Young People's views and experiences of COVID-19 and Lockdowns in Northamptonshire

April 2021

Contents

Summary

In March 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic[1] England went into a national lockdown[2] with schools and education settings across the country closing for all students unless they were the child of a key worker or deemed as vulnerable[3]. Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire (YHWN) wanted to find out about the impact that COVID-19 and the national lockdowns had on young people in Northamptonshire.

To do this YHWN developed a survey they felt would appeal to people their age, to gather the views of young people aged 11 to 19. Discussion with Public Health Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire County Council and Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group also took place to ensure that the survey would gather information that would assist local commissioners and service providers in responding to the pandemic and needs of young people.

Over 1,000 young people from across the county responded to the survey. The survey findings give an insight into how young people felt during the pandemic and the things that affected them the most, as well what they thought of the information and support available to them. Unsurprisingly, lockdown had a negative impact on emotional wellbeing of more than half the young people we spoke to, and many struggled with not being able to see their friends and usual support networks. There were, however, examples of ways in which lockdown had benefited some young people.

Some, but not all, young people had struggled to access physical and mental health support during lockdown and the preference of many for face to face appointments is an important finding.

Most young people felt supported by their places of education during lockdown but there were many examples of people who disliked home and online learning, as well as a few who preferred it. Some of those who struggled with their mental health mentioned losing the support they got from school counsellors and other school staff.

The findings of this survey give a useful insight into what matters most to young people, how they are usually supported as well as what support they were missing during lockdown – from their friends, from school or from health and care services.

A word from Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire (YHWN)

"We conducted this survey as we wanted to highlight the views of young people related to the pandemic. Young people aged 11-19 are all at different points of their childhood and we wanted to see how each age group and education setting were affected. Emotional wellbeing is a huge part of YHWN's core values, these survey questions were what we felt would summarise young people's experiences and would give us an indication of goals and recommendations for local providers to work towards locally."

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[1] www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
[2] www.gov.uk/coronavirus
[3] See Government guidance for definition - www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision

Key findings

About the young people

- 1,173 young people between the ages of 11 and 19 responded to the survey.

- There was a fairly even split between young people from the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. 10% were from a non-white ethnic group and 12% said they cared for someone else. 62% of respondents were female.

- Over half of young people (58%) live in a household where an adult is a key worker.

COVID-19 experiences

- The majority of young people (72%) were not told to shield nor was anyone in their household.

- 13% had tested positive for COVID-19 themselves and/or someone that they lived with. 78% of those who had tested positive (or someone in their household had) said they had been given information about self-isolation.

- 17% of those who told us more about the support they would have liked while self-isolating said they would have liked more support with education.

- 85% of young people felt safe at home during lockdown. A higher proportion of young people that did not identify as either male or female told us they did not always feel safe – 45%, compared to 16% of females and 8% of males.

Information about COVID-19

- 53% said it was easy or very easy to find out up to date information about COVID-19. Only 6% said that it was hard or very hard. Over half the young people (59%) got up to date information on COVID-19 from the news on TV and/or their parents. Slightly under half (44%) got information from social media.

- When asked to describe what they thought of the information, half (50%) said that the information was useful, helpful, informative or reassuring, often because it helped them know what was going on or what they could and couldn't do. One-quarter (25%) described the information as confusing, unclear or not helpful and 21% mentioned it made them anxious, stressed or worried.

- 59% of young people found it very easy or easy to understand the rules and guidance around COVID-19. 12% found it hard or very hard to understand the information. More people from the oldest age group (17-19 years old) found it hard to understand information, perhaps reflecting confusion to do with exam arrangements or because they were exposed to more information.

Accessing care

- 39% had not needed to access medical care during lockdown. Of those who had, 65% had been able to access medical care and 9% had not. 26% had been able to access care sometimes but not always.

- Fewer had needed to access mental health support, but less of those who needed it were able to. 63% had not need to access mental health services during lockdown. Of those who had, 42% had been able to access mental health services and 38% had not. 20% had been able to sometimes but not always.

- 20% of young people felt that COVID-19 has meant that they were less likely to get help and support for physical and mental health needs, if it was needed. A similar proportion, 17%, said that COVID-19 did not make them less likely to get help. A further 20% were unsure and 43% told us that they did not need any help or support.

- Those identifying as non-binary or 'other', and those identifying as female, were less likely to get help or support (and fewer said they did not need it). A higher proportion of the two older ages groups (17-19 and 15-16) said they were less likely to get help or support if they needed it (32% and 30%) compared to the younger age groups (13-14 and 11-12, 18% and 11%).

- Those that said they were less likely to get help or support were asked to tell us why. 42% mentioned having less access to services and, 28% had less support from others and 14% highlighted the difficulties arising from a lack of face to face appointments.

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

- More than half (53%) of young people told us that their emotional wellbeing or mental health got a bit worse (34%) or got much worse (20%) during the lockdowns. 28% young people told us that their mental health stayed the same and 13% told us their mental health got a bit better (6%) or much better (7%).

- Nearly half (48%) of all young people who identified as non-binary or another gender other than male or female said that during COVID-19 their emotional wellbeing had got much worse and a further eleven people (26%) said it had got a bit worse – 74% in total (31 of 42). This is significantly higher than the 37% of males and slightly higher than the 61% of females. The older respondents also appeared to experience worse emotional wellbeing or mental health during lockdown, with 72% of 17 to 19 year olds saying it had gotten much worse (35%) or a bit worse (36%).

- 44% said that their emotional wellbeing or mental health improved when they returned to education in person. 29% said that it did not improve and a similar proportion (28%) said they were unsure.

Support from school, college and university

- 56% of the young people that responded felt that the contact they had from their place of education was the right amount. Nearly a quarter 24% felt that it was too much and 11% felt that they received too little contact.

- 60% felt they had received the right amount of support from their place of education. Nearly one quarter (23%) felt they received too little support and only 3% felt they received too much support. More of the older age groups felt they got too little support.

Other comments

- 158 young people gave additional comments when asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about their experiences of COVID-19 or lockdown. Two-thirds of the comments had a negative sentiment (67%), 13% had a positive sentiment, 14% were neutral and 6% were mixed.

- The key negative themes arising were the **social impact of lockdown** - this frequently included the lack of opportunities to see friends, as well as the closure of clubs and sporting activities.

- The impact on **mental health** was mentioned specifically 22 times and 23 people indicated being emotionally impacted by lockdown or the pandemic more generally.

- Concern regarding the **educational impact** or other issues relating to education were mentioned 28 times.

Recommendations

1. If we were to enter another lockdown or a similar need to communicate with and support young people arose, partners should ensure that all information for young people is available in a format that is easy to access and easy to understand and is as consistent as possible.

2. Services for young people need to be accessible to them in other ways if the usual access routes are unavailable. This would prevent young people not seeking help for both physical and mental health concerns. Many young people still prefer face to face appointments so it should not be assumed that all young people would like to access services online.

3. Additional support should be made available for those who struggle the most with changes to services or routines and not being able to talk to those they trust, and those who do not feel safe or supported at home - especially those identifying as non-binary or 'other', who were the most likely to not feel safe and whose emotional wellbeing and mental health suffered the most during lockdown (along with girls and those aged 17 to 19).

4. Whilst most people struggled with aspects of the pandemic and lockdown, some young people found their wellbeing improved due to them gaining new beneficial habits or the removal of other stresses – ways to maintain these benefits should be sought by services supporting young people.

5. All services that work with children and young people should ensure they continue to keep safeguarding a priority and especially look out for those who feel unsafe in their own homes.

Responses to the report and recommendations

Response from Public Health Northamptonshire

"This is a comprehensive report capturing key views of our children and young people county-wide. We are delighted that key findings from this report concur with those reported in the recent children and young people engagement report undertaken in the summer of 2020 by Northamptonshire Public Health and CCG.

Both reports positively highlighted how resilient our children and young people have been during the Pandemic and equally identified the importance of a system wide approach to supporting our children and young people to readily access services tailored to their emotional, physical and social wellbeing.

Going forward, Public Health are keen to continue working collaboratively with the system partners to enhance accessibility of our children and young people to services tailored to their emotional, physical and social wellbeing, to reduce health and social care inequalities and improve service users experience, thereby facilitating and further supporting our children and young people in developing healthy minds and healthy bodies."

Response from NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group

"Northamptonshire CCG is passionate about ensuring the voice of the child and young person is a central focus as we work with providers to develop health services across the county. Healthwatch is an important part of that feedback and we always welcome their reports to help us review services through the eyes of those that access them.

At the beginning of the pandemic many services across the county adapted quickly, switching to online or telephone-based delivery of care as part of their COVID-19 response. Feedback and experiences of children, young people, and their families are key elements of planning ways to sustain any beneficial changes beyond emergency response arrangements.

A new Mental Health Wellbeing Café for 11-18 year olds was launched in 2020. The Café name– Espresso Yourself, was chosen by young people, and feedback so far has been very positive. As we develop local plans for mental health support we are committed to continue engaging with local families to explore options that take into account their experiences and views. This will ensure services are responsive, equitable, inclusive, and available where and when they are needed the most. By working together we aim to ensure children and young people are happy, healthy, safe and resilient, enabling a positive transition into adulthood."

Response from Parker E-ACT Academy

"The lockdowns have been exceptionally challenging for everybody not least our students. Having to manage learning from home and the feeling of isolation that the lockdowns brought to some was always going to have an impact. As a school we are very proud of the resilience that our students showed and are grateful for how our staff and community pulled together for the young people of Daventry. Weekly welfare phone calls to all students as well as digital forms of communication meant that we were able to stay in touch with students and signpost additional support where necessary, both educational and welfare."

Background

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire (YHWN) wanted to gather the views and experiences of young people locally to see how they had been impacted by COVID-19. During the coronavirus pandemic schools closed in March 2020 and a full national lock down meant the nonessential shops, restaurants and entertainment venues such as gyms, cinemas and bowling alleys where closed. The government advice was to stay at home[4] and to not mix with anyone outside of your household. The restrictions were put in place to try and stop the spread of COVID-19. The impact of this was felt across the country and the way that many vital services run was impacted. This included doctors, dentists and other healthcare settings. In the summer of 2020 the restrictions were eased slightly and non-essential shops reopened and the rule of six came in. In November 2020 England went into a second national lockdown and a tiered system for local areas came into force. Schools reopened between September and December 2020. In December/January England entered a third national lockdown, this saw tighter restrictions and once again the closure of schools.

This project aimed to engage with young people in Northamptonshire to find out about their experiences of COVID-19, what impact there has been on young people and to make recommendation of how better to support and communicate with young people in the future.

Method

At a series of virtual meetings in November 2020 Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire started scoping out their project around COVID-19 and the impact that it had had on young people in Northamptonshire.

It has always been important that YHWN seek the views of other young people in Northamptonshire and as such they wanted to receive a minimum of 500 responses from across the county. They wanted to ensure that certain demographic questions were asked, such as whether a young person was a carer or if someone in their household was a key worker. This was so they could see if different groups had been affected differently.

Survey development

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions YHWN were aware that the usual ways of reaching young people in Northamptonshire would not be possible so they sought ways to make the survey accessible. It was decided that an online only survey would be best as it would eliminate the risk spreading COVID-19 through paper surveys and would be accessible to most young people since more now

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[4] www.gov.uk/coronavirus

have internet-enabled devices that they were using for schoolwork during lockdown or self-isolation.

At the second YHWN meeting in November the group started to narrow down some of the things they wanted to find out about into questions that would be asked in the survey. They discussed the wording they would use and if it would be understood by younger respondents. Once the questions were drafted they designed social media posts that would go out on the YHWN Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp accounts. These were designed in an online meeting using the screen sharing capabilities to allow all members to be actively involved.

A Healthwatch Northamptonshire staff member spoke with Public Health Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire County Council and Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that the survey would gather information that would assist local commissioners and service providers in responding to the pandemic and needs of young people.

The survey was piloted by YHWN volunteers in early December 2020. The survey was due to go live to the public in the first week of January 2021. However, on 5 January 2021 the Government announced that the following day tighter restrictions would come into place and we would be going back in to a third lockdown, which included the closure of all schools to all pupils apart from those whose parents were key workers and the most vulnerable. With this in mind, we had to re-word the survey so that it would make sense with the new tighter restrictions and school closures. The new survey was piloted again by YHWN in early January. See Appendix 1 for survey questions.

Survey distribution

The survey was launched to the public on 18 January 2021 with a press release inclusion in the Healthwatch Northamptonshire newsletter. The social media posts that had been created by YHWN also went live and were shared through our social media contacts. All schools in Northamptonshire were made aware of the project as it went out in the weekly school bulletin from Northamptonshire County Council and the School Nursing service run by Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT). YHWN staff and volunteers also shared details of the survey through WhatsApp broadcast[5]. We made some of our existing school contacts aware of the project and the importance of hearing the voices of young people from across the country. The survey was shared widely with our existing contacts, local youth groups and partner agencies.

The survey was due to run until 31 March 2021 but due to the government announcement on 22 February that all school pupils would be returning on 8 March it was decided that the survey should be closed before the schools return so as not to skew the data. All surveys were completed while schools were closed to most pupils.

The survey closed on 8 March 2021 with a total of 1,173 responses.

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[5] faq.whatsapp.com/general/requirements-for-broadcasting-a-message/

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis was undertaken and Chi-square testing for statistically significant differences between groups was used where the sample size was big enough. Charts and tables were calculated once blank/missing answers had been removed.

Qualitative data from open text questions was thematically coded into categories generated as the data was explored. Masters course students from the University of Northampton assisted with the coding, which was a helpful additional resource for us and allowed students to gain some good data analysis experience and insight into the views of young people.

Limitations

COVID-19 impacted the way in which the worked could be carried out, all tasks had to be completed online and there were no paper copies of the survey available for people to complete.

The pace and time scales in which government legislations were changed also had an impact on the way in which we worked. The closure of schools meant that the survey had to be re worded which then delayed the launch date of the survey. When schools reopened it meant that we had to close the survey earlier than anticipated so that the data was not skewed.

What people told us

- 1,173 young people between the ages of 11 and 19 responded to the survey.

- The percentages given are of those who answered each question, unless otherwise stated.

Age

Age	131 11%	256 22%	222 19%	163 14%	136 12%	114 10%	77 7%	52 4%	17 1%
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
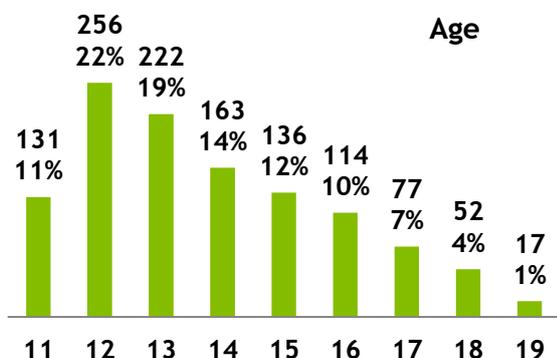
Demographics

Age

Over half of the respondents (55%, 641 of 1168) were aged between 12 and 14.

Only 12% of young people that responded (146 of 1168) were over the age of 16.

Location

At the time of the survey Northamptonshire was divided in to seven districts and boroughs. On 1 April 2021 Northamptonshire County Council was reformed into two unitary authorities, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. One third of respondents (33%, 386 of 1159) were from the Kettering area and nearly one quarter (23%, 271 of 1159) from Northampton. Respondents from North Northamptonshire (Wellingborough, Kettering, East Northamptonshire and Corby) make up just over half of the respondents (53%, 616 of 1159) and those from West Northamptonshire

District of Northamptonshire

	Kettering	Northampton	Daventry	East N'hants	South N'hants	Corby	Wellingborough	Other
	386 33%	271 23%	181 16%	139 12%	84 7%	52 4%	39 3%	7 1%

(Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire) account for 46% (536 of 1159) of the responses. We had a further seven responses from young people who lived on the border of Northamptonshire and so we have included them in the data as they may be accessing services or education in the Northamptonshire area.

Area of Northamptonshire

North N'hants 616, 53%

West N'hants 536, 46%
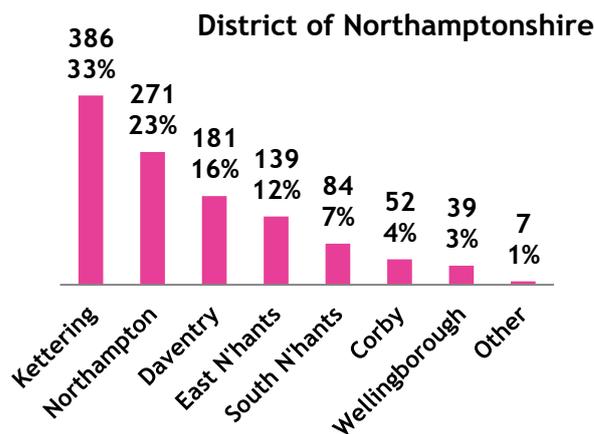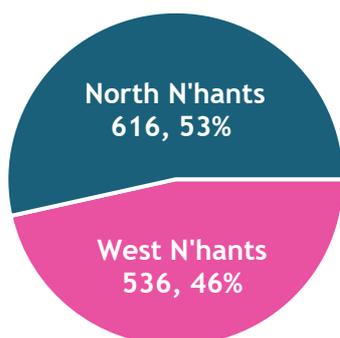
Gender
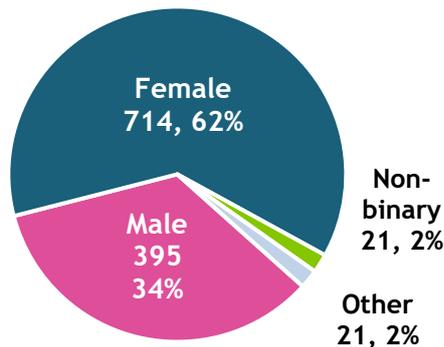
The majority of the young people that responded to the survey identified as female (62%, 714 of 1151), 34% (395) identified as male, 21 (2%) respondents told us they are non-binary and a further 21 (2%) wanted to self-identify, including three as Demi girl, two as Gender fluid or gender queer, two as Transgender and five who didn't want to answer.

Female 714, 62%
Male 395 34%
Non-binary 21, 2%
Other 21, 2%

Ethnicity

The majority of responses were from young people who were White British 877 of 1146 answers (77%). The responses from those that do not identify as White British exceeds the last census data in 2011[6] which shows that 86% of the population in Northamptonshire identify as White British.

| Ethnicity	Count
White: British...	877, 77%
White: Any other White...	149, 13%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	36, 3%
Asian / Asian British	35, 3%
Black / Black British	24, 2%
Another ethnic background	18, 2%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	4, <0%
Arab	3, <0%
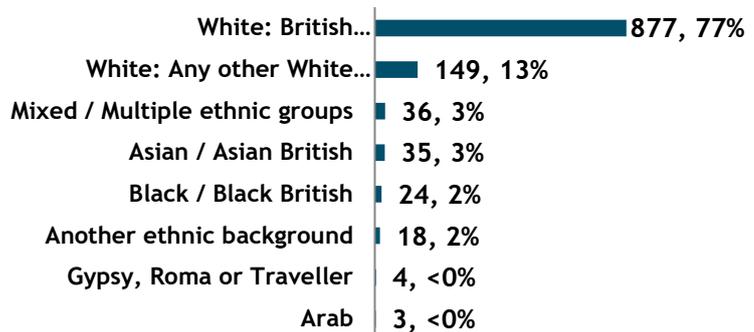
Young Carers

12% (134 of 1154 answers) of young people said they helped to look after someone with a long-term illness or disability, which would suggest that they are a young carer. 9% (105) of young people were unsure if they were a young carer.

No 915 79%
Yes 134 12%
Unsure 105 9%
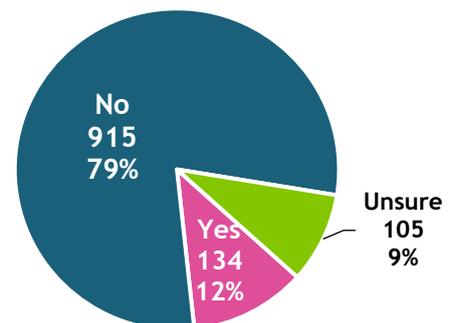
Key Workers

Over half of young people (58%, 670 of 1161) live in a household where an adult is a key worker[7]. 11% (122) were unsure if someone in their household was a key worker.

All four young people who said that they were Gypsy, Roma or Traveller said that an adult in their household was a keyworker. 78% of the 24 young people who were Black/Black British said that an adult in their household was a key worker compared to 57% of the 1036 from a White British or any other White background.

670 58% | 369 32% | 122 11%
Yes | No | Unsure

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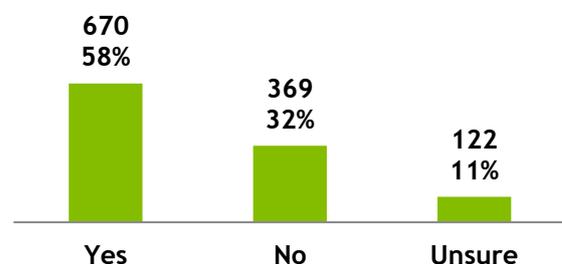
[6] www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/health/health-and-wellbeing-board/northamptonshire-jsna/Documents/Demography_2020_Updated%20September%202020.pdf

[7] A key worker (or critical worker) was defined during the pandemic as those working in health and social care, education and childcare, key public services, local and national government, food and necessary goods industries, public safety and national security, transport and border, and utilities, communication and financial services - www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision

Key worker in household

Legend: **Yes** ■No ■Unsure

Ethnic group	Yes	No	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	498, 57%	281, 32%	90, 10%
White: Any other White background	85, 57%	47, 32%	16, 11%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	18, 50%	13, 36%	5, 14%
Asian/Asian British	22, 63%	11, 31%	2 6%
Black/Black British	18, 78%	4, 17%	1 4%
Another ethnic background	11, 61%	2, 11%	5, 28%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	4, 100%		
Arab	1, 33%	1, 33%	1, 33%
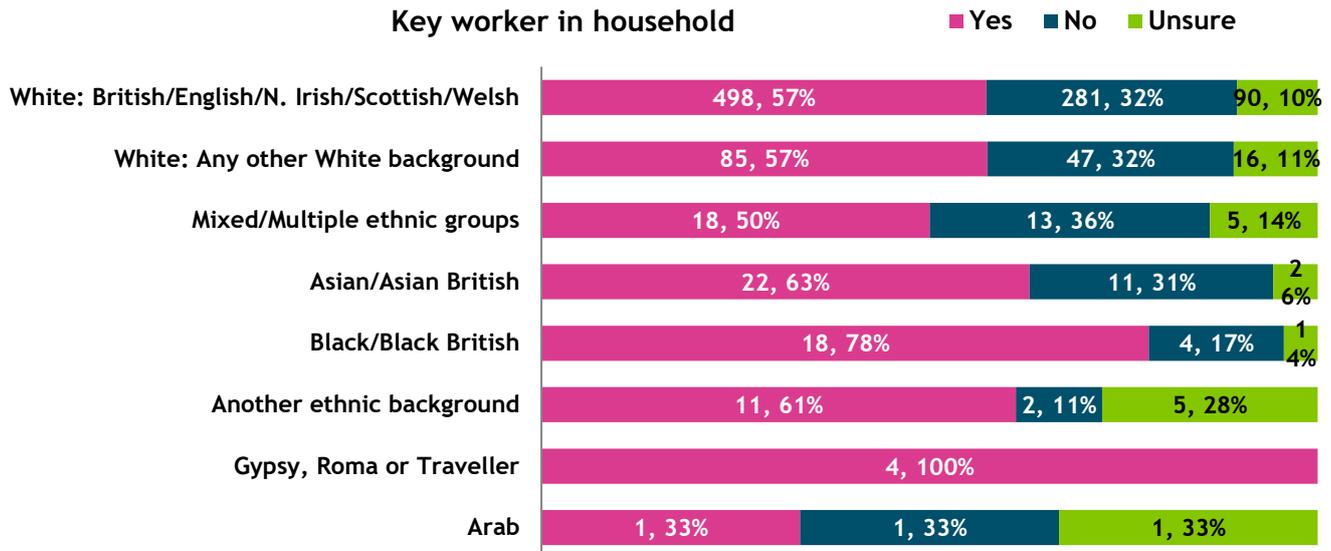
COVID-19 experiences

Shielding

Less than 3% of young people that responded to the survey (32 of 1164) were told to shield[8] because they were clinically extremely vulnerable. A further 16% (183) said someone in their household was told to shield. The majority of young people (72%, 836) were not told to shield nor was anyone in their household.

Shielding

Yes, me	Yes, someone in my household	No	Unsure
32 3%	183 16%	836 72%	113 10%

Tested positive for COVID-19

Yes, me	Yes, someone in my household	Yes, me and others in my household	No	Unsure
16 1%	90 8%	42 4%	993 85%	27 2%
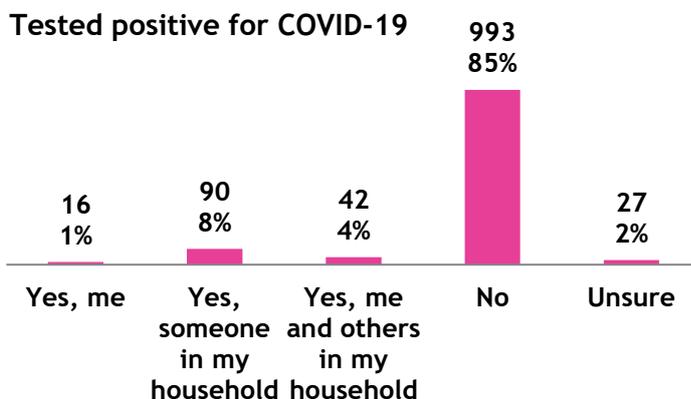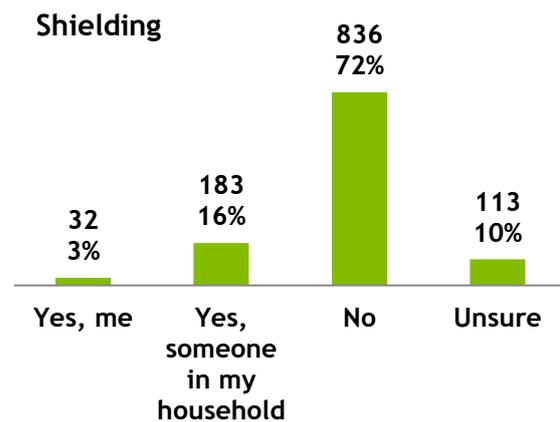
Testing positive for COVID-19

Of the 1,168 people that responded to the question less than 13% (148) had tested positive for COVID-19 themselves and/or someone that they lived with. 5% (58) had tested positive themselves. A further 2% (27) were unsure if they or someone in their household had tested positive for COVID-19.

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[8] Shielding or social shielding is used to describe how to protect those at highest risk of severe illness (clinically extremely vulnerable) if they catch coronavirus - www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

Care, advice and instructions received for COVID-19

We asked young people to tell us about the care, advice, or instructions they had received once they or someone in their household had tested positive for COVID-19.

Theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[9]
Self-isolation	90	78%
Advice from Test and Trace/NHS/COVID helpline	14	12%
Not given any	8	7%
Support provided (inc. Test and Trace check in calls and help with shopping)	6	5%
General COVID hygiene	3	3%
Unsure/Cannot remember	3	3%
Keeping distance from others	2	2%
Wear mask	2	2%
Following government guidelines	1	1%
Test instructions	1	1%
Hospital treatment	1	1%
Advice not passed on from positive family member	1	1%

78% (90 of 116) of those who had tested positive (or someone in their household had) and answered the question said they had been given information about self-isolation. 14 people (12%) mentioned receiving advice from Test and Trace or other NHS professionals, and one person referred to calls from Test and Trace as support. One person was given an oxygen sensor to monitor themselves. Two people mentioned support phone calls/messages from the council and two mentioned offers of grocery shopping. Eight people (7%) said they had not been given any advice or support.

Self-isolation

We asked young people to tell us what extra support would have been useful to them if they had been asked to self-isolate. 303 people gave a relevant answer. More answered this question than just those who had a positive COVID-19 test in their household because many had to self-isolate if had been a contact (e.g. classmate) of someone testing positive. 116 (38%) did not need any extra support (49) or were not sure (67). The remaining 187 answers were themed:

Theme/sub-theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[6]
Education-related	53	17%
More contact/support	*30*	*10%*
More schoolwork/resources	*11*	*4%*
Less schoolwork	*10*	*3%*
Help with school	*2*	*1%*
Food/shopping related	31	10%
More social contact	29	10%
Activities/exercise/wellbeing	23	8%
Better advice/information	20	7%
Mental health support	15	5%
Financial support	9	3%
IT equipment/access	7	2%

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[9] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%.

Parents/family	6	2%
Support with work/job	4	1%
Less contact with others	3	1%
Other help	2	1%

Education was the most common area that people would have liked more support with (53 people, 17% of those who answered). 30 of these would have liked more contact, particularly **more contact with teachers** (16) and **more online learning** (8). Two people would have liked more **one-to-one or daily catch ups**, and two **more support**, including for Special Educational Needs (SEN). Example comments:

"Be able to have 1 to 1 lesson so I don't get behind in school." – *Female, age 12*

"More help during online classes." – *Female, age 12*

"More input from the teachers to explain the work we needed to complete." – *Female, age 11*

"Phone call with teachers." – *Female, age 15*

"Special Zoom or Microsoft lessons to help." – *Female, age 12*

"To get a text message from all my teachers for that for example a text from my maths teacher my science teacher and English one then my PE teacher that I have the next day telling me that they miss me and can't wait to see me again." – *Non-binary or other, age 12*

"Online school for some lessons when I was self-isolating." – *Female, age 16*

"More instructions from teachers." – *Male, age 12*

"Teachers understanding kids with SEN can't work as quick as others. More support from school with SEN." – *Female, age 14*

"The understanding from schools that it's difficult." – *Female, age 14*

Eleven people would have been helped by having **more schoolwork or resources** and nine by having **less schoolwork and the pressure** from it. Example comments:

"I had to self-isolate for 3 days because my dad had symptoms but tested negative, I would have liked more support from the school for example school work to do during self-isolation to keep me distracted from my worries and as something to do so I don't miss out on even more learning." – *Male, age 13*

"If I hadn't needed to stay at home alone when my class were sent home due to a positive case." – *Male, age 11*

"More platforms and opportunities for education." – *Male, age 12*

"Work sent from school." – *Female, age 14*

"Extra support from school would of helped I guess, they gave us the homework and revision as well as the school work they did in class, bearing in mind we're only at home whereas before the workload was split between school and home. So school being more understanding if we didn't meet deadlines would of been good." – *Female, age 15*

"School not always saying I haven't done work when I can't work." – *Female, age 12*

"No work and focus on getting better." – *Female, age 14*

21 people mentioned wanting **more or better food or grocery deliveries**, or shopping in general (two) and eight people mention food in general. Example comments:

"Better online food shopping service." – *Female, age 11*

"Food really as we could not leave the house so could not just leave to go and get food." – *Male, age 16*

"Someone to get the shopping - due to allergies we can't order and have it delivered." – *Male, age 11*

"Wider food delivery options," – *Female, age 14*

"Food isolation boxes from university and calls from reception." – *Female, age 19*

"Well I did have someone cater food for me whilst in my room and that was a big help." – *Female, age 18*

29 people mentioned wanting more contact with friends and/or family, including by online means. Example comments:

"Being able to facetime my friends more to talk to them." – *Female, age 14*

"I felt sad because I couldn't see my family or friends. It was hard to do my schoolwork because I couldn't ask my teachers questions; they were in lessons." – *Female, age 12*

"Being able to see my mum whilst she was in hospital." – *Female, age 19*

"Being able to talk to someone outside my household." – *Male, age 12*

"Having my family - but you can't do that." – *Age 14*

"Well I would struggle really bad seeing nobody so can't believe I'm saying this but more virtuals." – *Female, age 14*

"People around my age that are also isolating, so I can talk to people who are going through the same as me." – *Female, age 12*

12 people mentioned wanting **more things to do or fun activities**, six mentioned wanting to do **more exercise** (three exercise, three going for walks). One person mentioned meditation and one was using positive thinking. One person suggested getting more sleep and one a better routine. Example comments:

"Some activities to do in your household so that you don't get bored." – *Female, age 12*

"More fun activities set." – *Female, age 11*

"Headspace for meditation, WhatsApp and Zoom so I can still see my friends." – *Female, age 17*

"1 hour of sport a day." – *Male, age 11*

"To go on walks or runs to get exercise." – *Female, age 11*

"Going out in the garden and getting some fresh air." – *Female, age 14*

20 people would have liked **more** (12) or **clearer** (8) **advice and information**. For example:

"A letter of what I can do and can't do." – *Male, age 11*

"Advice on how to cope with isolation." – *Female, age 16*

"Ideas of how to keep fit and stay healthy while isolating." – *Male, age 19*

"It would have been helpful to understand more about Covid." – *Male, age 13*

"Knowledge of what happens after the test." – *Female*

"Just someone coming and explaining more in detail." – *Non-binary or other, age 11*

"Knowing EXACTLY what we need to do, as sometimes it's unsure." – *Female, age 17*

15 people mentioned the **importance of mental health support**, for example:

"Just someone to talk to really most young people go through things that we don't want to tell others." – *Female, age 18*

"More mental health support from schools." – *Female, age 18*

"Not had to self-isolate but I would say that having a Mental Wellbeing Support service or network would be helpful where people can stay connected and talk to others who might've had Covid. I think that local authorities could provide an information/guidance package to people who are isolating and the number for local support for those who have no relatives to get essentials for them." – *Female, age 18*

"Therapy." – *Non-binary, age 15 and female, age 12*

Nine people were worried about **finances**, for example:

"Both my parents being paid while we had to isolate." – *Female, age 16*

"Food parcels, etc. seeing I'm from a more low income family." – *Male, age 15*

"Money support because I'm not working." – *Male, age 17*

"Monthly payment paid to my mum as she can't work as a hairdresser and is self-employed." – *Male, age 15*

Seven people mentioned needing **better IT equipment or access**, for example:

"Free internet." – *Male, age 12*

"A laptop so I can do my work a lot easier." – *Male, age 15*

Six people mentioned needing their **family**, four wanted **support with their employer**, three wanted to have **less contact with others** and two wanted other or **more help**, such as help walking the dog. Example comments:

"To have at least one parent with me .. both my parents are key workers I felt lonely 😔." – *Male, age 12*

"My family keeping me away from them and me staying in my room". – *Female, age 12*

"Not having someone call me every week to see how I am." – *Male, age 16*

"A letter of proof for my place of work." – *Female, age 18*

"Time away from work." – *Male, age 14*

Feeling safe

We asked the young people to tell us if they had always felt safe in their households during the lockdown. 85% (993 of the 1164 that responded) said that they had always felt safe. A further 9% (107) told us they had felt safe sometimes but not always. 30 young people (2.5%) said they had not always felt safe and 34 (3%) were unsure.

During the COVID-19 lockdown have you always felt safe in your household?
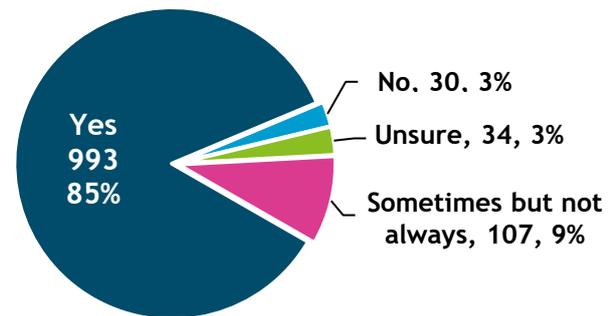
Yes
993
85%

No. 30. 3%

Unsure, 34, 3%

Sometimes but not always, 107, 9%

A higher proportion of young people that did not identify as either male or female told us they did not always feel safe – 45% (10 of 42), compared to 16% of females and 8% of males[10].

■ Yes ■ Sometimes but not always ■ No ■ Unsure

Female: 596, 84% | 75 11% | 19 3% | 21 3%

Male: 360, 92% | 19 5% | 7 2% | 7 2%

Non-binary or other: 23, 55% | 9, 21% | 4, 10% | 6, 14%
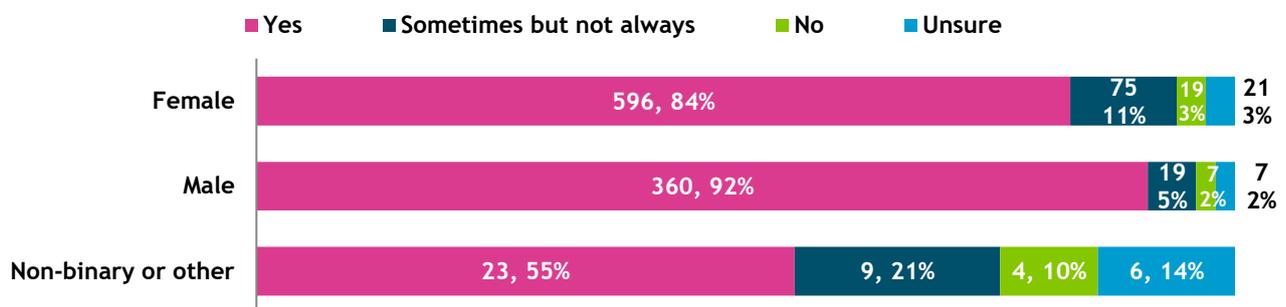
There may be a higher proportion of those from mixed or multiple ethnic groups, those who have a key worker in their household, those age 15-16 years old, and those who cared for someone else, who did not always feel safe, but these differences were not statistically significant – see Appendix 2 for breakdown graphs.

People who felt unsafe were asked to tell us more about why this was, and 81 people gave an answer.

52 people gave reasons relating to directly to coronavirus, especially **fear of getting the virus** (37 people), including 24 who mentioned family members having to go to work and two who had direct experience of someone having coronavirus in their family. Example comments:

"I don't want covid the threat of getting it makes me anxious." – *Female, age 15*

"Because my mum is a childminder so lots of children from other families have been in my house, then my dad and brother are key workers and are still mixing with work colleges." – *Female, age 14*

"I was scared people may bring it into the house when doing things such as essential shopping." – *Female, age 16*

"We still have to go out to get food and the others in my household are key workers even though we are all at a high risk due to medical conditions." – *Female, age 18*

"My parent is a key worker who works in the NHS. So I don't feel entirely safe as she is in contact with patients who have covid every day." – *Female, age 14*

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[10] Chi-square test for significance, non-binary and other compared to female and male combined. Chi-square statistic 39.08. The p-value is < 0.00001.

"There's lots of people coming and going like from the council and other workmen and this makes me nervous." – *Female, age 16*

"My dad still has to work to earn enough money but he is a builder so he still comes in contact with people every day so I'm worried if they might not get the symptoms of covid but still be a carrier of it and my dad is 48 and I don't want him to get covid." – *Male, age 12*

"Well, it's quite hard to explain but mum and nan both had to go to hospital and grandad was ill so I had to go live with my aunt for about three weeks and I was the only well person so how am I supposed to feel safe if my mum and nan have been in hospital with the STUPID virus." – *Female, age 11*

Eight people were **worried about giving the virus to others** in their household, especially if they were vulnerable, and five people mentioned others breaking coronavirus rules, for example:

"Because my mum is a key worker so if she does get covid my grandmother could die." – *Male, age 12*

"Sometimes I felt I was putting my parents and my grandpa, who is in our bubble, at risk by going to school when there are cases." – *Female, age 12*

"Sometimes my dad invites some of his co-workers to help them with something they're struggling [with] but I don't feel comfortable when strangers come to our house during the pandemic." – *Female, age 11*

"Men come past my house coughing." – *Female, age 11*

22 people mentioned other **reasons to do with mental health or wellbeing**, including one person who was worried about harming themselves and one who had a parent with mental health issues. Some felt unsafe because of the impact of the pandemic on their mental health and wellbeing whereas others had mental health issues that may have bene pre-existing. Example comments:

"I sometimes feel safe at home but sometimes not but that's because I haven't been out for a walk or something." – *Female, age 11*

"I just started to get lost in negative thoughts, and it affected me badly. This has changed now!" – *Non-binary or other, age 13*

"Because I feel trapped in the house and I feel like I am going crazy." – *Female, age 16*

"I feel like going outside most of the time but when I do go outside I feel really uncomfortable. Also my parents won't let me that much anyway." – *Female, age 11*

"Mental health is a huge issue for me currently, being stuck inside constantly just made me feel sick of the same thing and honestly caused me to want to leave all the time." – *Male, age 17*

"Not exactly physically unsafe, but more mentally. I'm in a household with a baby and I have nowhere to escape to. I'm more afraid of what I'm going to do to myself because of the stress than anything else." – *Female, age 16*

"Because I'm suicidal and need to get out of the house as it is too much for me." – *Female, age 15*

"I struggle a lot with self harm and I can't talk to my parents about it, so it can escalate quickly." – *Female, age 17*

22 people mentioned how **family members or family dynamics** were the reason they felt unsafe, including high levels of stress within the home and parental anger, for example.

"Sometimes I feel safe but my dad gets angry very quickly and sometimes it's scary." – *Female, age 14*

"I feel anxious around my parents." – *Female, age 14*

"Sometimes parents just don't understand us and are not bothered about mental health." – *Female, age 15*

"Anxieties and tempers running high." – *Non-binary or other, age 16*

Four people mentioned **threats of violence**, **trans/homophobia** was mentioned by two, and one person mentioned the involvement of social services. Four people mentioned being alone at home or hearing noises. Example comments:

"Arguments within the people in my house and I am scared someone will be hurt seriously." – *Female, age 15*

"My dad is a racist homophobic transphobic sexist person. And has threatened to abuse me." – *Male, age 12*

"My parents are key worker, even though my mum could work from home her boss didn't let her work from home so me and my brother left alone 10-18:00 at home 😔" – *Male, age 12*

"When I'm home alone I don't always feel safe." – *Male, age 11*

Three people preferred not to give a reason and one person mentioned knife crime near their house.

Although they were not asked to, 16 people gave a reason for why they had always felt safe, identifying safe home environments and positive familial relationships.

We were aware that when we asked this question it may have raised some safeguarding issues. The survey was anonymous and so while we were unable to identify and offer help and support to those who said they may need it, we were able to regularly look at the data and make a correlation between the schools that had told us they had shared the survey and the responses. This meant that when a specific safeguarding issue arose, we could inform the school that there was a possibility that it could be one of their students. The information at the end of the survey included helpline numbers so that anyone who wanted to get help and support could.

Information about COVID-19

Access to information

How easy was it to find up to date information about COVID-19

Unsure, 79, 7%
Very hard, 17, 1%
Hard, 51, 4%
Very easy 272 24%
OK 394 34%
Easy 344 30%

Where did you find out up to date information about COVID-19?

- TV news: 682, 59%
- Parents: 681, 59%
- Social media: 502, 44%
- School: 337, 29%
- Local government or NHS...: 305, 26%
- News articles online: 273, 24%
- Newspaper (including...): 104, 9%
- Other (please tell us): 56, 5%
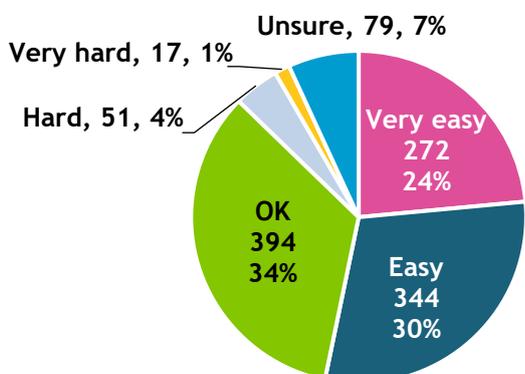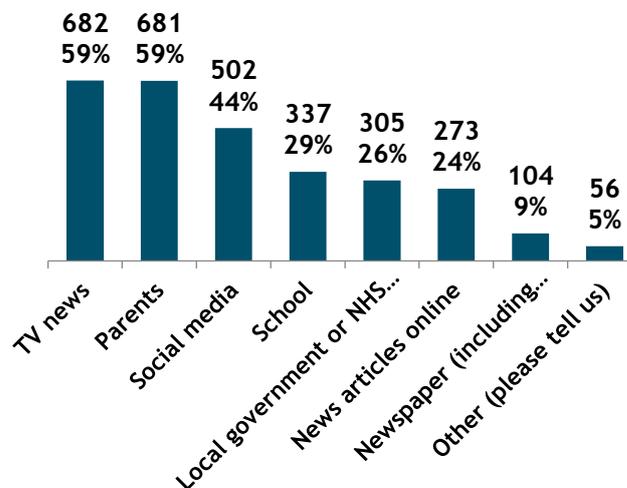
Over half of respondents (53%, 616 of 1157) found it very easy or easy to find out up to date information about COVID-19. Only 68 people (6%) said that it was hard or very hard.

Over half the young people (59%) got up to date information on COVID-19 from the news on TV (682 of 1156) and/or their parents (681). Slightly under half (44%) got information social media.

The most common 'other' place they got information from was 'other family members or friends' (15 people), followed by new apps or notification, including Google (9 people). Five people heard information on the radio, four used the national government website, two mentioned 'word of mouth' and two the cadets. Two just said the 'internet' and five people mentioned specific social media platforms, including YouTube (two), TikTok (one), Instagram (one) and Gamex (one). One person saw messages in shops and one person saw them "everywhere".

Two people instead gave additional comments:

"Different people (scientists and government) give different data and it's difficult to know who to trust." – *Female, age 18*

"If I find news on the internet I just read what the title says without looking into it." – *Male, age 12*

A higher proportion of those identifying as non-binary or 'other' also found it harder to access up to date information[11].

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[11] Chi-square test for significance, non-binary and other compared to female and male combined. Chi-square statistic 44.08. The p-value is < 0.00001.

How easy was it to find out up to date information about COVID-19?
('Unsure' omitted for clarity)

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ OK ■ Hard ■ Very hard

	Very easy	Easy	OK	Hard	Very hard	
Female	150, 21%	211, 30%	261, 37%	34 5%		7 1%
Male	115, 29%	124, 32%	114, 29%	11 3%		5 1%
Non-binary or other	5, 12%	8, 19%	14, 33%	5, 12%	5, 12%	
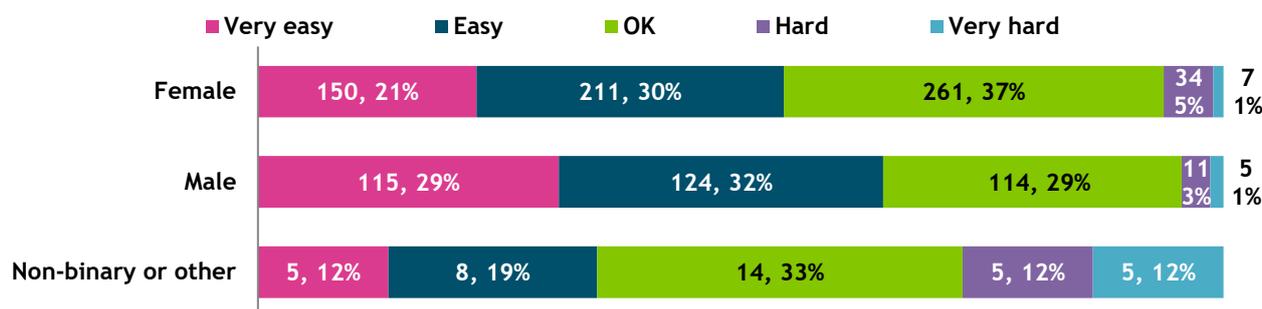
Access to up to date information may have been more difficult for those who are Gypsy, Roma or Travellers, but with such a small group size (four people) it is difficult to know. There was no obvious difference in how easy different ages groups found it to access information. See Appendix 2 for breakdowns.

Opinions about the information

The young people were also asked to describe what they thought of the information, e.g. was it useful/helpful, did it reassure them or make them more anxious, was it confusing? 848 commented and the comments could be grouped into the following themes:

Theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[12]
Useful/helpful/informative/reassuring	421	50%
Confusing/unclear/not helpful	215	25%
Anxious/stress/worried	181	21%
Okay	52	6%
Not sure/don't know	38	4%
Indifferent/	37	4%
Angry/annoyed/frustrated	15	2%
Other	14	2%

Of the 50% who found the information useful, helpful, informative or reassuring, 331 (39% overall) specified it was **useful or helpful,** often because it helped them know what was going on or what they could and couldn't do, for example:

"It was helpful because it meant could have a better understanding of what was going on." – *Female, age 12*

"It was helpful to know how everyone else in the world is/was." - *Female, age 12*

"Useful as it was clear and well explained." - *Female, age 16*

"It told me crucial things." – *Male, age 12*

"I found that the guidelines where clear and that really helped." - *Female, age 17*

"It was helpful because knowing everything about the virus helped me stay safer and knowing how it works and where it is helping me know were to be more careful." – *Male, age 13*

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[12] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%.

"It was helpful and sometimes annoying. (Another lockdown so I can't see my friend)". – *Male, age 12*

Some that found it helpful mentioned that it **also made them anxious**, for example:

"It was helpful because it provided dates and layouts of how things were going to happen but it made me anxious and nervous at the same time because anything could change." – *Non-binary or other, age 16*

"It was useful, but made me more nervous especially about our GCSE's and whether we would be doing them or not, also about whether we would even go back to school." – *Female, age 15*

"Useful to know but certainly increased my levels of anxiety." – *Female, age 18*

"I found it helpful but it told me what was happening but sometimes it was too much as every time I turned my phone on or tv it would show something about COVID-19." – *Female, age 12*

"It was helpful but made me anxious about leaving the house." - *Female, age 15*

"It was helpful for me however I feel it may have scared some people instead of reassuring them." - *Female, age 16*

Some of the older respondents gave more detailed answers:

"Northamptonshire's local updates are very helpful but most people my age don't follow the platforms that they're being advertised on. Local young people's engagement with Councils, Politics and things like that are limited so it would be nice to see young people getting involved and becoming more aware of how much local authorities actually do." – *Female, age 18*

"I guess helpful. Most of the time it was telling me to do things I was doing anyway. The only times it was relevant to me was when things such as driving lessons and tests were cancelled. Sometimes it was confusing in the beginning, but I think now we all have a better understanding of what the government means." – *Female, age 18*

40 people (5% overall) **felt reassured** and 34 (4%) **felt informed**, although this was again mixed with anxiety for some, for example:

"I was happy to be able to know what was going on in the world; it was very helpful and reassuring." – *Female, age 11*

"Good as I know what is going on rather than being kept in the dark." - *Male, age 16*

"I have got most of my news from TikTok which lessened the bad news with comedy." - *Female, age 15*

"Made me more aware of the dangers and it helped me follow government guidelines, so I understood the consequences." - *Male, age 12*

"It made me feel a lot safer being aware of all the restrictions and keeping up to date on the cases." - *Female, age 13*

"It made me feel more safe and less worried." - *Male, age 12*

"When the cases went down it reassured me but then they've gone up again it has made me more anxious." - *Female, age 14*

"It was both reassuring to know what's going on and a bit anxiety inducing to see how much misinformation existed out there." - *Female, age 15*

"It reassured me on to what's going on but it does make you a bit anxious going out or anywhere." - *Female, age 14*

12 people mentioned that the information was **easy to understand**, two that it was interesting and two said they were not worried.

21% of people (180) felt the information was **confusing** and another 12 that it was **not helpful**. Ten people mentioned that it was **unclear** and eight were **concerned about false information**. Two felt that it was boring, one that it was hard to access and two that it lacked any emotion or feeling. Example comments:

"It sometimes was confusing as the government kept going back on their decisions but the stay at home message was very clear." - *Male, age 15*

"It was a bit confusing, it did make me anxious because people are so unsure about COVID which unsettles me a bit." - *Female, age 14*

"Sometimes confusing, not always written in a way for young people to understand." - *Female, age 17*

"Due to information being different across media platforms, it was difficult to differentiate the truth." - *Female, age 18*

"It was sometimes confusing due to the fact that for a time I had no idea how my GCSE results were going to be decided." - *Male, age 15*

"It's always been confusing because there's never any definites. Officials never guarantee anything because it will come back to bite them, so everything has always been vague and confusing. The fact that it's so unsure is what makes me more anxious, since if government officials refuse to set dates or state what's happening there's no way to plan for the future. Like with exams, they would not make a choice for a long time on whether they would or would not go through with it which really strung students along and made me more anxious." - *Female, age 18*

"It was confusing but then again I'm 12 and its more for adults all I needed to know was anything about when I'm going to school and if the lockdown ended. The rest of the information was for my dad for work and adulty things." - *Male, age 12*

"It definitely confused me because only the children who were more at risk [because their parents were key workers] was actually in school." - *Male, age 11*

"It made things much worse as all it did was cause uncertainty and made people panic. As a key worker myself this caused more damage than it did good as more and more people came in to say their opinion and give us grief." – *Male, age 17*

"It was confusing at first, but I got used to hearing about it." - *Female, age 12*

"Some things on the internet aren't true." - *Female, age 13*

"Not really useful as I'm not worried about it and a bit too much information because it showed the bad side of it rather than the good side like how it brought people together and help each other out more." - *Female, age 14*

"Did not understand why they are trying to open schools when there are still people dying? It does not make sense? Online school works perfectly." – *Male, age 15*

"It wasn't really helpful for me because I didn't understand much of it." - *Female, age 11*

130 people (15%) mentioned how the information made the **anxious**, 20 (2%) **felt worried** and 18 (2%) **felt scared**, for example:

> "I think it makes the community anxious telling us about covid 19 and is not helping people with their mental health because in a time like this we need to keep optimistic." – *Male, age 13*
>
> "More anxious in case family caught it." - *Female, age 12*
>
> "Quite anxious and confusing for what it meant for my future, as a person who struggles and falls behind in school, because I have such high expectations for myself and ambitions to succeed, my future seems uncertain." - *Female, age 15*
>
> "It was what it was I couldn't change it but at times it was a bit terrifying." - *Female, age 12*
>
> "It made me worry about everything." – *Male, age 14*

Seven people felt the information was **stressful**, three that it was **depressing** and two that it was **overwhelming**. One person said it was disappointing.

49 people thought the information was **okay**. 37 people were **indifferent** to the information, example:

> "I truly do not have an opinion on this, it was sometimes confusing but it was just easy to taken in at times." – *Non-binary, age 14*
>
> "I didn't really care about it." – *Male, age 13*

Ten people found the information **annoying**, two found it **frustrating** and three said it made them **angry**, mostly all because it meant they were subject to increased restrictions, for example:

> "It made me annoyed that we can't see our families." – *Male, age 11*
>
> "Not clear and made me more frustrated and annoyed." - *Female, age 17*

Ten people mentioned that their parents helped them to understand information, two mentioned that they were now feeling more positive or trying to stay positive and one mentioned their difficult family situation:

> "During the first lockdown it made me a lot more anxious and I hated even hearing the word coronavirus and I hated seeing all the death around me - I kept fearing my own family were in danger of dying from covid. Now, I don't really get affected by it - I actually like some of the things I am seeing now - especially with the success of the vaccine rollout, and the strong hope to return to normalcy. Hopefully things are looking up now." - *Female, age 17*
>
> "It's hard because I'm in a difficult situation with looking after family but also living with my boyfriend." - *Female, age 18*

Ease of understanding

59% of young people (680 of 1156) found it very easy or easy to understand the rules and guidance around COVID-19. Just over a quarter (26%, 297) found them neither easy or hard. 12% (133) found it hard or very hard to understand the information.

More people from the oldest age group (17-19 years old) found it hard to understand information, perhaps reflecting confusion to do with exam arrangements or because they were exposed to more information[13].

How easy have you found it to understand the information and guidance on rules around COVID-19?

	Very Easy	Easy	Neither easy or hard	Hard	Very hard	Unsure
%	20%	39%	26%	9%	3%	4%
n	232	448	297	99	34	46

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ Neither easy or hard ■ Hard ■ Very hard

Age	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy or hard	Hard	Very hard
17-19	30, 21%	44, 30%	35, 24%	22, 15%	9 6%
15-16	59, 24%	87, 35%	64, 26%	21, 9%	8 3%
13-14	71, 19%	162, 42%	112, 29%	23 6%	6 2%
11-12	71, 19%	154, 41%	85, 22%	33 9%	11 3%
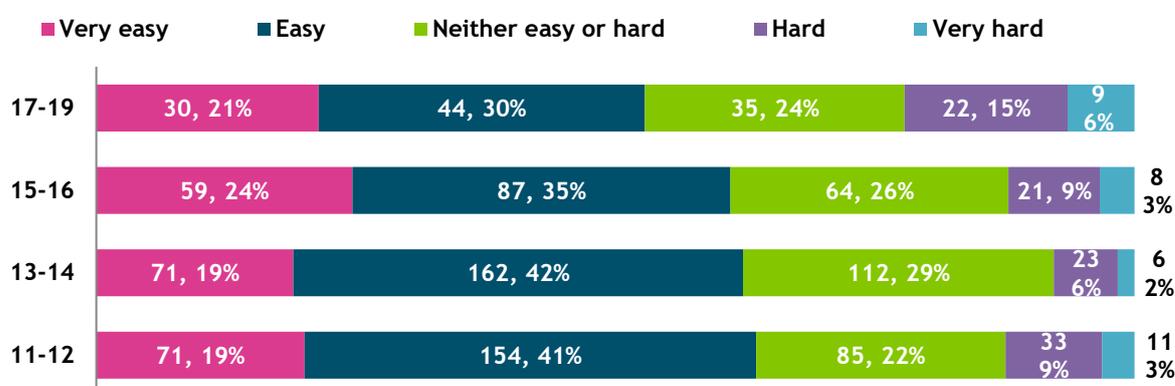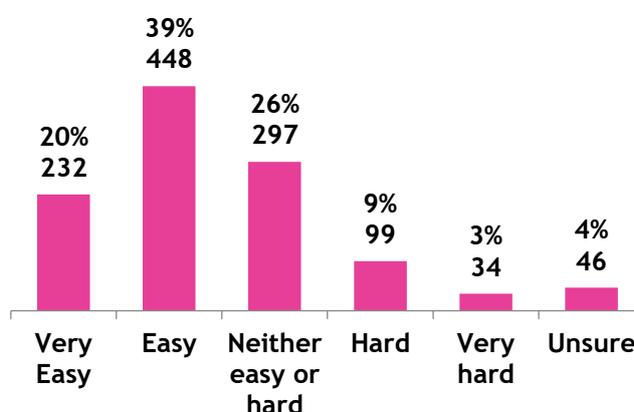
Those from mixed or multiple ethnic groups may have found it more difficult to understand the information, but this difference is not statistically significant. There was no obvious difference in how easy different genders found it to understand information. See Appendix 2 for breakdowns.

457 people told us more about how easy or not they had found understanding the information. These were grouped into themes, which can be split further into positive, negative, and mixed or neutral themes. Half of the comments (50%, 229 of 457) were positive:

Theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[14]
Positive themes	*229*	*50%*
Easy to understand	164	36%
Clear information	28	6%
Family/friends helped understand	25	5%
Seen/heard lots of information	12	3%
Negative themes	*177*	*39%*
Changing or contradictory information	79	17%
Unclear information	33	7%

---

[13] Chi-square test for significance, 17-19 year olds compared to other groups combined. Chi-square statistic 17.48. The p-value is 0.0016.

[14] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%.

Sometimes confusing	30	7%
Confusing	27	6%
Too much information	3	1%
Don't look at info	3	1%
Disagree with information	1	<1%
School stress	1	<1%
Mixed/Neutral themes	**89**	**19%**
Followed guidelines	49	11%
Hard to follow sometimes	32	7%
Others break rules	5	1%
Okay for some, hard for others	2	<1%
Didn't worry	1	<1%

Positive themes:

36% of those who answered gave comments about how the information was **easy to understand**, such as mentioning the main rules were quite simple or well-explained, even if other guidance was more complicated, for example:

"You just stay apart from others, wear a face mask and wash hands. It's pretty easy to understand" – *Demi girl, age 16*

"It was very clear so I found it easy to understand." – *Female, age 12*

"At times, it was quite confusing regarding the rules of six. But overall, I found it easy to understand." – *Female, age 13*

"Information was easy to understand and to process, as well as adapt to." – *Female, age 15*

"By getting knowledge about COVID-19 it's easy to understand about social distancing, bubbles etc." – *Male, age 11*

"Once they explained in more detail after each major change to the rules then I understood fully." – *Female, age 17*

Along similar lines, another 28 people (6%) mentioned how they thought the information was **clear** or well communicated, for example:

"I could read it clearly and it had clear dates and times of which things were going to be done in." – *Non-binary or other, age 16*

"My school has been great at communicating all the necessary information to us in a simple, easy to understand way." – *Female, age 12*

"I check the government website when new restrictions are released." – *Female, age 12*

"Online and on social media, people have made it very easy to understand." – *Female, age 15*

In another similar theme, 12 (3%) people commented on how they had **seen or heard the information in a lot of places**, for example:

"It was pretty easy because it was spread everywhere so it was hard not to know." – *Male, age 11*

"They talk about it on TV every day." – *Female, age 12*

25 people (5%) mentioned how their **family or friends had helped** them to understand the information, for example:

"My parents explained everything and what we could and couldn't do and staying safe when we went out." – *Male, age 11*

Main negative themes:

79 people (17%) pointed out how it was harder to understand the **information** when it **kept changing** (from the government) or if different sources **contradicted** each other, for example:

"Vague advice, different people gave different answers and news outlets reported it differently and sent different messages." – *Female, age 16*

"The always changing rules, different areas in a county have different rules, bubbles not being valid but in different cases it's allowed." – *Female, age 15*

"As the rules have changed so many times and rumours are being spread, the rules always seem unclear." – *Female, age 13*

"I feel like it's constantly changing and I don't know what to believe and what not to." – *Female, age 12*

"The rules of 6 were ambiguous and contradictory at first, and also they wouldn't really work because one person could move between groups to transfer illness." – *Male, age 14*

Along similar lines, 33 people (7%) felt that the information was at times **unclear**, for example:

"Often rules are vague or unclear so it can be hard to determine where and who you're able to meet with." – *Female, age 15*

"They could put it a bit simpler." – *Female, age 15*

63 people (14%) found it **confusing** (27, 7%) or sometimes confusing (30, 7%), for example:

"It's worded in a way that's too complicated for younger people." – *Male, age 11*

"It's difficult to understand as different rules apply to different people and it is difficult to know where I stand a lot of the time." – *Female, age 17*

"The bubbles were a bit confusing." – *Male, age 13*

"Sometimes the words given I do not fully understand." – *Female, age 15*

Main neutral themes:

Rather than commenting on how or why they found the information easy to follow, or not, 49 people (11%) mentioned the guidelines themselves or how they had followed them, implying they did understand the information. Another 32 people (7%) talked about how they found the rules hard to follow in some way, and two felt they would be hard for others to follow, for example:

"I forget sometimes but most the time I'm really, really anxious about it and am washing my hands every minute." – *Female, age 14*

"What am I supposed to say? It's been a breeze? Of course not. It hasn't been for anyone. It's a whole new concept of information that no one considered before. I'm finding it easy, but I doubt others are." – *Female, age 13*

"Hard because I can't see friends and family." – *Female, age 11*

Five people were unhappy that others seemed not to follow the rules.

Some people who had said they found the information easy to understand in the previous question still gave comments about it being contradictory, etc.:

Theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[15]
Very easy/easy to understand	*282*	*62%*
Easy to understand	147	32%
Followed guidelines	36	8%
Clear information	27	6%
Family/friends helped understand	21	5%
Changing or contradictory information	17	4%
Seen/heard lots of information	11	2%
Hard to follow sometimes	9	2%
Unclear information	5	1%
Others break rules	3	1%
Sometimes confusing	3	1%
Didn't worry	1	<1%
Disagree with information	1	<1%
Confusing	1	<1%
Very hard/hard to understand	*88*	*19%*
Changing or contradictory information	37	8%
Confusing	16	4%
Unclear information	15	3%
Hard to follow sometimes	11	2%
Sometimes confusing	4	1%
Followed guidelines	3	1%
Others break rules	1	<1%
Too much information	1	<1%
Neither easy or hard/unsure	*125*	*27%*
Changing or contradictory information	25	5%
Sometimes confusing	23	5%
Easy to understand	17	4%
Unclear information	13	3%
Hard to follow sometimes	12	3%
Confusing	10	2%
Followed guidelines	10	2%
Family/friends helped understand	4	1%
Don't look at info	3	1%
Okay for some, hard for others	2	<1%
Too much information	2	<1%
Clear information	1	<1%
Others break rules	1	<1%
School stress	1	<1%
Seen/heard lots of information	1	<1%

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[15] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%.

Key messages

The young people were asked whether there was one message they saw that made them realise how important their part in COVID-19 was/is. Most had not, 28% (321 of 1132) said yes.

Those that said yes were asked to tell us what that message was. 313 people gave an answer, which were themed as follows:

Was there one message that you saw that made you realise how important your part in COVID-19 was/is?

Yes
321
28%

No
811
72%
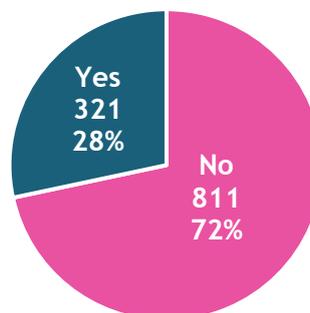
Theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[16]
Statistics	86	27%
Public campaigns	81	26%
Government guidelines/restrictions	67	21%
News/Media	22	7%
Direct experience	18	6%
Risk to elderly	14	4%
School closure	8	3%
Key workers	3	1%
Social media	2	1%
Unknown	11	4%
Mixed	4	1%
Alternative comment	2	1%

There were three main themes:

Statistics

86 young people (27% of answers) identified that their primary key message was the statistics relating to infection rates and the death toll, they for example:

"The number of people lost from covid showed how important it is to follow rules." – *Female, age 13*

"When the younger people started to get it I realised that it's not just adults getting it, it is people like my brother's age around 15-16 also got it so I stayed inside more." – *Male, age 12*

"When I realised that this virus could affect anyone. Loved ones, friends could be you. It not a petty virus. It affects nations and has killed millions and who's to say if the person dying might be someone you know." – *Female, age 14*

Public campaigns

81 young people (26%) identified the **public campaign messages** – 'Hands Face Space', NHS adverts, 'briefing banners; Stay home - Save lives - Protect the NHS' and information letters in the post – were the most influential messages for recognising their part. Example comments:

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[16] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%.

"Because we need to keep people safe and stay inside to protect the community." – *Female, age 12*

"The clap for NHS was uplifting and made me feel like I was helping by keeping safe." – *Male, age 11*

"The advert which it says look into their eyes and tell them you are doing everything you can to stop the spread of covid." – *Non-binary or other, age 12*

"If you get covid you could suffer lung damage and have other long term health problems." – *Female, age 18*

Government guidelines/restrictions

67 young people (21%) identified that it was the **government guidelines**, lockdowns and social distancing measures that were put in place that demonstrated the severity of the risks. These comments also included mentions of mask wearing, the 2m rule, support bubbles and tiers. 55 of these 69 were between 11 and 14 years old. Example comments:

"Stay at home as much as possible and wear a mask outside and wash hands as much as possible and not see other people so not to spread it." – *Female, age 12*

"I realised how important it was when I could only leave my house to exercise for 20 mins a day." – *Male, age 13*

"I know that one person being asymptomatic and going out then spreading it to five more people escalates quickly like a pyramid." – *Female, age 11*

"Everyone has an important part in this pandemic; every death could be down to the fault of just one person so each and every one of us need to carry on with what we are doing to prevent any more illnesses and deaths." – *Female, age 16*

Other notable themes

22 young people primarily understood their part from information included in **news** reports and general **media coverage,** such as films of the hospitals and documentaries, for example:

"I've seen the news and seen the devastation coronavirus had caused and I realised that staying at home really isn't that hard for me so I shouldn't complain about it when there are worse situations." – *Female, age 13*

"Seeing pictures/video clips of people ill in hospital has made me want to follow all the rules. I don't want my family to get sick." – *Female, age 15*

18 identified that the main message of the severity of the situation came from **direct experience of a death** in the family or the death of friends' family members, for example:

"It wasn't a message as such, someone close died from corona and it made me realise the severity." – *Female, age 15*

"The message saying I had covid." – *Female, age 12*

"Mum was shielding." - *Male, age 15*

"My dad has diabetes so I had to not see him because he is high risk." – *Female, age 15*

14 young people felt that the most influential message was the **risk to the elderly** and how important it was to protect them. Some specifically mentioned family member, for example:

> "My parents told me that Granny was vulnerable, so I know that I need to obey social distancing and I know how important it is." – *Female, age 12*
>
> "It was an advert about keeping older people safe and not putting people at risk." – *Female, age 15*
>
> "That it affects the elderly greatly which means that herd immunity can't be taken into account for ethical reasons even though it is the best long term solution." - *Male, age 15*

Eight young people identified the **schools closures** and one identified that the cancelling of GCSE exams, was when they understood the risks

Three young people identified as being - or knowing - **key workers**, and that this was the most impactful message of their part to play. One highlighted how they had received a letter of thanks from their parent's employers for their part in allowing them to do their jobs!

Two highlighted the impact that social media had made on them, especially where they highlighted real life examples:

> "Social media especially TikTok showing real life people." – *Female, age 15*
>
> "A post on social media saying covid-19 patients die alone in a hospital bed with no family next to them." – *Female, age 15*

Eleven responders were **unsure** or **didn't know** where the message had come from specifically; they just knew it was important to play their part. A further four felt the messages they got were from **mixed** but unidentified sources.

And finally, two responders gave **alternative** views about the messages they had come across:

> "The public isn't important." – *Non-binary or other, age 15*
>
> "That we have to be more careful in believing what is happening in the world." – *Female, age 13*

Accessing care

Medical care

39% of young people (449 of 1157) had not needed medical care during lockdown and 4% were unsure. Of the remaining 57% (661), 65% (428 of 661) had been able to access medical care and 9% (58) had not. 26% (175) had been able to access care sometimes but not always.

Access to medical care when they needed it may have been more difficult for those who are Black/Black British[17] and Gypsy, Roma or Travellers, but with such a small group size it is difficult to be sure.

Have you been able to access medical care during the COVID-19 lockdown, if you have needed it?

- Have not needed: 449 — 39%
- Yes: 428 — 37%
- No: 58 — 5%
- Yes and no / Sometimes but not always: 175 — 15%
- Unsure: 47 — 4%
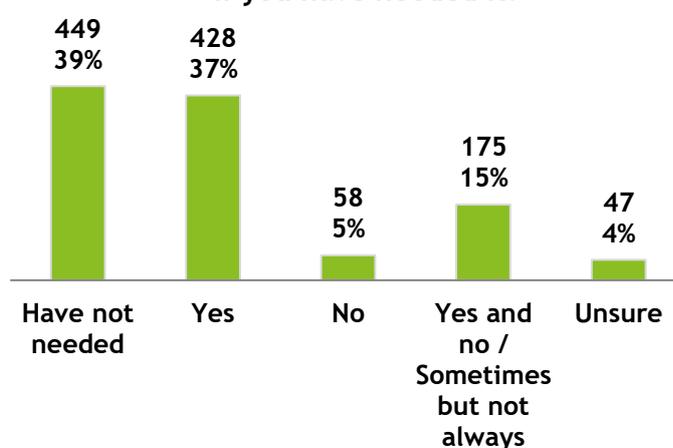
[17] Chi-square test for significance, Black/Black British compared to other groups combined, excluding those who have not needed care. Chi-square statistic 15.78. The p-value is 0.0013.

Legend: ■ Have not needed ■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes and no / Sometimes but not always ■ Unsure

Ethnic group	Have not needed	Yes	No	Yes and no / Sometimes but not always	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	326, 37%	337, 39%	39 4%	136, 16%	32 4%
White: Any other White background	68, 46%	52, 35%	5 3%	19, 13%	5 3%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	12, 33%	10, 28%	3, 8%	9, 25%	2 6%
Asian/Asian British	17, 49%	11, 31%	1 3%	3, 9%	3, 9%
Black/Black British	9, 41%	6, 27%	5, 23%	2, 9%	
Another ethnic background	6, 33%	5, 28%		3, 17%	4, 22%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	3, 75%		1, 25%		
Arab	1, 33%	1, 33%		1, 33%	

A higher proportion of those identifying as non-binary or 'other' had difficulty accessing medical help, but this difference was not statistically significant. There was no obvious difference in access to medical care for different age groups. See Appendix 2 for breakdowns.

Mental health care

The majority of young people, 63% (733 of 1157), told us that they did not need to access mental health services during the COVID-19 lockdowns and 8% (96) were unsure. Of the remaining 28% (328), 42% (138 of 328) had been able to access mental health services and 38% (125) had not been able to. 20% (65) had been able to sometimes but not always.

The older age groups were more likely to have needed mental health services and may have more difficulty accessing them[18].

Have you been able to access mental health services during the COVID-19 lockdown, if you have needed it?

Have not needed	Yes	No	Yes and no / Sometimes but not always	Unsure
733 63%	138 12%	125 11%	65 6%	96 8%

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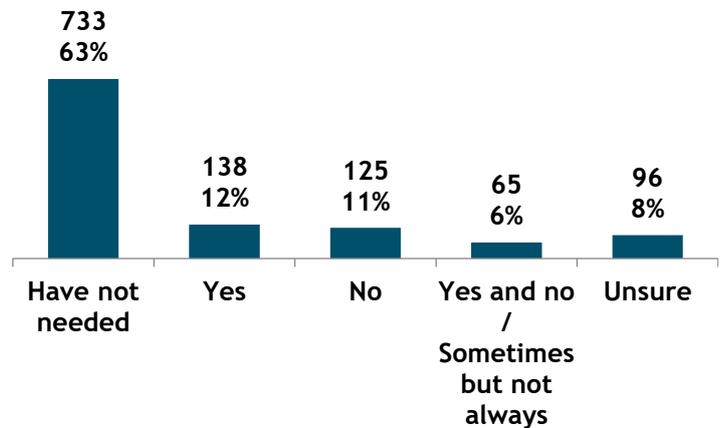
[18] Chi-square test for significance, 15-19 year olds combined compared to 11-14 year olds combined. Chi-square statistic 26.68. The p-value is 0.00002.

Legend: ■ Have not needed ■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes and no / Sometimes but not always ■ Unsure

Age	Have not needed	Yes	No	Yes and no / Sometimes but not always	Unsure
17-19	82, 57%	17, 12%	18, 13%	15 10%	11 8%
15-16	132, 54%	43, 17%	35, 14%	18 7%	18 7%
13-14	248, 65%	41, 11%	41, 11%	21 5%	33 9%
11-12	270, 71%	36, 9%	31, 8%	10 3%	34 9%
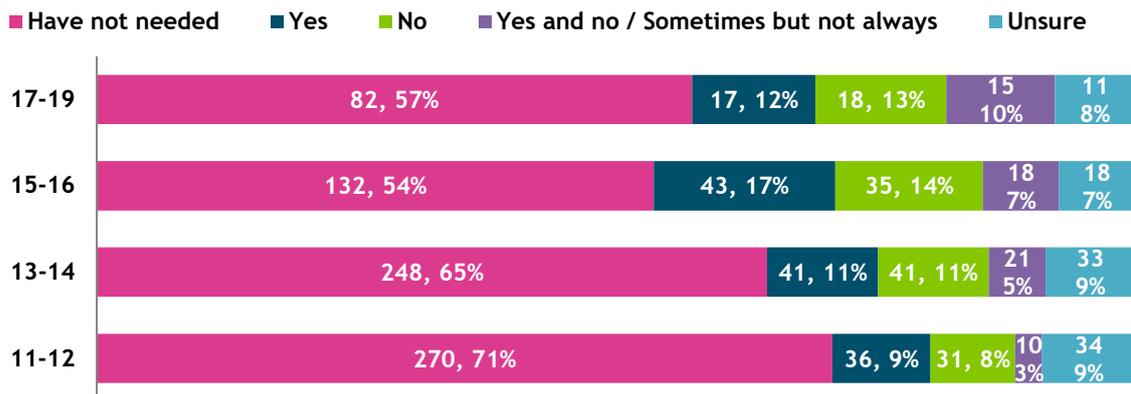
Access to mental health care when they needed it may have been more difficult for those from a mixed ethnic background, but with only a few saying they needed mental health care, it is difficult to determine.

Proportionally, more people who identify as non-binary or 'other' have had more trouble accessing mental health services when they have needed them, but this difference is also not statistically significant. See Appendix 2 for breakdowns.

Accessing support

20% of young people (232 of 1162) felt that COVID-19 has meant that they were less likely to get help and support for physical and mental health needs, if it was needed. A similar proportion, 17%, said that COVID-19 did not make them less likely to get help. A further 20% (236) were unsure and 43% (495) told us that they did not need any help or support.

Those identifying as non-binary or 'other', and those identifying as female, were less likely to get help or support (and fewer said they did not need it) [19].

Has COVID-19 meant that you are less likely to get help/support for your physical or mental health if it was needed?

	Yes	No	Unsure	I didn't need any help or support
	232 20%	199 17%	236 20%	495 43%

Legend: ■ I didn't need any help or support ■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

	I didn't need any help or support	Yes	No	Unsure
Female	272, 38%	166, 23%	108, 15%	164, 23%
Male	209, 53%	45, 11%	83, 21%	56, 14%
Non-binary or other	9, 21%	14, 33%	6, 14%	13, 31%
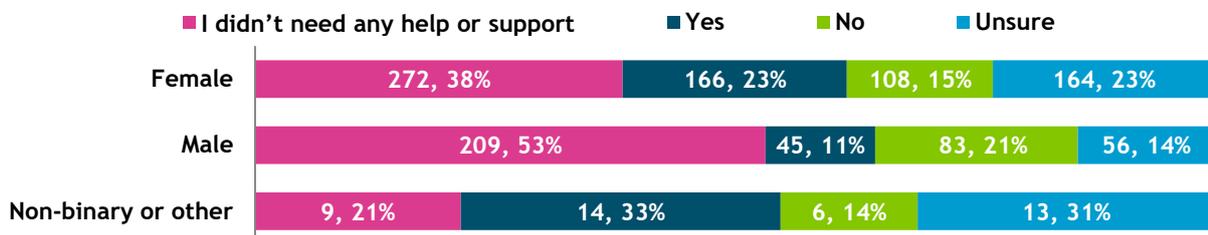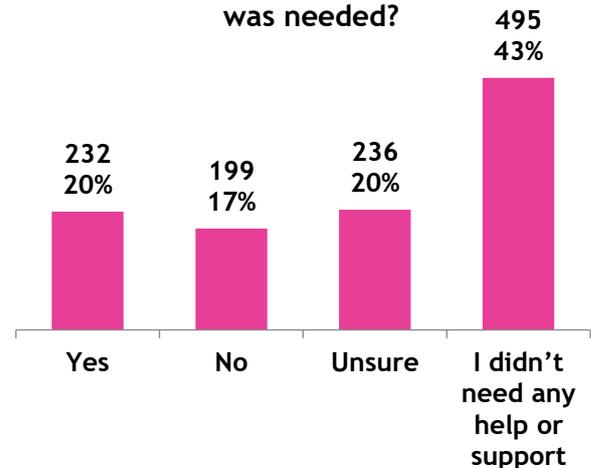
[19] Chi-square test for significance, non-binary and other compared to female and male combined. Chi-square statistic 11.43. The p-value is 0.0096. Chi-square test for significance, female compared to other groups combined. Chi-square statistic 33.27. The p-value is < 0.00001.

A higher proportion of the two older ages groups said they were less likely to get help or support if they needed it (32% and 30%) compared to the younger age groups (18% and 11%)[20].

	I didn't need any help or support	Yes	No	Unsure
17-19	52, 36%	46, 32%	24, 17%	23, 16%
15-16	91, 37%	74, 30%	36, 15%	45, 18%
13-14	165, 43%	70, 18%	66, 17%	83, 22%
11-12	186, 48%	41, 11%	72, 19%	85, 22%
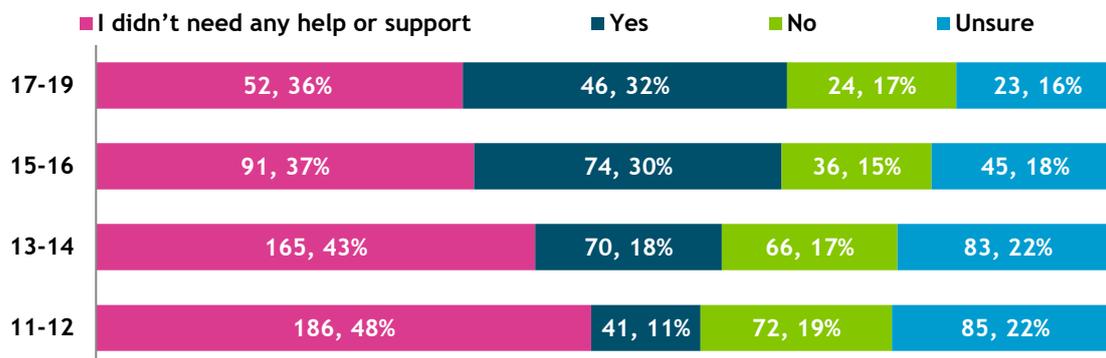
Those from white and mixed ethnic groups may have been less likely to get help or support if they needed it, but these differences are not statistically significant. See Appendix 2 for breakdown.

Those that answered yes were asked to tell us why. 160 gave answers that were grouped into the following themes:

Theme	Number of people	Percentage of question respondents[21]
Less access to services	67	42%
Less support from others	45	28%
Lack of face to face appointments	22	14%
Fear of COVID-19	14	9%
COVID-19 more important	10	6%
Can't do what usually keeps them well	8	5%
Other	5	3%

Less access to services

The most common reason for getting less help or support, from 42% of those that answered (67 of 160), was the reduced access to services. 16 people specified this was **mental health support** and ten talked about less access to **doctors**. Three mentioned getting less hospital care, two less physiotherapy and one no access to dentists. Four mentioned delays or having their appointments postponed or cancelled and four mentioned that services were too busy. Example comments:

"Doctors are busier dealing with COVID vaccines and patients." – *Female, age 16*

"There is no access to doctors for mild problems." – *Female, age 15*

"Appointments constantly being pushed back; waiting lists getting longer." – *Non-binary or other, age 18*

"They've stopped doing scoliosis surgeries, if they were still taking place then I would have had surgery by now." – *Female, age 14*

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[20] Chi-square test for significance, 15-19 year olds combined compared to 11-14 year olds combined. Chi-square statistic 42.94. The p-value is < 0.00001.

[21] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%.

"I haven't been able to talk to the support staff at school nor been able to get into therapy which has been a struggle for me anyway." – *Female, age 14*

Three people commented on how they felt that **mental health was seen as less of a priority** and four felt they also did not have enough support before COVID-19. Two people mentioned that there were more people needing support now and one said they did not know how to access support online. Example comments:

"Because mental health is not a priority and they are not seeing people." – *Female, age 15*

"There are less services available, Kettering doesn't have many helpful ones as it is, but during COVID- 19 it is even harder to access these." – *Female, age 18*

"Was referred by GP to be transferred from CAMHS to the Adult mental health team but has not received a response since. Have been working in the office up until Jan 2021 but have now been told to work from home which is really taking a toll on my mental health and waiting over a year for an appointment or any type of update is not ideal when I'm struggling." – *Female, age 18*

"Doctors' offices and appointments are always full, very unlikely to be seen/spoken to, mental health services are already strained, and it can take years to even get an application in and it's been made worse with the amount of people suffering because of lockdown restrictions." – *Female, age 16*

Less support from others
45 people (28%) mentioned how they did not get as much support from others, including 19 who said they had **no-one to talk to** – mostly those who could not see the people they relied on or trusted. Example comments:

"Because you're not interacting with as many people as before so if you can't see the person you talked to about your mental health then you're not saying what's on your mind." – *Female, age 13*

"Don't like meeting new people I don't have their trust." – *Non-binary or other, age 16*

"Due to autism I feel more alone." – *Female, age 17*

"There is no real support out there, not that teenagers feel comfortable with." – *Female, age 18*

15 people mentioned how they **did not get the support they usually got from school**, including from teachers (five people), school counsellors (five people) and talking to others (four people). Example comments:

"My school counsellor wasn't able to talk to me the entire time lockdown and school closure has been taking place." – *Non-binary or other, age 14*

"Wasn't able to talk to a teacher about it." – *Female, age 13*

"Yes because the teachers can't help me when I need it and school is for help." – *Female, age 12*

"Because I have dyslexia and ADHD and at home no-one can support me." – *Male, age 13*

11 people mentioned that they **missed the support from their friends,** for example:

"Because I am not able to see my friends, they matter a lot to me and they keep me going." – *Female, age 14*

"Because you can't go and see friends that you can talk to, to cheer you up." – *Female, age 12*

Lack of face to face appointments
22 people (14%) did not feel they got as good support from phone or online appointments, including eight who found it harder to communicate that way, for example:

"When I had counselling it was hard as it couldn't be face to face and I prefer that. – *Male, age 12*

"More difficult to talk to people online about problems." – *Female, age 13*

"Doctor appointments all over the phone, no face to face with professionals, lack of care." – *Female, age 18*

"It is harder to get hold of people for support and more difficult to book face to face examinations for physical problems, meaning I don't always get the treatment I need." – *Male, age 18*

Fear of COVID-19
14 people (9%) were avoiding going out or avoiding health services to avoid catching or spreading COVID-19 and to follow the rules, for example:

"Because it's safer to stay inside away from health places as I have vulnerable people in the household and don't want to put them at risk." – *Female, age 15*

COVID-19 more important
Ten people (6%) felt that it was more important for services to focus on the pandemic, for example:

"People don't want to further put pressure on doctors, NHS and mental health services for issues that to us, don't seem important." – *Female, age 19*

Can't do what usually keeps them well
Eight people (5%) mentioned that they could no longer do what kept them physically and/or mentally well, such as doing sport and exercise or going out and seeing people, for example:

"It isn't possible to lead a normal life anymore. Things I do for comfort and to keep my mental state okay, I can't do anymore." – *Male, age 17*

"Because I can't leave the house otherwise we will be fined as I can no longer trust the police and local authorities to assess a situation properly." – *Female, age 15*

Other
One person explained how they did have mental health difficulties but did eventually get some help. Four others told us about issues there were struggling with – paranoia, pressure, being too scared to talk to people and disliking change.

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

More than half (53%, 617 of 1155) of young people told us that their emotional wellbeing or mental health got a bit worse (34%) or got much worse (20%) during the lockdowns. 28% (317) young people told us that their mental health stayed the same and 13% (151) young people told us that their mental health got a bit better (6%) or much better (7%). 70 young people were unsure of how their mental health had been impacted.

Nearly half of all young people who identified as non-binary or another gender other than male or female (48%, 20 of 42) said that during COVID-19 their emotional wellbeing had got much worse and a further eleven people (26%) said it had got a bit worse – 74% in total (31 of 42). This is significantly higher than the 37% of males (144 of 391) and slightly higher than the 61% of females (434 of 708) [22].

How has your emotional wellbeing/mental health been during COVID-19?
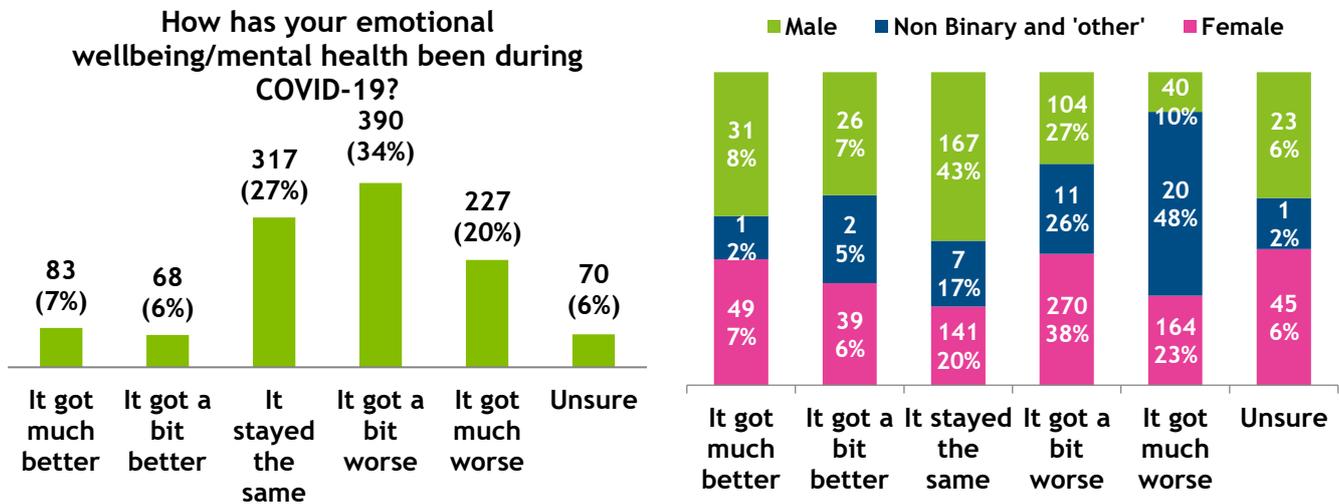
The older respondents appeared to experience worse emotional wellbeing or mental health during lockdown, with 72% of 17 to 19 year olds (103 of 144) saying it had gotten much worse (35%, 51) or a bit worse (36%, 52). 63% of 15 to 16 year olds said their emotional wellbeing or mental health got much (27%, 67 of 245), or a bit (36%, 87), worse – slightly more than the young age groups[23].
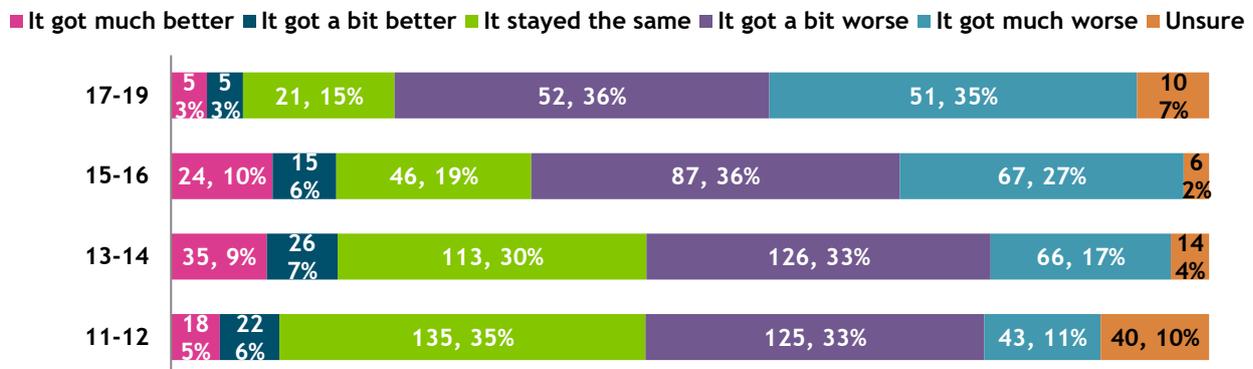
Splitting the data by ethnicity indicates that those from White backgrounds may have had worse emotional wellbeing or mental health during lockdown, although this could be due to these groups being larger as the difference was not statistically significant. See Appendix 2 for breakdown.

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[22] Chi-square test for significance, non-binary and other compared to female and male combined (answers of 'unsure' were omitted). Chi-square statistic 20.65. The p-value is 0.00037.

[23] Chi-square test for significance, 17-19 year olds compared to other groups combined (answers of 'unsure' were omitted). Chi-square statistic 35.65. The p-value is < 0.00001.

School, college and university

Contact from education

Over half of the young people that responded (56%, 646 of 1153) told us they felt that the contact they had from their place of education was the right amount. Nearly a quarter 24% (271) felt that it was too much and 11% felt that they received too little contact. 10% (113) were unsure.

The results were similar for different ethnicities and ages, with slightly more from a White British[24] or Mixed background and the oldest age group[25] saying they had too little contact.

How do you feel about the amount of contact from education during lockdowns?

■ It was too much   ■ It was the right amount   ■ It was too little   ■ Unsure

■ It was too much   ■ It was the right amount   ■ It was too little   ■ Unsure

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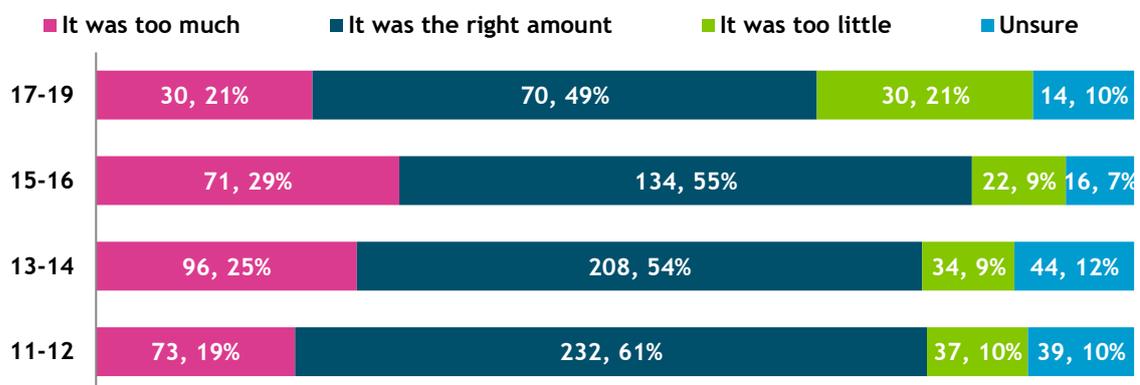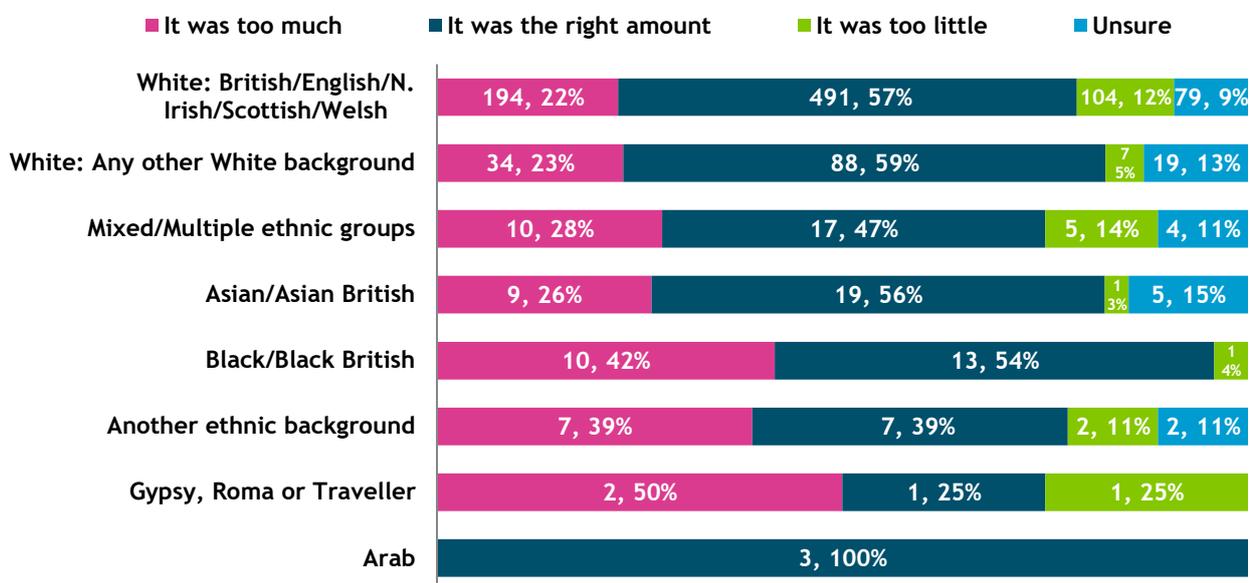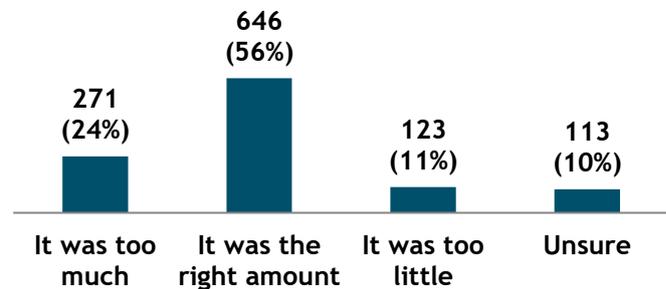
[24] Chi-square test for significance, White British compared to other groups combined. Chi-square statistic 8.91. The p-value is 0.031.

[25] Chi-square test for significance, 17-19 year olds compared to other groups combined. Chi-square statistic 17.91. The p-value is 0.00046.

A slightly higher proportion of those identifying as non-binary or 'other' thought they had too much contact, but the difference was not statistically significant. See Appendix 2 for breakdown.

Support from education

The majority of young people (60%, 688 of 1154) told us they felt they had received the right amount of support from their place of education (school, college or university). Nearly one quarter (23%, 260) felt they received too little support and 3% (37) felt they received too much support.

More of the older age groups felt they got too little support[26].

There was not much difference between different ethnic groups of genders. See Appendix 2 for breakdowns.

The amount of support from school, college or university
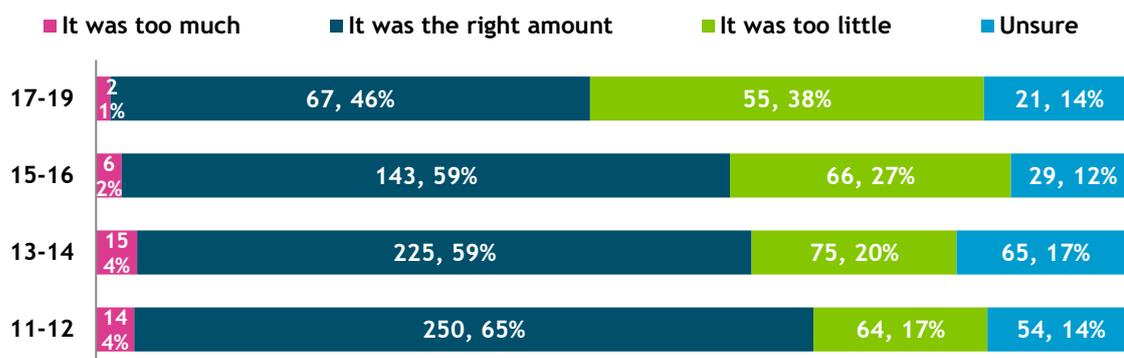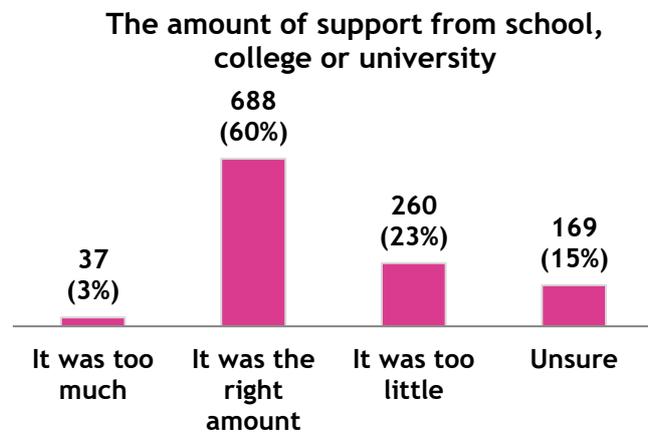
Emotional wellbeing on returning to education

44% young people (505 of 1150) felt that their emotional wellbeing or mental health improved when they returned to school, college or university. 29% (328) said that it did not improve and a similar number (28%, 317) said they were unsure.

More young people aged 15-16[27] said that returning to education did not improve their wellbeing or mental health.

A slightly higher proportion of those identifying as non-binary or 'other' said the same but this difference was not statistically significant. See Appendix 2 for breakdown.

Do you think your emotional wellbeing/mental health improved when you returned to School / College / University?

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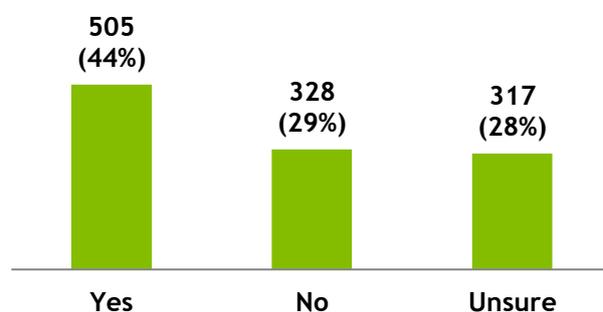
[26] Chi-square test for significance, 15-19 year olds combined compared to 11-14 year olds combined. Chi-square statistic 25.67. The p-value is 0.00001.

[27] Chi-square test for significance, 15-16 year olds compared to other groups combined. Chi-square statistic 21.98. The p-value is 0.000017.
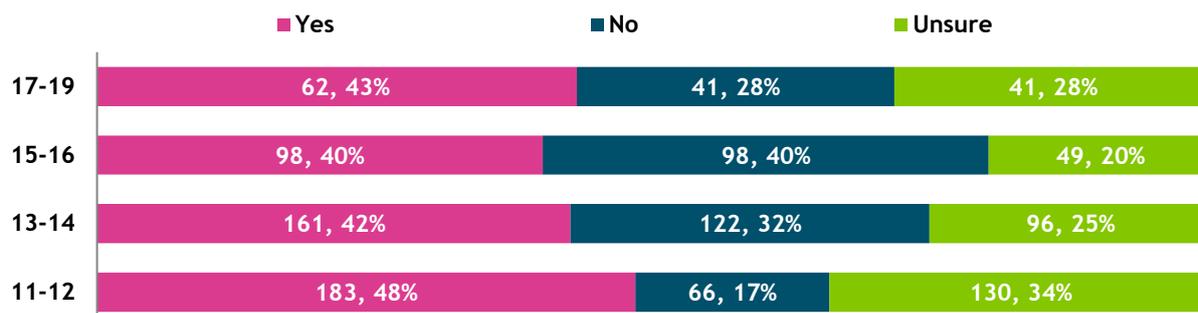
Age	Yes	No	Unsure
17-19	62, 43%	41, 28%	41, 28%
15-16	98, 40%	98, 40%	49, 20%
13-14	161, 42%	122, 32%	96, 25%
11-12	183, 48%	66, 17%	130, 34%

Other comments

158 young people gave additional comments when asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about their experiences of COVID-19 or lockdown.

Two-thirds of the comments had a negative sentiment (67%, 106), 13% (21) of the comments had a positive sentiment, 14% (22) were neutral and 6% (9) were mixed.

Negative themes

Broad theme	Number of mentions	Percentage of question respondents[28]
Mental and/or emotional impact	55	35%
Social impact	54	34%
Educational impact	28	18%
Family dynamics	8	5%
Government messages, etc.	8	5%
Generally negative	8	5%
Other	11	7%

The key negative themes arising were the **social impact of lockdown** - this frequently included the lack of opportunities to see friends (35 people mentioned missing their friends or family), as well as the closure of clubs and sporting activities. The terms isolated and bored were used frequently and were often interchangeable. Example comments:

"I hate it I can't see my friends, I just want to be happy again with all my friends and not be stuck inside of my house, it's so boring, I want to go back to year six, where everything was perfect (until covid)." – *Female, age 11*

"It makes you feel isolated and away from everyone so you feel more lonely." – *Female, age 14*

"I have missed being able to socialise with my friends, and I've also missed after school clubs and not being able to go to my kick boxing classes and keeping up with my exercise." – *Female, age 13*

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[28] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%. Answers were coded into sub-themes, which were combined into the above themes, so some people have been counted more than once if they gave two similar sub-themes.

"It's been lonely during lockdown as, yes I am with my family, but it can feel lonely doing the same thing day in day out and having no motivation to do school work." – *Female, age 17*

The impact on mental health was mentioned specifically 22 times and 23 people indicated being emotionally impacted by lockdown or the pandemic more generally, including four who said they were lacking motivation and three who were anxious about their health. Example comments:

"Lockdown has ruined my happiness as I am always anxious and upset. I am very paranoid and cannot see the people who cheer me up, I have had a very negative experience with the lockdown and following the rules." – *Female, age 19*

"I need a socially active life because of my ADHD and because I don't have that and am not permitted to go to school I kinda want to jump out my third floor window." – *Male, age 13*

"I think that lockdown does not help people with their wellbeing because they're stuck at home and even if they do go out, it's not enough to change the way they're feeling." – *Female, age 11*

"I got really confused with my identity, hormones weren't helping and my friends aren't the best at supporting. I decided to hide it from my parents and was struggling with it for a good few months." – *Non-binary or other, age 12*

Concern regarding the **educational impact** or other issues relating to education were mentioned 28 times. One young person said they were out of work and their apprenticeship hadn't been extended and other had significant concern for their grades or exams and standards of work. Others did not like online learning. Example comments:

"I have found home/learning really difficult, I struggle to focus in school and even more at home, I struggle with understanding the task at hand when I don't have a teacher in front of me helping me understand." – *Female, age 12*

"Doing school during Covid-19 has made me stressed and anxious because I'm scared that I'm not going to understand something important or my laptops going to shut down or the WiFi's going to be terrible and I won't get to see an important lesson or something like that." – *Female, age 13*

"I've lost the chance to finish primary school properly, I've had no 'easy' transition into secondary school and I'm being expected to just 'put up' with it! It's hard, unfair and I feel like the government aren't taking things like that seriously." – *Male, age 11*

"The uncertainty with regards to my A levels and how I have not been able to access school for my photography work and use the specialist facilities." – *Male, age 17*

"I've hated being stuck indoors and at home. Learning remotely is nigh on impossible for me because it's just not very plausible for me to focus like I can in a proper school environment. It's much harder to separate home life and school/work life when you're constantly at home but simultaneously trying to force yourself to work. I've never been great at revision but even more so now there's not a proper structure, I'm incredibly demotivated and disinterested in studying thanks to such scary stuff going on in the world right now." – *Female, age 18*

Family dynamics, such as the need for their own space, was mentioned eight times, for example:

"If both parents are key workers at least one parent could stay at least few days of weeks to be with us...so we don't feel lonely as this." – *Male, age 12*

"I found my caring role took up even more of my time without me realising." – *Female, age 19*

"On the first lockdown I lived with my Dad. He didn't do much home schooling as he was working from home. Since going to my new school I live with my mum and she's a lot more supportive and caring towards me. Lockdown meant I couldn't see her as Dad said I couldn't which wasn't true." – *Female, age 12*

The **government lacking direction** and/or giving **mixed messages** was mentioned eight times.

Other negative themes included a lack of support, changes to services, and less opportunities for physical activity - often alongside the social impact. One person felt there was racism towards those from an Asian background:

"As a Southeast Asian, I felt that the racism against Southeast and East Asians in the UK have risen. East Asians get more hate crimes but Southeast Asians have similar physical features with them which makes us a target for racists as well. Compared to other Asian Ethnicities in UK, the population of Southeast Asian Ethnicities are relatively small. Conversations about the increasing hate Asians receive are non-existent. We're already underrepresented in the media and it just frustrating how our struggles are not acknowledged. The police are also not exercising the power given to them. They have tried to make us pay for an alleged violation without sufficient evidence." – *Male, age 19*

Positive themes

Broad theme	Number of mentions	Percentage of question respondents[29]
Positive lockdown experience	15	9%
Improved wellbeing	8	5%
Changes to education	6	4%
More time outdoors	4	3%
Other	2	1%

Of the 20 positive responses, young people identified that they had enjoyed the **sense of community**, **time with their families** and used the time away from school to **improve their physical** and **mental health**. They enjoyed online learning and being away from school and felt they had more time to pursue hobbies they don't normally have time to enjoy. The nice weather was also mentioned. Example comments:

"Loved the nice weather, lockdown vibe, clap for carers, joe wicks, home workouts, hourly exercise." – *Age 16*

"My mental health definitely improved and I was much happier during lockdown as I got to spend more time with my parents and I was more comfortable. I really enjoyed lockdown and was a nice experience being at home, and I haven't been bored." – *Male, age 14*

"I was able to take some time to work on myself physically and mentally - I workout everyday now and understand the importance of self love / care." – *Female, age 12*

"Mental health is upwards I feel great, school work its easier as I no longer feel pressured by the eyes of my peers, and more comfortable asking questions mostly." – *Female, age 15*

"Honestly, the time away from school made me a lot happier as it has a really detrimental effect on my mental health (though I know this isn't the case for a lot of people). I physically have nightmares of returning to school and know a lot of other kids feel the same way, so I think it has really shed a light on the education system in some ways (though of course I appreciate the wonderful work and support of teachers throughout this time)." – *Female, age 14*

"It's opened my eyes and made me realise how lucky I am, and surprisingly was a positive experience for me." – *Female, age 13*

Mixed positive and negative sentiment

The nine mixed sentiment responses also had very mixed themes. There were elements of boredom but threads of mental health improvements. Some responders had had direct experience of the virus (themselves or through a loved one) but were appreciative of the recovery that had been made. Others had missed friends but were aware of the need to follow the rules. The responders were balanced in their comments and mostly gave weighed answers. Example comments:

"Pretty sad overall, many physical activities that I would usually do are banned, school is good online, the right amount of work and not too much pressure with all that's going on." – *Female, age 15*

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[29] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%. Answers were coded into sub-themes, which were combined into the above themes, so some people have been counted more than once if they gave two similar sub-themes.

"I guess it was scary when my sister and step mum got it but they're okay now but my step mum has something wrong with the brain and very vulnerable so I guess it was scary." – *Female, age 15*

"It was good because I got time to reflect on myself and think about what I needed but school was sometimes stressful as there wasn't any teachers but I was sad that I wasn't able to see friends." – *Female, age 13*

"I was stuck at home with my entire family so that was a bit annoying but it was very good compared to other people's situation." – *Male, age 11*

"I feel quite conflicted on exiting lockdown - I worry for my safety and how the pandemic may worsen once again but I do want to be able to go out and see friends again." – *Female, age 15*

"I feel very isolated and lonely. I live with my parents and have a good relationship with them. But I miss my friends and other family members. I feel my life is on hold." – *Female, age 19*

Neutral themes

Broad theme	Number of mentions	Percentage of question respondents[30]
Had direct experience of COVID-19	6	4%
Concerned about people breaking rules	5	3%
Had to self-isolate	3	2%
Questions vaccinations and information	3	2%
Mentioned more screen time	2	1%
Comments on the future	2	1%
Other	1	1%

Generally there were similar themes to the other codes, comments relating to appreciating time with family, but being bored. Some acknowledgement of the social impacts and statements about challenges but necessities. Some questions arose in relation to the vaccines, the constant reporting of deaths but not cures and why some people were ok to break the social distance rules.

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[30] Some answers came under more than one category so the total is greater than 100%. Answers were coded into sub-themes, which were combined into the above themes, so some people have been counted more than once if they gave two similar sub-themes.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all those who took the time to share their views and experiences with us. We would especially like to thank all who shared our survey, including:

- Northamptonshire Young Carers Service

- Schools and Colleges across Northamptonshire including:

  - Parker E-ACT Academy

  - Huxlow Science College

  - Weston Favell Academy

  - Lodge Park academy

- Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT)

- University of Northampton Masters students and course leader for helping with data analysis

- All the organisations and people who shared the survey on social media.

About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

• We have the power to monitor (known as "Enter and View") health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.

• We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement

• We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.

• We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we feel that the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of are not being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.

Find out more at www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

About Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire are a group of young people between the ages of 11 to 24 who are health and social care champions.

What we do:

- Look at local health and social care issues

- Give young people a voice for all aspects of health and social care locally.

- Work with professionals on the health and wellbeing of young people locally and nationally

- Set our own work plan

- Learn new skills

- Report back to the Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN US. PLEASE GET IN CONTACT

Facebook.com/younghealthwatchnorthamptonshire

Twitter.com/YHWNorth1

yhwnorthants (scan our code)

yhwnorthamptonshire

Investing in Children

If you are a professional that wants to work with us please contact us on the details on the next page or email younghealthwatch@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance

- Legal requirements

- Financial and risk management

- Sustainability and growth

- Agreeing strategy and operations

- Agreeing policies and procedures

Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

By using our expertise and experience, we can help you in delivering community engagement programmes including workshops, research, surveys, training and more. Contact us to find out how we can help your community.

We welcome ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit Northamptonshire and its community.

Find out more at www.connectedtogether.co.uk

Appendix 1 – Survey questions

1. What is your age?
   11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15 / 16 / 17 / 18 / 19

2. Which area of Northamptonshire do you live in?
   Wellingborough / Kettering / East Northamptonshire / Northampton / Corby / Daventry / South Northamptonshire / Other (please tell us)

3. Are there any adults in your household that are Key workers? (whose work is essential to the country during COVID-19)
   Yes / No / Unsure

4. Was anyone in your household told to shield during COVID-19? (Because they are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19)
   Yes, me / Yes, someone in my household / No / Unsure

5. Have you or someone in your household tested positive for COVID-19?
   Yes, me / Yes, someone in my household / Yes, me and others in my household / No / Unsure

6. If yes please tell us about any care/advice/instructions you received for COVID-19

7. If you have had to self isolate what extra support would have been helpful to you?

8. During the COVID-19 lockdown have you always felt safe in your household?
   Yes / No / Unsure / Sometimes but not always

9. If you have not always felt safe at home please tell us more about this

10. Have you been able to access medical care during the COVID-19 lockdown, if you have needed it? (E.g. doctors, dentist)
    Have not needed / Yes / No / Yes and no - Sometimes but not always / Unsure

11. Have you been able to access mental health services during the COVID-19 lockdown, if you have needed it?
    Have not needed / Yes / No / Yes and no - Sometimes but not always / Unsure

12. Has COVID-19 meant that you are less likely to get help/support for your physical or mental health if it was needed?
    Yes / No / Unsure / I didn't need any help or support

13. If yes why?

14. How has your emotional wellbeing/mental health been during the COVID-19 lockdown? If it was up and down, choose the answer for how you felt most of the time. (Emotional wellbeing can affect the way you think, feel and behave. It is just as important as physical health)
    It got much better / It got a bit better / It stayed the same / It got a bit worse / It got much worse / Unsure

15. How do you feel about the amount of contact you have from your school / college / University during lockdown? (For example by Microsoft Teams/video lessons and calls, phone calls or email)
    It was too much / It was the right amount / It was too little / Unsure

16. How do you feel about the amount of support you have from school/college/University during lockdown?
It was too much / It was the right amount / It was too little / Unsure

17. Do you think your emotional wellbeing/mental health improved (got better) when you returned to School / College / University?
Yes / No / Unsure

18. How easy was it to find out up to date information about COVID-19?
Very easy / Easy / OK / Hard / Very hard / Unsure

19. Where did you find out up to date information about COVID-19?
School / Parents / Local government or NHS (e.g. Northamptonshire County Council or Public Health team) / TV news / Social media / Newspaper (including online newspaper) / News articles online / Other (please tell us)

20. What did you think of this information? e.g. Was it useful/helpful, did it reassure you or make you more anxious? Was it confusing?

21. How easy have you found it to understand the information and guidance on rules around COVID-19? (including bubbles, social distancing, rule of 6 etc)
Very Easy / Easy / Neither easy or hard / Hard / Very hard / Unsure

22. Please tell us more about this

23. Was there one message that you saw that made you realise how important your part in COVID-19 was/is?
No / Yes, Please tell us what this was

24. If there is anything else that you want to tell us about your experiences of COVID-19 or lockdown, please share it here.

25. Which Gender do you identify as?
Male / Female / Non-binary / Other (please tell us)

26. What is your ethnicity?
Arab / Asian/Asian British / Black/Black British / Gypsy, Roma or Traveller / Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups / White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh / White: Any other White background / Another ethnic background

27. Do you help look after someone (like a family member) with a long term illness or disability? (People who don't get paid to help look after or care for someone, often a relative, with a long term illness or disability are called Carers. If you think you are a Carer or want to find out more, you can at https://www.northamptonshire-carers.org/young-carers)
Yes / No / Unsure

Appendix 2 – Further data breakdowns

COVID-19 experiences

Feeling safe

During the COVID-19 lockdown have you always felt safe in your household?

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

■ Yes ■ Sometimes but not always ■ No ■ Unsure

Ethnicity	Yes	Sometimes but not always	No	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	744, 85%	81, 9%	23 3%	24 3%
White: Any other White background	131, 88%	11 7%	3 2%	4 3%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	28, 78%	5, 14%	2 6%	1 3%
Asian/Asian British	31, 89%		1 3%	3 9%
Black/Black British	22, 92%	2, 8%		
Another ethnic background	15, 83%	2, 11%		1 6%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	4, 100%			
Arab	3, 100%			
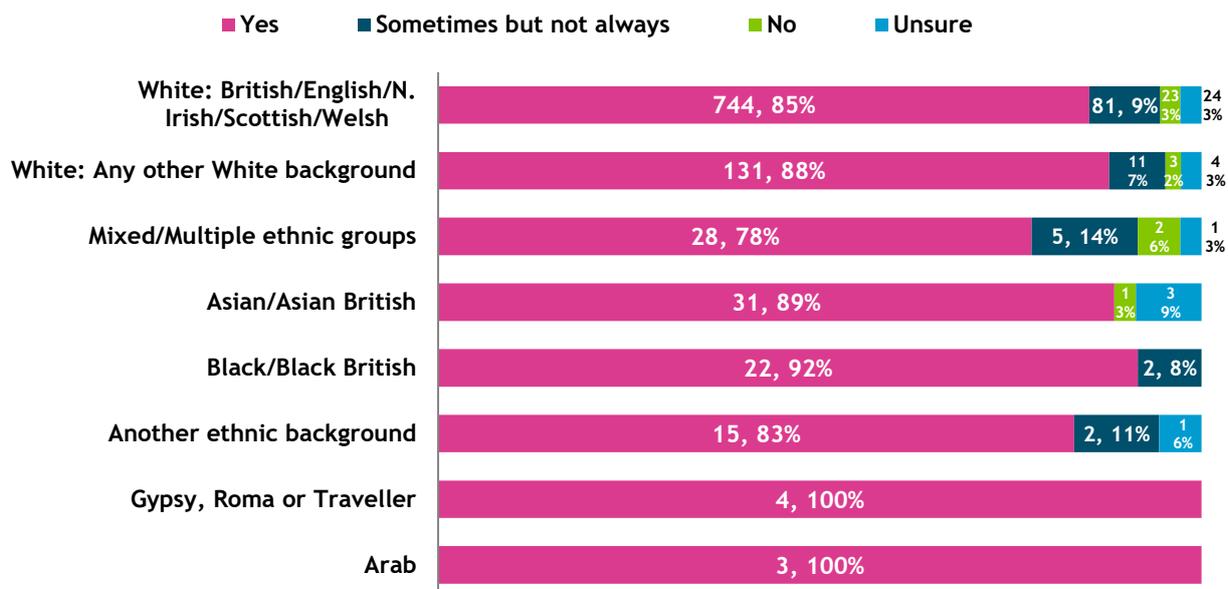
Breakdown by key worker household – no statistically significant differences

■ Yes ■ Sometimes but not always ■ No ■ Unsure

	Yes	Sometimes but not always	No	Unsure
Keyworker - Yes	560, 84%	67 10%	23 3%	18 3%
Keyworker - No	321, 87%	28 8%	7 2%	11 3%
Keyworker - Unsure	102, 86%	12 10%		5 4%

Breakdown by age – no statistically significant differences

■ Yes ■ Sometimes but not always ■ No ■ Unsure

	Yes	Sometimes but not always	No	Unsure
17-19	131, 90%	5 3%	6 4%	3 2%
15-16	201, 81%	29, 12%	7 3%	11 4%
13-14	332, 87%	34, 9%	7 2%	9 2%
11-12	326, 85%	39, 10%	9 2%	11 3%
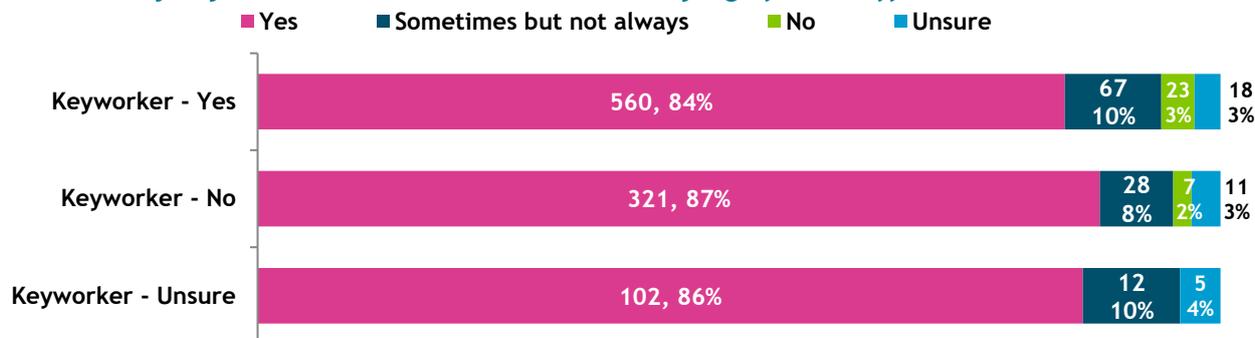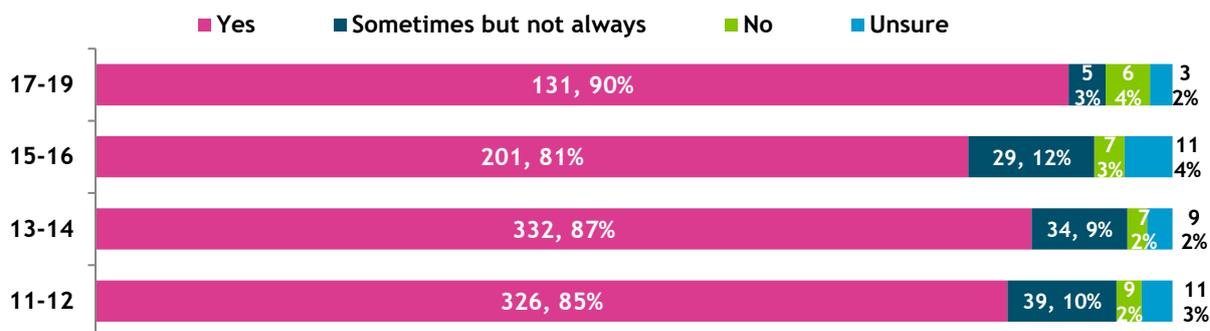
Breakdown by carers – no statistically significant differences
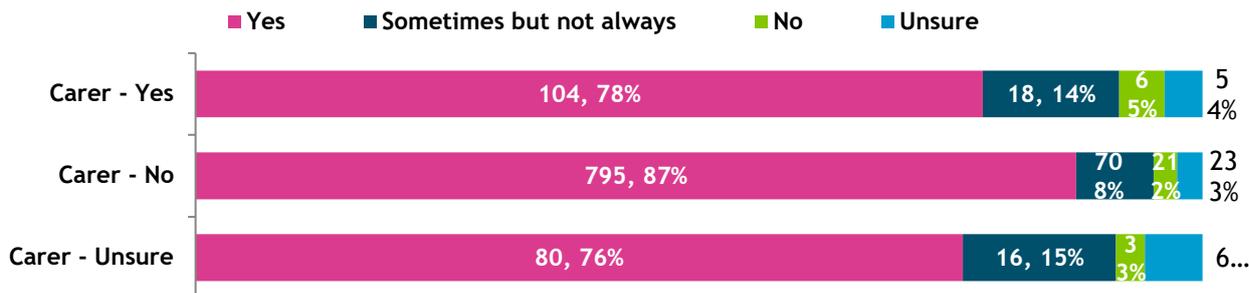
Legend: ■ Yes ■ Sometimes but not always ■ No ■ Unsure

Category	Yes	Sometimes but not always	No	Unsure
Carer - Yes	104, 78%	18, 14%	6 5%	5 4%
Carer - No	795, 87%	70 8%	21 2%	23 3%
Carer - Unsure	80, 76%	16, 15%	3 3%	6…

Information about COVID-19

Access to information

How easy was it to find out up to date information about COVID-19?

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ OK ■ Hard ■ Very hard

Category	Very easy	Easy	OK	Hard	Very hard
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	206, 24%	271, 31%	285, 33%	40 5%	12 1%
White: Any other White background	32, 21%	33, 22%	60, 40%	7 5%	3 2%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	9, 25%	14, 39%	11, 31%	1 3%	
Asian/Asian British	8, 24%	13, 38%	11, 32%	1 3%	
Black/Black British	7, 29%	5, 21%	11, 46%	1 4%	
Another ethnic background	4, 22%	4, 22%	7, 39%		
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller			3, 75%		1, 25%
Arab	1, 33%	1, 33%		1, 33%	

Breakdown by age – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ OK ■ Hard ■ Very hard

Category	Very easy	Easy	OK	Hard	Very hard
17-19	38, 26%	37, 26%	53, 37%	9 6%	4 3%
15-16	56, 23%	82, 33%	81, 33%	12 5%	5 2%
13-14	92, 24%	105, 27%	146, 38%	16 4%	3 1%
11-12	85, 22%	119, 31%	113, 30%	14 4%	5 1%

Ease of understanding

How easy have you found it to understand the information and guidance on rules around COVID-19?

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ Neither easy or hard ■ Hard ■ Very hard

- White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh — 175, 20% | 331, 38% | 230, 26% | 83 9% | 25 3%
- White: Any other White background — 34, 23% | 62, 42% | 31, 21% | 11 7% | 3 2%
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups — 2 6% | 18, 50% | 12, 33% | 3 8% | 1 3%
- Asian/Asian British — 7, 21% | 17, 50% | 6, 18% | | 3 9%
- Black/Black British — 6, 26% | 8, 35% | 7, 30% | | 1 4%
- Another ethnic background — 3, 18% | 5, 29% | 5, 29% | 1 6% | 1 6%
- Gypsy, Roma or Traveller — 1, 25% | 2, 50% | 1, 25% |
- Arab — 1, 33% | 2, 67% |

Breakdown by gender – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ Neither easy or hard ■ Hard ■ Very hard

- Female — 138, 19% | 280, 39% | 182, 26% | 68 10% | 19 3%
- Male — 83, 21% | 150, 38% | 102, 26% | 30 8% | 12 3%
- Non-binary or other — 9, 21% | 15, 36% | 11, 26% | 1 2% | 2 5%

Accessing care

Medical care

Have you been able to access medical care during the COVID-19 lockdown, if you have needed it?

Breakdown by gender – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Have not needed ■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes and no / Sometimes but not always ■ Unsure

- Female — 244, 34% | 271, 38% | 34 5% | 127, 18% | 33 5%
- Male — 187, 48% | 139, 36% | 18 5% | 35 9% | 10 3%
- Non-binary or other — 12, 29% | 14, 33% | 4 10% | 11, 26% | 1 2%

Breakdown by age – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Have not needed ■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes and no / Sometimes but not always ■ Unsure

Age	Have not needed	Yes	No	Yes and no / Sometimes but not always	Unsure
17-19	41, 28%	55, 38%	9 6%	36, 25%	3 2%
15-16	86, 35%	99, 40%	17 7%	39, 16%	7 3%
13-14	142, 37%	156, 41%	13 3%	58, 15%	14 4%
11-12	179, 47%	117, 31%	19 5%	41, 11%	23 6%
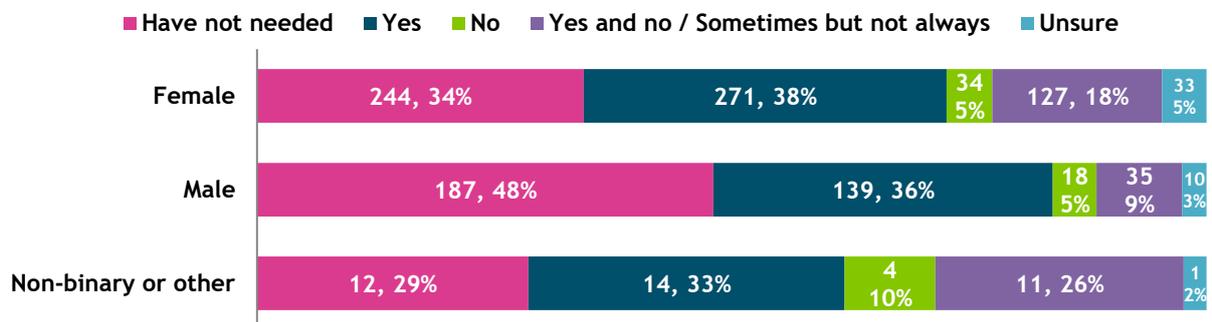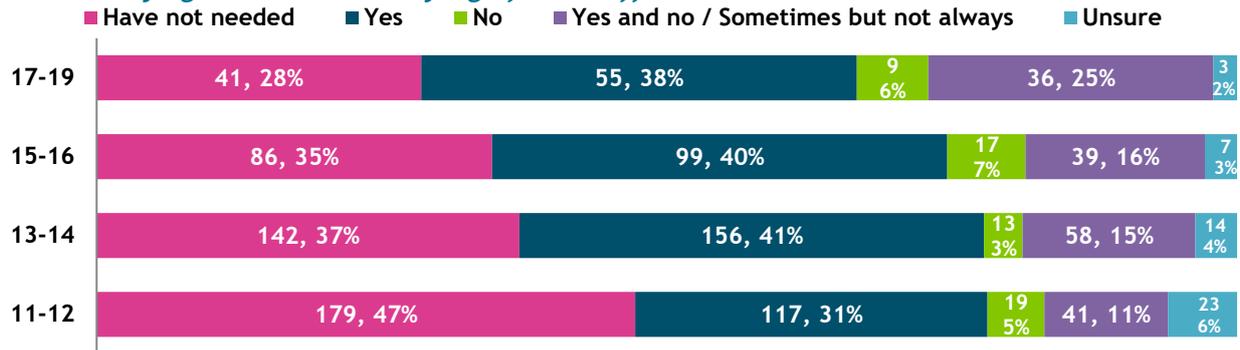
Mental health care

Have you been able to access mental health services during the COVID-19 lockdown, if you have needed it?

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Have not needed ■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes and no / Sometimes but not always ■ Unsure

Ethnicity	Have not needed	Yes	No	Yes and no / Sometimes but not always	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	549, 63%	107, 12%	91, 10%	52 6%	70, 8%
White: Any other White background	101, 68%	16, 11%	16, 11%	6 4%	10 7%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	21, 58%	2, 6%	5, 14%	5, 14%	3, 8%
Asian/Asian British	26, 76%	4, 12%	2 6%	1 3%	1 3%
Black/Black British	15, 63%	3, 13%	2, 8%		4, 17%
Another ethnic background	11, 61%	2, 11%			5, 28%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	3, 75%		1, 25%		
Arab	3, 100%				

Breakdown by gender – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Have not needed ■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes and no / Sometimes but not always ■ Unsure

Gender	Have not needed	Yes	No	Yes and no / Sometimes but not always	Unsure
Female	410, 58%	98, 14%	86 12%	52 7%	64 9%
Male	298, 77%	32 8%	24 6%	9 2%	26 7%
Non-binary or other	19, 45%	6, 14%	9, 21%	3 7%	5 12%

Accessing support

Has COVID-19 meant that you are less likely to get help/support for your physical or mental health if it was needed?

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

■ I didn't need any help or support   ■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Unsure

Ethnicity	I didn't need any help or support	Yes	No	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	370, 42%	182, 21%	145, 17%	176, 20%
White: Any other White background	67, 45%	30, 20%	25, 17%	27, 18%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	15, 42%	9, 25%	8, 22%	4, 11%
Asian/Asian British	19, 56%	2, 6%	5, 15%	8, 24%
Black/Black British	11, 48%	1, 4%	4, 17%	7, 30%
Another ethnic background	9, 50%	3, 17%	1, 6%	5, 28%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	1, 25%		2, 50%	1, 25%
Arab		1, 33%	2, 67%	
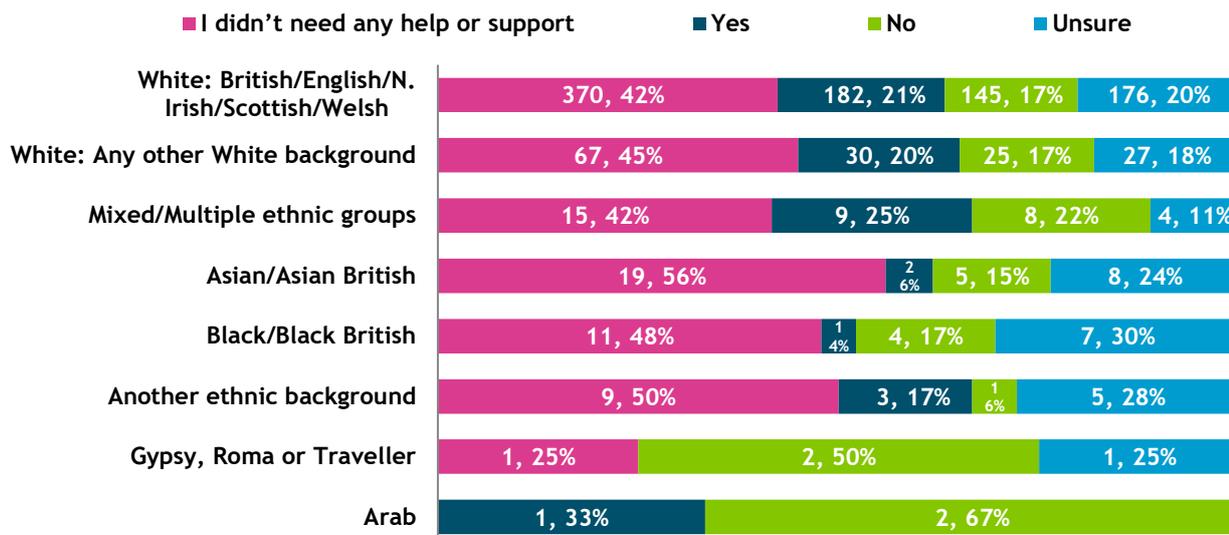
Emotional wellbeing and mental health

How has your emotional wellbeing/mental health been during the COVID-19?

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

■ It got much better   ■ It got a bit better   ■ It stayed the same   ■ It got a bit worse   ■ It got much worse   ■ Unsure

Ethnicity	It got much better	It got a bit better	It stayed the same	It got a bit worse	It got much worse	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	58, 7%	52, 6%	234, 27%	305, 35%	176, 20%	45, 5%
White: Any other White background	13, 9%	9, 6%	43, 29%	46, 31%	28, 19%	10, 7%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	1, 3%	1, 3%	15, 42%	9, 25%	8, 22%	2, 6%
Asian/Asian British	5, 15%	4, 12%	10, 29%	11, 32%	3, 9%	1, 3%
Black/Black British	2, 9%	4, 17%	4, 17%	5, 22%		8, 35%
Another ethnic background	1, 6%	1, 6%	5, 29%	6, 35%	3, 18%	1, 6%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	2, 50%		1, 25%	1, 25%		
Arab			1, 33%	2, 67%		

School, college and university

Contact from education

How do you feel about the amount of contact from education during lockdowns?

Breakdown by gender – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ It was too much ■ It was the right amount ■ It was too little ■ Unsure

|	It was too much	It was the right amount	It was too little	Unsure
Female	170, 24%	394, 56%	74, 10%	69, 10%
Male	81, 21%	231, 59%	42, 11%	37, 9%
Non-binary or other	15, 36%	17, 40%	4, 10%	6, 14%
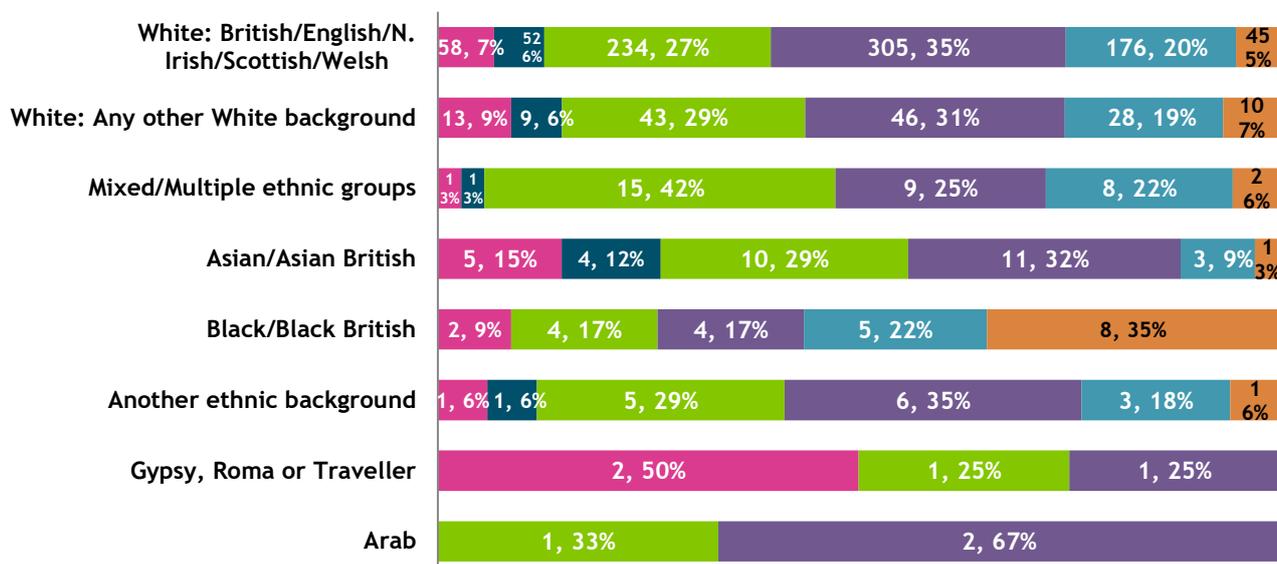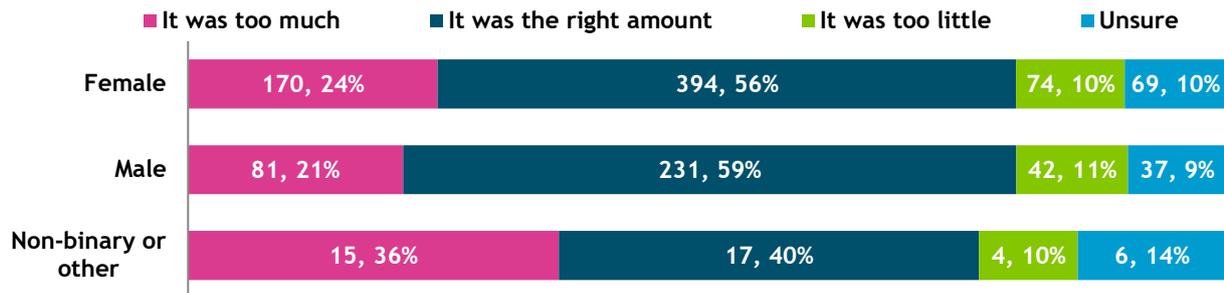
Support from education

How do you feel about the amount of support from education during lockdowns?

**Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences**

Legend: ■ It was too much ■ It was the right amount ■ It was too little ■ Unsure

	It was too much	It was the right amount	It was too little	Unsure
White: British/English/N. Irish/Scottish/Welsh	27 3%	517, 59%	207, 24%	119, 14%
White: Any other White background	5 3%	96, 64%	26, 17%	22, 15%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups		18, 50%	10, 28%	8, 22%
Asian/Asian British	1 3%	23, 70%	5, 15%	4, 12%
Black/Black British	2, 9%	14, 61%	3, 13%	4, 17%
Another ethnic background		8, 44%	4, 22%	6, 33%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller	1, 25%	1, 25%	1, 25%	1, 25%
Arab		3, 100%		

Breakdown by gender – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ It was too much ■ It was the right amount ■ It was too little ■ Unsure

	It was too much	It was the right amount	It was too little	Unsure
Female	17 2%	412, 58%	170, 24%	109, 15%
Male	15 4%	253, 64%	75, 19%	50, 13%
Non-binary or other	3 7%	19, 46%	12, 29%	7, 17%

## Emotional wellbeing on returning to education

Do you think your emotional wellbeing/mental health improved when you returned to School / College / University?

Breakdown by gender – no statistically significant differences

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

	Yes	No	Unsure
Female	310, 44%	210, 30%	190, 27%
Male	180, 46%	96, 25%	113, 29%
Non-binary or other	12, 29%	15, 37%	14, 34%

Breakdown by ethnicity – no statistically significant differences

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Unsure

Ethnicity	Yes	No	Unsure
White: British/English/N.…	370, 43%	262, 30%	237, 27%
White: Any other White background	81, 55%	26, 18%	40, 27%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	10, 28%	11, 31%	15, 42%
Asian/Asian British	17, 52%	4, 12%	12, 36%
Black/Black British	8, 35%	5, 22%	10, 43%
Another ethnic background	11, 61%	5, 28%	2, 11%
Gypsy, Roma or Traveller		4, 100%	
Arab	1, 33%	1, 33%	1, 33%
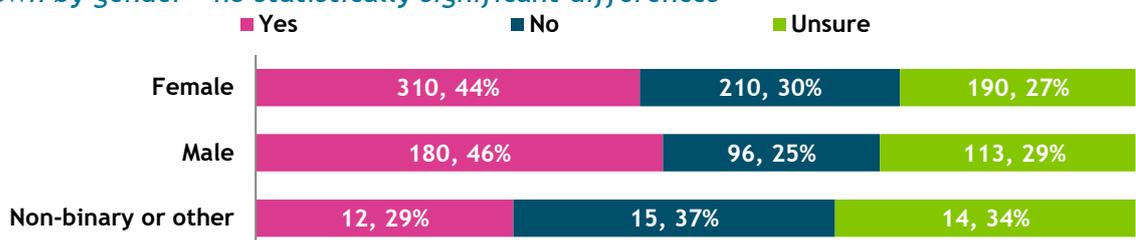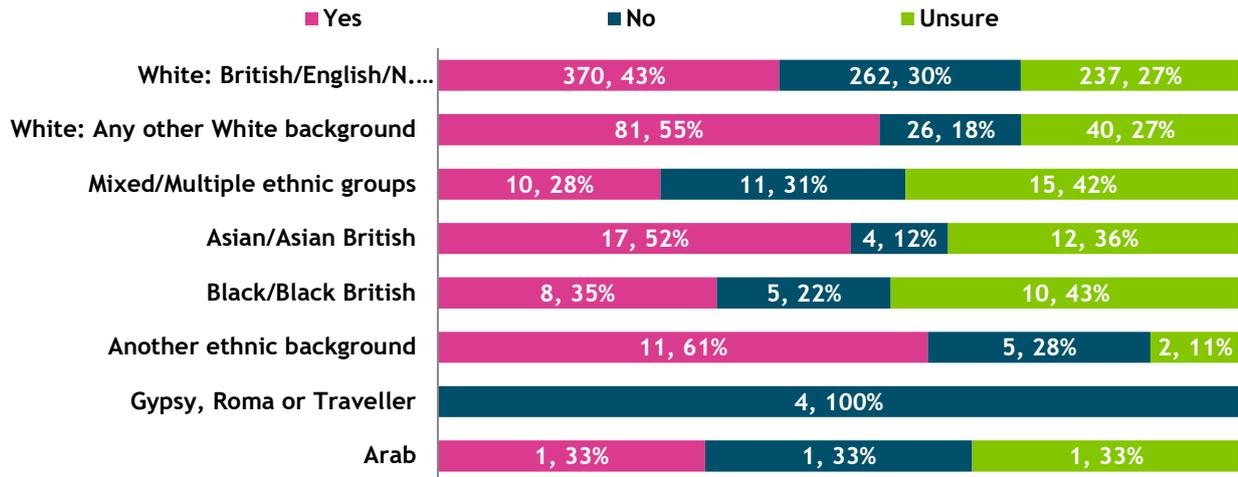
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