



# Student mental health survey Report

Effects of the pandemic on students'  
mental health and wellbeing. May 2022



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## Introduction to Healthwatch Bury

This report has been produced by Healthwatch Bury. The Healthwatch network consists of 152 Healthwatch organisations across each of the local authority areas in England. It also has a national body called Healthwatch England based in London. We are all independent organisations who aim to help people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience. We are the only body looking solely at people's experience across all health and social care in Bury. As a statutory watchdog, our role is to ensure that local decision makers put the experiences of people at the heart of their care so that those who buy (commissioners) and provide our services (NHS Trusts, GPs, the voluntary sector and independent providers) can benefit from what Bury people tell us. Our reports on various elements of health and social care in Bury can be found on our website at the following link: [healthwatchbury.co.uk](http://healthwatchbury.co.uk) or by contacting us directly using the details on the back cover.





## Executive Summary

In February 2022, during half-term, we involved students from the Holy Cross College and Bury College to help us co-produce the HW100 survey to collate feedback about local services from young people.

We arranged a virtual workshop where students developed and designed the questionnaire that focused on the young people's mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. The target age group was 10-18 years. The survey was shared online in various ways; it was distributed on social media and shared to high schools and colleges in the borough. The survey received 350 responses within weeks and was closed at the end of March 2022.

We invited the same students back in the end of April to attend the session to analyse the findings and come up with recommendations, with our support, based on the survey results. The students had time to familiarize themselves with the results for a few weeks before the workshop. As an outcome from the survey and the session this summary report has been produced to showcase the findings and recommendations that young people suggested to local services.

## Key findings

1. 75% of the respondents said they had not received any mental health support in the last 18 months. It is unclear from the responses whether this is because the support was not required or whether it is due to lack of awareness about local mental health services amongst young people.



2. Over half of the students who responded said they are 'Unlikely' or 'Not likely' to access mental health support at their place of study compared to 12% who said they are 'Likely' or 'Very likely' to access it at their place of study.

3. Over half the students were aware of the support provided in schools. 61% said their school offers tutorial sessions about mental health and 50% said their school offers access to a school counselling service.





## Our recommendations:

🗣️ **Speak to young people more and involve them in designing the services.**

🗣️ **Get young people to speak to young people from similar backgrounds about mental health to ensure they understand their experiences better and can relate to their cultural values.**



🗣️ **Teach young people about self-care, self-awareness, and self-appreciation from a young age.**

🗣️ **Mental health to be talked about in primary schools. Ensure Mentally Healthy Schools programme is rolled out to all schools.**

🗣️ **Mental health organisations and charities to come to schools to talk about what is available and give talks- awareness raising about available services in schools.**



🗣️ **More staff required to reduce waiting times.**

🗣️ **Teach students how to deal with exam pressures, offer practical tools and guidance.**

🗣️ **Get mentors speaking to young people providing guidance and support.**





## Background

Impact of the pandemic on mental health has been much discussed in the previous two years. Research that the MIND charity carried out suggested that those who were more likely to struggle with their mental health before the pandemic have been most affected.<sup>1</sup>

The Lancet study specifically looked at young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>2</sup>. The study findings show that between March 2020, and March 2021, clear increases in parent-reported symptoms of SDQ behavioural and attentional difficulties at times of peak restrictions, when most children were not physically attending school were seen.

We wanted to find out what the impact of the pandemic had had on students' mental health across Bury and if there were any key themes emerging from feedback.

### Further context:

- [How can co-production be made a reality in youth work-led mental health? | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Participation and co-production \(ncb.org.uk\)](#)
- [Working towards co-production in research - Emerging Minds](#)
- [Home : Mentally Healthy Schools](#)
- [Exam Stress | How To Deal with Exam Stress | YoungMinds](#)
- [Exam stress and pressure | Childline](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf \(mind.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic - The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health](#)



## Methodology

A group of student volunteers from Holy Cross College in Bury took part in a workshop to create, design and deliver a project that focussed on issues experienced by young people. In that workshop, mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic was clearly the issue the participants felt most strongly about, so it was decided they would create a survey to find out the experiences of their fellow students and young people in the area.

They created a survey using our 'Bury Healthwatch 100' structure, and with the assistance and supervision of the Healthwatch Bury team, they published the survey using our SmartSurvey online software.

Following its official launch in February 2022, the survey was distributed and promoted in a range of ways, including:

- Promotion via Healthwatch Bury's website, mailing list and social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram).
- Promotion via local colleges and high schools including Bury College, Holy Cross College, and many others.
- Promotion at the face-to-face drop-in sessions and community events.
- Asking statutory organisations, health and social care providers, local businesses, voluntary sector partners and community groups to promote the survey.
- Direct emails to existing contacts and organisations.

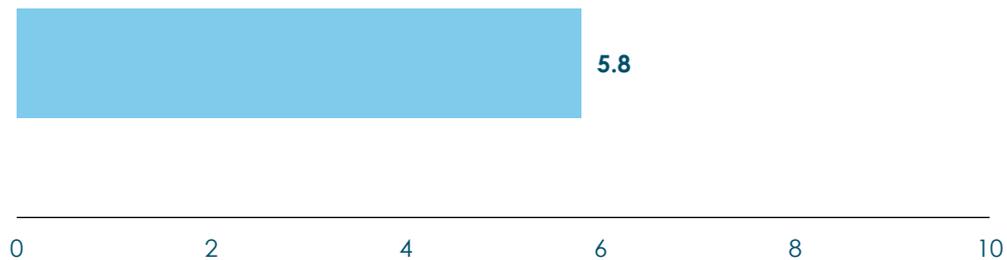




## Findings

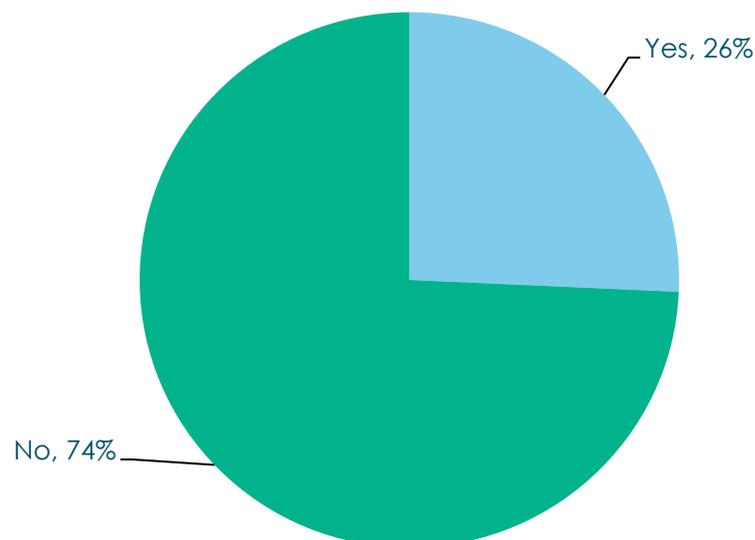
Please see the survey findings below:

- 1. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your current mental wellbeing?  
With 1 being poor, 5 being neutral and 10 being great**



Average wellbeing score was rated 5.8 out of 10. When analysing the findings, the student volunteers were surprised as they expected the score to be slightly lower due to various challenges the pandemic presented.

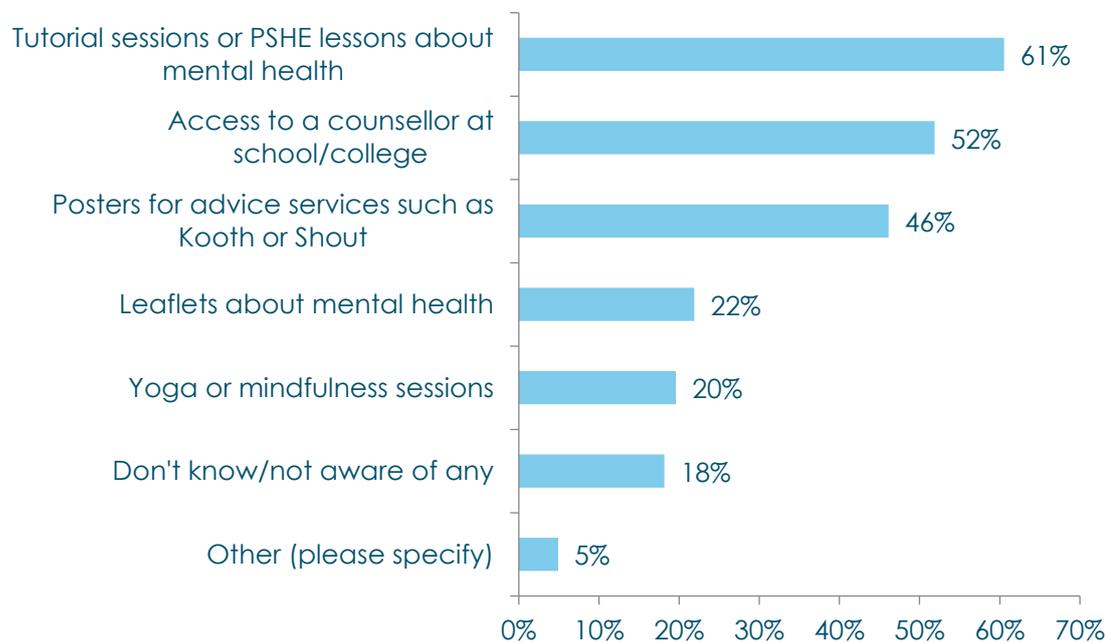
- 2. Have you received mental health support during the past eighteen months?**



Approximately one quarter (26%; 90 students) of the respondents said they have received mental health support during the pandemic in comparison to 74% (260) who said they had not received any mental health support during the pandemic.



### 3. What support is offered for your mental health and wellbeing in your place of study?



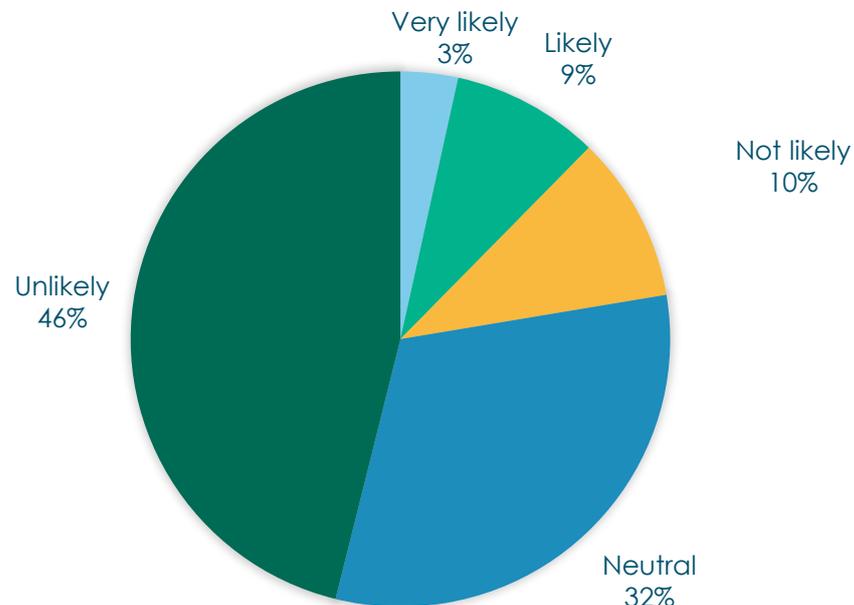
61% (210) of the respondents said there are tutorial sessions or PSHE lessons about mental health offered in their place of study. Over half of the respondents (52%;180) said that there is an access to a counsellor at school/college.

46% (160) stated they have seen posters for advice services and another 22% (76) said they have seen leaflets about mental health. About fifth (20%; 68) of the respondents was aware of the yoga or mindfulness sessions in their place of study whereas 18% (63) stated they were not aware of any support. Other options included Healthy Young Minds, Streetwise, Place to Be, socialising with friends and family and access to a counsellor outside the school.

Student volunteers suggested local services to visit schools and deliver awareness raising sessions as they were not aware of what is available locally to support young people with their mental health and wellbeing.



#### 4. How likely are you to use mental health support at your place of study?



56% of the students responded they're 'Not likely' to use mental health support at their place of study and 12% said they're 'Likely' or 'Very likely' to use the support offered.

We also asked students if they answered 'Not likely' where would they access the support instead and the following answers were given:

7 students responded 'Nowhere', 5 people said 'I don't know' and 3 said 'they don't need help'. Other support like 'Home', 'GP', 'Friends', 'I play Fortnite', 'Online' and 'Myself' were also mentioned.

Other comments included:

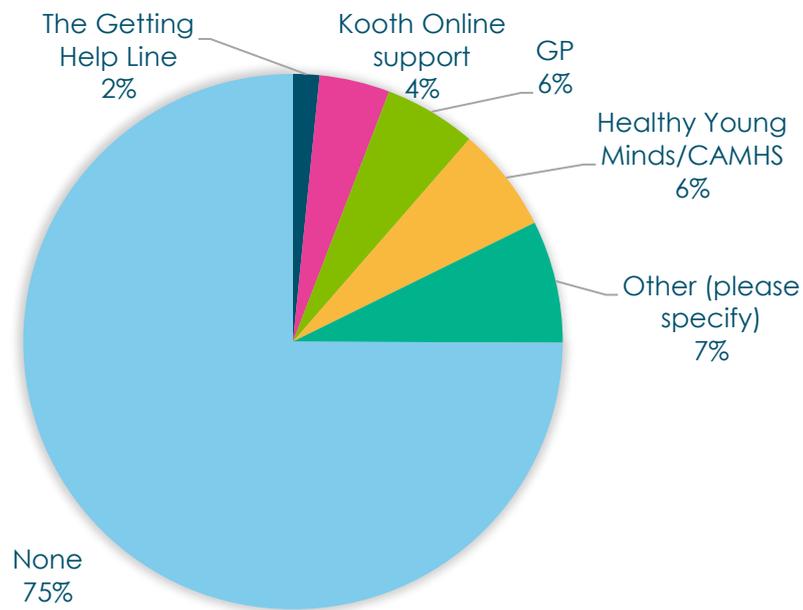
***'Pull us out of class or break or something and then talk to us instead of us coming to you'***

***'Don't like speaking to people I don't know about my personal life and feelings'***

***'School's not comfortable'***



**5. What mental health services or local groups have you used or attended in the past 18 months?**

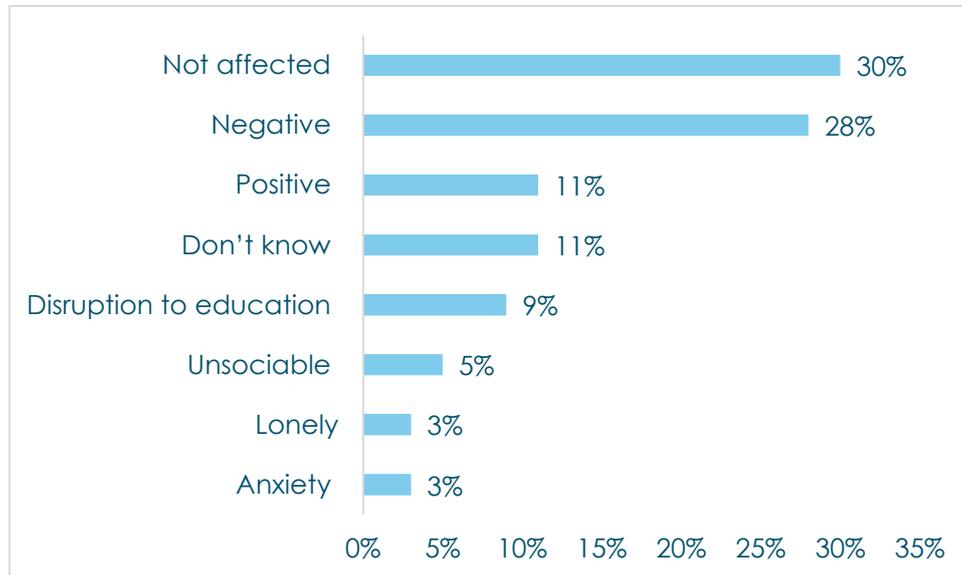


Majority of the respondents (75%; 284) said they had not used any mental health services in the past 18 months.

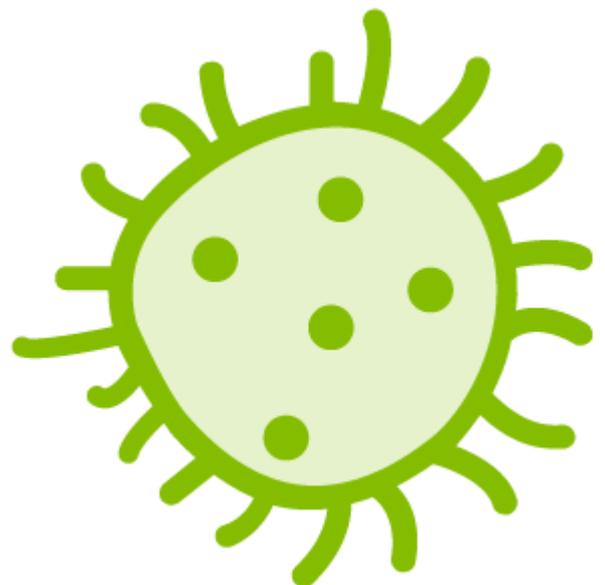
6% said they had used the Healthy Young Minds service and another 6% said they had visited their GP. 4% had used Kooth online support and 2% had been in touch with the Getting Help Line. 7% stated 'Other' which included Place2be, counselling in school, private counselling, A&E, Early Break, Streetwise, Parrenthorn SHARP System, North Manchester Lesion Team, Learning Support and some respondents said they didn't need any help.



6. How do you feel the pandemic has affected your mental health? Please tell us more about any changes, positive or negative that the lockdowns, disruption to education or COVID-19 has had on your mental health?



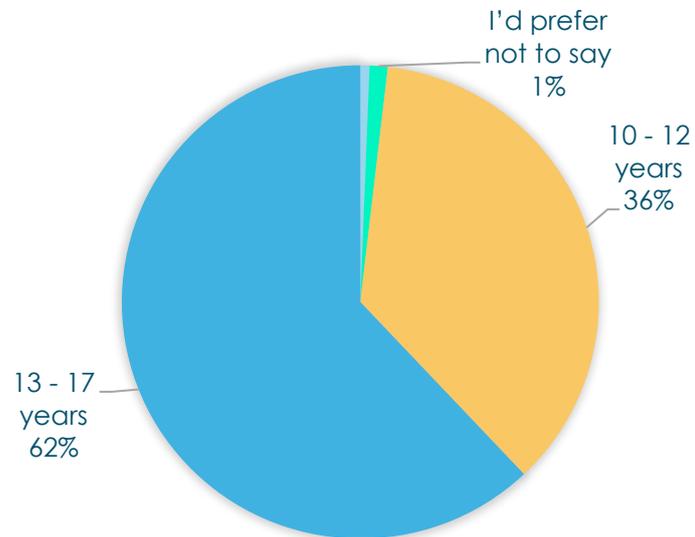
30% (89) of the respondents said their mental health had not been affected by the pandemic compared to 28% (82) who said the pandemic had a negative effect on their mental health. 11% (31) said the pandemic had a positive impact on their mental health and another 11% (31) were unsure how it had affected them. Other answers included disruption to education (9%;25), feeling unsociable (5%;14), lonely (3%;11) or anxious (3%;11).



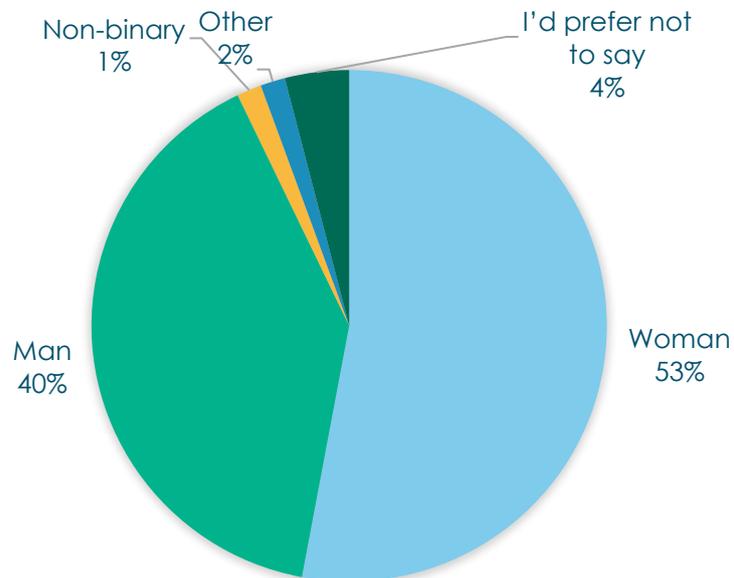


## Demographics

### 7. Please tell us which age category you fall into:

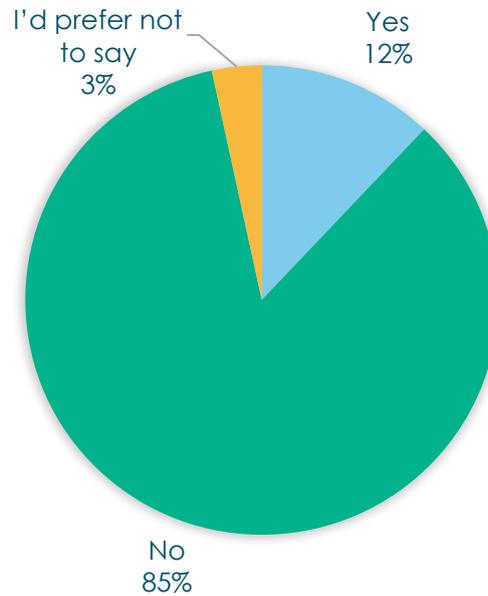


### 8. Please tell us which gender you identify with:

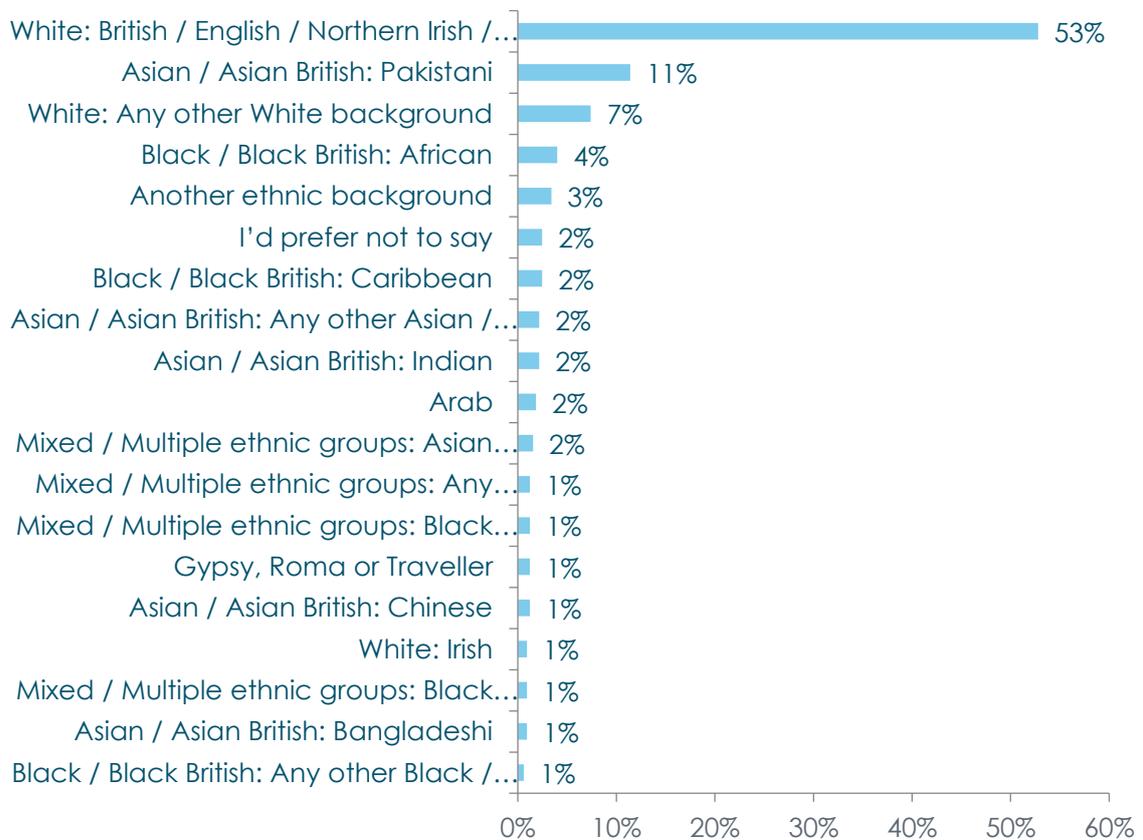




## 9. Is your gender different to the sex that was assigned to you at birth?

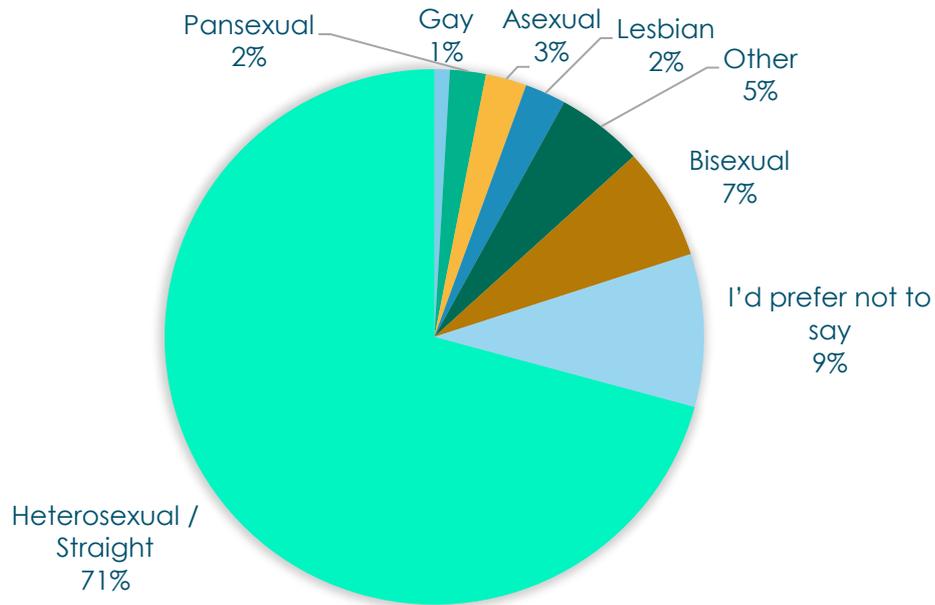


## 10. Please select your ethnic background:

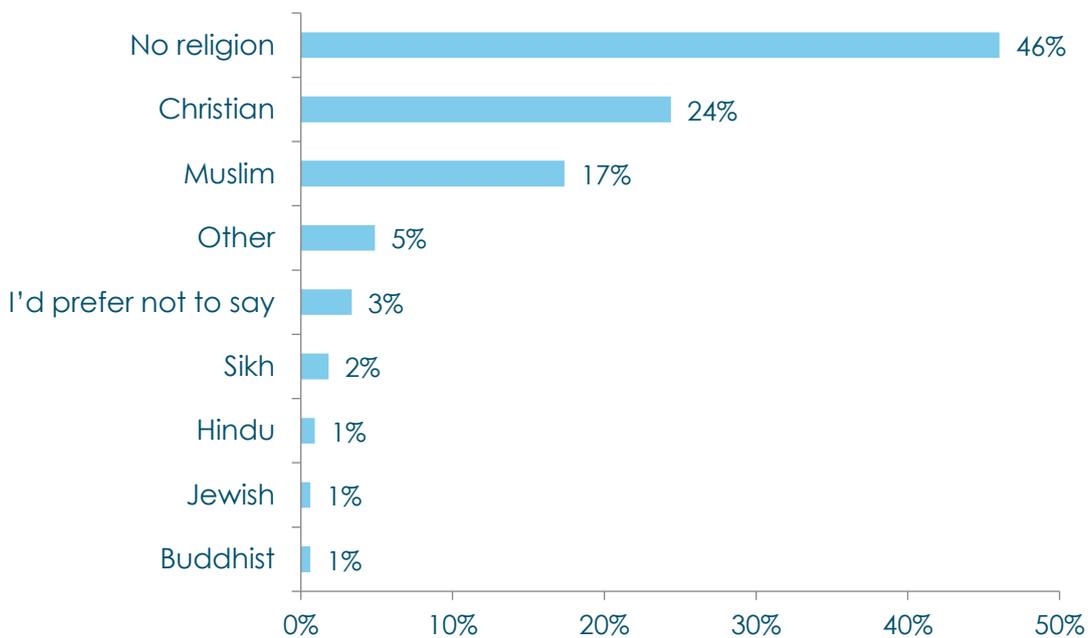




### 11. Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with:

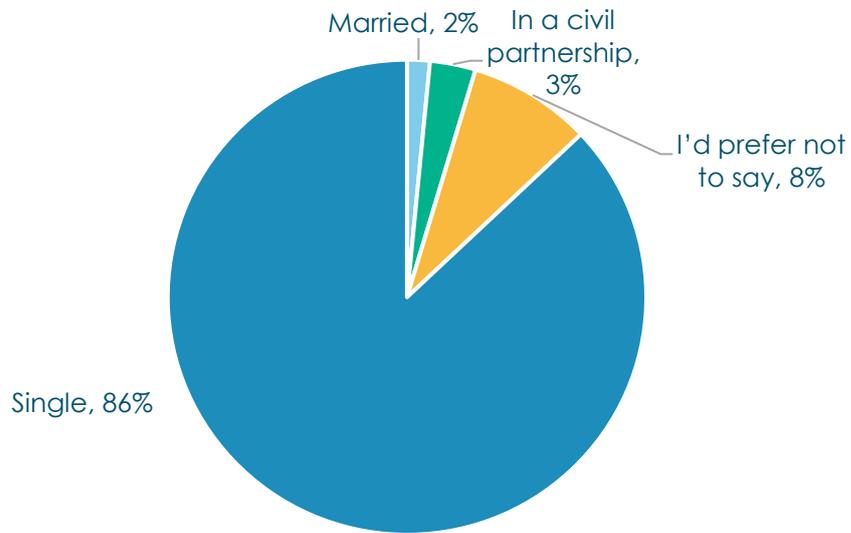


### 12. Please tell us about your religion or beliefs:

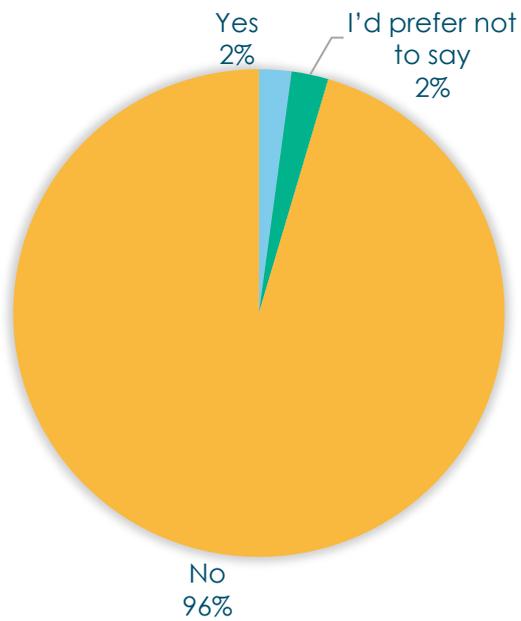




### 13. Please tell us about your marital or civil partnership status:



### 14. Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?





## Discussion with students

During the workshop with the student volunteers numerous themes were explored in relation to mental health during the pandemic.

Family support. When we asked our volunteers where they'd go for support if they felt down, they said they'd approach their parents and siblings or closest friends. However, it was acknowledged that not everyone has close relationships with their families which can leave young people feeling isolated and lonely. Also, families spent more time together in close proximity during the pandemic which may have presented its own challenges.



Media and social media. Young people felt there was a lot of scaremongering during lockdown and made them think more about media and its use. It was discussed that media needs to be regulated as can have devastating effect on one's mental health and steer young people towards negative thinking pattern and self-image. There is also lots of online bullying which became even more apparent during the pandemic. It was recognised that there are also benefits to social media and how it can also offer support and help to reduce isolation.

Education and exam pressures. It was highlighted that education suffered during the pandemic and students felt the pressures of exams and feeling frustrated about not being able sit the exams, many did not feel the grades were fair and felt there was favoritism involved in some cases. Students felt the support and practical tools for exam pressures were desperately needed.



In conclusion, during the discussion around local services and support available it was felt that young people don't know a lot about what is on offer locally and felt it would be hugely beneficial for students to have guest speakers coming into colleges to raise awareness about local services. It was also felt that it is important to ensure that the support provided is culturally appropriate so that whoever supports the young person understands their culture, family values and who young people could relate to.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Healthwatch Bury student volunteers for contributing to this project and supporting us with developing and designing this survey and helping us analyse the findings:

- 🗨️ Fajar Zeeshan
- 🗨️ Saverah Rashid
- 🗨️ Josh Brooks

We would also like to thank all local colleges, high schools and our partner organisations for promoting this survey.

And most importantly, we would like to thank every one of the young people that took the time to complete the survey and shared their experiences with us.

## References

1. MIND 'Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health report'  
([the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf \(mind.org.uk\)](#))  
Accessed May 2022
2. 'Young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic'  
([Young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic - The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health](#))  
Accessed May 2022



## Contact us

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If you require this information in an alternative format,  
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