

# Coronavirus: Young People's Experience Survey

Follow-up summary July 2021 (Published September 2021)

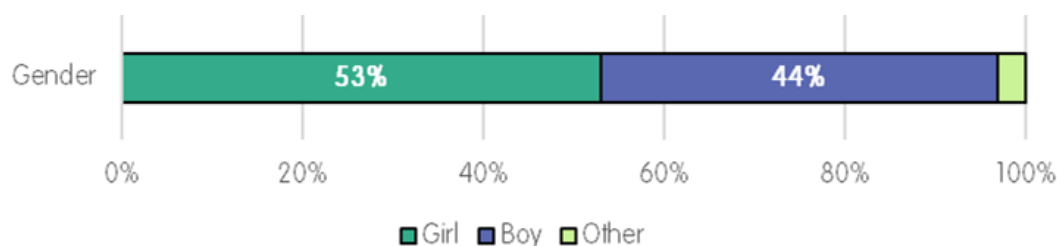
At the end of the 2020/21 summer term, Kirklees Council's Public Health Intelligence team conducted the third in a series of wellbeing surveys for young people aged nine to 16.

The initial survey took part at the end of the summer term in July 2020, exploring how young people were feeling and whether their behaviours had changed during the first national COVID-19 lockdown, to assist in the preparation for pupils returning to schools in September. A follow-up survey was carried out in December 2020 to monitor the wellbeing of young people and to evaluate their experiences since returning to school in September.

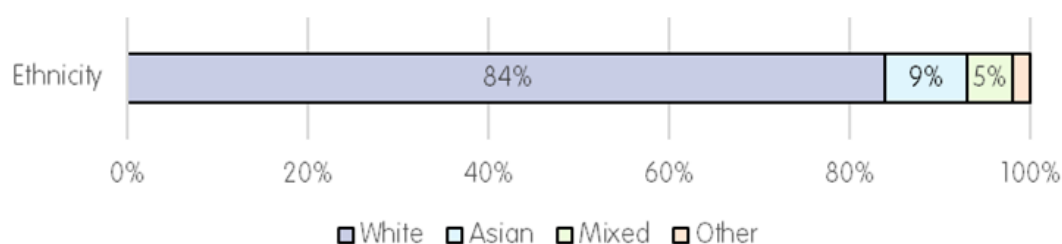
The findings of the most recent survey are summarised below.

## Who took part in the survey?

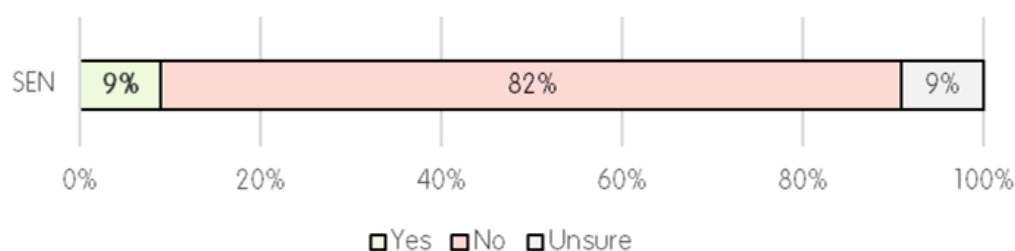
There were 176 respondents in total, broken down by demographics as follows:



Just over half said that they would describe themselves as a girl, and just fewer than half said as a boy. 4% responded "Trans", "Non-binary" or "I'd describe myself in another way", "I'm not sure" or "I'd rather not say".



Compared to the overall Kirklees school-aged cohort, the ethnicity breakdown was over-representative of White British young people (+~25%) & under-representative of Asian & Asian British young people (-~20%).



## Emotional wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing was measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS). This is a set of seven positively worded questions which, when answered together, give a validated score which can be an overall indicator of wellbeing. The maximum possible score (highest level of wellbeing) for an individual is 35, and the minimum score is seven. We used this measure as part of our first and second Coronavirus experience surveys in July and December 2020.

The SWEMWBS is only a validated measurement of wellbeing for people aged 13 or over, therefore the following mean scores don't include data from respondents who were below this age at the time the survey was completed.

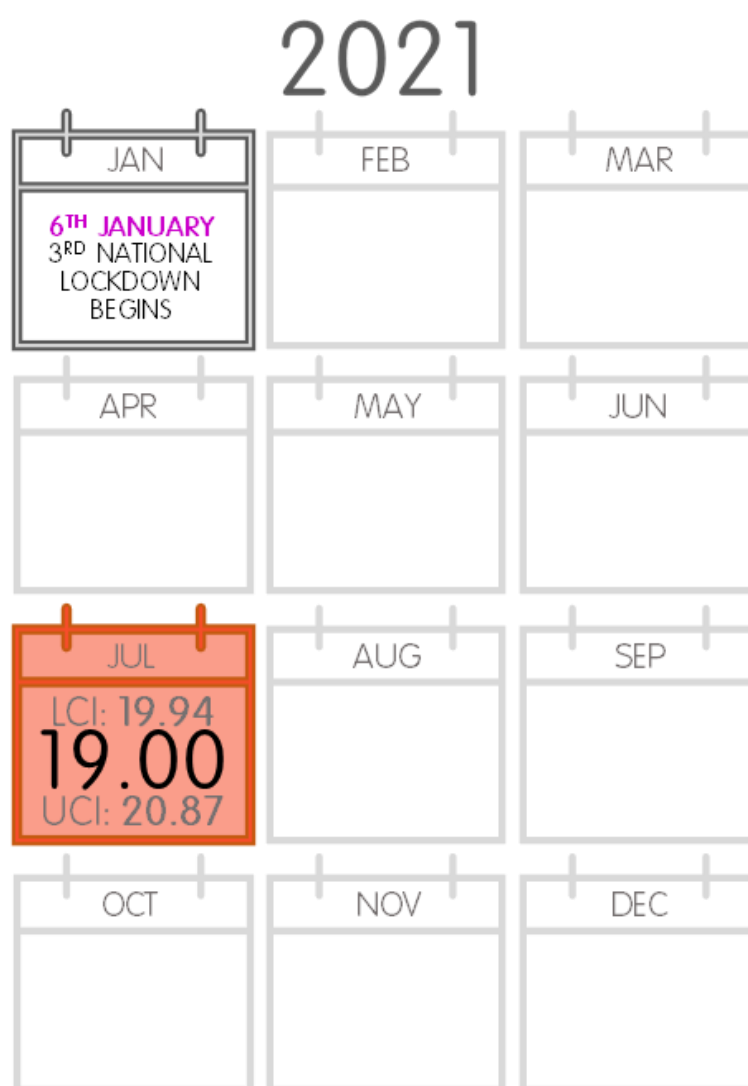
In July 2020, the majority of young people had been learning from home since March, owing to school closures. Their average SWEMWBS score was 21.89. In December, following a return to school under COVID-19 restrictions, the mean score was statistically significantly lower, at 17.72.



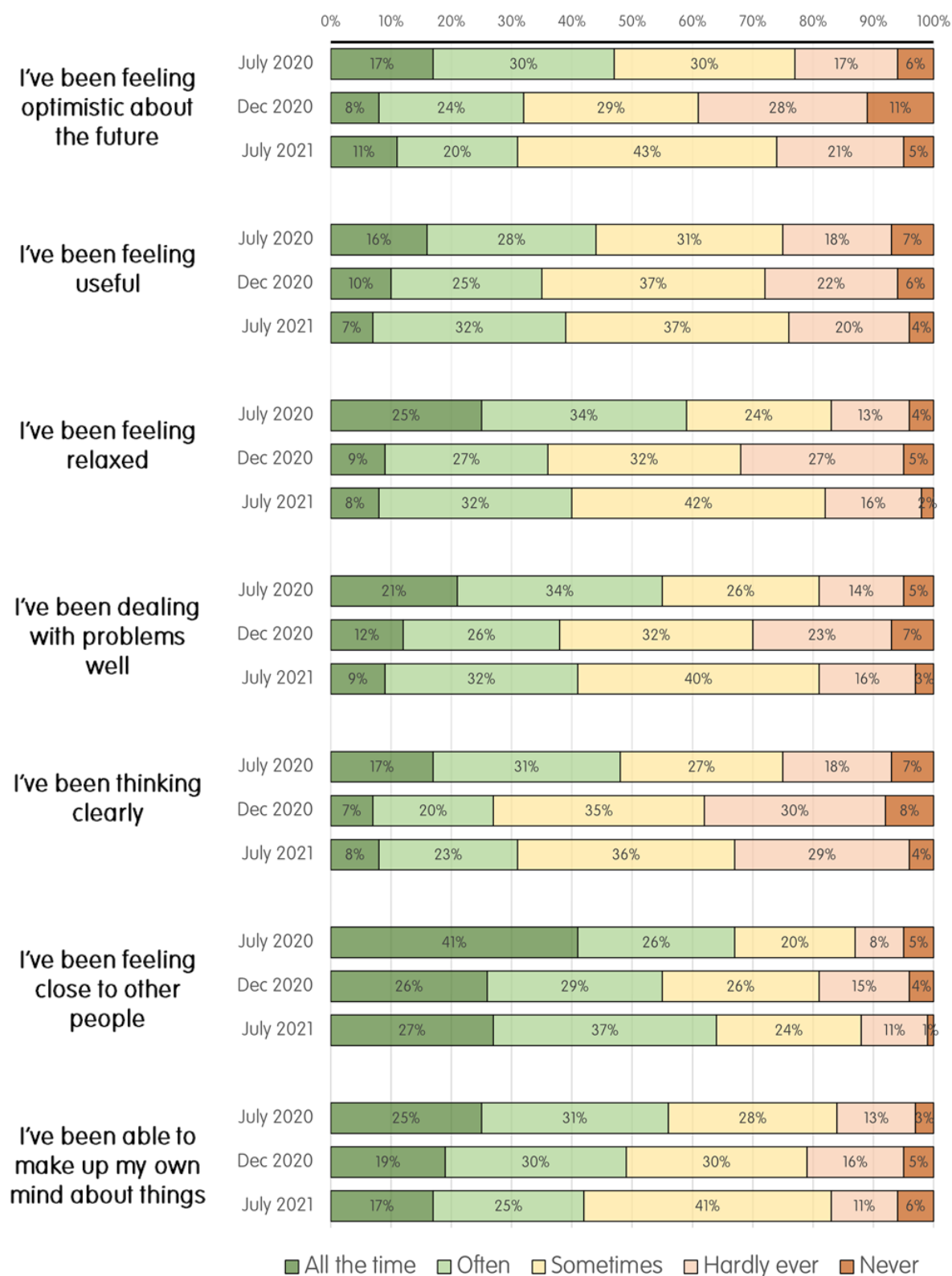
There were further imposed school closures from January until March 2021, followed by requirements and restrictions within schools. These including the wearing of face coverings, lateral flow testing, increases hygiene measures, limitations on the delivery of certain lessons and extracurricular activities, so-called “bubbles” which limited interaction between groups of pupils.

Mandatory isolation was required for those with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or for those who had been in contact with a confirmed case. This meant that remote learning had to be undertaken by many pupils during this time.

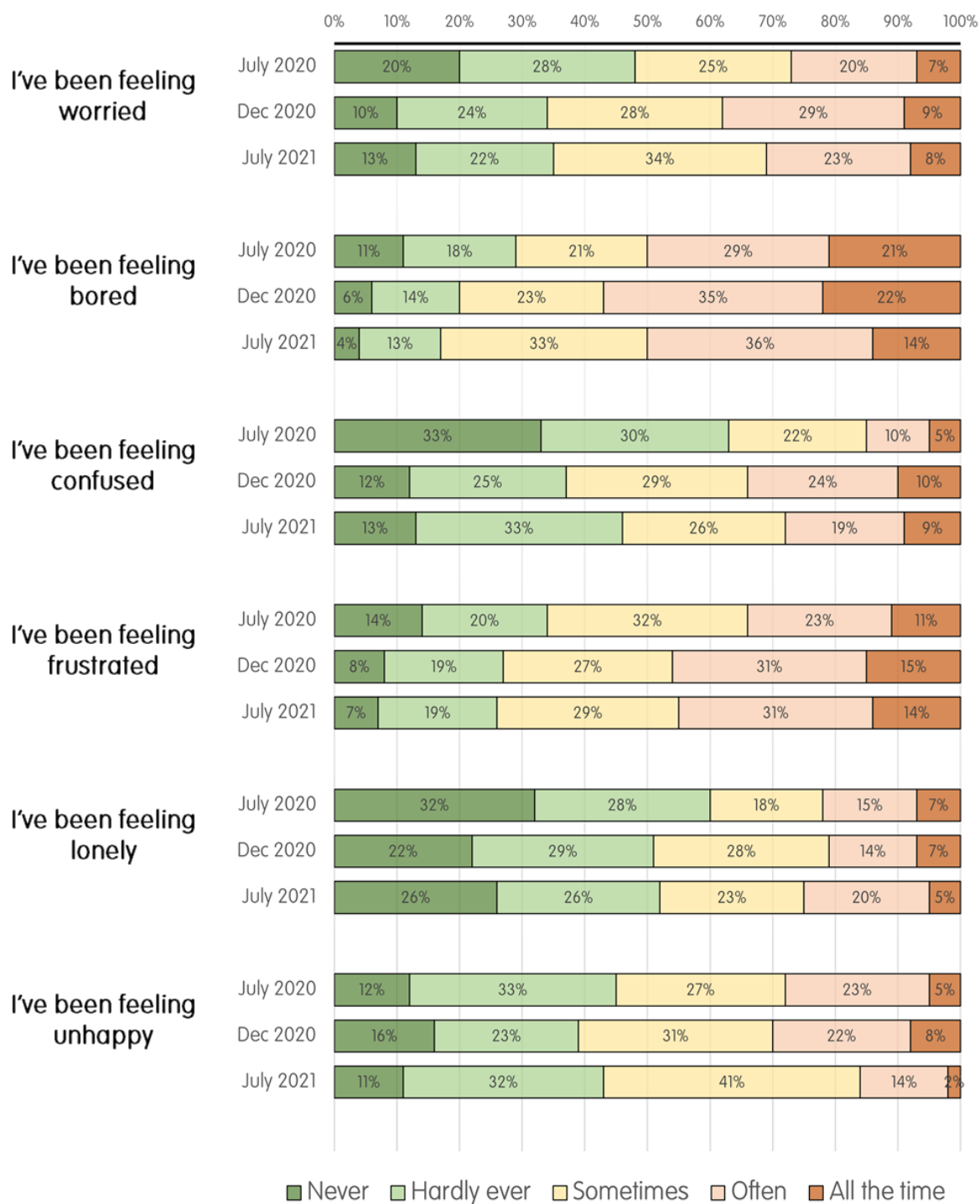
In July 2021, the mean SWEMWBS score was 19.00; significantly higher than in December 2020, however, significantly lower than the previous July.



Each of the seven SWEMWBS questions were answered by the full cohort. The results of these questions over the course of the pandemic are as follows.

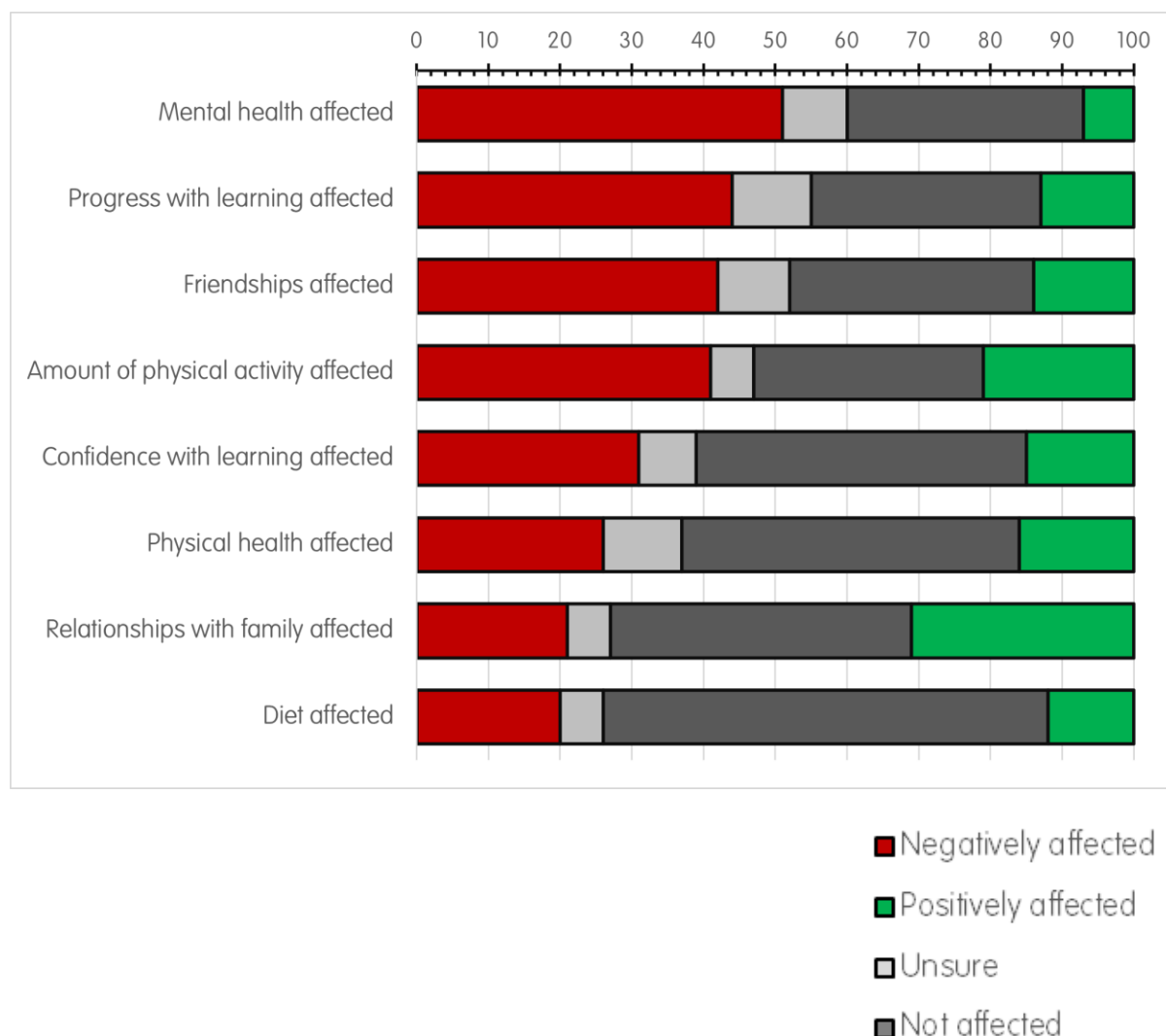


The graphs below show the results of six questions, similar to the SWEMWBS questions but worded negatively, including the comparable data from the surveys in July and December 2020. They generally show that the frequency of experiencing negative emotions increased in December and then decreased again in July 2021.



## Positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 disruptions

Respondents were asked whether they felt that disruptions caused by COVID-19 (such as self-isolation, social restrictions and 'burst bubbles') since they had returned to school in March following the third national lockdown had affected various aspects of their lives. They were also invited to describe more specifically how they had been impacted.



### Mental health

More than half (51%) of respondents said that their mental health had been negatively affected. Many young people expressed that they missed their friends and family, their social activities, and their usual routine. Uncertainty about the future was also frequently mentioned. A small minority (7%) of the young people said that the disruptions had impacted their mental health in a positive way.

"Loneliness 'cause everyone was still working so I was on my own most of the time."  
Girl, Year 11

"I have found it really hard when I have been scared by what is in the news."

Girl, Year 6

"Less confident, forming friendships has been hard, afraid to mix with others."

Boy, Year 7

"I feel stressed and worry I have missed a significant amount of learning."

Boy, Year 9

"Loss of interaction with my peers has cause me great anxiety and confusion. I have to [have] faith in the structure of my day as my day now has no structure"

Girl, Year 5, SEN

"It got better as I didn't have to be around people who I thought I had to be like."

Girl, Year 11

"Spending more enjoyable time with family."

Boy, Year 6

"Had a break from children at school who cause problems in class."

Boy, Year 5

### Progress with learning

Almost half (44%) of respondents felt that their progress with learning had been negatively impacted since their return to school in March 2021, with many identifying the limitations of remote learning. Around 1 in 8 (13%) felt that there had been a positive impact on their learning progress.

"Can't do practical experiments etc., theory is boring."

Boy, Year 9

"Couldn't keep up with workload due to internet connectivity."

Boy, Year 11

"I feel I haven't learnt as much as I should especially as I have my GCSE exams next year."

Girl, Year 10

"Things you find hard to understand can't be explained in a different way."

Boy, Year 9

"Not had a full education, topics missed, stuff not understood properly, not full timetable, missed loads of weeks isolating/lockdown."

Boy, Year 9

"Home schooling was hard, and it's been hard getting used to high school."

Boy, Year 7

"Been able to focus on weak subjects."

Girl, Year 4

"The teacher noticed I was struggling because there were less children in class."

Girl, Year 5

"Due to having a set plan and time to do it I've been able to take it at my own pace and get everything done without any disruption."

Girl, Year 9

## Friendships

The disruptions caused by COVID-19 negatively affected the friendships of around 2 in 5 (42%) respondents. Enforced segregation within school was a common theme as well as lack of opportunities to connect with friends outside of school. 14% of young people said their friendships had improved.

"Class bubbles mean I've not seen some friends for ages."

Girl, Year 4

"Find it hard to make new friends. And only have one friend."

Boy, Year 6, SEN

"Grew apart from some friends, leading to anxiety about returning to school and the need to make new friends."

Girl, Year 5

"Lots of fallouts online."

Girl, Year 7

"I'm an only child and I got sad when I couldn't see my friends."

Boy, Year 6

"Maintaining meaningful relationships over zoom or with constant cancellations due to isolating is impossible. The things we would usually do as a family/friendship group not open. Wearing masks in school means communication is kept to a minimum."

Girl, Year 10

"I have made more friends and I have learnt to not take them for granted."

Girl, Year 8

"Sets [based on] on ability mean new friends and relatable peers."

Girl, Year 8



### Physical activity

Around 2 in 5 (41%) young people said their physical activity levels had been adversely affected by COVID-19 disruptions, however, 1 in 5 (21%) had experienced positive impacts.

"I would normally train 12 hours gymnastics a week this was reduced to 9 hours online conditioning which is not as fun as doing skills and being with my friends in the gym."  
Girl, Year 5

"Not walking to school every day. PE lessons and extracurricular activities taking place over Zoom."  
Girl, Year 10

"More screen time, less outdoors."  
Girl, Year 5

"I haven't got a garden and not gone to the things I enjoy."  
Boy, Year 4

"After lockdown I have become less motivated and VERY lazy."  
Girl, Year 5

"Been on more walks and doing workouts in the garage with dad."  
Boy, Year 5

"I had the time to do exercise without being stressed that I wasn't doing any schoolwork."  
Girl, Year 11

### Confidence with learning

Almost one third (31%) of respondents felt their confidence had been negatively affected by disruptions to their learning. 15% said that their confidence with learning had been positively affected.

"Been at home a lot more and forgot some stuff."  
Girl, Year 4

"Harder as having to slow down and learn yr7 work we've missed as well as yr8 work."  
Girl, Year 8

"Not having time with a teacher. Not having proper equipment to undertake my work."  
Girl, Year 5

"Some subjects are hard to learn online eg. languages, DT."  
Boy, Year 9

"I feel like I have struggled with my learning despite parents helping me. When burst bubble at school and teacher trying to teach on teams it was hard because other children were causing distraction."

Boy, Year 6

"Broken teaching, less time in classroom, less confidence."

Girl, Year 7

"Fewer children in class meant I could learn more easily."

Girl, Year 5

"Independence."

Girl, Year 11

"I can participate more because in class it's more pressurising."

Girl, Year 7

### Physical health

One quarter (26%) of young people said that their physical health had been negatively impacted due to COVID-19 restrictions. Conversely, 16% felt that restrictions had had a positive influence on their health.

"Loss of mobility and interaction has caused my muscle memory to regress thus effecting my movement."

Girl, Year 5

"It affected my physical health because I couldn't go outside for the same amount of exercise as I would have done at school."

Girl, Year 6

"My face is so sore from the face masks."

Year 9

"I have put on weight."

Girl, Year 6

"Personally I think I've lost weight and got stronger and faster."

Boy, Year 8

"Due to being able to do more exercise in lockdown, I've become more stronger meaning I can do more which has helped my physical health."

Girl, Year 9

### Relationships with family

The relationships that the young people have with their family was the only metric where there was a higher likelihood of reported positive impacts (32%) than negative impacts (21%).

"Although I was able to spend more time with my mum and dad I was not able to see my grandparents and other family which was very hard and made me feel sad."

Girl, Year 5

"Some family members are in different countries, and I won't be able to see them from covid"

Boy, Year 7

"More disruption, more chaos, more juggling everything so that everyone has what they need, when they need it."

Girl, Year 5

"We have always been close but as we have had to rely on each other we have grown even closer."

Girl, Year 10

"Started gardening together."

Boy, Year 11

### Diet

Snacking at home and a restricted menu at school were significant contributory factor for 1 in 5 (20%) feeling that their diet had been negatively impacted. 13% felt that changes due to COVID-19 had positively impacted their diet.

"I was bored at home so ate a lot more snacks."

Girl, Year 5

"Food on school menu limited to cold food."

Boy, Year 5

"Eating less."

Girl, Year 10

"I eat more as I'm so sad."

Year 9

"I eat more healthy lunches at home."

Boy, Year 7

"I've started not eating junk food and takeaways or drink fizzy drinks that much."  
Boy, Year 8

"We eat a lot healthier as its supposed to help a little with mental health mum said."  
Girl, Year 8

For more information about this series of population surveys, please contact the Public Health Intelligence team: [helen.jessop@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:helen.jessop@kirklees.gov.uk)

Further information can also be found [here](#).