

#SpeakUp: A survey from Saalik Youth Project with young people and parents about the Covid-19 pandemic

Background

What is #SpeakUp?

#SpeakUp is Healthwatch Sheffield's micro grants programme, offering funding of between £500-£1000 to not-for-profit, voluntary, and community groups. The purpose is to run a project which will reach out to people across Sheffield, and hear what matters to them in relation to health and social care.

By working with groups which are already trusted partners in their communities, we can make sure we're hearing from even more people, including those whose voices aren't often heard by decision makers.

Saalik Youth Project

Saalik Youth Project works with young people aged 6-25 from ethnically diverse backgrounds and origins. The project operates in the Pitsmoor, Burngreave and Firvale areas of Sheffield. They seek to advance young people's interests, confidence, self-esteem, and aspirations enabling them to realise their potential by promoting and providing various cultural, educational, social, and recreational activities.



During the second lockdown in early 2021, Healthwatch Sheffield worked with Saalik Youth Project to deliver five 2-hour Zoom sessions focused on health and community engagement. The participants were 10 Pakistani young men aged between 15 and 18. The sessions were an opportunity to listen to their life experiences, how the resources in their community affects their health and wellbeing, and their aspirations for themselves and their community.

Building on this work, the young people wanted to explore issues within their wider community, and were awarded a #SpeakUp grant. They designed two surveys - one for young people and one for parents. They wanted to explore:

- What issues the community was facing during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What support the community needs?

Who completed the two surveys?

The surveys covered topics such as worries during the pandemic, accessing support, schooling and using technology, and workshops and activities that the community would like to take part in. For many of the questions, the young people allowed participants to select more than one answer, or write in their own answer.

After they designed the questions, the young people used their networks to invite young people and parents to take part in the online survey.

Young people



Number of respondents: 221

Gender: 162 male, 56 female, 3 prefer not to say

Age: 7-25 years old (average age was 16)

Postcodes: S5 (34%); S4 (24%); S10 (14%); S9 (7%); S3 (6%); S8 (3%); S2 (3%); S6 (3%); S11 (2%); S7 (2%); **Other postcodes** (2%)

Parents



Number of respondents: 86

Gender: 41 male, 44 female, 1 prefer not to say

Number of children: 0-9 (average number of children was 3)

Ethnicity: 37 People described themselves as Pakistani/ British Pakistani.

Other responses included: Asian / Asian British; Kashmiri / British Kashmiri; Black African / African; Chinese/African; Anglo Korean; Somali; Yemeni Albanian; White British

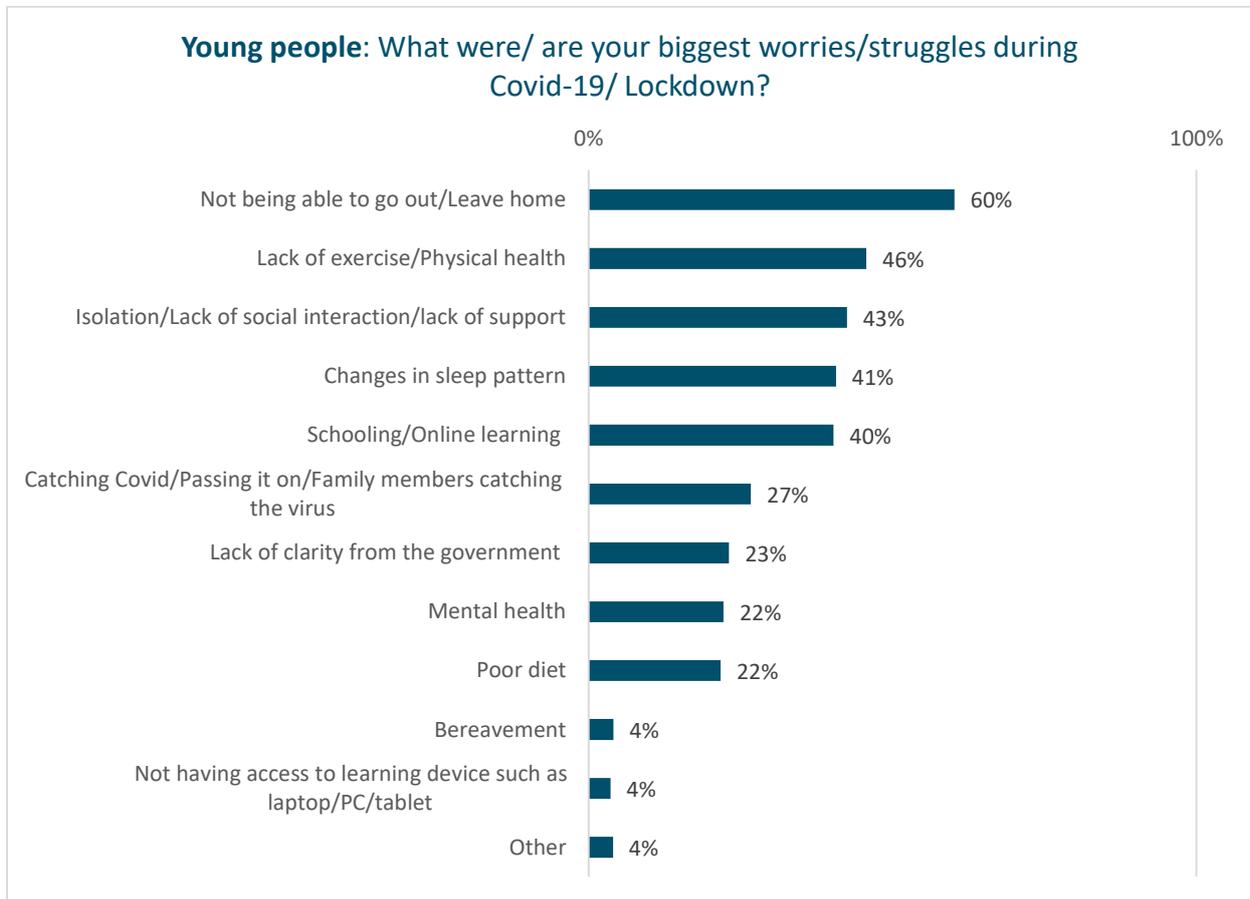
Postcodes: S5 (45%); S4 (38%); S3 (5%); S8 (3%); S9 (2%); S60 (2%); **Other postcodes** (3%).

Findings



Worries and struggles during the pandemic

The surveys asked young people and parents about their concerns during the pandemic. The majority of young people said they were worried about not being able to go out/leave home. Other popular answers included lack of exercise/physical health, isolation, changes in sleep pattern and schooling:



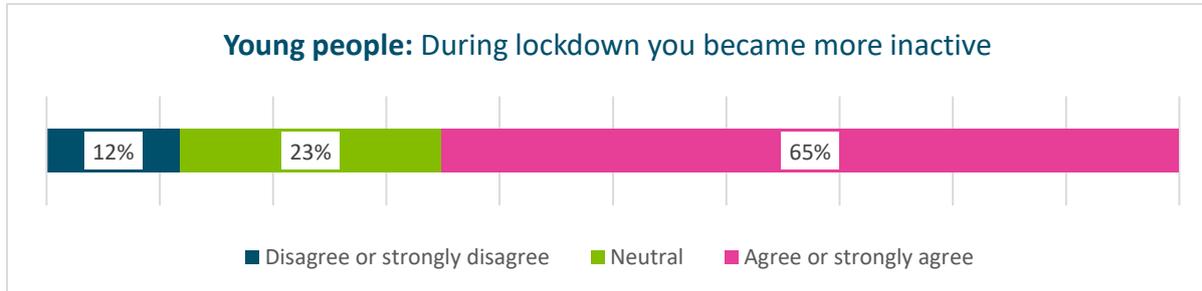
Other responses included:

“Not being able to play football matches”

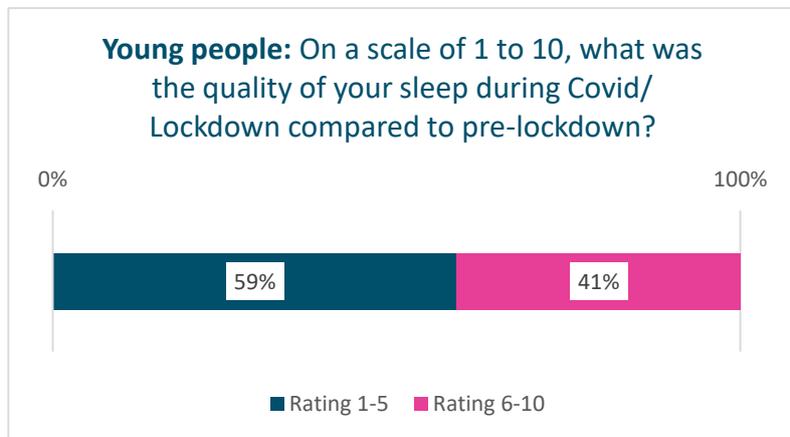
“Not seeing friends”

“Grades affected”

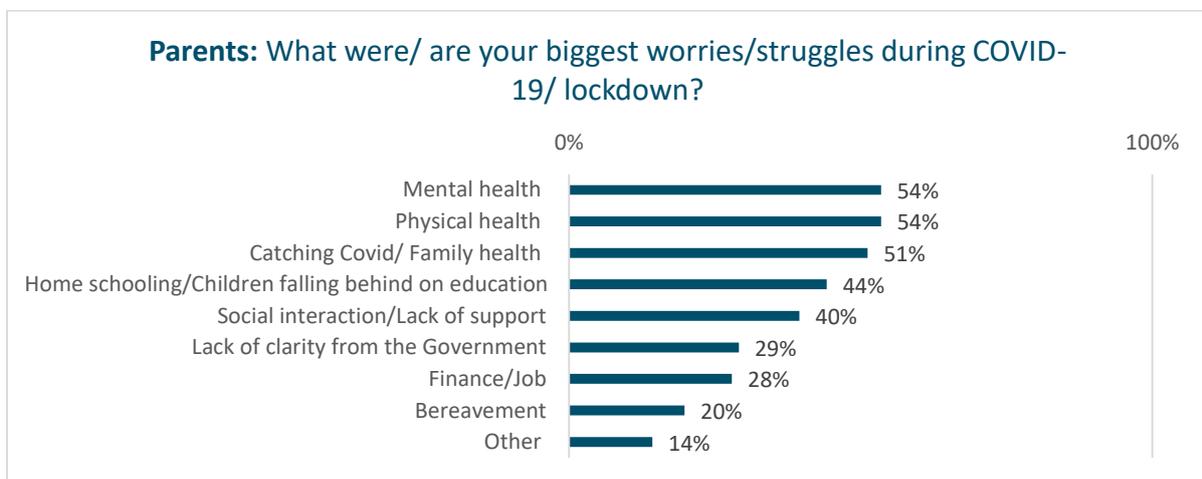
In fact, the majority of young people felt that they became more inactive during lockdown:



Young people were also asked to rate their quality of sleep during lockdown compared to pre-lockdown on a scale of 1-10. The majority of young people gave a rating of 5 or lower. The average rating was 5.1/10.



The majority of parents were concerned about mental and/or physical health and/or catching Covid/family health. Other prominent concerns included home schooling and social interaction/lack of support:



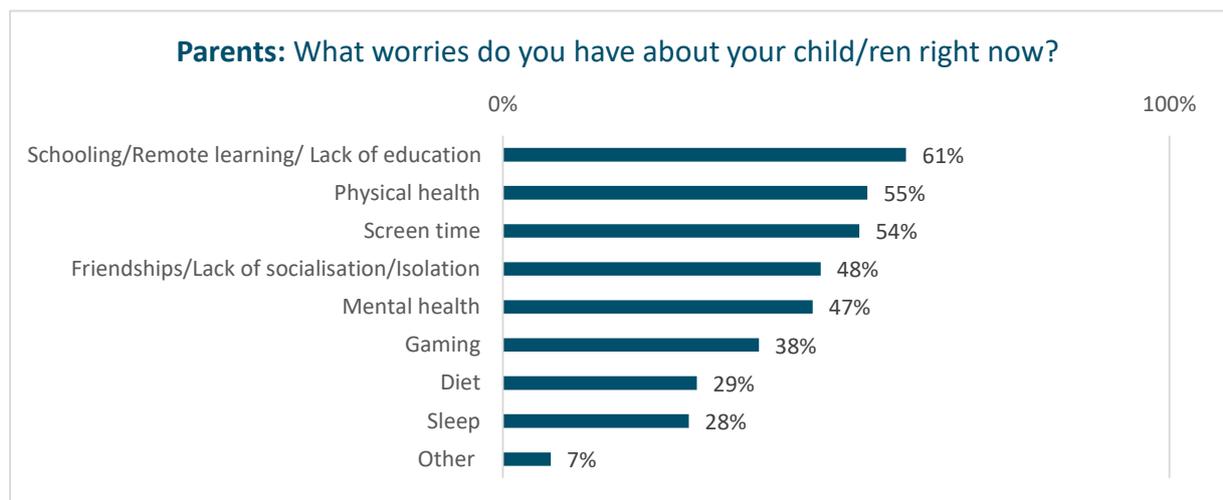
Other responses included:

“I just had a baby and had lack of support”

“Home schooling has definitely been challenging whilst working from home. Also the lack of interaction with family friends has had a great impact on mine and children’s health”

“Maintaining physical and mental wellbeing due to lack of access to faith and fitness centres. Lack of alternative academic provision to compensate for parents unable to support children’s learning”

Parents were also asked about specific worries they had about their children. The majority of parents were concerned about one or more of the following: schooling, physical health, and screen time. Other popular answers included lack of socialisation and mental health:



Other responses included:

“Gyms are currently closed as well as other recreational activities”

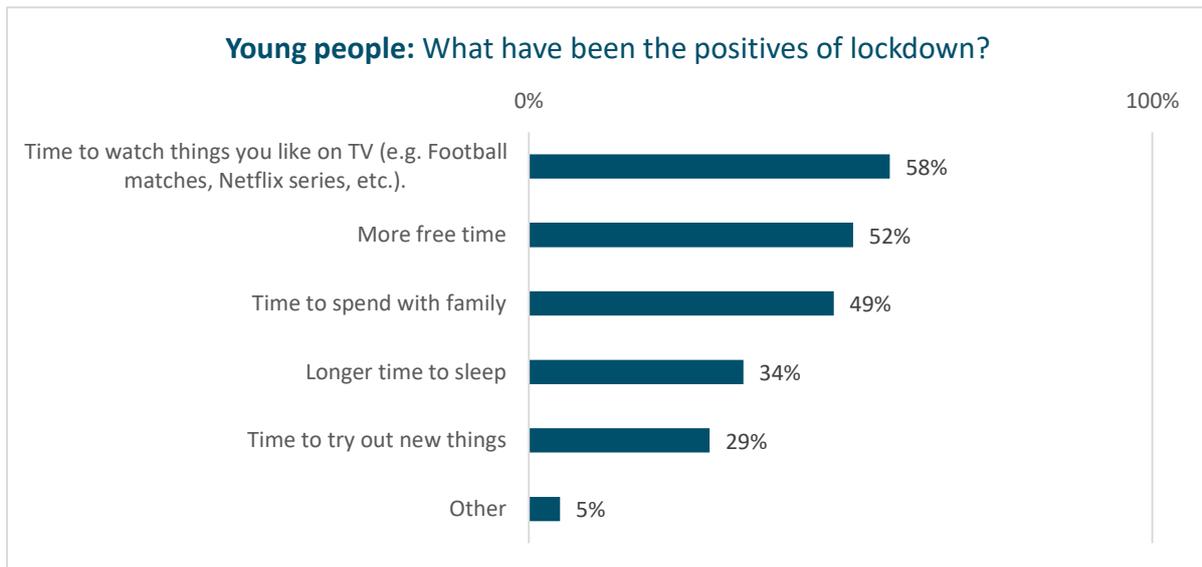
“Not being able to see extended family”

“Crime gangs”



The positives

The surveys included questions about the positives for young people and parents during the pandemic. The majority of young people selected TV time and/or free time, and just under half selected the time they spent with family:



Other responses included:

“Became more independent and confident”

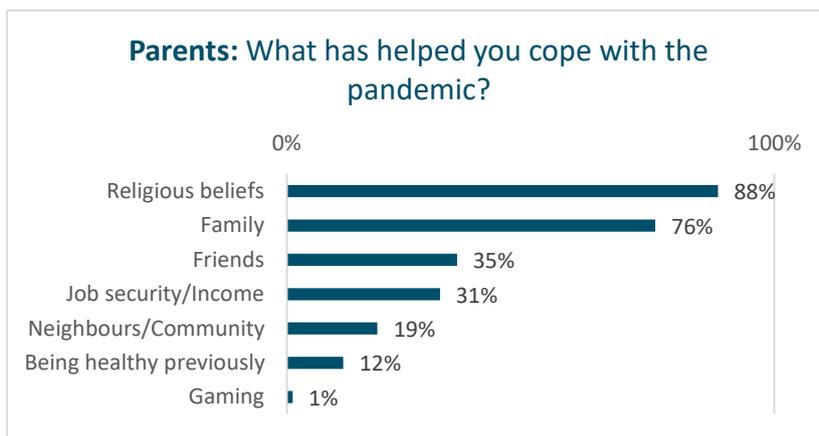
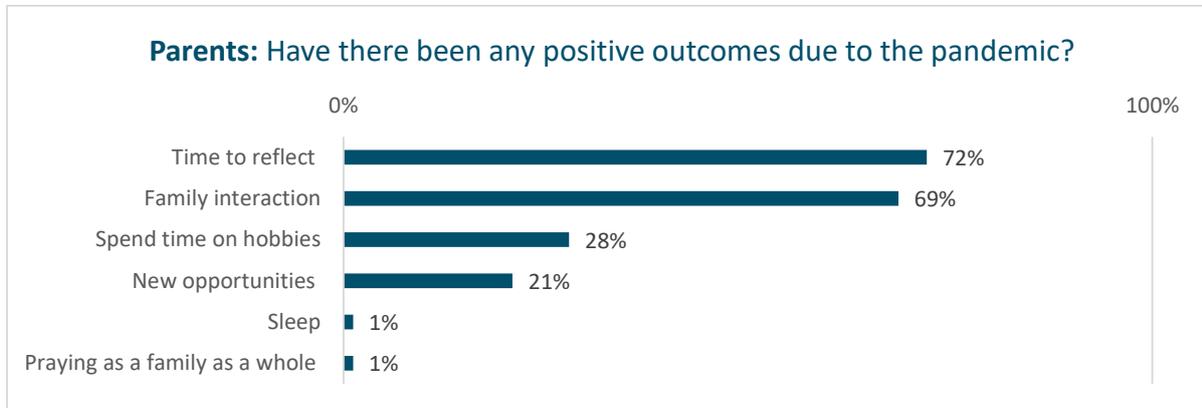
“Less hectic life”

“I bonded a lot with friends due to us playing games together online”

“New hobbies”

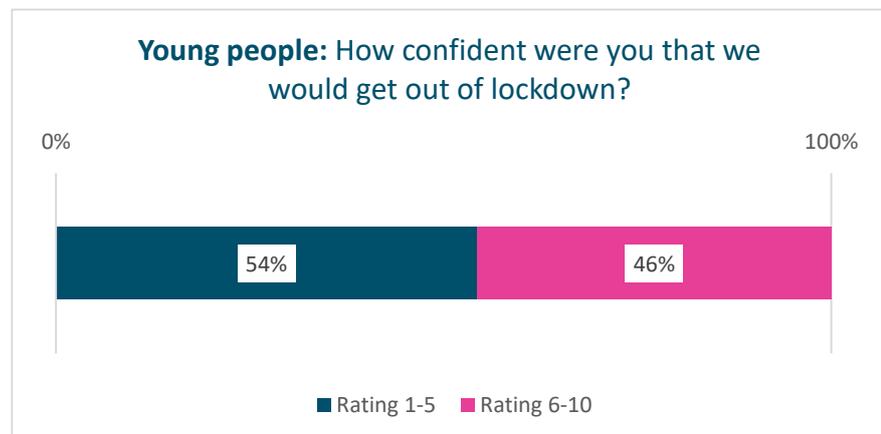
“Nothing much, not much improvement in activity”

For parents, positives to come out of the pandemic were the additional time for reflection and/or family interaction. Some parents also included spending time on hobbies and new opportunities:



Parents were also asked about the things that helped them cope during the pandemic. The majority of parents selected religious beliefs and/or family. Other popular answers included friends, job security and neighbours/community.

Young people were asked how confident they felt that we would get out of lockdown. A slight majority gave a rating of 5 or lower. The average rating was 5.4/10.

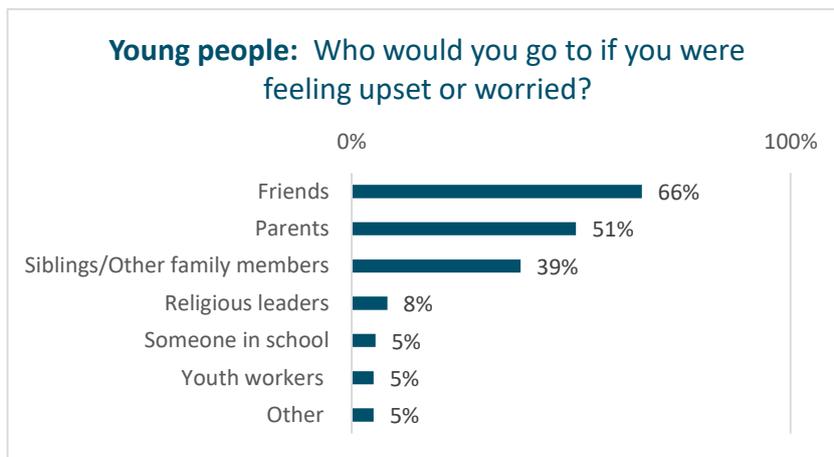




Support

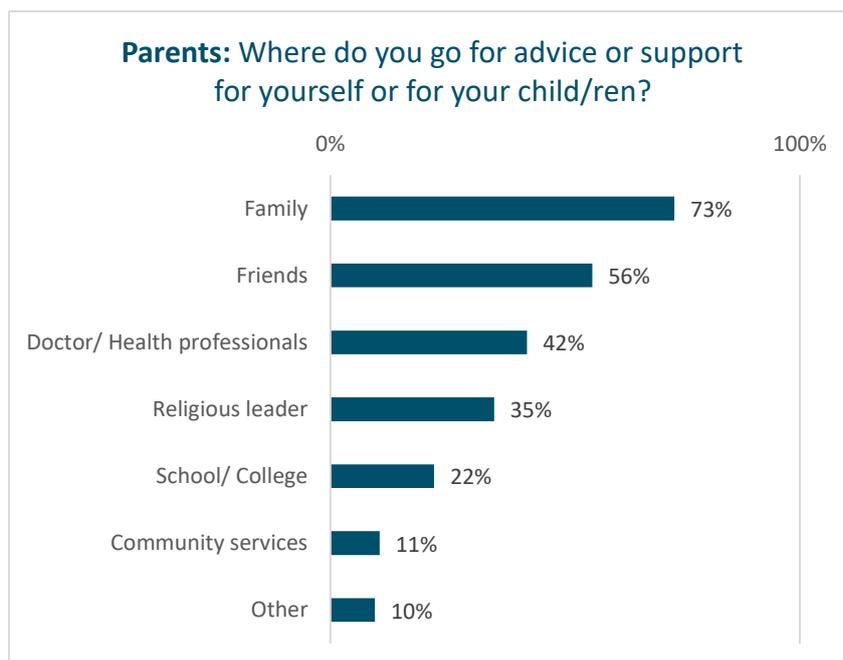
Young people and parents were asked about who they go to for support. Broadly speaking, friends and family were more popular sources of support for both groups compared to professionals.

The majority of young people said they would go to friends for support. Over half also said they would go to parents, with siblings/other family members also ranking quite highly. Far fewer young people said they would go to religious leaders, someone in school and/or youth workers:



Other responses included that young people would share with *“no one”* and *“I like to keep it to myself”*.

When parents were asked where they would go for support for themselves or for their children, the vast majority said family, though friends was also a very popular answer. Fewer people said they would go to a doctor/health professional, religious leader and/or school/college:

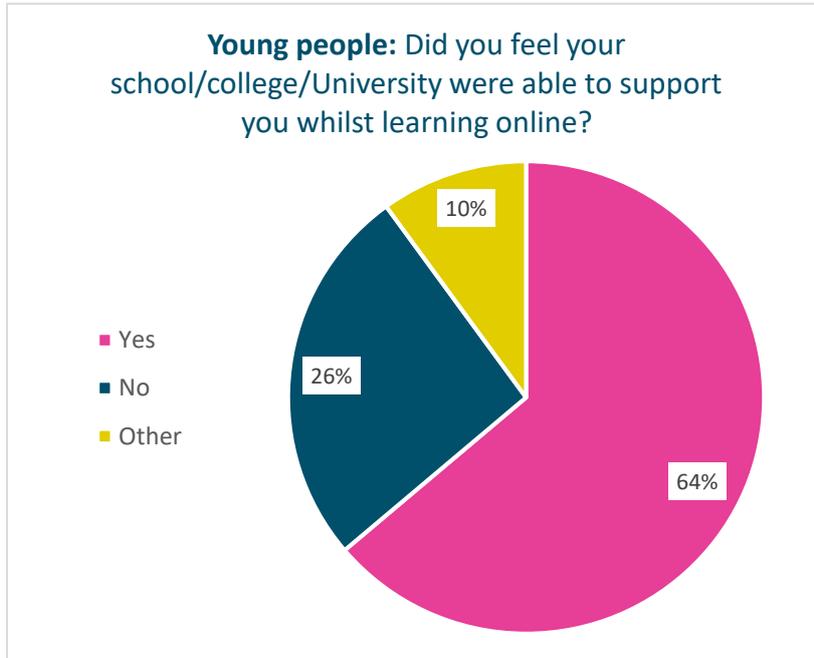


Other responses included:
“Online resources”
“Don’t feel I have any real support as such”
“Children madrassah”



Schooling and access to technology

The majority of young people felt that their school/college/university were able to support them whilst learning online:



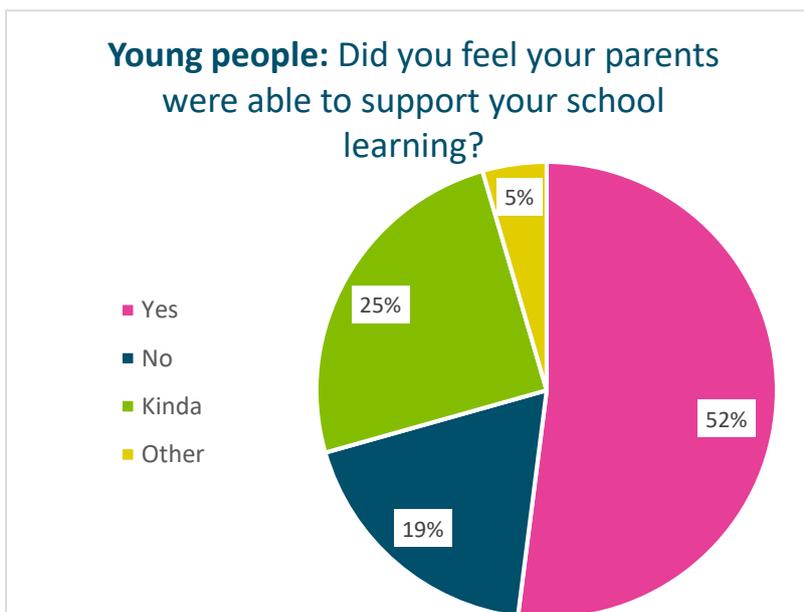
Other responses included:

“Kind of”

“Mostly but a lot of teachers were very hands off, leaving the kids to figure things out on their own and motivate themselves”

“Not always with homework”

The majority of young people also felt that their parents were able to support their school learning:



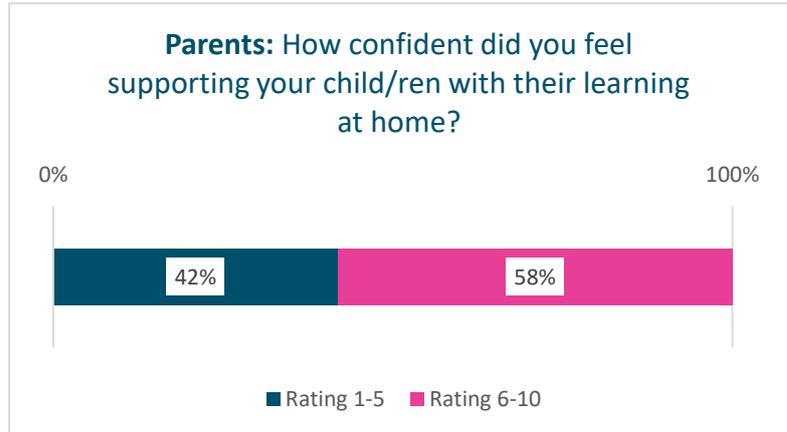
Other responses included:

“My mum can’t speak English but she would motivate me to try my hardest”

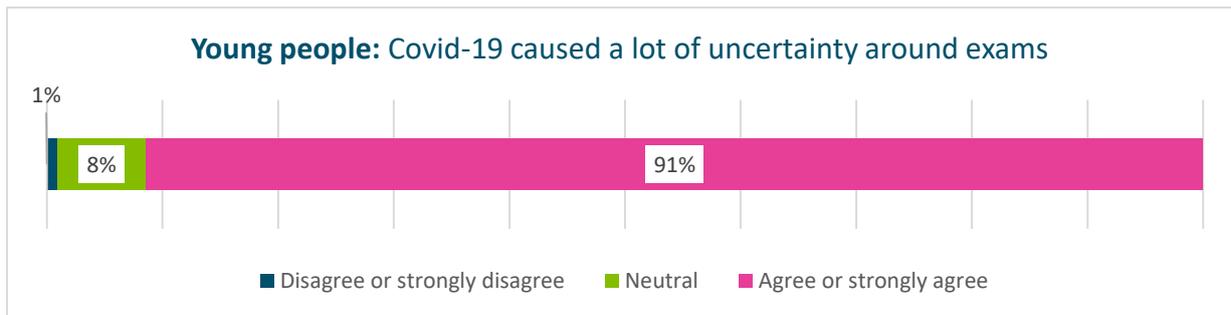
“I felt like my parents didn’t need to as I understood it very well”

“Didn’t need any support”

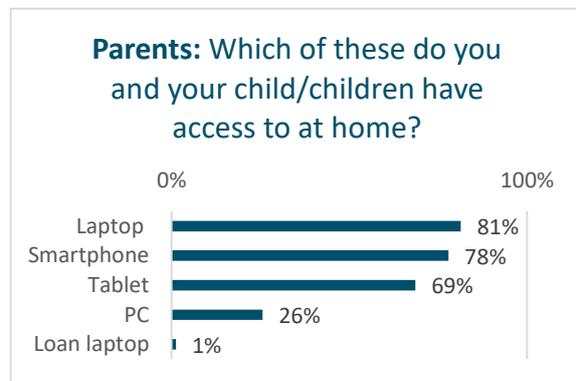
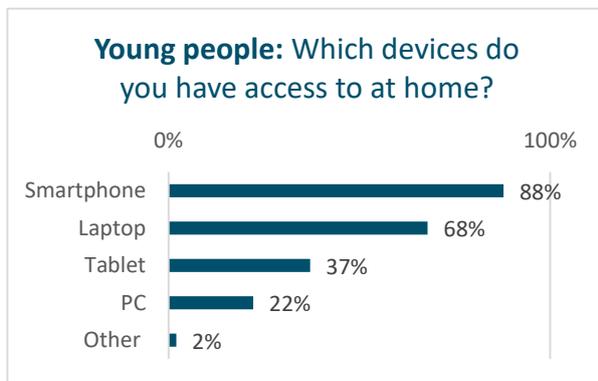
Similarly, parents were asked to rate how confident they felt supporting their children with their learning at home on a scale of 1-10. The average rating was 6.4/10



Even though most young people felt they received support from their school and/or parents for their online learning, the vast majority of young people still felt that Covid-19 had caused a lot of uncertainty around exams:

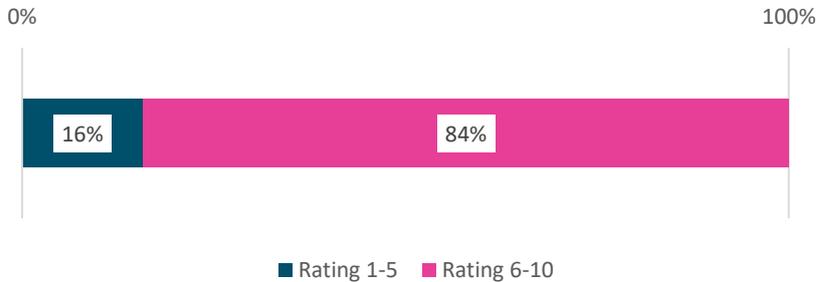


According to both surveys, young people had good access to technology. The majority of young people said they had access to a smartphone and/or a laptop, with smartphone being the top answer. The majority of parents also said their children had access to a laptop and/or a smartphone, but here laptop was the top answer:



Other responses for young people included “Smart TV”.

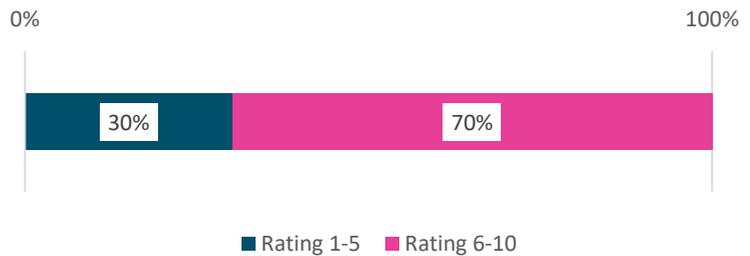
Young people: How confident are you with using technology to access your school/college/university work?



Young people were asked to rate how confident they felt with using technology to study on a scale of 1-10. A vast majority of young people gave a rating of 6 or higher. The average rating was 7.8/10.

Similarly, parents were asked to rate how confident they felt supporting their child's learning and engagement on a scale of 1-10. Parents' confidence was slightly lower than young people's, but the majority still gave a rating of 6 or higher. The average rating was 7/10.

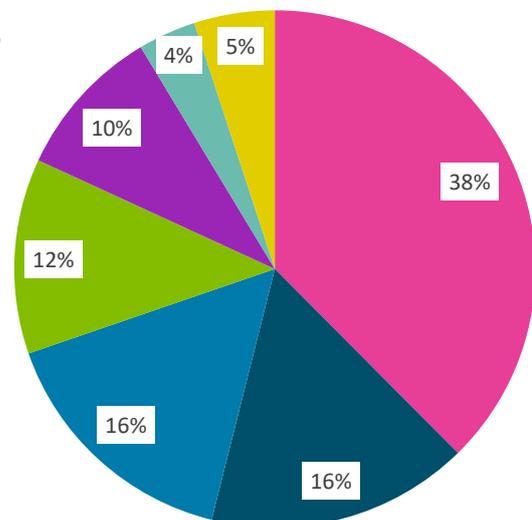
Parents: How confident are you in using technology to support your child/ren learning and engagement?



Young people had mixed feelings when they were asked if they felt that their parents understand technology. Although a large group selected yes, and a smaller group said no, a large number of young people gave more varied answers:

Young people: Do you feel your parents understand technology?

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but not when it's too technical (network issues etc)
- Kinda
- Dad does
- Mum does
- Other

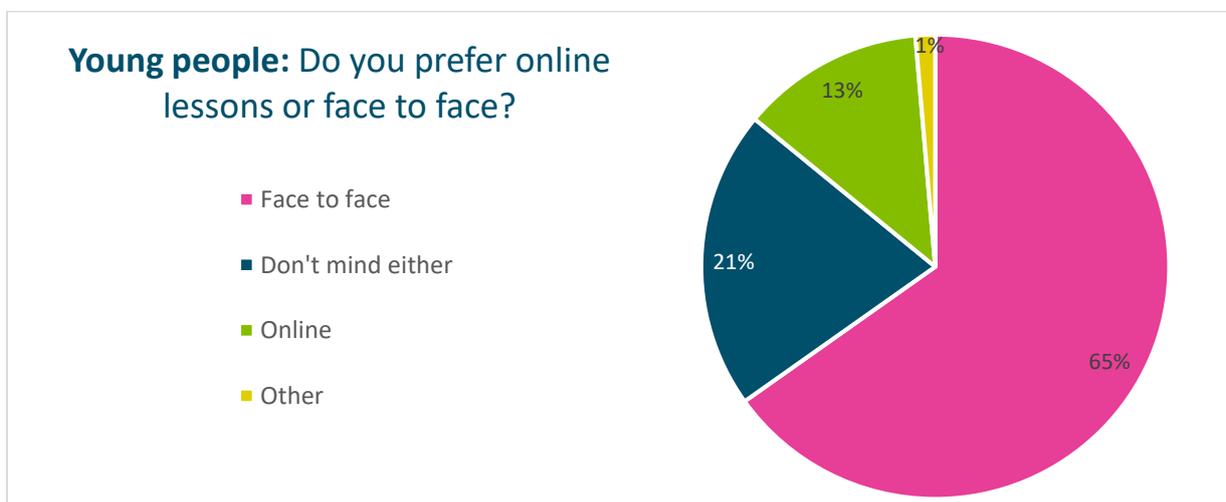
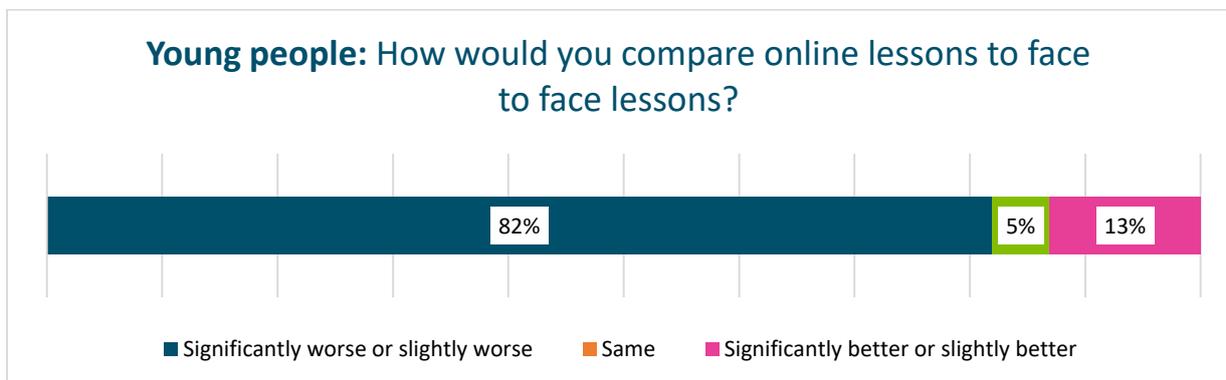


Other responses included:

“I think my parents do but I think my brothers are a better help and also I am very independent when it comes to it”

“Most of it yes but there’s a few things they still don’t know about”

When they were asked to compare online lessons to face to face lessons, the vast majority of young people selected significantly worse or slightly worse. The majority of young people also said they preferred face to face lessons:



Other responses included:

“None because I am very stressed at the moment, it’d be good for a break for our mental health”

“Depends”

“Recordings”

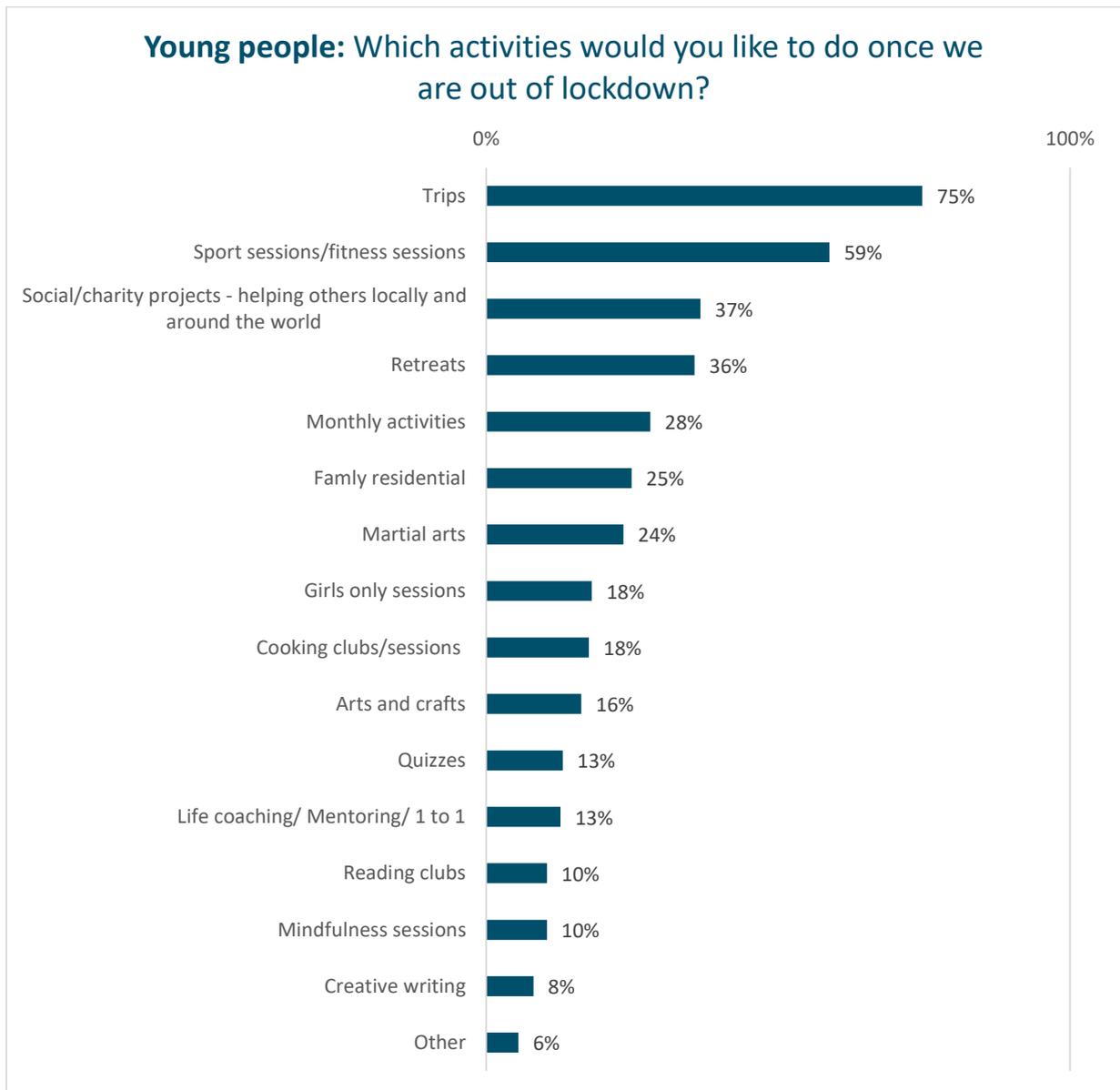


Activities, workshops and support

The surveys asked both young people and parents about the activities and workshops they wanted to do.

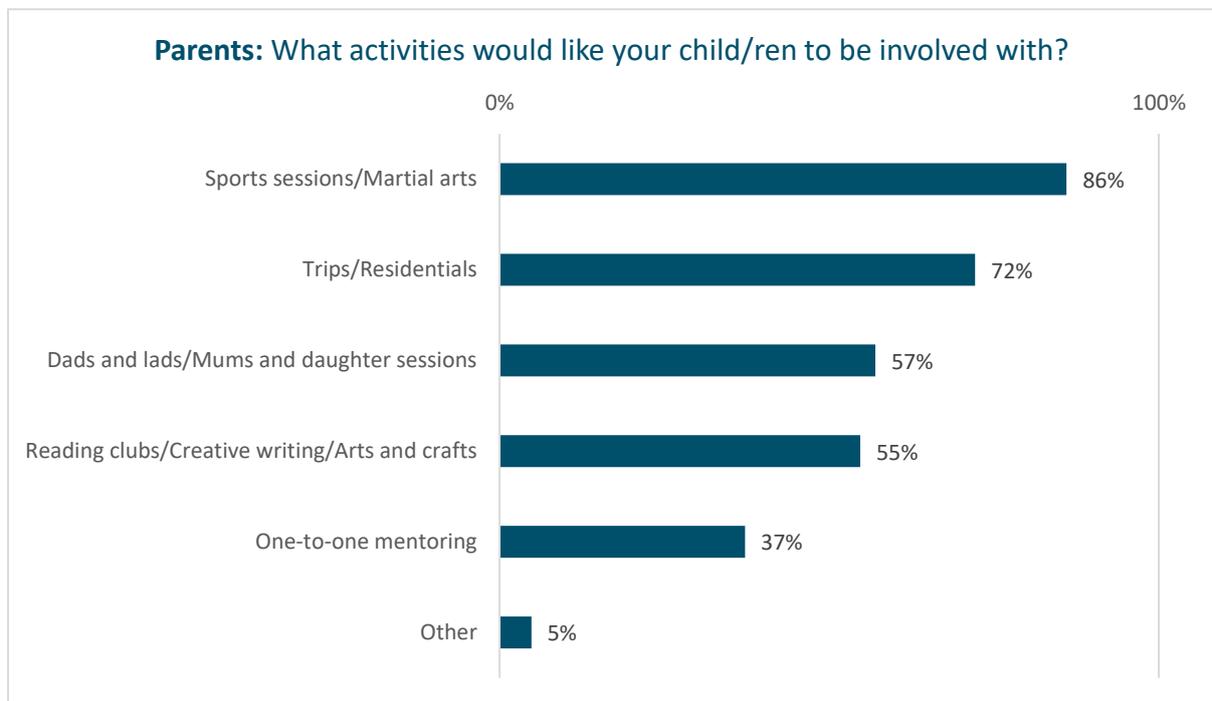
Activities

The majority of young people selected trips and sport sessions/fitness sessions. Other popular answers included social/charity projects and retreats:



Other responses included: Study clubs (e.g. for GCSEs), Scouts, specific sports activities (e.g. Football, Badminton, and Cricket) and career-related activities (e.g. paid work, careers fair, writing CVs/personal statement for college), gaming club or technology club, parties. Some young people were not sure.

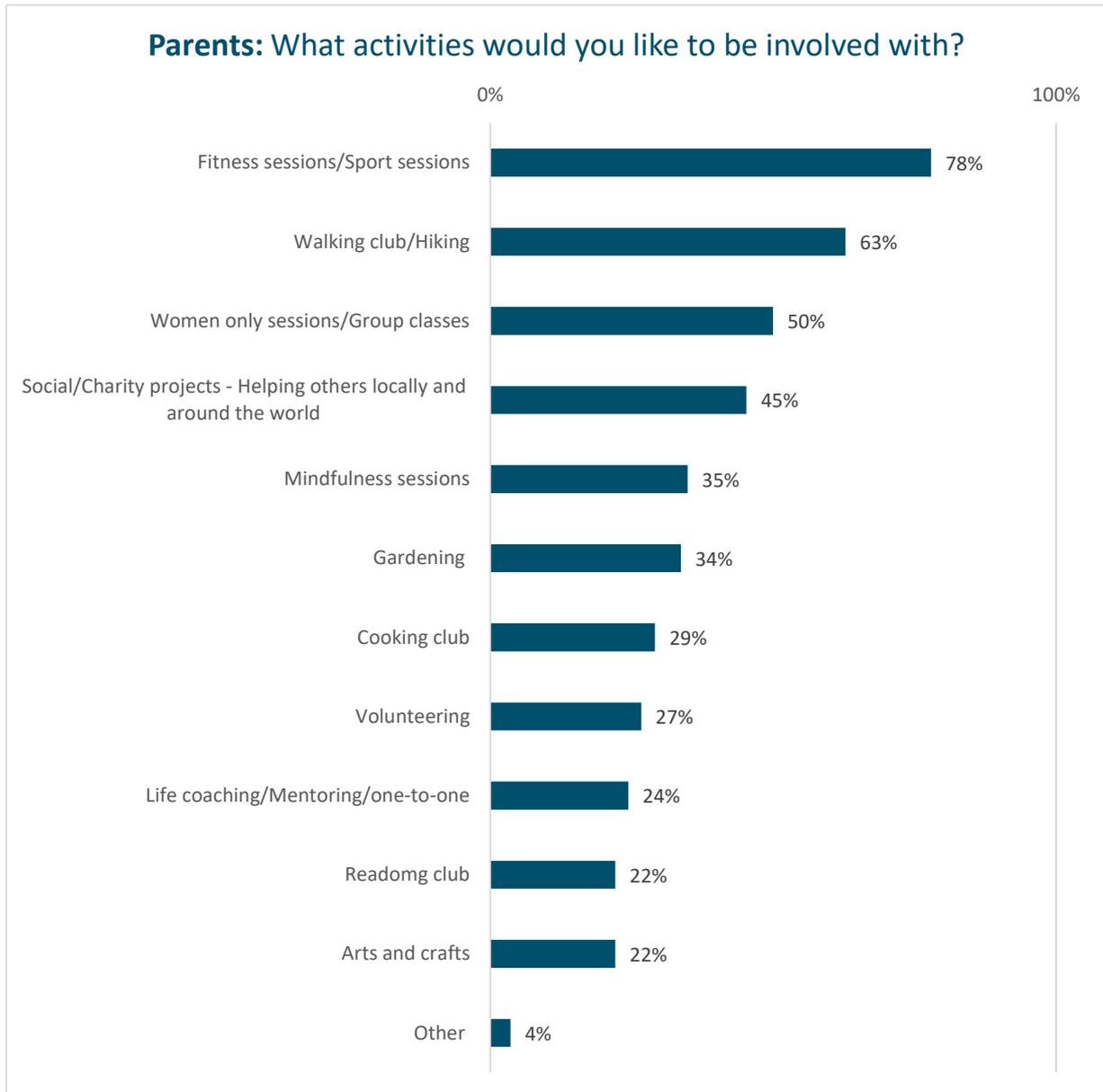
Parents were asked what activities they would like their child/children to be involved with. Answers selected by the majority of parents included sports sessions/martial arts, trips/residential, dads and lads/mums and daughter sessions, and reading clubs/creative writing/arts and crafts:



Other responses included: Mums and lads, and dads and daughter activities, as well as baby-related groups. One parent said:

“Space for them to be themselves and not pressured”

In terms of activities that they themselves wanted to be involved with, the majority of parents selected fitness/sport sessions and/or walking/hiking. Popular answers also included women-only sessions/group classes, social/charity projects, mindfulness sessions and gardening:



Other responses included:

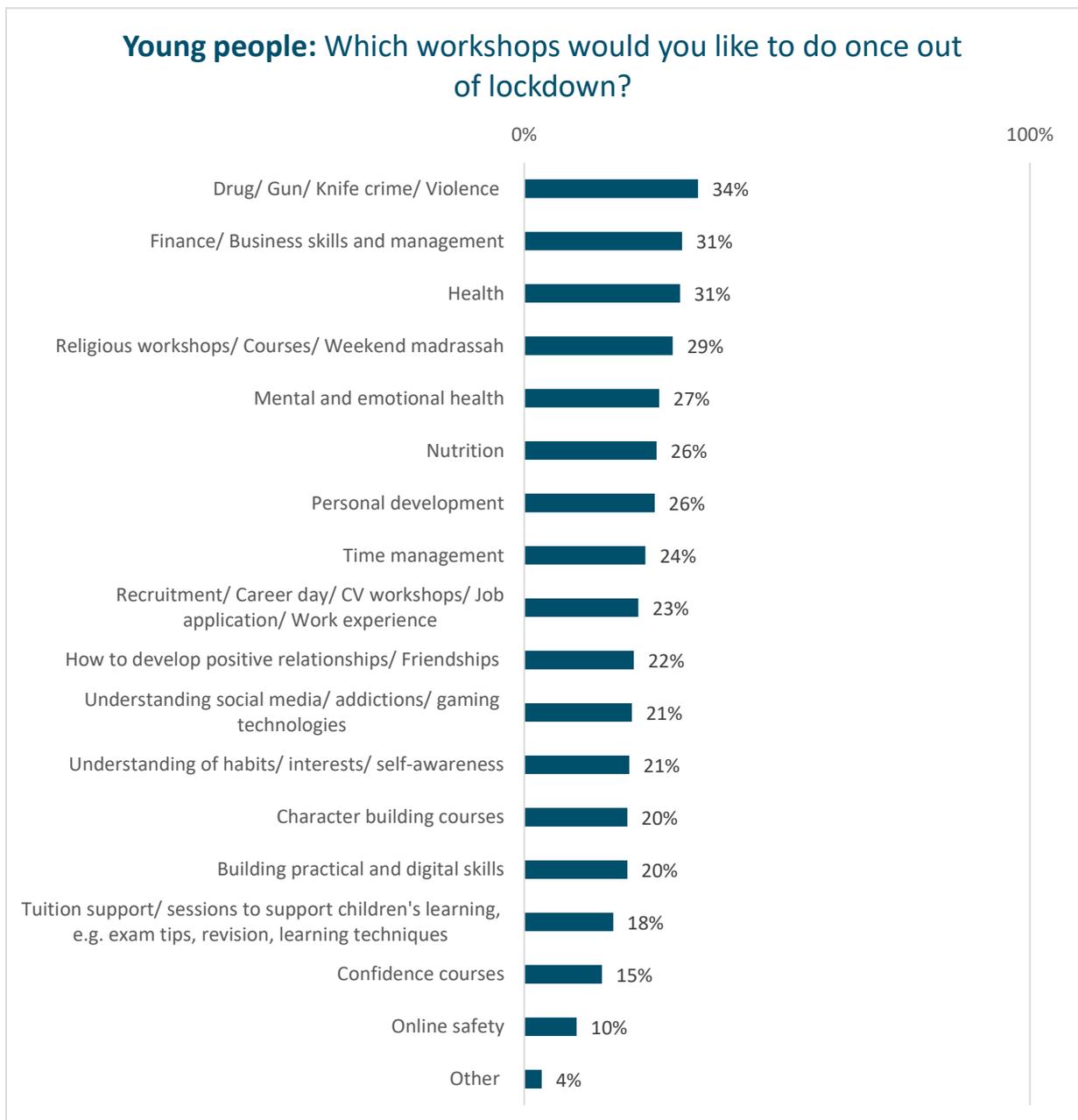
“Training”

“None really”

Workshops and training

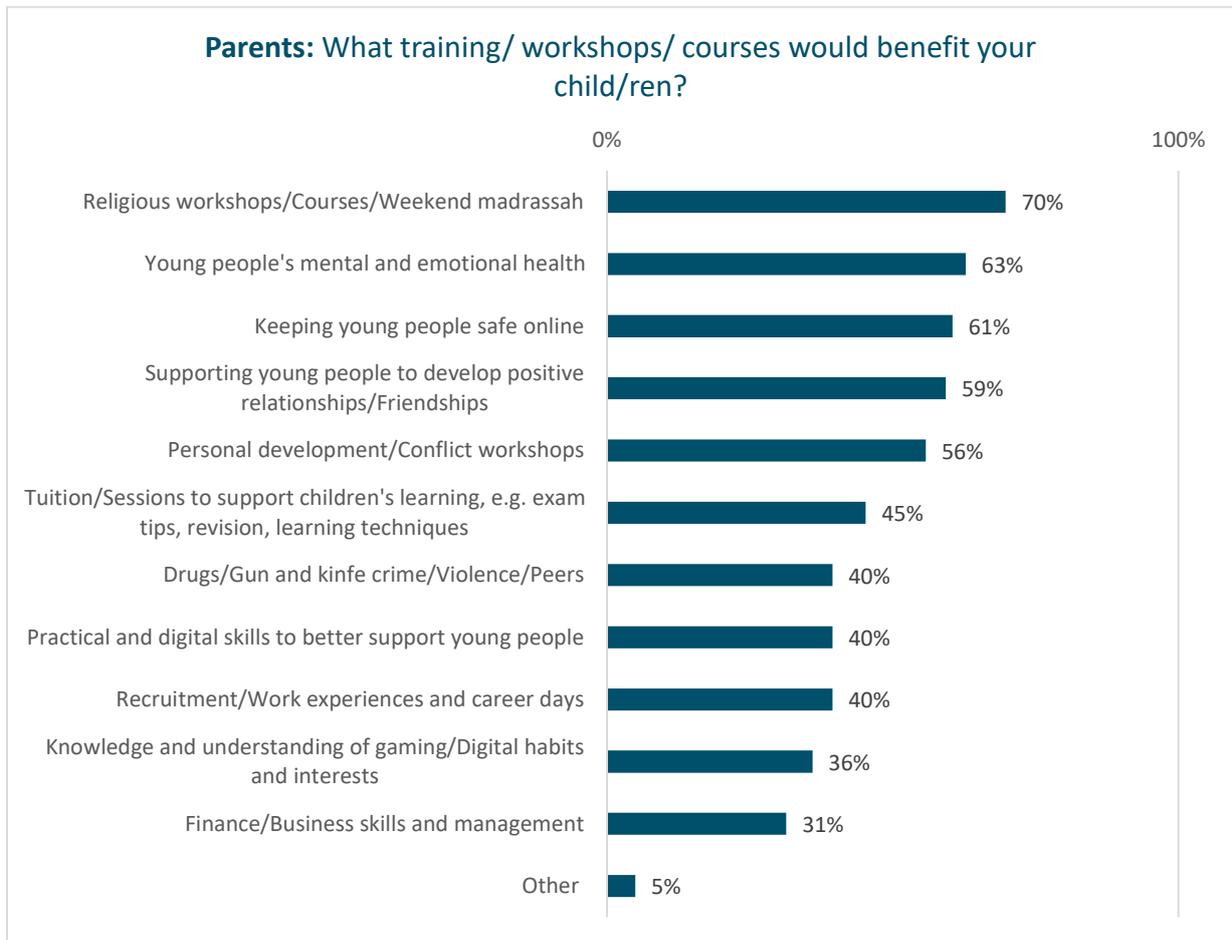
The surveys also asked about workshops and training that young people and parents wanted to be involved with.

Young people gave mixed responses to this question, with none of the topics being selected by a majority of participants. However, top responses included drug/gun/knife crime/violence, finance/business skills and management, health, religious workshops, and mental and emotional health.



Other responses included football sessions and work experience.

Parents were also asked about the training that they felt their children would benefit from, and selected different responses to the young people themselves. For example, the most popular answer for parents was religious workshops while for young people this topic ranked lower. The majority of parents selected one or more of the following: religious workshops, young people’s mental and emotional health, keeping young people safe online, supporting young people to develop positive relationships/friendships, and personal development/conflict workshops:



Other responses included:

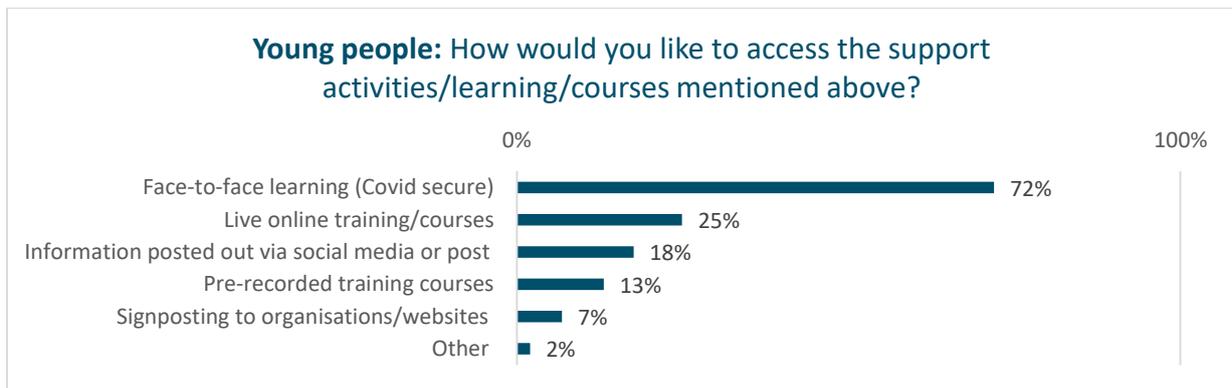
“Technology club”

“Baby groups with other mums”

In terms of training that parents themselves wanted to be involved with, the majority of parents selected one or more of the following: religious workshops/courses, trips/excursions, and mental health awareness. Other popular answers included family residentials, character building courses and parenting workshops:



Finally, the surveys asked both young people and parents how they would like to access these activities and learning courses. The vast majority of young people selected face-to-face delivery. Far fewer young people selected options such as live online delivery, information posted out via social media or post, and/or pre-recorded training courses.



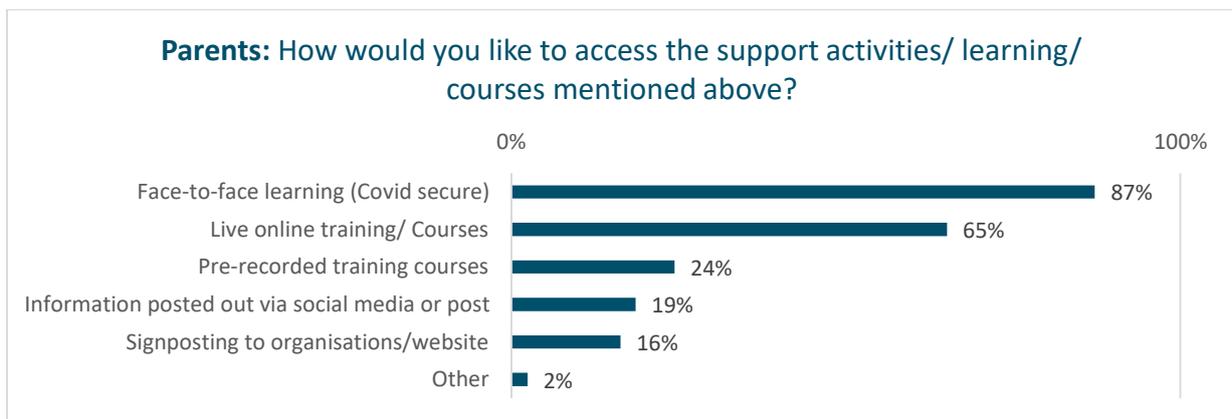
Other responses included:

“Extra revision”

“Anyway I don’t mind cause like some things are better face to face-and-some are better online”

“Not sure”

The majority of parents also selected face-to-face as a delivery method, but were also more likely to select live online training than young people. Like the young people who were asked, very few parents selected options like pre-recorded training courses and/or information posted out via social media or post:



Other responses included:

“None of the above”

“Face-to-face is always king”

Recommendations

Based on these findings, we would make the following recommendations to health and social care commissioners and providers, as well as voluntary sector organisations, who want to engage with and improve the health and wellbeing of the communities surveyed:

- Statutory organisations should use targeted and culturally-competent ways to better engage with the community which this survey relates to. They should be particularly aware that less than half of the parents we spoke to would go to a health professional for support for them or their children - and consider ways to improve these relationships
- Commissioners in statutory services should recognise the lack of trust in formal services/professionals and develop commissioning plans which take account of this, shifting more resource to ensure that trusted community-based services are able to meet the needs of communities
- Encourage and facilitate opportunities for young people to support each other where appropriate, for example through peer mentoring
- Activities and training should be organised according to the specific areas of interest of young people and parents in the community, especially where they could improve health and wellbeing. These should be delivered in a culturally-competent way, for example by connecting and working with organisations that the community have trust in (such as mosques or other faith organisations)
- Wherever possible, activities should be organised in a face-to-face (Covid secure) way