



Eastbourne Listening Tour: Short Survey

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healthwatch
East Sussex

Introduction

Our rationale for exploring experiences in Eastbourne

Each year Healthwatch East Sussex undertakes a dedicated 'Listening Tour' to explore the health, care and wellbeing themes within a specific location or community.

In 2022, following an interruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we undertook our first face-to-face Listening Tour since 2019. Our focus was the experiences of residents, community groups and professionals in Eastbourne Borough.

Between the 15th and 30th October 2022, we focused on '*meeting people where they are*' and visited a wide range of organisations and locations across the Borough so that we could hear as many voices as possible.

Our goal was to learn as much as we could and use this information to identify local issues and priorities that we will share with decision-makers.

Our aims were to:

1. Explore (and raise) awareness of Healthwatch amongst local people and groups
2. Capture a snapshot of people's experiences of health and care services
3. Identify people's current and future priorities for health and care services
4. Explore the impacts of the 'cost of living' crisis on people's lives and wellbeing

Listening Tour 2022: Eastbourne Borough

Tell us about your experiences of Health and Care Services

Healthwatch East Sussex is the local independent watchdog for health and care. We will share our findings with decision-makers to support positive change.

Please complete our survey and tell us:

- Your experiences of local health and care services
- If local health and care services are meeting your needs?
- How you feel health, care and wellbeing support could be improved?

1. Have you heard of Healthwatch East Sussex?

Yes	No	Don't Know

2. Which health or care services have you used in the last 12 months?

If 'None', please progress to Q5.

3. Please tell us about your experiences of health and care services over the last 12 months

4. Over the last 12 months what has been your overall experience of local health and/or care services?

Got better	Remained the same	Got worse	Not sure

What we did

Our survey methodology

Between the 15th October and 13th November 2022, Healthwatch East Sussex ran a short public survey to gather the health and care experiences of people in Eastbourne Borough, including residents, workers and visitors.

Our seven questions were developed through reviews of previous Listening Tour surveys, engagement with partners and piloting with local people.

We distributed hard copies of the survey at engagement events throughout the Listening Tour, both with the public and when collaborating with specific community and user groups.

Staff also used these to hold structured conversations when 'out-and-about' during the Listening Tour fortnight.

Paper versions were available, with staff available to complete the survey online or over the telephone.

240 responses were received to this survey by the 13th November deadline.

This report summarises the experiences of the respondents and identifies our key findings.



What we heard – Our key findings

What you told us about health and care services:

- We asked people about their levels of confidence in accessing health and care services when they need them. Of those responding, we heard that: **45.5%** were **Very/Quite Confident**, **38.3%** were **Unsure** and **7.1%** were **Not Confident at all**.
 - Approximately a quarter of our respondents told us that a key concern in accessing health and care services was the ability to **access services when they needed them**, and any **waiting times** they might face. This primarily included GPs, Dentists and emergency services, but also waits for hospital diagnostics and surgical procedures.
 - Some people told us they were confident that the system would be able to meet their needs as and when they arose, with perceptions largely based on previous experiences of using health and care services.
 - We asked people about their direct experiences of health and care services over the last 12 months. We heard that: **27.5%** felt they had **Remained the same**, **27.1%** were **Not Sure**, **25.8%** felt they had **Got worse**, and **17.1%** felt that they had **Got better**.
 - **Access to services/waiting times, quality of services, communication and quality of care and treatment** were the themes most identified in respondent's comments.
 - **Access to services** and **waiting times** were raised in twice as many comments as any other, with a majority highlighting negative experiences, concerns and anxieties. Primary care services (Doctors, Dentists, A&E) were those most identified in people's experiences of waiting times and delays.
 - The **improvements in health and care services** that respondents most wanted to see were: **Better access to GPs** (27.5%); **Reduced waiting times** (23.3%); **More staff** (10.8%); **Developmental changes** (9.2%) and **More face-to-face appointments** (8.3%).
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What we heard – Our key findings

What you told us about health and wellbeing:

- We heard that the quality of services and overall quality of care and treatment received were generally good once services had been accessed, but improved communications and information for patients and the public could help to manage expectations.
- Feedback highlighted people's appreciation for the expertise, professionalism and compassion of staff in the NHS and wider health and care services.
- Of the comments received on **people's experiences of health services** over the last 12 months: **35.8%** highlighted a **mixed** sentiment, **32.6%** a **positive** sentiment and **31.6%** expressed a **negative** sentiment.
- We heard about changes to respondents' behaviour since the **cost-of-living crisis** had begun earlier in 2022.

Changes identified by our respondents included:

- » 50.0% telling us that they had become **more anxious about the future**.
- » 34.6% had **good quality sleep less often**.
- » 20.8% **felt lonely**, in part due to changes in other parts of their behaviour.
- » 19.2% had **socialised** with friends and family **less regularly**.
- » 17.5% engaged in **physical activity less often**.
- » 22.9% **ordered fast food** or takeaways on a **less** regular basis.
- » 15.8% **consumed alcohol less** regularly.



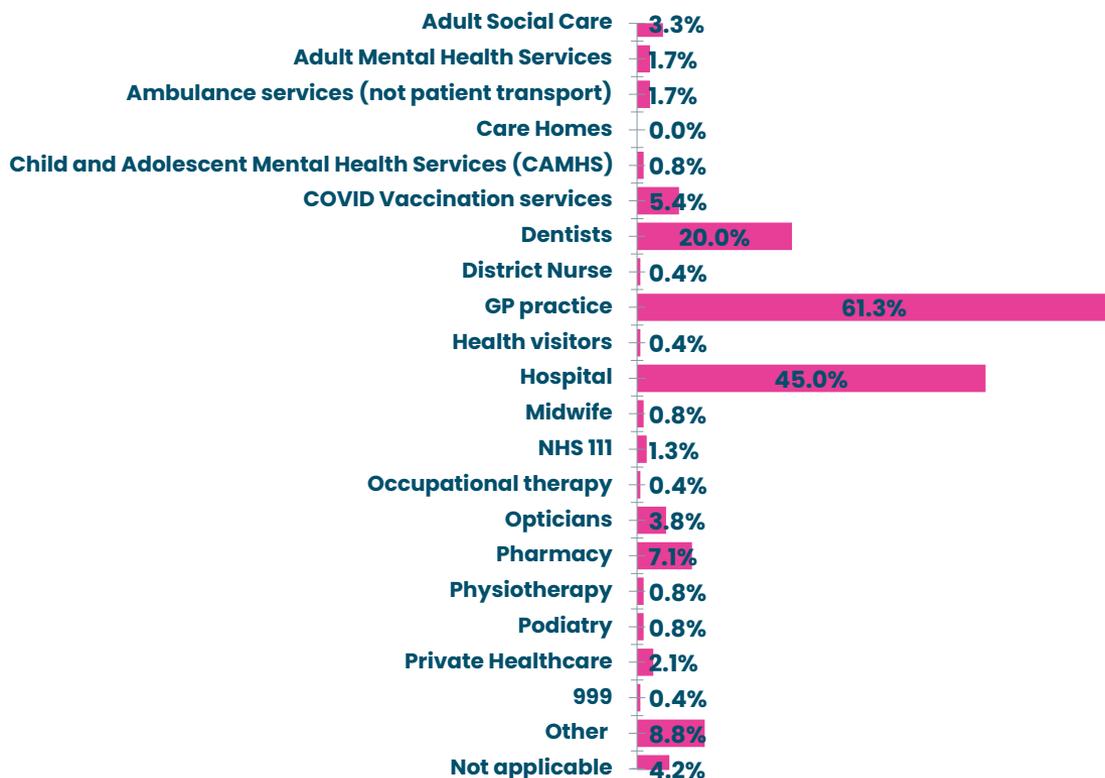


**Your experiences of health
and care services**

What you told us about health and care services

Which health or care services have you used in the last 12 months?

Which health or care services have you used in the last 12 months?



Respondents told us that the health and care services they had most accessed were:

- **GPs** (61.3%)
- **Hospital services** (45.0%)
- **Other services** (8.8%)
- **Pharmacy** (7.1%)
- **COVID Vaccination Services** (5.4%)

What you told us about health and care services

Please tell us about your experiences of health and care services over the last 12 months

We asked people to tell us more about their experiences and why they had offered the ratings to health services that they had. We received 206 comments, and the most common themes were:

Access to services and **Waiting Times** *(identified in 112 comments)*

People highlighted concerns and frustration about the length of time it took to be able to access services and get appointments and/or treatment. Most comments were negative, and concerns were most identified in relation to GPs and dentists, but also hospital services, ambulances and NHS 111. These focused on the amount of time and effort often required to successfully contact services, with some identifying they would/had given up trying due to the waits involved. Some people indicated paying for health/care services privately so they could get them faster.

Quality of services *(identified in 59 comments)*

Comments were split evenly between positive and negative experiences. Positive comments often highlighted the professionalism, dedication and care offered by NHS staff in various roles, as well as quick and efficient access and follow-ups by services. Positive comments tended to highlight good experiences once treatment had been accessed. Negative comments referred to a lack of professionalism, poor knowledge, limited communication and a lack of personalisation in care.

193 of the comments received which outlined people's level of satisfaction over the last 12 months expressed a sentiment: **35.8%** a **mixed sentiment**, **32.6%** a **positive sentiment** and **31.6%** expressed a **negative sentiment**.

What you told us about health and care services

Please tell us about your experiences of health and care services over the last 12 months

Communication(s) *(identified in 25 comments)*

A range of communication-related issues were identified, with comments generally being negative and highlighting problems experienced by patients and the public.

Issues raised included: a failure to consider health literacy and adapt methods of communication, people feeling rushed in appointments with a limited opportunity to ask questions, limited clarity about options and charges (dentists), delays in getting follow-up appointments, information and results, a lack of face-to-face appointments (primarily with GPs), poor communication between health and care services (especially between primary and acute care); and concerns over the systems used for booking appointments, especially GP practice phone systems.

Quality of care and treatment *(identified in 20 comments)*

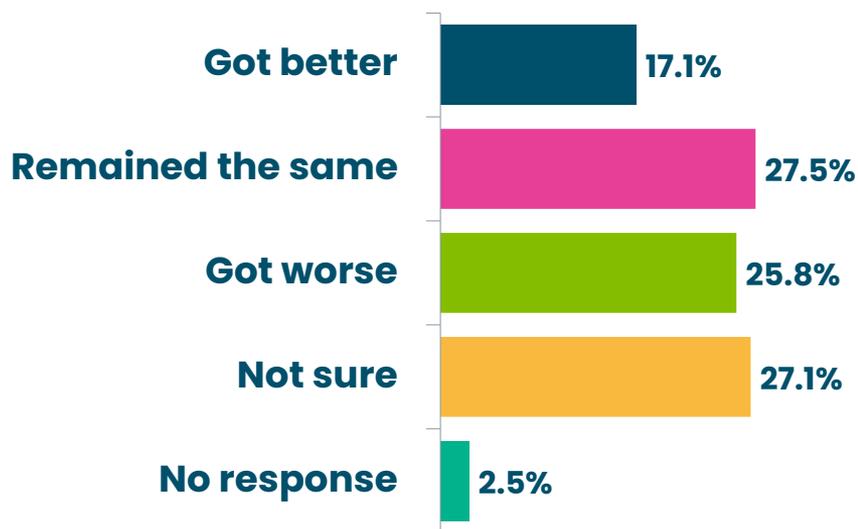
Respondents commented on the quality of the service they received. Positive comments often highlighted services delivering high quality outcomes which patients appreciated. This included fast and responsive care, with minimal delays and a fast transition between different services/departments. This largely applied to primary, acute and community NHS services.

Negative aspects were identified as a lack of perceived professionalism (including rudeness), poor attentiveness and limited consideration of the individuals' needs, a lack of appropriate facilities or equipment and poor liaison between health and care services causing frustration.

What you told us about health and care services

Your overall experience of health and care services in the last 12 months

What has your direct experience of local health or care services been over the last 12 months:



We asked people about their direct experiences of health and care services over the last 12 months.

We heard that:

1. **27.5%** felt they had **Remained the same**
2. **27.1%** were **Not sure**
3. **25.8%** felt they had **Got worse**
4. **17.1%** felt that they had **Got better**

The most common response was that respondents felt that their experiences of using health and care services had remained the same during the last 12 months.

Positive feedback about health and care services

"Wonderful GP Practice, very kind staff. Carer has been great. ASC [Adult Social Care] have been very helpful in providing an assessment and independent living aids - excellent service. EBC [Eastbourne Borough Council] have also been very good. Use of technology is excellent."

"I've been extremely satisfied. I've had a double bypass. Two years ago and scans and other visits - all good. I couldn't be more satisfied." If you have heart problems or cancer they're superb. They do an amazing job."

"CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service] - exceptional, no concerns. GP surgeries - very difficult to access/get appointments, get through on the phone. Dentists - no problem."

"Amazing! Vaccine service for my family what an incredible achievement from NHS. GP services have been able to speak to or see a GP when needed."

"Very good have nothing but praise."

"Yes, very good over years. Had heart triple bypass and right valve replacement."

"Good service by GP and outpatient service."

Negative feedback about health and care services

*"Cannot get East Sussex and Rother DC to talk to each other re Adult Social Care
At the moment Father-in-law in DGH
[District General Hospital] waiting
discharge, but no care home available."*

*"12hr+ wait for elderly relative with cancer
who fell and broke hip for an ambulance
10 Hours spent to A&E for different
emergency. Receptionists/triage staff very
unfriendly + unhelpful. But doctors
wonderful when finally seen. Impossible to
get a face-to-face doctor's appointment."*

*"Issues gaining follow-up from GP re: high
blood pressure.
Barriers to appointments- gave up trying
to seek help and support."*

"2 x long waits in A&E (7 and 13 Hours)."

*"Long wait for Ambulance, suspected heart
attack and Mum was left in A&E for 6 hours
because she had not booked in. Neurology
consultation cancelled 3 times, over a year
wait for follow up appointment."*

*"Has a broken tooth- 9th August and still
waiting to get appointment. Travelling
from Hastings to Horsham for dentist. Wife
has arterial defibrillation- has a lump on
left kidney- never speaks to the same
person twice. Long waiting times. Letters
aren't clear for patients- needs better
explanation."*

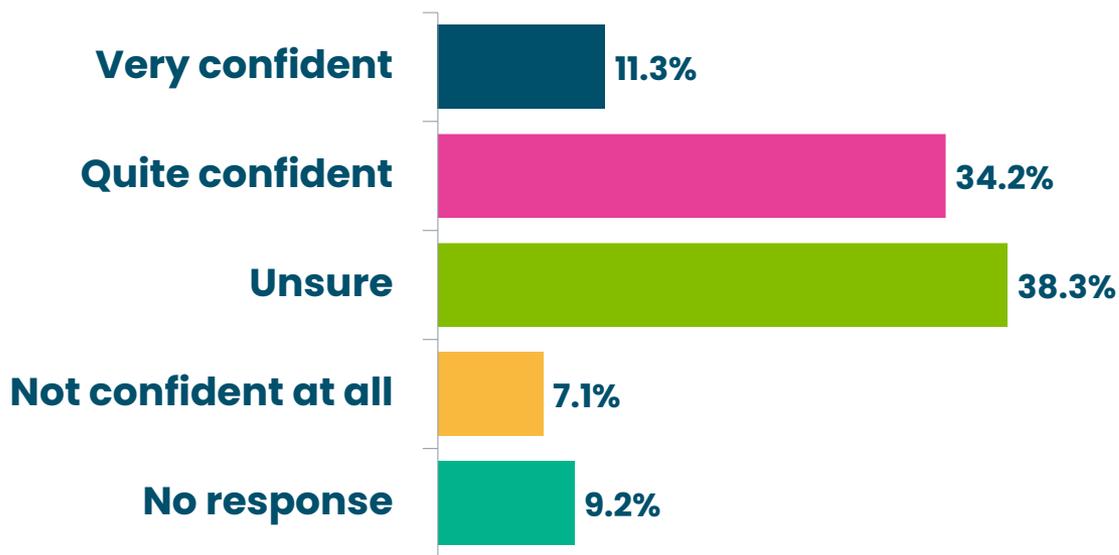


Views on health and care services

What you told us about health and care services

Your confidence about accessing health and care services

How confident do you currently feel about accessing health or care services when you need them?



We asked people about their levels of confidence in accessing health and care services when they need them.

We heard that:

1. **45.5%** were **Very/Quite Confident**
2. **38.3%** were **Unsure**
3. **7.1%** were **Not Confident at all**

It is concerning that fewer than half of the respondents have a lack of confidence that services will be accessible when they need them.

What you told us about health and care services

We asked survey participants to tell us ‘**How confident do you currently feel about accessing health or care services when you need them?**’

The three most common issues people told us about were:

Access to services and waiting times (*identified in 89 comments*)

Three-quarters of comments highlighted concerns around delays and being able to access services when they needed to. Most comments related to GPs, NHS Dentists and hospitals, but A&E, Ambulances, NHS 111, Pharmacies and Mental Health services were also mentioned. A quarter of people highlighted positive experiences or confidence that NHS and care services would be available to them if required. Comments often highlighted that many respondents had both positive and negative experiences.

Communication (*identified in 26 comments*)

We heard that communication from and between health and care services wasn't always as good as it could be. People highlighted not knowing how and when to contact services, not receiving responses when they did contact them, and the need to repeat information. Broken promises and a failure to meet expectations which services had themselves set were identified as key frustrations. Some respondents told us they found it challenging trying to find a human to speak to, but some comments highlighted a feeling that some online services (e.g. bookings) had made things easier for people to engage services.

Quality of care/treatment (*identified in 22 comments*)

We received a number of comments praising the quality of care and treatment they had received across a range of services. A majority indicated that once health and care services had been accessed, the advice, treatment or support received was often professional, effective and delivered positive outcomes. Many respondents were very grateful for the support they received. Some negative experiences and feelings were relayed, and these highlighted concerns around the speed of follow up, impacts of staff shortages, delays, unprofessional attitudes, but with a recognition that services are regularly stretched.

How confident do you currently feel about accessing health or care services when you need them?

"Some services you can get hold of and they listen. Then there's others who you can't get in touch with, then when you do they don't want to listen. They seem to be trying to privatise it."

"There aren't enough appointments, people can't access what they need. There is no communication with services, they don't explain things so I don't know what's going on."

"Most bookings are computerised now so makes things easier but you can always talk to a person if you need to."

"Both her and her Mother have dentures and both need to be corrected but cannot get dental appointment."

"You have saved my life three times over the years!"

"They have been there when I need them."

"You cannot get appointments, long waiting times, never know what is going to happen."

"Worried about NHS cuts and winter overload and Ambulance wait times. But when you are face-to-face with the medical team the NHS is still excellent."

"I have used two services in the Eastbourne Hospital and Conquest and exemplary treatment each time."



Health and care priorities

Where would you most like to see improvements in health or care?

We asked respondents to identify where improvements in health services were most urgent, and then to explain why this was the case.

The services most identified as priorities for improvement were:

1. **Better access to GPs** (27.5%)
2. **Reduced waiting times** (23.3%)
3. **More staff** (10.8%)
4. **Other changes** (9.2%)
5. **More face-to-face appointments** (8.3%)

Better access to GPs

The most common request was for improved access to GPs, including contacting surgeries and reduced waiting times to get through and to make an appointment. Timely access and appointments in the form people preferred (mainly face-to-face) was highlighted as a priority. Increased access out-of-hours and at weekends was also flagged. Delays were identified as putting people off trying to make contact.

Waiting times

Waiting times were identified as something people wanted to see reduced across all NHS services, especially amongst primary care services: GPs, Dentists and emergency services. This also extended to Adult Social Care, Community Care and wider community services. Comments acknowledged the pressures, but highlighted anxiety about being able to access health and care services when they needed to.

Where would you most like to see improvements in health or care?

More staff

Responses to the survey highlighted a desire to see more staff employed in health and care services as a means of increasing capacity and reducing waiting times. Comments particularly highlighted a strong desire for increases in the numbers of GPs/Doctors, NHS dentists and nurses, and a desire to see more frontline staff overall and a reduction in managers and administrators.

Other changes

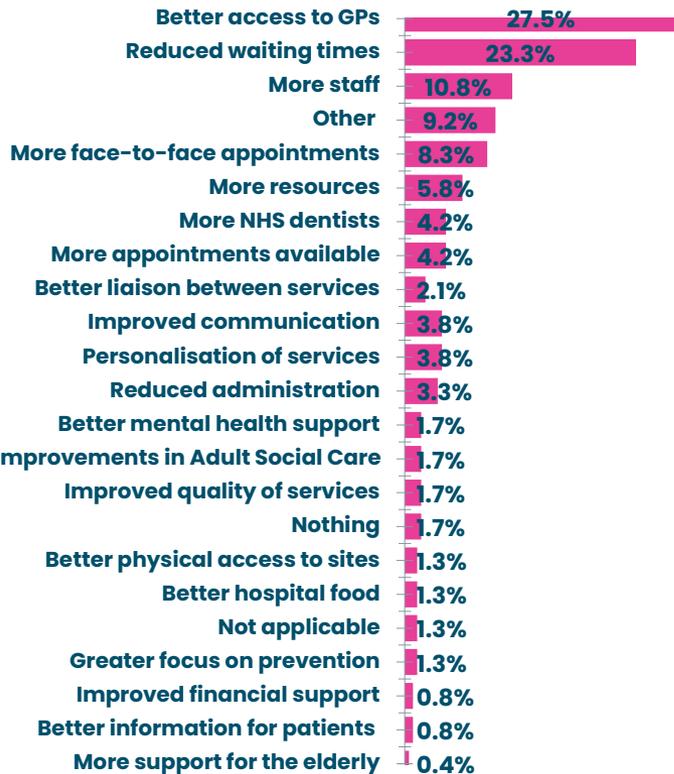
Respondents drew attention to a wide range of things they would like to see changes in. These included: improvements in the quality of hospital food, greater access to patient transport services, enhanced menopause awareness and support, increased support for the health and care needs of the homeless, stopping fat-phobic care and steps being taken to minimise wastage in areas such as PPE.

More face-to-face appointments

We heard that people were particularly keen that face-to-face appointments were made more available, especially amongst the services offered by GPs. There was a clear preference amongst many that this should be available on request, and concerns were highlighted about the effectiveness of triage and diagnoses undertaken remotely rather than face-to-face. Comments highlighted the more personal and engaging nature of face-to-face appointments, as well as some concerns over the use of telephone and video services.

Where would you most like to see improvements in health or care?

Where would you like to see improvements in health or care?



Respondents told us that the changes in health and care they most wanted to see were:

- **Better access to GPs** (27.5%)
- **Reduced waiting times** (23.3%)
- **More staff** (10.8%)
- **Other changes** (9.2%)
- **More face-to-face appts** (8.3%)

Where would you most like to see improvements in health or care?

*"More GPs/Doctor appointments accessibility and availability
Less wait times at A&E for ambulances by having more staff."*

"More funding to increase appointments available."

"Dentistry, quality and actually seeing a dentist."

"Relationship between social care and hospital. More holistic, run as one. Not joined up very well. When it works its ok, but for most people it doesn't."

*"Funding across the NHS
Cut down admin/management and increase frontline
Increase number of staff at the sharp end."*

"Speed of appointments and access to healthcare."

"More low-level mental health support for young people."

"Face-to-face appointments, cannot see how you feel over the phone."

"The confidence that you're going to call your surgery and get an appointment and it be face to face. When you get through the layers of receptionists, the doctors are working hard."



**People's everyday health
and wellbeing**

What you told us about your everyday wellbeing

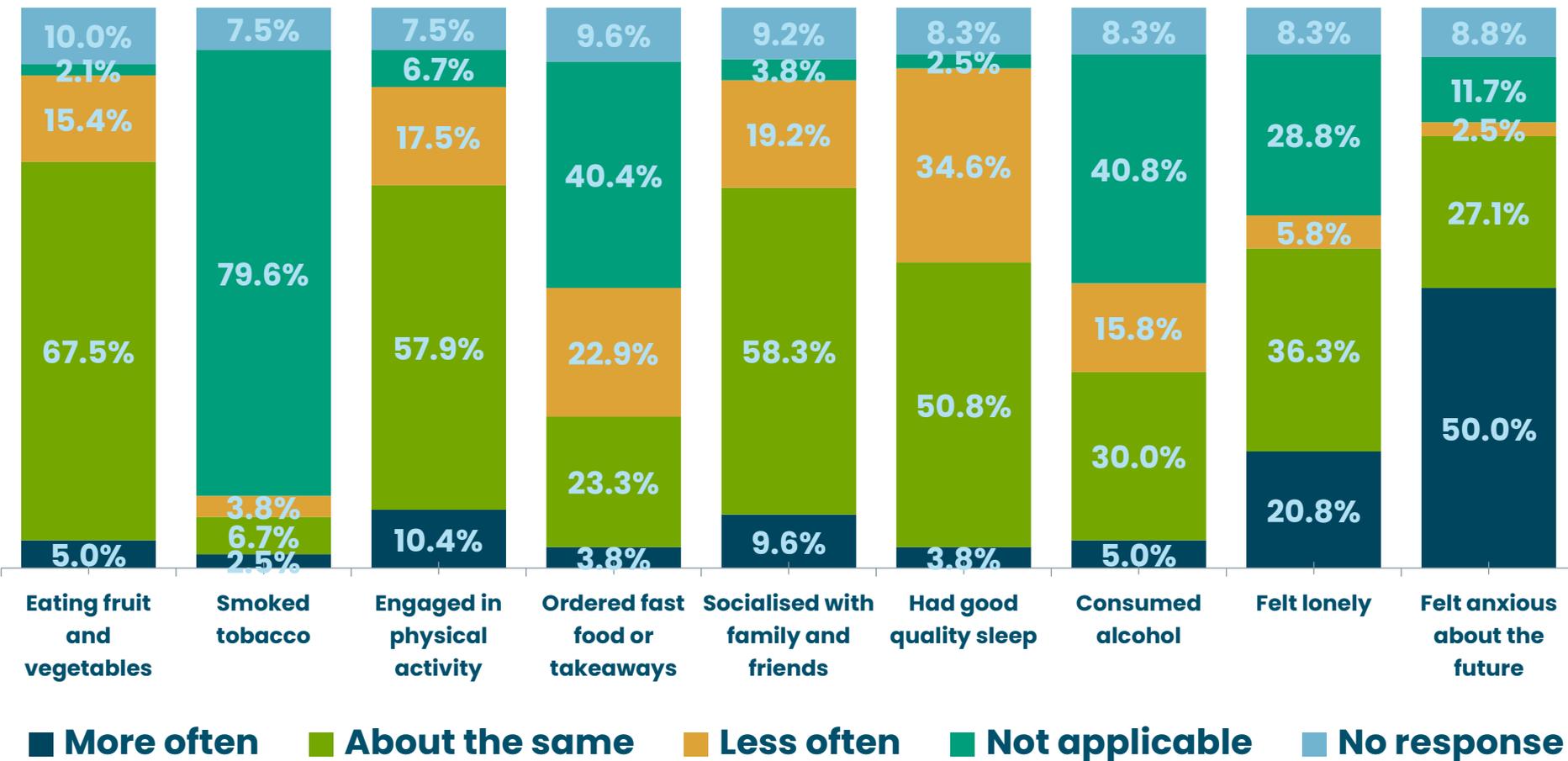
Since the 'Cost of Living' crisis began, have any of the following things changed for you?

We asked respondents about any changes they had made to their behaviour since the cost-of-living crisis had begun earlier in 2022, or wider effects it may have had on them.

Changes identified by our respondents included:

- Half of the people (50.0%) we heard from told us that they had become **more anxious about the future** since the 'cost of living crisis' began.
- A third of respondents (34.6%) had **good quality sleep less often**.
- Approximately a fifth (19.2%) had **socialised with friends and family less regularly**.
- Approximately a fifth (20.8%) highlighted that they **felt lonely**, in part due to changes in other parts of the behaviour.
- Nearly one-in-five (17.5%) had **engaged in physical activity less often**.
- 22.9% had **ordered fast food or takeaways** on a **less regular** basis.
- Nearly one-in-six (15.8%) had **consumed alcohol less regularly**.

Since the 'Cost of Living' crisis began, have any of the following things changed for you?



For more information

Healthwatch East Sussex
Freepost RTTT-BYBX-KCEY
Healthwatch East Sussex
Greencoat House
32 St Leonards Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3UT

www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

 @HealthwatchES

 Facebook.com/HealthwatchESussex

t: 0333 101 4007

e: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

healthwatch