



How are you feeling?

Linking with young people in Northumberland

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Like many organisations, Healthwatch Northumberland wants to be better at hearing directly from young people about their experiences of healthcare. In spring 2023 we developed a campaign with the help of young people, entitled 'How are you feeling?' to gain an insight into the actual state of children's and young people's health and wellbeing in Northumberland.

The project was led by our high school student volunteers. They designed and piloted a survey, an explainer video and promotional materials, as part of the campaign to ensure it was attractive to young people. We worked with secondary/high schools and colleges in the county to promote and distribute the survey to their students, and also promoted the campaign more widely. We provided paper copies when required but most students completed the survey online. An accessible version of the survey was also made available online and as a paper copy.

We offered a prize for the school/college with the highest proportion of student responses and students who took part had the chance to enter a prize draw to win a voucher.

Who did we hear from?

We had 615 responses from over 17 schools/colleges to the main survey (see appendix 1, fig. 13) and 36 responses from five schools/colleges to the accessible version of the survey (see appendix 1, fig. 14). This means we heard from a total of 651 young people aged between 13-24 years old.

Most of the respondents to the survey were aged 13-15 years old. Over two fifths of the respondents were aged 13 years (240 respondents, out of 564 who answered this question), with just under a fifth of the respondents aged 14 years old (94 respondents) and approximately a fifth were aged 15 years old (112 respondents) - see Appendix 1, Fig. 15 for a full breakdown of the ages of respondents.

According to the 2021 census, which breaks ages down into five-year bands, Northumberland has 17,400 residents aged 10 - 14 years old and 15,700 residents aged between 15 and 19 years. These five-year bands show there are 6,960 residents aged 13 and 14 years old and 3,140 residents aged 15.

We, therefore heard from just under 5% of the population of 13 - 14 years old and just under 4% of the 15-year-old population.

What we heard

Feelings

We first asked, 'How are you feeling today?' and gave a five-point scale, using emojis, for their response. 589 young people replied to this question on the main survey. The responses are shown in fig.1.

Almost half of the responses were positive (choosing either a laughing or a smiling face emoji) at 49% and only 16% were negative (choosing either a scowling or a sad face emoji). Just over a third (35%) were neither positive nor negative (choosing an ambivalent face).

In the accessible survey, 36 young people responded, and their responses are shown in Fig.2. Almost three quarters (72%) of the respondents were in a positive frame of mind, choosing either a laughing face or a smiling face emoji. Only 11% chose a scowling or sad face and only 17% chose an ambivalent face.

How are you feeling today? (n = 589)

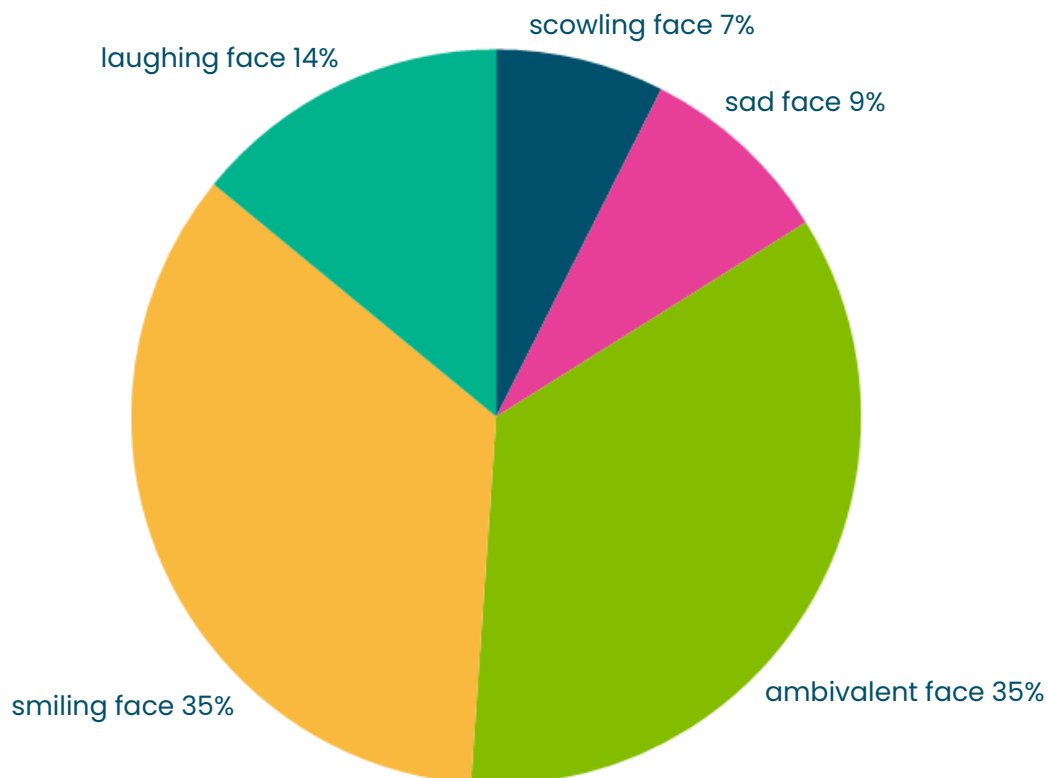


Fig.1 Breakdown of responses in the mainstream survey to the question, 'How are you feeling today?'

How are you feeling today? (n = 36)

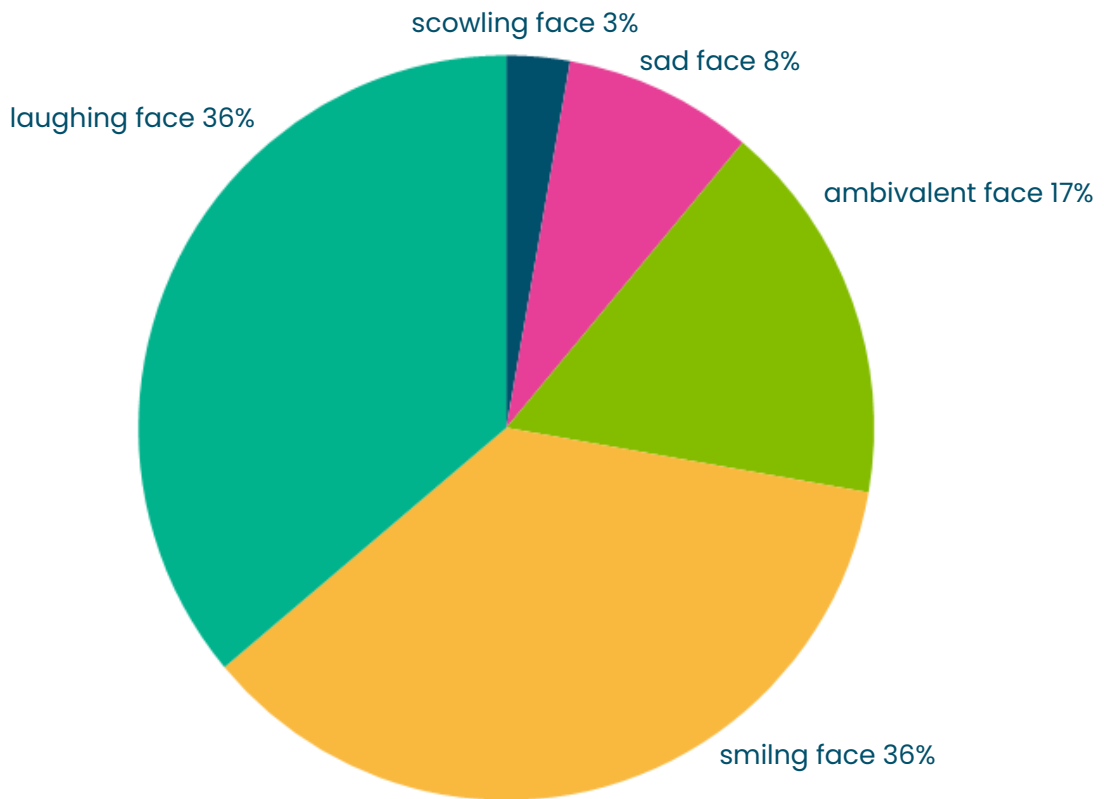


Fig.2 Breakdown of responses in the accessible survey to the question, 'How are you feeling today?'

Respondents were then asked to choose three words from a list of 12 (six pairs of opposite words) that best described how they were feeling. The 12 words to choose from were:

happy	sad
hopeful	hopeless
positive	negative
calm	anxious
sociable	lonely
relaxed	stressed

The responses from the mainstream survey are shown in fig.3 below.

Choose three words that best describe how you're feeling today (n = 584)

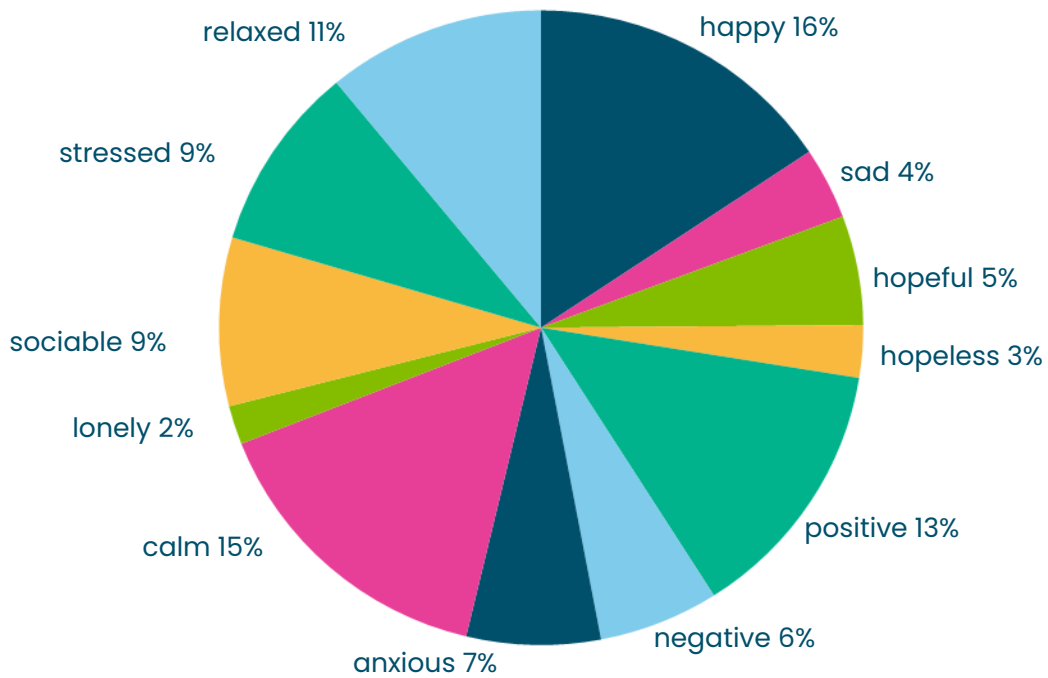


Fig.3 Breakdown of responses in the mainstream survey to the question, 'Tick THREE words that best describe how you're feeling today'.

Words with a positive sentiment were chosen in 69% of the responses whereas words with a negative sentiment were chosen 31% of the responses. Likewise, the respondents who completed the accessible survey were asked the same question. Their responses are shown in Fig.4.

Choose three words that best describe how you're feeling today (n = 35)

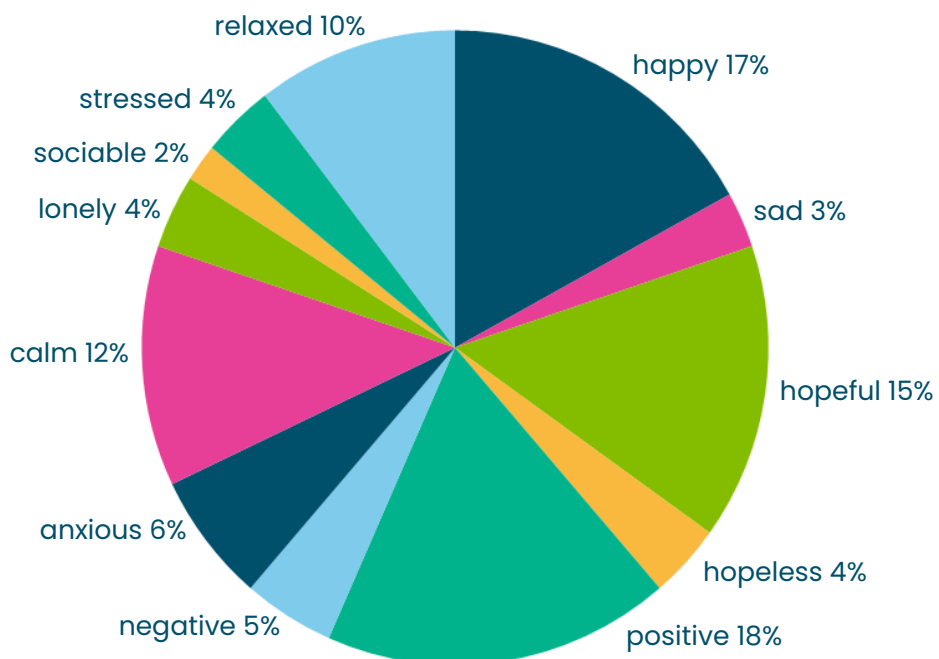


Fig.4. Breakdown of responses in the accessible survey to the question, 'Tick THREE words that best describe how you're feeling today'.

For the young people answering the accessible survey, words with a positive sentiment were chosen in 74% of the responses whereas words with a negative sentiment were chosen in 26% of the responses.

Interestingly, in both surveys, the answers given to this question (Q2) were more positive than the answers to question 1 (How are you feeling today?) – mainstream survey, 49% positive responses (Q1) versus 69% positive responses (Q2) and 72% (Q1) versus 74% (Q2) for the accessible survey.

In question 3 we invited the respondents to tell us anything more if they wanted. In the mainstream survey the majority of students skipped this question (433 of 605 respondents in total, 72%) and of the 172 that did respond, 71 said 'no, thank you' (41%). This was a free text question, so the answers were summarised by key word then categorised as positive sentiment, negative sentiment, neutral, unclear or 'did not want to respond'.

26% of the answers were negative in sentiment with 'tired' being the most common negative sentiment expressed and 'sick', 'stressed', 'anxious' and 'unhappy' being the next most common negative sentiments expressed. 16% of the answers were positive in sentiment with 'good' being the most positive sentiment expressed followed by 'happy' and 'excited/positive/productive' as the next most positive sentiments expressed.

6% of the answers expressed neutral sentiments with 'alright', 'okay' and 'so-so' combined making up most of the responses.

11% of the responses were unclear in their meaning.

We also asked the respondents to the accessible survey to tell us more if they wanted to. We only had eight respondents answer this question out to 36 in total. Given the low number of responses we cannot draw any firm conclusions.

Services

We next asked 'Which of the following have you used in the past 12 months?' and gave a list to choose from:

- Doctor (GP)
- Other GP surgery service, e.g. Nurse
- Dentist
- Optician
- Hospital
- Chemist
- Mental Health Services
- School Nurse
- 999/Ambulance service
- NHS 111
- Other including non-NHS/private services (please specify)

The breakdown of responses is shown in Fig. 5.

Tick all the services you have used in the last 12 months (n=561)

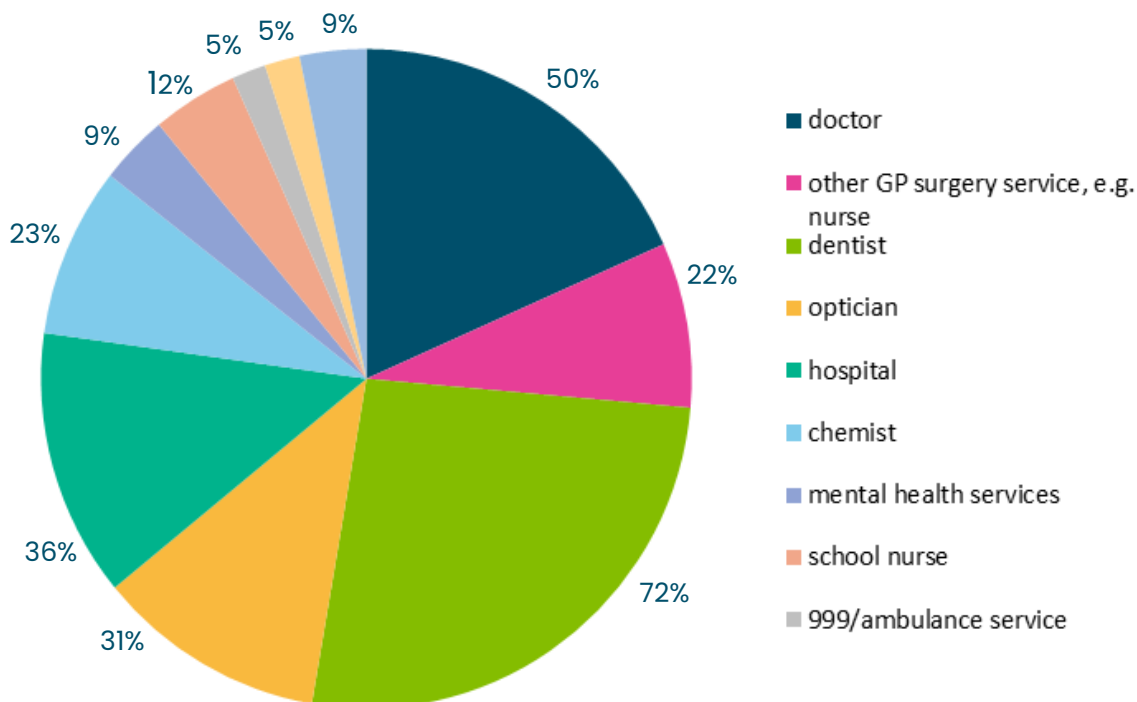


Fig. 5. Breakdown in responses from the mainstream survey to the question, ‘Which of the following have you used in the past 12 months?’

We asked the same question on the accessible survey and the responses are shown in Fig. 6.

Tick all the services you have used in the last 12 months (n=35)

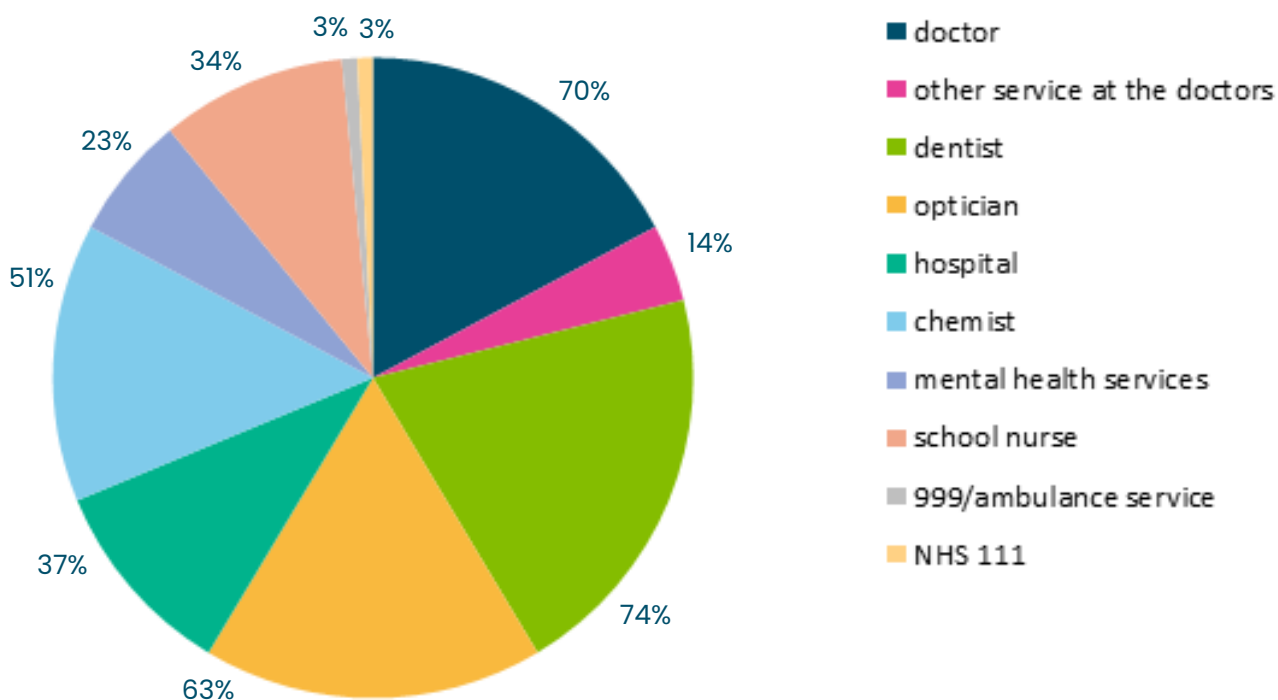


Fig. 6 Breakdown in responses from the accessible survey to the question, “Which of the following have you used in the past 12 months?”

We wanted to know a bit more about the last health service that was used by the young people, what went well about that service and what could have been better. Young people who answered the mainstream survey were accessing the dentist the most. 36% of the replies mentioned dentist, followed by 16% who mentioned GP and 15% who mentioned 'hospital'. Services last used by respondents broke down as follows in Fig. 7 below.

Last health service used (n=376)

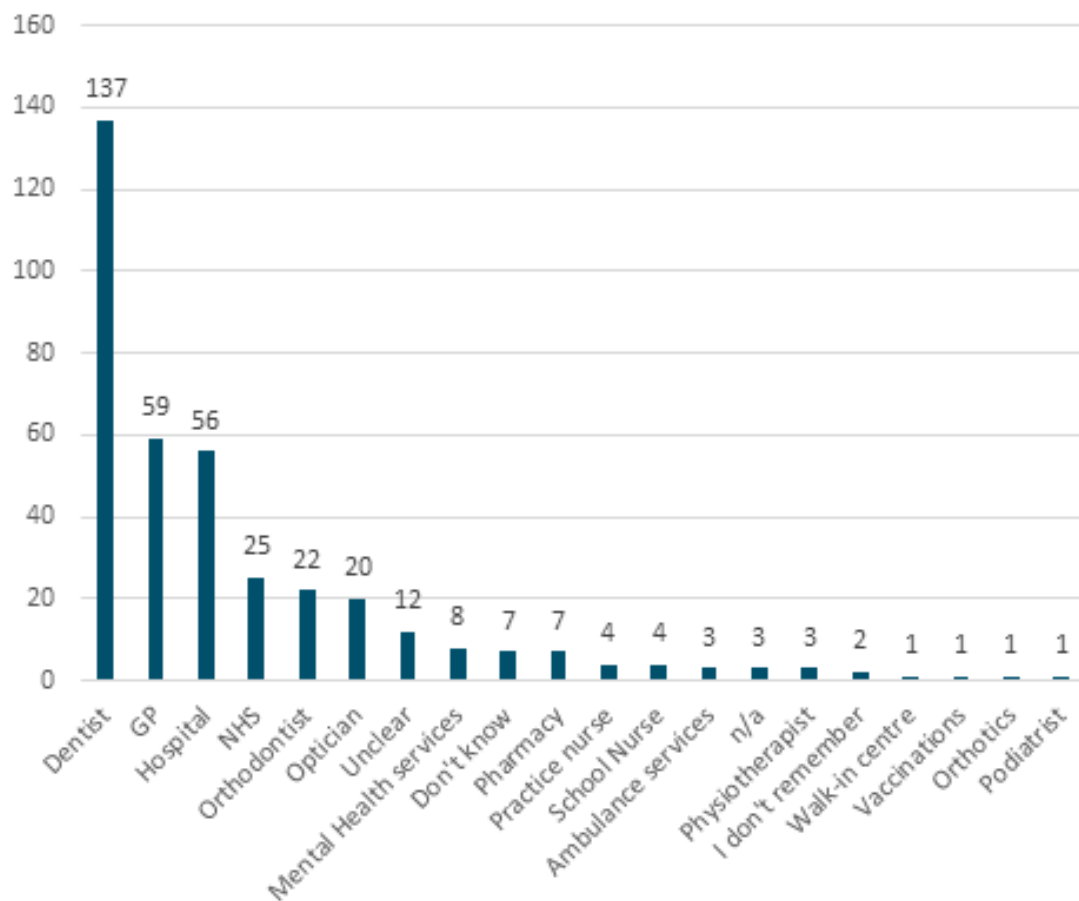


Fig. 7 Results of 'Which was the last health service you used.'

We asked them what went well, and the responses were generally they had received good news, for example, they had got the results back from an investigative test and they were in the all-clear, or that it was a successful appointment, for example, braces were successfully fitted.

They were then asked what could have been better and the highest response was that 'nothing could have been better' (39% of responses), followed by 'having to wait for a long time at the appointment' (11%), then 'unclear' (10% of responses).

Those who replied to the accessible version of the survey used the optician the most with 17% of the respondents replying they had used optician services the most recently. The next highest category of health service used by the accessible survey respondents was a tie between Doctors (GP), School Nursing Services, Children and Young People's Services and hospital appointments (14% per category). The full breakdown of responses is given in Fig. 8, below.

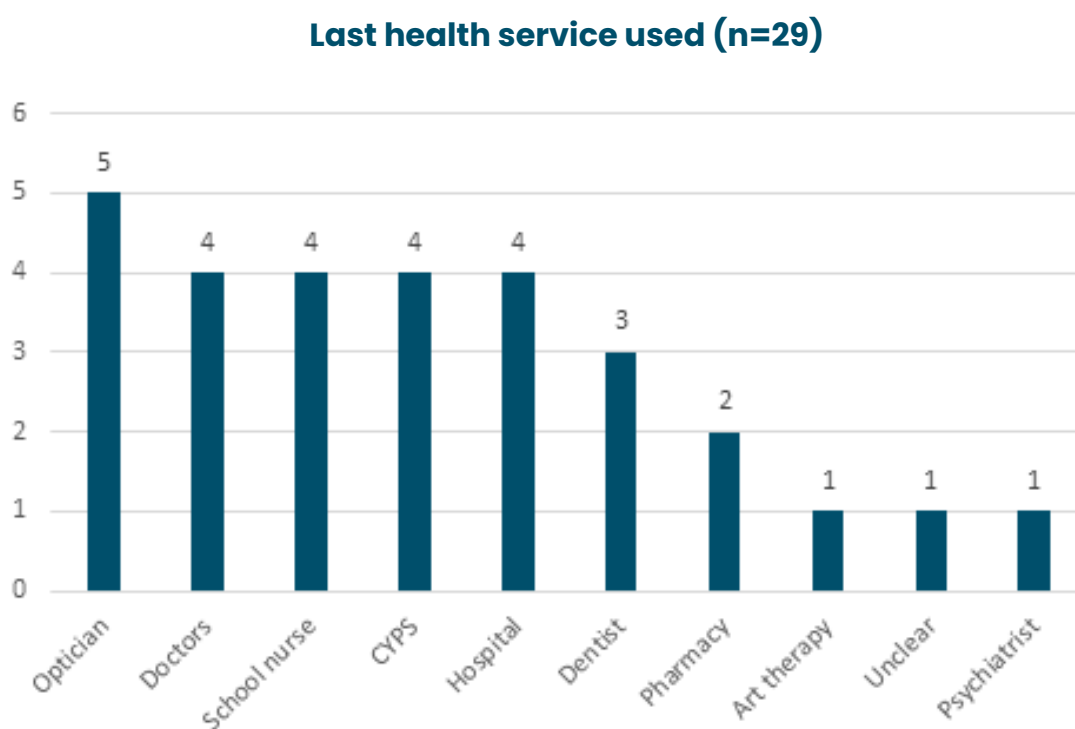


Fig. 8 Results from accessible survey of 'Which was the last health service you used?'

Similarly, we asked what went well in their most recent health appointment. The vast majority of the responses indicated that they were well treated and only two respondents (7%) felt that 'nothing' had gone well.

In response to the third part of question 5, we asked 'What could have been better in your most recent health appointment?' Half of the respondents felt that 'nothing' could have been improved. 22% of respondents felt the waiting times were too long and 11% felt that doctors could have had better people skills.

In both versions of the survey we then asked young people to place in order of importance to them, the following five services:

- **Doctor (GP)**
- **Dentist**
- **Mental Health Services**
- **Hospital**
- **Optician**

The mainstream survey responses are shown in Fig. 9 below.

Put these five health services in order of importance to you where 1 is the most important and 5 is the least important. (n=571)

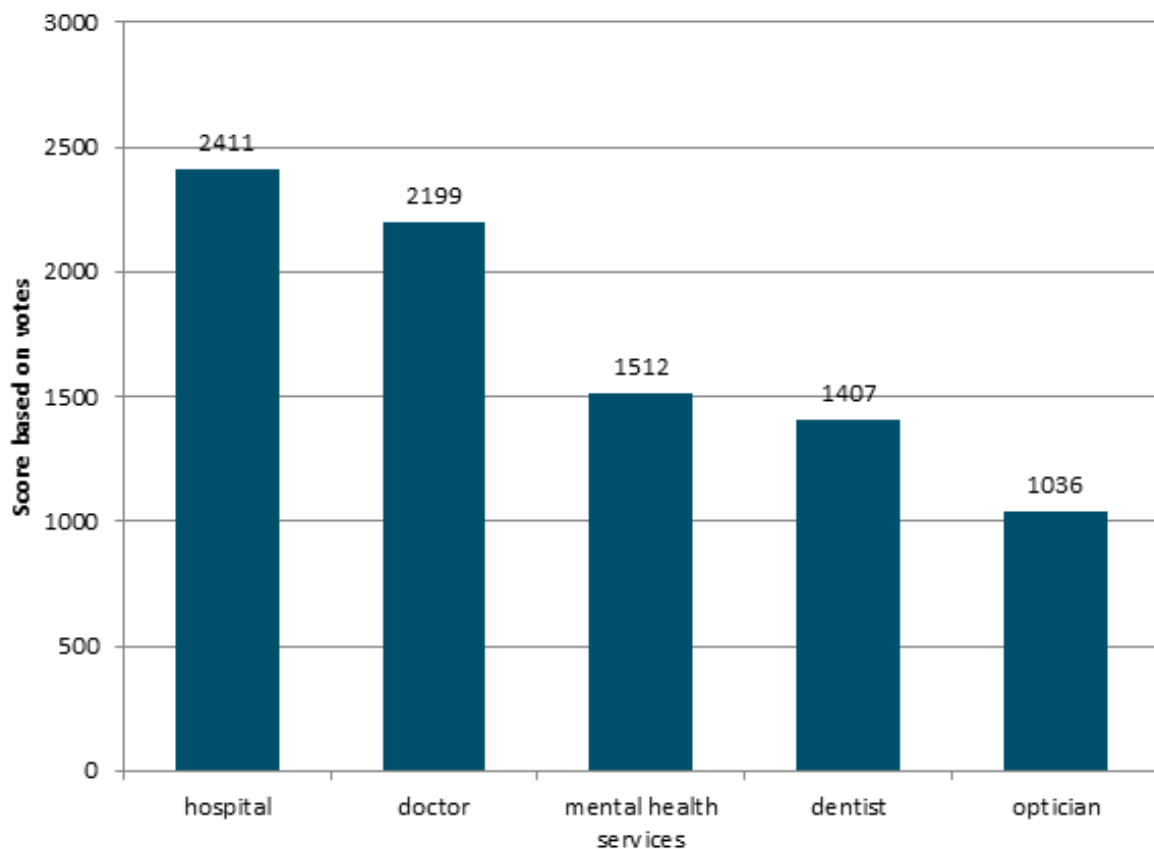


Fig. 9 Scores and ranking of five services in order of personal importance according to respondents of mainstream survey.

Hospital and Doctor (GP) were the two most important services according to the responses received. There was a clear gap between second and third most important services.

Respondents to the accessible survey had different priorities of personal importance, as shown in Fig. 10. Although Hospital and Doctor (GP) were both ranked in the top two places, Mental Health Services came last in the ranking.

Put these five health services in order of importance to you with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. (n=30)

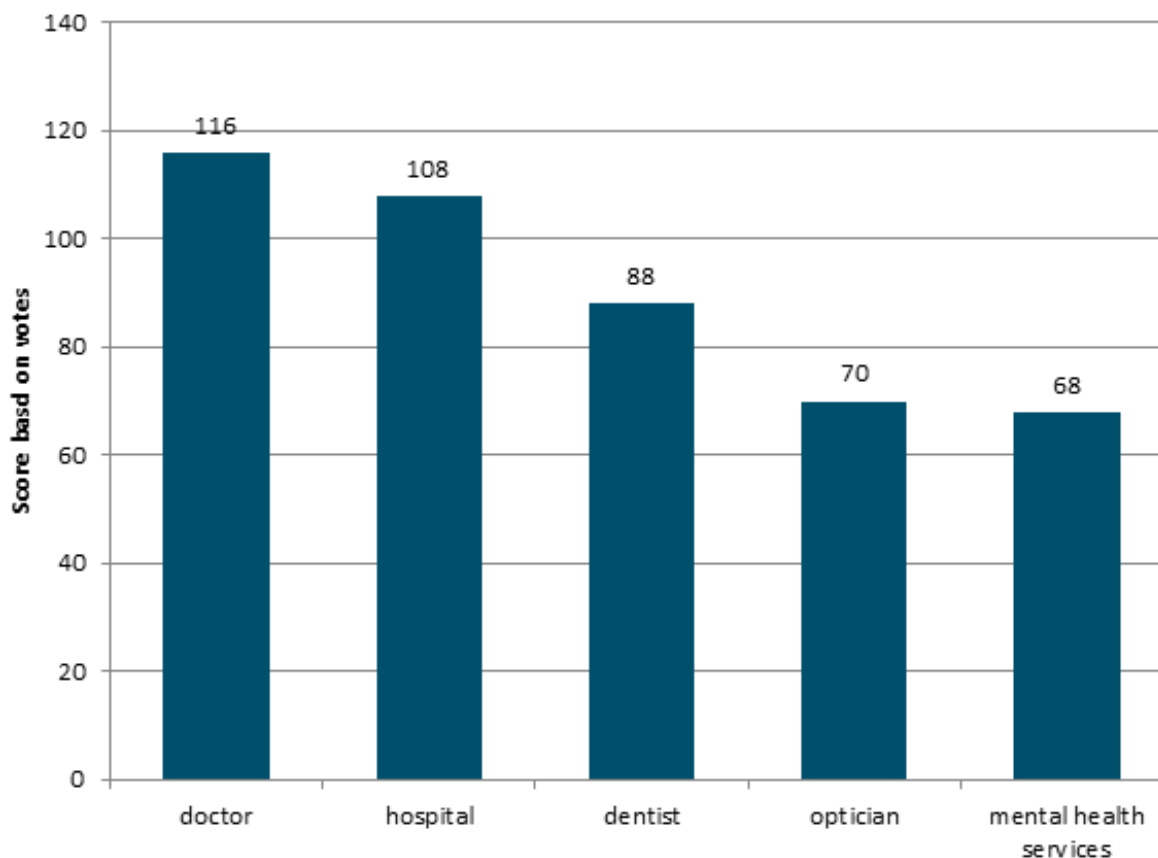


Fig. 10 Scores and ranking of five services in order of personal importance according to respondents of the accessible survey.

Finally, we asked 'What one thing would improve NHS services for you?' There was a broad range of responses, with several subjects only getting one vote per topic. The top ten results are shown overleaf in Fig. 11. We asked the same question in the accessible version of the survey and the results are shown in Fig. 12 overleaf.

For both sets of respondents, the most common response was that they could think of nothing to improve the NHS services with 'shorter waiting times' being the second most common response. Note that as this was a free text answer there was some ambiguity in the wording of the answers when it came to categorising responses as either 'shorter waiting times' or 'shorter waiting lists'.

Of note is that a proportion of respondents to both surveys felt that staff pay should be increased.

What one thing would improve NHS services for you? Top ten responses (n=396)

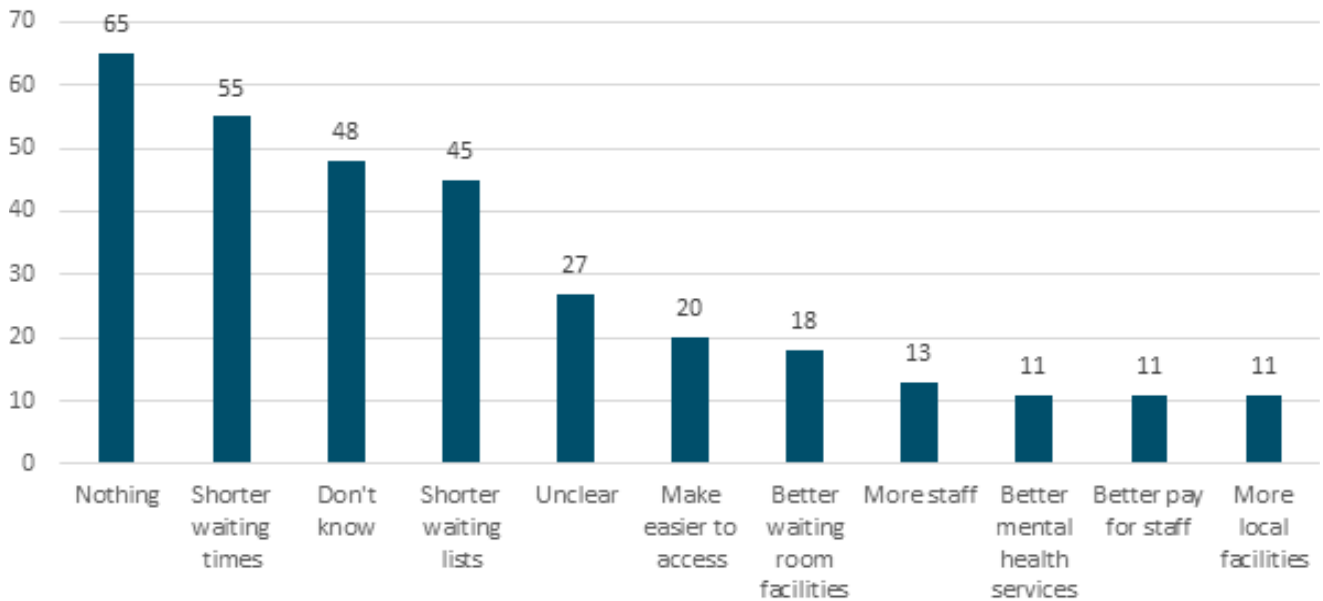


Fig. 11 Top ten responses to the question 'What one thing would improve NHS services for you?'

What one thing would make NHS services better for you? (n=13)

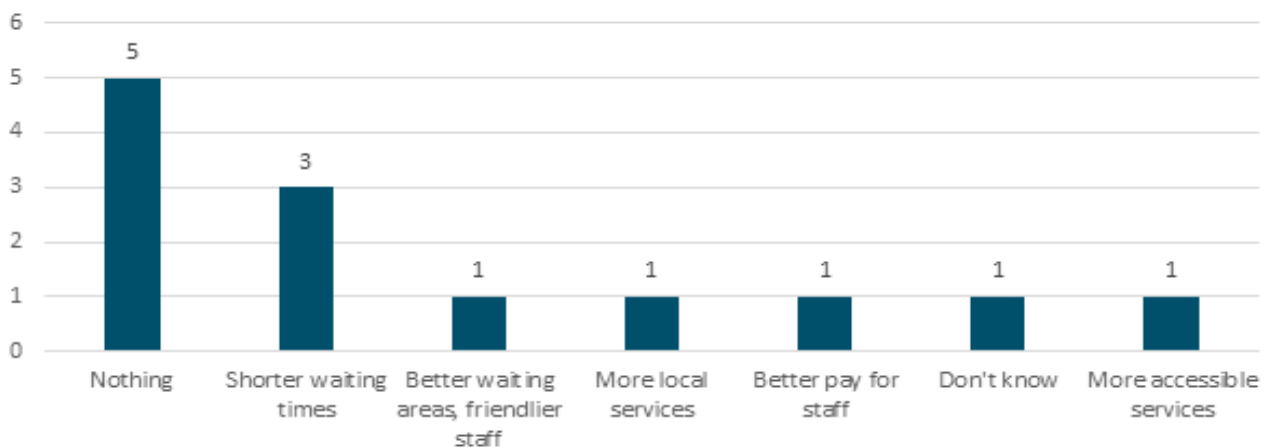


Fig. 12 Breakdown of all responses in the accessible survey to the question "What one thing would improve NHS services for you?"

Conclusions

Contrary to the perception given by the media, based on the findings from our campaign, those young people of Northumberland aged between 13 – 15 years old are generally happy in themselves. Respondents to our accessible survey were even happier overall than the respondents to the main survey. Both sets of respondents also feel happy with the service provided by the NHS but there were concerns about the length of waiting times. However, there was some ambiguity in the answers whether that was the length of time spent on a waiting list to receive an appointment or the length of time spent waiting at an actual appointment.

What happens next

We were delighted by the response from young people. Ponteland High School had the highest number of students taking part in the campaign and won a wellbeing hamper. Jonny Greenshields, Deputy Head Teacher at Ponteland High School, told us “We’re very happy to have won the wellbeing hamper as part of this campaign. We scheduled this into lesson plans and the campaign fit extremely well with the work we have been doing with students around ‘having a voice’ in varying aspects of life, from democracy to healthcare.”

This shows us that this was a useful way to hear from young people and we hope to repeat the campaign. We will share the report with schools to encourage more schools to get involved.

We will also share this report with the strategic partners at Northumberland County Council and health service providers. We will ask them how the insights will help them to make decisions about the services they commission and provide for young people in the county.

Appendix 1

Demographics

Which school/college do you go to? (n=527)

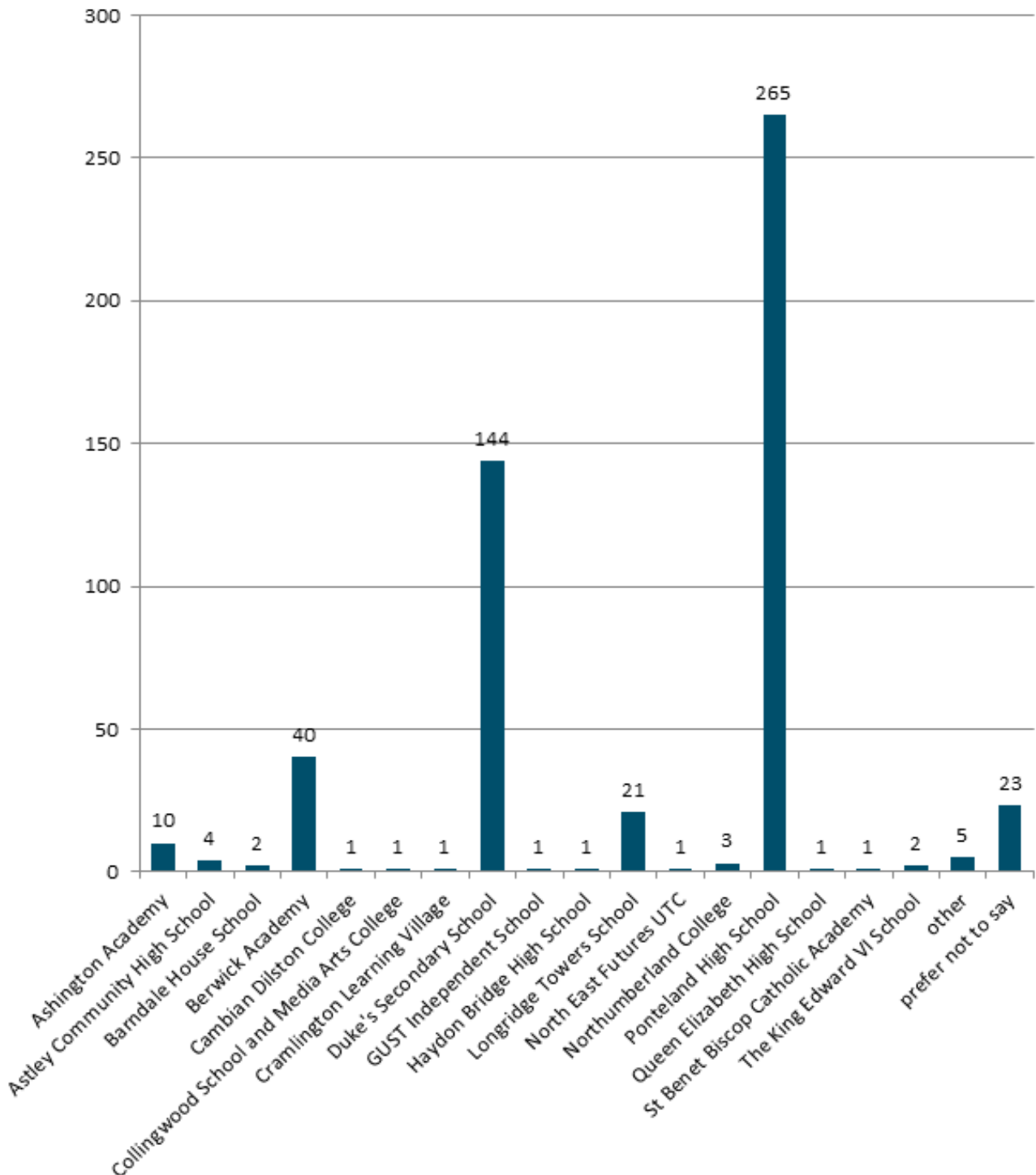


Fig. 13 Distribution of main survey responses by school

Which school/college do you go to? (n = 32)

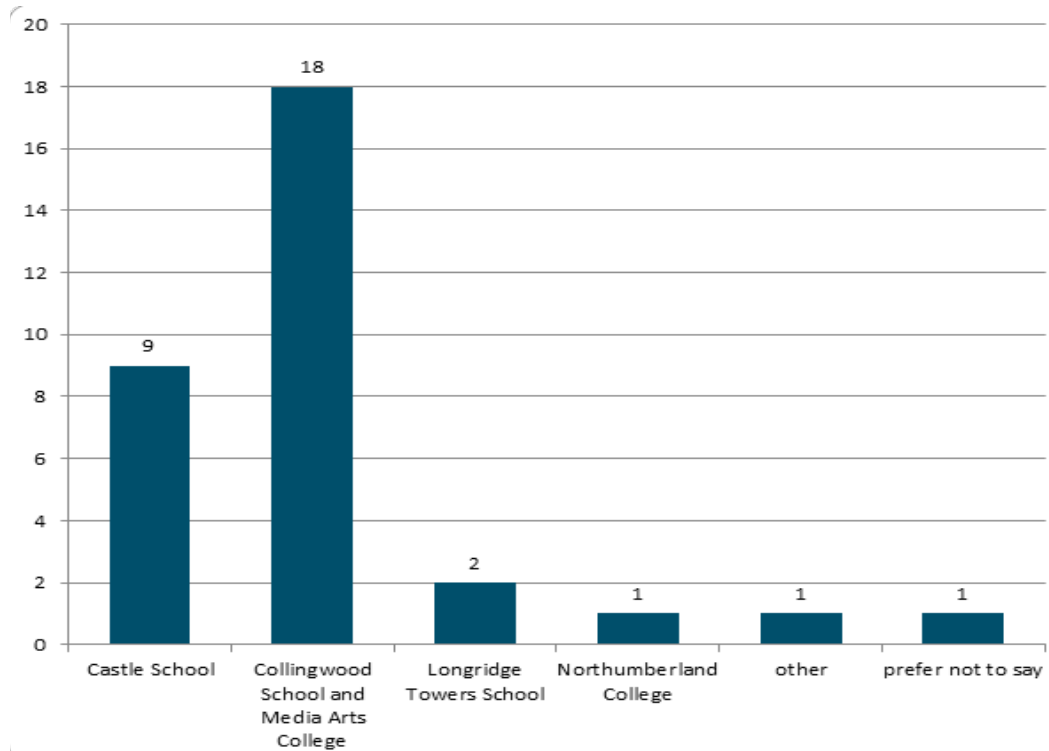


Fig. 14 Distribution of accessible survey responses by school/college

How old are you? (n=564)

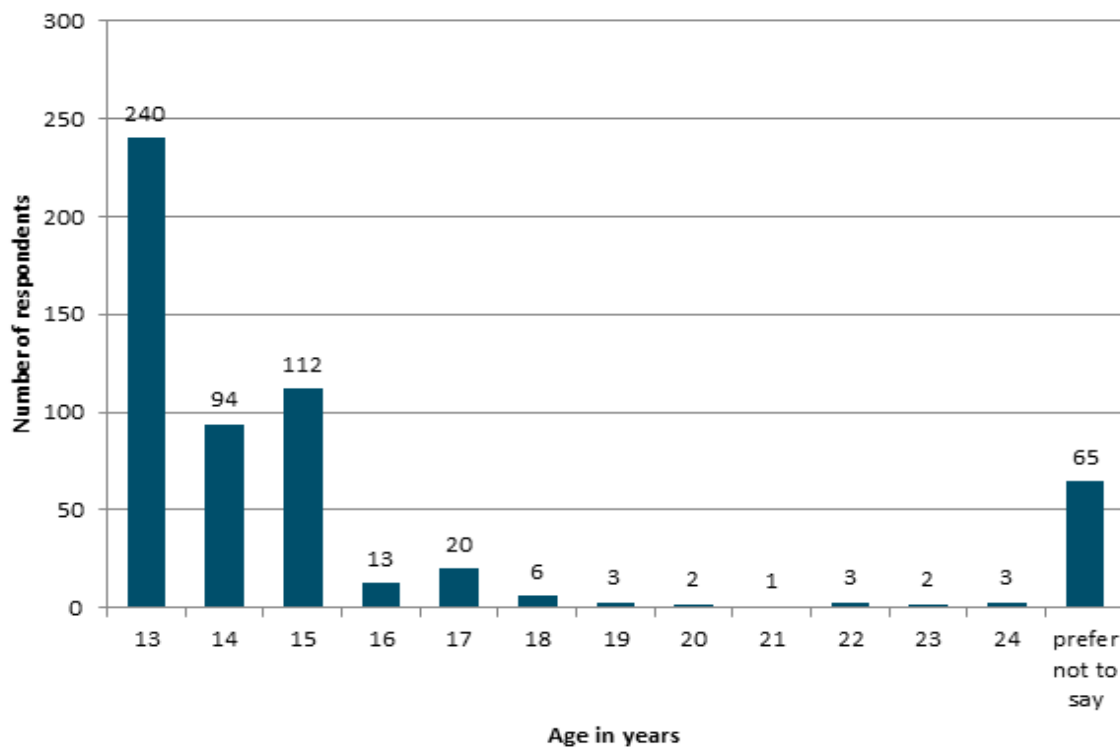


Fig. 15 Ages of respondents to main survey

How old are you? (n=36)

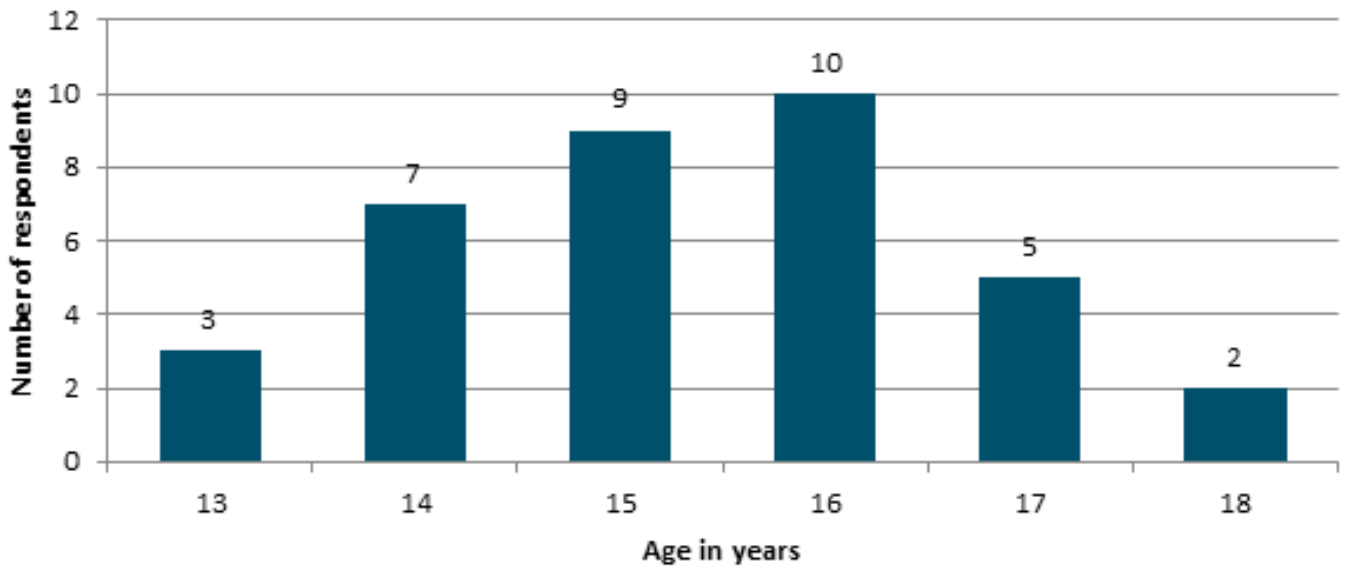


Fig. 16 Ages of respondents to accessible survey

What is your sex? (n = 551)

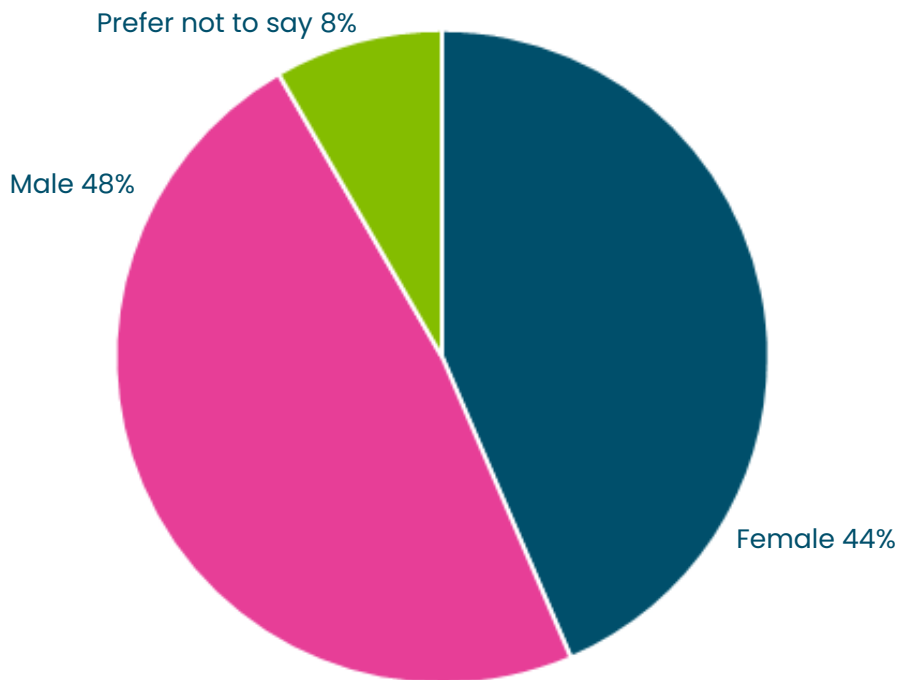


Fig. 17 Breakdown of sex for respondents to main survey

What is your sex? (n = 36)

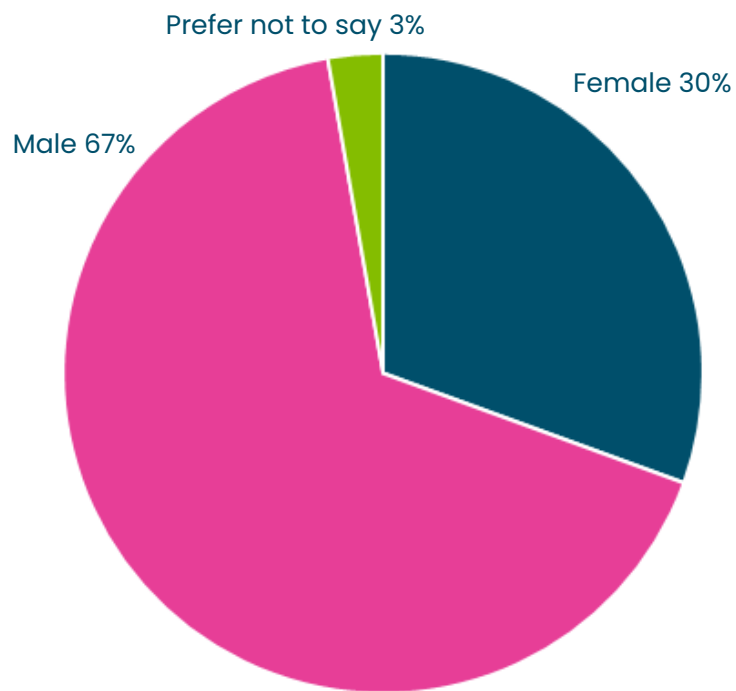


Fig. 18 Breakdown of sex for respondents to accessible survey

What is your ethnicity? (n = 549)

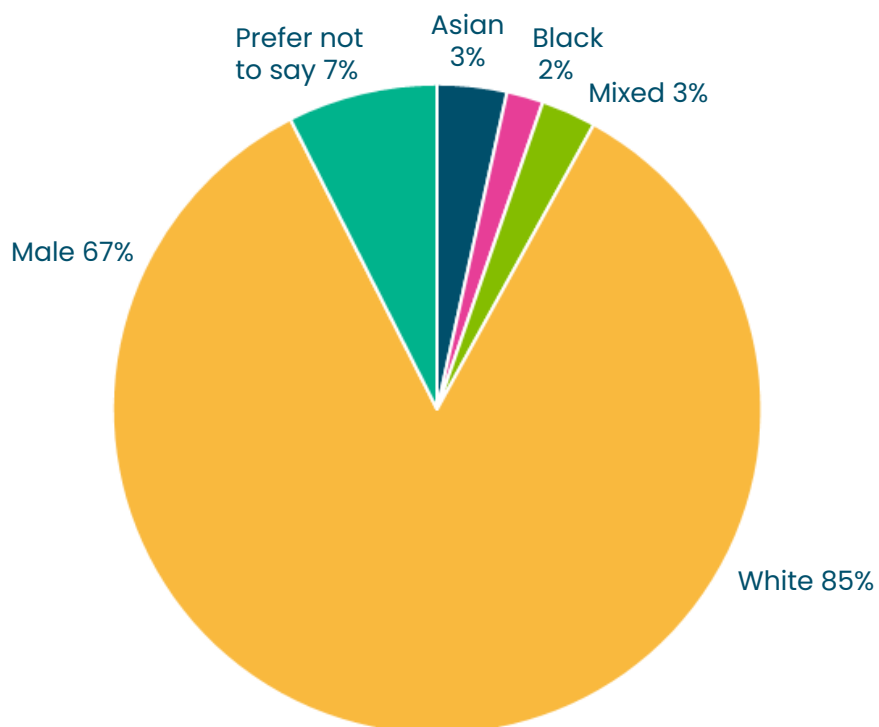


Fig. 19 Breakdown of ethnicity for respondents to main survey

What is your ethnicity? (n = 35)

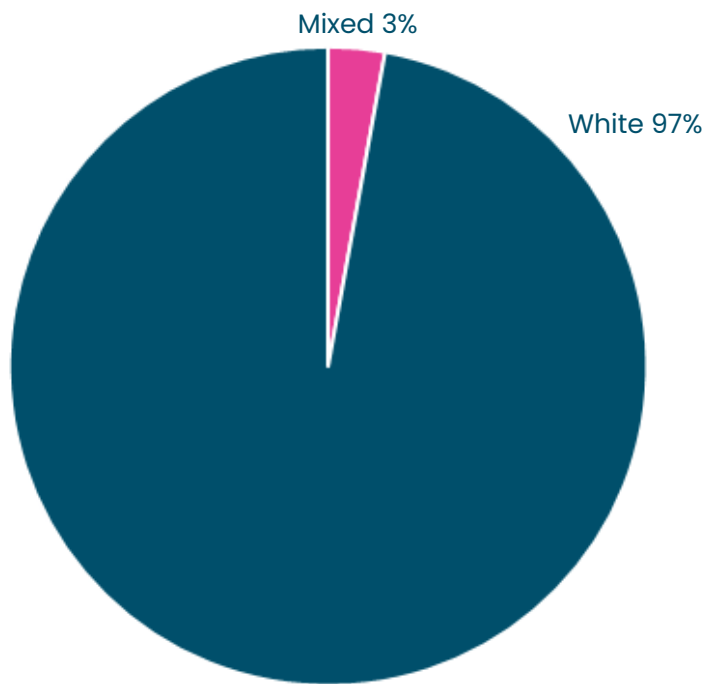


Fig. 20 Breakdown of ethnicity for respondents to accessible survey

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (n=549)

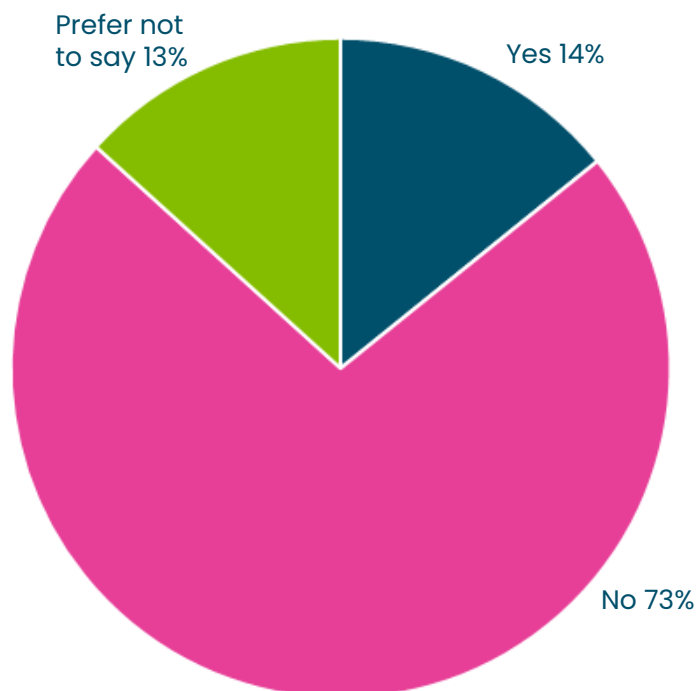


Fig. 21 Breakdown of disability for respondents to main survey

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?(n=34)

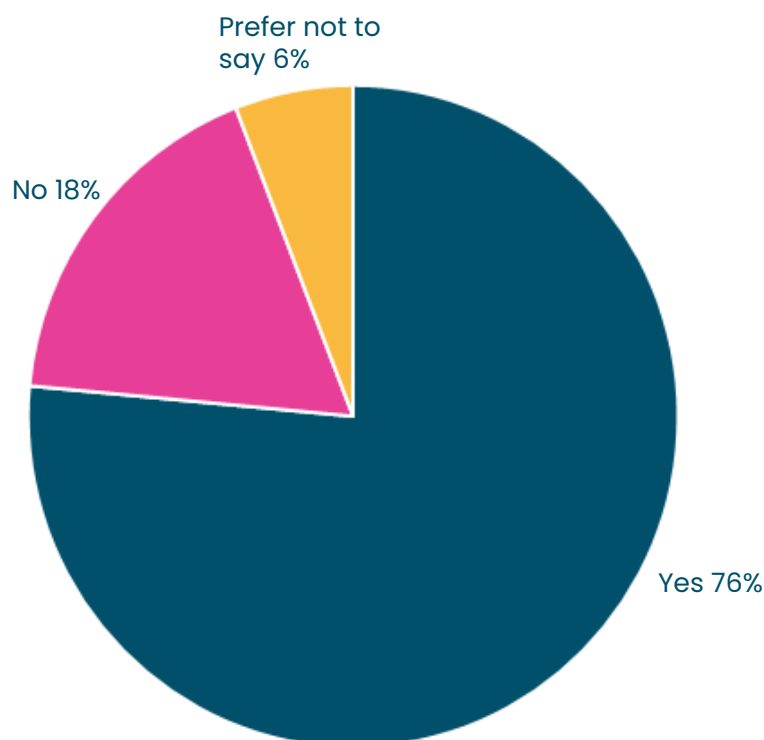


Fig. 22 Breakdown of disability for respondents to accessible survey

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