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Suffolk



My Health, Our Future (Phase 7)

Student ethnicity summary

Acknowledgements

The continued support of the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System, and various partners collaborating with young people in Suffolk is essential to the success and achievements of the *My Health, Our Future* (MHoF) programme. Above all, we thank school and college leaders, as well as students, at the following schools and colleges for supporting MHoF 2023:

- ▶ Abbeygate Sixth Form College
- ▶ Castle Manor Academy
- ▶ Chantry Academy
- ▶ Claydon High School
- ▶ County High School
- ▶ Copleston High School
- ▶ East Bergholt High School
- ▶ Felixstowe Academy
- ▶ Holbrook High school
- ▶ Horringer Court Middle School
- ▶ Ipswich High School
- ▶ Ipswich School
- ▶ King Edward VI School
- ▶ Mildenhall College Academy
- ▶ Newmarket Academy
- ▶ Northgate High School
- ▶ Ormiston Denes Academy
- ▶ Pakefield High School
- ▶ Samuel Ward Academy
- ▶ St Joseph's College
- ▶ Sir John Leman High School
- ▶ St Alban's Catholic High School
- ▶ Suffolk ONE Sixth Form College
- ▶ Thomas Gainsborough School
- ▶ West Suffolk College
- ▶ Westley Middle School
- ▶ Westbourne Academy
- ▶ The survey was also open to the public, gaining **77** responses.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond and share their experiences with us.

Contents

For more information about *My Health, Our Future* (MHoF), or to download previous reports and insights, please visit: www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/mhof

Introduction	Slide 4
Demographics	Slide 6
Results	Slides 7-18
<i>Wellbeing</i>	<i>Slide 7</i>
<i>Happiness (The GCI)</i>	<i>Slide 8-9</i>
<i>Anxiety (GAD-7)</i>	<i>Slide 10</i>
<i>Someone to talk to</i>	<i>Slide 11</i>
<i>Cost of living</i>	<i>Slide 12</i>
<i>Healthy lifestyles</i>	<i>Slide 13</i>
<i>Vaping</i>	<i>Slide 14</i>
<i>Sexual health</i>	<i>Slide 15</i>
<i>Sexual harassment</i>	<i>Slide 16</i>
<i>Hormonal changes</i>	<i>Slide 17</i>

Introduction

***My Health, Our Future (MHoF)* is a unique research programme exploring the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people in Suffolk.**

Since 2015, MHoF data has been helping schools, colleges, and integrated care systems to improve support for children and young people. The programme offers reliable insights into the current wellbeing of young people across Suffolk, providing data to support local decision-making about services, attract funding for local support and inform health and care system strategies around young people's health and wellbeing.

The programme has recorded over 55,000 responses from young people on topics like bullying, self-harm, body image, social media, anxiety, and many other areas. The 'phase seven' 2023 MHoF survey included a new focus on physical health, prompting young people to share their views on topics like sexual health support, and healthy lifestyles.

This report presents the findings from phase 7 of the MHoF survey for young people in secondary schools and colleges, with a focus on presenting the main findings split by ethnicity. This data has been mostly presented using the wider ethnicity categories in census data, e.g. 'Asian / Asian British'. Where more granular categories are used, e.g. 'Asian / Asian British – Pakistani', this is noted in the text.

To learn more about the MHoF programme, and to access our reports, please visit www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/mhof.

This report is a part of a series relating to our findings in 2023/24.

Please [click this link](#) to find our other MHoF phase seven reports.

For more information about the MHoF research programme, and to access our full range of reports and content, visit [this link](#).



Who took part?

Demographics

- **13,084** responses were recorded. Most young people were in Years 7, 8, and 9.
- **31% (4,048)** identified with one or more 'additional support needs' in the survey, such as receiving free school meals (**12%/1,364**).
- Most students identified as 'White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British' (**73% / 9,606**).

See table for a full breakdown of responses.

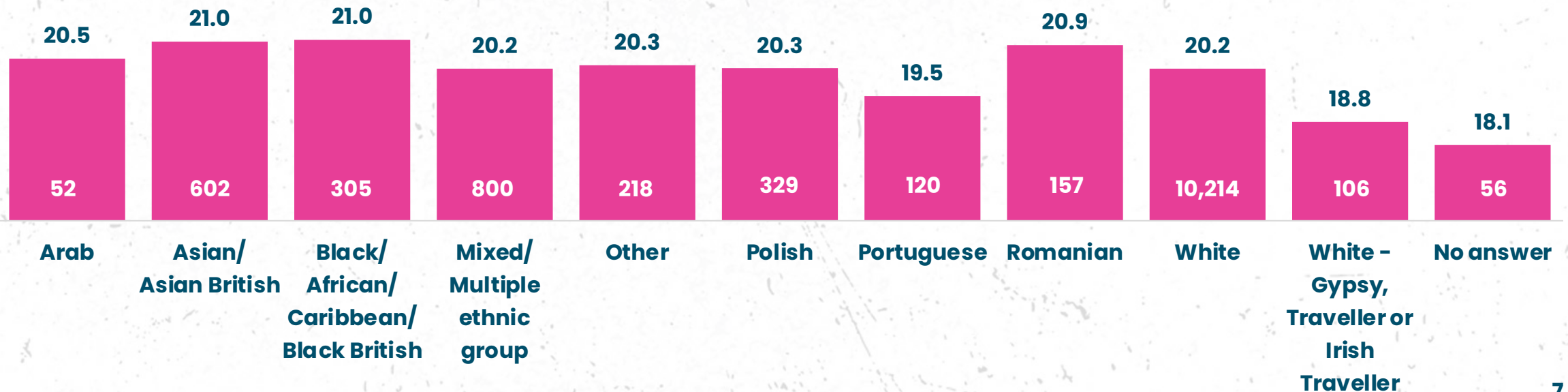
Ethnicity	Count	%
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	9,606	73%
Any other White background	596	5%
Polish	331	3%
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic backgrounds	229	2%
White and Black Caribbean	222	2%
Other ethnic background	221	2%

Ethnicity	Count	%
African	197	2%
White and Asian	191	1%
Indian	190	1%
Any other Asian background	176	1%
White and Black African	163	1%
Romanian	160	1%
Portuguese	122	1%
Irish	101	1%
Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	108	1%
Bangladeshi	92	1%
Chinese	90	1%
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	64	0%
Pakistani	59	0%
Arab	52	0%
Caribbean	50	0%

Wellbeing

Students' wellbeing has improved after record low scores in 2021 and 2022. Although, the Suffolk 2023 average (20.3) remains lower than the 2020 national average (24.6). The graph below shows average wellbeing scores.

- Students from a 'White - Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller' (18.8) ethnicity had the lowest average wellbeing score, compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. This was followed by Portuguese students (19.5).
- Furthermore, students from an Asian / Asian British (21.0) or Black / African / Caribbean / Black British background had a higher average wellbeing score than the Suffolk average score. Within these groups, students from an Indian (21.4), or any other Black background (other than African or Caribbean) (21.8) reported the highest average wellbeing scores.
- Apart from Asian / Asian British and Black / African / Caribbean / Black background students, all other groups of students reported lower or similar wellbeing scores than the Suffolk average.



Happiness (The GCI)

Developed by the Children's Society, the Good Childhood Index (GCI) is a short questionnaire that measures wellbeing overall in relation to ten aspects of life. Students' responses amount to an average happiness score. Scores below the mid-point (0 to 4) on the 0 to 10 scale are considered to have 'low wellbeing' for the various aspects of life.



Unhappiest with school

Students were most unhappy with school than with any other aspects of their lives.

White Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students (**57%/62**) were most likely to report being unhappy with school.

This was followed by Arab (**35%/18**) and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British students (**35%/108**).



Happiest with home

Students were happiest when it came to the homes they lived in.

The lowest percentage of people who reported being unhappy with their homes were Asian/Asian British students (**4%/27**) and Romanian students (**4%/7**).

This was followed by White students (**5%/518**).



Unhappiest with appearance

The second aspect of life young people were overall **unhappiest** with was appearance.

White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students were the most likely to report being unhappy with their appearance (**35%/38**). This was followed by Portuguese students (**29%/35**) and White students (**28%/2904**).



Happiest with things you have

The second aspect students were **happiest** with overall was the things they have.

Portuguese students (**4%/5**) and students who identified as an 'other ethnic group' (**4%/8**) were happiest with things they had, followed by White students (**5%/512**) and Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups (**5%/44**).

Happiness (GCI) continued...

The table below shows the percentage of students who scored below the mid-point (0-4), suggesting they were unhappy with that aspect of life. Within each ethnic group, the aspect of life young people were happiest (pink) and least happy (green) with has been highlighted.

Overall, White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students were the most likely to report being unhappy with all aspects of life, compared to other ethnic groups. Fewest Romanian students reported being unhappy with all aspects of life, compared to other demographics.

	Family	Home	Choice	Friends	Things	Health	Appearance	Future	School	Time
Arab (52)	12%	13%	19%	12%	15%	19%	17%	15%	35%	19%
Asian / Asian British (607)	8%	4%	12%	9%	9%	9%	21%	15%	24%	21%
Black/ African / Caribbean / Black British (311)	7%	6%	11%	7%	7%	10%	21%	14%	35%	20%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic group (805)	10%	6%	11%	8%	5%	13%	26%	18%	35%	20%
Other ethnic group (221)	8%	7%	10%	7%	4%	12%	25%	14%	35%	18%
Polish (331)	10%	7%	11%	8%	5%	13%	27%	17%	32%	19%
Portuguese (122)	13%	6%	8%	10%	4%	14%	29%	24%	34%	20%
Romanian (160)	6%	4%	8%	8%	8%	6%	20%	15%	28%	13%
White (10,303)	8%	5%	8%	8%	5%	12%	28%	17%	28%	19%
White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller (108)	23%	21%	32%	21%	21%	36%	35%	28%	57%	29%

Anxiety (GAD-7)

The Generalised Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7) asks students about seven statements that aim to identify probable cases of generalised anxiety disorder. Scores range between 0 and 21. A score of less than 5 indicates 'mild' anxiety, 10 indicates 'moderate' anxiety, and 15 indicates 'severe' anxiety.

- The table (right) shows the percentage of students reporting 'low anxiety' and 'moderate' or 'severe' anxiety.
- Asian/Asian British students (43%/239) were the most likely to report 'low' anxiety levels. This was closely followed by Romanian students (42%/62) and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British students (41%/208).
- Arab students (47%/22) were the most likely to report 'moderate' or 'severe' anxiety levels. This was followed by Portuguese students (46%/51) and White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students (41%/39).

	Low	Moderate or Severe
Arab (47)	34%	47%
Asian / Asian British (551)	43%	27%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (280)	41%	30%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic group (742)	35%	34%
Other ethnic group (212)	40%	31%
Polish (300)	33%	37%
Portuguese (111)	30%	46%
Romanian (148)	42%	31%
White (9,609)	35%	37%
White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller (94)	35%	41%

Students with moderate or severe anxiety reduced in 2023.

- 2023 (37%)
- 2022 (41%)



Someone to talk to

We asked young people if they had someone at their school or college they could talk to about their mental health.

- White (**57%/ 5454**) students were most likely to have had someone to talk to. This means students from multi-ethnic communities were less likely to have someone they could talk to at school or college about their mental health.
- White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller (**39%/ 37**) were the least likely to say they had someone they could talk to. This was closely followed by Portuguese (**40%/ 43**) and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (**44%/ 122**) students.

Table: Having someone to talk to at school or college

	Percentage	Count
Arab	45%	20
Asian / Asian British	50%	275
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	44%	122
Mixed / Multiple ethnic group	50%	375
No answer	33%	16
Other	44%	93
Polish	54%	164
Portuguese	40%	43
Romanian	46%	69
White	57%	54
White – Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	39%	37

Young people who believed they had someone to talk to about their mental health at school or college were...



Less likely to report 'moderate' to 'severe' anxiety levels (**32% vs. 47%**).



More likely to score above the mid-point, which suggests they are happy with their school (**78% vs. 52%**).



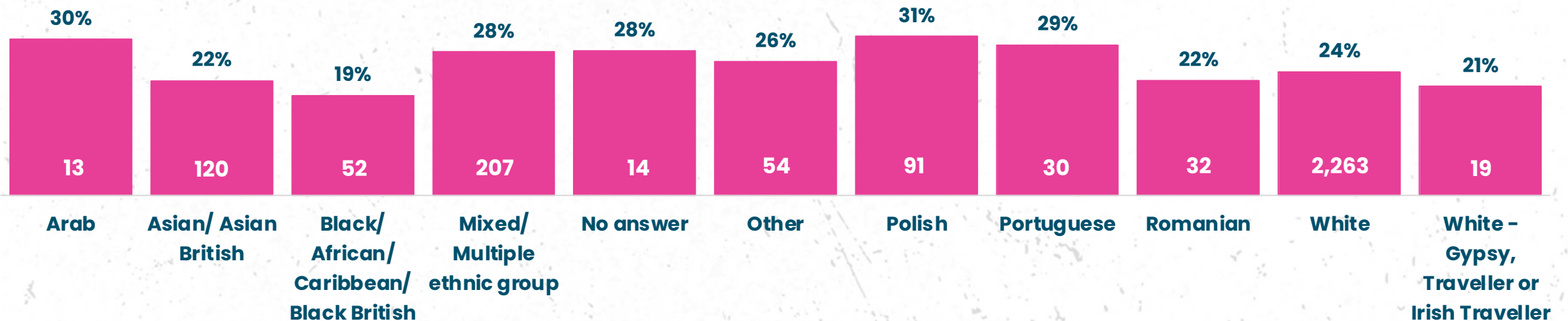
Three times less likely to have 'low' wellbeing scores (**6% vs. 17%**).

Cost of living

Cost of living pressures are an increasing concern for many people across Suffolk. Recent research by the youth charity ERYICA has shown children as young as eleven are expressing apprehension about how increasing living costs are affecting their households.

12,137 people answered.

- The graph (below) shows the percentage of students who reported being either 'worried' or 'very worried' about the impact of the cost of living crisis on themselves and their families.
- Results varied by student ethnicity. Some groups were more likely to be 'worried' or 'very worried' about the cost of living. For example, Polish students (31%/91) were the most likely to say they were 'worried' or 'very worried'.
- This was closely followed by Arab students (30%/13), Portuguese students (29%/30), and students from Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups.
- White students (24%, 2263), Romanian (22%/32) and White Gypsy Traveller or Irish Traveller students (21%/19) and Black/African/Caribbean students (19%/52) were the least likely to be 'worried' or 'very worried' about the cost of living.



Healthy lifestyles

The Mental Health Foundation (2019) reported that millions of young people in Britain worry about their body image, and around one-third feel ashamed about their body image.

We asked young people whether they were concerned about their weight. **11,831** responded to the question.

- Almost half (**47%/35**) of White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students said they were concerned about their weight. Of these students, **38%** were concerned they were overweight and **9%** were concerned they were underweight. This was followed by Arab (**40%/17**), Polish (**33%/97**), Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (**31%/82**), and Asian/Asian British (**31%/164**) students.
- Romanian students (**24%/35**) were the least likely to report being concerned about their weight. Of these students, **18%** were concerned they were overweight and **6%** were concerned they were underweight. This was closely followed by White students (**28%/2,644**) and students who classed themselves as being in an 'other ethnicity group' (**28%/57**).

	% concerned	Count	Concerned overweight	Concerned underweight
Arab	40%	17	28%	12%
Asian/ Asian British	31%	164	22%	9%
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	31%	82	23%	8%
Mixed/ Multiple ethnic group	29%	212	21%	8%
No answer	51%	24	34%	17%
Other	28%	57	20%	8%
Polish	33%	97	23%	10%
Portuguese	30%	31	19%	12%
Romanian	24%	35	18%	6%
White	28%	2,644	20%	8%
White - Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	47%	43	38%	9%

Vaping

We asked young people whether they currently vaped or smoked. **11,758** people answered the question.

- Overall, **88% (10,400)** of young people said they do not vape, although some **(1%/86)** did smoke. This meant there were **11% (1,272)** of young people who reported vaping.
- Asian/Asian British **(6%/34)** students were the least likely to have vaped. This was closely followed by Polish students **(9%/27)**, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British students **(9%/25)** and students who identified their ethnicity as an 'other ethnic group' **(9%/19)**.
- White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students were the most likely to vape compared to other ethnic groups **(29%/26)**. This was closely followed by Arab students **(21%/9)**.

White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller

26

29%

White

1,005

11%

Romanian

15

10%

Portuguese

12

12%

Polish

27

9%

Other

19

9%

Mixed/ Multiple ethnic group

86

12%

Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British

25

9%

Asian/ Asian British

34

6%

Arab

9

21%



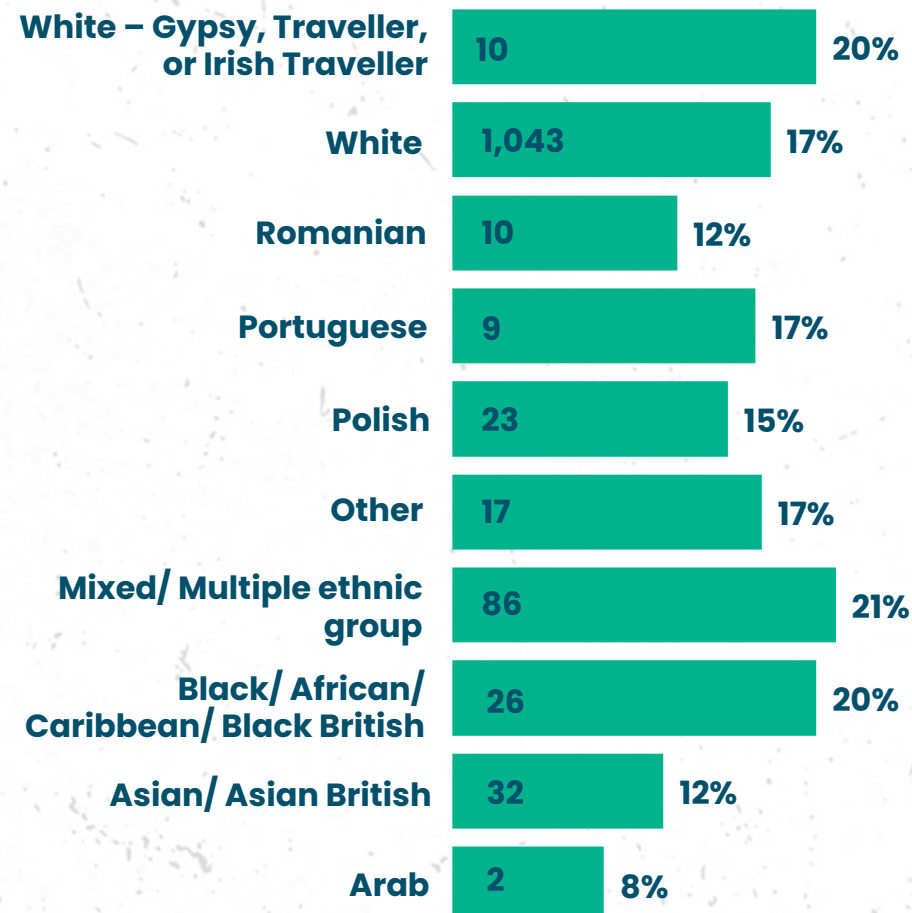
Young people vaped most commonly because they liked the feeling it gave them **(39%/496)**. This was followed by them being addicted to them **(31%/395)** and enjoying the smell of vapes **(31%/393)**.

Sexual health

We asked young people in Year 9 and above about their awareness of iCaSH, which is a local service that provides all aspects of sexual and reproductive health (e.g., contraception, STI testing and treatment). **7,264** answered the question.

The graph (right) shows the percentage of students across various ethnicities who were aware of the iCaSH service.

- Most young people reported they were unaware of iCaSH prior to the survey (**78%/5,690**). This meant that just **one in six (17%/1,265)** of students in Year 9 and above were aware of iCaSH services and support, though awareness increased slightly with year groupings.
- The graph (right) demonstrates the percentage of students aware of iCaSH services and support.
- It shows that Arab students (**8%/2**) were the least likely to say they had heard of iCaSH. This was closely followed by Asian/ Asian British (**12%/32**) and Romanian (**12%/10**) students.
- Students from a Mixed / Multiple ethnic group (**21%/86**) were the most likely to report that they had heard of iCaSH services and support before. Followed by Black / African / Caribbean / Black British students (**20%/26**) and White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students (**20%/10**).
- Only **17% (1,043)** of White students reported that they had heard of iCaSH support and services.



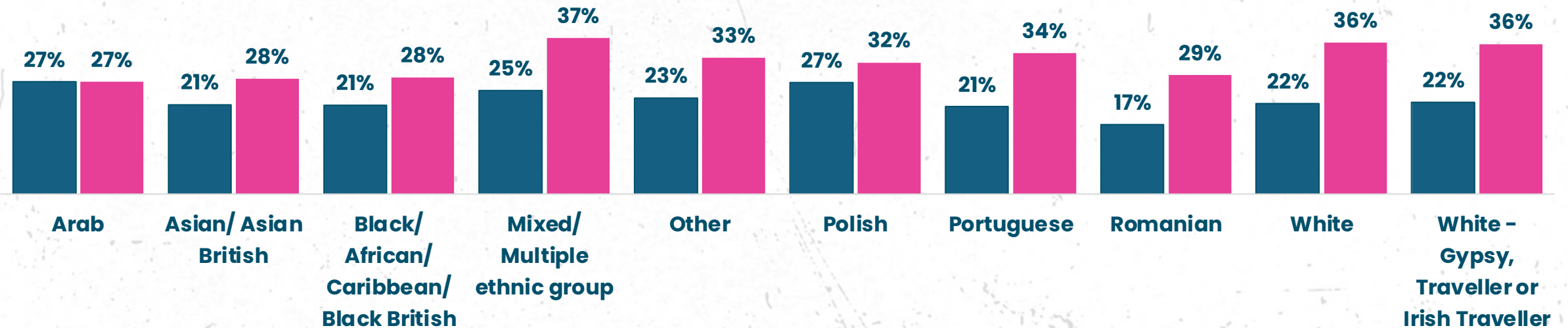
Sexual harassment

We asked young people whether they would be confident to report sexual harassment at their school or college.

- Students from a Mixed/Multiple ethnic group were the most likely to say they would feel confident to report (**37%/158**). This was followed by White students (**36%/2,195**) and White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students (**36%/18**).
- Arab students were the most likely not to feel confident to report sexual harassment at their school or college (**27%/7**).
- A total of **36%** of White students (**2,195**) would be confident to report sexual harassment at their school or college, and **22%** (**1312**) would not.

Out of **8,449** students, **4,807** had heard or seen at least one form of sexual harassment at their school or college. Only **36%** of students felt confident to report sexual harassment at their school or college.

This included over half (**53%**) who had witnessed 'the use of homophobic or transphobic language'. Almost **30%** had witnessed 'unwanted messages of a sexual nature' (**29%**) and 'unwanted sharing of images or videos of a sexual nature' (**29%**).



● Would be confident to report sexual harassment at school/college ● Would not be confident to report sexual harassment at school/college

Hormonal changes

The questions on hormonal changes were designed and developed with the support of Youthwatch Suffolk. We asked, 'Does your school give you enough information about the physical changes your body will be experiencing during puberty?'

- Most young people were given enough information about the physical changes at the right time. For instance, students who identified as White were the most likely to report they had received this information (**62%/5,418**). This was closely followed by Asian/Asian British (**62%/305**), and Romanian students (**61%/79**).
- There were still many young people who did not receive information about hormonal changes. For instance, Arab students (**26%/10**) were the most likely to say they did not receive information about the physical changes their body may experience during puberty. This was followed by **19% (15)** of White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students.
- Whilst most young people had received information, it had often not been enough or provided at the right time for them (see table right). For example, **44% (43)** of Portuguese students said that either the information provided was not enough or not at the right time for them.
- Similar results were found when asking young people whether their school had given enough information about the emotional changes their body will be experiencing during puberty.

	Didn't receive	Not enough information	Not at the right time
Arab	26% (10)	13% (5)	21% (8)
Asian/ Asian British	9% (45)	15% (75)	14% (68)
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	13% (31)	10% (25)	19% (46)
Mixed/ Multiple ethnic group	7% (46)	19% (126)	17% (113)
Other	9% (17)	18% (34)	18% (34)
Polish	8% (22)	17% (45)	18% (49)
Portuguese	5% (5)	18% (18)	26% (25)
Romanian	12% (16)	12% (15)	15% (19)
White	8% (687)	14% (1,221)	16% (1,412)
White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller	19% (15)	18% (14)	16% (13)

The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

This report includes reference to, and use of, a widely used measure of wellbeing known as the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). It was developed by the Universities of Warwick, Edinburgh and Leeds in conjunction with NHS Health Scotland (©University of Warwick, 2006, all rights reserved).

Results related to the use of a shortened format of this scale can be found throughout, and within our section about wellbeing from page 15. For more information about WEMWBS, please visit <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>.



This report has been produced to support the ongoing development and implementation of children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing support in Suffolk.

It will be publicly available on the Healthwatch Suffolk website. It will also be made available to Healthwatch England, and bodies responsible for the commissioning, scrutiny or delivery of local health and care services.

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

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