



Northern Health
and Social Care Trust



Causeway CYPSP Locality Planning Group Young People's Mental Health Survey 2022 / 2023

NHSCT Health and Wellbeing
Team

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Background and Introduction

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) in Northern Ireland plays a vital role in improving the wellbeing and outcomes of children and young people across the region for which it is responsible. CYPSP at local level, through Causeway Locality Planning Group, acts as a collaborative platform by bringing together various government departments, statutory agencies, in addition to voluntary and community organisations, as it seeks to promote a shared vision of promoting the interests of children and young people. CYPSP strives to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for young people, enabling them to thrive and assist as they work towards achieving their full potential. As a group, Causeway LPG works closely with the Causeway Family Support Hub, to identify needs and gaps in services for children and young people. As a result of meetings held over the past year, issues highlighted by members have included: gaps in Mental Health services for children and young people; school refusal; anxiety; concerns around young people; relationships; and drugs and alcohol, these being closely related to MH.

Mental health issues among young people in Northern Ireland and the Northern Trust area have become a growing concern in recent years. There has been a significant rise in the prevalence of conditions such as: anxiety; depression; and self-harm among our young people. The Public Health Agency framework for public health 'Making Life Better' states that people in Northern Ireland are 25% more likely to have a Mental Health condition than their counterparts in the rest of the UK. This may be attributed to the troubles, social and economic inequalities, and limited access to mental health services. High levels of poverty and unemployment in certain areas may also be factors contributing to an increased vulnerability to mental health issues in the region.

The rural nature of the Causeway Coast and Glens in which the Causeway LPG operates, consists in part, of a more isolated environment which in some cases is seen as increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation. This may make it harder for young people to seek help or connect with support networks. The COVID 19 pandemic has also left young people with fewer connections in some cases, having less time spent in school settings and with less experience of sitting exams. Consequently, some young people have experienced feelings of isolation, loneliness, and increased levels of stress and anxiety. Gaps in MH services and longer waiting times to access some services in the Causeway area (which have been reported by LPG members) may have made it more difficult for those seeking support. Limited Transport may also be seen as a major issue as much of the Causeway area is rural.

Times of transition can also be particularly challenging for young people as they navigate changes in their education, relationships, and responsibilities, these often leading to increased stress and uncertainty. COVID 19 has meant that young people have not had the 'normal' experience of transitional times such as starting a new school and this may have led to increased difficulty.



Discussion

As a group the Causeway LPG felt it important to look again at Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing as a subject area following from the 2020 research which ranked it as the most important health and wellbeing Issue for both parents and young people.

The previous 2020 CYPSP research, which looked at the wellbeing of young people in the Causeway area was completed as part of the CYPSP Children and Young People's survey. Respondents included both parents and children. 26 of the respondents living in Causeway were children or young people. When asked what their top 3 'Health and Wellbeing' needs were, they ranked Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing as top 62%; followed by Sports and Fitness 35%; Healthy Eating 31%; and Education 31%, This was followed by Weight Concerns and Family relationships. When asked how they would like their health and wellbeing needs to be met, young people in 2020 responded with Sport and Exercise 52%; Counselling 28%; 1to1 programmes 28%; Online Support 24%; and a Safe Place to Meet 24%.

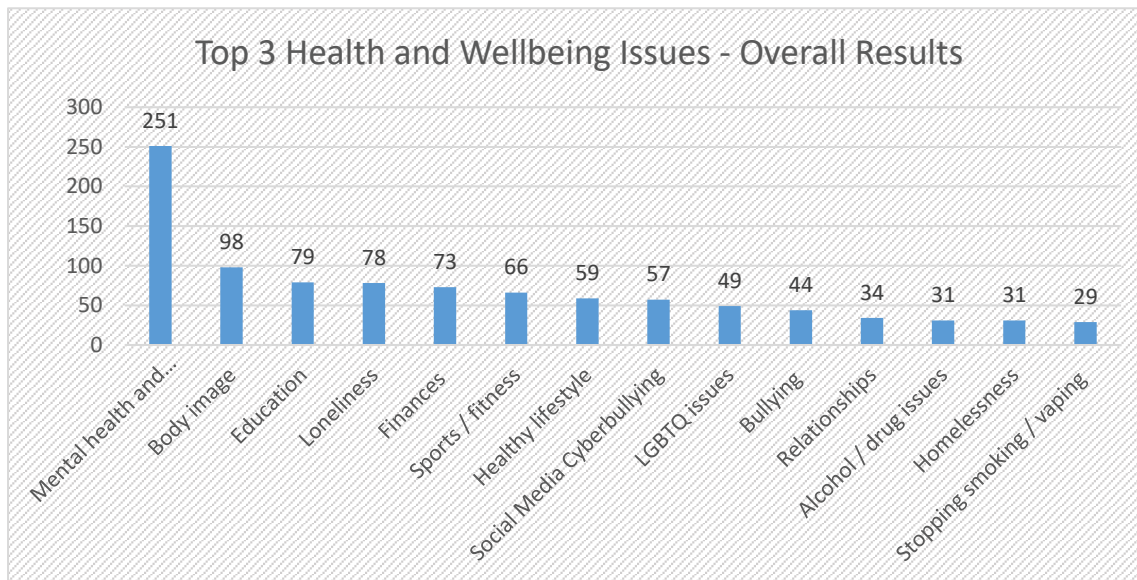
This research looks at prevailing trends in the mental health of secondary school age children in the Causeway area and draws comparison to these findings. As a LPG, we hope to use the data collected to influence our work at a local level in order to raise awareness and increase opportunities to improve of MH for local Young People.

This survey was undertaken between 2022 and 2023 with over 70 responses collected at the 'Youth Voice' Conference held in Coleraine in June 2022 attended by secondary school pupils. The survey was moved online and circulated to Causeway LPG members and all secondary schools in the Causeway area. A total of 235 responses were collected.

Most young people commented that their levels of happiness were about the same 43% following the COVID 19 pandemic with slightly more people stating they were less happy 30% than those who said they were happier 25%.

Most participants said they would turn to Family 173 out of 235 (74%) and Friends 156 out of 235 (66%) when in need of support. Counsellors and 24 (10.2%) and teachers 23 (9.7%) were the next most popular options for support.

When asked what health and wellbeing issues were of most importance to them the highest ranked was 'Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing, with 62 people ranking it first. This was followed by Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing scoring 250 points, followed by Body Image 98; Education 79; Loneliness 78; Finances 73; and Sport and Fitness 66.



When asked about other important health and wellbeing issues, concerns about education along with family issues and relationships, were mentioned in the young people's comments.

12% of the Young People surveyed had accessed Mental Health support services with 56% of people who used the support finding it useful.

When asked about support in school during times of transition, 22% of participants felt they had received support and 52% of those who had support found this to be useful.

Qualitative data from those who had accessed support with transitions, highlighted: support from teachers along with family and friends as being useful in making change easier. 'Open nights' and counselling accessed following the transition back to school after the pandemic was also mentioned.

When asked what type of support would be useful during times of change in their lives, participants mentioned: emotional support; support from teachers and schools in a caring manner; 1 to 1 support, advice and assistance; and youth clubs were some of the most commonly noted answers.

Participants felt they had reasonable knowledge of different Mental Health conditions with over half of participants having awareness of 17 out of 18 conditions. 56% of participants wanted more information on the following Mental Health conditions: Anxiety; Depression; Self-esteem; Panic attacks; ADHD; OCD; Psychological disorders; PTSD; Self-esteem and Stress; Schizophrenia; Sleep paralysis; Self-harm; Suicidal thoughts; Body dysmorphia; Eating disorders; Panic attacks; Suicidal feeling; Bi polar and Paranoia were the Mental Health

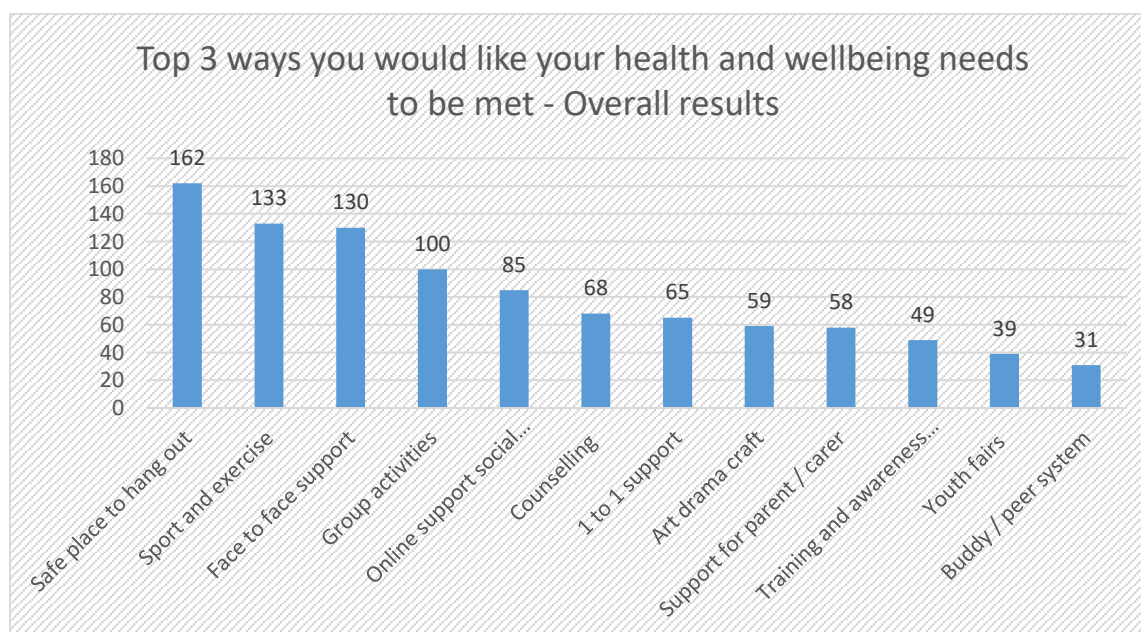


conditions mentioned when participants were asked what Mental Health conditions they would like to know more about qualitatively.

Many participants mentioned that their reason for wanting to know more about these conditions was so that they could help other people.

Out of a total of 235 participants, the most popular activities that they took part in to support their Mental Health were Exercise 171 (73%); Hobbies 165 (70%); Creative Activities 73 (31%); and Spending time in Nature 97 (41%). Participants also mentioned Mindfulness 40 (17%); and Journaling 36 (15%). When asked qualitatively what other activities they took part in to support their mental health: participants mentioned music; attending Sunlea Youth Centre; bible reading; farming; spending time with family; spending time with friends; football; judo; gaming; and going for a walk.

Exercise also ranked highest when young people were asked the top 3 ways they would like their Health and Wellbeing needs to be met. This was followed by a Safe Space to Hang Out 162, Sport and Exercise 133, Face to Face support 130, and Group Activities 100.





Conclusion

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing still ranks as the most important health and wellbeing issue for young people when drawing comparisons with the survey completed in 2020. There has been a rise in concerns about finances and this may be attributed to the cost of living crisis. Education ranks as quite important to young people in both surveys, as does sport and fitness.

The Importance of exercise is highlighted a number of times throughout the research, with young people ranking it highly in their most important issues and ranking it first in the ways in which they would like their health and wellbeing needs to be met.

There has been a rise in the need for a 'Safe place to hang out' which was the most popular way young people wanted their health and wellbeing needs to be met, while it ranked joint 5th with online support in 2020.

57% of the young people who took part were from the Coleraine area which is less rural than other areas of Causeway. This may have had an impact on some of the results. A reasonably balanced mix of ages took part. 11% were over 18, 21% were aged 17 to 18 and 34% were aged 14 to 16.

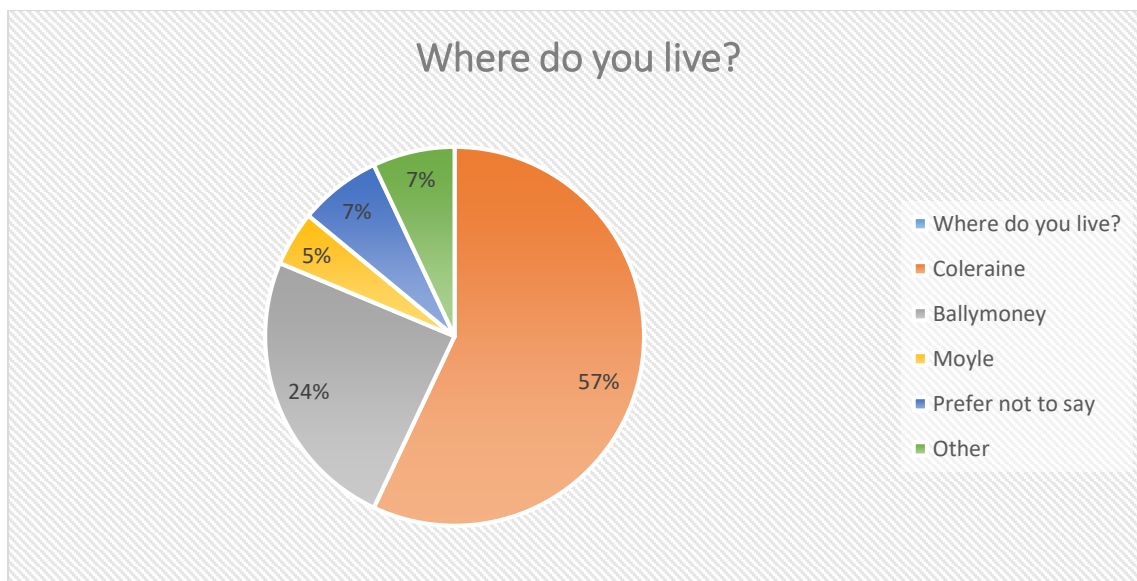
Taking into consideration all of the qualitative comments made by participants the importance of talking to someone and having someone to listen non-judgementally and confidentially, appeared as a theme throughout. This is supported by responses to the ways young people would like their health and wellbeing needs to be met and evidence indicated that young people highlighted an interest in taking part in both 1 to 1 and group activities.

Young People showed an interest in helping others in their responses, around learning more about mental health conditions. The importance of support and understanding for LGBTQ issues and the need for more mental health support and access to counselling was also highlighted throughout the research. As 85% of the young people surveyed had not used mental health services, it would have been useful to collect data on the numbers who felt they needed support but were unable to access it. Of those who did access support the most used services were 'Youth Forum' and Child and Adolescents Mental Health Services 'CAMHS.'

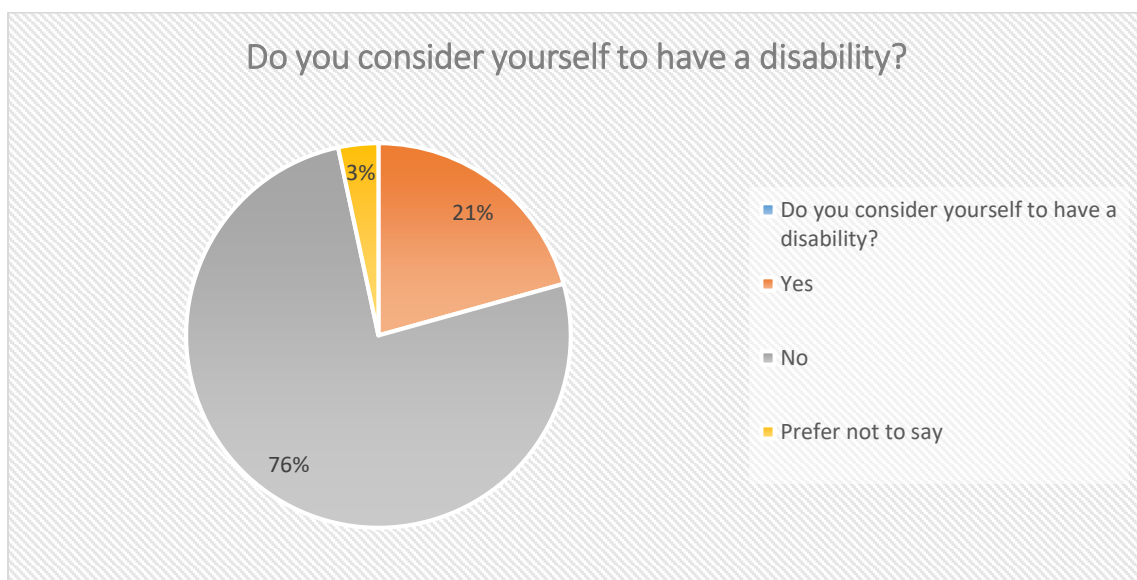
The research would reflect that there is a strong interest from young people that they would want to have their issues heard and to be offered the opportunity to talk in a safe environment. The research would also suggest that Friends and Family are still the main source of support for young people at this age. The research also reflects the need for enjoyable and active activities for young people such as exercise, hobbies and spending time in nature both of which contribute to positive mental health. It is hoped that as a group we can go some of the way to providing more of these opportunities in Causeway through our action planning and small grants scheme.



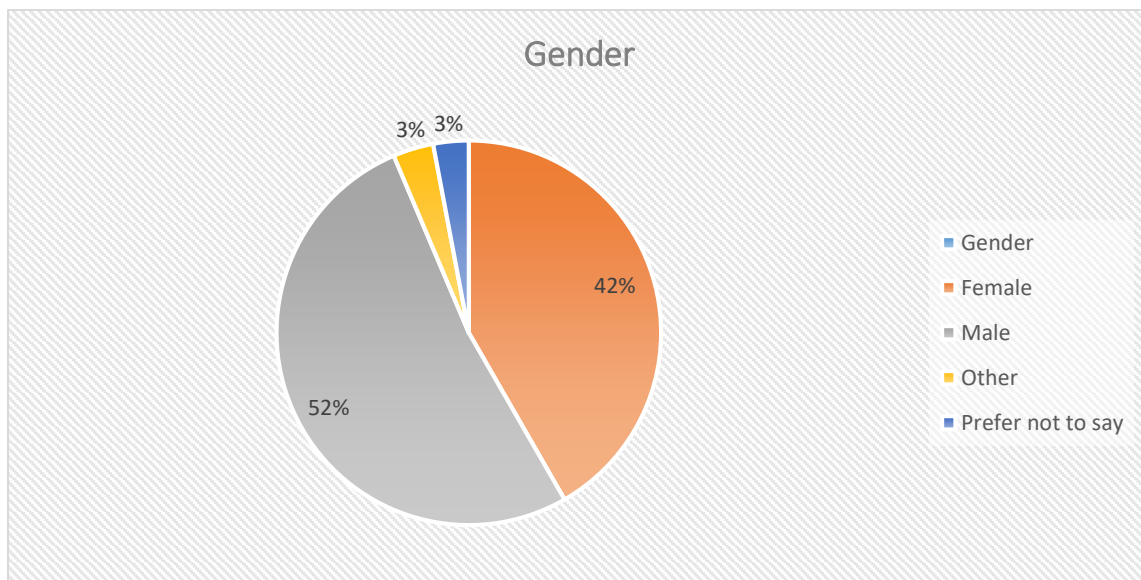
Q1.



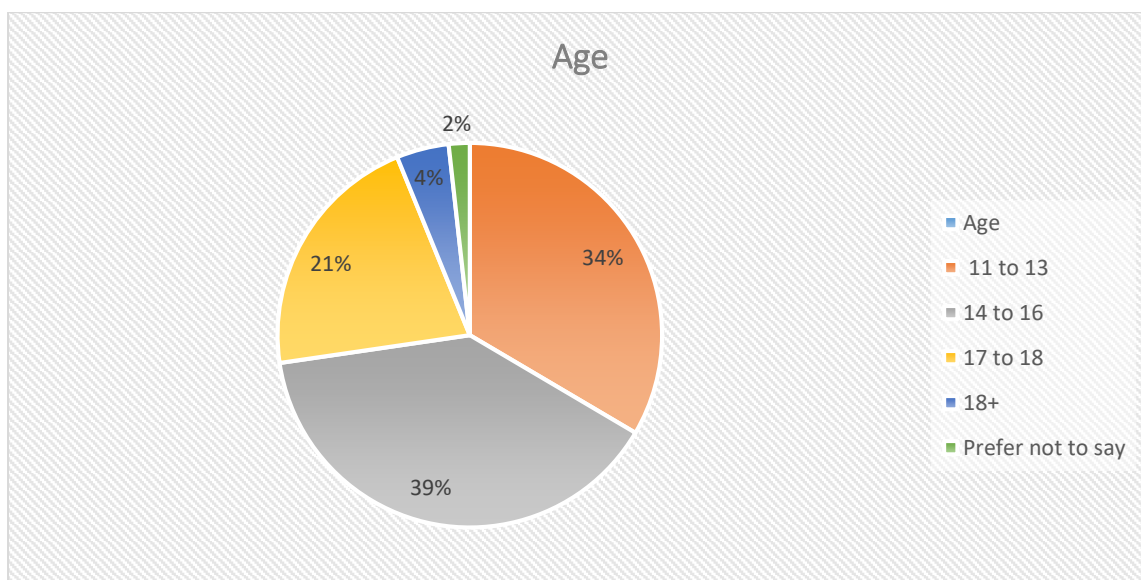
Q2.



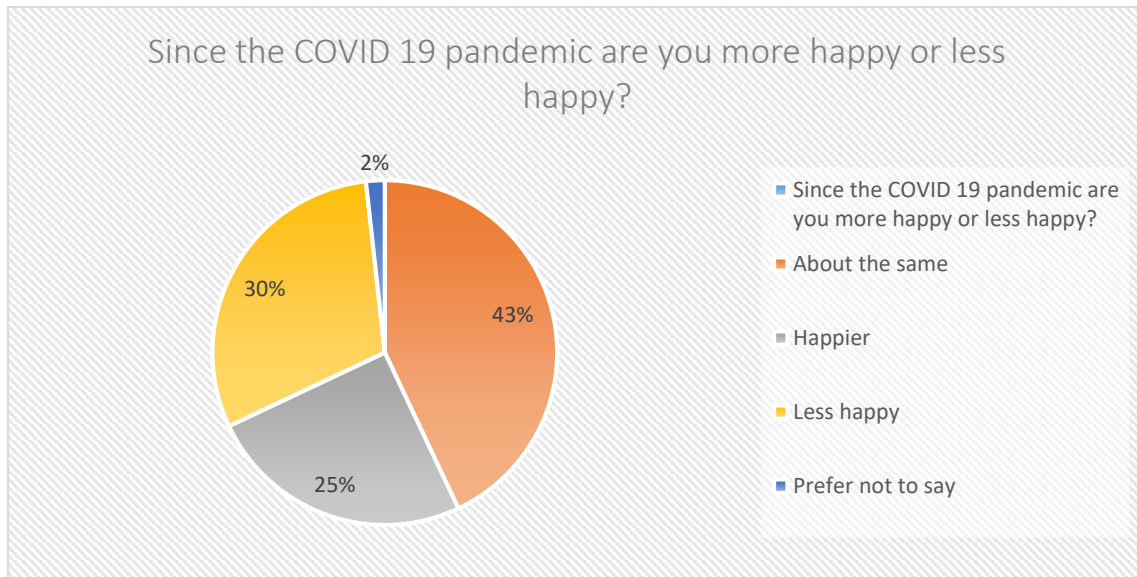
Q3.



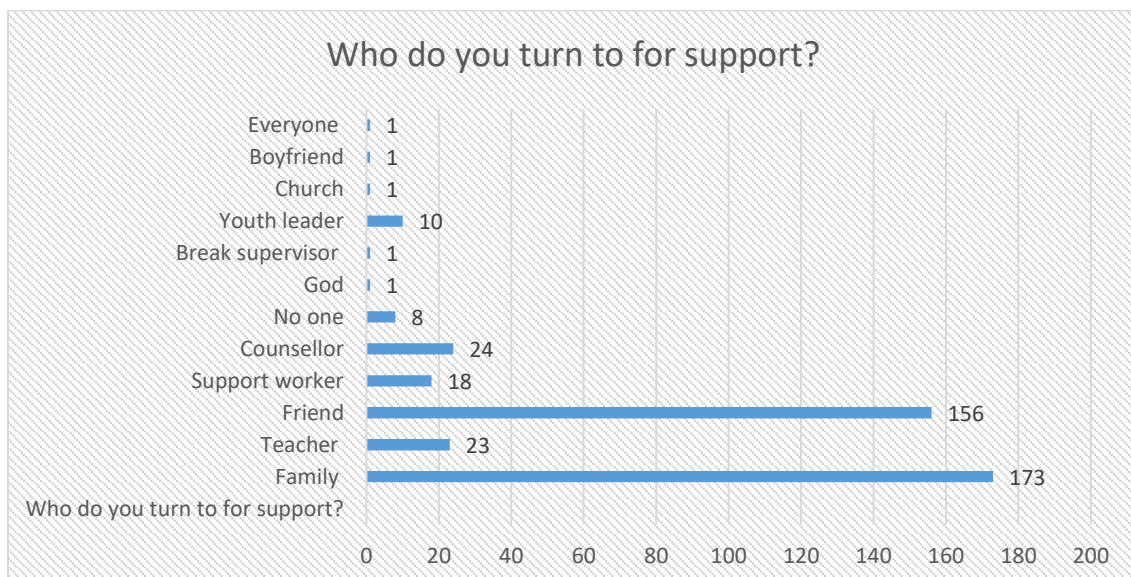
Q4.



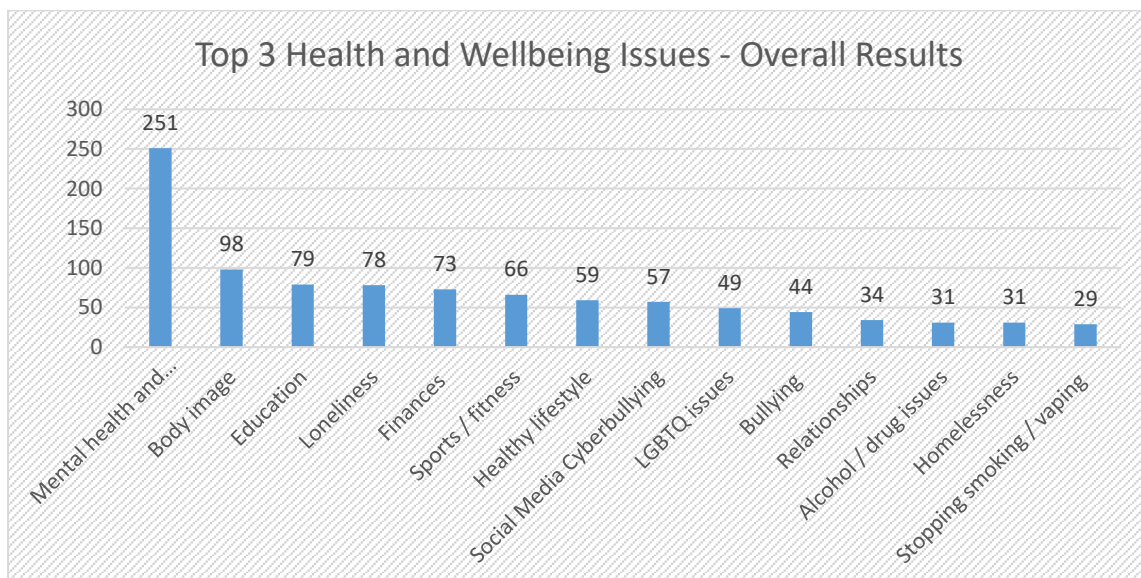
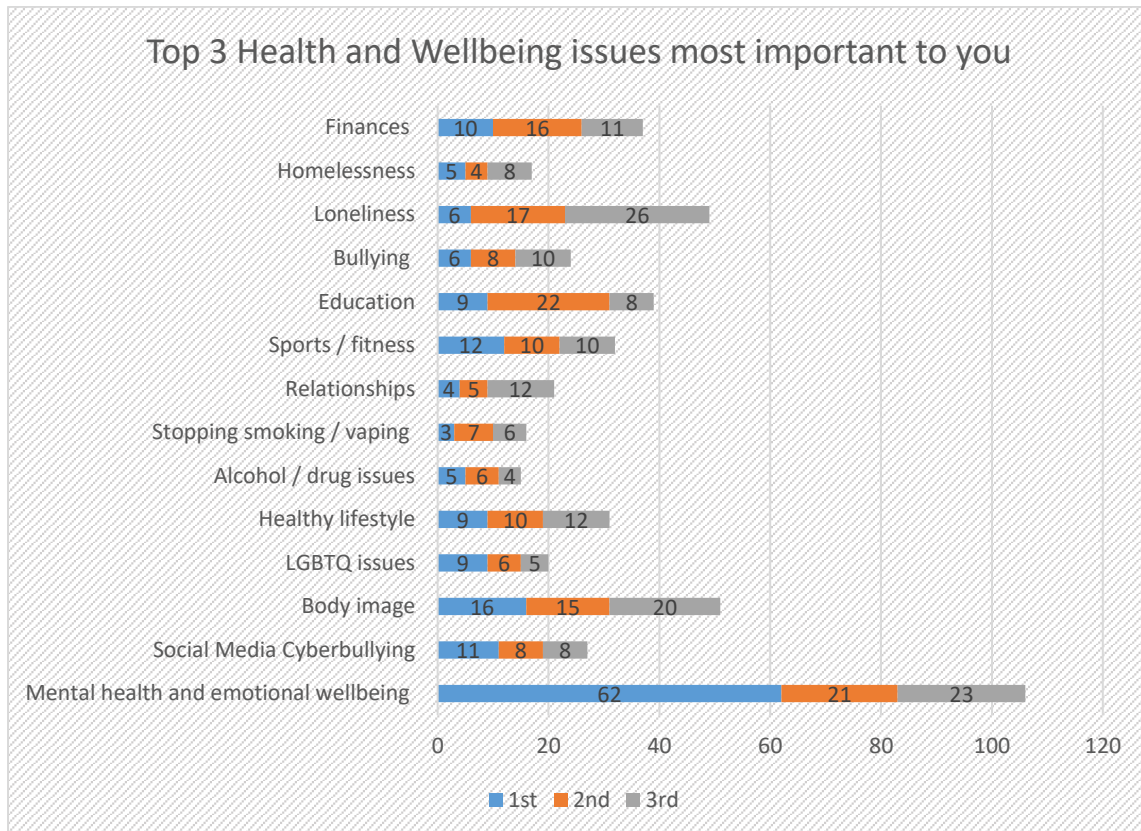
Q5.



Q6.



Q7.



For overall results answers were scored 1st 3 points, 2nd 2 points and 3rd 1 point and added together to give the overall score.



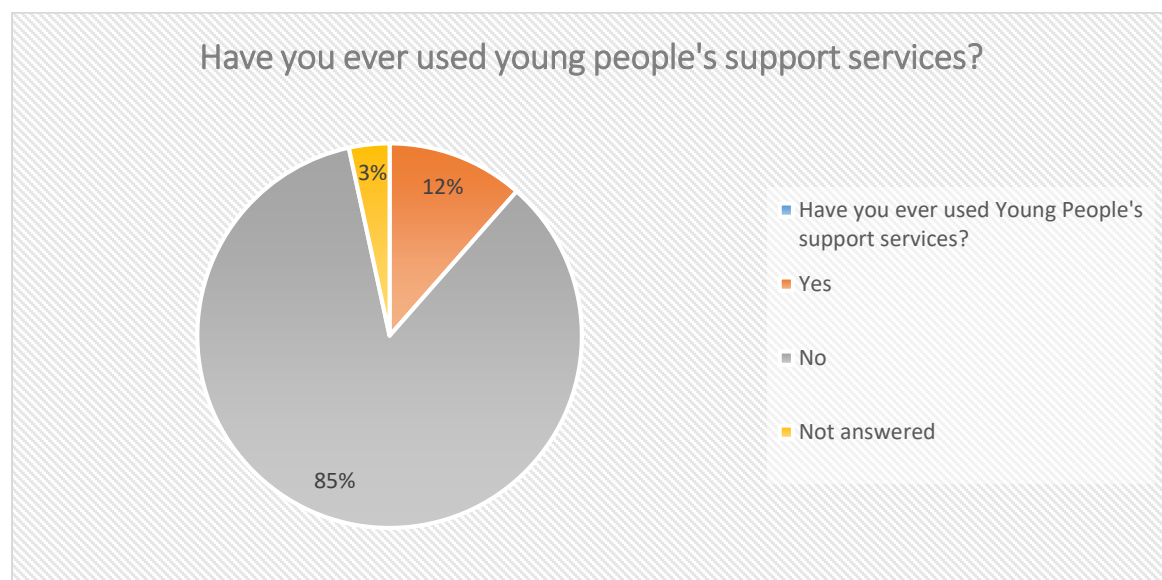
Are there any other issues that you feel are important to you?

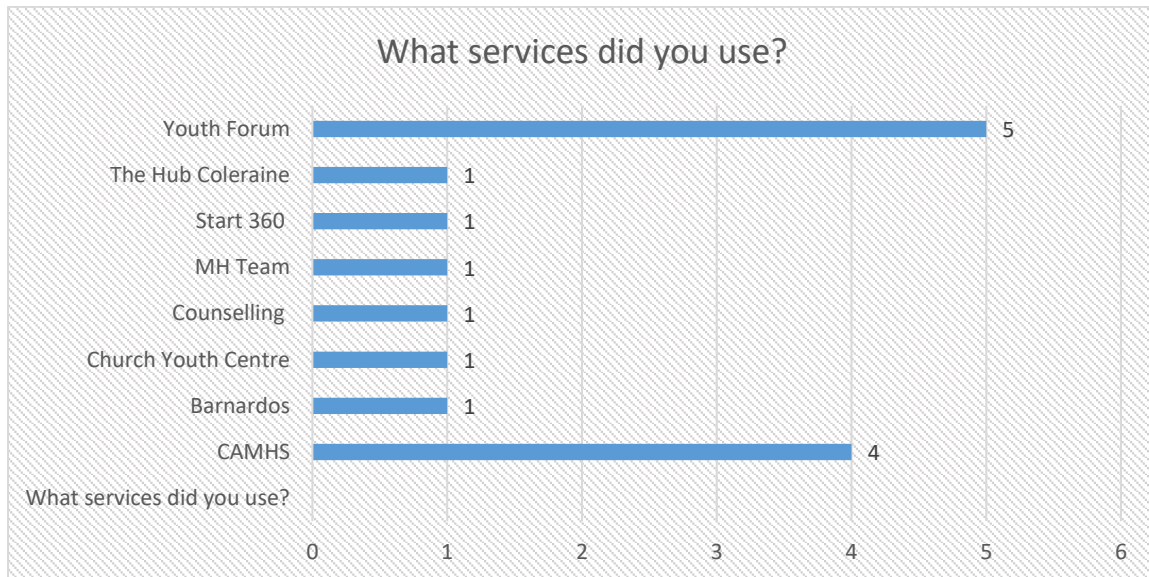
Education, Family issues, Family relationships, Friend groups etc.,
LGBT, No, Loneliness, No mental health education available, Self-
harm in teenagers, War, Sexism

'I have trauma issues in my life i need support for, I think all of these issues are important to address,
Just be nice to people'

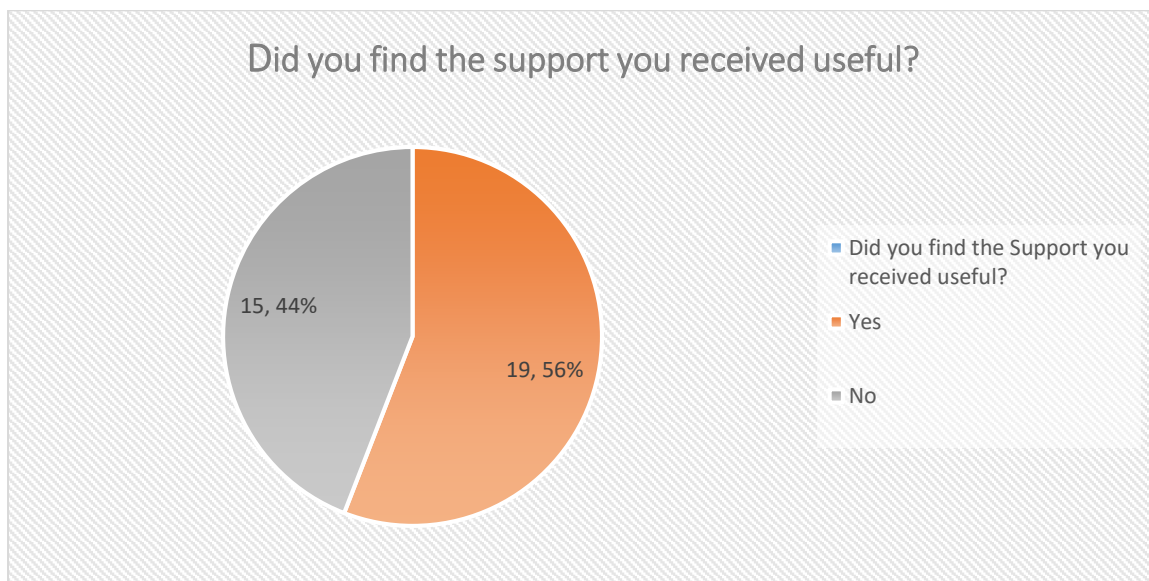
'I think there needs to be a bigger push for people seeing counsellors while it is good to talk to your
peers it can be harsh on their mental health to see their friends going through issues and not be able
to help them and there is a lot of stress as they now have to take their friends health as their
responsibility' 'Understanding from teachers and school. M school does nothing to help those with
mental health issues'

Q8.



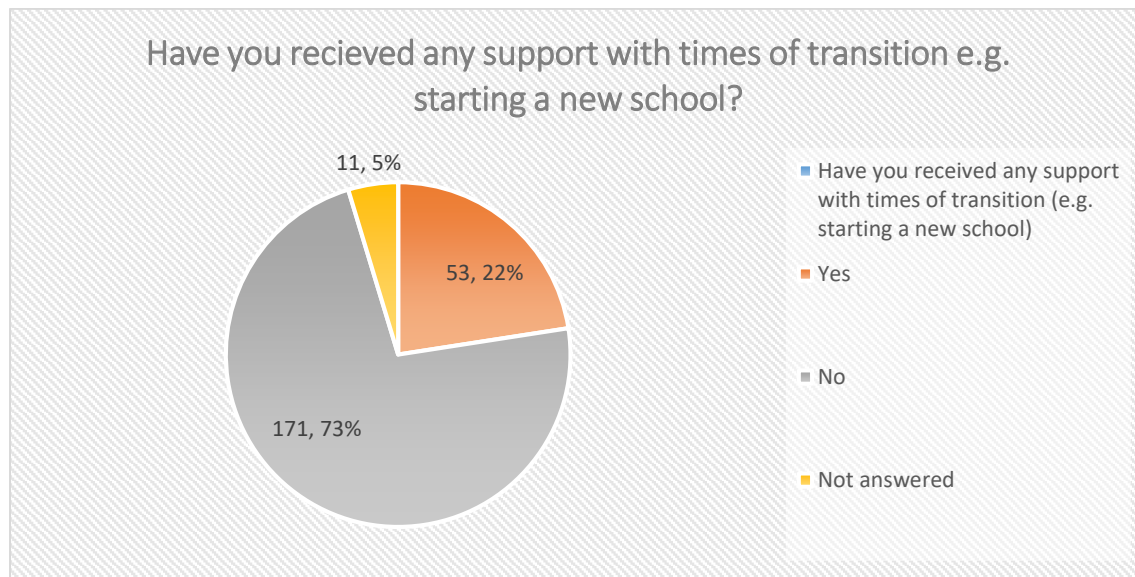


Q9.





Q10.



What support did you get with transitions?

Support from school, help from teachers, help from family members, support from friends, learning support, tips to make change easier, open night tours, careers advice,

'All the other students and my form tutor are really supportive'

'as i was the only one going into my high school and i came from a small school with a p7 class of 9 a teacher came from my high school to ask me if i knew anybody else going there and they put me in a class with the only person i knew as i had went from a whole school population of xx to a year class of about xx this was very helpful for me especially as i don't deal well with large groups of unknown people'

'Counselling when coming back to school after lock down'

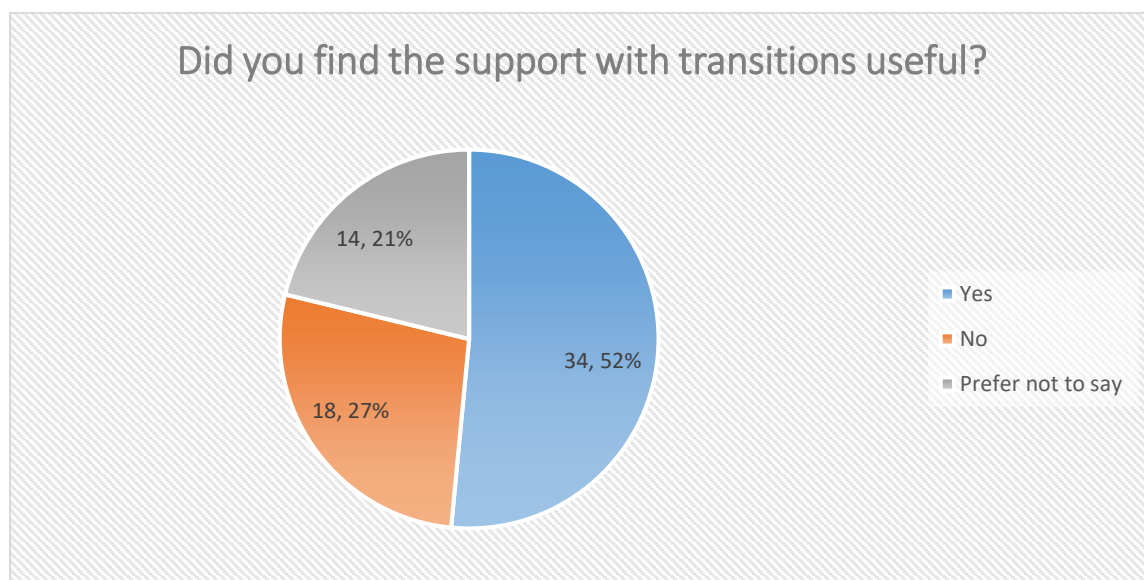
'I was taught in class how to organise my life with all the new changes'

'My primary school teacher in year 7 helped prepare us for leaving school and entering a new one'



'Someone came into our primary school to talk to us about secondary school
talking to my family and friends who are already at secondary school'
'They tell us about things that might help make the change easier'

Q11.



What kind of support do you think would help you when going through big changes in your life?

Emotional support, teachers, family and friends, I don't know, 1 to 1 support, someone to talk to, someone to be there, caring school & teachers, youth club, advice, assistance, talking (friends, family), to talk with no

judgement & confidentially, counselling, safe space, practical support

'A school system that informs those who are about to leave school how to actually survive on your own' 'Cooking skills, bills, safety, taxes. We are expected to just know all of this as soon as we leave high school' 'Financial advice and help and advice on what line of career to choose and what subjects to coincide with career path' 'Support and a clear plan through it and advice on how to handle the change.' 'Support on approaching university.'

'Being able to talk to others going through similar change. Getting busy to take my mind off of it' 'Being able to talk to people without being scared.' 'Better friends' 'Get someone by your side when your going threw it' 'Dealing with friendship groups/individuals that maybe nothing wrong with how to deal with easy irritations' 'Having someone to have an open conversation about how I feel and what I'm going through without being judged by the person listening or my feelings being brushed aside and being told it's just because I'm a teenager' 'I think having a group or support network of other young people who are feeling the way that i am, whether it be about finances, seasonal depression, school pressure etc. i think it is less petrifying than speaking to a counsellor or adult who i feel i relate to less and is always trying to fix the problem. It would be nice to just have a listener and see how other people are dealing with their emotions.'

'Help with stress for people in later years of school with exams and universities, being able to take your mind away from it briefly. E.g. school trips purely for the enjoyment of pupils and staff.'

'Football' 'more groups for young people'

'I think if there was a more open and easy conversations around taboo subjects such as LGBT issues, body image issues, money issues and how these things affect school and work extra there would be less stress and pressure surrounding test and homework and it would be easier for students to understand that sometimes life can affect work and that a few bad grades aren't the end of the world. There is a lot of pressure around doing well and not a lot of understanding of what goes on in people's lives outside of school and most people's main contact with adults qualified in childcare is in schools therefore these issues should be discussed more in school' 'People explaining what is going to happen and actually talking about LGBTQIA and related topics'

'I think it would be helpful if it was more acknowledged in school that these changes are difficult, and maybe to talk about what we find hard so that a) we don't feel like we're the only one struggling, and b) we can try to figure out how to help with those specific things' 'Just everything school wise go a lot slower. Because when I'm dealing with stuff, every class wants me to do an hour of something each night and I feel like I've got no free time and I can never really relax and it's really pressuring.' 'Just having people there instead of forcing people to talk and shoving options in their faces' 'Just having support no matter what i decide to do' 'Just people being nice'



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'Just the general knowledge of what to do. Having someone to turn to like a teacher is unhelpful as all you seem to hear about people telling teachers and other people in school is the parents being told and them being unsympathetic/uncaring if your grades are good. Holding assembly's and the like I think is most helpful as you are given info and not just told to call childline, tell a teacher if worried.' 'School councillors should reach out to more people not just the people who reach out to them but instead talk to anyone whose going through life changes it doesn't have to be permanent just a chat if they consent'

'People taking the time to talk about it and try to help the situation.' 'Someone telling me I made a good choice' 'Someone telling you it's OK if you don't like this change it may take a while to adjust but take your time' 'Someone to talk to who has advice, information and experience.' 'Someone to talk to who won't get fed up of me complaining.' 'Someone to tell all my worries too no matter how big or small they are.' 'Someone who has been through the change before explaining the process clearly.'

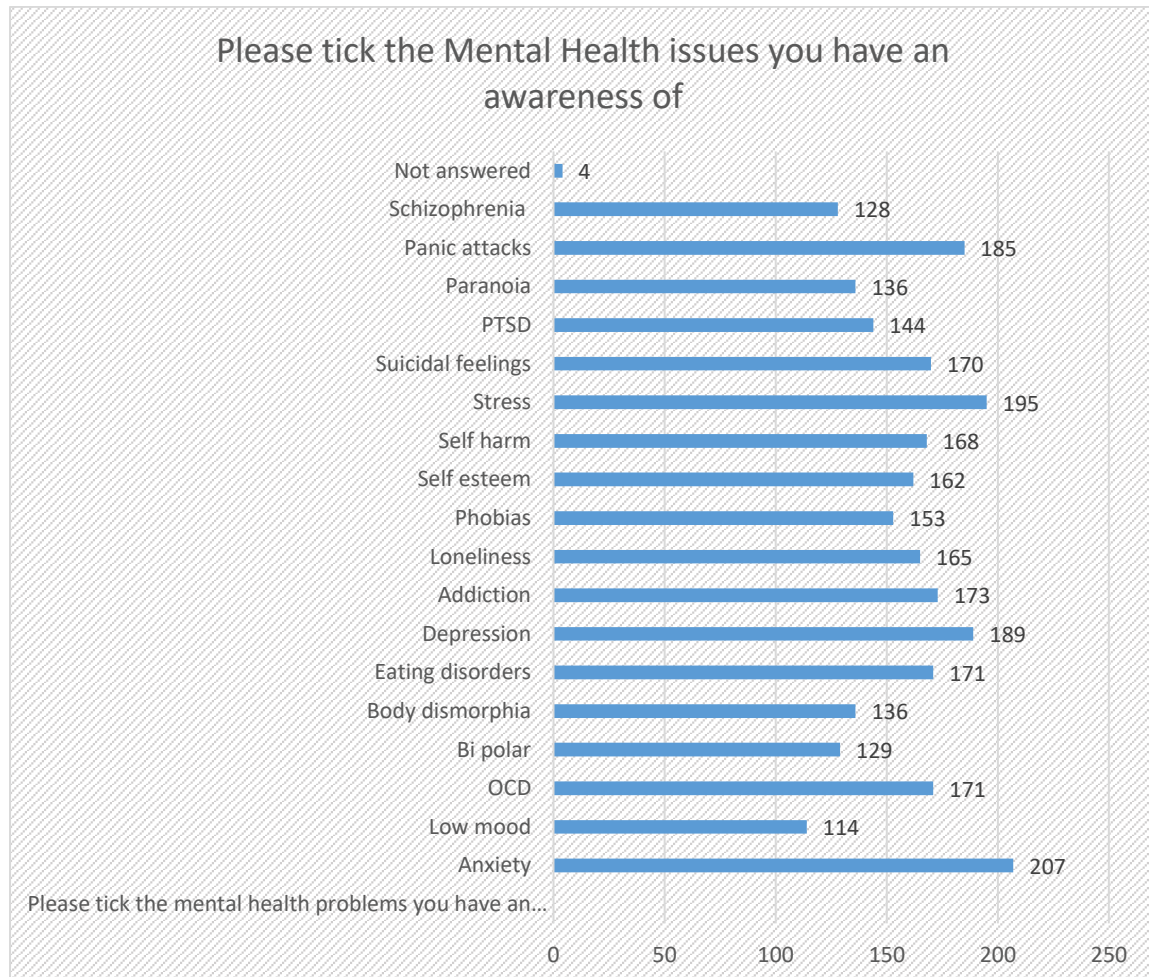
'To be left alone about my feelings and to work on myself taking my own time' 'Not being forced to reach out.'

'Free products in school bathroom!'

'Familiar things and time'

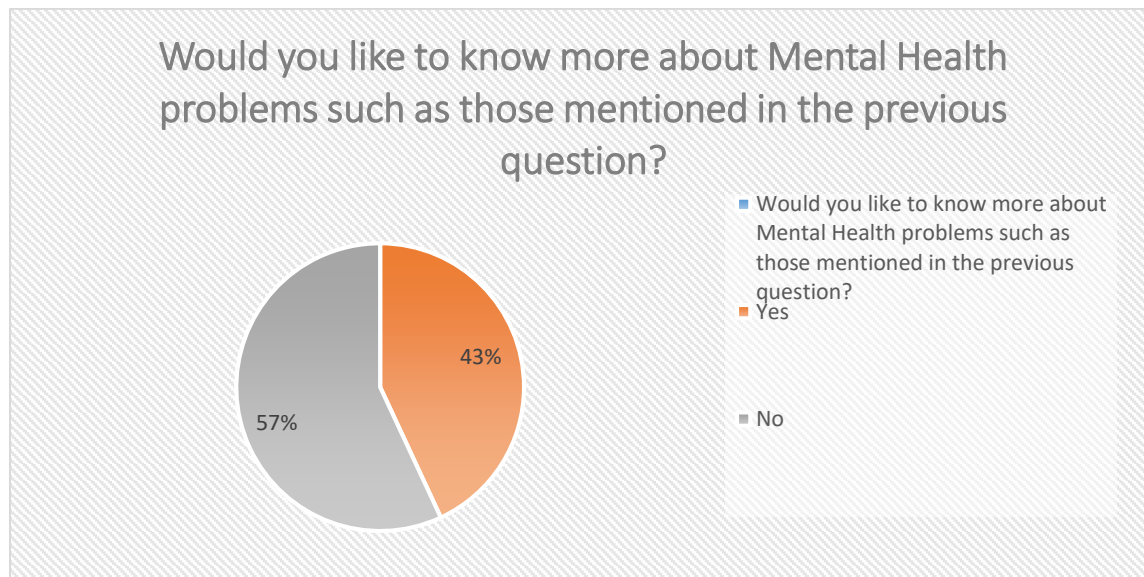


Q12.





Q12.



What Mental Health topics would you like to hear more about?

All of them, Anxiety, Depression, Self esteem, Panic attacks, ADHD, OCD, Psychological disorders, PTSD, Self-esteem and Stress, Schizophrenia- what is it?, Sleep paralysis, Self harm, Suicidal thoughts, Body dysmorphia, Eating disorders, Panic attacks, Suicidal feelings, Bi polar, Paranoia

'All of them I feel like people are age need to be more aware of mental health as many more people struggle with it. So we should make them feel aware and not alone' 'Almost all of them, I want to be able to help someone with any of those disorders if they need help. And because I have a few of them I also want to know more about them,



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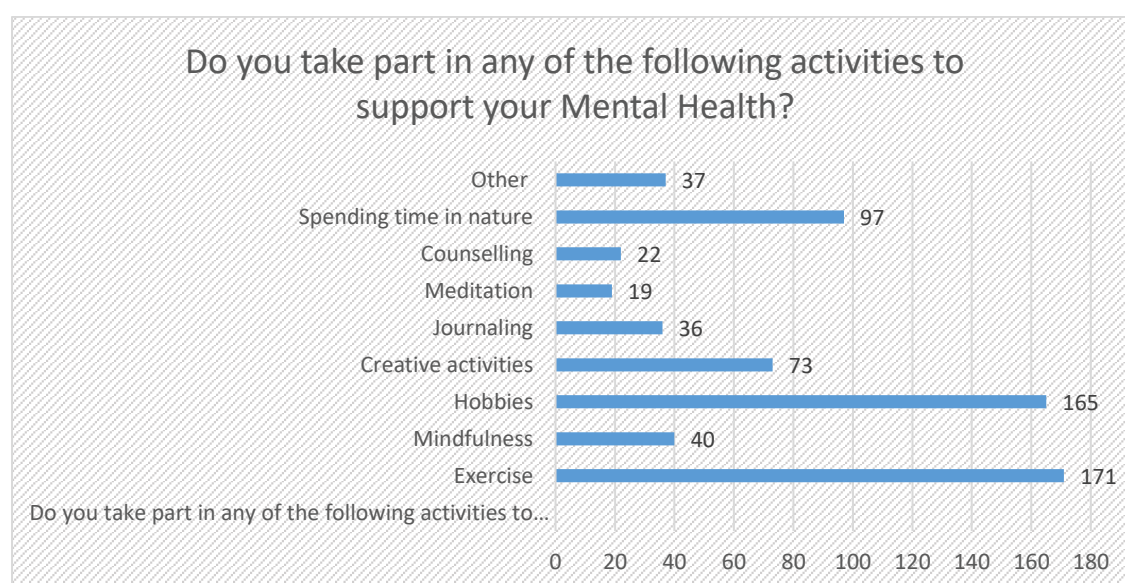
'Anxiety, stress and my phobias of loud noises such as balloons and fireworks.' 'Anxiety, stress OCD because I think these are pretty common and I want to know why.'

Breaking down stereotypes - OCD isn't just excessive cleaning, anxiety isn't just worrying

'How to help someone having a panic attack or what to do when a friend is self harming/ having suicidal feelings or maybe how to recognise the signs' 'I am interested in learning more about how to help myself and other people cope with anxiety, depression and low self esteem/changes in mood. i think it's important to coach young people how to deal with the issues before it becomes an immediate problem in the young person's life. prevention before cure.' 'I feel like a lot more awareness of self-esteem and anxiety would be beneficial as a lot of people don't seem to understand that even walking past someone can be terrifying and to try and be a lot more kinder and gentler.' 'I guess it would be helpful to be taught what they are e.g. what different eating disorders there are, and to know how to spot if someone is struggling with one of these mental health problems and what we can do to support them.' 'I want to understand all of them or at least how to help someone who is experiencing them.' 'I would like to learn about depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness and PTSD because I want to be aware of what people going through these things feel.' 'Dealing/helping others u know with problems how to help/handle them.'

'I would like to learn more about most of these mental health problems as school doesn't really touch on subjects such as body dysmorphia and eating disorders and self-harm, they only briefly mention it but don't go into it a lot in order to show help for students who are going through these things, schools need to talk about how to cope with these struggles and not just what they are.' 'Most of these i only have knowledge about because me or my friends have struggled with and had to help each other with i think eating disorders self harm and body image issues need to be talked about more and rather than just in a what it is way, but in a how to cope with these issues way most of the people i know have struggled with eating disorders and had to learn how to cope by themselves.'

Q13.



Other activities you take part in to support your Mental Health?

Music, Sunlea Youth Centre, bible reading, farming, spending time with family, spending time with friends, football and judo, gaming, going for a walk

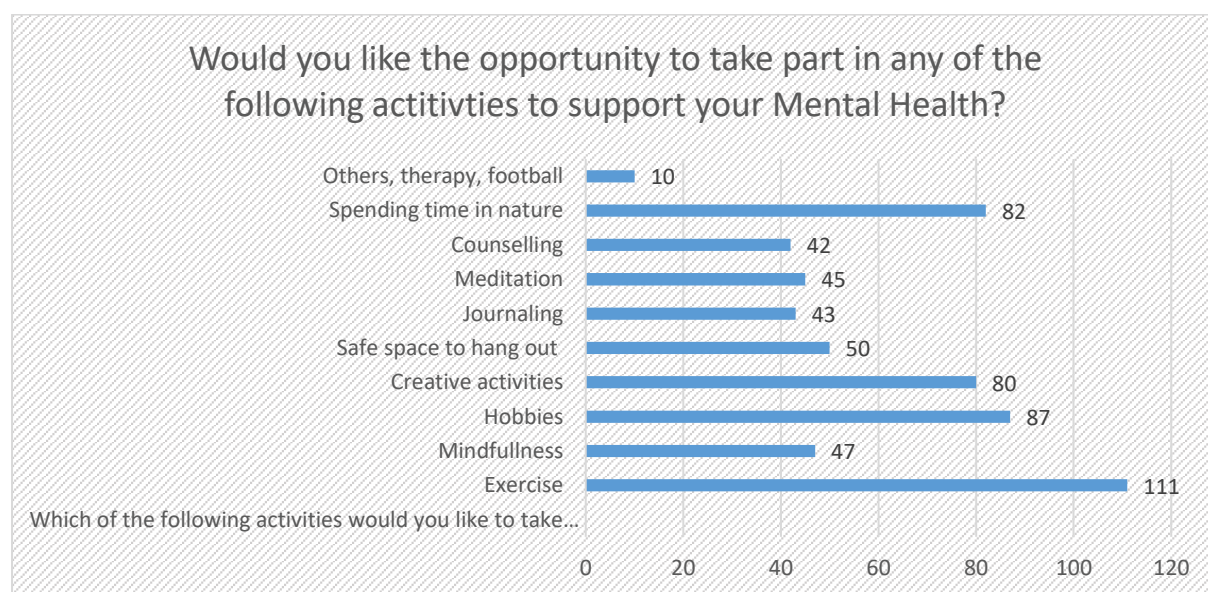
hot girl walk, hoverboarding outside, reading, Sitting in a room by myself in the quiet, reborn Doll Therapy, smoke weed, Spending plenty of time with friends and family that care about me, Talking to grandparents, Walking is my escape, Woodworking, tattooing and cooking, playing musical instruments, singing with my friends, doing art

'I like to make accessories like pins, badges, necklaces, bracelets and other little bits and bobs because wearing lots of badges and accessories makes me happy.'

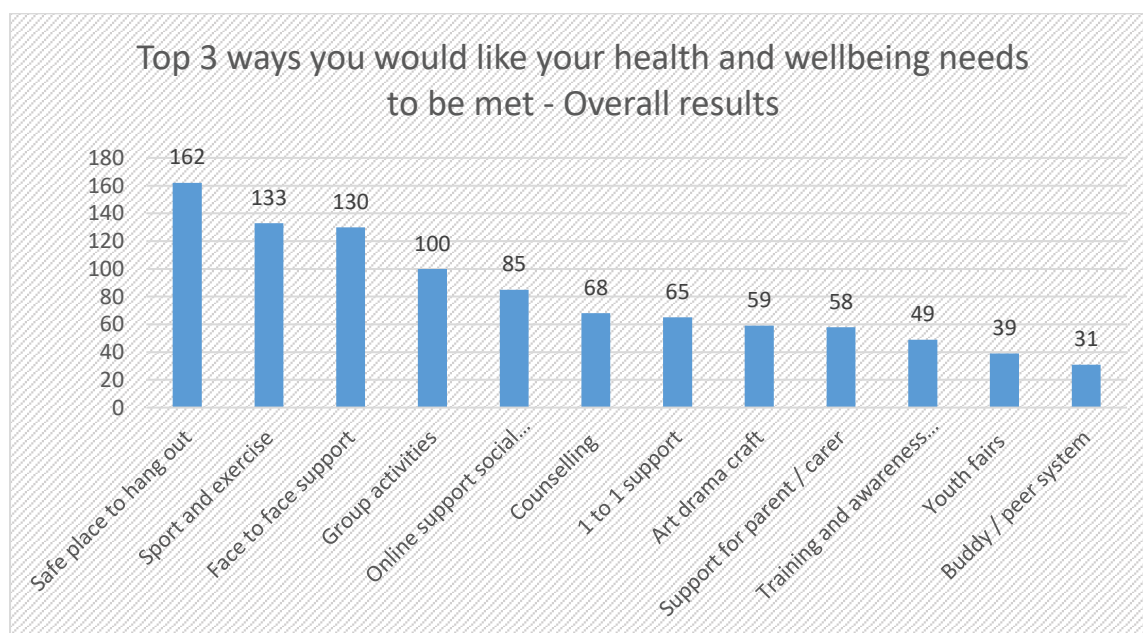
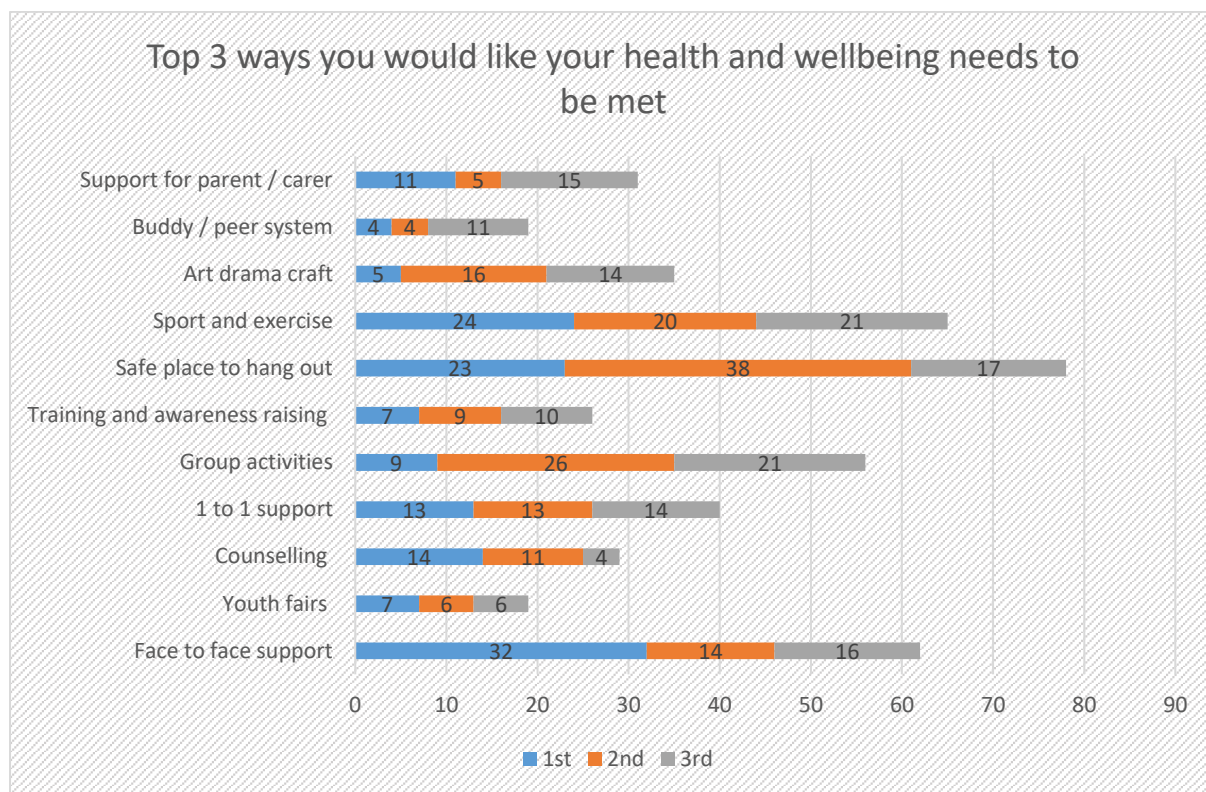


'I tend to busy myself with activities such as school, revision, fundraising, sport and scouting to take my mind off of how I'm feeling'

Q14.



Q15.





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For overall results answers were scored 1st 3 points, 2nd 2 points and 3rd 1 point and added together to give the overall score.