

June 2020

You-COPE

Disruptions experienced by young people aged 16-24 during first months of the COVID-19 lockdown

Liam Crosby, Tayla McCloud, Lee Hudson, Dasha Nicholls, Bianca De Stavola, David Fowler, Russell Viner, Praveetha Patalay

Key points:

- This briefing presents information on changes and disruptions experienced during lockdown by 1,274 respondents to an online survey of young people aged 16 to 24.
- Participants lived across all regions of the United Kingdom but were not a nationally representative sample. The majority of participants were female, and over half were 16-18 years. A similar proportion of participants had received free meals to national rates of children and young people claiming free school meals.
- **31% of people in our survey reported that their income had decreased** during the lockdown, compared to less than one in ten whose income had increased.
- **78% of respondents reported their normal educational/employment activities had changed.** This proportion was higher among younger age groups.
- **24.4% of young people reported changes to their living situation.** Respondents aged over 18, and those reporting previous mental health problems, were more likely to report changes in their living situation.
- **Of those receiving ongoing healthcare, 41% reported that it had been disrupted.** Females and those with previous mental health problems were more likely to report disruptions to their care.
- **Of those receiving mental health care, 58% reported disruption to these services.**

About this study:

You-COPE seeks to understand more about how young people aged 16-24 in the UK are being impacted by the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is a rapid study that comprises an initial web-based 20-minute survey, followed by subsequent on-line surveys every two weeks, asking questions about life, health and wellbeing, and daily activities. This briefing presents results from the first 1,274 respondents to the main initial survey.



Introduction

You-COPE aims to understand the changing situation of young people aged 16-24 during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting 'lockdown'. The study comprises an initial 20-minute web-based survey, followed by subsequent surveys every two weeks, asking questions about life, health and wellbeing, as well as changes to personal living situation, health and wellbeing, education and employment, daily activities and loneliness.

This briefing focuses on two particular aspects of 'change' as reported in the first wave of the survey: (a) changes to income, education/employment and living situation and (b) disruptions to access to health services.

Recruitment and respondents

The information in this briefing is based on responses to the first wave of the survey and is limited to the 1,274 individuals who responded to the survey between 11th May and 31st May 2020 (i.e. from study launch, until the 1st June when substantial changes to the lockdown regulations were made).

Recruitment to the survey was via convenience sampling. We conducted a rapid mapping of institutions and organisations who would have links to a diverse range of young people and asked them to circulate the survey link. This included youth group networks; school networks; charities, unions and other organisations working with particular groups of young people; national bodies representing institutions such as FE colleges or local authorities; academic research networks focusing on young people; and organisations representing young people's mental health. Some recruitment efforts were made via social media.

The sample included participants from all regions of the UK, but was not nationally representative, with 27% of participants from London and a further 39% from the South of England. The majority (72%) of participants were female, and over half of participants were 16-18. Most participants (89%) were white – a higher proportion than in this age group at the last census (82%).¹ Prior to lockdown, 19% were employed part time and 15% full-time. 14% of respondents reported having ever received free school meals, which is similar to known national rates (between 12-15% nationally have received free school meals in recent years).² 17% of respondents reported having at least one long-term condition, which is similar to national rates in this age group.³ A summary of respondent characteristics is presented in the appendix.

Part 1: social disruptions – to income, education and employment activities, and living situation.

1.1. Changes to income

All participants in the survey were asked whether their income had increased, decreased, or remained unchanged since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those who answered this question (99.2% of the sample), **7.9% reported their income had increased, while 30.7% stated it had decreased.**

Figure 1 below shows how different sub-groups within the sample experienced changes to income. As can be seen, females were more likely than males to report decreases in income (32.7% vs 26.6%); as were white people compared to BAME people (32.1% vs 19.5%). Higher proportions of those reporting either depression

¹ Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census data. Accessed from <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/age-groups/latest#age-profile-by-ethnicity>

² Department for Education, 2018. *Schools, pupils and their characteristics*. Statistical Publication, 28 June 2018. Available online [here](#).

³ Department of Health, 2012. Report. [Long-term conditions compendium of Information: 3rd edition](#)

and anxiety (32.4%) or another mental health problem (33.6%) had seen decrease in their income than those with no mental health problem (27.0%).

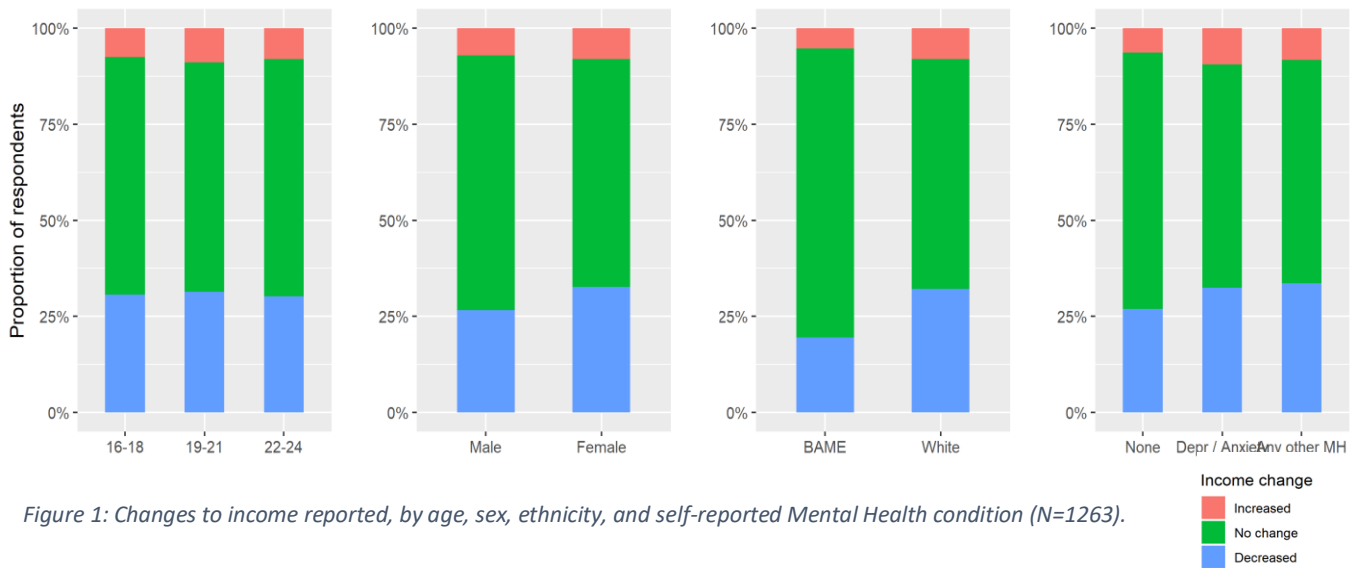


Figure 1: Changes to income reported, by age, sex, ethnicity, and self-reported Mental Health condition (N=1263).

1.2: Changes to current education and employment activities.

All participants were asked whether their usual education or employment activity/ies had changed since the current COVID-19 pandemic began, and 1,271 (99.8%) responded. Among those who responded, 78.3% reported that their usual employment or educational activities had changed. Figure 2 below shows that those aged 22-24 were less likely to experience change in their education or activity (67.0% of those aged 22-24; versus 81.4% of younger respondents). A greater proportion of white respondents (79.0%) than BAME respondents (72.6%) reported such changes.

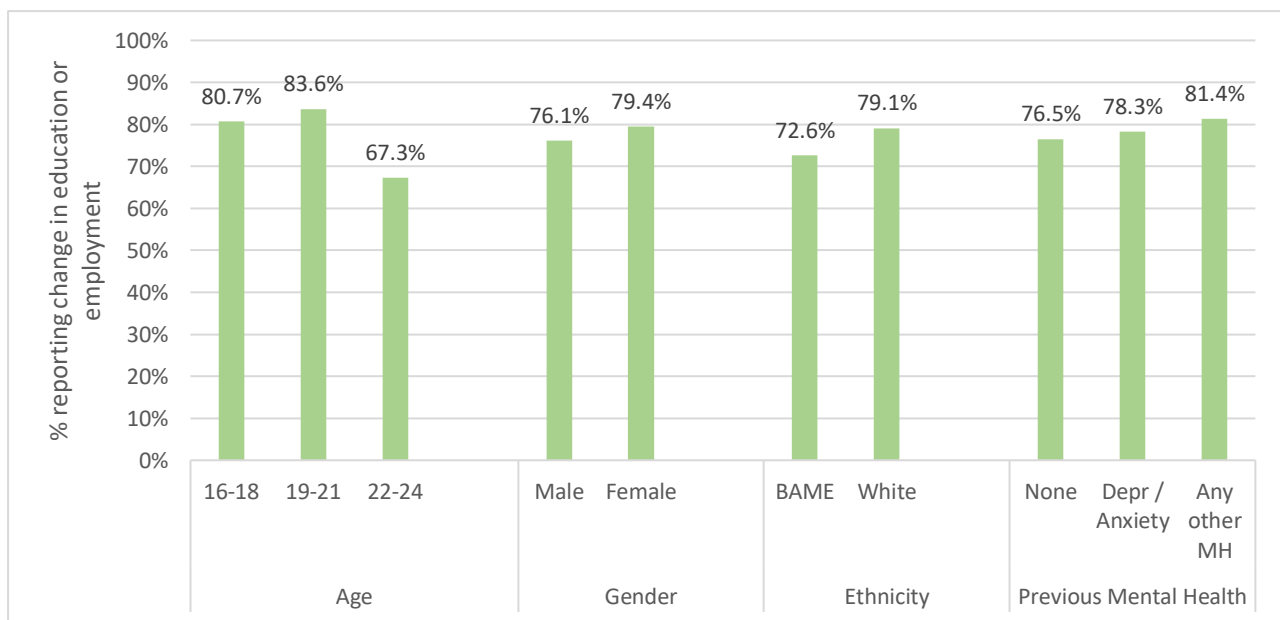


Figure 2: Changes to education/employment activity reported, by age, sex, ethnicity, and self-reported mental health condition (N=1271).

Figure 3 below shows the different forms of employment/education activity changes experienced by the participants, as a proportion of all respondents broken down by gender (male and female only, because of small numbers in the other categories). The most common experience was for training and studying to have

changed to be online (42.0% overall); followed by training being stopped (24.7%) and being furloughed due to coronavirus (17.7%).

Certain subgroups were more likely than others to experience specific changes: for example, 52.6% of part-time employees, and 42.6% of full-time employees reported being furloughed (not shown in chart).

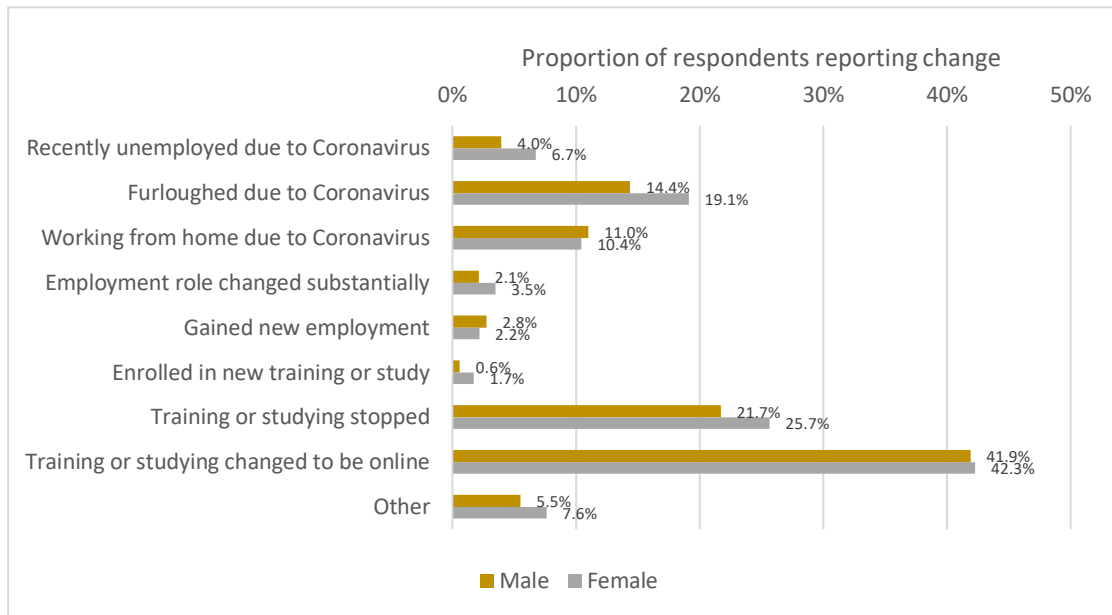


Figure 3: Proportion of respondents experiencing each form of activity change, by gender (N=1274)

1.3 Changes to living situation

Participants were asked whether they had experienced change in whom they currently live with since the current COVID-19 pandemic began. **24.4% of respondents reported that their living companions had changed.** As can be seen in figure 4 below, those aged 16-18 were much less likely to have seen a change in whom they live with, which might be expected as a majority of this aged group would have already been living at home with parents prior to lockdown. 46.9% of those aged 19-21 had experienced a change to living situation, compared to 9.3% of those aged 16-18. There were minimal differences between genders, and between White / BAME ethnic groups.

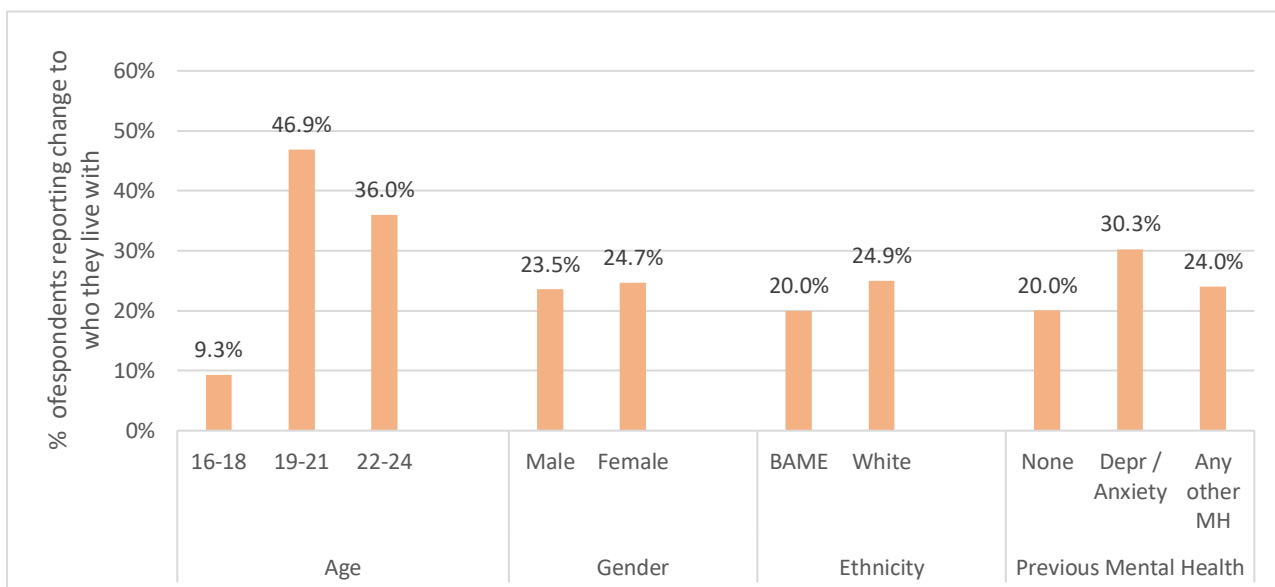


Figure 4: Proportion of respondents reporting change to whom they live with, by age, sex, ethnicity, and self-reported Mental Health condition (N=1273).

Figure 5 then shows respondents’ living situation before vs after lockdown. As can be seen, the largest changes are that at the time of the survey fewer respondents lived with friends, in group accommodation (such as halls of residence) or with partners. A much larger proportion lived with family at the time of the survey than before lockdown: whereas 27.3% lived apart from family prior to lockdown, this fell to just 12.2% at the time of the survey. This indicates a large group of young people – such as those moving to parents’ homes from halls of residents – who have experienced a significant life change in returning to live with parents from more independent living situations.

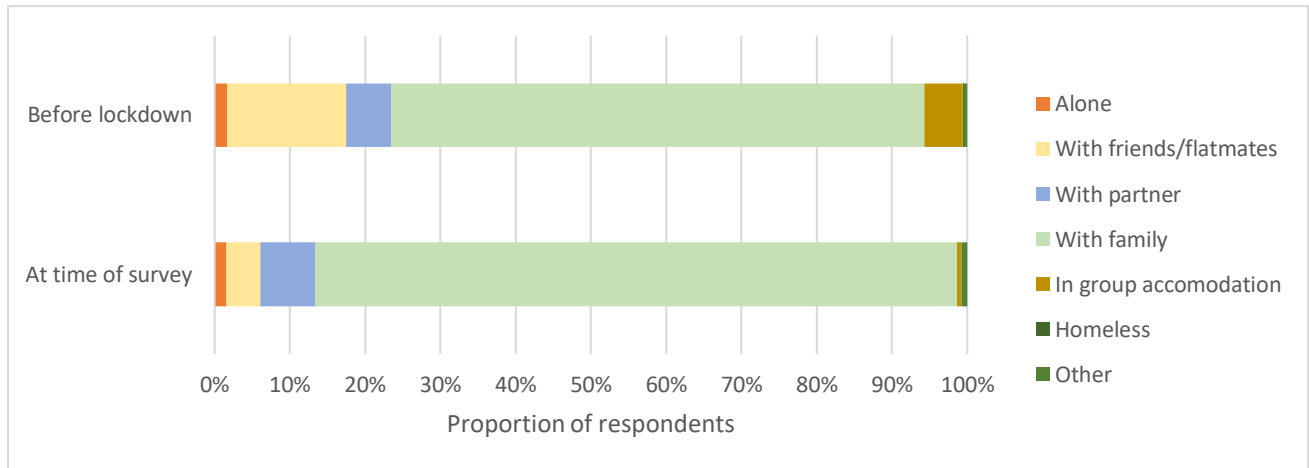


Figure 5: Living situation (reported members of household) before lockdown versus at time of the survey (N=1273)

Part 2: Disruptions to health services

2.1 Overall health services

In total, 412 individuals (32.3% of all respondents) reported some current need for health services, defined as either having one or more long-term condition(s) (LTC; n=222, 17.4%), or currently taking any prescribed medicine (n=353, 27.7%), or both. These 412 individuals were asked whether they had experienced disruption to obtaining medical advice or care; whether they had experienced disruption to obtaining necessary medication or devices; or whether they had avoided or missed appointments.

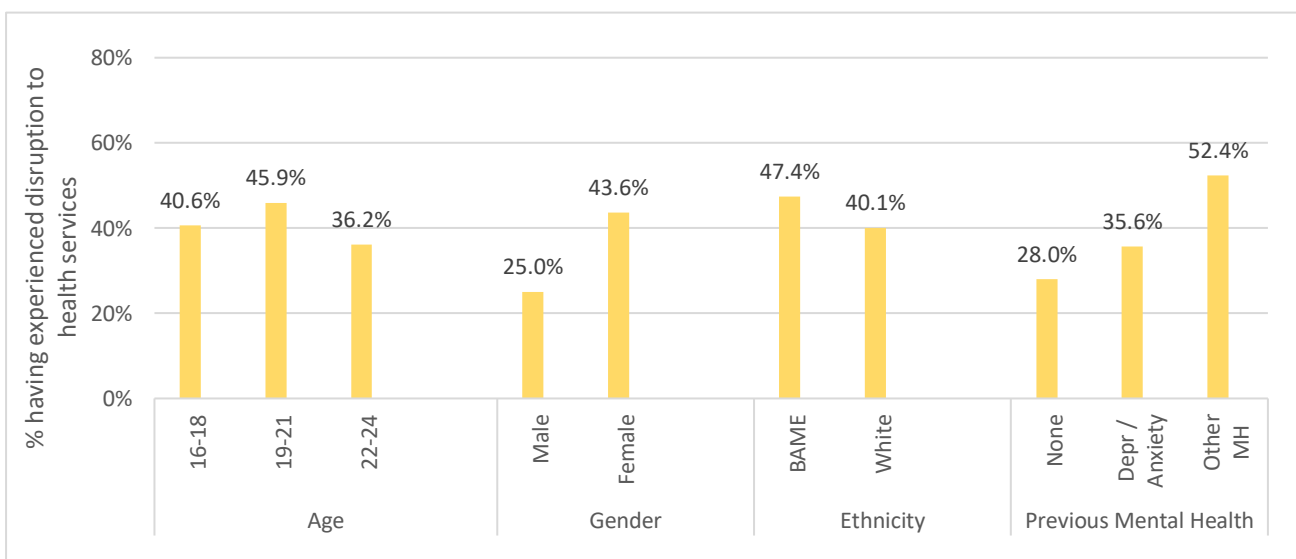


Figure 6: Proportion, of those reporting any LTC or medication, having experienced disruption to health service; by age, gender, ethnicity, and self-reported Mental Health (n=412)

168 respondents (40.8%) reported some disruption to their healthcare, in at least one of the domains listed above. As figure 6 above shows, the proportion reporting disruption to healthcare was higher among females (43.6%) than males (25.0%); and among those reporting mental health problems other than depression and anxiety (52.4%) and those reporting depression or anxiety (35.6%) than among those not reporting any mental health condition (28.0%).

We asked about contraceptive service disruption. 71 people reported having had unprotected sex in the last month, of whom 7 (9.9%) said they had not had any contraception due specifically to the lockdown.

2.2: Mental health services

193 respondents (15.1%) reported currently receiving treatment or help for a mental health difficulty; these 193 were asked whether their mental health treatment had been disrupted in any way due to coronavirus pandemic or related events. Of these 193 individuals, 58.0% reported some disruption to their mental health treatment; with higher proportions among 16-18 year-olds (54/79 respondents: 68.3%), those reporting mental health problems other than depression or anxiety (69/109 respondents: 63.3%) and females (96/160: 60.0%).

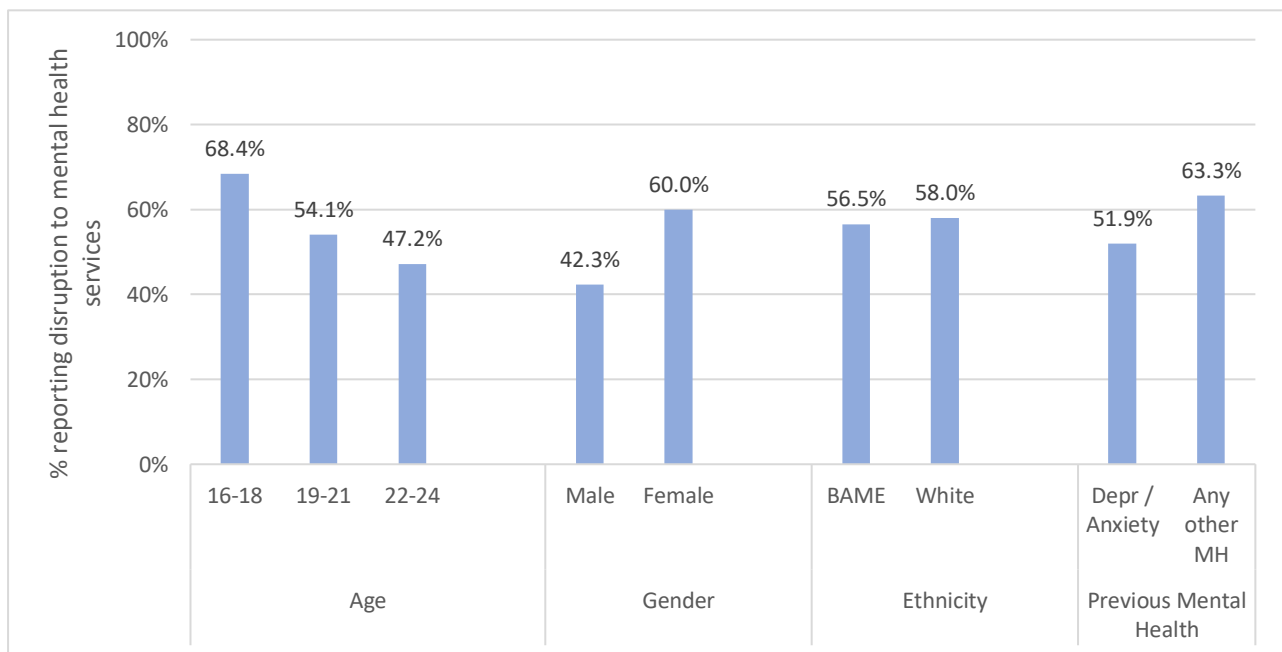


Figure 7: Proportion, of those normally using mental health services, having experienced disruption to their mental health care; by age, gender, ethnicity, and self-reported Mental Health (n=193)

We asked respondents to describe how their mental health treatment had changed. Among the responses common themes included: move to online or telephone-based services; therapy sessions reducing or completely stopping; and additional difficulties with obtaining medication or amending prescriptions. A few respondents reported that they felt online/telephone-based services were “less effective”. Some mentioned that having moved house made accessing therapy more challenging.

Appendix: Summary of participants' demographics

	Number of participants	Proportion
Total respondents	1,274	100.0%
Age Band		
16-18	679	53.3%
19-21	318	25.0%
22-24	276	21.7%
Unstated	1	0.1%
Gender		
Male	327	25.7%
Female	920	72.2%
Other	21	1.6%
Unstated	6	0.5%
Ethnicity		
Asian	46	3.6%
Black	19	1.5%
Mixed race	41	3.2%
White	1131	88.8%
Chinese	15	1.2%
Middle Eastern	6	0.5%
Other	8	0.6%
Unstated	8	0.6%
Monthly Income		
£0-£500	794	62.3%
£501-£1000	209	16.4%
£1001-£2000	217	17.0%
Over £2000	50	3.9%
Unstated	4	0.3%
Ever received Free School Meals		
Has ever received	181	14.2%
Never received	1082	84.9%
Unanswered	11	0.9%
Region		
East Midlands	76	6.0%
East of England	38	3.0%
London	341	26.8%
North East and Cumbria	33	2.6%
North West	59	4.6%
Northern Ireland	6	0.5%
Scotland	28	2.2%
South East	192	15.1%

South West	303	23.8%
Wales	83	6.5%
West Midlands	47	3.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	63	4.9%
Unstated	5	0.4%

Activity in normal times

Not Employed	834	65.5%
Employed part-time	244	19.2%
Employed full-time	196	15.4%

Previous mental health (self-reported)

None	494	38.8%
Depression or Anxiety only	400	31.4%
Any other mental health problem	366	28.7%
Unanswered	14	1.1%