

Coronavirus: Your Experience Matters II

Westminster



A report by Healthwatch Central West London

August 2021

“The charity sector has been responsive and should be applauded for the work they have done throughout this pandemic, alongside the hard work of other key workers. ”

Local resident

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1. Introduction

i. Background: Your Experience Matters

Since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the United Kingdom (UK) in early 2020, we have been carrying out extensive community engagement. We have been hearing from patients, residents, and carers from across Westminster about their experiences accessing information, support, and services, and how people have been coping through the pandemic. We have sought to understand the indirect, wider health determinant impact of lockdown and social distancing on residents.

This engagement work began once the severity of the situation became clear in March 2020. We began our work by launching an initial one question survey. We asked local people ‘how is the COVID-19 outbreak affecting you and your loved ones?’ You can read our report of this survey [here](#).

In April 2020, we launched our first major COVID-19 survey, called ‘Your Experience Matters’. We wanted to know the issues facing local people during the first wave of COVID-19, how they were managing, and how they were finding accessing information and support. We received over 300 responses from local people to this survey. We produced a series of reports and infographics detailing the key themes that had emerged from this engagement. You can read these [here](#).

ii. Your Experience Matters II

As the pandemic developed and circumstances changed, we launched a refreshed version of our survey, called ‘Your Experience Matters II’, in November 2020. We launched this survey during the second wave of COVID-19 in the UK. It ran through the two subsequent lockdowns between November 2020 and April 2021.

This refreshed survey had two main aims. Firstly, in common with our earlier survey during the first wave of COVID-19, we wanted to reach more people in Westminster. We wanted to find out how local people were coping during the pandemic and how they were finding accessing health and social care services.

Secondly, we wanted to monitor the ongoing trends and long-term impacts of the pandemic. We wanted to know the similarities and differences in local people’s experiences during the second wave of COVID-19 compared to earlier in the year. This information helps us influence health and social care decision makers by identifying the key ongoing problems faced by local people in Westminster.

iii. Healthwatch Central West London

Healthwatch Central West London (HCWL) is an independent organisation for people who use health and social care services. We deliver the statutory Healthwatch projects in Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Through our

research and local engagement, we make sure that local people's views are always at the centre of decision making about health and social care.

We make this happen by

- Listening to what people like about services and what could be improved.
- Monitoring how changes in the health care system affect local people.
- Helping to improve the quality of services by letting those commissioning, running, and making decisions about services know what people want from care.

This report presents the results of our 'Your Experience Matters II' survey in Westminster.

2. Methodology

Our 'Your Experience Matters' engagement work was carried out through a series of surveys.

We use open, free answer survey questions to find out about the lived experience of local people. We do this so that we can better understand common themes in people's experiences or identify exceptions that might otherwise be missed.

Our survey was available both digitally and physically. To maintain our commitment to accessibility, and to make sure that everyone who wanted to contribute was able to do so, paper surveys were available upon request. Additionally, we distributed physical copies of surveys to residents living in sheltered accommodation, care homes, and other assisted living residences.

Across our surveys, looking at 'what' people tell us (the content), helps us see the breadth of their experiences.

Noticing 'how' they talk about their experiences (emotive language for example), helps us better understand what this has been like for them and often uncovers hidden nuances that might not otherwise have been apparent.

This type of research can help us understand more about why people make the choices they make, how they prefer to get support, and where there might be gaps. It can also enable us to identify groups of people with shared characteristics, for example age or ethnicity, who are finding it more difficult to get support.

This can help organisations that commission or provide services, such as the NHS or local councils, to better plan, design and run services that are good quality and meet the needs of local people.

3. Executive Summary

This report is based on the feedback of 61 people, who completed the survey from November 2010 to April 2021. For information on the demographics of respondents, please see Appendix 1.

This is a summary of key themes and issues (see sections 6 - 12 for findings in full).

Key Findings: Themes

Shielding, Support and Services

- 68% of the clinically 'extremely vulnerable' received a letter.
- Those shielding have received good levels of support from services in general (Council, Community, Primary Care) and from neighbours, family and friends.
- 77% of respondents have enough information about GP services, and most feel well supported, involved, and encouraged to access services.
- 17% have experienced difficulty when booking a GP appointment.
- Half of health service appointments (51%) have been in-person, while 39% were conducted remotely. 10% of appointments were cancelled by services.
- 29% of respondents have delayed seeking help for health concerns.

Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

- A clear majority of respondents (92%) say their mental wellbeing is impacted.
- Accounts of anxiety, stress and depression are common, with lack of human contact and future uncertainty among the issues cited.
- Those with hobbies and routines are best able to cope.

Personal and Family Relationships

- Lockdown has increased levels of stress and tension within households.
- A significant number of respondents miss regular contact with others.
- Social isolation is widespread, with 'extreme loneliness' largely reported.
- Online meetings (Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp) are increasingly popular.

Environment and Finances

- A quarter of respondents (25%) have found it difficult to remain indoors.
- 30% have found it difficult to socially distance, when out.
- Those with access to outside space acknowledge themselves to be fortunate.
- Living conditions are widely reported to be unfit for exercise or work.
- On one estate, lifts are said to be crowded, by people without masks.
- Half of respondents (50%) say their fitness has deteriorated.

- 18% say their finances or regular income have decreased.

Key Findings: Themes (Continued)

Information and Technology

- 63% of respondents have found it easy to understand information, with just 8% finding it to be difficult.
- Local information sources include the Council, GPs, word of mouth, newspapers, Healthwatch and community groups.
- National sources include mainstream television and newspapers, websites and social media.
- On technology, those with sensory or physical disabilities say smartphones are not suitable for them.
- Other barriers highlighted include cost and a lack of knowledge.

Equality Check

When compared with White/White British respondents, we find that those from an ethnic minority background are more likely to have:

- Experienced difficulty when booking a GP appointment.
- Delayed seeking help for health concerns.
- Been tested for Coronavirus.
- Experienced impact on their emotional and mental wellbeing.
- Found it difficult to maintain a safe social distance when out.
- Experienced a deterioration in physical fitness.

And less likely to have:

- Enough information about GP services.
- Experienced a reduction in finances or income.
- Found it easy to understand information, to stay safe.

We also found that, as a group:

- Respondents from an ethnic minority background, those with mental health conditions, disabilities and carers, are the least well informed about services at their GP practice.
- Respondents from an ethnic minority background, those aged 55-64, or with mental health conditions are most likely to experience difficulty when booking a GP appointment.
- Those with mental health conditions are significantly most likely to delay seeking help or treatment.
- Those aged 55-64, or with mental health conditions are most likely to have experienced a negative impact on their emotional and mental wellbeing.

- Those with mental health conditions are significantly least able to remain indoors without difficulty.
- Carers are most likely to find social distancing difficult.
- Those with disabilities are clearly most likely to have experienced an impact on their physical fitness.

Analysis of Feedback

This report is based on the feedback of 61 people, who completed the survey from November 2010 to April 2021.

Our analysis (sections 6 - 12) presents findings around shielding, access to services and support, testing and vaccinations, emotional and mental wellbeing, personal and family relationships, environment, finances, information and technology.

We analyse feedback as a whole, and also look closely at age, gender, ethnic background and existing conditions, to establish any findings that may be especially relevant to certain groups.

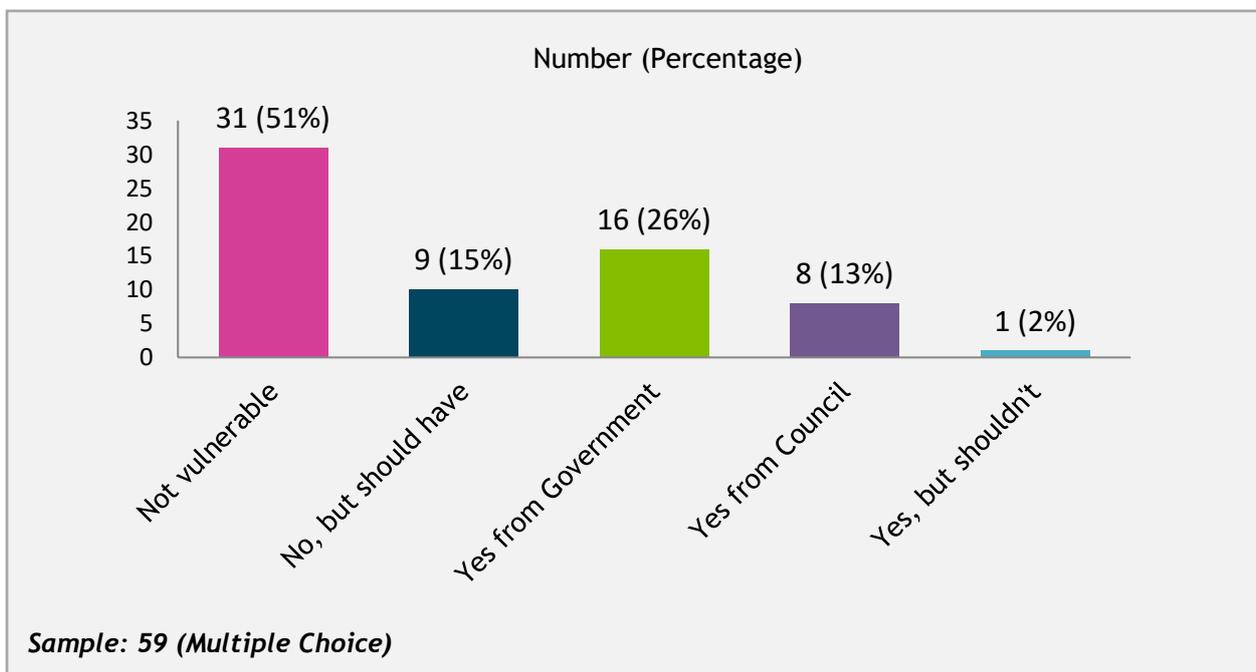
4. Services and Support

In this section, we examine experiences around shielding, access to services and support, testing and vaccinations.

4.1 Shielding

We began the survey by asking people whether they considered themselves to be clinically extremely vulnerable, and if so received a letter.

4.1.1 Every person, who is considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable, should have received a letter from the Government or the Council. Did you receive a letter from the Government or the Council?



28 respondents (46%) consider themselves to be clinically extremely vulnerable. Of these, 19 (68%) received a letter from either the Government, Council or both, while 9 people (32%) did not receive a letter.

Some, citing 'ever changing' information are confused as to what to expect.

Selected Comments

"The instructions from the government have been confusing and ever changing which makes it difficult to remember what one should or should not be doing. I think as a result a lot of people have just given up and are living their lives as normal."

23 respondents (38%) confirmed that they are shielding. We asked what, if anything, they are doing differently this time around.

For many, walking is increasingly popular. On levels of support - it is noted that food parcels are not supplied this time, additionally supermarkets have increased their charges for online deliveries - a challenge for those with limited finances.

Selected Comments

“Going for walks more often. Support Bubble is great. I will get groceries if it’s quiet.”

“Going for a daily walk.”

“First lockdown, I was shielding and not visiting supermarkets at all. I relied on the food boxes from the Government and Asda was providing priority delivery with no minimum basket and delivery charges, also some friends assisted with some other supplies at a few occasions. However in the current lockdown, the Government is not providing the food boxes, Asda has introduced a minimum basket and a very high delivery charge as well hence it is not possible for me to rely on the priority slots as they get extremely expensive (I am a single person and do not have £40 worth of shopping to do every 2 weeks). Hence I am going to the supermarkets for my basic supplies. I also don't have a job since this year hence need to be frugal.”

4.2 Accessing Help and Support

We asked those who have needed to shield, self-isolate or quarantine since the second wave of the pandemic about their experience of accessing help and support.

4.2.1 Council Services

Nine respondents (15%) used Council services. Of these, the majority (six) found services to be helpful, while 3 did not.

One person comments on difficulties and delays in accessing employability services.

Selected Comments

“I have tried contacting the council to access their employability services as that is a major concern for me but it's just taking ages for them to help.”

4.2.2 Community Organisations, Charities and Voluntary Organisations

12 respondents (20%) used community, charity or voluntary organisations, Of these, the majority (10) found services to be helpful, while 2 did not.

Organisations and groups including Westminster Connect, One Westminster, Westminster Society and Westminster Learning Disability Partnership are mentioned.

4.2.3 Foodbanks

Six respondents (10%) used a foodbank. Of these, the majority (four) found services to be helpful, while two did not.

4.2.4 Supermarket Deliveries

23 respondents (38%) have used supermarket deliveries. Of these, the majority (19) found services to be helpful, while four did not.

4.2.5 GP

27 respondents (44%) have used a GP service. Of these, the majority (20) found services to be helpful, while seven did not.

4.2.6 Pharmacy

29 respondents (48%) have used a pharmacy service. Of these, the majority (27) found services to be helpful, while two did not.

4.2.7 Mutual Aid Groups

Five respondents (8%) have used a mutual aid group. Of these, the majority (three) found services to be helpful, while two did not.

4.2.8 Neighbours

21 respondents (34%) have received support from neighbours. Of these, the majority (19) found it to be helpful, while two did not.

In some localities, neighbours are in touch regularly, and easily able to make contact. In others - such as those with large student populations it is more difficult generally to build relationships.

Selected Comments

Positives

“My friends and neighbours have on a few occasions helped.”

“I’m in touch daily with next door neighbours and the doors to our flats are unlatched during the day - making contact easy.”

“I helped set up a voluntary Help Your Neighbour Scheme from home on behalf of vulnerable residents in my near / immediate locality.”

Negatives

“I have no social support, do not know neighbours as all are transient AirBnB or students.”

4.2.9 Family

19 respondents (31%) have received support from family. Of these, the majority (17) found it to be helpful, while 2 did not.

Some people, with family nearby appreciate the ability to form ‘Support Bubbles’. Those who are more distanced from relatives comment on a lack of family support, however benefit from the ability to stay in touch.

Selected Comments

Positives

“Support Bubble is a family I know and trust. When needed they brought groceries and distanced.”

“My family live more than 100 miles away. But we are in daily text contact and twice a week by WhatsApp.”

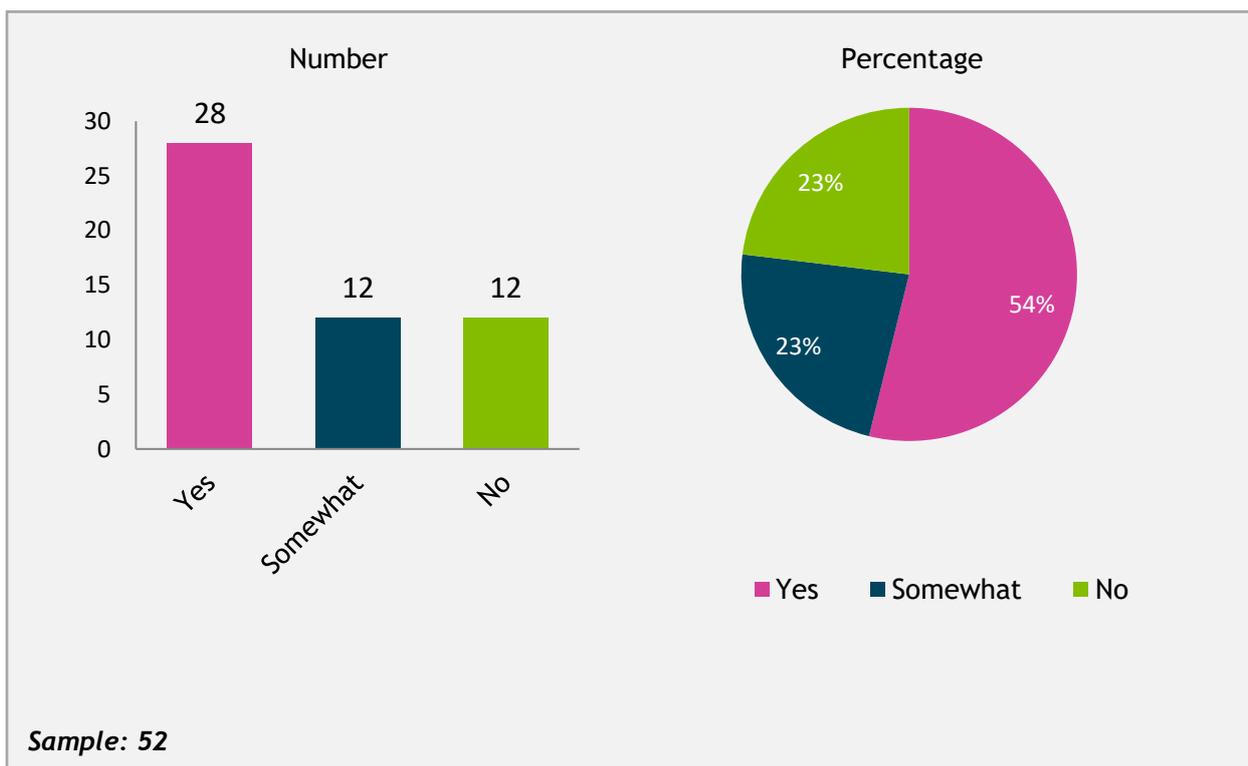
Negatives

“I live alone and my family are not living closely hence they have not been able to visit me or help as often as they may have wanted to.”

4.3 GP Services

We examine the experience of GP services, including communication, accessibility and levels of support.

4.3.1 Would you say you have enough information about services at your GP practice during the Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak, and how to access it?



Around three quarters of respondents (77%) have enough, or somewhat enough information about their GP services. A sizeable minority (23%) do not.

We hear that services have been supportive and responsive on the whole, with patients feeling involved and reassured. On communication, feedback is mixed - while some patients have received quick and concise information, others feel uninformed and confused.

On service-wide information, there is praise for the clarity of advice, and availability across channels (website, answerphone, social media) however it is noted that delays in communication may have disadvantaged vulnerable patients.

Some practices appear to be closed.

Selected Comments

Positives

“They are very responsive when I need help and when I was concerned about the possibility of catching COVID, they reassured me by telling me that they would organise district nurses.”

“My questions by text were answered quickly and my invitation to a vaccine was clear and prompt.”

“I received regular updates about access electronically. I had telephone consultations and had to attend on one occasion. I felt very safe.”

“Website and answer phone system are both clear with information.”

“GP surgery used Twitter to inform all about restricting services. This was a very useful form of communication.”

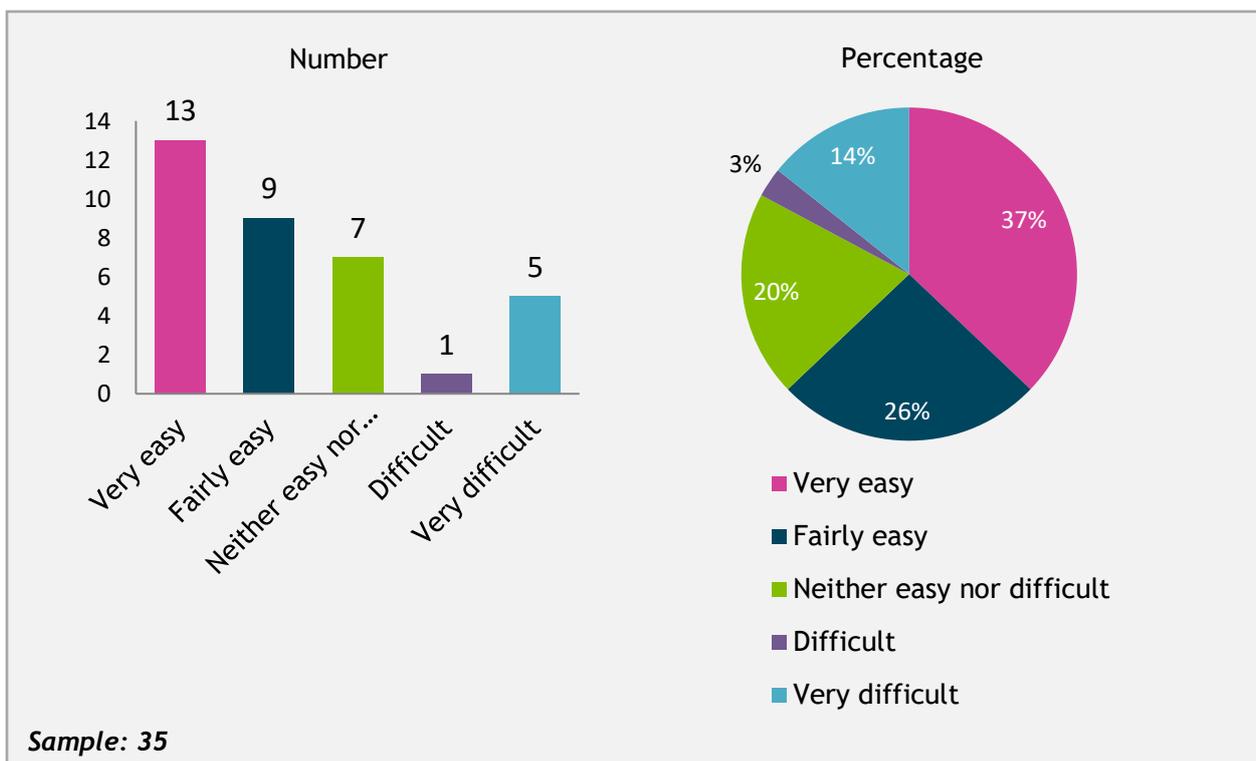
Negatives

“I was initially given no information at all about the progress of vaccination, only ‘you will be notified’. We are now in the third week since the vaccines arrived, I should have had an appointment by now. I was left unsure that my GP practice was even part of any vaccination scheme.”

“Although there was a change to some services these weren’t always communicated quickly enough. There was no contingency for vulnerable patients.”

“We’ve heard nothing at all (other than automated texts telling us to call an 0208 number rather than 111) from our GP surgery since the Covid-19 outbreak.”

4.3.2 If you had to contact your GP since the second wave of the Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak, how easy or difficult has it been to make an appointment?



Around two thirds of respondents (63%) have found it 'very or fairly' easy to make an appointment, while 17% have experienced difficulty.

When reviewing experiences, we find that some patients have gained quick access to consultations, while others have tried 'on numerous occasions' to book services. In some experiences, administrative staff or protocols are perceived to be a barrier.

Feedback about waiting times is mixed, however those requiring emergency appointments are generally complimentary. On choice, while in-person appointments may be available, one patient observes that 'phone appointments were easy, in-person appointments were impossible'.

Online services are generally praised - patients appreciate the ability to book appointments and arrange prescriptions. Communication via email is also valued.

Selected Comments

Positives

"GP phoned back day I phoned in. Had appointments at surgery to see GP and get blood taken."

"Very easy to speak to a doctor over the phone and take their advice. The practice took the initiative to contact all elderly patients and I received a phone call in September while I was on a sailing holiday in Turkey. He rang again when I had returned and advised me to take a daily dose Vitamin D3, which I have done ever since."

"It's three weeks wait for a telephone appointment and slightly more for a blood test. On the other hand when I had an emergency I very quickly had a telephone call."

"Easier than before! GP has put a simple app on website so I could explain problem in a chat message. GP then rang me back within 24 hrs. Prescriptions or hospital appointments then set up online."

"Newly registered with GP practice, I could communicate via email which was good in my case as I am elderly and disabled, unable to use the telephone."

Negatives

"Takes too long for next appointment even though the appointment is over the phone."

"I contacted the practice on numerous occasions to arrange a flu jab. It was only when I suggested going to another practice that I was offered one."

“When we’ve tried to speak with or see a GP it has been almost impossible, requiring us to have to explain personal medical information to the person answering the phone in order to justify our wish to speak with / or see an actual GP.”

“Phone appointments were easy. In-person appointments were impossible.”

We asked those who sought help from their GP during the second wave, whether they felt they had received the help needed.

25 respondents (41%) did seek help from their GP. While some patients have found it ‘easy’ to get appointments and support, others with less success consider it to have been a ‘concentrated effort’. Delays in communication are a cause of anxiety and frustration, with varying accounts given - from waiting for a routine consultation call, to awaiting confirmation of a vaccine appointment.

One patient notes that (at a previous practice) lack of a smartphone had hindered access to consultations.

Selected Comments

Positives

“Easy to get a telephone appointment and a follow up face to face appointment.”

“Much the same, all done online with prescription sent direct to chemist.”

“I stubbed a toe, the GP thought it might be fractured and arranged for me to have an x-ray.”

Negatives

“No. It’s taken much concentrated effort to manage to speak with an actual GP and then almost impossible to get any follow up in a timely way.”

“Needed to change medication, as new one had side effects. Took a few tries.”

“The system of ringing and then a doctor rings you back is helpful but can be very worrying if you feel really unwell and are waiting hours for the return call.”

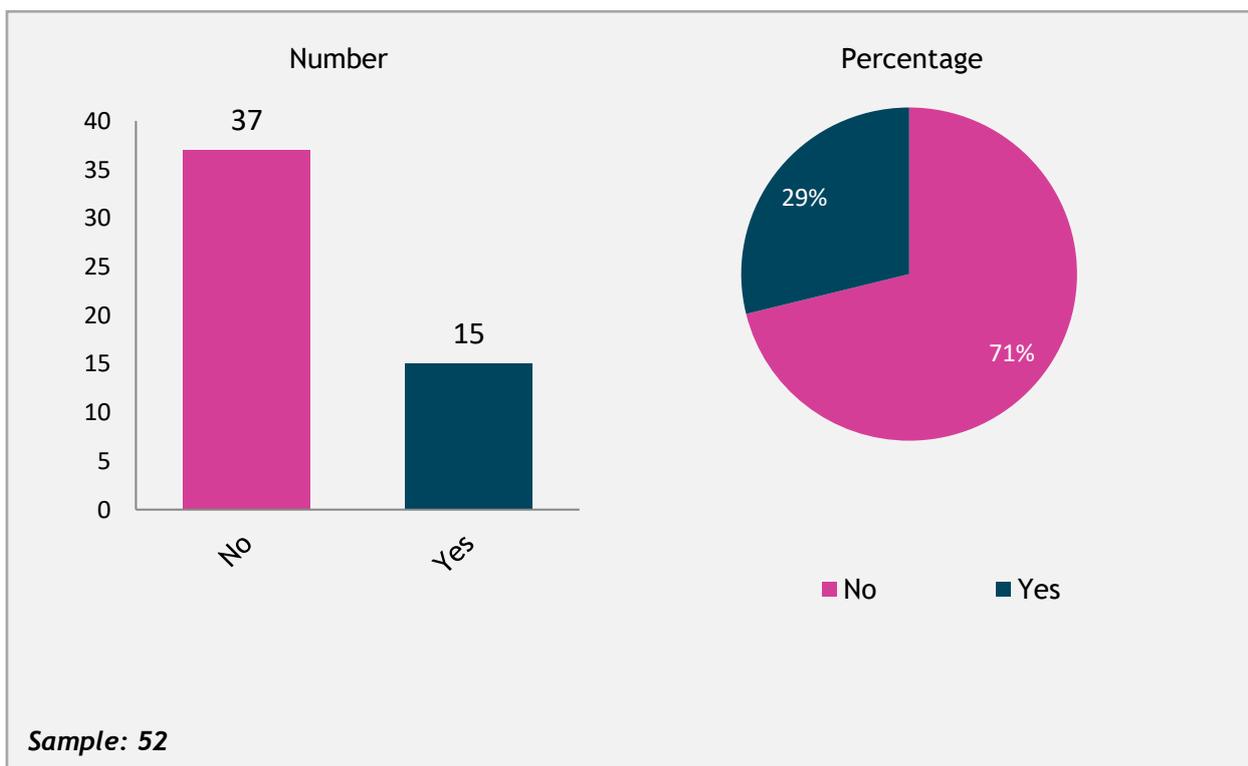
“Yes eventually although I’m now waiting to be contacted for my Covid Vaccine. I’m frustrated as my friends registered at other practices in West London have had their first jab!”

“Yes, at long last I had a video consultation, which previous GP surgery had refused on the grounds of smartphone exclusivity.”

4.4 Wider Health Services - Appointments and Support

We assess whether, and how people have attended any health related appointments, and if they received the help they need.

4.4.1 Have you delayed seeking help with your health concerns during the second wave of the outbreak?



Almost three quarters of respondents (71%) have not delayed seeking help with health concerns, while a significant minority (29%) indicate they have.

With perceptions of capacity and staffing issues, people are conscious of ‘being a burden’ on the NHS. Many, particularly those with minor ailments and conditions have either delayed getting in touch, or sought alternative services.

Some patients, including those with dental emergencies complain of cancelled or delayed treatment, and a level of confusion within services.

Selected Comments

“I have done my best not to bother the Practice at all knowing how stretched they are at present due to being short staffed overall.”

“I needed more cream for a minor, recurring skin ailment, but I bought it over the counter rather than trouble my GP during high Covid numbers.”

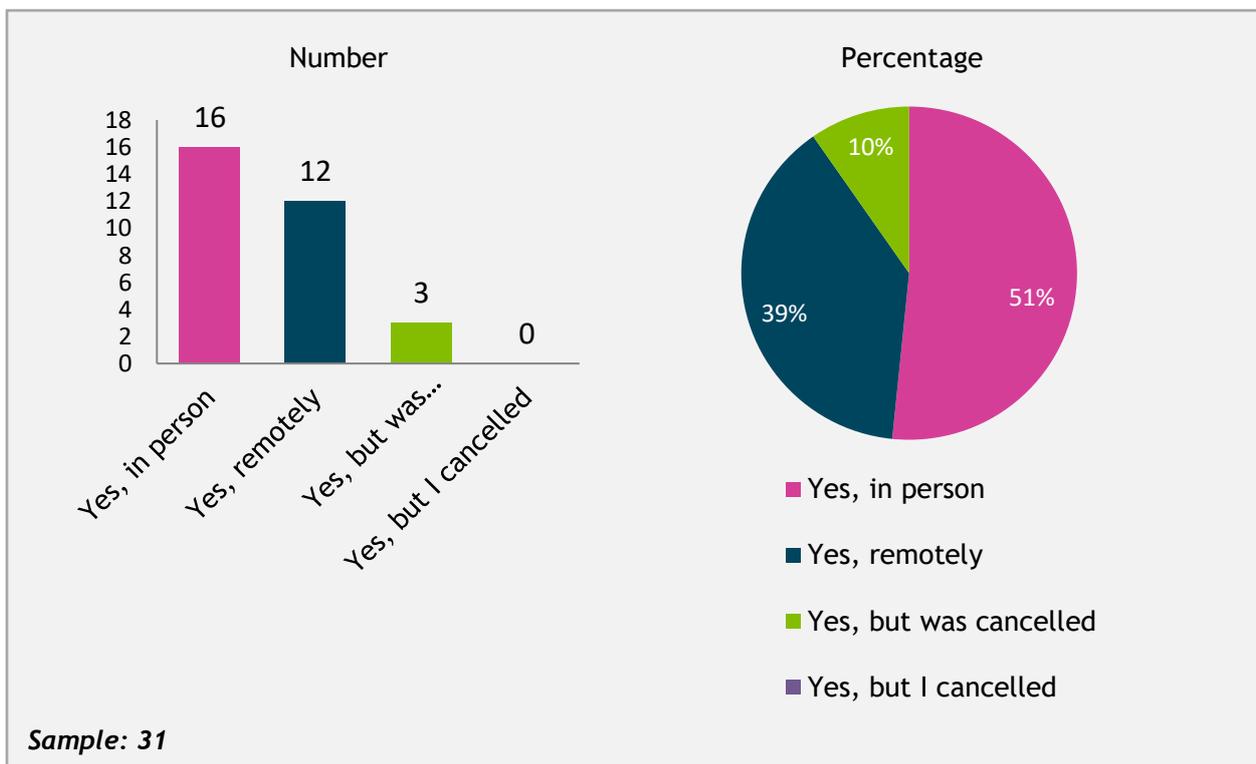
“I didn’t think it was a priority and with all the do’s and don’ts and restrictions imposed I have put this on the back burner. As I don’t have any underlying health issues I feel I am not a priority.”

“But the help has been delayed, despite my chasing it up repeatedly.”

“I had an emergency dentist appointment and I’m waiting for a dental hospital appointment for nearly two months.”

“I have had outstanding appointments to see consultants at various hospitals cancelled as I could not get bloods done. I have turned up at hospital to find appointment cancelled and now have to wait 4 months for next appointment which will be a phone call...”

4.4.2 Have you had any appointments with a GP, community health services or a hospital since the second wave of the Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak?



31 respondents, equating to half overall (51%) had appointments with health services. Of these, half (51%) had in-person appointments and 39% remote appointments. 10% say their appointments were cancelled.

37 respondents (61%) had sought help from services, with the GP (including flu vaccinations) and various hospital departments mentioned.

Feedback suggests a level of 'normality' for primary care services such as prescriptions, blood testing and basic nursing care. The closure of other services (such as minor injuries units) is a cause of inconvenience, however some patients are sympathetic, given the current climate.

There is much anxiety about lengthy waiting lists for treatment and tests, with one person 'struggling to engage' with services.

Selected Comments

Positives

"In-person GP consultation at GP's request. Blood taken. Results accessed online."

"Got my prescription as normal."

"Very positive. Care taken re safety. Sufficient time given. Helpful receptionists."

"I had a cut requiring stitches and it was dealt with very well."

Negatives

"The out of hours doctor had zero empathy and was indeed quite cold. I felt that I was being a nuisance despite the phone call only lasting approximately 1 minute. My own GP despite taking a while to return my call was considered in her approach and empathetic."

"Had stitches for hand injury at A&E - would have preferred to use minor injuries unit but it's closed for the duration. Service was chaotic (second day of lockdown) but pretty good considering..."

"Awaiting hospital CT scan appointment which is not possible during lock down."

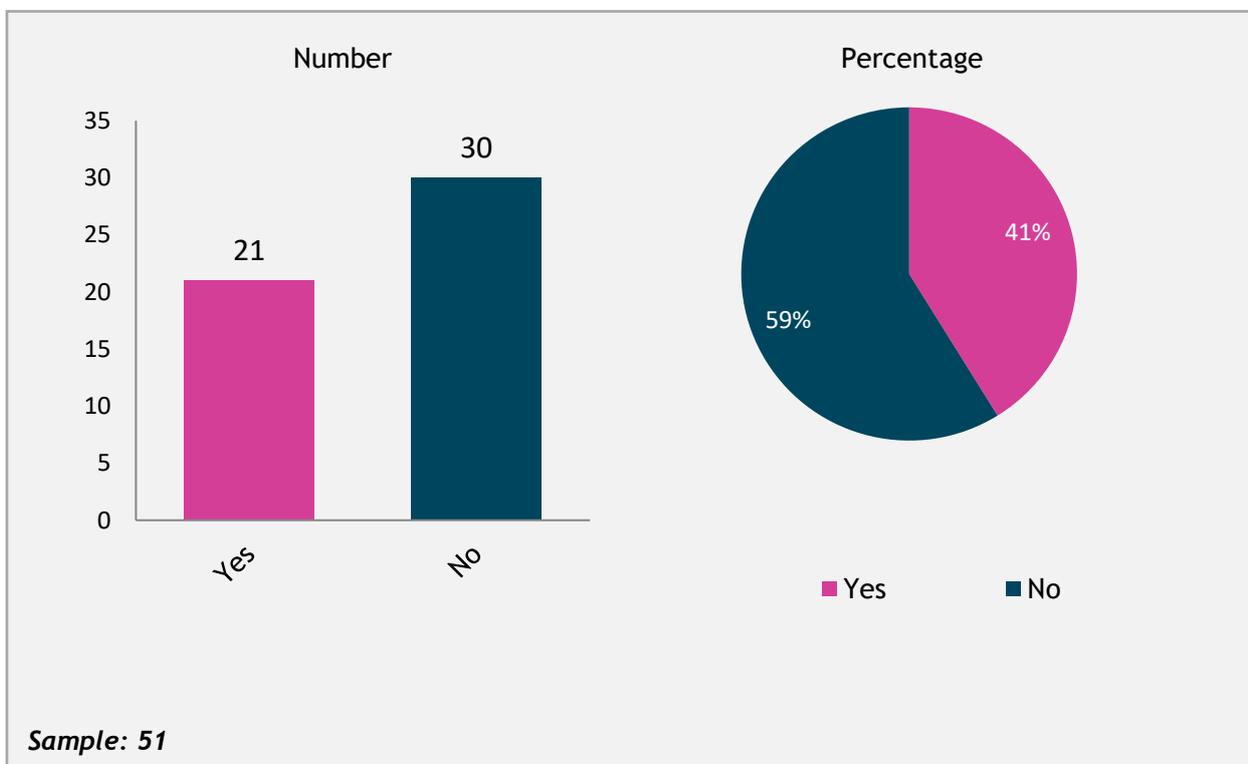
"Am confident it will happen this year as I have another video consultation scheduled for August. Also awaiting hospital trauma physio appointment. This will take longer as waiting list is huge."

"Struggling to engage regarding leg problems."

4.5 Testing

We asked people whether they've been tested for Covid-19, and to share their experience.

4.5.1 Have you been tested for Coronavirus/Covid-19?



41% of respondents have been tested, while a larger number (59%) have not.

Most people have found the testing system to be 'straightforward, organised and efficient', with tests easy to access and results forthcoming soon after.

A minority have experienced difficulty - one person waited ten days for the result, despite chasing several times, while another says a problem with the phone app means records are incomplete.

Selected Comments

Positives

"Excellent, at Westminster Cathedral, very well organised, long queue outside went quickly, indoors for minimal time, results texted within half an hour. Outstanding."

"Was very straightforward - got an appointment for the same day to attend a walk in site. Very short wait, easy to follow instructions and result within 48 hours."

“Twice at dental surgery. Result in 11 minutes.”

“I found the test uncomfortable and awkward at first, but was pleased with how quickly I received the results. I have had a couple more tests since then and found them easier.”

Negatives

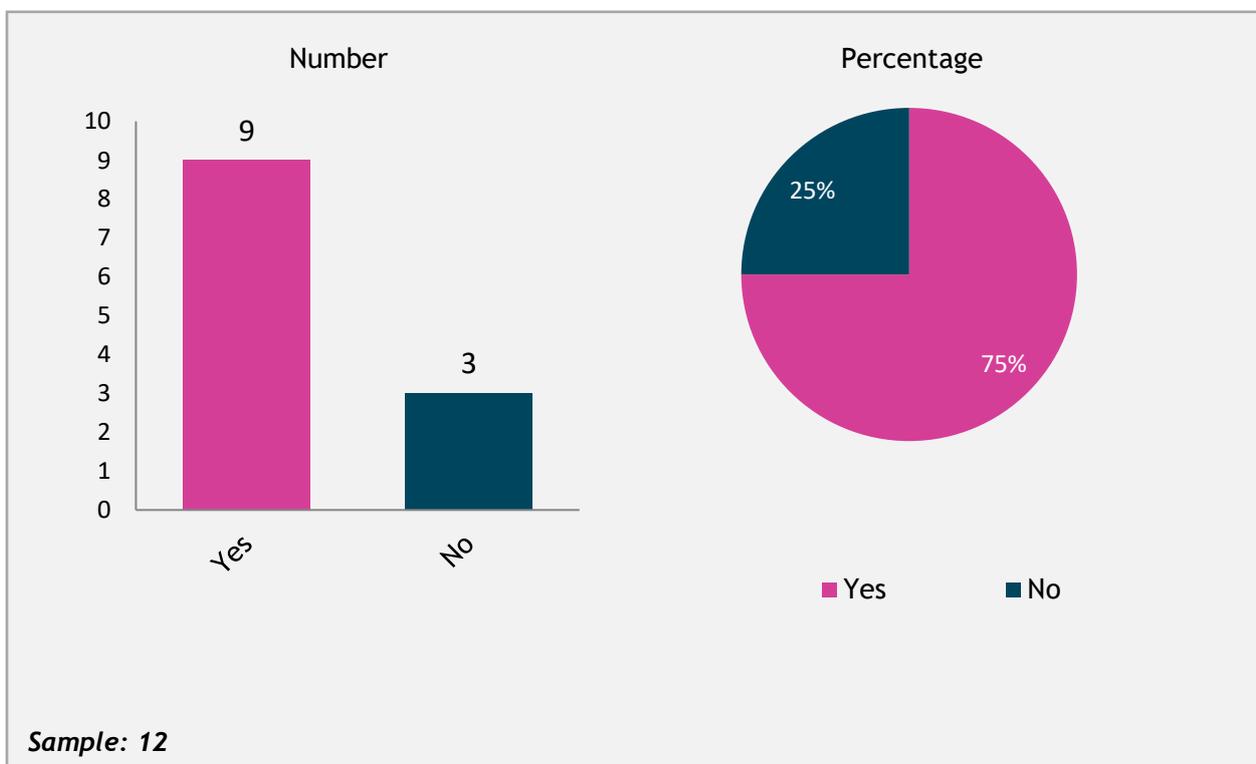
“Test and trace didn’t contact me for 10 days with results of the home test. I tried to get the results after 3 days but they kept saying it wasn’t back. After much chasing, I eventually got the results. I knew I was positive by the way I felt and isolated without being told by them to do it.”

“Two tests, good service except that they did not connect to the app on my phone, so records are not complete.”

4.6 Vaccinations

We asked people whether they’ve had the vaccination, and if there is any specific information they would like about the vaccine, or wider programme.

4.6.1 Have you been vaccinated for Covid-19?



12 people (14%) give a response to this question. Of those, three quarters (75%) confirm they have been vaccinated.

Feedback suggests a well organised, efficient and timely vaccine service, with good levels of involvement and support from staff.

On booking, one person regrets a lack of confirmation from the GP, while another says that local centres (such as Lords Cricket Ground) were not listed as an option.

Selected Comments

Positives

“Lords Cricket Ground - very well organised and efficient.”

“Lords Cricket Ground. Absolutely excellent, cheery efficient staff who must have been tired because it was an end of day ‘use up the spare vaccine’ appointment. And they had been working flat out all day.”

“The district nurse did a home visit. I was very grateful.”

“This was on January 8th so was a bit chaotic but I felt safe and the staff did their best to process everyone as quickly as possible, although I had to wait 2 hours for the vaccination.”

Negatives

“To date, no communication from my Practice regarding an appointment.”

“Appalling, as National Booking Centre website did not include local vaccination centre such as Lords. I had to log in and out non stop for 9 days until a fairly close community pharmacy appeared on the drop down menu. Many elderly people, like me, had the same poor experience.”

We asked people what in particular they would like to know about the vaccine, or vaccination programme.

There are some concerns about efficacy - with clarification wanted on regulatory approval, safety, side effects and effectiveness. One person says that local uptake statistics would be useful.

Most people are satisfied with the level and content of general information, however some point to contradictions, and a lack of detail on access.

Selected Comments

“That it had been approved by the regulator.”

“That it was safe and not a live vaccine.”

“How effective they are and how long do they last for, will they need repeating.”

“Possible reaction, both for the first and second doses.”

“Am in no hurry to take, would rather see what happens to other people first.”

“More information on the uptake in my area.”

“Everything is included on the NHS and Department of Health websites.”

“Plenty of information out there digitally in English.”

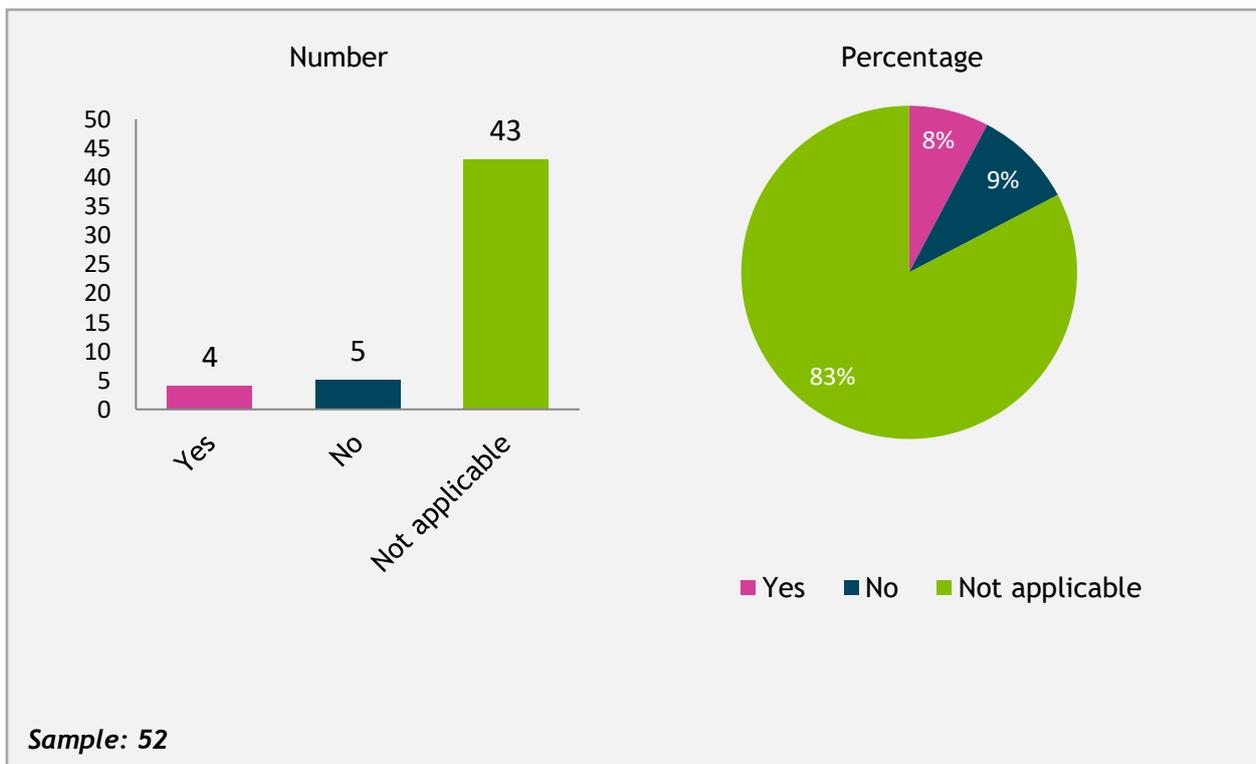
“I would certainly accept. The information provided is however contradictory and confusing.”

“Vaccine invitation process was a mess. There is plenty of info about the vaccine but nothing about mass vaccination centres.”

4.7 Care

We asked people whether there had been any changes to the care they, or their cared-for receive - such as help with getting up, getting dressed or going out.

4.7.1 Have there been any changes to the care you, or the person you care for, receives with things like getting up, getting dressed or getting out, since the second wave of the Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak?



Four respondents (8%) indicate there had been a change.

We hear that the ‘total isolation policy’ of a care home has prevented the ability to visit a loved one at the end of life.

One person is concerned for the welfare of a neighbour, while a parent - without a care co-ordinator for her son, suspects a shortage of mental health staff.

Selected Comments

Negatives

“The care home has applied a total isolation policy, which I feel is barbaric & inhumane when applied to someone who is approaching the end of life and impaired by dementia. I don’t feel the issue of having to let someone close die without any direct contact (which is the only form she can appreciate) is humane. I believe that we need to find ways of preventing this, applying imagination and compassion.”

“Services have fallen apart - nobody will visit my neighbour. When she needed to see a doctor they phoned and realised they did need to see her at her surgery.”

“No Care Co-ordinator for my son. I’m guessing shortage of mental health staff.”

Four respondents (7%) identified as carers. We asked whether they felt they were getting the support they need.

Some feel supported while others do not. One person is concerned that older disabled people are less able to understand the restriction requirements.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I am a carer I have good support.”

Negatives

“No am not being helped or listened to.”

“Though not an official carer I do take occasional care of elderly disabled or housebound friends nearby. They seem quite unable to understand the rules re. Covid because they change so frequently locally despite being educated English speaking people in full possession of their faculties.”

4.8 Impact on Specific Groups

We look closely at age, ethnic background and existing conditions, to establish any findings that may be especially relevant to certain groups.

The following ‘impact scale’ tables highlight all groups which exceed the average (baseline) figure, for key questions.

4.8.1 Have enough information about GP services

All respondents (baseline)	77%
Aged 75+	74%
Aged 55-64	63%
Long Term Conditions	57%
Ethnic minority respondents	50%
Mental Health Conditions	50%
Disabilities	50%
Carers	50%

Ethnic minority respondents, those with mental health conditions, disabilities and carers, are the least well informed about services offered at their GP practice.

4.8.2 Experienced difficulty in booking a GP appointment

All respondents (baseline)	17%
Ethnic minority respondents	25%
Aged 55-64	25%
Mental Health Conditions	26%

Ethnic minority respondents, those aged 55-64, or with mental health conditions are most likely to experience difficulty when booking a GP appointment.

4.8.3 Delayed seeking help with health concerns

All respondents (baseline)	29%
Ethnic minority respondents	38%
Aged 55-64	38%
Aged 65-74	42%
Long Term Conditions	43%
Mental Health Conditions	63%

Those with mental health conditions are significantly most likely to delay seeking help or treatment.

4.8.4 Tested for Coronavirus

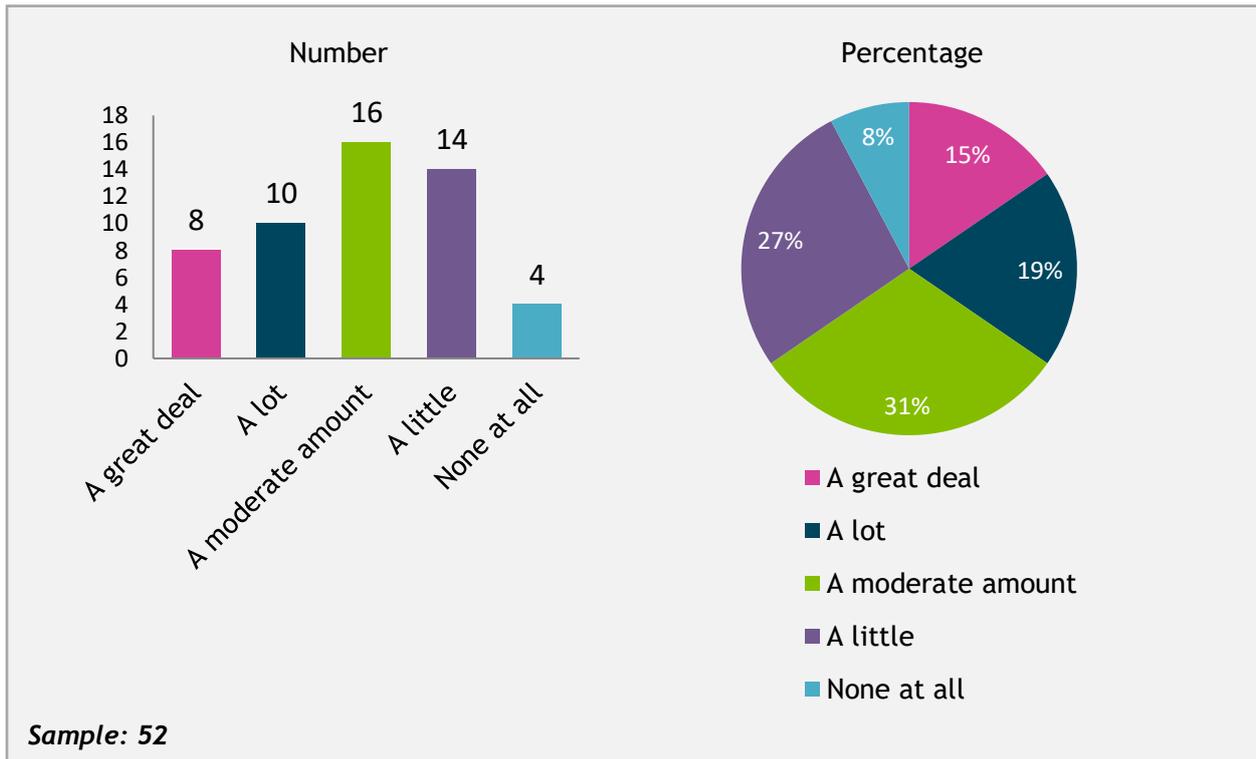
All respondents (baseline)	41%
Carers	50%
Aged 45-54	50%
Aged 65-74	50%
Ethnic minority Respondents	63%

Ethnic minority respondents are noticeably most likely to have been tested for Coronavirus.

5. Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

We asked people to what extent, ongoing changes to their daily lives have impacted on their emotional or mental wellbeing.

5.1 To what extent do you feel that the ongoing changes to how you are living your life as a result of Coronavirus/Covid-19 have had an impact on your emotional or mental wellbeing?



A third of respondents (34%) say their mental wellbeing has been impacted ‘a great deal’ or ‘a lot’, with a further 58% feeling some impact. Just 8% have not felt an impact at all.

Many people complain of a lack of variety in daily life, and those with distractions, such as hobbies, routines, work or volunteering roles appear more fulfilled than those without. While some are grateful that activities and groups are available online, others say it takes ‘more motivation’ and can become ‘tiring’.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I do mindfulness daily and physical exercise in doors.”

“It’s isolating but the air is clean. It’s quiet. It’s not busy. It makes dealing with my visual impairment easier. I’m grateful my group therapy moved to Zoom.”

Negatives

“I miss not engaging with people particularly with regards to the gym.”

“Almost impossible to go out to libraries/archives/museums, or to the cinema or theatre since March 2020. Life has just become very same-y.”

“Miss the activities I did at Maggie’s Cancer Centre where one met and socialised. One has to be more motivated to join on zoom and can get tired of it. Also making one get out and walk seems harder this time round. But not hardest time of my life. Have avenues to think things through and supported re art and creative writing. Having had cancer has meant I get support I would not have had otherwise!”

Loneliness and isolation is widely reported, with worry and frustration expressed.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I have plenty of interests and do talk to friends on phone.”

Negatives

“I feel more isolated and find my restricted movements rather frustrating.”

“No socialising, no work, no contact unless I phone, use Zoom etc. I am widowed, no family and do not have a pet so this is a major alteration to my usual life style.”

“Loneliness is a real issue. Lack of exercise probably not helping. Preferring to go into the office rather than work from home just for the company.”

“Initially I missed the human contact and I felt trapped at home. I don’t worry about this now, which in a way is worrying.”

We receive accounts of anxiety, stress and depression - with some people concerned about the longer term consequences for their mental health. Uncertainty, about the length of lockdown and future prospects is also highlighted.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I’ve suffered from bouts of depression for many years. They’ve become a little more severe, which happens from time to time, and is always difficult, but I know to hang on till the clouds lift.”

Negatives

“Since the lockdown started life changed. First lockdown was ok, but during the second I started getting anxious, nervous, stressed and eventually depressed. There’s no other option but to seek help from my GP.”

“For a long time I felt I wasn’t particularly affected by it all, but I’ve been recognising more recently that the ongoing low-level stress I feel isn’t just due to work but also due to the background of the pandemic. I wouldn’t say it has a major impact on me, but I expect my long-term psychological or emotional health has been affected in ways I’m not fully aware of.”

“Not knowing how long measures need to be in place makes planning and looking forward difficult and uncertain which adds to strain as an older person each year is very important.”

“Exhausted, depressed, stressed. Do not know how long it will last but also have no job security so could lose income any time.”

5.2 Impact on Specific Groups

We look closely at age, ethnic background and existing conditions, to establish any findings that may be especially relevant to certain groups.

The following ‘impact scale’ table highlights all groups which exceed the average (baseline) figure, for key questions.

5.2.1 Emotional and mental wellbeing has been impacted ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’

All respondents (baseline)	34%
Ethnic minority respondents	38%
Disabilities	57%
Long Term Conditions	57%
Aged 55-64	63%
Mental Health Conditions	63%

Those aged 55-64, or with mental health conditions are most likely to have experienced a negative impact on their emotional and mental wellbeing.

6. Personal and Family Relationships

This section explores how the ongoing restrictions have affected personal and family relationships.

We look separately at household and wider relationships, and also examine whether methods of keeping in touch have changed since the first lockdown.

6.1 Household

For some households, the extended time with loved ones is appreciated, while for others - especially those in cramped conditions, increased stress and tension is reported. Those who may be in need of additional support are finding it particularly difficult.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I am lucky to have a live-in partner, so have someone to talk to and go out for a walk with.”

Negatives

“It’s been really hard not seeing my family. I have to make a choice of having either my partner or my mum in my bubble which has put a strain on my relationship. Being unable to get close to my mum or partner is very very difficult.”

“Some frayed tempers.”

“I live in one bedroom flat with my husband, my daughter and my grandchildren age 17 and 15. I have mental health issues. During the first lockdown I had psychologist to talk to every week, but this time I have no one.”

6.2 Wider Family & Friends

A significant number of people are missing regular contact with their wider family and friends and while online meetings (such as Zoom) are welcome, many say they are not a substitute for physical interaction. We also hear accounts of ‘extreme loneliness’ and ‘total isolation’.

Selected Comments

Positives

“Positively as I now speak to my family more regularly.”

Negatives

“I wish to be able to see my son and my grandchildren more often.”

“We all work, we are exhausted all the time. We cannot meet grandparents, uncles etc. Very stressful.”

“Realised how important face to face contact is. Live alone and unable to go to the activities I was used to having. Family in Denmark unable to come over.”

“I feel distressed by the restrictions on my relationships with friends and family, being a sociable and tactile person. The few friends who have agreed to visits are cautious and anxious and all our usual activities and ways of relating are impaired.”

“Total isolation - except for emails from colleagues and friends.”

“Disastrous. I lost my husband a short while ago, have no children or relatives and my usually busy social life is almost non-existent. Do have many good friends but we are not allowed to socialise or travel to meet up or they are afraid to do so which means that I have not had anyone in my house to speak to or be physically present with me at all since February which is extremely lonely. I Skype, email and use the phone, but it is not the same and for some people I know extremely depressing mentally.”

6.3 Methods of Keeping in Touch

We asked if methods of keeping in touch with others had changed since the first lockdown.

Many people are increasingly using online platforms, with Zoom mentioned frequently. While online meetings are popular, there is a widespread view that they are not a substitute for physical interaction. As one person puts it, ‘Zoom doesn’t hug’.

Phone contact has also largely increased.

Selected Comments

Positives

“Yes. Zoom has been a boon.”

“I use Zoom a great deal for meetings, keeping up with neighbours etc.”

Negatives

“Less enthusiastic to keep in touch as weary.”

“Drastically, mainly because of the banning of outdoor meetings where we used to be able to sit & picnic & chat in peace. Zoom has become more stressful and frustrating...”

“Yes I have to use the internet but zoom doesn't hug.”

“Use of electronic communications have increased 10 fold to my dismay. Much prefer the face to face communication.”

“Yes I feel almost totally isolated because I am obeying the rules and not allowing anyone into my home, visiting, entertaining, sociasing etc.”

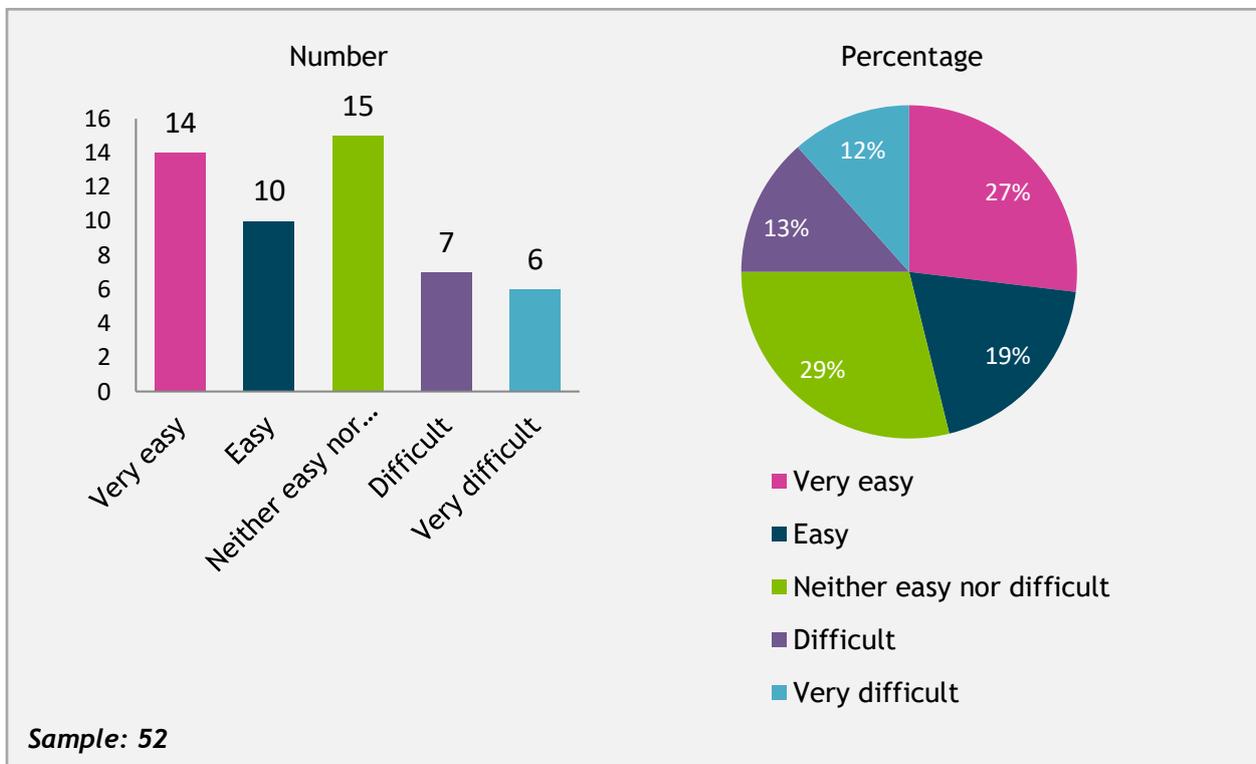
7. Environment

In this section, we look at ability to stay indoors, maintain a safe social distance when out, and levels of physical fitness during the restrictions.

7.1 Staying Indoors

We evaluate how easy, or difficult it is for people to stay indoors during the second wave.

7.1.1 How easy or difficult is it for you to stay indoors since the second wave of Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak restrictions were introduced? Think about where you live - including the type of home you live in and the people who you share your living space with.



Just under half of respondents (46%) have found it easy to stay indoors, while a quarter (25%) have experienced difficulty.

Those with easy access to outside space - such as a garden, or nearby parks and walks acknowledge themselves to be fortunate. Local amenities, such as food shops are also seen as beneficial.

We hear that living conditions can be a challenge, with accounts of accommodation that is too small, inadequately ventilated, or unsuitable for exercise or work.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I have 2 bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bathroom, so plenty of space. I have central heating so I am fortunate in my living circumstances.”

“I live in my own private property and have limited access to a courtyard so can be outside for fresh air weather permitting etc.”

“I live alone but the usual facilities are within walking distance and we also have a park nearby.”

Negatives

“I live alone in a flat with no balcony, nor garden. So it does feel like a prison.”

“I have no balcony and live in a tower block.”

“My flat can reach 40°C even at night in the summer. I am 2 meters tall and the flat is small. I get too depressed stuck inside over winter.”

“I live in a very small flat. There is no real space for me to exercise inside.”

“We live in a high density area with regeneration works going on around us. We are also working from home, without any workspace.”

When describing their living environment, many people comment on isolation and loneliness.

Selected Comments

Positives

“Like my own company! Very independent. Love reading.”

Negatives

“Find I need to get out and breathe. Living alone means one needs to get out to see people and have interaction with shop assistants etc.”

“I must keep myself active, otherwise I don't feel well. I have nobody to talk to.”

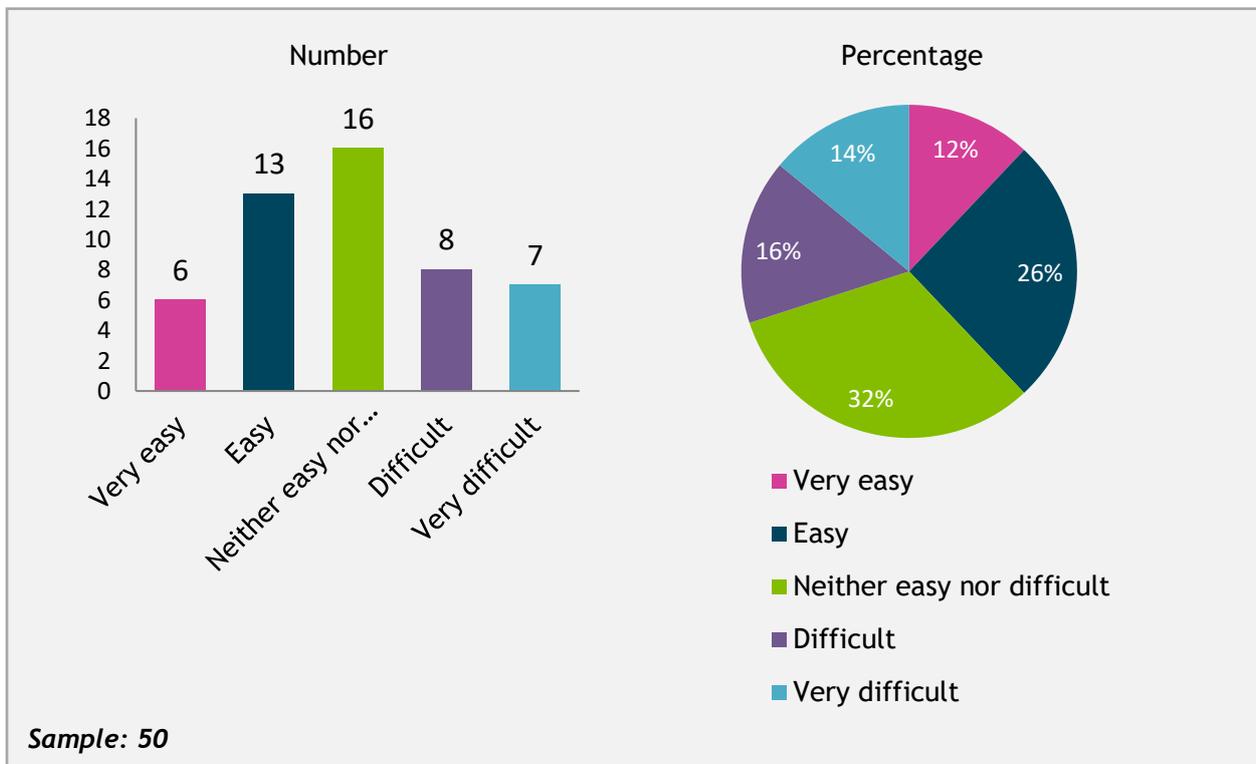
“I have a small garden, but it's the isolation that's been most difficult, since weather not permitting meeting a friend for walks.”

“Have good internet so can order most things. Have regular online shopping delivery. Only have one other person in the house. The hardest part is the isolation and loneliness.”

7.2 Social Distancing

We evaluate the ability to stay a safe distance from others, while making ‘essential trips’ outside.

7.2.1 How easy or difficult is it for you to stay a safe distance from others when you have needed to make essential trips outside - for example to go shopping, or for you to exercise outdoors? Think about the area near to where you live.



38% of respondents have found it easy to stay a safe distance from others when outside, while a smaller but significant proportion (30%) have found it to be difficult.

Experiences of social distancing are mixed - while some people observe good practice, such as maintaining distance and the wearing of masks, others report that the rules are frequently breached. In one case, we hear that tenants of a tower block regularly crowd into the lifts, without face protection.

On compliance, some say they genuinely find it difficult to remember and follow the rules, and others say they are less concerned, and more likely to forget when outside.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I do go out occasionally. Most people behave sensibly.”

“I prefer to order online or shop near where I work.”

“Central London has been very quiet and shopping has been relatively safe depending on which shops you choose. Regents Park has got more crowded but there are spaces around where it is easier to avoid people. Cyclists on pavements has been a problem but situation improved as has people being responsible about wearing masks.”

Negatives

“People are not social distancing, constantly have to avoid people on the street and in shops.”

“A great many people are still not wearing their masks or are in groups etc. so it can be a bit discouraging and off putting. One has to queue to get into the (major) supermarket locally but once inside no one takes any notice of Social Distancing at all until they get to the check out which rather defeats the object.”

“Other people don't seem to care about maintaining any sort of distance. Have experienced verbal abuse when politely asking someone to step back, this was from an elderly woman who should have known better even if she disagreed with the rules.”

“Live in a tower block and when going down in the lift it stops on other floors and people want to get in. And they don't get it. And no one in my block wears a mask. A lot of flats have a lot of visitors.”

“I find it impossible to remember or comply fully with this instruction.”

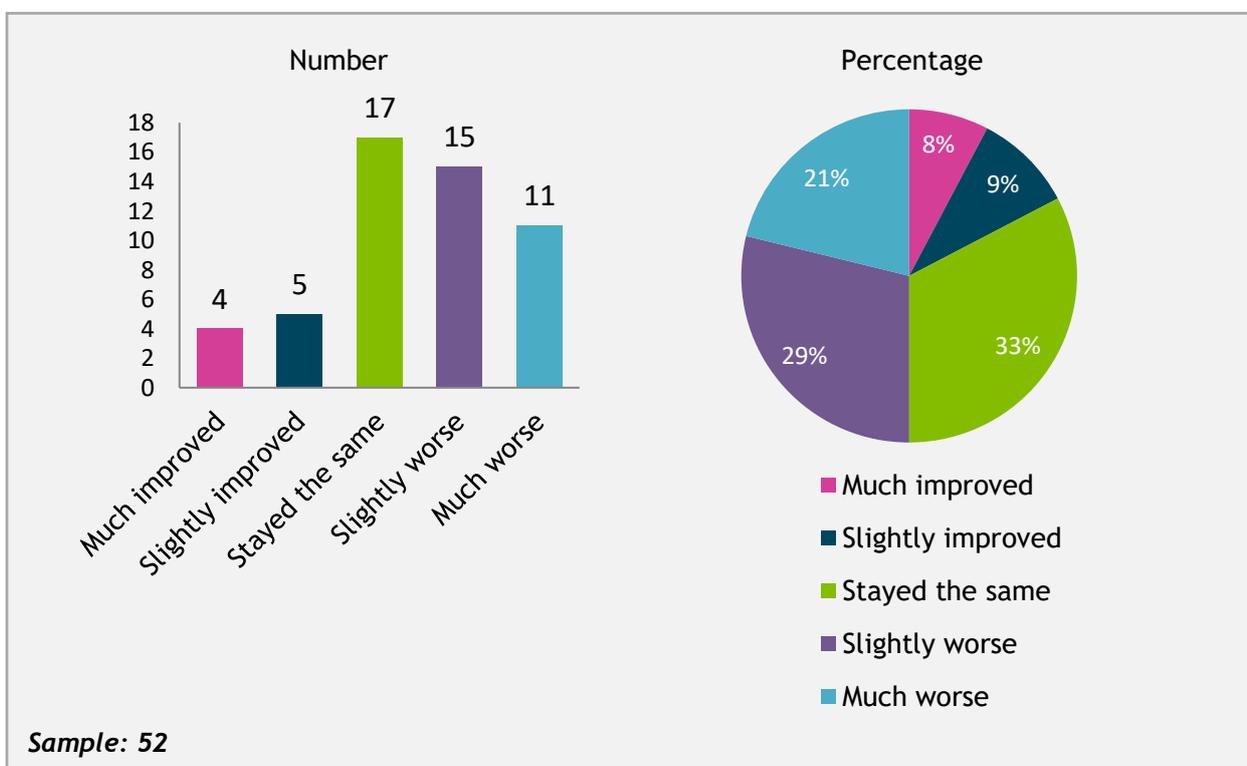
“I forget- don't feel too concerned when outdoors.”

“Covent Garden has been very quiet. I was more worried between lockdowns.”

7.3 Physical Fitness

We evaluate how the restrictions have impacted on levels of physical fitness.

7.3.1 Thinking about physical fitness and weight management, to what extent do you feel that the ongoing changes to how you are living your life as a result of Coronavirus /Covid-19 have had an impact on your fitness?



Half of respondents (50%) consider their fitness levels to have become ‘worse’ during the pandemic. 17% feel it has improved.

The closure of gyms, exercise facilities and swimming pools is cited by many as a key reason for reducing their levels of fitness. As living accommodation is often unsuitable for exercise, walking has become increasingly popular. Those with support, such as exercise instructions from a professional, or buddy to walk with, are finding it easier generally.

On diet, we find that while some people are eating more healthily, a relatively equal number are eating more unhealthily. It is noted that a reduction in physical fitness can impact on mental health and self-esteem.

Selected Comments

Positives

“I walk regularly and fill time with some exercise. With general life slower I’m less stressed and more able to focus on healthy eating.”

“Eating at home rather than in restaurants so eating more healthily. Doing more regular exercise, walking most days.”

“I have become much more conscious of my diet. Substituting gym with other forms of exercise which don’t involve being indoors with people outside my bubble.”

“I do longer walks and try not to use transport only if I have heavy shopping.”

“I have continued with the exercises given to me by my physiotherapist which help me a lot to stay mobile.”

Negatives

“I used to go gym most days. I can’t do this now so my physical and mental wellbeing has reduced.”

“Weight, healthy eating etc. is not an issue at all but being unable to swim at my health club three or four times a week is. I do walk but do not feel as fit as I should.”

“Flat too small to exercise and Dyspnea is getting worse.”

“I’m probably eating less healthily and getting less exercise than I was pre-pandemic. Though I try to walk every day, it’s still not as much as I normally would. My diet is definitely somewhat worse.”

“Not always easy to go out walking alone!”

“Eating more and not doing so much exercise.”

“Although I am getting out & walking & cycling plenty, I have put on weight and feel dreadful.”

“I don’t walk as much. This could partly be due to the current weather. Was walking a lot more during the summer months.”

7.4 Impact on Specific Groups

We look closely at age, ethnic background and existing conditions, to establish any findings that may be especially relevant to certain groups.

The following ‘impact scale’ tables highlight all groups which exceed the average (baseline) figure, for key questions.

7.4.1 Have found it difficult to stay indoors

All respondents (baseline)	25%
Aged 75+	26%
Aged 55-64	38%
Long Term Conditions	50%
Disabilities	50%
Mental Health Conditions	75%

Those with mental health conditions are significantly least able to remain indoors without difficulty.

7.4.2 Have found it difficult to maintain a safe social distance when outside

All respondents (baseline)	30%
Aged 75+	32%
Disabilities	43%
Ethnic minority respondents	50%
Long Term Conditions	50%
Aged 55-64	63%
Carers	75%

Carers and those aged 55-64 are by far most likely to find social distancing difficult.

7.4.3 Fitness has been impacted

All respondents (baseline)	50%
Ethnic minority respondents	63%
Aged 75+	63%
Mental Health Conditions	63%
Long Term Conditions	64%
Disabilities	79%

Those with disabilities are clearly most likely to have experienced an impact on their physical fitness.

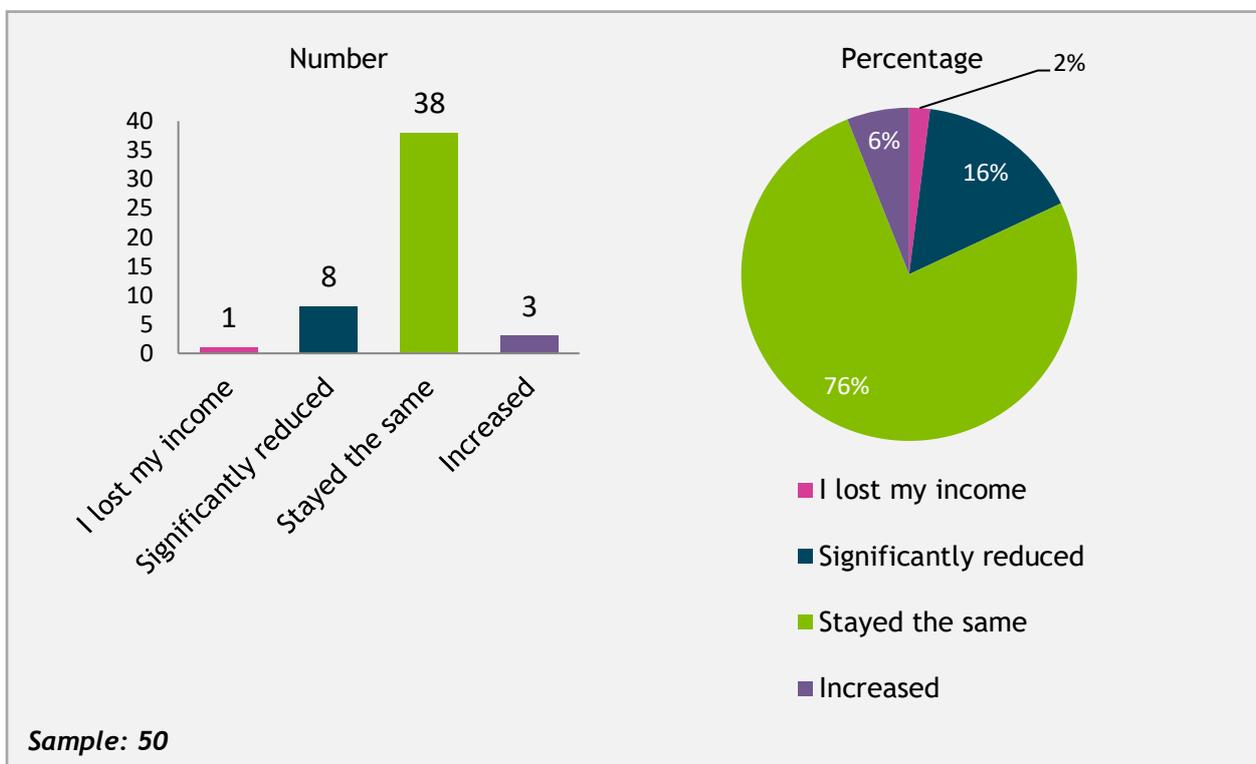
8. Finances and Income

In this section we examine personal finances, including the need to seek support.

8.1 Finances and Income

We asked people whether the restrictions have affected their finances or regular income.

8.1.1 Please tell us how the ongoing Coronavirus/Covid-19 restrictions have affected your finances or regular income.



Three quarters of respondents (76%) report that their finances or income level has stayed the same, while a sizeable minority (18%) indicate it has reduced.

Some, such as the self-employed have experienced a significant reduction in earnings. Others comment on the difficulty of having to balance spending.

We hear from one person, who lost a large proportion of earnings for self-isolating - despite being on a permanent contract. Those on furlough express worry about the future, while job seekers comment on the lack of opportunities.

Selected Comments

Positives

"I try to balance my spending which can be difficult but not complaining."

Negatives

"I'm self employed and my income has reduced 70%."

"Not reduced significantly but still importantly."

"My partner was not paid when he got Covid though he has a permanent contract and has been with the company for 3 years. He was given statutory sick pay which was unexpected and meant a sudden decrease of 700 pounds. He isolated though he felt well after 3 days and could have gone back to work but he didn't because he wanted to do the right thing. Our family was penalised for him isolating for the 10 days though he had the virus and gave proof to his employers of having had the virus."

"The last time I went to work was February 2020. First lockdown received furlough and now I am just waiting and hoping that maybe one day I will be going to work."

"Job opportunities have stopped."

Six respondents (10%) have needed to seek financial support. We hear that some people are 'on the edge', with accounts of having to pause rent payments, or borrow from family members.

Selected Comments

"Not yet. But on the edge."

"Family helped."

"Mortgage holiday."

"Not at the moment but if I do not find another job quickly, then it will be required."

"Got a little furlough money for a second job but this ran out in August."

8.2 Impact on Specific Groups

We look closely at age, ethnic background and existing conditions, to establish any findings that may be especially relevant to certain groups.

The following 'impact scale' table highlights all groups which exceed the average (baseline) figure, for key questions.

8.2.1 Finances or regular income have been reduced

All respondents (baseline)	18%
White/White British Respondents	20%
Mental Health Conditions	25%
Aged 45-54	25%
Carers	25%
Aged 55-64	38%

Those of later working age are most likely to have been disproportionately impacted.

9. Information and Technology

This section looks at information sources, ability to understand information, and any challenges associated with technology.

9.1 Information Sources

We asked people where they are finding information about how to stay safe, access health services and the support they need.

Information Sources

Common Local Sources

- Council (website and news alerts)
- Family & Friends
- GP Practice
- Newspapers (Camden New Journal, Westminster Extra)
- Charities/Community Organisations
- Healthwatch

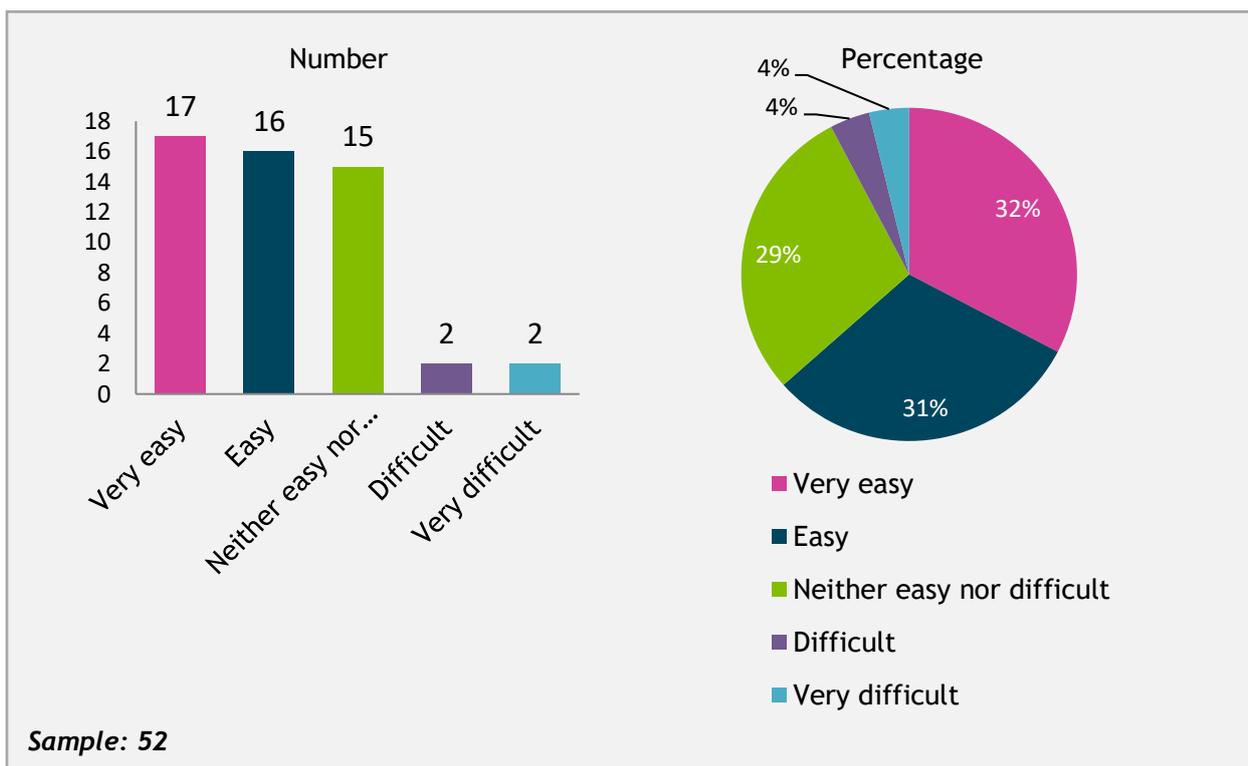
Common National Sources

- Mainstream Television and Radio (such as the BBC)
- Newspapers
- Social Media
- Websites (such as the NHS and GOV.UK)

9.2 Understanding Information

We then assessed the ability to understand the information, in order to stay safe.

9.2.1 How easy have you found it to understand the information about how to keep yourself and others safe since the second wave of Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak.



Just under two thirds of respondents (63%) have found it easy to understand information, to stay safe. 8% have found it to be difficult.

While many people find information, particularly from official sources to be ‘clear and common sense’, others say it is confusing, complicated and contradictory. Changes in messaging are also viewed as unhelpful.

Some complain of ‘information overload’.

Selected Comments

Positives

“There is plenty of good, clear information on the BBC online, TV and radio channels.”

“Not sure what to say. Common sense. Not drowning in overload of information.”

“Information is clear and easy to understand.”

Negatives

“The Government message is confusing.”

“Sometimes very difficult to understand.”

“Inconsistent and changeable information from the government. It meant taking action based on myself and using my own instinct.”

“I understand what's being said, but there are so many contradictions it has been distressing and confusing and caused a general loss of trust & respect in the powers that be (i.e. the politicians who quote the scientists and then don't apply the facts to the policy).”

“For the most part easy, although the constant changing of rules seems to throw many people.”

“Possibly overload from too many sources.”

9.3 Technology

We asked people if there are any reasons why they don't use technology (such as smartphones, tablets or computers) to find information and access health services.

Those with sensory or physical disabilities say smartphones are not suitable for them. Cost, a lack of knowledge, and the fast pace of technology are also considered barriers.

Interestingly, one person notes that not owning a smartphone means mobile Test and Trace is not available - therefore presenting a health risk to themselves and others.

Selected Comments

“Do not have smartphone as have tremor and need buttons. Cannot cope with too much technology!”

“I cannot use smartphones because of a hearing impairment and severe hand osteo-arthritis.”

“Dyslexia.”

“I am not trained. Technology changing very fast. No consideration at all for us oldies.”

“I use anything computer based with ease, but do not have a smart phone therefore no Test and Trace contact details when going into church etc.”

“Much easier to read the information in a newspaper or from friend's experiences.”

9.4 Impact on Specific Groups

We look closely at age, ethnic background and existing conditions, to establish any findings that may be especially relevant to certain groups.

The following ‘impact scale’ table highlights all groups which exceed the average (baseline) figure, for key questions.

9.4.1 Have found it easy to understand information

All respondents (baseline)	63%
Aged 65-74	58%
Long Term Conditions	57%
Carers	50%
Mental Health Conditions	50%
Aged 55-64	38%
Ethnic minority respondents	38%

Ethnic minority respondents and those aged 55-64 are, by some margin, least able to easily understand information, in order to stay safe.

10. Closing Questions

To close the survey, we asked people what they have found helpful, what could have been better, and if they had any other thoughts.

10.1 What have you found helpful to cope with the Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak?

Keeping occupied and contact with other people are viewed as most important of all, as well as maintaining good mental health and wellbeing.

Selected Comments

Activities

- My Christian faith. Writing for church related articles. Expressing self and situation through the Art sessions with Imperial College Health and Cancer Centre.
- Regular walks. Zoom. Movies.
- Listening to old Indian songs or music.
- Reading and watching football.
- Doing a daily exercise class online.
- Tidying the house, reading, listening to music, being shopped for by my family.

Family & Friends

- A supportive partner and family.
- Zoom/Google meets, obviously! And social media more generally.
- Reading more, greeting more people than usual. With masks on, you don't know who it is, so just smile & nod anyway.
- Corresponding with friends.

Information

- Information feeds.
- The internet! Without which I would have starved to death.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Taking pleasure in small things, trying to keep cheerful, be optimistic, encourage others, look for the best and recognise it. My Covid charity work gives good information which is very helpful. Thank God for being alive.
- My basic optimism & resilience.
- Looking on the bright side and learning to play it on the piano.

- Thinking about the fact that everyone else is experiencing it.
- Taking pleasure in small things, trying to keep cheerful, be optimistic, encourage others, look for the best and recognise it.
- Carrying on as usual as much as possible.

10.2 Finish the phrase: “Things could have been better if ...”

Many people are critical of the Government’s handling of the pandemic. The living environment is also a popular topic.

Selected Comments

Activities

- I could have my hair done.

Employment & Finances

- I had been working full time.
- Transport for London had not imposed a £15 congestion charge from 7.00am - 10.00pm 7 days a week.

Environment

- I lived in a larger flat and had some outdoor space.
- I had a garden.
- I was living near a green space where I could go out.
- It has been worse this time because the weather is so cold and wet.

Family & Friends

- I'd been able to see my family.

Government (Pandemic Oversight)

- The Government had recognised the severity of the pandemic more quickly and acted accordingly.
- The government had acted with more consistency and earlier.
- We had a government who put people's lives before the economy.
- It had not become so political and a minority of people had shown more responsibility.
- Less scientists talking... and scientists been more specific!
- The Government message was clearer and more support would have been provided in the second wave as well.
- The testing had been effective and available on request.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- There was greater consistency, more understanding of people's everyday lives.
- We were really treated as if we were all in this together.

Social Distancing

- Other people followed the rules.
- People who had realised how serious this was and worn masks and gloves.

Support

- I want the Government to send me a letter in Easy Read with pictures.
- I had social support.

10.3 Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

It is observed by many that the community has 'pulled together', with gestures of support and kindness experienced.

Selected Comments

Environment

- Fortunate to live in large house with small terrace and easy access to range of food shops with no queues. fortunate to be well and not a carer.
- It hasn't helped having Vauxhall Bridge closed and the 87 bus on diversion so that the nearest bus-stop is by Pimlico station.

Government (Pandemic Oversight)

- Anger at the poor government handling of the pandemic. Too many people have died unnecessarily.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Found the media using over dramatic words as if this was the most awful time in history! There seems to me that many are indulging in what are genuine difficulties but out of proportion with what could occur in life. We will have serious mental issues because we are told we will! For some this is true but we need to get things in perspective.
- I'm just really looking forward to it eventually being over. I expect it's only then I'll fully realise how much it was affecting me.
- Alcohol consumption has gone up. Daughter is now struggling with isolation from school and friends. Can't wait for the world to get out of this.

Support

- The Charity sector has been responsive and should be applauded for the work they have done throughout this pandemic, alongside the hard work of other key workers.
- It's good that people are pulling together.
- At times is very difficult to cope.
- Not really except to say this time it is getting a bit tedious.
- After effects (eg mental health) will last for a long time after.

11. Conclusion

The aim of this project was to hear from residents, patients, and carers from across Westminster about their experiences accessing health and social care services during the pandemic, so that we could better understand the indirect, wider health determinant impact of lockdown and social distancing on local people.

A number of recurring issues and themes have emerged over the course of our 'Your Experience Matters' work. Many of the findings described here have also been echoed in our wider engagement work since March 2020. These include:

- Respondents from an ethnic minority background have consistently reported more negative experiences through this period
- A clear majority of respondents have reported an impact of this period on their emotional and mental wellbeing
- Respondents who are carers were significantly more adversely affected compared to the baseline figures

Theme 1: Negative experiences of those from an ethnic minority background

Through this engagement, respondents from an ethnic minority background consistently reported more negative experiences. We found that respondents from an ethnic minority background are more likely to have delayed seeking help for health concerns. This has been an impact we have seen echoed in our other work. Many people from an ethnic minority background have told us they have less trust in health and social care services, and that are unwilling to visit their GP, call 111, or arrange an appointment with a specialist.

Health and social care providers must make tackling this issue a priority. Ensuring there is trust in health services across all communities is essential. As we have seen, a lack of trust leads to an unwillingness to use services and a worsening of healthcare outcomes.

Theme 2: Emotional and mental wellbeing

A clear majority of respondents have reported an impact of this period on their emotional and mental wellbeing. Over 90% of respondents told us their mental wellbeing has been affected to some extent. People have told us they feel increasingly anxious, isolated, and worried.

Furthermore, people who identified as having a mental health condition have been impacted by COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions consistently across the period analysed.

Of particular note is the delay to seeking help with health concerns reported by people who identified as having a mental health condition. Residents with mental health conditions told us through our survey and wider community engagement that they felt disadvantaged by telephone consultations. Some said that they would delay or not seek health care at all because they found communication on the phone very difficult. Patients felt that in some cases, they should have been offered a face-to-face appointment without telephone consultation first.

Theme 3: The experience of carers

Respondents who are carers were significantly more adversely affected compared to the baseline figures of all respondents. Importantly, we found that carers as a group are least well informed about services offered at their GP practice, and the most likely to experience difficulty when booking appointments.

It is vital that health and social care providers tackle the issues facing carers. Health and social care providers must acknowledge the unique and varied situations of carers, and ensure services are adaptable to fit changing and developing needs.

Long-term trends and ongoing issues

Throughout the pandemic, Government measures, support and guidance, and peoples' individual circumstances, have changed rapidly as the national situation develops. Across this report, and our other work on COVID-19, we have highlighted the experiences of local residents, patients, and carers. Some people we have spoken to have been largely unaffected by the pandemic, while others have been temporarily affected at certain points. However, many people we have spoken to, from groups across Westminster, have consistently reported being adversely affected.

The pandemic has exposed inequalities in terms of access to, performance of, and trust in, local health and social care services. Many of these inequalities we have discussed in this report. As the national and global situation continues to develop, it is important to monitor these underlying themes. The UK may not be in a lockdown at the moment, but many of the inequalities exposed through this period remain unaddressed.

As we move into a new phase of the COVID-19 pandemic this summer, listening to patients' voices and learning from their experiences remains as important as ever. It is vital that the voices of local people are kept central to considerations of new ways of working, and when commissioning and evaluating services. We have heard from local people about their experiences of living through the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they would like the healthcare and support they receive to be improved to help them stay well and safe.

12. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public, and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

Healthwatch Central West London, Grand Union Studios, 332 Ladbroke Grove, North Kensington, London, W10 5AD

 020 8968 7049

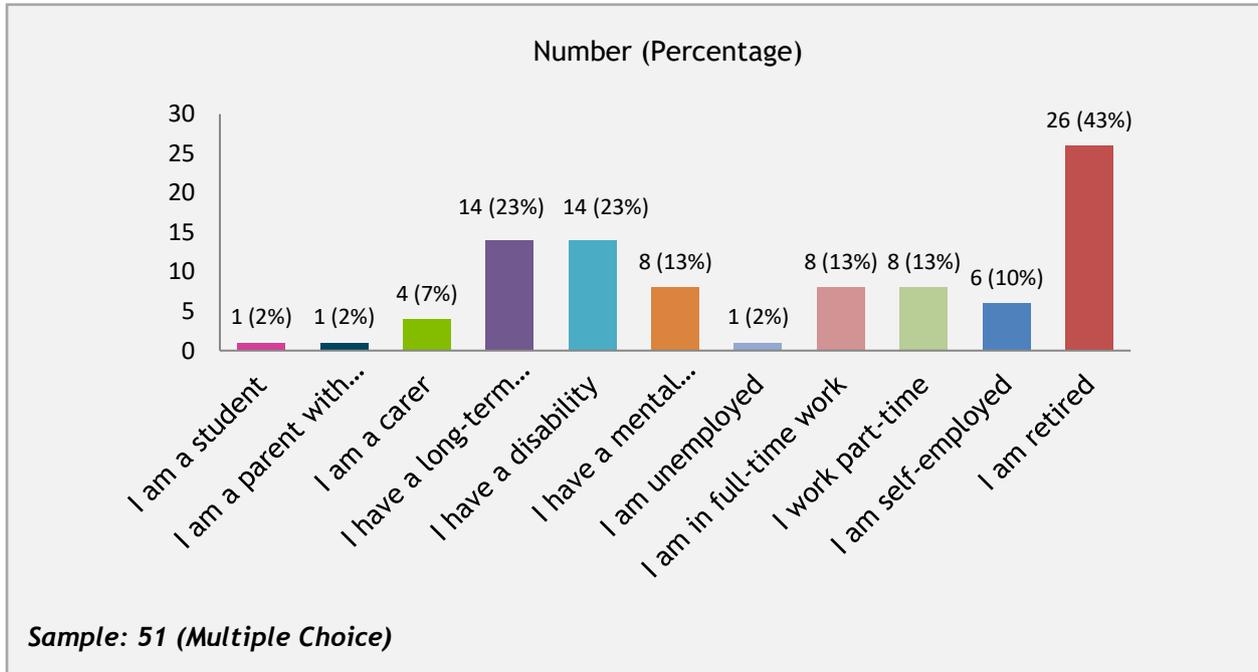
 info@healthwatchcentralwestlondon.org

 healthwatchcwl.co.uk

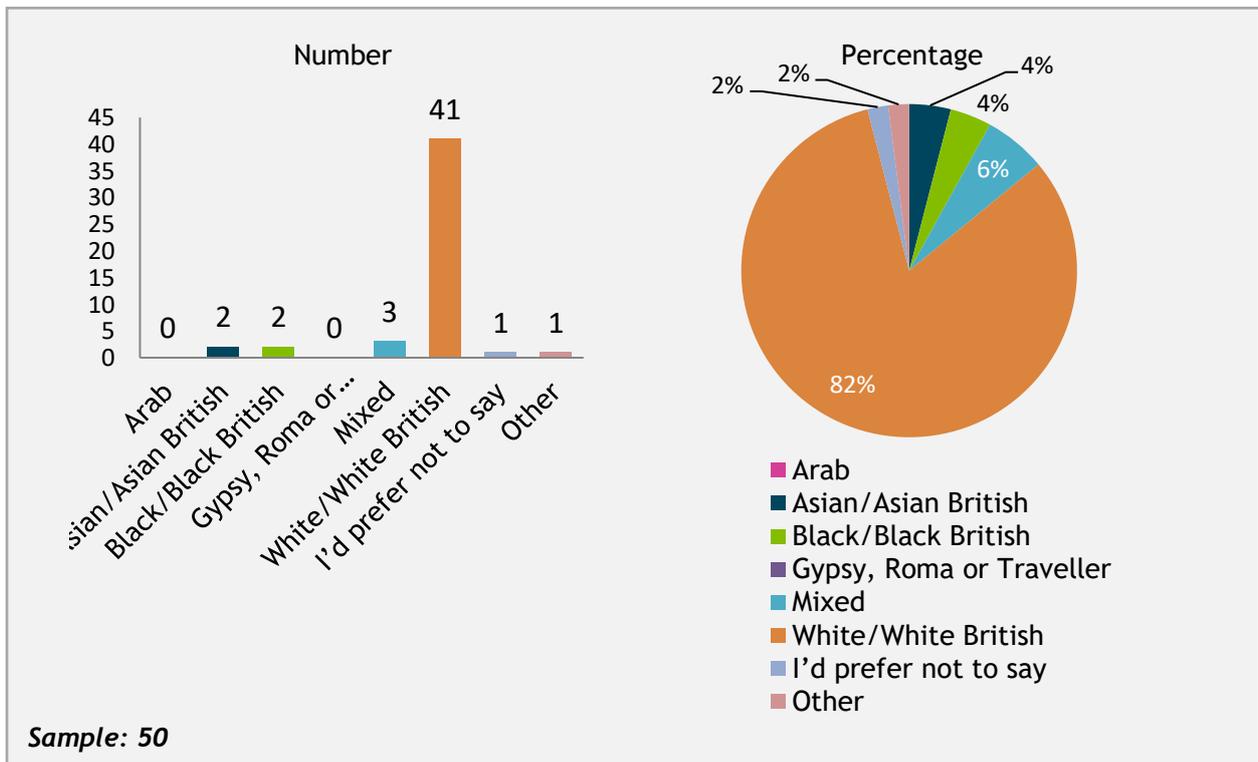
Appendix 1 - Demographics

The stated demographics of participants are as follows.

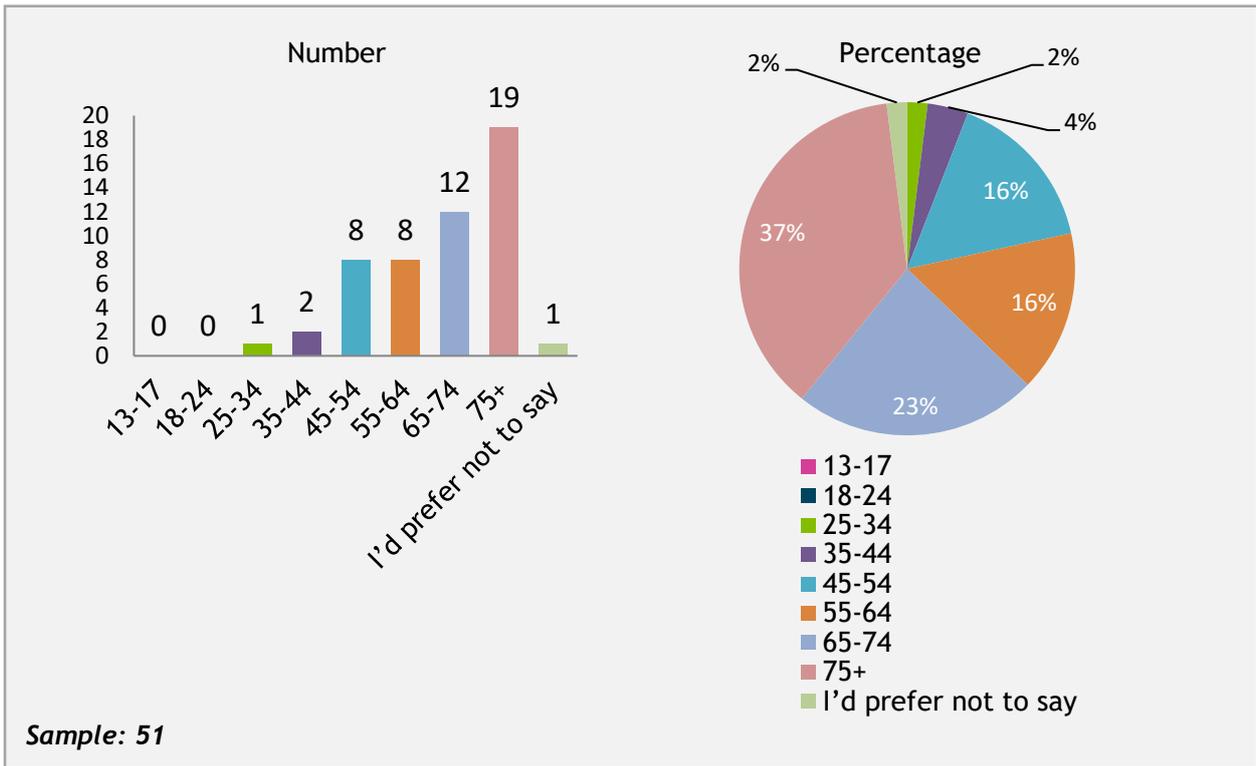
Please tell us what best describes you?



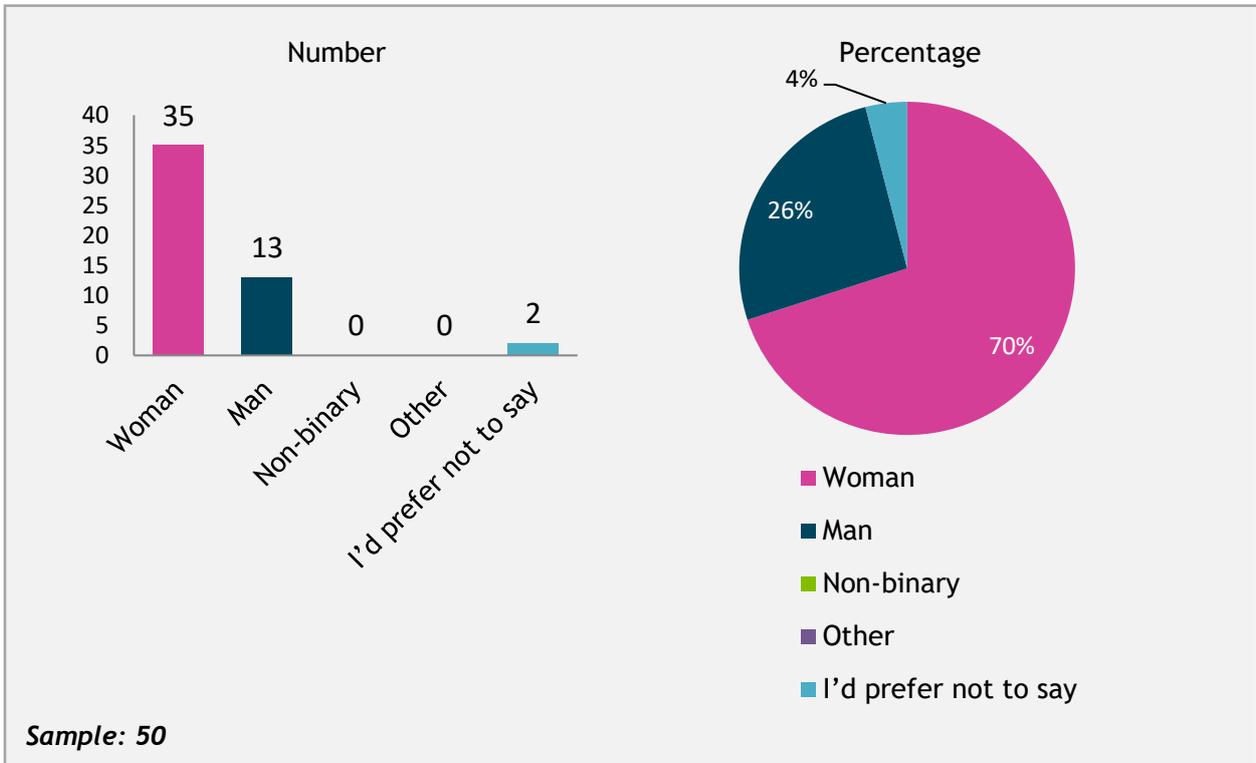
Please select your ethnic background



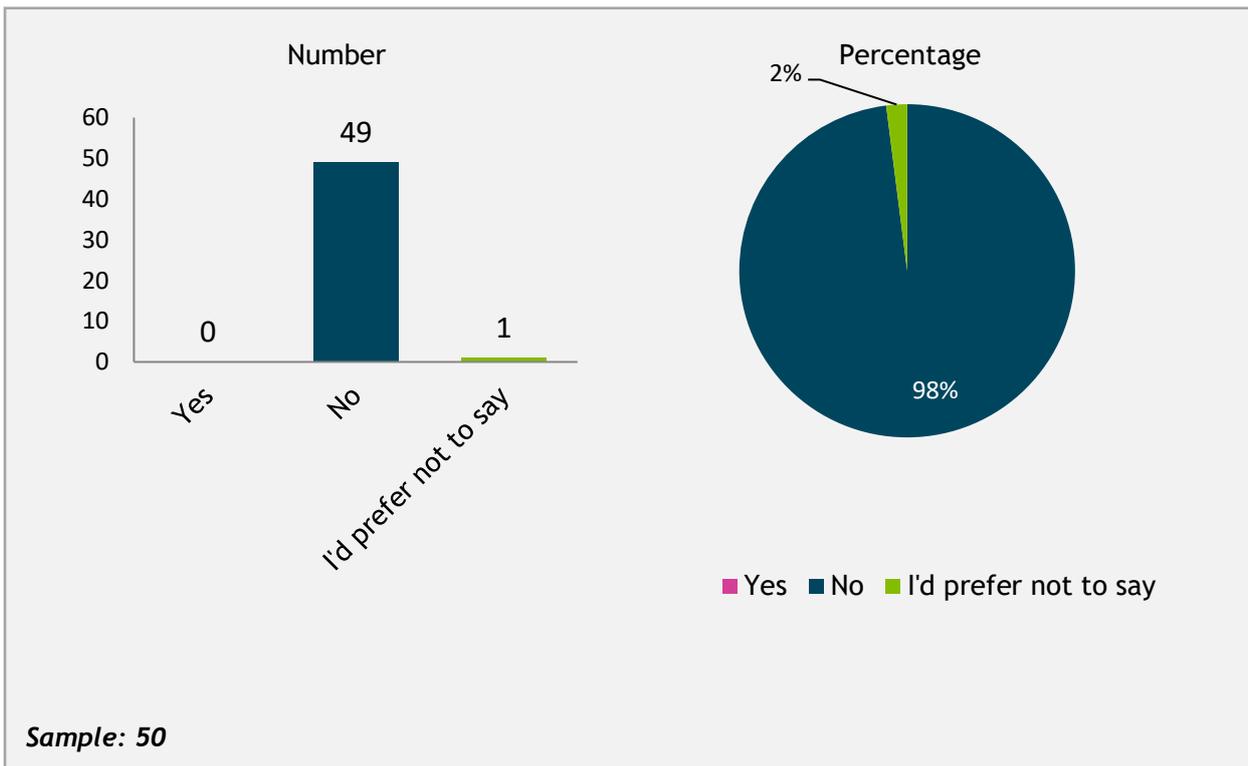
Please tell us which age category you fall into



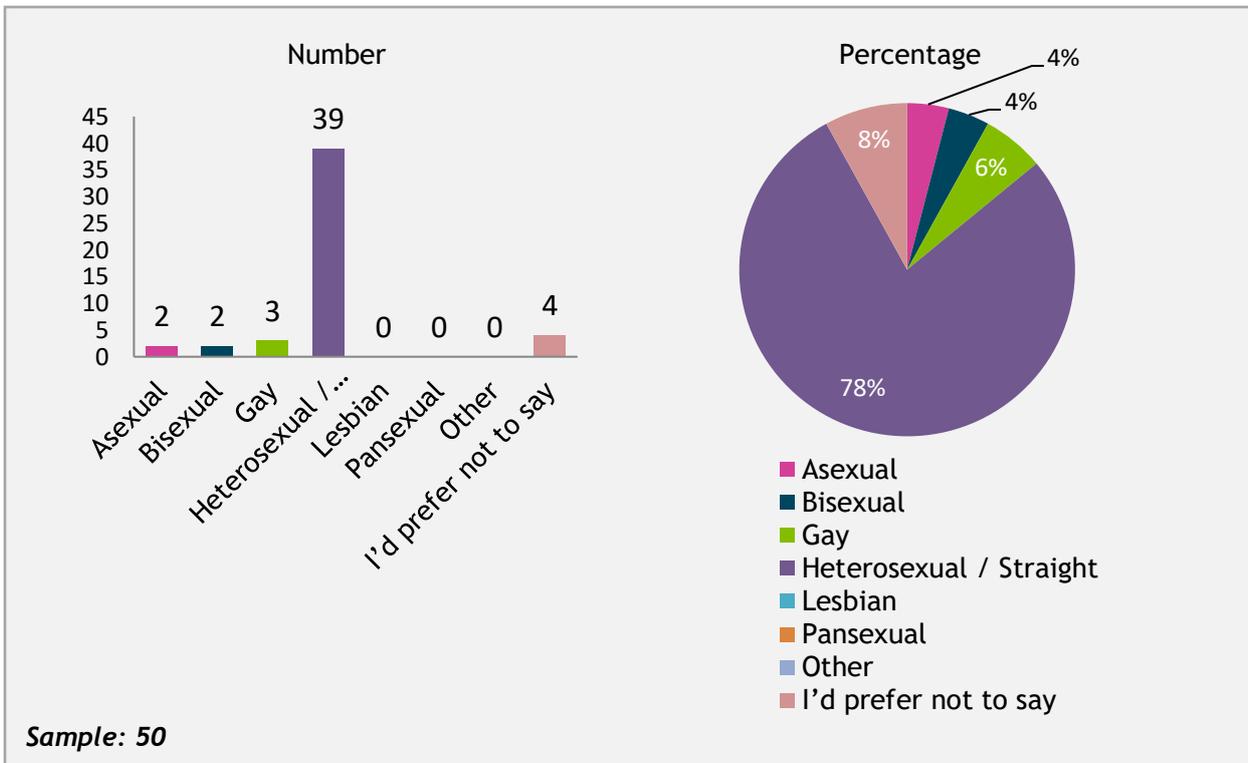
Please tell us which gender you identify with



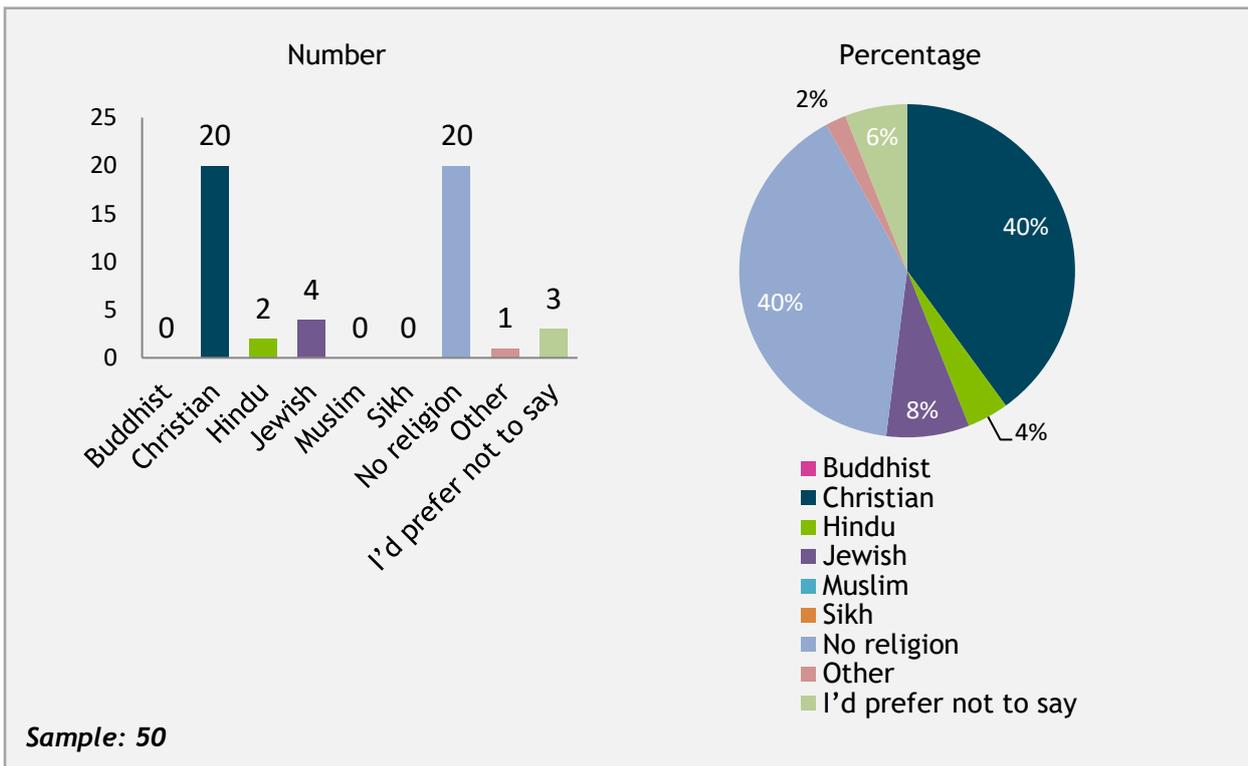
Is your gender different to the sex that was assigned to you at birth?



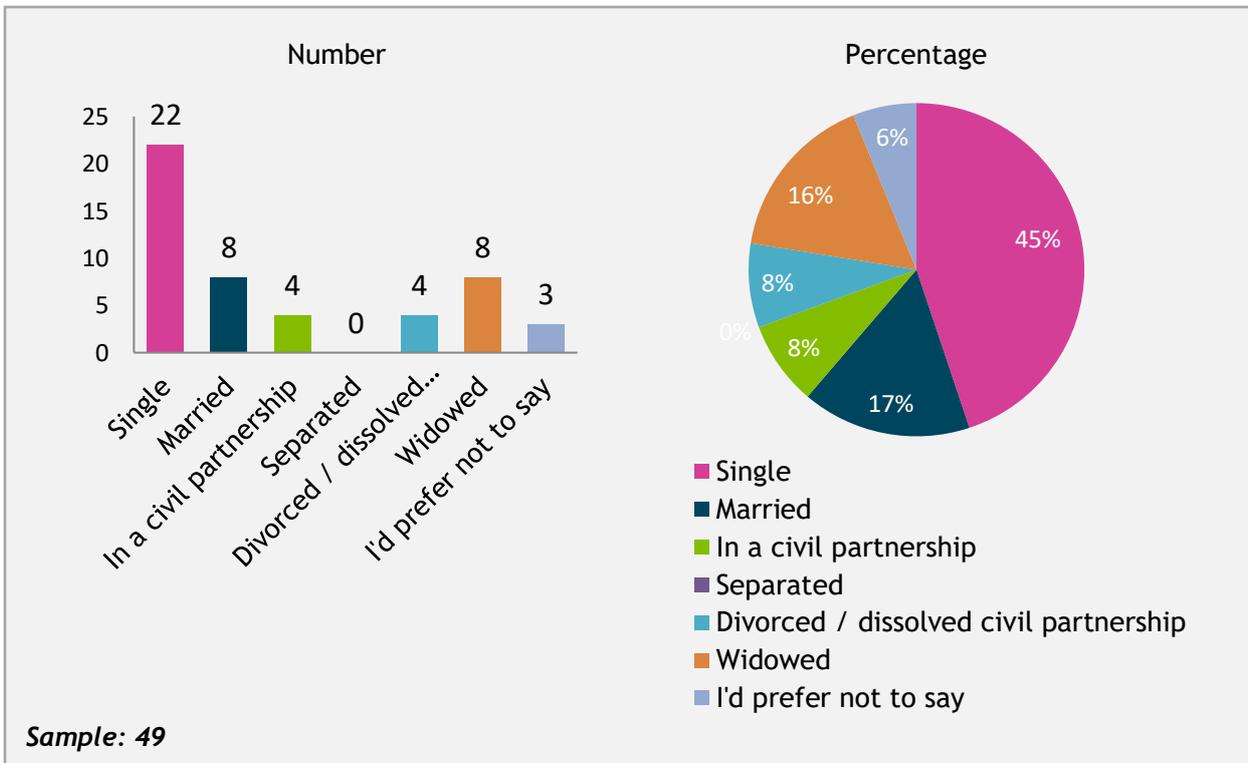
Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with



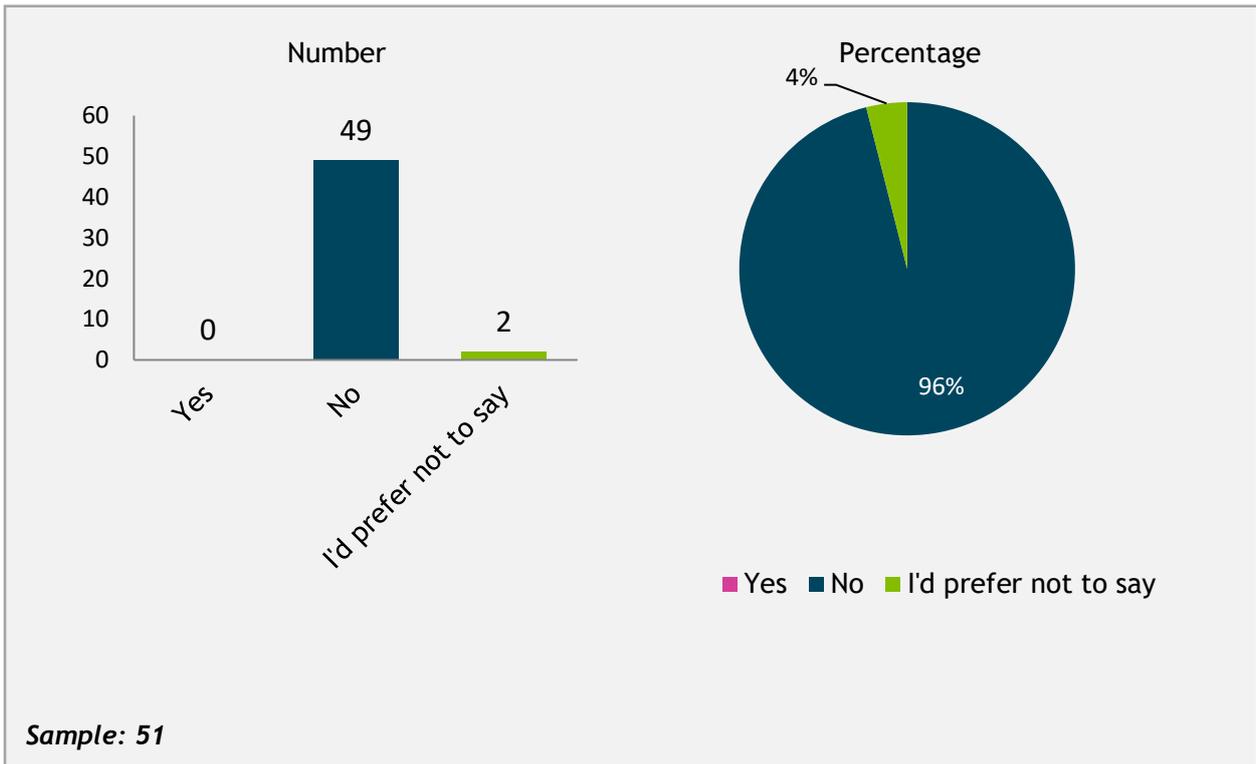
Please tell us about your religion or beliefs



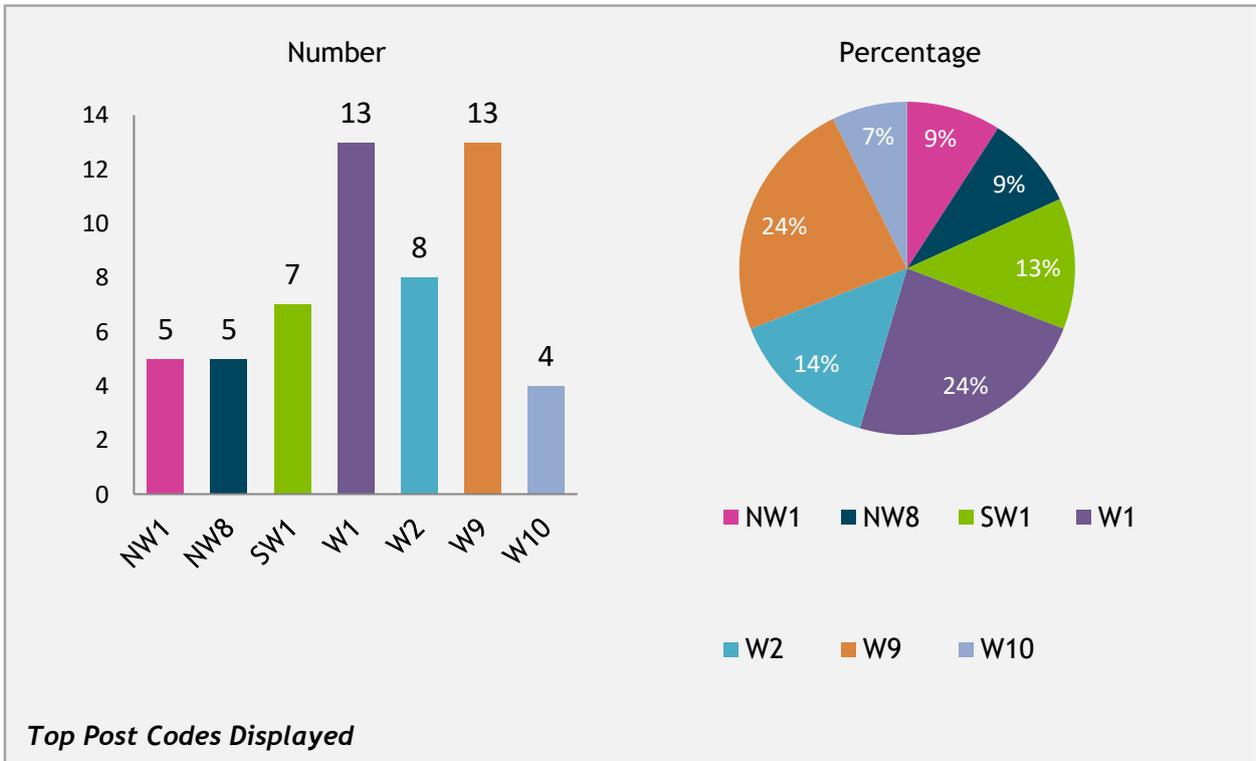
Please tell us about your marital or civil partnership status



Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?



Please tell us your Post Code



“Test and trace didn’t contact me for 10 days with results of the home test.

I tried to get the results after 3 days but they kept saying it wasn't back. After much chasing, I eventually got the results.

I knew I was positive by the way I felt and isolated without being told by them to do it.”

Local resident