

# HOW'S YOUR HEAD?

## Young Voices During COVID-19

Report of a national consultation  
with young people on mental  
health and wellbeing

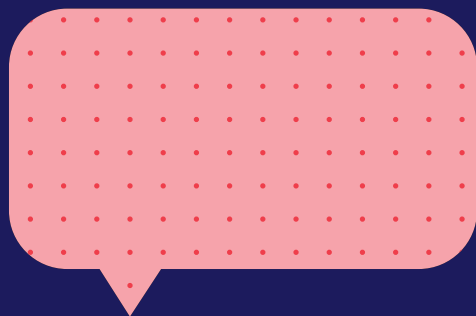
OCTOBER 2020



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs

SPUNOUT.ie





**If you would like to chat to someone about any feelings this report may bring up, text SPUNOUT to 50808 to talk about it.**

**50808 is a free 24/7 text support service providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis - big or small.**

# Foreword

I am very pleased to publish this report – How’s Your Head – Young Voices during COVID-19. My Department worked with SpunOut.ie, stakeholders in the health and youth sectors, and a Youth Advisory Group made up of young people from a variety of backgrounds to inform the design of this consultation.

This consultation set out to hear from young people directly about how the pandemic has impacted their everyday lives; what have been the challenges, but also what positives do young people want to keep from this time, how they feel about the future, and importantly, what should be considered as we plan to live our lives alongside COVID-19 into the coming months.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the right of the child and young person to have a voice on all issues that have an impact on their lives. I am proud to say that Ireland has become a world leader in supporting the voice of the child in decision-making processes.

Our commitment in this sphere is demonstrated principally through the National Strategy for the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-Making 2015-2020, a cross-Government strategy led by my Department. Ensuring that young people are involved in making decisions related to their lives has never been more important than now as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause disruption.

The findings from this consultation tell us of the impact on young people of being separated from friends and family, the difficulties they have experienced with education and work, and the impact of the pandemic on physical and mental health. Despite these challenges, many young people remain optimistic about the future.

Young people on the advisory group provided their insight and ideas around how we can respond to some of these challenges and my Department will be considering these and other responses with Government colleagues as we work together to overcome the challenges ahead.

I recognise the important work of our stakeholders in the youth sector during this time in reaching out to our young people and in particular making provisions for our more vulnerable young people. We will continue to work together to support our young people as they adjust to these exceptional circumstances.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roderic O’Gorman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Roderic O’Gorman**

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN,  
DISABILITY, EQUALITY  
AND INTEGRATION

# Contents

Foreword	<b>3</b>
Introduction	<b>5</b>
Summary	<b>6</b>
How the consultation was carried out	<b>8</b>
Who responded to the survey?	<b>9</b>
What have you been finding hard during COVID-19?	<b>12</b>
What are the changes in your life during COVID-19 that you would like to keep?	<b>19</b>
In general, how do you feel about the future?	<b>28</b>
Specifically, what would help you to be healthy and happy in the future?	<b>32</b>
Ideas for Action - reflections from the Youth Advisory Group	<b>40</b>
Appendix 1: survey instrument	<b>44</b>
Appendix 2: demographics	<b>47</b>
Appendix 3: breakdowns of themes by respondent profile	<b>54</b>

# Introduction

In the summer of 2020, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, working with the Department of Health and the youth sector, collaborated with SpunOut.ie to undertake an online survey of young people's experiences of COVID-19. A Youth Advisory Group worked with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to guide the development and analysis of the consultation.

The consultation sought to better understand how young people are experiencing COVID-19. The consultation asked them about what has been working well for them and the challenges in maintaining their wellbeing. The consultation gave young people a chance to provide feedback on what could be useful to them in improving their mental health and wellbeing over the coming months.

They were asked four open-ended questions to ascertain how they felt about specific aspects of their lives at this time.

The questions were:

- ▶ What have you been finding hard during COVID-19?
- ▶ What are the changes in your life during COVID-19 that you would like to keep?
- ▶ In general, how do you feel about the future?
- ▶ Specifically, what would help you to be healthy and happy in the future?

Input gathered from young people through the consultation will be used to:

- ▶ Ensure that responses to COVID-19 developed for society as a whole are relevant to the needs of young people
- ▶ Design and deliver services and messages for young people over the coming months, including information campaigns on living alongside COVID-19
- ▶ Develop further policies on issues relevant to young people.

The responses of a highly varied group of 2,173 young people aged 15-24 were received and analysed. The [main body of the report](#) provides a detailed presentation of the findings as well as relevant information on the demographics of the young people who responded. It also contains an overview of the methodology used to consult with young people and analyse their responses. The Youth Advisory Group provided their input on ways decision makers can respond to the findings of the consultation in the [Ideas for action](#) section.

# Summary

A SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT.

## DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY YOUNG PEOPLE DURING COVID-19

A range of difficulties were reported by young people:

- ▶ The COVID-19 crisis had negative effects on young people's health and wellbeing, especially amongst some marginalised groups. The most common negative effects related to the mental health of respondents, including overthinking, concern, worry, anxiety, depression and a sense of utter hopelessness.
- ▶ More than a third of young people missed their friends, with those young people who engage with youth groups/clubs/services missing their friends slightly less.
- ▶ Many had concerns about their education, particularly those aged 18 or over.
- ▶ Other challenges experienced by young people included:
  - ▶ cabin fever
  - ▶ isolation/loneliness
  - ▶ missing relatives
  - ▶ boredom/lack of motivation
  - ▶ lack of routine
  - ▶ work and money problems
  - ▶ loss of social life
  - ▶ lack of sport
  - ▶ social distancing
  - ▶ service reduction in mental health/addiction services, shops, public transport, hair dressers, etc
  - ▶ cancellation of summer plans
  - ▶ negative effects of media consumption.

## POSITIVES FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WISH TO CARRY FORWARD

Young people mentioned a range of positives that they wished to take forward:

- ▶ Around a quarter of young people were keen to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- ▶ The second most quoted benefit, especially amongst young women, was self-care.
- ▶ Quality family time, including time spent with family pets, was cherished by many young people.
- ▶ Other things that young people wish to carry forward included self-development, the remote/online life, hygiene/social distancing, a simpler/slower/quieter life, quality friendships, improved finances, feeling less pressured, not having the pressures of school/college and positive community spirit.
- ▶ For many young people, the increased use of technology in their daily lives brought benefits. These included no longer having to endure long commutes, avoiding bullies in school, making daily tasks like shopping easier, being able to enjoy the comforts of home more, and enabling communication with those far away.
- ▶ Almost one in 10 respondents were unable to name any positives.



### YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEELINGS TOWARDS THE FUTURE

It was common for respondents to experience a range of emotions:

- ▶ The most common emotion, expressed by over a third of respondents, was optimism; young men were found to be especially optimistic about the future.
- ▶ However, anxiety was also a common feeling experienced by over a quarter of respondents.
- ▶ Many young people were troubled by the uncertainty of the future, as expressed by one in five respondents.
- ▶ Other feelings expressed were pessimism and fear.
- ▶ A number of respondents also reported feeling acceptance and excitement.
- ▶ Young people who engaged with youth groups/ clubs/services tended to be more optimistic and excited about their futures.

### WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAY THEY NEED TO BE HEALTHY AND HAPPY IN THE FUTURE

A wide variety of responses were reported here ranging from friendships and family to issues like housing, services and policy:

- ▶ More than one in five respondents mentioned how valuable having a network of supportive family and friends is.
- ▶ Not having to worry about work and money was the next most common issue.
- ▶ Undertaking regular exercise and having a healthy diet.
- ▶ Many respondents, especially under-18s, said that it was imperative that their educational needs be addressed.
- ▶ Other factors identified as playing an important role in young people's future wellbeing were:
  - ▶ regaining a sense of normality
  - ▶ knowing that COVID-19 is being managed well
  - ▶ personal growth
  - ▶ a balanced life
  - ▶ health care supports
  - ▶ pursuit of interests
  - ▶ affordable housing
  - ▶ progressive government policy
  - ▶ access to services and facilities
  - ▶ quality information
  - ▶ sense of community.

# How the consultation was carried out

---

A working group of representatives was established from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health, National Youth Council of Ireland, SpunOut.ie and a specially convened Youth Advisory Group. The following actions were taken:

- ▶ Established a working group of representatives from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health, National Youth Council of Ireland, SpunOut.ie and Youth Advisory Group (see below).
- ▶ Consulted on the focus of survey questions with a specially convened Youth Advisory Group comprising individuals nominated by Comhairle na nÓg, Foróige, National Youth Council of Ireland (Young Voices European Union Youth Dialogue), SpunOut.ie and Youth Work Ireland.
- ▶ SpunOut.ie worked with Whitebarn Consulting to carry out the survey.
- ▶ Designed an online survey on the SurveyMonkey platform.
- ▶ Piloted the survey with members of the SpunOut.ie Action Panel and amended it as necessary (the final survey instrument can be found in [appendix 1](#)).
- ▶ Agreed that a convenience sample would be most appropriate, provided that a sufficiently high response rate was achieved.
- ▶ Incentivised the survey with entry into a prize draw<sup>1</sup> and promoted it heavily on social media, including targeted ads on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. The survey was live for 10 days in late June/early July 2020.
- ▶ Received 3,480 survey entries, although 1,290 dropped off after the first question.
- ▶ Cleaned the data set: 2,173 valid responses remained.
- ▶ Analysed key respondent characteristics (see [appendix 2](#) for detailed demographic data). With some exceptions, closed questions were used. In some cases during the analysis, responses were reallocated to different categories. Whilst there are obvious risks associated with doing this, every effort was made to stay true to the respondents' answers while at the same time making analysis of these answers feasible and meaningful.
- ▶ Where possible, compared the cohort data to relevant national data sets to ascertain how representative it was of the whole population.
- ▶ Used WordItOut to show the most commonly used terms in the answers to the open, unprompted questions. Word clouds of the relevant terms were created by a graphic designer.
- ▶ Undertook an initial read-through of the answers to these questions to select illustrative quotes.
- ▶ Undertook a second read-through to identify emerging themes, and subsequently refined these themes into eight to fifteen categories depending on the question. This process was not without challenges, because inevitably, there were strong linkages between the different themes used.
- ▶ Coded each response on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, allocating one or more codes to each answer. In some cases a response was unclear, so no codes were allocated to it. There was a wide variety of responses, with some people giving only one word answers and others writing full paragraphs.
- ▶ Did a final check of each response to ensure the correct codes had been used.
- ▶ Cross-referenced the themes against the respondent categories. For simplicity's sake, only two age bands were used (namely under 18 and 18 and over) and counties were excluded from the detailed analysis (but the distinction between those living in urban and rural areas was maintained).

---

<sup>1</sup> The survey was wholly anonymous. Those completing it were directed to a further, entirely separate, survey where they could give their contact details to enter the prize draw and/or opt-in to receive future surveys. This second survey also signposted respondents to a source of emotional support, should they have needed this after reflecting on the issues raised in the survey.



Notable differences between different types of respondents were recorded and discussed. Subgroups are only mentioned where major differences between subgroups were visible in the analysis. However, breakdowns of the proportion of each subgroup that mentioned specific matters are provided in appendix 3.

- ▶ Drafted the report detailing the methodology and findings of the analysis.

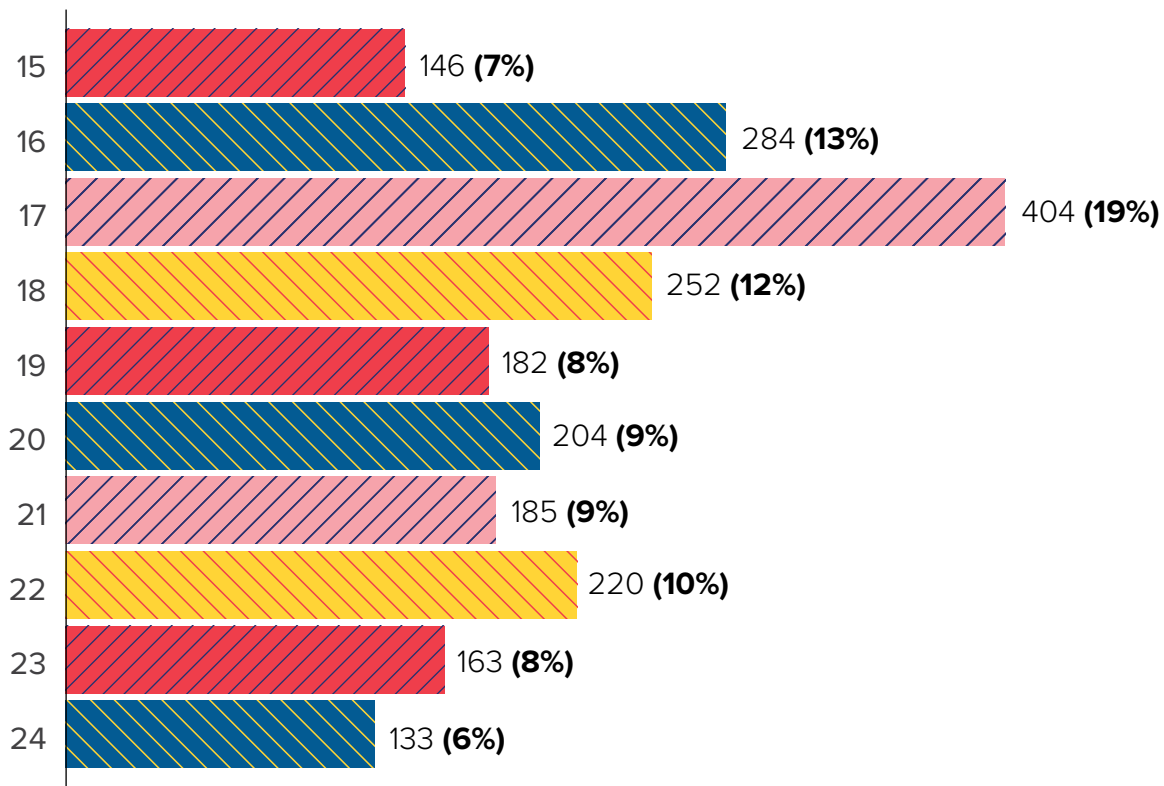
The draft report and its findings were reviewed by the Youth Advisory Group. They provided their input on ways decision makers can respond to the findings of the consultation. These can be found in the [Ideas for action](#) section. The report was finalised by the working group of representatives from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health, National Youth Council of Ireland, SpunOut.ie and Youth Advisory Group.

## Who responded to the survey?

The survey attracted 2,173 respondents aged 15-24, representing every county in Ireland. A breakdown of the respondents by age, geography, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic/cultural background is presented below. Further demographic information is contained in [appendix 2](#).

### Age

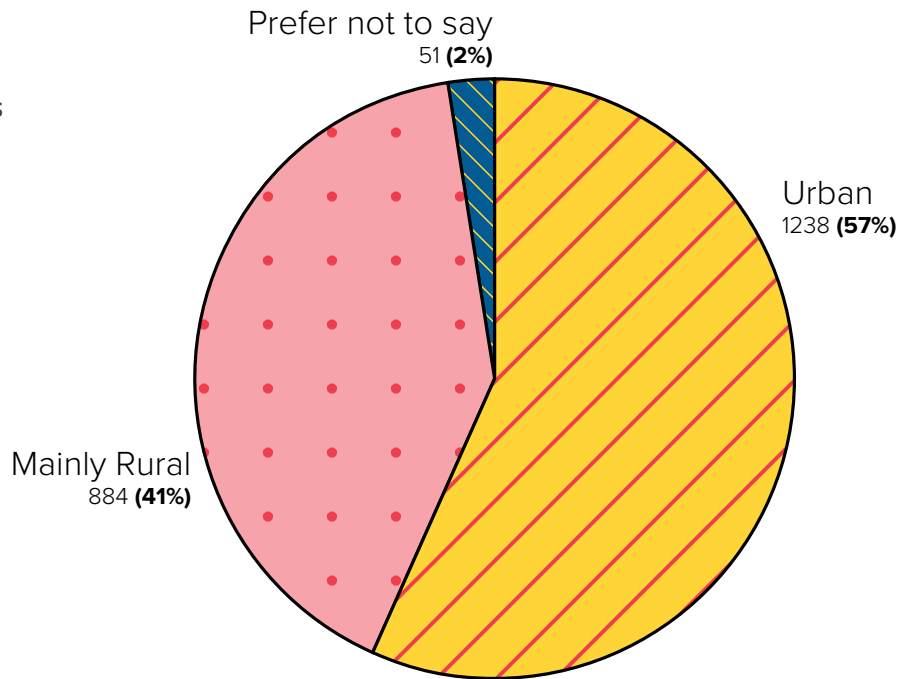
Respondents were asked how old they were on the day that they filled in the survey.



## Urban or rural

---

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the place they spent the majority of their time was mainly urban or mainly rural.

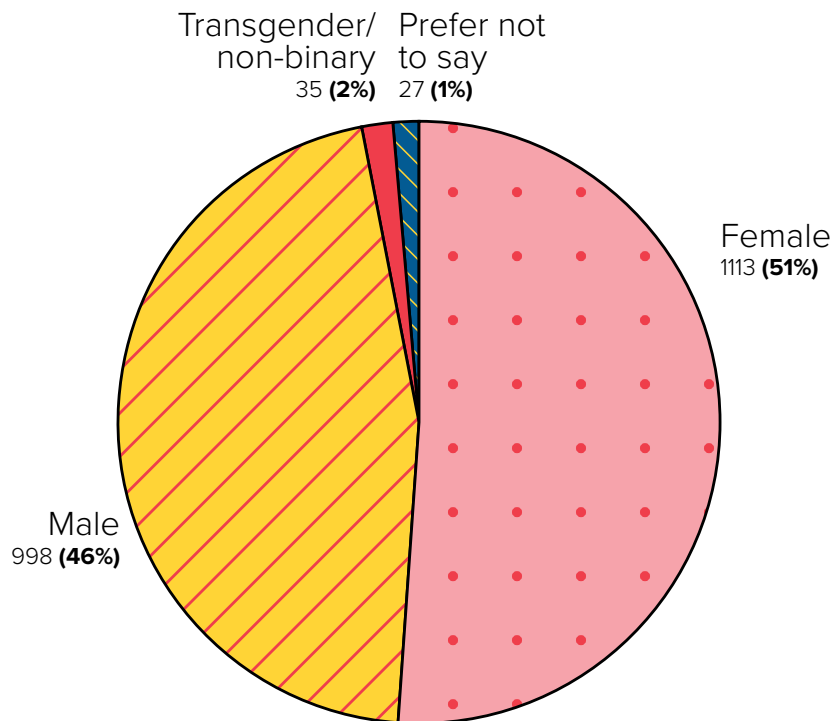


## Gender

---

For gender identity, respondents were provided with three closed options (female, male and transgender/non-binary), a prefer not to say option, and the option to self-identify.

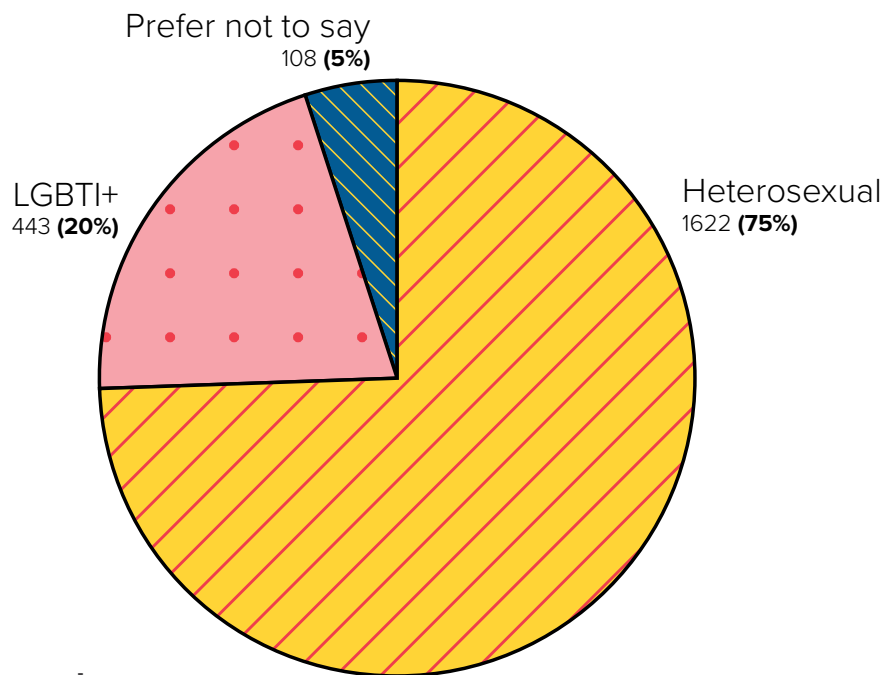
Eight respondents chose to self-identify. Informed by their responses, two of these were re-allocated to the prefer not to say category and the remaining six were re-allocated to the transgender/non-binary category.



## Sexual orientation

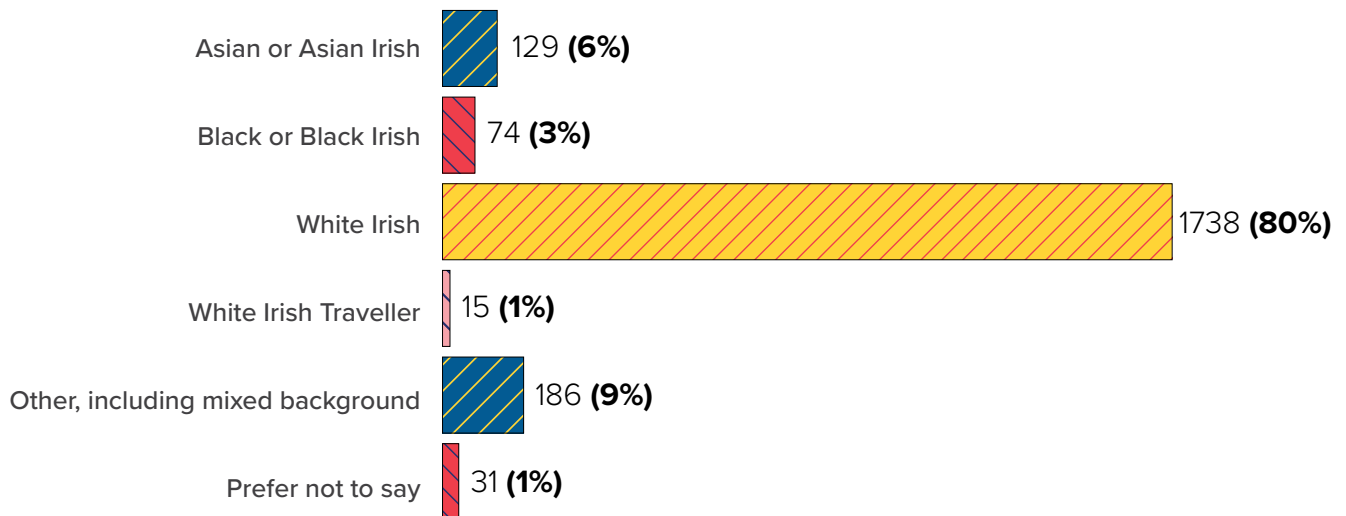
Respondents were asked if they identified as LGBTI+, given the option not to say, or given the option to self-identify.

Twenty-seven respondents chose to self-describe. Based on the nature of their responses, nine were re-allocated to the prefer not to say category and the remainder was re-allocated to the LGBTI+ category.



## Ethnic/cultural background

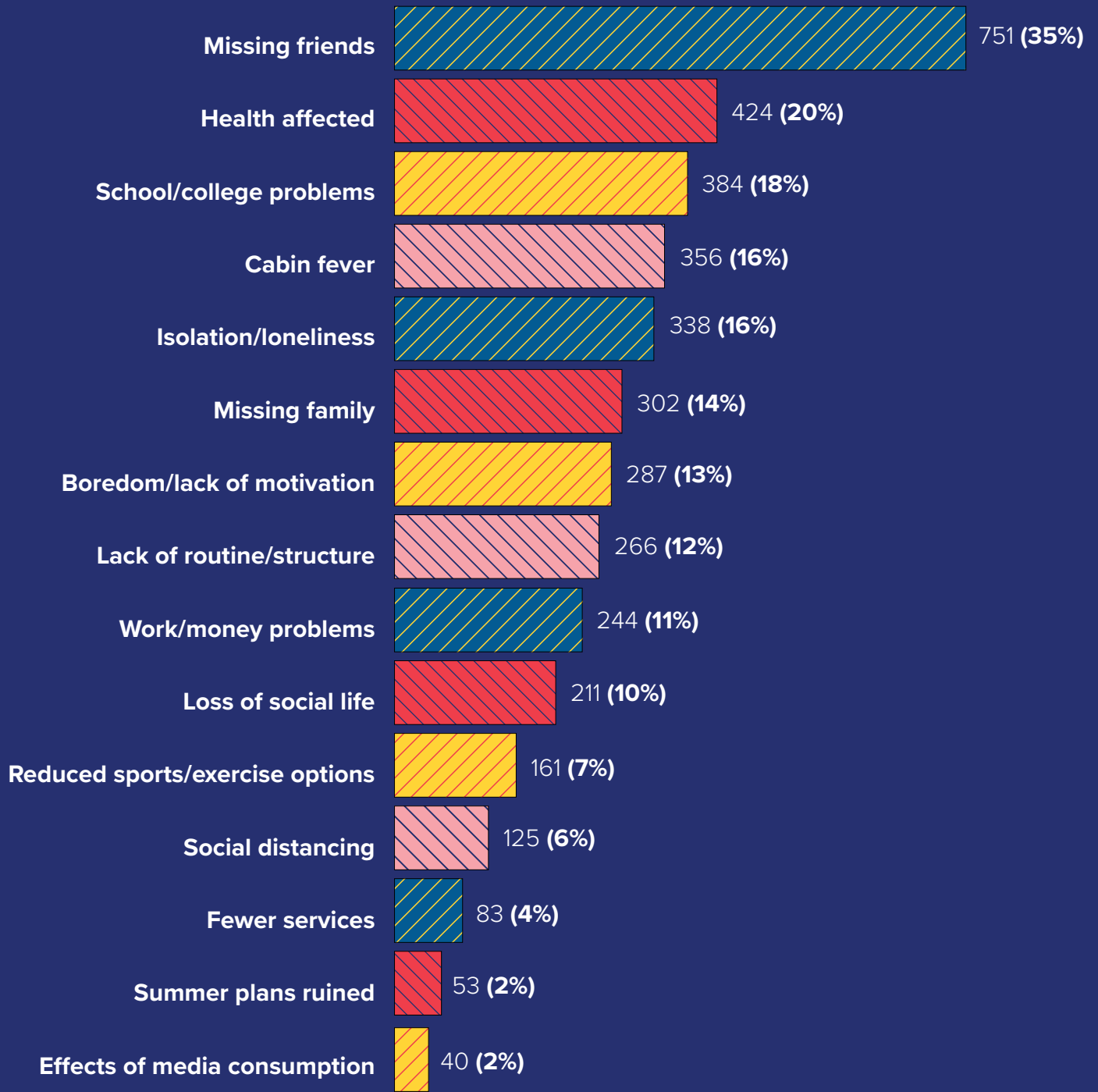
Standard census categories informed the categories used to examine respondents' ethnicity/cultural background, although some were grouped together for the sake of simplicity.



We also asked about housing status, disability/chronic health status, usage of mental health services/supports and engagement with youth groups/clubs/services. More detailed information regarding the demographics of respondents can be found in [Appendix 2](#).



## What have you been finding hard during COVID-19?



Respondents were able to select more than one answer

## FRIENDSHIPS

The data show that friendships are of immense importance to young people and more than 750 respondents stated that missing friends was the hardest thing with which they had been forced to cope with. This included boyfriends and girlfriends. The feeling was strongest amongst young women, Travellers, users of mental health services and those living in the family home. Although many young people tried to maintain their friendships using digital means, they generally found that experience to be far less satisfying than regular face-to-face contact.

“I really missed my friends during lockdown, I missed my boyfriend even more and the lack of contact led to us breaking up shortly after restrictions lifted. It’s been really hard. I miss college, in-person lectures, but mostly seeing my friends at lunch.”

FEMALE - 20  
URBAN LOCATION

“Not being able to do simple things such as seeing friends, going to the movies, going for food etc was really weird and made me more unhappy than I can explain. I will never take something as simple as taking a walk with a friend for granted ever again.”

FEMALE - 16  
URBAN LOCATION

## HEALTH

The period also had significant negative effects on young people’s health with well over 400 respondents mentioning this as an issue. For instance, the situation for those with chronic conditions such as cystic fibrosis or generalised anxiety disorder worsened. Others found themselves experiencing new health problems for the first time, including having panic attacks.

Although physical health effects such as difficulties sleeping, overeating/undereating and consuming too much alcohol were named, mental health effects – which are in any case very closely intertwined – far outweighed these.

Lockdown appears to have impacted young people’s mental health negatively, with many mentions of overthinking, concern, worry, anxiety, depression and a sense of hopelessness. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who were already disabled or ill suffered especially. Mental health service users were more than twice as likely to mention the effects of this period on their health than those not using those services. The rate for LGBTI+ people was also far higher than that for heterosexuals.

“It has been a roller coaster of ups and down since the very day schools closed, some days have been extremely low, there were weeks where I cried every day and found just getting up challenging.”

FEMALE - 18  
URBAN LOCATION



**If you would like to chat to someone about any feelings this report may bring up, text SPUNOUT to 50808 to talk about it.**

**50808 is a free 24/7 text support service providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis - big or small.**

## SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

There were almost 400 mentions of problems relating to school and college. What may be surprising is the extent to which young people missed going to school/college, both for their education and also in terms of having daily connections with peers and teachers. Online learning was deemed a poor substitute, especially for those with hardware and internet access issues.

According to respondents, there was great variety in the way individual educational professionals and establishments handled lessons/lectures and exams. Over-18s were far more likely to mention problems relating to their education than under-18s.

There were numerous references to the handling of the Leaving Certificate and the consequences of this; some of these will have been made by 18 and 19 year olds. Young women were also much more likely to report school and college concerns.

“I found finishing my third level education extremely stressful, I feel that third level students were completely overlooked. With the loss of jobs during COVID-19, I had to work full time as my mother lost her job so I had to help pay the bills. Working full time AND trying to finish my degree year took a severe toll on my mental health.”

FEMALE - 21  
RURAL LOCATION

“I have been finding it hard to deal with the uncertainty of it all. I also struggle with lack of structure and routine.”

FEMALE - 15  
URBAN LOCATION

## CABIN FEVER

Although only a few respondents used the term cabin fever, the body of answers showed that a sense of confinement was a real challenge, with more than 350 respondents mentioning this. This ranged from those who were only somewhat fed up about having restrictions placed on their movements to those who found themselves completely trapped in highly dysfunctional domestic situations.

Young women and Travellers were more likely to report cabin fever. Many of the over-18s who had been forced to return to live in the family home, commented on losing their independence and adult freedoms, which sometimes led to a strain on family relations.

“My dad has started to lash out and hit me again – I used to be able escape it by going to college early and studying in the library until very late but now that I have to be at home 24/7, along with the added stress and pressures on my dad due to coronavirus restrictions etc, there’s no escaping it. My mum’s mental health has deteriorated severely these past two weeks which have added to the difficulties at home.”

FEMALE - 21  
URBAN LOCATION

“We had a baby just before lockdown and not being able to leave the house for so long was really tough.”

FEMALE - 22  
RURAL LOCATION

## ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Although closely related to some of the other categories, feelings of isolation and loneliness were mentioned sufficiently often (well over 300 times) to merit separate analysis. This might include, for example, being at home alone all day while parents were at work. Young people in rural areas were twice as likely as those in urban areas to say they felt isolated. Young women, members of the LGBTI+ community, people with disabilities/chronic health conditions, users of mental health services and those living in rented accommodation (non-family home) also reported higher rates of loneliness. In terms of ethnicity, Travellers were least likely to report isolation and other White Irish people were most likely to do so.

“Having to sit and spend time with myself. Not seeing my friends who are like my chosen family. I felt very stressed which caused a huge flare up of my psoriasis so now even though restrictions are being lifted my anxiety of going outside because of my skin is really bad.”

**NON-BINARY - 20**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## MISSING FAMILY

Missing family members was also a common theme mentioned by around 300 respondents. The difficulties of not being in contact with grandparents and other elderly relatives was referred to particularly often. This emotion was felt especially strongly in rural areas, by young women and by people living in rented accommodation. Young Travellers most frequently reported missing their family members.

“My dad has been in the hospital for three months with a serious case of the virus, being stuck at home I had little else to do but dwell on the situation and the likelihood of his death. Although we kept in touch online I found it difficult not having the in-person support of friends and family.”

**FEMALE - 20**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

## BOREDOM BUT LACKING IN MOTIVATION

About one in eight young people said that they had experienced boredom but lacked the motivation to address this. They struggled to keep themselves entertained and otherwise fill their days. They may even have lost interest in things that they previously enjoyed doing. This was especially true for those who identified as non-binary and those who lived in accommodation that they owned.

“I feel totally purposeless, demotivated and lost during this time, I feel like most of the activities I do during the day are simply day fillers rather than anything I actually enjoy, I can't drive so I truly am stuck in my house which is in a rural area with a scarcity of services/facilities. All of this has contributed to major hardship on my mental health.”

**FEMALE - 21**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

## ROUTINE

Closely related to the issues of boredom and lack of motivation were changes in routine. Prior to lockdown, most young people had a structure in their life (for example: school, sports, family time, socialising) that was suddenly upended. Around one in eight said they had struggled to find a new routine that was healthy and productive. Young women, members of the LGBTI+ community and those living in the family home were more likely to say this was a difficulty for them.

“Reduced activity coupled with anxiety spike meant I had huge trouble sleeping for the first two months. Finishing my masters online was so difficult, lack of interpersonal contact and seeing my friends, not being able to go to the gym and gaining weight, not being able to see my boyfriend.”

**FEMALE - 23**  
**RURAL LOCATION**



## WORK AND MONEY PROBLEMS

Work and money problems were experienced by around 250 respondents, the vast majority of whom were over-18. Renters and people with disabilities/chronic ill-health were most likely to report problems in this regard. Young people availing of youth groups/clubs/services were half as likely to mention work and money as being problematic than those who did not make use of those services. Some had lost their job, whereas others had not been able to find one. Others were working, but the frontline environments in which they did were challenging (such as hospitals and supermarkets).

Many expressed worries about their financial situation. Would they be able to afford college next year? Would there be employment options in their chosen field if there was an economic downturn? Some expressed frustration about not being eligible for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment<sup>2</sup>.

“Losing my job that I had lined up for the summer and now having no money. I’ve applied for over 300 new jobs and got none of them. I needed the money for college so that’s very upsetting.”

FEMALE - 20  
RURAL LOCATION

“I was forced to drop out of college ... I relied on a grant and normally had to work another job over summer to pay rent in Dublin. I had to quit my jobs because there weren’t enough hours and I can’t get jobseekers assistance as I’m under 24 and I’m not eligible. (The state assumes you’re financially dependent on family if you’re under 24, but that’s not reality for many of us.)”

FEMALE - 20  
URBAN LOCATION

## SOCIAL LIFE

Having an active social life is the hallmark of most young people. Losing the opportunity for socialisation was noted by more than 200 respondents as a new problem in their lives. Many of the Travellers who responded to the survey identified loss of social life as an issue for them. Some respondents made general reference to this issue, whereas others named specific ways of socialising, such as youth clubs or going to the cinema.

“Not being able to see family and friends. My niece was born during COVID-19 and it was really hard not being able to visit her and my sister after she gave birth.”

FEMALE - 17  
RURAL LOCATION

## SPORT

Sport and other ways of exercising and keeping fit were also affected by COVID-19; well over 150 respondents referred to this problem. It was especially challenging for those living in precarious accommodation and those engaging in youth groups/clubs/services. Examples included the closure of gyms, missing the camaraderie of team sports, and being forced into doing alternative activities that they did not enjoy. Current users of mental health services were half as likely to mention sports/fitness as those who do not use those services.

“I’ve found it hard not having any sport. A big escape for me was playing hurling and rubbing shoulders with the lads but that all kind of came to a halt suddenly.”

MALE - 17  
RURAL LOCATION

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/be74d3-covid-19-pandemic-unemployment-payment>

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

The new reality of social distancing (including mask wearing) was also considered problematic by some 125 people. The lack of physical touch with loved ones (especially hugging) was found to be really difficult by some. Others expressed annoyance, even distress, about people who were not adhering to social distancing rules.

“Different things on different days, some days getting up just seems like the worst thing ever when you know it’s just another day of lockdown, sometimes it’s the amount of Zoom calls a week and I get sick of looking at a screen, etc.”

**MALE - 15**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## CANCELLED SUMMER PLANS

A group of about 50 respondents made specific reference to much longed-for summer plans being cancelled, such as holidays, music festivals and trips to see family members living in countries of origin. Those of Asian heritage were most likely to lament this aspect of the COVID-19 crisis.

“Usually when things are bad, there’s always plans in the near future that you can look forward to, now I feel like there’s nothing to feel excited about (no holidays, trips), everything that keeps you going when times are tough have been cancelled.”

**FEMALE - 21**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

## REDUCED SERVICES

More than 80 people commented on the difficulties associated with reduced services during the pandemic. This included shops, hairdressers, public transport, mental health/addiction services, etc. Service reduction was particularly keenly felt by Travellers and young people with Asian heritage.

“I have very strict parents who did not allow me much freedom at the best of times. COVID-19 made this so much worse. It gives them a reason to demand to know my whereabouts and who I’m with at all times and forbid me from the independence of using something as simple as public transport. I feel stripped of my freedom and like a child in primary school asking for permission to leave the house and lifts everywhere.”

**FEMALE - 20**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## CONSUMPTION OF MEDIA

The final theme identified, by 40 people, was in relation to the consumption of media, both traditional and social. For example, some felt overwhelmed by watching the news every day. Others admitted spending too long on social media and experiencing the negative effects of that. The effect was strongest for non-binary people.

“Seeing all the bad news every night really hit me hard. I got emotional some nights watching the news and hearing about all these people who were falling ill and dying.”

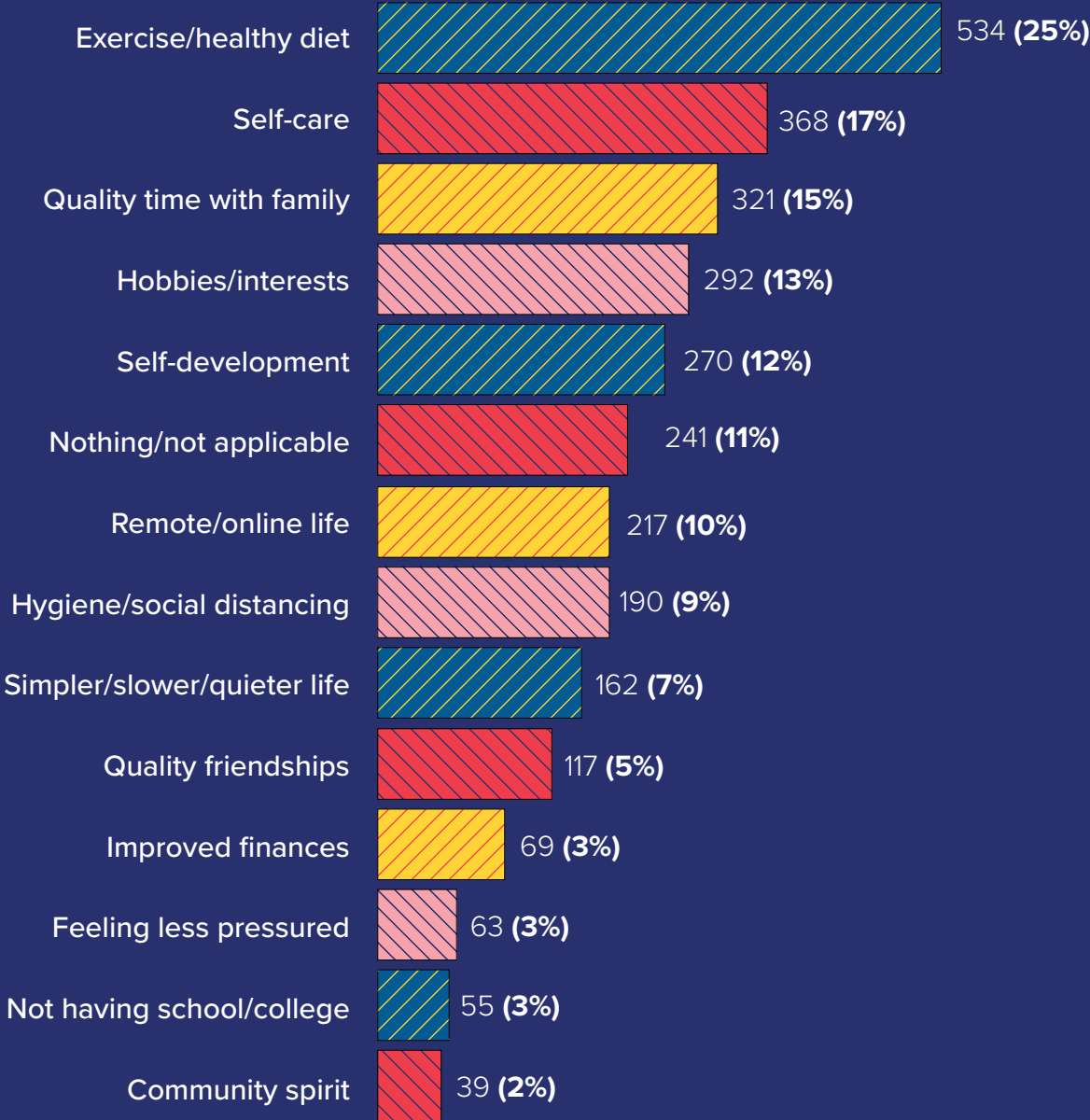
**MALE - 15**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

# What are the changes in your life during COVID-19 that you would like to keep?

Reading the responses, the overarching sense from the majority of respondents was one of appreciating the extra time that they had been afforded as a direct result of the crisis. However, almost one-tenth of respondents expressed the sentiment that there was absolutely nothing from the COVID-19 period that they wished to retain going forward.



## What are the changes in your life during COVID-19 that you would like to keep?



Respondents were able to select more than one answer

## HEALTH

Young people chose to spend their time during COVID-19 in a myriad of ways. Well over 500 respondents reported increased time and attention to exercise and diet, often mentioning these together. Whilst a wide range of ways of keeping fit and working out were mentioned, walking, running and cycling were the activities that were mentioned most frequently. Young people said they enjoyed exercising outdoors. They also took pride in looking after their food and drink intake better to ensure it was healthy. This included managing overweight and underweight and reducing alcohol consumption. Young people with Black heritage were most likely to mention wishing to retain their healthy lifestyles. Owner-occupiers, LGBTI+ people and mental health service users were somewhat less likely to do so. Non-binary people and disabled/ill people were significantly less likely to report expecting to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

“Exercising more often I would like to keep. Being outside with friends once the lockdown lifted and spending less time on my phone. Being more creative.”

FEMALE - 15  
RURAL LOCATION

“I’ve been healthier, I go out walking multiple times nearly every day.”

MALE - 15  
URBAN LOCATION

## SELF-CARE

The second most popular response, given by well over 350 respondents, was what might be best termed self-care. This involved having ‘me time’, getting better sleep, improving daily routines, experiencing far more relaxation, practising mindfulness/meditation, enjoying skincare regimes, etc. This benefit was mentioned most frequently by young women, people who identified as LGBTI+, those of mixed or other ethnic/cultural backgrounds and current users of mental health services.

“I’ve started bullet journaling and now I’m four months in so I hope to continue it. Also got back into reading more regularly after being put off by the Leaving Cert so it’s good to rediscover a childhood love.”

FEMALE - 18  
RURAL LOCATION

“Being allowed to be an introvert.”

17 - URBAN LOCATION

## QUALITY FAMILY TIME

Quality family time, including time spent with family pets, was also cherished. More than 300 young people mentioned this. Lockdown had brought many families closer together, both physically and emotionally. Young women were almost twice as likely as men, and more than three times as likely as non-binary people, to mention quality family time. LGBTI+ people were less likely to mention quality family time than heterosexuals. Considering ethnicity, young Travellers were most likely to mention enjoying spending time with their families and those from mixed or other ethnicities were least likely to report doing so. Considering housing status, young renters were the least likely to mention quality family time.

“How my dad was able to work from home so we would all get to see him.”

**MALE - 17**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

“I would like to still spend time with my younger brothers.”

**MALE - 15**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

“I like being able to be at home to spend time with my family and help around the house. I started to cook more which I would like to stay doing.”

**FEMALE - 15**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“To stay in touch with my entire family, calling them once every two days to check on them as they live in Lithuania.”

**MALE - 17**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## HOBBIES AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Recent months had provided most young people with the opportunity to invest time in their hobbies and personal interests. For some, they were ones they had rediscovered from childhood. For others, they were ones they usually enjoyed but could not normally spend enough time on. And for yet others, they were new ones that they had picked up during lockdown.

Various benefits were alluded to, including developing skills, unleashing creativity, instilling discipline, finding calm and experiencing joy.

The list of activities was very long, but particularly common ones were reading and baking. Around 300 people referred to hobbies and interests, but young Travellers were least likely to mention them, whereas young people who engaged with youth groups/clubs/services were most likely to do so.

“I was able to become more active with the Irish Girl Guides which I was really grateful for.”

**FEMALE - 18**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“I’ve recently started to play a new instrument and I hope to keep playing it. I also started to work out and have eaten more healthy.”

**FEMALE - 15**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The next most common category is one that has been termed self-development (although only a handful of the 270 respondents who were allocated to this code actually used this phrase). This involved deeper reflection, greater self-awareness, improved attitude, the practice of gratitude, and so on. For a handful it meant a closer connection with their god.

Young people with Black heritage, renters, those living with a disability or chronic health condition and youth groups/clubs/services users were most likely to reference self-development matters.

“I would like to keep my new way of thinking. During this period I have been spiritually awake and have been paying attention to what’s going on in the world and how I can help or contribute.”

FEMALE - 16  
URBAN

“I’ve taken a lot of time to think about life and have educated myself on several topics such as racism and things that are going on in third world countries and I want to educate others about it too.”

FEMALE - 15  
URBAN LOCATION

“I have discovered a wider genre of music while stuck indoors.”

MALE - 17  
URBAN LOCATION

## REMOTE/ONLINE LIFE

Well in excess of 200 young people pointed to the benefits of the remote/online life. Education, employment, service provision and social life were all mentioned in this context.

The benefits mentioned included being able to avoid bullies in school, no longer having to endure long commutes, making certain things – such as prescriptions and shopping – easier, preferring the comfort of being in one’s home environment, and enabling communication with those far away.

The majority acknowledged that a fully remote life was not their goal. However, they felt that they would like to continue to incorporate aspects of it into their lives in the future, such as working from home a few days per week or replacing some physical meet-ups with friends with virtual ones. Young LGBTI+ people, renters and people of Asian heritage were particularly attracted to the remote/online life.

“Working from home has been brilliant for me - a lot of time in offices is wasted chatting to staff that come in and out. Getting more work done at home - but with a good life balance too.”

MALE - 23  
URBAN LOCATION

“I like the freedom of being assigned work for the entire week. This means you can complete the required work at any point during the week and it leaves time for other things.”

FEMALE - 15  
RURAL LOCATION

## HYGIENE AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Just under 200 respondents were appreciative of the far greater emphasis on hygiene and social distancing, which they definitely wanted to be continued into the future, regardless of whether COVID-19 was eradicated. This included things like reduced numbers on buses, cleaning of supermarket trolleys, mask wearing as a norm, and cough etiquette. In particular, those with existing anxieties around such matters felt that the new practices for hygiene and social distancing had helped them. This sentiment was expressed most strongly by non-binary and Asian/Asian Irish people.

“Washing my hands properly. I’m ashamed to say this but I never learnt how to wash my hands properly until the pandemic! I will definitely keep doing that even when this is over.”

FEMALE - 16  
RURAL LOCATION

“Better standard of hygiene in restaurants, shops etc.”

FEMALE - 16  
RURAL LOCATION

“I have autism, so don’t like people touching me, and so having everyone at least one metre away from me suits me!”

FEMALE - 18  
RURAL LOCATION

## SIMPLER LIFE

There were also many mentions of appreciating a simpler, slower and quieter life. It would appear that in pre-COVID-19 times, many young people’s lives were very full and very hectic. The opportunity to slow down and appreciate small things was valued, although less so by young men. There were numerous references to enjoying tranquility, exploring one’s locality, connecting with nature, doing less damage to the environment, being less consumerist, and in some cases, reducing reliance on technology. Nearly 200 respondents mentioned this benefit, but the adult cohort was almost twice as likely to do so than the 15-17 age group.

“I’d like if we could preserve the changes that have come to the environment during this and use it as an example of ways that we could reduce carbon footprints considerably by reducing the amount of people who have long commutes to work.”

FEMALE - 16 - RURAL LOCATION

“A more simplistic look on life. Picnics with friends. More emphasis on facilities like parks: don’t always have to go somewhere fancy.”

FEMALE - 18 - RURAL LOCATION

“Taking things for granted is not an option anymore.”

MALE - 19 - URBAN LOCATION

“Time spent in the morning sleeping and not commuting at 6 am. Eight hours’ sleep has been a boon. I’ve been decorating my room with art and reworking a lot of my old clothes into new pieces, which I find very rewarding.”

MALE - 21 - RURAL LOCATION



## QUALITY FRIENDSHIPS

The importance of quality friendships was also referred to by well over 100 respondents. During the crisis, some young people had come to understand which people were positive actors in their lives and which were not. They had come to appreciate just how important good friends were, whether they lived nearby or far away. Old friendships had been rekindled, existing friendships had deepened and some new friendships had also been forged during this time. The importance of communicating regularly with friends was recognised, whether through in-person contact, phone calls, video calling, or even letter writing. Young people who owned their own homes were most likely to mention friendships.

“A bigger appreciation for the time I spent with my friends. I took it for granted before”

MALE - 17  
URBAN LOCATION

## FINANCIAL SITUATION

For about 70 respondents, the COVID-19 crisis had improved their financial situation and reduced their financial worries. Although a minority mentioned having secured employment during this period or having been able to access welfare payments, for most it was due to having had fewer opportunities to spend money. Many had come to realise that they had previously been spending unnecessarily and they wanted to retain their new-found budgeting and savings habits.

“Saving a lot of money by not spending on things I’ve come to realise don’t make me any happier.”

MALE - 23  
RURAL LOCATION

## LESS PRESSURE

There were also around 70 references to feeling less pressured during the time of COVID-19, for a variety of reasons. This included the release of pressure to overwork, to keep up with peers, to look made up, to perform to the expectations of others, and so on. Non-binary young people were especially likely to report this effect.

“I feel a lot of stress from school has been lifted. I am no longer constantly stressed and angered due to school. I don’t need to worry about forgetting things or being late for the bus.”

MALE - 15  
URBAN LOCATION

## NO SCHOOL/COLLEGE

More than 50 respondents pointed to not having school/college as the main benefit from COVID-19 that they would like to keep, with the vast majority of these being aged under 18. This held especially true for those identifying as non-binary. Many said that they struggled at school or college and some wished their education played a less all-encompassing role in their lives.

“I found that I prefer online schooling to physically going into school. I am also enjoying spending more time with my family that I otherwise wouldn’t get to see until six o’clock in the evening.”

FEMALE - 17  
URBAN LOCATION

## COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Finally, a smaller number of young people valued the increased community spirit and kindness to others that had become evident during the crisis, which they very much hoped would continue.

“The kindness people show when you’re out and about going about your day, the sense of community spirit.”

FEMALE - 23  
RURAL LOCATION

“I began making masks for the people in my parish/community and began making food hampers for the food kitchens in my local area with any profit from sales. So far I’ve donated over €130 worth of food in only two donations.”

FEMALE - 17  
URBAN LOCATION

## NOTHING

It is important to note, however, that almost one in ten survey respondents could not name a single thing that they wished to carry forward from the COVID-19 period.

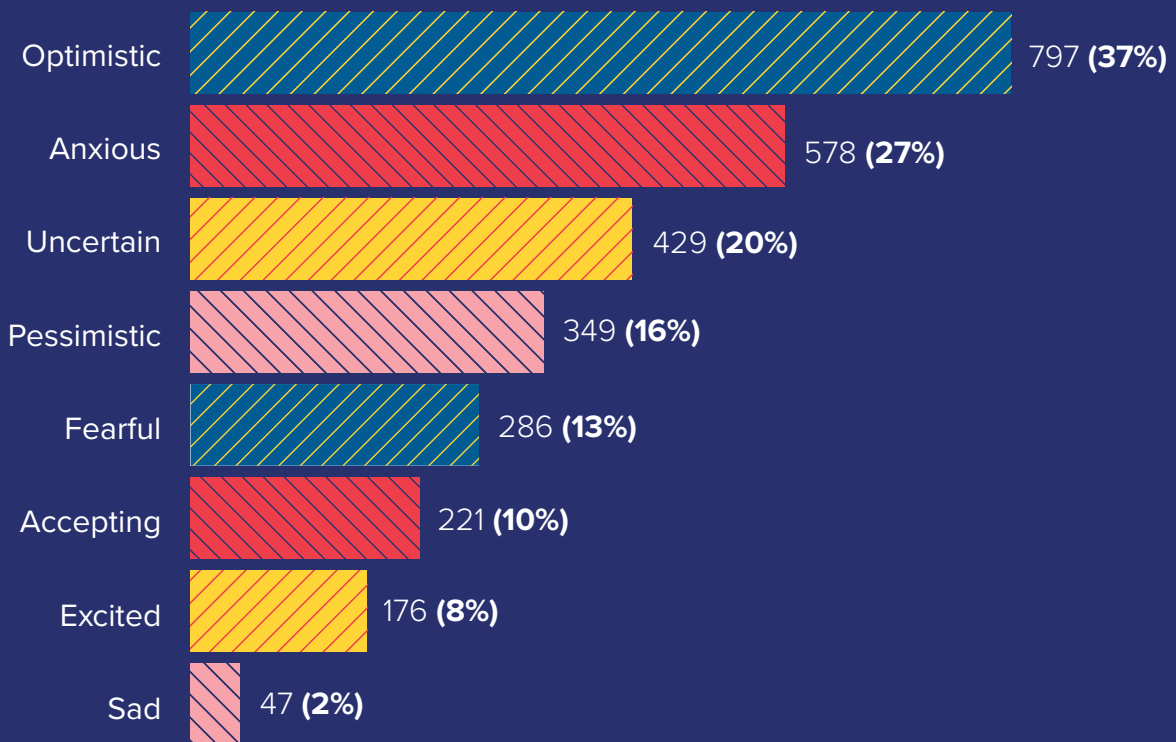
The majority simply answered along the lines of ‘none/nothing/not applicable’ to this question. Others linked back to the negatives they had mentioned in the first survey question, such as the sense of being cooped up or struggling with their mental health. Some felt very resentful about the situation they found themselves in. There was a notable yearning amongst some respondents for pre-pandemic life.

“None. There seems to be attempts to find positives in this pandemic, but for many people that undermines the trauma we have faced. There have been no positives to COVID-19.”

FEMALE - 24



## In general, how do you feel about the future?



Respondents were able to select more than one answer

It was not indicated how far into the future respondents were expected to project, and neither was it made clear to them if the question related to their personal futures or the future of the country or even the world. In some cases, young people provided reasons for their answers, which often related back to their responses to the first two questions. These included things such as a second wave of the COVID-19, the development of a vaccine, the Leaving Certificate, college entry, job prospects, financial insecurity, the housing market, the climate crisis, racism, trust/mistrust in the government, and human capacity to overcome challenges. The coding and analysis focused on the feelings themselves, rather than the rationale for those feelings. In the majority of cases, the coding was done on the basis of named feelings, but sometimes it was necessary to infer a particular feeling from the answers given.

“I feel optimistic! I’m a medical student so I’m very eager to finish my degree and get into the real world and help people and just make it a better place!”

 **MALE - 21**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“I think that we’ve had a tough run of things, and that there is so much negativity in the world. But social and global issues are coming more to the foreground, and that we will be the generation to change things for the better. So I am hopeful that things will improve for everyone in the long-term eventually.”

 **FEMALE - 18**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## **OPTIMISTIC**

The most common responses to this question were positive. Almost 800 respondents expressed being optimistic and hopeful for the future, which equates to more than a third of the total. They believed that things were going to improve before long. Some were very confident about this; others were somewhat more cautious. Men were most likely to report feeling optimistic about the future. The effect was least pronounced for non-binary people, people with disabilities or chronic health conditions and users of mental health services.

“Quite optimistic, I’m lucky to have already finished college and have a job. I’m also at a point in my life where I can emigrate if I have to. I’d rather not be forced into it though.”

 **MALE - 22**  
**URBAN**

“That the direction Ireland is going in seems good, and that things will be back to normal by the end of the year.”

 **MALE - 15**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

## **ANXIOUS**

However, at the same time, almost 600 young people said that they were anxious about the future. Non-binary people were most likely to report anxiety and Travellers least so. The young people who referred to this described feeling worried, nervous and stressed.

“I’m depressed about it. Constantly being inside gives teens a lot of time to doubt their choices.”

 **FEMALE - 17**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“COVID-19 has f\*\*\*\*d up my school learning because I’m in fifth year and I feel like I know damn all in order to complete my Leaving Cert next year.”



FEMALE - 17 - RURAL LOCATION

“I’m scared about it because there’s probably going to be a second wave.”



FEMALE - 15 - RURAL LOCATION

## UNCERTAIN

More than 400 respondents mentioned feeling very uncertain, unsure and doubtful about what would happen in the future. Young people with Asian heritage were most likely to be troubled by the level of uncertainty they were experiencing.

“Right now the future seems lost in a cloud of uncertainty. Will I get to experience college? Will I get the predicted grades I deserve? Will my family members get their jobs back? Will we be able to afford my future or the bills? These questions play over in my mind every day and every time they do I feel it’s harder to keep a smile on my face and be happy for the rest of my family. So right now the future doesn’t exist, it matters, but right now matters more.”



FEMALE - 18 - RURAL LOCATION

“Positive, I’m rested and I finished my undergraduate with honours during lockdown so I’m looking forward to whatever the uncertain future holds.”



MALE - 22 - URBAN

## PESSIMISTIC

Contrasting with the first point, around one in six reported feeling pessimistic, negative and without hope for the future. They did not feel they had anything to look forward to. They often mentioned big global issues and a handful alluded to facing into the second economic recession in their short lives. Disabled/ill people were most likely to be pessimistic about the future.

“Pessimistic – youth unemployment is high and house prices were already insanely high so now there’s even less of a chance that I can afford a house.”



NON-BINARY - 22 - URBAN LOCATION

“I’m scared honestly that things won’t go back to normal.”



FEMALE - 15 - RURAL LOCATION

## FEARFUL

Nearly 300 young people referred to being fearful. They were scared about the future they were facing into: this ranged from feeling slightly apprehensive to feeling terrified.

“Crippling fear of everything falling apart even more than it already has.”



FEMALE - 18 - URBAN LOCATION

“I feel concerned as I will be going into my final year of college and still do not know whether I will have lectures/labs in person meaning I may not see my classmates again until my graduation. I am also worried that my job prospects could be affected by the likely economic recession.”



FEMALE - 21 - RURAL LOCATION

“I’m really scared for the future and I think about it every day, a lot of people know exactly what they want to do and have their whole life planned out and it really scares me.”

FEMALE - 16 - URBAN LOCATION

## ACCEPTING

However, there were more than 200 others who were far more accepting of the situation they found themselves in and how that situation might play out over the coming months and years. Young Travellers were found to be most accepting.

“Fairly confident overall. I think it’s important that we stay positive as a country. We’re all in this pandemic together and we will come out of it together. We’ve had setbacks in the past and I see no reason why we can’t get through this one.”

MALE - 19 - RURAL LOCATION

“It just goes to show that nothing is guaranteed in life, things can change in a split second. But I am trying to stay positive and keep the mindset that whatever comes my way I will cross that bridge when I get to it. It’s okay to have a few unanswered questions. I’m hopeful that no matter what happens I will learn to cope with it and do my very best.”

FEMALE - 17 - RURAL LOCATION

## EXCITED

Others reported feeling very excited about the future and eager to grasp the opportunities presented. Just under 200 referred to excitement. This held most true for users of youth groups/ clubs/services.

“I’m very excited about the future. I have so many exciting plans for my life.”

FEMALE - 21 - RURAL LOCATION

“As in the state of the world? Terrified but hopeful. About my personal future? Excited and determined.”

MALE - 17 - URBAN LOCATION

## SADNESS

Finally, there was a small cohort of around 50 respondents whose primary feeling was one of sadness. At its most minor, this was simply a sense of disappointment at opportunities lost, but at its most extreme, this included young people with very serious depression who were contemplating suicide. Young people living with disabilities or chronic health conditions were twice as likely to mention feeling sad as those who were not living with these conditions.

“I’m also nervous as I’ve never felt this low due to problems at home before and I think I may be on my last legs dealing with it. I have contemplated ending things several times this last month, the main thing that stops me is that I’m afraid it will go wrong and instead of escaping, I will be disabled for life or chronically unwell and at the hands of a carer.”

FEMALE - 21 - URBAN

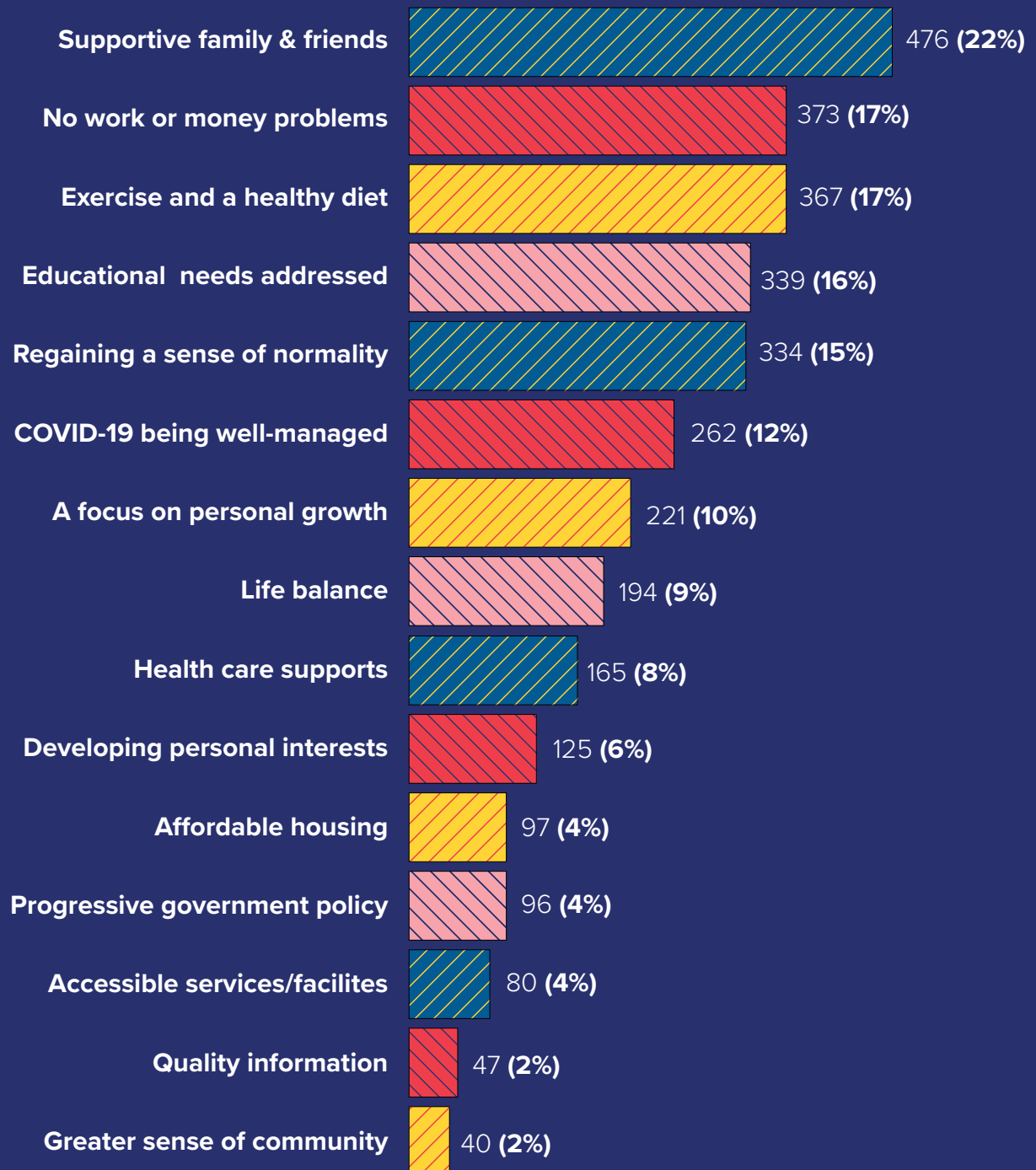
“The world is just getting more cruel and horrible as time passes so I have no hope for anything.”

FEMALE - 15





## Specifically, what would help you to be healthy and happy in the future?



Respondents were able to select more than one answer

## SUPPORTIVE FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The importance of strong interpersonal relationships once again came to the fore. More than one in five respondents mentioned how valuable having a network of supportive family and friends is. Friends in this instance also includes romantic partners, although reference to these was scant. Their own health and happiness appears to be strongly connected to the health and happiness of their loved ones. Travellers and Black (Irish) respondents were most likely to mention their family/friends circle and respondents from the LGBTI+ community were least likely to do so.

“A small group of real friends, family and a stable job that pays well.”

FEMALE - 16  
RURAL LOCATION

“Being surrounded by those who make me happiest and bring me most joy and knowing that there are people and services there for me if I ever need help.”

FEMALE - 17  
URBAN LOCATION

“I would like to have some friends. Some friends that I could turn to whenever I’m down. Some friends to go shopping with. As of now I haven’t got any. I would like to have people in my life that would motivate me to do better. I feel like if I had a workout buddy, I would enjoy working out so much more.”

FEMALE - 17  
URBAN LOCATION

## WORK AND MONEY

The next most significant factor was in relation to work and money, with almost 400 people mentioning these. Some respondents were hoping to get back to work as soon as possible, others were actively looking for work (both full-time and part-time), and yet others were imagining long-term career goals. A few were considering apprenticeships; others self-employment.

Having stable employment equates with financial security and allows young people to live the types of independent lives they want. For many, just having a job is not sufficient in the long-run; they also wish to receive reasonable compensation, for their work to be fulfilling and for their employer to be supportive.

Over-18s were more than twice as likely to report money/work issues than their younger counterparts. Renters were most likely to mention the importance of work and money, followed by over-18s, those in precarious accommodation, Travellers and non-binary people.

“Finding an apprenticeship where I would be able to learn off good electricians and be guaranteed a career with the company.”

FEMALE - 18  
URBAN LOCATION

To know that graduates aren’t forgotten about. Everyone else seemed to be looked after and we had to just accept our new fate but unlike those who lost jobs, we lost job prospects and had no lifeline like workers had.”

FEMALE - 21  
RURAL LOCATION

“Being able to afford rent, food, transport from my job and still be able to save towards buying a house. Having a better work-life balance, a shorter commute, better mental health support for adults (I’ve been on a waiting list for Adult Mental Health Services for almost three years). Being able to make enough from my job to have money to enjoy life instead of having to choose between paying rent and buying food or going college or going to work.”

**FEMALE - 20**  
**URBAN**

## HEALTH

Undertaking regular exercise and having a healthy diet were once again recognised as crucial aspects of being happy and well. Gyms were most commonly cited, although there were also many references to team sports and walking. The importance of home-cooked food was noted by some. About one in six mentioned diet and/or exercise. They were most likely to be referred to by Travellers, Black/Black Irish people and males. Least likely to do so were LGBTI+ and non-binary people, people with disabilities/chronic health conditions and mental health service users.

“Having healthy and happy people around me, playing football and getting a degree.”

**MALE - 19**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“It’s not rocket science on how to be healthy and happy in the future. Eat good and work out and do something that you enjoy and hang out with friends that mean you well will allow most people to truly be healthy and happy!”

**19 - URBAN LOCATION**

“Easing my time with social media or technology would definitely help me to be healthy and happy in the future. The media can be very toxic sometimes and we really don’t know if it’s legitimate. During the lockdown, I have learnt to spend more time with my family and to appreciate what’s around me. Whether it’s simply going out to my garden or just reading some books, it’s certainly a detox in contrast to what’s behind my screen.”

**MALE - 15**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

## EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ADDRESSED

Well over 300 respondents said that it was imperative that their educational needs be addressed. Education was especially likely to be mentioned by those in the under-18 age bracket, users of youth groups/clubs/services and owner-occupiers. The majority of those mentioning education could not wait to get back to school or college to continue their studies.

There was a strong sense of needing clarity as to what that return to education would look like. Invariably, there were differences in what students thought best in this regard. Many desired things to be just as they were before COVID-19 struck, others wanted assurance that they would be safe in school, a minority said they wanted to retain a fully remote learning experience, and others still indicated that they would prefer a blended approach.

There were requests for a range of specific supports that included: reduced educational costs, less homework, more continuous assessment, greater career guidance, a greater focus on student wellbeing and improved facilities. The need for stronger links with mental health services was also identified.

There were several references to the Junior Certificate, but there was far more commentary in relation to the Leaving Certificate. The class of 2019/2020 wanted clarity on what would happen with their predicated grades and Central Admissions Office offers and wished to understand how college entry could be assured.

The class of 2020/2021 felt that they had missed a significant proportion of their senior cycle and wanted allowances to be made for that over the coming year. Those already in college felt that they had been largely ignored by decision-makers and wanted assurance that their needs would be met in the remaining time that they were in education. There were several requests for holding proper graduations to mark the end of school or college.

“We need to ensure that every student feels safe and secure at their schools. We need to ensure that students are actually listened to at school. School hours need to be reduced and the Junior Cert needs to be abolished.”

  
**FEMALE - 15**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

“Allowing school to return full-time in September. Seeing friends is key.”

  
**MALE - 16**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

“If schools were on for just two days a week, as in blended learning.”

  
**MALE - 16**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“Clarification on my Leaving Cert, and a chance for our voices to be heard to have a say in the fate of the Leaving Cert.”

  
**FEMALE - 17**  
**RURAL LOCATION**

## **SENSE OF NORMALITY**

Around the same number of young people said that they simply wanted to come out of lockdown and regain a sense of normality. Some noted that normality might be somewhat different than what they had experienced in the past, but they were hungry for some sense of certainty. Transgender and non-binary people, Travellers and those in precarious accommodation were most likely to mention this need.

“Lifting all the lockdown restrictions and allowing everybody to live like before.”

  
**MALE - 19 - URBAN LOCATION**

## **COVID-19**

Unsurprisingly, there are 250+ references to COVID-19 itself. The desire to see it eradicated was strong, although it was acknowledged that this might not happen. In that case, a vaccine and/or a treatment were sought. In order to avoid a second wave, many respondents wanted to retain the measures that had been put in place, such as social distancing, greater sanitisation and the wearing of personal protective equipment. Some wanted measures to be strengthened, for instance, through international travel restrictions and enforcement of mask wearing in all indoor spaces. Some also expressed the need for everyone to be ready if a virulent infection such as COVID-19 struck again.

“If I knew people were sanitising hands at all times and wearing masks in public areas I would feel safer going out.”

  
**FEMALE - 15**  
**URBAN LOCATION**

“Number one would be a vaccine and for all of this to be gone but more realistically, I’m hoping for some sort of compensation with regards to my Leaving Cert and that teachers take it easier on us if there are more online classes because it’s incredibly hard to stay motivated in times like these.”



FEMALE - 17 - URBAN LOCATION

### PERSONAL GROWTH

There was a recognition amongst many young people that their health and happiness would be driven to a large extent by their personal growth. This included things such as increasing their own levels of confidence, formulating goals to work towards, having a positive mindset, being more motivated, attending to spiritual needs, and so on. 200+ respondents made reference to personal growth matters, with young people in precarious accommodation and Travellers least likely to do so.

### LIFE BALANCE

Closely following personal growth was a recognition of the importance of having a life balance, that typically included study/work, socialising with family and friends, and downtime. In order to achieve this it was recognised, for instance, that routines were helpful and that life should not be taken up with tech/social media. Adults were far more likely to mention this than under-18s. There were differences between ethnicities also, with no Travellers referring to life balance but one in 10 of those from a mixed or other ethnicities doing so. In terms of housing status, renters were most likely to allude to the need for a balance in their lives.

“Take time for myself to not worry about my education and just focus on my mental health. Become more open about my gender identity (eventually). Do what I love in college. Distance myself from any toxic people in my life. More reading and art. Possibly get back into martial arts as a sport.”



NON-BINARY - 17 - URBAN LOCATION

### HEALTH CARE SUPPORTS

Some 165 young people also said that they needed health care supports, now and/or in the future. Although there were a few references to physical health, the vast majority of responses related to the need for accessible, affordable, quality mental health care, which was felt to be lacking at present, especially outside Dublin. In addition to talk therapies and medication, there were calls for trauma-informed wrap-around care, dual diagnosis care, peer support structures and stigma reduction campaigns. Some very big differences between different types of people were evident. Non-binary people were almost five times as likely to mention health care supports as men. Mental health service users were almost four times as likely to do so as people not using those services. LGBTI+ people and people who are disabled or ill were almost three times as likely to do so as heterosexuals and those who were not disabled/well.

“If my therapist emailed me back.”



FEMALE - 19 - URBAN LOCATION

“I think more support systems for youth in rural areas. This is a serious need. There are no youth groups or anything in my area and we have the facilities. My friend’s mental health is awful. He’s tried to take his own life three times. We need more support.”



FEMALE - 17 - RURAL LOCATION

“I would like to make people more aware that pre-existing health conditions can exist in people of all ages, so that everyone is cognisant of preventing the spread of illness around young people as well as older people.”

FEMALE - 17  
RURAL LOCATION

“A better support system in schools. In school I feel like all they care about is grades and attendance and they never really care about the mental state of the students. A poster with words does not help someone, being there and talking to them does.”

FEMALE - 16  
URBAN LOCATION

### PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were over 120 references to happiness being found in the pursuit of personal interests. Various hobbies and ways of relaxing and finding joy were mentioned, including music, reading, meditation, being outdoors, travel and volunteering. No Travellers mentioned this as being a necessary part of their future lives, but one in 10 young people from mixed or other ethnicities did so.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There were almost 100 mentions of affordable housing. Many dreamed of having their own place, or even sharing somewhere with friends. Some respondents mentioned a lack of affordable accommodation in Ireland which prevents them from leaving home. Non-binary people were most likely to refer to this issue. It is especially interesting to compare the answers to this question with the housing status of respondents. Respondents who lived in rented accommodation or precarious housing were most likely to mention this issue.

Young people who lived in their family home were in line with the average response. Those who were owner-occupiers did not mention this issue at all.

“Universal Public Healthcare. Free GP so my mom doesn't have to sacrifice for my health. Social housing.”

MALE - 18  
RURAL LOCATION

### PROGRESSIVE POLICY

There were almost 100 references to politics and public policy. A few felt that their votes in recent elections had counted for little. The desire for a government that developed and implemented progressive policy that took into account the voice of young people was expressed. Many different policy matters were raised that included climate justice, educational reform, universal public health care, public health promotion, tackling the homelessness crisis, regional and rural development, the development of the arts, the decriminalisation of drugs, and more. Young Travellers were most likely to mention politics and public policy.

“I think the concept of a four-day work week should be implemented into Ireland in as many sectors as possible. People are really appreciating time with themselves or their loved ones so it would be nice to see that continue.”

FEMALE - 22  
URBAN LOCATION

## SERVICES AND FACILITIES

In the region of 80 respondents pointed to the need for more, better and cheaper services and facilities, often in particular locations. These included reliable mobile phone coverage and broadband throughout the island (for a continuation of the online/remote life), improved public transport and cycling and walking routes, libraries, indoor and outdoor gyms and other sports facilities, night clubs, youth clubs and other places for young people to hang out.

“Reliable internet for everyone in the country.”

  
MALE - 17  
RURAL LOCATION

“If walking trails in the west of Ireland were invested in.”

  
MALE - 21  
URBAN LOCATION

## QUALITY INFORMATION

There were also nearly 50 calls for quality information, and not only in relation to COVID-19. The respondents that raised this talked of wanting improved reporting in the media, including less scaremongering and more positive stories. They also mentioned the need for sources of trusted information that were written from the point of view of young people themselves and that covered topics that were of relevance to them.

## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Finally, a small group of 40 people said they wanted a kinder society in which there was a greater sense of community and where the needs of all were respected. Some also mentioned wanting an eco-conscious world.

“Accessible gyms and more youth clubs in smaller towns so you have something to do.”

  
MALE - 15

“More community centres or parks where people can meet rather than going to cafes/pubs/shops.”

  
FEMALE - 21  
RURAL LOCATION

# Ideas for action

## Reflections from the Youth Advisory Group

### THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

**COVID-19 changed life for all of us** in Ireland in ways that we could never have imagined. But not all groups in society experienced the pandemic in the same way.

The 'How's Your Head?' consultation gave voice to the specific experiences of young people across Ireland. Thousands of individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 took the time to tell their stories and spell out the challenges they were facing. Their feedback will help policy makers and service providers to better understand the needs of young people, in order to inform their work in supporting young people through the coming period of time.

This consultation benefited greatly from being informed and designed by a Youth Advisory Group, ensuring that the questions asked and the language used were relevant to young people. The Youth Advisory Group was also invited to respond to the consultation findings. This final section is a summary of the group's feedback and ideas as to what practical actions can be taken to better support young people in Ireland, both immediately and into the future.

The Youth Advisory Group strongly expressed the view that young people's views should be sought as a matter of course on any issues that affect them so that better decisions can be made.

They also stressed the importance of decision-makers reporting back to young people on how and why such decisions were made. Bodies such as SpunOut.ie and the Irish Second-Level Students' Union can have a key intermediary role to play in this regard.

### VALUING YOUNG PEOPLE

**First and foremost, the Youth Advisory Group expressed** the need for more empathy and compassion towards young people. They felt that young people have been unfairly scapegoated for spikes in COVID-19 cases. They believed that blame and finger pointing is unhelpful and unnecessarily tarnishes their age group. It also does not recognise the huge sacrifices that young people have had to make during the crisis to keep themselves, their family, friends and neighbours safe.

Media coverage was considered to have been especially problematic on occasions when the actions of small groups of individuals received disproportionate coverage and painted a negative image of young people in general. They strongly believed that there needs to be more proportional coverage of the efforts young people have made to flatten the curve and more stories about the many positive contributions made by young people. They also felt that the coverage in general was disproportionately negative and overly-focused on numbers related to COVID-19. They were frustrated with the lack of recognition of



the negative impact on general wellbeing and solidarity of this type of coverage and would like consideration to be given to more human-focused and optimistic media coverage.

The Youth Advisory Group also felt that - during a time of great uncertainty - the lack of clear and timely communication about important youth matters, such as the Leaving Certificate or college accommodation, had the result of making young people feel undervalued. As a result, they had been unable to make plans and take appropriate actions to live their lives. Again, this can lead to additional anxiety at a time when stress amongst young people is already high.

### **BETTER USE OF EXISTING SUPPORTS**

**The Youth Advisory Group** was aware of the range of supports for young people that already exist and felt that, now more than ever, mental health services, educational institutions, youth services, sports clubs etc. need to work together, so that each is aware of the challenges young people have been facing and can help ease them back into everyday life in the next stage of the pandemic and beyond. They highlighted the need for school staff, and particularly key roles like career guidance teachers, to be knowledgeable about the services that are available for young people and direct them to these services as needed, as young people themselves may not be aware of, or know how to access them.

Also, the group advised that influencers (Instagrammers, YouTubers, TikTokers, etc) ought to be used to a far greater extent to get messages across to young people, and that includes signposting to relevant support services.

They also point out that influencers could be an excellent way of communicating directly to specific subgroups, such as young people of particular ages or with particular interests, minority ethnic groups, LGBTI+ young people, etc.

### **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS**

**The Youth Advisory Group** was struck by the mental health toll of the pandemic on young people and particularly with the survey finding that 10% of respondents felt there was nothing positive to take away from the COVID-19 experience. They stressed that it is vital for young people to have something positive to look forward to. They also noted the importance of promoting the benefits of self-care.

The group recognised the difficulties young people experience in accessing mental health services and was concerned that this problem will be exacerbated as demand on these services rises. They felt that more investment in mental health services for young people is needed and also that there is a crucial need for more online service provision, especially for young people in rural areas who might experience transport difficulties. (It is worth noting here that progress has already been made in this regard since this survey was conducted.) They further stated that the specific mental health needs of different communities (LGBTI+, Traveller, migrant, etc) should be acknowledged and addressed in a targeted manner.

## **EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS**

**The Youth Advisory Group** believed that young people will require extra support in returning to education. They considered that, in order to assure their wellbeing, they may need access to counsellors and to programmes that promote healthy routines, encourage motivation and relieve exam stress.

Many young people struggled with online learning during the pandemic and the group felt strongly that educational institutions should make every effort to ensure that online learning, when needed, is made as easy as possible for their students. They particularly noted that there is a requirement for providing grants for laptops and dongles for those who do not have internet access.

The group also stressed the importance of schools and colleges involving young people in decision-making in relation to educational supports needed.

## **WORKPLACE SUPPORTS**

**Many of the supports identified for education** were also felt to apply to the world of work. These include motivational and self-care programmes, the provision of appropriate equipment and high speed internet access if working remotely, and having youth representatives within companies.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH SERVICES AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY**

**The Youth Advisory Group** felt it is important that youth services continue to play their part in enabling young people to maintain their mental and physical health. Suggestions for doing so include self-care programmes, the promotion of physical exercise, the opportunity to trial new hobbies, fostering connections with Men's Sheds and similar organisations, and so on.

Finally, the group noted that the pandemic has reminded us of the support and solidarity that can be found within our communities and urges the promotion of the value of strong communities during this time. There is a need for young people to be valued and the response to COVID-19 requires a spirit of intergenerational solidarity.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Young people stressed that a co-ordinated whole of society response is needed that recognises all the aspects of young people's lives. This will support young people to move forward positively from here into the future.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1: survey instrument



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs



How's your head? Young voices during COVID-19

**Do you want your experience of living through COVID-19 to be heard?**

**Would you like to influence government policy and public services?**

**Do you want to be in with a chance to win a set of Apple AirPods or Galaxy Buds?**

**The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has asked SpunOut.ie to consult young people aged between 15 and 24, about the good and the bad in their lives at the moment, as well as their wishes for the future. Here is a short survey where you can, entirely anonymously, share your views and some basic information about yourself.**

\* 1. How old are you?



An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children and Youth Affairs



How's your head? Young voices during COVID-19

\* 2. What have you been finding hard during COVID-19?

\* 3. What are the changes in your life during COVID-19 that you would like to keep?

\* 4. In general, how do you feel about the future?

\* 5. Specifically, what would help you to be healthy and happy in the future?

\* 6. Where do you live? (If you live in more than one place, select the place where you spend most of your time.)

\* 7. How would you describe the place where you spend the majority of your time?

\* 8. What is your gender identity?

\* 9. Do you identify as LGBTI+?

\* 10. What is your ethnic or cultural background?

\* 11. What is your current housing status?

\* 12. Do you have a disability or chronic health condition?

\* 13. Are you currently availing of any mental health services or similar supports?

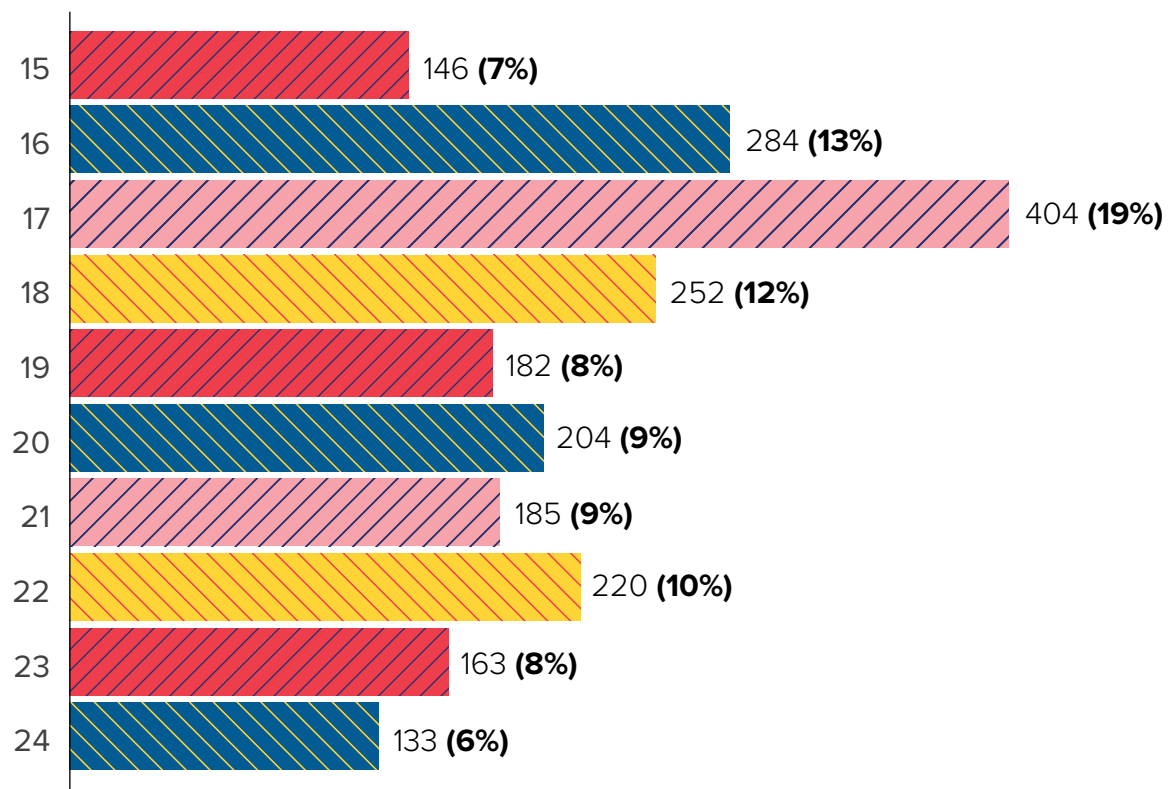
\* 14. Have you been engaged with any youth group, clubs, and services during COVID-19?

Would like to take part in our draw for a pair of **Apple AirPods** or **Galaxy Buds** or take part in any **additional surveys** in this consultation? Just submit this survey and follow the link in the Thank You section.

## Appendix 2: demographics

### AGE

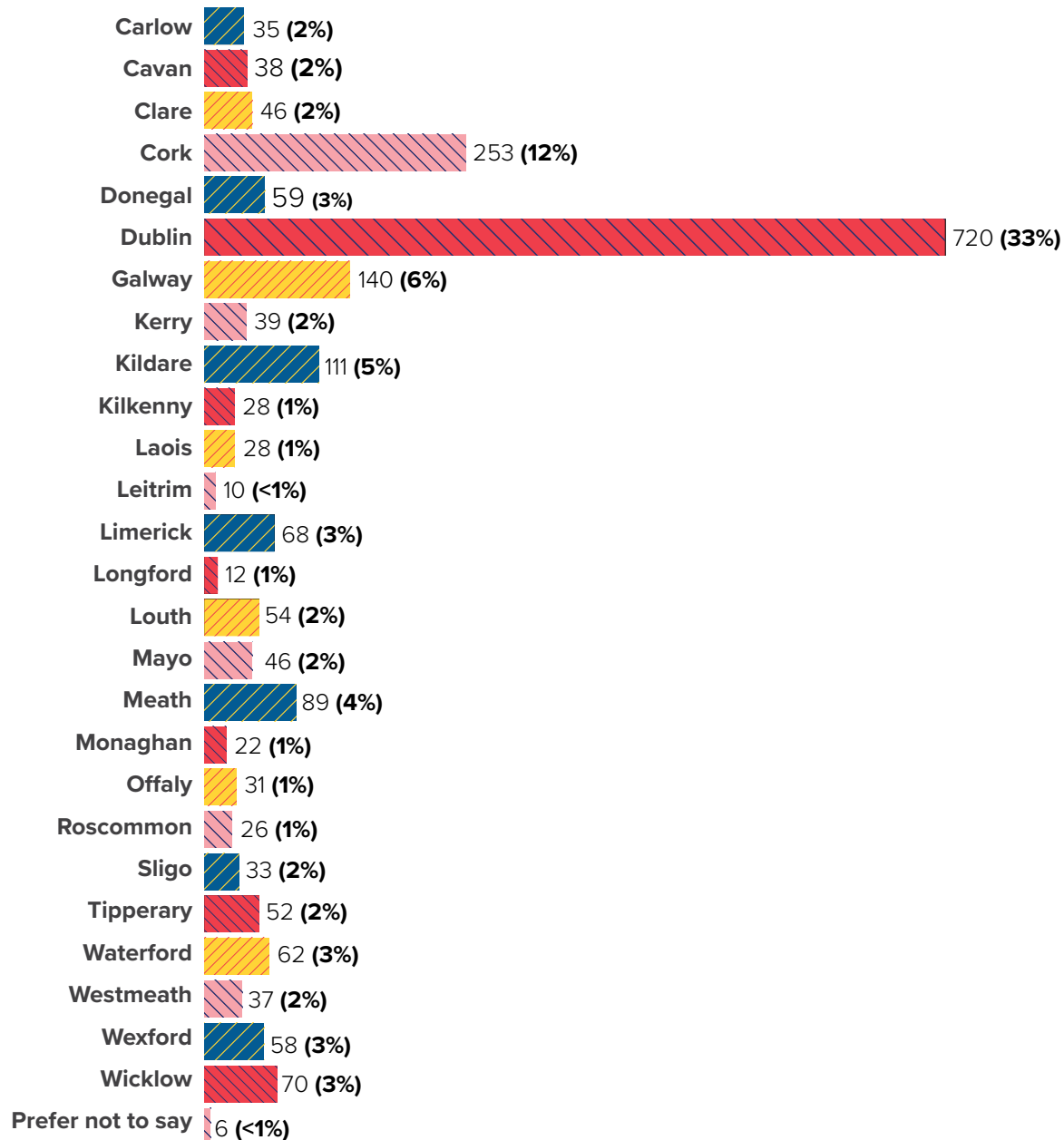
Respondents were asked how old they were on the day that they filled in the survey.



All ages within the target group were thus well-covered, with those aged 17 being somewhat over-represented in the respondents' age profile.

## PLACE OF HABITATION

It was acknowledged that many young people may live in more than one place, so they were asked to select the county where they spent the majority of their time.



All 26 counties were therefore represented, with the distribution broadly reflecting the population densities throughout the country<sup>3</sup>.

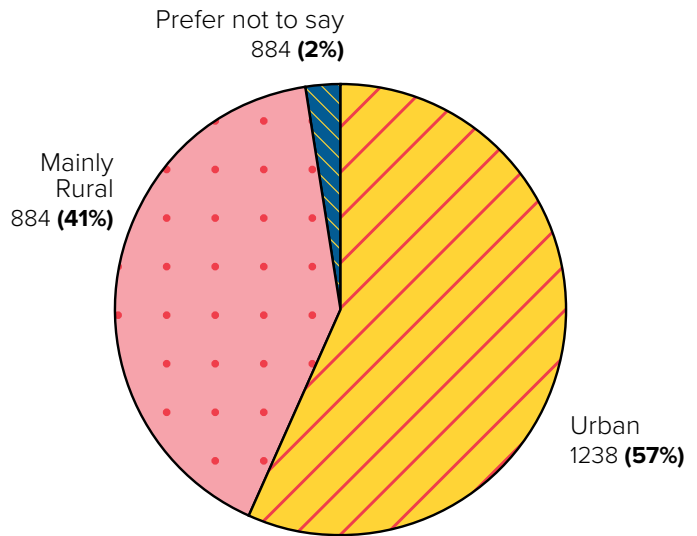
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsdgi/regionalsdgsireland2017/nt/>



### URBAN OR RURAL?

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the place they spent the majority of their time was mainly urban or mainly rural.

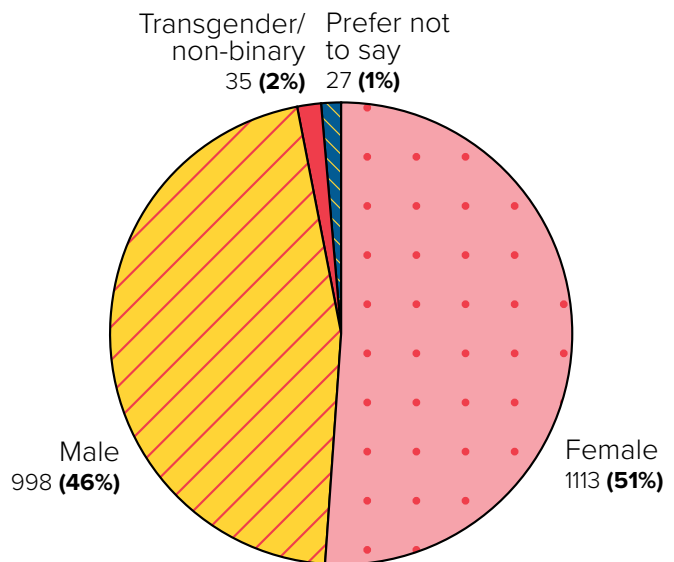
Census data confirm that the majority (c. 63%) of the population lives in areas that are classified as urban, with the remainder living in more rural areas<sup>4</sup>. The respondent profile is thus broadly reflective of the overall Irish population, with a slight over-representation of young people living in mainly rural areas.



### GENDER

For gender identity, three closed options were provided (female, male and transgender and non-binary people), as well as the prefer not to say option. Eight respondents chose to self-identify. Informed by their responses, two of these were re-allocated to the prefer not to say category and the remaining six were re-allocated to the non-binary/third gender category.

According to the 2016 census, the 15-24 year old population in Ireland was 49% female and 51% male. Direct comparison with the census is problematic as the census does not currently allow for a transgender/non-binary option. It can nevertheless be seen that young women were somewhat over-represented and young men were somewhat under-represented within this survey cohort. The number of people who classified themselves as being transgender/non-binary roughly tallies with that found in other recent surveys conducted by SpunOut.ie.

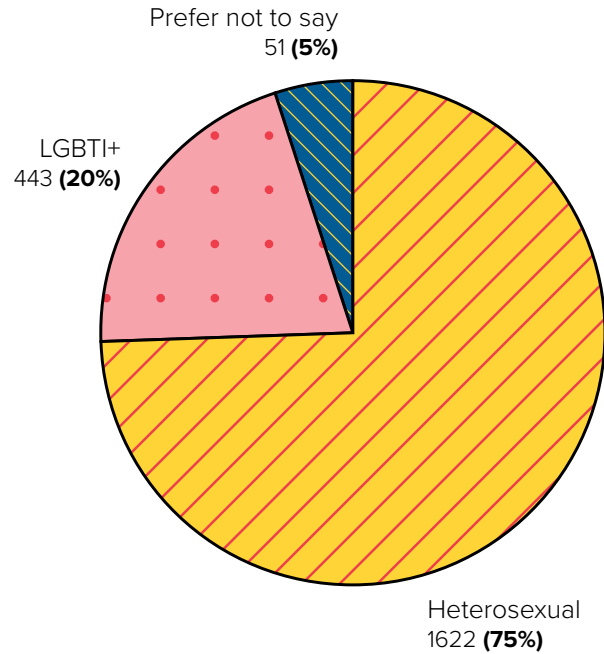


<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-uri/urbanandrurallifeinireland2019>

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

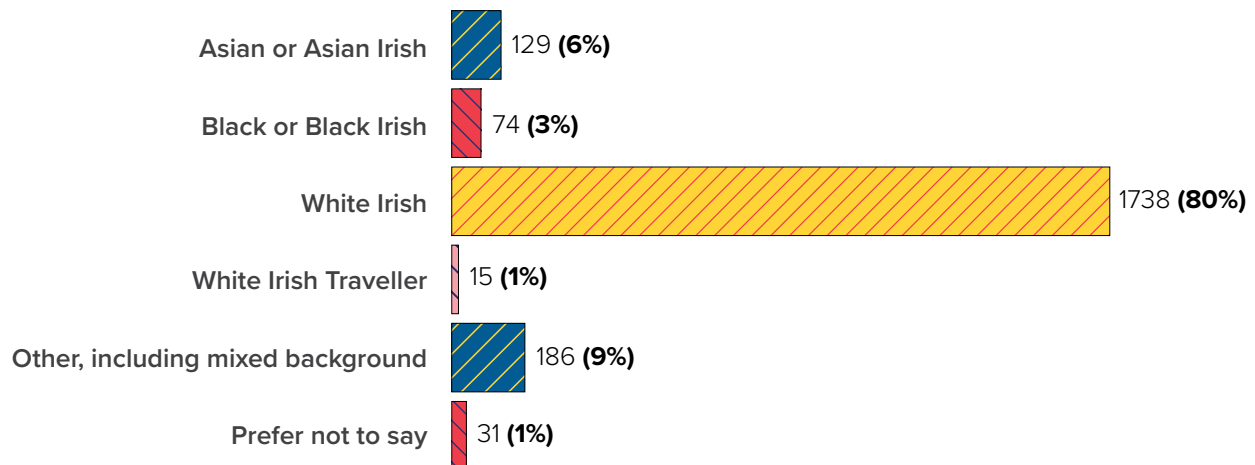
Rather than being asked what their sexual orientation was, respondents were only asked to say if they identified as LGBTI+<sup>5</sup>, provided of course that they felt comfortable doing so. Twenty-seven respondents chose to self-describe. Based on the nature of their responses, nine were re-allocated to the prefer not to say category and the remainder was re-allocated to the LGBTI+ category.

The census does not ask citizens about their sexual orientation and cannot therefore be used as a comparator. However, the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study shows that 87% of 20-year olds consider themselves heterosexual/straight, 6% as bisexual, 3% as lesbian/gay and 4% as other<sup>6</sup>. This would indicate that people who identify as LGBTI+ are over-represented in this survey.



## ETHNIC/CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Standard census categories informed the categories used to examine respondents' ethnicity/cultural background, although some were grouped together for the sake of simplicity:



<sup>5</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex +

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.growingup.ie/pubs/KF3-Web.pdf>

If one compares the above breakdown with a breakdown of the same age group in 2016 census data<sup>7</sup>, it can be seen that those with Asian heritage were slightly over-represented but that the survey sample largely reflected the overall population:

Category	Census 2016	This 2020 survey
Asian/Asian Irish	2%	6%
Black/Black Irish	2%	3%
White Irish	82%	80%
White Irish Traveller	1%	1%
Other/mixed	10%	9%
No answer	3%	1%

## HOUSING STATUS

An extensive list of options was provided to indicate the type of accommodation being used by young people. Unfortunately, and despite piloting, these categories appear not to have been as clear as they should have been. Any correlations between young people's housing status and their feelings about the COVID-19 situation must therefore be treated with caution.

Most young people stated that they were living in the family home, but did not necessarily indicate whether that home was owned or rented. A decision was therefore made to amalgamate these two categories, not least because owner-occupation exceeded rental by a factor of around five to one.

Two distinct categories for owning accommodation and renting accommodation (outside of the family home) were retained. However, it should be noted that respondents may have misinterpreted the 'I own my own accommodation' category, because the rate of owner-occupation seems quite high for the age group concerned.

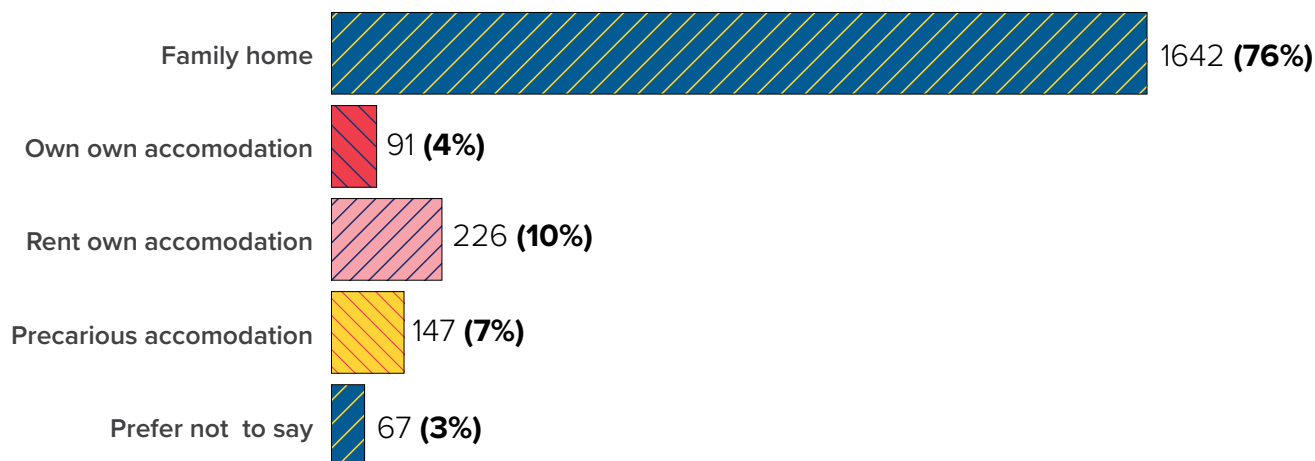
An 'other' category was provided and 58 respondents availed of this. Re-allocations were made as necessary to the best-fit category (for example, a person on a foster placement may not be in their original family home, but is in a family home, and someone who receives accommodation as part of their employment package can reasonably be considered as renting that accommodation).

In order to avoid very small subcategories, those living in precarious housing situations were also amalgamated, but for completeness, the figures are broken down below:

Accommodation type	Numbers
Family hub	131
Couch surfing	10
Direct Provision/asylum seeking accommodation centre	4
Emergency accommodation/homeless hostel	2

<sup>7</sup> <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=E8001&PLanguage=0>

The final breakdown was as follows:



As noted, the vast majority of survey respondents were living with their families. This broadly tallies with the Growing Up in Ireland study, in which 84% of 20-year olds gave their parent's address as their primary address<sup>8</sup>. There was a fair representation of all other accommodation types, including those living in very vulnerable circumstances.

## DISABILITY/CHRONIC HEALTH STATUS

Respondents were asked if they had a disability or chronic health condition and the answer breakdown was as follows:



2016 census data show that within the 15-24 age group, 53,465 had some type of disability<sup>9</sup>. This represents just over 9% of the entire age cohort in the state that year. When this national figure is compared to the profile of respondents to this survey, it is found that young people stating that they have a disability/ chronic health condition comprised 15% of the total, and were therefore somewhat over-represented.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.growingup.ie/pubs/KF1-Web.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=E9006&PLanguage=0>

## USAGE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES/SUPPORTS

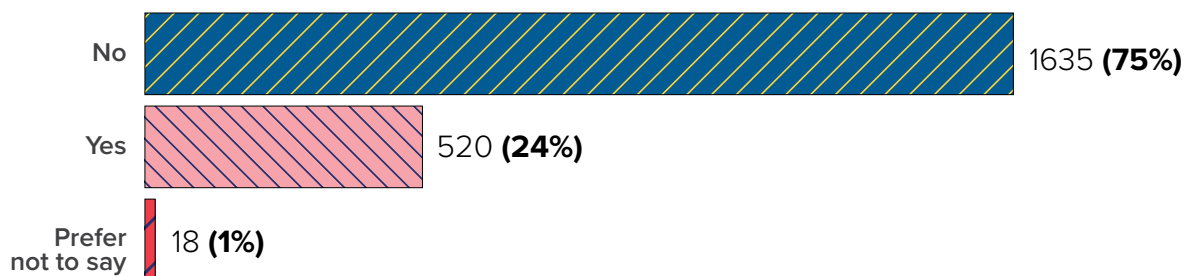
Respondents were also asked if they were currently availing of mental health services or similar supports and the responses were as follows:



As the nature of services/supports were not defined in the survey, it is difficult to make a meaningful comparison with external data sets. It can be noted however, that those who are currently using services/supports are represented in the survey.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH GROUPS/CLUBS/SERVICES

Finally, respondents were asked if they had engaged with any youth groups, clubs or similar services during COVID-19 and the responses were as follows:



Even though the nature of such engagement was not defined in the survey, it would appear that the proportion of respondents who said they were involved with youth groups/clubs/services matches the participation rates of Irish young people in youth organisations shown in Eurobarometer data<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/themes.html?t=involvement>

### **Appendix 3: breakdowns of themes by respondent type**

Appendix 3 contains a breakdown of the responses to each of the four main questions. The percentages shown are the proportions of respondents who were allocated to the various themes that were identified. They are shown to the nearest whole percentage point. Note that those who ticked 'prefer not to say' for any particular category are omitted from the calculations.

## What have you been finding hard during COVID-19?

	Missing friends	Health affected	School/college problems	Cabin fever	Isolation/loneliness	Missing family	Boredom/lack of motivation	Lack of routine/structure	Work/money problems	Loss of social life	Reduced/sports/exercise options	Social distancing	Fewer services	Summer plans ruined	Effects of media consumption
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Age</b>															
<18	36	18	19	15	13	13	15	11	2	8	9	5	3	2	2
18+	34	21	28	17	17	14	12	12	17	11	6	6	4	2	2
<b>Location</b>															
Rural	38	20	19	18	22	13	13	11	12	10	7	5	4	2	2
Urban	34	19	17	16	11	8	13	13	10	10	8	6	4	3	2
<b>Gender</b>															
Female	38	23	23	19	18	19	13	14	12	8	5	7	4	3	2
Male	31	14	13	14	13	8	13	11	10	12	9	5	3	2	2
Transgender/non-binary	23	51	14	14	14	9	20	9	9	9	6	0	3	0	6
<b>Sexual orientation</b>															
Heterosexual	34	17	17	16	14	15	13	11	11	10	8	5	4	3	1
LGBTI+	36	28	20	18	19	13	13	16	12	8	5	7	5	2	3
<b>Ethnicity/culture</b>															
Asian (Irish)	22	16	18	22	12	8	12	11	9	12	10	7	5	5	2
Black (Irish)	24	22	16	16	15	9	16	16	4	8	7	4	1	0	1
Mixed/other	33	18	18	20	12	10	13	11	11	9	10	6	4	3	1
White Irish	36	20	18	15	17	15	13	13	12	10	7	6	4	1	2
Traveller	40	7	0	27	7	40	13	0	0	27	0	0	7	0	0
<b>Housing</b>															
Family home	36	19	19	17	16	14	13	13	10	10	7	6	4	3	2
Own home	35	21	19	13	11	12	18	10	3	9	5	4	4	1	2
Rent home	24	21	12	12	20	19	12	11	23	10	6	3	3	1	1
Precarious housing	30	19	10	17	12	10	8	8	11	5	10	5	4	2	1
<b>Disabled/ill</b>															
Yes	34	28	16	17	20	13	11	14	16	11	5	8	7	2	2
No	35	18	18	16	15	14	14	12	10	10	8	5	3	3	2
<b>Mental health service</b>															
Yes	29	36	15	18	20	15	11	14	15	9	4	9	5	1	2
No	36	16	18	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	8	5	4	3	2
<b>Youth service</b>															
Yes	32	19	18	16	16	15	13	13	7	9	11	5	3	2	3
No	35	20	18	17	16	14	13	12	13	10	6	6	4	3	2

What are the changes in your life during COVID-19 that you would like to keep?

	Exercise/ healthy diet	Self-care	Quality time with family	Hobbies/ interests	Self- development	Remote/online life	Hygiene/social distancing	Simpler/slower/ quieter life	Quality friendships	Improved finances	Feeling less pressured	Not having school/college	Community spirit
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Age</b>													
<18	22	17	16	14	13	9	8	5	5	1	3	6	2
18+	26	17	14	13	12	11	9	9	5	5	3	1	1
<b>Location</b>													
Rural	25	19	16	15	12	8	7	8	5	3	3	3	2
Urban	26	16	14	13	13	12	10	7	5	3	3	3	2
<b>Gender</b>													
Female	26	20	19	15	14	10	8	11	6	3	3	3	2
Male	27	14	11	12	11	10	9	4	5	3	3	2	2
Transgender/non-binary	9	14	6	14	11	9	14	14	6	11	9	9	3
<b>Sexual orientation</b>													
Heterosexual	26	16	16	13	12	9	8	8	5	3	3	2	1
LGBTI+	19	20	11	14	14	14	11	7	8	4	3	4	3
<b>Ethnicity/culture</b>													
Asian (Irish)	22	19	15	10	15	16	12	5	1	5	1	2	3
Black (Irish)	28	12	11	16	20	5	8	4	4	1	1	1	1
Mixed/other	26	20	9	17	8	12	10	5	4	3	1	1	2
White Irish	25	17	16	13	12	10	8	8	6	3	3	3	2
Traveller	27	0	33	6	11	0	6	0	6	0	0	0	0
<b>Housing</b>													
Family home	25	17	15	14	12	11	9	8	5	3	3	3	2
Own home	18	18	21	10	12	4	9	6	12	1	2	5	4
Rent home	26	16	9	10	17	13	9	9	6	7	3	0	2
Precarious housing	27	15	18	10	10	5	7	5	4	2	1	1	0
<b>Disabled/ill</b>													
Yes	15	16	13	15	16	8	11	11	4	4	3	3	4
No	26	17	15	13	12	10	8	7	6	3	3	2	1
<b>Mental health service</b>													
Yes	19	20	15	14	12	8	10	10	5	3	2	5	3
No	26	16	15	14	12	10	8	7	6	3	3	2	1
<b>Youth service</b>													
Yes	25	19	16	19	16	11	7	6	7	2	3	3	3
No	25	16	15	12	11	10	9	8	5	4	3	3	2

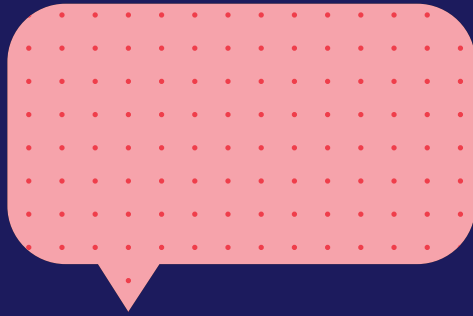


## In general, how do you feel about the future?

	Optimistic	Anxious	Uncertain	Pessimistic	Fearful	Accepting	Excited	Sad
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Age</b>								
<18	37	27	17	15	12	11	10	2
18+	37	27	21	17	14	10	7	2
<b>Location</b>								
Rural	36	27	20	16	12	10	8	2
Urban	37	27	19	16	14	11	8	2
<b>Gender</b>								
Female	32	27	22	15	12	9	10	2
Male	43	25	16	17	15	12	6	2
Transgender/ non-binary	23	29	23	20	6	3	6	0
<b>Sexual orientation</b>								
Heterosexual	39	26	18	15	15	11	9	2
LGBTI+	32	28	23	18	8	10	7	2
<b>Ethnicity/culture</b>								
Asian (Irish)	41	19	27	15	10	7	5	2
Black (Irish)	41	16	19	14	15	18	9	3
Mixed/other	35	25	19	15	12	13	6	1
White Irish	36	27	20	17	14	9	9	2
Traveller	40	6	20	6	6	33	0	0
<b>Housing</b>								
Family home	36	28	20	17	13	11	9	2
Own home	40	26	19	14	20	9	8	2
Rent home	40	21	18	19	13	7	4	2
Precarious housing	32	23	20	7	16	8	7	2
<b>Disabled/ill</b>								
Yes	28	26	23	22	18	8	7	4
No	38	27	19	15	13	11	9	2
<b>Mental health service</b>								
Yes	28	25	23	16	15	9	8	2
No	38	27	19	15	13	11	8	2
<b>Youth service</b>								
Yes	40	26	20	20	11	12	11	2
No	36	26	20	15	14	10	7	2

Specifically, what would help you to be healthy and happy in the future?

	Supportive family and friends	No work or money problems	Exercise and a healthy diet	Educational needs addressed	Regaining a sense of normality	COVID-19 being well-managed	A focus on personal growth	Life balance	Health care supports	Developing personal interests	Affordable housing	Progressive government policy	Accessible services/facilities	Quality information	Greater sense of community
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Age</b>															
<18	26	9	18	22	14	11	9	6	8	6	2	3	3	2	1
18+	19	22	16	12	16	13	11	11	8	6	6	5	4	2	2
<b>Location</b>															
Rural	23	15	15	16	16	13	9	10	7	6	3	3	3	2	2
Urban	21	19	18	15	15	12	11	8	8	6	6	5	4	2	2
<b>Gender</b>															
Female	24	17	14	18	15	15	11	10	9	5	5	4	3	3	2
Male	19	18	20	13	15	9	9	7	5	7	4	5	5	1	2
Transgender/non-binary	25	20	11	17	26	6	11	9	23	6	9	0	3	0	0
<b>Sexual orientation</b>															
Heterosexual	23	17	19	15	16	13	10	9	5	6	4	4	4	2	2
LGBTI+	15	17	10	17	14	9	9	8	16	5	7	5	4	4	3
<b>Ethnicity/culture</b>															
Asian (Irish)	27	17	21	14	12	20	13	5	4	8	4	1	2	2	2
Black (Irish)	32	15	26	5	8	11	15	5	4	4	5	0	4	1	0
Mixed/other	20	19	16	18	17	10	11	10	5	10	5	5	4	2	4
White Irish	21	17	16	16	16	12	10	9	8	5	4	5	4	2	2
Traveller	33	20	27	6	20	13	0	0	6	0	0	13	0	0	0
<b>Housing</b>															
Family home	21	16	16	17	16	11	11	9	8	6	4	4	4	2	2
Own home	26	9	20	21	14	11	10	7	5	5	0	2	2	1	0
Rent home	24	29	20	7	13	16	10	14	8	4	7	6	5	2	2
Precarious housing	22	20	20	10	19	15	3	6	7	5	8	3	3	2	1
<b>Disabled/ill</b>															
Yes	18	18	12	13	12	14	9	5	17	5	8	4	7	3	1
No	23	18	18	16	16	12	11	9	6	6	4	4	3	2	2
<b>Mental health service</b>															
Yes	17	16	11	15	14	11	13	11	19	4	6	6	3	4	2
No	22	17	18	15	16	12	10	9	5	6	4	4	4	2	2
<b>Youth service</b>															
Yes	26	12	19	21	12	12	10	8	9	6	2	5	6	4	2
No	20	19	16	14	16	12	10	9	7	6	5	4	3	1	2





**An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige**  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs

Department of Children and Youth Affairs  
Block 1 - Floors 2 & 3  
Miesian Plaza  
50-58 Baggot Street Lower  
Dublin 2  
D02 XW14

**W** [www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie)

**E** [contact@dcya.gov.ie](mailto:contact@dcya.gov.ie)



SpunOut.ie  
Sean MacBride House  
48 Fleet Street  
Dublin 2  
D02 T883

**P** 01 675 3554

**E** [hello@spunout.ie](mailto:hello@spunout.ie)

**W** [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)

 [instagram.com/spunout.ie](https://www.instagram.com/spunout.ie)

 [twitter.com/SpunOut](https://twitter.com/SpunOut)

 [facebook.com/SpunOut.ie](https://www.facebook.com/SpunOut.ie)

 [youtube.com/user/spunoutmedia](https://www.youtube.com/user/spunoutmedia)

 [tiktok.com/@spunout.ie](https://www.tiktok.com/@spunout.ie)

