

Healthwatch Tameside Mental and emotional wellbeing report

Survey data collected
April 2021 to July 2021

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Introduction

Healthwatch Tameside is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Tameside.

We listen to local people, and gather information about their experiences of using health and social care services.

We use this information to talk to the people who arrange (commission) the services and the people who provide the services. We can influence changes which will make these services better for everyone. If we hear about good practice, we encourage this to be shared. If you tell us about something that could be improved, we will talk to the people in charge about this too.

Any information we are given will remain anonymous. We are careful to share ideas in a way which will not identify any individuals.

In this report we are looking at mental and emotional wellbeing (how people are feeling mentally and whether there have been any short-term changes due to the pandemic). We knew from our Covid-19 survey last year that many people felt their mental and emotional wellbeing had been affected. We wanted to know how they were feeling, as the lockdown restrictions eased.

We launched our survey at the end of April 2021, and it stayed open until the end of July 2021.

The second part of the survey asked for feedback about using other services, and these responses will be included in a separate report.

We want to give as many people as possible an opportunity to complete our surveys. They are available online, on paper, and we offer to complete them over the phone with people.

We received 75 completed responses to this survey, broken down as follows:

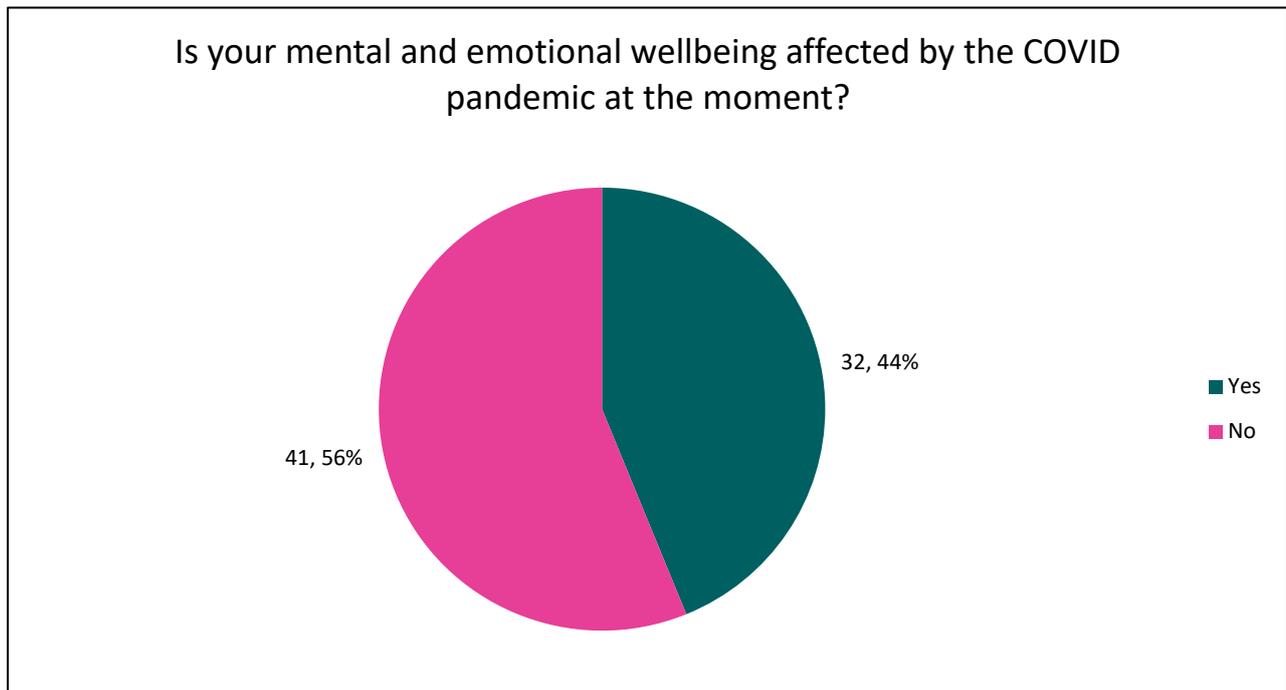
Online	-	16 (21%)
On paper	-	42 (56%)
By phone	-	17 (23%)

Some of the questions have tick-box responses, and some ask for people to write what they think in their own words.

Here is what we were told.

Question 1 - Is your mental and emotional wellbeing affected by the Covid pandemic at the moment?

73 people answered this question.



The responses to the same question in the COVID-19 report in 2020 were:

Yes - 51%

No - 49%

It would appear as the lockdown restrictions eased, the mental and emotional wellbeing of people was affected slightly less. However, the proportion of people who say they are still being affected by the pandemic is quite high at 44%.

Two of the surveys were completed by a parent/carer on behalf of an adult with a learning disability.

“My mental wellbeing isn't good at the best of times so restrictions of pandemic not really affected me as I live my life in poverty and therefore isolation most of the time.”

“I think it has affected everyone in some way, some people more so than others.”

The second part of this question asked:

Please tell us more

A few people mentioned how they felt at the beginning of lockdown.

The responses about how people are feeling now included the following comments (some were repeated by a number of people):

- Effect of not being able to attend day care centres
- Effect of trying to keep other family members safe
- Feel scared going out
- Feeling fed up, down, anxious and/or depressed
- Feeling isolated and lonely
- More emotional
- No enthusiasm to go out
- Not able to get out, including shopping, groups, and seeing friends and family
- Not knowing what is happening, or not understanding what the pandemic is about
- Want to go out, then want to go home again straight away

“I feel like I am getting to the end of my tether and I am not usually a depressive person”

“Want to go outside more but when outside can't wait to get back home. Feel guilty at being outside.”

“Has not got level of understanding of why he can't do all his day care activities or his evening clubs. Showing by self-harm and behaviour.”

The positive comments included:

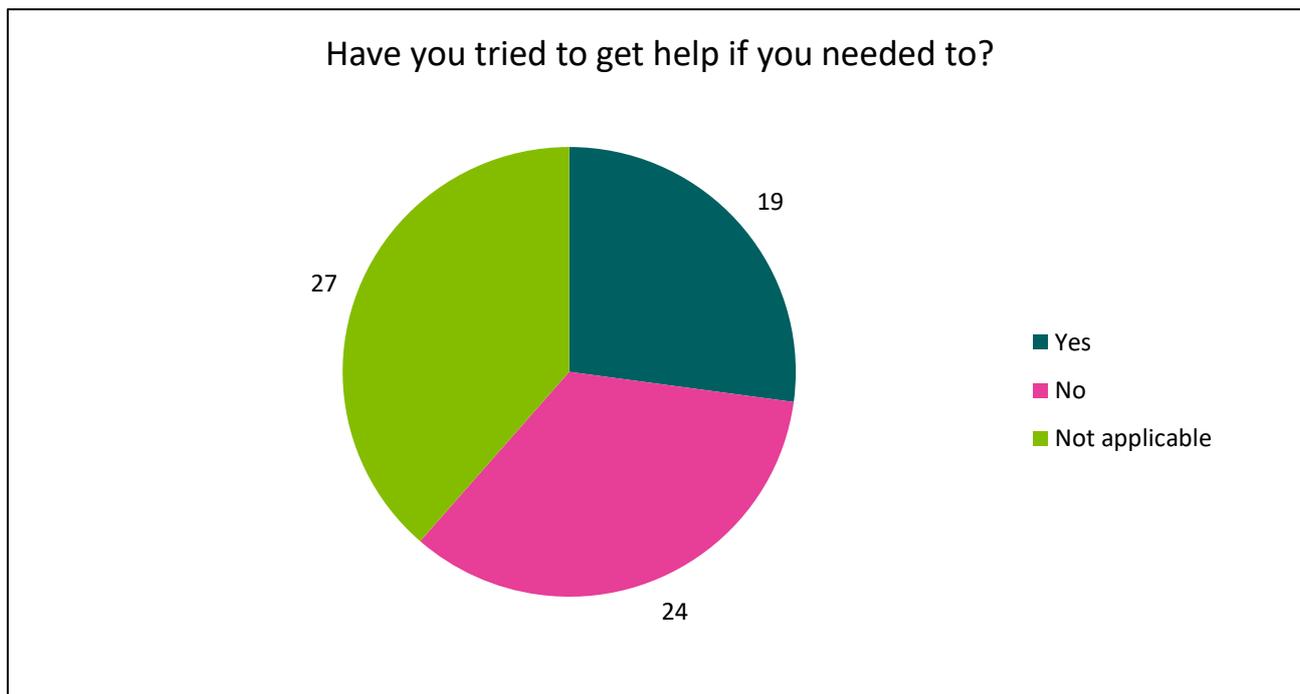
- Able to go shopping for myself again
- Coping well
- Mental health not affected as much now
- Things are starting to open up

“Luckily I am strong willed and I will get back to my old self.”

“I have not been going out. I live on my own. I used to go out most days. I feel very isolated but things are starting to open which is good.”

Question 2 - Have you tried to get help if you needed to?

70 people answered this question.



The second part of this question asked:

Please tell us more

Some of the comments referred to help which was not related to their mental and emotional wellbeing, and these will be included in the separate report about use of other services.

Here are some of the people or organisations people turned to for help with mental and emotional wellbeing:

- Care staff
- Counsellor
- CPN (Community psychiatric nurse)
- Family members
- GP
- Healthy Minds
- Tameside Oldham and Glossop Mind

“Mental health and other problems been affected more from isolation, emotional loneliness, etc. I don't think the support has improved.”

Some people said they tried to get help, but are still waiting:

- Been waiting for mental health help since May 2020, [name of organisation] have hurt my mental health more than a global Pandemic ...
- I asked for referral to psychologist in December 2019 - I've still not heard anything!

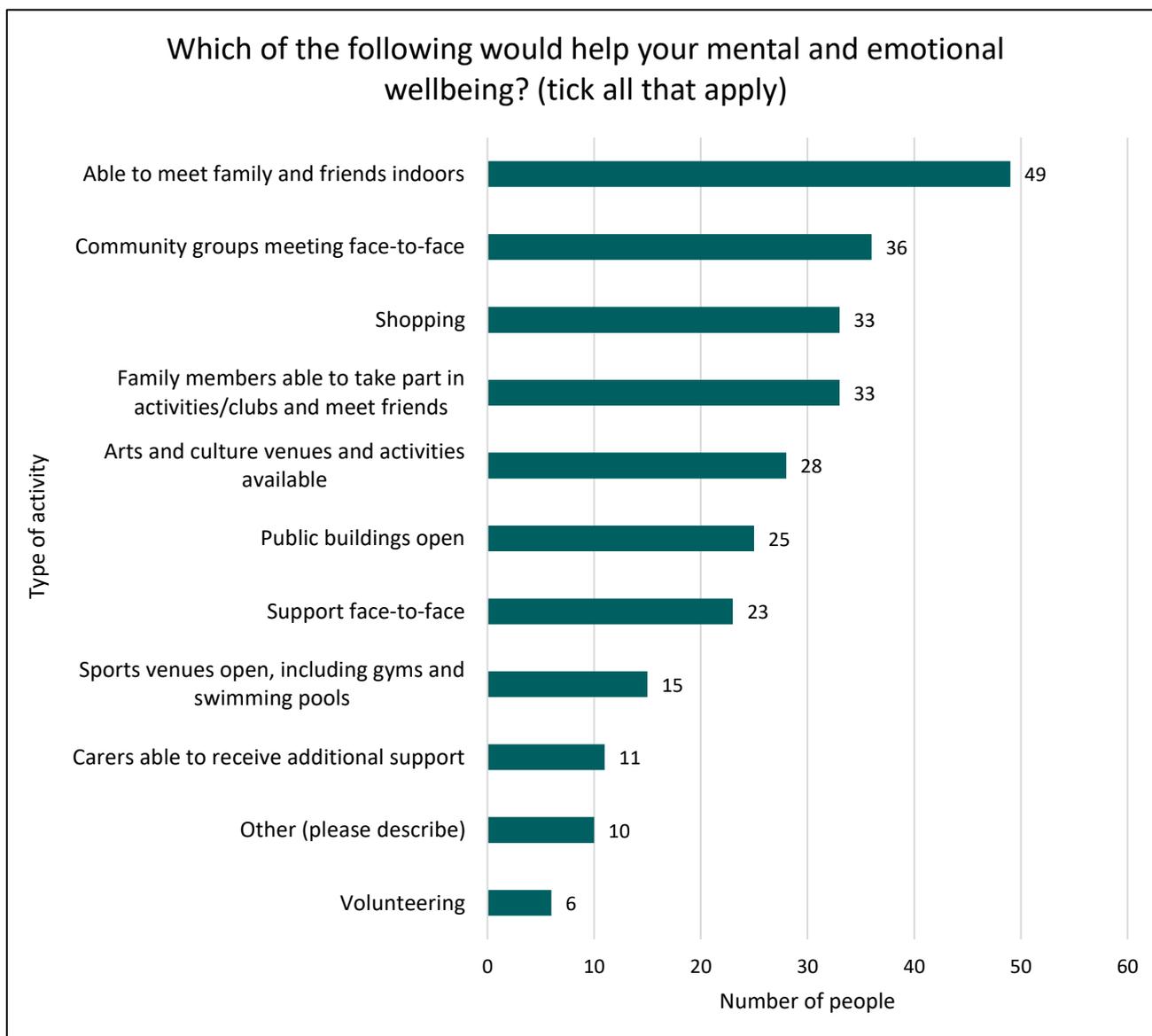
Some of the comments explained why people didn't ask for help:

- As would have been a waste of time as they only deal with you via computers. If you don't have [computers], I don't exist.
- Covid is something that we just have to deal with.
- I am very independent.
- I feel I can cope with these times with strategies I've learned in the past.
- I have had plenty to keep me going.
- Waste of time.

“Didn't feel I needed help as am good at reasoning things out. Am good at occupying myself and kept in touch with friends. Talked about feelings.”

Question 3 - Which of the following would help your mental and emotional wellbeing? (Tick all that apply)

65 people answered this question.



The responses which ticked 'other' included:

- Being able to hug people
- Eating out
- Getting counselling
- Going on holidays and days out, including visiting family abroad
- Not wearing masks
- Several people said 'getting back to normal'
- Too anxious to do any of these activities yet

“My belief is we should put more positive messages out there - we seem to see too much on media re mental health (There will be no-one left soon who has good mental health to look after all the others!)”

Question 4 - Thinking about your answers to the previous question, please explain how these will help you.

51 people answered this question.

Some people described how the opening up of places and activities would make them feel.

Similar comments were made by several people. The comments included:

- Being able to talk to people, and interact with them face-to-face helps
- Feel like back to normal
- Feel more confident if go out regularly
- Feel-good factor and enjoyment of being there
- Help general health
- Help mental health and wellbeing
- Helps with feelings of isolation
- More distractions, less thinking
- Something to do
- Something to look forward to

“Help this feeling of being alone to go away. Knowing there are other people in same position as me and I am not alone with these feelings.”

Some people told us about the places they would like to go, or the activities they would like to do:

- Craft groups, social groups
- Eating out, coffee in a café, takeaways
- Keeping active
- Music venues, theatres, clubs

“Getting back to Yoga would help me but I cannot use public transport.”

Some people mentioned what was important to them:

- Being able to choose their own shopping
- Being able to invite friends and family into the house
- Meeting friends socially, having a catch-up
- Some people still being careful wearing masks and social distancing, whilst others said not wearing masks would make all the difference
- Spending time with family, especially seeing children and grandchildren

“Emotional and social contact is extremely important to us, especially stimulation for my wife.”

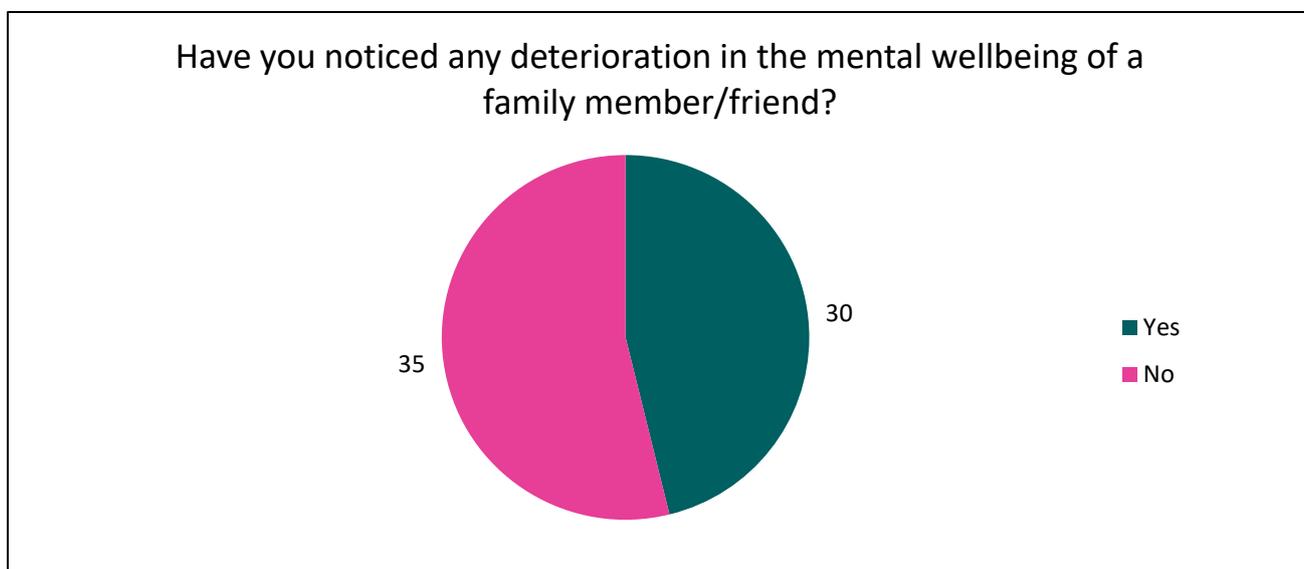
One person said they were feeling fine, so nothing would help.

“I now no longer like people coming to see me, I would prefer to visit outside my home.”

“Gets you out and about, mixing again which is hard after being stuck in for so long.”

Question 5 - Have you noticed any deterioration in the mental wellbeing of a family member/friend?

65 people answered this question.



The second part of this question asked:

Please tell us more.

The information provided was about:

- Family members (including husband, wife, partner, children, grandchildren, parents)
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Social group members

“One of my neighbours seems very depressed and now says she is unable to try anything.”

The reasons given for the deterioration in their mental health included:

- Health getting worse, including loss of mobility, and deterioration in dementia
- Isolation as they do not have any family
- Not being able to go out

“One of my relatives was badly affected by not being able to work.”

How people were affected included:

- Becoming more afraid to go out
- Behaviour of a child - becoming more difficult
- Doing nothing apart from watching TV
- Feeling down or depressed
- Gaining weight
- Lack of motivation
- Not sleeping
- Not washing or getting dressed

“They are struggling to leave home. Fitness levels deteriorated despite going for a walk every day.”

“My wife's dementia seems to have progressed more quickly (she cannot write/speak for herself). Day care re-opening would be a great help.”

One person said they were improving now, with the easing of the rules. Another said using FaceTime instead of phoning helped them.

“Carers are unsung heroes and need support.”

Conclusion

Although lockdown ended and restrictions eased, people's mental and emotional wellbeing were still affected by Covid-19. Many of these people have not asked for help.

We have heard about the impact of Covid-19, not just on mental and emotional wellbeing, but on physical health too.

The survey responses show what is important to people, and what will help them to feel better.

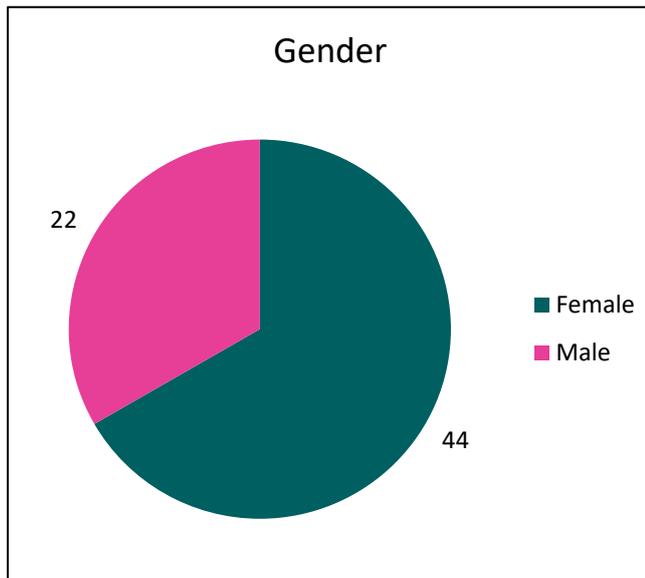
They also show how important contact with other people is, with both friends and family. People value being able to go out, visit places, and take part in activities.

Some people say they may need counselling. In our COVID-19 survey report we included the following recommendation, which is still relevant:

- Services need to be able to provide care without a long waiting list, and alternative types of support should be considered.

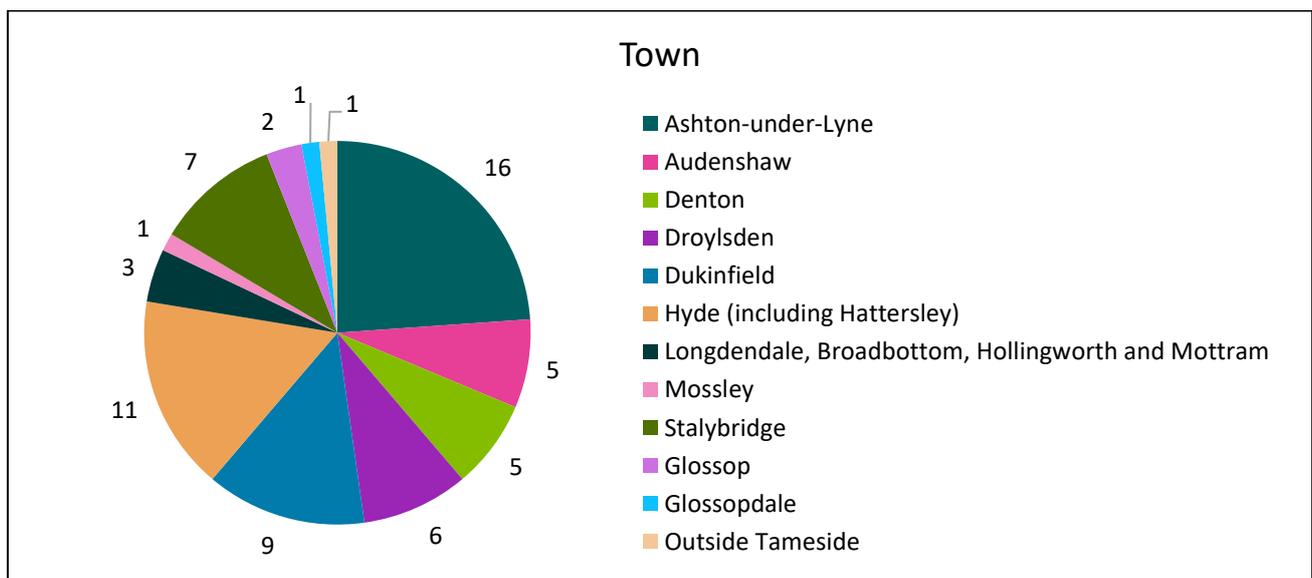
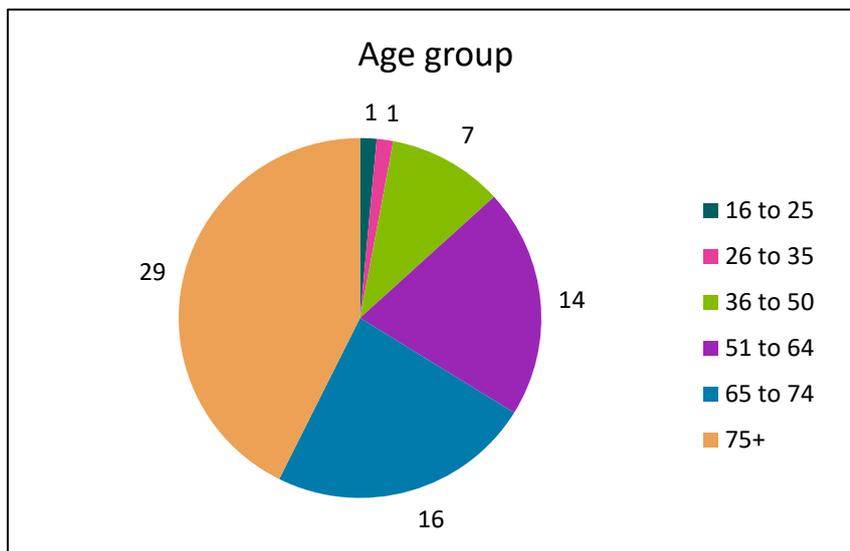
Demographics

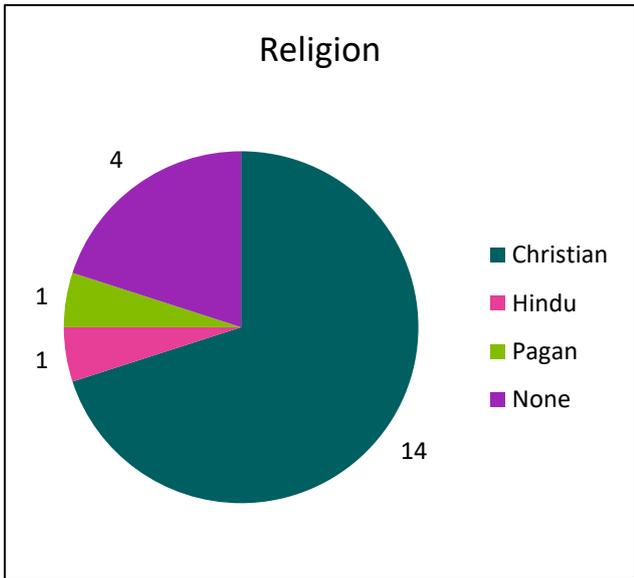
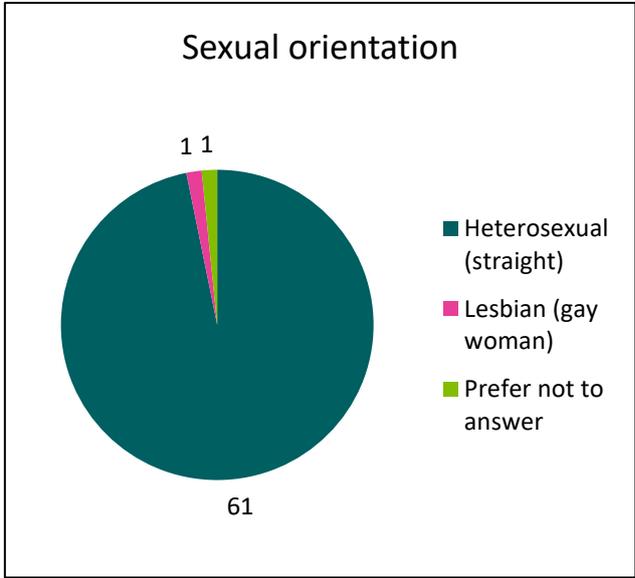
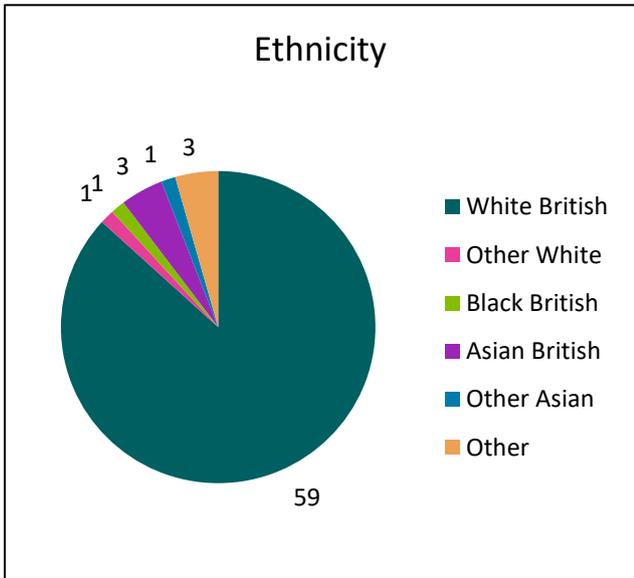
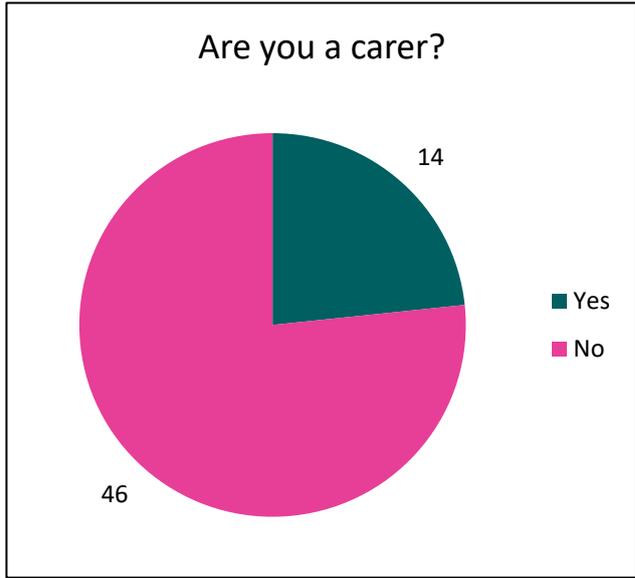
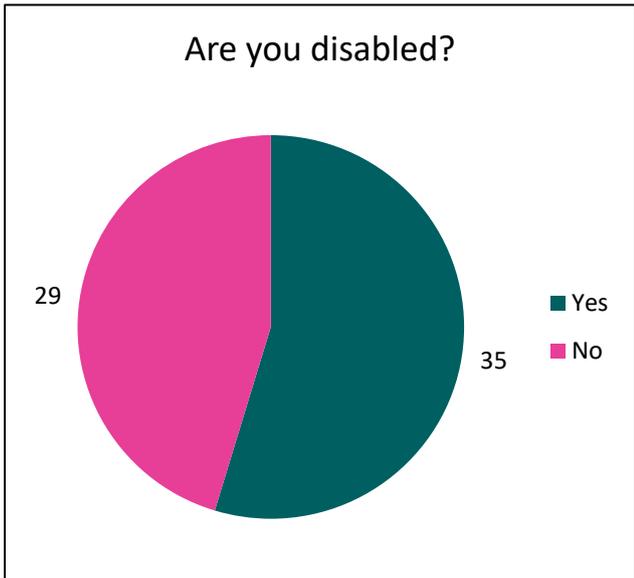
These questions are optional.



Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?

64 people (100%) answered 'Yes' to this question.





Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Tameside would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have shared our survey links with others. This includes statutory partners, community groups and charities, as well as members of the public and our volunteers.

Your help makes all the difference to our work.