



# BACK ON TRACK

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE  
OUT OF LOCKDOWN

AUGUST 2020





**YMCA was established in 1844, and is the largest and oldest youth charity in the world, helping more than 65 million people in 120 countries. Here in England and Wales, 116 YMCAs work to transform 740 different communities, impacting the lives of nearly 630,000 people every year.**

**We believe that the right start in life is crucial for a person's long-term development. It is for this reason YMCA works with people from birth through to adulthood – supporting individuals and families to flourish.**

**To this end, each year YMCA supports 33,560 young people through our youth work and services.**

## FOREWORD

In a few short weeks, normality disintegrated in March 2020. The country, the charity sector, young people and their families were instantly shaken.

The typical childhood experience suddenly distorted: instead of days spent with classmates, lunchtimes chatting and after-school hours playing in sports teams and youth centres, children and young people were confined to their homes, with just those living within it for company. Learning was to be done via laptops as whiteboards were exchanged for PowerPoint presentations. Parents and carers took up the unfamiliar mantle of becoming teachers. Hanging out with friends could only be done on a range of apps, be it messaging, video calling or gaming.



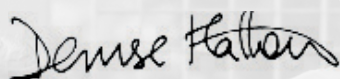
Soon after the lockdown was announced, local YMCAs swiftly worked on how to adapt their services to the 'new normal', to provide the young people in their community with a sense of stability, stimulation and somewhere to see friends. From Zoom sessions to activity packs, to working with local charities to get children without digital access online or providing meals to those on the poverty line, services switched to ensure young people could find a safe space, a trusted adult and somewhere to thrive as well as they could.

While the development of severe COVID-19 symptoms may be rare amongst children and young people<sup>1</sup>, the lockdown instigated to limit the spread of the virus has proven substantially detrimental to their wellbeing as the shape of the 'new normal' emerged.

The impact of enforced isolation and removal of school and social spaces will have had deep ramifications on the wellbeing of young people: allowing them somewhere to be young and feel part of a community will be paramount in their recovery.

There is no doubt about the strain the lockdown has had on children and young people as this report sets out. We stand ready to support our communities coming out of lockdown and back into normal life, stronger together as we combat the quandaries that have gathered over the past month and those still to come.

YMCA has faced many crises, from World Wars to global financial crashes. We have been at the heart of communities for 175 years and we plan to be there still supporting young people for at least another 175.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denise Hatton".

**Denise Hatton**  
Chief Executive,  
YMCA England & Wales

<sup>1</sup> Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – information for children, young people and families](#), 22 July 2020

# PURPOSE

The aim of this research was to find out from young people themselves what the impact of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown has been on them. To do so, we surveyed 11- to 16-year-olds on how life has been over the past several months, and how they felt as normality started to resume.

The purpose of this work is to paint a holistic picture about what young people have been going through during lockdown, from their schooling to their wellbeing, so that we can plan, prepare and act as a country to support young people in a time where they need us the most.

# KEY FINDINGS

This report finds:

- 1. Young people are lonely:** nine-in-ten report missing being face-to-face with people (92%), and three-quarters feel lonelier and more isolated during lockdown (77%).
- 2. A virtual world can't be the new normal,** with three-quarters of young people (73%) tired of being online all the time.
- 3. Young people are struggling with school and their aspirations for the future are changing,** with 56% being worried about falling behind and 41% being worried about getting a job.



- 4. Young people need safe spaces outside of the home to improve family cohesion**, with more than half of young people (58%) feeling that their relationship with their family has become more strained during lockdown.
- 5. Prevention of young people's poor mental health is key** as more than two-fifths of young people report that they are worried about their mental health or wellbeing as they come out of the COVID-19 lockdown (42%).

## METHODOLOGY

In this report, YMCA England & Wales combines primary research from both before and after the lockdown with on-the-ground experience from local YMCAs, providing insight on just how severely young people have been impacted by COVID-19.

Research on young people and the COVID-19 lockdown was conducted by Survation on 1009 young people aged 11 to 16 living in the UK between 24-27 July 2020. This was weighted by age, sex and region as to the profile of all people in this age group as measured by the Office for National Statistics.

This is supplemented by prior YMCA England & Wales research on youth services, undertaken by YouthSight between 11 December 2019 and 9 January 2020 with 998 young people aged between 11 and 16 in England and Wales, representative by age and gender and weighted to ensure representation across the regions. This piece of research highlights the effectiveness of youth services in helping young people develop flourish.

# INTRODUCTION

2020 will be known as the year that COVID-19 dismantled our country and the rest of the world. The crisis caused by the pandemic has not only been through the number of deaths but also through the trauma it has caused to people nationwide – either living in fear of a deadly virus, or their lives impacted drastically as the country locked down.

This has prevented young people from attending school, seeing friends and family, and also placed strain on their mental health and wellbeing.

This report digs deeper into what the impact COVID-19 and the lockdown has had on young people, uses existing evidence to root out what good solutions could look like, and suggests a road map forward to how we rebuild our society and the lives of young people.

## LONELY AND DIGITALLY WORN-OUT

In a time before COVID-19, loneliness was already prevalent among young people. In 2018, ONS research found 45% of young people often felt lonely either some of the time or often.<sup>2</sup>

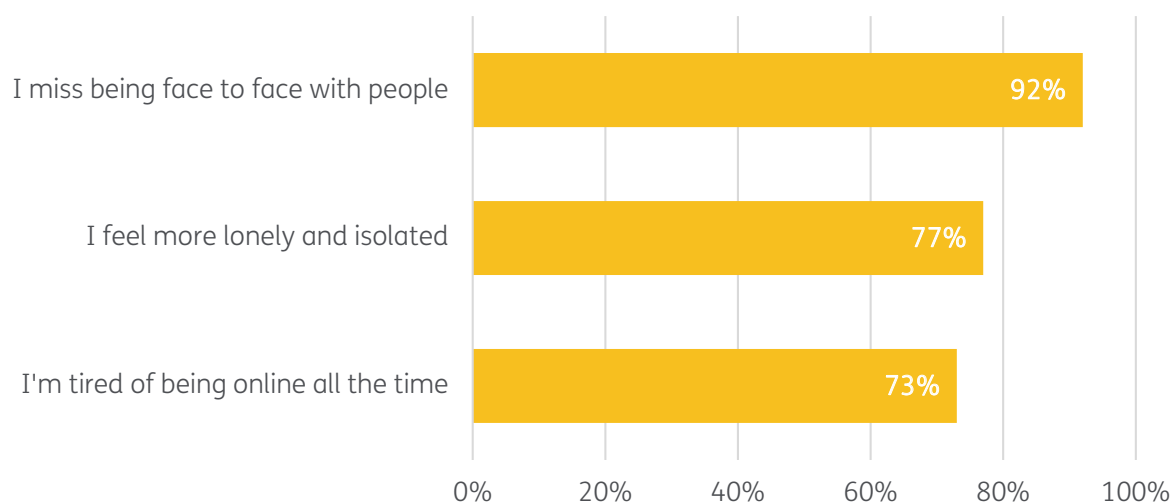
Compared to this, the impact of the pandemic is stark. YMCA's research reveals the loneliness young people have experienced over the past several months. Nine-in-ten report missing being face-to-face with people (92%), and three-quarters (77%) have felt lonelier and more isolated during lockdown.

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Children's and young people's experiences of loneliness: 2018](#), 5 December 2018



Four months after the UK shut down, three-quarters of young people (73%) are tired of being online all the time. As the new mainstay of education, communication and entertainment, digital fatigue is setting in. YMCAs across England and Wales have worked at ways to counteract this for the young people they work with, from sending activity packs to children to writing letters and postcards. These methods, however, can only do so much when young people are desperate for face-to-face interaction.

**CHART 1:** TO WHAT EXTENT, IF AT ALL, HAVE YOU FELT THE FOLLOWING DURING LOCKDOWN?

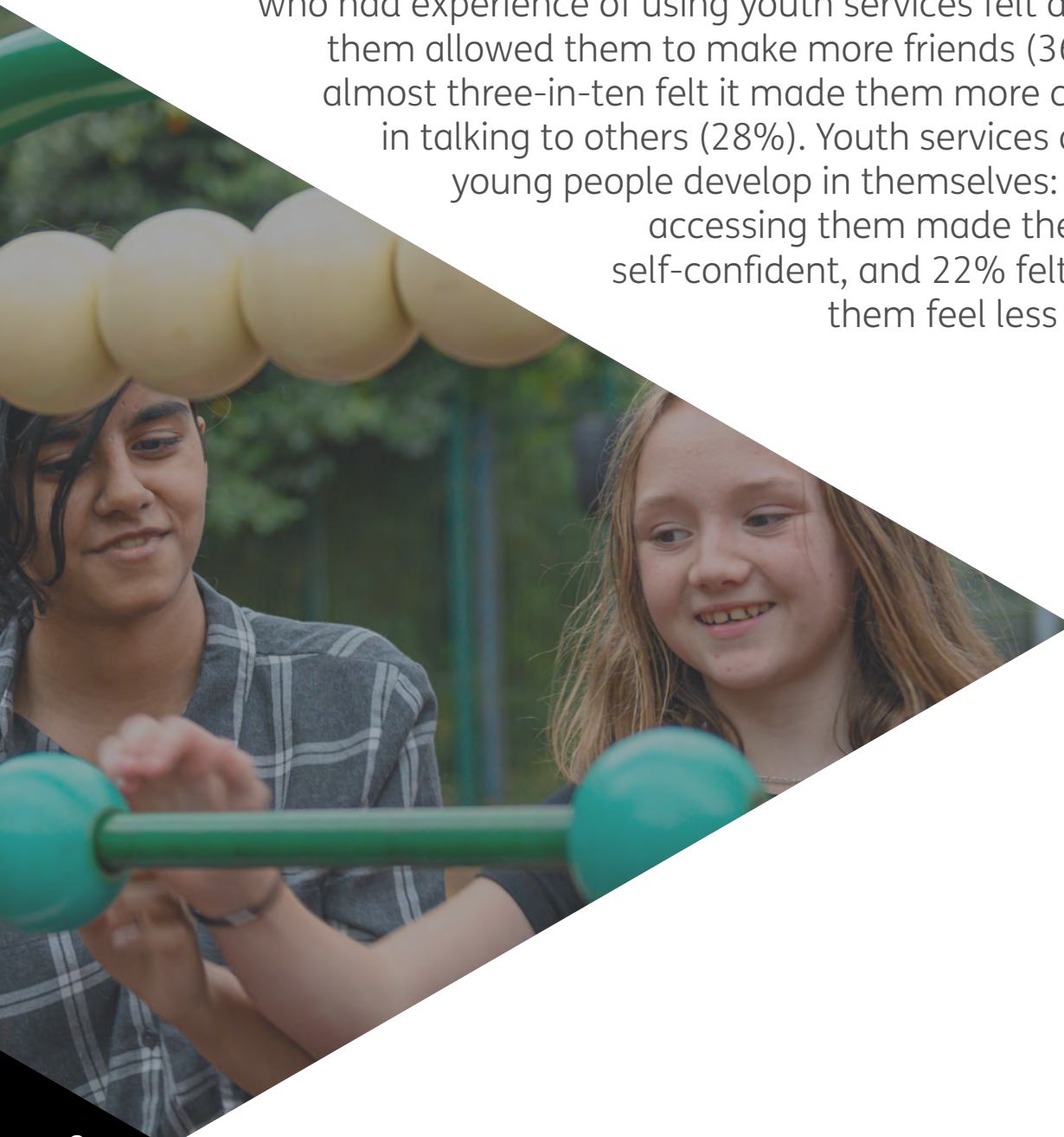


BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020

With young people rendered unable to see their friends or interact with others from different households, there is a huge need to address the trauma this sudden and extreme level of loneliness has caused. Paired with the fact that online fatigue is high amongst young people, it stands that the solution cannot just be a technology-based one. It must involve face-to-face interaction.

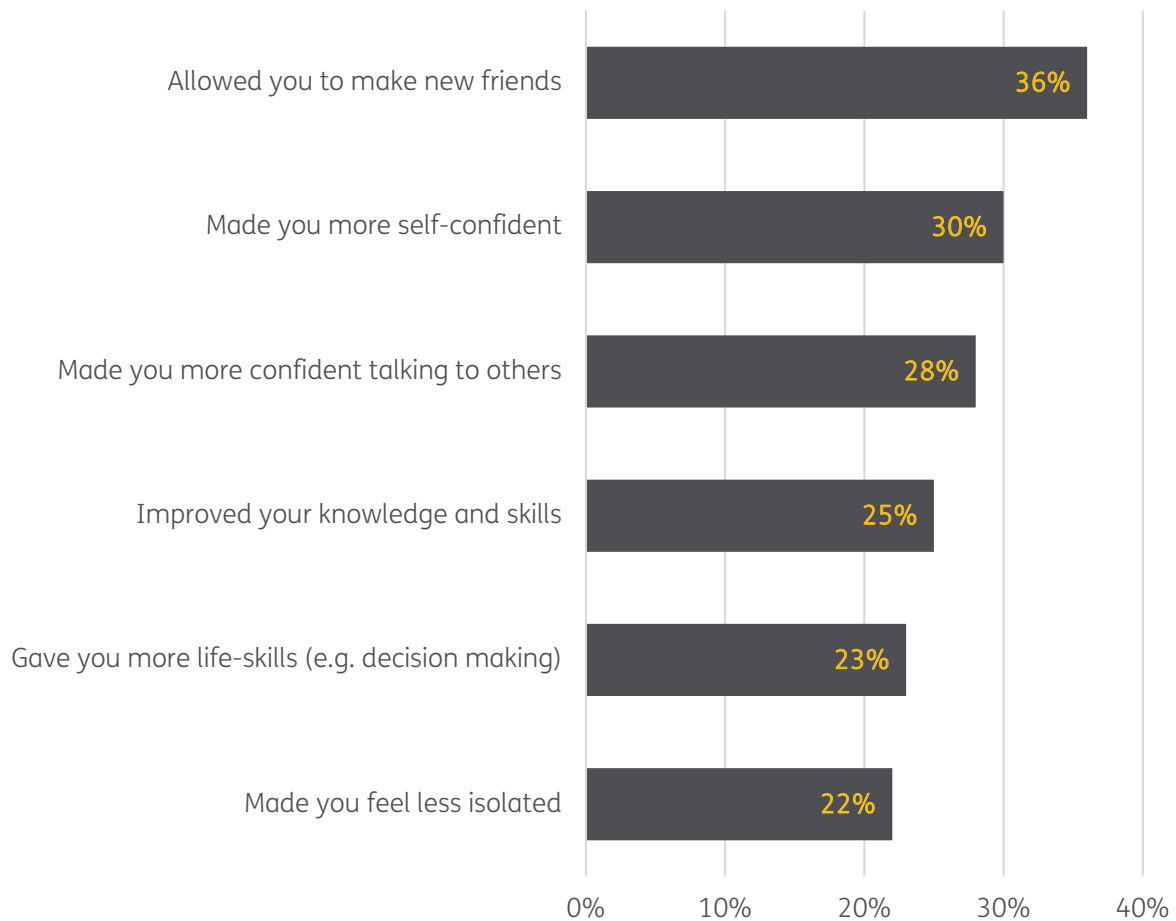
Youth services have been the antidote to loneliness in young people for decades, and can help them build their self-esteem and personal resilience. As one of the country's largest providers of youth services, we know all too well the transformative effect these services can have. They provide a social space for young people to interact, simply have fun and enjoy being young.

For young people who have attended youth services, the benefits it brings to their wellbeing is clear. In previous research, YMCA found that more than a third of young people who had experience of using youth services felt accessing them allowed them to make more friends (36%), and almost three-in-ten felt it made them more confident in talking to others (28%). Youth services also help young people develop in themselves: 30% felt accessing them made them more self-confident, and 22% felt it made them feel less isolated.





## CHART 2: HAS ACCESSING YOUTH SERVICES ACHIEVED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?



BASE: Those who are currently or have previously accessed youth services (n=590), January 2020

It is clear from how young people reported feeling during the lockdown that many of the problems they face now could be solved with youth work interventions. Youth services, with centres established and youth workers adept at helping young people to develop their confidence and social skills, provide a fertile ground in a post-lockdown world to help children re-tie their social connections into the new school year and beyond.

## OPEN-ACCESS YOUTH SERVICE

YMCA EXETER, DEVON

YMCA Exeter delivers youth services with the aim to provide an outlet for energy and conversations with youth workers to help them work through their issues. Their programme focuses on a large cohort of boys from single parent families and low income backgrounds, with displays of aggression commonplace.

YMCA youth workers find the key to their success is building good relationships with the boys. They would talk through why the young people were causing trouble, getting detentions and generally struggling - then work towards establishing a solution, but this only happens after a solid foundation is built.

Sadly, as digital fatigue hits, maintaining these conversations through lockdown has not been easy.

**“Up until a few weeks ago we were having really good engagement, but digital fatigue is getting to them. They’re spending all day on Zoom and with school and their teachers; they can’t stay all day on Zoom and then evening with a youth worker.”**

YMCA Exeter also has particular issues with the rural nature of their location. Difficulties with digital access are twofold: for rural youth work, with young people living in houses that do not have good broadband or phone signal – limiting the amount youth workers are able to provide. Concurrently, for some families, social deprivation prices them out of broadband contracts or the adequate technology required for online living.

This has made the prevalence of loneliness and social isolation extremely high in some areas across the country, like Devon, not only due to the lockdown but also their ability to even connect online.



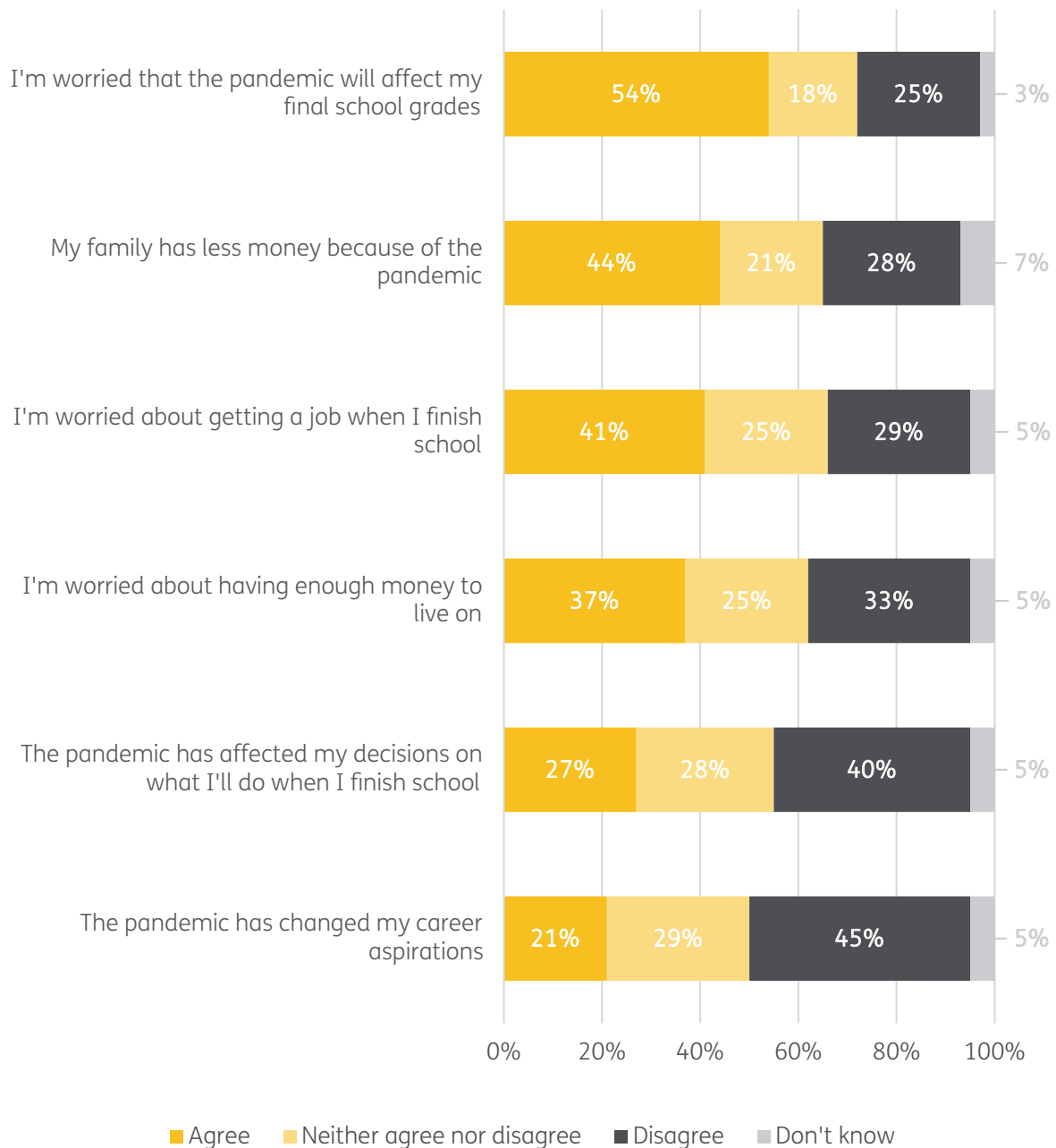
# FADING FUTURES

Young people across the country have missed months of schooling because of the pandemic. This has not only impacted them, but also their parents and carers in trying to juggle work, childcare and home-schooling.

For young people, the full reopening of schools in September not only brings concerns over social distancing, but worries around academic performance after months spent learning from home (as we will see in Chart 4, 56% worry about falling behind in school). These concerns are not just in the present, but how it will impact their educational achievement. More than half of young people are worried that the pandemic will affect their final school grades (54%), rising to 75% and 64% amongst 15- and 16-year-old respectively, the ages closest to final exams.

There are lurking worries about what young people's futures will look like, creating uncertainty amongst some. Two-in-five are worried about getting a job when they finish school (41%); a quarter agree that the pandemic has affected their decisions on what they'll do when they finish school; a fifth agree that the pandemic has changed their career aspirations (21%). The uncertainty of what normal will look like has cast a haze over what young people not only want from their lives, but if their goals will even be achievable.

### CHART 3: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT LOCKDOWN?



BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020



As schools plan to return in September, we must identify those young people whose learning has been disproportionately affected, and support them to get back on track with their education. This must go hand in hand with building back hope that young people can expect to gain employment once they finish their time in education.

With young people being under an increased level of pressure to catch up in school due to months missed, we must not ignore the impact this has on their mental wellbeing and the steps we must take to prevent a longer term negative impact.

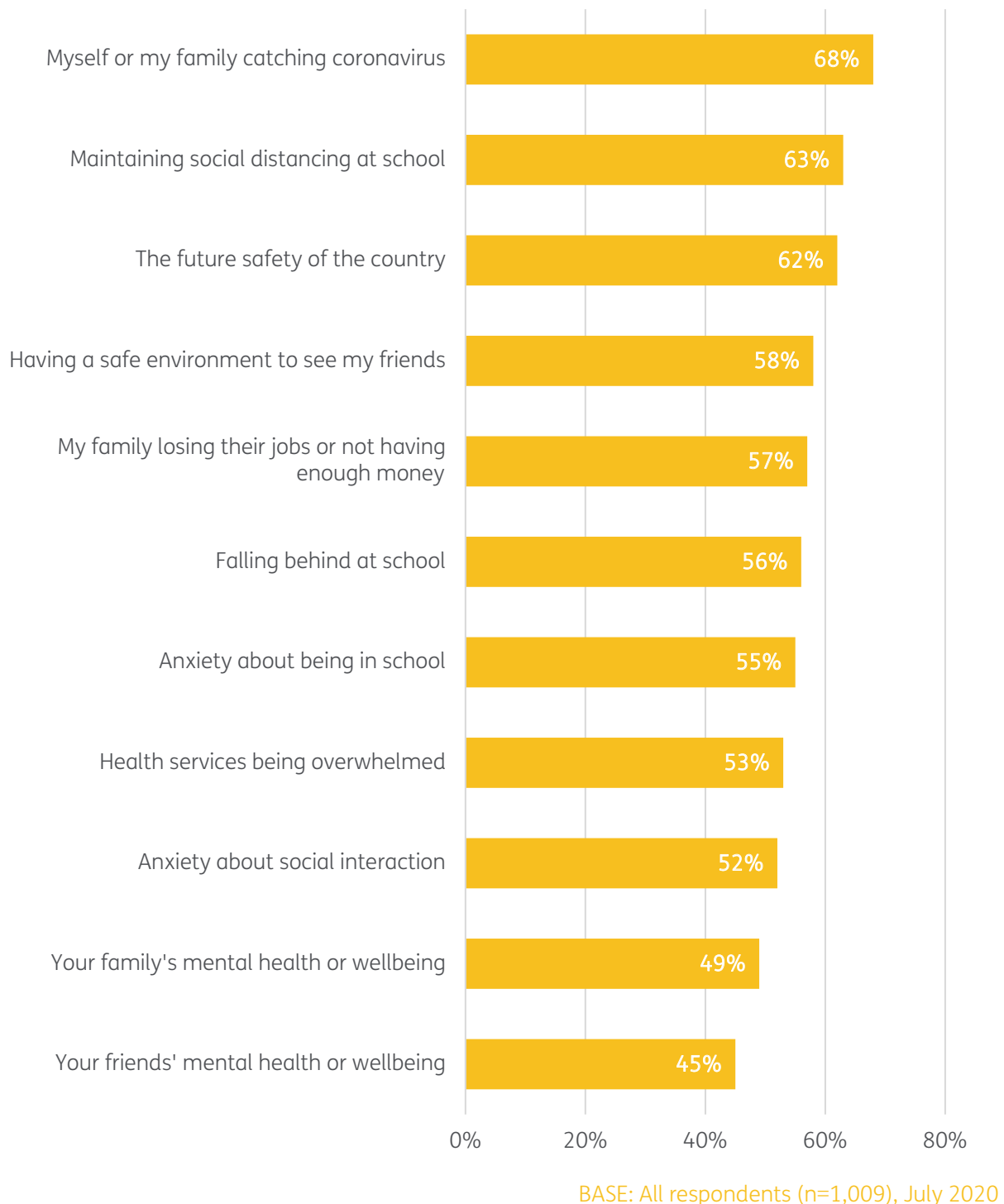
## DETERIORATING MENTAL WELLBEING

Over the past few decades, the conversation around young people's mental health has come sharply into focus: in England, the prevalence of at least one mental disorder amongst 5- to 15-year-olds has risen steadily from 9.7% in 1999 to 10.1% in 2004, and 11.2% in 2017<sup>3</sup>. With the impact of COVID-19 on any already increasing picture it is likely with the levels of stress, anxiety and worry shown in our survey that this could get worse.

The reopening of the country is causing concern amongst young people. The most pervasive of which is them or their family catching coronavirus, with two-thirds (68%) worried about this. Accordingly, maintaining social distancing and keeping safe while seeing others is something young people are cautious about as the lockdown eases: 63% worry about maintaining social distancing at school; 58% worry about having a safe environment to see their friends; and 52% have anxiety about social interaction.

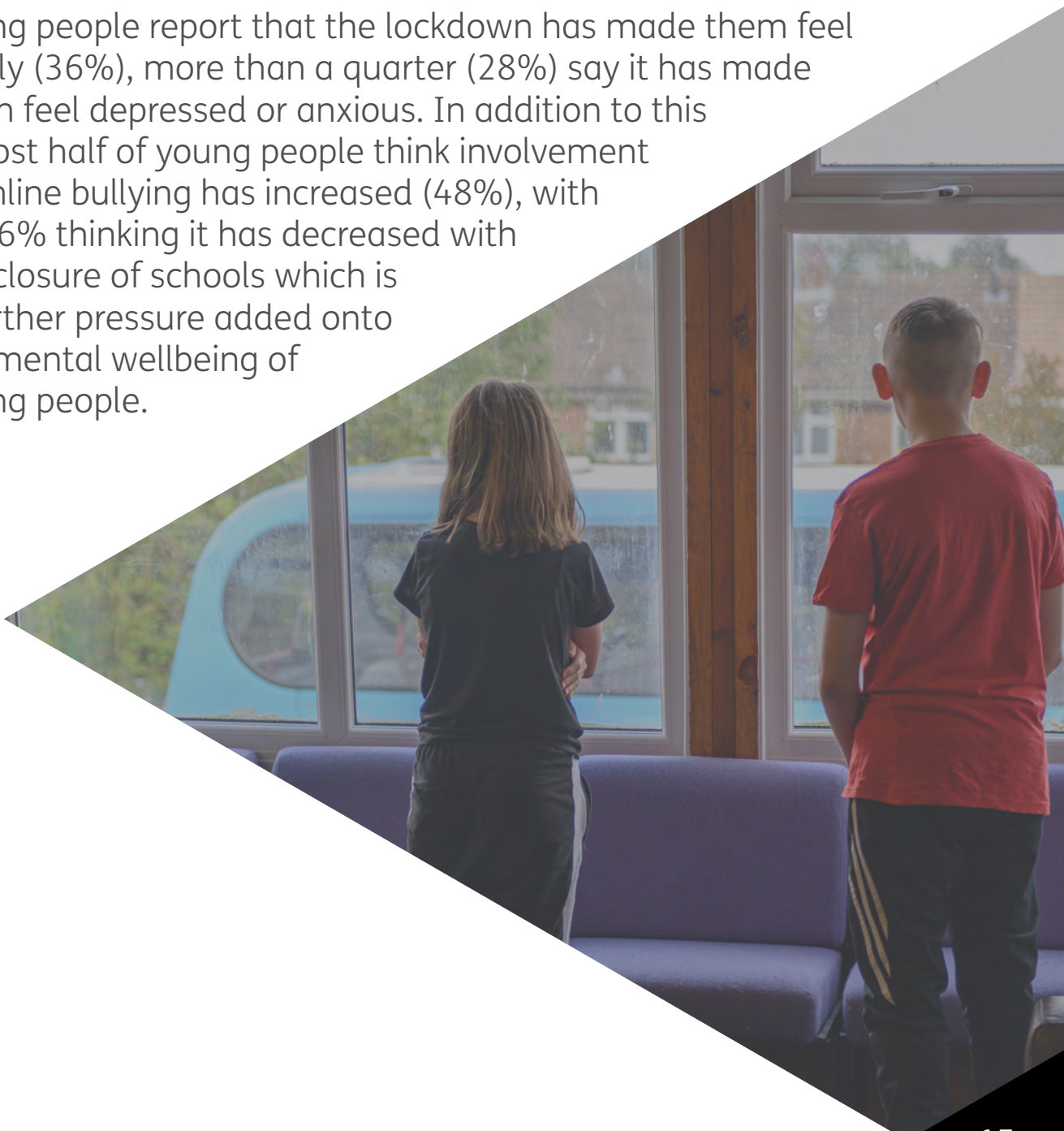
<sup>3</sup> NHS Digital, [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017 \[PAS\]](#), 22 November 2018

#### CHART 4: HOW WORRIED ARE YOU ABOUT THE FOLLOWING COMING OUT OF THE CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN?



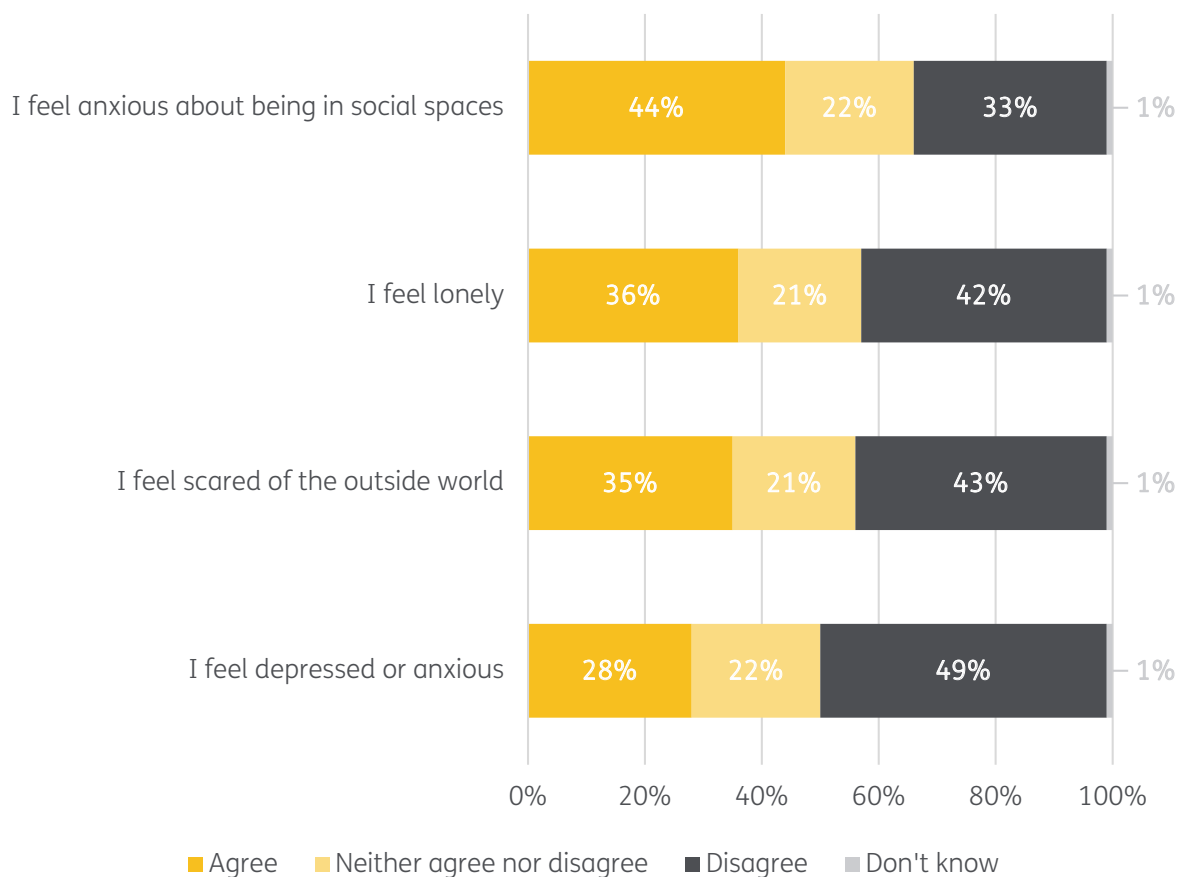
Young people are experiencing a range of concerns, about wider society and much closer to home. They are not only worrying about their schooling and their final grades, but family finances and the safety of the country.

The lockdown has impacted young people's mental health and wellbeing in an array of different ways and to different severities. Returning to life beyond the home is sparking angst: 44% now feel anxious about being in social spaces, and 36% feel scared of the outside world. While more than a third of young people report that the lockdown has made them feel lonely (36%), more than a quarter (28%) say it has made them feel depressed or anxious. In addition to this almost half of young people think involvement in online bullying has increased (48%), with just 6% thinking it has decreased with the closure of schools which is a further pressure added onto the mental wellbeing of young people.





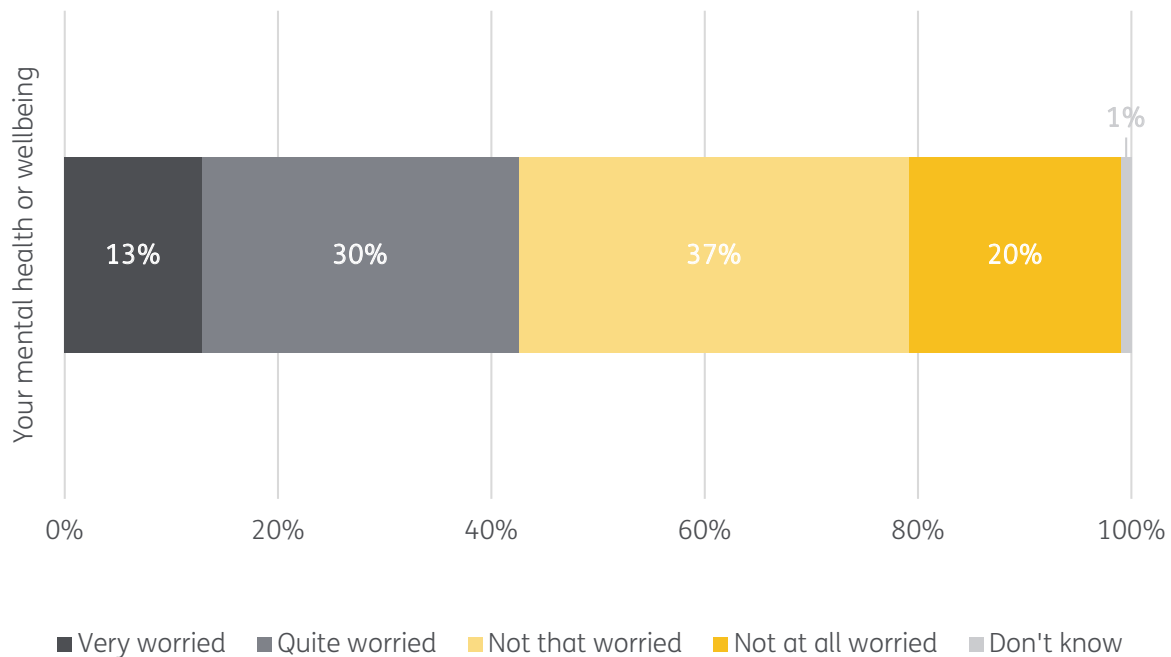
**CHART 5:** HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ON HOW CORONAVIRUS AND THE LOCKDOWN HAVE IMPACTED YOU?



BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020

The consequences for young people of being confined within their own homes for months, alongside a global health crisis, cannot be understated. More than two-fifths (43%) of young people report that they are worried about their mental health or wellbeing as they come out of the lockdown. This is a scale that will require substantial intervention to ensure these young people can rediscover stability and a sense of where their lives may lead.

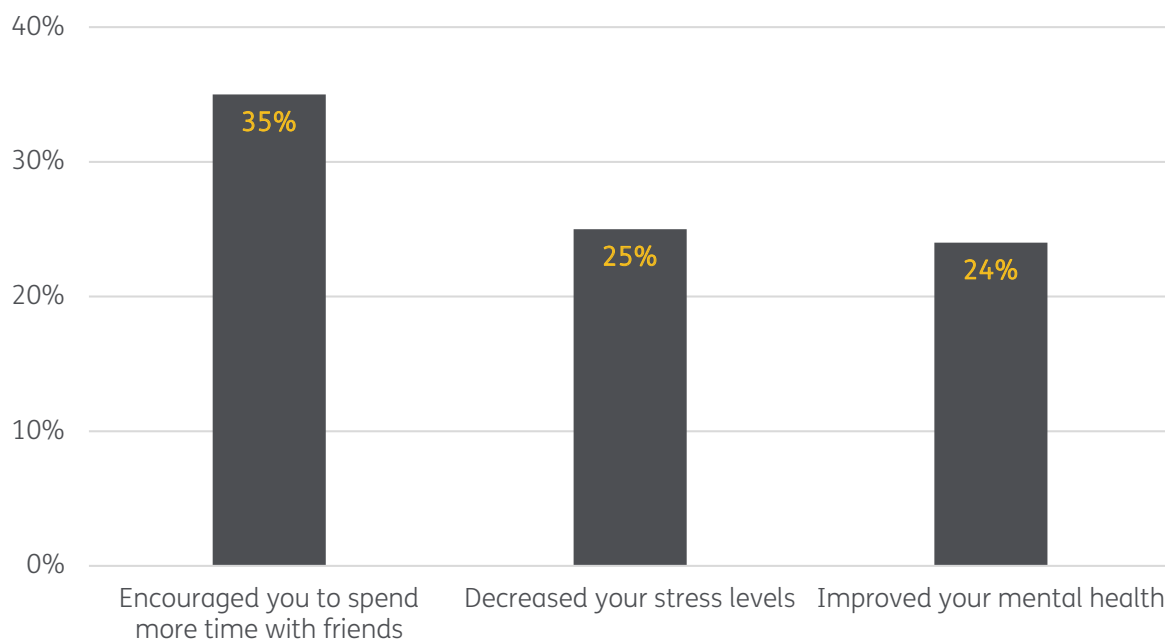
## CHART 6: HOW WORRIED ARE YOU ABOUT THE FOLLOWING COMING OUT OF THE CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN?



BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020

While there is no single silver bullet to remedy this impact, before mental health services step in, youth services can provide a vital preventative intervention to help young people work through their problems and improve their quality of life. Of those who accessed youth services more than a third (35%) feel encouraged to spend more time with their friends, 25% feel it has decreased their stress levels, and 24% feel it has improved their mental health.

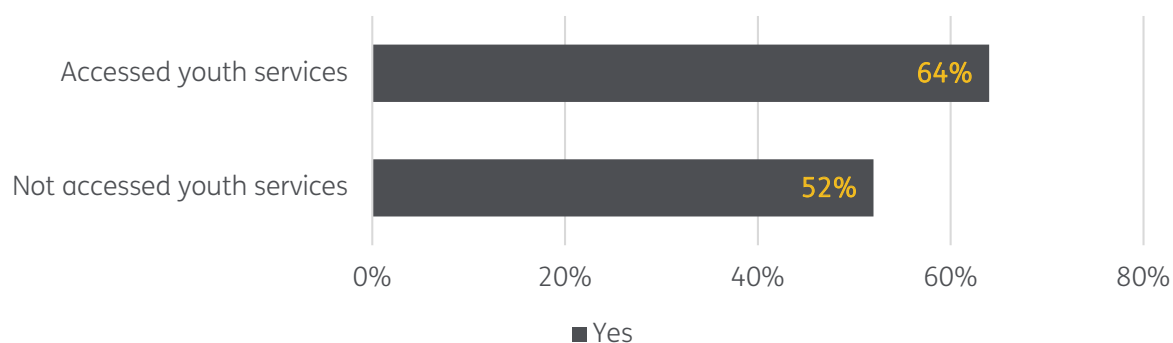
## CHART 7: WHAT IMPACT HAS ACCESSING YOUTH SERVICES HAD ON YOU?



BASE: Those who are currently or have previously accessed youth services (n=590), January 2020

Youth services widen young people's support networks: 64% of those who had accessed youth services have an adult outside of their family who they trust to talk to, compared to 52% of those who have not accessed them. It is through these relationships with youth workers and the space to talk through issues in their lives that young people can find new pathways and build resilience for future problems.

## CHART 8: DO YOU HAVE AN ADULT OUTSIDE OF YOUR FAMILY WHO YOU TRUST TO TALK TO ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS?



BASE: All respondents (n=998), January 2020

The frontline support here, however, may not be fully prepared for the demand yet to be unleashed upon it as lockdown ends. NHS mental health services for children and young people (CAMHS) have been brought to their knees in recent years in waves of underfunding and restructuring.<sup>4</sup> These services must be adequately resourced to ensure those most in need are provided the vital help and effective care needed to rebuild their lives.

For the less severe cases, both universal and targeted youth services can help young people work through hard times and prevent the onset or exacerbation of mental health problems.

Hand-in-hand, mental health services and youth services can work together to not only support the negative impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health but prevent it from developing in the first place.

<sup>4</sup> Association of Child Psychotherapists, [Silent Catastrophe](#), 25 June 2018



# WAVES

## YMCA EAST SURREY

YMCA East Surrey's WAVES (Wellbeing, Awareness and Voice for East Surrey) is a mental health project for 13- to 19-year-olds, which prior to lockdown, ran six face-to-face group sessions every day of the week across East Surrey.

**“The idea is that as a group, we support each other with mental health and wellbeing issues, but also on the grander scheme of things, we look to tackle stigma around mental health – be it campaigning or working in schools.”**

As the lockdown came into effect, YMCA East Surrey swiftly shifted how it held sessions to be able to continue offering support to the young people who would attend sessions. WAVES moved to an online model. Its daily sessions were held online, allowing young people to keep this safe supportive space.

It also created a private Facebook group where WAVES could post daily videos around mental health and wellbeing subjects, with young people also sharing videos

of how they were using their time in lockdown. From gardening to sports, to cooking to photography, it allowed the young people using WAVES to stay in contact and connect with each other when they could not be together in-person.

For some of the young people YMCA East Surrey works with, however, the lockdown had the potential to undo much of the progress they had made with their mental health through WAVES.

**“A lot of young people who had previously socially isolated themselves with mental health issues are unfortunately reverting back to that. We’ve got to put our stick in and make sure that doesn’t happen to them. We’re doing all we can to help engage them.”**

As the lockdown eased, WAVES is now able to run one socially-distanced in-person session every Monday as it helps young people adapt to the next stage of the ‘new normal’. In these sessions, WAVES not only helps young people with the transition from lockdown back into public spaces, but supports them as they prepare to return to schools and colleges in September.

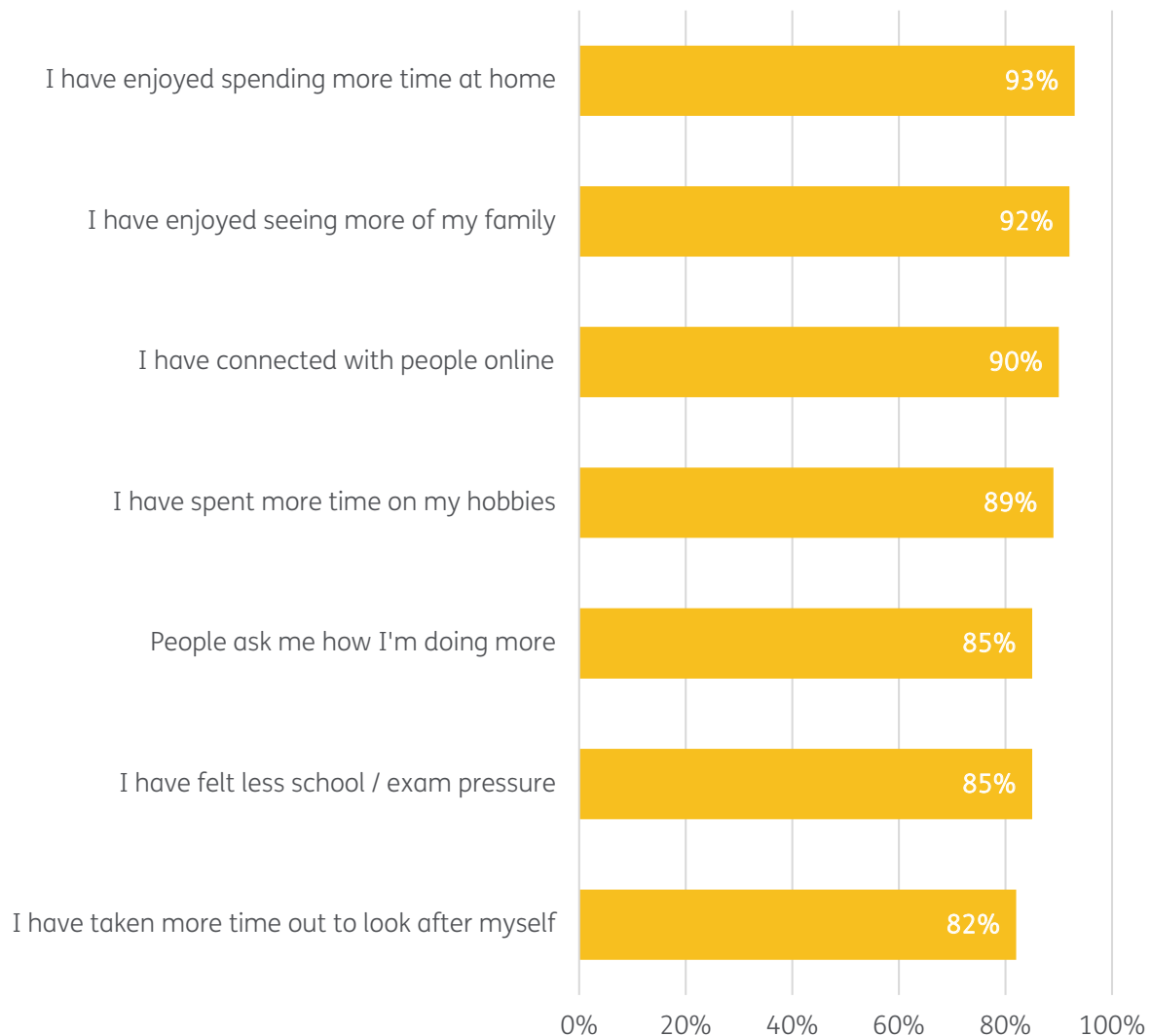
# COOPED UP AT HOME

Our research sought to cover the range of ways young people's lives had changed, and how they felt about this, providing a rich insight into the complex nature of being young and trapped at home.

Indeed, for many young people, the lockdown brought a chance to pause, to be with their family and practice self-care. The majority have enjoyed spending more time at home (93%), have enjoyed seeing more of their family (92%) and have connected with people online (90%). Time spent away from school and without external activities had allowed 89% to spend more time on their hobbies, and 85% felt less school or exam pressure. Not only have 82% of young people been able to take more time out to look after themselves, but 85% feel people ask them how they're doing more.

As facets and functions of our lives from before the COVID-19 pandemic begin to fall back into place, we should consciously attempt to retain some of the positive attributes this time has brought, from spending more time with our loved ones to taking a chance to stop and breathe, to looking out for our communities.

## CHART 9: TO WHAT EXTENT, IF AT ALL, HAVE YOU FELT THE FOLLOWING DURING LOCKDOWN?

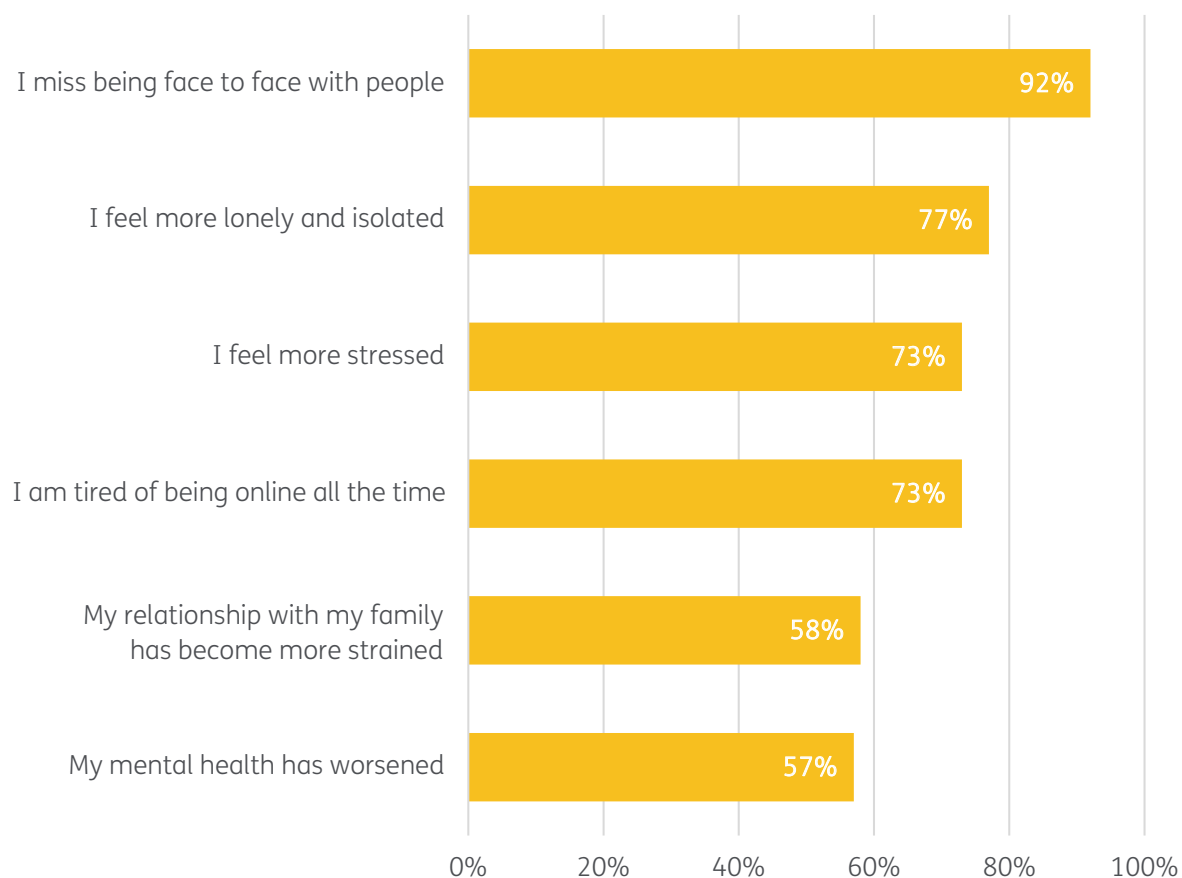


BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020

It must be understood, however, that lockdown has created an environment and experience for young people that is not resolutely as positive as this may suggest. Being cooped up at home, without meeting friends, spending more time online and in close confines with family has also given rise to a range of difficulties for young people.

With parents, carers and siblings equally trapped, even the enjoyment of seeing more of them can lapse. The close proximity and isolation of households has raised tensions. More than half of young people (58%) feel that their relationship with their family has become more strained during lockdown. This has also been seen by local YMCAs on the ground across England and Wales. They have reported seeing a rise in the number of families struggling to cope living in cramped houses unable to go out, having to create multifunctional rooms which serve as an office and a classroom, sharing the equipment and technology between siblings and having the burden of financial hardship at such a time of such uncertainty.

**CHART 10:** TO WHAT EXTENT, IF AT ALL, HAVE YOU FELT THE FOLLOWING DURING LOCKDOWN?



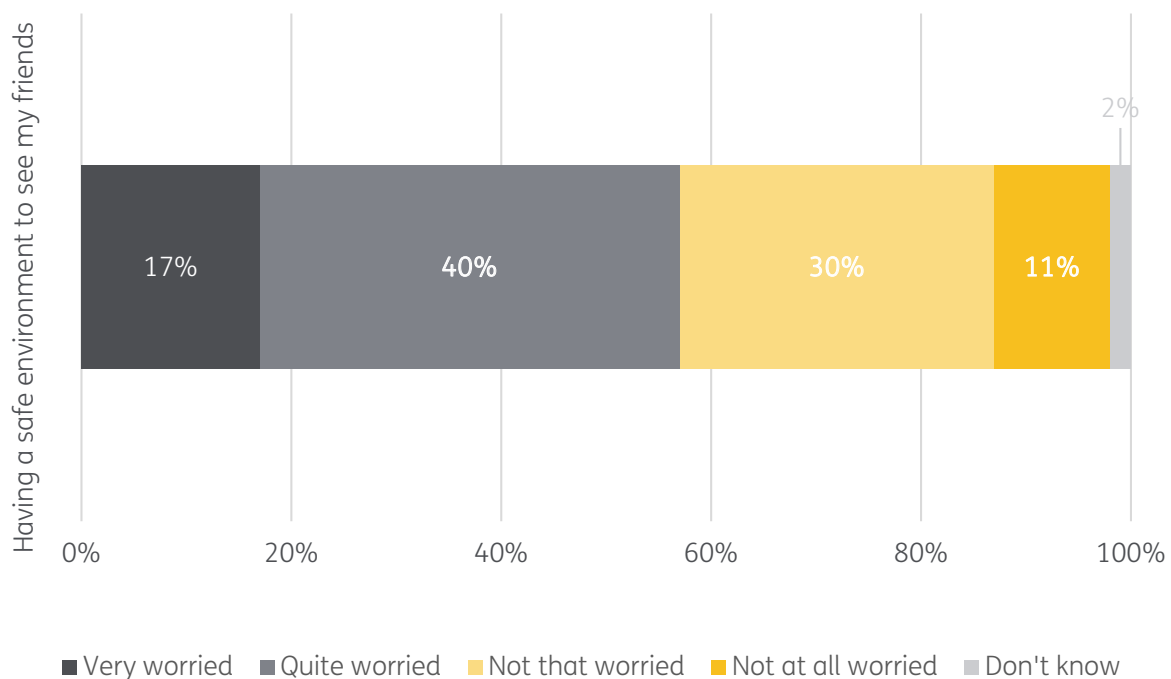
BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020



This presence of financial strains is reflected in what young people reported, as seen in Chart 4: more than half of young people are worried about their family losing their jobs or not having enough money (57%), and almost half are concerned about their family's mental health and wellbeing (49%). Being cooped up at home has presented the difficulties families are facing in stark focus to the young people living in them.

With pressures building at home, having somewhere safe to socialise will be essential to provide relief to many young people and their families. The need for such a space is striking: 57% of young people are worried about having a safe environment to see their friends when coming out of lockdown.

**CHART 11:** HOW WORRIED ARE YOU ABOUT THE FOLLOWING COMING OUT OF THE CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN?

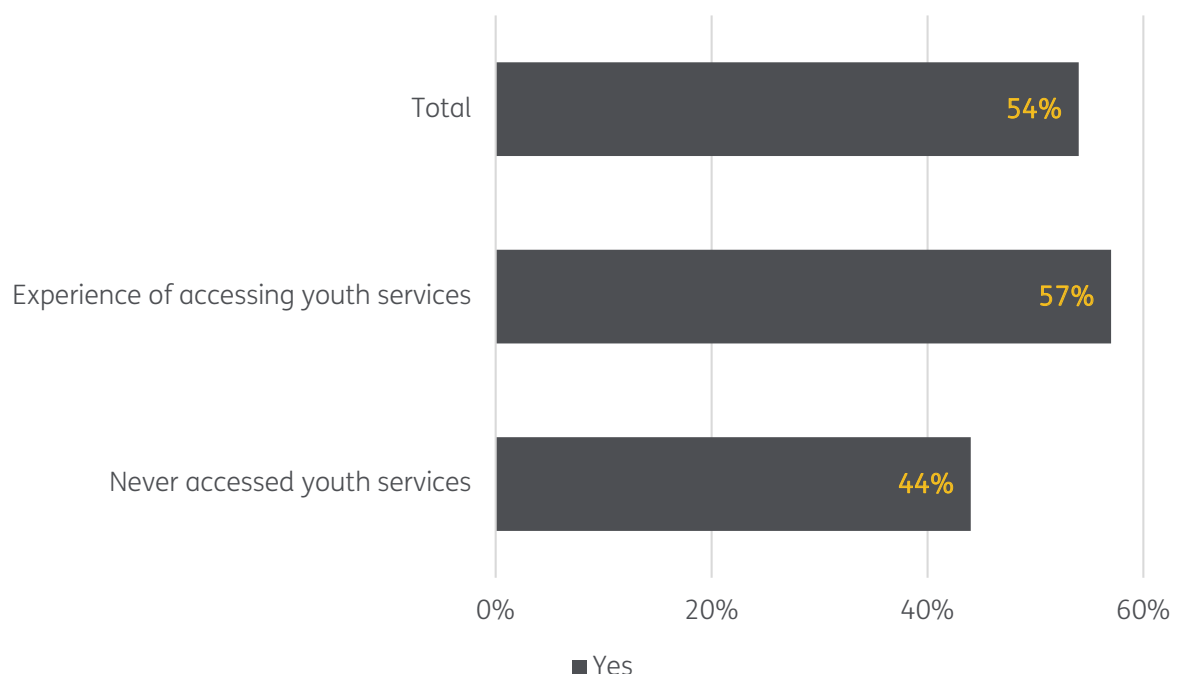


BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020

This is something YMCAs and youth centres across the country have long been offering, yet their ability to continue to do so was already strained before COVID-19 hit. Funding of youth service provision from local authorities in England and Wales deteriorated by 70% since 2010, previous YMCA research found.<sup>5</sup> The fallout of this is not just limited to the disappearance of safe spaces for young people, but the loss of a platform for emotional development and overall wellbeing.

For those with experience of access to youth services, 57% identified as having somewhere safe to hang out with friends outside of school or their house, compared to just 44% of those who had not accessed youth services. Significantly, when narrowing to those who are currently accessing youth services, this identification of having somewhere safe jumps to 70%.

#### CHART 12: DO YOU HAVE SOMEWHERE SAFE TO HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL OR YOUR HOUSE?



BASE: All respondents (n=998), January 2020

<sup>5</sup> YMCA England & Wales, [Out of Service](#), January 2020

Anecdotally, YMCAs have received reports of young people spending time outside of the home during lockdown, perhaps due to difficult domestic dynamics, but not having a centre to visit, instead spending time on the street or in parks and playgrounds. These areas, youth workers reflected, have begun to be targeted by gangs. To try and reach these at-risk young people, some YMCAs are working with their local constabularies to scale up street talks.

It is clear that young people need a safe space to go, where they are free to be themselves, which doesn't risk them spending their time on the streets or struggling at home.





# REBOOT

## YMCA DOWNSLINK GROUP, SUSSEX

Last year, YMCA DownsLink Group became a partner in REBOOT, a multi-faceted, early-stage intervention programme, funded by Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). With annual increases of knife offences in the area and the prevalence of risk factors affecting young people's involvement in violent crime, the REBOOT programme sought to reduce the risk of young people becoming either the victim of, or involved in, serious crime in the future by intervening at an early 'teachable' moment.<sup>6</sup>

REBOOT is aimed at children on the fringes of criminality, typically aged 14 and under, although young people up to the age of 17 can access it. It aims to change the course of young people's behaviour through a range of protocols and activities to build their self-confidence and encourage positive engagement with society.

The REBOOT programme has multiple stages, from police making home visits to encourage parents to understand the risks facing their children, to offering individualised and personal programmes for each

young person. YMCA DownsLink Group step in at this point to provide specialist coaching for the young person.

**“Our aim is to support young people into engaging with positive activities, so that they start to have a more positive experience of the world around them. Many of the young people who are referred have had very little opportunity to pursue their interests, or even find out what they are. Although often it's a physical activity that attracts them, from football and bouldering, to being around horses, we work to offer whatever attracts them whether that's make-up, coding or cooking.**

**Our intervention, not only provides an opportunity for young people to build self-confidence through trying something new, but crucially, it's also about creating a relationship with a coach, to help understand what drives them and provide a trusted adult outside of the home that they can rely on.”**

Of the 160 young people being coached by YMCA DownsLink Group, two-thirds (66%) said it had a positive impact on their personal goals; 61% said it had a positive impact on their resilience and self-esteem; 59% on their wellbeing.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, REBOOT Impact Report: Year One – 2019/20. May 2020

<sup>7</sup> ibid



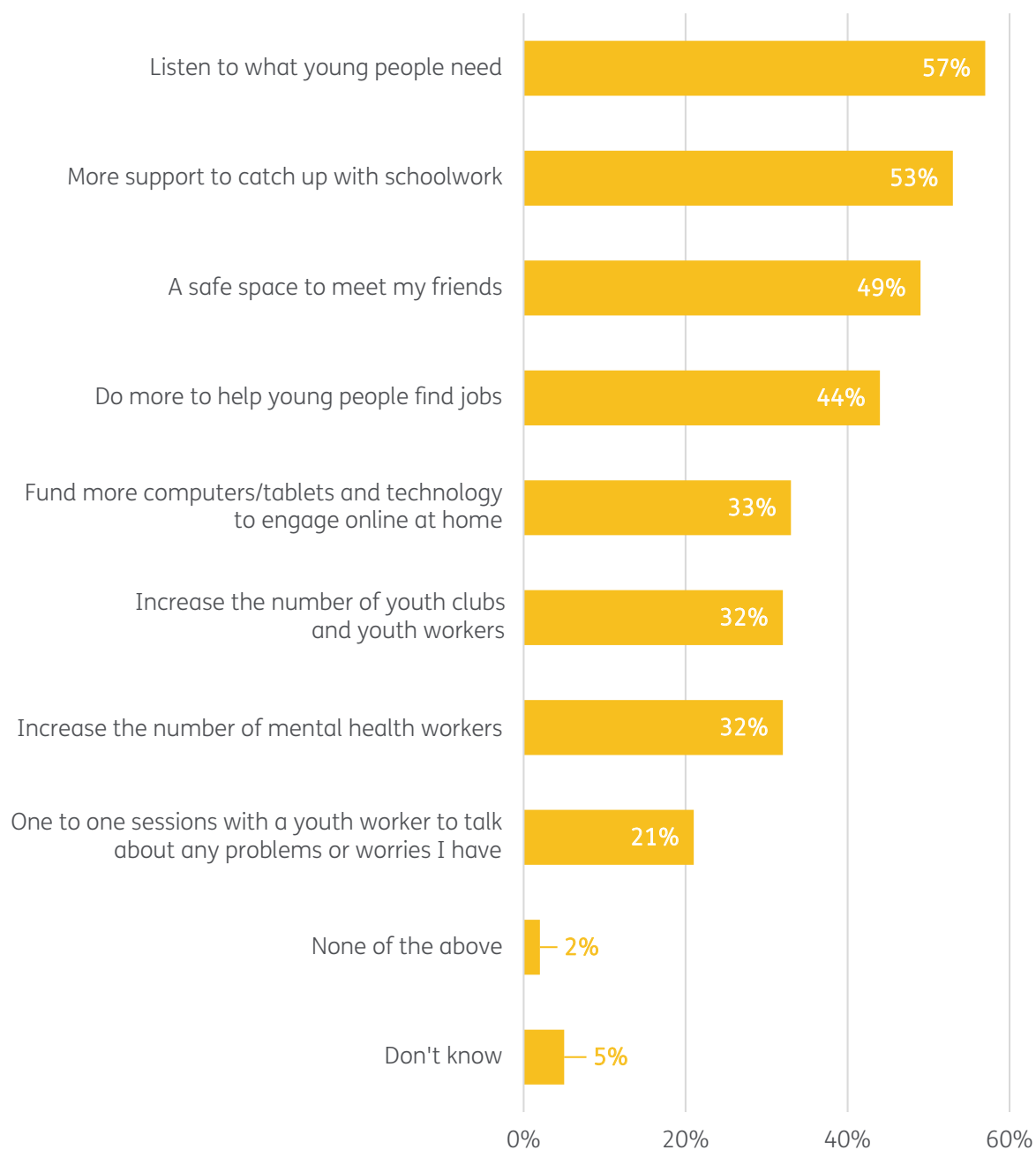
# WHAT SUPPORT DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT?

As plans to ease lockdown continue, it is paramount that young people's concerns, worries and futures are placed front and centre of recovery strategies. A briefing published by the Children's Commissioner for England in August implored for children to be kept at the heart of any planning for future COVID-19 lockdowns, with schools to be the last establishments to close and the first to reopen – and for children's perspectives to be better reflected in scientific and public health advice.<sup>8</sup>

Young people echo this sentiment. Almost three-in-five think the Government should listen to what young people need as lockdown eases (57%). More than half think the Government should provide support to help them catch up with schoolwork (53%), and with the potential of time spent in the home front-of-mind, a third think the Government should fund more computers, tablets and technology so young people can engage online at home (33%).

<sup>8</sup> Children's Commissioner, [Briefing: Putting children first in future lockdowns](#). 4 August 2020

**CHART 13:** WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO TO SUPPORT YOU COMING OUT OF LOCKDOWN AND RETURNING TO NORMAL LIFE?



BASE: All respondents (n=1,009), July 2020

Half of young people think the Government should support them coming out of lockdown and returning to normality by providing a safe space to meet their friends. For almost a third of young people, the Government should increase the number of youth clubs and youth workers (32%), and a third also think the Government should increase the number of mental health workers (32%). One-in-five young people think they should be supported with one-to-one sessions with a youth worker to talk about any problems or worries they have (21%).

Young people are lonely, isolated and anxious and are trying to find their feet in a world with many of the features they recognise, but mired in change. With much of childhood put on hold over the past several months, young people must be provided with the safe spaces and support to help place their lives back on track.

Youth services are more than a place to hold a game of football or learn a new craft. They serve as an ecosystem of support, personal development and social interaction. This is precisely what young people have lost since the pandemic. Given the intense disruption to normality and the threat of a deadly virus ready to strike upon a step outside their front door, youth services will prove a vital resource in helping young people rebuild their world.

# CONCLUSION

Young people are lonely, digitally fatigued, strained at home and facing more of a mental health crisis than loomed before the COVID-19 pandemic.

YMCA welcomes the support the Government has already announced for children and young people. From the £650 million support package in education<sup>9</sup>, to the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme to help young people into work<sup>10</sup>, and the £500 million for youth services over five years.<sup>11</sup> However, we must ensure this benefits the young people who need the most support, and at a time they need it. This means spending in the short term to help young people get back on track at school, home and the wider world, to assuring long term provision of services where we must ensure there is no lasting damage.

**We are calling on the Government to create a Cross Departmental Strategy for Children and Young People's recovery from COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown. This strategy must guarantee:**

## **1. EDUCATION**

- Schools are adequately equipped and resourced through funding and guidance on spending. They will identify young people who are struggling, with a stronger focus on the most disadvantaged pupils, and emphasise young people's holistic wellbeing.

<sup>9</sup> UK Government, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) catch-up premium](#), 20 July 2020

<sup>10</sup> UK Government, [A Plan for Jobs 2020](#), 8 July 2020

<sup>11</sup> UK Government, [Chancellor announces support for post-Brexit future \(press release\)](#), 30 September 2019

- ▶ All young people have access to careers when they leave school. Take up of the Kickstart Scheme<sup>12</sup> and traineeships should be measured to ensure that it reaches those that need it most. This includes assessing who is not ‘work ready’ or NEET (not in employment, education or training) to ensure they can gain the skills to access these programmes.
- ▶ Continually measure and review the impact of COVID-19 on this generation of young people, through key indicators such as NEET and Universal Credit claims.

## 2. LONELINESS

- ▶ Release some of the £500 million investment for youth services so that providers can immediately deliver extra services aimed at young people’s recovery post-COVID-19. This will allow young people to see each other face-to-face again in a safe environment, and fund both universal open access services as well as targeted youth work programmes.
- ▶ Develop a sustainable funding model for how youth services are funded so that all young people have a service in their area regardless of where they live for continued provision into the future.

<sup>12</sup> UK Government, [Chancellor announces support for post-Brexit future \(press release\)](#), 30 September 2019



### **3. MENTAL HEALTH**

- ▶ CAMHS are equipped to support the potential growing numbers of young people needing support, ensuring short waiting times and easy referral and access.
- ▶ Work preventatively to support schools and youth services based in communities to run programmes which support positive mental wellbeing, avoiding young people reaching crisis point.
- ▶ Continually measure the impact of mental health difficulties on this generation of young people and have a fully integrated approach to mental health across all services which interact with young people.

### **4. FAMILY STRAIN**

- ▶ Ensure Local Authorities have adequate funding for child protection and safeguarding to intervene where needed, but also fund community family services to prevent permanently damaged relationships.
- ▶ Give families a chance to have a break away from each other through supporting the resourcing and reopening of childcare provision, schools and youth services.
- ▶ Review the ways in which child poverty and financial hardship can be relieved in families that need it to ensure no child has to worry about money.

The strategy should focus on the short-term goals of immediate recovery but continually measure the impact of COVID-19 on this generation of young people so that in the long term the strategy can reflect the measures needed to fix any lasting damage.

This cannot be the “lost coronavirus generation”, and must instead be the generation that saw the true strength and resilience of this country to pull together and support the people who need it most.









# CONTACT DETAILS

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YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION