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PARTNER Midlands

MIDLAND REGIONAL DRUG & ALCOHOL TASK FORCE

PLANET YOUTH REPORT 2025

COUNTY WESTMEATH

HSE

Prepared by the Midlands Planet Youth Research sub-group
(of the Midlands Planet Youth Oversight Group) on behalf of
the Midland Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force.

November 2026.

Acknowledgements

The Midland Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force (MRDATF) would like to extend its sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the planning, data collection and completion of the Midlands Planet Youth Reports.

We would like to acknowledge the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) for allocating the resources to support the rollout of the Planet Youth Project across the Midlands area.

We would like to thank all the young people who took part in the Planet Youth Midlands survey and shared their experiences, views and perspectives. Their participation is central to this work and provides an important foundation for understanding how young people across the Midlands are growing, learning and living.

We are grateful to the participating secondary schools and out-of-school settings for facilitating the survey and supporting its administration. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the principals, Planet Youth school coordinators, teachers and staff who gave their time and assistance to make the survey possible.

We would also like to thank the Midlands Planet Youth Oversight Committee and the Research and Analysis Sub-group for their ongoing support, advice and leadership throughout the process, and their continued dedication to supporting the rollout of the Planet Youth Project.

Special thanks to HSE Public Health for their expertise, guidance, ethical oversight and ongoing support throughout the process. Thank you to Dr James O'Connell of CreateWell Futures for conducting a very comprehensive data analysis and preparing the reports. Finally, we acknowledge Planet Youth Iceland for their guidance, expertise and support in implementing the Planet Youth approach in the Midlands.



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WHAT OUR STUDENTS TOLD US

Key Findings

Alcohol, smoking & vaping

68% Alcohol use in their lifetime

41% Vaped in their lifetime

36% Drunk in the last 30 days†

27% Smoked in their lifetime

26% Had a drink of alcohol at age 13 or younger

17% Vapes daily

Health & wellbeing

65% Rate their physical health as good or very good

54% Less than 8 hours sleep per night on average

47% Rate their mental health as good or very good

43% Report ever having had suicidal thoughts

32% Restricted food intake for 3 months or more

† Asked only of the students who reported ever using alcohol.

Screens & online life

85% Has a phone in their bedroom at night

74% Report feeling safe online often or always

66% Uses social media 3 or more hours per day

24% Watched pornography at age 13 or younger

18% Has been asked to send a sexually explicit image of themselves in the last year

School, family & community

84% Report having friends at school that care about them

80% Report their parents/carers know where they are in the evenings

72% Report there are adults at school that care about them

47% Report being bullied at school by someone

41% Report having a suitable outdoor youth space in their area

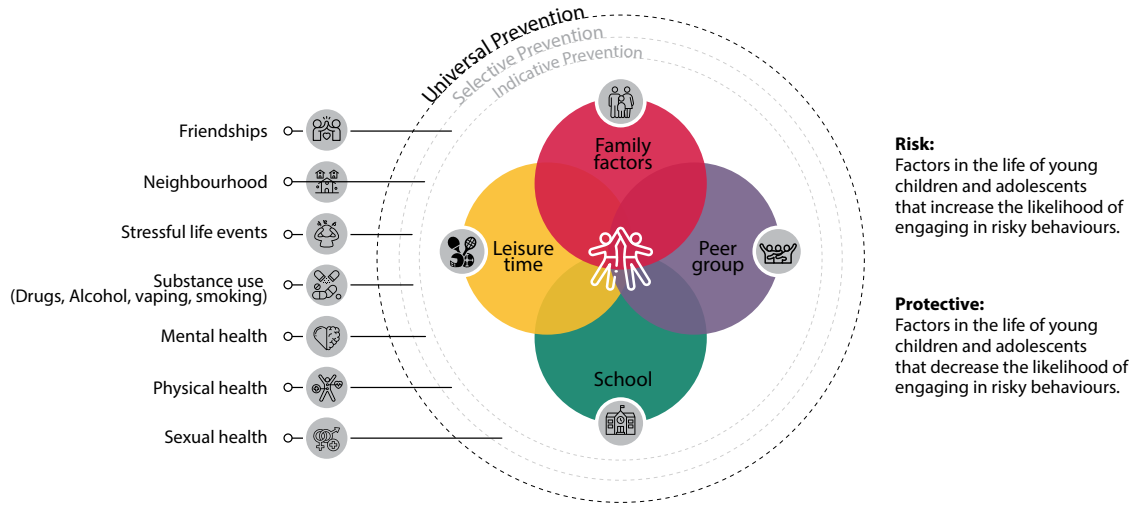
29% Outside after midnight once or more in the last week

17% Does not participate in any supervised out-of-school activities

Introduction

Planet Youth is an international prevention model that supports communities to improve young people's health and wellbeing. A key focus of Planet Youth is drug and alcohol use prevention. Originating from the Icelandic Prevention Model, it is based on the understanding that young people's health, wellbeing and behaviour are shaped not only by individual choices, but also by the environments in which they grow up. Family, peers, school, community life and the wider social environment all influence the opportunities young people have to live well and feel well.

Planet Youth is a cyclical five-year process of data gathering, analysis, dissemination, action and evaluation. It involves taking a population health and prevention approach by helping communities understand the risk and protective factors influencing young people's health, wellbeing and behaviour. In doing so, Planet Youth provides a shared evidence base for action.



Planet Youth Midlands was undertaken as a regional, collaborative process across Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath. It involved partnership and engagement with schools, youth and community organisations, statutory agencies, health and social care services, local structures and other stakeholders across the region. At the centre of this work was the Planet Youth survey, completed anonymously by young people in participating schools and out-of-school settings. As an expression of young people's voices, the findings are intended to help partners across the Midlands ask what can be strengthened, what needs attention, and where coordinated action could make the greatest difference.

Methods

The Planet Youth Midlands survey was carried out between November and December 2025. Participants were post-Junior Certificate students attending participating post-primary schools and out-of-school settings. Out-of-school settings included alternative education and training pathways in Ireland, such as iScoil, Youthreach Centres and Community Training Centres, which support young people who have disengaged from mainstream education to continue their learning and work towards recognised qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications.

In total, students from 40 post-primary schools and 12 out-of-school settings took part. Data were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire administered through the Alchemer platform. The survey was completed during classroom hours, or equivalent supervised time in out-of-school settings. Participation was voluntary. Students could complete the survey in whole or in part, skip any question, or change their mind about participating at any time.

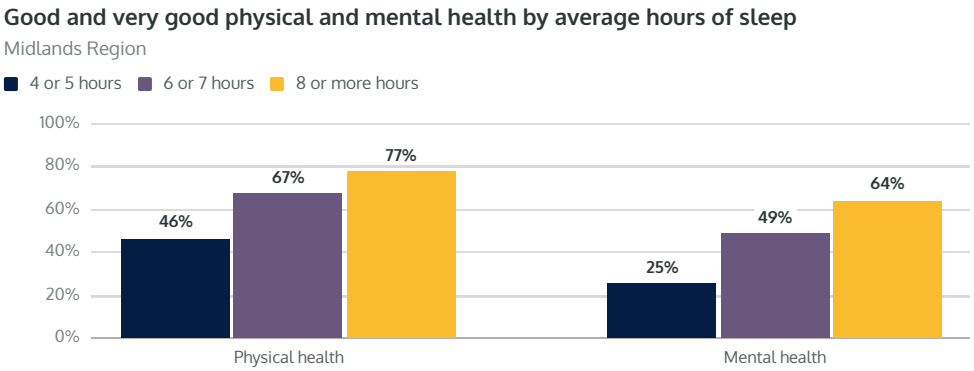
The questionnaire covered a broad range of topics relevant to young people's lives, including substance use, parents and family, school life, peer relationships, leisure time, community, health and wellbeing, and online life. Because not every student answered every question, the number of responses varies across indicators. Percentages in this report are therefore calculated using the number of valid responses available for each question.

Before analysis, the dataset was cleaned to remove records where 25% or less of the survey had been completed. As an additional quality check, respondents who reported lifetime use of a fictitious drug were removed from the dataset.

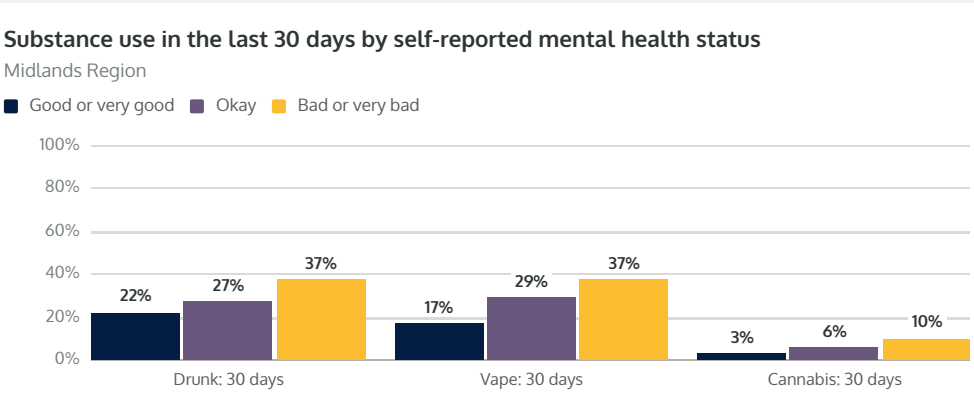
Regional, county and school-level reports have been prepared using the survey findings. In this report, county-level findings are reported according to gender. County and regional-level findings are also shown in the latter half of this report. To protect confidentiality and avoid overinterpreting small numbers, statistical disclosure-control rules were applied. Where data are suppressed, this does not mean that an issue is absent or present; it means that the number of responses was too small to report safely. When comparing results by gender, these rules meant that reportable findings were restricted to male and female categories only.

Cross-Tab Interpretation

Cross-tabulations show how the percentage of young people reporting a particular outcome differs across groups. They are useful for identifying patterns and relationships in the data, but they should not be interpreted as proving that one factor directly causes another. Below are examples of how to interpret cross-tabulations.



Interpretation: The findings show a clear gradient between sleep and self-rated health. Good or very good physical and mental health were more commonly reported among young people who reported 8 or more hours of sleep than among those who reported less sleep.



Interpretation: Substance use in the last 30 days was more common among young people who reported their mental health as bad or very bad than among those who reported it as good or very good.

Study Sample

Across the Midlands Region, the response rate was 83%. Across all counties, a response rate of above 80% was achieved. This indicates that the results are likely to represent the target population well and with minimal risk of systematic bias due to non-participation.

Area	Valid Responses (n)	Enrolled Students (N)	Response Rate (%)
Laois	822	987	83%
Westmeath	1,116	1,321	84%
Longford	742	896	83%
Offaly	892	1,098	81%
Region	3,572	4,302	83%

The sample analysed in this report excluded 194 valid responses from students who indicated they were foreign exchange students. As a result, the analytical sample size was 3,378.

Sample by Gender				
	Female	Male	Other/Prefer not to say/Unknown	Total
Westmeath	555	435	37	1,027
Midlands Region	1,666	1,630	82	3,378



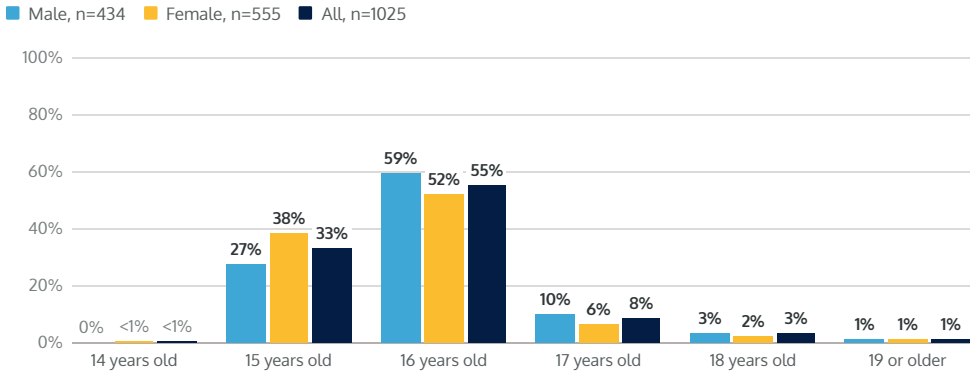
County by Gender Profile



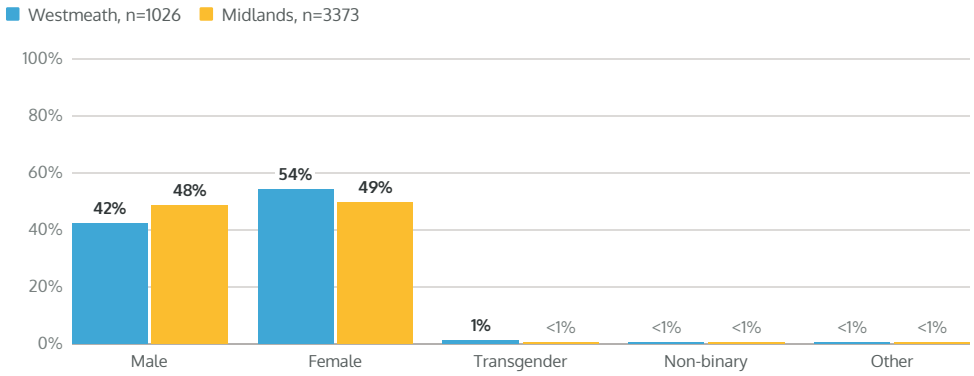
Respondent Profile

This section describes the characteristics of the young people who took part in the Planet Youth Midlands survey. It provides important context for interpreting and understanding the findings in the rest of the report, including demographic characteristics such as age, gender, school year and ethnicity, and sociodemographic characteristics such as parental occupation and education.

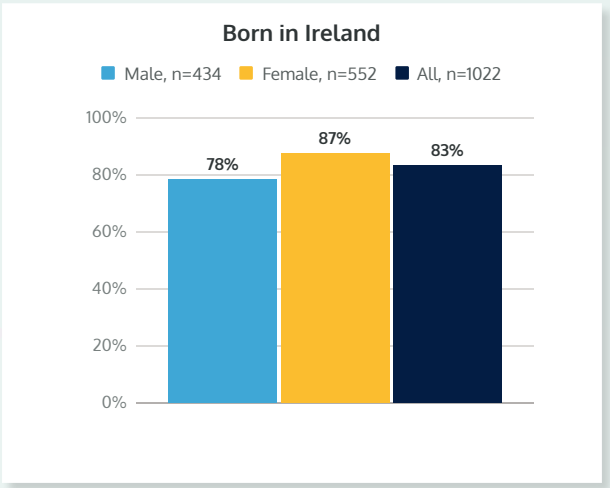
Age distribution

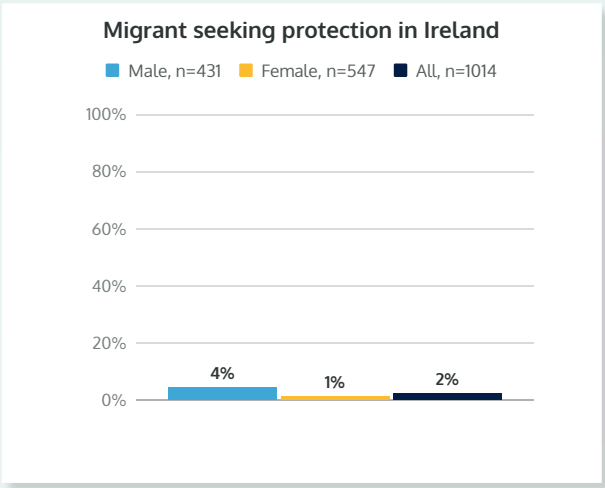


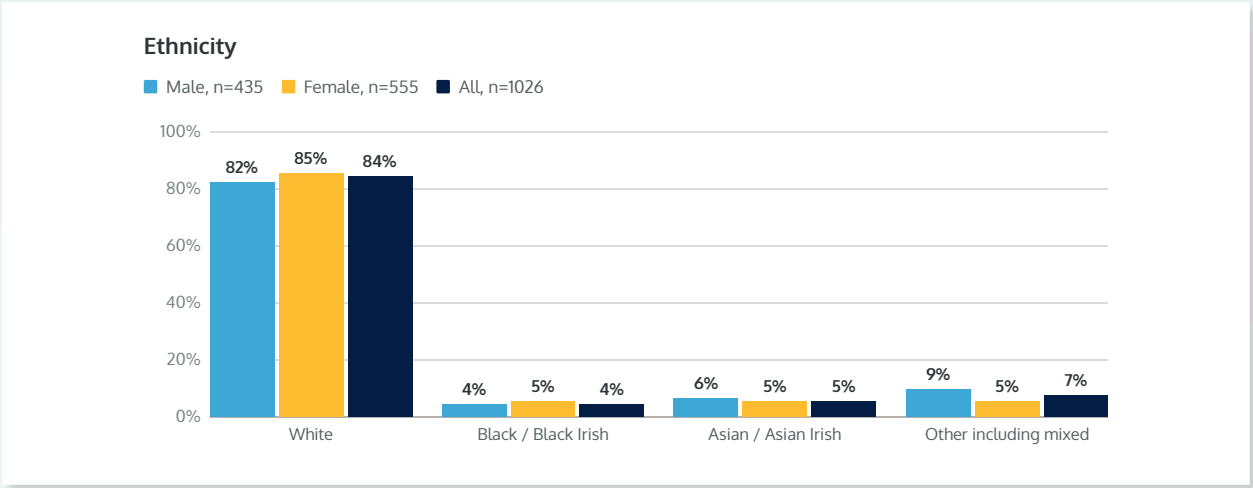
Gender

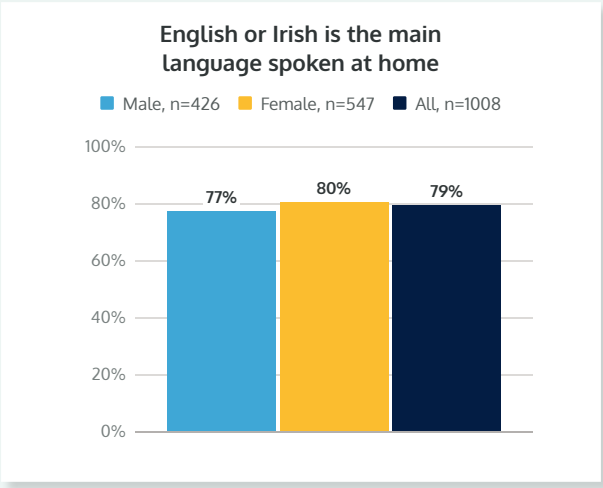


Respondent Profile

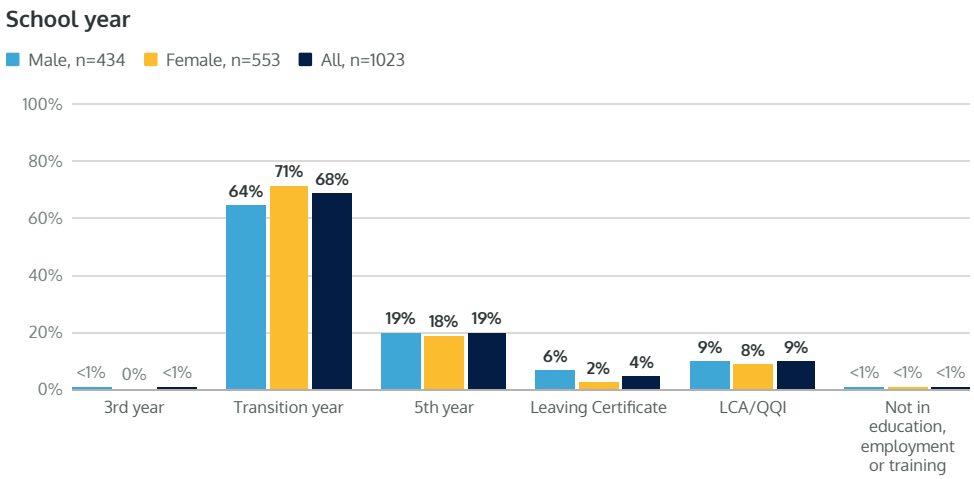


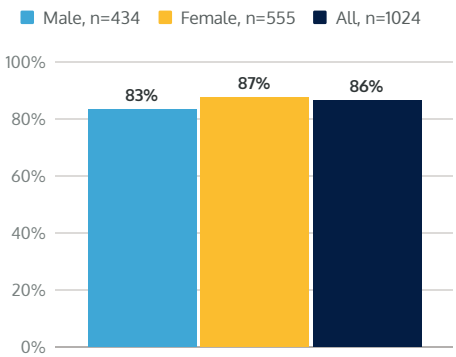


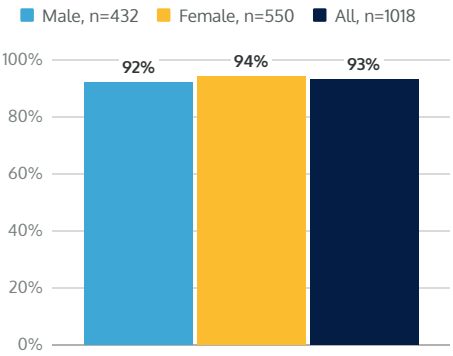


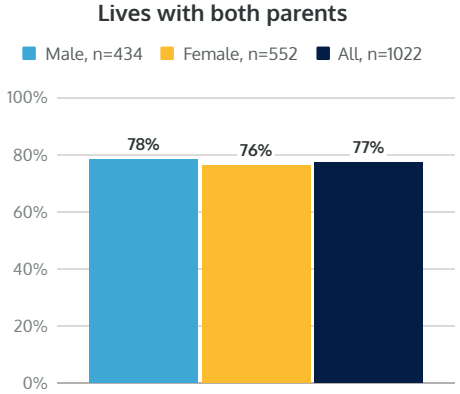


Respondent Profile



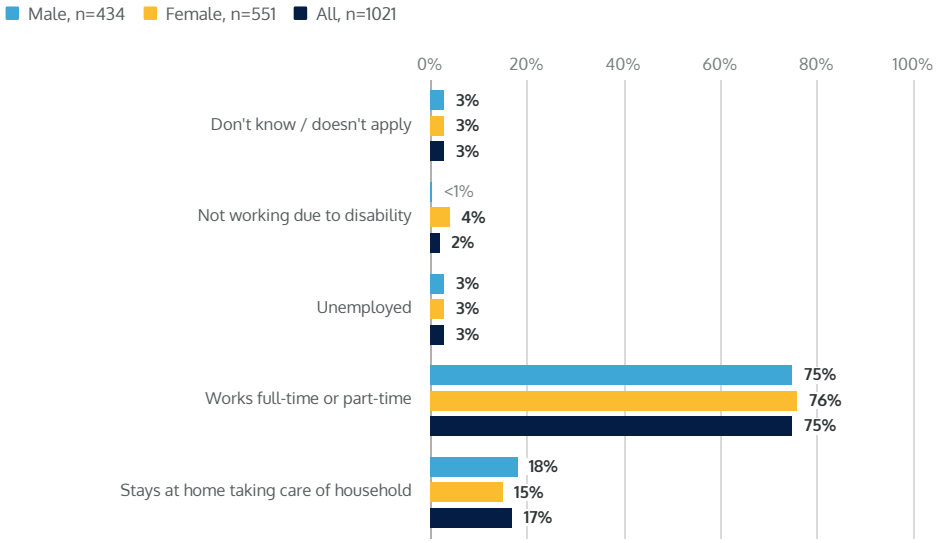




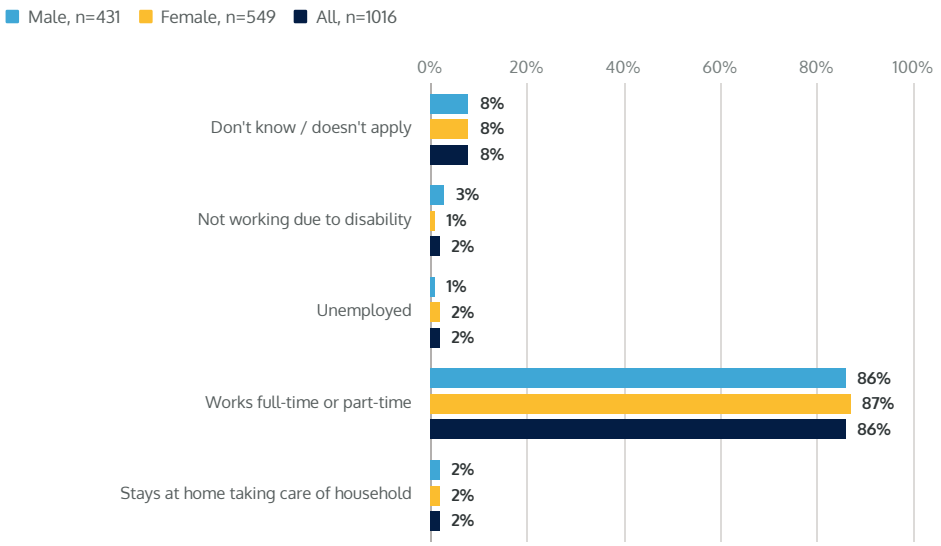


Respondent Profile

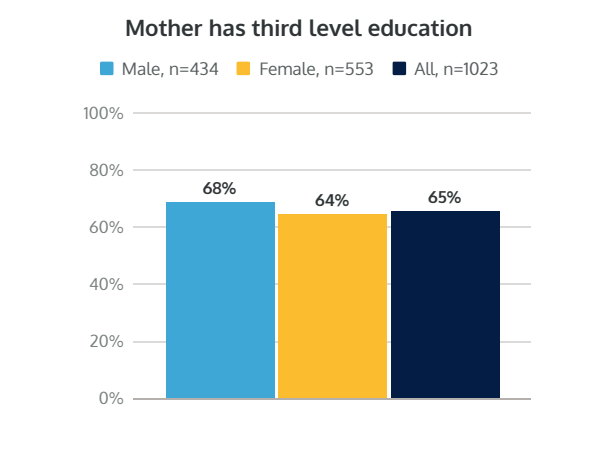
Mother's occupation

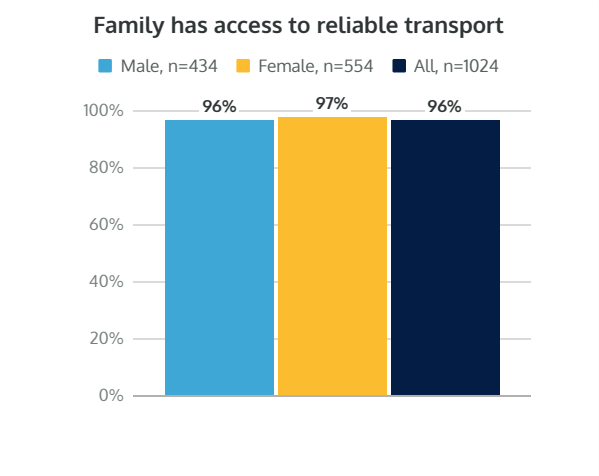


Father's occupation



Respondent Profile











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Substance Use

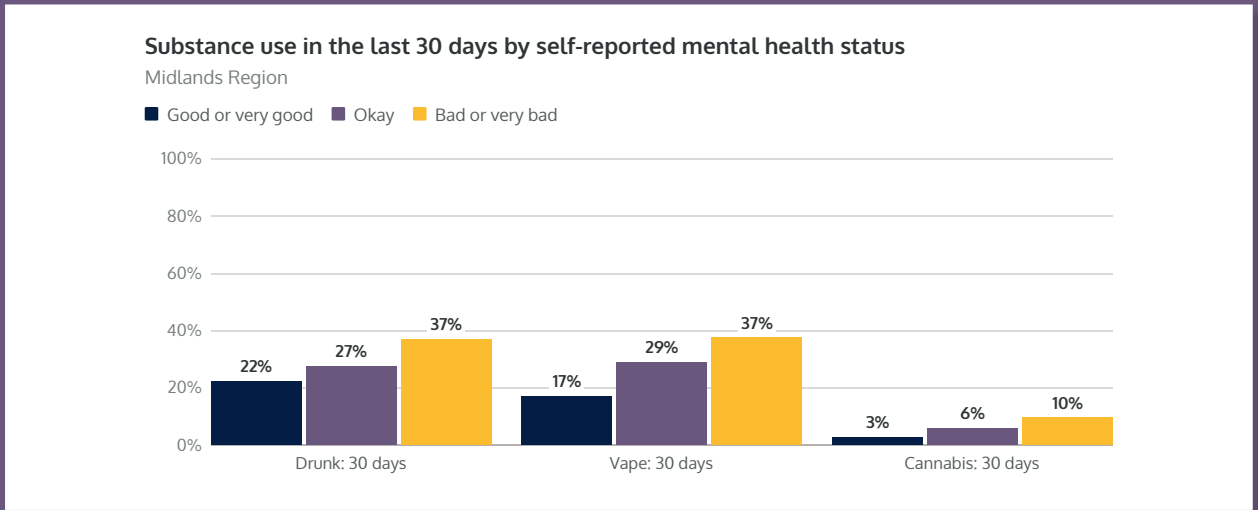
This section describes young people's reported use of alcohol, vaping products, tobacco, cannabis and other substances. It includes reasons for use, sources of substances, perceptions of harm and drug-related risks.

Across the county, 68% of respondents reported alcohol use in their lifetime and 44% reported alcohol use in the past 30 days. Among young people who had consumed alcohol in their lifetime, 59% reported having been drunk at some point and 36% reported having been drunk in the past 30 days.

Vaping was also common among young people in the county. Over forty per cent of respondents reported vaping in their lifetime, 24% reported vaping in the past 30 days and 17% reported daily vaping. Although most young people (85%) agreed that vaping damages the lungs and that vapes are addictive (74%), 31% agreed that vaping helps reduce stress. Cannabis use was less common than alcohol or vaping, with 13% reporting cannabis use in their lifetime and 6% reporting use in the past 30 days. Other substance use was generally less commonly reported.

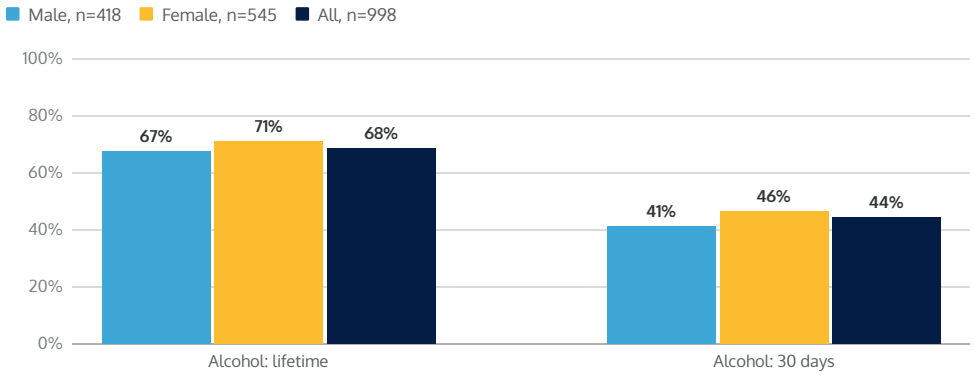
Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data demonstrated that recent substance use was more common among young people who rated their mental health as bad or very bad compared with good or very good.

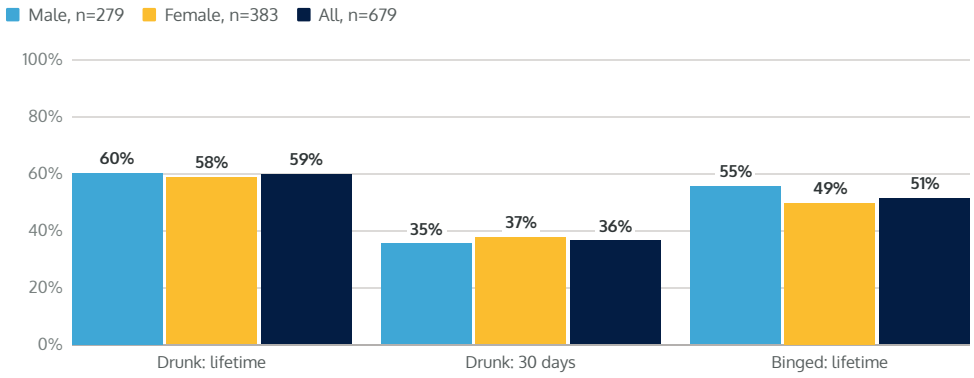


Substance Use

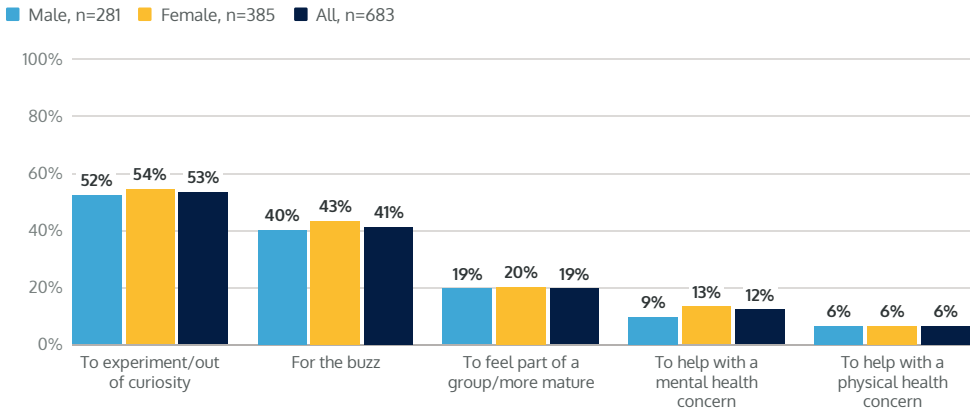
Alcohol use: lifetime and in the past 30 days



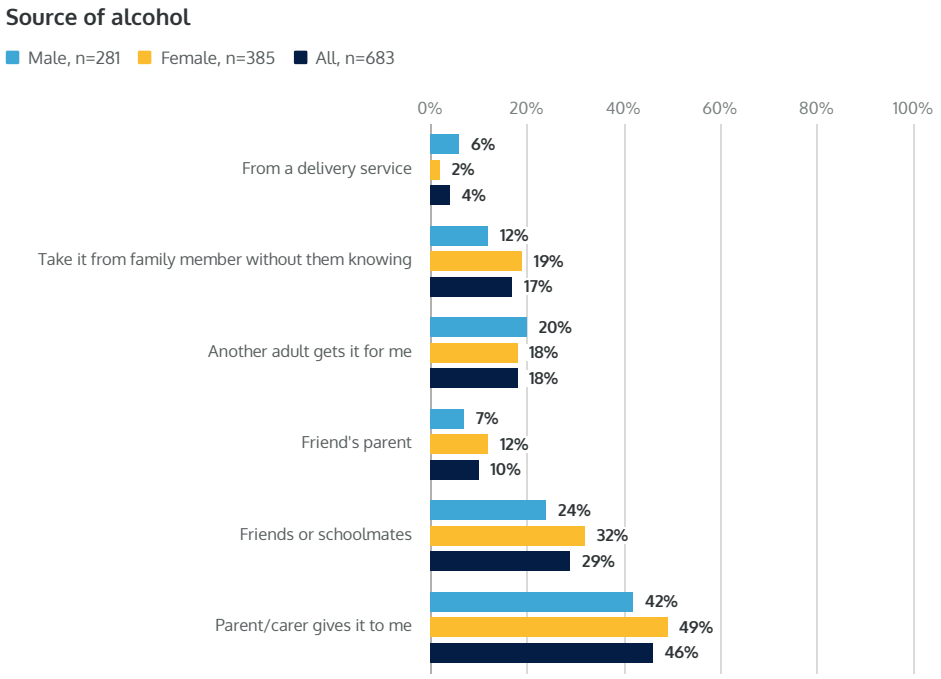
Drunk and binge drinking among those who consumed alcohol in their lifetime

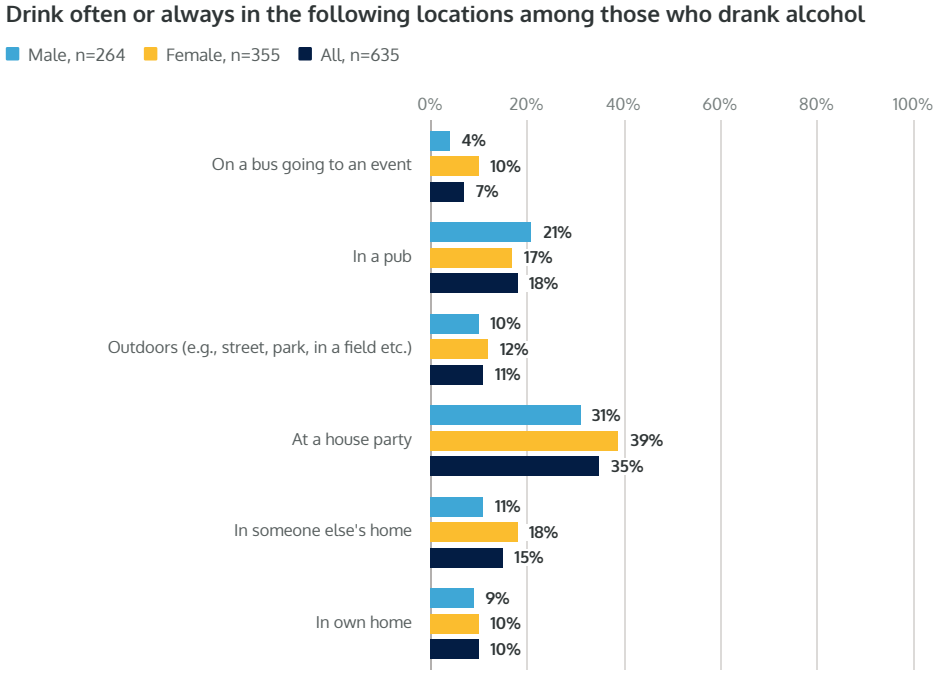


Reasons for drinking alcohol



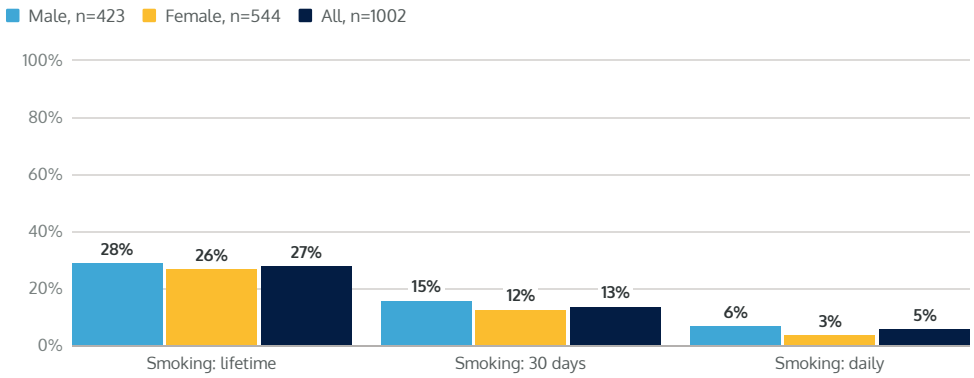
Substance Use



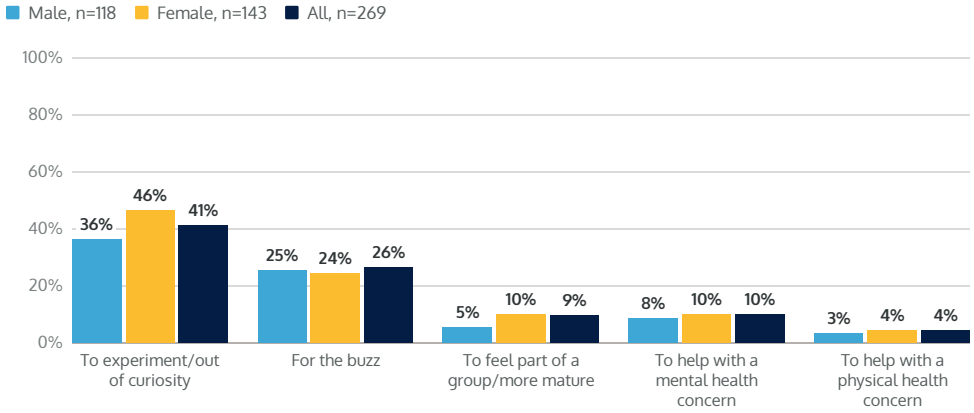


Substance Use

Smoking: lifetime, past 30 days and daily

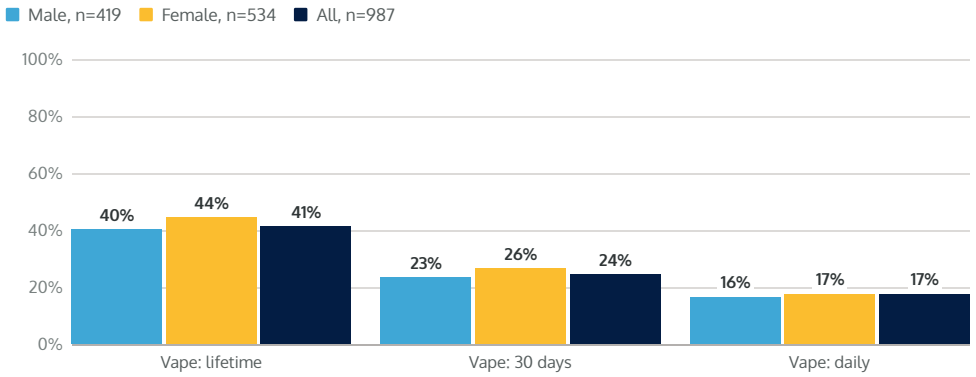


Reasons for smoking

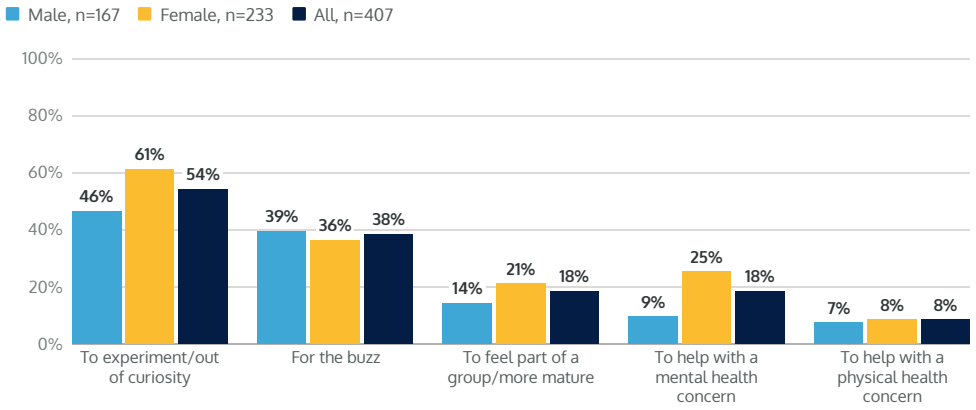


Substance Use

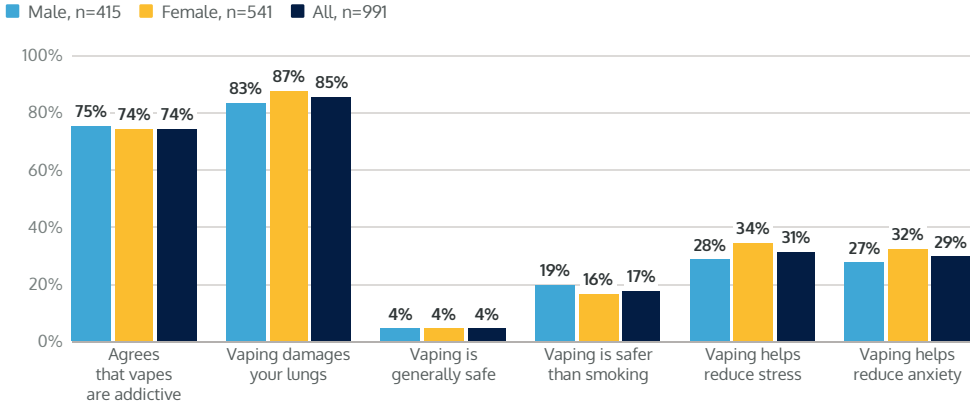
Vaping: lifetime, past 30 days and daily



Reasons for vaping

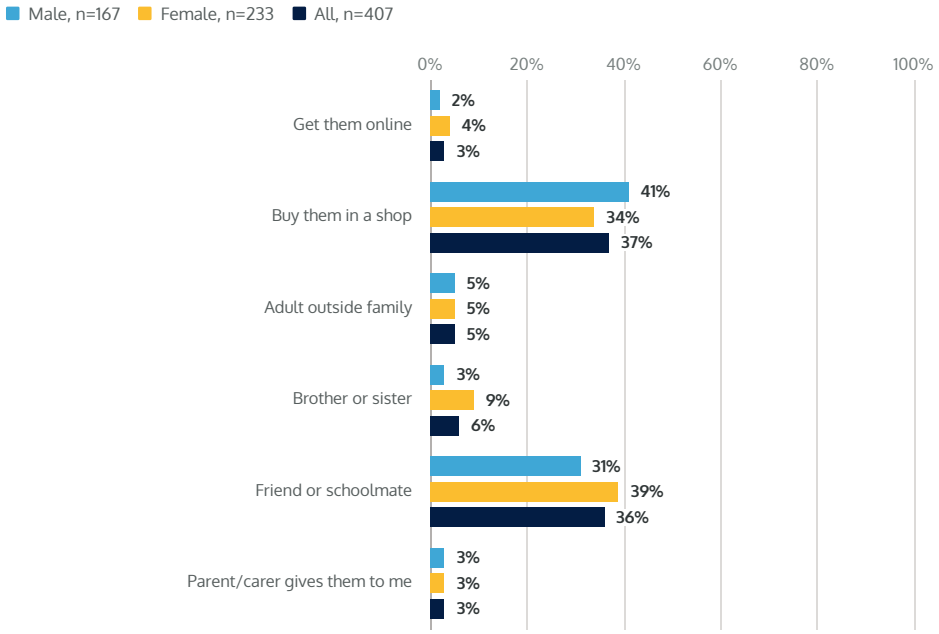


Perceptions of vaping

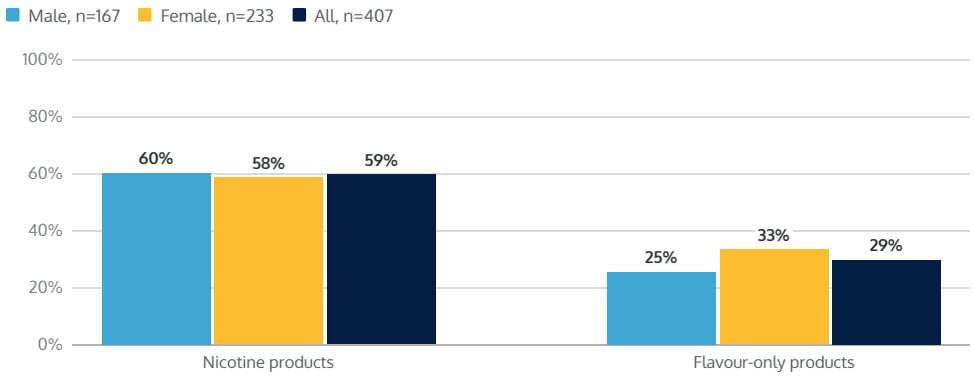


Substance Use

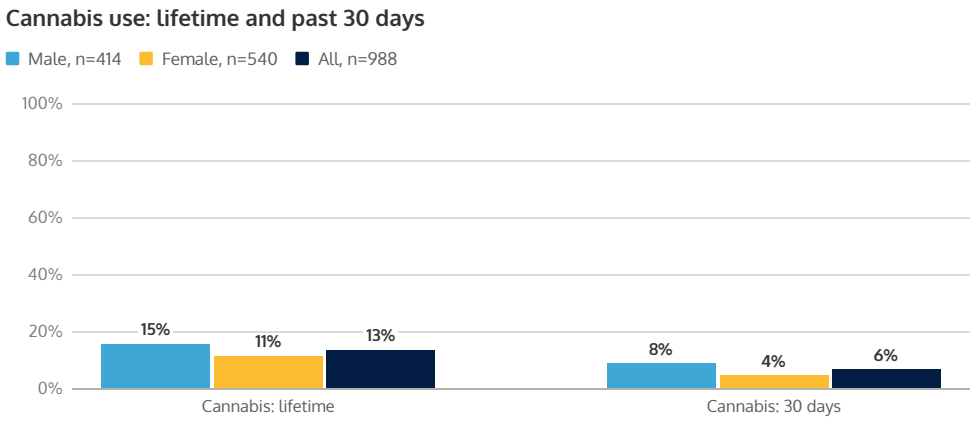
Source of vaping products

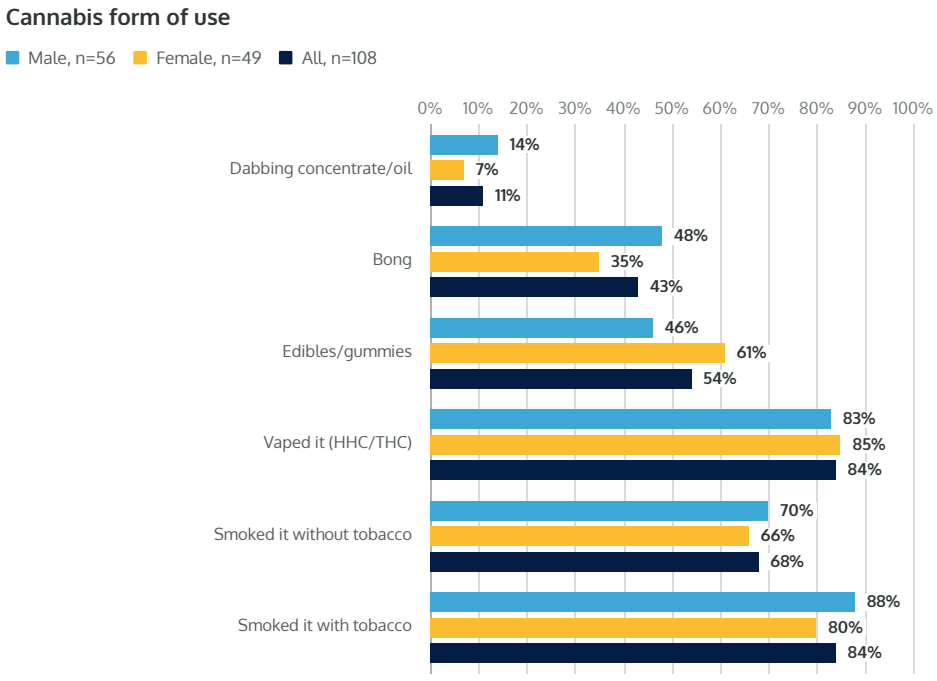


Products vaped



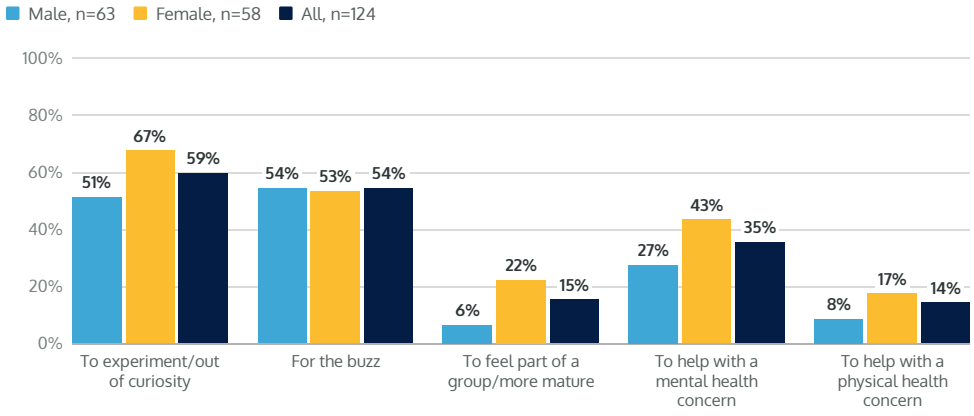
Substance Use



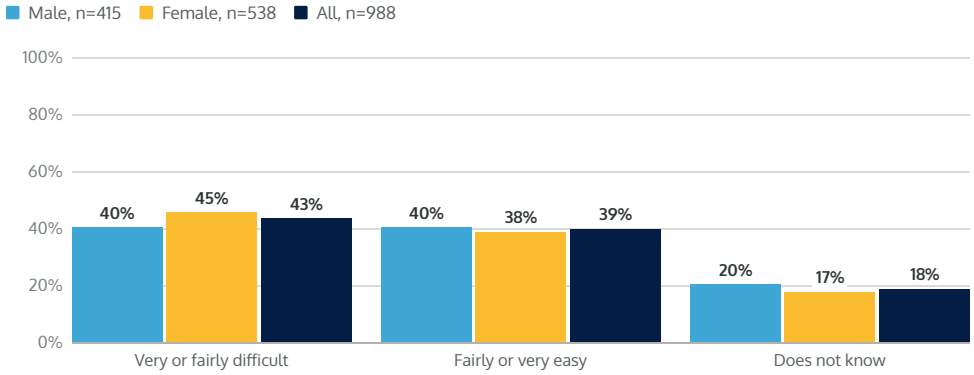


Substance Use

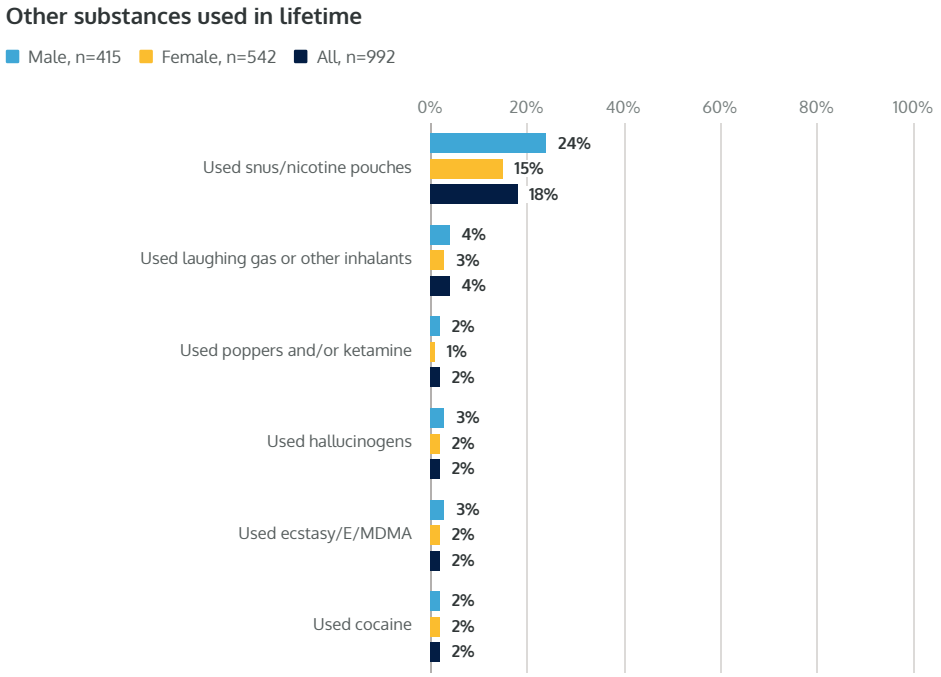
Reasons for cannabis use

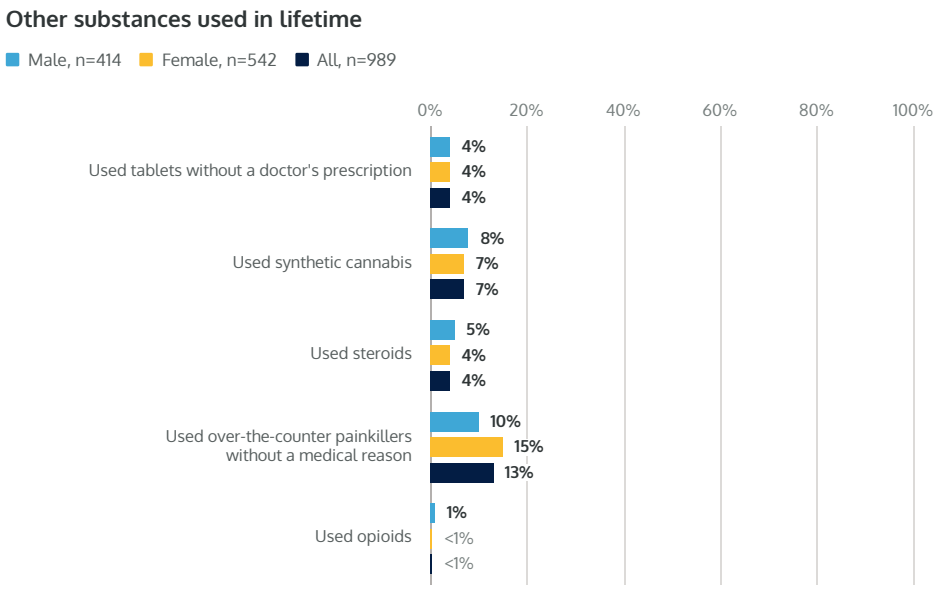


Difficulty getting cannabis



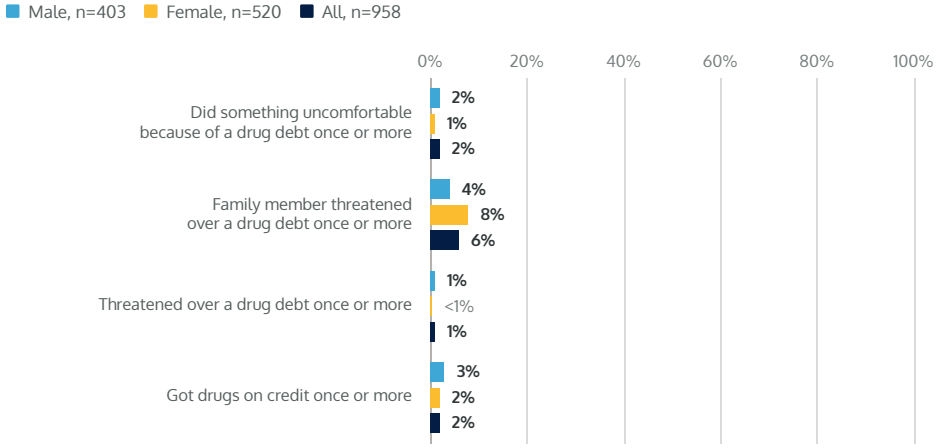
Substance Use



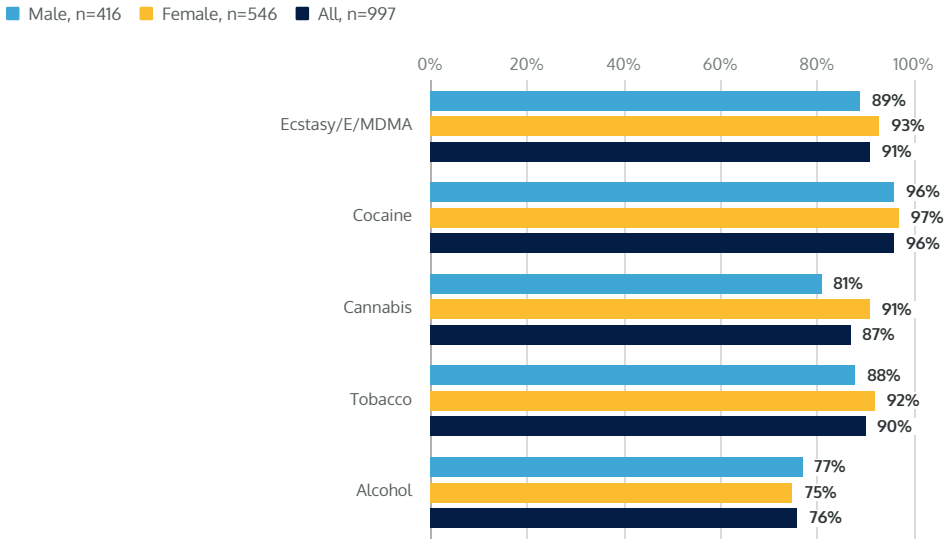


Substance Use

Drug-related debts and intimidation



Perceived as harmful or very harmful









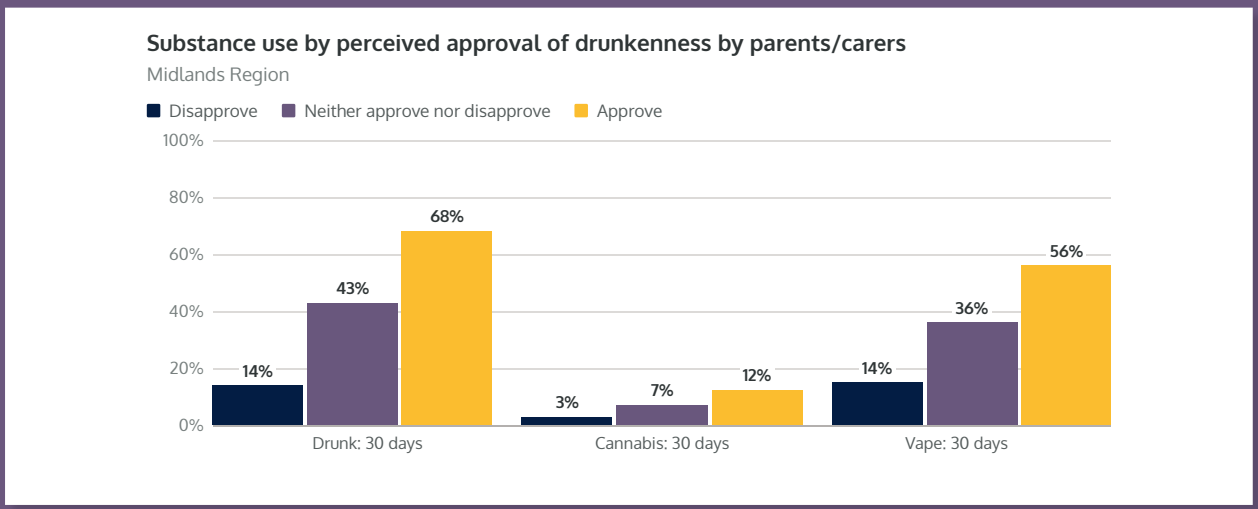
Parents & Family

This section describes young people's relationship with their parents, including parental support, monitoring and perceived parental attitudes towards substance use.

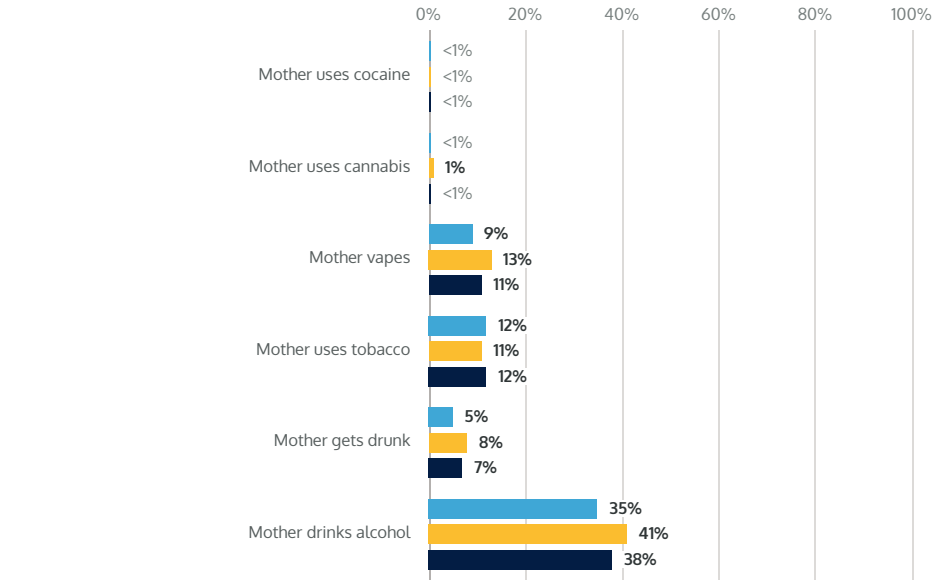
Across the county, most young people (88%) reported that it was easy or very easy to receive caring and warmth from their parents or carers. Many also reported that their parents or carers know where they are in the evenings (80%), know who they are with (80%), and know their friends (83%). At the same time, the findings show areas where further support may be useful. Fewer young people reported that their parents or carers know the parents of their friends (55%), and only around half reported definite rules about what they can do at home or when they should be home in the evening. Perceived parental disapproval was very high for smoking (93%), vaping (89%), cannabis (95%) and cocaine use (99%), but was much lower for getting drunk (67%).

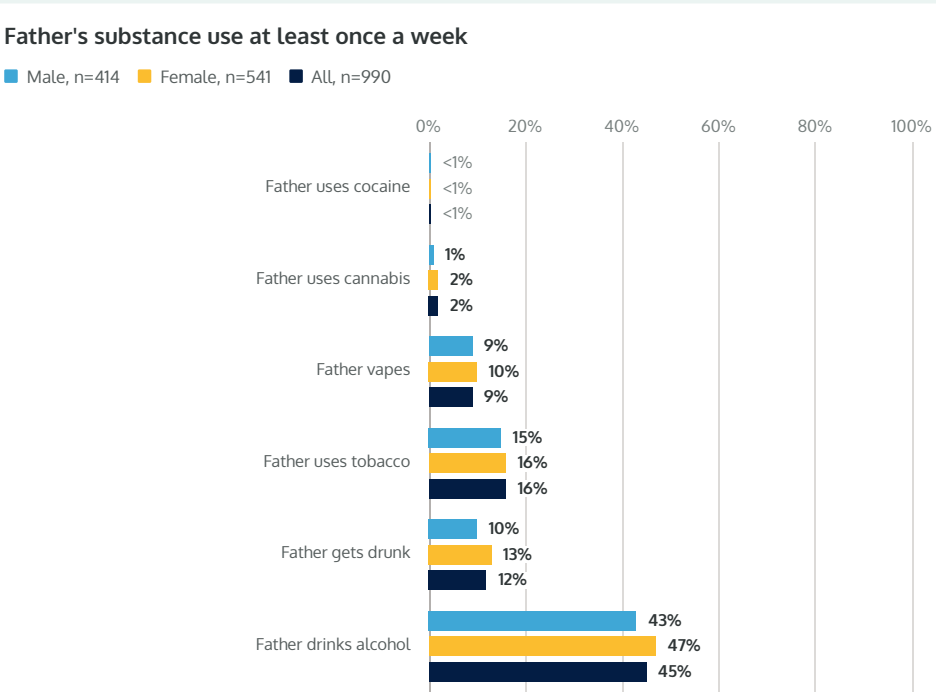
Regional Insights

Across the regional-level parent and family cross-tabulations, recent substance use was generally lower where young people reported stronger parental connection, monitoring and boundaries. This pattern was seen across several indicators, including spending time with parents or carers at weekends, parents knowing where young people are in the evening, parents setting definite rules about being home in the evening, and ease of receiving caring and warmth from parents. The strongest pattern was seen for perceived parental/carer approval of drunkenness, with recent drunkenness, vaping and cannabis use all notably higher among young people who felt their parents or carers approved of them getting drunk.

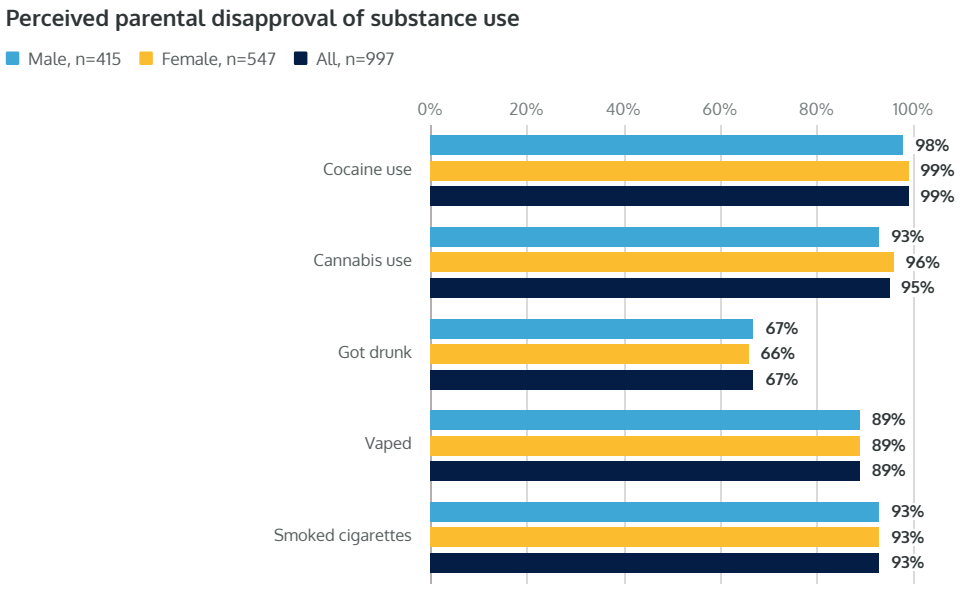


Parents & Family

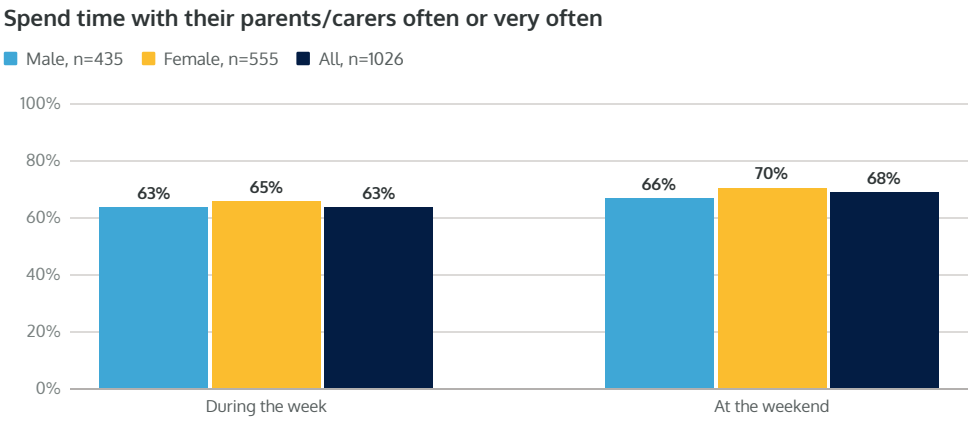




Parents & Family

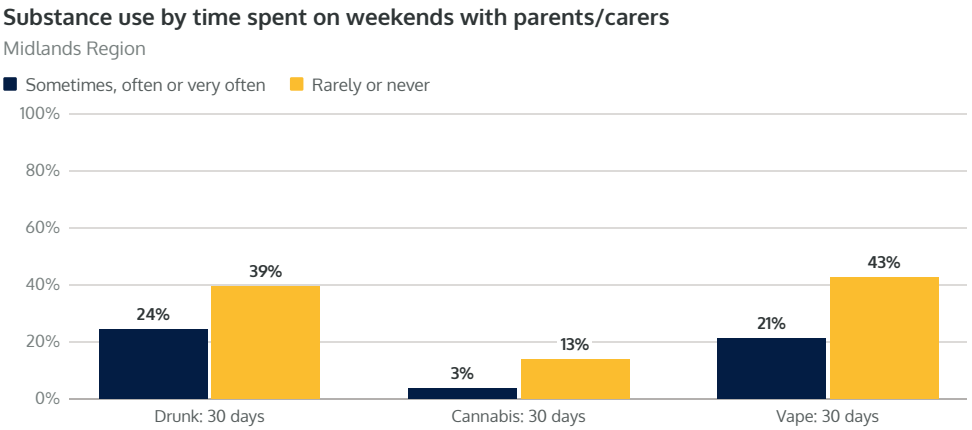


Parents & Family

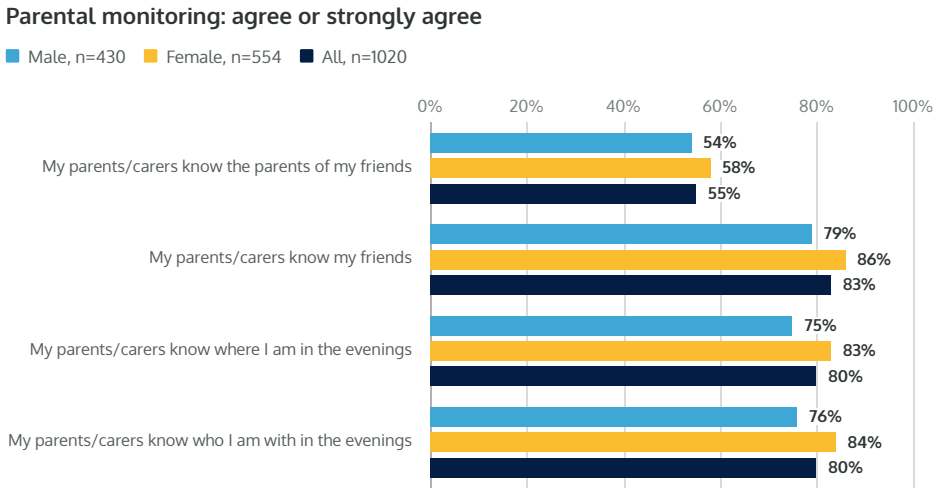


Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent drunkenness, cannabis use and vaping were lower among young people who spent time with their parents or carers at weekends sometimes, often or very often, compared with those who rarely or never did so.

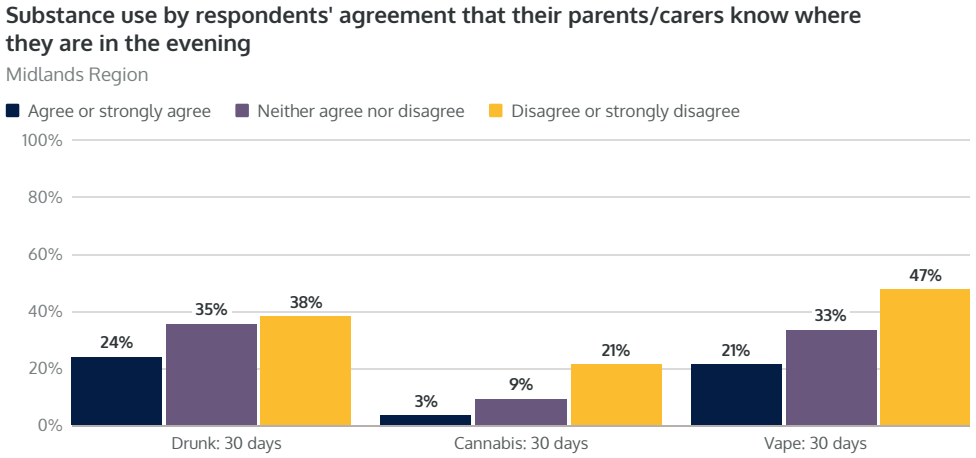


Parents & Family

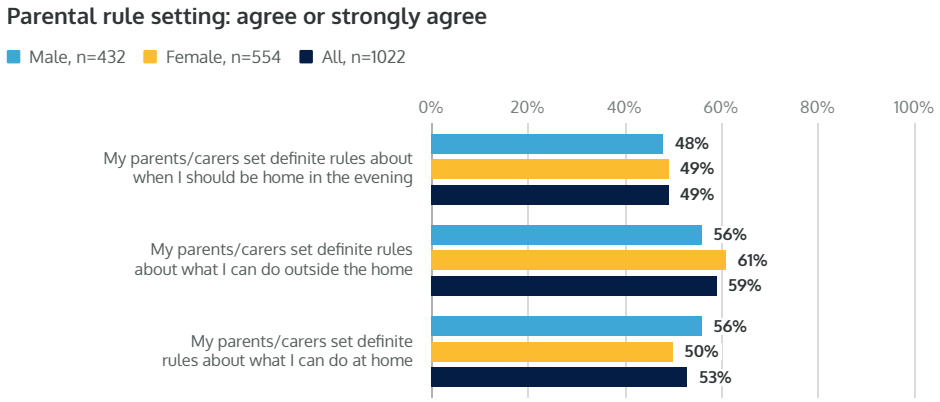


Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent drunkenness, cannabis use and vaping were lower among young people who agreed that their parents or carers know where they are in the evening.

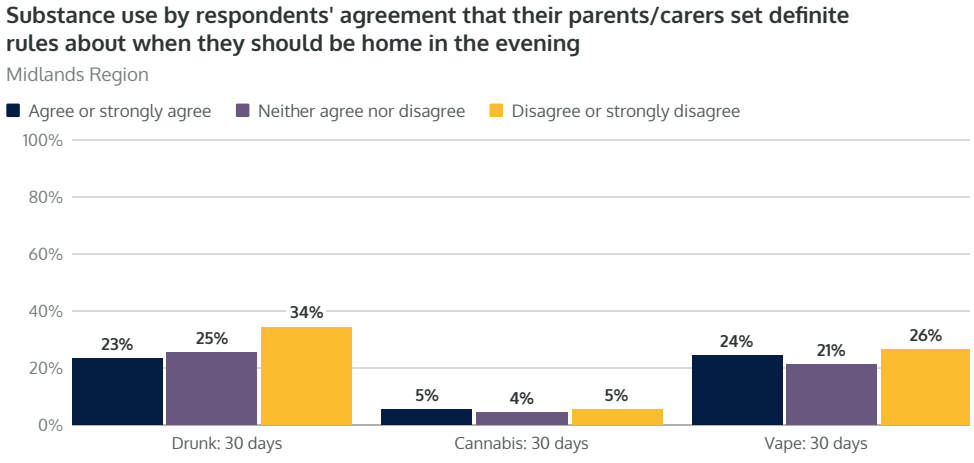


Parents & Family

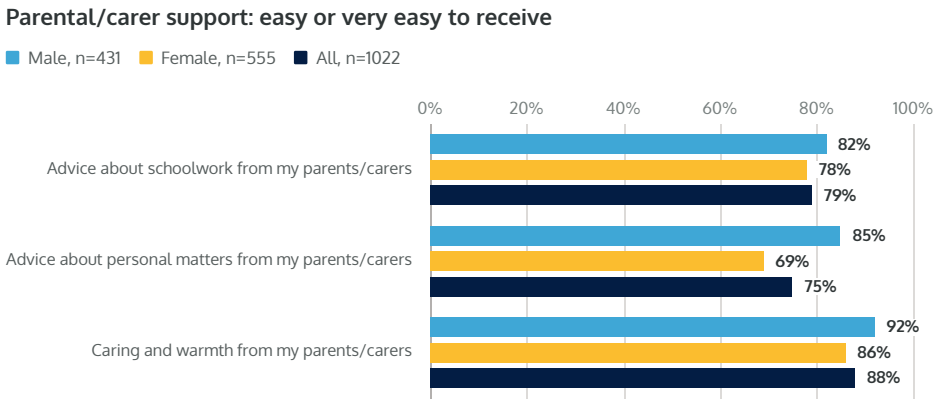


Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent drunkenness was higher among young people who disagreed that their parents or carers set definite rules about when they should be home in the evening. However, the pattern was less clear for cannabis use and vaping, where differences between groups were smaller.

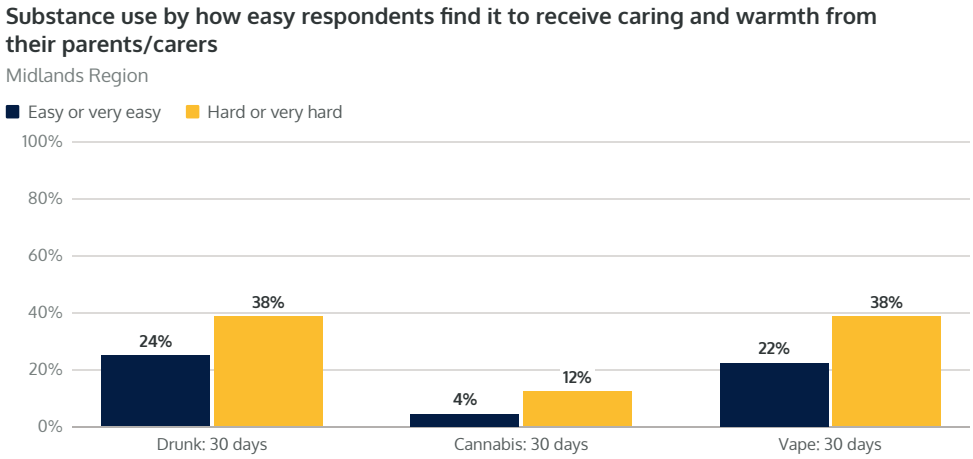


Parents & Family

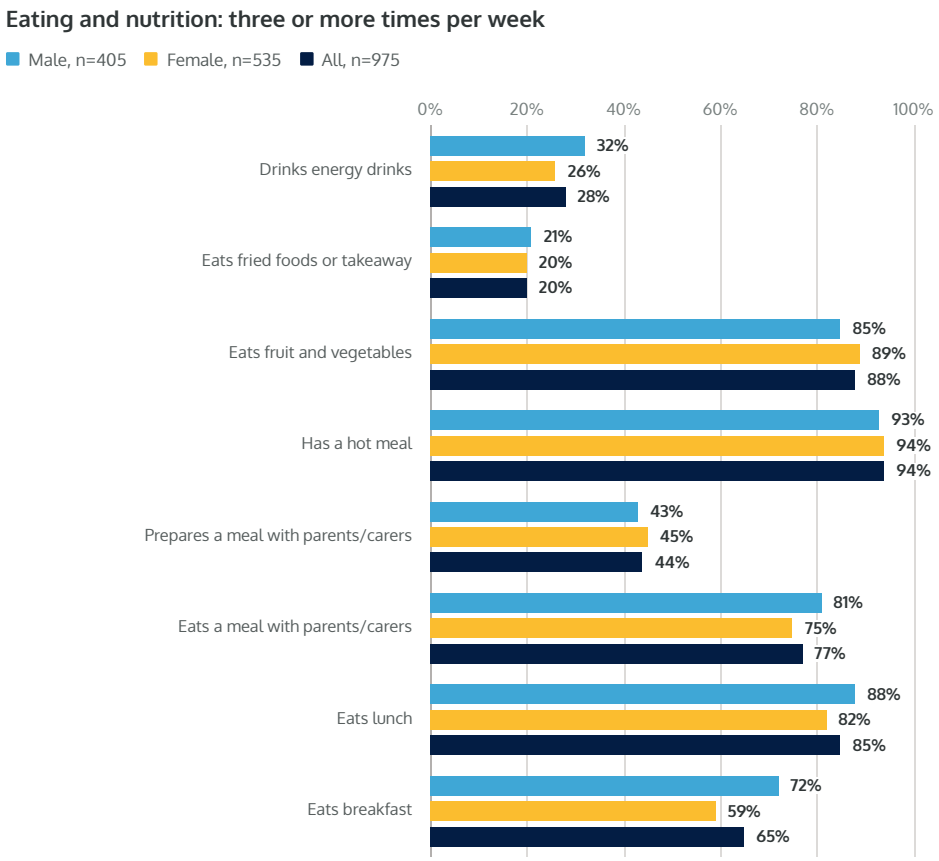


Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent drunkenness, cannabis use and vaping were lower among young people who found it easy or very easy to receive caring and warmth from their parents or carers, compared with those who found this hard or very hard.



Parents & Family







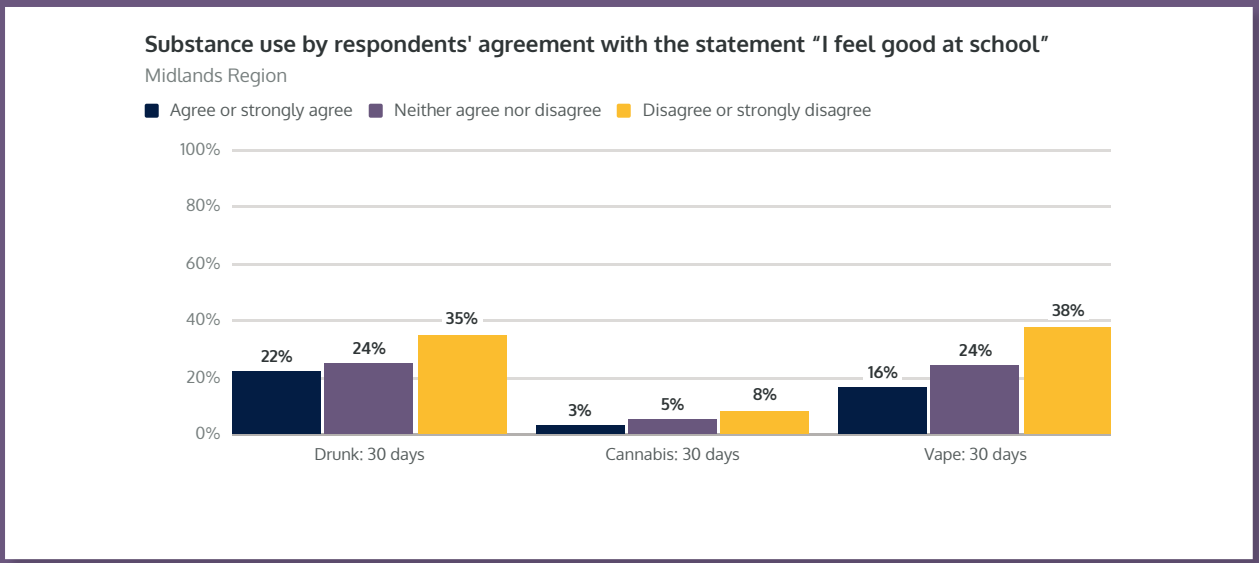
School Life

This section describes young people's experiences of school, including relationships with adults and peers at school, schoolwork, motivation and activities.

Most respondents in the county reported having friends at school who care about them (84%), getting along with teachers (72%), and wanting to complete the Leaving Certificate (91%). The majority (85%) also reported that adults at school are fair and kind to them. However, there are also areas for attention. Less than half of young people (42%) agreed that they feel good at school and 44% reported that there are adults at school who notice when they are having a hard time and offer help. Only 42% agreed that students at their school are nice to each other.

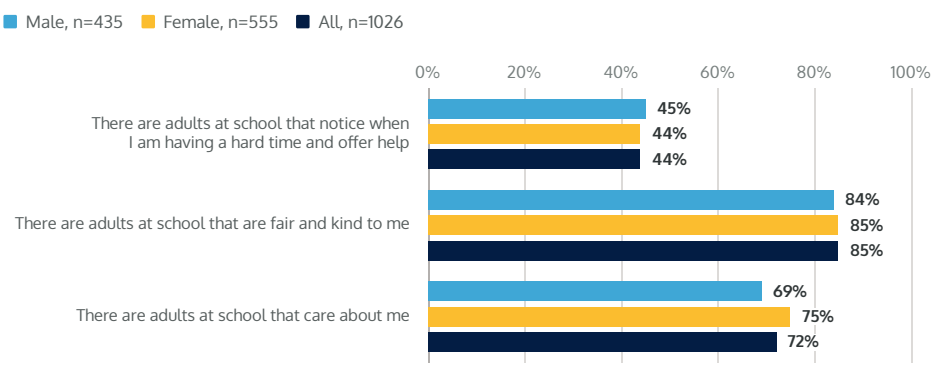
Regional Insights

The regional-level data cross-tabulations show that recent substance use was generally lower among young people who reported a stronger sense of connection to school. Young people who agreed that they felt good at school were less likely to report recent drunkenness, vaping and cannabis use than those who disagreed. A similar pattern was seen among young people who wanted to change schools, with recent substance use, particularly vaping, more common among those who agreed that they wanted to change schools.

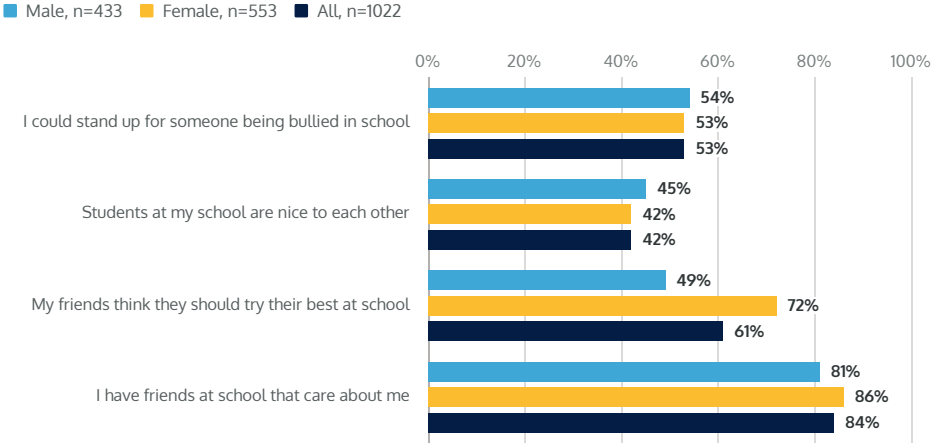


School Life

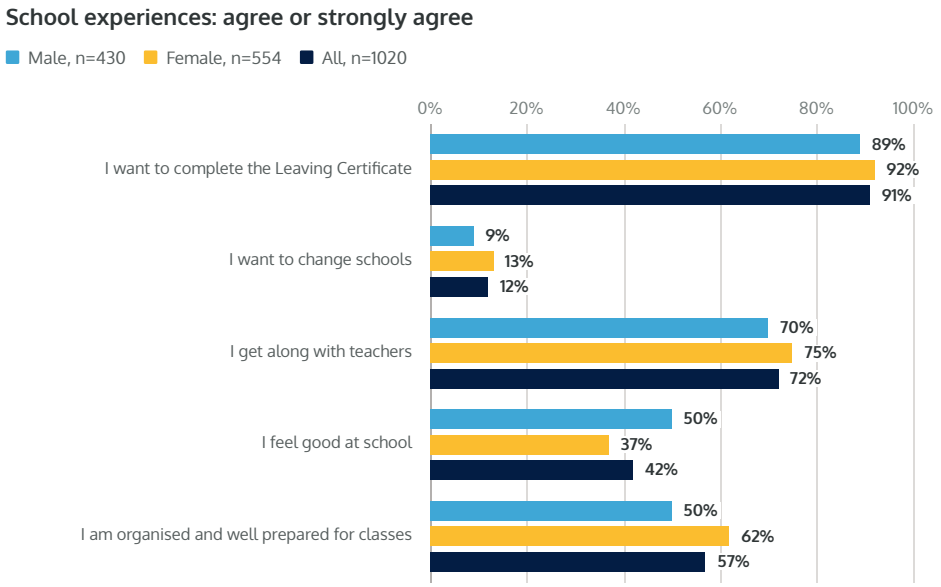
Adult support in school: agree or strongly agree



Peer support in school: agree or strongly agree

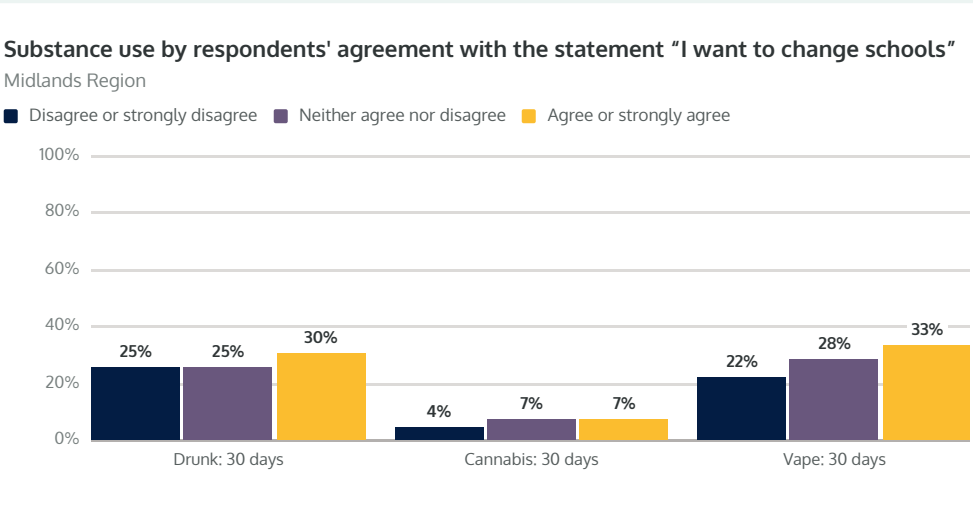


School Life



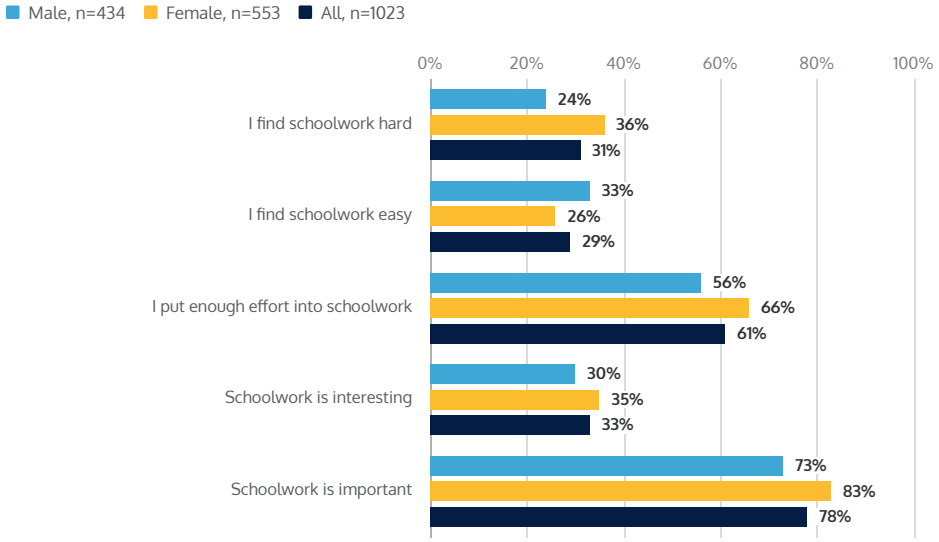
Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent drunkenness, cannabis use and vaping were higher among young people who agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to change schools, compared with those who disagreed or strongly disagreed. This pattern was clearest for vaping.

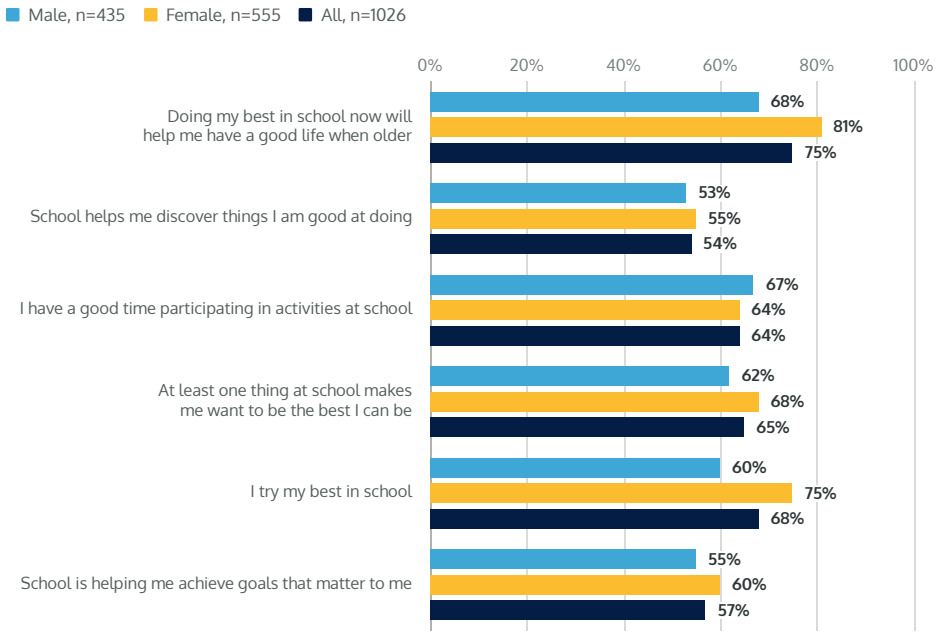


School Life

Schoolwork: agree or strongly agree



School activities and motivation: agree or strongly agree





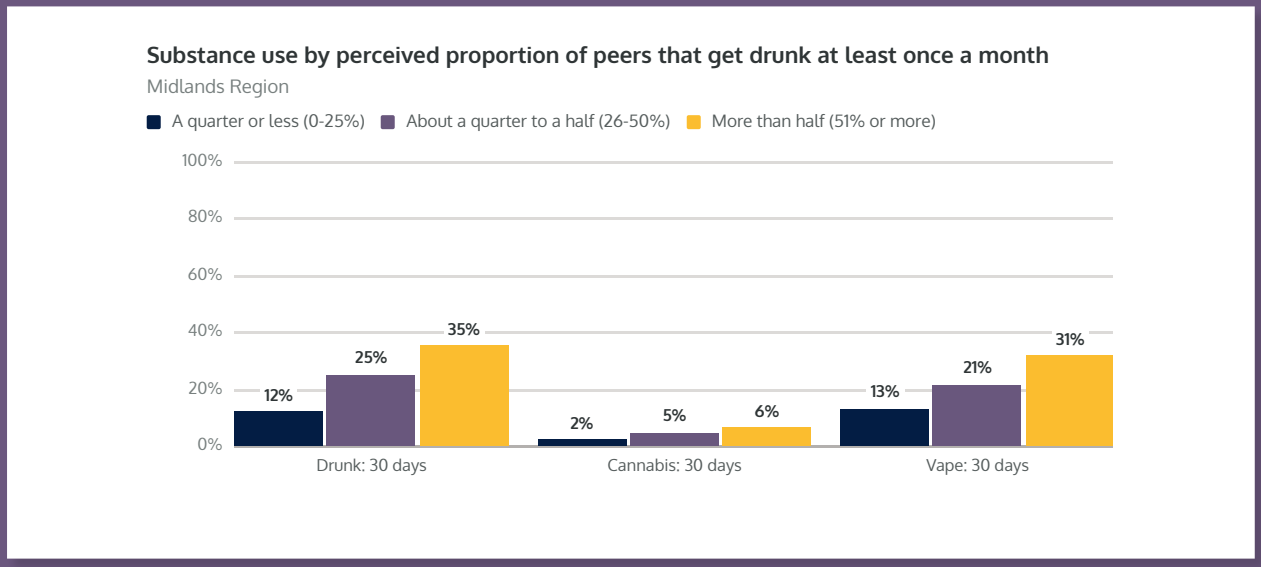


Peer Group

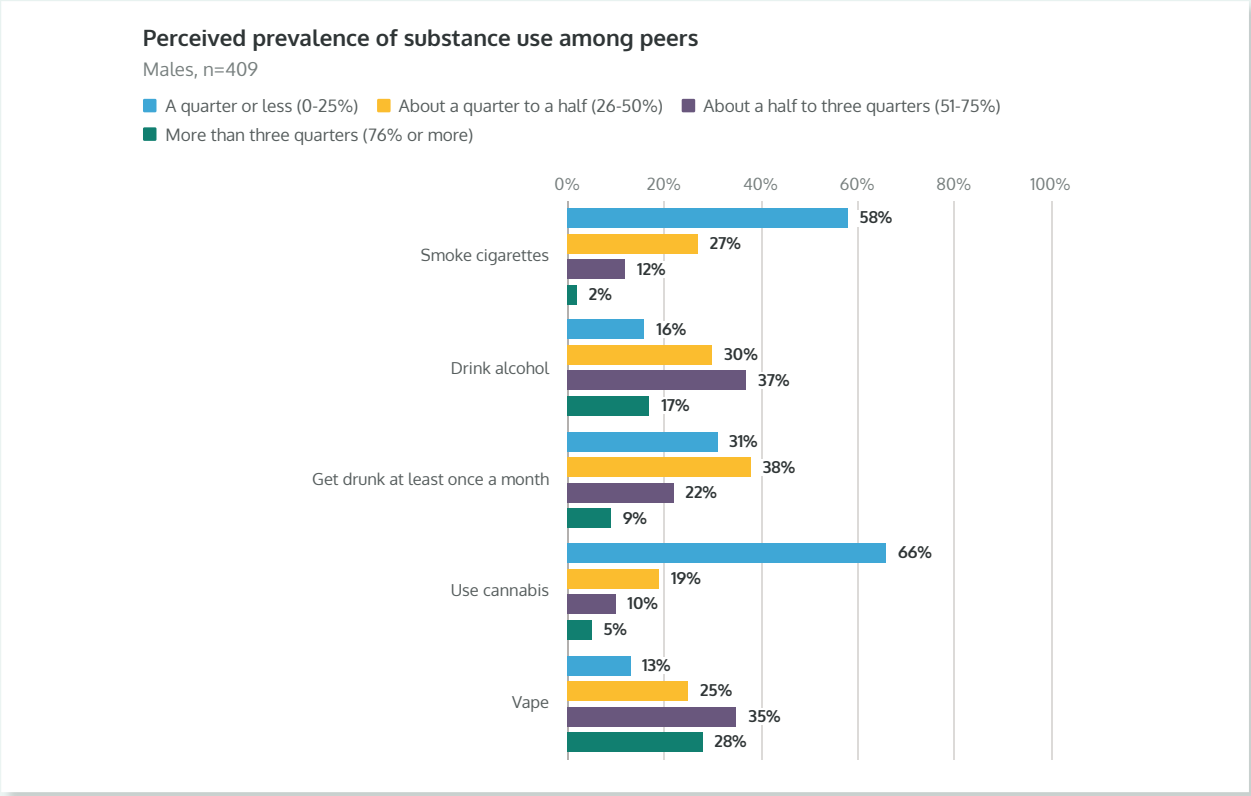
This section describes perceived peer substance use and the relationship between perceived peer drunkenness and young people's own reported substance use.

Regional Insights

Across the Midlands Region, recent substance use was higher among young people who believed that more of their peers got drunk at least once a month. Among those who thought that a quarter or less of their peers got drunk at least once a month, 12% reported recent drunkenness, 2% reported recent cannabis use and 13% reported recent vaping. Among those who thought that more than half of their peers got drunk at least once a month, the corresponding figures were higher, at 35%, 6% and 31%.

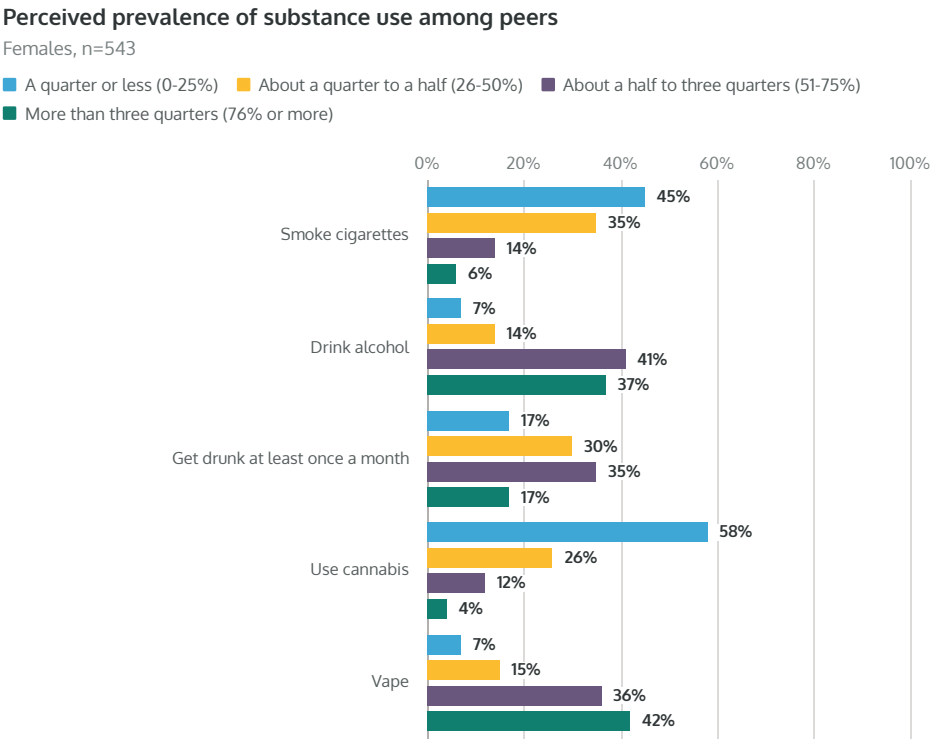


Peer Group



Students were asked what proportion of young people their age they thought engaged in each substance use behaviour. They selected one of four response categories: a quarter or less (0–25%), about a quarter to a half (26–50%), about a half to three quarters (51–75%), or more than three quarters (76% or more).

Peer Group



Students were asked what proportion of young people their age they thought engaged in each substance use behaviour. They selected one of four response categories: a quarter or less (0–25%), about a quarter to a half (26–50%), about a half to three quarters (51–75%), or more than three quarters (76% or more).



Leisure Time & Community

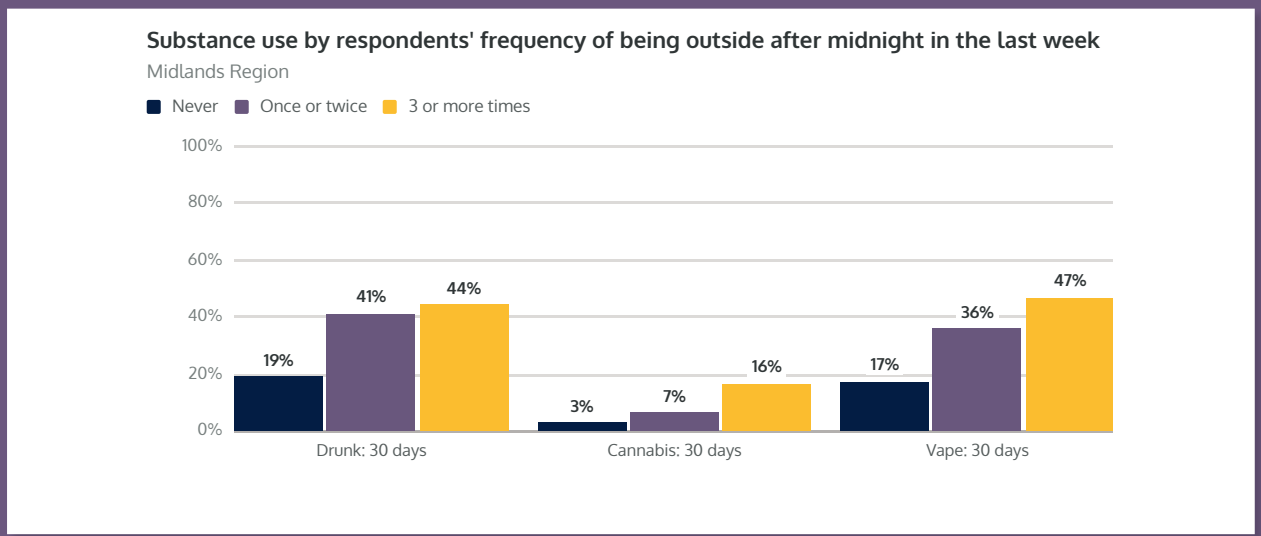
This section describes how young people spend their leisure time and their experiences of their communities.

The findings show that, across the county, many young people are physically and socially active. Around one-third (35%) reported individual physical activity outside school three or more times per week, and the vast majority participated in supervised out-of-school activities such as music, art, volunteering or other clubs. However, 17% reported no participation in supervised out-of-school activities.

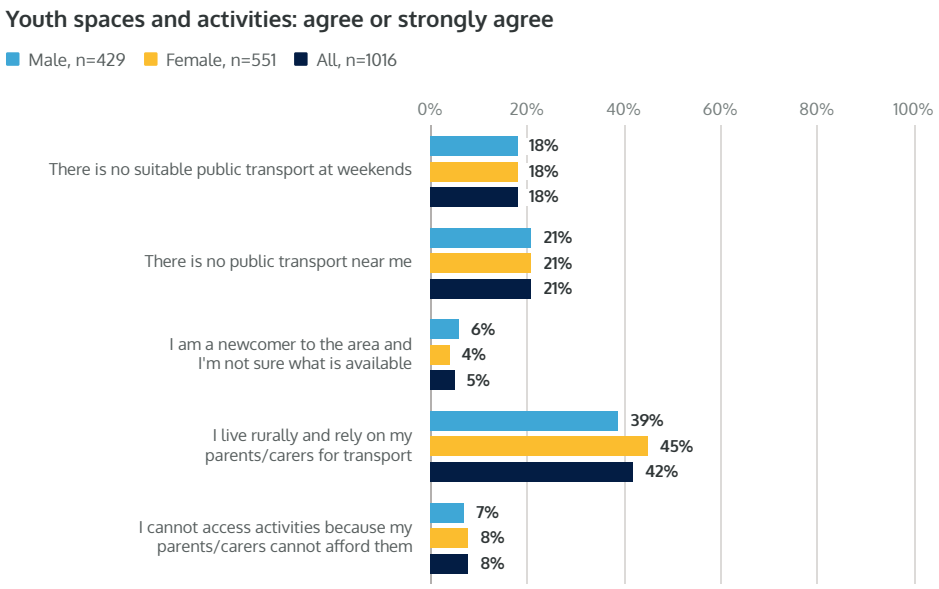
Access and availability were important issues. Fifty-five percent agreed that there are activities for them to do in their area, 41% agreed that there is a suitable outdoor youth space and 43% agreed there is an after-school social space in their area. Forty-two per cent reported living rurally and relying on parents or carers for transport, and 18% reported no suitable public transport at weekends.

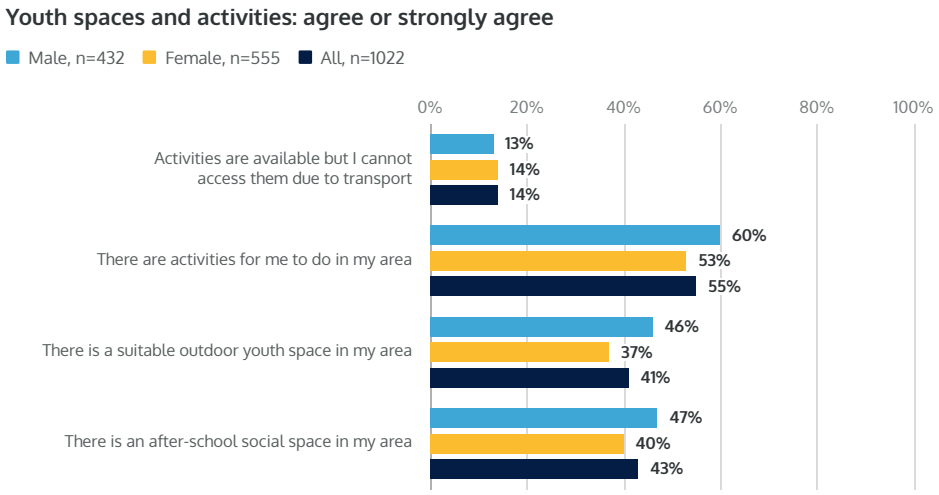
Regional Insights

Regional-level data cross-tabulations demonstrate that recent substance use was more common among young people who reported spending time in less structured settings. Young people who had been outside after midnight in the last week, particularly three or more times, were more likely to report recent drunkenness, vaping and cannabis use than those who had not been outside after midnight. A similar pattern was seen for young people who reported hanging out with friends in the streets in the past month, with substance use increasing as this became more frequent.

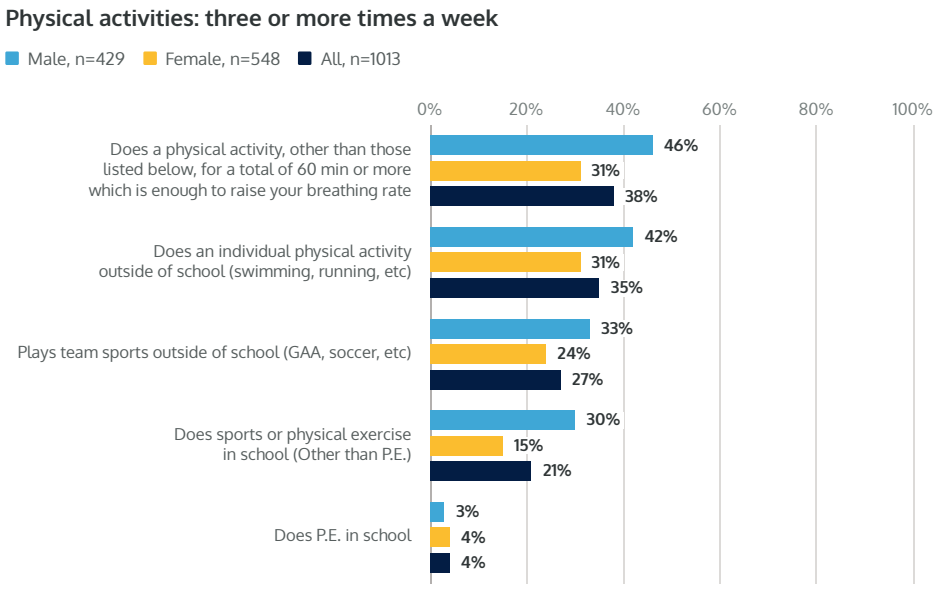


Leisure Time & Community





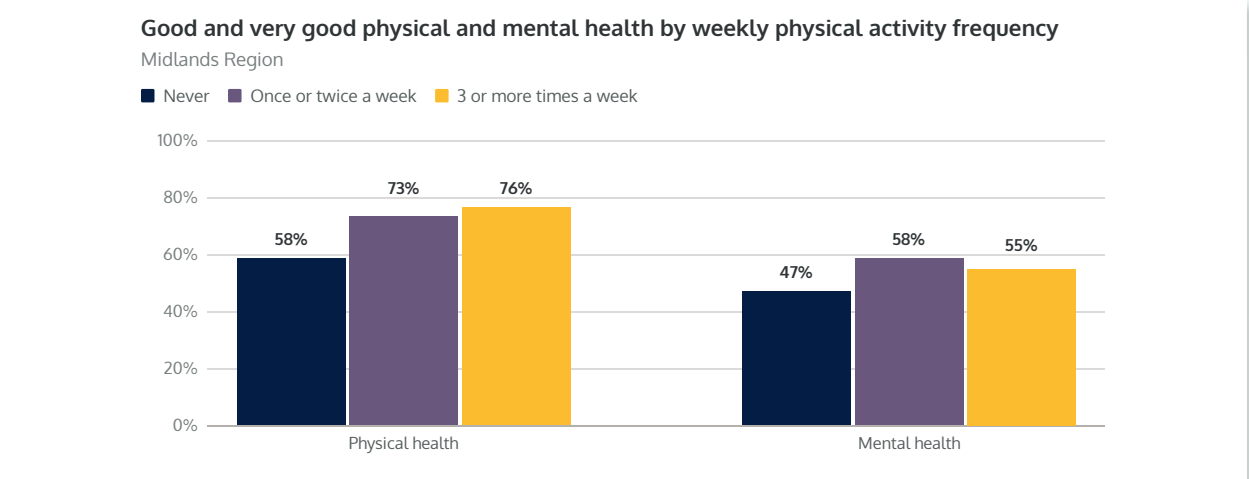
Leisure Time & Community



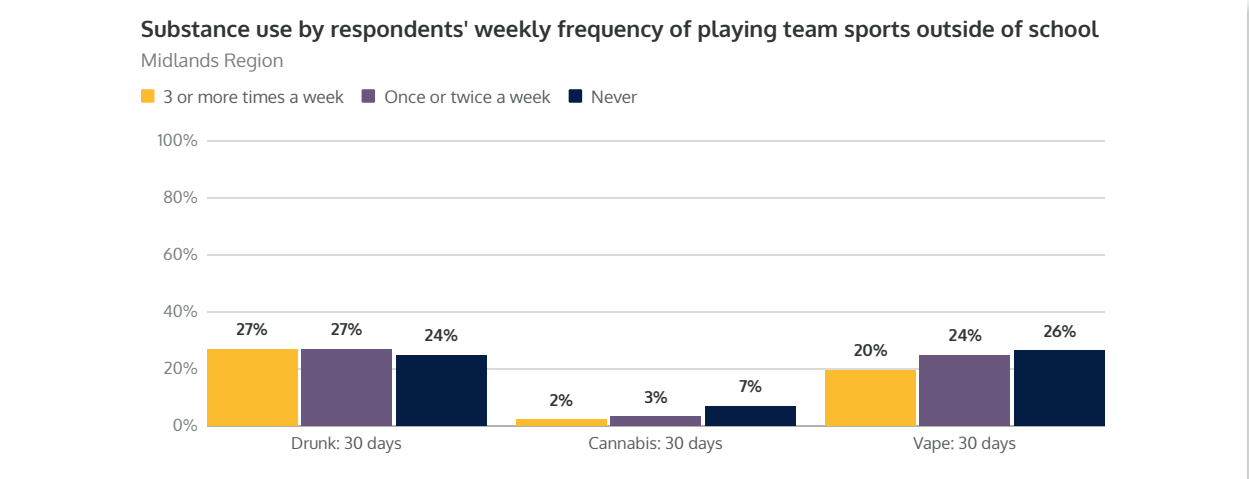
Leisure Time & Community

Regional Insights

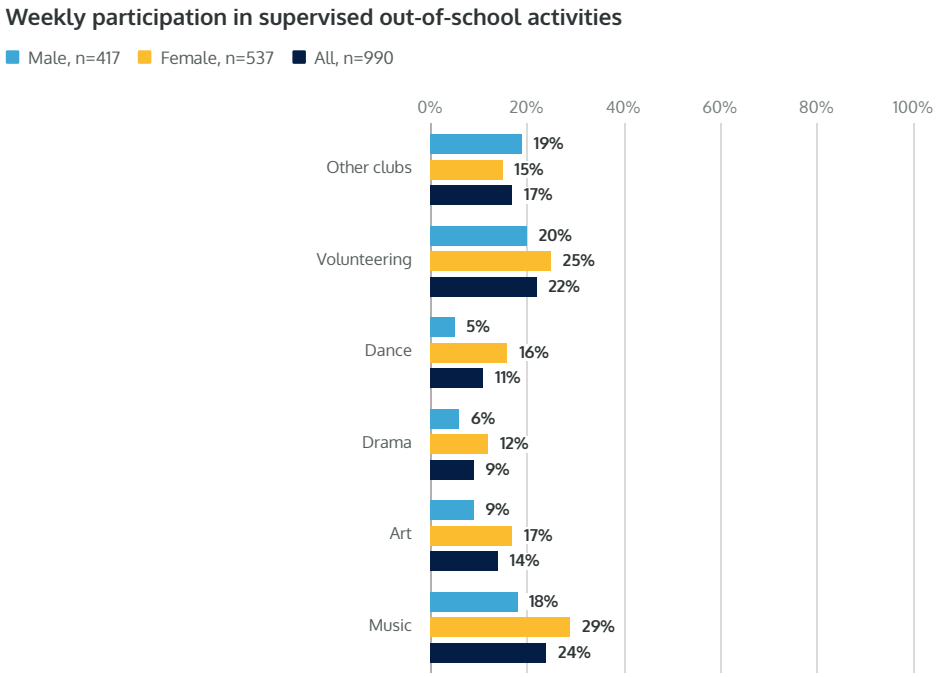
Across the Midlands Region, young people who reported doing physical activity once or twice a week, or three or more times a week, were more likely to rate their physical health as good or very good than those who reported no weekly physical activity. The pattern for mental health was positive but less clear, with good or very good mental health highest among those physically active once or twice a week.

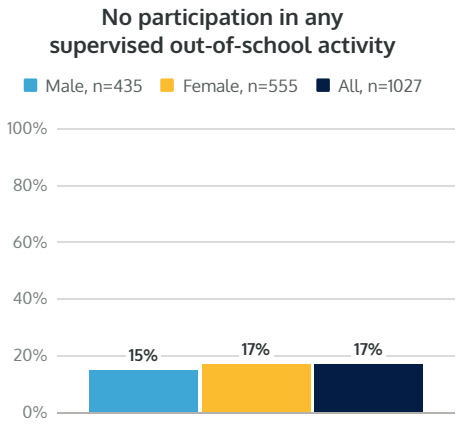


The relationship between team sports and recent substance use was mixed. Although recent cannabis use and vaping were somewhat higher among young people who did not play team sports outside of school, recent drunkenness was notably similar across levels of team sport participation.



Leisure Time & Community

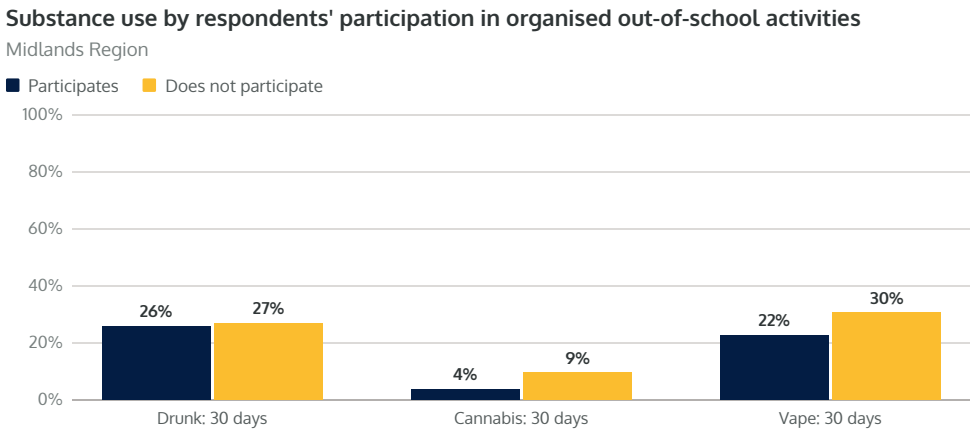


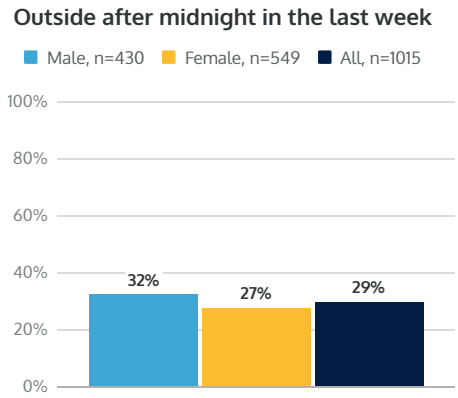


Leisure Time & Community

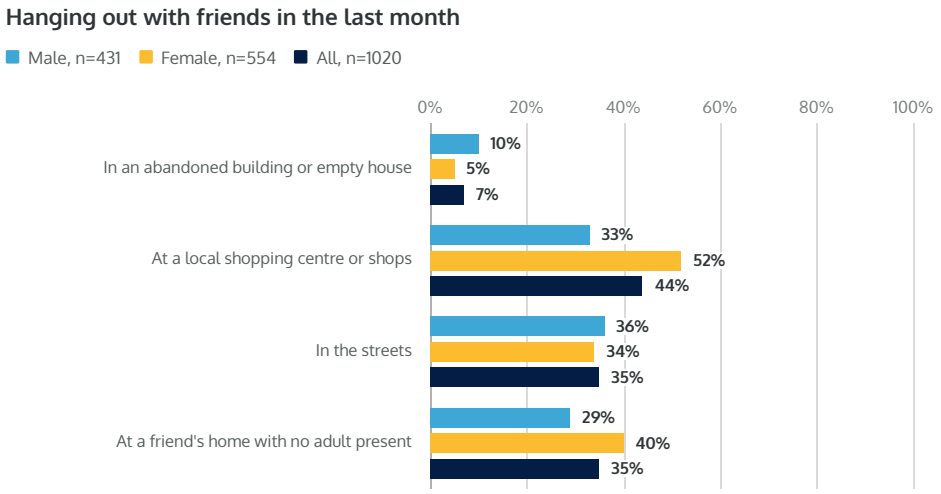
Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent cannabis use and vaping were lower among young people who participated in organised out-of-school activities, compared with those who did not participate.



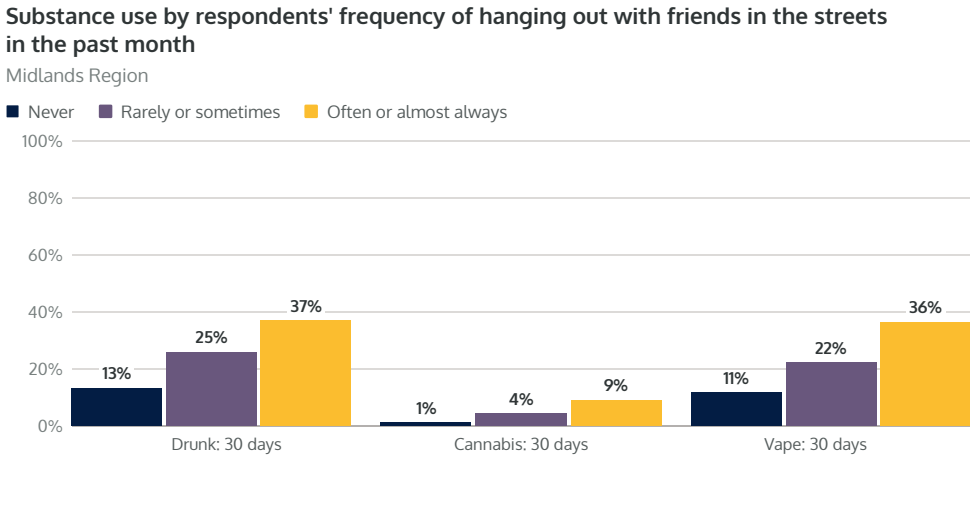


Leisure Time & Community



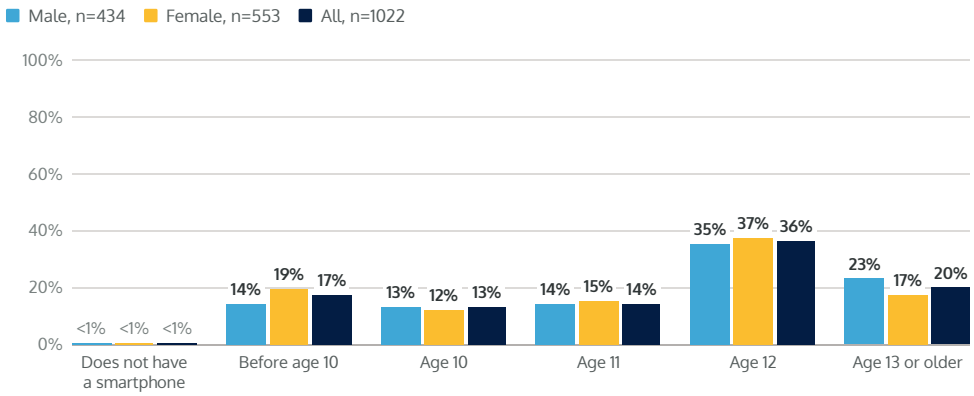
Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that recent drunkenness, cannabis use and vaping were higher among young people who reported hanging out with friends in the streets more often.

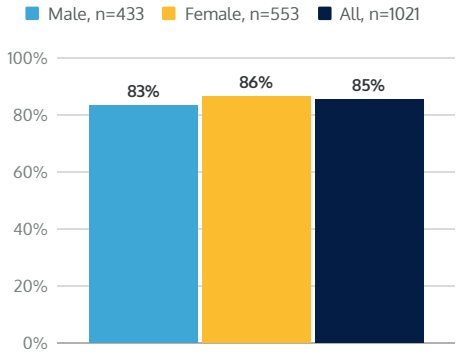


Leisure Time & Community

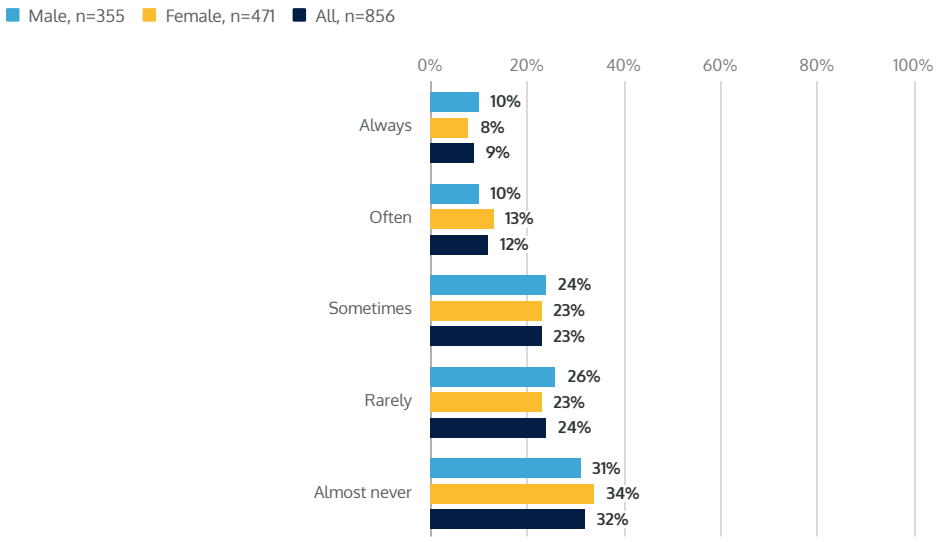
Age when respondents got their first smartphone



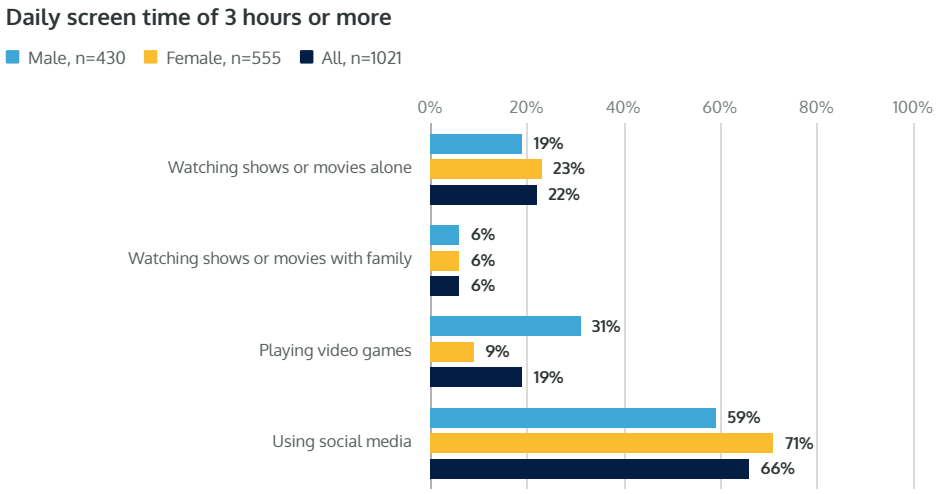
Phone in bedroom at night



Phone use between midnight and 6am

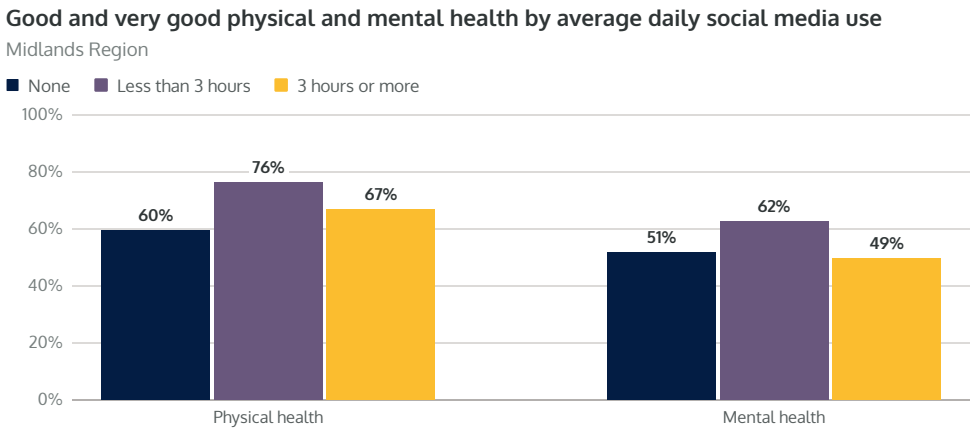


Leisure Time & Community

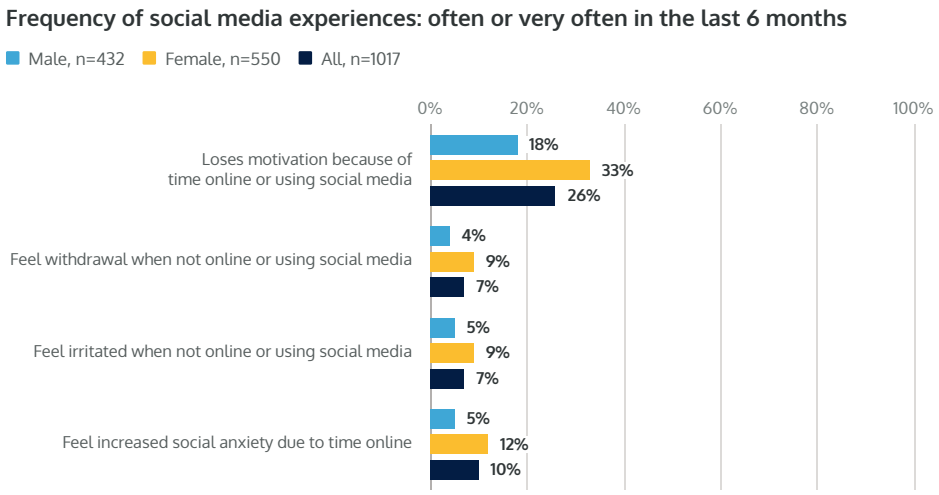


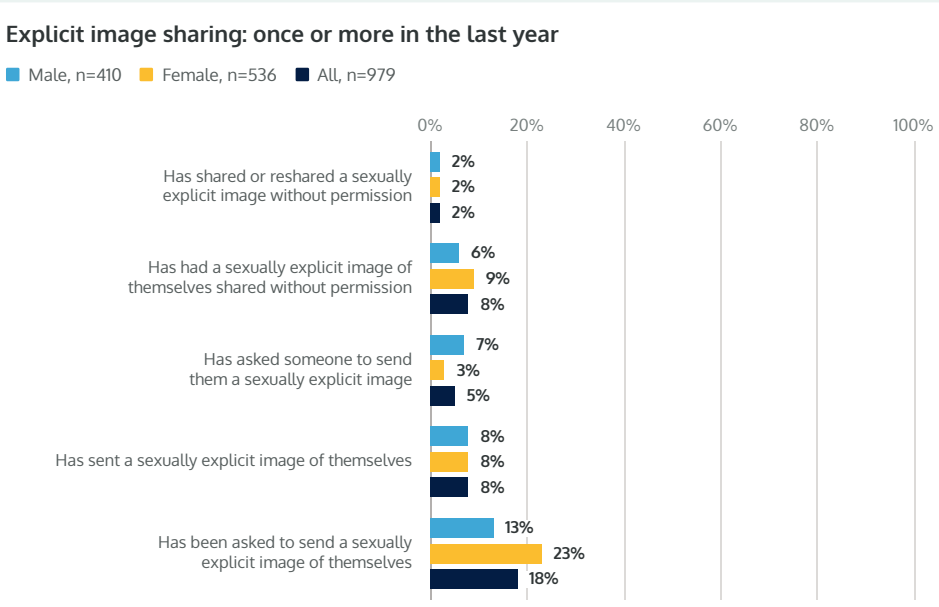
Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data found that young people reporting less than three hours of social media use per day were most likely to rate both their physical and mental health as good or very good. Those reporting three or more hours of daily social media use had lower levels of good or very good mental health.

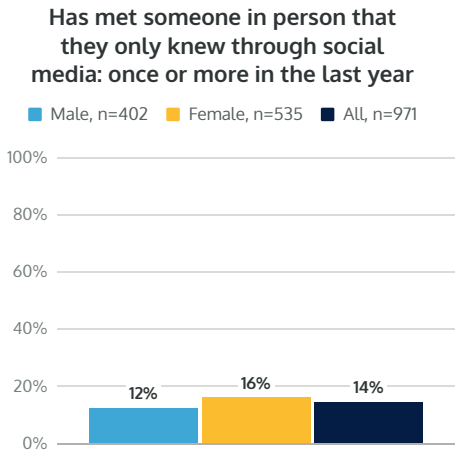


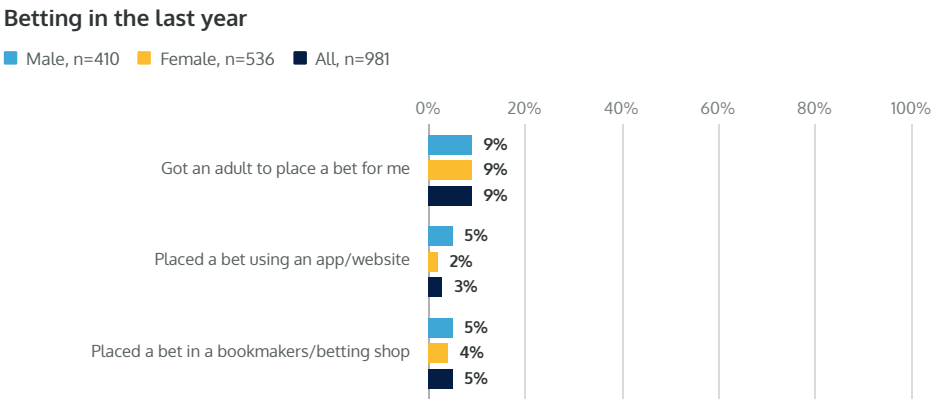
Leisure Time & Community





Leisure Time & Community







Health & Wellbeing

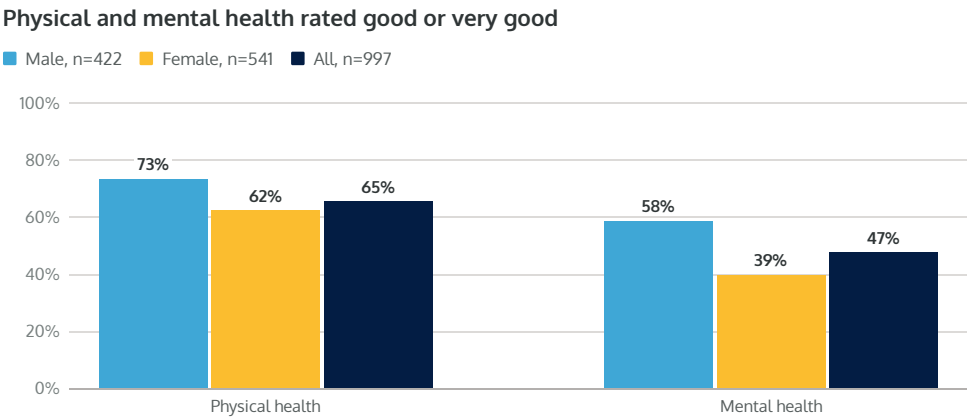
This section describes how young people rated their physical health, mental health, wellbeing, sleep, negative life experiences, mental health support, and other health-related experiences.

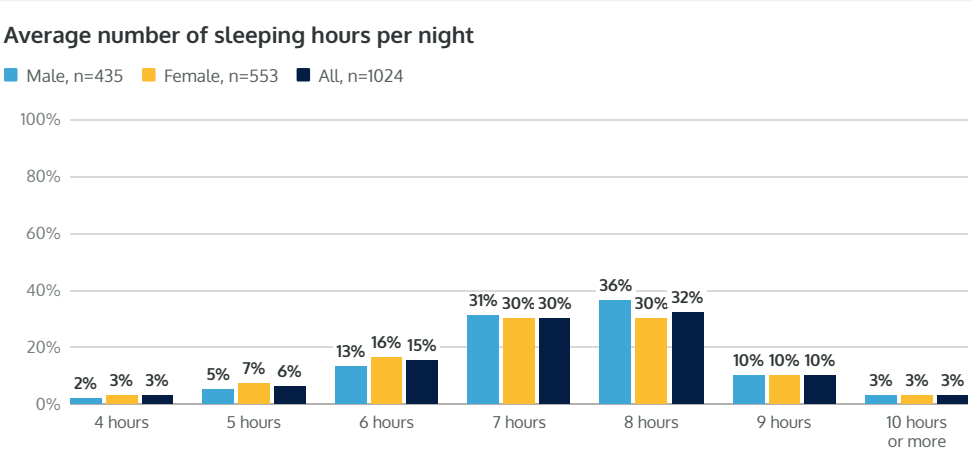
Across the county, 65% of young people rated their physical health as good or very good, while 47% rated their mental health as good or very good. Over half of young people (54%) reported getting fewer than 8 hours sleep per night on average.

The vast majority of young people reported feeling safe at home (92%), at school (77%) and in their neighbourhood (80%). There were notable gender differences across several wellbeing indicators, with females generally reporting poorer mental health, poorer wellbeing, lower self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety, stress and negative body-image-related experiences. Over half of females reported being strict about their exercise or eating behaviours and 24% reported having deliberately made themselves vomit.

One fifth of young people reported having looked for help or support with mental health issues and two thirds (65%) of these reported having received professional help or support.

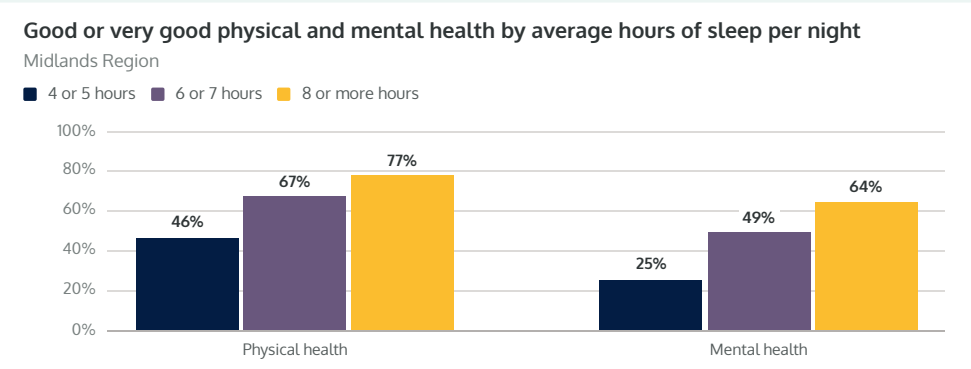
Health & Wellbeing





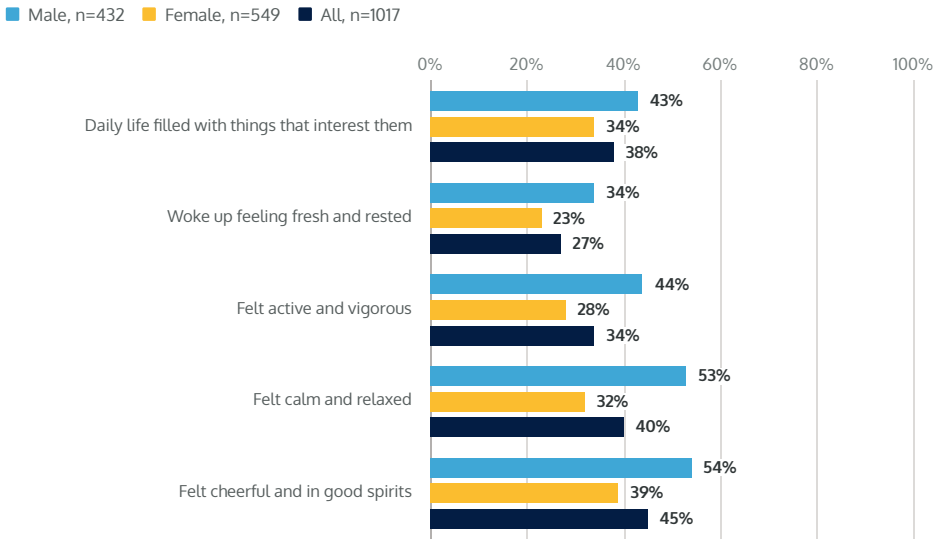
Regional Insights

Cross-tabulation of the regional-level data shows that young people who reported eight or more hours of sleep were more likely to rate both their physical and mental health as good or very good than those who reported less sleep.

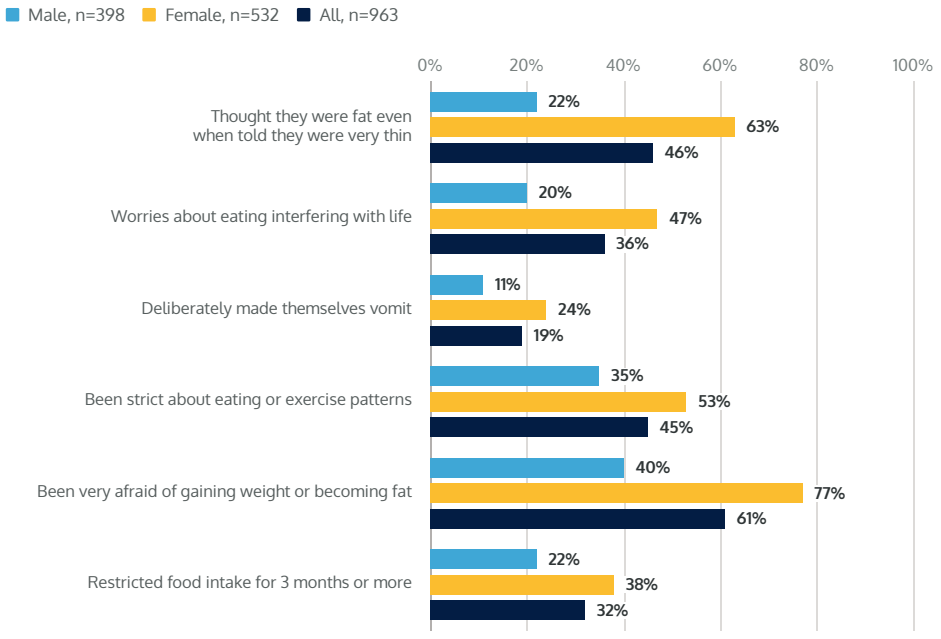


Health & Wellbeing

Wellbeing: all or most of the time over the past two weeks

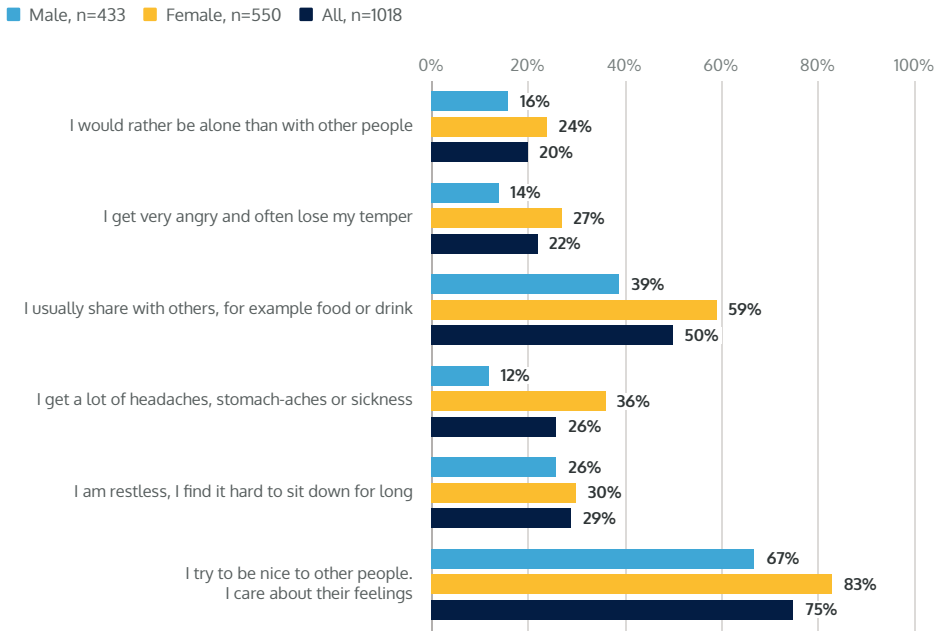


Eating and body image-related behaviours

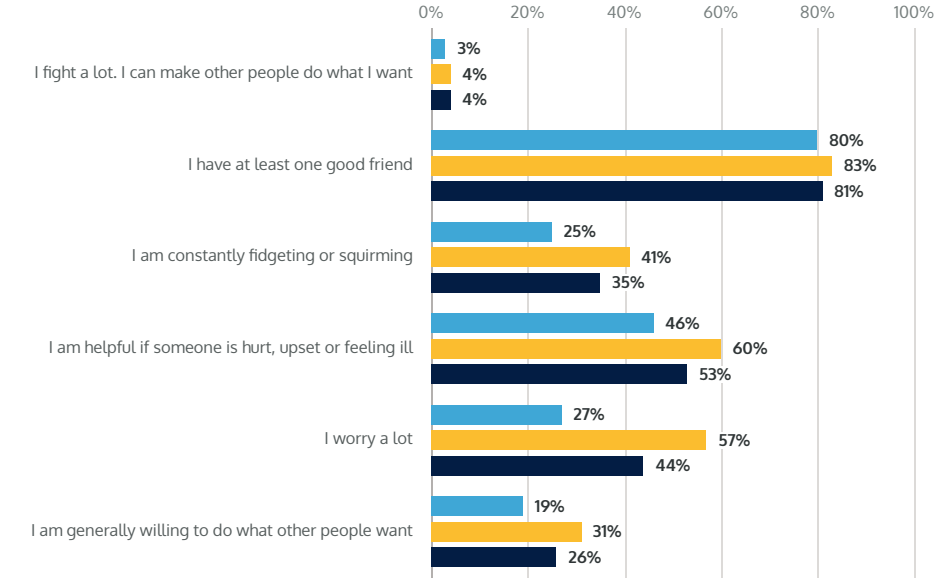


Health & Wellbeing

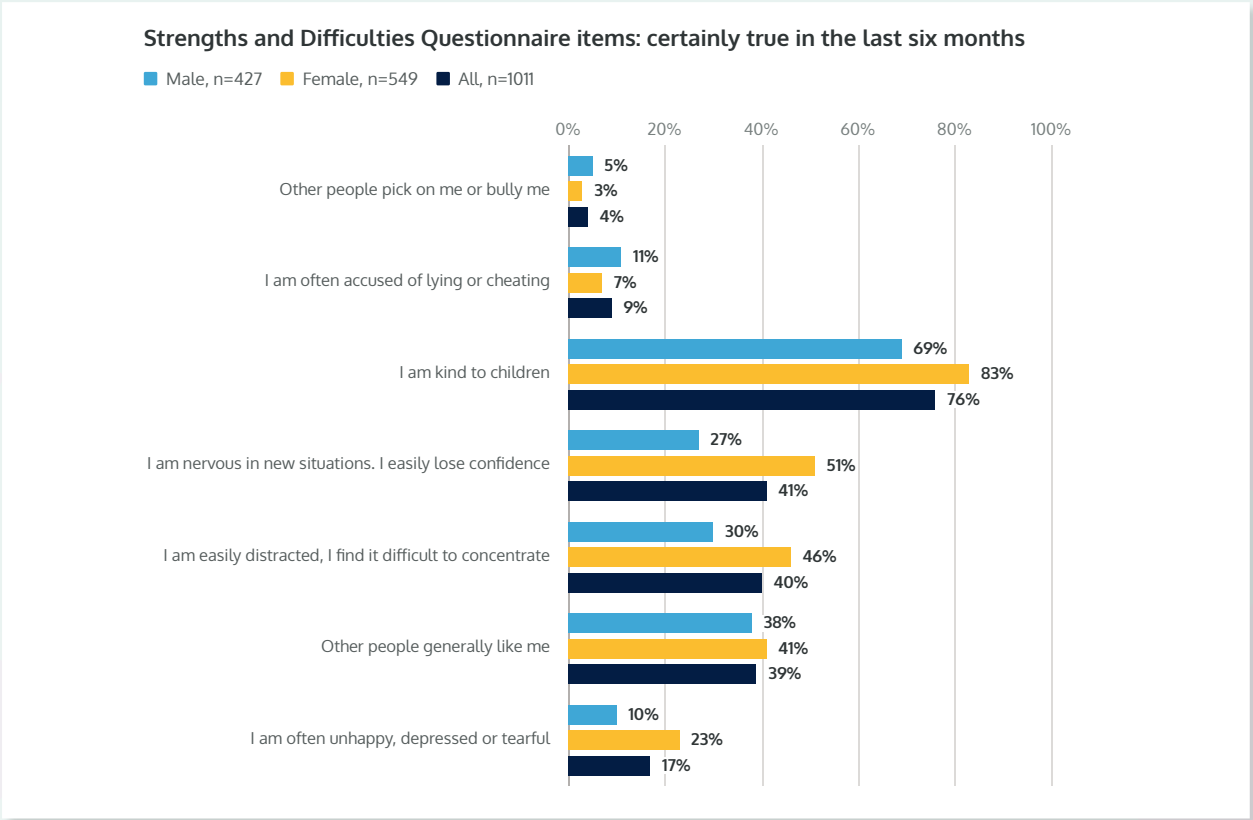
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire items: certainly true in the last six months

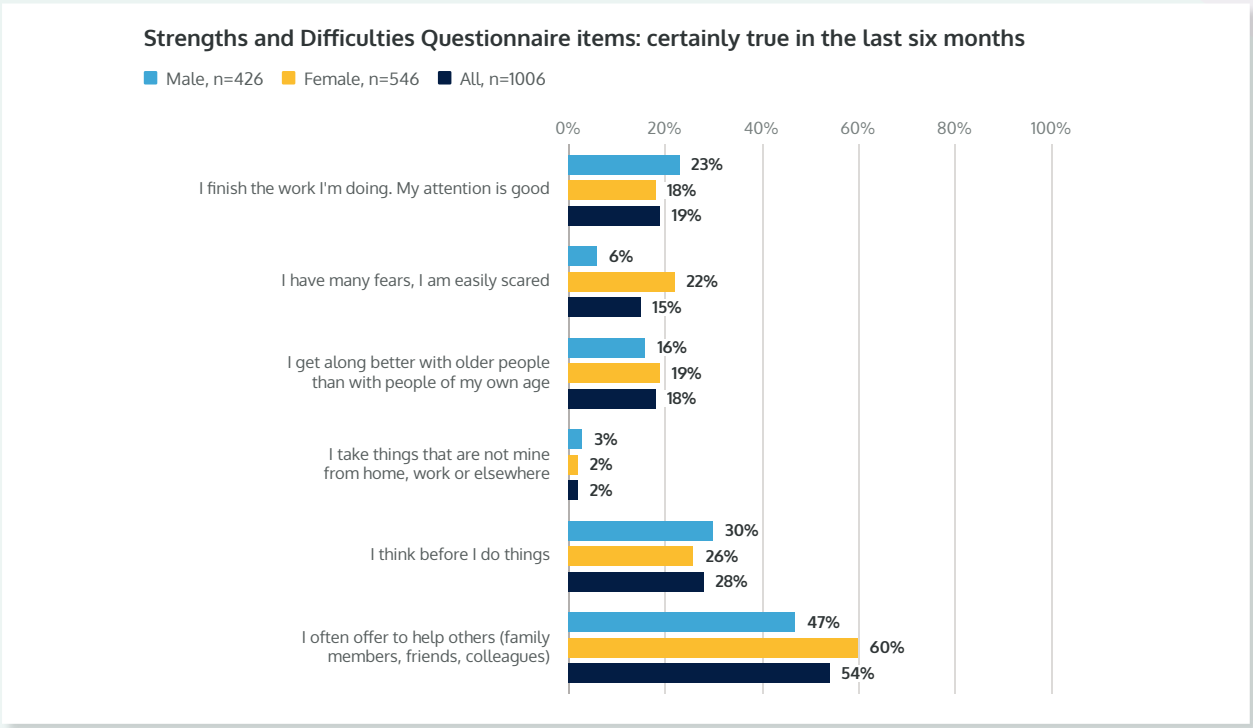


Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire items: certainly true in the last six months

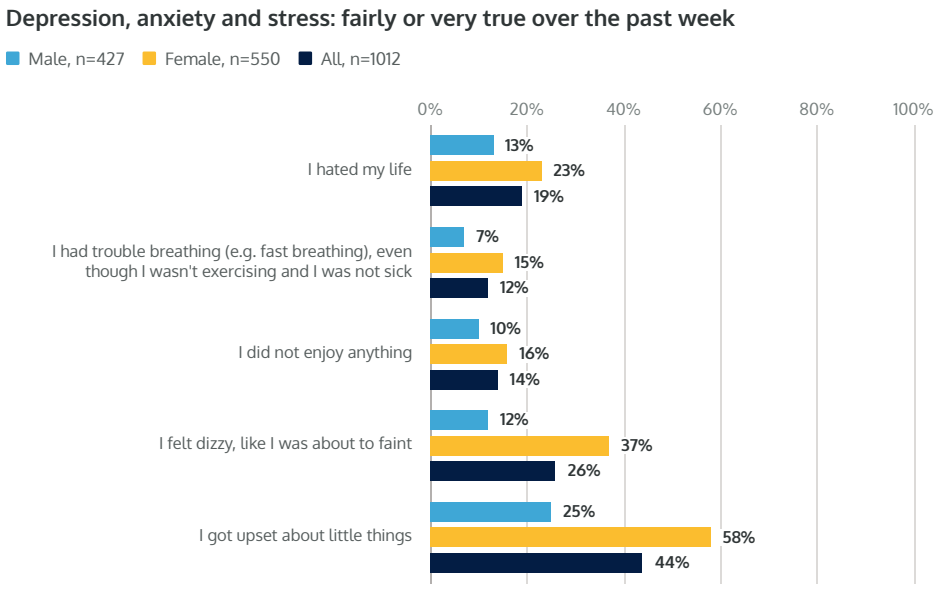


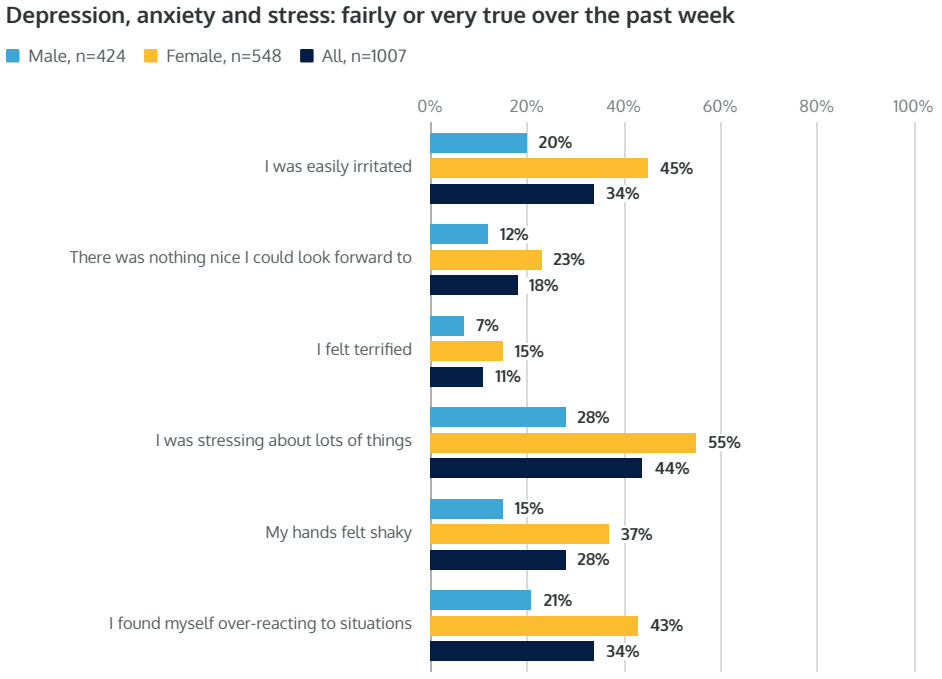
Health & Wellbeing



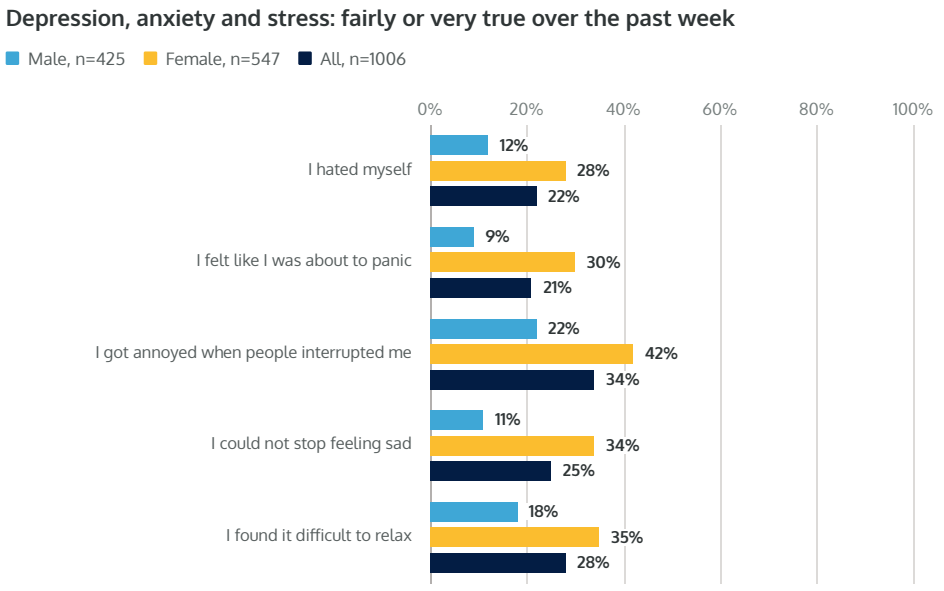


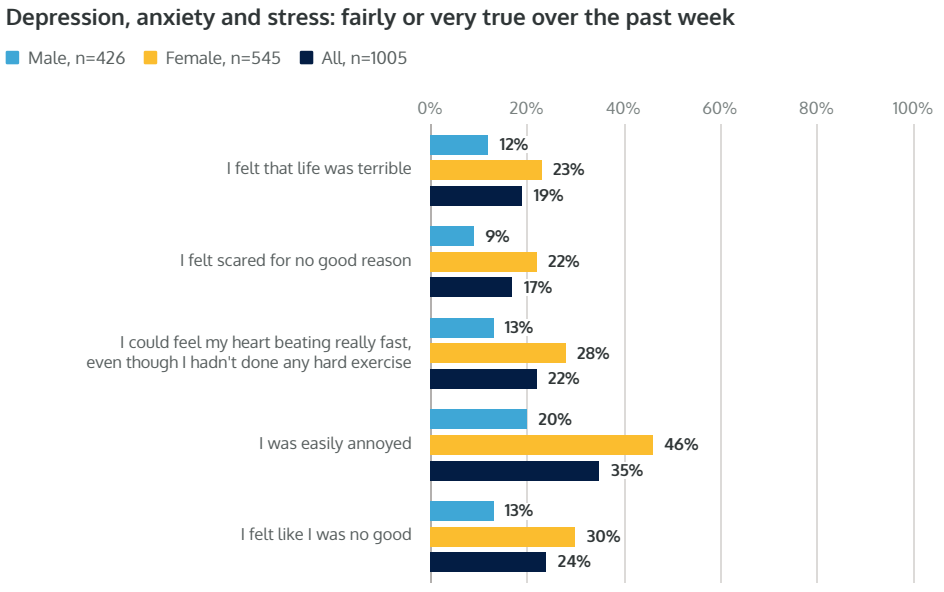
Health & Wellbeing



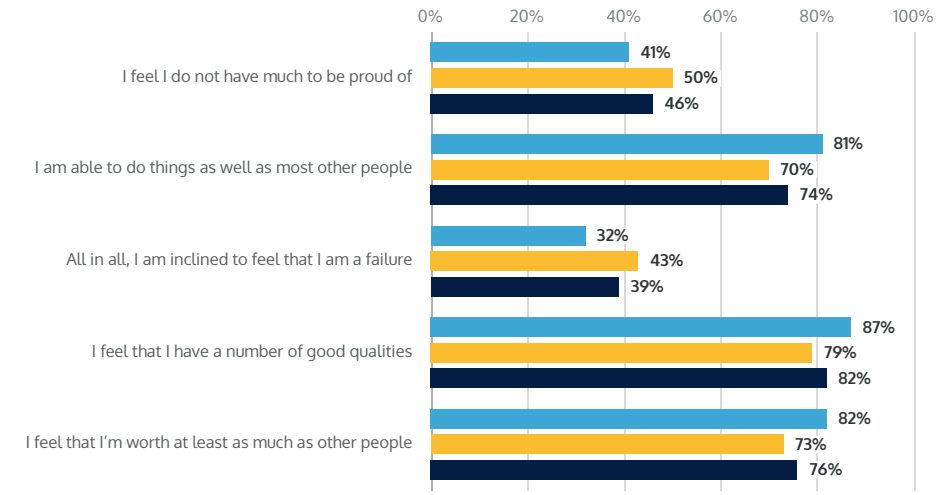


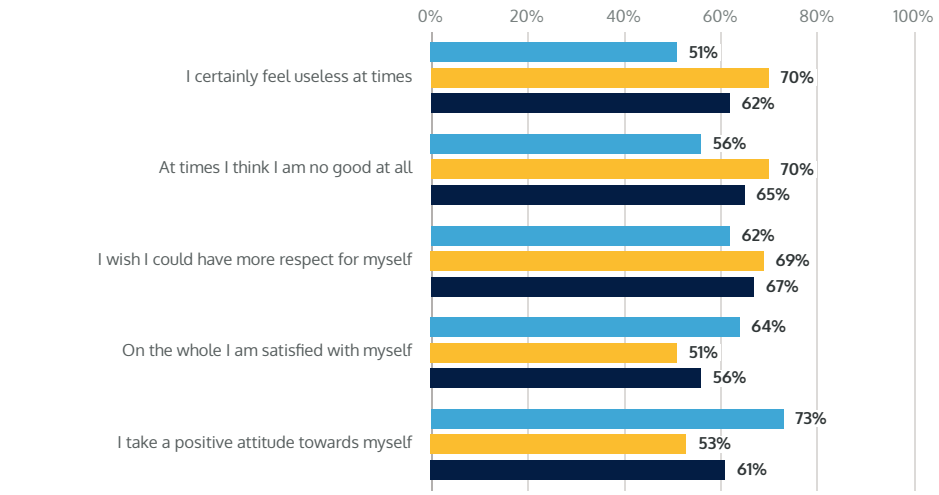
Health & Wellbeing



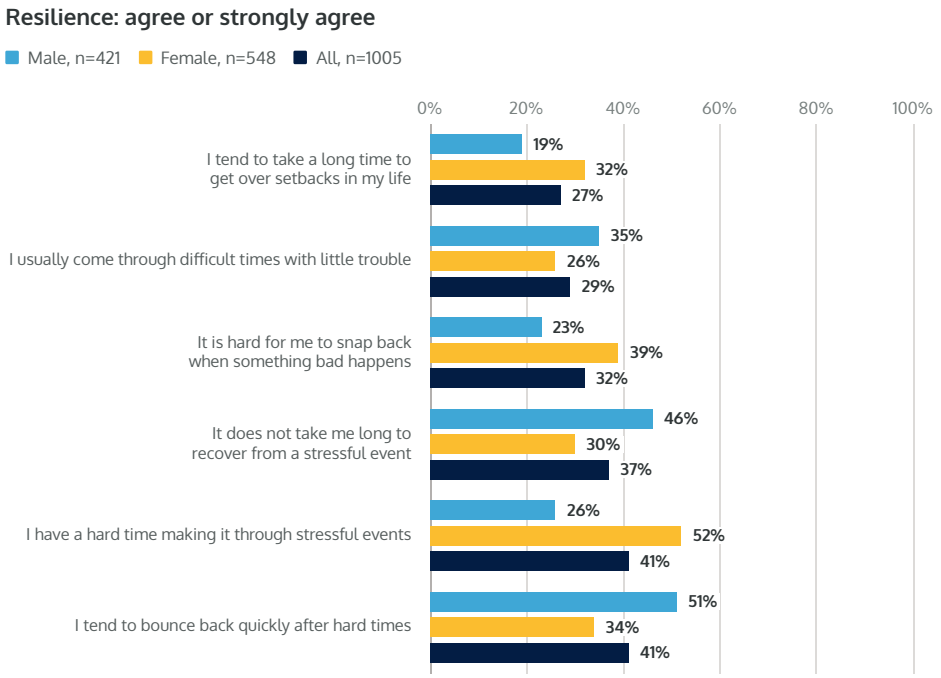


Health & Wellbeing



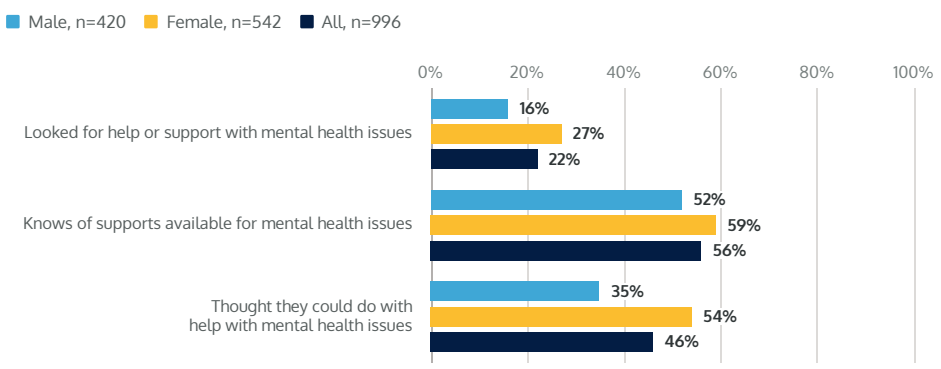


Health & Wellbeing

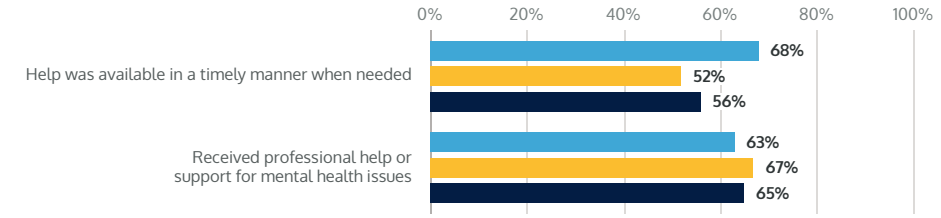


Health & Wellbeing

Mental health support

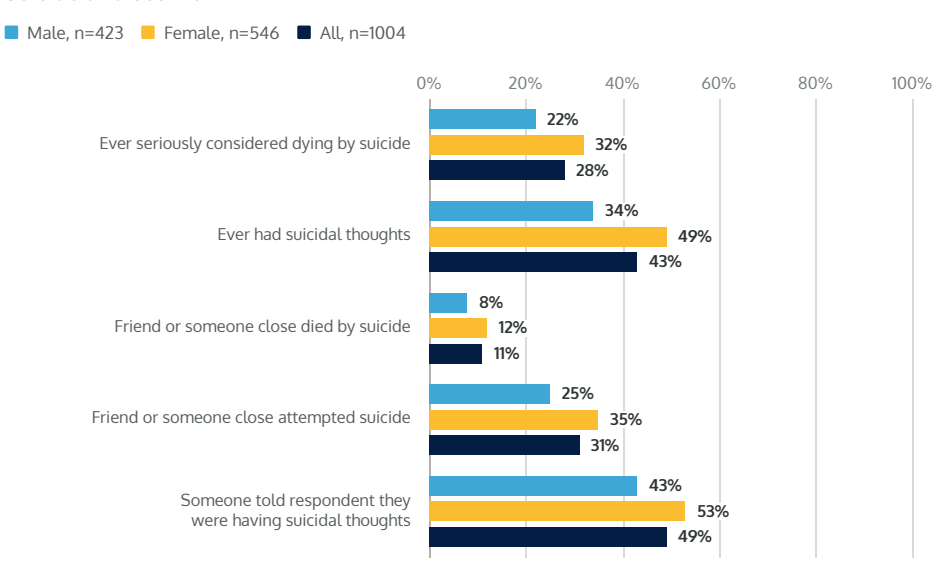


Support with mental health issues when sought

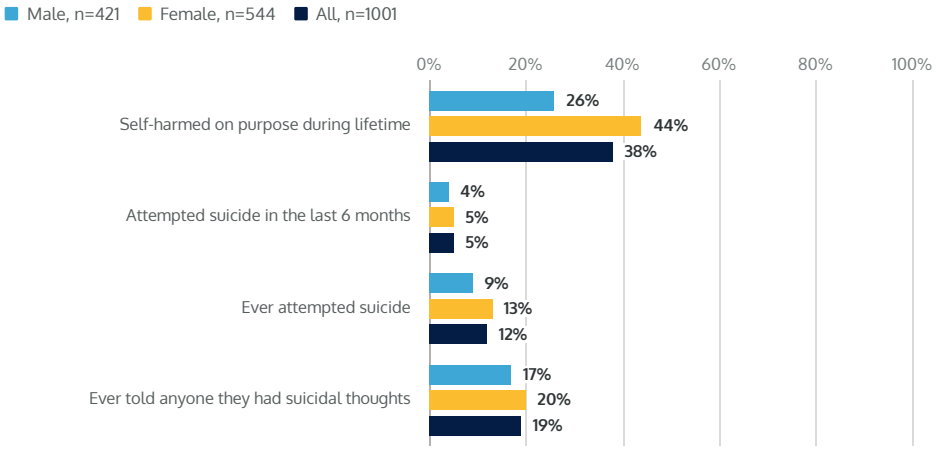


Health & Wellbeing

Suicide and self-harm

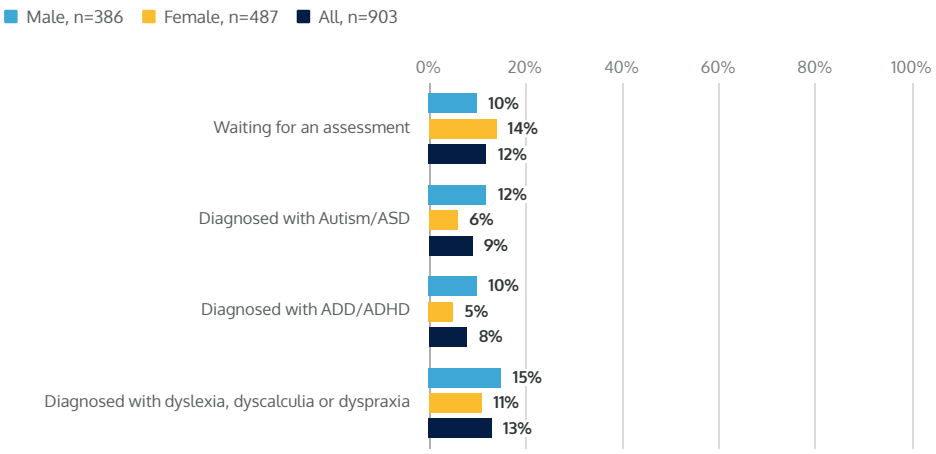


Suicide and self-harm

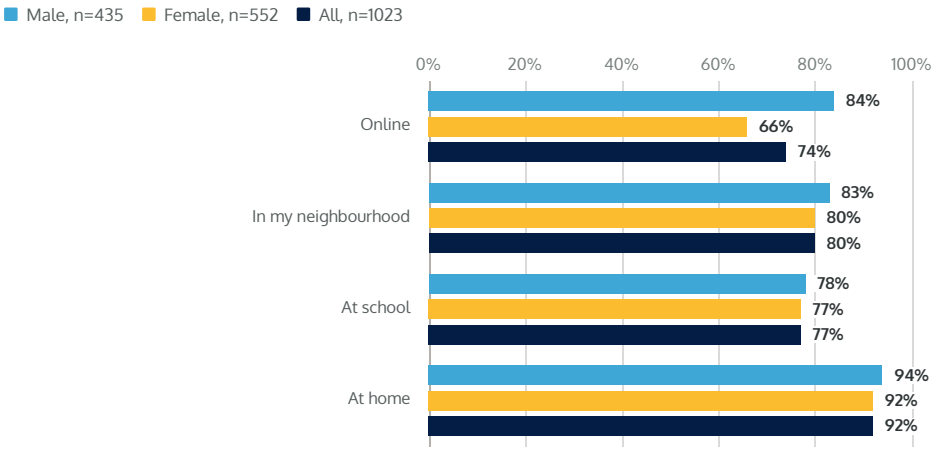


Health & Wellbeing

Self-reported neurodivergence

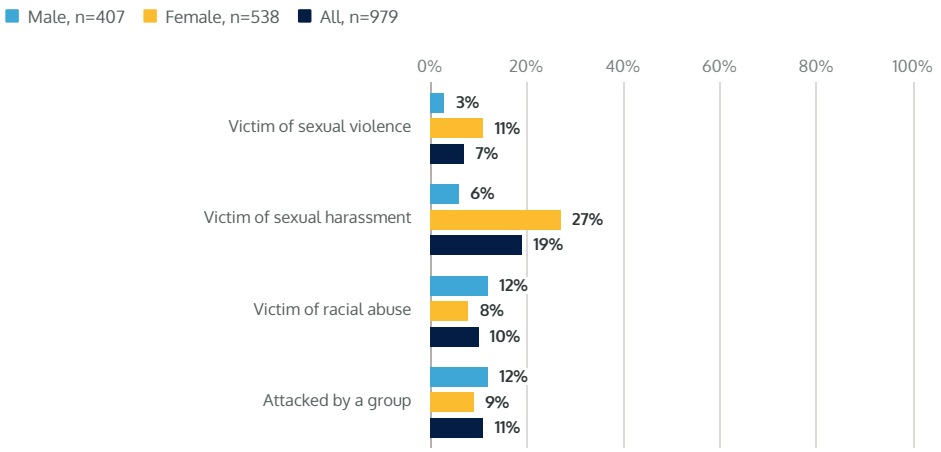


Feel safe: often or always

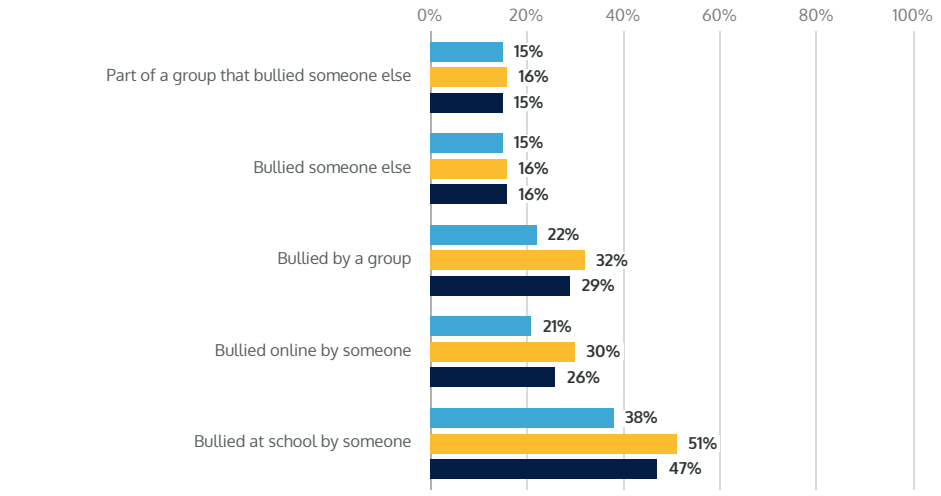


Health & Wellbeing

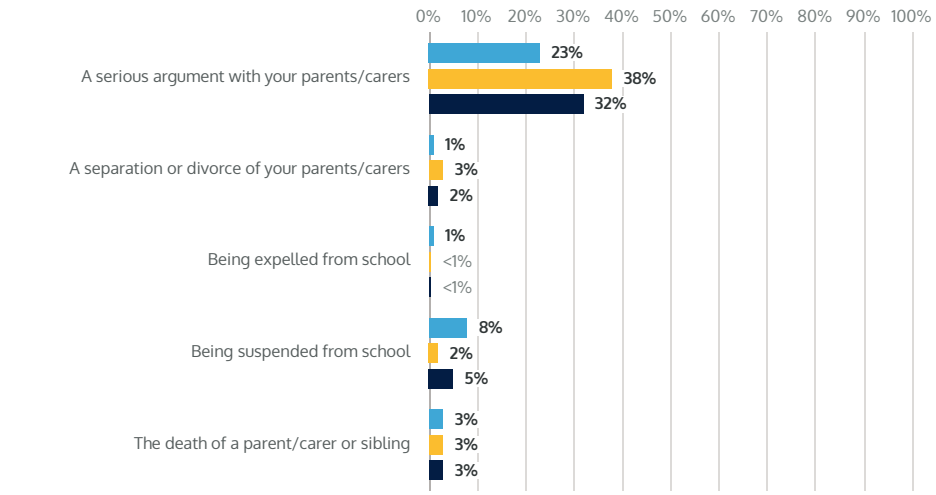
Violence and harassment experiences: ever

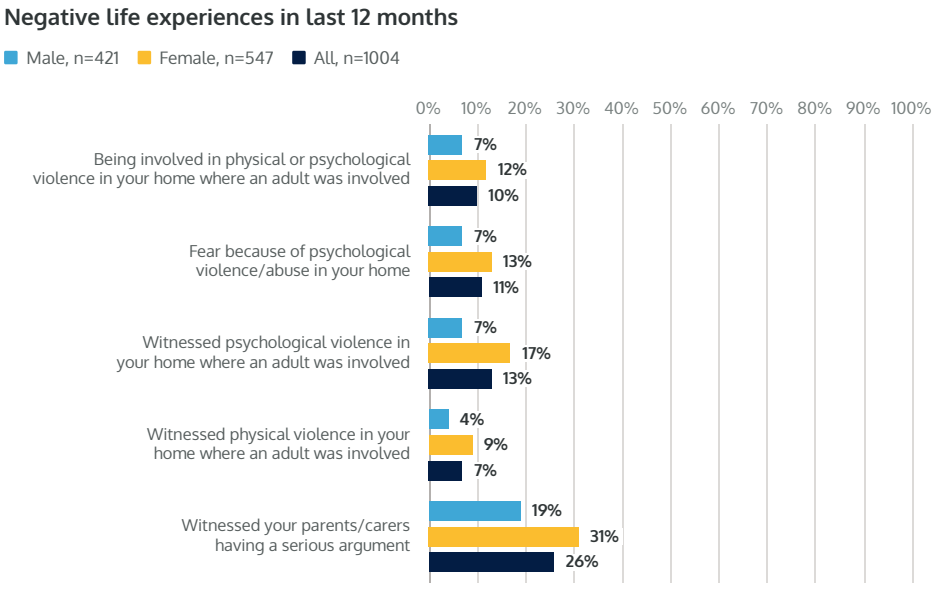


Bullying experiences: ever

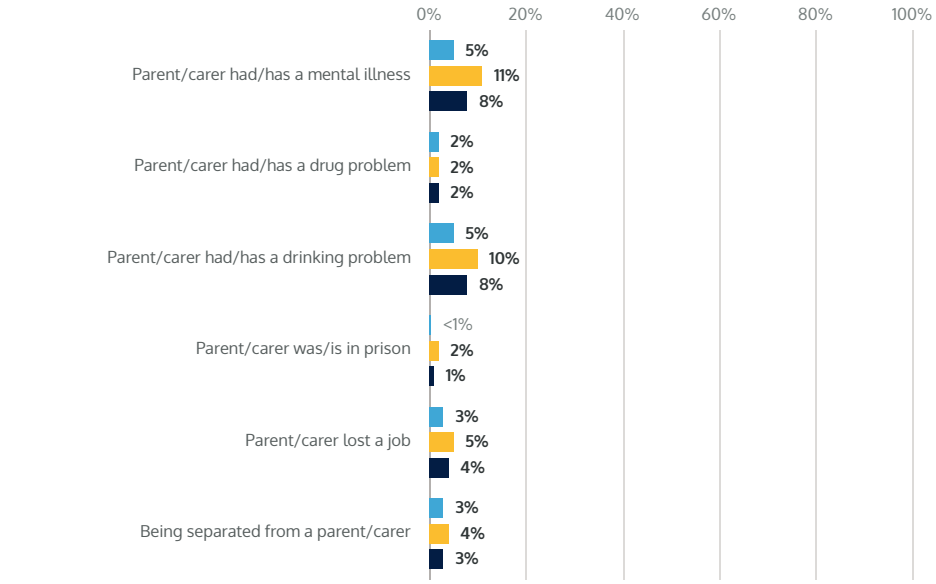


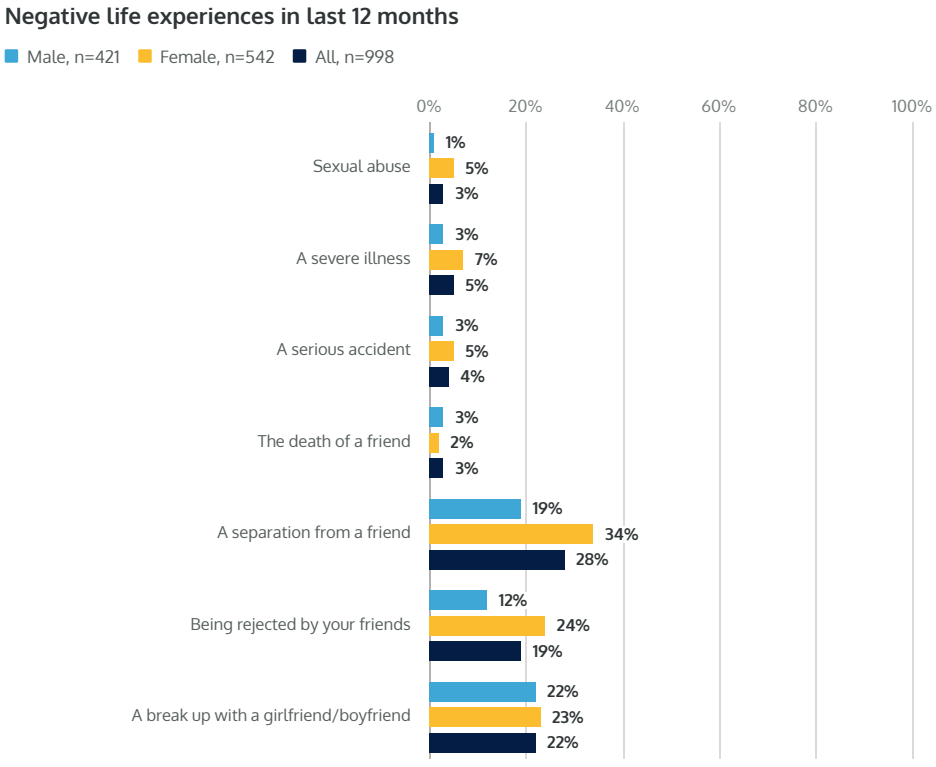
Health & Wellbeing



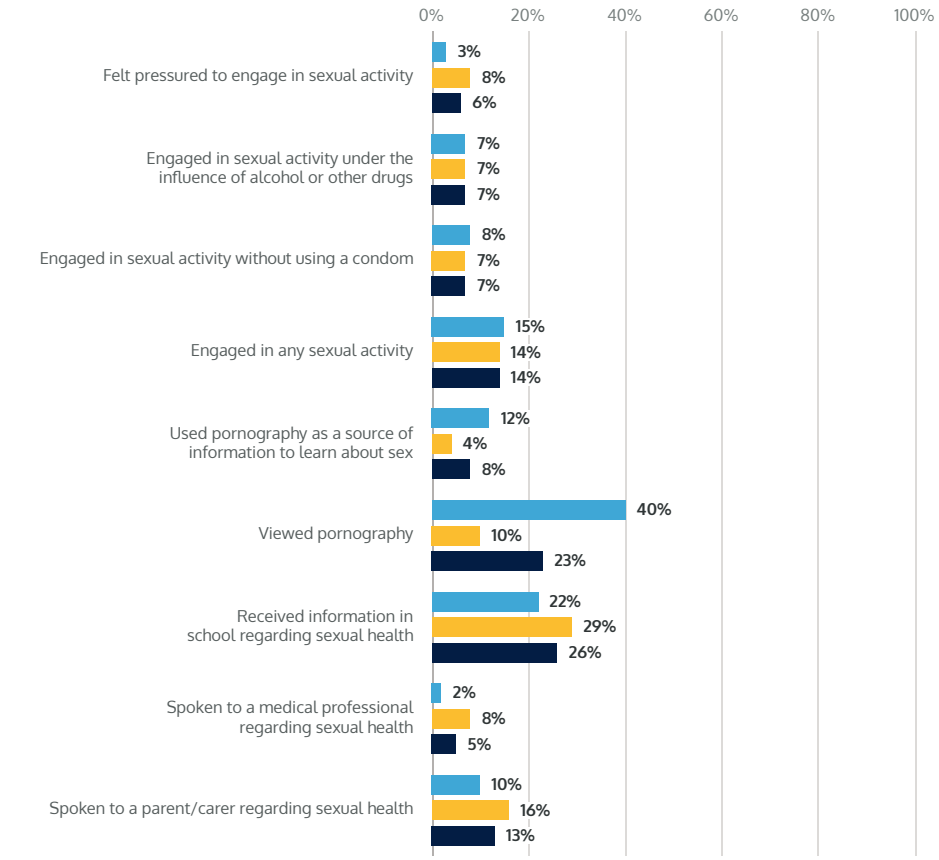


Health & Wellbeing

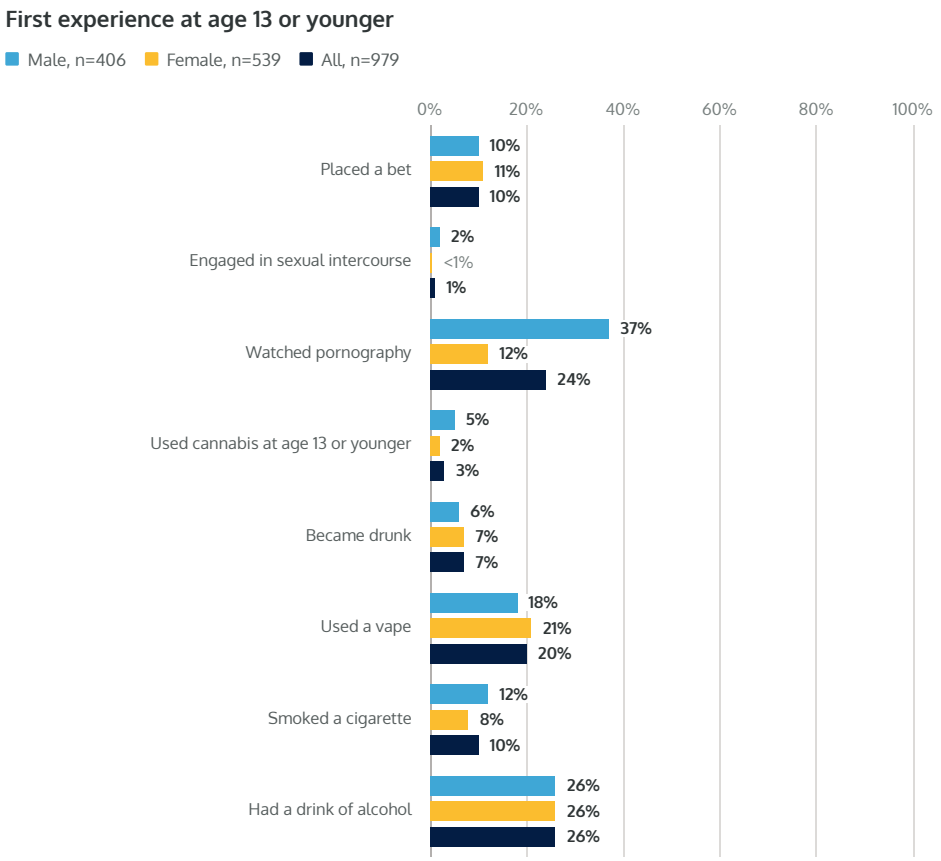




Health & Wellbeing



Health & Wellbeing



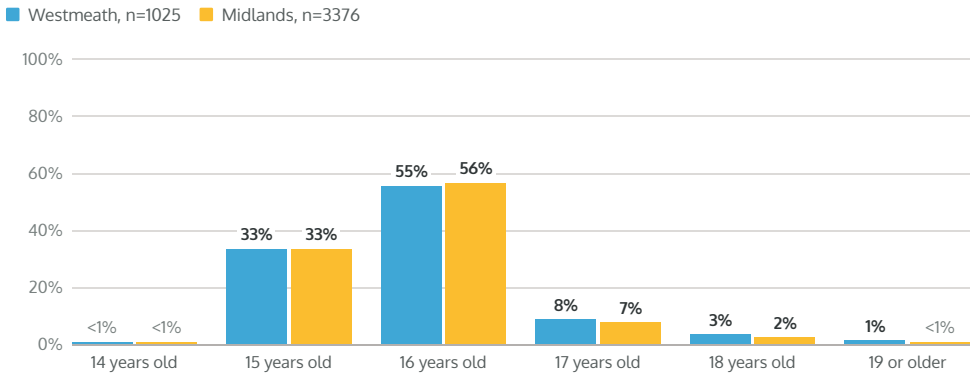


County versus Region Profile

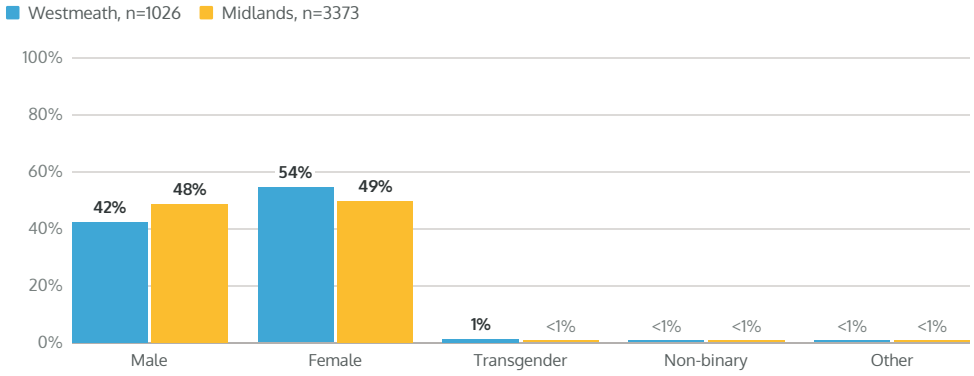


Respondent Profile

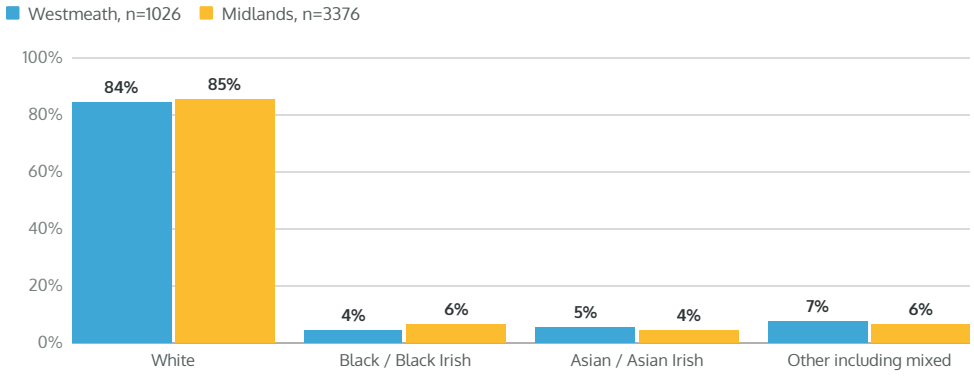
Age distribution



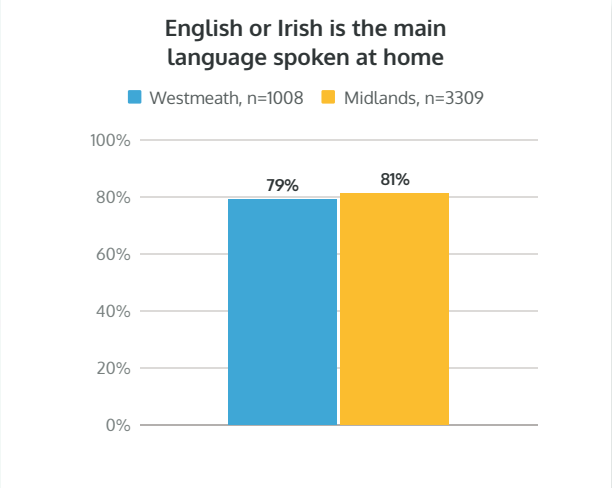
Gender

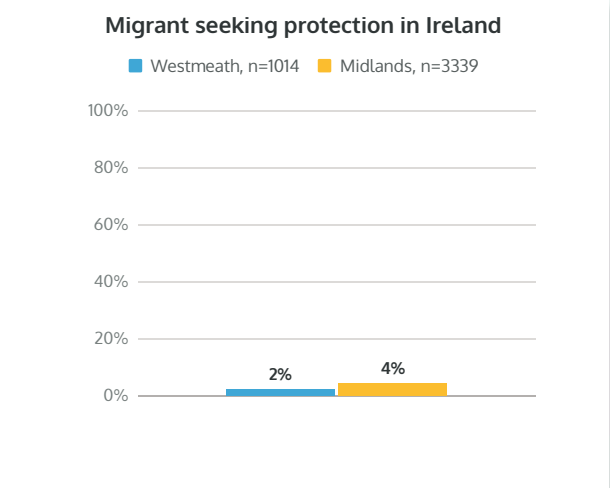


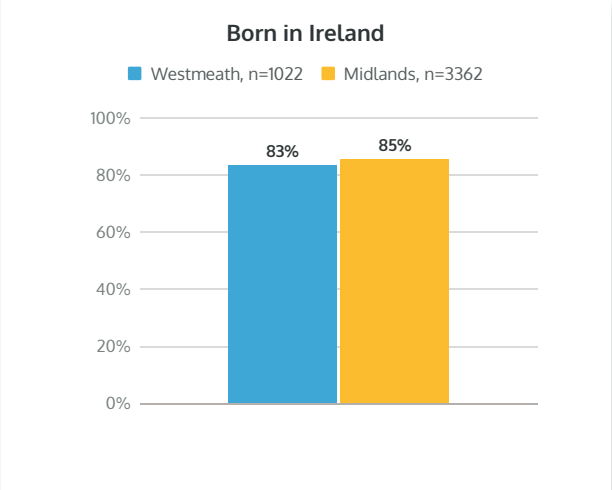
Ethnicity

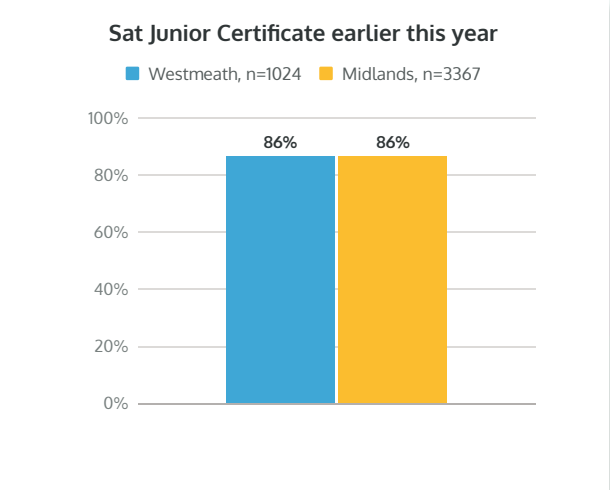


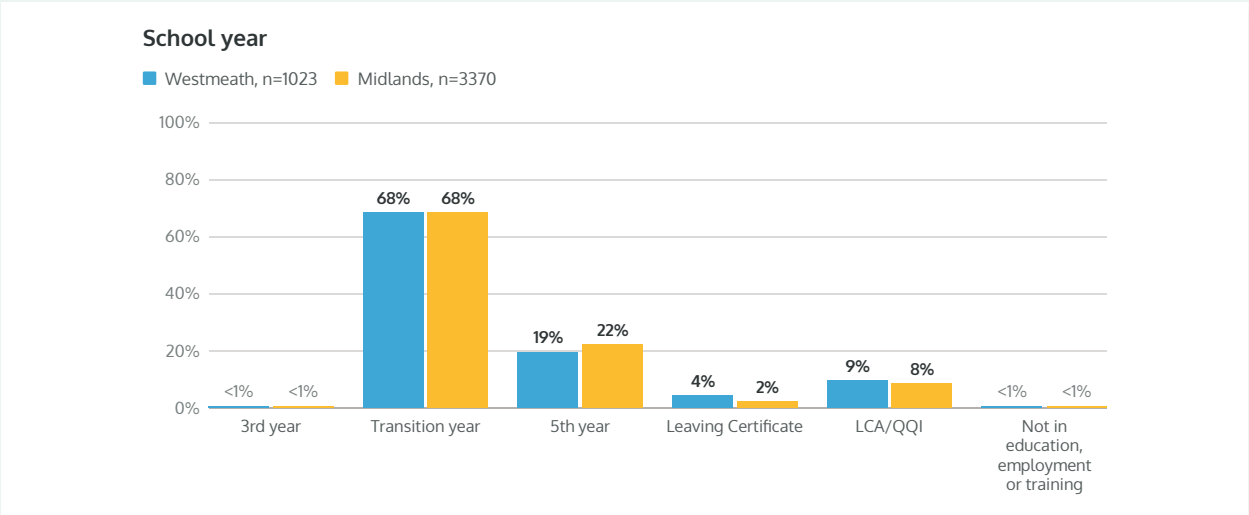
Respondent Profile



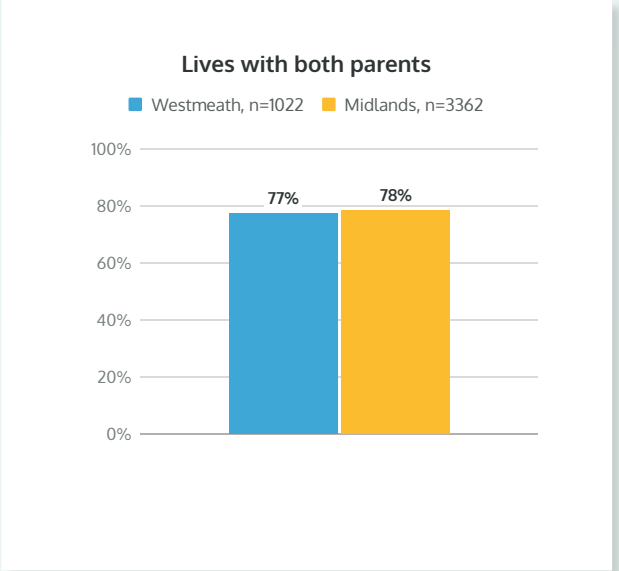


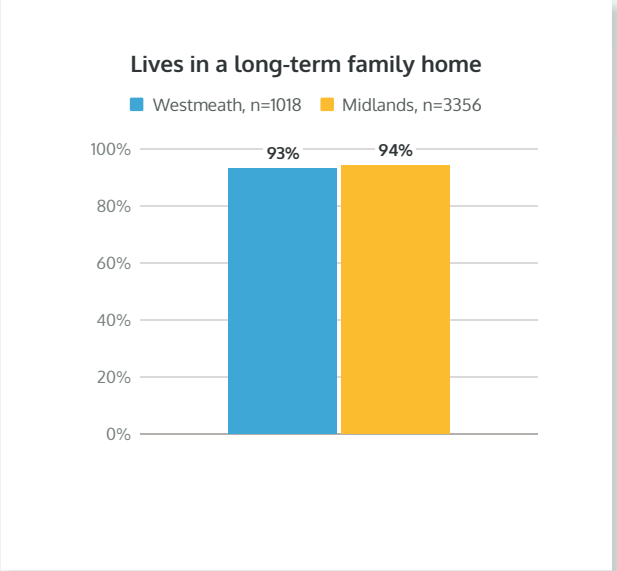


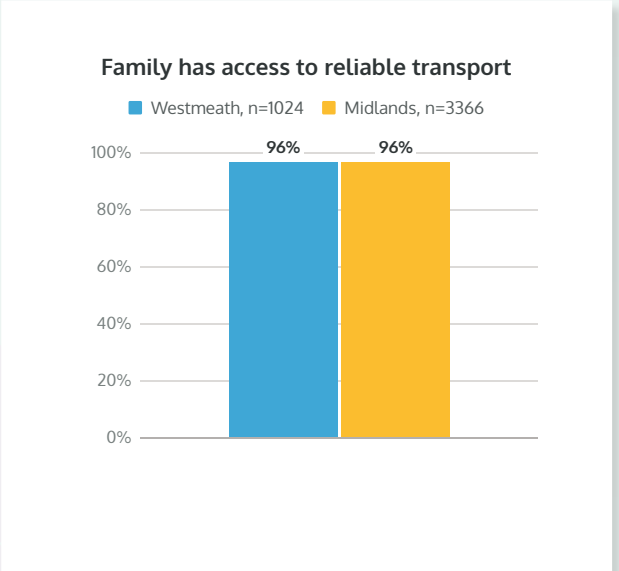


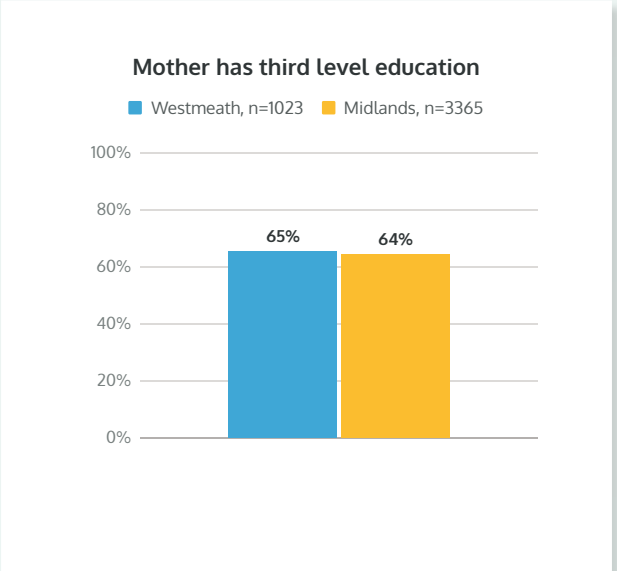


Respondent Profile



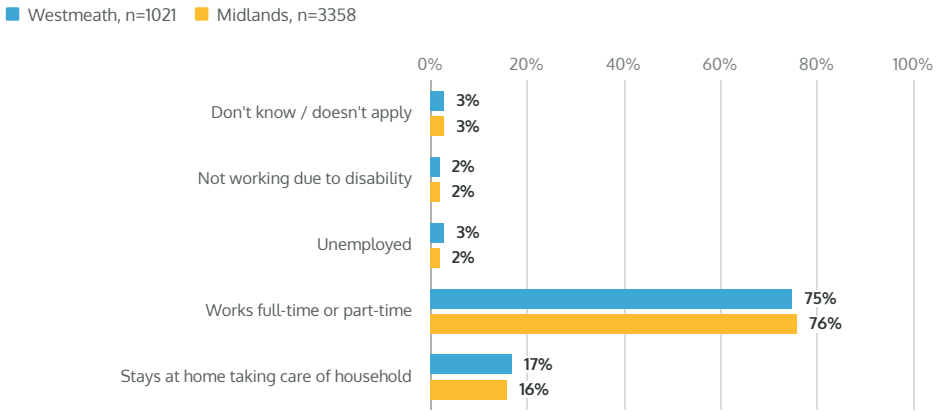




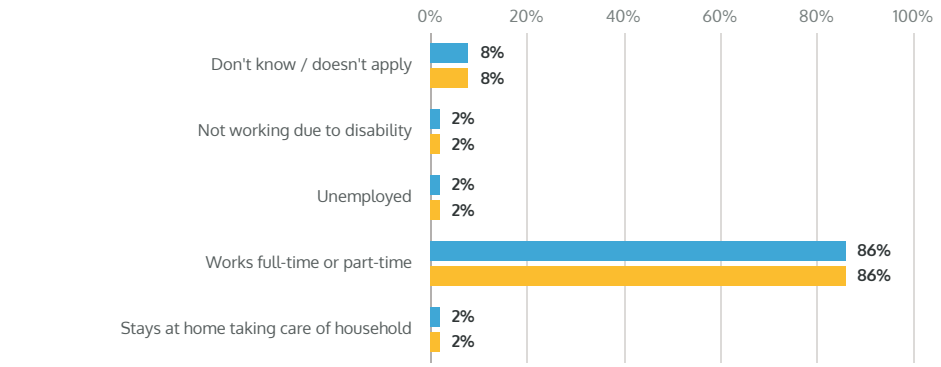


Respondent Profile

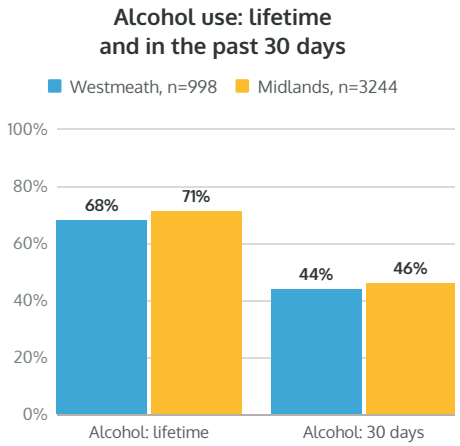
Mother's occupation

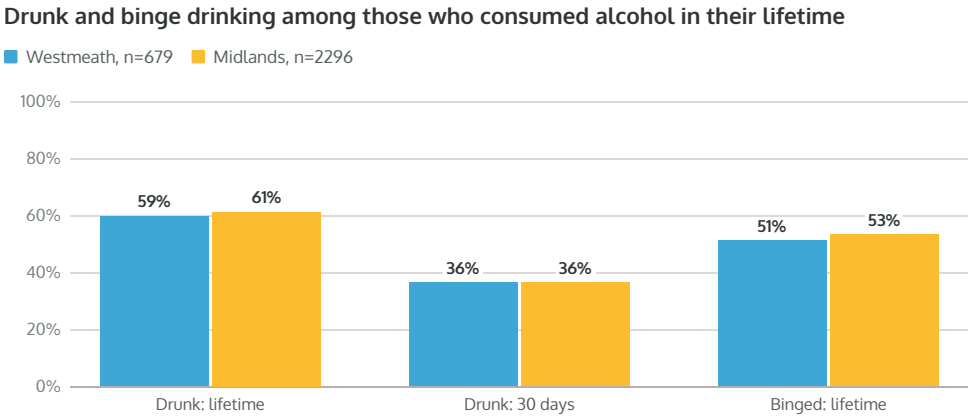


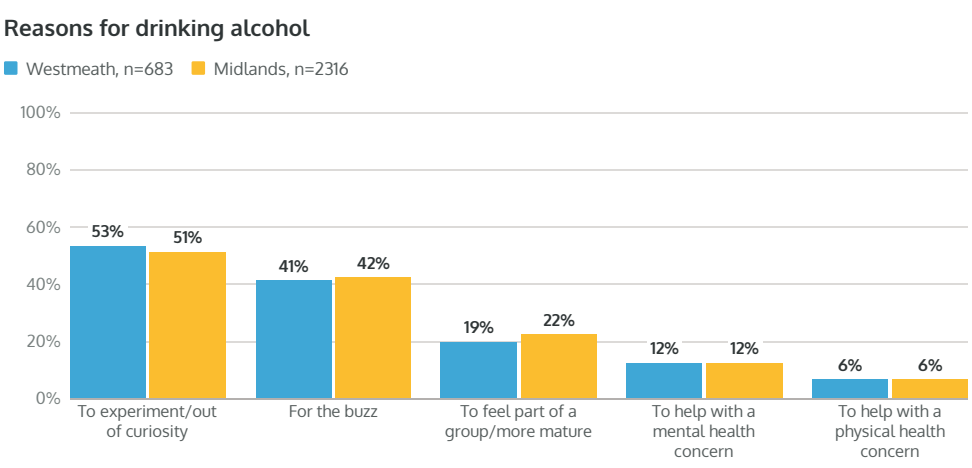
Father's occupation



Substance Use

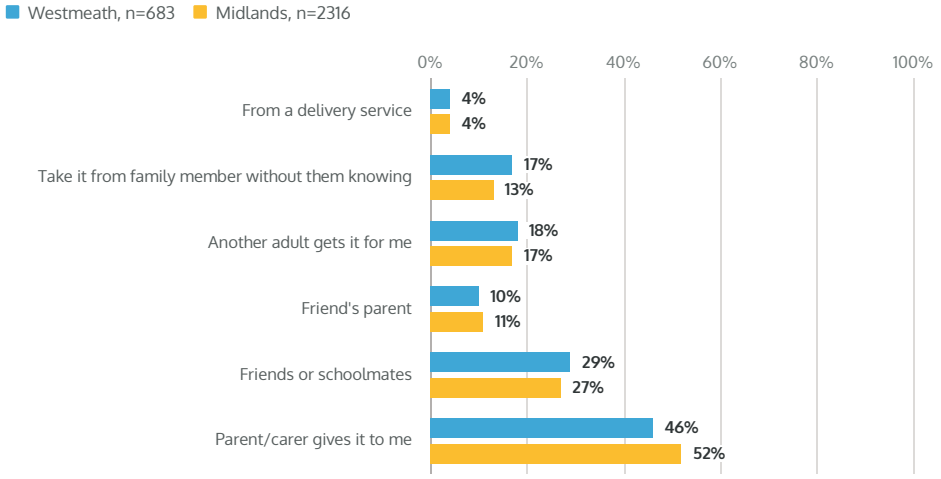




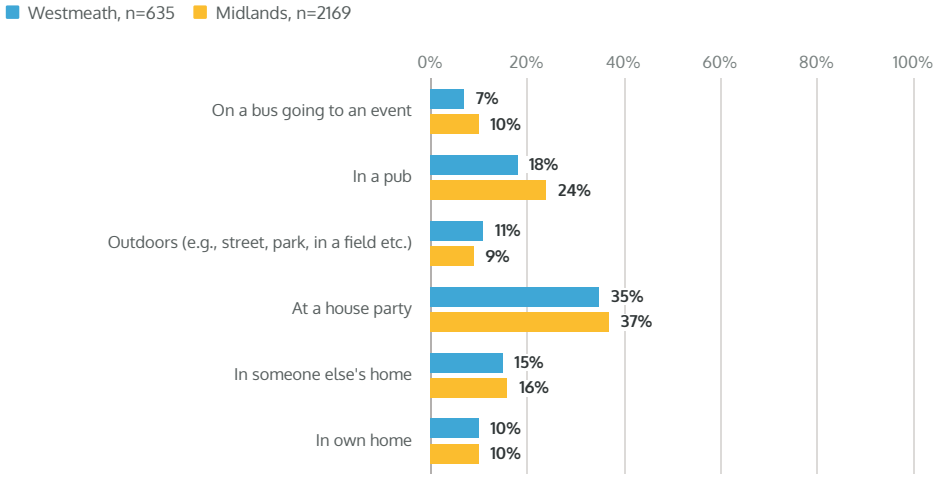


Substance Use

Source of alcohol

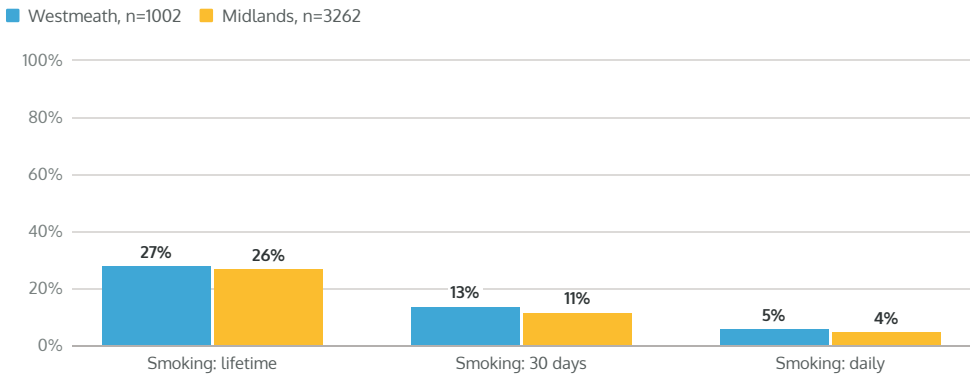


Drink often or always in the following locations among those who drank alcohol

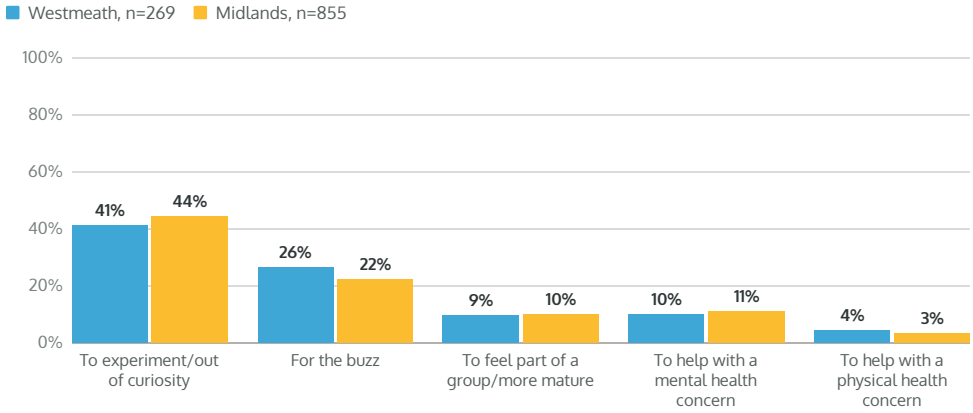


Substance Use

Smoking: lifetime, past 30 days and daily

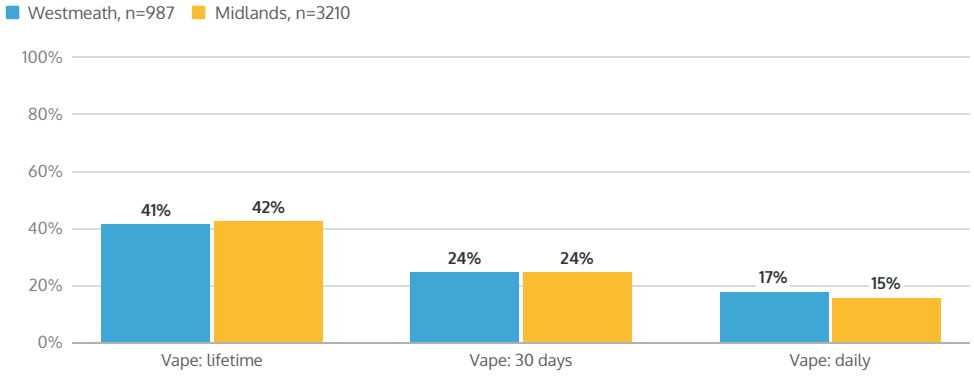


Reasons for smoking

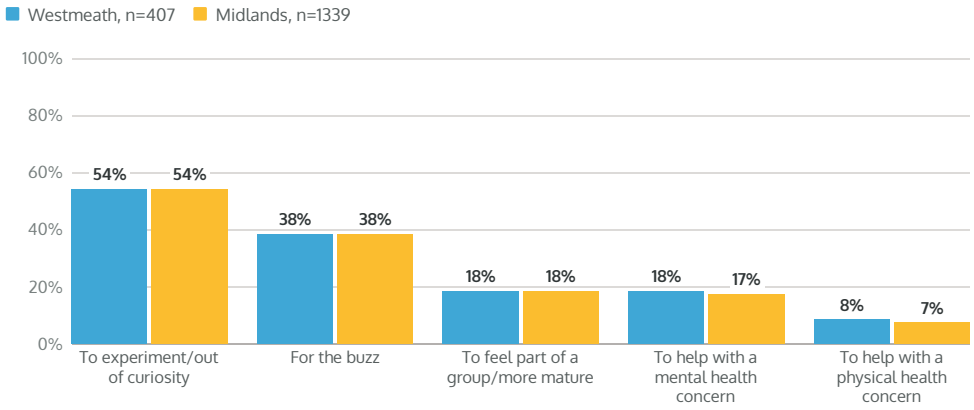


Substance Use

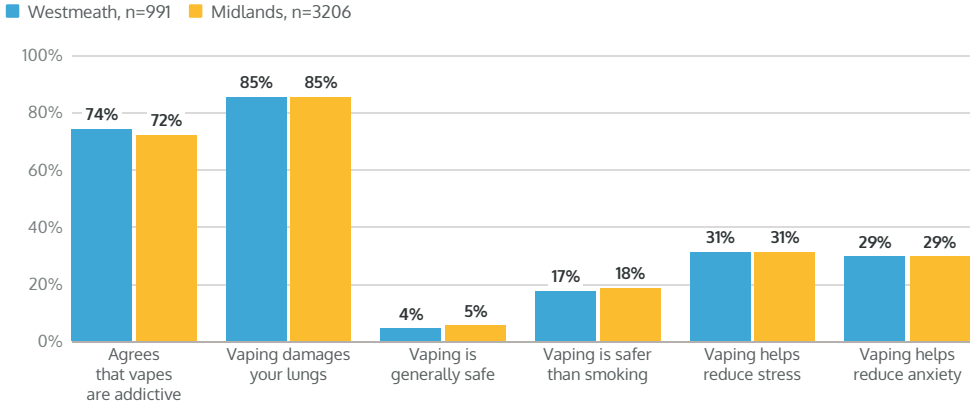
Vaping: lifetime, past 30 days and daily



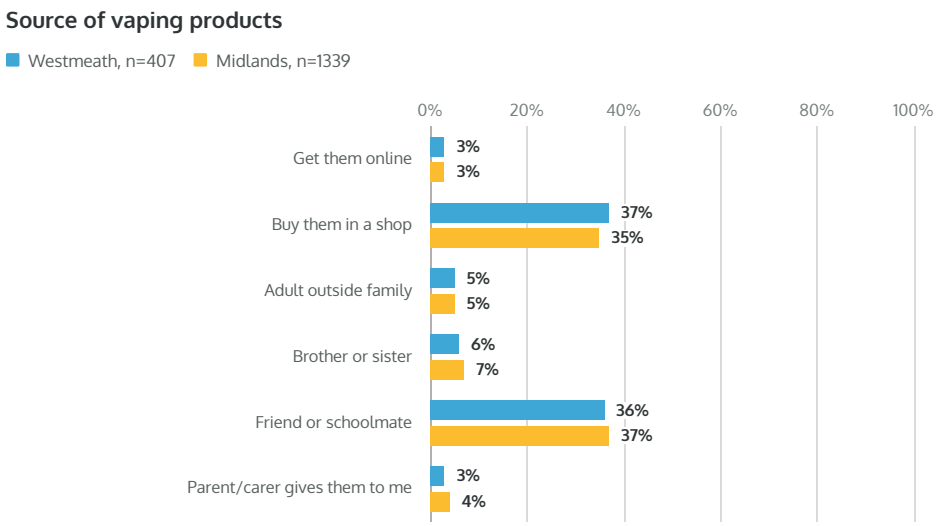
Reasons for vaping

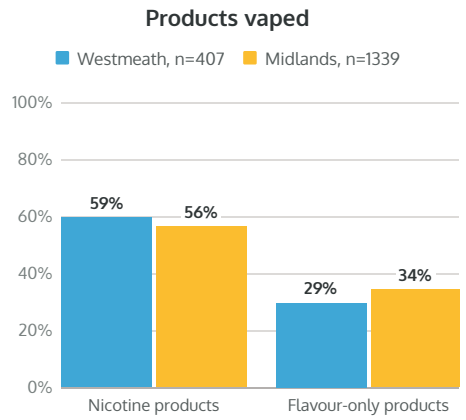


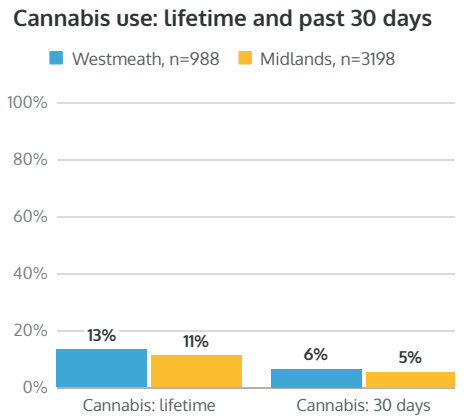
Perceptions of vaping



Substance Use

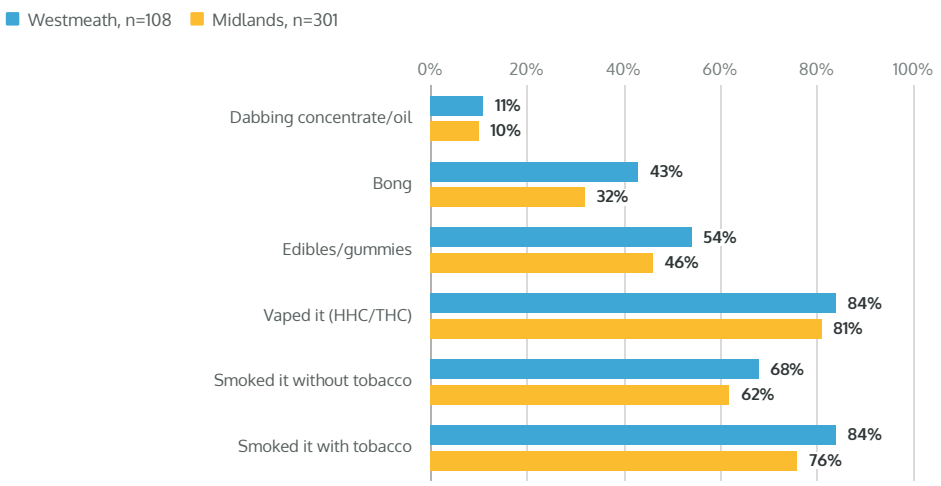




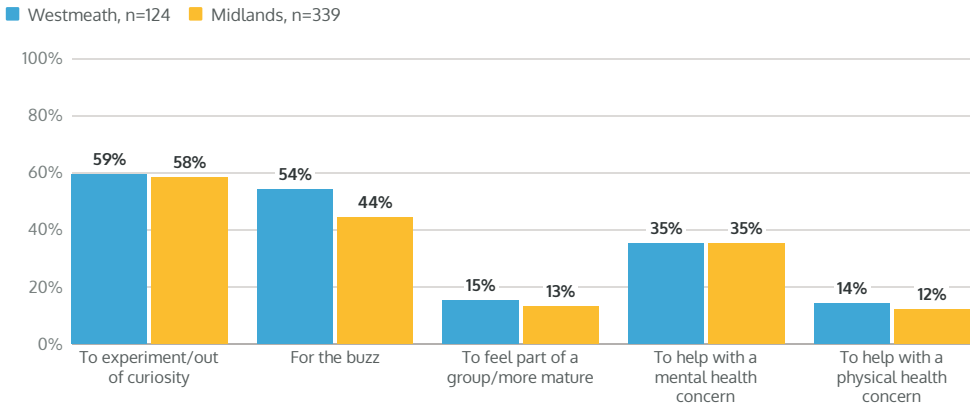


Substance Use

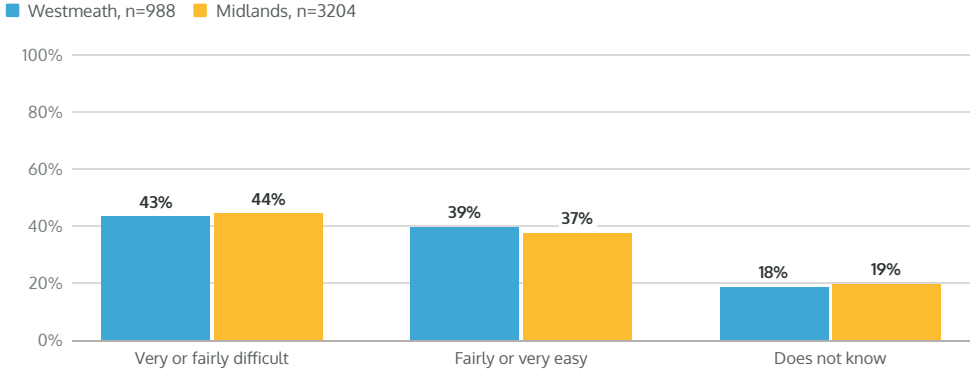
Cannabis form of use



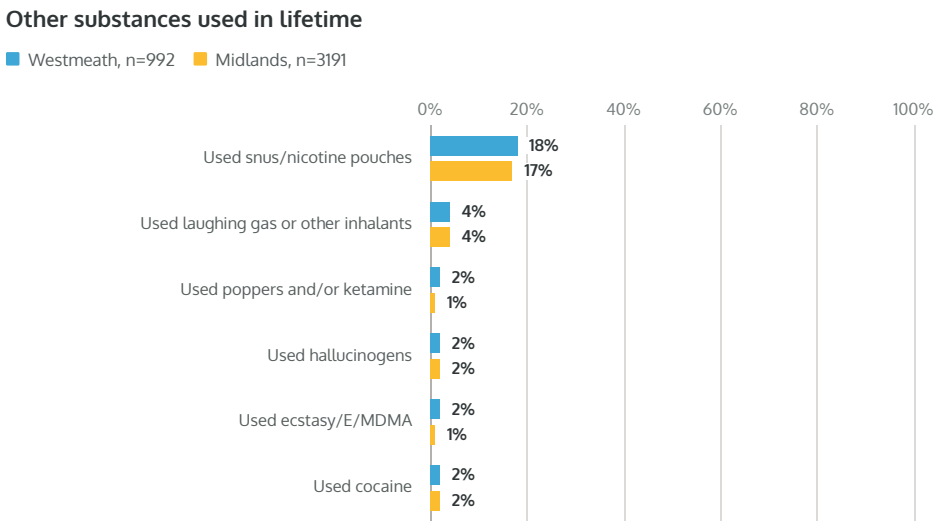
Reasons for cannabis use

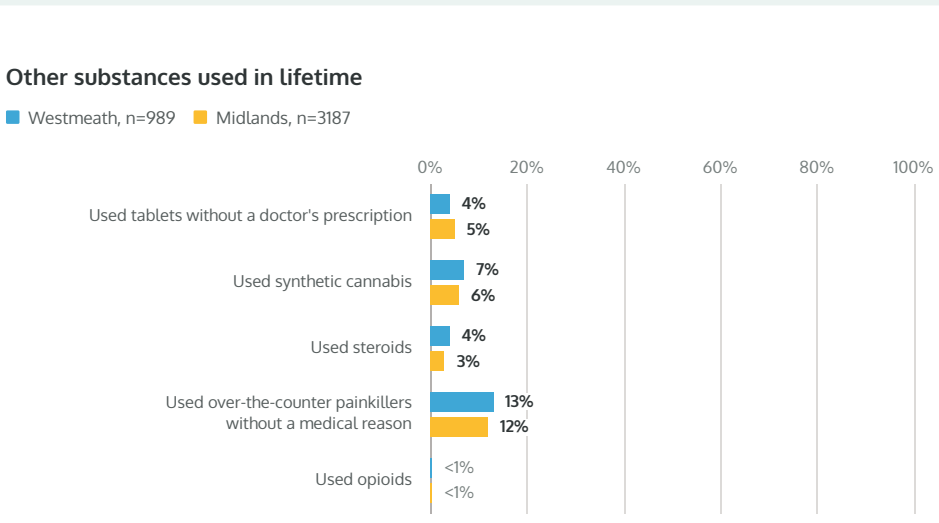


Difficulty getting cannabis



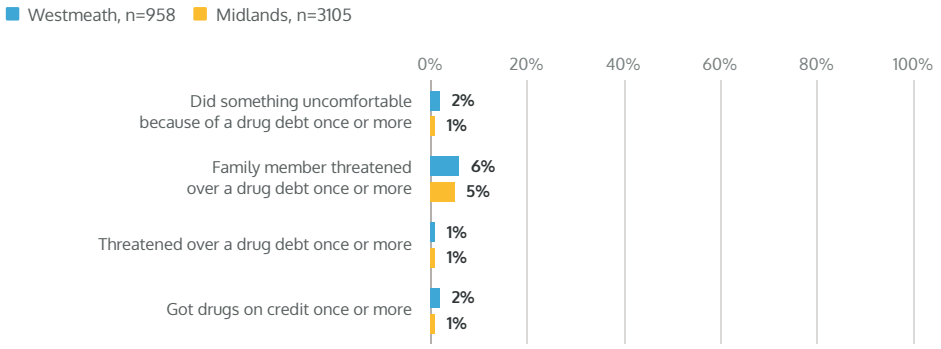
Substance Use



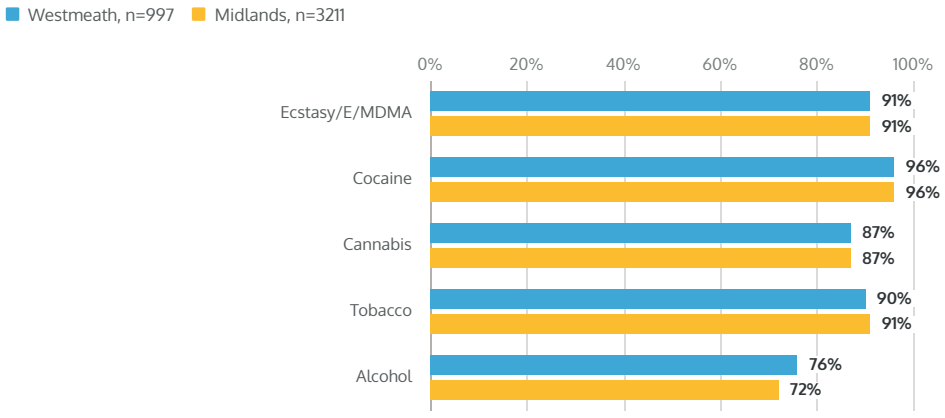


Substance Use

Drug-related debts and intimidation

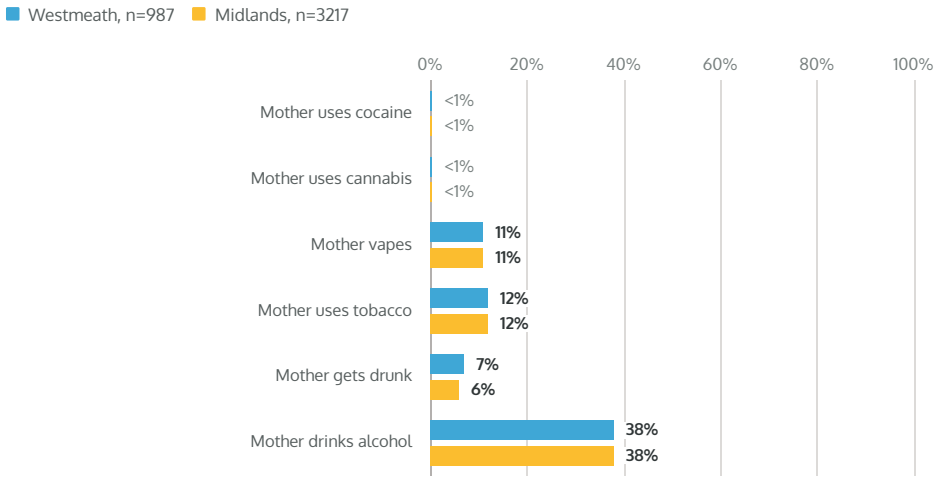


Perceived as harmful or very harmful

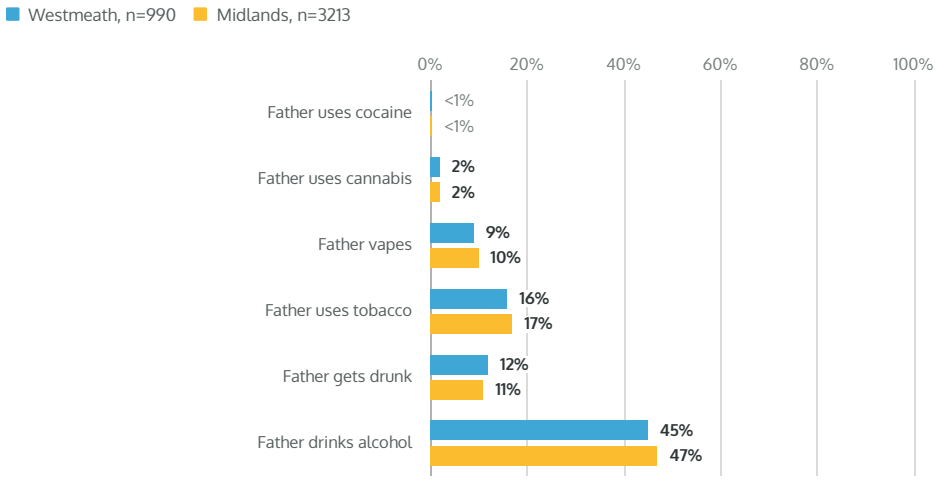


Parents & Family

Mother's substance use at least once a week

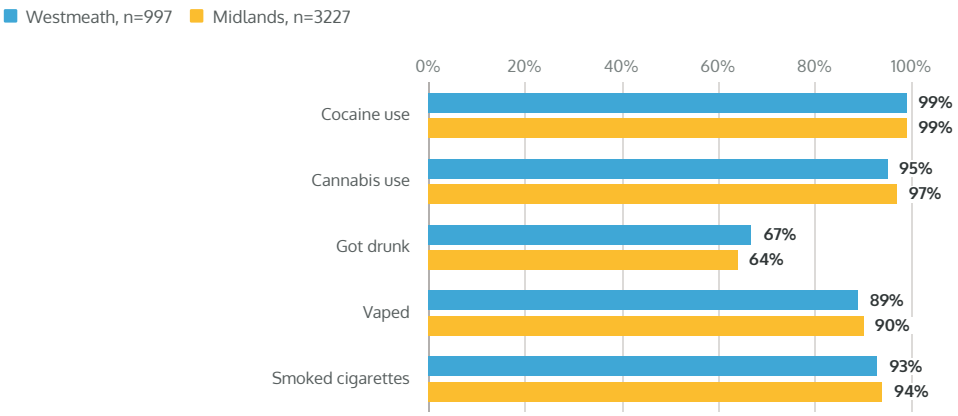


Father's substance use at least once a week

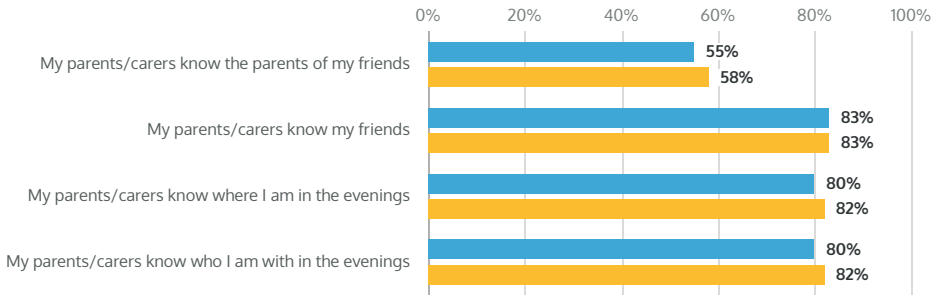


Parents & Family

Perceived parental disapproval of substance use

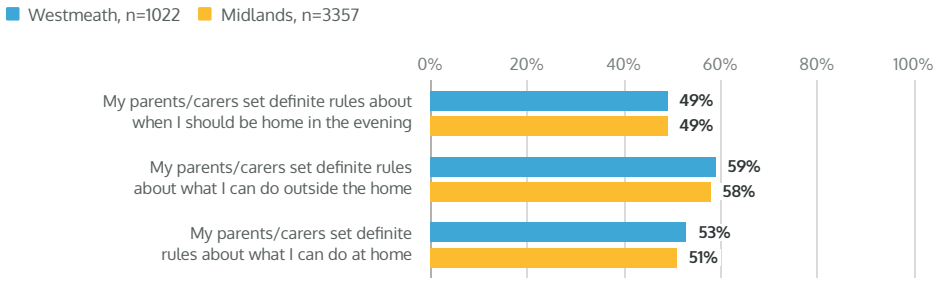


Parental monitoring: agree or strongly agree

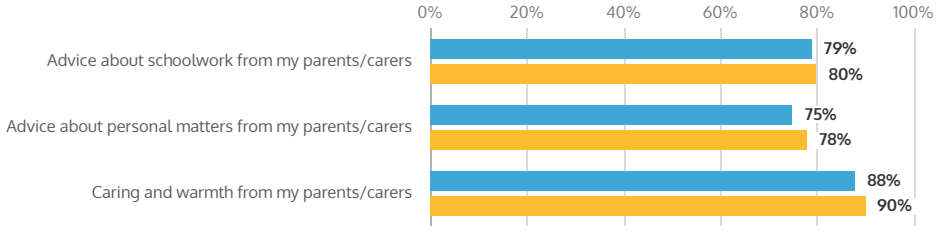


Parents & Family

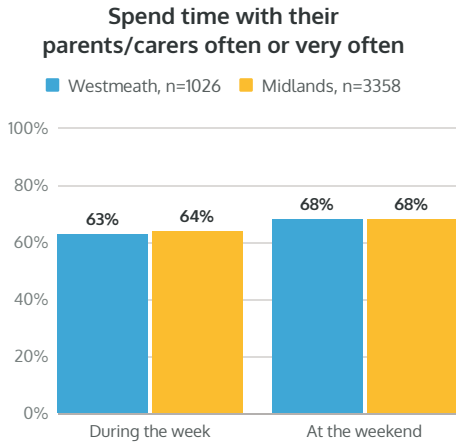
Parental rule setting: agree or strongly agree

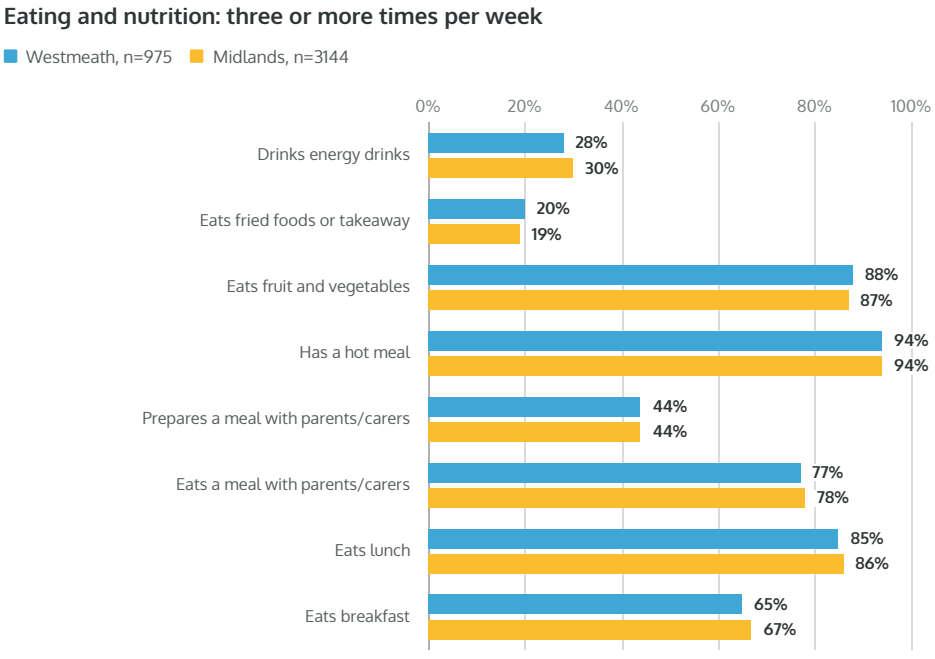


Parental/carer support: easy or very easy to receive



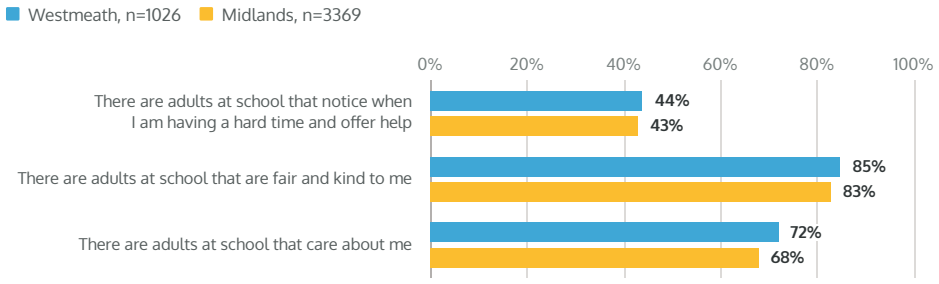
Parents & Family



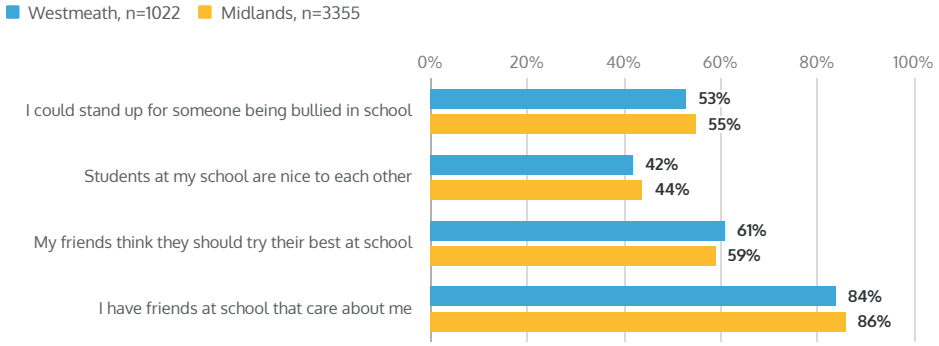


School Life

Adult support in school: agree or strongly agree

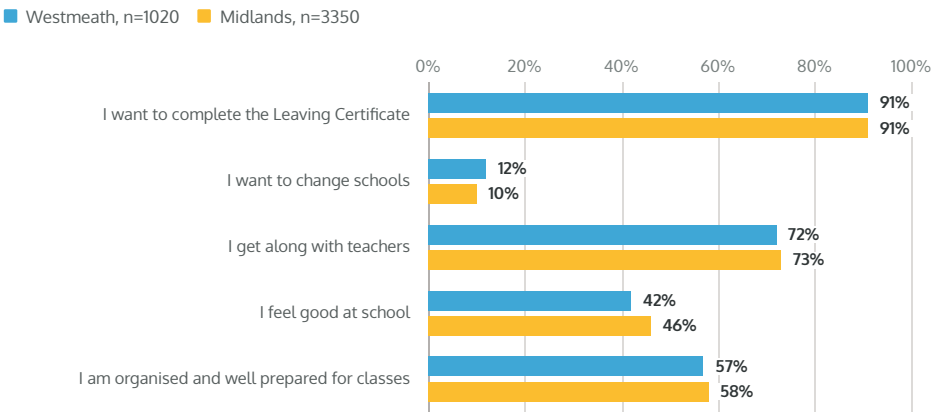


Peer support in school: agree or strongly agree

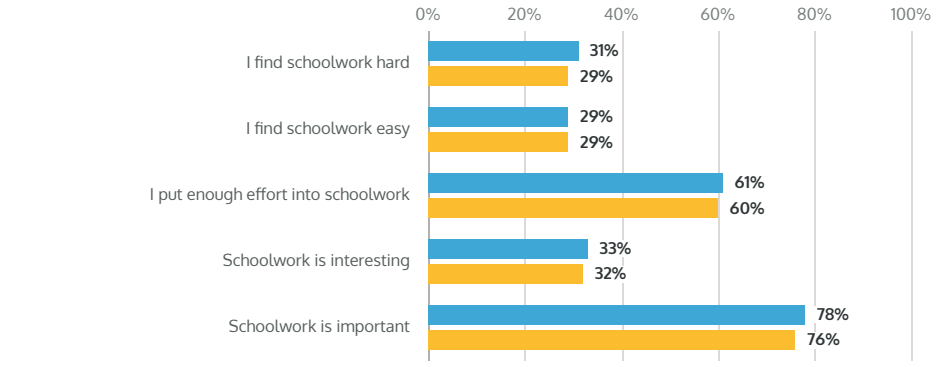


School Life

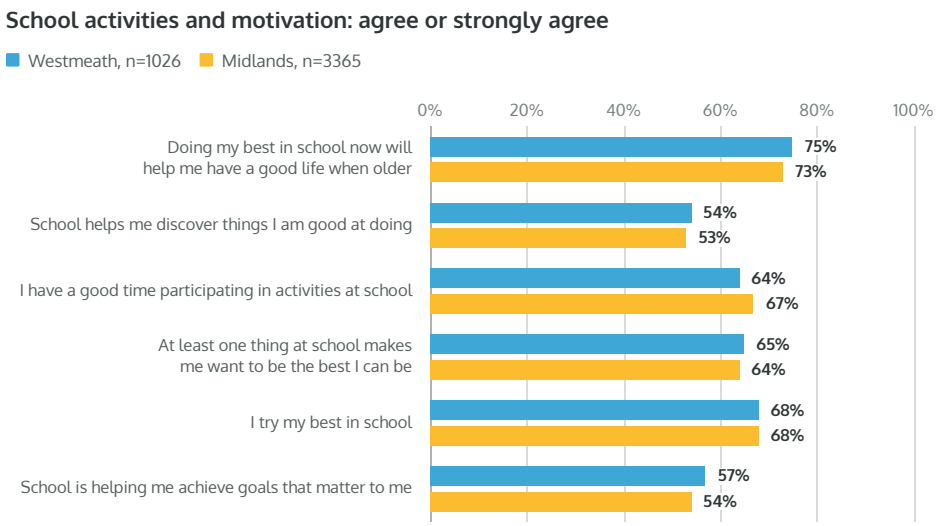
School experiences: agree or strongly agree



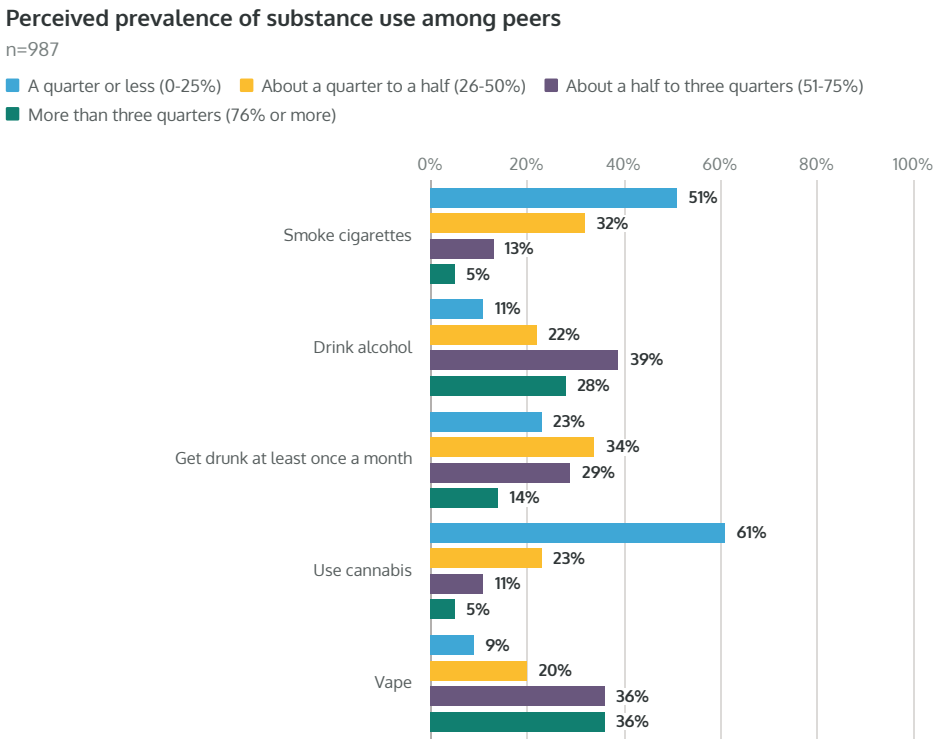
Schoolwork: agree or strongly agree



School Life


School activities and motivation: agree or strongly agree
Westmeath, n=1026
Midlands, n=3365
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Doing my best in school now will help me have a good life when older
75%
73%
School helps me discover things I am good at doing
54%
53%
I have a good time participating in activities at school
64%
67%
At least one thing at school makes me want to be the best I can be
65%
64%
I try my best in school
68%
68%
School is helping me achieve goals that matter to me
57%
54%

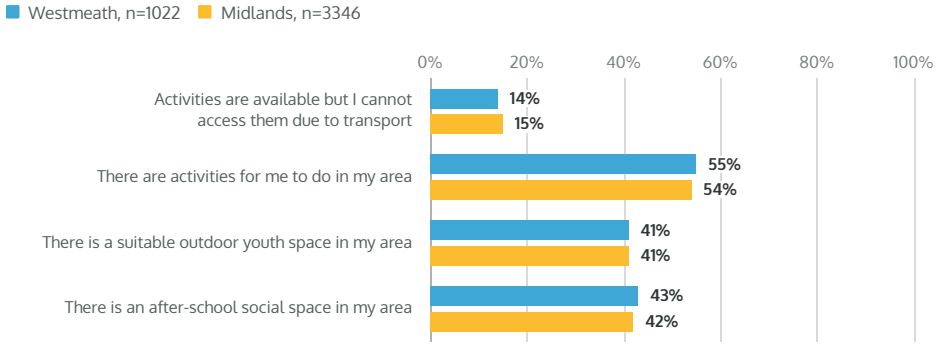
Peer Group



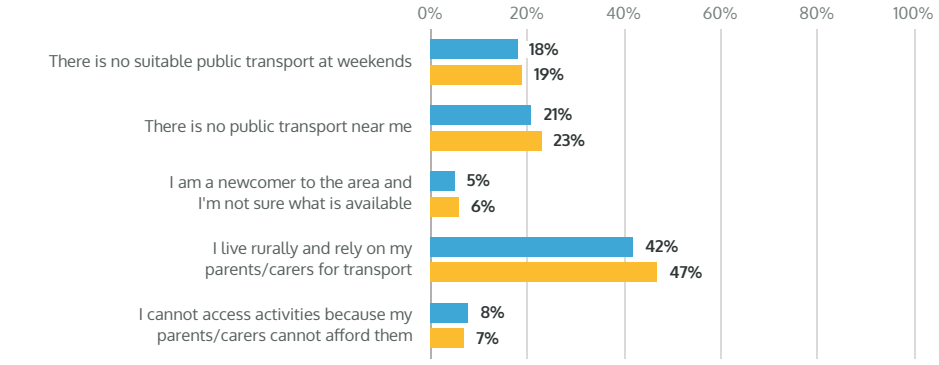
Students were asked what proportion of young people their age they thought engaged in each substance use behaviour. They selected one of four response categories: a quarter or less (0–25%), about a quarter to a half (26–50%), about a half to three quarters (51–75%), or more than three quarters (76% or more).

Leisure Time & Community

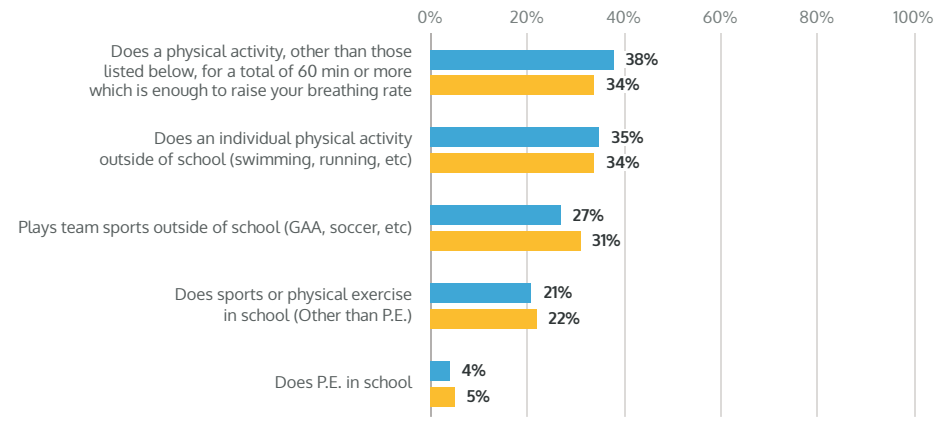
Youth spaces and activities: agree or strongly agree



Youth spaces and activities: agree or strongly agree

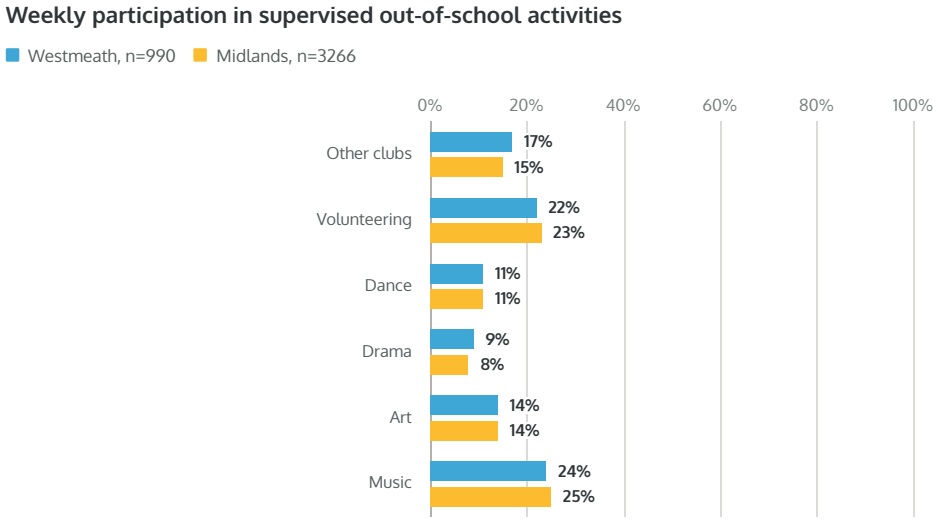


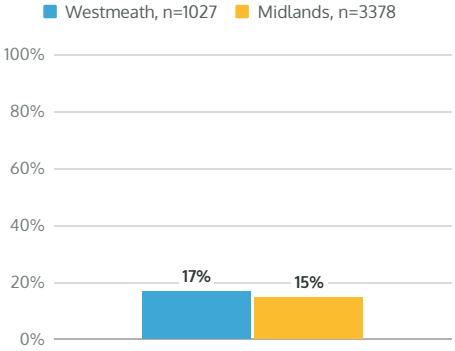
Physical activities: three or more times a week

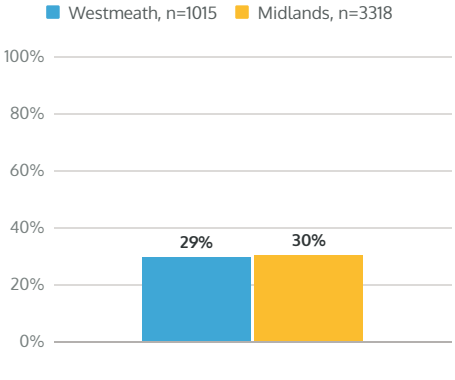


PLANET Youth PARTNER Midlands

Leisure Time & Community

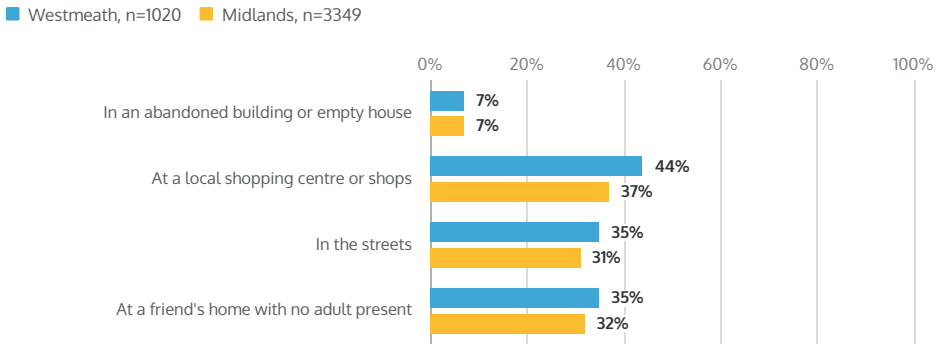




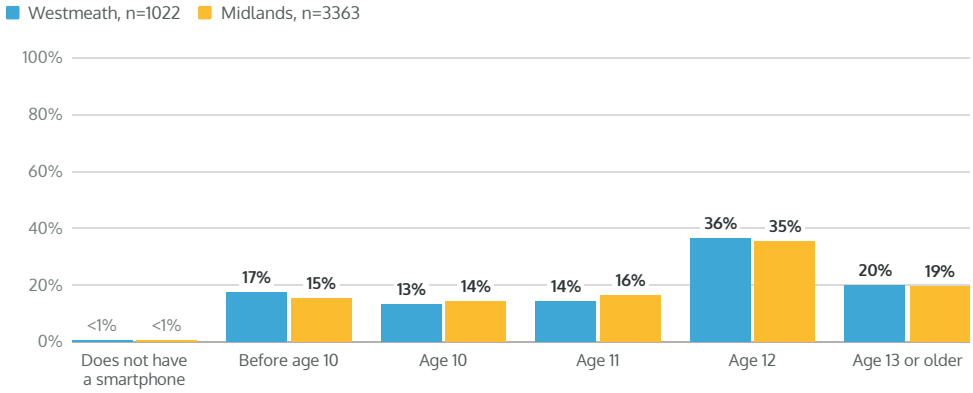


Leisure Time & Community

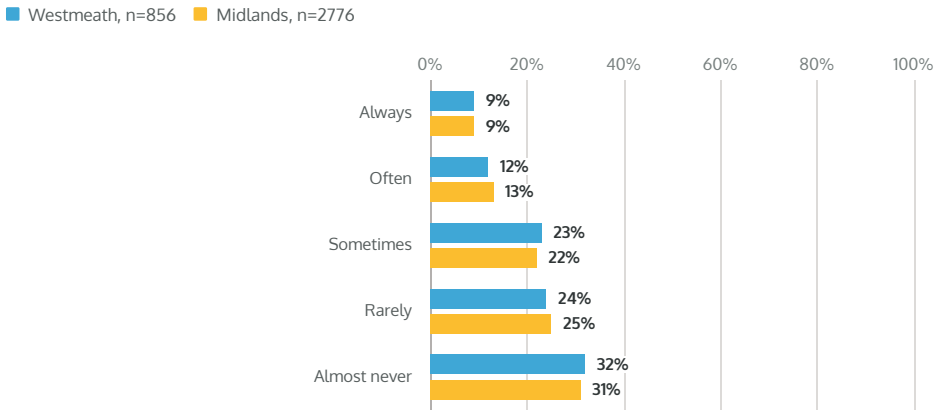
Hanging out with friends in the last month



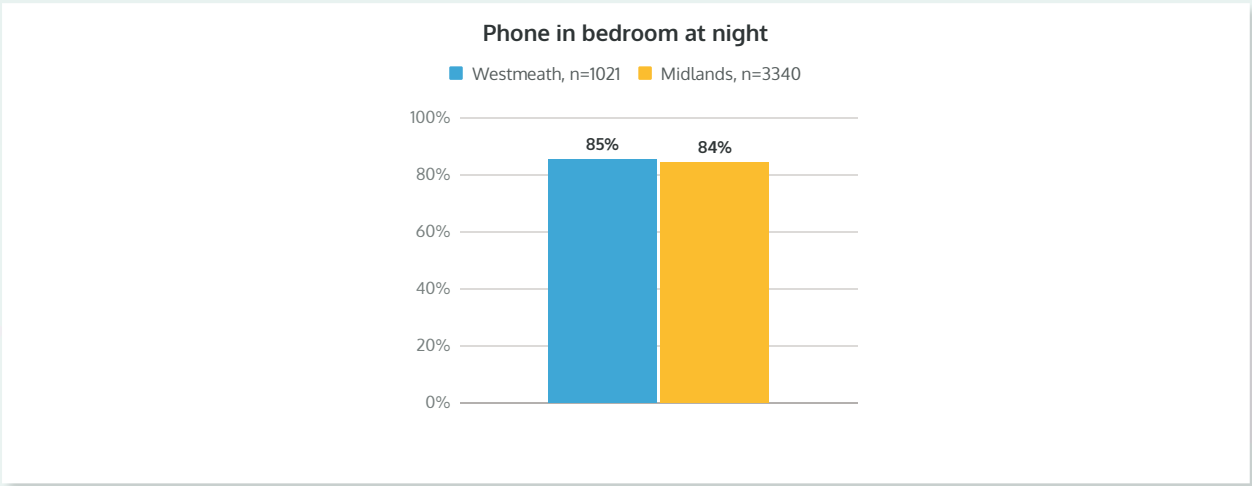
Age when respondents got their first smartphone

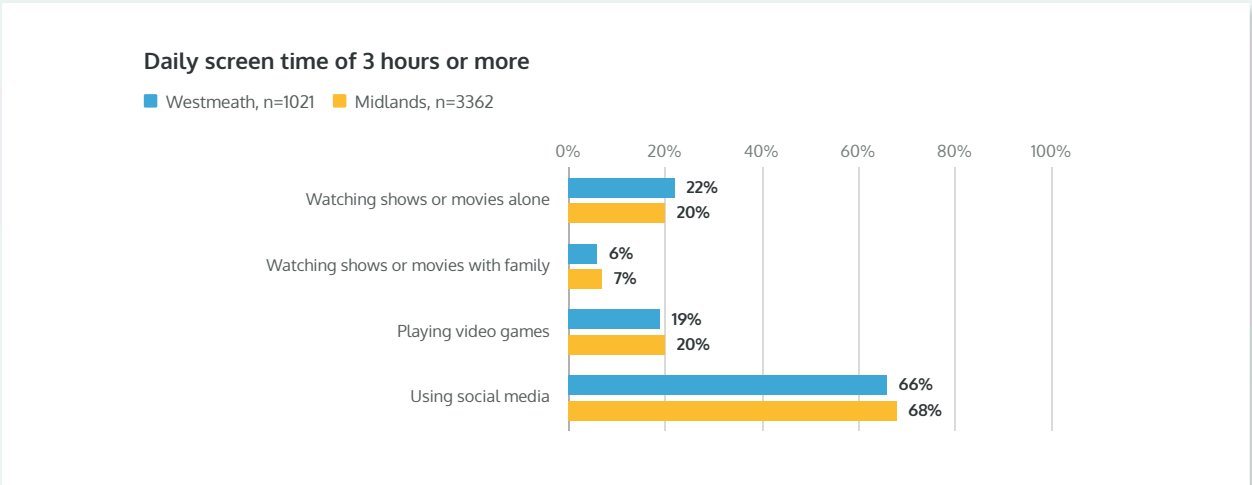


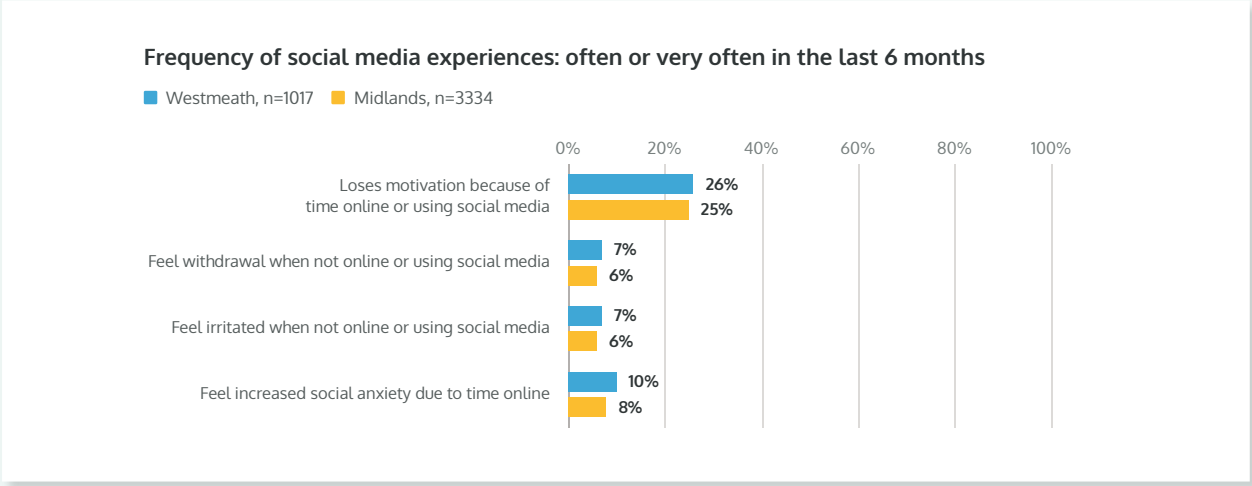
Phone use between midnight and 6am



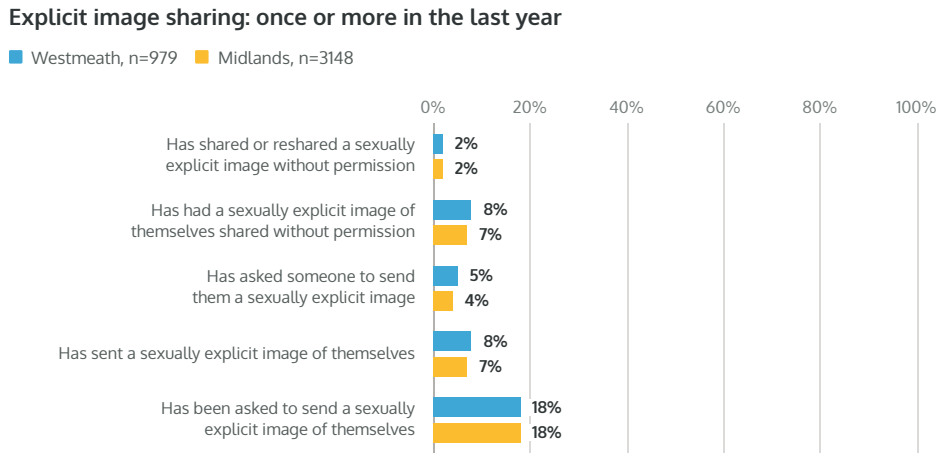
Leisure Time & Community

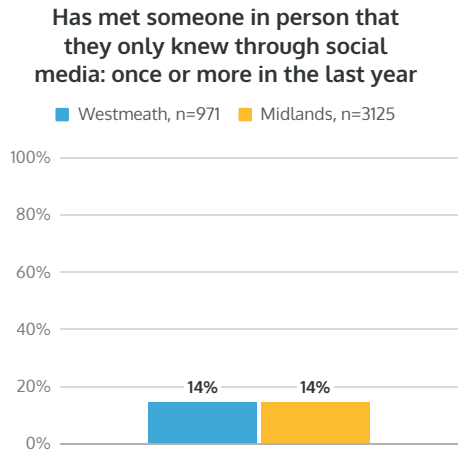


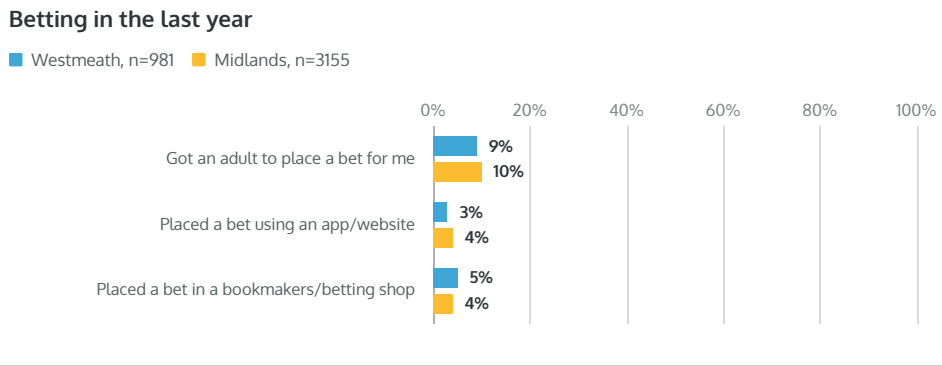




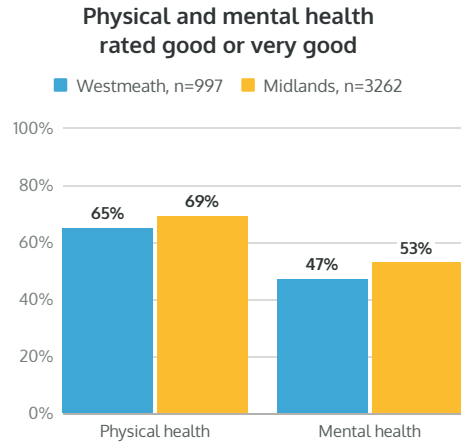
Leisure Time & Community

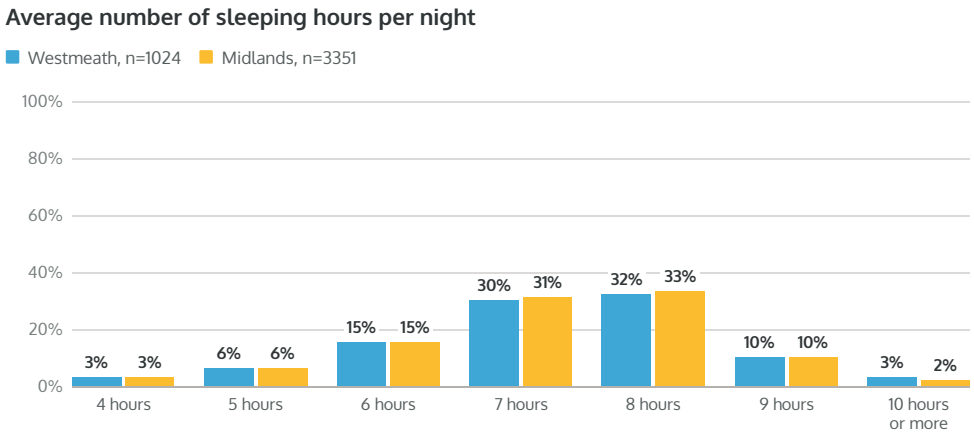






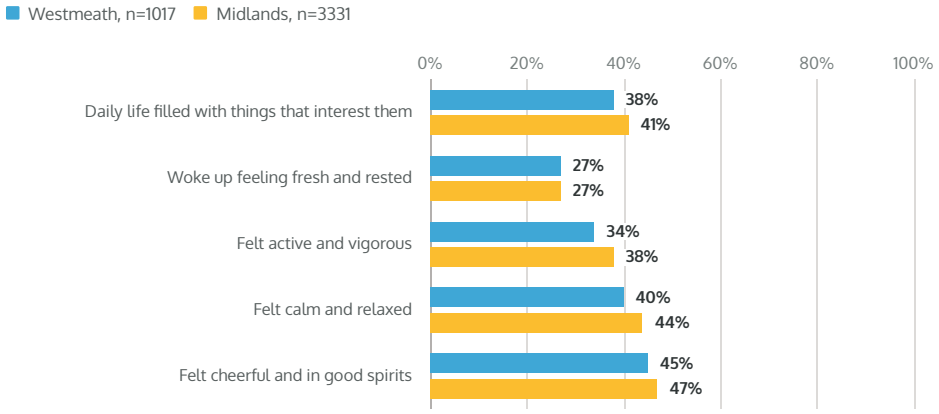
Health & Wellbeing



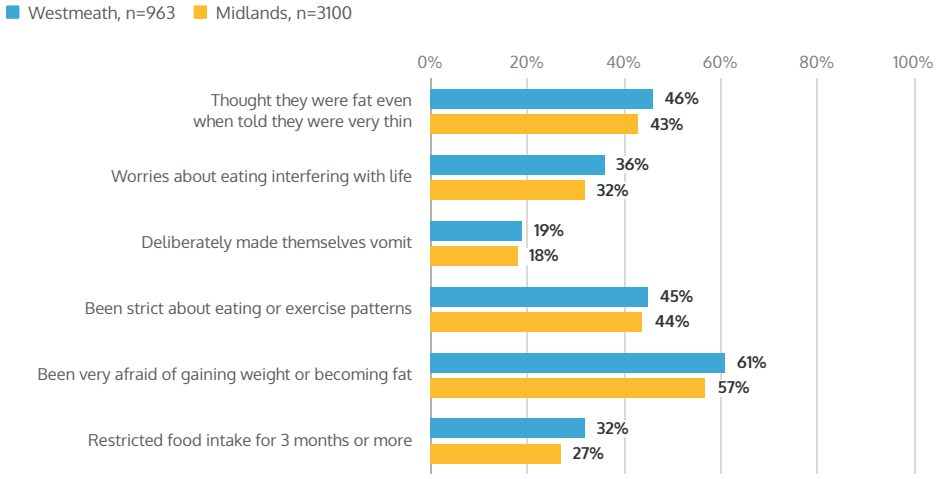


Health & Wellbeing

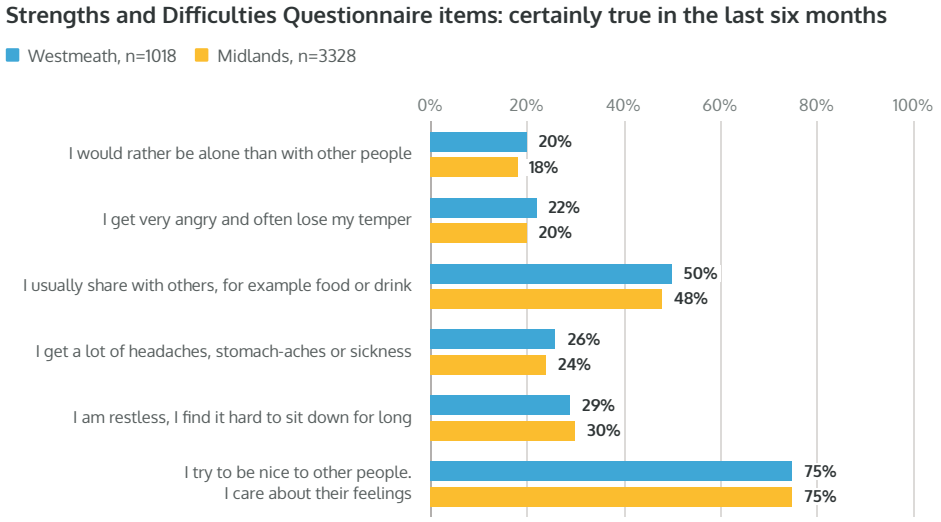
Wellbeing: all or most of the time over the past two weeks

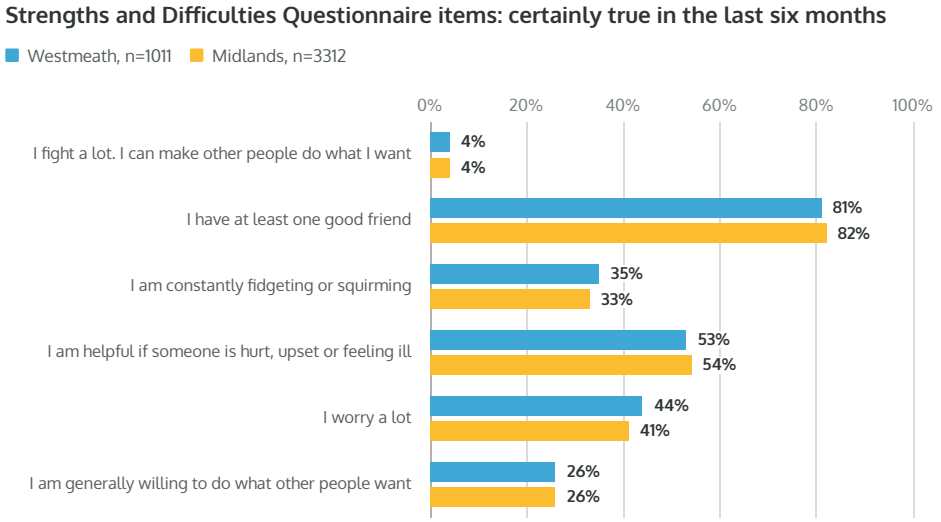


Eating and body image-related behaviours



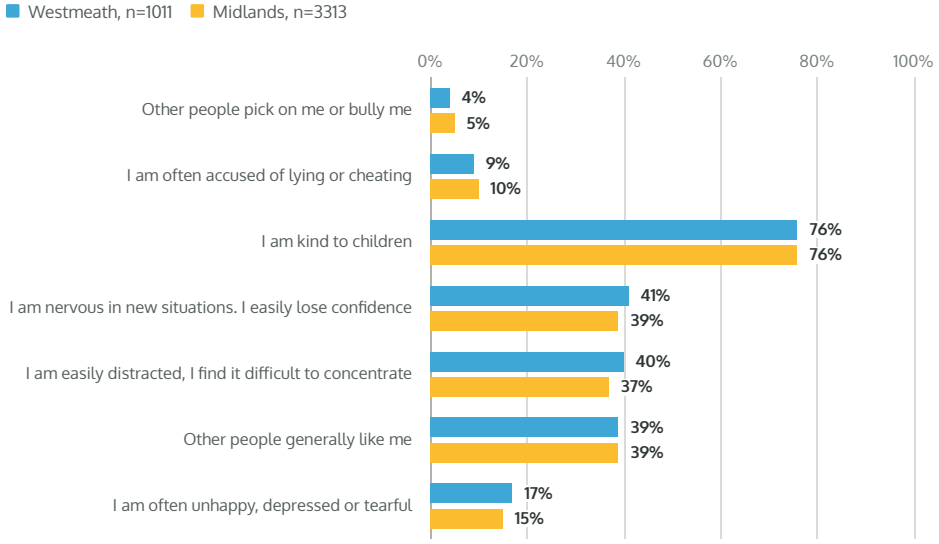
Health & Wellbeing



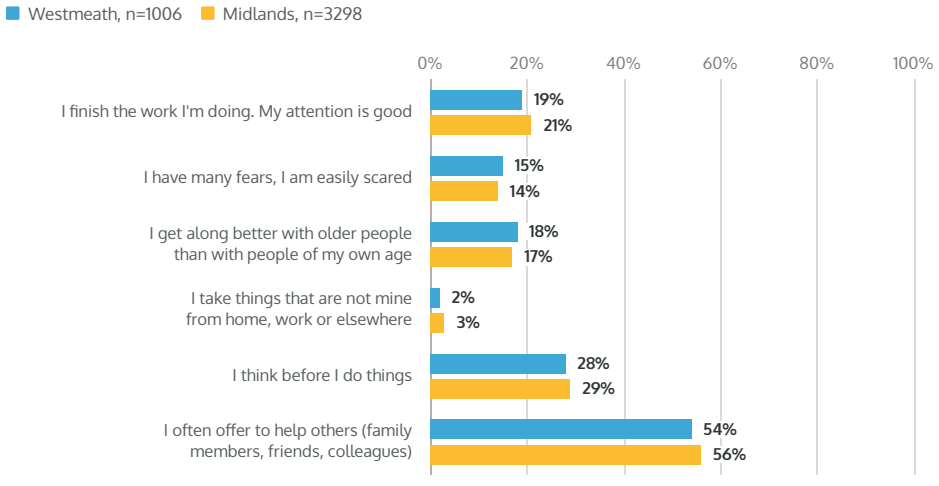


Health & Wellbeing

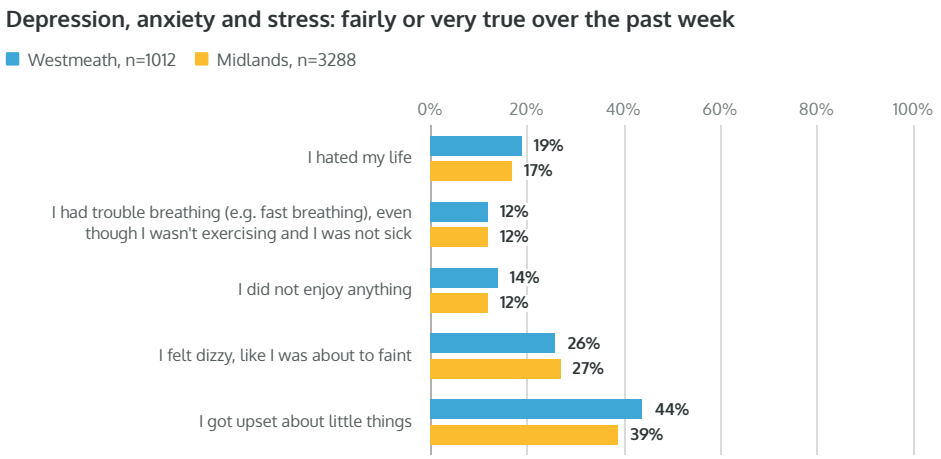
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire items: certainly true in the last six months

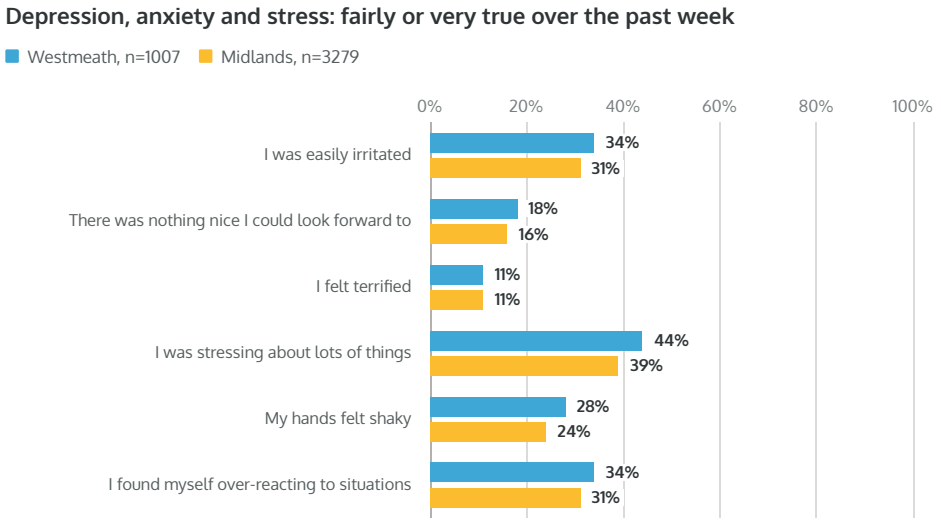


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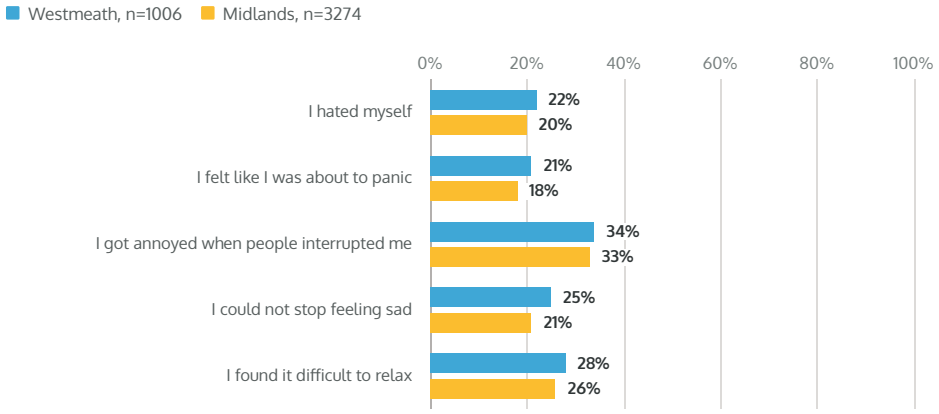
Health & Wellbeing



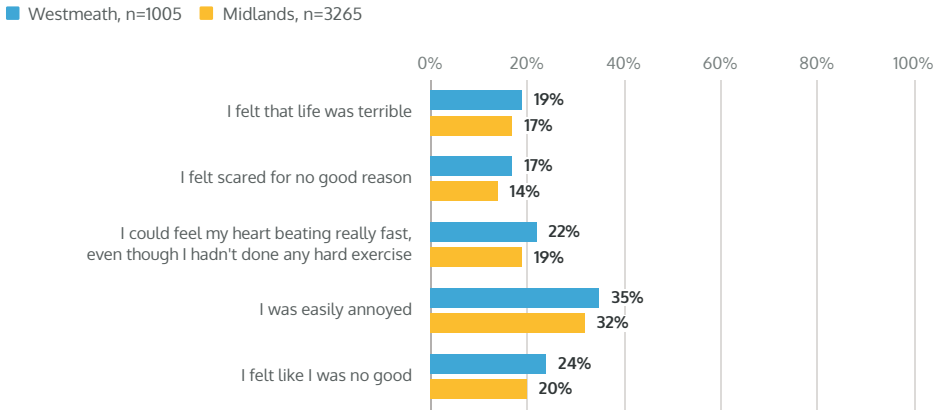


Health & Wellbeing

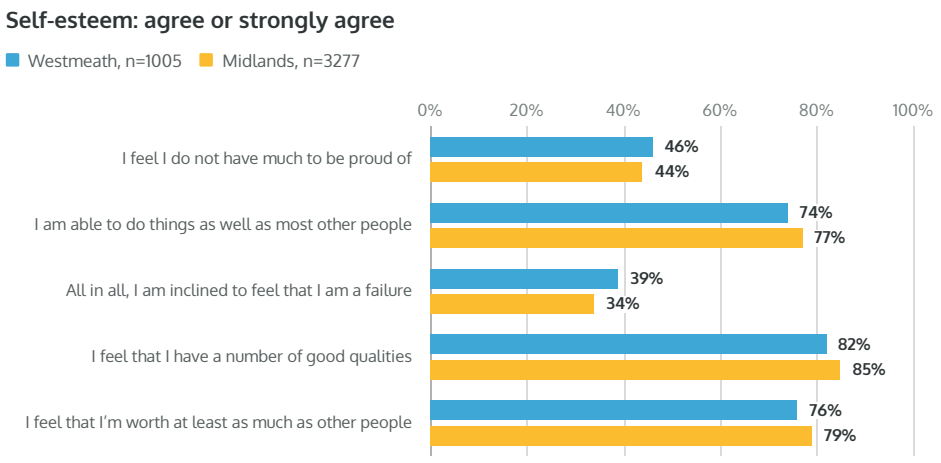
Depression, anxiety and stress: fairly or very true over the past week

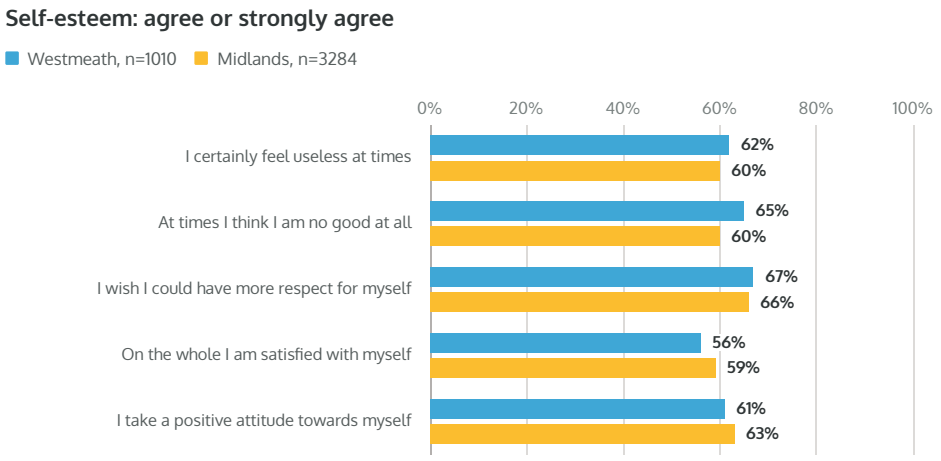


Depression, anxiety and stress: fairly or very true over the past week



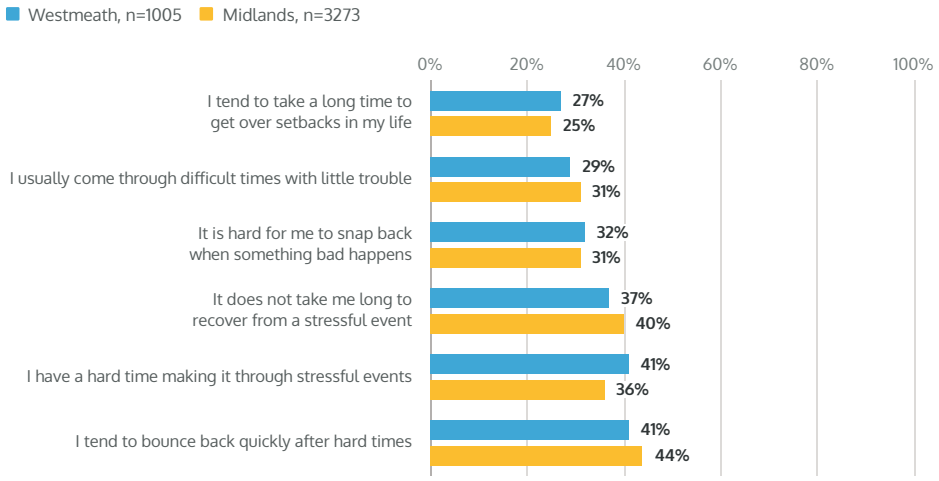
Health & Wellbeing



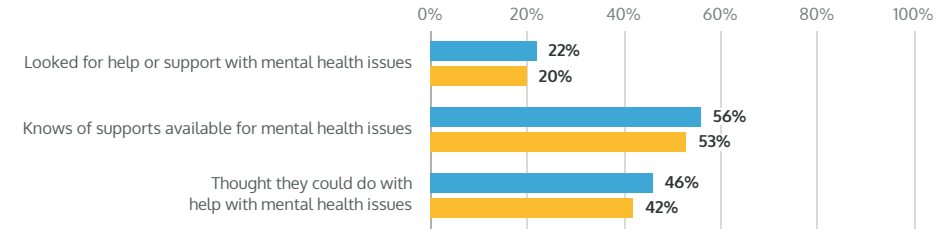


Health & Wellbeing

Resilience: agree or strongly agree

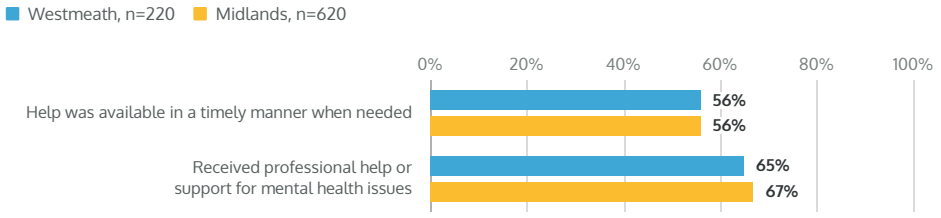


Mental health support

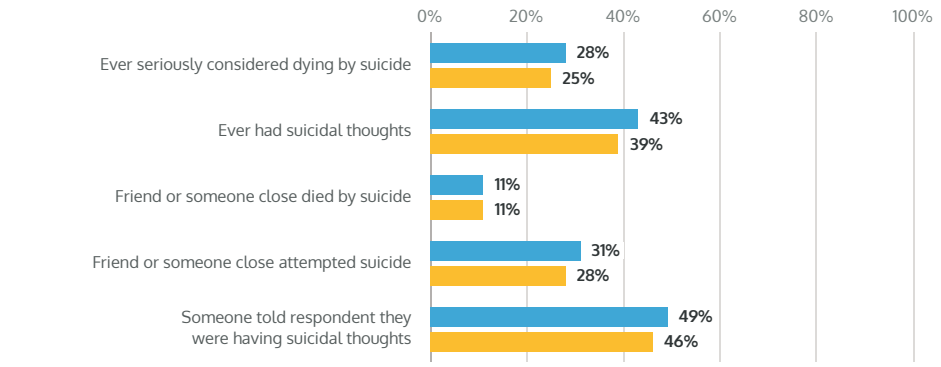


Health & Wellbeing

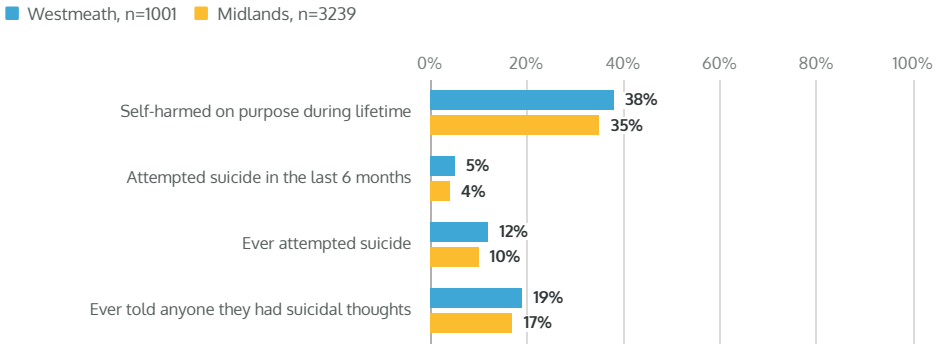
Support with mental health issues when sought



Suicide and self-harm

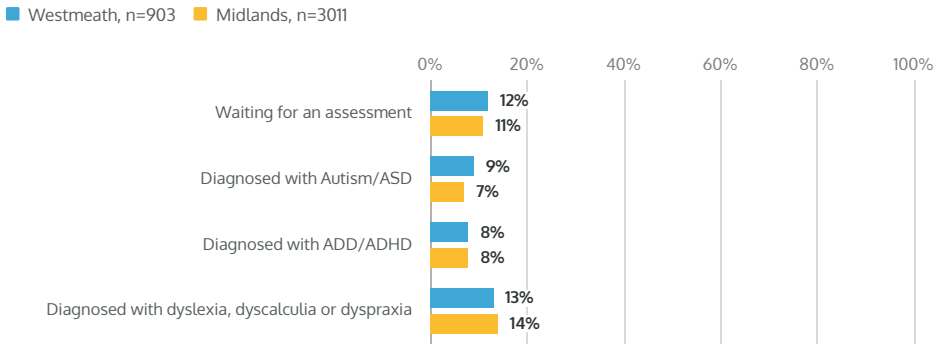


Suicide and self-harm

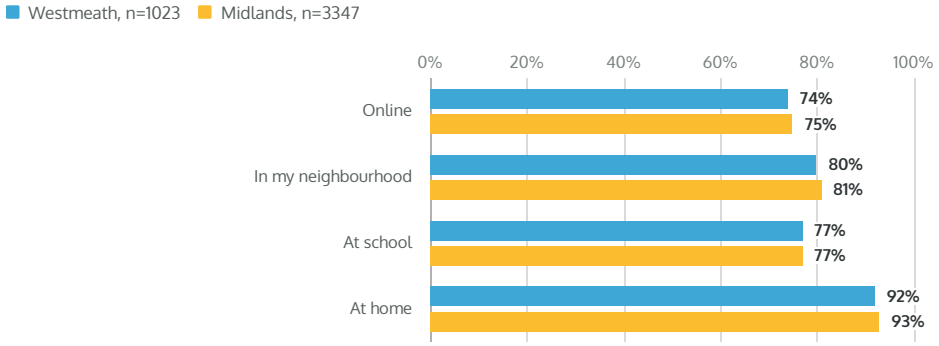


Health & Wellbeing

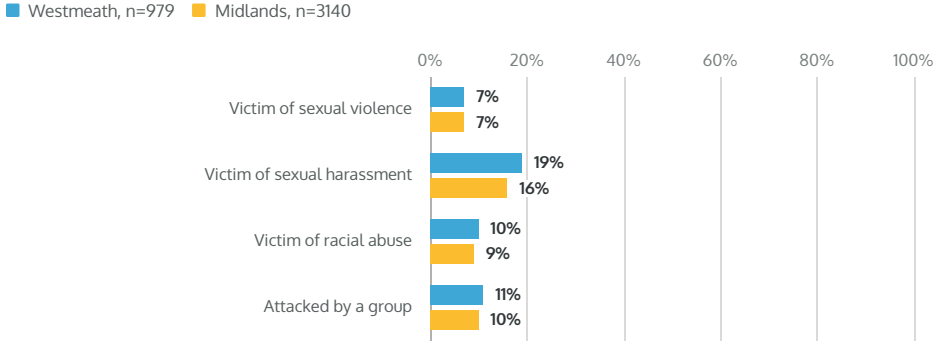
Self-reported neurodivergence



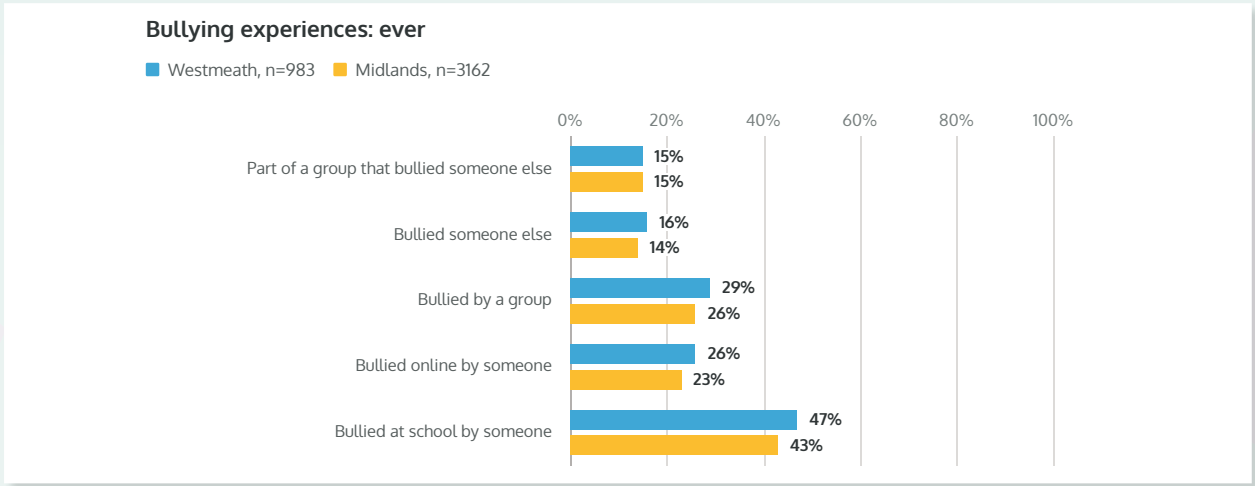
Feel safe: often or always

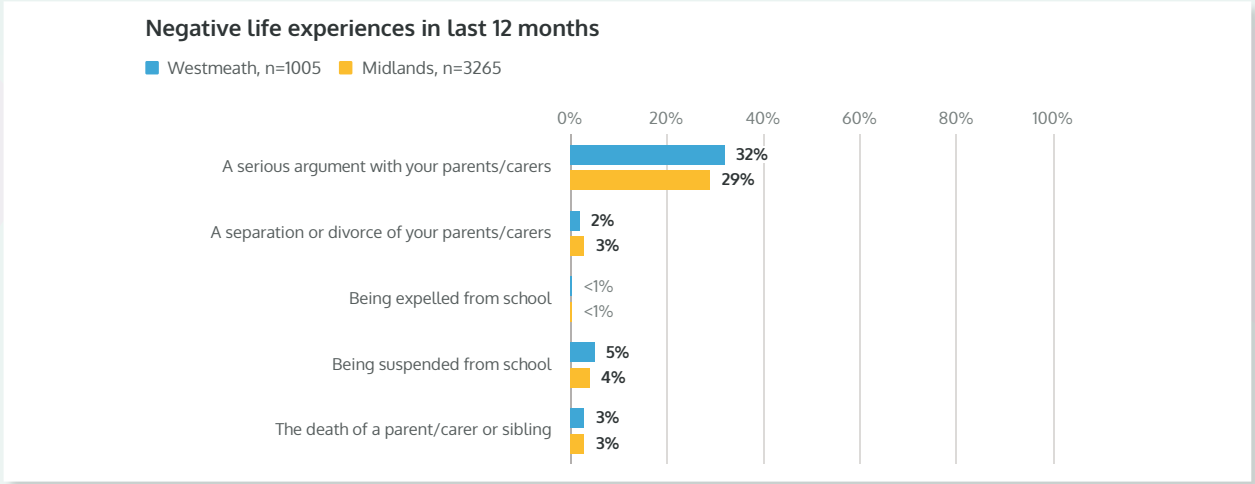


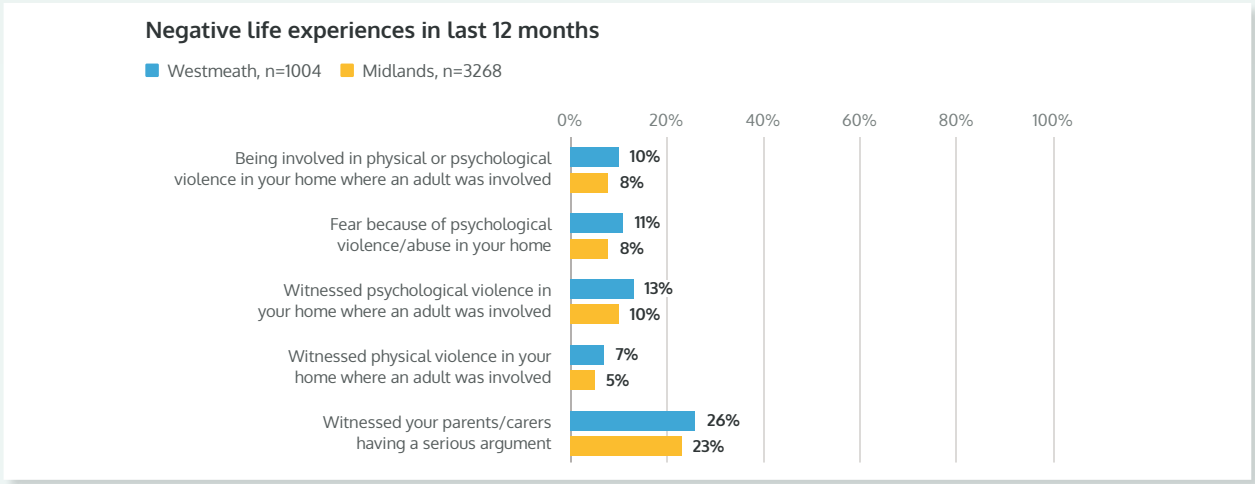
Violence and harassment experiences: ever



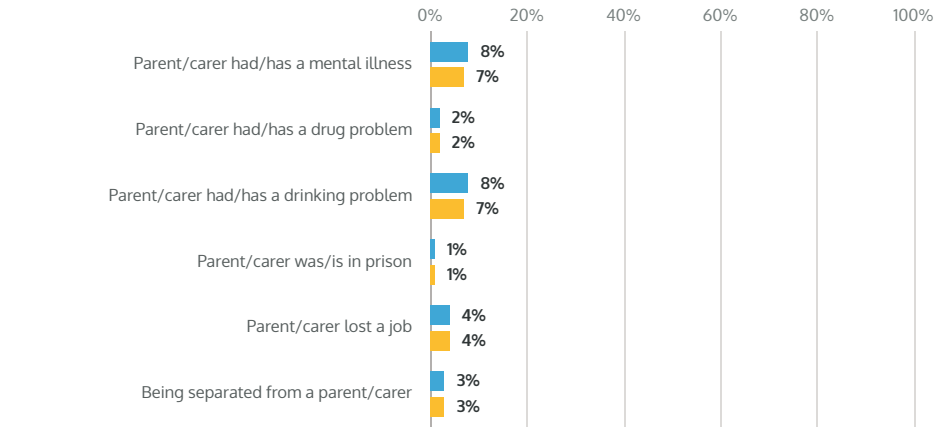
Health & Wellbeing

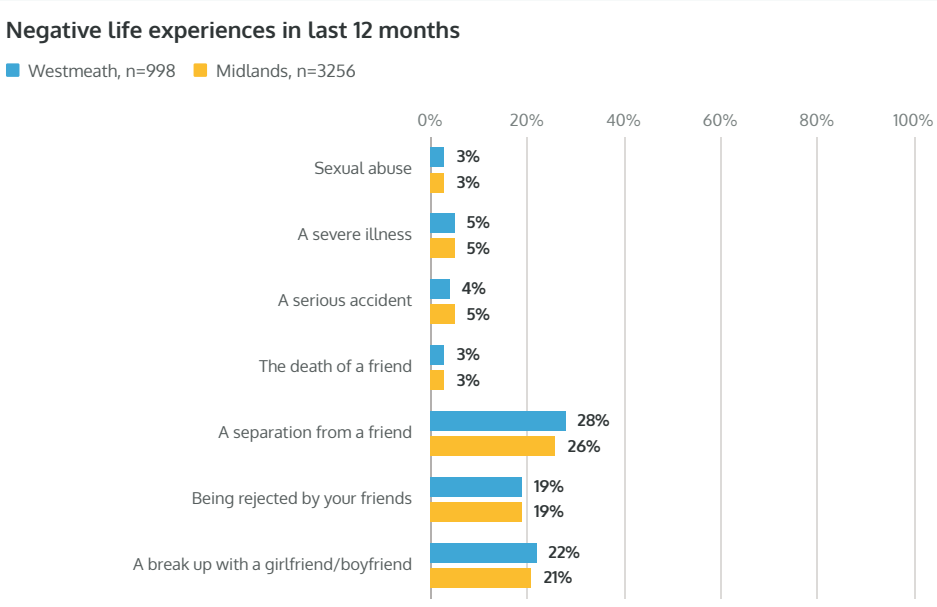




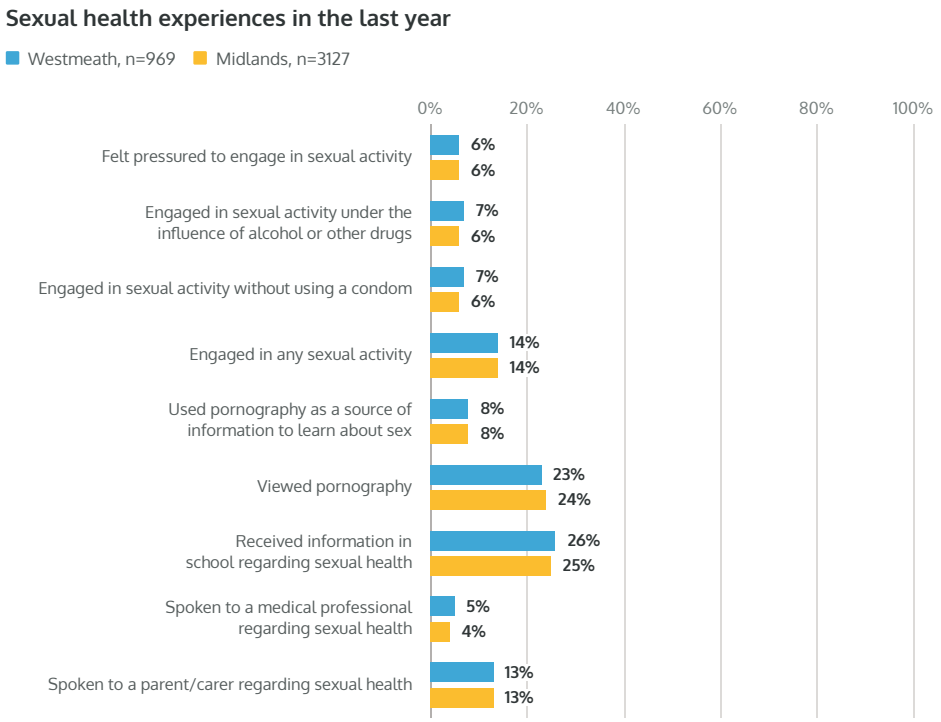


Health & Wellbeing

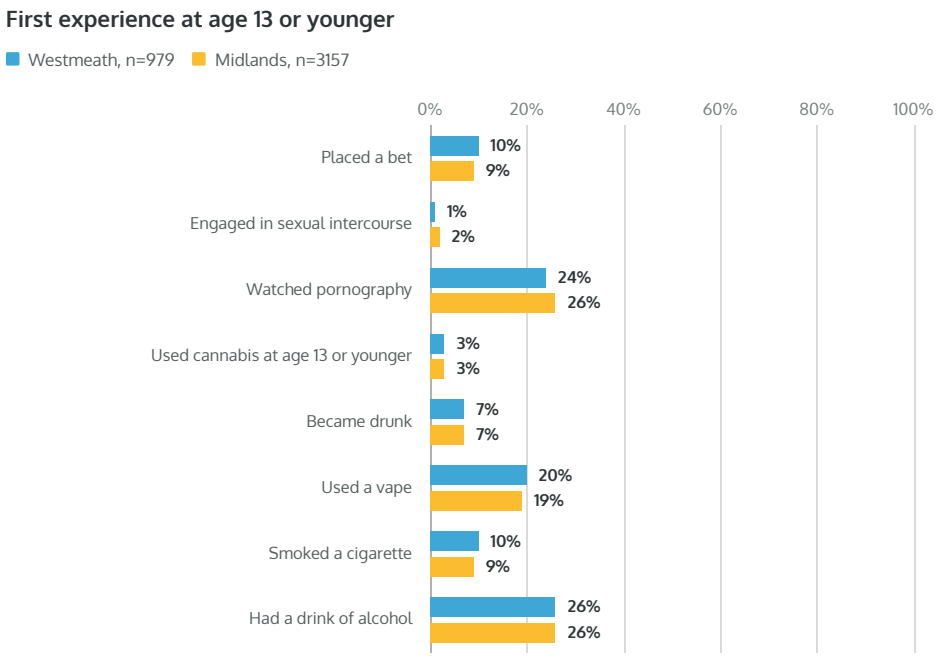




Health & Wellbeing



Health & Wellbeing









Conclusion & Next Steps

Taken together, the findings provide a picture of many strengths in the lives of young people across Westmeath, but also point to a number of areas where there is clear scope for action. Most young people reported strong relationships with their parents, having friends at school who care about them, feeling safe at home and wanting to complete the Leaving Certificate. These are important protective factors and provide a strong foundation on which to build.

At the same time, a number of findings stand out. Alcohol use was common, with almost half of respondents reporting drinking in the past 30 days, while vaping was also widespread and 17% reported vaping daily. One of the clearest findings across the report is the relationship between young people's environments and substance use. Parents or carers were the most commonly reported source of alcohol. Recent drunkenness, vaping and cannabis use were generally lower among young people who reported stronger parental connection and monitoring, greater parental disapproval of drunkenness and a stronger connection with school. Conversely, substance use was higher where young people perceived drunkenness to be more common among their peers and among those spending more time in less structured settings, including being outside after midnight. These findings do not demonstrate cause and effect, but the consistency of the pattern across different parts of the survey is important and supports the Planet Youth focus on strengthening the environments around young people rather than focusing on individual behaviour alone.

The findings also identify opportunities within schools and communities. While most young people reported positive relationships with friends and teachers, fewer than half agreed that they feel good at school or that adults at school notice when they are having a hard time and offer help. Outside school, a sizeable minority of young people were not involved in supervised activities. Fewer than half reported having a suitable outdoor youth space or after-school social space in their area, while rurality and transport affected access for a sizeable proportion of young people.

Conclusion & Next Steps

In terms of health and wellbeing, just under half of young people rated their mental health as good or very good, with particularly marked differences between males and females across mental health, wellbeing, anxiety, stress, self-esteem and body image. More than half of young people reported getting fewer than eight hours of sleep per night, and better physical and mental health were substantially more common among those reporting eight or more hours.

High levels of social media use and phone use during the night were also noted. Mental health and substance use were also closely related in the data, with recent drunkenness, vaping and cannabis use all more common among young people who reported poorer mental health. Regarding sexual health, the findings indicate that improved access to information and support around relationships and sexual health is needed.

The next phase of Planet Youth Midlands should consider the report findings, alongside the views of young people and local knowledge, and identify a smaller number of shared priorities where coordinated action could make the greatest difference. The findings suggest that these discussions should include alcohol and vaping; parental attitudes, connection and boundaries; mental health and the particular experiences of females; sleep and online life; sexual health; connection and support within schools; and access to activities and spaces for young people.

The 2025 survey provides a baseline for this work. The value of Planet Youth will ultimately lie in how families, schools, out-of-school settings, communities, services and other partners use these findings together to strengthen protective factors, reduce risk factors and create environments that give young people across the Midlands the best possible opportunities to live well and feel well.



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