

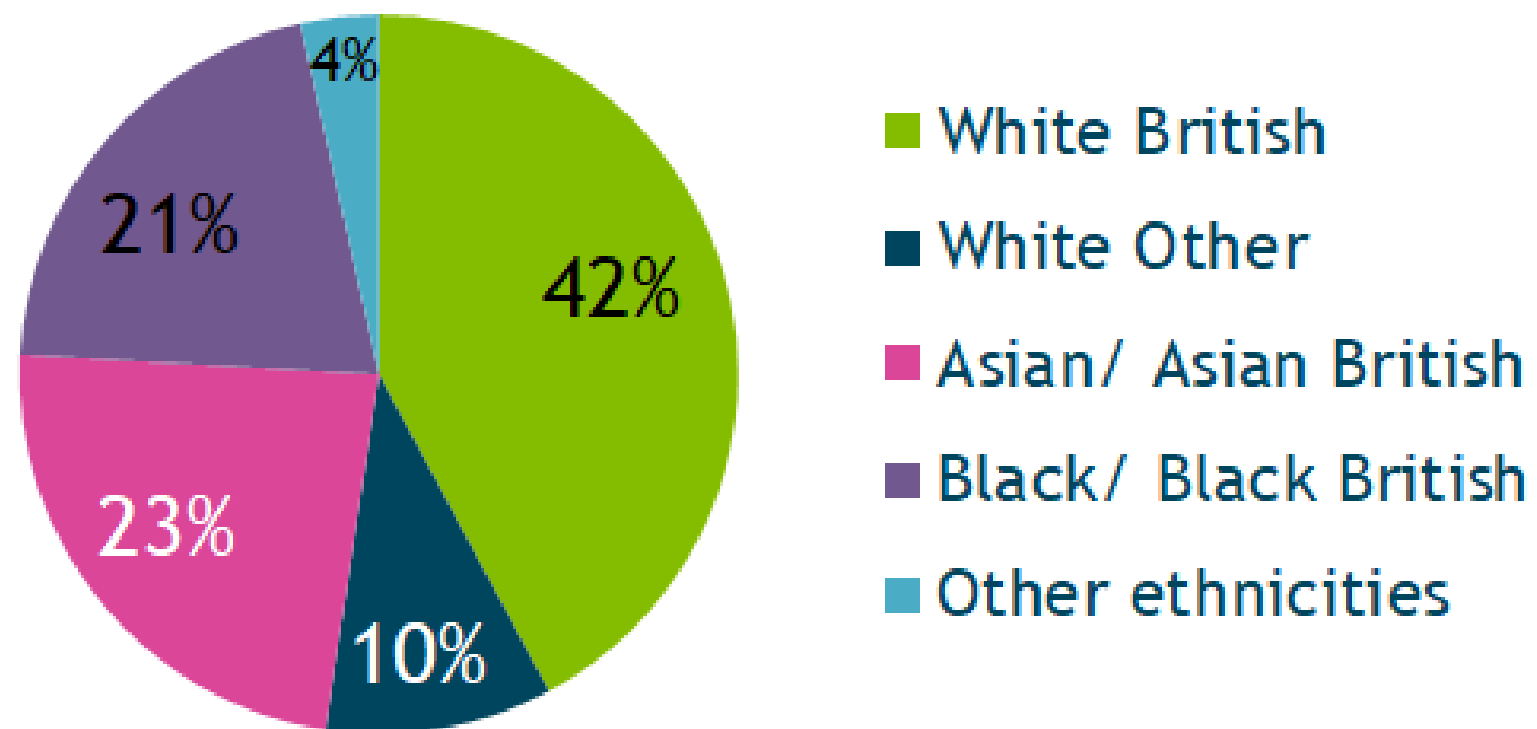
# Experience of health services by ethnic minority communities in North East London

March 2020–October 2021



## Health services and ethnic minority communities in North East London during the Covid-19 pandemic

We analysed aggregated feedback from **1,682 comments** from people who stated their ethnicity, received between March 2020 and October 2021.



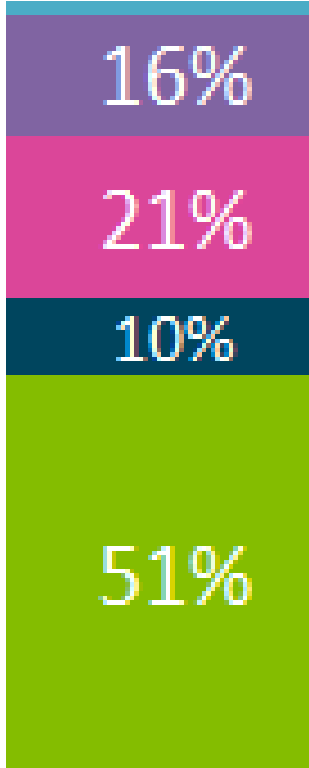
### What we learnt:

- ➔ The Covid-19 pandemic had a **negative impact** on experience with health and social care services. Feedback on services overall leaned negative.
- ➔ Ethnic minorities, especially **Black British** people, had a worse experience with hospital services.
- ➔ **Black, Asian and minority ethnic** people had a worse experience with mental health services than those of White ethnicities.
- ➔ **Asian patients** had slightly better experience with GP services.

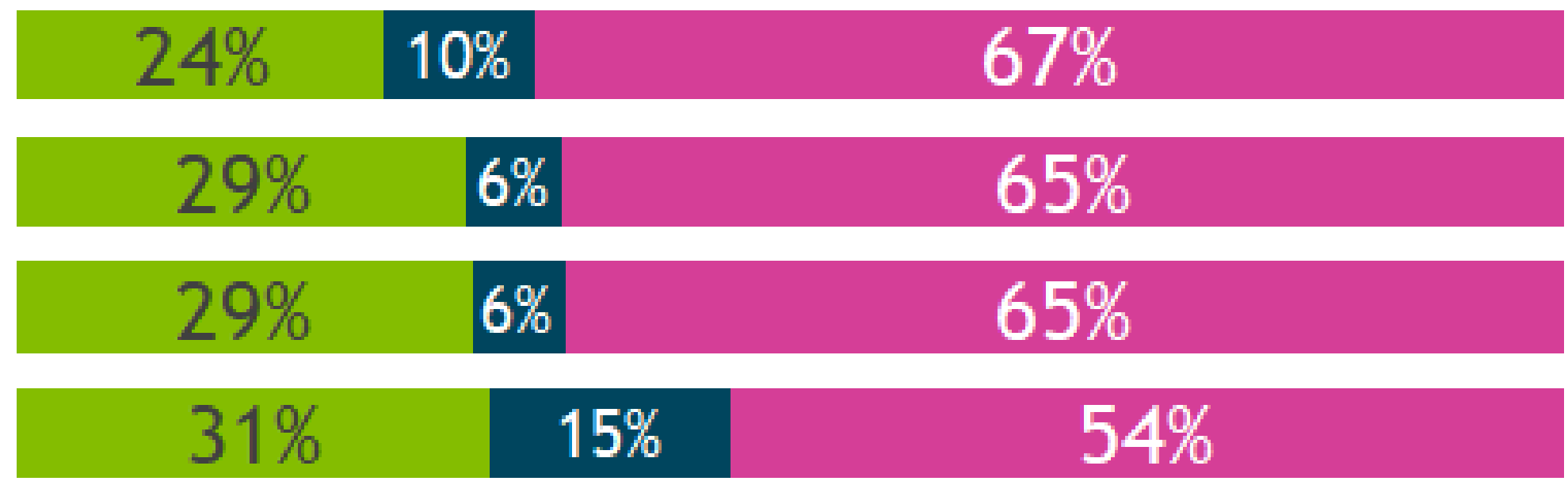
# Hospital services

Total feedback on hospitals: 348 comments

- White British
- White Other
- Asian/ Asian British
- Black/ Black British
- Other ethnicities



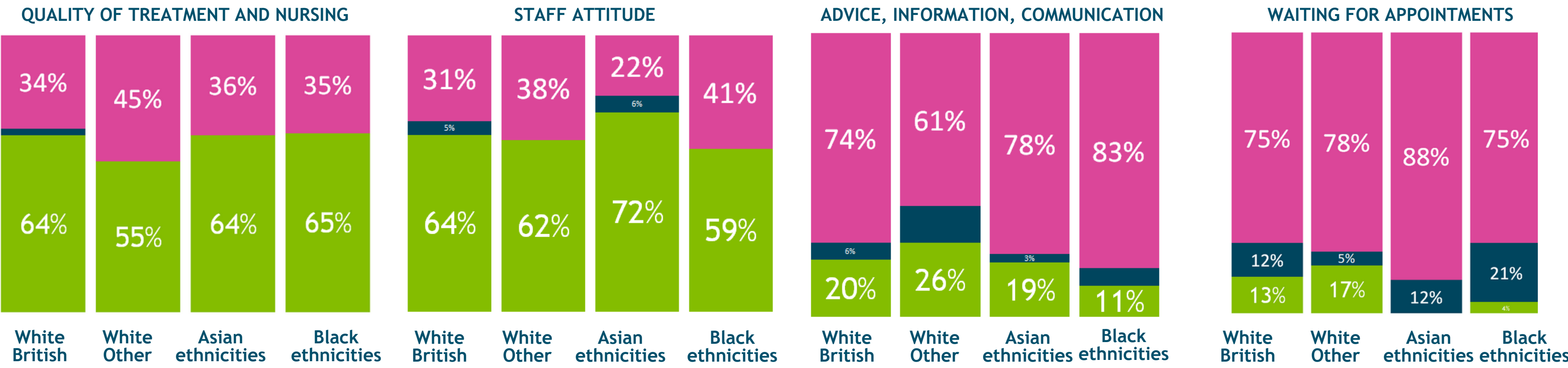
- Black ethnicities
- Asian ethnicities
- White ethnicities other than British
- White British



■ positive      ■ neutral      ■ negative

# Hospital services

- ➔ Despite having the worst experience overall, people of **Black ethnicities** were as happy as White British people with the quality of treatment and nursing in hospitals. However, they were more likely to find communication poor and to be dissatisfied with the attitude of staff members. They were also more unhappy with waiting times than White respondents'
- ➔ People of **White ethnicities other than White British** were slightly less happy with the quality of treatment and nursing, but slightly happier with communication in the hospital and with waiting times.
- ➔ People of **Asian ethnicities** were the happiest with staff attitude, but the most unhappy with waiting times.



# Hospital services

As a result of structural health inequalities, people from ethnic minority backgrounds may find it hard to afford healthier lifestyles; things like inadequate housing, lack of cooking facilities or precarious shift work can lead to health inequalities; making people from ethnic minority backgrounds more vulnerable to chronic illness.

At the same time, people from ethnic minority backgrounds may be more vulnerable to Covid, through factors including a higher likelihood of working in jobs that cannot be done from home, living with extended family or housemates in overcrowded housing or vaccine hesitancy.

Long waiting times for specialist appointments and poor communication around changes in service provision have been an issue for everyone; since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are more likely to affect people who are suffering from complex chronic illness or who are disabled- a category that people from ethnic minorities may be over-represented in as a result of health inequalities. Issues with communication relating to language barriers or to lack of familiarity with NHS processes and bureaucracy further exacerbate inequalities.

A focus group with Somali mothers carried out by the Women's Inclusive Team found that discussion participants felt discriminated against when accessing maternity care; they reported being turned away from local hospitals because they didn't look in pain (while at the same time not being examined), or their pain being dismissed by midwives. Several different incidents were discussed of the women being accused of being dramatic or over exaggerating when in labour, this led to feeling alone and vulnerable.

Notably, Somali women reported being treated with a lack of respect by the Black midwives who also encouraged them to not show pain or emotion because "it would not be appropriate".



*I had several exams to take in the last 4 months, the university wasn't very supportive and I felt very stressed and short of breath a couple of days before my last exam, so I called 111. Half an hour later an ambulance arrived, I was taken to the hospital. It was 2 am. I was assessed in an hour but it was only 5 hours later when I saw a doctor. There were only about 8 people at this time and didn't feel that busy. There wasn't anyone to talk to or to get updates from.*

*(Black Caribbean patient, Hackney)*

*Last year I broke my hand-the metacarpal bones- and had an urgent surgery at the Royal London Hospital.*

*After the operation I had only one session of physiotherapy and no follow up appointments. My arm has been swollen since then and I'm to contact every single week the department to discuss further investigations, as the surgery probably didn't go according to plan.*

*I've been to A&E six times so far for the pain; they did an x-ray but I didn't yet get the results/picture. I'm attending private appointments. My private doctor doesn't have the image and redoing it privately costs £700.*

*I'm a chef and I work in hospitality and have been off work since the beginning of the pandemic, I worry I won't be able to go back to work when furlough ends.*

*(White Other patient, Tower Hamlets)*

*There are rumours in the Somali community that if you go to hospital you'll catch Covid.*

*(Somali patient, Tower Hamlets)*

*I totally understand getting through security and checks etc but actually getting the appointment was delayed last year for months - it's much better now but still a palaver.*

*(Black African patient, Havering)*

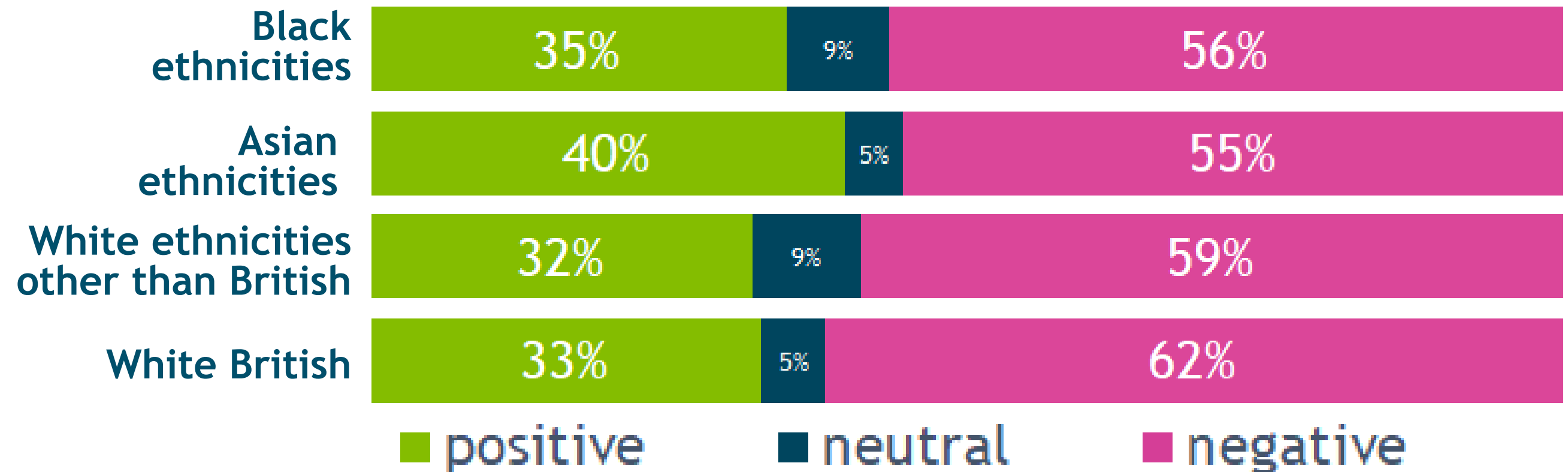
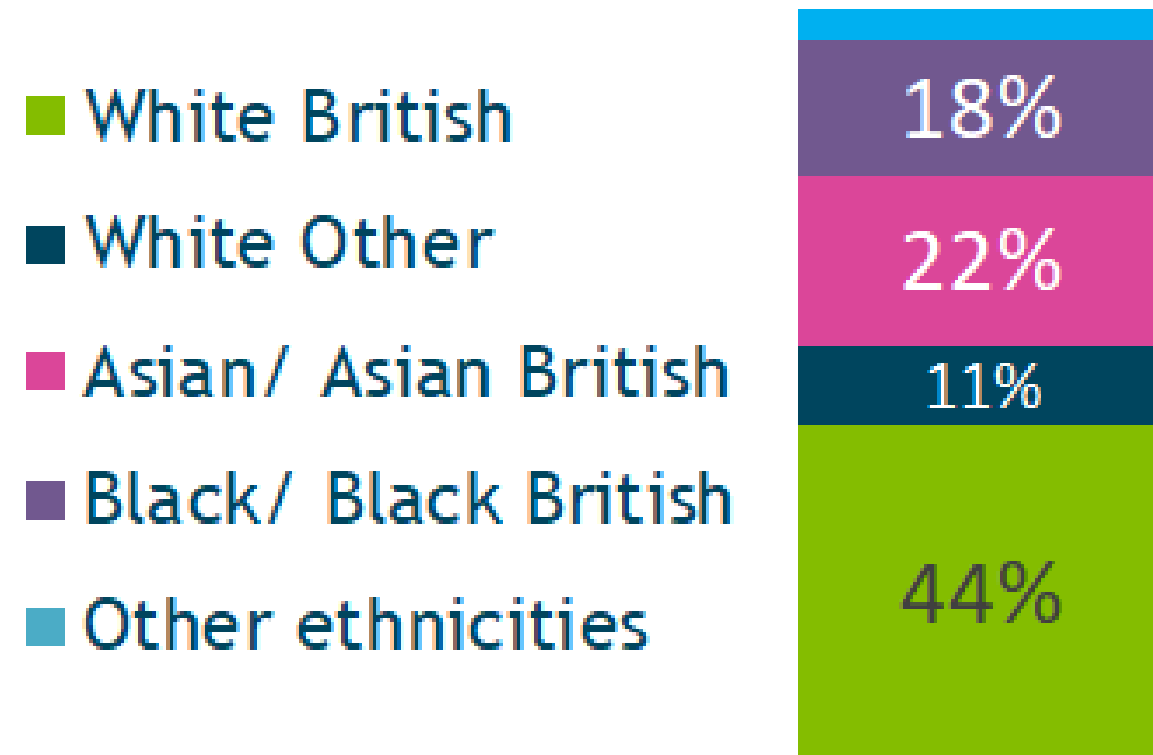
*All my mum's appointments have been cancelled. She is mobility impaired with chronic pain, she has diabetes and depression, Orthopaedics have offered an appointment in August (months from now). Physiotherapy have sent a walking frame. They have phoned twice to check on her, but she has lost so much mobility that there isn't much they can do without seeing her."*

*(Bangladeshi patient, Tower Hamlets)*



# GP services

Total feedback on GPs: **513** comments

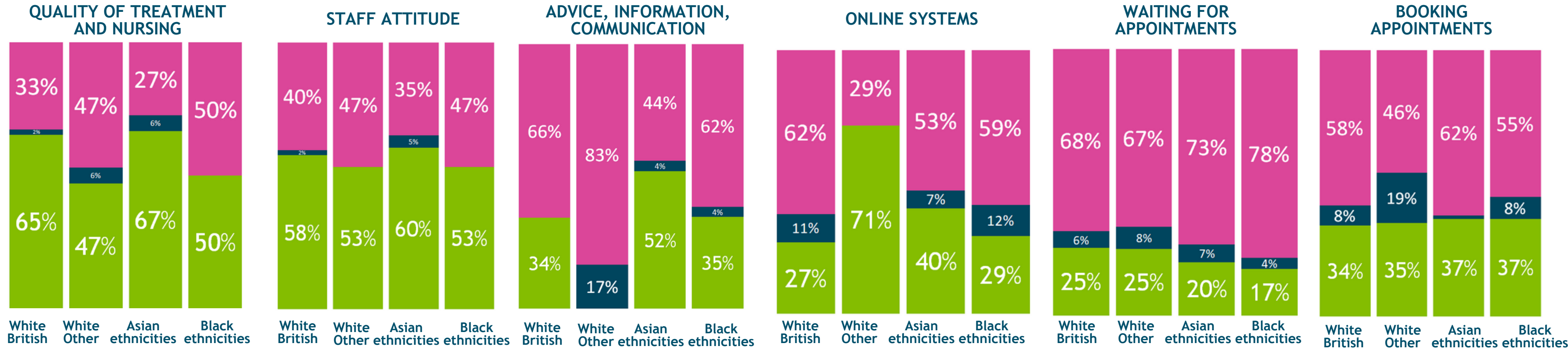


# GP services

➔ **Asian patients** were happiest with the quality of clinical treatment and nursing; slightly more so than White British patients. They were also the happiest with staff attitude. They were the only group to have a mixed rather than mostly negative view of communication with their GP surgery. However, they were more likely to complain about the booking process. Their experiences with online services were mixed.

➔ People of **White ethnicities other than White British** were the happiest with online services provided by GP surgeries and with the process of booking appointments, but the least happy with the quality of treatment and nursing. They were also the least happy with communication.

➔ People of **Black ethnicities** were less happy with the quality of treatment and nursing than White British or Asian patients. Their experience of online GP services was worse than that of Asian or White Other patients, but slightly less negative than that of White British patients. They were the group least satisfied with waiting for appointments; but were no different than other groups in terms of experience with booking appointments.



# GP services

The way in which GP appointments are booked has changed during the Covid-19 pandemic whilst lockdown caused an increase in demand for services and a reduction in capacity.

The way in which this affected different groups varied; being influenced by the particular needs of each group.

Previous engagement by Healthwatch Tower Hamlets found that Asian patients are likely to consider their GP their first port of call when it comes to health information, mental wellbeing resources or advice on accessing community support. GP surgeries are seen as valuable community resources, and difficulties in accessing them can have a serious negative impact.

On the contrary, patients of some White Ethnicity, particularly the Eastern European community, may have lower levels of engagement with GPs and other primary care services. For example, some Eastern Europeans may opt to travel for routine cervical screening or dental treatment to their countries of origin. Differences in expectations and culture may lead to distrust of GP surgeries.

There may be differences in experience within broad ethnic groups as well as between the groups. For instance, Bangladeshi Tower Hamlets residents are more likely than Chinese or Vietnamese Tower Hamlets residents to have access to GP surgery staff who speak their language.

Among the Black and Asian communities, generational divides around English language fluency and digital exclusion may impact access to GP services and the experience of booking them.

*My GP surgery are brilliant with my 82 year old mother who doesn't speak any English. I am the main person the practice can contact for anything related to her. Whenever she needs the appointment they often work around my availability so I can come and interpret for her. If I am not available then they will arrange another one for her. They are brilliant with follow up on medication and any other communication. I am so happy with their service."*

*(Asian patient, Hackney)*

*I am housebound and can't really go out. The GP calls me at home and he spends enough time with me over the phone which is good. However, I never know when he is next going to call and that's something that I don't like.*

*(White Other patient, Hackney)*

*I find GP access somewhat harder. Have found the GP appointments have been ok just via video call. But information has been inconsistent. I have been asked to call and book my flu jab several times, although I have had it in the last 6 months. When I called to raise this with the surgery I have been fobbed off. I was told the Practice or Duty manager will call back and nobody called.*

*(White Other patient, Newham)*

*You can only call from 8:30am when I am at work and unable to call. That's very inconvenient and feels like we cannot have a problem at specific times. We are unable to call during the day when you feel the need to make a doctor's appt.*

*(Black Caribbean patient, Hackney)*

*I've helped my mum contact the GP. It was good, I was able to get some information about the problem we had and was able to talk to a nurse eventually. The way in which provision of GP services is different- it's not something that can change as it is dependent on the situation of COVID, so it wasn't a problem in my opinion.*

*(Bangladeshi patient, Tower Hamlets)*

*It has been somewhat harder to access the GP because the service was not easily accessible and telephone consultations were not immediate.*

*(Indian patient, Redbridge)*

*I went there accompanying a patient with autism. The doctor, who was supposed to be specialised in working with autistic adults, was very clear in telling the patient that he can only talk about one problem at a time (after he tried explaining other issues) and he will need to book a double appointment next time. At the end of the consultation the doctor said "oh, by the way this is my last week so next time you will be seen by another doctor". How inappropriate is this to be said to someone with autism and to break him down? The patient did not receive any letter with notification of this so he can be prepared.*

*(White Other patient, Hackney)*

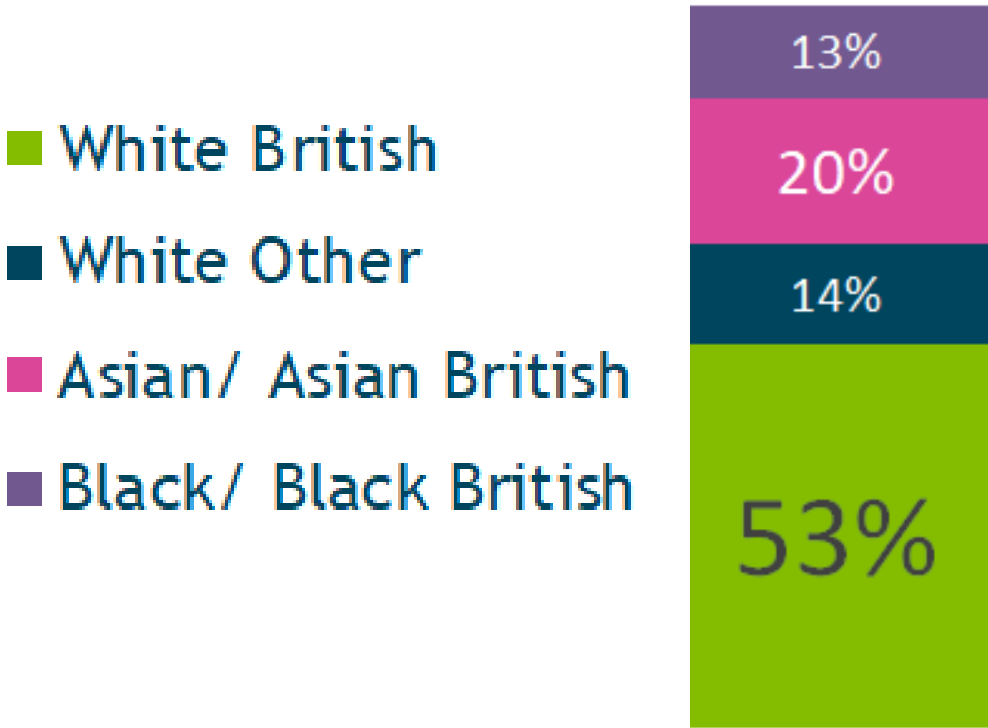
*Hold on the line for so long and I am only offered a video call rather than a normal call. Not knowing when to expect the call is also making things difficult, especially if I am working or on the bus going to work. This is a private conversation, I don't want to make it public.*

*(Black African patient, Hackney)*

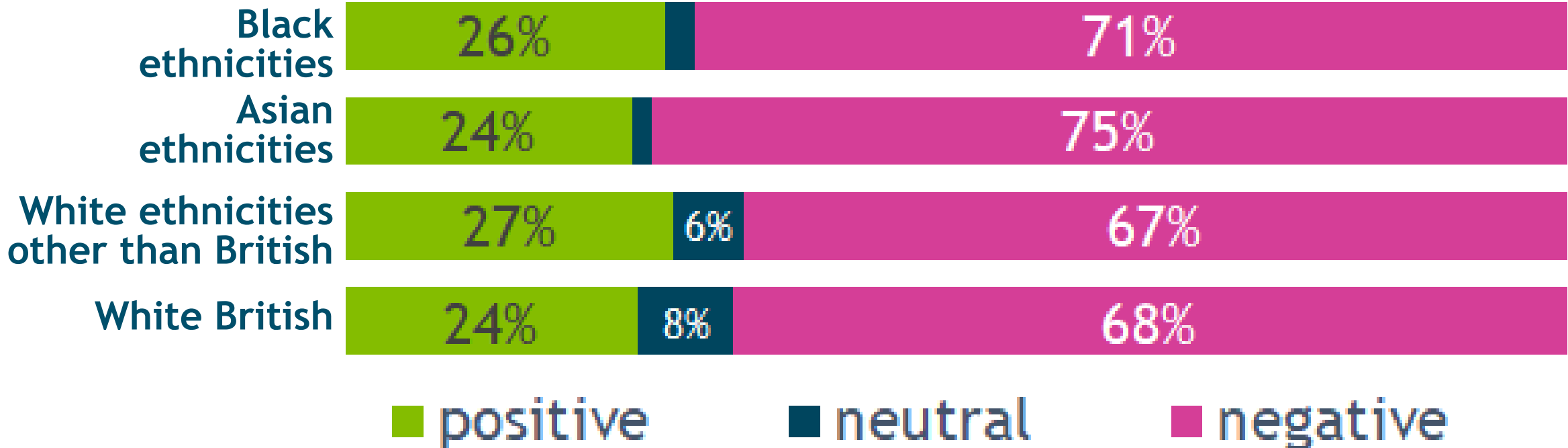


# Mental health services

Total feedback on mental health services: **107 comments**



**BAME patients had a poorer experience with mental health services than people of White ethnicities.**

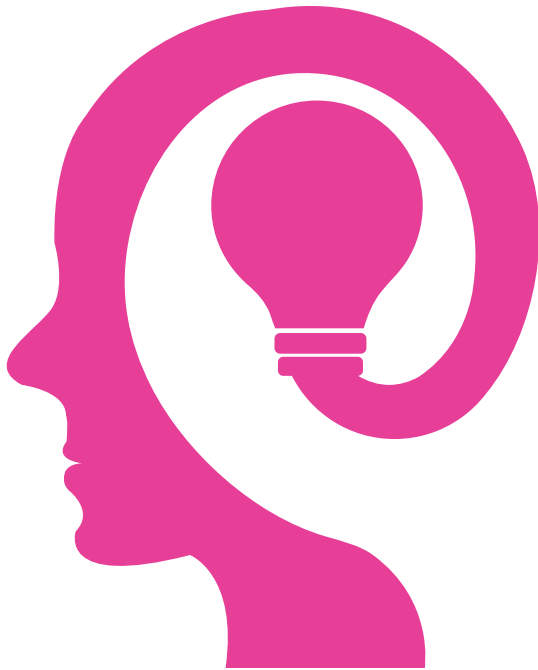


*Accessing mental health services remotely during lockdown is not as beneficial as face to face, but they have adapted to online provision well. However, I've experienced some cancellations and this has affected me a great deal.*

*(Black African patient, Tower Hamlets)*

*Because of the pandemic, all face to face appointments have been cancelled. So it is really a very hard time. For mental health I would need to talk with a professional .*

*(Bangladeshi patient, Tower Hamlets)*



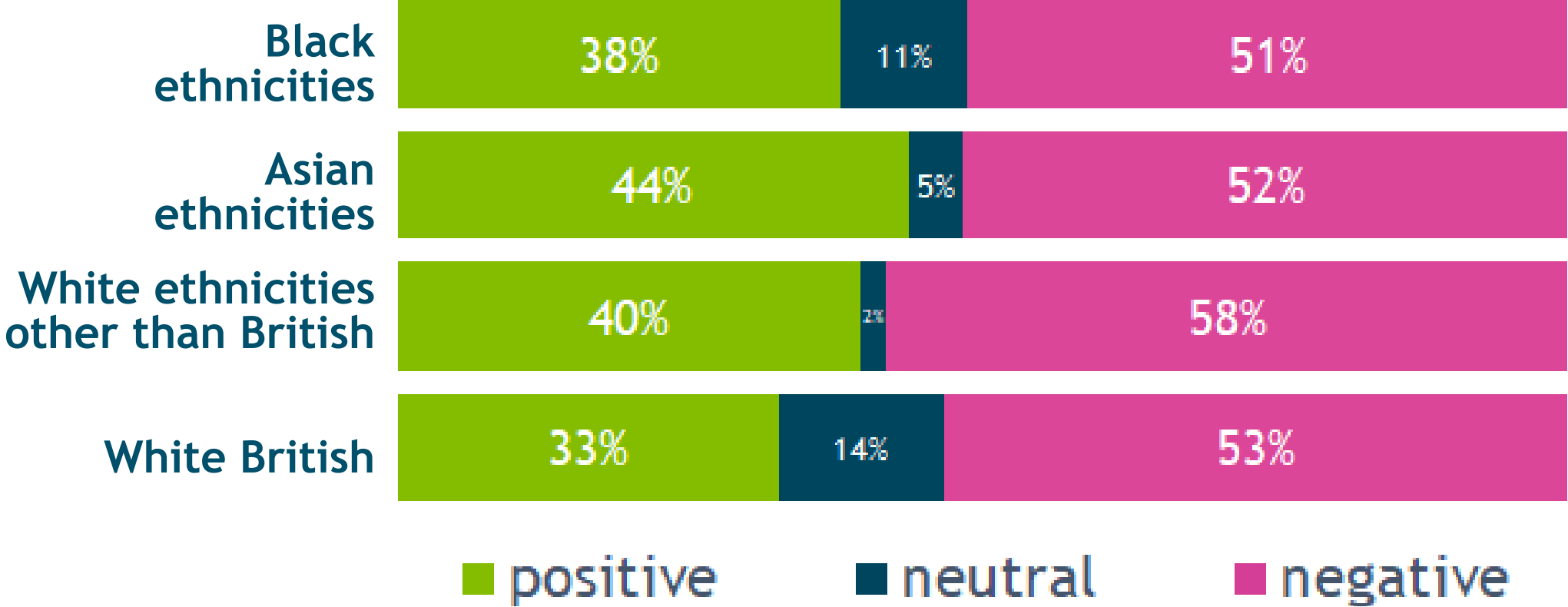
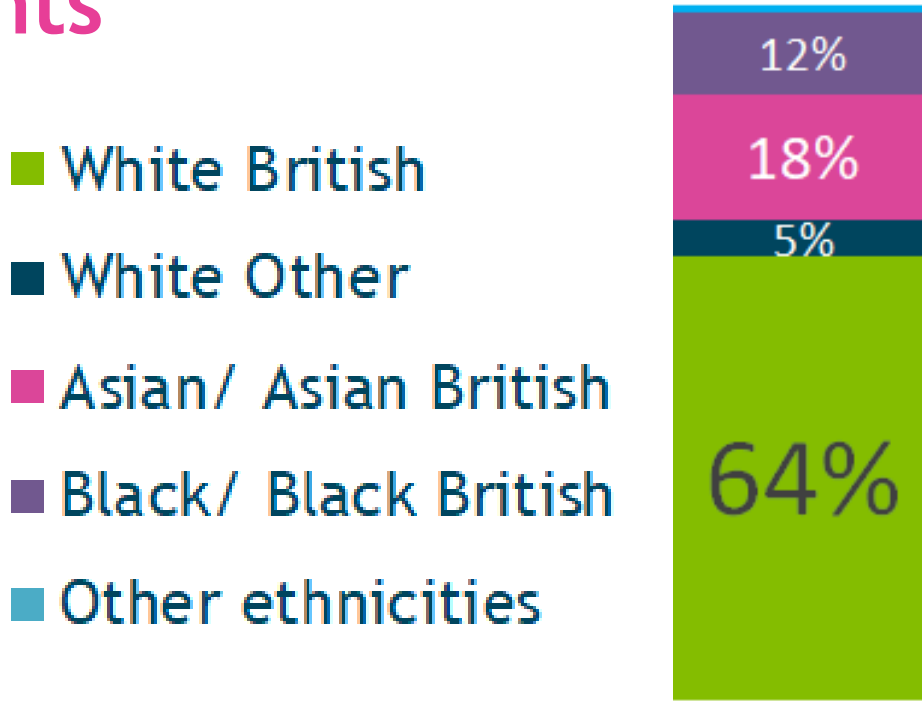
*I'm a carer for my son and things got more difficult because of cuts to social care. I would have needed mental health support, but I never had the time to look for it. I spoke to CAMHS for my son and shared my struggle with my mental health. They suggested I contact the GP and request counselling support. I was referred to the service but had to wait for more than two months to finally get an appointment.*

*Everyone is talking about mental health and how important is to keep mentally healthy especially at this time but the help is not easily available. Parents/carers should be looked after better as their struggles are huge.*

*(Pakistani patient, Hackney)*

# Social care services

## Total feedback on social health services: 113 comments



There were only small differences between patients in terms of experience with social care.



*I am providing more care to my family member because the paid health and social care staff have reduced personal care. Due to the changes to the care packages that happened 3 years ago, I had to employ my own carers. No carers were coming during the lockdown, we had to change addresses often due to the housing issues. New assessments were made all the time, this was very time consuming, then no carers were available.*

*(Pakistani carer, Tower Hamlets)*

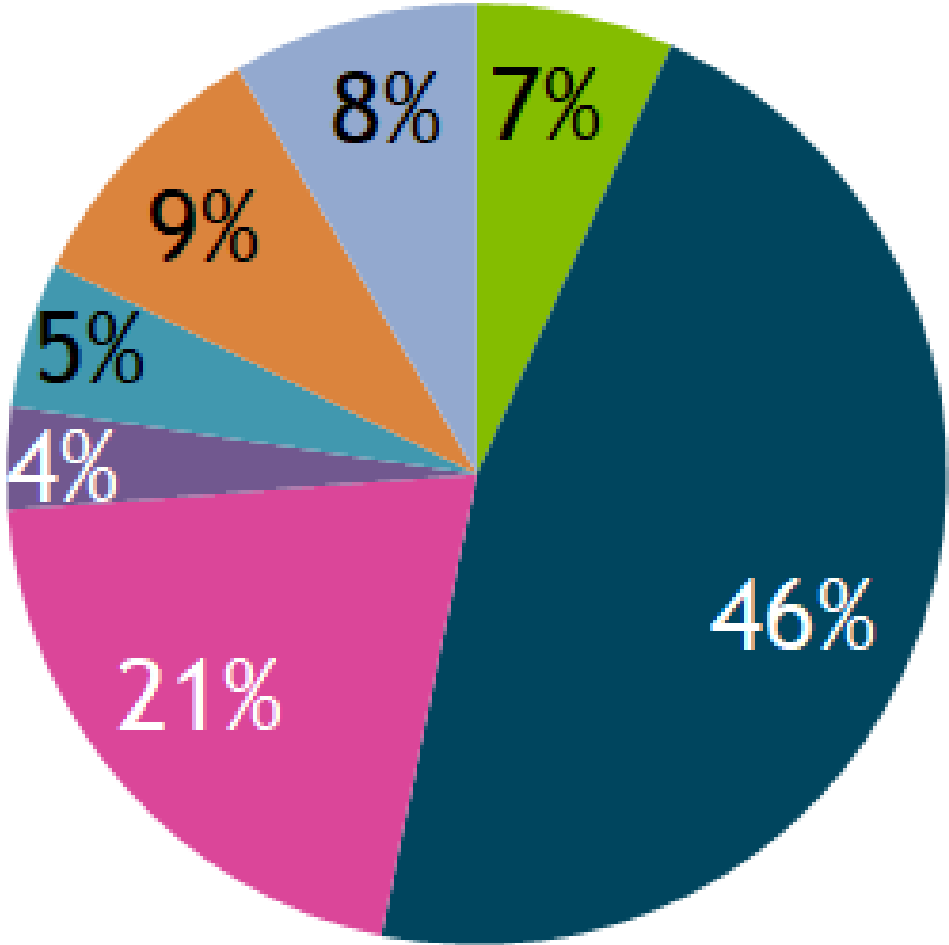
*My brother had a stroke two years ago when he was 60. After having an emergency life-saving brain operation he lost speech and is unable to walk. He lives in a nursing home. My brother needs an advocate to act on his behalf as he is not able to speak. I am his next of kin but am not given any access to his care package and I don't know what are the plans for supporting my brother. The staff at the care home is not supporting me as his next of kin and unpaid carer. On some occasions, they've been rude in their answers when requesting some information about my brother's health. They've been only allowing 30mins visit.*

*(Black Caribbean carer, Hackney)*

Based on feedback from **1682 comments** received between March 2020 and October 2021.

# Comment origins

- Outreach/ Enter and View
- Disabled People's Voices survey
- Other surveys
- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Office
- Other



Aggregated, coded and analysed using the Community Insights System