

A black and white photograph of three medical students in a laboratory. A male student in the center, wearing a white lab coat with a 'Student Nurse' badge, is holding a human skeleton. He is looking towards a female student on the right who is also in a lab coat and glasses. A third student is partially visible on the left. The background shows laboratory equipment and shelves.

The 'Impact of COVID-19 on Students' Survey

Survey II Key findings



Top 3 Takeaways of the 'Impact of COVID' Survey 2021

The pandemic continues to impact on student experiences, both in clinical placement and in university, with many of the student views expressed in this 2021 Survey (Survey II) echoing those from the 2020 Survey (Survey I):

1. Mixed Experiences
2. Respondents' Concerns
3. Tough Choices



1. Mixed Experiences

In placement



Students working solely in placement say they were well supported in a high quality clinical environment.

Students reported a slightly less positive experience than in the previous survey with the main concern being:

- Anxiety about catching up with academic studies, which has increased since Survey I.



In academic



Students who focused on academic studies during Survey II reported that academic staff were 'really helpful'.

Students were less positive about the extent to which the online learning fulfilled the need for face to face contact.



In placement/ academic



Of students who spent time in academic and clinical environments, 77% were positive about their clinical placement.

Areas that students said needed improvement include online learning and catching up with clinical skills development (this was cited primarily by midwifery students).



2. Respondents' Concerns



10% fewer BAME students and **5% fewer** White students in Survey II were concerned on a daily basis about the impact of COVID-19 on their future careers compared to [Survey I](#).

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Concerns were expressed by all about the adjusted placement experience and whether they will have the appropriate range of **skills** and **competencies** at the end of the programme.



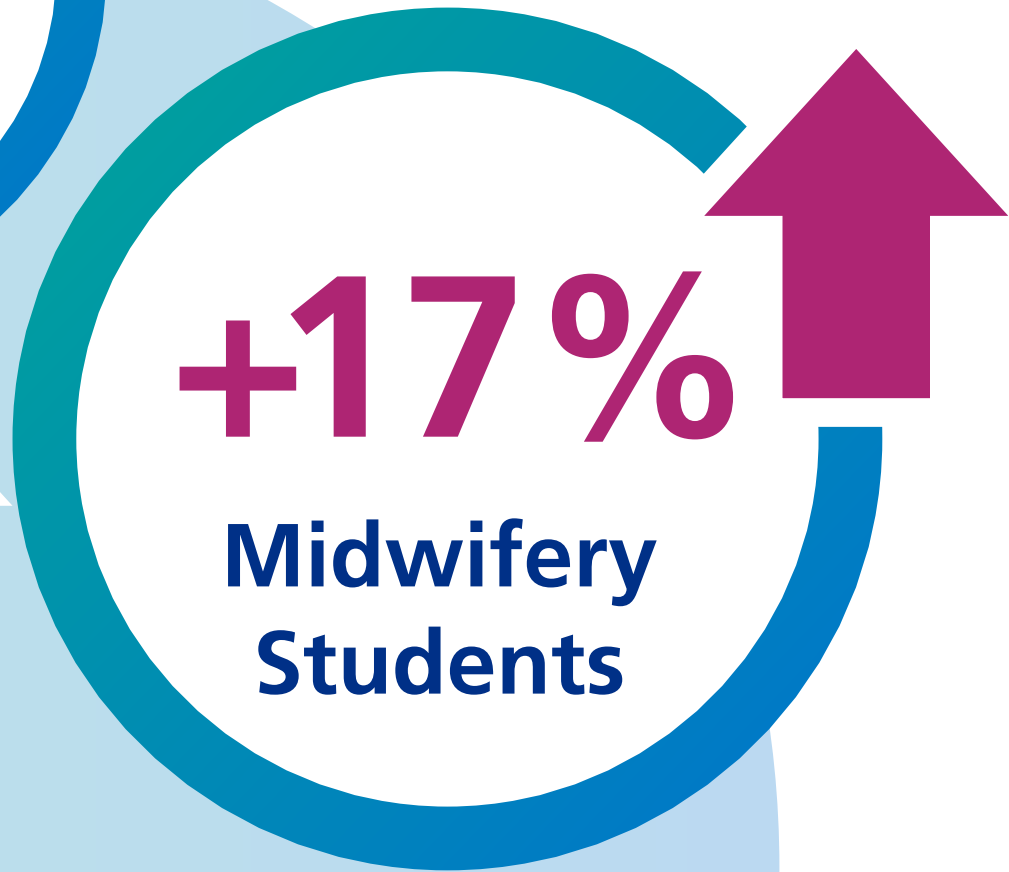
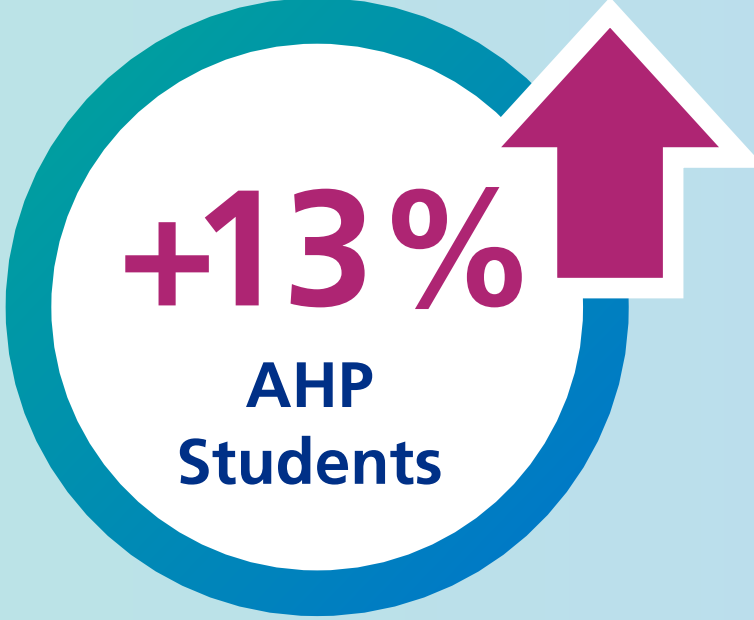
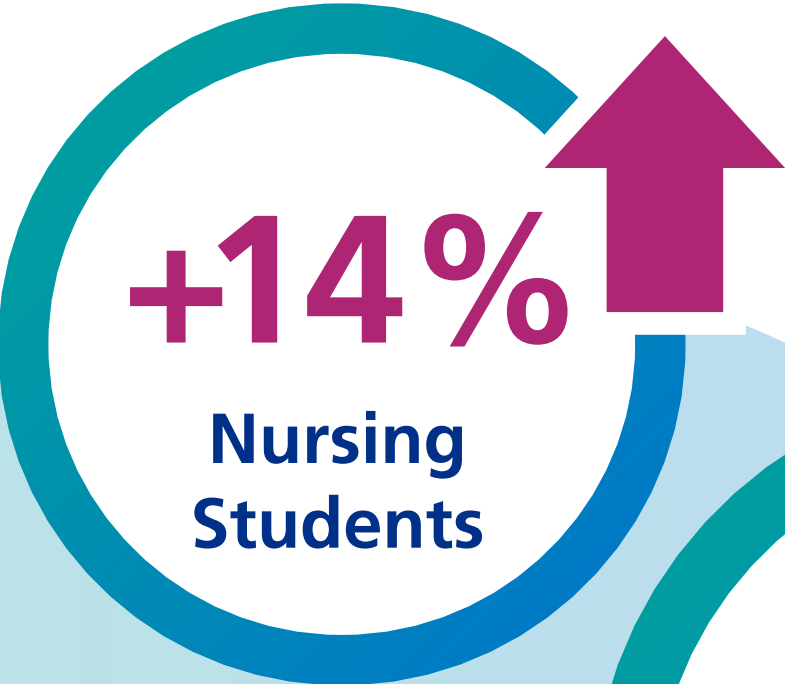
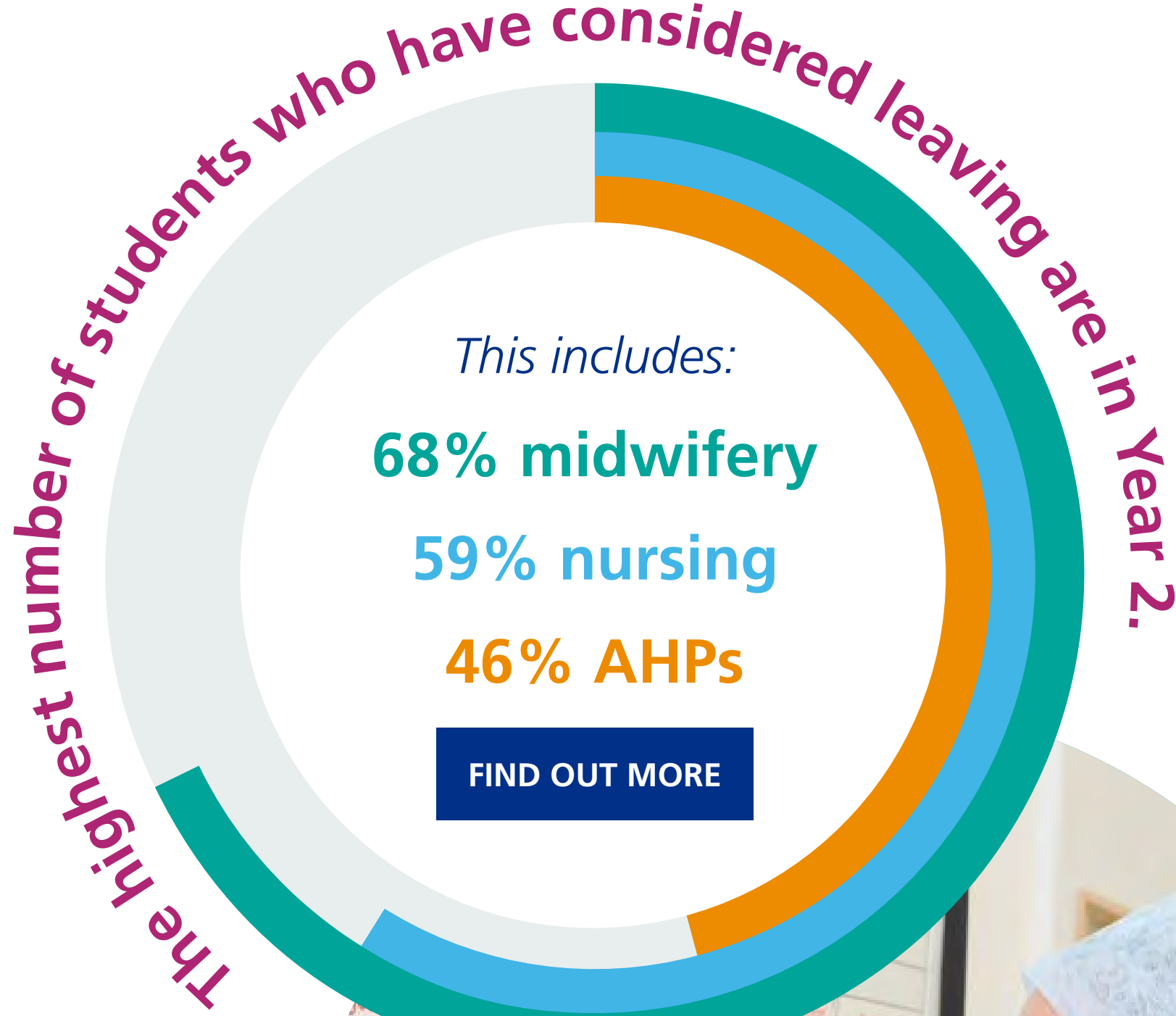
'I am worried the impact it has on my health and well-being. My family members are very high risk, every time I go to work I am worrying about catching the virus and giving it to my family.'

3. Tough Choices



A higher percentage of students in Survey II have considered leaving compared to Survey I

This includes:



58% of younger nursing students and 60% of older midwifery students have considered leaving.

Reasons for considering leaving

Main reasons for considering leaving during Survey II are similar to those reported in Survey I:

- Stress and being overwhelmed particularly midwifery students. [Find out more](#)
- Lack of HEI support particularly White nursing and midwifery students
- Mental health challenges - all groups particularly BAME midwifery students

The main reasons cited for considering leaving based on ethnic cluster were:

Lack of HEI support
Cited by White nursing students (same as Survey I) and White midwifery students

Mental health challenges
Cited by BAME midwifery students and BAME AHP students (same as Survey I)

Key Recommendations

These recommendations build on the recommendations from Survey I



1. Focus on mid-programme students

To avoid a further increase in Year 2/mid-programme students considering leaving, the Health and Care Education sector (HEIs and Service Provider Organisations) should continue to focus their activity on this group of students.



2. Addressing student concerns

At national and regional level, HEIs and Service Provider Organisations must work together, with assistance from HEE's national and regional teams, to support the groups of students who have the most concerns. These include all midwifery students; BAME AHP students and the younger nursing students.



3. Confidence in the online learning

The respondents continue to report concerns about the impact of the online learning on their knowledge, skills and competence at the point of qualification. HEIs should assess this impact.



4. Completing clinical skills

Repeatedly respondents report their concerns about completing their clinical skills. HEIs and Service Provider Organisations should work together with HEE's regional teams to further understand the extent of the problem.

Service Provider Organisations: Refers to places where students gain their practice experience.

About the Survey

The nursing, midwifery and AHP student experience during Survey II of the pandemic – the possible impact of COVID-19 on student retention

In March 2021 Health Education England (HEE) asked the RePAIR (Reducing Pre-registration and Improving Retention) team to undertake a second survey to capture the experience of pre-registration student nurses, student midwives and student AHPs (allied health professionals).

Why?

Key recommendation 4 from Impact of COVID-19 on Students' Survey I was:

HEE should consider whether there is value in repeating this survey to ascertain how the second Wave has impacted on students and to compare and contrast results of the surveys and outcomes.

In addition, as part of this survey, we have sought to identify trends between Survey I and Survey II.

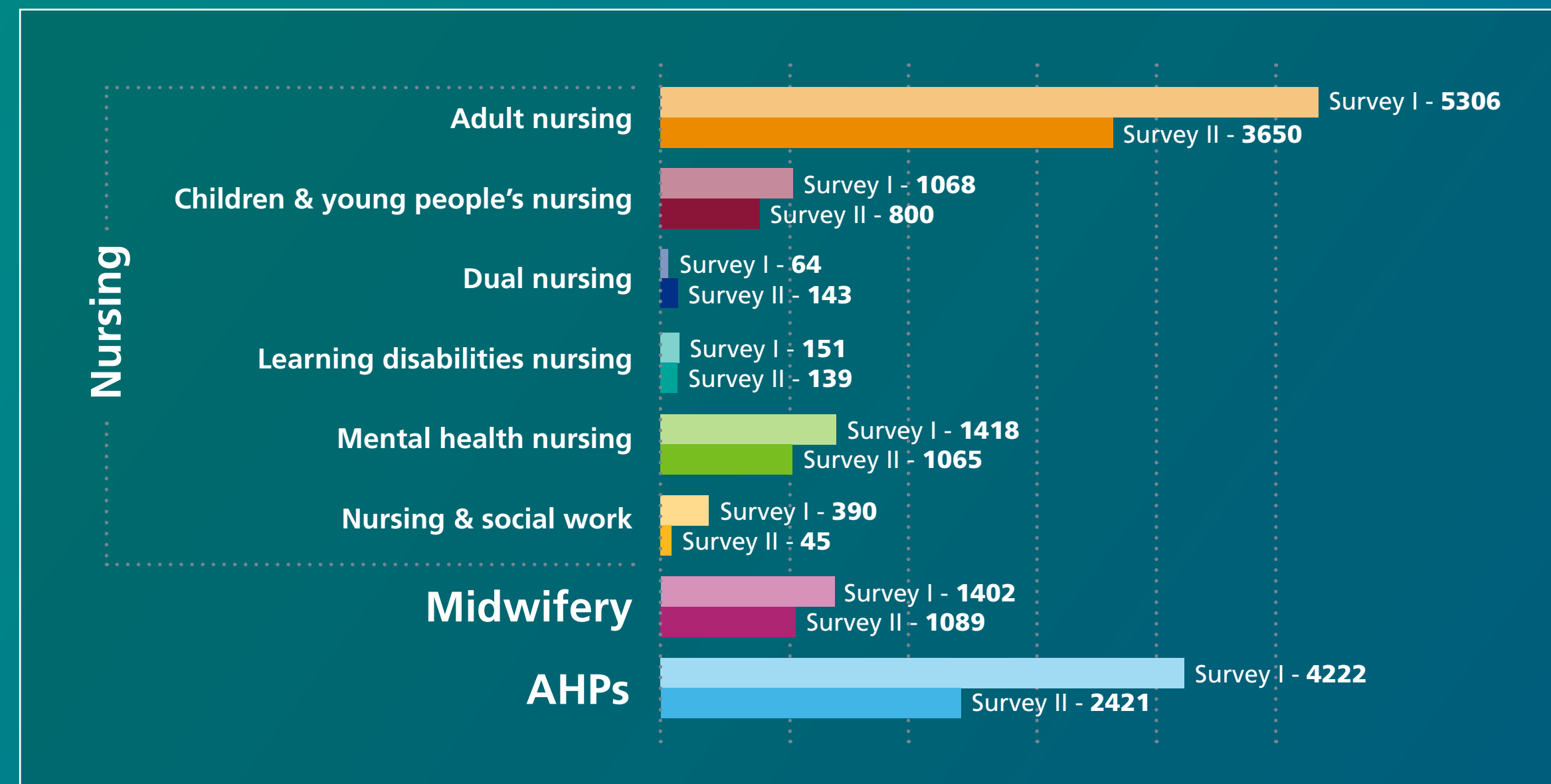
When?

Survey II ran for one month from the middle of May to the middle of June 2021

What?

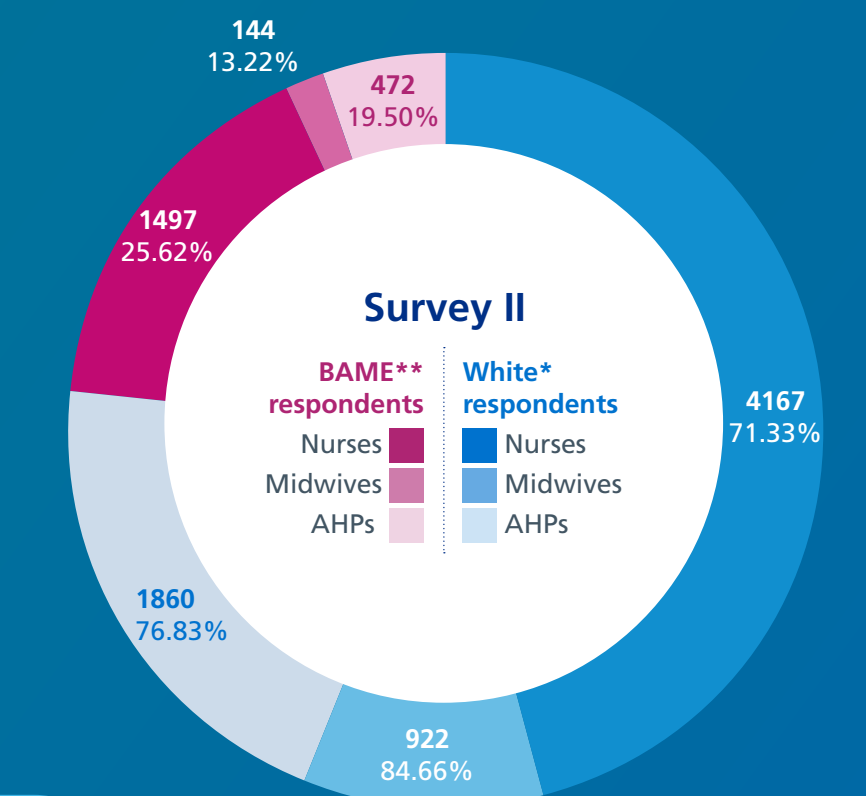
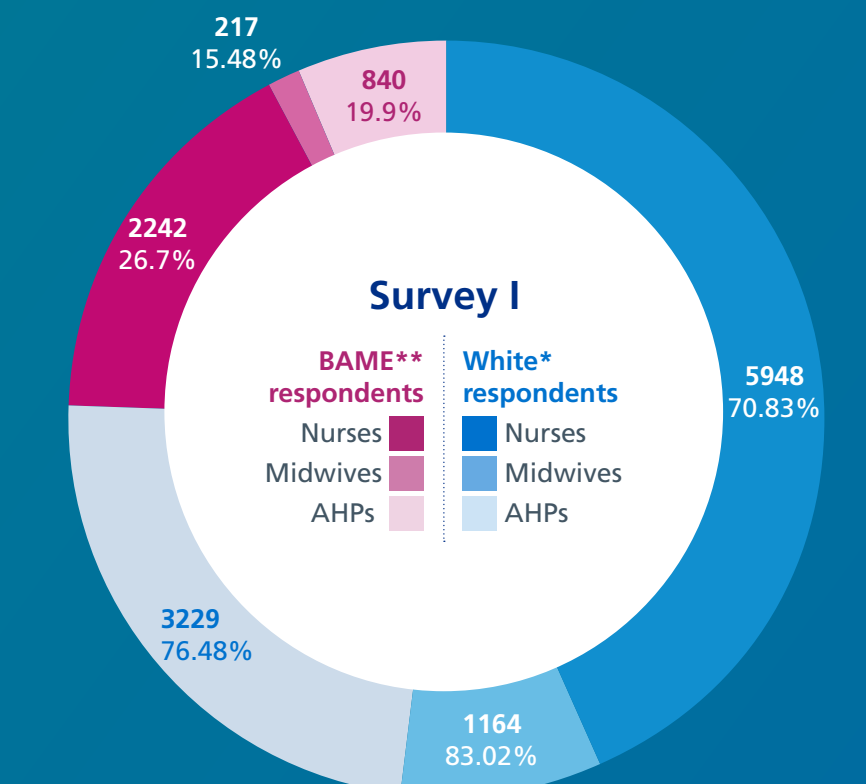
The number of students who responded and the sample analysed was **9,352** which included all cohorts. The number and percentage of respondents compared to Survey I is shown on the right.

Number and percentage of respondents to Survey II compared to Survey I

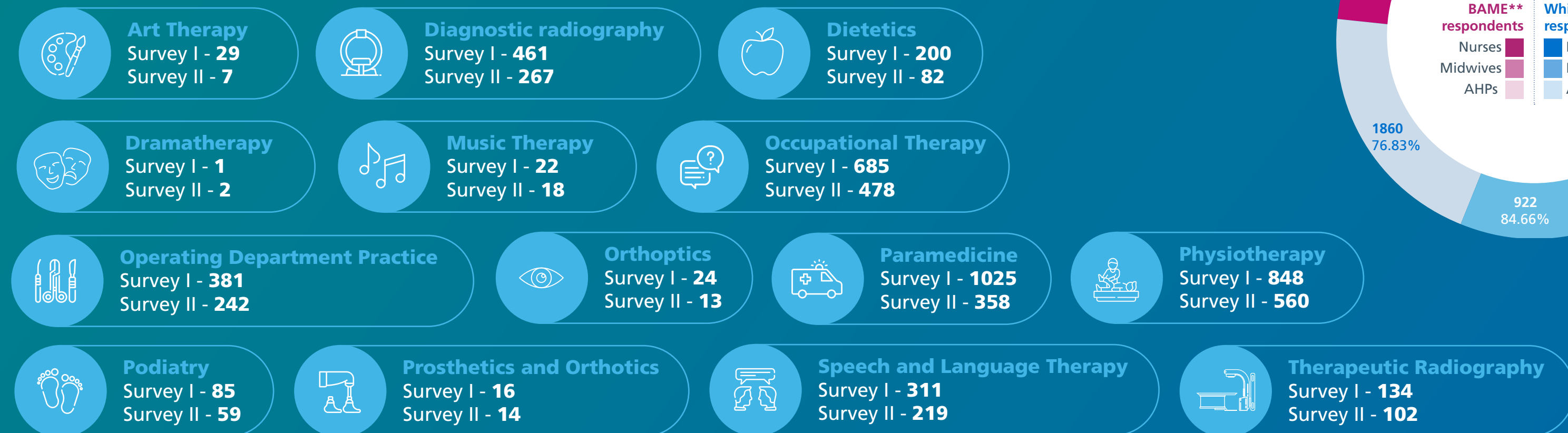


Ethnic clusters

The relative percentage between the two surveys of respondents from BAME students and white students were very closely matched



Number and percentage of AHP respondents – Survey II compared with Survey I

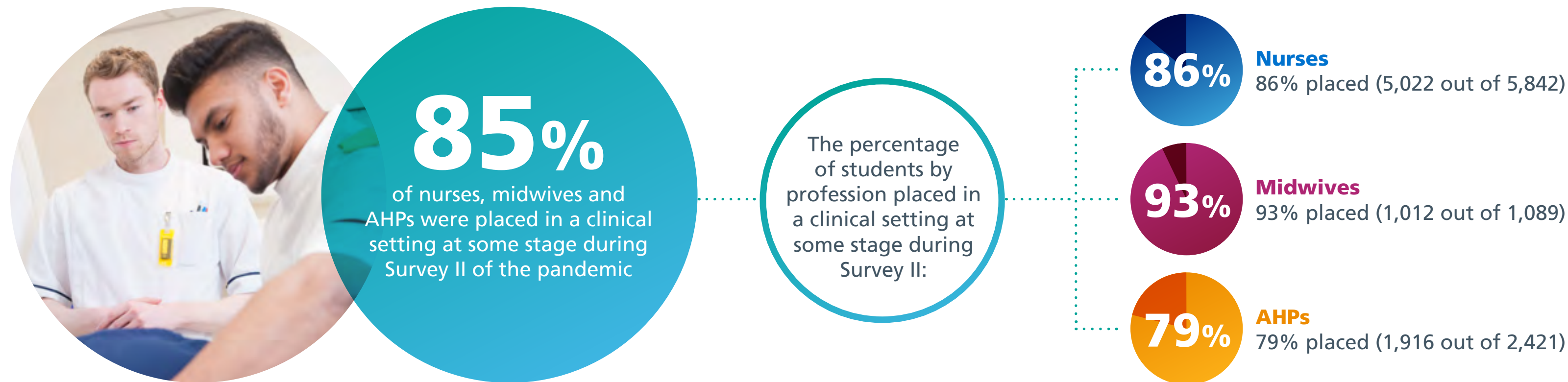


* White British, White Irish & White Other ** Oxford English Dictionary definition non-white communities in the UK NB: not all respondents declared their ethnicity

The 'Impact of COVID-19 on Students' Survey: Charting student experiences

To understand how students are coping during these challenging times, the 2021 survey (Survey II) asked for their feedback across a wide range of areas. This included their placement experiences and support as well as any concerns about the future of their careers. Where possible, we have also compared findings with those sourced in the 2021 survey (Survey I) to see what further lessons can be learned to better serve our student community moving forward.

How many students were placed in a clinical environment during Survey II?



What were the experiences of students placed in a clinical environment only?

The quality of student experiences of those solely in a clinical environment have all dropped during Survey II (SII) compared to Survey I (SI):

79% in Survey II
Vs.
85% in Survey I
felt supported in the clinical environment

68% in Survey II
Vs.
84% in Survey I
felt supported by academic staff during placements

83% in Survey II
Vs.
90% in Survey I
felt clinical placements were of a high quality and a good learning environment

62% in Survey II
Vs.
66% in Survey I
reported high quality clinical placement supervision

Where we can improve

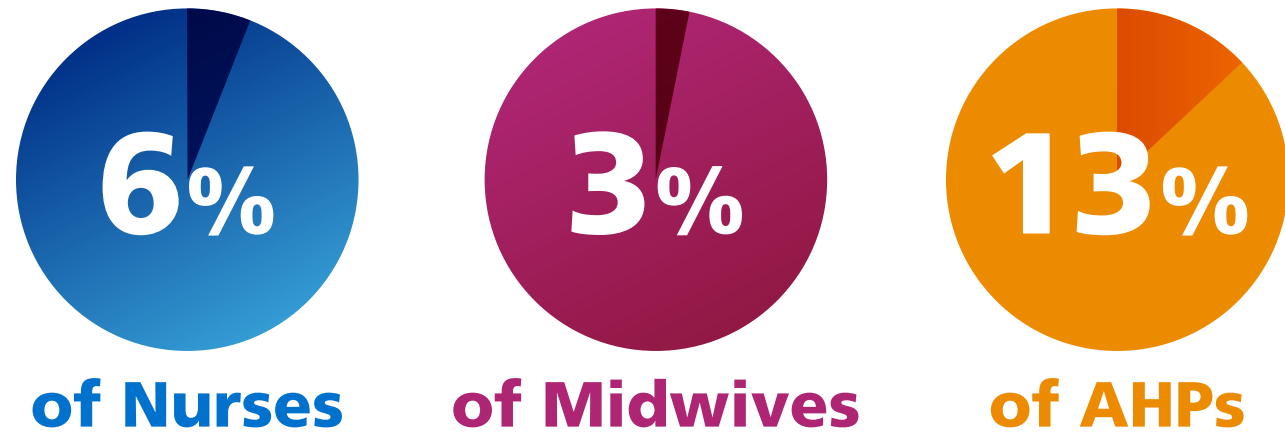
While concerns about being significantly challenged by work volumes and the complexity of the clinical care is similar to last year (62% in SII vs. 60% in SI), students' anxiety about catching up with academic studies has increased since Survey I:

68% in Survey II Vs. **59% in Survey I**

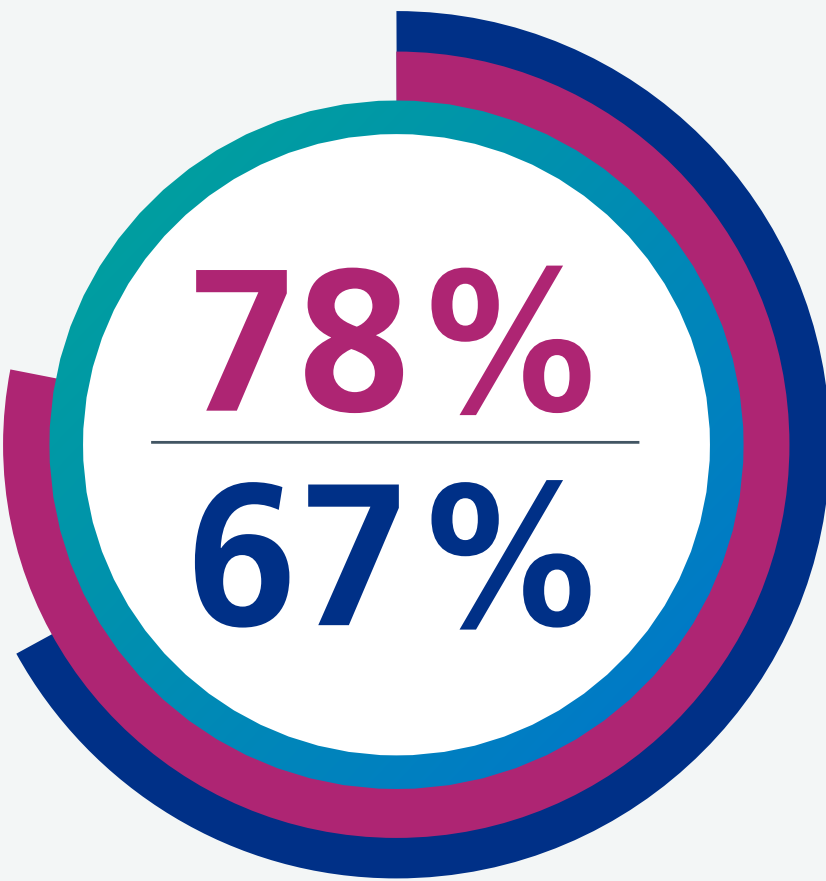


What were the experiences of students placed in an academic environment only?

The number of students in an academic environment only was low during Survey II:



During their training, students believed the following activities worked well:



78% said the academic staff were really helpful and, if they were struggling, the staff would listen and try and help them
67% said online resources were of a high quality.



saying they received regular feedback from their tutors



saying online teaching enabled effective learning

Of most concern...



said online resources fulfilled the need for face to face contact

What were the experiences of students placed in both clinical and academic environments?

The survey shows that **55%** of students spent time in both areas during Survey II and stated the following three activities worked well:

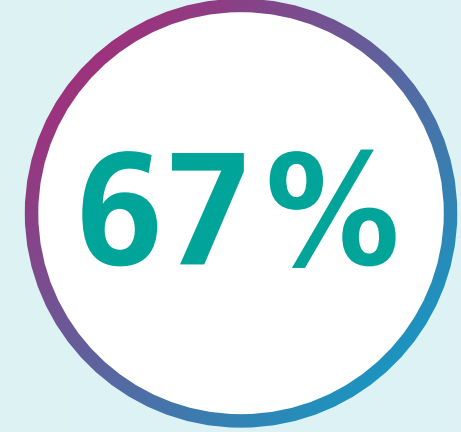


- 88%** said that the clinical placement respected inclusion, equality and diversity practices for staff and students
- 86%** said the clinical environment was of a high quality and a good learning environment
- 73%** said the staff were friendly during the clinical placement

However, there were activities that many students said didn't deliver as expected:



said the online interaction did not fulfil the need for face to face course delivery



said that they sometimes struggled to complete the learning outcomes in the context of online delivery

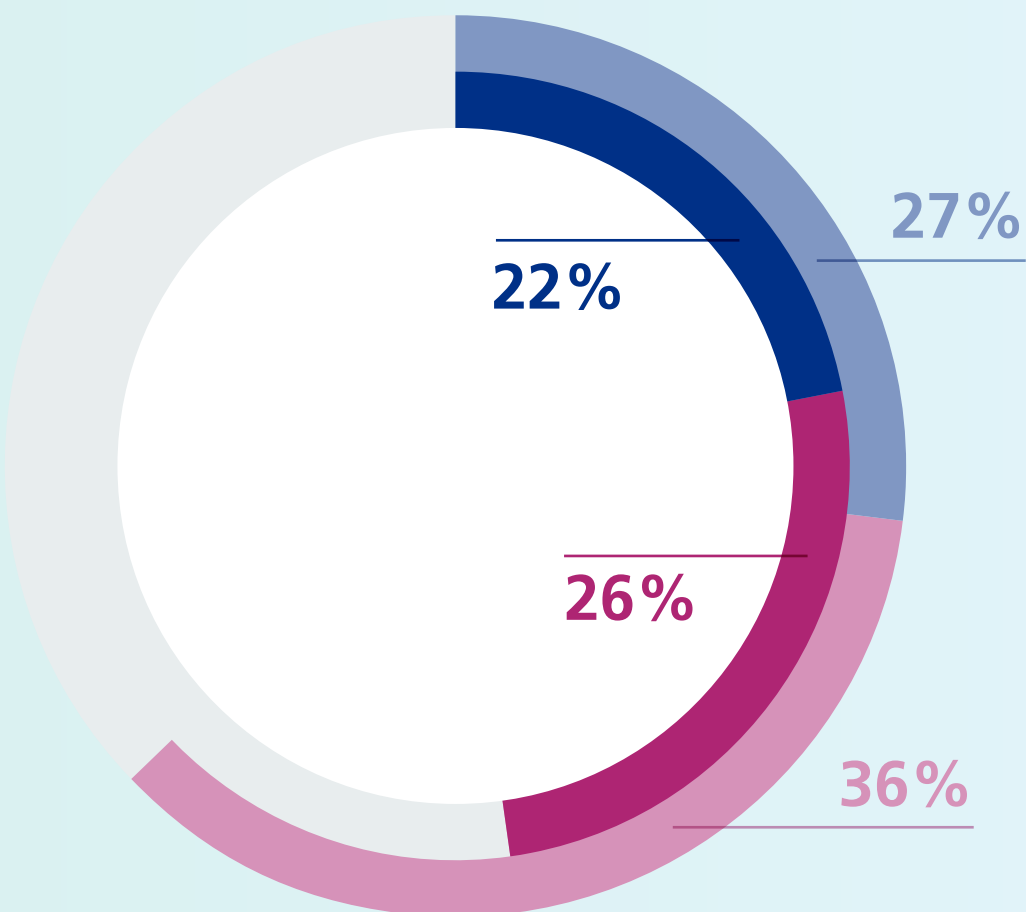


said they were anxious about catching up with academic studies.

Ongoing Concerns

How anxious are students every day about the impact COVID may have on their future careers?

During Survey II, concerns about how the pandemic may affect students' careers have fallen in both White and BAME students compared to Survey I.



- Survey I - White students expressed concern
- Survey I - BAME students expressed concern
- Survey II - White students expressed concern
- Survey II - BAME students expressed concern

However, the fact remains that BAME students are still more anxious every day about their future prospects compared to their White counterparts.

Why are students anxious?

The survey offered students the opportunity to express their specific concerns about their career prospects and how the pandemic will impact on them.

Nursing

23% are concerned every day about the impact of COVID on their careers.

Year 1
"I will not have experienced a normal placement without a Covid interruption, therefore I will not know how to work under pressure or how to complete all the skills."
White respondent

Year 2
"I haven't had enough placement time and have to catch up on 600 hours."
White respondent

Year 3
"I am worried about the impact it has on my health and well-being. My family members are very high risk so every time I go to work, I worry about catching the virus and giving it to my family."
BAME respondent

Midwifery

23% are concerned every day about the impact of COVID on their careers.

Year 1
"Staff are too overrun to support students. Online learning is not enough, especially for students with academic needs."
White respondent

Year 2
"I missed out on six weeks labour ward in the first year and have been told that I will not get that time back."
BAME respondent

Year 3
"I feel like my resilience is lower because of Covid."
White respondent

"I am worried I will not be as competent because my education and practical experience has been greatly affected."
BAME respondent

AHPs

22% are concerned every day about the impact of COVID on their careers.

Year 1
"Practice is more online and I get anxious about whether I will be able to perform well."
BAME respondent

Year 2
"I am a Year 2 student doing Year 1 work due to Covid."
White respondent

Year 3
"The reduced time on placement, the long gaps between placements. I do not feel competent at all."
White respondent

"The stress of being behind clinical training and education due to Covid and not being able to attend laboratories sessions due to Covid. I was unable to practice and participate with unscreened patients."
BAME respondent

How many students have considered leaving during Survey II?

Why students considered leaving

While responses from nursing students in Survey II were similar to Survey I (except for mental health – see page 12), there were significant differences in midwifery and AHPs. The top two reasons given by these students for considering leaving are the stress of the situation and feeling overwhelmed:



Stress of the situation

68% of White midwifery students in Survey I said the stress of the situation made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **78%**.

66% of BAME midwifery students in Survey I said the stress of the situation made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **79%**.

55% of White AHP students in Survey I said the stress of the situation made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **66%**.

Feeling overwhelmed

67% of White midwifery students in Survey I said feeling overwhelmed made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **75%**.

65% of BAME midwifery students in Survey I said feeling overwhelmed made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **75%**.

47% of White AHP students in Survey I said feeling overwhelmed made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **65%**.

Mental health challenges

Learners have reported an increase in mental health challenges across all professions and ethnic groups.



Nursing

31% of White nursing students in **Survey I** said mental health challenges made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **42%**.

34% of BAME nursing students in Survey I said mental health challenges made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **43%**.



Midwifery

31% of White midwifery students in **Survey I** said mental health challenges made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **48%**.

25% of BAME nursing students in **Survey I** said mental health challenges made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **55%**.



AHPs

29% of White AHP students in **Survey I** said mental health challenges made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **43%**.

38% of BAME AHP students in **Survey I** said mental health challenges made them consider leaving. In Survey II, this grew to **46%**.



Why are students staying?

While more students have considered leaving in 2021 survey, there are still many who cite important, often personal, reasons for staying:



Adult nursing students' reasons for staying

"My ambition and the thought of Florence Nightingale and her will to help patients in need during the war."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"The care a patient needs. I always think if I stop, they won't get all the care needed to be well. Also I don't want the ward to be short of staff. I always remember the '6Cs'."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"I offered to be redeployed to Critical Care throughout both Covid Waves and this has given me a greater desire to succeed in my dream of becoming a nurse."

Year 2 (P/G pre-reg) student



Children & young people's nursing students' reasons for staying

"My passion for children and families and supporting their care, health and development."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"Covid has shown the need for nurses, and has really encouraged me to keep going so I can make an impact."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"I've always wanted to pursue my career as a children's nurse and although the covid situation has impacted on me, it hasn't stopped me from achieving this."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Learning disabilities nursing students' reasons for staying

"The apprenticeship scheme is an amazing opportunity and I am aware of how lucky I am. I have received exceptional support from my trust, the university and all my clinical placements."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"I am passionate about becoming an LD nurse and embrace the opportunity I have been given."

Year 2 (U/G) student

Note: All respondents have given permission to share their comments.

Why are students staying?

While more students have considered leaving in 2021 survey, there are still many who cite important, often personal, reasons for staying:



Mental health nursing students' reasons for staying

"I have worked in mental health for five years. I have worked so hard to get in the course so it will take a lot for me to give up. I am very passionate about my job."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"As a key worker, I continued so I could contribute to the medical team during an exceptional situation. Though it was a learning opportunity, I have a duty of commitment to vulnerable patients' advocacy."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Midwifery students' reasons for staying

"It has been a lifelong dream to become a midwife and having been on placement, I know it is definitely what I want to be."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"I've always wanted to be a midwife, and resilience is part of being one. If I can train during a pandemic, it only enhances my resilience."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"I can still feel the fire inside me burning to be a midwife – and I will keep going for the future families I will support and the workforce I will stand by."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Dramatherapy students' reasons for staying

"Knowing that by qualifying I could make a difference to people's lives."

Year 2 (P/G pre-reg) student

Music Therapy students' reasons for staying

"The course is very interesting and inspiring, and the academic staff are very supportive and organised according to the circumstances so they motivated me and supported me to continue."

Year 2 (P/G pre-reg) student

Note: All respondents have given permission to share their comments.

Why are students staying?

While more students have considered leaving in 2021 survey, there are still many who cite important, often personal, reasons for staying:



Diagnostic Radiography students' reasons for staying

"My greatest desire is to become a qualified radiographer and I have waited for a decade to be given that chance. The placement really helped me increase my knowledge and understanding."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"Motivation, resilience and overcoming challenges to better myself, so that hopefully one day I can make a difference to people's lives."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"I tried my best to think what was on the other side of the rainbow. I am still trying to be as motivated as I was starting the course."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Dietetics students' reasons for staying

"I felt that I was still getting good hospital/clinical experience during this time. Also, I did not know the hospital environment before the pandemic so it was not something I had to get used to."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"I was motivated and knew the end goal would be worth it. I did not see a major disadvantage to my studies because of Covid as the university has accommodated us well."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Occupational Therapy students' reasons for staying

"There are many people who need an occupational therapist to help, and I loved my placement."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"I just love the impact occupational therapists have on patients' health and independence."

Year 2 (U/G) student

Note: All respondents have given permission to share their comments.

Why are students staying?

While more students have considered leaving in 2021 survey, there are still many who cite important, often personal, reasons for staying:



Operating Department Practice students' reasons for staying

"Being a proud descendant of Elizabeth Garrett-Anderson, I feel inspired to help the cause against this vile enemy Covid. The NHS Trust I work for inspires me to want to improve as well."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"Determination, perseverance, endurance, courage, honesty, hardworking, time management."

Year 2 (U/G) student



Paramedic students' reasons for staying

"I have enjoyed every moment of the course, and this is definitely the career I would like to do. The clinical placement has been amazing."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"My placement has confirmed for me that this is the job I want to do and has given me more confidence in myself and my knowledge – but I am still anxious as I missed all placement in the first year."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"My drive and passion for the paramedic profession kept me going. I had worked too hard to set myself back a year so continued to battle through and face the challenges thrown my way."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Physiotherapy students' reasons for staying

"I know that ultimately I want to be a physiotherapist. Although it is tough now and I don't feel as confident in my clinical skills, I believe I will catch up and make a good physio."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"I know I want to be a physiotherapist, and I am prepared to do extra work in my own time to achieve this. I also have a job as an assistant which has helped me practice some clinical skills."

Year 2 (P/G pre-reg) student

"I wanted to keep helping patients and saw what the qualified physios were doing at close hand during the pandemic. I wanted to keep going and ensure I could qualify."

Year 3 (U/G) student

Note: All respondents have given permission to share their comments.

Why are students staying?

While more students have considered leaving in 2021 survey, there are still many who cite important, often personal, reasons for staying:



Podiatry students' reasons for staying

"Brilliant support from the teaching staff who've worked hard to enable us to continue working in clinics during lockdown and sourcing the provision of lateral flow tests early on."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Speech & Language Therapy students' reasons for staying

"Reminding myself of the inspiring SLTs I worked with prior to joining the course, and my enjoyment of the setting I used to work in and how I want to progress my career."

Year 1 (P/G pre-reg) student

"The opportunity to be on a clinic placement and actively make a difference in patients and their families' lives."

Year 3 (U/G) student



Therapeutic Radiography students' reasons for staying

"The staff are really encouraging and the environment when out on placement is welcoming. The online course provided the material and knowledge I needed for the year."

Year 1 (U/G) student

"I enjoyed being on placement and the real insight it provided. It allowed me to apply my academic skills in a real-life setting and know what to expect in the future as a professional."

Year 2 (U/G) student

"I know this is what I want to do and saw the pandemic as an opportunity to grow and develop."

Year 3 (U/G) student

Note: All respondents have given permission to share their comments.

Are student health and well-being needs being met?

This survey captured the students' health and well-being needs.

"There is a positive culture of care in the clinical placement"

86% of nursing students agreed
75% of midwifery students agreed
82% of AHP students agreed

"I feel valued in the clinical practice setting"

77% of nursing students agreed
72% of midwifery students agreed
77% of AHP students agreed

"My contribution to the patient care is recognised"

84% of nursing students agreed
81% of midwifery students agreed
79% of AHP students agreed

"The clinical practice environment supports my lifestyle"

73% of nursing students agreed
62% of midwifery students agreed
75% of AHP students agreed

"I am confident that I will be supported in my first clinical post when I transition from final year student to newly qualified practitioner"

73% of nursing students agreed
66% of midwifery students agreed
73% of AHP students agreed





Further survey update

- HEE extends grateful thanks to the Council of Deans and the Universities for help to distribute this survey about the Impact of COVID on Students.
- The key findings from the first survey can be accessed via <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/reducing-pre-registration-attrition-improving-retention>
- HEE would like to extend special thanks to all the students who took the time to share their experiences.

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