

Predicting Futures: Ensuring Fairness for 2021 Grade Predictions

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Overview

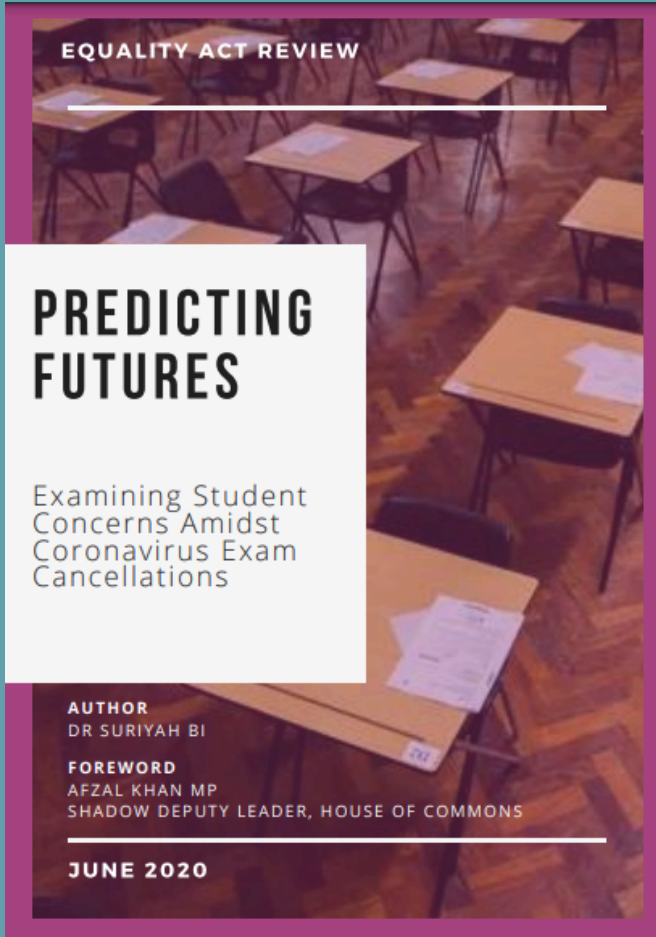
- Introduce Predicting Futures research project, its aims and objectives.
- Findings of the first report.
- Findings the second report.
- Engagement with government and Ofqual.
- Implications for 2021.

Research aims and objectives

- Discourse was dominated by 'experts'.
- Re-centre the voices of students.
- Ensure students were at the heart of policy making around predicting grades.
- Understand whether students were concerned and if so why (first report).
- Understand how students had been impacted by predicted grades (second report).

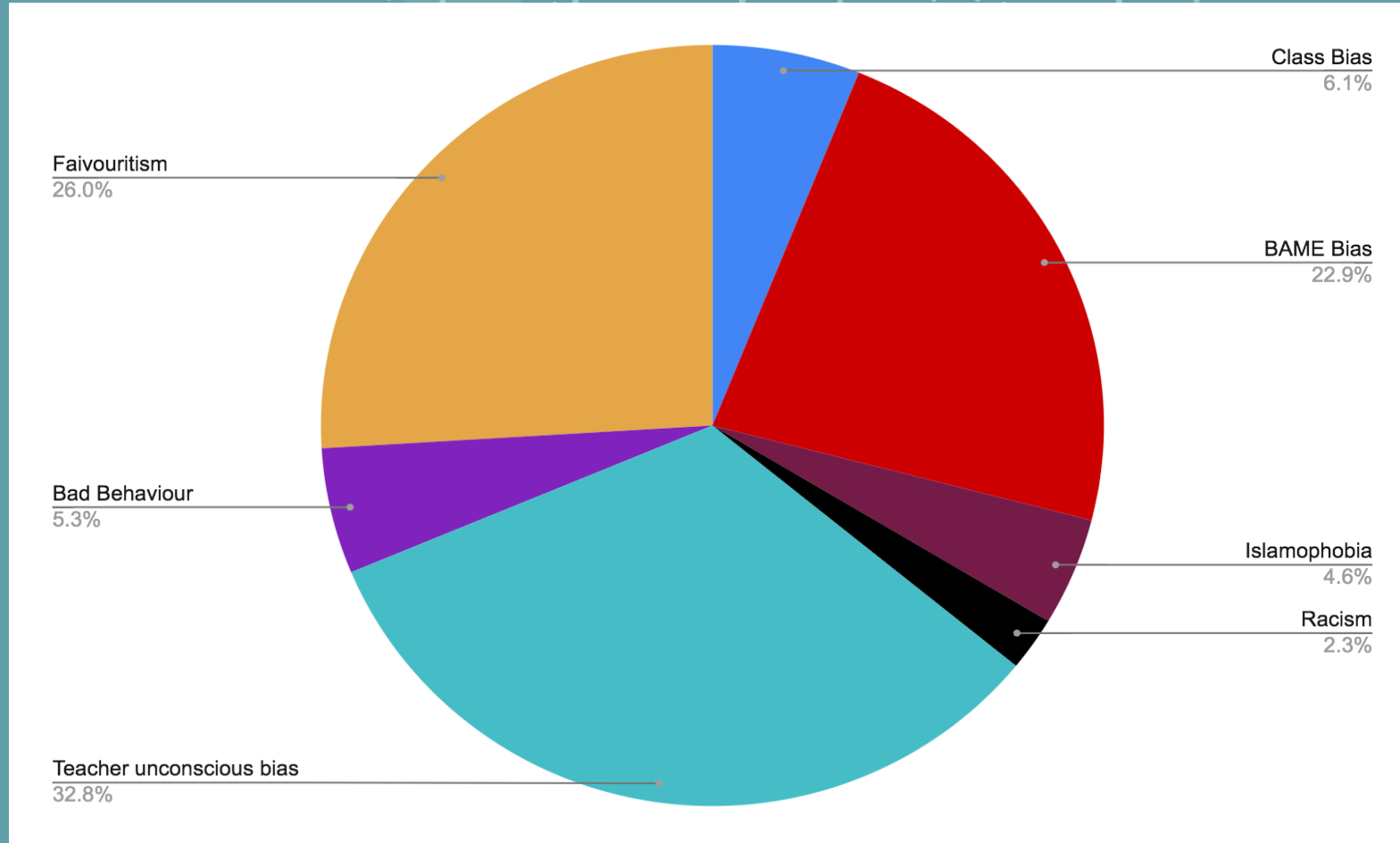


Predicting Futures



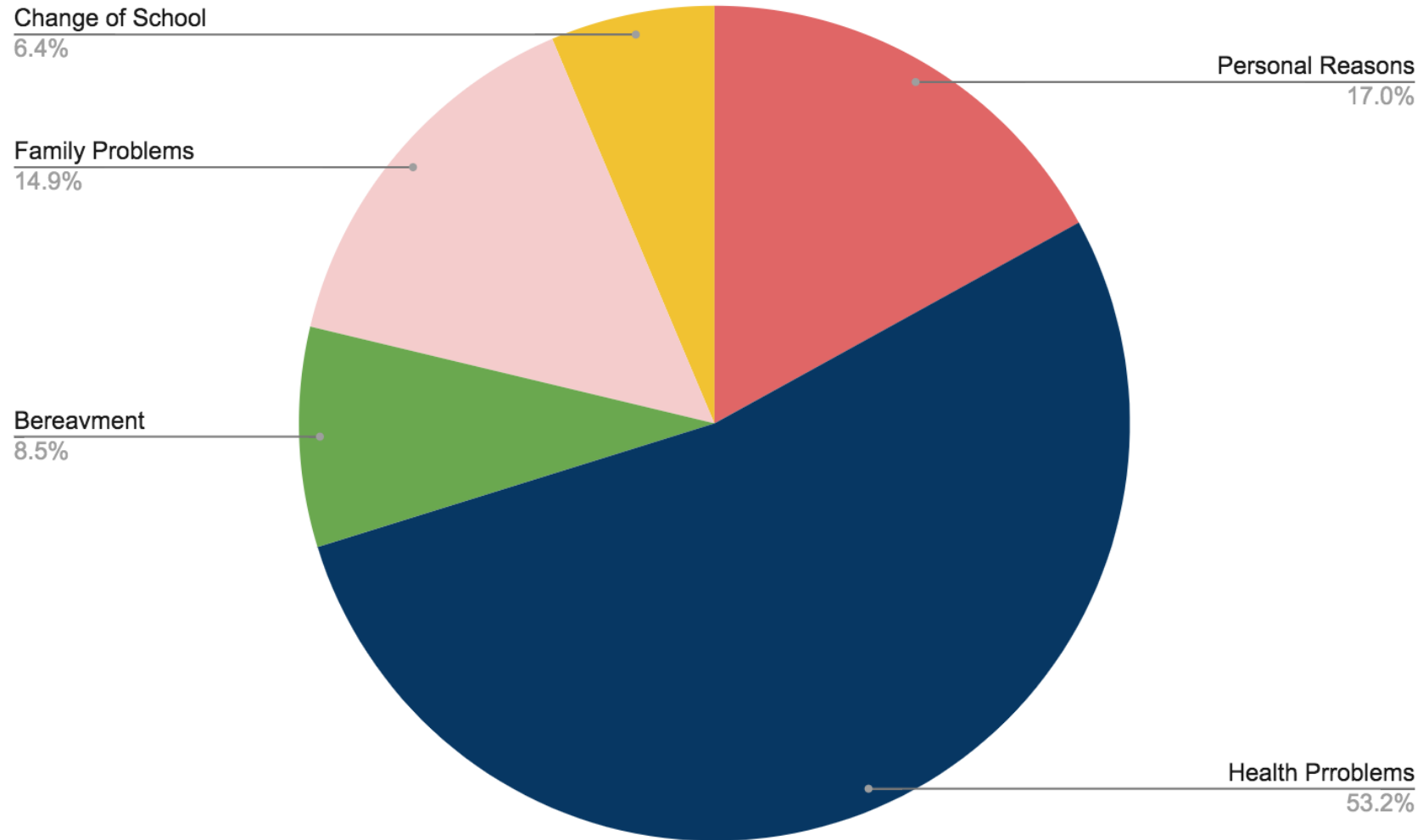
- 803 responses.
- 80% of students were concerned about their grades being predicted.
- 85% of respondents were from BAME backgrounds.
- 22.9% of the respondents expressed that they were worried about anti-BAME bias.
- Over 50% of students expressed concern about their learning style, namely that they work harder under pressure and have made progress since their mock exams, which is not accounted for by a predicted grade.
- The current grade predictions system does not account for learning style, mitigating circumstances or BAME bias.
- 80% of respondents were concerned about their future education and employment prospects.

Chart 14: A breakdown of the concerns relating to the nature of bias

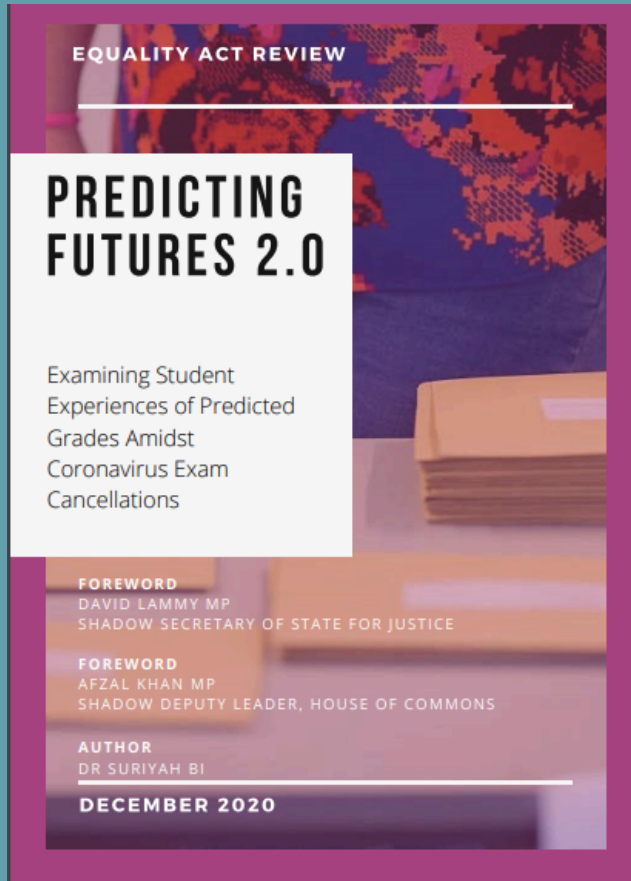


Bias concerns extend beyond BAME identity to bad behaviour, favouritism, class, Islamophobia and learning style.

Chart 12: A breakdown of the concerns relating to the nature of mitigating circumstances



Predicting Futures 2.0



- 2091 responses.
- 77.2% (1614) of respondents stated that they received results that were an under-estimate of their abilities.
- Nearly 80% were from BAME backgrounds.
- Over half of the applicants were from households below the national average household income of £28,500.
- Loss of aspiration and talent: We found that 50.7% (1070) respondents decided to re-take their exams, 26.5% (555) decided not to re-take, and 22.8% (476) were undecided at the time of taking the survey as to whether or not they wished to re-sit their exams to improve their grades.
- Low success of appeals: 69% wanted to appeal, 33% not only to appeal, and those who appealed only 2% were successful but only 0.1% successful and positive outcome for higher education.

Chart 12: Impact of predicted grades.



The study also found that almost 65% of respondents missed out on university offers.

Chart 11: Experience of predicted grades relative to teacher predicted grades against household income.

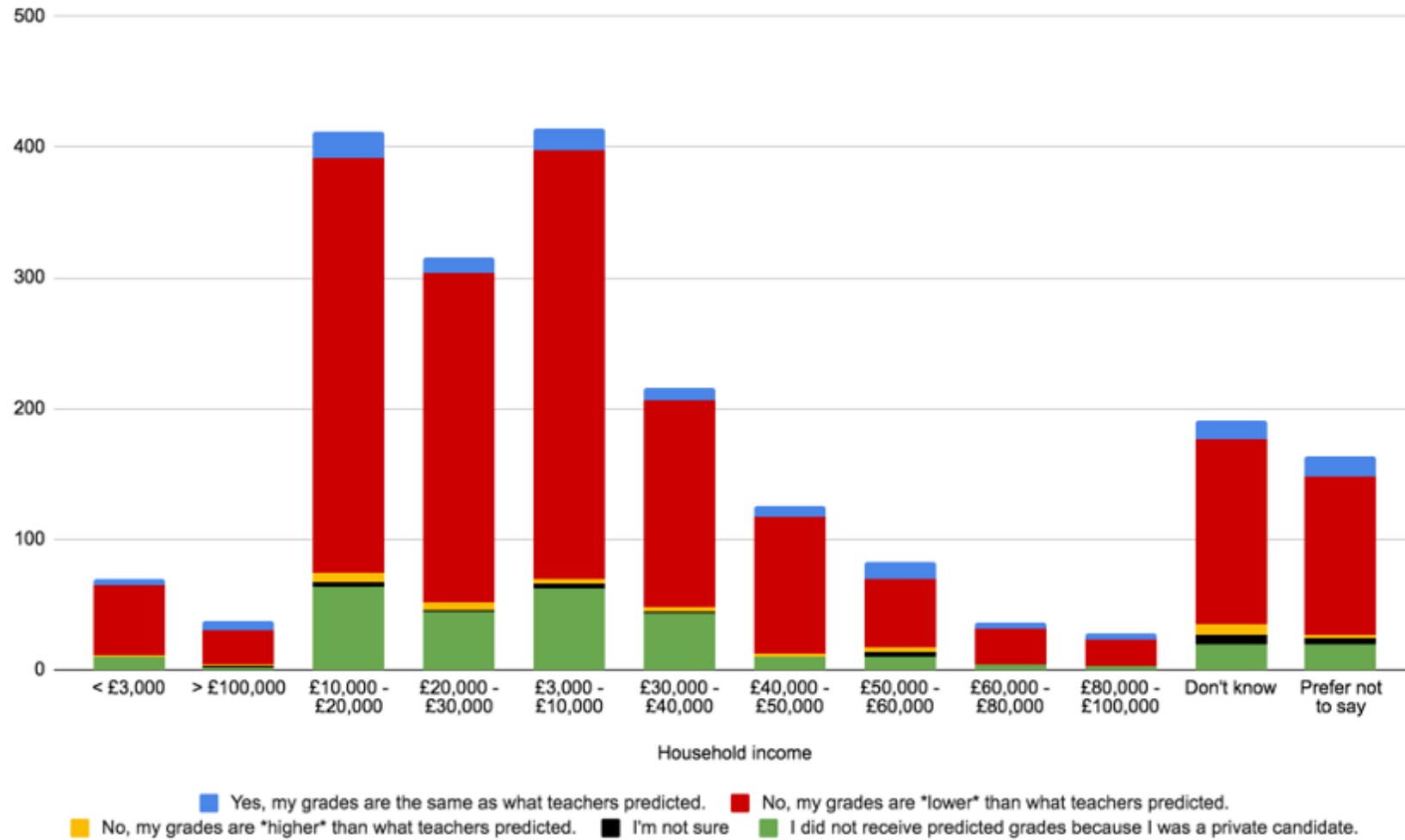


Chart 9: Experience of predicted grades in relation to household income.

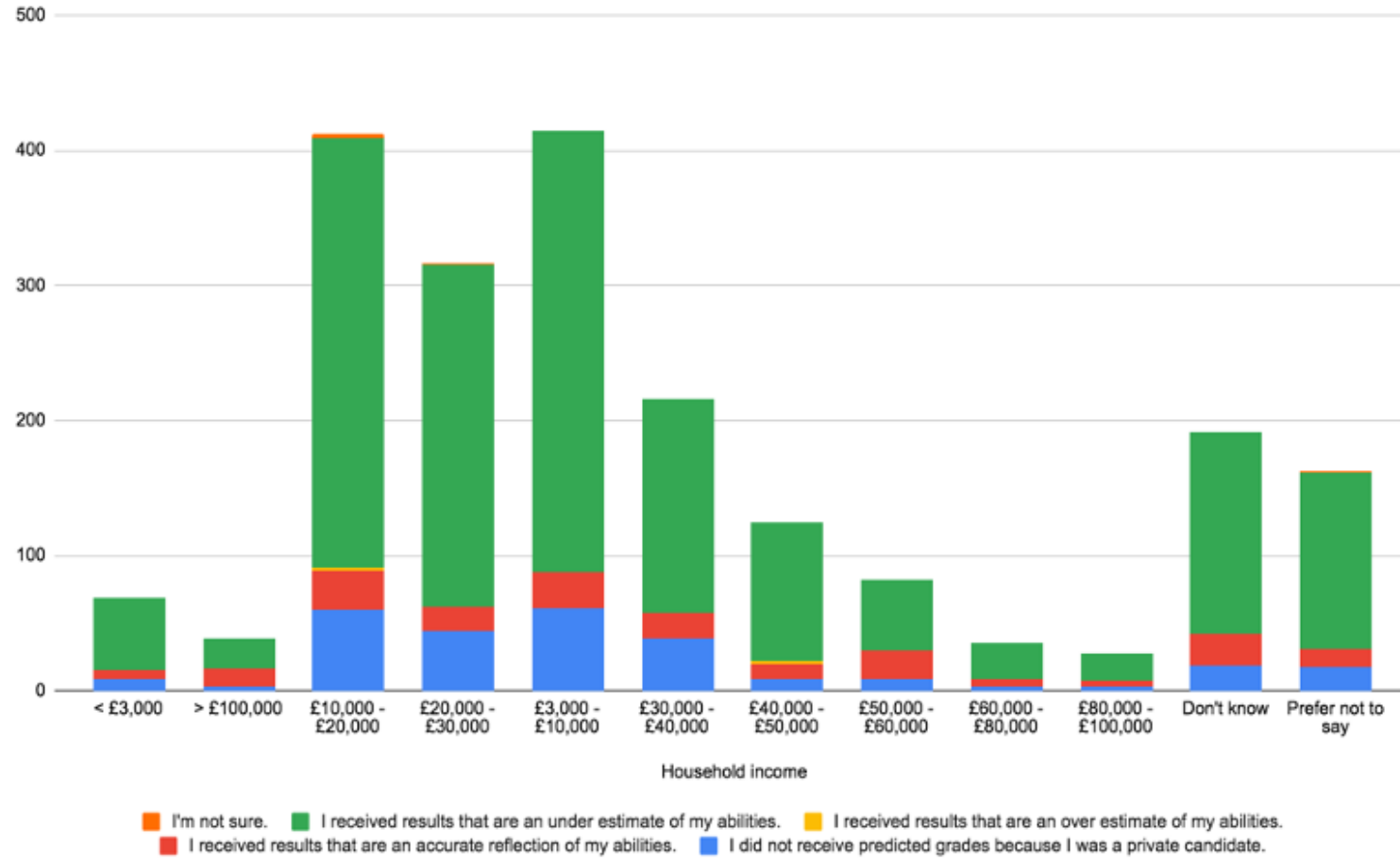
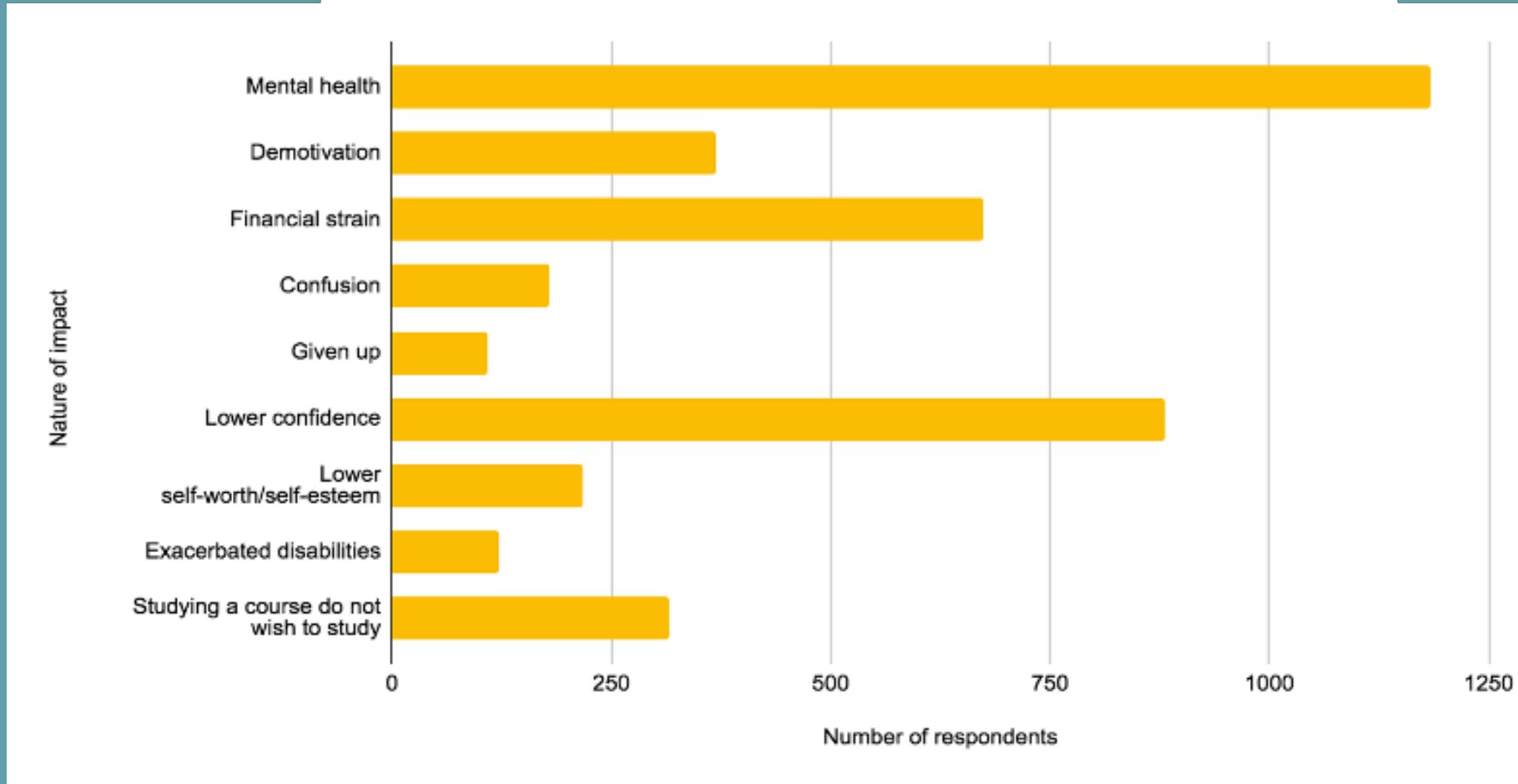


Chart 13: Nature and proportion of impact amongst respondents.



The results indicate that predicted grades had a negative impact on 56.5% (1183) of respondents' mental health, caused 17.6% (368) to feel demotivated, 32.3% (675) to experience financial strain, 8.56 (179) to experience confusion as to future directions, 5% (108) to 'give-up' on their education, 42% (880) to experience lower levels of confidence, 10.3% (217) to experience low self-worth and/or self-esteem; 5.8% (121) said they experienced an exacerbation of existing disabilities, and 15% (316) said they were studying a course they did not wish to study

Recommendation 1: To widen the grounds of appeal and allow for students to directly contact exam boards without having to seek approval from assessment centres before appealing.

Recommendation 2: To provide all external students their UCAS predicted grades.

Recommendation 3: To enable mentoring, work placements, and skills workshops for young people who have missed out on opportunities to attend college and universities this academic year.

Recommendation 4: To provide free counselling sessions to young people affected by the grade predictions process.

Recommendation 5: To create an advisory pack for all GCSE and A level students to be sent out immediately. This should entail useful resources and details of organisations that can assist them in navigating this delicate juncture in their lives.

Recommendation 6: To advise universities to prioritise, in the future, those students who have missed out on places this academic year.

Recommendation 7: To streamline the exam and grading process for summer 2021 to avoid a repetition of the same outcomes.

Implications for 2021 and beyond

- We wrote to DFE, Ofqual as early as April 2020 advising against algorithm.
- Warnings included postcode lottery system, the different forms of bias,
- Mitigating circumstances, learning styles, bias not accounted for or mitigated, appeal system to be streamlined.
- Include an index for BAME/LSE, learning style, and mitigating circumstances between 1-10% to equalise forms of bias.
- Devise an aptitude test which can be completed online by students. Universities and employers should consider predicted grades in conjunction with this.
- Broader implications for workplace diversity and gender pay gap.

