

healthwatch Suffolk

My Health, Our Future (Phase Eight)

Young people's wellbeing in Suffolk (2023/24)

Acknowledgements

The success and achievements of the *My Health, Our Future* (MHoF) programme rely greatly on the ongoing support of the Suffolk and north east Essex integrated care system and the collaboration of various partners working with young people in Suffolk. Above all, we extend our thanks to school and college leaders, along with students from the following schools and colleges, for their support of MHoF 2023/2024:

- Abbeygate Sixth Form College
- Breckland School
- Castle Manor Academy
- Chantry Academy
- Claydon High School
- East Point Academy

- Hadleigh High School
- Ipswich High School
- Mildenhall College Academy
- Northgate High School
- Ormiston Sudbury Academy
- Samuel Ward Academy
- Sir John Leman High School

- Stour Valley Community School
- Suffolk ONE
- West Suffolk College
- Woodbridge School

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond and share their experiences with us.



For more information about *My Health, Our Future* (MHoF), or to download previous reports and insights, please visit: www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/mhof

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Introduction

My Health, Our Future (MHoF) is a unique research programme that explores the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people in Suffolk.

Since 2015, MHoF data has been helping schools, colleges, and integrated care systems to improve support for children and young people. The programme offers insights into the current wellbeing of young people across Suffolk, providing data to support local decision-making about services, attract funding for local support, and inform health and care system strategies around young people's health and wellbeing.

The programme has recorded **nearly 65,000** responses from young people on topics like bullying, self-harm, body image, anxiety, and many others. The phase eight 2023/24 survey included new sections on feeling safe and the future, alongside adapted sections on body image, sexual harassment, physical activity, and sleep.

This report presents findings from phase eight of the MHoF programme. The survey was completed between January and July 2024. To learn more about MHoF and access our reports, please visit www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/mhof.

















Co-production

Each year, the *My Health, Our Future* survey is reviewed by young people, NHS commissioners, schools, colleges and other partners to ensure it aligns with local priorities. Most importantly, the survey co-production helps us to ensure the survey is focused on issues that are important to young people.

This year, we connected with schools and colleges to revisit the findings of previous reports and better understand their current challenges. We also collaborated with local partners, such as Suffolk's Public Health and Communities team, school nurses, mental health support teams, and Survivors in Transition, to explore how MHoF can continue to influence their work. This led to the inclusion of new topics and other survey revisions.

Additionally, we have updated the reports provided to each participating school and college regarding their students' responses. These reports now include practical "top tips" from us and local partners, such as school nurses, Kooth, Suffolk Sexual Health Service, The Source, Survivors in Transition, and Stop Loan Sharks, highlighting potential sources of support and solutions for key findings.



"Suffolk School Nursing Service are proud to collaborate with Healthwatch Suffolk and contribute to the developing surveys, looking at key topics and sharing helpful information.

"The young people's responses are so important to us. We can find out how things are for them and ensure their voices are being heard. We are committed to supporting both the young people and the school with their survey report."



Using and interpreting our data

MHoF uses an online survey to reach thousands of young people each year, gathering insights that are useful across sectors. When considering our data, it's important to note:

- **1.** The survey captures young people's views at a single point in time. Our findings can reveal patterns, relationships, and associations between factors but cannot prove that one factor has a direct or singular influence over another.
- For example, if large numbers of young people report low wellbeing and worry about their body image, the data cannot confirm with certainty that poor body image is a cause of low wellbeing. It shows that these issues often occur together and may be related.
- 2. Results from small groups or small differences between groups should be interpreted with care.
- For example, if only a few students from specific demographic groupings (e.g., ethnicities) have responded to the survey, their results may not be generalised to wider populations. Similarly, small differences in how students have responded to the survey questions (e.g., between students identifying with different gender options) may be meaningful or simply due to chance.

Many complex factors shape young people's wellbeing, behaviors and experiences. Survey data should be used carefully and considered alongside other evidence.

Who took part?



Demographics

- A total of 9,227 responses were recorded. Most were from students in Years 12 and 13 (42%).
- More than three quarters (77%/7,082) were from 'White –
 English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British' students, followed
 by students who identified as 'White Any other White
 background' (5%/432).
- 35% (3,016) reported having one or more 'additional support needs', including 7% (601) who had 'special educational needs'.
- 1,765 (21%) students were categorised as SEND (inclusive of students who self-selected statements from a list that included 'I have autism, Asperger's syndrome or ASD', 'I have ADHD', 'I have a sensory disability', 'I have a physical disability', and 'I have special educational needs'.

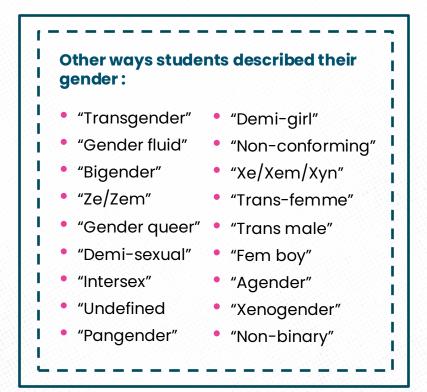
Please see the following pages for more details about the demographic profile of students.

Year Group	Count	%
Year 7	1,382	15%
Year 8	1,136	12%
Year 9	1,128	12%
Year 10	985	11%
Year 11	514	6%
Year 12	2,311	25%
Year 13	1,595	17%
Year 14	71	1%
No answer	105	1%

Gender

This page features a full breakdown of students' gender.







Gender	%	Count
Female	50%	4,642
Male	45%	4,108
Describe gender another way	1%	123
Prefer not to say	4%	354

Sexuality

The largest proportion of students identified as heterosexual/straight (78%/7,236), followed by 8% (748) of students who identified as bisexual. The table below shows a full breakdown of students' sexuality.

Sexuality	%	Count
Heterosexual/straight	78%	7,236
Bisexual	8%	748
Gay male	2%	147
Gay female/lesbian	2%	184
Described sexuality another way	2%	206
Prefer not to say	8%	706

Other ways students described their sexuality included:

- "Abrosexual"
- "Unlabelled"

"Aroace"

"Questioning"

"Aromantic"

"Graysexual"

"Asexual"

"Transexual"

"Demisexual"

- "Pansexual"
- "Panromantic"
- "Polyamorous"

- "Omnisexual"
- "Unsure"
- "Sexually fluid"
- "Arospec"

"Biromantic asexual"

"Bi-curious"

• "Queer"

- "Furry"
- "Aegosexualyne"
- "Cupiosexual"
- "Demiaroace"



responses were from LGBT*Q+ students (14%). This compares to 13% in 2023 and 22% in 2022.

Each year, MHoF reveals persistent disparities in emotional, mental and physical health between LGBT*Q+ young people and non-LGBT*Q+ peers.

Our findings have previously shown that LGBT*Q+ young people are more likely to report lower levels of wellbeing, experience higher rates of anxiety, and feel less optimistic about their future. They are also less likely to feel close to others which is crucial for overall wellbeing.

In this report, the findings for LGBT*Q+ students are presented as a group, inclusive of responses to questions about sexuality and gender unless otherwise stated.



Ethnicity

Most students identified as 'White –
 English/Welsh /Scottish/Northern Irish/British'
 (77%/7,085).

See tables for a full breakdown of responses.

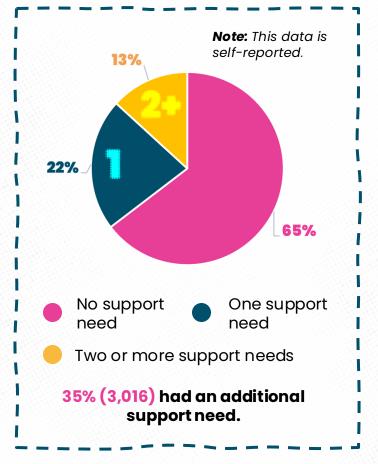
Ethnicity	%	Count
White - English/Welsh/Scottish/ Northern Irish/British	77%	7,085
Any other White background	5%	432
Polish	2%	194
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic backgrounds	1%	135
White and Black Caribbean	1%	127
Any other Asian background	1%	136
Indian	1%	125
White and Black African	1%	112

Ethnicity	%	Count
White and Asian	1%	110
African	1%	109
Romanian	1%	88
Other ethnic background	1%	87
Portuguese	1%	85
Bangladeshi	1%	59
Irish	1%	55
Chinese	1%	54
Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	<1%	51
Caribbean	<1%	42
Any other Black/African/ Caribbean background	<1%	40
Pakistani	<1%	25
Arab	<1%	24

Additional support needs

 Additional support needs have been shown to influence student wellbeing across the MHoF programme. See the table below for a breakdown of responses this year.

Additional support needs	%	Count
Diagnosed mental health difficulty	10%	849
Receiving free school meals	9%	744
ADHD	8%	679
Autism, Asperger's syndrome, or ASD	7%	615
Special educational needs	7%	601
Young carer	6%	544
Sensory disability	4%	370
Physical disability	4%	322
Has been in care	3%	264
Has been a refugee	<1%	39





...identified with having a special educational need or disability (SEND). This compares to 16% (2,120) in 2023.

These young people self-selected statements from a list that included 'I have autism, Asperger's syndrome or ASD', 'I have ADHD', 'I have a sensory disability', 'I have a physical disability', and 'I have special educational needs'.

Year after year, MHoF data has shown that students with SEND are considerably more likely to experience lower levels of wellbeing. Further insights into the experiences of students with SEND can be found throughout the report.

Our results

Wellbeing (swemwes data)

- Overall wellbeing was measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS), where students respond to seven statements. These are calculated to give a score between 7 and 35, a lower score equates to lower wellbeing.
- A total of 9,227 students completed the SWEMWBS questions.
- Average wellbeing scores have continued to improve, but they still fall below a national average recorded in 2020.

National SWEMWBS data

NHS research in 2020 reported the average SWEMWBS score for young people in England (aged 11 to 16) as **24.6.**

Average wellbeing (22.8) remains below a national average recorded by the NHS in 2020.



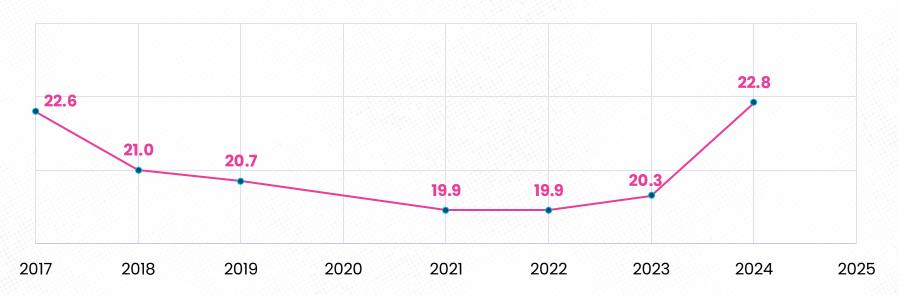
Suffolk 2021 – Pandemic low (19.9)

National 2020 (24.6)

Suffolk 2024 (22.8)

Average wellbeing (since 2017)

The chart below shows how the average wellbeing score of young people in Suffolk has changed over time. Scores range between 7 and 35, a lower score equates to lower wellbeing. Average wellbeing in Suffolk has returned to levels previously recorded in 2017 but remains below a national average of 24.6 recorded by the NHS in 2020.



Average wellbeing & year group

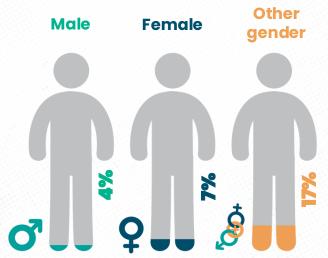
The chart below compares the average wellbeing score of young people in Suffolk **2022** and **2023** and surveys. The number within the bars indicates the number of students in each year group, while the number above the bars shows the average wellbeing score for that group.

In the previous year, students in Years 12 and 13 reported higher average wellbeing than their peers, a trend that continues this year. The overall proportion of this group in the sample this year has increased, and this is likely to have influenced the overall rise in Suffolk's average wellbeing scores to some extent.



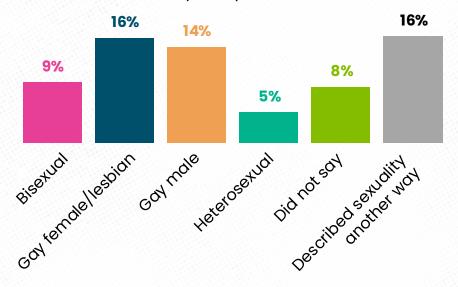
Gender & wellbeing

- Students describing their gender in another way were 4x more likely than male students to report low wellbeing (17% vs. 4%).
- Female students were almost twice as likely to report low wellbeing than male students (7% vs. 4%).



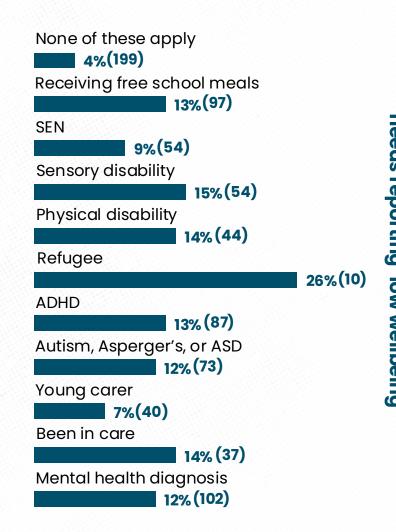
Sexuality & wellbeing

 Students describing their sexuality as anything other than heterosexual were more likely to report low wellbeing. Students identifying as 'Gay female/lesbian' (16%) and students who 'described their sexuality another way' (16%) were the most likely to report this.



Additional support needs & wellbeing

- The graph illustrates the percentage of students reporting low wellbeing in those who self-identified with 'additional support needs'.
- Students with additional support needs were more likely to report low wellbeing compared to those with no support needs (9% vs. 4%).
- Students that are refugees or asylum seekers were the most likely to have low wellbeing (26%/10), followed by students with a sensory disability (15%/54).
- The likelihood of having low wellbeing increased with the number of additional support needs reported, from 4% (none) to 12% (two or more additional support needs).



entage

Ethnicity & wellbeing

The average wellbeing score for students in Suffolk is 22.8.

- The table to the right illustrates the average wellbeing score for students and their ethnicity.
- As in previous years, students from a 'White –
 Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller' background
 had the lowest average wellbeing scores (19.7),
 closely followed by 'Arab' students (20.5).
- Students with the highest average wellbeing score identified as 'Romanian' (23.6), 'Asian/ Asian British' (23.1) and 'Mixed/Multiple ethnic group' (23).

	Average	Count
Romanian	23.6	88
Asian/Asian British	23.1	399
Mixed/Multiple ethnic group	23.0	484
White	22.8	7,572
Polish	22.7	194
Portuguese	22.7	85
Black/African/Caribbean /Black British	22.0	191
Other	21.7	87
Arab	20.5	24
No answer	20.2	51
White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller	19.7	51

Note: Caution is advised when interpreting results where response rates are low.

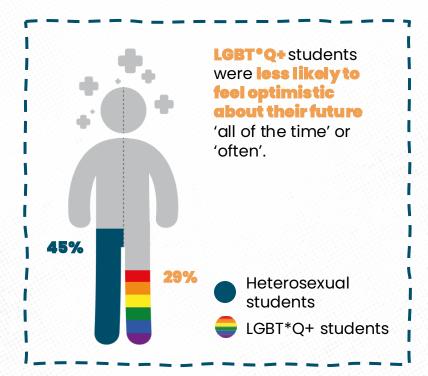


Two in five students felt optimistic about their future 'all of the time' or 'often'.



Feeling optimistic about the future

3,847 (42%) students felt optimistic about the future 'all of the time' or 'often'. Optimism varied across demographics and other factors (e.g., additional support needs).



The following students were **less likely** to report feeling optimistic about their future 'all of the time' or 'often'.

- Students who described their gender in another way (27%) and female students (37%), compared to male students (50%).
- Students with identified additional support needs (35%), compared to those with none (46%).
- Students who scored below the midpoint for happiness about their future (25%), compared to those who scored above the midpoint (47%). See more on happiness from page 28.
- Students who identified as 'White Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller' (38%) and 'Other ethnic minority groups' (39%) were least likely to be optimistic about their future.

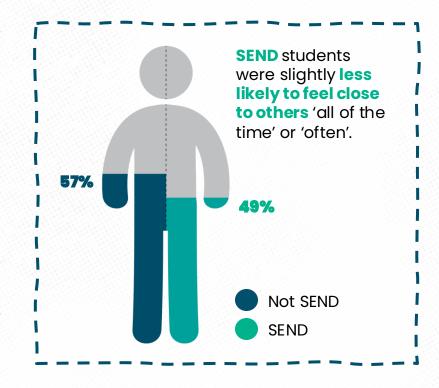


Less than 1 in 10 students with a low wellbeing score said they felt close to others 'all of the time' or 'often'.

Feeling close to others

Over half (55%/5,031) of students felt close to others 'all of the time' or 'often'. Some groups were more likely to report feeling close to others, including:

- Male students were most likely to feel close to others 'all of the time' or 'often' (59%, compared to 53% of female students). Students who preferred to describe their gender another way were least likely to say they felt close to others (40%).
- Over half (58%) of heterosexual students reported feeling close to others 'all of the time' or 'often', compared to 47% of LGBT*Q+ students.
- 93% of students with a high wellbeing score reported feeling close to others 'all of the time' or 'often', compared to just 6% of students who had a low wellbeing score.
- Students that reported being happy with their family were more likely to say they felt close with others 'all of the time' or 'often' (57% vs. 31%).



Getting support

In last year's survey, students were more likely to talk to another student about their mental health than adults, including their parents, teachers or GP. To understand how much young people rely on each other, we asked, 'Has a friend ever talked to you about their mental health? (e.g., anxiety, depression, feeling low)'.

9,028 students answered this question.



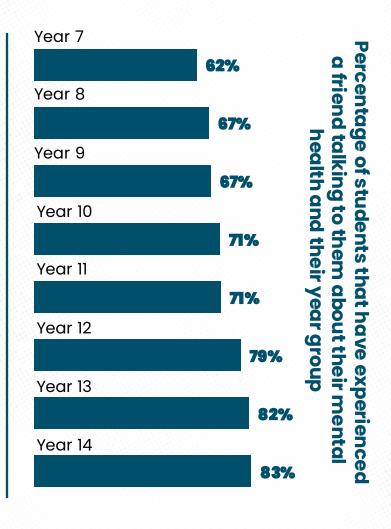
Most students said a friend had spoken to them about their mental health.

- Most students (73%/6,555) indicated a friend had talked to them about their mental health, including things like anxiety, depression, and feeling low. Just over a quarter (27%/2,473) had yet to experience this.
- These findings suggest a need to equip young people with accurate information about mental health and available support services, so they can better support themselves and their friends.

Talking to peers

Some groups, such as older students, were more likely say a friend had spoken with them about their mental health (this trend can be seen in the graph).

- Students who described their gender in another way (88%/107) and female students (84%/3,848) were most likely to say a friend had talked to them about their mental health. Male students were the least likely to report this (59%/2,369). This is consistent with studies that show male students tend to discuss emotional issues and mental health concerns less frequently (Wolstenholme, 2023).
- LGBT*Q+ students were more likely than heterosexual peers to have had a friend discuss their mental health with them (84% vs. 71%).
- Students with additional support needs were slightly more likely than students without additional support needs to have had a friend talk to them about their mental health (75% vs. 71%).



Support for a friend

We asked, 'If you were worried about a friend's mental health, would you know where to access support?'

...knew
where to find
support for a
friend.

9,016 students answered this question.

- Awareness of where to access support increased with year group. A total of 90% (1,402) of Year 13s knew where to find support, compared to 75% (1,006) of Year 7s.
- Female students were most likely to report knowing where to access support (84%/3,840), compared to male students (79%/3,154) and students who described their gender another way (78%/95).
- 'Arab' students were least likely to know where to access support if worried about a friend's mental health (55%/12), followed by 'White – Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller' students (63%/31).

	%	Count
Arab	55%	12
Polish	75%	143
Portuguese	80%	66
Romanian	76%	67
White	82%	6,104
Other	67%	54
Mixed/Multiple ethnic group	80%	382
Asian/ Asian British	76%	298
White Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	63%	31
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	73%	136
No answer	65%	30

Information about support services

We asked, 'How would you like to receive information about what support services are available for your mental health and wellbeing?'

8,885 students answered this question.

When asked how they preferred to receive information about support services, most young people selected 'none of the above' from the answer choices.

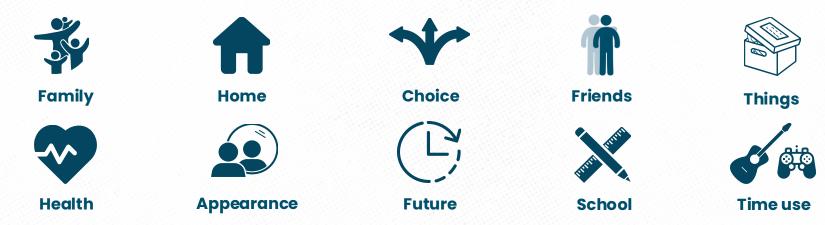
- The most popular method of receiving information was by email (26%), followed closely by receiving information in lessons (25%) and assemblies (23%).
- The least preferred method was signposting cards, with only 5% selecting this option.
- Older students also had the option to receive information through personal progress sessions and student welfare services. Out of 3,800 students in Years 12 and 13, the most popular options included email (35%/1,314), online page (25%/937), and personal progress tutor (22%/811).

	%	Count
None of the above	27%	2,439
Email	26%	2,335
In lessons	25%	2,235
Online page	23%	2,053
Assembly	23%	1,141
Information from professional	22%	1,926
Personal progress tutor	22%	844
Student welfare	18%	671
Via text	14%	1,201
Signposting card	5%	454

Happiness (the GCI)

The Good Childhood Index (GCI) is a short questionnaire developed by the Children's Society. It measures wellbeing concerning 10 aspects of life.

Students were asked how happy they are with:



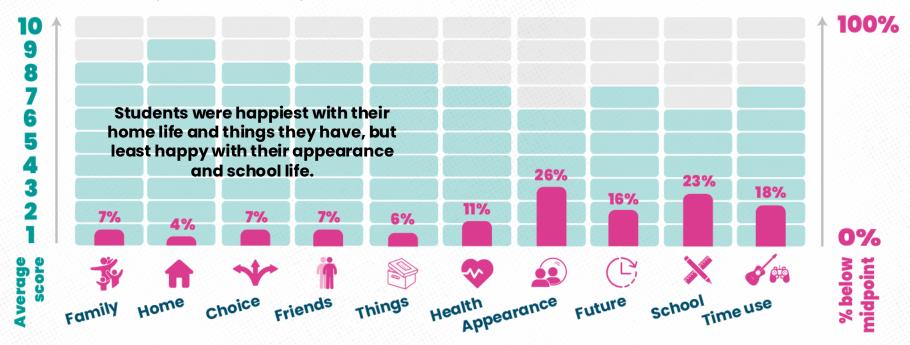
An average wellbeing score can be calculated for each domain. Students with scores below the midpoint (0-4) are classified as having low wellbeing in the various life aspects included in the index. For more information about the CGI, please visit:

https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/professionals/good-childhood-index

Ten aspects of life...

The graphic shows the average GCI score for each aspect of life and the percentage of students scoring <u>below</u> the midpoint on the 0-10 scale. Higher percentages of scores below the midpoint and lower average scores indicate higher levels of unhappiness.

9,227 students responded to these questions.



National comparison

The graph below shows a comparison between the MHoF (phase eight, 2024) results and the Children's Society Good Childhood 2023 results.

26%

Suffolk

23%

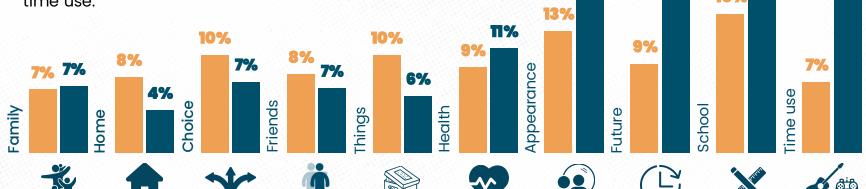
16%

National

18%

 The chart compares the percentage of students who scored below the mid-point in each domain. Greater scores mean higher levels of unhappiness with each category.

Like last year, Suffolk students were happier about their home life, choices, relationships with friends, and what they have, compared to the national sample. However, the graph shows that they were less happy with their health, appearance, future, school, and time use.



Suffolk comparison

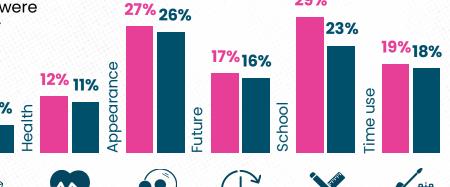
The graph below shows a comparison between the MHoF (phase seven, 2023) results and MHoF (phase eight, 2024) results.

• The chart compares the percentage of students who scored below the mid-point in each domain. Greater scores indicate higher levels of unhappiness.

Suffolk 2023

Suffolk 2024

- There have been slight shifts in the data, with fewer young people reporting scores below the mid-point across all areas. The most notable change was the number of students reporting unhappiness with their school or college life.
- This trend could, in part, be due to the survey having a higher proportion of older students this year, who were less likely to report scores below the mid-point for school/college.





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29%

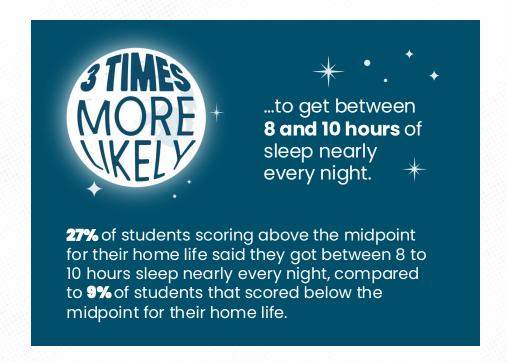


Happiness with home

Students scoring above the midpoint (5-10) for home were <u>more likely</u> to report greater wellbeing on various measures in the survey.

They were:

- More likely to score above the midpoint on the family relationship domain, indicating they were happier than students scoring below the midpoint with their home (95% vs. 42%).
- More likely to score above the midpoint on the things they have domain, suggesting they were happier than students scoring below the midpoint with their home (95% vs. 65%)
- Five times less likely to have 'low wellbeing' than peers who were unhappy with their home (5% vs. 25%).



Who is unhappy?

Unhappiness in the different domains varied by demographics. Examples include are shown in the boxes below.

Gender

Students who described their gender another way were more likely to be unhappy with all aspects of life.

Male students the most likely to be unhappy with school (18%). Female students (32%) and those who described their gender another way (53%) were most unhappy with their appearance.

Additional support

Students with additional support needs were more likely to be unhappy with all aspects of life than those with none.

They were three times as likely to report being unhappy with family (12% vs. 4%) and their health (19% vs. 6%) than peers with no additional support needs.

LGBT*Q+

LGBT*Q+ students were more likely to report they were unhappy with all aspects of life than heterosexual students.

LGBT*Q+ students were twice as likely to be unhappy with their appearance (45% vs. 22%).

School happiness

We asked, 'Would any of these things make you feel happier at school/college?'

The answer options were created in co-production with young people and professionals in Suffolk. **8,545** students answered this question.

- The most popular suggestion for improving students' happiness at school/college was having small breaks between lessons, chosen by 56% (4,799) of students.
- Peer support groups (10%/885) and information about support services (11%/977) were the least popular options.
- Other popular ideas to enhance happiness included support with homework and managing workload.

	%	Count
Small gaps between lessons	56%	4,799
More flexibility with lessons content	43%	3,696
Quiet spaces	41%	3,464
Help with homework	33%	2,823
Support to manage workload	31%	2,622
After school clubs	26%	2,204
More awareness of mental health	24%	2,016
Someone to talk to	19%	1,586
None	14%	1,238
More information about support	11%	977
Peer support	10%	885

Co-production insights – school happiness

Young people responded to a survey created to co-produce the content of this year's MHoF survey. This is what they said about supporting happiness in school and college.

"Easier access to school nurses & counsellors."

"Having **a friendly pastoral team** at school that deals with issues firmly and fast."

"Maybe more access to information about support and counsellors coming into schools. I often struggle with anxiety and feel I don't have anywhere to go and no one to talk to."

"Quiet spaces to take a break from the chaos of school."

"Class and **topics often feel disconnected** to the world and is often unhelpful."

"Allow us some decision about what we want to learn about."

"...**mental stress from**higher workload is
causing mental
health to decline."

"Have **downtime during periods** and form time to
reflect and involve students
in more exercise."

"Having talks about mental health."

"School needs to **create groups for different people** to allow them to create friends and build
relationships."





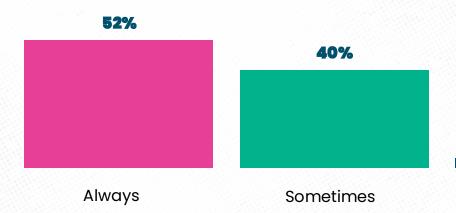
Half of the students felt safe at school or college 'all of the time' or 'often'.

Feeling safe

Schools and colleges should be safe environments for pupils and places that promote respect and diversity in communities. When young people feel safe and supported, they are more likely to engage in their learning, manage their emotions, and ask for support when they need it (Headstart, 2021).

We asked, 'Do you feel safe in school/college?'

8,561 students answered the question.



- Over half of students (52%/4,455) said they always felt safe at school or college.
- Two in five students (40%/3,423) only felt safe at their school or college sometimes.
- 378 (4%) students never felt safe at their school or college.



Co-production insights – safety

Young people responded to a survey created to co-produce the content of this year's MHoF survey. This is what they said about safety in school and bullying.

"Schools have a large issue with bullying, especially for those part of minority groups such as being gay or trans or disabled. Being a teenager is hard enough let alone not fitting in with everyone else your age."

In the co-production, young people and professionals also called for more topics on bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, grooming, gangs, drugs, discrimination, and exploitation to be explored among young people.

"Bullies need to be dealt with. There is no point saying just ignore it." "School needs to be a safe environment for all.
Many of us don't feel safe or able to express
ourselves freely as we will be judged or bullied.
There needs to be a zero-tolerance policy on
bullying and harassment. This needs to be taken
seriously and action is needed when it happens."

"Schools and colleges taking care of bullying better."

"School safety from other students is lacking."

"Bullying also needs to be tackled hard and fast by schools. Too many turn a blind eye to it."

Safety and wellbeing

The graphics show the influence of feelings of safety at school or college on young people's overall SWEMWBS wellbeing score. The average wellbeing score of all students in Suffolk was 22.8.

	Score
l always feel safe	24.6
I sometimes feel safe	21.5
I never feel safe	17.6
Preferred not to say	19.4

Do you feel safe in school or college?

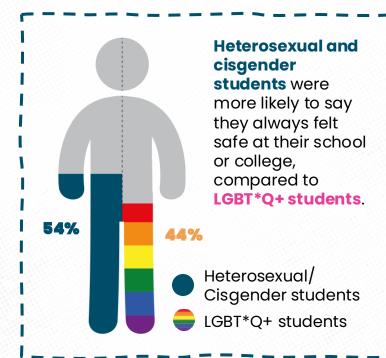
Students who 'always' felt safe at school or college reported higher overall average wellbeing than those who never felt safe to any extent. Their wellbeing is equal to an average recorded by the NHS in 2020.



- Suffolk average 2024 (22.8)
- Students who 'never' feel safe (17.6)
- Students who 'always' feel safe (24.6)

Who felt safe?

Some students were <u>more likely</u> to say they 'always felt safe' at their school or college.



Gender

Male students were more likely to report always feeling safe at school/college compared to female students (59% vs. 48%).

Students who preferred to describe their gender in another way were least likely to report always feeling safe (32%). Instead, these students were three times more likely to report they never felt safe compared to their peers.

SEND

Students with SEND were less likely to report that they always feel safe at their school or college, compared to students without SEND (40% vs. 55%).

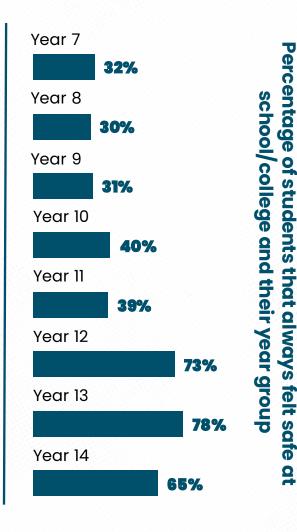
Who felt safe?

Further examples of young people who were more likely to say they 'always' felt safe at their school or college are given below.

 Students in Year 12 and 13 were more likely to report always feeling safe at their school or college than younger students (see graph).
 In total, 32% of Year 7 students 'always' felt safe, compared to 78% of Year 13 students.

Additional Support Needs

Students with additional support needs were almost three times more likely to have 'never' felt safe at their school or college than peers with no additional support needs (8% vs. 3%). The percentage of students that 'always' felt safe decreased for those identifying with more support needs.



Feeling safe & ethnicity

The table shows students' responses to feeling safe at school or college and their ethnicity.

- White students (53%) and students from Mixed/Multiple ethnic backgrounds (53%) were most likely to report 'always' feeling safe at school or college.
- Portuguese (49%), Polish (41%), and Asian/Asian British (41%) students were more likely to report feeling safe only 'sometimes'.
- Nearly a quarter of Arab students (24%)
 said they 'never' felt safe at their school or
 college. Similarly, White Gypsy, Traveller,
 or Irish Traveller students were among the
 most likely to report 'never' feeling safe.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Arab	48%	19%	24%
Polish	49%	41%	6%
Portuguese	46%	49%	4%
Romanian	51%	33%	8%
White	53%	40%	4%
Other	36%	39%	10%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic group	53%	38%	6%
Asian/Asian British	48%	41%	6%
White - Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	26%	38%	21%
Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British	49%	38%	9%

Feeling unsafe

We then asked, "Have any of the following caused you to feel unsafe in school?"

7,943 students answered.

- More than half of young people (53%/4,217)
 'always' felt safe in school.
- 1,650 (21%) students indicated that 'something else' not included in the list made them feel unsafe at their school or college.
- 20% (1,584) felt unsafe due to bullying and cyberbullying.
- Although less common, there were hundreds of young people who reported feeling unsafe at school or college due to issues like theft (749), sexual harassment (575), homophobia (596), and discrimination against their race (484), religion (239), or disability (341).

```
Bullying & Cyberbullying
                        1,584
Racial discrimination
Religious discrimination
Homophobia & transphobia
Disability discrimination
  341
Sexual harassment
Theft
         749
Something else
```



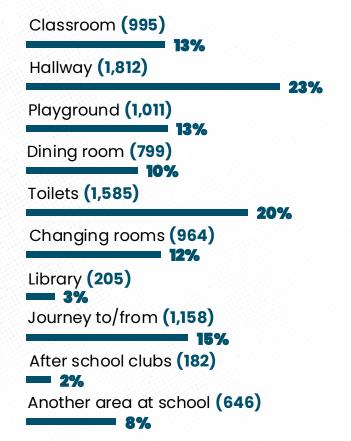
ntage school/college hat felt unsafe

Feeling unsafe continued...

We asked, 'Have you ever felt unsafe in any of the following areas of school?'

7,925 students answered.

- More than half of students felt safe in all areas of their school/college (52%/4,118).
- Students felt most unsafe in school/college hallways (23%/1,812), closely followed by the toilets (20%/1,585). Large numbers of students had also felt unsafe in the playground (13%/1,011) and on the journey to and from school (15%/1,158).
- SEND students were twice as likely to report feeling unsafe in the classroom, compared to students without SEND (21% vs. 10%).
- Female students were twice as likely to report feeling unsafe on the journey to and from school, compared to male students (9% vs. 18%).



Physical activity

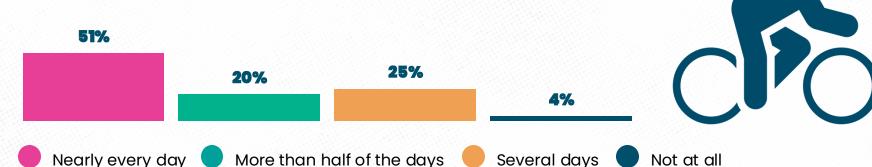
Young people aged 5 to 18 should aim for at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity each day (NHS,2024).

We asked, 'In the last month, how often have you had at least I hour of movement every day?'

8,436 students answered these questions.

• Over 50% (4,324) said they got at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity nearly daily. A further 20% (1,718) got physical exercise on more than half of the days.

A quarter of students (25%/2,068) reported only achieving 60 minutes of physical exercise on 'some days', while 4% (326) never got 60 minutes of exercise.



Continued...

We asked, 'How could school or college encourage you to take part in more physical activity?'

- The most frequently selected option was to have more sports available in PE lessons (44%/3,530), followed by better access to gym facilities (35%/2,784).
- Other popular options included support to build confidence and body positivity and better access to indoor spaces for sports.
- 1,393 (17%) wanted more accessible exercise options, and 1,324 (17%) wanted more after school activities.
- 469 (6%) wanted changing rooms to be monitored. Of these 56% (326) said they either 'sometimes' or 'never' felt safe at school.

	%	Count
More sports available in PE lessons	44%	3,530
Better access to gym facilities	35%	2,784
Support to build confidence	29%	2,291
Better access to indoor spaces for sports	25%	1,997
Support to build body positivity	24%	1,940
Something else	21%	1,657
Better access to outdoor spaces for sports	20%	1,605
More accessible exercise options	17%	1,393
More after school activities	17%	1,324
More information about local clubs	16%	1,287
Changing rooms to be monitored	6%	469

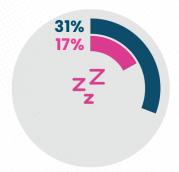
Benefits of physical activity

Students who reported at least 60 minutes of physical activity nearly every day...

Gets 60 minutes daily exercise



Never gets 60 minutes daily exercise



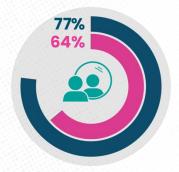
Get more sleep

They were much more likely to report getting between 8 and 10 hours of sleep each night.



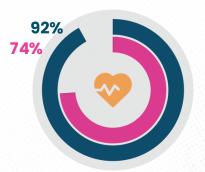
Report higher wellbeing

They were more likely to have 'high wellbeing' based on their average SWEMWBS score.



Are happier with their appearance

They were more likely to report being happy with their appearance.



Are happier with their health

They were more likely to report being happy with their health.

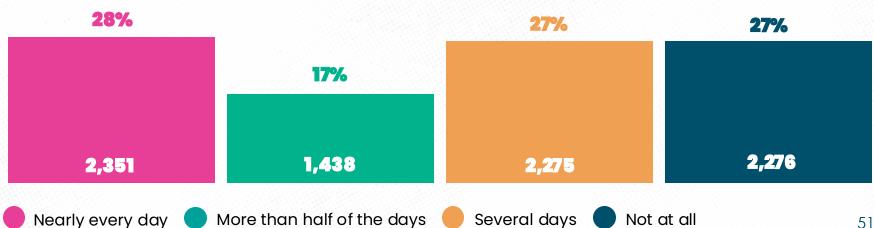
Body image

Body dissatisfaction has been linked to risk-taking behaviours and mental health problems (Mental Health Foundation, 2024).

We asked, 'In the last month, how often have you worried about how you look?'

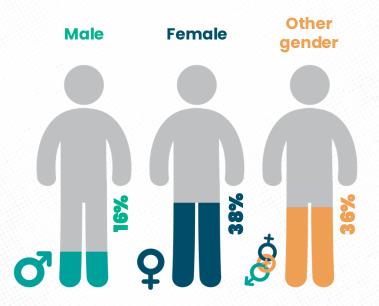
8,340 responded to the question. Responses are shown in the graph below.

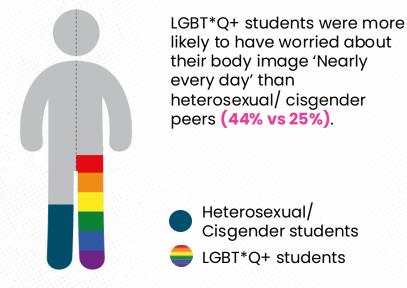
(45%) worried about how they looked either 'Nearly every day' or 'More than half the days'.



Who worried about their body image?

Female students (38%/1,604) were the most likely to say they worried about their body 'Nearly every day', followed by students who preferred to describe their gender another way (36%/122). Male students were the least likely to say this (16%/585).





Students with additional support needs were also more likely to have worried about their body image 'Nearly every day', compared to students with no additional support needs (36% vs. 24%).



Impact of body image

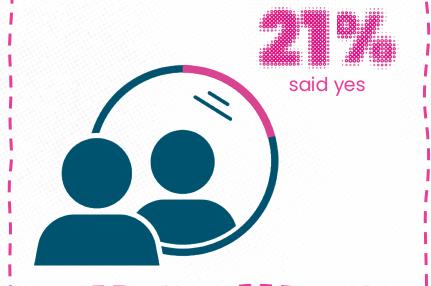
Social life

We asked, 'Has your view of your body prevented you from socialising with friends and family?'



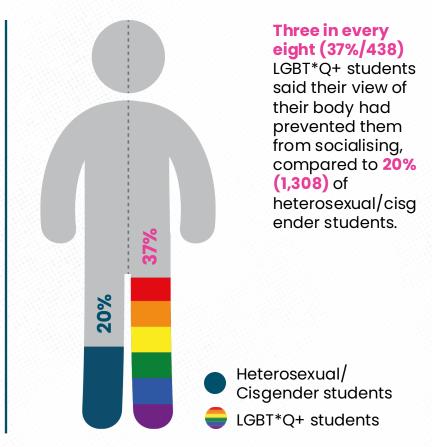
Getting exercise

We asked, 'Has your view of your body prevented you from taking part in physical activity?'



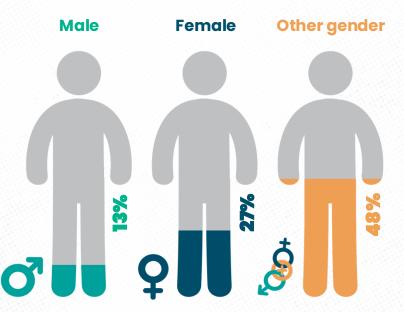
Impact of body image on social life

- Students who described their gender another way (41%/45) were most likely to say their view of their body had prevented them from socialising, followed by female students (31%/1,288). Just 13% (466) of male students reported the same experience.
- Students with additional support needs were also more likely to say their view of their body had impacted their social life (32%/1,854), compared to 18% (901) of students without additional support needs.
- 'Arab' students were most likely to say their view of their body had affected their ability to socialise, followed by students identifying their ethnicity as 'Other' (35%/25) and 'Romanian' students (34%/26). This compared to 22% (1,538) of 'White' students.



Impact of body image on getting exercise

Almost half of students who preferred to describe their gender another way (48%/53) said their view of their body prevented them from participating in physical activity. This was followed by over a quarter of female students (27%/1,153) and 13% (468) of male students.



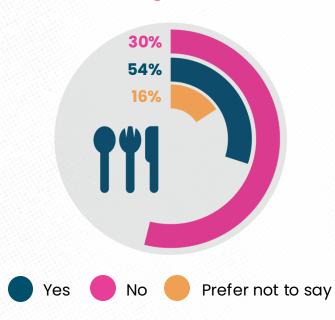
- 37% (446) of LGBT*Q+ students said their view of their body had prevented them from taking part in physical activity, compared to 18% (1,169) of heterosexual/cisgender students.
- 30% (825) of students with additional support needs said their view of their body had prevented them from participating in physical activity, compared to 16% (824) of students without additional support needs.
- 21% (1,447) of 'White' students said their view of their body had prevented them from taking part in physical activity. Students who described their ethnicity as 'Other' (38%/28) were the most likely to say their view of their body prevented them from participating in physical activity. This was followed by 'White Gypsy, Traveller, or Irish Traveller students' (33%/15).

Eating habits

Our relationship with food can affect many aspects of our wellbeing, from our weight to how we feel daily and our body image. We wanted to know if young people were worried about their eating habits.

- 8,339 responded to the question.
- Half of students were not worried about their eating habits (54%/4,495).
- 30% (2,473) were worried about their eating habits and 16% (1,371) preferred not to say.
- A relationship existed between being worried about eating habits and the likelihood that young people engaged in daily exercise. Over half (54%) of students concerned about their eating habits got 60 minutes of exercise nearly every day, compared to 12% of those who were not.

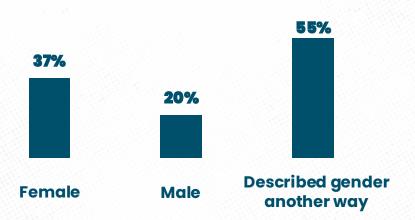
Are you worried about your eating habits?

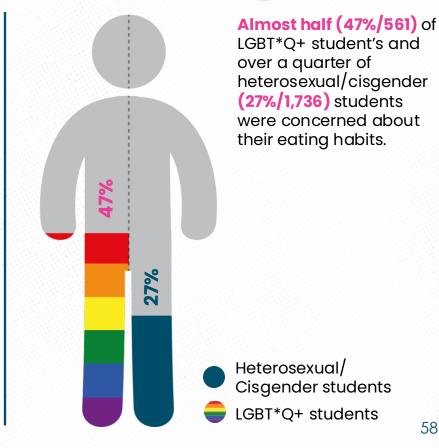


2,473 (30%) young people were **worried** about their eating habits

Eating habits - gender and sexuality

- More than half of students who preferred to describe their gender another way (55%), and more than one in three (37%) female students were concerned about their eating habits. Male students were the least likely to report this (20%).
- The graph shows the percentage of students who said 'Yes' to the question, 'Are you worried about your eating habits?'





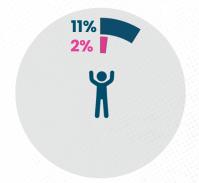
Who worries about their eating habits?

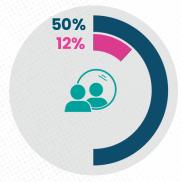
A relationship may be shown between worry about eating habits and various other measures. Students worried about their eating habits nearly every day...

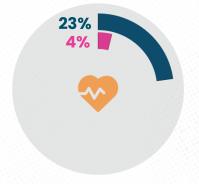
Worried nearly every day about eating habits

Never worried about eating habits









Get less sleep

They were more likely to never get between 8 and 10 hours of sleep each night.

Have lower average SWEMWBS scores

They were more likely to have 'low wellbeing'.

Are less happy with their appearance

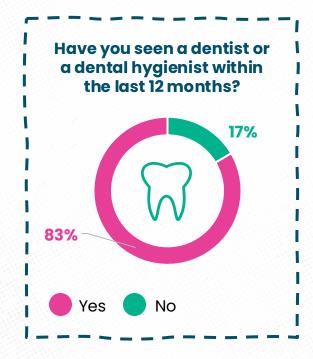
They were much more likely to report being unhappy with their appearance.

Are less happy with their health

They were more likely to be unhappy with their health.

Dental appointments

Between 2022 to 2023, 47,571 tooth extractions for 0- to 19-year-olds were performed in NHS hospitals in England – an alarming nation trend in childhood oral health. Of these, 66% were attributed to tooth decay (Oral Health Foundation, 2024).



8,231 students responded to the question 'How easy was it to get an appointment?'.

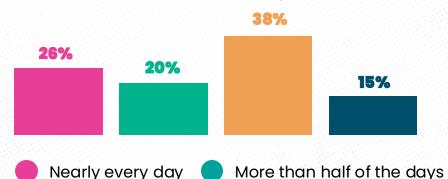
- The largest proportion of students had seen a dentist or dental hygienist in the last 12 months (83%/6,870), and 1,361 (17%) students had not.
- 67% (5,200) of students had got an appointment 'easily'. A further 18% (1,374) had got an appointment, but it had not been easy to get.
- 13% (990) of students had not needed a dental appointment in the last 12 months.
- 190 (2%) students could not get a dental appointment when they needed one.

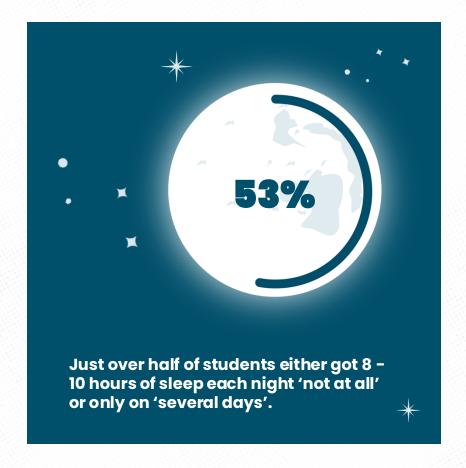
Sleep

Sleep is essential, supporting physical and mental development (Sleep Foundation, 2024).

We asked, 'How often have you got between 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night?'

 Of 8,300 who answered, most students got between 8 and 10 hours of sleep either on 'several days' (38%/3,193) or 'nearly every day' (26%/2,164). A total of 15% (1,255) never got between 8 and 10 hours of sleep.





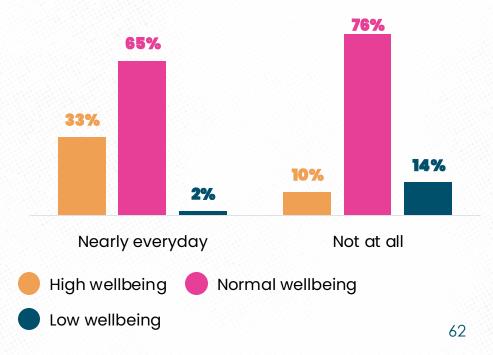
Sleep and wellbeing

Students who got between 8 and 10 hours of sleep 'nearly every night' had higher average wellbeing scores than students who never got between 8 and 10 hours of sleep.



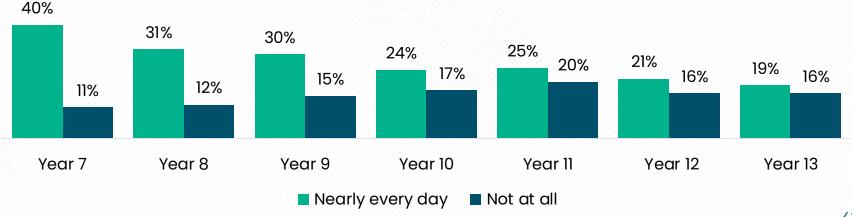
- Nearly every day (23.1)
- Not at all (19.6)

- The chart below provides a breakdown of the wellbeing categories for students who got 8-10 hours of sleep every night, compared to those who did not.
- The graph shows that students who get more sleep are considerably more likely to have high wellbeing than those who never get 8 to 10 hours each night.



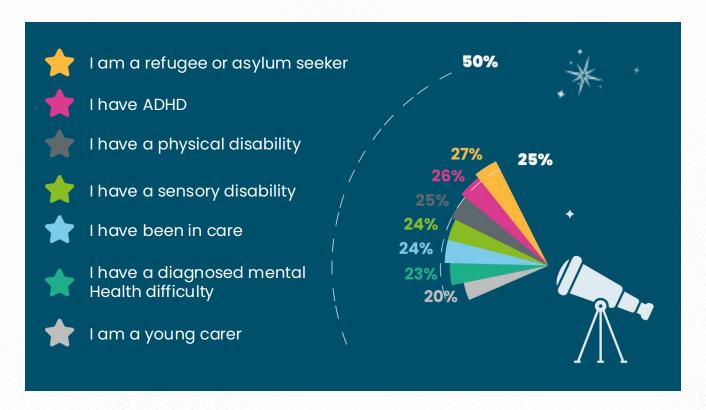
Sleep and Year group

- The graph illustrates the proportion of students who reported consistently getting 8 to 10 hours of sleep nearly every night compared to those who never achieved this amount of sleep, categorised by year group.
- It shows a decline in sleep duration with increasing age, as 40% of Year 7 students reported regularly getting 8 to 10 hours of sleep, compared to only 19% of Year 13 students.
- Year 11 students were the most likely to report never getting 8 to 10 hours of sleep, potentially due to examrelated stress or demanding revision schedules. As we previously heard exam stress was one of the leading causes of anxiety for students.



Sleep and additional support needs

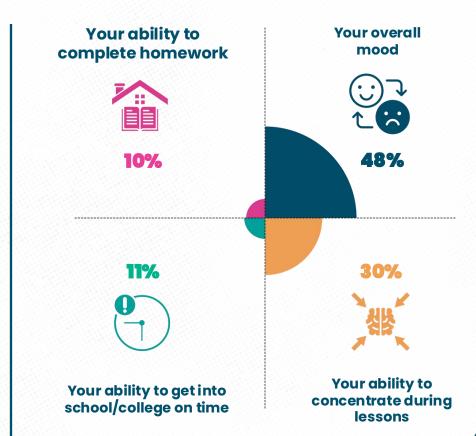
- The graphic shows how some groups of young people were likelier to report never getting 8-10 hours of sleep each night than young people who did not identify with any additional support need.
- For comparison, 13% of students without an additional support need said they never get 8-10 hours of sleep each night.



Impact of a poor night's sleep

A lack of sleep can impact young people's attention, behaviour, learning, memory, emotional regulation, mental health and physical health. Research has suggested students with poor sleep will likely have worse academic and athletic performance (AASM Foundation, 2022).

We asked students whether a poor night's sleep had affected different aspects of their lives, including concentration levels, ability to get to school or college on time, ability to complete homework and their overall mood. The results are shown in the graphic (right).





Sexual harassment

<u>End Violence Against Women (2022)</u> argues there is a national crisis of sexual violence and harassment at schools and colleges.

5,816 students (Year 9 and above) answered our question about potential sexual harassment in school or college.

- 35% (2,034) had seen at least one form of sexual harassment at their school or college. Therefore, 65% (3,782) had not. This represents a decline in the percentage of students witnessing potential sexual harassment compared to the 2022/23 MHoF results (57% down to 35%).
- Consultation with local experts suggests this change could be attributed to various factors, including the number of students who responded and differences in the demography of our sample. For example, older students who are more prominent in the sample this year are potentially more likely to experience harassment outside of school or feel it is normalised.



How we asked about sexual harassment

Our survey included a definition of sexual harassment: "Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual behaviour that makes someone feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated, or is meant to make them feel that way."

Within this context, young people responded to a series of statements about forms of harassment they may have seen in school or college, ranging from people 'making sexual jokes', to 'sexual threats' and 'unwanted sexual behaviour'.

Our MHoF (phase seven) results in 2022/23 were synonymous with findings of Ofsted in 2021. It found incidents of sexual harassment are now so commonplace in schools that young people may see no point in reporting them. Our data aims to raise awareness of this issue and encourage whole-system approaches to tackling sexual harassment locally.

In 2023, our Chair (Wendy Herber) said:

"It is fair to assume from our data that sexual harassment is a significant, commonplace, and increasing concern in all schools and colleges. With only a third of young people confident to report it, more action is needed to address this issue locally.

"Schools and colleges must create a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse of any form is not tolerated to protect children and young people better, and that means every school embracing a wholeschool approach to tackling this issue regardless of whether they have received reports of abuse from their students."

Types of harassment

The table shows the percentage of students who reported they had heard or seen different types of sexual harassment or violence at their school or college.

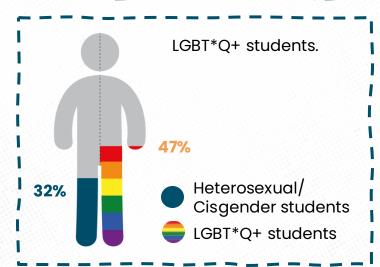
- Most students had not heard or seen any potential sexual harassment in their school or college (65%/3,855).
- The most frequently selected type of harassment was sexual name calling (22%/1,326) towards another student, followed by 21% (1,256) who said they had witnessed sexual comments about other students' appearances.
- 16% (952) witnessed the sharing of unwanted messages of a sexual nature, and 17% (1,022) of students said they had witnessed the sharing of images or videos of another student.
- 800 (14%) students said they had witnessed unwanted sexual touching.

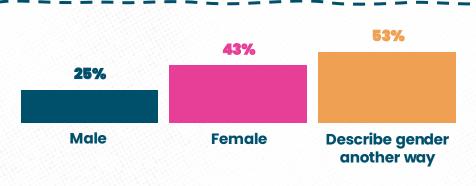
	%	Count
Sexual name calling towards another student	22%	1,326
Sending unwanted messages of a sexual nature	16%	952
Sharing images or videos of other students of a sexual nature	17%	1,022
Making sexual comments about other students' appearance	21%	1,256
Making sexual threats	10%	567
Unwanted sexual touching	14%	800
Other unwanted sexual behaviour	10%	571
None of the above	65%	3,855

Who witnessed sexual harassment?

The following students were amongst the <u>most likely</u> to say they had seen or heard any form of potential sexual harassment in their school or college.

'White – Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller' (74%), 'Mixed/Multiple ethnic background' (41%) and 'Polish' students (40%).





Students who preferred to describe their gender another way (53%) and female students (43%).



SEND students were more likely to witness potential sexual harassment than their peers (44% vs. 33%).

Sexual harassment & feeling safe

- The table shows the percentage of students who <u>felt</u>
 <u>unsafe</u> in areas of their school or college and whether
 students had witnessed any form of potential sexual
 harassment at their school or college.
- Students who had not seen or heard any form of sexual harassment were more than twice as likely to feel safe in all areas of their school/college (76% vs. 31%).

Students who said they witnessed sexual harassment at their school or college were more than twice as likely to indicate they had not always felt safe at their school or college (60% vs. 25%).

Seen/heard sexual harassment

Has not seen/heard Sexual harassment

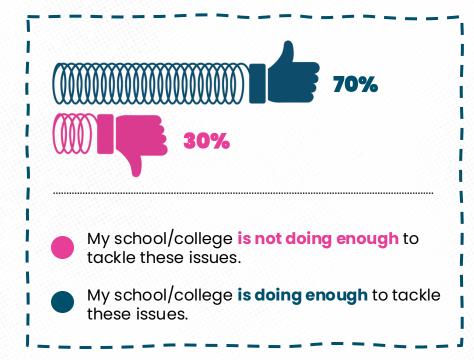
School area	Percentage
Felt safe in all areas	31% 76%
Classrooms	23% 4%
Hallways	38%
Playground	21% 3%
Dining room	20% 3%
Toilets	34%
Changing rooms	21% 3%
Library	5% 1%
Journey to/from	25% 7%
After school clubs	4% 0%
Another area	12% 4%

Approach to sexual harassment

Due to the volume of students who have told us they had seen or heard sexual harassment, we wanted to know if students felt their school or college was doing enough to tackle the issue.

5,932 responded to this question.

- 70% (4,150) felt their school was doing enough and 30% (1,782) did not.
- Male students were most likely indicate their school was doing enough to tackle the issue (76%). Whereas female students (66%) and students who described their gender in another way (63%) were less likely to feel this way.
- Older students were more likely to report their school/college was doing enough, compared to younger students (55% of students in Year 9 said their school was doing enough, compared to 81% of students in Year 13).

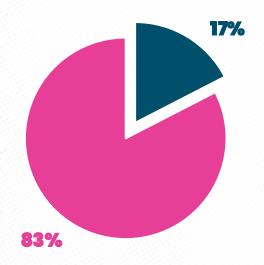


Accessing support services

To address sexual harassment in schools and colleges, it is important to determine if students know how to access support when needed.

6,004 responded to this question.

- Most students felt they knew where to access support for concerns relating to sexual harassment or violence (83%/4,957). However, 17% (1,047) of students did not.
- Students who described their gender another way were the least likely to say they knew where to access support (76%), closely followed by male students (82%). Female students were the most likely to report knowing where to access support (84%), but gender differences were small.
- Younger students were less likely to know where to access support than older students. For example,
 74% of Year 9s said they knew where to access support, compared to 89% of Year 13 students.



- No, I don't know where to access support
- Yes, I know where to access support

The future

Last year, just 1 in 3 young people were optimistic about their future 'all of the time' or 'often'. This year, we explored things that could help students to feel more positive.

7,945 students answered.

- The most popular option was lessons on managing money (55%/4,339), followed by life skills lessons (53%/4,210). Other popular choices included support to build self-confidence and self-worth (40%/3,145) and more information about colleges, universities, and career options (40%/3,204).
- Many young people also wanted more work experience and volunteering opportunities, support to understand their mental health, information about global events, and guest speakers to talk about life after education.

	%	Count
More volunteering and work experience opportunities	41%	3,292
More information about colleges, universities, and career options	40%	3,204
Lessons on managing money	55%	4,339
Lessons on life skills	53%	4,210
Support to build self-confidence and self-worth	40%	3,145
Support to understand your own mental health and physical health	33%	2,620
More information about current global events	22%	1,720
Guest speakers to talk about life after education	29%	2,277
None of the above	16%	1,280

Note: Answer choices were created in co-production with young people and local professionals.

Co-production insights - optimism

Young people responded to a survey created to co-produce the content of this year's MHoF survey. This is what they said about what is needed to help young people feel more optimistic about their future.

"Global problems are affecting people my age like climate change, war and inequality. We see negative things happening around the world and within the community."

"Information on **what university is actually** like rather than just
how to get in."

"Early intervention for mental health and emotional wellbeing in schools."

"Life skills to know how to deal with money and finances. Skills on building confidence and self-worth to give a better outlook."

"Local young people from the area who are **inspirational speakers coming into school.**"

"Classes that teach you how to properly write applications and CVs."

"We need actual support such as **teaching life skills** that could help us grow as young people."

"Info about **career options, uni applications and finances** is
really important."

Feeling more positive about the future

Some groups of young people said different things would make them feel more positive about their future:

Gender

Male students were most likely to say they wanted lessons on managing money (55%).

Female students (56%) and students who described their gender another way (60%) were more likely to say they wanted lessons in life skills.

SEND young people

SEND students were more likely to say they wanted support to understand their own mental and physical health, compared to students without SEND (40% vs. 31%).

LGBT*Q+

Almost **50%** of LGBT*Q+ students wanted support to build self-confidence and self-worth, compared to **38%** of heterosexual/cisgender students.

Similarly, 48% wanted support to understand their own mental health and physical health, compared to 30% of heterosexual/cisgender students.

Continued...

Some groups of young people said different things would make them feel more positive about their future:

Support needs

Students with additional support needs were more likely to say all options would help them to feel positive, compared to students without additional support needs (e.g., 42% wanted support to understand their own mental and physical health, compared to 28% of students without additional support needs.

Ethnicity

Across all ethnicities, lessons on managing money and life skills were most frequently selected as helping young people to feel more positive about the future. However, Arab students were likelier to say that 'volunteering and work opportunities' would help them to feel more positive.

Year group

Younger students were more likely to want support to understand their own mental health, compared to older peers.

For example, 37% of Year 7s wanted more support to understand their own mental health, compared to 28% of Year 13s.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

This report includes reference to, and use of, a widely used measure of wellbeing known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). It was developed by the Universities of Warwick, Edinburgh and Leeds in conjunction with NHS Health Scotland (©University of Warwick, 2006, all rights reserved).

Results related to the use of a shortened format of this scale can be found throughout the report, and specifically within the section about wellbeing from page 15. For more information about WEMWBS, please visit https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/.



This report has been produced to support the ongoing development and implementation of children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing support in Suffolk. It will be publicly available on the Healthwatch Suffolk website. It will also be made available to Healthwatch England, and bodies responsible for the commissioning, scrutiny or delivery of local health and care services.

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