

Background

The **Young Person's Health and Wellbeing Survey** (YPHWS) has been developed for secondary school aged young people. The survey was developed and delivered in partnership – Public Health, YCH Services for young people, and HCT Public Health Nursing Service. The survey replaces the bi-annual Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) and the Lancaster Model survey for secondary schools.

There were **11,681 responses** to the survey which was a slight decrease from last year (12,923 responses). However, this is just under three times more responses than the 2018 Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, with pupils from **41 schools** participating. Schools with sufficient numbers of pupils participating will have received a report summarising how their pupil responses compare with the Hertfordshire average.

- 44.7% (5,216) of respondents identified as male, and 50.4% (5886) female, with 256 young people selecting 'other' when responding to the gender question.
- 10 young people were not attending a school, and 960 (8.2% of all respondents) young people completing the survey stated that they had caring responsibilities.
- 1,229 young people completing the survey identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual (10.5% of the overall respondents), with a further 788 identifying as undecided or questioning (6.70%).

1. Mental Health and wellbeing:

Covid-19 impact:

We asked young people how they would rate their wellbeing now compared with before Covid-19.

Overall, 28.5% of young people felt that their wellbeing was worse than before Covid-19, with girls being more affected than boys, with those identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual (50.4% rated their wellbeing as worse) and those selecting 'other' as their gender* being also negatively affected (44.0% rated their wellbeing as worse),

General wellbeing

57.9% of young people at the time of the 2021 survey rated their happiness as high or very high, compared with 52.5% in 2020.

20.6% rated their happiness as 'low' compared with 27.0% in 2020. Those young people identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual were more likely to rate their happiness as low (47.7%) in 2021, compared with 51.6% in 2020.

Boys were more likely to rate their happiness as high or very high compared with girls.

Self-harm

68.4% said they had never self-harmed (61.8% female and 80.7% male – 18.8% other)

13.4% prefer not to say (17.4% female and 7.23% male – 28.1% other)

15.3% said they had self-harmed. (18.3% female and 8.91% male – 51.6% other). 43.9% of young people identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual reported that they had self-harmed.

It's worth noting that a larger proportion of those selecting 'other' for their gender, reported that they self-harmed, when compared with those selecting 'male' or 'female'. This is based on small numbers however so no firm conclusions can be drawn.

Self reported self harm rates have increased from 14% to 15.3% between 2020 and 2021, but the increase is not statistically significant.

- In 2020 – 72.0% said they had never self-harmed, 14% said they had, and 14% preferred not to say.

Worries

Young people were asked to select which things they worry about from a long list of options. The top 5 worries for young people in Hertfordshire are:

1. **School work (58.3%)** – Appears to have increased since 2020 (56.4%)
2. **Their appearance (45.5%)** – Similar number to 2020 (46.0%). This worry was more prominent for females (59.4%) and higher in those identifying as 'other' (71.1%)
3. **Mental health (39.8%)** – Similar number to 2020, with a possible slight increase in females
4. **Feeling lonely (34.8%)** – Similar number to 2020 (35%)
5. **Issues with friends (34.2%)** – Appears to have increased since 2020 (30.8%)

Listed below is some further detail regarding the worries highlighted by young people in the 2021 survey:

Appearance – 45.5% 2021 (59.4% females, 28.1% males, and 71.1% 'other')

Nb. Higher in females and those identifying as 'other' compared to males

Bullying – 15.5% 2021

Nb. Higher in females than males, and higher in those identifying as 'other'

Covid-19 – 30.4% 2021

Nb. Higher in females than males and higher in those identifying as 'other'

Crime – 14.2% 2021

Drugs/alcohol – 6.84% 2021

Family problems – 25.1% 2021

Nb. Higher in females than males (slightly over double). For all respondents, this is slightly higher than in 2020 (24.6%)

Feeling lonely – 34.8%

Nb. Lower in males than females

Gambling – 2.4% 2021

Issues with friends – 34.2% 2021

Nb. Higher in girls and other than in boys

Mental health – 39.8% 2021 (twice as likely in girls and more than twice as likely in 'other' than boys).

Money problems - 17.9% (more likely in girls and 'other')

Physical health – 29.1% (more likely in girls and 'other' and increased marginally from 2020)

Relationships and sexual health – 15.9% (more likely in girls and 'other')

Social media – 17.9% (more likely in girls and 'other')

Street safety and violence – 20.0% (more likely in girls and 'other')

The environment – 24.4% (more likely in girls and 'other')

School work – 58.3% (67.7% females, 46.7% males and 72.7% other). Overall, this appears to have increased slightly since 2020.

Coping strategies

22.2% said they'd do nothing if they were struggling to cope (24.1% of girls and 19.4% of boys), with a further 29.4% saying they'd try to solve the problem alone.

The most popular coping strategies for boys were playing computer games (52.2%), doing/listening to music (46.7%), talking to a friend (42.6%) exercising (41.5%), followed by talking to a family member (41.0%).

It's worth noting that between 2020 and 2021 there appears to have been a decrease from 44.5% to 42.6% of boys saying they'd talk to a friend if they were struggling.

The most popular coping strategies for girls were doing/listening to music (60.1%), talking to a friend (50.6%), talking to a family member (42.4%) followed by creative activities (31.3%) and thinking of a solution on their own (30.3%).

Compared with previous surveys, there seems to have been an increase in young people who would 'do nothing' if they were struggling to cope, this being particularly pronounced in girls (increased from 14.6% in 2017 to 24.1% in 2021).

Knowledge of mental health information and support

15.4% felt they do not know where to find mental health information or services (boys were slightly more likely to feel this way than girls). This has decreased from 16.5% last year, although the difference is not statistically significant.

19.8% were unsure

62.6% felt they did know where to find mental health services for support or more information

Knowledge appears to slightly increase with age ranging from 53.4% in year 7 to 64.5% in year 10, 66.6% in year 11 and 72.1% in year 12. There appears to be a slight decrease in knowledge when moving to year 13 (67.7%).

Attitudes towards mental health

Young people were asked whether they agreed with the statement, "It's ok to talk about my mental health".

67.1% of young people agreed that it was OK to talk about their mental health - 72.1% of males agreed, and only 65% of females (47.3% of those selecting 'other'). This has decreased from 70.4% last year, though the difference isn't statistically significant.

In 2017, 70% of males agreed with the statement and 72% of females, so there appears to have been a potential shift. It is important to ensure that campaigns designed to normalise conversations about mental health and help seeking behaviours (such as Hertfordshire's JustTalk campaign) effectively reach all genders.

Bullying

4% of young people said they are currently being bullied

39.6% of young people have been bullied at school at some point – this is a decrease from 45.9% in 2020, but was higher for gay, lesbian, or bisexual young people (61.8%).

6.6% of young people have been bullied online

School support and information provision

Is your school supportive of your emotional wellbeing?

Yes – 36.9% (37.1% last year)

Somewhat – 34.8%

Unsure - 6%

No - 18.9% (this was higher for those selecting 'other' as gender – 42.2%)

2. Healthy weight, eating and physical activity

Healthy eating

14.6% reported that they ate 5 portions of fruit or veg yesterday. This was 15.6% last year.

7.5% reported eating none.

The most common response was 3 (26.9%).

How would you describe your current weight?

57.5% described their weight as just right

9.3% described themselves as overweight (males and 'other' more likely to identify as overweight than females)

8.9% described themselves as underweight (males significantly more likely to identify as underweight than females)

23.5% don't know/prefer not to say

Physical activity

16.5% young people reported that they do 60 minutes of physical activity for at least 5 out of 7 days in a week (in line with guidance). Boys were more likely than girls to report this.

Of those that did not achieve this level of physical activity, only 2.5% did 30 minutes of physical activity per day.

Most common response was that young people did 60 minutes of activity between 5 - 7 times per week, with boys much more likely to report 60 minutes of activity 7 times per week (22.3%).

3. Oral Health

81.8% of young people brushed their teeth at least twice the day before the survey (84.3% girls, and 81.2% boys). 16.0% brushed their teeth once. 1.6% had not brushed their teeth at all.

Young people were also asked, "Within the last year have you had a check-up at the dentist?" 18.8% said No, 80.4% said Yes, with no significant differences between male and female responses. Those selecting 'other' were more likely to say no (31.3%).

4. Smoking, vaping and drugs

Smoking

90.5% of respondents said they have never smoked

5.6% have tried smoking once or twice

1.1% smoke regularly.

For those that smoke regularly, 12.0% would like to stop, 29.3% would like to cut down, and 58.7% want to continue – this is based on very low numbers though as most young people do not smoke.

Vaping – new questions

84.7% have never vaped

8.6% have vaped once or twice

2.5% vape regularly

1.2% used to vape but no longer do.

The majority of those who had vaped did not use it as a way to reduce smoking (72.2%). Only 27.8% reported vaping for this reason.

Drugs

92.7% young people reported that they had never taken drugs

3.4% said they had taken drugs once or twice

1.0% reported they take drugs regularly

0.8% used to take drugs but no longer do.

The most commonly used drug was cannabis (56.0% of those who said they'd taken drugs), followed by ketamine (13.5%) and nitrous oxide (11.3%). Ecstasy (9.22%), Hallucinogens (10.0%) and cocaine (11.0%) also feature. The figures appear similar to previous years, with

no major increases or decreases since 2018, but it is difficult to draw conclusions as older children were included in this survey in 2020.

5. Sexual Health

29.8% felt they know how to access sexual health services (33.3% felt they did not know how to access sexual health services, the rest were unsure).

Across all year groups, 37.1% said they knew where to get free contraception and 45.9% said they did not know. Knowledge increases with age as we might expect.

This year 89.7% of year 10 pupils feel it is OK to wait to have sex, a similar figure to 2020 (90%).

43.6% of young people feel there is a pressure on young people to have sex. 24.5% felt there is not pressure.

This perception of pressure increases with age and is more pronounced for girls than boys.