



Data insights

Students' views on their mental health

A key finding in the inaugural Speaking Out Survey conducted with 4,912 WA students in 2019 was that mental health issues are a great concern for children and young people. The following data provides further analysis of this significant result.

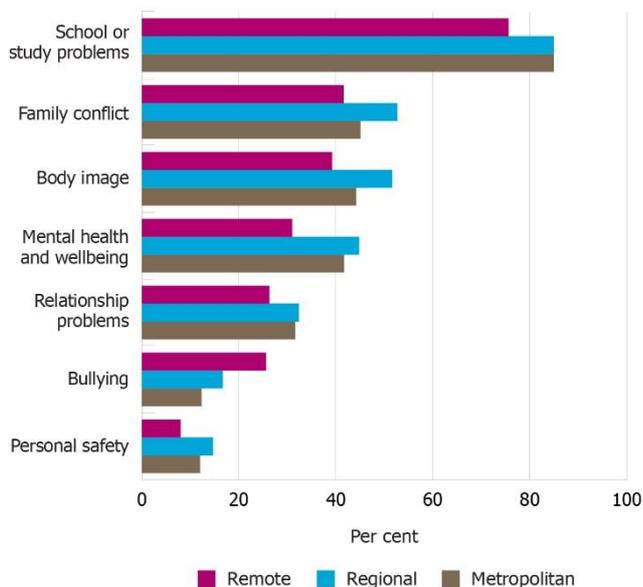
Indices of mental health

There is a wide range of mental health indicators including stress and depression, happiness and life satisfaction, and level of resilience.

Stress and depression

The percentage of students who reported stress was substantial and widespread across several sources.

Figure 1: Year 9 to Year 12 students reporting sources of stress in the last year, by region



Year 9 to 12 students from regional areas were equal or more likely than those from metropolitan or remote areas to report stress

from any source in the last 12 months with the exception of bullying.

The majority of students in Years 9 to 12 also reported having felt depressed, sad or blue for two weeks or more in a row during the past year (60%). There were differences between students from metropolitan (60%) and regional schools (60%) compared to remote schools (50%).

Happiness and life satisfaction

For students in Years 4 to 6, 92 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am happy with myself."

In contrast, high school students reported significantly lower happiness scores, including more than three times as many students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (28% compared to 8%).

Female students in high school disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement more than twice as much as their male peers (38% compared to 17%).

The life satisfaction of students followed the same trend. Almost 80 per cent of students in Years 4 to 6 reported a high life satisfaction (7 to 10 out of 10), while for high school students this figure was 62 per cent.

Low life satisfaction (0 to 4 out of 10) was reported by eight per cent of Year 4 to 6 students compared to 14 per cent of high school students.

Female high school students were significantly more likely to score low life satisfaction (17%) compared to their male counterparts (11%).

Figure 2: Proportion of students disagreeing with the statement: "I am happy with myself", Years 4 to 12



Resilience

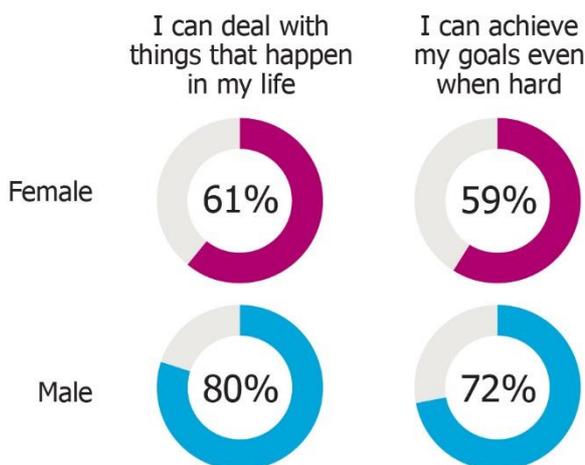
Resilience is the ability to cope and thrive in the face of negative events, challenges or adversity. The majority of high school students agreed or strongly agreed with the questions:

"I can deal with things that happen in my life." (70%)

"I can achieve my goals even if it is hard." (65%)

Female students reported a significantly lower proportion of affirmative responses (agree or strongly agree) than male students across both these indicators of resilience.

Figure 3: Proportion of affirmative responses to resilience items, Years 7 to 12, by gender



Protective and risk factors

A range of protective and risk factors can help or hinder mental health and wellbeing outcomes, including supportive relationships and connectedness, knowledge and access to support, as well as physical and emotional safety.

Supportive relationships and connectedness

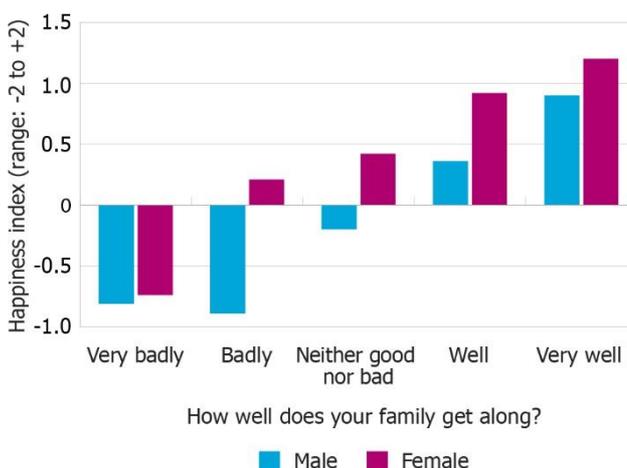
About 7 in 10 (72%) of all Year 4 to 12 students feel their dad and 8 in 10 (83%) feel their mum cares about them a lot.

Among high school students, 11 per cent said they do not live with a parent or adult they can talk to about their problems.

For female students, 25 per cent said they do not live with a parent who will listen to them if they have something to say, and nine per cent say their family gets along badly.

Supportive relationships with parents and whether one's family gets along were strongly associated with mental health outcomes. More parental support (particularly from the father) and family harmony were related to substantially higher happiness and life satisfaction and fewer cases of prolonged sadness or depression or stress.

Figure 4: Happiness and how well family gets along, Years 7 to 12



Among Year 10 to 12 students, 18 per cent feel they do not have enough friends.

The desire to stay connected increased between primary and high school, with 26 per cent of



primary school students and 36 per cent of high school students being bothered when they could not use the internet.

In high school, about 12 per cent of students are regularly going without eating or sleeping because of the internet or games, while 15 per cent are going without due to mobile phone use.

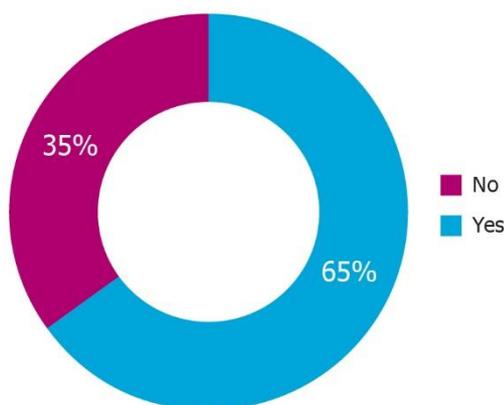
Knowledge and access to support

Many high school students were unaware or not sure about the availability of mental health resources locally (49%) or online (37%).

One in four students report not being able to access health support when required (27%).

Female students report less awareness of available health resources and are twice as likely to have difficulties accessing support when required (35%) compared to male students (18%).

Figure 5: Have accessed mental health services, Years 7 to 12



Note: Questions about health access refer to the last 12 months only.

Physical and emotional safety

Feeling safe and secure is a critical foundation for young people’s healthy development both physically and mentally. This not only includes physical safety (the absence of harm or injury by any person) but emotional and psychological safety as well, whereby children and young people are provided dependable and supportive environments, are safe to express how they feel, and are free from bullying and intimidation.

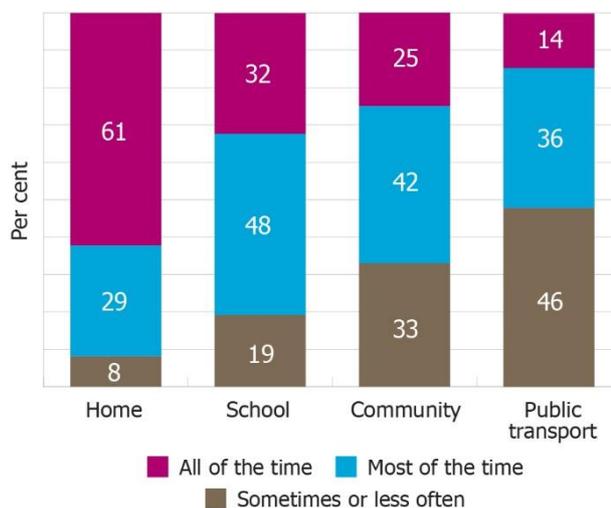
Physical safety

Many students do not always feel safe in the home, school and the community. This is true of almost 4 in 10 (37%) students in the home, nearly 7 in 10 (62%) at school, more than 7 in 10 (72%) in the community and over 8 in 10 (82%) of those who have used public transport.

Not feeling safe in these environments was associated with lower resilience, happiness and wellbeing.

Students not feeling safe in the home were more likely to be one of the 30 per cent of students who have stayed away from home overnight because of a problem.

Figure 6: Feeling safe, Years 7 to 12



Note: Columns do not all add up to 100% as responses “I’d prefer not to say” and “Do not apply” were omitted from this figure

Bullying and harm

One-half of all students (53%) reported they had not been bullied or cyberbullied by students from their school.

For those students who have experienced bullying, this was associated with prolonged periods of sadness/depression, decreased happiness and school absences, especially in females.

Female students in high school experience about twice as much cyberbullying and combined bullying and cyberbullying (21%), compared to their male classmates (12%).

In high school, absences were twice as prevalent (and more frequent) among females (21%) due

to being afraid of bullying, compared to their male classmates (11%).

At least one occurrence of being physically harmed was associated with lower happiness scores. Students who reported being bullied by students from their school were twice as likely to disagree with being happy with themselves (36%), compared to those who have never been bullied (19%).

Family worry

The safety and wellbeing of parents and family is also an essential part of providing a dependable and supportive environment for children and young people. Worrying about family safety and conflict can have significant adverse impacts on the mental wellbeing of children and young people.

About 1 in 5 of all students were at least somewhat worried about family fighting (23%), moving away (19%), and hurting themselves (22%) or others (18%). Female students were more likely to worry about family.

Family worry was related to decreased life satisfaction and feeling less safe at home. Worry about family fighting was also associated with increased stress and decreased happiness and resilience, highlighting family conflict as particularly impactful.

The associations between family worry and mental health were also stronger in female students compared to their male classmates.

Body image and diet

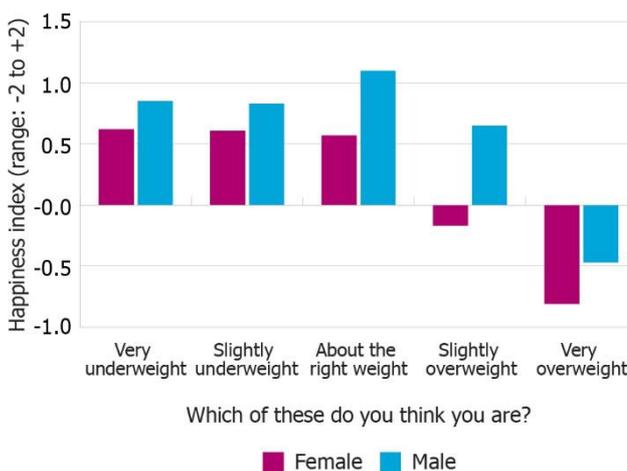
School students reported significantly lower happiness scores if they considered themselves to be slightly or very overweight compared to those who reported as slightly or very underweight.

One-half (50%) of all students reported worrying a little or a lot about their weight.

Seventy per cent of female students in high school worried about their weight compared to 37 per cent of male students.

Worrying about weight was associated with lower resilience, life satisfaction, happiness, higher stress and skipping meals.

Figure 7: Body self-perception and happiness, Years 7 to 12



The full Speaking Out Survey report and Indicators of Wellbeing data are available at ccyp.wa.gov.au

