



Wakefield District School Health Survey

2024 Final Report

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Introduction

The School Health Survey provides schools, colleges and the Council with a better understanding of the health, wellbeing and behaviours of their pupils. Summaries produced for individual schools and colleges enable them, with health improvement specialists, to prioritise areas of learning for the pupils inside school or colleges. They can also highlight interventions that they might need to take forward to address particular health and wellbeing issues.

The analysis in this report looks at year groups and the pupil population as a whole and provides an important intelligence resource for strategic decision making. It also adds to the knowledge built up since the first school health survey some fifteen years ago.

Fieldwork for the 2024 School Health Survey ran from January to early May 2024. Questionnaires for Year 12 (16-17 year olds) students were delivered using Survey Monkey, and questionnaires for Years 5 (9-10 year olds), 7 (11-12 year olds) and 9 (13-14 year olds) were delivered using Snap Surveys, both on-line survey systems. Throughout the survey participants were signposted to additional support and advice about the topics covered.

Around 6,600 questionnaires were completed from across 67 different schools and colleges. Some key questions have remained the same as in previous surveys, while new questions have also been added this time to collect information on topics such as vaping, views about climate change, and the use of nitrous oxide. It was the first time that students from sixth forms and colleges had been surveyed since 2017, which presented an opportunity to ask about a range of different topics appropriate to these young people.

Thank you to the schools and colleges and pupils who completed the survey.

Summary

Overall, the 2024 survey reveals an improvement in pupil wellbeing compared to 2022, and more and more pupils adopting positive health behaviours such as healthy eating and abstinence from tobacco and alcohol. However, inequalities persist, and some pupils are experiencing less happy and healthy lives than others.

In 2024 nearly two-thirds of pupils in Years 5, 7 and 9 [eat fruit and vegetables](#) most days – up from 44% in 2013. Among Year 12 students, 38% of students are eating 3 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Compared to 2022, the proportion of Year 9 pupils missing breakfast has fallen. Four-in-five pupils brush their teeth at least twice a day, but some groups are not getting to the dentist as frequently as is recommended.

Nearly 80% of Year 5 pupils enjoy [physical activity](#) a lot or quite a lot, and 68% of Year 7 and 60% of Year 9 do one hour or more of physical activity a day. In Year 12, however, less than half of students are getting the weekly recommended level of physical activity. Half of Year 5 pupils ride a bike regularly, but this activity seems to reduce among older pupils.

A question related to [bed poverty](#) was added to the survey for the first time this year. Six percent of pupils say they share a bed most of the time or sleep on something other than a bed (Years 5,7 and 9 combined). Pupils experiencing bed poverty are less likely than others to be happy with life and are more likely to be getting less than six hours sleep on a school night.

A question about [period poverty](#) was also newly added this year and found that 9% of Year 9 pupils and 11% of Year 12 students had ever experienced not being able to purchase period products because they couldn't afford them.

62% of pupils said they were quite or very [happy](#) with their lives at the moment. This was an improvement from 2022 but is still slightly below levels seen in 2020 and earlier. The proportion of pupils feeling lonely some or most of the time has followed a similar pattern – improving since 2022, but still higher than in 2020. Around one-third of Year 7 pupils and one-quarter of Year 9 pupils had high or maximum mental wellbeing scores, similar to the mental wellbeing levels measured in 2020, and an improvement since 2022.

A national NHS survey in 2023 found that 59% of young people aged 17 to 19 screened positive for a possible [eating disorder](#). A set of screen questions were included in the Year 12 questionnaire and 45% of students answered in a way indicative of a possible eating disorder.

Younger pupils generally get more hours [sleep](#) on a school night than older pupils. Only 23% of Year 5 pupils said they got seven hours or less, compared to 51% of Year 9 pupils. Just over half of Year 12 students said the quality of their sleep was fairly or very good.

School work and exams was the most common issue pupils had [worries](#) about. Older pupils worry more than young pupils about the way they look and about money problems, while younger pupils are more likely to worry about problems with friends and climate change.

Across Year 5, 7 and 9, 10% of pupils said they felt scared of going to school because of [bullying](#), with very little difference between the year groups. There was no significant change in this since 2022. Three-quarters of pupils said they felt [safe](#) in the area where they lived, but young carers, pupils with special educational needs, LGBTQ+ pupils and pupils living in the most deprived neighbourhoods all felt less safe in the area where they lived compared to their counterparts.

Younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to make [visits](#) to parks and libraries. [Social media](#) is very popular, but 28% of Year 9 pupils said they worry about some of the things they have seen there.

When Year 12 students were asked about [sexual health](#), 77% felt confident in establishing consent with a sexual partner and two-thirds know where to access free STI testing.

One quarter (26%) of Year 9 pupils say they have ever experienced [sexual harassment](#) by another young person or group of young people. The most common type of sexual harassment was sexualised comments/banter. Most pupils knew who to report sexual harassment to in their school or college.

The proportion of Year 7 and 9 pupils who have never tried [smoking](#) has continued to increase – similar to the national trend. 1-in-5 of Year 12 students said they use a vape every day.

The proportion of Year 9 pupils saying they have abstained from trying [alcohol](#) has doubled since 2013, to 48%. And 20% of Year 12 students also said they had never drunk alcohol, up from 11% in 2017.

The most common form of [gambling](#) was buying coins to move up a level on a computer game with over half of all pupils in years 7, 9 and 12 taking part in this activity in the last 12 months. Male pupils were more likely to have taken part in gambling than females, especially those types of gambling relating to online gaming. In Year 7, 87% of males said they took part in online gaming most days or every day.

Using [drugs](#) is not common among Year 9 pupils and 78% of Year 12 students said they had never taken drugs. Among the Year 12 students who used drugs or had taken them in the past, cannabis was by far the most common drug that had been taken.

When students in Year 12 were asked to think about their [future plans](#) for after school/college (they could pick more than one option) half were interested in further study, half thought they would get a job and one in five were considering travelling abroad or having a gap year. Students from the most deprived neighbourhoods were less optimistic about their health in the future. Only 17% of all Year 12 students were optimistic about [climate change](#), with 58% of students agreeing global warming was a very serious problem.

Diet and Oral Health

37%

of Year 9 pupils had not eaten breakfast on the day of the survey

39%

of Year 5 **felt they need to eat more healthily** (this increased with age)



65%

of Years 5,7 and 9 **eat fruit and vegetables most days**



80%

of Years 5,7,9 and 12 **brush their teeth twice a day or more**



61%

of Years 5,7,9 and 12 had **been to the dentist in the last 6 months**



Pupils were asked several questions about their diet and oral health, these varied slightly by year group. Of the pupils in Years 5, 7 and 9 completing the survey around one-in-four had not eaten breakfast that morning. Older pupils were less likely to eat breakfast than younger pupils (Figure 1).

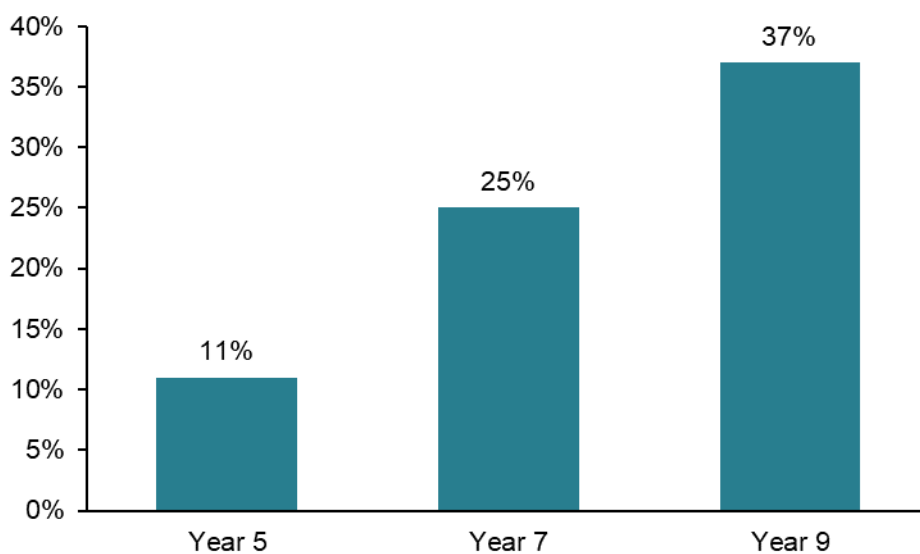


Figure 1 Percentage of pupils who had not eaten breakfast by school year.

Fewer Year 9 pupils were not eating breakfast than in 2022 but the proportion is still high (Figure 2). Looking at inequalities, in Years 5 and 7 pupils with special educational needs and in Years 7 and 9 females, young carers and those in the most deprived areas were more likely to have not eaten breakfast.

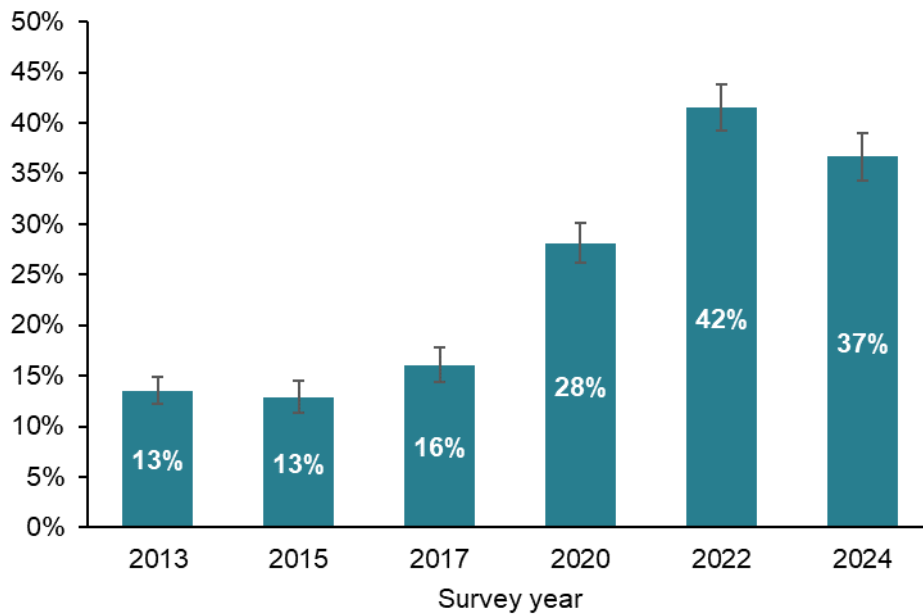


Figure 2 Trends in percentage of Year 9 pupils who hadn't eaten breakfast that morning

It is recommended that children and young adults eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day¹. Of Year 5,7 and 9 pupils, 65% said they ate fruit and vegetables on most days (back in 2013 it was only 44% - Years 5 and 9 only). Pupils who ate fruit and vegetables once a week or less were more likely to think they needed to eat more healthily than those who ate them most days (58% vs. 38%). Year 12 students were asked a more specific question about eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day and only 1-in-10 replied that they did (Figure 3), this is lower than the percentage of all participants in the Adult Health Survey where 2-in-10 people said they ate five portions of fruit and vegetables or more a day².

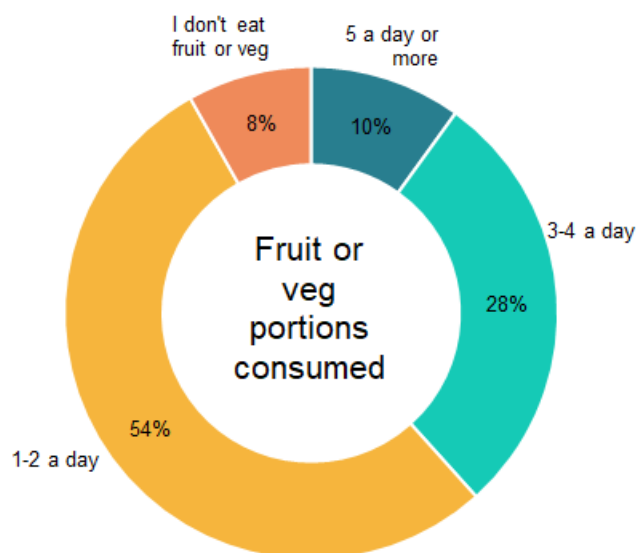


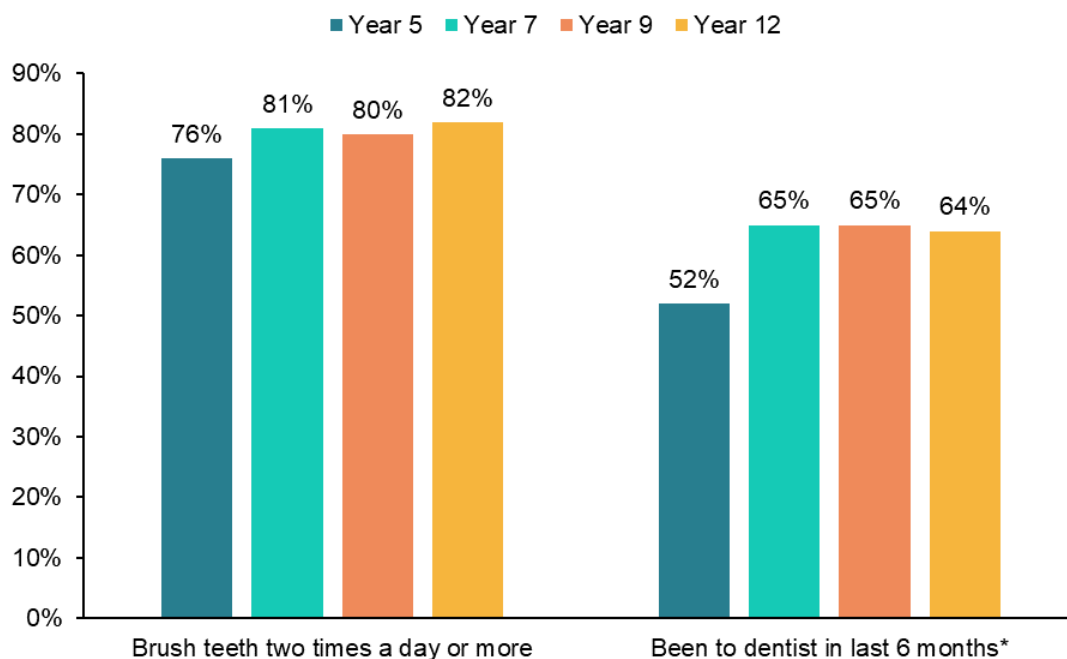
Figure 3 Fruit and vegetable portions consumed per day by Year 12 students.

¹ NHS England (2022) [Live Well. 5 A Day portion sizes](#)

² Wakefield Council (2023) [Wakefield District Population Health Survey Report - Diet \(p48-52\)](#)

Pupils in Years 5, 7 and 9 were also asked about how often they consumed energy drinks, these are of interest as they contain high levels of caffeine and sugar. Calls to ban their sale to children have been made due to the evidence of health effects including headaches, sleeping problems, irritation, and tiredness³. In Year 5 and Year 7, 12% of children consumed them once a week or more increasing to 18% in Year 9. Young carers, children with special educational needs and those living in the most deprived areas were more likely to consume energy drinks.

For good oral health it is recommended by NHS England that children 7 years and older brush their teeth at least twice a day and visit the dentist every 6 months or as recommended by the child’s dentist⁴. Overall, 8 out of 10 pupils said they brush their teeth twice a day or more and 6 out of 10 had been to the dentist in the last 6 months. Frequency of tooth brushing was at a similar level to previous years.



* There was a high percentage of don't know responses for dentist visit frequency for Year 5 pupils (25%).

Figure 4 Percentage of pupils brushing their teeth two times a day or more and have been to the dentist in the last 6 months in Years 5, 7, 9 and 12.

Young carers and those with special educational needs had more difficulties with oral health than other groups being less likely to have visited a dentist and less likely to brush their teeth two times a day or more. Males were also less likely to brush their teeth two times a day or more and those in the most deprived areas were less likely to have been to the dentist in the last 6 months.

³ Department of Health and Social Care (2018) [Banning the Sale of Energy Drinks to Children Impact Assessment](#)

⁴ NHS England (2022) [Taking Care of Children's Teeth](#)

Physical Activity

79%

of pupils in Year 5 enjoyed physical activity a lot or quite a lot

64%



of Years 7 and 9 did **more than one hour of activity per day**

41%



of those who don't think they do enough exercise felt they **didn't have the time** to do more

42%



of Years 5,7 and 9 pupils **walk to school**

50%



of Year 5 pupils **cycle once a week or more** dropping to 11% in Y12 pupils

Physical activity is an important part of children's health and wellbeing, the NHS advises that children and young people should aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per day⁵. The question about the amount of physical activity children did was asked differently by age; Year 5 were asked if they enjoyed physical activity, Year 7 and 9 were asked if they did the recommended amount of at least an hour of activity a day, and Year 12 students were asked if they did 150 minutes or more per week, the amount of moderate activity recommended for adults by the NHS, and which enables comparisons with the Wakefield District Population Health Survey findings for adults of all ages⁶.

Nearly 80% of Year 5 pupils enjoy physical activity a lot or quite a lot, and 68% of Year 7 and 60% of Year 9 do one hour or more of physical activity a day and 47% of Year 12 do 150 or more minutes per week. The percentage for Year 12 students was similar to the Wakefield District Population Health Survey where 50% of participants did 150 or more minutes per week. Overall, females were less likely to do the recommended amount of activity as well as those who were not of White ethnicity and those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Participants were asked about the barriers they faced to doing physical activity; 45% of Year 5 pupils selected they were active enough already, this reduced to 27% among Year 12 students. The most common barriers to exercise amongst those who didn't feel they did enough exercise were not having the time or not feeling bothered or motivated to exercise except for Year 5 for whom being worried about being laughed at or looking silly was also a concern (Figure 5). Looking at how barriers differed between genders, females were less likely to say they were active enough already and more likely to be worried about being laughed at or looking silly than males, at all ages.

⁵ NHS (2021) [Physical activity guidelines for children and young people](#)

⁶ Wakefield Council (2023) [Wakefield District Population Health Survey Report](#) - Overweight and Obesity, and Exercise (p38-47)

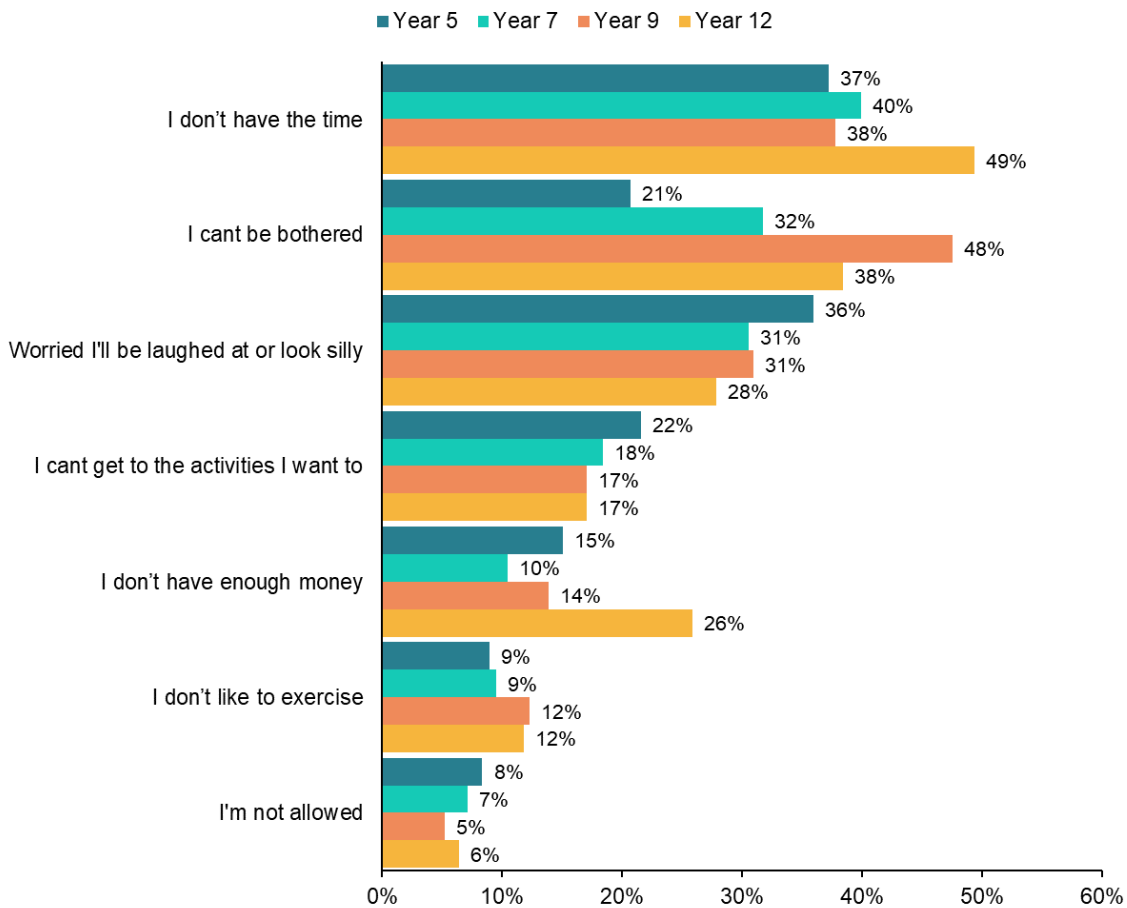


Figure 5 Barriers to exercise (percentage is of those pupils who felt they weren't active enough already in each Year group).

	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9	Year 12
Sports pupils currently do:				
1st 🏆	Swimming 66%	Running 45%	Running 40%	Gym sessions 36%
2nd 🏆	Running 58%	Football 45%	Football 35%	Running 26%
3rd 🏆	Football 47%	Swimming 36%	Swimming 25%	Dancing 19%
Sports pupils would like to do:				
1st 🏆	Tennis 43%	Fitness classes 52%	Fitness classes 59%	Swimming 29%
2nd 🏆	Basketball 39%	Tennis 31%	Martial arts 25%	Gym sessions 28%
3rd 🏆	Martial arts 34%	Swimming 29%	Swimming 29%	Running 25%

Table 1 Most popular sports pupils do or would like to do amongst each year group.

The sports children were most likely to currently do were swimming, running and football, apart from Year 12, where gym sessions, running and dancing were most popular (Table 1). Of sports pupils would like to

do basketball, fitness classes, gym sessions, martial arts, running, swimming and tennis all came in the top-3 for one or more school years.

Pupils were asked how they got to school. Across Years 5, 7 and 9 a similar proportion of pupils travelled to school by walking, with just over 4-in-10 pupils getting to school this way overall (Figure 6).

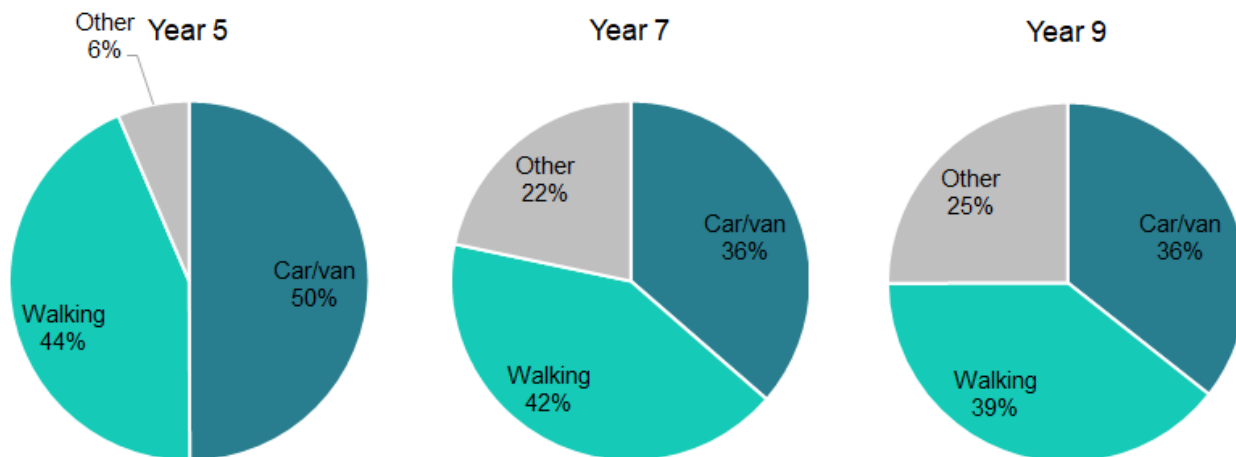
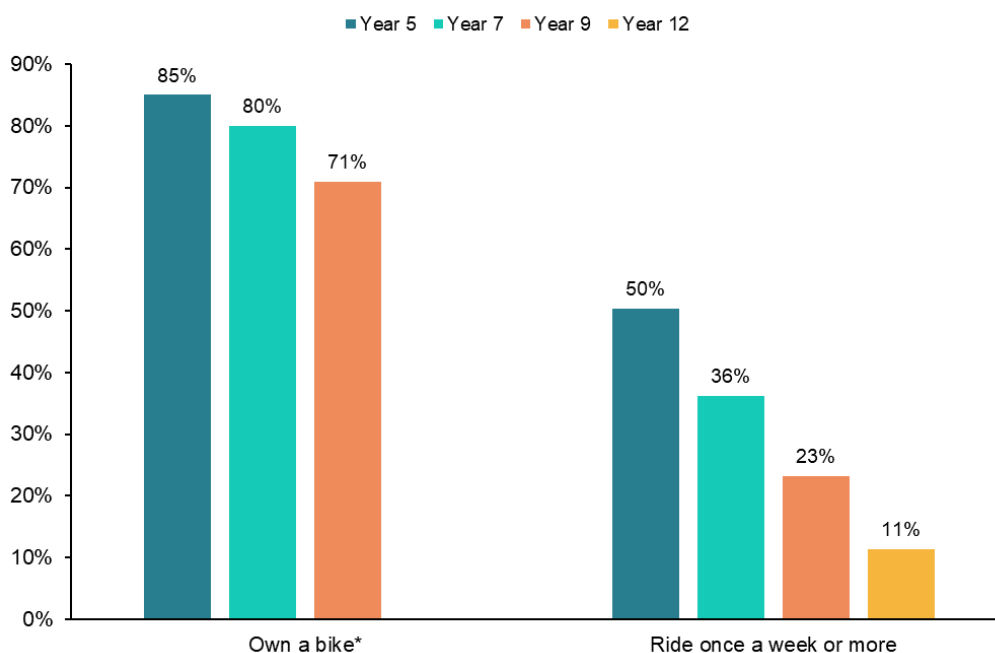


Figure 6 Mode of transport for getting to school, other included bus, train, scooter and cycle.

Year 5 pupils were most likely to own a bike and ride a bike once a week or more in their leisure time, with 50% doing so. Fewer pupils owned or rode a bike in the older year groups (Figure 7). Those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods were less likely to have their own bike. Females of all ages were much less likely to cycle regularly than males and those in Year 9 were less likely to have a bike. Children with special educational needs were more likely to cycle regularly.





* Year 12 pupils were not asked if they owned a bike


Figure 7 Percentage of pupils who owned or rode a bike once a week or more.


Weight (Year 12)

32% of students in Year 12 are living with overweight or obesity

71% 
of females are a healthy weight, and 61% of males

44% 
of student living with overweight or obesity bullied, three-quarters because of their weight

52% 
of students living with overweight or obesity screen positive for an eating disorder

70% 
of students living with overweight or obesity would like to lose weight

The National Child Measurement Programme records the weight and height of most pupils in Reception and Year 6 and the measurements are used to assess whether pupils have a healthy weight. There is very little reliable data available on adult weight, and at the local authority level this is limited to an annual measure for all adults aged 18 and over, based on data from the (national) Adult Active Lives Survey. Because of the lack of data on weight post-Year 6 it was decided to adapt the School Health Survey to try and collect height and weight measurements from Year 12 students. The results are being regarded as **experimental statistics** as this was a first attempt, and further development of the approach may be required.

The health consequences of childhood obesity include Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, liver problems and exacerbation of conditions such as asthma⁷. Children may also experience social isolation, low self-esteem, teasing and bullying.

BMI category	Year 12 students		
	Female	Male	Total
Underweight	2.5%	2.0%	2.1%
Healthy weight	71.3%	61.0%	66.6%
Overweight	13.2%	14.3%	13.8%
Obese	9.5%	17.3%	13.8%
Severely Obese	3.5%	5.4%	4.5%

Table 2 Two-thirds of Year 12 students are a healthy weight.

Male students in Year 12 were less likely than female students to be a healthy weight (61.0% compared to 71.3%), and male students were more likely than female students to be living with obesity (including severe obesity) (22.7% compared to 13.0%). These differences are consistent with the National Child Measurement Programme measurements in Year 6.

No significant inequalities could be measured for ethnicity, young carer status or special educational needs. No significant inequality could be measured for deprivation, although the analysis was hampered by non-response to the question about where students live.

⁷ Chief Medical Officer (2019) [Time to Solve Childhood Obesity](#)

Students living with overweight or obesity were more likely to be bullied than other students (44% compared to 33%). And among those bullied students, 76% said they were bullied because of their weight. Students who are living with overweight or obesity were also more likely than other students to screen positive for an eating disorder (52% compared to 37%). And students living with overweight or obesity were more likely to say they would like to lose weight than other students (70% compared to 30%).

About the methodology

Year 12 students were asked to self-report their height and weight using either metric or imperial measurements.

Of the 1,501 Year 12 respondents to the survey, a BMI (Body Mass Index) value could be calculated for 932 students (62%). 64 students were discounted from the analysis because it was not clear whether their sex was male or female (sex is required to calculate BMI). Among the 533 male or female students for whom a BMI could not be calculated, 395 (74%) had submitted a valid height but no weight measurement, 69% of this group were female.

Implausible height and weight values were discounted from the analysis. Some students appeared to have misunderstood the questionnaire and had likely provided plausible measurements but not in the correct format. For example, students could submit their height in feet and inches, but some students appeared to interpret this as a request to record their height in both feet and inches, e.g. 5 feet and 60 inches. Obvious errors of this type were corrected. Future questionnaires designed to capture this type of information would benefit from validation rules being applied to limit the range of values that can be entered.

Students were not asked to submit their date of birth so students were assumed to be 17 years old. This assumption is consistent with what the Department for Education School Census records about age for this year group. For the purposes of calculating BMI, it is necessary to make adjustments to BMI measurements for people aged under 18 years old. This was done using Cole's LMS method⁸ using an age of 17.0 years for all students.

Further adjustment of BMI by sex and age was made to account for self-reporting bias. A linear regression model (accounting for age and sex) has been developed by the NHS for this purpose and is routinely used to adjust BMI measurements based on self-report data from the Sport England Adult Active Lives Survey⁹.

Population monitoring cut-offs were used to assign weight categories (e.g. underweight, healthy weight, overweight, obese) to the BMI scores. This is consistent with the approach used by the National Child Measurement Programme¹⁰.

⁸ Cole, TJ et al. (2012) [The development of growth references and growth charts](#)

⁹ NHS England (2022) [Health Survey for England predicting height, weight and body mass index from self-reported data: Developing and using prediction equations](#)

¹⁰ Department for Education (2023) [National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2022/23 School Year](#)

Bed Poverty

6%

of pupils in Years 5,7 and 9 combined say they share a bed most of the time or sleep on something other than a bed

Among pupils experiencing bed poverty,

58%



are **feeling very or quite happy with life** at the moment

61%



feel lonely some or most of the time

19%



get **less than six hours sleep** on a school night

11%



of Year 7 and 9 pupils have **low mental wellbeing**

Bed poverty is just one aspect of child poverty and may look different from family to family. It can include broken beds and damaged bedding; sharing beds and rooms; sleeping on the floor; or families being unable to wash or dry bedding properly¹¹. Not having their own bed may have consequences for a child's physical and mental health. Poor sleep has been linked with difficulties in paying attention in class, keeping up with school work, forgetfulness and absenteeism¹².

A national survey in August 2023 by Bernado's, a children's charity, found that 11% of children aged 8 to 17 had had to share a bed or sleep on the floor in the last 12 months¹³.

A question in the School Health Survey on bed poverty was included for the first time this year and was asked of pupils in Years 5, 7 and 9. Nine percent of Year 5 pupils said they share a bed most of the time or sleep on something other than a bed (e.g. a sofa or the floor). Four percent of Year 7 pupils and 3% of Year 9 pupils said the same (Table 3).

Where do you sleep most of the time	Year group			Total
	5	7	9	
I sleep in my own bed	91%	96%	97%	94%
I share a bed (e.g. with siblings/parents/carers)	7%	4%	2%	4%
I sleep on something else other than a bed (e.g. sofa/floor)	2%	0%	1%	1%

Table 3 Nine percent of Year 5 pupils say they don't sleep in their own bed.

Pupils with special educational needs are more likely to experience bed poverty (8% compared to 5% of pupils with no SEN), as are pupils who live in the district's most-deprived (top-10%) neighbourhoods (9% compared to 4% of pupils from the 10% least deprived neighbourhoods).

Pupils experiencing bed poverty are less likely than other pupils to say they are feeling very or quite happy with life at the moment (58% compared to 65%), and are more likely to be getting less than six hours sleep on a school night (19% compared to 9%) (Figure 8)

¹¹ Bernado's (2023) [What is bed Poverty?](#)

¹² University of Leeds (2017) [Lack of sleep damaging for children.](#)

¹³ Bernado's (2023) [No crib for a bed: the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on bed poverty.](#)

Year 7 and 9 pupils experiencing bed poverty are more likely have low mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS scores of 7 to13) than other pupils (11% compared to 6%).

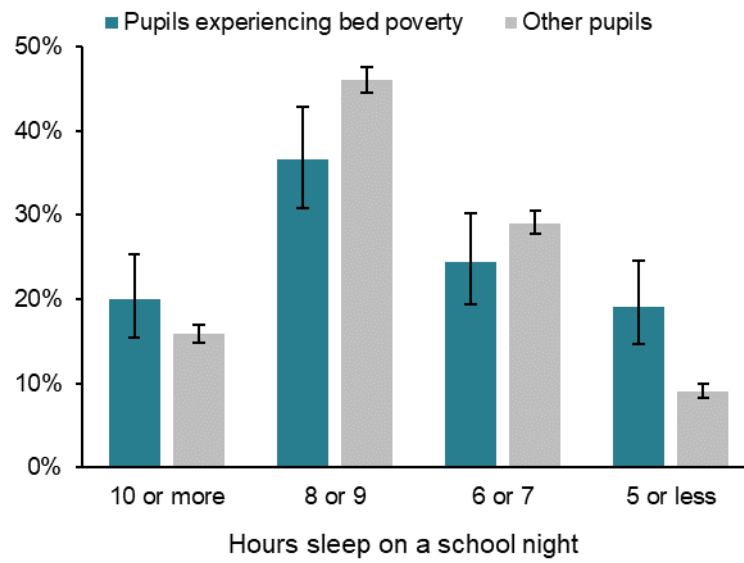


Figure 8 Nearly one-in-five pupils experiencing bed poverty get five or less hours sleep.

Period Poverty

8%

of pupils in Years 7, 9 and 12 combined say they have experienced not being able to afford period products

Among pupils experiencing period poverty,

26%



are **feeling very or quite happy with life** at the moment

80%



feel lonely some or most of the time

23%



are often or very often **scared of going to school because of being bullied** (any reason)

15%



of year 7 and 9 pupils have **low mental wellbeing**

Periods usually begin at around the age of 12 (Year 7). Some females will start them later, and some earlier. Period poverty is a term used to describe a lack of access to proper period products and/or the education needed to use them effectively. The lack of access to period products can cause physical health problems such as infections and reproductive tract complications, and can have negative social and psychological consequences, including missed school days and stigma¹⁴.

Not being able to afford period products may be indicative of low income and poverty more generally.

A national poll carried out in 2023 found 27% of 18 to 24-year-olds were struggling to afford period products like tampons¹⁵. Another survey of girls' attitudes found that 1-in-5 girls and young women aged 11-21 worried about having enough money to buy period products or period pain medication¹⁶.

A question in the School Health Survey on period poverty was included for the first time this year and was asked of pupils in Years 7, 9 and 12. Pupils were asked if they had ever experienced not being able to purchase period products because they couldn't afford them.

Eleven percent of Year 12 students¹⁷ said they had experienced not being able to afford period products, as well as 9% of pupils in Year 7 and 4% of pupils in Year 7.

Have you ever experienced not being able to purchase period products because you couldn't afford them	Year group			
	7	9	12	Total
Yes	4%	9%	11%	8%
No	71%	88%	86%	82%
Not applicable / I don't have periods	25%	3%	3%	11%

Figure 9 Eleven percent of Year 12 students were affected by period poverty.

¹⁴ Girls Helping Girls Period (2024) [What Causes Period Poverty?](#)

¹⁵ ActionAid (2023) [Cost of living: UK period poverty has risen from 12% to 21% in a year.](#)

¹⁶ Girl Guiding (2023) [Girls' Attitudes Survey 2023.](#)

¹⁷ Pupils were discounted from the analysis if they identified themselves as male or a boy.

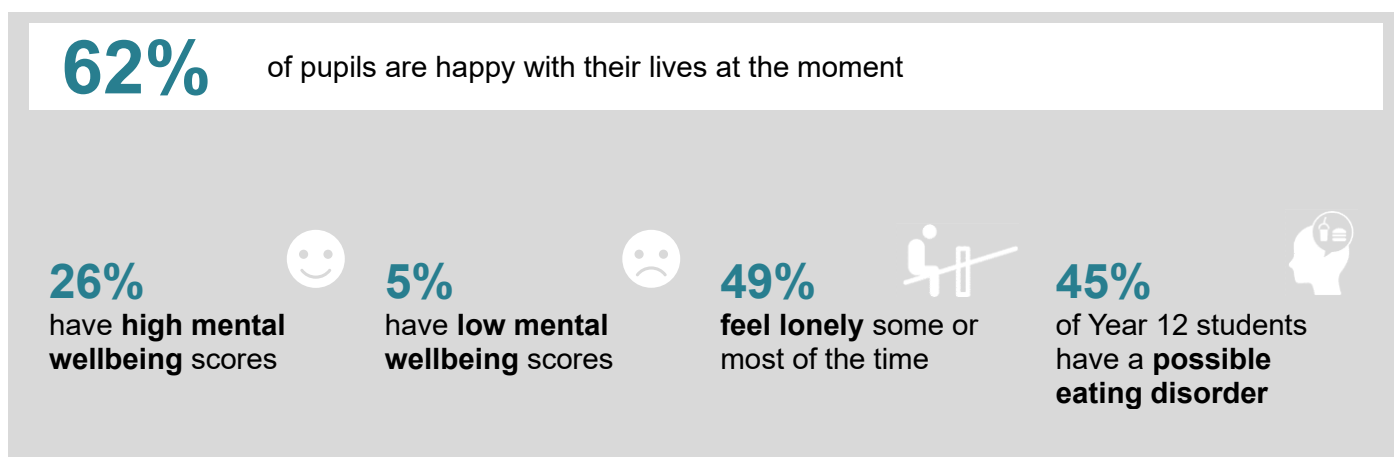
Pupils who are young carers were more likely to have experienced period poverty (18% compared to 7% of pupils who are not carers), and pupils with special educational needs were more likely to have experienced period poverty (14% compared to 8% of pupils with no SEN).

Pupils who have experienced period poverty were less likely than other pupils (who have periods) to say they are feeling very or quite happy with life at the moment (26% compared to 57%).

Pupils who have experienced period poverty are more likely to say they feel lonely most or some of the time (80% compared to 57%) and were more likely to have low mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS scores of 7 to 13) than other pupils (who have periods) (15% compared to 5%).

Pupils who have experienced period poverty are also more likely than other pupils (who have periods) to say they often or very often feel scared of going to school because they are being bullied (23% compared to 7%).

Mental Wellbeing and Sleep



All pupils were asked how happy they feel with their lives at the moment and also how often they feel lonely. In addition, the general mental wellbeing of pupils in Years 7, 9 and 12 was measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS¹⁸), a scientifically validated set of questions. Year 12 students were also asked to answer questions designed to identify a possible eating disorder¹⁹. Pupils in Years 5, 7 and 9 were asked how much sleep they usually got on a school night, and Year 12 students were asked to rate the quality of their sleep.

Happiness and loneliness

Overall, 62% of pupils said they were quite or very happy with their lives at the moment. This was an improvement from 2022 but is still slightly below levels seen in 2020 and earlier (Figure 10). The proportion of pupils feeling lonely some or most of the time has followed a similar pattern – improving since 2022, but still higher than in 2020. However, levels of happiness haven't improved for everyone. Since 2022, there has been no significant improvement in levels of happiness among young carers or pupils with special educational needs.

Male pupils were happier and less likely to be lonely than female pupils in all the year groups surveyed, and young carers were less happy and more likely to be lonely than their counterparts in all the year groups surveyed. Pupils with special educational needs were less happy and more likely to be lonely than their counterparts across most of the year groups surveyed.

Year 9 and Year 12 LGBTQ+ pupils were less happy than other pupils and more likely to be lonely, while poverty did not have a significant effect on levels of happiness or loneliness.

¹⁸ [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale](#) (WEMWBS) © University of Warwick 2006, all rights reserved.

¹⁹ Morgan, JF et al. (1999) [The SCOFF questionnaire: assessment of a new screening tool for eating disorders](#).

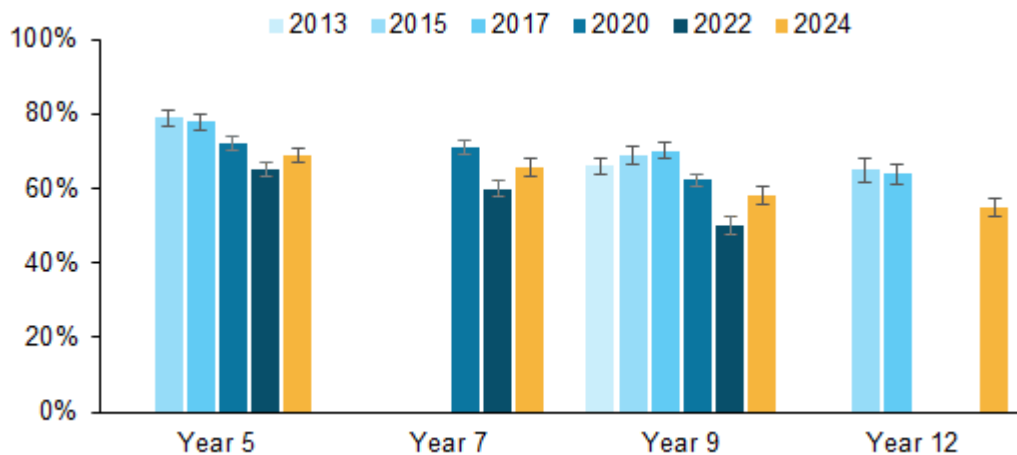


Figure 10 Happiness levels increased in 2024.

Mental wellbeing

Around one-third (34%) of Year 7 pupils and one-quarter (26%) of Year 9 pupils had high or maximum mental wellbeing scores, similar to the mental wellbeing levels measured in 2020. 19% of Year 12 students had high or maximum mental wellbeing scores.

One-in-twenty (5%) pupils have low mental wellbeing – 5% of Year 7 pupils; 7% of Year 9 pupils; and 3% of Year 12 students, and the levels of low mental wellbeing among Year 7 and 9 pupils have also returned to levels similar to those seen in 2020, after increasing in 2022.

Male pupils were more likely than female pupils to have high levels of mental wellbeing, and ethnic minority pupils were more likely than White-British pupils to have high levels of mental wellbeing.

Young carers were less likely than their counterparts to have high levels of mental wellbeing, except in Year 12, where there was no difference. Pupils with special educational needs were less likely than their counterparts to have high levels of mental wellbeing across all year groups.

Year 9 and Year 12 LGBTQ+ pupils were more likely than other pupils to have low levels of mental wellbeing, while poverty did not have a significant effect on high levels of mental wellbeing.

Eating Disorder

A national NHS survey in 2023 found that 59% of young people aged 17 to 19 screened positive for a possible eating disorder ²⁰.

Among Year 12 students in Wakefield District who answered questions about their eating and weight, 45% had a SCOFF score of two or higher, indicating a possible eating disorder. Female students (62%) were more likely than male students (25%) to have a possible eating disorder, and young carers (58%) and students with special educational needs (52%) were also more likely to have a possible eating disorder compared to their non-carer and non-SEN counterparts.

LGBTQ+ Year 12 students (63%) were more likely than other students (44%) to screen for a possible eating disorder.

²⁰ NHS England (2023) [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey](#)

Sleep

Younger pupils generally get more hours sleep on a school night than older pupils. Only 23% of Year 5 pupils said they got seven hours or less, compared to 51% of Year 9 pupils. 56% of Year 12 students said the quality of their sleep was fairly or very good, while 16% said it was very bad.

In Year 12, female students had poorer quality sleep than male students, young carers were more likely to have poor quality sleep compared to their non-carer counterparts, and students living in the top-20% most-deprived neighbourhoods had poorer quality sleep than students from the least-deprived neighbourhoods (Figure 11). Only 14% of Year 12 students with low mental wellbeing said they had good quality of sleep.

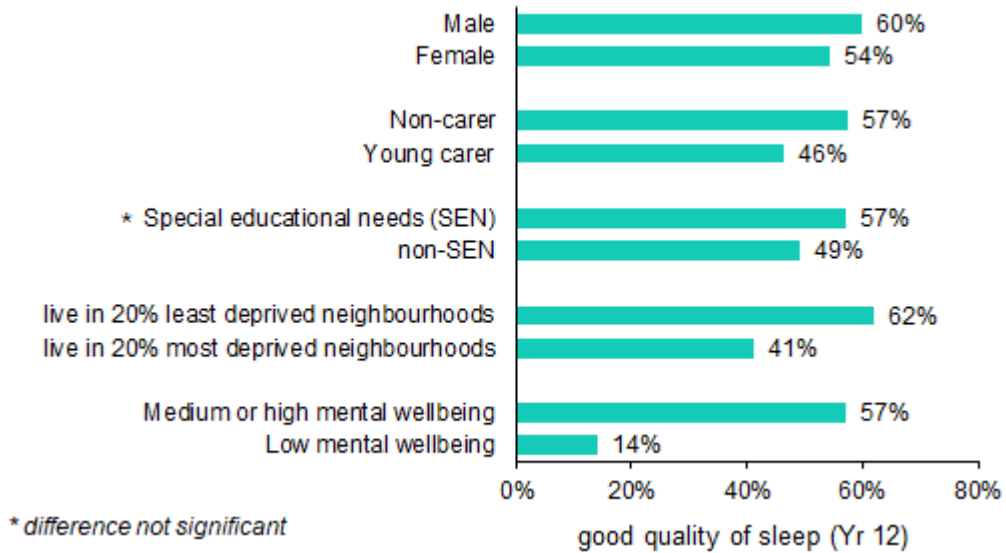


Figure 11 Year 12 students from poorer neighbourhoods sleep less well.

Comparing mental wellbeing with other aspects of pupil/student health reveals that pupils with low mental wellbeing were more likely to smoke cigarettes at least once a week (5%) than other pupils (1%); were more likely to vape at least once a week (23% compared to 9% of other pupils); and were more like to drink alcohol at least once a week (14% compared to 8% of other pupils).

Year 9 pupils and Year 12 students with low mental wellbeing were more likely to say they would cut or harm themselves (43%) if they were worried about a problem or stressed, than other pupils (5%). And three-quarters (76%) of Year 12 students with low mental wellbeing also screened positive for a possible eating disorder, compared to 44% of other students.

Of those Year 12 students with low mental wellbeing, 59% were also not optimistic about their health in the future, or having somewhere secure to live (59%), their job prospects (56%) or having enough money (56%).

Worries and Concerns

41%

of pupils worry a lot or quite a lot about school work and exams

35%

worry about **the way they look**



28%

of Year 5 pupils **worry about climate change**



51%

listen to music when they are worried or stressed



58%

of female Year 12 students would **like to lose weight**



Pupils were asked how much they worry about specific things, and what they are most likely to do when they are worried or stressed about a problem. Year 12 students were also asked questions about body image.

Worries

School work and exams was the most common issue pupils worry about, and in Year 12 nearly half of students said they worry about this a lot or quite a lot (Table 4). Older pupils worry more than young pupils about the way they look and about money problems, while younger pupils are more likely to worry about problems with friends and climate change. Overall, 15% of pupils said they worry about climate change, with pupils in Year 5 being the most likely to worry. This question was being asked for the first time.

Pupils living in the most deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to worry about money than pupils from the least-deprived neighbourhoods.

Female pupils, young carers, pupils with special educational needs and ethnic minority pupils worry more than their counterparts about school work and exams, across Years 5, 7 and 9. In Year 12, two-thirds of female students worry about school work and exams compared to less than one-third of male students, and students from less-deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to worry about school work and exam than students from the most-deprived neighbourhoods.

Young carers and pupils with special educational needs are more likely than their counterparts to worry about money problems, while female pupils are more than twice as likely as male pupils to worry about the way they look. Young carers are also more likely than their non-carer counterparts to worry about the way they look. Since the last survey (2022), fewer pupils say they worry about problems with friends or family.

Worry a lot or quite a lot about ...	Year group				
	5	7	9	12	All
School work / exams	34%	36%	44%	49%	41%
The way you look	25%	35%	43%	40%	35%
Problems with friends	30%	28%	29%	17%	26%
Family problems	25%	19%	24%	21%	22%
Relationships	-	16%	23%	24%	21%
Money problems	15%	13%	17%	28%	18%
Climate change	28%	14%	10%	8%	15%

Table 4 Pupils worry most about school work and exams.

Response to Worries and Stress

Listening to music and watching TV or playing computer games are the things pupils are most likely to do if they are stressed or worrying about problems (Table 5). Younger pupils are more likely to talk to someone about worries or stress. Very few pupils said they would seek help with a problem online.

8% of Year 9 pupils and 6% of Year 12 students said they were most likely cut or hurt themselves when they are worried or stressed. Among Year 12 students, 17% said they would smoke or vape and 9% said they would have an alcoholic drink.

When you have a problem that worries you or you are feeling stressed, what are you most likely to do?	Year group				
	5	7	9	12	All
Listen to music	42%	52%	55%	55%	51%
Watch TV / play computer games	44%	54%	54%	43%	49%
Talk to someone about it	50%	40%	30%	38%	40%
Rest or sleep more	22%	37%	45%	46%	37%
Think carefully about the problem by yourself	26%	29%	28%	26%	27%
Do physical activity	26%	31%	28%	23%	27%
Eat or drink more (e.g. sweets, chocolates)	17%	21%	27%	26%	23%
Don't know	10%	9%	7%	6%	8%
Smoke cigarettes/vape	-	1%	5%	17%	-
Cut or hurt myself	-	-	8%	6%	-
Seek help with the problem online	4%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Have a drink of something alcoholic	-	1%	4%	9%	-
Other	0%	0%	0%	7%	2%

Table 5 Pupils are most likely to listen to music if they are stressed or worried.

Among those Year 9 and Year 12 pupils who said they would cut or hurt themselves, females were more likely than males to say they would self-harm and young carers and pupils with special educational needs were both more likely than their counterparts to say they would self-harm if they were worried or stressed.

A national NHS survey in 2023 found that 9% of young people aged 17 to 24 had talked about harming themselves in the last four weeks, and 5% had tried to harm themselves, with self-harm being more common in young women than young men ²¹.

Body Image

When thinking about their appearance, significantly more Year 12 females than males would like to lose weight; would consider cosmetic surgery; and would consider things like Botox, dermal fillers or taking steroids. Also, Year 12 LGBTQ+ students were more likely than other students to say they would like to lose weight and would consider things like Botox, fillers and steroids (Table 6).

Students who say they worry about the way they look were much more likely to agree they would like to lose weight, consider cosmetic surgery, and things like Botox or taking steroids.

Thinking about appearance do you agree or disagree that (% agree)	Year 12 students		
	Male	Female	LGBTQ+
I would like to lose weight	35%	58%	65%
I would consider cosmetic surgery	5%	27%	12%
I would consider things like Botox, dermal fillers or taking steroids	5%	27%	25%

Table 6 Female students are more likely than males to consider changing their body image.

²¹ NHS England (2023) [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey](#)

Bullying and Safety

10% of pupils across Years 5, 7 and 9 felt scared of going to school because of bullying

Size or weight was the most common reason for being bullied



14% of **young carers** feel scared to go to school because of bullying



49% of Year 12 LGB students had been bullied because of their **sexual orientation**

22% of Year 9 pupils **feel unsafe at school**



Bullying in childhood is a major public health problem that increases the risk of poor health, social and educational outcomes in childhood and adolescence. The consequences may also last deep into adulthood²². The survey asked pupils whether they ever felt scared of going to school/college because of bullying, and if they had been bullied what they thought the reasons for being picked on were. Pupils were also asked where any bullying had taken place, and whether they thought their school or college would help make it stop. In addition, pupils were asked how they feel in the area in which they live, at school/college and at home.

Bullying

Across Years 5, 7 and 9, 10% of pupils said they felt scared of going to school because of bullying, with very little difference between the year groups. In Year 12, only 3% of students said they felt scared of going to college because of bullying. There was no significant change since 2022 in the proportions of pupils saying they felt scared of going to school because of bullying.

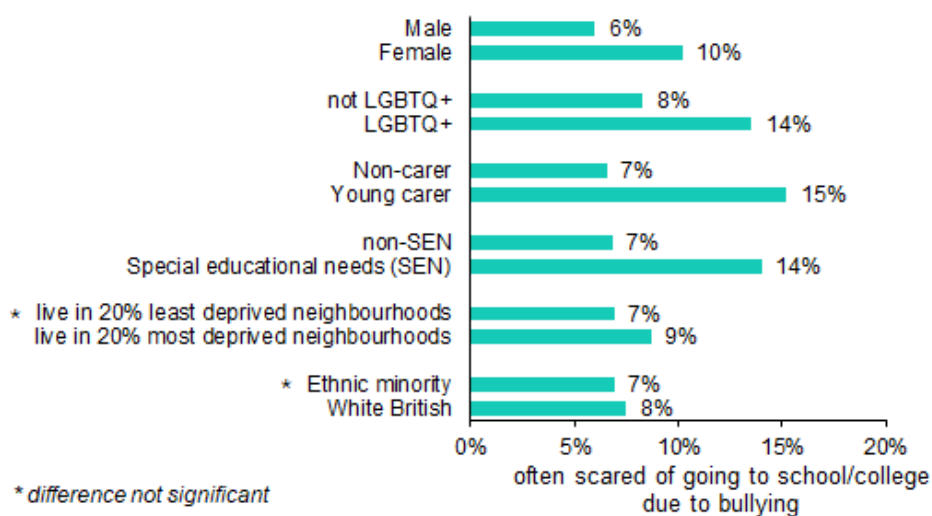


Figure 12 Some pupils were more likely than others to be afraid of going to school/college due to bullying.

²² Armitage, R (2021) [Bullying in children: impact on child health](#)

Female pupils, LGBTQ+ pupils, young carers and pupils with special educational needs are more likely than their counterparts to say they are often scared of going to school/college because they are being bullied (Figure 12). Their size or weight is the most common reason why pupils overall had been bullied, followed by the clothes that they wear (Table 7).

Reason	Ever been bullied			
	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9	Year 12
Your size or weight	17%	22%	30%	29%
The clothes you wear	8%	7%	10%	18%
Your sexual orientation	-	-	6%	10%
A disability or learning difficulty	7%	5%	8%	9%
Your race or skin colour	5%	5%	9%	7%
Your gender identity	-	-	4%	4%
Your religion or faith	5%	2%	4%	4%

Table 7 Size and weight is the most common reason pupils are bullied.

Among Year 12 students who described their gender as other than male or female, over half (55%) had ever been bullied because of their gender identity, and a similar proportion (49%) of lesbian, gay and bisexual students had ever been bullied because of their sexual orientation.

Among pupils with special educational needs, 19% had ever been bullied because of a disability or learning difficulty, and among ethnic minority pupils, 26% had ever been bullied because of their race.

When asked where they were bullied, 49% of pupils said they hadn't been bullied, 35% said they had been bullied in school, 17% had been bullied outside school, and 15% had been bullied online. There was relatively little difference between the year groups. Even 15% of Year 5 pupils said had been bullied online.

Around two-thirds (65%) of Year 5 pupils thought that if they were being bullied their school would help make it stop, but only 41% of Year 7 pupils and 26% of Year 9 pupils shared this view (Figure 13). Nearly half (49%) of Year 9 pupils were of the opposite view – that their schools would not help the bullying stop.

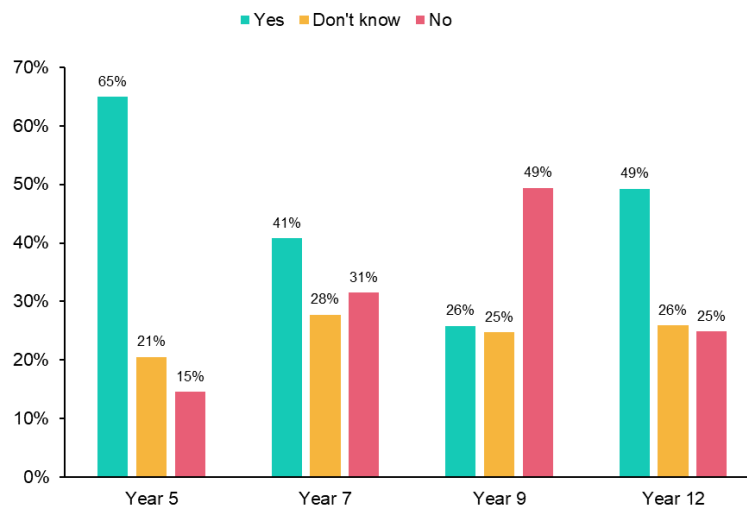


Figure 13 Year 5 pupils were the most likely to think their school would help stop them being bullied.

Safety

Overall, three-quarters (76%) of pupils said they felt safe in the area where they lived, but there were inequalities. Young carers, pupils with special educational needs, LGBTQ+ pupils and pupils living in the most deprived neighbourhoods all felt less safe in the area where they lived compared to their counterparts.

Year 12 students were the most likely to say they felt safe at school/college and three-quarters of Year 5 pupils also felt very safe or quite safe at school. There was more uncertainty among Year 7 and Year 9 pupils (Table 8). Female pupils, young carers and pupils with special educational needs all felt less safe at school than their counterparts. 94% of pupils said they felt safe at home.

	Feel safe at school/college			
	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9	Year 12
Very/quite safe	75%	59%	52%	81%
Not sure	12%	23%	26%	14%
Very/quite unsafe	13%	18%	22%	5%

Table 8 Year 7 and Year 9 pupils were less likely to say they felt safe at school.

Neurodiversity (Year 12)

30%

of Year 12 students identified as neurodiverse in the survey

45%

reported **feeling happy with life at the moment**



32%

have **low mental wellbeing** scores



Lower

levels of feeling safe at home, school, and area they live



29%

reported **needing extra help at school**



Year 12 students were asked whether they considered themselves to have a neurodiverse condition (they were not asked if they had received a medical diagnosis). Neurodiversity regards differences in brain function and behavioural traits as part of normal variation in the population. It can include autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and Tourette syndrome, as well as neurodevelopmental conditions. Uncovering the strengths of neurodiverse people and utilising their talents can help increase innovation and productivity of society as a whole.

Self-identification as neurodivergent is becoming more prevalent but a particularly high percentage of Year 12 students identified as neurodiverse in the survey (30%), compared to national estimations of clinical prevalence of around 10-20%²³. Children and young people's referral pathways are more established than adults in this area, however younger people may also be more likely to identify as neurodiverse, or identify with some characteristics of neurodiversity, due to an increase in neurodiversity awareness, more exposure on social media, and greater neurodiverse representation online, in media and in TV/film.

These results are being regarded as **experimental statistics** as this question was being asked for the first time and further development of the self-report approach may be required in the future.

45% of neurodiverse students reported feeling happy with life at the moment, which was lower than their neurotypical peers/counterparts (59%). Neurodiverse students also reported feeling less optimistic about the future than their neurotypical peers on a range of subjects, including family and friend relationships, accommodation, health, and money.

Almost a third (32%) of neurodiverse students had low mental wellbeing scores, compared to around one in five (19%) neurotypical students, and higher levels of feeling lonely some or most of the time.

Similar to neurotypical students, neurodiverse students were most likely to worry about school/exams and their appearance. However, neurodiverse students were generally more likely to worry a lot or quite a lot across all topics (Table 9).

²³ The Brain Charity (2022) [Neurodivergent, neurodiversity and neurotypical: a guide to the terms](#)

I worry a lot or quite a lot about...	Neurodiverse	Neurotypical
School/exams*	50%	49%
My appearance	45%	38%
Money	33%	26%
Relationships	30%	21%
Family problems	28%	18%
Problems with friends	26%	13%
Climate change	13%	6%

* difference not significant

Table 9 Neurodiverse students were generally more likely to worry a lot or quite a lot across all topics.

Neurodiverse students felt less safe than their neurotypical peers in the area in which they lived, at school, and at home (Figure 14).

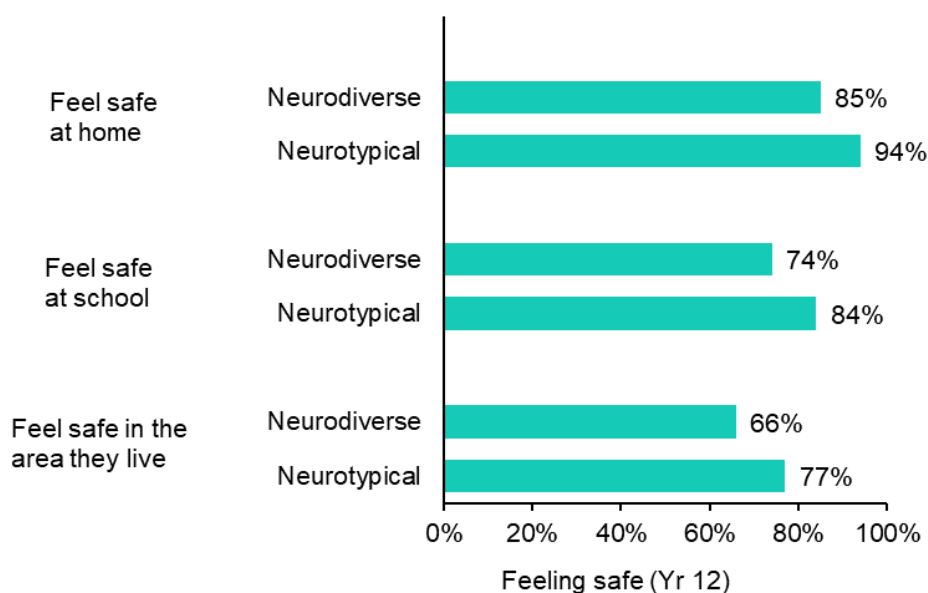


Figure 14 Lower levels of feeling safe in neurodiverse students.

29% of neurodiverse students reported needing extra help at school and neurodiverse students were more likely to be bullied than their neurotypical peers. They reported higher levels of bullying due to their size or weight, clothes, sexual orientation, and gender identity. A quarter of neurodiverse students (25%) reported being bullied due to a 'disability' (or possibly their neurodiversity that other pupils may perceive to be a 'disability'), compared to only around 3% of neurotypical students.

Free Time and Social Media

34%

of Year 7 pupils **go to the library** once a month or more

44%



of Year 5 pupils **went to the playground** once a week or more

Females



are more likely to **read a book once a week or more**

Increases



with age, the percentage of pupils who **never read books** in their free time

28%



of Year 9 pupils agree they **worry about some of the things they have seen on social media**

Pupils were asked how often they visit different places outside of school in their free time, this included green spaces and several places that are funded by the local authority (Figure 15). They were also asked if they read books outside of school time and what their opinions were about several aspects of social media.

Green spaces like parks are recognised as important for children's physical and mental health²⁴. In their free time it was found that 45% of Year 5 and 49% of Year 7 visited a park once a week or more and 28% of Year 5 and 38% of Year 7 visited the countryside once a month or more. Previous studies have found that children from ethnic minority backgrounds sometimes have less access to green space²⁵. In Wakefield it was found pupils of non-White ethnic backgrounds were as likely to access parks at least once a week in all years but were less likely to go to the countryside at least once a month in Years 7 and 9. Those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods were also less likely to visit the countryside.

²⁴ Unicef (2022) [The Necessity of Urban Green Space for Children's Optimal Development](#)

²⁵ Friends of the Earth (2020) [England's green space gap](#)

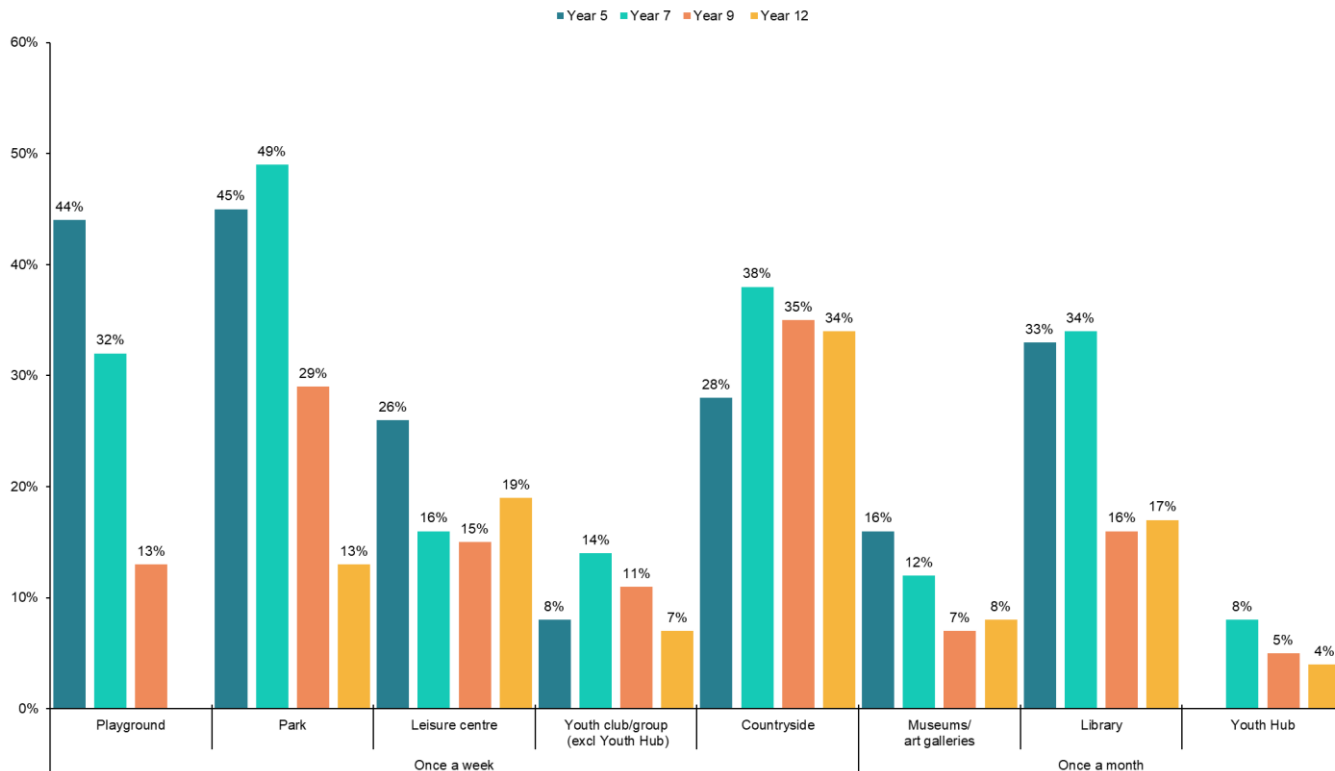


Figure 15 Places visited in free time.

Year 5 pupils were most likely to visit a leisure centre once a week or more and Year 5 and 7 were most likely to visit the library once a month or more. Across places visited, excluding green spaces discussed previously, there were similar patterns of attendance across the inequality groups except females and children from non-White ethnicities were more likely to visit the library once a month or more and young carers in all years and children with special educational needs in Year 7 were more likely to visit youth hubs once a month or more.

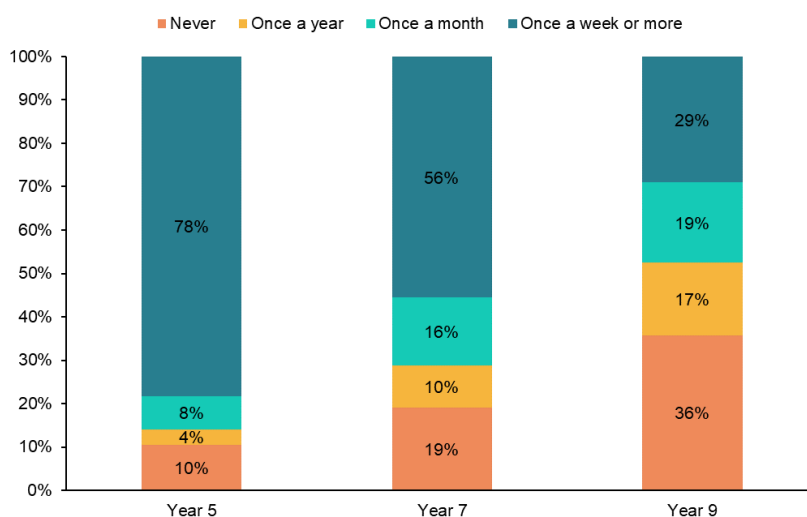


Figure 16 How often children read a book at home.

Children were also asked how often they read a book in their free time (Figure 16). Younger children were most likely to read a book once a week or more (78%), more than twice as likely as those in Year 9 (29%). Trends in reading over the last three surveys (2020, 2022, 2024) suggest there have not been many changes over time in the percentage of children who never read a book at home, the percentage continues to be higher in Year 9 pupils across all years (Figure 17).

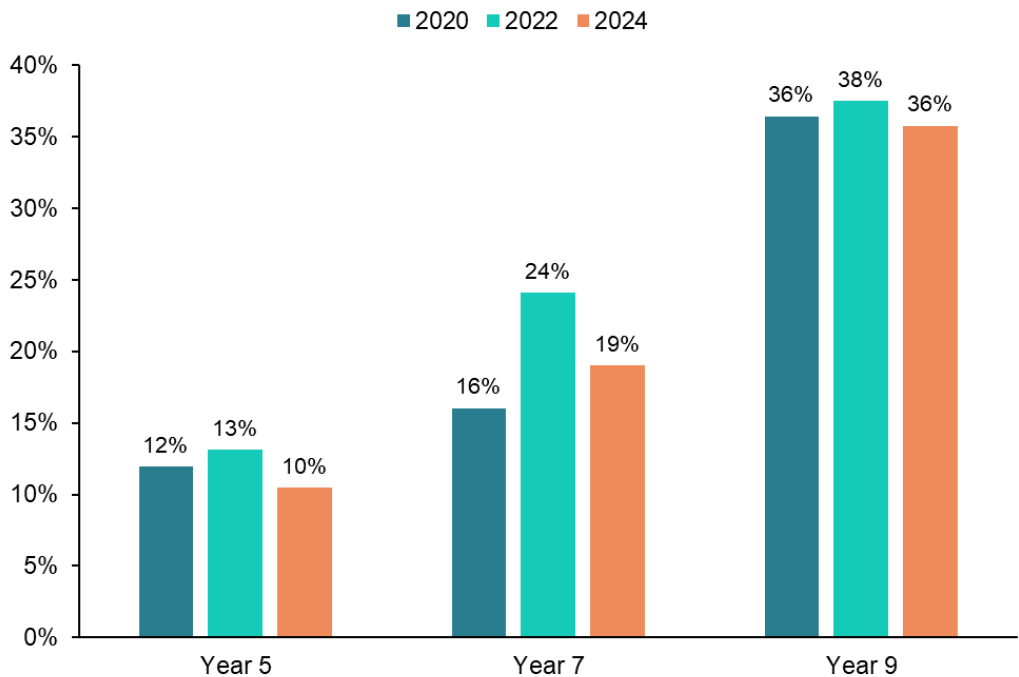


Figure 17 Trends of never reading at home.

There was a gender gap in reading with males much less likely than females to read a book once a week or more in all year groups (Figure 18). A similar gender gap has also been seen nationally in reading enjoyment which is lower amongst males compared to females in children aged 5 to 18²⁶. The national survey also found declining reading enjoyment up until the age of 16, which matches the reducing percentages of children reading books once a week or more with age seen in this survey.

²⁶ National Literacy Trust (2023) [Children and Young People's Reading in 2023](#)

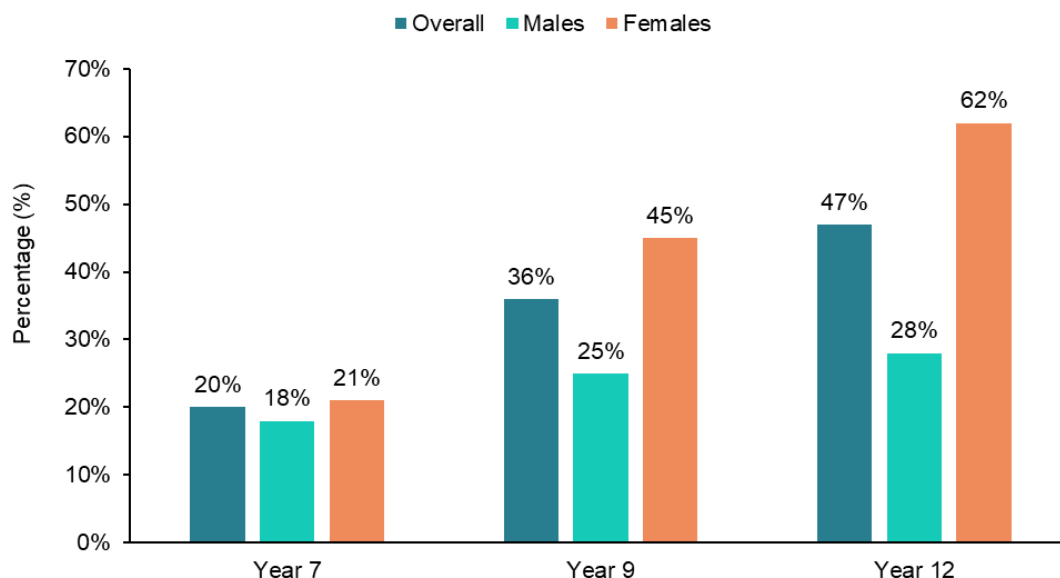


Figure 18 Percentages of respondents reading a book once a week or more, by gender

The most popular social media apps and websites showed a similar pattern to the 2022 survey with YouTube, online gaming, TikTok and Snapchat being most popular amongst Year 5 and 7 pupils (Figure 19).

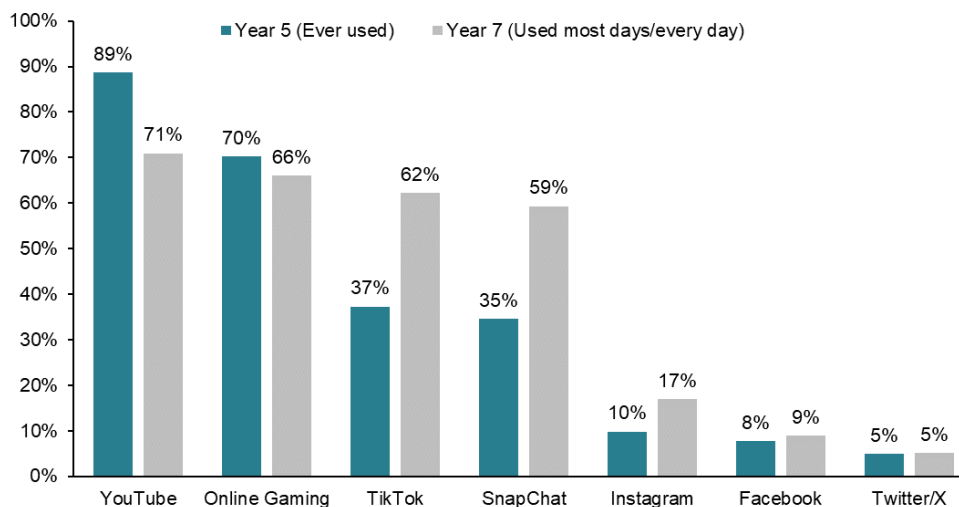


Figure 19 Use of different social media apps / websites by years 5 and 7.

Pupils in Years 7 and 9 were asked to give their level of agreement about some statements relating to social media (Figure 20). About half of pupils agreed they could go without using social media for a day. The percentage of people agreeing they felt social media put them in a bad mood or were worried about how many likes they got on social media was relatively low for both year groups. Some of the things they saw on social media worried 24% of Year 7 and 28% of Year 9 pupils.

Females and young carers were more likely to agree that they couldn't go without social media for a day and to agree with statements about worrying about social media and feeling like they are missing out due to

what they see on social media. Those with special educational needs were more likely to worry about getting enough 'likes' or positive responses on social media.

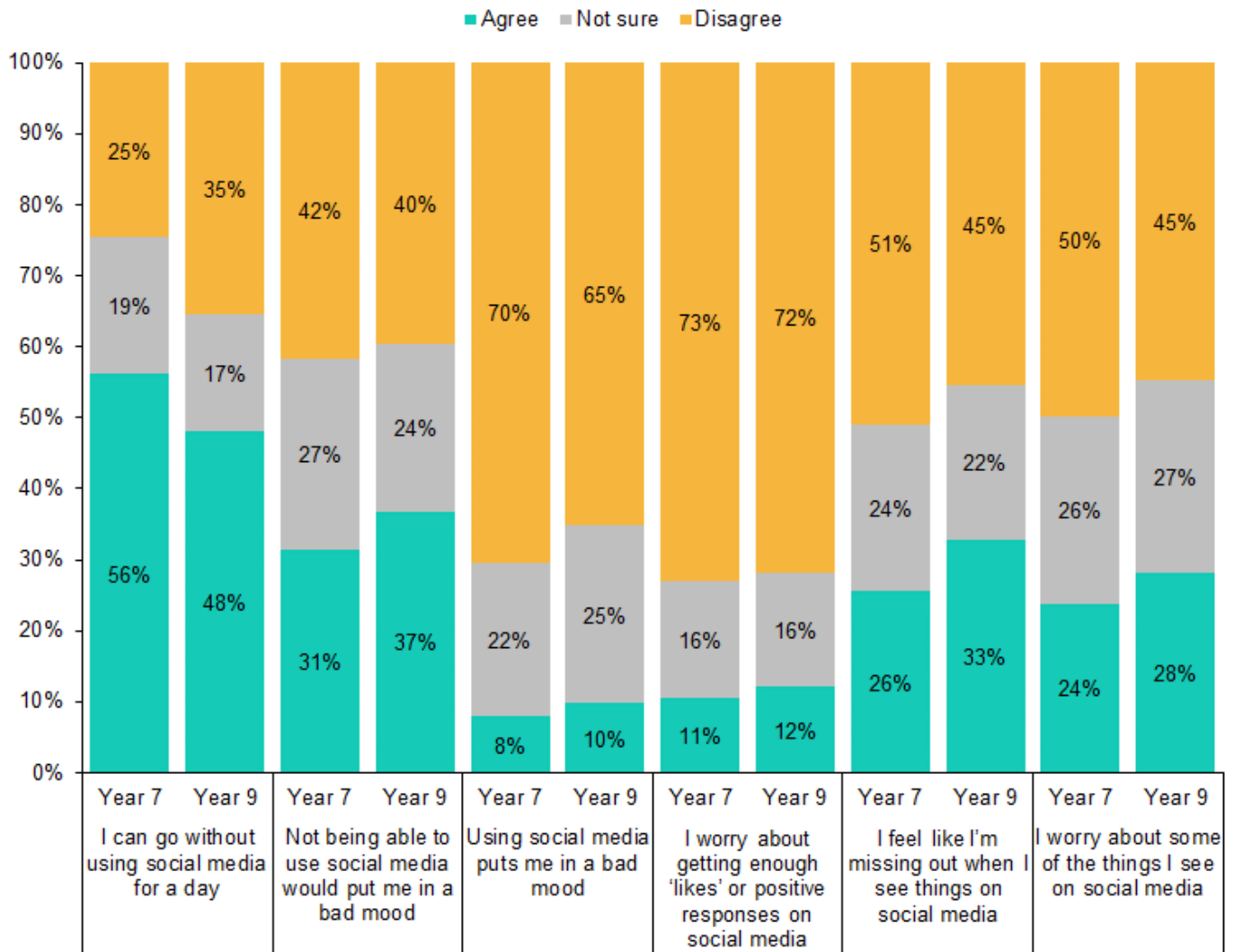


Figure 20 Level of agreement with different statements about social media use.

Sexual Health

35%

of Year 9 pupils know where to get free condoms

77%



of Year 12 students feel **confident in establishing consent with a sexual partner**

67%



of Year 12 students **know where to access free STI testing**

67%



of Year 9 pupils agree they could **describe the laws relating age of consent for sexual relationships**

31%



of Year 12 students who have had sex **use a condom every time**

Year 9 pupils and Year 12 students were asked a number of questions relating to sexual health including how well they thought they understood issues surrounding consent, whether they had felt under pressure to have sex and whether they knew how to access condoms. Year 12 students were also asked if they knew they could access free sexually transmitted infection (STI) clinics and testing.

When asked to agree with different statements about sexual relationships and consent, Year 12 students were more likely to agree they could describe the laws relating to age of consent and establishing consent with a sexual partner and were more likely to agree they had felt pressure to have sex than those in Year 9 (Figure 21). Those from non-White ethnicities and those with special educational needs were less likely to agree they could describe consent laws or felt confident establishing consent with a partner. Females were more likely than males to agree they had felt pressure to have sex.

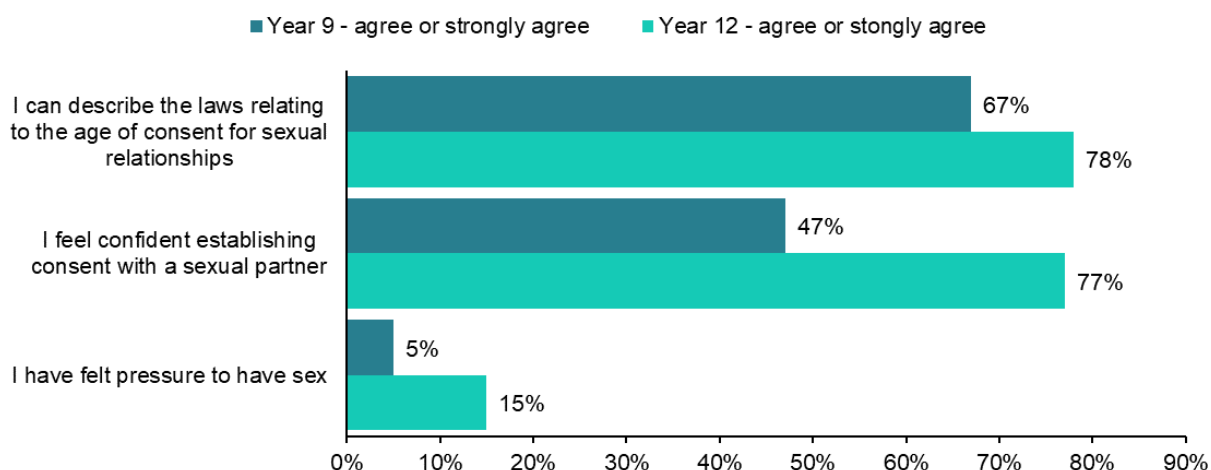


Figure 21 Percentage of Year 9 and 12 who agreed or strongly agreed to the given statements.

In Wakefield District if you are aged between 13 and 24 years old you can register for a C-Card which offers access to a number of sexual health services including free condoms and STI testing²⁷. Very few pupils in Year 9 had had sex (<4%) and 35% knew where to get condoms for free. Trends show there was a drop in the number of pupils in year 9 knowing where to access condoms for free but this has begun to increase slightly again (Figure 15). In Year 12, 4-in-10 students had had sex and 31% of those had used a condom every time, three quarters of all Year 12 students knew where to get condoms for free and this was higher amongst those who had had sex (82%).

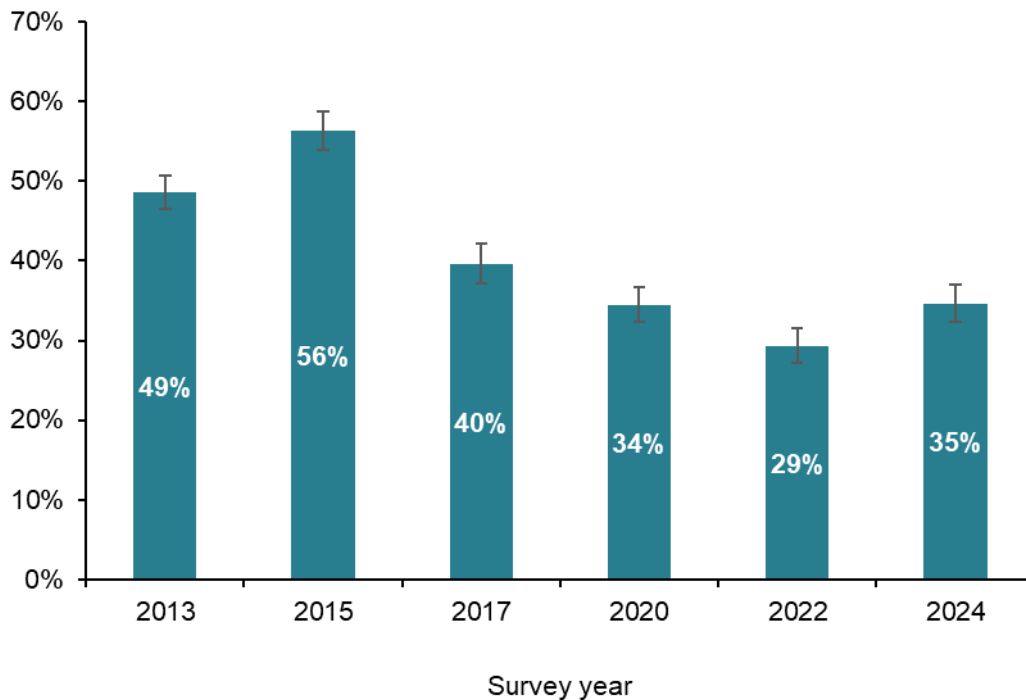


Figure 22 Trends over time for the percentage of Year 9 pupils who know where to get condoms for free.

Two thirds of Year 12 students knew where to access STI testing for free, and those who had had sex were more likely to know. Exploring possible barriers to STI testing, 52% of Year 12 students didn't think there were any barriers. Of the barriers listed, 22% didn't know how to access free tests. Barriers of not knowing why/when a test is needed, being embarrassed, worry about parents/carers finding out and being nervous scared were each selected by 11% of students (Figure 23).

²⁷ Spectrum Health (2024) [Condoms and C-Card](#)

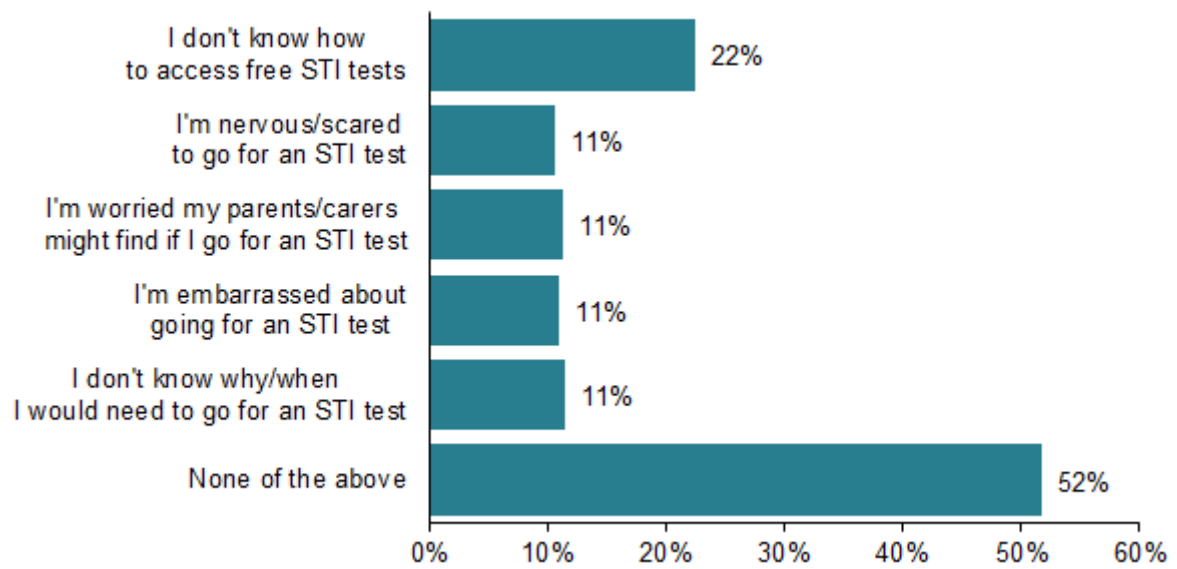


Figure 23 Selected barriers to STI testing, Year 12 student responses (more than one barrier could be selected).

Sexual Harassment

26%

of Year 9 pupils have been **sexually harassed** by another young person or group of young people

Carers

in Year 7 and Year 9 were **more likely to be sexually harassed** than others in their year groups

Females

were much more likely to be **sexually harassed** than males

85%

of Year 9 pupils had been **taught about sexual harassment at school**

80%

of Year 12 students **know who to report sexual harassment to in their school/college**

Raising awareness of what sexual harassment is and its impacts is part of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PHSE) curriculum in schools or is delivered through online safety or other information sessions. It can be taught at any time whilst a child is at high school but when it is delivered may vary between schools. In the survey 72% of Year 7 and 85% of Year 9 pupils said they had been taught about it in school. The percentage of respondents who had experienced sexual harassment was higher among the older year groups (Figure 24).

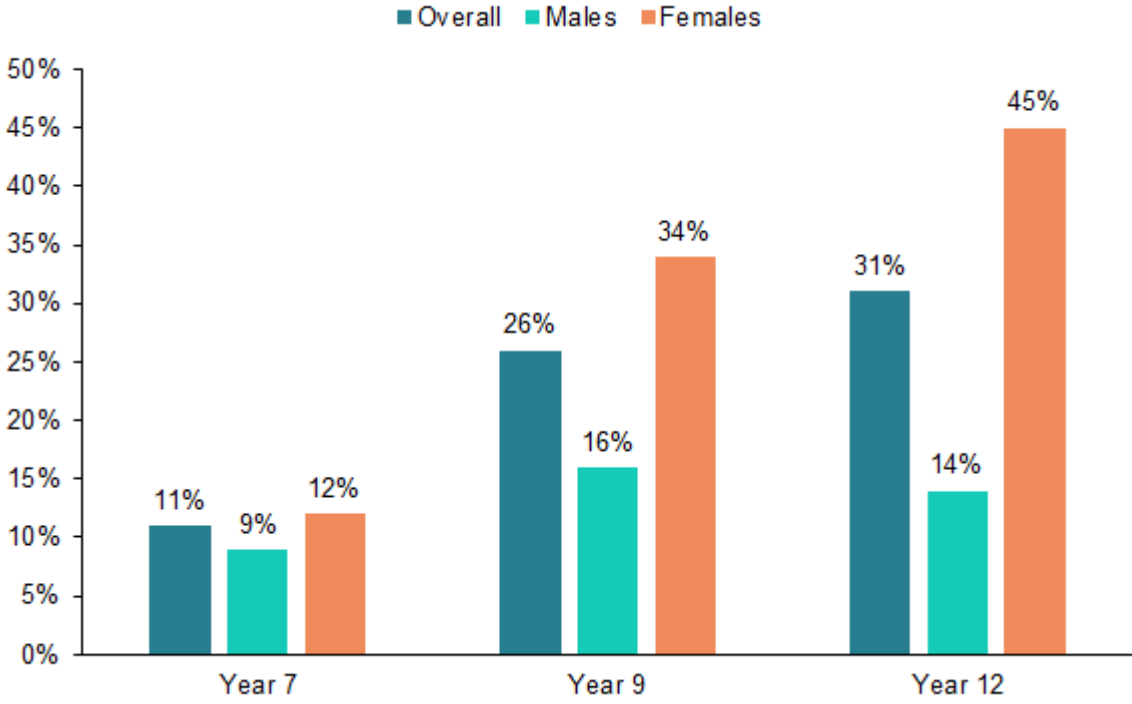


Figure 24 Percentage of respondents experiencing sexual harassment overall and by gender.

Females were much more likely to experience sexual harassment than males and the gap increased with age (Figure 24). This gender gap was also found in a 2021 review carried out by Ofsted²⁸. Other groups more likely to experience sexual harassment included those with special educational needs in Year 7 and young carers in Year 7 and Year 9. Rates were lower than the 2022 survey in Year 7 and Year 9 but the question was altered slightly in 2024 to include the option of 'prefer not to say' which may have affected the percentages.

The most common types of sexual harassment for Year 12 students were sexualised comments/banter and being asked to share nude or semi-nude images or videos (Figure 25). Most pupils knew who to report sexual harassment to in their school or college, 74% in Years 7 and 9 and 80% in Year 12.

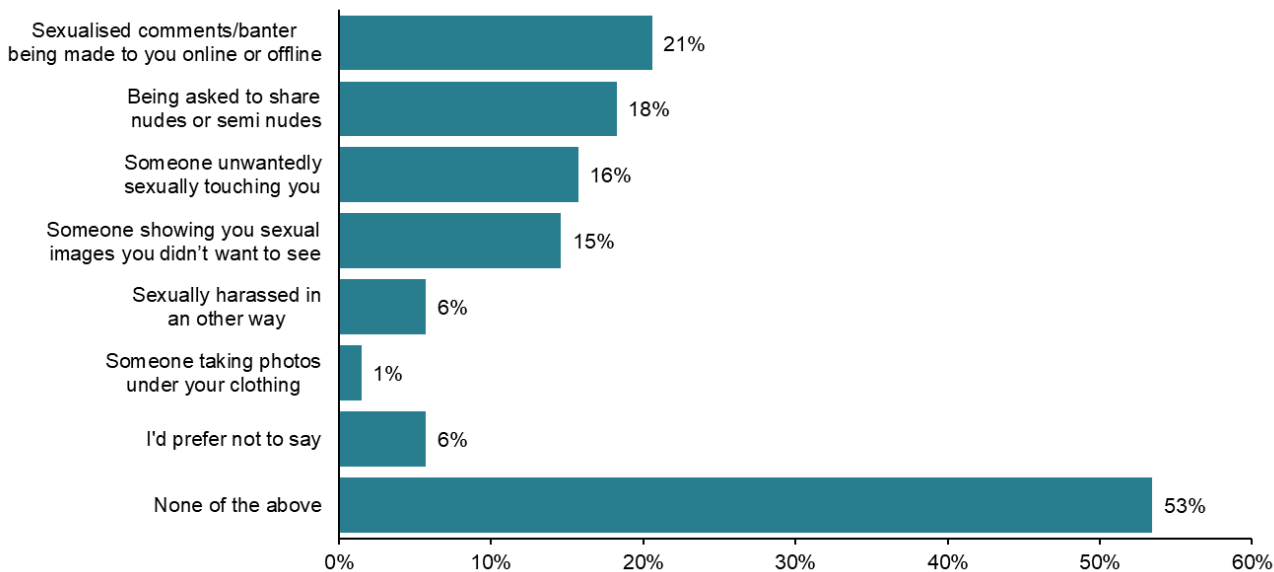


Figure 25 Types of sexual harassment experienced by Year 12 students (more than one option could be selected except if 'None of the above' was chosen).

²⁸ Ofsted (2021) [Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges](#)

Smoking and Vaping

99%

of pupils in Year 7 had never tried smoking a cigarette

3 out of 4



of Year 9 pupils **had never used a vape**

12%



of all pupils **thought it was OK for people their age to smoke**

19%



of Year 5 pupils have **someone who smokes in their home**

1 in 5



of Year 12 students **use a vape every day**

Survey participants were asked a number of questions about their own smoking and vaping opinions and behaviour, as well of those around them. Almost all Year 7 pupils (99%) had never tried smoking a cigarette, this decreased slightly in year 9 to 93% and Year 12 students were more likely to have tried a cigarette with 70% having never tried (Figure 26).

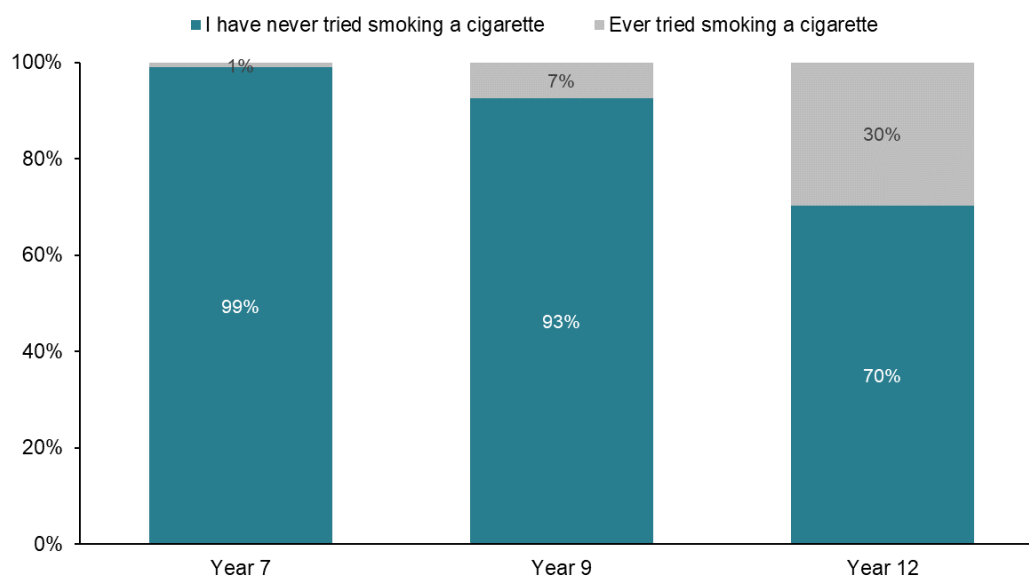


Figure 26 Percentage of survey respondents who had at least tried smoking a cigarette.

Percentage of never-smokers for Year 7 and 9 pupils have increased since previous surveys (Year 9 trends in Figure 27). A similar trend is being seen nationally in the Health Survey for England where 'ever smoked' amongst 8-15 year olds has decreased from 19% in 1997 to 3% in 2022²⁹.

²⁹ NHS England (2024) [Health Survey for England, 2022 Part 1. Children's health and health-related behaviours](#)

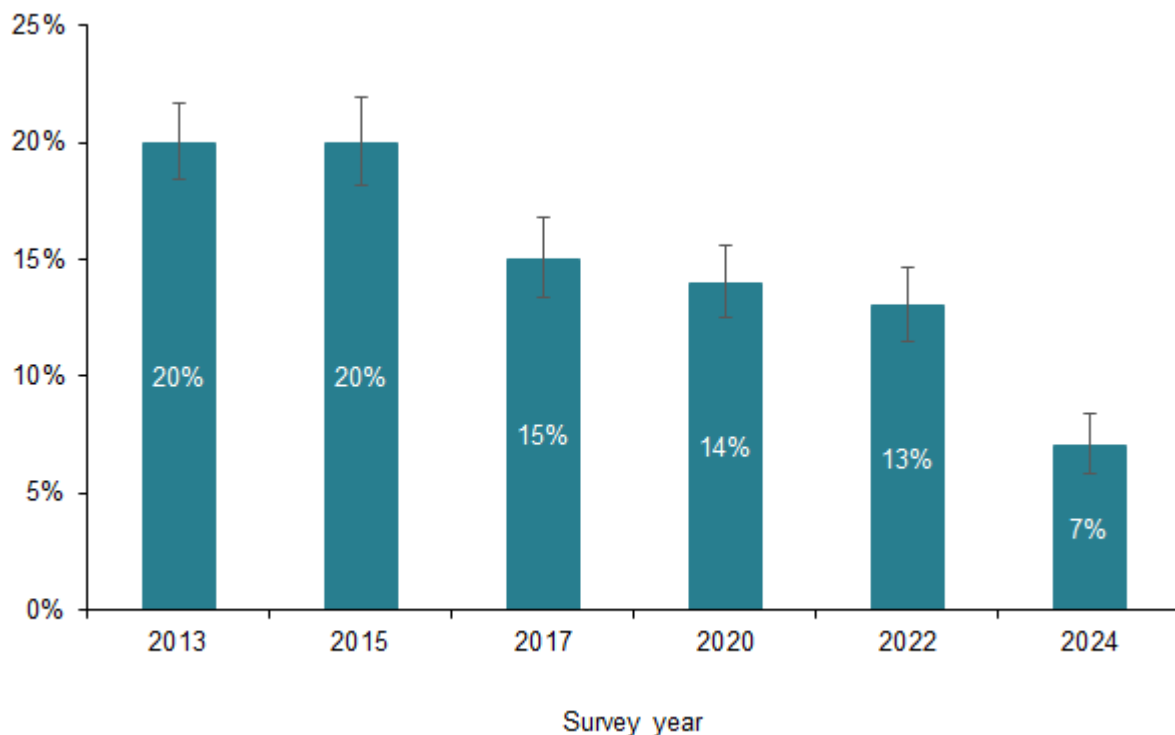


Figure 27 Trends over time for the percentage of Year 9 pupils who had ever tried smoking.

When asked about vaping, nine out of ten Year 5 pupils had never tried using a vape, this decreased to one in-four in Year 9 pupils and just under half of Year 12 students (Figure 28). Levels were similar to previous survey years for Years 7 and 9. Year 12 levels of students having ever tried vaping were slightly higher than national levels reported for 16-17 years olds in a 2023 survey³⁰. As age increases a higher percentage of young people are regular users of vapes with 4% of Year 9s responding they use vapes every day increasing to 21% in Year 12 compared to less than 1% and 2% respectively for smoking cigarettes.

³⁰ Action on Smoking and Health (2023) [Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain](#)

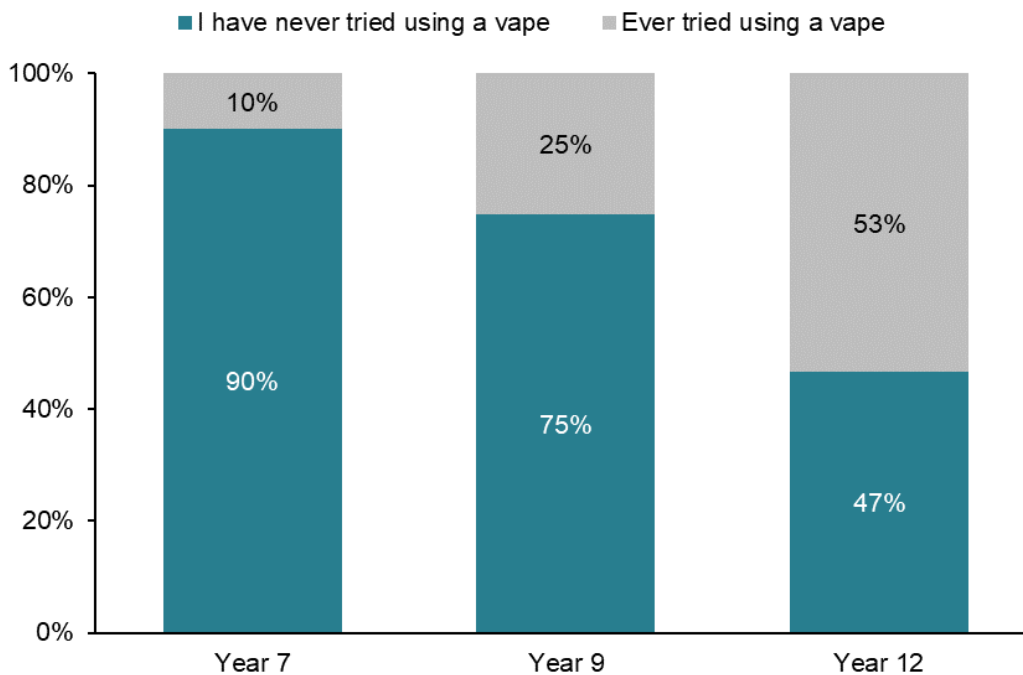


Figure 28 Percentage of survey respondents who had at least tried vaping.

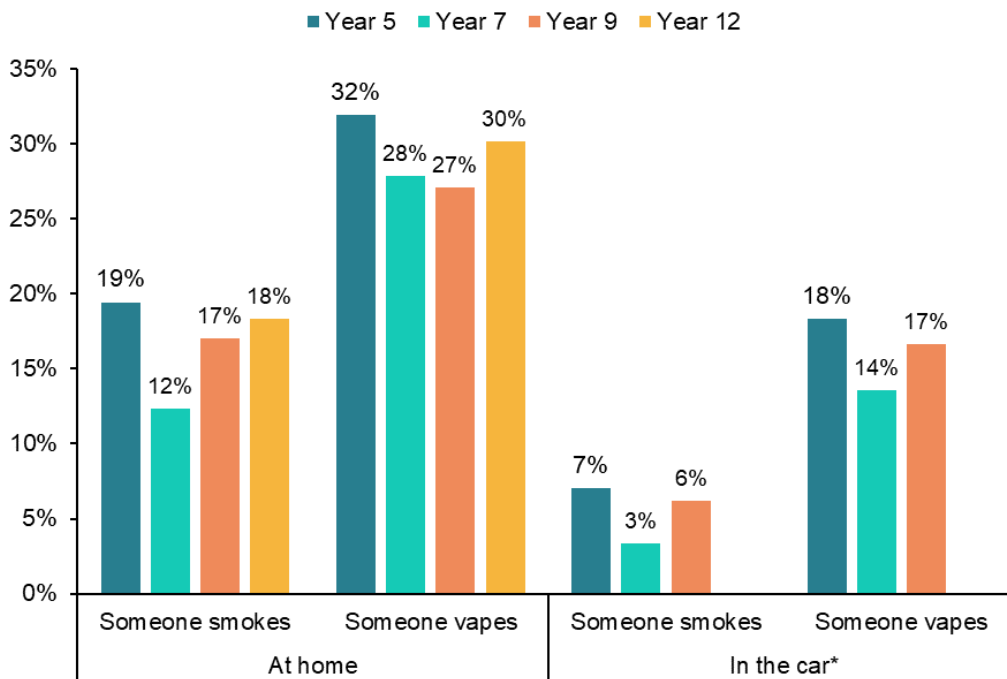
Comparing those who smoked and vaped nearly all Year 7, 9 and 12 pupils who had tried smoking had also tried a vape. And 9% of those who had never tried smoking had tried a vape in Year 7, 20% in Year 9 and 35% in Year 12.

Year 9 females were more likely to have smoked and vaped than males but there were no differences in other years. In Years 9 and 12, those of White ethnicity were more likely to have vaped. In Year 9, young carers and those with special educational needs were more likely to have at least tried smoking or vaping than other pupils. Young carers in Year 12 had higher levels of smoking and vaping along with students living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Children who are exposed to smoking and environmental tobacco smoke at a young age are at increased risk of respiratory problems like asthma and chest infections³¹ and are also more likely to take up smoking themselves³². Less is known about children's passive exposure to vaping or what effects it may have on their health. When looking at environmental exposure to cigarette smoking and vaping, levels of vaping were higher than smoking in the home and car (Figure 29). More children in Year 5 reported someone who smoked in their home (19%) and car (7%).

³¹ NHS (2022) [Passive smoking](#)

³² Action on Smoking and Health (2024) [Young People and Smoking - What factors influence children to start smoking?](#) p.3



* Year 12 were not asked about other people smoking in the car.

Figure 29 Percentage exposed to other people smoking or vaping in the car or home.

Pupils from ethnic minorities were less likely to have someone who vaped in the home or car when they were in it while those with special educational needs reported higher levels of smoking in their home and car. Young carers were at higher risk of being exposed to someone smoking or vaping in the home. Year 5 pupils living in the most deprived neighbourhoods were nearly twice as likely to report smoking or vaping in their home. Year 9 pupils who reported smoking or vaping at home were more than three times as likely to have tried smoking and twice as likely to have tried vaping than those who didn't. Levels of smoking in the home increased during the last survey in 2022 possibly due to people spending an increased amount of time at home due to Covid lockdowns but this has now reduced to pre-Covid levels.

In every year group surveyed, pupils were more likely to think it was okay for others their age to vape than it was to smoke cigarettes (Figure 30).

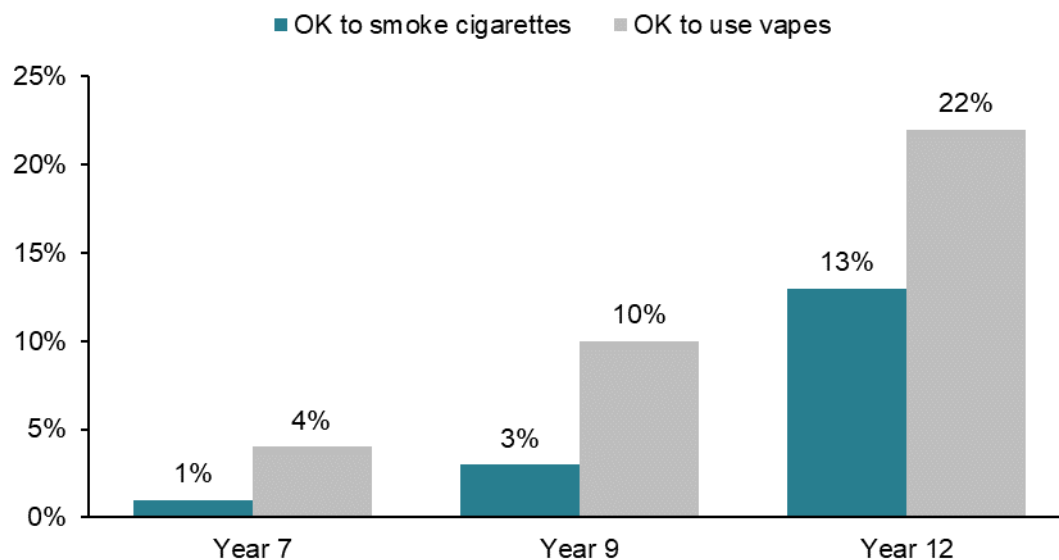


Figure 30 Percentage of pupils who think it is okay for young people their age to smoke cigarettes or use vape.

Year 12 students were asked about where they got their cigarettes and vapes from. Of those who had at least tried smoking cigarettes 28% had been given them and 21% got them from a shop and for those who at least tried vaping 36% bought them from a shop and 20% were given them. It is illegal for shops to sell these products to under 18s.

Alcohol

Nearly half

of pupils in Year 9 had never tried alcohol

20%



of Year 12 students
drink alcohol once or
more per week

18%



of Year 9 pupils thought
it was OK for people
their age to get drunk

49%



of Year 12 students
said they were given
the alcohol they
drank

Upwards



trend in the percentage
of pupils who had
never tried alcohol

The percentage of respondents who had never consumed alcohol decreased with age with 71% of Year 7, 48% of Year 9 and 20% of Year 12s having never drunk alcohol (Figure 31), up from 11% in 2017.

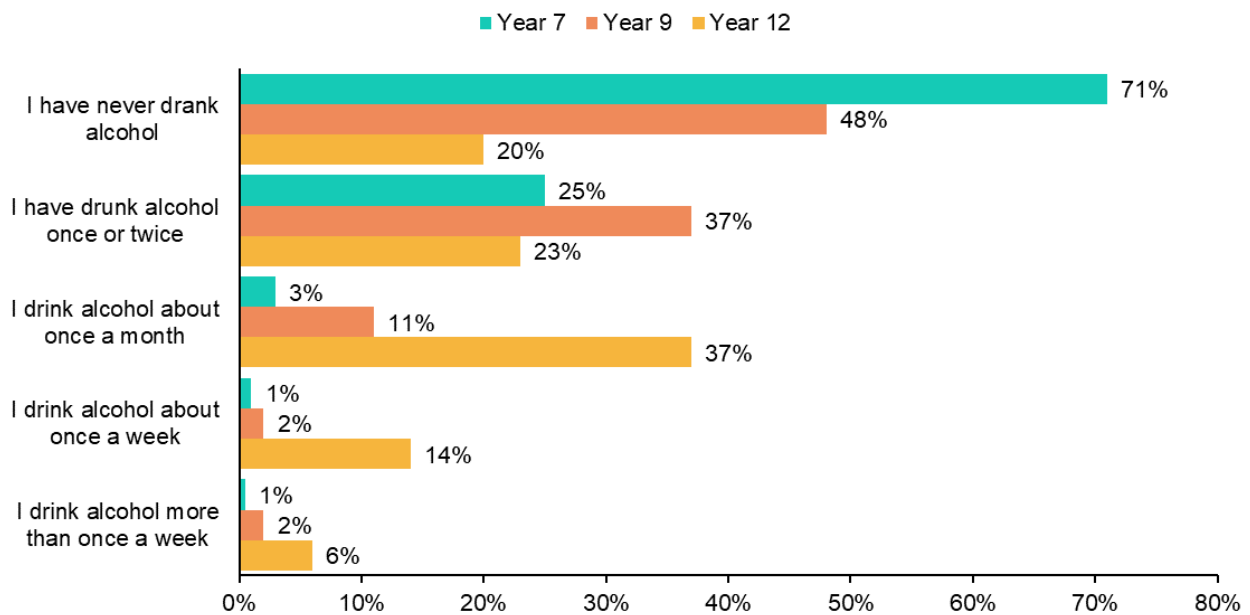


Figure 31 Frequency of alcohol intake by year group.

As with smoking, the percentage of respondents who had tried alcohol has decreased over time with 58% and 39% of Year 7 and 9 pupils in 2020 having never drunk alcohol (Trends for Year 9: Figure 32), this is similar to national trends from the Health Survey for England³³.

³³ NHS England (2024) [Health Survey for England, 2022 Part 1. Children's health and health-related behaviours](#)

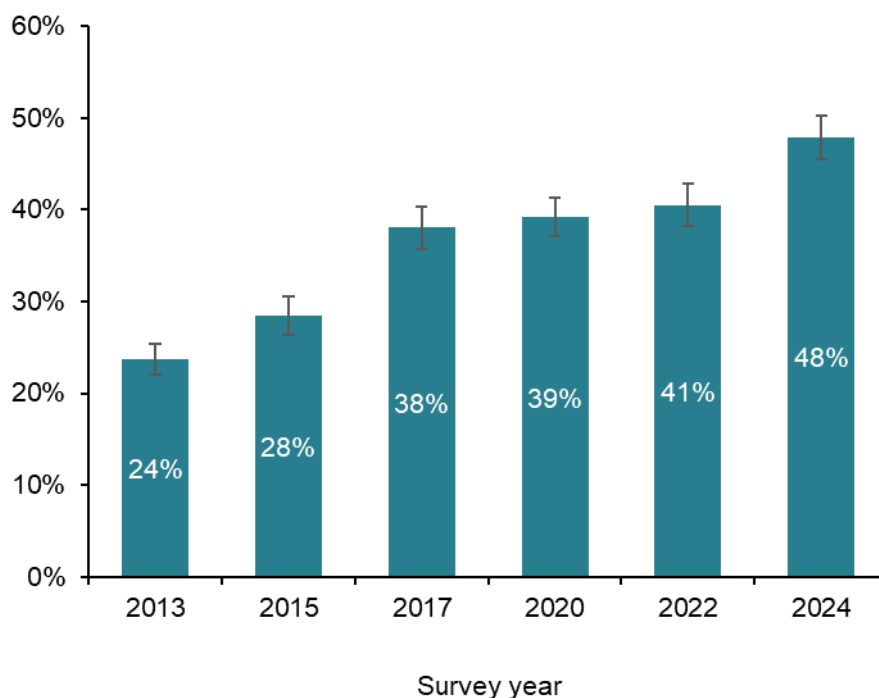


Figure 32 Trends in percentage of Year 9 pupils who had never tried alcohol.

In Year 7, females were more likely to have never drunk than males but this was different in Year 9, where males were more likely to have never drunk. In Year 12 the proportions abstaining were similar for both sexes. Those of non-White ethnicity were less likely to have tried alcohol across all year groups.

Opinions about whether it was okay for people their age to get drunk was 5% in Year 7 increasing to 18% for Year 9 pupils. Those who drank alcohol once a month or more were more likely to think it was okay to get drunk than other pupils (Y7: 39% vs. 3%, Y9: 55% vs. 11%). Year 12 students were asked where they got alcohol from, and most were given it (49%) or didn't want to say where they got it (26%) or bought it from a shop (22%).

Gambling

69%

of pupils in Year 7 and 9 had tried one of the gambling activities asked about in the survey in the last 12 months

28%



of Year 12 students had **put a bet on a sporting event** in the last 12 months

29%



of Year 9 pupils **hadn't done any gambling** in the last 12 months

46%



of Year 7 pupils knew **where to get professional support for gambling**

55%



of Year 9 pupils had **bought coins to level up on a game** in the last 12 months

In the survey there were questions about the frequency respondents had taken part in the following different types of gambling activity in the previous 12 months:

- Bought coins to move up a level on a computer game
- Skin gambling on online games
- Bought a 'loot box' on a computer game
- Used a fruit machine/slot machine
- Placed a private bet with friends
- Bought a lottery ticket or scratch card
- Put a bet on a sporting event

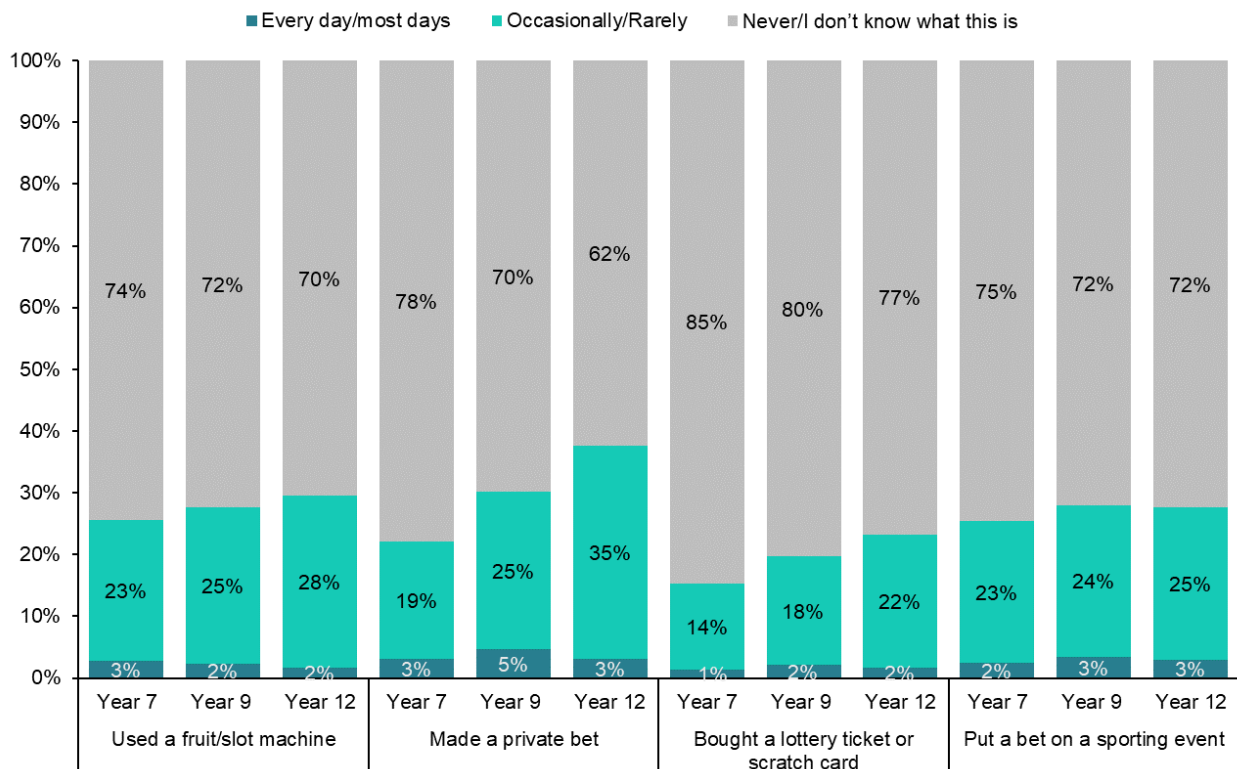


Figure 33 Frequency of gambling by year group for non-gaming related gambling types.

The proportion of pupils who had never gambled was similar to previous school health surveys with about 3 out of 10 pupils in both Years 7 and 9 not partaking in any of the listed gambling activities in the previous 12 months. The most common form of gambling was buying coins to move up a level on a computer game with 57% of Year 7, 55% of Year 9 and 50% of Year 12 taking part in this activity in the last 12 months.

Males were more likely to have taken part in gambling than females, especially those types of gambling relating to online gaming. This could be due to higher proportions of males who participate in online gaming compared to females – when asked about how often they took part in online gaming 87% of males compared to 48% of females in Year 7 answered most days or every day. When gaming related gambling was excluded, rates were still higher amongst males.

Those of non-White ethnicity who took part in the survey were less likely to have gambled, and this was similar to findings by the Gambling Commission in a national survey of young people³⁴.

Young carers were more likely to have taken part in gambling and when young carers in Year 7 were asked about whether they knew where to get professional help for gambling they were less likely to know than other children. Having special educational needs and living in deprived neighbourhoods did not have a major bearing on gambling habits in any of the year groups.

³⁴ Gambling Commission (2023) [Young People and Gambling 2023. Variations in active involvement in gambling](#)

Drugs

78%

of Year 12 students had never tried drugs

15%

of Year 9 pupils had **been offered cannabis**



Similar

the percentage of Year 9 pupils who have **tried cannabis** was 5%, similar to previous years (3-5%)



40%

of Year 12 students who regularly/occasionally used drugs **felt happy**, less than those who didn't (56%)



4%

of Year 12 students had **tried nitrous oxide**



Year 9 and Year 12 were asked some questions relating to drug use including whether they had been offered or used a number of specific drugs. Year 12 were also asked how often they used drugs.

Overall, a relatively low proportion of Year 9 pupils had been offered or taken the drugs asked about; 15% had been offered cannabis and 5% had taken it whereas only 5% had been offered nitrous oxide and 3% had taken it. A 2022 national survey found that pupils aged 11-15 years old were almost twice as likely to have been offered cannabis than any other individual drug, with 17% of pupils having been offered cannabis³⁵.

78% of Year 12 students had never taken drugs with only 2% saying they took them regularly or most days (Figure 34). Of the five types of drugs asked about specifically ('cannabis', 'nitrous oxide', 'powder cocaine, ecstasy/MDMA/spice', 'Amphetamine', 'Prescription medicines not prescribed to you') the most common used was cannabis at 17% with the other groups each being used by 5% of pupils or less. There were no clear inequalities in percentages of those who had ever taken drugs, but those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods were more likely to have taken cannabis and young carers were more likely to have taken nitrous oxide or amphetamine, but overall numbers were small.

³⁵ NHS England (2022) [Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England, 2021](#)

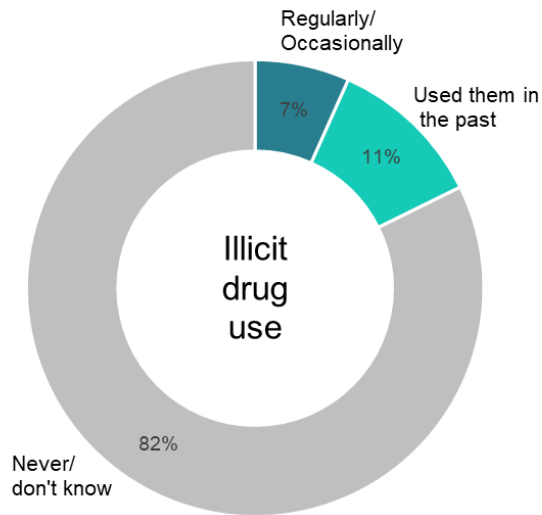


Figure 34 Percentage of Year 12 students who have used drugs, by frequency.

Students who took drugs regularly or occasionally in Year 12 were less likely to feel happy and more likely to feel lonely compared to other students (Figure 35).

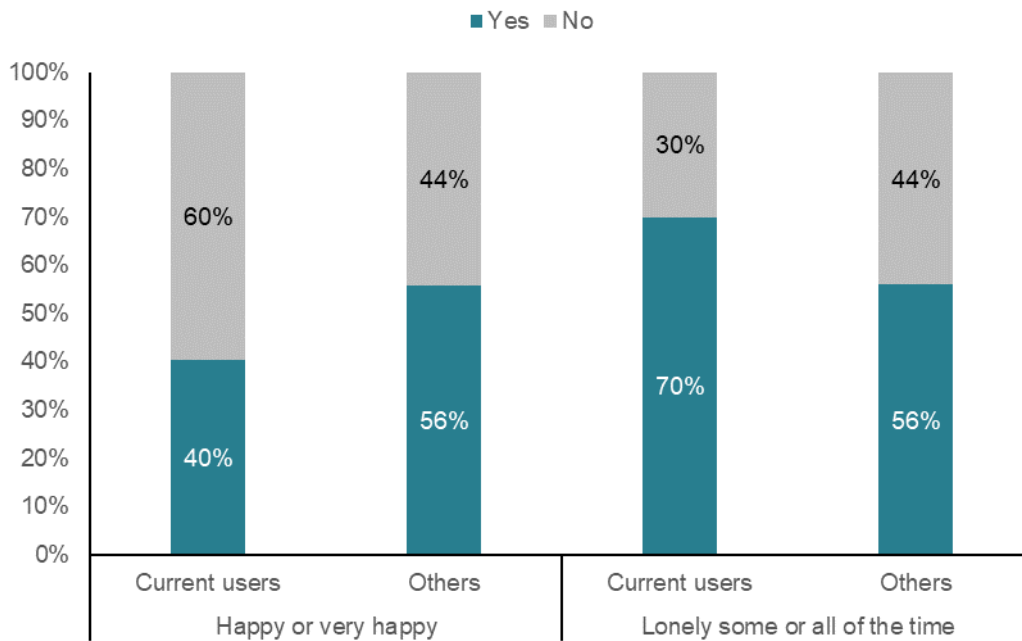


Figure 35 Happiness and loneliness based on current drug use for Year 12.

Future Plans and Climate Change (Year 12)

80%

of Year 12 students were planning to get a job and/or continue with further study after finishing at school/college

76%



are optimistic or very optimistic about their relationships with friends in the future

56%



are optimistic or very optimistic about their job prospects in the future

Females



were less optimistic than males in most areas of their lives in the future

58%



agree or strongly agree that global warming is a very serious problem

When students in Year 12 were asked to think about their plans for after school/college (they could pick more than one option) half were interested in further study, half thought they would get a job and one in five were considering travelling abroad or having a gap year (Figure 36). A total of 80% selected further study and/or a job. The latest national data on destinations in the year after completing 16 to 18 study (2021/22) showed nationally 51% of pupils stayed in education³⁶ and 83% of pupils were in education, apprenticeship or employment. Males were more likely to say they would like to get a job and females were more likely to be considering further study or travel abroad/gap year.

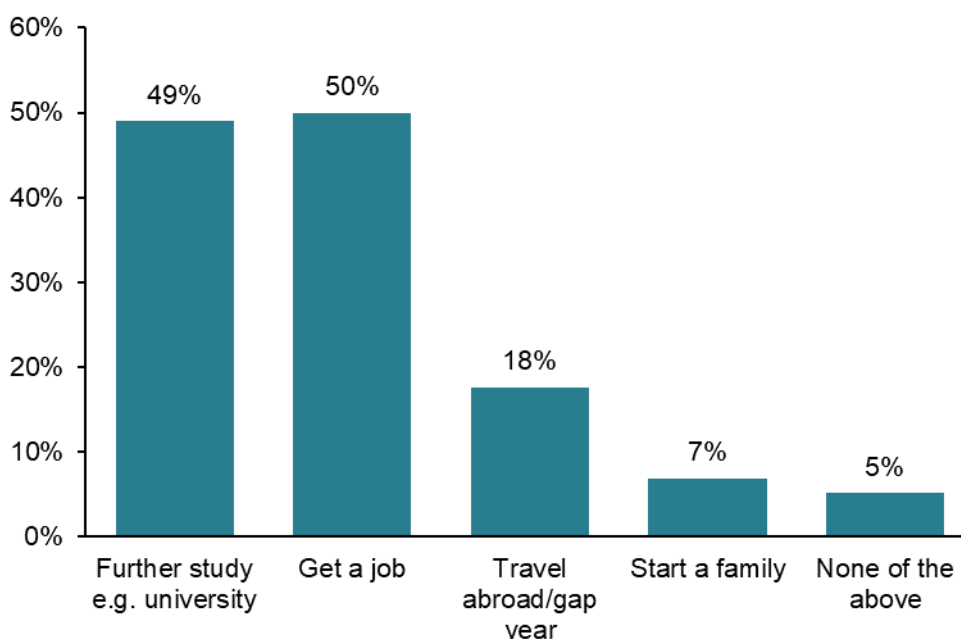


Figure 36 What Year 12 students are planning to do after finishing school / college (more than one option could be selected except if 'None of the above' was chosen).

³⁶ Department for Education (2024) [Academic year 2021/22. 16-18 destination measures](#)

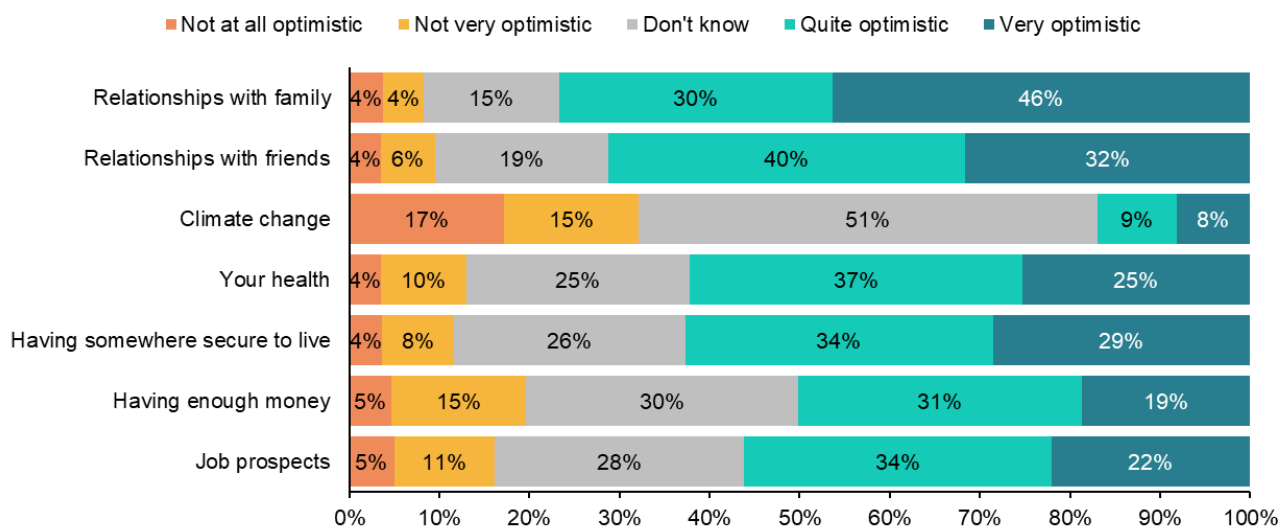


Figure 37 How optimistic Year 12 students felt about different areas of their lives in the future.

Optimism was high about relationships with friends and family in the future but lower when considering having enough money or job prospects (Figure 37). Optimism was lowest about climate change and a high percentage of students didn't know if they were optimistic or not about this topic.

Amongst different groups females tended to be less optimistic than males about all the topics except those relating to relationships with friends and family and especially having enough money. Students from non-White ethnic minority backgrounds were less optimistic about their job prospects and relationships with family. Young carers were less optimistic about having enough money, their health and relationships with family. Those with special educational needs were less optimistic about job prospects, having enough money, having somewhere secure to live and their health. Those from the most deprived areas were less optimistic about their health than those from the least deprived areas.

Year 12 students were also asked more in-depth questions about climate change, 58% agreed it was a very serious problem, 41% were worried about its effects, 48% thought there was too much responsibility on young people to solve the climate crisis and 28% felt their behaviours were contributing to environmental conservation (Figure 38).

An international study of climate anxiety in children and young people asked a sample of 16-25 years olds in the UK with 49% saying they were extremely or very worried about climate change³⁷. Similar questions were also asked in the Girls' Attitudes Survey in 2023 which found 84% of 17-24 year olds were worried about the effects of climate change³⁸. The percentage of females agreeing or strongly agreeing they were worried was lower in this survey at 48%, this was higher than the figure for males. There were differences between females' and males' responses to all four statements with females more likely to agree or strongly agree with them all. Children of non-White ethnicity were more likely to believe global warming is a very serious problem but there were no other differences across the other inequality groups.

Those who thought global warming is a very serious problem or were worried about global warming were more likely to feel like they were contributing to environmental conservation through their behaviours.

³⁷ Hickman, C et al. (2021) [Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey](#)

³⁸ Girlguiding UK (2023) [Girls Attitudes Survey 2023](#)

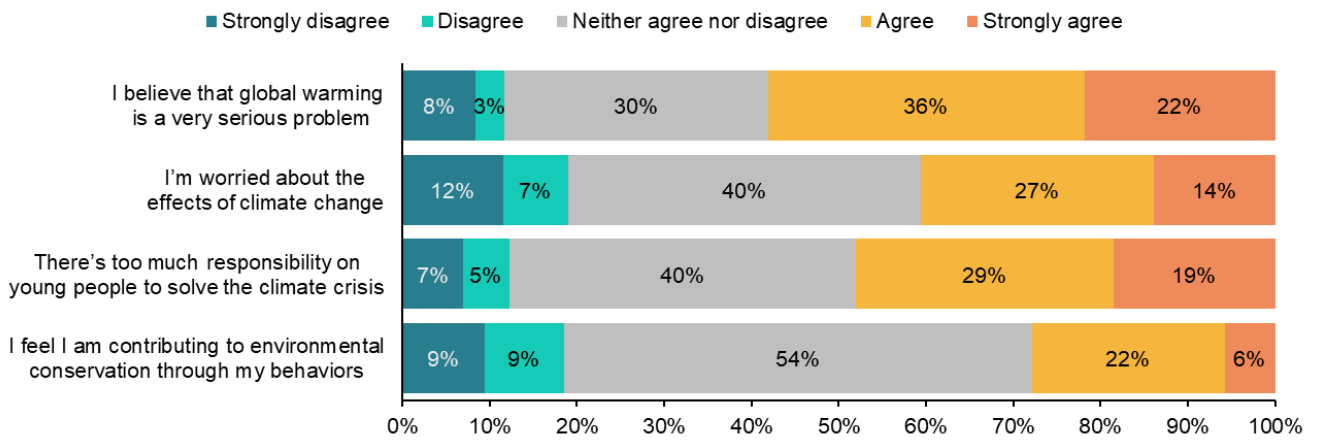


Figure 38 How strongly Year 12 students agreed or disagreed about four statements relating to climate change.

Appendix 1 Survey Participants

Gender

All pupils were given the opportunity to state their gender. 51% of respondents were female and 47% were male. The remaining 2% described their gender as transgender, non-binary, or other (options offered varied by year group). There were no major differences in the gender split between the different year groups.

LGBTQ+

In addition to gender, Year 12 pupils were also asked about their sexual orientation. 17% of Year 12 pupils identified as LGBTQ+.

Deprivation

Pupils in Years 7, 9, and 12 were asked for their home postcode. This was used to determine the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile/decile of the neighbourhood in which the pupils live compared to all neighbourhoods in the Wakefield District. (The analysis uses within-district deprivation quintiles, not the all-England quintiles). 44% of pupils either did not provide a postcode, or did not provide a valid postcode, and therefore their deprivation quintile/decile is unknown. The neighbourhood deprivation of Year 5 pupils was based on the postcode of the school.

Of those that did respond, there was a reasonable spread of responses from pupils across the different IMD quintiles (Figure 39).

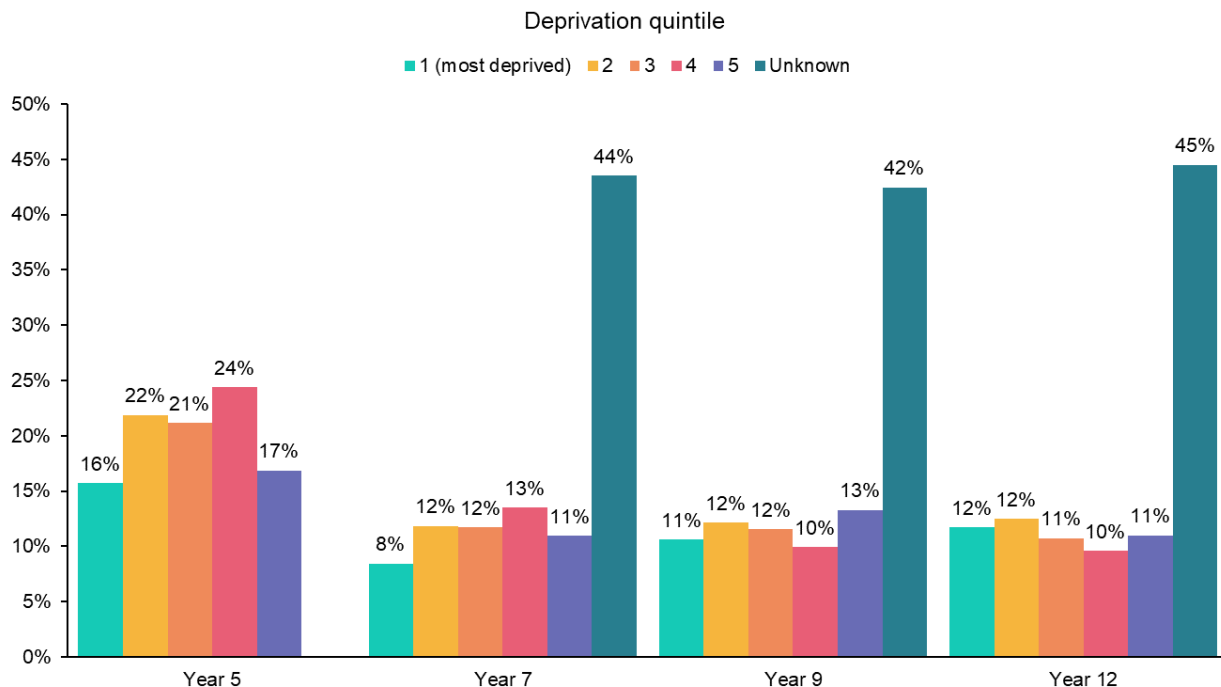


Figure 39 There were was a fairly even spread of responses by level neighbourhood deprivation.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity was asked of pupils in Years 7, 9 and 12, of whom 3% answered ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Don’t want to say’. The profile from those who did state their ethnicity (Table 10) was consistent with that seen in the 2021 Census.

Ethnicity	Year 7	Year 9	Year 12	All Years
White British	79%	73%	83%	78%
Asian / British Asian	9%	8%	6%	8%
Other White	4%	7%	4%	5%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	4%	5%	3%	4%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups	3%	5%	3%	3%
Any Other Ethnic Background	1%	1%	1%	1%

Table 10 Ethnicity of survey respondents.

Special Educational Needs

Pupils were asked if they received extra help at school with their learning or behaviour from someone other than a teacher. The proportion of pupils in Years 7 and 9 answering ‘yes’ (Figure 40) are consistent with the SEN Support statistics published by the Department for education³⁹. However, the proportion of Year 5 pupils saying they receive extra help (27%) is higher than would be expected (circa 16%), which was also the case in the 2022 survey and may indicate younger pupils having difficulty interpreting this question.

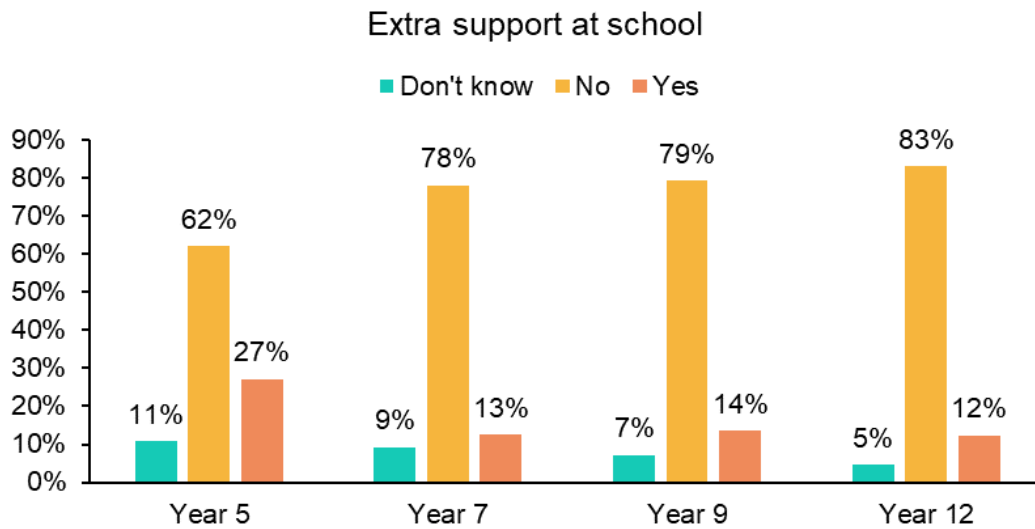


Figure 40 More Year 5 pupils than expected said they receive extra help at school.

³⁹ Department for Education (2024) [Special Educational Needs in England 2023/24](#)

Young Carers

13% of all pupils said they look after, or help, someone in the family who is disabled or ill; 71% said they did not, and 16% did not know. There is no consensus about the true extent of young caring nationally. The 2021 Census showed only 1% of 5–15-year-olds in Wakefield District as providing unpaid care⁴⁰. While a national survey in 2018 found that 22% of young people aged 11 to 15 years in England lived with someone who suffered from an illness or a disability and who they helped to look after and do things to help them around the home⁴¹.

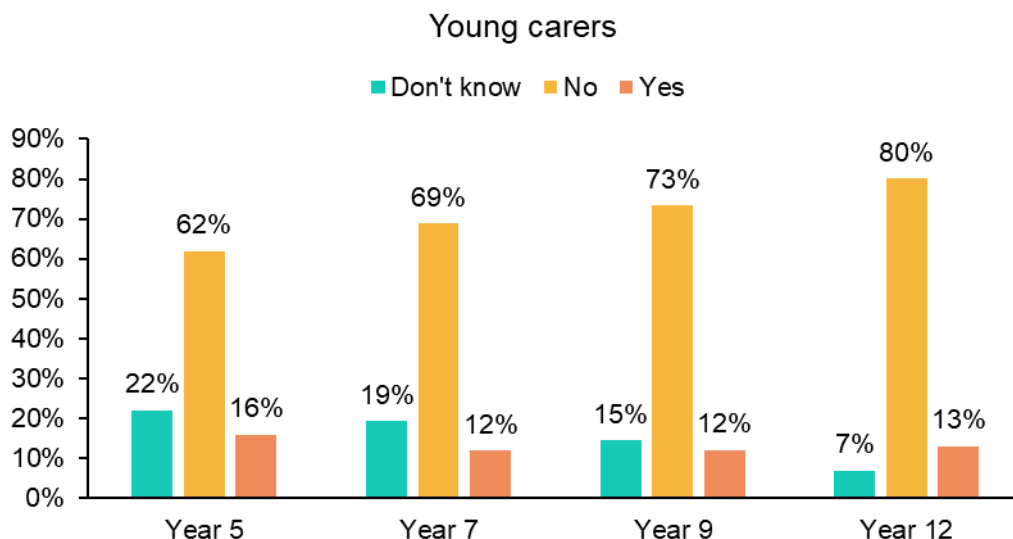


Figure 41 Percentage of young carers in each year group

⁴⁰ Wakefield JSNA (2024) [Unpaid Carers](#)

⁴¹ Joseph, S et al. (2019) [Young carers in England: Findings from the 2018 BBC survey](#)

Appendix 2 Methodology and Terminology

Calculating deprivation inequality

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the most commonly used official measure of deprivation used in England. It was last calculated in 2019 and combines 39 indicators across 7 domains to give an overall picture of living conditions in an area⁴². Deprivation scores are published for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) and can be grouped into deciles. In this report decile 1 contains the top-10% most deprived neighbourhoods in Wakefield District and decile 10 contains the 10% least deprived.

For the School Health Survey, children in Year 5 were allocated to the deprivation decile based on the postcode of their school. Those in Years 7,9 and 12 were asked to give a home postcode and this was used to calculate their deprivation decile of the neighbourhood in which they live. Some children/students provide postcodes from outside the Wakefield District even though they attend a Wakefield school and deprivation decile was set as not known for these children.

Significance testing and confidence intervals

Chi-squared tests have been used to test hypotheses that some pupils answer differently to some questions than other pupils. Results where the findings were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) are discussed further in the text.

95% confidence intervals are presented in some figures comparing the findings from 2024 to previous survey years. These were calculated using the Wilson Score method⁴³ as this is the one most used in national government publications of population figures such as the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Fingertips health profiles.

The chi-squared test for trend has been used to test the significance of trends over time for a limited number of questions that have been asked in a consistent way since 2013. This is the test currently used in the OHID Fingertips profiles to indicate trend⁴⁴.

Pupils and students

Within this report, participants in year groups 5, 7 and 9 are referred to as pupils, and participants in Year 12 are referred to as students when being addressed singly. When the term 'pupils' is used without a qualifying year group, it is referring to participants from all year groups to whom the question was asked.

⁴² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) [The English Indices of Deprivation 2019](#)

⁴³ Association of Public Health Observatories (2010) [Technical Briefing 3: Commonly used public health statistics and their confidence intervals](#)

⁴⁴ OHID (2020) [Technical Guide - Fingertips trend markers](#)