



Norfolk
County Council
Public Health

Flourish Survey 2024 – Sexual health and relationships

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Overview – 2024 data

Identity

Just over **1 in 45** describe their gender in another way

Around **1 in 9** report being bisexual, gay or lesbian

The proportions describing their gender in another way or their sexuality as bisexual, gay or lesbian have increased since 2017

Proportions average across sampled **Year 8 to Year 13** pupils (those aged 12 to 18)



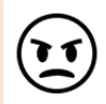
Relationships

Around **6 in 10** report having had a relationship at some point

Of those who report being in a relationship at some point...

Around **1 in 12** report being slapped or hit at some point

Around **1 in 5** report they would not seek help if concerning behaviours occurred



Around **1 in 8** report being pressured into sex/sexual things at some point

Almost **1 in 8** report not knowing where to seek help if concerning behaviours occurred

Almost **1 in 16** report sending a sexual image of themselves/‘sext’ at some point

Over **1 in 7** report receiving a ‘sext’ at some point

Females are more likely to report sending a sexual image than males

Almost **3 in 4** pupils report never having had sex

Among **Year 12/13** pupils...

Around **4 in 10** report they have had sex at some point



Sexual issues

Proportions average across sampled **Year 8 to Year 13** pupils (those aged 12 to 18)

Over **1 in 12** report being approached online by an adult for sex at some point

Over **1 in 20** report unwanted sexual touching in the past month

Around **1 in 9** report receiving sexist/sexual comments in the past month



Of those who report receiving a ‘sext’ ...

Over **1 in 5** report sending one back

Most pupils think young people start having sex at an earlier age than they actually do

Among **Year 11 to Year 13** pupils...

A **majority** report knowing where to access free condoms and the morning after pill



Sexual Health

Proportions average across **Year 10 to Year 13** (those aged 14 to 18), unless stated otherwise



Of those who report having had sex...

Around **4 in 10** report having had unprotected sex at some point

Almost **1 in 4** report that they do not know where to get free condoms

Infographic text description

Identity

Proportions average across sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils (those aged 12 to 18)

- Just over 1 in 45 describe their gender in another way
- Around 1 in 9 report being bisexual, gay or lesbian
- The proportions describing their gender in another way or their sexuality as bisexual, gay or lesbian have increased since 2017

Relationships

- Around 6 in 10 report having had a relationship at some point
- Of those who report being in a relationship at some point...
 - Around 1 in 12 report being slapped or hit at some point
 - Around 1 in 8 report being pressured into sex/sexual things at some point
 - Around 1 in 5 report they would not seek help if concerning behaviours occurred
 - Almost 1 in 8 did not know where to seek help if concerning behaviours occurred

Sexual issues

Proportions average across sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils (those aged 12 to 18)

- Almost 1 in 16 report sending a sexual image of themselves/‘sext’ at some point
- Over 1 in 7 report receiving a ‘sext’ at some point
- Females are more likely to report sending a sexual image than males
- Of those who report receiving a ‘sext’...
 - Over 1 in 5 report sending one back
- Over 1 in 12 report being approached online by an adult for sex at some point
- Over 1 in 20 report unwanted sexual touching in the past month
- Around 1 in 9 report receiving sexist/sexual comments in the past month

Sexual Health

Proportions average across Year 10 to Year 13 (those aged 14 to 18), unless stated otherwise

- Almost 3 in 4 pupils report never having had sex
- Among Year 12/13 pupils...
 - Around 4 in 10 report they have had sex at some point
- Most pupils think young people start having sex at an earlier age than they actually do
- Among Year 11 to Year 13 pupils...

- A majority report knowing where to access free condoms and the morning after pill
- Of those who report having had sex...
 - Around 4 in 10 report having had unprotected sex at some point
 - Almost 1 in 4 report that they do not know where to get free condoms

The Survey

The results from the Flourish Survey begin to be reported on page 10; below, we first provide context to help interpret the results by discussing key details about the sample and analysis. This includes the sample's representativeness, variations in analysis by year group and how confidence intervals allow us to assess which differences in the results are likely to be real. Additionally, Appendix 1 provides further detail on the representativeness of the sample and Appendix 2 explains how year groups map to the age of pupils.

The sample

The analysis is based on a survey which in 2024 sampled 9,347 school pupils in Norfolk from 28 primary schools and 17 secondary schools/further education colleges.¹ The sample represents 12.3% of pupils in state-funded schools in eligible year groups (Year 4 to Year 13, equivalent to pupils aged 8 to 18). Three of the schools in the sample were independent schools. The survey was conducted by the School Health Education Unit (SHEU) which has run similar surveys in other parts of the country for many years. Where the similarity of question wording allows it, we have combined the 2024 data with that from previous Norfolk surveys conducted in 2015 and 2017.

While SHEU has found that results from its surveys are generally broadly consistent with those from other data sources, it is important to note that the dataset is not a truly random sample. Instead, schools self-select to take part in the survey. As such, while the analysis below results from a large Norfolk sample and offers unique insights into the lives of Norfolk pupils, the results may differ from a survey that had a truly random sample of Norfolk pupils.

Questions and year groups

The questionnaire for secondary pupils was more detailed than the primary questionnaire, particularly around alcohol, drugs, smoking/vaping and sexual health. In this report, we generally report results that combine data from Year 8 through to Year

¹ Two private schools served both primary and secondary pupils so 43 schools took part in total.

13 (pupils aged 12 to 18).² A small number of questions related to having sex were only asked to pupils in Year 10 to Year 13 (pupils aged 14 to 18). The year groups on which analysis is based are clearly indicated in the figure captions and text in each section.

All the percentages and figures in this report are based on the data available for the relevant survey questions. Not all pupils responded to all questions. As such, the number of responses on which percentages and figures are calculated varies within and across topics.

As is standard, the survey was anonymous to ensure that pupils felt able to be honest in their responses. While this means it is not possible to contact pupils revealing issues of concern, the survey did contain multiple phone numbers and web addresses of organisations that pupils could contact to obtain topic specific support.

Comparisons with wider SHEU data

Alongside the data from the Norfolk sample, some data is available for equivalent surveys conducted by SHEU in other parts of the country. For specific important questions, and where an equivalent question is available in the wider SHEU data, comparisons are made with the Norfolk sample. As the SHEU comparator data is only from areas where SHEU has been contracted to run the survey, it does not necessarily provide a fully representative national average. Similarly, the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the areas in the SHEU comparator data may differ from Norfolk. Also, the most recent SHEU comparator data is from 2022 and is only available for Year 8 and Year 10.³

Assessing differences

Any differences we highlight in the text below are statistically significant at the 5% level. In the charts, the black lines extending from the end of bars are (95%) confidence intervals. The smaller the confidence interval the greater the certainty we have about the true length of the bar/percentage. If the confidence intervals of two categories/groups do not overlap, we know that the difference between the categories is

² Most Year 7 pupils were asked to respond to the primary questionnaire rather than the secondary questionnaire due to the more sensitive nature of some of the questions in the secondary questionnaire. As such, the secondary year groups for which the data aims to be representative are Year 8 to Year 13.

³ We do not make a comparison with SHEU data from other parts of the country for Year 12/13, as SHEU's comparator Year 12 data involves far fewer observations than for Year 8 or Year 10.

statistically significant, i.e. is likely to be real. If the confidence intervals of two different categories/groups overlap, further analysis would be required to determine if any difference is statistically significant (likely to be real).

Gender and sexual orientation

Gender

While data on gender identity is available for all year groups, for simplicity the figures below combine data from Year 8 to Year 13 (pupils aged 12 to 18) to be consistent with most of the other data in this report.

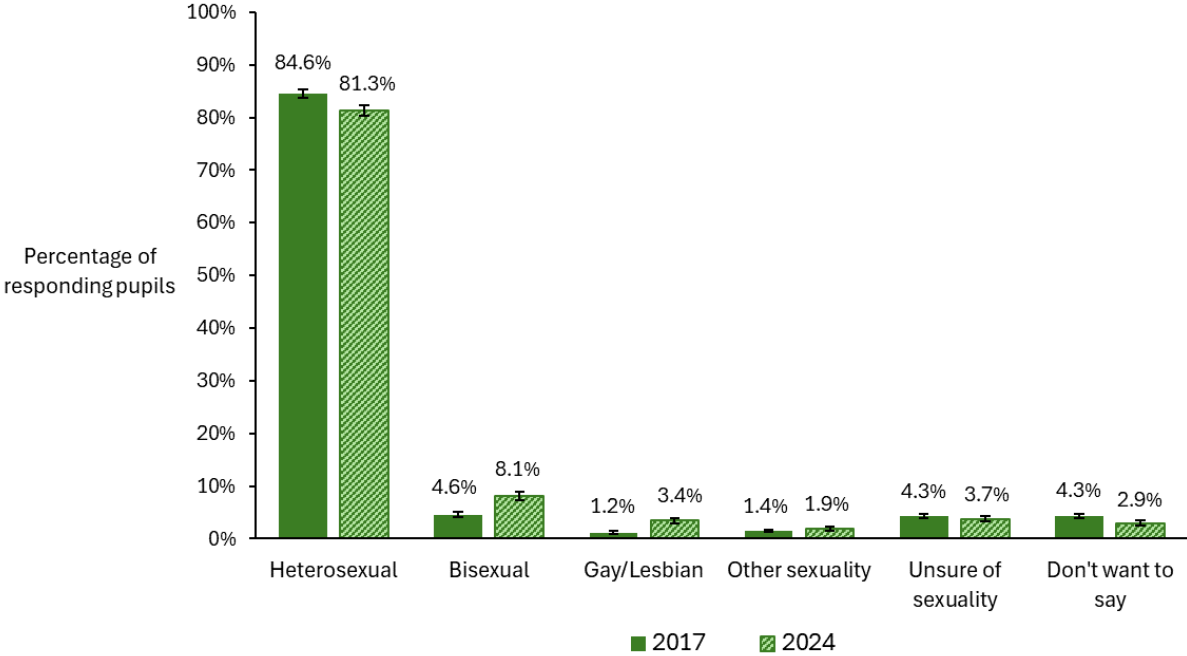
In 2024 52.8% of sampled pupils identified as female, 43.9% identified as male, 2.3% described their gender in another way and 1.0% preferred not to state their gender. The observed imbalance between the proportions of males and females, is noticeably larger than in 2017 when 50.6% of sampled pupils identified as female and 47.2% identified as male. Part of the reason that fewer individuals identify as male in 2024 appears to be that the proportion of sampled pupils describing their gender in another way has risen from 1.0% in 2017 to 2.3% in 2024.⁴

⁴ The gender imbalance may also be due to one of the responding schools having female only provision. 'Describes their gender in another way' includes those identifying as non-binary. The data results from a survey question that specifically referred to gender identity. There was no question about pupils' sex at birth.

Sexual Orientation

Sampled pupils' responses on their sexual orientation also suggest a greater willingness to be open about their personal identity. Figure 1 shows the percentage of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils identifying as bisexual rose from 4.6% to 8.1% between 2017 and 2024, while the percentage identifying as gay or lesbian rose from 1.2% to 3.4% over the same time period. That this results from greater openness is suggested by the percentage of sampled pupils answering 'Don't want to say' falling from 4.3% to 2.9% between 2017 and 2024.

Figure 1: Percentage of sampled pupils identifying as different sexual orientations - 2017 and 2024 (Year 8 to Year 13 data combined)



There is also some evidence that older pupils are more likely to report a sexual orientation other than heterosexual. For example, in 2024 6.9% of sampled Year 8 pupils report being bisexual compared to 13.4% of Year 12/13 pupils.⁵ Similarly, 2.5% of sampled Year 8 pupils report being gay or lesbian compared to 5.2% of Year 12/13 pupils.

⁵ The oldest category analysed is Year 12/13 as the oldest year group recorded in the secondary questionnaire was 'Year 12+' and there are 276 18-year olds in the 2024 sample.

Continuing Challenges

Despite an apparent increased willingness to report minority genders and sexual orientations, these groups may still face particular challenges. For example, the Flourish Survey topic report on Family, Friendships and Bullying reveals that among those describing their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual who had experienced bullying in the 12 months prior to the survey 48.6% indicated that they had been bullied due to their sexual orientation compared to 1.1% of bullied heterosexuals. More generally, 6.8% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who had been bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey thought they had been bullied due to their gender identity⁶ and 11.2% thought they had been bullied due to their sexual orientation.

The Family, Friendships and Bullying report also shows that 19.0% of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 10 to 18) who described their gender in another way rated their safety at home as only OK, poor or very poor, compared to only 11.1% of males and 11.2% of females.

⁶ This reason for bullying has not been split out by gender identity as there were too few observations for those who describe their gender identity in another way to have their result reported.

Romantic relationships

Prevalence

In 2024 59.2% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report having been in a relationship with a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner at some point. Any differences by gender are not statistically significant.

Also, interestingly, once uncertainty is considered, there does not seem to be any variation in this statistic by age. One might have expected a positive relationship between having been in a relationship at some point and age, since those in older year groups would have had more time to experiment with relationships.

Variations across groups – interpretation

In the following subsection, the aim is to understand how the reported rate having been in a romantic relationship at least once varies across a range of groups. The characteristics used for the breakdown are the same in all the Flourish Survey topic reports. In all instances, the identifiers are based on pupils self-reporting their status and so are likely to identify a slightly different group of children than if official designations were used. The characteristics used to split pupils are: identifying as having a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)⁷, receipt of free school meals⁸,

⁷ 2,058 individuals in the 2024 sample identify as having SEND (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This number excludes those answering 'I don't want to say' and represents 22.3% of the sample (when considering Year 4 to Year 13 and excluding non-responses). The number of respondents identifying as having SEND is considerably higher in 2024 than in 2015 or 2017. This is probably linked to a change in question design whereby in 2024 respondents are identified as having SEND if they indicate that they experience at least one of six impairments/difficulties (those identifying as having a long-term illness are not included in the SEND indicator). For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

⁸ 1,171 pupils in the 2024 sample report that they currently receive free school meals (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This number excludes those answering 'Don't know' or 'Don't want to say' and represents 15.4% of the sample (when considering Year 6 to Year 13 and excluding non-responses). In 2024 the free school meals indicator is only available for Year 6 and above. For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

different ethnicities⁹, identifying as a young carer¹⁰, reporting low mental wellbeing¹¹, and gender identity¹². It is worth remembering that some pupils will fall into multiple groups, e.g. both identifying as a young carer and reporting receipt of free school meals.

When interpreting all figures in this report, it is important to remember that the analysis only shows correlations, i.e. how things differ across groups, it does not demonstrate that the difference is caused by being in a different group. For example, Figure 2 shows those reporting low mental wellbeing report lower rates of having been in a relationship. However, we do not know whether: (i) low mental wellbeing leads to pupils not being in a relationship, (ii) not being in a relationship leads pupils to have lower mental wellbeing, or (iii) some other factor is driving the patterns in both mental wellbeing and the likelihood of having had a relationship at some point.

Linked to this, all figures in this report only report 'univariate' associations. In other words, they report how one characteristic (e.g. identifying as a young carer) is associated with one outcome variable (e.g. reporting being in a relationship). They do not control for any other characteristics, such as age. It is possible that the patterns shown in the figures could result from differences in other characteristics between two groups e.g. if those identifying as a young carer and those not identifying as a young carer differed in age. However, controlling robustly for all characteristics is much more

⁹ 986 individuals in the 2024 sample identify as not having a solely white ethnicity. This number excludes those answering 'Don't want to say' and represents 10.6% of the sample (when considering Year 4 to Year 13 and excluding non-responses). For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

¹⁰ 625 individuals in the 2024 sample identify as young carers (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This number excludes those answering 'Don't want to say' or 'Not sure' and represents 6.8% of the sample (when considering Year 4 to Year 13 and excluding non-responses). For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

¹¹ 3,155 pupils in 2024 have been classified as having low mental wellbeing (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This represents 39.9% of the sample when considering Year 4 to Year 13 and non-responses to the constituent questions are excluded. For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond. Low mental wellbeing is identified according to an aggregate score from a range of questions according to recognised academic methods. For primary pupils and most Year 7 pupils the questions result in the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (Stirling Scale), while for older pupils the questions result in the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). For both scales, 'low' mental wellbeing is identified as being a score at least one standard deviation below the mean score on the respective scales as reported in academic studies. Both scales ask pupils to rate their experience of life in the couple of weeks before the survey.

¹² 168 individuals in the 2024 sample describe their gender in another way beyond simply male or female (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This number excludes those answering 'I prefer not to say' and represents 1.9% of the sample (when considering Year 4 to Year 13 and excluding non-responses). Primary pupils as well as secondary pupils could identify as a gender other than male or female. The relevant question was framed as asking about gender identity and there was no separate question asking about sex at birth. For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

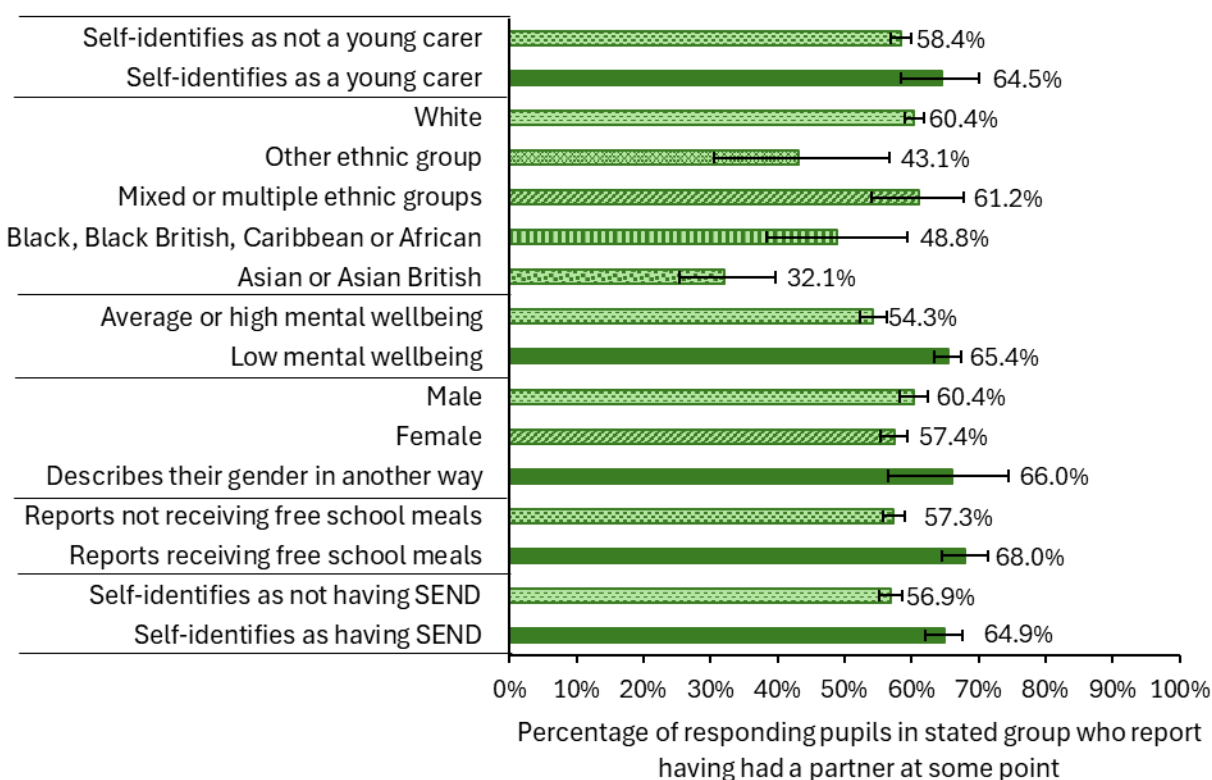
involved than the present analysis allows with it requiring multivariate regression analysis.

In Figure 2 the results should be read as follows. Each bar reports the percentage within the stated group that reports having been in a relationship with a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner at some point. For example, in Figure 2 64.9% of pupils identifying as having SEND report having been in a relationship at some point. Each characteristic described on the previous page is used to split the overall sample of Year 8 to Year 13 into mutually exclusive groups. In the case of those identifying as having SEND, there are two mutually exclusive groups: 'Self-identifies as having SEND' and 'Self-identifies as not having SEND'. The horizontal lines on the vertical axis separate the different cuts of the data, and the statements about statistical significance refer to comparisons between the groups between two of the horizontal lines, e.g. Self-identifies as having SEND vs Self-identifies as not having SEND.

Variations across groups – results

Among the groups considered in Figure 2, sampled pupils identifying as having SEND, reporting low mental wellbeing or reporting receipt of free school meals all have a higher rate of reporting having been in a relationship at some point. For example, 64.9% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils identifying as having SEND report having had a relationship at some point compared to 56.9% of those who do not identify as having SEND. This is an intriguing result given that the topic report on Family, Friendships and Bullying reports how pupils identifying as having SEND are more likely to report it never being easy to make friends than pupils who do not identify as having SEND.

Figure 2: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting having had a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner at some point by selected group - 2024 (Year 8 to Year 13 data combined)



Those identifying as being in an Other ethnic group or being Asian or Asian British are less likely to report having been in a relationship than those as identifying as White. For example, only 32.1% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who were Asian or Asian British reported having had a relationship at some point compared to 60.4% of White pupils.

Sexual health

The parts of this section concerning the respondent's own sexual behaviour are based on questions that were only shown to Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 14 to 18) due to their sensitive content.

Sexual experiences

Overall, the vast majority (73.6%) of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils report that they have not had sex, with 14.1% reporting that they are currently in a relationship involving sex and 12.3% reporting having had sex in the past.¹³ However, there is a large difference between Year 12/13 and the two younger age groups: 41.3% of sampled Year 12/13 pupils report having had sex at some point compared to only 12.7% of Year 10 pupils. After considering uncertainty, we cannot be sure that the proportion of sampled Year 11 pupils reporting having had sex at some point is different to the proportion of Year 10 pupils.

It is unclear whether the large jump in the rate of reporting having had sex between Year 11 and Year 12/13 (17.8% vs 41.3%) is related to the age of consent being 16 and the normal age of pupils in Year 12/13 being at least 16.

Changes over time

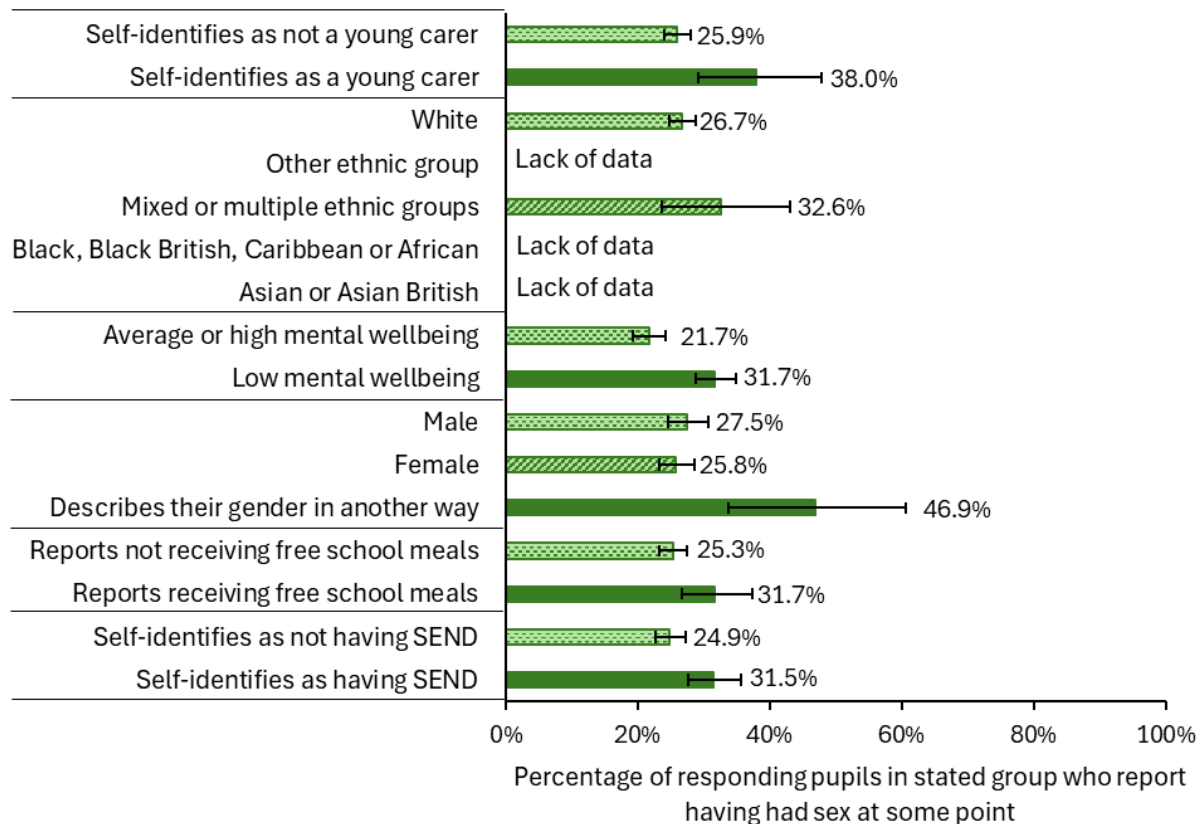
Comparing the 2024 results to results from earlier years is complicated by changes in question wording; specifically, the 2015 and 2017 questions do not allow for the possibility that a pupil may have had sex outside a relationship at some point in the past. Looking at the proportion of pupils reporting that they are currently in sexual relationship by individual year group, the only change between years that is statistically significant is that the percentage of sampled Year 10 pupils reporting a current sexual relationship rose from 2.0% in 2017 to 5.2% in 2024.

¹³ The survey did not define what qualifies as "sex". Combining Year 10 to Year 13 data 286 pupils report that they are currently in a relationship involving sex and 250 report that they have had sex in the past. 372 of the pupils who report having had sex are in Year 12/13, compared to 93 in Year 10 and 71 in Year 11.

Variations across groups

Figure 3 shows that sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report they are young carers, have low mental wellbeing, describe their gender in another way or identify as having SEND all report higher rates of having had sex than those pupils who do not have these characteristics. The largest difference relates to those describing their gender in another way with 46.9% of these pupils reporting that they have had sex compared to only 27.5% of sampled males in Year 10 to Year 13. The differences relating to identifying as a young carer and low mental wellbeing are also large: in both instances the proportion of pupils with these characteristics reporting having had sex was more than 10 percentage points higher for than pupils who did not have these characteristics.

Figure 3: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting that they have had sex at some point by selected group - 2024 (Year 10 to Year 13 data combined)



Expectations of peers' behaviour

Not only did the survey ask about pupils' actual sexual behaviour, it also collected data on when pupils thought that most young people first had sex. The results shows that pupils tend to think that other pupils first have sex at a younger age than they actually do. While a majority of Year 12/13 pupils and a large majority of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils report not having had sex, most respondents expect that most young people first have sex when they are 16 or younger. Also, this issue is more pronounced for those pupils who already report having had sex. 24.4% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report not having had sex believe that their peers first have sex when they are 17 or older, while only 6.8% of pupils who report that they have had sex believe that other pupils first have sex when they are 17 or older.

Contraception

Data on knowledge regarding contraception, as opposed to unprotected sex, was collected from all Year 8 to Year 13 pupils.

Overall, 7.5% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report that they worry quite a lot or a lot about becoming a parent before they are ready. However, a majority, 57.9% report never worrying about this issue. The percentage worrying quite a lot or a lot about becoming a parent does not vary by gender or age once uncertainty is considered. However, unsurprisingly, sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report having had sex are more likely to worry quite a lot or a lot about becoming a parent than those who have not had sex (14.3% vs 5.0%). Looking over time, the percentage of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils reporting that they worry quite a lot or a lot about becoming a parent in 2024 is in line with that in 2015 but is lower than the 9.7% recorded in 2017.

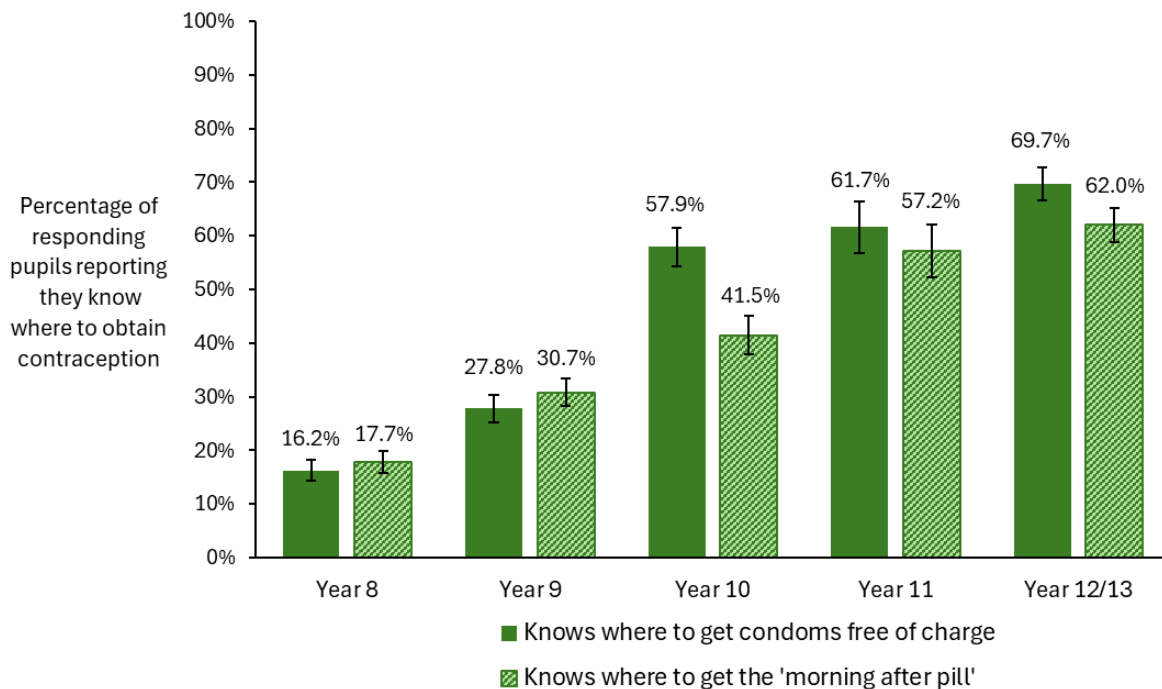
In terms of obtaining help and information about sex and relationships, 44.1% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report that they would use their family as their first source of advice and 24.4% report that their friends would be their first source of help. More concerningly, 12.6% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report that they have nowhere or no one available as a source of help and information on sex and relationships.

Accessing Contraception

The survey asked pupils about their knowledge of where they can access condoms free of charge and where they can obtain the emergency 'morning-after pill'. Overall, 40.0% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report that they know where they could obtain free condoms and 36.8% report that they know where to obtain the morning-after pill. No statistically significant differences were observed between genders.

Figure 4 shows that the proportion of pupils reporting that they know where they can obtain free condoms or the emergency morning after pill rises sharply with age. For example, the percentage reporting that they know where to obtain free condoms increases from 16.2% in Year 8 to 69.7% in Year 12/13. A majority of pupils in Year 11 and Year 12/13 report that they know where they can obtain each of these forms of contraception.

Figure 4: Percentage of sampled pupils who know where to obtain contraception by year group - 2024 (Year 8 to Year 12/13 data separately)



Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report that they have had sex at least once are more likely to report knowledge of where to access free condoms or the morning after pill, but this knowledge is not universal. While 76.3% of those who report having had sex at some point report knowing where to get free condoms compared to 59.4% of those who have not had sex, this means 23.7% of those who have had sex report not knowing where to access free condoms. Similarly, 26.1% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who have had sex report not knowing where to access the emergency morning after pill.

Looking over time at the percentage of pupils in different year groups that report knowledge of where to access free condoms¹⁴, the picture appears mixed. For example, for Year 8 and Year 10, the percentage who report knowledge of where to obtain free condoms is lower in 2024 than in 2015. However, for Year 10 and Year 13 the

¹⁴ The questionnaires in 2015 and 2017 do not contain ask about knowledge of the morning after pill.

percentage of sampled pupils reporting knowledge of where to access free condoms increased between 2017 and 2024. For example, the proportion of sampled Year 10 pupils reporting this knowledge was 66.1% in 2015 falling to 37.3% in 2017 before recovering somewhat to 57.9% in 2024.

In terms of variations in knowledge of contraception across groups, pupils identifying as Asian or Asian British are less likely to report this knowledge: 24.4% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 Asian or Asian British pupils report knowledge of where to obtain free condoms compared to 40.8% of White pupils. Interestingly, pupils identifying as having SEND are more likely to report knowledge of where to access free condoms than pupils who do not identify as having SEND (45.1% vs 38.9%). Although, this might simply relate to those identifying as having SEND having a higher probability of having had sex (see Figure 3).

Unprotected sex

Turning to whether pupils are actually using contraception/protection when having sex, the picture is somewhat concerning. Of those sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report having had sex, only 52.8% report that they have always used contraception/protection, with 6.0% unsure and 41.1% indicating that they have had unprotected sex at least once.¹⁵ Any difference between males and females in the propensity to have safe sex is not statistically significant.

A further survey question asks whether pupils had unprotected sex after consuming drugs or alcohol. Any association between these substances and unprotected sex is not obvious from the limited data available. As a proportion of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils reporting unprotected sex, only 32.5% indicate that this had ever happened after consuming alcohol and only 13.5% report that it had ever happened after consuming drugs.¹⁶ A further 8.1% and 5.7% respectively reported that they were unsure as to whether they had had unprotected sex after consuming each of these substances. However, it is possible that these percentages may have been lowered to some extent by the specific wording of the question which emphasised the negative consequences of unprotected sex.¹⁷

¹⁵ These percentages result from 218 pupils reporting that they have had unprotected sex at least once and 32 pupils reporting that they were unsure as to whether they had had unprotected sex.

¹⁶ These percentages involve 98 pupils reporting that they had had unprotected after drinking alcohol and 41 pupils reporting unprotected sex after taking drugs.

¹⁷ In the question after the words unprotected sex was the clause “which has put you at risk of STIs or pregnancy”. Strictly speaking this wording would also allow a pupil who wrongly believes a particular sexual act does not carry any risk to answer ‘No’ to the survey question.

Sexual issues

Offline issues

In the questions related to bullying, in addition to statements related to gender identity and sexual orientation, pupils could also report incidents of a sexual nature. 11.3% of all sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils reported having experienced sexist or sexual comments in the month prior to the survey. Similarly, 5.8% of the same year groups reported being touched in sexual ways that the respondent did not want.¹⁸ There is no difference in the reported rate of these two issues between pupils who identify as male and pupils who identify as female.

Online safety

This subsection is a companion to the equivalent online safety section in the Family, Friendships and Bullying topic report. Here the focus is on aspects of online safety which have a clear sexual element, while the other topic report focuses on more general aspects of online safety. Unlike the more general online safety questions, the questions with a sexual theme were only asked in the secondary questionnaire and so once again the results we report relate only to Year 8 to Year 13.

Overall, 8.5% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report having been approached by an adult online wanting a sexual encounter or relationship at some point.¹⁹ Also, 22.7% of sampled pupils reported having seen sexually explicit images, videos or games online including pornography at some point.²⁰ In terms of nude images of pupils themselves, a noticeably greater proportion of pupils reported receiving 'sexts' than sending them: 15.1% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils reported having received a sext at some point compared to only 6.2% who reported sending a nude or sexual image of themselves. 3.0% of pupils reported that someone else had sent nude or sexual images of the respondent.²¹

¹⁸ 283 pupils reported this second issue in the 2024 survey.

¹⁹ The survey did not collect any information about how pupils responded to these approaches.

²⁰ If respondents took the question literally in its referencing of "when online", this percentage may exclude pupils who have seen sexually explicit content as part of mainstream films on TV etc.

²¹ The numbers of observations (across Year 8 to Year 13) involved are: 394 pupils report being approached by an adult for a sexual encounter or relationship at some point, 698 pupils report receiving a

For context, the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW)²² in 2023 found that 9.5% of 13-15 year olds in England and Wales reported that they had received a sexual message in the 12 months prior to the survey. A figure considered stable when compared to the CSEW's 2020 estimate²³ of 11%. Of those who received a sexual message, the CSEW found that 66.6% had received them in the form of photos or images, while 38.9% had received a video. In terms of, sending sexual messages, CSEW found that 1.6% of 13-15 year olds had sent such a message in 2023 (this includes messages which only involve text).²⁴

sext, 286 pupils report sending a sext and 141 report someone else sending a sext involving the respondent. The questions do not distinguish between genuine images and those created using AI or digitally manipulated.

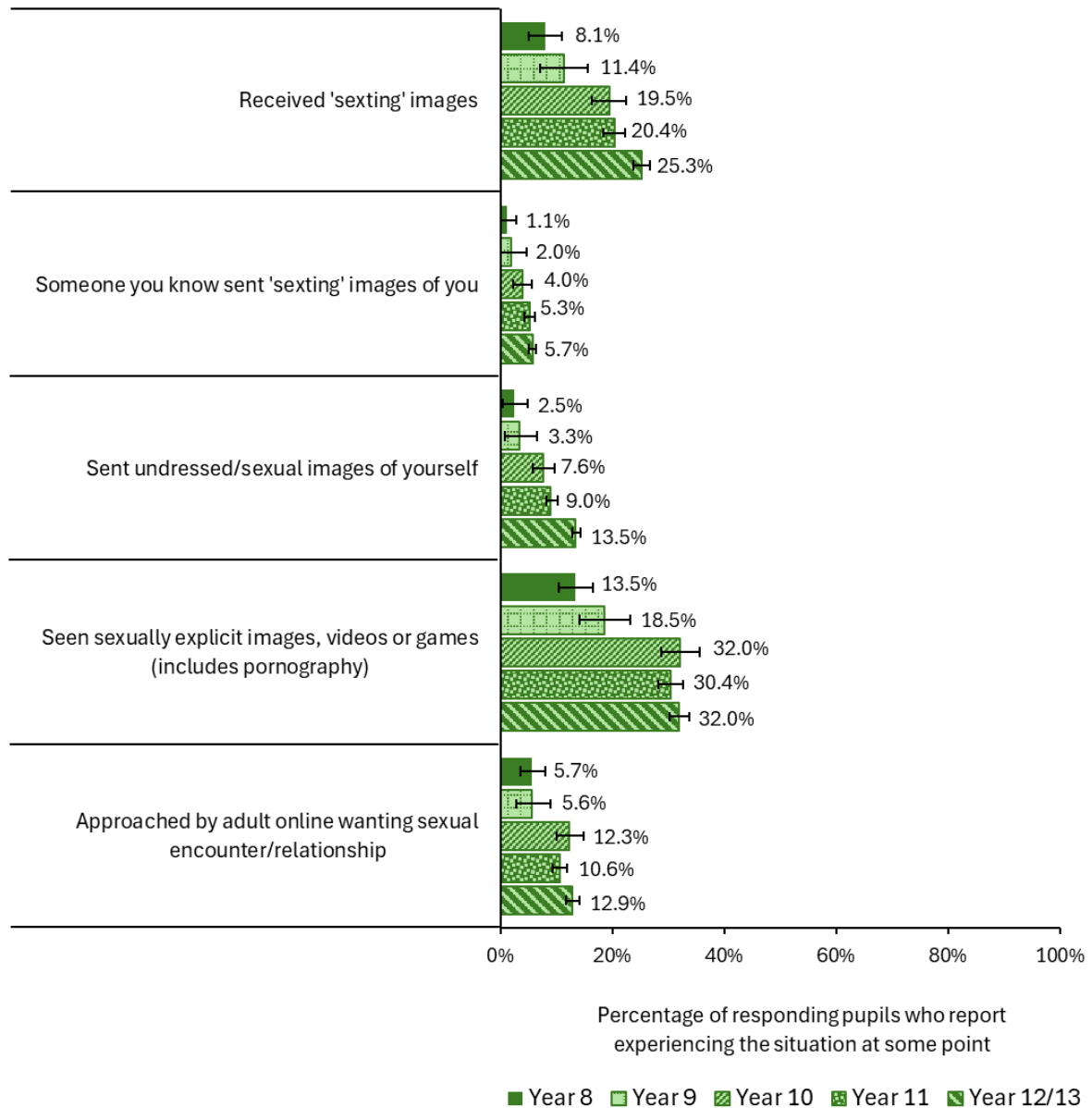
²² See [Bullying and online experiences among children in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

²³ See [Children's online behaviour in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

²⁴ The equivalent 2020 figure was 1.1%.

Figure 5 shows that the reported rates of all these behaviours increase with age. Often, there is a notable jump up in the reported rate between Year 9 and Year 10.

Figure 5: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting that they have experienced different sexualised online situations at some point by year group - 2024 (Year 8 to Year 12/13 data separately)



For example, 32.0% of sampled Year 10 pupils report having seen a sexually explicit image or video online compared to 18.5% of Year 9 pupils. Similarly, the percentage of Year 10 pupils who have been approached online by an adult wanting a sexual encounter or relationship rises from 5.6% in Year 9 to 12.3% in Year 10. For both of

these situations the rate of reporting then remains stable between Year 10 and Year 12/13 once uncertainty is considered.

In contrast, the reported rates of sending and receiving sexts show an additional increase by Year 12/13. It seems notable that by Year 12/13 around a quarter of sampled pupils report having received a sext at some point, while more than one in eight sampled Year 12/13 pupils report having sent a sext at some point.

Changes over time

The rates of sending and receiving sexts reported by Year 12/13 are stable between 2017 and 2024. The reported rates of sending and receiving sexts are also stable between 2017 and 2024 for Year 10 pupils. However, there is a statistically significant increase in the reported rates of both sending and receiving sexts for Year 8 pupils between 2017 and 2024. For example, in 2024 8.1% of sampled Year 8 pupils report receiving a sext compared to 5.1% in 2017.²⁵

Responses to sexts

Pupils were also asked about how they responded when they received a sext and could provide multiple responses. Of those sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who reported receiving a sext 50.7% report doing nothing, while 30.7% deleted the images. More concerningly, 22.4% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 who received a sext sent one back in response²⁶, while only 10.2% told a responsible adult about the incident(s).

²⁵ In 2024 115 Year 8 pupils report receiving a sext compared to 94 Year 8 pupils in 2017.

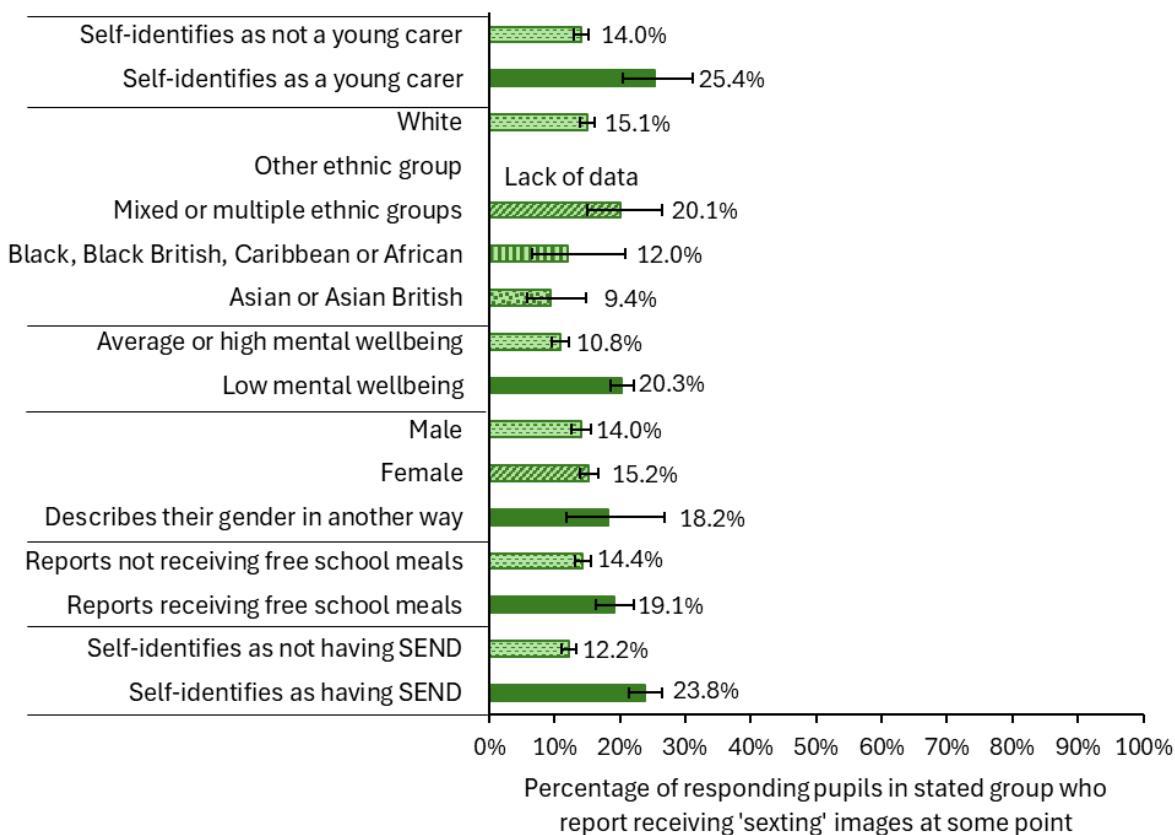
²⁶ 153 pupils report that following receipt of a sext they had sent one back.

Variations in sexting

Figure 6 shows that those reporting being young carers, having low mental wellbeing, in receipt of free school meals or having SEND all have a higher likelihood of reporting receipt of a sext than those not in these groups. Around a quarter of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who report being a carer report receiving a sext, while over 20% of those reporting low mental wellbeing or having SEND report receiving a sext. Indeed, the reported rate of receiving a sext among those identifying as having SEND is almost double that for pupils not identifying as having SEND (23.8% vs 12.2%).

In terms of available national data, the CSEW reports for England and Wales in 2020 that 13-15 year old girls were more likely to report receiving a sexual message than boys in the 12 months before the survey (16% vs 6%). No statistically significant differences were found according to ethnicity or whether or not a child had a disability.

Figure 6: Percentage of sampled pupils who received a 'sext' at some point by selected group - 2024 (Year 8 to Year 13 data combined)



There were also variations across the different groups in terms of sending sexts. Those pupils who report being young carers, low mental wellbeing or having SEND have higher reported rates of sending sexts than those without these characteristics. The large gaps in the reported rates of sending sexts between those with these characteristics and those without might raise concerns about whether these groups are at greater risk of exploitation. For example, 10.3% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who identify as having SEND report sending a sext at some point compared to only 4.8% of those who do not identify as having SEND. Similarly, 9.2% of pupils reporting low mental wellbeing report sending a sext at some point, compared to 3.9% of those with average or high mental wellbeing.

The data on sending sexts is also interesting as there is a rare difference between male and female pupils that is statistically significant: 6.9% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 female pupils report having sent a sext at some point compared to only 4.7% of male pupils. No data was collected on whether sexts were sent unsolicited or in response to requests or pressure.

In contrast, the CSEW found that in 2020 there was no statistically significant difference in the rate of sexual messages being sent by boys or girls. The CSEW in 2020 also found no differences in the rate of sending sexual messages across ethnicities or by whether not an individual reported a disability.

Concerning behaviours in relationships

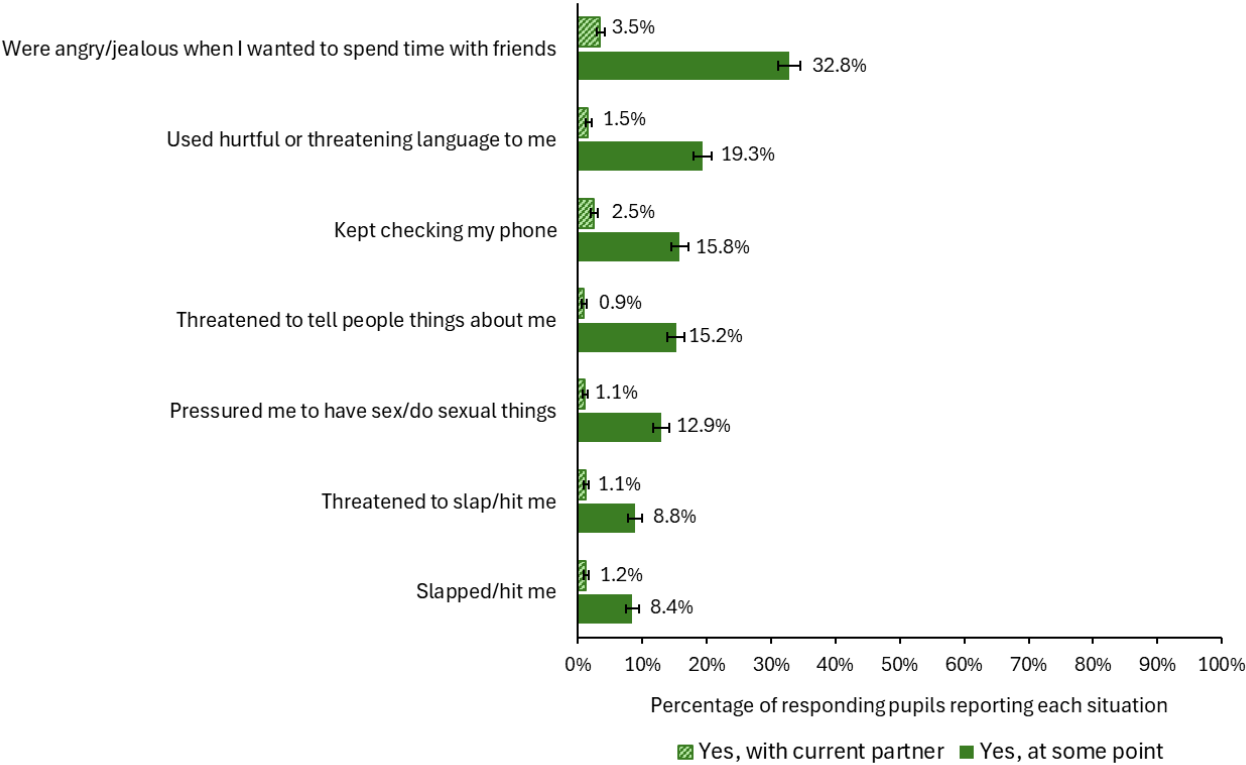
Overall, 4.7% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report that they view their safety in relationships (including friendships) as poor or very poor, and a further 23.3% rated their safety as OK. There is no difference between the proportion of males and females that rate their safety in relationships as poor or very poor.²⁷ The survey also asks detailed questions about specific concerning behaviours that might occur within relationships; the results to these questions are reported on the following page.

²⁷ Due to the very limited number of observations of this issue among those describing their gender in another way, we do not report the percentage for this group.

Specific Behaviours

Figure 7 shows the percentage of those who have been in a relationship at some point who report behaviours of potential concern in either a current or past relationship. While some of the behaviours are clearly serious, there is potentially some ambiguity as to whether saying hurtful things or being jealous about a partner spending time with friends might occur in an ‘average’ relationship.

Figure 7: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting different concerning behaviours in relationships by when they occurred - 2024 (Year 8 to Year 13 data combined, data only relates to those who report having had a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner at some point)



A potential positive is that each behaviour is reported as occurring in a current relationship by fewer than 5% of those who have been in a relationship at some point. Only 1.1% of those Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who report having been in a relationship at some point report being in a current relationship where they have been pressured to have sex or do sexual things and only 1.2% report being in a current relationship where they have been slapped or hit.²⁸ Of more concern is that 8.4% of those who report being

²⁸ 31 pupils report being pressured to have sex or to do sexual things by their current partner and 34 pupils report being slapped or hit by their current partner

in relationship at some point report being slapped or hit at some point, while 12.9% report having been pressured to have sex or do sexual things at some point.²⁹

Unsurprisingly, the less serious issues are more likely to be reported with 32.8% of those who have been in a relationship at some point reporting a partner at some point that was angry or jealous when the respondent wanted to spend time with friends. Also, 19.3% report having experienced hurtful or threatening language directed at them in a relationship at some point.

Over time

Only some of the behaviours listed above have a similarly worded question in the 2022 SHEU data for other parts of the country. Below we discuss three indicators that can be compared to the SHEU 2022 data: (a) being threatened with a slap or a hit, (b) having a partner continually checking a pupil's phone, and (c) having a partner get angry or jealous when the pupil spent time with friends.

To enable comparison with the SHEU data, Year 8 and Year 10 are analysed separately, while Year 12/13 is also included as the oldest year group with data.³⁰ To enable to comparison with the SHEU data and the data from 2015 and 2017³¹ the percentages in this subsection, and specifically Figure 8 and Figure 9, are not restricted to simply those individuals who report being in a relationship at some point, instead they are the proportion of all the pupils in each year group. The results are mixed, depending on the indicator and year group.

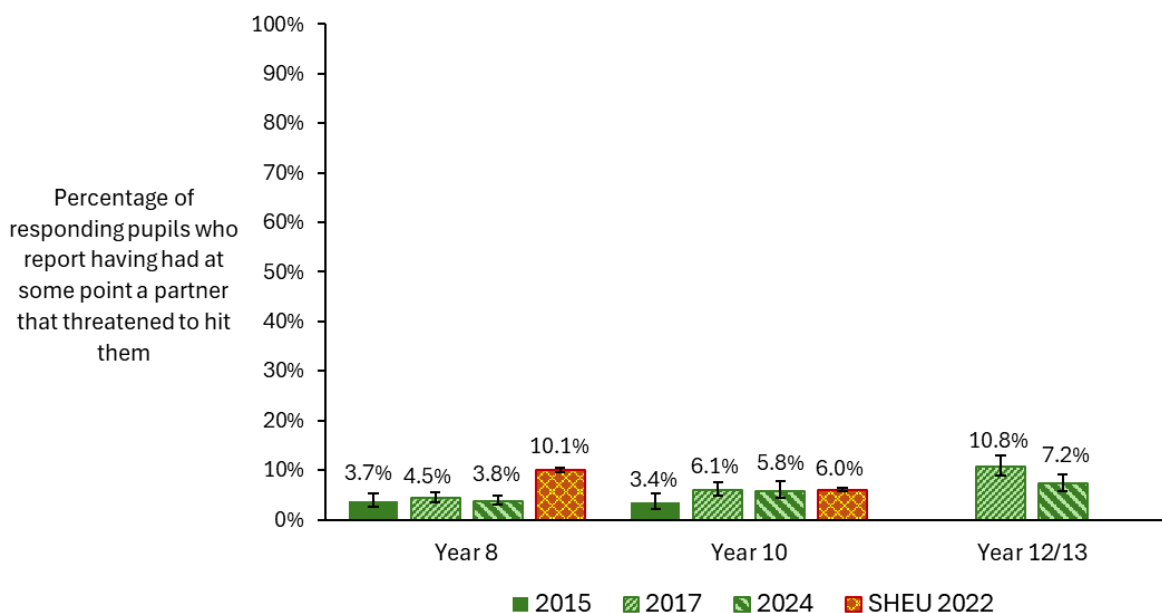
²⁹ 247 pupils report that they have been slapped or hit by a partner at some point and 361 pupils report that they have been pressured to have sex or do sexual things by a partner at some point.

³⁰ No Year 12/13 data was collected in 2015.

³¹ In these earlier years there was no specific question to identify whether a respondent had been in a romantic relationship prior to the survey.

Figure 8 shows that after uncertainty is considered, in both Year 8 and Year 10 the rate of reporting having had a partner at some point threaten the respondent with being hit has remained stable between 2015, 2017 and 2024. In Year 10, the rate of reporting this threatening behaviour is in line with the wider SHEU data and, positively, the rate of being threatened with being hit by a partner at some point for Year 8s in the Norfolk sample in 2024 is well below the rate in the wider SHEU data (3.8% vs 10.1%). It is also likely that in Year 12/13 there has been a drop in the reported rate of being threatened with being hit between 2017 and 2024 that is statistically significant.

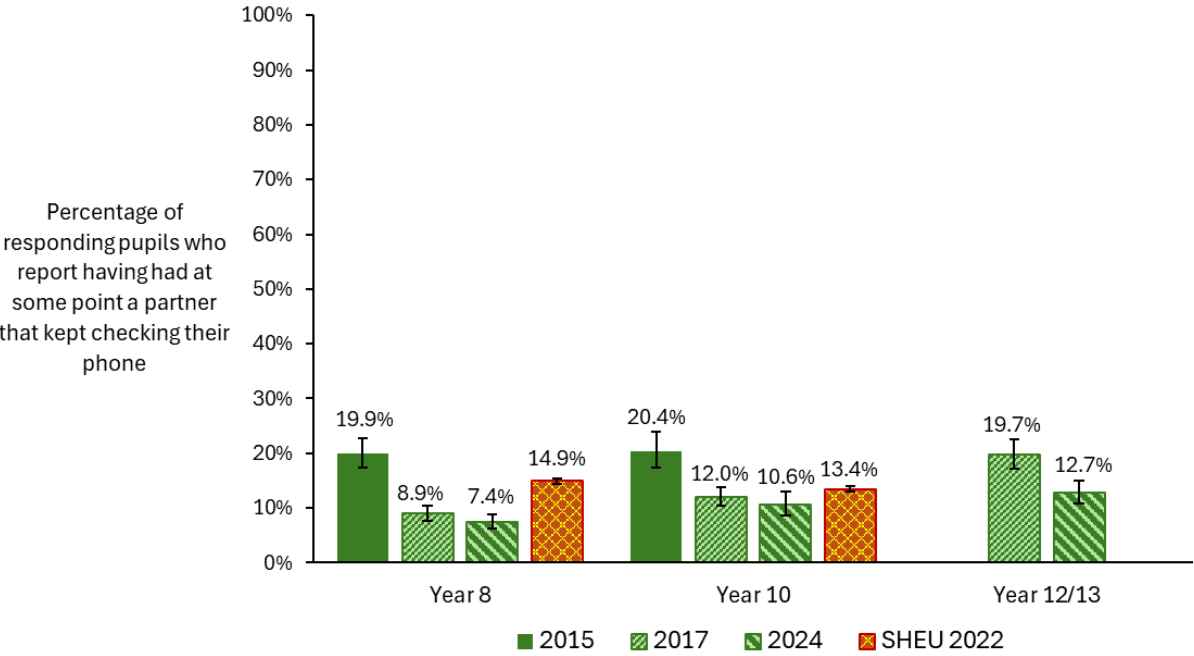
Figure 8: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting that at some point they have had a partner that threatened to hit them by selected year group - 2015, 2017, 2024 and SHEU 2022 (Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 data separately)



A similar set of relationships also exist for reports of experiencing at some point a partner that became angry or jealous when the respondent spent time with friends. In both Year 8 and Year 10, the reported rate of this issue remained stable between 2015, 2017 and 2024 once uncertainty is considered. In Year 10, the reported rate of this issue in 2024 is also similar to the 2022 SHEU comparator data, while in Year 8 the rate in the Norfolk sample (17.7%) is lower than for the 2022 SHEU comparator data (22.0%). Lastly, in Year 12/13, there has been a significant fall in the percentage reporting a jealous partner when spending time with friends from 34.7% in 2017 to 23.2% in 2024.

Turning to the rate of those who report having had a partner at some point who repeatedly checked the respondent’s phone, the picture Figure 9 gives over time is broadly positive. For both Year 8 and Year 10 there is a substantial drop in reports of phone checking between 2015 and 2024 (although most of this occurred between 2015 and 2017), while for Year 12/13 there has been a noticeable drop between 2017 and 2024. For example, among Year 8 pupils the reported rate of having had at some point a partner who kept checking the respondents’ phone fell from 19.9% in 2015 to 7.4% in 2024. 7.4% is also less than half the figure recorded for Year 8 in the SHEU comparator data in 2022. It is also likely that the 2024 rate for Year 10 of reporting having had a partner that kept checking the respondents’ phone is lower in the Norfolk sample than the equivalent rate in the 2022 SHEU comparator data.

Figure 9: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting that at some point they have had a partner who kept checking their phone by selected year group - 2015, 2017, 2024 and SHEU 2022 (Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 data separately)



An aggregate indicator

To provide an overview of concerning relationship behaviours over time we have also created an aggregate indicator of the four more serious behaviours reported in Figure 7, namely, (i) being slap or hit, (ii) being threatened with a slap or hit, (iii) being pressurised into doing sexual things and (iv) being threatened with things being told to other people. In total, in 2024 24.3% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who have

been in relationship at some point report facing at least one of these concerning behaviours in a relationship at some point, while 2.3% report experiencing at least one of these behaviours in a current relationship.³²

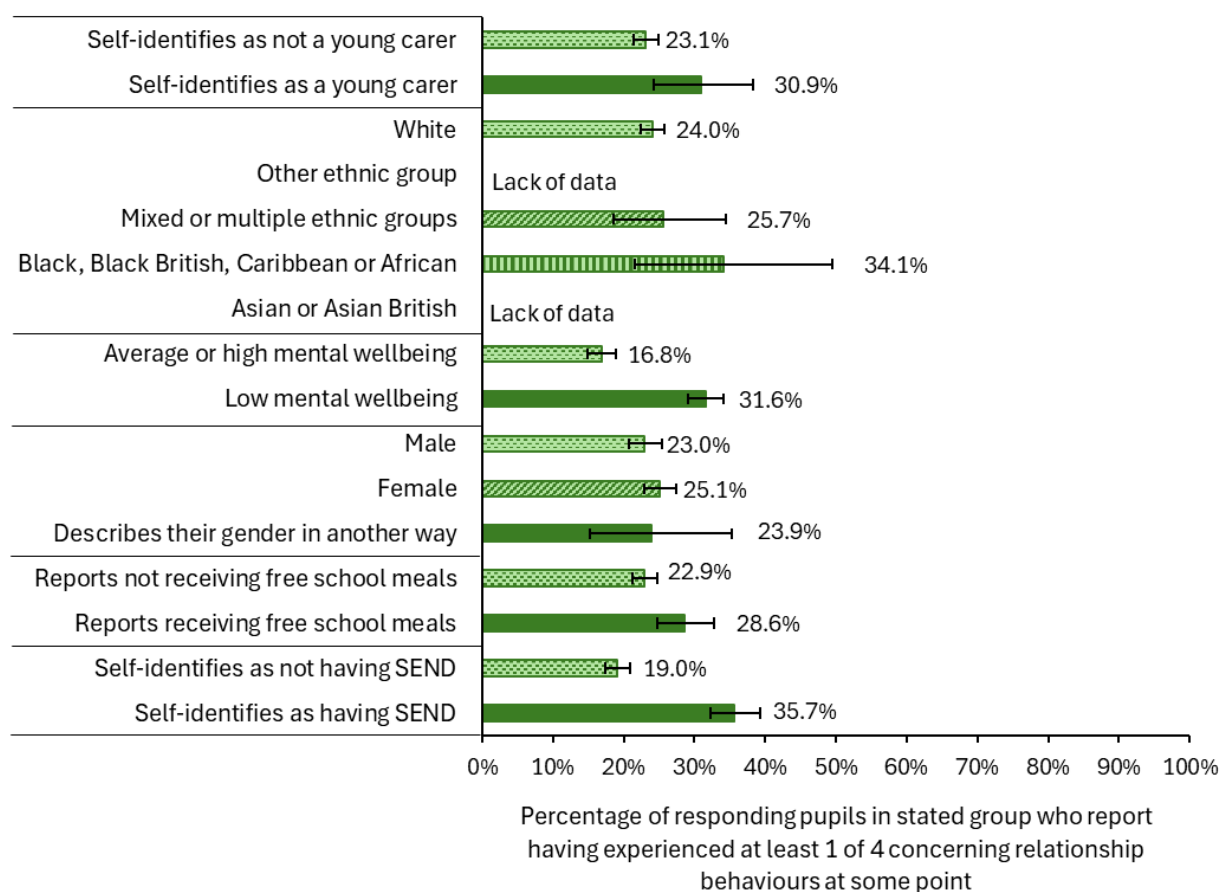
Again, to allow comparisons over time, percentages have to be calculated as a proportion of all pupils in each year rather than just those who have been in a relationship at some point. Looking at the aggregated indicator over time, the reported rate of experiencing at least one of the more serious concerning behaviours at some point is stable in Year 8 and Year 10 between 2015 and 2017 once uncertainty is considered. In Year 12/13 there is a drop in the reported rate of pupils who experienced at least one of the serious behaviours from 26.5% in 2017 to 19.1% in 2024. The data is also consistent with the proportion of pupils that have experienced at least one of the serious behaviours at some point to be increasing with age: 11.1% of Year 8 pupils in 2024 had experienced at least one serious behaviour at some point increasing to 15.9% in Year 10 and 19.1% in Year 12/13.

³² Only aggregate results for the 2022 SHEU comparator data are available (rather than records for individual pupils), this means an equivalent aggregate indicator cannot be created for the SHEU comparator data.

Variation across groups

Using the aggregated indicator we can explore if there are differences in the rates of reporting at least one of the more serious behaviours across different minority groups. Figure 10 returns to reporting percentages as a proportion of relevant pupils who report having been in a relationship at some point. This explains why the percentages in Figure 10 are noticeably higher than those in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

Figure 10: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting having experienced at least one of four concerning relationship behaviours at some point by selected group - 2024 (Year 8 to Year 13 data combined, data only relates to those who report having had a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner at some point)³³



³³ 'Lack of data' indicates that there were fewer than 10 observations within the sample of pupils who identified as an 'other ethnic group' that reported they had been in a relationship and had experienced at least one of the concerning behaviours. To preserve anonymity and robustness statistics based on fewer than 10 observations are not reported.

Figure 10 shows that those pupils who report having been in a relationship at some point and who report low mental wellbeing or having SEND are more likely to report having experienced at least one of the serious concerning behaviours than equivalent pupils who do not report low mental wellbeing or having SEND. In particular, just over a third (35.7%) of those identifying as having SEND and who report having had a relationship report that they have experienced at least one of the serious concerning behaviours at some point.

It is also likely that those reporting receipt of free school meals have a higher rate of reporting the more serious concerning relationship behaviours than those who do not report receipt of free school meals by a margin which is statistically significant.

Accessing Support

If pupils experience any of the concerning relationship behaviours described above, one would hope that they might access support to help deal with the situation. However, this cannot be assumed. When asked whether they would seek help in response to any of the behaviours listed in Figure 7, 20.6% of those Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who reported having been in a relationship at some point reported that they would not seek help, while 36.3% were not sure if they would seek help.³⁴

In terms of knowing where to get help for relationship issues, 12.2% of Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who reported being in a relationship at some point did not know where they could ask for help. A further 26.6% were not sure if they knew where they could get help. After accounting for uncertainty, there was no variation observed between the genders in terms of those not seeking help or not knowing where to seek help.

If pupils found themselves in an 'unhealthy relationship', 78.8% of all sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils (not just those who had been in a relationship) indicated that they would seek help from their family, while 65.9% would seek help from their friends.³⁵ The next most common responses were to seek support from a school nurse (22.5%) and a police/community support officer (20.1%). This greater reliance on informal rather formal sources of support suggests that the support and advice pupils receive may be influenced by the social and cultural context in which they live.

³⁴ The relevant questions on whether pupils would seek help and if they knew where to get help were only asked of pupils that indicated that they had been in a relationship at some point.

³⁵ Pupils could indicate they would use multiple sources of support in the question.

Appendix 1: Assessing the representativeness of the sample

A separate topic report provides a detailed comparison of the 2024 Flourish sample with data for the population of schools and pupils in Norfolk. While the sample data is broadly in line with the population data for some characteristics, such as ethnicity, for other characteristics there are differences to the population data. These differences are clearest in terms of the age distribution of responding pupils and the geographic distribution of schools taking part in the survey.

Regarding age, the data is concentrated in Year 7 to Year 10 (pupils aged 11 to 15) rather than being evenly distributed across year groups. To avoid differences in age distributions impacting comparisons between years, and with the wider SHEU comparator data for 2022, we generally make these comparisons according to individual year groups.

Regarding the geographic distribution of the 2024 data, only primary schools chose to take part in the Borough of Great Yarmouth and in Norwich none of the Year 7 to Year 11 data comes from state-funded schools. Furthermore, pupils from King's Lynn and West Norfolk are over-represented in the data for secondary schools and colleges, while pupils from Norwich are over-represented in the primary data and pupils from Breckland are under-represented in the primary data. This uneven geographic distribution of data means that we do not break out results by district.

Also, it appears that the sample probably under-represents pupils who are eligible for free school meals. This, combined with the geographic distribution of the data, means that the sample may under-represent children from deprived backgrounds. However, this does not mean the data should be ignored, rather thought should be given to whether a particular variable is more or less likely to be observed among pupils from deprived backgrounds. For example, where a behaviour is thought to be more common among pupils from a deprived background, the results in this report are likely to be a minimum for the true prevalence of the behaviour among the full population of Norfolk pupils.

In terms of the validity of comparisons between 2015, 2017 and 2024, as noted previously, we control for differences in the age distribution of pupils.³⁶ Nevertheless, there are other differences in the compositions of the samples between years. The slightly greater ethnic diversity of the sample and the large increase in the proportion of pupils reporting receipt of free school meals between 2017 and 2024 are broadly mirrored by changes in population data between 2016-17 and 2023-24. In other words, for these two characteristics, the population of pupils in Norfolk is changing rather than it being a clear issue with the sample's representativeness. Regarding the gender breakdown of the sample and the proportion of pupils identifying as having SEND, it is possible that there are changes in the sample composition between years that do not match the population data; although, in both instances, methodological issues cloud the picture.³⁷

Overall, the analysis is representative of the subset of pupils who are educated within schools with management that might consider undertaking a pupil health survey worthwhile. The Norfolk population data indicates that the sample under-represents pupils taught in schools rated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement. We cannot rule out the possibility that differences in results between years, and with SHEU data from other parts of the country, result from differences in the characteristics of pupils being sampled. The results in this and the other topic reports are all unweighted.

³⁶ The size of the Flourish sample has also varied considerably between years being 3,155 in 2015 and 11,417 in 2017; however, these changes in sample size are reflected in the size of the confidence intervals reported in figures and they should not have a clear impact on the sample's representativeness.

³⁷ For gender, the sample appears to becoming less representative over time with the proportion of females in the sample increasing. However, drawing firm conclusions is complicated by the population data being about sex rather than gender identity; in other words, the population data only records pupils as male or female. For SEND status, the increase in the proportion of the sample self-identifying as having SEND exceeds the increase observed in the population data between 2016-17 and 2023-24 by some margin; the large increase in the Flourish data probably relates to the question wording in the Flourish questionnaire changing between 2017 and 2024.

Appendix 2: Mapping year groups to age

Generally, the topic reports based on the Flourish Survey break data out by school year group rather than age for two reasons: (i) key events in pupils' lives are determined by school year group, e.g. the switch from primary to secondary school and GCSE exams, and (ii) SHEU reports comparator data from other parts of the country for selected year groups.

For readers who are unfamiliar with school year groups Table 1 provides a mapping to the age of pupils. Year 6 marks the end of primary school, while Year 7 marks the start of secondary school. GCSE exams are taken in Year 11 with pupils moving to sixth form or further education providers for Year 12/13. As discussed in the first section of the report, the questions pupils see in the Flourish Survey vary to some extent by the year group they are in.

Table 1: Age of pupils in school year groups included in the Flourish Survey

School year group	Age of pupils
Year 4	8-9
Year 5	9-10
Year 6	10-11
Year 7	11-12
Year 8	12-13
Year 9	13-14
Year 10	14-15
Year 11	15-16
Year 12/13	16-18

The Flourish Survey questionnaire does not enable pupils in Year 12 and Year 13 to be separated. Also, in rare circumstances individual pupils of a particular age may be in a different year group if they have been moved up or down a year.