



Norfolk
County Council
Public Health

Norfolk Flourish Survey 2024 – Family, Friendships and Bullying

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Norfolk Overview – 2024 data

Unless stated otherwise, proportions average across sampled **Year 4 to Year 13** pupils (pupils aged 8 to 18)

Around **1 in 15** report being a young carer

A further **1 in 11** report not being sure about whether they are a young carer

Over **6 in 10** report they have a trusted adult to talk to when worried or upset

Of those identifying as young carers...

Around **1 in 5** report missing school due to caring responsibilities

Home Life

Almost **1 in 8** report shouting and arguing between adults at home at least once a week

Among Year 8 to Year 13 pupils...

Almost **4 in 10** report feeling loved only sometimes, rarely or never

Among Year 6 to Year 13 pupils...

Around **1 in 9** rate their safety at home as only OK, poor or very poor



Over **1 in 20** report violence between adults at home in the past month



Over **1 in 5** report never or only sometimes being able to rely on their parents

Almost **1 in 6** report it never being easy to make friends



Almost **4 in 10** report it is usually/always hard to trust people

The proportions reporting difficulties making friends and trusting people have increased since 2017

Socialising



Among Year 10 to Year 13 pupils...

Around **4 in 10** report chatting to someone online they/their friends have never met

Around **4 in 10** report being bullied a little or a lot in the last year

Almost **1 in 12** report missing school in the last year due to bullying

Of those reporting bullying....

Around **1 in 4** state they do not know why it happened



Bullying



Of those identifying as having SEND or as young carers....

Over **1 in 6** report being bullied a lot in the last year

In the month before the survey....

Over **1 in 4** report being pushed or hit

Almost **4 in 10** report being teased/made fun of

Almost **1 in 12** report receiving hurtful/threatening messages online

Not all pupils view these experiences as bullying



Problems at home and socially are associated with **low mental wellbeing**

Infographic text description

Unless stated otherwise, proportions average across sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 8 to 18)

Home Life

- Around 1 in 15 report being a young carer
- A further 1 in 11 report not being sure about whether they are a young carer
- Over 6 in 10 report they have a trusted adult to talk to when worried or upset
- Of those identifying as young carers...
 - Around 1 in 5 report missing school due to caring responsibilities
- Almost 1 in 8 report shouting and arguing between adults at home at least once a week
- Among Year 8 to Year 13 pupils...
 - Almost 4 in 10 report feeling loved only sometimes, rarely or never
- Among Year 6 to Year 13 pupils
 - Around 1 in 9 rate their safety at home as only OK, poor or very poor
- Over 1 in 20 report violence between adults at home in the past month
- Over 1 in 5 report never or only sometimes being able to rely on their parents

Socialising

- Almost 1 in 6 report it never being easy to make friends
- Almost 4 in 10 report it is usually or always hard to trust people
- The proportions reporting difficulties making friends and trusting people have increased since 2017
- Among Year 10 to Year 13 pupils...
 - Around 4 in 10 report chatting to someone online they/their friends have never met

Bullying

- Around 4 in 10 report being bullied a little or a lot in the last year
- Almost 1 in 12 report missing school in the last year due to bullying
- Of those reporting bullying...
 - Around 1 in 4 state they do not know why it happened
- Of those identifying as having SEND or as young carers...
 - Over 1 in 6 report being bullied a lot in the last year
- Not all pupils view the experiences below as bullying
- In the month before the survey....
 - Over 1 in 4 report being pushed or hit

- Almost 4 in 10 report being teased/made fun of
- Almost 1 in 12 report receiving hurtful/ threatening messages online
- Not all pupils view these experiences as bullying

Problems at home and socially are associated with lower mental wellbeing

The Survey

The results from the Flourish Survey begin to be reported on page 9; 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 fully random sample of pupils. 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 involved a sample selected at random from the full population of Norfolk pupils.

A separate topic report provides a detailed comparison of the Flourish Survey sample with the known characteristics of pupils in state-funded schools in Norfolk. A number of key points result from this comparison. First, we do not break out the data by individual district as the data is unevenly distributed across districts, in particular, only primary schools took part in the Borough of Great Yarmouth. Second, the geographic distribution of the data and information on the prevalence of pupils receiving free school meals suggests that pupils from deprived backgrounds may be under-represented in the Flourish Survey sample. Third, between 2015, 2017 and 2024 the age distribution of the

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

sample varied noticeably, hence, when making comparisons between these three years we control for age by performing the comparison for individual year groups.

Questions and year groups

The questionnaire for secondary pupils was more detailed than the questionnaire for primary pupils, particularly around alcohol, drugs, smoking/vaping and sexual health. There were limited questions on these topics for pupils in Years 4 and 5. In this report, we generally report results that combine data from Year 4 through to Year 13. Where more involved questions were only included in the questionnaire for secondary pupils, we report the data for Year 8 to Year 13 (pupils aged 12 to 18).² 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 use to obtain topic specific support.

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 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).

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

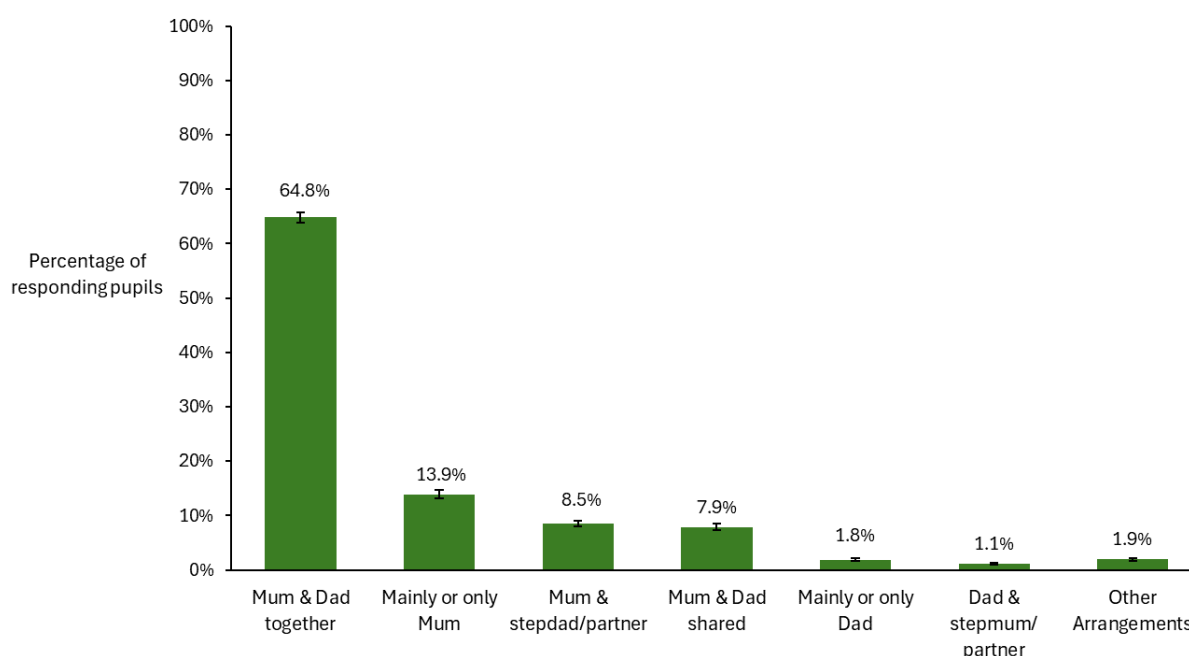
Family relationships

Family structure

Figure 1 reports the family structures that sampled pupils live in for most of the week. Almost two-thirds (64.8%) of sampled pupils report living in a household involving both their mum and dad. Most other pupils, 30.3%, report living in a setting involving regular contact with their mum. As such, in total 95.1% of sampled pupils report living in a setting which includes their mother.

15.7% of sampled pupils report spending most of their time in a single parent household (either mainly with their mum or mainly with their dad). Furthermore, only a very small proportion of sampled pupils report being 'looked after' children with 0.4% stating that they spend most of their week with foster parents.³

Figure 1: Percentage of sampled pupils living in different family structures - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined)



For comparison, the Children Commissioner's Family Review⁴ reports that of UK families in 2021 63% were married couples with children, 14% were co-habiting couples

³ There are too few observations (less than 10) to report the proportion of living in children's homes.

⁴ See [cc-family-and-its-protective-effect-part-1-of-the-independent-family-review-.pdf](#)

and 23% were headed by a lone parent⁵. However, it is not entirely clear how these definitions marry up to the family structures described in Figure 1; for example, the SHEU survey makes no mention of whether or not a pupil's parents are married. The Children's Commissioner's report also states that 0.7% of children in England are "looked after by the state".

One note of caution with Figure 1 is it may be showing the family structures of children in the Flourish Survey sample, rather than the distribution of family structures that exist in Norfolk as a whole.

Caring responsibilities

While a home is frequently thought of providing support to a child, it is important to remember that some children have to provide support to other household members. Overall, 6.8% of sampled pupils in Year 4 to Year 13 (pupils aged 8 to 18) report being young carers and a further 8.6% were not sure if they were carers or not. 2021 UK census data indicates that 1.3% of those aged 5-17 had unpaid caring responsibilities in England as a whole and 1.6% of those aged 5-17 in Norfolk had these responsibilities.⁶ Potential explanations for the figures from the current survey being noticeably higher than the census figures include the SHEU questionnaire providing a detailed explanation of situations that indicate someone is a young carer and because the survey was completed at school rather than in the home.

More detailed questions about caring responsibilities were only asked of Year 6 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 10 to 18). The following statistics are based on these year groups only and relate solely to those pupils who were sure that they were a young carer.

44.2% of Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who report being young carers report that they cared for a brother or sister while 35.8% report caring for a parent/carer. In terms of the time that caring responsibilities take up, there seems to be considerable variety with 39.2% of those identifying as young carers reporting not needing to perform caring tasks everyday, while 18.1% report spending more than 2 hours on caring tasks per day. A statistic illustrating the burden that some of those identifying as young carers face is that 20.7% of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who identify as young carers report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey to perform caring responsibilities. Once uncertainty is considered, the proportion of those identifying as

⁵ The definition used in the Children's Commissioner's report is that a lone parent is where an adult not in a co-habiting or married relationship takes care of a dependent child.

⁶ Data obtained from: [Provision of unpaid care by age - Office for National Statistics](#)

young carers reporting school absences due to caring responsibilities does not show an obvious relationship with age.

Whether young carers receive any support from their schools appears uncertain. Only 24.2% of those identifying as young carers report that their school definitely knew about their caring responsibilities, while a further 42.2% were unsure about whether their school knew about their caring responsibilities.

The quality of relationships

22.9% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in 2024 report that they could never or only sometimes rely on their parents. This is an increase on 2017 when the proportion was 19.9%, but is very close to the 2015 figure of 22.7%.

Among sampled pupils in Year 8 to Year 13⁷, 37.2% report that they have only felt loved some of the time, rarely or none of the time. This percentage is virtually identical to the 2017 figure and, once uncertainty is considered, is similar to the 39.8% reported in 2015.

⁷ The relevant question was only asked in the questionnaire for secondary pupils, hence the restriction to these year groups.

Safety at home

Overview

While most homes provide a warm and stable environment that supports a child's development, conflicts at home can cause upset to children and, in the worst cases, put their safety at risk.

12.4% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in 2024 report that in the month prior to the survey there had been shouting and arguing between adults at the home which upset them at least once a week. This includes 5.0% who report that they witnessed this every day or almost every day. A further 24.6% of pupils report shouting or arguing at least once or twice in the month prior to the survey.

More seriously, 6.1% of sampled pupils report that at least once there had been violence between adults at home in the month prior to the survey. 1.9% of sampled pupils report that violence between adults at home occurred at least once a week during this time period.

No questions in the survey directly asked pupils whether they had been the victim of violence in the home. However, pupils were asked to rate their overall safety at home. It should be noted that 'safety at home' is a broad statement; while violence in the home is an obvious interpretation, the statement could relate to topics such as the condition of the building which a pupil lives. Nevertheless, 11.4% of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils⁸ rated their safety at home as only OK, poor or very poor. In contrast, around two-thirds of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils rated their safety at home as very good.

Changes over time

If we restrict attention to pupils in Year 8 to Year 13⁹, it is possible to compare the reported rates of arguing and violence in the home between 2017 and 2024. Between these two years the proportion of Year 8 to Year 13 pupils reporting shouting and arguing between parents that was upsetting at least once a week in the month prior to the survey rose from 9.1% to 12.3%.

⁸ Only pupils in these year groups were asked the relevant question about safety at home.

⁹ In 2017 the relevant questions were only asked in the questionnaire for secondary pupils.

The percentage of Year 8 to Year 13 pupils reporting violence between adults in the home at least once in the month prior to the survey remained constant at 4.4% in both 2017 and 2024.

Variations across groups – interpretation

In the following subsection, the aim is to understand how the reported rate of violence in the home and perceptions of safety in the home vary 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)¹⁰, receipt of free school meals¹¹, different ethnicities¹², identifying as a young carer¹³, reporting low mental

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 986 individuals in the 2024 sample identify as not having a solely white ethnicity (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' 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.

¹³ 625 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.

wellbeing¹⁴, and gender identity¹⁵. It is worth remembering that some pupils will fall into multiple groups, e.g. both identify as a young carer and report 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 higher rates of witnessing violence within the home. However, we do not know whether: (i) low mental wellbeing leads to violence in the home, (ii) violence within the home leads pupils to have lower mental wellbeing, or (iii) some other factor is driving the patterns in both mental wellbeing and violence within the home.

Linked to this, Figure 2 and all other 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 violence in the home). 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 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 witnessing violence between adults in the home in the month before the survey. For example, in Figure 2 - 9.2% of pupils identifying as having

¹⁴ 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.

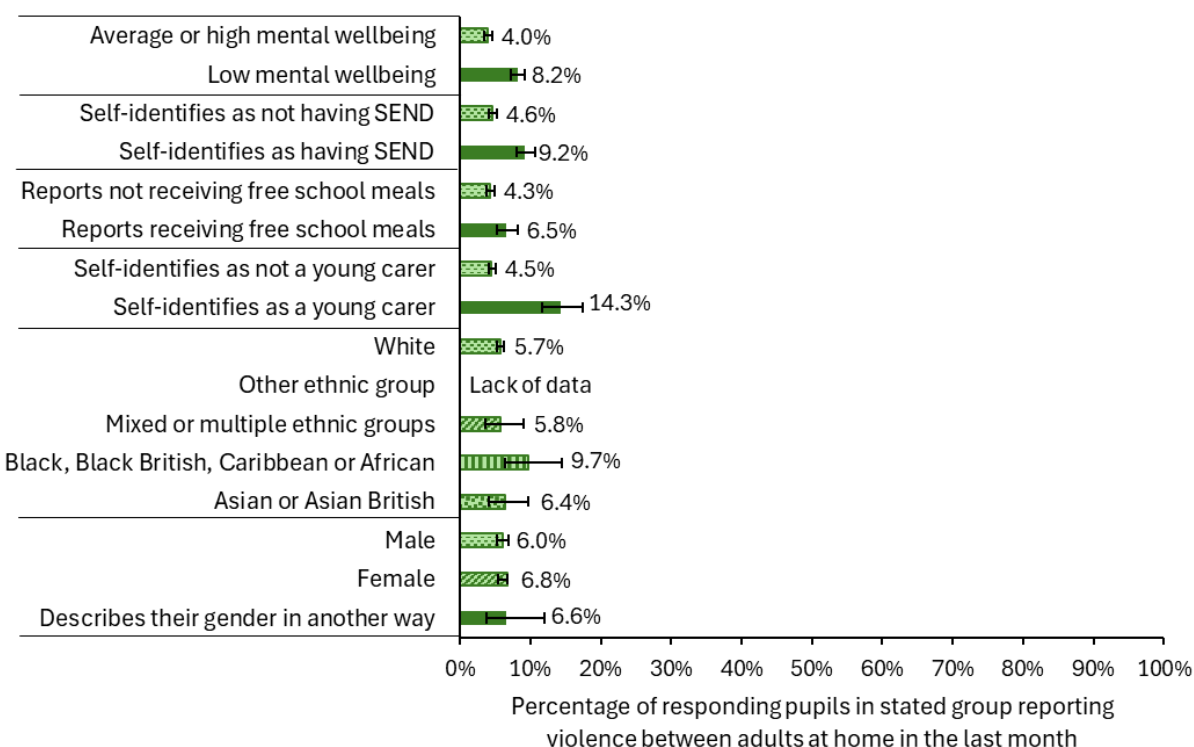
¹⁵ 168 individuals in the 2024 sample describe their gender in another way beyond simply male or female (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This number excludes those answering 'I prefer not to say' and represents 1.9% of the sample (when considering 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.

SEND report witnessing violence at home. Each characteristic described on the previous page is used to split the overall sample 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

Figure 2 shows that sampled pupils reporting low mental wellbeing, having SEND, receipt of free school meals, being a young carer or are more likely to report witnessing violence between adults in the month prior to the survey than those pupils who do not have these characteristics. Also, those identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African are more likely to report witnessing violence between adults in the month prior to the survey than pupils who identify as White. With the exception of the statement regarding free school meals, these statements relate to when data from sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils is combined. The statement about free school meals relates to data for Year 6 to Year 13 pupils as these were the year groups asked the relevant question about receipt of free school meals.

Figure 2: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting violence between adults in the home at least once in the month before the survey by selected groups – 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, except free school meals comparison which is Year 6 to Year 13 data combined)¹⁶

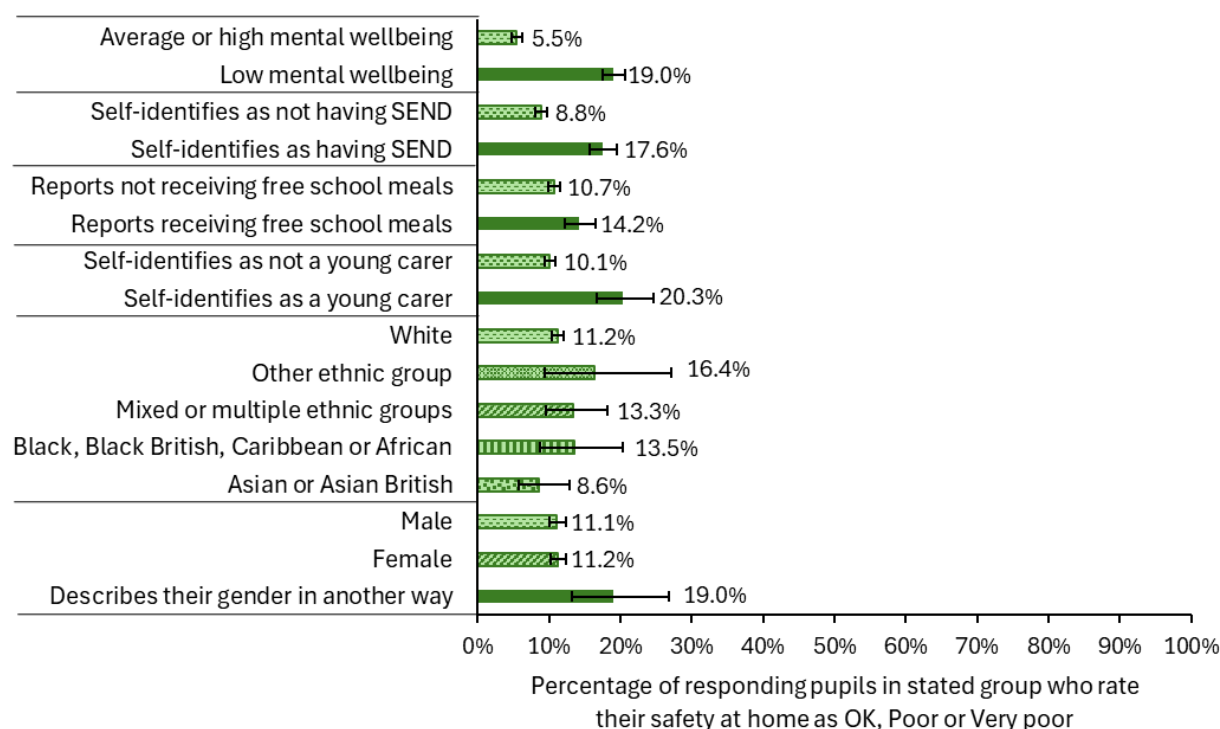


¹⁶ 'Lack of data' indicates that there were fewer than 10 observations within the sample of pupils identifying as belonging to an 'other ethnic group' who reported violence within the home. To preserve anonymity and robustness statistics based on fewer than 10 observations are not reported.

While for all groups only a small minority of sampled pupils witnessed violence within the home, the proportionate increases associated with some of these characteristics are large. For example, reporting low mental wellbeing or having SEND results in the rate of reported violence more than doubling relative to sampled pupils reporting average or high mental wellbeing or not having SEND respectively. Even more dramatically, the percentage of pupils identifying as young carers who report violence within the home is more than three times the percentage reported by those not identifying as young carers (14.3% vs 4.5%).

In Figure 3 one can see that sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who report having low mental wellbeing, having SEND, receipt of free school meals, being a young carer or who describe their gender in another way are more likely to rate their safety at home as only OK, poor or very poor than pupils without these characteristics. It is notable that 19.0% of sampled pupils describing their gender in another way report their safety at home to be only OK, poor or very poor compared to 11.1% of those identifying as male and 11.2% of those identifying as female. Looking across the Flourish Survey topic reports, it is relatively rare for those who describe their gender in another way to report outcomes where there is a statistically significant difference to those identifying as male or female.

Figure 3: Percentage of sampled pupils rating their safety at home as OK, poor or very poor by selected groups - 2024 (Year 6 to Year 13 data combined)



The differences for reporting having SEND, low mental wellbeing and being a young carer appear large. Those who report having SEND or identify as young carers are around twice as likely to report their safety at home as OK, poor or very poor than sampled pupils who report not having SEND or not identifying as young carers respectively. However, the proportionate difference is largest between those reporting low mental wellbeing and those reporting average or high mental wellbeing; 19.0% of the former group rate their safety at home as only OK, poor or very poor, compared to only 5.5% of the latter group.

Access to a trusted adult

Overview

While one hopes that for most pupils their home life will provide them with the support required to be resilient in the face of life's adversities, perhaps the more basic need is for pupils to have an adult somewhere in their life to whom they can turn if they face difficulties.

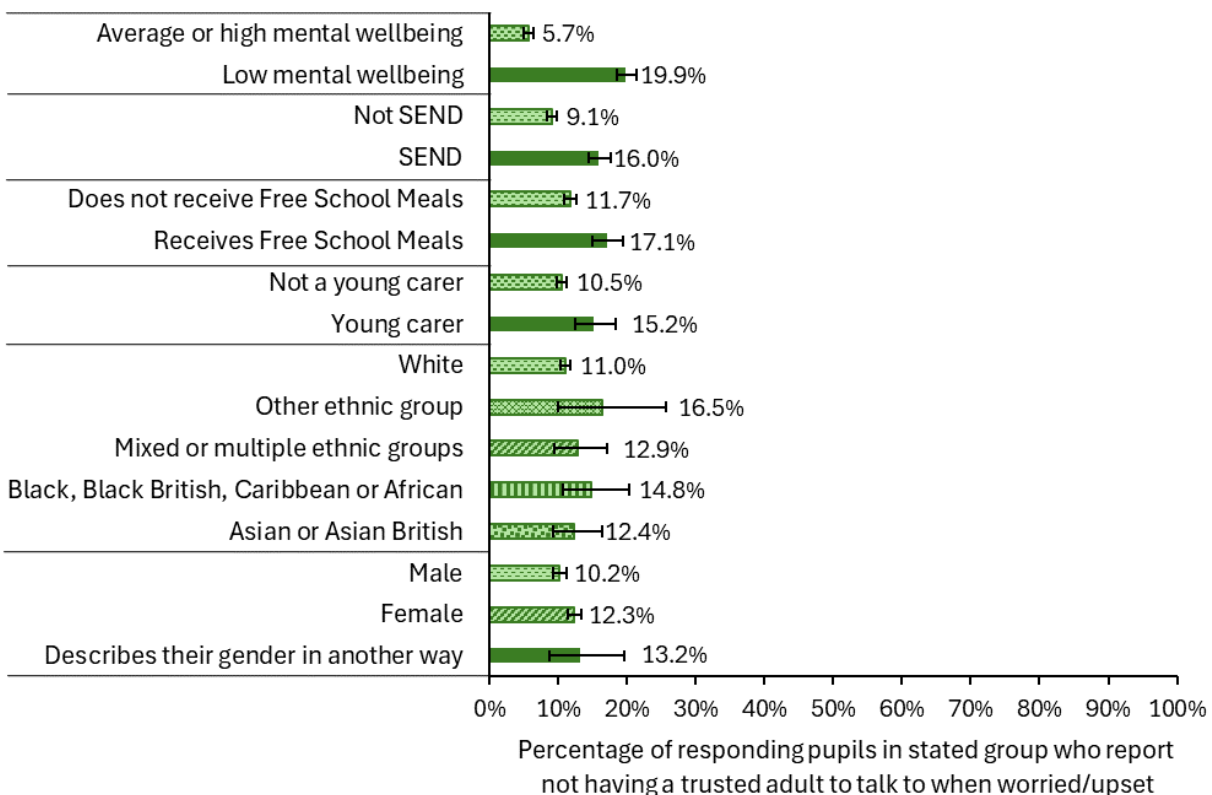
Overall, in 2024, 11.4% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils report that they did not have a trusted adult they could talk to when worried or upset. A further 25.6% answered 'maybe' in response to whether they had access to a trusted adult. In terms of whether there is a relationship between age and access to a trusted adult, pupils in Year 8 to Year 10 are more likely to report that they do not have a trusted adult they can talk to when worried or stressed than both younger and older pupils. The difference is clearest between Year 8 to Year 10 pupils and those in primary age groups; for example, 15.3% of Year 8 pupils report not having access to a trusted adult compared to 7.3% of pupils in each of Year 4 and Year 6.

11.4% represents an increase on the 9.8% of sampled pupils who reported not having a trusted adult they could talk to when worried or upset in 2017. However, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting they were unsure about whether they can speak to a trusted adult remained stable between 2015, 2017 and 2024 once uncertainty is considered.

Variations by group

Figure 4 shows those reporting low mental wellbeing, having SEND, receiving free school meals or being a young carer all have a higher percentage reporting a lack of a trusted adult to talk to than those who do not report these characteristics. The largest difference involves mental wellbeing: 19.9%, or almost 1 in 5, of those reporting low mental wellbeing report that they do not have a trusted adult they can talk to when worried or upset compared to only 5.7% of those reporting average or high mental wellbeing. Again, these statements are based on data for sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils with the exception of the statement about free school meals which is based on data for sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils.

Figure 4: Percentage of sampled pupils who report not having a trusted adult to talk to when worried or upset by selected groups - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, except free school meals comparison which is Year 6 to Year 13 data combined)



Friendships

Perceptions of Socialising

In 2024, 16.1% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils report that it is never easy to make friends, an increase from 11.7% in 2017. Similarly, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting that it is usually or always hard to trust people increased from 29.2% in 2017 to 37.7% in 2024. Both of these results appear consistent with the notion that the disruptions of the pandemic have had an impact on pupils' ability to form social bonds.

Once uncertainty is considered, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting that it is never easy to make friends is broadly stable across all year groups. Turning to the ability of pupils to trust other people, secondary pupils (Year 7 to Year 13) on average are more likely to report that they usually or always find it hard to trust people than primary pupils (Year 4 to Year 6). 34.6% of primary pupils report this issue compared to 39.0% of secondary pupils.

In terms of groups that report it being harder to make friends, those reporting that they are a young carer, they have low mental wellbeing, receive free school meals or having SEND are more likely to report never finding it easy to make friends compared to those not in these groups. Indeed, it is striking that just over a quarter of those reporting having SEND or low mental wellbeing report it never being easy to make friends (26.6% and 26.3% respectively), while just under a quarter (23.2%) of those identifying as young carers and just over 1 in 5 (20.9%) of those reporting receipt of free school meals indicate they experience the same problem. In contrast, only 11.8% of those identifying as not having SEND and 9.5% of those with average or high mental wellbeing report never finding it easy to make friends.¹⁷

Also, 11.1% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in 2024 report that at some point in the last 12 months they had not gone to school due to worries about friendships or relationships.

¹⁷ As before, these statements relate to when data for sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils is combined, apart from those relating to receiving free school meals which is based on data for Year 6 to Year 13.

Online safety

The pervasive nature of the internet and smartphones means they often provide a platform for social interaction. Indeed, they may enable interactions that would not take place in the offline world. However, as well as enabling positive interactions, the online world also potentially allows for interactions and behaviours that raise concerns.

In this section we focus on general issues that may arise when social interactions take place online; behaviours with a sexual element are discussed in the Flourish Survey topic report on sexual health and relationships. In 2024, the general online safety questions were asked to all pupils in Year 6 to Year 13, however, in 2017 the questions were only included in the questionnaire for secondary pupils.

The role of the online world in some pupils' lives is clear from the fact that 28.9% of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils report that they had at some point chatted to someone online that they and their friends did not know in the offline world. This type of online interaction also increased with age. In 2024, 13.6% of sampled Year 6 pupils report chatting at some point to someone they and their friends had only met online rising to 32.0% of Year 9 pupils and 46.5% of Year 11 pupils.

As context, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)¹⁸ estimates that in 2023 19.2% of 10-15 year olds in England and Wales in the 12 months prior to the survey spoke with someone online that they had not met in person. While this figure is similar to the 2020 estimate¹⁹ of 17%, the proportion of these contacts that were with individuals that the child did not have a connection to or did not have mutual friends with rose. In 2023, of the 19.2% who spoke to someone online who they had not met in person, 49.6% did not have a connection or mutual friend with this new person compared to 37.3% in 2020. Also, the CSEW found in 2023 that those aged 13-15 were more likely to have spoken to someone online whom they had not met in person compared to 10 year olds.

Online social contact appears to be more important for individuals who face difficulties making friends. 38.9% of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who report that it is never easy to make friends also report chatting to someone that they and their friends had never met offline compared to only 27.4% of pupils who report that it is sometimes, usually or always easy to make friends. Those who find it never easy to make friends

¹⁸ See [Bullying and online experiences among children in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

¹⁹ See [Children's online behaviour in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

also report a higher likelihood of being asked to meet up by someone they had only met online.

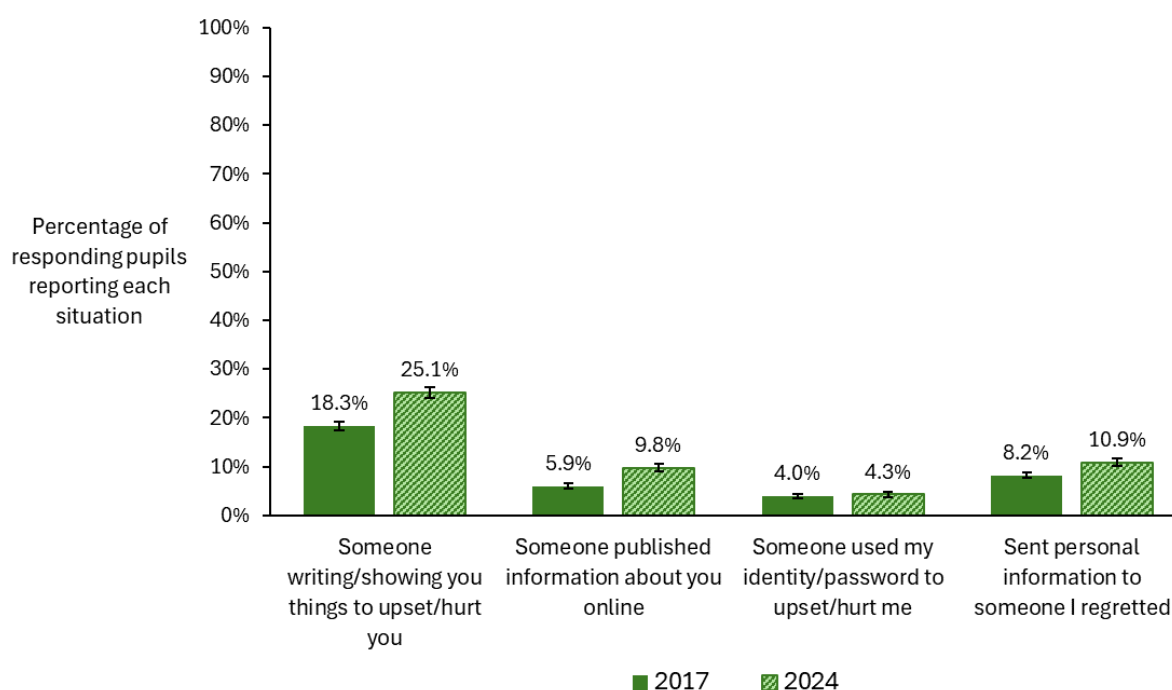
Additionally, in all year groups from Year 7 to Year 11 a higher percentage of pupils reported this type of online chatting in 2024 than in 2017. For example, the 46.5% of sampled Year 11 pupils in 2024 who reported chatting to someone they and their friends had only met online was noticeably higher than the 36.0% reported by sampled Year 11 pupils in 2017.

Turning to whether pupils had been asked to meet someone in person who they had only spoken to online, there is again a clear relationship with age. For example, the percentage of sampled Year 11 pupils reporting that at some point they had been asked to meet someone in person who they had only spoken to online was 18.8% compared to only 4.0% of Year 7 pupils. For many year groups there was an increase in the percentage reporting this behaviour between 2017 and 2024, however, in Year 11 and Year 12/13 the difference was not statistically significant.

The Norfolk survey did not ask whether pupils had actually met in person with someone they had only met online. However, the CSEW in 2023 did ask this question and found 4.4% of 10-15 year olds had met up in person with someone they had only spoken to online in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 5 reports the percentages of sampled Year 7 to Year 13 pupils²⁰ who have experienced different online situations which are problematic. A quarter of sampled Year 7 to Year 13 pupils in 2024 report someone showing them things that hurt or upset them, while 9.8% report someone publishing information about them online and 10.9% report that they had sent personal information to someone that they subsequently regretted. Figure 5 also shows that, with the exception of someone using a pupil's identity or password to upset or hurt them, a greater proportion of sampled pupils were experiencing these problematic behaviours in 2024 than in 2017.

Figure 5: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting different problematic online situations - 2017 and 2024 (Year 7 to Year 13 data combined)



In terms of seeing something upsetting or hurtful, 2022 Ofcom data can provide a comparison for the UK as a whole. Ofcom²¹ reports that, among 8-17 year olds, 29% had experienced someone being nasty or hurtful to them via a communications technology (i.e. not only online but also via texting, phone calls and video calls). Ofcom also indicates that this proportion rises with age from 20% for 8-11 year olds to 37% for 16-17 year olds. In the present Norfolk survey there is some, although not perfect evidence, that older pupils are more likely to report that someone has written or shown them things online to hurt or upset them. The percentage of sampled pupils reporting

²⁰ The data is restricted to these year groups as in 2017 the relevant questions were not asked to Year 6 pupils.

²¹ See [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes 2023](#)

this issue increases from 14.0% in Year 7 to 29.2% in Year 12/13²²; however, there is an outlier in the data with 22.4% of sampled Year 6 pupils reporting that someone has written or shown them things online to hurt or upset them.

²² The oldest age category is Year 12/13 as in the questionnaire the oldest year group was labelled 'Year 12+' and there are 276 18-year olds in the 2024 sample.

Bullying

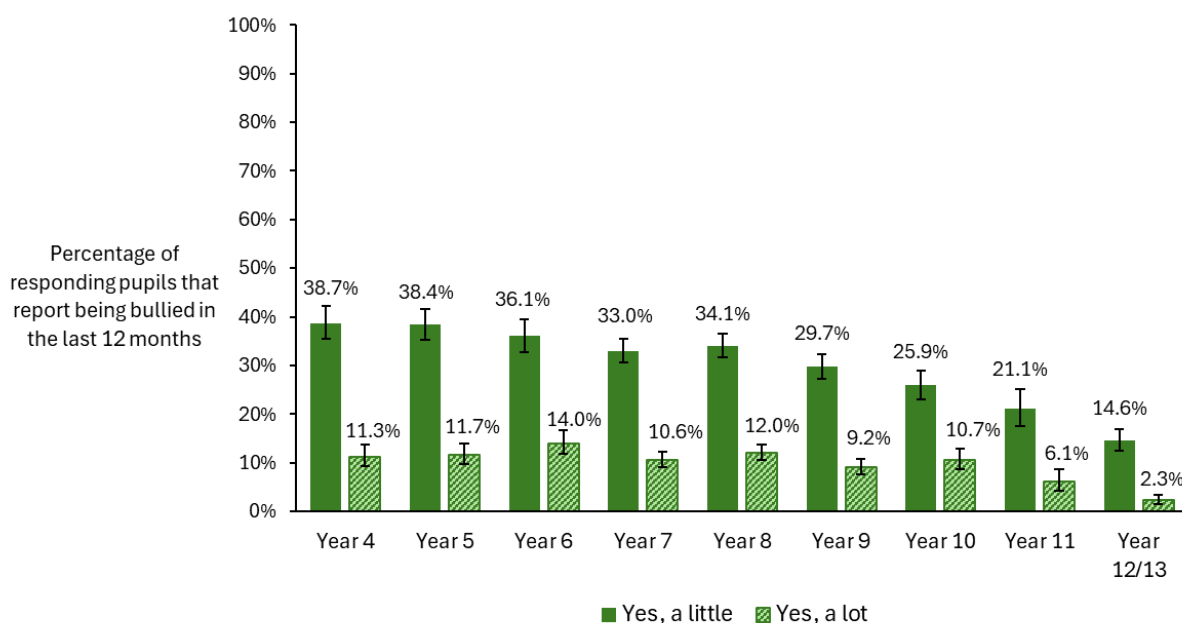
Prevalence

In 2024 30.7% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils report being bullied a little in the 12 months before the survey and an additional 10.0% report being bullied a lot. For 8.1% of sampled pupils, bullying stopped going to school at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey. These percentages relate to pupils' own perceptions of what constitutes bullying rather than any external definition, although, these perceptions may be influenced by any lessons on bullying that occur within schools.

For comparison, the CSEW in 2023 found that 34.9% of 10-15 year olds in England and Wales had experienced at least one out of thirteen listed in-person bullying behaviours in the 12 months prior to the survey, while 19.1% had experienced at least one out of nine listed online bullying behaviours. However, only 33.4% of those who had experienced one of the in-person bullying behaviours would describe the behaviours as bullying, and only 45.0% of those who had experienced one of the online bullying behaviours would describe them as bullying.

Figure 6 shows that in older year groups there is some drop in the reported rate of being bullied, with this drop occurring earlier for those reporting being bullied a little. Between Year 4 and Year 8 the reported rate of being bullied a little is broadly stable once uncertainty is considered. Above Year 8, there is a steady decline in the proportion of sampled pupils reporting being bullied a little from 34.1% to 14.6% in Year 12/13.

Figure 6: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting being bullied a little or a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey by year group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 12/13 data separately)



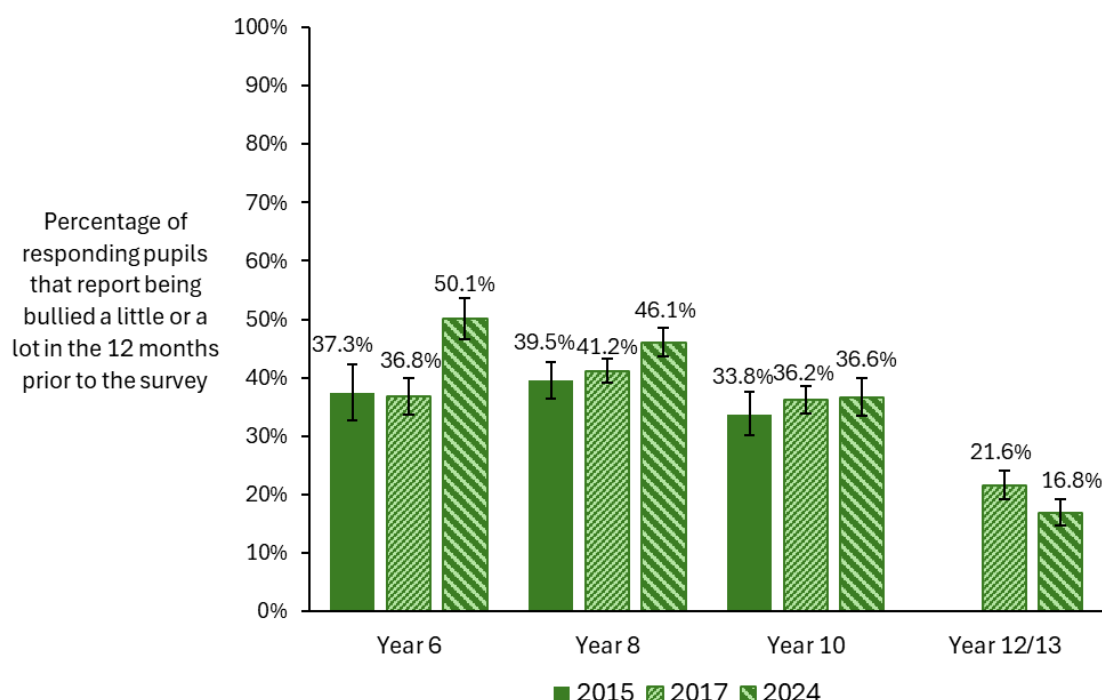
The rate of sampled pupils reporting being bullied a lot remains stable later into secondary school with the drop in the reported rate of being bullied a lot occurring from Year 10. In Year 10 10.7% of sampled pupils report being bullied a lot falling to 2.3% in Year 12/13. However, a degree of caution around this relationship with age is warranted since any link with age is much less clear in the 2015 and 2017 data.

Changes over time

Since Figure 6 shows a relationship between age and the likelihood of reporting bullying, to assess whether the rate of reported bullying has changed over time it is necessary to control for age by looking at changes within individual year groups. We report only selected year groups for brevity; namely Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13. Year 6 was chosen as the youngest year group for which sufficient data is

available and Year 12/13 was chosen as the oldest year group available. No Year 12/13 data was available in 2015, while in 2015 and 2017 there was insufficient data available in Year 4 for robust analysis.²³

Figure 7: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting being bullied a little or a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey by selected year group - 2015, 2017 and 2024 (Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 data separately)



There is no consistent pattern over time in Figure 7, with instead there being substantial variations by year group. Figure 7 shows that between 2015 and 2017 the reported rate of being bullied a little or a lot was stable once uncertainty is accounted for. For Year 10 this stability continued into 2024, however, for Year 6 and Year 8 the reported rate of being bullied at little or a lot increased, while for Year 12/13 there was a decrease in the reported rate of bullying. In Year 6, the increase between 2017 and 2024 was particularly large, from 36.8% of sampled pupils reporting being bullied a little or a lot in 2017 to 50.1% in 2024.

If one restricts attention to those reporting being bullied a lot, only the increase found for Year 6 and the decrease for Year 12/13 remain statistically significant. In Year 6, the proportion reporting being bullied a lot increased from 8.1% in 2017 to 14.0% in 2024.

²³ It is not possible to compare the rates of bullying between the Norfolk sample and SHEU data from the rest of the country in 2022 as the response categories to the wider SHEU bullying question were different.

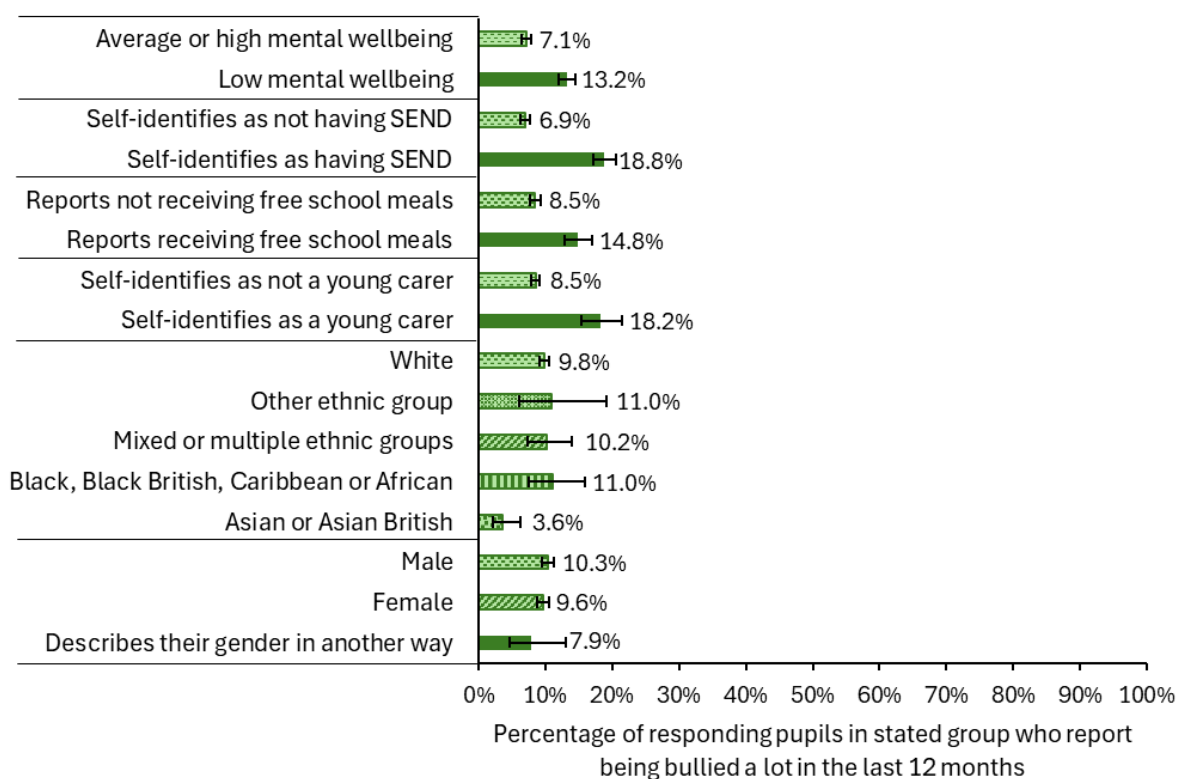
If one considers the proportion of pupils reporting at least one absence from school due to bullying in the 12 months prior to the survey, only in Year 6 and Year 8 were there statistically significant differences. In both year groups there was an increase in the proportion of sampled pupils reporting this type of absence. For Year 6, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting missing school at least once due to bullying rose from 3.9% in 2017 to 9.5% in 2024.

As context, the CSEW, using its definition of bullying, found no statistically significant difference in the reported rate of bullying between 2020 and 2023 for 10-15 year olds in England and Wales.

Variations by group

In Figure 8 those reporting low mental wellbeing, having SEND, receiving free school meals or being a young carer are all more likely to report being bullied a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey than those who did not report these characteristics. More than 18% of those reporting having SEND or being a young carer report being bullied a lot. All these statements relate to when data is combined for sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils, apart from those relating to the receipt of free school meals which combine data for sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils.

Figure 8: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting being bullied a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey by selected group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, except free school meals comparison which is Year 6 to Year 13 data combined)



For those who report having SEND the rate of being bullied a lot is more than twice the rate for those who do not report having SEND (18.8% vs 6.9%). Sampled pupils who identify as Asian or Asian British have a noticeably lower rate of reporting bullying than those identifying as White (3.6% vs 9.8%), while the percentage of pupils who describe their gender in another way report a rate of being bullied a lot which is not statistically different from either male or female pupils.

Using its definition of bullying, the CSEW found in 2023 that there was no difference between girls and boys in terms of the reported rate of in-person bullying, but that girls were more likely to report online bullying behaviours than boys.

Types of bullying

Concerning incidents

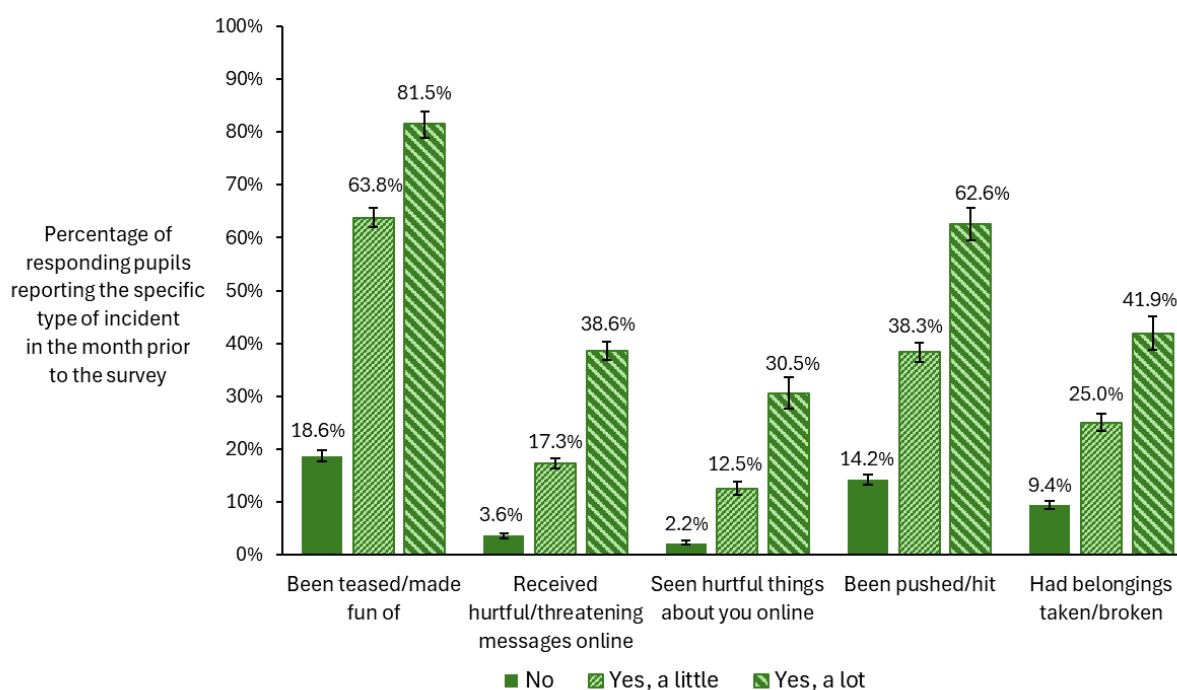
The Flourish Survey provided the opportunity for pupils to report different types of incident that might be thought to constitute bullying. Pupils could indicate that they had experienced multiple different types of incident in the month prior to the survey. The most common type of incident reported by sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils in 2024 was being teased or made fun of with 38.9% of pupils reporting this as having occurred in the month prior to the survey. The next most common type of incident reported was being pushed or hit, with 26.5% of sampled pupils reporting this happening in the month prior to the survey.

The other types of incident pupils could select (and the proportion reporting them) were: having belongings taken/broken (17.5%), receiving hurtful or threatening messages online (11.4%) and seeing hurtful things written about themselves online (8.3%). These proportions indicate that while the online world can provide an additional avenue for bullying, fewer pupils report experiencing issues online than in person.

However, pupils themselves appear to some degree uncertain about whether these types of incidents constitute bullying. Figure 9 reports the percentage of pupils reporting each type of incident split by whether they consider themselves to have been bullied in the 12 months before the survey.

First, it is clear from Figure 9 that even individuals who do not consider themselves to have been bullied in the last 12 months report the concerning incidents. Indeed, 18.6% of those who view themselves as not being bullied still report being teased or made fun of in the month before the survey and 14.2% report being pushed or hit.

Figure 9: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting different types of incident in the month prior to the survey by whether or not they reported being bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined)



Nevertheless, it is also clear from Figure 9 that those who report being bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey are much more likely to report each of the behaviours. For example, 81.5% of those who report being bullied a lot also report being teased or made fun of in the month prior to the survey. Indeed, of those who view themselves as being a bullied a lot in the year before the survey a majority have been teased/made fun of and pushed or hit in the month prior to the survey. Furthermore, Figure 9 shows that a greater proportion of those who report being bullied a lot report each of the incidents than the those who report being bullied only a little. For example, 30.5% of those reporting being bullied a lot report having seen hurtful things written about them online in the past month compared to 12.5% of those who report being bullied a little.

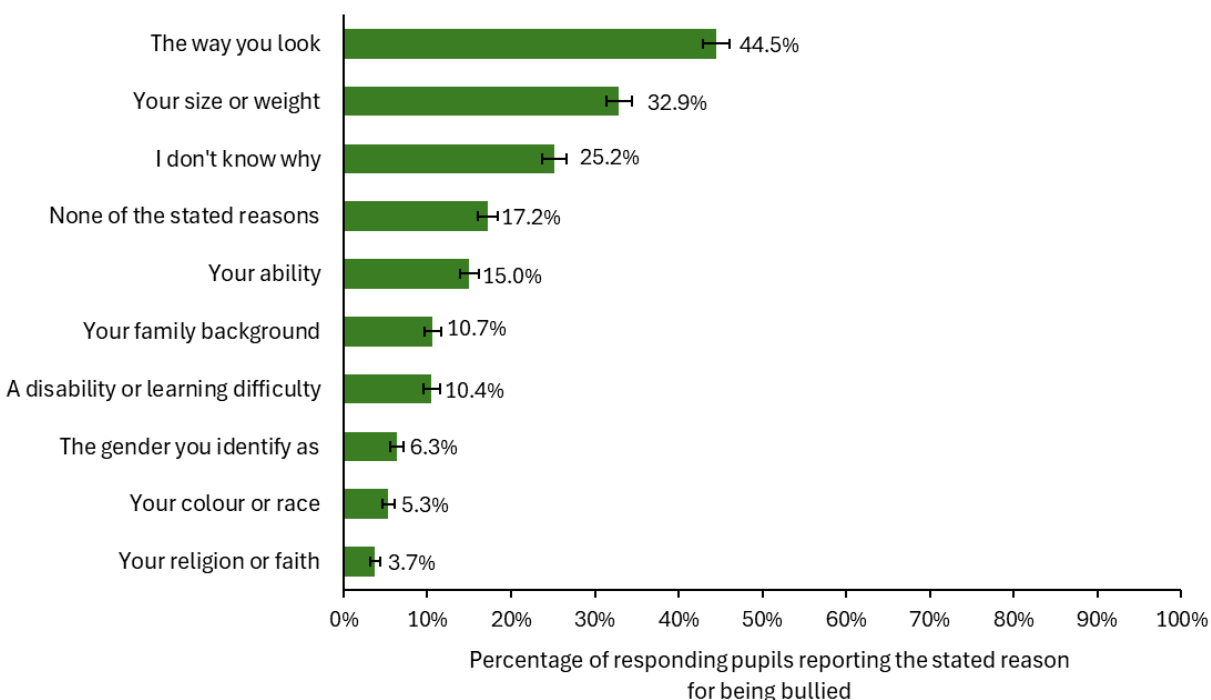
Overall, Figure 9 suggests that whether pupils consider incidents to be bullying depends on the frequency and variety of incidents that they are experience. Also, it is possible that incidents in the online world may be viewed as more likely to constitute bullying since only 3.6% of those who do not consider themselves to have been bullied in the past year report receiving hurtful or threatening messages online in the past month and only 2.2% of this group saw hurtful things written about themselves online. Pupils' views of whether incidents constitute bullying or not may be being informed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance's definition of bullying which stresses that bullying is the repetitive and intentional hurting of someone where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.²⁴

²⁴ See [Our definition of bullying](#)

Reasons for bullying

Figure 10 shows that appearance appears to be a key factor identified by victims as a reason for their bullying. Of those who report being bullied a little or a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey 44.5% thought that the bullying had occurred because of the way they looked and 32.9% thought it was due to their size or weight. However, beyond appearance the perceived reasons for being bullied appear to be diverse and uncertain. The third most common response, given by around a quarter of those who report being bullied, was that they did not know why they had been bullied. Similarly, the fourth most common response, given by 17.2% of those who report being bullied, was that the reason for bullying was something other than one of the ten reasons stated in the survey question.

Figure 10: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting different possible reasons for their bullying - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, data solely relates to those indicating that they have been bullied a little or a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey, multiple responses possible)

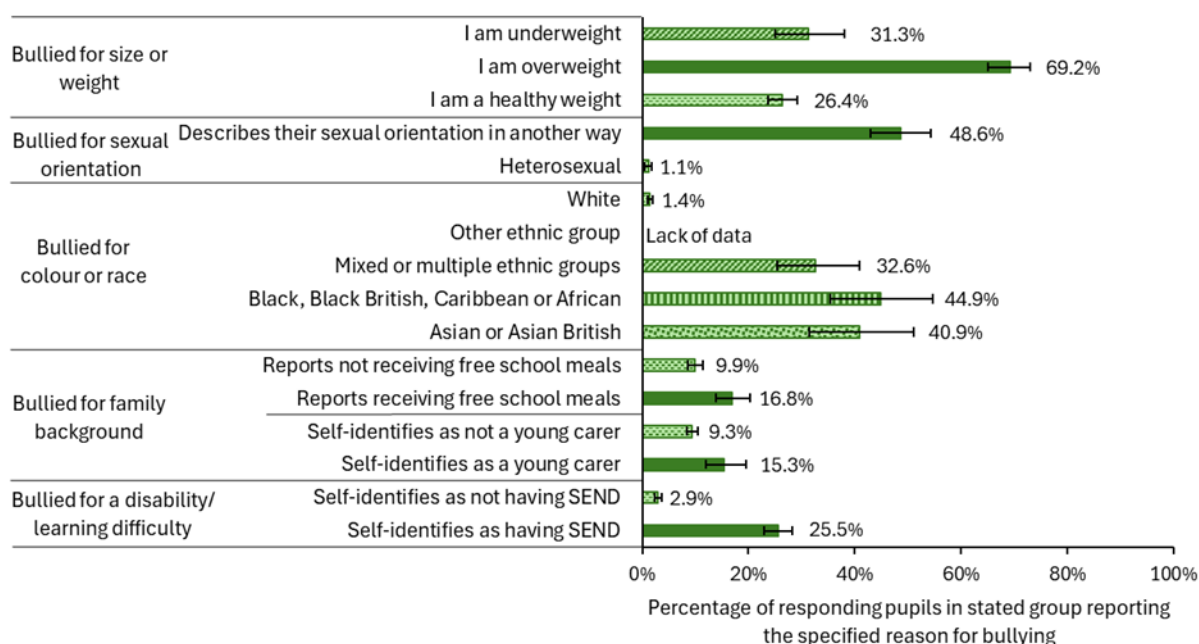


That the reasons for bullying are diverse and pupils are not certain individual incidents imply bullying suggests that bullying is potentially a difficult phenomenon to accurately identify. However, some of the apparent diversity in the reasons for bullying displayed in Figure 10 results simply from the fact that some reasons for bullying are only reported

by small minorities of the school population. Figure 11 illustrates how particular reasons for bullying are far more relevant for certain groups of pupils.

Figure 11 should be read in the following way. Figure 11 is split according to the bullying reason being considered (on the far left of the vertical axis) and the characteristics of the pupils (e.g. identifying as a young carer vs not identifying as a young carer). Each bar represents the percentage of pupils with a particular characteristic that report the reason listed on the far left of the vertical axis. As such, the first line of the chart indicates that among sampled pupils who feel they are underweight and who have been bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey 31.3% feel that they were bullied due to their weight or size. The characteristics of the pupils are used to split the overall sample into mutually exclusive groups. 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. identifying as a young carer vs not identifying as a young carer.

Figure 11: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting different potential reasons for their bullying by selected group - 2024 (Year groups of data vary²⁵, data solely relates to those indicating they have been bullied a little or a lot in the 12 months prior to the survey)



²⁵ The data related to being bullied due to a pupil's sexual orientation and being bullied for weight or size relates only to pupils from Year 8 to Year 13 as the relevant question was only asked in the questionnaire for secondary pupils. The data related to the receipt of free school meals only relates to Year 6 to Year 13 pupils. All other cuts of the data relate to Year 4 to Year 13 pupils combined.

Some of the results in Figure 11 are striking. For example, among those identifying as heterosexual who report bullying in the 12 months prior to the survey only 1.4% report the reason for bullying as being their sexual orientation, whereas 48.6% of those who describe their sexual orientation in another way and who report being bullied in the past 12 months stated their sexual orientation was a reason for their bullying. Similarly, only 1.4% of those identifying as White and who report being bullied indicate the reason for this was their colour or race compared to 32.6% of those identifying as being from Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 44.9% of those identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African and 40.9% of those identifying as Asian or Asian British.

Similarly, 25.5% of those pupils identifying as having SEND and having being bullied in the past year report that they had been bullied for a disability or learning difficulty compared to only 2.9% of pupils who report being bullied and identify as not having SEND. Additionally, those reporting being in receipt of free school meals or being a young carer who report being bullied are more likely to report the reason for their bullying as being their family background compared to those individuals who had been bullied but did not report these characteristics.²⁶

While individuals that report bullying and perceive themselves to be overweight were more likely to report the reason for their bullying as being their size or weight, just over a quarter of those reporting bullying and perceiving themselves as a healthy weight still thought they had been bullied for their size or weight.

Pupil Safety

Year 6 to Year 13 pupils were also asked to rate their safety at school and their safety when going to and from school. 8.2% of sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils report their safety at school as being poor or very poor with a further 24.4% rating it as only OK. Possibly worryingly, these figures are actually higher than when pupils were asked about travelling to or from school: 4.4% of sampled pupils report their safety as poor or very poor when going to and from school, while 20.4% report it as being OK.

Unsurprisingly, there is a clear association between reporting being bullied and feeling less safe. Among sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who report not being bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey only 4.2% rate their safety at school as being poor or very poor, whereas among those reporting that they have been bullied a lot in the past 12 months 28.3% view their safety at school as being poor or very poor. These pupils

²⁶ The percentages who believed they had been bullied for their gender identity are not reported as there was fewer than observations for those 'describing their gender in another way'.

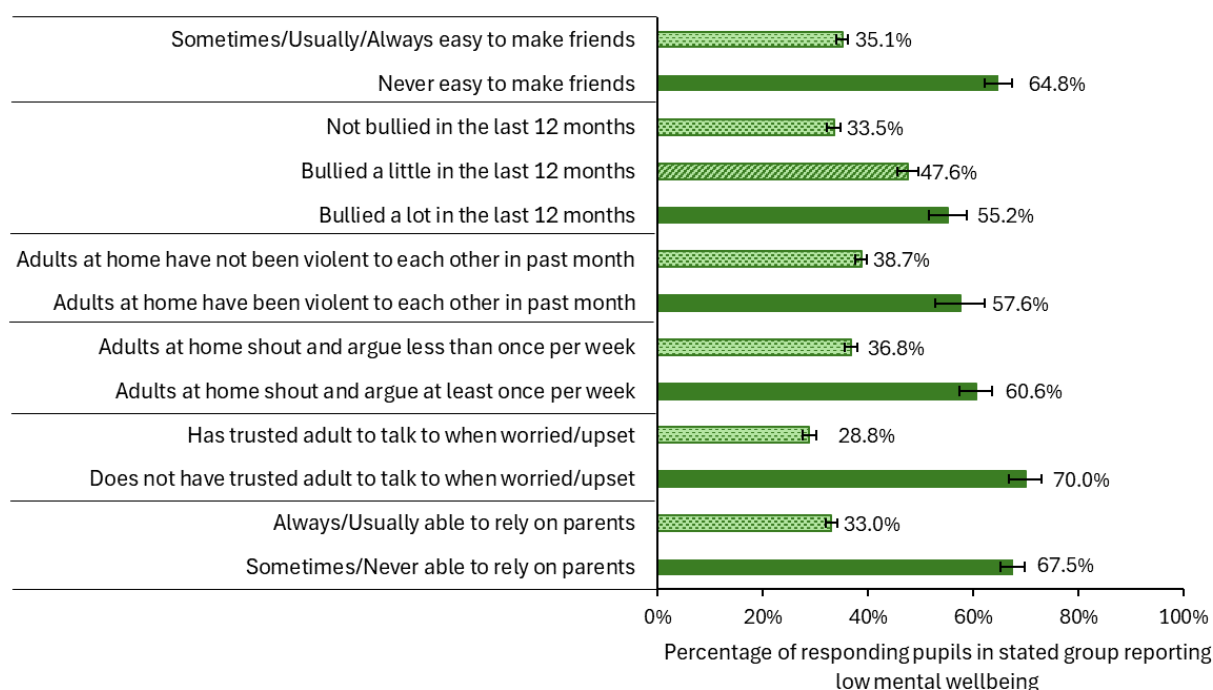
seem less worried about their safety to and from school with 11.5% rating it as poor or very poor, although, this is still much higher than for those who do not report being bullied (2.7%).

Associations with mental health

Once again it is important to stress that Figure 12 and the accompanying discussion only report correlations between the different variables and low mental wellbeing, they do not prove that the negative experiences described cause low mental wellbeing.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Figure 12 shows that sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils who report finding it never easy to make friends, being bullied in the last 12 months, witnessing violence in the home in the past month, shouting and arguing in the home at least once a week, those who do not have a trusted adult to talk to or those who sometimes or never can rely on their parents are more likely to report low mental wellbeing than those pupils who do not report these experiences.

Figure 12: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting low mental wellbeing by selected negative experience - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined)



Perhaps more striking than that an association exists between these variables, is the high proportions of sampled pupils reporting these experiences who also report low mental wellbeing. In all instances, more than half of those who report one of the listed negative situations also report low mental wellbeing. Indeed, more than two thirds of sampled pupils who report that they do not have a trusted adult to talk to or that they can only sometimes or never rely on their parents report low mental wellbeing.

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.²⁷ 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.²⁸

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, occur due to differences in the characteristics of pupils being sampled. The results in this and the other topic reports are all unweighted.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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.