



Norfolk Flourish Survey 2024 – Risk-taking behaviours

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Norfolk Overview – 2024 data

All the following behaviours are associated with each other:

Reporting placing a bet online at least once

Reporting smoking at least once

Reporting drinking alcohol at least once a month

Reporting consumption of cannabis at least once

Reporting vaping at least once

Reporting having had sex at least once

Reporting consumption of a drug other than cannabis at least once

The strongest associations are between:

Reporting smoking at least once and reporting vaping at least once

Reporting consuming cannabis at least once and reporting consuming a drug other than cannabis at least once

Reporting smoking at least once and reporting consuming cannabis at least once

Risk-taking behaviours

Statements average across **Year 10 to Year 13** pupils (pupils aged 14 to 18) unless stated otherwise



Among Year 10 pupils...

A **majority** report never smoking, vaping, taking cannabis or taking another drug

Around **two-thirds** report never smoking, never having sex, never taking drugs and drinking alcohol less than once a month

The weakest associations are between:

Reporting placing a bet online at least once and all the other behaviours considered

Apart from placing a bet online at least once, older pupils are more likely to report the behaviours considered

In each year group vaping at least once is the most frequently reported behaviour

Just under **1 in 10** think regularly attending school is not important

Around another **1 in 8** do not know whether regularly attending school is important



Almost **1 in 5** report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey for day trips or holidays in term time



School absences



Statements average across **Year 4 to Year 13** pupils (pupils aged 8 to 18) unless stated otherwise

Among Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 pupils...

The proportion thinking attending school regularly is not important rose between 2017 and 2024



The most common reported reasons for missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey are illness/injury and medical/dental appointments

Almost **1 in 6** report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey due to worries about school and/or bullying

Among pupils who identify as young carers, identify as having SEND, report receiving free school meals and/or report low mental wellbeing...

Just over **1 in 4** report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey due to worries about school and/or bullying

Infographic text description

Risk-taking behaviours

Statements average across Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 14 to 18) unless stated otherwise

- All the following behaviours are associated with each other:
 - Reporting placing a bet online at least once
 - Reporting smoking at least once
 - Reporting vaping at least once
 - Reporting drinking alcohol at least once a month
 - Reporting having had sex at least once
 - Reporting consumption of cannabis at least once
 - Reporting consumption of a drug other than cannabis at least once
- The strongest associations are between:
 - Reporting smoking at least once and reporting vaping at least once
 - Reporting consuming cannabis at least once and reporting vaping at least once
 - Reporting smoking at least once and reporting consuming cannabis at least once
- The weakest associations are between:
 - Reporting placing a bet online at least once and all the other behaviours considered
- Among Year 10 pupils...
 - A majority report never smoking, vaping, taking cannabis or taking another drug
 - Around two-thirds report never smoking, never having sex, never taking drugs and drinking alcohol less than once a month
- Apart from placing a bet online at least once, older pupils are more likely to report the behaviours considered
- In each year group vaping at least once is the most frequently reported behaviour

School absences

Statements average across Year 4 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 8 to 18) unless stated otherwise

- Just under 1 in 10 think regularly attending school is not important
- Around another 1 in 8 do not know whether regularly attending school is important
- Among Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 pupils...

- The proportion thinking attending school regularly is not important rose between 2017 and 2024
- The most common reported reasons for missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey are medical related
- Almost 1 in 5 report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey for day trips or holidays in term time
- Almost 1 in 6 report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey due to worries about school and/or bullying
- Among pupils who identify as young carers, identify as having SEND, report receiving free school meals and/or report low mental wellbeing...
 - Just over 1 in 4 report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey due to worries about school and/or bullying

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 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 had a truly random sample 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.² Indeed, the most sensitive questions around sexual health were only asked to pupils in Year 10 and above.

Much of the current report involves considering associations between variables, and since the analysed variables generally show a clear relationship with age, we restrict the analysis solely to Year 10 (pupils aged 14 to 15), where relevant, to ensure that age is not influencing correlations reported.³ Also, for consistency between comparisons, when comparing the rates of the different risk-taking behaviours across sub-groups of pupils we restrict analysis to Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (pupils aged 14 to 18). This is done because the data on whether a pupil has had sex or not is only available for these year groups. The broader discussions relating to school absences and online gambling consider all year groups for which data is available. 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.

Since part of this report considers pupils' school attendance, it is important to remember that only pupils in school on the day when the survey was conducted would have had the opportunity to complete the survey. In other words, pupils who regularly miss school are likely to be under-represented in the survey. This potential under-representation should be considered when interpreting the results.

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

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.

³ Year 10 is used because the category Year 12/13 combines two year groups and so age variation remains, while in 2024 Year 11 has noticeably fewer observations than Year 10.

concern, the survey did contain multiple phone numbers and web addresses of organisations that pupils could contact to obtain topic specific support.

In this report, no comparisons are made between the data for Norfolk in 2024 and that collected by SHEU in 2022 to avoid duplicating the analysis in other topic reports and because for some variables relevant SHEU comparator data is unavailable.

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. it 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).

Associations between ‘risk-taking’ behaviours

The primary purpose of this topic report is to see if further insights can be gained by looking at a range of behaviours explored in the other Flourish Survey topic reports together ‘in the round’. The behaviours we consider are those where pupils who engage in them are likely be exposed to some degree of health risk. The behaviours considered are:

1. Smoking at least once
2. Vaping at least once
3. Drinking alcohol at least once a month
4. Using cannabis at least once
5. Using a drug other than cannabis at least once⁴
6. Having sex at least once⁵
7. Placing a bet online at least once

All of these behaviours are identified by pupils self-reporting that they have engaged in them.

Apart from 7., these behaviours are at the heart of the analysis in one of the following topic reports: (i) smoking and vaping, (ii) sexual health and relationships, or (iii) drugs and alcohol. To gain a full understanding of each of these behaviours, readers should consult the relevant topic report. In particular, these topic reports provide additional analysis looking at changes in the prevalence of these behaviours over time and, where the data allows, include comparisons with national data.⁶ In the current report we only make comparisons to national data when it relates to associations between risk-taking behaviours (sometimes known as risky behaviours); in the separate topic reports, where feasible, the prevalence of individual risk-taking behaviours are compared with national data.

⁴ When we refer to ‘drugs’ this excludes tobacco, alcohol or any medication which has been prescribed to a pupil.

⁵ The meaning of the word ‘sex’ is not defined within the questionnaire and so different pupils may have interpreted the word differently. However, one of the response options to the relevant question did link sex with being in a relationship.

⁶ The other topic reports also provide information about additional ‘risk-taking’ behaviours not included in the current analysis due to time and space considerations. For example, the drugs and alcohol report discusses pupils who report carrying/looking after drugs for other people; the mental health report discusses pupils reporting self-harm; and the sexual health and relationships report discusses pupils reporting unprotected sex and sending nude/sexual images of themselves (sexts).

While we group the above behaviours together in this report, this should not be viewed as indicating that the level of health risk associated with each of them is the same; some are higher risk than others.

Identifying associations

In terms of statistically identifying associations between the seven behaviours listed above we perform a chi-squared test of independence for each possible pairing of two the behaviours. This test allows us to assess whether there is an association or not between the behaviours in each pair. Even when associations between variables pass the test for statistical significance there can still be variations in their strength, i.e. the probability of observing behaviour B if you observe an individual with behaviour A. The strength and direction of the association between a pair of behaviours can be expressed by calculating the phi co-efficient for each pairing.⁷ The phi co-efficient can vary from -1, the strongest negative correlation, to a value of 1, the strongest positive correlation between two variables.⁸

When interpreting all figures in this report, it is important to remember that the analysis only shows correlations, i.e. whether a behaviour is more prevalent among a particular group of pupils, it does not demonstrate that engaging in one behaviour causes a pupil to engage in another behaviour. For example, Figure 1 shows that a pupil reporting that they have vaped at least once is associated with also reporting that they have smoked at least once. However, we do not know whether: (i) vaping leads pupils to smoke, (ii) smoking leads pupils to vape, or (iii) some other factor is driving the patterns for both smoking and vaping. For example, rather than vaping causing smoking it could be that some underlying characteristic of particular pupils or their circumstances makes them prone to both behaviours.

Specifically, the current data does not allow us to say whether one risk-taking behaviour is a 'gateway' leading to other risk-taking behaviours; to address this issue would require data which takes repeated observations from the same individual pupils at different points in time. As such, to understand potential causal relationships, one should refer to the relevant academic literature. The significance of establishing that behaviour A causes behaviour B, rather than simply a correlation/association, is that causation implies that if one could reduce the prevalence of behaviour A, and all other factors were held constant, this would then result in the prevalence of behaviour B also falling.

⁷ A full description of the chi-squared test of independence and the phi co-efficient can be found at: [Chi-squared and phi co-efficient description](#)

⁸ A value of 1 between behaviours A and B implies that every individual reporting behaviour A also reports behaviour B. In contrast, a value of -1 implies that no individual who reports behaviour A also reports behaviour B.

Linked to this, all figures in this report only report ‘univariate’ associations. In other words, they report how one behaviour (e.g. smoking at least once) is associated with one other behaviour (e.g. reporting drinking alcohol at least once a month). It is possible that the patterns shown in the Figure 1 could result from other characteristics of the pupils who engage in each behaviour. Controlling robustly for all characteristics is much more involved than the present analysis allows, with it requiring multivariate regression analysis. However, we do control for one specific variable: age.

We control for age in this section by restricting attention to data from Year 10 pupils (pupils aged 14 to 15). This is done because Figure 4 shows that all the risk-taking behaviours listed above, with the exception of placing an online bet, become more prevalent with age.⁹ If this restriction was not imposed, most of those identified as, say, drinking alcohol less than once a month would be from younger age groups than those identified as drinking alcohol at least once a month. In turn, this may over-estimate the relationship between regularly drinking alcohol and other risk-taking behaviours since other risk-taking behaviours also show a positive relationship with age.

One consequence of focusing the analysis on a single year group is that, for the behaviours correlated with age, the percentages reported would be mechanically higher/lower if a different year group were chosen. However, in this instance, we are less interested in the headline rate of a particular behaviour than mapping the associations between behaviours.

Another mechanical result of restricting attention to Year 10 pupils is that there are fewer observations with which to perform the analysis. In 2024, the sample included 882 pupils in Year 10, while Year 10 to Year 13 (pupils aged 14 to 18) combined consisted of 2,393 pupils.¹⁰ When there are fewer observations the confidence intervals become wider and so differences between groups need to be larger for them to be identified as statistically significant. As a robustness check, we therefore also report whether the associations occur when the analysed data is extended to cover Year 10 to Year 13.¹¹

⁹ Year 10 is used as it contains more observations than Year 11 and Year 12/13 cannot be used as it covers multiple year groups.

¹⁰ The precise number of pupils on which phi coefficients and percentages are based varies according to the number of pupils answering the relevant questions. The smallest total number of pupils on which analysis is based is 704 (for the association between taking drugs other than cannabis at least once and placing a bet online at least once).

¹¹ Obviously, this robustness check suffers from the earlier concern regarding over-estimating the relationship between two variables that each have a clear association with age.

Pattern of associations

The list of seven risk-taking behaviours listed above leads to a total of 21 possible pairs of behaviours for which a chi-squared test of independence is performed. Considering only data from Year 10, the 21 statistical tests indicate that for each pair we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no association between them. In other words, there is statistical evidence that all seven risk-taking behaviours are associated with each other. This result again occurs when the tests are repeated combining data for Year 10 to Year 13 pupils.

As the phi co-efficients reported in Figure 1 (on the following page) are all positive we can say that if a pupil reports any of the listed behaviours, e.g. smoking at least once, they are more likely to report each of the other listed behaviours than pupils who report, for example, never smoking.

While all the listed behaviours are associated with each other, there are quite large variations in the strengths of the associations as indicated by the phi coefficients in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A symmetric matrix showing phi co-efficients between different pairs of seven risk-taking behaviours reported by sampled pupils - 2024 (Year 10 data only)



To understand Figure 1 note that each cell corresponds to two behaviours, one in the top row and one in the first column, and the number in the cell is the phi co-efficient between the two behaviours. All the values along the leading diagonal are 'N/A'

because each behaviour is simply being compared against itself thus implying a perfect correlation. The matrix is also 'symmetric' in that the phi co-efficients above the diagonal are a mirror image of those below the diagonal as the order of the two behaviours does not alter the phi co-efficient. For example, the phi co-efficient between reporting vaping at least once and reporting smoking at least once is 0.54 regardless of whether it is the smoking or vaping behaviour that is listed in the top row.

Figure 1 shows that there is quite a lot of variation in the phi co-efficients across the different behaviour pairings. The highest phi co-efficients, indicating the strongest associations between behaviours, relate to pairs of substances. The highest phi co-efficient is 0.55 between pupils reporting consumption of cannabis at least once and reporting consumption of a drug other than cannabis at least once, followed by 0.54 between reporting smoking at least once and reporting vaping at least once and 0.49 between reporting smoking at least once and reporting consumption of cannabis at least once.

The lowest phi co-efficients, with values between 0.09 and 0.19, are the associations between reporting placing a bet at least once and the other behaviours. These weak relationships are probably related to Figure 4 showing that placing an online bet is the only one of the listed behaviours that does not have a positive correlation with age.

That correlations are found between the consumption of different substances matches similar findings reported in the NHS Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England 2023 survey.¹² This NHS Survey reports that, among pupils aged 11-15, reporting current smoking is correlated with use of e-cigarettes, taking drugs and drinking alcohol. Similarly, reporting the drinking of alcohol in the week before the survey is correlated with reporting the use of e-cigarettes, taking drugs and smoking. Also, reporting taking drugs in the month prior to survey is found to be correlated with reporting the use of e-cigarettes, drinking alcohol and smoking. While consistent with the findings from the Flourish Survey, it should be noted that the results from the NHS Survey use a different methodology which is more robust. The associations found in the NHS Survey are the result of multivariate regressions, in other words, they show that associations between the risk-taking behaviours still exist after controlling for a range of other factors.

¹² See [Part 1: Smoking prevalence and cigarette consumption - NHS England Digital](#)

Pupils reporting multiple risk-taking behaviours

The previous section established statistical associations between different pairs of behaviours. In this section, we aim to show how these associations play out in practice by describing the proportions of pupils who report different combinations of multiple risk-taking behaviours.

Once again it is important to emphasise that the evidence we present simply illustrates the outcome of associations between variables, it does not by itself demonstrate that one behaviour causes another. We again restrict the analysis to Year 10 pupils to avoid variations in the age of pupils influencing the results.

We look at two sets of behaviours separately:

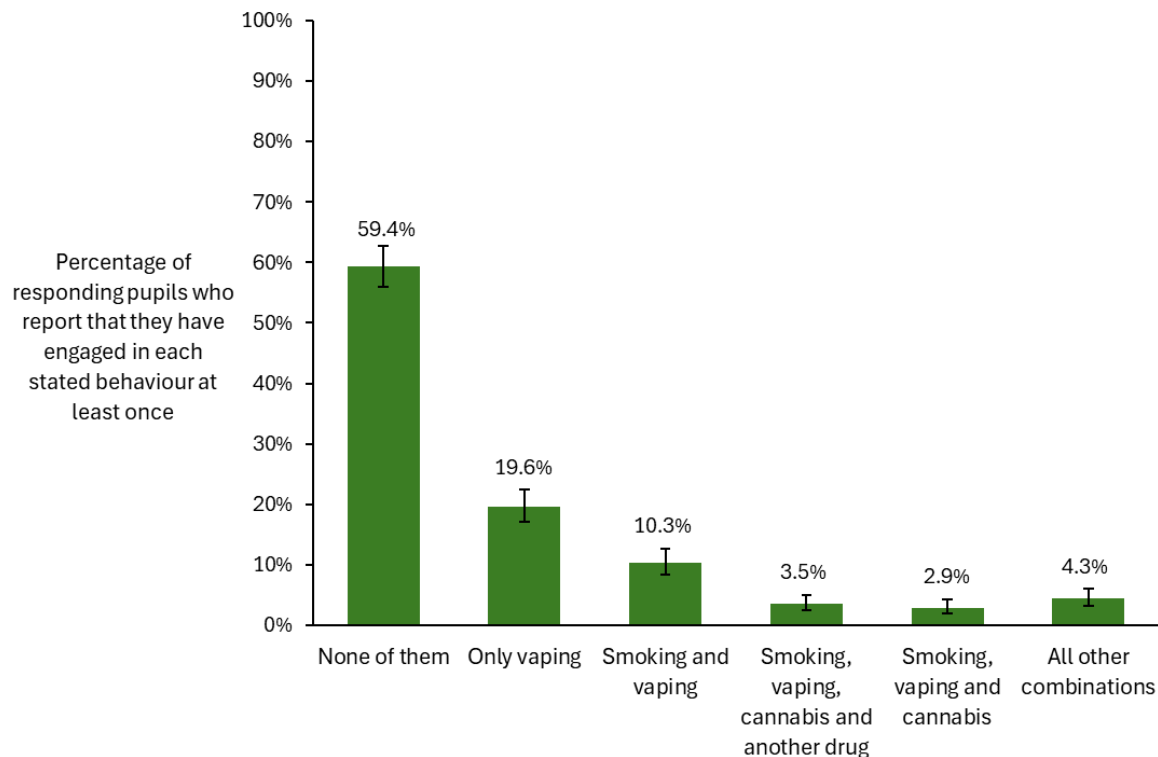
Set A: (i) reports smoking at least once, (ii) reports vaping at least once, (iii) reports consuming cannabis at least once, and (iv) reports consuming a drug other than cannabis at least once.

Set B: (i) reports smoking at least once, (ii) reports drinking alcohol at least once a month, (iii) reports taking drugs at least once, and (iv) reports having had sex at least once.

Note that, for simplicity, in Set B we do not separate out cannabis use from the consumption of other drugs. For a pupil to be included in the analysis below they must have the necessary data for all the variables that form Set A and/or Set B.

Figure 2 reports the combinations of behaviours in Set A that have sufficient observations that the percentage of pupils reporting them can be stated. For robustness and anonymity reasons, we only report results based on 10 or more observations. The 'All other combinations' category in Figure 2 pools the data from the combinations of behaviours in set A that do not reach this threshold. Thus Figure 2 provides similar information to a Venn diagram showing the different behaviours in Set A.¹³ As such, the different bars represent mutually exclusive groups that sum to 100%, i.e. pupils reporting 'Smoking, vaping, cannabis and another drug' do not feature in the column 'Smoking and vaping'.

Figure 2: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting different combinations of smoking at least once, vaping at least once, consuming cannabis at least once and/or consuming a drug other than cannabis at least once - 2024 (Year 10 data only)¹⁴



¹³ Note that Venn diagrams involving more than three variables are neither straightforward to construct or read.

¹⁴ Figure 2 is utilises data from 806 pupils in total. 479 pupils report never engaging in any of the four behaviours in Set A; 158 pupils report only vaping at least once; 83 pupils report both smoking and vaping at least once; 28 pupils report smoking, vaping, consuming cannabis and consuming a drug other than cannabis at least once; 23 pupils report smoking, vaping and consuming cannabis at least once; while 35 pupils are spread across all the other possible combinations of behaviours listed in Set A. Since only 12% of pupils are sampled, the numbers for Year 10 pupils across Norfolk as a whole would be much higher.

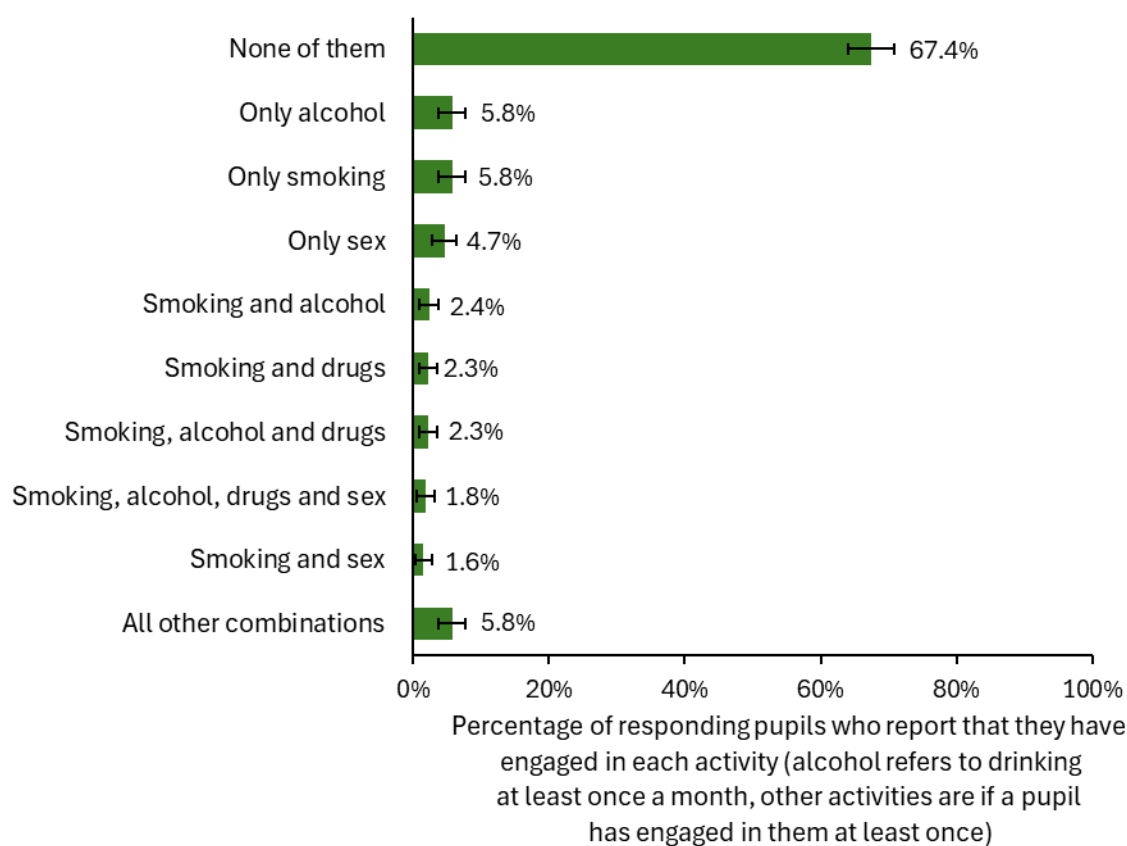
The most important feature of Figure 2 is that the majority of sampled Year 10 pupils, 59.4%, report that they have never tried smoking, vaping, cannabis or another drug. After this, the next most common outcome is that 19.6% of sampled Year 10 pupils report that they have vaped at least once but have not engaged in any other Set A behaviours, while 10.3% of sampled Year 10 pupils report both smoking and vaping at least once but never consuming cannabis or other drugs. Another notable finding is that fewer than 10 Year 10 pupils report that they have smoked at least once without engaging in any of the other Set A behaviours. Also, Figure 2 shows that the two combinations of behaviours involving drugs which are common enough to be reported, also include pupils reporting that they have both smoked and vaped at least once.

When the analysis in Figure 2 is repeated using Year 10 to Year 13 data as a robustness check, the qualitative pattern across the different behaviour combinations is similar, but the proportion of pupils reporting none of the Set A behaviours falls. Looking across sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, 51.7% report never vaping, smoking, consuming cannabis or consuming a drug other than cannabis. That the proportion of pupils reporting no Set A behaviours falls when older pupils are included in the analysis is unsurprising since Figure 4 shows that older pupils are more likely to engage in each behaviour.

If one repeats the analysis in Figure 2 for 2017, the main change is the growth in vaping, as reported in the topic report on smoking and vaping. Between 2017 and 2024 the proportion of sampled Year 10 pupils reporting that they have never engaged in any of the Set A behaviours falls from 73.1% to 59.4%. A substantial part of this change is accounted for by sampled pupils who report vaping at least once but no other Set A behaviour. The proportion of pupils who report vaping at least once but none of the other behaviours increases from 11.5% in 2017 to 19.6% in 2024.

Turning to Set B activities, Figure 3 shows that by far the most common combination among Year 10 pupils involves pupils who have never smoked, never consumed drugs, never had sex and who drink alcohol less than once a month. Around two-thirds of sampled Year 10 pupils, 67.4%, report this combination of behaviours. All the other combinations of Set B behaviours are each reported by fewer than 10% of sampled Year 10 pupils. The next most common combinations are: (i) pupils who report consuming alcohol at least once a month but none of the other behaviours, and (ii) pupils who report smoking at least once but none of the other behaviours; each of these combinations are reported by 5.8% of sampled Year 10 pupils. Only 1.8% of sampled Year 10 pupils report that they have smoked at least once, consumed drugs at least once, had sex at least once and drink alcohol at least once a month.¹⁵

Figure 3: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting different combinations of smoking at least once, consuming drugs at least once, having sex at least once and drinking alcohol at least once a month - 2024 (Year 10 data only)



¹⁵ Figure 3 utilises data from 703 pupils. 474 pupils report that they do not engage in any of the Set B behaviours; 41 pupils report that they drink alcohol at least once a month but have not engaged in the other behaviours; 41 pupils report that they have smoked at least once but do not report the other behaviours; and 13 pupils report smoking, having sex and consuming drugs at least once as well as drinking alcohol at least once a month.

When the analysis behind Figure 3 is repeated with data from Year 10 to Year 13, a similar qualitative result is obtained with engaging in none of the Set B behaviours still being by far the most common reported outcome. However, with older pupils now being considered, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting that they engage in none of the Set B behaviours falls to 50.8%. The remaining Year 10 to Year 13 pupils are then spread widely across the different combinations of Set B behaviours. The second most common combination reported among sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils involves consuming alcohol at least monthly but none of the other Set B behaviours (8.5%), followed by pupils who report smoking, taking drugs and having sex at least once as well as drinking alcohol at least once a month (6.8%), and pupils who report having sex at least once but none of the other Set B behaviours (6.1%).

A direct comparison of the analysis in Figure 3 with 2017 data cannot be performed as the question asking about the sexual experience of pupils is not directly comparable between 2017 and 2024.

Variations in risk-taking behaviours

This section highlights some of the key associations between risk-taking behaviours and other key variables. It is important to stress that only associations, not causal relationships, are being identified in this section and we only look at basic univariate associations rather than controlling for other background factors.

Variations with age

Figure 4 (on the following page) shows that for six out of the seven risk-taking behaviours listed at the start of the report the proportion of pupils reporting each behaviour increases as they become older. The exception is the proportion of pupils reporting that they have placed a bet online at least once which remains broadly stable between Year 8 and Year 12/13.

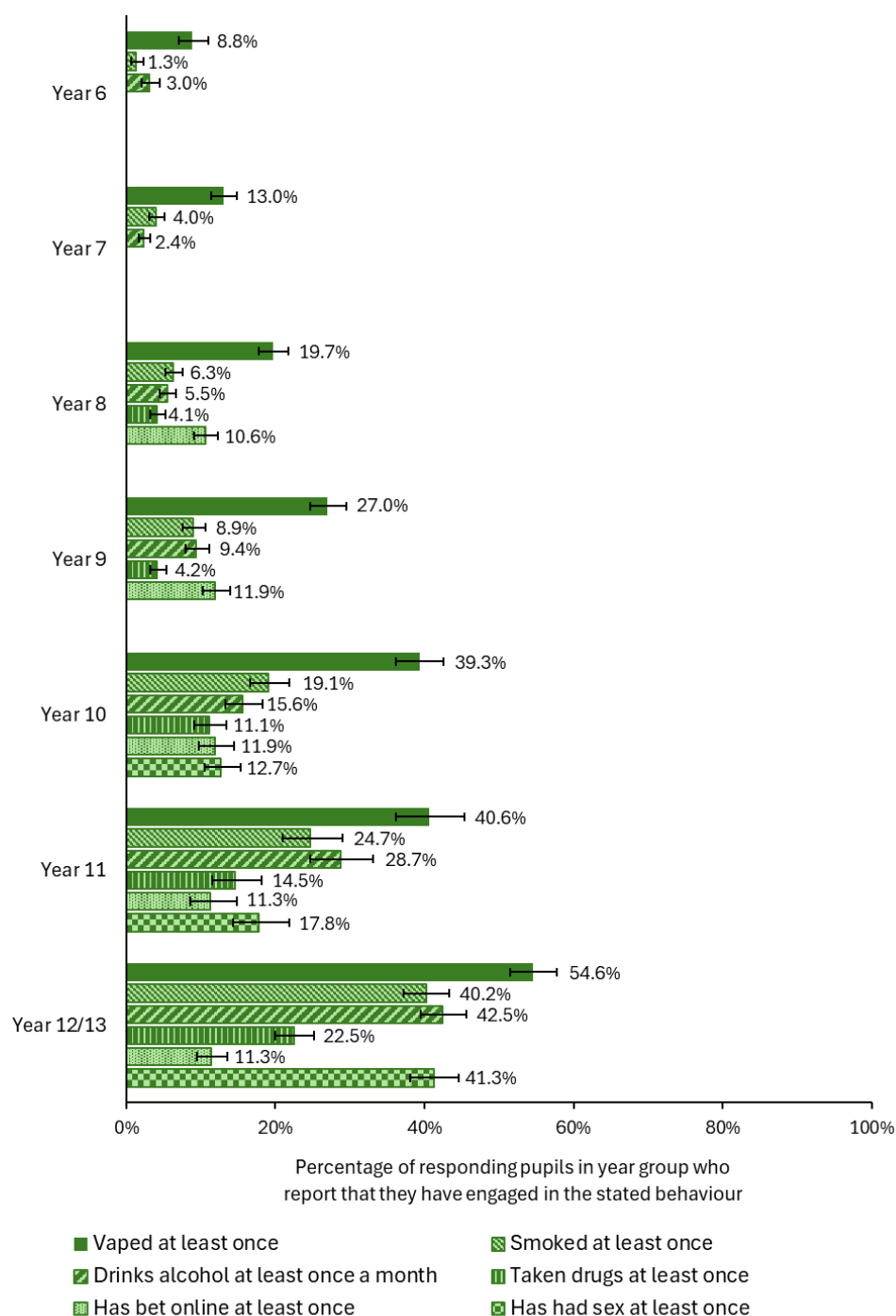
In all year groups, Figure 4 shows that vaping at least once is the most common of the behaviours, often by a large margin. In each year group from Year 6 to Year 10, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting that they have vaped at least once is more than double the proportion of pupils reporting the next most common behaviour. For example, in Year 9 27.0% of sampled pupils report that they have vaped at least once compared to 11.9% of sampled pupils who report placing a bet online at least once.

Some of the behaviours in Figure 4 also show large proportionate changes in the percentage of pupils reporting them between particular year groups. For example, the percentage of sampled pupils reporting that they have had sex at least once more than doubles between Year 11 and Year 12/13, while the percentage of pupils reporting that they have taken drugs at least once more than doubles between Year 9 and Year 10, and the percentage of pupils reporting that they have smoked at least once more than doubles between Year 6 and Year 7 (albeit from a very low base).

The final observation from Figure 4 is that within each individual year group the proportion of pupils who report smoking at least once and the proportion drinking alcohol at least once a month are similar after taking account of uncertainty.¹⁶

¹⁶ Although this does not automatically imply that it is the same pupils who engage in each of these behaviours.

Figure 4: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting different risk-taking behaviours by year group - 2024 (Year 6 to Year 12/13 data separately, where data is available)¹⁷



¹⁷ Due to the relevant questions only being shown to certain year groups data is only available for Year 8 upwards regarding whether pupils report taking drugs at least once and/or have placed a bet online at least once, while data on whether pupils report having sex at least once is only available for Year 10 upwards.

Variations between 2017 and 2024

For the full picture of how individual behaviours have changed over time and compare to national data the reader should consult the individual topic reports, however, for completeness, we provide a brief summary of the key trends here. When making comparisons between years we control for age, comparing proportion of pupils reporting risk-taking behaviours separately in Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 (as well as Year 6 where data is available).¹⁸

Comparing data for 2017 and 2024, the proportions of pupils in each of the selected year groups that report smoking at least once and/or report consuming cannabis at least once are broadly stable once uncertainty is considered. In contrast, in each year group there are large increases in the proportion pupils reporting that they have vaped at least once between 2017 and 2024. For example, the proportion of Year 8 pupils reporting that they have vaped at least once increases from 8.1% to 19.7% between 2017 and 2024, while the proportion of Year 12/13 pupils reporting that they had vaped at least once increases from 39.6% to 54.6%.

Interestingly, for a number of the behaviours the proportion reporting the behaviour in Year 12/13 has remained stable between 2017 and 2024, while there has been an increase in the proportion of Year 8 and/or Year 10 pupils reporting the behaviour. This pattern applies to the proportion of pupils reporting drinking alcohol at least once a month, consumption of a drug other than cannabis, consumption of any drug and/or placing of a bet online. While the increases in the percentage of pupils reporting these behaviours can be large in proportionate terms, they are from low levels and so in 2024 still only a small minority of pupils in Year 8 or Year 10 report each of these behaviours. For example, the proportion of sampled Year 8 pupils reporting that they have consumed drugs at least once rose from 1.0% to 4.1% between 2017 and 2024, while the proportion of Year 8 pupils reporting that they have placed a bet online rose from 4.1% to 10.6%.

The 2017 Flourish Survey did not contain a question that was directly comparable to reporting having had sex at least once, however, it is possible to compare the proportion of Year 10 and Year 12/13 pupils reporting that they are currently in sexual relationship. Between 2017 and 2024 the proportion of Year 12/13 pupils reporting that they are currently in a sexual relationship remained stable once uncertainty is considered, while the proportion of Year 10 pupils reporting that they are currently in a sexual relationship rose from 2.0% to 5.2%.

¹⁸ These year groups are chosen to be consistent with the year groups used in the other topic reports.

Variations across groups – interpretation

In the following subsection, the aim is to understand how the reported rates of the seven risk-taking behaviours listed earlier 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. We report the results of the analysis here slightly differently to the other topic reports; in the other topic reports charts show how a single risk-taking behaviour, e.g. smoking at least once, varies across all the different groups of interest, whereas in the current analysis we provide charts showing how all the risk-taking behaviours vary for each group of interest, e.g. those reporting low mental wellbeing. Due to this different emphasis, we restrict the data to Year 10 to Year 13 pupils so that the same data is used to compare all the risk-taking behaviours; these are the only year groups where a question asked about their sexual experience.

The characteristics used to split pupils are: identifying as having Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)¹⁹, receipt of free school meals²⁰, different ethnicities²¹,

¹⁹ 582 Year 10 to Year 13 pupils 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 26.5% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (when 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.

²⁰ 347 Year 10 to Year 13 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 sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (when excluding non-responses). For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

²¹ 257 Year 10 to Year 13 pupils 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 11.0% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (when excluding non-responses). For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

identifying as a young carer²², reporting low mental wellbeing²³, and gender identity²⁴. 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.

Figure 5 should be read as follows; on the far left of the chart each behaviour of interest is listed, before the mutually exclusive groups being compared are listed, in this case pupils reporting receipt of free school meals and pupils reporting that they do not receive free school meals. Each bar reports the percentage within one of these groups that reports the stated behaviour. For example, in Figure 5 37.6% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report receiving free school meals report that they have smoked at least once. The horizontal lines on the vertical axis separate the analysis for different behaviours and the statements about statistical significance refer to comparisons involving the groups between two of the horizontal lines.

²² 121 Year 10 to Year 13 pupils 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 5.5% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (when excluding non-responses). For most questions in the survey, the number responding will be different as some pupils will choose not to respond.

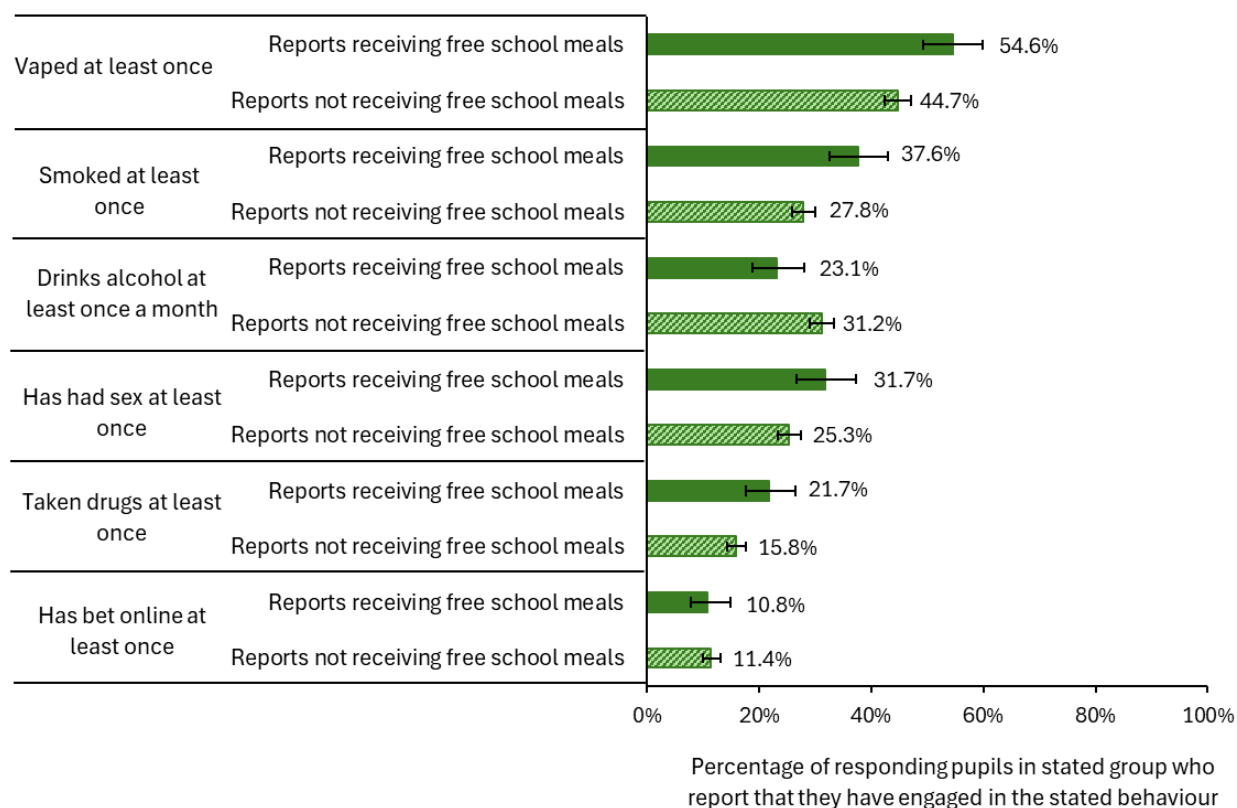
²³ 935 Year 10 to Year 13 pupils in 2024 are classified as having low mental wellbeing (since only 12% of pupils are sampled the number for Norfolk as a whole would be much higher). This represents 45.5% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils when non-responses to the constituent questions are excluded. 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 pupils in Year 8 and upwards the questions result in the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). 'Low' mental wellbeing is identified as being a score at least one standard deviation below the mean score reported in the academic study establishing the scale. Pupils rate their experience of life in the couple of weeks before the survey.

²⁴ 61 Year 10 to Year 13 pupils 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 2.8% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils (when excluding non-responses). 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.

Pupils reporting receipt of free school meals

Figure 5 shows that sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report receipt of free school meals are more likely to report that they have vaped at least once, smoked at least once and/or taken drugs at least once than those who report not receiving free school meals.

Figure 5: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting different risk-taking behaviours split by whether they report receipt of free school meals or not - 2024 (Year 10 to Year 13 data combined)



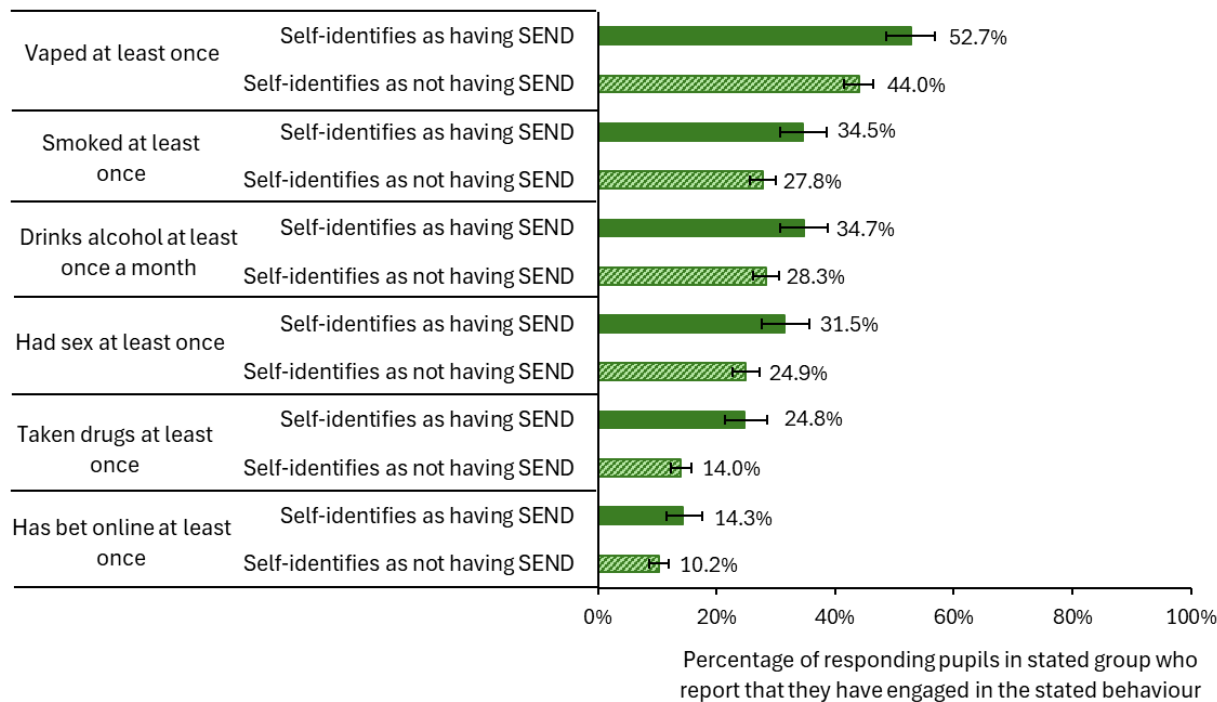
The proportions of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils reporting that they have vaped at least once and/or smoked at least once are around 10 percentage points higher among pupils who receipt of free school meals than among pupils who report that they do not receive free school meals. However, pupils identifying as receiving free school meals are less likely to report drinking alcohol at least once a month: 23.1% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils reporting receipt of free school meals report drinking alcohol at least once a month compared to 31.2% of sampled pupils who report not receiving free school meals. This finding appears broadly consistent with the NHS Survey reporting that pupils from low affluence families and the most deprived backgrounds are less

likely to report ever having drunk alcohol compared to pupils from high affluence families and those from the least deprived backgrounds.²⁵

Pupils identifying as having SEND

Figure 6 shows that sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who identify as having SEND are more likely to report that they have vaped at least once, smoked at least once, taken drugs at least once, had sex at least once and/or that they drink alcohol at least once a month than pupils who identify as not having SEND.

Figure 6: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting different risk-taking behaviours split by whether or not they identify as having SEND - 2024 (Year 10 to Year 13 data combined)



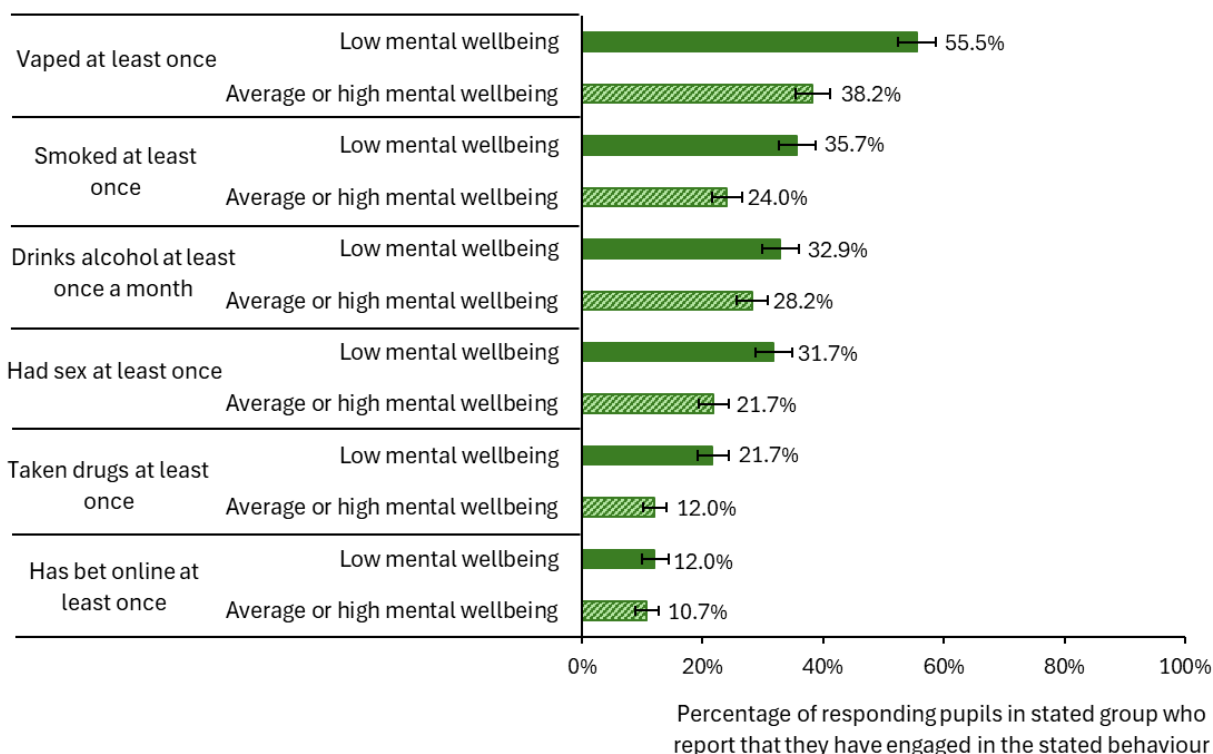
The largest of these differences between pupils who identify as having SEND and those who identify as not having SEND relates to vaping: 52.7% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who identify as having SEND report that they have vaped at least once compared to 44.0% of pupils who identify as not having SEND. Also, pupils identifying as having SEND are more likely to report that they have placed a bet online at least once than pupils identifying as not having SEND by a margin that is likely to be statistically significant.

²⁵ See [Part 7: Young people and alcohol: the context - NHS England Digital](#)

Pupils reporting low mental wellbeing

Pupils reporting low mental wellbeing are another group that generally reports higher rates of risk-taking behaviours. Figure 7 shows that sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report low mental wellbeing are more likely to report vaping at least once, smoking at least once, having had sex at least once and/or taking drugs at least once. The largest percentage point difference relates to vaping, with 55.5% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who report low mental wellbeing reporting that they have vaped at least once compared to 38.2% of pupils who report average or high mental wellbeing.

Figure 7: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting different risk-taking behaviours split by whether or not they report low mental wellbeing - 2024 (Year 10 to Year 13 data combined)



Pupils identifying as young carers

Among sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, only one of the six risk-taking behaviours listed in Figure 4 has a difference in the reported rate between pupils who identify as young carers and those who do not identify as young carers that is statistically significant.

Sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who identify as young carers are more likely to report that they have had sex at least once than pupils who do not identify as young carers (38.0% vs 25.9%).

If one looks across all sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils, rather than just Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, those who identify as young carers are also more likely to report that they have placed a bet online at least once than pupils who identify as not being young carers (15.5% vs 10.6%).

Gender

For none of the six risk-taking behaviours listed in Figure 4 is there a statistically significant difference in the proportion of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils reporting the behaviour between pupils identifying as male and pupils identifying as female. The only statistically significant difference found is that pupils describing their gender in another way are noticeably more likely to report that they have had sex at least once than pupils who identify as male and pupils who identify as female. 46.9% of sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils who describe their gender in another way report having had sex at least once compared to 27.5% of pupils who identify as male and 25.8% of pupils who identify as female.

More generally, it is worth noting that because there are a small number of pupils in the sample who describe their gender in another way the confidence intervals for this group are particularly large. It is possible that if a larger number of observations from this group could be obtained more differences in the reported rates of risk-taking behaviours between this group and male and female pupils would be found to be statistically significant.

Ethnicity

The issue of limited numbers of observations is even more of an issue when assessing variations in reported rates of risk-taking behaviours across different ethnic groups. When the data is restricted to sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils not only are confidence intervals generally large for many of the ethnicities other than white, there are simply too few observations to report the rates of the different risk-taking behaviours for these groups due to anonymity and robustness reasons.

When considering only Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, the two results that are statistically significant are that sampled pupils who identify Asian or Asian British are less likely to report that they have smoked at least once and/or vaped at least once than White pupils. In both cases the rate reported by pupils identifying as Asian or Asian British pupils is less than half the rate reported by pupils identifying as White. For example, 29.9% of sampled pupils who identify as White report smoking at least once compared to only 13.9% of pupils who identify as Asian or Asian British.

If one looks at data from all the available year groups, as reported in the other topic reports, a few other differences according to ethnicity are statistically significant. Looking across sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils those who identify as from Mixed or multiple ethnic groups are more likely to report smoking at least once than White pupils (19.5% vs 12.9%). Among sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils those identifying as from Mixed or multiple ethnic groups are also more likely to report taking drugs at least once than pupils who identify as White (16.7% vs 9.4%). While sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who identify as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African are more likely to report placing a bet online at least once than pupils who identify as White (20.5% vs 11.0%). However, sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who identify as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African are less likely to report drinking alcohol at least once a month than pupils who identify as White (6.7% vs 13.4%).

So overall, looking across the different groups of interest among sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, it appears that pupils reporting low mental wellbeing and/or who identify as having SEND, and to a lesser extent pupils who report receipt of free school meals, report elevated rates for the broadest range of risk-taking behaviours.

A note on gambling

In the discussions above, we include placing an online bet as one of the risk-taking behaviours. Unlike the other behaviours considered, gambling is not analysed in one of the other topic reports and so we now provide a quick overview of this topic.

Looking across sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils 11.3% report that they have placed a bet online at least once. As outlined above, unlike the other listed risk-taking behaviours, the proportion of pupils reporting that they have placed a bet online at least once remains stable across each year group from Year 8 to Year 12/13 in 2024. However, in the 2017 data, older pupils are more likely to report having placed an online bet at least once with the proportion of sampled pupils reporting this behaviour rising from 4.1% among Year 8 pupils to 9.7% among Year 12/13 pupils.

Consistent with this changing relationship with age between 2017 and 2024, whether the proportion of sampled pupils reporting placing a bet online at least once increases between these two years is dependent on the year group considered. While the proportion of Year 12/13 pupils reporting that they have placed an online bet is stable between 2017 and 2024, both Year 8 and Year 10 show increases. The proportion of sampled Year 8 pupils reporting that they have placed a bet online at least once increases from 4.1% in 2017 to 10.6% in 2024, while among Year 10 pupils the increase is from 8.1% to 11.9%.

In terms of groups that are more likely to report placing an online bet, sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who identify as having SEND and/or identify as a young carer are more likely to report placing a bet than pupils not in these groups. Also, pupils identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African pupils are noticeably more likely to report placing an online bet than pupils who identify as White (20.5% vs 11.0%).

Lastly, 3.4% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils report that they worry about gambling quite a lot or a lot. As one would expect, this proportion varies according to whether pupils report placing an online bet at least once: 10.9% of sampled Year 8 to Year 13 pupils who report placing an online bet report being worried quite a lot or a lot about gambling compared to 2.5% of pupils who report that they have never placed an online bet.

School attendance

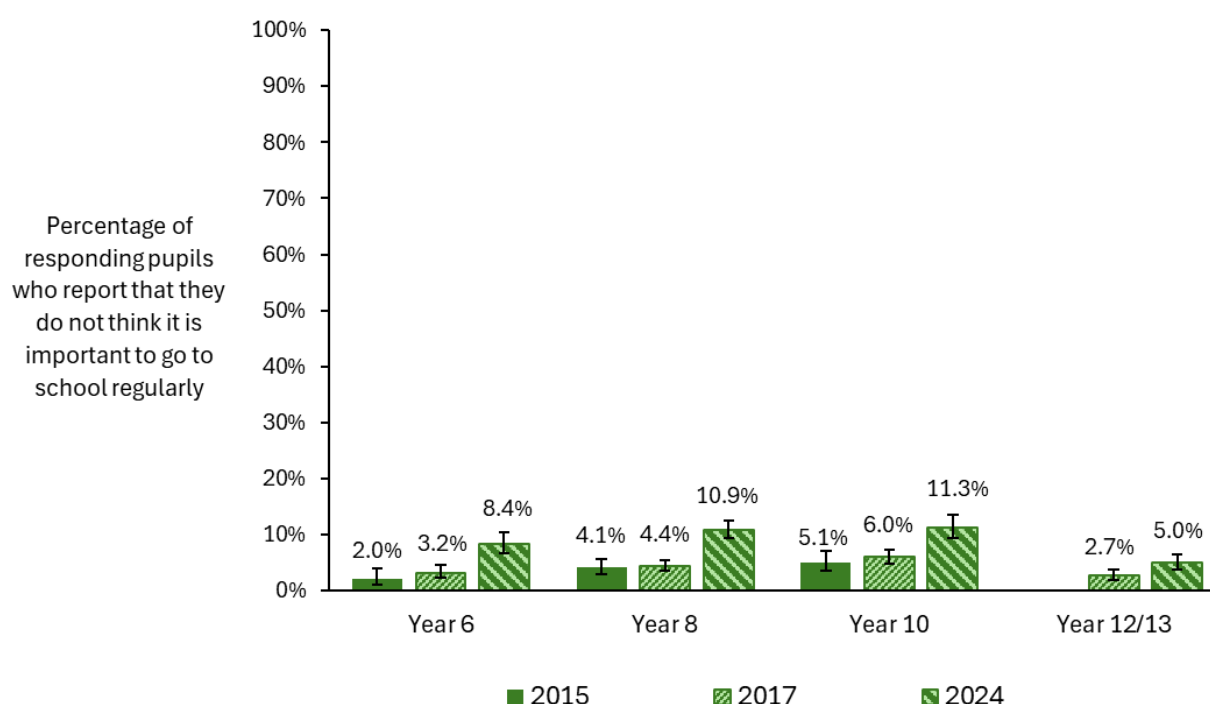
Here we analyse the extent to which pupils believe it is important to attend school and their reported reasons for school absences.

The importance of school

Across sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils 9.3% report that they do not think it is important to attend school regularly, while a further 12.0% do not know whether regularly attending school is important or not. In terms of how these percentages vary with age, sampled Year 11 to Year 13 pupils are less likely to report that school is not important than pupils in Year 7 to Year 10. For example, 5.0% of sampled Year 12/13 pupils report that regularly attending school is not important compared to 11.3% of sampled Year 10 pupils.

Figure 8 shows that in each year group considered the proportion of sampled pupils reporting that regularly attending school is not important increased between 2017 and 2024. While starting from a low base, the proportionate increase between 2017 and 2024 is often large: among sampled Year 6 and Year 8 pupils the proportion reporting that it is not important to attend school regularly more than doubled between 2017 and 2024. For example, the percentage of sampled Year 8 pupils reporting that regularly attending school is not important increased from 4.4% in 2017 to 10.9% in 2024.

Figure 8: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting that it is not important to go to school regularly - 2015, 2017 and 2024 (Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 data separately)²⁶

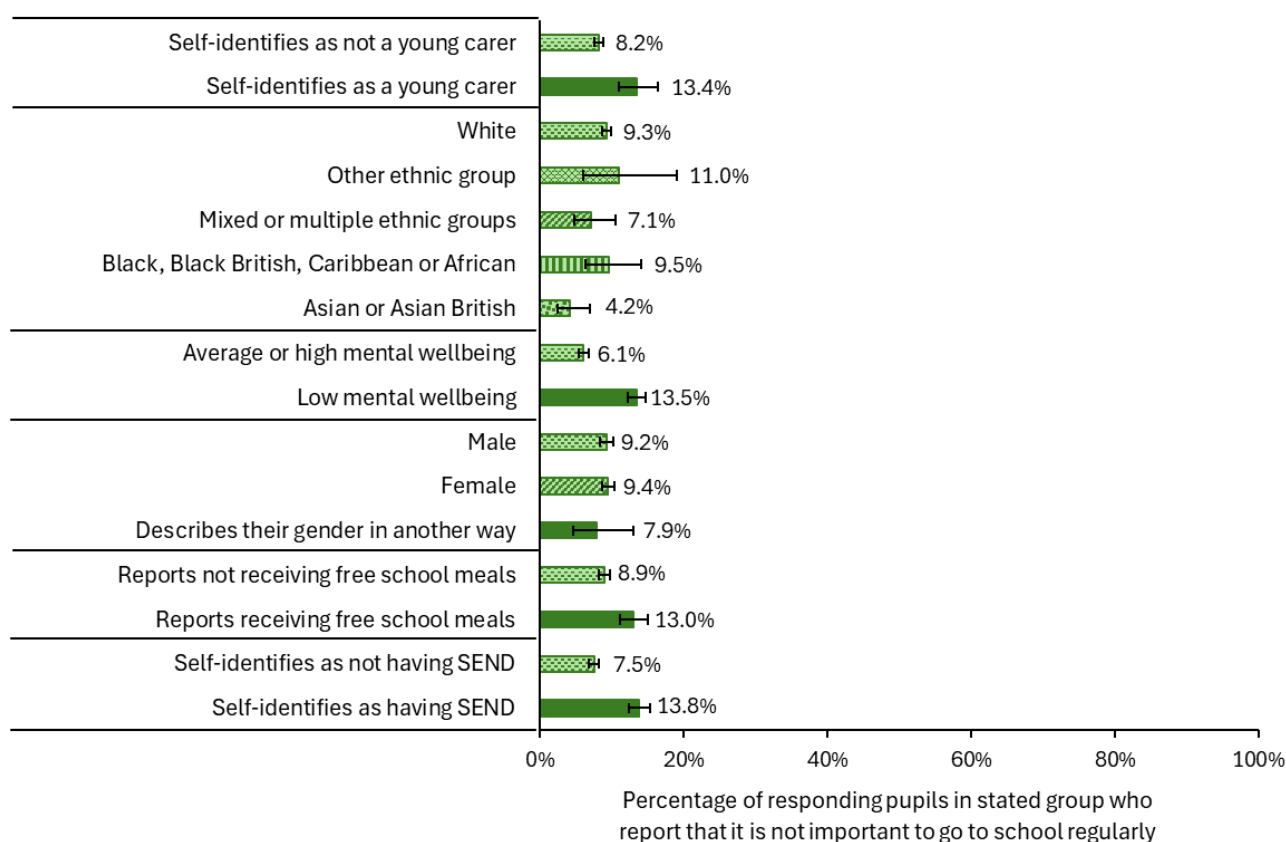


Similarly, in each of the four year groups considered, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting that they do not know whether it is important to attend school regularly also increased between 2017 and 2024. For example, the percentage of Year 6 pupils who report that they do not know whether attending school regularly is important or not rose from 7.5% in 2017 to 12.8% in 2024.

²⁶ Data for Year 12/13 pupils was not collected in 2015 and there is insufficient data for Year 4 pupils in 2015 and 2017 to provide a comparison over time.

In terms of the groups who are more likely to view regular school attendance as unimportant, Figure 9 shows that sampled Year 4 to 13 pupils who identify as young carers, who report low mental wellbeing and/or who identify as having SEND are more likely to have this view than pupils without these characteristics. Similarly, sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who report receipt of free school meals are more likely to report that regularly attending school is unimportant than pupils who report not receiving free school meals. Among these groups, the difference in the rate of reporting that regularly attending school is not important is largest between pupils reporting low mental wellbeing and those reporting average or high mental wellbeing, with the rate among the former group being more than double that among the latter (13.5% vs 6.1%).

Figure 9: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting that it is not important to attend school regularly by selected group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined)²⁷



Also, pupils who identify as Asian or Asian British are less likely to report that regular school attendance is not important than pupils who identify as White.

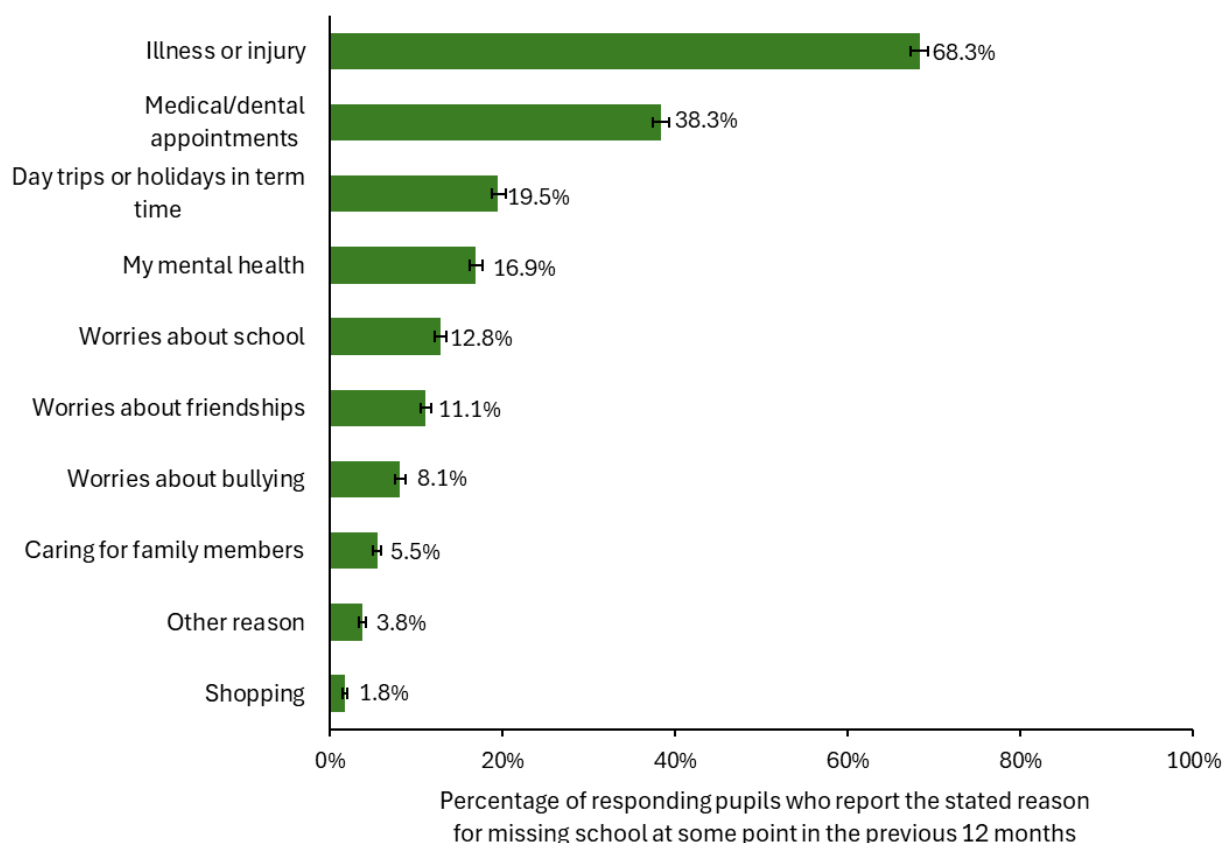
²⁷ The comparison relating to free school meals is based on Year 6 to Year 13 data as in 2024 the relevant question about free school meals was not asked to younger pupils.

Among sampled Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, reporting that regular school attendance is not important is correlated with being more likely to report a number of risk-taking behaviours, namely, vaping at least once, smoking at least once and taking drugs at least once. Of those pupils who report that regular school attendance is not important, 58.3% report vaping at least once and 26.5% report taking drugs at least once compared to 44.3% and 16.0% respectively of pupils who report that regularly attending school is important.

Reasons for school absences

As one would expect, the most common reasons reported by sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils for not attending school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey in Figure 10 are illness or injury, by 68.3% of pupils, and medical/dental appointments, by 38.3% of pupils.

Figure 10: Reasons stated by sampled pupils for not going to school in the 12 months prior to the survey - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined, multiple response allowed)



Other reasons for school absences are potentially of more concern. 19.5% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils report that they missed school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey to go on day trips or holidays, while 12.8% of pupils report missing school due to worries about school and 11.1% report not attending school due to worries about bullying.

Looking at those pupils missing school for day trips or holidays²⁸, there are fluctuations in the proportion of pupils reporting this reason for not attending school between year groups, however, there is no obvious trend with age. Also, when looking at variations across different sub-groups of pupils, the only statistically significant difference is that sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils who report that they do not receive free school meals are more likely to report a school absence for a day trip or holiday in the 12 months prior to the survey than pupils who report receipt of free school meals (19.9% vs 16.2%).

In contrast, there is a noticeable increase in the proportion of sampled Year 6, Year 8 and Year 10 pupils who report missing school for day trips and holidays between 2017 and 2024. For example, 29.1% of sampled Year 6 pupils in 2024 report missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to survey to go on day trips and holidays compared to 17.3% in 2017. Interestingly, while the proportions of pupils missing school for this reason in Year 8 and Year 10 increased between 2017 and 2024, the proportions in 2024 are similar to those reported in 2015 once uncertainty is considered. The proportion of sampled pupils reporting missing school to go on day trips and holidays in Year 12/13 was stable between 2017 and 2024.

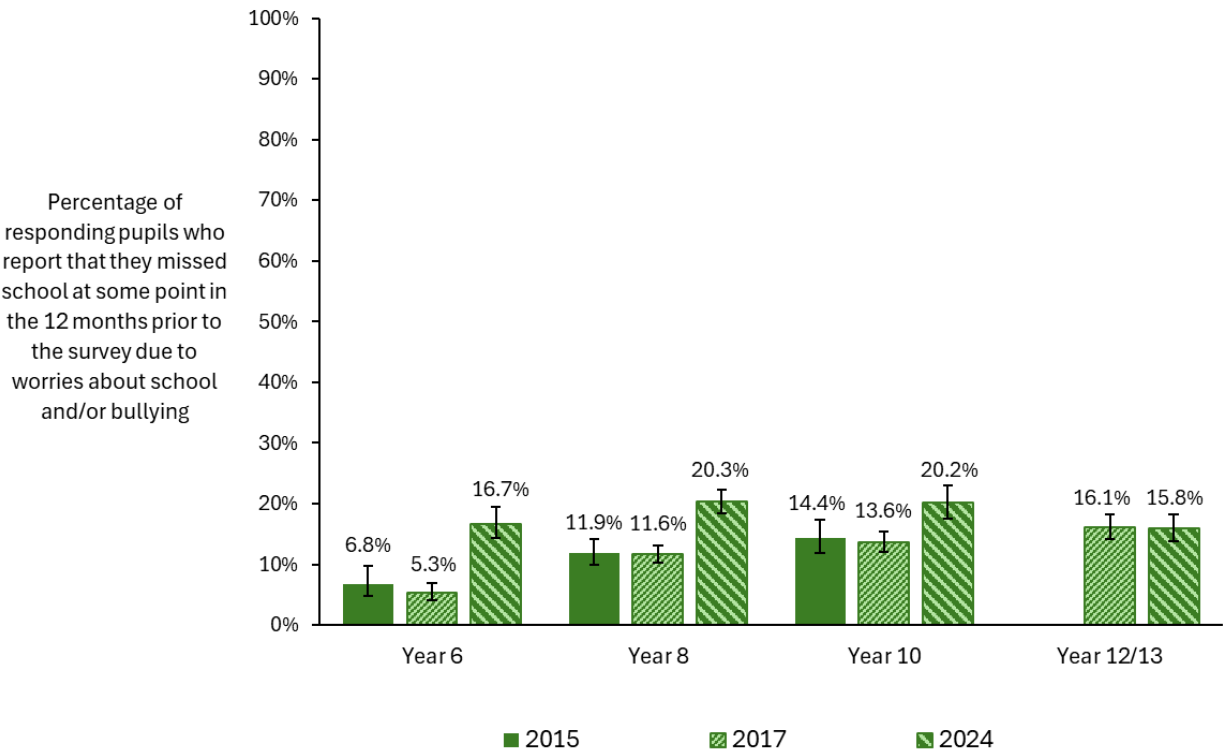
Absences due to worries about school and/or bullying

We now focus on pupils who report missing school due to worries about school and/or bullying as it seems particularly important to understand absences related to pupils' experience of school. In 2024, 16.3% of sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils report that they missed school at some point in the 12 months prior to survey due to worries about school and/or bullying. In terms of variations by age, the proportion of sampled pupils reporting absences due to worries about school and/or bullying is broadly stable from Year 6 to Year 12/13, but is lower among Year 4 and Year 5 pupils. 16.7% of sampled Year 6 pupils report an absence at some point in the 12 months prior to survey due to worries about school and/or bullying compared to 10.5% among sampled Year 5 pupils.

²⁸ It is not entirely clear how pupils who take time off school to celebrate religious holidays would answer this question.

Figure 11 shows that the proportion of sampled pupils in Year 6, Year 8 and Year 10 reporting that they have been absent at some point in the 12 months prior to survey because of worries about school and/or bullying increased noticeably between 2017 and 2024. Most striking is that the percentage of sampled Year 6 pupils reporting this issue more than trebled between 2017 and 2024 from 5.3% to 16.7%. It also seems notable that around 1 in 5 Year 8 and Year 10 pupils in 2024 report that they have missed school at some point in the 12 months prior to survey due to worries about school and/or bullying. In contrast, the proportion of Year 12/13 pupils reporting this issue remained stable between 2017 and 2024.

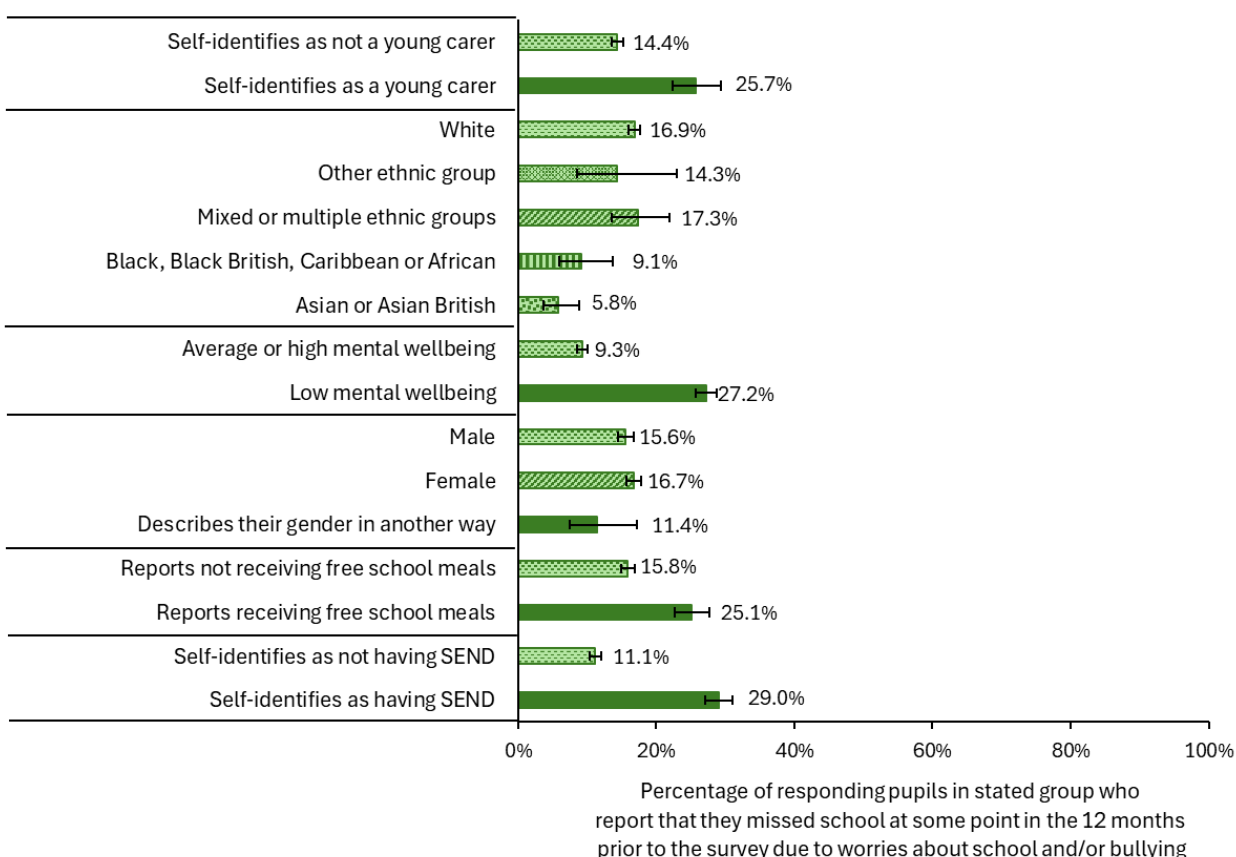
Figure 11: Percentage of sampled pupils reporting missing school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey due to worries about school and/or bullying - 2015, 2017 and 2024, (Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 12/13 data separately) ²⁹



²⁹ Data for Year 12/13 pupils was not collected in 2015 and there is insufficient data for Year 4 pupils in 2015 and 2017 to provide a comparison over time.

Turning to groups of pupils who are more likely to report absences due to worries about school and/or bullying, Figure 12 shows that sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils who identify as young carers, identify as having SEND and/or who report low mental wellbeing are more likely to report a school absence due to these reasons than pupils not in these groups. Similarly, sampled Year 6 to Year 13 pupils who report receipt of free school meals are more likely to report missing school in the 12 months before the survey due to worries about school and/or bullying than pupils who report that they do not receive free school meals.

Figure 12: Percentages of sampled pupils reporting that they missed school at some point in the 12 months prior to the survey because of worries about school and/or bullying by selected group - 2024 (Year 4 to Year 13 data combined)³⁰



The increase in the proportion reporting missing school for some of these groups can be large; for example, 29.0% of pupils who identify as having SEND report school absences for due to worries about school and/or bullying compared to 11.1% of pupils who identify as not having SEND. Equally, that pupils with low mental wellbeing are

³⁰ The comparison relating to free school meals utilises Year 6 to Year 13 data as in 2024 the relevant question about free school meals was not asked to younger pupils.

much more likely to report missing school due to worries about school and/or bullying is perhaps unsurprising as having a greater propensity to worry is potentially a symptom of low mental wellbeing.

Figure 12 also shows that pupils who identify as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African or who identify as Asian or Asian British are less likely to report missing school due to worries about it and/or bullying than pupils who identify as White. The difference is particularly large for sampled Year 4 to Year 13 pupils identifying as Asian or Asian British with 5.8% of these pupils reporting missing school due to worries about school and/or bullying compared to 16.9% of pupils who identify as White.

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.³¹ 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.³²

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.

³¹ 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.

³² 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.