

Sevenoaks Youth Council



MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY REPORT

Sevenoaks Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report

Introduction

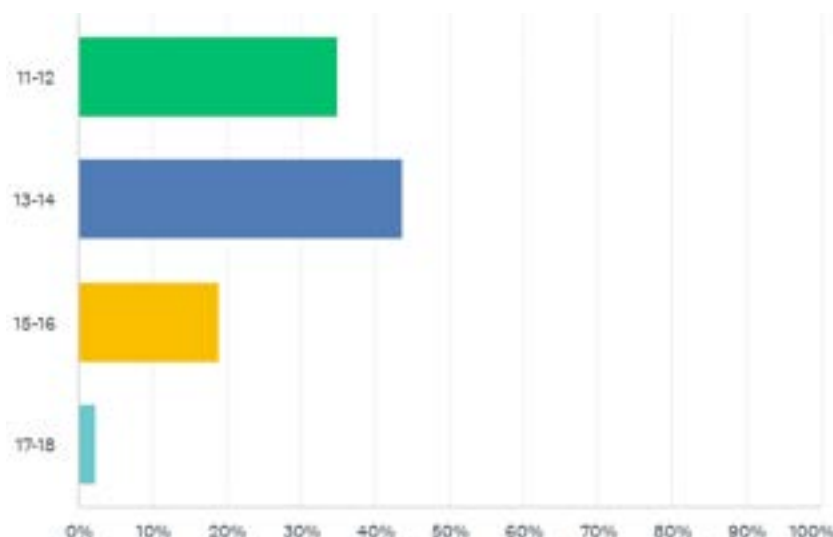
On September 9, 2024, the Sevenoaks Youth Council created and launched its Mental Health Survey targeting young people aged 11–18. This was distributed through local schools and youth organisations in the Sevenoaks town area, accompanied by posters signposting available support. The survey was designed to capture authentic, anonymous feedback about mental health from young people. It ran for two months, closing on November 13, 2024, having received 250 responses.

The largest age groups were 13–14 years (43.78%) and 11–12 years (34.94%), with smaller percentages for the older age brackets.

- **Response Count:** 250 responses (with minor variations across questions).
- **Age Distribution:**
 - 11–12 years: 34.94%
 - 13–14 years: 43.78%
 - 15–16 years: 18.88%
 - 17–18 years: 2.41%

Note: Some questions had slight variations in response numbers due to skipped items.

(Question 1) Age:



Questions 2 and 5 have been left out of this survey due to a data issue. These questions asked young people to rate their feelings on a scale from 1 to 5. However, the collected data was recorded on a scale from 1 to 100, with extreme variations. Some responses were also entered manually, making the data unreliable. As a result, these questions were not included. The questions were:

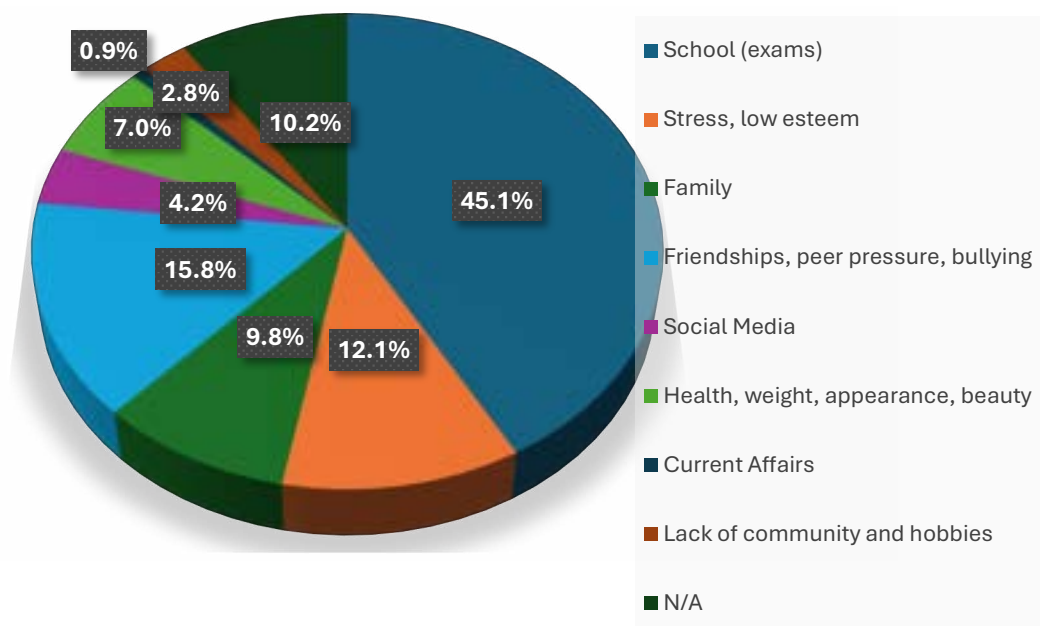
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- (Question 2) On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your mental wellbeing currently? (1 being very poor and 5 being excellent)
- (Question 5) On a scale of 1 to 5 how stressed are you generally? (1 being not stressed at all and 5 being extremely stressed)

(Question 3) What are some factors that negatively impact your mental health?

A total of 215 young people responded to what they felt negatively impacted their mental health, while 35 skipped the question. Analysis of open-ended responses revealed several key themes:

- **School-Related Stress:**
45.1% mentioned school as a primary stressor citing factors such as exams and overall academic workload, and homework.
- **Stress and Self-Image:**
12.1% highlighted issues related to stress, anxiety, and self-esteem (including concerns about how others perceive them, mindset issues, and self-criticism), with 7% of respondents outlining that their health, weight, weight, appearance, and beauty as affecting their mental health.
- **Uncertainty:**
10.2% of responses indicated that they did not know.
- **Additional Factors:**
Other responses pointed to bullying, friendships and Peer pressure (15.8%), Family (9.8%), and negative experiences with social media (4.2%).



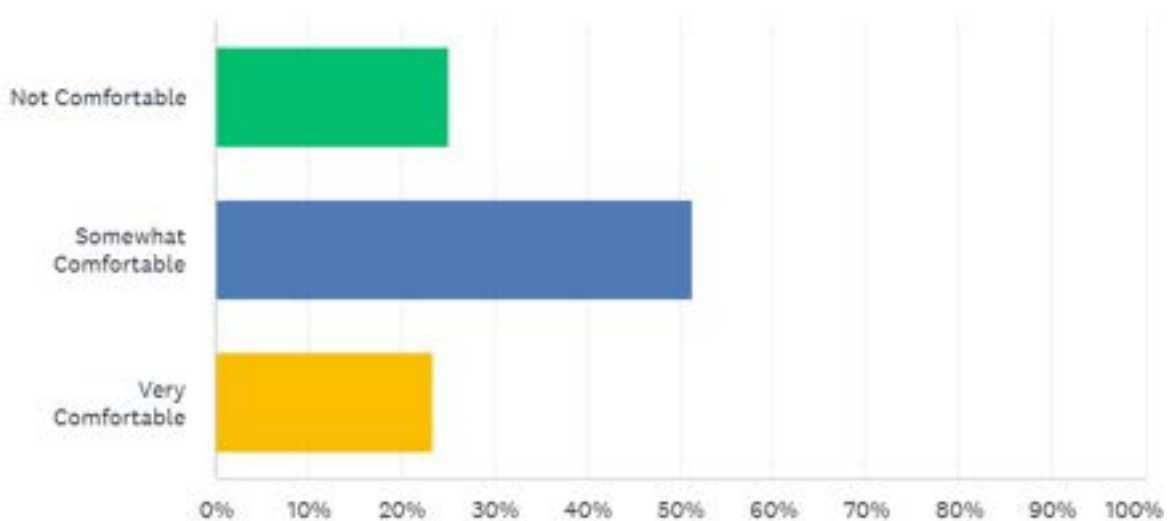
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(Question 4) How comfortable are you talking about youth Mental Health?

247 respondents (with three skipping) shared how comfortable they feel talking about their mental health:

- **Very Comfortable:** 23.48% (58 respondents)
- **Somewhat Comfortable:** 51.42% (127 respondents)
- **Not Comfortable:** 25.10% (62 respondents)

While more than 70% of young people reported feeling at least somewhat comfortable discussing mental health, nearly one in four remain reluctant to do so.

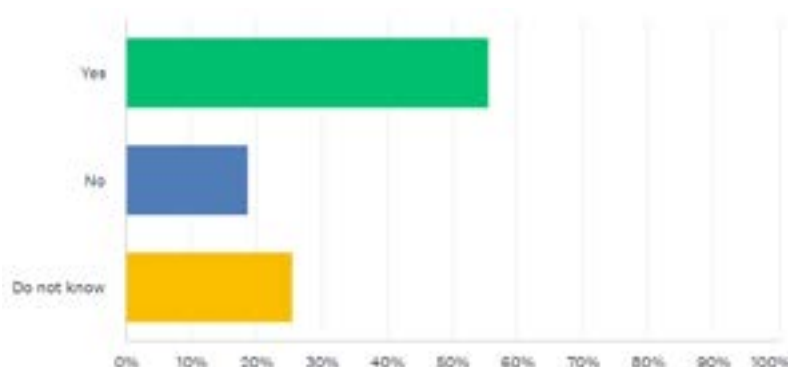


(Question 6) Do you feel you have a good school-life balance?

When asked about their school-life balance (with 246 responses):

- **Yes (Good Balance):** 61.90% (143 respondents)
- **No:** 6.93% (16 respondents)
- **Do Not Know:** 27.27% (63 respondents)

Although a majority believe they maintain a healthy balance, nearly one-third of respondents are either uncertain or feel that their balance could be improved.



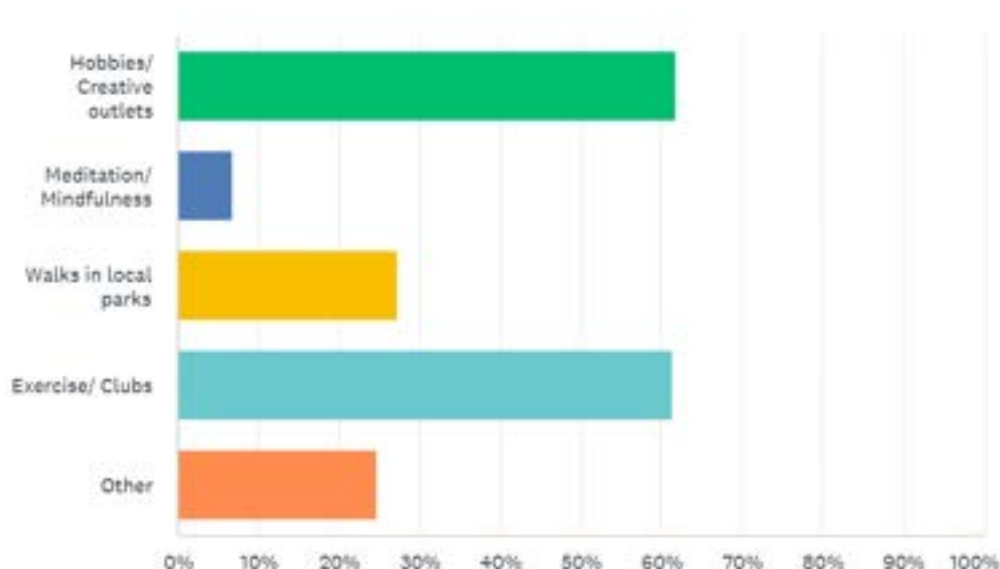
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(Question 7) Do you practice any of the following to cope with stress/ promote well-being?

Young people were asked about the strategies they use to cope with stress and promote well-being. Of the 231 respondents who answered this question (with 19 skipping), the recorded responses were as follows:

- **Hobbies/Creative Outlets:**
143 respondents (61.90%) reported relying on creative activities to cope with stress.
- **Meditation/Mindfulness:**
16 respondents (6.93%) indicated they practice meditation or mindfulness techniques.
- **Walks in Local Parks:**
63 respondents (27.27%) selected going on walks in local parks and green spaces.
- **Exercise/Clubs:**
142 respondents (61.47%) highlighted using exercise and or clubs to help cope with stress and general well-being.
- **Other:**

It should be noted that in the survey while there is an “other” option there was no prompt for young people who selected this to fill in how they coped with stress and well-being, 57 respondents (24.68%) selected this option.



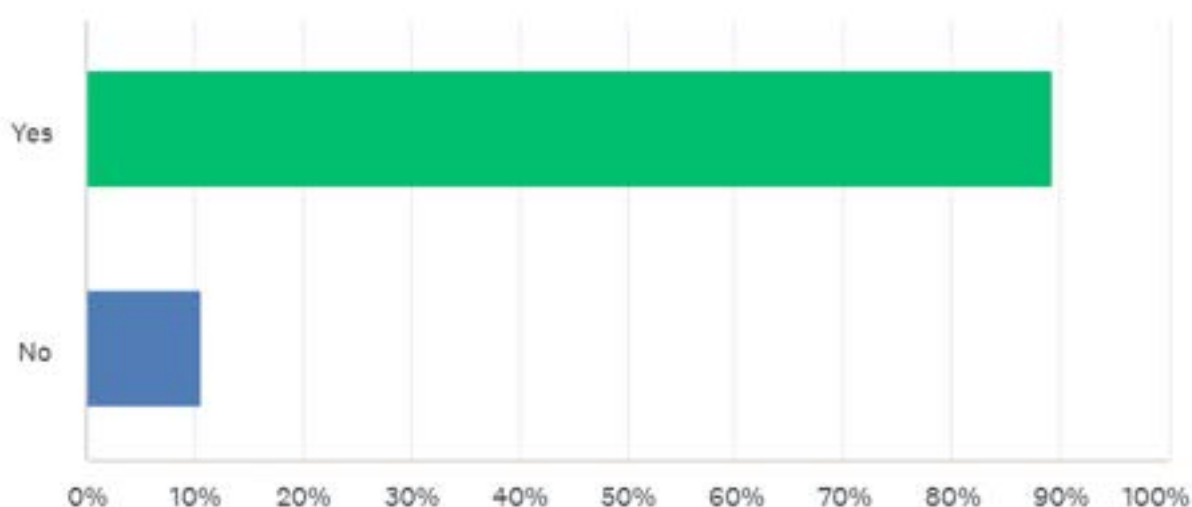
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(Question 8) Do you know where to go for help?

In this question, which seeks to gauge the level of awareness of where they can go to seek help, 246 of the respondents answered (with four skipping). This question was put to the young people as a yes or no question and yielded the following results:

- **Yes:** 89.43% (220 respondents) confirmed they are aware of support services.
- **No:** 10.57% (26 respondents) indicated they do not know where to seek help.

The high level of awareness is encouraging; however, the 10.57% who are uncertain demonstrate the need for enhanced signposting and communication about available mental health resources.



(Question 9) What could your school do to support student's mental well-being?

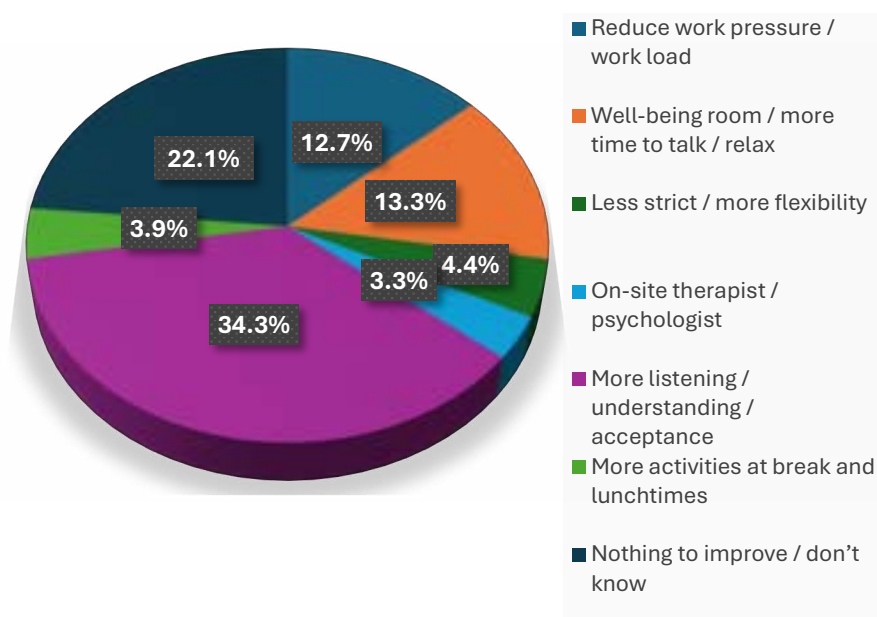
Key Findings:

181 of the 250 respondents provided insights into how their school could better support student mental health with 69 skipping this question. The responses reveal several recurring themes:

- **Dedicated Well-Being Spaces:**
13.3% of respondents proposed the establishment of designated “well-being spaces” within schools. These areas would offer students a quiet environment to relax, engage in mindfulness, or simply take a break from the daily pressures of school life.
- **Mental Health Awareness:**
34.3% of respondents requested that more understanding towards mental health was needed in schools with more listening and acceptance was needed. 3.3% of the respondents highlighted that more mental health support staff were needed for students to talk to. 12.7% of respondents suggested that a reduction in workload and pressure could help improve their mental well-being.

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It is important to note that 22.1% of the respondents reported that they are content with the current level of support offered by the schools or that they did not know how the school could improve.



(Question 10) What could be done in your community to raise awareness about mental health?

Key Findings:

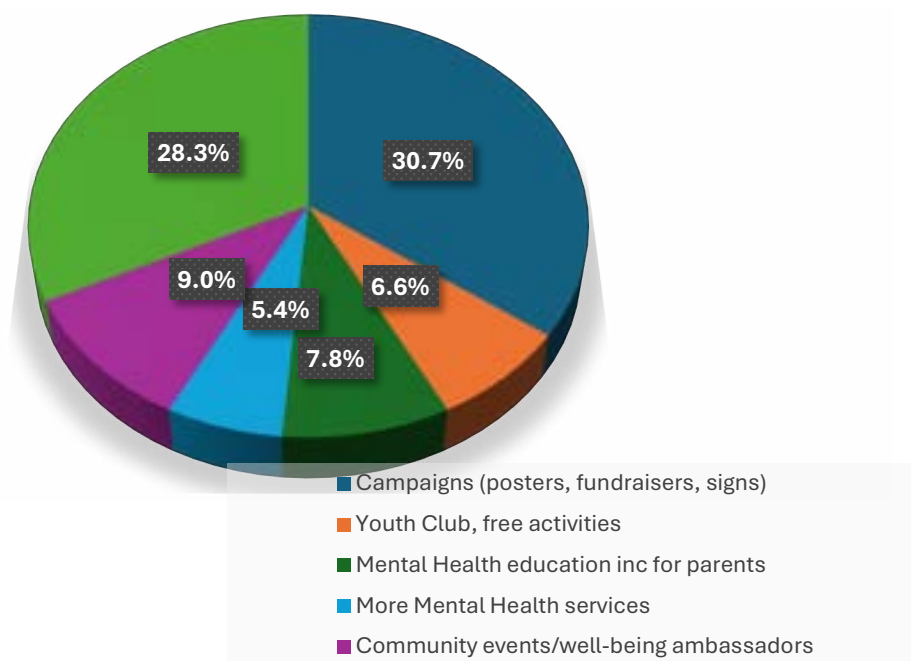
Responses to Section 10 with 166 contributions focused on what could be done in the community to enhance mental health awareness, it should be noted 84 skipped this question. The key recommendations include:

- Organised Events and Campaigns:**
 30.7% of respondents advocated for community-wide events, such as mental health awareness days and public campaigns. 6.6% requested more youth clubs, free activities and facilities within the town as well as more awareness of those facilities that already exist. One of the common requests under this heading was for a specific mental health awareness event.
- Enhanced Mental Health Education:**
 7.8% of respondents mentioned they would like to see more regular, structured sessions such as assemblies or workshops featuring mental health professionals. 5.4% of respondents highlighted that having someone they could go and talk to about how they were feeling outside of school could help.

28.3% of those who answered this question stated that they were unsure or did not know what could be done to raise awareness for mental health.

The responses indicate that young people see great value in proactive community initiatives that not only educate but also actively involve them in the dialogue around mental health.ⁱ

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Conclusion

The survey findings reveal that academic pressures, self-image concerns, and experiences of bullying are among the primary factors negatively impacting young people's mental health.

The majority of respondents reported having a good school-life balance and they are relying on positive coping strategies that were key to good mental well-being at school, most notably through creative outlets. However, a significant proportion of respondents feel uncomfortable discussing mental health and/or remain uncertain about where to seek the help required.

The diverse suggestions provided, particularly regarding reduced academic pressure and enhanced support mechanisms display that there are several ways to change school structures to benefit student's mental health as well as a number of additional supports that could be integrated within the local community.

Recommendations from Sevenoaks Youth Council:

- Encourage schools to create an internal young people's mentorship programme
- Promote via posters and digital information for students about where to get help if concerned about exam pressure
- Also via posters and digitally provide links to independent services for helping with mental health concerns
- More information talks at schools around *It is ok not to be ok* and *where to access help*
- Consider making available space for young people to meet up and share revision notes and techniques and/ or create groups e.g. informal language meet-ups.

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Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to all Youth Council members for their contribution and help in promoting the survey within their schools. Special thanks to Youth Councillor Riddley McDermott for his efforts in correlating data for questions 3, 9, and 10.

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ⁱ The data for questions 3, 9, and 10 were correlated by Youth Councillor Riddley McDermott, whose valuable contributions are gratefully acknowledged in this report.

Sevenoaks Youth Council

Sevenoaks Town Youth Councillors are elected to represent the views, issues and opinions of young people across Sevenoaks, to make a difference and change things for the better in Sevenoaks.

Youth Council meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks in the Town Council Chamber.

Since its conception in 2009 the Youth Council has become increasingly involved in initiating and developing events for young people.

All young people are welcome to attend and join the Youth Council.

For more information about Sevenoaks Youth Council please QR code below Or check out our Instagram: @sevenoaks_youthcouncilofficial

