

# Aberdeen City Council

## Health & Wellbeing Report for Children & young People (April 2022)

During March 2022 **9428 (68%)** children and young people from P6-S6 in all schools within Aberdeen City completed the Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey developed by the Scottish Schools Health and Wellbeing Improvement Research Network (SHINE). Some of the data from this survey is evaluated against the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey (HBSC), undertaken, however it is important to note that the information from this is based on a survey completed in 2017/18. This large population baseline is thought to be helpful to give us a sense of the impact of the pandemic on our children and young people but can only be interpreted in general terms given that Aberdeen City first engaged in the survey in 2022. As we move forward more direct comparisons will be possible.

Children and young people from P5-S6 also had the opportunity to undertake a Physical Health & Wellbeing survey developed by the Local Authority. Questions within this were drawn from previous local surveys, national lines of enquiry and the clarification sought to support effective local planning based on the working knowledge of school leaders. **6193 (38%)** pupils completed this survey, also undertaken in March 2022.

Both surveys were undertaken as the last of the COVID-19 restrictions were being lifted and for some of our more senior pupils, in the run up to exams. This was also following 2 years of schools adapting to change and the management of risk associated with a global pandemic. Young people have been through significant adaptations both within school and within their personal lives and this should be considered when reading this report.

It should be recognised that each survey is based on self-reporting, therefore a subjective measure and a snapshot in time.

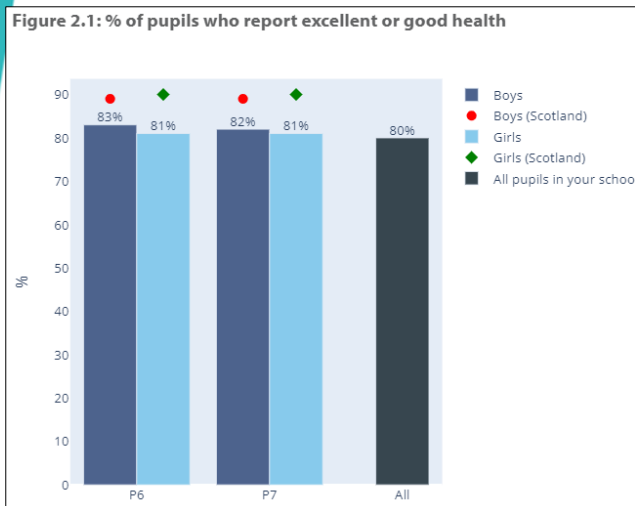
Both Surveys provide data which supports and enhances opportunities for:

- Promoting pupil voice and shared decision-making
- Identification of the main mental health and physical wellbeing issues affecting learners
- Focusing on local needs and local context
- Identification of hidden or emerging issues, or groups at particular risk to facilitate prioritising & targeting of resources
- School and the local authority evidence-based improvement planning
- School and the local authority future design of relevant health programmes and interventions
- Enrichment of the curriculum with up-to-date health-related research findings, for example in maths, science or PSE lessons given that health and wellbeing is the responsibility of all.
- Opportunities for engaging parents with pupil health concerns

## SHINE Mental Health Survey (Primary 6 & 7)

**3514 (87%)** pupils from P6 and P7 completed this survey with 178 pupils not providing details of their gender and 65 pupils not identifying their year group.

**Good Childhood Index: This scale asks young people about their happiness with eleven aspects of life including family, friendships, school, appearance, future, life overall.**



Pupils were asked about their own general health. Around **80% (2811)** of learners in primary 6 and 7 who responded reported that their health was excellent or good compared with the HBSC Scotland National average. Although this seems like a positive picture, when looking at the number of pupils specifically, this also means that **18% (633)** of learners reported that their general health was fair and **2% (70)** stated their general health was poor. This signifies a reduction against the national pre-pandemic baseline.

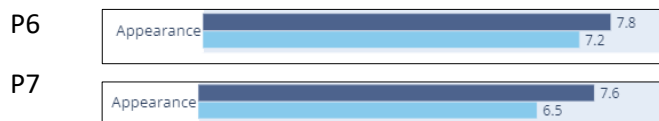
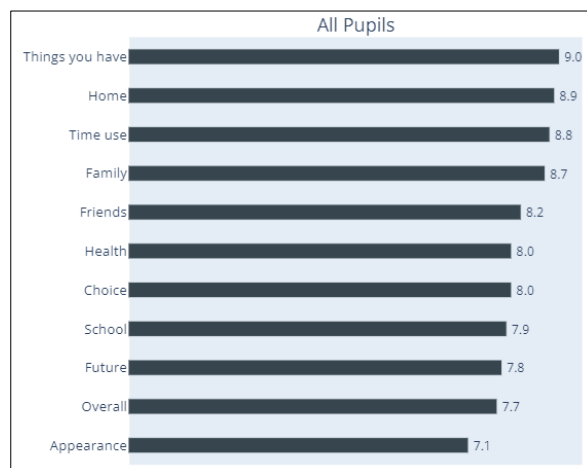
This Local Authority data mirrors the national mean of other SHINE surveys and suggests a general reduction in the self-reported general health of children. Continuing to focus on health and wellbeing will be critical as we move forward to ensure that we proactively address this potential risk to children.

**Learners were asked to rate how happy they are with various aspects of their life. Response options ranged from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'very unhappy', 5 means 'neither happy nor unhappy' and 10 means 'very happy'.**

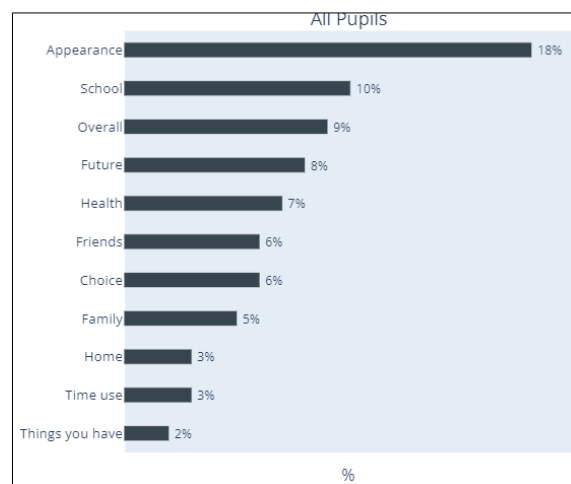
On the whole boys were slightly more positive than girls, however, this was the opposite when children were asked specifically about school.

Across P6 and P7, learners were positive about many aspects of their lives, however across both age groups and gender categories, 'Appearance' was visibly lower than other aspects of their lives and this was particularly noticeable with the girls in P7.

Within the graph below, out of 10, the top colour represents boys with the lighter blue colour on the bottom representing girls.



Low happiness is defined as a score of less than 5. The percentage of pupils who scored low happiness in each aspect of life recorded that 'Appearance' was of concern, with **27 % (444)** of P6 learners and **35% (569)** of P7 learners in this category. It was also evident from this that School, Future, Friends, Choice and Overall health were areas of higher concern and 'Things you have', 'Home', 'Family' and 'Time Use' being of the lowest concern.

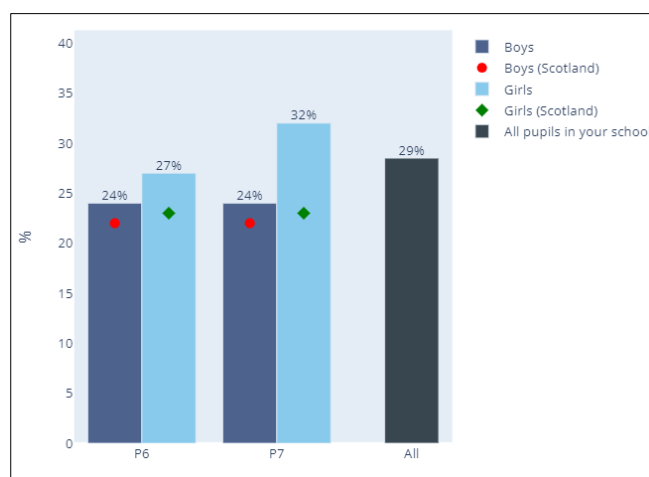


This could be linked to the prevalence of social media posts and focus on appearance and could be worthy of further investigation. This strongly suggests a need to proactively address self-image and appearance.

**The WHO-5 Wellbeing Index is a five item scale which provides a measure of emotional functioning. Items are summed to create a score ranging from 0 to 100.**

**A score of 50 or less on the WHO-5 indicates low mood**

This graph indicates that **29% (1019)** learners across Aberdeen P6 and P7 population self-rated below the 50-score threshold. This is slightly higher, more so for P7 females, than the Scottish 2017/2018 measure. Without a 2022 Scottish average we are unable to attribute the cause of this but must consider the impact of the pandemic and current societal picture in interpreting this.



Learners were then asked to complete 16 questions which measure emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Emotional scale:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel lonely</li> <li>• I cry a lot</li> <li>• I am unhappy</li> <li>• Nobody likes me</li> <li>• I feel scared</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I worry a lot</li> <li>• I have problems sleeping</li> <li>• I wake up in the night</li> <li>• I am shy</li> <li>• I worry when I am at school</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Behavioural scale:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I get very angry</li> <li>• I hit out when I am angry</li> <li>• I am calm</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I lose my temper</li> <li>• I do things to hurt people</li> <li>• I break things on purpose</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

The answers to the sixteen questions are summed to produce scores and pupils classified according to pre-determined cut-offs: 'as expected' or 'elevated'. Those in the elevated groups may experience difficulties in this area.

More

A higher percentage of girls at **44% (674)** both in P6 and P7 showed elevated responses within the Emotional Scale, while the responses for Behavioural on average score, was similar for both boys

and girls with **20% (702)** of responses being elevated. This may suggest that girls have been more negatively impacted by the last two years than boys.

### Liking School

The table below highlights the number of learners and their view of liking school. Overall, **80%** of learners like school a bit or a lot, which compares to **20%** who rated not liking school very much or at all. We may need to consider our approaches within school to help increase this, thinking creatively, engaging with young people about what would make the difference and considering our curriculum pathways to support greater enjoyment and increased engagement. Further exploration at school level would support decision making in this area.

	P6 %		P7 %		All %
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
A lot	35	39	30	37	34
A bit	47	44	48	46	46
Not very much	13	13	17	14	15
Not at all	4	4	5	4	5

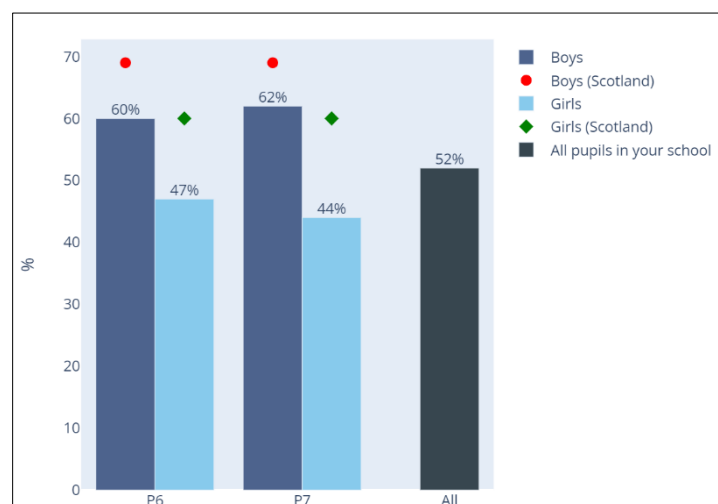
### Pressured by Schoolwork

**12% (421)** of learners stated that they felt pressured by schoolwork a lot, with **24% (843)** highlighting that they did not feel pressured by schoolwork at all. Individual schools can review this information at a more localised level to understand if there are any particular groups most impacted by this. This is a similar picture across all ASGs with on average **13%** of learners feeling a lot of pressure from schoolwork.

### Self Confidence

Learners were asked about how confident they felt in themselves, **52% (1827)** of P6 and P7 pupils stated that they always or often felt confident. This is significantly lower than the proportion of pupils reporting this within the HSBC report of 2017/2018 and could be associated with the last two years.

Girls again showing a significant reduction in confidence compared to boys with **21% (738)** of learners across both age and gender brackets stating that they never or hardly ever feel confident. In response to the pandemic and less socialising opportunities, we should consider the impact of this on both adults and children. Confidence is impacted by competence and a range of other factors making it complex and the impact of the pandemic may be a factor for the reduced confidence levels.



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Although not significantly varied across the City, across 5 ASGs, there was some evidence that slightly higher numbers of pupils felt less confidence with between 23-26% of learners within these school groups reporting they felt confident hardly ever or never.

## Social Emotional

The Social Emotional Health Survey (SEHS) measures different aspects of a child's social and emotional wellbeing: Gratitude, Zest, Persistence and Optimism. All these aspects are positive character traits and are linked to having more positive mental health and greater school engagement.

- Gratitude is associated with increased life satisfaction and social interaction including perception of support and providing support to others as well as academic achievement.

Questions included: I am lucky to go to my school / I am thankful that I get to learn new things at school / We are lucky to have nice teachers at my school / I feel thankful for my good friends at school

- Optimism is associated with greater interest in school, persistence and coping as well as more positive social relationships.

Questions included: When I have problems at school, I know they will get better in the future / I expect good things to happen at my school / Each week, I expect to feel happy in class / I expect to have fun with my friends at school

- Zest has a positive association with relationships with others, improved emotional wellbeing and autonomy.

Questions included: I get excited when I learn something new at school / I get really excited about my school projects / I wake up in the morning excited to go to school / I get excited when I am doing my classwork

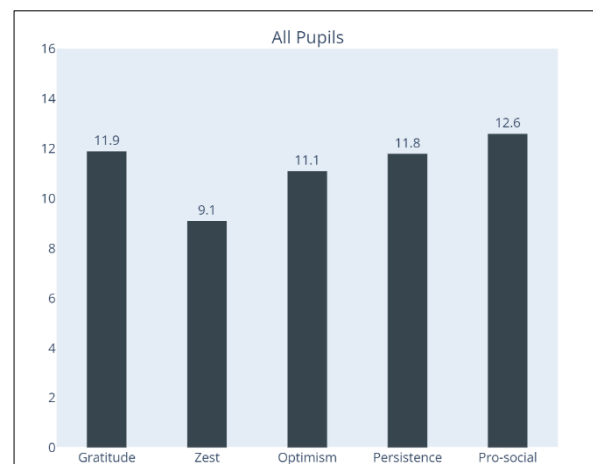
- Persistence has been shown to increase learning, mediating the relationship between motivation and performance.

Questions included: I finish all my classwork / When I get a bad mark, I try even harder the next time / I keep working and working until I get my schoolwork right / I do my classwork even when it's really hard for me

The co-occurrence of multiple positive psychological traits from these 4 areas is called (covitality) they are associated with increased resilience, pro-social behaviour, school engagement and satisfaction.

The responses to this section of the survey provide scores out of 16 within these four domains and then are collated to create an overall covitality score, out of 64.

Across gender groups and year groups responses were very similar with Zest scoring lowest, on average 9 out of 16 and Gratitude scoring slightly higher than the others averaging about 12 out of 16. There is a need for us to consider if our curriculum offer across school communities is providing excitement and encouraging a love of learning and passion for coming to school.



## SHINE Mental Health Survey (Secondary 1-6)

**5914** (60%) learners from S1-S6 completed this survey with 292 learners choosing not to provide details of their gender and 98 learners not identifying their year group.

General Health is closely related to mental health. Boys in S1 and S3 seem to be more confident about their general health with a higher percentage of learners stating that their general health is Excellent or Good. In S4-S6 there is a clear increase in the number of girls highlighting that they have poor general health and overall, **5% (296)** of all learners state this across all responses.

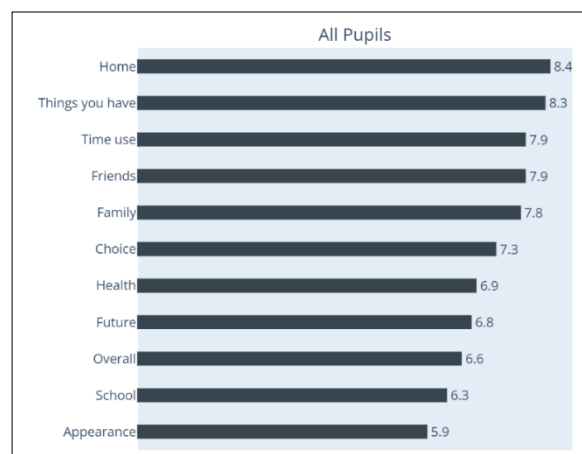
**Table 2.1: Pupil self-rated health**

	S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S6		All %
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
<b>Excellent</b>	23	16	25	12	27	11	22	13	20	10	18	13	18
<b>Good</b>	58	55	51	51	53	57	53	48	53	53	59	44	52
<b>Fair</b>	17	26	22	32	18	27	22	32	23	30	17	36	25
<b>Poor</b>	2	3	3	6	2	4	3	8	4	7	6	7	5

From Primary to Secondary there is a decrease in the reported general wellbeing of learners with an increase in those who report their general health to be fair or poor from **20% (703)** of Primary learners to **30% (1774)** of Secondary learners. This shows an increase for S6 girls in particular, with **43%** of S6 girls reporting their general health is poor or fair. This supports the need for some targeted work with girls.

**Learners were asked to rate how happy they are with various aspects of their life. Response options ranged from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'very unhappy', 5 means 'neither happy nor unhappy' and 10 means 'very happy'.**

Within Secondary Schools, it was again clear that the aspects of their lives learners were most happy with are, home, things they had, time use, friends and family, with school and appearance consistently receiving lower scores.

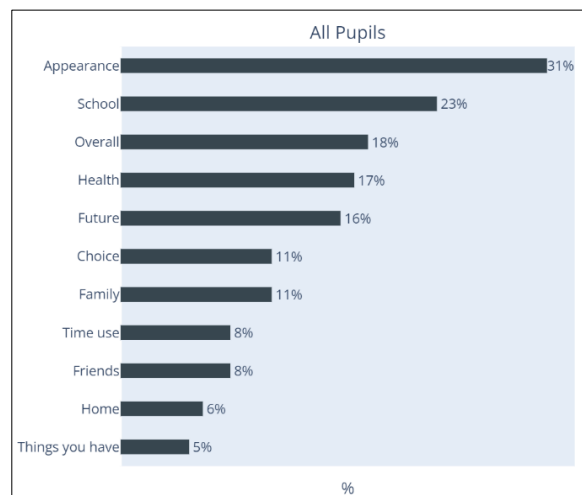


Within the Secondary context however, there is a considerable concern around the number of girls between **31% - 46%** from S1 – S6 reporting low happiness with regards to their 'Appearance'. Girls also identify low levels of happiness around 'School', 'The future', 'Health', and their overall lives.

Overall, **31% (1833)** learners report low happiness linked to 'Appearance' and **23% (1360)** linked to 'School'.

From Primary to Secondary there is a drop in rating related to how happy learners are relating to school by 1.6 points. This is an increase from 10% of primary learners to 23% of secondary learners who report low happiness regarding school.

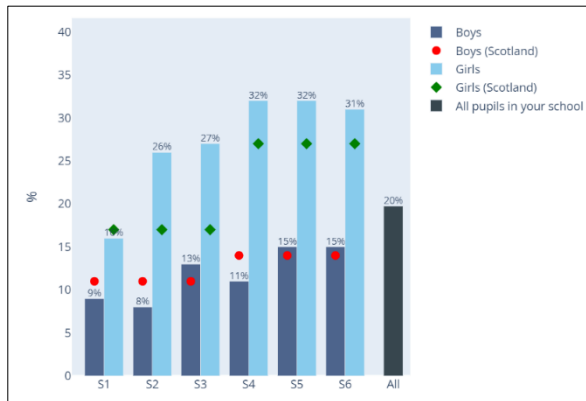
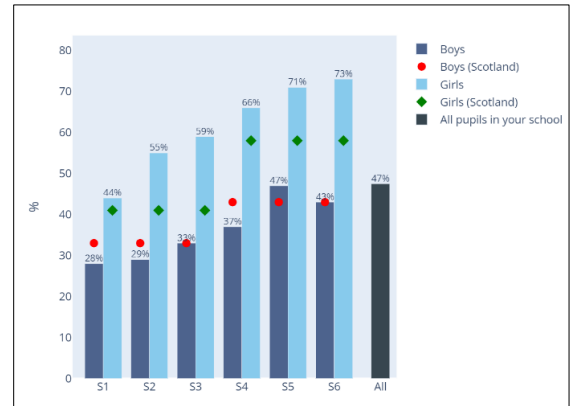
The WHO-5 Wellbeing Index is a five-item scale which provides a measure of emotional functioning.



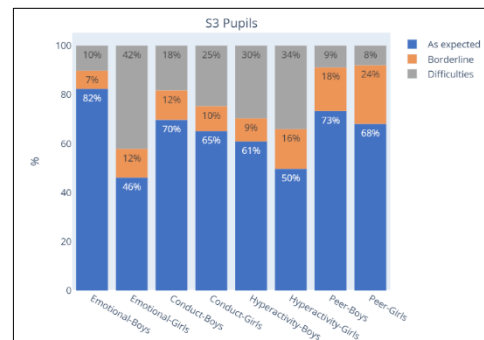
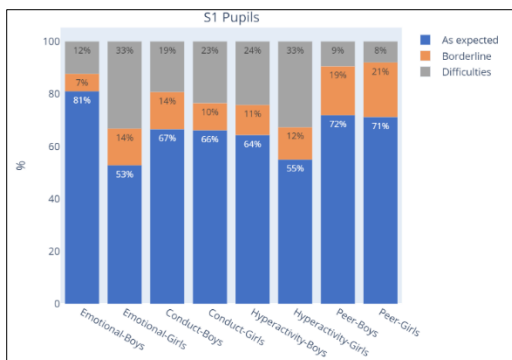
Answers are collated to create a score ranging from 0 to 100. A score of 50 or less on the WHO-5 indicates low mood

The graph to the right shows that when collated **40% (2366)** of learners in S1-S6 indicate low mood.

The graphs below highlights, **20% (1183)**, the proportion of those that scored 28 or less and are classified as at risk of depression. Again, there are considerable concerns evident for the wellbeing of girls.

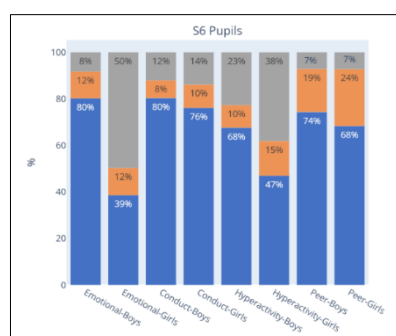
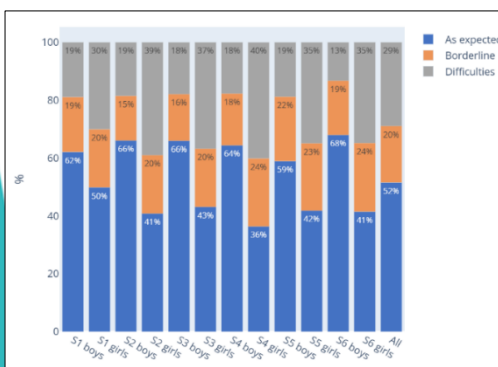


The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) measures mental health difficulties in different areas: emotional symptoms, conduct, hyperactivity and peer relationships.



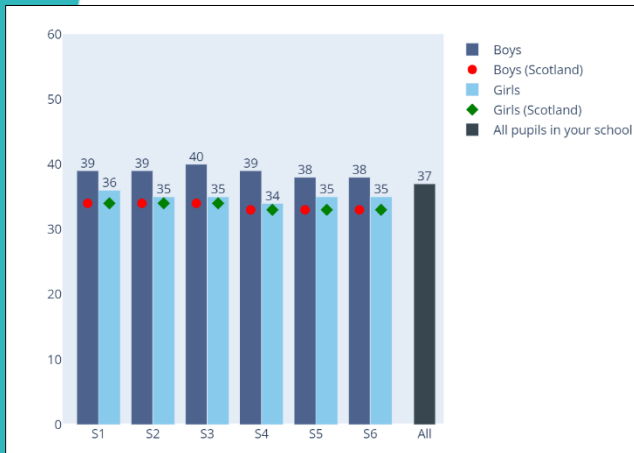
Reviewing all year groups there is a very clear, high percentage of girls showing difficulties with hyperactivity and emotions. There is evidence within the below 2 reports to suggest that emotional disorders are increasing, particularly amongst girls.

- BorW,DeanA.J.,NajmanJ.,HayatbakhshR.(2014) Are child and adolescent mental health problems increasing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? A systematic review. AustNZJPsychiatry.
- Pataly,P.,Gage,S,H.(2019).Changes in millennial adolescent mental health and health-related behaviours over 10 years :a population cohort comparisonstudy.internationalJournalofEpidemiology.



There is a need to focus more effectively on the emotional wellbeing needs of girls across all year groups and consider what opportunities there are to provide support as overall strengths and difficulties scores, highlight this area.

## Sleep



Learners were asked to complete the adolescent sleep wake scale that measures sleep quality. Higher scores indicate better sleep quality and is measured out of 60.

Boys in all year groups indicate that they have a better sleep quality than girls and in general this is also higher than the national average (2017/18).

All pupils, however, would benefit from increased sleep quality to positively impact on their mental and physical health. We should consider the links between social media and the use of digital technology and the potential impact this has had on the measures noted.

## Liking School

Learners were asked to select whether they liked school from a scale of, a lot to not at all. With **42% (2484)** of learners indicating that they don't like school very much or at all, there is a need for us to consider carefully how this might be improved.

Table 7.1: How much pupils like school

	S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S6		All %
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
<b>A lot</b>	22	19	14	9	13	8	8	5	8	8	15	6	12
<b>A bit</b>	50	48	55	46	55	47	51	37	45	33	39	42	47
<b>Not very much</b>	23	23	22	26	21	29	29	31	29	37	33	35	27
<b>Not at all</b>	6	10	9	19	11	16	12	27	17	21	13	17	15

**31% (1833)** of learners stated that they felt pressured by schoolwork a lot with **12% (710)** highlighting that they did not feel pressured by schoolwork at all.

## Self Confidence

Learners were asked about how confident they felt in themselves, **35% (2069)** of S1-S6 pupils stated that they always or often felt confident. This is lower than the number of pupils reported within the HSBC report of 2017/2018. Girls again showing a greater reduction in confidence compared to boys with **29% (1715)** of learners across both age and gender brackets stating that they never or hardly ever feel confident.

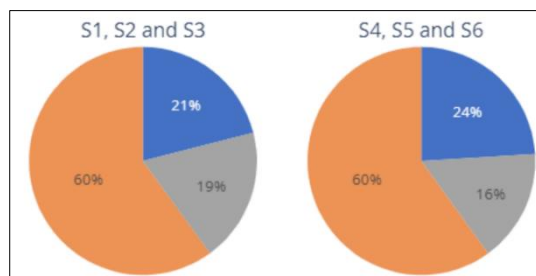
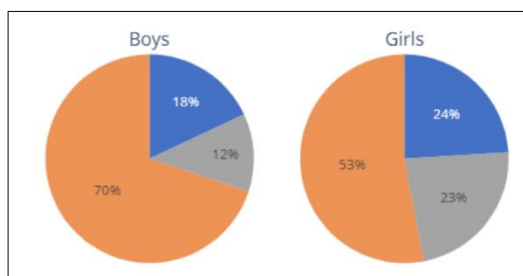
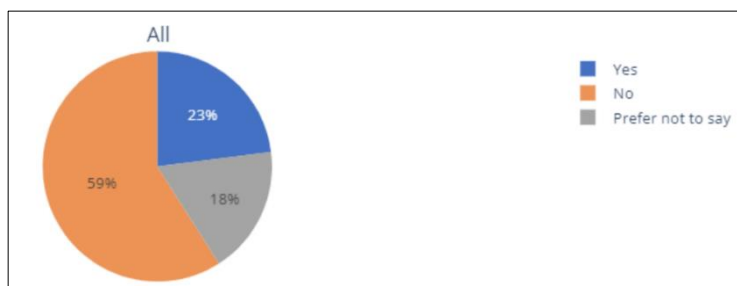
Table 7.3: How often pupils feel confident

	S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S6		All %
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
<b>Always</b>	16	8	14	4	14	3	14	4	11	2	12	5	9
<b>Often</b>	37	22	37	18	35	18	33	17	31	16	30	16	26
<b>Sometimes</b>	29	35	32	36	34	41	35	41	42	42	40	45	36
<b>Never or hardly ever</b>	18	35	17	42	17	38	18	37	17	40	18	34	29



## Self-Harm

Out of the 5915 pupils who participated in the survey 4427 pupils were asked if they had ever hurt themselves on purpose. **23% (1018)** said yes with a further 18% choosing 'prefer not to say'. This raises questions about the possible stigmatisation or bottling up of concerns if learners were not confident in revealing this information. This was again, even across year groups and gender, and out of those reporting yes, **39% (397)** suggesting they had done this between 1-10 times, and **19% (193)** suggesting that they had done this more than 10 times over the past year. This data is suggestive of an urgent need to review our partnership approaches to support young people.



## Loneliness

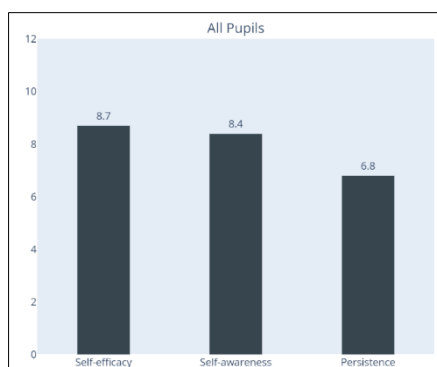
Learners were asked how often they felt lonely in the past week (March 2022). **25% (1478)** of learners stated that they felt lonely most or all the time with **33% (1951)** feeling more positive about this aspect of their life, feeling lonely none of the time. Over the past 2 years there has been an overall increase in social isolation due to the impact of the pandemic and 2 lockdown situations and it is important to recognise this as we reflect on the above data.

## Social Emotional

**This section measures different competencies of positive socio-emotional health, which are considered fundamental for young people to develop to live engaging and meaningful lives.**

These traits do not work alone but when they co-occur, they help to foster higher levels of wellbeing and increased resilience, pro-social behaviour, school engagement and life satisfaction.

## Belief in self



This assesses a young person's overall sense of self and personal competence and includes measures of self-awareness, self-efficacy, and persistence.

Learners were asked to rate against positive measures with questions like, 'I can work out my problems, I can do most things if I try, I understand my moods and feelings'.

Across all year groups, again, boys demonstrated higher levels of confidence through self-efficacy, self-awareness, and persistence, however persistence is an area across all categories that was scored significantly lower.

### Belief in others

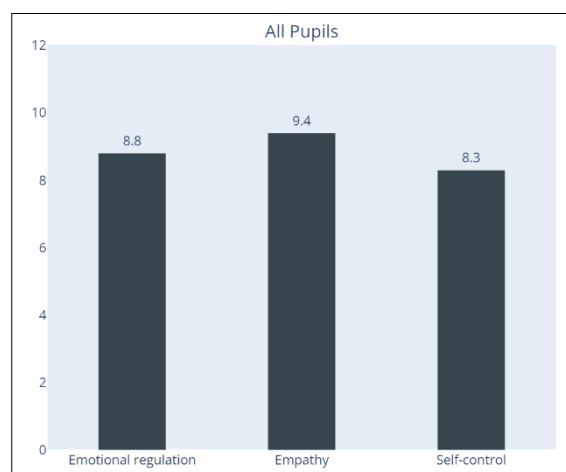
This is the young person’s perception of their social support and levels of trust and connectedness. It comprises measures of school and peer support and family coherence which are important factors in resilience. Learners responded to questions such as ‘At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who listens to me when I have something to say, there is a feeling of togetherness in my family’.

Learners have rated that on the whole support from school, family and peers is somewhat positive and that family and peers play, in particular, a significant role in maintaining levels of resilience. It is essential, however, that we continue to build on this support and build confidence in the views of our learners around the supports that are available to them.

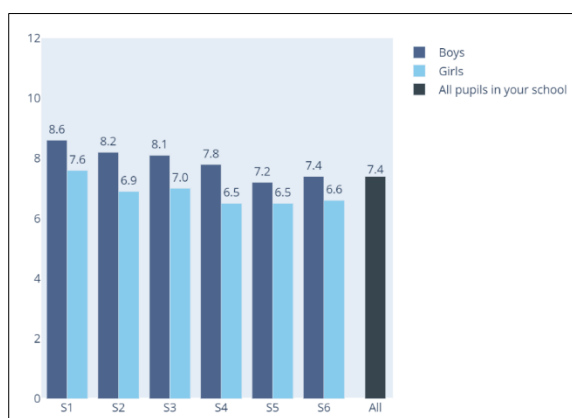
### Emotional competence

This is a young person’s ability to successfully manage emotions to establish interpersonal relationships. It comprises of measures of emotional regulation, empathy and self-control which are all positively related to social and academic success.

Learners demonstrate through this a high level of empathy, responding to statements such as ‘I accept responsibility for my actions, and I think before I act’. Self-control is consistently lower across all year groups as is emotional regulation, particularly in girls, which mirrors previous elements of this survey.



**Optimism:** is associated with greater interest in school, persistence and coping as well as more positive social relationships. Across the years, optimism levels of our young people decrease until S6 where we see a small increase from the responses across genders. The overall optimism levels of our learners, however, is lower than we would want, and we need to stay mindful of this and its relationship to potential pressure of assessment and its interactions with ‘liking of school’ which showed a similar decrease year on year. The scorings in this area may also be reflective of reporting on the economic downturn and ‘loss’ of opportunities for young people.



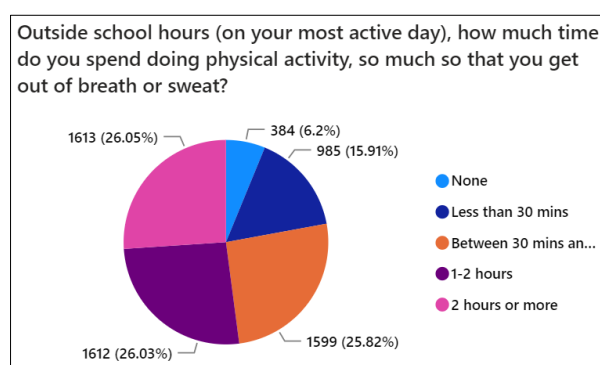
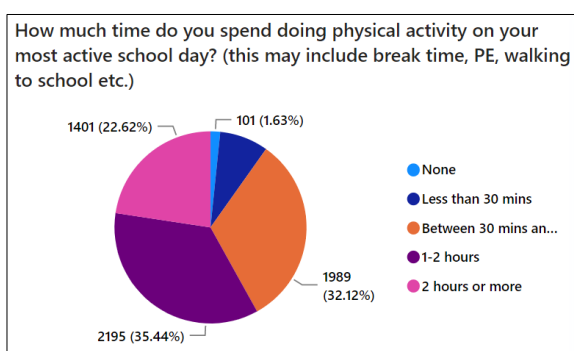
Consistently, learners’ belief in themselves is scored lower than their belief in others or their emotional competence. We must continue to build the confidence levels of our learners to see a more positive impact on engagement and success in schools and for the future of our children and young people across Aberdeen.

## Physical Wellbeing (P5-S6)

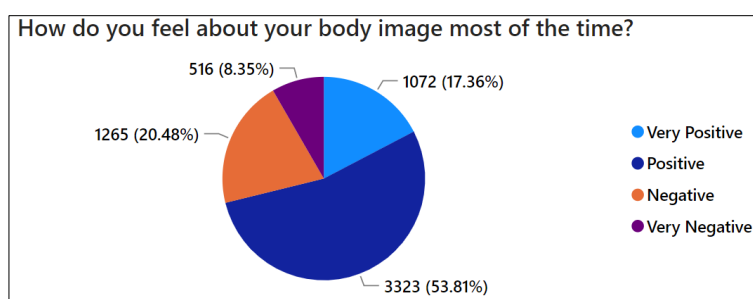
Similar to the Mental Wellbeing survey, learners were asked to identify how well they thought their general physical wellbeing was. The majority of learners identified their general health as good or excellent, however **20.94% (1297)** felt their general health was fair with a further **1.97% (122)** learners stating that their general health was poor.

### Physical Health and Body Image

NHS physical activity guidelines suggest that on average children and young people between 5 – 18 should aim for at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity, physical activity a day across the week. **41.95% (2597)** of learners do not meet the national health standards set above.



As with the mental wellbeing survey, **28.83% (1781)** of learners reported that most of the time they felt negative or very negative about their body image. Out of the **516** pupils who stated they felt very negative about their body image, **212** of those pupils were in Primary School.



Across Associated School Groups, the breakdown of responses was similar to the overall percentages below with on average **50%** of learners selecting positive, **20%**, very positive and **30%** selecting negative or very negative.

### Relationships with others

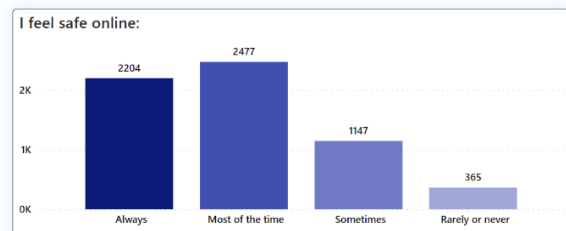
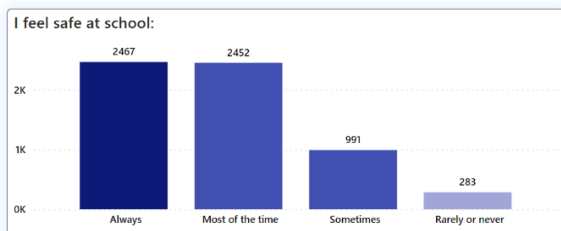
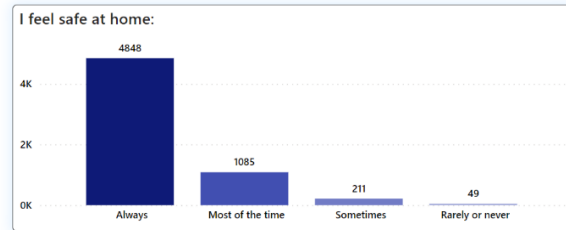
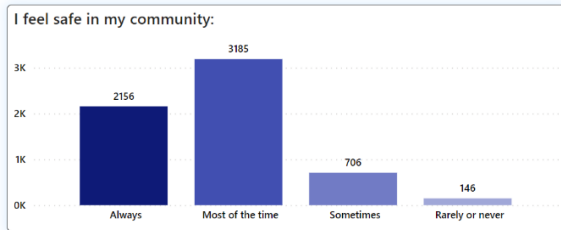
Throughout our lives, the number and strength of relationships can affect our mental and physical wellbeing. The benefits of social interactions and good mental health are significant. Proven links include lower rates of anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem, greater empathy, and more trusting and cooperative relationships.

Being available to listen to children and young people, is essential for supporting individual needs and understanding fully what is required. Learners were asked if they had an adult in their lives that listens to them about how they are feeling. **64% (3964)** positively shared that they always did, **31% (1898)** agreed that this was true sometimes, however, **5% (221)** also stated no, they did not have an adult in their life that listens to them about how they are feeling.

**95% (5641)** Learners identified that overall, their relationships with other people were positive some, most, or all of the time.

## Feeling Safe

Learners were asked to consider how safe they felt within various environments and across all schools and year groups, the majority of learners reported that they felt safe always or most of the time in their communities, at home and in school, however there is a percentage of learners who feel that they rarely or never feel safe in these environments. Further review of this data and engagement with children and young people will assist us in addressing this at local level, through partnership working and considering the need for more targeted support. Online safety will continue to be a regular feature within the school curriculum, with clear advice provided for responding to issues affecting learners feeling of safety online and actions they can take if this is breached.



## Sleep

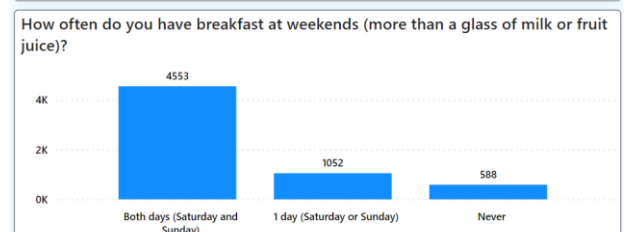
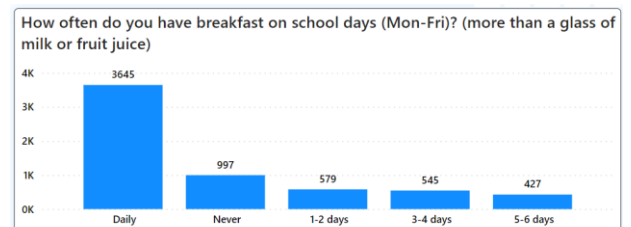
NHS advises that teenagers between the age of 13-18 should have a recommended 8 hours sleep. Learners were asked about their usual sleep patterns and the number of hours they slept the night before completion of the survey. **12% (688)** of learners reported that they had 5 hours sleep or less with **3% (159)** learners saying that they had less than 3 hours sleep. **250** Primary aged pupils reported that they usually went to bed after midnight.

**19% (1889)** of learners feel that technology has affected the choices that they make, relating to and impacting their sleep. **1005** learners reported that on school days they can spend more than 6 hours on technology and this increases to **2100** at the weekend.

## Food and Drink

To understand the eating habits of all respondents, learners were asked to identify how regularly they usually eat or drink particular food groups or categories of drink. This indicated that there is a need for us to continue to work on educating learners to make healthy choices. There is an increase in the number of children and young people who are reported as being overweight or obese.

Establishing good eating habits is vitally important to support positive weight management. The number of learners who reported starting the day with breakfast was varied when you compared school days and weekends with **908** more eating breakfast daily at the weekend. **997** children are regularly attending school, however with no breakfast.



There are times where children and young people do not have the right access to food to meet their nutritional needs. **3.72% (230)** of learners who completed the survey, reported that they often or always went to bed hungry because there was not enough food at home. Further review of this data at local level will help us identify where food parcels, foodbanks and other such resources would help us address this and target our support.

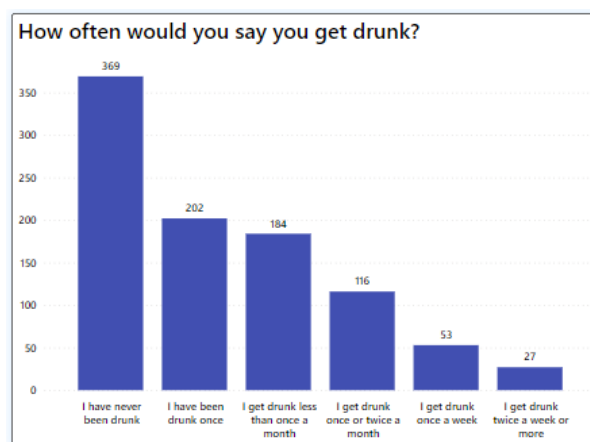
## Substance Use / Misuse

### Smoking

**8% (476)** of learners reported that they have tried smoking cigarettes or e-cigarettes with 27 young people smoking between 1-20 cigarettes a week and 22 learners smoking more than 20. The number of young people reporting that they use e-cigarettes or vapes, however is higher with **29% (149)** reporting that they use e-cigarettes or vapes once a week or more.

### Alcohol

Learners were asked about alcohol consumption, regularity and type of alcoholic drinks consumed. **84.64% (5242)** learners stated that they had never had a drink of alcohol with **15.36% (951)** learners reporting that they had and **80** learners stating that they get drunk weekly, with Cider, Spirits and Alcopops highlighted as those most often selected for regular consumption.



### Drugs

**158** of our learners reported that they have taken illegal drugs, drugs formerly known as legal highs, solvents or prescription drugs that were not prescribed for them. **6035** stated that they had never done this. **22** of our learners also stated that they use drugs daily with the largest number of responses linked to cannabis, followed by Ketamine and Cocaine.

A continued focus on substance misuse will be undertaken through the LOIP project charters, in partnership with Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and through increased focus on this throughout the curriculum, with appropriate signposting and supports being made available.