



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* ADELAIDE

**RESILIENT YOUTH:**

**STATE OF THE NATION**

**REPORT**

20  
23

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands throughout Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and honour the rich diversity of their ancient living Culture.

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# REPORT CONTENTS

Introduction .....	01
Research Context .....	02
Survey Measurements .....	04
Key Results: Primary School Students .....	09
Mental Wellbeing .....	10
Hope .....	19
Life Satisfaction .....	23
Resilience .....	27
Positive Learners Mindset .....	29
Healthy Behaviour .....	32
Social Support .....	33
Social Behaviour .....	35
Safety .....	36
First Nations Snapshot .....	38
Key Results: Secondary School Students .....	43
Mental Wellbeing .....	44
Hope .....	53
Life Satisfaction .....	57
Resilience .....	61
Positive Learners Mindset .....	63
Healthy Behaviour .....	66
Social Support .....	67
Social Behaviour .....	69
Safety & Risk Factors .....	70
First Nations Snapshot .....	78
Conclusions .....	82

# INTRODUCTION

Wellbeing refers to a state of mental, emotional, social and physical health. Good wellbeing is critical for children and youth to thrive, and investing in the identification of the state of child and youth wellbeing in Australia provides an important tool towards prevention and intervention of poor wellbeing outcomes.

For good wellbeing, children and youth need the resilience to cope with stressors in life. Resilience is a dynamic, context-dependent process where an individual positively adapts to challenging or adverse circumstances. It is a skill that can be learned, as well as strengthened, and is a powerful protective factor against poor wellbeing.

The Resilience Survey is an annual measure of the wellbeing and resilience of Australian school students, administered in more than one thousand schools across every state and territory. The Resilience Survey is a proprietary instrument of Resilient Youth Australia (RYA). It is an online school-based survey which collects, analyses, and reports the wellbeing of young people at a cohort level in terms of their mental health, learning mindset, coping strategies, hopefulness, life satisfaction, and resilience in addition to further risk and protective behaviours. The survey engages directly with children aged 7 to 18 years, with the aim of capturing unique, context-specific insights about aspects of their emotional and mental lives and behaviour that may not be visible to parents, carers, or teachers. The Resilience Survey provides school principals and wellbeing staff a detailed profile of the mental health and wellbeing of their students.

This, our third State of the Nation Report, provides a summary of findings of Australian students surveyed in 2023.

“

**It is critical that our young people feel connected, protected and respected to enjoy a productive, happy and resilient life.**

**~Resilient Youth Australia**

”

# RESEARCH CONTEXT

## BACKGROUND

Data was collected using the Resilience Survey (Resilient Youth Australia). The Survey was administered by each participating school once in the year using unique codes to allow school-based administration to students. The Resilience Survey is a student voice instrument, meaning that data is collected directly from students in a manner that ensures their privacy and confidentiality (i.e., their answers are not visible to parents, caregivers and/or teachers). The survey is anonymous and non-identified, and responses are only reported in the aggregate. In this way, the Resilience Survey aims to elicit honest answers from students, empowering them to share responsibility for developing and enhancing their own resilience, mental health, and broader wellbeing. Approval for the analyses undertaken in this report was granted by The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Psychology subcommittee (approval number 20/87).

## PARTICIPANTS

In 2023, 139,041 students of average age 12.16 years ( $SD = 2.65$ ; range = 7-18 years) completed the survey. Overall, 48.8% of students were female, 47.3% male, 3.8% self-reported as “Other” and/or preferred not to report gender identity (referred to as ‘gender diverse’ throughout the report). 61,639 (44.3%) of students were in primary education (Gender: 47.6% female, 48.7% male, 3.8% Other; Age:  $M=9.73$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ), and 77,402 (55.7%) were in secondary education (Gender: 49.8% female, 46.3% male, 3.9% Other; Age:  $M=14.11$ ,  $SD=1.70$ ).

Students were represented across all states and territories, including 54.8% from Victoria, 15.6% from Queensland, 15.6% from New South Wales, 5.3% from South Australia, 3.9% from Western Australia, 2.2% from Tasmania, 1.4% from the Northern Territory, and 1.3% from the Australian Capital Territory.

The majority of students (85.2%) were born in Australia. Students also listed all of the cultural backgrounds which best described them, with 79.2% of students identifying with a single culture, 18.0% with two different cultures, 2.4% with three different cultures, and 0.5% with four or more different cultures. The most prevalent cultures students identified as were 69.9% Australian, 5.4% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 16.6% Asian, and 10.9% European. 20.8% of students reported one or more cultural background different to those listed above. Since students could indicate more than one cultural background, categories reported in this report are not mutually exclusive.

## RESILIENT YOUTH: STATE OF THE NATION REPORT 2023

Socio-economic conditions of participants were measured using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2021) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) report. Postcode of the student's residential address was used to determine their corresponding Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) score. Among those who reported a residential postcode with a corresponding IRSAD score (n=128,878), the cohort of students represented the full range of socioeconomic status (SES) in the general population of Australia (i.e., percentile ranks ranging 1-100 as indicated by SEIFA), with a mean percentile rank of 55.74 (SD = 28.49). Within this report, SEIFA scores are classified as Low (SEIFA deciles 1-3), Middle (SEIFA deciles 4-7), and High (SEIFA deciles 8-10) SES.

For a number of measures that have been consistently reported across the years of the Resilient Youth: State of the Nation report, descriptive comparisons across the three most recent years (i.e. 2021, 2022 and 2023) are provided as separate figures. These comparisons are provided separated by gender, as well as by school grade. In this way, the report provides a convenient visualisation of trends over time for core measures of wellbeing in Australian students. For further details of the population characteristics and other outcomes from previous years please visit: <https://wildlabadelaide.org/reports>.

# SURVEY MEASUREMENTS

## MENTAL WELLBEING FACTORS

<b>DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS</b>	Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2), scores range from 2-8. Higher scores indicate worse symptoms. A score below 4 is considered 'healthy' or feeling good and functioning well. A score of 4 or 5 is considered 'borderline', or sometimes experiencing sadness, low mood, and withdrawn behaviour. A score of 6-8 is considered 'at risk' of depression, or low mood and a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest that interferes with life.
<b>ANXIETY SYMPTOMS</b>	General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2), scores range from 2-8. Higher scores indicate worse symptoms. A score below 4 is considered 'healthy' or feeling positive with few worries. A score of 4 or 5 is considered 'borderline', or sometimes experiencing worries that prevent engagement in activities. A score of 6-8 is considered 'at risk' of an anxiety disorder, or having difficulty managing fears and worries, becoming overwhelmed by anxious thoughts.
<b>ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS</b>	Single item: "I can talk about things if they upset me"; scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater ability to speak openly about difficult things.

## HOPEFULNESS

<b>HOPEFULNESS</b>	The Children's Hope Scale (CHS). Scores range from 6-36. Higher scores indicate greater hope, or a sense of agency and ability to work towards a goal. Scores 6-18 indicate low, scores 19-27 indicate moderate, and scores 28-36 indicate high hope.
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## LIFE SATISFACTION

<b>LIFE SATISFACTION</b>	Adapted from the Cantril Self Anchoring Scale, scores range from 1-8, with students imaging each number as a rung on a ladder ranging from worst possible life to best possible life. Higher scores indicate greater overall life satisfaction. Scores 1-4 indicate struggling, scores 5-6 indicate doing OK, and scores 7-8 indicate thriving.
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<b>RESILIENCE</b>	
<b>RESILIENCE</b>	For this new measure, scores are a combination of agency (belief that they have what it takes to work towards a desired goal), pathways ability (ability to imagine different practical ways to achieve these goals), and life satisfaction – each key components of a resilient mindset. Scores range from 0-100 and were standardised based on 2022 data. Higher scores indicate greater resilience. Scores 0-39 indicate low, 40-60 indicate normal, and scores 61-100 indicate high resilience.
<b>POSITIVE LEARNERS MINDSET</b>	
<b>DISENGAGEMENT</b>	The Coping Strategies Inventory-avoidance sub-scale (CSI) measures avoidant coping behaviour, or disengagement. Scores range from 4-16. Higher scores indicate greater disengagement.
<b>SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT</b>	Single Items: “I try hard at school”, “I care about my school”, “I do my homework”. “I enjoy learning things at school”, “I am given useful jobs at school”, “I am involved with at least 1 extracurricular activity” “I have fun at school”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater engagement.
<b>HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR</b>	
<b>HEALTHY EATING</b>	Single item: “I eat healthy food”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate healthier eating.
<b>ADEQUATE SLEEP</b>	Single item: “I get at least 8 hours sleep most nights”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate better sleep.
<b>PHYSICALLY ACTIVE</b>	Single item: “In a day, how often are you physically active for at least one hour”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate more activity.



### SOCIAL SUPPORT

<b>SCHOOL SUPPORT</b>	Single items: “I have a teacher at my school who cares about me”, “I have a least one teacher who encourages me”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater support.
<b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b>	Single items: “I get love and support from my family”, “I have parents/carers who encourage me to do well”, “I have a parent/carer who listens to me”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater support.
<b>PEER SUPPORT</b>	Single items: “I have a least one good friend at school”, “I am good at keeping friends”, “I get along with people who are different from me”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater support.

### SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

<b>TRUST</b>	Single item: “I trust my friends and they trust me”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater support.
<b>FORGIVENESS</b>	Single item: “I forgive others who are mean to me”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater forgiveness.
<b>HELPFULNESS</b>	Single item: “I give my time to help others”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater helpfulness.

### SAFETY

<b>SAFETY AT SCHOOL</b>	Single item: “I feel safe at school”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater safety.
<b>SAFETY AT HOME</b>	Single items: “I feel safe at home”, “I feel safe in the area where I live”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater safety.
<b>BULLYING</b>	Single items: “In the last month I have been bullied at school”, “In the last month I have been bullied online”, “In the last month, I have been left out of a group of friends on purpose, ignored, or had rumours spread about me”. Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate more bullying.

**INTENT TO HURT**

**OTHERS\***

Single item: "In the last month I threatened to physically hurt someone". Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater intention. \*Data presented for secondary students only.

**ALCOHOL OR ILLICIT**

**DRUGS USE\***

Single items: "I drink alcohol", "I use illegal drugs" Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater consumption. \*Data available for secondary students only.

**SMOKE CIGARETTES OR**

**VAPE\***

Single items: "I vape", "I smoke cigarettes". Scores range from 1-4. Higher scores indicate greater consumption. \*Data available for secondary students only.

**PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**STUDENT ANALYSES**

# KEY RESULTS:

## PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

### MENTAL WELLBEING

On average students are in the 'healthy' range for mental health symptoms. However, nearly 1 in 3 report high depression, anxiety or both. Positive mental health is lower in gender diverse students compared to males and females, and also lower in females compared to males.



### POSITIVE LEARNERS MINDSET

Half of students are at risk of poor learning mindset compared to 18% without any concerns. Gender diverse identifying students report lower school engagement compared to males and females. Most students enjoy school, with 9 in 10 primary students reporting they often or always try hard at school.

### LIFE SATISFACTION

The average rating of life satisfaction amongst students was in the mid-range, or "doing OK". Encouragingly 45% report to be thriving, whereas around 14% report to be struggling with low life satisfaction. Gender diverse students report much lower life satisfaction.



### HOPEFULNESS

Students report levels of hope in the mid-range on average, with 27% reporting high hope and 24% reporting low hope. Substantially more gender diverse students report low hope, however little difference was found between males and females.



### HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR

8 in 10 primary school students report regular healthy eating, and almost 85% report frequently being physically active for at least 1 hour each day. However, 3 in 10 report rarely or only sometimes getting 8 hours or more of sleep at night,



### SOCIAL SUPPORT

Between 8 to 9 in 10 students report having loving, encouraging and attentive families, teachers who care about and encourage them, and having at least one good friend and being good at keeping friends most of the time.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of students say they frequently get on well with others who are different from themselves.

### SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

8 in 10 students report trusting their friends and being trusted often or always. 6 in 10 report frequently forgiving others for being mean, but 1 in 10 struggle to do this at all. Around  $\frac{3}{4}$  report frequently helping others.



### SAFETY

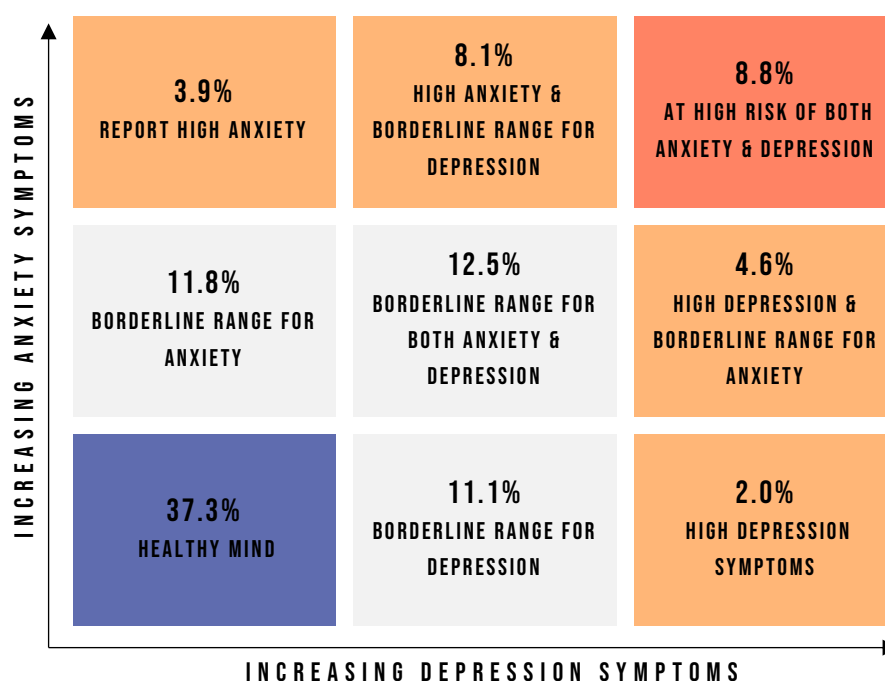
8-9 in 10 students feel safe always or often in school, home, and their neighborhood. Around 65% are never or rarely bullied at school, with 80% never or rarely bullied online. However, between 2-3 in 10 are bullied at school or online at least sometimes, with almost 4 in 10 reporting being left out on purpose, ignored, or had rumours spread about them at least sometimes.



# MENTAL WELLBEING

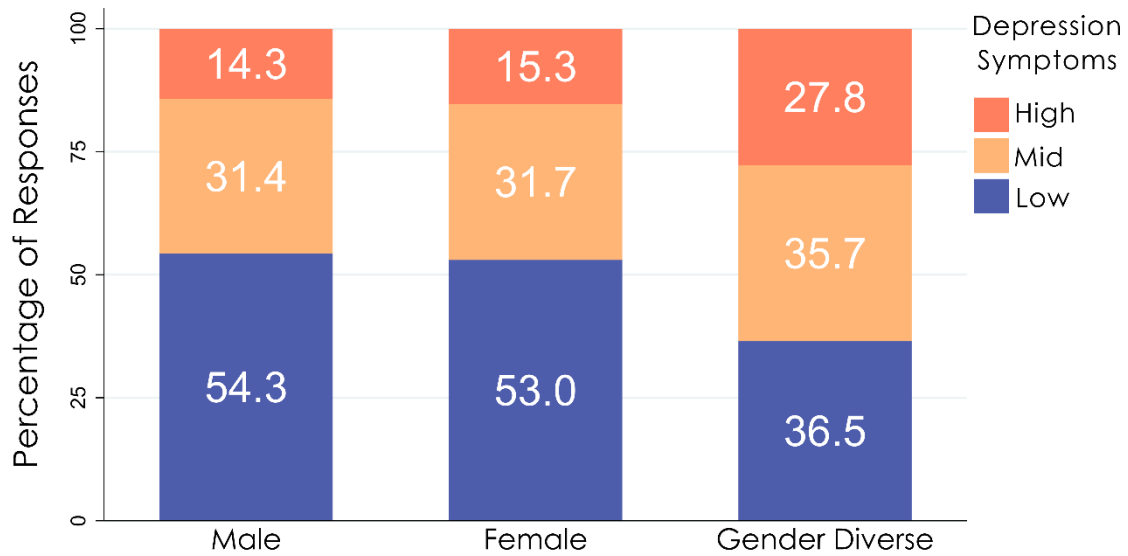
Primary school students report depression (M=3.70, SD=1.67) and anxiety symptoms (M=3.87, SD=1.88) in the 'healthy' range on average.

As an indication of the state of mental wellbeing, depression and anxiety categories were combined to represent the different levels of risk amongst primary school students (see Figure 1). Healthy students are represented as those reporting low depression and anxiety, borderline students as those with mid-range reports of depression, anxiety, or both, and students at risk of mental wellbeing problems as those with high levels of depression, anxiety, or both.



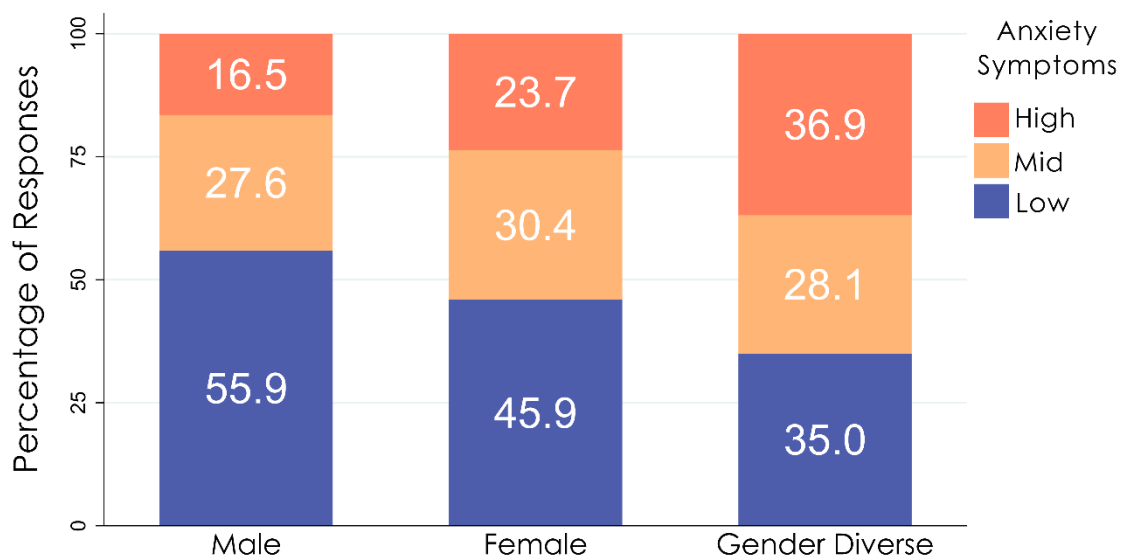
**FIGURE 1.** A graphical representation of student mental wellbeing during 2023, comprised of combinations of depression and anxiety symptoms. 37.3% of students are of healthy mind (low anxiety + low depression symptoms - shaded in blue). 35.4% of students are in a borderline range (moderate anxiety and/or depression symptoms - shaded in grey); **27.4% of primary school students are in the high-risk categories for anxiety, depression or both (shaded in orange).**

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS**



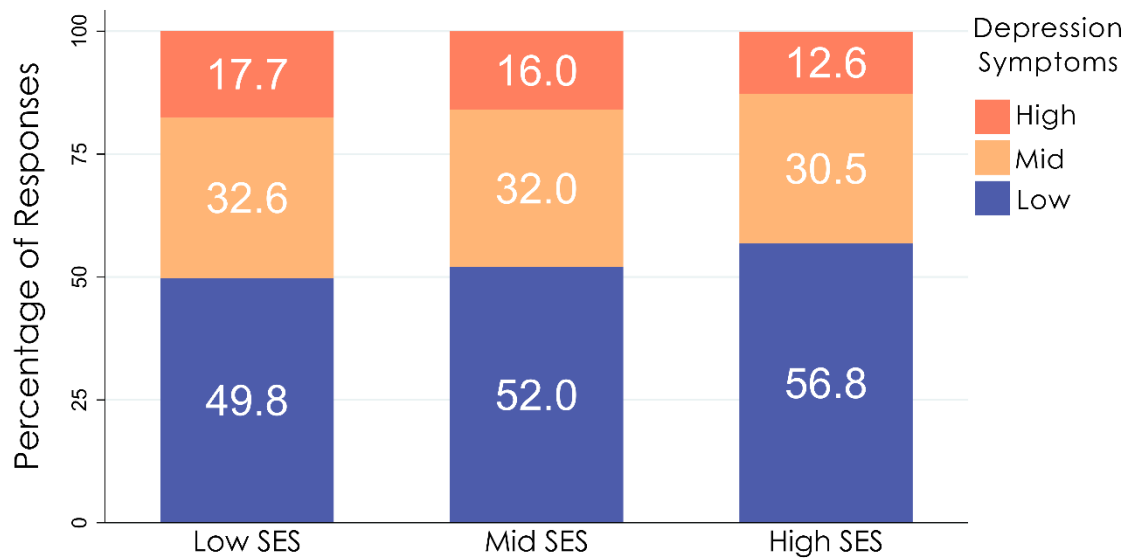
**FIGURE 2.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms in 2023 by gender. Male (M=3.65, SD=1.64) students report slightly but significantly lower rates of depression symptoms than female (M=3.70, SD=1.66) students. Gender diverse students show significantly higher rates of depression symptoms (M=4.40, SD=1.87) compared to male and female students.

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ANXIETY SYMPTOMS**



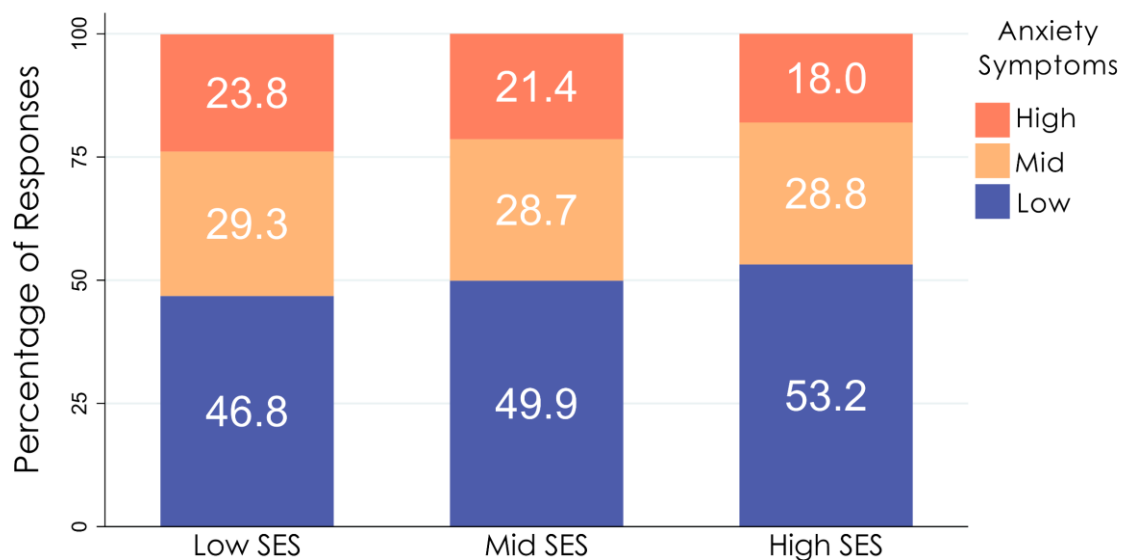
**FIGURE 3.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms in 2023 by gender. Male (M=3.64, SD=1.78) primary school students show lower rates of anxiety compared to female students (M=4.05, SD=1.93). Gender diverse students (M=4.70, SD=2.12) show higher rates of anxiety symptoms compared to both male and female students.

SES DIFFERENCES IN DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS



**FIGURE 4.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms in 2023 by SES category. Rates of depression symptoms are significantly lower in high SES areas (M=3.55, SD=1.58), compared to students in mid SES areas (M=3.74, SD=1.69). Students in low SES areas (M=3.84, SD=1.74) report higher depression symptoms than both mid SES and high SES areas.

SES DIFFERENCES IN ANXIETY SYMPTOMS



**FIGURE 5.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms in 2023 by SES category. Rates of anxiety symptoms are significantly lower in high SES areas (M=3.74, SD=1.81) areas, compared to students in mid SES areas (M=3.90, SD=1.90). Students in low SES areas (M=4.03, SD=1.95) report higher depression symptoms than both Mid and High SES area.

DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER

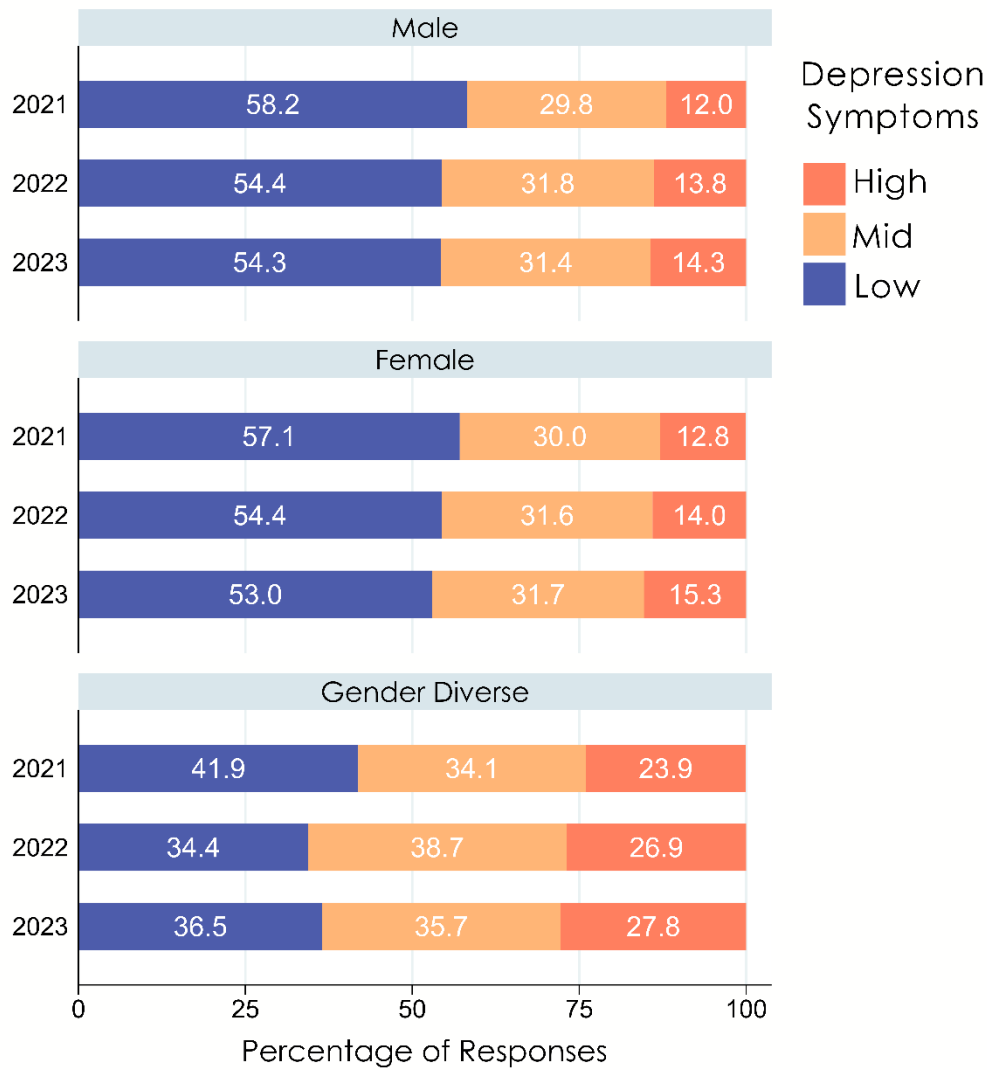
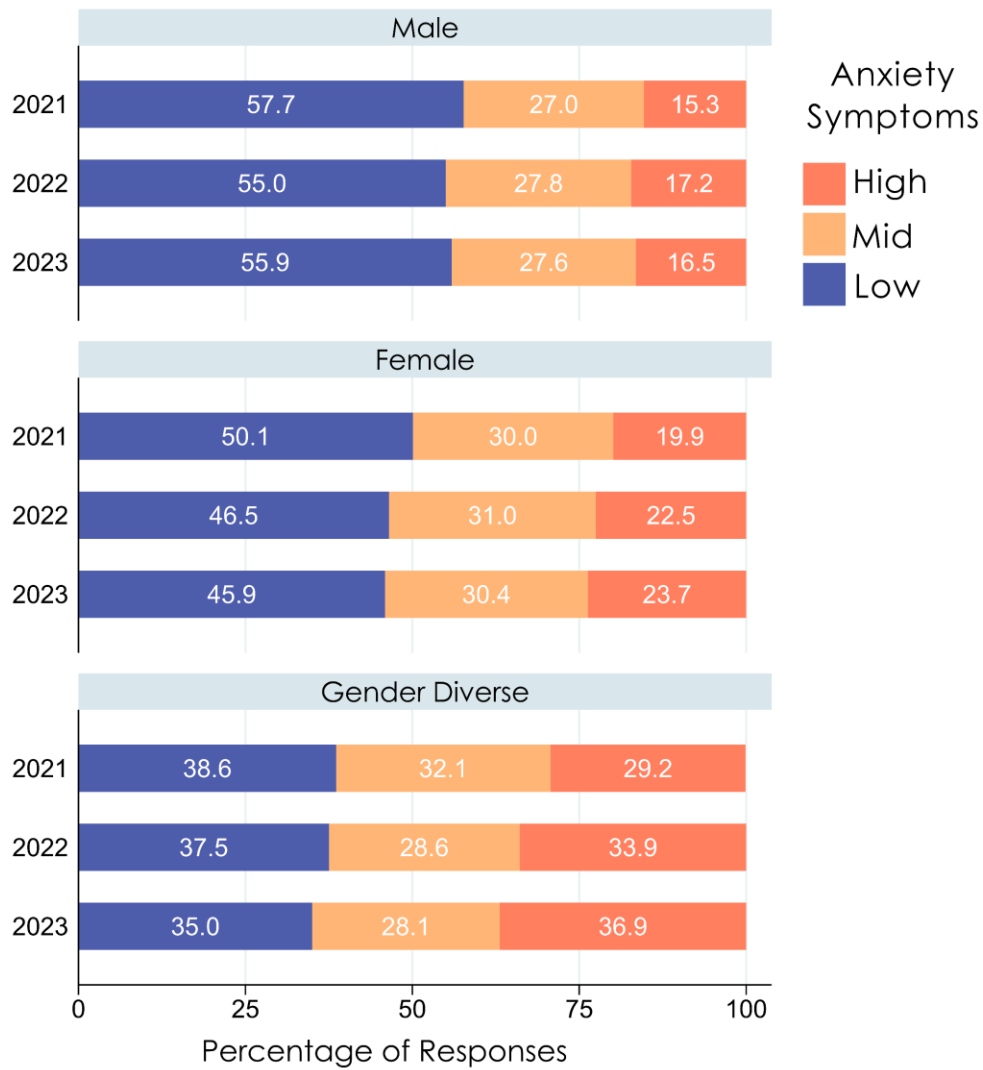


FIGURE 6. Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Across all genders, there is a trend for an increasing proportion of students to report high symptom levels relative to the previous year (high symptom levels - males: 2021: 12.0%, 2022: 13.8%, 2023: 14.3%; females: 2021: 12.8%, 2022: 14.0%, 2023: 15.3%; gender diverse: 2021: 23.9%, 2022: 26.9%, 2023: 27.8%). Gender diverse students report the largest proportion of high level symptoms across all three years.

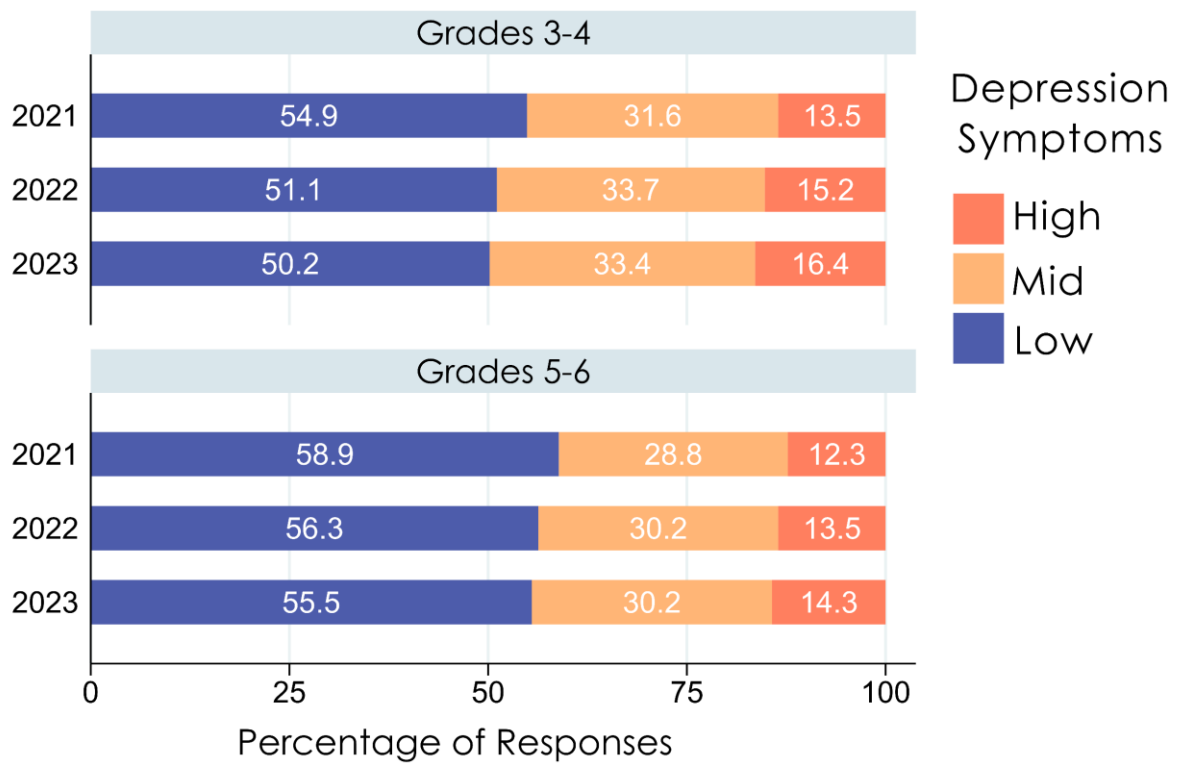


ANXIETY SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



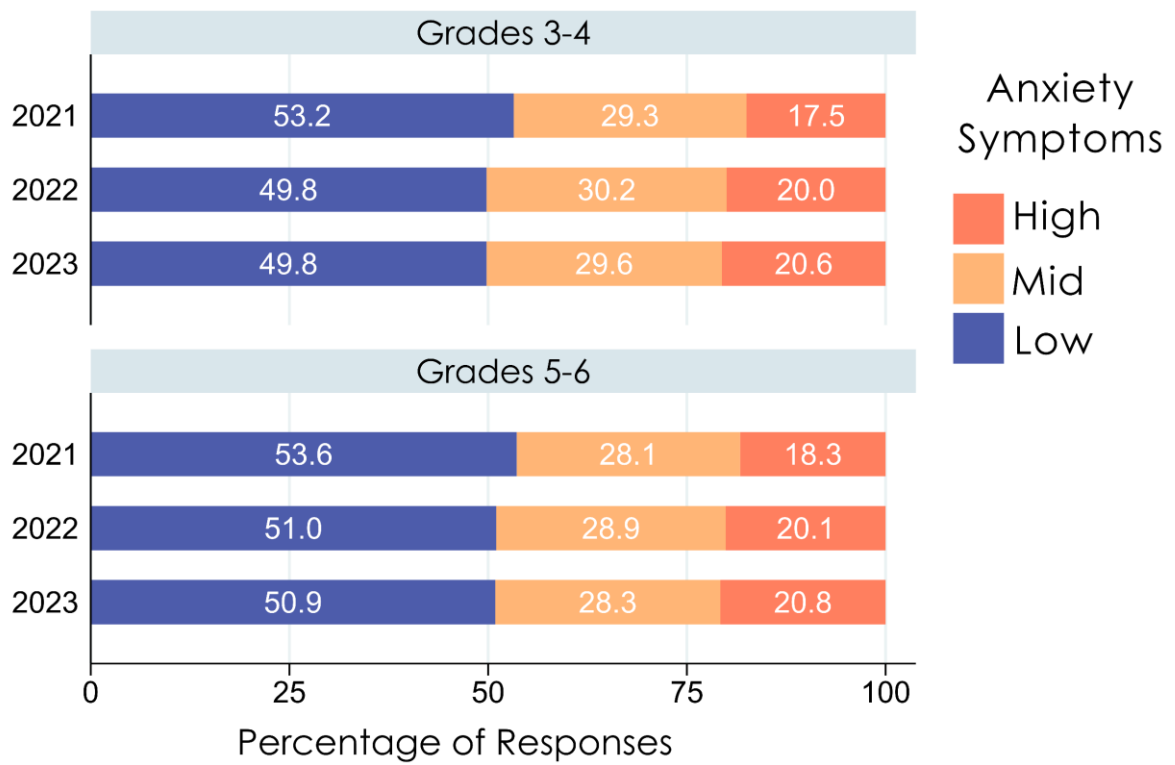
**FIGURE 7.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Female and gender diverse students show a trend for an increasing proportion of students reporting high symptom levels relative to the previous year across all three years (high symptom levels - females: 2021: 19.9%, 2022: 22.5%, 2023: 23.7%; gender diverse: 2021: 29.2%, 2022: 33.9%, 2023: 36.9%). A smaller proportion of male students report high anxiety symptoms in 2023 relative to 2022, though the 2023 proportion is greater than that of 2021 (high symptom levels - males: 2021: 15.3%, 2022: 17.2%, 2023: 16.5%). Gender diverse students report the largest proportion of high level symptoms across all three years.

DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES



**FIGURE 8.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms by school grade groups (grades 3-4 and grades 5-6) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Both grade groups show a trend for an increasing proportion of students reporting high symptom levels relative to the previous year (high symptom levels – grades 3-4: 2021: 13.5%, 2022: 15.2%, 2023: 16.4%; grades 5-6: 2021: 12.3%, 2022: 13.5%, 2023: 14.3%). A slightly higher proportion of students in grades 3-4 report high depression symptoms relative to those in grades 5-6 across all three years.

ANXIETY SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES

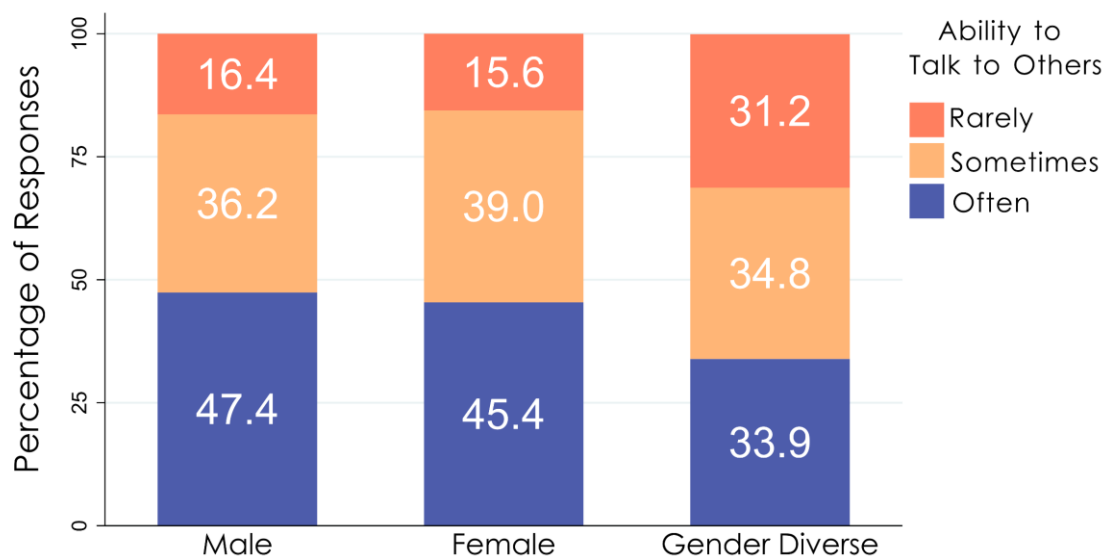


**FIGURE 9.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms by school grade groups (grades 3-4 and grades 5-6) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Both grade groups show an increase in the proportion of students reporting high anxiety symptoms between 2021 and 2022, and both show similar proportions reporting high symptom levels between 2022 and 2023 (high symptom levels – grades 3-4: 2021: 17.5%, 2022: 20.0%, 2023: 20.6%; grades 5-6: 2021: 18.3%, 2022: 20.1%, 2023: 20.8%). The proportion of students reporting high anxiety symptoms levels are similar between grade groups across all three years.

### ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS

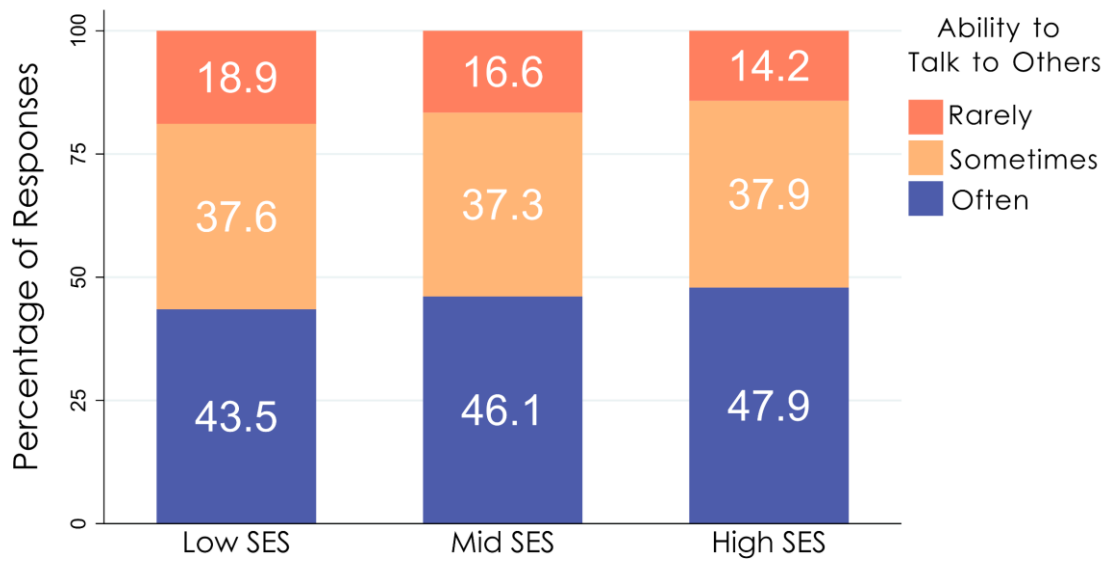
Students were asked about how readily they can talk to others about things that upset them. Nearly half (46.0%) of primary school students report they are often or always able to talk to others. In contrast, 37.5% of primary students are sometimes able to talk to others, and 16.6% never or rarely talk about things that upset them. This may mean just over half of students do not always feel able to talk about things when they would otherwise like to.

### GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS



**FIGURE 10.** Percentage of responses for ratings of ability to talk to others in 2023 by gender. Male ( $M=2.50$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ) students report slightly greater ability to talk to others than female students ( $M=2.47$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ). Gender diverse students ( $M=2.18$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) show lower ability to talk to others about things that upset them than both male and female students.

SES DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS



**FIGURE 11.** Percentage of responses for ratings of ability to talk to others in 2023 by SES category. Students living in high SES areas (M=2.51, SD=0.93) report slightly greater ability to talk to others than mid SES (M=2.48, SD=0.98) and low SES (M=2.44, SD=1.01) areas. There was also a slightly greater ability to talk to others reported in mid SES versus low SES areas.



*“Good mental health and wellbeing allows us to live our lives in a positive and meaningful way and ‘bounce back’ from life’s changes and challenges”*

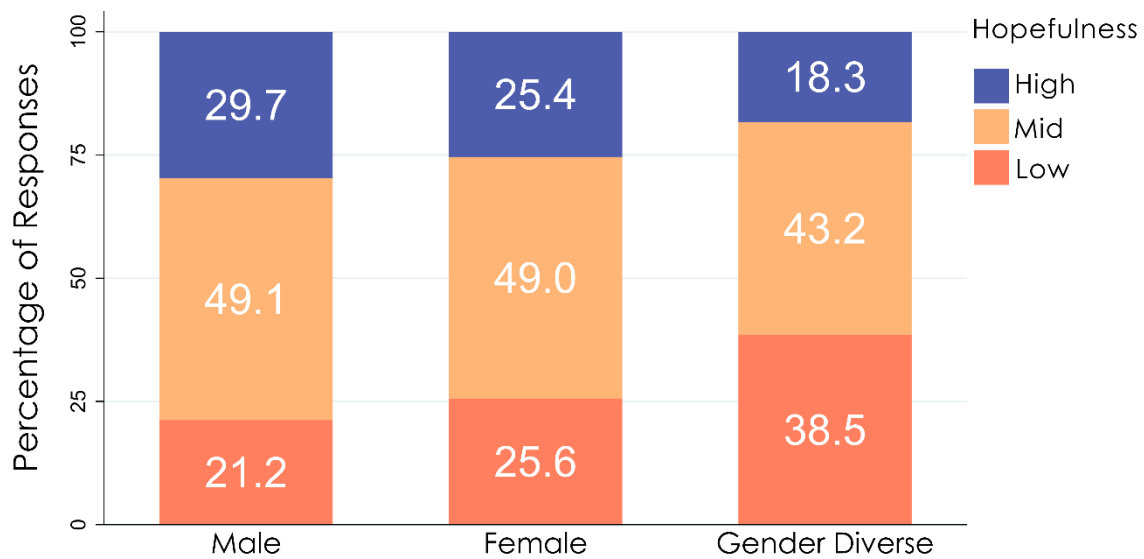
- 10 year old male student.

# HOPEFULNESS

The measure of hopefulness reflects a combination of the student's belief that they have what it takes to work towards a desired goal (often called 'agency') and can imagine different practical ways to achieve these goals (often called 'pathways').

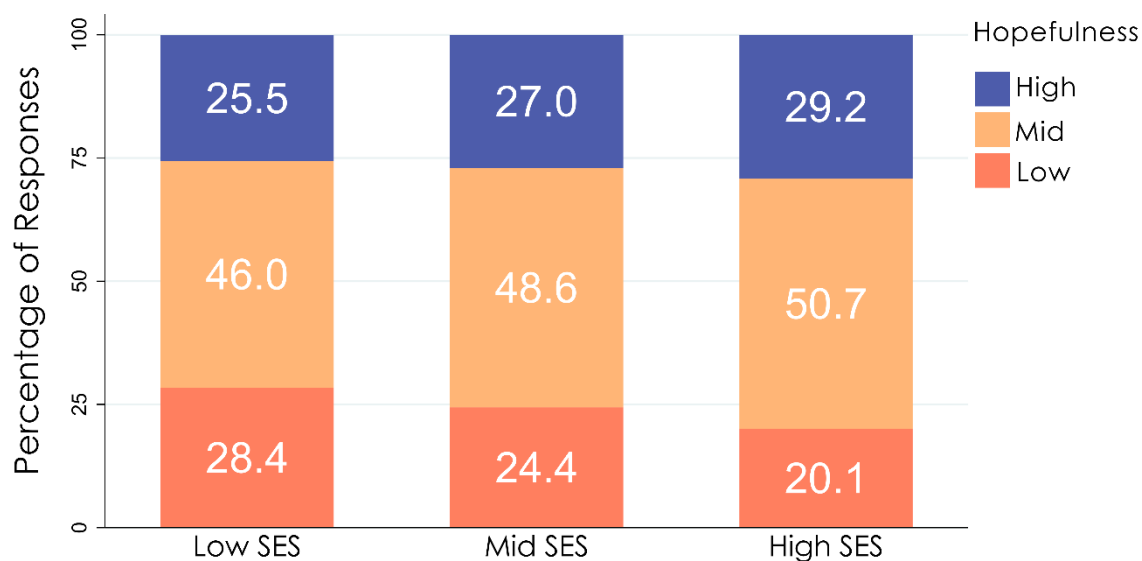
Primary school students surveyed reported average scores of hopefulness in the 'mid-range' of the scale ( $M=23.20$ ,  $SD=6.37$ ). In 2023, 27.2% report high rates of hope, 48.8% moderate hope, and 24.0% in the low range of hopefulness.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HOPEFULNESS



**FIGURE 12.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness in 2023 by gender. Rates of hopefulness are highest in male ( $M=23.70$ ,  $SD=6.32$ ), followed by female primary school students ( $M=22.88$ ,  $SD=6.29$ ), with gender diverse students ( $M=20.68$ ,  $SD=7.09$ ) showing lowest rates of hopefulness.

## SES DIFFERENCES IN HOPEFULNESS



**FIGURE 13.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness in 2023 by SES category. Slight differences are seen between categories. Students in low SES areas ( $M=22.59$ ,  $SD=6.70$ ) have lower rates of hopefulness than both mid ( $M=23.14$ ,  $SD=6.37$ ) and high ( $M=23.76$ ,  $SD=6.05$ ) SES areas. Further, students from High SES areas report slightly higher rates of hopefulness than those mid SES areas.

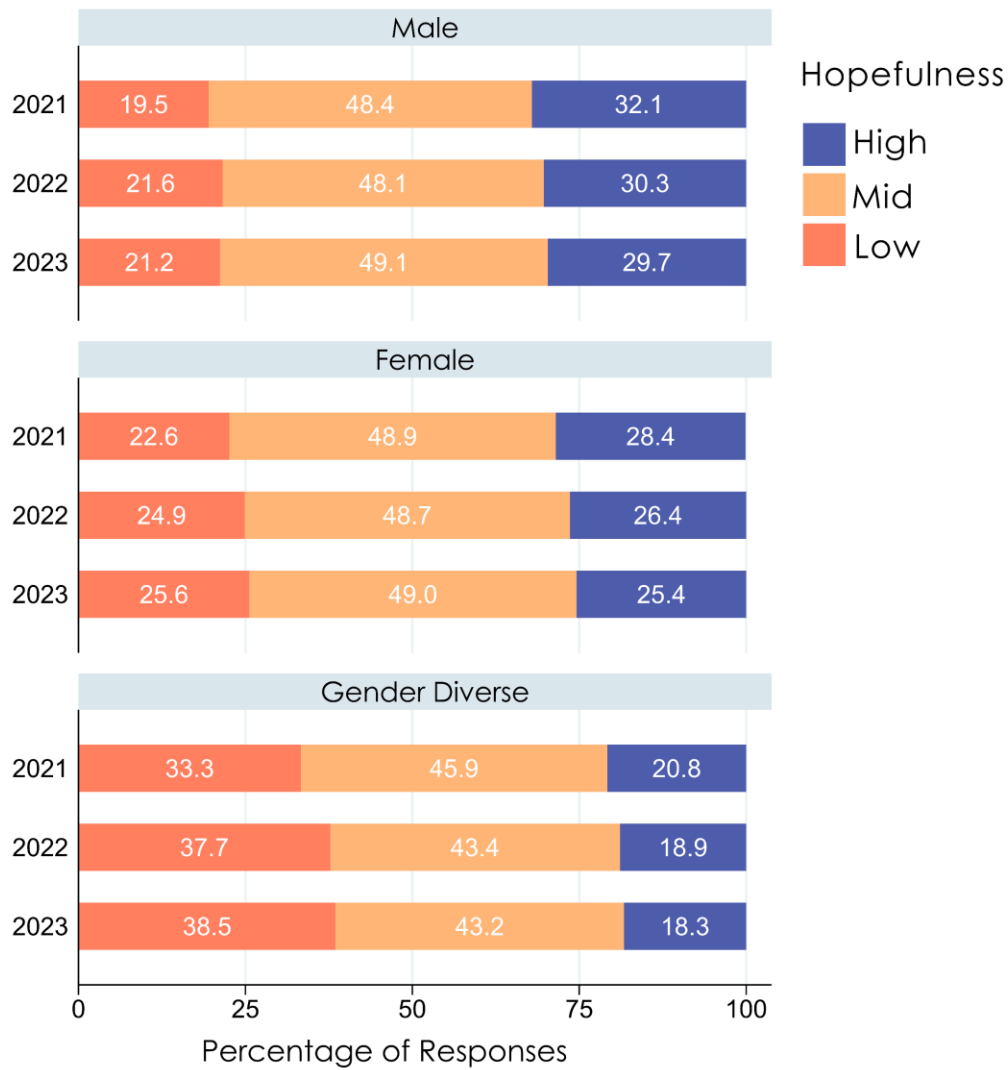


We can help others by:

*“ teach[ing] little kids or kids my age to believe in themselves and to be proud of what they do in life ”*

- 10 year old female student

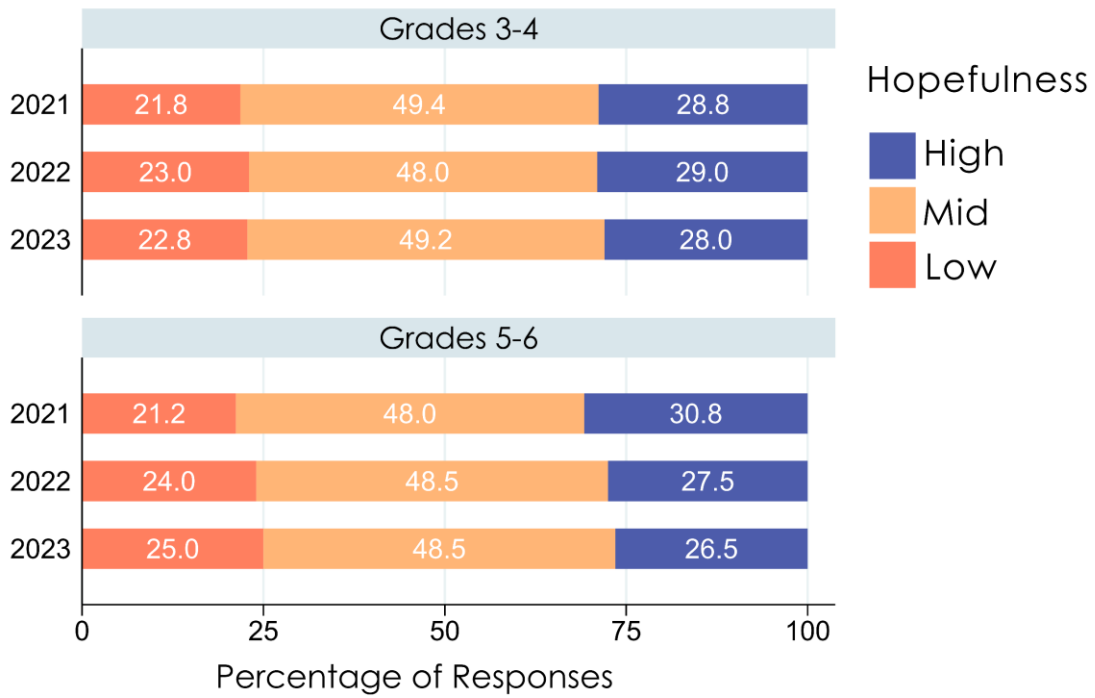
HOPEFULNESS OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



**FIGURE 14.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. All genders show a trend for a decreasing proportion of students reporting high levels of hopefulness relative to the previous year, though to a lesser amount for gender diverse students between 2022 and 2023 (high hopefulness- males: 2021: 32.1%, 2022: 30.3%, 2023: 29.7%; females: 2021: 28.4%, 2022: 26.4%, 2023: 25.4%; gender diverse: 20.8%, 2022: 18.9%, 2023: 18.3%). Gender diverse students represent the lowest proportion of students reporting high hopefulness across all three years.



HOPEFULNESS OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES



**FIGURE 15.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness by school grade groups (grades 3-4 and grades 5-6) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. A similar proportion of students in grades 3-4 report high hopefulness between 2021 and 2022, with a trend for fewer students reporting high hopefulness in 2023 (2021: 28.8%, 2022: 29.0%, 2023: 28.0%). For grades 5-6, there is a trend for a decreasing proportion of students reporting high hopefulness relative to the previous year (2021: 30.8%, 2022: 27.5%, 2023: 26.5%). A slightly higher proportion of students in grades 5-6 report high hopefulness relative to those in grades 3-4 in 2021. In comparison, a greater proportion of students in grades 3-4 report high hopefulness in 2022 and 2023.

# LIFE SATISFACTION

To measure life satisfaction, students were asked to imagine a ladder where the top represents the best possible life, and the bottom represents the worst possible life. Responses are categorised as struggling (refers to wellbeing that is at risk; dark orange), doing OK (indicates wellbeing that is moderate; light orange), and thriving (reflects wellbeing that is strong and consistent; blue).

Data from 2023 indicates that on average, primary school students were in the mid-range, where they considered themselves to be doing OK (M=6.15, SD= 1.54). Generally, 4-5 in 10 children believed themselves to be thriving, whereas a little over 1 in 10 believe themselves to be struggling (see image pictured right for category percentages).



Primary students think it is important to:

*“help everyone to be happy and brave”*

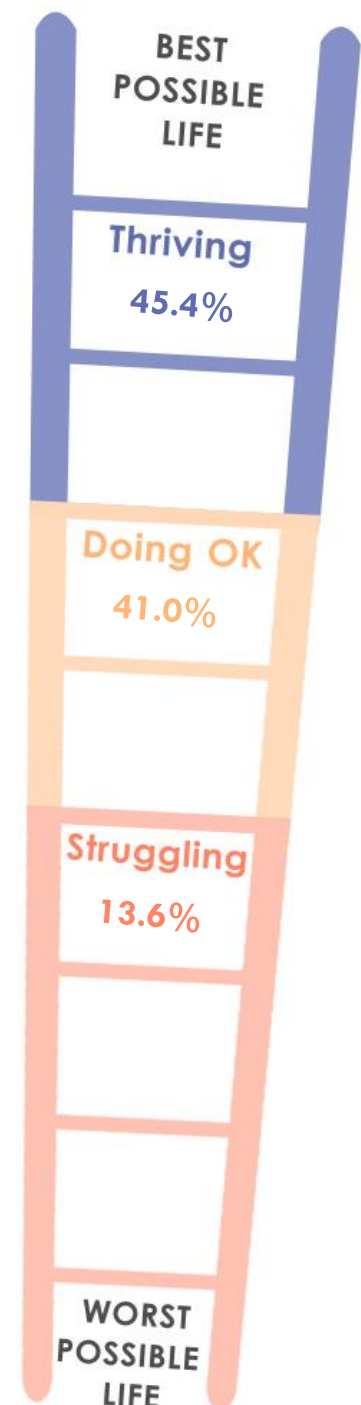
- Female student, 8 years

*“[be] excited about life”*

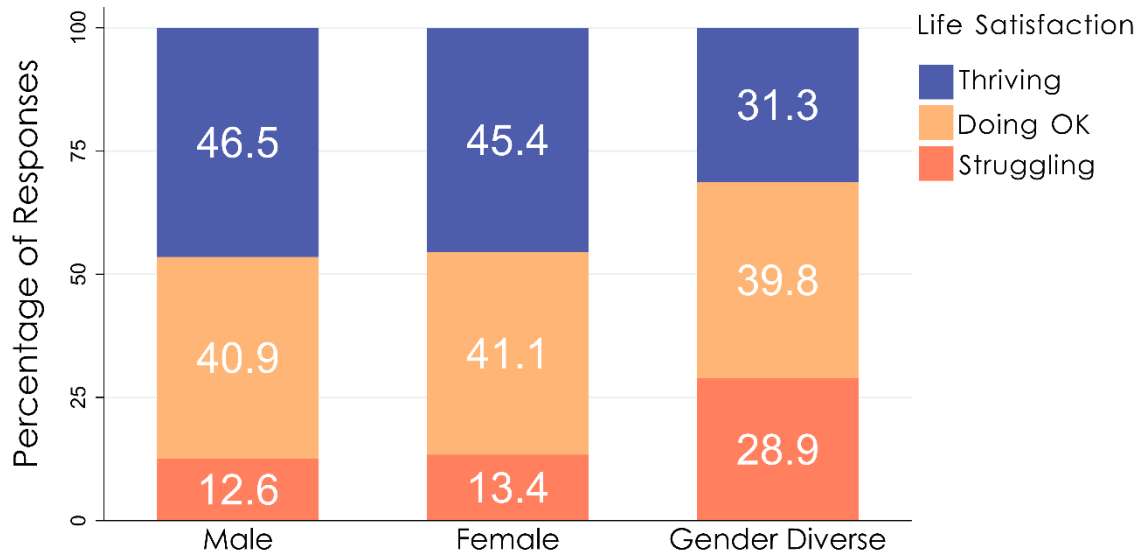
- Female student, 10 years

*“have fun!!!!!!”*

- Male student, 9 years

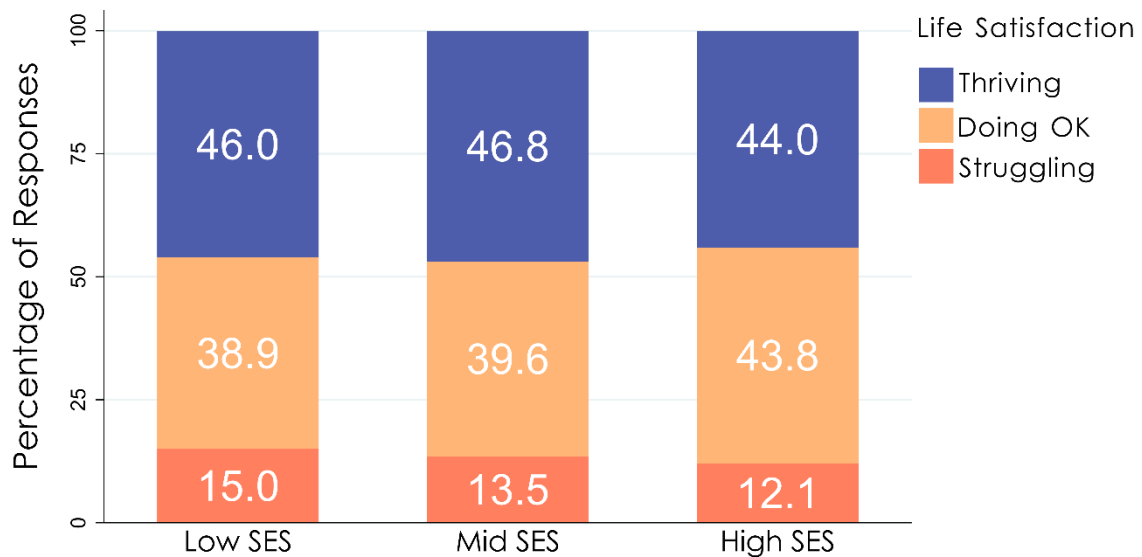


**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LIFE SATISFACTION**



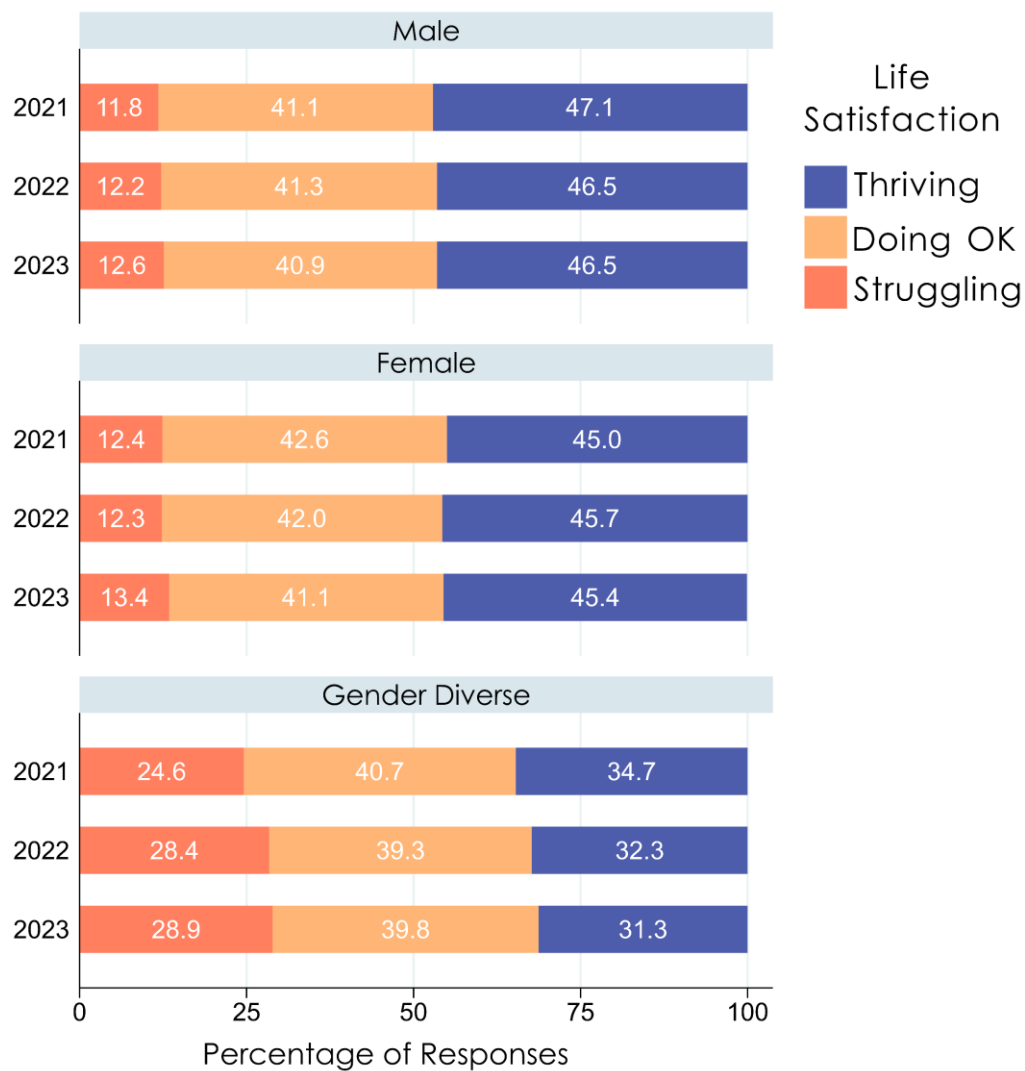
**FIGURE 16.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 by gender. Ratings of life satisfaction are similar across male (M=6.20, SD=1.53) and female (M=6.15, SD=1.50) primary school students. However, gender diverse students (M=5.40, SD= 1.91) report lower life satisfaction compared to both male and female students.

**SES DIFFERENCES IN LIFE SATISFACTION**



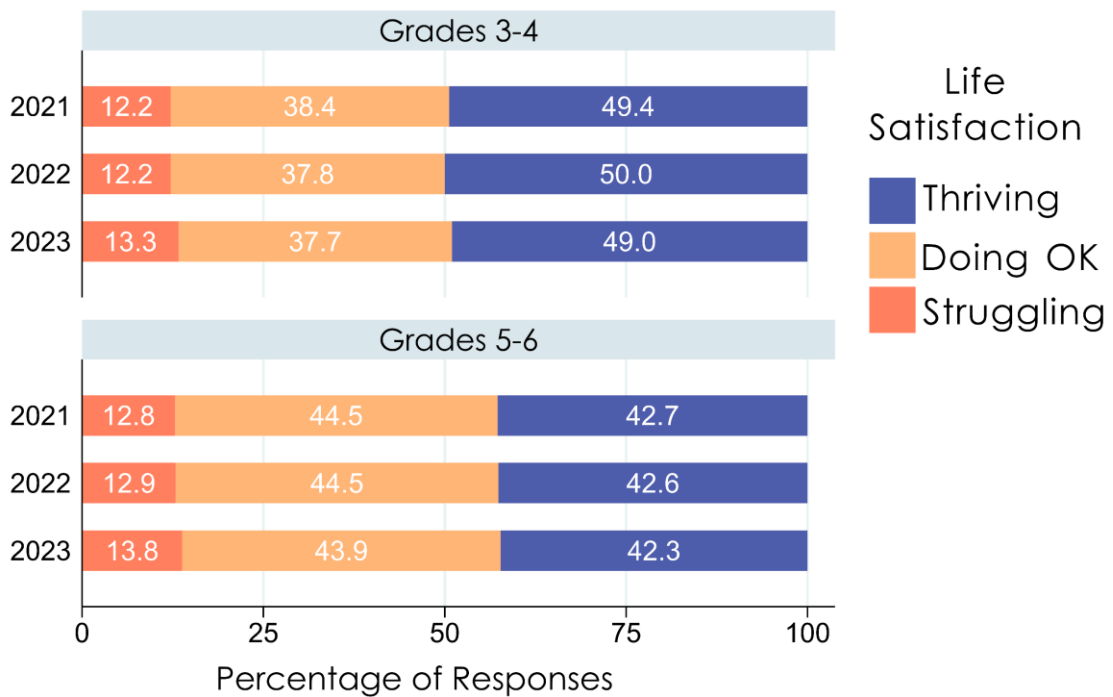
**FIGURE 17.** Percentage of responses for categories of life satisfaction in 2023 by SES. Average life satisfaction of students is similar in mid (M=6.18, SD=1.56) and high SES (M=6.15, SD=1.42) levels, but slightly lower for students living in low SES areas (M=6.12, SD=1.65) relative to those living in mid SES areas.

LIFE SATISFACTION OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



**FIGURE 18.** Percentage of responses for ratings of life satisfaction by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The same proportion of male students report that they are thriving in 2023 and 2022, which is slightly lower than that of 2021 (thriving male students – 2021: 47.1%, 2022: 46.5%, 2023: 46.5%). Among female students, there is a slight increase in the proportion of students who report they are thriving from 2021 to 2022, and similar proportions between 2022 and 2023 (thriving female students – 2021: 45.0%, 2022: 45.7%, 2023: 45.4%). Gender diverse students show a trend for a decreasing proportion of students reporting that they are thriving relative to the previous year across all three years (thriving gender diverse students - 2021: 34.7%, 2022: 32.3%, 2023: 31.3%). Gender diverse students represent the lowest proportion of students reporting that they are thriving across all three years.

LIFE SATISFACTION OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES

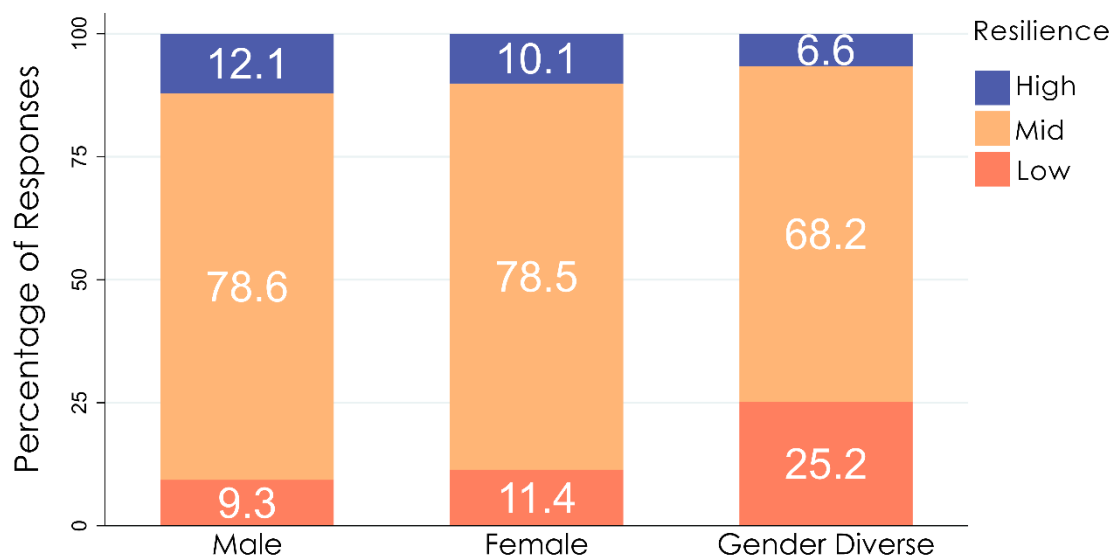


**FIGURE 19.** Percentage of responses for ratings of life satisfaction by school grade groups (grades 3-4 and grades 5-6) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The proportion of students reporting that they are thriving in grades 3-4 shows a slight upward trend between 2021 and 2022, and a decreasing trend between 2022 and 2023 (thriving grades 3-4 – 2021: 49.4%, 2022: 50.0%, 2023: 49.0%). A similar proportion of students in grades 5-6 report that they are thriving across all three years (thriving grades 5-6 – 2021: 42.7%, 2022: 42.6%, 2023: 42.3%). Across all three years, a greater proportion of students in grades 3-4 report that they are thriving than students in grades 5-6.

# RESILIENCE

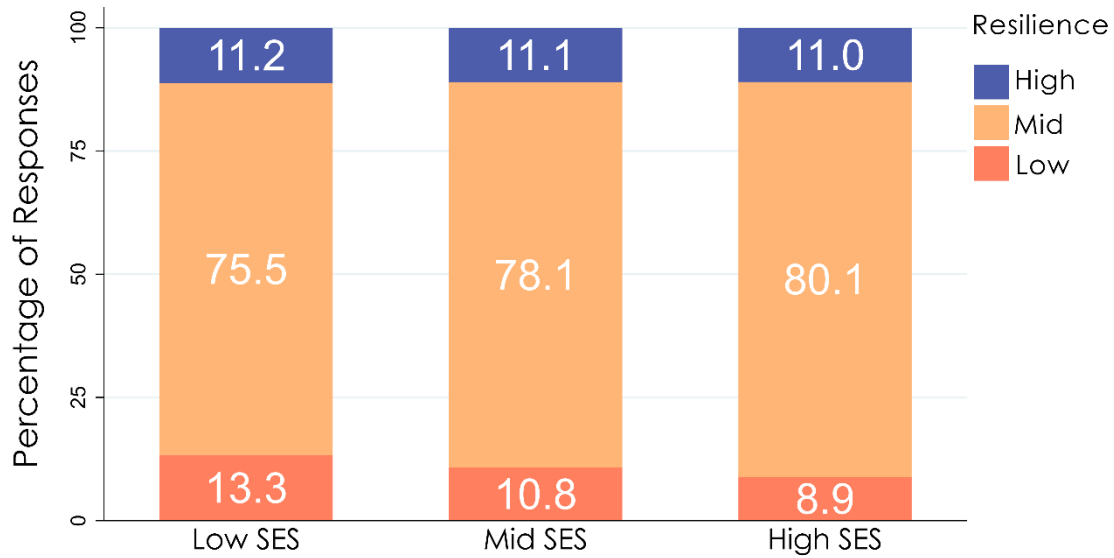
The measure of resilience reflects a combination of the student's hope (made up of a sense of agency - their belief that they have what it takes to work towards a desired goal - and their pathways ability - the ability to imagine different practical ways to achieve these goals), and their life satisfaction. Rather than use existing thresholds for the hope and life satisfaction measures, raw scores for *agency*, *pathways* and *life satisfaction* were combined using standardised data from 2022. This created a new nationally representative index of resilience reported here for the 2023 data. Of the primary school students surveyed, 10.9% reported low resilience, 78.2% mid or normal levels of resilience, and 11.0% high resilience.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RESILIENCE



**FIGURE 20.** Percentage of responses for ratings of resilience in 2023 by gender. Rates of resilience are slightly higher in male ( $M=50.61$ ,  $SD=7.94$ ) than in female primary school students ( $M=49.69$ ,  $SD=8.01$ ). Gender diverse students ( $M=45.93$ ,  $SD=9.33$ ) show lower rates of resilience than both male and female students.

SES DIFFERENCES IN RESILIENCE



**FIGURE 21.** Percentage of responses for ratings of resilience in 2023 by SES category. Slight differences are seen between categories. Students in low SES areas (M=49.35, SD=8.52) have lower rates of resilience than both mid (M=50.02, SD=8.08) and high (M=50.56, SD=7.6) SES areas. Further, students from high SES areas report slightly higher rates of resilience than mid SES areas.



To help other students we should:

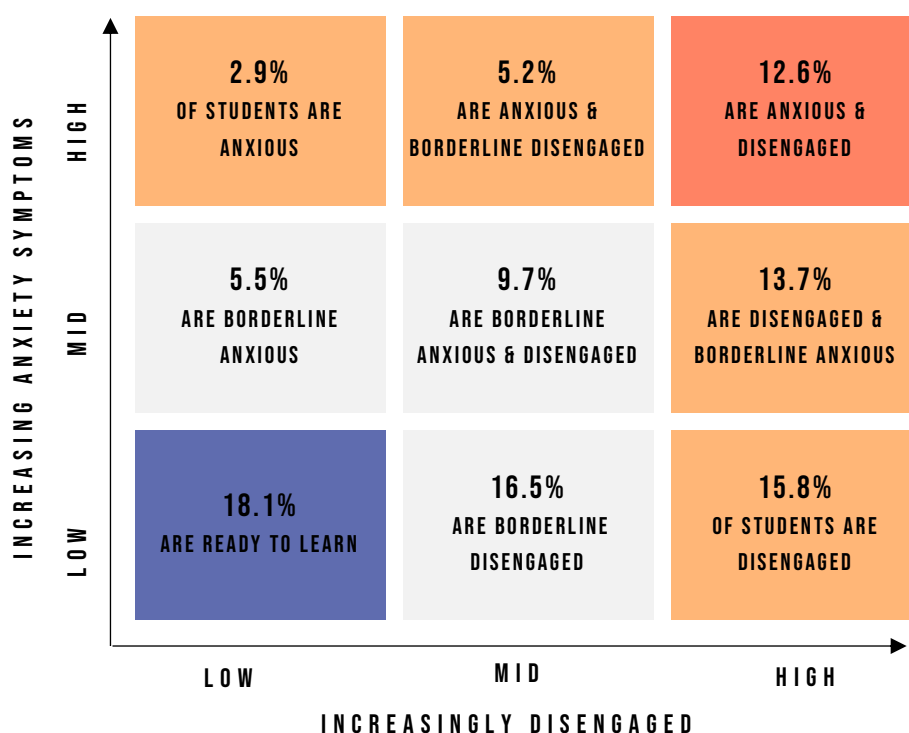
*“encourage people to keep going and to never give up”*

- 8 year old female student

## POSITIVE LEARNERS MINDSET

Beyond the mental wellbeing of students, positive learners mindset explores factors that may influence resilience building and engagement in the classroom. Disengagement reflects behaviour aimed at avoidance coping - avoiding thinking about, feeling, or doing difficult things as a coping mechanism.

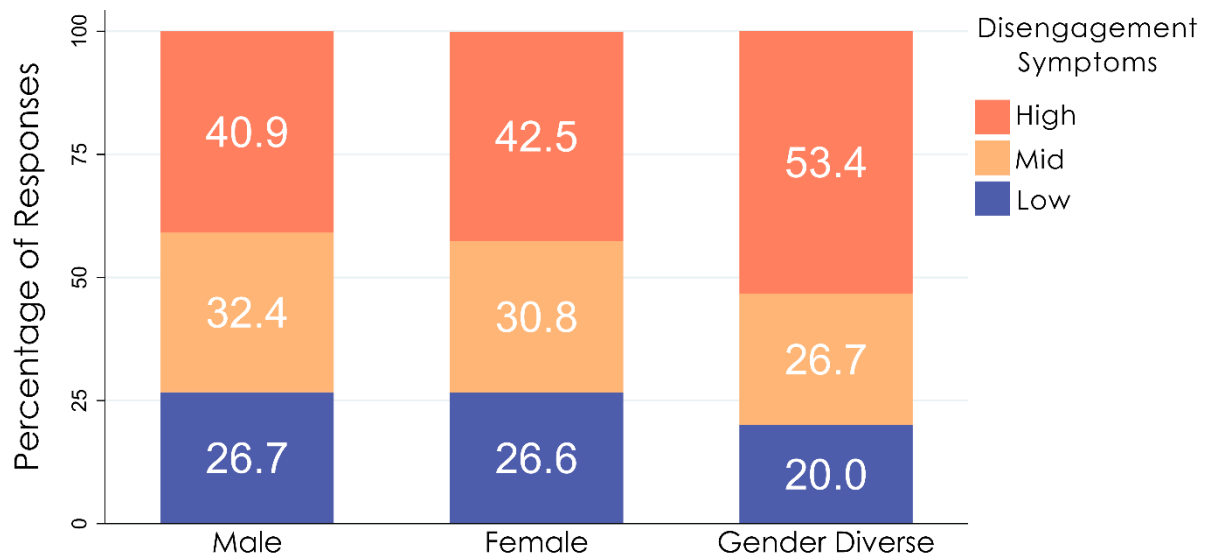
The surveyed primary school students report mean scores of disengagement ( $M=10.04$ ,  $SD=2.42$ ) within the 'moderate' range. As an indication of the positive learners mindset, reports of anxiety and disengagement were combined to create a unique indicator of a child's readiness to learn in the classroom (see Figure 8).



**FIGURE 22.** A graphical representation of positive learners mindset domains during 2023, indicated by combining scores on disengagement and anxiety. 18.1% of students have a 'ready to learn' mindset (low anxiety, low disengagement - shaded in blue). 31.7% of students are in a borderline range (moderate anxiety and/or disengagement - shaded in grey). **50.2% of primary school students have an 'at risk' learners mindset (high anxiety, disengagement, or both - shaded in orange).**

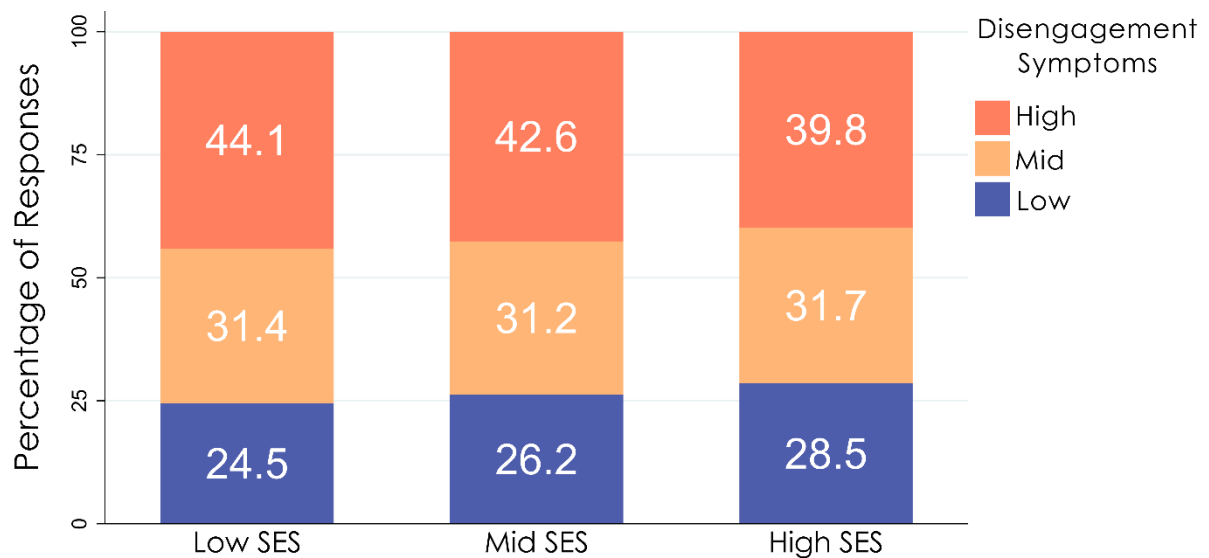


**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DISENGAGEMENT**



**FIGURE 23.** Percentage of responses for ratings of disengagement strategies in 2023 by gender. Male (M=9.96, SD=2.34) students report slightly lower levels of disengagement than female (M=10.08, SD=2.47) students. Gender diverse students (M=10.70, SD=2.53) show significantly higher disengagement symptoms than male and female students.

**SES DIFFERENCES IN DISENGAGEMENT**



**FIGURE 24.** Percentage of responses for ratings of disengagement strategies in 2023 by SES. Rates within each level were similar across SES, however students in low SES (M=10.17, SD=2.42) report slightly higher rates of disengagement than those in mid SES (M=10.07, SD=2.42) and high SES (M=9.89, SD=2.41) areas. There were also lower levels of disengagement symptoms in high SES versus mid SES areas.

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

Feeling engaged is likely to influence school performance, student self-esteem, respect for themselves and others, and have a positive impact on building resilience.

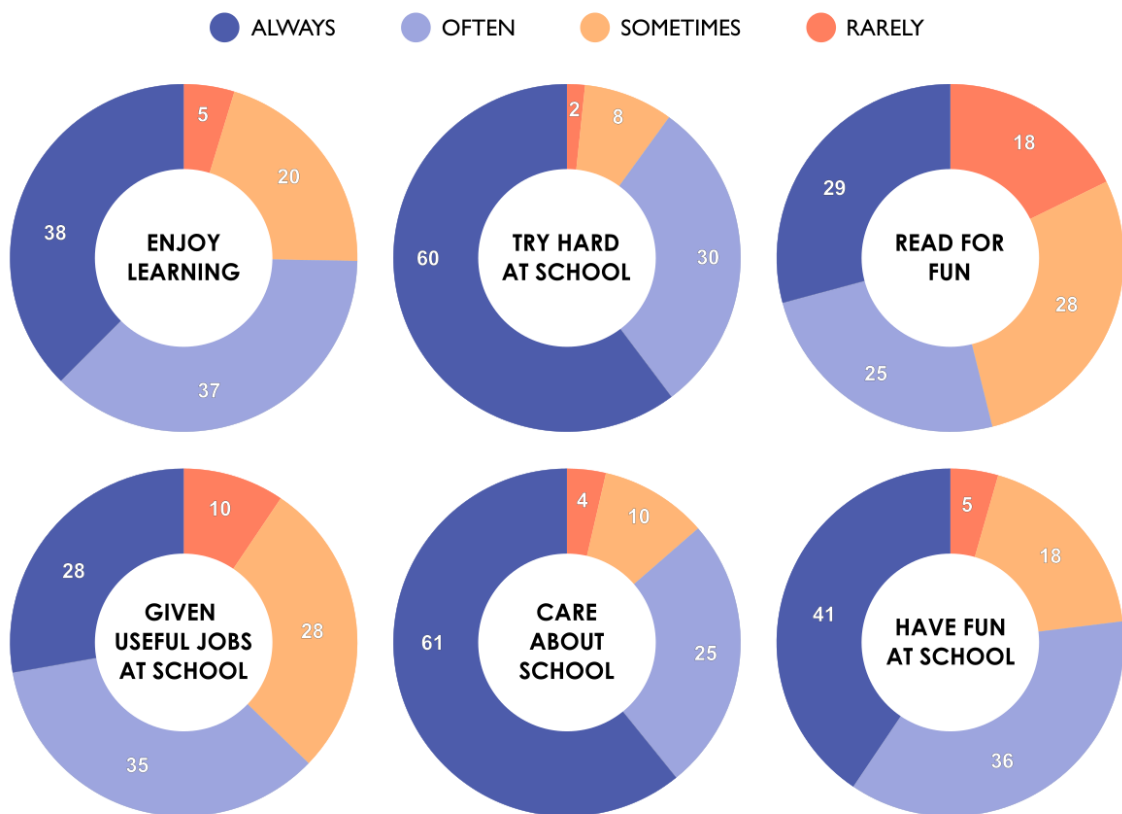
When students were asked about activities that foster engagement in a school environment, 9 in 10 primary students report often or always trying hard at school and that they care about their school.



Primary students want us to: *“Provide them with fun learning so they will always want to come to school!”*

- 9 year old male student

Students reported their frequency of doing a range of learning engagement behaviours:



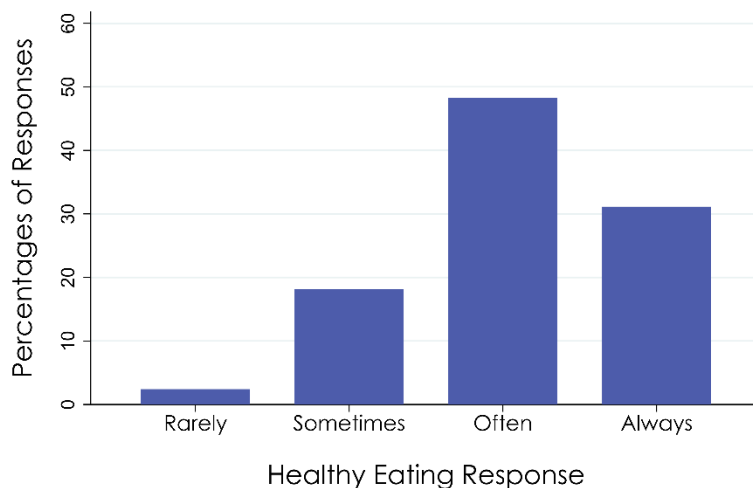
**FIGURE 25.** Percentage of responses for each category of learning engagement. Students in years 5-6 were asked to report their enjoyment of learning at school. Of these students (n=32,985), 7 students out of 10 report often or always enjoying learning. All other school engagement questions were asked of all primary school students in years 3 to 6. Across these engagement items, 8 students out of 10 report often or always having fun at school, and 6 students out of 10 report often or always being given useful jobs to do at school. Similar to the high engagement for other items, approximately half of the students report reading for fun, although 1 in 6 students report rarely reading.

# HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 survey relating to key physical protective factors of resilience and wellbeing.

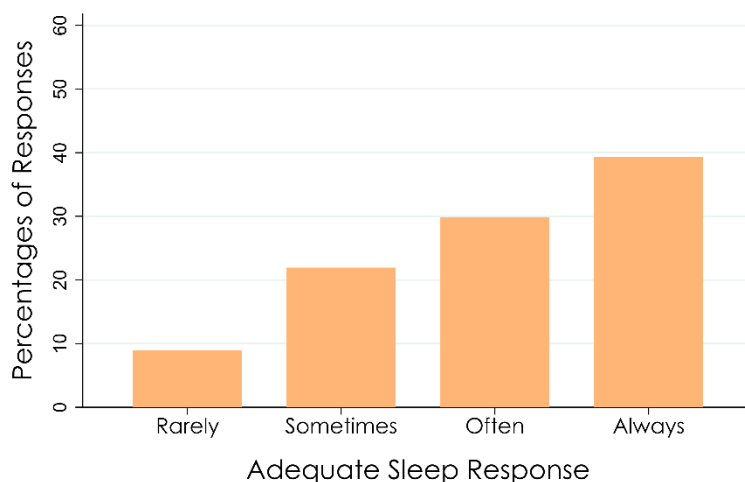
## HEALTHY EATING

**FIGURE 26.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of healthy eating. 31.1% of students state they always (or almost always) eat healthy food, compared to 48.3% who report this behaviour often, 18.2% sometimes, and 2.4% of students who report to rarely (or never) eat healthy food.



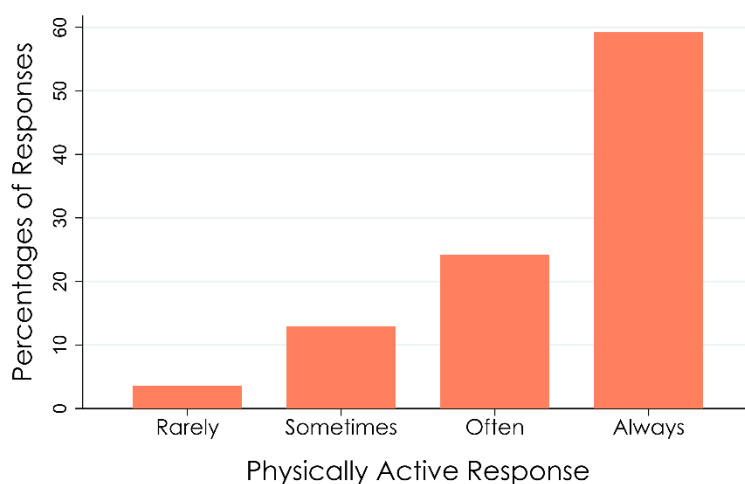
## ADEQUATE SLEEP

**FIGURE 27.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of obtaining at least 8 hours of sleep most nights. Results suggest that 39.3% of students are obtaining adequate sleep most or all nights, with 29.8% often, 21.9% sometimes and 8.9% of students saying they rarely get 8 hours of sleep most nights.



## PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

**FIGURE 28.** Percentage of student responses regarding being physically active for at least one hour each day. Results suggest that a majority (59.2%) of students are always physically active for at least one hour per day, with 24.2% reporting this behaviour often and 13.0% sometimes. Only 3.6% of students are rarely physically active.

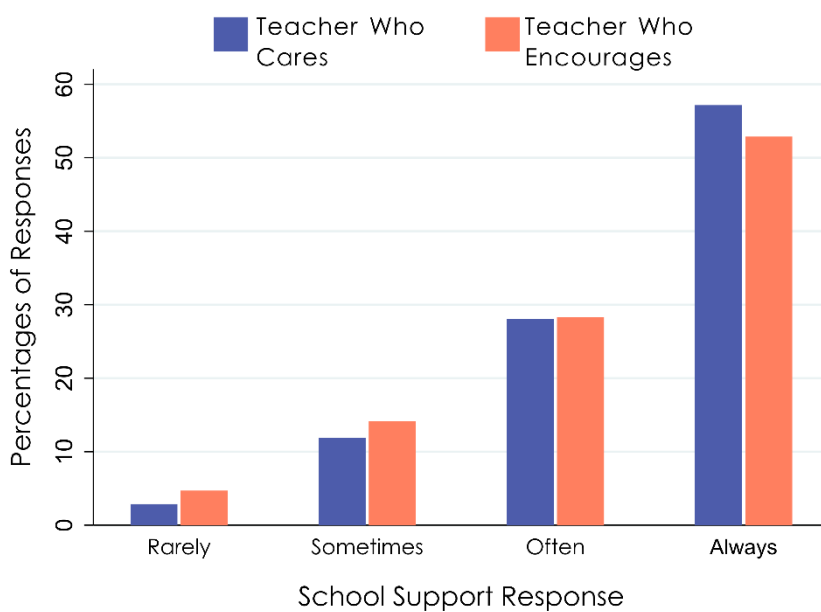


# SOCIAL SUPPORT

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 survey relating to aspects of social support, which are important predictors of resilience and wellbeing.

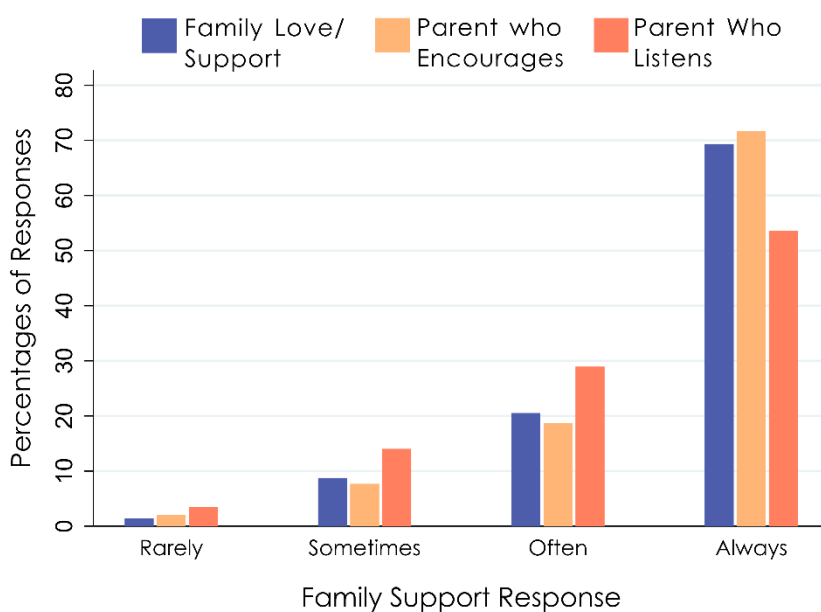
## PERCEIVED TEACHER SUPPORT

**FIGURE 29.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of perceived school support: Having a teacher that cares about (blue) and/or encourages (red) them. Results suggest that the majority of students report to always have some teacher support at school, being from a teacher who cares (57.2%) or encourages (52.9%).

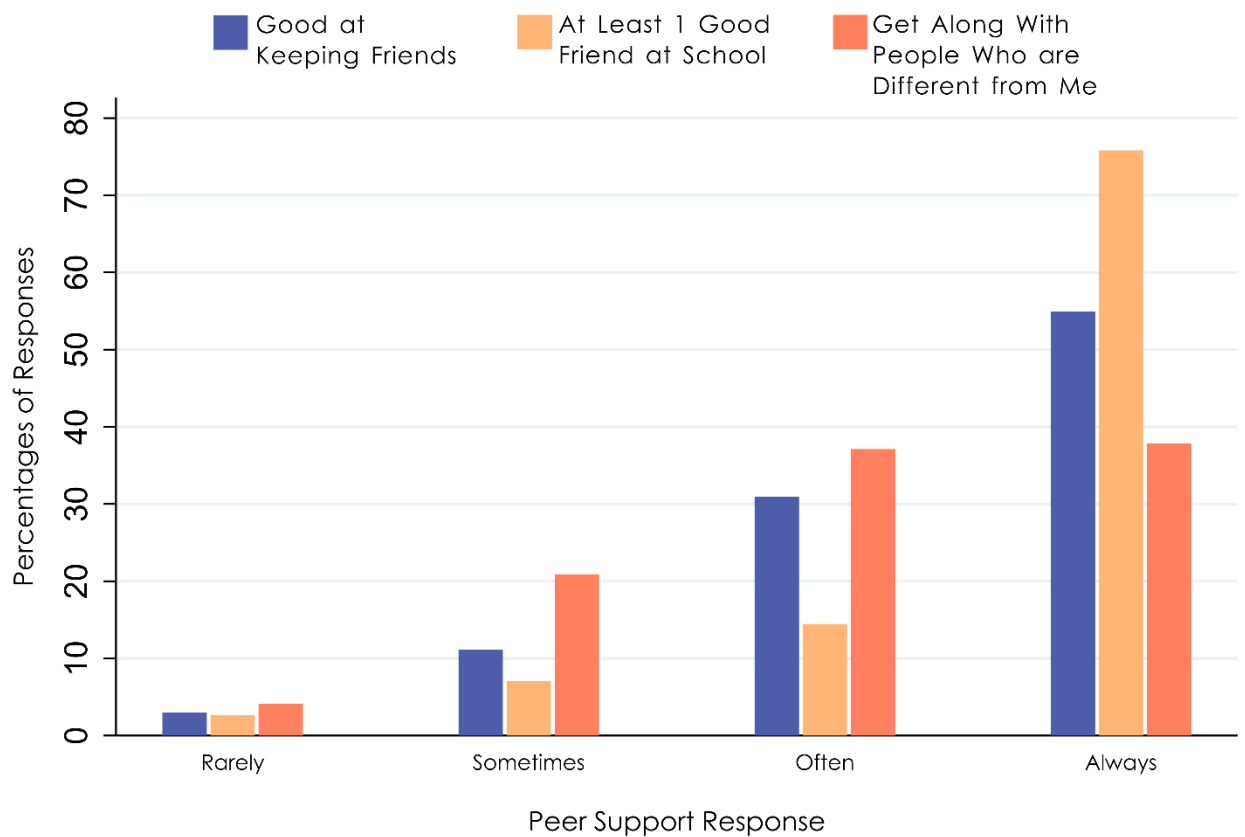


## PERCEIVED FAMILY SUPPORT

**FIGURE 30.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of perceived family support: Receiving love and support from family (blue) and having a parent/caregiver who encourages (orange) and who listens (red). Results suggest that the majority of students always report receiving family love/support (69.3%), and have a caregiver who encourages (71.7%), or listen to them (53.6%).



PERCEIVED PEER SUPPORT



**FIGURE 31.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of perceived peer support: Good at keeping friends (blue; reported by years 5 and 6 students only, n=33,597), have at least one good friend at school (orange; reported by year 3 to 6 students), and gets along with people who are different from them (red; reported by year 3 to 6 students). Results suggest that the majority of students report to always be good at keeping friends (54.9%) and have at least one good friend at school (75.8%). Students feel as if they often (37.1%) or always (37.8%) get along with people who may be different from them.



It is important to have:

*“the best friends that always listen to you and are so kind that are the best friends that you could ever wish for”*

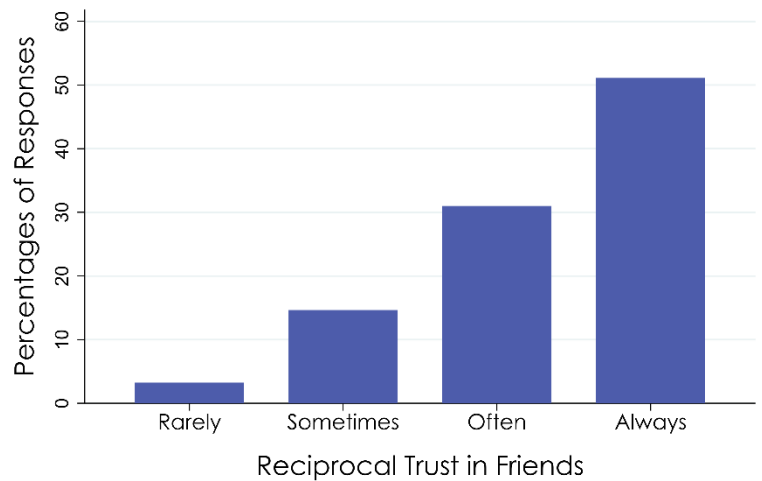
- 10 year old female student

# SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 survey relating to feelings toward personal and social capabilities. These social identity factors are important for self-awareness and self-management that are associated with resilience building.

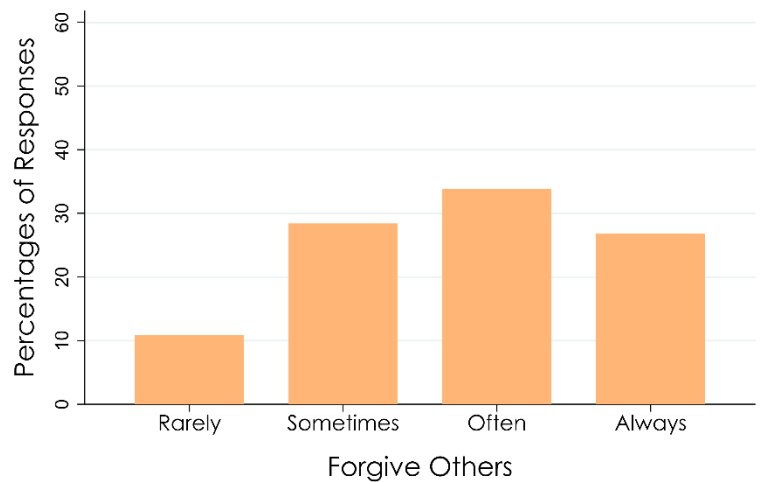
## RECIPROCAL TRUST

**FIGURE 32.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of reciprocal trust – of trusting and being trusted by their friends. Results suggest the majority of students always (51.1%) or often (31.0%) experience reciprocal trust with their friends.



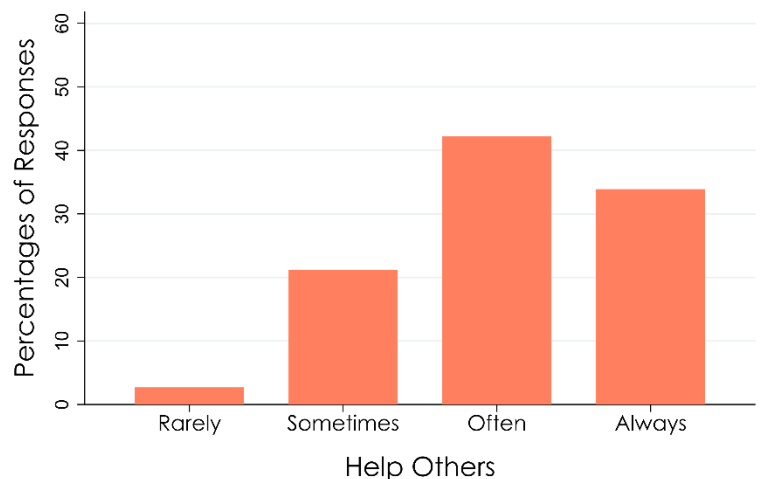
## FORGIVENESS

**FIGURE 33.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of forgiving others who are mean to them. Results suggest that overall, most students always (26.9%) or often (33.8%) feel that they forgive others who are mean to them.



## HELPFULNESS

**FIGURE 34.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of giving their time to help others. Results suggest that overall, most students always (33.9%) or often (42.2%) help others.

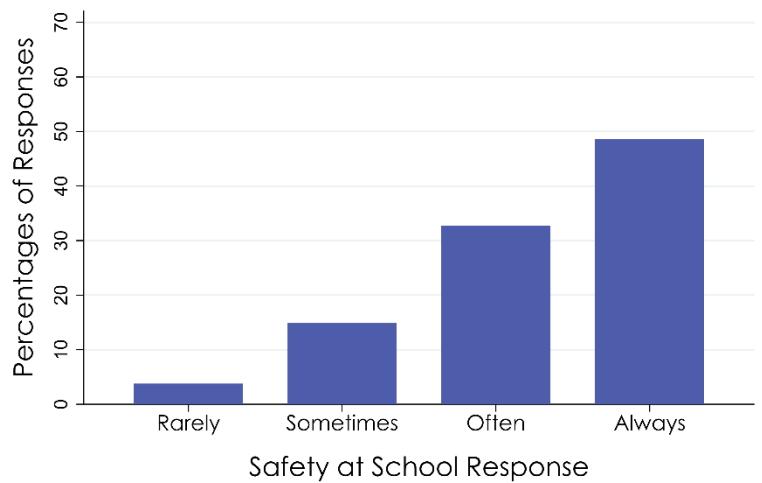


# SAFETY

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 Resilience Survey items relating to safety factors in the student’s environment. Safety in different life contexts is essential to a sense of protection and resilience building.

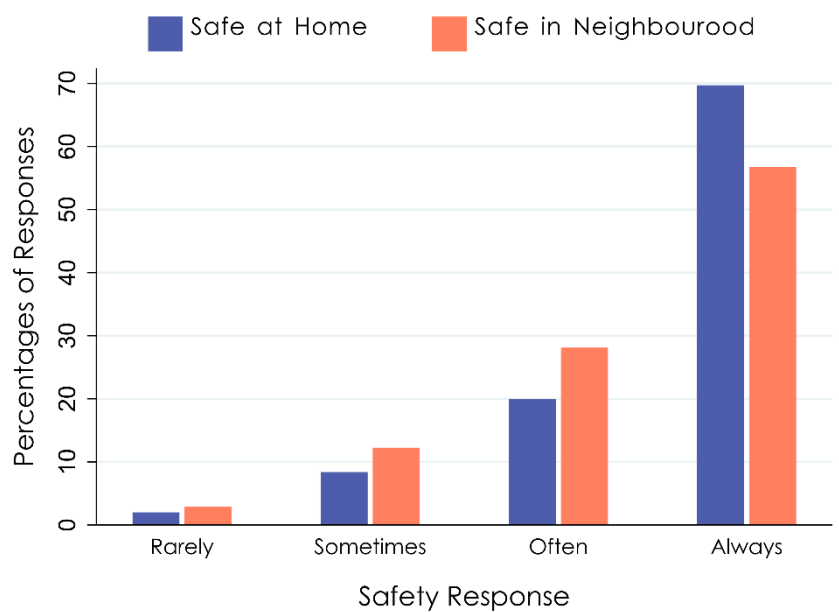
## SAFETY AT SCHOOL

**FIGURE 35.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of feeling safe at school. Results suggest that nearly half of students always (48.6%) feel safe, with 32.8% reporting feeling safe at school often, and 14.9% sometimes. 3.8% of students rarely feel safe in school.

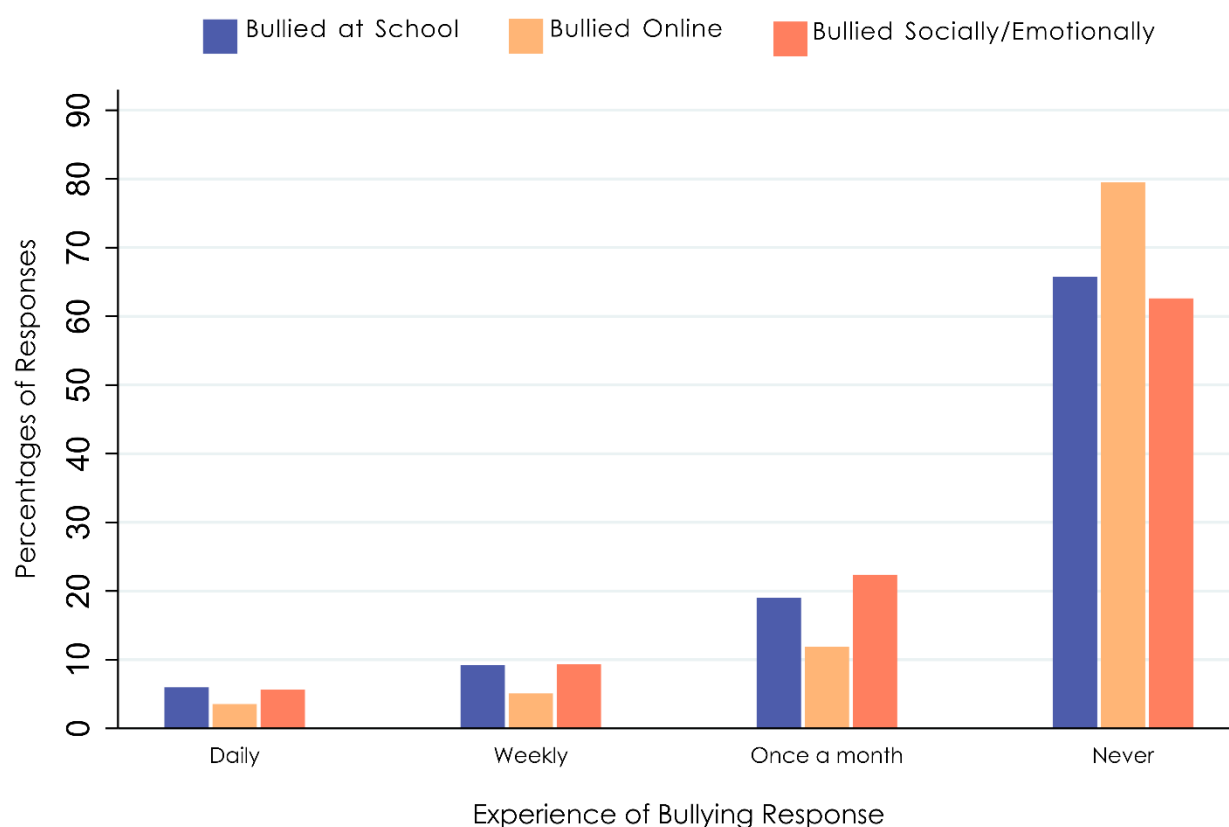


## SAFETY AT HOME

**FIGURE 36.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of feeling safe at home (blue) and in their neighbourhood (red). Results suggest that the majority of students always feel safe at home (69.7%) and in their neighbourhood (56.7%). 19.9% report feeling safe at home often and 8.4% sometimes; while 28.1% feel safe in their neighbourhood often and 12.2% only sometimes. 2.0% of students say they rarely feel safe at home and 2.9% in their neighbourhood.



## EXPERIENCE OF BULLYING



**FIGURE 37.** Percentage of primary school student responses relating to frequency of being bullied at school (blue), being bullied online (orange), and experiencing social/emotional bullying such as being deliberately left out or having rumours spread about them (red). Results suggest that the majority of primary students report never being bullied at school (65.8%), online (79.5%), or socially/emotionally (62.6%). However, frequent bullying at school (monthly: 19.0%, weekly: 9.2%, daily: 6.0%), online (monthly: 11.8%, weekly: 5.1%, daily: 3.6%) and socially-emotionally (monthly: 22.4%, weekly: 9.4%, daily: 5.6%) is reported to occur in a significant minority of students.



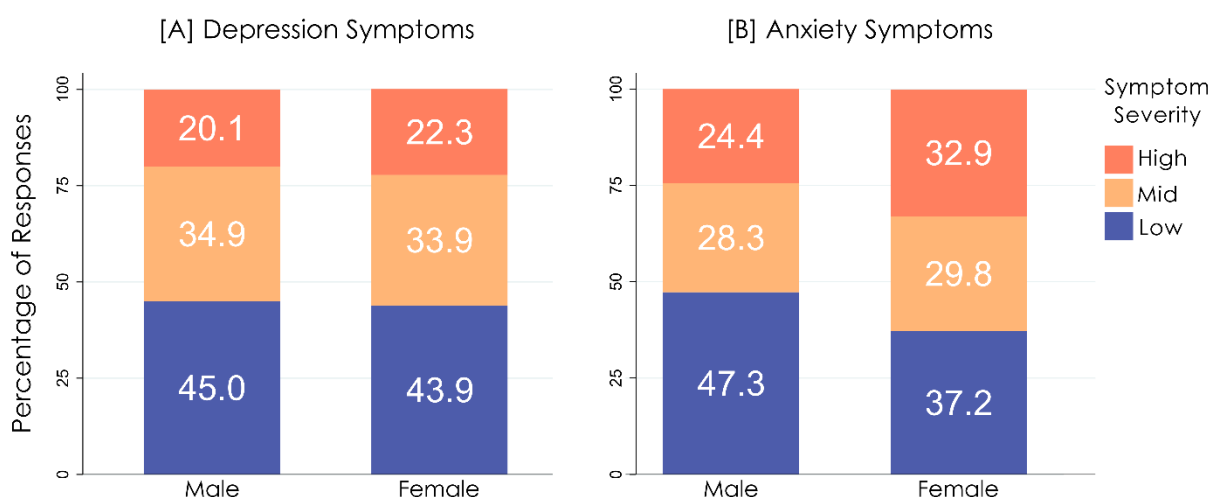
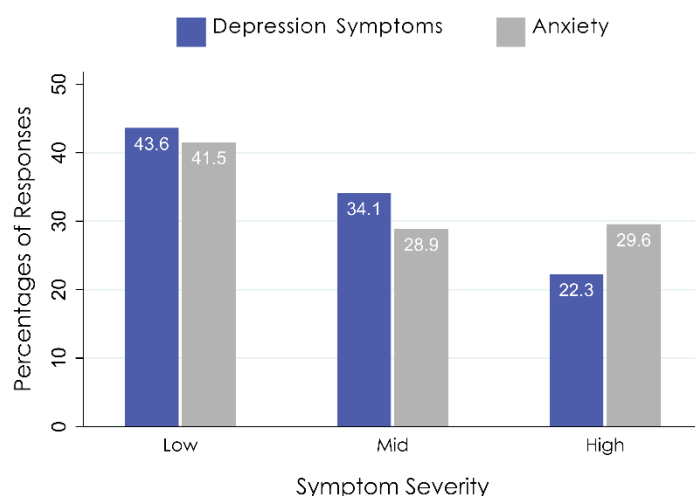


# FIRST NATIONS SNAPSHOT

The following provides a snapshot of data from the 2023 survey relating specifically to wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Of primary students surveyed in schools, 5.2% (n=3,233 students) identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (M=9.76 years, SD=1.30). 47.8% of these students identified as female, 47.1% identified as male, and 5.1% self-reported as “Other” and/or preferred not to report gender identity.

## DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

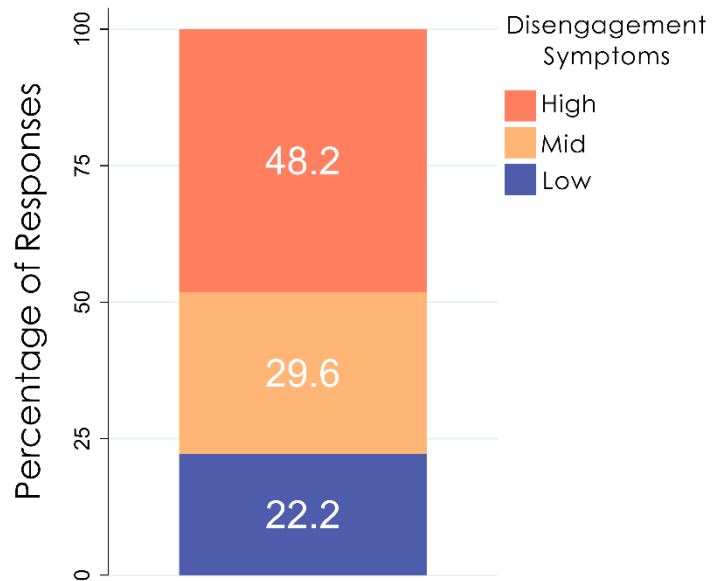
**FIGURE 38.** Percentage of responses relating to depression (blue) and anxiety (grey) symptoms in 2023. Average scores for First Nations children show depression (M=4.10, SD=1.83) and anxiety scores (M=4.31, SD=2.02) in the mid-range.



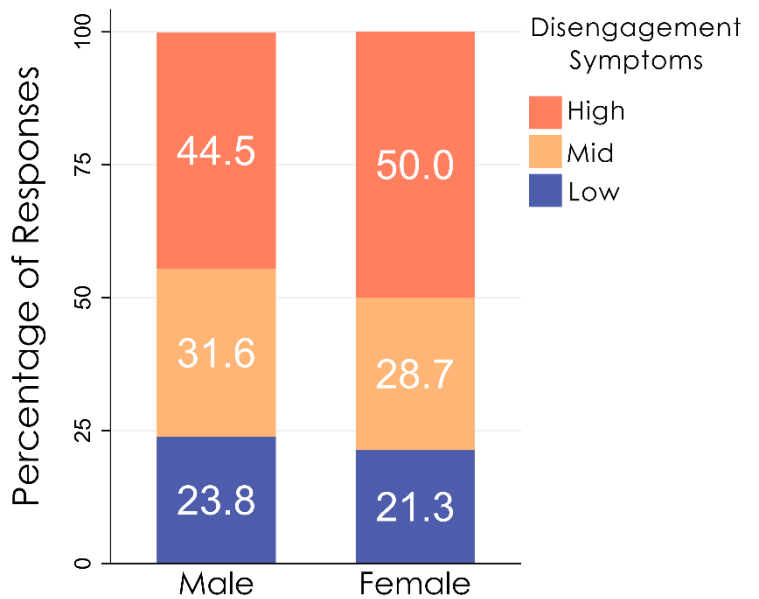
**FIGURE 39.** Percentage of responses relating to (A) depression and (B) anxiety symptoms by gender in 2023. Male (M=4.03, SD=1.80) and female (M=4.07, SD=1.81) students report the same level of depression symptoms, while female (M=4.48, SD=2.03) students report slightly higher levels of anxiety symptoms than male (M=4.04, SD=1.96) students. *N.B.* 165 students self-reported as gender diverse. This category has not been included in these figures to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.

**DISENGAGEMENT**

**FIGURE 40.** Percentage of responses relating to disengagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students in 2023. Average scores for disengagement (M=10.39, SD=2.48) are in the mid-range. *N.B. A lower disengagement score is indicative of a more positive outcome.*

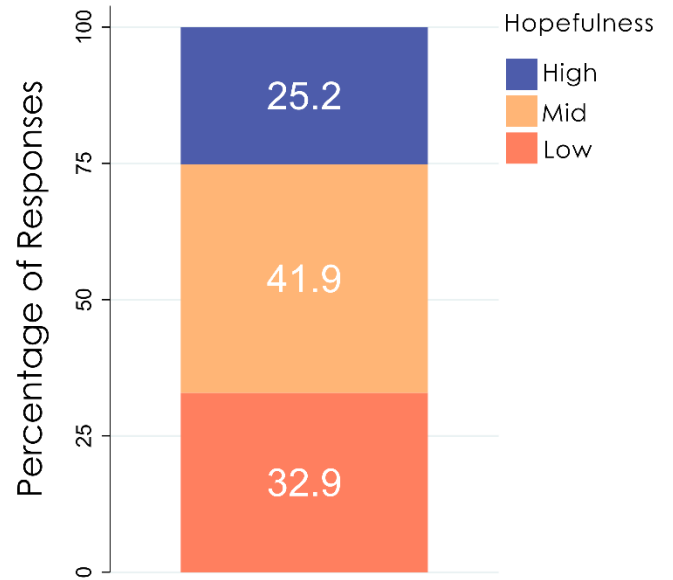


**FIGURE 41.** Percentage of responses relating to disengagement by gender in 2023. Female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students display slightly higher rates of disengagement (M=10.47, SD= 2.48) compared to male students (M=10.21, SD=2.44). *N.B. As only 165 students self-reported as gender diverse, this category has not been included in these figures. This is to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.*



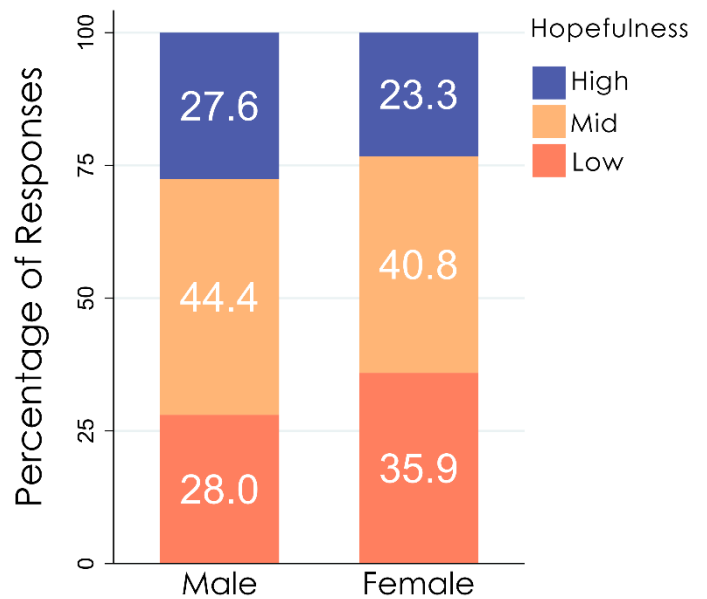
HOPEFULNESS

**FIGURE 42.** Percentage of responses relating to hopefulness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students. Average scores for hopefulness (M=22.05, SD=7.11) are in the mid-range. *N.B. A higher hopefulness score is indicative of a more positive outcome.*



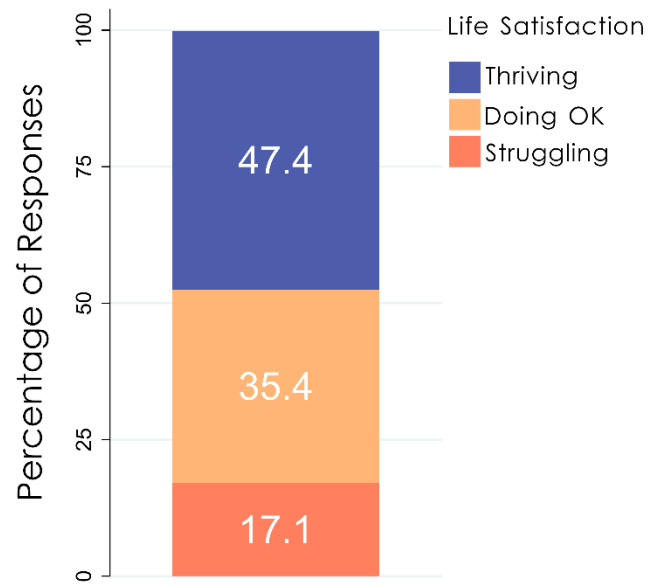
**FIGURE 43.** Percentage of responses relating to hopefulness by gender in 2023. Female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students display lower rates of hopefulness (M=21.63, SD= 6.90) compared to male students (M=22.82, SD=6.99).

*N.B. As only 165 students self-reported as gender diverse, this category has not been included in these figures. This is to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.*



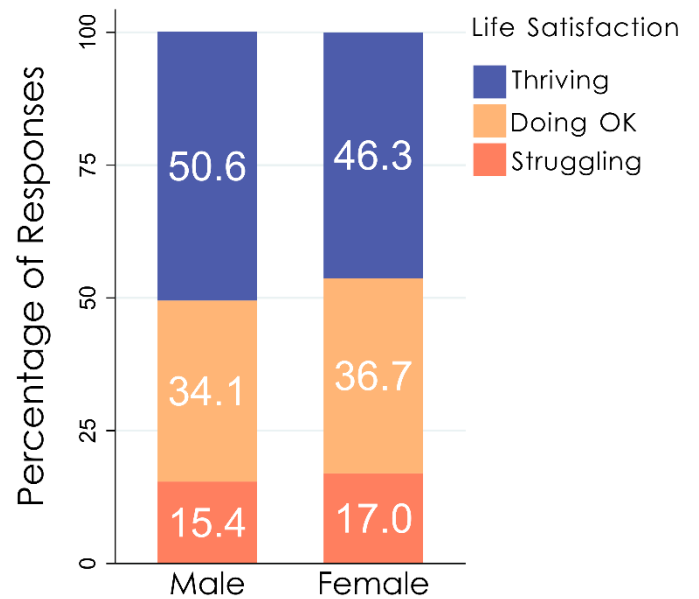
**LIFE SATISFACTION**

**FIGURE 44.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students. Struggling (red) refers to wellbeing that is at risk. Doing OK (orange) indicates wellbeing that is moderate. Thriving (blue) reflects wellbeing that is strong, consistent, and progressing. Results indicate that nearly half of First Nations primary school students report they are ‘thriving’ in 2023. Average scores for life satisfaction are in the ‘doing ok’ range (M=6.08, SD=1.79).



**FIGURE 45.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 by gender in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students. Male primary school students report slightly higher rates of life satisfaction (M=6.20, SD=1.77) than female students (M=6.07, SD=1.74).

*N.B. 165 students self-reported as gender diverse. This category has not been included in these figures to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.*




# **SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT ANALYSES**

# KEY RESULTS:

## SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

### MENTAL WELLBEING

Students are typically in the 'healthy' range for depression and 'mid' range for anxiety, but over 1 in 3 report high depression, anxiety or both. Mental health is lowest in gender diverse students, followed by females, then males.

 1 in 4 never or rarely feel they can talk about things that upset them.



### POSITIVE LEARNERS MINDSET

Over half of students are at risk of poor learning mindset (anxiety + disengagement). Gender diverse students report highest disengagement as a coping strategy, followed by females, then males. However, around 7 in 10 students report trying hard at school most of the time, and 6 in 10 frequently enjoy learning.

### LIFE SATISFACTION

The average rating of life satisfaction was in the mid-range, or "doing OK". 1 in 4 report they are thriving, whereas 1 in 5 report they are struggling with low life satisfaction. Gender diverse students report lowest life satisfaction, followed by females, then males.



### HOPEFULNESS

Students report levels of hope in the mid-range on average, with 2 in 10 reporting high hope and 3 in 10 reporting low hope. More than half of gender diverse students report low hope, compared to almost 4 in 10 females and a quarter of all males.



### HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR

Most secondary students report regular healthy eating and physical activity. 76% of students always or often eat healthy, and 72% get at least 1 hour of physical activity on most days.

However, only just over half get at least 8 hours sleep on most nights.



### SOCIAL SUPPORT

The majority of secondary students report supportive social environments. Around 8 in 10 report loving, encouraging and attentive families, 6 in 10 report teachers who care and encourage them, and between 8-9 in 10 have a good friend and feel like they can maintain friendships.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of students say they frequently get on well with others who are different from them.

### SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

8 in 10 students report being able to trust their friends and be trusted most of the time. Around half easily forgive others who are mean to them, while 6 in 10 frequently spend time helping others.



### SAFETY

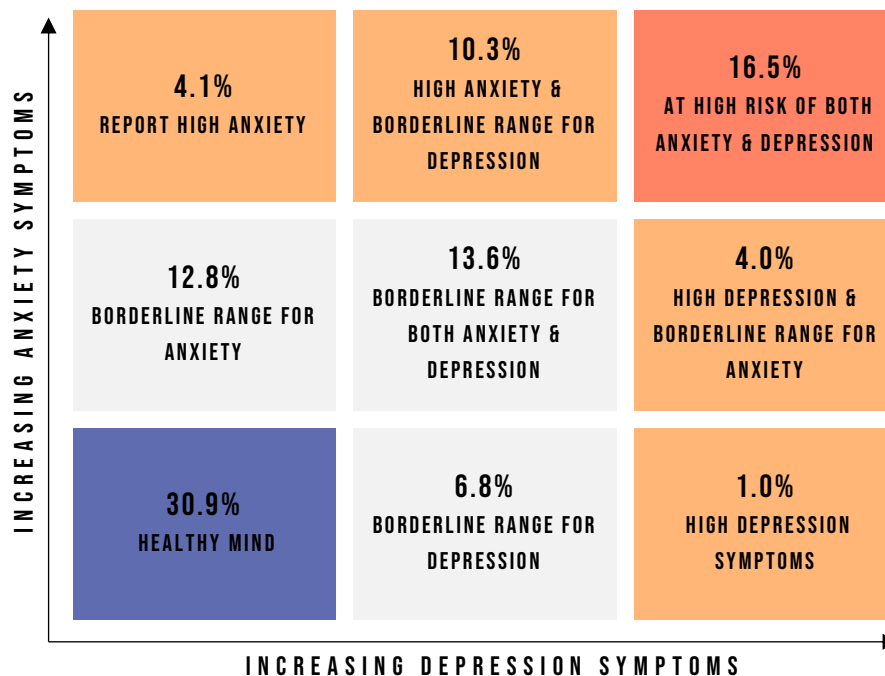
7 in 10 feel safe at school and between 8-9 in 10 feel safe at home and in their neighborhood. In the last month 1 in 4 of students report being bullied at school, 16% online, and more than 1 in 3 experienced some form of social or emotional bullying. 3-5% of year 7-10 students frequently use illegal substances (vaping, alcohol, etc.), compared to 5-15% of year 11 and 12 students.



## MENTAL WELLBEING

The surveyed secondary school students report depression symptoms ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=1.86$ ) just in the 'healthy' range, and anxiety symptoms ( $M=4.43$ ,  $SD=2.07$ ) in the 'mid' range on average.

As an indication of state of mental wellbeing, depression and anxiety categories were combined to represent the different levels of risk amongst secondary students (see Figure 34). Healthy students are represented as those reporting low depression and anxiety, borderline students as those with mid-range reports of depression, anxiety, or both, and students at risk of mental wellbeing problems as those with high levels of depression, anxiety, or both.



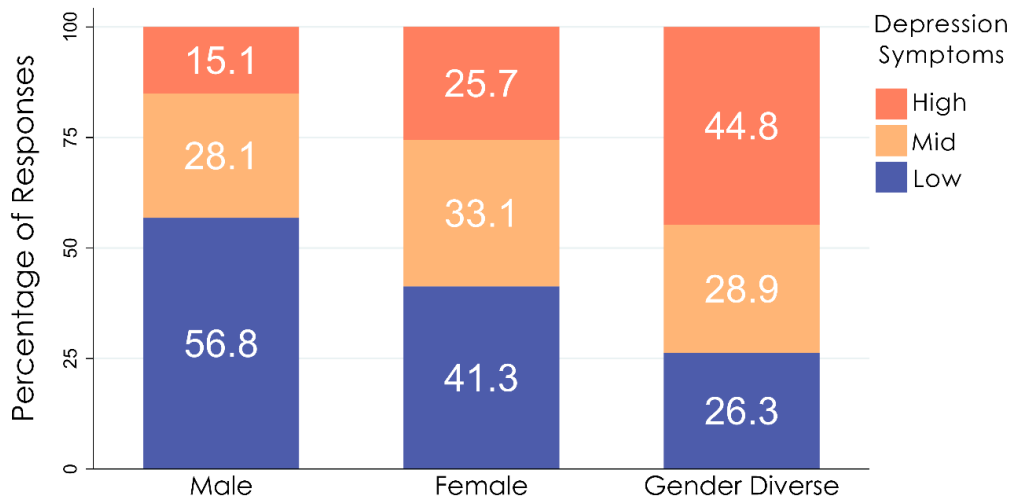
**FIGURE 46.** A graphical representation of student mental wellbeing during 2023, comprised of combinations of depression and anxiety symptoms. 30.9% of students are of healthy mind (low anxiety + low depression symptoms - shaded in blue). 33.2% of students are in a borderline range (moderate anxiety and/or depression symptoms - shaded in grey); **35.9% of secondary school students are in the high-risk categories for anxiety, depression or both (shaded in orange).**



secondary students think it is important to “*eradicate stigmas surrounding mental health and give students strength and courage to come forward and get professional mental help*”

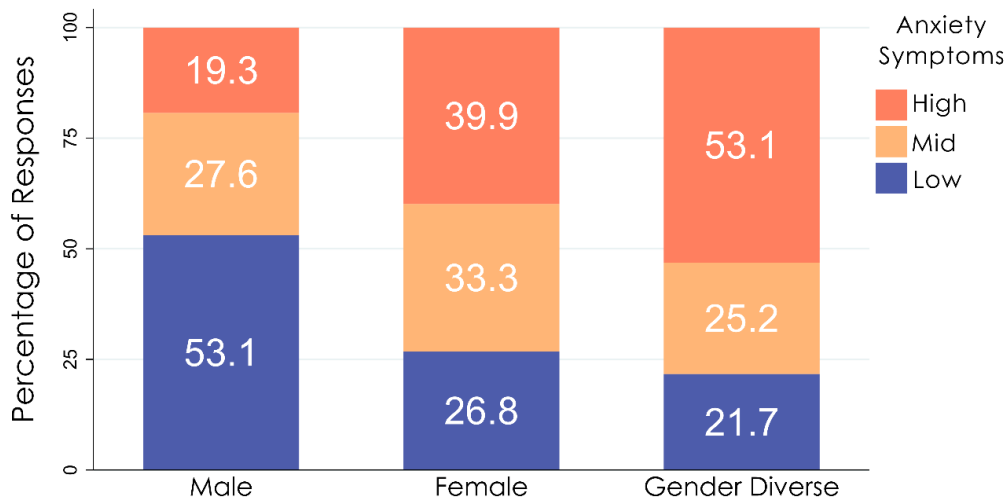
- gender diverse student, 17 years

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS**



**FIGURE 47.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms in 2023 by gender. Male students (M=3.60, SD=1.72) report significantly lower rates of depression symptoms compared to female students (M=4.24, SD=1.89). The largest effects were for gender diverse students, who show significantly higher rates of depression symptoms (M=5.16, SD=2.12) compared to male and female students.

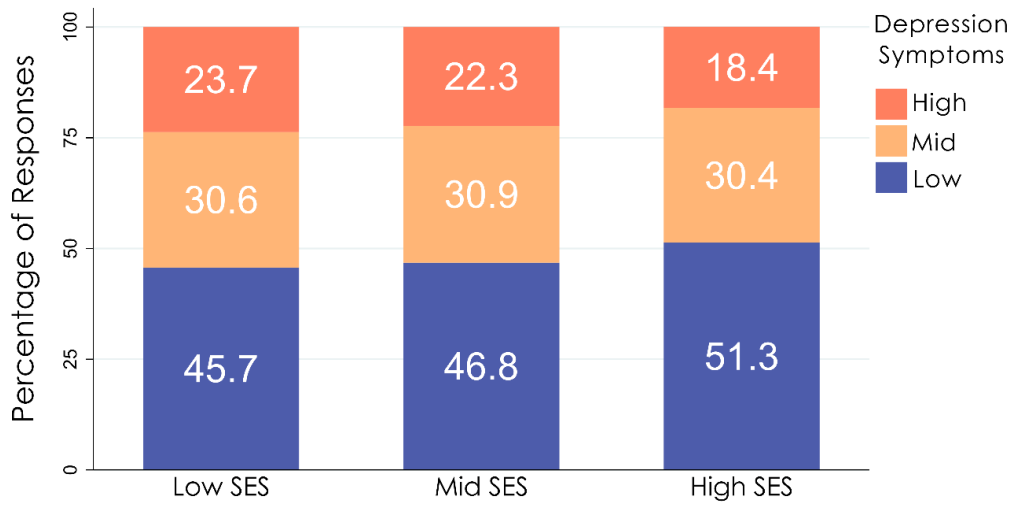
**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ANXIETY SYMPTOMS**



**FIGURE 48.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms in 2023 by gender. Male students (M=3.76, SD=1.88) report significantly lower rates of anxiety symptoms compared to both female students (M=4.96, SD=2.04) and gender diverse students (M=5.55, SD=2.20). Gender diverse student also reported significantly higher rates of anxiety symptoms compared to female students.

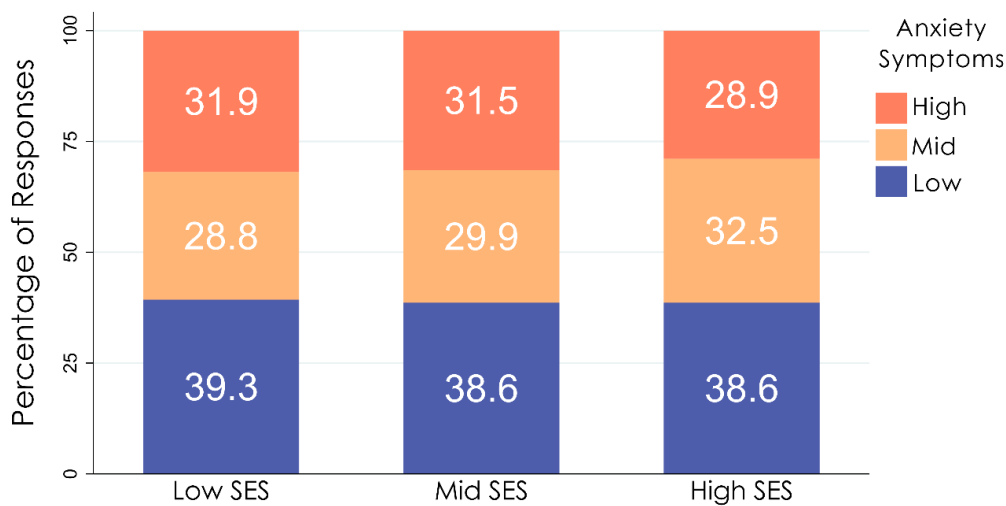


SES DIFFERENCES IN DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS



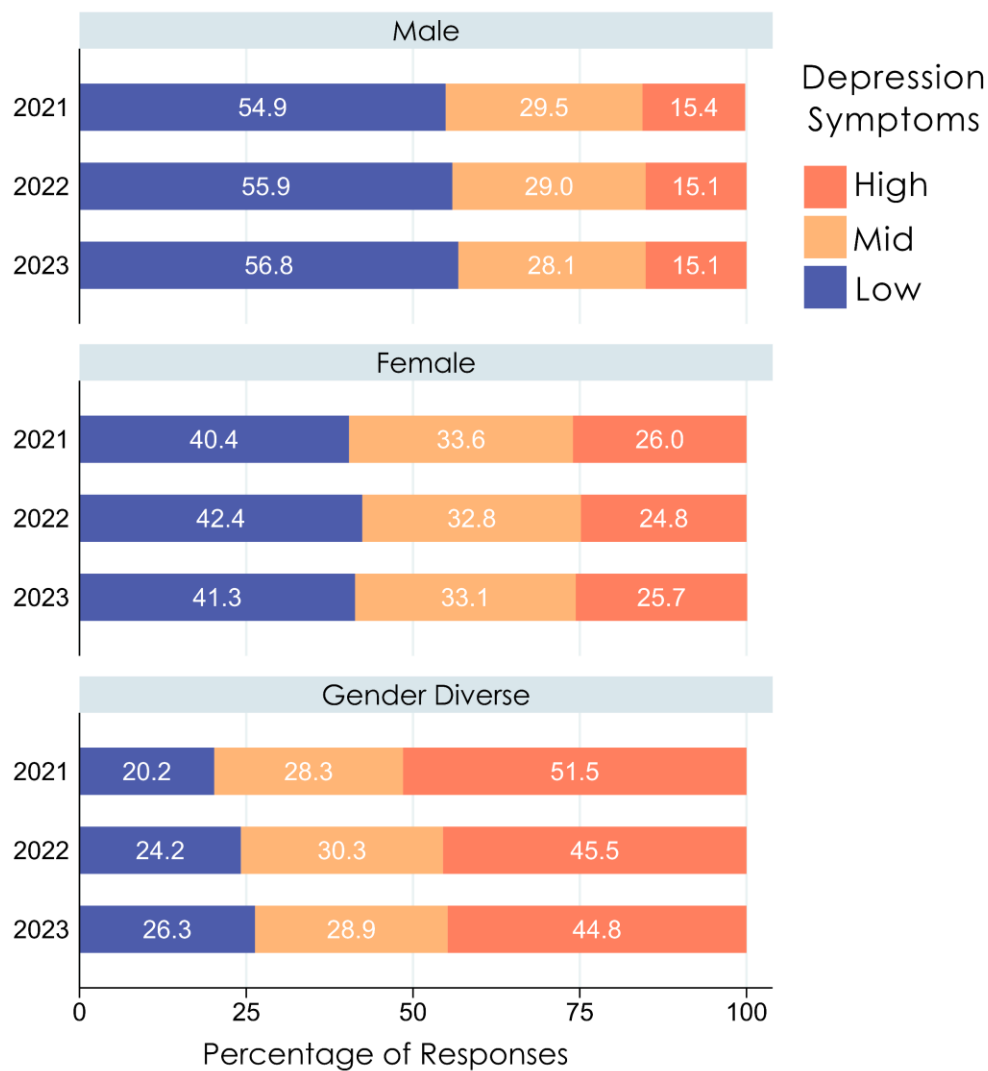
**FIGURE 49.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms in 2023 by SES category. Students in high SES areas (M=3.82, SD=1.79) report depression in the ‘healthy’ range, and slightly lower than students living in mid SES (M=4.02, SD=1.88) and low SES areas (M=4.08, SD=1.90), who both report symptoms in the ‘mid’ range on average. Students living in low SES areas also show slightly higher rates of anxiety symptoms compared to students in mid SES areas.

SES DIFFERENCES IN ANXIETY SYMPTOMS



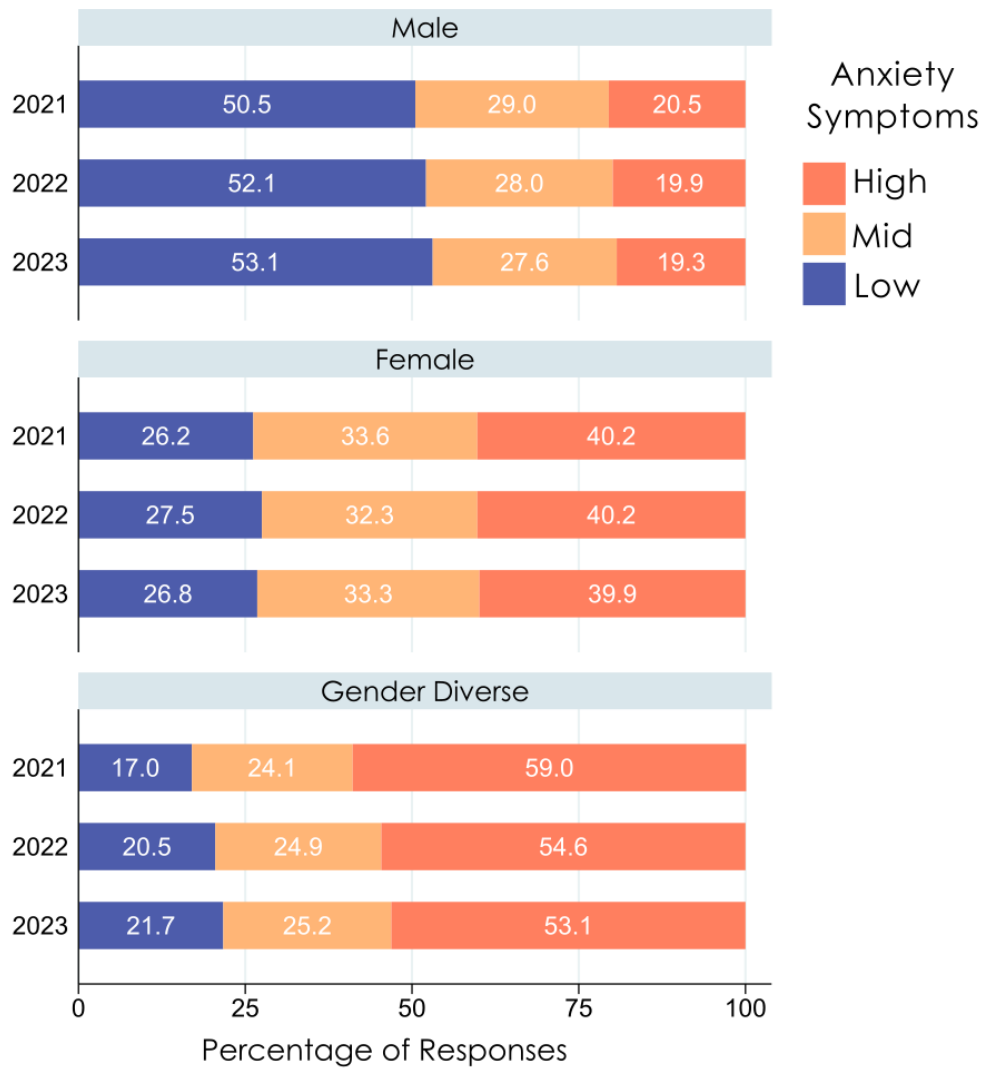
**FIGURE 50.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms in 2023 by SES category. Students in low (M= 4.43, SD=2.10) and mid (M=4.45, SD=2.09) SES areas report similar ratings of anxiety. However, students from high (M=4.39, SD= 2.02) SES areas report slightly lower levels of anxiety than those in mid SES areas.

DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



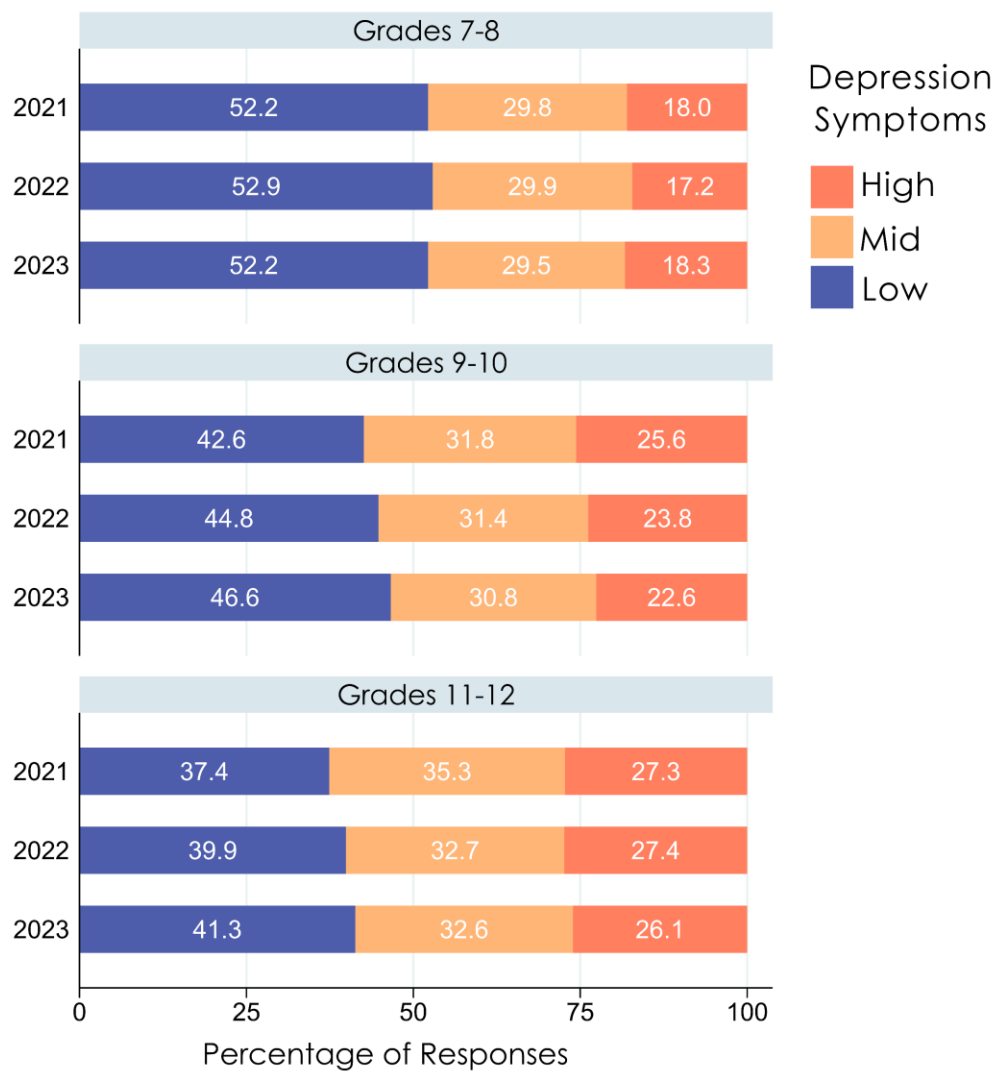
**FIGURE 51.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. A similar proportion of male students report high symptoms levels across all three years (males – 2021: 15.4%, 2022: 15.1%, 2023: 15.1%). A smaller proportion of female students report high symptom levels between 2021 and 2022, which then increased between 2022 and 2023 (females – 2021: 26.0%, 2022: 24.8%, 2023: 25.7%). Among gender diverse students there is a decreasing proportion reporting high symptom levels across all three years (gender diverse – 2021: 51.5%, 2022: 45.5%, 2023: 44.8%). A greater proportion of females than males report high symptom levels, and gender diverse students report the largest proportion of high level symptoms across all three years.

ANXIETY SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



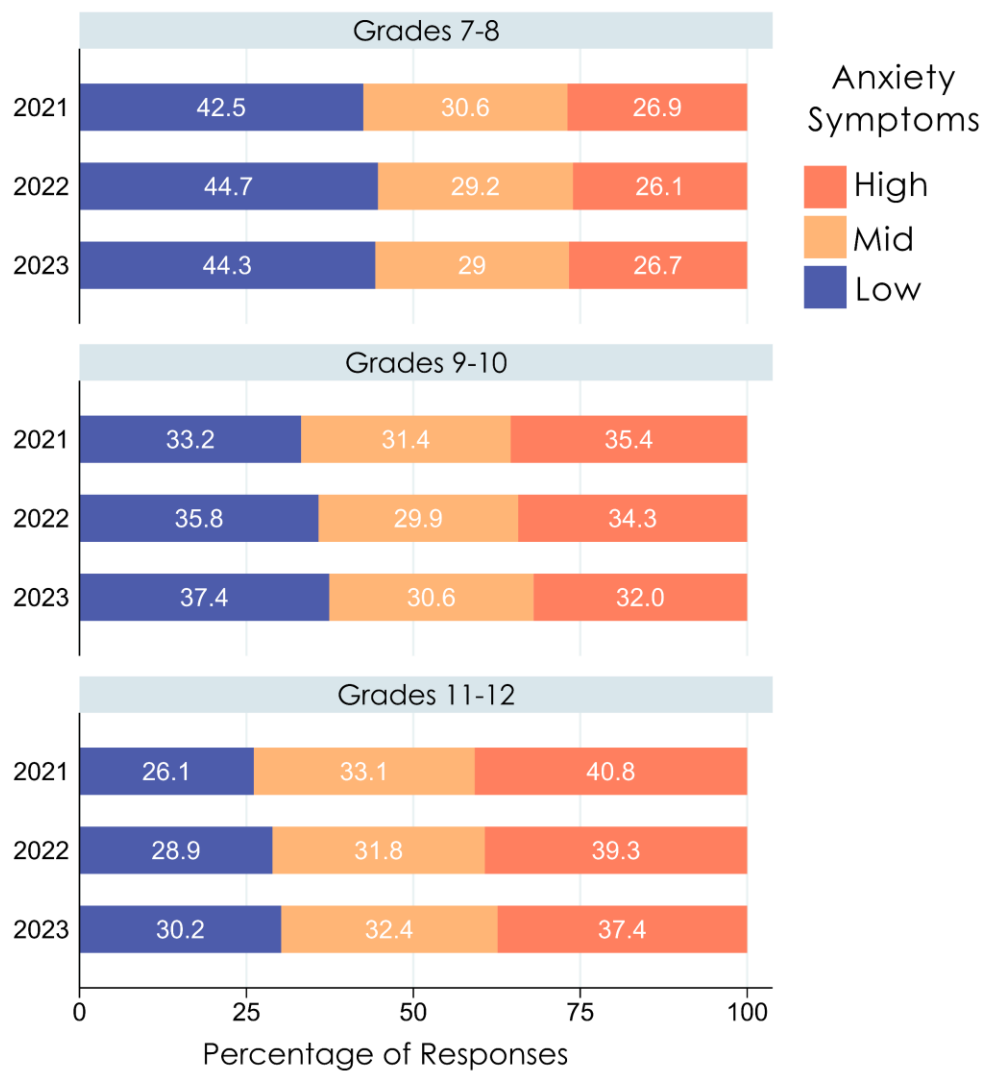
**FIGURE 52.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Male students report similar proportions of high level symptoms across all three years, as do female students (high symptom levels - males: 2021: 20.5%, 2022: 19.9%, 2023: 19.3%; female: 2021: 40.2%, 2022: 40.2%, 2023: 39.9%). There is a trend for a decreasing proportion of gender diverse students reporting high level symptoms across the three years (high symptom levels - gender diverse: 2021: 59.0%, 2022: 54.6%, 2023: 53.1%). Approximately twice as many females than male students report high symptom levels across all three years. Gender diverse students report the largest proportion of high level symptoms across all three years.

## DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES



**FIGURE 53.** Percentage of responses for ratings of depression symptoms by school grade groups (grades 7-8, grades 9-10, and grades 11-12) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Among students in grades 7-8, a slightly smaller proportion reported high symptom levels between 2021 and 2022, which then increased from 2022 to 2023 (high symptom levels – grades 7-8: 2021: 18.0%, 2022: 17.2%, 2023: 18.3%). The proportion of students reporting high symptom levels trends downwards across all three years for grades 9-10 (high symptom levels – grades 9-10: 2021: 25.6%, 2022: 23.8%, 2023: 22.6%). The proportion of students reporting high symptom levels in grades 11-12 is similar in 2021 and 2022, and decreases in 2023 (high symptom levels – grades 11-12: 2021: 27.3%, 2022: 27.4%, 2023: 26.1%). A higher proportion of students in grades 9-10 report high symptom levels than in grades 7-8 across all three years. Students in grades 11-12 report the largest proportion of high level symptoms across all three years.

## ANXIETY SYMPTOMS OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES

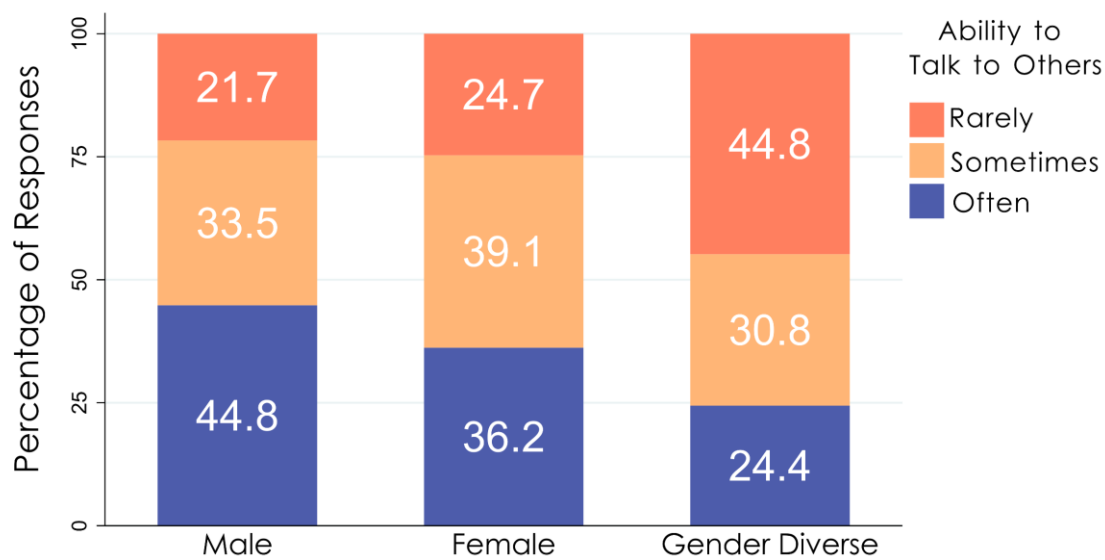


**FIGURE 54.** Percentage of responses for ratings of anxiety symptoms by school grade groups (grades 7-8, grades 9-10, and grades 11-12) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Among students in grades 7-8, the proportion of students reporting high symptom levels is similar across all three years (high symptom levels – grades 7-8: 2021: 26.9%, 2022: 26.1%, 2023: 26.7%). The proportion of students reporting high symptom levels trends downwards across all three years for grades 9-10 (high symptom levels – grades 9-10: 2021: 35.4%, 2022: 34.3%, 2023: 32.0%) and grades 11-12 (high symptom levels – grades 11-12: 2021: 40.8%, 2022: 39.3%, 2023: 37.4%). A higher proportion of students in grades 9-10 report high symptoms levels than in grades 7-8 across all three years. Students in grades 11-12 report the largest proportion of high level symptoms across all three years.

### ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS

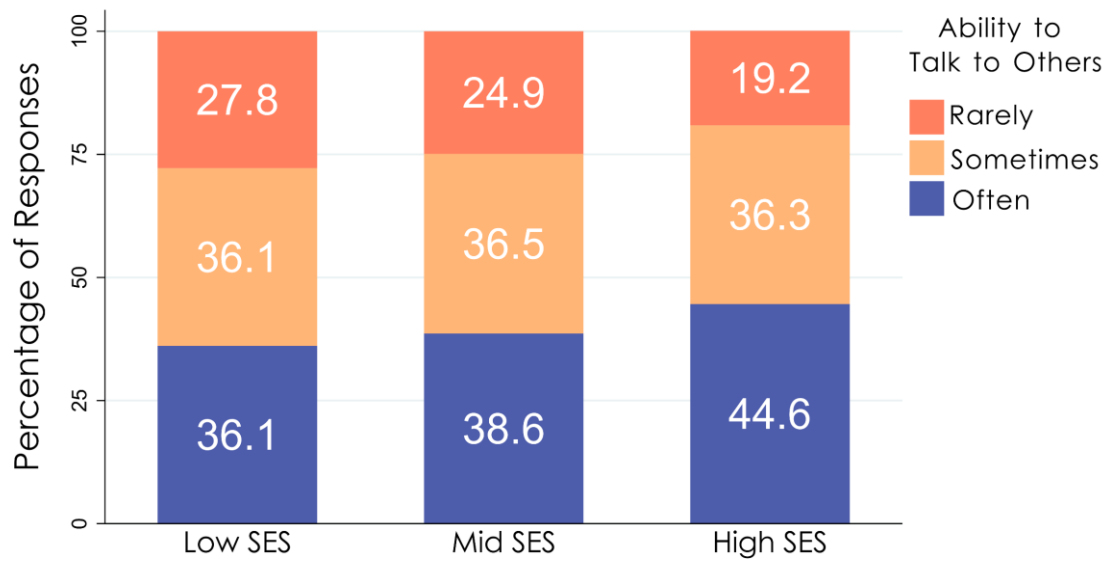
Students were asked about how readily they can talk to others about things that upset them. Approximately 4 in 10 secondary school students (39.7%) report they are often or always able to talk to others. Similarly, 4 in 11 students (36.2%) are sometimes able to talk to others, and 1 in 4 students (24.1%) never or rarely talk about things that upset them. This suggests that at least some of the time students may want to talk about things but do not feel able for various reasons.

### GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS



**FIGURE 55.** Percentage of responses for ratings of ability to talk to others in 2023 by gender. Male ( $M=2.41$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) students are more able to talk to others than female students ( $M=2.24$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ) on average. Gender diverse students ( $M=1.90$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) show lower ability to talk to others about things that upset them than both females and males.

## SES DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS



**FIGURE 56.** Percentage of responses for ratings of ability to talk to others in 2023 by SES category. Students living in high SES ( $M=2.42$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ) show slightly greater ability to talk to others than those in mid SES ( $M=2.28$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) areas. Students in low SES ( $M=2.22$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) show lower ability to talk to others than those in mid SES and high SES areas.



For teens to be able to talk it is important to:

*“give them a safe, welcoming, supportive, trustworthy space for them to share their issues and mental health problems”*

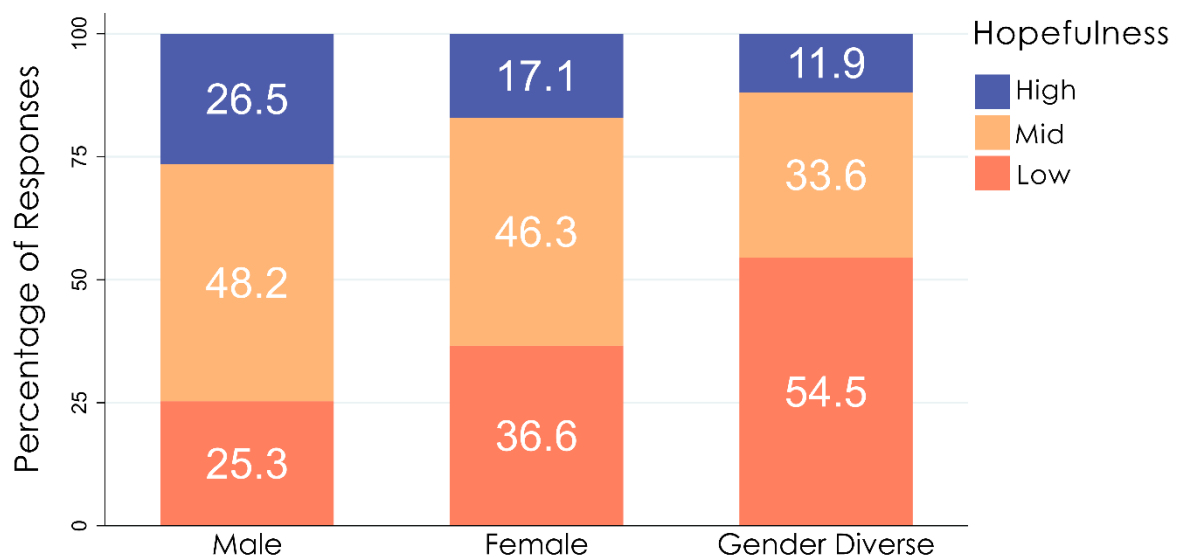
- 17 year old male student

# HOPEFULNESS

The measure of hopefulness reflects a combination the student's belief that they have what it takes to work towards a desired goal (sometimes called 'agency') and can imagine different practical ways to achieve these goals (sometimes called 'pathways').

Secondary school students surveyed reported average scores of hopefulness in the 'mid-range' of the scale ( $M=21.86$ ,  $SD=6.56$ ). Of the current cohort of secondary students, 21.3% report high rates of hope, 46.7% in the moderate range, and 32.1% in the low range of hopefulness.

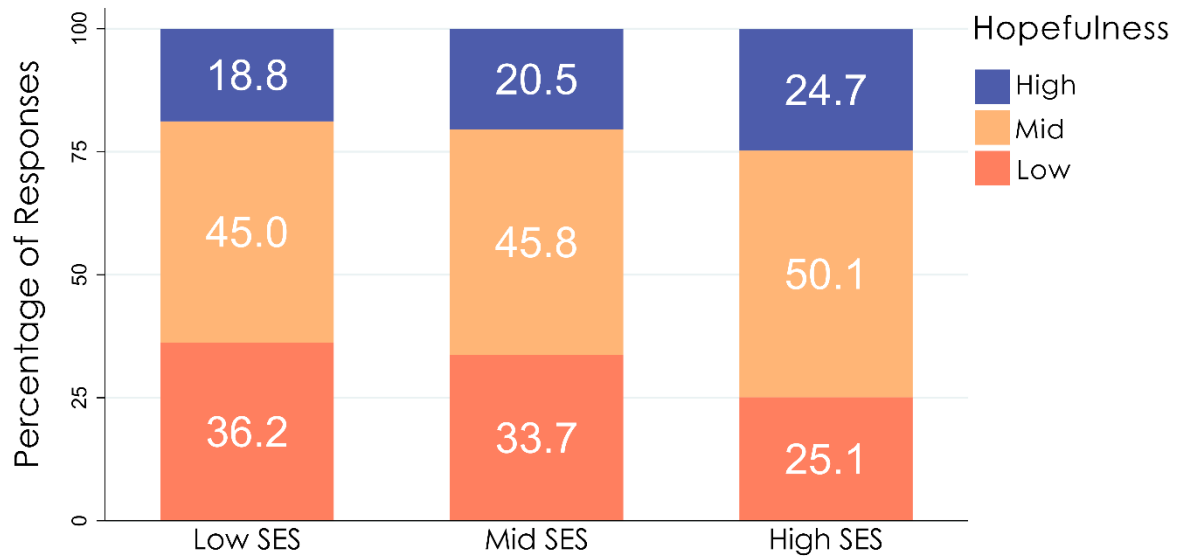
## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HOPEFULNESS



**FIGURE 57.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness in 2023 by gender. Rates of hopefulness in male students ( $M=23.02$ ,  $SD=6.57$ ) are higher than female students ( $M=21.07$ ,  $SD=6.27$ ). Gender diverse students ( $M=18.31$ ,  $SD=7.24$ ) report significantly lower hopefulness than both male and female students.



## SES DIFFERENCES IN HOPEFULNESS



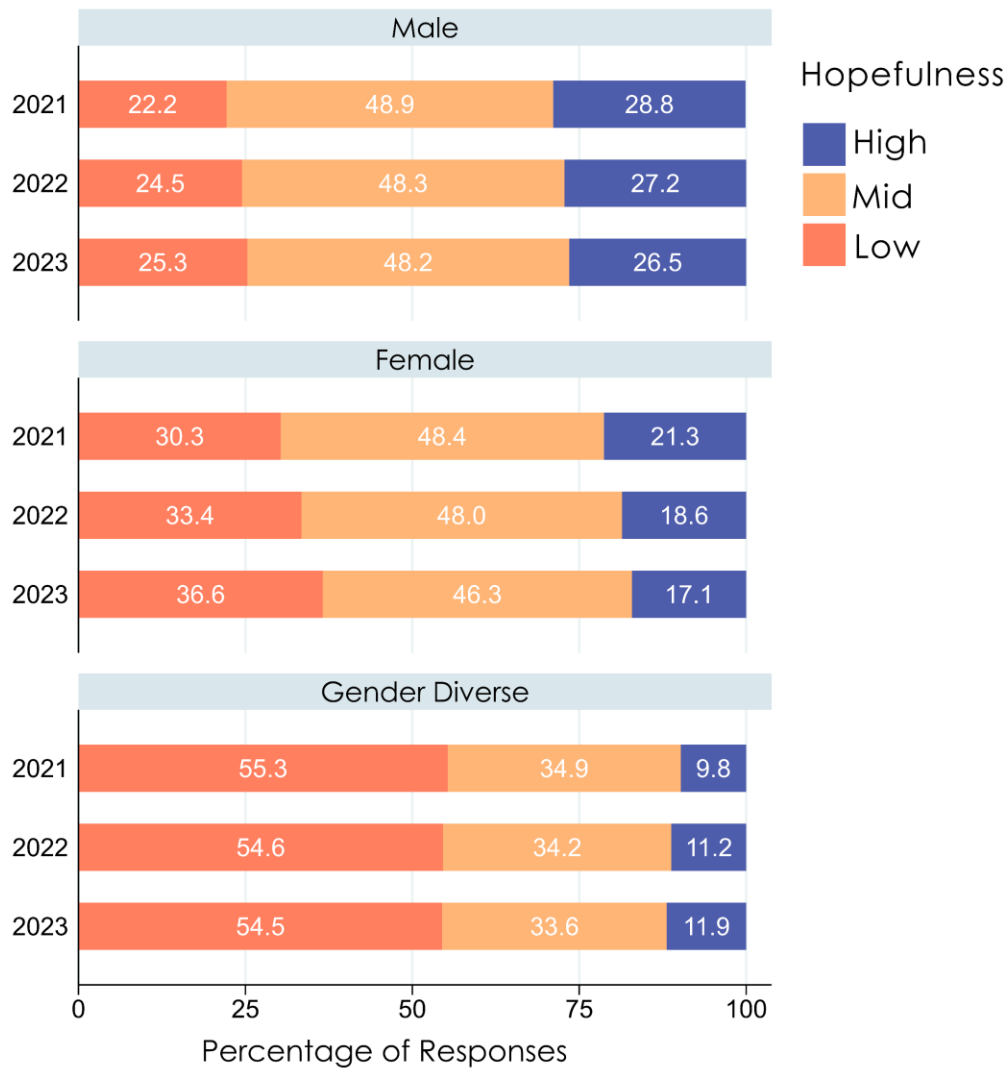
**FIGURE 58.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness in 2023 by SES category. Students in high SES areas ( $M=22.86$ ,  $SD=6.25$ ) report higher hopefulness than students living in mid SES ( $M=21.66$ ,  $SD=6.56$ ) areas. Students living in both high and mid SES areas report slightly higher hopefulness compared to those in low SES areas ( $M=21.20$ ,  $SD=6.67$ ).



*“If I had the magical ability to do anything to support the well-being of young people, I would use it to give them strength and hope”*

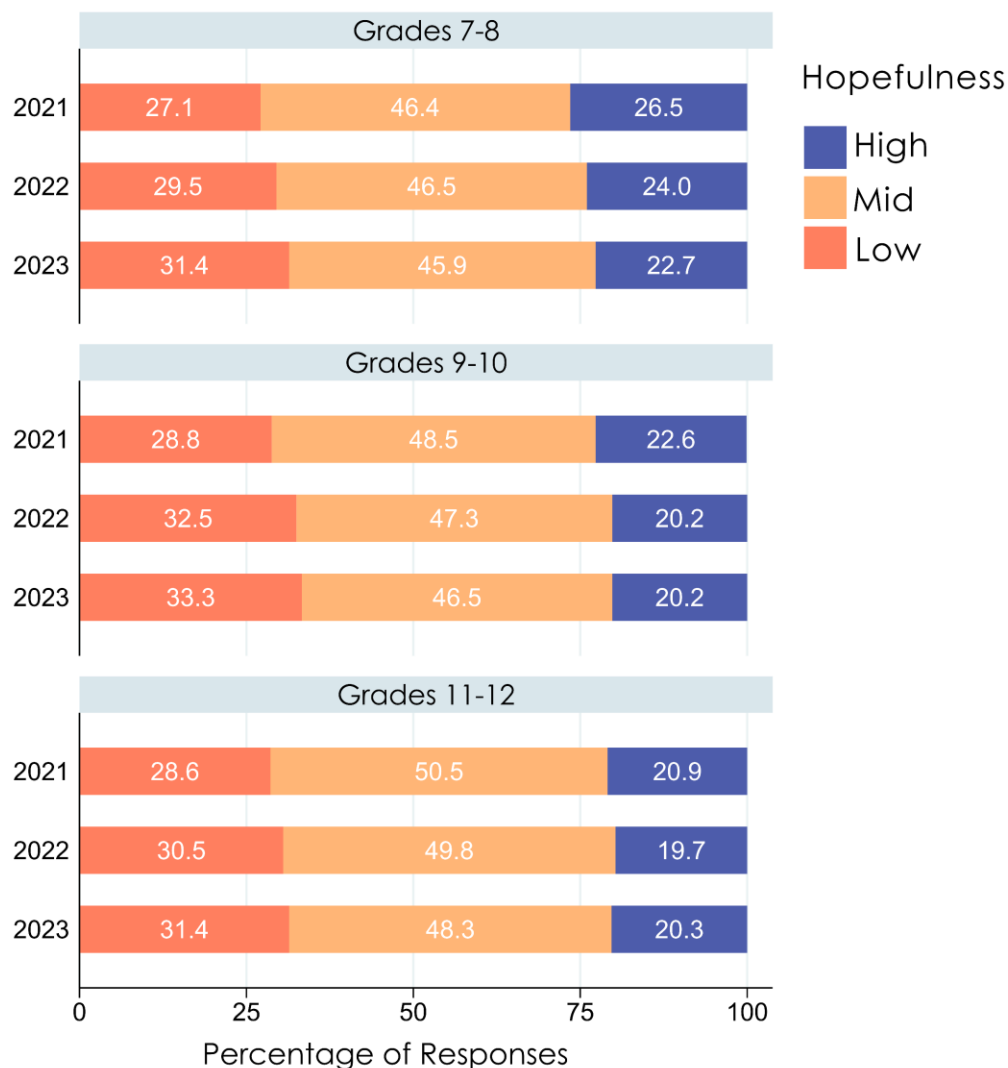
- Male student, 14 years.

HOPEFULNESS OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



**FIGURE 59.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Male and female students show a trend for a decreasing proportion of students reporting high levels of hopefulness across all three years (high hopefulness – males: 2021: 28.8%, 2022: 27.2%, 2023: 26.5%; females: 2021: 21.3%, 2022: 18.6%, 2023: 17.1%). Gender diverse students show a trend for an increasing proportion of students reporting high hopefulness across the three years (gender diverse: 2021: 9.8%, 2022: 11.2%, 2023: 11.9%). Male students represent the highest proportion of students reporting high hopefulness across all three years, and gender diverse students represent the lowest proportion across all three years.

## HOPEFULNESS OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES



**FIGURE 60.** Percentage of responses for ratings of hopefulness by school grade groups (grades 7-8, grades 9-10, and grades 11-12) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The proportion of students in grades 7-8 reporting high levels of hopefulness trends downwards across all three years (high hopefulness grades 7-8: 2021: 26.5%, 2022: 24.0%, 2023: 22.7%). Whereas the proportion of students in grades 9-10 decreases between years 2021 and 2022 and remains the same between 2022 and 2023 (high hopefulness grades 9-10: 2021: 22.6%, 2022: 20.2%, 2023: 20.2%). The proportion of students reporting high hopefulness in grades 11-12 decreases between 2021 and 2022, and slightly increases in 2023 (high hopefulness grades 11-12: 2021: 20.9%, 2022: 19.7%, 2023: 20.3%). A similar proportion of students in grades 9-10 and 11-12 report high hopefulness in 2022 and 2023. Students in grades 7-8 report the highest proportion of high hopefulness across all three years.

# LIFE SATISFACTION

As a measure of life satisfaction, students were asked to imagine a ladder where the top represents the best possible life, and the bottom represents the worst possible life. Results are categorised as struggling (refers to wellbeing that is at risk; dark orange), doing OK (indicates wellbeing that is moderate; light orange), and thriving (reflects wellbeing that is strong, consistent, and progressing; blue).

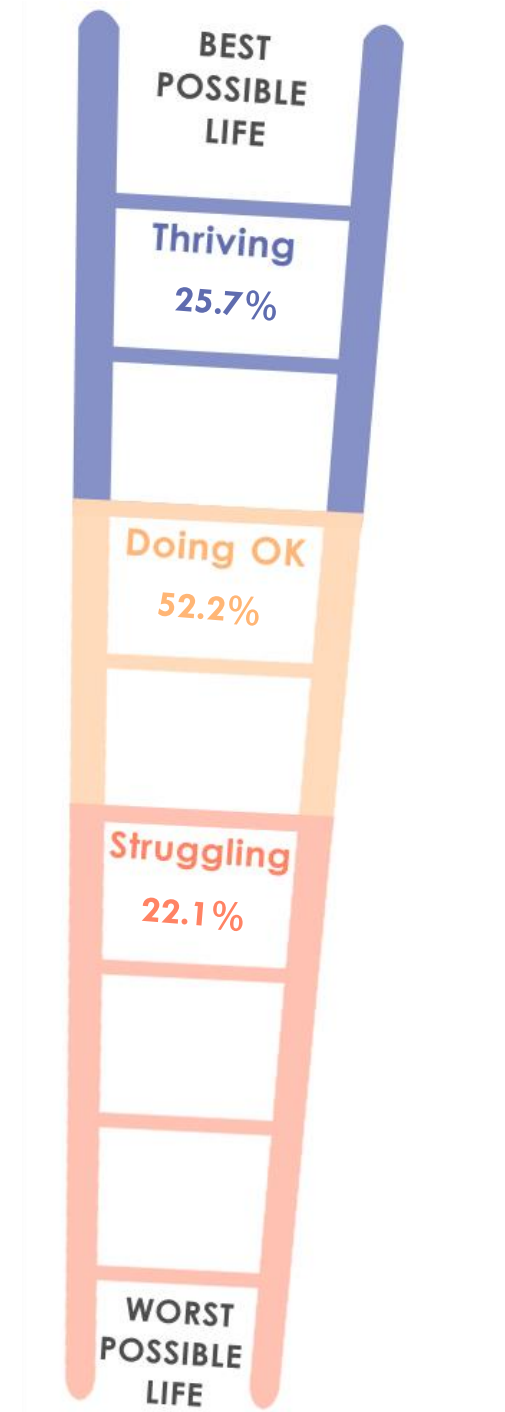
Data from 2023 indicates that on average, secondary school students were in the mid-range, where they considered themselves to be doing OK ( $M=5.54$ ,  $SD= 1.48$ ). Approximately 1 in 4 students believed themselves to be thriving, whereas approximately 1 in 5 believe themselves to be struggling (see image pictured right for category percentages).



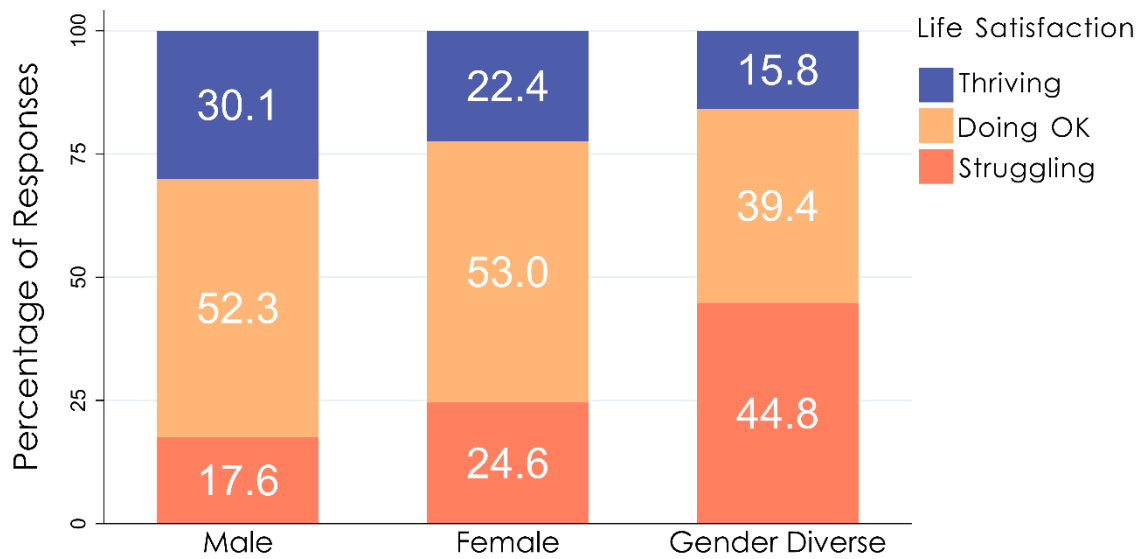
Important for a full life is to:

*“help others with their mental health [and] provide helpful resources and bring joy and happiness”*

– female student, 13 years

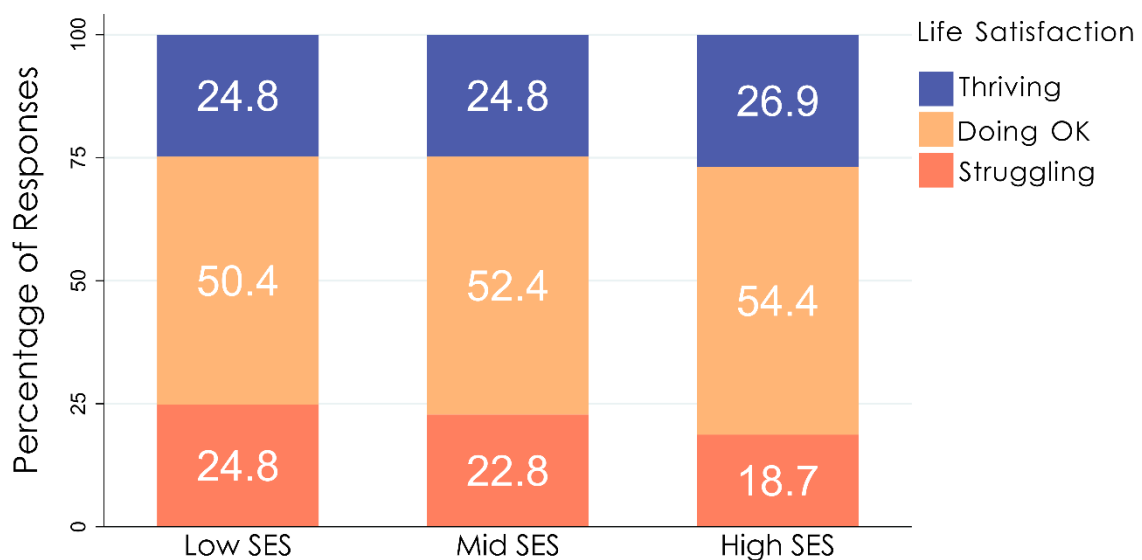


**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LIFE SATISFACTION**



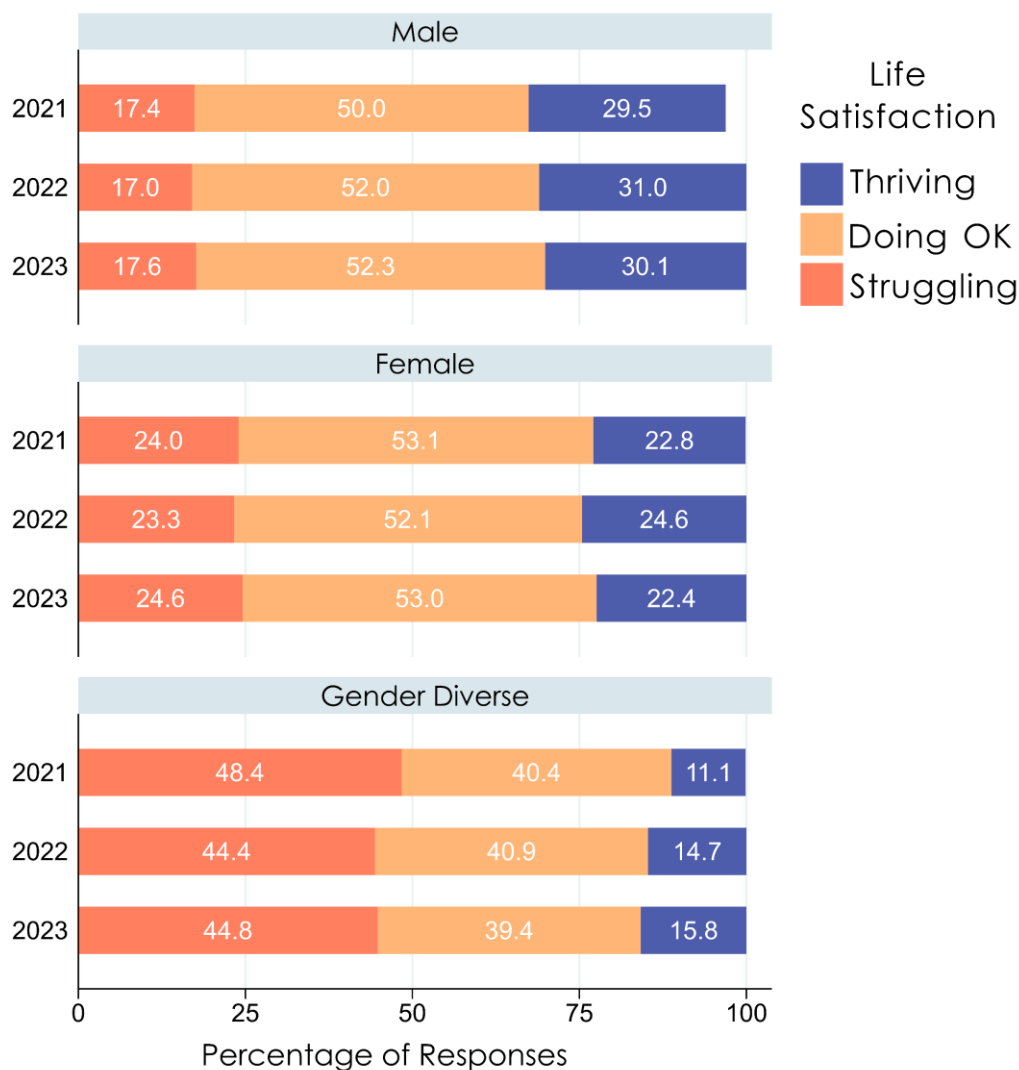
**FIGURE 61.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 by gender. Results indicate that male students (M=5.74, SD=1.45) report higher life satisfaction than female students (M=5.42, SD=1.44). Gender diverse students (M=4.66, SD=1.86) report lower life satisfaction than male and female students.

**SES DIFFERENCES IN LIFE SATISFACTION**



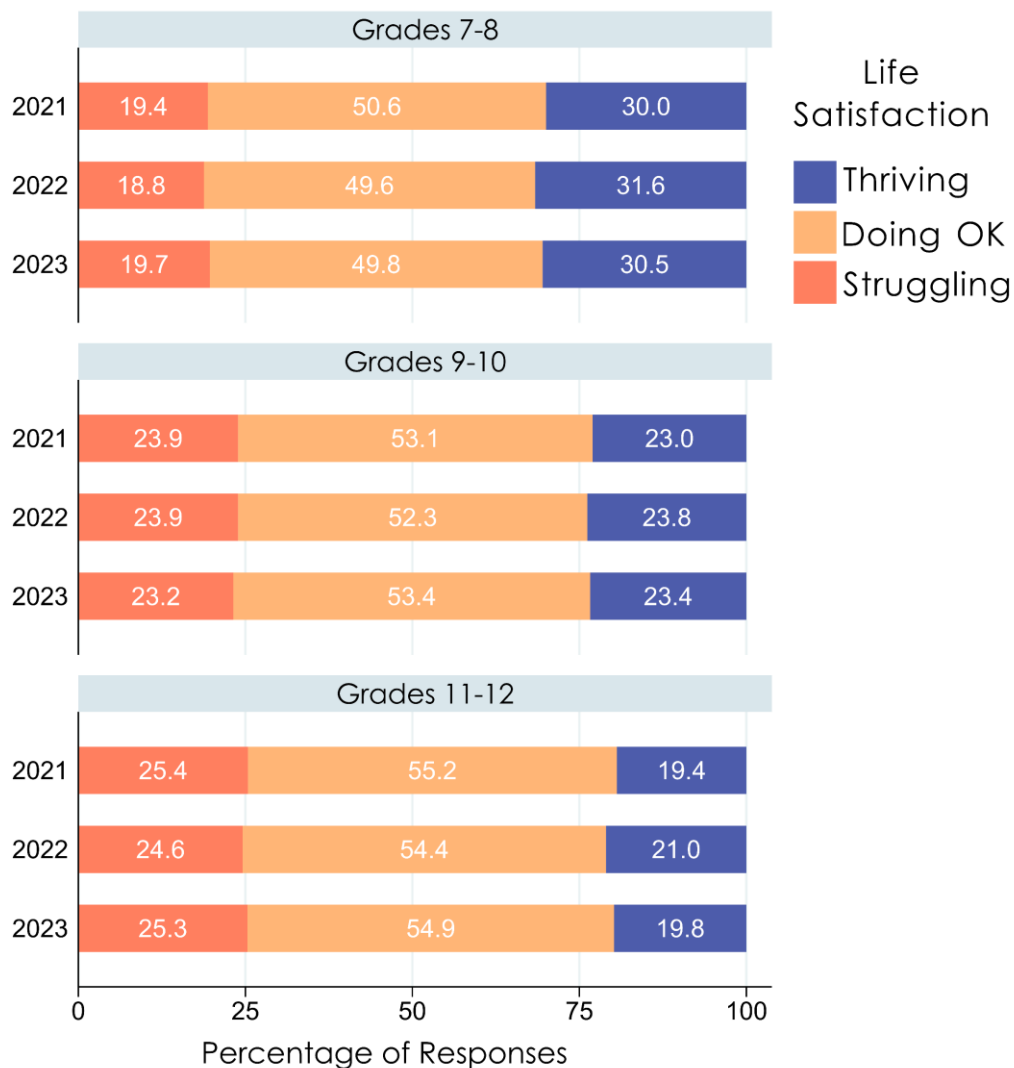
**FIGURE 62.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 by SES. Students in high SES areas (M=5.65, SD=1.39) report slightly higher life satisfaction than students living in mid (M=5.51, SD=1.48) and low SES areas (M=5.45, SD=1.55). Students in low SES areas report the lowest life satisfaction.

LIFE SATISFACTION OVER TIME FOR EACH GENDER



**FIGURE 63.** Percentage of responses for ratings of life satisfaction by gender in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The proportion of male and female students reporting that they are thriving increases between 2021 and 2022, and decreases in 2023 (thriving male students – 2021: 29.5%, 2022: 31.0%, 2023: 30.1%; female students: 2021: 22.8%, 2022: 24.6%, 2023: 22.4%). Gender diverse students show an increasing trend in the proportion of students reporting that they are thriving relative to the previous year across all three years (thriving gender diverse students - 2021: 11.1%, 2022: 14.7%, 2023: 15.8%). Male students represent the highest proportion students reporting that they are thriving across all three years, and gender diverse students represent the lowest proportion of students reporting that they are thriving across all three years.

## LIFE SATISFACTION OVER TIME FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES

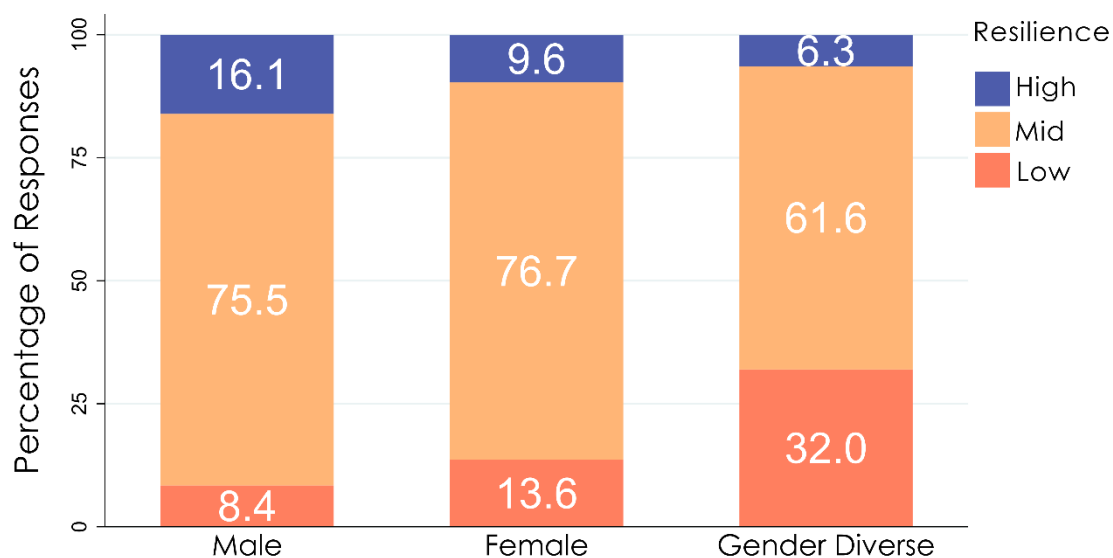


**FIGURE 64.** Percentage of responses for ratings of life satisfaction by school grade groups (grades 7-8, grades 9-10, and grades 11-12) in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The proportion of students reporting that they are thriving in grades 7-8 shows an upward trend between 2021 and 2022, before decreasing between 2022 and 2023 (thriving grades 7-8 – 2021: 30.0%, 2022: 31.6%, 2023: 30.5%). A similar proportion of students in grades 9-10 report that they are thriving across all three years (thriving grades 9-10 – 2021: 23.0%, 2022: 23.8%, 2023: 23.4%). The proportion of students reporting that they are thriving in grades 11-12 slightly increases between 2021 and 2022, and decreases in 2023 (thriving grades 11-12 – 2021: 19.4%, 2022: 21.0%, 2023: 19.8%). Across all three years, students in grades 7-8 represent the greatest proportion reporting that they are thriving, and students in grades 11-12 represent the smallest proportion.

# RESILIENCE

The measure of resilience reflects a combination of the student's sense of agency (their belief that they have what it takes to work towards a desired goal), their pathways ability (ability to imagine different practical ways to achieve these goals), and their life satisfaction. Raw values for each of these measures were combined and standardised based on 2022 data to create this new metric providing a nationally representative index of resilience. Of the secondary school students surveyed, 11.9% reported low resilience, 75.6% mid-range resilience, and 12.5% high resilience.

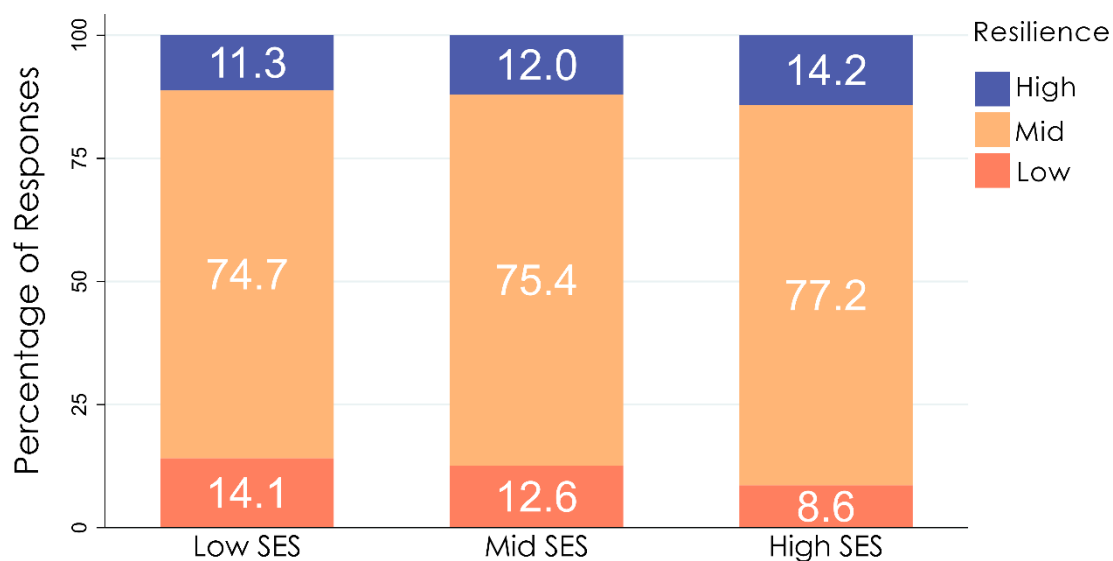
## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RESILIENCE



**FIGURE 65.** Percentage of responses for ratings of resilience in 2023 by gender. Rates of resilience are higher in male ( $M=51.58$ ,  $SD=8.27$ ) than in female ( $M=48.96$ ,  $SD=8.18$ ) and gender diverse ( $M=44.60$ ,  $SD=9.53$ ) secondary school students. Gender diverse students also show lower rates of resilience than female students.



## SES DIFFERENCES IN RESILIENCE



**FIGURE 66.** Percentage of responses for ratings of resilience in 2023 by SES category. Ratings of resilience are lowest in low SES areas ( $M=49.17$ ,  $SD=8.63$ ), followed by mid ( $M=49.73$ ,  $SD=8.43$ ) and then high ( $M=51.22$ ,  $SD=8.06$ ) SES areas, however all are within the normal range on average.



Secondary students think it is important to:

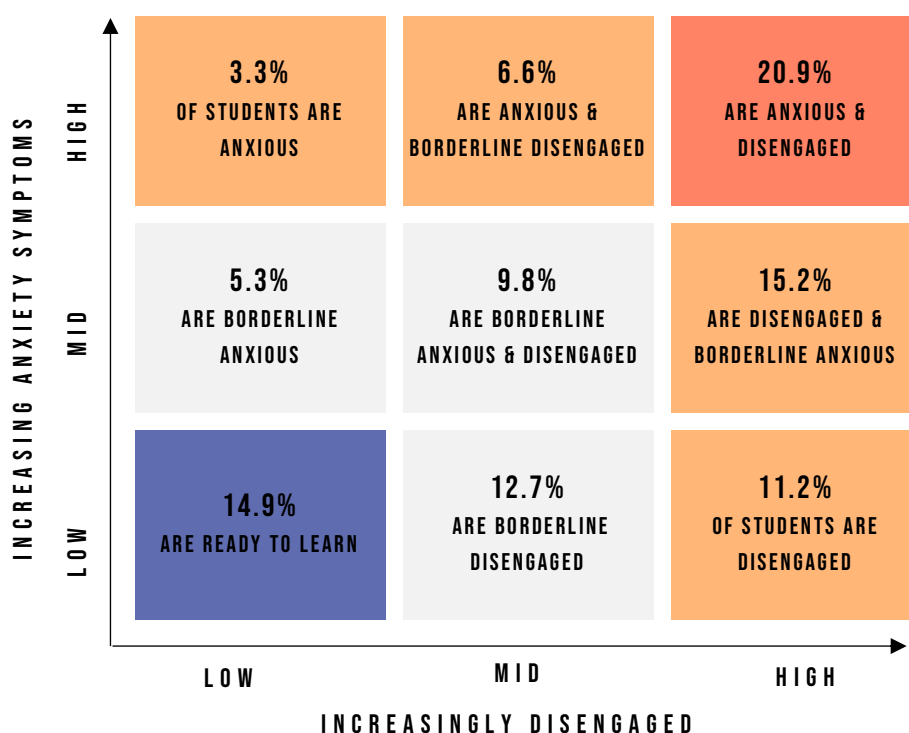
*“make every young person be very very veeerrry resilient”*

- 16 year old male student

## POSITIVE LEARNERS MINDSET

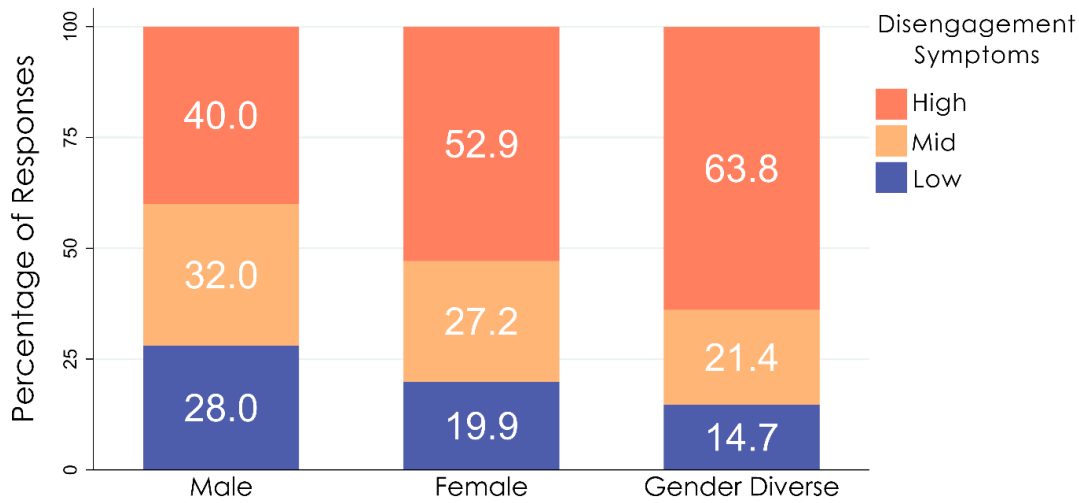
Beyond the mental wellbeing of students, positive learners mindset explores factors that may influence resilience building and engagement in the classroom. Disengagement reflects behaviour aimed at avoidance coping - avoiding thinking about, feeling, or doing difficult things as a coping mechanism.

The surveyed secondary school students report mean scores of disengagement ( $M=10.36$ ,  $SD=2.51$ ) within the 'moderate' range. As an indication of the positive learners mindset, reports of anxiety and disengagement were combined to create a unique indicator of a child's readiness to learn in the classroom (see Figure 39).



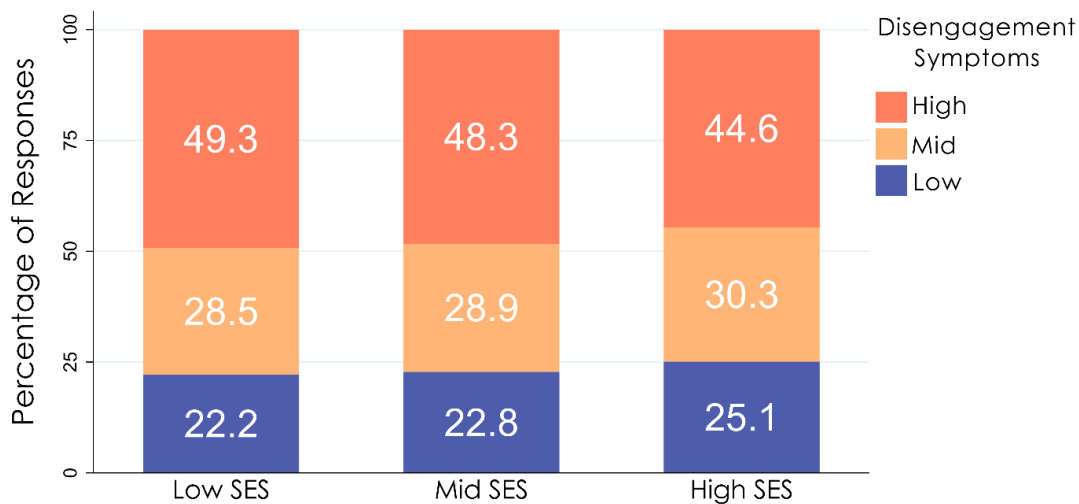
**FIGURE 67.** A graphical representation of positive learners mindset domains during 2023, indicated by combining scores on disengagement and anxiety. 14.9% of students have a 'ready to learn' mindset (low anxiety, low disengagement – shaded in blue). 27.8% of students are in a borderline range (moderate anxiety and/or disengagement - shaded in grey). **The learning mindset of 57.2% of secondary school students are at risk (high anxiety, disengagement, or both - shaded in orange).**

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DISENGAGEMENT**



**FIGURE 68.** Percentage of responses for ratings of disengagement in 2023 by gender. Levels of disengagement are in the mid range for male and female students, with male students reporting significantly lower disengagement symptoms (M=9.93, SD=2.39) than female students (M=10.67, SD=2.54). Gender diverse students report high levels of disengagement on average (M=11.40, SD=2.63), which are significantly higher than both males and females.

**SES DIFFERENCES IN DISENGAGEMENT**

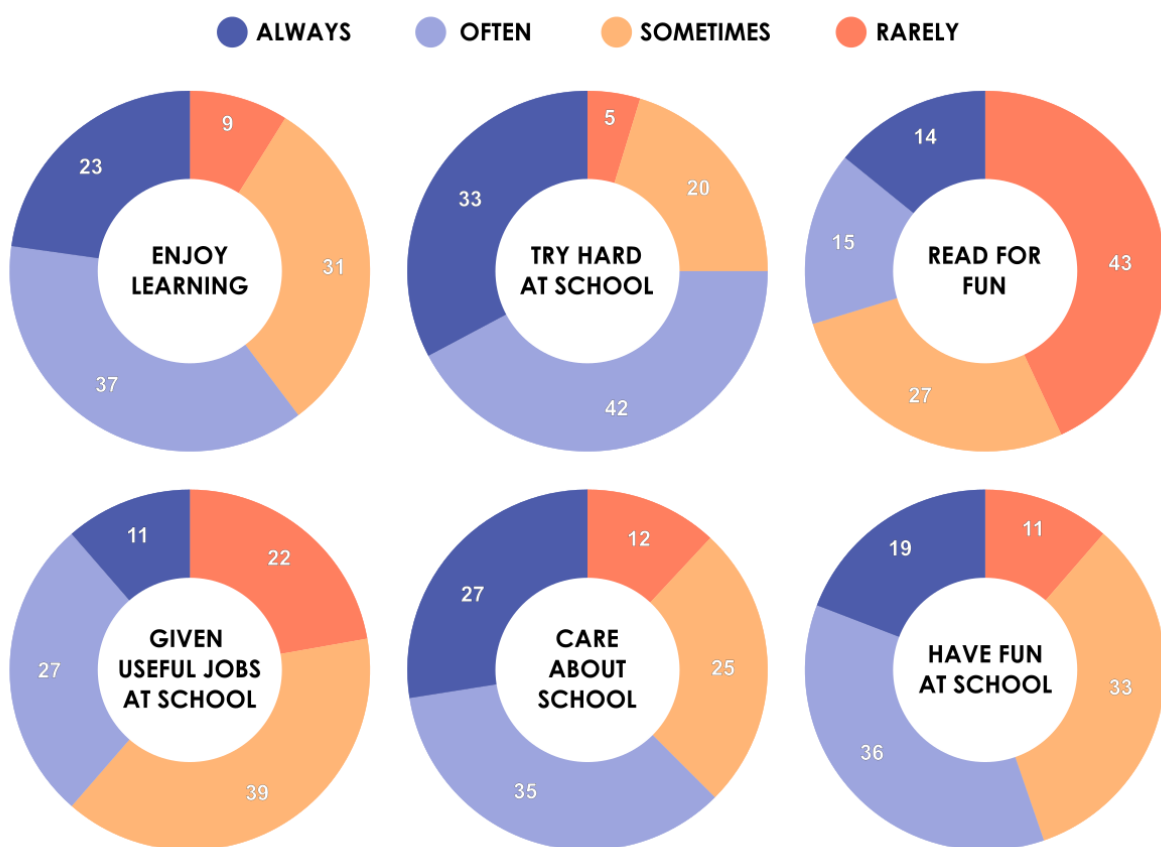


**FIGURE 69.** Percentage of responses for ratings of disengagement symptoms in 2023 by SES. Disengagement was similar across SES. However, students in low (M= 10.47, SD=2.53) SES areas show slightly higher levels of disengagement than mid (M=10.42, SD=2.51) SES and high (M=10.19, SD= 2.47) SES areas, with high SES areas showing the lowest levels of disengagement symptoms overall.

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

Feeling engaged is likely to influence student school performance, self-esteem, respect for themselves and others, and have a positive impact on building resilience. When students were asked about activities that foster engagement in a school environment, 7 in 10 secondary students report often or always trying hard at school, and 6 in 10 report often or always caring about their school.

Students reported their frequency of doing a range of learning engagement behaviours:



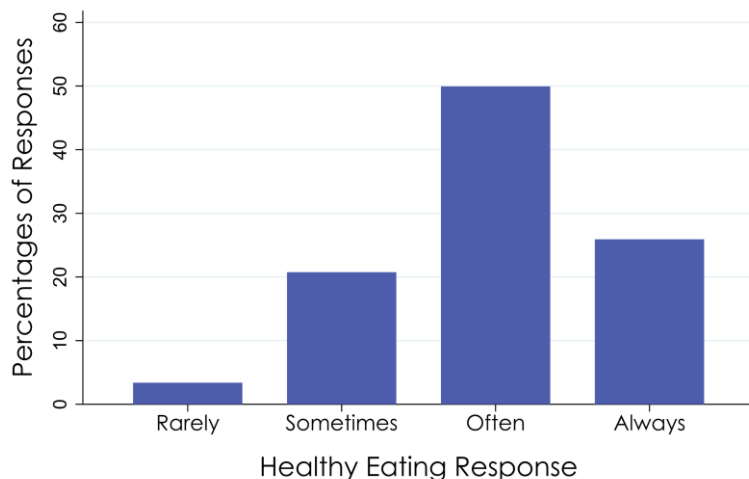
**FIGURE 70.** Percentages of responses for each category of learning engagement. Across student engagement items, 6-8 students out of 10 report often or always enjoying learning, trying hard at school, and caring about school. 5-6 out of 10 students report often or always having fun at school. Whereas only 4 students out of 10 report often or always being given useful jobs to do at school and only 3 in 10 report often or always reading for fun, with 4 in 10 students reporting rarely reading.

# HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 survey relating to key physical protective factors of resilience and wellbeing.

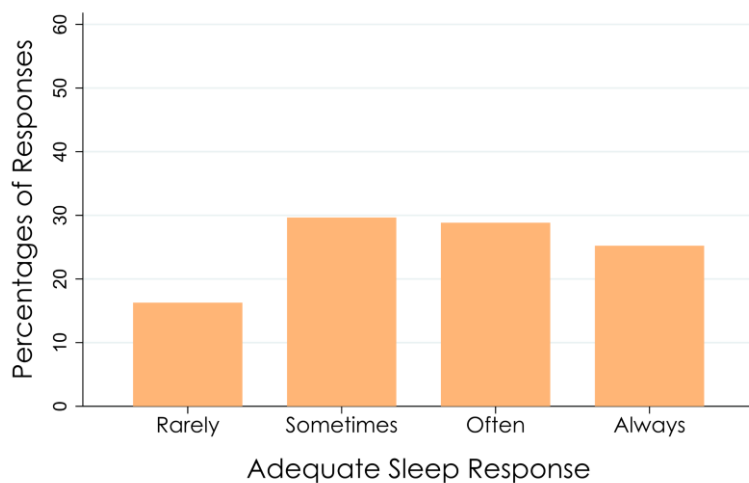
## HEALTHY EATING

**FIGURE 71.** Percentage of secondary student responses relating to frequency of healthy eating. 25.9% of students state they always (or almost always) eat healthy food, compared to 49.9% who report this often, 20.8% sometimes, and 3.4% of students who report to rarely (or never) eat healthily.



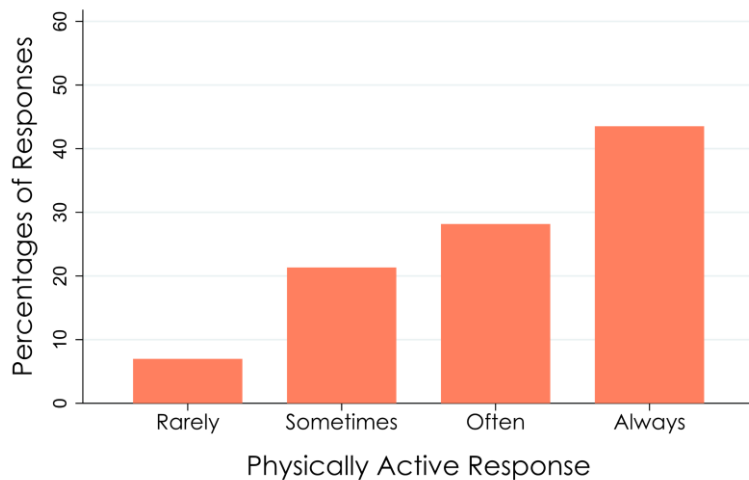
## ADEQUATE SLEEP

**FIGURE 72.** Percentage of student responses to obtaining at least 8 hours of sleep most nights. Results suggest that only 25.2% of students are obtaining adequate sleep consistently, with 28.8% often, 29.7% sometimes, and 16.3% of students reporting they rarely get 8 hours of sleep at night.



## PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

**FIGURE 73.** Percentage of student responses regarding being physically active for at least one hour each day. Results suggest that less than half (43.5%) of students are always physically active for at least one hour per day, with 28.2% reporting this behaviour often and 21.3% sometimes. Only 7.0% of students are rarely physically active.

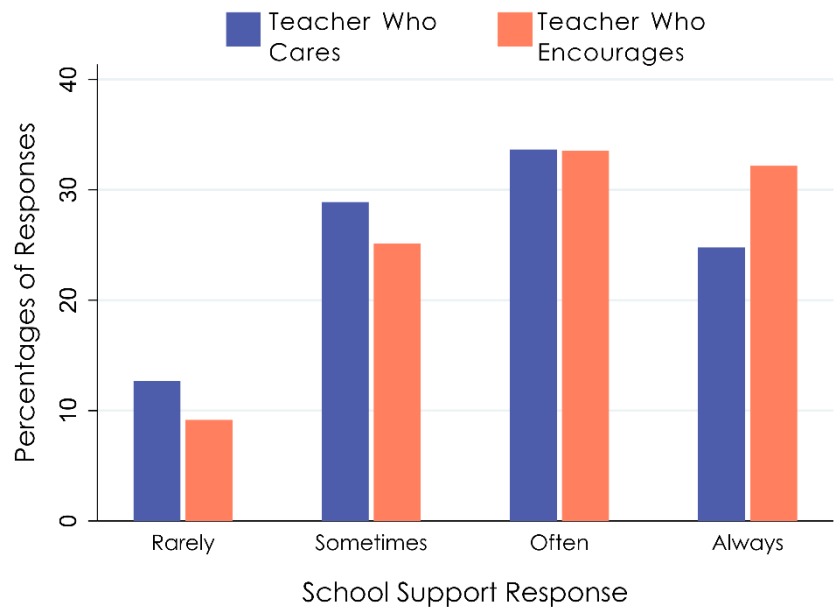


# SOCIAL SUPPORT

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 survey relating to aspects of social support. Feeling connected is associated with increased resilience and wellbeing.

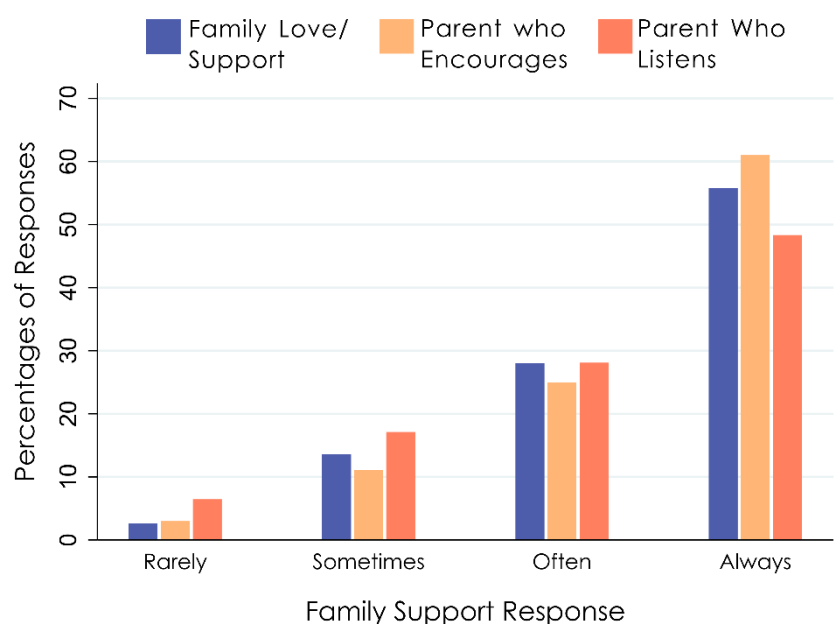
## PERCEIVED SCHOOL SUPPORT

**FIGURE 74.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of perceived school support: Having a teacher that cares about (blue) and/or encourages (red) them. Results suggest that around 3 in 10 students perceive to always or almost always have teacher support at school, being from a teacher who cares (24.8%) or encourages (32.2%).

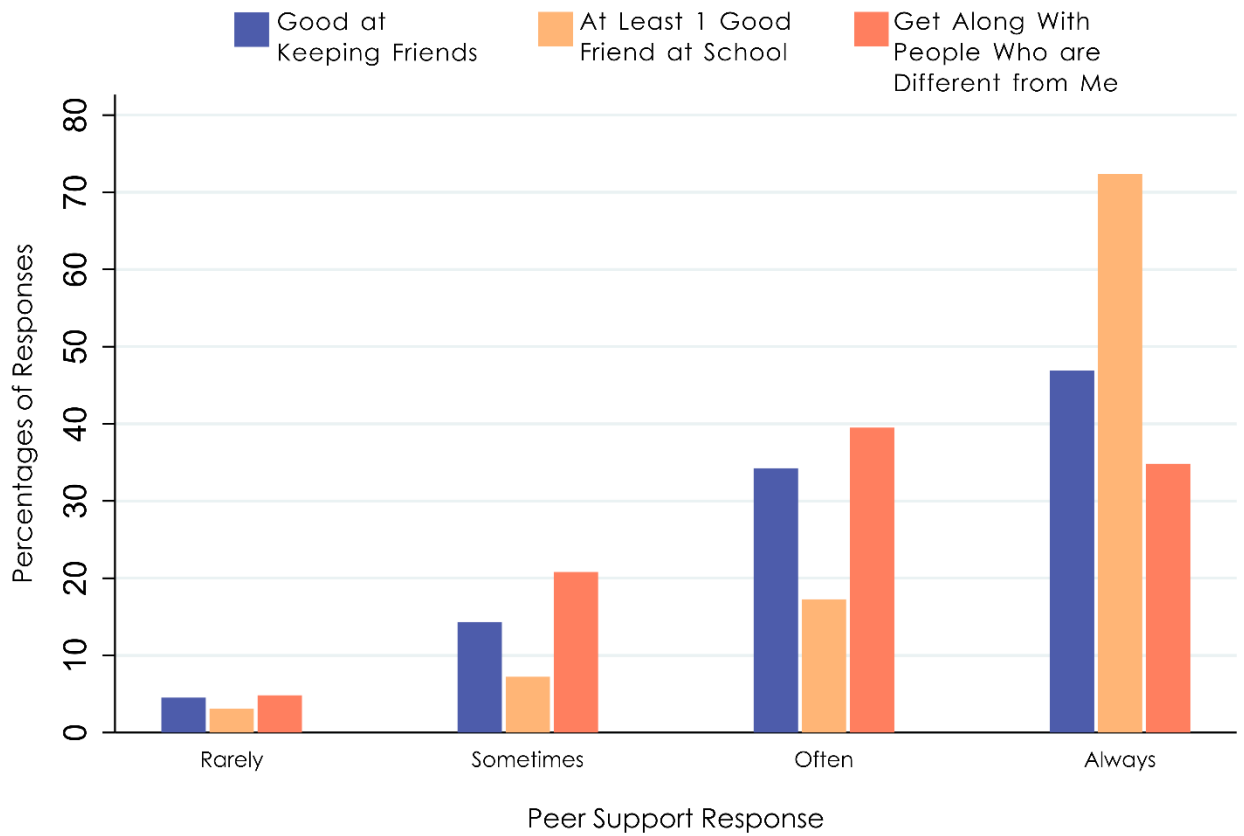


## PERCEIVED FAMILY SUPPORT

**FIGURE 75.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of perceived family support: Receiving love and support from family (blue) and having a parent/caregiver who encourages (orange) and who listens (red). Results suggest that the majority of students report always receiving family love/support (55.8%) and have a caregiver who encourages (61.0%). Around half of secondary students report having a caregiver who always listens to them (48.3%).



PERCEIVED PEER SUPPORT



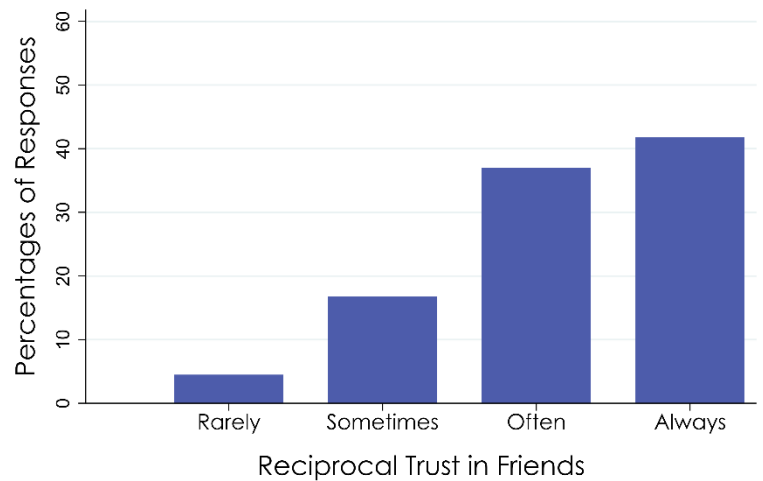
**FIGURE 76.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of perceived peer support: Good at keeping friends (blue), have at least one good friend at school (orange), and gets along with people who are different from them (red). Results suggest that just under half of secondary students are always good at keeping friends (46.9%). The majority of students perceive to always have at least one good friend at school (72.4%). and feel as if they often (39.5%) or always (34.8%) get along with people who are different from them.

# SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 survey relating to feelings toward personal and social capabilities. These social identity factors are important for self-awareness and self-management that are associated with resilience building.

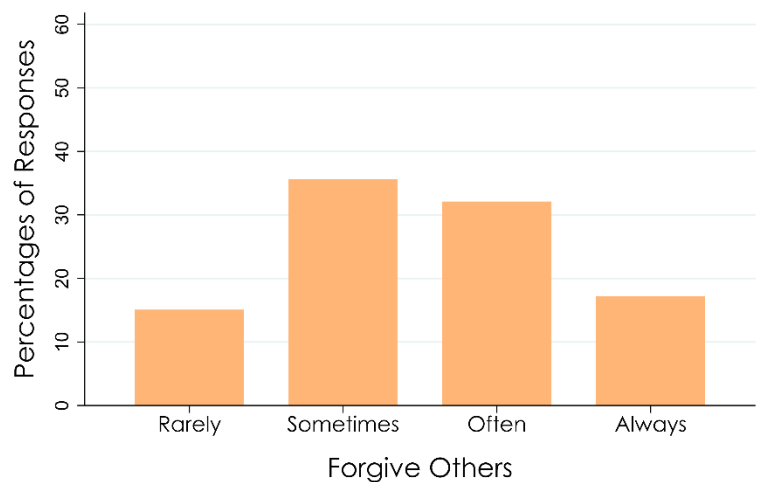
## RECIPROCAL TRUST

**FIGURE 77.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of reciprocal trust – of trusting and being trusted by their friends. Results suggest that overall, most students always (41.8%) or often (37.0%) experience reciprocal trust with their friends.



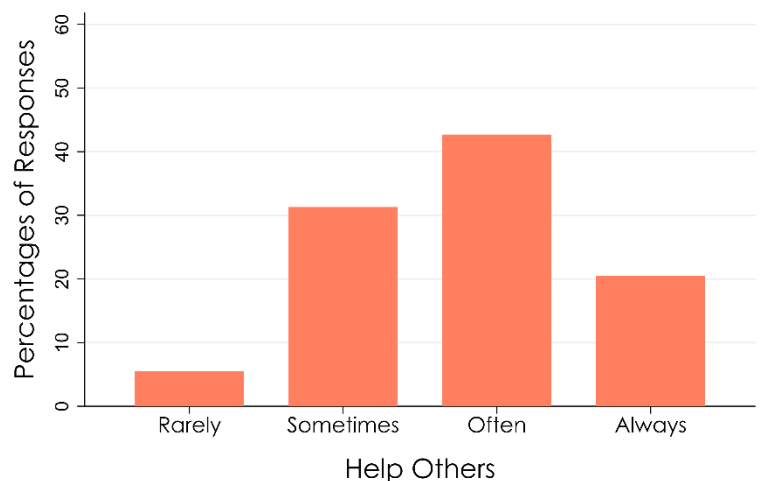
## FORGIVENESS

**FIGURE 78.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of forgiving others who are mean to them. Results suggest that overall, less than 1 in 5 students always (17.2%) and less than 1 in 3 often (32.1%) forgive others. Just over 1 in 3 sometimes (35.6%) forgive others who are mean to them.



## HELPFULNESS

**FIGURE 79.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of giving their time to help others. Only 1 in 5 students always (20.5%) help others, compared to 42.7% often and 31.3% sometimes helping others.



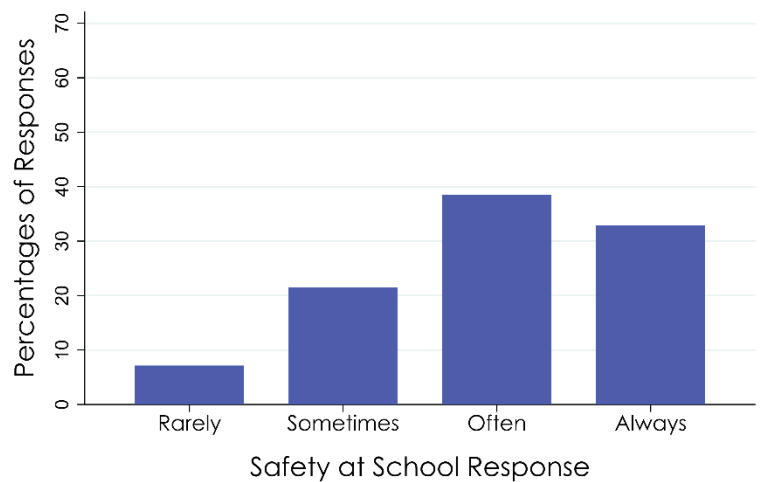


# SAFETY

The following are each descriptive analyses based on single items from the 2023 Resilience Survey items relating to safety factors in the student’s environment. Safety in different life contexts is essential to a sense of protection and resilience building.

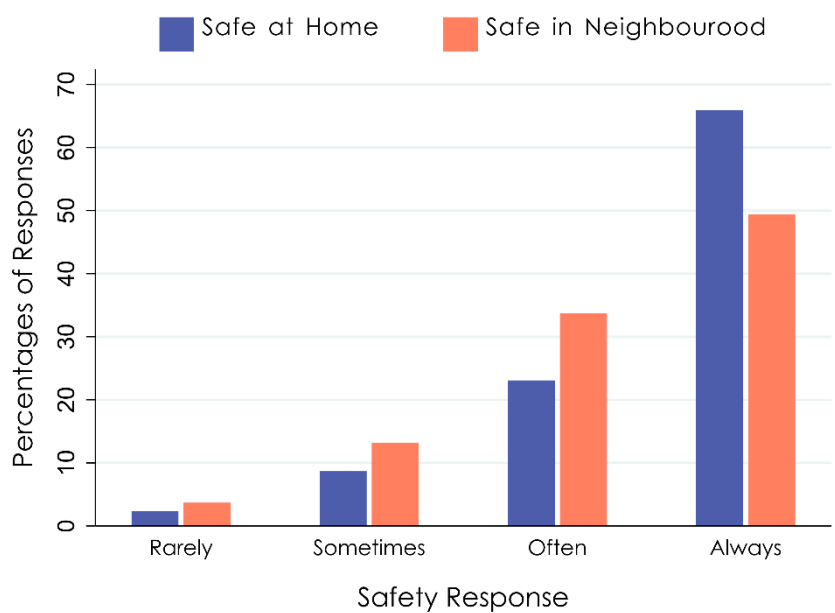
## SAFETY AT SCHOOL

**FIGURE 80.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of feeling safe at school. Results suggest that around 3 in 10 always (32.9%) feel safe, with 38.5% reporting feeling safe at school often, and 21.4% sometimes. 7.2% of students rarely feel safe in school.

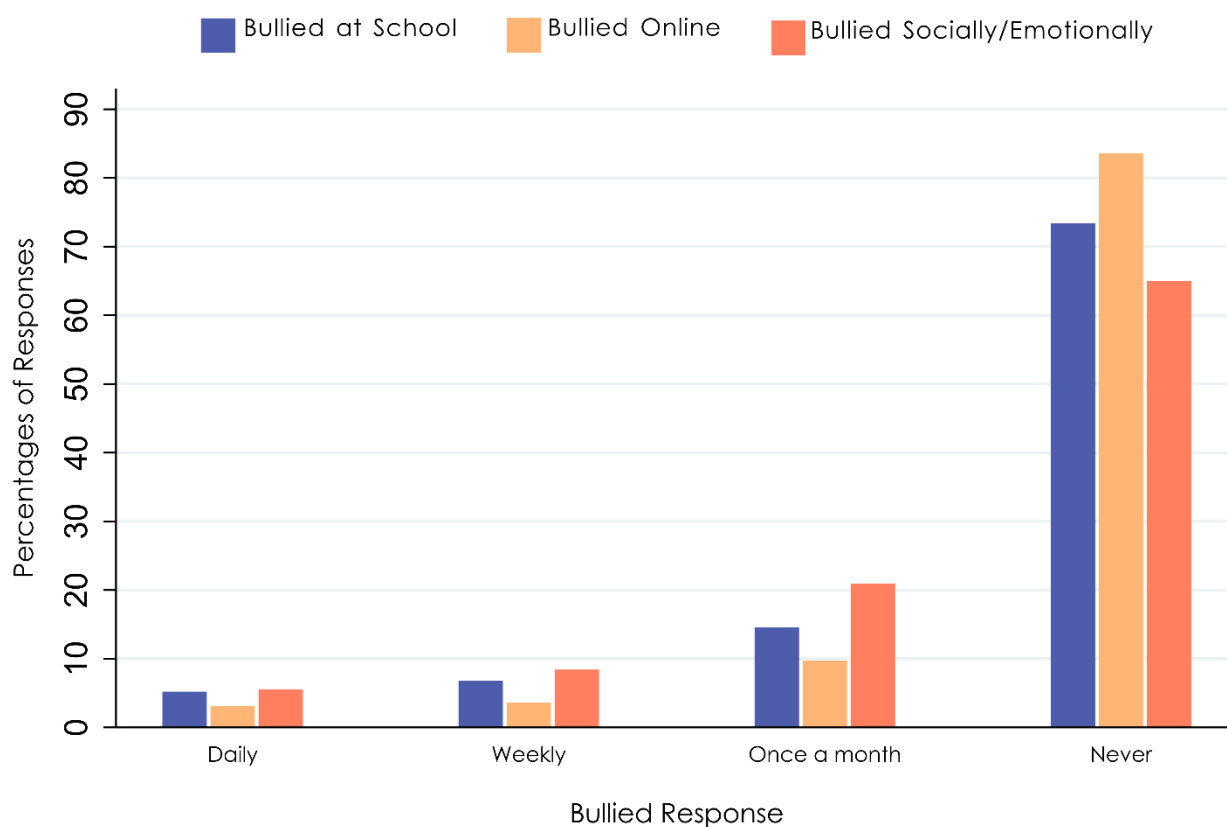


## SAFETY AT HOME

**FIGURE 81.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency of feeling safe at home (blue) and in their neighbourhood (red). Results suggest that the majority of students always feel safe at home (65.9%) and around half always feel safe in their neighbourhood (49.4%). 23.1% report feeling safe at home often and 8.7% sometimes; while 33.7% feel safe in their neighbourhood often and 13.2% only sometimes. 2.3% of students say they rarely feel safe at home and 3.7% in their neighbourhood.



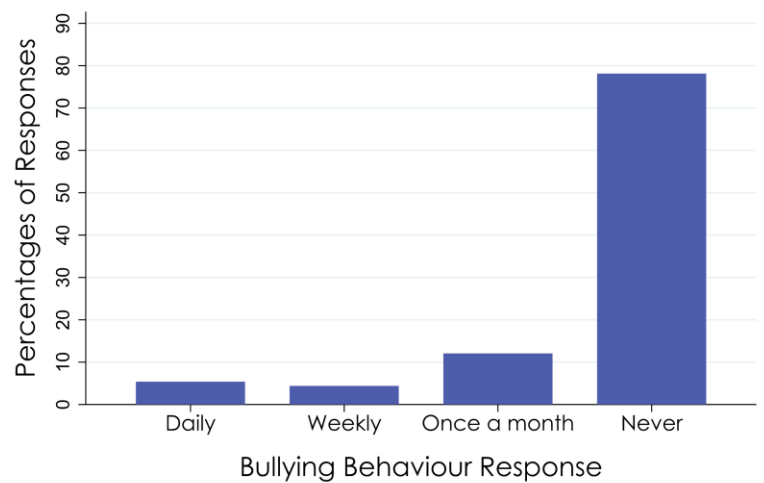
## EXPERIENCE OF BEING BULLIED



**FIGURE 82.** Percentage of secondary school student responses relating to frequency of being bullied at school (blue), being bullied online (orange), and experiencing social/emotional bullying such as being deliberately left out or having rumours spread about them (red). Results suggest that the majority of secondary school students report never being bullied at school (73.4%), online (83.6%), or socially/emotionally (65.0%). However, frequent bullying at school (monthly: 14.5%, weekly: 6.8%, daily: 5.2%), online (monthly: 9.7%, weekly: 3.6%, daily: 3.1%) and socially-emotionally (monthly: 21.0%, weekly: 8.4%, daily: 5.6%) is reported to occur in a significant minority of students.

## BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

**FIGURE 83.** Percentage of student responses relating to frequency with which they threaten to physically hurt someone within the previous month. 1.7% (n=1,270) of secondary school students did not respond to this question. Of those who did respond (n=76,123), results indicate that the majority of students (78.1%) never threaten physical harm. However, a significant minority threatened physical harm once a month (12.1%), weekly (4.4%), and daily (5.4%).



Secondary students say it would be helpful:

“For teachers to be more aware of bullying without students having the snitch”

- Female student, 14 years

*The student experience of bullying can be harrowing: “[I] get called either a slur, lesbian or emo each day by many or the same people. I don’t want anyone to feel shut in and closed by society like me, I want them to be happy for who they are and be able to express themselves without any trouble”*

- Female student, 12 years

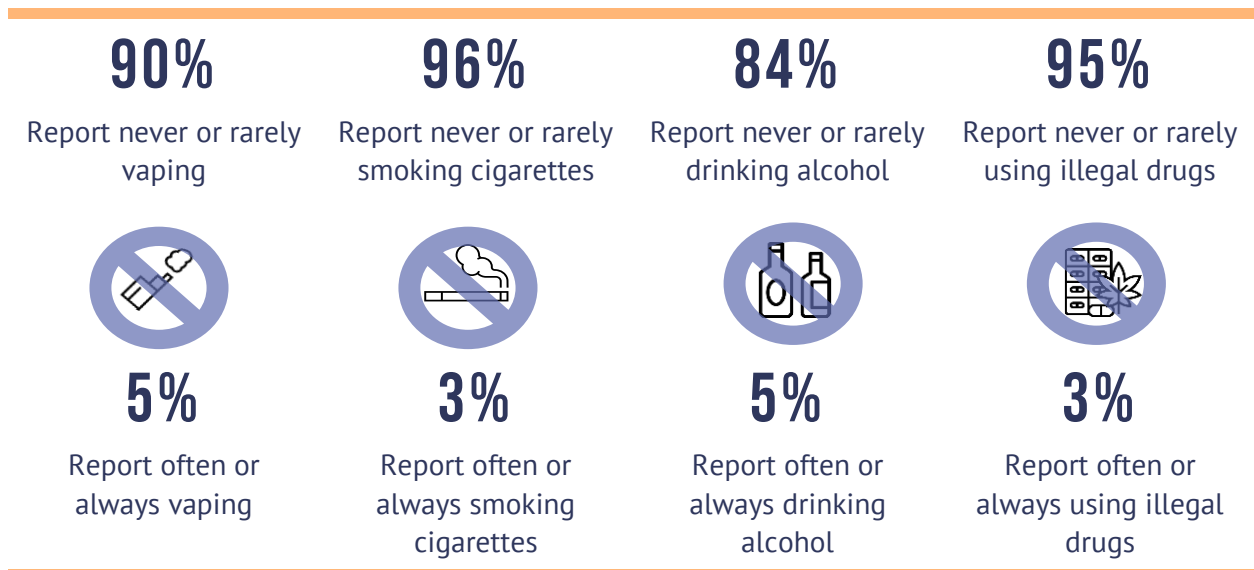
## RISKY BEHAVIOURS

The following provides a summary of substance use among secondary school students from the 2023 survey. Students were asked about their use of vaping/e-cigarettes, cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs. Responses ranged from never/rarely, to sometimes, often, and almost always/always. Responses of often and almost always/always were grouped together and classified as frequent use.

Of the secondary students surveyed in schools, 77.8% (n=60,181 students) were in grades 7 to 10, and 22.2% (n=17,221) were in grades 11 to 12. Responses are reported separately for these two school grade groups.

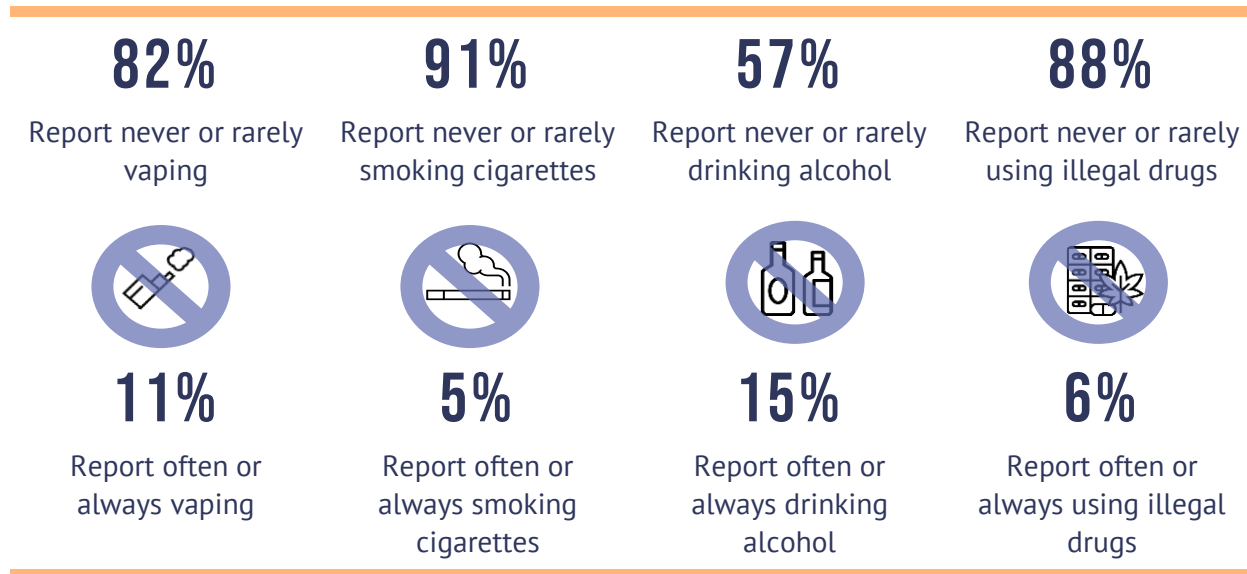
### SUBSTANCE USE AMONG STUDENTS IN GRADES 7 TO 10

Students in grades 7 to 10 reported using the following substances in 2023:



## SUBSTANCE USE AMONG STUDENTS IN GRADES 11 TO 12

Students in grades 11 to 12 reported using the following substances in 2023:



Students have a range of suggestions for substance use problems amongst their peers: *“Stop them from doing drugs and vaping and give them someone to talk to”*

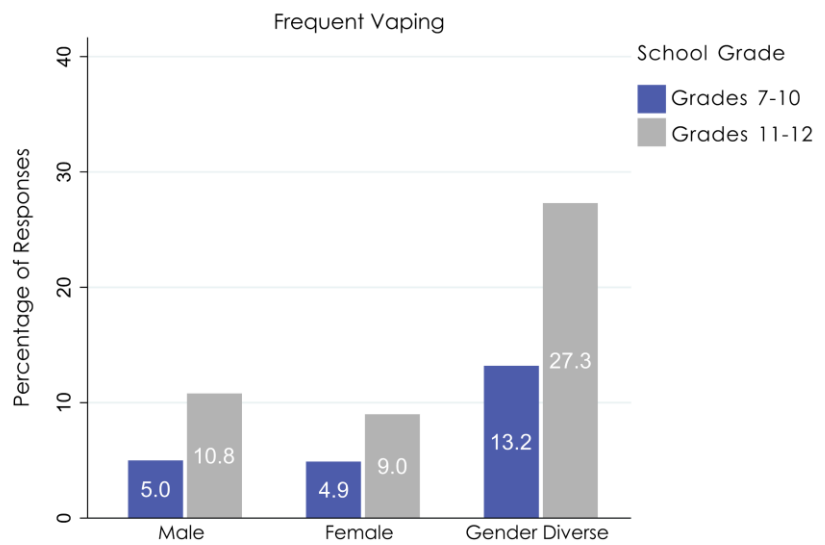
- Male student, 12 years

They want to: *“Get rid of vapes, bad drugs, cigarettes and other bad substances, as well as help people understand they do not need to impress others”*

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RISKY BEHAVIOURS FOR DIFFERENT SCHOOL GRADES

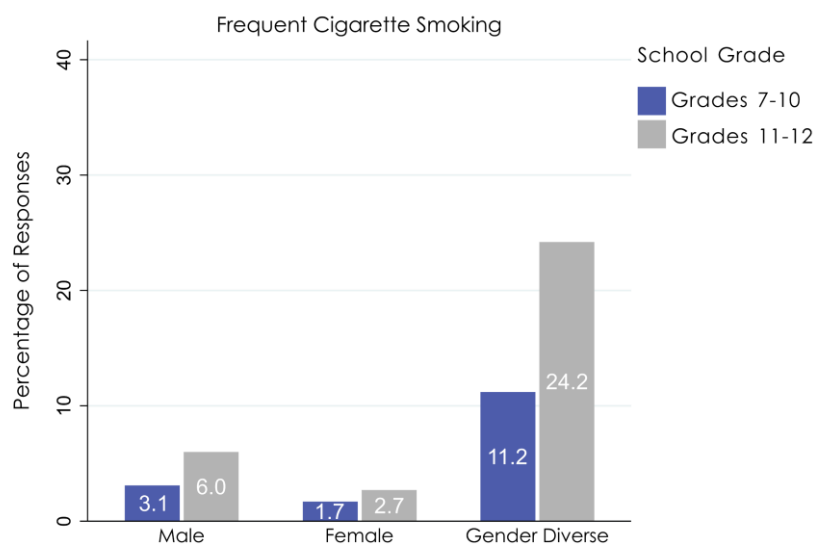
VAPING

**FIGURE 84.** Percentage of students reporting frequently (often or always) vaping/using e-cigarettes among students in grades 7-10 (blue), and grades 11-12 (grey), by gender. Across both grade groups, gender diverse students reported being more at risk of frequent vaping (grades 7-10: 13.2%; grades 11-12: 27.3%) than male (grades 7-10: 5.0%; grades 11-12: 10.8%) and female (grades 7-10: 4.9%; grades 11-12: 9.0%) students, who report a similar risk within grade groups. Among those who report sometimes vaping (not depicted), females (grades 7-10: 5.1%; grades 11-12: 8.6%) and gender diverse students (grades 7-10: 5.6%; grades 11-12: 5.9%) in grades 7-10 report more risk than males (grades 7-10: 3.8%; grades 11-12: 6.0%). Among those who sometimes vape in grades 11-12, females report the greater risk. The proportion of secondary school students frequently vaping in grades 11-12, relative to the proportion frequently vaping in grades 7-10, approximately doubles across all genders.



CIGARETTES

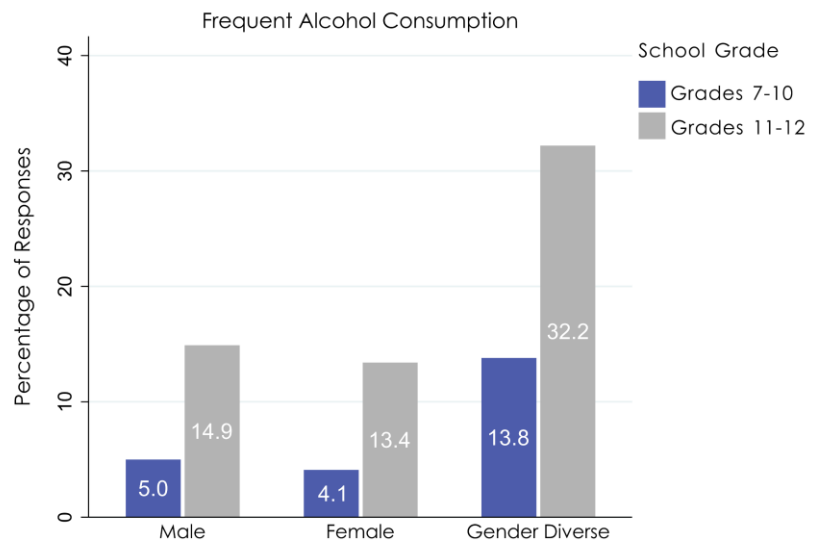
**FIGURE 85.** Percentage of students reporting frequently (often or always) smoking cigarettes among students in grades 7-10 (blue), and grades 11-12 (grey), by gender. Across both grade groups, gender diverse students reported being more at risk of frequent smoking (grades 7-10: 11.2%; grades 11-12: 24.2%) than male (grades 7-10: 3.1%; grades 11-12: 6.0%) and female (grades 7-10: 1.7%; grades 11-12: 2.7%) students. Female students report the lowest risk in both grade groups. Gender diverse students (grades 7-10: 3.6%; grades 11-12: 5.0%) also report higher risk of sometimes smoking cigarettes (not depicted) across both grade groups than males (grades 7-10: 1.5%; grades 11-12: 3.5%) and females (grades 7-10: 1.7%; grades 11-



12: 4.0%), the latter of whom report similar risk of smoking sometimes in both grade groups. The proportion of secondary school students frequently smoking cigarettes in grades 11-12, relative to the proportion frequently smoking in grades 7-10, is 1.6 times higher for female students and approximately doubles for male and gender diverse students.

## ALCOHOL

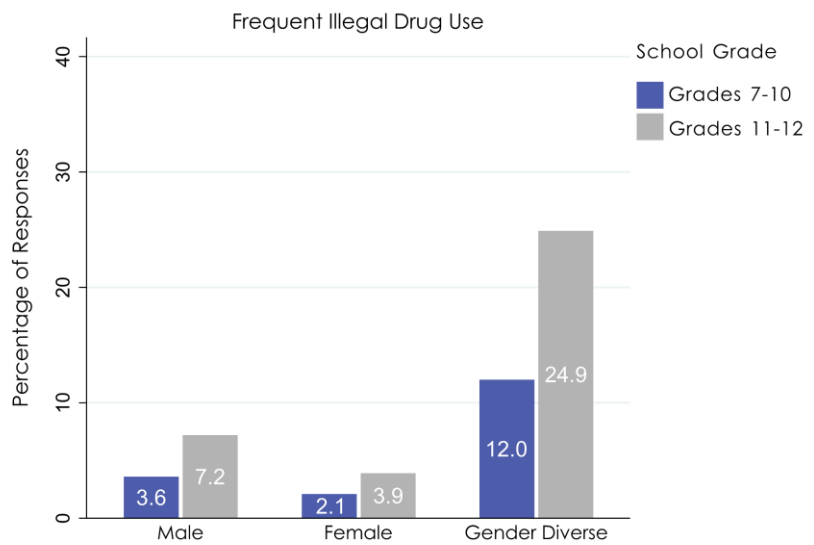
**FIGURE 86.** Percentage of students reporting frequently (often or always) drinking alcohol among students in grades 7-10 (blue), and grades 11-12 (grey), by gender. Across both grade groups, gender diverse students reported being more at risk of frequent alcohol consumption (grades 7-10: 13.8%; grades 11-12: 32.2%) than male (grades 7-10: 5.0%; grades 11-12: 14.9%) and female (grades 7-10: 4.1%; grades 11-12: 13.4%) students. Male students in grades 7-10 report



slightly higher risk of frequent alcohol consumption than female students, and males and females in grades 11-12 report similar risk. Among those who report sometimes consuming alcohol (not depicted), gender diverse (grades 7-10: 14.4%; grades 11-12: 18.7%) students report the greatest risk in grades 7-10, and the lowest risk in grades 11-12. Female (grades 7-10: 10.9%; grades 11-12: 31.8%) and male (grades 7-10: 10.2%; grades 11-12: 25.0%) students report similar risk of sometimes consuming alcohol in grades 7-10, and female students report greater risk than males in grades 11-12. The proportion of secondary school students frequently consuming alcohol in grades 11-12, relative to the proportion frequently consuming alcohol in grades 7-10, approximately triples for male and female students, and doubles for gender diverse students.

**ILLEGAL DRUGS**

**FIGURE 87.** Percentage of students reporting frequently (often or always) using illegal drugs among students in grades 7-10 (blue), and grades 11-12 (grey), by gender. Across both grade groups, gender diverse students reported being more at risk of frequent drug use (grades 7-10: 12.0%; grades 11-12: 24.9%) than male (grades 7-10: 3.6%; grades 11-12: 7.2%) and female (grades 7-10: 2.1%; grades 11-12: 3.9%) students. Male students in both



grade groups report higher risk of frequent drug use than female students. Among those who report sometimes using illegal drugs (not depicted), gender diverse (grades 7-10: 3.2%; grades 11-12: 5.8%) students report the greatest risk in grades 7-10. Female (grades 7-10: 1.9%; grades 11-12: 5.5%) and male (grades 7-10: 1.8%; grades 11-12: 5.8%) students report similar risk of sometimes using drugs in grades 7-10, and all genders report similar risk of sometimes using drugs in grades 11-12. The proportion of secondary school students frequently using illegal drugs in grades 11-12, relative to the proportion frequently using illegal drugs in grades 7-10, approximately doubles for all genders.



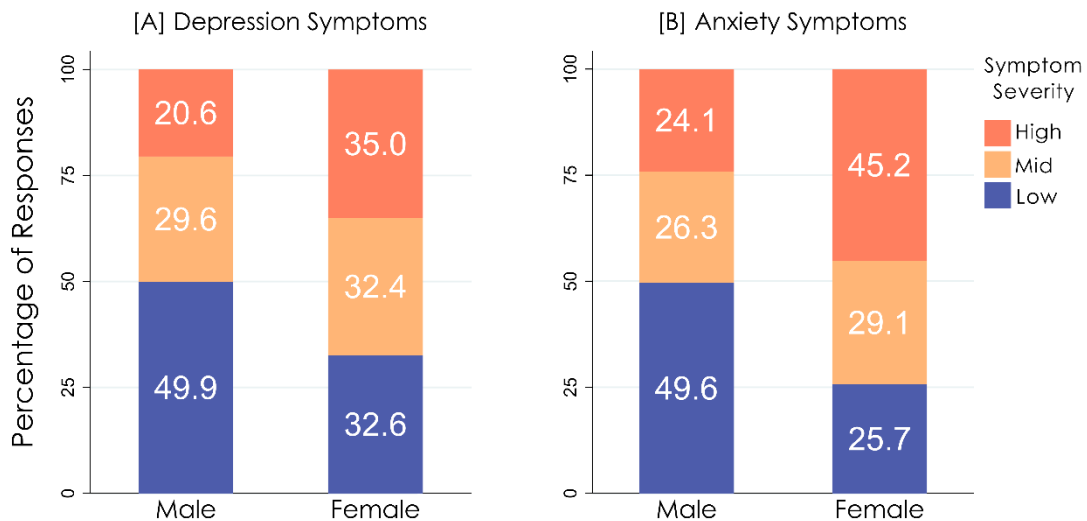
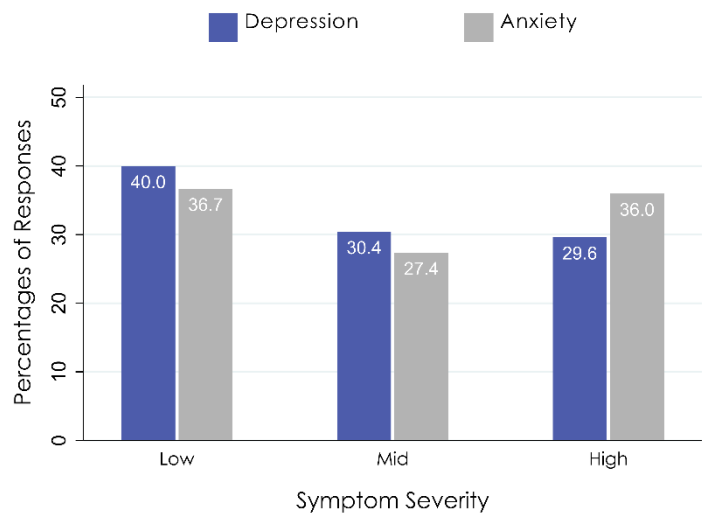


# FIRST NATIONS SNAPSHOT

The following provides a snapshot of data from the 2023 survey relating specifically to wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Of the secondary students surveyed in schools, 5.4% (n=4,212 students) identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (M=13.83 years, SD=1.71). 46.6% of these students identified as female, 46.6% identified as male, and 6.9% self-reported as “Other” and/or preferred not to report gender identity.

## DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

**FIGURE 88.** Percentage of responses relating to depression (blue) and anxiety (grey) symptoms in 2023. Average scores for First Nations children show depression (M=4.38, SD=2.02) and anxiety scores (M=4.61, SD=2.18) in the mid-range.

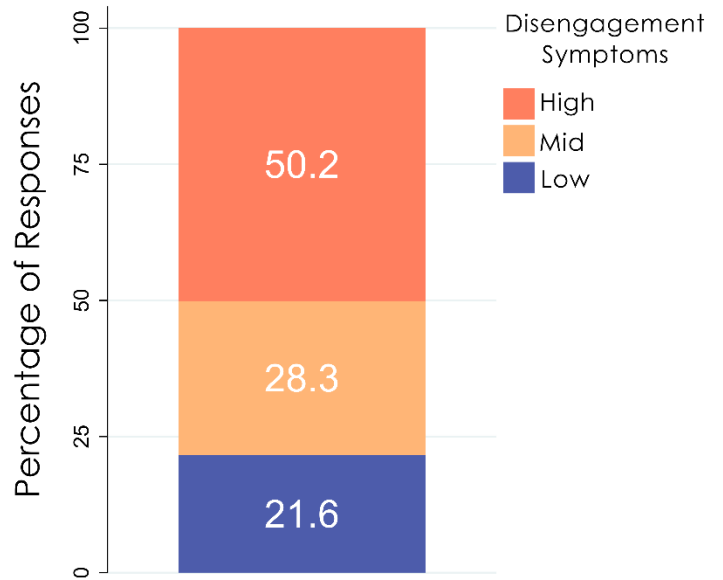


**FIGURE 89.** Percentage of responses relating to (A) depression and (B) anxiety symptoms by gender in 2023.

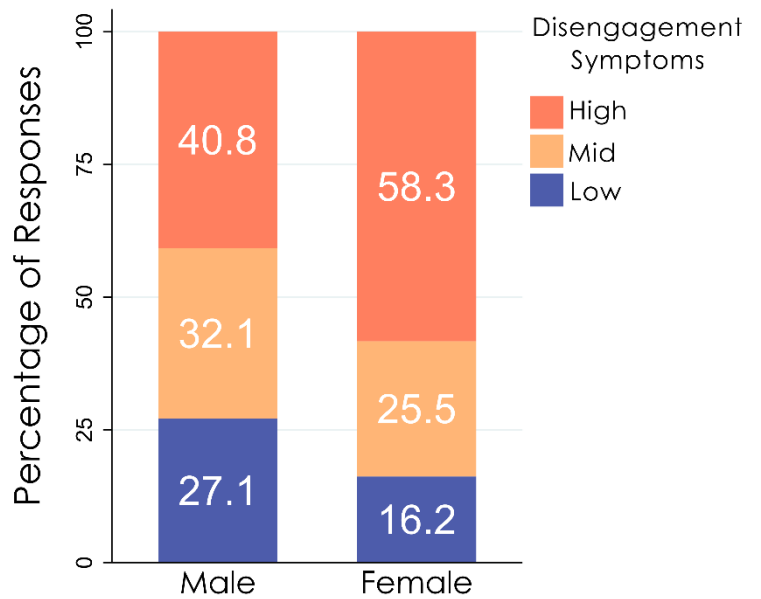
Female students display significantly higher ratings of depression (M=4.68, SD=1.97) and anxiety (M=5.15, SD=2.12) symptoms compared to male students (depression symptoms: M=3.91, SD=1.91; anxiety symptoms: M=3.93, SD=2.01). *N.B.* As only 260 students self-reported as gender diverse, this category has not been included in these figures. This is to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.

**DISENGAGEMENT**

**FIGURE 90.** Percentage of responses relating to disengagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students in 2023. Average scores for disengagement (M=10.59, SD=2.59) are in the mid-range. *N.B. A lower disengagement score is indicative of a more positive outcome.*

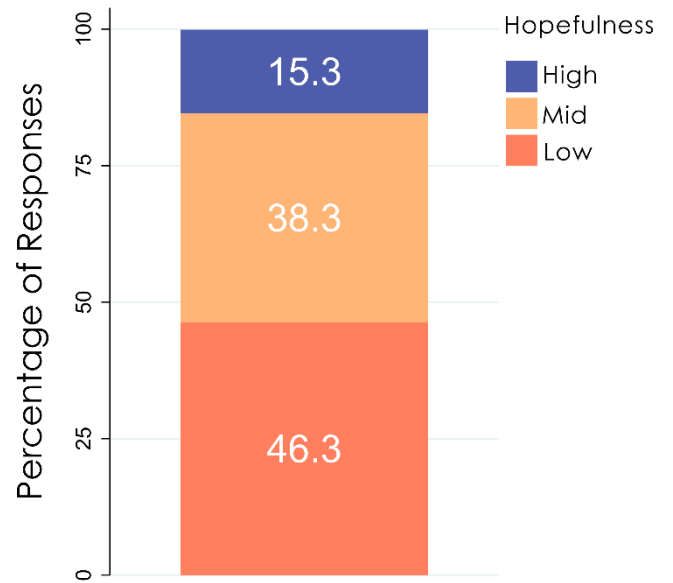


**FIGURE 91.** Percentage of responses relating to disengagement by gender in 2023. Female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students display significantly higher rates of disengagement (M=11.05, SD= 2.58) compared to male students (M=10.04, SD=2.45). *N.B. As only 260 students self-reported as gender diverse, this category has not been included in these figures. This is to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.*



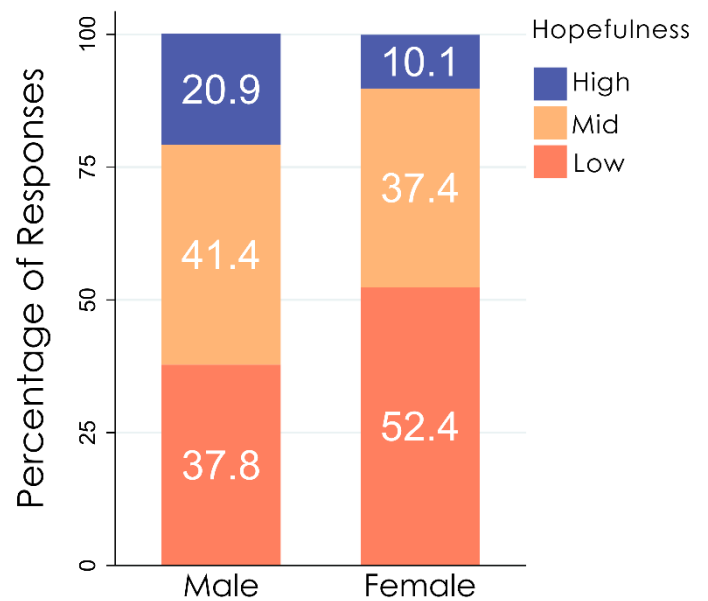
HOPEFULNESS

**FIGURE 92.** Percentage of responses relating to hopefulness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students. Average scores for hopefulness (M=19.74, SD=7.13) are in the mid-range. *N.B. A higher hopefulness score is indicative of a more positive outcome.*



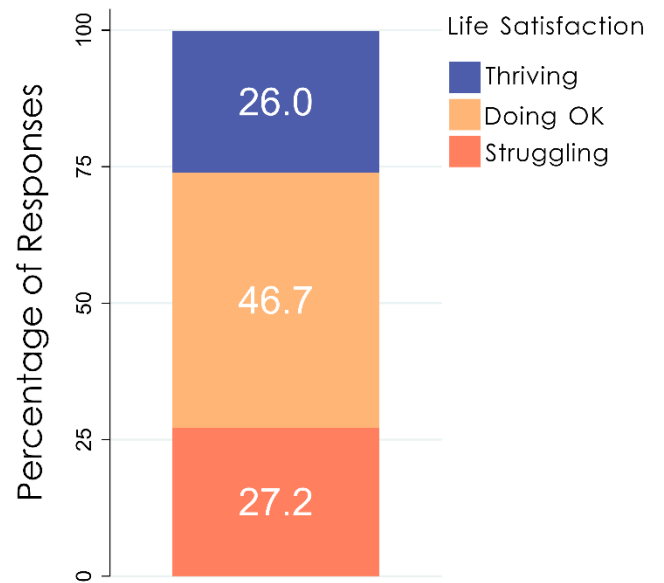
**FIGURE 93.** Percentage of responses relating to hopefulness by gender in 2023. Female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students (M=18.72, SD= 6.52) display lower rates of hopefulness compared to male students (M=21.19, SD=7.20).

*N.B. As only 260 students self-reported as gender diverse, this category has not been included in these figures. This is to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.*



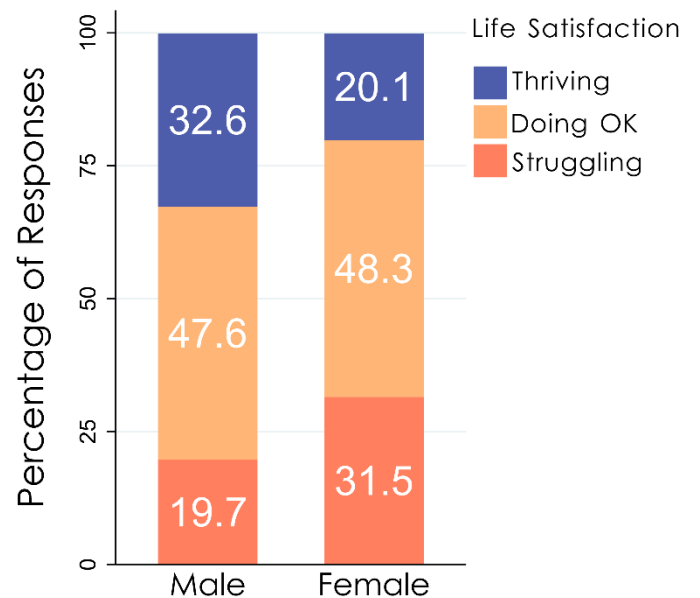
LIFE SATISFACTION

**FIGURE 94.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students. Struggling (red) refers to wellbeing that is at risk. Doing OK (orange) indicates wellbeing that is moderate. Thriving (blue) reflects wellbeing that is strong, consistent, and progressing. Results indicate that only around one quarter (26.0%) of First Nations secondary school students report they were ‘thriving’ in 2023. Average scores for life satisfaction are in the ‘doing ok’ range (M=5.39, SD=1.71).



**FIGURE 95.** Percentage of responses for each category of life satisfaction in 2023 by gender in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students. Male students report higher rates of life satisfaction (M=5.74, SD=1.61) than female students (M=5.18, SD=1.62).

*N.B. As only 260 students self-reported as gender diverse, this category has not been included in these figures. This is to avoid misrepresentation of this group at a national level based on a small sample.*



For First Nations students it is important to *“Have a few places in school to go to that you can feel safe, and have more of a voice.”*

- Female student, 12 years, Aboriginal

And to *“Strengthen their strategies of coping. So that no matter what they are going through, they’d be able to cope with it and find their own ways out.”*

- Female student, 14 years, Aboriginal

# CONCLUSIONS

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*Each year, the Resilience Survey provides a measure of child and youth perspectives on many aspects of their wellbeing, including mental health, learning engagement, hope, life satisfaction, healthy behaviour and social behaviour, as well as perceived support from their surrounding environment. This year, a new measure of resilience has also been included. The 2023 results from almost 140,000 primary and secondary students in all states and territories identifies key areas of strengths and deficit amongst Australia's children and youth. This large-scale annual measure provides critical and current knowledge to evaluate overall child and youth wellbeing in Australia, as well as guide policy and community practice.*

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## MENTAL WELLBEING

Amongst the areas of major concern, child and youth mental health outcomes show a large proportion of primary and secondary students reporting high symptoms of depression and anxiety. For primary school students, around 21% report high anxiety, and 15% high depression. Combined, more than 1 in 4 primary school students report high anxiety, depression or both. For secondary school students, around 31% report high anxiety, and 21% high depression, with slightly more than 1 in 3 reporting high anxiety, depression or both overall. Amongst secondary school students, female mental health is reported at higher risk compared to males – 15% of males vs 26% of females report high depression, and 19% of males vs 40% of females report high anxiety.

When considering positive measures of wellbeing, around 3 in 4 primary students report being moderately to highly hopeful, with 1 in 4 reporting low hope. Amongst secondary students, 1 in 5 report high hope and 1 in 3 low hope. When it comes to overall life satisfaction, 45% of primary students and 27% of secondary students report themselves to be “thriving”, compared to 14% and 22% respectively reporting to struggle in life.

In 2023, a new measure of resilience was included in the report, which combines elements of hopefulness with feelings of life satisfaction. Ratings of resilience suggest around 9 in 10 of all students display normal to high resilience. When comparing males and females on all positive

measures, males consistently report slightly greater wellbeing. The one exception was for ratings of life satisfaction amongst primary students which were very similar between males and females.

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*The overall results for mental wellbeing suggest that Australian children and youth are facing very significant challenges to mental health, but despite this maintain a degree of hope and resilience. This resilience, despite the adversity being faced, is critical to acknowledge and leverage to prevent further decline in mental health and to promote improvements through strategic intervention.*

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### FIRST NATIONS

The report included responses from almost 7500 students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Reports of wellbeing amongst this group suggested similar levels of concern for symptoms of depression and anxiety, hope and life satisfaction, suggesting a high need to provide culturally appropriate strategies to help students deal with the challenges they face. Of further concern was the consistent pattern of poorer wellbeing amongst female students compared to male. Almost half Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students report high life satisfaction, however around 1 in 5 say they are struggling. For secondary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, a similar proportion (around 1 in 4) report thriving and struggling in life, with the remainder reporting they are 'doing OK'.

### GENDER DIVERSE

Although gender diverse students represent a much smaller proportion of the population, they still represent a considerable number of individuals (4.2% overall in this report, or over 5,000 students). Students not identifying as male or female report the poorest wellbeing, with levels of high depression and anxiety symptoms, low hope, and life satisfaction in the 'struggling' range at around twice the rate of other students. This difference was most marked amongst secondary students, where often around half or more of gender diverse students reported outcomes in the poorest range (e.g. high depression, low hopefulness, etc.). Given the large overall sample size in this report, it provides a unique window into the wellbeing of these students, and emphasises the need for policy makers, health care professionals, educators and parents to be aware of this elevated risk. It is also important to ensure that such students can equally access necessary

support, and that efforts are made to understand the potentially unique needs of such students when addressing wellbeing.

### CHANGES OVER TIME

When comparing wellbeing ratings in 2023 with reports from 2022 and 2021, primary school students overall demonstrate a slight worsening of symptoms between 2021 and 2023, whereas secondary students tend to show relatively stable reports, and in some cases slight improvement, across these years. While rates of high problems appear to have remained relatively similar between grades 3 and 4 versus grades 5 and 6 students, it is notable that despite a consistent level of high mental health problems in secondary students across years, the rate substantially increases from grades 7 and 8, to grades 9 and 10, to being greatest in grades 11 and 12 students.

Something easy to overlook in this report is the large proportion of students reporting symptoms of wellbeing in the middle, or moderate range. The extent of this means around half or more of all students report to be in the extreme or moderate category for symptoms such as depression and anxiety, and that any further deterioration of child and youth mental health would potentially push an even larger number of students into the extreme categories. Further to this point is that mental health symptoms in primary school students over the past three years are declining slightly with each year, potentially exacerbating the large jump in concerning symptoms observed for secondary students into the future.

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*Overall, reports of mental wellbeing show students are facing significant challenges, and that for a large proportion this extends to their sense of hope and life satisfaction. Despite this, many students still feel a healthy level of resilience and an ability to find ways to overcome problems in life. Beyond the concern that the reported levels of poor wellbeing present generally, patterns of particular concern include the deterioration of wellbeing on most measures in secondary compared to primary students. Also, the state of wellbeing reported by females is significantly worse compared to males, and even more so for children identifying as gender diverse.*

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### LEARNING ENGAGEMENT

When it comes to approaches to learning, at least 2 in 5 students from both primary and secondary school report to be disengaged. These rates are similar between males and females in primary school, however secondary school females report around a 10% greater proportion of high disengagement compared to males. Patterns are very similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; however, gender diverse students typically report greatest disengagement irrespective of age. In contrast to the high level of general disengagement reported, the vast majority of primary students report school to be a fun environment, where they try hard and enjoy learning. For secondary students, reports of learning engagement and enjoyment decline substantially.

A unique metric of each Resilient Youth: State of the Nation report is the combination of reported disengagement and anxiety as a measure of learning readiness – called Positive Learners Mindset. Amongst primary students almost 1 in 5 report very high Positive Learners Mindset (i.e., low anxiety and low disengagement) and just over 1 in 10 report very low Positive Learners Mindset (high anxiety and high disengagement). Amongst secondary students the opposite order is seen, with around 1 in 6 reporting very high Positive Learners Mindset and 1 in 5 reporting very low scores.

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*When it comes to engagement and learning, most primary students in Australia are engaged, and both enjoy and try hard at school. By secondary school, the majority of students report being disengaged, and the level of enjoyment in school and learning substantially drops. Levels of disengagement tend to be higher for females compared to males, and highest for gender diverse students.*

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### SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT & CAPABILITIES

In 2023 most students report feeling safe and supported by family, peers and their teachers. Between 8-9 out of 10 primary and secondary students report having loving, encouraging families who listen, with a similar but smaller number reporting to have teachers who care and encourage them, and having close friends and maintaining friendships. Around 3 in 4 of all students say they frequently get on well with others who are different from themselves.



Amongst all students, 8 in 10 report trusting friends and being trusted by them, with at least half of students frequently forgiving others who are mean to them. About 3 in 4 of primary students say they frequently give their time to help others, compared to about 6 in 10 secondary students.

Around 9 in 10 of all students frequently feel safe at home, with a similar number of primary students feeling safe at school. Comparatively, around 7 in 10 secondary students frequently feeling safe at school. Over 8 in 10 primary and secondary students frequently feel safe in their local neighbourhood. Although the majority of students report never experiencing social and/or emotional bullying, or being bullied specifically at school or online, more than a third of all students experience some form of social or emotional bullying such as being left out of a group of friends on purpose, being ignored, or had rumours spread about them. 1 in 3 primary students and 1 in 4 secondary students report bullying at school, and up to 1 in 5 of all students experience bullying through online media.

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*Students in Australia largely feel safe in their local environments, reporting supportive families, teachers and peers. Students also tend to show relatively positive social behaviour in general. Despite this, a large proportion of students in both primary and secondary school experience bullying of some form.*

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### HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR

Most students report regular healthy eating and physical activity, with 7-8 in 10 students always or often eating healthily and frequently reporting at least 1 hour of physical activity each day. Fewer students report frequently getting at least 8 hours of sleep on most nights, with 7 in 10 primary students and only slightly more than half of secondary students reporting this often or always.

Amongst secondary students, additional questions about the use of unhealthy or illegal substances were asked, with most students reporting to never use these substances. Amongst students from grades 7-10, 5% report frequent vaping and/or drinking alcohol and 3% report regular cigarette smoking and/or use of other illegal drugs. For grades 11-12 students 11% report frequent vaping, 15% report frequent drinking of alcohol. 5% of these students reporting regular cigarette smoking and 6% frequent use of other illegal drugs. The use of substances was generally similar between males and females, however gender diverse students appear to be at a much greater risk of frequent substance use.

*The majority of Australian students maintain relatively healthy lifestyles, although there is particular room for improvement when it comes to the use of illegal substances amongst secondary school students, as well as sleep practices overall – with a large number of students failing to report adequate sleep on a regular basis.*

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### FINAL COMMENTS

The *Resilient Youth: State of the Nation Report* provides a snapshot of wellbeing amongst Australia's children and youth. The reports from Australian students in 2023 continue to demonstrate a significant need for greater attention and action regarding student mental health. These challenges extend to how satisfied students feel about life and the level of hopefulness they demonstrate. Importantly, in the face of such challenges to their wellbeing, students remain relatively resilient. It will be critical to take advantage of this mindset before further deterioration in wellbeing becomes apparent, as the resilience and sense of agency children currently retain provides an important resource to leverage for improvement in subsequent years.

The imperative of this call to action is perhaps accentuated by the large proportion of students reporting moderate symptoms on many wellbeing measures. Particularly amongst primary students, there is evidence that those reporting moderate symptoms has remained relatively stable over recent years, but that the proportion reporting problematic or at-risk symptoms is growing while those in the most favourable ranges are declining. Overall, this suggests an equal rate of children moving from the most favourable into the moderate or middle range and moving from this middle range into the least favourable range. Given the considerable deterioration of mental health and wellbeing symptoms reported by secondary students compared to primary students overall, a continuation of this trend will inevitably place an even greater need for wellbeing intervention at the secondary school level. A concerted effort to address wellbeing at an earlier age may be the best strategy to mitigate increasing youth mental health problems at a population level.

The findings in this report also provide a unique window into groups amongst the student population facing different levels of risk. It was clear throughout the report that for the most part female students are at slightly greater risk of poor wellbeing compared to males, and that gender diverse students, despite being a very small proportion of the population, are at considerably elevated wellbeing and health risk. Socioeconomic status (SES) demonstrated the expected trend

of worse outcomes with lower SES ranking, however changes across levels were often very small, and certainly not to the same extent as seen across different genders. A positive finding was that amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the level of risk for poor outcomes was very similar to all students. It is difficult to speculate on the contrast between this and other national reports, however it is important note that this report is based on responses from children and youth attending school. Results reported here may not represent specific communities and caution should always be taken when generalising outcomes.

Another positive outcome was that the vast majority of students consider their immediate environments as safe and supportive and school as a positive place to be. There were two clear exceptions to this trend. Firstly, a substantial proportion of students report experiencing bullying, be it at school, online, or more generally. Secondly, amongst secondary students a substantial number report frequent substance use. Vaping and alcohol are the most widely reported of these substances, with frequent use amongst grade 11-12 students at more than double that of younger grades. Effective education around bullying and substance use therefore remains a need in schools. Current initiatives warning students of the harmful ingredients present in vaping e-liquids and other products will hopefully lead to reduced rates being reported in the future but are likely insufficient on their own.

Combined, the reports from students suggest that programs targeting wellbeing and healthy behaviour are needed and that school provides a safe and engaging context for such program delivery. Such programs should include components aimed at parents and teachers, in addition to the students themselves, to help build awareness and skills around how to talk about and respond to concerns about wellbeing and mental health. Such programs need to be culturally safe and inclusive. The results of reports such as this one will also help guide the focus and approach of programs towards the specific needs to different groups amongst the student population.

What remains clear from this report is that the challenges presented are unlikely to remedy themselves by the natural change of circumstance in society, or by the current approaches in place. Both more carefully considered, and at-scale approaches are required if we are to leverage the resilience of our children and youth and provide them with the systems and supports necessary to live a hopeful, healthy, and satisfied life. The *Resilient Youth: State of the Nation Report* will continue to provide this valuable snapshot of student wellbeing, in the hope that it reflects such positive change in the future.

“ **Carefully considered, and at-scale approaches are required if we are to leverage the resilience of our children and youth and provide them with the systems and supports necessary to live a hopeful, healthy and satisfied life.** ”

**Who is WiLDlab @ The University of Adelaide?**

Wellbeing in Learning and Development (WiLD) Lab is situated within the School of Psychology at The University of Adelaide.

Our research investigates factors that influence wellbeing, attention and learning, with a primary interest in child and youth development.

**For more information about this report please contact WiLDlab at:**

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