My Health, Our Future

What did young people say about their body image?



My Health, Our Future is a long-standing programme of research about the health and wellbeing of young people in Suffolk. This graphic shows the results of the 2023/24 MHoF survey regarding body image.

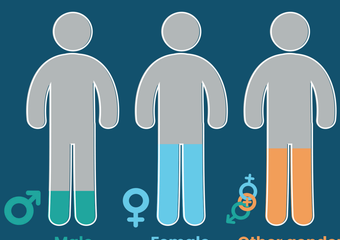
How many young people are worried about how they look?

We asked 'In the last month, how often have you worried about how you look?',

- Nearly every day (28% / 2,351)
- More than half of the days (17% / 1,438)



Who worried about how they looked nearly every day?



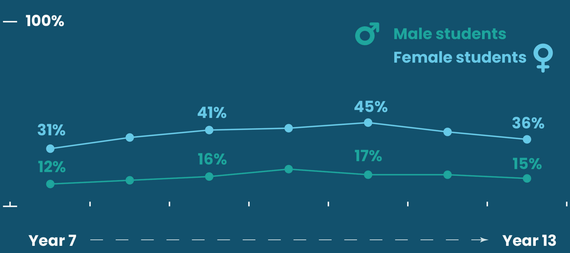
Female students and **students who preferred to describe their gender another way** were most likely to worry about how they looked 'Nearly every day'.



LGBT*Q+ students were more likely to have worried about how they looked 'Nearly every day' than heterosexual/cisgender peers.

- 44% worried 'Nearly every day'
- 25% worried 'Nearly every day'

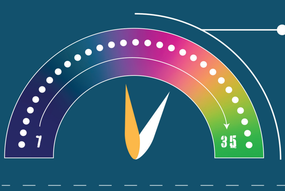
Worrying 'Nearly every day' and student age



Compared to male students, female students were more likely to worry 'Nearly every day' about how they looked across all year groups. In general, the youngest and oldest students worried less than those in Years 9, 10 and 11.

Worrying 'Nearly every day' about body image and student wellbeing scores

Our data shows an association between young people's feelings about they looked and their wellbeing. We measure wellbeing using something called the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale developed by the Universities of Warwick, Edinburgh and Leeds in conjunction with NHS Health Scotland (©University of Warwick, 2006, all rights reserved). Scores can range between 7 (lowest wellbeing) and 35 (highest wellbeing).



Young people who said they had worried about how they looked 'Nearly every day' in the last month had much lower average wellbeing scores **(19.8)** than those who did not worry about this at all **(25.8)**.

Body image, social lives and getting exercise

We asked young people if their view of their body had prevented them from socialising or taking part in physical activity.

- Socialising - Yes (23%)
- Getting exercise - Yes (21%)



Eating habits



Our relationship with food affects many aspects of our wellbeing. In our survey, **2,473 (30%)** young people were worried about their eating habits.

Those who worried about their eating habits 'Nearly every day' were much more likely to be unhappy with their appearance than those who 'Never' worried about their eating habits.

- Worried 'Nearly every day' (50%)
- Worried 'Never' (12%)

Learn more about My Health, Our Future

Our programme has recorded more than 64,000 responses from young people about their wellbeing. Visit our website to learn more, download our reports and explore the impact of the research.

www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/mhof/

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