

NAB WELLBEING REPORT Q3 2017



Wellbeing continues to improve driven by lower levels of anxiety (although 1 in 4 people still report “high” anxiety). What would help us to cope better? Most Australians say the answer lies in getting more sleep & improving their financial position. Over 50s and high income earners still enjoy the highest wellbeing. What about children? In this report we ask parents to assess their anxiety. Primary school children are less anxious and cope better than secondary school children, particularly girls. And parents view their children as less anxious than teachers (as reported in NAB’s survey of 90 independent schools).

WELLBEING TRENDS

How is our wellbeing tracking?

It continues to rise and is now at its highest since 2013.

What is driving this improvement?

Lower anxiety (lowest in 4 years), but it’s still detracting most from our wellbeing (1 in 4 report “high” anxiety).

Where did wellbeing improve most?

For those not employed, young women, earning \$75-100,000, high school leavers and in Queensland.

And for who did it fall most?

Self-employed workers, those living in single households, part time workers and people living in NSW/ACT.

Who reported the highest wellbeing?

Widows, over 50s - both men and women, Tasmanians and 2 person households

Who had the lowest wellbeing?

Single people, labourers, 30-49 year olds, people earning less than \$35,000 p.a. and young women.

What are the main positive influences on wellbeing?

Our homes, personal safety and family & personal relationships.

What detracts most from wellbeing?

Lack of time, events (e.g. abuse or victimisation), substance use/abuse, buying, selling, finding a home.

What drives higher wellbeing for over 50s?

Their homes, safety, family & personal relationships, personal safety, living standards, community and health.

What helps us cope better with anxiety?

More rest/sleep, improving our finances, worrying less about little things, exercising, diet, avoiding toxic people, a clearer idea of where life was heading, more time for ourselves, with family & friends and holidays.

Does anxiety start earlier in life? Are our children also anxious?

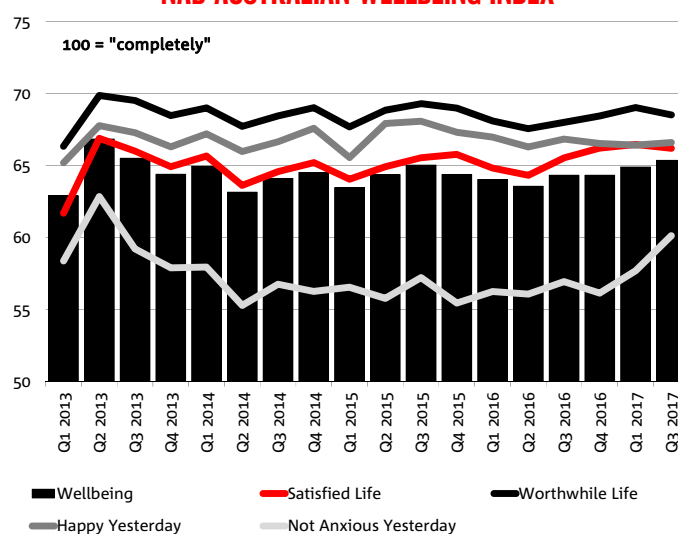
Parents and teachers say anxiety levels are much lower for primary school children than for those in high school, with anxiety among girls in high school significantly higher than boys. Generally parents believe their children are less anxious than do their teachers.

Are our children coping with anxiety?

Parents and teachers said primary school children are coping well, but secondary school children aren’t coping as well (especially girls).

Wellbeing continues to improve, driven mainly by lower levels of personal anxiety - but anxiety is still detracting the most from our overall sense of personal wellbeing...

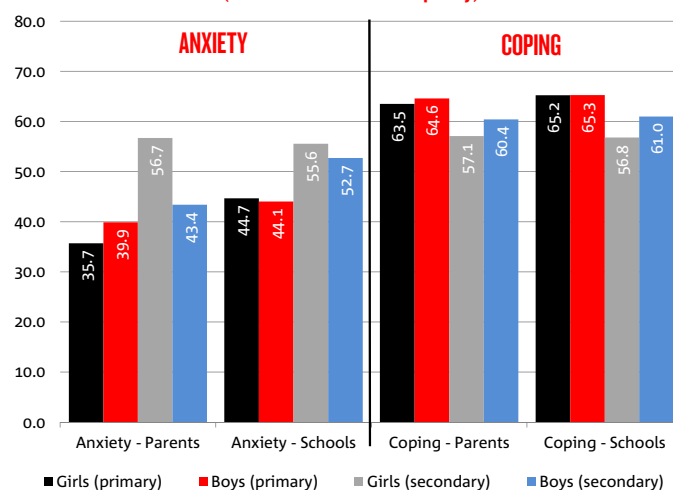
NAB AUSTRALIAN WELLBEING INDEX



Parents and teachers agree anxiety is much lower in primary school aged children than high school children, particularly girls - and these girls aren’t coping as well as boys...

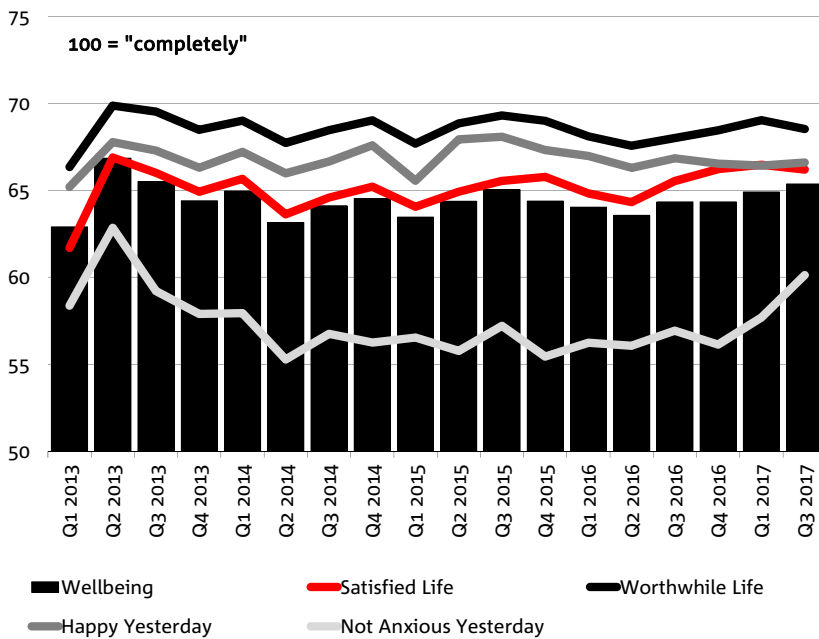
CHILDREN'S ANXIETY & COPING WITH ANXIETY

(0 = not at all; 100 = completely)



MAIN REPORT

NAB AUSTRALIAN WELLBEING INDEX



Australians felt better about the quality of their lives, with NAB's Wellbeing Index climbing further in Q3 2017 - its highest level since 2013. Over 50s lead the way...

The NAB Australian Wellbeing Index rose again in Q3 2017 to 65.4 points (64.9 points in the previous survey). Wellbeing now sits at its highest level since Q3 2013 and is comfortably above its long-term average level (64.4 points).

Encouragingly, lower anxiety continues to be the main driver of this improvement, with anxiety falling to its lowest since mid-2013. But it's still adding the least to our personal wellbeing and around 1 in 4 Australians reported "high" levels of anxiety.

Australians were also a little happier in Q3, but their sense of life worth and life satisfaction was slightly lower.

An improvement in wellbeing was seen in 32 of 48 monitored groups. It improved most for those not employed, young women, earning \$75-100,000, high school leavers and people in QLD. Self-employed workers, single households, part time workers and people in NSW/ACT reported the biggest falls.

Overall levels of wellbeing continue to vary widely across key demographic groups. It was highest for widows (70.8 points), over 50s - both men (70.8 points) and women (70.2 points) and men (70.3 points), in TAS (69.5 points) and in 2 person households (68.4 points).

Single people (58.4 points) had the lowest wellbeing (replacing young women), followed by labourers (58.6 points). Other low wellbeing groups included 30-49 year olds (61.3 points), the lowest income earners (61.6 points) and young women (61.2 points).

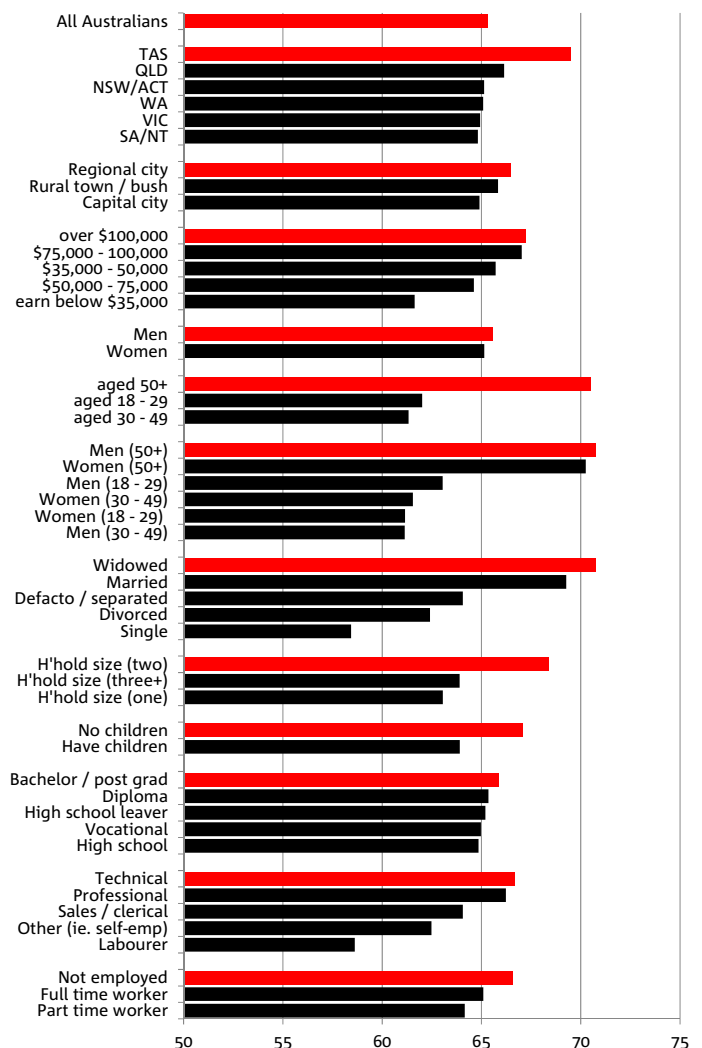
Among other key findings, TAS (69.5 points) led the country for wellbeing by some margin, with wellbeing lowest in SA/NT (64.8 points) and VIC (64.9 points).

Men (65.6 points) reported higher wellbeing than women (65.6 points), but the gap narrowed as women reported bigger improvements in their level of anxiety, happiness and life satisfaction during the quarter.

We continue seeing a strong correlation between wellbeing and income, with wellbeing highest in the top income earning group (67.3 points) and lowest in for those earning the least (61.6 points).

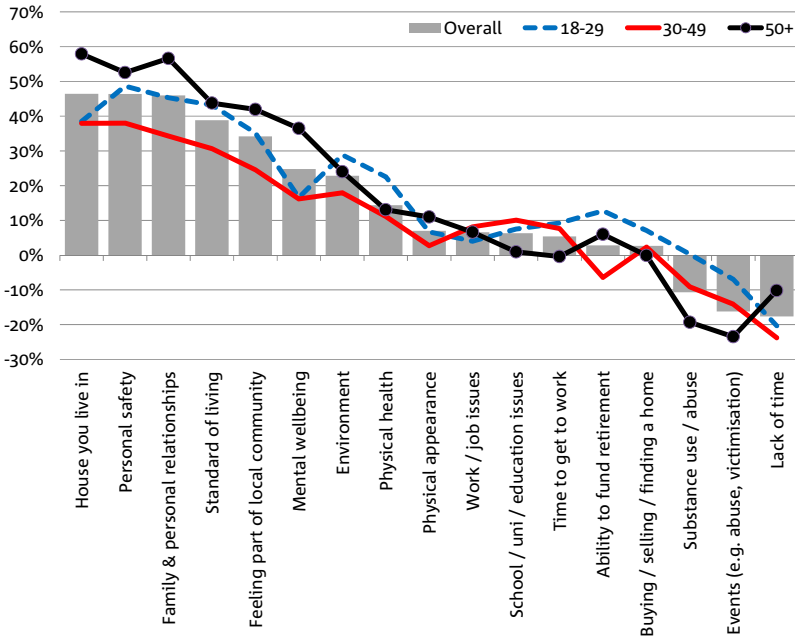
It is also apparent that older Australians enjoy much higher wellbeing - both women and men. Middle-aged men and young women have the lowest wellbeing, with anxiety in both groups a key detractor.

NAB WELLBEING INDEX BY GROUP



What drives higher wellbeing for over 50s? Older Australians derive noticeably more wellbeing benefits from their homes, family and personal relationships, mental wellbeing and their community than do other age groups...

WELLBEING DRIVERS: BY AGE



Over 50s have consistently reported the highest levels of wellbeing since NAB began this survey in early-2013. Over time, their wellbeing has also been climbing in trend terms and they have rated all aspects of their wellbeing better, especially in regards to anxiety.

In this report, we compare wellbeing drivers of over 50s against the broader population and other age groups.

Our homes, personal safety and family and personal relationships contribute the most to our overall sense of personal wellbeing. But for over 50s, the contribution these wellbeing drivers make to their wellbeing are even more important, particularly when it comes to their homes and family and personal relationships.

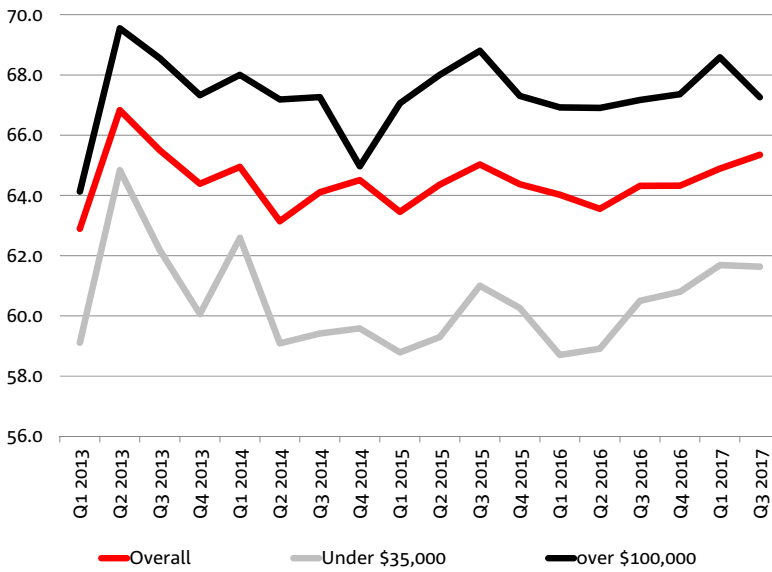
Other wellbeing drivers that more positively impact over 50s include, personal safety, living standards, feeling part of local community and mental wellbeing - which is significantly higher.

But there are also some areas where over 50s are struggling, particularly when it comes to substance use or abuse and events (such as victimisation and abuse), which detracts more from their wellbeing than it does for the general population. This may however reflect negative impacts flowing from other family members or friends facing such issues.



WELLBEING: HIGHEST VS. LOWEST INCOME

(0 = not at all; 100 = completely)

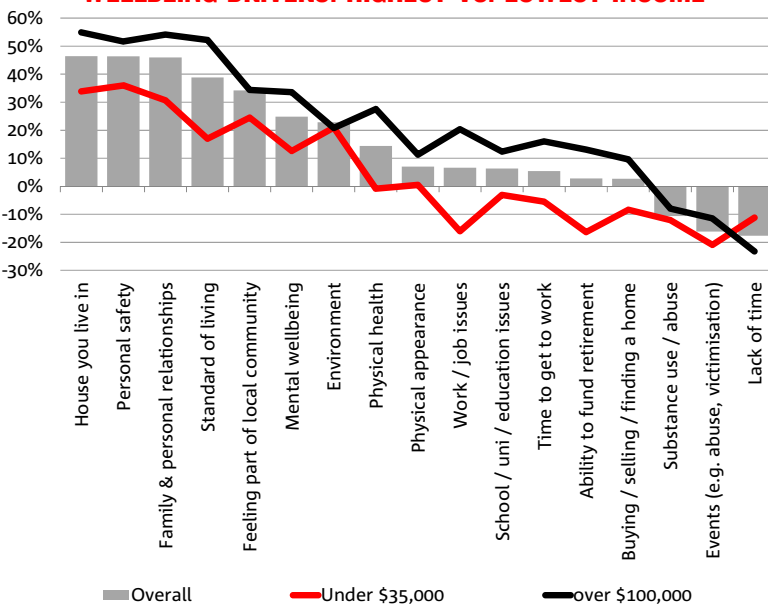


Another group that has consistently reported higher levels of wellbeing are high income earners (over \$100,000 p.a.).

Although the wellbeing gap between high and low income earners (less than \$35,000 p.a.) has been narrowing since early-2016, it remains substantial.

Not only do low income earners report the lowest wellbeing across all income groups, they are also typically among the lowest for wellbeing across all demographic groups.

WELLBEING DRIVERS: HIGHEST VS. LOWEST INCOME



Comparing the factors that add or detract to wellbeing (the wellbeing drivers), it is clear that high income earners derive greater benefits from all key drivers (except lack of time), than the lowest income group.

The biggest differences are in: work/job issues, standard of living, ability to fund retirement, physical health, family & personal relationships, time to get to work, mental wellbeing and their homes.



FACTORS THAT WOULD MOST HELP US DEAL WITH ANXIETY

NAB research has consistently identified anxiety as the biggest detractor from our personal wellbeing. In this report, we asked Australians what would have helped them to better cope when they are feeling anxious.

A number of coping mechanisms were identified. The most common factor highlighted by around 1 in 4 Australians was getting more rest or sleep. But around 1 in 4 also said improving their financial position would have helped, indicating that money is a key driver of anxiety for a large number of Australians.

Around 1 in 5 said that worrying less about the little things would have helped them cope better, and 1 in 6 cited factors such as exercising more, improving their diet, avoiding toxic people, having a clearer idea of where their life was heading, more time for themselves and with family and friends and going on holidays.

There were however some differences in how we cope by gender and by age.

By gender, almost twice as many women (20%) said having more time for themselves would have helped them than did men (11%) - reinforcing previous NAB Wellbeing research showing that a lack of time is also a far bigger detractor from the overall wellbeing of women than men.

Slightly more women than men said that not comparing themselves to others, improving their financial position, worrying about the little things and having a clearer idea of where their life was headed would have also helped them. In contrast, more men would have benefitted from changing their job or work situation.

By age, getting rest/sleep was much more important for 18-49 year olds than over 50s, but more over 50s highlighted their financial position, worrying less about the little things, a clear idea of where their life was headed, spending time with family/friends and holidays as factors that would have helped them cope better.

Significantly more younger Australians aged 18-29 would be less critical of their appearance, and also somewhat more likely to avoid toxic people, have more time to themselves and spend less time on social media in order to better cope with stress than any other age group. But middle-aged Australians aged 30-49 were somewhat more inclined to meditate the most and avoid unhealthy habits.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HELPED MOST WHEN FEELING ANXIOUS (% of respondents)

	Overall	Men	Women	18-29	30-49	50+
Got more rest or sleep	26%	26%	26%	28%	27%	21%
Improved my financial position	24%	23%	26%	22%	24%	28%
Worried less about the little things	20%	19%	22%	14%	21%	27%
Exercised more and/or had a better diet	17%	16%	19%	18%	17%	17%
Avoided toxic people	17%	17%	16%	20%	16%	15%
Had a clearer idea where my life was headed	16%	14%	17%	16%	14%	19%
Had more time out for myself	16%	11%	20%	20%	15%	12%
Spent more time with family/friends	16%	16%	15%	14%	15%	19%
Went on a holiday	15%	16%	15%	14%	14%	19%
Changed my work or job situation	11%	14%	9%	10%	12%	11%
Stopped comparing myself to others	10%	8%	12%	10%	12%	7%
Saw a doctor/therapist	9%	10%	9%	8%	10%	11%
Could be myself	8%	10%	6%	11%	9%	3%
Was more organised	8%	7%	8%	8%	8%	7%
Was less critical of my appearance	8%	7%	8%	11%	6%	6%
Meditated	7%	5%	9%	5%	9%	6%
Avoided unhealthy habits (e.g. smoking, drugs, etc.)	6%	7%	5%	5%	7%	5%
Watched/read, less news, magazines, TV, etc.	5%	8%	3%	6%	6%	2%
Spent less time on social media	5%	7%	4%	8%	5%	3%
Changed my living arrangements	5%	5%	5%	4%	6%	4%
Drank less alcohol and caffeine	4%	5%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Spent more time away from technology	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Changed my friends	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	0%
Changed my school	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	1%

ARE OUR CHILDREN ANXIOUS & ARE THEY COPING - VIEW FROM PARENTS & SCHOOLS

Almost daily, there are media reports highlighting the growing challenges facing our children arising from globalisation, the future of work, housing affordability and cost of living pressures, terrorism, climate change, global economic uncertainty, declining levels of literacy and numeracy relative to some countries, cyber-bullying and family breakdown to name a few.

NAB’s wellbeing survey looks at Australians aged 18 and over. This research led us to wonder if this issue of anxiety starts even earlier in life. Rather than ask children directly we decided to ask the people who spend the most time with them - their parents (in this survey) and teachers from 90 independent schools across Australia (see the **NAB Independent Schools Survey 2017: Australia’s Future is in Good Hands - Part 1: Our Children’s Wellbeing**).

Based on the responses of over 500 parents, perceived anxiety levels were much lower for primary school aged children than for those attending high school. On average, parents rated anxiety levels of boys attending primary school 39.9 points out of 100 (where 100 is “completely” anxious), slightly above primary school aged girls (35.7 points) - suggesting anxiety levels are on average comparatively low.

Interestingly, schools rated anxiety levels in primary school aged children somewhat higher - and girls (44.7 points) slightly above boys (44.1 points).

Perceptions changed dramatically when parents were asked about their children attending secondary school. Here, anxiety levels jumped quite sharply for girls (56.7 points) and was higher than for boys which climbed only slightly to 43.4 points.

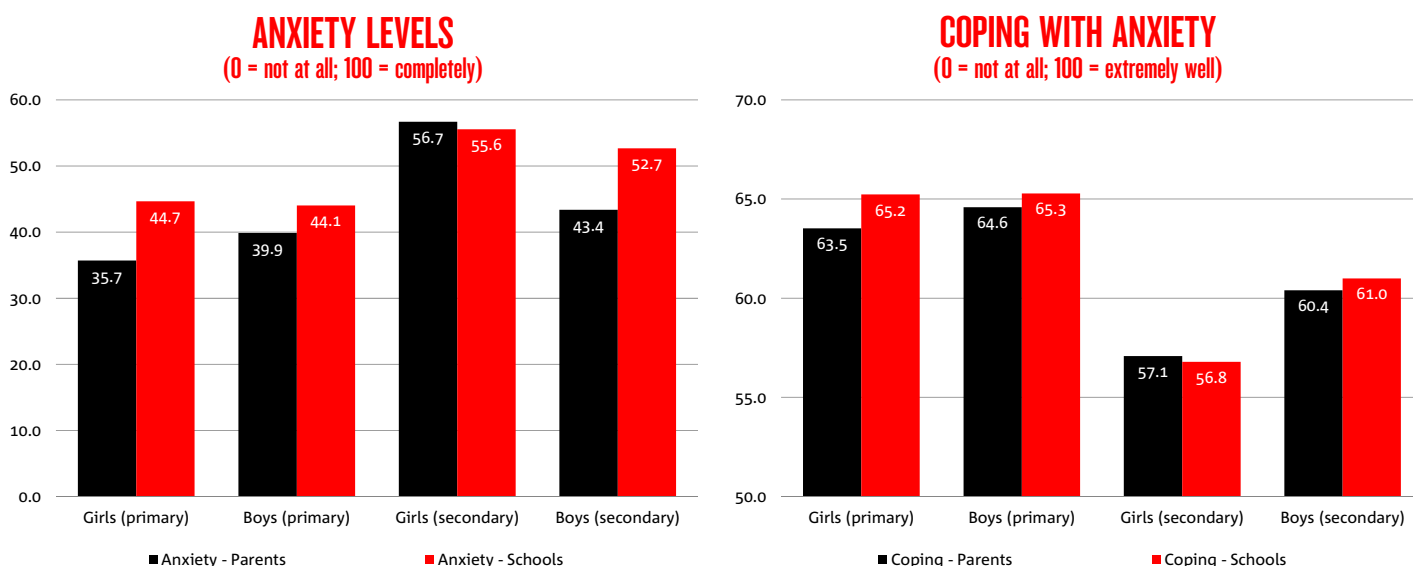
Schools also identified a sharp jump in anxiety among girls in secondary schools, and anxiety levels were assessed broadly the same as those of their parents (55.6 points). But schools also noted a much sharper increase in anxiety in secondary school aged boys, with anxiety levels rising to 52.7 points - suggesting a clear disconnect in perceptions of parents and teachers of teenage boys.

Schools identify family conflict and breakdown as having by far the biggest negative impact on anxiety of secondary school aged girls and boys. Looks and appearances was the next biggest factor for girls and added significantly more to their anxiety than it did for boys. Boys worried more about not being successful and money

Parents were also asked to assess how well they thought their children were coping with their anxiety. Parents think their primary school aged children are coping reasonably well - and boys somewhat better than girls. On average, parents rated boys 64.6 points out of 100 (where 100 is coping “extremely” well) and girls 63.5 points. Schools also think primary school children are coping slightly better - both boys (65.3 points) and girls (65.2 points).

But parents also recognise that secondary school aged children aren’t coping as well - and girls are doing it even tougher. On average, parents rated the ability of teenage girls to cope with anxiety just 57.1 points, compared to 60.4 points for boys. Schools were in broad agreement, scoring girls 56.8 points and boys 61.0 points.

Clearly this mis-match in coping with anxiety between girls and boys is a problem that needs to be addressed, particularly if it is interfering with the development of young women.



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The NAB Australian Wellbeing Index is based on survey participants' responses to four questions (developed by the UK Office of National Statistics) related to how people "think and feel about their own lives" - how satisfied are you with your life nowadays; to what extent do you feel the things that you do in your life are worthwhile; how happy did you feel yesterday; and, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

All questions were answered on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".

Around 2,000 Australians participated in the Q3 2017 survey, with weights applied to age, location and gender to ensure that the survey reasonably reflects the Australian population.

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