NAB
Education Insights
Special Report

Part 1: Wellbeing – How do high school students really feel about their lives?

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In this 2024 State of Education series, NAB has again reached out to a large representative sample of over 400 Australian secondary school students nationwide to gauge how they perceive their lives are tracking. Students contributed across all year levels including those from public schools, private independent schools and private Catholic schools.

Part 1 explores their wellbeing.

Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness. It integrates mental and physical health, and both are inextricably related. When students feel well, happy, secure and are thriving socially, they can fully participate in and learn from their daily routines, play, interactions, and experiences at school. Educators acknowledge the crucial role of supporting student wellbeing, despite the added pressures it places on budgets, teachers, and support staff. Addressing the diverse mental health issues faced by young Australians today requires a joint effort involving educators, government bodies, students, communities, families, and parents alike.

Various surveys of wellbeing are already available across Australian schools providing significant existing data sets. The purpose of this report is not to produce another measure of wellbeing, but simply to gain a better understanding of how they view their lives (both at school and beyond), track if these perceptions have changed, and promote discussion among educators and families. It is deliberately subjective. How a young person feels is an important determinant of the quality of their life – how they experience it, not as we think they might or ought to.

Encouragingly, Australian secondary school students believe their emotional and mental wellbeing has improved over the past year, a growing number are coping better in managing their mental health and many are also feeling less lonely. However, some worrying disparities persist, particularly within the LGBTIQ+ student community, where 1 in 4 students identify as having low wellbeing and almost 1 in 2 say they are not coping with their mental health concerns. Additionally, while girls continue to report lower wellbeing than boys, there has been a noticeable fall in self-reported wellbeing among boys more generally.

Although awareness around school-based wellbeing initiatives has grown over this past year and is relatively high, students believe these programs provide only limited support – especially among LGBTQI+ individuals. Key areas identified by students where schools could better foster wellbeing include – encouraging teachers to be calmer and more caring, implementing less strict policies on uniforms and appearance, giving more feedback on progress and academic performance, placing less emphasis on grades and scores (although this concern has lessened quite significantly over the past year) and allowing different school times.

However, student beliefs on what could help most vary based on school type and gender. For example, more students at private independent schools believe less homework would be a significant support, while more students in public schools see greater feedback on their progress and academic performance as a major help.

The main worries of students are largely unchanged from a year ago, though concerns over family finances and cost of living have risen sharply. The biggest worry, identified by 2 in 3 students, remains pressures from schoolwork, tests, or grades. Interestingly, most students believe these pressures are coming mainly from themselves. Almost 1 in 2 also cited looks, appearance or body image as their biggest worry.

Around 1 in 7 secondary students are considering completing their school education without sitting exams and gaining an ATAR. The majority have made this decision to prioritise their mental health and to avoid the stress of exams.

Australian students continue to get inadequate amounts of sleep, but time spent on social media has fallen. Girls continue to spend more time on social media and doing homework, while boys spend substantially more time gaming and to a lesser extent playing sport.

Overall students believe social media is having a positive impact on themselves and others their own age (albeit more so for others than themselves). Social media plays a key role in helping them stay connected, included, and accepted in life. But 1 in 2 strongly believe that social media is not a place where they feel supported during tough times nor that it makes them feel better about their lives.

Key Findings

1. **Australian students believe their physical health is largely unchanged from a year ago, but their emotional and mental wellbeing improved, and a growing number say they are coping better in managing their mental health. But there are some concerning findings among LGBTIQ+ students and a noticeable fall in self-reported wellbeing among boys more generally.**

Wellbeing levels at boys only schools fell very sharply, though boys overall still report somewhat higher wellbeing than girls. Wellbeing jumped sharply and was highest overall at private Catholic schools, ahead of private independent schools (where it fell slightly) and public schools (unchanged). Almost 1 in 5 (17%) students identified as having low emotional & mental wellbeing (down from 20% in 2023) but rising to 1 in 4 among LGBTIQ+ students. Furthermore, just under 1 in 4 students overall said they were not coping well, an improvement on over 1 in 3 in 2023. Over twice as many LGBTQI+ students (over 4 in 10) said they were not coping (vs. 2 in 10 non LGBTQI+ students).

2. **Students also report feeling less lonely, reversing the trend during the pandemic when growing numbers of young Australians reported feelings of social isolation. Both boys and girls felt less lonely compared to a year ago, though feelings of loneliness remain higher among girls than boys. LBGTIQ+ students are also much lonelier than others.**

On average, students attending public schools were the loneliest, although the share of students feeling this way declined compared to a year ago. Loneliness was lowest and fell sharply among students at private Catholic schools. Students at private independent schools were the only group who felt lonelier compared to a year ago. The number of students who said they were "extremely" lonely was highest and increased in private independent schools and lowest in private Catholic schools where it fell noticeably. Around 1 in 8 students however continue to report feeling extremely lonely, with the number rising to 1 in 4 among LBGTIQ+ students.

3. **Student's top worries are schoolwork, tests, or grades (with these pressures coming largely from themselves), followed by looks, appearance or body image (particularly girls), tiredness or lack of sleep; mental health (particularly LGBTIQ+ students), family money worries and cost of living pressures. The main concerns of students are largely unchanged from a year ago, though worries over family finances and cost of living have risen sharply.**

2 in 3 students (66%) identified schoolwork, tests, or grades as their biggest concern (61% a year ago); 44% (unchanged) said looks, appearance or body image; 37% (unchanged) tiredness or lack of sleep; 35% mental health and anxieties (down from 42%); and 34% family money worries and cost of living pressures (up significantly from 23% a year ago). Other important concerns include not being accepted for who they were (particularly LGBTIQ+) and climate change/the environment. On average, over 8 in 10 students said the pressure from schoolwork, tests and grades was largely coming from themselves. Almost 1 in 2 said it was coming from parents & family or teachers.

4. **Around 1 in 7 students overall are considering completing year 12 without sitting exams and gaining an ATAR (1 in 5 if completing year 12), mainly to prioritise their mental health and avoid the stress of exams.**

Among students considering completing year 12 without sitting exams and gaining an ATAR, almost 1 in 2 were doing so to prioritise their mental health and 1 in 3 to avoid the stress of exams. Significantly more students at public (51%) and private Catholic (50%) schools identified mental health as a concern compared to those in private independent schools (33%). It was also a consideration for far more students at boys only schools (63%) than at girls only schools (29%), and among LGBTQI+ students (67%). Almost 1 in 5 (48%) students overall however did not plan to sit exams or get an ATAR as they plan to go to TAFE, and 1 in 3 (32%) did not because they plan to get a job straight out of school.

5. **Awareness of school wellbeing initiatives is high and growing, but students still believe these programs provide only limited support, with 1 in 2 scoring their effectiveness very low. Only 3% of LGBTQI+ students said their schools wellbeing initiatives had significantly helped them - 5 times less than the overall average.**

Around 7 in 10 students overall said their school had a wellbeing program, 1 in 10 were unsure. More students were aware their school had a wellbeing program, especially in private independent schools (71% were aware up from 61%) and private Catholic schools (69% vs. 59%). Overall, students scored their effectiveness at only 45.5 pts out of 100 (down slightly). Almost 1 in 2 said they did not help much at all (less than 40 pts). Only 15% or around 1 in 7 said they very much helped – down from nearly 1 in 5 (19%), last year. Almost 1 in 2 students at public schools and private Catholic schools said school wellbeing programs provided little help (though for Catholic schools the numbers fell sharply from 62% a year ago to 46%). It was lowest in private independent schools but increased somewhat to 40% (34% in 2023). Around 1 in 2 students at girls only (48%) and coeducational (47%) schools said they did not help much, while in boys only schools it fell sharply to just 1 in 3 (33%) from 1 in 2 (50%) in 2023. Just over 1 in 2 girls overall said they did not help much (52%), compared to just 3 in 10 (31%) boys. It was also above average among LGBTQI+ students (52%) and ranged from 54% among students in year 10 to 36% in years 7–9.

6. **There has been a very noticeable shift in emphasis on what students believe schools could do to help them with their worries. A significantly smaller proportion of students identified less emphasis on grades and scores and fewer tests and exams, with calm and caring teachers now the top response.**

The top 5 things schools could do to help as identified by students are: teachers more calm, honest and caring (36%), less strict policy on uniforms and appearance (33%), more feedback on progress and academic performance (31%), less emphasis on grades and scores (albeit falling sharply from 45% students a year ago to 27% this year), different school times (26% vs. 30% in 2023). Outside the top 5, significantly lower numbers of students also identified fewer tests and exams (26% vs. 41% in 2023), better or more professional counselling and wellbeing services (14% vs. 25%), less homework (24% vs. 33%), more understanding of individual people (24% vs. 33%), more safe spaces or opportunities for check ins with students (18% vs. 26%) and more support for problems at home (11% vs. 18%). Only 2% of students said there was nothing the school could do to help. What would help most did however differ by school type and gender. For example, more

students at private independent schools said less homework (32%) while more in public schools wanted feedback on their progress and academic performance (33%). Twice as many students in public and private Catholic schools also said more support for problems at home would help them (12%). By gender, a higher number of girls singled out uniforms and appearance (39% vs. 27% boys), more learning outside the classroom (21% vs. 15%) and more remote learning (16% vs. 10%).

7. **Australian school students continue to get inadequate amounts of sleep, but time on social media has fallen. Girls continue to spend more time on social media and doing homework, while boys spend substantially more time gaming and to a lesser extent playing sport.**

On average, students are sleeping just 7.4 hours per night (little changed from a year ago). Boys in general (7.6 hours) slept more than girls (7.2 hours), essentially half a night's sleep more over a 7 day week. Time sleeping ranged from 8.1 hrs for students in years 7–9 to 7.2 hrs in year 12. When students were asked how much time they spent on a typical day on social media, doing homework, sports, gaming, and chores around the home, they estimated almost 5½ hours on average in 2024. The most time was spent on social media (98 minutes though down from 113 minutes in 2023), followed by homework (87 mins, basically unchanged), playing sports and doing physical activities (53 mins), gaming (43 mins) and doing chores and helping around the home (39 mins). Girls overall spend more time on social media (113 mins vs. 83 mins boys) and doing homework (98 mins vs. 74 mins), and boys more time playing sports (59 mins vs. 48 mins) and gaming (60 mins vs. 27 mins). Students that identified as LGBTQI+ spent substantially more time on social media (122 mins vs. 94 mins for non-LGBTQI+), but significantly less time playing sports or doing physical activity (28 mins vs. 57 mins).

8. Overall students believe social media is having a positive impact on themselves and others their own age (albeit more people their own age are getting "very high" benefits than themselves). They see social media as playing a role in helping them stay connected, included, and accepted in life. But 1 in 2 also strongly believe that social media is not a place where they can be supported during tough times nor that it makes them feel better about their lives.

Students were in highest agreement (by a significant margin) with the statement - social media makes me feel "more connected to what is going on in my friends' lives." Almost 3 in 10 (28%) students overall scored their support "very high", but 1 in 4 (26%) also "very low". Agreement on average was strongest next for the statement that social media "makes me feel included in things" and "more accepted for who I am." While around 1 in 6 students were in strong agreement, 4 in 10 strongly disagreed. Students scored "I have a place where I can be supported during tough times" only moderately with over 1 in 2 in very low agreement. A substantial number (around 1 in 2) also strongly disagreed that social media makes me feel "better about my own life". Student feelings about social media were scored lowest around the statements it made them feel "overwhelmed because of all the drama with their friends" and "pressure to comment or post." Around 3 times as many students at coeducational schools (15%) reported an extremely positive impact on their lives from social media as did students at girls only schools (5%).

Student Wellbeing

Wellbeing influences student learning outcomes. Not only is it linked to improved academic outcomes, but also enhanced mental health and responsible life choices. For students, the deepest reality of their experience of life is how they feel about their own wellbeing (physical, emotional & mental). It is also a key determinant of the quality of their life - how they experience it.

In this report, we again touch base with secondary school students to gauge how their wellbeing is tracking compared to last year. We find that while their physical wellbeing is similar, they are a little more positive about their emotional & mental wellbeing.

Overall, Australian students reported 'moderate' and basically unchanged levels of physical wellbeing in 2024 (66.3 pts vs. 66.5 pts in 2023). Student wellbeing however varied across monitored student groups.

Students at private independent schools rated their physical wellbeing highest though lower than last year at 70.1 pts (72.3 pts in 2023). It also fell a little for students in public schools to 64.6 pts (65.2 pts in 2023). Students attending private Catholic schools however reported a sharper uplift in their physical wellbeing to 68.3 pts (63.3 pts in 2023).

Overall physical wellbeing moderated a little for students in boys only, coeducational and girls only schools in 2024. It remains however highest in boys only schools (70.5 pts) and lowest in girls only schools (64.1 pts). Boys overall
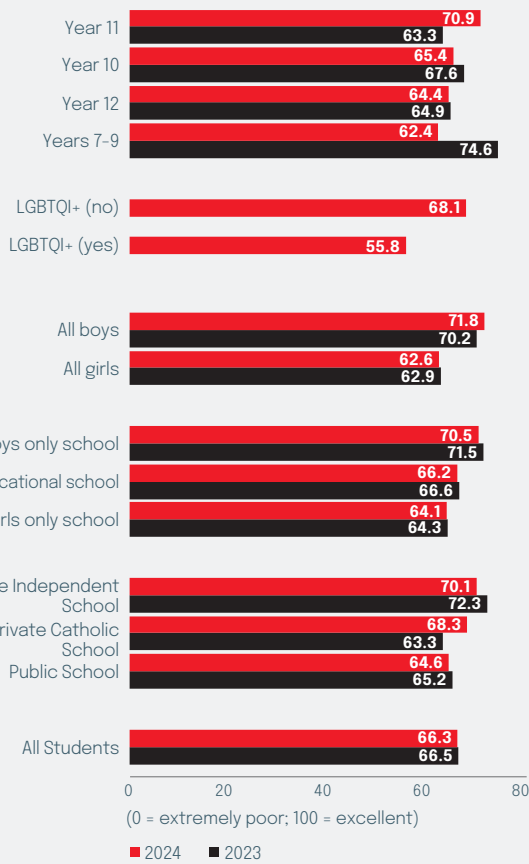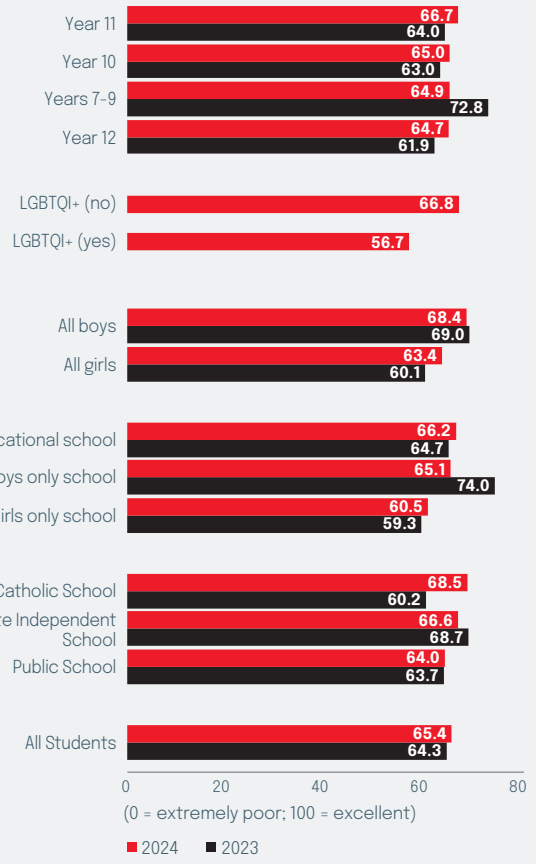
Chart 1: Student Physical Wellbeing

	2024	2023
Year 11	70.9	63.3
Year 10	65.4	67.6
Year 12	64.4	64.9
Years 7–9	62.4	74.6
LGBTQI+ (no)	68.1	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	55.8	
All boys	71.8	70.2
All girls	62.6	62.9
Boys only school	70.5	71.5
Coeducational school	66.2	66.6
Girls only school	64.1	64.3
Private Independent School	70.1	72.3
Private Catholic School	68.3	63.3
Public School	64.6	65.2
All Students	66.3	66.5

(0 = extremely poor; 100 = excellent)

■ 2024   ■ 2023

Chart 2: Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

	2024	2023
Year 11	66.7	64.0
Year 10	65.0	63.0
Years 7–9	64.9	72.8
Year 12	64.7	61.9
LGBTQI+ (no)	66.8	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	56.7	
All boys	68.4	69.0
All girls	63.4	60.1
Coeducational school	66.2	64.7
Boys only school	65.1	74.0
Girls only school	60.5	59.3
Private Catholic School	68.5	60.2
Private Independent School	66.6	68.7
Public School	64.0	63.7
All Students	65.4	64.3

(0 = extremely poor; 100 = excellent)

■ 2024   ■ 2023

reported an improvement in their physical wellbeing over the past year (71.8 pts up from 70.2 pts) and was much higher than girls where it was also a little lower (62.6 pts vs. 62.9 pts).

For the first time we also asked students if they identify as LGBTQI+, and with 14% of students identifying in this demographic, we have decided to report their responses against students that did not identify as LGBTIQ+ and will continue to monitor their responses going forward. In 2024, LGBTIQ+ students (56.8 pts) reported significantly lower levels of physical wellbeing than students that did not identify as LGBTQI+ (68.1 pts).

Physical wellbeing levels were highest and improved sharply for year 11 students (70.9 pts up from 62.3 pts) and was lowest and down significantly among year 7-9 students (62.4 pts from 74.6 pts). It was a little lower among year 10s (65.4 vs. 67.6 pts) and largely unchanged for year 12 students (64.4 pts vs. 64.9 pts).

Emotional & mental wellbeing improved at little in 2024 to 65.4 pts (64.3 pts in 2023). It jumped sharply and was highest overall in private Catholic schools to 68.5 pts (60.2 pts in 2023), ahead of private independent schools where it fell slightly (66.6 pts down from 68.7 pts). It was basically unchanged in public schools (64.0 pts vs. 63.7 pts).

Coeducational schools reported the highest (and improved) emotional & mental wellbeing outcomes in 2024 (66.2 pts up from 64.7 pts), and girls only schools the lowest though also slightly higher (60.5 pts up from 59.3pts). Emotional & mental wellbeing levels at boys only schools however fell very sharply to 65.1 pts down from 74.0 pts in 2023. Despite this, boys overall still report somewhat higher emotional & mental wellbeing (68.4 pts) than girls (63.4 pts). Emotional & mental wellbeing was also noticeably lower among LGBTIQ+ students (56.7 pts) than those that were not (66.8 pts).

By year level, it ranged from just 66.7 pts among year 11s to 64.7 pts in year 12. All year levels reported higher wellbeing in 2024, except years 7-9 where it fell noticeably to 64.9 pts (72.8 pts in 2023).
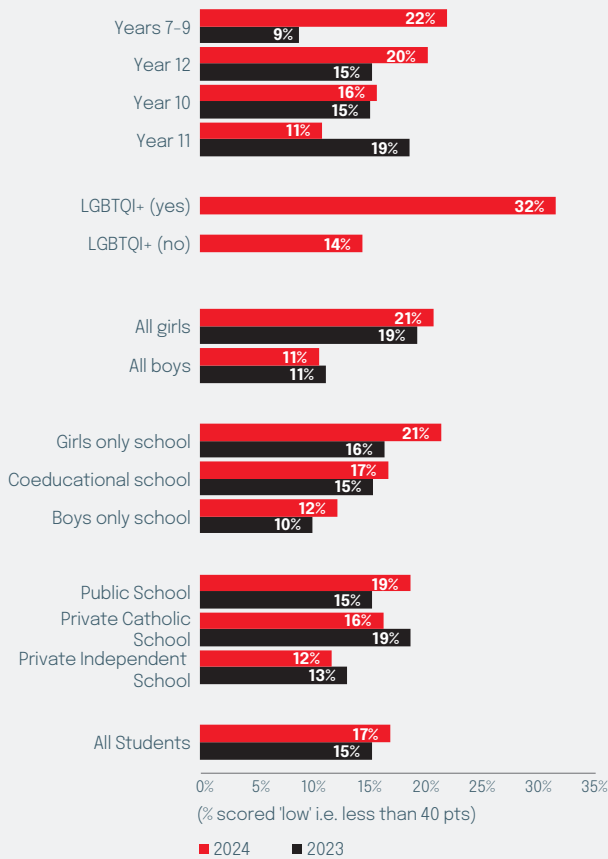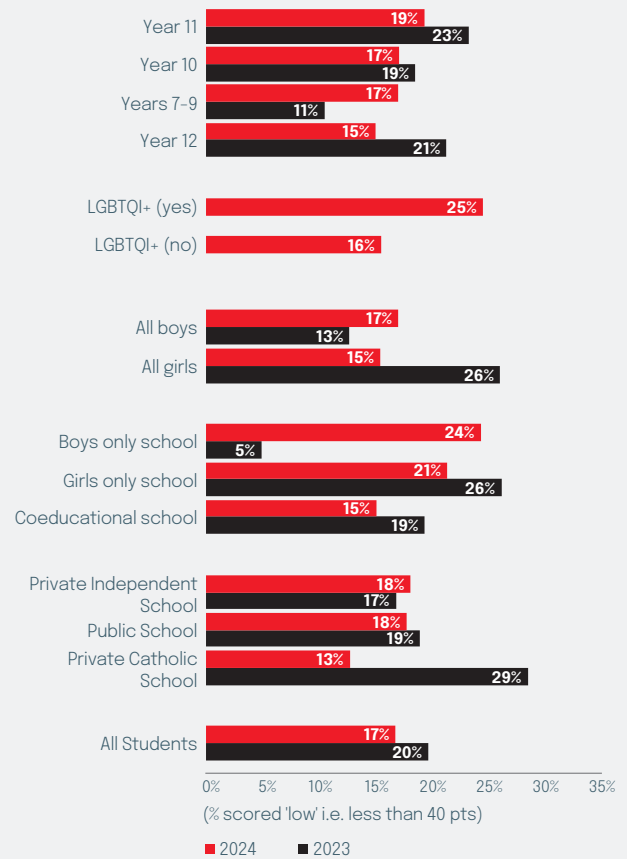
Chart 3: Student Physical Wellbeing (% scored low)

Category	2024	2023
Years 7-9	22%	9%
Year 12	20%	15%
Year 10	16%	15%
Year 11	11%	19%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	32%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	14%	
All girls	21%	19%
All boys	11%	11%
Girls only school	21%	16%
Coeducational school	17%	15%
Boys only school	12%	10%
Public School	19%	15%
Private Catholic School	16%	19%
Private Independent School	12%	13%
All Students	17%	15%

(% scored 'low' i.e. less than 40 pts)

Chart 4: Student Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (% scored low)

Category	2024	2023
Year 11	19%	23%
Year 10	17%	19%
Years 7-9	17%	11%
Year 12	15%	21%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	25%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	16%	
All boys	17%	13%
All girls	15%	26%
Boys only school	24%	5%
Girls only school	21%	26%
Coeducational school	15%	19%
Private Independent School	18%	17%
Public School	18%	19%
Private Catholic School	13%	29%
All Students	17%	20%

(% scored 'low' i.e. less than 40 pts)

Average wellbeing scores can however mask significant numbers of students who feel they are really struggling with both their physical and emotional & mental wellbeing. Here we single out students that scored their wellbeing less than 40 pts. It remains of some concern that almost 1 in 5 students overall report low wellbeing, leaving them at greater risk of being able to manage emotional resilience, stress, and navigate the challenges of school and beyond.

The number of students that reported low physical wellbeing rose to 17% in 2024 (15% in 2023). It was highest and climbed to 19% in public schools (15% in 2023). It fell slightly and was lowest in private independent schools (12% down from 13%) but fell somewhat more in private Catholic schools (16% down from 19%).

We noted a rather steep increase at girls only schools with low physical wellbeing to 21% (16% in 2023), and a smaller rise at boys only schools to 12% (10% in 2023) and remained lowest overall. Almost twice as many girls (21%) report low physical wellbeing in 2024 than boys (12%). Around 1 in 3 LGBTQI+ students (32%) report low wellbeing, more than double non-LGBTQI+ students (14%). The number of year 7-9s with low physical wellbeing almost trebled to 22% (9% in 2023). It also rose noticeably among year 12s to 20% (15% in 2023), but almost halved in the year 11 cohort (19% down from 11%).

Encouragingly, the number of students with low emotional & mental wellbeing eased in 2024 but was still high at 17% (20% in 2023). A similar number in private independent a public schools reported low wellbeing (18%), but it fell sharply in private Catholic schools to 13% (29% in 2023). It rose very sharply in boys only schools and was highest overall with 1 in 4 (24%) reporting low emotional & mental wellbeing (5% in 2023). The number with low wellbeing fell in girls only (21% from 26%) and coeducational (15% from 19%) schools where it was also lowest overall. While low emotional & mental wellbeing rose to 17% for all boys (13% in 2023), it fell noticeably for girls to 15% (26% in 2023). Significantly more LGBTQI+ students (25%) reported low wellbeing than those who were not (15%).

The number with low emotional and mental wellbeing fell in all year levels except 7-9 where it rose to 17% (11% in 2023). It was highest overall in year 11 (19%) and lowest in year 12 (15%).

Students were also asked to rate how their physical and emotional and mental wellbeing today compared to a year ago. The results are presented in net balance terms - a positive result signals the number of students who said their wellbeing was better exceeded the number who said it was worse, while a negative result signals the number of students who said it was worse exceeded the number that said it was better. Pleasingly, a higher number of students on balance said both their physical and emotional & mental wellbeing was better than worse than when asked in the 2023 survey.

In 2024, the net number of students who rated their physical wellbeing better than one year ago rose to +24% (+18% in 2023) survey. The biggest improvement was seen in private Catholic schools where +42% said it was better - a turnaround from the previous year when the number who said it was worse out-weighed those who said it was better (-4%). We also noted an increase in private independent schools (32% up from +16%), but a fall in public schools (+16% down from +20%).

While broadly unchanged, +36% of students in boys only schools said their physical wellbeing was better, a much higher number in girls only schools said it was better (+24% up from +3% in 2023). We also noted a small increase in coeducational schools (+23% up from +20%).

More than twice as many boys overall (unchanged at +34%) said their wellbeing was better than last year than girls, though a much higher number of girls said it was better (+14% up from +5%). In net terms, fewer LGBTQI+ students (+18%) said their wellbeing was better than students who did not identify as LGBTQI+ (+25%).

Emotional & mental wellbeing was on balance also rated better by all students and doubled to +18% (+9% in 2023.) A big uplift was again seen in private Catholic schools where +33% said it was better (+4% in 2023), and it was also around twice higher than in private independent schools (18% up from +10%) and public schools (+13% up from +20%). In boys only schools, those who said their wellbeing was better fell to +22% (+35% in 2023) but was still highest. We recorded a sharp turnaround at girls only schools where those who said it was better reached +15% (–13% in 2023) but remained lowest overall. The overall number of girls who said their emotional & mental wellbeing was better reached +20% in 2024 (–2% in 2023), overtaking boys (+19% down from +22%). Fewer LGBTQI+ students (+13%) said their wellbeing was better than students who did not identify as LGBTQI+ (+19%). More students said their wellbeing was better than last year in all year levels, excepts 7-9 where it fell sharply (+7% from +35% in 2023).

Chart 5: Physical Wellbeing Versus Year Ago (net balance - better/worse)

	2024	2023
Years 7-9	38%	42%
Year 11	35%	8%
Year 10	21%	18%
Year 12	15%	18%
LGBTQI+ (no)	25%	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	18%	
All boys	34%	34%
All girls	14%	5%
Boys only school	36%	35%
Girls only school	24%	3%
Coeducational school	23%	20%
Private Catholic School	42%	-4%
Private Independent School	32%	26%
Public School	16%	20%
All Students	24%	18%
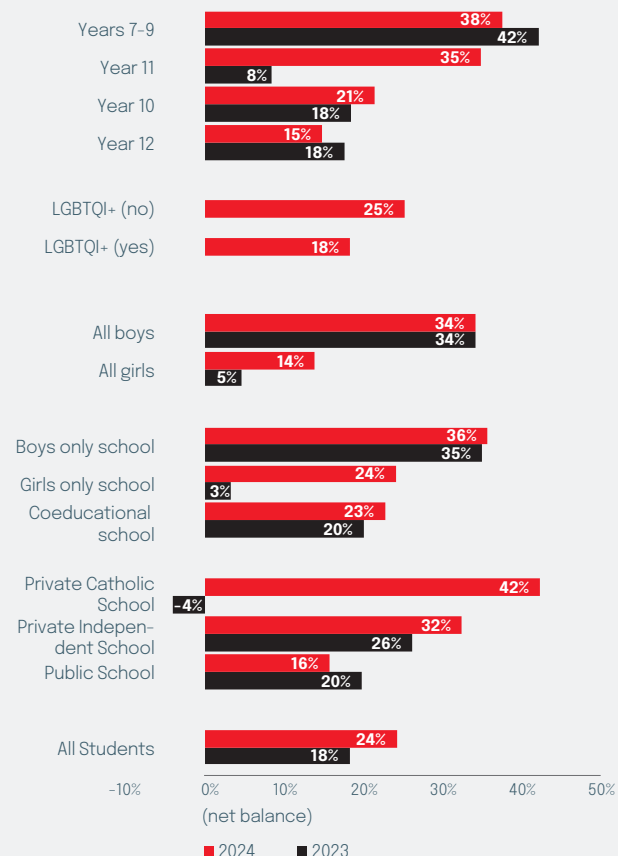
Chart 6: Emotional/Mental Wellbeing Versus a Year Ago (net balance - better/worse)

	2024	2023
Year 11	24%	17%
Year 12	16%	-1%
Year 10	15%	-5%
Years 7-9	7%	35%
LGBTQI+ (no)	19%	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	13%	
All girls	20%	-2%
All boys	19%	22%
Boys only school	22%	35%
Coeducational school	18%	11%
Girls only school	15%	-13%
Private Catholic School	33%	4%
Private Independent School	18%	10%
Public School	13%	9%
All Students	18%	9%
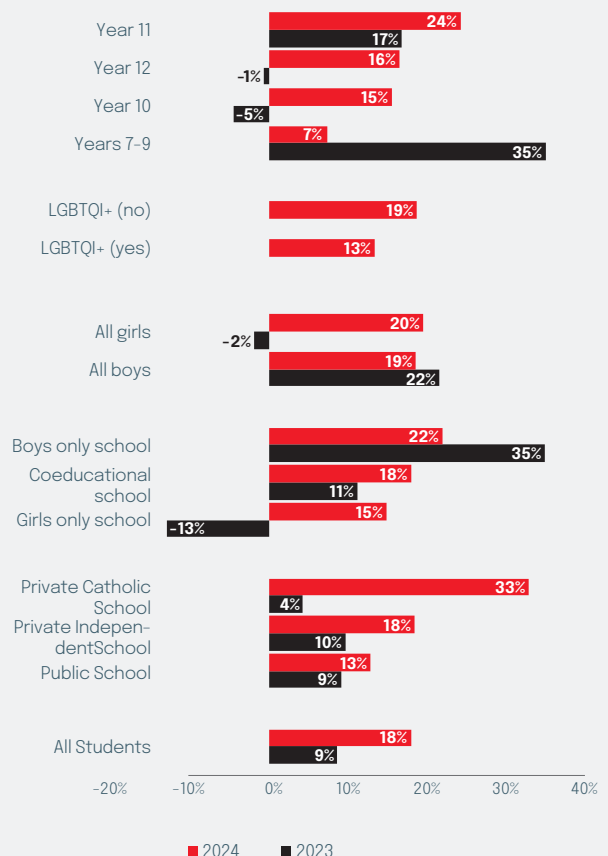
Loneliness

Students are not exempt from feeling lonely. Indeed, a plethora of research shows it has become more prevalent in recent years, with an increasing number of students feeling alone at school. Loneliness can be felt in different ways. Some students feel disconnected, despite being surrounded by family and friends. Others report feeling socially isolated and having no friends. Loneliness impacts student wellbeing, causing higher rates of anxiety, poorer sleep, lower levels of motivation, and withdrawal from social interactions. Studies also find connections between loneliness and poorer grades in school.

Encouragingly, students overall felt a little less lonely in 2024, scoring on average 42.5 pts (44.9 pts in 2023). Loneliness was highest in public schools but fell to 43.4 pts (47.0 pts in 2023). It was lowest and fell sharply in private Catholic schools to 40.0 pts (48.0 pts in 2023). Students at private independent schools were the only group who felt increasingly lonely (41.8 pts up from 36.8 pts).

Feeling lonely ranged from 43.0 pts in coeducational schools to 39.5 pts at boys only schools, but we recorded a steep improvement in how lonely students felt at all girls only schools to 41.3 pts (52.5 pts in 2023). Both boys and girls overall felt less lonely in 2024 compared to a year ago, though feelings of loneliness remain higher among girls (43.9 pts) than boys (40.2 pts). Feeling lonely was scored much higher by LGBTQI+ students (54.8 pts) and ranged from 44.0 pts among year 12 students to 38.9 pts for year 11s.

Despite scoring loneliness lower in 2024, a significant number of students still feel extremely lonely (i.e. scored 80+ pts). In the 2024 survey, around 1 in 8 or 13% of students said they felt this way, though it was heartening to see a small decline from 15% in 2023.

The number of students who were extremely lonely was highest and increased in private independent schools (14% up from 12%), and lowest in private Catholic schools where it also fell noticeably to 10% (16% in 2023). The number of extremely lonely students also eased in public schools (13% from 16%). The 2024 survey also revealed a big fall in the number of students at all boys only schools who were felt extremely lonely, halving to 12% from 25% in 2023. It was highest in girls only schools (15%).

On average, a broadly similar (and lower number) of girls (13%) and boys (12%) overall were extremely lonely in 2024. Extremely high feelings of loneliness were found to be much higher among LGBTQI+ students, with 1 in 4 (25%) feeling this way compared to only 1 in 10 (11%) students who did not identify as LGBTQI+. By year level, it was largely unchanged, except in the year 11 cohort where it fell noticeably to 8% (15% in 2023).

Chart 7: Student Loneliness

Category	2024	2023
Year 12	44.0	45.1
Year 10	43.8	47.0
Years 7–9	42.9	41.4
Year 11	38.9	44.9
LGBTQI+ (yes)	54.8	
LGBTQI+ (no)	40.4	
All girls	43.9	47.4
All boys	40.2	42.4
Coeducational school	43.0	43.8
Girls only school	41.3	52.5
Boys only school	39.5	40.5
Public School	43.4	47.0
Private Independent School	41.8	36.8
Private Catholic School	40.0	48.0
All Students	42.5	44.9

(0 = not at all; 100 = extremely)

Chart 8: Student Loneliness

Category	2024	2023
Years 7–9	17%	16%
Year 10	15%	17%
Year 12	14%	15%
Year 11	8%	15%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	25%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	11%	
All girls	13%	16%
All boys	12%	16%
Girls only school	15%	16%
Coeducational school	12%	15%
Boys only school	12%	25%
Private Independent School	14%	12%
Public School	13%	16%
Private Catholic School	10%	16%
All Students	13%	15%

(% scored 'high')
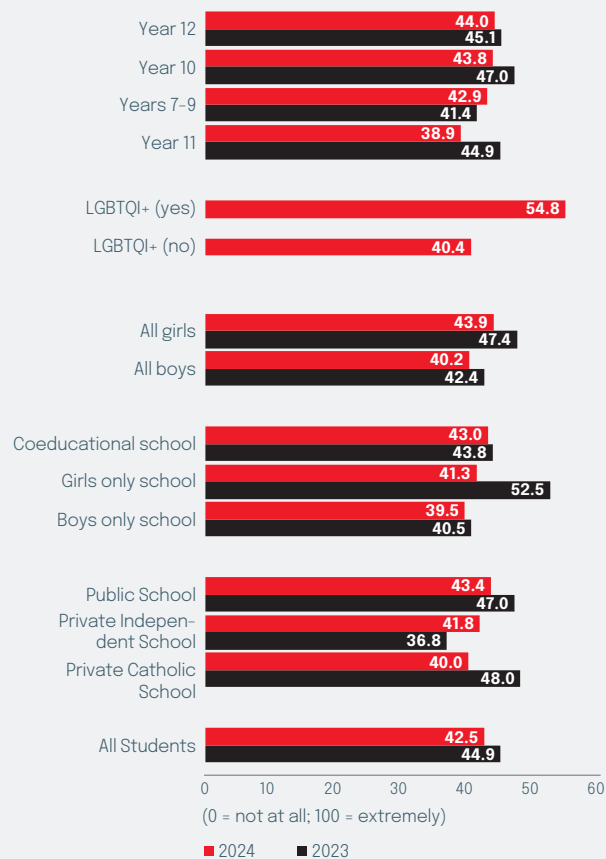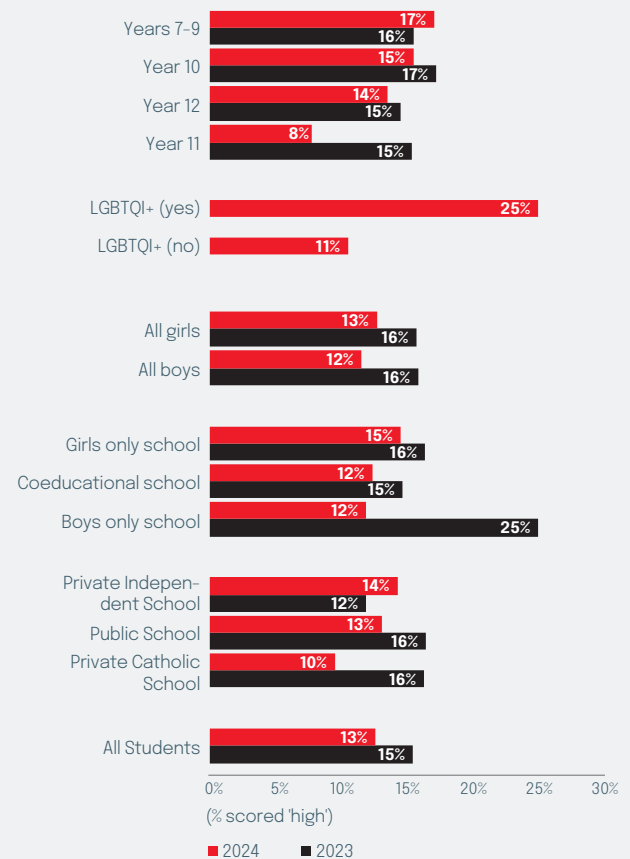
Coping with Mental Health or Worries

All people including students experience worries at some time. For students, common worries often include school demands and frustrations, negative thoughts or feelings about themselves, problems with friends and or peers at school, and issues at home to name a just a few. For some, this can weigh heavily on their overall sense of personal wellbeing. Though in itself this can be problematic for students, how they cope with it is key to building resilience around these worries and concerns. In this regard, the 2024 survey findings were uplifting, with students overall indicating they were coping much better with their mental health and worries than in 2023.

When Australian secondary school children were asked to score how well they were coping with their mental health or worries, they scored a much higher 61.2 pts out of 100 (where 100 is 'extremely' well), up from 54.0 pts in 2023. Students were coping much better at all types of schools, scoring from 67.8 pts in private independent schools to 58.8 pts in public schools, with improvement somewhat more pronounced at both private independent and Catholic schools. It was also higher in boys only (67.1 pts up from 60.0 pts), coeducational (60.9 up from 54.1 pts) and girls only (58.4 pts up from 51.5 pts) schools.

Though improving for all boys and girls, boys (67.2 pts) indicated they were coping much better than girls (56.1

pts). LGBTQI+ students (49.0 pts) however indicated they were not coping as well with their mental health and worries than students that were not (63.2 pts). Coping with mental health and worries scored higher in all year levels and ranged from 64.9 pts among year 11 students to 58.0 pts in year 10.

It was also very encouraging to see a sizeable drop in the number of students wo here not coping very well with these worries (i.e. scored less than 40 pts). In the 2024 survey, just under 1 in 4 (23%) students overall said they were not coping well, down from over 1 in 3 (35%) in 2023 – though this figure is still alarmingly high and a cause for concern for both parents and educators.

The number of students that were not coping very well fell sharply in private independent (from 36% to 16%) and Catholic (from 41% to 17%) schools and was significantly lower than in public schools where improvement was less pronounced (from 34% to 28%).

The number of boys and girls not coping very well fell sharply for all boys (from 28% to 15%) and girls (from 42% to 30%) but remains twice as high among girls than boys. Over twice as many LGBTQI+ students - over 4 in 10 or 42%) - were not coping well than students who did not identify as LGBTQI+ (20%).

Chart 9: Coping with Mental Health or Worries

Category	2024	2023
Year 11	64.9	54.7
Years 7-9	61.3	58.0
Year 12	60.1	52.3
Year 10	58.0	52.4
LGBTQI+ (no)	63.2	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	49.0	
All boys	67.2	60.3
All girls	56.1	47.6
Boys only school	67.1	60.0
Coeducational school	60.9	54.1
Girls only school	58.4	51.5
Private Independent School	67.8	55.0
Private Catholic School	62.4	50.8
Public School	58.8	54.3
All Students	61.2	54.0

(0 = not at all well; 100 = extremely well)
■ 2024 ■ 2023
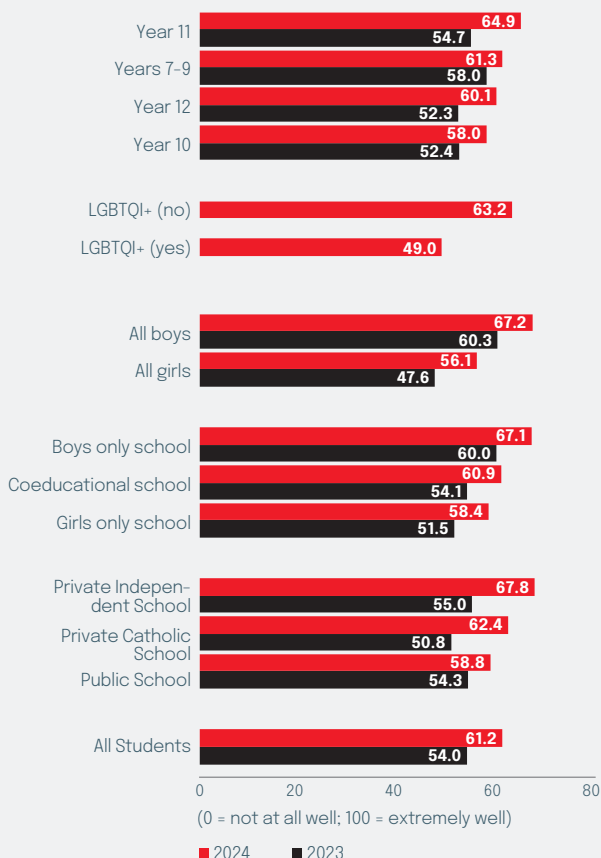
Chart 10: Coping with Mental Health or Worries

Category	2024	2023
Year 10	30%	38%
Year 12	24%	35%
Years 7-9	23%	34%
Year 11	17%	34%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	42%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	20%	
All girls	30%	42%
All boys	15%	28%
Girls only school	29%	35%
Coeducational school	23%	35%
Boys only school	15%	35%
Public School	28%	34%
Private Catholic School	17%	41%
Private Independent School	16%	36%
All Students	23%	35%

(% scored 'low' i.e. less than 40 pts)
■ 2024 ■ 2023
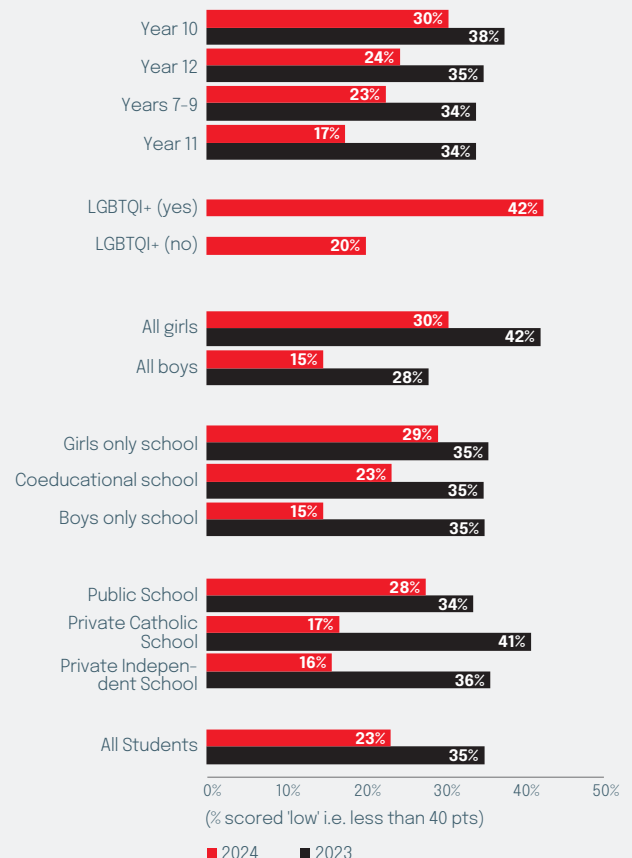
The number of students not coping well was noticeably lower in all year levels in 2024. It was highest among students in year 10 (30% down from 38%) and lowest among year 11 students (17% down from 34%).

Secondary students believe they were coping better with their mental health and worries in 2024. But we were also keen to better understand what the main drivers of their worries were. So we again asked them to select up to 5 causes of their worries and looked to see if these had changed since 2023. Our results suggest the main contributors of students worries were largely unchanged, though we noted some were causing worry for noticeably more students than last year and in some areas noticeably less.

Chart 11: Causes of Your Worries (Top 5)

Cause	2024	2023
My schoolwork, tests or grades	61%	66%
My looks/appearance/body image	44%	44%
My tiredness/lack of sleep	37%	38%
My mental health/anxieties	35%	41%
My family - money worries/cost of living pressures	34%	23%
My future job prospects	30%	30%
My friendships	29%	28%
University/TAFE/other - pressure of getting into my chosen course	26%	29%
My family - conflicts/family breakdown	25%	24%
My physical health	19%	21%
Not being accepted for who I am	12%	16%
The health of those closest to me	11%	11%
Climate change/the environment	9%	13%
World conflicts e.g. Russia/Ukraine	8%	5%
Being bullied (verbal, physical, cyberbullying)	7%	9%
Something else	2%	4%
I don't have any personal concerns or worries	4%	4%

■ 2024   ■ 2023

In 2024, around 6 in 10 (61%) students overall said the biggest cause of worry was driven by schoolwork, tests, or grades, though this was down from 66% in 2023.
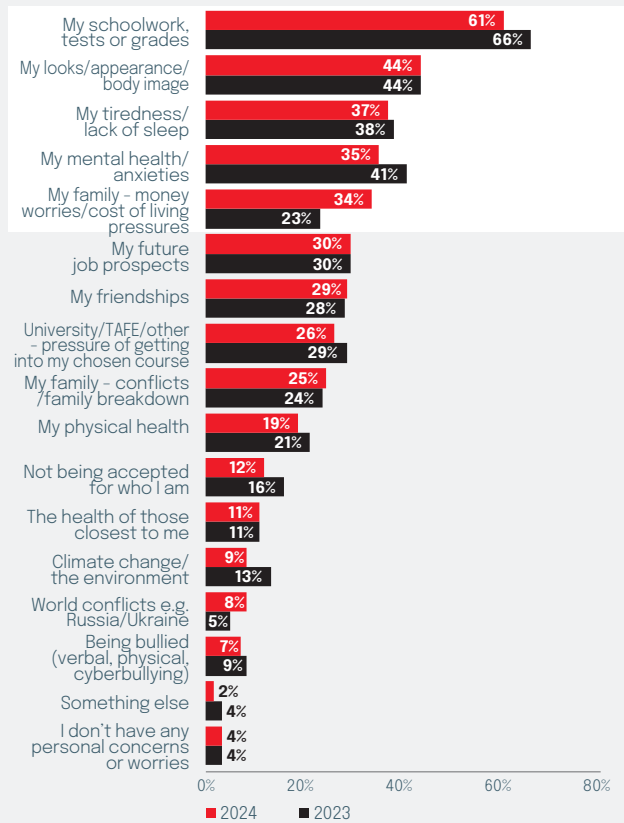
In second place by a large margin according to an unchanged 44% of students was their looks, appearance, or body image, followed by 37% who cited tiredness or lack of sleep (basically unchanged from 36% in 2023). Over 1 in 3 (35%) students identified mental health and anxieties (though this was down noticeably from 42% in 2023).

Rounding out the top 5 were worries centred around their family in relation to money worries and cost of living pressures, with this causing worry for 1 in 3 (34%) students, up significantly from less than 1 in 4 (23% in 2023). Clearly, cost of living pressures are now not only weighing heavily on the adult population, but these worries are also trickling down to their high school aged children.

In other key findings, we also counted a somewhat lower number worried about not being accepted for who they are (12% down from 16%) and climate change and the environment (9% down from 13%).

The survey again also found very few students are worry free, with only 1 in 25 (4%) overall indicating they had no personal worries or concerns in 2024, unchanged from 2023.

Main Causes of Worries (Students)

	All Students	Private Indep. school	Private Catholic	Public School	Boys school	Girls school	Co-ed school	All boys	All girls	LGBTQI+ (yes)	LGBTQI+ (no)	Years 7-9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Schoolwork, tests, or grades	61%	58%	59%	62%	54%	75%	59%	54%	68%	52%	62%	61%	63%	64%	58%
Looks/appearance/body image	44%	36%	39%	48%	22%	42%	47%	33%	55%	57%	42%	45%	47%	43%	43%
Tiredness/lack of sleep	37%	38%	38%	37%	34%	40%	37%	34%	41%	43%	36%	32%	29%	39%	40%
Mental health/anxieties	35%	39%	24%	38%	20%	30%	38%	27%	40%	56%	32%	36%	35%	28%	41%
Family - money/COL pressures	34%	32%	34%	34%	29%	42%	33%	30%	38%	39%	33%	20%	25%	27%	44%
Future job prospects	30%	34%	24%	31%	34%	33%	29%	30%	31%	21%	32%	14%	28%	32%	34%
Friendships	29%	29%	25%	31%	15%	37%	30%	26%	32%	34%	28%	34%	37%	24%	29%
Getting into chosen course (Uni etc)	26%	22%	25%	28%	24%	21%	27%	28%	25%	20%	27%	14%	25%	24%	32%
Family - conflicts/family breakdown	25%	27%	23%	24%	15%	19%	27%	20%	30%	31%	23%	23%	22%	27%	24%
Physical health	19%	17%	18%	20%	22%	21%	18%	18%	20%	18%	19%	27%	16%	22%	15%
Not being accepted for who I am	12%	16%	15%	10%	10%	12%	12%	13%	11%	23%	10%	16%	16%	12%	9%
Health of those closest to me	11%	6%	15%	11%	12%	12%	11%	11%	12%	13%	11%	7%	15%	16%	8%
Climate change/environment	9%	9%	6%	9%	7%	7%	9%	11%	6%	16%	7%	7%	10%	9%	8%
World conflicts (e.g. Russia/Ukraine)	8%	8%	8%	8%	10%	7%	8%	10%	6%	11%	8%	9%	4%	9%	9%
Being bullied (verbal, physical, cyber)	7%	10%	6%	7%	12%	4%	7%	8%	6%	10%	7%	11%	7%	6%	6%
Something else	2%	3%	0%	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	0%	3%
No personal concerns or worries	4%	4%	6%	4%	10%	2%	4%	8%	1%	2%	5%	9%	6%	4%	3%

Responses were however more nuanced across groups. In public schools, we noted a lot more students worried about their looks, appearance, or body image (48%), in private Catholic schools health of those closest to them (15%), private independent schools being bullied (10%), and in private independent (16%) and Catholic (15%) schools not being accepted for who they are, and in private independent (39%) and public schools (38%) mental health & anxieties.
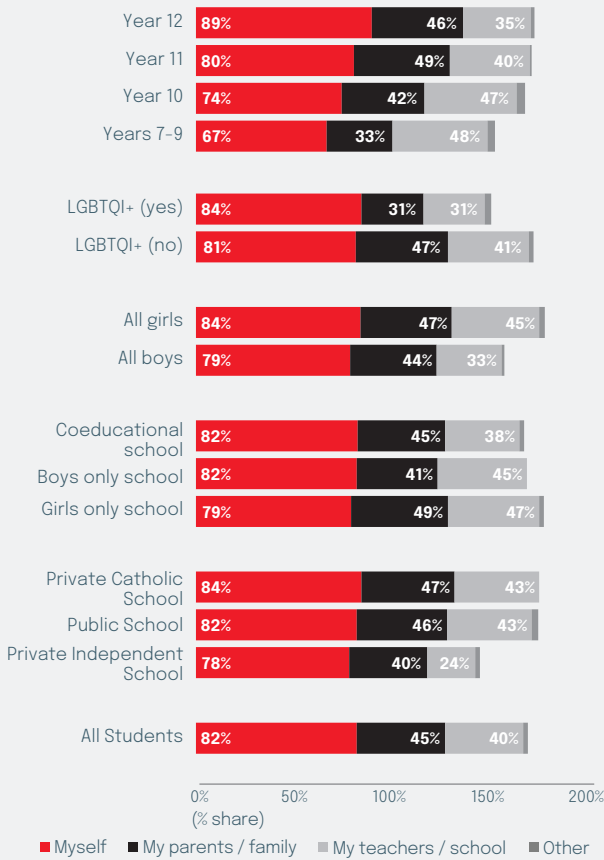
Noticeably more students at girls only schools worried about schoolwork, tests & grades (75%), money & cost of living pressures (42%) and friendships (37%), and those at coeducational schools about their looks, appearance, or body image (47%) and family conflicts & breakdown (27%). It was also apparent far more students at boys only schools had no worries (10%).

Significantly more girls than boys overall worried about their looks, appearance, or body image (55% vs. 33%), tiredness & lack of sleep (41% vs. 34%), mental health & anxieties (40% vs. 27%), money & cost of living pressures (38% vs. 30%) and family conflict & breakdown (30% vs. 20%). Far more boys than girls however had no concerns or worries (8% vs. 1%).

LGBTQI+ students worried much more about looks, appearance or body image (57% vs. 42%), mental health & anxieties (56% vs. 32%), not being accepted for who they are (23% vs. 10%) and climate change & environment (16% vs. 7%) than students that did not identify as LGBTQI+.

By year level, the biggest differences included a much higher number of year 12s that were worried about money & cost of living pressures (44%) and getting into their chosen course after high school (32%), and in years 7-9 being bullied (11%).

Chart 12: Where is Pressure About Schoolwork, Tests or Grades Coming From?

	Myself	My parents / family	My teachers / school
Year 12	89%	46%	35%
Year 11	80%	49%	40%
Year 10	74%	42%	47%
Years 7-9	67%	33%	48%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	84%	31%	31%
LGBTQI+ (no)	81%	47%	41%
All girls	84%	47%	45%
All boys	79%	44%	33%
Coeducational school	82%	45%	38%
Boys only school	82%	41%	45%
Girls only school	79%	49%	47%
Private Catholic School	84%	47%	43%
Public School	82%	46%	43%
Private Independent School	78%	40%	24%
All Students	82%	45%	40%

0% 50% 100% 150% 200%
(% share)

■ Myself ■ My parents / family ■ My teachers / school ■ Other

Pressure to do well at school has been shown to increase stress and anxiety in students, leading to poorer physical, social, and emotional health. With the vast majority of surveyed students indicating their main cause of worry was over their schoolwork, tests, or grades, we asked these students for the first where this pressure was coming from.

On average, over 8 in 10 (82%) of all students said they were putting that pressure on themselves, with almost 1 in 2 also indicating it was coming from their parents & family (45%) or their teachers & school (45%). These findings were broadly consistent among most groups.

Pressure came from most students themselves in all cohorts. It ranged from 78% in private independent schools to 84% in private Catholic schools, from 79% in girls only schools to 82% in coeducational schools, from 79% boys overall to 84% of all girls, and from 81% of non-LGBTQI+ students to 84% of LGBTQI+ students. Self-pressure also increased as students progressed through school from 67% in of students in years 7-9 and stepping up in each year level to 89% among students in year 12.

Among other pressure points, key differences included much lower pressure coming from parents & family of students in years 7-9 (33%), that identify as LGBTQI+ (31%) and at private independent schools (40%). Much lower pressure was also reported from teachers & their school by students enrolled at private independent (24%) and coeducational schools (38%), boys overall (33%), students than identified as LGBTQI+ (31%) and year 12 students (35%).

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) remains the dominant pathway to university for school leavers. According to The Centre for Independent Studies, recent estimates show almost three-in-four school leavers use ATAR to gain university entry - 60% use solely ATAR and 14% use ATAR in conjunction with other criteria. The share admitted on a non-ATAR basis has however grown from 15% in 2016 to at least 25% today. Given the growth in non-ATAR based admissions, we asked students if they are considering completing year 12 without sitting exams and gaining an ATAR.

Chart 13: Considering Completing Year 12 Without Sitting Exams or Gaining an ATAR
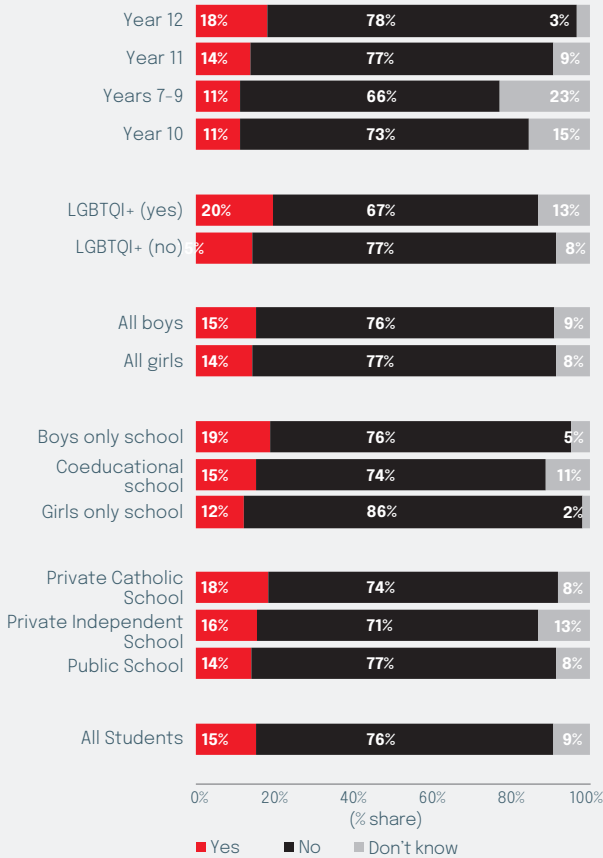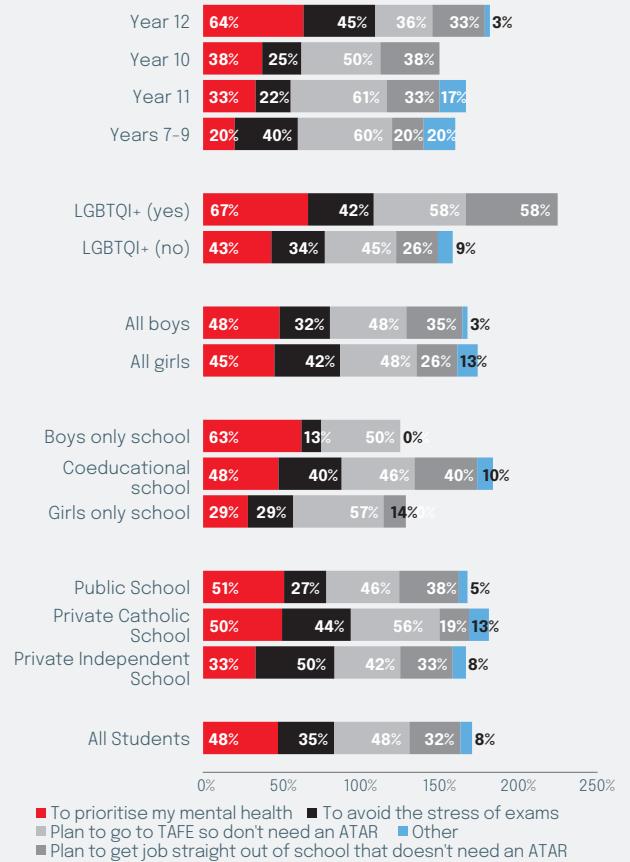
Group	Yes	No	Don't know
Year 12	18%	78%	3%
Year 11	14%	77%	9%
Years 7-9	11%	66%	23%
Year 10	11%	73%	15%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	20%	67%	13%
LGBTQI+ (no)	%	77%	8%
All boys	15%	76%	9%
All girls	14%	77%	8%
Boys only school	19%	76%	5%
Coeducational school	15%	74%	11%
Girls only school	12%	86%	2%
Private Catholic School	18%	74%	8%
Private Independent School	16%	71%	13%
Public School	14%	77%	8%
All Students	15%	76%	9%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
(% share)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Chart 14: Why Considering Not Sitting Exams and Gaining an ATAR?

Group	To prioritise my mental health	To avoid the stress of exams	Plan to go to TAFE so don't need an ATAR	Plan to get job straight out of school that doesn't need an ATAR	Other
Year 12	64%	45%	36%	33%	3%
Year 10	38%	25%	50%	38%	
Year 11	33%	22%	61%	33%	17%
Years 7-9	20%	40%	60%	20%	20%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	67%	42%	58%	58%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	43%	34%	45%	26%	9%
All boys	48%	32%	48%	35%	3%
All girls	45%	42%	48%	26%	13%
Boys only school	63%	13%	50%	0%	
Coeducational school	48%	40%	46%	40%	10%
Girls only school	29%	29%	57%	14%	
Public School	51%	27%	46%	38%	5%
Private Catholic School	50%	44%	56%	19%	13%
Private Independent School	33%	50%	42%	33%	8%
All Students	48%	35%	48%	32%	8%

0% 50% 100% 150% 200% 250%

■ To prioritise my mental health ■ To avoid the stress of exams
■ Plan to go to TAFE so don't need an ATAR ■ Other
■ Plan to get job straight out of school that doesn't need an ATAR

Our survey found that around 1 in 7 (15%) students overall are considering completing year 12 without sitting exams or gaining an ATAR. The vast majority - around 3 in 4 (76%) –however were not, and 1 in 10 (9%) were unsure.

We found somewhat more students at private Catholic schools (18%) were considering not completing exams or getting an ATAR than students at public schools (14%), significantly more at boys only schools (19%) than girls only schools (12%), but a broadly similar number of boys (15%) and girls (14%) overall.

Somewhat more students who identified as LGBTQI+ did not plan to sit exams or gain an ATAR (20%) than those that did not identify as LGBTQI+ (15%). Interestingly, the highest number considering finishing year 12 without sitting exams or gaining an ATAR were in year 12 - almost 1 in 5 or 18% - followed by year 11s (14%).

Among those that were not considering completing Year 12 without sitting exams or gaining an ATAR ranged from almost 9 in 10 (86%) at girls only schools to around 2 in 3 in years 7-9 (66%) and students who identified as LGBTQI+ (67%). Uncertainty was highest among students in years 7-9 by some margin (23%).

Students considering completing year 12 without sitting exams or gaining an ATAR where also asked why they were leaning this way. It is commonly acknowledged that exams can come with a lot of pressure and make students feel really stressed. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that almost 1 in 2 (48%) students said they were considering not sitting year 12 exams or gaining an ATAR in order to prioritise their mental health, while a further 1 in 3 (35%) to avoid the stress of exams.

Noticeably more students prioritised mental health in public (51%) and private Catholic (50%) schools than in private independent schools (33%). It was also a consideration for far more students at boys only schools (63%) and more than double at girls only schools (29%), among LGBTQI+ students (67%), and for students in year 12 (64%). Noticeably more students at private independent schools (50%), coeducational schools (40%), girls in general (42%), who identified as LGBTQI+ (42%) and in years 12 (45%) and 7-9 (40%) cited stress avoidance.

Almost 1 in 5 (48%) students overall however did not plan to sit exams or get an ATAR as they plan to go to TAFE, so they do not need an ATAR and 1 in 3 (32%) plan to get a job straight out of school that does not need an ATAR - see table above.

Are Schools Providing Enough Wellbeing Support?

Around 7 in 10 (69%) students overall said their school had a wellbeing program (e.g. mindfulness, coaching, meditation, yoga, counselling etc.). Around 2 in 10 (19%) said they did not but 1 in 10 (9%) were unsure. More students in most cohorts said their school had a wellbeing program than in 2023, especially in private independent schools (71% up from 61%) and private Catholic schools (69% up from 59%), and to a lesser extent in boys only schools (67% up from 60%) and years 11 (70% up from 63%) and year 12 (71% up from 65%). Interestingly, a much higher number of year 7-9 (18%), year 10 (17%), LGBTQI+ (16%) students and those at public school (15%) did not know whether their school had a wellbeing program.

Student wellbeing is a fundamental component of the school experience and just as important as academic achievement. But wellbeing initiatives provided by schools (such as coaching, meditation, counselling, etc.) still do not seem to be helping students very much, with students scoring a very 'moderate' 45.5 pts out of 100 in 2024 (where 100 signals they are helping completely), down slightly from 46.0 pts in 2023.

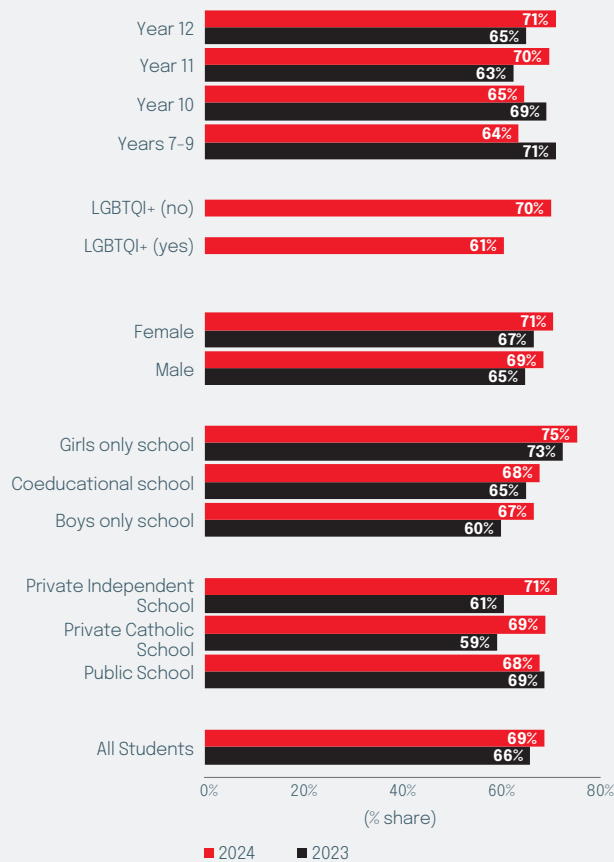
Chart 15: Does School Have Wellbeing Program Yes

Category	2024	2023
Year 12	71%	65%
Year 11	70%	63%
Year 10	65%	69%
Years 7-9	64%	71%
LGBTQI+ (no)	70%	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	61%	
Female	71%	67%
Male	69%	65%
Girls only school	75%	73%
Coeducational school	68%	65%
Boys only school	67%	60%
Private Independent School	71%	61%
Private Catholic School	69%	59%
Public School	68%	69%
All Students	69%	66%

(% share)
■ 2024 ■ 2023

Chart 16: Does School Have Wellbeing Program No

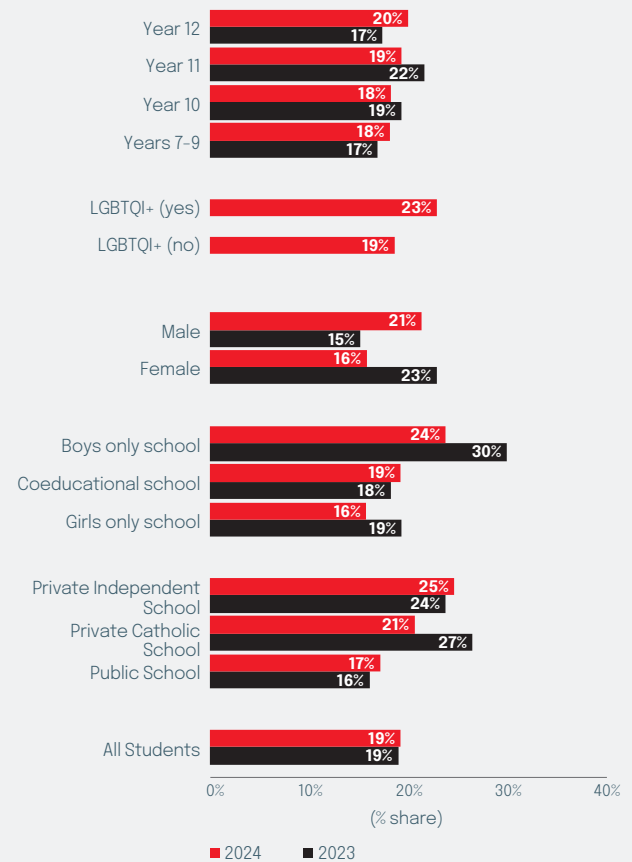| Category	2024	2023
Year 12	20%	17%
Year 11	19%	22%
Year 10	18%	19%
Years 7-9	18%	17%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	23%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	19%	
Male	21%	15%
Female	16%	23%
Boys only school	24%	30%
Coeducational school	19%	18%
Girls only school	16%	19%
Private Independent School	25%	24%
Private Catholic School	21%	27%
Public School	17%	16%
All Students	19%	19%

(% share)
■ 2024 ■ 2023

Chart 17: Extent Wellbeing Initiatives Helping to Improve Wellbeing

	2024	2023
Year 12	46.2	46.9
Years 7-9	45.9	48.9
Year 10	45.4	44.7
Year 11	44.2	44.5
LGBTQI+ (no)	46.0	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	42.1	
All boys	50.9	54.0
All girls	40.9	39.6
Boys only school	54.1	54.0
Coeducational school	45.3	45.3
Girls only school	41.2	47.3
Private Independent School	51.0	51.9
Private Catholic School	46.1	36.9
Public School	43.6	45.8
All Students	45.5	46.0

(0 = not at all; 100 = completely)

■ 2024　■ 2023
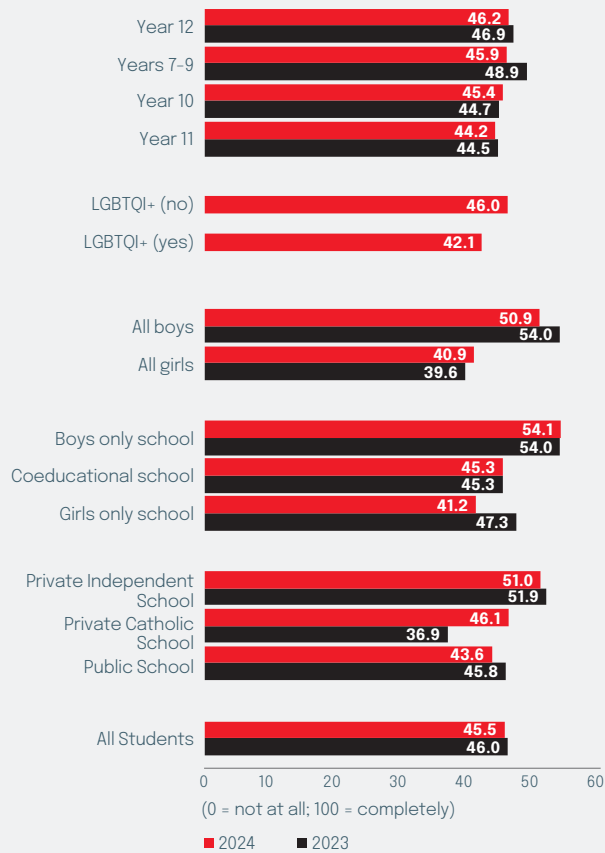
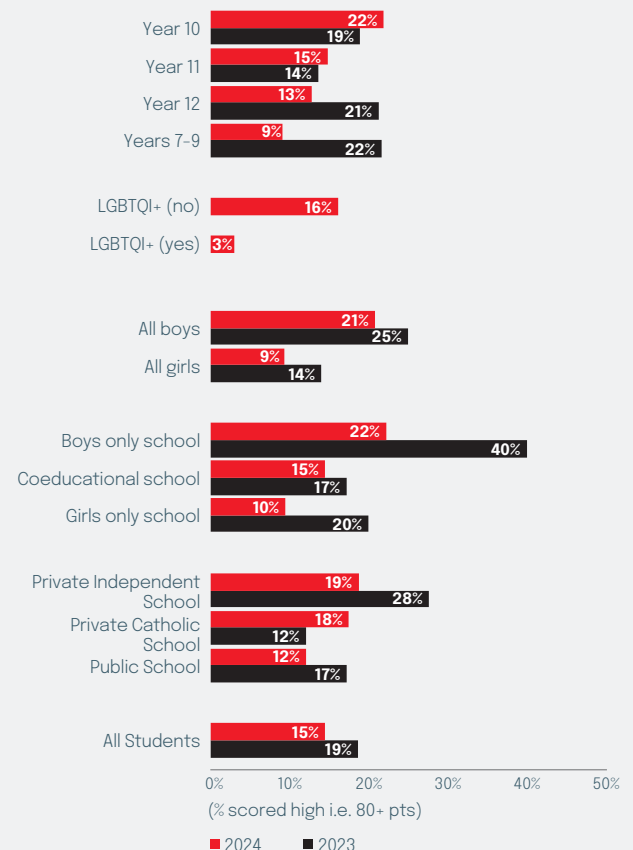## Chart 18: Extent Wellbeing Initiatives Helping to Improve Wellbeing (scored "low")

	2024	2023
Year 10	54%	47%
Year 11	48%	45%
Year 12	44%	44%
Years 7-9	36%	43%
LGBTQI+ (yes)	52%	
LGBTQI+ (no)	45%	
All girls	52%	55%
All boys	40%	31%
Girls only school	50%	49%
Coeducational school	47%	44%
Boys only school	33%	50%
Public School	48%	45%
Private Catholic School	46%	62%
Private Independent School	40%	34%
All Students	46%	45%

(% scored low i.e. less than 40 pts)

■ 2024　■ 2023
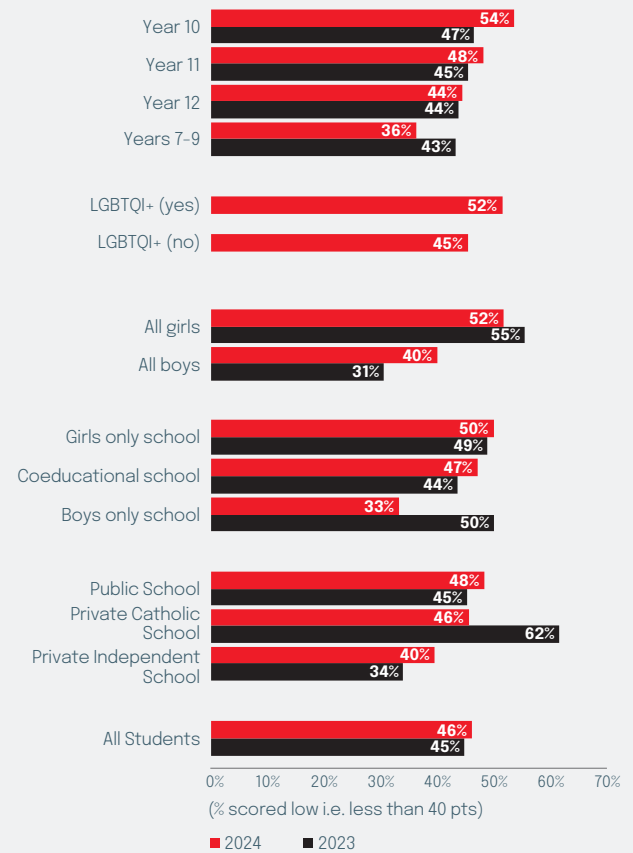
School wellbeing initiatives were rated only moderately in all groups. Students at private independent schools said they helped most (51.0 pts from 51.9 pts in 2023), and public schools least (43.6 pts down from 45.8 pts). It was however encouraging that students at private Catholic schools said they helped more (46.1 pts from 36.9 pts in 2023).

Students at boys only schools (54.1 pts) said they were much more helpful than coeducational (45.3 pts) and girls only schools where it also scored a much lower at 41.2 pts in 2024 (47.3 in 2023). Overall, boys still believe school wellbeing initiatives are helping improve their wellbeing (50.9 pts) much more than girls (40.9 pts). The survey also found non-LGBTQI+ (46.0 pts) students got more benefit from school wellbeing initiatives than students that identified as LGBTQI+ (42.1 pts). The extent school wellbeing initiatives help students was rated broadly the same in all year levels.

Chart 19: Extent Wellbeing Initiatives Helping to Improve Wellbeing (scored "high")

	2024	2023
Year 10	22%	19%
Year 11	15%	14%
Year 12	13%	21%
Years 7-9	9%	22%
LGBTQI+ (no)	16%	
LGBTQI+ (yes)	3%	
All boys	21%	25%
All girls	9%	14%
Boys only school	22%	40%
Coeducational school	15%	17%
Girls only school	10%	20%
Private Independent School	19%	28%
Private Catholic School	18%	12%
Public School	12%	17%
All Students	15%	19%

(% scored high i.e. 80+ pts)

■ 2024　■ 2023

The disconnect between school wellbeing initiatives and how much they help students is amplified when looking at the number of students who said they helped very little (i.e. scored less than 40 pts). Overall, almost 1 in 2 (46%) said they did not help much (45% in 2023). Only 15% or around 1 in 7 said they helped very much, with this also falling from around 1 in 5 (19%) in 2023.

The number of students who said they provided little help was highest in public schools (48%) followed by private Catholic schools (though it fell sharply 46% from 62% in 2023). It was lowest in private independent schools but increased somewhat to 40% (34% in 2023). Around 1 in 2 students at girls only (48%) and coeducational (47%) schools said they did not help much, but in boys only schools it fell sharply to just 1 in 3 (33%) from 1 in 2 (50% in 2023). Just over 1 in 2 girls overall said they did not help much (52%), compared to just 3 in 10 (31%) boys. It was also above average among LGBTQI+ students (52%) and ranged from 54% among students in year 10 to 36% in years 7-9.

Among those who said it helped very much, this ranged from around 1 in 5 students in private independent (19%) and Catholic (18%) schools to around 1 in 10 in public schools (12%). It was also twice as high in boys only schools (22%) than at girls only schools (10%), and for boys overall (21%) than girls (9%). By year level, wellbeing helped most students very much in year 10 (22%), but far fewer in years 7-9 (9%). Significantly, only 3% of students that identified as LGBTQI+ said their schools wellbeing initiatives helped them very much - or 5 times less than the overall student average.

So what do students believe their school could do to most help them and their classmates with their worries? The 2024 points to a very noticeably shift in emphasis on what would help students most. When asked to select the top 5 things schools could do, the highest number of students (36%) now believe that having teachers who are more calm, honest, and caring is key.
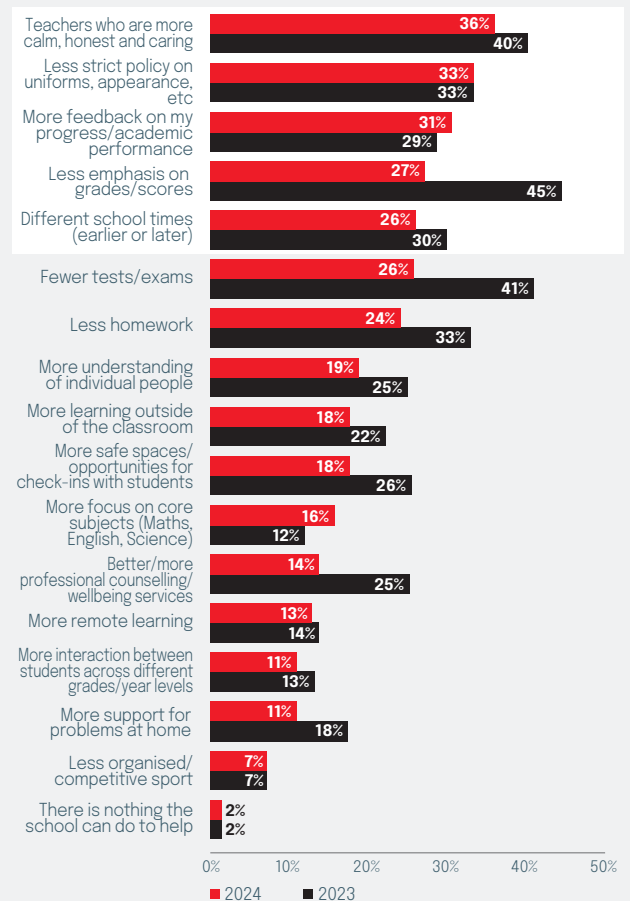
Less strict policy on uniforms and appearance (33%) and more feedback of their progress and academic performance (31%) featured prominently. Next was less emphasis on grades and scores - though this dropped from top spot last year with the number of students who thought this would help them most also falling sharply to around 1 in 4 (27%), from almost 1 in 2 (45%) in the 2023 survey. Rounding out the top 5 was different school times (earlier or later), though the number that thought this would help also fell somewhat to 26% (30% in 2023) - see chart below.

The 2024 survey also revealed significantly lower numbers of students who thought fewer tests and exams would help most with their worries (26% down from 41% in 2023), as well better or more professional counselling and wellbeing services (14% down from 25%), less homework (24% down from 33%), more understanding of individual people (24% down from 33%), more safe spaces or opportunities for check ins with students (18% down from 26%) and more support for problems at home (11% down from 18%). Only 2% of students said there was nothing the school could do to help.

The tables on the following pages highlight some key differences across student cohorts.

Chart 20: Top 5 Things Schools Should Do to Help Students Most With Their Worries

	2024	2023
Teachers who are more calm, honest and caring	36%	40%
Less strict policy on uniforms, appearance, etc	33%	33%
More feedback on my progress/academic performance	31%	29%
Less emphasis on grades/scores	27%	45%
Different school times (earlier or later)	26%	30%
Fewer tests/exams	26%	41%
Less homework	24%	33%
More understanding of individual people	19%	25%
More learning outside of the classroom	18%	22%
More safe spaces/opportunities for check-ins with students	18%	26%
More focus on core subjects (Maths, English, Science)	16%	12%
Better/more professional counselling/wellbeing services	14%	25%
More remote learning	13%	14%
More interaction between students across different grades/year levels	11%	13%
More support for problems at home	11%	18%
Less organised/competitive sport	7%	7%
There is nothing the school can do to help	2%	2%

Top 5 Things Schools Should Do to Help Students Most With Their Worries (Students)

	All Students	Private Indep. school	Private Catholic	Public School	Boys school	Girls school	Co-ed school	All boys	All girls	LGBTQI+ (yes)	LGBTQI+ (no)	Years 7-9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Teachers more calm, honest & caring	**36%**	36%	31%	38%	29%	37%	37%	35%	37%	38%	36%	**44%**	36%	38%	**33%**
Less strict policy on uniforms, etc	**33%**	36%	**43%**	29%	27%	**44%**	32%	27%	**39%**	**40%**	32%	33%	30%	36%	33%
More feedback on progress	**31%**	25%	27%	**33%**	29%	26%	31%	27%	33%	18%	**33%**	30%	29%	28%	32%
Less emphasis on grades/ scores	**27%**	23%	26%	29%	34%	33%	25%	25%	29%	28%	27%	23%	32%	28%	26%
Different school times (earlier or later)	**26%**	23%	24%	28%	17%	**37%**	25%	24%	29%	**37%**	24%	**37%**	26%	23%	26%
Fewer tests/exams	**26%**	27%	26%	25%	**39%**	25%	24%	25%	26%	30%	25%	26%	23%	29%	25%
Less homework	**24%**	**32%**	24%	22%	27%	30%	23%	23%	25%	25%	24%	**35%**	26%	29%	18%
More understanding of individuals	**19%**	17%	17%	20%	17%	14%	20%	21%	17%	18%	19%	19%	**25%**	16%	19%
More safe spaces for student check-ins	**18%**	19%	17%	17%	20%	16%	18%	19%	17%	17%	18%	12%	16%	18%	19%
More learning outside of the classroom	**18%**	19%	20%	16%	15%	21%	17%	15%	**21%**	**27%**	16%	5%	**22%**	15%	**21%**
More focus on core subjects	**16%**	17%	15%	16%	**22%**	11%	16%	18%	14%	8%	17%	**23%**	17%	10%	17%
Better counselling/wellbeing services	**14%**	10%	**18%**	13%	10%	16%	14%	11%	**16%**	**22%**	12%	12%	10%	10%	18%
More remote learning	**13%**	14%	12%	12%	12%	**21%**	11%	10%	16%	13%	13%	**19%**	10%	11%	13%
More support for problems at home	**11%**	6%	**12%**	**12%**	5%	7%	**12%**	13%	9%	10%	11%	5%	14%	14%	9%
More interaction across year levels	**11%**	9%	12%	11%	12%	12%	11%	12%	10%	3%	12%	16%	14%	14%	6%
Less organised/competitive sport	**7%**	6%	7%	7%	7%	4%	8%	8%	6%	**12%**	6%	12%	10%	6%	6%
There is nothing school can do to help	**2%**	3%	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	3%	0%	0%	2%	1%

What would help most did however differ by school type

Whereas somewhat more students at private independent schools believe less homework would help (32%), somewhat more in private Catholic schools singled out less strict policy on uniforms & appearance (42%) and better counselling & wellbeing services (18%), and in public schools more feedback on their progress and academic performance (33%).

Twice as many students in public and private Catholic schools also said more support for problems at home would help them (12%). In boys only schools, noticeably more students pointed to fewer test and exams (39%) and a greater focus on core subjects (22%). In girls only schools however less strict policy on uniforms & appearance (44%), different school times (37%) and more remote learning (21%) was more important, and in coeducational schools more support for problems at home (12%).

By gender, the main differences related to the higher number of girls that singled out uniforms & appearance (39% vs. 27% boys), more learning outside the classroom (21% vs. 15%) and more remote learning (16% vs. 10%).

Also apparent was the somewhat higher number of LGBTQI+ students who said less strict polices on uniforms & appearance (40%), different school times (37%), more learning outside the classroom (27%), better counselling & wellbeing services (22%) and less organised sports (12%) would help them most with their worries, but among non-LGBTQI+ students more feedback on their progress and academic performance (33%).

By year, we discovered a much higher number of students in years 7-9 who thought more calm, honest & caring teachers (44%), different school times (37%), less homework (35%), more focus on core subjects (23%) and more remote learning (19%) would help them most, in year 10 more understanding of individual people (25%), and in years 10 (22%) and year 12 (21%) more learning outside the classroom.

Time Spent Sleeping & on Activities

National standards from the Australian Department of Health recommend that adolescents aged between 14-17 should get between 8 and 10 hours of sleep per night for their developing brain, and between 9 to 11 hours for children aged from 5-13 years. Not getting enough sleep can have negative effects on the way they think, react, and learn. Sleep deprivation can also contribute to emotional issues and behaviour problems that may affect academic achievement.

This may also partly help explain why girl students also rate their physical and emotional & mental wellbeing lower than boys. It is also consistent with other NAB Wellbeing research which has repeatedly found lack of sleep detracts from people's overall wellbeing.

The average amount of time school students spent sleeping each night fell as they progressed through academic year levels - falling from 8.1 hrs for students in years 7-9 to 7.2 hrs by the time they reach year 12.

Chart 21: Average Hours Slept Each Night

Chart 22: Time Spent on Activities
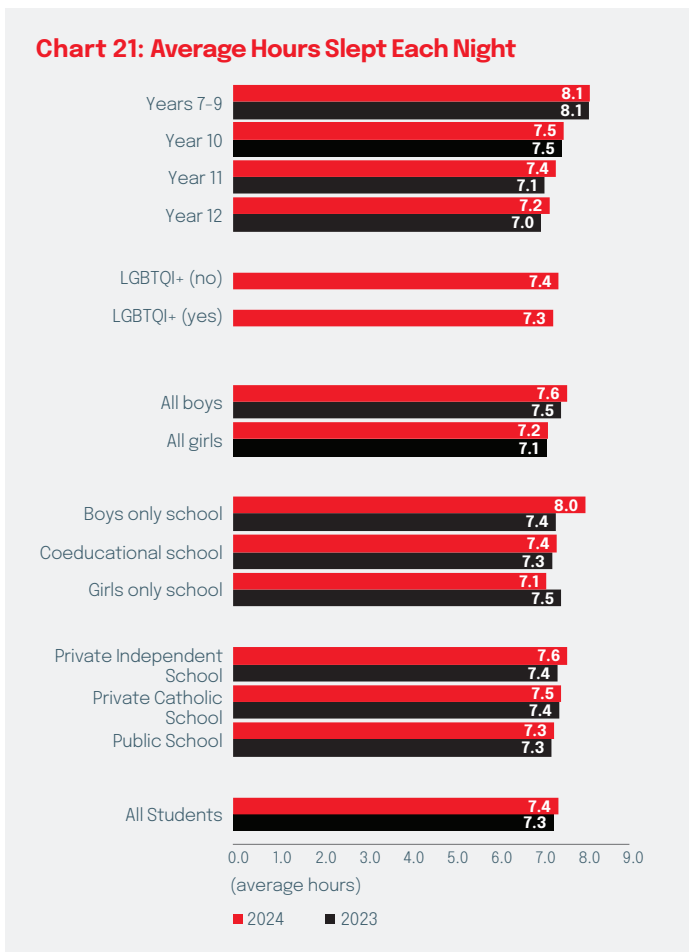
NAB's research however continues to show that students are not getting enough sleep - on average sleeping just 7.4 hours per night. The survey also found little difference in the amount of time spent sleeping by type of school attended, with sleep patterns little changed from our 2023 findings.

Sleep ranged narrowly from 7.3 hours in public schools to 7.6 hours at private independent schools, but somewhat more so from 7.1 hours among students at girls only schools (down from 7.5 hrs in 2023) to 8.0 hours at boys only schools (up from 7.4 hrs in 2023).

Boys in general (7.6 mins) slept more than girls (7.2 mins), with these numbers suggesting boys on average are sleeping almost 30 minutes more a night than girls - and that girls are essentially losing half a night's sleep over the course of a 7 day week when compared to boys.
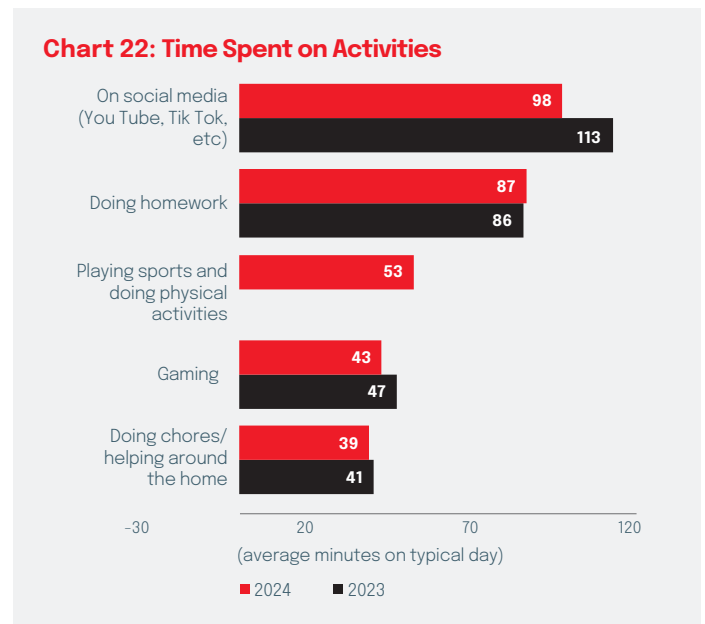
There are several reasons teenagers may not be getting enough sleep. Hectic after-school schedules including homework, sports, part-time jobs, and social commitments can cut into a teenager's sleeping time. Leisure activities, such as television, internet and computer gaming and social media can also encroach on this time.

When students were asked how much time they spent on a typical day on social media, doing homework, sports, gaming, and chores around the home, they estimated almost 5½ hours on average in 2024.

Specifically the highest amount of time was spent on social media such as You Tube, Tik Tok etc. (98 minutes though this was down from 113 minutes in the 2023 survey). They spent a basically unchanged amounts of time doing homework (87 mins), playing sports, and doing physical activities (53 mins), gaming (43 mins) and doing chores and helping around the home (39 mins).

The table below shows survey responses across all student groups.

Time spent on activities

	All Students	Private Indep. school	Private Catholic	Public School	Boys school	Girls school	Co-ed school	All boys	All girls	LGBTQI+ (yes)	LGBTQI+ (no)	Years 7-9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
On social media	98	84	99	102	72	**104**	**100**	83	**113**	**122**	94	93	**104**	93	100
Doing homework	87	89	87	86	78	**108**	84	74	**98**	87	87	88	73	87	92
Playing sports	53	56	60	49	**65**	52	51	**59**	48	**28**	57	62	59	54	47
Gaming	43	43	40	44	**54**	18	46	**60**	27	**50**	42	57	43	**38**	43
Chores/helping at home	39	36	36	41	33	38	40	40	37	42	39	**33**	40	40	39
Total (minutes)	**319**	**307**	**321**	**323**	**302**	**318**	**322**	**316**	**322**	**329**	**318**	**333**	**319**	**311**	**322**
Total hours	**5.3**	**5.1**	**5.3**	**5.4**	**5.0**	**5.3**	**5.4**	**5.3**	**5.4**	**5.5**	**5.3**	**5.6**	**5.3**	**5.2**	**5.4**

Students attending public schools (102 mins) and private Catholic schools (99 mins) said they spent the most time on social media, but those in private independent schools on homework (89 mins) - though only marginally more than in Catholic (87 mins) and public schools (86 mins). Students at public schools however spent somewhat less time playing sports or doing physical activities (49 mins), but a little more doing chores at home (41 mins). Students at girls only (104 mins) and coeducational schools (100 mins) spent much more time on social media than students at boys only schools (72 mins). Students at girls only schools also spent significantly more time doing homework (108 mins), and students at boys only schools much more time playing sports (65 mins) and somewhat more time gaming (54 mins).

The survey also revealed a much higher number of girls overall spending time on social media in a typical day (113 mins girls vs. 83 mins boys) and doing homework (98 mins vs. 74 mins), but boys more time playing sports (59 mins vs. 48 mins) and gaming (60 mins vs. 27 mins).

Students that identified as LGBTQI+ spent much more time on social media (122 mins vs. 94 mins) and gaming (50 mins vs. 42 mins) on a typical day, but significantly less time playing sports or doing physical activity than students that did not identify as LGBTQI+ (28 mins vs. 57 mins).

Interestingly, students in all year levels spent the most amount of time on social media - ranging from 93 mins among students in years 7-9 and year 11 to 104 mins among year 10 students. Year 12s spent the most time doing homework (92 mins), and those in year 10 by far the lowest (73 mins). Year 11s spent somewhat less time gaming (38 mins) and years 7-9 doing chores and helping out at home (33 mins).
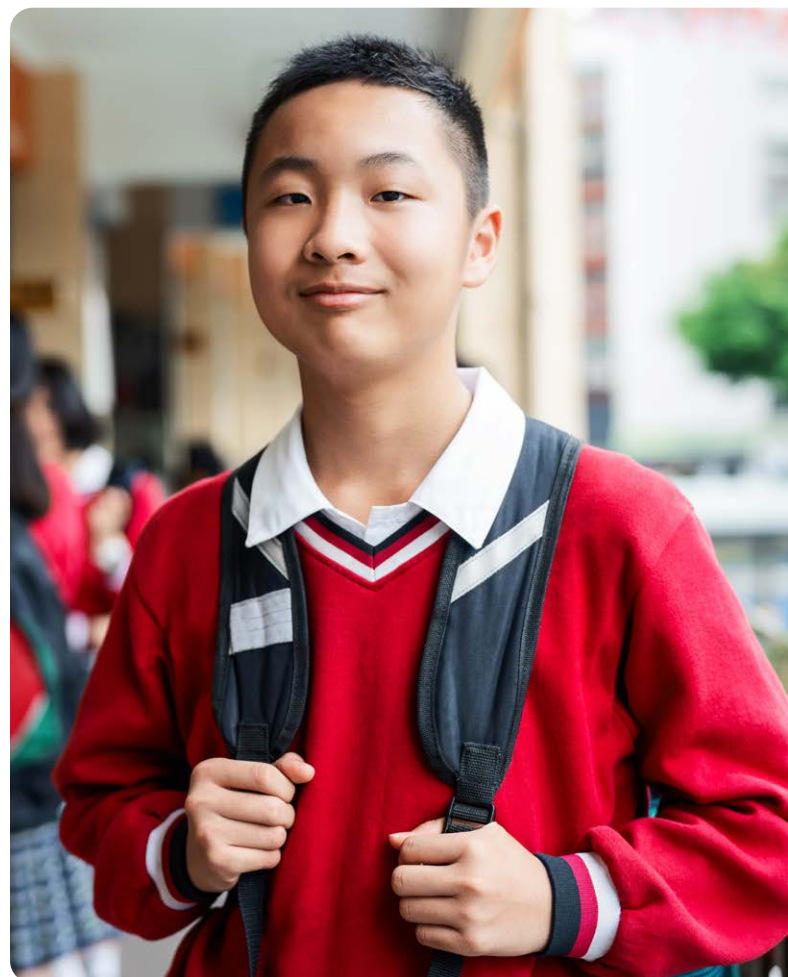
Social Media

Social media is any digital technology that allows people to share ideas, information and thoughts through online communities and networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok etc. It provides students with multiple ways to connect virtually with others (friends, family, teachers, members of interest groups and even strangers).

Most popular social media platforms are completely free. Students will use social media in different ways, depending on their interests, communities, friends, and family. The ease of creating, posting, and sharing content creates opportunities for students to have both positive and negative experiences online.

On the positive side, social media can enhance communication and connectivity, information sharing and learning, self-expression, and awareness.

But on the negative side it can also pose risks to their mental health, result in cyberbullying, and be a source of distraction with excessive use of social media leading to time management issues.

In this section, we ask students to rate the extent they agree with both positive and negative statements about social media and how it makes them feel.

Overall, students were in highest agreement (by a significant margin) with the statement social media makes me feel "more connected to what is going on in my friends' lives" scoring 57.7 pts. Almost 3 in 10 (28%) students overall however scored this feeling "very high" (i.e. scored 80+ pts) but 1 in 4 (26%) also "very low" (i.e. less than 40 pts).

Social media also seems to play a role in helping students feel included and accepted in life, scoring next highest for the statements social media makes me feel "included in things" (47.9 pts) and "more accepted for who I am" (43.6 pts), with around 1 in 6 students rating these feelings very high, but around 4 in 10 very low.

Students scored their feelings about the statement social media makes me feel "I have a place where I can be supported during tough times" moderately at 42.3 pts, though 1 in 2 (51%) were in very low agreement with this statement. The statement social media made me feel "better about my own life" was also scored moderately (41.5 pts), with just 1 in 10 (11%) scoring their feelings very high but 1 in 2 (50%) very low.

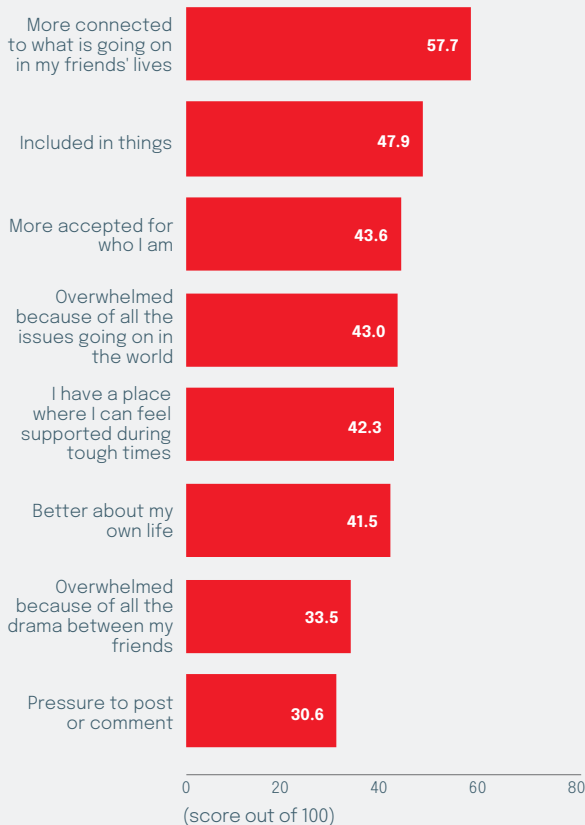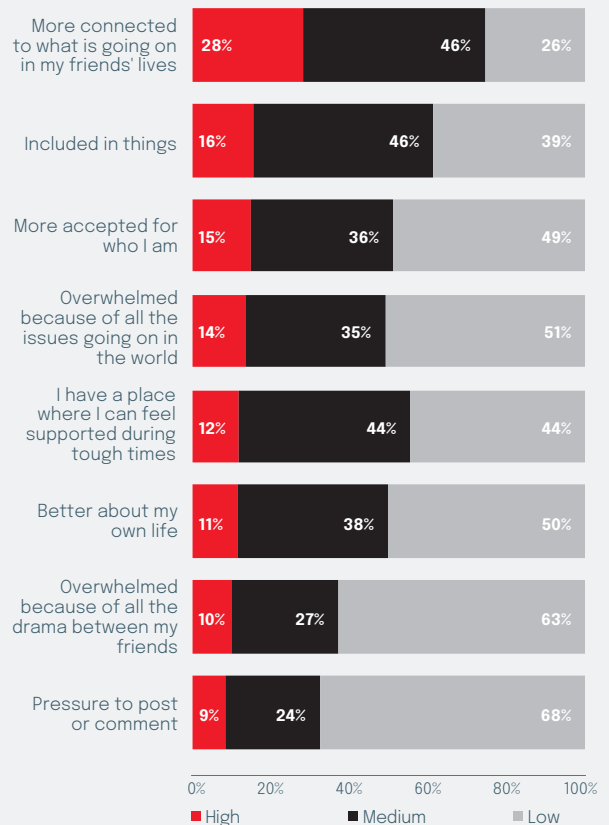**Chart 23: Extent of Agreement With Statements About Social Media Makes Me Feel …**

Statement	Score
More connected to what is going on in my friends' lives	57.7
Included in things	47.9
More accepted for who I am	43.6
Overwhelmed because of all the issues going on in the world	43.0
I have a place where I can feel supported during tough times	42.3
Better about my own life	41.5
Overwhelmed because of all the drama between my friends	33.5
Pressure to post or comment	30.6

(score out of 100)

Chart 24: Extent of Agreement With Statements About Social Media Makes Me Feel …

Statement	High	Medium	Low
More connected to what is going on in my friends' lives	28%	46%	26%
Included in things	16%	46%	39%
More accepted for who I am	15%	36%	49%
Overwhelmed because of all the issues going on in the world	14%	35%	51%
I have a place where I can feel supported during tough times	12%	44%	44%
Better about my own life	11%	38%	50%
Overwhelmed because of all the drama between my friends	10%	27%	63%
Pressure to post or comment	9%	24%	68%

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

Student feelings about social media were scored lowest around the statements it made them feel "overwhelmed because of all the drama with their friends" (33.5 pts) and "pressure to comment or post" (30.6 pts), with just 1 in 10 scoring their feelings about both these statements very high, and around 1 in 3 very low.

They did however score the statement social media makes me feel "overwhelmed because of all the issues going on in the world" somewhat higher (43.0 pts), with almost 1 in 5 (15%) students scoring this feeling very high.

Some groups however, felt more strongly about the way social media made them fell than others. The table below highlights the number of students who scored their feelings around all of these statements "very high".

Extent of Agreement with Statements... (% scored "very" high)

	All Students	Private Indep. school	Private Catholic	Public School	Boys school	Girls school	Co-ed school	All boys	All girls	LGBTQI+ (yes)	LGBTQI+ (no)	Years 7-9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
More connected to what is going on in my friends' lives	**28%**	26%	20%	**31%**	22%	30%	29%	26%	**31%**	28%	28%	24%	**34%**	30%	26%
I have a place where I can feel supported during tough times	**14%**	12%	17%	13%	**24%**	9%	13%	16%	13%	13%	14%	7%	17%	16%	13%
More accepted for who I am	**12%**	12%	8%	13%	**22%**	6%	12%	**15%**	10%	12%	12%	14%	12%	15%	9%
Overwhelmed because of all issues going on in the world	**15%**	18%	16%	13%	21%	19%	14%	14%	15%	**19%**	14%	14%	9%	18%	15%
Overwhelmed because of all drama between my friends	**10%**	**14%**	6%	10%	5%	8%	11%	8%	12%	**14%**	9%	12%	11%	11%	9%
Included in things	**16%**	12%	19%	16%	15%	13%	16%	16%	15%	16%	16%	**29%**	20%	15%	12%
Better about my own life	**11%**	9%	8%	13%	10%	5%	13%	14%	10%	16%	11%	**17%**	9%	13%	10%
Pressure to post or comment	**9%**	11%	10%	7%	11%	12%	8%	9%	9%	4%	9%	7%	6%	11%	8%

Among some key takeouts we noted somewhat higher numbers of students that were in very high agreement around the statement about feeling: "more connected to what is going on in my friends' lives" at public schools (31%), among all girls (31%) and in year 10 (34%); the statement "I have a place where I can feel supported during tough times" at boys only schools (24%); the statement "more accepted for who I am" at all boys schools (22%) and among all boys (15%); the statement "overwhelmed because of all of the issues going on in the world" (19%) and "overwhelmed because of all the drama between my friends" (14%) among LGBTQI+ students; and the statements about feeling "included in things" (29%) and "better about my own life" (17%) by students in years 7-9.

Students were also asked to rate the effect social media is having an impact on their own lives and on people their own age. Interestingly, they believe it is having a more positive impact on themselves than on people their own age. Moreover, this appears to be the case with students in all cohorts with few exceptions. Interestingly however they also think that a somewhat higher number of people

their own age enjoy extremely positive effects than themselves in most cohorts.

When asked to score the effect social media is having, students overall scored the impact somewhat more positive for themselves (51.0 pts) than for people their age (47.0 pts) - see charts above.

The impact on themselves was rated most positive by students at private Catholic schools (54.7 pts) and higher than people their own age (53.5 pts). It was next highest among students at public schools (51.1 pts) and much higher than people their own age (44.9 pts). Students at private independent schools however rated the effect of social media on their own lives (46.3 pts) lowest, and below people their own age (46.8 pts).

Students at boys only schools also scored the impact on themselves highest (43.0 pts) and above their peers (52.0 pts), as did students at coeducational schools (51.4 pts versus 46.0 pts for their peers). But students at girls only schools scored the effect of social media on their lives least positive (46.5 pts) and below people their own age (48.5 pts).

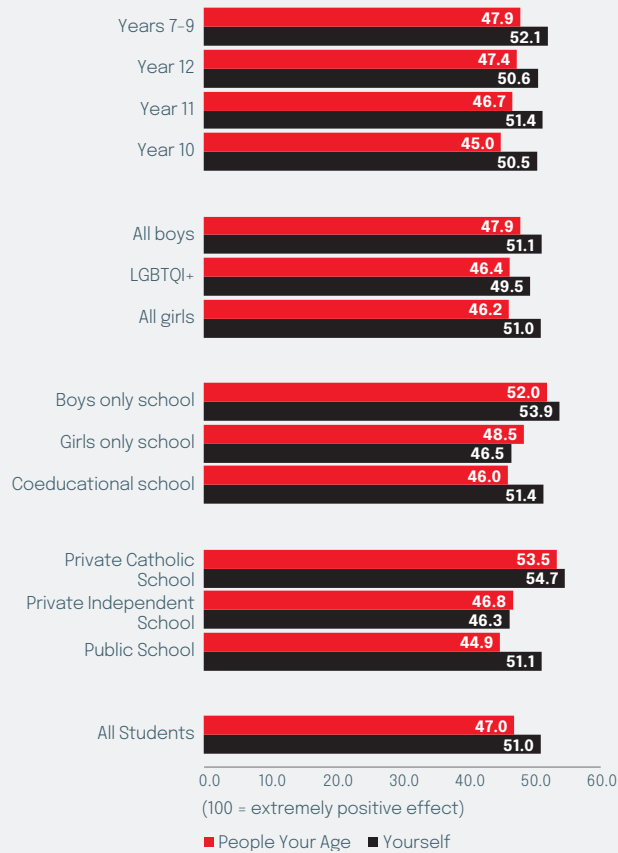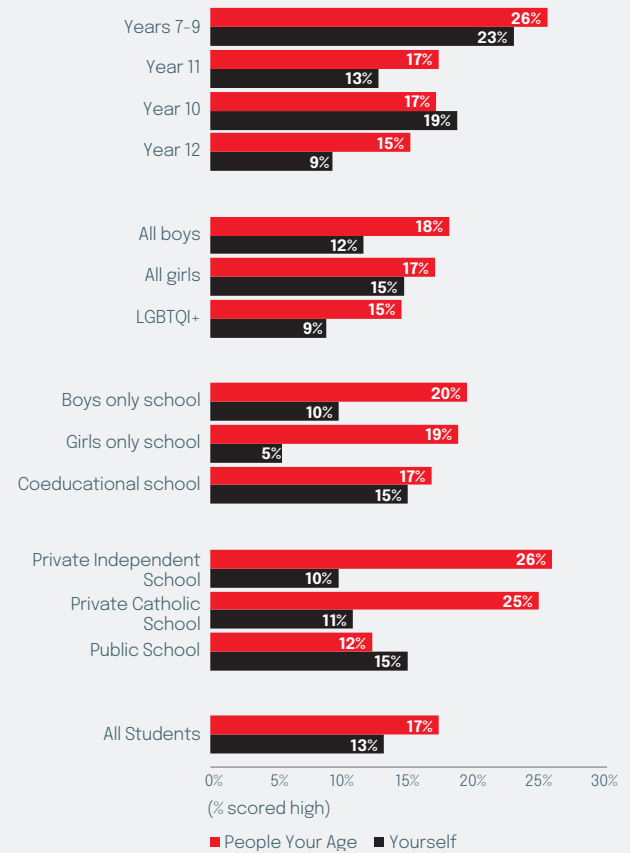**Chart 25: Effects Social Media is Having on Yourself & People Your Own Age**

	People Your Age	Yourself
Years 7–9	47.9	52.1
Year 12	47.4	50.6
Year 11	46.7	51.4
Year 10	45.0	50.5
All boys	47.9	51.1
LGBTQI+	46.4	49.5
All girls	46.2	51.0
Boys only school	52.0	53.9
Girls only school	48.5	46.5
Coeducational school	46.0	51.4
Private Catholic School	53.5	54.7
Private Independent School	46.8	46.3
Public School	44.9	51.1
All Students	47.0	51.0

(100 = extremely positive effect)

Chart 26: Effects Social Media is Having on Yourself & People Your Own Age (% scored "high")

	People Your Age	Yourself
Years 7–9	26%	23%
Year 11	17%	13%
Year 10	17%	19%
Year 12	15%	9%
All boys	18%	12%
All girls	17%	15%
LGBTQI+	15%	9%
Boys only school	20%	10%
Girls only school	19%	5%
Coeducational school	17%	15%
Private Independent School	26%	10%
Private Catholic School	25%	11%
Public School	12%	15%
All Students	17%	13%

(% scored high)

All boys (51.1 pts) and girls (51.0 pts) on average said social media had a bigger positive impact on their own lives than on people their own age (47.9 pts & 46.2 pts respectively). Students that identified as LGBTQI+ were a little less positive about the impact on themselves (49.5 pts) than students that were not (51.2 pts), though both groups said the impact was more positive than for people their age.

Students in all year levels scored the impact of social media on their own lives higher than for people their own age, with this also ranging narrowly from 52.1 pts among students in years 7–9 to 50.5 pts for students in year 10.

Though students scored the effect social media was having on their own life higher than for people their own age, it was surprising that noticeably more students scored people their own age enjoying "extremely positive" (i.e., scored 80+ pts) effects from social media (17%) than themselves (13%).

This gulf was more pronounced at private independent schools (10% themselves; 26% people their own age) and private Catholic schools (11% themselves; 25% people their own age) where significantly more students said people their own age were extremely positive about the effects social media was having in their lives. In public schools however more students said it was having an extremely positive benefit on their own lives than for their peers (15% vs. 12%).

Around 3 times as many students at coeducational schools (15%) reported an extremely positive impact on their lives than students in girls only schools (5%). Students at girls (19%) and boys (10%) only schools also believe significantly more of their peers are enjoying an extremely positive effect from social media than themselves.

Fewer girls (15% vs. 17%) and boys (12% vs. 18%) overall said social media was having an extremely positive effect on themselves than their peers. This was also true for LGBTQI+ students (9% vs. 15%) and non LGBTQI+ students (14% vs. 18%).

We also noted a very strong correlation between the number of students who reported an extremely positive effect from social media on their own lives - it was highest among students in years 7–9 (23%) and stepped down in each year level to just 9% in year 12. All year levels also said more people in their own age group enjoyed an extremely positive effect from social than they themselves did.

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