



hbsc
ENGLAND

HBSC England Factsheet Series: **MENTAL WELL-BEING OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN**

Findings from the 2021-2022 HBSC study for England
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN:
World Health Organisation Collaborative
cross-national study (HBSC)

CHSS
University of Kent

Hrytsenko, V., Eida, T., Ferris, E., Hulbert, S., Pomplun, R., Kendall, S. (2024).
Mental well-being of school-aged children. HBSC England 2022 data: Factsheet series. University of Kent.
<https://hbscengland.org/>

KEY FINDINGS

- Mental well-being worsened with increasing age for both boys and girls.
- Girls systematically reported worse mental well-being than boys.
- Young people from the least affluent families showed poorer mental well-being than their peers from the most affluent families.
- Mental well-being findings for England were particularly low compared with the international HBSC average.
- 19% of adolescents reported scores classified as 'at risk of depression'; 24% recorded scores indicating poor emotional well-being; more than half (57%) met the 'high mood' threshold.

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*The pressures on young people start really early - to do well at school, to look good, have the right things etc. **Sometimes it feels overwhelming.***

Claudia, 14
HBSC England
National Report 2021-2022

MEASURE

Mental well-being was measured with the WHO-5 Well-being Index.

Over the last two weeks: how often have you had the following...? (All the time; Most of the time; More than half of the time; Less than half of the time; Some of the time; At no time)

- I have felt cheerful and in good spirits
- I have felt calm and relaxed
- I have felt active and vigorous
- I woke up feeling fresh and rested
- My daily life has been filled with things that interest me

In line with the international WHO recommendation, (www.who-5.org) the five individual item scores are summed and the total is then multiplied by 4 to obtain a final score ranging from 0 to 100.

Participants with a score of 0 to 28 fall in the category labeled at "risk of depression", those scoring 29-50 are referred to as having poor emotional well-being, which can be classified as a "low mood" category; while those scoring 51 through to 100 formed the "high mood" category.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

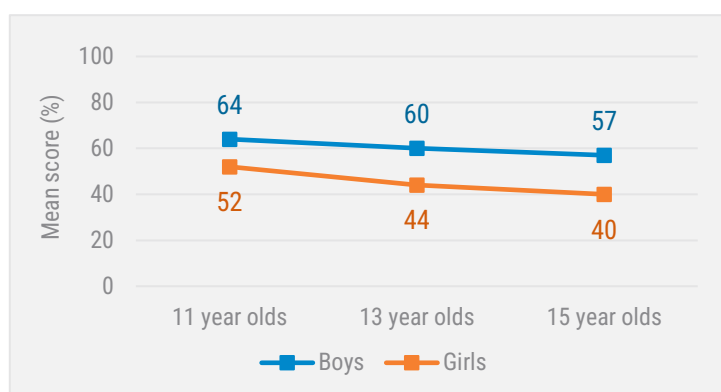
The importance of mental health and well-being has been emphasised by the WHO when they say: "Mental health and well-being are fundamental to quality of life, enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative and active citizens. Mental health is an essential component of social cohesion, productivity, and peace and stability in the living environment, contributing to social capital and economic development in societies" (WHO, 2005, p. 1).

This factsheet presents findings on Mental well-being from the 2021-2022 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in England, which used data from 5377 adolescents aged 11, 13 and 15 years old.

HBSC MENTAL WELLBEING FINDINGS 2022

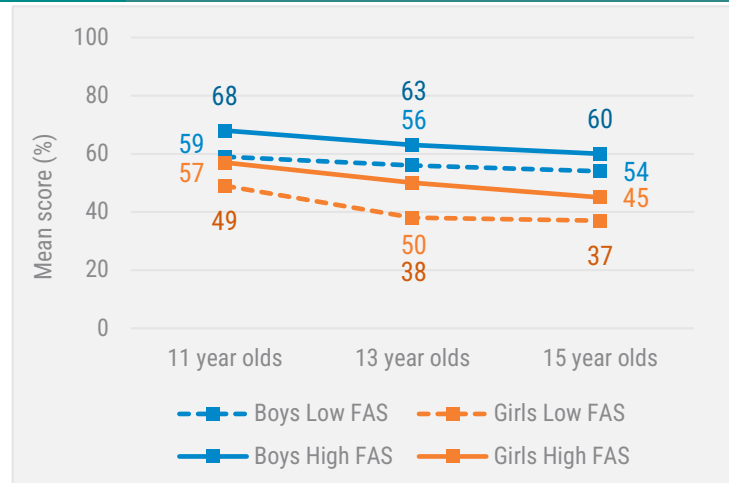
OVERALL MENTAL WELL-BEING: WHO-5 SCORE

- Mental well-being worsened with age for both boys and girls, with 15-year-old girls having the poorest mental well-being overall.
- Boys scored much higher in mental well-being than girls.



MENTAL WELL-BEING (WHO-5 SCORE): FAMILY AFFLUENCE

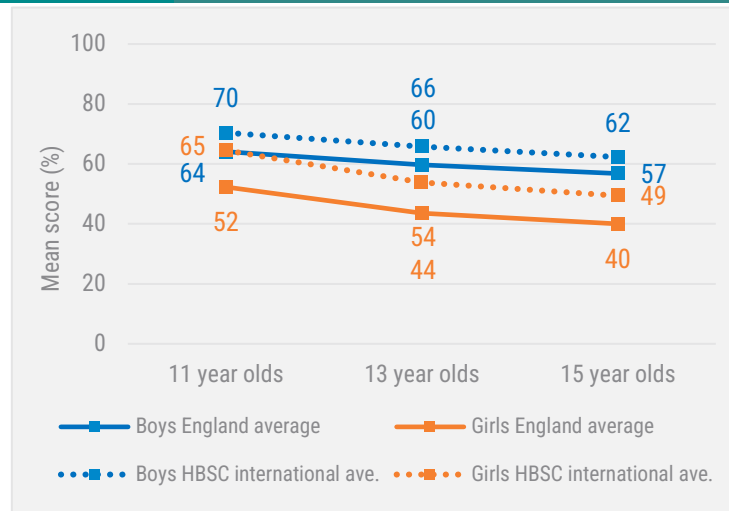
- Socio-economic inequality was associated with poorer mental well-being for both boys and girls.
- The biggest discrepancy in family affluence groups was among 11 year old boys and among 13 year old girls.
- Girls from the least affluent families scored the lowest in the mental well-being scale.



MENTAL WELL-BEING (WHO-5 SCORE): ACROSS COUNTRIES

- English boys and girls among all age groups scored visibly lower than the international HBSC average for boys and girls across those countries that participated in the 2022 HBSC survey*.
- This signifies the lower than average mental well-being among English children.
- Across all countries, mental well-being declined with age: 15 year old boys and especially 15 year old girls displayed the poorest mental well-being.

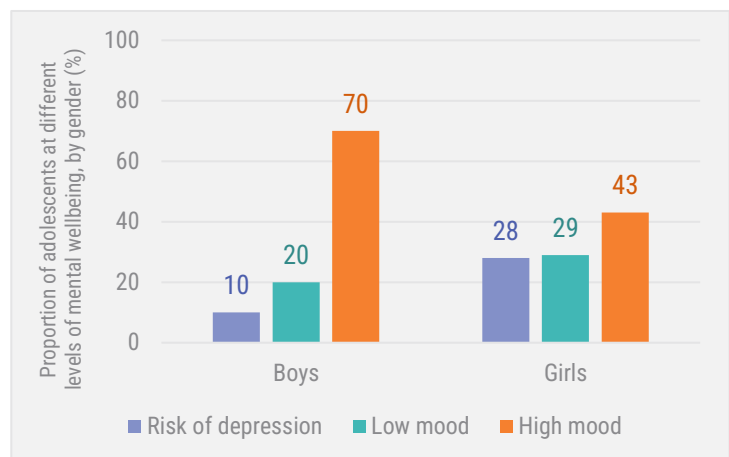
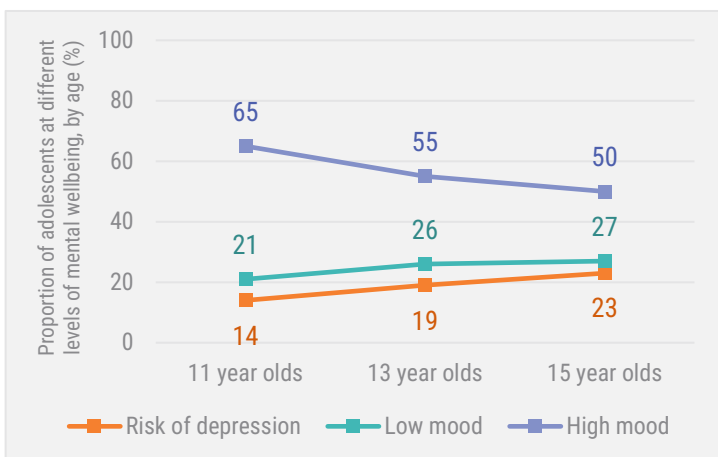
* *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (2023), Data browser (findings from the 2021/22 international HBSC survey): <https://data-browser.hbsc.org>.*



DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MENTAL WELL-BEING: AGE AND GENDER

- Among 11 year olds, 65% fell into the 'high mood' category; this fell to 50% among 15 year olds. The prevalence of being 'at risk of depression' was much higher among 13 and 15 year olds, compared with 11 year olds.

- While 70% of boys met the criteria for 'high mood', only 43% of girls did so. The proportion of girls 'at risk of depression' was three times higher than for boys.



WELL-BEING IN CONTEXT

WELL-BEING, LIFE SATISFACTION AND MULTIPLE HEALTH COMPLAINTS

In our study, we analyzed the relationships that may exist between variables.

We predicted and observed strong positive correlation between mental well-being and life satisfaction ($r = .59$, $p < .001$, $N = 4999$) and negative correlation between mental well-being and multiple health complaints ($r = -.60$, $p < .001$, $N = 4994$). Both correlations were considered to be strong and significant.

WELL-BEING AND FAMILY

Mental well-being also had a positive association with ease of communication with mother ($r = .39$, $p < .001$, $N = 4820$) and father ($r = .42$, $p < .001$, $N = 4837$).

Moreover, mental well-being was positively related to family social support ($r = .32$, $p < .001$, $N = 4803$). All these correlations were moderate and significant.

WELL-BEING, SCHOOL AND PEERS

Correlation analysis outcomes demonstrated that mental well-being had a moderate negative yet significant correlation with schoolwork pressure ($r = -.41$, $p < .001$, $N = 5004$); however, it was positively associated with school liking ($r = .51$, $p < .001$, $N = 4993$) and peer social support ($r = .17$, $p < .001$, $N = 4750$).

The correlation between mental well-being and school liking was strong and significant. Although the correlation with peer social support was considered small, it was still significant.

WHAT IS HBSC?

The HBSC survey is a WHO collaborative cross-national study that has been run every four years since 1983 in a growing number of countries. In 2022, 51 countries and regions in Europe, Central Asia and North America took part. HBSC monitors the health behaviours, health outcomes, well-being and social environments of school-aged children across a range of indicators, the role of gender, age and social inequality, and how adolescent health and well-being have changed over time.

CONCLUSION

While 57% of young people met the criteria for high mood, 24% were in the low mood category and 19% were deemed at risk of depression. Among girls, risk of depression increased with age and lower family affluence with around 45% of 13 and 15 year old girls from the least affluent families meeting the criteria of being at risk of depression.

Socioeconomic inequality was associated with poor mental well-being in both genders at all ages, and especially among 13 year old girls.

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