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ENGLAND

HBSC England factsheet series: ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING

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

This factsheet presents findings from the 2021-2022 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in England, which reports on data from 5377 young people aged 11, 13 and 15. Data was collected with the support of a representative sample of 37 schools from across England.

HBSC is an international study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) capturing data on young people's health, health behaviours and social environment.

Eida, T., Ferris, E., Hrytsenko, V., Hulbert, S., Pomplun, R. Kendall, S. (2024). Adolescents' experiences of Neighbourhood Belonging. HBSC England 2022 data: Factsheet series. University of Kent.
<https://hbscengland.org/>

WHAT DID WE DO?

We asked our 11, 13 and 15 year old participants to respond to the NEIGHBOURHOOD SENSE OF BELONGING scale which presents statements about COMMUNITY SUPPORT, COHESIVENESS, RESOURCES AND SAFETY.

Their responses generated an overall NEIGHBOURHOOD SENSE OF BELONGING (NSB) score.

We used cut off points to define the proportion of adolescents reporting 'HIGH NSB' and 'LOW NSB'.

SOME YOUNG PEOPLE SHARED THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE SURVEY FINDINGS VIA ONLINE MEETINGS AND WRITTEN FEEDBACK...



"If you don't have your own space or even headspace at home and there's no space in the community that you can connect with then maybe that's making young people feel less safe."

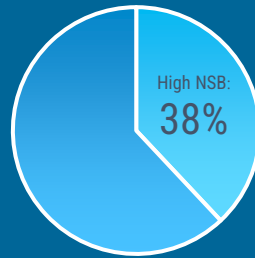


"It seems that funding is being pulled away from the least affluent places so less open space, gardens, activities, places to be safely."



"Lower neighbourhood belonging may possibly be an effect of young people being more connected to the world via the internet and social media. I only know my very close neighbours and my friends all live quite far away."

WHAT DID WE FIND? KEY MESSAGES



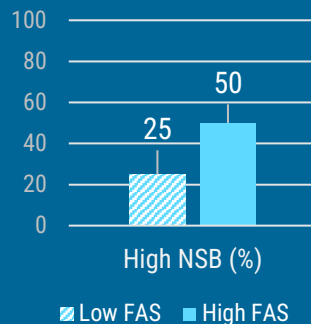
Around 2 in 5 (38%) of those adolescents surveyed reported high NSB.

- 11 year olds were the most likely to report high NSB (47%)
- 13 and 15 year olds reported similar, lower levels of high NSB (34%, 33%)
- Boys were more likely than girls to report high NSB at all ages (41% vs 35%)



Our trend data shows adolescents' sense of neighbourhood belonging in overall decline between 2014 and 2022.

Family affluence (FAS) levels* matter



Adolescents from high affluence families were twice as likely to report high NSB (50%) compared with those from low affluence families (25%).

- Low FAS girls and boys were significantly less likely to report high NSB than high FAS adolescents in each age group
- Less than a fifth of 13 and 15 year old girls from the least affluent families reported high NSB (19%, 16%)

*Family affluence level (high, medium, low) was assessed through the Family Affluence Scale (FAS)

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Places and communities are central social determinants of health and wellbeing (Marmot et al., 2020). Belonging and connectedness to the local place and community are important components of adolescents' protective health assets (Brooks et al., 2017). As such, improved neighbourhood cohesion (sense of belonging and social connections: Buckner, 1988) has been associated with reductions in mental distress over time (Rugel et al., 2021) and improved self-rated health (Michalski et al., 2020).

According to HBSC England data, opportunities to protect adolescent health and buffer against risk were lower in 2022 than in previous survey rounds. Young people reported less support and communication in family, school and community settings, alongside rising stressors at school and neighbourhood levels. Inequalities in health outcomes and behaviours were reflected in access to, uptake of and trust in support mechanisms.

NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING IN CONTEXT

Statistical tests showed associations between adolescents' neighbourhood belonging scores and their scores on other aspects of the HBSC England survey. The strength of the correlations varied, but each of those reported below was statistically significant ($p < .001$).



NSB AND MOOD

There was a **MODERATE correlation** between NSB and mood. Adolescents who reported **HIGH NSB** were **MORE LIKELY** to record

- HIGHER SCORES ON THE WHO-5 SCALE ($r=.37$) indicating better emotional wellbeing

Those reporting high NSB were also more likely to report better SELF-RATED HEALTH ($r=.28$), though the relationship was weaker than NSB and mood.



NSB AND SCHOOL

There were **MODERATE correlations** between NSB and some aspects of school life. Adolescents who reported **HIGH NSB** were **MORE LIKELY** to report

- feeling SAFE AT SCHOOL ($r=.34$)
- feeling that they BELONGED AT SCHOOL ($r=.34$)

Those reporting high NSB were also slightly more likely to hold positive perceptions of neighbourhood figures, eg: to TRUST TEACHERS ($r=.27$), or to FEEL AT EASE WITH PRIMARY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS ($r=.27$).



NSB AND RISK BEHAVIOURS

Correlation relationships were **WEAKER** here. Those reporting **HIGH NSB** were **SOMEWHAT LESS LIKELY** to report

- having ever been DRUNK ($r=.17$); VAPED ($r=.16$); SMOKED CIGARETTES ($r=.14$); DRUNK ALCOHOL ($r=.13$); USED CANNABIS ($r=.10$)
- having DELIBERATELY SELF-HARMED ($r=.15$)
- regular VAPING ($r=.15$); SMOKING ($r=.11$); DRUNKENNESS ($r=.11$); DRINKING ($r=.11$); CANNABIS USE ($r=.10$)
- experiencing CYBERBULLYING ($r=.13$), or BULLYING ($r=.12$); and perpetrating BULLYING ($r=.12$), or CYBERBULLYING ($r=.12$).

For further detail, please see our **SHORT REPORT ON NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING**, presenting the components of neighbourhood belonging and their associations with age, sex, family affluence levels – as well as other aspects of adolescent health and wellbeing. Policy recommendation are discussed. <https://hbscengland.org/>

NEIGHBOURHOOD BELONGING MEASURE

Please say how you feel about these statements about the area where you live. (Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree).

- There are good places to spend your free time (eg: leisure centres, parks, shops)
- I feel safe in the area where I live
- It is safe for younger children to play outside during the day
- People say hello and stop to talk in the street
- Most people around here would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance
- You can trust people around here
- I could ask for a help or a favour from neighbours

This question generated an overall neighbourhood sense of belonging (NSB) score as well as individual component scores. The overall score was computed by summing the scores of the individual items. Cut-off points of 14 and 28 (on a possible 7 to 35 range) were used to define low and high levels of neighbourhood belonging.

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