

West Berkshire Youth Survey 2025

Main report and findings



In January 2025, the second iteration of the West Berkshire Youth Survey opened, seeking responses from West Berkshire secondary school aged young people about their attitudes to health, safety, the local area and other topical issues facing young people.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

Introduction

In January 2025, the second iteration of the West Berkshire Youth Survey opened, seeking responses from West Berkshire secondary school aged young people about their attitudes to health, safety, the local area and other topical issues facing young people.

Updates for 2025

Based on reflections and feedback from the 2023 survey some alterations were made for the 2025 survey.

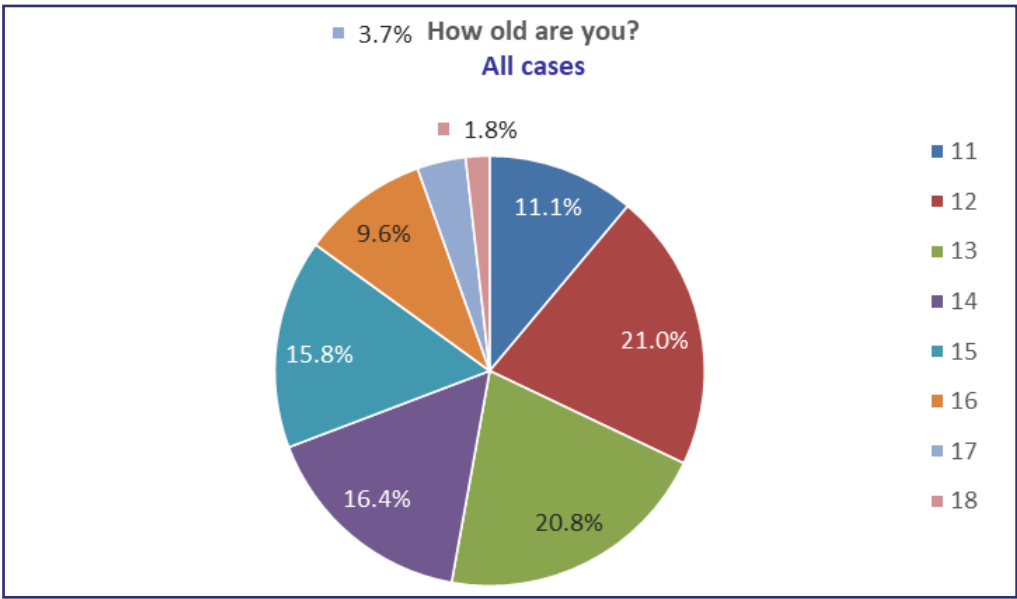
- The scope of the survey was widened to offer the opportunity for Elected home educated (EHE) young people to respond.
- Following issues with data quality to the question asking young people to input their postcode minus the last two letters; a character limit was set, and responders were also asked to name the town or village in which they lived.
- Two additional optional special category questions about ethnicity and disability were added to the survey
- The question asking young people how happy they were with different topics in their life was expanded. The new topics were 'my sleep', 'my physical health', 'my mental health', 'my life at home' and 'my weight'
- The question asking young people about which topics they thought were a problem for young people in the area had 'online abuse' added.
- Following feedback from secondary headteachers, the wording of a question was changed (Q16) to give schools a clearer understanding of prevalence of the issues described.

Response

The West Berkshire Youth Survey 2025 received 5189 responses with 4441 young people fully completed the survey, Therefore, it is important to note the number of respondents to each question to gain accurate percentages for the findings of the survey.

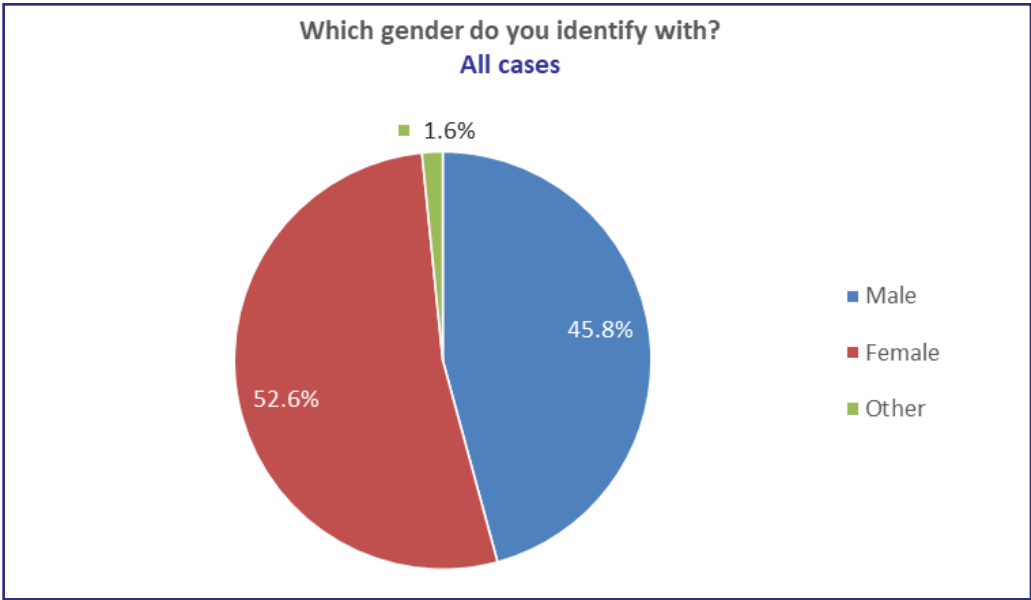
Although the response rate is lower than 2023 it is still high with 40% of students from the ten academy and maintained secondary schools in West Berkshire responding. This provides a good representative sample of this cohort and each of the 10 West Berkshire secondary schools had a response rate of at least 20% of their students.

The breakdown of respondents by age can be seen below.



The table above shows a relatively even spread of response rates for 12-15 year olds with 17-18 year olds the least likely to respond to the survey.

By gender identity



The breakdown of response by gender identity is similar to 2023 with a slight decrease in young people identifying their gender as 'other'; 3% in 2023 and 1.6% in 2025.

Survey findings

Finding from the survey questions will be displayed below with some additional insights, these insights are not exhaustive. Where available, national comparison data will be given.

Participating schools will each receive a report giving insights to their specific cohort which will have comparison between 2023 and 2025 data.

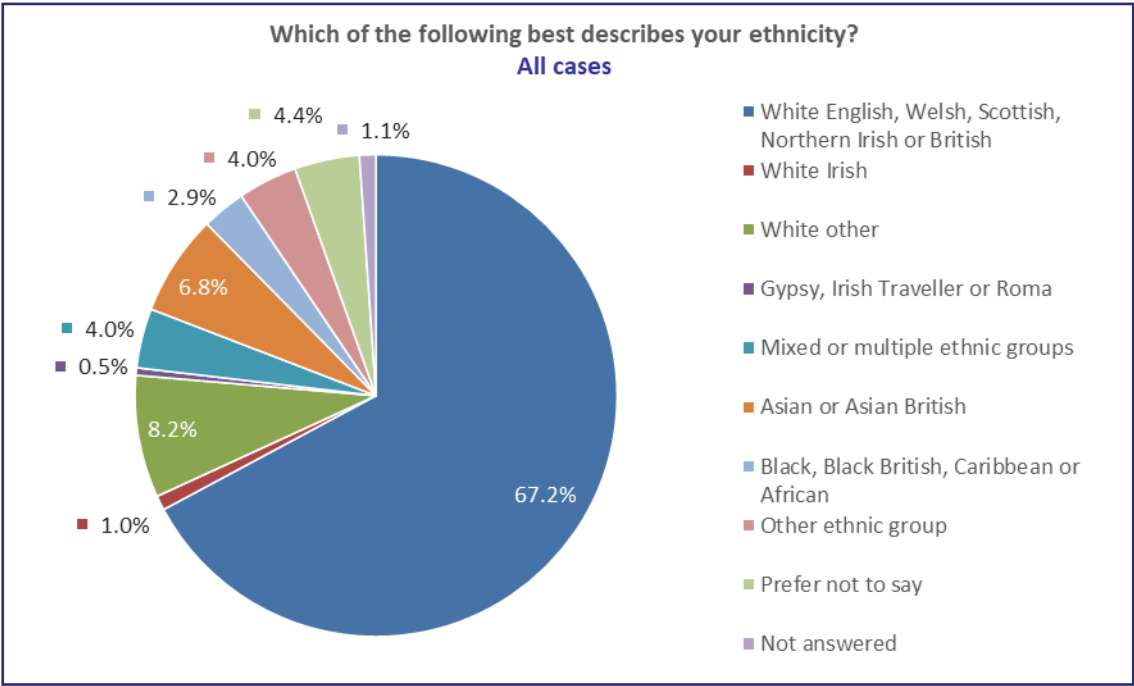
Insights will also be provided to the qualitative questions (7, 12 and 16) by analysing any popular specific responses or themes of responses.

Questions 1-5

Questions 1-5 of the survey asked the young people to input their age, gender identity, school, the town or village in which they lived and their postcode (minus the last two digits)

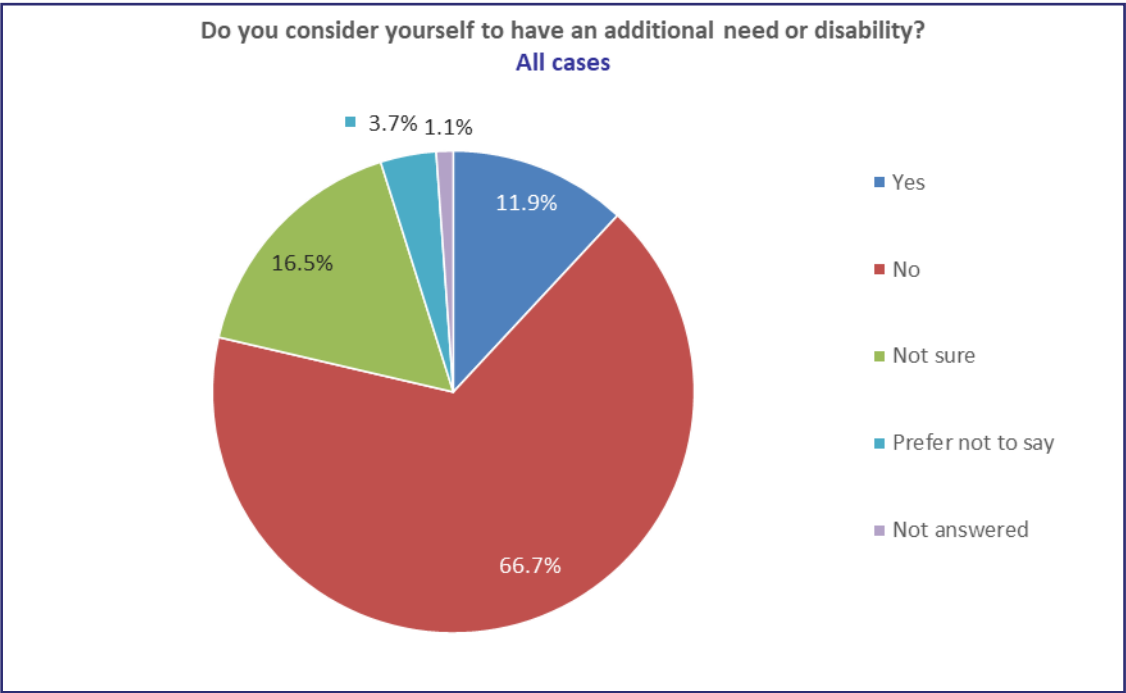
Question 6 ‘Which of the following best describes your ethnicity? (Optional)’

This question was new for 2025 and is one of two special category questions. The rationale for its inclusion was to see if any inequalities or disparities were evident between young people of different ethnic groups. Both special category questions were optional to answer.



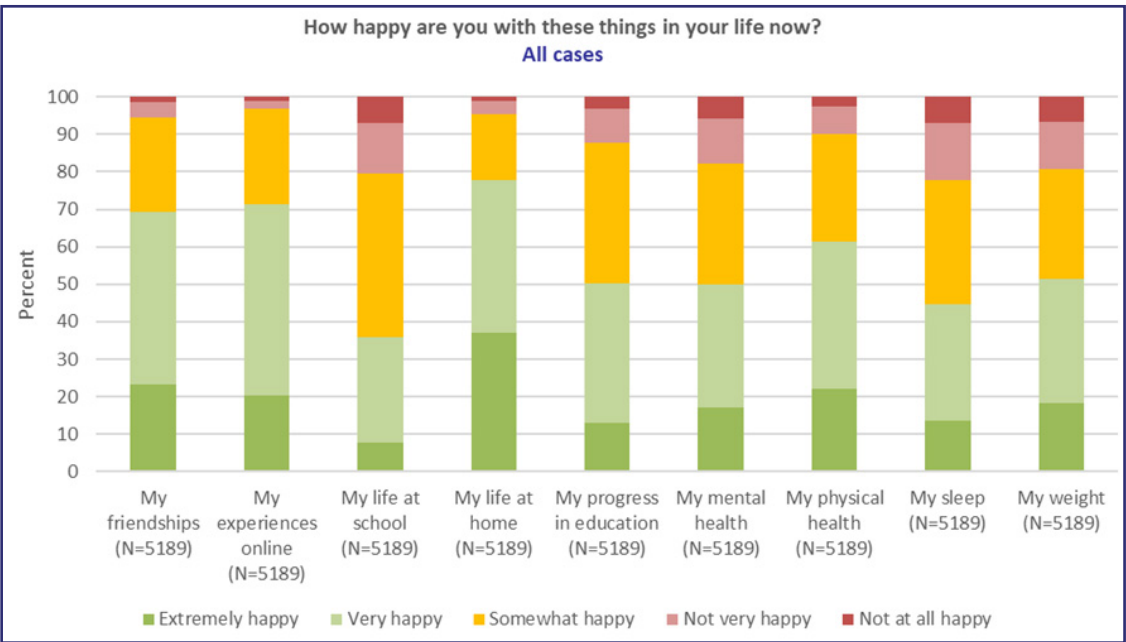
Question 7 ‘Do you consider yourself to have a disability’

The second specific category question asked the young people whether they considered themselves to have a disability.



Question 8 ‘How happy are you with these things in your life now?’

This question asked young people to rate how happy they were with specific personal topics. These topics were: *My friendships, my experiences online, my life at school, my life at home*, my progress in education, my mental health*, my physical health*, my sleep*, my weight**. (*new for 2025 survey)



The figure above shows young people in West Berkshire were most likely to say they were happy (extremely, very or somewhat) with their experiences online, friendships and life at home. Young people in West Berkshire were least likely to be happy with their sleep.

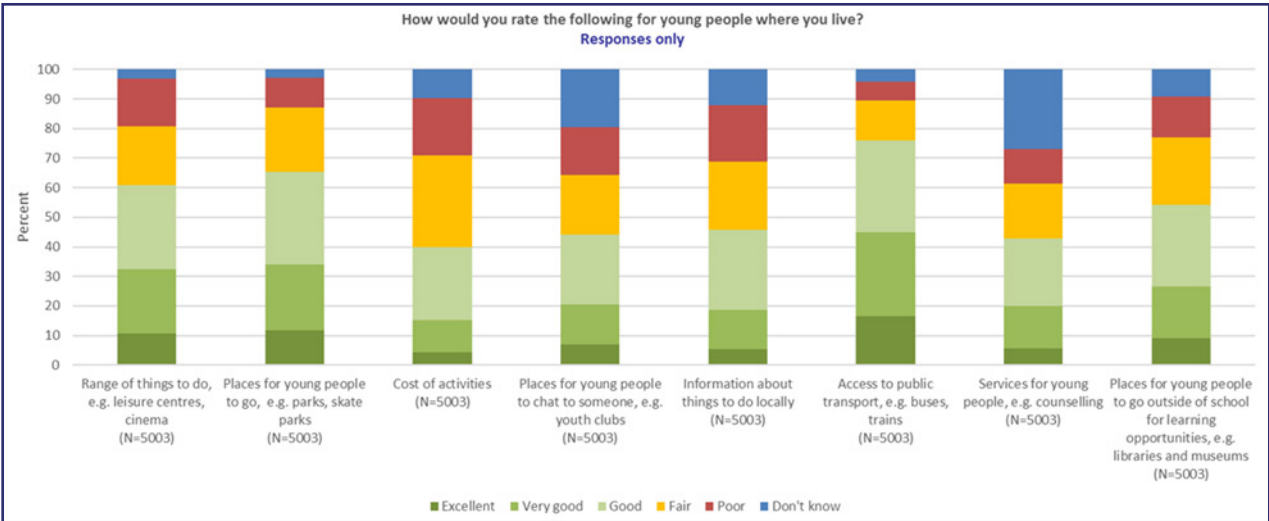
In the topics that were repeated from 2023 there was an increase in young people reporting they were happy with their life at school in 2025 (79.5%) compared to 2023 (76.7%). There was also an increase in young people reporting they were happy with their progress in education in 2025 (87.8%) compared to 2023 (85.9%).

Analysing using a sentiment summary (a study which determines overall emotional tone) we can see males score higher happiness scores than girls in regard to weight, mental health and school life.

Those young people who stated they had a disability scored lower happiness scores for mental health, school life and sleep.

Question 9 ‘How would you rate the following for young people where you live?’
Respondents: 5003

The question asked the young people to rate different amenities and opportunities in the local area, the rating options were ‘excellent’, ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘fair’, ‘poor’ or ‘don’t know’



Young people in West Berkshire were most likely to rate access to public transport positively with 75.8% selecting either excellent, very good or good. The cost of activities got the least positive rating with over half of young people (50.5%) rating this as fair or poor. Ratings were more likely to be excellent-good in younger age groups.

Satisfaction levels with the range of things to do is above the national average. 60% of young people in West Berkshire rated the range of things to do as good-excellent According to the Children’s Commissioner’s “Big Ask” survey (2021), only 52% of children aged 9–17 said they were happy with the choice of things to do in their local area.

Many responses highlighted the need for safe, welcoming places to hang out with friends.

Suggestions included:

- Youth clubs
- Indoor social spaces
- Cafés and study spaces
- Community centres
- Sheltered outdoor areas

Sports and Physical Activity Facilities

There was a strong desire for better sports infrastructure, particularly:

- Astro turf pitches
- Football pitches with goals
- Basketball courts with proper hoops
- Skateparks and pump tracks
- Bike trails and mountain biking areas
- Gyms and fitness centres

Transport and Accessibility

Transport was a major barrier to accessing existing facilities. Issues included:

- Expensive bus and train fares
- Lack of public transport in rural areas
- Poor bus frequency and coverage
- Desire for free or subsidised transport for young people

Shops and Food Outlets

Young people expressed a desire for more:

- Clothing shops (e.g., Primark, Zara)
- Fast food outlets (e.g., McDonald's, Greggs, KFC)
- Affordable food options

Mental Health and Support Services

There were several mentions of:

- Counselling and therapy services
- Safe spaces to talk
- Support for neurodiverse and disabled youth
- Awareness and accessibility of mental health resources

Safety and Cleanliness

Concerns included:

- Unsafe parks (e.g., litter, drug use, broken equipment)
- Lack of street lighting
- Fear of crime or being judged by adults

Community and Inclusion

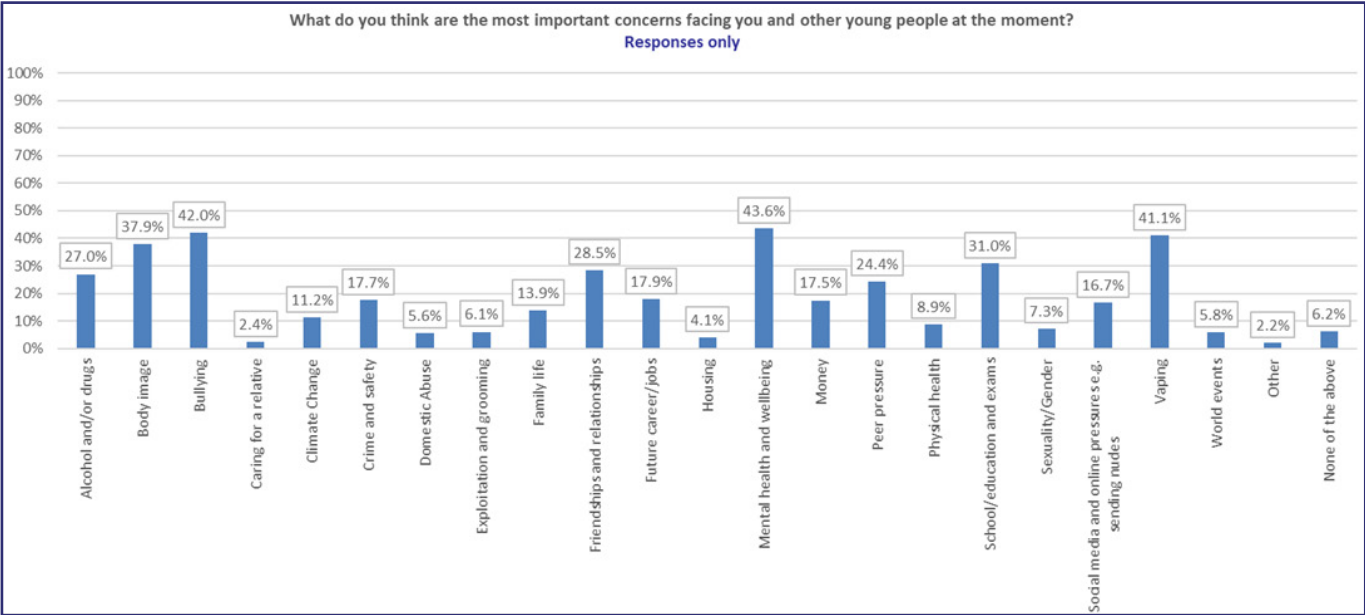
Some responses called for:

- More community events and festivals
- Inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ youth
- Opportunities to meet new people and make friends

Volunteering and job opportunities for under-18s

Question 11 ‘What do you think are the most important concerns facing you and other young people at the moment (maximum 5)?’ Number of respondents: 4743

The young people were asked to pick up to 5 things that they believed were the most important concerns facing themselves and other young people. The 4 topics that were selected the most were: Mental health and wellbeing (43.6%), bullying (42%), vaping (41.1%) and body image (37.9%)



Young people aged 11-13 were more likely than other age groups to select bullying and peer pressure. Females were more likely than males to select Body image

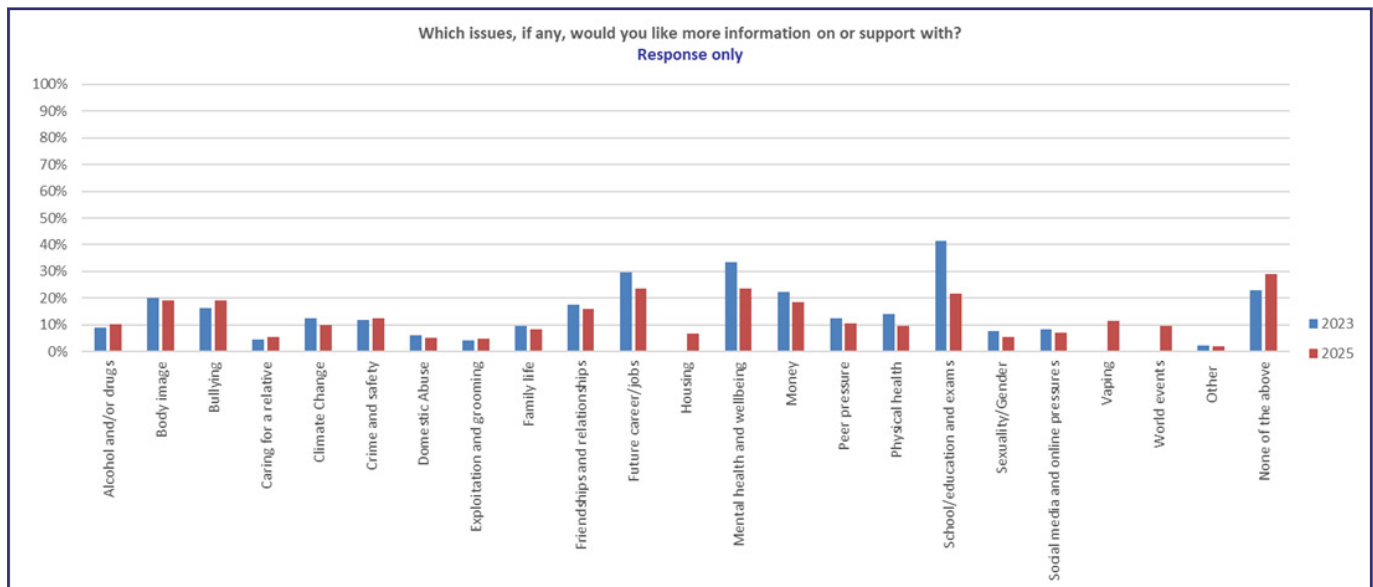
Question 12 ‘Which issues, if any, would you like more information on or support with? (maximum 5)’ Respondents: 4627

Question 12 then asked young people what issues, if any, they would like more information or support with. The graph below shows the responses for 2023 (blue) and 2025 (red). Where responses only show red, these options were added new in 2025, often as they were mentioned regularly in 2023 under the option of ‘other’.

In 2025, the option selected the highest amount was ‘none of the above’ (28.9%), followed by future career/jobs (23.6%), mental health and wellbeing (23.4%) and school education and exams (21.5%).

In 2025, the option selected the highest amount was ‘none of the above’ (28.9%), followed by future career/jobs (23.6%), mental health and wellbeing (23.4%) and school education and exams (21.5%).

Graph on next page.



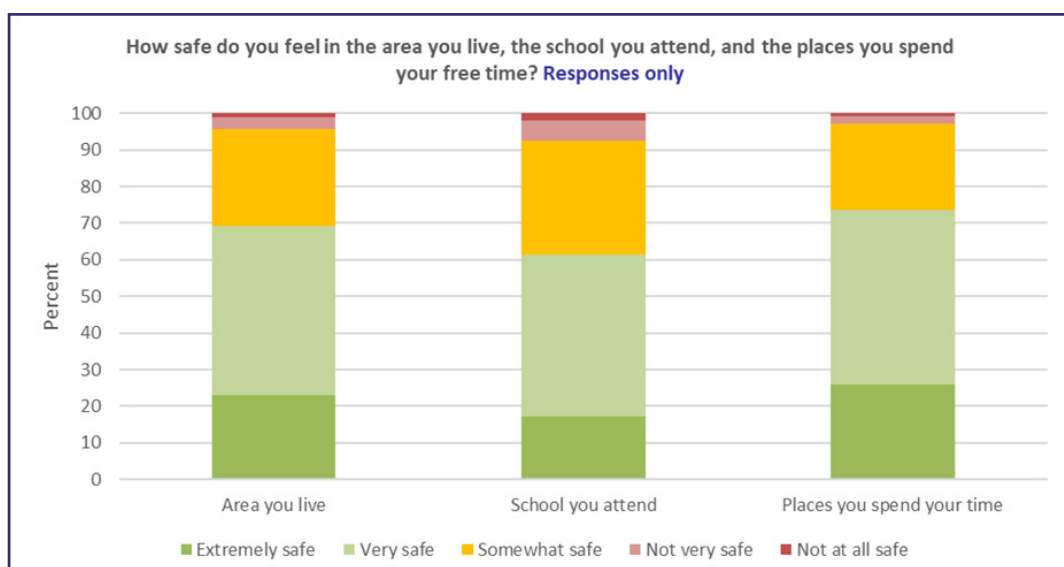
When filtering by gender, females were more likely to select body image than males. Males were more likely to pick money. Those who selected 'other' for gender identity were most likely to select Mental health and wellbeing and Sexuality/Gender.

Question 13: 'How safe do you feel in the area you live, the school you attend, and the places you spend your free time?'

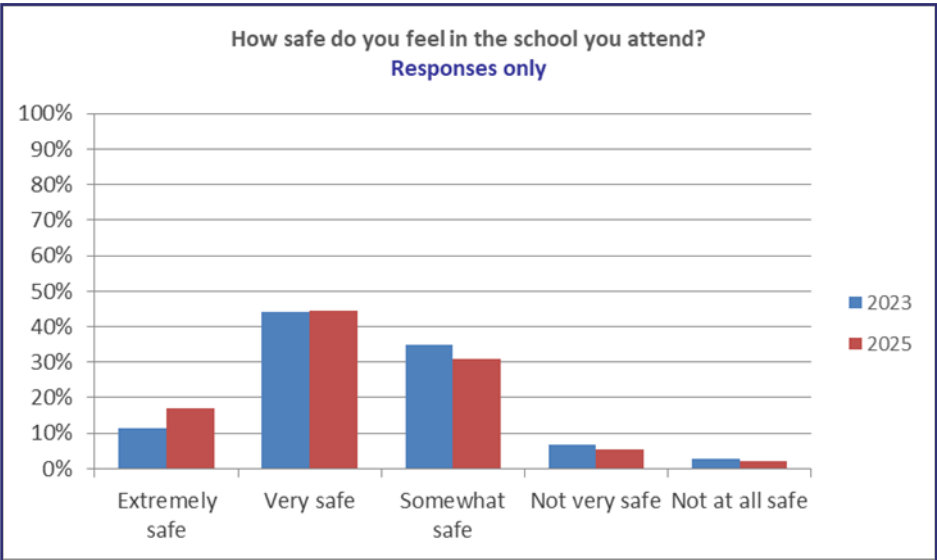
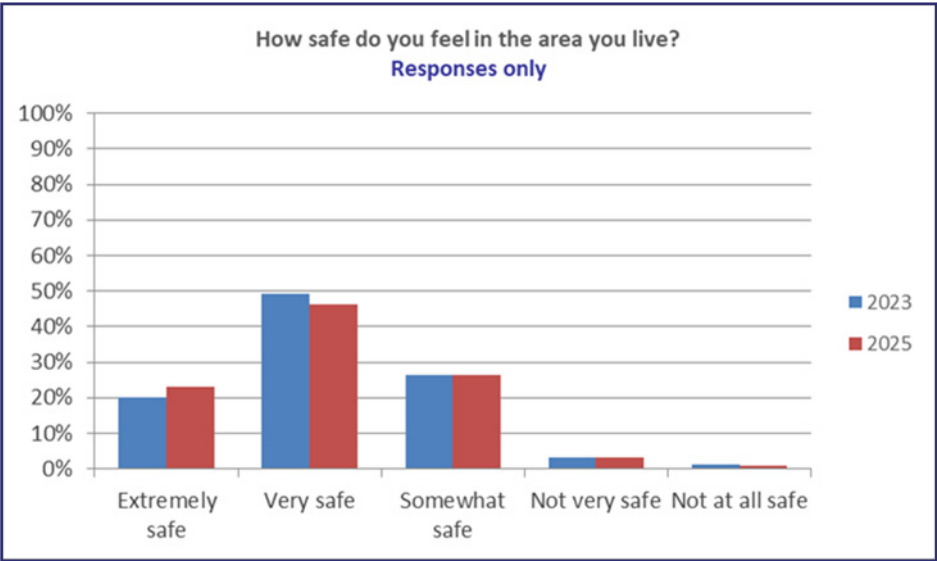
Respondents: 4589

Young people were asked to rate how safe they felt in the area you live, the school you attend and the places you spend your free time. The options were 'extremely safe', 'very safe', 'somewhat safe', 'not very safe' and 'not at all safe'.

The graphs below show the overall results. 95.7% of young people said they felt safe (extremely, very or somewhat) in the area they live, 92.5% said they felt safe at school and 97.1% said they felt safe in the places they spent their free time.

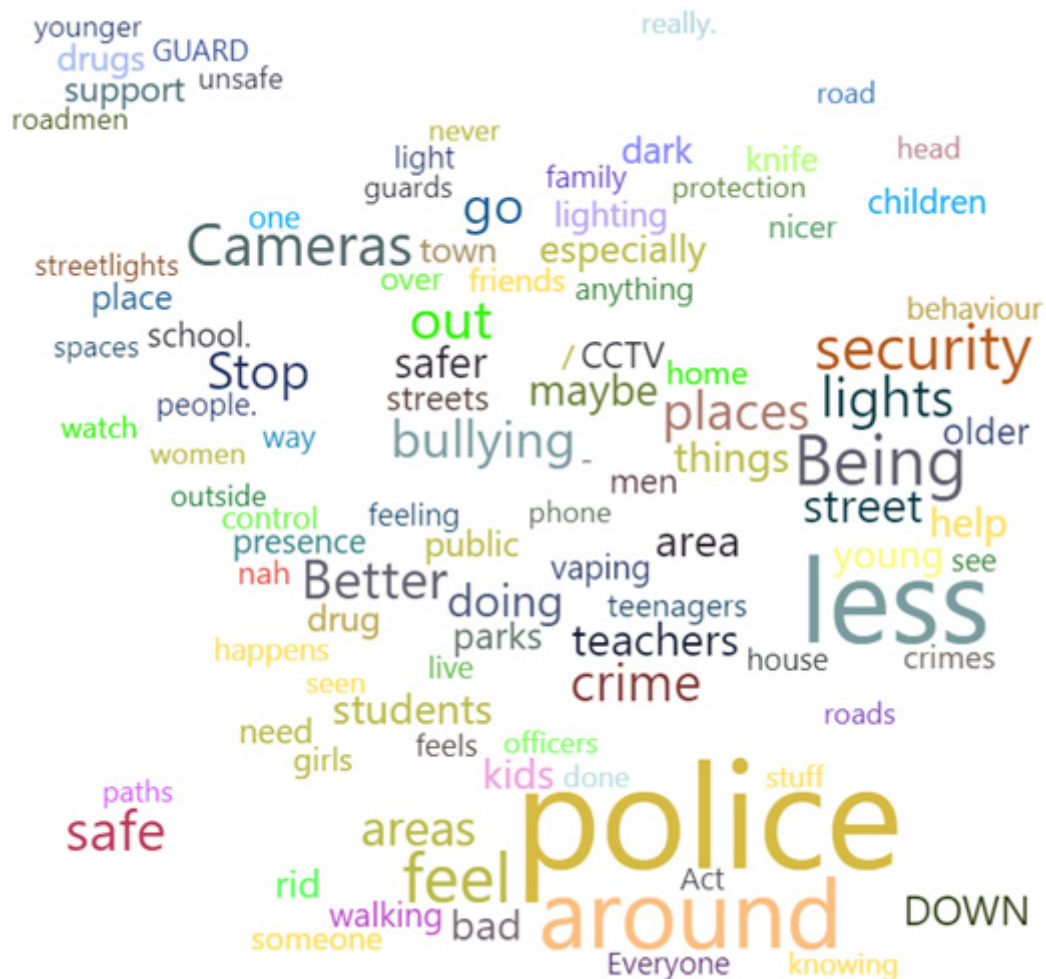


Safety levels are above national averages. Below the graphs display comparisons between 2023 and 2025 in each category.



Question 14: 'Is there anything that would help you to feel safer?'

Respondents who had answered 'somewhat safe,' 'not so safe' or 'not safe at all' to Q13 were asked to articulate if there was anything that would help them to feel safer. The Word Cloud below shows the most popular words from responses. Phrases such as 'don't know' have been removed.



A summary of the key themes of these responses can be seen below

Increased Police Presence

- Many young people called for more visible police patrols, especially in town centres, parks, and near schools.
- Some suggested community policing, PCSOs, and regular patrols to deter crime and antisocial behaviour.

Better Lighting and Surveillance

- A large number of responses mentioned the need for more streetlights, especially in alleyways, parks, and secluded areas.
- CCTV cameras in public spaces and schools were frequently requested.

School Safety Improvements

- Students want:
- Better control over bullying and violence.
- More supportive and responsive staff.
- Lockable doors and secure buildings.
- More supervision during breaks and in corridors.
- Mental health support and regular check-ins with staff.

Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

- Some asked for harsher punishments or better enforcement of laws.
- Others mentioned specific local issues like known individuals causing fear.

Safe Spaces and Community Support

- Requests for more youth-friendly spaces (e.g., clubs, indoor areas, sports facilities).
- Some wanted spaces free from adults or older teens who intimidate them.
- Suggestions included neighbourhood watch programs and community engagement.

Personal Protection

- Some expressed a desire for bodyguards or personal safety tools (though often jokingly or out of frustration).

Mental Health and Emotional Safety

- Many young people expressed a need for emotional support, including:
- One-on-one sessions with trusted adults.
- Feeling heard and understood by teachers.
- Less pressure from school and more focus on wellbeing.

Cleanliness and Maintenance

- Concerns about dirty or unsafe public toilets, vandalism, and litter.
- Requests for better maintenance of public areas and school facilities.

Social Issues

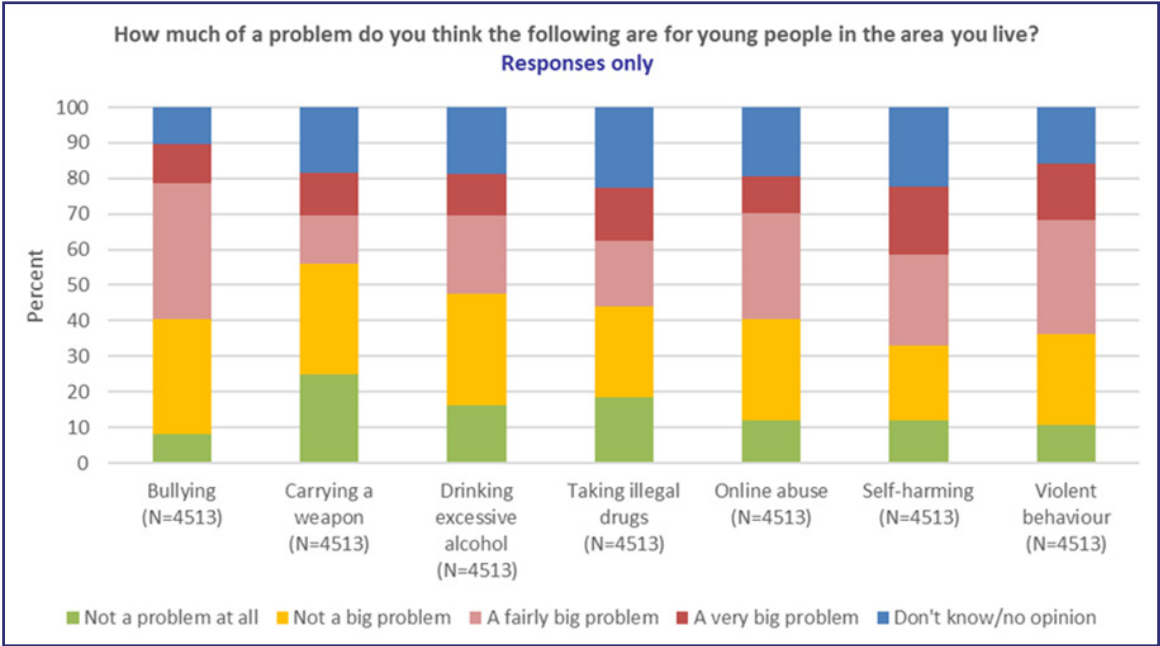
- Some responses highlighted:
- Gender-based harassment.
- Discrimination (e.g., racism, homophobia, transphobia).
- The need for education on respect, boundaries, and inclusivity.

Q15: 'How much of a problem do you think the following are for young people in the area you live?

Respondents: 4513

The young people were asked to rate their perception of how big certain issues were for young people in the local area. The options were 'not a problem at all', 'not a big problem', 'a fairly big problem', 'a very big problem' or 'don't know/no opinion'.

Young people were most likely to pick bullying as a big problem (fairly or very) with 49.2%. The issue with the lowest perception of being a problem was carrying a weapon with 25.8% of young people selecting this.

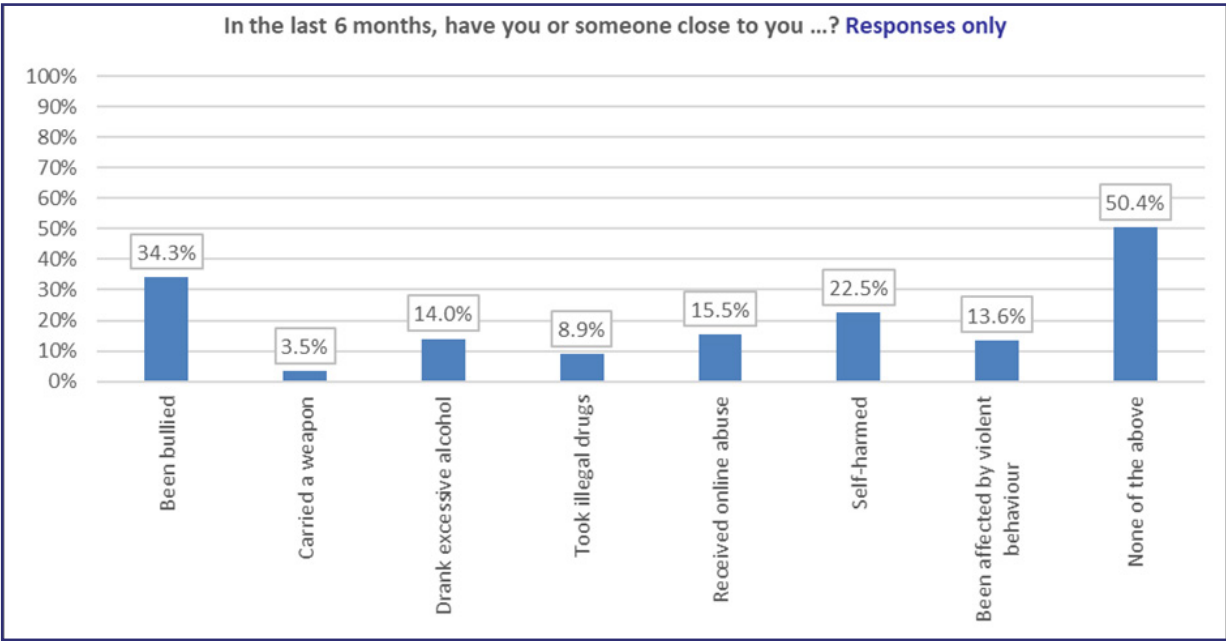


Q16: 'In the last 6 months, have you or someone close to you ...?'

Respondents: 4470

Following feedback, the wording of this question was changed for 2025. There is therefore no comparison data for 2023.

Below we can see 33.4% of young people reported that they or someone close to them had been bullied in the last 6 months and 22.5% of young people reported that they or someone close to them had self-harmed. Young people in West Berkshire were most likely to select 'none of the above' with just over half of young people selecting this.



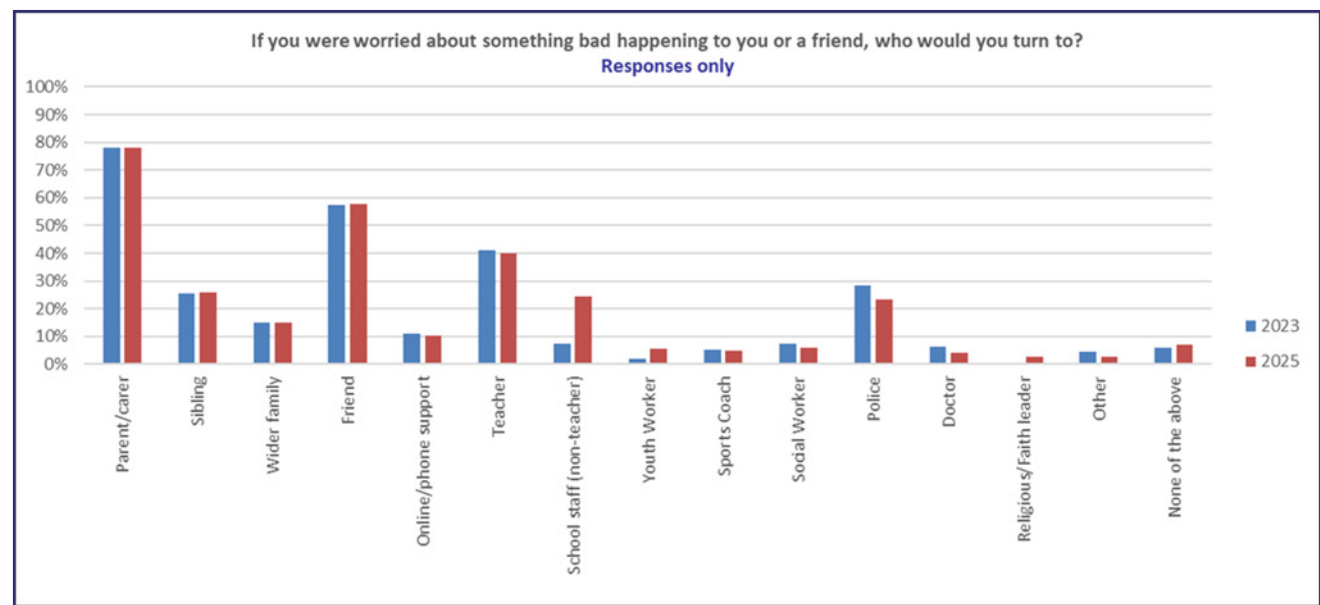
Girls were more likely than boys to select 'been bullied' and 'self harmed' than boys

Q17: 'If you were worried about something bad happening to you or a friend, who would you turn to (maximum 5)?'

Respondents: 4441

Young people could pick up to 5 options of people they would turn to if something bad happened to them or a friend.

The graph below shows that responses were similar 2023 with over 75% of young people selecting parent/carer and over 55% selecting friend. There were increases in young people selecting school staff (non-teacher) and youth worker and a decrease in the number of young people selecting police.



Q18: 'If it was up to you, what would be the single most important thing that the local council could do to improve your life, or your family's life?'

This final question gave the young people the opportunity to describe issues that they felt they and their families needed support with. Below a WordCloud displays the most frequently written responses



An analysis of the key themes can be seen below

Youth Mental Health and Emotional Support

- Strong demand for better mental health services, especially in schools.
- Requests for safe spaces, counsellors, and support for neurodivergent individuals.
- Concerns about bullying, self-harm, and lack of understanding from adults.

Cost of Living and Financial Stress

- Many mention that everything is too expensive—from food to leisure activities.
- Requests for free or cheaper public transport, free school meals, and lower taxes.
- Some directly ask for financial support for their families.

Safety and Crime Prevention

- Concerns about knife crime, drug use, and antisocial behaviour.
- Calls for more police presence, safer parks, and better lighting in public areas.
- Specific mentions of being followed, unsafe streets, and lack of trust in authorities.

Leisure, Recreation, and Social Spaces

- Overwhelming demand for more things to do: skateparks, football pitches, bowling alleys, cinemas, youth clubs.
- Requests for affordable or free activities to reduce boredom and isolation.
- Suggestions for community centres, libraries, and creative spaces like music studios.

Transport and Infrastructure

- Complaints about poor bus services, especially in rural areas.
- Calls for cheaper and more frequent buses, better roads, and fewer potholes.
- Suggestions for bike lanes, safer crossings, and accessible transport.

Education and School Environment

- Criticism of school systems, especially around mental health, bullying, and lack of life skills education.
- Requests for more engaging lessons, less homework, and better support for SEND students.
- Some want more education on real-world issues like taxes, relationships, and mental health.

Environment and Cleanliness

- Many mention litter, dog mess, and pollution.
- Suggestions include more bins, community clean-ups, and environmental education.
- Some express concern about climate change and want greener initiatives.

Housing and Living Conditions

- Requests for affordable housing, larger homes, and better maintenance.
- Some mention homelessness, overcrowding, and unsafe living conditions.

Summary of findings

The high level of responses from young people in West Berkshire to this survey provides a useful insight into this population.

Many of the metrics show West Berkshire young people reacting more positively than the national average such as in regard to the range of things to do locally and how safe they feel in their communities and schools.

There were however some negative metrics that showed prevalence equal too or slightly higher than national averages such as experience of bullying, self harm and concerns about mental health.

There were many metrics that improved from the 2023 survey such as increases in young people reporting feeling happy at school and happy with their progress in education.

Next steps

Any feedback about the West Berkshire Youth survey is gratefully received.

If you have any questions about any of the data or would like to request further specific data insights from this survey in order to support young people please get in touch with [**paul.graham1@westberks.gov.uk**](mailto:paul.graham1@westberks.gov.uk)

Reports will be created for each participating school and school colleagues will have the opportunity to discuss these reports in detail.

If you are a representative of a town or parish council and would like to look at the data at your geographical level, please get in touch to arrange a time to do so.

The West Berkshire Youth Survey will aim to be repeated in January and February of 2027