



# Growing up in the West

The lives of our young people

## Planet Youth County Report

Mayo 2020



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# 1

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planet Youth is an international evidence-based primary prevention model, developed in Iceland, that has been used to reduce substance use rates amongst adolescents.

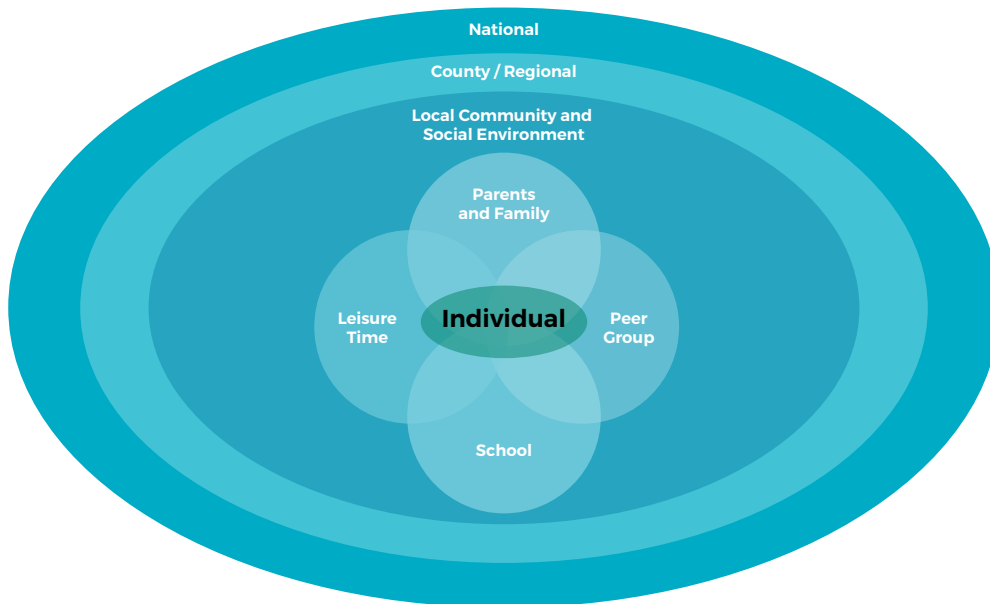
The model's whole population approach offers an opportunity to improve health outcomes for young people in many areas of their lives. It works by directly targeting the risk and protective factors in young people's lives that determine their substance use behaviours and enhancing the social environment they are growing up in. By developing targeted interventions that seek to reduce the identified risk factors and strengthen the identified protective factors, the problems associated with adolescent substance use can be reduced or prevented before they arise.

### Data

The Planet Youth model relies on the data derived from biennial cross-sectional surveys that are conducted using the Planet Youth questionnaire. This comprehensive lifestyle questionnaire is administered to the 15-16 year olds in the target community. There are questions on their substance use, physical health, mental health, physical activity, family and school experience, internet use, bullying and many other categories. There are 73 primary questions in the current Planet Youth questionnaire and a total of 1,631 variables, all of which can be examined and cross-tabulated.

### Risk and protective factors

The survey results provide the information for planning, selecting key factors requiring attention, designing suitable interventions and tracking trends and changes in young people's behaviours and well-being over time. The main risk and protective factors lie within the domains outlined in the diagram below.



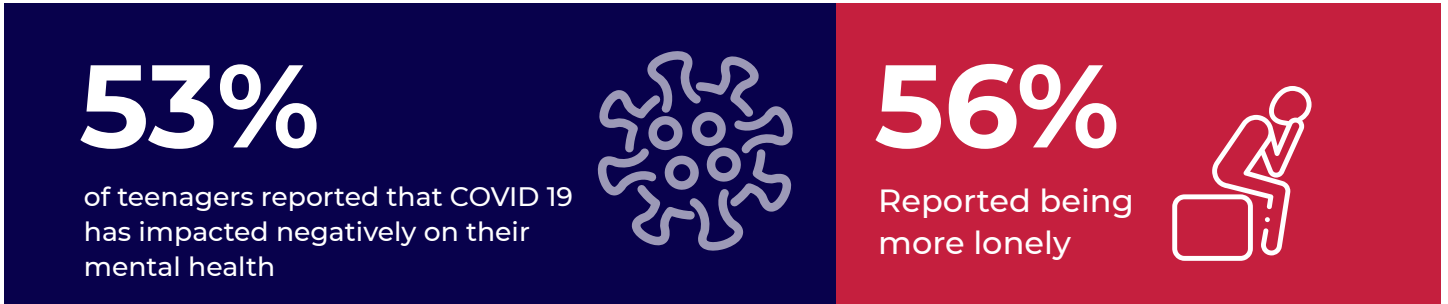
**MAJOR DOMAINS OF INTERVENTION**

### Survey

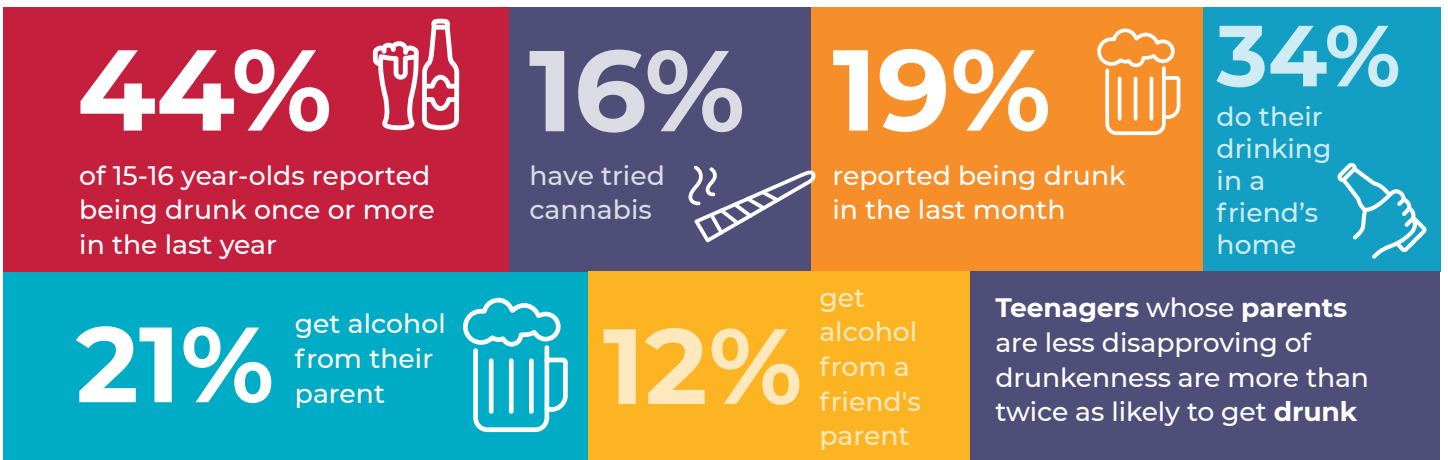
In December 2020, all of the pupils in Mayo that returned to school after finishing the Junior Cycle were invited to complete the Planet Youth questionnaire. This report summarises the findings of the survey and is based upon 1,352 15 and 16 year-olds attending the 26 post-primary schools and 3 Youthreach centres in the county.

## KEY FINDINGS

### COVID19



### SUBSTANCE USE



### FAMILY TIME

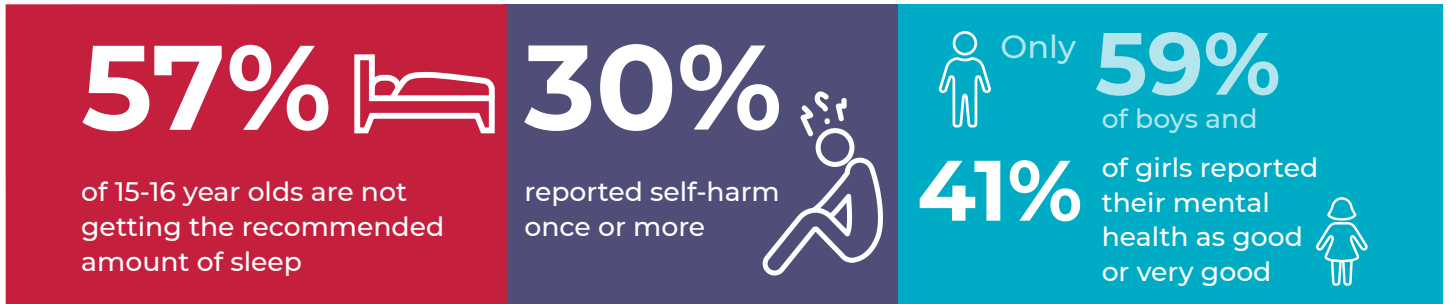


### SCREEN TIME

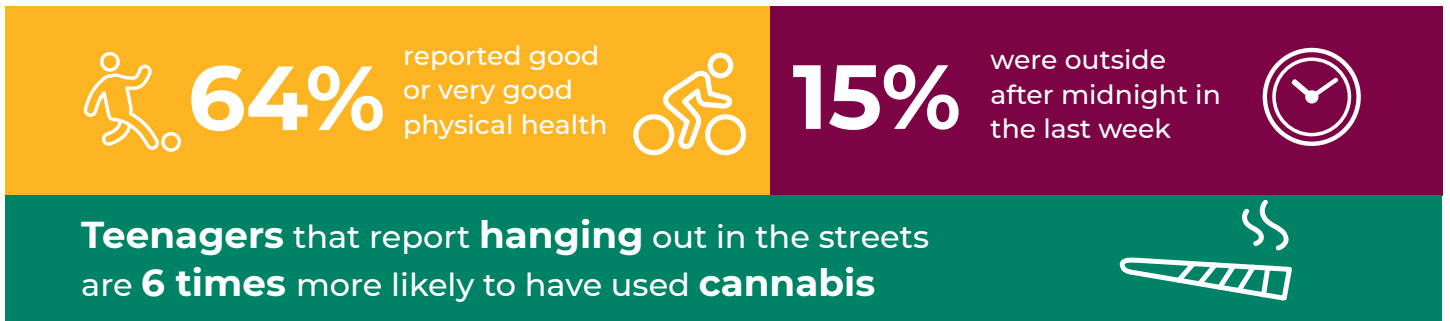


## KEY FINDINGS

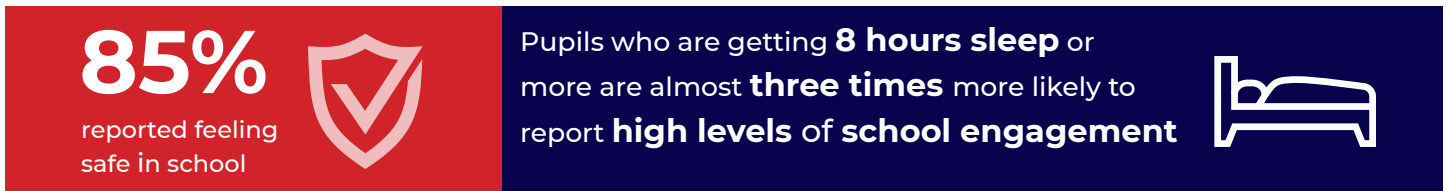
### WELLBEING INDICATORS



### LEISURE TIME



### SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



### SEXUAL HEALTH AND BEHAVIOUR



## KEY MESSAGES

### Substance Use

- The most common place for teenagers to get drunk is at a friend's house, enabled by a parent or a carer. Those in parental roles can make a huge difference to the long-term health and wellbeing of our children by agreeing not to supply alcohol to teenagers in our homes.
- Teenagers whose parents are less disapproving of drunkenness are more than twice as likely to get drunk.

### Family Time

- Parental caring and warmth is a protective factor for mental health. Those with high levels of parental warmth are five times more likely to report positive mental health.

### Screen Time

- Four hours or more of daily social media use creates significant risk for problems associated with sleep, mood and self-esteem.

### Wellbeing Indicators

- Teenagers getting 7 hours or less sleep are reporting poorer mental health, self-esteem and school engagement.
- Undisturbed sleep is important for development and between 8 and 10 hours is recommended. Limiting social media and screen use and keeping screens out of bedrooms at night will really help.

### Leisure Time

- Teenagers that report hanging out in the streets regularly are 6 times more likely to use cannabis. It's important that teens have access to organised sports and other constructive leisure time activities to reduce their substance use.

### Sexual Health and Behaviour

- Nearly a third of our teenagers use pornography as a way to learn about sex. Pornography use is also associated with unsafe sexual health practices and can create misleading expectations about sexual relationships.

## 2

# INTRODUCTION

## Planet Youth

In the 1990s Iceland had the highest levels of alcohol and substance misuse among adolescents in Europe. A group of social scientists at the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), along with policy makers and practitioners, began collaborating in an effort to better understand the societal factors influencing substance use among adolescents and identify potential approaches to prevention. Together they developed an approach founded on three pillars:

1. Evidence-based practice
2. Using a community-based approach
3. Creating and maintaining a dialogue between research, policy and practice

The model has evolved and is now known as Planet Youth. The Planet Youth model has demonstrated that it is possible to develop evidence-based interventions to promote and facilitate social capital on the local community level, in order to decrease the likelihood of adolescent substance use by strengthening the supportive role of parents and schools and the network of opportunities around them.

The evidence for community-based approaches and participatory stakeholder dialogue is based on a validated survey of adolescent behaviours and attitudes. The same survey document, with local contextual modifications, is used in all the countries adopting the Planet Youth approach and is repeated at biennial intervals.

The prevention model that has emerged continuously links local-level data collection from the survey with local-level reflection and action to increase social capital suitable to the needs of the community. The data guides the development of suitable and effective interventions that reduce the identified risk factors and strengthen the protective factors for young people.

## Five Guiding Principles of Planet Youth

1. Planet Youth is a primary prevention approach that is designed to enhance the social environment.
2. Planet Youth emphasizes community action and views schools as the natural hub of local community efforts to support child and adolescent health, learning, and life success.
3. Planet Youth engages and empowers community members to make practical decisions using local, high-quality, accessible data and diagnostics.
4. Planet Youth integrates researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and community members into a unified team dedicated to solving complex, real-world problems.
5. Planet Youth matches the scope of the solution to the scope of the problem, including an emphasis on comprehensive, long-term intervention and efforts to marshal adequate community resources.



## Planet Youth Mayo Report

The Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force conducted the second detailed Planet Youth survey, on the experiences of teenagers living in their communities in County Mayo, in early December 2020. The target population was all of the 15 and 16 year-old post-Junior Cycle pupils in every post-primary school and Youthreach centre in the county. The Planet Youth survey is repeated biennially amongst this cohort in order to assess changing trends and behaviours.

Each of the 26 schools and 3 Youthreach centres in the county were invited to take part and all of them participated. A total of 1,966 pupils were targeted and 1,558 pupils completed the survey document. This represents a completion rate of 78%.

All the completed survey forms were transported to ICSRA for scanning and processing. A total of 1,525 records were returned in the dataset after data verification and quality checks.

This report is based on the 1,352 15 and 16 year-olds within those records. The 173 records that are excluded from the report are all older pupils. These pupils are included within the reports that go to the schools and will be part of further analysis of the extended dataset.

## Additional Reports

A series of additional thematic and agency-specific reports will also be developed from the Planet Youth dataset for use by agencies in the region.

Additionally, access to the Planet Youth 2018 dataset is available, for research and teaching purposes, through the Irish Social Sciences Data Archive. The Planet Youth 2020 dataset will be added to the archive in Summer 2021.

## 3

# SURVEY

## Survey Document

The Planet Youth survey questionnaire is a standardised document that is used in each Planet Youth community. The questions asked and the document layout are roughly the same from country to country to ensure that the document scanning process is simplified as this enables the prompt return of data to each community.

In Ireland, prior to the administration of this second Planet Youth survey, the questions in the document were modified and localised to be more suitable in an Irish context and an Irish language version was also produced for use in Irish-speaking schools.

Additionally, with this second Irish survey some non-core questions from the International questionnaire were removed and new ones were introduced. These revisions will allow Planet Youth and partner agencies gather useful information that furthers the overall aim of the project in improving the health and wellbeing of our young population. New areas of questioning included:

- An ethnic identifier as per the Irish Census form
- The addition of *non-binary* and *prefer not to say* with the gender question
- Access to alcohol and drugs
- Parent and sibling substance use
- Additional adverse life experience questions
- Barriers to accessing hobbies and sports
- Drug-related intimidation
- Racism
- Sexual health and behaviour
- COVID19 experience

## Survey Methodology

The Planet Youth survey is administered via a paper-based questionnaire amongst the 15 and 16 year-olds in the target community. This second survey was undertaken in December 2020. The pupils that were targeted for inclusion were all those who had returned to school after completing the Junior Cycle in June 2020.

The sequence of events related to the administration of the survey are detailed below:

1. An ethical review was conducted and approval granted by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI).
2. Localisation of the survey was completed through consultation with agencies and youth groups.
3. Principals of all of the post primary schools and Youthreach Centres in Mayo were approached in advance of the survey to explain the Planet Youth project and the purpose of the survey.
4. A support services card was developed to be issued alongside the surveys in order to ensure participants had access to contact details of support services if required.
5. All students and parents were given copies of information about the survey and were invited to opt out if they so wished.
6. The survey documents, support services cards and blank A4 envelopes were all boxed and prepared for each school. A careful record was kept of the sequence of documents that went to each school.

7. Each school appointed a coordinator for their in-house survey and they all attended an online training to ensure consistency of the survey's administration.
8. The surveys were completed by the students, placed in blank A4 envelopes and sealed. All of the completed documents were then returned to the Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force offices in Galway.
9. The completed sealed documents were then packaged and transported to Reykjavik for processing at ICSRA.
10. The forms were scanned and parsed by ICSRA and the results and dataset returned to Ireland.

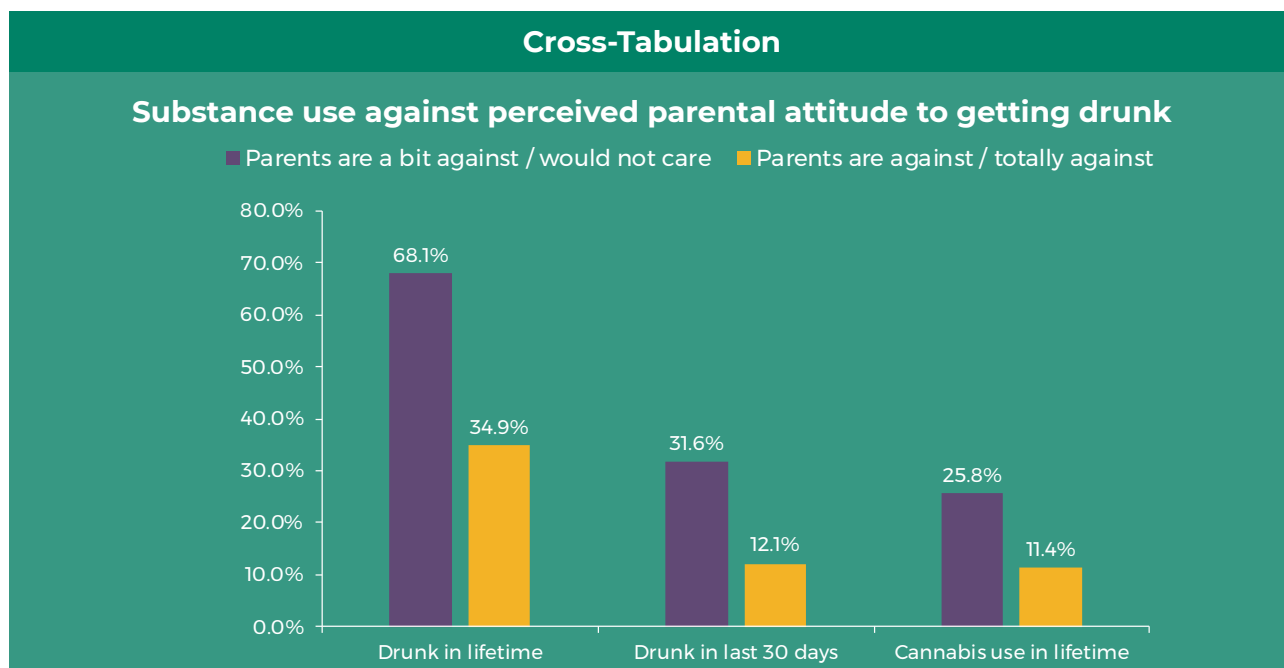
The survey was conducted during class hours, taking approximately 40 minutes to complete. Students were instructed not to write their names or any other identifying information anywhere on the questionnaire and they were also informed of the purpose of the support services card. When finished, students were asked to seal their completed questionnaire in an envelope provided for this purpose.

To ensure survey accuracy, some questionnaires were eliminated as part of the data cleansing process in Reykjavik. The criteria for elimination included insufficiently complete forms, reporting the use of a fictitious drug or reporting to have tried every substance 40 times or more.

## How To Interpret the Cross-Tabulations

The cross-tabulations shown in this document are used to indicate the relationship between one variable and another. Cross-tabulations can demonstrate the effect and importance of different risk and protective factors. This is a method of quantitatively analysing the relationship between multiple variables by examining correlations within the data that may not be readily apparent otherwise.

Cross-tabulations are used throughout the survey findings to examine the risk and protective factors in different domains. They can highlight factors that are working well and also those that seem to be working poorly or that are unusual in some other way and so worthy of investigation.



*Cross-tabulation example. Proportion of teenagers that reported lifetime drunkenness, became drunk in the last 30 days and have used cannabis once or more in their lifetime compared against parental attitude to drunkenness.*

The orange bar in this example shows the substance use behaviours of teenagers whose parents are disapproving of drunkenness, contrasted against the purple bar representing the substance use behaviours of the teenagers whose parents are more tolerant of drunkenness.



# 4 SURVEY RESULTS

## Number of Participants

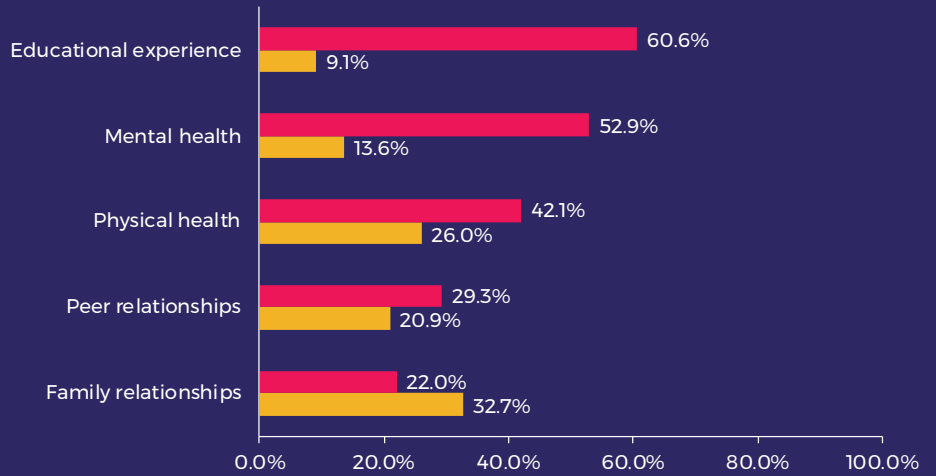
	Male	Female	Non-Binary*	Prefer not to say	Total
Mayo	662	673	10	7	1,352
Region	2,179	2,228	39	32	4,478

\* The options to answer *non-binary* and *prefer not to say* were added to the 2020 questionnaire. A thematic report will be developed in 2021 relevant to these teenagers.

# COVID19

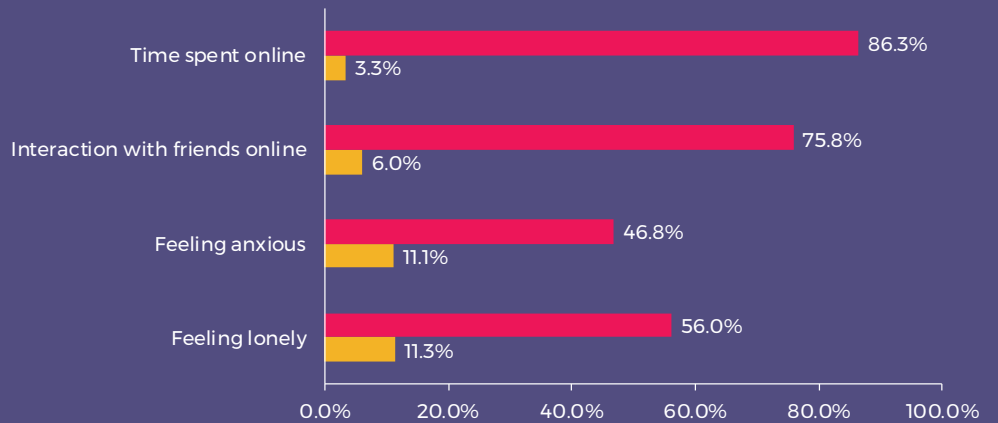
## How have the COVID19 lockdown and restrictions affected the following areas of your life?

■ A bit worse / A lot worse    ■ A bit better / A lot better



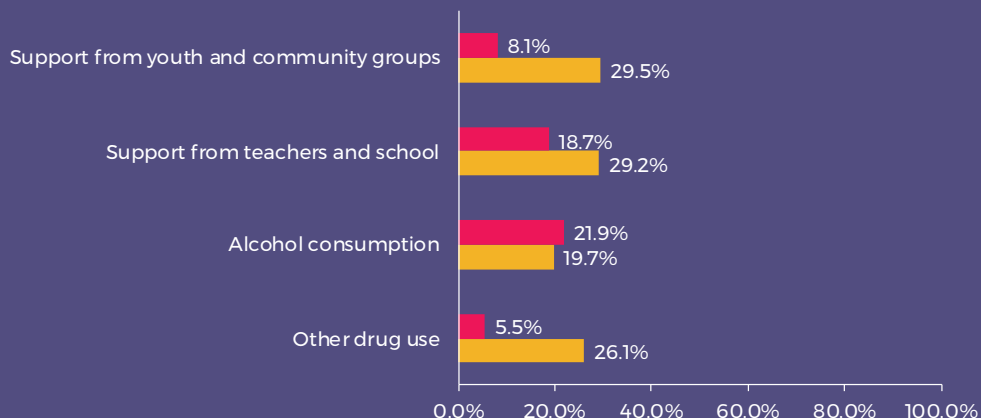
## How have the COVID19 lockdown and restrictions affected the following areas of your life?

■ A bit more / A lot more    ■ A bit less / A lot less



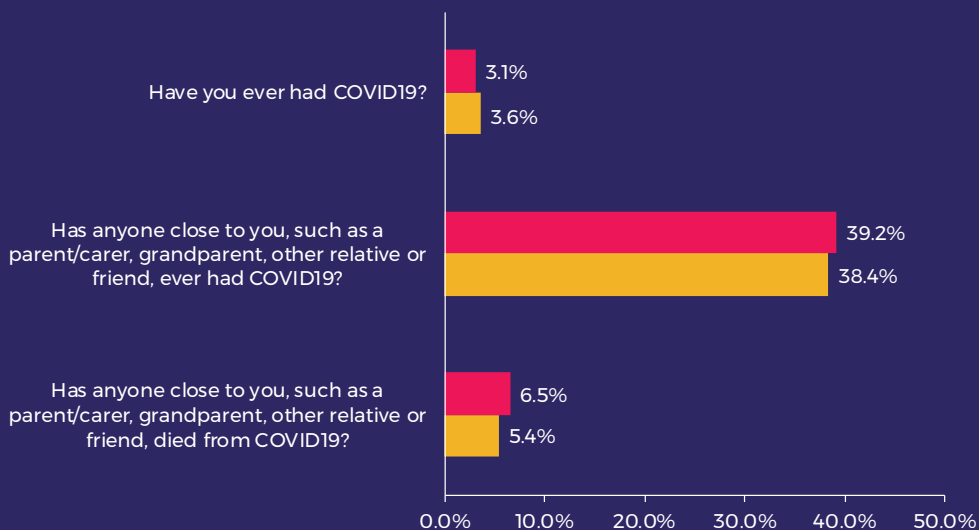
### How have the COVID19 lockdown and restrictions affected the following areas of your life?

■ A bit more / A lot more   ■ A bit less / A lot less



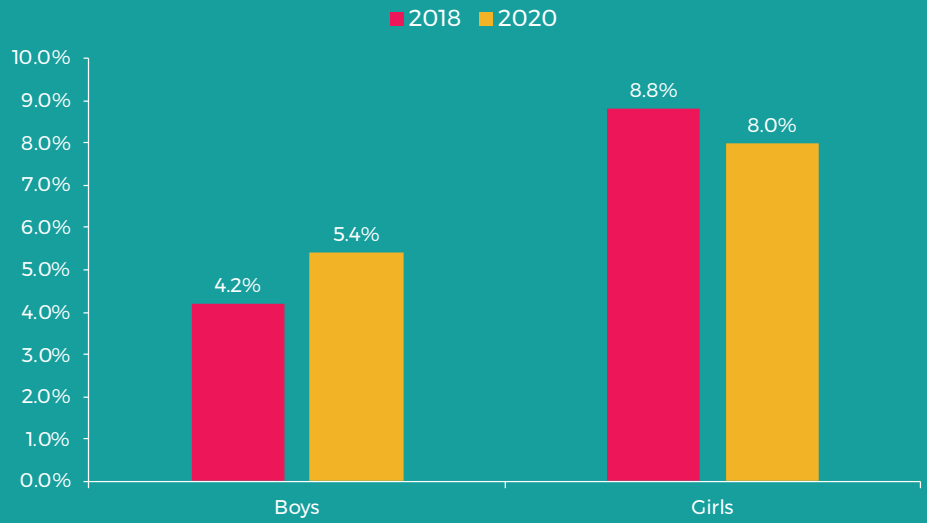
### Pupils exposure to COVID19

■ Mayo   ■ Region

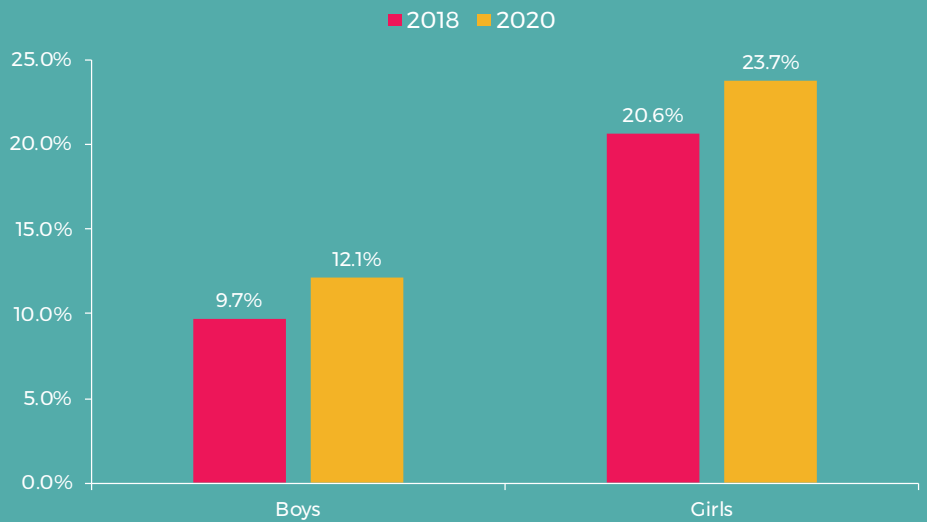


# TRENDS

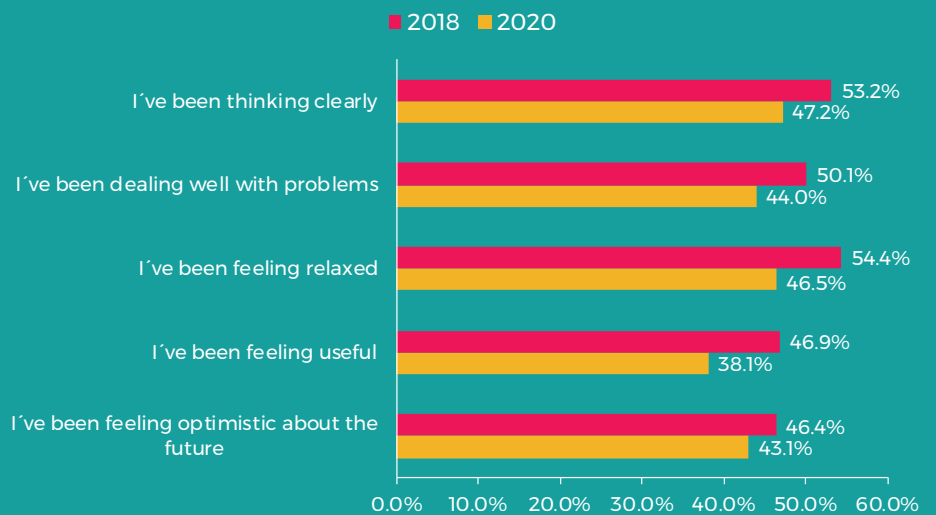
## Pupils that rate their physical health as bad or very bad



## Pupils that rate their mental health as bad or very bad

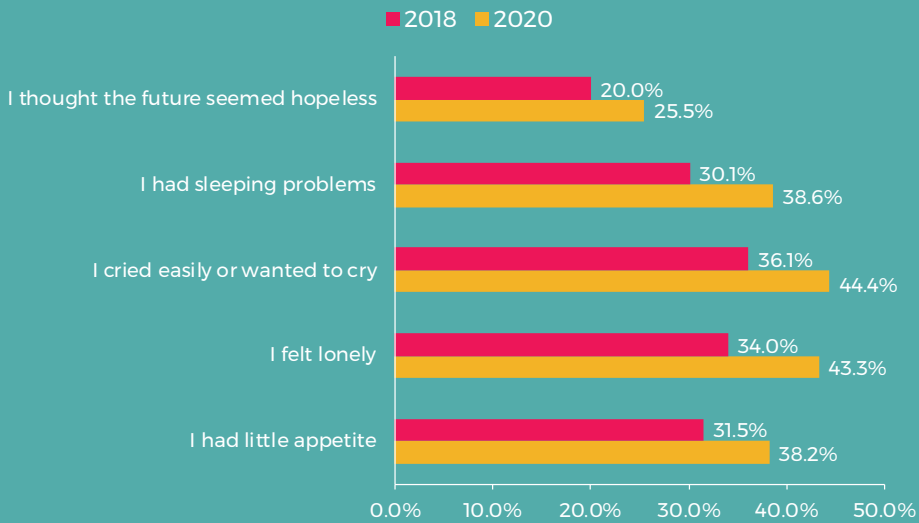


## Pupils who say the following statements apply often or all the time in the last two weeks

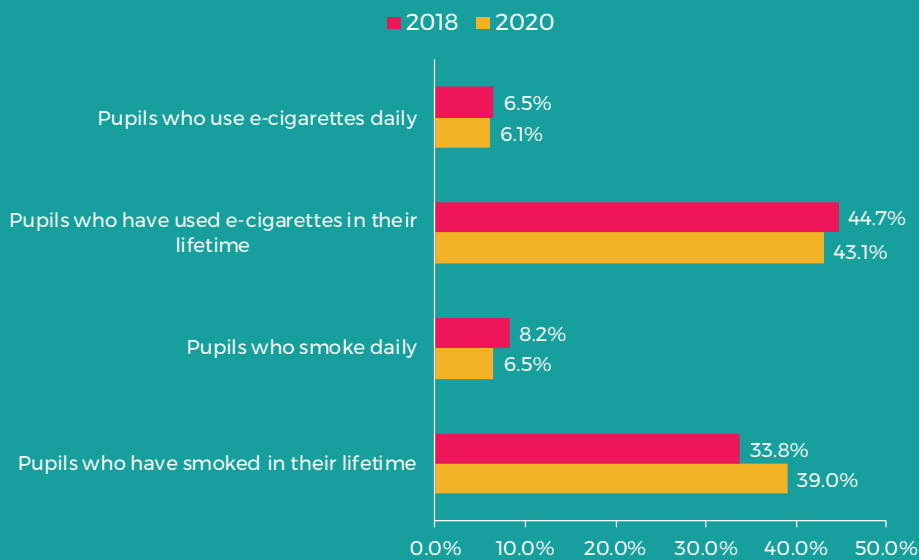




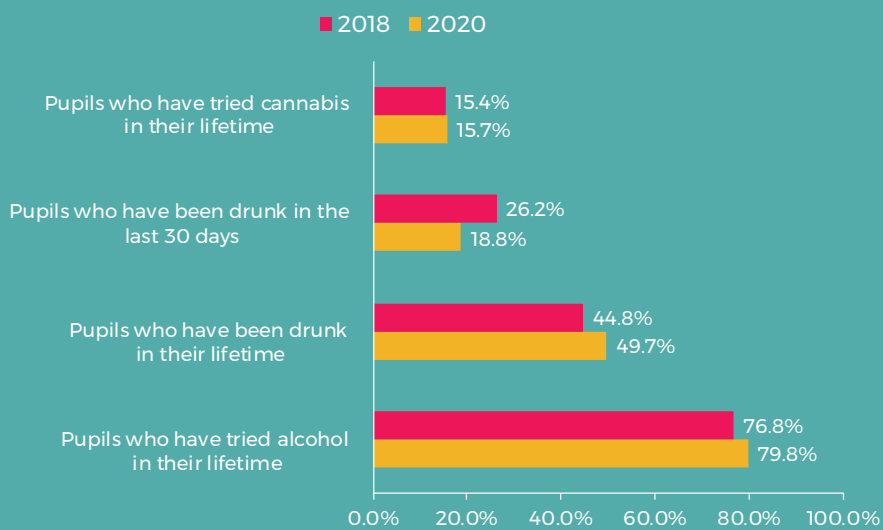
### Pupils who felt the following applied sometimes or often in the last week

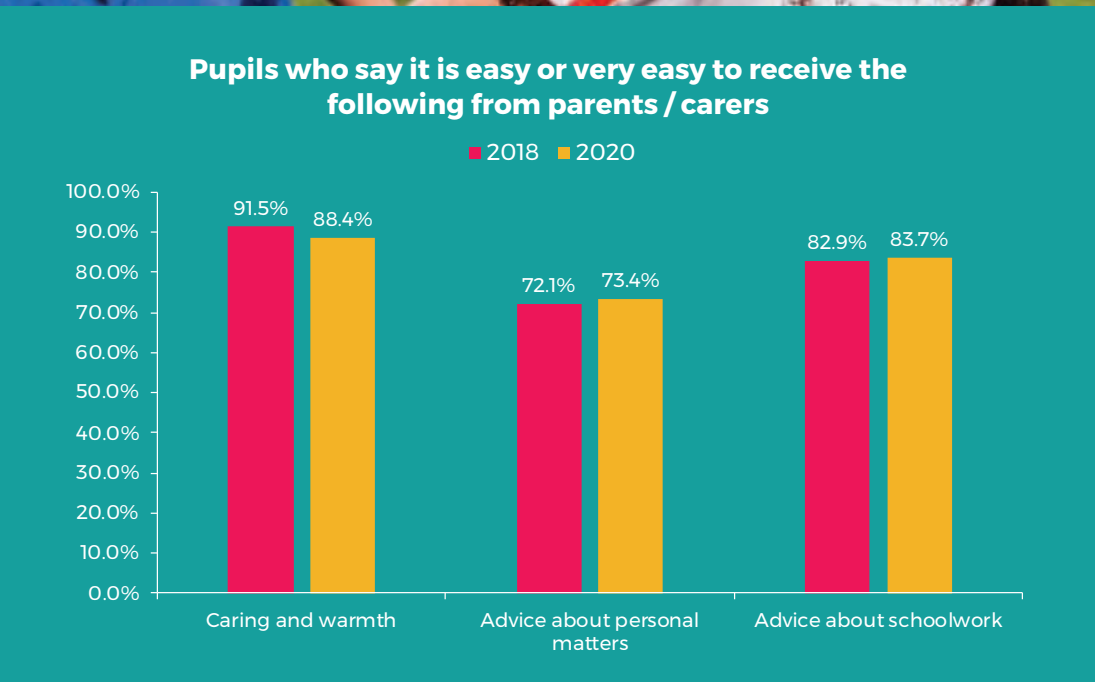
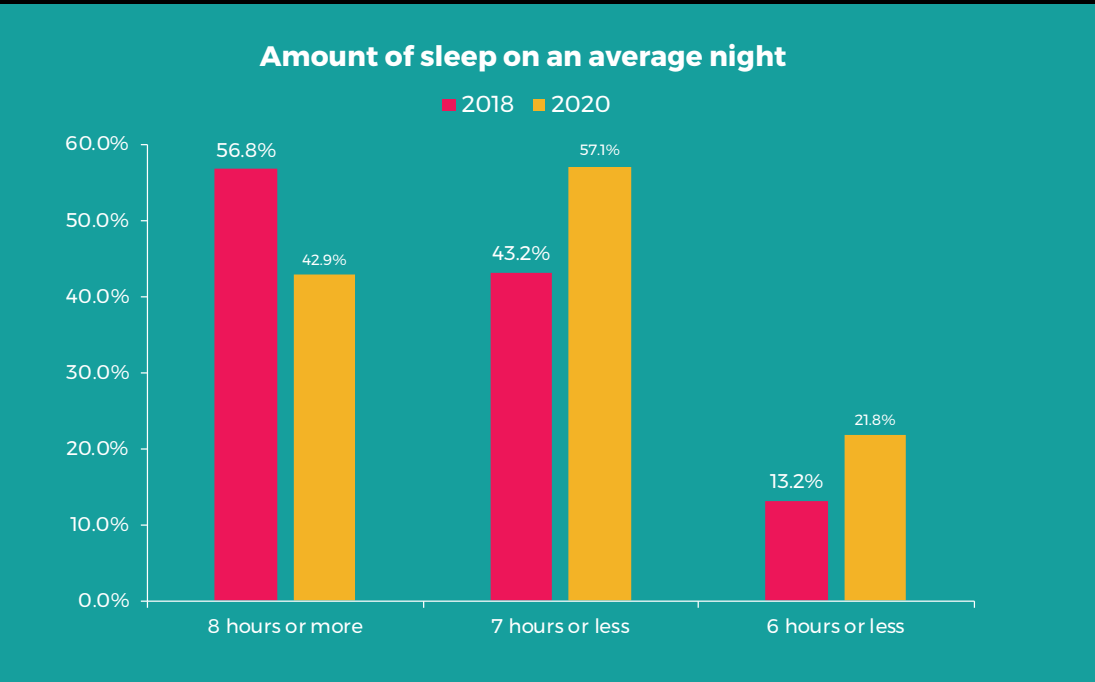


### Substance Use

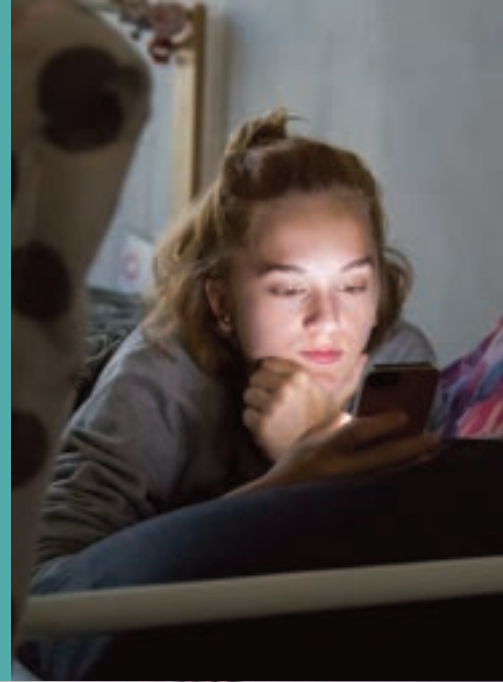
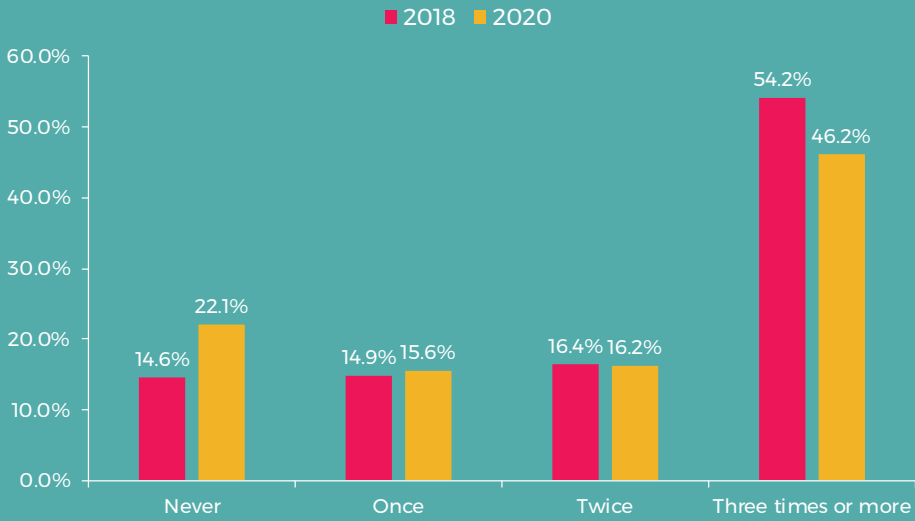


### Substance Use

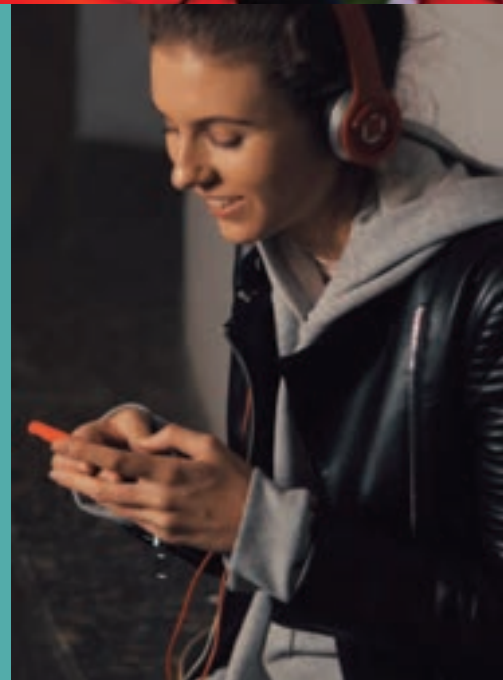
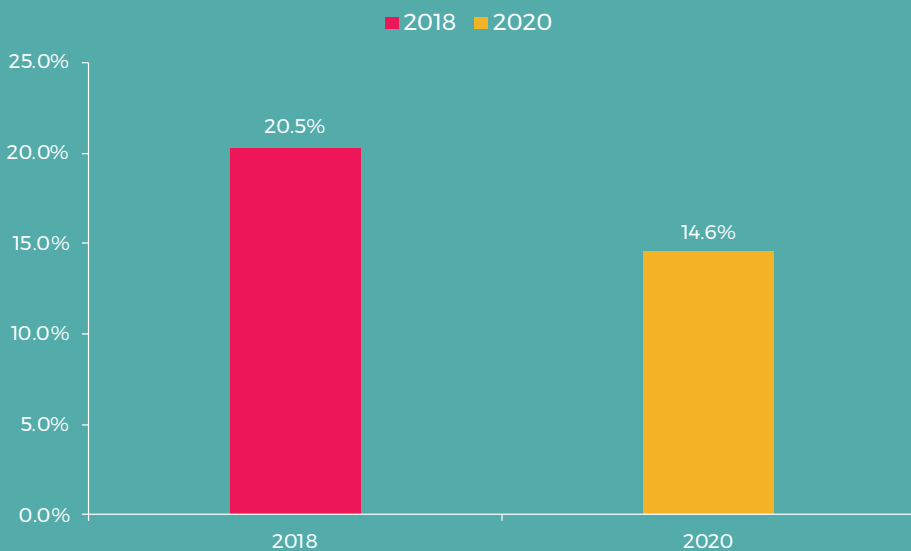




### How many times a week do you exert yourself physically so you exhaust yourself or sweat?



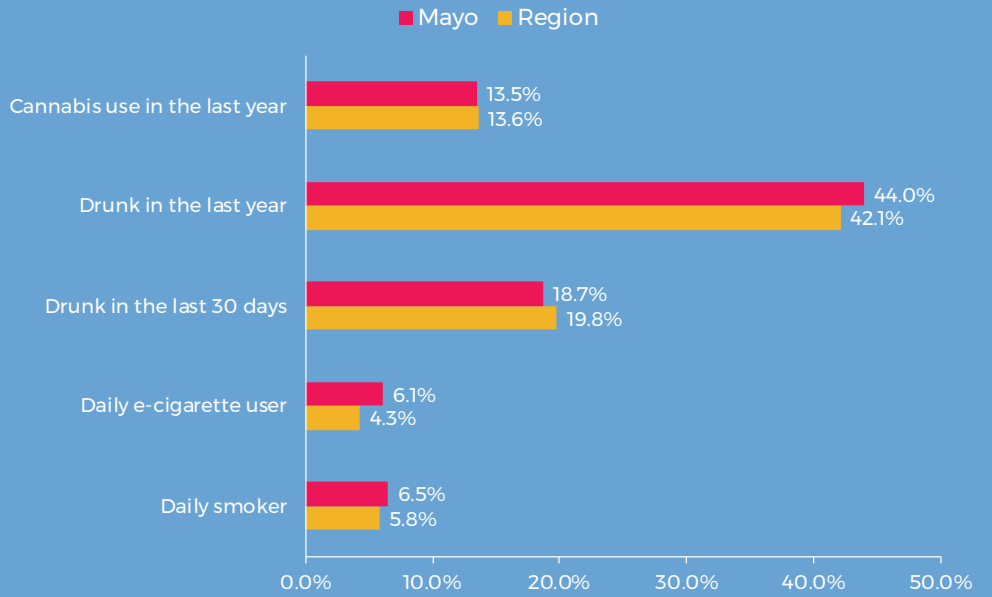
### Pupils outside after midnight in the last week



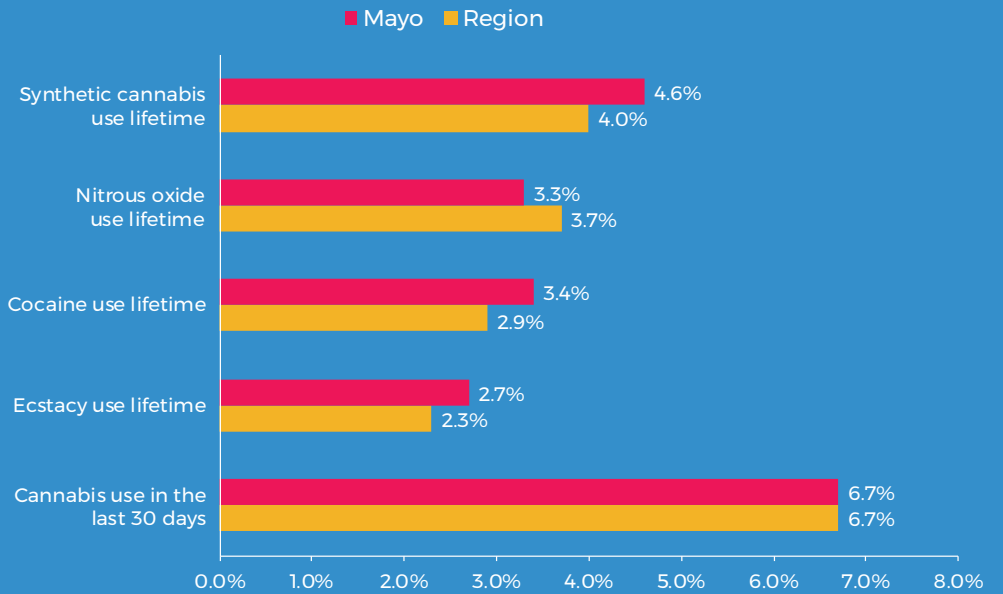
# Substance Use



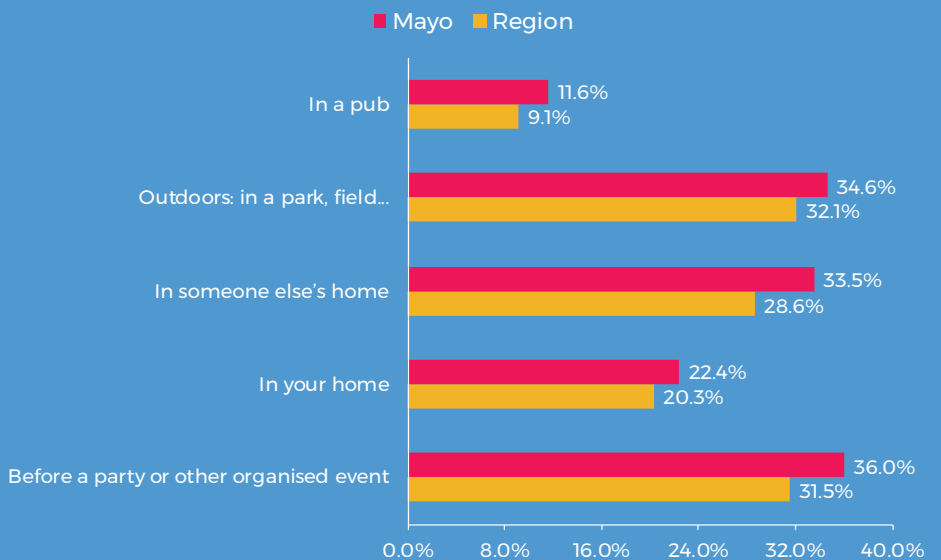
**Pupils who report the following substance use**



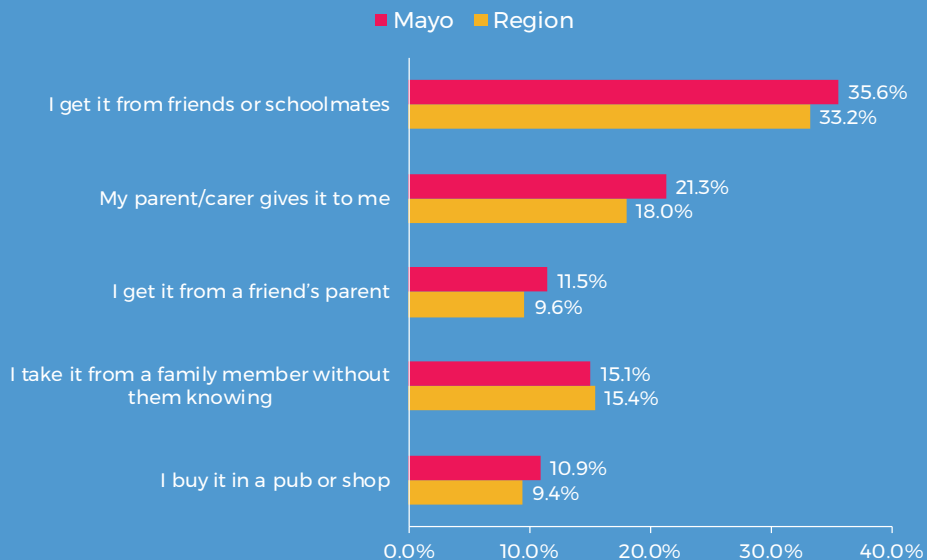
**Pupils who report the following substance use**



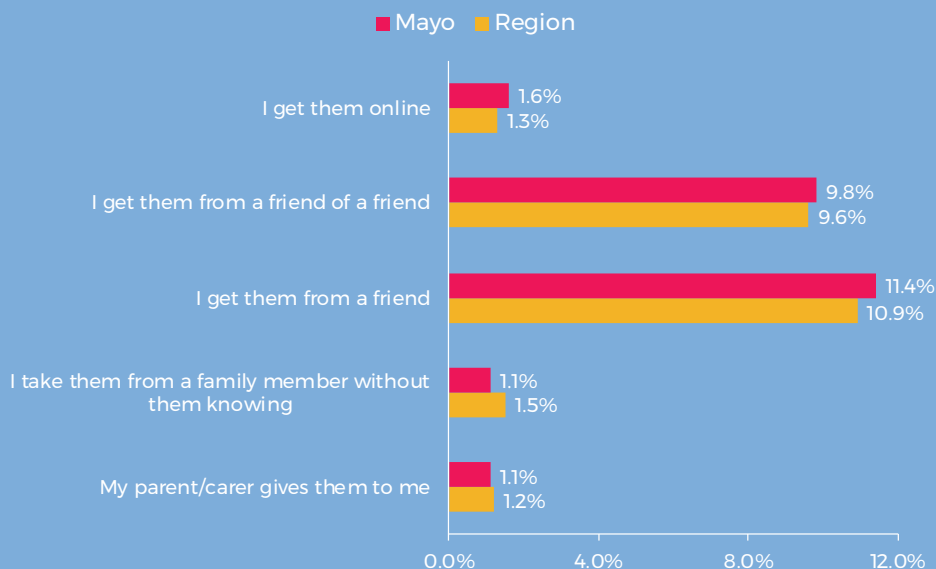
**Pupils who sometimes or often drink in the following places**



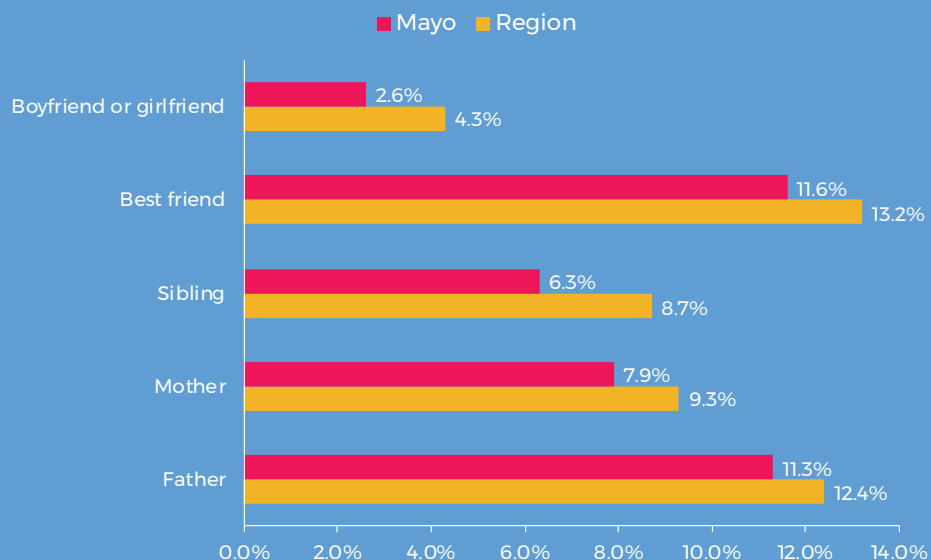
### Pupils who sometimes, often or almost always get their alcohol the following ways



### Pupils who sometimes or often get their drugs the following ways

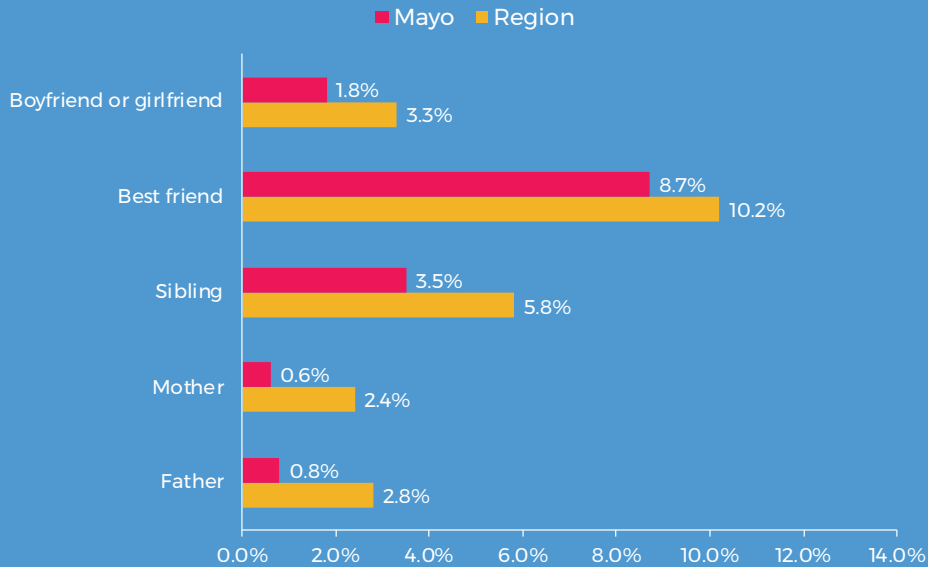


### Pupils who say the following people become drunk at least once each week

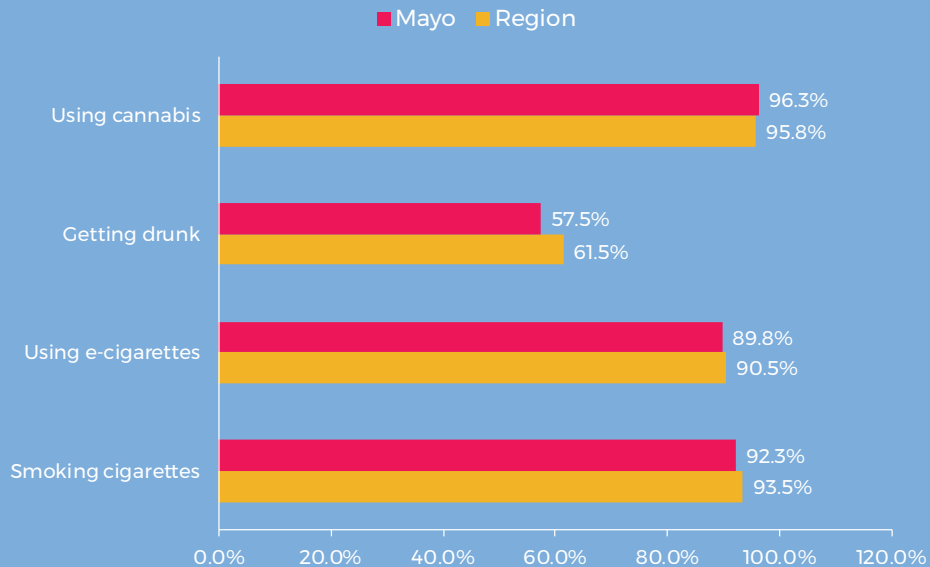




### Pupils who say the following people use cannabis weekly

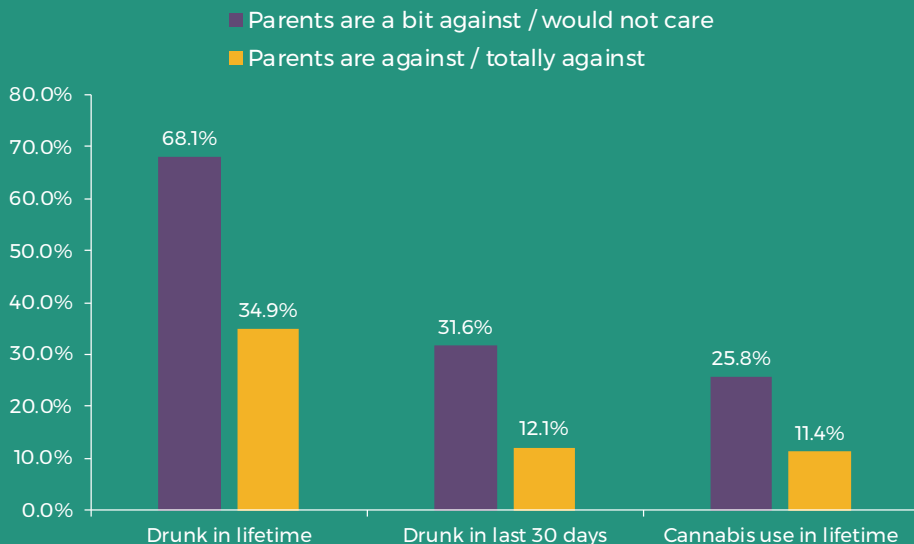


### Pupils who say their carers / parents would be against or totally against the following

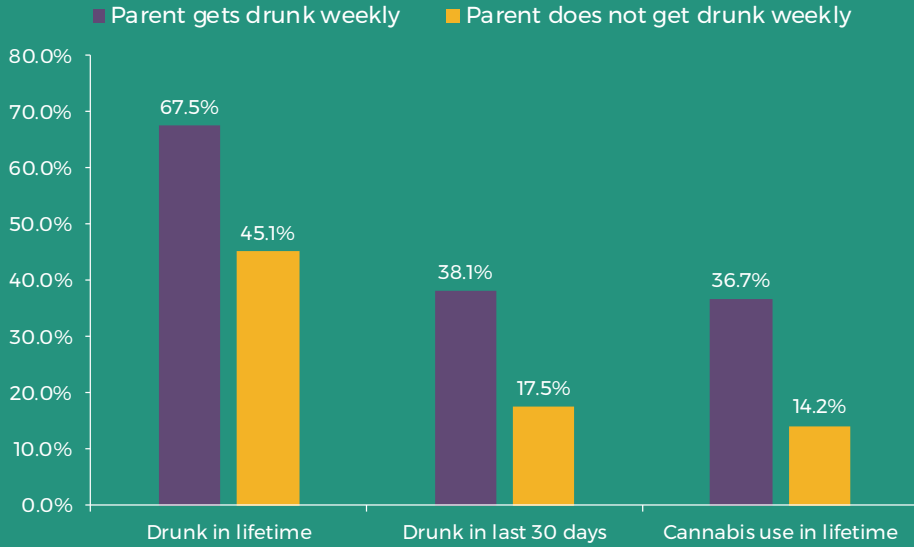


## Cross Tabulations

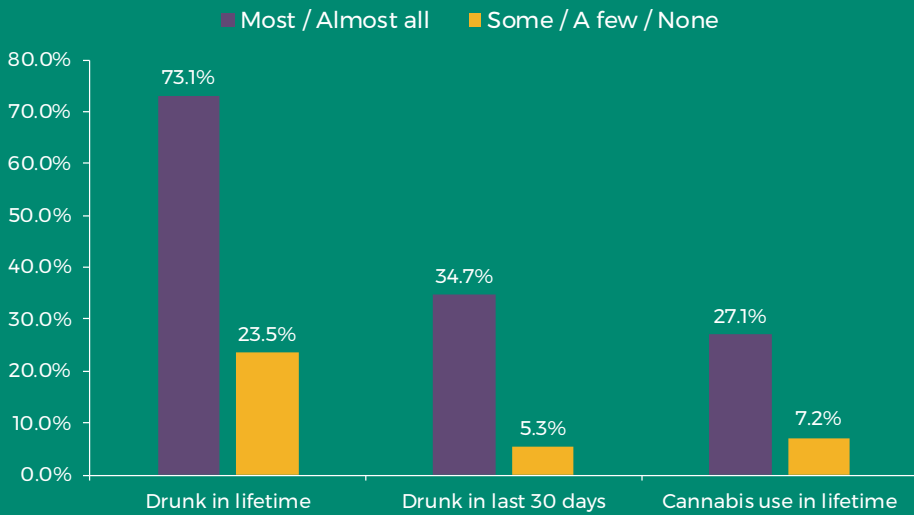
### Substance use against perceived parental attitude to getting drunk



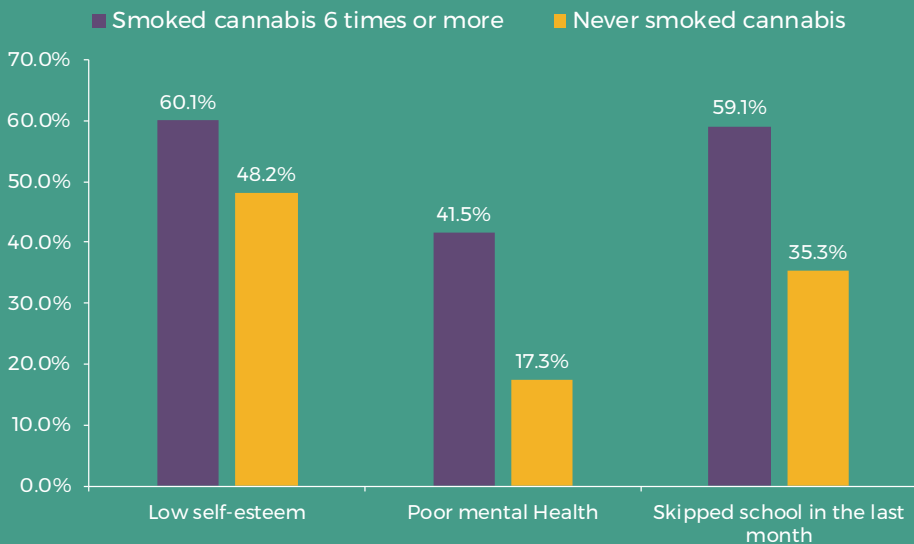
### Substance use against my mother or father gets drunk weekly



### Substance use against perceived peer alcohol use: How many of your friends do you think drink alcohol?



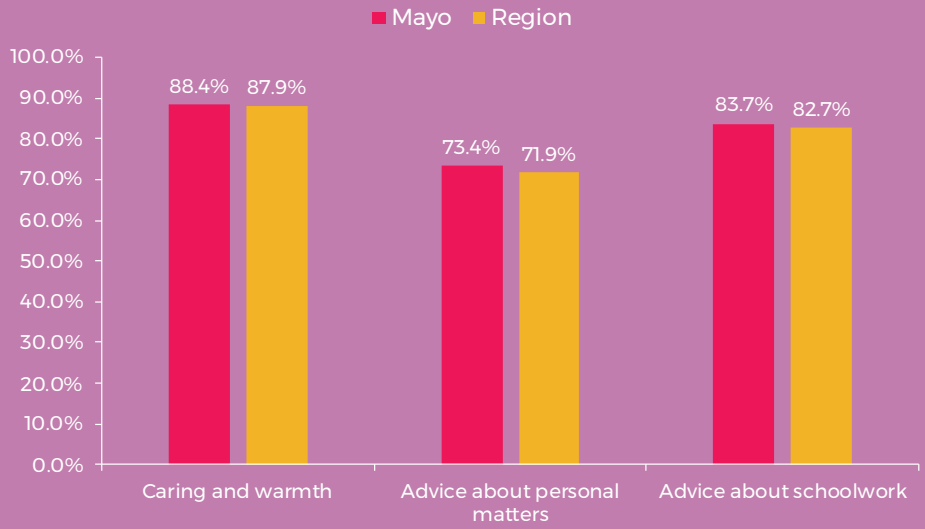
### Regular cannabis use against self-esteem, mental health and skipping school



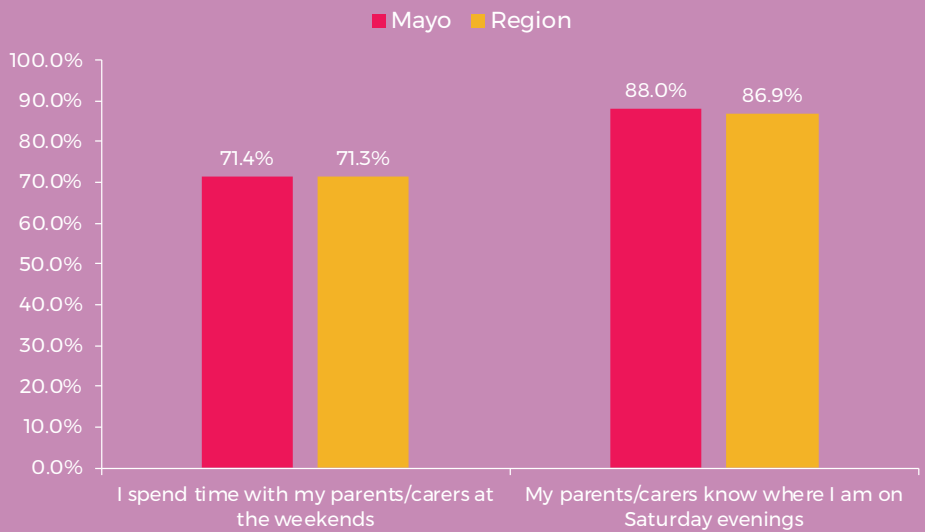
# Family Time



## Pupils who say it would be easy or very easy to receive the following from parents/carers



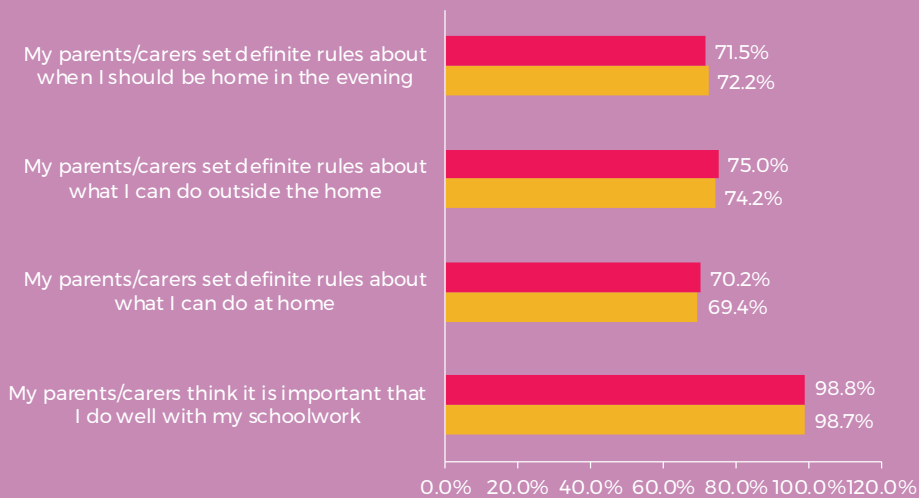
## Pupils who say the following often or almost always applies





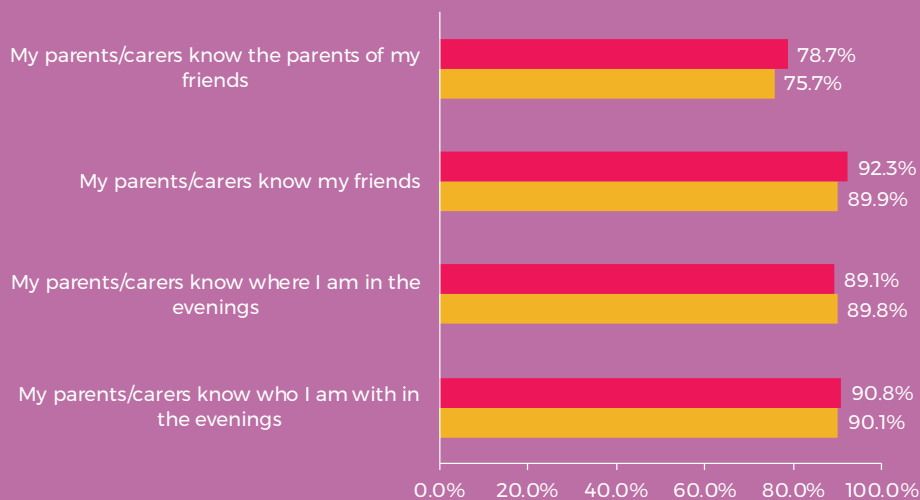
### Pupils who say the following applies well or very well

■ Mayo ■ Region



### Pupils who say the following applies well or very well

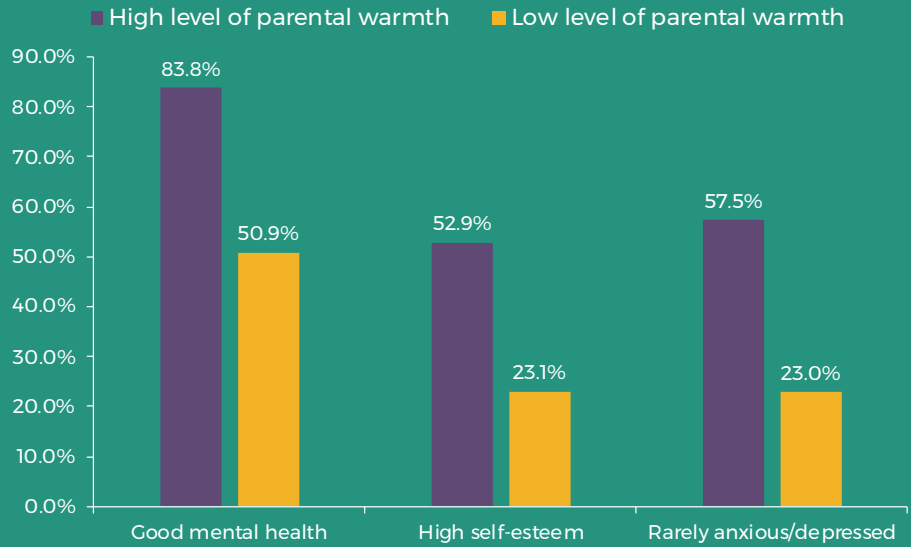
■ Mayo ■ Region



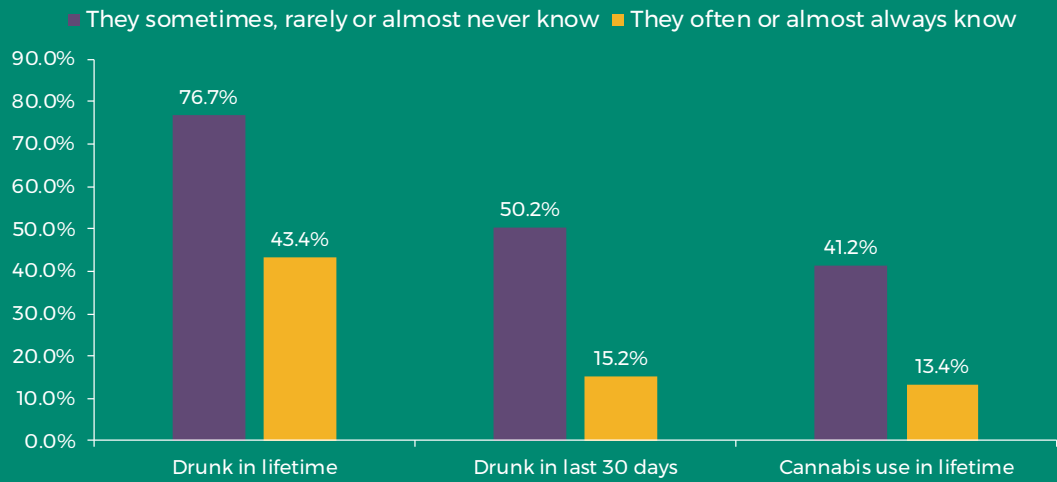
# Cross Tabulations



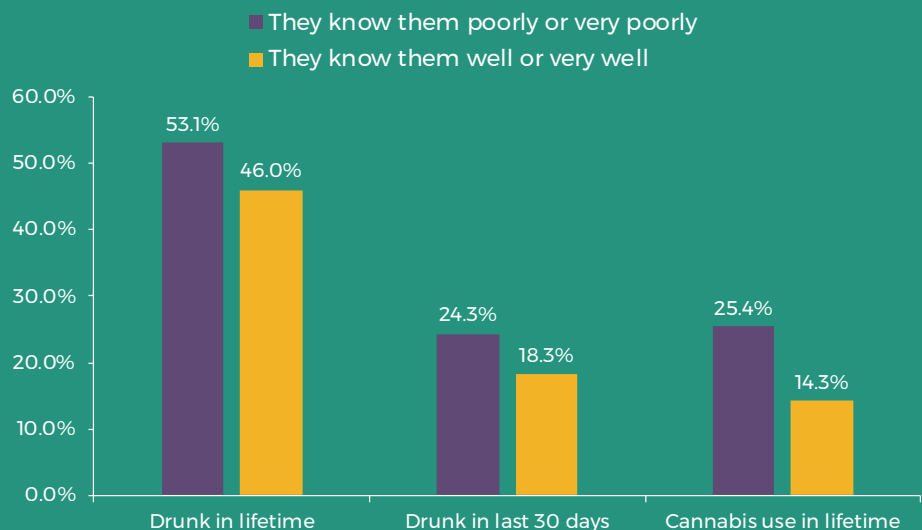
## Parental care and warmth against self-esteem, mental health and anxiety/depression



## My parents/carers know where I am on Saturday evenings against substance use



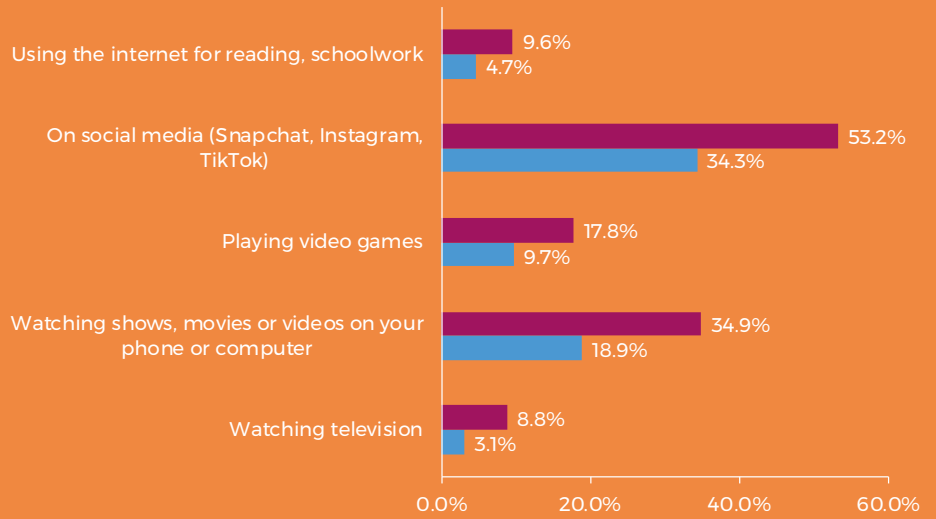
## My parents/carers know the parents of my friends against substance use



# Screen Time

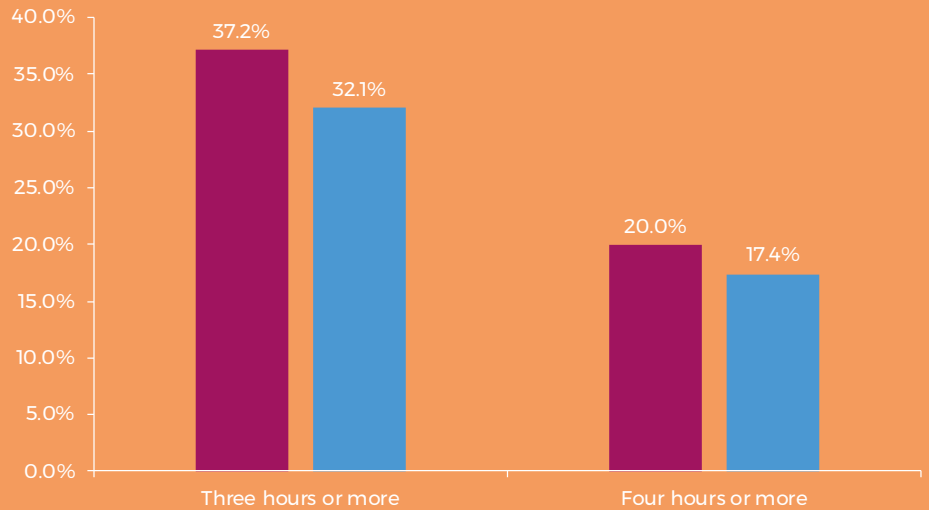
## Time spent each day on screens

■ Three hours or more ■ Four hours or more



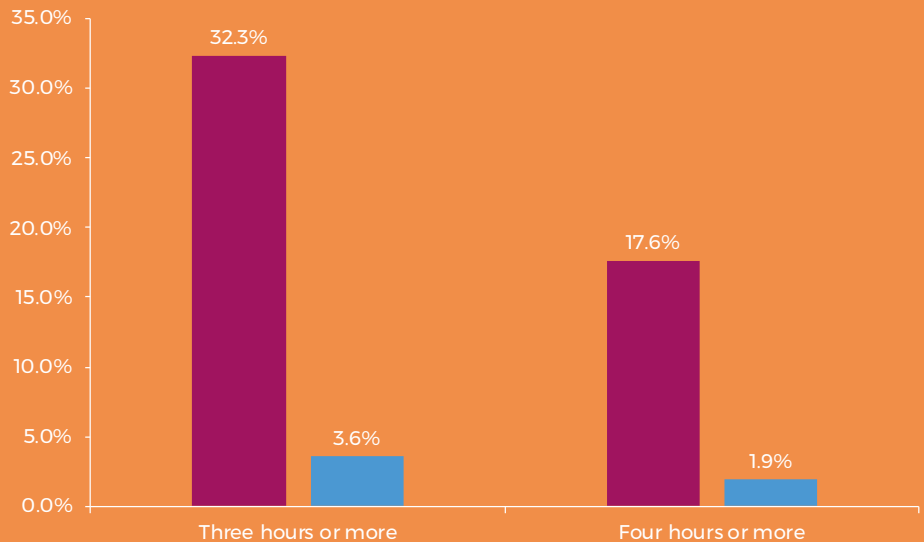
## Time spent each day watching shows and videos on screens

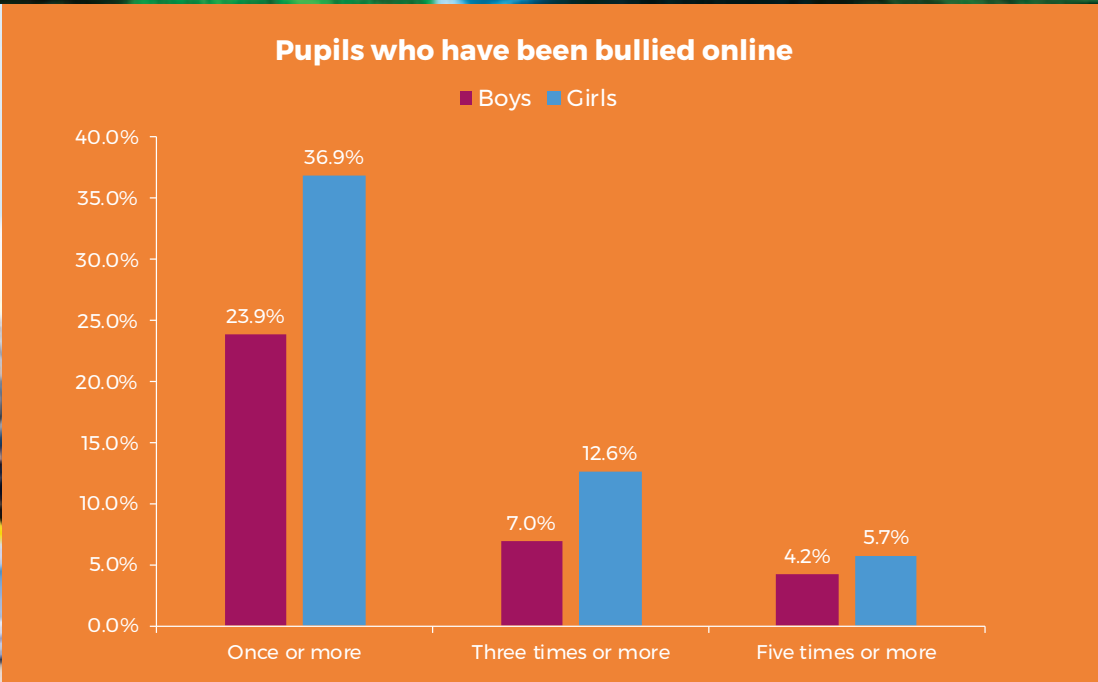
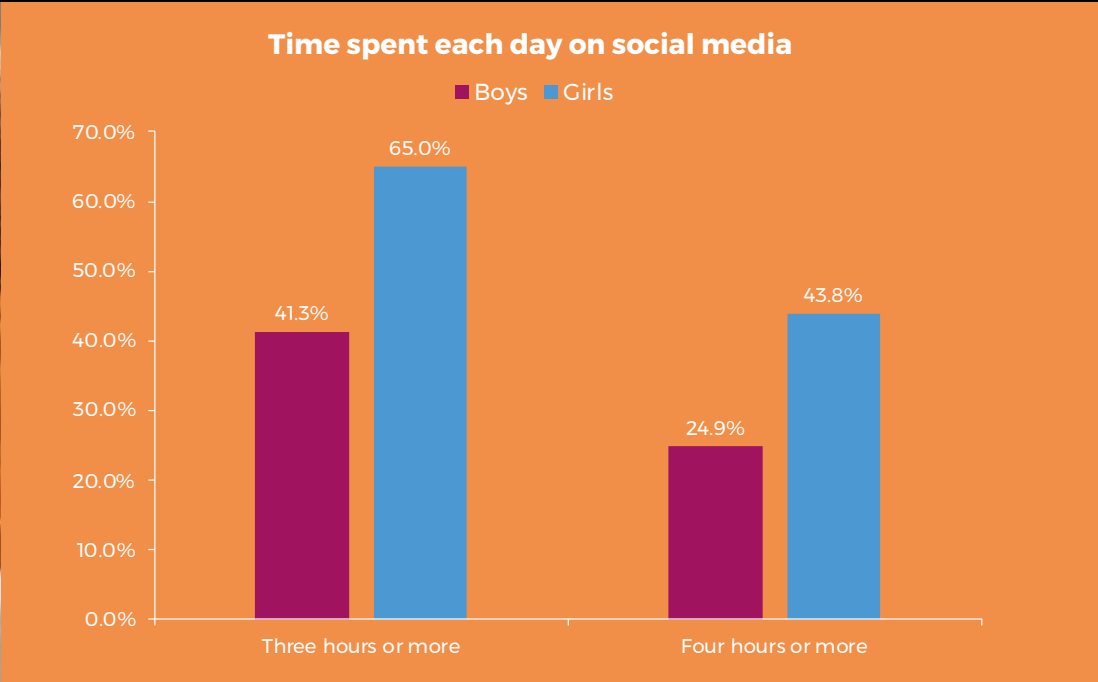
■ Boys ■ Girls



## Time spent each day gaming

■ Boys ■ Girls

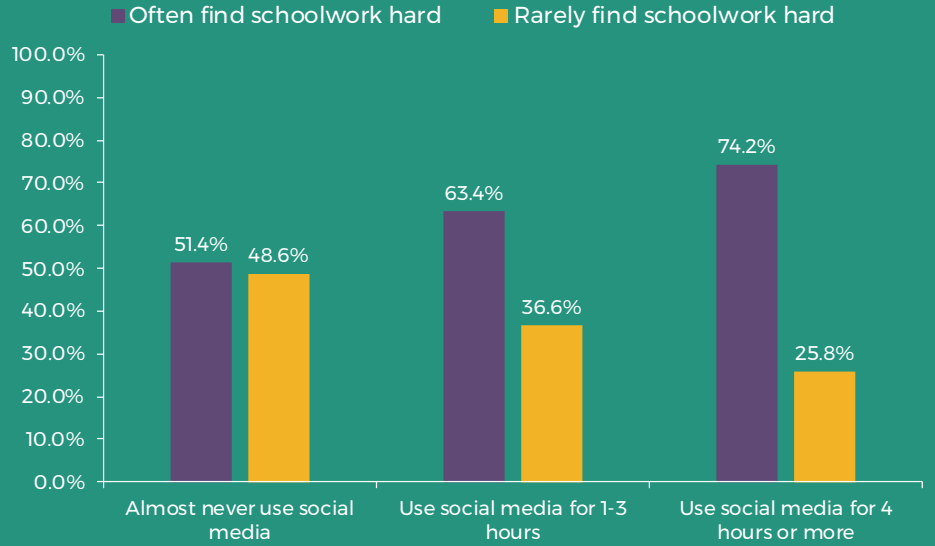




# Cross Tabulations



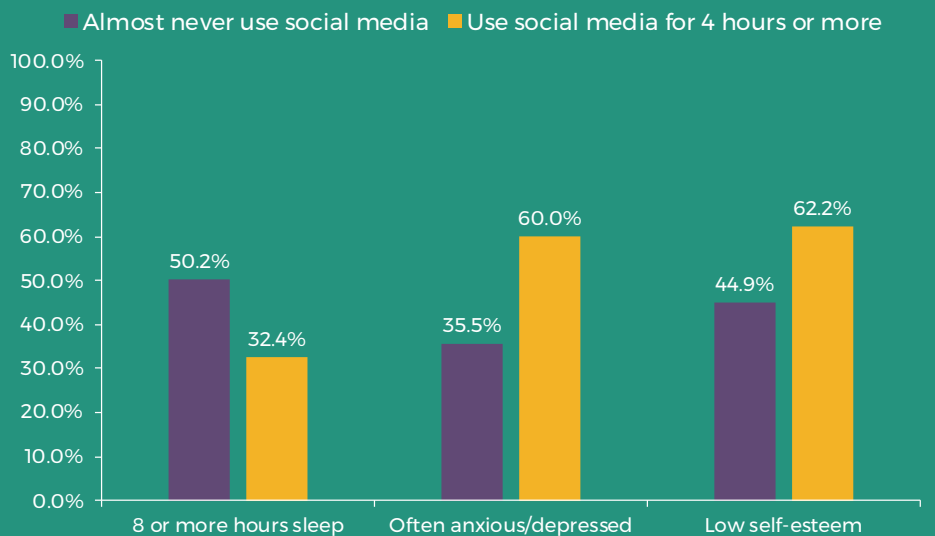
## Social media use against schoolwork



## Cyberbullying against self-harm

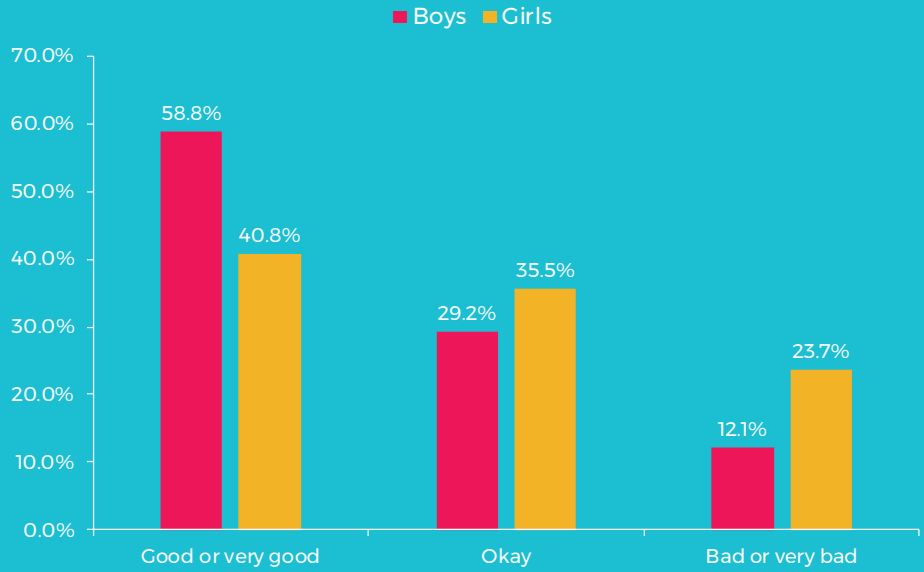


## Social media use against sleep, anxious/depressed and self-esteem

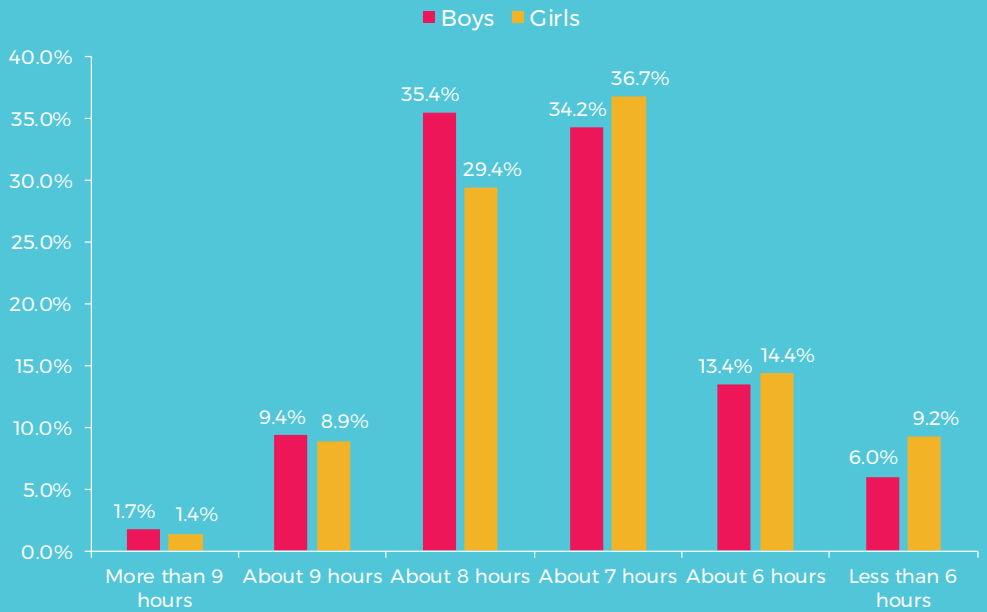


# Wellbeing Indicators

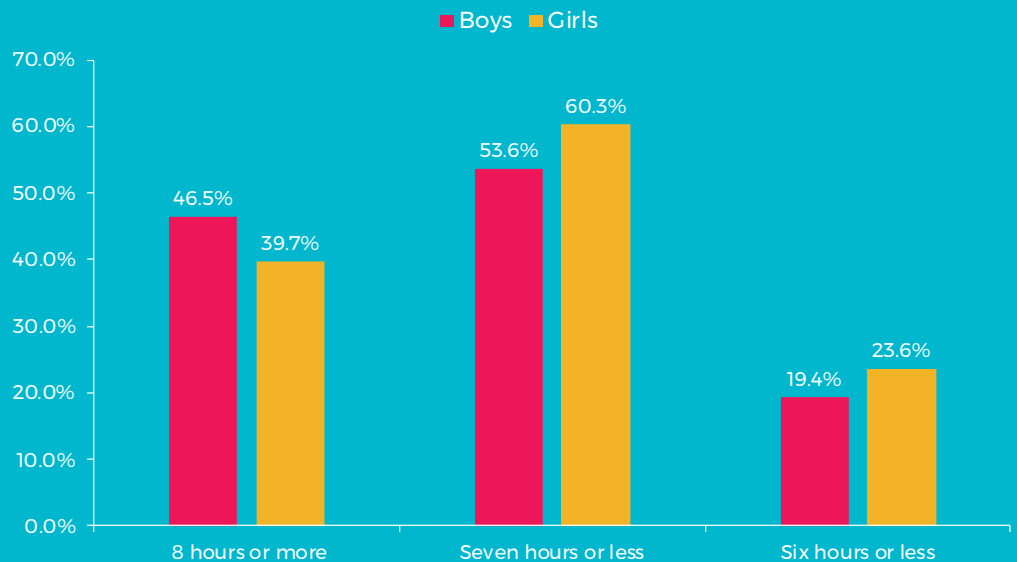
## How pupils rate their mental health



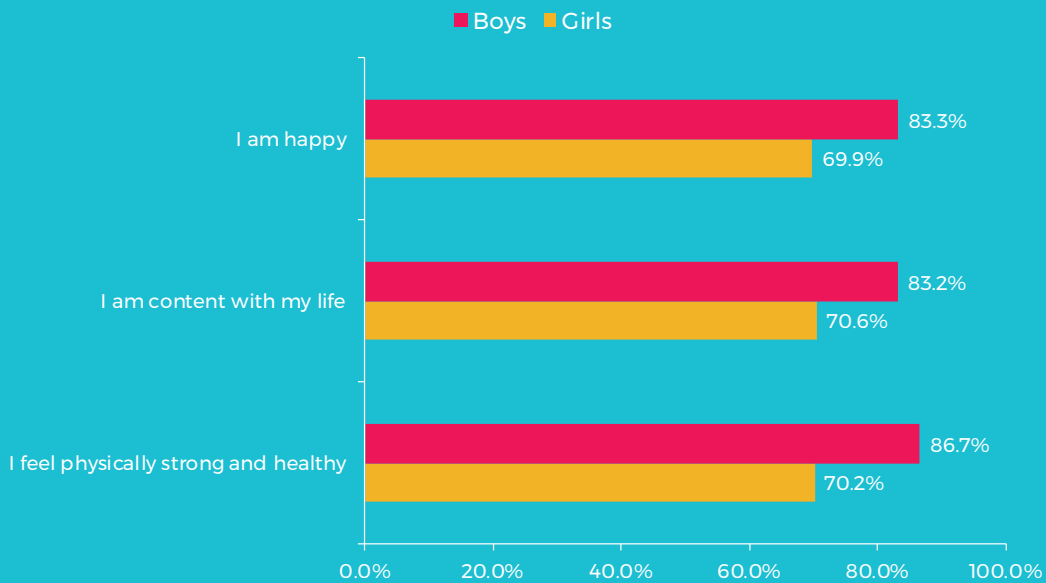
## Amount of sleep on an average night



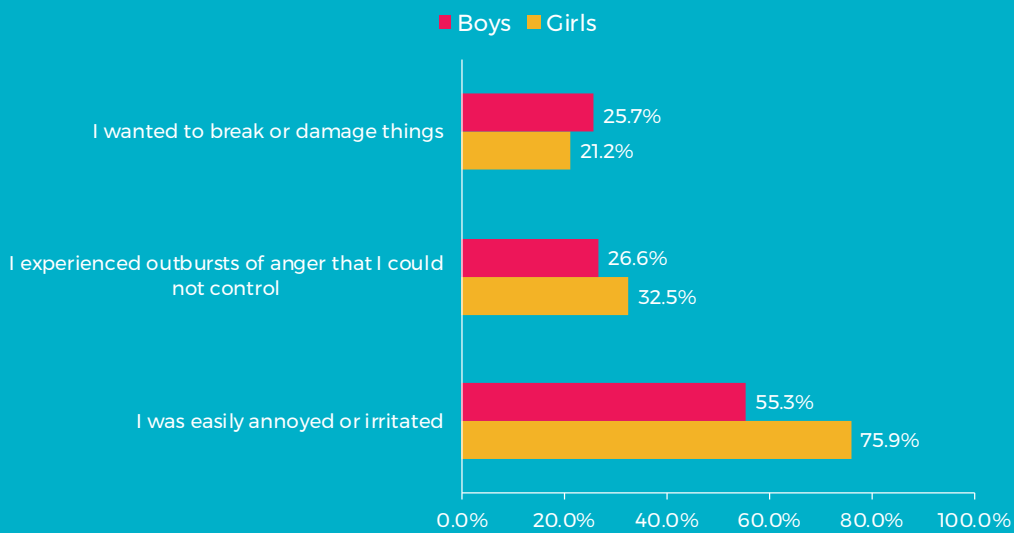
## Amount of sleep on an average night



### Pupils who say the following apply well or very well

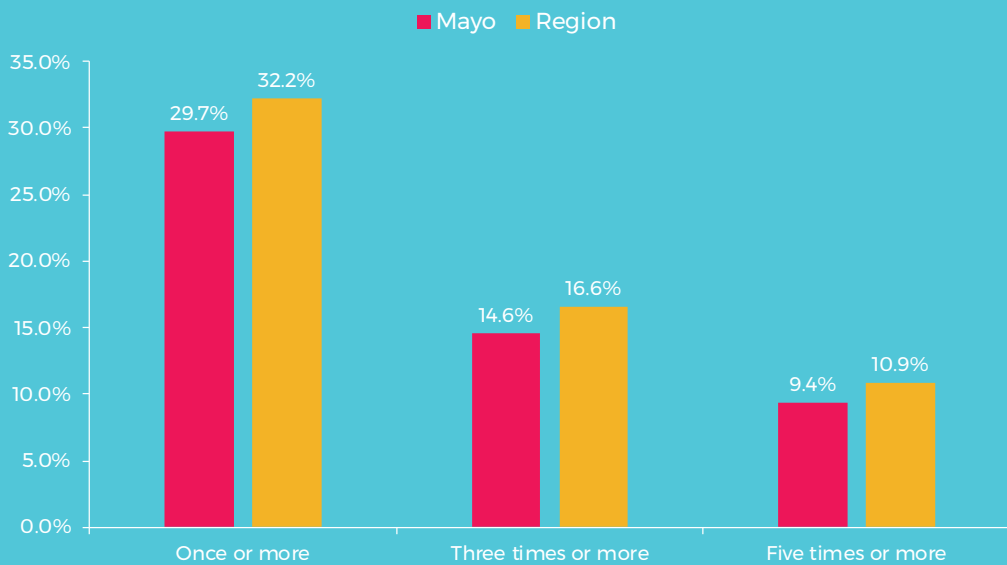


### Pupils who said the following described their mood sometimes or often in the previous week

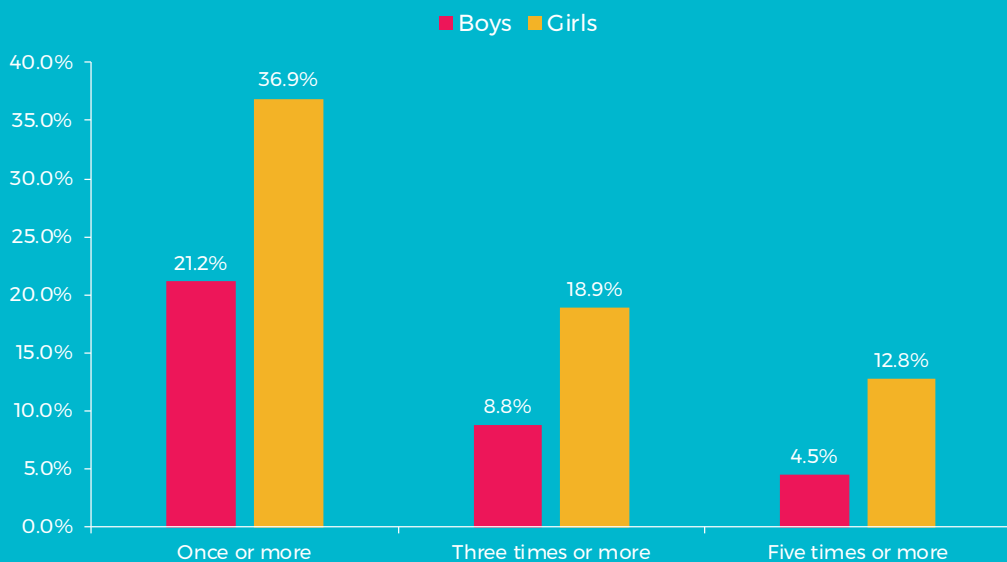




### Pupils who said they have self harmed



### Pupils who said they have self harmed

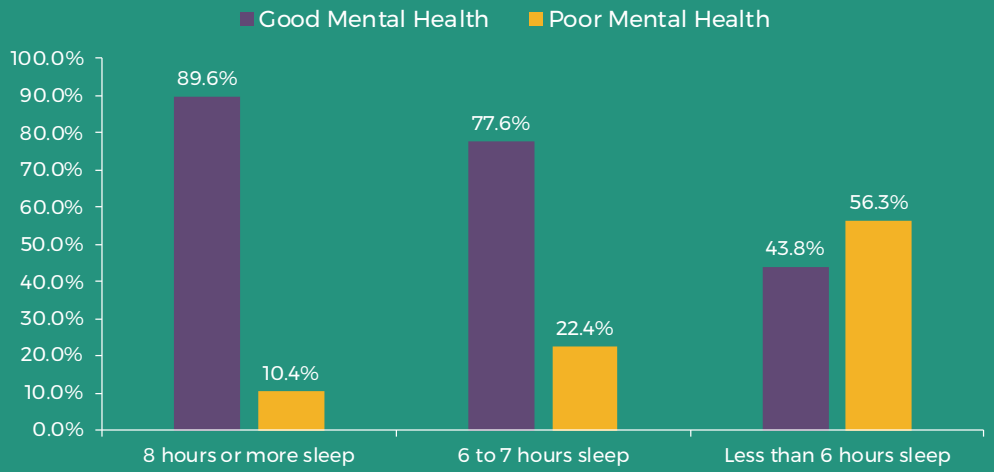




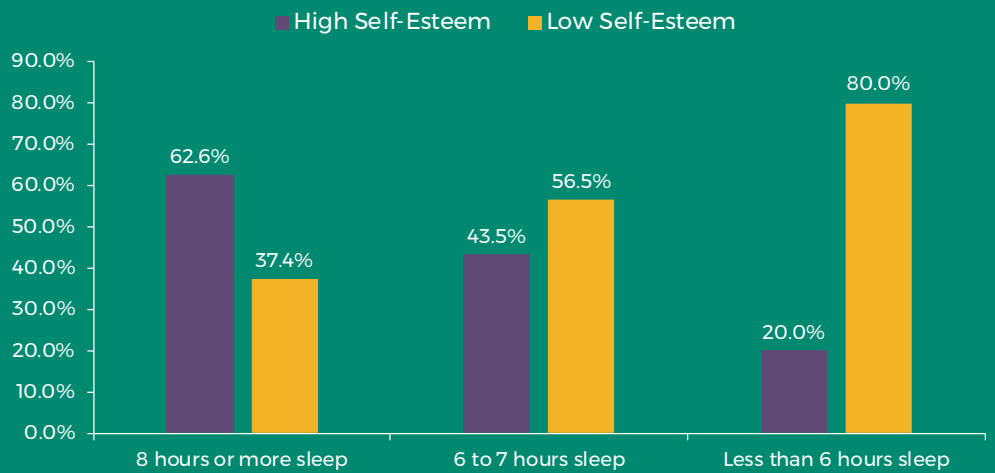
# Cross Tabulations



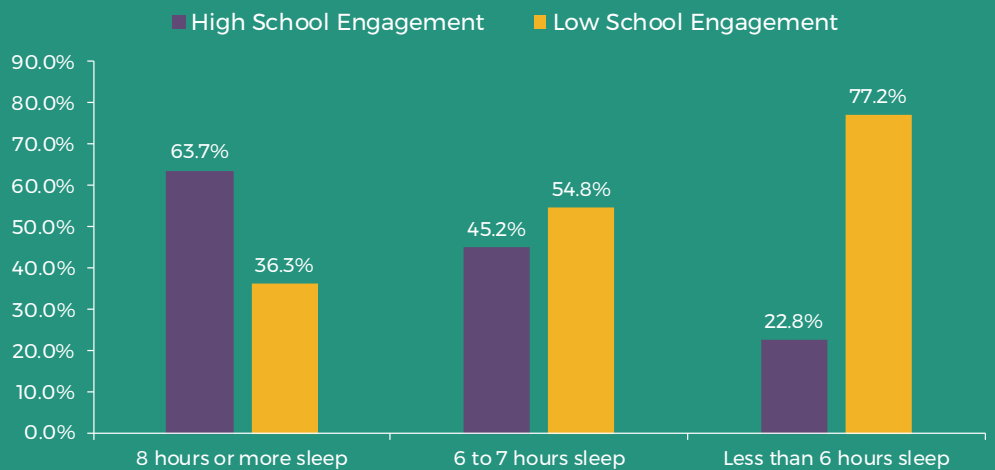
## Sleep against mental health



## Sleep against self esteem



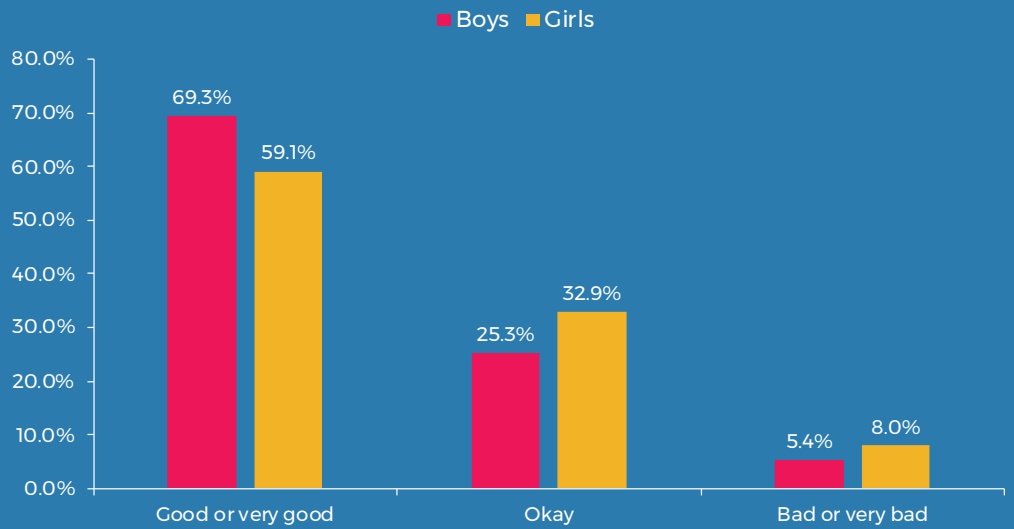
## Sleep against school engagement



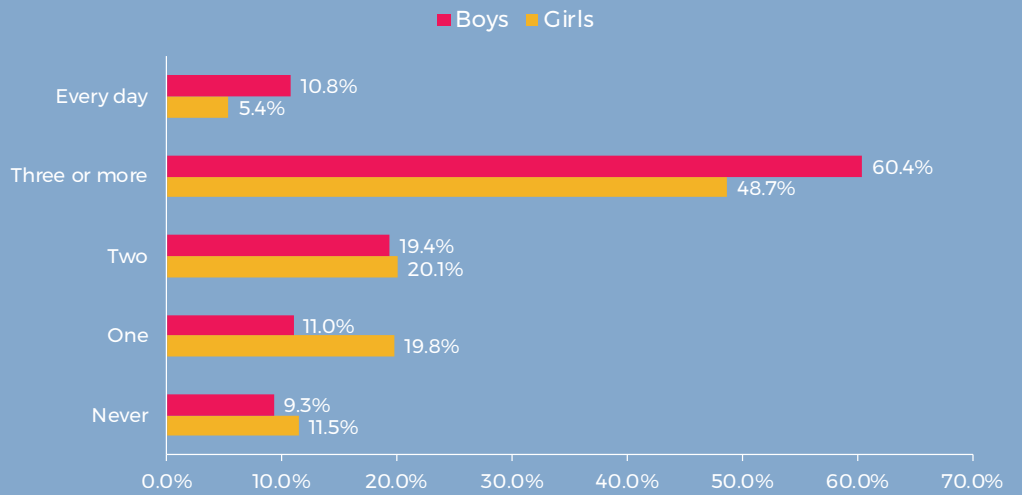
# Leisure Time



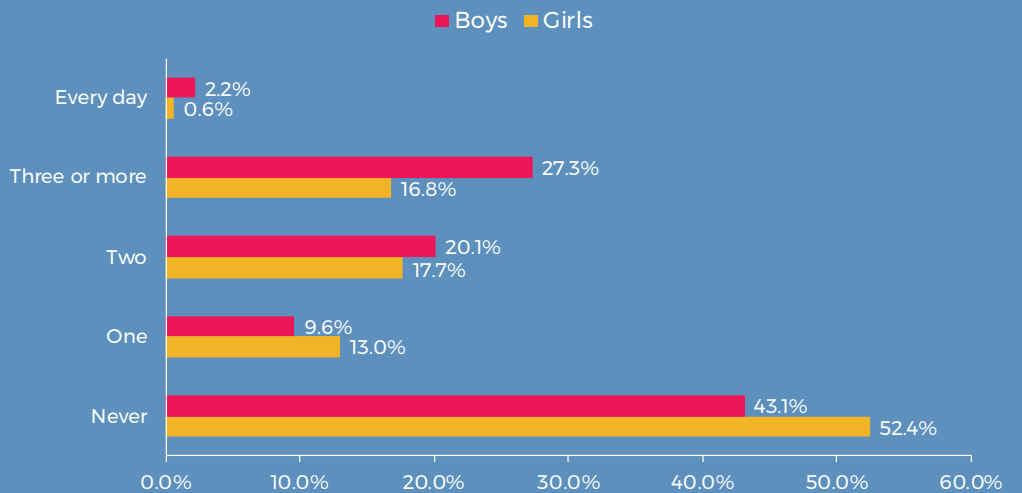
## How pupils rate their physical health



## Days in the last week that pupils had 60 mins of physical activity



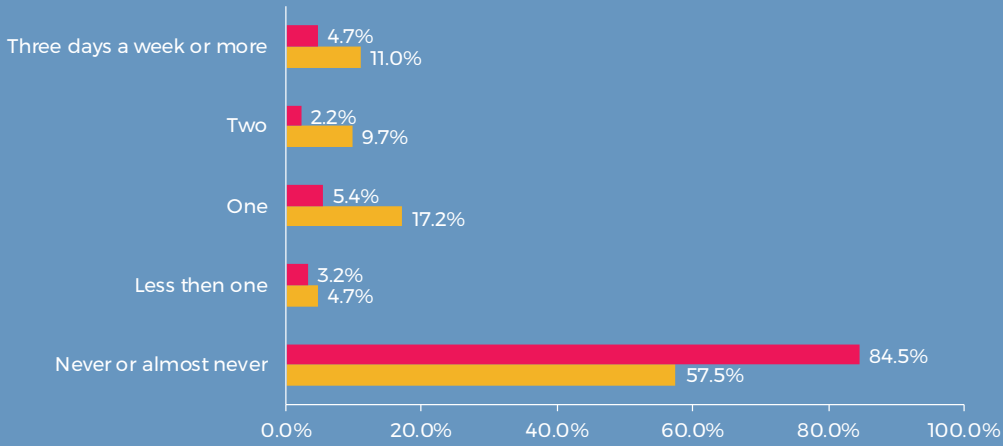
## Days in the week that pupils participate in sports outside school with a club or team





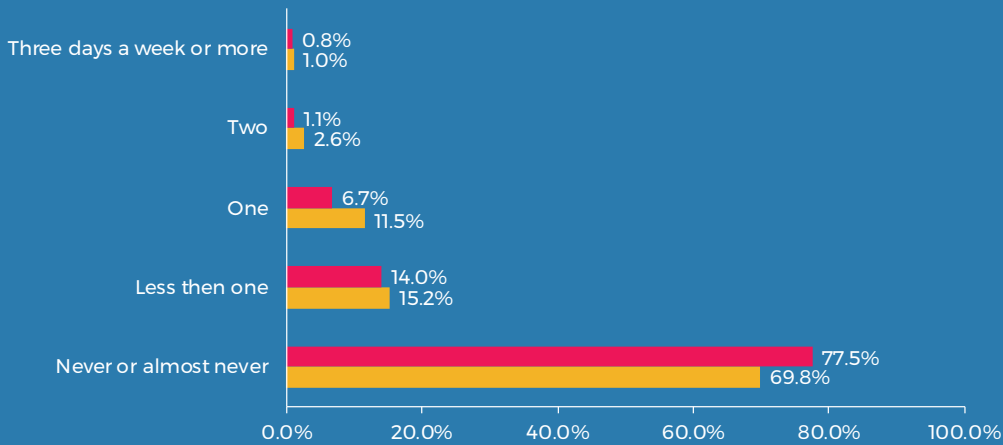
**Days in the week that pupils participate in music, art, drama or dance**

■ Boys ■ Girls



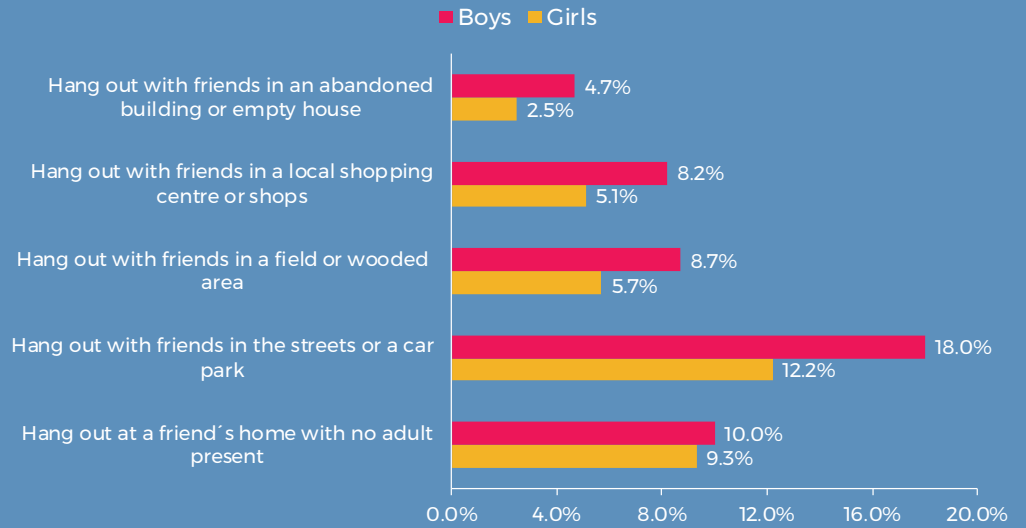
**Days in the week that pupils participate in volunteering in the community**

■ Boys ■ Girls

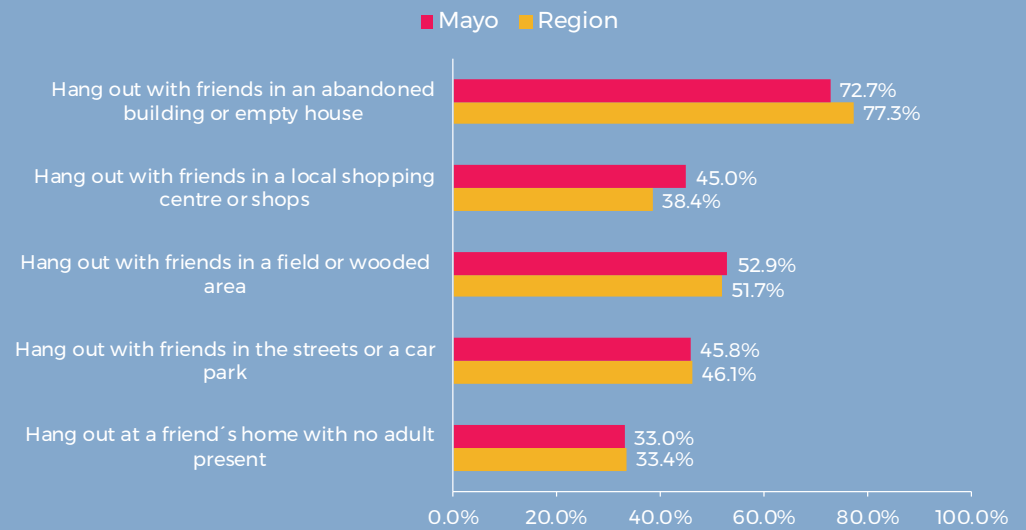




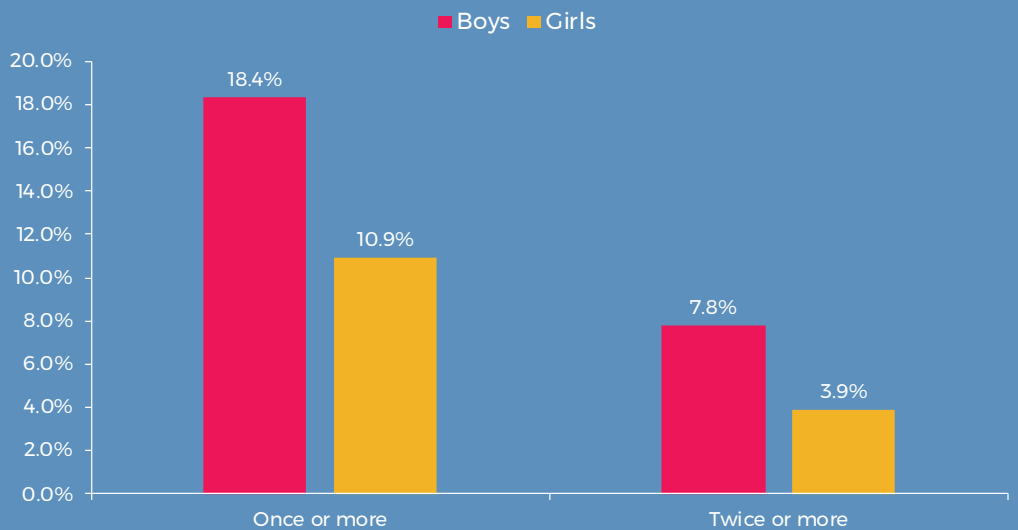
### Pupils who do the following once a week or more



### Pupils who never or almost never do the following

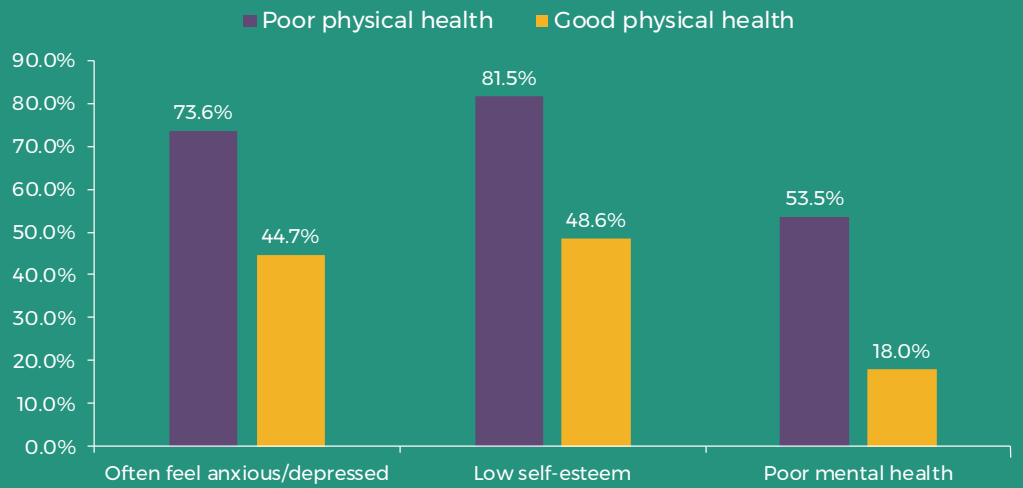


### Pupils who were outside after midnight in the last week

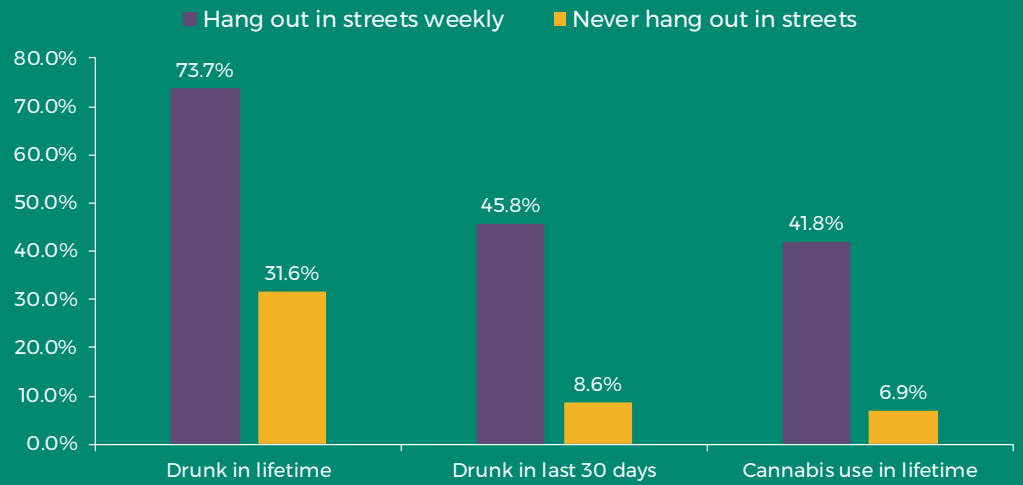


# Cross Tabulations

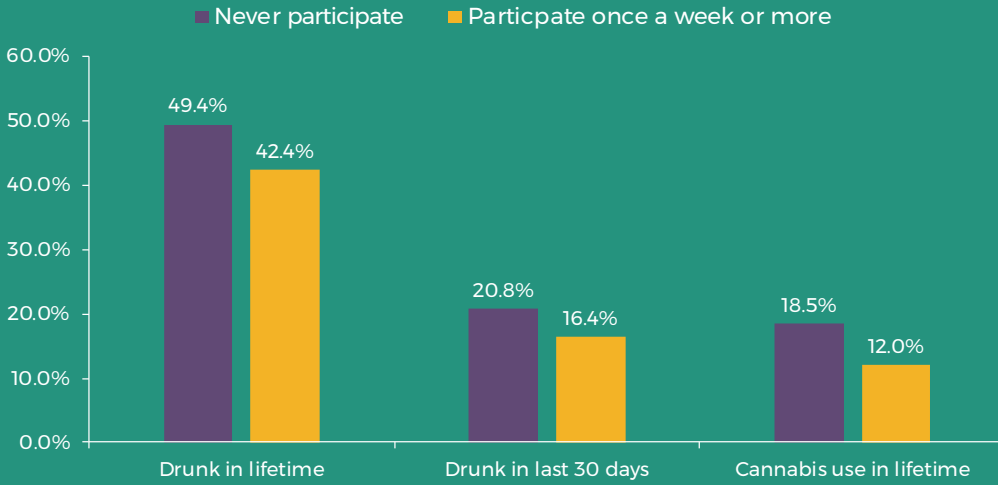
## Physical health against anxiety/depression, self-esteem and mental health



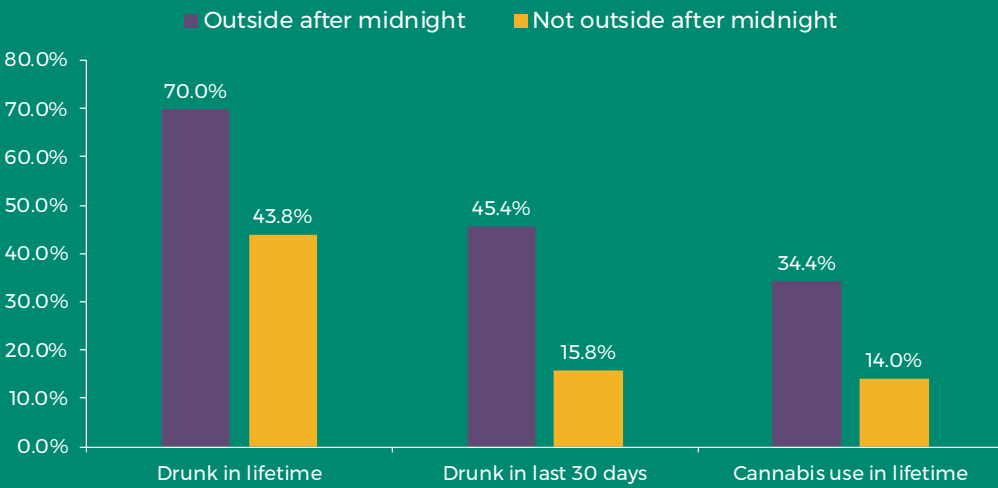
## Substance use against hanging out in streets or car park weekly



**Substance use against participating in music, art, drama or dance**

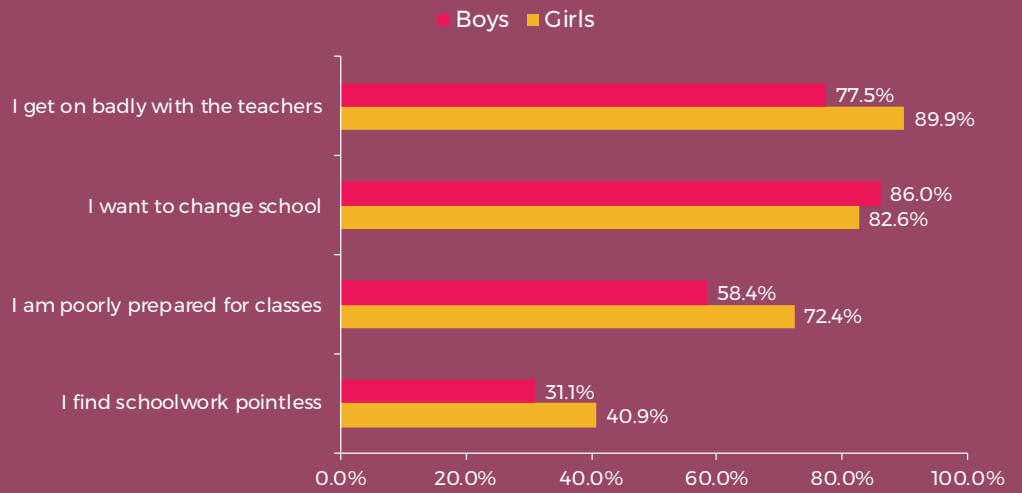


**Substance use against being outside after midnight once or more in the last week**

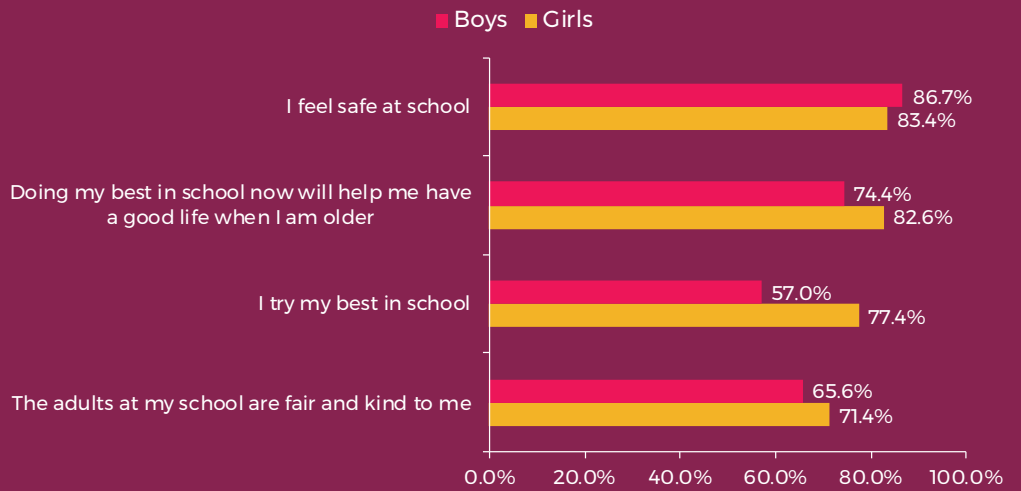


# School Experience

## Pupils who say that the following applies rarely or almost never to them



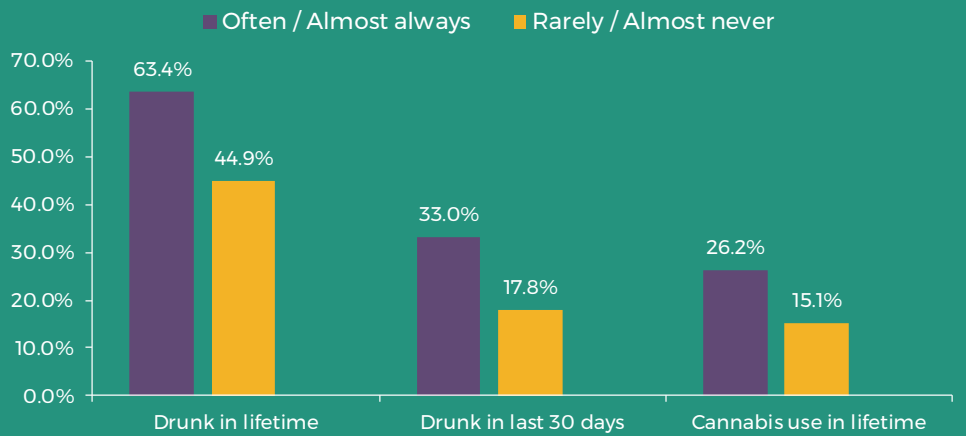
## Pupils who say that the following applies often or almost always to them



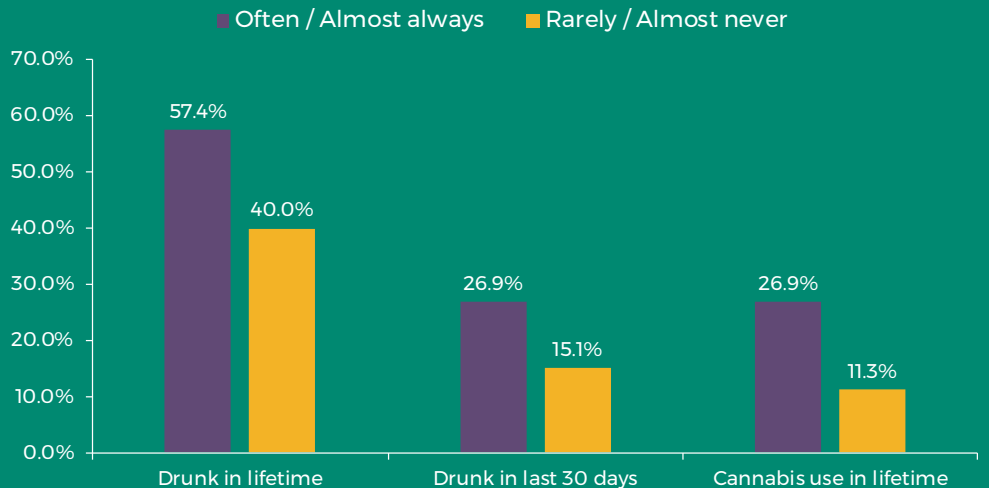


# Cross Tabulations

**Substance use against attitude toward school: I want to change school**



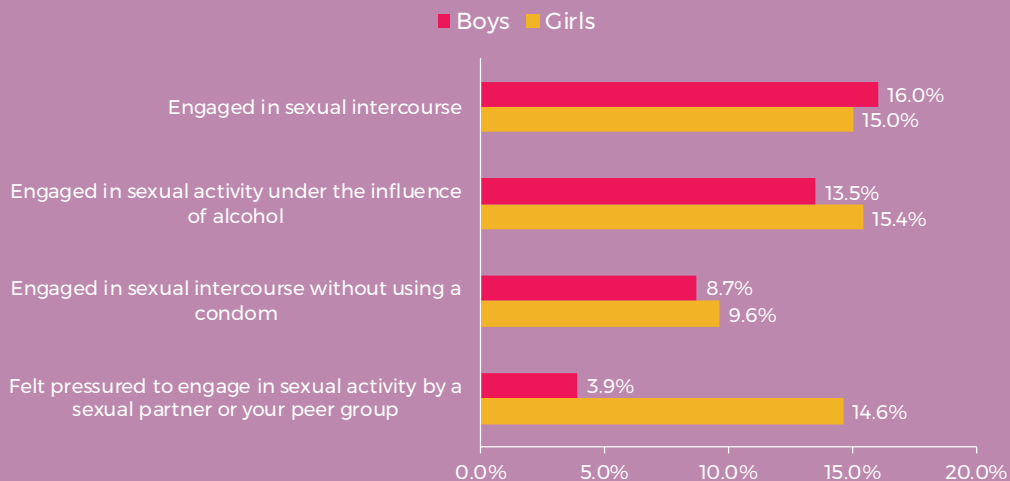
**Substance use against attitude toward school: I find schoolwork pointless**



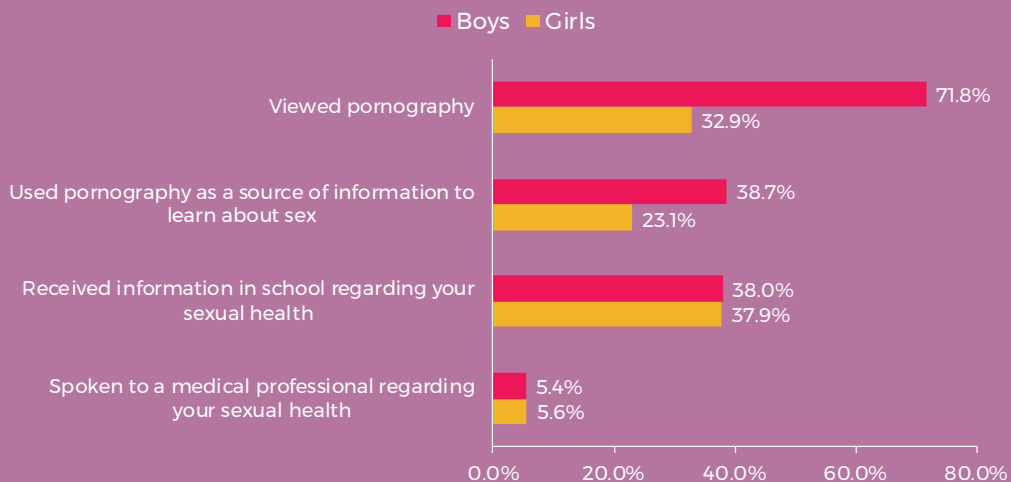


# Sexual Health & Behaviour

**Pupils reporting the following once or more in the last 12 months**



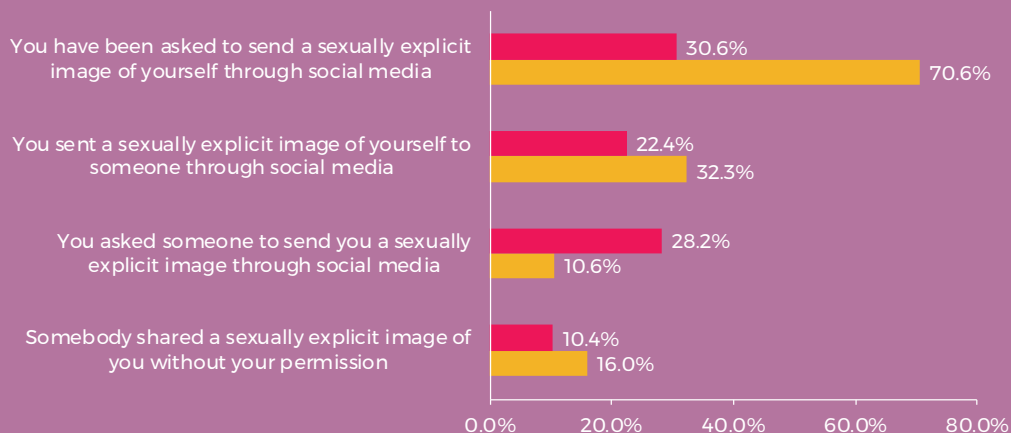
**Pupils reporting the following once or more in the last 12 months**





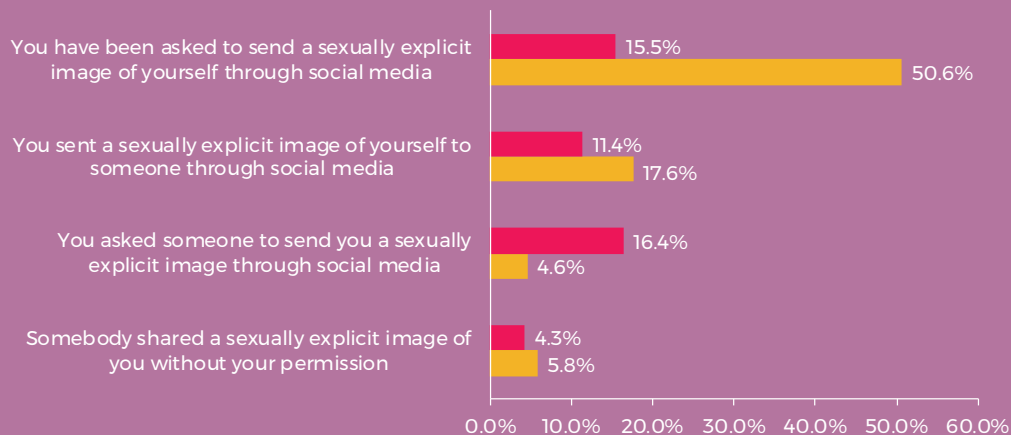
### Pupils reporting the following once or more in their lifetime

■ Boys ■ Girls



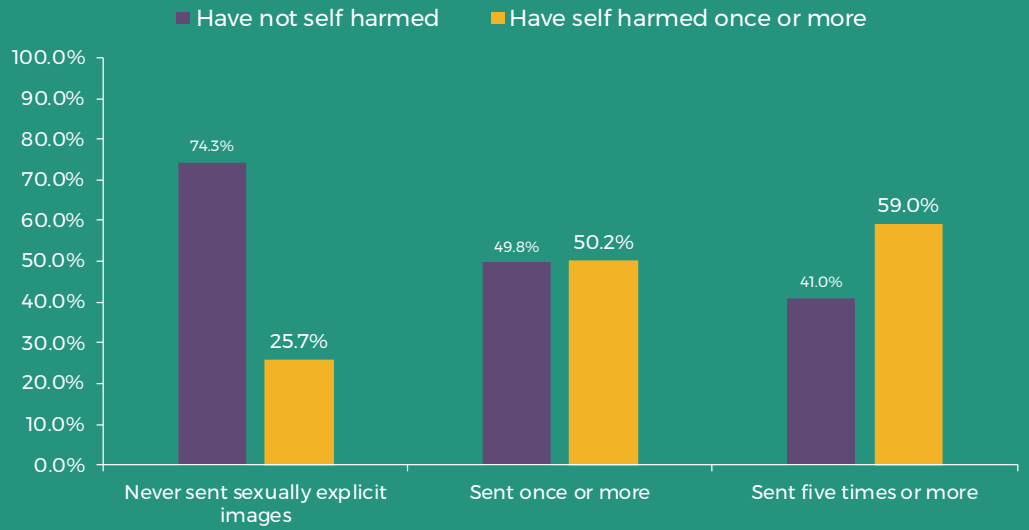
### Pupils reporting the following three times or more in their lifetime

■ Boys ■ Girls

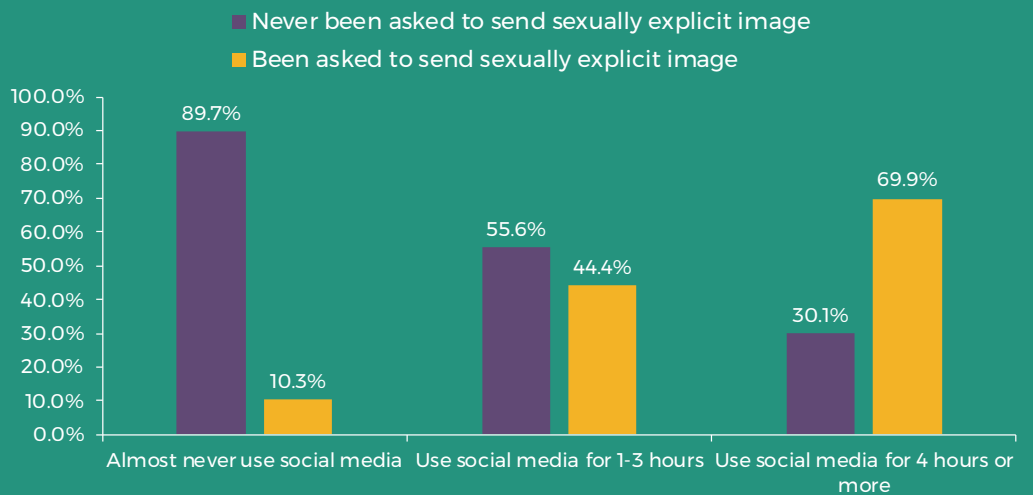


# Cross Tabulations

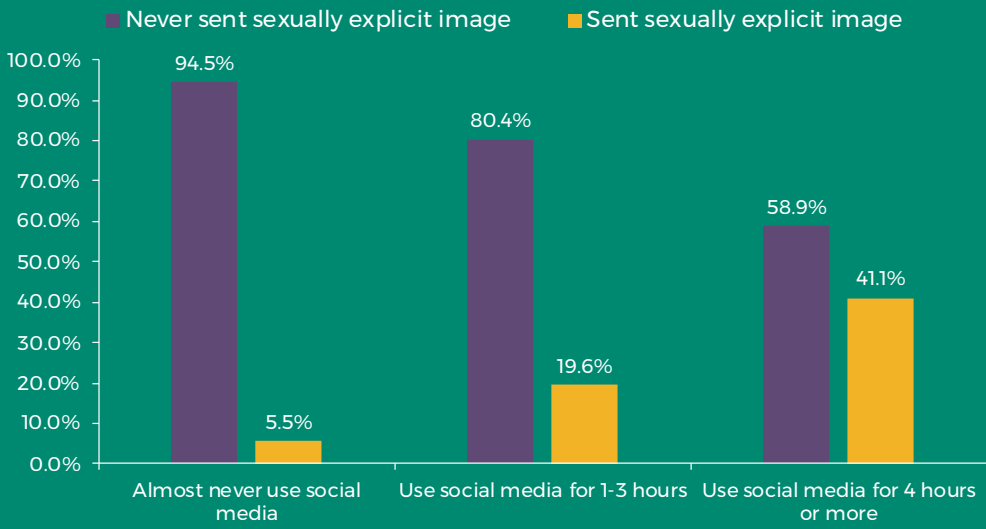
## Self-harm against sending sexually explicit images



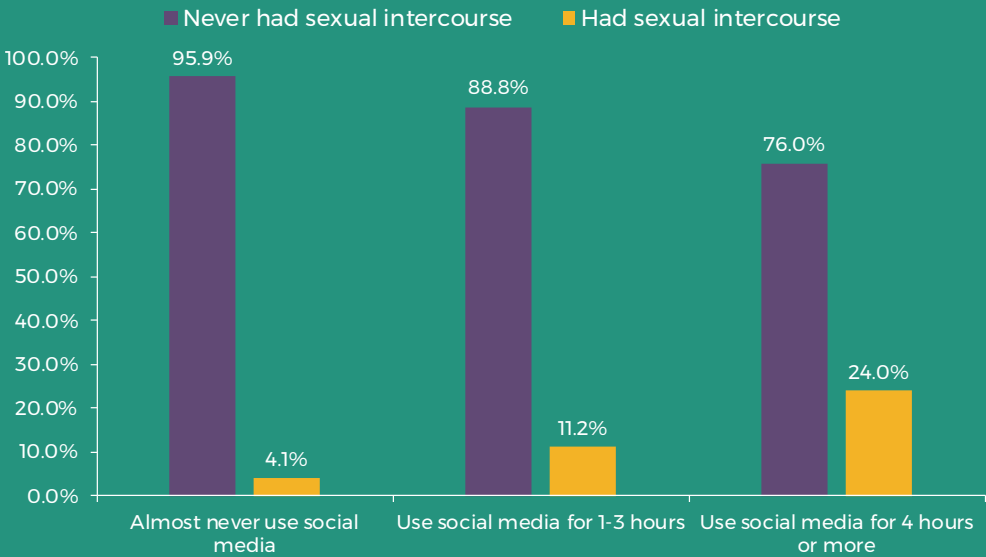
## Time on social media against have been asked to send sexually explicit image



### Time on social media against sent sexually explicit image



### Time on social media against had sexual intercourse





## 5

# CONCLUSION

This 2020 survey was conducted during the COVID19 pandemic and it gives a unique insight into the lives of our young people during this period. It is clear the pandemic is having a measurable and significant effect on issues like mood, mental health, screen use, sleep, physical activity and substance use rates.

A lot of these issues are closely intertwined and take a bit of unravelling. We can see in the data the close relationships between lack of sleep, poor mental health and school engagement. Lack of sleep is exacerbated by excessive screen use and excessive screen use leads to other problems. Similar links and risk factors apply to free-time, parental monitoring and substance use.

The Planet Youth primary prevention model provides us with the opportunity to help address some of these issues by developing data-informed interventions, that work by influencing and improving the risk factors in the lives of our young people. The model specifies that interventions are applied in the four domains of Parents and Family, Peer Group, Leisure Time and School.

## Parents and Family

A key protective factor for primary prevention is a sense of parent and family connectedness. The survey illustrates that the majority of our young people have good relationships with their parents and carers and report being happy and safe in their homes and communities. Other parent and family factors scored very well also, and we have high levels of parental support and monitoring. Where parental support and monitoring is lower, we can see that young people are more likely to be using alcohol and other drugs and are at risk for other issues also.

## Peer group

Our young people report very positive findings around friendships and peer support, particularly having friends that care about them in their schools. Young people are heavily influenced by their friends and their immediate peer group and so it is important that they have accurate information about what other young people their age are doing. It is evident in the data that teenagers are far more likely to use substances, and adopt other risky behaviours, if that is what their friends are doing and also if it is what they perceive their friend are doing. There are opportunities to influence these factors with young people directly and for the young people to develop interventions themselves that address these social norms.

## Leisure Time

This is an area affected very negatively by the pandemic due the large scale curtailment of sporting and social activities. It is important that young people have access to sports and hobbies that interest and engage them. We see in the data that young people with unstructured leisure time, hanging out in the streets for example, are at very high risk for substance use. Access to regular structured extracurricular activities is important for this but for many other reasons also. Having good physical health as well as good mental health enables our young people to deal with the challenges of adolescence and prepares them for adult life. The correlation in the data between physical and mental health is very strong and further underlines the importance of providing young people opportunities to keep involved in structured activities.

## School

Most of our young people report being happy and safe in their schools, getting on with their teachers, and school engagement is high. Where we see young people that are not reporting this, such as those that find school pointless, this can be a risk factor for substance use. Our schools in the region are receiving their own individual Planet Youth reports that give a more thorough insight into the school experience of their student population. This will help them inform the work that is done in wellbeing programmes within the curriculum.

Many of the identified issues were apparent in the findings of the previous Planet Youth survey but the pandemic has amplified them and brought them increasingly to the fore. Never before has the need to invest in the wellbeing of our young people been more apparent or more important.

The Planet Youth primary prevention methodology, with its focus on partnership, collaboration and community involvement provides a platform to inform this work.

Additionally, secondary use of the Planet Youth dataset should be promoted within agencies and organisations in the region to inform and guide their work practices.

## 6

## KEY MESSAGES

### Substance Use

- The most common place for teenagers to get drunk is at a friend's house, enabled by a parent or a carer. Those in parental roles can make a huge difference to the long-term health and wellbeing of our children by agreeing not to supply alcohol to teenagers in our homes.
- Teenagers whose parents are less disapproving of drunkenness are more than twice as likely to get drunk.

### Family Time

- Parental caring and warmth is a protective factor for mental health. Those with high levels of parental warmth are five times more likely to report positive mental health.

### Screen Time

- Four hours or more of daily social media use creates significant risk for problems associated with sleep, mood and self-esteem.

### Wellbeing Indicators

- Teenagers getting 7 hours or less sleep are reporting poorer mental health, self-esteem and school engagement.
- Undisturbed sleep is important for development and between 8 and 10 hours is recommended. Limiting social media and screen use and keeping screens out of bedrooms at night will really help.

### Leisure Time

- Teenagers that report hanging out in the streets regularly are 6 times more likely to use cannabis. It's important that teens have access to organised sports and other constructive leisure time activities to reduce their substance use.

### Sexual Health and Behaviour

- Nearly a third of our teenagers use pornography as a way to learn about sex. Pornography use is also associated with unsafe sexual health practices and can create misleading expectations about sexual relationships.



## 7

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## Parents and Family



- 1 Implement the key messages of the Planet Youth Guidelines for Parents Booklet.
- 2 As a parent, increase the amount of quality time you spend with your children each week.
- 3 Understand the direct relationship between parental alcohol and drug use as a risk factor to teenage substance use.
- 4 Use classroom contracts to agree on common goals and boundaries for young people.

## Peer Group



- 1 Use the Planet Youth survey results to design and develop workshops that promote and enhance resilience in young people.
- 2 Use the Planet Youth survey results to inform educational programmes, such as SPHE, that focus on peer support.
- 3 Use the Planet Youth survey results to challenge the social norms related to substance use amongst teenagers and their peers.

## Leisure Time



- 1 Increase opportunities for structured leisure time activities and make accessible to all young people.
- 2 Increase the number and variety of structured leisure time activities available to reflect a wide range of young people's interests.
- 3 Secure long-term state investment to develop a Leisurecard scheme.
- 4 Increase availability of area-based youth clubs for all ages.

## School



- 1 **Primary Schools:** Introduce classroom-based contracts for children, agreed by parents, based on the wellbeing indicators in the Planet Youth survey.
- 2 **Post-Primary Schools:** Conduct first-year parent meetings in schools that promote the implementation of the key messages in the Planet Youth Guidelines for Parents Booklet.
- 3 **Post-Primary Schools:** Utilise the new [TheFacts.PlanetYouth.ie](http://TheFacts.PlanetYouth.ie) website in supporting SPHE and Wellbeing curriculum delivery.

## 8

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the members of the Planet Youth Mayo Steering Committee for their help with the new report and their support in bringing Planet Youth Mayo to where it is today.

The WRDATF would like to acknowledge co-funders in this project; Mayo County Council, Tusla, CYPSC and the HSE.

A huge thank you goes to the staff who acted as survey coordinators in the schools and centres. The survey was a big undertaking, and particularly so with the COVID19 restrictions in place. The survey could not have happened without you.

Thanks go to the support services who kindly offered additional care to participants if required, namely Childline, Pieta House, Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Mindspace Mayo.

Thanks to Dr. Bernadine Brady and Dr. Charlotte Silke, UNESCO Child and Family Centre, NUI Galway for professional guidance and additional data analysis.

A special acknowledgement to Dr. Diarmuid O'Donovan and HSE Public Health for assistance with the application to the Ethical Review Committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

Finally, a big thank you to all the principals and the 26 post primary schools and 3 Youthreach Centres in facilitating the survey. Without your support Planet Youth Mayo would not be possible.



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