



Wellbeing Barometer 2023

Based on results as of 15 April 2023



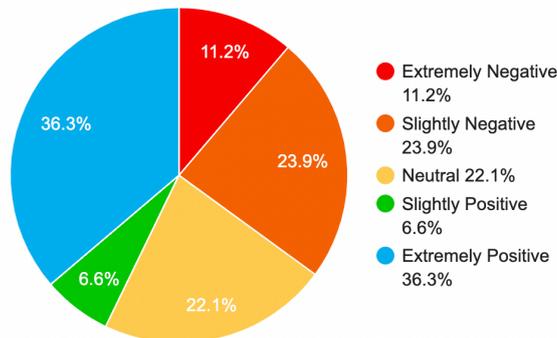
Introduction

SchoolTV recently conducted a survey of 1,099 parents with children aged between 13-18 years of age (secondary school) to gain insight into the state of their children's mental health in the last 12 months. The results are concerning and suggest that mental health issues are prevalent among this age group.

Key Findings

Wellbeing Barometer 2023: Secondary Survey

Average of 1099 submissions



Category Descriptions

- Extremely Negative**
The child's wellbeing is poor.
- Slightly Negative**
The child's wellbeing is fair.
- Neutral**
The child's wellbeing is good.
- Slightly Positive**
The child's wellbeing is very good.
- Extremely Positive**
The child's wellbeing is excellent.

Relationships:

The survey found that 28.2% of parents reported a negative change in their relationship with their child, with 6.3% reporting an extreme negative change. This is especially concerning for adolescents because this age group is already going through significant physical, emotional, and social changes.

A healthy parent-child relationship is crucial for adolescents to navigate these changes successfully and develop a strong sense of identity, self-esteem, and emotional stability. Negative changes in the parent-child relationship can exacerbate the stress and challenges adolescents face, potentially leading to mental health issues, risky behaviour, and difficulties in establishing healthy relationships with peers.

A strained parent-child relationship may also hinder effective communication and support, making it harder for parents to identify and address their adolescent's mental health needs. Thus, it is vital for parents to be proactive in maintaining open lines of communication, understanding, and support with their adolescent children to foster positive wellbeing and development.

Communication:

Regarding communication, 52.3% of parents reported that their child sometimes or frequently engages them in conversations about their concerns or worries. However, 10.7% of parents reported that their child constantly engages them in such conversations. This is a concern for adolescents because it indicates that a significant number of them may be experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety, or other emotional challenges.

Adolescence is a critical period marked by various changes and increased pressure from academic, social, and personal expectations. Regular conversations about concerns or worries may suggest that these adolescents are struggling to cope with these pressures and may be at risk of developing mental health issues.

In addition, constant engagement in such conversations may be a sign of more severe emotional distress, which could have long-lasting impacts on their overall wellbeing and development. It is essential for parents and caregivers to pay close attention to these conversations, provide support and guidance, and seek professional help if necessary, to help adolescents manage their concerns and build resilience.

Stress and Anxiety:

The survey found that stress and anxiety are common among secondary school children, with 26.4% of parents reporting that their child frequently experiences high levels of stress or anxiety. Additionally, 11.1% of parents reported that their child constantly experiences stress or anxiety. This is a concern for adolescents as it demonstrates that a significant number of them may be struggling with the demands and pressures of this critical developmental stage.

High levels of stress and anxiety can lead to a range of mental and physical health problems, including depression, sleep disturbances, and poor academic performance. Furthermore, prolonged exposure to stress can have long-lasting impacts on an adolescent's emotional wellbeing, social development, and overall quality of life.

This highlights the need for parents, educators, and communities to collaborate in providing a supportive environment for adolescents, including access to mental health services and coping strategies, to address these concerns effectively and promote resilience and emotional wellbeing.

Depression:

The survey also showed that depression is a concern for some parents, with 12.1% reporting that their child frequently feels sad or depressed for extended periods of time, and 6.5% reporting that their child constantly feels sad or depressed. This is a concern for adolescents, as it indicates a significant number of them may be struggling with mental health challenges.

Depression in adolescents can have serious consequences, affecting their social, emotional, and academic development, and can lead to more severe mental health issues if left unaddressed. Additionally, depression during this critical developmental stage can hinder the formation of healthy relationships, self-esteem, and the ability to cope with life's challenges.

It is crucial for parents, educators, and mental health professionals to remain vigilant, closely monitor adolescents' moods, and provide appropriate support and early intervention. By addressing these issues proactively, adolescents can receive the help they need to overcome emotional challenges and promote overall wellbeing and future success.

Self-Harm:

Alarming statistics also revealed that 13.1% of parents reported that their child sometimes engages in self-harming behaviours. This is a major concern for adolescents, as it signifies that a significant proportion of young people are experiencing considerable emotional distress or psychological pain.

Self-harm is often a maladaptive coping mechanism used to manage overwhelming emotions or as a means of exerting control when an individual feels powerless. This behaviour not only puts the adolescent's physical health and safety at risk but also signals underlying mental health issues that need to be addressed. Additionally, self-harming behaviours can lead to a cycle of shame, isolation, and further emotional suffering, potentially exacerbating the problem and hindering an adolescent's overall wellbeing and development.

It is essential for parents, educators, and mental health professionals to be aware of such behaviours, provide appropriate support, and intervene early to help adolescents overcome their emotional challenges and promote better mental health outcomes.

Help Seeking:

Only 19.8% of parents reported that their child is currently in treatment or has ceased treatment with a mental health professional, indicating that many children who may require help may not be receiving it. This is a concern for adolescents, as it suggests that a large number of young people who may require help for their mental health issues may not be receiving the necessary support.

Lack of treatment can lead to the exacerbation of existing problems, making it more challenging to address these issues effectively in the long run. Untreated mental health issues in adolescents can have a significant impact on their academic performance, social relationships, and overall wellbeing, potentially affecting their future prospects and quality of life.

This highlights the need for increased awareness among parents, educators, and healthcare providers about the importance of early intervention, as well as the need to reduce barriers to accessing mental health services, such as stigma or limited resources, to ensure that all adolescents receive the help they need for optimal mental health outcomes.

Academic Performance:

Regarding academic performance, 23.3% of parents reported a slight decline, with 5.2% reporting an extreme decline in their child's performance. However, 2.8% of parents reported an extreme improvement in their child's academic performance. This is a concern for adolescents, as poor academic performance can have far-reaching consequences on their overall wellbeing and future opportunities.

A decline in academic performance might be indicative of underlying issues, such as mental health challenges, learning difficulties, or other stressors, which can negatively affect a young person's self-esteem, motivation, and engagement in school. Moreover, this decline can limit their prospects for higher education and career advancement. The fact that only 2.8% of parents reported an extreme improvement in their child's academic performance suggests that interventions and support systems may not be adequately addressing the needs of many struggling adolescents.

This highlights the importance of parents, educators and communities working collaboratively to identify and address the root causes of academic difficulties, provide targeted support, and create a nurturing environment conducive to learning and personal growth for all adolescents.

Motivation to Study:

The survey revealed that the motivation to study has decreased for some children, with 21.0% of parents reporting a slight decrease and 8.9% reporting an extreme decrease. This is a concern for adolescents, as motivation plays a crucial role in academic success, personal growth, and overall wellbeing.

A decline in motivation can hinder learning, negatively impact academic performance, and reduce engagement in school and extracurricular activities. This decrease might be indicative of underlying issues, such as stress, anxiety, depression, or social pressures, which can exacerbate mental health challenges and affect adolescents' quality of life.

It is essential for parents, educators, and communities to collaborate in identifying the factors contributing to this decline in motivation, providing the necessary support, and implementing strategies that promote a positive and encouraging environment. By addressing these concerns, adolescents can regain their enthusiasm for learning, improve their academic outcomes, and develop resilience and coping skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Extracurricular Activities:

In terms of participation in extracurricular activities, 19.5% of parents reported a slight decline, with 9.0% reporting an extreme decline. However, 4.7% of parents reported an extreme improvement. This is a concern for adolescents because these activities provide valuable opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and social engagement. Extracurricular activities foster a sense of belonging, enhance self-esteem, and contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals.

A decline in participation may indicate that adolescents are facing challenges in managing their time, coping with stress, or balancing their academic responsibilities. Additionally, reduced participation could signify a lack of interest or motivation, which could be linked to underlying mental health issues, social pressures, or difficulties in adapting to new environments.

It is crucial for parents, educators, and communities to understand the reasons behind this decline and support adolescents in finding activities that align with their interests and passions, as this can positively impact their overall wellbeing, social integration, and academic success.

Future Concerns:

The survey findings indicating that 37.3% of parents reported their child as slightly concerned about their future studies or career aspirations, and 9.0% reported their child expressing a desire to withdraw from school before completing Year 12, are concerning for adolescents.

These results may reflect heightened uncertainty, fear, and anxiety among young people about their future prospects, which can negatively impact their mental health, self-esteem, and motivation. It is essential to address these concerns as early school leaving and uncertainty about the future can lead to long-term consequences, such as limited employment opportunities, reduced earning potential, and a higher risk of social and economic marginalisation.

Addressing these concerns requires parents, educators, and policymakers to provide adequate resources, guidance, and support to help adolescents make informed decisions about their education and career paths, fostering resilience and self-confidence in the face of uncertainties and challenges that they may encounter.

Routine Psychological Screening:

The majority of parents (74.1%) believe that routine psychological screening should be conducted on all students. This highlights a growing awareness of mental health issues and the potential need for proactive interventions among young people. This belief may stem from the increasing prevalence of mental health problems among adolescents, such as anxiety, depression, and self-harming behaviours.

The concern is that without proper screening and early identification of issues, students may struggle academically, socially, and emotionally, ultimately impacting their long-term wellbeing and success.

Furthermore, this statistic underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between parents, educators, and mental health professionals to develop and implement appropriate mental health screening tools and support systems that can identify and address adolescents' needs effectively, ensuring their overall wellbeing and a healthy transition into adulthood.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey data suggests that the mental health of secondary school children is a significant concern for many parents. It is important for parents, schools, and healthcare providers to work together to identify and address any mental health issues that children may be experiencing. This may involve providing resources and support to children and their families, as well as implementing preventative measures to promote positive mental health outcomes.

Suggestions for School Communities

Based on the findings of the Wellbeing Barometer Report 2023, the following suggestions can be made for secondary schools and parent communities to help build better mental health and wellbeing for their children:

1

Strengthen parent-child relationships:

Schools can host workshops and provide resources for parents to improve their communication skills, empathy, and understanding of adolescent development. These tools will enable parents to better support their children and foster a positive relationship, which is essential for the wellbeing of adolescents.

2

Promote Open Communication:

Encourage open communication between students, parents, and teachers. Schools can organise regular meetings or parent-teacher conferences to discuss students' concerns, academic progress, and social-emotional wellbeing.

3

Develop Stress and Anxiety Management Programs:

Implement school-wide programs that teach students effective stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, relaxation exercises, and time management skills. Additionally, schools can provide access to counsellors or mental health professionals for students experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety.

4

Mental Health Awareness and Early Intervention:

Schools should provide mental health education to both students and parents, to raise awareness about the signs, symptoms, and resources available for support. Establishing early intervention programs can help identify and address mental health issues before they escalate.

5

Encourage Help-Seeking Behaviour:

Create a supportive school environment that encourages students to seek help from teachers, counsellors, or mental health professionals when needed. Schools should also work to de-stigmatise mental health issues and provide information about available resources.

6

Foster Academic Success:

Schools can offer academic support services, such as tutoring, study groups, or learning accommodations, to help students overcome academic challenges and improve their performance.

7

Enhance Motivation:

Implement strategies to help students discover their passions, set realistic goals, and celebrate their achievements, both academically and personally. Teachers can use various instructional methods to engage and motivate students in the learning process.

8

Support Extracurricular Activities:

Encourage participation in a variety of extracurricular activities that cater to students' interests and abilities. Extracurricular programs can enhance students' social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

9

Career Guidance and Planning:

Provide comprehensive career counselling and guidance to help students make informed decisions about their future studies and career paths. Schools can organise workshops, career fairs, and mentorship programs to expose students to various career opportunities and help them develop skills for future success.

10

Implement Routine Psychological Screening:

Work with mental health professionals to develop and implement routine psychological screenings for all students. Early identification of mental health concerns will enable schools to provide targeted support and interventions, promoting better mental health outcomes for students.

By working together, secondary schools and parent communities can create an environment that supports the mental health and wellbeing of their children, paving the way for a healthy, successful future.