



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



Youth Work Ireland
Galway

Galway County
Comhairle na nÓg
Young Voices. Local Issues.

Understanding the Mental Wellbeing of Young People in Galway

November 2020

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BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

Background

Galway County Comhairle na nÓg is a Youth Council for Young people 12-17 years living or in education in Galway County. Our 2020 topic is Mental Health. As part of our topic we have created this survey to discover more about the supports provided to young people in Galway and how these could be improved.

Summary

Second Level students from across Galway took part in this study, whose ages ranged from 12-19.

280 young people took part in this study.

This survey aimed to help understand the mental wellbeing of second level students within Galway.

The results of this survey will be used to see how support for young people in Galway could be improved.

There was a warning placed at the beginning of this survey as it contained a potentially triggering subject. A list of support services were also provided.

METHOD

Survey Methodology

The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of the mental wellbeing of young people in County Galway.

We created and published a survey using SurveyMonkey, which consisted of fourteen questions and which we published in both English and Irish.

We shared the survey on our Comhairle na nÓg social media accounts and sent it to schools in Galway.

This survey was released on October 24th, 2020 and closed on the 16th November, 2020

There was a sample size of 280 second level students from Galway.

The participants were not offered anything for their participation in the survey.

Participants were asked to answer questions regarding their wellbeing, and supports available to young people in Galway.

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Key Results of the Survey

- 59% of the young people surveyed believed there is still a stigma surrounding mental health.
- Young people showed a good awareness of how to support their friends.
- 53% of the young people were unaware of youth support services in their local area.
- Some schools have high level of mental health education, mostly taught through wellbeing classes.
- It was mentioned by certain students that there was no Mental Health education in their school.
- Young people provided great recommendations for how they would like to see Mental Health education in their schools.
- 60% of young people had either good, very good or excellent mental wellbeing.
- 19% reported that their mental wellbeing was poor.

Conclusions drawn from the results of the survey

- Young people consider there still to be a stigma around Mental Health.
- Positive messages shared on social media positively impact young people's mental wellbeing.
- Young people felt expressed inconsistencies regarding Mental Health education in Galway, with some having brilliant support and education in place, while other schools have none.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

- More work needs to be done on reducing the stigma surrounding Mental Health and Wellbeing among young people, starting with improved Mental Health education and awareness in schools incorporating Senior Cycle as well as Junior Cycle.
- Implementation of regular Wellbeing classes in the school curriculum.
- Improved Mental Health supports available to students within school, such as increased availability of a school counsellor, chaplain and/or guidance counsellor.
- Community Mental Health Campaign, taking on a multidisciplinary approach to increase young people's awareness of the various Youth Mental Health Services available to them across County Galway, thereby improving their pathways to support.

APPENDIX A

The following are the survey questions that were released.

1. Age, Location (Galway County/City), Gender

Age

Location

Gender

2. Overall, how would you rate your mental wellbeing?

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Other (please specify)

3. Do you think there is still a stigma (a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that society or a group of people have about something) around mental health?

Yes

No

Unsure

4. What would you do if a friend needed support around their mental health?

5. Are you aware of youth supports available to you in your local area if needed?

Yes

No

6. Which of the following youth services are you aware of?

Jigsaw Galway

Reachout.com

Youth Work Ireland, Youth Counselling Service

SpunOut.ie

None of the Above

Other (please specify)

7. Would you consider mental health supports in Galway to be open to everyone or only those in the greatest need?

Everyone

Only Those in the Greatest Need

8. Which Social Media platform(s) would you use most often?

Snapchat

TikTok

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter

Other (please specify)

9. What effect do positive messages shared on social media have on your mental wellbeing?

Positive Effect

No Effect

Negative Effect

Unsure

10. Do you feel there is a good standard on mental health education in your school?

Yes

No

If you answered yes, please provide details on how this is provided:

11. If you answered no to the question above (q.10), how do you think this education could be improved?

12. Is there support available to you in your school if you needed it? (e.g. school counsellor, a responsible adult, etc.)

Yes

No

Unsure

If you answered yes, please specify who that support is

13. Any Additional Comments?

14. Our topic for the past year has been Mental Health. Every year we ask young people from all over Galway County to vote on a new topic for our Comhairle committee to work on. What important issue for young people would you like to see as our new topic for the next year?

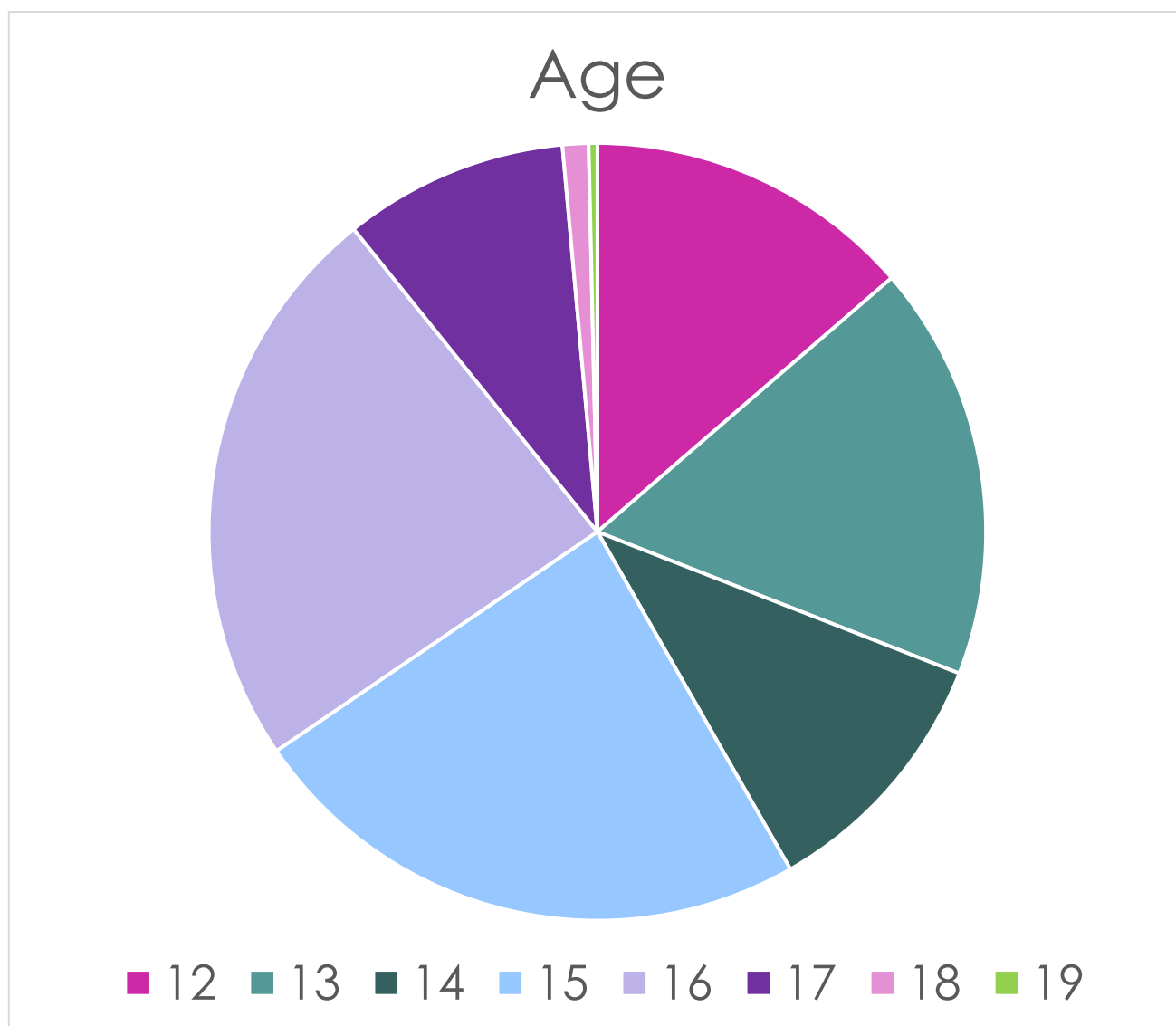
APPENDIX B

The following section consists of the results:

1. Age, Location (Galway County/City), Gender

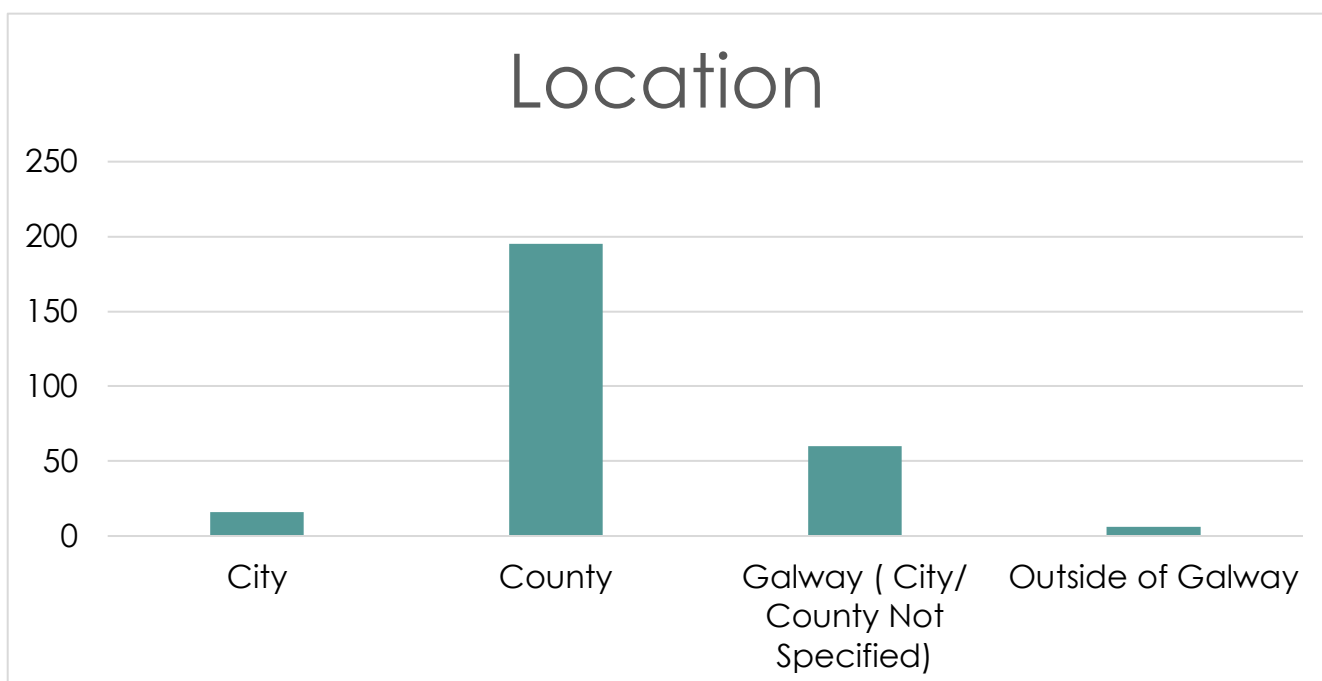
Age

Answers: 280 Invalid Answers: 2



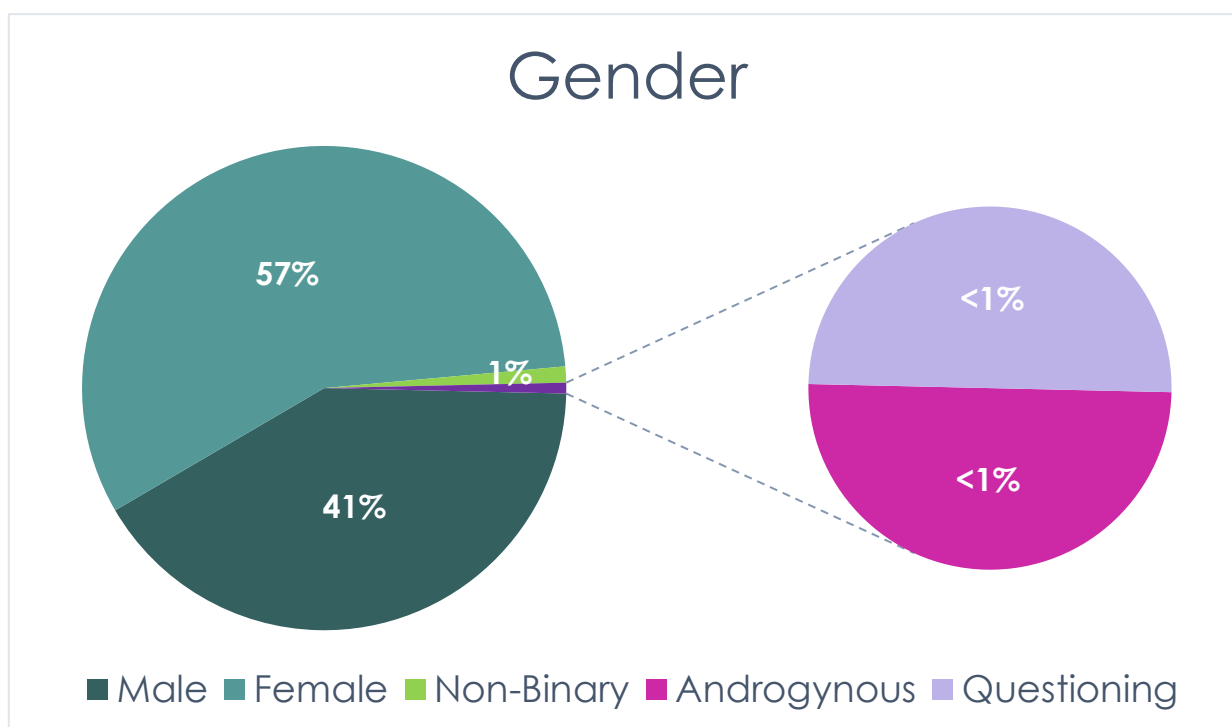
Location

Answered: 279 Invalid Answers: 3



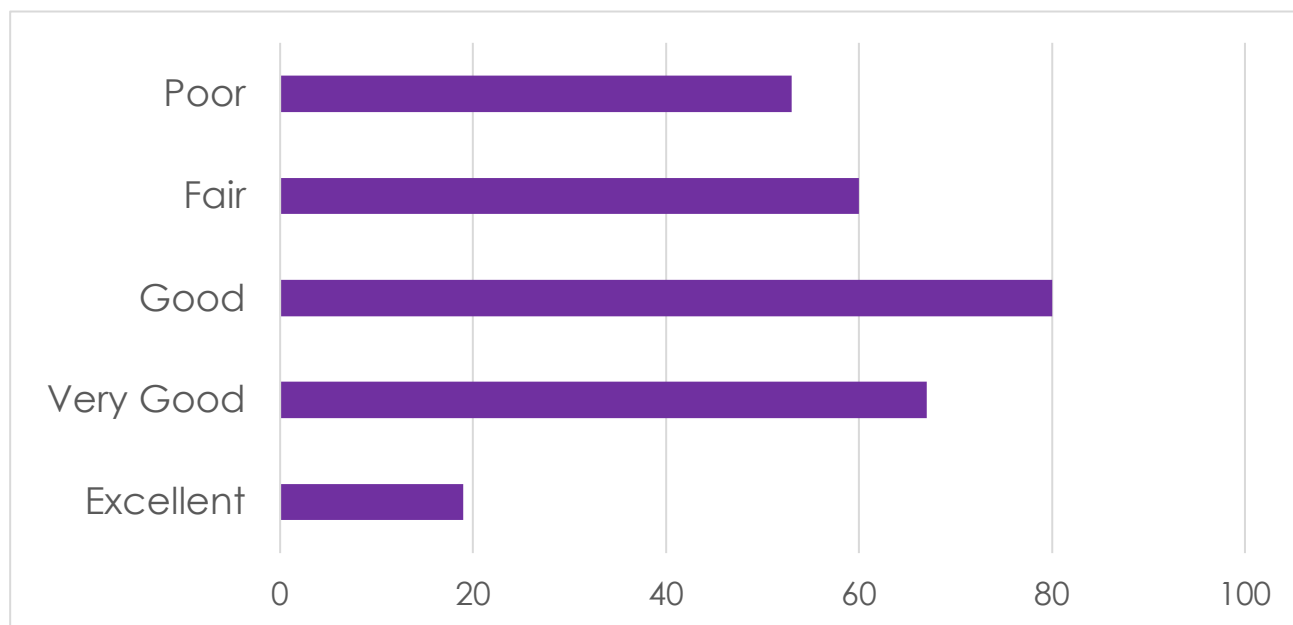
Gender

Answers: 279 Invalid Answers: 0



2. Overall, how would you rate your mental wellbeing?

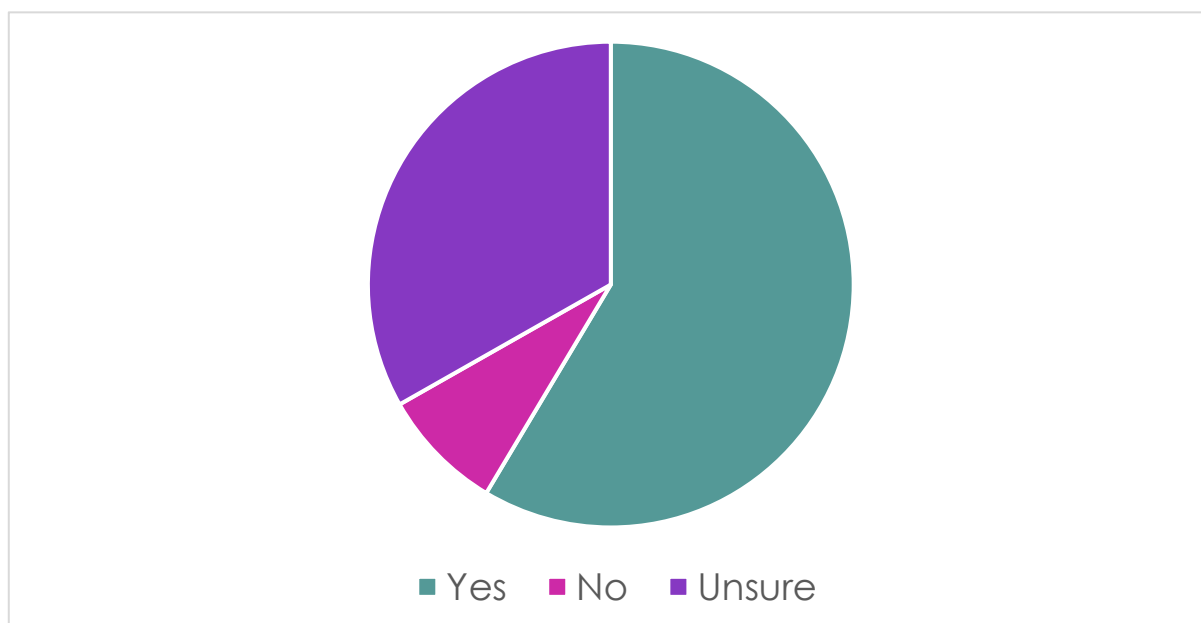
Answered: 280 Skipped: 0



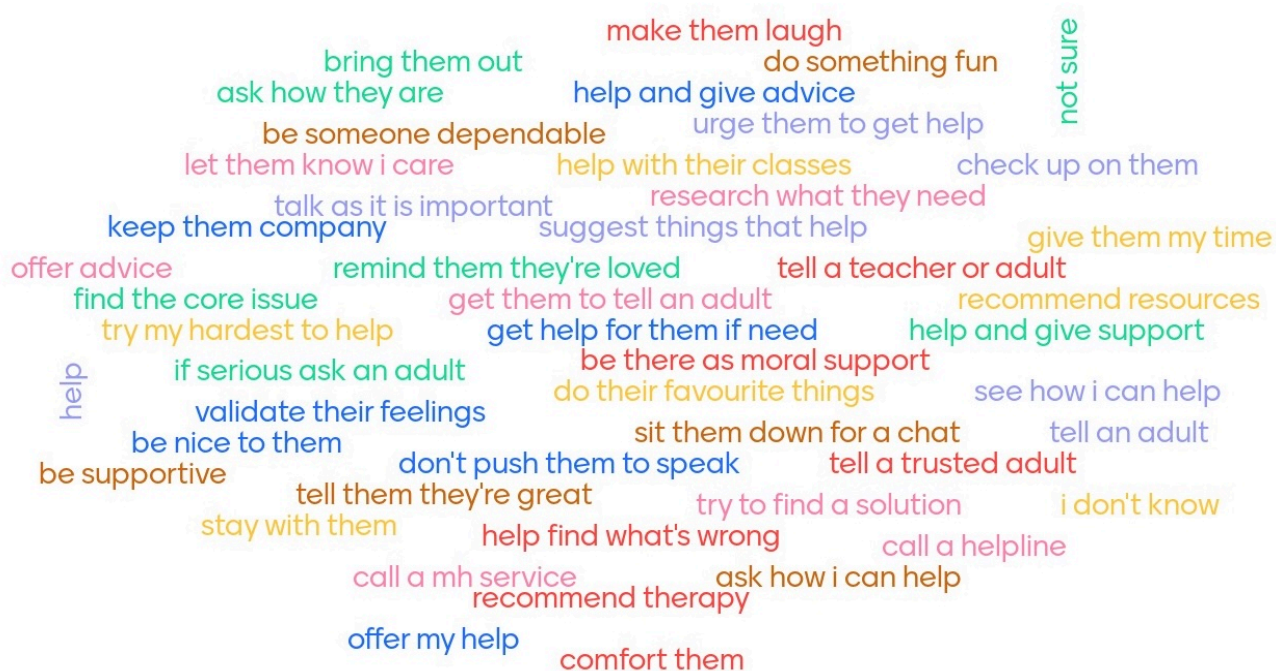
Other: Low-Medium

3. Do you think there is still stigma (a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something) around mental health?

Answered: 280 Skipped: 0



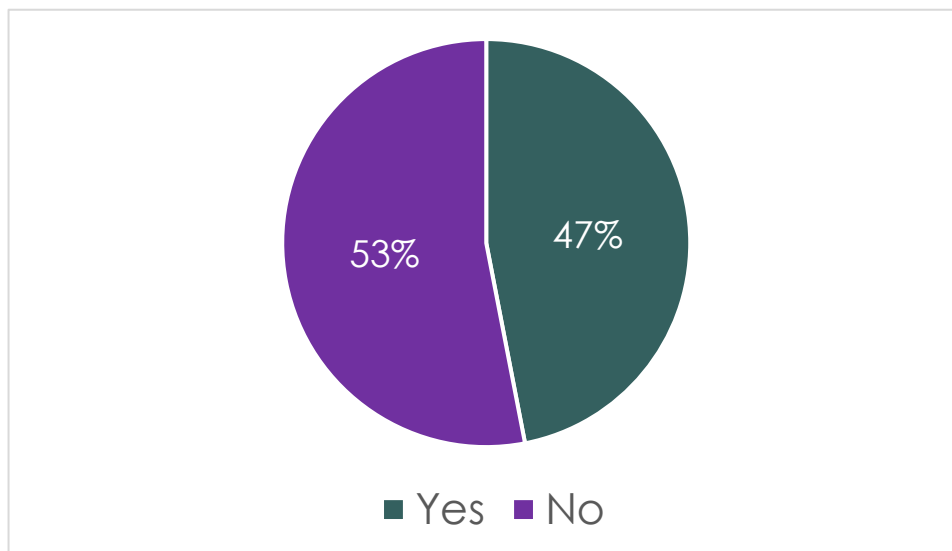
Answered: 274 Skipped: 6



- Many commented that they would try and support their friend, however, if they felt their friend was really struggling they would recommended further help and talk to a trusted adult about the situation.

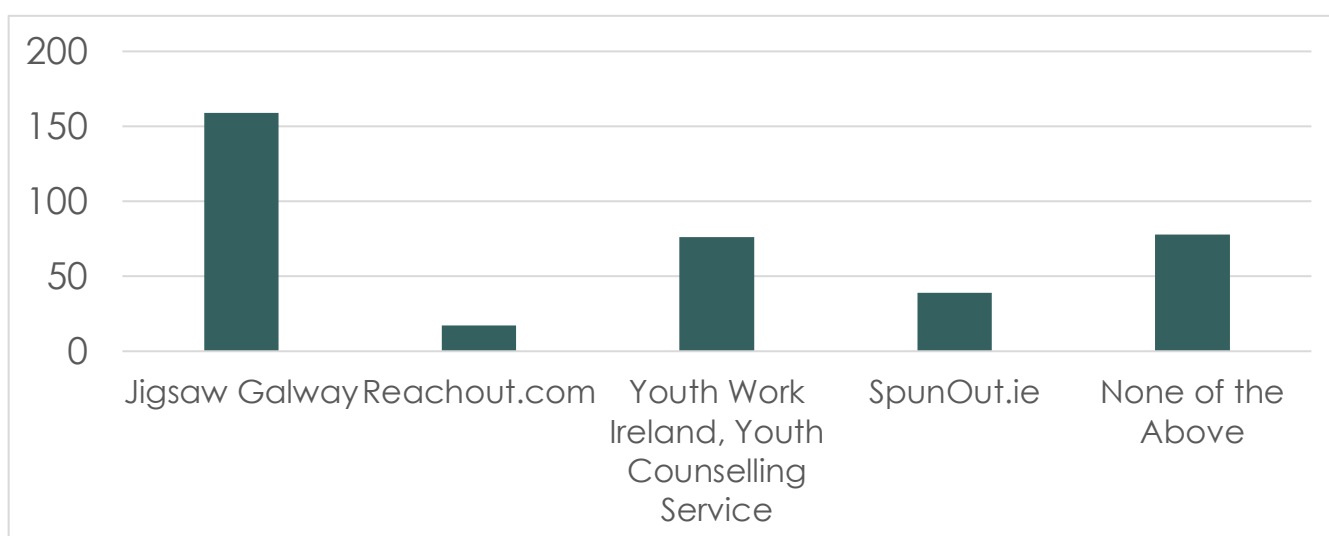
5. Are you aware of youth supports available to you in your local area if needed?

Answered: 279 Skipped: 1



6. Which of the following youth support services in Galway are you aware of?

Answered: 277 Skipped: 3

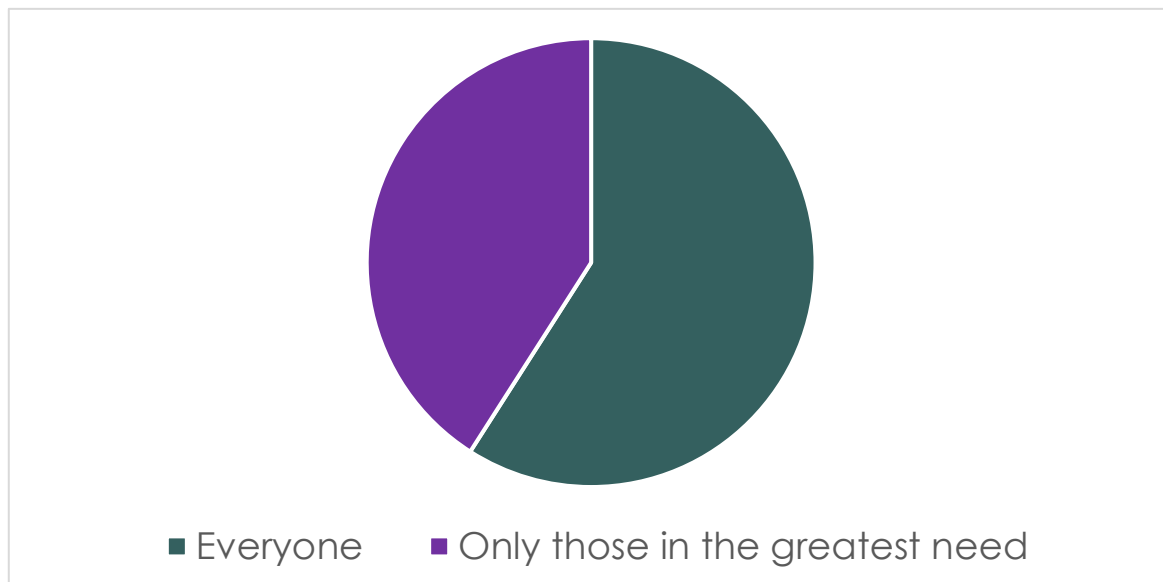


Other:

- CAMHS (14), Pieta House (5), Samaritans (1), HSE.ie (1), Childline (1), An Tobar Nua Counselling (1), Foróige (1)

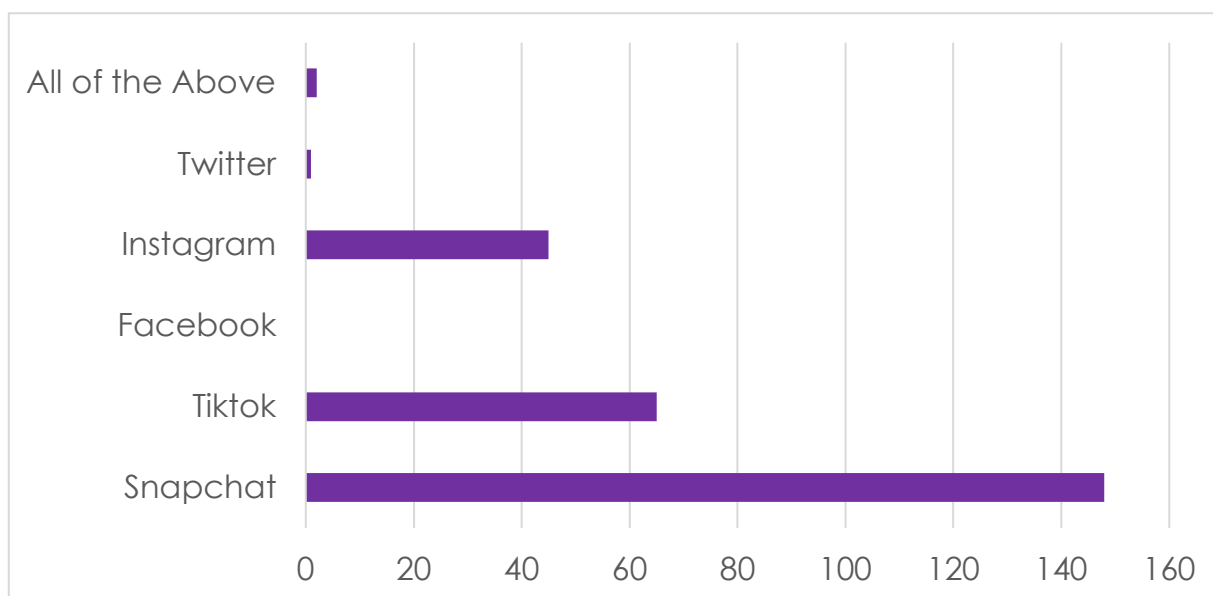
7. Would you consider mental health supports in Galway to be open to everyone or only those in the greatest need?

Answered: 276 Skipped: 4



8. Which Social Media platform(s) would you use most often?

Answered: 1 Skipped: 279

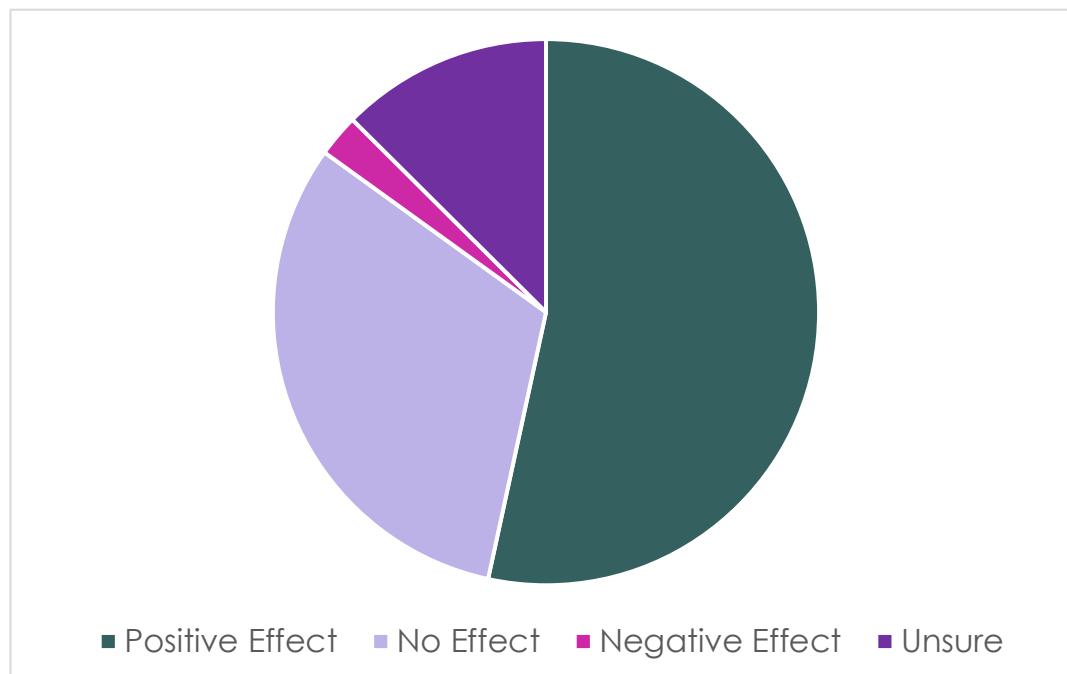


Other:

- Do Not Use Social Media (4), YouTube (5), Discord (4), WhatsApp (3), Reddit (2)

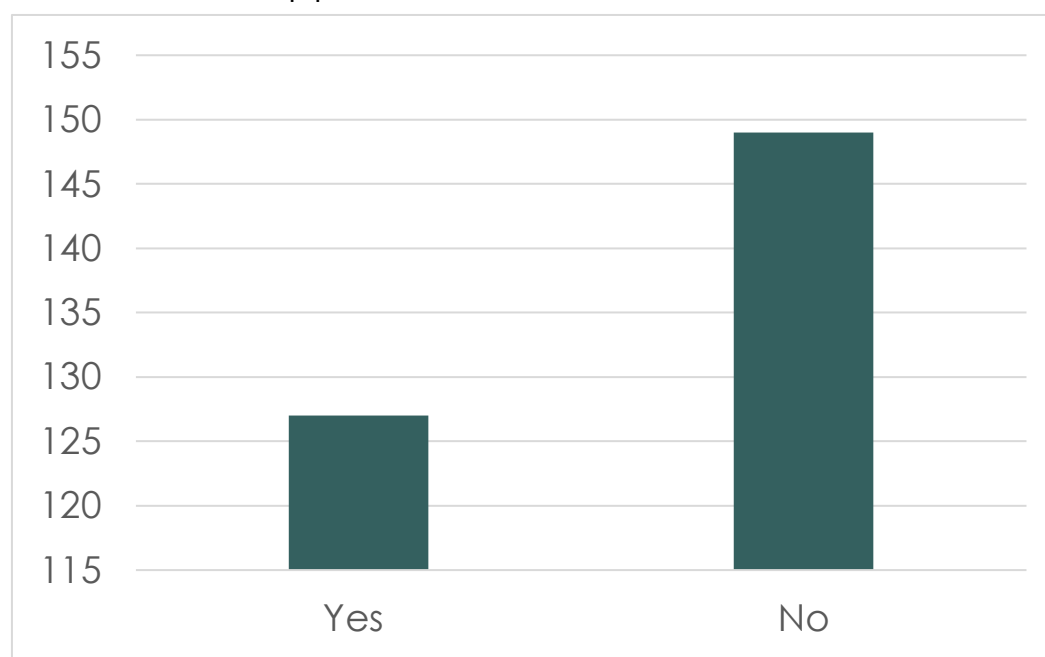
9. What effect do positive messages shared on social media have on your mental wellbeing?

Answered: 279 Skipped: 1



10. Do you feel there is a good standard of Mental Health education in your school?

Answered: 276 Skipped: 4



Comments from those who answered yes:

- Active week, walks for P.E., SPHE & CSPE classes, Wellbeing classes, Healthy Living classes, Retreats, Talks from guest speakers, Meditation.
- Teachers who are available to talk to students. Students mentioned that these teachers were friendly and understanding. Students felt able to talk to teachers who appeared to be well-equipped to support them.
- Guidance Counsellor, Support team/Patrol Care Team, School Chaplain.
- A supportive and friendly school environment made the young people feel able to ask for help if they needed it.
- Non-Bullying Policy.
- One student felt that while it is provided, it is talked about in a taboo way. Another student discussed that while their school does have Mental Health education, students are not well-informed about it.
- It was mentioned that Mental Health education is in SPHE class which in certain schools is only had up until Junior Cycle. This student felt that this education on Mental Health should be improved and put in place for Senior students as well.
- While some schools appear to have a high level of mental health education, students feel that others could be improved.

11. If you answered no to the question above (q.10), how do you think this education could be improved?

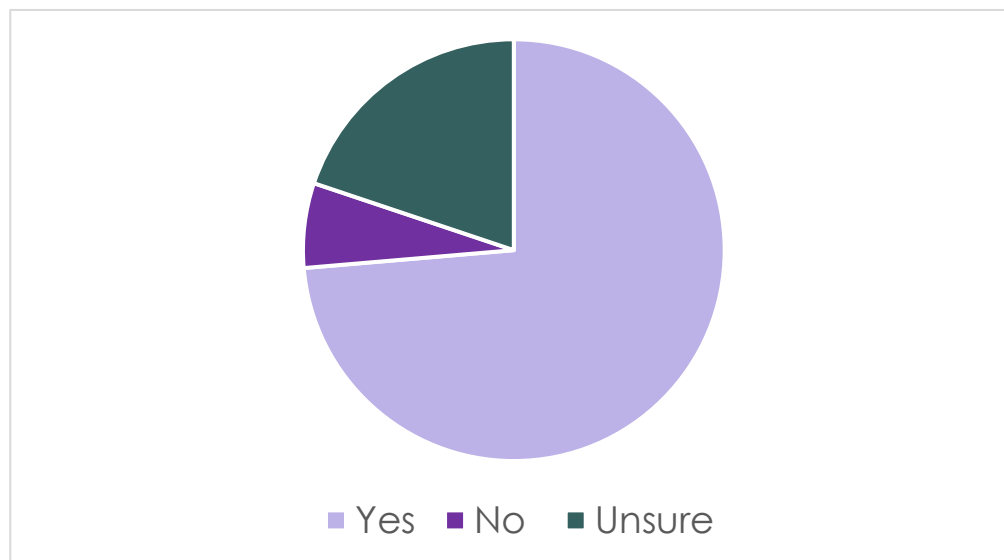
Answered:173

- Less pressure on students to maintain a perfect performance all the time.
- More Mental Health talks and Mental Health days, After-school activities .
- A dedicated Mental Health teacher. Training teachers so they know what to do if a young person has, for example, a panic attack.
- By trying to remove the stigma around Mental Health, making it an open conversation among students.
- Mental Health education at Senior Cycle.
- Students felt schools should educate classes on Mental Health issues and how to deal with them/ how to help a friend in need. More wellbeing classes. One student mentioned having one class a week dedicated to discussing Mental Wellbeing/ Stress-Free time during the week.
- Regular check-ins with students as some students may not have the confidence to approach their teacher/counsellor first. More options to those who are struggling.
- A greater understanding from teachers when giving out large amounts of work, being aware of the effect this can have on a student's stress levels.
- Increased awareness that some students struggle to focus
- More conversation about lesser known Mental Health issues, symptoms and where to get help.

- Providing more information on the signs that someone is struggling so they can be aware when they need to get support for their classmates.
- A large amount students mentioned that Mental Health education was non-existent in their school(s).
- Young people believe that better education will stop people basing Mental Health illnesses off of stereotypes.
- They want better education about how common and normal it is to feel down and how support is not only for those in really bad situations.
- Students want to be reminded that ***“it’s okay to need help”***
- Have a specific person who ensures students are okay, such as a specialised guidance counsellor.
- ***“...going to the bathroom isn’t just to get out of class, it’s to go to the bathroom and just breathe because of how overwhelming just being in school is due to my anxiety”.***

12. Is there support available to you in your school if you needed it? (e.g. school counsellor, a responsible adult)

Answers: 277 Skipped: 3



Galway County Comhairle na nÓg

If you answered yes, please specify who that support is:

- School Counsellor
- Religion Teacher
- Nice/helpful teachers
- Tutor
- Online Email
- SNA
- Wellbeing teacher
- Year Head
- Chaplain
- Vice-Principle
- Pastoral Care Team
- Friends
- There were multiple comments from students that while there was a guidance counsellor, they did not find them helpful or reliable.
- Further students mentioned that they found it difficult to get an appointment with their guidance counsellor as they are always booked out, or only available one day a week.
- Some students found that the counsellor in their school was only for those assumed to be most in need.

13. Any Additional Comments?

- ***“Opening up about mental health can be so hard because there is such a stigma around it but I just think it’s so important that people learn not to be ashamed of their mental health”.***

- A few young people mentioned that they have no one they feel comfortable talking to about their Mental Wellbeing
- Mental Health should be spoken about in depth.
- ***“Mental Health is important.. the education system as a whole needs to change to cater for different mental health needs”.***
- Reducing stigma around Mental Health is a necessity, especially for young males who don't feel comfortable to speak about their feelings.
- A greater understanding that we all need to talk about and express our feelings, even if we are just having a bad day.
- More assistance for those with Mental Health issues, especially those who may not get support from parents/responsible adults in their lives.
- ***“I was taken of the counsellors list as I was seen to not have anything wrong and I feel like this made my situation worse as I felt like my mental health didn't matter to the school”.***
- There is a lot of pressure put on those in exam years. School can have a negative effect on wellbeing.
- Teaching the difference between feeling sad and being clinically depressed.
- ***“The mental health of teenagers in Galway seems to be either seriously declining or we're more aware of mental health issues than the generation before us”.***

14. New Topic for Galway County Comhairle?

- Exam Expectations & Pressure
- **Bullying – Cyber Bullying, Peer Pressure, Anti-Bullying, Online Safety**
- **Mental Health- What to do when it's getting worse/ Anxiety / COVID affecting Mental Health/ Social Media/ Managing Stress**
- Future Opportunities- Leaving School. Jobs/College, etc. Independence
- **Body Positivity & Self-Confidence (self-image/self-love), Empowering young people. Societies norms- it's okay to be different. Eating Disorders**
- Socialising
- Smoking/ Alcohol awareness/ Drug misuse among young people
- **Sexuality, LGBTQ+ community & rights. Gender identity**
- Importance of Fitness/Sports. Physical Health. GAA. Healthy Eating
- Racism, Cultural Education
- Living in poverty/homelessness
- People with disabilities
- Climate change/ Global Warming
- Transport
- Gender Equality. Feminism
- Recreational Areas/ places to reduce anti-social behaviour, give young people somewhere to go. Better youth spaces
- Educational Environment

- Sex Education, Consent
- Self-Harm
- Healthy relationships – with family, friends, partners
- Fast fashion

Need to Talk?

- **One Good Adult**
 - Family Member or Friend
 - Teacher/Guidance Counsellor
 - Youth Worker

Mental Health Emergency

GP (9-5)

GP Out of Hours

A&E

999/112

Support Lines & Text Services:

Mental Health Information Helpline- 1800 111 888

Samaritans- 116 123 (Listening Helpline)

Jigsaw- 1800 544 729 (Mental Health Support Line for those aged 12-25 Years)

Crisis Text Line- 50808 (Listening Text Services)

Pieta House- 1800 247 247 (Support for people who are suicidal or experience self-harm)

Aware- 1800 80 48 48 (Support Line for depression & mood disorders)

Body Whys- 1890 200 444 (Helpline for eating disorders)

Youth Counselling & Support Services

Youth Work Ireland Galway Counselling Service (12-21 Years)-

For an appointment: **Call:** 087 120 9425

Email: counselling@youthworkgalway.ie

Jigsaw Galway Intervention Sessions (15-25 Years)-

For an appointment: **Call:** 091 549 252

For more information on Galway County
Comhairle na nÓg, contact the
coordinator:

Maria Coyne-Twomey
eastgalway@youthworkgalway.ie