



healthwatch
Bristol

healthwatch
South Gloucestershire

HEALTHWATCH MINI PROJECT - STUDENT STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Healthwatch engaged with students studying at the University of the West of England and Bristol University to find out their experiences of feeling stressed or feeling under pressure. The project also aimed to find out what university or health services students had used for support, what was good about their experiences and what students think could be improved.

HEALTHWATCH MINI PROJECT - STUDENT STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

PURPOSE

This questionnaire was conducted in order to try to better understand students' experiences of stress, for instance, what causes students stress and what students do to manage their feelings of stress. This includes which health or wellbeing services students used (if any), and their opinions of the care they received from these services. Information was gathered in order to try and improve students' mental health services and see what local students think can be done to improve student wellbeing and mental health support.

METHODOLOGY

Information was gathered using a questionnaire, which fifty-four students completed. Thirty-five female students and eighteen male students responded and one student preferred not to disclose their gender. There were two versions of the questionnaire, an online version which thirty-four students completed, and a paper version, which twenty students completed. The online questionnaire was shared via Survey Monkey and social media sites like Facebook. Students who completed the questionnaire were studying at the University of the West of England or Bristol University. All questionnaires were completed in February 2016 and results were collated using Survey Monkey. Quotes from students are highlighted in bold.

For full results, please see Appendix A.

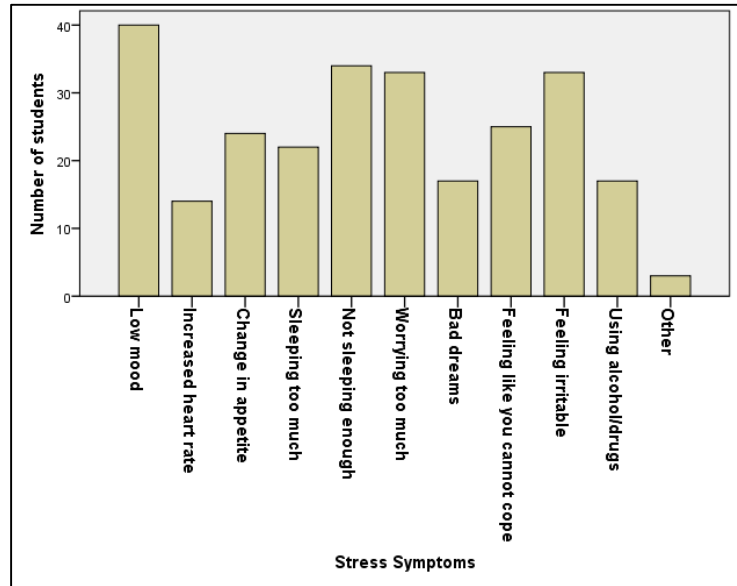
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of the fifty-four students that responded, the high majority stated that they had experienced stress of some kind, mainly relating to university work and deadlines or thinking about their future. Students mentioned that they had used a few Bristol based services to help combat their feelings of stress, such as the UWE wellbeing service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Bristol Mental Health Assessment Team. Recommendations have been made in order to try and improve student health care, based on what students have said they want and need locally.

FINDINGS

Question 1

Question one asked about the symptoms of stress that students had experienced over the last three months. Fifty three out of the fifty-four students answered this question. The most selected answer was “low mood”, which 75.47% of students selected. The second top choice was “not sleeping enough”, with 64.15% selecting this option, and “worrying too much” and “feeling irritable” were joint third with 62.26%. 32% students (17/53) said they use alcohol/drugs when they feel stressed. The least selected answer was “increased heart rate”, yet this still had 26.42% of students selecting it, which is over a quarter of the students that responded.

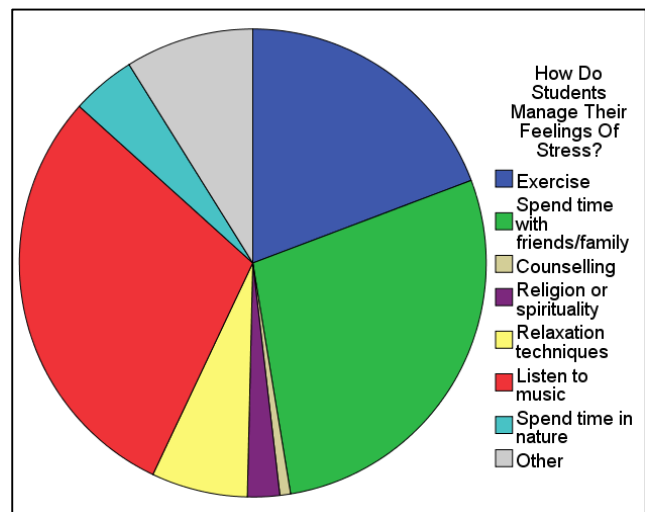


Question 2

This question asked students to rate on a scale of 1 (being not at all) to 5 (being completely) how much their feelings of stress impacts upon their daily lives. It was clear that feelings of stress impact greatly on students. All fifty-four students answered this question and there was a weighted average of 3.19. Most often, students ticked 4, with nineteen out of the fifty-four students selecting it (35.2%), and 3 was the second most chosen rating, with 16 out of fifty-four students selecting it (29.6%).

Question 3

Question three focused on how students manage their feelings of being stressed. Fifty-three of the students answered this question, with 75.47% of students saying they listen to music to help manage their stress. This was the most popular answer. 71.7% of students also said they spend time with family and/or friends to help manage stress, and nearly half of students that responded (49.06%) selected exercise.



Only one student (1.9 %) said they use counselling to manage stress and only 6 students (11.1%) said they spend time in nature.

Question 4

This question aimed to find out what things cause students stress. All fifty-four students answered. The students were asked to rate potentially stressful circumstances on a scale from 1 (being not at all) to 5 (being completely). University work and deadlines was rated as the most stressful thing, with 48.15% (26/53) of students selecting the highest rating of 5 and 37 % of students selecting the second highest rating of 4 (a weighted average of 4.26.) Thinking about the future was the second most stressful thing for the students who responded, with 29.63% of students selecting the second highest rating of 4.

Over 60 % of students (32/53) said that worries about their appearance and body image cause them stress.

Question 5

Question five asked students who they would go to if they needed support, and all fifty-four students answered this question. The top three answers that the students wrote about were friends, family and partners, with some mentioning a combination of these answers. Thirty-three out of fifty-four students (61%) mentioned that they would go to family for support, twenty-seven out of fifty-four students (50%) mentioned that they would go to friends for support and eleven out of fifty-four students (20.4%) said they would go to a partner for support.

Question 6

This question asked students who they would go to if they needed emergency support for stress or wellbeing related issues. Fifty-two students answered this question, and the most common answer was that they would contact a family member (thirty out of the fifty-two students 55.6% said this.)

The second most common answer students gave was that they would not know who to contact in an emergency, with ten out of the fifty-two students (18.5%) writing this. Only five students (9.6%) said they would call 999 for emergency support and only one student (1.9%) said they might call The Samaritans helpline.

Question 7

Question seven asked students which services they have used to manage their feelings of stress. Twenty-one students answered this question, and 47.62% of these students (10) said they had used “doctor’s services/medication” to help with feelings of stress, which was the most selected answer. The second top answer was “university counseling”, which 23.81% of students selected.

Question 8

This question aimed to find out students' experiences and opinions of using mental health support services. 11 students answered this question. Some people tended to just name the service they had used but did not make any further comments (for example, students answered **“university well-being mentoring and counseling”**, **“UWE wellbeing centre”**, and **“yoga”**).

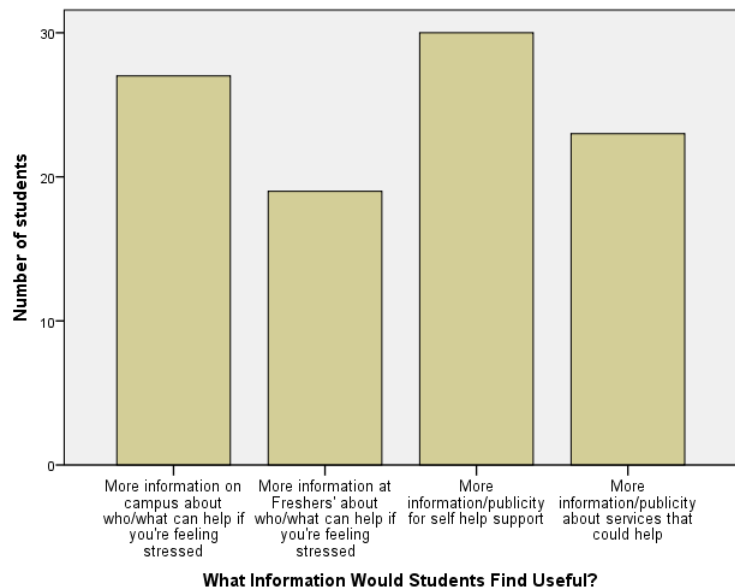
Other students mentioned going to the doctor's but did not state specifically which doctor's they had visited. For instance, **“stress made me ill, I got skin problems, so the doctor gave me medication”**, and **“my local medical centre gave me advice on how to deal with anxiety, the doctor was friendly and gave me further information”**. Another student said, **“I went to the doctor who signed me off work for 2 weeks. It was very beneficial for me”**, and another student mentioned the medication they had been given: **“Antidepressants (citalopram) helped significantly with low mood”**. One student had had a bad experience and stated, **“I used the GP and the Mental Health Assessment Team. They listened to none of my concerns and medicated me without talking through what was happening to me.”**

Other students went into more detail about their experiences of using university services: **“university counseling - it would help more but I've only been to one session”**, and **“housing advice at uni - it helped to talk things through but nothing could be done to help”**. Finally, one student spoke about the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services: **“CAMHS - poor care, did not do anything to help but rather caused more issues than it was worth.”**

Question 9

Finally, this question asked students what information they would find useful for managing feelings of stress or being under pressure. Students were asked to tick all options that they thought might help.

Forty-seven students answered this question, with the most selected option being more information/publicity for self-help support, as thirty out of forty-seven students (63.83%) selected this. The second most popular choice was more information on campus about who/what can help if you're feeling stressed, with 27 out of 47 students (57.4%) selecting it. One student said they thought information was **“adequate”** already.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To summarise, the large majority of students experience feelings of stress, with many students experiencing low mood, lack of sleep, worrying, and irritableness because of it. The main things that students tend to worry about are university and work deadlines, as well as their futures, and in order to combat their levels of stress, students listen to music, spend time with loved ones, and exercise.

Many students say they would contact a family member, a friend, or their partner if they needed support. Very few students said they would call 999 or The Samaritans if they needed emergency support, which was a concern. Students spoke about how they have also used university services and medical support from local GP practices and mental health teams. Most of the students that completed the survey said they would find more information on campus about how to manage stress and who to go to about stress helpful, as well as more information for self-help support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

About one fifth of students asked did not know what they would do or who they would contact if they needed emergency support. Therefore, we recommend that more information is given out on campus, or emailed to students, about what to do/who you can contact if students need emergency support during stressful times.

Every option for question nine had a relatively high percentage (40.43% to 63.83%) of students selecting them. Therefore, we recommend that more information is given on campus and during Freshers' week to students about who and what can help if you are feeling stressed, as well as more information about services that could help like The Samaritans. We particularly recommend that more information on self-help support is provided by universities, as over three fifths of students said they would find this useful. This information could be given to the students in the form of leaflets, emails, the university websites, and posters and campaigns on campus.

DISCLAIMER

This report relates to students consulted at a specific point in time. This report is not representative of all students (only those who contributed their views).

APPENDICES

Appendix A- All answers

Question 1: (53 responses) - **Which, if any, of these experiences of feeling under pressure or stressed have you experienced in the past 3 months? Please select all that apply:**

- Low mood- 40/53
- Increased heart rate- 14/53
- A change in appetite- 24/53
- Sleeping too much- 22/53
- Not sleeping enough- 34/53
- Worrying too much- 33/53
- Bad dreams- 17/53
- Feeling like you cannot cope- 25/53
- Feeling irritable- 33/53
- Using alcohol/drugs- 17/53
- Other- 3/53
 - "Insomnia"
 - "Lots of alcohol."
 - "mood swings"

Question 2: (54 responses) - **On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all and 5 being completely, how much do your feelings of being stressed or under pressure impact on your daily life?**

- 1- 2/54
- 2- 13/54
- 3- 16/54
- 4- 19/54
- 5- 4/54

Question 3: (53 responses) - **What, if anything, do you do to manage your feelings of being stressed or under pressure? Please select all that apply:**

- Exercise- 26/53
- Spend time with family and/or friends- 38/53
- Counseling- 1/53
- Religion or spirituality- 3/53
- Relaxation techniques- 9/53
- Listen to music- 40/53
- Spend time in nature- 6/53
- Other- 12/53
 - "Using alcohol"
 - "Drugs/alcohol"
 - "Use of drugs"
 - "Playing video games"
 - "Read"
 - "Watching TV"
 - "Netflix, boyfriend and baking"
 - "Reading"

- "Cleaning kitchens/room etc."
- "Reading/TV/YouTube/games etc."
- "Watching Netflix or Crunchyroll to zone out"
- "Watch TV."

Question 4: (54 responses)- **On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all and 5 being completely, how much do the following things cause you to feel stressed or under pressure?**

University and work deadlines

- 1- 0/54
- 2- 4/54
- 3- 4/54
- 4- 20/54
- 5- 26/54

Your job

- 1- 24/51
- 2- 6/51
- 3- 13/51
- 4- 6/51
- 5- 2/51

Thinking about the future

- 1- 5/54
- 2- 8/54
- 3- 15/54
- 4- 16/54
- 5- 10/54

Relationships with family/friends/partner

- 1- 12/53
- 2- 16/53
- 3- 9/53
- 4- 12/53
- 5- 4/53

Your appearance/body image

- 1- 9/53
- 2- 12/53
- 3- 14/53
- 4- 11/53
- 5- 7/53

Comments

- "Social life- 3"
- "Money issues"

Question 5: (54 responses) - **If you did need support, who would you go to?**

- "Family"
- "Family/friends"
- "Partner/family/friends"
- "Friends"
- "Family"
- "UWE wellbeing service"

- “Family”
- “Family and friends”
- “Lecturers, friends/family”
- “UWE wellbeing”
- “My family”
- “My siblings and my boyfriend.”
- “I don’t know”
- “My friends and family, pets.”
- “Friends, family or university counselor.”
- “Friends”
- “Parents, girlfriend”
- “My mum”
- “My friends and family”
- “My mum”
- “Girlfriend or family”
- “Nobody”
- “My GP or therapist”
- “Close friends”
- “A friend”
- “Nobody”
- “No one”
- “Family, friends, boyfriend.”
- “Boyfriend and family”
- “Doctors”
- “The Pub”
- “mum and dad”
- “Boyfriend/mum”
- “Not sure”
- “My boyfriend”
- “Friends”
- “My family or friends”
- “A friend”
- “Possibly family and/or friends”
- “My mother/close friends”
- “friends and family”
- “Family”
- “My boyfriend or a close friend”
- “My mum”
- “Friends”
- “Friends/Family
- “mum, boyfriend, friends”
- “Friends, doctors”
- “My friends or family”
- “Friends”
- “my family”
- “Family (parents etc.)”
- “Family/friends/partner. Sometimes the wellbeing centre”

- “Friends, family or university tutor.”

Question 6: (52 responses) - **If you needed emergency support, what would you do? Who would you contact?**

- “999”
- “999”
- “Doctor”
- “Emergency services”
- “Dunno”
- “Family”
- “Psychologist”
- “Family or uni”
- “My father”
- “Family”
- “My brother.”
- “Family”
- “Friends/family”
- “Mother, friends”
- “Parents”
- “Call my mum”
- “My parents- phone them and ask them to help.”
- “If it’s to do with university, a student advisor. Otherwise 999”
- “Call my parents”
- “I wouldn’t contact anybody”
- “I don’t know. Samaritans?”
- “I don’t know”
- “I don’t know”
- “Parents”
- “No one”
- “My mum, dad, brothers, boyfriend or close family friend.”
- “Mother”
- “Unsure”
- “No idea”
- “uni”
- “I honestly don’t know. I’d probably call my mum”
- “Not sure”
- “My granddad, he would provide support.”
- “Family”
- “My mum”
- “Parent”
- “Not sure”
- “Call my mother or failing so, try my friends”
- “family”
- “Friends”
- “A doctor”
- “My mum”
- “Parents”

- “I don’t know”
- “mum or close friends”
- “Parents, doctors”
- “Contact the university’s wellbeing centre”
- “Family member”
- “999”
- “Family again”
- “Family/friends/partner
- “If it was university related I would contact my tutor immediately. Anything else I would talk to my parents.”

Question 7: (21 responses) - **Which services, if any, have you used to try and manage your feelings of being stressed or under pressure? Please select all that apply:**

- Doctors/medication- 10/21
- Exercise groups- 3/21
- University counseling- 5/21
- Other counseling- 2/21
- Relaxation groups- 1/21
- Faith groups- 0/21
- Social club/society- 4/21
- Other- 3/21
 - Archery Club helps with stress
 - None
 - N/A

Question 8: (11 responses) - **If applicable, please tell us the name of the service you used and what you thought about the care they offered you. What was good? What could be improved?**

- “University counseling- it would help more but I’ve only been to one session.”
- “Yoga”
- “University well-being mentoring and counseling”
- “Stress made me ill, I got skin problems, so the doctor gave me medication”
- “I used the GP and the Mental Health Assessment team. They listened to none of my concerns and medicated me without talking through what was happening to me.”
- “Housing advice at uni. It helped to talk things through but nothing could be done to help.”
- “CAMHS- poor care, did not do anything to help but rather caused more issues and trouble that it was worth.”
- “Went to the doctor who signed me off work for 2 weeks. It was very beneficial for me.”
- “Antidepressants (citalopram) helped significantly with low mood”
- “UWE wellbeing centre”
- “My local medical centre gave me advice on how to deal with anxiety, doctor was friendly and gave further information.”

Question 9: (47 responses) - **Which of the following would you find useful for managing your feelings of being stressed or under pressure? Please select all that apply:**

- More information on campus about who/what can help if you’re feeling stressed- 27/47
- More information at Freshers’ about who/what can help if you’re feeling stressed- 19/47

- More information/publicity for self-help support- 30/47
- More information/publicity about services that could help- 23/47
- Comments
 - “I feel this is adequate already”

Question 10: (54 responses) - **What is your gender? Please select the option that applies:**

- Female- 35/54
- Male- 18/54
- Transgender- 0/54
- Prefer not to say- 1/54

Appendix B- blank questionnaire

See next page.

Healthwatch aims to ensure that local people's voices are heard and embedded in decisions about health and care.

This short questionnaire should not take more than around five minutes to fill out. Your anonymous responses will be reported back to Healthwatch Bristol and Healthwatch South Gloucestershire.

Your responses to this questionnaire will help understand how students manage stress, and what can be done to help students manage feelings of stress and pressure.

1. Which, if any, of these experiences of feeling under pressure or stressed have you experienced in the past 3 months? Please tick all that apply:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low mood | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased heart rate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A change in appetite | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping too much |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not sleeping enough | <input type="checkbox"/> Worrying too much |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bad dreams | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you cannot cope |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol/drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |
-

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all and 5 being completely, how much do your feelings of being under pressure or being stressed impact upon your daily life? Please circle the number that applies.

1 2 3 4 5

3. What, if anything, do you do to manage your feelings of being stressed or under pressure? Please tick all that apply:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with family and/or friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or spirituality | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation techniques |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time in nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
-

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all and 5 being completely, how much do the following things cause you to feel stressed or under pressure? Please circle the number that applies:

- **University work and deadlines**

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - | Your job | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - | Thinking about the future | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - | Relationships with family/friends/partner | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - | Your appearance/body image | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - | Other (please specify) _____ | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5. If you did need support, who would you go to?

6. If you needed emergency support, what would you do? Who would you contact?

7. Which services, if any, have you used to try to manage your feelings of being stressed or under pressure? Please tick all that apply:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctors/medication | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise groups | <input type="checkbox"/> University counselling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other counselling | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social club/society | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |

-
8. If applicable, please tell us the name of the service you used and what you thought about the care they offered you. What was good? What could be improved?

9. Which of the following would you find useful for managing your feelings of being stressed or under pressure? Please tick all that apply:
- More information on campus about who/what can help if you're feeling stressed
 - More information at Freshers' about who/what can help if you're feeling stressed
 - More information/publicity for self help support
 - More information/publicity about services that could help
10. What is your gender? Please tick the box that applies:
- Male Female Transgender Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.