

# Teacher Wellbeing Index **2021**

## Mental Health of Education Staff



We asked teachers and education staff about symptoms and signs of poor mental health, the work and personal issues they relate to and who they turn to for help.

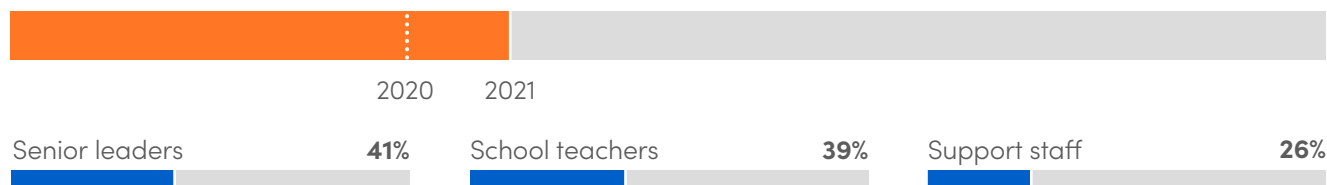
Our main findings:

- **More than three-quarters (77%) of all staff experienced symptoms of poor health linked to their work**
- **Staff reported a seven percent increase in mental health issues in the past academic year**
- **The most common symptom of poor mental health is insomnia, or difficulty sleeping**
- **Symptoms linked to signs of anxiety and depression are higher than the general population**
- **Levels of exhaustion have considerably increased**
- **A lack of work-life balance, excessive workload and the Covid-19 pandemic are the three main work issues linked to symptoms of poor mental health**
- **Staff experiencing mental health problems at work are most likely to turn to their family and friends for help**
- **Family issues, health concerns and financial worries are the three most common personal reasons for symptoms of poor mental health**
- **The wellbeing score for staff is 43.90 – lower than last year's Index and lower than the general population scores for England, Scotland and Wales**

# 1. Mental health issues in the past academic year

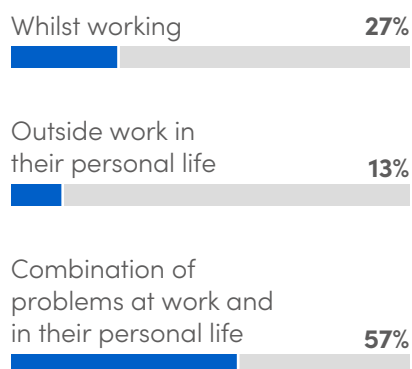
**We asked all teachers and education staff if they had experienced a mental health issue in the past academic year**

**38%** of teachers and education staff reported experiencing mental health issues in the past academic year **(7% increase on 2020)**



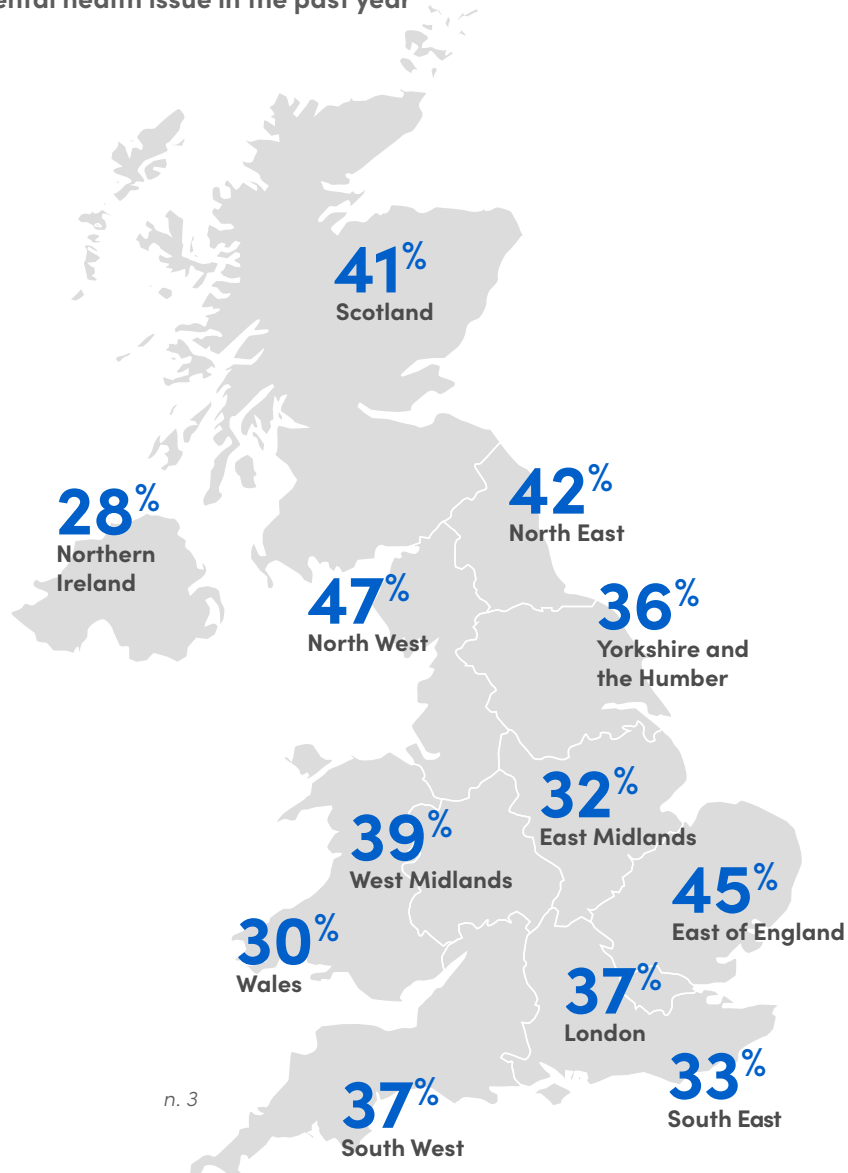
*n. 1 (All sample sizes for each chart (known as 'n' numbers) can be found at the back of the section. n. 1 refers to note 1, and so on.)*

## Staff who had experienced a mental health issue had problems



*n. 2*

## Percentage of staff who experienced any mental health issue in the past year

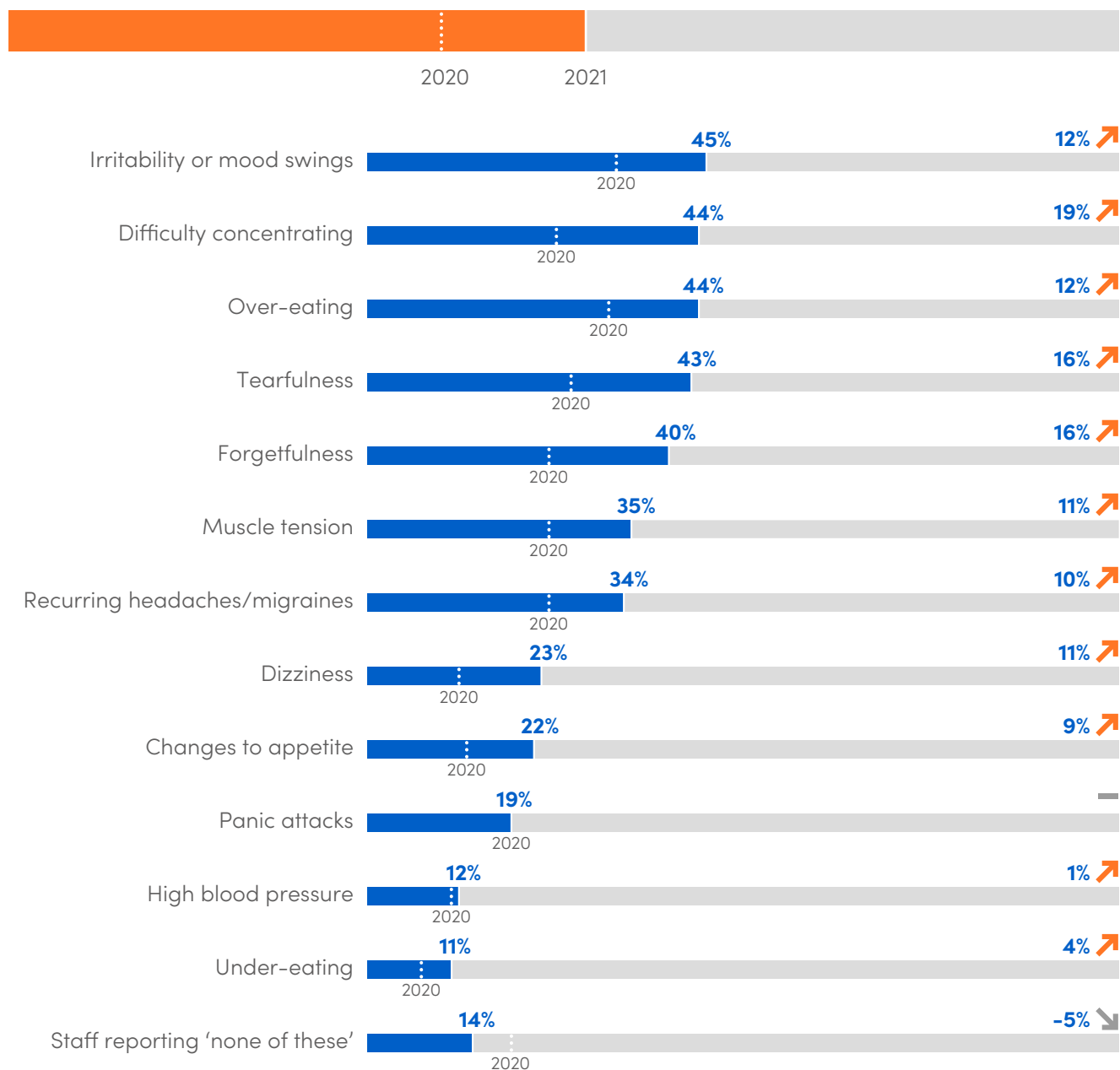


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## 2. Symptoms of poor mental health experienced in the last year

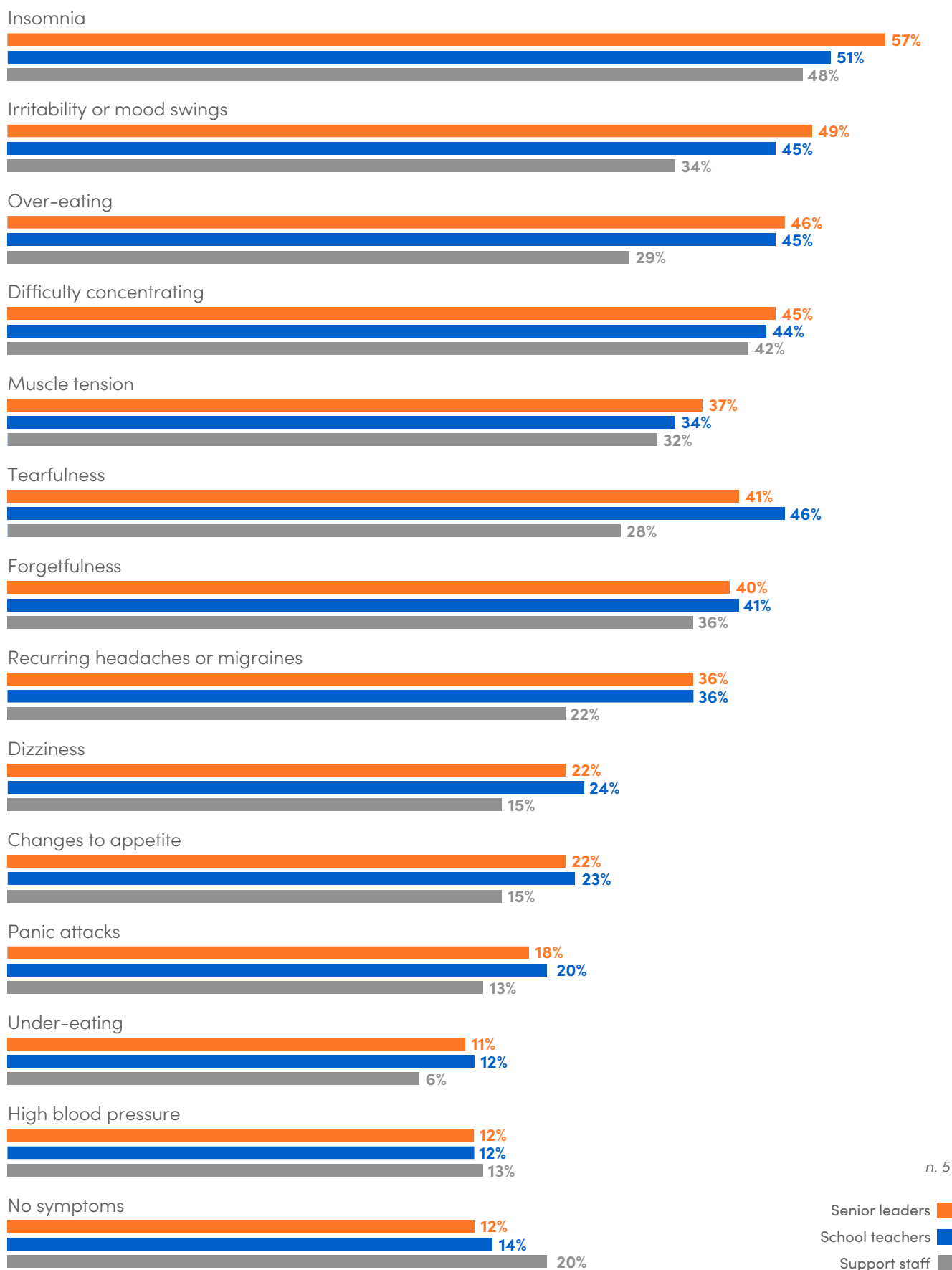
Staff reported experiencing increased symptoms of poor mental health, compared to last year. The most common was insomnia, or difficulty sleeping. (Note: This question asks all respondents in the 2021 survey for their perceptions relating to both 2021 and 2020.)

**52%** experienced insomnia or difficulty sleeping **(13% increase on 2020)**



n. 4

## Symptoms by job role in 2021



Senior leaders experienced the highest rates of insomnia or difficulty sleeping. They also experienced slightly higher levels of irritability or mood swings and muscle tension.

School teachers experienced the highest levels of tearfulness. They experienced slightly higher levels of dizziness and panic attacks.

Support staff had the highest levels of experiencing no symptoms.

### Symptoms by length of time working in education

Early career staff (working up to 0–2 years) experienced the highest levels of symptoms in seven areas.\*

Symptoms	Length of service					
	0–2 yrs	3–5 yrs	6–10 yrs	11–20 yrs	21–30 yrs	31+ yrs
Panic attacks	26%	23%	20%	17%	20%	14%
Dizziness	30%	25%	21%	23%	22%	20%
Changes to appetite	29%	23%	21%	22%	22%	16%
Over-eating	49%	39%	44%	46%	43%	38%
Irritability, mood swings	57%	48%	48%	45%	44%	28%
Tearfulness	50%	43%	44%	45%	42%	27%
Forgetfulness	45%	38%	39%	41%	43%	30%

n. 6

### Observations

Staff working more than **60 hours per week** experienced more symptoms than those working 40 hours per week or less.

Staff who reported feeling stressed experienced more symptoms than those who were not stressed.

Staff who indicated their organisations did not support them well experienced more symptoms in all categories than those who indicated their organisations supported them well.

\*Data is based on percentage point scores which are not statistically significant, with the exception of irritability/mood swings.

### 3. What do the symptoms mean?

The most common signs of poor mental health that the symptoms could be attributed to were anxiety, exhaustion, depression, burnout and acute stress.

#### Anxiety



The signs of anxiety were highest among school teachers



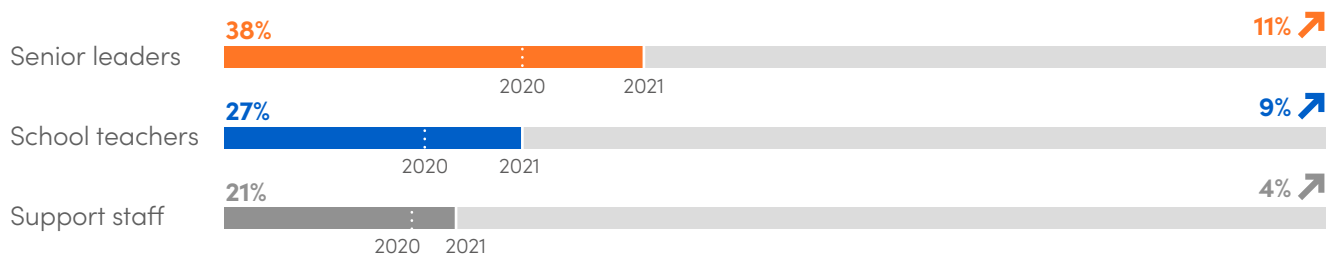
n. 7

#### Exhaustion

**29%** of education staff felt, or it was suggested to them, that the symptoms they experienced were signs of exhaustion



The signs of exhaustion were highest amongst senior leaders



n. 8

#### Depression



The signs of depression were highest amongst school teachers



n. 9

## Burnout

**24%** of education staff felt, or it was suggested to them, that the symptoms they experienced were signs of burnout



The signs of burnout were highest amongst senior leaders



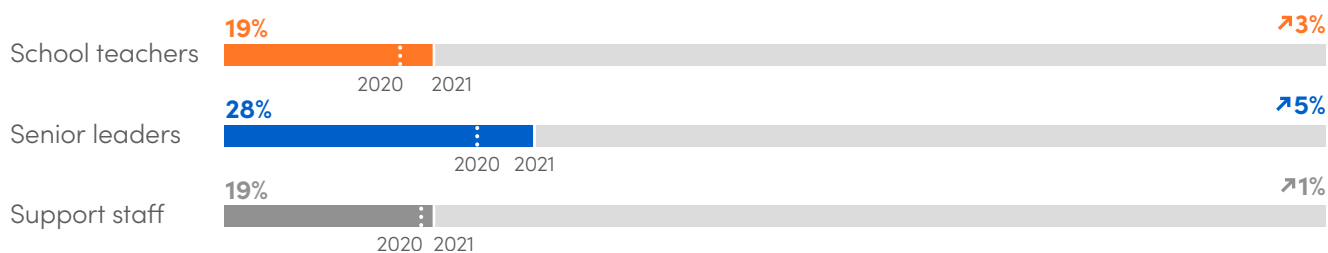
n. 10

## Acute stress

**20%** of education staff felt, or it was suggested to them, that the symptoms they experienced were signs of acute stress



The signs of acute stress were highest amongst senior leaders



n. 11

**9,570**

calls to Education Support's free and confidential helpline in 2020-21<sup>3</sup>



## Formal diagnosis

Many of the staff who exhibited signs went on to consult with their General Practitioner (GP), or doctor, for a diagnosis. Support staff have not been included in the breakdowns below due to the small sample set.

### Anxiety

**44%** were diagnosed



Senior leaders **47%**



School teachers **45%**



### Exhaustion

**10%** were diagnosed



Senior leaders **13%**



School teachers **9%**



### Depression

**54%** were diagnosed



Senior leaders **46%**



School teachers **59%**



### Burnout<sup>4</sup>

**9%** were diagnosed



Senior leaders **8%**



School teachers **8%**



### Acute stress

**22%** were diagnosed



Senior leaders **20%**



School teachers **24%**

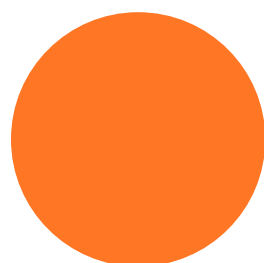


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## 4. Levels of resilience

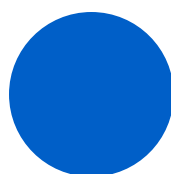
### Levels of staff resilience

(their ability to adapt and recover after experiencing difficulties or challenges in life)



**62%**

stated as having very or fairly high resilience



**26%**

medium resilience



**11%**

fairly low or very low resilience

### Of those with very or fairly high resilience:

Senior leaders **73%**



School teachers **58%**

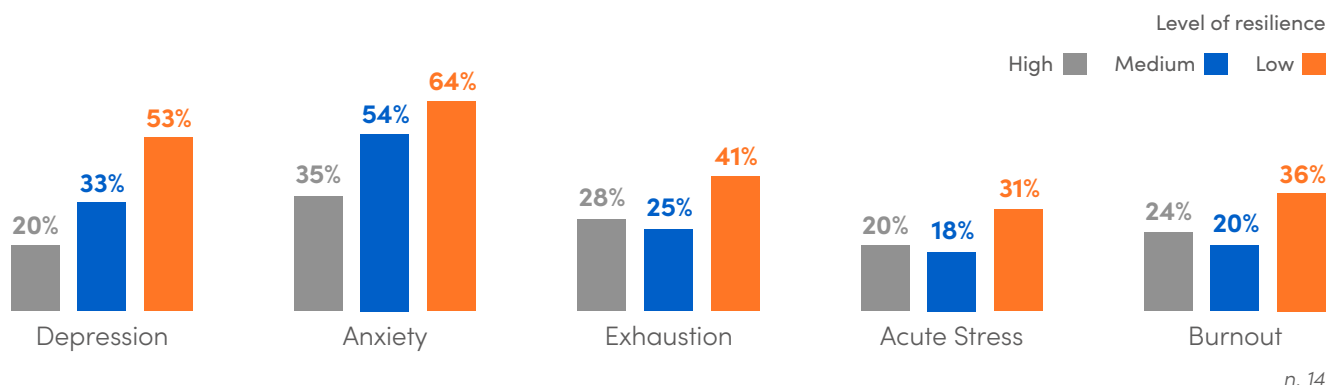


Support staff **62%**



n. 13

### Staff with low levels of resilience were more prone to experience signs of mental ill-health



## 5. Symptoms of poor mental health due to work

**77%** of all staff experienced at least one behavioural, psychological or physical symptom linked to their work (**3% increase on 2020**)



### Behavioural symptoms

(eg changes to appetite, irritability, procrastination, mood swings)

**4%** ↑

Increased by **4%** from last year to **58%**. They were the most common type of symptoms

### Psychological symptoms

(eg depression, anxiety, panic attacks)

**2%** ↑

Increased by **2%** from last year to **51%\***

### Physical symptoms

(eg raised blood pressure, muscle tension, sweating, dizziness, headaches or migraines)

**4%** ↑

Increased by **4%** from last year to **51%**

### Symptoms of poor mental health due to work - by job role



n. 15

\*Not statistically significant

## Observations

Staff who were stressed were more likely to experience symptoms than those who were not stressed.

Staff who felt well supported by their organisation were less likely to experience symptoms than those who were not well supported.

Stressed staff experienced the most physical symptoms, followed by behavioural and psychological symptoms.

Staff who felt trusted were less likely to experience symptoms than those who were not trusted.

### We asked staff who had experienced behavioural, psychological or physical symptoms linked to their work about its impact

**45%** Work performance suffered



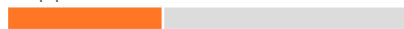
Senior leaders **47%**



School teachers **46%**



Support staff **39%**



**43%** Personal relationships suffered



Senior leaders **52%**



School teachers **41%**



Support staff **28%**



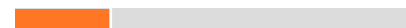
**26%** Work relationships suffered



Senior leaders **30%**



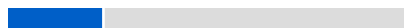
School teachers **24%**



Support staff **28%**



**24%** Taking time off work



Senior leaders **19%**



School teachers **27%**



Support staff **18%**



**23%** None of these



Senior leaders **21%**



School teachers **24%**



Support staff **27%**



**12%** Felt they had to leave their job



Senior leaders **6%**



School teachers **14%**



Support staff **11%**



**11%** Felt suicidal



Senior leaders **11%**



School teachers **11%**



Support staff **6%**



**7%** Personal relationships broke down



Senior leaders **8%**



School teachers **7%**



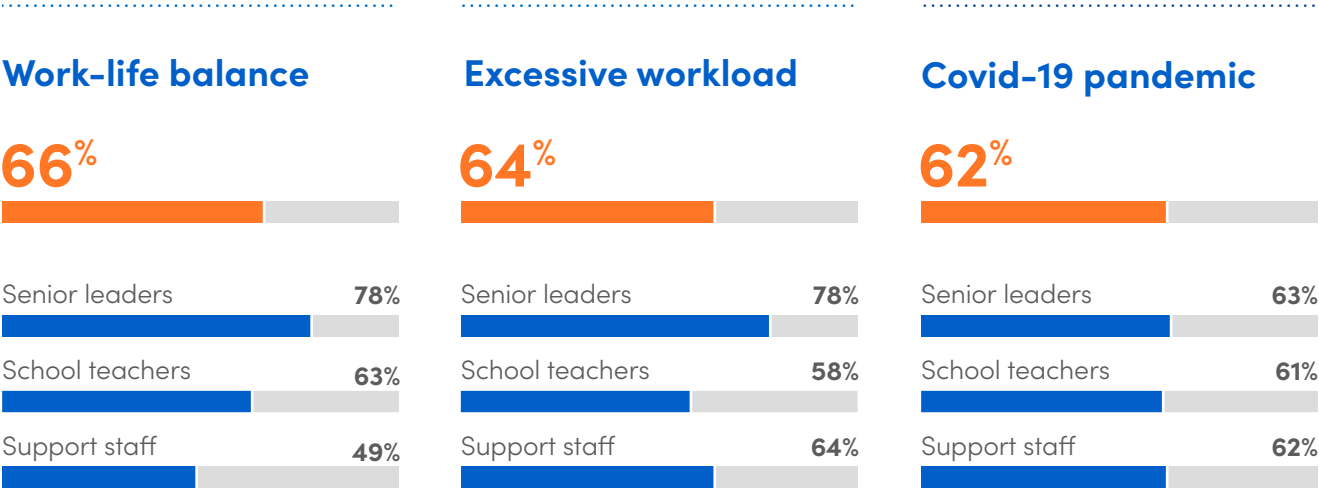
Support staff **3%**



n. 16

## 6. Symptoms related to work issues

The most common work-related issues for staff who had experienced symptoms were work-life balance, excessive workload and the Covid-19 pandemic.



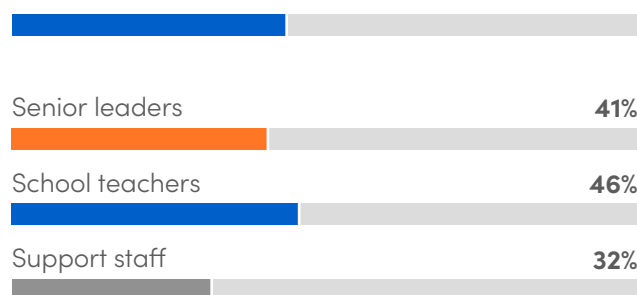
## 7. How do teachers and education staff seek support?

Teachers and education staff who experienced mental health problems at work sought support from four main sources – their family and friends, their partner or spouse, their GP, the NHS or Health professionals, and their peers or colleagues.



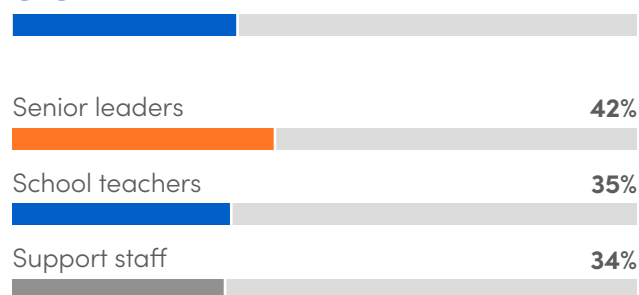
### Family and friends

**44%**



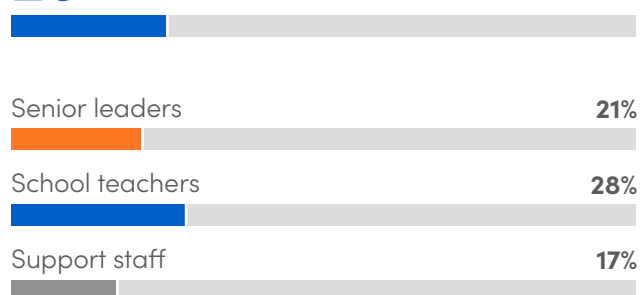
### Partner or spouse

**36%**



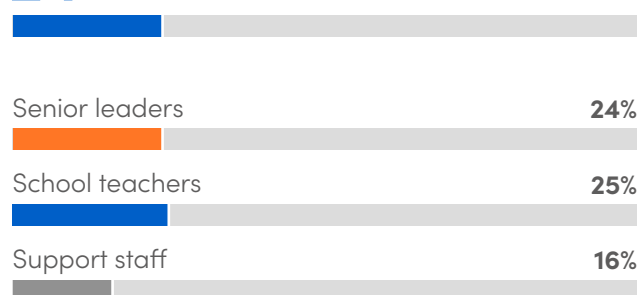
### GP, NHS or Health professionals

**25%**



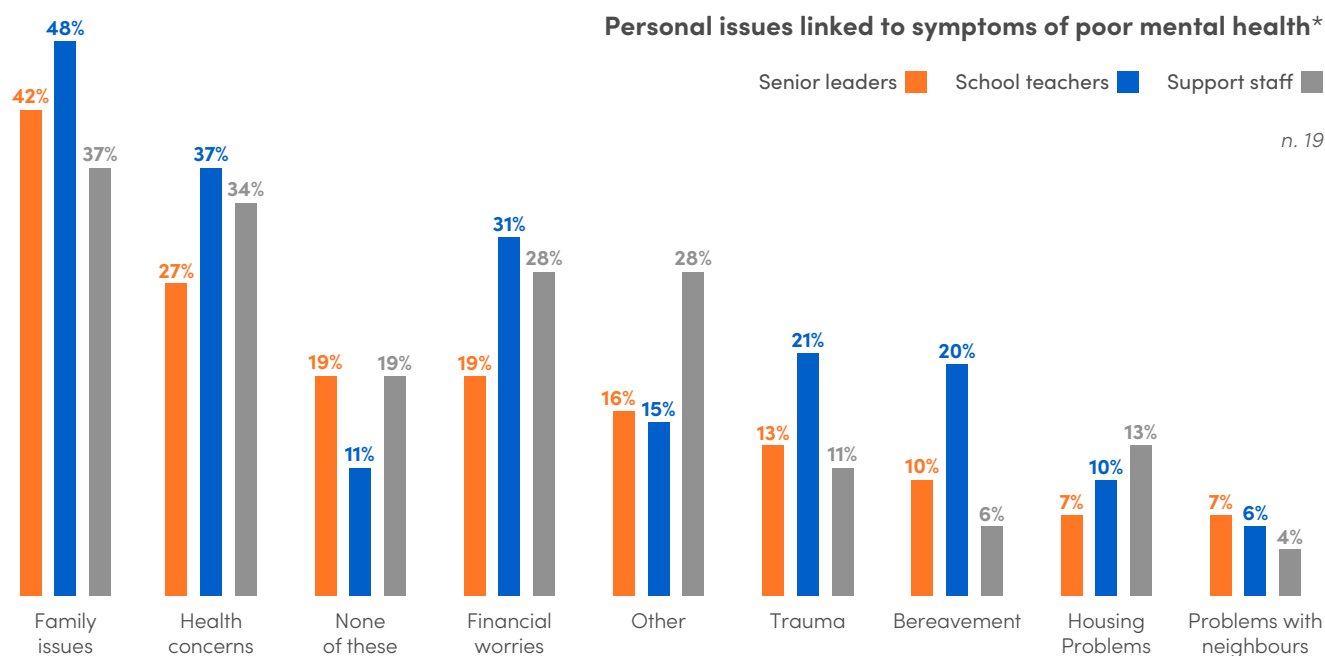
### Peers or colleagues

**24%**



## 8. Personal issues which are linked to the symptoms of poor mental health

The three most common personal reasons for symptoms of poor mental health were family issues, health concerns and financial worries.



In the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, Education Support received

**726**

grant applications from education staff in financial difficulties. The most prevalent issue was housing.<sup>5</sup>

\*Due to small dataset for support staff, the findings can only be treated as indicative

## 9. Wellbeing scores

We use an established questionnaire to determine the wellbeing score for teachers and education staff, namely the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). To understand more about this, go to Appendix [D].

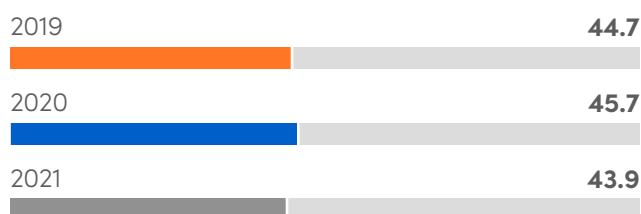
Scores below 40 suggest an individual could be at high risk of major depression and should be advised to seek help (Taggart et al, 2015)<sup>6</sup>.

Those with scores between 41 and 45 should be considered at high risk of psychological distress and increased risk of depression.

**The overall wellbeing score of the education workforce was**


**43.90**   
(3% decrease on 2020)

**This score is lower than the scores recorded by this Index in both 2020 and 2019**




*The full scores for 2021 and 2020 can be found in Appendix D.*


**In addition to the overall score, other findings include:**

**10%**   
(29% to 18%)

decrease in respondents saying they feel relaxed all of the time or often (Q3)

**9%**   
(52% to 44%)

decrease in respondents saying they have been thinking clearly all of the time or often (Q7)

**8%**   
(56% to 48%)

decrease in the number of respondents saying they have felt loved all of the time or often (Q12)

## Comparisons with published wellbeing data for the UK adult population

National WEMWBS scores are available for the adult populations in England<sup>7</sup>, Scotland<sup>8</sup> and Wales<sup>9</sup>. When the scores from the Teacher Wellbeing Index are compared with the most recent nationally available scores for 2021, they are found to be much lower<sup>10</sup>.

### National Teacher Wellbeing Index Score

**43.90**

#### Scotland

**43.97**

**49.40**

#### Northern Ireland

**47.26**

**N/A**

#### Wales

**44.30**

**51.40**

#### England

**43.79**

**52.40**

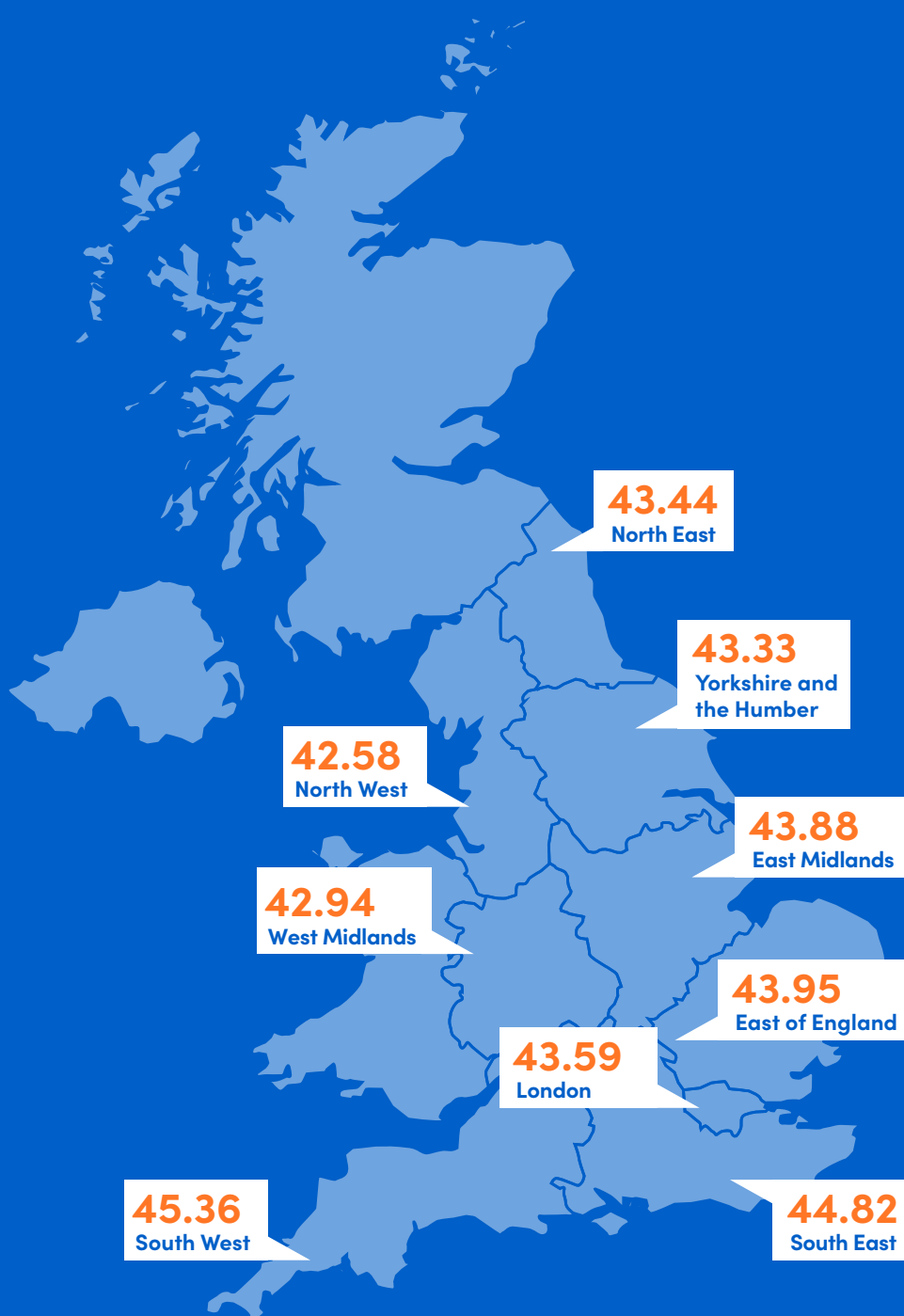
Teacher Wellbeing Index score

National Adult Population score

## Country and regional comparisons - 2021

Staff working in Northern Ireland were found to have the highest wellbeing scores, followed by staff working in Wales. Staff working in Scotland and England had broadly similar results.

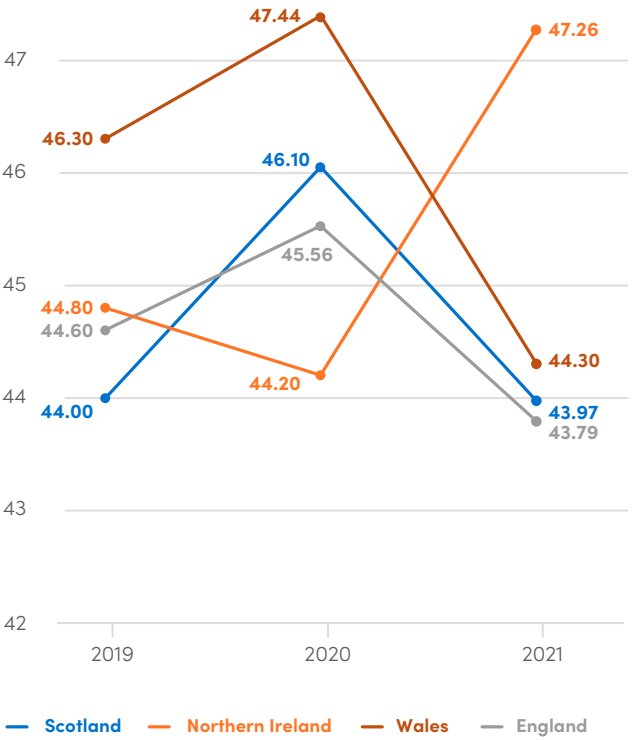
On a regional basis, we found the highest wellbeing in South West and South East, and the lowest wellbeing in the West Midlands and the North West.





Over the past three years, we found that the wellbeing of staff working in Northern Ireland has improved, while the wellbeing of staff working in the other nations has declined.

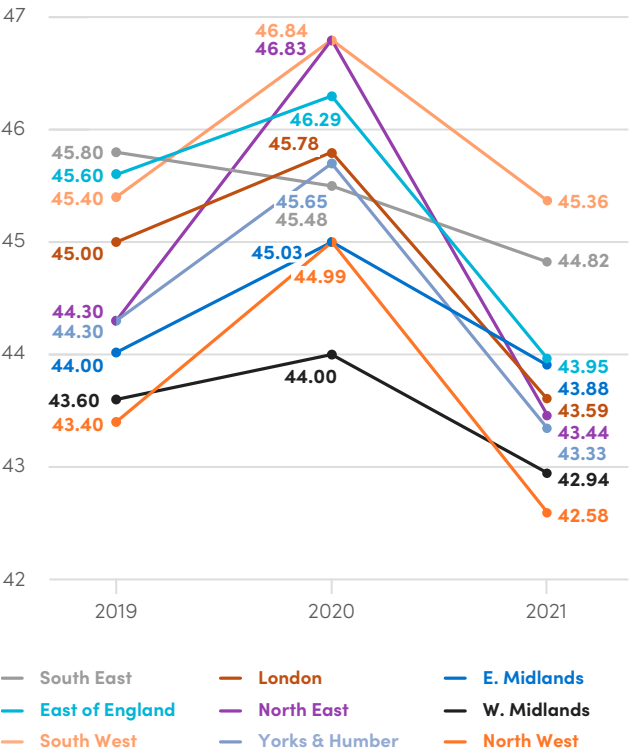
Teacher Wellbeing Index WEMWBS  
Scores by country 2019-2021



n. 23

We have found that the wellbeing of staff working in the English regions is now lower in 2021 than in 2020 and 2019.

WEMWBS Scores by English Region  
2019-2021

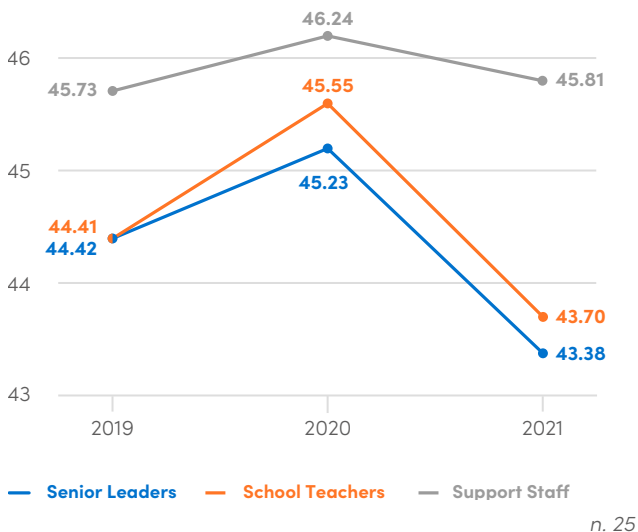


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## Comparison by job role

In the last three years, the wellbeing of senior leaders and school teachers rose in 2020, but in 2021 dropped lower than 2019 levels. The wellbeing of support staff also rose in 2020, but in 2021 was marginally higher than in 2019.

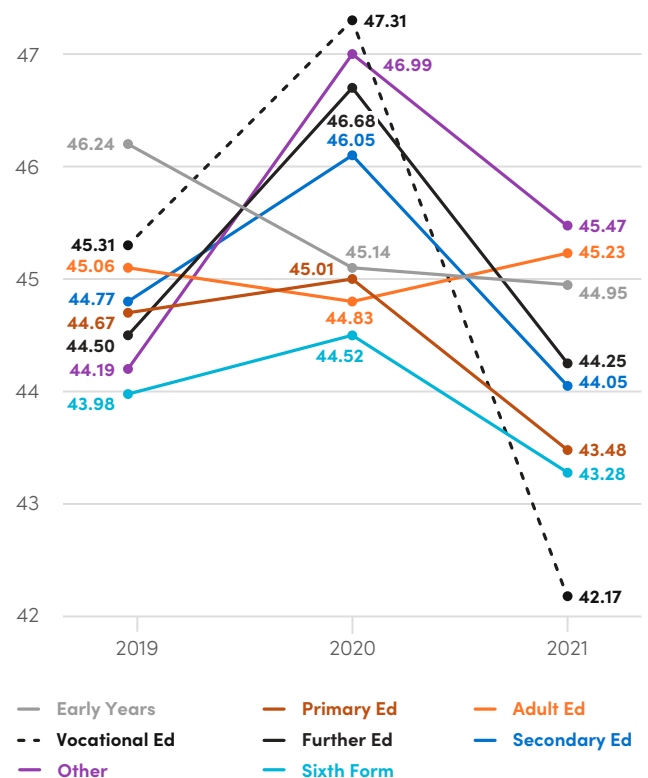
**WEMWBS Scores by Job Role 2019-2021**



## Comparison by education phase

The wellbeing of staff working in the early years, primary, secondary, sixth form college, further education and vocational education sectors is now lower in 2021 than 2020 and 2019. Staff working in the adult education sector showed a marginal improvement on both 2020 and 2019 levels, and staff working in other sectors an improvement but it was not as high as in 2020.

**WEMWBS Scores by Education Sector 2019-2021**



## Observations

**32.9%** of staff had a WEMWBS score of **40** or below, which indicates probable depression.

Staff working for **31+** years had the highest WEMWBS score (**45.25**) and staff working **6-10** years the lowest (**43.24**).

Staff who consider they are well supported by their organisation have a higher WEMWBS score (**46.94**) than those who consider they are not well supported (**40.75**) by their organisation.

Staff who are stressed have a much lower WEMWBS score than staff who are not stressed (**41.71** compared to **49.63** who are not stressed – the latter is much closer to the national average figures).

Staff who felt trusted at work have a higher WEMWBS score (**45.47**) than those who feel distrusted (**36.78**) at work.

Staff who rate themselves with higher levels of resilience, also have a higher WEMWBS score (**46.82**) when compared to those with medium (**41.15**) or low levels of resilience (**33.91**).



## Sample profile

- n.1 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 3,318), Senior leaders (n = 771), School teachers (n = 2,224), Support staff (n = 221)
- n. 2 2021 Base Where the problem was: All education professionals (n = 1,258)
- n. 3 2021 Base: 2021 base: East Midlands (n = 257), North West (n = 377), Wales (n = 123), East of England (n = 249), North East (n = 127), West Midlands (n = 319), South East (n = 535), South West (n = 302), Scotland (n = 269), Northern Ireland (n = 65), London (n = 435), Yorkshire and the Humber (n = 296)
- n. 4 2021 Base: All education staff in the last year (n = 3,077), in the last two years (n = 2,480)
- n. 5 2021 Base: Senior leaders (n = 717), School teachers (n = 2,065), Support staff (n = 202)
- n. 6 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 3,077): 0-2 years (n = 114), 3-5 years (n = 347), 6-10 years (n = 624), 11-20 years (1,129), 21-30 years (n = 647), 31+ years (n = 216)
- n. 7 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,006), Senior leaders (n = 469), School teachers (n = 1,347), Support staff (n = 125)
- n. 8 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,006), Senior leaders (n = 469), School teachers (n = 1,347), Support staff (n = 125)
- n. 9 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,006), Senior leaders (n = 469), School teachers (n = 1,347), Support staff (n = 125)
- n. 10 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,006), Senior leaders (n = 469), School teachers (n = 1,347), Support staff (n = 125)
- n. 11 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,006), Senior leaders (n = 469), School teachers (n = 1,347), Support staff (n = 125)
- n. 12 2021 Base: Anxiety (n = 866), Exhaustion (n = 595), Depression (n = 536), Burnout (n = 484), Acute stress (n = 413)
- n. 13 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 3,354), Senior leaders (n = 776), School teachers (n = 2,251), Support staff (n = 225)
- n. 14 2021 Base: High resilience (n = 1,202), Medium resilience (n = 538), Low resilience (n = 250)
- n. 15 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 3,257), Senior leaders (n = 761), School teachers (n = 2,178), Support staff (n = 218)
- n. 16 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,505), Senior leaders (n = 629), School teachers (n = 1,663), Support staff (n = 142)
- n. 17 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 1,062), Senior leaders (n = 282), School teachers (n = 693), Support staff (n = 51)
- n. 18 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 2,505), Senior leaders (n = 632), School teachers (n = 1,658), Support staff (n = 143)
- n. 19 2021 Base: Senior leaders (n = 179), School teachers (n = 576), Support staff (n = 49)
- n. 20 2021 Base: All education staff (n = 3,354); 2020 Base: All education Staff (3,034), 2019 Base: All education staff (3,019)
- n. 21 2021 Base: England (n = 2,897), Wales (n = 123), Scotland (n = 269), Northern Ireland (n = 65)
- n. 22 2021 Base: North East (n = 127), North West (n = 377), Yorkshire and the Humber (n = 296), East of England (n = 249), West Midlands (n = 319), East Midlands (n = 257), London (n = 435), South East (n = 535), South West (n = 302)
- n. 23 2021 Base: England (n = 2,897), Wales (n = 123), Scotland (n = 269), Northern Ireland (n = 65)
- n. 24 2021 Base: North East (n = 127), North West (n = 377), Yorkshire and the Humber (n = 296), East of England (n = 249), West Midlands (n = 319), East Midlands (n = 257), London (n = 435), South East (n = 535), South West (n = 302)  
2020 Base: North East (n = 116), North West (n = 349), Yorkshire and the Humber (n = 263), East of England (n = 254), West Midlands (n = 278), East Midlands (n = 243), London (n = 330), South East (n = 513), South West (n = 286),  
2019 Base: North East (n = 135), North West (n = 367), Yorkshire and the Humber (n = 290), East of England (n = 237), West Midlands (n = 277), East Midlands (n = 228), London (n = 326), South East (n = 462), South West (n = 280),
- n. 25 2021 Base: Senior leaders (n = 776), School teachers (n = 2,251), Support staff (n = 225)  
2020 Base: Senior leaders (n = 749), School teachers (n = 2,010), Support staff (n = 184)  
2019 Base: Senior leaders (n = 545), School teachers (n = 1,842), Support staff (n = 474)
- n. 26 2021 Base: Early years (n = 147), Primary (n = 1,417), Secondary (n = 1,407), Sixth form college (n = 87), Further education (n = 142), Adult education (n = 43), Vocational education (n = 12), Other (n = 99)

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>ONS (2020). "Coronavirus and anxiety Great Britain: 3 April 2020 to 10 May 2020". Office for National Statistics.

Release date 15 June 2020. Available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/coronavirusandanxietygreatbritain/3april2020to10may2020/>

<sup>2</sup>ONS (2021B). "Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: January to March 2021". Office for National Statistics.

Release date 5 May 2021 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/coronavirusanddepressioninadultsgreatbritain/januarytomarch2021/>

<sup>3</sup>Education Support (2021). "Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts – for the year ended 31 March 2021". Available at

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/yrib5iwi/education-support-annual-report-2021-final-september-2021.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Although burnout is not a medically diagnosable mental disorder, it is an occupational condition. Therefore, GPs can still make an assessment on a patient having burnout.

<sup>5</sup>Education Support (2021). "Trustees' Annual Report & Accounts – for the year ended 31 March 2021". Available at <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/yrib5iwi/education-support-annual-report-2021-final-september-2021.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Taggart, F et al (2015). "Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)". User Guide – Version 2. Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick and NHS Scotland.

<sup>7</sup>The 2019 national WEMWBS score for England is 51.4, as communicated to Education Support by NHS Digital's Lifestyles Team on 23 August 2021.

<sup>8</sup>Scottish Government (2020). "The Scottish Health Survey Dashboard, September 2020. Available at

<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-health-survey/>

<sup>9</sup>Welsh Government (2019). "National Survey for Wales". StatsWales. September 2019. Available at <http://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/National-Survey-for-Wales/Population-Health/Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing/>

<sup>10</sup>The 2019 national WEMWBS score for England is 51.4, as communicated to Education Support by NHS Digital's Lifestyles Team on 23 August 2021.



**#TWIX2021**