



Design to Living

Research to support young
people's mental health and
wellbeing

Worry *vb* -ies, -rying, -ried. 1 to be or cause to be anxious or uneasy. 2 (tr) to disturb the peace of mind of; bother.
n, *pl* -ries. 3 a state or feeling of anxiety.
4 a person or thing that causes anxiety.
5 an act of worrying.

Foreword

It has been estimated that around one in five young people will experience mental health problems during their adolescence, many of which can continue into adulthood.

This research was undertaken to help us understand what young people in Northern Ireland have concerns about – now and in their future. It also explores what helps them cope with these issues.

We know that many young people experience emotional upset, mental ill health and, in extreme cases, self-harm. It is important for us all to understand how young people cope with challenges to their mental health and wellbeing, and how we can help them develop and reach their full potential.

Following the successful Generation 2000 conference, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland established a Children and Young Persons' Intersectoral Forum to take forward a number of recommendations.

A 'Health Cluster Group' was convened by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland to explore how recommendations on health issues could be addressed. One focus which emerged was mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The Agency, through its support for the 'Design for Life' competition organised by Action Mental Health, saw an opportunity to align its work with the Intersectoral Forum and the Youth Council to develop further support for young people's mental wellbeing. A regional partnership, 'Design for Living', was formed to develop plans for a youth and practitioners' conference (25-26 April 2001), which would offer information on practical ways that young people's mental health is being supported here.

The information in this report has formed the basis of the conference themes of creativity, knowledge of support sources, physical activity and self-esteem as protective ways to support young people's mental wellbeing. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland in providing funding for this study.



Dr Brian Gaffney
Chief Executive, The Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland

Introduction

The years between 16 and 24 are when individuals engage in establishing independence, forming new relationships, and developing an adult identity and self-image.¹ These are formative years, when individuals make choices, develop careers and begin to cope (or fail to cope) with the pressures of adult life.

Mental health problems such as sleep disorders, stress, anxiety and behavioural and emotional disorders are relatively common among young people.² It is estimated that around 20% of adolescents experience such problems, and between 2% and 8% of them suffer from major depressions.² Many of these mental health problems may continue into adulthood.²

There are currently around 657,000 young people aged 25 and under living in Northern Ireland.³ The mental health of young people is therefore an area of concern, and interventions among young people have been identified as a priority.⁴ It is important that young people are given the support they need to achieve good mental health and wellbeing.

Previous research has highlighted differences in how young men and women express their worries and in their coping skills.⁵ Females are considered to be more likely to communicate their worries and to use social support to help themselves. Males, on the other hand, are more likely to keep their problems to themselves or to ignore them.¹

The extreme consequence of poor mental health is suicide, and again there are differences in how young men and women are affected. Overall, males in Northern Ireland are three times more likely than females to commit suicide. Young male suicides are a particular cause for concern - a quarter of all male suicides occur among those aged between 15 and 24.⁶ Whether this reflects the fact that the mental health problems faced by young males are more serious than those of young females, or that young females have more effective coping skills to help them face such problems, is as yet uncertain.¹

The aim of this research is to understand more about the worries young people in Northern Ireland have, and also to find out what they do to help themselves feel better, and where they get help or advice in times of difficulty. The research was built on a previous study which developed a questionnaire to identify issues of concern to young people in Northern Ireland.⁷

The findings will enable the 'Design for Living' partnership, which involves the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland, Action Mental Health

and The Youth Council for Northern Ireland, to take action to inform young people in Northern Ireland of the positive steps that they can take to support their own mental wellbeing.

Methodology

Questions on what young people worry about and what they do to make themselves feel better when anxious or down, were included in a Northern Ireland wide omnibus survey in October and November 2000 (see Appendix 2 for questionnaire).

The survey used a quota-controlled sample representative of the Northern Ireland population. The quota controls were by gender, age, social class and region. Interviewing was carried out at 50 randomly selected sampling points in Northern Ireland.

Two waves of the survey yielded a sample of 414 young people aged between 16 and 25. Table 6 in Appendix 1 provides a profile of respondents in the sample.

The data has been analysed by gender, age, social class (based on the occupation of the chief income earner in the household and divided into ABC1, C2 and DE groupings) and whether the young person works (full or part-time), is unemployed or is a student. For some issues where the differences in response are considered notable, findings are also reported in relation to community background.

Key findings

What are young people worried about?

The young people taking part in the survey were first asked to express what sorts of things they worry about most often; what gets them down, makes them feel stressed or makes them lose sleep. Only 4% said they didn't worry about anything. The main issues to emerge were worries around school, work or career. More than half (54%) of respondents cited worries around these issues, such as not being able to get a job or get on a course, or uncertainty about what job or course to choose, or anxiety over schoolwork and exams.

Lack of money was the next main issue to emerge, with 53% of young people citing it as a worry. Fifteen percent of young people surveyed cited self-esteem issues such as appearance, lack of confidence, popularity and their health. Fifteen percent also cited worries about the health and safety of their children or other family members and friends. Nine percent worried about not being able to find a partner or problems with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

The respondents were then prompted with a range of issues (see questionnaire in Appendix 2) and asked to indicate all those they ever worry about. The issues that young people said they worry about most frequently are presented in Table 2. Anxiety about money still emerged as one of the main issues. However, personal concerns such as worries about work and school fell further down the list when respondents were prompted with social issues, such as a return to the Troubles and crime and violence.

Not having enough money

More than two thirds (68%) of all the young people said they worry about not having enough money. This varies by gender, with slightly more females than males worrying about money (71% of females and 64% of males).

More of those in social group DE worry about not having enough money (74%) than in the C2 (69%) and ABC1 (62%) social groups. The difference is most marked among the 16-19 year old group where 73% of DEs worry about not having money compared to 59% of ABC1s. There is little variation by work or student status, for those who worry about money. The group that

Table 1: Most common worries (unprompted)

	%
Not having enough money	53
Work/career/job security	35
Schoolwork/exams/university work	19
My family and friends	9
Family problems (rows/divorce/abuse)	7
My children (health/schooling/safety/drugs)	6
My appearance	5
The future	5
My health	5
Relationships (boys/girls)	4
Problems with boyfriend/girlfriend	3
Being single (not being able to find a partner)	2
Return to the Troubles/Northern Ireland/politics	2
My popularity	2
Death	2

Base = 414

(A full table of results for this question is presented in Table 7, Appendix 3).

Table 2: Most common worries (prompted)

	%
Not having any money	68
A return to the Troubles	52
The future	50
My appearance (weight/height/looks)	47
Crime or violence	43
Not being able to get a job	35
Not being able to make a decision about what I'm going to do	35
The drugs problem in Northern Ireland	33
Being in a job/course I don't enjoy	30
Schoolwork/exams	30
Problems with my boyfriend/girlfriend	29
Lack of confidence	27

Base = 414

(A full table of results for this question is presented in Table 8, Appendix 3).

worries most about lack of money is those who are not working or studying (73%). Slightly more of those in full-time employment (70%), worry about money than full-time students (66%) or those with part-time jobs (56%).

Return to the Troubles

Just over half of all the young people (52%) said that they worried about a return to the Troubles. A higher proportion of those from a Catholic background (58%) reported this worry compared to those from a Protestant background (48%). Among Protestant respondents a greater number of 20-25 year olds (53%) worried about a return to the Troubles than 16-19 year olds (40%). Similar proportions of young and older Catholics were worried about this issue.

More of those in the ABC1 social class grouping reported this worry (59%) than in the C2 and DE class groupings (47%).

The future

Half of the sample (50%) said they worry about the future. More females reported this worry (55%) than males (45%).

Appearance

Forty seven percent of young people reported that they worried about their appearance. There was a notable difference between the genders, with 66% of females reporting this worry compared to 28% of males. Young men and women aged 16-19 years old were much more likely to report worrying about their appearance. Among males, 39% of 16-19 year olds and 18% of 20-25 year olds reported that they worried about their appearance,

while among females, 80% of the 16-19 year olds and 57% of 20-25 year olds reported this worry.

Crime and violence

More than two in five young people (43%) reported that they worried about crime and violence. Females were more likely to report this worry than males (48% compared to 38%). A higher proportion of Protestant respondents worried about crime or violence (46%) compared to Catholic respondents (37%). However, there is a variation between the age groups, with more 20-25 year old Protestant respondents reporting this worry than 16-19 year old Protestants (52% compared to 38%). The pattern is reversed for Catholic respondents with a higher proportion of 16-19 year olds (44%) worrying about crime and violence than 20-25 year olds (31%).

Not being able to get a job

One third of the sample (35%) worries about not being able to get a job. More females reported this worry than males (39% compared with 31%). A greater proportion of younger males reported this worry than 20-25 year olds (38% compared to 25%). There was no marked variation by age for females.

Predictably, a greater proportion of those who were not working reported worrying about not getting a job (52%), than those in full-time education (38%), or in full-time employment (22%). More of those in the C2 and DE social groupings reported this worry (40%) than in the ABC1 grouping (29%).

Table 3: How young people feel about their future

	All	Males	Females
	%	%	%
Hopeless, there are too many problems	7	6	8
Worried, I'm not sure if things will get sorted	12	10	13
OK, things will sort themselves out	31	29	33
Optimistic, I think I will do OK	48	54	43
Don't know	2	2	3

Base = 414

Not being able to make a decision about what I'm going to do

Just over a third of young people (35%) said they worry about not being able to decide what they are going to do in terms of work, further education or training. More 16-19 year olds (42%) reported this worry than the 20-25 year olds (30%).

The drugs problem in Northern Ireland

One third of the sample reported worrying about the drug problem in Northern Ireland. More females (40%) than males (26%) worry about this issue. There was no notable variation by age or any other variables.

Being in a job/course I don't enjoy

Thirty percent worry about being in a job or course that they don't enjoy.

Schoolwork/exams

Of those who were in full-time education, 60% reported worrying about schoolwork and exams.

Problems with boyfriend/girlfriend

More than one in four young people (29%) said they worry about their relationship with their girlfriend/boyfriend, partner or spouse. Females (31%) were more likely to report this worry than males (26%). Fewer 20-25 year olds (26%) said they worried about this than those aged 16-19 (32%).

Lack of confidence

Just over one in four of the sample (27%) report worrying about their lack of confidence. More females (32%) than males (22%) said they worried about this. More of those in the younger age group (33%) worry about lack of confidence than in the older age group (23%).

Fewer young people who work either full or part-time said they worried about lack of confidence (19%), while similar proportions of those who do not work or are in full-time education reported having this worry (35%).

A greater proportion of those in the ABC1 and DE social class groupings worry about lack of confidence (28% and 32%) compared to those in the C2 group (18%). More Catholic respondents worry about lack of confidence than their Protestant counterparts (35% compared to 22%).

How young people feel about their future

The young people taking part in the survey were then presented with four statements and asked which statement best described how they felt about their future (Table 3). The majority (79%) chose a statement that said they felt OK or optimistic about their future. A substantial proportion worried about the future, with more than one in ten (12%) saying they were not sure things will get sorted and a further 7% reporting that they felt hopeless because they perceived there to be too many problems ahead.

Females were less optimistic than males. Those who are not working and those in social class DE were least optimistic. Conversely, the most optimistic group were older males in social class ABC1.

Seven percent of the sample thought their future was hopeless. The actual number in the sample giving this response was 28. This figure is too small to allow for analysis that could reliably reveal the characteristics of this group. However, the group comprises more females than males, and more young people who are unemployed or in full-time work, than part-time workers or full-time students.

What young people do to make themselves feel better

The respondents were first asked to express unprompted what they do to make themselves feel better whenever they feel worried or down. Table 9 in Appendix 3 lists the most common results.

Table 4: What young people do to make themselves feel better (prompted)

What would you do to make yourself feel better or less worried?	%
Listen to music	74
Talk to my friends	65
Arrange a night out with friends	56
Talk to my girlfriend/boyfriend	40
Keep active/play a sport	37
Talk to my parents	34
Go shopping	34
Drink	34
Eat	27
Smoke	25
Write about things/paint/draw/play music	15
Kick a ball around	14
Talk to no one/try to sort myself out	13
Talk to another adult/youth leader/teacher/lecturer	7
Use drugs	4
Talk to someone at an advice service/agency	3

Base = 414

The most frequently cited methods were talking to friends or having a night out with friends.

Young people were then prompted with a list of common methods that might be used to ease worries and asked to indicate those they use themselves (Table 4). The most common things young people do to ease their worries are listen to music, talk to friends and arrange a night out with friends. The least popular thing to do was to talk to someone at an advice service or agency or to take drugs.

Gender differences in coping

While males and females chose the same top three activities to alleviate worry, there were gender differences in the other activities used to cope with worries (Table 5). Fourth on the list for females is to go shopping whereas fourth on the list for males is to keep active or play a sport, a response that came well down the list for females (ranked 10). Fifth place for females is to talk to their boyfriend, whereas fifth place for males is to drink, with talking to their girlfriend in sixth place. The next most popular approach for both is talking to parents (ranked sixth for females and seventh for males). Choosing a more formal route to coping, such as talking to another adult, for example, youth

leaders or teachers or contacting an advice service, came bottom of the list for both males and females.

Age group and other differences

With regard to physical activity, more of the younger age group said that they used keeping active or playing a sport as a way of helping themselves feel better (44% of those aged 16-19 years old, compared to 32% of those aged 20-25 years old). Those in social class grouping ABC1 were also more likely to say they engage in physical activity as a way of making themselves feel better (44%) than those in social classes C2 (39%) and DE (27%). Those who are not working were also less likely to give this answer (17%) than those in employment (35%) or those in full-time education (51%).

Shopping was a popular means of alleviating the stress of worry for females. However, those in social class C2 were less likely to say they would go shopping (26%) compared with those in ABC1 and DE (37%).

A third of the sample said that they would drink in order to make themselves feel better. Males gave this answer much more frequently than females (43% compared to 25%). Those working full-time

Table 5: Coping activities by gender (ranked)

What would you do to make yourself feel better or less worried?

	Rank males	Rank females
Listen to music	1	1
Talk to my friends	2	2
Arrange a night out with friends	3	3
Keep active/play a sport	4	10
Drink	5	9
Talk to my girlfriend/boyfriend	6	5
Talk to my parents	7	6
Kick a ball around	8	15
Smoke	9	8
Eat	10	7
Talk to no one/try to sort myself out	11	12
Go shopping	12	4
Write about things/paint/draw/play music	13	11
Talk to another adult/youth leader/teacher/lecturer	14	13
Use drugs	15	15
Talk to someone at an advice service/agency	16	14

Base = 414

were more likely to say that they would drink to cheer themselves up (40%) than those in education or not working (29%).

A quarter of the sample said that they would smoke to make themselves feel better. Slightly more females (27%) than males (22%) gave this answer. More of the older respondents would smoke compared with the younger ones (28% compared to 20%). Those in social class DE were more likely to say that they would smoke (29%) than those in the ABC1 and C2 social class groups (24%). Those who are not working were more likely to give this reply (32%) than those in full or part-time employment (26%) or those in full-time education (18%).

Young people were then asked to highlight the three things which they would be most likely to do. The most frequent replies were: listen to music, talk to friends, and arrange a night out.

Discussion

Worry

Young people worry about a range of issues that relate to different aspects of their lives. The most frequently reported worries were the personal ones such as worry over money, appearance, academic performance and employment. Social interaction, including relationships with family, partners, girlfriends or boyfriends, was another common source of worry. Developments in society were also a concern, with a large proportion of young people worrying about a return to the Troubles and about crime and violence.

It is acknowledged that females are more likely to report their worries than males⁵ and are more likely to 'ruminate'⁸ about stress, whereas males turn their attention away from it. Findings in this survey demonstrate the same phenomenon. Most noticeable was the higher proportion of females worrying about their appearance, but females were also more likely to worry about family problems, the future and crime and violence. Whether this higher rate of reported anxiety reflects that females actually worry more, or have more stressful lives, than males do, or merely that they are more likely to identify and talk about their concerns cannot be concluded from this study.¹

Table 10 (see Appendix 3) shows that for nearly all prompted worries, more females report the worry than males. For this reason, it is worth highlighting those issues that appear to concern males slightly more than females. These were 'intimidation', 'being single and not being able to find a partner', 'not being able to talk to my parents' and 'my own use of drugs or alcohol'.

Most of the personal worries appeared to decrease in the older age group. Anxiety about appearance, not being able to get a job, school and exam work, problems with a partner and lack of confidence were all less frequent among the older participants. Other worries, such as family problems and money, increased slightly with the age of the participants. More of the older participants worry about a return to the Troubles and about crime and violence.

A higher proportion of the ABC1 social class group was concerned about a return to the Troubles and about schoolwork and exams than those in other social class groups. Those in the DE category were more likely to worry about having enough money and about crime and violence, and, together with the C2 group, they were most likely to worry about not being able to get a job, and about the future.

Feelings about the future

Although 79% of the young people reported feeling OK or optimistic about the future, one in five felt anxious about it or felt that the future looked hopeless and filled with problems. Females were more likely than males to have a negative view of the future, and this trend was more marked among the older participants.

Employment and socioeconomic status seem to be linked with the attitudes that young people have towards the future. Those in the DE social class group, together with those who are not working, were less likely than others to feel optimistic about the future.

Ways to make oneself feel better

Listening to music, socialising and talking with friends, family or partners were the most common ways in which young people tried to make themselves feel better when worried or feeling down.

These coping strategies were common to both genders. In addition to these strategies, females were more likely than males to go shopping, to eat and to smoke in order to make themselves feel better. Males, on the other hand, were more likely than females to engage in physical activities, and to drink.

Those in the 20-25 year old age group were more likely to say that they would smoke in order to cheer themselves up, and they were also slightly more likely to say they would drink. The younger respondents were more likely to engage in sport, and slightly more likely to listen to music.

Another point worth noting is that few young people of either gender would seek the help of a professional, for example, a teacher or a youth leader, or go to an advice agency or service. This has also been noted in previous research.¹

Conclusions

This study used a quota controlled sample and inferences cannot be drawn for the whole population of 16-25 year olds. However, it provides an indication of young people's current concerns. In a rapidly changing society, there is a need for young people to be consulted on a regular basis to identify their needs.

The results obtained in this study highlight a number of issues which have implications for supporting young people. Adolescence is a time when stress is experienced: personal worries about appearance or having money or employment, and social worries about relationships are part of growing up. How young people cope with these stresses will make a difference to their future positive mental health and wellbeing, so learning about and discussing positive ways to address common worries is important. Life and social skills education, personal development programmes and job search skills and careers guidance are essential and should be available and accessible to young people.

The importance of the community context of worries needs to be emphasised. On average, young people in Northern Ireland have experienced double the number of negative life events and report a much higher stress or impact score than young people in other countries.⁹ It is of interest that worries about a return to the Troubles, and worries about crime and violence were evident among older participants in the study.

Research indicates that young people who live in areas socially or economically disadvantaged areas perceive their neighbourhood as more dangerous. There is a direct relationship between the degree to which an area is perceived to be dangerous and reported levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety and conduct disorder. Work to address health inequalities in Northern Ireland should take into account the impact of crime and violence on mental health and wellbeing.¹⁰

Gender differences in worries and in coping mechanisms were evident in this study, and there is in particular a need to be aware of the emotional difficulties experienced by young men who may find it hard to express personal problems. The emphasis in supporting young people should be on adding to their knowledge and experience of a range of positive ways to relieve worry.

The study provides evidence of ways that young people do help themselves. Involvement in physical activity is a recognised support for mental wellbeing, used by males more than females. Innovative ways to engage young people in lifelong physical activity will have an impact on mental wellbeing and should be developed.

Of note in this study was how few respondents would seek the help of a teacher or youth leader, or go to an advice agency or service. It remains vital that service providers continue to understand the needs of young people and to respond accordingly. We need to ensure that services are readily accessible and acceptable to young people. By sharing good practice, we can all learn from those interventions that have proved effective.

The focus in addressing young people's mental health and wellbeing needs must continue to be on increasing their resilience. If the 'least resilient' young people are characterised by isolation, lack of support, low self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness, and uncertain futures, we need to continue to find effective ways to address the beliefs, attitudes, and structures in society which compound these so that young people are strengthened in the process.¹¹

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Appendix 1: Profile of the respondents

Table 6: Profile of respondents in the sample

	N	% of total sample
Gender:		
Male	200	48
Female	214	52
Age:		
16-19 years	165	40
20-25 years	249	60
Social class:		
ABC1	177	43
C2	101	24
DE	136	33
Work status:		
Full-time work	152	37
Part-time work	48	11
Not working	90	22
Full-time education	124	30

Appendix 2: Survey questionnaire

SELF COMPLETION SECTION FOR ALL 16-25 YEAR OLDS

Thank you for agreeing to complete this section. Please take your time and read through the questions below carefully. If you have any queries, please ask the interviewer.

Q.1 What sorts of things do you worry about most often?
(These are things that get you down, stress you, or make you lose sleep.)

Q.2a) Here are some things that other people your age have said they worry about. Tick any of those that you would ever worry about.

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

SCHOOL/JOBS/CAREER

- Not being able to get a job
- Choosing a job or course
- Getting a job or course
- Starting a job or course
- Being in a job/course I don't enjoy
- Schoolwork/exams
- Not being able to make a decision about what I'm going to do now/in future
- Not having any money

MYSELF

- I don't know how to change my situation
- I feel I just can't change my situation
- I worry about the future
- My appearance (weight, height, looks)
- I worry about being shy
- I feel lonely
- I lack confidence
- I have no one to talk to
- I have nothing to look forward to
- I worry about being bullied

MY FAMILY

- Family problems (rows, divorce, violence or abuse)
- Not being able to talk to my parents
- Not getting on with my brother/sister

RELATIONSHIPS

Being single (not being able to find a partner)

Problems with my boyfriend/girlfriend

I worry about my sexuality

I worry about other sexual issues
(eg getting pregnant, sexually transmitted disease)

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

I worry about my friends' use of drugs or alcohol

I worry about my parents' use of drugs or alcohol

I worry about my own use of drugs or alcohol

NORTHERN IRELAND

I worry about the drugs problem in Northern Ireland

I worry about crime or violence

I worry about intimidation

I worry about a return to the Troubles

Q.2b) Please write below the 3 things from the list that you would worry about most often.

Q.3 Here are some statements people your age have made on how they feel about the future.
Tick the statement which best describes how you feel about your future.

Hopeless, there are too many problems

OK, things will sort themselves out

Worried, I'm not sure that things will get sorted

Optimistic, I think I will do OK

Q.4 Thinking about the last time you were worried or felt down in some way, what things did you do to help yourself feel better or less worried?

Q.5a) Here is a list of things that other people your age have said they do to make themselves feel better. Which of these things would you do to help yourself feel better or less worried?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Listen to music

Write about things/paint/draw/play music

Keep active/play a sport

Kick a ball around

- Talk to my friends
- Talk to my girlfriend/boyfriend
- Talk to my parents
- Talk to no-one/try to sort myself out
- Talk to another adult/youth leader/teacher/lecturer
- Talk to someone at an advice service/agency
- Go shopping
- Arrange a night out with friends
- Smoke
- Drink
- Eat
- Use drugs

Q.5b) Again, could you choose the 3 things that you would be most likely do to help yourself feel better or less worried.

Q.6 Name a song you love, or a book, or poem you have read that really lifts your mood when you feel down. (If it's a song tell us the song title and name of the band. If it's a book or poem tell us the title and author.)

Appendix 3: Full responses

Table 7: Unprompted worries (full response)

What sorts of things do you worry about most often?

	%
Not having enough money	53
Work/career/job security	34
Schoolwork/exams/university work	19
My family and friends	9
Family problems (rows/divorce/abuse)	7
My children (health/schooling/safety/drugs)	6
My appearance	5
I worry about the future	5
I worry about my health	5
I worry about relationships (boys/girls)	4
Nothing/have no worries	4
Problems with boyfriend/girlfriend	3
Being single (not being able to find a partner)	2
Return to the Troubles/Northern Ireland/politics	2
I worry about my popularity	2
Death	2
Staying out of trouble	1
Not being able to make a decision about the future	1
I worry about my own use of drugs or alcohol	1
House security	1
Sexual issues (getting pregnant)	1
Poor countries/state of the world	1
I worry about crime or violence	1
I worry about being shy	1
I lack confidence	1
I worry about being bullied	1
Loss of sleep/depression/stress	1
I worry about life in general	1
I worry about intimidation	1
I worry about paramilitary groups	1
Homelessness	1
Other	6

Base = 414

Table 8: Prompted worries (full response)

Here are some things people your age say they worry about.
Tick any of those that you would ever worry about.

	% of all	% of males	% of females
Not having any money	68	64	71
I worry about a return to the Troubles	52	50	54
I worry about the future	50	45	55
My appearance (weight/height/looks)	47	28	66
I worry about crime or violence	43	38	48
Not being able to get a job	35	31	39
Not being able to make a decision about what I'm going to do	35	33	36
I worry about the drugs problem in Northern Ireland	33	26	40
Being in a job/course I don't enjoy	30	29	31
Schoolwork/exams	30	30	29
Problems with my boyfriend/girlfriend	29	26	31
I lack confidence	27	22	32
Starting a job or course	27	22	32
Family problems, rows/divorce/violence/abuse	27	22	31
I worry about intimidation	24	26	23
Getting a job or course	22	18	25
I worry about my friend's use of drugs or alcohol	22	21	23
Choosing a job or course	21	20	22
Being single/not being able to find a partner	21	22	20
Not being able to talk to my parents	16	17	15
Not getting on with my brother or sister	16	16	16
I worry about being shy	14	12	16
I feel lonely	14	12	15
I don't know how to change my situation	12	10	13
I feel I just can't change my situation	12	11	13
I have nothing to look forward to	10	8	12
I worry about my own use of drugs or alcohol	8	13	4
I have no-one to talk to	7	5	9
I worry about being bullied	4	5	3
I worry about my sexuality	4	4	5

Base = 414

Table 9: Most common methods young people use to make themselves feel better (unprompted)

What would you do to make you feel better or less worried?

	%
Talk to my friends	18
Arrange a night out with friends	13
Go out/get fresh air/walk	13
Listen to music	10
Keep active/play a sport	9
Drink	8
Talk to my parents	8
Go shopping	7
Talk to my girlfriend/boyfriend/spouse	5
Talk to another adult/youth leader/teacher/lecturer/advice service	5
Try to forget about it/do nothing	4
Eat	3
Work harder	2
Think about things I do have	2
Watch TV	2

Base = 414

Table 10: Things young people do to make themselves feel better (prompted)

Which of these things would you do to make yourself feel better or less worried?

	% of all	% of males	% of females
Listen to music	74	77	72
Talk to my friends	65	60	69
Arrange a night out with friends	56	54	58
Talk to my girlfriend/boyfriend	40	36	44
Keep active/play a sport	37	52	23
Drink	34	43	25
Talk to my parents	34	28	40
Go shopping	34	15	52
Eat	27	21	32
Smoke	25	22	27
Write about things/paint/draw/play music	15	13	17
Kick a ball around	14	26	2
Talk to no one/try to sort myself out	13	16	11
Talk to another adult/youth leader/teacher/lecturer	7	7	7
Talk to someone at an advice service or agency	3	4	3
Use drugs	4	6	2

Base = 414



Youth Council for Northern Ireland