

The Mix's helpline trends: 2019-2022

Post-pandemic challenges for young people: back to 'normal'?



Written by: Bohdana Dock, Holly Turner & Devante Kumar
Designed by: Emily Cohen

THE MIX
Essential support for young people

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Summary | 4 |
| Young people & suicidal thinking | 6 |
| Depression & anxiety | 10 |
| Self-harm | 14 |
| Stress & anger | 16 |
| Loneliness, relationships & family | 19 |
| School, education & exam stress | 22 |
| Self-worth or self-esteem, disordered eating, bullying & body image | 25 |
| Autism & symptoms of trauma, flashbacks or PTSD | 30 |
| Money & benefits | 33 |
| Sexuality & LGBTQIA+ issues | 35 |
| Difficulty sleeping & drug use | 37 |
| Demographic information | 40 |
| Method | 41 |
| Limitations | 41 |
| Glossary | 42 |
| Signposts | 42 |

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to share a deeper insight into the lives of young people, with a specific focus on understanding the challenges and issues faced by them during 2022, so that the best possible support can be provided to them.

We have been through a turbulent few years, defined by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the UK's cost of living crisis. In February 2022, all the remaining COVID-19 restrictions were removed, and lives of people returned to some extent to what they looked like prior to the pandemic. Does this mean that after years of worsening mental health, young people's wellbeing is finally improving? Are the issues they were experiencing due to the pandemic subsiding?

To answer these questions, we have reviewed our data from 2019 to 2022 on key topics discussed by young people on the helpline* when seeking support. While this report is mainly focusing on the trends experienced in 2022, without setting this year into a wider context that is strongly dominated by the pandemic, we would have a very limited picture. The Mix monitors over 100 topics on the helpline, tracking whether these are discussed during conversations. This report presents data on a selection of key issues showing the most dramatic changes over the last couple of years. It also identifies issues that are often discussed together to illustrate how these are interconnected.



Trigger warning: This report includes references to self-harm, abuse, suicide, substance use and bereavement. If you are looking for support for any of the issues mentioned, you can find information at the end of the report.

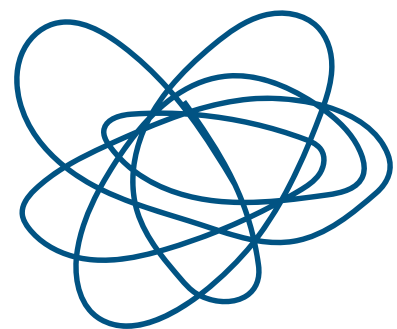
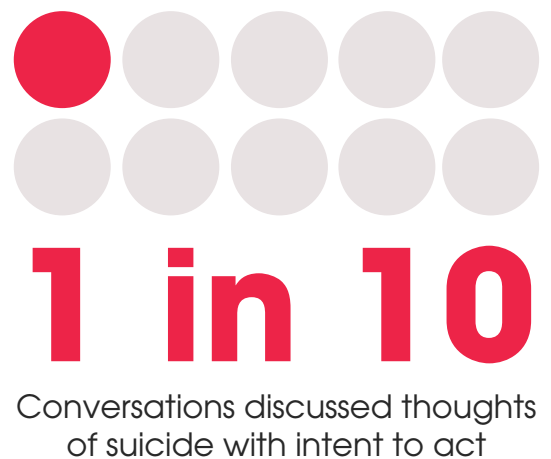
Summary

Worryingly, The Mix's data indicates that **suicidal thinking** among young people has become far more common in 2022. The trends for the past four years show that the proportion of conversations discussing suicidal thinking peaked in 2022, and broadly kept rising throughout the year.

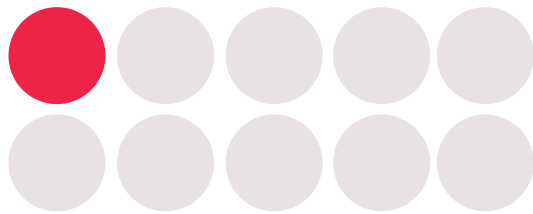
Similarly, the share of conversations discussing **thoughts of suicide with intent to act** peaked in 2022, with 1 in 10 conversations discussing these thoughts, and the proportion of cases mentioning a **previous suicide attempt** doubled year on year in 2022. It is likely that other factors apart from the pandemic have also contributed to this dramatic increase in suicidal thinking, such as a rise in loneliness or the lack of youth or mental health services for young people that could help them deal with their issues early, before they grew into complex problems. Lack of capacity within services that would traditionally provide support to people with suicidal thoughts may also play a role.

Levels of **depression and anxiety** increased dramatically during the pandemic, with many young people experiencing mental distress for the first time. Our data indicates that although lives have 'returned back to normal' in many respects during 2022, prevalence of anxiety and depression remained high among young people throughout the year, well above the pre-pandemic levels.

We have also seen that self-harm is becoming more common. Although cases mentioning self-harm were relatively stable on the helpline during the early phase of the pandemic, they rose dramatically throughout 2021 and 2022, ending the year at near peak levels.

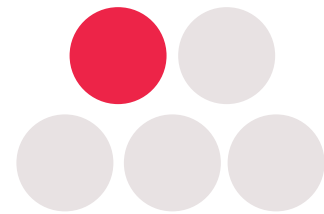


Out of the topics monitored by The Mix, issues connected to school/education, family, loneliness and body image were among those rising the most sharply over the past four years, with 1 in 10 conversations discussing school/education, and over 1 in 5 discussing family issues in 2022; all stayed worryingly far above the pre-pandemic levels.



1 in 10

of conversations discussed school and education in 2022



1 in 5

Over 1 in 5 conversations discussed family issues in 2022

Additionally, for 2022, our data shows a dramatic increase in the proportion of cases discussing:



Stress



Flashbacks/PTSD



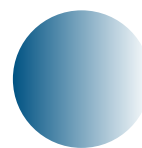
Bullying



Self-worth or self-esteem



Difficulties sleeping/insomnia



Autism



Relationships/friendships

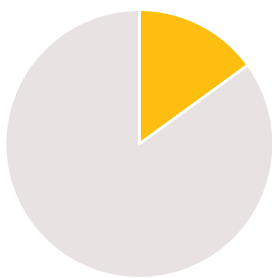
Many of these issues are likely connected to difficulties with 'returning to normal'. All the above issues, where data for the past four years is available, remained above the pre-pandemic levels during 2022.

The cases discussing money, LGBTQIA+ issues, anger or disordered eating also rose substantially over the past four years and remained above pre-pandemic levels in 2022. Following a fall in conversations discussing drugs and solvents during the pandemic, in 2022, the proportion returned to the pre-pandemic level.

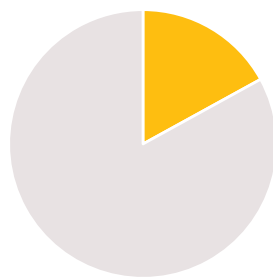
Young people & suicidal thoughts

Annual trends

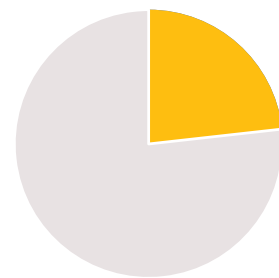
The Mix's data indicates that suicidal thinking among young people is worryingly becoming more prevalent. Looking at trends over the past four years, the proportion of conversations discussing suicidal thinking peaked in 2022, and broadly kept rising throughout the year.



14.7% in 2020



17.0% in 2021



23.3% in 2022

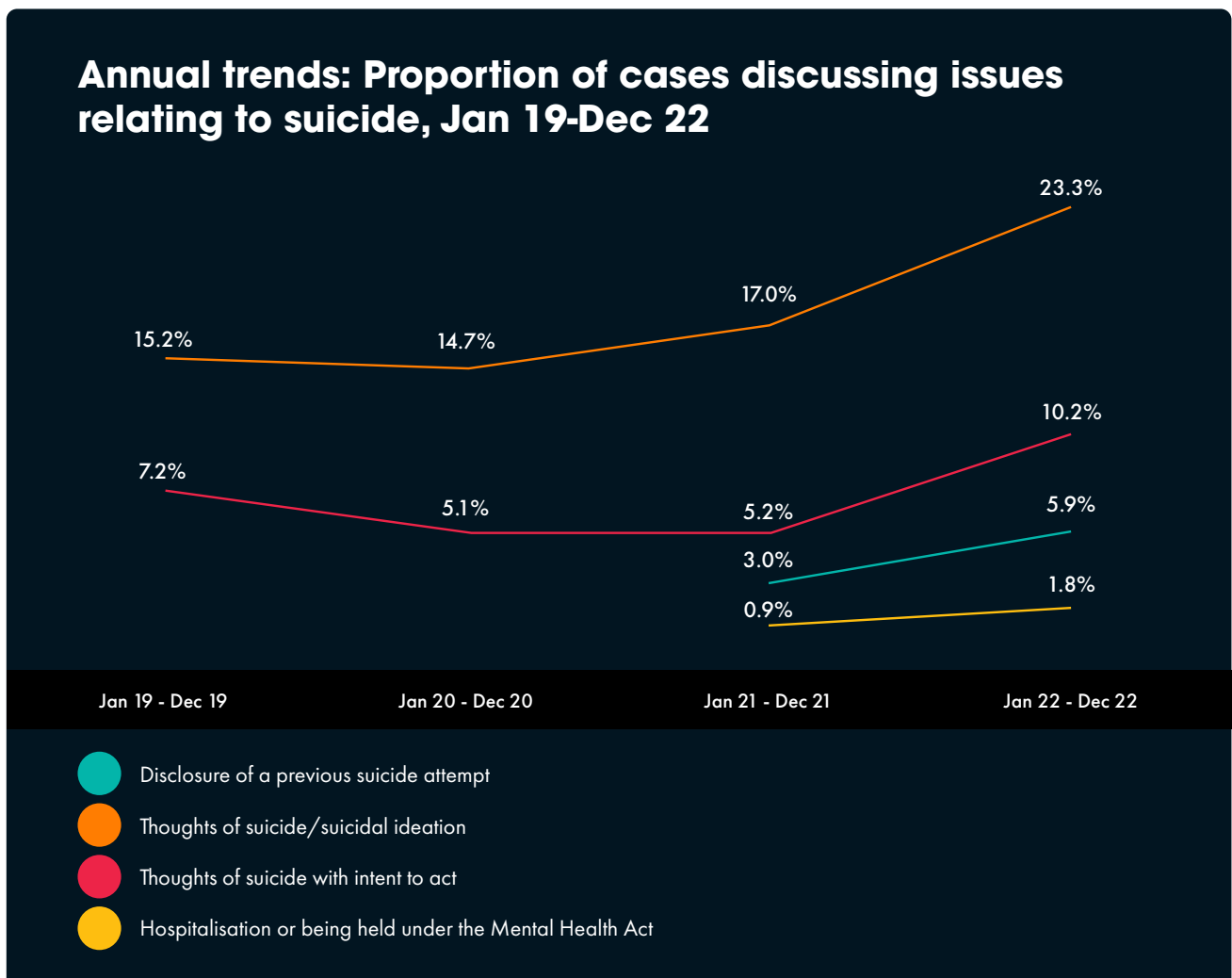
While before the pandemic hit and in its first year, the conversations discussing suicidal thoughts accounted for around 15% of the helpline cases, the proportion rose to 17.0% in 2021. Another sharp rise followed in 2022, with these conversations accounting for 23.3% of the cases, far above the pre-pandemic levels (15%).

The cases discussing thoughts of suicide with intent to act were somewhat below the pre-pandemic level of 7.2% during 2020 and 2021, accounting for around 5% of all cases during both years. However, in 2022, there was a sharp rise. The proportion of these cases doubled, with suicidal thinking with intent to act being discussed in 1 out of 10 cases (10.2%).

In line with the above-mentioned trends, the cases where a previous suicide attempt was disclosed doubled from 3.0% in 2021 to 5.9% in 2022. Cases mentioning hospitalisation, including hospitalisation under the Mental Health Act also increased sharply from 0.9% in 2021 to 1.8% in 2022.

Why have cases relating to suicide increased?

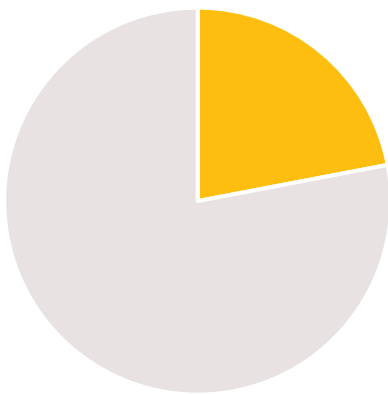
As many people experienced severe decline in their mental health over the pandemic period¹ ; it may be the case that now there are more young people who experience suicidal thinking getting into a crisis. This data, however, may also reflect the worsening cost of living crisis in the UK and the consequences of the erosion of mental health provision and youth services, with problems getting more complex as they are not being picked up early, and young people seeking help from fewer remaining services.



¹ Mind (2021). Coronavirus: The consequences for mental health: The ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people with mental health problems across England and Wales.

Quarterly trends

Looking at the quarterly volume of cases over the past two years, Q3 (July-September) of 2021 recorded the lowest number of requests for support around suicidal thinking; this was after the government introduced a roadmap to reopening society and most of the restrictions were relaxed. However, during Q4 of 2021, characterised by outbreak of the Omicron variant and introduction of the Plan B, the cases discussing suicidal ideation increased by around half to 21.9% and remained at this elevated level or higher throughout the whole of 2022.



21.9% of cases discussed suicidal ideation during Q4 of 2021

There is a similar trend for cases discussing thoughts of suicide with intent to act which have been rising sharply since Q3 of 2021 and throughout the entire 2022, so much so that the proportion of these cases more than doubled from 4.6% in Q3 of 2021 to 12.7% in Q4 of 2022.

4.6%

of cases discussed thoughts of suicide with intent to act in Q3 of 2021

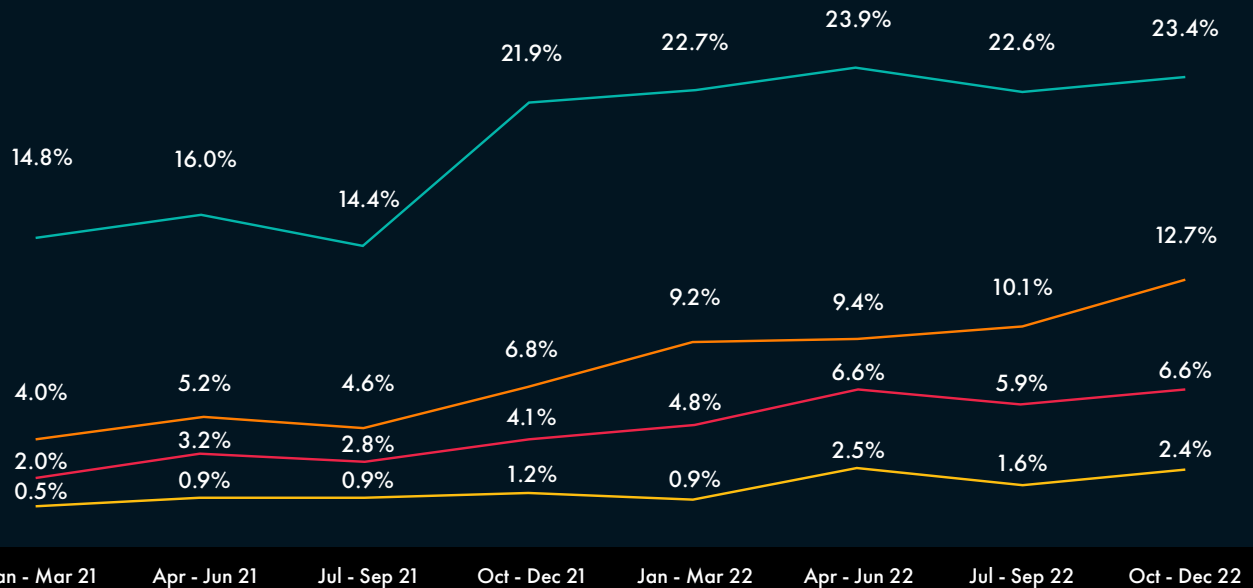


12.7%

of cases discussed thoughts of suicide with intent to act in Q4 of 2022

In line with these trends, the cases where a previous suicide attempt was disclosed have also risen dramatically from 2.8% in Q3 of 2021 to 6.6% in Q4 of 2022. The cases where hospitalisation due to mental health issues was discussed have also risen sharply during this period, from 0.9% in Q3 of 2021 to 2.4% in Q4 of 2022.

Quarterly trends: Proportion of cases discussing issues relating to suicide, Jan 21-Dec 22



- Thoughts of suicide/suicidal ideation
- Thoughts of suicide with intent to act
- Disclosure of a previous suicide attempt
- Hospitalisation or being held under the Mental Health Act

Issues connected to thoughts of suicide



Based on our data from 2022, almost half of conversations where thoughts of suicide were discussed also mentioned depression; around a third discussed thoughts of self-harm or thoughts of suicide with intent to act; with a quarter discussing the subject of family. Additionally, around 1 in 5 of these conversations discussed anxiety, disclosure of a previous suicide attempt, loneliness, and acting on thoughts of self-harm.

Depression & anxiety

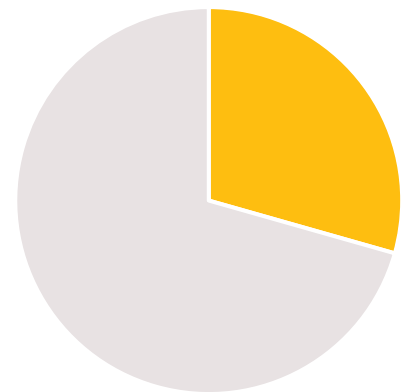
“I think just even day-to-day life is quite anxiety inducing.”

Ellie

Annual trends

Many young people experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic, but people who already struggled with their mental health before this experienced the greatest impact on their mental health.² Our data indicates that levels of anxiety and depression remained high among young people throughout 2022, although both started declining after the spring.

While cases discussing depression or low mood and anxiety were both at around 17% before the pandemic hit, both depression and anxiety became far more dominant topics during the pandemic, as young people wrestled with mental health issues associated with isolation and loneliness³, worries about people close to them or bereavement⁴. Requests for support with anxiety peaked at 25.7% in 2021 and fell slightly during 2022. However, the cases discussing depression peaked at 29.4% in 2021, and remained at a similar level during 2022. Counselling has also become a more dominant topic on the helpline, with the proportion of conversations mentioning it more than doubling from 4.7% in 2019 to 10.9% in 2022.



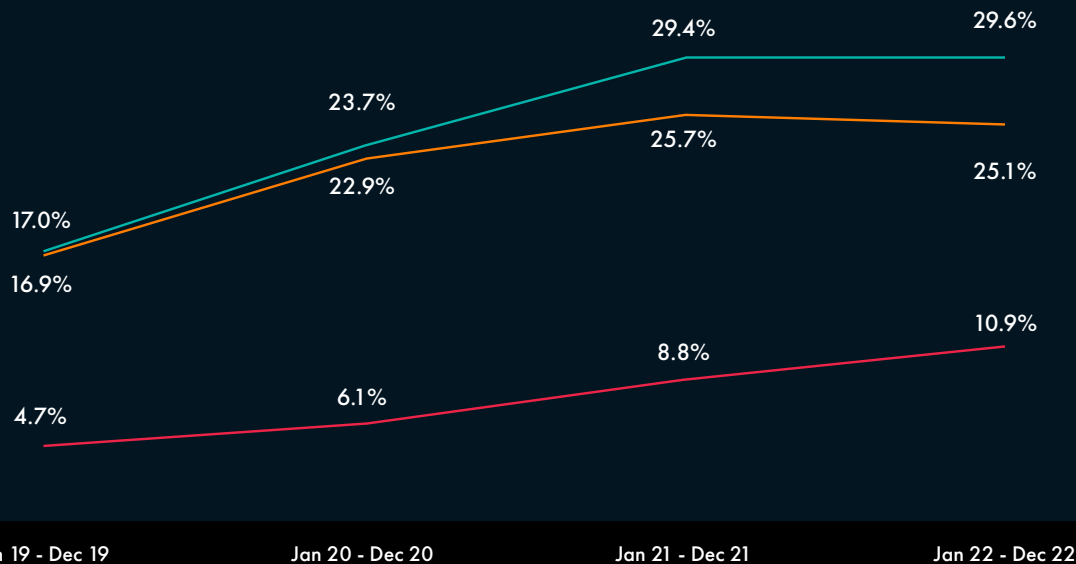
29.4% of conversations discussed depression or low mood in 2021

²Mind (2021). Coronavirus: The consequences for mental health: The ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people with mental health problems across England and Wales. <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8962/the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf>

³The Mix (2021). Young people and the loneliness pandemic. <https://www.themix.org.uk/news-and-research/research/young-people-and-loneliness-during-the-pandemic>

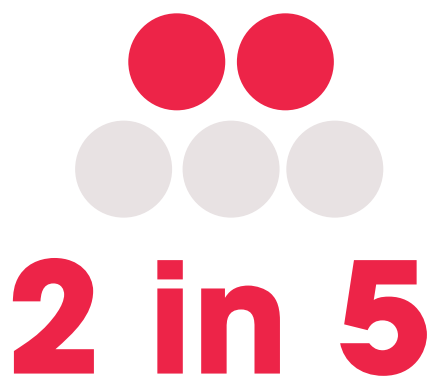
⁴The Mix (2021). The Mix's Quarterly Helpline Trends: July-December 2021. <https://www.themix.org.uk/news-and-research/research/issues-impacting-young-people-on-the-mixs-helpline-july-september-2021>

Annual trends: Proportion of cases discussing depression/low mood, anxiety & counselling, Jan 19-Dec 22



- Depression/Low mood
- Anxiety
- Counselling

Issues connected to depression, & anxiety



Around two in five conversations discussing depression in 2022 also mentioned anxiety or thoughts of suicide. Other dominant topics often mentioned together with depression included family, thoughts of self-harm, loneliness, self-worth, counselling and acting on thoughts of self-harm. Over 1 in 10 discussed stress, thoughts of suicide with intent to act or disclosed a previous suicide attempt.

Apart from depression, which is talked about in almost half of the cases that discuss anxiety, the second key theme is family. This is followed by stress, counselling, thoughts of suicide, loneliness and self-worth. Around 1 in 10 of these conversations mention thoughts of self-harm or panic attacks.

“I think it was about two years ago, so I was year eight, I think. I was really struggling to go into school, and I think the environment at school was really difficult for me and as the days went by, my anxiety just got really bad... I also get reactions to new situations or meeting new people; sort of that fear of the unknown I guess...”

Alex

Quarterly trends

A more complex and dynamic picture can be seen when exploring quarterly data. This shows that the cases discussing depression tend to fall during summer months and rise in winter, with the cases peaking in Q1 of 2022 at 31.8%, before assuming a downward trend.

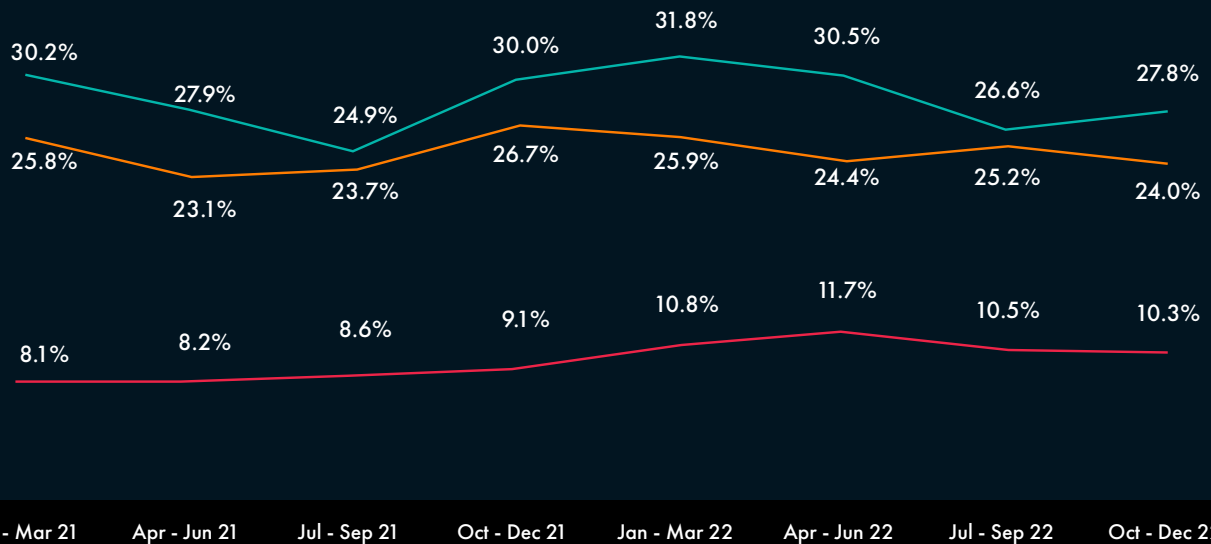
Cases discussing anxiety peaked somewhat earlier at 26.7% in Q4 of 2021; and since then, they have been slowly declining. The cases discussing counselling had risen throughout 2021 and the first part of 2022, peaking at Q2 of 2022 at 11.7%; followed by a slight decline in the second part of the year.



26.7%

Cases discussing anxiety peaked in Q4 of 2021

Quarterly trends: Proportion of cases discussing depression/low mood, anxiety & counselling, Jan 21-Dec 22



- Depression/Low mood
- Anxiety
- Counselling

“For me, I kind of get anxious about the future a lot. I tend to just worry about everything. And it's like, even health wise, I tend to get really anxious that something's going to happen or something bad will happen to other people and stuff like that.”

Ellie



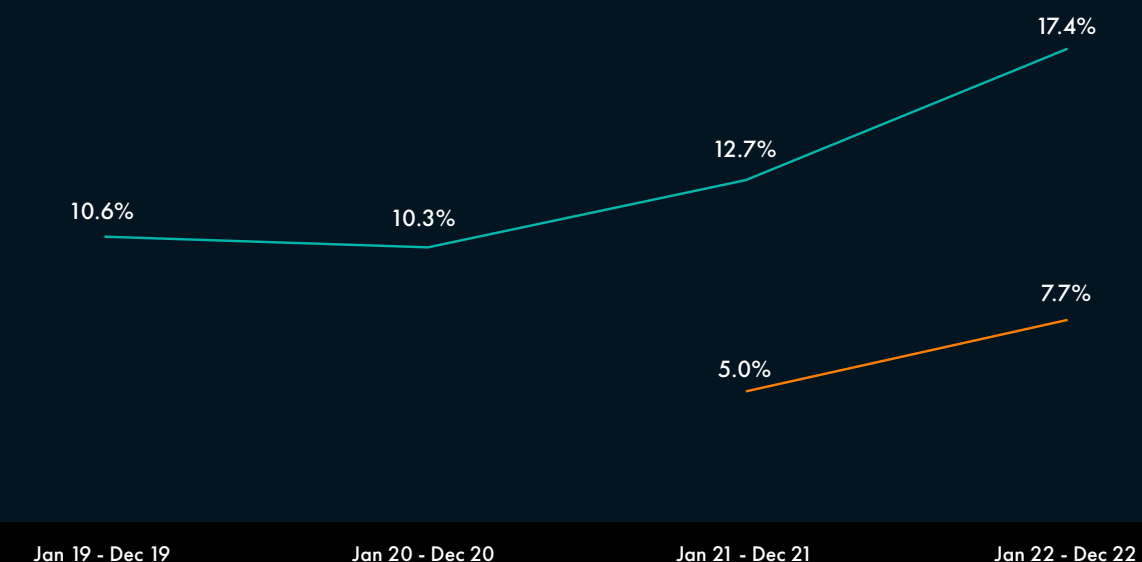
Self-harm

Annual trends

The rates of cases mentioning thoughts of self-harm were relatively stable on the helpline during the early phase of the pandemic. However, they rose dramatically throughout 2021 and 2022, ending the year at near peak levels.

Conversations discussing thoughts of self-harm started rising from their pre-pandemic level of 10.6% in 2021, with a sharp increase in 2022, when they peaked at 17.4%. Since mid-2020, we've also started tracking mentions of whether young people acted on thoughts of self-harm. While in 2021, 5% of conversations mentioned this, the proportion increased by around half to 7.7% in 2022.

Annual trends: Proportion of cases discussing self-harm, Jan 19-Dec 22



- Thoughts of self harm
- Has acted on thoughts of self harm

Quarterly trends

Looking at the quarterly volumes of cases over the past two years, like the trends around suicidal thinking and depression, there was a sharp rise in cases discussing thoughts of self-harm in Q4 of 2021. Suddenly, these cases rose from 8.5% in Q3 of 2021 to 13.2% in the following quarter, with the cases rising even higher during 2022 and ending the year at 14.6%, near to peak levels.

8.5%

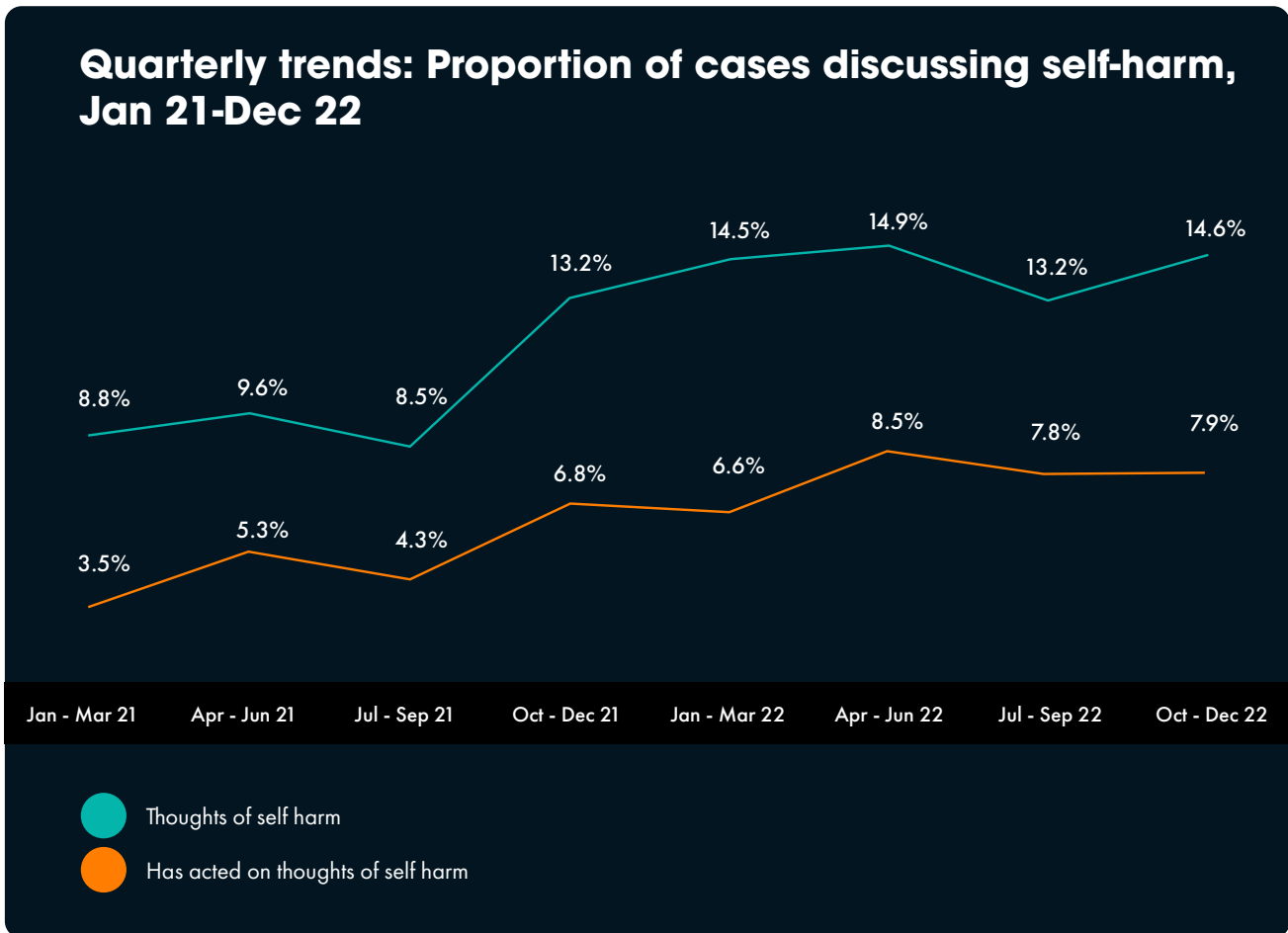


14.6%

of conversations discussed thoughts of self-harm in Q3 of 2021

of conversations discussed thoughts of self-harm at the end of 2022

The cases where young people disclosed acting on thoughts of self-harm follow a broadly similar trend, with the cases growing sharply between Q3 (4.3%) and Q4 of 2021 (6.8%), peaking at 8.5% in Q2 of 2022, and ending the year at 7.9%, not far from peak levels.



Issues connected to self-harm

Suicidal ideation was discussed alongside **self-harm** in over half of the 2022 conversations (55%). Depression was discussed during 4 in 10 of self-harm conversations and disclosure that a young person has acted on thoughts of self-harm were made in a third of these conversations. Other topics that were frequently discussed alongside self-harm include: family, anxiety, thoughts of suicide with intent to act, disclosure of a previous suicide attempt, self-worth, loneliness, disordered eating and counselling.

Stress & anger

Annual trends

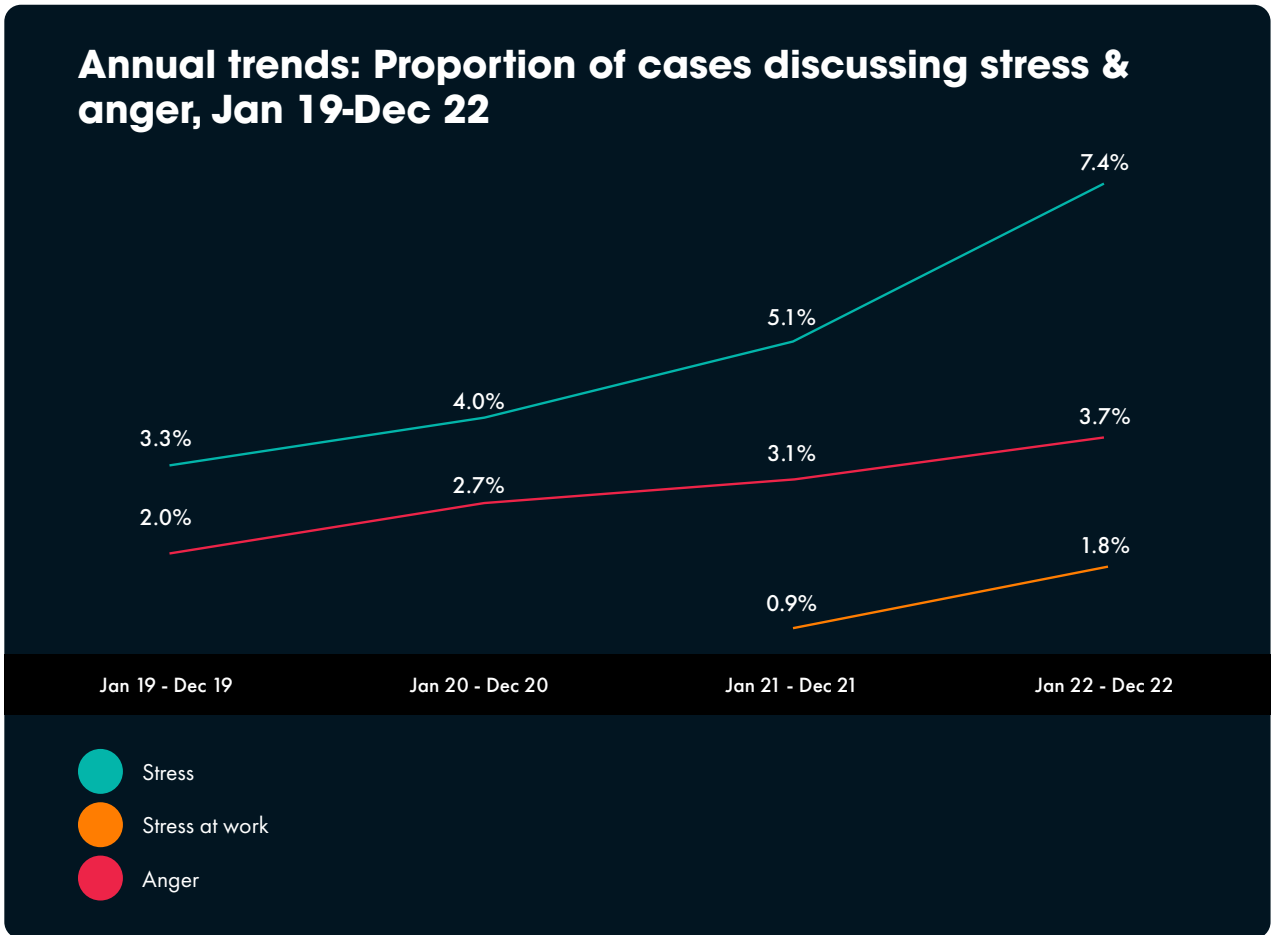
While discussions around **stress** were fairly rare during the early stages of the pandemic, they became far more common during 2021. Peaking at Q2 of 2022, the cases fell sharply during the second half of 2022.

The helpline recorded a relatively low level of cases discussing stress in 2019 (3.3%) and in 2020 (4.0%), when people's everyday routines were disrupted by covid restrictions, and their day-to-day activities came to a halt. Discussions on The Mix's forum suggest that some young people felt freed from day-to-day pressures by lockdown. However, the proportion of cases mentioning stress grew more sharply in 2021, and by 2022 doubled from the pre-pandemic level to 7.4%. This sharp increase in stress might be connected to reopening of society and 'return to normal' as many young people were worried about the 'return to normal life' and being near to other people.⁵



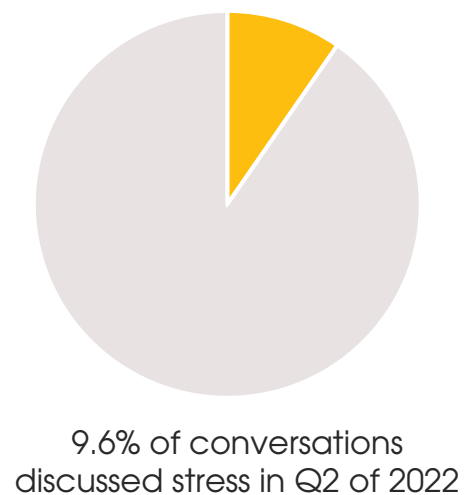
⁵ Mind (2021). Coronavirus: The consequences for mental health: The ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people with mental health problems across England and Wales.

For stress at work, a full year data set is only available for 2021 and 2022, with the cases discussing stress at work doubling from 0.9% in 2021 to 1.8% in 2022. The volume of cases mentioning anger has been increasing steadily since 2019, when they accounted for 2.0%, with the proportion almost doubling over the last four years to 3.7% in 2022.

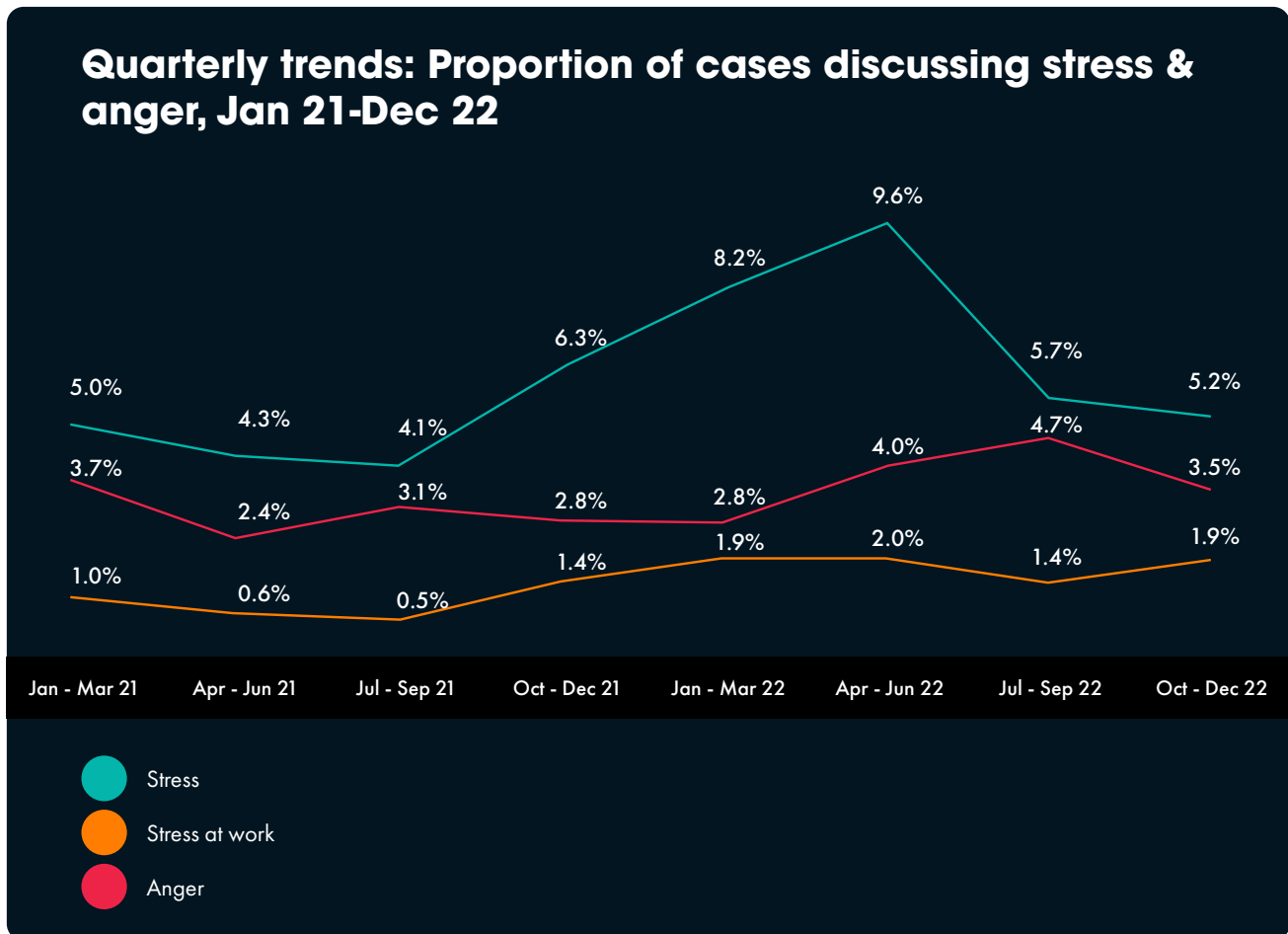


Quarterly trends

Looking at quarterly trends for cases discussing stress, we can see that in the first three quarters of 2021 they accounted for 4-5% of conversations. While Q3 of 2021 represents a dip in cases discussing stress (as well as suicidal thinking, depression or thoughts of self-harm), the conversations discussing stress started growing substantially from Q4 of 2021 and peaked at 9.6% in Q2 of 2022, before dropping sharply and ending the year at 5.2%.



Cases discussing stress at work also show a similar pattern; they were at their lowest in Q3 of 2021 accounting for 0.5% and peaked at 2.0% in Q2 of 2022. Although the cases fell slightly in Q3 of 2022, in Q4 of 2022 they picked up again. On the other hand, the cases where anger was mentioned fluctuated up and down during 2021 and 2022, peaking in Q3 of 2022 at 4.7%.



Issues connected to stress & anger

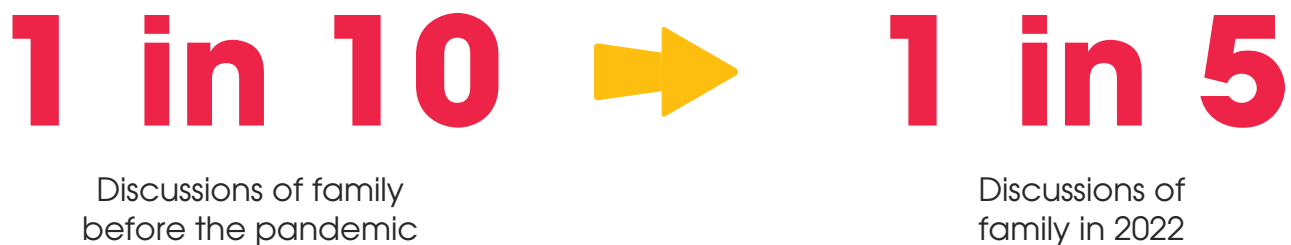
The topics that were frequently discussed alongside **stress** included: anxiety, depression, family, exam stress, school and education, self-worth, loneliness, counselling, thoughts of suicide without intent to act, thoughts of self-harm, stress at work and work.

Topics that were discussed most frequently alongside anger included family (45%), depression (40%) and anxiety (35%). Around a fifth of people mentioning anger also discussed loneliness, stress, thoughts of suicide or thoughts of self-harm.

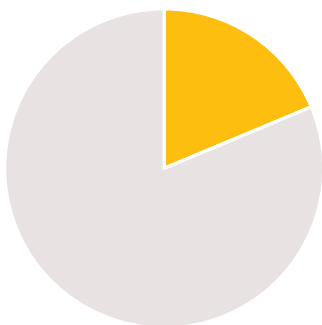
Loneliness, relationships & family

Annual trends

Some of the issues that soared most sharply during the pandemic and further peaked in 2022 include family issues and feelings of loneliness or isolation. While our data shows that family issues started decreasing towards the end of 2022, loneliness appears to be at its peak.



The topic of **family** was discussed in around 1 in 10 conversations prior to the pandemic, but during the pandemic the volume increased sharply to 15.9% in 2020 and 17.8% in 2021. Interestingly, the cases continued rising during 2022, with 1 in 5 (21%) conversations discussing family issues; the proportion more than doubled compared to the pre-pandemic level.



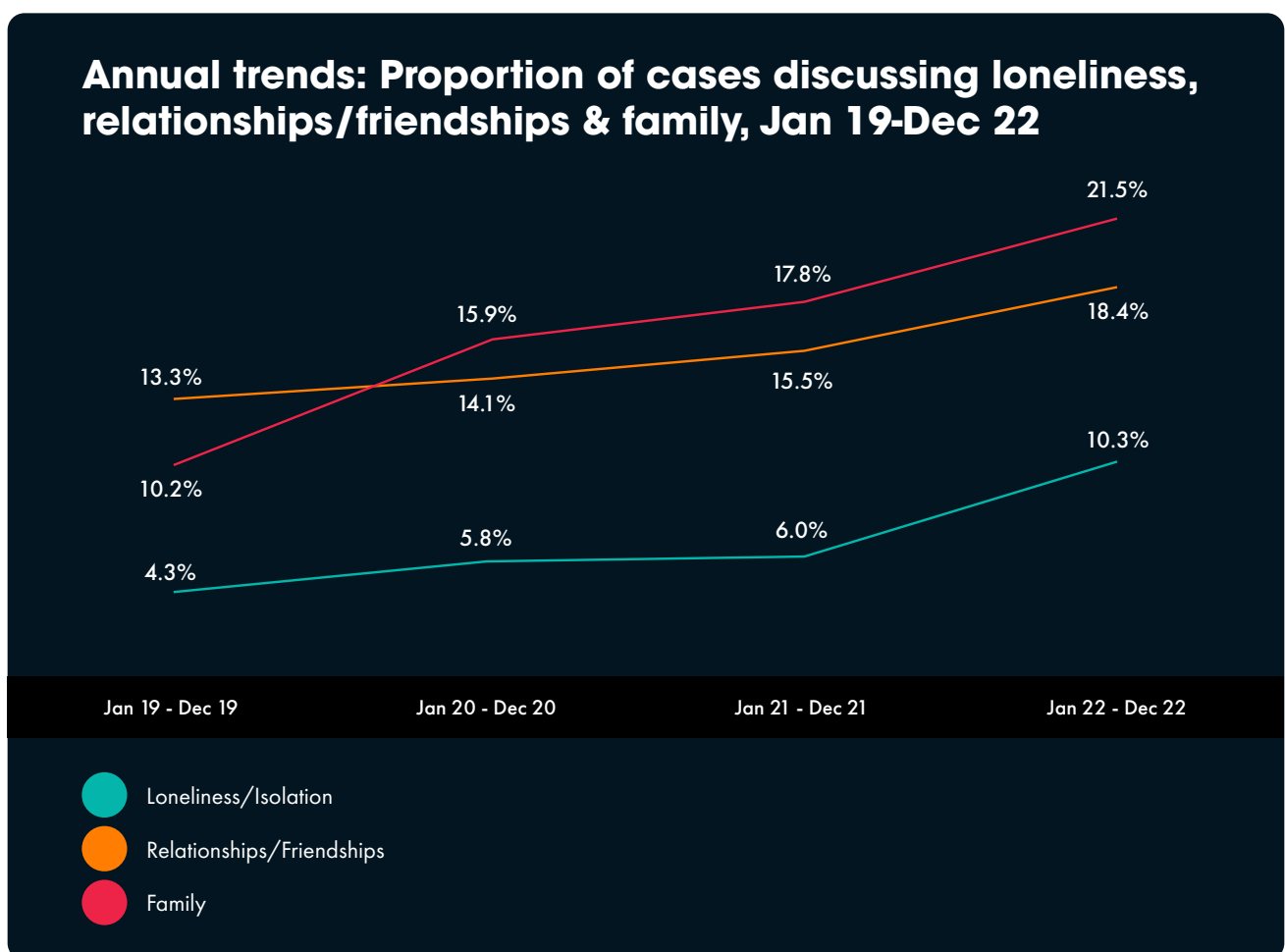
Prior to the pandemic, around 13% of conversations discussed issues around relationships or friendships. The proportion grew only slightly in 2020, when the pandemic restrictions often severely limited face-to-face contact. However, the volume increased more sharply in 2021 and also 2022, when these cases peaked at 18.4%.

At the time when young people were experiencing more issues around family and relationships, our helpline trends also show a dramatic **increase in loneliness**, with the proportion more than doubling in 2022 compared to before the pandemic. Conversations mentioning loneliness rose from 4.3% in 2019 to 10.3% in 2022.

Issues connected to family & friendships/relationships

The top four issues discussed alongside the topic of **family** were depression (43%), anxiety (34%), relationships (28%) and thoughts of suicide (27%). Other issues mentioned in about a fifth of conversations about family include loneliness, counselling, thoughts of self-harm, stress or self-worth. Around 1 in 10 conversations mentioning family also discussed bereavement, emotional abuse, abuse, disordered eating, a previous suicide attempt or thoughts of suicide or self-harm with intent to act.

Other topics that come up most frequently in conversations around relationships or friendships include depression (38%), anxiety (33%) and family (32%). Around a fifth of such conversations also discuss loneliness, thoughts of suicide or low self-worth/self-esteem.

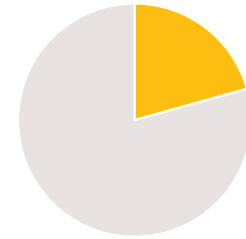


Quarterly trends

Yet again, the quarterly data shows a much richer picture, uncovering further

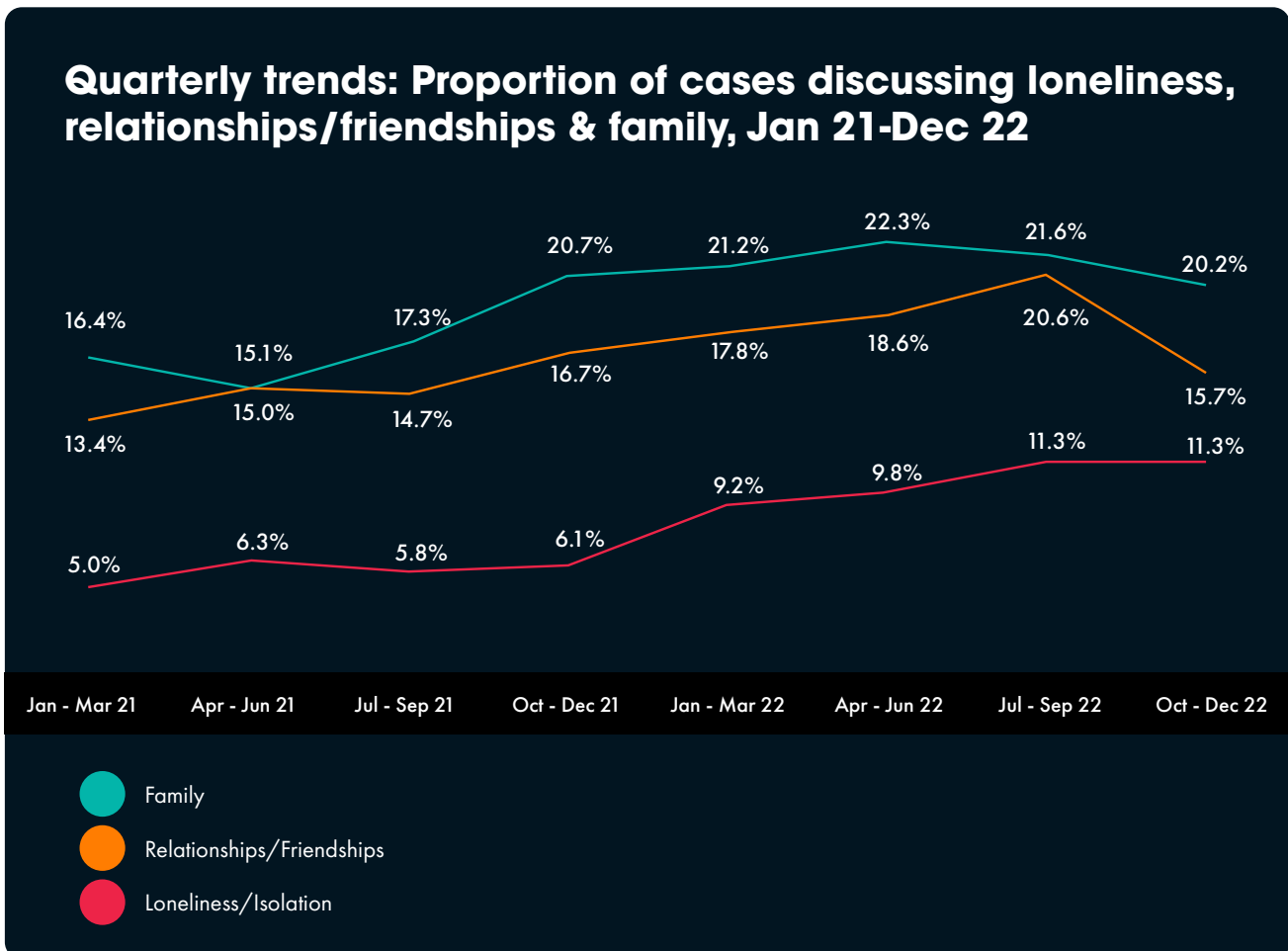
fluctuations. The conversations discussing family were broadly growing throughout 2021. Having peaked in Q2 of 2022 at 22.3%, encouragingly, their proportion declined over the last two quarters of 2022, ending the year at 20.2% of cases.

The cases discussing relationships or friendships also broadly grew during 2021 and much of 2022, peaking at 20.6% in Q3 of 2022. Surprisingly, the cases dipped suddenly in the last quarter of 2022, falling almost 5 percentage points**



20.6% of cases discussed relationships or friendships in Q3 of 2022

While it appears that family and relationship issues have now peaked and are slowly heading down, levels of loneliness show a very different trend. While loneliness conversations accounted for around 5-6% of cases in 2021, worryingly, they kept rising sharply throughout 2022, with more than 1 in 10 conversations (11.3%) discussing loneliness in the second half of 2022. Similarly, other sources such as DfE’s State of the Nation report indicate that loneliness has worsened further during 2022⁶.



⁶ DfE. (2023). State of the Nation 2022: Children and Young People’s Wellbeing. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134596/State_of_the_nation_2022_-_children_and_young_people_s_wellbeing.pdf

School, education & exam stress

“There are a lot of pressures now - especially school is a big one because everything just gets harder each year. A lot of people that I know experience a lot of anxiety surrounding school and just preparing for life really... I also have a lot of anxiety around school, which has been one of my big issues. Not so much academically, just the whole thing of school with, like busy places, loads of people. That kind of thing has always been quite anxiety-inducing for me.”

Ellie

Annual trends

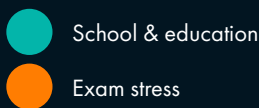
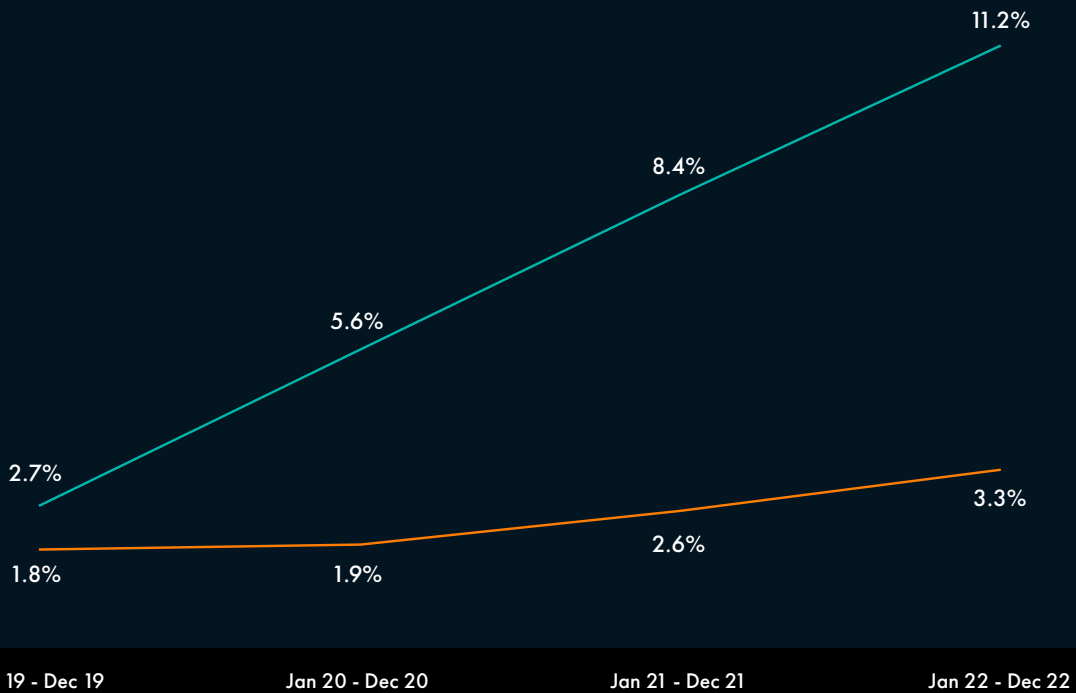
Out of the topics monitored by The Mix, issues connected to school or education rose the most sharply over the past three years, with 1 in 10 requests for support discussing these issues towards the end of 2022. While before the pandemic only about 2.7% of cases discussed these topics, the proportion doubled during lockdowns, when face-to-face teaching was temporarily replaced with online teaching. However, even when pupils returned to their classes in 2021 and 2022, issues connected to education kept growing significantly year on year, so much so that their proportion **quadrupled in the past four years.**

On the other hand, the proportion of cases discussing exam stress remained relatively flat during the first year of the pandemic (1.9%) when home learning was the norm, but it increased in 2021 and peaked at 3.3% in 2022.

“Something was going on at home and then it's carrying all that sort of negative energy from home into school, and then it makes you anxious to go to school as well.”

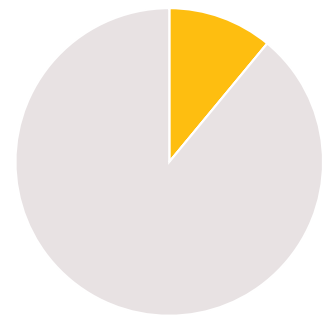
Alex

Annual trends: Proportion of cases discussing school, education & exam stress, Jan 19-Dec 22



Quarterly trends

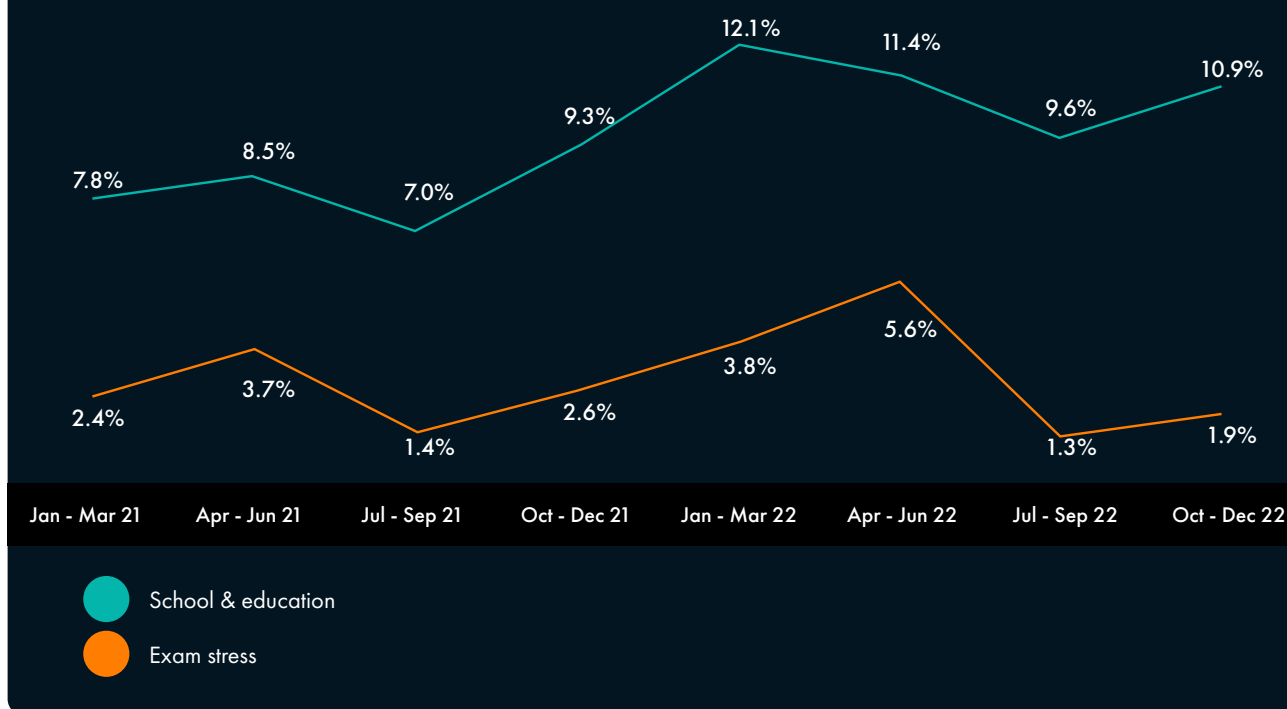
Looking at the quarterly trends over the past two years, like other issues, Q3 of 2021 represented the lowest point in the proportion of cases discussing issues around education (7%). Following this, the cases climbed sharply, peaking at 12.1% in Q1 of 2022. Despite dips during Q2 and Q3 of 2022, the proportion remained at elevated levels compared to 2021, and ended the year 2022 at 10.9%.



10.9% of conversations discussed education by the end of 2022

The proportion of cases discussing **exam stress** peaked at 5.6% in Q2 of 2022 before it dipped sharply during summer holidays (1.3%), with exam stress cases typically showing a sharp fall during the summer seasons.

Quarterly trends: Proportion of cases discussing school, education & exam stress, Jan 21-Dec 22



Issues connected to school & education

Around 4 in 10 young people discussing school and education also talked about anxiety or depression. A third mentioned family, relationships or friendships, with around a fifth talking about stress, thoughts of suicide, loneliness, self-worth, counselling or exam stress. Around one in 10 mentioned bullying, Autism, thoughts of self-harm or acting on thoughts of self-harm.



Self-worth/self-esteem, disordered eating, bullying & body image

“I think it's the kind of perfection that is put on to everyone - that you have to be a certain size. You have to look a certain way and it's like everyone has all these pictures and videos available to them just at the click of a finger. Before social media, no one really had that. You just saw people face to face. You didn't see all this editing and all that kind of stuff. So, I think that is a big pressure on people wanting to look a certain way or feeling like they need to look a certain way, be a certain way, like certain things and stuff like that.”

Ellie

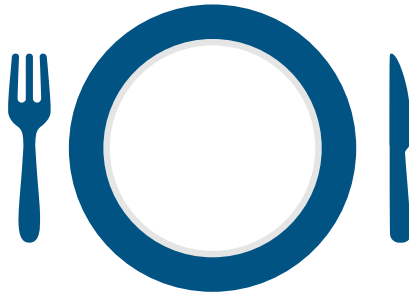
Annual trends

Over the last few years, The Mix recorded an increase in conversations about self-worth/self-esteem, disordered eating, body image and bullying, with self-worth/self-esteem issues soaring the most sharply in 2022 and showing no signs of abating.





The Mix only began monitoring the topic of **self-worth/self-esteem** recently, so full year data is only available from 2021. While 3.7% of conversations discussed this topic in 2021, the proportion more than doubled the following year (8.3%).

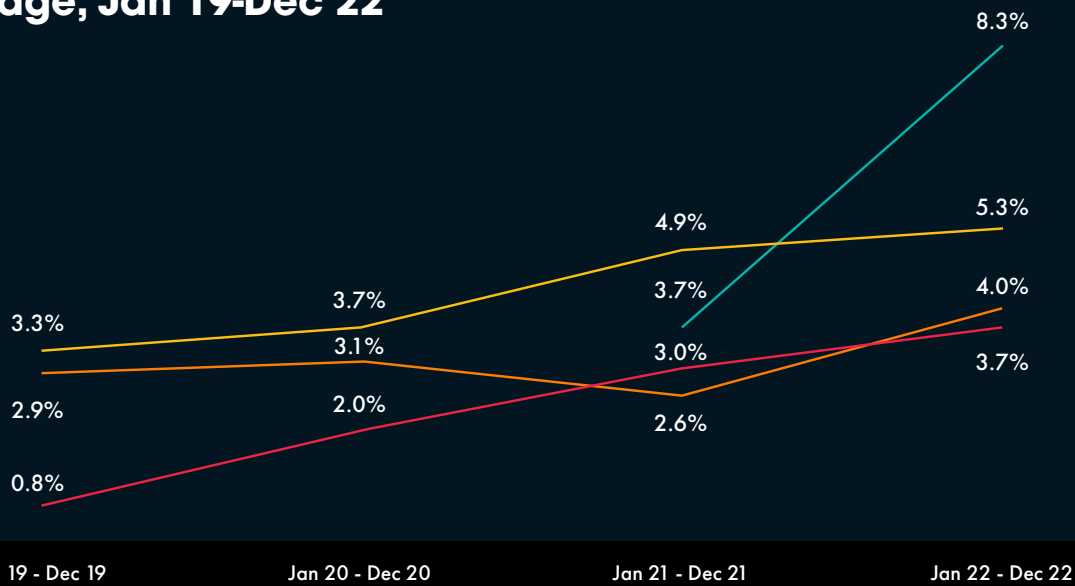


The proportion of cases discussing **disordered eating** has been steadily rising over the past few years, from 3.3% in 2019 to 5.3% in 2022. Similarly, the conversations about **body image increased**, so much so that the cases quadrupled from 0.8% prior to the pandemic to 3.7% in 2022.



Conversations referring to **bullying** remained relatively stable over the pandemic period, at around 3%, but with young people being back at school or work, their proportion jumped to 4% during 2022.

Annual trends: Proportion of cases discussing self-worth/self-esteem, disordered eating, bullying & body image, Jan 19-Dec 22



- Self-worth/(low) self-esteem
- Bullying
- Body image
- Disordered eating/eating disorders

Quarterly trends

Our quarterly trends show that, yet again, Q3 of 2021 was the point after which the proportion of conversations around self-worth soared sharply, with the percentage remaining at 8% or above throughout 2022.

Throughout 2021, the trend is fairly flat for the cases mentioning **disordered eating**, with the proportion fluctuating between 4.3% and 5%. The cases peaked in Q2 of 2022 at 6.0%, and subsequently returned to 2021 levels during the last two quarters of 2022.

4.3%

of cases mentioned disordered eating in Q3 of 2021



6.0%

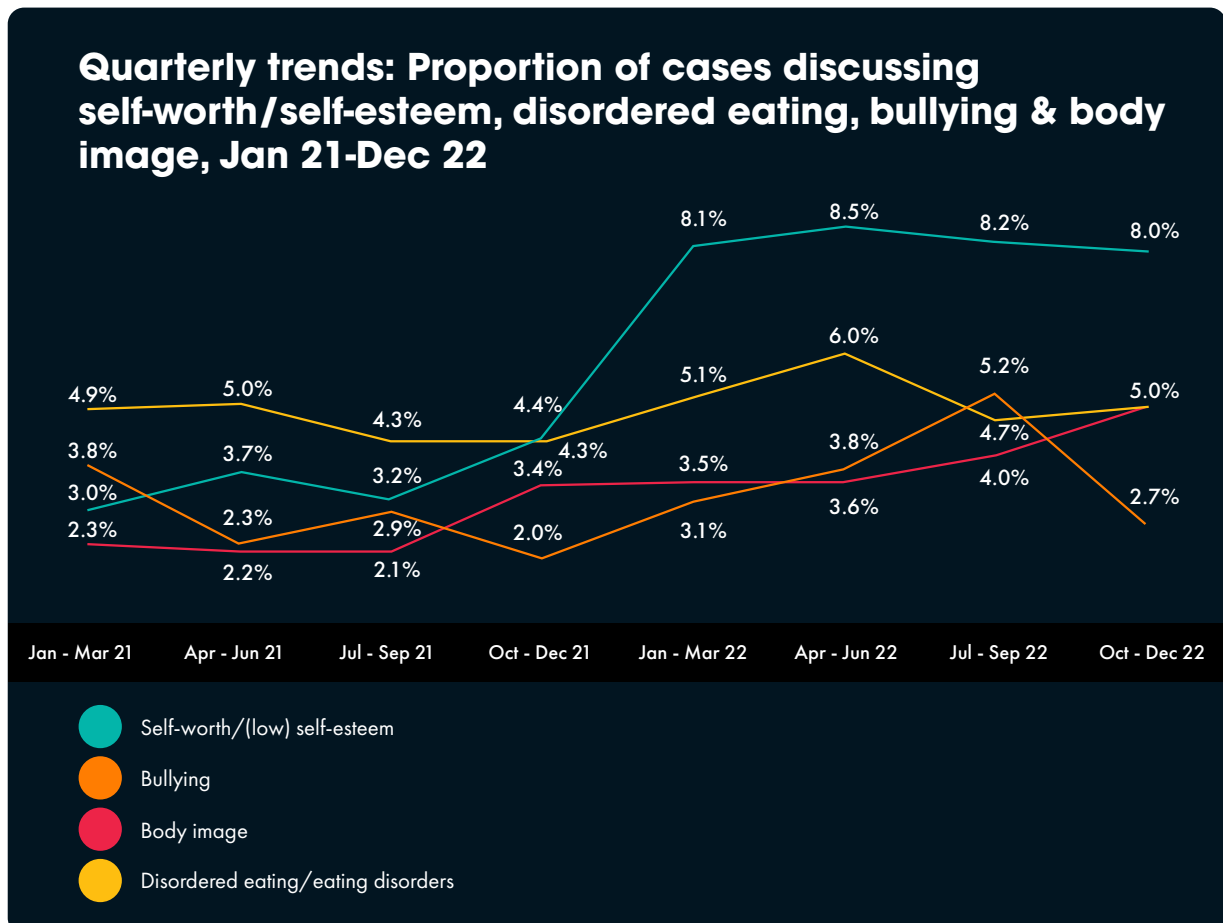
Cases mentioning disordered eating peaked in Q2 of 2022

Conversations around **body image** fluctuated up and down in 2021. During 2022, there was a steady increase during the first three quarters, with these conversations peaking at 5.2% in Q3 of 2022, before they fell sharply during Q4 of 2022.



of conversations mentioned bullying by the end of 2022

After Q3 of 2021, the volume of conversations mentioning **bullying** also started to climb, rising steadily throughout 2022 and peaking at the end of the year at 5% of cases.



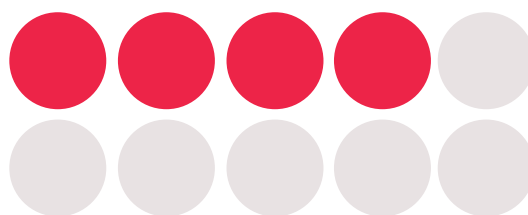
Issues connected to self-worth/self-esteem & body image

There are a lot of other topics often discussed in conversations referring to **self-worth or self-esteem**. 2 in 3 of these conversations mention depression and half mention anxiety. Around 4 in 10 talks about family, relationships or thoughts of suicide. About a third mention loneliness or stress, with a quarter discussing thoughts of self-harm. Around a fifth discuss counselling or self-harm, with 16% mentioning body image.



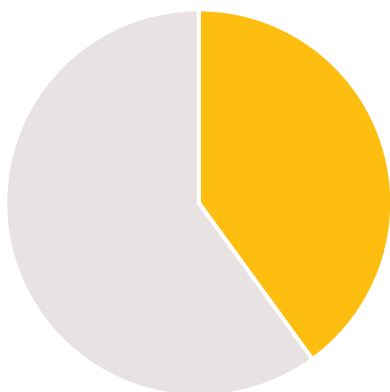
2 in 3

Young people mention depression when discussing self-worth or self-esteem



4 in 10

Young people mention family, relationships or thoughts of suicide when discussing self-worth or self-esteem



Around half of **conversations about body image** also discussed depression, with around 4 in 10 conversations also discussing disordered eating or anxiety. Self-esteem or family were discussed in about a third of cases, with around a quarter also talking about thoughts of self-harm or relationships.

Autism, symptoms of trauma/ flashbacks/PTSD & panic attacks

Annual trends

Over the past two years, The Mix has seen a sharp increase in contacts from young autistic people and those who experienced flashbacks/ PTSD or panic attacks.

Over the past four years, the proportion of cases mentioning Autism or Aspergers Syndrome⁷ quadrupled from 1.1% in 2019 to 4.2% in 2022.

4.2%

3.8%

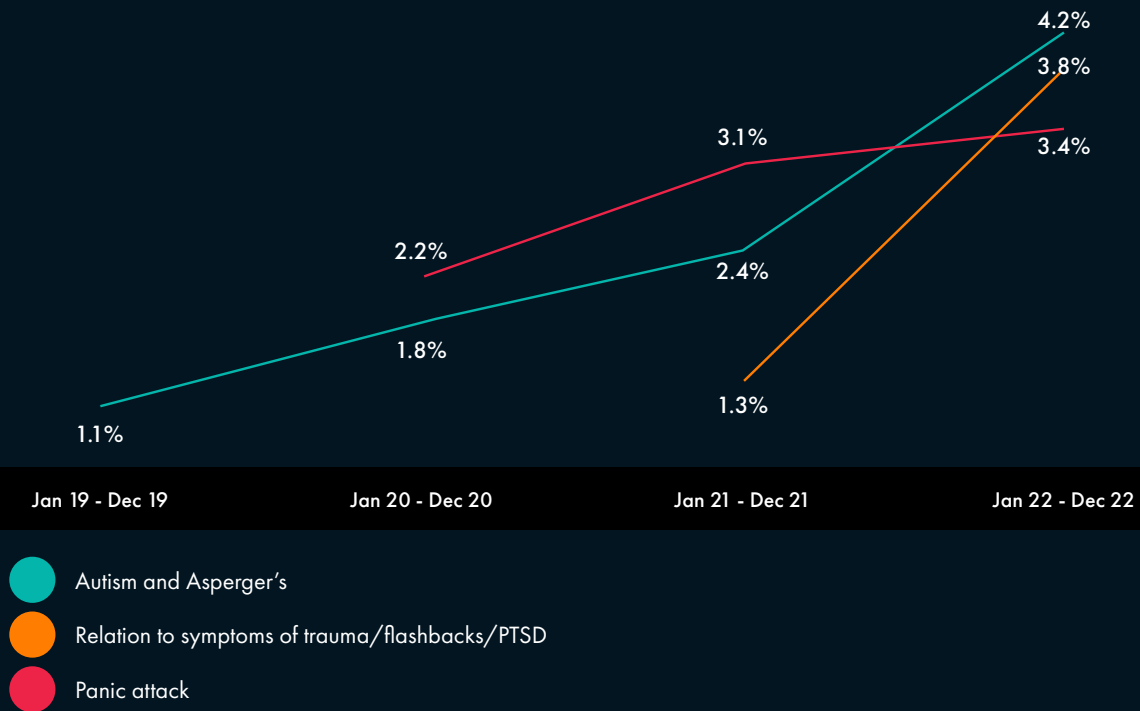
The proportion of young people mentioning symptoms related to trauma, flashbacks or PTSD also soared from 1.3% in 2021 to 3.8% in 2022.

The conversations discussing panic attacks also rose substantially from 2.2% in 2020 to 3.4% in 2022.

3.4%

⁷ Although the name for Asperger's Syndrome has officially changed, some people still use the term Asperger's Syndrome when talking about their condition therefore for now we have retained the name.

Annual trends: Proportion of cases discussing Autism, symptoms of trauma/flashbacks/PTSD & panic attacks, Jan 19-Dec 22

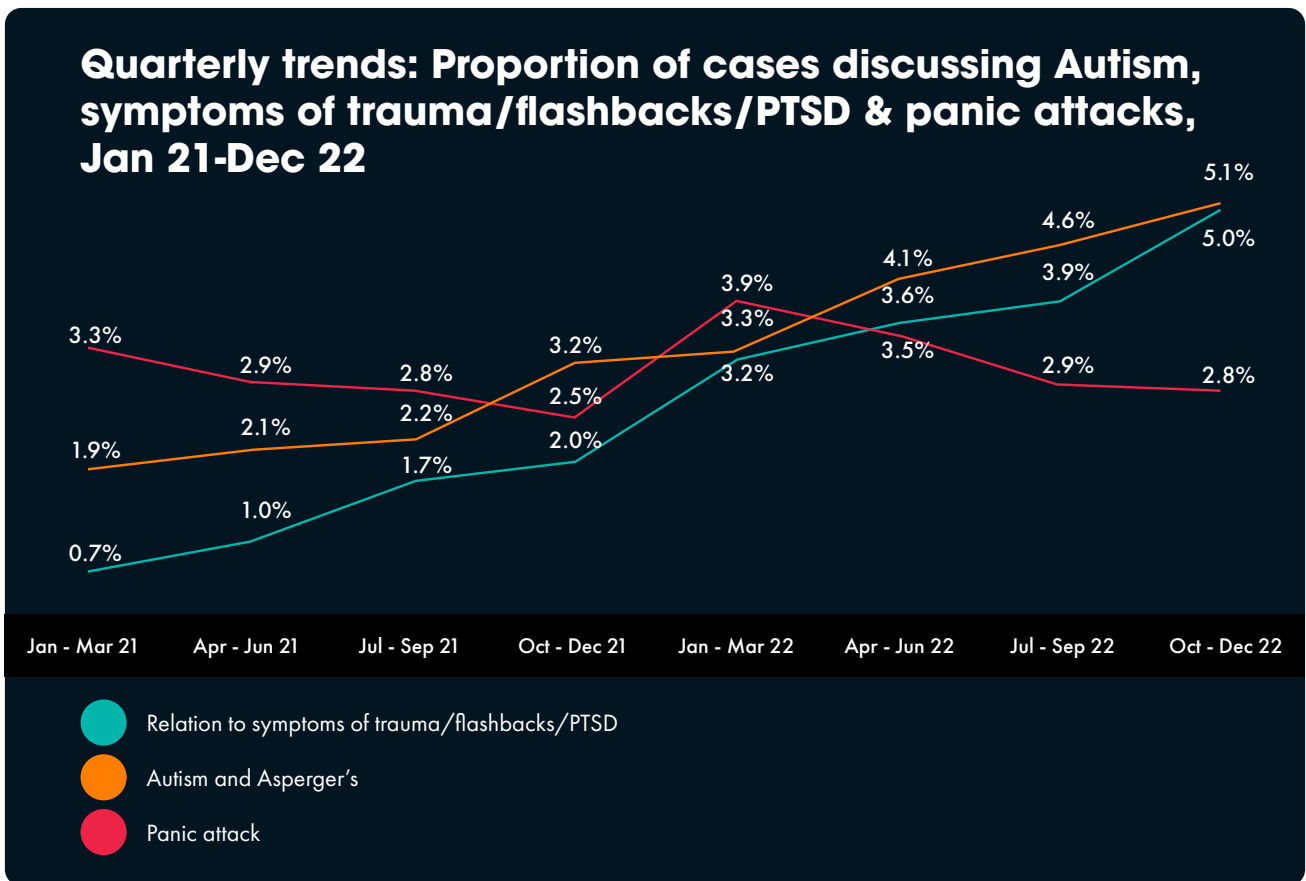


Quarterly trends

Quarterly trends show a gradual increase over the two-year period in both conversations mentioning Autism or Asperger's Syndrome and those discussing symptoms related to trauma, flashbacks or PTSD. They both peaked at around 5% in Q4 of 2022.

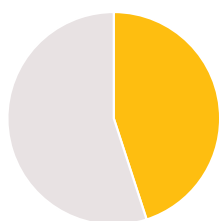


On the other hand, conversations discussing **panic attacks** show a very different pattern. While they had been at a fairly high level of 3.3% in Q1 of 2021, they were falling for the rest of the year. They suddenly spiked again in Q1 of 2022 and then were falling for the rest of the year. This temporary increase in panic attacks may be connected to a return to pre-pandemic routines and physical places such as school or work, as during the pandemic some people developed an increased sense of anxiety or fear of being in crowded places.



Issues connected to Autism

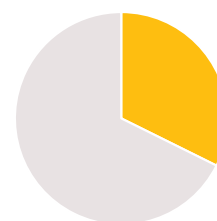
The conversations where Autism or Asperger's were mentioned often also included anxiety (45%), family (35%), depression (32%), relationships (23%), thoughts of suicide (22%), loneliness (21%) and thoughts of self-harm (19%).



Anxiety



Family



Depression

Money & benefits

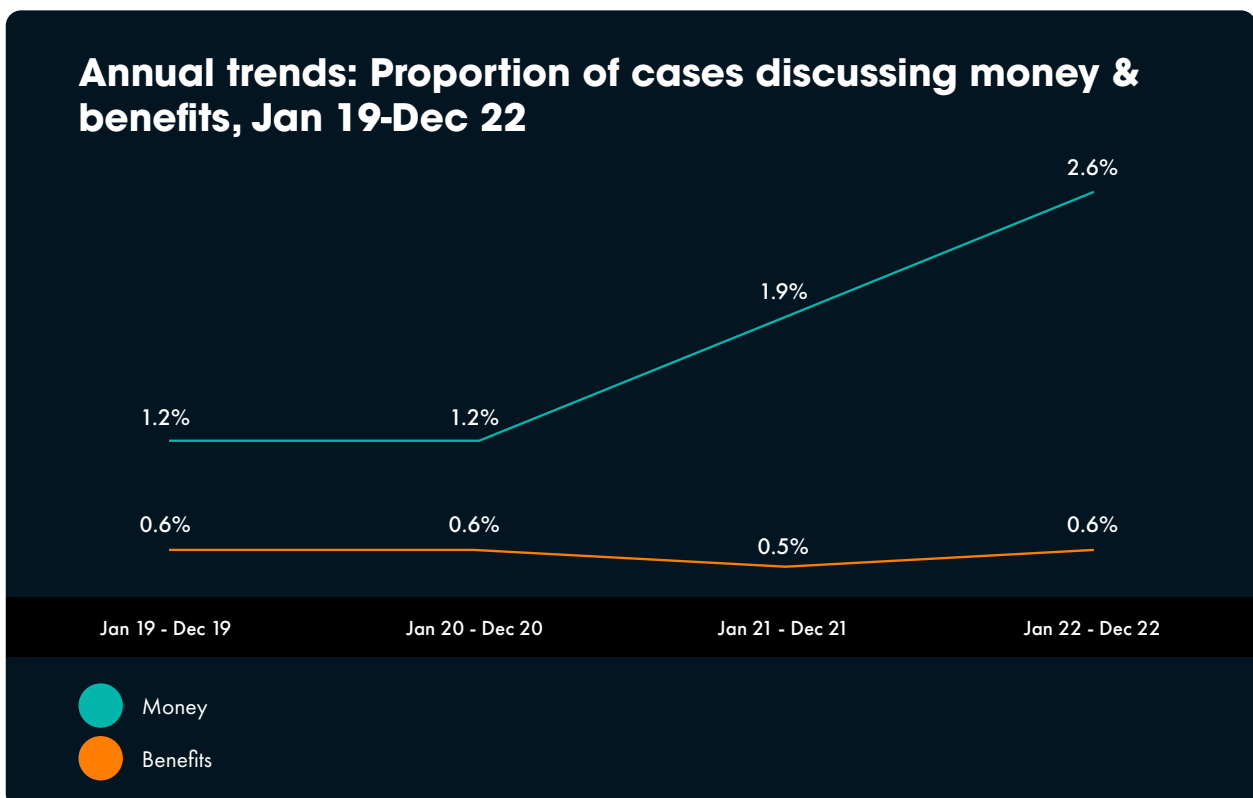
“There is a lot of pressure and the way that everything has happened in the economy as well. There's a lot of stress and anxiety for young people. Trying to afford things as well; I think that's a big part of it.”

Ellie

Annual trends

The last two years have been dominated by sharply growing inflation, resulting in a cost-of-living crisis for many in the UK. Although The Mix's helpline is predominantly known for its mental health support, worries about money can be an underlying factor causing poor mental health. In line with this, over the last couple of years the cases mentioning money have more than doubled on The Mix's helpline.

While the proportion of cases discussing money stood at 1.2% during both 2019 and 2020; it started rising in 2021, and by 2022 it doubled to 2.6%. However, conversations about benefits show a flat trend on our helpline over the past four years, with the proportion standing at 0.5% to 0.6% over this period.

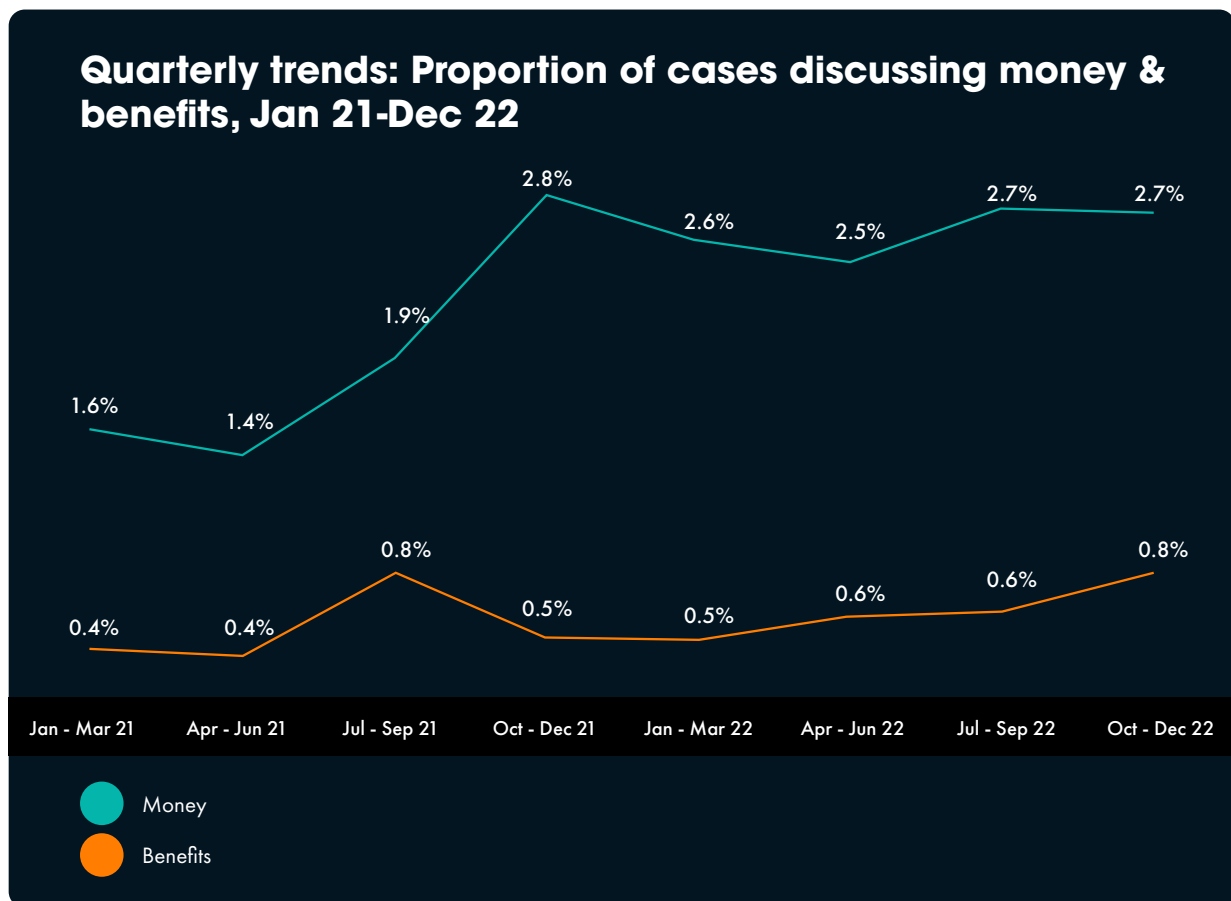


Quarterly trends

Quarterly trends over the past two years show that in Q2 of 2021 there was the lowest volume of cases discussing money. Following this, the proportion rose sharply during Q3 and Q4 of 2021, when it peaked at 2.8%, with the proportion remaining at elevated levels throughout 2022; between 2.5% and 2.7%. On the other hand, requests for support discussing benefits remained relatively stable throughout 2021 and 2022; between 0.4% and 0.8%.

2.8%

Cases discussing money peaked in Q4 of 2021



Issues connected to money & benefits

Family, depression and anxiety were the three most frequently discussed topics alongside money. Around a fifth of these conversations also discussed relationships, loneliness, stress and thoughts of suicide.

Sexuality & LGBTQIA+ issues

Annual trends

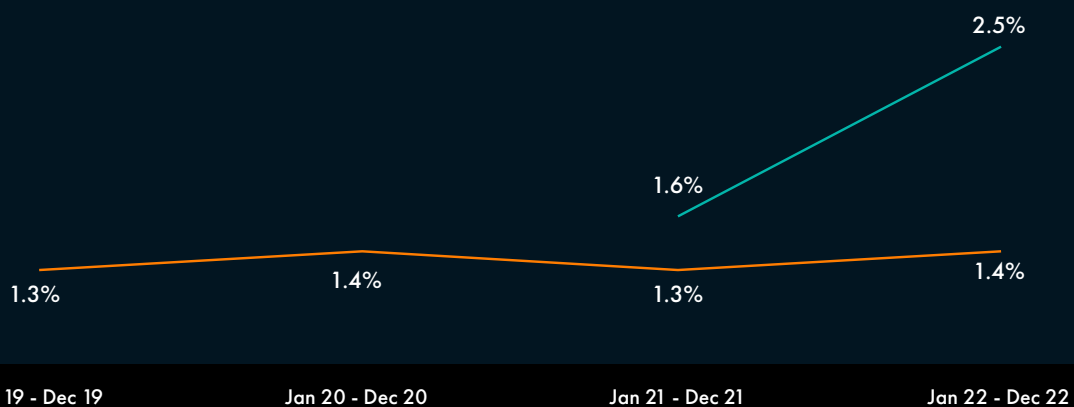
A small proportion of young people contacting The Mix helpline do so as they are seeking support around LGBTQIA+ issues or issues connected to their sexuality.

2.5%

of cases discussed LGBTQIA+ issues in 2022

The proportion of conversations discussing **sexuality** on the helpline remained relatively flat over the past three years; slightly above 1%. The full year data for cases discussing **LGBTQIA+** issues is available only from 2021. Since then, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of cases discussing these issues, with these conversations accounting for 2.5% of cases in 2022.

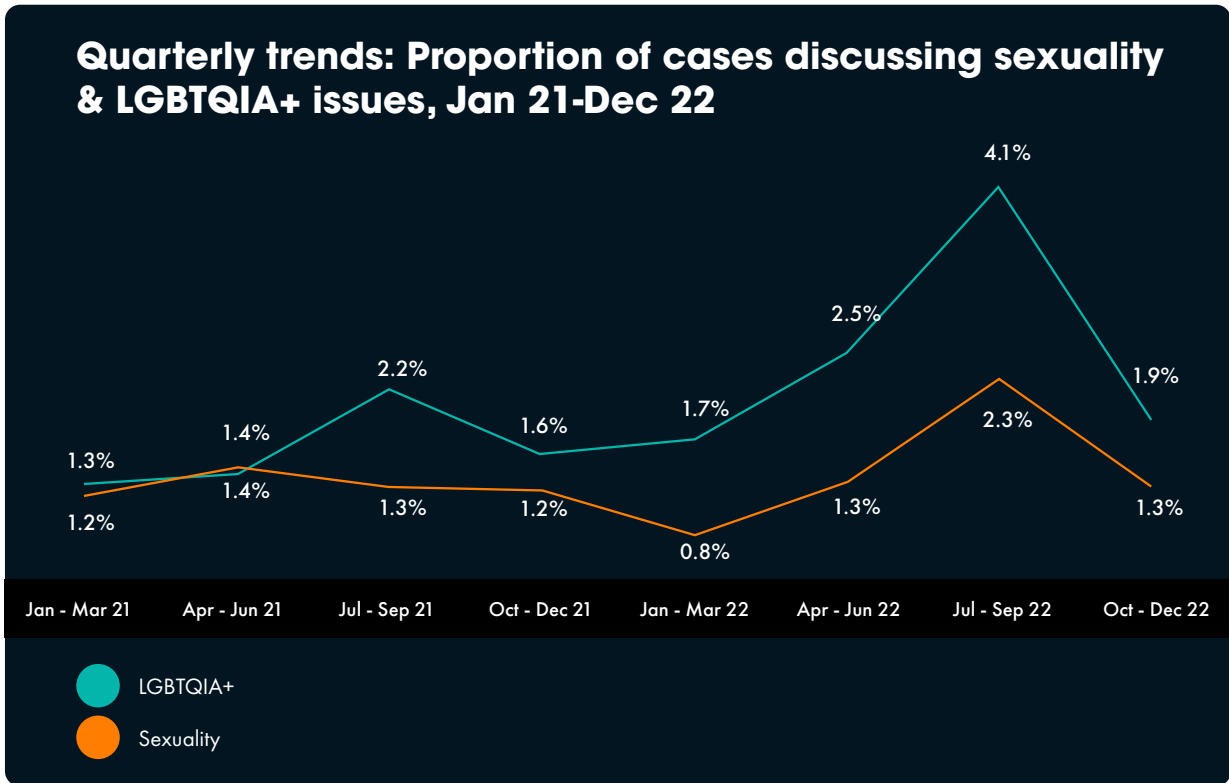
Annual trends: Proportion of cases discussing sexuality & LGBTQIA+ issues, Jan 19-Dec 22



- LGBTQIA+
- Sexuality

Quarterly trends

Our quarterly data shows that cases discussing LGBTQIA+ issues fluctuated a lot over the past two years, with clear peaks in Q3 of 2021 (2.2%) and Q3 of 2022, when they accounted for 4.1% of cases, before falling by half to 1.9% in Q4 of 2022. Similarly, cases discussing sexuality also peaked in Q3 of 2022 (2.3%); this was then followed by a sharp fall.



Issues connected to sexuality & LGBTQIA+

The most frequently discussed topics alongside LGBTQIA+ issues included relationships (34%), family (28%), anxiety (26%), depression (26%), thoughts of suicide (22%), sexual orientation (21%), self-worth (16%), thoughts of self-harm (14%), loneliness (14%) or stress.



Difficulty sleeping & drug use

Annual trends

Although the cases mentioning **drugs or solvents and difficulties with sleeping** account for a small proportion of overall cases, they soared during 2022 at a time when the lives of young people began 'returning to normal', after lockdown restrictions were lifted.

The proportion of cases discussing drugs or solvents on the helpline had fallen slightly between 2019 and 2021 from 1.9% to 1.4%, but this was followed by a substantial rise to 2.1% in 2022. This trend is in line with our findings on substance use among young people⁸, showing that drug consumption initially fell during the early phase of the pandemic, most probably due to restrictions on face-to-face contact and closures of venues where young people typically use drugs. However, with life 'returning to normal' and with many young people seeking escapism, drug consumption among young people soared.

1.4%

of cases discussed sleeping or insomnia in 2021



2.6%

of cases discussed sleeping or insomnia in 2022

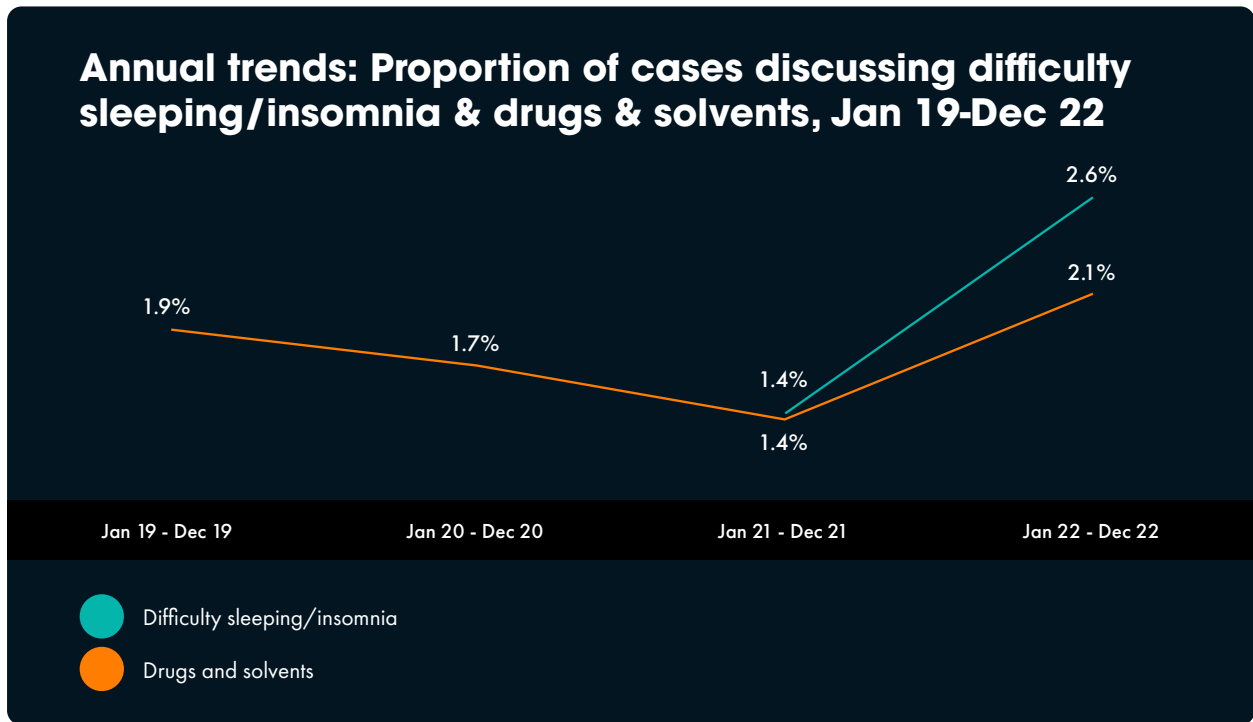
Quarterly trends

Our quarterly data for the past two years show that the proportion of cases mentioning drugs or solvents was relatively flat over 2021 and in Q1 of 2022. It rose sharply in Q2 of 2022 and peaked at 2.8% in Q3 of 2022. This was followed by a sharp fall during Q4 2022.

⁹ The volume of cases in 2022 is lower due to shorter helpline opening hours and lower capacity to respond.

Full year data on conversations mentioning difficulties in sleeping or insomnia is only available from 2021, when these conversations accounted for 1.4% of cases.

Interestingly, there was a substantial rise in these cases last year, with the proportion almost doubling to 2.6% in 2022.



0.8%

of cases discussed
difficulties around sleeping
in summer 2021

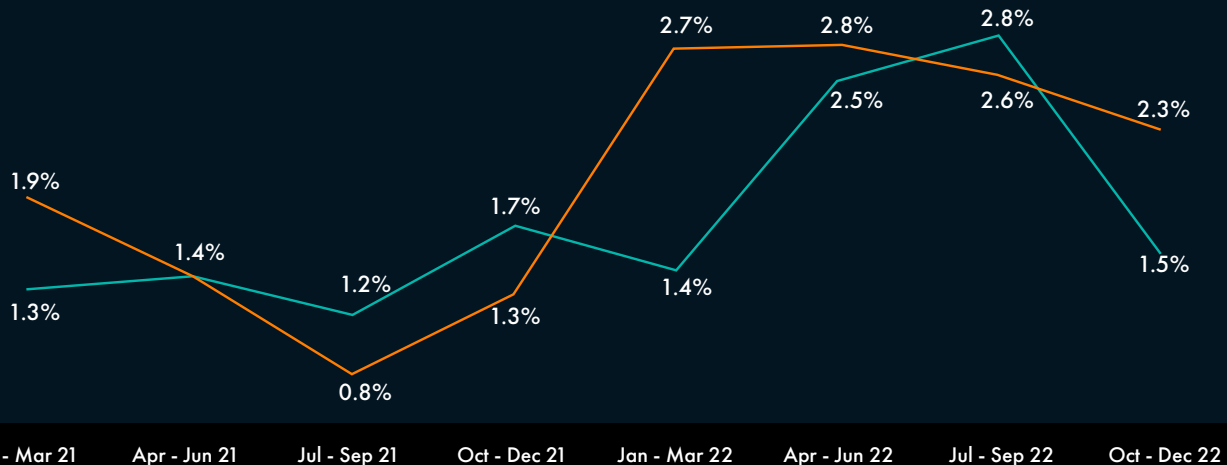


2.7%

of cases discussed
difficulties around sleeping
in Q1 of 2022

Like a number of other issues, during the summer of 2021 we recorded the lowest volume of cases referring to difficulties around sleeping (0.8%). However, over the next two quarters the cases rose steeply, so much so that by Q1 of 2022 their proportion tripled to 2.7%. The proportion had remained at a similar level until Q2 of 2022, followed by a slight drop during the last two quarters of 2022.

Quarterly trends: Proportion of cases discussing difficulty sleeping/insomnia & drugs & solvents, Jan 21-Dec 22



- Drugs and solvents
- Difficulty sleeping/insomnia

Issues connected to difficulties with sleeping

Around half (56%) of conversations where difficulties with sleeping were discussed also mentioned depression or anxiety (48%), with other frequently discussed topics being family (41%), thoughts of suicide (35%), loneliness (31%), counselling (28%), relationships (26%) or stress (23%). Around a fifth also discussed disordered eating, self-worth, thoughts of self-harm and acting on thoughts of self-harm.

Demographic information

Demographic information on the age and gender of young people from helpline cases in 2022 is provided below. Cases where the information is unknown were excluded.

| Age | Count | % |
|--------------|-------|------|
| 12 and under | 147 | 3% |
| 13 - 16 | 1176 | 24% |
| 17 - 21 | 2224 | 45% |
| 22 - 25 | 1415 | 29% |
| Total | 4942 | 100% |

| Gender | Count | % |
|-------------|-------|------|
| Female | 3395 | 72% |
| Male | 1030 | 22% |
| Non-binary | 20 | 0% |
| Other | 128 | 3% |
| Transgender | 171 | 4% |
| Total | 4744 | 100% |

Method

Anonymous data on topics discussed during helpline conversations with young people from 2019-2022 was analysed. Topics discussed are recorded on The Mix's database by the agent supporting the young person.

For the purposes of this paper, we define a young person as 25 years old or younger.

As this paper focuses on trends for young people only, data where the known user age was 26 years or above were excluded, alongside records where the topic of the conversation was not specified.

For the annual and quarterly trends, each percentage is the proportion of all conversations where the given issue was discussed.

Data is looking at cases rather than users, meaning that people who contacted The Mix more than once would appear in the data repeatedly. Typically, the repeat users tend to contact the helpline about a wide range of issues.

Volumes of cases in the analysis - 2019: 9,000 cases; 2020: 8,662; 2021: 7,957 cases; 2022: 5,520 cases.⁹

Analysis describing topics that appear together is based on case data from 2022.

Limitations

- Young people seeking support are overrepresented in this data as it is only young people who seek support who access The Mix helpline.
- Data on mental health conditions reflect how young people describe their feelings. While some users might have a diagnosed mental health disorder, others might be describing their feelings.
- Although most cases have topics/issues mentioned recorded on the database, there is a small proportion of cases where this is missing – these were excluded.

⁹ The volume of cases in 2022 is lower due to shorter helpline opening hours and lower capacity to respond.

Glossary

*The Mix helpline offers a non-judgemental service for young people aged 11 to 25 years old who need help. It can be accessed via phone, webchat, email or a webform. Young people can speak to us about any issue. We will explore their situation with them and find organisations that may be able to help them further. Information on issues mentioned is typically recorded by volunteers dealing with young people seeking support, during or after conversations on The Mix database.

** A percentage point or percent point is the unit used for the arithmetic difference of two percentages. For example, moving up from 40% to 44% is a 4-percentage point increase, but is a 10 percent increase in what is being measured.

Signposts

The Mix

For essential support for under 25s on any issue, call 0808 808 4994, email or chat to us via themix.org.uk/get-support (Monday-Saturday from 4pm to 11 pm).

Access counselling, a moderated community and online resources via themix.org.uk

Crisis Messenger

For crisis support, text "SHOUT" to 85258 to contact the Shout Crisis Text Line

Papyrus UK

A charity for the prevention of young suicide (under 35) in the UK. Call the Papyrus Hopeline on 0800 068 4141.

You can also text them on 077862 09697, email pat@papyrus-uk.org or go to papyrus-uk.org

Switchboard LGBTQ+ Helpline:

For specialist support for LGBT+ communities, call 0300 330 0630 (open 10am-10pm every day). Find out more information or webchat with someone via switchboard.lgbt

Black Minds Matter

A service for Black communities, offering signposting to support and advice for mental health. Go to blackmindsmatteruk.com

Childline

If you're under 19, you can call 0800 1111 to talk to Childline (the number will not appear on your phone bill). Go to childline.org.uk for webchat service or message board.

Samaritans

Call 116 123 to talk to Samaritans, or email: jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours. Samaritans offer a listening ear on any issue. Or access samaritans.org for more information.

Amy Winehouse Foundation

Access information and support for drug and alcohol-related issues via amywinehousefoundation.org

Drinkline

Get in touch for support on alcohol-related issues. The number for England is 0300 123 1110 and 0808 808 2234 for Wales. Access via alcoholchange.org.uk

Relate

For support with relationships you can access relationship counselling for young people, individuals and families over the phone, by email, webchat and face-to-face. There is a charge for some services. Visit relate.org.uk for more information.

Young Minds Parents Helpline

If you're supporting a young person, call 0808 802 5544 (9.30am to 4pm on weekdays). Or visit youngminds.org.uk or send them an email via the website.

Winston's Wish

Call the free helpline on 08088 020 021 (Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm) for expert advice and guidance on bereavement support for a grieving child or young person after the death of a loved one. Or visit winstonswish.org.uk and send them a message from there.