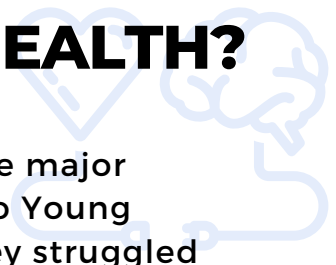


DO TESTS AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



Tests and examinations are frequently identified as one of the major stressors in the lives of children and young people. According to Young Minds’ “Missing the Mark” report, 63% of 15-18-year-olds said they struggled to cope in the lead up to and during GCSE and A Level exams and 35% of KS2 students said that SATs made them feel ill. Advocates of standardised tests argue that they are the only truly fair assessment method, avoiding the issue of teacher bias. However, critics say that they take a significant mental toll on young people, one that outweighs the educational benefit. To mark this year’s Mental Health Awareness week, running from 11-17th May, we wanted to find out how young people felt about tests in their own words. Do they see them as an educational tool, a necessary evil, an emotional burden, or as something else entirely?

Alex
Data Coordinator 

53,623

TOTAL VOTES

9,843

VOTES AGE 5-11

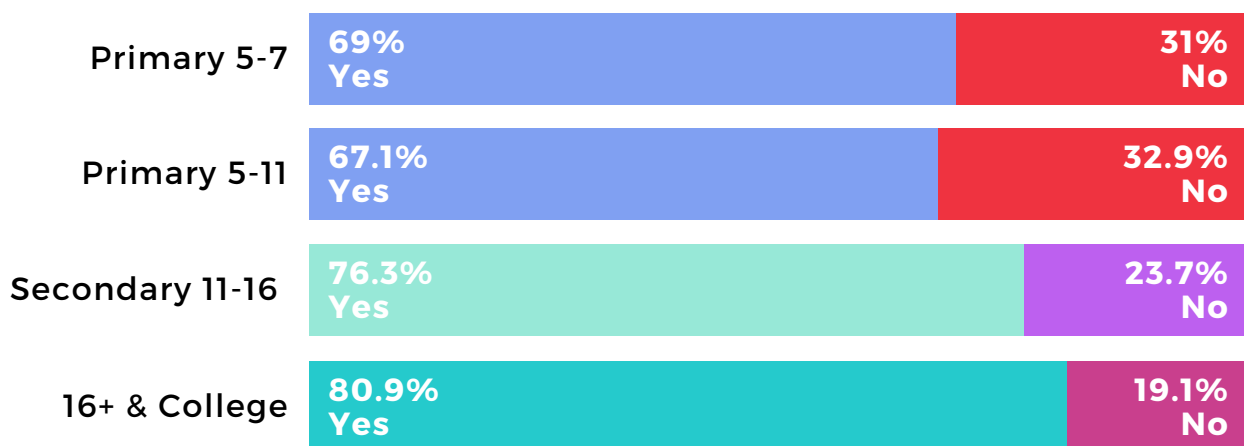
43,780

VOTES AGE 11-16+

The VoteTopic questions, discussed amongst the different age groups, were:

Primary 5-7: “Do tests change how you feel?”

Primary 7,11 Secondary 11-16, 16+ & College: “Do tests affect your mental health?”



DO TESTS AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

Voters at all ages responded that tests can have an affect on their mental health and many views were shared across age groups.

At Primary, pupils discussed tests being stressful and generating anxious feelings. Some spoke about how tests can disrupt their sleep. There was certainly a proportion of voters who said that tests do not affect their mental health, or that they enjoy them. There was an appreciation that tests can help improve learning and identify areas to work on.

Similar themes were explored by older voters. A number of Secondary voters identified pressure from teachers, schools and parents as a source of stress around tests. A handful of students called for coursework to be reinstated, arguing for it as a less stressful assessment method. Some discussed the need to put tests into perspective, saying that most tests do not matter for their lives. However, other students disagreed, finding that the impact tests can have on their future lives was a major source of pressure.

Some teachers reported a notable gender divide in their classrooms; girls said that their mental health was affected by tests, but boys did not. National data reflects this, with girls in all ages more likely to vote yes than boys. This was most pronounced at Secondary with 33% of boys voting that they are not affected by tests, compared to 15% of girls.

Yes they do affect my mental health because I want my mum to be proud of me [...] sometimes I get a really bad headache because I'm worried.

Primary 'Yes' Voter

I said no because I think it is good for my teachers to know what I need to work on so that I am ready for the learning in the next year group.

Primary 'No' Voter

It affects mental health as there is a huge pressure on doing well and how much of an impact it has in future life.

Secondary 'Yes' Voter

It is just a method to check your knowledge, it is short-term and won't affect my whole future.

Secondary 'No' Voter