

Briefing: Accenture and Cibyl Mental Health Report

December 2021

Introduction

Accenture, a global consulting firm, together with Cibyl, a student and graduate market researcher, conducted a survey on mental health with more than 12,000 students across 140 U.K. universities between October and December 2020, resulting in the report *University: The Best Time of Our Lives?*¹ While the Covid-19 pandemic has made a difficult situation worse, this research and report reflects concerning trends observed in student mental health over the past several years.

Mental Health Challenges

Many students report mental health challenges, which may be exacerbated by the transition to university and the unique stresses and pressures of university life. The challenges identified in the survey include:

- » 35% of students reported facing a mental health challenge at the time of the survey, with transgender (58%), disabled (58%), neurodiverse (57%), and lesbian (56%) and gay (50%) students more likely to report mental health challenges.
- » 39% of respondents said their mental health has declined since starting university – this was higher among students with long-term illness or disability (58%).
- » Of those who reported mental health challenges, anxiety (72%), depression (53%), and burnout (36%) were the most frequently reported conditions.
- » Factors that negatively affect students' mental health include feeling unprepared for university; pressure in coursework, assessments, and studying; and loneliness and lack of good friendships.
- » 55% of respondents said they feel lonely on a daily or weekly basis – women and LGBTQ students were more likely to report feeling frequently lonely.
- » 80% said the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to their poor mental health, but only 13% said it was the sole cause.

Getting Help

Most students know how to get help, however uptake and effectiveness of these services vary. The survey found that:

¹ <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/is-the-hippocratic-oath-an-answer-to-the-student-mental-health-question/>
<https://cibyl.com/cibyl-insights/university-best-time-our-lives>

- » 60% of students reported knowing where to get help, and the most used services were counselling (35%), GP (33%), and university wellbeing support (30%).
- » While only 14% reported using a mentor/buddy service, they were rated as most effective with 80% of users agreeing that these schemes were effective. Mental health advisers and stress management workshops were also rated as highly effective.
- » 17% of students reported not talking to anyone about their mental health – this is higher among male (32%) and ethnic minority students (20%). Many (42%) felt that they didn't know what to say or how to express their feelings.
- » Half of respondents felt their mental health is not well supported at university and just over a third felt the actions taken by their university to help them maintain good mental health during the pandemic were effective.