

Student Space Insights

June 2021

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of recent insights gathered through the [Student Space programme](#).

Previous insight reports from the Student Space programme can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions about this report, please contact studentspace@studentminds.org.uk.

Contents

1. Student Space overview (4-6)
2. Analysis of text conversations about anxiety (7-13)
3. Content insights (14-15)
4. Support service insights (16-26)
5. Contact us (27)

What is Student Space?

Student Minds launched Student Space in August 2020 to help students find the support that they need during coronavirus.

The platform works to support students in three ways:

1. [Dedicated support services](#)
2. [Information, tools](#) and [stories](#)
3. [Signposting to university support](#)

The screenshot shows the Student Space website interface. At the top right, there is a search bar with the text "Search our site" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "Support services", "Advice and Information", "Student stories", "Support at your university", and "About Student Space". The main heading reads "Find the support you need during coronavirus". Below this, there is a call to action: "If you need support now, text STUDENT to 85258" and a link for "Other ways you can get in touch". The page is divided into three columns under the heading "Advice and information". The first column is titled "Studying during coronavirus" and features an illustration of a student at a desk. The second column is titled "Lockdown and self-isolation" and features an illustration of a person on a sofa. The third column is titled "Mental health and wellbeing" and features an illustration of a person on a bicycle. Each column includes a sub-heading, a link, and a brief description of the resources available.

The Student Space Support Package

Universal support services

Dedicated support for whatever challenge a student is facing. Whether it's mental health, studies, money, housing or relationships.

Current services:

- Text support
- Phone support
- Email support
- Webchat support



Tailored support services

Tailored support for some of the student groups most impacted by the pandemic.

This includes support for:

- Black students
- Punjabi students
- Muslim students
- Trans students
- Working-class students
- Students with OCD and BDD
- Students who hear voices
- Students with disordered eating

Information, tools and stories

Expert information and advice shaped and written by students and clinicians.

Video-based stories about how students have responded to the challenges created by coronavirus.



University support directory

A directory for students to find the mental health support available at their university.

Search by university

Delivered in partnership

Funders

Office for
Students



Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

hefcw

Support service providers

shout
85258

THE MIX

ਤਰੱਕੀ
tarakī
ترقى

myh muslim
YOUTH
helpline

First
Steps

VOICE
COLLECTIVE

RECLAIM

BPT

ocdaction
it's time to act

M
Mermaids

Analysis of text conversations with students about anxiety

April - June 2021

Analysis by: The logo for 'shout 85258' features the word 'shout' in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. Below it, the number '85258' is displayed in white inside a purple speech bubble shape with a tail pointing towards the bottom left.

Text conversations with students about anxiety

(April - June)

Anxiety was the most common issue raised by student texters between April and June, featuring in 51% of conversations.

Analysis of these conversations revealed four key themes:

- 1 Coursework and exams
- 2 Relationships
- 3 The pandemic
- 4 Job prospects

Text conversations with students about anxiety

(April - June)

1

Coursework and exams

In around **two-thirds of conversations**, texters mentioned feeling anxious or stressed, and often also suicidal, about their **coursework and exams**.

Key issues

- Course workload and difficulty understanding the topics.
- Forthcoming exams and assignment deadlines.
- Worries about getting poor grades and fears over failing.

Text conversations with students about anxiety

(April - June)

2

Relationships

In almost **a quarter of conversations**, texters mentioned a **breakdown in their relationships** as the reason behind their feelings of anxiety or stress.

Key issues

- Breaking up with a partner
- Falling out with friends and housemates.
- Disagreements and arguments with parents and siblings

Text conversations with students about anxiety

(April - June)

3

The pandemic

In around **three-quarters of conversations**, issues arising from the **pandemic** exacerbated the students' anxiety and stress.

Key issues

Isolation and lack of motivation were the most common issues raised in relation to the pandemic, in particular their impact on studies, relationships and job prospects.

Isolation:

- Anxiety and stress experienced over coursework and exams is normally eased by the support of coursemates and social networks. Lockdown made this more difficult.
- Some living in university accommodation mentioned being homesick, depressed and missing their family who had supported them previously.
- Many texters found online learning isolating and the lack of interaction with others challenging.
- Some found maintaining a relationship during lockdown difficult and not being able to see partners regularly resulted in the breakdown of relationships.
- Isolation made it difficult for some to distract themselves from a recent relationship break up.
- Some experienced conflict and arguments as a result of being confined with family or housemates while coping with the stress of exams and coursework.

Text conversations with students about anxiety

(April - June)

3

The pandemic

In around **three-quarters of conversations**, issues arising from the **pandemic** exacerbated the students' anxiety and stress.

Key issues

Lack of motivation:

Lockdown restrictions prevented students from carrying out their usual activities and disrupted their routines, which often resulted in a lack of motivation and difficulty focusing on their studies.

- A third of texters reported being anxious and even suicidal about their lack of motivation, as they described being aware of imminent assignment deadlines and exams, but feeling unmotivated and unable to concentrate or focus.
- Some texters mentioned that a lack of routine as a result of lockdown, and uncertainty created by the pandemic, left them feeling depressed and unmotivated and expressed feeling fed up with lockdown.

Text conversations with students about anxiety

(April - June)

4

Job prospects

In around **1 in 6 conversations**, texters mentioned feeling anxious and stressed about their life after university, specifically their **job prospects**. A majority of these texters were in the final year of their degree.

This theme was less apparent in the January to March period.

Key issues

- Concerns about not being able to find a job due to the **competitiveness of the job market** in relation to their chosen profession.
- Low confidence and a feeling that they had **not acquired the necessary skills** required for their chosen career.
- The **uncertainty of the job market** due to the impact of the pandemic on the job sector.

Website Content

1st June - 30th June 2021

Top 5 most viewed psycho-education pages in June

1. [How to practice self-care during your job hunt*](#)
2. [Improve your sleep*](#)
3. [Finding focus and motivation for studying*](#)
4. [Overcoming social anxiety*](#)
5. [Healthy habits can help your mental health](#)

*Not in May's top 5

The most viewed pages on Student Space will be heavily influenced by our comms and marketing approach.

The Support Services

1st June 2021 - 30th June 2021

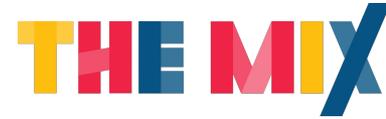
Key issues raised by students through the universal support services



Text service

Issue*	% of convos (June)	% of convos (May)
Anxiety / Stress	45%	51%
Relationship	23%	23%
Depression / Sadness	22%	31%
Isolation / Loneliness	13%	19%
Suicide	19%	14%
Grief	5%	-
COVID-19	-	6%

*The two service providers track the frequency of issues using different categories and methodologies.

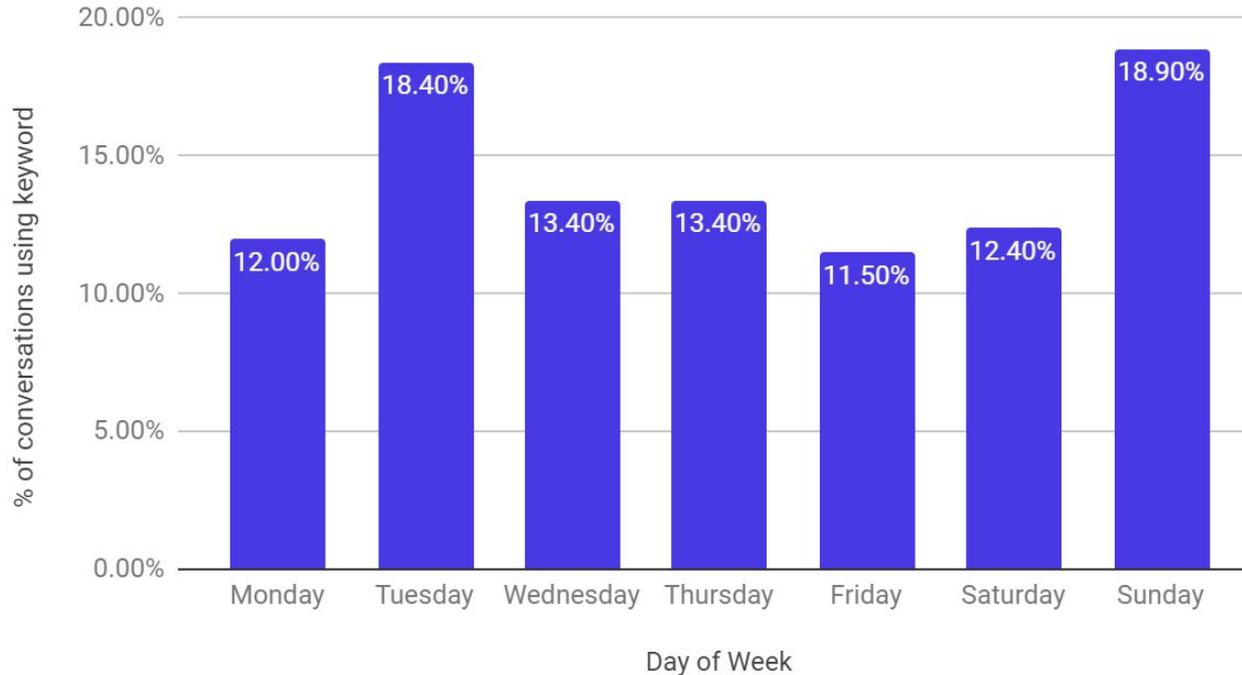


Phone, email and webchat services

Issue*	% of convos (June)
School and education	28%
Anxiety	16%
Money	13%
Mental health and wellbeing	12%
Loneliness / isolation	10%
Feelings and emotions	10%
Depression / low mood	10%
Stress	9%
Relationships and friends	7%

Day of access: Text service (June 21)

% of conversations using keyword vs Day of Week

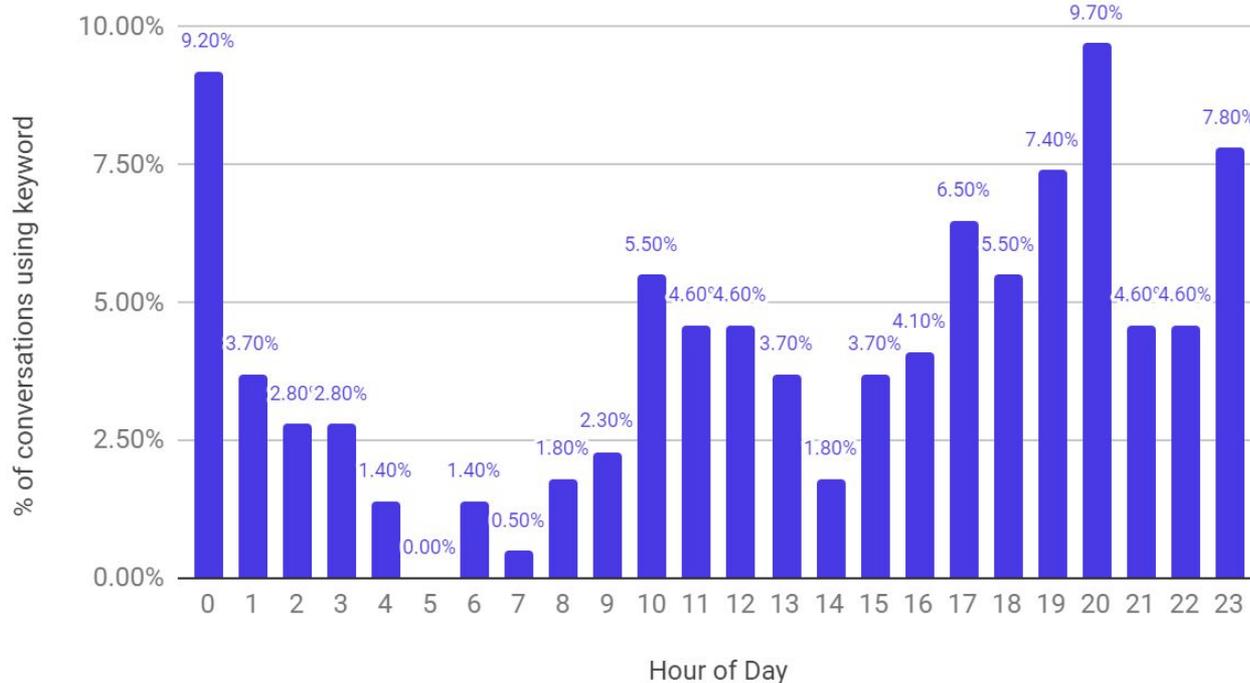


Tuesday and Sunday were the most popular days for students to engage with the text service across June.

This compares to Monday, Thursday and Sunday being the most popular days in May.

Hour of access: Text service (June 21)

% of conversations using keyword vs Hour of Day



Only 26.2% of texts took place between 9pm and 1am in June, compared to 35.3% during the same time period in June.

Instead, 5pm - 9pm became the most popular four hour period with 29.1% of texts received. This compares to 20.2% of texts received during the same time period in May.

Issues facing students with OCD

The support service

Online sessions for students living with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), and related conditions such as body focused repetitive behaviours (BFRBs).

Delivered by: **ocdaction**
it's time to act

The most common issues raised by students with OCD who have joined the online sessions

- Knowing where to go for support or treatment, particularly as university services are not always best placed to support students with OCD.
- The waiting times associated with accessing support.
- The lack of knowledge about OCD from peers and support workers, often leading to unhelpful advice e.g. around how much cleaning is too much cleaning.
- Perfectionism and the impact on studies and time management.
- Lack of routine.
- Feelings of loneliness, and difficulties managing relationships due to OCD.

Issues facing students who hear voices and have other sensory experiences

The support service

An online peer support group and forum for students who hear voices and have other sensory experiences.

Delivered by:



The most common issues raised by students in the peer support group

- Difficulties making friends and the uncertainty about how much to tell others about their mental health, in particular about their experience of hearing voices.
- The pressure to take part in student activities and meet the expectations of student life, particularly for introverts, non-drinkers etc...
- Concerns about Covid restrictions easing and the impact on their studies and university life.

Issues facing students from working-class backgrounds

The support service

A webinar & podcast series exploring the challenges that students from working-class backgrounds are facing during the pandemic.

Delivered by: **RECLAIM**

The most common issues raised by students in the peer support group

- Financial struggles and the impact on emotional wellbeing, particularly as the summer holidays are approaching and finding a job may be more difficult than normal due to the pandemic.
- The return to university and the structures that will be in place to meet the needs of students from working-class backgrounds.

Issues facing trans and gender questioning students

The support service

Phone and webchat support for trans, gender-diverse and nonbinary students, available 9am-9pm, Monday to Friday.

Delivered by:



The most common issues raised by trans students

- Gender identity and dysphoria
- Loneliness and isolation
- Anxiety

Issues facing Punjabi students

The support service

An online support group for Punjabi students.

Delivered by:



The most common issues raised by Punjabi students in the online support group

- Difficulties setting boundaries with family members, particularly for women, due to the desire to please and the expectation in the family home of being open.
- Generational differences in mindsets, particularly for LGBTQ+ Punjabi students.
- The impact and reliance on social media.
- The desire to reconnect with friends.
- Managing relationships with toxic members of the extended family, and trying to break the mould of adopting outdated cultural norms.
- Managing grief.

You can find insights relating to the following student groups in the [May insights report](#):

- Black students
- Muslim students
- Students with disordered eating

The value of taking an intersectional approach

A theme that has been raised by a number of students is the value of creating spaces and support that is intersectional.

In a workshop for Pujabi LGBTQ+ students it was recognised that queer spaces are predominantly white and that continuing to create more tailored spaces for different groups within the LGBTQ+ community would be valuable.

In a workshop for Black students, the importance of providing tailored support to Black students who are neurodiverse was highlighted by attendees.

ਤਰੱਕੀ
tarakī
ترقی



If you have any questions about this report, please contact
studentspace@studentminds.org.uk