

# Mental Health in Education Report

Building mentally healthy learning communities

A snapshot from the Be You National Mental Health in Education Survey 2024



With delivery partners



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# About Be You

Be You is the national mental health and wellbeing initiative for early learning services and schools in Australia. It is delivered by Beyond Blue in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace.

Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Be You is freely available for educators and those studying to become educators.

It includes professional learning, consultant support, and practical tools and resources to establish positive, inclusive, and responsive learning environments. Be You is designed to be tailored to fit the needs of each learning community and helps educators enhance their knowledge and skills to support children and young people in achieving their best possible mental health.

Regular research and survey activities, such as the National Mental Health in Education Survey, inform the development of Be You, ensuring the initiative is evidence-based and consistently meets the needs of the education sector.

For more information about the survey please contact us via the website: [beyou.edu.au](http://beyou.edu.au)



# About the survey



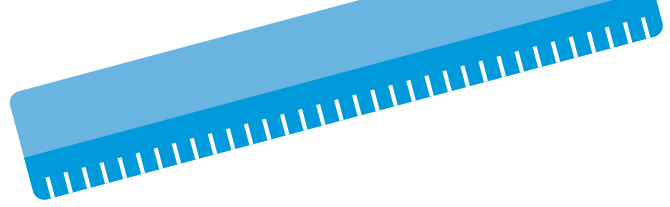
Be You conducts the annual National Mental Health in Education Survey to assess the state of mental health and wellbeing in education. The survey, which began in 2018, collects data and insights from early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers and pre-service educators. It gauges attitudes, behaviours and the mental health literacy of educators across Australia.

The 2024 survey reached a total of 2,630 respondents, including educators, school leaders, support staff and pre-service educators. These participants represented a diverse range of educational settings, from early learning services to schools across different states and territories.

The survey was carried out online between February 22 and March 27, 2024. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Bellberry Limited Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).



# Report Snapshot



The 2024 National Mental Health in Education Survey conducted by Be You, gathered insights from 2,630 educators, school leaders, support staff and pre-service educators across early learning, primary and secondary education settings.

## The key findings are:

Mental health remains a top priority in the education sector. Educators are increasingly concerned about the mental health of children and young people, with 77% citing depression and anxiety as the biggest health issue.

This concern extends to their peers with only 38% of educators indicating that they felt the staff in their learning communities are mentally healthy.

Educators take their role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their learning communities seriously, and their confidence in addressing these issues is increasing (from 71% in 2022 to 77% in 2024).

Research consistently shows that educator mental health is closely tied to the wellbeing of the entire learning community. When educators feel supported, they are better equipped to create environments where children and young people can thrive.

However, challenges such as workforce shortages, time constraints and growing demands are putting this at risk.

## Key barriers to educator wellbeing

**Staff turnover and shortages:** Staff shortages exacerbate the pressures on time-poor educators. Half (52%) of the educators surveyed reported unusually high staff turnover in 2024. Of those educators, 93% said it negatively affected educator wellbeing, and 79% believed it negatively impacts the wellbeing of children and young people.

**Mentally healthy workplaces:** Cultivating a mentally healthy workplace starts from the top with leadership driving the culture. Yet just less than two-thirds (62%) of educators feel their leadership actively supports staff wellbeing.

**Lack time and resources:** Only 54% of educators have access to dedicated wellbeing coordinators, and 24% feel they don't have enough time for professional development.

**Impact of critical incidents:** Educators play a crucial role in supporting children and young people through critical incidents but they too are impacted by these events. Only 55% of educators felt confident their communities were adequately prepared to provide support after a critical incident.

## Recommendations for building an education system that enables educators to thrive

There are several changes within the system required to ensure educators receive adequate resources and support. These changes extend beyond individual self-care strategies and focus on a whole learning community approach to supporting educators' wellbeing and building their capacity to effectively promote mental health throughout their careers.

### These recommendations are:

- Equip leaders with resources and strategies to support educator wellbeing.
- Embed mental health in pre-service training.
- Provide paid time for educators to engage with and implement wellbeing programs.
- Fund dedicated wellbeing roles.



# The urgent state of mental health in Australian education

In recent years, mental health has become a major concern in Australia's education sector. Some of the reasons behind this are the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce shortages, increased critical incidents in schools and extraordinary events such as natural disasters. The combination of these factors is impacting the mental health of educators, children and young people, and requires urgent attention.

Since the survey began in 2018, results have remained consistent, demonstrating that educators' perceptions of the mental health within their learning communities has been consistently low. This raises concerns that the state of mental health within education is not improving.

The survey highlights that educators have a good understanding of the importance of mental health, and we trust their observations when it comes to the wellbeing of children, young people and their colleagues. However, it's important to remember that they are not mental health professionals, nor are they expected to be.

The consistency in their responses over time reinforces the need for changes that could benefit the mental health of the entire learning community.

This report highlights key findings from the survey, emphasising the essential role educators wellbeing plays in the overall health of learning communities and offers recommendations on how to better support mental health in educational settings.



# Mental health is one of the top issues in Australian education

When educators were asked about the health concerns they think weigh most heavily on children and young people, topping the list was mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety.



**77%** of educators state mental health as the number one health concern.

This concern spans across all educational settings, from early learning services to schools and even among pre-service educators.

“Mental health really impacts learning. We see a lot of poor attendance due to anxiety. It’s a bit of a vicious cycle when attending school isn’t part of a child’s routine, we can’t support them when they aren’t here.”

- Secondary School Teacher

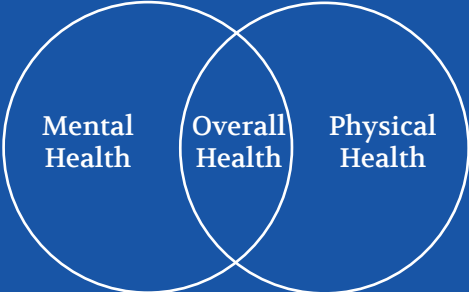
## Screen time is a growing concern.

Educators reported excessive screen time as the second biggest health issue affecting children and young people, which rose from 55% in 2022 to 58% in 2024.



## Educators understand the deep connection between mental health and physical wellbeing

**97%** agree that mental health is just as important as physical health.



Mental Health    Overall Health    Physical Health

There is strong recognition of the need to foster wellbeing.

**95%** believe that good mental health is a precondition for effective learning.




Educators' confidence in their ability to respond to mental health issues is growing steadily.

**91%** of educators consider it their responsibility to support the social and emotional development of children and young people.



Educators' confidence in supporting children and young people with mental health issues has risen from 71% in 2022 to 77% in 2024.



Although educators are confident in their ability to address mental health concerns, only one-third (33%) believe that the children and young people in their care are mentally healthy.

These findings point to a gap between educators' readiness to act and the actual state of mental health in their learning communities. While educators feel equipped to address mental health concerns, the scale of these issues presents a major challenge.





# The wellbeing of educators is key to mentally healthy learning communities

Educator wellbeing is at the heart of creating positive learning environments. It can affect health, outlook, personal life and how educators interact and build relationships with children, young people, families and colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

When educators are mentally healthy, they are empowered to create learning communities where everyone has the potential to thrive.

“There’s a high rate of burn out. This often means staff need to take leave, and children are left without their main educator. It’s hard to maintain a high quality program when educators are experiencing burn out.”

- *Early Childhood Educator*



Only  
**38%**

of educators felt the staff in their learning communities are mentally healthy.

With educators increasingly facing workforce shortages and rising expectations, their wellbeing may be at risk. High levels of stress, burnout and inadequate access to support is taking a toll.



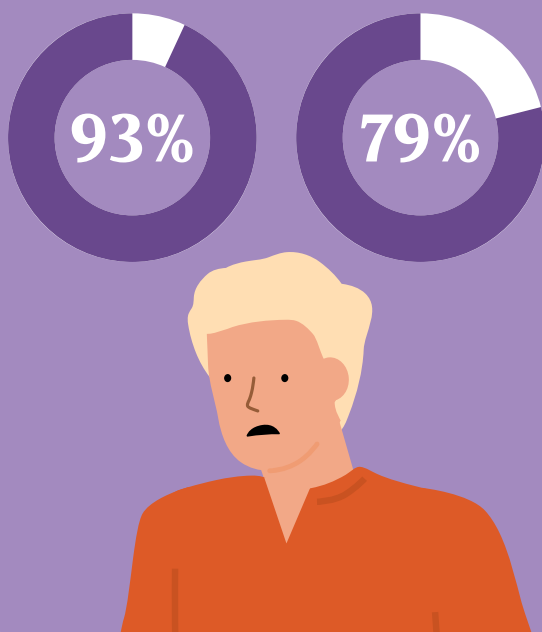
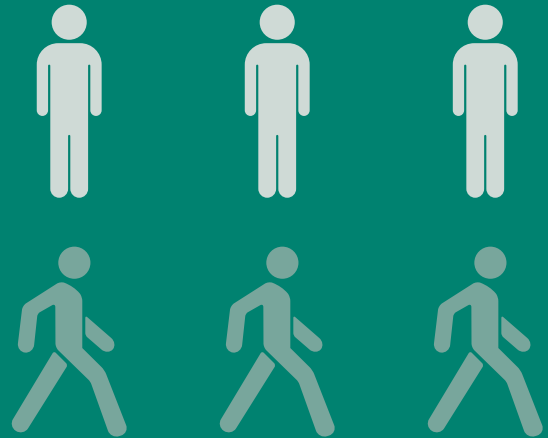
# Barriers to educator wellbeing

There are several factors facing the sector that may impact educator wellbeing and the overall health of learning communities.

## High staff turnover

Educator wellbeing continues to be undermined by staffing challenges. In 2024, more than half (52%) of educators reported unusually high staff turnover in their learning communities.

This turnover not only affects those who remain in the workplace but also has the potential to impact the quality of care for children and young people.



## Staff shortages

Staff shortages exacerbate the pressures on already time-poor educators, limiting their capacity to promote mental health in their learning communities and to focus on personal wellbeing. With fewer staff, the workload increases, pushing mental health and wellbeing down the list of priorities.

Half (52%) of the educators surveyed reported unusually high staff turnover in 2024. Of those educators, 93% said it negatively affected educator wellbeing, and 79% believed it negatively impacts the wellbeing of children and young people.

## Mentally healthy workplaces

A supportive workplace is essential for positive mental health.<sup>2</sup> Cultivating a mentally healthy workplace starts from the top with leadership driving the culture. Yet just less than two-thirds (62%) of educators feel their leadership actively supports staff wellbeing.

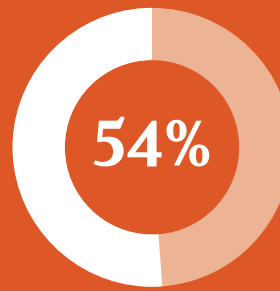
This gap suggests there is an opportunity for leadership to play a bigger role in driving a constructive culture, one that considers educator wellbeing a shared responsibility.



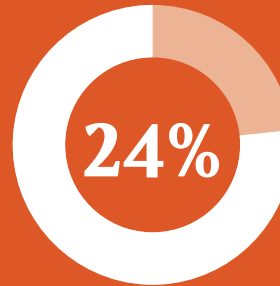
## Lack of time and resources

Adequate time and resources take the strain off educators and are essential for the effective implementation of wellbeing initiatives. Only 54% of educators report having access to a dedicated wellbeing coordinator, and 24% indicate they do not have enough time for professional development, an increase from 22% in 2022.

The lack of time and resources has the potential to hinder educators' wellbeing and limit overall progress towards building healthier more supported learning communities.



have access to a wellbeing coordinator



do not have time for professional development

## Impact of critical incidents

Educators play a crucial role in supporting children and young people through critical incidents, but they too are impacted by these events.

Only 55% of educators felt confident their communities were adequately prepared to provide support after a critical incident, and 53% of educators reported that critical incidents negatively impacted their learning community. Despite widespread understanding of the importance of supporting one another's mental health during such times, there has been no improvement in staff mental health or leadership support following critical incidents since 2022.

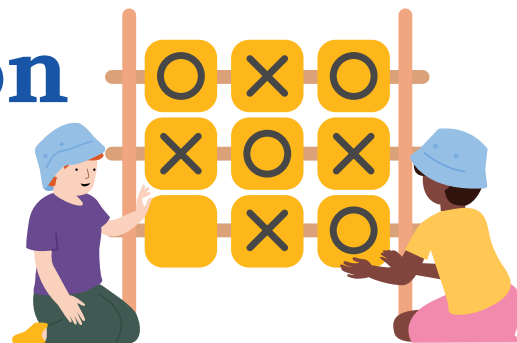


“Dealing with critical incidents is particularly challenging. Having to support and care for your school community, educators, students and families when you may also be grieving and upset is very tough”

- *Primary School Principal*



# Building an education system that enables educators to thrive



The findings from the survey highlight the urgent need to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and educators at every level of the education system. Educators take their responsibility for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the learning community seriously and feel confident in addressing these issues. However, high staff turnover within the sector, lack of time and limited access to support and resources are taking a toll on educators.

Educators play an important role in promoting mentally healthy learning communities. By investing in their wellbeing, we can create a ripple effect that not only improves outcomes for educators themselves but also for children, young people and their families.

While self-care is important, research shows that supporting educator wellbeing is most successful when a whole learning community approach is taken<sup>3</sup>. This means individuals, leaders, early learning services, schools and education systems all build and strengthen protective factors that promote educator wellbeing.

Several changes to the system that educators work within could help them overcome the barriers they face and ensure they receive the resources and support necessary to thrive.



### Strengthen leadership support

Supporting early learning service leaders and school principals to effectively equip their learning communities is essential. Educators require leaders who can prioritise comprehensive and inclusive strategies that support educator wellbeing throughout the entire learning community. Leaders need to be adequately resourced and guided to effectively carry out these strategies. In addition, learning community leaders have specific wellbeing needs, and these need to also be supported in any whole learning community approach.

“A happy workplace is essential for building an expert teaching team where everyone is motivated to do their best. Wellbeing is a standing agenda item at our staff meetings and is supported by regular professional development.”

*-Primary School Principal*

“We need to set our pre-service educators up for success. If they come into the profession feeling confident in their mental health literacy, imagine the positive outcomes this could have for them in their careers and everyone in their orbit.”

*-Primary School Teacher*



### Embed mental health and wellbeing in educator training

Pre-service educators need comprehensive, formal training integrated into their studies to ensure they are prepared to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Additionally, they need the awareness and tools to support and prioritise their own wellbeing and that of those around them. Providing high-quality mental health and wellbeing training in all pre-service education qualifications can help educators build the capacity and confidence needed to support the wellbeing of children and young people, as well as their own, from the outset of their careers.



## Paid time for educators to engage with wellbeing programs

Educators are highly skilled professionals who manage a range of responsibilities. Almost a quarter (24%) of educators report being too time-poor to engage with wellbeing programs. Adequate funding is needed to ensure that all educators have access to paid time for professional development focused on mental health, such as Be You. Educators also need time to apply their learnings in practical settings and for this to be built into workloads.

“One of the biggest challenges I’ve faced is stress, particularly related to time management. We are expected to do an enormous amount of work outside of the classroom to prepare for lessons. This makes it hard to strike a healthy work-life balance”

- *Secondary School Teacher*



## Fund wellbeing support roles in all learning communities

Having dedicated wellbeing support and integration roles in all learning communities can help to implement and embed whole learning community approaches to mental health and wellbeing. Long-term funding for such roles across Australia can help ensure sustainable positive outcomes into the future.



# Supporting one another

## Practical steps toward educator wellbeing

Wellbeing at work matters, not only for personal health and happiness, but also for the relationships educators build with children and young people. Be You is a free initiative that supports everyone in the learning community to achieve their best possible mental health. Whether someone is navigating a crisis or is seeking to deepen their understanding of wellbeing practices, Be You provides resources to support educators wherever they are on their journey. Here are some practical tips to promote mentally healthy workplaces:

- **Give staff a voice:** Ensure staff have a say in choosing and accessing wellbeing activities and professional development opportunities.
- **Recognise each other's contributions:** Make regular, positive recognition a priority in your learning community.
- **Create a relaxing staffroom:** Turn the staffroom into a relaxing space, absent from the pressures of the workplace.
- **Gather anonymous feedback:** Ensure there are mechanisms in place for staff to provide confidential feedback to freely share their opinions and concerns.
- **Foster a supportive culture:** Encourage help-seeking, mutual support and healthy boundaries for yourself and your peers.
- **Host social events:** Organise optional social gatherings to build connection and strengthen cohesion.
- **Establish clear wellbeing policies:** Create and regularly update staff wellbeing, anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies.
- **Develop a Wellbeing Action Plan:** Collaborate with your peers to create a plan and begin enacting it.



Some handy resources to help educators build on their mental health and wellbeing practices:  
[Educator Wellbeing Guide](#)  
[Planning for Wellbeing](#)  
[Wellbeing Tools for You](#)

## Guiding principles for leaders

Leaders play a vital role in promoting educator wellbeing. In collaboration with Monash University, Be You has developed a set of guiding principles to create thriving workplaces for educators, the [Beyond Self-Care: An Educator Wellbeing Guide](#). Leaders are encouraged to implement the following principles to promote wellbeing:

- **Create a positive culture and environment:** Create environments where educators are supported, engaged and can thrive.
- **Recognise educators as professionals:** Educators' professionalism, expertise and capability is acknowledged, respected and celebrated.
- **Acknowledge educators' autonomy:** Educators' agency and autonomy is acknowledged and respected. This includes how they engage in wellbeing initiatives.
- **Promote respectful relationships:** Relationships amongst staff, students and the learning community are respectful and collaborative.
- **Wellbeing resources are accessible and inclusive:** Wellbeing initiatives are accessible to all educators and convenient. They acknowledge educators' cultures, experiences and needs. They support their work with children, young people and communities.
- **Learning communities use evidence-informed practice:** High-quality, relevant evidence must be used when designing wellbeing initiatives. Use local data to inform decisions, and track and review outcomes.
- **Wellbeing initiatives are practical and adaptable:** Wellbeing initiatives need to be applied and relevant to the daily work of educators and their learning communities. They should be adaptable to the context in which educators work.



Be You recognises that leaders' wellbeing is imperative to the overall health of their learning communities. Engaging with Be You is an easy and flexible way for leaders to support their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their learning communities. These principles and an array of helpful strategies can be found in the [Be You Beyond Self-Care: An Educator Wellbeing Guide](#) offering leaders actionable insights to build mentally healthy workplaces.



# Be You Glossary

## **Critical incident:**

Be You uses the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2023) definition - “a critical incident is a sudden, unexpected and overwhelming event, that is out of the range of expected experiences.”

## **Educators:**

An inclusive term to describe all staff working in early learning services and schools whose role is to educate children and young people. This includes leaders and support staff.

## **Leaders:**

This term is used to describe existing leaders within a early learning service or school. This include principals, assistant principals, early learning service managers and assistant service managers, early learning service directors and assistant directors, head teachers, year level coordinators and wellbeing officers.

## **Learning communities:**

A term used to refer to early learning services, school age care services and schools. As Be You is an education initiative for educators working with children and young people from birth to 18 years, some resources may refer to early learning services and schools as “learning communities” to reflect and cater to Be You’s broad audience.

## **Whole learning community approach:**

A whole learning community (or whole-setting) approach is an evidence-based strategy that involves all members of the community working together to drive meaningful change. It’s about creating mentally healthy learning communities, that are positive, inclusive and responsive - a place where every child, young person, educator and family is empowered to achieve their best possible mental health and wellbeing.



This is a snapshot of the mental health and community support services available for children, young people, families, carers and educators.

If you are concerned about someone at risk of immediate harm, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

### **Beyond Blue**

24/7 mental health support service  
1300 22 46 36

### **headspace**

Online support and counselling to young people aged 12 to 25  
1800 650 890 (9am to 1am daily)  
For webchat visit <https://headspace.org.au/ehespace>

### **Kids Helpline**

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services for children and young people aged 5 to 25  
1800 55 1800

### **1800RESPECT**

24/7 support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic violence and abuse  
1800 737 732

### **Lifeline**

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services  
13 11 14

### **Suicide Call Back Service**

24/7 crisis support and counselling service for people affected by suicide  
1300 659 467

### **Mensline**

24/7 counselling service for men  
1300 78 99 78

### **QLife**

LGBTI peer support and referral  
1800 184 527 (3pm to midnight daily)  
Online chat 3pm to midnight daily

### **13YARN**

24/7 crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people  
13 92 76

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