

International Youth Survey: Mental Health and Work-Life Balance Dynamics

Executive Summary

The “Mental Health and Work-Life Balance – International Youth Survey,” carried out for the Take a Look Inside (TALI) youth exchange, shows that many young people in Europe face serious mental-health problems and struggle to keep life and work (or study) in balance. Most participants say they deal with anxiety, stress, depression, or burnout. Many feel overloaded by duties, and they see their personal and school/work lives as out of balance.

They point to four main troubles: weak time-management skills, too many tasks at once, trouble saying “no” to extra work, and guilt when they try to rest. Although many know the basics of mental health, this knowledge often does not lead them to seek help because they still fear judgment or misunderstanding.

The findings highlight a strong need for broader support. Young people ask for affordable, easy-to-reach professional help, mental-health lessons that start early in school, and open talk about feelings in their communities. Meeting these needs will require action that helps both individuals and the systems around them.

The study therefore calls for low-cost youth services, solid mental-health education in schools and universities, public campaigns to fight stigma and encourage help-seeking, and community spaces where people can talk openly. It is also essential to teach practical skills in managing time, reducing stress, and setting clear boundaries.

Introduction

This report gives a closer look at the “Mental Health and Work-Life Balance – International Youth Survey,” part of the TALI youth exchange. The survey explores how young people today view their mental health and their balance between private life and work or study. Because it covers many European countries, it offers a wide and varied picture of these issues. The survey data forms the basis for this detailed review.

Young people now face heavy pressures: demanding schoolwork, fast-changing job

markets, nonstop social-media influence, and shifting social expectations. Together, these pressures shape how they feel and whether they can keep personal life and school or work in balance. Understanding these forces is vital for designing targeted actions and supportive policies that build resilience, promote overall well-being, and help young people succeed.

The survey itself ties mental health to outside pressures. It asks about feeling “overwhelmed by responsibilities (school, work, family)” and about which parts of life are hardest. This shows that mental health is not just an inner issue; it is linked to study loads, work conditions, and family duties. Good solutions must therefore do more than strengthen personal coping skills—they must also change the systems and environments that create pressure. This report will examine both the signs of distress and the outside factors, stressing the need for many connected actions that keep the individual in mind while also improving the wider setting.

Respondent Demographics

This part explains who took the survey. We looked at their age, gender, country, the kind of place they live (city, town, or village), and what they are doing now (studying, working full-time, studying and working part-time, or unemployed).

Most respondents are young adults aged 20 – 25, the stage when many finish university and start their careers. The gender split is almost even, with slightly more women than men. Participants come from Poland, Italy, Czechia, Georgia (Sakartvelo), Ukraine, Türkiye, and Slovenia, so the survey covers several parts of Europe. Most live in cities or towns, while some live in rural areas or villages. As for current activity, most are students or students who also work part-time. A smaller group works full-time or is not employed. These details help us understand how different backgrounds might shape the experiences described later in the report.

Table 1: Respondent Demographic Distribution (Illustrative Percentages)

Demographic Category	Sub-Category	Percentage of Respondents
Age	20-22	45%
	23-25	30%
	26-28	15%
	29-30	10%
Gender	Female	60%
	Male	35%
	Non-binary	5%
Country	Poland	25%
	Sakartvelo (Georgia)	20%
	Italy	20%
	Czechia	15%
	Ukraine	5%
	Turkiye/Turkey	5%
	Slovenia	5%
	Other	5%
Living Area	City	70%
	Town	15%
	Village or rural area	15%
Current Status	Studying	45%
	Working full-time	30%
	Studying and working part-time	15%
	Unemployed	5%

	Studying and working	5%
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Understanding and Experience of Mental Health

The survey first asked young people how well they understand mental health, using a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). Most chose 4 or 5, meaning they feel they know a lot about emotional and psychological well-being.

Next, it asked, “Have you ever experienced any of the following?” and let them tick all that applied. Many picked anxiety, depression, burnout, and stress that affected daily life—often several at once. Only a few chose “None of the above.” So, even though most say they understand mental health, many still struggle with serious issues.

Table 2: Reported Mental Health Challenges (Illustrative Percentages)

Mental Health Challenge	Percentage of Respondents Reporting Experience
Stress that affected daily life	85%
Anxiety	75%
Depression	60%
Burnout	55%
None of the above	10%

These results reveal a clear gap between what young people think they know about mental health and what they actually live through. Many rate their knowledge as high, yet the same group reports frequent anxiety, depression, burnout, and stress. In other words, understanding the theory does not automatically build resilience or stop problems. Heavy school and work demands may simply overpower what they know. Any support programme must therefore pair education with practical tools, easy-to-reach services, and changes that lower everyday pressure.

The survey also asked, “Do you know where to get professional mental-health help in your country?” Answers were mixed. Many said yes, but a large share answered no or maybe. This shows that plenty of young people still do not know, or are unsure of,

where to turn.

When asked what comes to mind with the phrase “mental health,” respondents used words such as “well-being,” “feelings,” “struggles,” “balance,” and “self-care.” Some also mentioned “taboo” or “illness.” These replies show that young people see mental health as both a positive aim (looking after yourself) and a challenge weighed down by stigma.

Even those who know where help is available often do not reach out. Feelings of being overwhelmed remain high. Barriers include fear of judgment, worries about privacy, cost, and the belief that others will not understand. Awareness campaigns must therefore do more than list phone numbers—they need to break stigma, build trust, and make seeking help feel normal.

Work-Life Balance Dynamics

The survey asked young people how often school, work, and family duties make them feel overwhelmed. Most answered “Always” or “Often.” Even the “Sometimes” group feels overloaded a lot, while “Rarely” was chosen by only a few. This shows that demands on youth often exceed what they can comfortably handle. (The “How Often Youth Feel Overwhelmed” chart in the HTML file gives the exact numbers.)

Another question was, “Do you feel you have a healthy balance between your personal life and work or studies?” Many replied “No,” and many others were unsure (“Maybe”). In short, most young people struggle to blend self-care with school or job responsibilities, leaving them stuck in an unhealthy, draining routine.

Table 3: Overwhelm and Work-Life Balance Perception (Illustrative Percentages)

Question	Response	Percentage of Respondents
How often do you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities (school, work, family)?	Always	25%
	Often	40%
	Sometimes	30%
	Rarely	5%

Do you feel like you have a healthy balance between your personal life and work/studies?	Yes	20%
	No	45%
	Maybe	35%

Note: When the survey asked each participant to choose their two biggest problems from a set list, a small group of issues rose to the top. Poor time management and mental overload were the most common answers, showing that many young people find it hard to organise tasks, set priorities, and handle the sheer flow of information and duties that come their way. Frequent distractions followed close behind, underscoring how nonstop notifications and other digital temptations make it tough to keep focused. Together, these three challenges sit at the core of the overwhelm and uneasy work-life balance described throughout the survey.

The survey also shows that many young people struggle to set boundaries. Two common problems are **saying “no” to extra work** and **feeling guilty when resting**. This points to a habit of overcommitting and seeing rest as wasted time. A **lack of support** was another top issue, signaling that stronger personal networks and better help from schools or workplaces are badly needed.

Table 4: Top Challenges to Mental Well-being

Challenge Category	Frequency of Selection (Illustrative)
Time management	High
Mental overload	High
Distractions	High
Saying “no” to extra work	Moderate-High
Guilt when resting	Moderate-High
Lack of support	Moderate

The fact that so many respondents feel **“always”** or **“often”** overwhelmed—while also naming **time management**, **mental overload**, and **distractions** as top

problems—shows heavy outside pressure from school and work. But the equally common struggles with **saying “no” to extra work** and **feeling guilty when resting** reveal strong inside pressures, too: weak boundaries, high self-expectations, and a “hustle culture” that frowns on downtime. Work-life imbalance, then, is not just about big workloads; it is also about one’s ability to defend personal limits and reject the idea that rest equals laziness. Any fix must hit both targets: lighten external demands and build inner skills like assertiveness, self-care, and challenging harmful beliefs about productivity.

Feeling overwhelmed and lacking a healthy balance go hand in hand with high levels of anxiety, depression, burnout, and debilitating stress. Add in mental overload and a lack of support, and the pressure mounts even further. This creates a vicious circle: constant overload feeds mental-health problems, and those problems make it even harder to handle tasks, set limits, and restore balance. The longer the loop continues, the tougher it becomes to break. That’s why early action and prevention are essential—before the cycle digs in and mental-health issues become harder to treat.

Coping Mechanisms and Community Perceptions

When the survey asked, “What helps you stay balanced and mentally healthy?”, answers covered a wide range. Many pointed first to friends and family, saying that talking with close people keeps them steady. Others named hobbies and good food, exercise, and spending time in nature. Simple self-care—sleep, rest, meditation, reading self-care books—also came up often. These replies show that while everyone’s routine is different, strong relationships and everyday self-nurturing are common threads.

The question “Is talking about mental health acceptable in your community?” drew mixed views. Some respondents said “Yes, openly.” Many answered “Somewhat, but not always.” A smaller group said “No, it’s a taboo.” So, in many places stigma still limits open conversations.

Nearly all participants agreed that people with mental-health issues are misunderstood or judged. Because of that, young people face a dilemma: they lean on friends and family for help, yet worry that frank talk about their struggles may bring criticism. This tension forces many to hold back, reducing the support they can truly gain from the very networks they value most. Destigmatizing mental health is

therefore essential so that seeking and giving help feels safe.

Finally, although respondents rely on personal tactics—sleep, rest, hobbies, music, nature—these are mainly reactive steps taken after stress has hit. Heavy workloads and constant pressure still leave most feeling “always” or “often” overwhelmed. Personal coping alone cannot offset systemic strains. Alongside individual resilience, young people need outside supports: lighter academic and job demands, better time-management tools, affordable professional help, and communities that actively encourage rest and self-care. Only by pairing personal efforts with structural change can the cycle of overwhelm and poor balance be broken.

Recommendations for Support and Resources

When asked what would help them stay mentally healthy and balanced, young people offered clear, practical ideas that fall into a few main groups.

First, they want mental-health care that is easy to reach and affordable. Many called for “cheaper therapy,” “free psychotherapy,” or simply “a chance for everyone to see a psychologist,” showing that money is a major barrier even when help is available.

Second, they asked for mental-health education from an early age. They suggested open talks in schools, lessons about emotions, and public campaigns so that everyone learns the basics before problems grow.

Third, they stressed the need to normalize conversations about mental health. Requests such as “make talking about stress normal” and “break the stigma” show a strong wish for a culture where sharing struggles is safe and accepted.

Fourth, respondents highlighted the value of supportive spaces and social networks. They mentioned more “third places” to hang out for free, outdoor group activities, and simply “respectful, supportive friends and family.” These ideas underline how belonging and connection protect mental well-being.

Finally, some pointed to practical life skills—better time management, less screen time, and healthier daily habits—as tools that would let them cope better with stress.

Taken together, these answers place most of the responsibility on systems, institutions, and society, not just on individuals. Young people are asking for lower costs, more school psychologists, open public dialogue, and community spaces. They

know personal resilience matters, but they also see that without structural support—lighter workloads, available specialists, and a culture that welcomes honest talk—private coping strategies are not enough. Real progress will require schools, health services, community groups, and governments to work together and build a unified, youth-friendly support system.

Conclusion

The survey shows that many young Europeans battle mental-health problems and find it hard to keep life and work (or study) in balance. Heavy school and job demands, poor time-management skills, weak boundaries, and nagging guilt about taking breaks all play a part. Even though most young people now understand the basics of mental health, that knowledge often fails to become real-life coping or help-seeking because stigma and fear of judgment still run deep.

These findings make it clear that wide-ranging, joined-up action is urgent. If left alone, constant overload and untreated mental-health issues can hurt grades, slow careers, strain friendships, and lower overall quality of life. Respondents repeatedly ask for three big things: low-cost professional help, solid mental-health lessons, and open, stigma-free talk in everyday life. Together, these form a ready-made action plan.

Because anxiety, depression, burnout, and stress are already common—and many feel overwhelmed almost all the time—support must shift from crisis response to early prevention. Teaching mental-health skills, building resilience, and fighting stigma from childhood onward can greatly reduce problems as teens move into adult life.

Finally, the data reveal a deeper worry: young people feel misunderstood, judged, and trapped by the idea that mental health remains a taboo subject. They long for honest conversation and acceptance. The real task, then, goes beyond clinics and classrooms. We need a kinder culture—one that treats openness and emotional honesty as strengths, not weaknesses. Protecting youth mental health is a shared duty that calls for greater empathy and support across society.