



Anxiety and well-being across age groups in Dorset

Surveys have shown that feelings of anxiety and well-being can change considerably through a person's life. In developed countries research is increasing in this area as governments acknowledge that measures of economic growth do not capture the level of satisfaction that people feel with life.

Big Numbers

Age at which anxiety levels start to drop: **65**

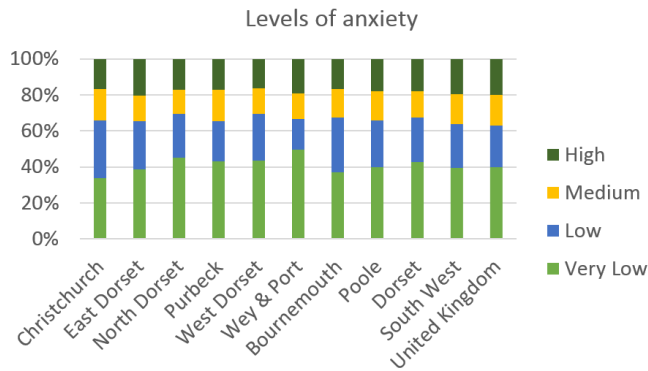
48.6% Of people in very bad health report feeling anxious

14.5% Of people in very good health report feeling anxious

Nearly half of people in Weymouth & Portland report very low levels of anxiety - one of the lowest in the country

49.7%

Box 1: Anxiety levels across Dorset



Dorset residents report some of the lowest levels of anxiety in the country¹. The only part of Dorset with a higher than average proportion of people with high anxiety was East Dorset, but this was significantly below the highest figure in the UK of 28.9%.

Dorset residents are more likely to report low levels of anxiety than the national average of 39.8%. The main exception is Christchurch (33.9%), with Bournemouth (37.0%) and East Dorset (38.7%) just below the average.

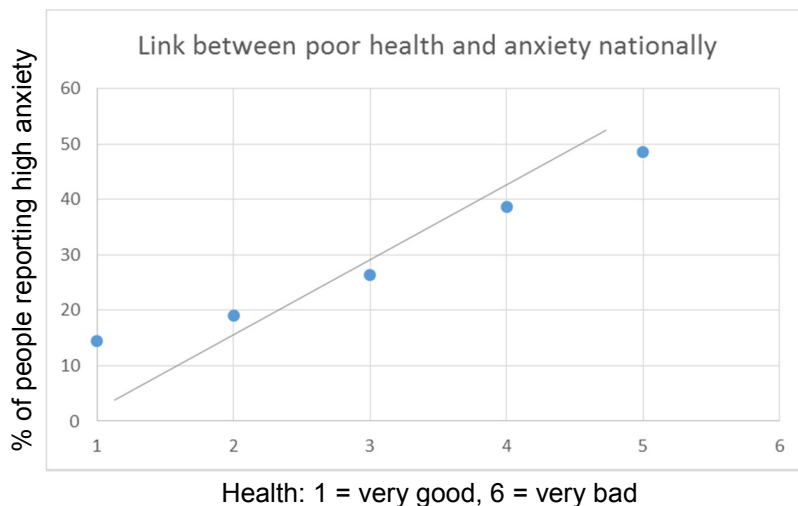
Box 2: Is anxiety linked to other factors?

There is a clear link between self-reported health and the level of anxiety that people feel. As **health declines** so the feeling of anxiety increases.

Anxiety is also linked to earnings. Perhaps surprisingly, **higher wages** are linked to higher levels of anxiety. This may be due to increasing stress levels at work as responsibility increases.

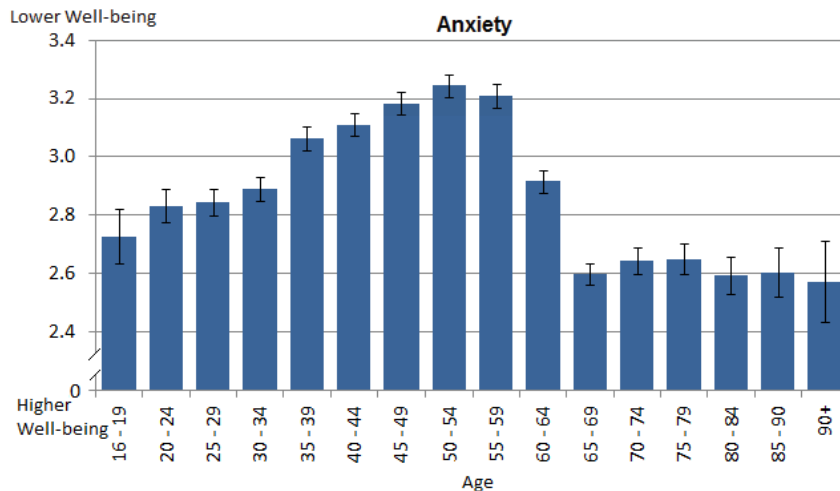
People who are **unemployed** are 30% more likely to feel very anxious compared to people in employment.

People who identify as **bisexual** are 50% more likely to feel very anxious than people who identify as heterosexual². This may be due to discrimination which could affect health, which is closely linked to anxiety.





Box 3: Anxiety and other measures of well-being



There is a clear pattern when looking at anxiety levels across age groups. Young people and older people report lower levels of anxiety but between these ages anxiety levels rise. Anxiety tends to peak in the 50-54 age group.

Other measures of well-being, including happiness, life satisfaction and feeling that activities in life are worthwhile, follow a similar pattern to anxiety with people aged 50-54 reporting the lowest levels of these measures with corresponding high levels of anxiety³. An interesting difference between

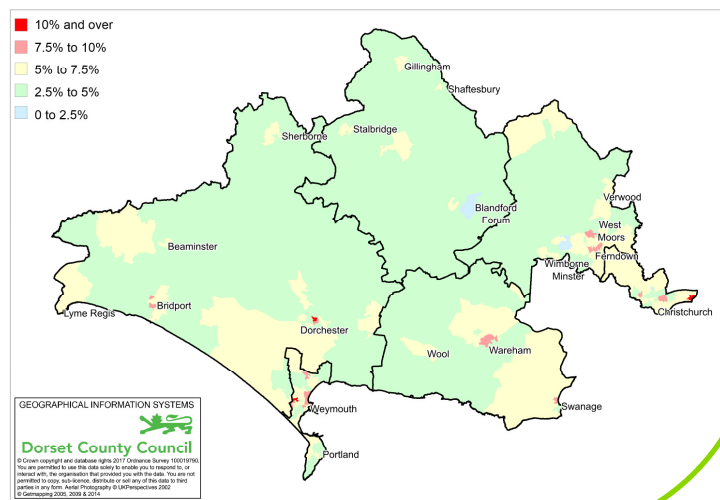
Source: Measuring National Well-being: At what age is Personal Well-being the highest?, ONS, 02/02/16

the measures is that whilst anxiety levels remain low for older people, the other measures of well-being, such as feeling that activities in life are worthwhile, gradually reduce as people get older. Interventions could help reverse this decline.

The 2011 Census asked people to consider the state of their health. The responses by residents can be mapped to highlight areas where people are concerned for their health, and are therefore more likely to be feeling anxious.

As the map shows, urban areas tend to have greater proportions (7.5% or more) of residents reporting bad health. More affluent parts of Dorset like East Dorset have higher concentrations of poor health, as do less affluent areas such as Weymouth & Portland. This corresponds with people reporting higher levels of anxiety in these areas (Weymouth & Portland also has a significant number of people reporting very low anxiety - see chart in Box1).

Proportion of people reporting 'bad' or 'very bad' health:



Source: 2011 Census, ONS

Why does it matter?

With the knowledge that people's feelings of anxiety and well-being are closely linked to age and socioeconomic circumstances, local government, employers and the voluntary and community sectors can target resources at specific groups. It is even possible that feelings of poor well-being may have a detrimental effect on health, rather than the other way around so that tackling low levels of well-being may reduce the demand for health resources. By asking 'why might people be feeling this way?' we can get to the root causes of anxiety, and better-target resources to improve people's well-being.

Sources:

- 1 Estimates of Anxiety from the Annual Population Survey (APS) Personal Well-being dataset: April 2012 to March 2015, ONS, 2017
- 2 Personal well-being and sexual identity in the UK: 2013 to 2015, ONS, 09/05/17
- 3 Measuring National Well-being: At what age is Personal Well-being the highest?, ONS, 02/02/16