



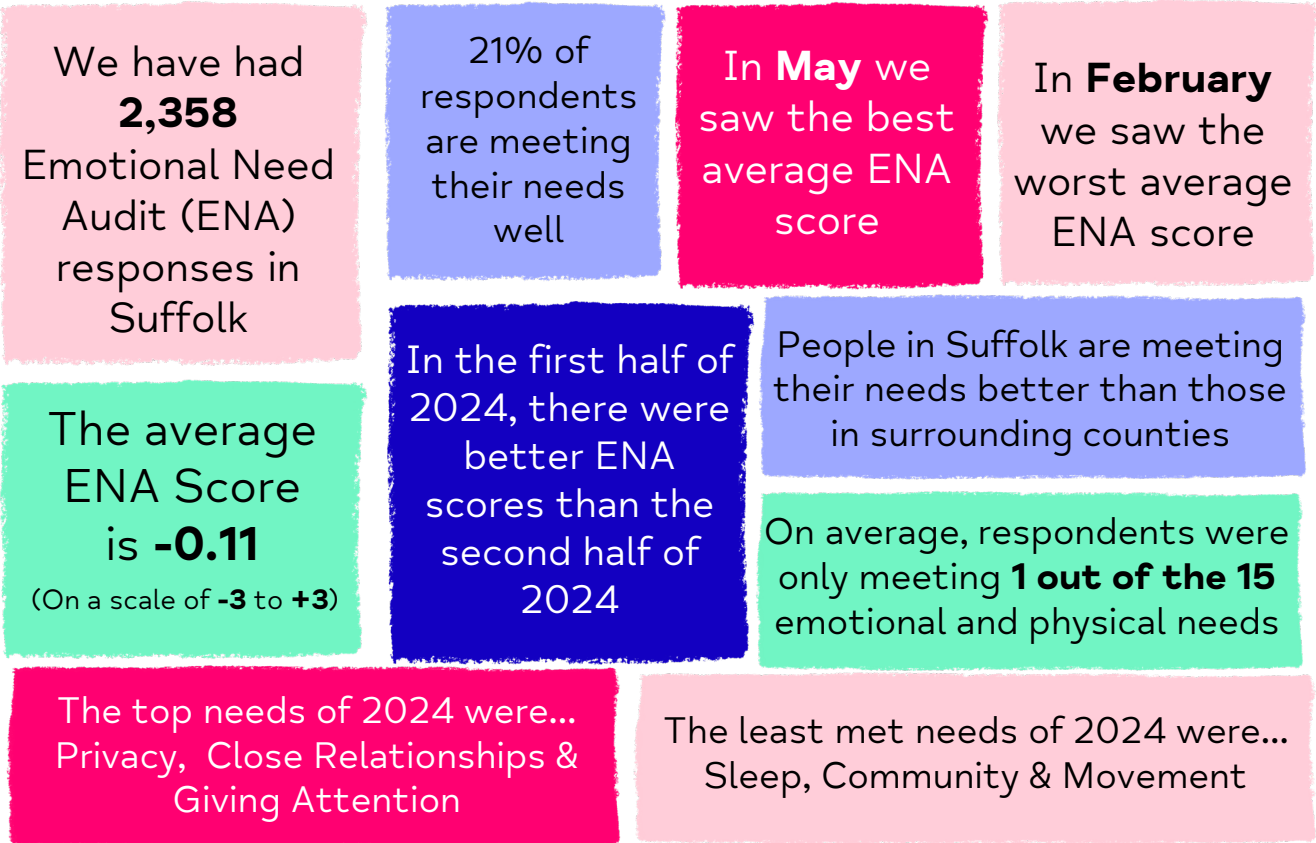
State of Suffolk 2024

June 2025



State of Suffolk 2024

How was Suffolk feeling in 2024?



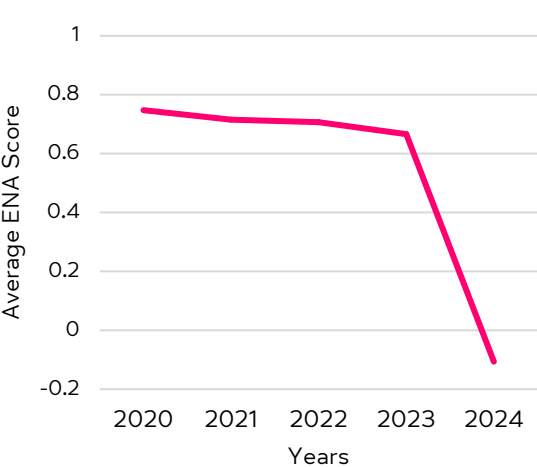
If you would like to know more about the emotional needs and our approach at Suffolk Mind, [please click here...](#)

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How have Suffolk’s needs changed from 2023?

We have seen a decline in mental wellbeing, over the years. 2024 shows the lowest average Emotional Needs Audit (ENA) score since we started measuring mental health in the pandemic, with every emotional need not as well met as the year before. This has meant that there has been a **25%** decrease in respondents meeting their needs compared to 2023, on average. People in Suffolk feeling less well aligns with other research that has found that personal wellbeing and life satisfaction has been declining since the pandemic (ONS, 2023).



Graph 1: Average ENA score over the years

The average ENA score range is between -3 to +3 (the higher score, the better), however, from this graph, we can see that the averages land between -0.2 and 1.

Community

The average **Community** need score has gone down, with a **30%** decrease from 2023 to 2024. This is also the second least met need of the year. With community being a need that we are at risk of not meeting, which demographic groups are meeting this need well?*

Over 75s are feeling well connected in larger groups and with their local community. We know that isolation and loneliness is a common issue among the older population. However, this positive finding from our 2024 data highlights that Suffolk could have good networks for older communities. According to our research in Suffolk, over 75s are the most well age group overall, and meeting the community need the most well. The need for Community is met significantly differently between different age groups. For instance, respondents who are between the ages of 18-24 are three times less likely to be meeting the need for community than those who are over 75.

Volunteers are feeling part of a wider community and meeting this need well. In 2024, those who volunteer are over three times more likely to be meeting the need for Community than those who don’t volunteer. Our research indicates that volunteers are the most well demographic and have one of the highest average ENA scores out of all the different demographic information we have.

Those who are a **surviving partner or spouse** are meeting the need for Community the most well when looking at marital status. They are meeting the need better than those who are married, single, in a civil partnership and separated from a long-term partner. Despite our assumptions that this demographic group are isolated, those who are bereaved and grieving in Suffolk are finding ways to be involved with the people around them.

*Demographic groups based on a response count of over 50

How have Suffolk's needs changed from 2023?

Meaning and Purpose

The average **Meaning & Purpose** need score has also gone down **30%** from 2024 to 2023. This need often links to being connected to something bigger than ourselves.

So...what demographics are meeting this need well?

Volunteers are meeting the need for Meaning & Purpose well compared to their non-volunteering counterparts. There is a difference of 13 percentage points between how well volunteers and non-volunteers are meeting their needs.

Those who are **married** are feeling a stronger sense of meaning and purpose in their life. Married respondents are nearly three times more likely to be meeting the need for Meaning & Purpose than those who are single. Relationships are a key supporting factor for those who are married where it is reported as a top supporting factor for 8 of the 15 emotional needs, compared to 4 for those who are single.

Our data shows that work industry has a strong influence on meeting the need for Meaning & Purpose. Those working in the **Human & Health social work** and the **Education** sectors are meeting Meaning & Purpose well. For both industry sectors, work situation is the biggest supporting factor for those meeting this need. Additionally, Meaning & Purpose is **higher for those who are employed** than those who are out of work. Employed respondents are roughly twice as likely to be meeting this need than respondents who are retired or unemployed.

Is Suffolk Sleeping well?

In 2024, Sleep was the least met need in Suffolk. With only 20% of people saying that they feel refreshed after sleep. Sleep is one of our physical needs that allows us to be physically and mentally well by allowing our mind and body to rest. Sleep is often the lowest met need – this is consistent with previous years where people often find sleeping the hardest need to meet.

Those who are sleeping well...

Those who **volunteer**

Those who work within the **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) sector**

Those who are **over 75**

Those who are not sleeping well...

Those who are on **parental leave** or **stay at home** parents

Those **unable to work** (either temporarily or permanently)

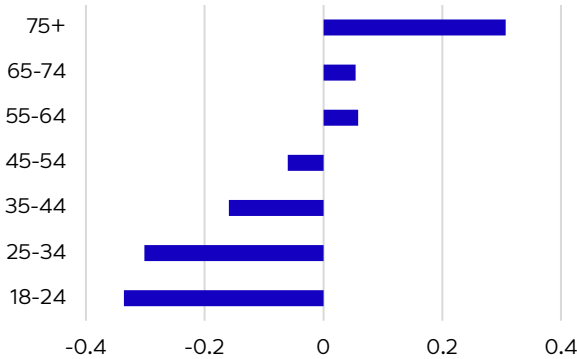
Those in the **LGBTQ+** community

Age and mental wellbeing

Our research shows that individuals in older age categories have better mental health, on average. Further research has found that despite older individuals experiencing a decline in their physical health and an increase in social isolation, they are not as depressed and often less dissatisfied than younger people (Suffolk County Council, 2023). Perhaps, this indicates that Suffolk is a healthy place to age well.

Graph 2 shows that younger individuals in Suffolk are at risk of not meeting their needs as well as older individuals. It is not entirely clear why this is the case. Reports have suggested that factors such as the rise of social media and excessive mobile phone use have contributed to this decline among young people’s mental health in the UK (Blanchflower, Bryson and Bell, 2024). Our 2024 data revealed the biggest decrease from the year before, (of **28%**) for those aged 18-24 meeting their needs.

Graph 2: Average ENA by age category



But how well are the middle-aged respondents in Suffolk doing?

Those who are in the middle age category often deal with many responsibilities that can add extra stress and stretch in their lives. From family life, financial stress to relationships and caring for relatives, these factors may alter how well emotional and physical needs are being met.

Despite the multiple responsibilities that this age group manage, those who are 35-54 are meeting the motivational based emotional needs well. In 2024, the need for Achievement and Meaning & Purpose was best met for those 35-54 compared to any other age category. Particularly, those who have parental responsibilities show the highest score for these needs.

Those aged 35-44...

This group are meeting the need for Close Relationships well with 70% of respondents feeling that they have at least one close relationship in their life. This is a higher percentage than any other age category. However, interestingly, the score for Emotional Connection is much lower and is the lowest compared to other age groups. Particularly, those who are not in a relationship and between the ages of 35-44 are not meeting their need for Emotional Connection. The difference between the results for Close Relationships and Emotional Connection could show that those aged 35-44 are feeling close to immediate friends or family but not as connected to wider groups in society.

Despite Privacy being the best met need in Suffolk, those 35-44 are not feeling like they get enough Privacy, having the lowest average score out of all other age groups.

Those aged 45-54...

Those aged 45-54 are not sleeping well compared to other age groups, having the lowest sleep scores in 2024. Sleep scores dip for the 45-54 age category, not following the general trend of older people meeting their needs better. Only 18% of respondents aged 45-54 feel refreshed after sleep, with respondents physical or mental health being the biggest barrier in preventing them from sleeping well.

Talking about and taking care of mental health

Our mission at Suffolk Minds is...

“To make Suffolk the best place in the world for talking about and taking care of mental health!”

How did our respondents contribute to our mission in 2024?

Around **50%** of respondents feel able to **talk about their mental health** and nearly **40%** of respondents feel able to **take care of their mental health**. These findings reveal that in Suffolk, we are more likely to be able to talk about our mental health than to take care of our mental health. Having conversations about our mental wellbeing is an important step to help reduce feelings of loneliness and taking action to help us better meet our needs. This also reduces the stigma of mental health that we are always striving for at Suffolk Mind.

As expected, there is a strong link to those who are meeting their emotional needs well on average and those who feel more able to talk about and take care of their mental health. Those who are confident talking about their mental health are nearly **13 times more likely** to be meeting their emotional needs than those who do not feel able to do so. Furthermore, those who are confident taking care of their mental health are **60 times more likely** to be meeting their emotional needs than those who don't feel able to.

Have you seen our online resources? These might be able to help you take better care of your mental health.

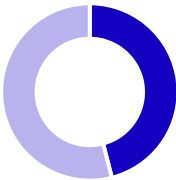
Does gender make a difference to respondent's answers?

Our data shows that women are more likely to be meeting their emotional needs than male or non-binary respondents. When looking at whether this differs with talking about or taking care of mental health, it shows similar results. Women are more likely to feel able to talk and take care of their mental health.

I feel able to talk about my mental wellbeing...



53% of female respondents agreed



46% of male respondents agreed

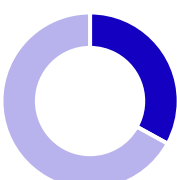


50% of non-binary respondents agreed

I feel able to take care of my mental wellbeing...



41% of female respondents agreed



33% of male respondents agreed



Despite, half of non-binary respondents feeling able to talk about mental health, only 19% feel able to take care of their mental health.

Workplace and mental wellbeing

Our work situation and work environment can have a big impact on our mental wellbeing. Many people find that their jobs help them positively meet their emotional and physical needs but can also disrupt them.

Achievement

Achievement is one of our motivational emotional needs. We need to feel like we are achieving in our life in order to stay well – even if it is the smallest of things! Feeling a sense of achievement helps to boost our self-esteem. In 2024, the need for Achievement is ranked 6 out of the 15 emotional needs. Roughly **40%** of respondents in Suffolk were feeling a sense of achievement or stretch in their lives.

Workplace supporting factors for those employed in Suffolk meeting their need for Achievement...

The biggest supporting factor for those who are meeting the need for Achievement was work situation where **60%** (n72) of respondents reported this as helping them meet this need.

25% (n30) of respondents stated that workload and work life balance supported them.

15% (n18) reported that their Line Manager helped meet this need.

21% (n25) reported work relationships as a supporting factor.

17% (n20) reported culture in the work organisation was a supporting factor.

Workplace barriers preventing those employed in Suffolk meeting the need for Achievement...

46% (n46) of respondents reported that their work situation and **31%** (n31) stated that the workload and work-life balance was a barrier for meeting the need for Achievement.

18% (n18) reported that work relationships were a barrier for meeting the need for Achievement.

15% (n15) expressed that the culture in the work organisation prevented them from meeting this need.

9% (n9) stated that Line Managers posed a barrier for feeling a sense of Achievement.

Achievement is significantly higher for those who work in a central base more than half the time but frequently work remotely. This contrasts to those who don't have a central base (such as pilots and plumbers) where achievement had the lowest average score.

The sense of achievement was highest for those who are a CEO, director or owner in their company and lowest for those who are in an admin or a supporting process role.

Industries where employees are feeling a strong sense achievement are those in the...

VCSE Sector
Arts, Entertainment & other recreation sector
Health & social care activities

Industries where employees are not feeling a strong sense of achievement are the....

Wholesale & retail trade sector
Accommodation & food services
Construction sector

What can we do about this?

“One of our trainers, Fiona Hanlon, discusses how we can learn from our Suffolk 2024 data to help us better meet our emotional and physical needs.”

The most recent State of Suffolk report shows a 25% decrease in how well people in Suffolk are meeting their needs in comparison to 2023. This is something we should take seriously as how well our needs are met affects our mental health and wellbeing. This means now is a good time for all of us to look at how our own needs are met and what we can change to meet them better.

A good way to do this is by completing an [Emotional Needs Audit](#) and noticing one or two needs we could meet better. You can also become a friend of Suffolk Mind and attend our training “The Essentials” to learn more. Many people find learning about and reflecting on their needs in this way helps them identify small steps to getting their needs better met and gets them thinking about changes they can make. This could mean making small changes to your routine, maybe going back to a hobby you used to enjoy that meets needs, making time for privacy or perhaps now is the right time for you to think about volunteering. It’s good to know that as well as helping others volunteering can help meet your need for community, achievement and meaning and purpose.

If you are thinking about how to look after not just your own needs but those of colleagues, you can get in touch to find out more about our training, The Mental Health Toolkit, and see what would work best in your workplace. All our services at Suffolk Mind, from our helpline to Green Care, support people to meet their needs better. To find out more visit www.suffolkmind.org.

The Mental Health Toolkit

The Mental Health Toolkit provides practical mental health training courses for organisations and individuals across the UK and worldwide.

Interested in making the workplace a healthy environment to meet your emotional needs?

2024 was a busy year for the training team....

90 businesses took steps to make sure they could support their staff's wellbeing in the workplace

We delivered **double** the amount of workshops and courses compared to 2023

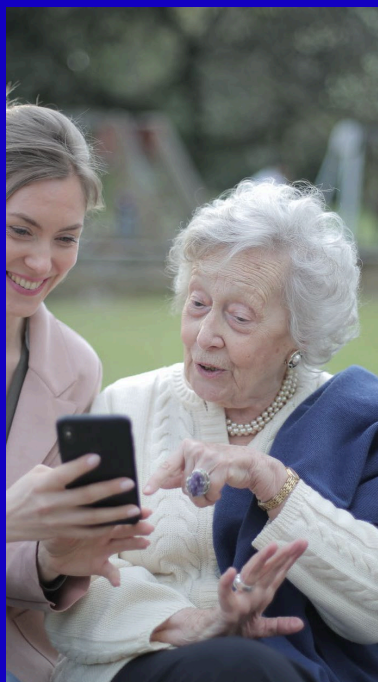
78% would recommend training to a friend or colleague
(The national average is 32%)

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