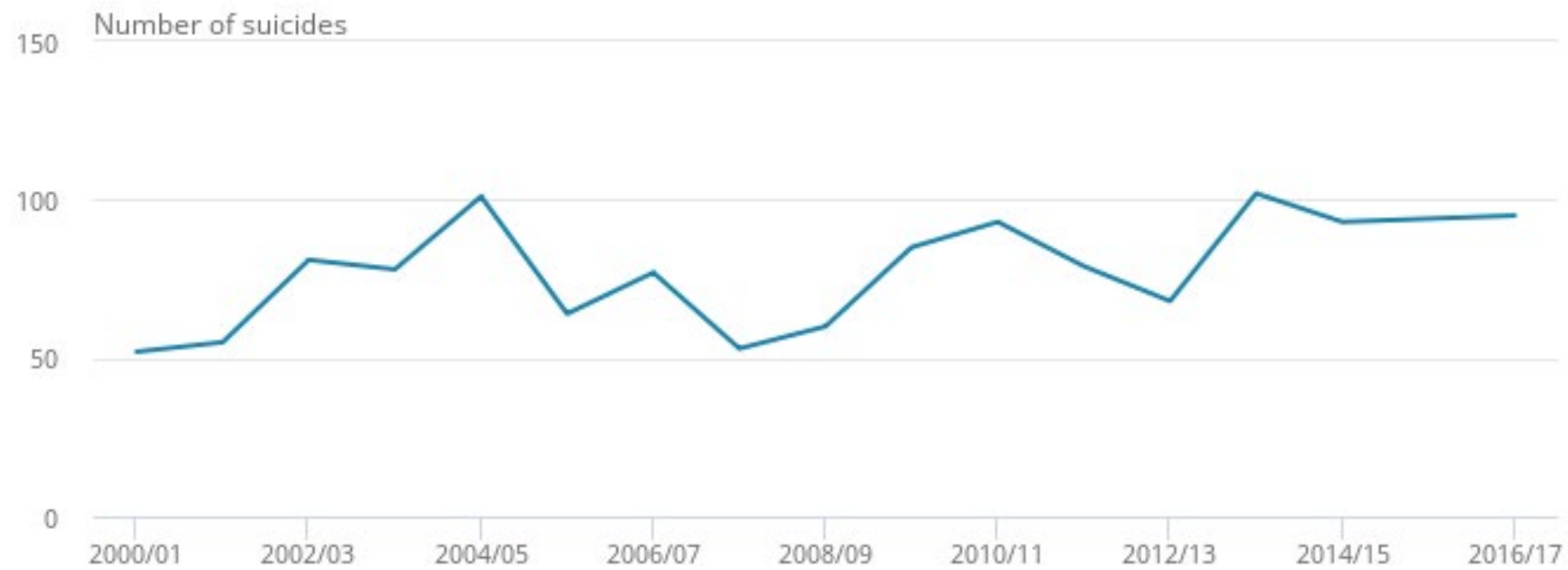# Student lifestyle choices and health

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Manchester Metropolitan University

- Most enduring mental health problems show their first signs before 25 years of age

- 75% mental health problems manifest by the age of 24

Burstow, P., Newbigging, K., Tew, J., and Costello, B., 2018. *Investing in a Resilient Generation: Keys to a Mentally Prosperous Nation*. *Executive Summary and Call to Action*.

Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

## Aims

❑ To explore the health and lifestyle choices of students attending an urban university in the UK.

❑ To identify health issues within the student population.

❑ To design appropriate and early interventions.

Holt, M. & Powell, S. (2017) Healthy Universities: a guiding framework for universities to examine the distinctive health needs of its own student population. Perspectives in Public Health, 137: 53-58.

**Methods**

❑ Used a health needs assessment stepped approach (Hooper and Longworth 2002).
❑ Online, 60 question questionnaire, mainly closed.
❑ Focused on national priorities (PHE Outcomes Framework 2014):
   ▪ Health care utilisation
   ▪ Eating and dietary
   ▪ Alcohol
   ▪ Smoking
   ▪ Sexual health
   ▪ Mental health
   ▪ Drug and substance use
❑ Administered at time of no other student focused activity – November 2014.

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**Results: Completion of Survey**

❑ 3683 students completed the survey (approximately 10% of the student population).

❑ 3428 answered the whole survey:

- 2507 female
- 1162 male
- 14 transgender or other

- Year 1          1636
- Year 2          952
- Year 3          658
- Postgraduate    208
- Part time       229

**Results: Health Care Utilisation**

❑ 42% (n=1426) not registered with a medical practitioner.

❑ 4% (n=150) would use hospital accident and emergency services for any ailment.

## Results: Eating and Dietary

- ❑ 56% (n=2227) respondents prepare their own food.

- ❑ 11% (n=371) eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

- ❑ Requested free water.

- ❑ Healthy food in vending machines.

- ❑ Cooking classes on campus.

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**Results: Alcohol**

❑ 8% (n=258) students consume >20 units per week.

❑ 23% (n=792) males and 50% (n=1,700) females wanted to get drunk.

❑ 42% (n=1,434) couldn't remember night before.

❑ 54% (n=1,847) not aware of support available.

**Results: Drugs**

❑ 30% (n=1027) used illegal or legal recreational substances.

❑ Alcohol, cannabis and cocaine.

❑ Obtain from friends and dealers off campus.

**Results: Sexual Health**

❑ 78% (n=2,673) sexually active.

❑ 335 had unprotected sex.

❑ 1,511 tested for STDs.

❑ 150 diagnosed (chlamydia).

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## Results: Mental Health

❑ 28% (n=1,015) had an emotional or
mental health issues whilst studying:
- 756 female
- 255 male

❑ Increase by year of study.

Significant associations between mental health and:

- Gender (p<.001) with fewer males and more females

- Ethnicity (p<.001) more white and mixed race and

  fewer Asian, Black and Chinese students

- Disability (p=.004)

- Living arrangements (p<.001) more in private halls and rented

- Course of study: more Arts and Humanities and Health related.

# Support available

Most common to seek from Students Union, Personal Tutors

Top reason for not seeking support was feeling they should be able to cope, followed by embarrassment

# Segmentation: higher risk groups

- White and mixed race females

- Living in private halls and rented accommodation

- Studying arts, humanities and health

## #Stepchange

- Developed by Universities UK

- Recommends whole system approach

- Leadership, data, staff literacy, prevention and early intervention and partnerships

## Next steps

Focus groups on survey content

Informing Student Services of priorities: evidence.

Improved signposting to support services.

Designing interventions: student consultations.

Developing a surveillance system rather than a snap shot

❑ GM Mental Health Hub in the city centre