



FORUM: World Health Organization (WHO)

TOPIC: Addressing the Inclination of Mental Health in Adolescence in today's society

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POSITION: President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

My name is Myrto Taki-Tsabala and I am a 17-year-old High School student. I will be your main chair in the WHO Committee. I hope you all have fun in this year's conference. However, you should take the conference seriously. If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me and feel free to ask me anything. I am hoping for a fruitful debate full of fresh ideas. In general, I urge you all to read the study guide as it contains a considerable amount of important information. But, also do your own personal research, come prepared and respect the conference you will be a part of. I am waiting to see you all and meet you! If you have further questions strictly considering the conference you can contact me via my email lucky.lulaki@gmail.com

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

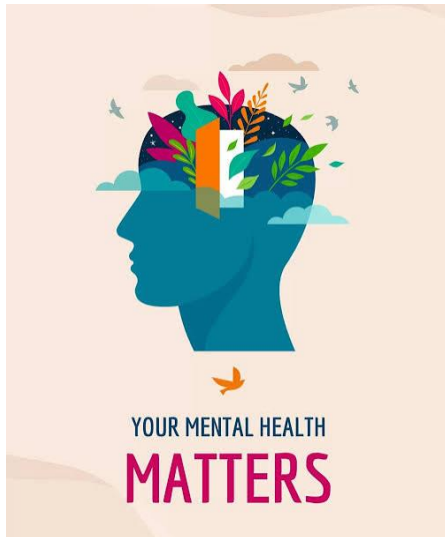
Adolescence is a unique stage of growth. The adolescents are prone to mental health disorders due to various reasons including exposure to hardships like poverty, abuse, and violence. Good health and wellbeing in adolescence and adulthood require protection from hardships and promotion of socioemotional learning and psychological wellbeing of adolescents as well as provision of adequate mental health services.

The prevalence rate of mental disorders amongst children aged between 10 to 19 is estimated to be one in seven (14.3%) ¹, yet there is a lack of awareness and treatment for such disorders.

Adolescents who suffer from mental disorders are particularly vulnerable to stigma and discrimination, isolation, academic troubles, risk-taking behaviors, physical problems, and human rights violations.

Multiple factors affect mental health. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater the potential inclination in their mental health. Factors that may result in stress during the period of adolescence include exposure to adversity, peer pressure and exploration of identity. Social Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or

¹ "Mental Health of Adolescents." *World Health Organization*, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.



aspirations for the future. Other important determinants include the quality of their family life and relationships with peers. Violence (specifically sexual violence and bullying), harsh parenting, and socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health and associated stigma.

The human brain with a heart showing that mental health matters²

The decline in the mental wellbeing of teenagers due to increased levels of psychological disturbance, anxiety, depression, and poor well-being is a reality in today's world. This research shows that

the decline in the mental wellbeing of teenagers is a phenomenon that existed even before the COVID-19 pandemic but has worsened lately, supported by information and literature from around the world and clinical as well as policymaker perspectives. This paper highlights several factors that have contributed to this trend including social media, digitalization, anxiety regarding climate change, fear of wars in the international sphere, socio-economic factors, bullying, academic pressure, and poverty.

The paper underlines the importance of taking a comprehensive multi-sector approach which comprises such aspects as improving early prevention measures, making peer support and low-threshold services more accessible, introducing socioemotional learning in education facilities, and regulating digital technology. It also stresses the importance of gathering data on a regular basis and listening to youth directly in order to understand their needs and priorities. The purpose of the report is to provide OECD countries with an opportunity to develop more rational policies to prevent the deterioration of youth mental health.

² Google Image Result for <https://www.cliniindia.com/Wp-Content/Uploads/2025/04/1143w-Jfwhvzm3qwa-E1744265185111.Webp>, Google, www.google.com/imgres?q=mental+health+matters&imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cliniindia.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2025%2F04%2F1143w-JFwHvzM3QWA-e1744265185111.webp&imgrefurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cliniindia.com%2Fmental-health-matters-breaking-the-stigma-in-healthcare%2F&docid=1u6yZqNLIHqBM&tbnid=6cDSC2GHTcsWhM&vet=12ahUKEwihnOb7g5aWAXWv3AIHHSuRGD0QnPAOegQIQRAA..i&w=1143&h=1387&hcb=2&ved=2ahUKEwihnOb7g5aWAXWv3AIHHSuRGD0QnPAOegQIQRAA . Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Disorder

“A condition or illness that causes problems with the way part of the body or brain works”³

Prefrontal Cortex

“The forwardmost part of the frontal lobe, associated with complex brain functions such as emotional expression, behavioural regulation, decision making, attention, and planning: part of the cerebral cortex.”⁴

Mental Health

“The state of health of somebody's mind”⁵

Stigma

“Negative feelings that people have about particular circumstances or characteristics that somebody may have”⁶

Eating disorder

“A condition in which somebody develops eating habits that are not healthy as a way of dealing with difficult feelings or situations”⁷

Anxiety

“The state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen”⁸

Trauma

“A mental condition caused by severe shock, stress or fear, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time”⁹

³ “Disorder.” *Disorder Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com*, www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/disorder. Accessed 01 Aug. 2026.

⁴ Prefrontal Cortex Definition & Meaning | Dictionary.Com, www.dictionary.com/browse/prefrontal-cortex. Accessed 13 July 2026.

⁵ “Mental Health Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.Com.” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/mental-health>. Accessed 18 July 2026.

⁶ “Stigma Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.Com.” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/stigma>. Accessed 18 July 2026.

⁷ “Eating Disorder Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.Com.”

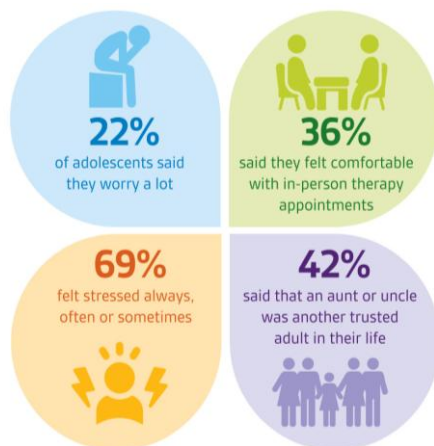
⁸ “Anxiety Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.Com.” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/anxiety>. Accessed 18 July 2026.

⁹ “Trauma Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.Com.” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/trauma>. Accessed 18 July 2026.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mental Health Disorders

As it is known by surveys 50 percent of adolescents in the US have experienced mental health disorder in the duration of their teenage years¹⁰, even though severity varies a lot. When a mental health disorder disrupts daily functioning in the home, school environment, or community, it is considered a "serious emotional disturbance." When children or adolescents have the ability to be functional in two of these three environments, however, it is not likely they have a serious mental health disorder. It is estimated that 22 percent of youngsters with any type of mental health disorder have experienced a severe disturbance.¹¹



Voices of Child Health, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, 2024

Statistics on mental health¹²

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders is important as intervening early may be critical to prevent serious impairment. Mental health disorders are typically marked by disruption of psychological, social, and cognitive functioning. Among adolescents, anxiety and depression are the most frequently diagnosed mental health conditions. Anxiety disorders may present as excessive fear, persistent worrying, phobias, or ongoing feelings

of nervousness that interfere with everyday activities. Depression is characterized by prolonged sadness, hopelessness, or a loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable, often affecting relationships, academic performance, and overall well-being. Other conditions that may emerge during adolescence include bipolar disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, eating disorders, learning disorders, and early-onset schizophrenia.

¹⁰ "Mental Health by the Numbers." *NAMI*, www.nami.org/mental-health-by-the-numbers/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

¹¹ "Mental Illness." *National Institute of Mental Health*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

¹² *Adolescents Report on Their Well-Being and Mental Health | Lurie Children's*, www.luriechildrens.org/en/voices-of-child-health-in-chicago/adolescents-report-on-their-well-being-and-mental-health/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

Mental Disorders

Anxiety disorders

In 2021, 359 million individuals were experiencing anxiety disorders, 72 million of whom were children and adolescents.¹³ anxiety disorders are characterized mostly by excessive fear and worry followed by related disturbances in behaviour. Symptoms can be severe enough to result in significant distress or significant impairment in functioning. There are many different kinds of anxiety disorders, such as: generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder etc.



How anxiety feels¹⁴

Depression

In the year 2019, 280 million people were experiencing, including 23 million children and youngsters.¹⁵ Depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life. During a depressive episode, the person experiences a depressed mood or an inclination of pleasure or interest in everyday activities, for the majority of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks. Many other symptoms are also present, which may include poor concentration, emotions of excessive guilt or low self-worth, hopelessness about what the future holds, thoughts about dying or suicidal thoughts, insomnia, modifications in appetite or weight, and feeling especially tired or low in energy. Individuals with depression are at an increased risk of suicide.

Bipolar disorder

In the year 2021, 37 million people were living with bipolar disorder, 3.8 million of whom were adolescents (10–19 years old). Individuals with bipolar disorder experience alternating depressive episodes with periods of manic symptoms. During a depressive episode, the person experiences a depressed mood or a decline in pleasure or activities, for the majority of the day, almost every day. Manic symptoms may include euphoria or irritability, increased appetite for

¹³ "Mental Disorders." *World Health Organization*, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

¹⁴ Author Lauren Smith "Anxiety Disorders: Types, Symptoms, and Treatment." *Recovered*, 11 June 2026, recovered.org/mental-health/anxiety-disorders. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

¹⁵ "Mental Disorders." *World Health Organization*, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

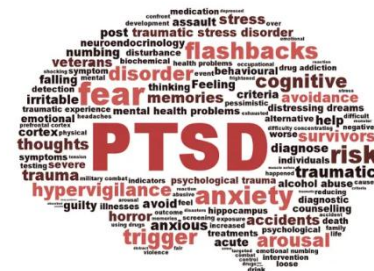
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The two different episodes,
result of the bipolar disorder¹⁶

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD may develop after being exposed to an extremely threatening event or series of events. It is characterized by all of the following:

- 1) having flashbacks of the traumatizing event or events or intrusive thoughts,
- 2) avoiding thoughts events or people that are connected to the threatening series of events an individual had experienced,
- 3) persistent perceptions of increased current threat.



The symptoms of PTSD ¹⁷

The symptoms mentioned are persistent for at least several weeks and may cause important impairment in functioning.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a severe mental health condition affecting around 23 million people globally, or approximately one in every 345 individuals. The disorder influences the way a person thinks, perceives reality, and behaves. Individuals may experience hallucinations, persistent delusions, disorganized thinking, or episodes of severe agitation. Many also face ongoing challenges with attention, memory, and other aspects of cognitive functioning. Beyond the symptoms themselves,

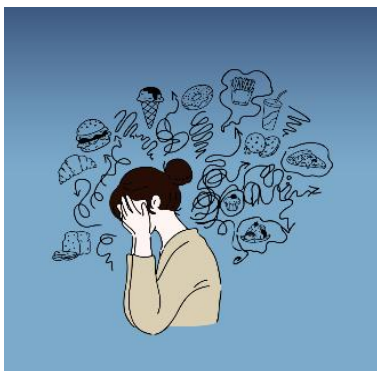
¹⁶Admin. "Coping with Bipolar Disorder." *Tulasi Healthcare*, 2 June 2023, www.tulasihealthcare.com/blog/coping-with-bipolar-disorder/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

¹⁷ “Disability Awareness Month Tip for Thurs., Oct. 29: What Is PTSD?” *Day at a Glance*, 28 Oct. 2015, daag.shoreline.edu/2015/10/28/disability-awareness-month-tip-for-thurs-oct-29-what-is-ptsd/ . Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

schizophrenia is associated with a reduced life expectancy, averaging about nine years shorter than that of the general population. Despite these challenges, a combination of medication, psychoeducation, family support, and psychosocial rehabilitation can significantly improve quality of life and long-term outcomes.

Eating disorders

In the year 2021, 16 million individuals experienced eating disorders and between those 3.4 million children and adolescents. Eating disorders, for example anorexia and bulimia, include abnormalities in eating and preoccupation with food and prominent body weight and shape concerns. The symptoms or behaviours cause risk or damage in the health system, significant anxiety, or important impairment of functioning. Anorexia nervosa many times has its onset during



adolescence or early adulthood and is connected to death prematurely because of medical complications or suicide. Individuals with bulimia are at a significantly heightened risk for substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and health impairments

Depiction of the thoughts of a girl with an eating disorder¹⁸

Disruptive behaviour and dissocial disorders

Behavioural disorders also affect a considerable number of children and adolescents. In 2021, approximately 41 million people worldwide were living with conduct-dissocial disorder.¹⁹ This condition, commonly referred to as conduct disorder, belongs to a group of disruptive behaviour disorders that also includes oppositional defiant disorder. Young people with these conditions often display persistent patterns of defiant, aggressive, or rule-breaking behaviour that go beyond what would typically be expected for their age. These behaviours may interfere with relationships, school performance, and social functioning. Symptoms often begin during childhood, although this is not always the case. Fortunately, effective interventions are available. Approaches such as cognitive problem-solving therapy and social skills training have shown positive outcomes, particularly when parents, caregivers, and teachers actively participate in the treatment process.

¹⁸ Peoples, Claire. "Teens and Eating Disorders: Recognizing Symptoms & Empowering Recovery." *New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women*, 24 Feb. 2025, nmcs.w.org/eating-disorder-awareness-week-teens/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

¹⁹ "Mental Disorders." *World Health Organization*, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.



Neurodevelopmental disorders

Neurodevelopmental disorders are behavioural as well as cognitive disorders, which arise in the developmental period, and involve important malfunctions in the acquisition and execution of some intellectual, motor, language, or social factors. For certain diagnoses and age groups, medication may also be considered.

Suicide and self-harm

Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among older adolescents and young adults aged 15–29, ranking third worldwide. The reasons behind suicidal behaviour are complex and rarely stem from a single factor. Common contributors include childhood abuse or neglect, harmful alcohol use, difficulties in accessing mental health services, social stigma surrounding help-seeking, and the availability of means for suicide. Digital media also plays an important role. Depending on how it is used, online platforms can either support suicide prevention by encouraging awareness and help-seeking or, conversely, increase vulnerability through harmful content or misinformation.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Australia

Recent Australian research has revealed that mental health challenges are widespread during adolescence, with almost three-quarters of young people experiencing clinically significant symptoms of anxiety or depression at some point between the ages of 10 and 18. The longitudinal study, conducted by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) and published in "The Lancet Psychiatry", followed 1,239 children from Melbourne over eight years. The findings showed that mental health difficulties were often persistent rather than short-lived, with 64% of participants reporting symptoms on three or more occasions throughout adolescence. Girls were particularly affected, with 84% experiencing anxiety or depression at least once compared with 61% of boys, and they were also more likely to experience long-term symptoms.²⁰ Researchers also observed that emotional difficulties tended to increase during periods of educational pressure, including the transition from primary to secondary school, examination periods, and the completion of compulsory education.

The study also highlighted that many adolescents who reported poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic had already been experiencing symptoms beforehand, suggesting that the pandemic intensified existing problems rather than creating them. According to the researchers, these findings underline the need to view adolescent mental health as a long-term public health issue rather than a temporary

²⁰ *Young People's Mental Health (12–24 Years) - Mental Health - AIHW*, www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/topic-areas/populations/young-people-s-mental-health. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

response to specific events. Dr. Ellie Robson emphasized that recurring anxiety and depression can significantly affect young people's daily functioning and may have lasting consequences for their health and well-being into adulthood. Professor Susan Sawyer further noted that the study provides one of the most comprehensive pictures to date of how common mental health conditions develop across adolescence, reinforcing the importance of early prevention and broader support strategies beyond traditional clinical services.

China

Mental health problems among children and adolescents have become an increasingly significant public health concern in China over the past few decades. A recent national psychiatric epidemiological survey involving 17,524 school-aged children and adolescents estimated that 17.5% were affected by a mental health disorder (95% CI: 17.2%–18.0%). The findings also indicated that mental health conditions were more common among boys, younger children, and those living in more economically developed regions. These trends highlight the growing need for early identification and effective support services to address the mental health needs of young people across the country.

Evidence from recent meta-analyses further shows that the most common mental health problems vary by educational stage. Among primary school students, sleep difficulties were the most frequently reported issue (25.2%), followed by depression (14.6%) and anxiety (12.3%). For junior middle school students, anxiety (27.0%), depression (24.0%), and self-harm (22.0%) were the most prevalent concerns, while among high school students, depression (28.0%), anxiety (26.3%), and sleep problems (23.0%) were reported most often. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that mental health challenges affect a substantial proportion of Chinese children and adolescents and have attracted increasing attention from researchers, healthcare professionals, and policymakers, who recognize the need for coordinated prevention and intervention strategies.²¹

Greece

Mental health has become an increasingly important concern for young people in Greece, both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. National data indicate that emotional well-being is a growing challenge across different age groups. According to ELSTAT (2021), 15.2% of children aged 5–14 experience feelings of anxiety, nervousness, or worry at least once a week. These concerns become even more pronounced during adolescence and early adulthood. A survey by diaNEOsis (2022) found that poor mental health was identified as the greatest concern by 38.9% of young people aged 17–24 and by 25% of those aged 25–39. In addition, ELSTAT (2020) reported that 5.6% of Greeks aged

²¹ Zhang, Ning. "A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health." *China CDC Weekly*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 4 Oct. 2024, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11532517/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.



15 years and older had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, highlighting the broader impact of mental health difficulties across the population.²²

To respond to these growing needs, Greece has established a network of specialized mental health services for children and adolescents. These services include Community Mental Health Centres for Children and Adolescents, child and adolescent psychiatric departments within regional and prefectural hospitals, child and adolescent psychiatric clinics, and dedicated child psychiatric hospitals. Together, these facilities provide assessment, treatment, counselling, and ongoing support for young people experiencing mental health difficulties, while also working with families and schools to promote early intervention and improve access to appropriate care.

India

Mental health has become an increasingly important public health concern in India, particularly among young people. Around one in ten Indians (10.6%) experiences a mental health condition, while approximately 7.3% of individuals aged 18–29 years are affected by mental morbidity. The NCERT Survey (2022) further highlighted the emotional challenges faced by students, reporting that 11% experienced anxiety, 14% struggled with intense emotional distress, and 43% reported frequent mood swings. Young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) are especially vulnerable because of social stigma, financial insecurity, and limited opportunities to access appropriate mental health services. These challenges are compounded by a severe shortage of mental health professionals, with only 0.75 psychiatrists available for every 100,000 people, alongside an even smaller number of psychologists and psychiatric social workers. As a result, many young people are unable to receive timely and adequate support.²³

To address these challenges, several initiatives have been introduced to strengthen mental health support systems for young people. YuWaah has launched a pilot programme in Maharashtra, working with the Department of Higher Education and the National Service Scheme to promote peer support, raise awareness, and encourage help-seeking among youth. At the national level, YuWaah has also collaborated with the Ministry of Education to bring together five key ministries—Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Social Justice and Empowerment, Women and Child Development, and Health and Family Welfare—to improve coordination of youth mental well-being initiatives. In addition, YuWaah convened eight technical working group meetings involving more than 70 mental health specialists to develop evidence-based recommendations for a

²² Marchionatti, Lauro Estivalete, et al. “The Mental Health Care System for Children and Adolescents in Greece: A Review and Structure Assessment.” *Frontiers in Health Services*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 11 Dec. 2024, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11668766/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11668766/). Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

²³ Zarafshan, Hadi, et al. “Children and Adolescents’ Mental Health in Iran’s Primary Care: Perspectives of General Practitioners, School Staff and Help Seekers.” *Global Social Welfare: Research, Policy & Practice*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Mar. 2021, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7962553/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7962553/). Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.



comprehensive school mental health programme, reflecting a growing commitment to strengthening mental health policy and practice across the country.

Russian Federation

A long-term study conducted in a large city in Siberia found important changes in the mental health and health-related behaviours of Russian adolescents over a 19-year period. Compared with 2002, adolescents in 2015 reported noticeably higher levels of emotional symptoms and internalising difficulties, as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). During the same period, tobacco and alcohol use declined considerably, suggesting that while some health-risk behaviours became less common, emotional well-being worsened. Most of these changes occurred between 2002 and 2015, with little additional change observed between 2015 and 2021. The study also showed that girls experienced a greater increase in mental health problems and a decline in prosocial behaviour, whereas boys demonstrated a more pronounced reduction in alcohol consumption. Differences in family structure or parental occupation did not explain these trends.²⁴

The findings also revealed changing gender patterns, with the gap in mental health outcomes widening in favour of boys, while the traditional gender differences in substance use became much smaller and, in some cases, even reversed. Interestingly, the study found no evidence that adolescents' mental health, as measured by the SDQ, deteriorated further between 2015 and 2021, despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may indicate that many young people were able to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic, although the researchers caution that this interpretation should be treated carefully. They emphasize the need for further studies using more representative samples and additional measures of adolescent mental health to better understand the factors that promote resilience and identify those that increase vulnerability, particularly among girls.

United States of America

Most children show many signs of positive mental well-being as they grow. According to US national data collected in 2022–2023, almost four out of five children between 6 months and 5 years of age (78%) demonstrated all four key indicators of flourishing. Nearly all smiled and laughed regularly (99%), while 96% were affectionate with their parents or caregivers. Most children also showed curiosity about learning new things (95%), and 82% were able to recover quickly when situations did not go as expected. Among children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 years, about 60% met all three flourishing

²⁴ Slobodskaya, Helena R, et al. "Russian Adolescent Mental Health in 2002, 2015 and during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2021." *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2023, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9353430/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

indicators. Specifically, 83% were interested in learning, 80% usually completed the tasks they started, and 72% were able to remain calm and manage challenges effectively.²⁵

Although many children experience positive mental health, mental, emotional, and behavioural disorders remain common. In 2021, almost one in five children aged 3 to 17 years (21%) had received a diagnosis of a mental, emotional, or behavioural condition at some point in their lives. The likelihood of developing these conditions generally increases with age, although some disorders may appear during early childhood. Data from 2022–2023 show that anxiety was the most frequently diagnosed condition, affecting 11% of children aged 3–17 years, followed by behaviour disorders (8%) and depression (4%). The findings also revealed differences by sex, with girls reporting higher rates of anxiety (12% vs. 9%) and depression (6% vs. 3%), while behaviour disorders were more common among boys (10% vs. 5%).²⁶

Child Mind Institute

An independent nonprofit organization focused on transforming children's and teens' mental health globally through clinical care, science, and education. At the Child Mind Institute, thousands of children have received help through compassionate clinical care, millions of families through public education and community programs, and a generation of scientists conducting groundbreaking research of the developing brain.²⁷

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

UNICEF is the primary global defender of child and adolescent rights. It leads the Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health (an alliance of private sector companies and NGOs) and publishes the authoritative State of the World's Children reports, which directly shape national policies.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
1867	English psychiatrist Henry Maudsley publishes his landmark medical book, <i>Physiology and Pathology of Mind</i> , featuring a groundbreaking chapter dedicated to adolescence titled "The Insanity of Early Life."

²⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health." Children's Mental Health, CDC, 5 June 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2026.

²⁶ "Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

²⁷ "Our Impact - Child Mind Institute." Child Mind Institute, 15 July 2021, <https://childmind.org/about-us/our-impact/>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2026.



July 1, 1899	Under the Illinois Juvenile Court Act, the Cook County Juvenile Court officially opens in Chicago, Illinois.
May 1904	Psychologist G. Stanley Hall publishes his massive two-volume study, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education.
March 17, 1909	Philanthropist Ethel Sturges Dummer funds and neurologist Dr. William Healy opens the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute in Chicago.
1935 (Published Year)	Dr. Leo Kanner publishes Child Psychiatry, the first systematic, English-language textbook on youth mental health.
1936 (Published Year)	Jean Piaget introduces his theory of cognitive development, identifying the Formal Operational Stage (where teenagers gain the capacity to process abstract logic).
July 3, 1946	The Event: President Harry S. Truman signs the National Mental Health Act into law.
April 23, 1951	16-year-old Barbara Johns organizes a secret meeting of her classmates and leads a massive walkout of over 450 students at her segregated high school to protest horrific school conditions, overcrowding, and the psychological impact of institutional racism.
1959 (Published Year)	Erik Erikson publishes Identity and the Life Cycle, detailing his eight stages of psychosocial development.
March 1, 1968	Over 10,000 Chicano students walk out of several East Los Angeles high schools



	to protest systemic discrimination, cultural suppression, and high push-out rates.
May 1970	Following the US invasion of Cambodia and the tragic shooting of four student protesters by the National Guard at Kent State University on May 4, a massive wave of strikes erupts
December 29, 1987	The FDA approves fluoxetine (Prozac), the first Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI).
2012	Global smartphone ownership and daily social media use among teenagers cross the 50% threshold.
March 24, 2018	In the wake of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, student survivors organize one of the largest youth-led protests in history. Millions of young people march in Washington, D.C., and across the country.
October 19, 2021	The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) declare a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.
September–October 2025	Organized heavily via Discord servers (specifically "GenZ212"), hundreds of thousands of Moroccan youths flood the streets to protest government spending on massive sports stadiums while public healthcare, youth employment, and mental health infrastructure remained severely underfunded.

RELEVANT UN TREATIES, CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)²⁸

The CRC, which is the most universally accepted treaty on human rights, is fundamental in safeguarding the mental health of adolescents. Article 24 ensures children and teenagers the right to the highest possible standard of health, including mental well-being and access to treatment. Article 6 emphasizes the importance of mental wellness in ensuring the survival and growth of children, while Article 12 grants adolescents the right to voice their opinions on matters concerning them. This particular article is crucial in advocating for youth involvement in the creation of their mental health initiatives.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966)²⁹

Article 12: Recognizes the right of everyone to the "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. «The AAAQ Framework: UN treaty bodies interpret this article to mean that mental health services for adolescents must be Available, Accessible (non-discriminatory and affordable), Acceptable (culturally and ethically appropriate), and of good Quality.

Resolution on "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Sustainable Development and Peace" (2023)³⁰

This landmark resolution was the first of its kind adopted by the General Assembly. It formally integrates mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into the broader UN goals for peace, security, and sustainable development. It calls for community-based, human-rights-aligned services that avoid over-medicalization and combat youth stigma.

Political Declaration on NCDs and Mental Health (2025)³¹

Endorsed by world leaders at the UN General Assembly, this declaration commits to fast-tracking progress on mental health and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), pledging to expand access to mental health care to an additional 150 million people by 2030, with a heavy emphasis on early youth intervention.

²⁸ *Convention on the Rights of the Child* | Ohchr, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

²⁹ *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* | Ohchr, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

³⁰ "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support:" *United Nations*, digitallibrary.un.org/record/4014613?v=pdf#files. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

³¹ *United Nations A/80/L.34 General Assembly Distr.: Limited 8 December 2025*, cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/4th-high-level-meeting-of-ncds/unlm4_draft_pd_a_80_l_34.pdf?sfvrsn=65f041c4_1&_amp=&download=true. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.



Resolution on Mental Health and Human Rights (A/HRC/RES/52/12, 2023 & A/HRC/RES/36/13, 2017)^{32 33}

These recurring resolutions declare that mental health is a human right. They urge governments to abandon discriminatory practices and coercive treatments, urging instead the creation of youth-friendly, community-cantered support systems. These resolutions offer a plethora of effective, efficient and potent solutions that advocate human rights.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The ratification of the CRC shifted the global mindset. Governments began to view mental health not as charity or a purely medical issue, but as a human right that states were legally obligated to uphold. The Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP) (2008): Launched by the WHO, this was one of the first major systematic attempts to address the lack of mental health care in low- and middle-income countries. It developed evidence-based guidelines for non-specialists (like pediatricians, general doctors, and community nurses) to identify and manage mental, neurological, and substance use disorders in young people.

Joint Initiative: "Helping Adolescents Thrive" (HAT)

Developed jointly by the WHO and UNICEF, the HAT initiative represents a massive shift toward prevention and promotion. Instead of waiting for teenagers to develop clinical depression or anxiety, HAT equips schools, parents, and community workers with psychological toolkits. It focuses on social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools, teaching coping skills, and promoting positive parenting strategies to reduce harsh home environments.

MMAP Initiative (Measurement of Mental Health Among Adolescents at the Population Level)

Historically, one of the biggest roadblocks to solving adolescent mental health was a total lack of data. Countries did not know how many teenagers were struggling because they lacked standardized ways to measure it. Led by UNICEF and academic partners, the MMAP project created validated, culturally adaptable survey tools to measure anxiety, depression, and functional impairment among adolescents globally. This data has allowed governments to transition from "guessing" the scale of the issue to creating targeted, funded policies.

The Danger of Over-Medicalization

Early attempts focused heavily on treating symptoms with medication. Modern initiatives emphasize that social stressors (like poverty, academic pressure, discrimination,

³² "Document Viewer." *United Nations*, docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/52/12. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

³³ "Document Viewer." *United Nations*, docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/36/13. Accessed 10 Aug. 2026.

and digital safety) must be addressed to truly heal youth. Providing medication to youngsters should be strict as many medications dangerously alter the brain. Over-medicalization is not an effective method as other solutions should be tested first.

The "Nothing About Us Without Us" Realization

For decades, adults designed youth mental health programs without asking adolescents what they actually needed. Today's initiatives, such as the UN Youth Office's programs, mandate the active participation of youth in designing policy. Not taking into account the opinions of young citizens to address their own needs makes finding a solid solution much more difficult than it actually is. Young people taking part in the designing of new policy is much more effective as the problems to be addressed concern mostly them.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Legislation on Mental Health Days

To address burnout and stigma, legislation that allows students to be granted excused days off due to mental health problems as they can due to physical health. Days focused completely on mental health will help students focus on themselves without feeling the pressure of absences from classes.

Trauma-informed Care (TIC)

Reframing punishment from "What is wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" by training teachers and other school administrators to recognize signs of trauma and chronic stress. Even a simple question can alter how the child views themselves and the amount of guilt or anxiety they feel.

Providing free or cheap tele-mental healthcare and text-lines

To help disadvantaged youth or citizens of rural areas have access to psychologists via telehealth infrastructures. There specifically should be numbers teens can call or text so as to get advice or to just be heard by a professional without necessarily needing parental consent except from when the situation calls for parental intervention.

Youth and Government Collaboration

In order to make sure that youth voices are heard directly regarding budgets allocated to healthcare, education, and environmental policy-making, governments should form special youth advisory boards. With the help of the feedback of adolescents, the budget and resources can be allocated where the youth deem most helpful for them and their improvement of their mental health.

Green spaces and urban design

Investing in readily available green spaces, recreational facilities, and environmentally oriented facilities which have been proven through various researches to lower cortisol levels and improve cognitive functions of children can prevent early

symptoms of anxiety and give a natural way of decompressing from the stress of everyday life.

Community Mental Health Centres

Establishing free, youth-run, or youth-oriented community centres where young people could seek advice and counselling without having to pay for a doctor's referral. A community centre can act as a safe space for a teen, specifically when they are surrounded by peers that deal with the same problems and situations and can relate.

Social and Emotional Learning

The Social and Emotional Learning is the inclusion of skills for building resilience, managing emotions, and resolving conflicts in the curriculum from an early age. Students should learn how to handle their feelings, control their reactions and have the right amount of patience towards difficult situations or other individuals. This lesson can help provide kids and teens with the right skill set and coping mechanisms in order for them to handle everyday issues without them taking a toll on their mental health.

De-stigmatization Campaigns

Creating targeted media and community guidelines to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, encouraging early help-seeking behaviours. The stigma around mental health issues still exists and social media campaigns can put an end to that. As a result, bullying will decrease around these issues and adolescents will feel free to express their feelings and seek out help when necessary.

Integration of Mental Health in Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

It is defined as a strategy to motivate governments to include mental health interventions into their national health insurance schemes so that adolescents can get affordable care, since many times the financial struggles of a family don't leave space and freedom for a teen to get professional help.

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