



The Issue of Addressing Rising Mental Health Disorders Among Young People

A possible contributing factor in the nation's rise in mental illness could be the increasing use of social media. Online interaction has taken precedence over face-to-face communication, perpetuating isolation and loneliness. Physical appearance is also heavily stressed on social media and other online platforms. Growing trends on apps like Instagram and TikTok influence users to look and dress a certain way. General comparisons and unrealistic expectations of physical appearance often affect users, particularly female users, which can contribute to depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Those who are frequently online are also more likely to experience cyber-bullying, which is linked to depression and suicidal behaviours.

Anxiety and depression constitute more than 40% of mental-health disorders among young people (those aged 10–19). UNICEF also reports that, worldwide, suicide is the fourth most-common cause of death (after road injuries, tuberculosis and interpersonal violence) among adolescents (aged 15–19). In eastern Europe and central Asia, suicide is the leading cause of death for young people in that age group — and it's the second-highest cause in western Europe and North America.

Psychological distress among young people seems to be rising. One study found that rates of depression among a nationally representative sample of US adolescents (aged 12 to 17) increased from 8.5% of young adults to 13.2% between 2005 and 2017¹. There's also initial evidence that the coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating this trend in some countries. For example, in a nationwide study² from Iceland, adolescents (aged 13–18) reported significantly more symptoms of mental ill health during the pandemic than did their peers before it. And girls were more likely to experience these symptoms than were boys. The consequences of failing to address adolescent mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.

Points to consider

- How does your country address the rising mental health disorders in young people today?
- What can your country's health services do to improve the help for the adolescents who struggle with mental health illnesses?
- What are the causes of mental health illnesses?
- How can your country change its view on mental health?

Useful Links

- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-children-and-young-people>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>