Can we talk?

Seven year youth mental health report - 2012-2018

The prevalence of psychological distress has increased among young people over the past seven years, particularly among young females.

**Female vs male**

Females are around twice as likely as males to experience psychological distress (30% compared with 16%).

The proportion of females with psychological distress has risen from over one in five (23%) in 2012 to three in ten (30%) in 2018.

**Rate of psychological distress**

% of 15-19 year olds with psychological distress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Females %</th>
<th>All cases %</th>
<th>Males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top concerns**

Those with psychological distress* were more concerned about:

- **Mental health**: 63% compared with 21%
- **Coping with stress**: 74% compared with 34%
- **Body image**: 55% compared with 23%
- **School or study problems**: 55% compared with 27%
- **Suicide**: 36% compared with 9%

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vs non-Indigenous**

Nearly one third (32%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people surveyed experienced psychological distress compared with less than one quarter (24%) of non-Indigenous respondents.

**Control over life**

Young people with psychological distress* are:

- 11x more likely to feel they had no control over their life.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents with psychological distress* were:

- 3x as likely to feel they had no control over their life (27% compared with 9%).

* Compared to young people without psychological distress

# Compared with non-Indigenous young people with psychological distress
Barriers to help-seeking

- Stigma & embarrassment
- Fear
- Lack of support
- Lack of confidence
- Accessibility

“People see asking for help as attention seeking”
Female, 16, NSW

“They feel they come across as weak if they ask for help”
Female, 16, Tas

“It’s not cool to ask for help”
Female, 17, NSW

Young people with psychological distress are more than 5x more likely to report that they experienced some stressful problems over the past year but did not get help, even when they thought they needed it (37% compared with 7%)

1 in 5 young people with psychological distress felt they didn’t have someone they could turn to in a crisis

Key policy recommendations:

- Focus on prevention and early intervention including parenting interventions, school-based programs and programs delivered early in life to build resilience
- Resource schools to embed wellbeing personnel, train staff, implement evidence-based psychological programs, effectively respond to bullying and integrate wellbeing into the curriculum
- Equip young people’s peers and parents with the knowledge and resources to recognise mental health issues and provide appropriate support and referrals when needed
- Improve access to health professionals for young people so they can receive early intervention in a youth-friendly environment
- Invest in researching, developing, implementing, marketing and evaluating evidence-based online therapies, courses, assessment tools and information aimed at young people in various formats
- Fund community-led programs that build on cultural determinants of social and emotional wellbeing to help provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with protective factors against mental health difficulties
- Provide gender-sensitive mental health services to respond to the concerns and preferences of young males and young females
- Involve young people as co-designers of mental health and wellbeing services, programs and campaigns to ensure services effectively engage young people and promote help-seeking

If you are a young person and need someone to talk with, you can contact Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (24/7) kidshelpline.com.au
For more information: researchandpolicy@missionaustralia.com.au
To download the report: missionaustralia.com.au/youthmentalhealthreport