

Mental health of children and young people in Australia

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises their own abilities, is able cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and can contribute to their community. Poor mental health can impact on the potential of young people to live fulfilling and productive lives.

Mental health

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Australia's Youth – Mental Illness 2021

Half of all the mental health conditions we experience will have started by age 14.

Over 75%
of mental health problems occur before the age of 25.

1 in 7 children
and young people aged 4 - 17 years experience a mental health condition in any given year.

19.9%
of all young people aged 11 - 17 years experience high or very high levels of psychological distress.

Self-harm

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Suicide and Self-Harm Monitoring 2021

1 in 10
young people aged 12 - 17 years have engaged in self-harm.

1 in 13
will seriously consider a suicide attempt, and one in 40 will attempt suicide.

In 2020-2021, there were **1,871** hospitalisations for intentional self-harm for children aged 14 and below - a rate of 39 per 100,000 children. The rate for girls was 7 times as high as that for boys.

More than 40 NSW children and teenagers are rushed to hospital for self-harm every day. This is a **31%** rise from the same time in 2020 and up 47% compared to 2019.

NSW Ombudsman Biannual Report 2021

1800 061 000
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Suicide

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Suicide and Self-Harm Monitoring 2021

Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Australians aged 15-24.

In 2021, **112** deaths by suicide occurred among children and adolescents (aged 17 and below) with **71%** occurring in those aged 15-17.

Suicide remains the leading cause of death of children between 5 - 17 years, with **80 deaths** occurring in this age group.

For every youth suicide,
there are
100 to 200
more attempts.

In 2021, based on Australian Bureau of Statistics - Causes of Death 2019 data:

461

deaths due to suicide among young people aged 15-24.

In children aged 14 and below deaths by suicide represented 12% of all deaths in this age group.

33%

of deaths in Australians aged 15-24 were due to suicide in 2021.

99

deaths by suicide occurred among children and adolescents (aged 5-17) with the majority occurring in those aged 15-17 (74%).

Impact of child abuse

In 2021, child abuse and neglect during childhood was the leading risk factor contributing to the burden of suicide and self-inflicted injuries in both males and females.



Child abuse was associated with

33%

of total suicide burden in females and

24%

in males aged 5 and over.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
The health impact of suicide and self-inflicted injuries in Australia 2019

Impact of COVID-19

1 in 4 young people reported experiencing psychological distress in 2020 (an increase from 1 in 7 in 2017). This rise is likely to have some association with the spread of COVID-19, in view of the larger negative impacts of COVID-19 for that group, such as job losses and financial stress.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
COVID-19 and the impact on young people 2021

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