A network of care: the importance of social support for adolescents in the WHO European Region during the COVID-19 pandemic

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people’s health and well-being from the findings of the HBSC survey round 2021/2022

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Key findings

• Young people’s living conditions and everyday lives have been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Young people’s view of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on their lives was dependent on the kind and volume of social support they received from family, teachers, classmates and peers.
• Family support was the most important factor in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by support from teachers and classmates.
• The weakest source of support was from peers.
• Links were found between the overall impact of the pandemic and family structure and ease of communication in the family.
• Age, gender and socioeconomic background were important in reducing the impact of the pandemic on adolescents, but not as significant as the four sources of social support.
• Adolescents who experienced a positive impact on life as a whole during the pandemic had a high level of social support.
• Those who experienced a negative impact had the lowest social support.
• Girls experienced more negative impacts from the pandemic.
• Adolescents from less well-off families were more likely to report a negative impact of the pandemic on their lives than those from better-off families, regardless of the social support they received from family, teachers, classmates or peers.
• Adolescents who reported a positive COVID-19 impact on their lives were more likely to have received high social support across all four sources than those who reported neutral and negative impacts.
• Gender differences and links between support and the pandemic’s impact on adolescents’ lives varied cross-nationally/regionally.
• Adolescents from less well-off families should be supplied with additional support to minimize the effects of crises.
• Teachers should be trained, guided and provided with the tools to offer support to their adolescent students in times of crisis.

Boys and girls who had high family support had more positive experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic than those with low family support

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