

Coping through crisis: COVID-19 pandemic experiences and adolescent mental health and well-being in the WHO European Region

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

Cosma A, Bersia M, Abdrakhmanova S, Badura P, Gobina I

Key findings

- COVID-19 pandemic mitigation measures, such as social distancing, school closures and isolation, have affected the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents. The HBSC survey provides insights into these effects in 22 countries.
- Most adolescents did not report a negative impact on their mental health and well-being; many reported that the pandemic had had neutral or even positive impacts.
- Girls reported higher levels of negative impacts on their mental health and well-being than boys, as did 15-year-olds compared to 11-year-olds.
- Between 17% and 38% reported that the pandemic had had a negative impact on their mental health and well-being.
- Negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic restriction measures on adolescents' mental health and well-being varied widely across 22 WHO European Region countries and regions.
- Adolescents who reported negative impacts on school performance and relationships with family and peers more often rated their mental health and well-being negatively.
- Adolescents who experienced negative impacts on their school performance and relationships with family and friends were much more likely to have high levels of psychological health complaints.
- Twenty-five per cent of those experiencing negative impacts on school performance experienced high levels of psychological health complaints, compared to 16% for neutral.
- The equivalent share for family relationships was 29% compared to 19%, and 23% compared to 17% for peer relationships.
- Adolescents' mental health and well-being needs should be addressed during such challenging times and the support and resources they require should be provided.
- Negative changes in family, peer and school environments were strongly linked to poor mental health and well-being, although differences across countries and regions were high.
- The findings point to an immediate need for tailored policies that aim to improve adolescents' lives and well-being in family, peer and school environments.

Thirty per cent of adolescents across the countries reported that the pandemic had had a negative impact on their mental health and well-being

