KidsData

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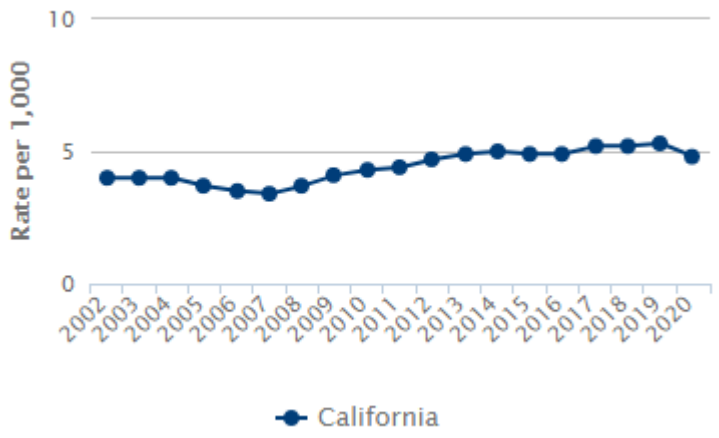
Children's Emotional Health in California

Rate of Hospitalization for Mental Health Issues Among Children Ages 5-19



Definition: Number of hospital discharges for mental health issues per 1,000 children and youth ages 5-19, by age group (e.g., in 2020, there were 9.1 hospital discharges for mental health issues per 1,000 California youth ages 15-19).
Data Source: California Dept. of Health Care Access and Information custom tabulation (Feb. 2022); California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections (Jul. 2021).

Students with Depression-Related Feelings: 2017-2019

California	Percent	
	Female	Male
Grade Level	Yes	Yes
Grade 7	37.0%	22.8%
Grade 9	41.4%	23.0%
Grade 11	45.1%	27.4%
Non-Traditional	48.3%	23.3%

Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who, in the previous year, felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some usual activities, by gender and grade level (e.g., in 2017-2019, 41.4% of female 9th graders in California had depression-related feelings in the previous year).
Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

Students with Depression-Related Feelings, by Sexual Orientation: 2017-2019

What It Is

Kidsdata.org provides the following indicators of children's emotional health:

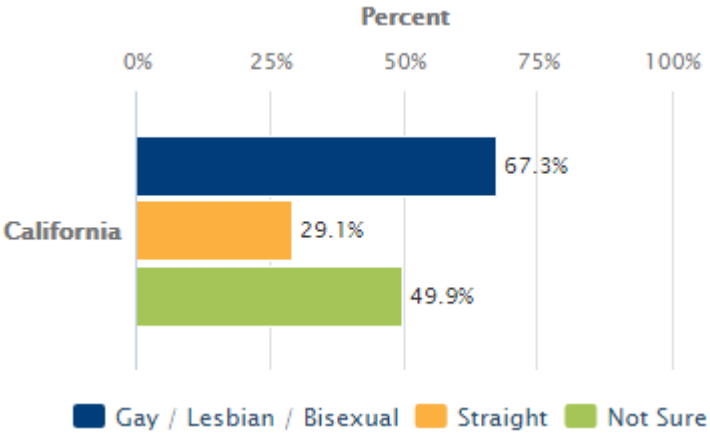
- The number and rate of hospital discharges for mental health issues among children and youth ages 5-19, by age group
- The percentage of California and U.S. children ages 3-17 with behavioral or mental health conditions, along with the share of those who have received mental health treatment or counseling in the previous year
- The percentage of students with depression-related feelings in the previous year, by grade level, gender, level of school connectedness, parent education level, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation

Why This Topic Is Important

Emotional health is an integral part of overall health, as physical and mental well being are intricately linked. Mental wellness—which is more than the absence of disorders—includes effective coping skills and the ability to form positive relationships, to adapt in the face of difficulties, and to function well at home, in school, and in life. Emotional development is influenced by complex biological and social factors, with early positive and adverse experiences in relationships and environments being particularly profound. Sound emotional health prepares young people for the challenges of growing up and living as healthy adults.

Most mental health disorders emerge before age 24, and the prevalence of such disorders is on the rise, affecting as many as one in five U.S. children and youth each year. Suicide has become the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10-24 nationwide. Treatment of mental illness is costly and accounts for the largest share of health care spending for children and youth in the U.S. Still, the majority of young people who need mental health treatment do not receive it, placing them at increased risk for negative outcomes throughout their lifetimes.

Anxiety disorders are the most commonly diagnosed mental health conditions among youth, affecting an estimated 32% of U.S. adolescents. Depression-related feelings also are common, with 42% of high school students nationwide in 2021 estimated to have had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness



Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who, in the previous year, felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some usual activities, by sexual orientation (e.g., in 2017-2019, 67.3% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had depression-related feelings in the previous year).
Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

in the previous year, up from 28% in 2011. Youth with anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems are more likely to exhibit suicidal behavior, drop out of school, use alcohol or drugs, and engage in unsafe sexual activity, in addition to having difficulties with school and relationships.

How Children Are Faring

There were 37,787 hospital discharges for mental health issues among California young people ages 5-19 in 2020: 12,719 for children ages 5-14 and 25,068 for teens ages 15-19. After peaking at 5.8 hospitalizations per 1,000 youth ages 5-19 in 2019—a two-thirds increase compared with 2007—the statewide rate of mental health hospitalization fell to 4.8 per 1,000 in 2020.

According to 2017-2021 data collected from parents and caregivers, an estimated 12% of California children ages 3-17 had one or more provider-diagnosed mental health conditions—attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety problems, behavioral or conduct problems, or depression—at the time of survey. Just over half of these children (52%) had received mental health treatment or counseling in the previous year, while the remainder were reported as either not needing services or not receiving the services they needed. By comparison, nationwide, 17% of children had diagnosed conditions, with a similar share (53%) receiving treatment or counseling in the previous year.

In 2017-2019, an estimated 30% of 7th graders, 33% of 9th graders, 37% of 11th graders, and 32% of non-traditional students in California experienced depression-related feelings in the previous year (meaning they felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some usual activities). Depression-related feelings were more common among female students and those with low levels of school connectedness. More than 67% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth had experienced depression-related feelings in 2017-2019, compared with fewer than 30% of their straight peers.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:
https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/68/childrens-emotional-health/summary