

Rate of mental disorders among children remained stable in 2021 after previous rise

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Credit: [Nijwam Swargiary](#)

One in six children in England had a probable mental disorder in 2021—a similar rate to 2020 but an increase from one in nine in 2017—according to a survey published today by NHS Digital.

The report, [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021](#), showed that among six- to 16-year-olds, the proportion with a probable mental disorder remained at one in six (17%) in 2021. Among

17 to 19 year olds, the rate was also one in six (17%).

Figures were statistically similar in 2020 and 2021. In 2020, the rate of probable mental [disorders](#) was also one in six for both these age groups.

Both years showed an increase from 2017, when one in nine (12%) six to 16 year olds and one in ten (10%) 17 to 19 year olds had a probable mental disorder.

This report looks at the [mental health](#) of children and young people in England in 2021 and how this has changed since 2017 and 2020. Views on [family life](#), education and services and experiences during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have also been collected. The findings draw on a sample of 3,667 children and young people aged between six and 23 years old, who were surveyed in 2017 and 2021.

The survey was carried out earlier this year by the Office for National Statistics, the National Centre for Social Research, University of Cambridge and University of Exeter.

Professor Tamsin Ford, Head of Psychiatry at the University of Cambridge and one of the study authors, said: "We can be reassured that the mental [health](#) of children and young people has not deteriorated further, but this survey suggests there has been no improvement. We need to work hard to prevent further deterioration and to ensure that those who need it have access to effective support."

This publication reports individual level change in mental health over time for the same group of children and young people. Some change may be due to different rates of mental health conditions being present at different ages. It shows 39% of [children](#) now aged six to 16 experienced a deterioration in their mental health between 2017 and 2021, while 22% saw an improvement.

Among [young people](#) now aged 17 to 23, 53% experienced a decline in mental health since 2017 and 15% experienced an improvement over that time.

Girls now aged between 11 and 16 were more likely to have experienced a decline in mental health (43%) than boys the same age (34%). This trend was also seen among those now aged 17 to 23, where [young women](#) were more likely to have experienced deterioration (61%) than young men (44%).

Other topics covered in the report included eating and sleeping problems, loneliness, social media usage and household circumstances.

Provided by University of Cambridge

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