

# Pediatric mental health surveillance IDs scope of public health burden

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Mental health disorders among children represent a considerable public

health concern, according to research published in the Feb. 25 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Rebecca H. Bitsko, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues examined mental health among children in the United States from 2013 to 2019 using surveillance data from federal data systems. The researchers found that based on 2013 to 2019 data, mental disorders began in early childhood and affected children with varying sociodemographic characteristics.

- The most prevalent disorders diagnosed during this period among U.S. children aged 3 to 17 years were attention-deficit/[hyperactivity disorder](#) and anxiety, each affecting 9.4 to 9.8% of children.
- Overall, 20.9% of children aged 12 to 17 years had ever experienced a major depressive episode.
- In 2019, 36.7% of [high school students](#) reported persistently feeling sad or hopeless in the past year, and 18.8% had seriously considered attempting suicide.
- Based on parent report, 9.6 to 10.1% of children aged 3 to 17 years had received [mental health services](#) and 7.8% of children aged 3 to 17 years had taken medication for [mental health problems](#) during the past year.
- Among children aged 12 to 17 years, about one in four reported having received mental health services during the past year.

"More comprehensive surveillance could help identify which mental health services, including treatment and prevention efforts, are needed and would be most effective for children with varying disorders, risk and protective factors, and circumstances so that public health interventions can be tailored to promote all children's mental health," the authors write.

**More information:** Rebecca H. Bitsko et al, Mental Health Surveillance Among Children—United States, 2013–2019, *MMWR Supplements* (2022). [DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.su7102a1](https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su7102a1)

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