

THE MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS REPORT

PROTECT CHILDREN'S WELLBEING IN HONG KONG

CHILD-FRIENDLY FACTSHEET (SEPT 2020)

Our study examines the current mental health needs for children in Hong Kong. It included extensive desk review of academic studies and small-scale surveys completed by other NGOs in Hong Kong. Findings also reflect conclusions data collected by Save the Children Hong Kong from:



THE BURDENS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S MENTAL HEALTH IN HONG KONG



- Coronavirus isolation and stress
- Distress amidst turmoil
- Poor self-care
- High academic pressure
- Strained parent-child relationships
- Excessive time on digital devices

FINDINGS

The social and political turmoil, as well as the pandemic, has compounded existing mental health problems and stresses, both on children and families as well as public mental health services.



As much as 39% (2 in 5) of all primary and secondary students may have developed symptoms of mental health disorders following a period of political and social turmoil.

1000s+



This year, thousands more children may need clinical psychiatric services compared to last year. But on account of low mental health awareness, low trust in public service providers, and high stigmatization, very few will actively seek or be referred to mental health care.



of school-aged children in our survey described their home environment as tense or fearful during the school suspension.

In July 2018 - July 2019, the median wait time for a child in to receive mental health care reached as high as 113 weeks in some areas of Hong Kong.



A 50% INCREASE

in clients hit the Hospital authority child psychiatric services between 2011 and 2016.



But only 4% of just youth cases were for depression.

While there were 58 youth and child suicides in 2019 and the portion of the population with probable depression has risen by 70% from 2014.



of surveyed children reported an increase in negative feelings during pandemic and school suspension.



Almost one third of children in Hong Kong believe they spend too much time on the internet

For teens and pre-teens, increases in time spent on the internet and mobile devices have been linked with...

- ↓ Social & psychological wellbeing
- ↑ Depression symptoms prevalence



THE VOICES



A senior social worker working on residential childcare service

The system of social services in Hong Kong is too segmented... Too many cases arise meaning that social workers cannot follow up quickly enough and manage them well. More manpower is needed.

Anonymous youth participating in Save the Children Hong Kong's "Young Voices" focus groups

No suicides have been reported in our form. However, many students tend to cut their arms. It's not easy to tell whether they cut themselves until the wounds are obvious. Students usually conceal their wounds very well.

Anonymous youth participating in Save the Children Hong Kong's "Young Voices" focus groups

I attempted suicide when I was young, owing to the stress given by my parents. It is impossible to change your parents, what you can do is to change the way you deal with things...



Anne-Sophie Dybdal, Senior Child Protection Advisor at the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Unit of Save the Children

People who are outside regularly have lower activity in the part of the brain that focuses on repetitive negative emotions. This is one of the reasons children can slide into negative feelings or even depression during the circumstances they are living in now.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



Improve community awareness of mental health and attitudes towards seeking mental health care

Improve the capacity to provide basic mental health services from the community level and find ways to reach children and youth in need who aren't seeking help

Reduce children and youth's academic and family pressure

Help children and youth manage screen-time in a healthy way

Full report: <https://savethechildren.click/mental-health-report>