

ARE YOU OK?

#mentalhealth



YOUTH MENTAL SURVEY 2023

THE RESULTS

renew europe.

BACKGROUND

The need for mental health support for youth was expected to substantially increase over the coming years, but the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty resulting from the war in Ukraine has only exacerbated this reality.

In fact, the incidence of mental health problems among people aged between 15 and 24 in most European countries doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides illness and death, the global pandemic resulted in lockdowns, restriction of social movement, closure of public and non-essential services, and loss of employment and income. Consequently, young people have been 30% to 80% more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and loneliness than adults¹. Furthermore, the impact of lockdown in people's mental health has been linked to an increase of psychological distress, sleep disorder, PTSD symptoms, irritability and fear.

Half of the mental health problems affecting adults start during adolescence, which makes crucial to empower young people giving them access to mental health services². By ad-

¹ Mental Health Europe (2022) Mental Health and Young People, it is time to start and shape a brighter future. <https://www.consaludmental.org/publicaciones/Mental-Health-Young-People.pdf>

² Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. (2005) Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62 (6) pp. 593-602



dressing youth mental health, we guarantee their wellbeing and we help them to realise their full potential. Therefore, investing on mental health is a promise for healthy and resilient societies.

Moreover, according to United Nations, the number of refugees due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine amounts to more than 7.8 million³. A large number of them has not even reached the age of 18. Many kids face the loss of a loved one from a very young age.

Most of the times, the physical consequences for those who survive the war or those who come from an arduous journey in search of a more hopeful future, are the only consequences perceived. However, many refugees must deal with feelings of sorrow, anxiety, and fear. All of a sudden, they must face not only the pain of leaving their home and often their relatives, but also the uncertainty of starting a new life in a very complex economic and political context. As defined by the World Health Organisation, "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

For these reasons, on the initiative of Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Renew Europe organised a Youth Mental Health Survey in autumn of 2022. The aim was to bring attention to the growing number of mental health issues on youth that have

³ The UN Refugee Agency (2022) Ukraine Emergency <https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-emergency.html#:~:text=As%20of%20November%202022%2C%20over,or%20similar%20national%20protection%20schemes.>

been reported in the last years and to give concrete follow-up to the oncoming EU Mental Health strategy that is expected to be published by the European Commission. Moreover, the survey would serve to find out the barriers young people face in accessing appropriate mental health support.

In the following pages, the methodology used for the creation of the survey will be presented. After that, the results will be analysed. Finally, a list of measures elaborated by the European Parliament Coalition for Mental Health -of which Soraya Rodríguez Ramos is a member- together with Mental Health Europe will be suggested. The aim will be to bring clarity on which are some crucial steps that should be taken to meet our youth needs on mental health.



METHODOLOGY

The survey questions were drafted in consultation with Mental Health Europe, a network organisation representing mental health users, professionals and service providers across Europe.

They focused on three main areas:

- 1) people's mental health,
- 2) barriers to mental health support,
- 3) other factors that can influence people's mental health such as global events and social media.

The survey was hosted on the Renew Europe participatory platform and was open for participation between 10 October 2022 and 20 November 2022. It was targeted at young people in Europe aged between 18-35.

MAIN RESULTS

The survey was answered by **692 respondents** in total.

On the nationality of respondents, we received answers from young people from:

20 European Member States (Top 3 of number of responses came from Germany, Spain & France)

We also received responses from young people with Ukrainian (11), British (6) and Russian (6) nationalities.



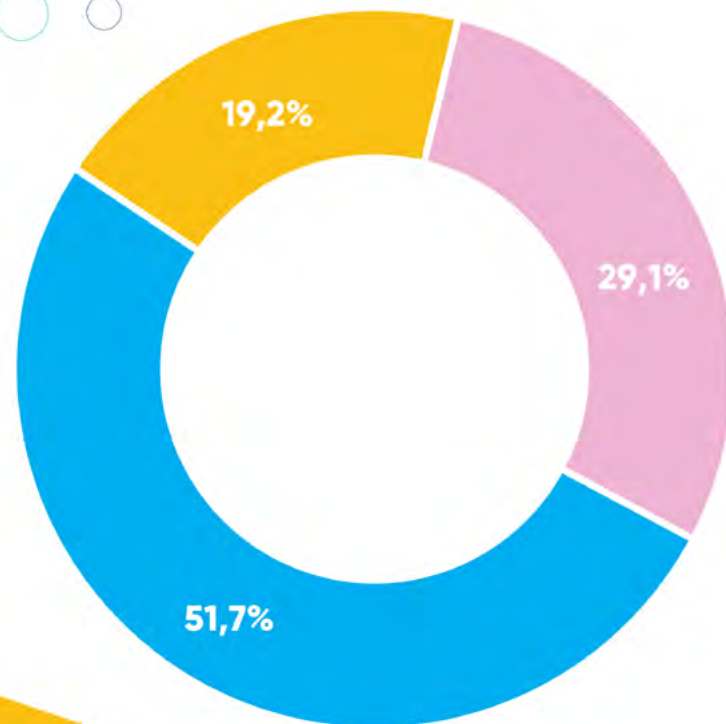
Tell us about yourself

First, we asked people to tell us a bit about their lives. The results of the questions on age, gender and employment situation can be seen below.

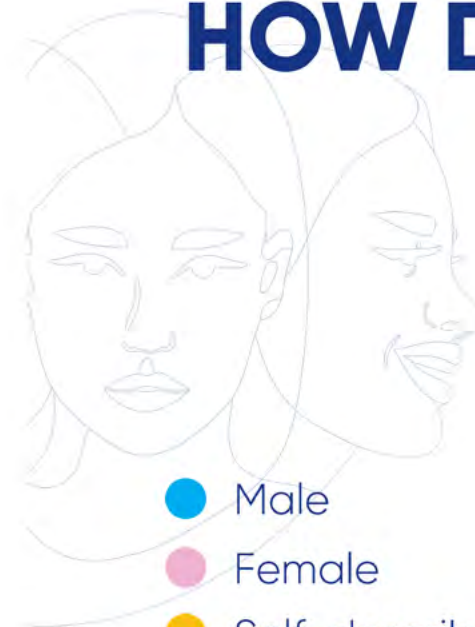
HOW OLD ARE YOU?



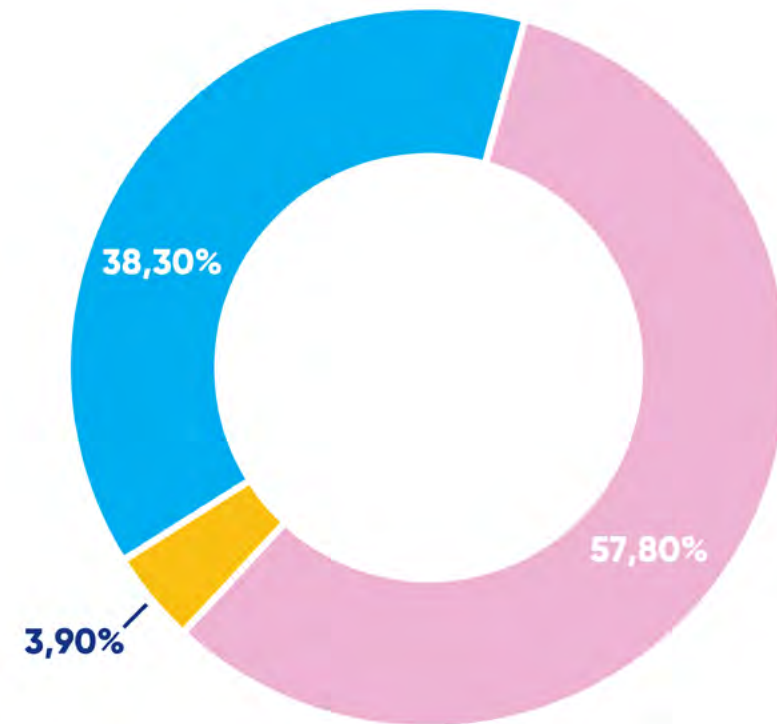
- 15 - 19 years old
- 20 - 24 years old
- 25 - + years old



GENDER: HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY?



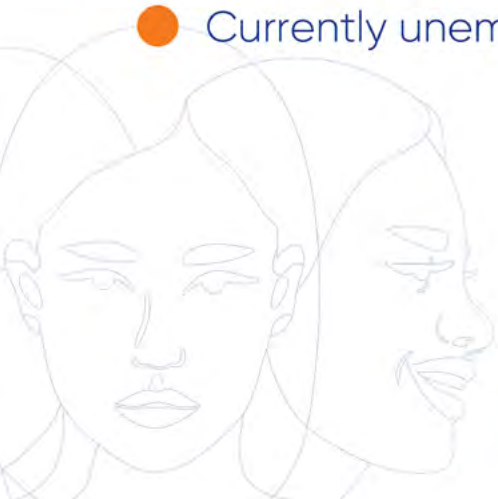
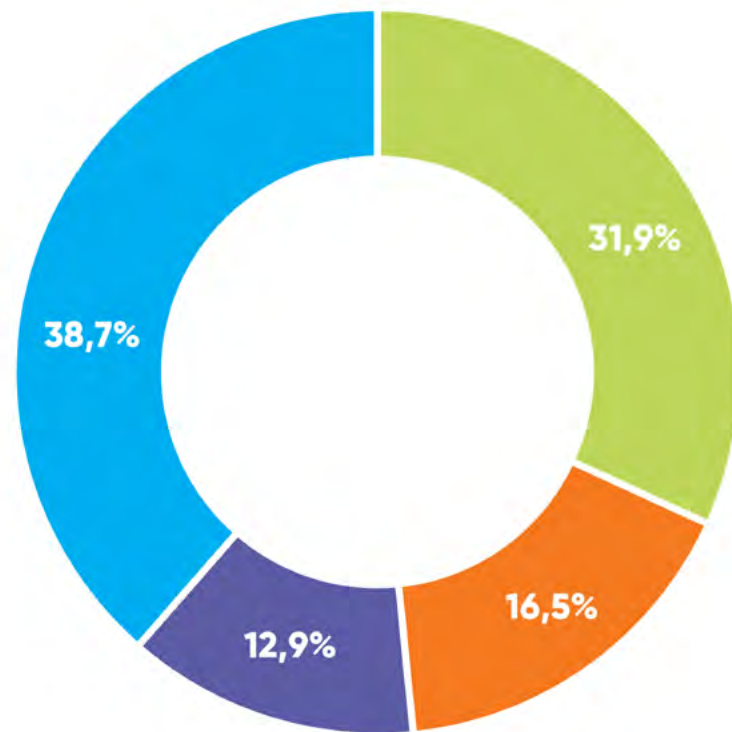
- Male
- Female
- Self-describe



WHAT IS YOUR EMPLOYMENT SITUATION?



- Student
- Combine work & studies
- Have a job
- Currently unemployed



How are you?

Then, we asked respondents about their mental health.

It is clear from the results that mental health is a matter of concern for our respondents and sadly, many of them seem to be struggling with mental health issues. Close to 60% of all respondents, classify their mental health as 'not great' or 'poor'. However, the majority of them did not seek for mental health support, which goes hand in hand with the fact that many respondents still find it difficult to talk about their mental health.

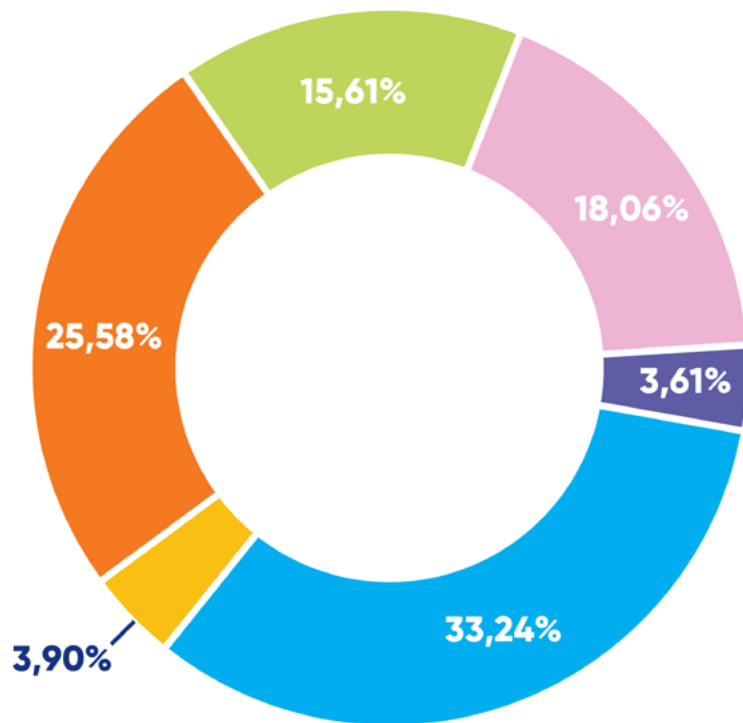
Moreover, several studies recognise a link between a lack of sleep and mental health problems⁴. Whereas sleep deprivation is known to be a symptom of adolescent depression, emerging evidence suggests that sleep difficulties might arise before depression does⁵.

⁴ Tarokh L, Saletin J, Carskadon M (2016) Sleep in adolescence: Physiology, cognition and mental health, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, Volume 70, 2016, pp. 182-188

⁵ Gradisar, M., Kahn, M., Micic, G. (2022) Sleep's role in the development and resolution of adolescent depression. *Nat Rev Psychol* 1, pp. 512-523

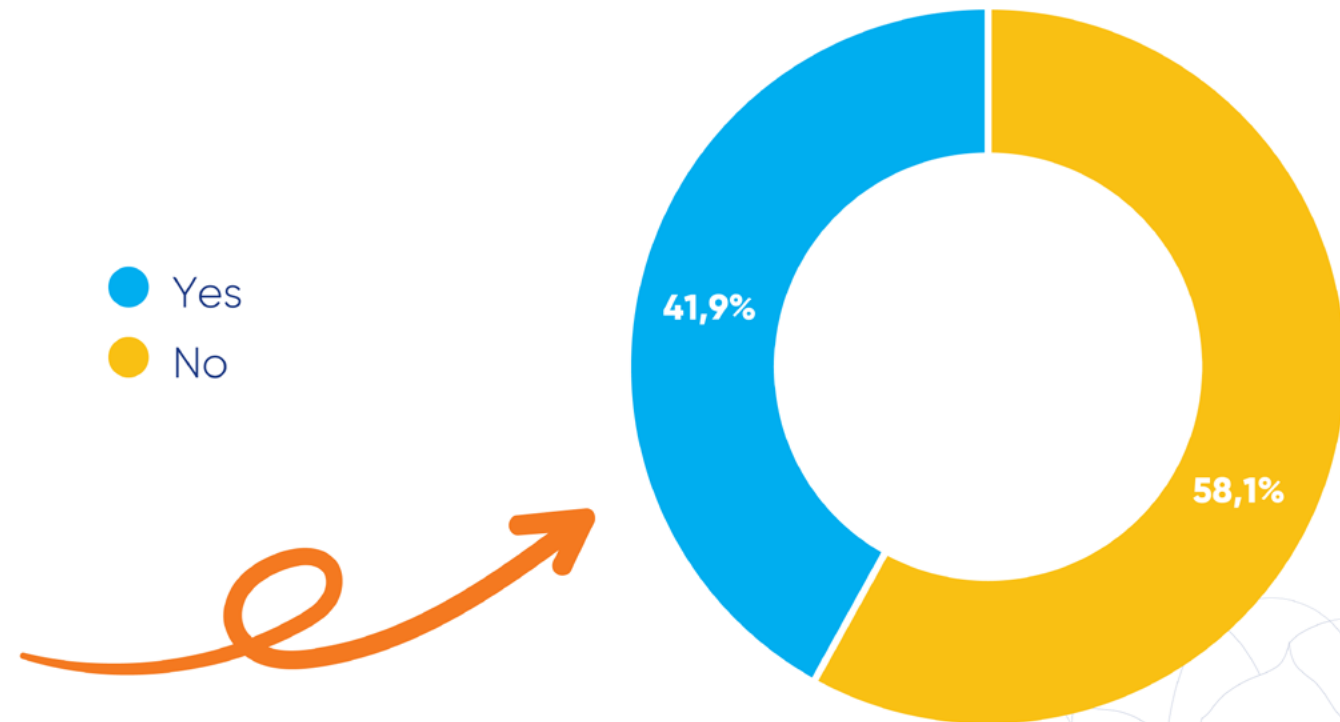
HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING?

- Excellent
- Pretty good
- Average
- Not sure
- Poor
- Not great

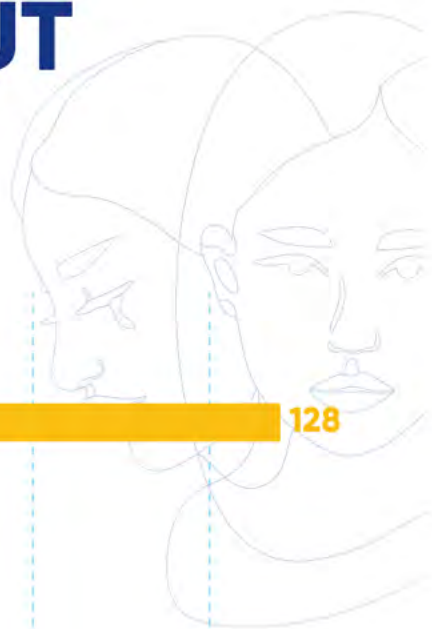
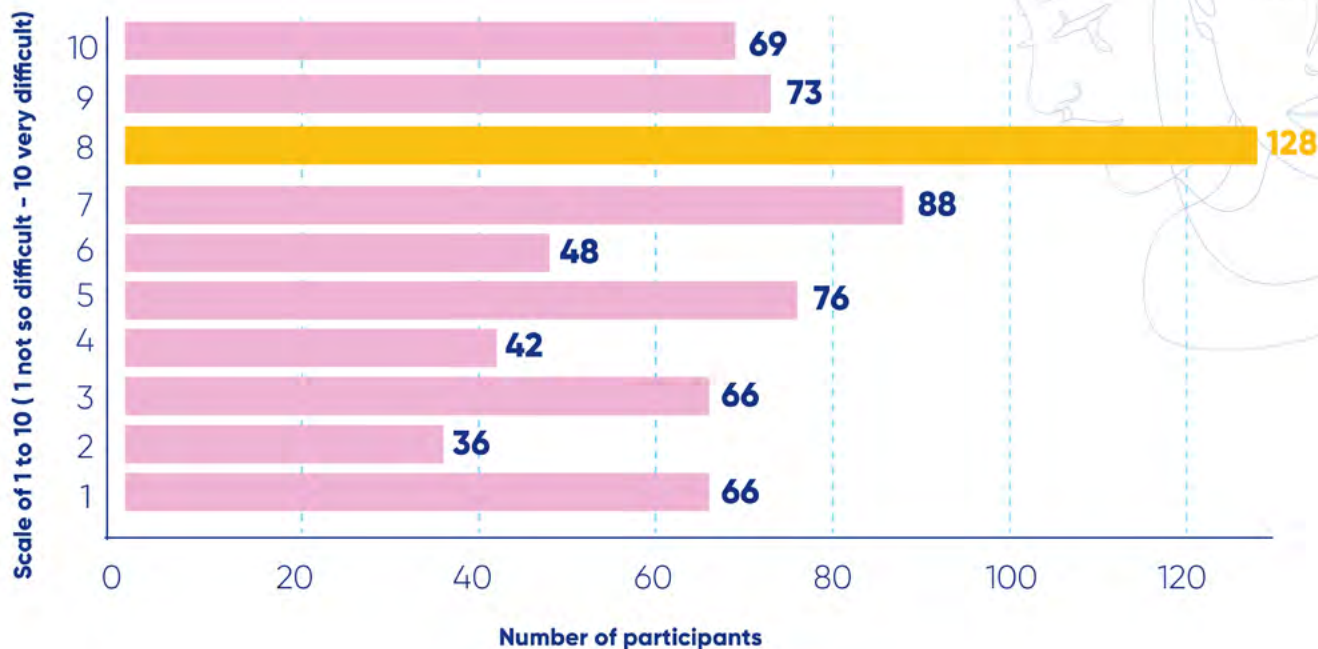


IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, DID YOU SEEK MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT?

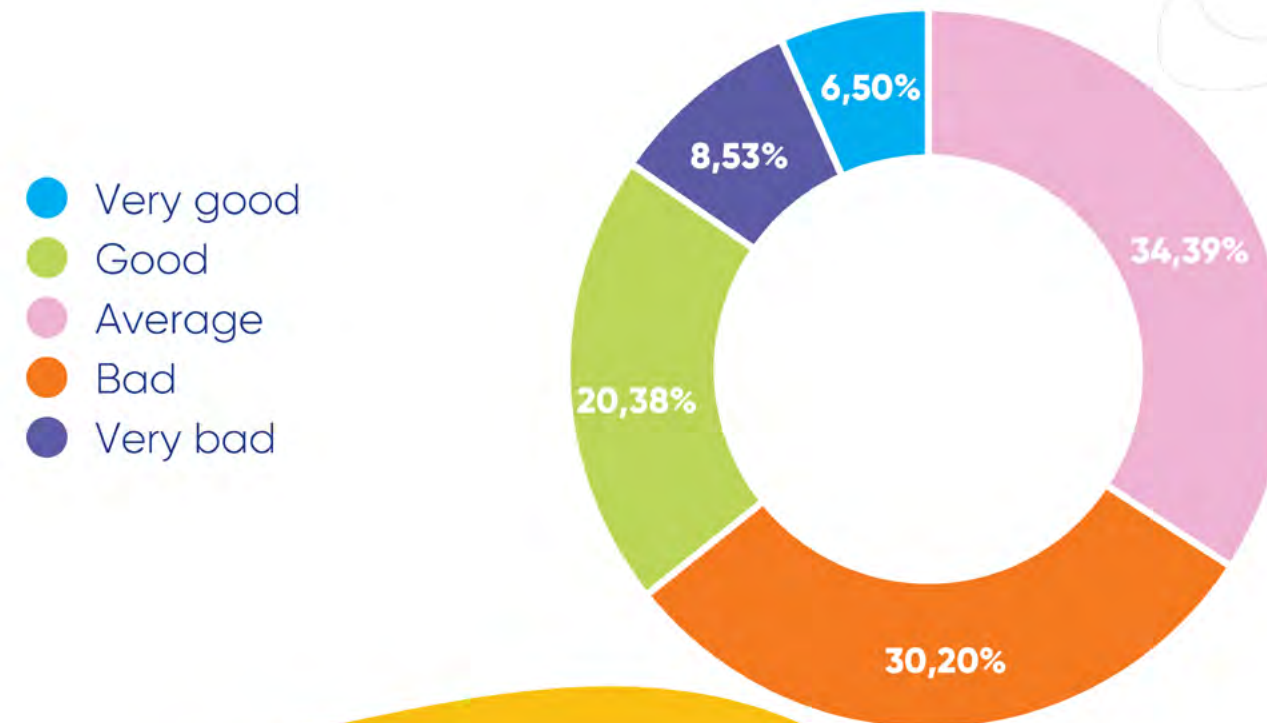
- Yes
- No



HOW DIFFICULT DO YOU FIND IT TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?



HOW IS YOUR QUALITY OF SLEEP?

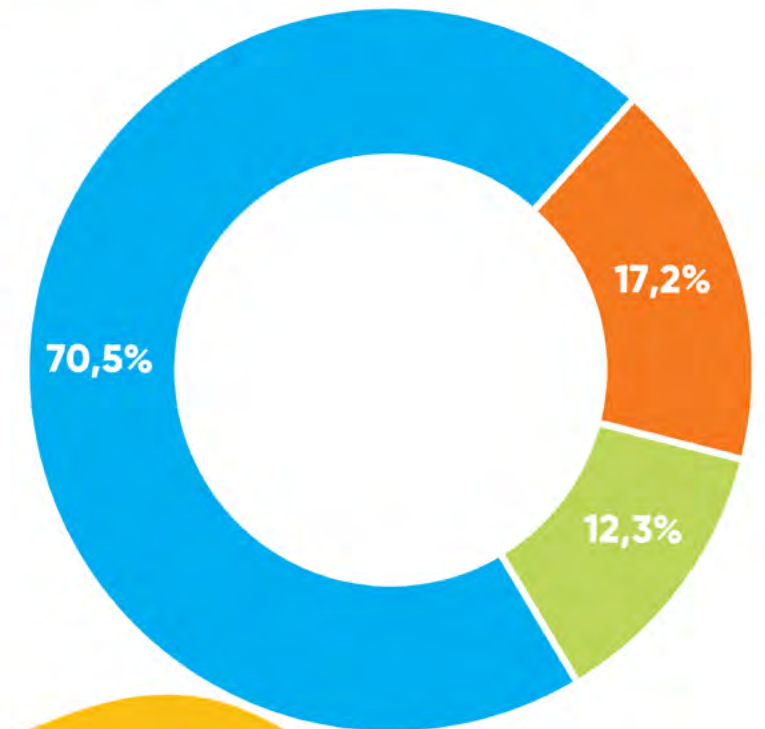


How is your mental health affecting you?

We asked people if they felt that they could have accomplished more in life if they had not suffered from mental health issues. **Over 70% of respondents answered 'yes' to this question.**

COULD YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MORE IN LIFE WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?

- Yes
- I'm not sure
- No



Getting the right help

We can see that the accessibility of mental health services is an issue for many respondents. A majority of respondents indicate that mental health services in their country are not very accessible. When asked whether people got the help they needed if they sought mental health support, a majority of the respondents answered 'no'.

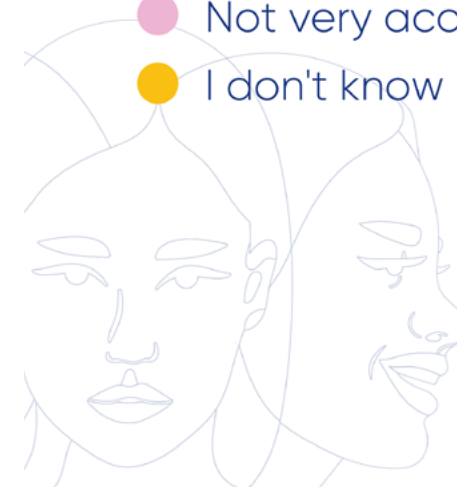
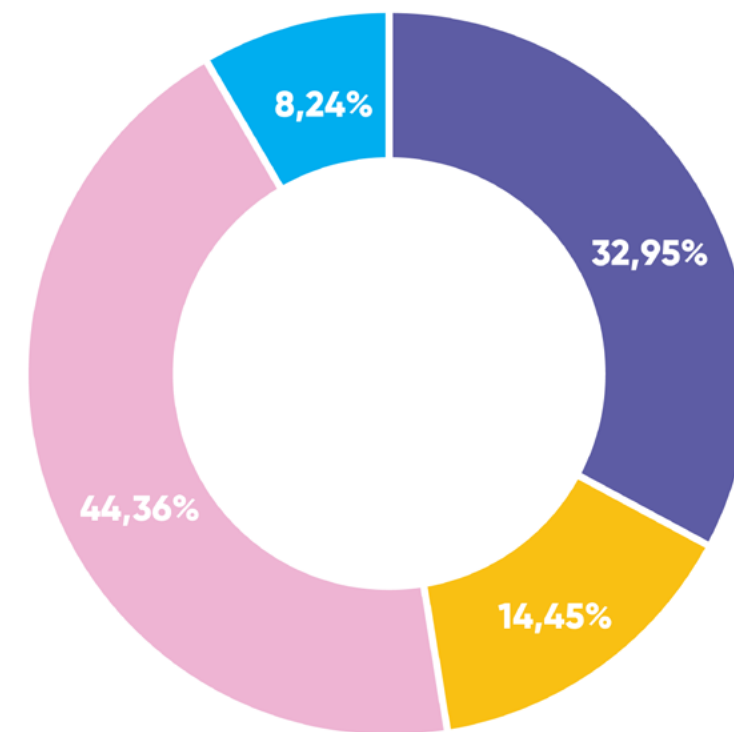
The main barriers to the right support are:

1. The cost of care
2. Long waiting lists
3. Fear of being stigmatised

HOW ACCESSIBLE ARE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YOUR COUNTRY?

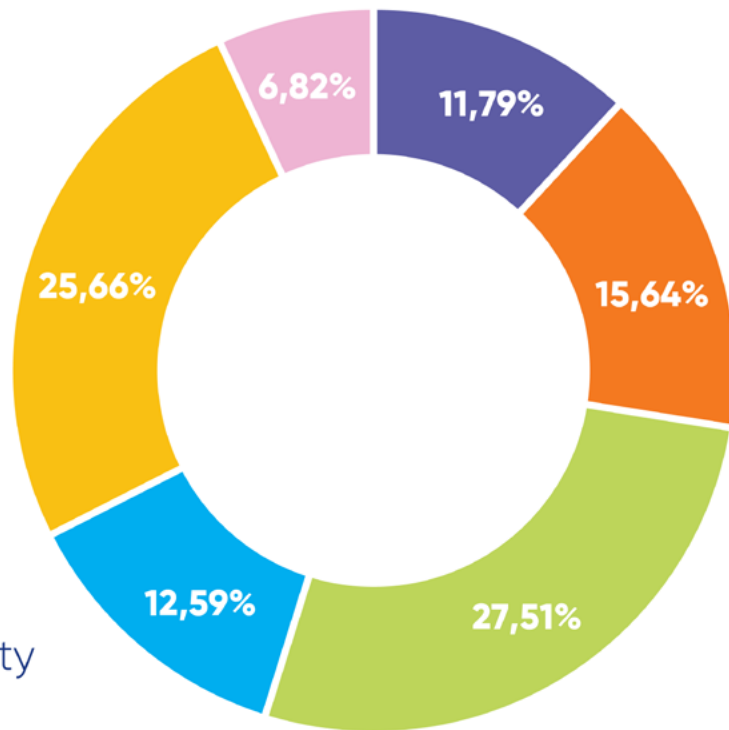


- Very accessible
- Accessible
- Not very accessible
- I don't know



WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS FOR YOU TO GET MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT?

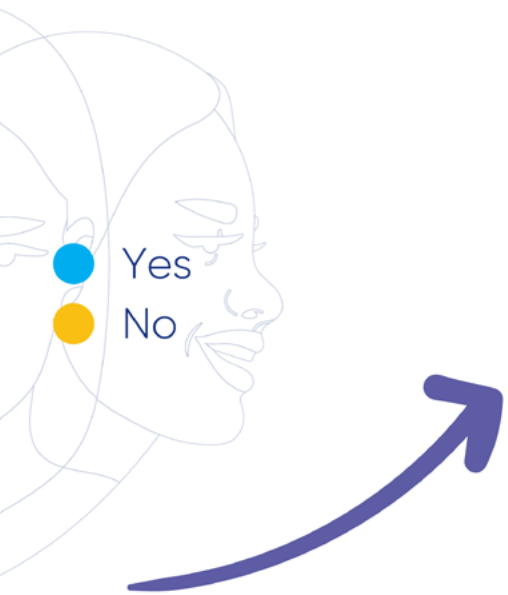
- Afraid I will need to take medication or be hospitalised
- Afraid of being stigmatised or discriminated
- Too expensive for me
- Other
- Long waiting lists
- No mental health support in my community



Impact global events

We know from other studies that Covid-19 had a big impact on the mental health of young people in Europe. Our survey confirms this. A majority of respondents also feel that the war in Ukraine had an impact on their mental health.

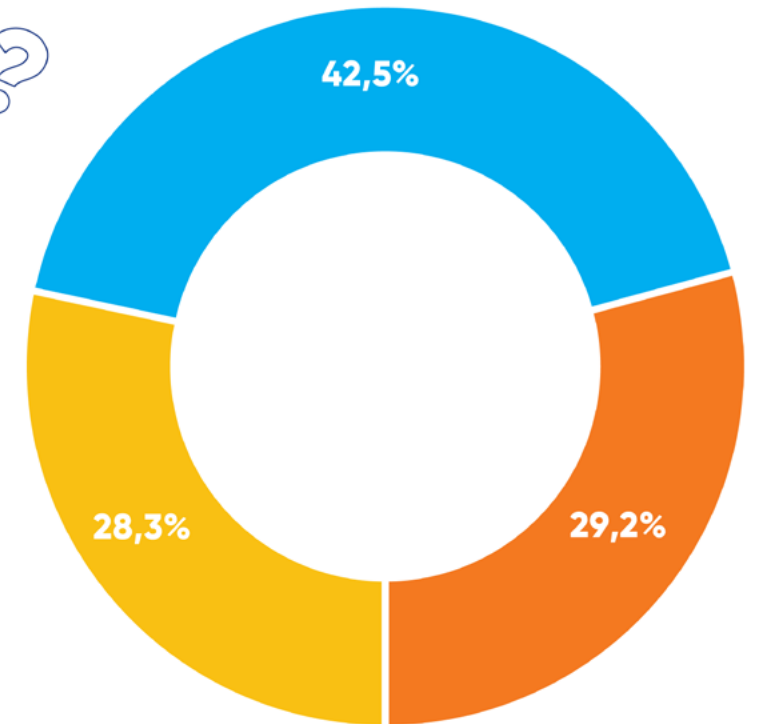
DO YOU FEEL MORE ANXIOUS SINCE THE START OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE?



DID COVID-19 HAVE AN IMPACT ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



- Yes, some impact
- Yes, very much so
- No, it had no impact



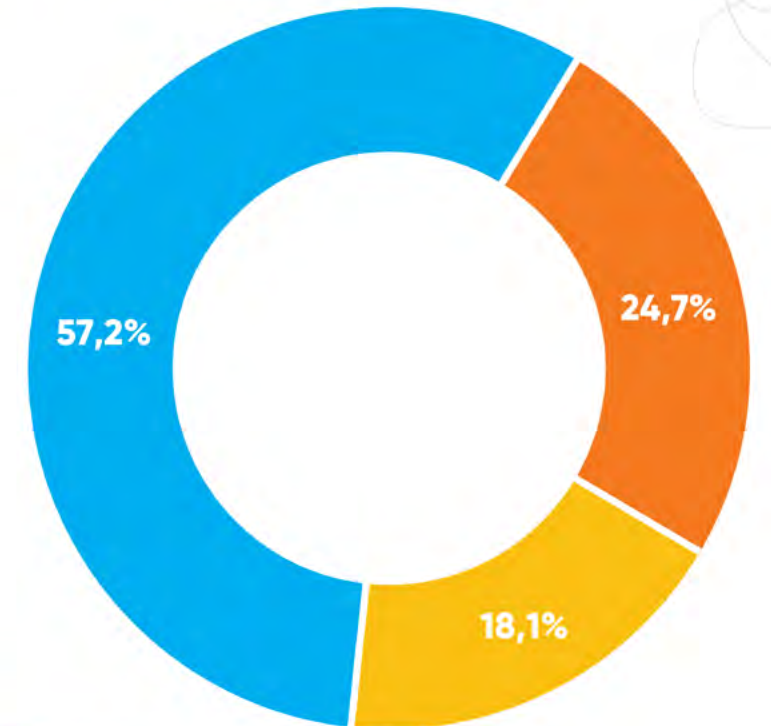
The role of social media

Unsurprisingly, social media is considered an important factor in the worsening of mental health issues, but interestingly respondents also see a role for social media to help young people connect and find support.

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA NEGATIVELY IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH?

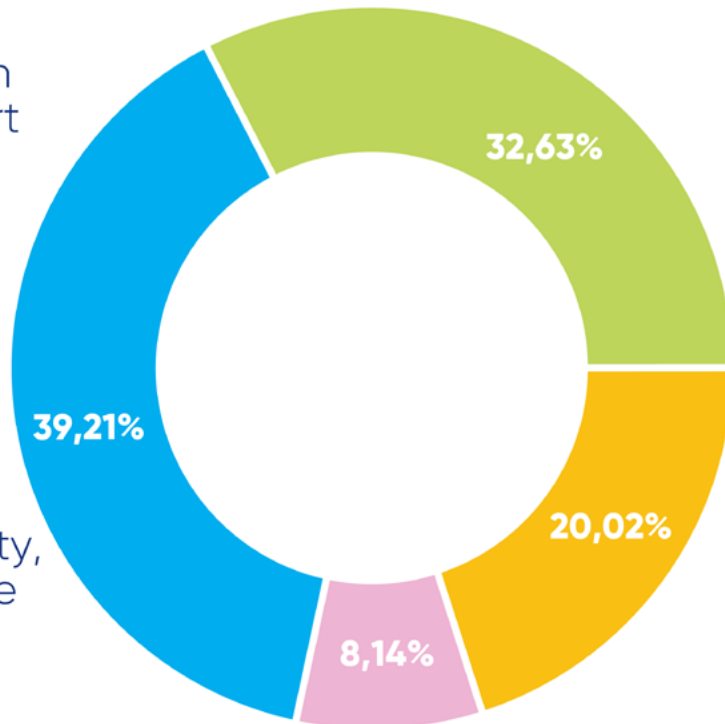


- Yes
- I'm not sure
- No



CAN SOCIAL MEDIA ALSO PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE?

- Social media can be a source of information on getting the right support for mental health issues
- Social media can help to connect people with the same mental health issues
- No, I believe there is a stronger connection between social media and symptoms of anxiety, depression and increase feelings of isolation
- Other



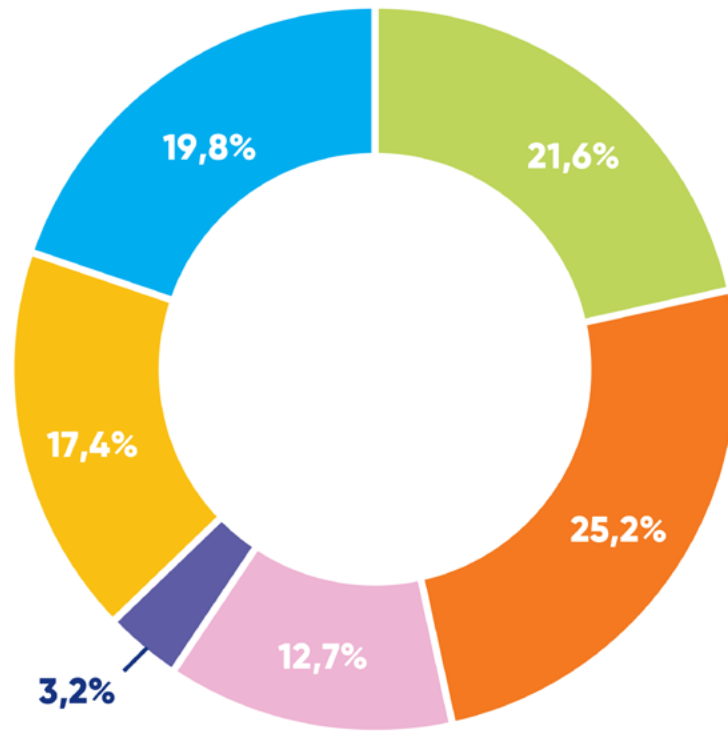
What can Europe do?

Our respondents want to see more investment in:

- 1 Education
- 2 Affordable care
- 3 Prevention in the workplace

WHERE SHOULD THE EU INVEST TO IMPROVE PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH?

- Prevention of mental health issues in the work place
- Affordable care
- Education in schools on mental health issues
- E-mental healthcare
- Personalised care
- Other



renew europe.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Parliament Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing together with Mental Health Europe have elaborated a list of recommendations to effectively respond to the current mental health needs and challenges. Established in 2012, this Coalition includes MEPs, across political groups, dedicated to ensuring the inclusion and mainstreaming of mental health in all policies. The co-chairs and members of this Coalition recommend the following actions as regards to improving mental health in the European Union:



1

Propose an intersectional European Mental Health Strategy that includes comprehensive objectives with clearly established benchmarks and indicators, as well as an adequate budget allocated for its implementation. The EP Coalition recommends for the mental health initiative to advance the work towards a European Mental Health Strategy.

2

Ensure that the comprehensive approach to mental health prioritises mental health support at every stage of life by capturing the mental health continuum. This way, the initiative recognises the rights of persons with mental health problems and psychosocial disabilities and addresses the need for tailored mental health support for those already experiencing mental health problems, while exploring adequate prevention of mental health problems.

3

Adopt a psychosocial model of understanding mental health to address social determinants, structural barriers and provide tailored support. It is important, when identifying possible solutions and ways forward, not to put all the responsibility on individuals (asking them to be more resilient or mentally health literate) but to address the broader structural, socio-economic and environmental factors. The psychosocial model of mental health should be used as a guiding principle to inform the Commission's work on mental health.

4

The psychosocial model should also look at the economic and structural side of mental health in Member states and address shortcomings in this regard. This can be done through the setting up of a Mental Health Fund by the European Commission. This Mental Health Fund shall be introduced hand-in-hand with a list of EU Mental Health Standards which shall serve as conditionalities to the aforementioned Mental Health Fund. Such funds can aid Member States in capping prices for mental health supports in order to make it affordable for everyone in society; in strengthening mental health services offered by Governments; in building of community Mental Health services which are up to EU standards, including human rights standards, and are recovery oriented. Such EU standards for mental health services shall also be introduced by the Commission, reflecting the commitments taken when ratifying the UN Convention On The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities. The fund should also allow for promotion and prevention activities across sectors.

5

Foresee the inclusion of mental health in all policies at EU level, as mental health is a cross cutting issue. In mainstreaming mental health, consider the impacts of different policies on mental health, especially vulnerable groups. This should be integrated into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy, legislative, and financial processes. These policies may include but are not limited to employment law, particularly training afforded to employers when setting up entities or businesses, human resources officials and employees upon being hired and the option to allow for mental health days off or burnout/exhaustion leave; education policy concerning mandatory training of educators and staff in education institutions, amongst others.

6

Support EU member states to propel work on mental health, including national action plans on mental health and adopting policies that support the prevention of mental health issues. The EU has a unique role and can engage and strengthen collaboration between member states, but also with national and local actors, to build a better mental health system. This can be encouraged through country-specific research studies in order to render disaggregated data on which such policies and work can be based.


7

Co-create the initiative alongside people with lived experience, their supporters, affected communities, civil society, and key stakeholders. They should be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the initiative. Member States should be encouraged to develop any services and policies with meaningful involvement of people with lived experience and in a non-tokenistic manner.

8

Breaking stigma and changing the narrative around mental health, through mental health literacy. The EU initiative could support increased education on mental health, to make sure people have an accurate and balanced understanding of mental health. It should also support awareness raising campaigns such as the MHE European Mental Health Week – to combat discrimination, promote equity and equality and normalise the conversation around mental health among the general public and in specific sectors (e.g. professionals from health, education, social fields). This initiative should include plans for a dedicated European Year for Mental Health.

The European Parliament Coalition on Mental Health and Wellbeing collaborates with the European Commission and other stakeholders to ensure that the European Union gives an answer to youth's mental health needs.



The European Union must be a safe space for our youth. And this can only be possible if we build a strong mental health support system. We must not forget that the actions we take today, will be the foundations of tomorrow. Caring for the mental health of young generations is a promise for a future of wellbeing and prosperity.

Soraya Rodríguez Ramos

ARE

YOU

OK?

#mentalhealth

renew europe.