

# National Survey of Children's Health

## Adolescent Mental and Behavioral Health, 2023

### Data Brief | October 2024

Olivia Sappenfield, Cinthya Alberto, Jessica Minnaert, Julie Donney, Lydie Lebrun-Harris, Reem Ghandour

### About the NSCH

The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) funds and directs the **National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)**, which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts.

The NSCH is the **largest national- and state-level survey on the health and health care needs of children ages 0-17, their families, and their communities.**

It is an annual household survey completed by a parent or guardian, either by web or paper and pencil.

### Content

- Health conditions and functional difficulties
- Social and emotional well-being
- Health-related behaviors
- Health care service access and use
- Preparation for transition to adult health care
- School environment and engagement
- Family life and activities
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Community activities or experiences

### State Oversamples

**Oversampling** increases the number of households sampled and surveys completed to enable detailed analysis of specific populations, such as regions within a state or racial and ethnic groups. In 2023, 13 states and 1 metropolitan area sponsored oversamples.

### 2023 Data Release

Access the most recent [data and supporting materials](#).

In 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration released the President's **Mental Health Strategy** to address the national mental health crisis. The strategy aims to strengthen system capacity, connect Americans to care, and create healthy environments. This brief presents newly released 2023 data on youth in the United States, aged 12-17, to support the President's Strategy.

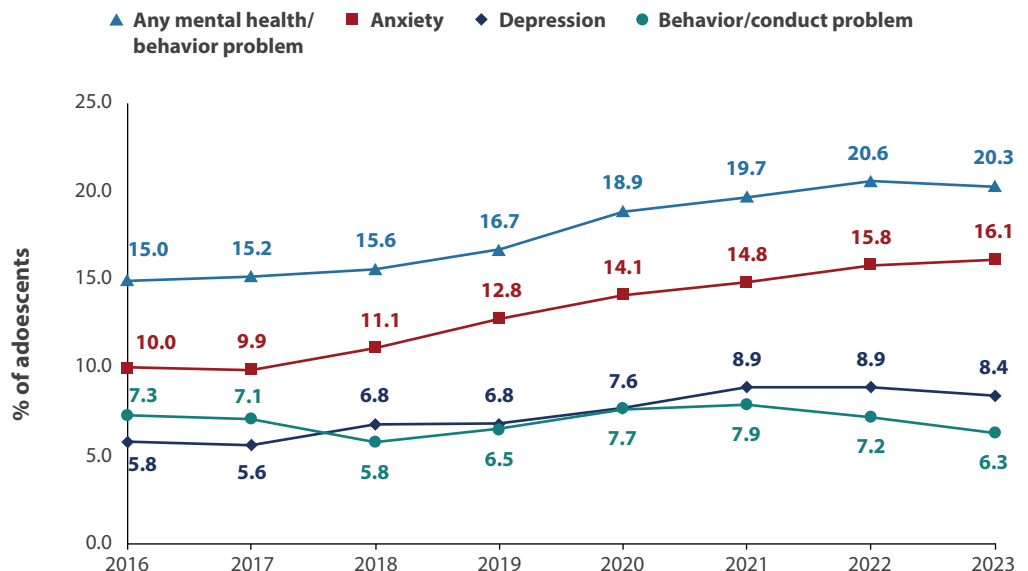
### Mental and Behavioral Health Conditions Among Adolescents

- In 2023, more than 5.3 million adolescents ages 12-17 years (20.3% of adolescents) had a current, diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition (anxiety, depression, or behavior/conduct problems). Anxiety was the most common condition (16.1%), followed by depression (8.4%) and behavior/conduct problems (6.3%).
- A greater proportion of females had diagnosed anxiety (20.1% vs. 12.3%) and depression (10.9% vs. 6.0%), while a greater proportion of males had diagnosed behavior/conduct problems (8.2% vs. 4.3%).
- Between 2016 and 2023, the prevalence of diagnosed mental or behavioral health conditions among adolescents increased 35 percent (from 15.0% to 20.3%). The prevalence of diagnosed anxiety increased 61 percent (from 10.0% to 16.1%) and depression increased 45 percent (from 5.8% to 8.4%); the prevalence of diagnosed behavior/conduct problems was stable.



**About 1 in 5 adolescents have a current, diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition.**

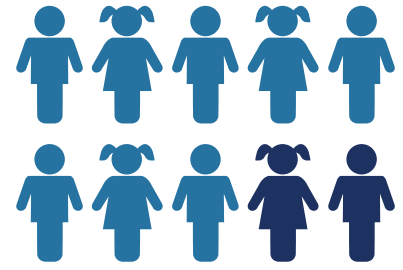
### Trends in diagnoses of anxiety, depression, and behavior/conduct problems among adolescents, 12-17 years, 2016-2023



## Access to Mental Health Treatment

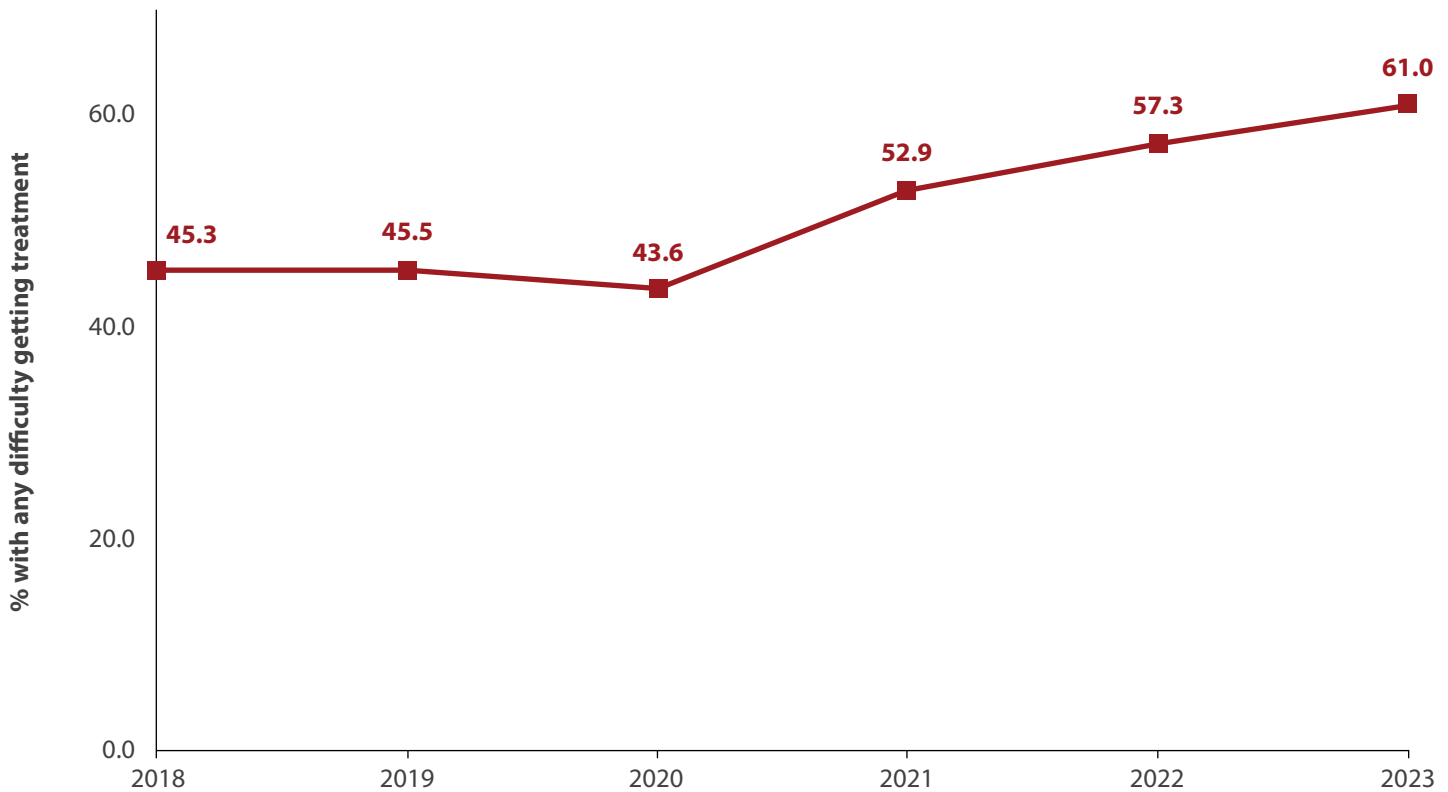
Adolescents who need mental and behavioral health services may or may not have a formal diagnosis from a mental health professional. Mental health professionals can include psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and clinical social workers.

- In 2023, an estimated 20.9% of adolescents were reported by their parents/caregivers to need treatment or counseling from a mental health professional in the past year, regardless of a currently diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition.
- Among adolescents whose parents/caregivers reported that they needed treatment or counseling from a mental health professional, 82.6% received treatment or counseling in the past year. This proportion was similar when restricted to those with a current diagnosis of anxiety, depression, or behavioral/conduct problems (83.6%).
- The proportion of adolescents with a current diagnosis who received any needed treatment or counseling from a mental health professional was similar for anxiety (85.4%), depression (86.7%), and behavior/conduct problems (82.2%).
- The proportion of adolescents with a current diagnosis who received any needed treatment or counseling from a mental health professional was similar among those with private insurance (85.2%), public insurance, (81.6%) and no insurance (80.0%).
- Among adolescents with a current diagnosis who needed treatment or counseling, 61.0% had difficulty getting needed treatment in 2023, a 35% increase since 2018, with a notable rise after 2020.



**About 8 in 10 adolescents 12-17 years who needed mental health treatment received it.**

## Trend in any difficulty getting treatment among adolescents with a current diagnosis of anxiety, depression, or behavior/conduct problems who needed treatment, 12-17 years, 2018-2023<sup>1</sup>



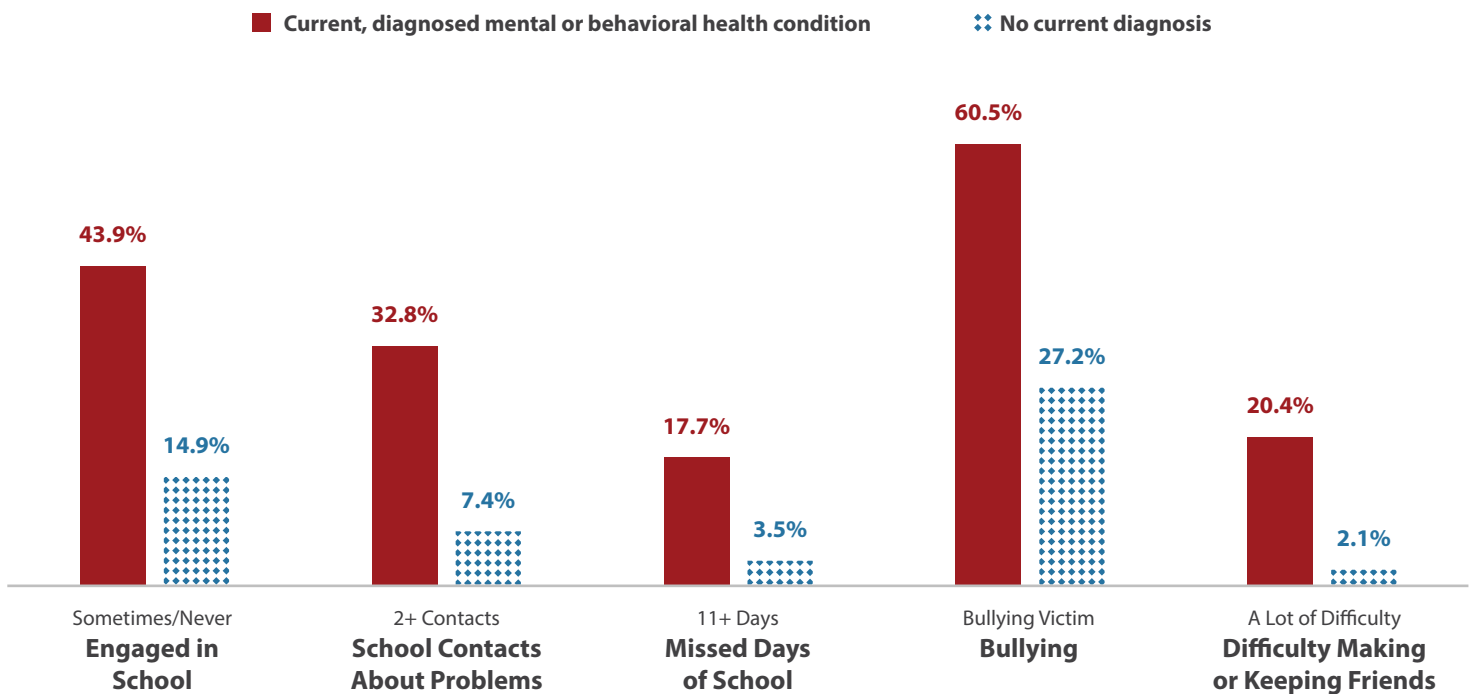
<sup>1</sup> The NSCH question asking about difficulty getting needed mental health treatment or counseling changed in 2018. Data from 2016 and 2017 are not comparable due to changes in response patterns.

## School and Social Life

School and social life indicators include school engagement (caring about doing well in school, doing all required homework), contacts with parents/caregivers about problems in school, missed days of school for health reasons, bullying, and difficulty making or keeping friends. There were differences in these indicators between adolescents with a current, diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition (anxiety, depression, or behavior/conduct problems) and those without a current diagnosis.

- **School engagement:** Adolescents with a current diagnosis were 3 times as likely to be disengaged from school, compared to those with no current diagnosis (43.9% “Never” or “Sometimes” engaged vs. 14.9%).
- **Contacts about problems in school:** Adolescents with a current diagnosis were 4 times as likely to have parents/caregivers report 2 or more contacts from their school in the past 12 months about problems compared to those with no current diagnosis (32.8% vs. 7.4%).
- **Missed days of school:** Adolescents with a current diagnosis were 5 times as likely to miss 11 or more days of school for health reasons in the past 12 months, compared to those with no current diagnosis (17.7% vs. 3.5%).
- **Bullying:** Adolescents with a current diagnosis were twice as likely to be a victim of bullying in the past 12 months, compared to those with no current diagnosis (60.5% vs. 27.2%).
- **Difficulty making or keeping friends:** Adolescents with a current diagnosis were 10 times as likely to experience a lot of difficulty with making or keeping friends, compared to those with no diagnosis (20.4% vs. 2.1%).

## Prevalence of school and social life indicators among adolescents 12-17 years, by mental/behavioral health status, 2023



## Data Notes

In 2023, parents/caregivers completed questionnaires for 55,162 children 0-17 years, including 18,397 adolescents 12-17 years. Estimates presented in this brief are weighted to represent the population of children living in U.S. households. For further information on the design, operation, and analysis of the NSCH, please see the [2023 NSCH FAQs](#) and the [2023 NSCH Methodology Report](#).