



Mental Health Promotion and Prevention

Nadja N. Lopez, Ph.D.

May 1, 2024



A state of well-being in which every individual realizes [their] own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to [their] community.

(World Health Organization)

Global Landscape

According to the latest World Health Organization (WHO) Global Burden of Disease study, about one billion people of the total global population (7.5 billion) are affected by any mental disorder

In 2019, using a composite approach that included mental disorders, alcohol and drug use, neurological disorders, chronic pain, suicide, and self-harm, encompassing, in total, 418 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), over 16% of global DALYs. The burden of mental disorders (in DALYs) exhibited a country-income gradient, with mental disorders comprising over twice the burden of disease in high-income countries compared to low-income countries.

Per year losses associated with this burden could exceed 5 trillion USD

Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 24–30, 2020

During late June, 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use*

ANXIETY/DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS



STARTED OR INCREASED SUBSTANCE USE



TRAUMA/STRESSOR-RELATED DISORDER SYMPTOMS



SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE†



*Based on a survey of U.S. adults aged ≥18 years during June 24-30, 2020

†In the 30 days prior to survey

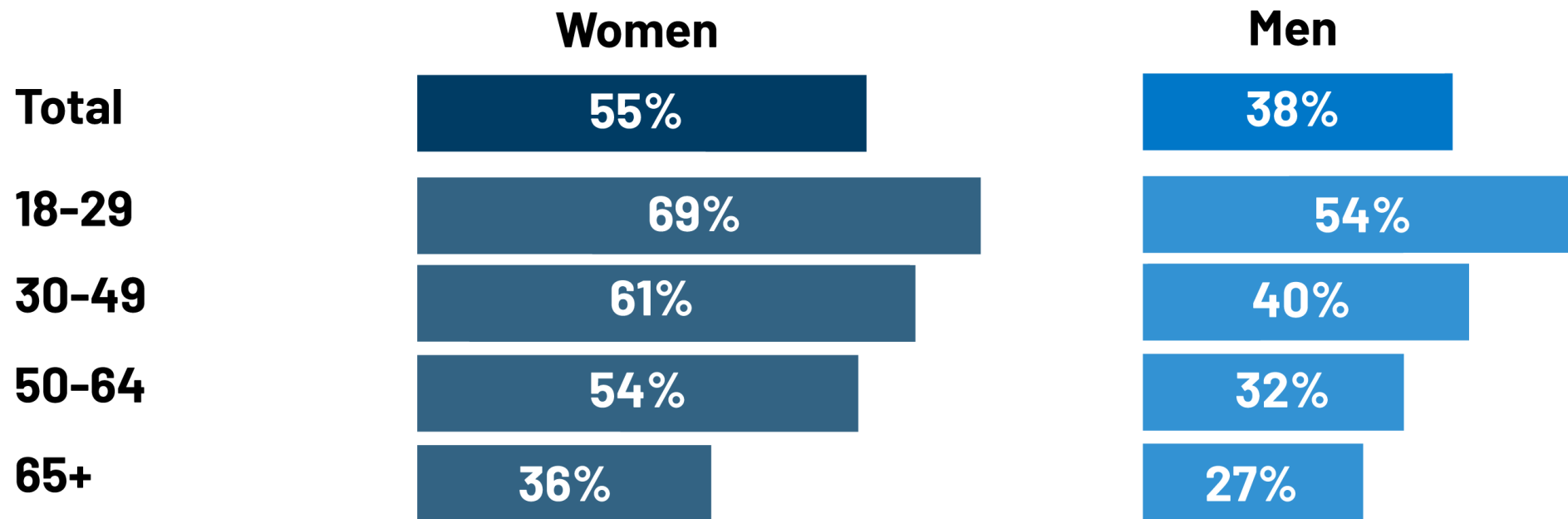
For stress and coping strategies: bit.ly/dailylifecoping

Impact Trends

- COVID-19 pandemic impacts on children and young people are more pronounced
- Inequalities in poor mental health following the pandemic have also been reported for women, low-income households, and several groups minoritized by race and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, or migrant status.

Nearly Seven In Ten Women Under Age 30 Report A Negative Mental Health Impact From Pandemic; Fewer Older Adults Say The Same

Percent who say they feel that worry or stress related to COVID-19 has had a *negative impact* on their mental health:



NOTE: See topline for full question wording.

SOURCE: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (March 15-22, 2021)

**KFF COVID-19
Vaccine Monitor**

YOUNGER ADULTS FEEL COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED BY STRESS



% OF **WOMEN** WHO SAID MOST DAYS THEY ARE COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED BY STRESS, BY AGE

ages 18 to 34

62%

ages 35 to 44

48%

ages 45 to 64

27%

ages 65+

9%

% OF **MEN** WHO SAID MOST DAYS THEY ARE COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED BY STRESS BY AGE

ages 18 to 34

51%

ages 35 to 44

48%

ages 45 to 64

21%

ages 65+

8%

Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety and/or Depressive Disorder, February 2023

All Adults

32.3%



Age Group	Share (%)
All Adults	32.3%
18-24	49.9%
25-49	38.0%
50-64	29.3%
65+	20.1%

Age

18-24

49.9%

25-49

38.0%

50-64

29.3%

65+

20.1%

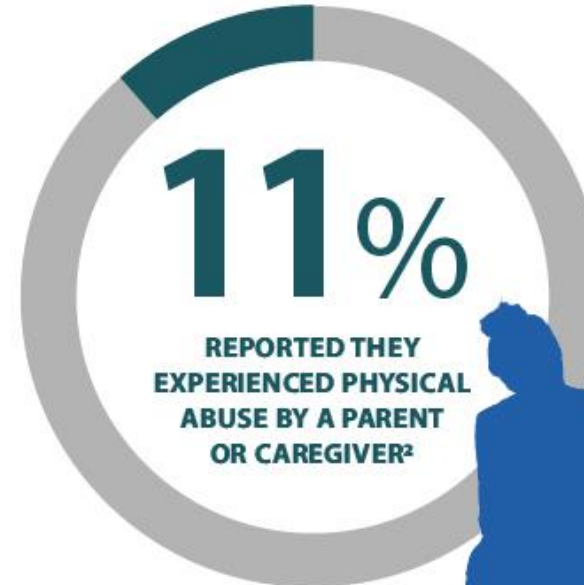
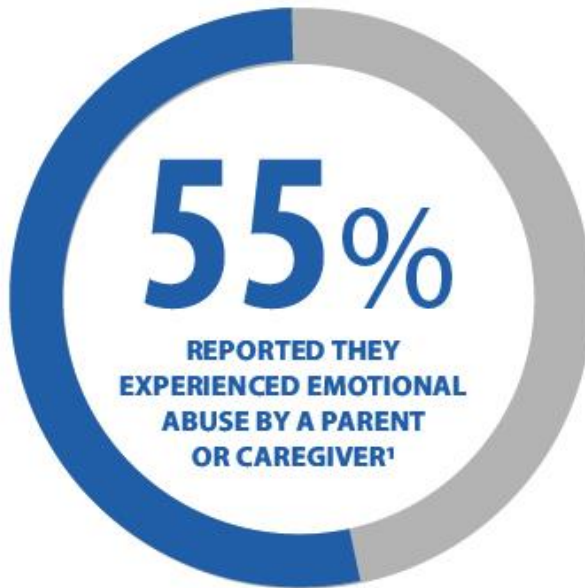
KFF



Early Onset

A recent systematic review of the pre-pandemic literature estimated that the onset of around one third, half and two thirds of any mental disorder will have already occurred by ages 14, 18 and 25, respectively.

CDC DATA GIVE MORE INSIGHT INTO SEVERE CHALLENGES U.S. YOUTH HAVE ENCOUNTERED DURING COVID-19



¹ Parent or other adult in the home swearing at, insulting, or putting down the student

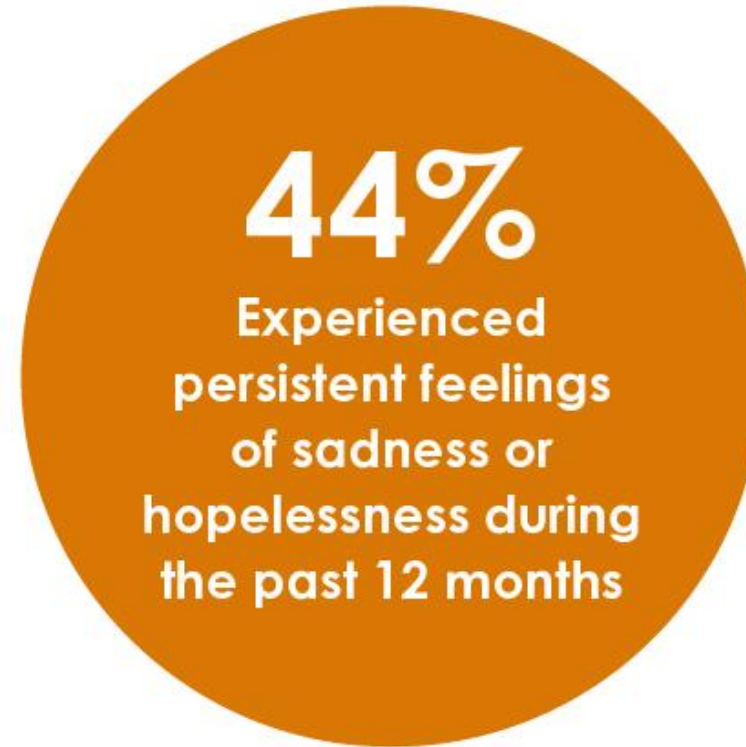
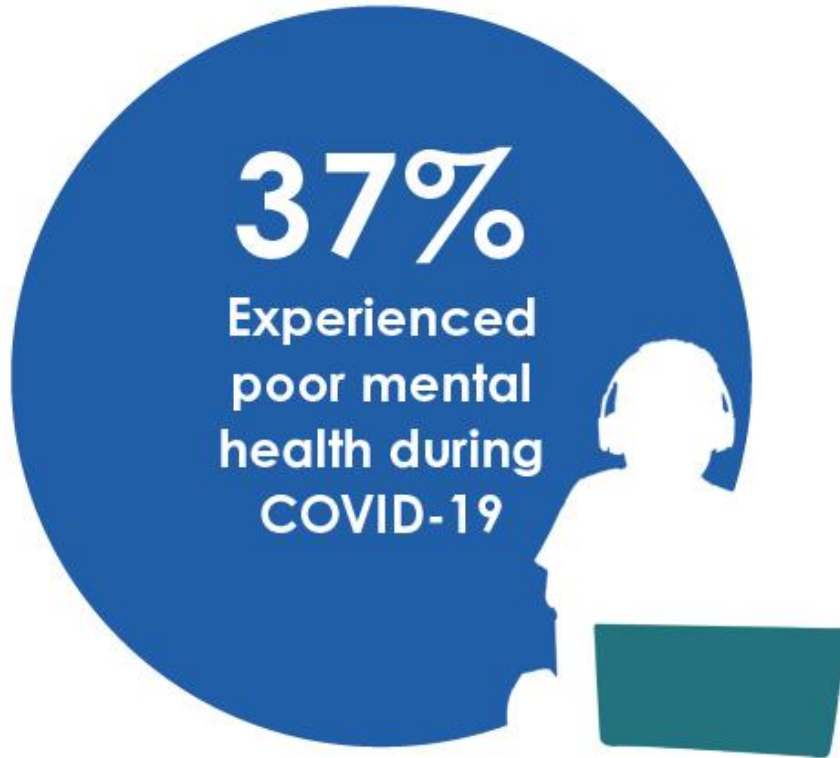
² Parent or other adult in the home hitting, beating, kicking or physically hurting the student

For more information, visit
cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

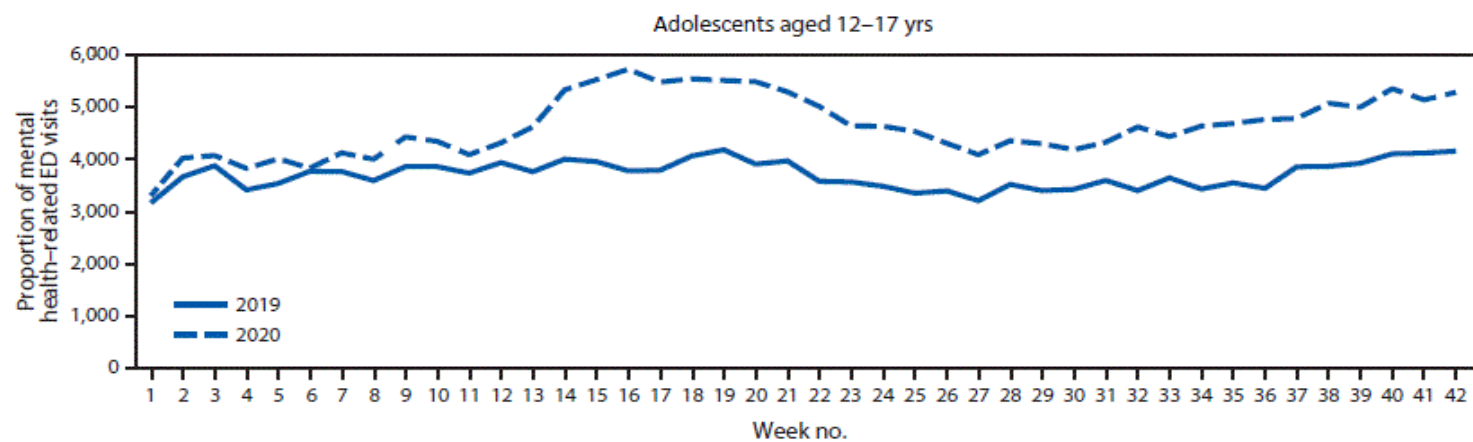
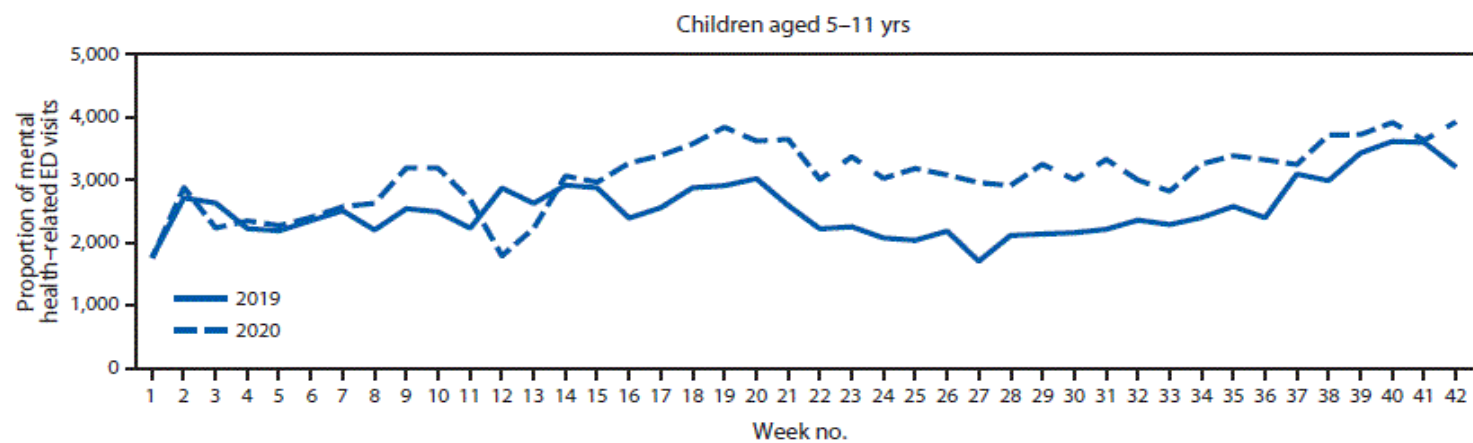
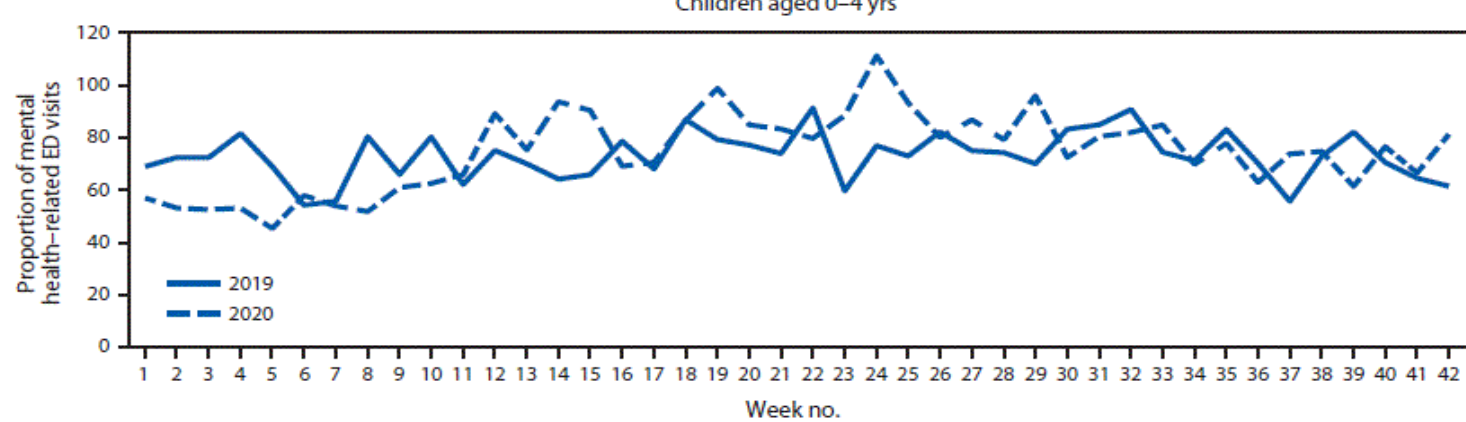
CDC DATA ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19



For more information, visit
cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



MENTAL HEALTH RELATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS IN 2020

24% ▲
5-11 YEAR OLDS

31% ▲
FOR 12-17 YEAR OLDS



TEEN GIRLS in the U.S.
are experiencing threats
to their health and
well-being.



18%

experienced
sexual violence

57%

felt persistently
sad or hopeless

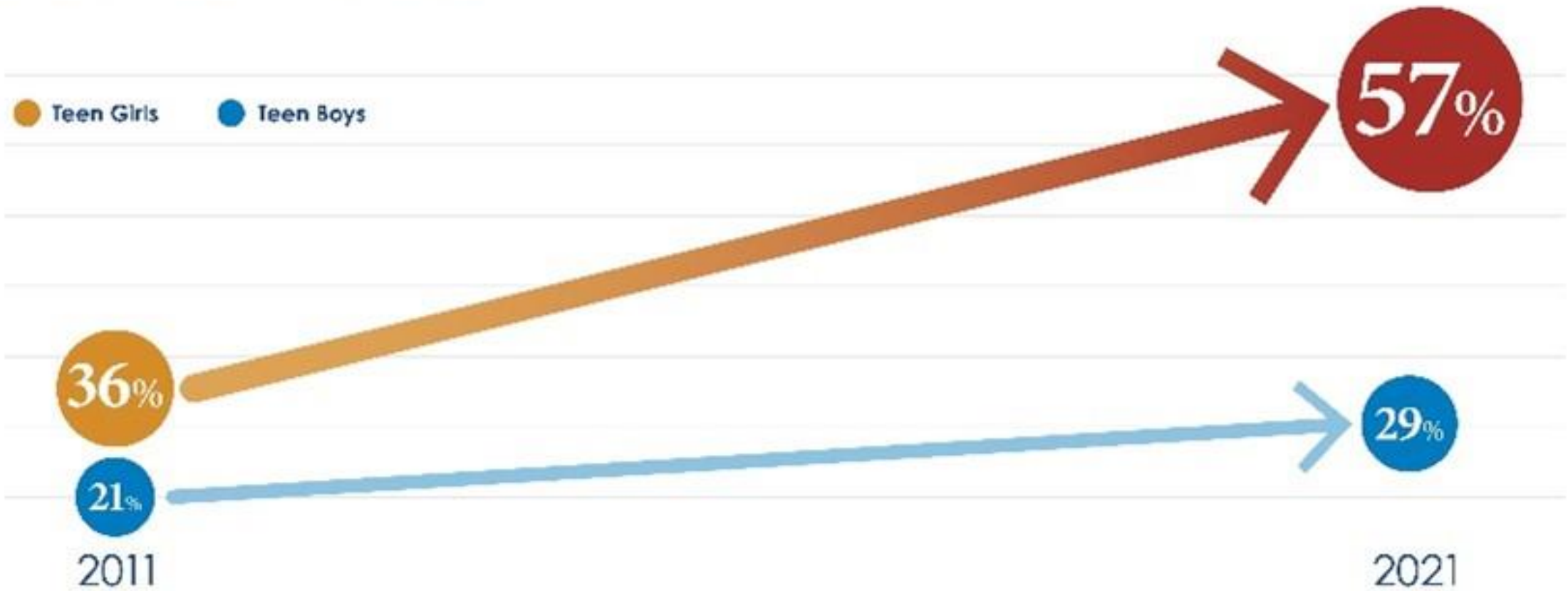
30%

seriously
considered suicide

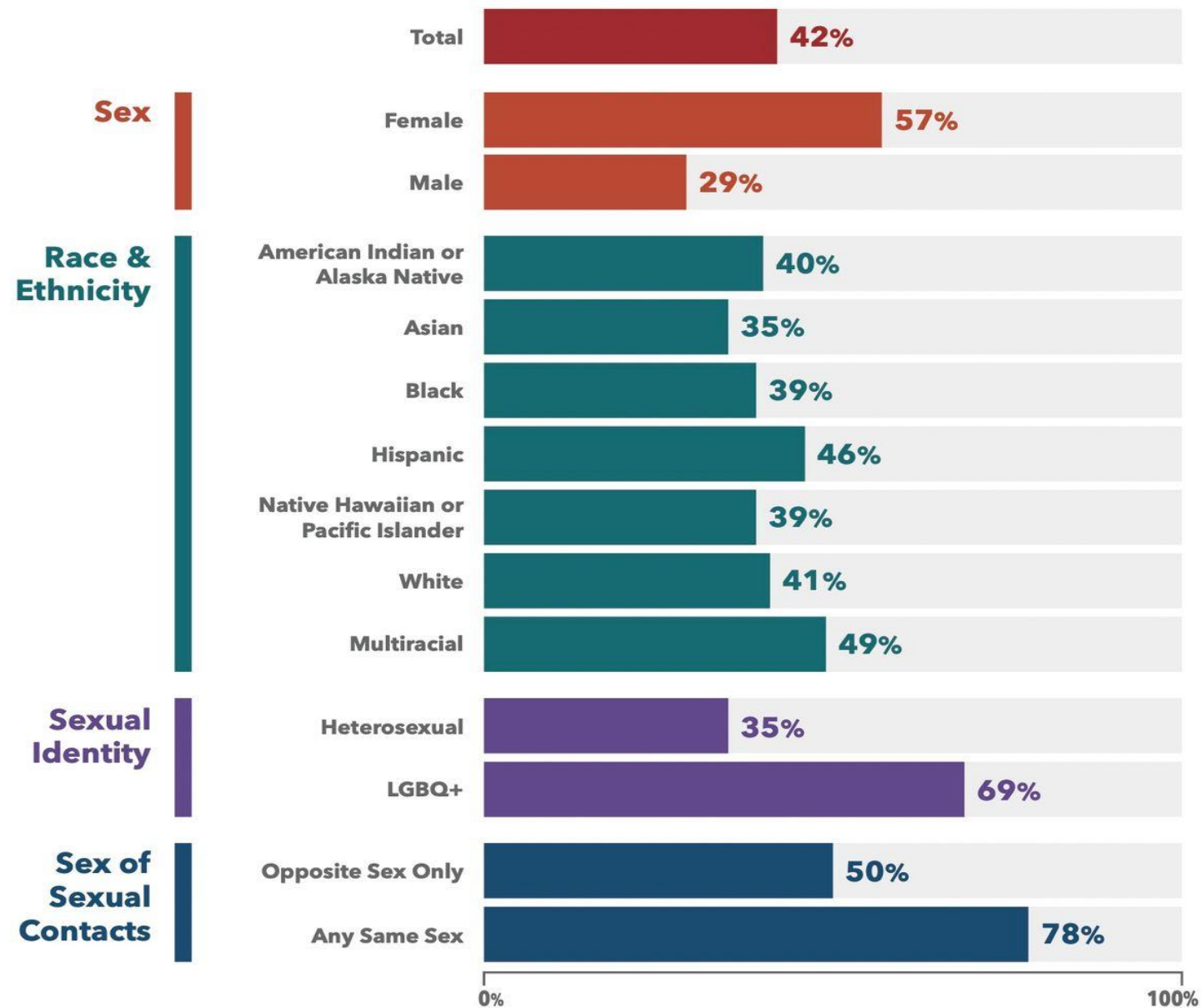


Source: CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary and Trends Report: 2011-2021

TEEN GIRLS WHO PERSISTENTLY **FELT SAD OR HOPELESS** INCREASED DRAMATICALLY FROM 2011 TO 2021



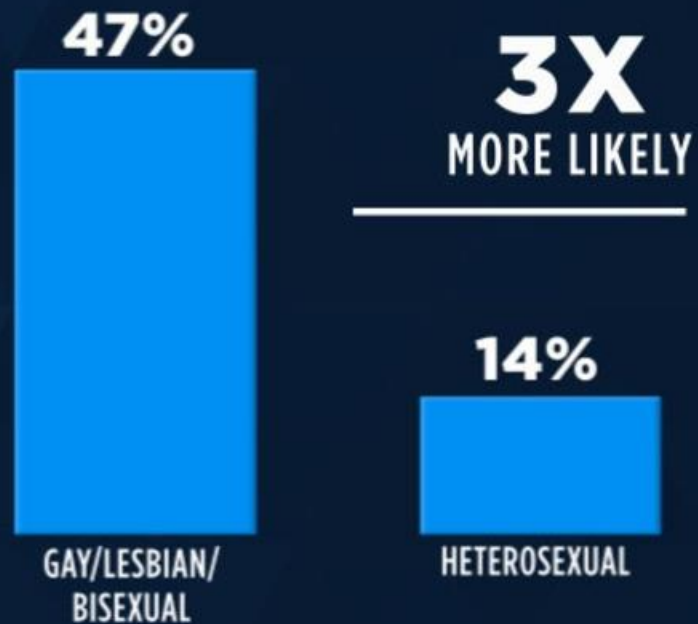
Percentage of High School Students Who
Experienced Persistent Feelings of Sadness or Hopelessness during
the Past Year, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021



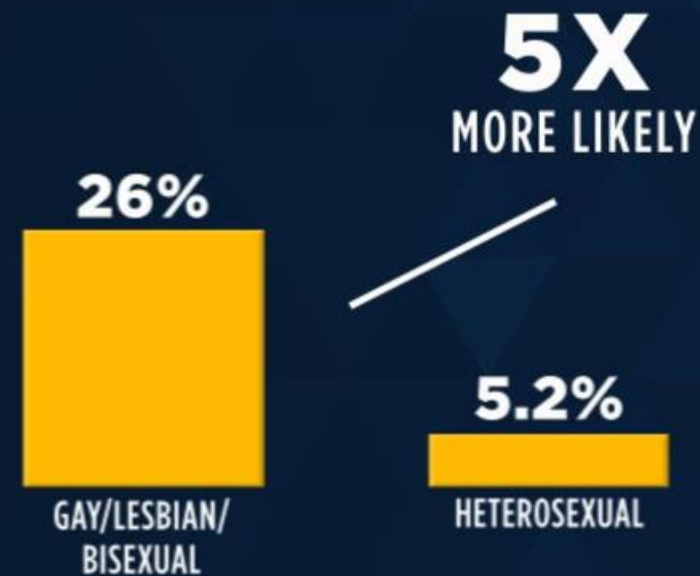
YOUTH SUICIDE RISK

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS - BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

CONSIDERED SUICIDE



ATTEMPTED SUICIDE



CDC SURVEY OF NEARLY 8,000 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

State of Emergency in Youth Mental Health



“It would be a tragedy if we beat back one public health crisis only to allow another to grow in its place.”

Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. Vice Admiral,
U.S. Public Health Service Surgeon General
of the United States

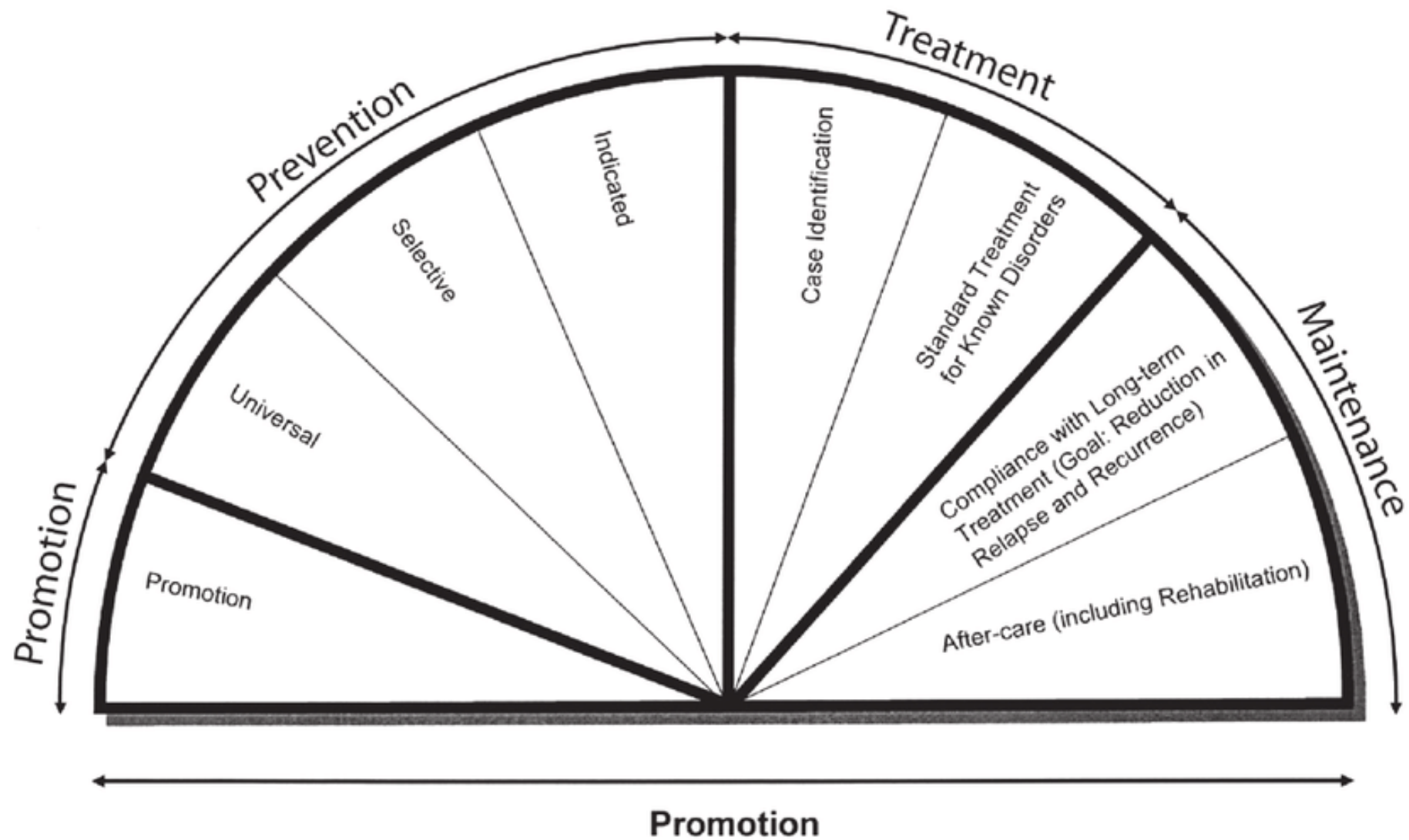
Mental Health Promotion and Prevention of Mental Illness



Promoting mental health and well-being is now identified as a specific outcome in the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, alongside targets to tackle various social determinants of health – including poverty, inequality, gender equality, and social justice – by 2030.



In the recent World Mental Health Report, T. Ghebreyesus, the WHO Director-General, reaffirmed the Organization's commitment in “transforming the environments that influence our mental health” to promote mental well-being and prevent mental disorder.



The Building Blocks of Mental Health Promotion

INDIVIDUALS

Fulfilment & contribution

Promote mindfulness, compassion, gratitude, personal growth, purpose & civic contribution.

Psychological skills

Foster mental health literacy, social and emotional competence, self-care and resilience & encourage help-giving and help-seeking for stress, psychological distress or suicidal ideation.

Healthy behaviours

Encourage regular physical activity, high quality diet, good sleep hygiene.

FAMILIES

Supports and connections

Promote secure attachment, positive parenting, social support, social participation and a sense of belonging.

COMMUNITIES

Safety

Ensure freedom from child abuse, gendered violence, racism and discrimination.

ORGANISATIONS

Material Basics

Ensure equitable access to food, adequate income, education, work, stable housing, and holistic healthcare.

GOVERNMENTS

The Environment & Culture

Protect the environment and support people to speak their language and practice their culture.



Mental Health Promotion

- Prenatal interventions
- Early childhood interventions
- Programs targeted at vulnerable groups, including minorities, indigenous people, migrants, and people affected by conflicts and disasters
- Incorporating mental health promotional activities in schools
- Community development programs – elevating youths' strengths by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths

Treatment: Interventions for individuals who currently have a diagnosable disorder that are intended to cure or reduce the symptoms or effects of the disorder. For example, individual/family/group psychotherapy or evidence-based practice for an individual or family that has been diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

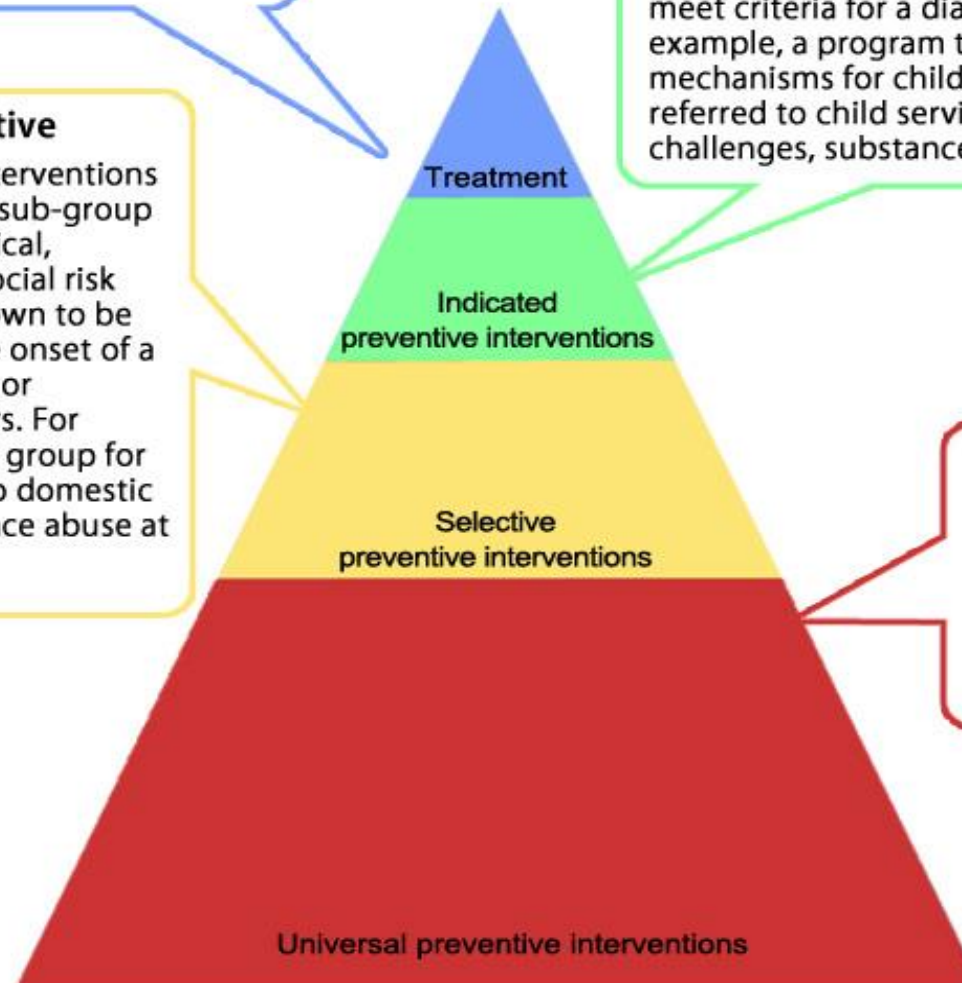
Selective preventive interventions:

Interventions for individuals or a sub-group who exhibit biological, psychological, or social risk factors that are known to be associated with the onset of a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders. For example, a support group for children exposed to domestic violence or substance abuse at home

Indicated preventive interventions: Interventions for high-risk individuals who are identified as having some detectable signs or symptoms of a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder, or who have a biological pre-disposition for such a disorder, but who do not meet criteria for a diagnosis at the current time. For example, a program to develop social skills and coping mechanisms for children or youth who have been referred to child serving systems due to behavioral challenges, substance use or truancy.

Universal preventive interventions:

Interventions for the general public that have not been identified to be at risk. For example, a mental health or substance abuse curriculum for all children in the school.





Critical link to equity and social justice

Since poor mental health can be the invisible hand that suppresses life chances, including both how long we live and the quality of years lived, improving population mental health by designing effective prevention strategies that intervene on modifiable social risk factors should be seen as a central issue of social justice.

(Kirkbride et al., 2024)



What communities can do

- Educate the public about the importance of mental health, and reduce negative stereotypes, bias, and stigma around mental illness. Community groups can play a key role in fostering open dialogue about mental health at the local level and correcting misconceptions and biases. For example, community groups can partner with trusted messengers such as faith leaders and health care professionals to speak to community members about youth mental health needs. It's particularly important to address misconceptions in populations that have an outsized influence over young people, such as families, educators, health care professionals, juvenile justice officials, online influencers, and the media.
- Elevate the voices of children, young people, and their families. Youth are experts on their own lives, so it is important to engage youth in community-based mental health efforts. Explore youth advisory councils and other ways to involve young people in all phases of programming, from ideation to implementation. Gather feedback to understand what is and isn't working. Include youth and families directly in delivering services, for example by creating peer support programs.



What funders and foundations can do

- Create sustained investments in equitable prevention, promotion, and early intervention. Prioritize interventions that address social and economic factors known to affect children's healthy development and mental health, such as poverty, discrimination, and inequality, among others.
- Incentivize coordination across grantees and foster cross-sector partnerships to maximize reach and bring together a diversity of expertise. The scale and complexity of mental health issues among young people require collaborative approaches. Consider leveraging resources across sectors to advance practices, policies, and research that support the mental health of children, youth, and families. And support grantees in developing and sharing meaningful mental health outcome measures.

Social Isolation

Social support and decrease stigma

Stress & Dysregulation

Skills for emotional regulation and health

Helplessness

Knowledge and self-efficacy

Recommended Readings

- Kirkbride, J. B., Anglin, D. M., Colman, I., Dykxhoorn, J., Jones, P. B., Patalay, P., ... & Griffiths, S. L. (2024). The social determinants of mental health and disorder: evidence, prevention and recommendations. *World psychiatry*, 23(1), 58.
- Protecting Youth Mental Health. The US Surgeon General's Advisory.
<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html>
- Raymond, I. J., Burke, K. J., Agnew, K. J., & Kelly, D. M. (2023). Wellbeing-responsive community: a growth target for intentional mental health promotion. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, 1271954.
- Waechter, R., Gallant, C., De Wilde, K., Arens, G., Brady, T., Custodio, J., ... & Bhagat, A. (2023). Prevention of mental illness within public health: An analysis of progress via systematic literature review and a pathway forward. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 102249.