

## **New NHS Digital statistics on the mental health of children and young people in England 2017: Preliminary look at the picture for 10-19 year olds**

### **Headline findings for 10-19 year olds**

- Overall 14.4% of 11-16 year olds and 16.9% of 17-19 year olds met the criteria for having a mental disorder at the time of the survey.
- As young people get older, young women are more likely to have a disorder. Rates for young men go up into the mid-teens and then fall slightly.
- Among boys the likelihood of a disorder was highest at 11-16. Among girls, it was 17-19.
- Nearly 1 in 4 young women aged 17-19 met the criteria for having a mental disorder, and in the majority of cases this included an emotional disorder.
- There was a clear overlap between physical and mental health problems.
- The rise from 1999 to 2017 (expressed as a proportion of the 1999 rate) was approximately 13% for 5-10 year olds and 19% for 11-15 year olds
- 5% of all 17-19 year olds were on psychotropic medicine, most commonly selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor antidepressants.

### **Background**

The long-awaited new prevalence data on mental disorders in children and young people were published by NHS Digital on 22 November 2018 (1,2). The survey follows two previous versions undertaken in 1999 and 2004. Information was collected from 9,117 children and young people between January and October 2017. Approximately 4,000 of these were aged 11-19. Young people and their parents completed standardised tools that measured disorder as specified in the International Classification of Disease (ICD-10) diagnostic criteria. This is important as it is a robust and internationally recognised list of diagnosable mental health problems, not simply of symptoms.

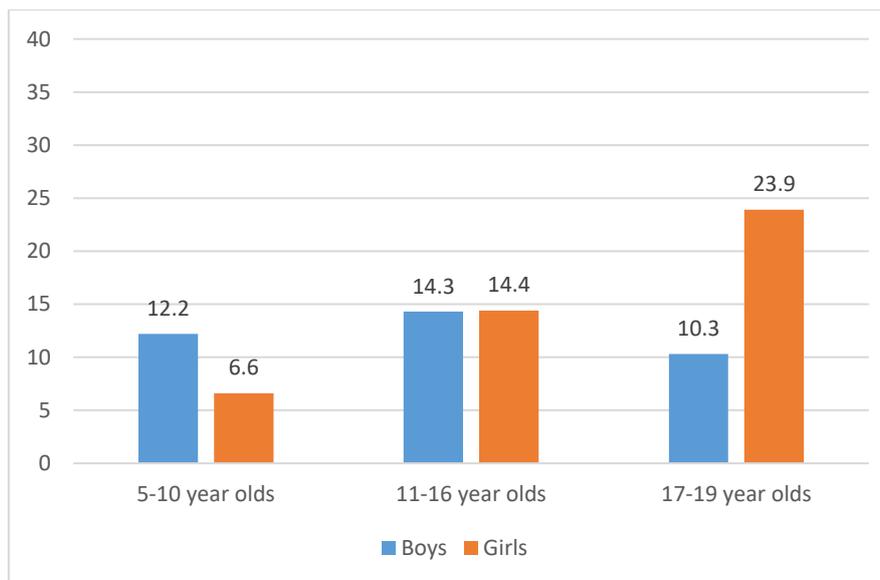
At AYPH we are particularly interested in young people aged 10-24. The survey included young people 11-19, alongside those from 2-10. We have done a preliminary extraction of the key messages as they relate specifically to young people aged 11-19. At the moment it is not possible to extract the 10 year olds and include them in our age group of interest.

It is important to focus on young people in this age range because the patterns and trends in mental health problems are not the same across the whole 2-19 age group. There are clear developmental trends which mean the experiences of teenagers are different to those of younger children. We need to understand what is happening specifically in the teenage years if we are to get prevention and intervention right, particularly as this is the focus of the recent Green Paper on young people’s mental health (3).

### Prevalence of mental disorder by age group

Overall 14.4% of 11-16 year olds and 16.9% of 17-19 year olds met the criteria for having a mental disorder at the time of the survey. Within these headline figures there was quite considerable variation by gender. Figure 1 shows the prevalence rates for all three age groups (5-10, 11-16 and 17-9), clearly showing the developmental trend for these disorders to increase in the early teens for both genders, and then to continue increasing into the late teens for young women. Nearly 1 in 4 young women aged 17-19 met the criteria for having a mental disorder.

*Figure 1: Percentage of mental disorders in children and young people by age and sex, England, 2017*



Disorders varied by age and gender. Behaviour problems (largely oppositional defiant and conduct disorders) were more common in boys up to the mid-teens, while emotional problems (largely anxiety and depression) were more common for girls, particularly in the older age groups. By 17-19, emotional disorders are the most common type in both genders. Of the quarter of young women age 17-19 with a disorder, 22.4% had an emotional problem.

### Particularly notable findings specifically for the 10-19 age group

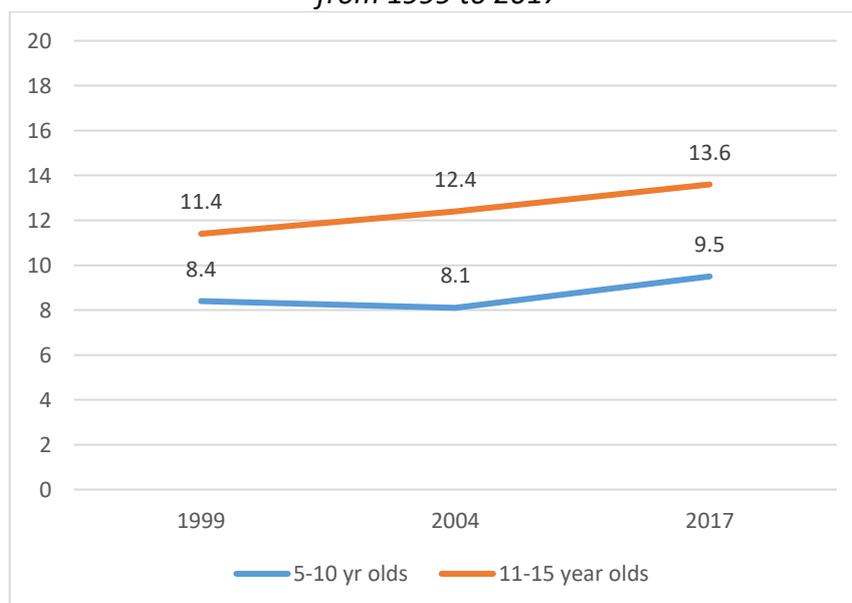
- Among boys the likelihood of a disorder was highest at 11-16. Among girls, it was 17-19.

- In those aged 11-16, risky health behaviours such as smoking and substance use were around three times more common for young people with disorders. This went up to five times more common for girls with a disorder who had tried drugs.
- A quarter (25.9%) of 11-19 year olds with a mental disorder also had a limiting long-term illness, compared to 4.2% of those without a mental disorder.
- Overall prevalence of self-harm and suicide attempts were not in the reports available at the time of writing. However among those aged 11-16 with a disorder the rate was much higher (25.5%) than for those without a disorder (3%). Clearly overall prevalence is going to be somewhere between 3 and 25% which may mean it is a bit lower than some other recent estimates.
- 5% of all 17-19 year olds were on psychotropic medicine, most commonly selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor antidepressants. That included 1.4% of young people in this age group with no disorder who were taking medicine.
- 5.6% of young women age 17-19 had a body dysmorphic disorder (related to anxiety). Eating disorders were rarer (1.6%).

### Time trends in mental disorder by age group

Time trends are only available for the younger age groups up to 15, as this was the age range covered by the earlier surveys. The most striking prevalence statistics from our point of view relate to the 17-19 year olds, but this is the first time they have been included in this survey, so we have nothing to compare them to in the past. Figure 2 compares the time trends in 5-10 year olds with those for the 11-15 year olds, from 1999 to 2017. The rise from 1999 to 2017 (expressed as a proportion of the 1999 rate) is approximately 13% for the younger age group, and 19% for the 11-15 year olds.

*Figure 2 Time trends in mental disorders (%) in 5-10 year olds and 11-15 year olds, from 1999 to 2017*



## References

1. Sadler K, Vizard T, Ford T, Goodman A, Goodman R, S M. Mental health of children and young people in England, 2017. London; 2018.
2. Sadler, Katherine, Vizard T, Ford T, Marcheselli F, Pearce N, Mandalia D, et al. Mental health of children and young people in England 2017: Summary of key findings. London; 2018.
3. Department of Health, Department for Education. Transforming children and young people's mental health: A Green Paper [Internet]. London; 2017. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664855/Transforming\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_s\\_mental\\_health\\_provision.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664855/Transforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_provision.pdf)

All data presented come from the Mental Health of Children and Young People in England Survey 2017, NHS Digital

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017>

### About AYPH

[AYPH](#) is the leading independent voice for youth health in the UK. We bridge the worlds of policy, practice and evidence to promote better understanding of young people's health needs and to advocate for youth friendly health services.

AYPH publishes a range of reports drawing together statistics on young people's health including our '[Key Data on Young People](#)' series. A new edition is due out in 2019. In order to keep up to date with our work do consider membership.

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