

Survey questions

Poll 8: Child mental health problems

October 2017

Please see below the questions that were reported on in the eighth RCH National Child Health Poll – Child mental health problems: Can parents spot the signs?

Some children and teenagers experience challenges, difficulties or problems with their behaviour or social and emotional wellbeing, together these are often referred to as 'mental health problems'. Mental health problems affect the way people think, feel and act. Mental health problems can include a range of things such as mood problems like depression and anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other behaviour issues, autism and problems related to alcohol and drug misuse. We are interested in knowing about your thoughts and experiences in relation to the social and emotional health of your children and family.

Question 1

It can be difficult for parents and carers to recognise the signs of social, emotional and behavioural problems in their child.

1.1 How confident are you that you could tell if your child was having social problems or difficulties, such as ongoing problems making and keeping friends? [Present each child separately]

Confident, Somewhat confident, Not confident

1.2 How confident are you that you could tell if your child was having emotional problems or difficulties, such as being sad for a long time or overly anxious? [Present each child separately]

Confident, Somewhat confident, Not confident

1.3 How confident are you that you could tell if your child was having behavioural problems or difficulties, such as ongoing problems with concentration, impulsivity, arguing back too much or being overly aggressive? [Present each child separately]

Question 2

Which of the following things could help to improve your confidence in recognising social, emotional or behavioural problems or difficulties in your child or children? Please select all that apply

- Learning more about social and emotional health and development in children in general
- Learning more about the physical and day-to-day signs of social, and emotional and behavioural problems in children
- Having a doctor, psychologist or other professional to talk to about these things
- Spending more time talking to and connecting with my children
- Having more information about how my child is going at school

Question 3

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the behaviour and social and emotional health of children and teenagers: [Present items below on carousel in random order. Present once to each respondent, ie NOT 'by child']

Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree or disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

- 3.1 It's normal for children and teenagers to sometimes feel down or lack motivation
- 3.2 Ongoing physical complaints (such as headaches, stomach ache or feeling sick) can be a sign of a social or emotional problem in children and teenagers
- 3.3 It's normal for teenagers to have trouble coping with everyday activities
- 3.4 A drop in school performance may be a sign of a social or emotional problem in a child or teenager
- 3.5 Depression affects children's thinking, memory and concentration
- 3.6 Consistently disobedient behaviour is normal in preschool-aged children
- 3.7 It's normal for teenagers to avoid seeing their friends
- 3.8 Persistent sadness and frequent tearfulness and crying is normal in children
- 3.9 It's normal for children to have ongoing guilty or negative feelings about themselves or their life
- 3.10 Pre-school aged children don't get depression
- 3.11 Primary-school aged children don't get depression
- 3.12 It's normal for children to sometimes show signs of anxiety, worry and fear
- 3.13 A baby's brain is too immature to develop social or emotional problems
- 3.14 Social, emotional and behavioural problems in children are best left to work themselves out over time
- 3.15 Persistent difficulties with aggression and anger management (such as frequent tantrums) is are normal in primary school children
- 3.16 The health of a mother during pregnancy can affect the social and emotional health of her child
- 3.17 It is normal for primary school age children to constantly butt in and interrupt each other

Question 4

It can be difficult for parents to find time to focus on and connect with their children. On average, how often do you talk to and/or connect with your children about things that are happening in their lives? Please answer separately for each child [by child]

Every day of the week, Almost every day of the week, 4 to 5 days a week, 2 to 3 days a week, 1 day a week, Less than 1 day a week

Q4b. What are the things that make it difficult for you to focus on, talk to and/or connect with your child/children? Please select all that apply.

I'm so busy (with home, work or other activities) that it's hard to find time to focus on and connect with my child

My child is so busy (with school, sport or other activities) that it's hard to find time when we can talk and connect

I find it hard to talk to and/or connect with my child

My child doesn't want to spend time talking to and connecting with me

My child is too young to talk to and/or connect with me

It's hard to focus on my child because I am distracted by other things (such as screen-based devices)

It's hard to connect with my child because they are distracted by other things (such as screen-based devices)

None

Question 5

If your child was experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, how confident are you that you might be able to do something yourself at home to help?

*Very confident, Somewhat confident, Not confident **branch to 10 only if answers somewhat or not confident*

Question 6

What are the things that might make it difficult for you to do something yourself at home to help your child with a social, emotional or behavioural problem? Please select all that apply.

- I would not know what I could do that would be helpful
- It is difficult for me to speak with my child about these kind of things
- I don't think my child would want to talk to me about these things
- I don't have enough time to deal with these kind of things
- My partner and I think differently about these kind of things
- I think these sorts of problems are better managed by professionals
- I think these problems are better left to work themselves out over time

- I don't think my child would want me to help
- My own difficulties make it hard for me to talk about these things

Question 7

If your child was experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, do you have a friend or family member who you could talk to about it?

Yes, No, Not sure

Question 8

If your child was experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, would your concerns about what other people might think affect your decision about whether to seek professional help?

No, this would not affect my decision

Yes, this would affect my decision a little

Yes, this would affect my decision a medium amount

Yes, this would affect my decision a great deal

Question 9

If your child was experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, how confident are you that you would know where to go for help if needed?

Very confident, Somewhat confident, Not confident

Question 10

If your child was experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, which of the following professional services/places would you be likely to go to for help? Please select all that apply

- Child and Family Health Nurse (Maternal Child Health Nurse)
- Early childhood educator or preschool teacher
- Child care worker
- General Practitioner (GP)
- Paediatrician
- Pharmacist

- School counsellor or psychologist
- School nurse
- Psychologist or counsellor, outside of school
- School teacher
- Hospital emergency department
- Child Psychiatrist
- Alternative health care provider (such as naturopath, osteopath)
- Government endorsed online services such as Beyond Blue
- Local Child and Adolescent/Youth Mental Health Service (such CAMHS or CYMHS)
- Other allied health professional (such as speech therapist, occupational therapist)
- Other, please say [open field]

Question 11

In general, how would you say your child's physical health is? Please answer separately for each child <BY CHILD>

Very good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very poor, Not sure

Question 12

In general, how would you say your child's social and emotional and behavioural health (mental health) is? Please answer separately for each child <BY CHILD>

Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very poor, Not sure

Participants were also asked demographic questions on gender, country of birth, languages spoken at home, annual household income, education and health care card status.

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