Mental Health among Children and Youth in Sweden: trends, prevention and promotion

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Mental health of children and youth in Sweden: trends
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Health, *mental health* and health behavior monitoring systems

- Employed to
  - guide national prioritization
  - measure development

- Surveys in use in Sweden
  - The national public health survey — “Health on Equal Terms”
  - Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)
  - Living Conditions Survey of Children
  - Nation-wide school survey on alcohol and other drugs
Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)

• **Aim:**
  - Gain new insight into young people’s health and well-being (11-, 13- and 15- years old)
  - Follow the development within countries and regions, and
  - Make comparisons between countries and regions.

• **Study design:**
  - Cross-sectional
  - >40 countries and regions across Europe and North America
  - Schoolbased
  - Conducted every four years since 1985/86, latest 2013/14
Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)

- Questionnaire:
  - Self-rated health and general well-being
  - Risk behaviour
  - Eating habits and physical activity
  - Social relationships
  - School environment

Boys 13 yrs  Girls 13 yrs
At least two psychosomatic problems per week during the last 6 months, among 11-years old, 1985/96-2013/14.
At least two psychosomatic problems per week during the last 6 months, among 13-years old, 1985/96-2013/14.
At least two psychosomatic problems per week during the last 6 months, among 15-years old, 1985/96-2013/14.
The national public health survey – “Health on Equal Terms”

• Conducted annually (since 2004)

• Ongoing collaboration between the Public Health Agency of Sweden and county councils/regions in Sweden

• Response rate between 57–61%

• Survey selection: a total of 20,000 people, aged 16–84 years
  – Includes a youth segment (16-24 years)
  – Information on parents

• Covers questions about
  – physical and mental health, substance use, contact with healthcare services, living habits, financial conditions, work and occupation and safety and social relationships

Sid . 2013-05-24
Moderate to high levels of stress

Ganska till väldigt mycket stressad. Åren 2010-2013 sammanslagna
Low mental wellbeing (GHQ12)

Nedsatt psykiskt välbefinnande. Åren 2010-2013 sammanslagna

![Chart showing mental wellbeing rates by age group and gender.](image-url)
Suicidal thoughts during the last 12 months

Suicidtankar. Åren 2010-2013 sammanslagna

Sid 15. 2014-10-16
Suicide attempts during the last 12 months

Försökt ta sitt liv. Åren 2010-2013 sammanslagna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Women Attempted Suicide</th>
<th>(95% CI)</th>
<th>Men Attempted Suicide</th>
<th>(95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>(1.8-3.1)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>(0.4-1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>(0.7-1.2)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>(0.6-0.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>(0.2-0.5)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>(1.3-2.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>(0.2-0.5)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>(0.1-1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-84</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>(0.9-1.7)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>(0.5-1.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sid 16. 2014-10-16
Trends

Data from HBSC, Health on Equal Terms, other national surveys and national registers:

• Self-reported life satisfaction: high, stable
• Self-reported mental health problems: increase 13- and 15 year olds
• Psychiatric care for depression/anxiety, eating disorders: increase
• Suicide attempts: earlier increase, now stable.

Poor mental health is significantly more common among girls and among youth who are neither in work, nor in education or training.
Promotion and prevention
The Swedish National Public Health Policy

Overall objective

create social conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population
The Swedish National Public Health Policy

A holistic perspective, based on the social determinants of health, was developed for the Swedish National Public Health Policy. No specific goal for mental health, but an integrated approach to all of the 11 objective domains is required.

1. Participation and influence in society
2. Economic and social prerequisite
3. Conditions during childhood and adolescence
4. Health in working life
5. Environments and products
6. Health-promoting health services
7. Protection against communicable diseases
8. Sexuality and reproductive health
9. Physical activity
10. Eating habits and food
11. Alcohol, illicit drugs, doping, tobacco and gambling
Promotion and prevention

PRIO

- Mental illness – action plan for targeted interventions in the area of mental illness, 2012-2016.

- An agreement between the State and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) concerning joint responsibility for the action plan.

- Since 2012, SEK 870 million has been allocated annually to prevent mental illness and improve health and social care for those already affected.

- Children and youth: one of two highly prioritized target groups.
Promotion and prevention

PSYNK-project

- Agreement between the State and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), 2011-2014.

- Syncronise actions/interventions for children and youth at risk of, or suffering from, mental illness.

- An intersectoral perspective and multidiciplinary working methods.

- Issue specific themes
  - Intense coordinated care planning
  - “First-line” – early access and intervention
  - Mental health and school performance

- Approx. 50 municiaplities and county councils involved in the PSYNC project.
Promotion and prevention

• Coordinated national evidence-based management: mental illness (Government assignment, National Board of health and Welfare, in collaboration with other national agencies), 2011-2013. Including efforts aimed at children at risk for severe mental illness.

• A national strategy for developed universal parental support (Public Health Agency) 2009-.

• Support to children in families with addiction, mental illness, or where violence occur (Government assignment, within the ANDT-strategy, Public Health Agency), 2011-2015.
Main challenges for mental health promotion and prevention in Sweden

• Increase in self-reported mental health problems and psychiatric care for depression/anxiety among youth and young adults.

• Problems more pronounced among girls/young women and among youth who are neither in work, nor in education or training.

• Lack of data, especially younger children and mental wellbeing. Data are essential for the surveillance and evaluation of interventions (“what is measured gets done”).
Main challenges for mental health promotion and prevention in Sweden

• A large number of government assignments concerning children's mental health. Need for national coordination 1) monitoring systems and 2) prevention/promotion.

• Current national action plan is focused on targeted interventions to tackle mental illness.

• Need for a national mental health strategy, and corresponding action plans, which also includes mental wellbeing and health promotion strategies and interventions?

• Furthermore, actions need to be guided by scientific evidence.
Thank you!