



Submission to OHCHR Study on the impact of mental health challenges on the enjoyment of human rights by young people

in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 57/30

Submitted to the OHCHR on February 20, 2026

I. BACKGROUND

IIMA - Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice is an international NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. IIMA is present in 97 countries where it provides education to children, adolescents, and youth to build up strategies for youth empowerment and participation worldwide.

VIDES International - International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, and Development is an NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, which works in 49 countries worldwide. It was founded in 1987 to promote youth volunteer service at the local and international levels for ensuring human rights, development, and democracy. Through its network of young volunteers worldwide, VIDES promotes best practices on active citizenship among youth.

IIMA and VIDES, together with other NGO partners, have been working for the empowerment of young people worldwide, not only by reporting existing protection gaps in the implementation of human rights with regard to youth, but also by greatly valuing the crucial role of youth in the promotion of human rights for society at large. Accordingly, both NGOs have been active in calling the attention of the Human Rights Council and other UN human rights bodies on the specific situation of youth in order to ensure that the rights of youth are placed high on the list of priorities.¹

II. PRELIMINARY REMARKS: A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

The present joint contribution intends to respond to the call for inputs launched by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the framework of the preparation of a detailed study on the impact of mental health challenges on the enjoyment of human rights by young people, as requested by Human Rights Council Resolution 57/30 (11 October 2024).

The main purpose of this contribution to the abovementioned call for inputs is to **bring the youth perspective and insights**, to ensure that they are reflected in the detailed study to be presented to the Council at its sixty-third session.

To this end, IIMA and VIDES Human Rights Office created and disseminated an online survey within its local youth network, the results of which are given below in the present submission.

¹ Further information on IIMA and VIDES work in promoting human rights is available at <https://iimageneva.org/youth/>.

Between February 5 and 15, 2026, **1778 replies** to the survey were received from over 46 countries² across the 5 continents.

Respondents to the survey belong to the following groups:

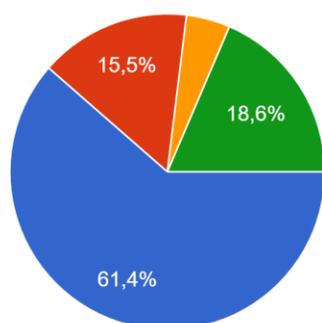
- **Adolescents (14 - 17 years old)**
- **Youth (18-25 years old)**
- **Young Adults (26-35 years old)**
- **Educators working with adolescents/youth (over 35 years old)**

The online survey (available in English and Spanish) consisted of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. Responses were provided anonymously.

A. Info on respondents to the survey

You are / Tú eres

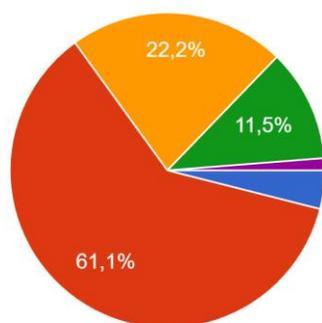
1 778 réponses



- Adolescents (14-17 years old) / Adolescentes (14-17 años)
- Youth (18-25 years old) / Jóvenes (18-25 años)
- Youth (26-35 years old) / Jóvenes (26-35)
- Educator working with adolescents/youth (over 35 years old) / Educador trabajando con adolescentes/jóvenes (más de 35 años)

You come from / Vienes de

1 778 réponses



- Africa / África
- America / América
- Asia / Asia
- Europe / Europa
- Oceania / Oceanía

III. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

² These include: Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan and Zambia.

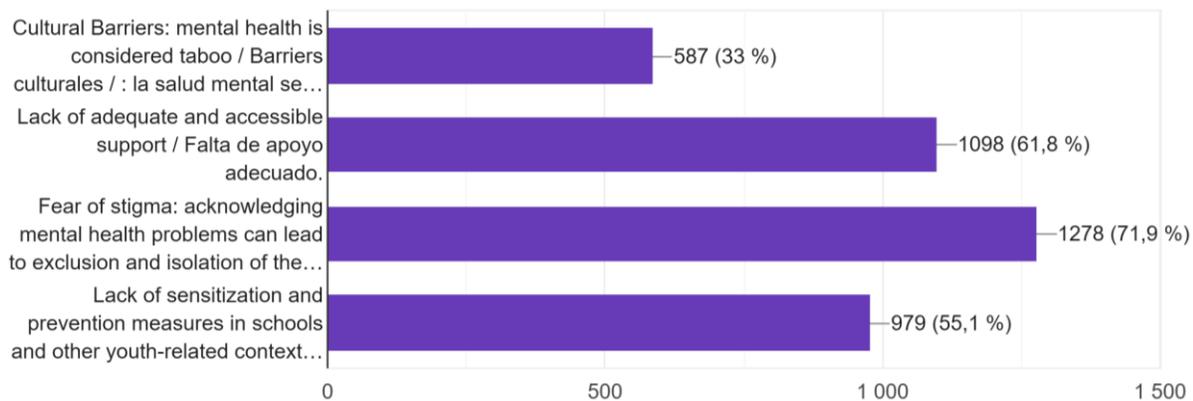
A. Main Mental health challenges faced by young people

In relation to question 1 of the Call for Input³, the following data was collected through our online survey:

1. What are the main mental health challenges that young people face in your community or country? (3 possible replies allowed)

Description of the proposed options:

- Cultural Barriers: mental health is considered taboo
- Lack of adequate and accessible support
- Fear of stigma: acknowledging mental health problems can lead to exclusion and isolation of the affected person by society.
- Lack of sensitization and prevention measures in schools and other youth-related contexts.

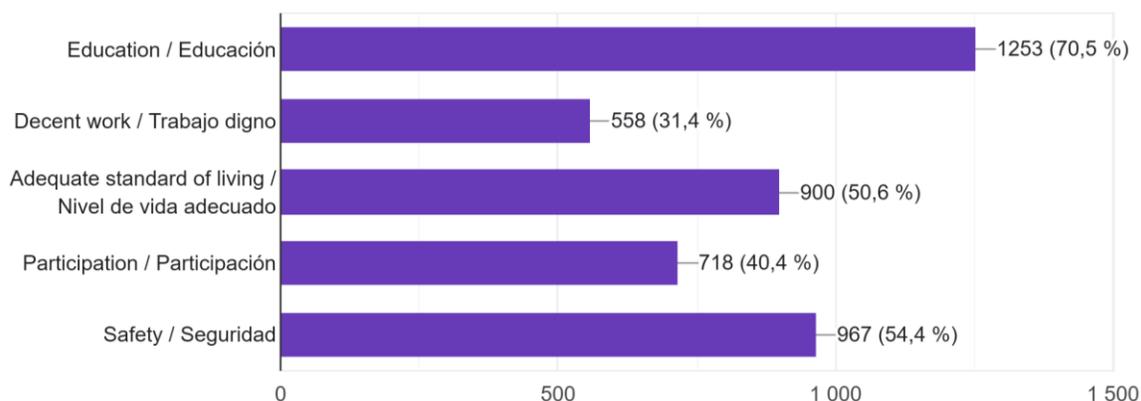


Other main challenges suggested by the respondents:

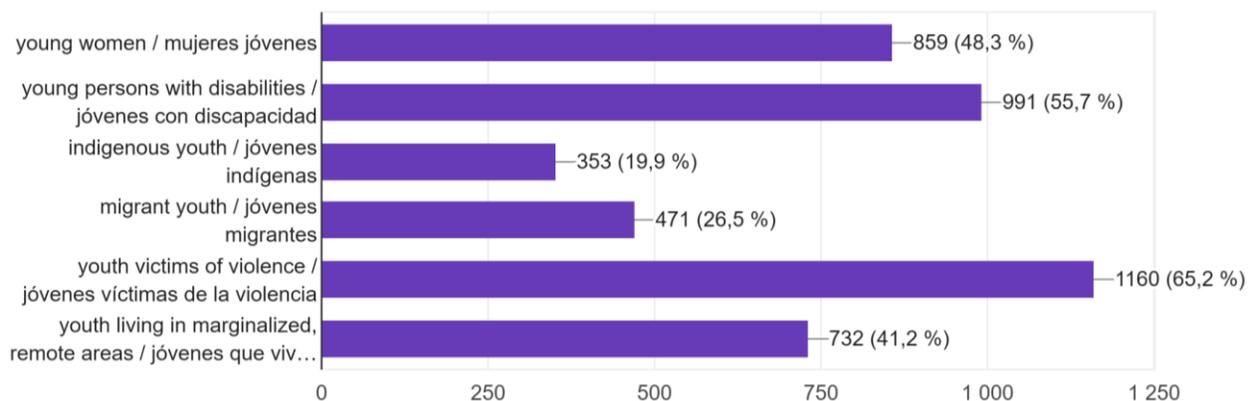
- **Significant stigma against youth**, which contributes to their reluctance to demonstrate their talents due to concerns regarding potential judgment from others.
- **Stress-related disorders exacerbated by social media pressure**. Social media pressure and cyberbullying negatively affect self-esteem, increase anxiety, and reduce healthy social interaction among young people. It is difficult for young people today is finding their identity amid social media that imposes unrealistic standards, constant pressure for quick success, and constant comparison.
- **Addiction to online gaming, alcohol, drugs**.
- **High academic pressure**: balancing academic demands with personal responsibilities while maintaining mental and physical well-being, and staying motivated despite setbacks or limited resources.
- **Psychological issues related to war**, such as fear, shock, and anxiety.
- **Exposure to violence, including bullying, and social inequality** affect emotional well-being and increase anxiety and depression among young people.
- **Social exclusion and discrimination** generate insecurity and low self-esteem in young people and an inability to express their emotions, which can lead to mental health problems.
- **The intergenerational cycle of poverty and limited economic opportunities** that directly exacerbate youth anxiety for the future and other mental health issues.
- **Lack of emotional support from the adult in charge of the young people and family instability-induced mental distress**: home environment turbulence impacts youth mental well-being and academic performance.
- **Lack of adequate training for educators** in this particular field.

³ What are the main mental health challenges that young people face in your community or country? How do these challenges affect their daily lives and their ability to enjoy their rights (such as education, decent work, adequate standard of living, participation, or safety, for example)? Please include the situation of marginalized youth or young people in vulnerable situations.

2. How do these challenges affect their daily lives and their ability to enjoy their rights? (3 possible replies allowed)



3. Which youth are particularly vulnerable to these main challenges related to mental health? (3 possible replies allowed)



Other vulnerable groups suggested by the respondents:

- Youth living in war related crisis zone
- LGBTQ+ youth facing discrimination and rejection
- Youth without family or community support
- Young people in poverty with limited access to education and healthcare
- Young people victims of various forms of discrimination

B. Actions by the Government

In relation to question 2 of the Call for Input⁴, the data collected through our online survey reported several actions undertaken by Governments especially in the following macro areas:

- Legislation and regulation:** Integrating mental health services into primary care.
- Awareness raising:** Conducting awareness and campaigns to sensitize about mental health issues, especially in schools.

⁴ What actions is the Government taking to address the root causes of mental health challenges among young people and to protect and promote their human rights in this regard? Please include the situation of marginalized youth or young people in vulnerable situations.

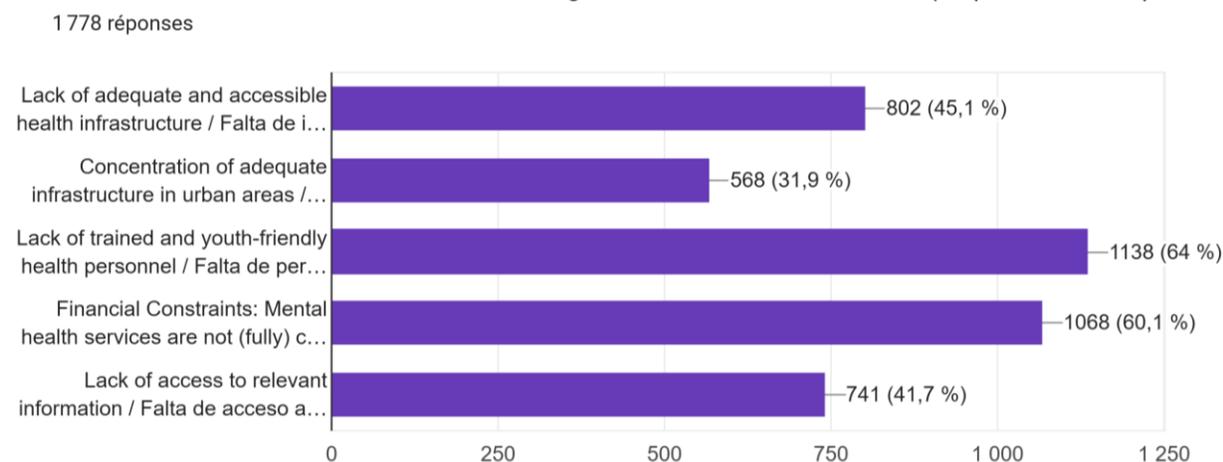
iii. **National prevention and mental health plans**, strengthening community services and focusing on prevention, suicide reduction and community care. However, access remains limited, especially for marginalized youth in rural or low-income areas. More investment in prevention, school counseling, and community-based services is needed to ensure equal protection of young people's rights.

C. Main Barriers faced by young people

In relation to question 3 of the Call for Input⁵, the following data was collected through our online survey:

Description of the proposed options:

- Lack of adequate and accessible health infrastructure
- Concentration of adequate infrastructure in urban areas
- Lack of trained and youth-friendly health personnel
- Financial Constraints: Mental health services are not (fully) covered
- Lack of access to relevant information

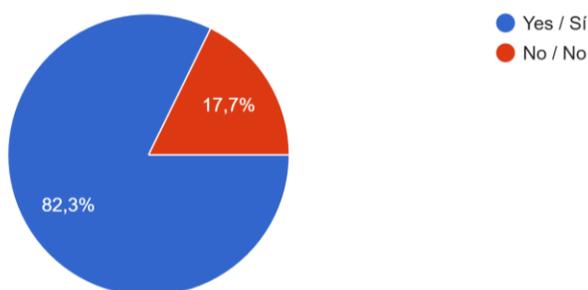


D. Laws, policies, or programmes focusing on young people's mental health

In relation to question 4 of the Call for Input⁶, the following data was collected through our online survey:

Are there any laws, policies, or programmes in your country that focus on young people's mental health? ¿Existen en su país leyes, políticas o pr...ramas centrados en la salud mental de los jóvenes?

1 778 réponses



⁵ What are the main barriers that prevent young people from getting the mental health support they need? How do these obstacles affect their rights and opportunities? Please consider the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of mental health care and the situation of marginalized youth or young people in vulnerable situations.

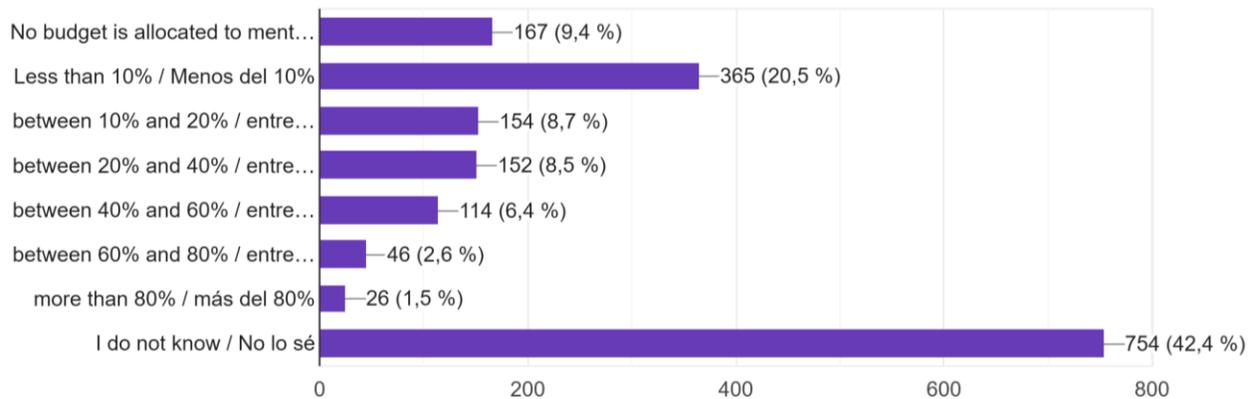
⁶ Are there any laws, policies, or programmes in your country that focus on young people's mental health?

E. Public expenditure (funding) allocated to health and mental health services for young people

In relation to question 5 of the Call for Input⁷, the following data was collected through our online survey:

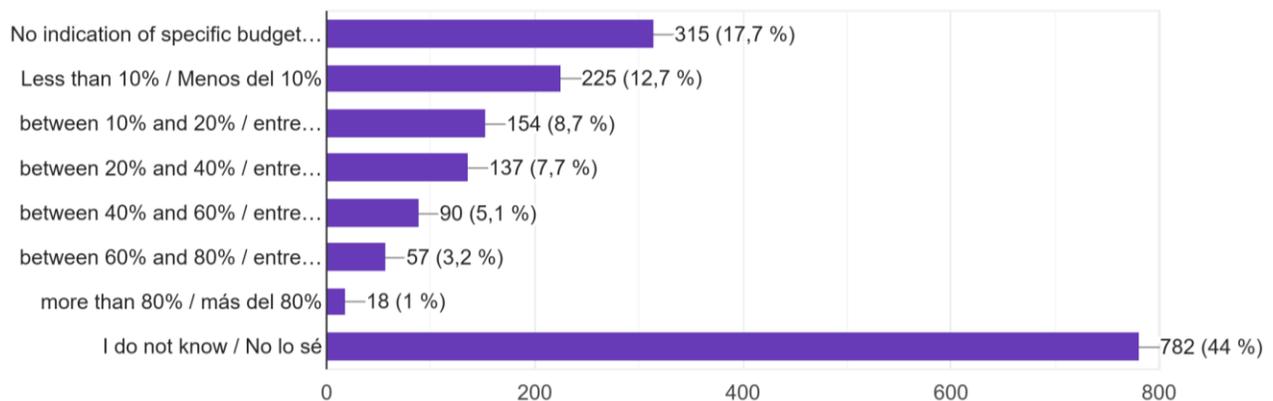
1. What proportion of the total public expenditure (funding) is allocated to mental health?

1 778 réponses



2. Within the budget allocated to mental health, what percentage is dedicated specifically to mental health services for young people?

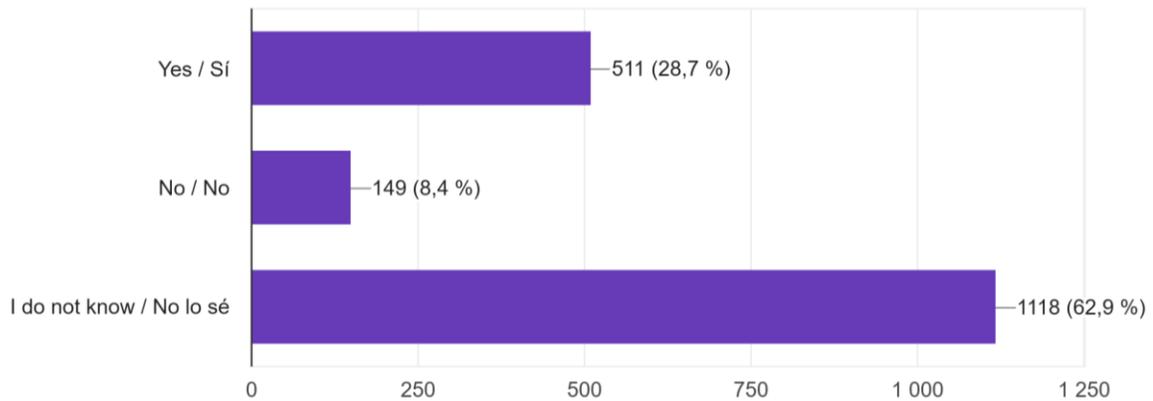
1 778 réponses



3. In particular, have there been cuts in budgets for mental health programmes and services addressing youth mental health?

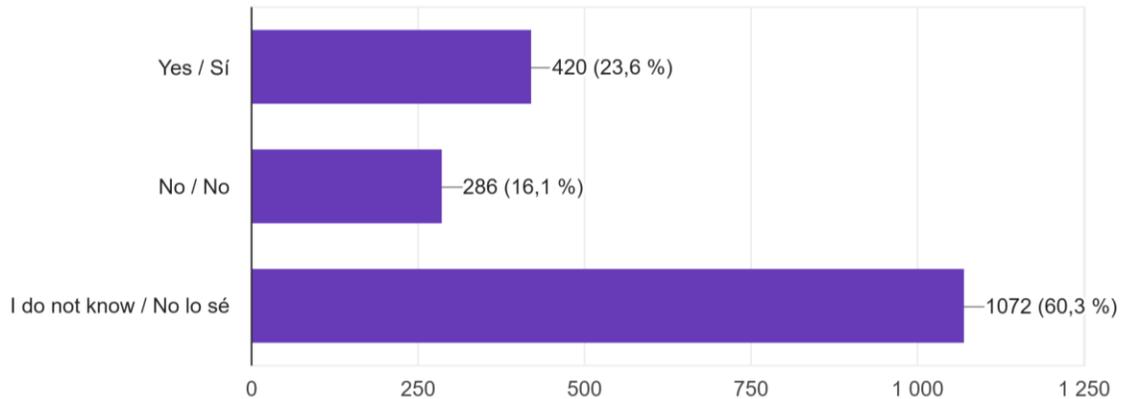
⁷ What proportion of total public expenditure (funding) is allocated to health, specifically to mental health services for young people? In particular, have there been cuts or increases in budgets for mental health programmes and services addressing youth mental health?

1 778 réponses



4. In particular, have there been increases in budgets for mental health programmes and services addressing youth mental health?

1 778 réponses



F. What more can be done

In relation to question 6 of the Call for Input⁸, the respondents to our online survey suggested:

- Invest more in accessible mental health services, prevention programs, and education to reduce stigma. Policies should target vulnerable youth and promote inclusion. Civil society and young people can contribute by raising awareness, providing peer support, participating in policy design, and creating safe spaces for open conversations about mental health.
- Ensure that costs related to mental health services are covered by the public health system in order to increase access for young people to such services.
- Increasingly Advertise publicly funded therapy programs in schools.
- enhance youth mental health by strengthening multi-sectoral policies (education, labor, health), increasing funding for community-based care, ensuring age-appropriate services, and implementing school-based social-emotional learning. Civil society and young people can actively drive solutions through youth-led advocacy, peer support, and participation in mental health governance.

⁸ What more should governments and international organizations do to make sure young people can fully enjoy their right to mental health? How can civil society and young people themselves be part of the solution?