

Summary of San Antonio’s Teen Mental Health Survey Conducted Spring 2022

Introduction

In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Children’s Hospital Association declared a national emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Healthⁱ. The declaration focused on the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic exacerbated existing societal struggles related to racial justice, therefore impacting certain communities as a result of pre-existing racial inequalities. The declaration noted the uptick in “emergency department visits for all mental health emergencies, including suspected suicide attempts”ⁱⁱ during the pandemic. This escalated the mental health crisis of youth prior to the pandemic. Data from 2009 to 2019 of high school students nationwide have shown increases in having persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, having seriously considered suicide, and having attempted suicide. This has only been compounded by the effects of COVID-19.ⁱⁱⁱ

The San Antonio Youth Commission is made of 22 members of high school students appointed by the mayor and city council members; Project Worth Teen Ambassadors is a youth group of 7th-12th graders who support teen health in the community by volunteering and sharing their voices, creativity, and ideas. Both groups came together in December of 2021 to develop a teen mental health survey after discussions on how much their and their peers’ mental health had been impacted by the pandemic. Taking time during their winter break, members of both groups worked to develop a 34-question survey to gain insight on the current state of mental health of young adults 12 to 19 years of age in San Antonio.

After mental health consultants working with the City of San Antonio reviewed the survey and analysis done on the literacy level of the questions, the survey was launched in March 2021. This was the first survey made by youth, for youth released on the City of San Antonio’s *SASpeakUp* platform. Through the data, the commission and ambassadors hoped to gain more insight on COVID-19’s impact on 12-19 year olds in the San Antonio community, as well as input on resources to assist in the recovery of young adults.

Methods

Data Source

This report includes data from the *SASpeakUp* Teen Mental Health Survey, conducted between March 8 to April 11, 2022. The survey was a one-time online-based survey open to youth ages 12-19 in the San Antonio Community. Participation in the survey was voluntary and primarily

promoted by word of mouth within teen serving organizations. A copy of the survey is attached. In total, 1,047 entries were collected. Of this amount, results from 846 of the surveys with valid responses were used in this analysis. All ten city council districts were represented in the survey results. Based on the number of valid responses (sample size) the survey has a 95% level of confidence, with a $\pm 4\%$ margin of error. This low margin of error confirms that the survey is reliable, therefore the responses can be considered a true representation of the population surveyed.

Measures

Results from the survey are analyzed on the following measures: 1) mental health status; 2) mental health issues experienced; 3) who is used for mental health help; and 4) what affects your mental health. No time frame was specified in questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the following demographic characteristics were analyzed: gender, sexual identity (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, asexual, or exploring or unsure), race and ethnicity (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, white, and/or other), and Council District.

Analysis

Of the 846 respondents, 29 were Asian or Asian American, 50 were Black or African American, 152 were White, and 542 were Hispanic. Gender diverse included 69 participants who marked transgender or “Not a girl or a boy (non-binary/third gender/two-spirit)”. The smaller groups should be evaluated with careful consideration. Data was analyzed and calculated for all study variables among all respondents and by demographic data. All data collected was analyzed by the data teams at the City of San Antonio’s Department of Human Services and Metropolitan Health District. The race and ethnicity of the survey were generally representative of the San Antonio population from the 2020 American Community Survey (5 year estimate) data. However, more females completed the survey than males. All survey results were disaggregated to better understand the mental health of each subpopulation.

Results

Mental Health Challenges

Participants notated several challenges with mental health. When asked about a variety of depressive traits, 37% stated an inability to perform day to day tasks, 49% stated feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters, and 24% stated smoking, vaping, or using drugs. Females reported higher struggles compared to their male counterparts, while LGBTQ+ and gender diverse youth reported 20 percentage points higher on average than their heterosexual counterparts when reporting the inability to perform day to day tasks and feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters. When examining results by race/ethnicity,

Asian or Asian Americans reported the highest rates of an inability to perform day to day tasks and feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters. A breakdown of the results is found in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of Youth Experiencing Mental Health Struggles

	Number	Population Breakdown	Inability to complete daily tasks	Feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters	Smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, or using drugs
Total (ages 12-19 years old)	846	100%	37%	49%	24%
Q2 – Gender					
Girl/Woman	473	56%	38%	54%	27%
Boy/Man	219	26%	26%	35%	19%
Gender Diverse	69	13%	65%	75%	32%
Not disclosed	40	5%	20%	20%	5%
Q3 - Sexual Orientation					
Straight/Heterosexual	434	51%	25%	39%	19%
LGBQ+	253	33%	58%	71%	38%
Not disclosed or did not respond	134	16%	25%	37%	11%
Q4 - Ethnicity/Race					
Hispanic	542	64%	38%	52%	27%
White	152	18%	38%	53%	20%
Black or African American	50	6%	38%	48%	22%
Asian or Asian American	29	3%	45%	59%	28%
Another Option Not Listed Here (includes Middle Eastern, AI, AN)	13	2%	46%	31%	23%
I prefer not to Answer	60	7%	12%	13%	5%

AI = American Indian; AN = Alaskan Native

Suicidal Thoughts and Ideations

When asked about whether they have had suicidal ideations, LGBQ+, gender diverse, and Asian Americans reported higher proportions than other subpopulations. Over 50% of gender diverse and LGBQ+ youth and 45% of Asian Americans reported suicidal ideations compared to 28% of all participants. In addition, LGBQ+ and gender diverse youth reported higher percentages of harming themselves compared to other subpopulations. On average, 26% of youth reported

these tendencies. With these results, LGBTQ+ youth and gender diverse youth continue to struggle more than their hetero-normative counterparts. In addition, Asian Americans show an increased struggle with suicidal ideations compared to their ethnic counterparts. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the results.

Table 2: Percentage of Youth Hurting Oneself and Experiencing Suicidal Ideation

	Number	Population Breakdown	Hurting oneself like cutting skin, pulling hair, burning skin	Suicidal ideation: thoughts or feelings about ending one's own life.
Total (ages 12-19)	846	100%	26%	28%
Q2 - Gender				
Girl/Woman	473	56%	27%	29%
Boy/Man	219	26%	11%	16%
Gender Diverse	69	13%	59%	58%
Not disclosed	40	5%	10%	13%
Q3 - Sexual Orientation				
Straight/Heterosexual	434	51%	11%	14%
LGBTQ+	253	33%	52%	55%
Not disclosed or did not respond	134	16%	20%	19%
Q4 - Ethnicity/Race				
Hispanic	542	64%	28%	30%
White	152	18%	30%	28%
Black or African American	50	6%	20%	28%
Asian or Asian American	29	3%	28%	45%
Another Option Not Listed Here (includes Middle Eastern, AI, AN)	13	2%	23%	15%
I prefer not to Answer	60	7%	5%	7%

Lack of Safe Spaces and Trusted Adults

When asked about where to go for mental health issues, overwhelmingly, youth reported a preference to talk with their friends. A staggering 17% of youth reported they do not feel comfortable talking to anyone. Most importantly, most of the youth reported not having a trusted adult at school to talk to regarding mental health struggles. Table 3 shows the full results.

Table 3. Youths' Preferred Resource for Mental Health Help

	Number	Population Breakdown	Friends	Sibling(s) or a family member close to your age	A trusted adult that is a family member	A trusted adult that is <u>not</u> a family member	A trusted adult that works in your school	Place of worship	Social Media	Internet search	I don't have anyone to go to.	I don't feel comfortable talking to anyone.
Total (ages 12-19)	846	100%	41%	18%	27%	10%	10%	5%	8%	12%	4%	17%
Q2 - Gender												
Girl/Woman	473	56%	43%	19%	29%	12%	9%	6%	8%	11%	4%	11%
Boy/Man	219	26%	38%	20%	31%	7%	12%	6%	2%	9%	4%	12%
Gender Diverse	69	8%	43%	12%	19%	12%	14%	0%	19%	22%	6%	23%
Not disclosed*	40	5%	20%	8%	10%	10%	8%	0%	3%	10%	3%	20%
Q3 - Sexual Orientation												
Straight/Heterosexual	434	51%	36%	21%	33%	9%	10%	7%	4%	7%	4%	13%
LGBTQ+	253	30%	49%	16%	19%	12%	11%	4%	15%	21%	5%	23%
Not disclosed or did not respond	134	16%	37%	11%	22%	7%	5%	1%	4%	7%	4%	15%
Q4 - Ethnicity /Race												
Hispanic or Latinx	542	64%	44%	21%	28%	10%	11%	5%	8%	12%	5%	18%
White	152	18%	43%	11%	31%	9%	5%	8%	12%	16%	5%	16%
Black or African American	50	6%	48%	26%	26%	14%	14%	2%	2%	12%	2%	10%
Asian or Asian American	29	3%	38%	14%	24%	10%	10%	3%	3%	21%	3%	21%
Another Option Not Listed Here (includes Middle Eastern, AI, AN)	13	2%	15%	15%	23%	0%	0%	8%	0%	8%	8%	23%
I prefer not to Answer	60	7%	12%	3%	13%	7%	5%	0%	3%	2%	2%	13%

Top Mental Health Stressor: School

When asked about areas that affect mental health, 59% of respondents reported school having a negative impact on their mental health compared to 51% stated COVID-19. These results are even worse for the LGBTQ+, gender diverse, and Asian American communities. These numbers were also higher than other subpopulations when looking at extra-curricular activities, home life, and social media. A breakdown is found in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Percentage of Youth Reporting a Negative Impact by these Factors or Environments

	COVID-19	Work	School	Extracurricular/ After-School Activities	Family/ Home Life	Social Media
Total (ages 12-19)	51%	25%	59%	16%	33%	22%
Q2 - Gender						
Girl/Woman	56%	25%	61%	17%	35%	23%
Boy/Man	35%	14%	46%	8%	23%	16%
Gender Diverse	67%	65%	79%	29%	49%	20%
Not disclosed*	56%	60%	60%	36%	42%	50%
Q3 - Sexual Orientation						
Straight/ Heterosexual	42%	18%	49%	16%	27%	23%
LGBTQ+	64%	40%	73%	18%	43%	19%
Not disclosed or did not respond	48%	26%	58%	18%	34%	23%
Q4 - Ethnicity/Race						
Hispanic or Latinx	54%	25%	60%	16%	34%	19%
White	48%	27%	59%	16%	29%	27%
Black or African American	38%	14%	47%	6%	21%	18%
Asian or Asian American	41%	15%	68%	27%	67%	32%
Another Option Not Listed Here (includes Middle Eastern, AI, AN)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
I prefer not to Answer	53%	50%	55%	21%	23%	30%

** Not an ample number of responses to calculate percentages. **

COVID-19 and School Stress

In March of 2020, COVID-19 wreaked havoc on the San Antonio community. As schools turned virtual and extra-curriculars were canceled, students were forced to stay at home which might have contributed to social isolation, anxiety related to the uncertainty and new academic environment, etc. These mental health stresses seem to have had a larger impact on certain demographics, such as LGBTQ+, gender diverse, or Asian American students.

As the data shows, both COVID-19 and school had high percentages of negative impact on youth. Through qualitative data collected through additional survey responses and conversations with youth in the San Antonio community, many youth interviewed shared fears of leaving their households and catching the virus and spreading it to their vulnerable family members or friends. The fear of contracting COVID-19 continued when students were required to return to school. Youth interviewed continued to state this fear led to an increase in anxiety and mental health stress during the school day. This qualitative data corroborates the findings of this survey.

According to data from the Texas Education Agency, the total Pre-K – 12 grade school population in San Antonio dropped by 14,500 students in public schools. College and career readiness percentages also dropped an average of 14% across San Antonio's 15 school districts. Drastic learning loss could have added additional stress onto students to perform well at school. This stress could have influenced the results found in this survey. Within the survey, participants also reported a lack of awareness of the available resources at their schools or in their community. Half of the respondents mentioned that they did not know where to get resources for their mental health challenges. When members of the San Antonio Youth Commission met with Bexar County Superintendents, and there were follow-up meetings with the Region 20 Counseling Directors, questions about when the services are available (for example: outside of school hours, online, with or without parental consent, or during high-stress testing times) highlighted many barriers to access and additional supports when students could use more help.

As this study shows, these feelings disproportionately affected LGBTQ+ and gender diverse youth who even pre-pandemic experienced “higher rates of mental health challenges and increased health complications” compared to their heterosexual peers.^{iv} Unlike their counterparts, the findings also show an increase in negative impact when around their family. These two factors alone could delineate an increase in mental health stress for these individuals. For Asian American students, the stress from family and school mirrors that of LGBTQ+ and gender diverse peers also showing an increase and mental health stress.

Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults throughout San Antonio experienced increased mental health challenges. In addition, LGBTQ+ and gender diverse youth in San Antonio

showed disproportionately higher percentages of mental health challenges compared to their peers. To adequately address COVID-19 recovery, a strong focus needs to be placed on mental health support for youth. Any support created for youth mental health recovery from the pandemic should specifically address the unique needs of these two subpopulations.

Although a good first start, the City should consider this first *SASpeakUp* youth survey as a baseline and work to track the mental health outcomes of youth yearly. This will ensure that any initiatives and/or programs funded by the City work to improve the mental health outcomes of San Antonio's youth. This survey should also be implemented yearly and in any city-funded youth-serving program to continue to track mental health outcomes for youth. It is only through further tracking that we can ensure our most affected populations are receiving the necessary support needed to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ⁱ See <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/> for the full declaration.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} American Psychological Association, 2011; National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2011



Attachment 1: Teen Mental Health Survey

Teen Mental Health Survey

This survey was made by young people for young people from the ages of 12 to 19. This survey will help our San Antonio Youth leaders make suggestions on what would help improve mental health for young people in San Antonio. **All personal information will remain confidential**, which means that we will not share any personal information that you share with us on this survey.

Trigger Warning

The following survey includes some questions on sensitive topics such as drug use, self-harm, and other mental health challenges that might trigger some uncomfortable thoughts or feelings. Please feel free to stop the survey at any time. If you need immediate assistance, some resources are included in the survey and at the end of the survey. We know it can be hard to talk about these things, and we appreciate everyone's honesty in responding to these questions.

- Crisis Text Line serves young people in any type of crisis, providing them access to free, 24/7, emotional support and information they need via the medium they already use and trust: text. Just text "HOME" to 741-74.

If you or someone you know needs immediate mental health assistance, please call 911 and request their Mental Health Response Team.

Who We Are

The San Antonio Youth Commission is a group of high school students from around the city. Project Worth Teen Ambassadors are youth from 7th – 12th grade who support teen health in the community by volunteering and sharing their voices, creativity, and ideas. These two organizations partner with the Department of Human Services and Metro Health.

Stage 1: Community Engagement

Open Date: March 8th, 2022

Close Date: April 10th, 2022

Contact Info:

Jemm Morris
Department of Human Services
jemm.morris@sanantonio.gov

When responding, please fill in your selection completely using a pen or #2 pencil.

Complete Mark  Incomplete Marks    

Language Preference - click "Continue" to stay in preferred language

Preferencia de idioma:


تڙبېج غوره توب

Tùy chọn Ngôn ngữ:

Pagpipilian sa Wika:



* How old are you?



* Gender: (Select all that apply.)

- I prefer not to answer
- Girl/Woman
- Boy/Man
- Not a girl or a boy (non-binary/third gender/two-spirit)
- Transgender
- Exploring or unsure
- Prefer to self-describe:



* What is your sexual orientation? (Select all that apply.)

- I prefer not to answer
- Straight/Heterosexual
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual/Pansexual
- Queer
- Asexual
- Exploring or Unsure
- Prefer to self-describe:



* Please indicate your race/ethnicity(ies). (Select all that apply.)

- I prefer not to answer
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx
- Middle Eastern
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Another option not listed here (please specify):





* Are you a person living with a disability?

- I prefer not to answer
- No
- Yes



If yes, please describe:





* On the map shown here, will you please select what district you live in?

- District 1
- District 2
- District 3
- District 4
- District 5
- District 6
- District 7
- District 8
- District 9
- District 10
- I do not live in the San Antonio city limits



* How much do you feel like you know about mental health?

- I prefer not to answer
- A lot
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- A little



* How would you rate your overall mental health right now?

- I prefer not to answer
- Excellent
- More good days than bad days
- More bad days than good days





Have you or a friend of yours experienced any of the issues listed below?
(Select all that apply.)

- I prefer not to answer
- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Not interested in spending time with people and/or doing usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, or using drugs
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming others
- Hurting oneself like cutting skin, pulling hair, burning skin
- Suicidal ideation - thoughts or feelings about ending one's own life.
- Inability to perform daily tasks like getting to work or school, finishing your schoolwork, extracurric...
- Other:
- None of these.



* Do you know where to find resources if you or someone you know needs help with mental health?

- No
- Yes



If yes, please tell us where you find mental health resources.





* Who would you most likely go to first if you were struggling with a mental health issue? (Select all that apply.)

- I prefer not to answer
- Friends
- Sibling(s) or a family member close to your age
- A trusted adult that is a family member
- A trusted adult that is not a family member (examples: friend's parent, neighbor)
- A trusted adult that works in your school (examples: counselor, teacher, principal, etc.)
- Place of worship
- Social Media
- Internet search
- I don't have anyone to go to.
- I don't feel comfortable talking to anyone.
- Other (please specify):



* How much has your mental health been affected by the following?

	Does Not Apply	A Lot Negatively	Somewhat Negatively	A Little Negatively	Not at All	A Little Positively	Somewhat Positively	A lot Positively
COVID-19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extracurricular /After-school Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family/ Home Life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



* How often do you talk about mental health with your friends?

- I prefer not to answer
- A lot
- Sometimes
- Very Little
- Not at All





* For these options listed, what do you think are the top 5 most common issues for people your age?

- I prefer not to answer
- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Not interested in spending time with people and/or doing usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, or using drugs
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming others
- Hurting oneself like cutting skin, pulling hair, burning skin
- Suicidal ideation - thoughts or feelings about ending one's own life.
- Inability to perform daily tasks like getting to work or school, finishing your schoolwork, extracurric...
- Other
- None of these.



* How often do you use social media?

- I prefer not to answer
- A lot
- Sometimes
- A little
- Not at all



How does social media impact your mental health?



* How often do you compare yourself to others?

- A lot
- Sometimes
- A little
- Not at all





* What are some activities or things that have been most helpful for your mental health recently?




* What do you think our community could do to better help with mental health-related issues? (Select all that apply)

- city-wide free events to share resources and information
- mental health programs with mental health professionals (examples: one-on-one counseling, and s...
- in-school resources with more access to mental health professionals (examples: mental health progr...
- confidential text, chat, and other telehealth services available through your tablets, computers, and ...
- information about mental health resources using social media
- I don't know
- I prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify):



Room for more suggestions here:




* Are you currently:

- In Middle School
- In High School
- Dual enrolled in high school and college
- Not in school
- In college, university, or a trade school




What is the reason you are out of school?

- I prefer not to answer
- Graduated
- Dropped out in grade
- Other: (please explain)





* Have you ever thought about going back to school in the future?



* How has your time out of school impacted your mental health?

- Does Not Apply
- A lot Negatively
- Somewhat Negatively
- A Little Negatively
- Not at All A Little
- A Little Positively
- Somewhat Positively
- A lot Positively



Please tell us more about how being out of school has impacted your mental health?




* Were there any resources that were not included in the survey that would be helpful for you and others your age that are out of school?

- No
- Yes



If yes, please describe:





* Are you involved in activities outside of school?

- No
- Yes



If yes, how do they affect your mental health?



* Where do you feel most comfortable? (Select all that apply.)

- At school
- At home
- Afterschool activities in person
- Place of worship
- Online
- I prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify):



* Do you feel like your school has the resources needed to help with the mental health related issues that people your age are dealing with?

- Yes
- No



* Is there anything else you think would be helpful for the mental health of people your age that wasn't covered in this survey?

- No
- Yes



If yes, please share more here:





* Do you work?

- Yes
- No



* If you do work, how many hours do you work a week?



* If you do work, how do you feel that it has affected your mental health?



* Would you like some more information and resources about mental health that are available here in San Antonio?

- No
- Yes



If you would like to learn more about the results of this survey or how to get involved with the recommendations we make with the survey results, please share an email we can send some information to here:



Name

Email

Address



Thank you for taking this survey!

If this survey brought up anything that you would like to talk about or get some judgement free support with, there are people who want to help. Here are some free and confidential resources:

- *Crisis Text Line serves young people in any type of crisis, providing them access to free, 24/7, emotional support and information they need via the medium they already use and trust: text. Just text "HOME" to 741-741*

If you or someone you know needs immediate mental health assistance, please call 911 and request their Mental Health Response Team.



For more resources to support your mental and emotional health, please visit DreamSA at www.idreamsa.com DreamSA provides information and links to online and local health & well-being resources as well as resources for higher education, careers, volunteering, and the arts in San Antonio.