

Back-to-School 2021

The Mental Health and Wellbeing
Impact on Children in America

Research Brief



Mental health challenges children are facing in 2021

Mental health challenges among children in the United States have been a well documented and growing concern of medical professionals, even before the emergence of COVID-19. The pandemic greatly exacerbated these challenges by producing circumstances for many families across the country that can be detrimental to a child's mental health and development.

There are many issues related to the pandemic that have placed undue stress on families and children such as job loss or the financial hardships of a volatile economy, isolation due to social distancing, and health issues – or worse, death – of a loved one. Within this environment of larger societal issues, the global pandemic made the 2020- 2021 school year difficult for children and families, especially due to the need for distance learning and the amount of time children physically spent away from school.

This survey was conducted in late September 2021, weeks after most children in the United States had physically returned to school, in order to gauge the mental health impact the pandemic has had thus far and how children have adapted to “reentry” into school after a year of tumultuous change.

The survey queried 1,109 parents or guardians in the U.S. who have children under the age of 18 and their responses demonstrate five key findings highlighted in this report.

KEY FINDINGS

1

Children are not getting access to the mental health services they need.

2

Returning to school in the fall of 2021 was taxing on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in the United States.

3

Parents are in need of more support to deal with the mental health challenges their children are facing and are unaware of resources available to them.

4

Mental health challenges are much worse for children who are distance learning or being home schooled.

5

There is a serious problem with mental health challenges among school-aged children in the U.S.

Children are not getting access to the mental health services they need.

46%

Nearly half of all respondents (46%) said their child experienced mental health challenges due to the pandemic.

ONLY 50%

Only half (50%) of parents who tried to access mental health care for their child during the pandemic said they were able to.

Top 3 Challenges

with accessing the right mental health care for a child

1

Lack of therapists available

2

Lack of resources to find the right therapist in the first place

3

Lack of opportunities to see therapists in person due to social distancing issues

Huddle Up analysis

“Parents’ ability to access mental health services for their children is of critical importance. We know that most people seek mental health support when there is a high level of distress or crisis, which makes accessibility imperative. Finding the right therapist can be a stressful and overwhelming process, especially when there may be a lack of therapists to choose from. It can be profoundly discouraging to seek support for a child and be unable to find it.”

-Jacqueline Wight, MA, LPC, Director of Mental Health Services, DotCom Therapy. DotCom Therapy is now Huddle Up



Returning to school in the fall of 2021 was taxing on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in the United States.

“ If parents are noticing emotional distress in their children, it’s critical to engage with the child’s school to seek support or to initiate therapy support for the child outside of the school setting. ”

Huddle Up analysis

“Transitions can be challenging for children and adolescents. Even positive transitions, like the return to in-person learning, can cause an increase in anxiety and other distressing emotions. We are still in a pandemic and children in schools are being exposed to Covid testing, watching peers sent home to quarantine and may have had this experience themselves. Now is the time to increase the mental health support for children and adolescents.”

-Jacqueline Wight, MA, LPC,
Director of Mental Health
Services, DotCom Therapy

DotCom Therapy is now
Huddle Up

66%

of parents whose children have returned to school, at least partially, said they thought their children were mentally and emotionally prepared.

But...

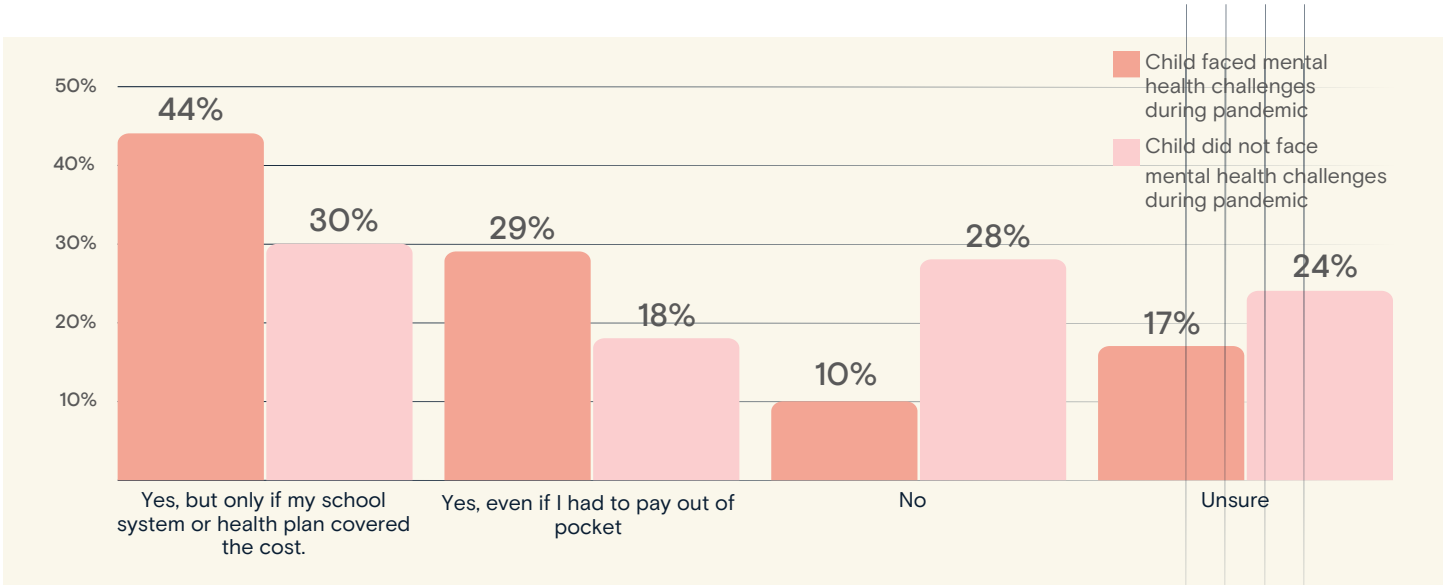
according to those parents, the reality of how children have actually fared has been somewhat different. When asked to describe the state of their children’s mental health and wellbeing since returning to school,

ONLY 50%

said their children were well-adjusted.



Parents are in need of more support to deal with the mental health challenges their children are facing and are unaware of resources available to them.



Parents interested in a service that could match their child with the right therapist and facilitate teletherapy at home

60%

of parents are at least somewhat concerned that their child may encounter mental health challenges in the future that may not get immediate and proper treatment.



Huddle Up ANALYSIS

“Parents are the experts on their children, and with the vast majority of them conveying their belief that healthcare and educational institutions should do more to provide better mental health services to children, the message is clear – their children need additional support to navigate mental health challenges. Parents want to provide their children with the best possible mental health support, but the current system can be challenging to navigate and oftentimes, the outcome of a search for a provider is unsuccessful.”

–Jacqueline Wight, MA, LPC, Director of Mental Health Services, DotCom Therapy
DotCom Therapy is now Huddle Up

Mental health challenges are much worse for children who are distance learning or being home schooled.

Huddle Up ANALYSIS

“Based on this data, it is possible that children that are continuing with distance learning or home-schooling are experiencing isolation or other challenging emotions that are prompting parents to be concerned about their overall wellbeing as the school year gets underway.

Because parents are reporting more challenges compared to students returning to in-person learning, it is apparent that these children will need increased mental health support to navigate through the challenges associated with their current school circumstances.

Without adequate support, it is unlikely that these issues will resolve, and the concern would be a worsening of symptoms over time.”

-Jacqueline Wight, MA, LPC,
Director of Mental Health
Services, DotCom Therapy
DotCom Therapy is now Huddle
Up



Top Challenges

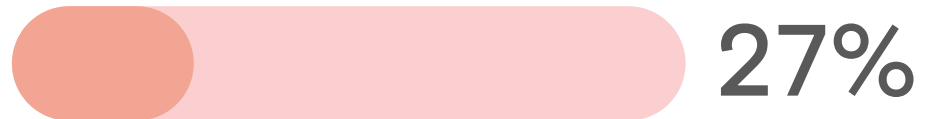
ANXIETY



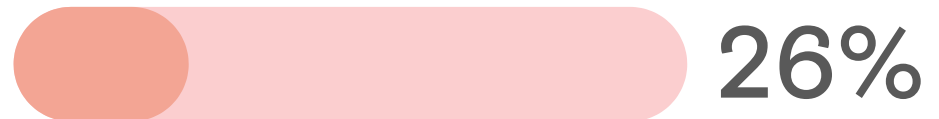
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DELAYS



LEARNING DEVELOPMENT DELAYS



DEPRESSION

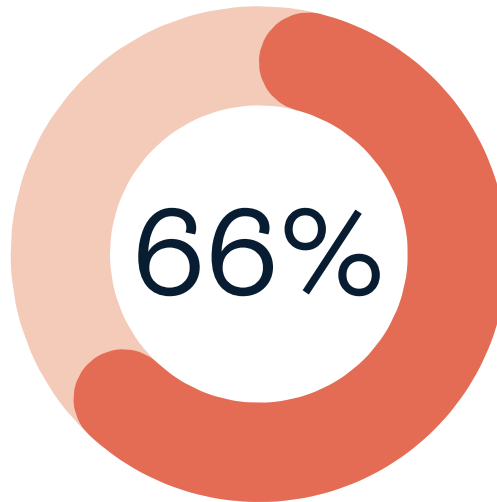


There is a serious problem with mental health challenges among school-aged children in the U.S.

Nearly half (42%) of parents say their children faced mental health challenges prior to the pandemic, at least somewhat.

That number only rose slightly to 46% of parents who say their children have experienced mental health challenges due to the pandemic. While the pandemic has contributed to mental health challenges among children overall, this data suggests that a large and growing problem existed beforehand as well.

When asked about the type of mental health challenges they're most concerned about their children facing, anxiety was by far the most frequent answer. Nearly half (48%) of parents are concerned about social anxiety in their children, and the same number are also concerned about general anxiety and/or panic attacks.



of parents feel the COVID experience will at least have somewhat of a lasting negative effect on children's mental health.



Huddle Up ANALYSIS

“The current mental health crisis experienced by children and adolescents is not new. There has been a critical need for children and families to access quality mental health care, and this need has grown significantly as a result of the pandemic. There is still a great amount of unknown around the impact of the pandemic on children’s mental health and it’s clear that parents are aware of this concern.”

-Jacqueline Wight, MA, LPC, Director of Mental Health Services, DotCom Therapy
DotCom Therapy is now Huddle Up

In summary, there is a need to improve access to mental health resources for school age children.

Mental health challenges among children in the United States existed before- COVID-19, but the negative effects of the pandemic have intensified to create a true crisis that requires immediate attention. While getting back to school this fall – for the first time in more than a year for many children – is a positive development, there is much more for parents, educators and healthcare professionals to do. As the results of this survey show, improving access to mental health resources, is an essential first step. This means increasing the volume of services available to ensure that people seeking help are able to find it, making services convenient and easy to use, and educating and involving parents more so they know what resources are available if and when their child is in need.



Huddle up

About Huddle Up

Huddle Up (Huddle Up) is the most comprehensive pediatric teletherapy provider for healthcare and educational organizations serving families across the nation. With a 5-star patient rating and 97% retention among its network of professional therapists, Huddle Up provides the flexibility families and organizations require to meet the mental health, behavioral, speech, and occupational therapy needs of children in their care. Huddle Up partners with school districts across the nation.

Visit www.huddleupcare.com to learn more.