

## Panel discussion - Young people's mental health in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gothenborg 26 Sept 2024

- ☹️ Mental health problem – a measurement problem?
- ☹️ Is the pandemic behind the increase?
- ☹️ Social media and YouTubers' role?
- ☹️ Future – threats or smooth development?

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- ☹️ **Mental health problem** – a measurement problem?
- ☹️ 73% of adolescent girls and 33% of boys has a mental health problem in Finland (Lancet Psychiatry 2024, survey)
- ☹️ Comorbidity 43% of girls, 13% of boys
- ☹️ What do we measure?? Symptoms that at teenage are developmentally appropriate and a normal response to the environment (anxiety, depression, other forms of distress) OR a psychiatric diagnosis needing care

## ☹️ **Is the pandemic behind the increase in mental health problems?**

- ☹️ The increase started before the Pandemic
- ☹️ Changes in school: More self-regulation for students, laptops and digital material (no books, no handwriting)
- ☹️ Worsening of PISA results
- ☹️ Is it still worth of investigating the impact and effects of the pandemic on mental health or should we concentrate on more relevant things

- ☹️ **Social media impact and role of social media influencers**
- ☹️ Too much talk of aspects of mental health and diagnosis “lists”? (in the society in general, too)
- ☹️ YouTubers’ (social media influencers) videos; some very popular among adolescents; support or creating anxiety?
- ☹️ Digital gaming and addiction; Blue Whale and suicides
- ☹️ Responsibility of the companies (compare Tobacco industry)

- ☹️ **Future – threats or smooth development**
- ☹️ New virus-induced epidemics, 30 potential viruses and other micro-organisms (WHO)
- ☹️ Children's brain development when exposed to digital devices and content
- ☹️ Or are we able to control over the digital development and the power of IT companies?
- ☹️ **More positive messages and hope!**