



Drivers of youth mental health

Prof. Dr. med. Julia Dratva, Pauline Raymer
Institute of Public Health/ZHAW



Known influencing factors

- the old
- and the new

EARLY study

- country trends
- drivers



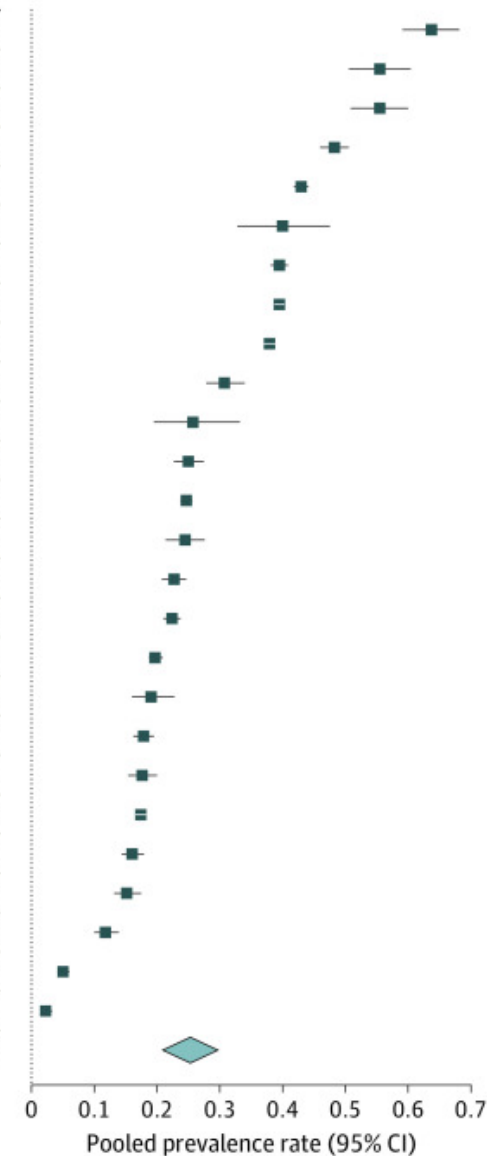


Until Covid-19

Globally ~20% of youth
experienced a mental
health condition.

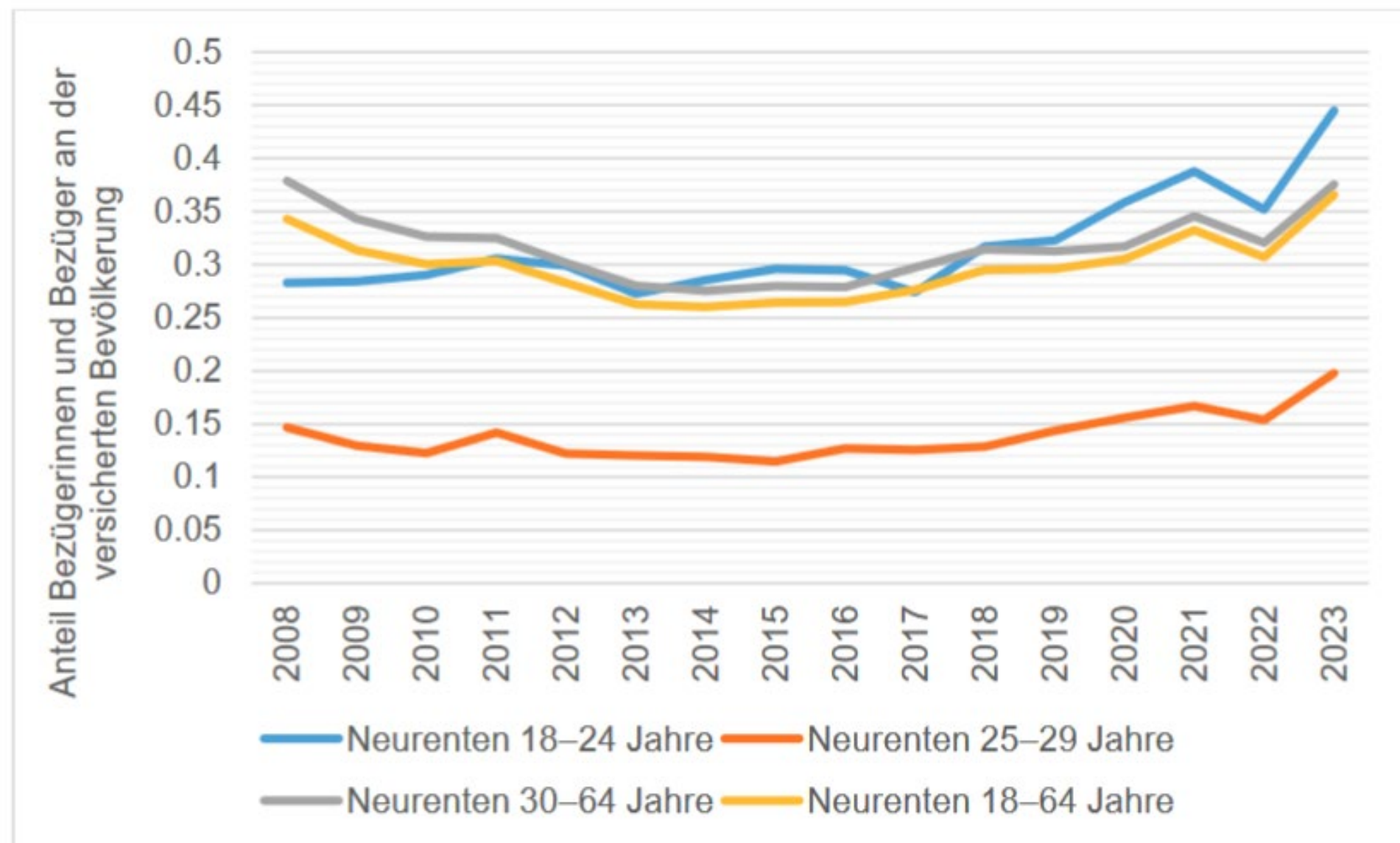
Forest Plot of the Pooled Prevalence of
clinically significant Depressive Symptoms in
Youth during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Source	Events, No.	Population, No.	Pooled prevalence rate (95% CI)
Giannopolou et al, ¹³ 2021	278	436	0.64 (0.59-0.68)
AlAzzam et al, ³² 2021	213	384	0.56 (0.51-0.60)
Murata et al, ⁴⁷ 2021	252	455	0.55 (0.51-0.60)
Chi et al, ³⁸ 2021	864	1794	0.48 (0.46-0.51)
Chen et al, ³⁷ 2020	3334	7772	0.43 (0.42-0.44)
Glynn et al, ⁴² 2021	67	168	0.40 (0.33-0.48)
Zhou et al, ⁵¹ 2020	1899	4805	0.40 (0.38-0.41)
McGuine et al, ⁴⁷ 2020	5136	13002	0.40 (0.39-0.40)
Cao et al, ³⁴ 2021	4240	11180	0.38 (0.37-0.39)
Hou et al, ⁴³ 2020	265	859	0.31 (0.28-0.34)
MacTavish et al, ²⁶ 2020	40	156	0.26 (0.19-0.33)
Zhang et al, ¹⁰ 2020	309	1241	0.25 (0.23-0.27)
Li et al, ⁴⁴ 2021	1941	7890	0.25 (0.24-0.26)
Crescentini et al, ³⁹ 2020	175	721	0.24 (0.21-0.28)
Xie et al, ¹⁹ 2020	403	1784	0.23 (0.21-0.25)
Duan et al, ²⁰ 2020	805	3613	0.22 (0.21-0.24)
Tang et al, ⁵⁰ 2021	857	4342	0.20 (0.19-0.21)
Orgilés et al, ⁴⁸ 2021	98	515	0.19 (0.16-0.23)
Dong et al, ⁴⁰ 2020	362	2050	0.18 (0.16-0.19)
Zhang et al, ⁵² 2020	179	1018	0.18 (0.15-0.20)
Zhou et al, ¹⁷ 2020	1402	8079	0.17 (0.17-0.18)
Asanov et al, ³³ 2021	248	1550	0.16 (0.14-0.18)
Zhang et al, ⁵³ 2020	155	1025	0.15 (0.13-0.17)
Chen et al, ³⁶ 2020	122	1036	0.12 (0.10-0.14)
Luthar et al, ⁴⁵ 2020	103	2078	0.05 (0.04-0.06)
Yue et al, ¹² 2020	30	1352	0.02 (0.01-0.03)
Overall			0.25 (0.21-0.30)





Development of new disability pensions, by year and age, 2008 - 2023

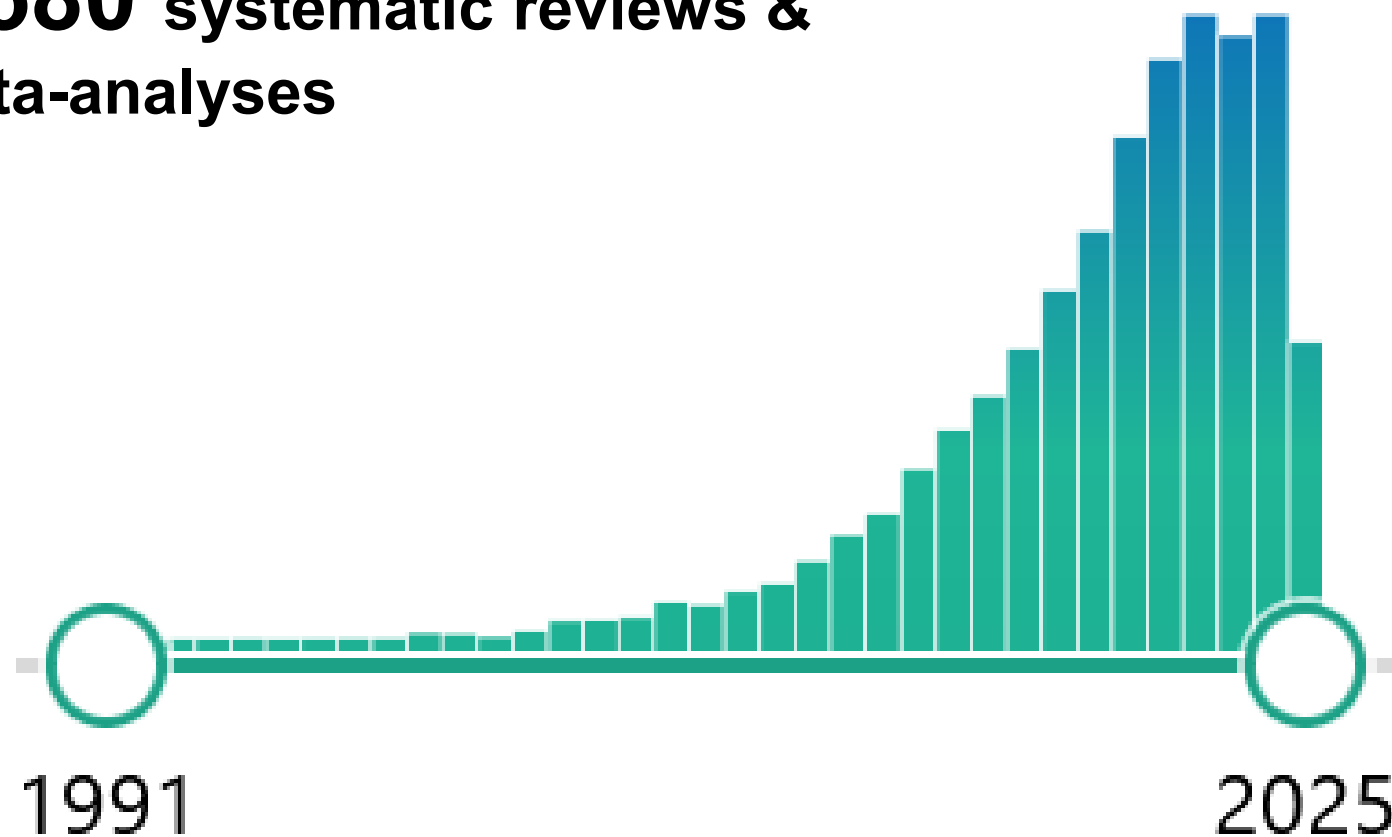




What do we know about factors related to mental health?

RESULTS BY YEAR

7,580 systematic reviews & meta-analyses





What we know

Biological factors: Genetics, Hormones, Sleep deprivation, Gender

Psychological factors: Self-esteem, coping competencies, emotional intelligence, childhood trauma

Social factors: Family environment and climate, friends, peer support, mobbing

Societal&Environmental factors: socio-economic situation (poverty, education), crises and uncertainties, media use, individualism, school

Is this all ?

Is it relevant today?



Evaluating, Identifying and Reducing determinants for Mental Health Conditions in Youth (EARLY)



PI Prof. Dr. Jutta Lindert
University of Applied Sciences
Emden/Leer, Germany





EARLY investigates the drivers of mental health

- **Mixed-methods approach:**

It combines qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the exposures associated with mental health.

- **Exposure matrix development:**

The study will develop a comprehensive matrix to track and assess exposures related to mental health.

- **Multicomponent intervention:**

It will develop, implement, and evaluate an intervention to promote mental health and prevent mental health conditions



Exposures addressed in EARLY-survey in youth

Biological factors: Gender, Age

Psychological factors: Childhood Traumatic Events, Parental attachment, Religiosity, Mental Health Literacy

Social factors: Loneliness, Humiliation, Social capital, social support, daily hassles, Family functioning, Socioeconomic and Living situation

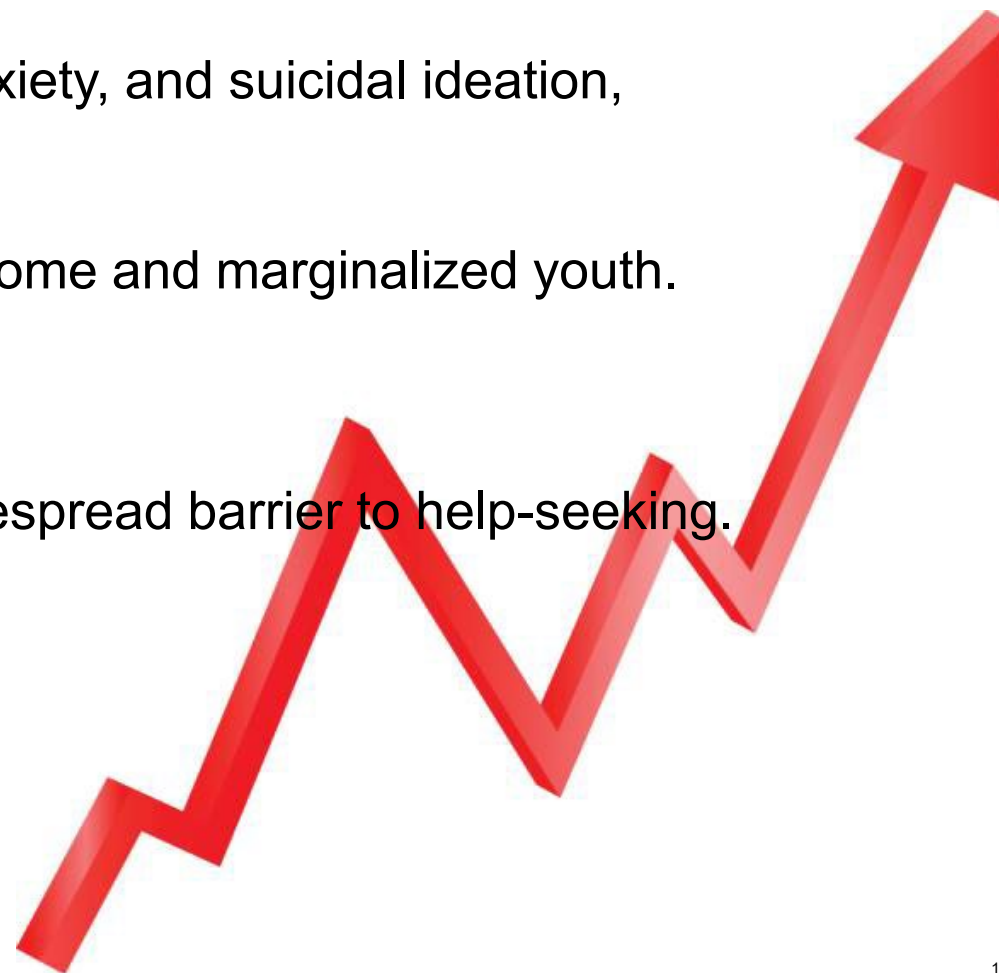
Societal&environmental factors: Exposure to natural disasters, Exposure to war/conflicts, Green spaces, Physical environment, Urbanicity, Social media



EARLY – country fact sheets

Shared and Emerging Trends in youth mental health

- **Prevalence & Vulnerable Groups:**
 - high and rising rates, particularly depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation,
 - especially among young women
 - vulnerability is heightened in rural areas, low-income and marginalized youth.
- **Awareness & Stigmatization:**
 - Awareness is growing but stigma remains a widespread barrier to help-seeking.
- **COVID-19 Impact:**
 - intensified existing mental health challenges
 - exposed weaknesses in mental health systems





Drivers of **decreasing** mental health - EARLY countries

- Social Determinants: Poverty, gender-based violence, discrimination, and social injustice
- Digital Risks: Screen addiction, cyberbullying, and ICT misuse.
- Cultural Barriers & Stigma: Cultural taboos, shame, and mistrust of institutions.
- Health System Failures: Workforce shortages, long wait times, underfunded services, and lack of youth-specific care.
- Policy Gaps: Many countries have national strategies but lack targeted youth programs or effective implementation



Drivers of **increasing** mental health - EARLY countries

- School-Based Programs: School interventions improve resilience, early identification, and access to support.
- NGO and Community Initiatives: Civil society plays a critical role in awareness, service delivery, and advocacy
- Policy and Legislation: Integrated or evolving mental health strategies prioritize youth.
- Growing Awareness and Political Will:
Youth more on national agendas





Sum up

- **We already know a lot about the drivers**
- **Lack of data on their public health relevance in Switzerland**
- **Need to identify new drivers**
- **Address drivers where possible: policy, civil society, schools, research**

Thank you for your attention!

Please participate in or share the Expert Survey – experts from public health practice, policy, law, and research welcome !



Expert Survey QR Code

