Mental Health & Experiences of Young People

Full Research Summary Supplied for the Starseed Dreamers Academy (SDA) Landing Page

Editorial note: This document preserves the supplied research summary and its claims for review. Before publication, verify each statistic, survey population, date, and source against the original publication. These figures do not establish that starseeds have distinct mental-health characteristics.

Mental Health of our young people

While public health tracking and clinical data do not use spiritual or metaphysical classifications like "starseed," current research deeply reflects the struggles of highly empathetic, sensitive adolescents in the United States. The feelings of over-sensitivity, inner confusion, and overwhelm are well-documented, particularly as they intersect with heavy digital consumption.

Here is the statistical landscape of US youth (ages 11–18) experiencing these compounding mental health and technology challenges:

- **General Mental Health & Overwhelm:** Nearly 1 in 3 (31%) youth ages 12 to 17 experience a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral challenge. Furthermore, 40% of teens report experiencing persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.
- **Anxiety & Depression:** Up to 32% of 12-to-17-year-olds report struggling with anxiety. Clinical depression symptoms are reported by 18% to 20% of adolescents in this age bracket.
- **Digital Immersion & "Addiction":** Up to 95% of youth use social media, with more than a third reporting they are online "almost constantly". Within younger demographics who may be particularly vulnerable to social pressures, one-third of girls aged 11–15 report feeling genuinely "addicted" to a social media platform.
- **The Physical Toll on the Nervous System:** 58% of teens report losing sleep directly because of social media. This disruption to sleep cycles severely limits the brain's ability to process emotional stimuli, measurably worsening mood, focus, and anxiety symptoms.

For teenagers who process the world deeply, the constant stream of social media can magnify inner conflict and emotional exhaustion. While nearly half (48%) of teens actively recognize that social media has a negative impact on people their age, disconnecting remains exceptionally difficult due to the habit-forming design of these platforms.

The most recent federal data—specifically the July 2026 release of the 2025 National Survey on Drug Use and Health by SAMHSA (https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/20260727/samhsa-releases-annual-national-survey-on-drug-use-and-health) and late 2026 updates from the CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/mental-health/about-data/suicidal-thoughts-and-behavior.html)—reveals the current scope of suicidal ideation and self-harm in the United States.

Suicidal Thoughts (Past Year)

- **Adults (18 and older):** 5.3% of U.S. adults—approximately 13.9 million people—reported having serious thoughts of suicide.
- **Adolescents (Ages 12-17):** 10.3% of youth in this age bracket, or about 2.6 million adolescents, reported serious thoughts of suicide.
- **High School Students:** A September 2026 CDC update shows an even higher prevalence among older teens, with 20% (1 in 5) of U.S. high school students reporting they seriously considered attempting suicide.

Self-Harm and Self-Injury

- **Adults:** Research indicates that approximately 5% of adults in the United States engage in non-suicidal self-injury.

- **Teens and Young Adults:** Rates are significantly higher in younger demographics. Approximately 17% of teens report some form of self-injury. The risk continues to elevate among college students, with self-harm rates estimated between 17% and 35%. The 2026 SAMHSA report also highlighted that millions of adolescents were either unsure or preferred not to report whether they had intentionally harmed themselves, suggesting these figures may be undercounted.

These numbers reflect a sustained mental health challenge across the population, with younger groups continuing to report the highest rates of ideation and self-harm.

Depression, Loneliness, and Isolation

Highly sensitive teenagers are currently navigating a significant mental health crisis, characterized by deep feelings of isolation and sadness:

- **Depression and Anxiety:** In the United States, data published by The Jed Foundation (https://jedfoundation.org/new-data-on-teen-and-young-adult-mental-health-whats-improving-and-what-still-needs-attention/) indicates that 15% of adolescents aged 12 to 17 experienced a major depressive episode in the past year, and 18% suffered from moderate to severe anxiety symptoms.
- **Loneliness:** Globally, a 2025 modeled estimate highlighted by Psychology.com (https://psychology.com/loneliness-statistics/) found that 15.8% of people aged 13 and older experience significant loneliness. In the U.S., the crisis is even more pronounced among younger demographics, with 67% of Gen Z reporting that they feel lonely.
- **The Belief That No One Can Help:** Many teenagers suffer silently because they believe reaching out is futile or unsafe. Among youth who recognized they had an unmet mental health need, 87% believed they had to handle their emotions and behaviors entirely on their own. Furthermore, 63% were worried about what people would say if they sought help, and 54% simply believed that treatment or talking to someone would not actually help them.

Hidden Spiritual, Psychic, and Anomalous Experiences

While "psychic" or "paranormal" experiences are often framed clinically as "anomalous" or "transpersonal" experiences, surveys show that youth are having these encounters at significant rates—and often keeping them secret.

- **Prevalence of Spiritual Sensitivity:** Research from the Springtide Research Institute, detailed by the National Catholic Reporter (https://www.ncronline.org/news/69-young-people-experience-sacred-moments-nature-says-new-poll), indicates that 78% of young people (ages 13 to 25) consider themselves at least slightly spiritual, and 69% report experiencing "sacred moments," often in nature.
- **Anomalous and Supernatural Encounters:** A survey of Gen Z conducted by NCLS Research (https://www.ncls.org.au/articles/gen-z-and-their-quiet-curiosity-about-the-spiritual/) found that 22% of young people report having had a supernatural or anomalous spiritual experience themselves, while 37% remain open to the idea that such events occur.
- **The Burden of Non-Disclosure:** While exact demographic percentages of teens intentionally hiding these experiences are difficult to pin down in standardized polls, clinical research into anomalous experiences highlights exactly why they remain hidden. Studies developing diagnostic tools, such as those published on PubMed Central (https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10952405/), note that individuals frequently suppress or hide their unusual perceptual or transpersonal experiences from adults and medical professionals. Because Western clinical frameworks often associate "magical thinking" or unusual perceptual experiences with pathology, highly sensitive teens quickly learn to keep these profound experiences to themselves to avoid being stigmatized, pathologized, or misunderstood.

Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences (OBEs)

- **Near-Death Experiences (NDEs):** Approximately 10% of the general population reports having had an NDE. Among patients who medically come close to death or undergo resuscitation, the incidence rate rises to between 10% and 20%.
- **Out-of-Body Experiences:** OBEs are heavily correlated with NDEs, occurring in roughly 24% of near-death cases. Across the general public, physiological research hosted on PubMed Central (https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6170042/) estimates that around 10% of individuals will have an out-of-body experience at some point in their lives.

Peak and Spiritual Experiences

Demographic surveys targeting younger populations show high rates of profound inner experiences.

- **Youth & Young Adults (Gen Z):** Data tracking 13-to-25-year-olds from the Springtide Research Institute (https://springtideresearch.org/post/religion-and-spirituality/an-inside-look-at-gen-zs-spiritual-practices) reveals that 77% of young people claim to be spiritual. Related findings from this polling indicate that 69% of these young individuals report experiencing profound "sacred moments" or peak experiences, frequently triggered by being in nature.

Paranormal and Anomalous Experiences

While many surveys group young adults with the general population, the prevalence of these experiences is widespread across all demographics.

- **Overall Prevalence:** A late-2025 survey by YouGov (https://yougov.com/en-us/articles/53258-most-americans-say-they-have-experienced-at-least-one-paranormal-event) found that 60% of Americans have experienced at least one paranormal event.
- **Common Encounters:** The most frequently reported anomalous experiences include feeling an unknown presence or energy (35%), smelling an unexplained odor (32%), and hearing unexplained sounds or voices (31%).
- **Perceived Paranormal Abilities:** 29% of the surveyed population believes they personally possess a paranormal ability. Specifically, 23% report having the psychic ability to sense auras or other people's emotions.

he most recent data from the CDC, SAMHSA, and federal surveys detail high rates of psychiatric medication use and digital dependency among American adolescents and young adults.

Psychiatric Medication Use (Ages 12 to 35)

- **Adolescents (Ages 12–17):** 13.9% of U.S. teenagers currently receive prescription medications for mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.
- **Young Adults (Ages 18–29):** Nearly 1 in 5 young adults (19.6%) took prescription medication for their mental health in the past 12 months, according to recent data from the CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db564.htm).
- **Adults (Ages 30–44):** Medication use rises slightly to 20.4% in this demographic.
- **Recent Surges:** The trajectory of antidepressant use spiked dramatically following the onset of the pandemic. Specifically, the rate of antidepressant use by teen girls (ages 12 to 17) increased by 129.6%, while use among young women (ages 18 to 25) rose by 56.5%.

Social Media and Smartphone Addiction

- **Constant Connectivity:** 40% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 report being online "almost constantly," according to a recent Psychology.com (https://psychology.com/social-media-addiction-statistics/) report.

- **Addiction Concentration:** Young adults aged 18 to 22 account for a striking 40% of all Americans considered to be addicted to social media.
- **Self-Reported Overuse:** 45% of teenagers explicitly admit they spend "too much time" on these applications.
- **Insomnia and Brain Fog:** 10% of teens check their smartphones more than 10 times per night. This nocturnal screen time suppresses melatonin and keeps the brain alert, directly feeding sleep loss, weakened focus, and worsening emotional stability.
- **Peer Awareness:** 48% of teenagers now acknowledge that social media has a mostly negative effect on people their age.