Health Trends in Adolescence
Protective Health Assets and New Risks

For Adolescents

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Adolescence is often seen as a risky and turbulent period of life, with young people ‘at risk’ from a range of new health problems. (Viner 2012)

Look at the headlines in the past six months would lead you to believe that most of our youth are alcohol-fuelled members of fight clubs, who between times are cyber-bullying and sexting. How teens find the time to do all of this in between planking, dealing drugs and causing chaos on our roads in their P-plated cars is anyone’s guess. The last thing Australia needs is more teenagers.

Sydney Morning Herald
Overall, 5% of young people drink alcohol weekly – significant decline over the past decade.
• 25% of boys and 9% of girls involved in a physical fight at least twice in the last 12 months

• Between 2002 and 2014 the proportion of both boys and girls involved in physical fights has decreased
Life Satisfaction

Happiness and self evaluation of quality of life linked to positive adult outcomes

England significant gender difference – **Girls** lower ranges with Greenland, Italy Scotland rates better

**Wales lower**

*Netherlands best ranking* decreased for 11 year olds
Overall, 65% of young people (59% of boys and 71% of girls) reported experiencing at least one health complaint on a weekly basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health complaint</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach ache</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backache</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling low</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling nervous</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleeping difficulties</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling dizzy</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feeling Low by Age, Gender and Country

![Graph showing feelings low by age, gender, and country](chart.png)
Self-harm

- Overall, 22% of young people said they had self-harmed.
- 16.8% (16-17 year olds in Australia)
- Earlier studies (Hawton 2002) – 13%
Young people who don’t have enough sleep to concentrate, by age and gender

- Overall, 22% of young people cannot concentrate at school due to lack of sleep
- Increases with age
- Gender differences
Cyberbullying 2 questions – one via messages second photographs/pictures. 18% reported experiencing cyberbullying (previous two months). 24% of girls 12% of boys.

Cyberbullying increases with age for both boys and girls -more traditional forms of bullying decreases with age.
A lot/Some

Scotland:
Girls 45% Boys 37% feeling pressured by school work in 2014

Increasing for both genders in Scotland

Wales: Girls 44% Boys 34%

England: Girls 46.5% Boys 38.9%

Girls) perceived school work pressure now exceeds any previous level over the past 20 years.
• Risk behaviours are decreasing.

• Prevalence of poor emotional wellbeing is increasing. (15 year olds lowest rates of positive wellbeing).

• Positive behaviours not improving

• Girls well-being area of concern
“Health promoting variables, often termed ‘protective factors’ or ‘assets’ have been identified as providing adolescents with a level of resilience which may help them cope and buffer them from negative influences...”

Fenton et al. (2010)
• Overall 19% meet physical activity guidelines - 22% of boys and 15% of girls

• Australia – 15% overall meet the guidelines (2010 data)

• Physical activity levels have remained stabled in girls since 2002
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Belonging and also reported feeling low</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher connectedness</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
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</table>
Key Questions

• Can we move from reducing risk factors to improving positive health behaviours and emotional well-being

• – start seeing these as important HEALTH OUTCOME MEASURES

• How do we strength protective factors or health assets gained from schools, the home and in local communities can make an important contribution to improving emotional health and young people’s well-being and preventing self harm

• How do we improve and even identify the domains of school culture and ethos and family and community that are of major arena of importance for the protection of health and well-being among young people