



Resources for Supporting Mental Health

Among Young People in Italy



Youth Leadership Programme

HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

Where to find support



Looking for resources to help yourself, a friend, or a family member? You can find various resources, such as helplines, organisations and websites here.



Key Insights



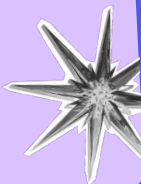
Curious about the mental health landscape in your country? Find out what young people actually need most and the biggest challenges to getting help.



Mental Health Context in Italy



What are local laws and support systems? Dive into the current mental health context in your country, see what's working, and, more importantly, what's still missing.



About the Project



Discover more about the Youth Leadership Programme, funded by the Rare Impact Fund, and how young leaders created this resource in partnership with Mental Health Europe.



This reference guide was developed by Youth Ambassador Sofia Alessandri as a part of the Youth Leadership Programme. The document is a product of co-creation, researched and drafted by Youth Leaders with the guidance and editorial oversight of Mental Health Europe. The views and content expressed reflect the national perspectives, contributions, and lived experiences of these Youth Leaders.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND SUPPORT

Disclaimer: In Italy, mental health services vary by region and municipality. Below are the most common national-level services, but many cities offer local initiatives. For more options, use the keywords in the “How to Look for Resources” section with your city’s name, or check social media and websites of local youth and cultural centers. Please note that following links and helplines were gathered with the best care possible, however, as these are third-party services, we cannot guarantee their quality or that they remain accessible after the release of these documents.



Funding Schemes



Helplines for Suicide Prevention



General Mental Health Services



Helplines for Immediate Support



Support for Alcohol, Drug, and Gambling Issues



Support for Individuals Struggling with Food-related issues



Support for Students



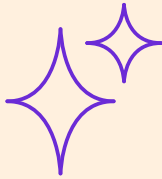
Useful websites to search for services



Online Therapy Services



Mental Health Organizations in Italy



Online Resources and Apps



Tips and Tricks for Daily Life



How to Look for Resources

“The act of speaking, being listened to, and being accepted in one’s pain without being judged is a fundamental action that allows one to break isolation and alleviate psychological pain. Those who experience psychological distress or have suicidal thoughts are not always alone, but taboos, the fear of being judged, and the fear of causing pain or frightening friends and family often lead them to keep their pain to themselves.”

— Telefono Amico representative





Funding Schemes



Bonus Psicologo

Funding can be requested by individuals with an ISEE of less than 50,000 euros, with a maximum amount of 1,500 euros (about 50 euros per session). The bonus is awarded based on economic need, and the number of bonuses depends on the funding available for that year. More information can be found on the website.



Helplines for Suicide Prevention



Telefono Amico

Free telephone helpline available 24/7 from 9AM to 12AM.

Contact: **02 2327 2327**.



Telefono Amico Cevita

Free helpline available 24/7. Contact: **02 99777**.



General Mental Health Services




Centri per la salute mentale (CSM)

Centers that are the primary point of reference for citizens with mental health issues. They coordinate prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation interventions and include at least one psychiatrist, one psychologist, one social worker, and one professional nurse. CSMs implement personalized therapeutic rehabilitation projects that develop self-care, daily living, and interpersonal skills, including job placement support. Waiting times can sometimes be long. They can be accessed through local ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale) or AUSL (Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale) offices.

Most services are located in main districts, so smaller cities or rural areas that are detached from more populated towns might not have specially dedicated public services. Inhabitants of rural areas might then need to reach the main cities to access the services in person, but all areas are covered by the territorial entities, may they be closer or farther away.

More information: [La rete dei servizi - Salute Mentale.](#)

Servizio Psichiatrico di Diagnosi e Cura



Hospital-based services provide voluntary and compulsory psychiatric treatment, as well as consultation to other hospital departments. It is located within hospital facilities.


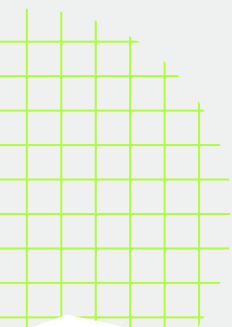


Centro diurno

Semi-residential facility that provides therapeutic and rehabilitative services and has its own dedicated team. It has suitable, adequately equipped premises. As part of personalized therapeutic and rehabilitation projects, it allows participants to engage in programs that build self-care, daily living, and interpersonal skills, including for the purposes of job placement.



Day Hospital Psichiatrico



Semi-residential facilities that offer short- and medium-term diagnostic and therapeutic rehabilitation services, including complex diagnostic tests and pharmacological treatments, helping to reduce the need for full hospitalization. It can be located within the hospital, with a functional and managerial link to the Servizio Psichiatrico di Diagnosi e Cura. It can also be located in facilities outside the hospital, linked to the CSM, equipped with adequate space, equipment, and necessary personnel. It is expected to be open at least 8 hours a day, 6 days a week.



Strutture residenziali

Non-hospital facilities that deliver part of the therapeutic and socio-rehabilitative programs for individuals with mental health issues referred by the CSM, offering opportunities for rehabilitation and social integration.

Consultori familiari

Family counseling centers provide integrated social and health services with multidisciplinary expertise. They sometimes offer free psychological support and play a key role in promoting mental health among women, children, adolescents, and families. They can be contacted through the websites and phone numbers, but most times waiting times are long.

Centri psicologici a prezzo calmierato

Centers that offer therapy at reduced prices, usually less than 50 euros per session. They are locally based, sometimes publicly funded, and are not coordinated nationally. In the **“How to Look for Resources”** section two websites are provided to look for this kind of service.





Helplines for Immediate Support



Progetto Itaca

Italian Foundation that provides an online phone helpline for individuals struggling with mental health issues and their families.

Contact: **800 274 274** or **022 90 00 71 66** (from mobile phones) on Monday to Friday from 9AM to 10PM.



Telefono Azzurro

Non-profit organisation that supports children, adolescents, and adults regarding bullying, addictions, trauma, and other youth-related issues.

Active 24/7: **1 96 96**.



Croce Rossa Italiana

Organisation that provides psychological support in emergency situations.

Contact: **1520** active 24/7.





Support for Alcohol, Drug, and Gambling Issues



Servizio per le tossicodipendenze (SER.D)

Free, accessible services in most cities providing information and support for substance abuse.



Alcolisti Anonimi APS

Support groups for individuals struggling with substance abuse. Information is available on the website for most cities in Italy.

Contact: **800 411 406**



Gruppi familiari Al-Anon

Support groups for family members of individuals struggling with substance abuse.

Contact: **800 087 897** or visit the website.



Gam-anon Italia

Support groups for individuals struggling with gambling addictions.

Contact: **340 498 0895**





Support for Individuals Struggling with Food-related issues



Animenta

Non-profit organisation that provides online support groups through Zoom and events for individuals struggling with eating disorders and food-related issues. The website also offers training and webinars.



Mapping of Eating Disorders Support Centers

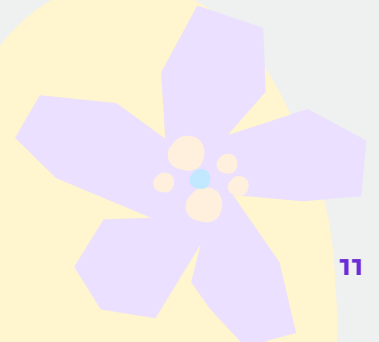
Provided by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, listing public outpatient and inpatient services.



Support for Students

University

Most universities provide counseling services for students, mainly focusing on study-related challenges such as exam stress. They may also refer students to external centers. Typical service names include: **Servizio Counselling per Studenti, Counselling Psicologico, Spazio di Ascolto.**



High School and Middle School

Most schools offer a school psychologist, accessible via the secretariat or a designated teacher. While sessions are usually held on school grounds during school hours, limiting privacy, they provide a crucial first step for students seeking therapy or support, and can refer to other services. Common service names include: **Psicologo della Scuola** or **Sostegno Psicologico della Scuola**.

“School is the place where distress often ‘speaks’ for the first time, perhaps through social withdrawal or declining performance. However, teachers cannot be left alone: collaboration can only be strengthened if we transform schools into centers of emotional literacy, where children learn that asking for help is not a sign of weakness.”

— Telefono Amico representative

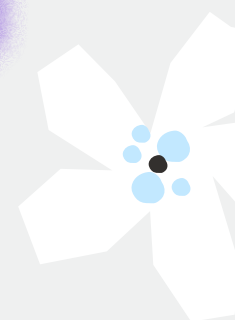


Useful websites to search for services



Agenas - Salute Mentale

Government website that allows users to search for public mental health services and facilities across Italy.





Psicoterapia Aperta

Search website dedicated to finding low-cost and accessible psychotherapy services.



Guida Psicologi

Platform that provides reviews of psychologists and indicates whether the practitioner is available for online therapy.



Psicologionline

Website that provides information on the price per session, practitioner reviews, and whether the psychologist offers online therapy.



Ministero della Salute - Salute Mentale

Official Health Ministry webpage providing information on the national mental health service network.





Informagiovani

Youth information centers present in many larger cities that provide guidance on employment, volunteering, training opportunities, and sometimes local initiatives related to health and youth wellbeing (example: Informagiovani Ravenna).



Online Therapy Services

While many psychologists and therapists now provide online therapy privately, recently new companies and medical centers have started proposing a more centralized way to connect with professionals operating online. Online therapy offers flexible, accessible, and often lower-cost options. Examples include:



Serenis

Online platform offering psychotherapy, sexology, psychiatric consultations, and group therapy, with a cost per session of around 50 euros depending on the service required.



Unobravo

Online psychology service providing individual and couple's therapy, with a cost per session of around 50 euros depending on the service required.



Santagostino

Italian medical center that offers online psychological and psychiatric services.

Disclaimer: Online therapy platforms are ideal for those who move frequently or prefer flexible, continuous support, often at lower costs. While a valid alternative to in-person therapy, users should be aware of privacy and data tracking risks, as highlighted in the “Tracciamenti” investigation, “Così le piattaforme di psicologia online tracciano i propri utenti” (available on RaiPlay). Many platform professionals also offer independent sessions, allowing for potential in-person follow-ups.



Mental Health Organizations in Italy



Associazione Italiana Tutela Salute Mentale (AITSaM)

Protects the rights and mental health of people experiencing psychological distress by providing listening and support services, self-help groups, advocacy, anti-stigma initiatives.



Unione Nazionale delle Associazioni per la Salute Mentale (UNASAM)

National Network of users', families', and advocacy associations that promotes mental health rights, fights stigma, and represents civil society in dialogue with institutions to improve mental health policies, services, and social inclusion across Italy.





Associazione Italiana per la Salute Mentale (AISME)

Promotes self-help in mental health contexts and involves professionals, patients, and their families, with no restriction in membership.



Children of Mentally Ill Parents (COMIP)

Provides support services for children of parents with mental illnesses, including a national online support group, advocacy and system change initiatives, awareness activities in schools.



TAGES Onlus

Provides information on mental health and promotes research initiatives.



Associazione Italiana Intervento Precoce nella Salute Mentale (AIPP Italia)

Promotes early prevention and intervention in mental health, with a specific focus on young people.



SOS Psiche

Provides support, information, and counseling (including free online services) delivered by psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as informational materials and forums for patients and families.





Online Resources and Apps

Disclaimer: When accessing information through podcasts, social media pages, or apps, it is important to verify the credibility of the sources. Remember that each individual's experience is different, and not all advice or shared stories can be applied directly to your personal situation.

Instagram



Chiedimi come sto

Instagram page that documents and promotes a campaign advocating for permanent psychological support in schools at all levels, sharing socio-political initiatives and mental health information.



Disegnetti Depressetti

Art page that shares illustrations related to mental health and offers the possibility to purchase selected prints.



Disegni per la salute mentale

Instagram page managed by a psychologist who combines professional expertise with illustration to raise awareness about mental health topics.



Useful Apps



Insight Timer

Meditation app offering content in multiple languages, including Italian, with a wide catalogue that includes guided meditations, music for sleep, and body scan practices.



Headspace

Widely used meditation app focused on mental health and sleep, with some meditations also available on Netflix.



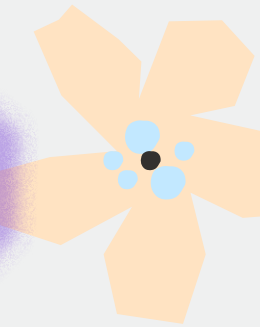
Tips and Tricks for Daily Life



Box Breathing

If you find yourself spiraling or feeling overwhelmed, this simple breathing exercise can help regulate your body. Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, pause for 4 seconds, and repeat. This technique, originating from yoga practice, helps regulate breathing and heartbeat by shifting attention away from the distressing emotion and focusing on rhythm and control.





Metodo 5-4-3-2-1

This grounding method, derived from mindfulness practices, consists of identifying 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste in your surroundings. It helps bring attention back to the present moment and reduce anxiety.



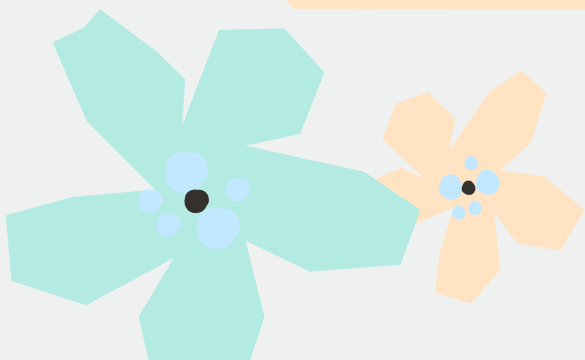
Body Scan

A mindfulness meditation technique that can be used during moments of stress or anxiety. It involves systematically bringing attention to different parts of the body, from the feet to the head, to observe sensations, tensions, and emotions without judgment, promoting awareness and relaxation.



“Only by combining the energy and freshness of young leaders with the experience of senior volunteers can we make our voices heard and overcome the stigma surrounding mental health. In short, my message is: break the silence.”

— Telefono Amico representative



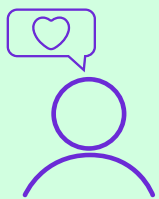


How to Look for Resources

Key search terms include: Ordine degli Psicologi, Psicoterapia a prezzo calmierato/prezzo agevolato, Psicoterapia, Psicoterapeuta¹, Psicologo², Psichiatra³, Centro di igiene mentale, Centro salute mentale, Gruppo di supporto, Terapia di gruppo, Centro di ascolto, Gruppo di ascolto.

Disclaimer: To verify a therapist's reliability, check their registration in the national professional register via your regional Ordine degli Psicologi websites ([this is the example for Lombardy](#)), which lists verified contact details and specializations. The lists are regionally based, so look for the specific one for your region.

¹**Psicoterapeuta** is a psychologist or psychiatrist that has completed a 4 year specialization course in Psicoterapia after the mandatory 5 years of the degree. They are registered in the Ordine/Albo degli Psicologi or of Medici (Doctors) as they do not hold a separate legal title. The additional training allows the psychotherapist to work with individuals experiencing psychological distress, emotional difficulties and mental health issues using therapeutic techniques to foster coping strategies, self-understanding and improved quality of life.



²**Psicologo** is a psychologist who acts in a more preventative and routine way, to support patients and their wellbeing in their everyday life. They are registered in the Ordine/Albo degli Psicologi. Their education consists of the 5 mandatory university years (Laurea triennale + Laurea magistrale).

³**Psichiatra** is a medical doctor who has completed the 6 year Medicine Degree and has specialized in Psychiatry (4+ years), they can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe medication and may provide psychotherapy if specialized (see above).



KEY INSIGHTS

These insights were identified through expert interviews and research on young people's mental health in Italy, providing an overview of the systemic and social factors shaping their experiences.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY

Many young people in Italy face a “polycrisis” - a condition of growing precariousness shaped by multiple overlapping challenges. High rates of youth unemployment (20.6% in September 2025, ISTAT) and a large proportion of young people aged 15–29 who are NEET (not in education, employment, or training, EUROSTAT 2025) create structural instability. These conditions make it harder for young people to plan for the future and directly affect their mental wellbeing, creating feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and stress.



STRUCTURAL BARRIERS IN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Italy's highly decentralized healthcare system and limited funding make it difficult to implement a cohesive, nationwide strategy for youth mental health. Many effective initiatives depend on the dedication of individual professionals or local organizations rather than systemic support, leaving gaps in access and consistency.

MENTAL HEALTH AND BROADER SOCIAL POLICIES

Mental health issues cannot be considered in isolation from social and political contexts. Structural choices regarding welfare, social rights, and political priorities directly influence the support available to young people. Addressing mental health requires a broader conversation about equity, rights, and systemic change.

PARTICIPATION AND CO-DESIGN

Involving young people and local communities in designing mental health initiatives improves effectiveness and sustainability. However, this participatory approach is still limited in Italy. As emphasized by local coordinators:

“Involving local people in co-design processes can have a very positive outcome, not only on the initiative itself, which then becomes effective, but it can also dismantle a whole other set of potentially problematic local dynamics, making it a practice worth adopting.”

— Chiedimi come sto Coordinator

WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Your experiences, from insecurity and stress to anxiety and frustration, are valid and recognized. While systemic support is fragmented, many initiatives exist to provide assistance. Understanding the structural challenges behind mental health provision can make it easier to navigate available resources and advocate for meaningful change.



MENTAL HEALTH CONTEXT IN ITALY

“Italy still faces structural policy gaps when it comes to suicide prevention. To date, there is no integrated national plan coordinating healthcare, education, and law enforcement. This fragmentation has a severe impact on young people: the 16% increase in cases among 15- to 34-year-olds recorded between 2020 and 2021 is a wake-up call that cannot be ignored. Another fundamental issue is the lack of real-time monitoring.”

— Telefono Amico representative

Mental health in Italy is protected by Law 180/1978 (Legge Basaglia), a landmark reform that closed psychiatric hospitals and ended forced detention. The law established that mental health treatment should be voluntary and community-based. It also created local Territorial Psychiatric Services and guarantees that people with mental health issues have the same rights as everyone else, including the right to be included in society.



Italy has a universal healthcare system, which means care is mostly free. However, having the right to care does not always mean getting it quickly or easily. Long waiting lists and limited services, especially in some areas, are still common problems. Because healthcare is managed at the regional level, services can look very different depending on where you live. There are significant differences between regions, particularly between the North and the South, making access uneven across the country.



For young people, the first point of contact with the system is usually a general practitioner. A pediatric doctor is guaranteed until the age of 14, after which you must register with an adult general practitioner. However, even booking an appointment can involve long waiting times and difficulty reaching the clinic.

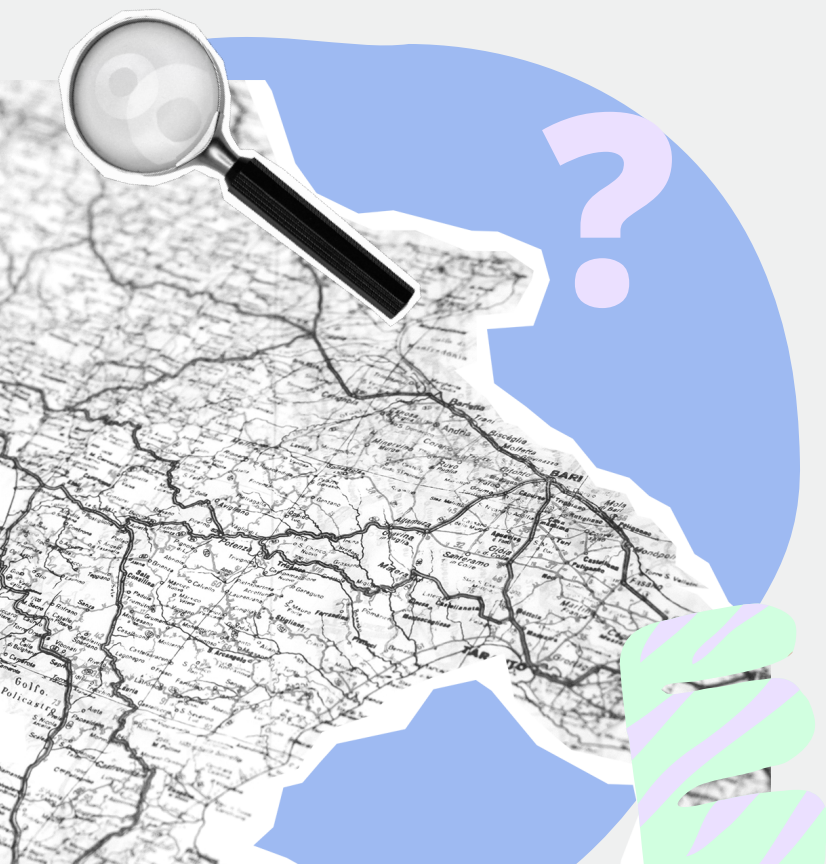
At the same time, data show that young people's mental health has worsened in recent years. Statistics from 2020 report a concerning deterioration, particularly among girls (ISTAT, 2023).

Despite this growing need, only



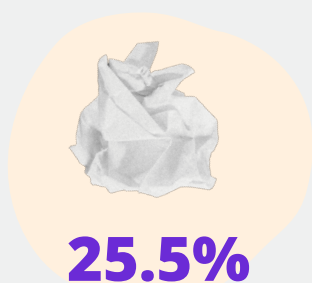
of the National Health Fund was allocated to mental health in 2022, which is lower than in many other Central European countries.

Another challenge is that most resources are focused on treating problems once they become serious, rather than preventing them early. For those who turn to private therapy, the cost of a one-hour session ranges between 35 and 120 euros (CNOP), which can be a major barrier for students and young adults.

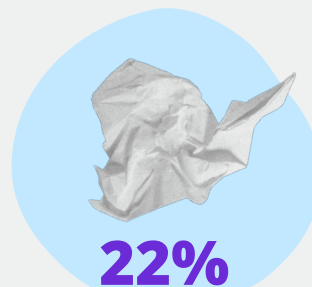


THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN ITALY

Recent data highlight how deeply the COVID-19 pandemic affected young people's emotional wellbeing. The #PRESTOInsieme survey examined changes in lifestyle habits and psychological wellbeing among the Italian population during the COVID-19 lockdown (without restrictions in the sample). The findings show that younger people and students were more likely to experience more severe depressive symptoms compared to other groups. Overall:



of respondents reported moderate psychological distress



experienced severe levels of psychological distress

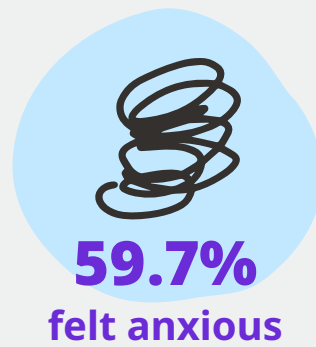
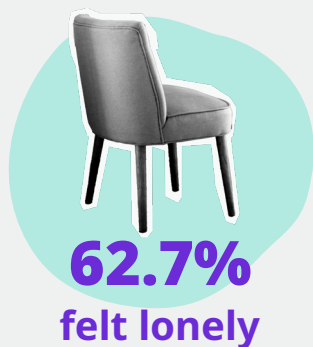
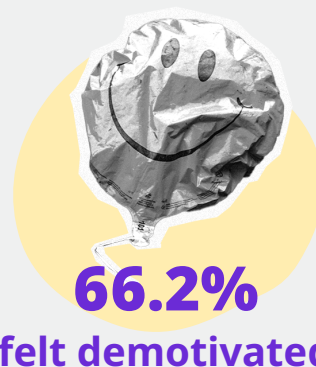
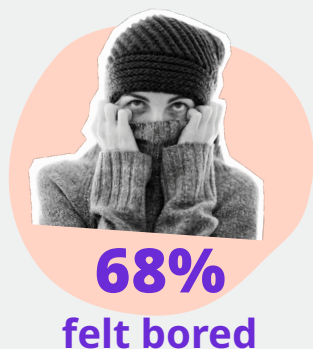
The 2022 "Chiedimi come sto" survey, conducted among high school and university students, provides a clear picture of this impact.



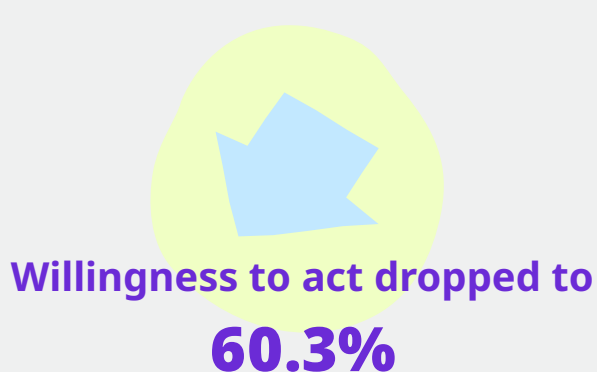
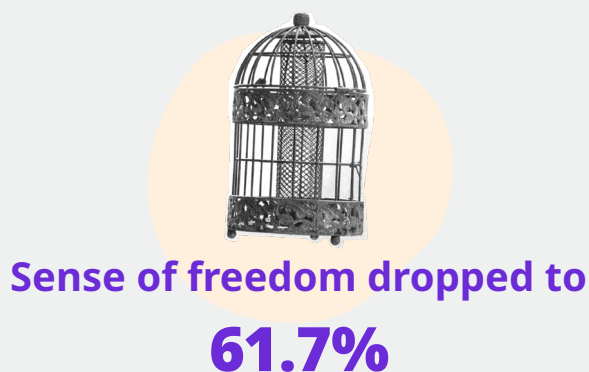
HOW DID STUDENTS FEEL AFTER COVID-19?

*(“Chiedimi come sto” Survey, 2022
– high school & university students)*

After the pandemic, most students reported:



At the same time, positive emotions decreased:



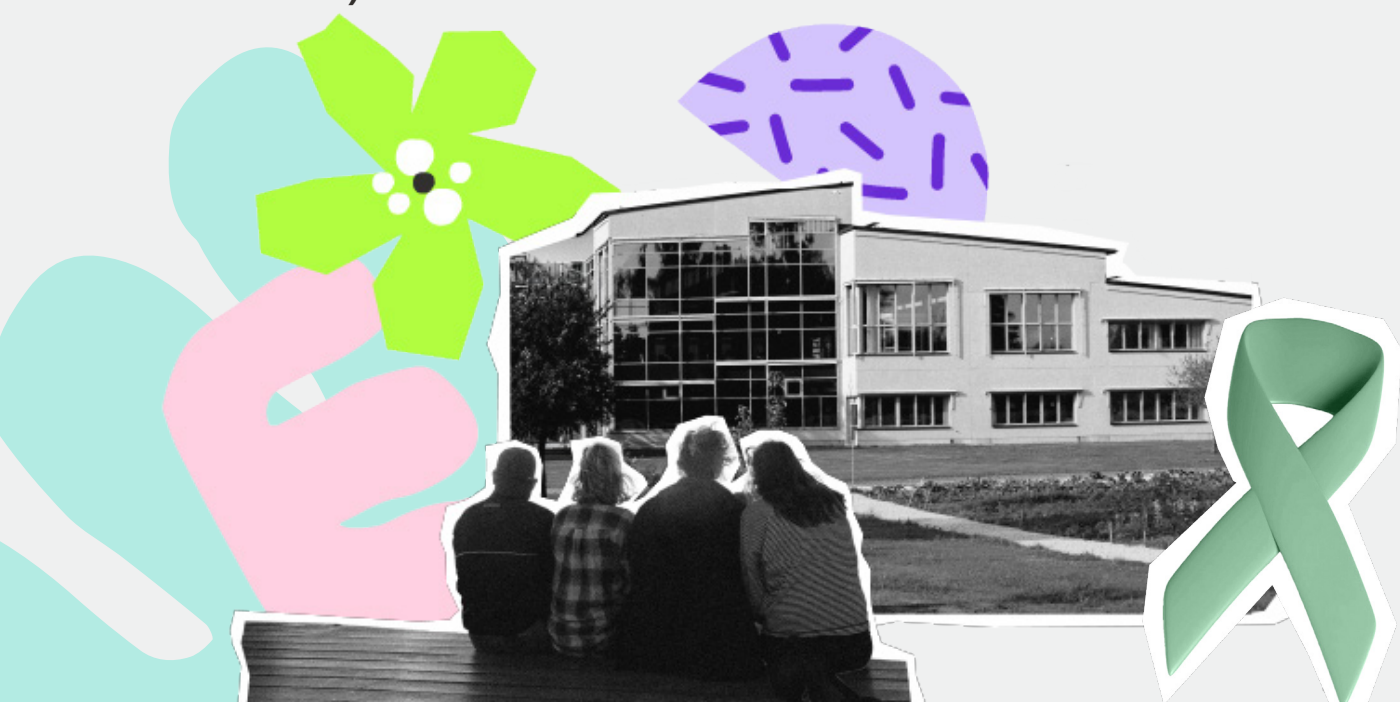
These findings show not only an increase in distress, but also a significant reduction in positive emotional experiences among young people.

HOW IS ITALY ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH?

In 2025, Italy launched the National Mental Health Plan (Piano Nazionale per la Salute Mentale 2025–2030), which includes a dedicated chapter on Youth Mental Health. The Plan responds to the growing psychological distress observed in recent years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, and aims to modernize the national approach to mental health care.

The Plan adopts a bio-psycho-social model that moves beyond a purely clinical perspective. It recognizes that mental health is shaped not only by individual factors, but also by social, environmental, and relational conditions. In line with WHO and European Commission guidelines, it embraces the One Health/One Mental Health approach, acknowledging the interconnection between physical, psychological, environmental, and social wellbeing.

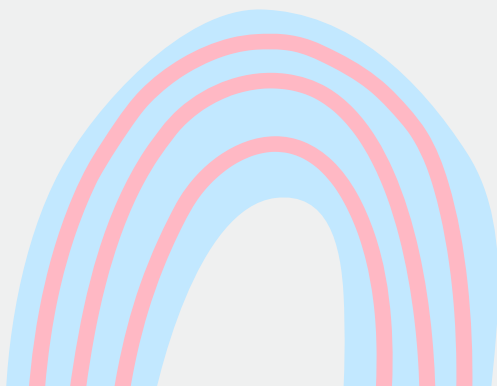
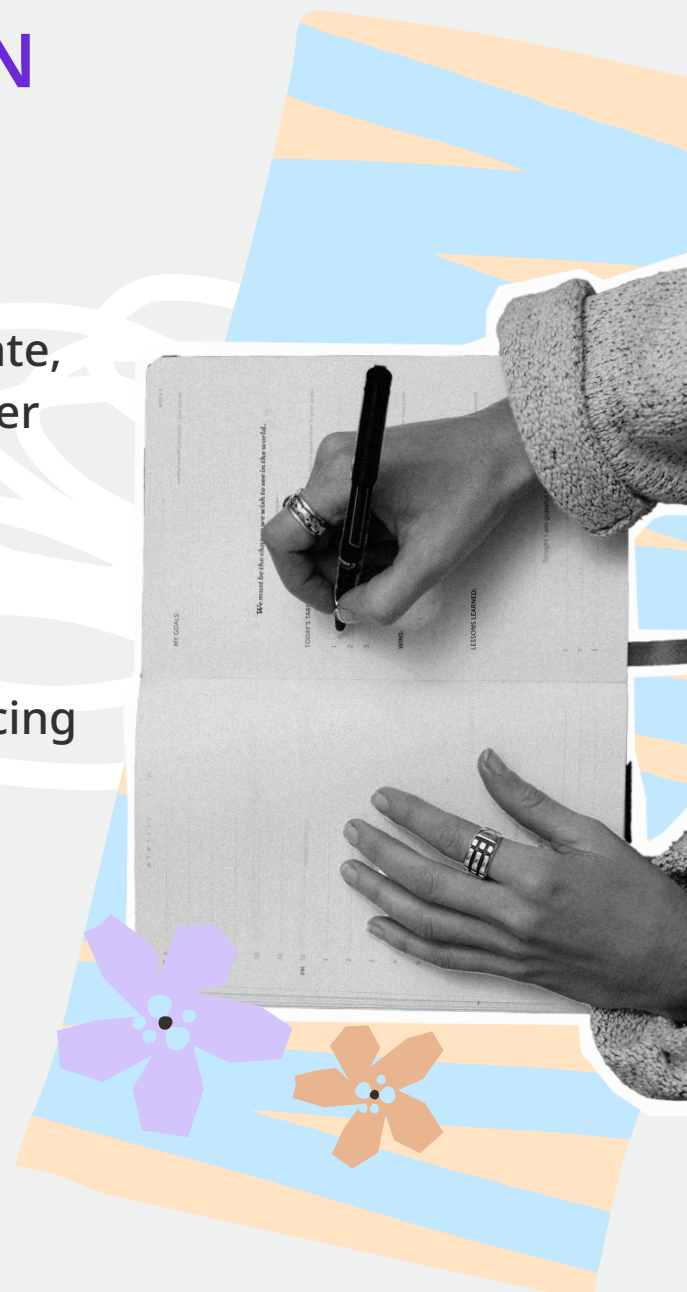
A central principle of the Plan is placing the individual at the center of care. Young people are viewed not simply as patients, but as active participants in their own recovery and wellbeing, supported by families, caregivers, and professionals through collaborative and participatory approaches (European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies).



The Plan also recognizes that many mental health difficulties begin at an early age and must be addressed promptly to prevent worsening over time. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health needs have increased significantly, with younger people experiencing more complex and severe forms of distress. The age of onset for serious psychological conditions has lowered, increasing pressure on health, social, and community services. Attention to neurodiversity has also grown, reinforcing the importance of early and preventative interventions. Mental health issues currently account for approximately 45% of the overall burden of disease.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

The Plan is designed to help young people earlier, before problems escalate, by making psychological support easier to access locally and avoiding gaps in care when transitioning from child to adult services. It also aims to bring mental health support directly into schools and communities, while reducing stigma and strengthening emotional skills for all.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Youth Leadership Programme is funded by **Rare Impact Fund** to amplify the voice of young people within Mental Health Europe and beyond, fostering a movement of young leaders who drive cultural and social change. By transforming the narrative around mental health, young leaders will challenge stigma and advocate for tangible support in schools, care settings, and the wider community.

Active participation of young people in policy development and sociopolitical processes is essential for building a just and equitable society where everyone's mental health can thrive. For 2025–2026, the project will focus on implementing various engagement activities led by youth leaders at both European and local levels, with the goal of supporting the mental health of children and young people aged 12–25.

This infosheet is part of the Youth Leadership Programme and focuses specifically on Italy. It aims to map youth-friendly, low-barrier (peer and community) mental health support offers, helping young people find services that feel accessible, non-judgemental, and easy to reach - especially during moments when life feels overwhelming or too difficult to manage alone.

“Addressing mental health issues, especially when they lead to suicidal thoughts, requires a paradigm shift: we must stop viewing it as an individual problem and start seeing it as a collective emergency.” — Telefono Amico representative



[@mentalhealthyouthleadership](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthyouthleadership)

rare impact fund



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