

## Association of self-rated health, life satisfaction and mental health difficulties in Latvian adolescents

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### **Objectives**

Mental health difficulties are highly prevalent in adolescent populations, but often unrecognised and untreated. The aim of the study was to investigate self-rated health and life-satisfaction as a possible proxy indicator of mental health difficulties in Latvian adolescents.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted using data from the international Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study year 2017/2018 database. HBSC in 2017/2018 included a mental health-screening instrument - The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire for 3-16 year olds. SDQ results were classified as abnormal, and indicative of significant mental health difficulties, if 22 points and higher were reached on the SDQ total difficulties score (results above the 90<sup>th</sup> centile). A binomial logistic regression model was used to explore the link between self-rated health, life-satisfaction and mental health difficulties, adjusting for sociodemographic factors (sex, age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status).

### **Results**

The sample consisted of 4412 adolescents age 11, 13 and 15. 2224 (50,4%) were girls. Girls in the sample had 1,33 times higher odds (CI 1,07-1,66) [Office1] of reporting significant mental health difficulties. Adolescents who evaluated their socioeconomic status as low had 2,44 times higher odds (CI 1,62-3,69) of reporting significant mental health difficulties. The results of the regression model indicated that even after controlling for sociodemographic factors, adolescents that did not rate their health as good or excellent had 2,56 times higher odds (CI 2,00-3,29), and adolescents with low life satisfaction (0-6 on a 10 point scale) had 3,06 times higher odds (CI 2,39-3,93) of reporting significant mental health difficulties.

### **Conclusions**

Poor self-rated health and life satisfaction are important predictors of significant mental health difficulties in the adolescent population. It is recommended to screen adolescents reporting poor self-rated health and life satisfaction in general medical practice for previously undiagnosed mental health difficulties.