

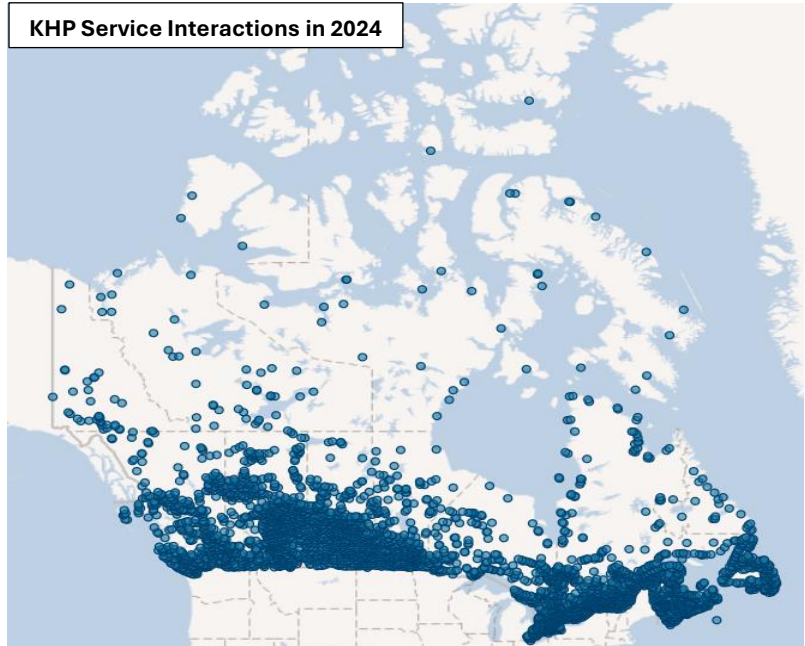
# State of Youth Mental Health in Canada

October 17th, 2024

Mental health issues continue to significantly affect youth in Canada, with Kids Help Phone (KHP) playing a critical role in offering support.

In 2024, KHP has had over **3 million interactions** with youth across Canada, reflecting an increasing demand for mental health services.

KHP Service Interactions in 2024



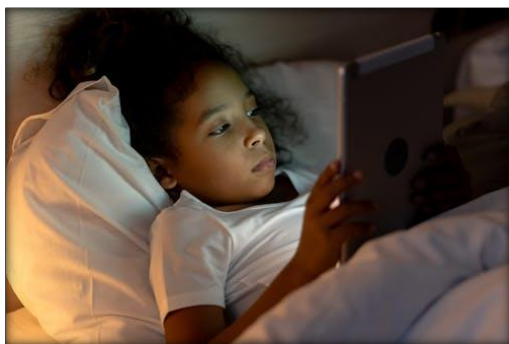
## Key Trends in Youth Mental Health Issues

KHP has observed a sharp rise in texting interactions concerning abuse, body image, and grief among young people. Comparing 2024 data to the previous year:

- **Physical abuse** interactions have increased by 27%.
- **Emotional abuse** has risen by 19%.
- Concerns around **eating and body image** are up by 18%.
- **Grief** and **isolation** have increased by 15% and 14%, respectively.

These changes could be influenced by rising cost of living, the negative influence of social media, and/or the use of new weight loss drugs (i.e. Ozempic). <sup>1</sup>

## Youth and Misinformation



A survey conducted by KHP between August and September 2024 revealed that misinformation on social media is a major concern for youth. 63% of youth reported encountering misinformation or harmful content, underscoring the negative impact of social media exposure.<sup>2</sup> Youth reported, "Misinformation and hate speech leads to feelings of frustration and sadness", and "A lot of content online spreads misinformation, leading to confusion".

<sup>1</sup> These suggestions are based on temporal relationships between changes in issue tags and support of external data. For example, the increase of interactions about body image coincides with the rise of searches for Ozempic and weight loss over Google Trends data.

<sup>2</sup> Out of the 145 responses to this question, 94 youth reported encountering misinformation.

## Trends by Gender

KHP has also noted distinct patterns in the issues raised by service users based on gender identity, in 2024.

- **Female Service Users:** Anxiety, relationship issues, and depression dominate the concerns raised in texting interactions by self-identified female users, with 48% of texting interactions on **anxiety/stress**, 42% on **relationship issues**, and 28% on **depression**. Alarming trends include a **38% increase in sexual abuse** and a **24% increase in emotional abuse** concerns compared to the previous year.
- **Male Service Users:** Anxiety and relationship issues are similarly prevalent among self-identified male users, with 44% of texts about **anxiety/stress** and 42% about **relationships**. Notably, there has been an **11% increase in depression-related interactions** in 2024.
- **2SLGBTQ+ Service Users:** These users face similar challenges, with 42% of texts focused on **anxiety/stress**, 28% on **depression**, and 24% on **suicide**. 2SLGBTQ+ youth tend to reach out to KHP about **suicide** (24% of interactions) at a higher rate than **males** (15% of interactions) and **females** (17% of interactions). KHP has also seen a **19% increase in issues related to gender and sexual identity** and a **10% increase in body image concerns**.



## Peer-to-Peer Platform Growth

Particularly notable is the **67% increase in interactions on KHP's Peer-to-Peer platform** between January 1 and September 30, 2024, compared to the same period last year. KHP's Peer-to-Peer platform has shown increased engagement in key areas:



- **Family issues:** 76% increase
- **Eating disorders and body image:** 50% increase
- **Dating concerns:** 50% increase
- **2SLGBTQ+ topics:** 43% increase

This growth highlights the growing reliance of peer support networks platform's value in providing a space for youth to connect and share experiences around their mental health challenges.

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## Conclusion

Kids Help Phone continues to play a crucial role in addressing the mental health crisis among Canadian youth, offering vital support across a wide range of issues. As mental health challenges increase, KHP's innovative approach—combining technology, data analysis, and peer support—ensures that no young person is left without the help they need, especially in areas where mental health services are lacking. KHP's efforts in 2024 reflect the growing importance of accessible, confidential support in safeguarding the mental well-being of Canada's youth.



1 These suggestions are based on temporal relationships between changes in issue tags and support of external data. For example, the increase of interactions about body image coincides with the rise of searches for Ozempic and weight loss over Google Trends data.

2 Out of the 145 responses to this question, 94 youth reported encountering misinformation.