

Statistical Summary 2008

Profile of calls and callers for the 2008 calendar year



0800WHATSUP (0800 942 8787) is a free, confidential, professional telephone counselling service for five to 18 year olds. Callers can speak free of charge to a trained counsellor between noon and midnight, seven days a week from any telephone in New Zealand, including mobile phones. Callers are welcome to ring with any issue, no matter how small.

Highlights

- On average, 1,422 calls were made to 0800WHATSUP each day during 2008. 0800WHATSUP counsellors answered approximately 29% of these. The response rate is constrained by limited funding for counsellor wages and telecommunications costs.
- Almost equal numbers of girls and boys called 0800WHATSUP (p.13).
- The average age of callers is just 13 years and 40% are 12 years or younger (p.13).
- 83% of callers surveyed report their talk with the 0800WHATSUP counsellor was “quite” or “very” helpful (p.15).
- Peer relationship problems continue to be the leading cause for concern of children and young people calling 0800WHATSUP but the severity of these problems might be decreasing (p.6).
- Bullying remains the second most common issue for 0800WHATSUP callers but the proportion of calls about severe bullying decreased in 2008 (p.7).
- Pregnancy is the most common reason for 0800WHATSUP to refer a caller to an external service (p.7).
- Feelings of loneliness were more often reported in 2008 than in 2007 (p.8).
- A third of callers with self-image concerns reported severe problems (p.8).
- Calls about quitting tobacco were higher than in 2007 and concern about friends’ smoking was down—perhaps smoking among children and young people is on the decrease? (p.10).
- The frequency and severity of calls about physical abuse were unchanged in 2008. It appears that repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act has not led to a rise in the number of children complaining about illegal parenting methods (p.10).
- Calls about violence decreased in 2008 (p.11)

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Introduction

0800WHATSUP is a free, professional telephone counselling service that is available from noon to midnight every day of the year to NZ's 841,000 young people aged between five and 18 years old.



0800WHATSUP is provided by The Kids Help Foundation Trust, an incorporated charity under the umbrella of Barnardos New Zealand. It became available to children and young people on 22nd September 2001.

This statistical summary profiles the children and young people of NZ who have contacted 0800WHATSUP between 1st January and 31st December 2008 and details their main concerns.

During 2008, 0800WHATSUP counsellors answered 145,060 calls from children and young people—an increase of 18.2% on the previous year. Non-identifying details were recorded for all calls answered.

This information provides a pool of valuable data on issues of concern to the young people who phone the service and is made available for any agencies or individuals to use. This publication may be quoted with appropriate acknowledgements. 0800WHATSUP can produce specific reports, information summaries or periodic statistical analyses on request.

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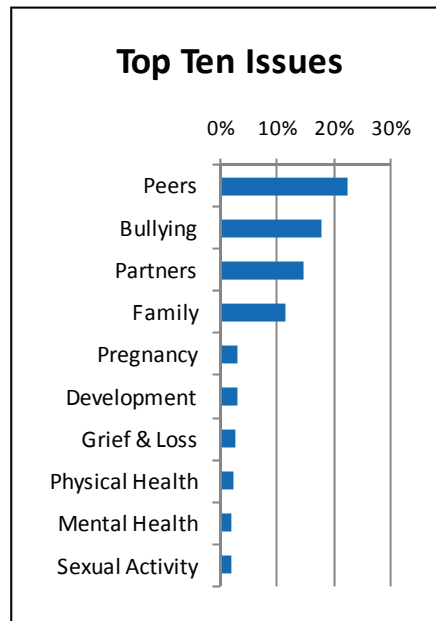
Overview of Issues

Calls from children and young people are categorised into one of 11 different problem categories. The table below left shows the number and percentage of calls for each problem category recorded during 2008.

These problem categories are further broken down into 39 sub-problems. The graph to the right below shows the ten main problems about which children and young people called 0800WHATSUP in this period.

The five most commonly presented issues of concern vary little from year to year. Relationships with others, particularly other children, consistently present the key challenges faced by children and young people.

Problem Category	% of Calls
Relationships	50.39%
School-related	20.26%
Sex	6.08%
Emotional	5.92%
Self Concept	5.60%
Health	5.20%
Practical	2.50%
Drug and Alcohol	1.57%
Child Abuse	1.41%
Violence	1.01%
Cults/Sects	0.06%
Total	100.00%



Relationship Issues

50.39%

Peers; Partners, Family

- About half of all counselling calls involve concerns about relationships with others.
- Calls in this category reporting ongoing problems in peer relationships, including difficulty maintaining friendships, decreased significantly from 2007 (41% to 34%¹). The proportion of calls about occasional problems with peers increased accordingly.
- Of those calling about family relationship problems, 51% reported experiencing frequent family conflict or family breakdown such as separation or divorce—about the same as in 2007.
- Relationships with partners (girlfriends/boyfriends) was the main concern of teenage callers. Of all calls about partner relationships, 37% reported significant difficulties or relationship breakdown—a decrease from 2007². Thirty-one percent said they wanted to establish a relationship, about the same as in 2007.

1. $z = 12.252, p < .000$ • 2. $z = 3.362, p < .000$

*He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.*

*What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people, it is people, it is people.*

School-Related Problems

20.26%

Bullying; Authority Conflict; Study

- Bullying is the second most frequent reason children and young people call 0800WHATSUP and the leading issue for those aged between nine and 11 years. Although the proportion of calls about bullying did not change between 2007 and 2008, the severity of the bullying reported decreased: the proportion of frequent incidents or continual harassment dropped significantly, from 42.8% to 26.7%¹.

Although calls about bullying show an increasing, long-term trend over time (see p.16), the stabilization of the total proportion of bullying calls between 2007 and 2008 and the drop in severity of these calls are encouraging.

- The majority (61.9%) of calls about authority conflict concerned unfair treatment by authority figures at school.
- Stress arising from workload or exams made up 15.9% of the calls about study concerns.

1. $z = 11.78$, $p < .000$

Sex-Related Problems

6.08%

Pregnancy; Sexual Activity; Contraception; Sexual Harassment; STIs

- More than half (53.3%) of the calls regarding sex concerned pregnancy. About 29% of these expressed distress about telling significant people about the pregnancy and another 20% were needing support with decision-making or urgent medical or emotional care.
- Referral to pregnancy support services is the most common external referral made at 0800WHATSUP. 37% of pregnancy callers were referred to an external service for further assessment.
- About 48% of callers about specific sexual activities wished to discuss a sexual experience and another 48% were seeking information or thinking about whether to engage in some sexual activity.
- The great majority (85%) of callers about contraception were seeking contraception information or were worried about the health risks of sex.

Emotional Problems

5.92%

Anger; Grief and loss; Loneliness; Suicide

- Calls about loneliness were up from 0.6% of all calls in 2007 to 0.8% in 2008¹.
- Grief and loss were the most commonly presented emotional problems, making up 47% of this category. Over half of these calls were from children and young people wanting to talk over an experience of loss. About 8% were reporting long-term, significant disruption of thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- More than half (57%) of callers about suicide were presenting suicidal thoughts or fears and another 18% were expressing immediate intent or current action. 23% of callers about suicide were referred to external services for further assistance.
- Almost half (49%) of callers about anger expressed frequent or severe anger management problems.

1. $z = 2.652, p = .004$

Self Concept

5.60%

Development; Self Image; Sexual Preference

- This category increased in importance to callers from 4.8% in 2007¹. This increase arose from increased rates of calls about development (2.6% to 3.2%²) and sexual preference (1.4% to 1.7%³)
- Over half (60%) of callers about development had concerns about some specific issue and another 33% were anxious about developmental changes or experiencing embarrassment.
- 33% of callers with self-image concerns reported persistent feelings of low self-worth or severe feelings of worthlessness.
- Approximately one-third (35%) of calls about sexual preference expressed confusion about sexual orientation and a similar proportion (33%) expressed problems or severe distress as a result of their sexual orientation.

1. $z = 2.948, p = .002$ • 2. $z = 3.171, p = .001$ • 3. $z = 2.041, p = .021$

Health-Related Problems

5.20%

Eating Behaviour; HIV AIDS; Physical Health; Mental Health

- Physical health concerns (46%) and mental health concerns (41%) made up the great majority of calls in this category.
- Over half of the callers with physical health concerns (57%) were presenting worries about their own symptoms. Another 28% were seeking information about health issues.
- Just under half (44%) of callers with mental health concerns reported having received a clinical diagnosis or severe ill-effects on their lives and another 43% were presenting mild or occasional symptoms.

Practical Issues

2.50%

Employment/finance; Homelessness; Legal; Life Skills

- Practical problems include financial difficulties, unemployment, skills for independent living, leaving home or homelessness or the need for support with legal issues.
- Questions about life skills (e.g. cooking, budgeting, housework, maintenance) made up 51% of these calls.
- 25% of calls in this category concerned leaving home and homelessness. 33% of these callers reported having left home and having nowhere to stay and another 6% were assessed as being at risk or extremely distressed as a result of their homelessness.
- 13% had employment or financial problems and 11% had questions about legal issues.

Drugs and Alcohol

1.57%

Drug Use; Alcohol Use; Tobacco Use

- 57% of callers about alcohol reported binge-drinking or using frequently or habitually. A further 8% were concerned about a friend's use of alcohol and 16% were concerned about their own behaviour when intoxicated.
- 60% of the callers using tobacco were seeking help to quit—up from 45% in 2007¹. A further 20% were concerned about a friend's use—down from 34% in 2007². Together these figures might indicate increased concern about personal tobacco use and reduced smoking rates among children and young people.
- Calls concerning drugs other than alcohol or tobacco made up 50% of this category. Almost half of these callers reporting using drugs frequently or habitually.

1. $z = 2.782, p = .003$ • 2. $z = 1.813, p = .035$

Child Abuse

1.41%

Emotional Abuse; Neglect; Physical Abuse; Sexual Abuse; Sexual Offending

- 50% of the calls about child abuse related to physical abuse, 33% to sexual abuse, 8% to emotional abuse and 7% to neglect.
- 43% of callers reporting physical abuse stated that they were experiencing regular abuse or felt currently at risk of injury or death. The frequency¹ and severity² of calls regarding physical abuse were not significantly different from their values in 2007.
- 80% of the callers ringing about sexual abuse said that they had been abused at least once. 60% stated that they were no longer being abused but had unresolved issues. 11% stated that they were currently at risk of sexual abuse and a further 20% reported ongoing abuse.

1. $z = 0.707, p = .240$ • 2. $t = 1.375, p = .085$

Violence

1.01%

Assault; Sexual Assault; Domestic Violence

- The frequency of calls about violence reduced between 2007 and 2008¹.
- Physical harassment or assault was the focus for 48% of the calls about violence. 65% of these were about isolated incidents or threats of personal harm.
- Sexual assault constituted 17% of the calls in this category, with almost half reporting a recent assault and a further 17% reporting an attempted assault.
- 36% of calls about violence involved concern about violence between the caller's caregivers or parents. 22% reported multiple incidents and a further 8% said that the violence had caused significant injury to a parent/caregiver.

1. $z = 2.429$, $p = .008$

Gender Differences

Although both males and females are principally concerned about problems in relationships with others, they differ in the relative importance of specific problems in this category.

The following table shows the five main problems for each gender, in order from highest to lowest.

Females	Males
Relationships with Peers	Bullying
Bullying	Relationships with Partners
Relationships with Partners	Relationships with Peers
Relationships with Family	Relationships with Family
Pregnancy	Sexual Activity

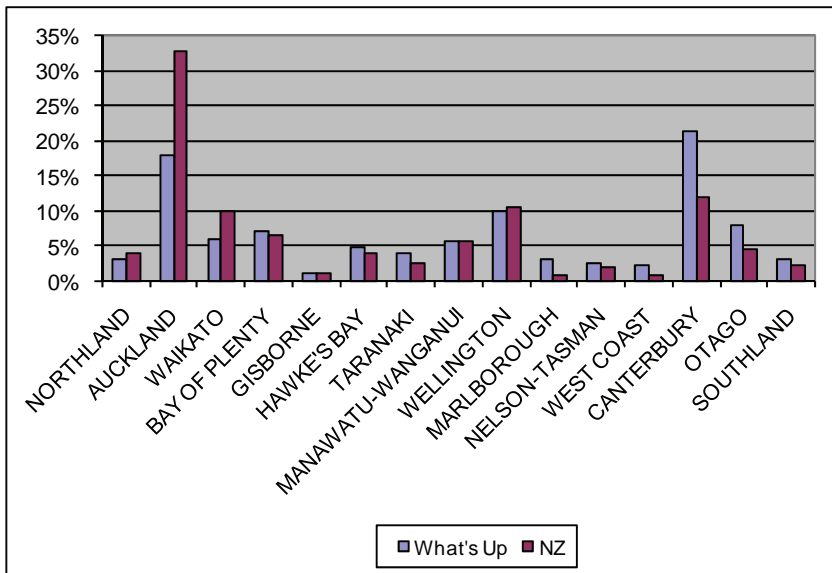
Age Differences

Pre-teens and teens also show some differences in the relative importance of specific issues. The following table shows the five main problems for each age group, in order from highest to lowest.

5-12 years of age	13-18 years of age
Relationships with Peers	Relationships with Partners
Bullying	Relationships with Peers
Relationships with Family	Relationships with Family
Relationships with Partners	Bullying
Development	Pregnancy

Where Do The Calls Come From?

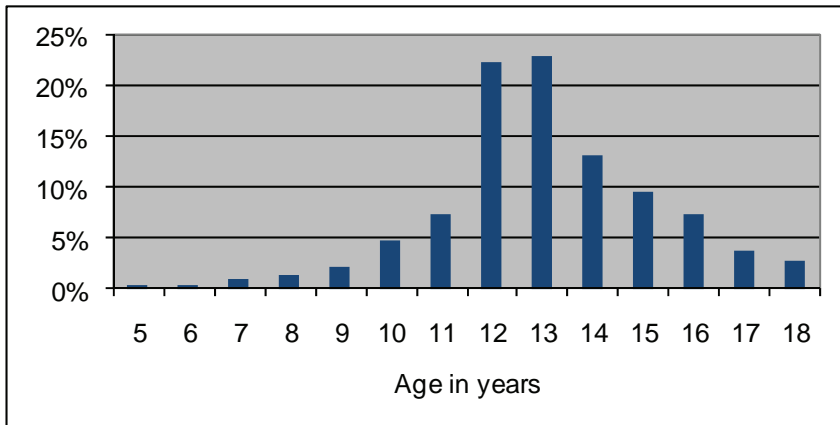
Calls from throughout NZ are answered in the counselling call center in Auckland. The chart below describes the comparison between the estimated regional population of five to 18 year olds and the regional distribution of callers to 0800WHATSUP. There is some tendency for rural regions to be more highly represented among callers than urban regions. This may be due to a wider range of alternative sources of help and support for children and young people in cities.



Caller Age Profile

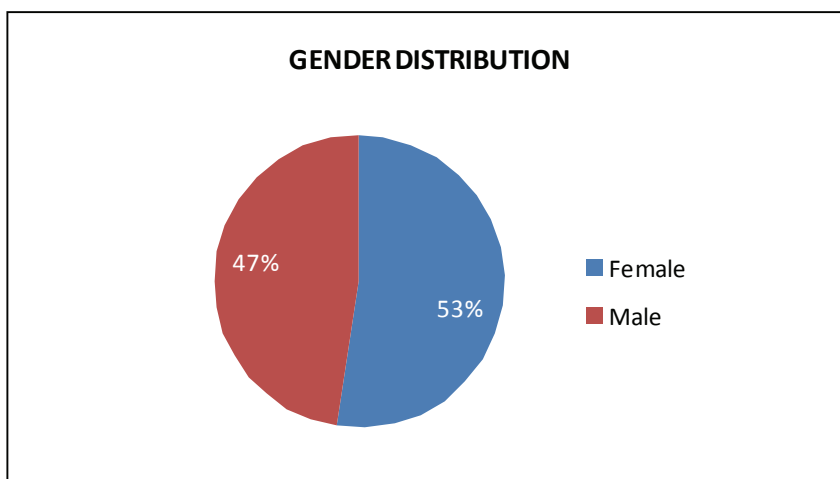
0800WHATSUP seeks primarily to engage with pre-teenage children. These years of “middle-childhood” offer an excellent opportunity to develop problem-solving and emotional self-management skills, building the ability to cope with set-backs and challenges (often referred to as “resilience”).

The graph below shows the age distribution of callers to 0800WHATSUP during 2008. The average age of callers was 13.04 years and 40% were 12 years of age or younger.



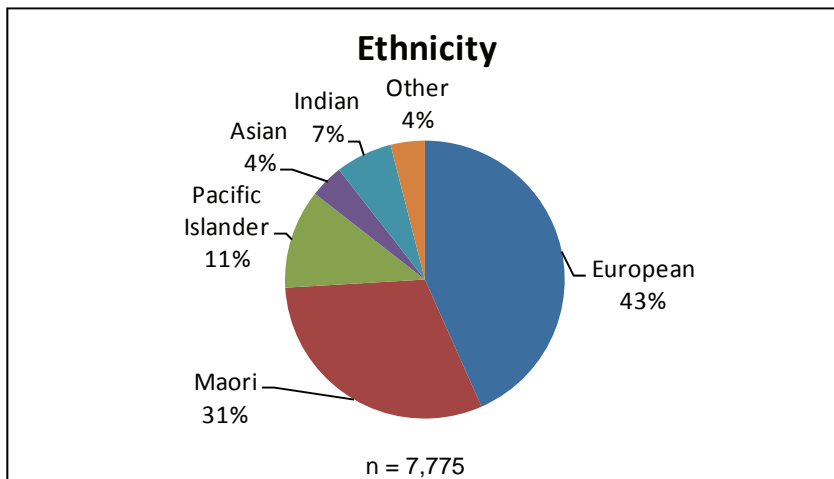
Caller Gender Profile

Females made up a small majority of the callers in 2008—52.6% compared with 47.4% males. This is the third year running that 0800WHATSUP has had nearly equal numbers of boys and girls contacting the service, which is a pleasing trend in indicating that males in Aotearoa/New Zealand have become more willing to seek help and talk about their concerns.



Caller Ethnicity

Ethnic identity is recorded when it is mentioned by callers, rather than routinely collected. It is known for less than 1% of callers, so few reliable conclusions can be drawn from a single-year's data regarding ethnicity. However, data accumulated since 0800WHATSUP began in 2001 show that callers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds have contacted the service in proportions that approximate the population distribution of ethnic groups. There is some indication that Maori and Pacific Island callers may be over-represented.



Duty Of Care and Emergency Referrals

0800WHATSUP receives a small number of calls each year from children and young people at risk of imminent harm. 0800WHATSUP counsellors are trained in risk assessment and our Duty Of Care protocols. They are assisted in all such calls by the supervisor on duty. During 2008, 87 such calls were managed.

In the majority of these cases, the decision is made to immediately involve an appropriate service in order to ensure the safety of the caller and others.

During 2008, 49 such referrals were made:

- Child, Youth and Family—22 referrals
- Police—9 referrals
- Mental health crisis teams—6 referrals
- Other services—5 referrals
- Physical health services—3 referrals
- Emergency accommodation services—3 referrals

Client Satisfaction

In July 2008, a system was introduced at 0800WHATSUP enabling callers to make an immediate and anonymous report on their level of satisfaction with the service they have just received.

Callers can rate the call as having been “totally unhelpful”, “not much help”, “quite helpful” or “very helpful”.

To the end of 2008, data has been collected from 716 respondents.

The graph below shows the distribution of these client satisfaction ratings. The overall positive evaluation rate (“quite helpful” plus “very helpful”) was 83%.



“Hi my name is J. and I have found [speaking to the What’s Up counsellors] really useful when I’m down. I have learnt a lot from What’s Up which has helped me deal with these situations. I think that What’s Up have done a great job in listening and offering support to us and I would like to thank them all for that . . . I feel if I don’t have the support I need, then things won’t change for me when I’m going through a hard time.”

What’s Up is a really good helpline. I have to admit I didn’t get the support from an early age . . . that I needed. But now that I have found this really cool number I have found that I have trust in them and that they are there to listen to us about our worries!

What’s Up have made a huge improvement in my confidence and when I am feeling like the worst, I can always give them a call once a day if needed.”

- Reproduced with permission of the client.

Trends

Fluctuations from one year to the next in the rate of calls about any particular problem type or category can be expected due to factors that do not necessarily reflect an overall change in the well-being of children and young people.

However, collecting information on the issues presented by children and young people using the same methods over a period of several years enables real changes to be detected.

Such changes may be due to changes in the *incidence* of the issue, changes in *awareness* of the issue itself or the possibility of obtaining help with it, or changes in *tolerance* of the issue.

Over the seven years in which data have been collected by 0800WHATSUP, only two long-term trends emerge:

- An increase in calls about relationships with partners
- An increase in calls about bullying

Trend analysis for the past four years suggest that both of these increases may have levelled off.

Over this shorter time period, there is also some evidence that calls about eating behaviour, child abuse, and sexual assault might be falling.

PROBLEM	7 Yr Trend	4 Yr Trend
RELATIONSHIPS	No Trend	No Trend
Peers	No Trend	No Trend
Family	No Trend	No Trend
Partners	Rising	No Trend
Others	No Trend	No Trend
SCHOOL	Rising	No Trend
Authority	No Trend	No Trend
Bullying	Rising	No Trend
Study	No Trend	No Trend
SEX	No Trend	No Trend
Sexual Activity	No Trend	No Trend
Contraception	No Trend	No Trend
Pregnancy	No Trend	No Trend
STI	No Trend	No Trend
HEALTH	No Trend	No Trend
Eating Behaviours	No Trend	Falling
Physical	No Trend	No Trend
Mental	No Trend	No Trend
EMOTIONAL ISSUES	No Trend	No Trend
Grief	No Trend	No Trend
Loneliness	No Trend	No Trend
Anger	No Trend	No Trend
Suicide	No Trend	No Trend
SELF CONCEPT	No Trend	No Trend
Development	No Trend	No Trend
Self Image	No Trend	No Trend
Sexual Orientation	No Trend	No Trend
PRACTICAL ISSUE	No Trend	No Trend
Employment/Financial	No Trend	No Trend
Leaving Home/Homelessness	No Trend	No Trend
Legal	No Trend	No Trend
Life Skills	No Trend	No Trend
DRUG & ALCOHOL	No Trend	No Trend
Alcohol	No Trend	No Trend
Drugs	No Trend	No Trend
Tobacco	No Trend	No Trend
CHILD ABUSE	No Trend	Falling
Emotional	No Trend	No Trend
Neglect	No Trend	No Trend
Physical	No Trend	No Trend
Sexual	No Trend	No Trend
VIOLENCE	No Trend	No Trend
Assault or Harassment	No Trend	No Trend
Domestic Violence	No Trend	No Trend
Sexual Harassment	No Trend	No Trend
Sexual Assault	No Trend	Falling
OTHER	No Trend	No Trend

PROBLEM	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
RELATIONSHIPS	50.4%	49.6%	48.6%	50.1%	51.4%	46.7%	42.9%
Peers	22.5%	20.8%	21.9%	22.7%	25.5%	21.3%	19.1%
Family	11.7%	12.7%	13.5%	13.3%	14.2%	14.2%	13.8%
Partners	14.8%	14.7%	12.2%	11.9%	10.4%	9.6%	10.0%
Others	1.4%	1.4%	1.1%	2.2%	1.3%	1.6%	n/a
SCHOOL	20.3%	20.1%	21.3%	19.3%	18.4%	18.3%	19.3%
Authority	1.2%	1.1%	1.3%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%	1.5%
Bullying	18.1%	18.0%	19.2%	16.9%	15.7%	14.9%	16.3%
Study	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	1.0%	1.5%	1.5%
SEX	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	7.0%	7.0%	7.9%	6.8%
Sexual Activity	2.1%	2.0%	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	2.9%	2.4%
Contraception	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Pregnancy	3.2%	3.2%	3.1%	4.0%	4.3%	4.6%	3.8%
STI	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
HEALTH	5.2%	5.7%	5.3%	5.5%	5.7%	6.5%	4.9%
Eating Behaviours	0.6%	0.7%	1.0%	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%
Physical	2.4%	2.0%	1.6%	2.0%	2.6%	2.7%	2.1%
Mental	2.1%	3.0%	2.8%	2.5%	2.2%	2.9%	1.8%
EMOTIONAL ISSUES	5.9%	5.8%	5.5%	5.4%	4.0%	5.1%	5.1%
Grief	2.8%	2.8%	2.9%	3.0%	1.9%	2.2%	2.5%
Loneliness	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	1.2%	1.3%
Anger	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.3%	0.6%	n/a
Suicide	1.4%	1.6%	1.3%	1.0%	1.4%	1.1%	1.3%
SELF CONCEPT	5.6%	4.8%	4.5%	4.0%	4.2%	3.9%	6.0%
Development	3.2%	2.6%	2.2%	1.7%	2.1%	1.5%	1.9%
Self Image	0.7%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	1.0%	2.6%
Sexual Orientation	1.7%	1.4%	1.7%	1.8%	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%
PRACTICAL ISSUE	2.5%	2.9%	3.3%	3.0%	3.9%	3.7%	4.7%
Employment/Financial	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Leaving Home/Homelessness	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%	0.8%	0.8%
Legal	0.3%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%
Life Skills	1.3%	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%	1.8%	1.9%	3.0%
DRUG & ALCOHOL	1.6%	2.0%	2.5%	1.8%	2.8%	3.5%	3.4%
Alcohol	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%
Drugs	0.8%	1.0%	1.3%	1.2%	1.9%	2.1%	2.8%
Tobacco	0.5%	0.4%	0.8%	0.4%	0.5%	0.9%	n/a
CHILD ABUSE	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%	1.7%	2.3%	4.2%
Emotional	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%
Neglect	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Physical	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%	1.3%
Sexual	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	2.4%
VIOLENCE	1.2%	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%	1.9%	2.3%
Assault or Harassment	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%
Domestic Violence	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Sexual Harassment	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%
Sexual Assault	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%
OTHER	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%

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