

# Understanding Anxiety in Children and Teens

## 2018 Children's Mental Health Report



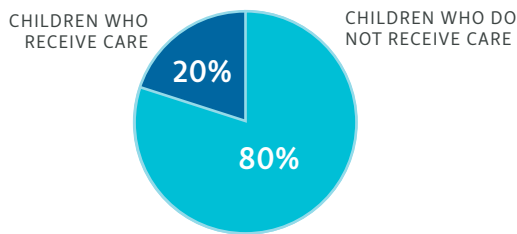
Anxiety is a normal and healthy physiological response to a threat in the environment. Anxiety disorders arise when we develop out-of-proportion anxiety responses to things most of us cope with easily.

This year's Child Mind Institute Children's Mental Health Report looks at just how widespread child and adolescent anxiety disorders are, how they develop, the risks of untreated anxiety and effective treatments.

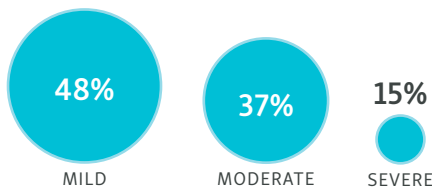
- In the past 10 years, there has been increasing recognition of anxiety in young people by health care providers, including a 17% increase in anxiety disorder diagnosis.
- Yet anxiety disorders are described as the "invisible condition" — with symptoms minimized or ignored— or as the "great masquerader," mistaken for other conditions.
- Untreated anxiety disorders increase the risk for depression, school failure, substance abuse and difficulty transitioning to adulthood.

### PREVALENCE

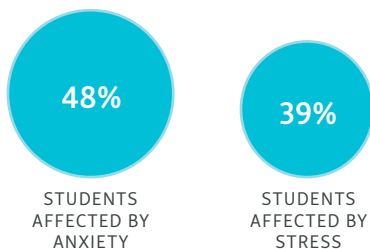
- At some point, anxiety affects 30% of children and adolescents, yet 80% never get help.



- Anxiety disorders are mild for 48%, moderate for 37% and severe for 15%.

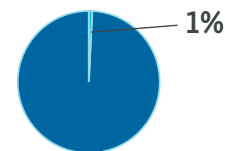


- In college students seeking mental health services, anxiety is the most frequent concern (48%), followed by stress (39%).



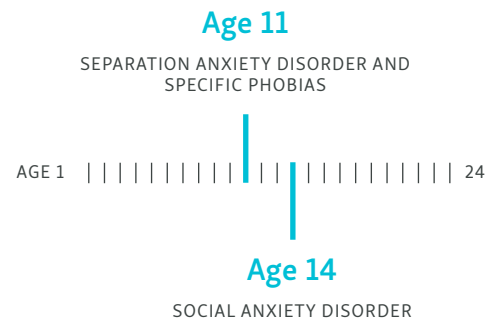
### LACK OF RECOGNITION

- As little as 1% of youth with anxiety seek treatment in the year their symptoms begin, and most anxiety symptoms go untreated for years.
- Anxiety is often mistaken for another disorder, resulting in ineffective treatment.



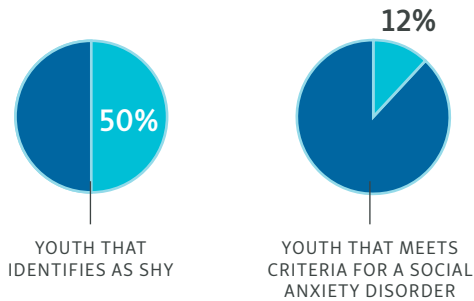
### DEVELOPMENT

- Average age of onset:

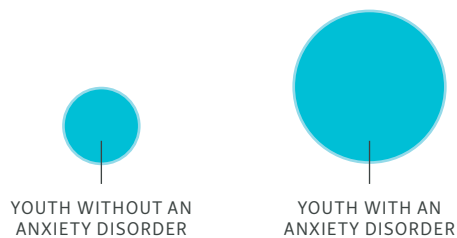


## RISKS

- 50% of teens either consider themselves “shy” or are described as shy by their parents, but only 12% of those shy adolescents meet criteria for social anxiety disorder.



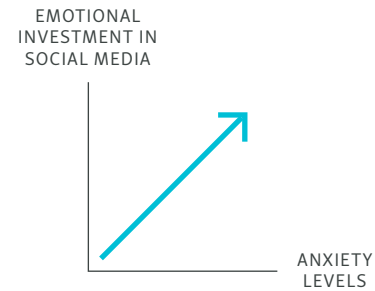
- Anxiety disorders are linked to a two-fold increase in risk for substance use disorder.



- When adolescents have depression alongside social anxiety, it is strongly associated with more suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and more depressive symptoms.

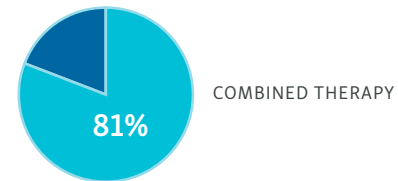
## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Higher emotional investment in social media was strongly correlated with higher levels of anxiety.

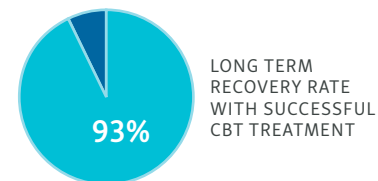


## TREATMENT INNOVATIONS

- Combined behavioral therapy and medication treatment is effective in more than 80% of youth struggling with social anxiety, generalized anxiety or panic disorder.



- Successful CBT treatment for anxiety disorders in youth results in long-term recovery for 93% of participants.



## CONCLUSION

Anxiety is a gateway disorder that leads to increased risk of depression, school failure, substance abuse and suicide. We have gotten very good at helping individual children and adolescents in need; now we need to get better at identifying the vast majority that never get help, or even know how and who to ask for it.

## About the Child Mind Institute

The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain, and empower parents, professionals and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most. Together with our supporters, we’re helping children reach their full potential in school and in life. We share all of our resources freely and do not accept any funding from the pharmaceutical industry. Learn more at [childmind.org](http://childmind.org).