



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties
From: Coalition to Empower Our Future
Re: Eight-in-10 California Voters & Parents Support a Comprehensive Approach to Youth Mental Health
Date: August 2025

With kids heading back to school, the Coalition to Empower Our Future (CEF) conducted research among California voters and parents to discuss youth mental health and wellbeing throughout the state. CEF, in partnership with Mercury Analytics, conducted an online survey among 600 registered voters in California (314 of whom were parents) from June 24 to 29, 2025. In addition to the survey research, CEF hosted conversations with 30 California voters and parents from August 5 to 8, 2025 (via an online discussion board).

This research builds on [previous research](#) conducted by CEF and finds that California voters and parents are worried about the state of youth mental health and wellbeing, which they view as a complex and multifaceted problem. The vast majority are seeking a comprehensive solution that includes expanding resources, improving school environments, and empowering parents to support their children.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

When it comes to tackling mental health issues among youth, California voters and parents think a comprehensive approach is necessary. Voters and parents prefer a solution that is multifaceted enough to meet the complex issue of youth mental health. Survey data shows that nearly **eight-in-10 California voters and parents support a comprehensive approach** over a narrow approach targeting phones and similar devices.

Q: WHEN IT COMES TO IMPROVING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST APPROACH?



California voters and parents think a broad range of factors is causing the decline in youth mental health. The vast majority of voters and parents in California recognize that youth mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. In both survey research and in CEF's conversations across the state, both voters and parents cite a broad array of drivers of declining youth mental health, including drug and alcohol abuse, early childhood abuse, bullying, social media, lack of exercise, instability at home, and more.

Q: HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT WOULD YOU SAY EACH FACTOR HAS ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CALIFORNIA RIGHT NOW?¹



Youth mental health is seen as a deteriorating and pervasive challenge that is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Survey data shows that California voters and parents are worried about youth mental health and wellbeing – the vast majority say the situation is bad and has only gotten worse since they were a child. Few say youth mental health and wellbeing are likely to improve in the near future.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE STATE OF YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CALIFORNIA TODAY?



Q: THINKING BACK TO WHEN YOU PERSONALLY WERE A KID, DO YOU THINK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CALIFORNIA HAS...



Q: THINKING AHEAD SIX MONTHS FROM NOW, DO YOU THINK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CALIFORNIA WILL BE...



"The youth are deteriorating in their mental health because there is no help available, especially with those who can't afford it."
– CA Voter, Parent

"Things are not improving. Not much is being done to address issues affecting our youth in California."
– CA Voter

"Since COVID, there has been more of a sense of isolation, and that has grown with the increase in digital lives."
– CA Voter

Most California voters and parents personally know young people who are struggling with their mental health, and most don't know where to turn to support them. For example:

- Almost **seven-in-10** CA voters and parents personally **know kids who are struggling** with mental health.
- About **six-in-10** CA voters and parents **would not know where to go** in their community to access mental health support for a young person in crisis.

- About **seven-in-10** CA voters and parents **say lack of access to mental health resources for youth** is a widespread issue in their community.

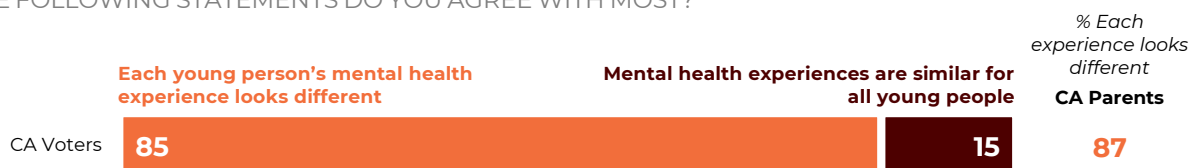
"It's concerning because sometimes if things are too tough or information is too hard to find, people may just give up."
– CA Voter

"A lot of resources cost money or require insurance as opposed to public resources that are free for all."
– CA Voter, Parent

"It seems like there are more young people facing mental health challenges, yet there aren't enough accessible services to meet the growing need."
– CA Voter

California voters and parents recognize how unique each young person's situation is, and they say that acknowledging differences could help improve youth mental health and wellbeing. The vast majority of California voters and parents agree that every young person's mental health experience looks different, and recognizing that and the complexity of youth mental health is part of the solution.

Q: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE WITH MOST?



Q: PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

ACKNOWLEDGING HOW EVERY YOUNG PERSON'S MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LOOKS DIFFERENT COULD HELP IMPROVE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.



"Acknowledging that each person's experience is unique could help improve youth mental health because it helps them feel truly seen, heard, and understood."
– CA Voter

"Acknowledging differences would greatly help young people as they will feel validated for not going through the same thing or healing in the same way as others."
– CA Voter

"Acknowledging differences encourages young people to speak up about their particular needs rather than suffering in silence."
– CA Voter, Parent

California voters and parents want to prioritize solutions that create more supportive environments and make resources more accessible. For example, a very strong majority (**more than nine-in-10 California voters and parents**) say we could improve youth mental health across the state by making it easier for young people to access mental health care, by ensuring K-12 schools have programs in place to help students develop the skills they need, by creating school environments where youth feel safe and supported, and by equipping parents with the tools and resources they need.

"Schools need to be a safe place to build a solid foundation for success."
– CA Voter

"We need to ensure that our K-12 schools have access to the resources that are needed to embed mental health learning into the curriculum."
– CA Voter, Parent

"We need to give parents support and resources so they can address their children's mental health."
– CA Voter, Parent

¹ Chart displays items that only rise to the top among California voters.

Additional Methodology Notes

Mercury Analytics, on behalf of the Coalition to Empower our Future, conducted a survey between June 24 and June 29, 2025. A sample of 600 registered voters in California were interviewed online (314 of whom were also parents). The margin of error among this audience at the 95% confidence interval level is +/- 4.0%.

The Coalition to Empower our Future also conducted an online discussion board with 30 voters in California between August 5 to 8, 2025. 12 of the participants were also parents.