# Mental health and addictions-related health care use has increased, largely driven by young people





The 2021 mental health and addictions scorecard finds that rates of mental health and addictions-related outpatient health service use, emergency department (ED) visits and hospitalizations have increased in Ontario between 2009 and 2017.

Using linked health administrative data for 13 performance indicators, the scorecard provides a comprehensive system-wide view of mental health and addictions trends across the lifespan (0 to 105 years).

"It is critical to understand what is happening across the mental health system. Understanding trends facilitates system planning. These indicators can serve as benchmarks for quality improvement and policy development."

- Dr. Paul Kurdyak, Mental Health & Addictions Research Program Lead, ICES

## Outpatient visits

9% increase

Age groups with the largest increase:

14-17: 58% 18-21: 47%

Higher rates of outpatient care may reflect greater need, a greater likelihood to seek help, or both.

#### **ED** visits

47% increase

Age groups with the largest increase:

10-21: >90% 22-24: 75% 25-44: 50%

The large increase in ED visits compared to the modest increase in outpatient visits suggests barriers to accessing outpatient services.

### Hospitalizations

123% increase

Age groups with the largest increase:

10-13: 115% 14-17: 136%

Results suggest an increased burden of mental illness severe enough to require hospitalization among children and youth.

## ED as first point of contact



>1 in 3
people under 25 and

>1 in 4
people aged 25+
used the ED as first
point of contact with

the MHA system

A high rate of people using the ED as a first point of contact suggests barriers to accessing outpatient mental health and addictions care.

## Self-harm and suicide



Age groups with the largest increase in self-harm:

10-13: 128% 14-17: 108% 18-21: 72%

The suicide rate remained unchanged for all age groups.

Despite significant investments in mental health, the prevention of suicides and selfharm events remains a challenge.

Mental Health and Addictions System Performance in Ontario: 2021 Scorecard. ICES; 2021.

