



Amplifying the Voices of Children & Young People in Europe



**Key Insights
from 2023
Child Helpline Data
on Mental Health
and Violence**

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Foreword

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As the Secretary General of the Swedish child helpline BRIS, and as the Regional Representative for Europe for Child Helpline International, I have witnessed first-hand the profound impact child helplines can have on the lives of children and young people. In 2023 alone, **more than a million children** and young people reached out for support to child helplines in Europe, seeking solace, guidance and protection during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. This report highlights the needs of these children and young people and **amplifies their voices**.

As in previous years, mental health remains the leading concern, with children and young people struggling with anxiety, mood disorders and even suicidal thoughts. Violence – especially bullying and emotional abuse – continues to cast a long shadow over the lives of many children and young people. Just as important are the challenges that children and young people are facing in their family and peer relationships, which deeply influence their wellbeing. **These findings are not just statistics—they are a call to action.**

Child helplines play a critical role as first responders, offering immediate, compassionate support to children and young people in crisis. However, many of these essential services face **resource constraints**, limiting their ability to fully meet a growing demand. This report emphasizes the urgent need for increased funding, stronger policy integration and enhanced support systems to ensure that every child or young person can access the help they need.



This important work would not be possible without the efforts of **Child Helpline International**. By uniting child helplines across Europe and beyond, Child Helpline International ensures that, collectively, we can amplify the voices of children and young people and strengthen the support that is available to them.

By strengthening and supporting child helplines, we can create a safer, more supportive Europe for all children and young people. Child Helpline International's network in Europe invites policymakers, funders and all partners to reflect on the insights shared here and to **take decisive action**. Let us work together to ensure that every voice is heard, and that no child or young person faces their challenges alone. Together, we can create meaningful change.

Magnus Jägerskog

Secretary General, Bris

Regional Representative of Europe
Child Helpline International

“...These findings are not just statistics—they are a call to action.”



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Key Insights

This report brings together data from 2023 from 36 child helplines across Europe¹, highlighting the essential role they play in supporting children and young people through some of their most challenging experiences.

The findings of this report reveal an urgent need for more robust support systems to address mental health and violence – two key child rights priorities in Europe, as well as across the international child rights community. Mental health issues are some of the most common reasons for reaching out, while violence, particularly bullying and emotional abuse, remains a major concern. Struggles with family and peer relationships further impact young people's wellbeing. This report spotlights these three main reasons for contacting child helplines in Europe.

KEY INSIGHTS

Mental Health

Mental health remains **the most frequent reason for children and young people to make contact with a child helpline in Europe**, accounting for 38.4% of the total counselling contacts received, with girls representing the majority of these contacts, especially for issues such as eating disorders and self-harming behaviour.

Key insights include:

- Child helplines remain **essential support services** promoting and protecting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Emotional distress – particularly **fear and anxiety issues, mood problems and suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts** – are the three most prevalent mental health concerns in Europe, comprising over half of all mental health contacts received. This raises significant concerns about the wellbeing of children and young people across the region.
- Boys account for most of the contacts regarding **addictive behaviours and substance abuse**. In contrast, girls make up the majority of contacts concerning all other mental health categories, especially in cases involving **eating behaviour issues, self-harming behaviour, and mood-related emotional distress**, where they outnumber boys by a significant margin. This also indicates a need to ensure that boys feel comfortable about reaching out for help regarding these particular concerns.

Violence

Violence was **the second most frequent reason for children and young people to make contact**, with 16.5% of them seeking help from a child helpline because of experience of abuse or neglect.

Key insights include:

- Child helplines remain a **crucial reporting mechanism for violence**, providing access to psychosocial support and referrals to other agencies.
- **Bullying, psychological/emotional violence and physical violence** are the three most common reasons for violence-related contacts made to child helplines in Europe, together accounting for over two-thirds of all violence-related contacts. This underscores the need for robust investment in both peer violence prevention and interventions addressing violence perpetrated by adults.
- Regarding gender distribution, the data reveals that girls are making contact with child helplines more frequently than boys for nearly all forms of violence-related cases, particularly those concerning **gender-based harmful traditional practices** (including child marriage) and **sexual violence**.

Family and Peer Relationships

Family and peer relationships were **the third and fourth most frequent reasons for children and young people to make contact** with European child helplines, comprising 15.4% and 10.9% of contacts, respectively.

Key insights include:

- Child helplines remain a **vital source of support** for children and young people, particularly outside of their regular support networks.
- **Family health and wellbeing and relationship with caregivers** accounted for 70% of the total number of contacts received by child helplines in Europe concerning family relationships.
- In terms of gender distribution of the different issues connected with family relationships, the data consistently shows that more contacts are made by girls than boys, with girls more frequently reaching out about **general family issues, relationship with caregivers** and issues around **adoption, fostering and extended family placements**.
- **Friends and friendships** and **partner relationships** were the two main reasons for contacts made with child helplines in Europe in 2023 relating to peer relationships, followed by **classmate/colleague relationships**.

1. The data includes data from child helplines within and outside of the European Union. Please refer to the last page to see who submitted data.

Our Recommendations

Expand Funding and Resources for Child Helplines as First Responders for Mental Health Support and Response

With mental health issues being the most reported concern, child helplines play a critical role as first responders for children in crisis. Strengthening child helplines with targeted resources ensures that they can continue to offer timely and effective support for child and youth facing emotional distress. Therefore, it is **crucial to provide dedicated, long-term funding** to equip child helplines with resources for ongoing, high-quality² service provision in mental health support, including suicide prevention, self-harm response, crisis intervention and the impact of the digital sphere on mental health, as well as resources for the relevant data collection on mental health. The European Union, other European agencies, governments and NGO partnerships should embed child helplines within mental health structures and policies, ensuring they are a recognized entry point for urgent support.

Position Child Helplines as Key Partners in Violence Prevention and Response Initiatives

As one of the primary contact points for children and young people experiencing or witnessing violence, child helplines have unique insights and can provide immediate, confidential support. By integrating child helplines into broader violence prevention systems and policies, they can amplify their impact and connect children to further child protection services when needed. Therefore, child helplines must be recognized and integrated into national and European frameworks for violence prevention, including anti-bullying, abuse prevention, and digital safety programs, as well as maintaining and/or developing strong partnerships with law enforcement and child protection agencies.

Expand Data Collection and Research Support for Child Helplines

Beyond service provision, child helpline data offers valuable insights into both well-known and emerging issues affecting children, and help ensure that the voices of children and young people are amplified on policy level – a key child participatory activity. By investing in child helplines' data infrastructure and fostering regular dialogue with policymakers, this information can be used to shape responsive and evidence-based child protection policies at both national and regional levels. Therefore, funding and partnerships that enhance child helplines' capacities for data collection and analysis are crucial. Collaborations between child helplines and policymakers on national and European level should be established to regularly review data and identify trends in child rights and child wellbeing.



CHILD HELPLINES IN EU & EUROPEAN POLICY

Over the years, the child helplines operating the European harmonized 116 111 number and other national child helplines have all become essential components of national child rights and child wellbeing structures in the majority of countries in Europe.

At EU and European policy levels, these child helplines are incorporated into key legislation, policy and strategy, including:

- [EU Child Rights Strategy](#), which references the importance of child helplines in response to violence, and which invited member states to improve the capacity access and funding for the harmonized 116 111 number.
- The [Commission Recommendation on Strengthening Integrated Child Protection Systems \(2023\)](#) references child helplines as being crucial to ensuring the reporting and referral of cases of violence and of children who are victims of trafficking, to supporting children in migration, and promoting online protection for children and young people.
- The [European Commission's communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health \(2023\)](#) highlights the role of child helplines in supporting prevention efforts and providing immediate psychological support.

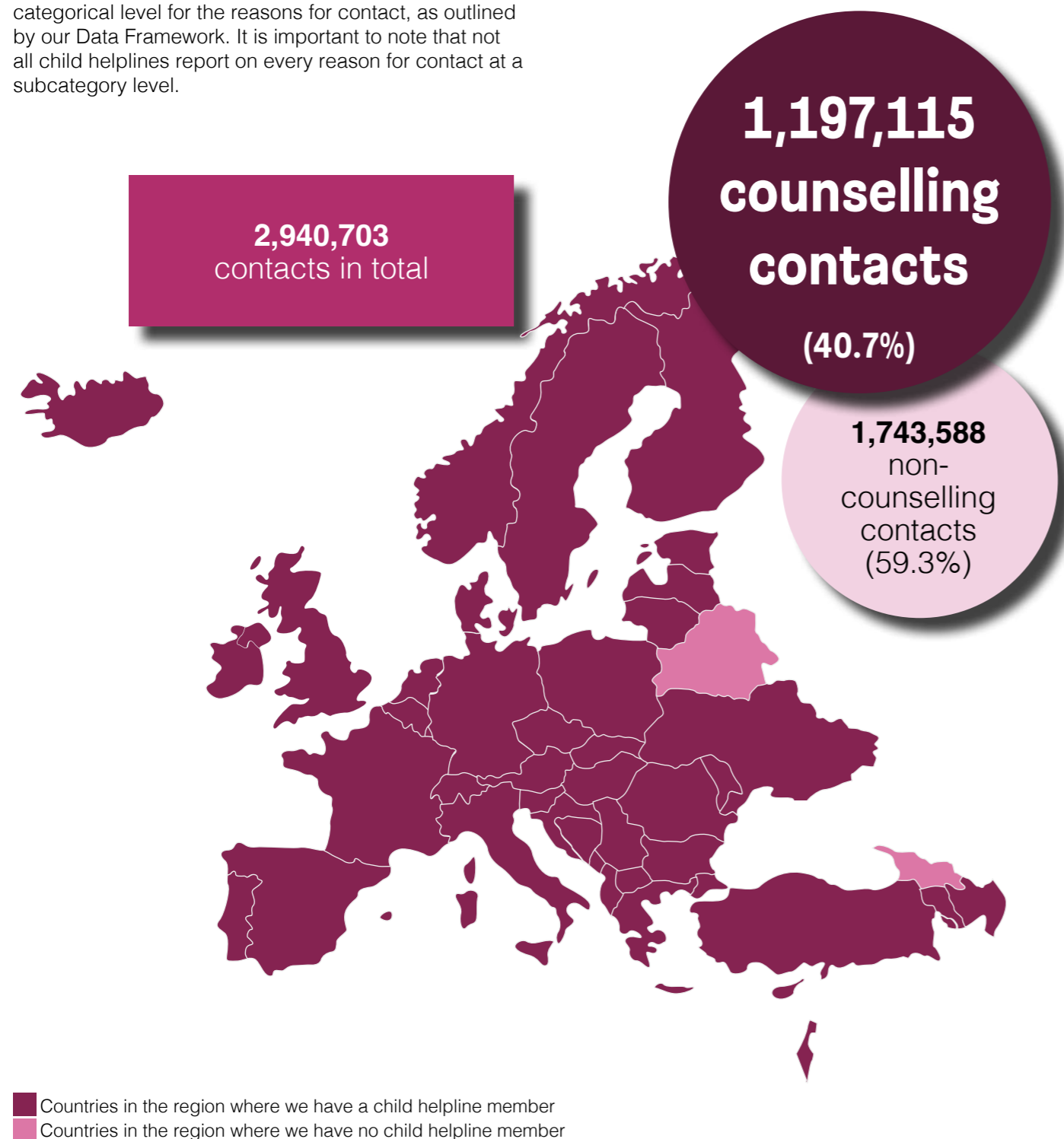
- The [Commission Decision of the European Commission \(2007\)](#) on reserving the national numbering range beginning with 116 for harmonized numbers of social value, states the role of child helplines in providing care, protection and links to services and resources, and in allowing children to express their concerns and talk about the issues directly affecting them. The document further states that these services should be free of charge and available 27/4 where possible.
- The [European Electronic Communications Code \(EECC\)](#) references the harmonized 116 111 number as a key service for children in need of care and protection.

Although child helplines are referenced in EU policy, there is a gap when it comes to the recognition of child helplines as child mental health services, and there is a gap regarding the strength of the request from the EU to Member States to support child helplines, leaving child helplines – and, by extension, children and young people – vulnerable.

For more detailed information on child helplines and policy integration on European level, please see our report, [116 111: Same Number, Same Service](#).

Child Helplines Data Analysis

We obtained 2023 data from 36 child helplines (94.7% of those who completed our annual survey) mapped at a categorical level for the reasons for contact, as outlined by our Data Framework. It is important to note that not all child helplines report on every reason for contact at a subcategory level.



REASONS FOR CONTACT

Mental health (38.4%) and **Violence** (16.5%) are the two most frequent reasons for making contact reported by the child helplines in Europe in 2023. Together, these two reasons represent over half of all of the contacts that were made. The following most frequent reasons were **Family Relationships** (15.4%) and **Peer Relationships** (10.9%).

	Contacts	%
Mental Health	582,347	38.4%
Violence	250,110	16.5%
Family Relationships	233,325	15.4%
Peer Relationships	164,737	10.9%
Sexuality	86,400	5.7%
Education and Occupation	70,218	4.6%
Access to Services	64,070	4.2%
Physical Health	53,666	3.5%
Missing Children	7,912	0.5%
Discrimination and Exclusion	4,146	0.3%
Total	1,516,931	100%

These four most common reasons for contact accounted for **81.2%** of all counselling contacts received.

In terms of gender distribution, girls represented most contacts related to all the four main categories.

	Boy	Girl	Nonbinary	Unknown	Totals
Mental Health	145,968 (25%)	318,750 (55%)	7,703 (1%)	109,926 (19%)	582,347
Violence	88,167 (35%)	126,224 (50%)	1,487 (1%)	34,232 (14%)	250,110
Family Relationships	79,670 (34%)	123,757 (53%)	1,445 (1%)	28,453 (12%)	233,325
Peer Relationships	54,670 (33%)	88,796 (54%)	1,040 (1%)	20,231 (12%)	164,737
Total	368,475	657,527	11,675	192,842	1,230,519

MENTAL HEALTH

Good mental health is vital for children and young people because it lays the foundation for emotional wellbeing, resilience and healthy development. When children and young people experience good mental health, they are better equipped to cope with stress, build positive relationships and navigate challenges such as school pressures, peer conflict or family difficulties. It also promotes self-esteem, encourages positive coping strategies, and enhances their ability to make sound decisions, ultimately fostering a stronger sense of self and a healthier transition into adulthood.

Access to support, whether from family, peers or mental health professionals, helps children and young people address their emotional struggles early on, preventing more serious mental health issues in the future.

Mental health remains the most frequent reason for children and young people making contact with child helplines, accounting for 38.4% of the total counselling contacts made. Subcategories of mental health issues include **anxiety**, **mood problems** and **suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts**. Girls represent a significant proportion of mental health-related contacts, especially in the areas of **problems with eating behaviour** and **self-harming behaviour**.

Case Summary

A girl contacted the child helpline via chat. She described feeling very lonely and she was having difficulties making friends. She stayed home a lot and only left her room to go to school. She described mood problems, and revealed that she had also self-harmed in the past. The pressure to perform well in school was making her anxious. She did not want to worry her family, as her sibling was also having a difficult time.

The counsellor offered a space for the girl to talk about her situation and provided some options for where she could get more support. The girl was worried about her parents finding out that she was asking someone for help, so the counsellor suggested she contact the family doctor or the school psychologist who were bound by confidentiality. They also encouraged the girl to talk to a friend or trusted relative, and to try once more to talk to her parents about her concerns.

Case Summary

A 15-year old boy contacted the child helpline by phone. He was in profound distress, expressing that he had been having suicidal thoughts for a while, and had come close to acting on them on two previous occasions. He wanted to learn how to manage these thoughts.

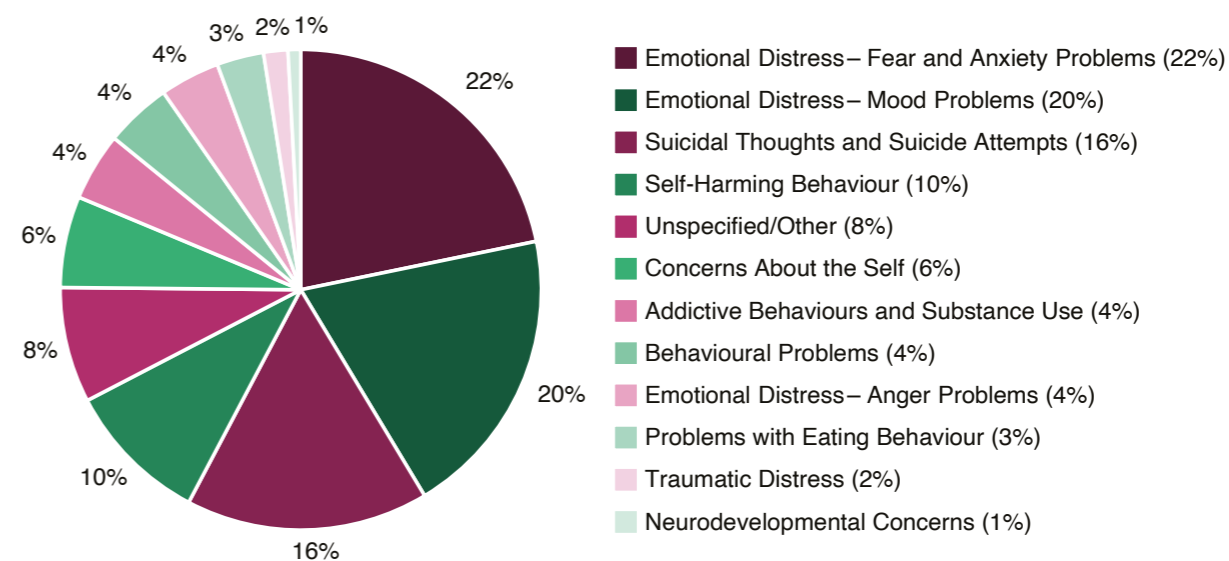
The counsellor reinforced his wish to seek support as a matter of urgency, and offered to put him in contact with local professionals so that he could access psychological and/or psychiatric help.

Data on Mental Health

Most counselling contacts made by children and young people in Europe in 2023 concerned their **Mental Health**. A total of 582,347 contacts was recorded for this category, representing 38.4% of all counselling contacts received by the child helplines.

Emotional Distress – Fear and Anxiety Problems (21.8%), **Emotional Distress – Mood Problems** (19.6%) and **Suicidal Thoughts and Suicide Attempts** (16.3%) were the three most frequent reasons for making contact in this category in Europe, accounting for more than half of all Mental Health-related contacts (57.7%). This paints a picture of great concern for the wellbeing of children and young people in Europe.

Emotional distress can manifest in various ways. **Fear** involves feelings of distress in response to immediate threats, while **Anxiety** refers to persistent, often overwhelming worries about daily situations that can be disproportionate to the actual danger. Fear and anxiety-related distress may present as stress, flashbacks, irrational fears, obsessive behaviours or trauma-related stress. **Mood Problems**, meanwhile, encompass sustained low or negative emotional states, such as sadness, grief and lack of motivation, but may also include extremes such as mania. Suicidal thoughts and behaviours involve contemplating or attempting suicide, with warning signs such as withdrawing from others, feeling trapped or showing an unusual preoccupation with death.



In terms of gender distribution in the Mental Health sub-categories, overall girls are more likely to contact a child helpline for nearly all types of mental health issues. Boys and girls are equally as likely to discuss their **Mood Problems** and **Fear and Anxiety Problems** in their counselling contacts.

Although boys are generally less likely to contact a child helpline with issues relating to their mental health, when they do they are more likely to discuss **Addictive Behaviour and Substance Use, Anger Problems** and **Behavioural Problems** compared with girls or nonbinary children and young people.

Girls are more likely than boys to talk about **Suicidal Thoughts and Suicide Attempts** and **Self-Harming Behaviour**. These same two topics are even more frequently brought up by nonbinary children and young people: Suicidal Thoughts and Suicide Attempts is the most common mental health-related reason for a nonbinary child or young person to contact a European child helpline (1 in 4 of the contacts made by this group).

	Boy	Girl	Nonbinary	Unknown	Totals
Addictive Behaviour and Substance Use	12,865 (48%)	10,448 (39%)	144 (1%)	3,168 (12%)	26,625
Behavioural Problems	10,663 (41%)	11,816 (45%)	23 (0%)	3,485 (13%)	25,987
Concerns About the Self	9,200 (26%)	20,534 (57%)	757 (2%)	5,299 (15%)	35,790
Emotional Distress – Anger Problems	10,056 (43%)	10,191 (43%)	102 (0%)	3,114 (13%)	23,463
Emotional Distress – Fear and Anxiety Problems	29,006 (23%)	68,465 (54%)	1,631 (1%)	27,640 (22%)	126,742
Emotional Distress – Mood Problems	33,425 (29%)	66,811 (58%)	1,114 (1%)	12,948 (11%)	114,298
Neurodevelopmental Concerns	2,213 (45%)	2,188 (44%)	32 (1%)	524 (11%)	4,957
Problems with Eating Behaviour	1,009 (5%)	12,999 (71%)	239 (1%)	4,117 (22%)	18,364
Self-Harming Behaviour	5,364 (10%)	37,565 (67%)	1,021 (2%)	12,313 (22%)	56,263
Suicidal Thoughts and Suicide Attempts	18,268 (19%)	49,998 (53%)	1,867 (2%)	24,927 (26%)	95,060
Traumatic Distress	3,159 (33%)	5,079 (53%)	132 (1%)	1,143 (12%)	9,513
Unspecified/Other	10,740 (24%)	22,656 (50%)	641 (1%)	11,248 (25%)	45,285
Total	145,968 (25%)	318,750 (55%)	7,703 (1%)	109,926 (19%)	582,347

Case Summary

A 10-year-old girl contacted the child helpline to talk about the negative thoughts she was having – especially thoughts about ending her life – which she was struggling to cope with. She also expressed concerns about too many responsibilities at school and wanting some free time. She told the counsellor that her classmates were giving her embarrassing nicknames because she was shy and withdrawn, and that her mother was mean to her and overreacted to everything the girl did. She was in therapy with a psychologist.

The counsellor explored each of the topics presented further, and looked at options for support in the girl's environment such as a school psychologist. The counsellor also emphasized the importance of expressing her suicidal and self-harming thoughts to her psychologist and her caregivers.

The Impact of Social Media on Child Mental Health

Research across Europe increasingly points to the mixed impacts of social media on children and young people's mental health, with both positive and negative effects. Studies have revealed correlations between high social media use and increased anxiety, depression and low self-esteem in young people, stemming from factors such as idealized portrayals of others' lives, cyberbullying and fear of missing out (FOMO).

Research by organizations such as the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) have shown that several hours of social media use daily is associated with a higher incidence of depressive symptoms. Additionally, excessive screen time and late-night use can disrupt sleep, which is critical for mental health and development; poor sleep is linked to issues such as irritability and cognitive impairment.

Platforms focused on visual content particularly affect adolescents, especially girls, with higher risks of body image issues and low self-esteem due to exposure to unrealistic beauty standards, which can contribute to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

Despite all of these risks, social media can also foster social connection, helping young people build communities, seek support and access mental health information – beneficial for those facing social isolation.

While this report cannot confirm a direct causal link between social media use and mental health issues, it acknowledges the connection and the need for more refined data capture. Child helplines in Europe continue working to respond to these challenges, striving to improve their services in addressing the mental health needs of young people.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Protection from violence is crucial for children and young people. **Exposure to violence can have lasting physical, emotional, and psychological consequences.** Violence undermines a child's sense of safety and security, leading to trauma that can disrupt their development, impair their ability to form healthy relationships and affect their mental health. Experiencing or witnessing violence can increase the risk of anxiety, depression and behavioural problems, and may also contribute to long-term challenges in education, social integration and wellbeing. Ensuring that children and young people are protected from violence helps them to grow in a nurturing environment where they can build resilience, develop confidence and reach their full potential, promoting healthier individuals and stronger communities.

Violence was the second most frequent reason for contact, with 16.5% of the children and young people contacting child helplines in Europe seeking help due to experiences of abuse or neglect.

Case Summary

A young person contacted the child helpline to share that she was being bullied at school. This bullying included physical aggression, and she had been hit in the face. The bullying had left her feeling increasingly isolated and reluctant to attend school. She felt unsupported, as her friends did not stand up for her, and even though teachers were present in the playground during some incidents, they appeared not to have noticed what was going on. The primary bullies were popular girls, who once even filmed the bullying and shared it, adding to the young person's distress. Despite all this, she was trying to stand up for herself, asking the bullies why they were targeting her.

The counsellor acknowledged her bravery and resilience in defending herself. During the conversation, the young person also shared that she and her mother were considering transferring her to a new school in January following the Christmas break. As she spoke with the counsellor, she gradually became more and more positive, talking about the activities she enjoyed, such as her cello lessons and her school work.

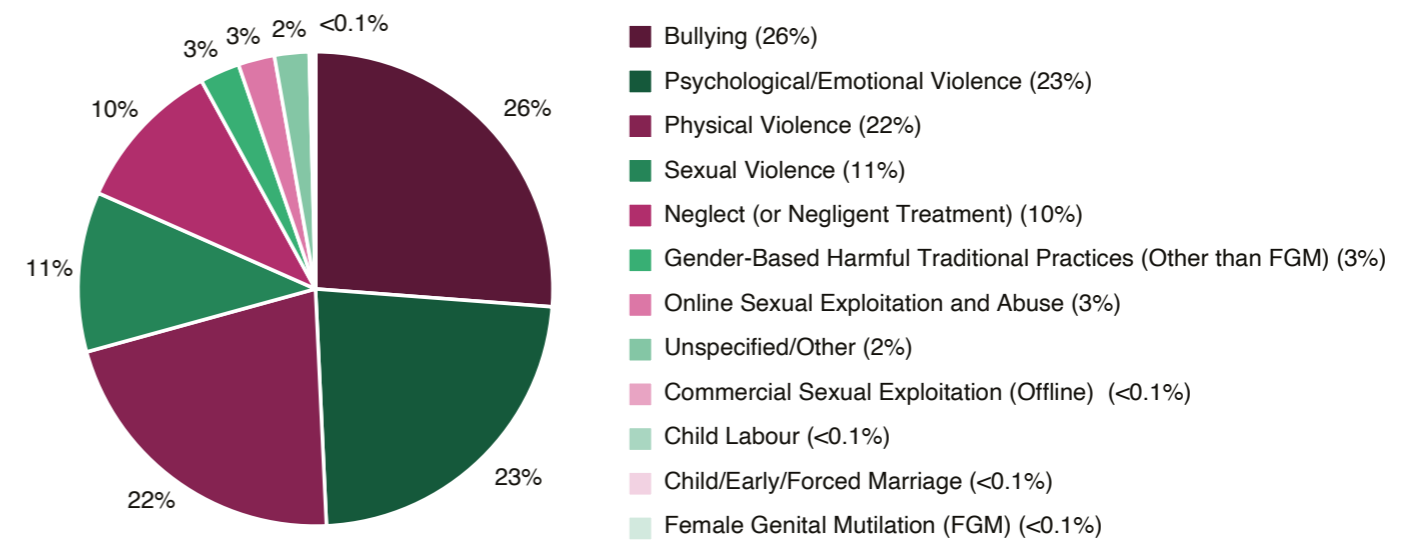
Data on Violence

We received data from 35 child helplines, representing a 92.1% response rate, about violence in 2023. Violence was the second most frequent reason for children and young people making contact with a child helpline in Europe in 2023. A total of 250,110 contacts was recorded for this category, representing 16.5% of all counselling contacts.

Bullying (26.2%), Psychological/Emotional Violence (23.1%), and Physical Violence (21.5%) are the three most frequent reasons for violence-related contacts reported by the child helplines in Europe. These three subcategories accounted for over two thirds of the violence-related contacts (70.8%).

Bullying encompasses intentional, repeated aggression aimed at a victim who – due to a real or perceived power imbalance – feels unable to defend themselves. It can be emotional (for example, criticism, name-calling or humiliation), physical (hitting, pushing or property damage) or sexual (repeated unwanted sexual comments). When bullying occurs online through digital devices, it is termed **cyberbullying**, involving harmful or false content shared to embarrass the victim; it may also include bystanders who witness the bullying without intervening.

Emotional maltreatment by adults, particularly in a child's home, may involve constant criticism, humiliation or excessive control, sometimes referred to as domestic emotional violence. This category also extends to victims of cyberhate, inadequate responses to eco-anxiety and children witnessing any form of abuse. Physical abuse, involving intentional harm, can occur across settings, including schools, detention centres or homes, and covers a range of acts such as corporal punishment, gang violence and intimidation by threat or weapons.



In terms of gender differences, girls contacted child helplines more often than boys or nonbinary children and young people on issues related to violence in 2023. This is especially true for different forms of gender-based and sexual violence. For example, **Sexual Violence** was brought up in 13% of girls' violence-related contacts and in 15% of those made by nonbinary children and young people, compared with 8% of the contacts concerning sexual violence that were made by boys. Conversely, **Neglect** and **Physical Violence** are two types of violence that boys and girls brought up equally as frequently during their contacts with the child helplines. **Bullying** accounted for 29% of boys' violence-related contacts and 39% of those from nonbinary children and young people, compared with 21% of girls' contacts.

Case Summary

A 14-year old girl contacted the child helpline by phone. A friend had given her the number, and encouraged her to call. The girl told the counsellor that she was the victim of physical and emotional abuse by her father, as well as regularly being a witness of domestic violence against her mother. The violence was occurring when her father had been drinking. The girl expressed suicidal ideation and wanted to leave home, but realized that it was too dangerous to do so.

The counsellor provided a safe and empathic space for her to tell her story, and praised her for seeking help and talking about her situation. The counsellor made a referral to the child protection services.

	Boy	Girl	Nonbinary	Unknown	Totals
Bullying	25,842 (39%)	26,925 (41%)	582 (1%)	12,192 (19%)	65,541
Child/Early/Forced Marriage	5 (6%)	50 (59%)	2 (2%)	28 (33%)	85
Child Labour	181 (38%)	177 (37%)	0 (0%)	120 (25%)	478
Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Offline)	129 (26%)	266 (54%)	2 (0%)	92 (19%)	489
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1
Gender-Based Harmful Traditional Practices (other than FGM)	2,571 (38%)	4,149 (61%)	1 (0%)	60 (1%)	6,781
Neglect (or Negligent Treatment)	10,210 (39%)	13,712 (53%)	75 (0%)	2,039 (8%)	26,036
Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation	2,076 (33%)	2,646 (43%)	27 (0%)	1,451 (23%)	6,200
Physical Violence	19,790 (37%)	26,635 (50%)	208 (0%)	7,029 (13%)	53,662
Psychological Violence	19,282 (33%)	31,594 (55%)	297 (1%)	6,497 (11%)	57,670
Sexual Violence	6,678 (24%)	16,314 (60%)	231 (1%)	4,052 (15%)	27,275
Unspecified/Other	1,403 (24%)	3,755 (64%)	62 (1%)	672 (11%)	5,892
Total	88,167	126,224	1,487	34,232	250,110

FAMILY AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Family and peer relationships are crucial for children's emotional, social and cognitive development. Family provides emotional support, teaches social skills and helps children form their identity, while peers offer opportunities for practising collaboration, communication and conflict resolution. Together, these relationships help children develop self-esteem, build a sense of belonging and learn effective coping mechanisms.

Strong family and peer connections also contribute to better mental health, resilience and overall wellbeing, providing the foundation for children to navigate life's challenges and develop healthy relationships.

Family and peer relationships were the third and fourth most frequent reasons for contacting a child helpline, comprising 15.4% and 10.9% of contacts, respectively. These categories encompass concerns about family wellbeing, relationships with caregivers, and issues within friendships or romantic partnerships.

Case Summary

A 14-year-old girl in a newly blended family was struggling to adjust to her mother's recent marriage to a new partner. While she felt everyone in the family was kind, she found it difficult to get along with her stepfather and felt pressured to "keep the peace" and act friendly. Despite her love for both parents and her siblings, she wanted to live with her father full-time, as she believed this would bring her greater happiness. However, she feared that this choice would hurt her mother, and would also disrupt her current school and friendships. Her mother's remarriage was deeply painful for her, and she now felt a lingering sense of unease, as though something bad might happen, causing her to constantly look over her shoulder.

The counsellor provided a safe, non-judgemental space for her to share her feelings. She was listened to with respect, encouraged to stay in touch, and advised to seek support from trusted adults around her regarding her family situation.

Case Summary

A boy contacted the child helpline, feeling unwell, and explained that he was struggling with concentration at school and skipping classes. He felt pressured to smoke with friends even though he didn't want to, but he was afraid of losing those friends or being bullied if he didn't.

The counsellor provided a safe, open space for the boy to talk, guiding a discussion around the stress he was feeling at school and the influence of his friends. Through their conversation, the boy began to recognize that his current friends may not be the best influence for him, yet he felt conflicted about letting go of the group due to fears of loneliness or bullying. When asked if he needed anything more from the conversation, he said no but expressed his relief at being able to share his story with somebody. The counsellor concluded by assuring him that he could reach out to the child helpline anytime he wanted to for further support.

Data on Family Relationships

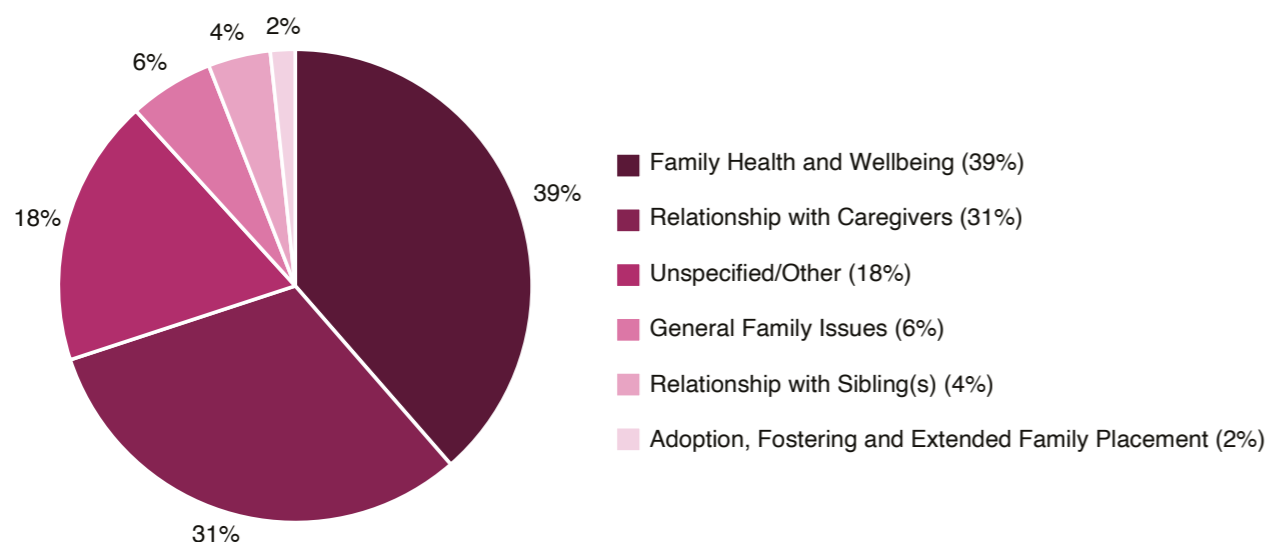
We received data from 33 child helplines in Europe in 2023, representing an 86.8% response rate, about Family Relationships.

Family Relationships ranked third out of ten counselling contact categories. A total of 233,325 contacts was recorded under this category.

Family Health and Wellbeing (38.6%), **Relationship with Caregivers** (31.3%) and **Unspecified/Other** (18.3%) accounted for almost all (88.2%) of the total Family Relationships-related contacts received by child helplines in Europe.

Family Health and Wellbeing refers to issues relating to the mental and physical health of family members, particularly those arising from adverse experiences, including parental conflict, separation or divorce, a parent or caregiver struggling with substance use or mental health issues, the death of a parent or guardian, changes in family dynamics such as remarriage or blended families, caregiver illness, or the absence or incarceration of a parent. Concerns about a parent's wellbeing or a missing parent can also fall under this category.

Relationship with Caregivers pertains to the dynamics between a child or young person and their parents or primary caregivers. This includes conflicts or disagreements with parents, the challenges of adjusting to a new or blended family structure and the pressures placed on children by parents to meet high expectations. The stress of parental pressure may lead to concerns about meeting those expectations, affecting the child's emotional wellbeing.



In terms of gender distribution across the Family Relationships subcategories, the data once again shows consistently more contacts involving girls than boys (53% compared with 34%). This was true for every subcategory. Notably, 51% of the contacts made by boys in this category were about Family Health and Wellbeing, whereas this was only the case for 36% of the contacts made by girls.

	Boy	Girl	Nonbinary	Unknown	Totals
Adoption, Fostering and Extended Family Placement	966 (24%)	2,148 (54%)	12 (0%)	819 (21%)	3,945
Family Health and Wellbeing	40,320 (45%)	44,105 (49%)	194 (0%)	5,449 (6%)	90,068
General Family Issues	3,812 (28%)	8,666 (64%)	41 (0%)	1,009 (7%)	13,528
Relationship with Caregiver(s)	22,399 (31%)	42,498 (58%)	391 (1%)	7,842 (11%)	73,130
Relationship with Sibling(s)	4,223 (43%)	4,348 (44%)	35 (0%)	1,321 (13%)	9,927
Unspecified/Other	7,950 (19%)	21,992 (51%)	772 (2%)	12,013 (28%)	42,727
Total	79,670 (34%)	123,757 (53%)	1,445 (1%)	28,453 (12%)	233,325

Case Summary

A 16-year-old girl reached out via webchat to discuss the challenges she was facing with her father, who has become aggressive and distant after quitting smoking and drinking. Living with both parents, she felt hurt by her father's change in behaviour, and worried about how to help him. Her mother was also struggling to connect with the father, leaving the girl feeling isolated. To cope, she often avoided him altogether, staying in a separate room or leaving the house. As a result, she had become withdrawn and closed off from her friends.

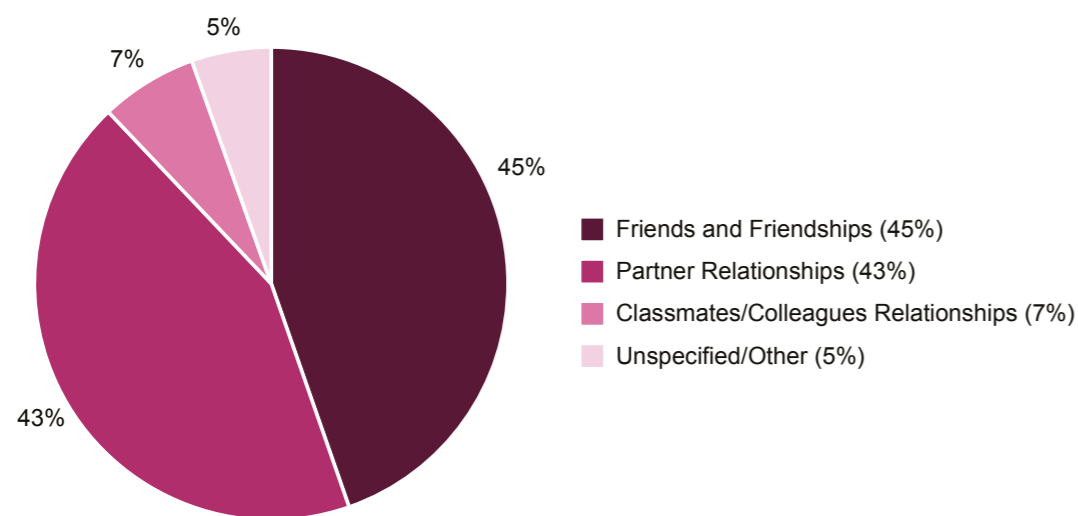
The counsellor reassured the girl that it was not her responsibility to change her father's behaviour, validating her desire for improving the situation while also appreciating the supportive relationship she had with her mother. They discussed the importance of reaching out to her mother and other loved ones whenever she needed support, as well as practical strategies that could help her to manage her father's aggression and her own emotional responses towards it.

Data on Peer Relationships

We received data from 33 child helplines, representing an 86.4% response rate, about Peer Relationships in 2023.

Peer Relationships ranked fourth out of ten counselling categories. A total of 164,737 contacts was recorded for this category.

Friends and Friendships (44.7%) and **Partner Relationships** (43.3%) were the main Peer Relationship-related reasons for making contact with child helplines in Europe in 2023, followed by **Classmates/Colleagues Relationships** (6.6%) and **Unspecified/Other** (5.4%).



Case Summary

A 12-year old girl was distressed about her friendship with her childhood best friend, which she felt was beginning to deteriorate. She had noticed her friend spending time with a different group from their class and ignoring her, which had caused her feelings of hurt and isolation. She was anxious that her friend might reveal her secrets to others, and was aware that the group had been gossiping about her. She was looking for advice on both saving her existing friendship and making new ones.

The counsellor worked with her to explore ways she could achieve this. Together, they discussed steps to take that would connect her with other classmates. As they continued discussing her best friend, the girl eventually recognized that this particular friendship might be one that was no longer worth pursuing. She decided to write a letter expressing her feelings as a final attempt; if there was no response, she was now prepared to be able to let go of the friendship.

Although girls contacted child helplines more often than boys for issues relating to Peer Relationships, in terms of gender distribution across the Peer Relationships subcategories, there were not many differences.

Friends and Friendships accounted for 44% of the contacts made by girls, 41% made by boys and 43% made by nonbinary children and young people. **Partner Relationships** were brought up more often in contacts made by boys, accounting for 50% of their contacts in this category, while only featuring in 43% and 41% of the contacts made by girls or nonbinary children and young people, respectively.,

	Boy	Girl	Nonbinary	Unknown	Totals
Classmates/colleagues relationships	3,412 (31%)	4,635 (42%)	22 (0%)	2,843 (26%)	10,912
Friends and friendships	22,643 (31%)	39,429 (54%)	445 (1%)	11,064 (15%)	7,3581
Partner relationships	27,336 (38%)	38,268 (54%)	424 (1%)	5,244 (7%)	71,272
Unspecified/other	1,279 (14%)	6,464 (72%)	149 (2%)	1,080 (12%)	8,972
Total	54,670 (33%)	88,796 (54%)	1,040 (1%)	20,231 (12%)	164,737

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 2023 data collected from 36 child helplines across Europe highlights the urgent need for increased support for children and young people, particularly in the areas of mental health, violence and family and peer relationships.

The findings reveal a concerning prevalence of emotional distress, with mental health issues such as anxiety, mood problems and suicidal thoughts being the most common reasons for children and young people making contact. Violence, especially bullying and emotional abuse, also remains a significant concern, alongside issues in family and peer relationships that affect children's wellbeing.

These insights emphasize the **crucial role of child helplines as first responders**, offering immediate support and guidance.

Our Recommendations

Expand Funding and Resources for Child Helplines as First Responders for Mental Health Support and Response

With mental health issues being the most reported concern, child helplines play a critical role as first responders for children in crisis. Strengthening child helplines with targeted resources ensures that they can continue to offer timely and effective support for child and youth facing emotional distress. Therefore, it is **crucial to provide dedicated, long-term funding** to equip child helplines with resources for ongoing, high-quality² service provision in mental health support, including suicide prevention, self-harm response, crisis intervention and the impact of the digital sphere on mental health, as well as resources for the relevant data collection on mental health. The European Union, other European agencies, governments and NGO partnerships should embed child helplines within mental health structures and policies, ensuring they are a recognized entry point for urgent support.

Position Child Helplines as Key Partners in Violence Prevention and Response Initiatives

As one of the primary contact points for children and young people experiencing or witnessing violence, child helplines have unique insights and can provide immediate, confidential support. By integrating child helplines into broader violence prevention systems and policies, they can amplify their impact and connect children to further child protection services when needed. Therefore, child helplines must be recognized and integrated into national and European frameworks for violence prevention, including anti-bullying, abuse prevention, and digital safety programs, as well as maintaining and/or developing strong partnerships with law enforcement and child protection agencies.

Expand Data Collection and Research Support for Child Helplines

Beyond service provision, child helpline data offers valuable insights into both well-known and emerging issues affecting children, and help ensure that the voices of children and young people are amplified on policy level – a key child participatory activity. By investing in child helplines' data infrastructure and fostering regular dialogue with policymakers, this information can be used to shape responsive and evidence-based child protection policies at both national and regional levels. Therefore, funding and partnerships that enhance child helplines' capacities for data collection and analysis are crucial. Collaborations between child helplines and policymakers on national and European level should be established to regularly review data and identify trends in child rights and child wellbeing.

2. We define "high-quality" as per our Core Quality Standards for Child Helplines: <https://childhelplineinternational.org/about/members/core-quality-standards/>

Our Child Helpline Members in Europe

Albania	ALO 116 ☎ 116111 https://www.alo116.al
Armenia	FAR Child Protection Hotline & Helpline ☎ 0800 61 111 http://www.farusa.org
Austria	Rat Auf Draht ☎ 147 http://www.rataufdraht.at
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan Child Helpline ☎ 116 111 https://www.childhelpline.az
Belgium	Jongerenlijn AWEL ☎ 102 http://www.awel.be
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Plavi Telefon ☎ 080050305 http://www.plavitefon.ba/
Bulgaria	National Telephone Line for Children ☎ 116 111 https://sacp.government.bg/
Croatia	Hrabritelefon ☎ 116 111 https://www.hrabritelefon.hr
Cyprus	Call 116 111 Cyprus ☎ 116111 http://www.call116.111.com
Czechia	Linka Bezpečí ☎ 116 111 https://www.linkabezpeci.cz
Denmark	BørneTelefonen ☎ 116 111 https://bornetelefonen.dk/
Estonia	Lasteabi ☎ 116 111 http://lasteabi.ee/en/
Finland	MLL Nuortennetti ☎ 116 111 https://www.nuortennetti.fi
France	Allô Enfance en Danger ☎ 119 https://www.allo119.gouv.fr/

Germany	Kinder- und Jugendtelefon ☎ 116 111 https://www.nummergegenkummer.de
Gibraltar	Childline Gibraltar ☎ 88008 http://www.childline.gi
Greece	The Smile of the Child ☎ 116 111 http://www.hamogelo.gr
	Together for Children ☎ 11525 http://www.mazigiatiopaidi.gr
Hungary	Lelkisegély-vonal ☎ 116 111 https://www.kek-vonal.hu
Iceland	Red Cross Helpline - Hjálparsíminn 1717 ☎ 1717 https://www.raudikrossinn.is
Ireland	ISPCC Childline ☎ 1800 66 66 66 / 116 111 http://www.childline.ie
Israel	ERAN ☎ 1201 http://en.eran.org.il
	Natal Helpline ☎ 1800 363 363 https://www.natal.org.il
Italy	Hello Telefono Azzurro ☎ 19696 https://www.azzurro.it
Latvia	Bērnu un Pusaudžu Uzticības Tālrunis ☎ 116 111 https://uzticibastalrunis.lv/
Liechtenstein*	Pro Juventute Beratung + Hilfe 147 ☎ 147 http://www.147.ch
Lithuania	Vaiku Linija ☎ 116 111 http://www.vaikuliniija.lt
Luxembourg	Kanner Jugendtelefon (KJT) ☎ 116 111 https://www.kjt.lu/en/

Malta	Kellimni.com http://www.kellimni.com Support Line 179 ☎ 116 111 https://fsws.gov.mt/en/appogg/Pages/supportline.aspx
Moldova	Telefon Copilului ☎ 116 111 https://telefonulcopilului.md/
Montenegro	National Child Helpline of Montenegro ☎ 116 111 https://dombijela.me/
Netherlands	De Kindertelefoon ☎ 116 111 http://kindertelefoon.nl
	Helpwanted ☎ +31 20 261 5275 http://helpwanted.nl
North Macedonia	Alo Bushavko ☎ +389 703 90632 https://alobushavko.mk/
Norway	Alarmtelefonen for barn og unge ☎ 116 111 http://www.116111.no Kors På Halsen ☎ 0800 333 21 http://korspaahalsen.rodekors.no
Poland	Telefon Zaufania ☎ 116 111 https://fdos.pl
Portugal	SOS Criança ☎ 116 111 http://iacrianca.pt/intervencao/sos-crianca
Romania	Telefonul Copilului ☎ 116 111 http://www.telefonulcopilului.ro
Serbia	NADEL ☎ 116 111 https://www.116111.rs/o-nadelu.html
Slovakia	Linka Detskej Istoty ☎ 116 111 / 0800 500 500 http://www.lidi.sk

Slovenia	National Telephone Helpline TOM ☎ 116 111 http://www.e-tom.si
Spain	Teléfono ANAR ☎ 116 111 https://www.anar.org
Sweden	BRIS ☎ 116 111 http://www.bris.se
Switzerland*	Pro Juventute Beratung + Hilfe 147 ☎ 147 http://www.147.ch
Ukraine	Ukraine National Child Toll-Free Hotline ☎ 116 111 http://www.la-strada.org.ua
United Kingdom	BEAT ☎ 0808 801 0677 http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk Childline UK ☎ 116 111 http://www.childline.org.uk HopelineUK ☎ 0800 068 4141 http://www.papyrus-uk.org/

The highlighted child helplines provided data that contributed to this report.

*Please note that the child helplines in Switzerland and Liechtenstein are operated by one member, Pro Juventute, whose data submission is counted in the singular.

Disclaimer

Data presented and statements made do not capture the full scope of practices and policies of all countries and cases handled by child helplines and other child protection organizations at the national level. The exact data can be requested from Child Helpline International.

Child Helpline International's work is firmly grounded in the principles and values enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including children's right to privacy and protection from harm. To preserve the trust and confidence children and young people place in child helplines every day, any personal details cited in case summaries has been altered and anonymized.



Every child has a voice. No child should be left unheard.

Child Helpline International is a collective impact organization with over 150 members in more than 130 countries and territories around the world.

We coordinate information, viewpoints, knowledge and data from our child helpline members, partners and external sources. This exceptional resource is used to help and support child protection systems globally, regionally and nationally, and to help our members advocate for the rights of children and amplify their voices.

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