

MENTAL CONFORT AND SPORTS

1. What is the current state of youth mental health in Spain?

Youth mental health in Spain is going through a tough moment.

Many adolescents are struggling with problems like anxiety, depression, or loneliness, yet a lot of them aren't getting the help they need.

The pandemic made things worse, and gaps in the health system — from lack of resources to long waits and limited trust — are slowing down the response.

Still, there's a growing awareness of the issue, more funding being put in place, and a stronger focus on prevention and early support.

Challenges & Areas of Concern

Stigma remains an obstacle: many adolescents don't recognise problems as "serious," prefer to keep them secret, or distrust school/health systems.

Gender differences: Girls tend to report higher levels of depression and anxiety, greater sleep problems and more worry about social comparisons.

Socio-economic inequalities: Young people from less affluent backgrounds have higher risk; also those in unstable housing or with fewer resources are more affected.

Insufficient early-intervention and preventive services: Many mental health issues seem to escalate before being addressed; schools, primary care settings are still under-equipped.

Overburdened mental health system: Especially for youth, lack of specialised clinicians, long delays, and regional disparities in service provision.

2. How is physical activity promoted as a mental health tool in schools, youth clubs, or nationally?

1. National Strategy against Sedentarism (2025-2030)

The Spanish government has approved a National Strategy for the Promotion of Sport against Sedentarism and Physical Inactivity covering 2025-2030.

2. School-based interventions & programs

“Entorno escolar / EPSP Interventions” (Ministry of Health)

There are operational objectives in the school environment to promote physical activity among infants, primary and secondary students.

3. Awareness & campaigns

Campaigns like “ACTÍVATE. Health training” by the Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD) are meant to promote physical activity across the population, emphasizing its benefits to both body and mind including emotional balance.

4. Strategic plans that integrate physical activity, mental health, and well-being

The Strategic Plan to Reduce Childhood Obesity includes creating “ecosystems” that promote healthy lifestyles including physical activity, emotional well-being, sleep quality, etc

3. Barriers to Participation

The barriers that limit people's participation in social, sports, or community activities can take various forms and are often interconnected. One of the most common is the fear of failure, which generates insecurity and prevents individuals from facing new challenges due to the concern of not meeting their own or others' expectations. This fear is often associated with previous negative experiences or with a perceived lack of necessary skills.

Another significant barrier is low self-esteem, which affects personal confidence and willingness to engage in group activities. Individuals with a negative self-image tend to avoid situations that require social interaction or public exposure, thereby reducing opportunities for personal growth and emotional development.

Social pressure also plays an important role in shaping participation. In some contexts, stereotypes or social norms discourage certain behaviors or activities. For example, some groups may perceive specific sports, hobbies, or community roles as inappropriate for their age, gender, or social background, which limits inclusion and diversity.

Finally, the lack of family support can be a major obstacle. When the family environment does not encourage or value participation in extracurricular activities, individuals—particularly young people—may feel unmotivated or even criticized for getting involved. This barrier prevents the development of

4. Programs and Strategies to Promote Emotional Well-being

Various institutions and organizations implement programs aimed at encouraging community participation and improving emotional well-being. Schools, for instance, play a key role by offering workshops, sports, excursions, and cultural events that strengthen social skills, self-esteem, and emotional regulation among students. These activities contribute to holistic development and foster a sense of belonging within the educational community.

Local councils and municipalities also design community-based projects that target different population groups. These include sports programs, outdoor activities, or personal development workshops that provide spaces for interaction, recreation, and stress reduction.

In addition, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local community groups often promote initiatives that encourage inclusion and social engagement. Their programs may focus on vulnerable populations, offering accessible opportunities to participate in meaningful activities that enhance emotional resilience, cooperation, and social cohesion.

Overall, such initiatives play a vital role in building stronger, more connected communities, where individuals can develop their potential, strengthen their emotional health, and improve their overall quality of life.