



Ministry of Health, Wellness & the Environment

unicef
for every child

YOUTH VOICES

A MENTAL HEALTH CARE BILL SURVEY REPORT





This research report was published by
Zenith Centre in June 2026.

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Your Mind Matters - Mental Health Care Bill 2026



Or Visit

<https://youtu.be/CaOwvKNmS-A>

LISTENING TO OUR FUTURE: A STUDY OF A&B YOUTH

In 2026, Zenith Centre concluded a historic listening initiative across Antigua and Barbuda. This infographic outlines the scope of our youth outreach and research.

Join us in making their voices heard.



Youth Voices Gathered:
Over 1,000
Unique insights



Ages Covered:
Ages 10-19



Research Scale
Across Both islands
(nationwide)



10 Focus Groups

Intimate discussions held across Antigua and Barbuda,
capturing deep qualitative insights



1,000 Surveys

Quantitative responses from diverse youth across all
regions, providing statistically robust data



A STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In 2026, Zenith Centre concluded a historic listening initiative across Antigua and Barbuda. This infographic outlines the scope of our youth outreach and research.

Join us in making their voices heard.



40.1%

Boys and Young Men



59.9%

Girls and Young Women

Age Groups of Respondents

Ages 10-12 years old: 7.6%

Ages 13-15 years old: 58.6%

Ages 16-19 years old: 33.8%

DIALOGUE: ENCOURAGING YOUNG MEN TO SHARE



Boys often feel they can't talk about mental health. We really need to change that. Why don't you try? Sharing can help so much.



It feels hard, but I guess I can try to find my voice. Maybe it will help.

UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

WHY THE DATA DIFFERS

The survey split is a finding in itself!

The lower number of boys points to real issue:

The stigma that boys can't talk about mental health.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

The focus must be on encouraging all young people to share.

We need to create safe space for boys to speak up without fear



MENTAL HEALTH BILL: OUR VOICES AT WORK

HOW DID WE DO IT?



WHAT WE FOUND

01. WE SUPPORT THE LAW, BUT WE DON'T TRUST THE SYSTEM (YET)



Most of us AGREE with the ideas in the new Mental Health Bill. But...just because a law says something, doesn't mean it actually happens.



75-90%

Support youth rights in the Bill



40.6%

Feel the law does NOT protect young people



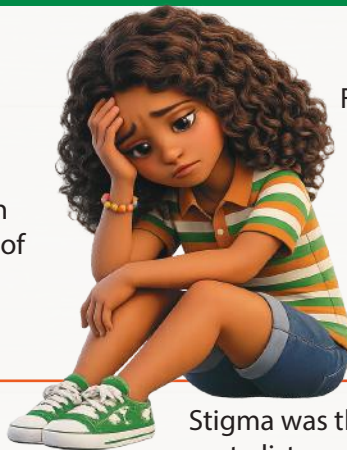
36.9%

Unsure if the law protects them

02. STIGMA IS THE #1 THING STOPPING US FROM GETTING HELP

Stigma:

Being judged, made fun of, or dismissed because of your mental health.



34.2%

Fear being judged if they ask for help



Boys especially feel they can't talk about their feelings

Stigma was the **BIGGEST barrier** - bigger than cost, distance or anything else.

Concerns of Youth

- Fear of gossip stops people from speaking up.
- Many fear adults won't believe them or will dismiss them. This happens at school. At home, and in clinics.

"Fear of judgment from their parents, being shy, and bullying we recited as key challenges to speaking up."

- Female participant, 16 years

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & ACCESS

03. PRIVACY IS EVERYTHING

Keep information safe - #1 thing that builds trust



“There is an issue of trust with persons who are familiar.”
- Male participant, Antigua, 15 years

We will not ask for help if private information is shared without permission.

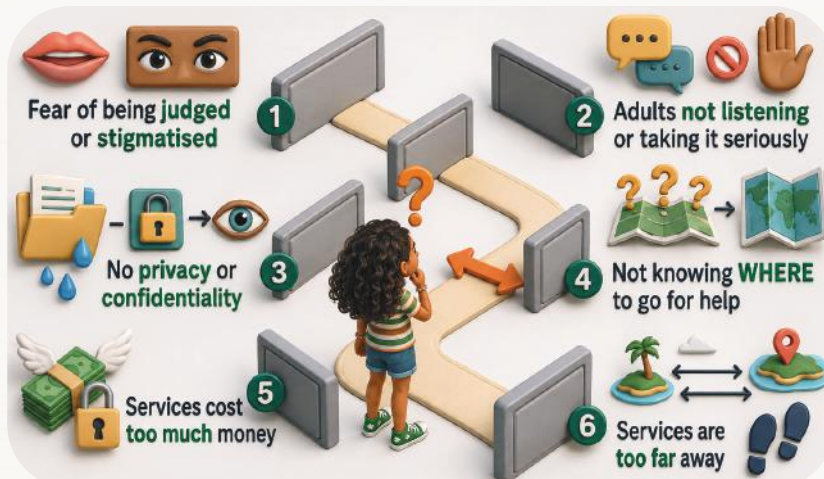
! SPECIAL CONCERN FOR BARBUDA

Barbuda shared that in small communities helpers might accidentally share private information.

In small communities, everyone knows everyone and this creates a privacy concern.

04. WE STRUGGLE TO ACCESS HELP

Even when we want help, getting it isn't easy. What gets in the way:



“I don't know where to go.”
- Survey respondent
- a recurring answer from many young people

SUPPORT PREFERENCES:

Where We Prefer to Get Support

01.



At home

02.



Online (chat)

03.



Youth centre

04.



Clinic / hospital

05.



At school



WHY HOME & ONLINE?

Home support = familiarity. Online support = anonymity.

Home feels safe because you are comfortable.

When nobody knows it's you, it feels safer to ask for help.

Many young people in Barbuda mentioned AI tools like ChatGPT because they feel private.

05.

WE WANT A SAY IN OUR OWN CARE

"Young people should be allowed to make decisions because others don't really know how you are feeling."

Most of us agreed that young people - especially from age 13 - should have a real say in their own mental health care. And we should be able to choose WHO supports us, not just be told who it will be.



YOUTH DEMANDS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE: A MESSAGE TO DECISION MAKERS

"We want safe, confidential, affordable, youth-friendly mental health support systems that genuinely listen to us and treat us with dignity."

- Every Young Person Who Took Part

CALL TO ACTION

01. IMPLEMENT SAFE, CONFIDENTIAL SYSTEMS

02. PROVIDE AFFORDABLE SERVICES

03. ENSURE YOUTH-FRIENDLY SUPPORT

04. GENUINELY LISTEN AND TREAT WITH DIGNITY

HOW TO REACH US - TOP CHANNELS

01.



TIKTOK

02.



INSTAGRAM

03.



ABS TV & RADIO

04.



TEXT MESSAGES

05.



FACEBOOK

OUTREACH STRATEGY

Prioritize TikTok and Instagram for youth engagement.

Include Traditional Media (ABS TV) for broader reach.

Utilize Text Messaging

**"WE SPOKE.
NOW IT'S
YOUR TURN
TO ACT."**





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