

MALAYSIA

MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

Version 2026.03.22

The purpose of this document is to share a brief snapshot of the landscape of mental wellbeing / mental health in **Malaysia** with comparisons to regional and international standards. This document was produced by Firetree Philanthropy Foundation, a Singapore-based philanthropic foundation that partners with non-profit organisations working in Malaysia. We undertook some online research on mental health to build our own knowledge.

This document is an opportunity to share what we learned. Please note that we are neither research or mental health experts and are simply making available what we came across in the spirit of sharing information on mental health data and needs in order to, hopefully, save time for others who may be interested to learn more on this topic. We recognise that this data is generalised and that figures for marginalised and/or higher risk groups may be different. We welcome your feedback and any suggestions on how to make this document better. If you come across any materials or information that you think would be good to include, please do share. You can reach out to us at resources@firetree.org.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

- **'Globally, one in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 15% of the global burden of disease in this age group.'**

SOURCE: WHO, 2025. Mental Health of Adolescents - Key Facts - <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health> (accessed 22.03.26)

- **'Around 1 in 8 adolescents [in Malaysia] aged 10-19 and 1 in 20 children aged 5-9 years are estimated to have a mental disorder (including developmental disorder).'**

SOURCE: UNICEF, 2022. STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND SERVICES for children and adolescents in East Asia and Pacific Region - Malaysia Country Profile <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/11811/file/Malaysia%20Country%20Report.pdf> (page 91. Accessed 22.03.26)

- **'In the South-East Asia Region, about 13.2% of the population, meaning 1 in 7 (approximately 260 million people), live with a mental health condition.'**

SOURCE: WHO, 2023. Mental health action plan for the WHO South-East Asia Region 2023-2030 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/97892290210689> (page 1 accessed 22.03.26) & WHO, 2022 World mental health report: transforming mental health for all. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338> (page 45. Accessed 22.03.26)

SUICIDE

➤ **Globally, 'more than to 720,000 people die due to suicide every year.'**

SOURCE: WHO, 2025. Suicide Key Facts <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide> (accessed 22.03.26)

➤ **Suicide rate (per 100,000 - 2021)**

- **Global:** 9.2 total - Female 5.9 Male 12.4
- **South East Asia Region:** 10
- **Malaysia:** 5.7 (+0.11 worsening since 2018) Female 2.2 Male 8.8

SOURCE: WHO, 2021. Data Set as per WHO data sets by country SOURCE: WHO, 2021. Data Set as per WHO data sets by country <https://data.who.int/countries/> (accessed 22.03.26) & <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/74b12494-f213-4b5b-9533-18442147e1fb/content> - (page 17 & 18 assessed 22.03.26)

➤ 'Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and was the third leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds **globally** in 2021'

The majority of deaths [globally] by suicide (73%) occur in low- and middle-income countries in 2021.

SOURCE: WHO, 2025. Suicide Key Facts <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide> (accessed 22.03.26)

➤ **'Suicide is estimated to be the second leading cause of death for adolescents in Malaysia.(1)'**

'Most adolescents who died by suicide did not have a known past history of attempted suicide, physical and mental health problems or family history of suicide.(20)'

'Adolescent boys had around four times the mortality rate due to suicide compared with girls.(24)'

SOURCE: UNICEF, 2022. STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND SERVICES for children and adolescents in East Asia and Pacific Region - Malaysia Country Profile <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/11811/file/Malaysia%20Country%20Report.pdf> (page 27. Accessed 22.03.26)

Source of References within the Quotes:

1. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 'Global Burden of Disease Study 2019', IHME, 2019.
20. Bahar, Norharlina, et al., 'Suicide Among the Youth in Malaysia: What do we know?' Asia-Pacific Psychiatry, vol. 7, no. 2, 2015, pp. 223–229.
24. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 'Global Burden of Disease Data Tool', Washington, D.C., IHME, 2019

ANXIETY

Prevalence of Anxiety

- **Global:** 5.7%
- **South East Asia Region:** 5.4%
- **Malaysia:** 2.3%

SOURCE: IHME, *Global Burden of Disease (2025)* – with major processing by Our World in Data.

<https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health> (accessed 22.03.26). NOTE: figures based on 2023 data.

DEPRESSION

Prevalence of depressive disorder

- **Global:** 3.8%
- **South East Asia Region:** 3.7%
- **Malaysia:** 3.7%

SOURCE: IHME, *Global Burden of Disease (2025)* – with major processing by Our World in Data.

<https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health> (accessed 22.03.26) NOTE: figures based on 2023 data.

[Globally] ‘Girls and women are more likely to experience an anxiety disorder than boys and men.’

SOURCE: WHO, 2025. *Anxiety Disorders Key Facts* <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/anxiety-disorders> (accessed 22.03.26)

ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental health workers per 100,000

- **Global:** 13.5
- **South East Asia Region:** 4
- **Malaysia:** 5.86 ***

Nurses working in mental health per 100,000

- **Global:** 4.1
- **South East Asia Region:** 0.4
- **Malaysia:** 2.88 ***

Psychiatrists* per 100,000

- **Global:** 1.5
- **South East Asia Region:** 0.5
- **Malaysia:** 1.12 ***

Psychologists** per 100,000

- **Global:** 2
- **South East Asia Region:** 0.2
- **Malaysia:** 0.56 ***

NOTES:

*Psychiatrist: A medical doctor who has had at least two years of postgraduate training in psychiatry at a recognized teaching institution. May have training in a sub-speciality of psychiatry.

**Psychologist A professional who has completed formal training in psychology at a recognized, university-level school for a diploma or degree in psychology. For the Mental Health Atlas, information was sought only on psychologists working in mental health care.

*** These figures are from the 2020 WHO Mental Health Atlas as there was no later version available.

As per WHO definition in the WHO Mental Health Atlas 2024 (page IX. Accessed 22.03.26)

SOURCE: WHO 2024. *WHO Mental Health Atlas 2024* <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240114487> (page 43, 44. Accessed 22.03.26) & *WHO Mental Health Atlas 2020 Country Profile: Malaysia* <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/mental-health-atlas-mys-2020-country-profile> (page 2. Accessed 22.03.26)