

# Poor Health and Adverse Psychosocial Conditions Among Adolescents in Nordic Countries: Variable- and Person-Oriented Analyses

13. Vulnerable groups

**Charli Eriksson<sup>1</sup>** , *Håkan Stattin<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> LIME, Karolinska institutet

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, Uppsala University

## Abstract text

**Background:** There is cause for concern about the health development of adolescents in the Nordic countries. Several reports have highlighted a marked decline in mental health in adolescent populations in high-income countries from the 1950s to the present, with a particular focus on the Nordic countries. It is important to get an understanding of vulnerable group, which can be identified among Nordic. The aim of this study is to compare variable- and person-oriented analyses of three health indicators - psychosomatic complaints, self-rated health and life satisfaction - for measures that include adverse physical, school, interpersonal and personal conditions.

**Methods:** Data were drawn from the HBSC survey of 15-year-olds, combining the survey years 2018 and 2022. Samples from five Nordic countries were used (N = 14,539). Regression and cluster analysis were applied.

**Results:** The results showed that the three health indicators were substantially related to each other and formed a common factor. The three indicators were similarly associated with measures of adverse psychosocial conditions. Cluster analysis of the three indicators revealed seven health profiles. Similar proportions of these health profiles were found in the five countries. The health profiles associated with adverse physical conditions all included self-rated poor health. The health profiles associated with adverse school, interpersonal and personal conditions all included low life satisfaction. Mental health profiles containing low life satisfaction appeared to be the primary risk configurations. As a proxy for mental health, psychosomatic complaints have been the primary measure of subjective health in many previous studies. However, the mental health profile characterized by high levels of psychosomatic complaints had only average levels of these psychosocial measures.

**Conclusions:** Both the variable- and person-oriented approaches to the study of adolescent health provide novel insights into the role of the three health indicators in exposure to adverse psychosocial conditions.