

ELEM/Youth in Distress in Israel

2020: The Year of the Coronavirus

At-risk teens and young adults
during the third quarter of the outbreak

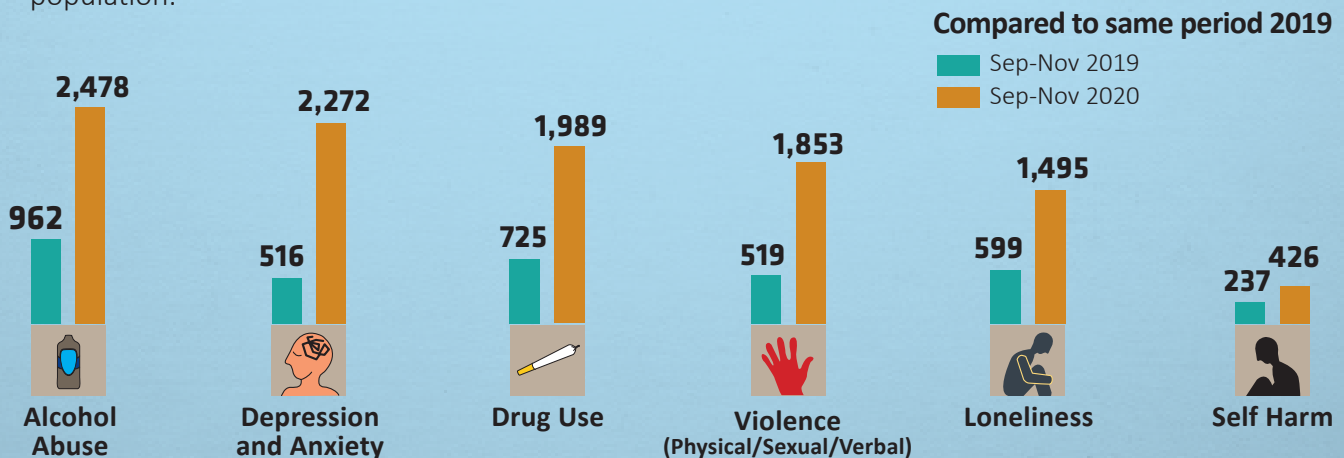
ELEM helped **6,517** **41%** more than 2019*
teens and young adults during
September - November 2020

The world we have inhabited for nearly a year, the world of the coronavirus outbreak, is different from anything we knew before. The hardships facing Israel's teens and young people are increasing. With each passing day, the circle of vulnerable youth expands. Over the past few months, we have seen young people who had not been at-risk, sliding to the margins of society. They report an increase in instances of depression, anxiety and violence at home.

This report describes the situation facing at-risk teens and young adults that ELEM has supported during the third quarter of the outbreak (September-November 2020), including an in-depth look at the crises our young people have faced since the beginning of the crisis and a comparison to the previous year.

What Were the Effects of COVID-19 on Teens and Young Adults During the Last 3 Months?

It has been nine months since the beginning of the pandemic - and the end is not yet in sight. During the year, the risks facing Israeli youth have worsened and affected a broader segment of the population.

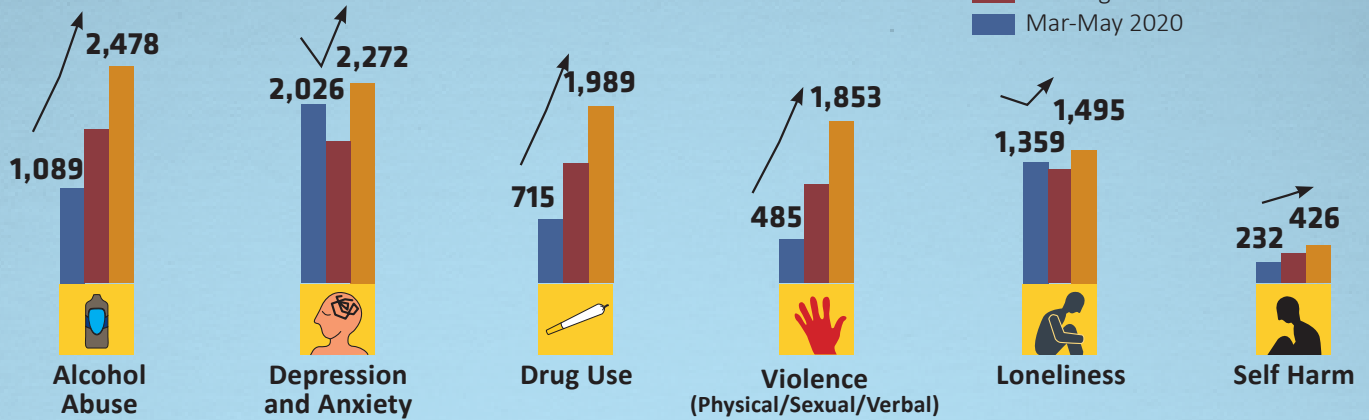


* Comparison to 2019 were measured against the same quarter

Rise in Harmful Behaviors throughout Coronavirus Pandemic

Compared to previous quarters

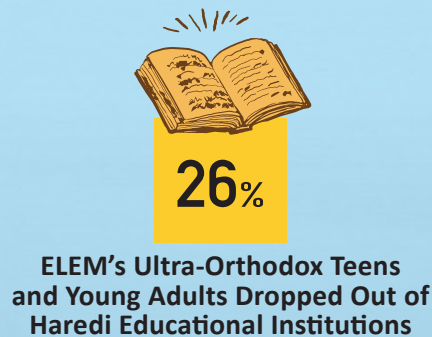
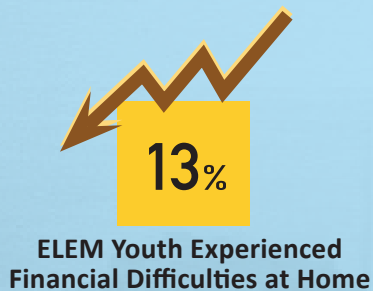
■ Sep-Nov 2020
■ Jun-Aug 2020
■ Mar-May 2020



"Suddenly you are told not to go out of the house. You get depressed. I was looking for thrills, something to break the monotony. I smoked drugs every day, falling even further, until I lost myself. Fortunately for me, the ELEM drop-in center was open during the lockdown, and I could go there and talk to them. They help you At ELEM. I found out there is someone to talk to, there is a solution to every problem."

(O., 16 years old, ELEM drop-in center)

The nine-month Coronavirus outbreak raised new and concerning issues among ELEM youth that had previously only been evident at the margins of society



Young people need the adults in their world to hear them and see them, and months on end of distance learning created a rift between the adult world and the teen world. In a world in which both teachers and students are cookie-cutter squares on a screen, there is no way to understand what the students are going through. Many teens have given up. About 16% have dropped out of school and 26% of ultra-Orthodox teens and young adults have dropped out of yeshiva.

"I feel myself sinking into depression and anxiety. Most of the day I just lie in bed, if I'm not asleep I try to play on my phone to distract myself but I feel myself sinking. I am tired in an unhealthy way, I have no appetite, I don't even feel like talking. I am pale, my eyes are heavy, I feel empty inside."

(M., 17 years old, ELEM drop-in center)

"People commit suicide because they think no one is listening to them. I understand the fear of speaking out. I want to be heard. The ELEM outreach van helped me now too, during the COVID crisis. When I met the van director, I felt less alone."

(S., 25 years old, ELEM outreach van)

Downward Trends During the Covid-19 Pandemic Continued to Worsen in the Later Months of 2020

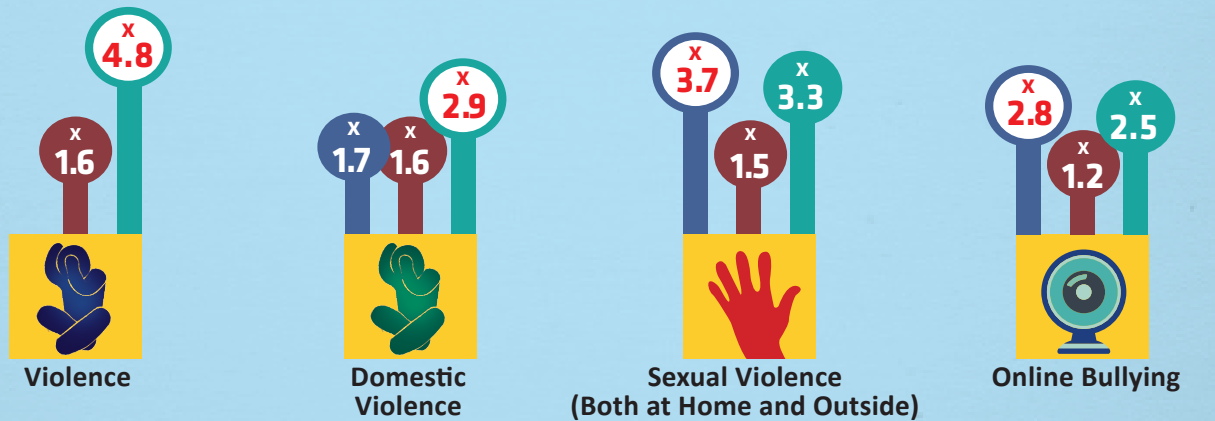
1. Worsening emotional and psychological distress

The school system is only partially functioning on Zoom, and important recreational activities such as extracurricular clubs, sports, and youth movements were completely shut down. Many teens found themselves completely detached from social and recreational interaction. As a result, we have seen emotional and psychological deterioration during this quarter.



2. Increase in violence

Violence, which increased at the beginning of the first coronavirus lockdown, worsened during the last quarter. It happens at home, on the streets, in parks and alleyways, and online.



3. Increased use of addictive substances

The emotional hardship, social detachment, and life in the shadow of uncertainty throughout the outbreak have exacerbated the use of mind-altering substances among thousands of teens and young adults.



From September through November, ELEM helped teens and young people



16,278

Face-to-Face Meetings



11,812

Online and Social Media Meetings



670

Emergency Humanitarian Aid



603

Teens and Young Adults at Extreme Risk



1,072

Teens and Young Adults Without Stable Families

"I've been through quite a bit in my life, including my father's murder. It has always been nice to come here and I always felt like the volunteer gave us everything, as if we were his own children."

"I was suicidal, I was depressed. Without ELEM, I don't think I would be here today."

"This place saved every single one of us."

(Lod ELEM outreach van youth)

We Must Save Our Youth!

Teens and young adults during the pandemic will continue to deal with the ramifications of the dramatic risk they are now facing into their adult lives, and we will continue to deal with the impact as parents and as a community.

ELEM goes anywhere young people are, including nightclubs, beaches, on the streets and areas of prostitution, seeks them out, and helps them. During day-to-day life and during emergencies, during lockdowns. We see them, hear them, and know how to help, guide and support them. To us, they are not invisible. If many at-risk youth don't get help now, this will become a tragedy for generations.



ELEM/Youth in Distress in Israel

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