

ELEM - Youth in Distress

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 hardship's 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 normative youth who had not been at-risk, sliding to the margins of society. They report more depression, anxiety, attrition from school and they are experiencing violence. All of our children are in danger!

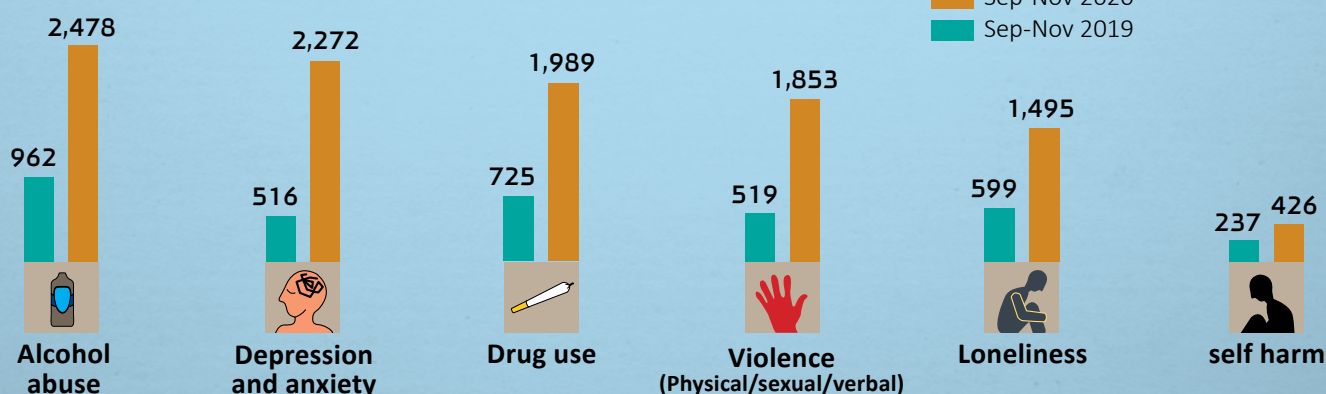
This report describes the situation facing the at-risk teens and young adults that ELEM has supported during the third quarter of the outbreak, September-November 2020, including an in-depth look at the prominent phenomena since the beginning of the crisis and a comparison to the previous year.

What happened to teens during the third quarter of COVID-19?

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

Rise in incidence compared to last year

Compared to same period 2019

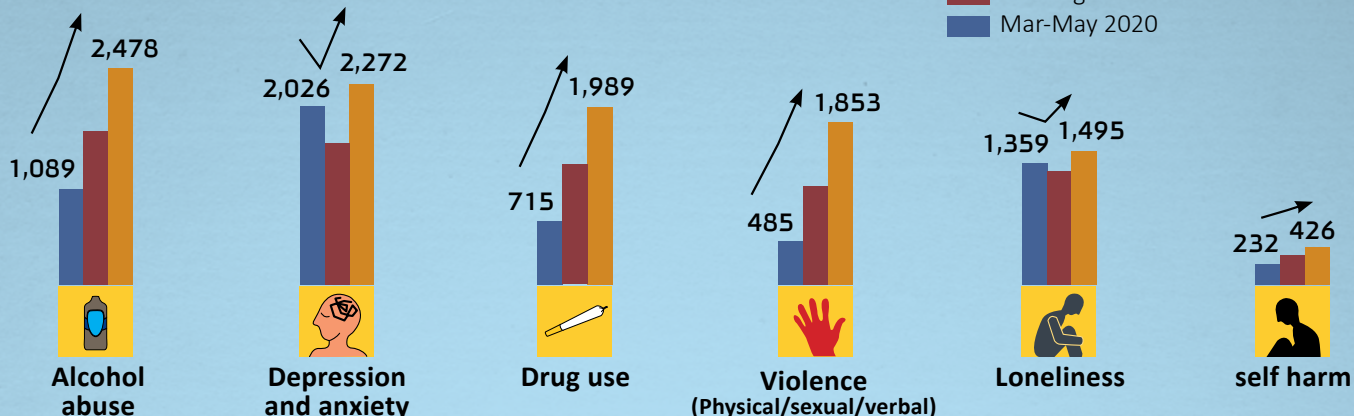


* Comparison to 2019 were measured against the same quarter

Rise in incidence throughout COVID outbreak

Compared to previous quarters

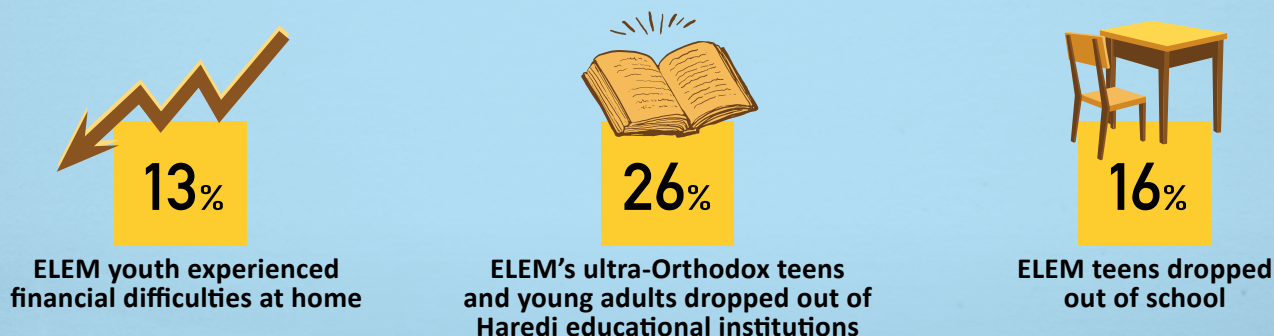
■ Sep-Nov 2020
■ Jun-Aug 2020
■ Mar-May 2020



"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".

(Ofek, 16 years old, an ELEM drop-in center beneficiary)

The nine-month coronavirus outbreak raised new and worrying issues which had previously only been evident at the margins of society.



Young people need the adults in their world to hear them and see them. 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 (while 26% of ultra-Orthodox teens and young adults have dropped out of yeshiva). If we don't act to fix this now, we will see the dramatic effect on society for years to come.

"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, an ELEM drop-in center beneficiary)

"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".

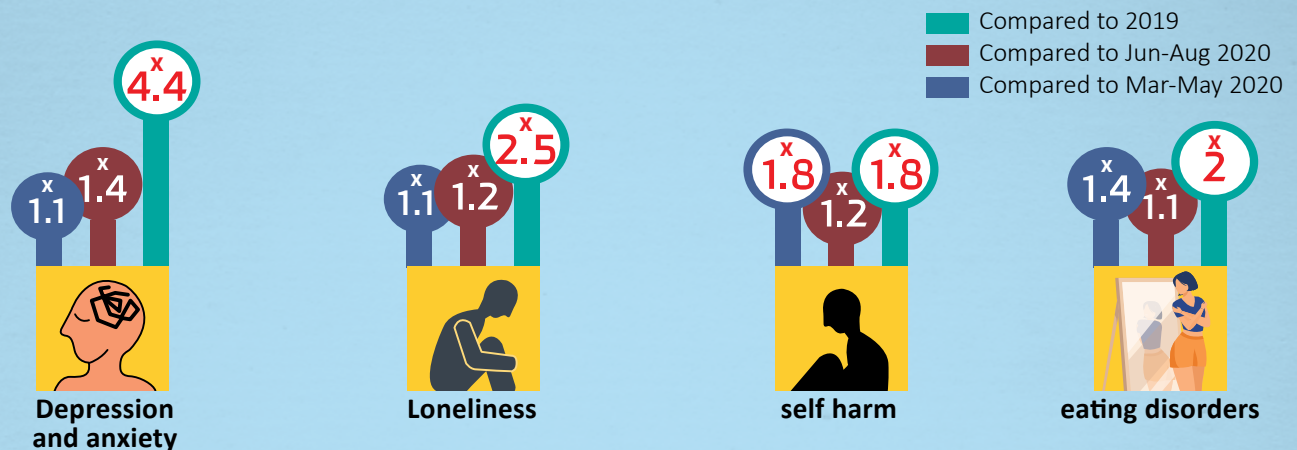
(S., 25 years old, an ELEM van beneficiary in central Israel)

Downward trends seen throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, worsened in 2020:

The “invisible epidemic,” the psychological epidemic, is as bad as the coronavirus itself. It is evident several ways:

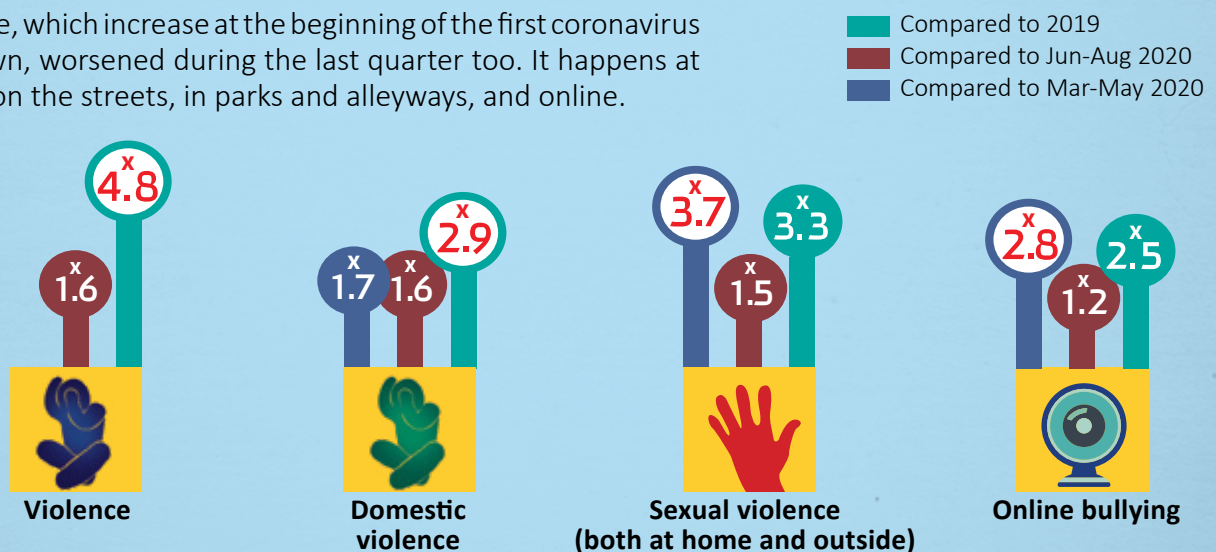
1. Worsening emotional and psychological distress:

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 for a long time. 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 increase at the beginning of the first coronavirus lockdown, worsened during the last quarter too. It happens at home, on the streets, in parks and alleyways, and online.



3. Increased use of addictive substances:

The emotional hardship, the 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 through



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".

(Young beneficiaries of the ELEM's Lod outreach van)

We must save our youth!

Teens and young adults during the pandemic, will continue to deal with the ramifications of the dramatic risk they faced 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, seeks them out, and helps them. During day-to-day life and during emergencies, during lockdowns and not. We see them, listen to 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.

We must help our young people now, before it is too late.



Right now, ELEM – Youth in Distress is launching a major **"Ambassadors' Campaign"** – a peer-to-peer fundraising effort that will allow us keep helping thousands of at-risk teens and young adults. Hundreds of staff, volunteers, partners, supporters and friends will become ambassadors for ELEM, will reach out to their own peer networks in order to keep developing services for young people, in order to save them now, before it is too late.

Join the campaign! If No ELEM ambassador has reached out to you yet, you can read more about our efforts at: <https://www.charidy.com/cmp/elem>

* ELEM – Youth in Distress collaborates with the Social Services Ministry. Many ELEM projects operate in conjunction with government ministries, local governments and charitable entities.

משרד העבודה הרווחה
והשירותים החברתיים
חוסן חברתי לישראל



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