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Mental health of Thai children

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Only 30% of children feel that their parents love and care for them, while more than 600,000 children have mental health disorders requiring treatment.



Thailand's future depends on the mental health and strength of today's children and teenagers. However, many of them, particularly those living in the South and in Bangkok, lack warm and close family relationships



A 2005 survey of the emotional and behavioral epidemiology of Thai children and teenagers showed that 5.1%, or 687,798 Thais aged 6 -18, experienced an "irregular level" of mental and behavioral disorders, such as anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies, childishness, misbehavior, law breaking, aggression, and sexual problems. These disorders, for which psychologists or mental health experts were required, were found most in young girls. The highest prevalence was among girls in the Southern region, at 9.8%, followed by girls in Bangkok, at 7.7%. The survey also found that 6.2% of students were involved with various kinds of illicit drugs.

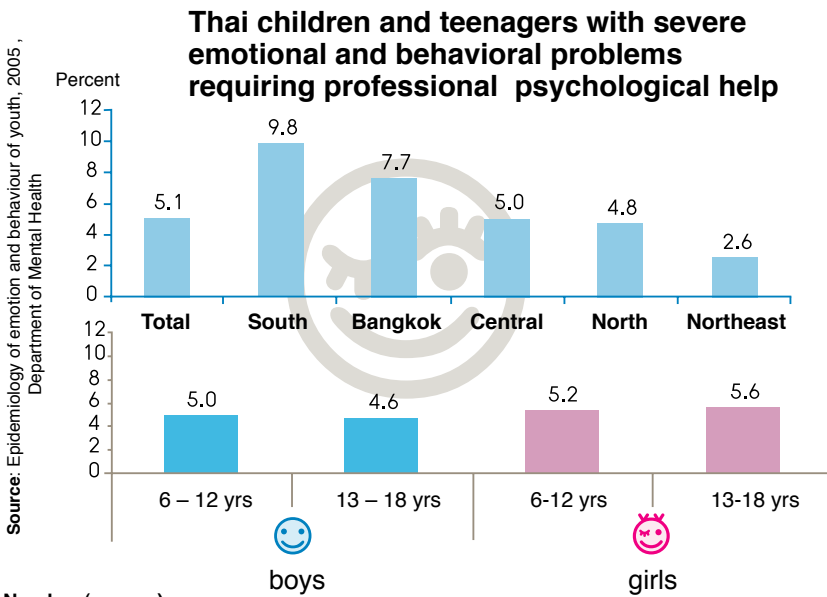
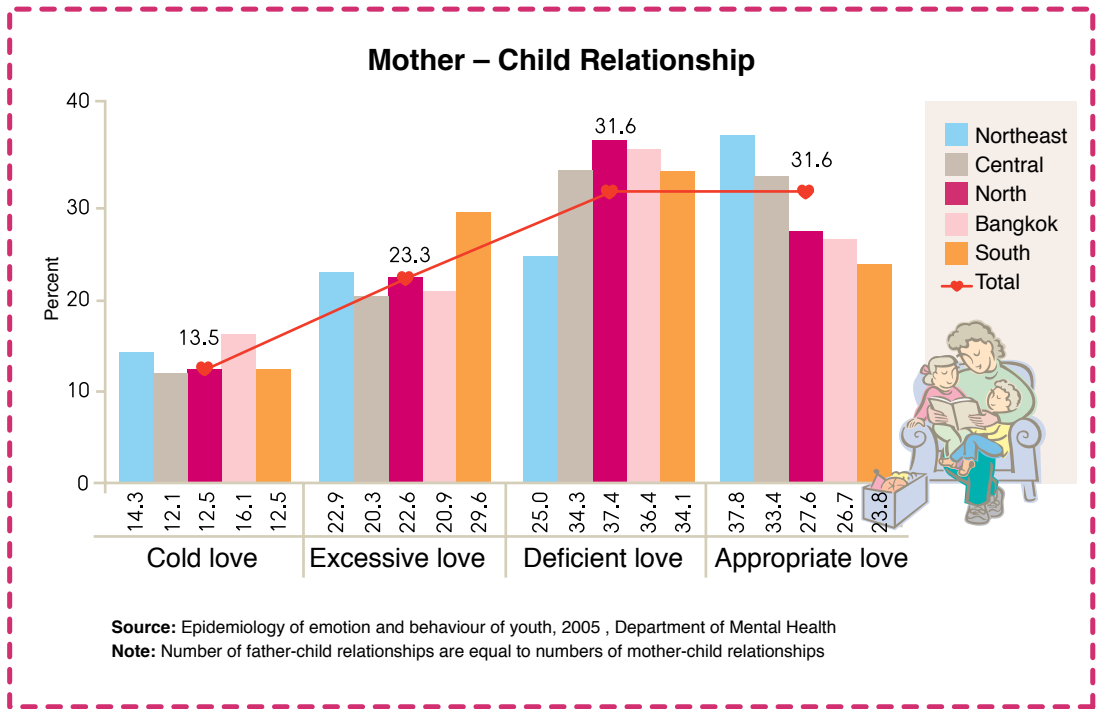
Despite the large numbers of children who need psychological treatment, the number of psychiatrists is growing very slowly. There are only 500 child psychiatrists in the whole country, most of whom work in Bangkok.

Good mental health is based on the creation of sound family relationships from infancy. The relationships can be categorized as follows :

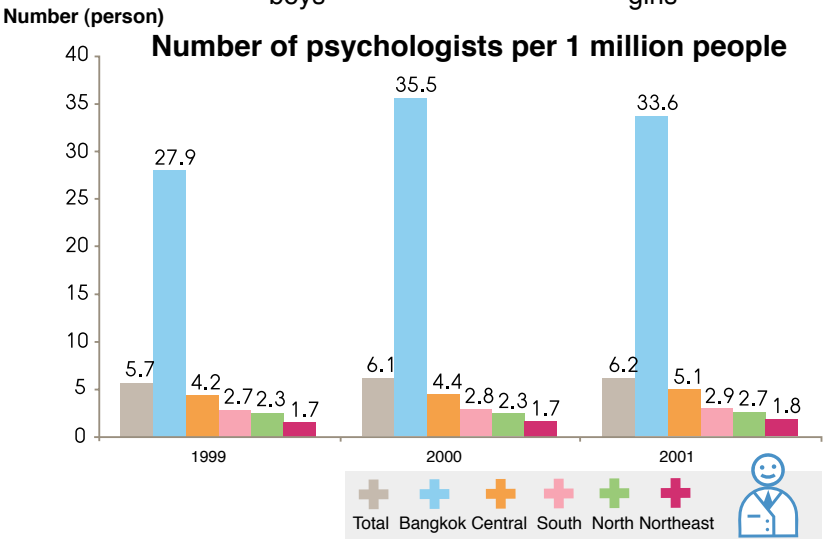
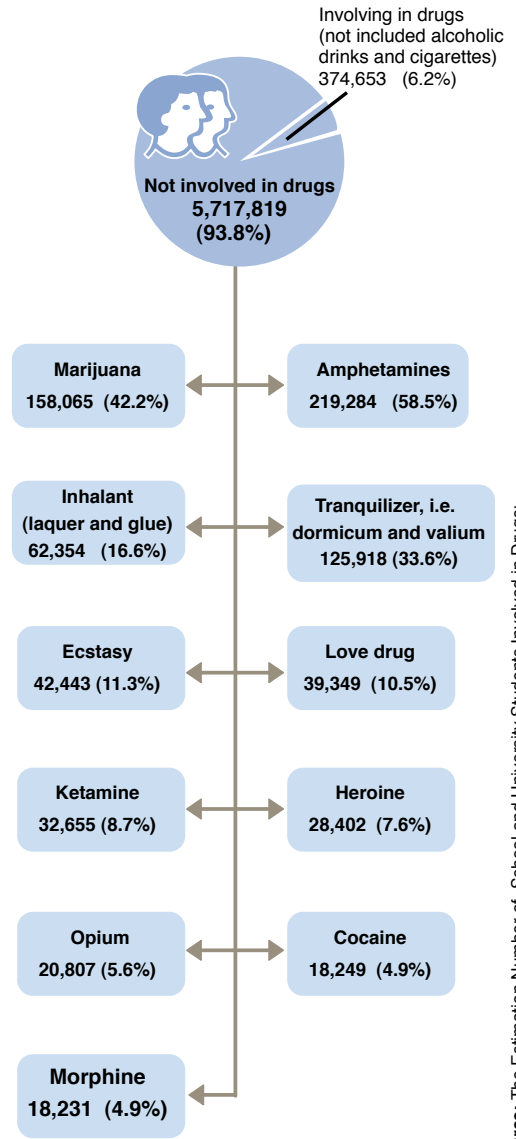
1. appropriate love (love with proper control) ;
2. excessive love (love with tight control);
3. deficient love (control without affection); and
4. cold love (a loveless relationship)

Sadly, it has become difficult in contemporary Thai society to create and sustain positive family relationships. "Deficient love" is found more than other types of love, throughout the country. In the Northeast, where the proportion of good family relationships, as well as poverty, is higher than in other regions, only three out of ten children feel their parents' love and care. Alarmingly, 14% of children state that there is no relationship at all. The creation of loving family environments needs to be made a priority in Thai society.





Number of school and university students in 2001



Source: The Survey of the Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health
 Thai Population Estimation in 1990 – 2020, the National Economic and Social Board
 Thai Population Projection in 2000 – 2025, the Health System Research Office and
 Institute for Population and Social Research.

Source: The Estimation Number of School and University Students Involved in Drugs: The Case of Students from Countrywide Educational Institutions, ABAC – KSC Internet Poll Research Center (ABAC Poll), 2001