

Children's Mental Health Network

February 6, 2026

Topic: Profile of Today's Youth – Beyond the Headlines



Belonging
the key to wellness



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF
**Children's
Mental Health**

Agenda

1. OCMH Announcements
2. Today's Youth
 1. Stressors
 2. Friendships and Relationships
 3. Hopefulness and Resilience
3. Experts in the Room – Large Group Discussion
4. Dig in for Further Discussion with Panelists and Speakers
5. Member Announcements
6. Adjourn

Meeting topic:
Profile of
Today's Youth –
Beyond the
Headlines

Children's Mental Health Network 2026

Meeting Agenda

February 6	May 1	August 7	November 6
Profile of Today's Youth – Beyond the Headlines	Neurodiversity	Technology and Children's Mental Health	Children's Mental Health in the New Year/Going Forward

OCMH 2025 Annual Report

- **Links:**
 - [2025 Report](#)
 - Annual Report [Briefing Slides](#)
 - [Re-recording of Briefing event](#)



Belonging

2025 Annual Report



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF
**Children's
Mental Health**

Profile of Today's Youth – Beyond the Headlines

Data

Key Data

Negative mental health

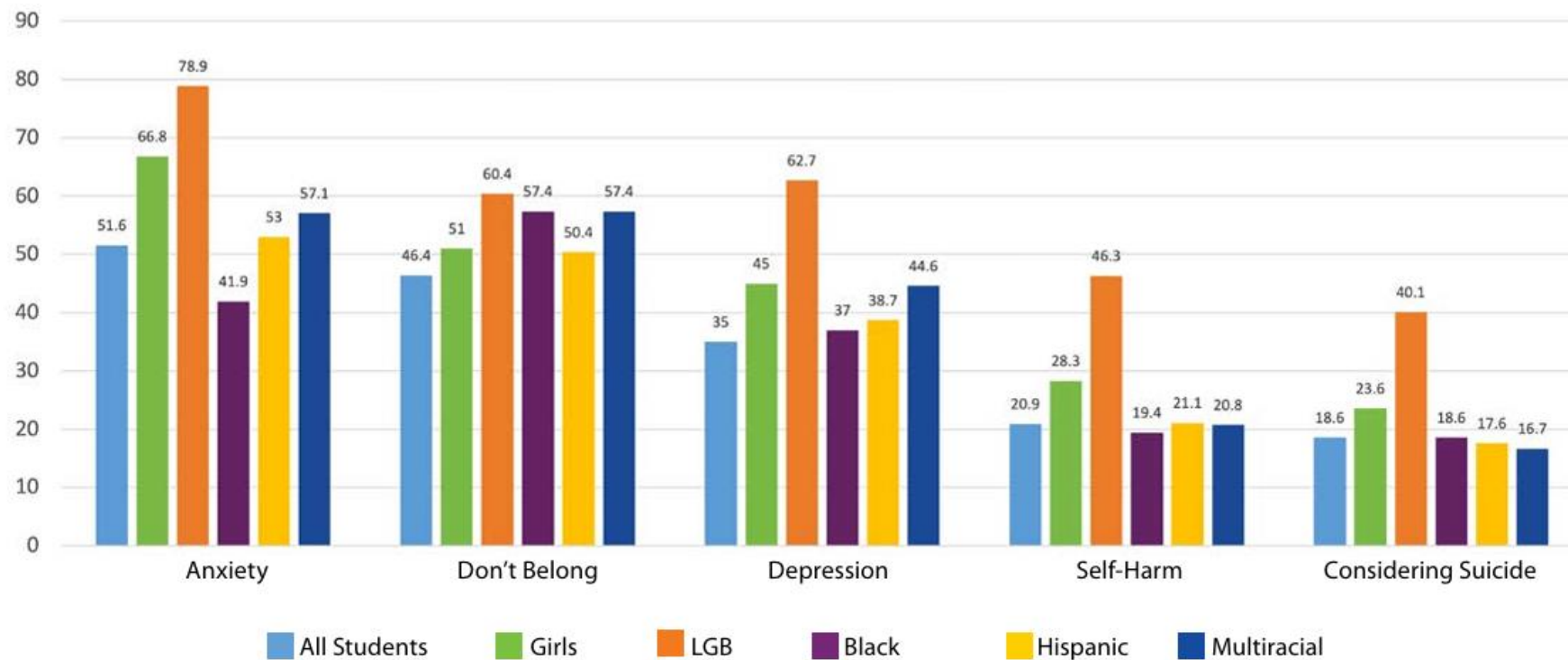
Percent of Wisconsin High School Students
Self-Reporting Mental Health Concerns



Key Data

PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Percent of Wisconsin High School Students With Wellness Concerns



Key Data

Negative mental health

- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Sufficient Sleep**
- **Considering Suicide**
- **Self-Harm**

Key Data

Positive mental health

- Ask for help (95%)
- Enjoy learning (89%)
- Set goals (89%)
- Happy (74%)
- Hopeful (63%)
- Motivated (61%)

Data on Stressors

Global Problems

- climate change, war, extreme weather

Conflict and Divisiveness

- politics, incivility, 24/7 news, discrimination, violence

Social Pressures

- comparisons, FOMO, appearances, notifications

Achievement Culture

- resume building, economic uncertainty, inequality

Social Disconnection

- less in-person socializing, more loneliness, isolation

DIGITAL STRESS



Image: Cedars-Sinai

**What is it like to
be young today?**

Stressors

Youth Voice

“I have an idea deeply ingrained in my brain, that if I’m not doing something at all times of the day, I’m lazy and unproductive, that resting and doing things like lying on the couch and watching TV means I’m wasting my life away. I try to pack my days. It impresses people, and I do enjoy the activities I’m a part of. But I’m also exhausted by them.”

- October 2024 This Teenage Life

Youth Voice

“Every time I sit down in a movie theater, I count the exits. I calculate which one is closest to me, which one I would be safest escaping from. Every time I walk into a new classroom, I think about where I would hide. Behind the laptop cart? In the supply closet? When I’m in the school library, I wonder: do I play dead or try to squeeze myself into the empty bookshelf by the wall? ‘What do I do if there is an active shooter?’, this is a thought that plays over and over in the back of my mind.”

- August 2024 This Teenage Life

Data

Youth Top Stressors

- Academic Pressure – 97%
- Achievement Culture – 87%
- Relationships – 80%
- Social Media – 75%
- Political Divisiveness – 73%
- Climate Change – 55%
- Gun Violence – 51%
- Discrimination – 51%

See the [flyer on Top Youth Stressors](#)

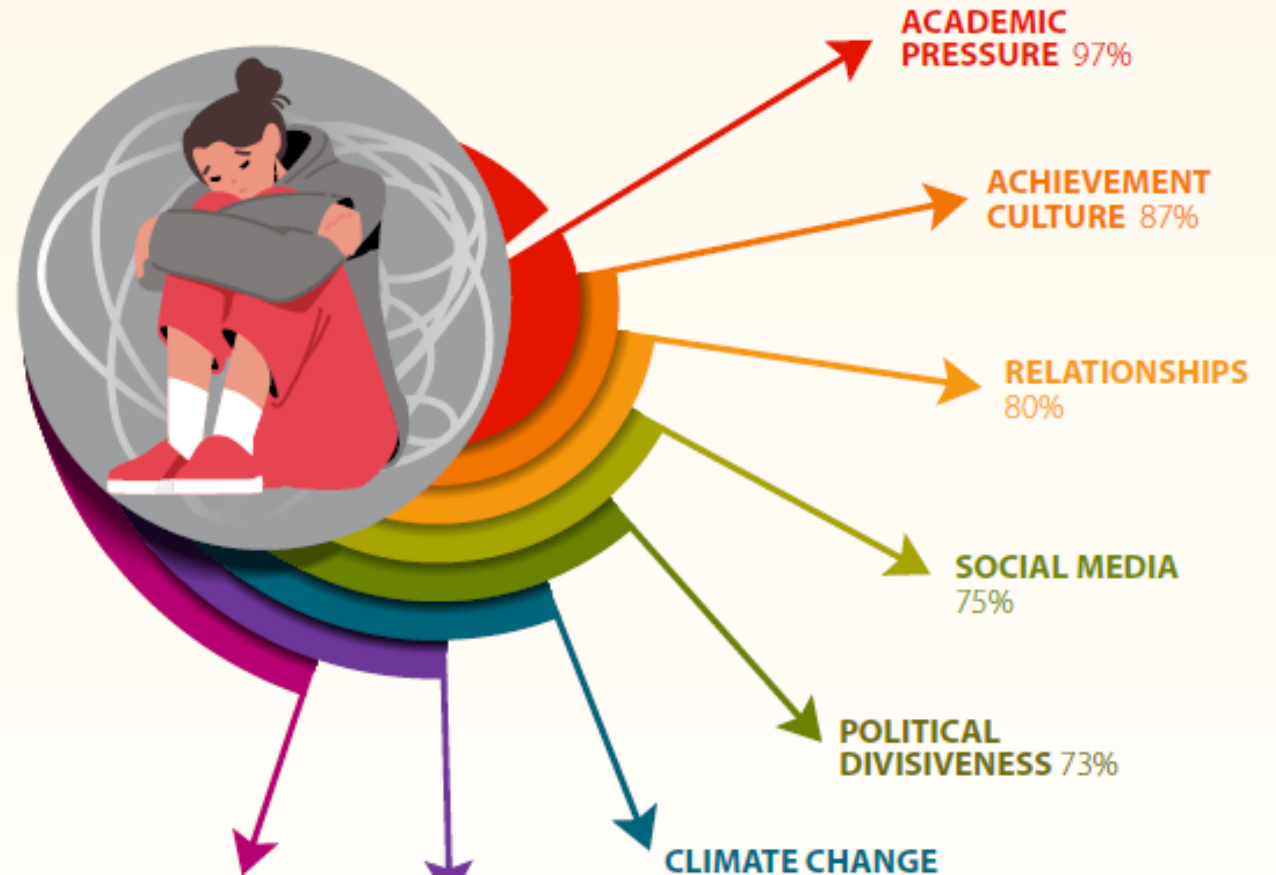
Top Stressors

Students Spoke, We Listened



We asked Wisconsin teens about their personal stressors.

Academic pressure and achievement culture topped the list. But there are many other issues surrounding and stressing our teens.



Youth Panel

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- **Levi Linngren**
St. Croix Falls High School
- **Lydia Cheslock**
Pulaski Community High School

Children's Mental Health Practitioner

Alegra Fowler, MSW, LCSW
Sweetgrass Behavioral Health



Friendships and Relationships

Relationships Start Early



Toddlers who learn to **play well** with their peers **by age 3** are more likely to have **positive mental health** later in childhood.

Teen Relationships Matter

The **quality of teen friendships** can predict physical and mental health in adulthood.



Parents Relationships Matter



For those teens looking for mental health help, **95% trust their parents**, a higher rate than teachers and friends.

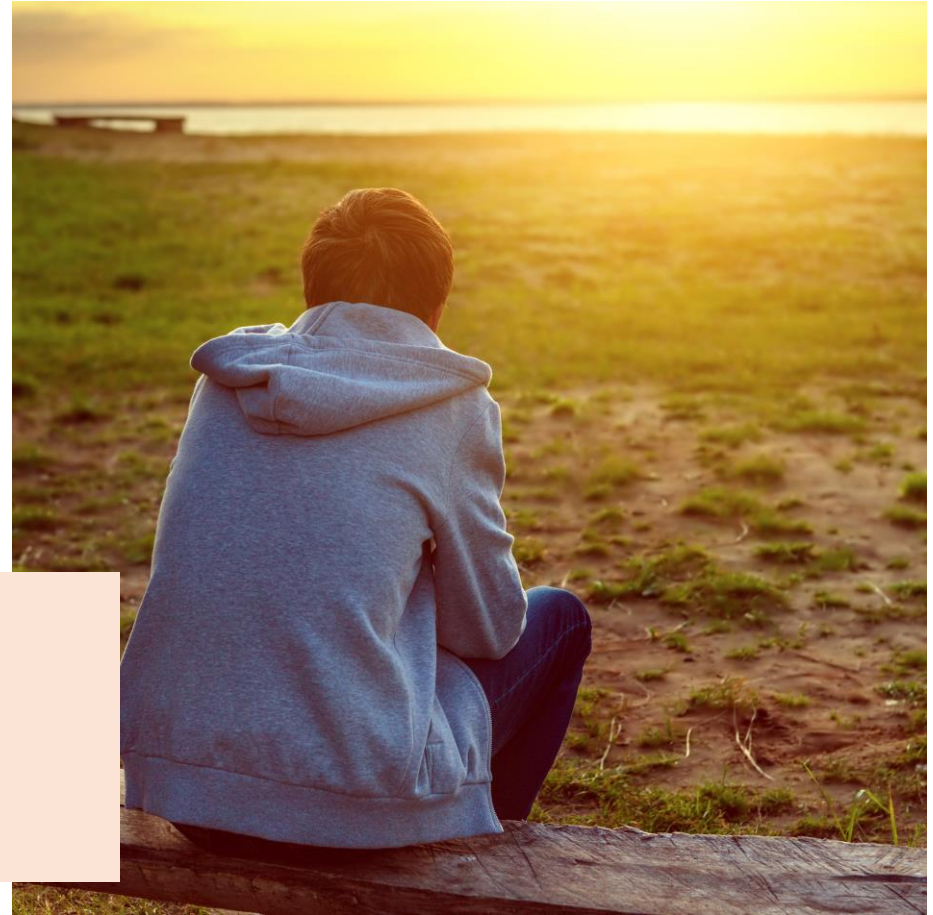
Parents Relationships Matter



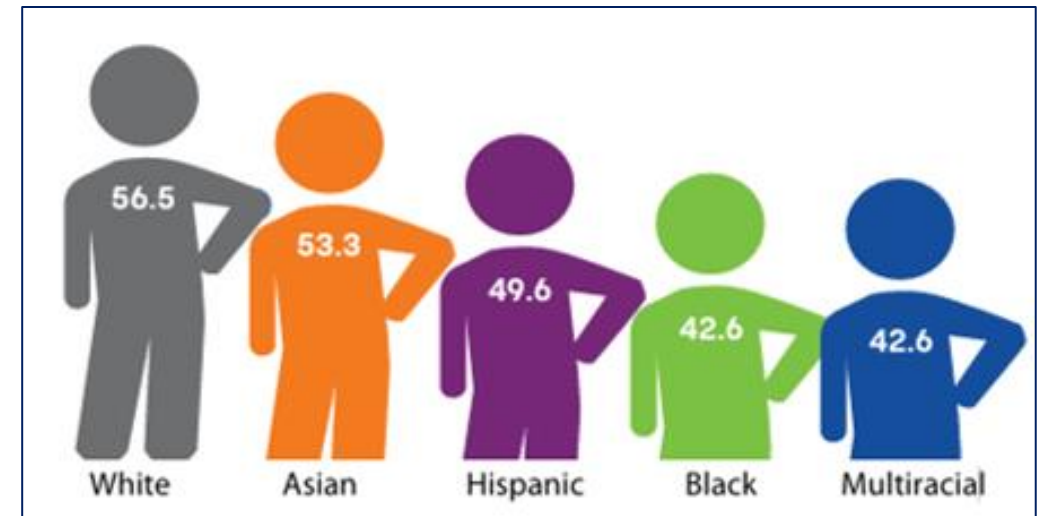
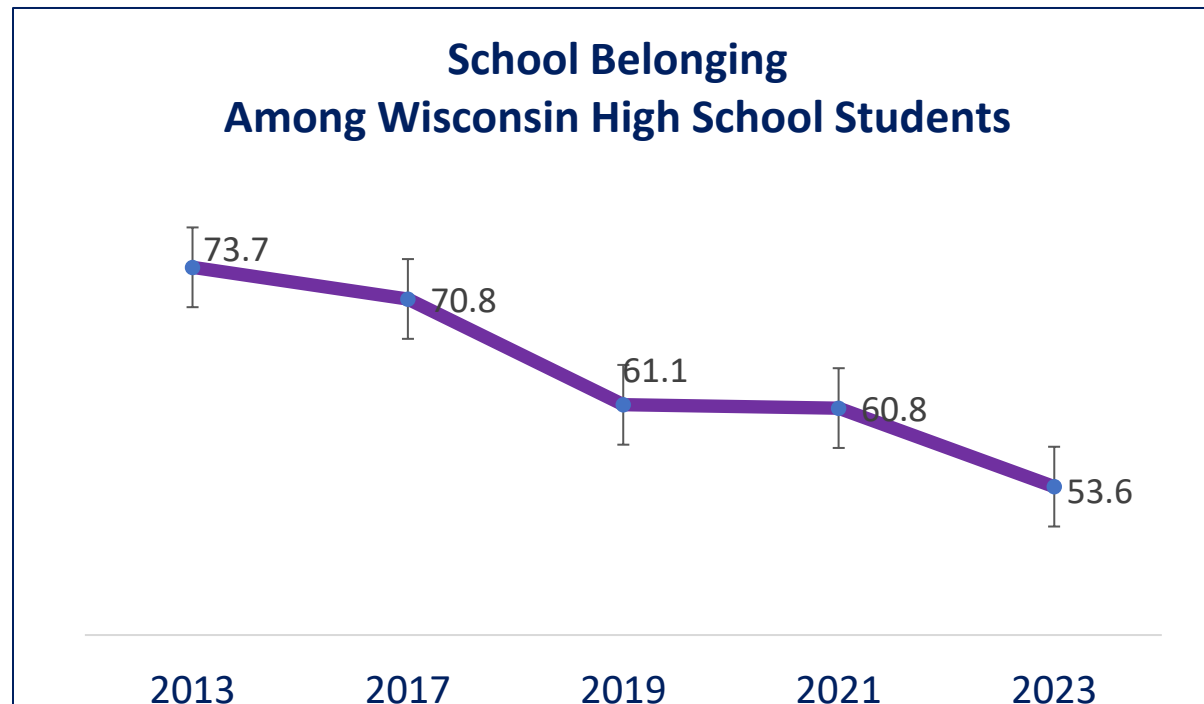
LGBTQ kids with high social support from family **attempted suicide at less than half the rate** of those who felt low or moderate support.

Relationships Connect Us

Young adults are **the loneliest generation**, twice as likely to be lonely as seniors.



Relationships and Belonging



Youth Voice

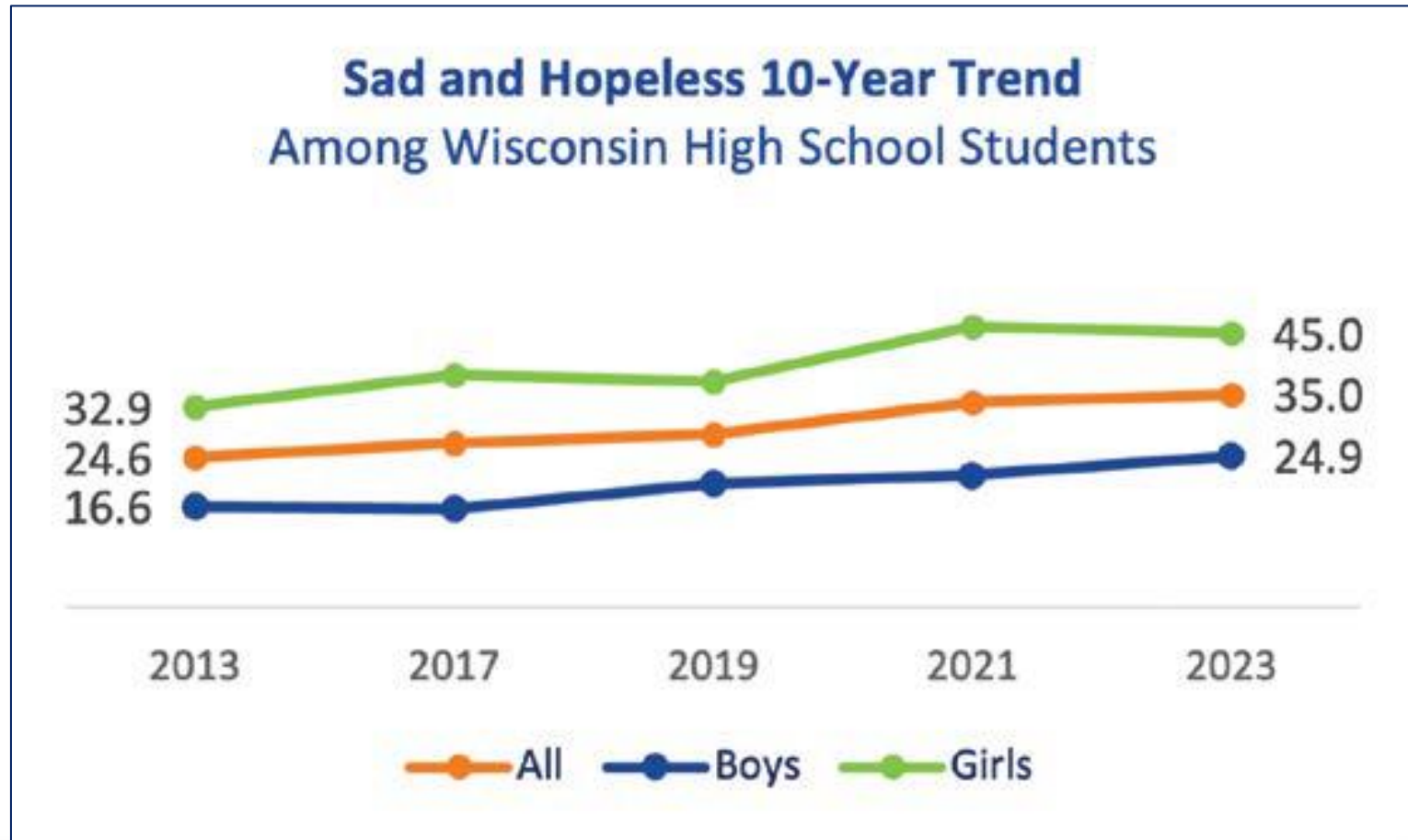
“With texting, everything feels faster but also more fragile. It’s our default mode of communication. While a lot of adults might think our lives revolve over social media posts online, many conversations regarding these posts are through texting. It’s a vast world in itself – creating group chats where some are included, others are left... Because everyone can reply quickly, I start expecting them to. And when they don’t, I feel a little let down. You stare at the screen, waiting, not opening the text because you don’t know what to say—but because you don’t want to seem too eager. And when the response comes, I’m left questioning if these are polite responses or real.”

- June 2025 This Teenage Life

Break

Hopefulness and Resilience

Sad and Hopeless Trend



Hopelessness and Hopefulness

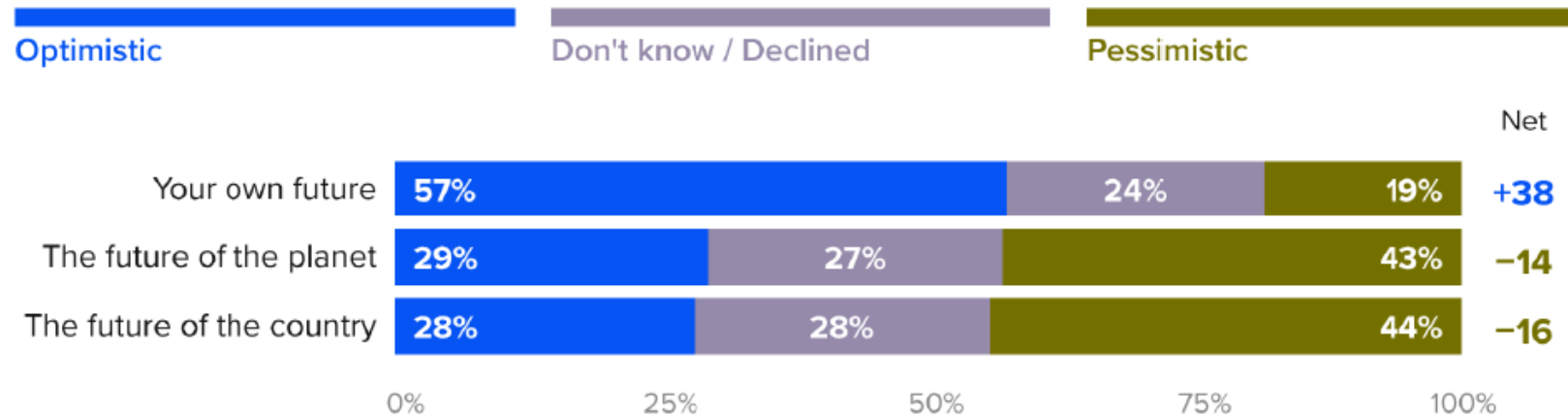


Black, Hispanic and multi-racial kids report **higher rates of feeling sad and hopeless** compared to white and Asian peers.

Personal Optimism

A Majority of Young People Are Optimistic About Their Own Futures and More Pessimistic About the Country

In general, do you feel optimistic or pessimistic about each of the following?



July 8-19, 2025 survey of 1,304 respondents between ages 13 and 24

HOPELAB DATA FOR PROGRESS

The Science of Hope

- Hope is **action-oriented** and a **skill** that can be learned.
- Hope can **improve self-esteem** and improve daily functioning for those with chronic conditions.
- Hope can **reduce depression and anxiety**.
- Hope is a **protective factor** against PTSD.
- Hope **promotes resilience** and a **sense of purpose**.
- Hope can **reduce cortisol** (the stress hormone).

Hope and PCEs



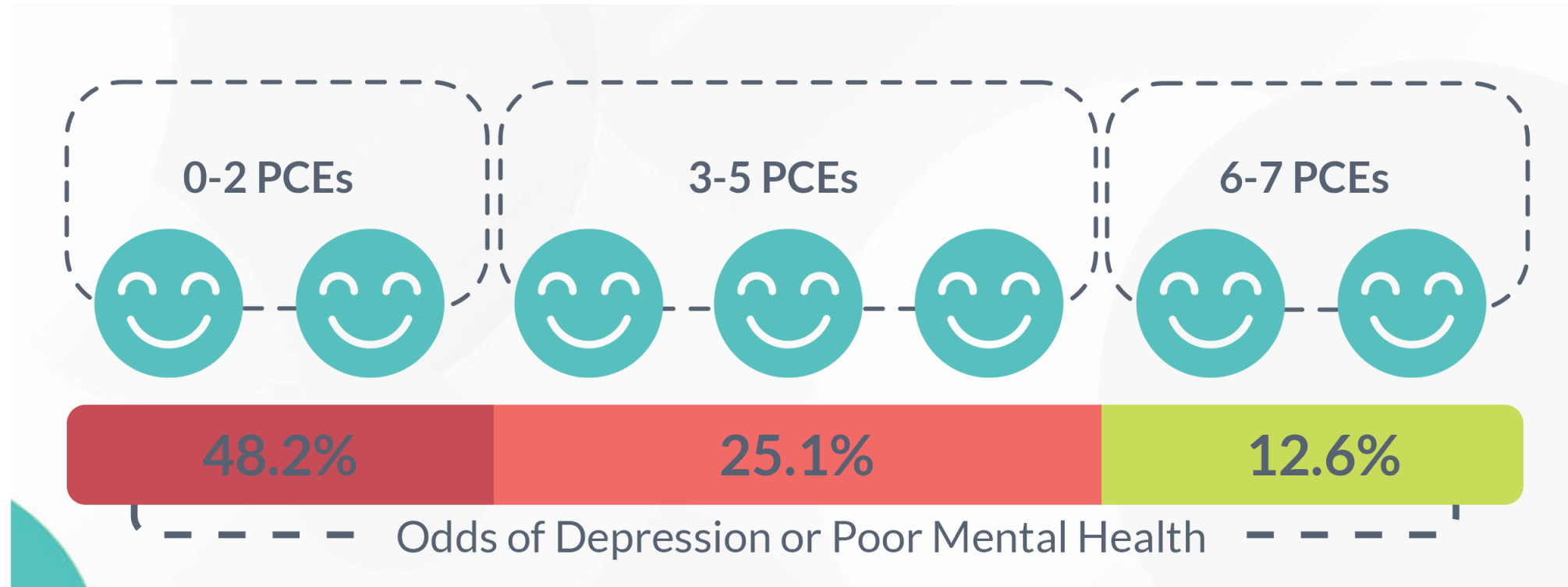
What are **Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)**?



Research shows that when PCEs are **actively promoted** during early childhood, adult mental health risks are significantly **reduced**!



Impact of PCEs



Speaker

Brian Krolczyk, PhD, NBC-HWC

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (UWSP)

Director, UWSP Health and Wellness Coaching Graduate Certificate Program,
Associate Professor, Executive Health (MBA) & Health Sciences & Wellness,
Strategic Growth Partner, UWSP Institute for Behavioral Health & Wellness Training





THE EMOTIONAL GUIDANCE SCALE

UPWARD SPIRAL HPF

1. Joy / Knowledge
Empowerment
Freedom / Love
Appreciation

2. Passion

3. Enthusiasm

4. Positive Expectation
Belief

5. Optimism

6. Hopefulness

7. Contentment

DOWNWARD SPIRAL LNF

8. Boredom

9. Pessimism

10. Frustration /
Irritation / Impatience

11. "Overwhelm"

12. Disappointment

13. Doubt

14. Worry

15. Blame

16. Discouragement

17. Anger

18. Revenge

19. Hatred / Rage

20. Jealousy

21. Insecurity / Guilt
Unworthiness

22. Fear / Grief / Depression
Powerlessness/
Victim

Daily Demands



**Anxiety
Fear**



**Sadness
Anger
Resentment
Shame/Guilt**



Effects on Body



POWERFUL THINKING IS JUST 4 PRINCIPLES

CLARITY

Clarity is a clear vision and plan

FOCUS

Daily focus is taking action on next steps

GRATITUDE

An attitude of gratitude keeps you in a positive mood

BELIEF

Believing you will succeed removes barriers that hold you back



Brian Krolczyk, Ph.D

www.revealyourpower.com

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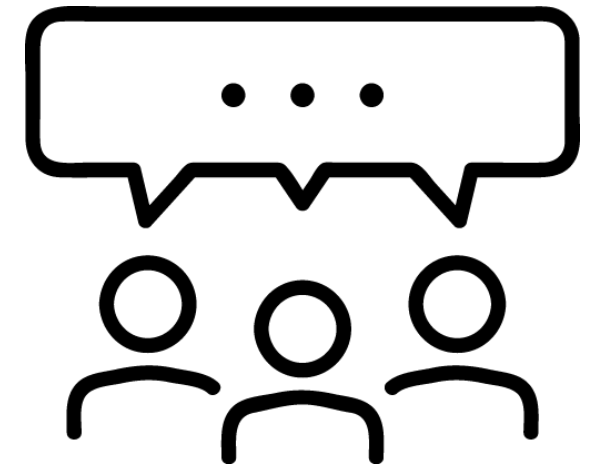
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Vision Board



Experts in the Room

What topics from today's speakers would like to hear from experts in our meeting on?



Small Group Discussion

Select Your Discussion Room

- **Children's Mental Health practitioner – Alegra Fowler**
(Linda Hall)
- **Resilience – Brian Kroczyk**
(Amy Marsman)
- **Youth Panel & Andrea Turtenwald**

Discussion questions:

1. Any questions you have.
2. How do the youth you deal with align with what you heard from our panelists (regarding stressors, friendships, and hope)?



Announcements / Next Meeting

Member Announcements

Share announcements/events/activities from your organizations.



2026 Meetings

- Feb. 6 • Aug. 7 • May 1 • Nov. 6



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