

# 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

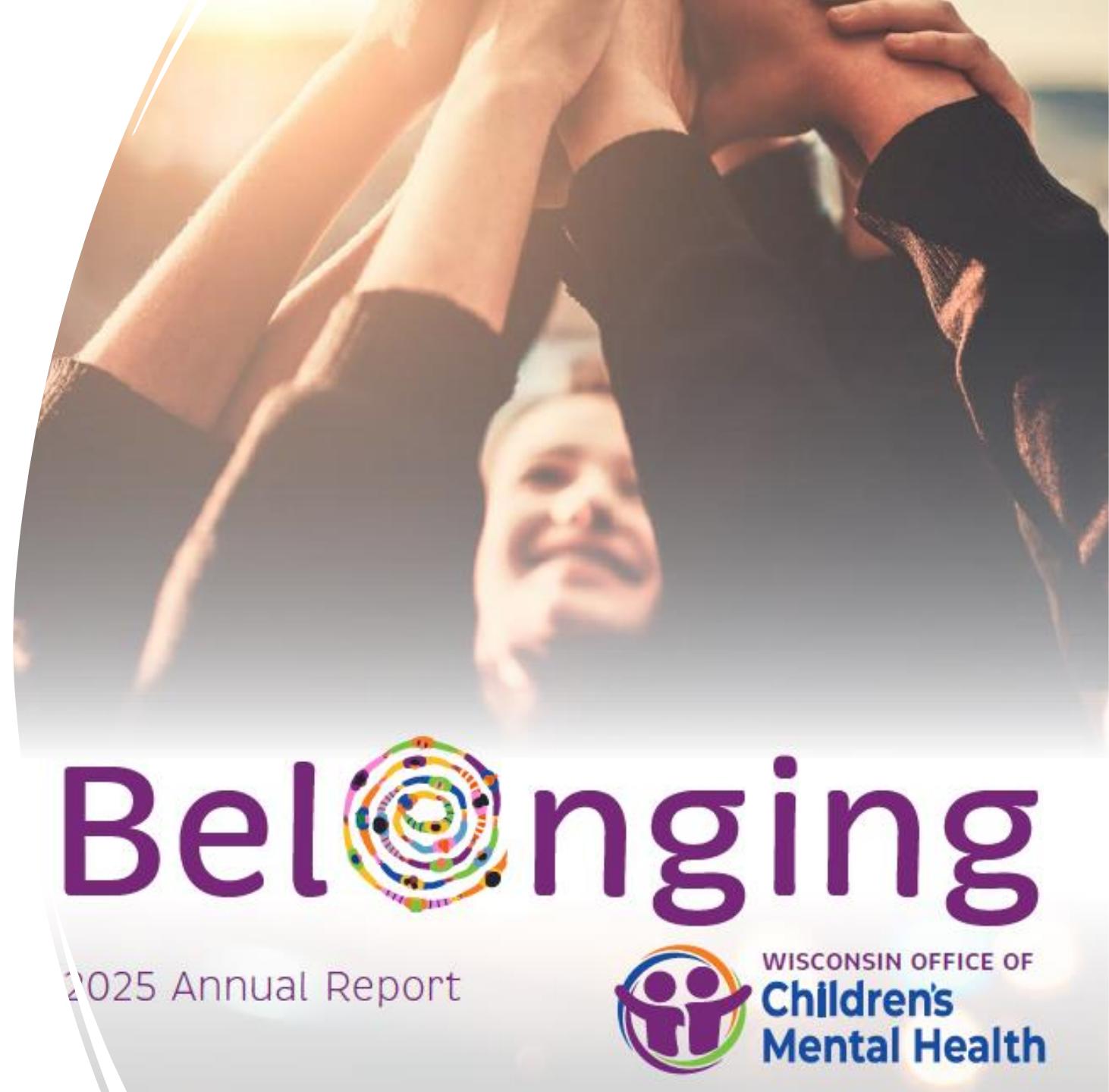
## Meeting Agenda

| 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](#)



# Profile of Today's Youth – Beyond the Headlines

# Data

# Key Data

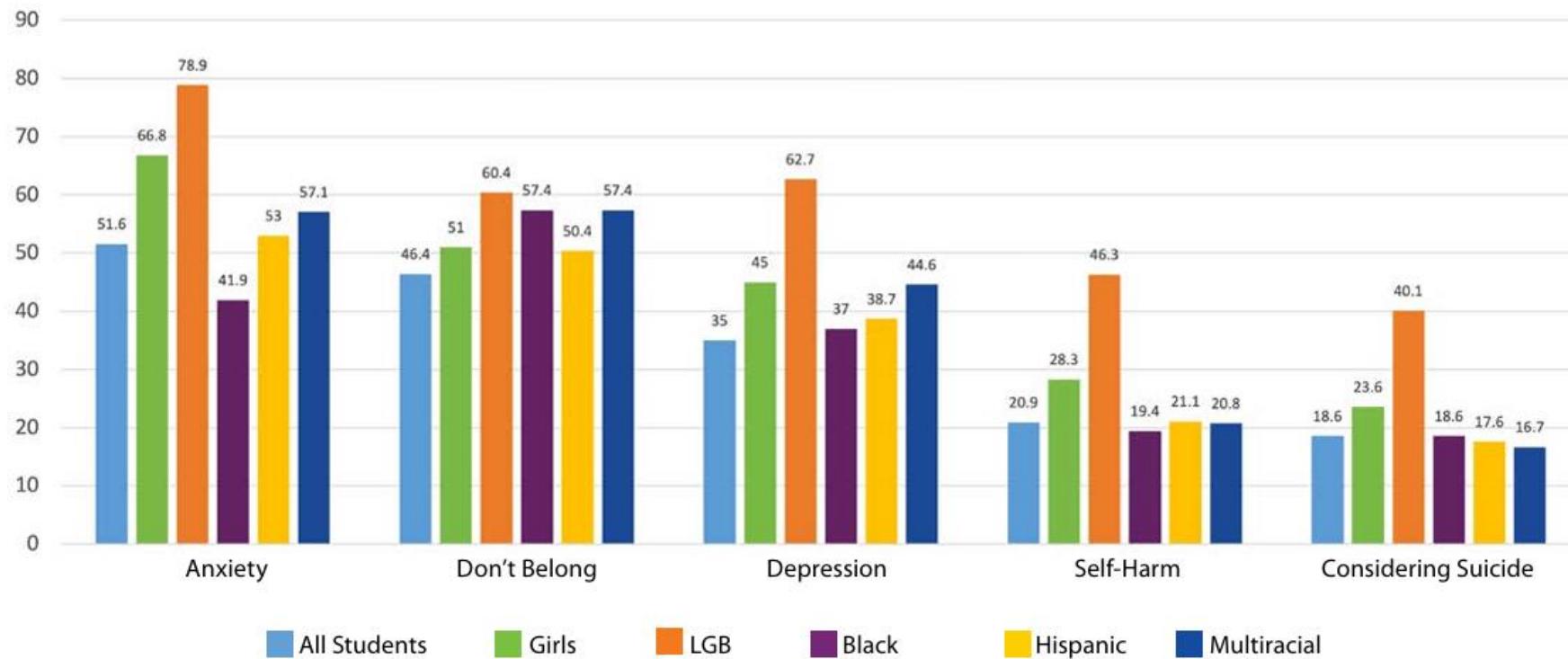
## Negative mental health

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](#)

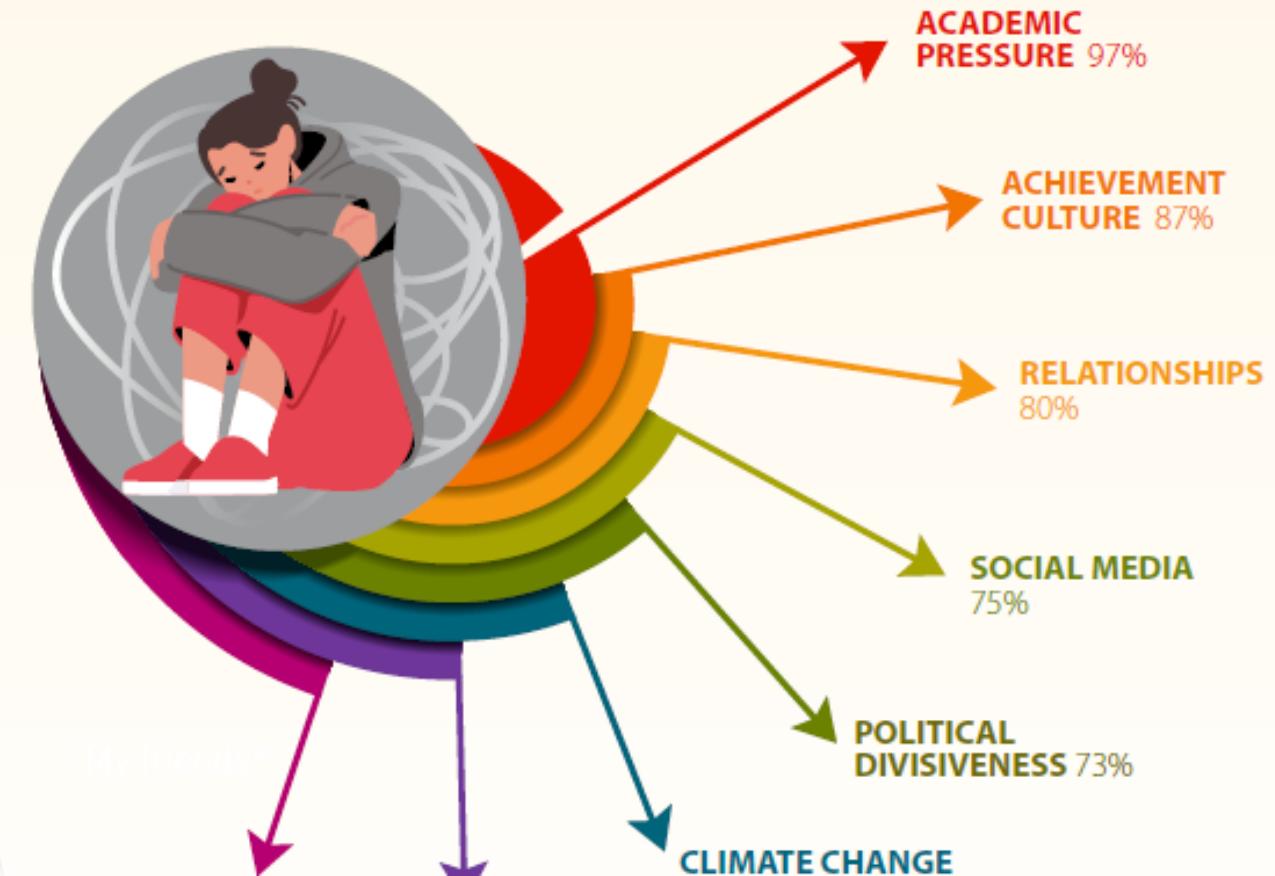
## Top Stressors

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

c

- **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.

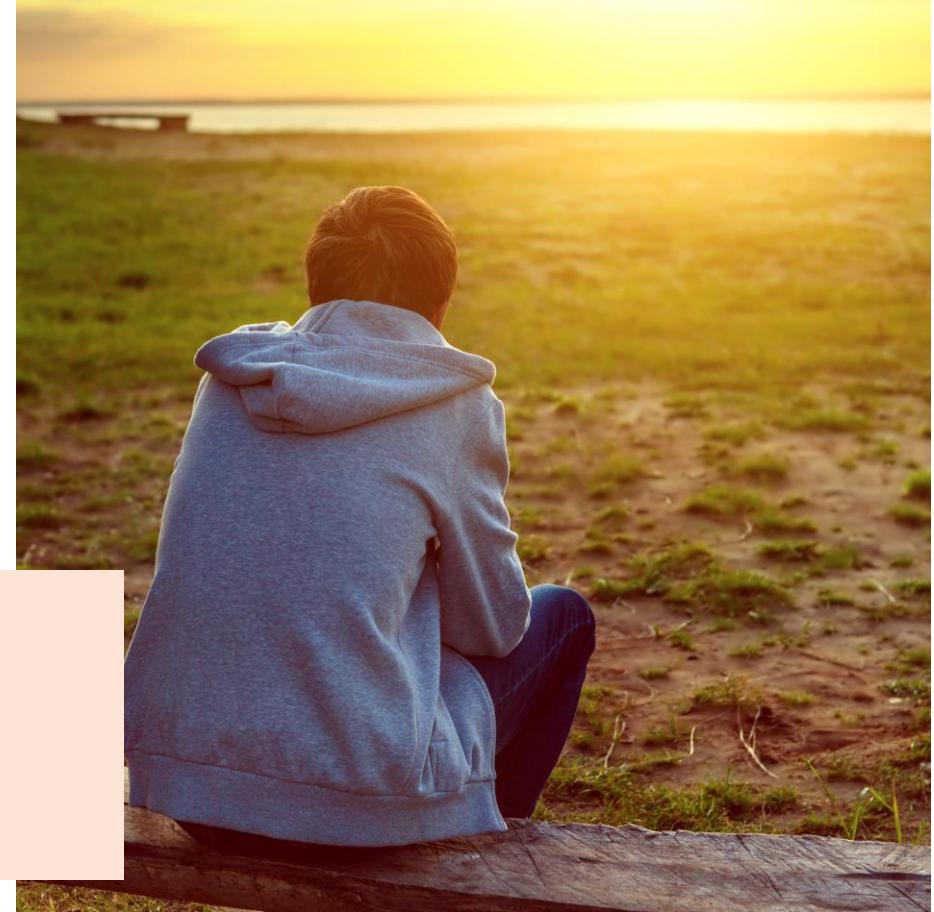
# Parents Relationships Matter



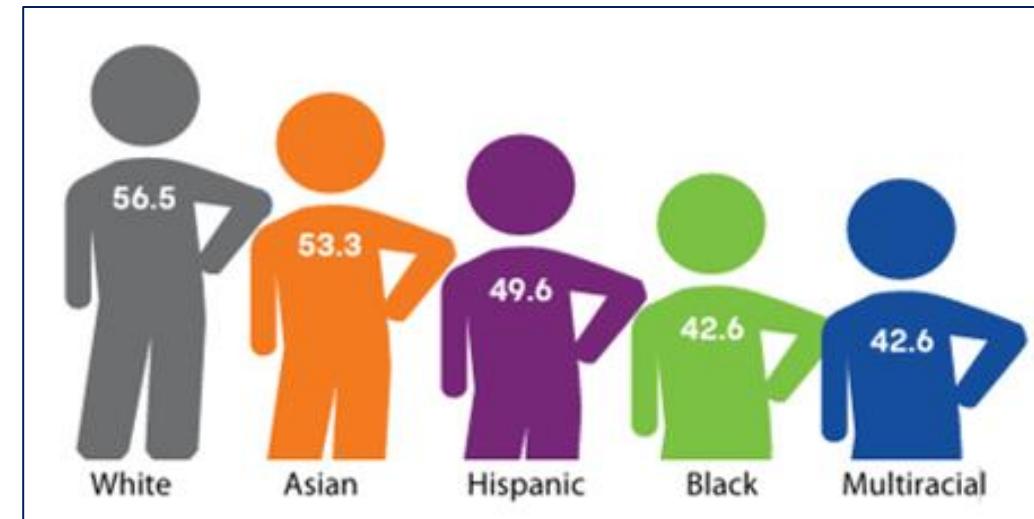
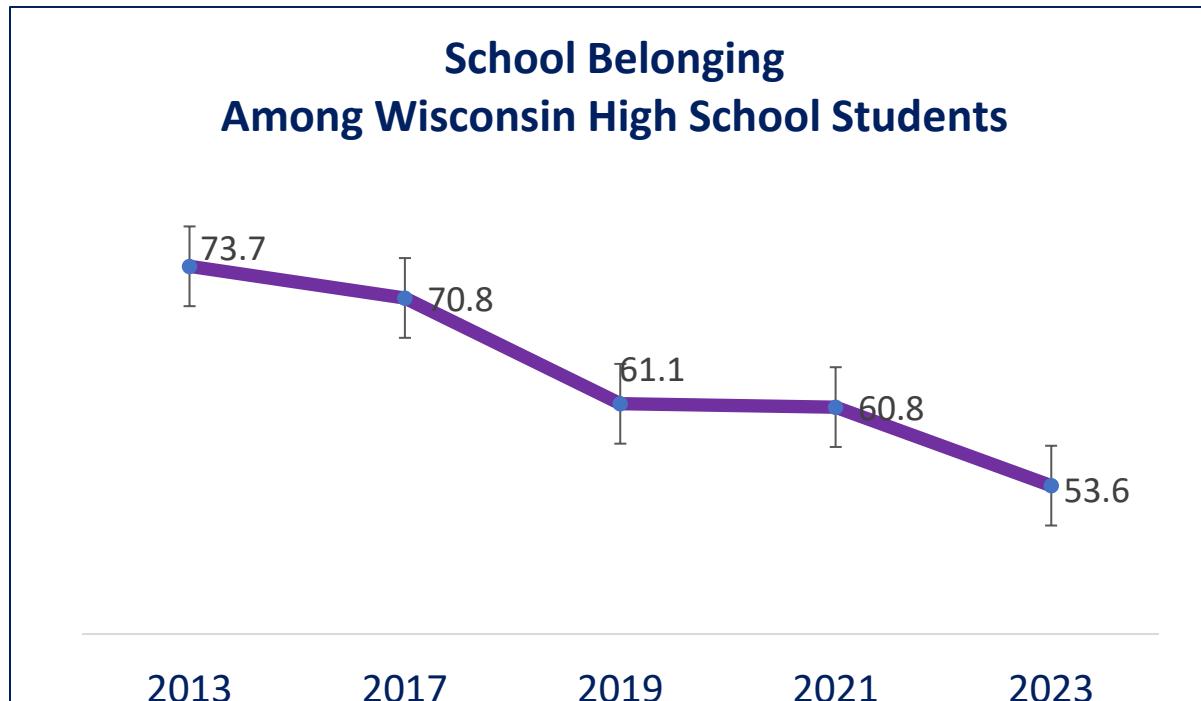
LGBTQ kids with high social support from family  
**attempted suicide at less than half the rate of**  
those who felt low or moderate support.

# Relationships Connect Us

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



# Relationships and Belonging



# Youth Voice

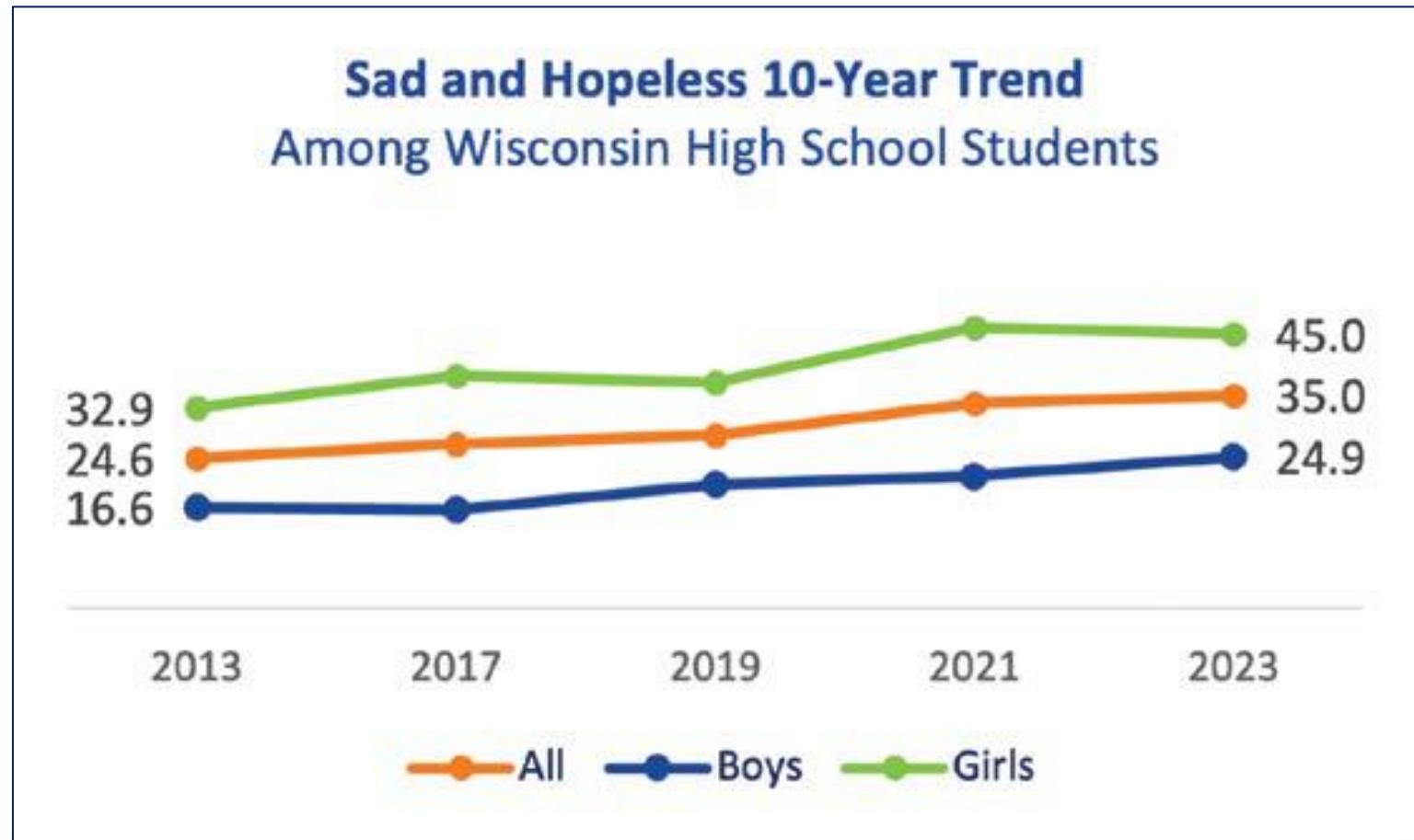
*“With texting, everything feels faster but also more fragile. It’s our default mode of communication. While a lot of adults might think our lives revolve over social media posts online, many conversations regarding these posts are through texting. It’s a vast world in itself – creating group chats where 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

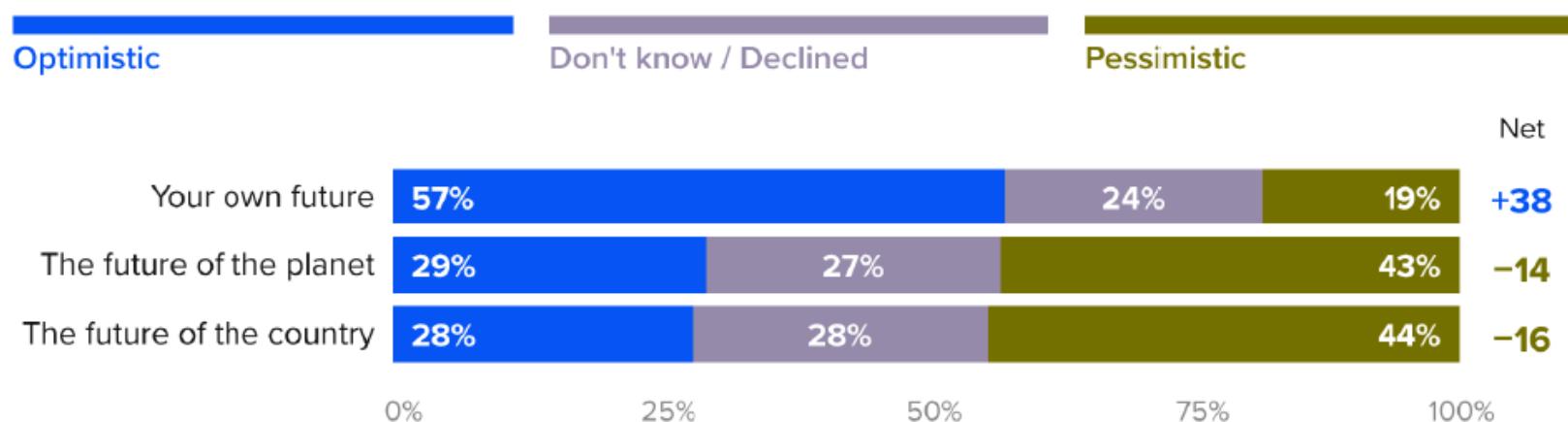


Black, Hispanic and multi-racial kids report **higher rates of feeling sad and hopeless** compared to white and Asian peers.

# 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

**HOPE LAB** DATA FOR PROGRESS  
ID: 986209

# 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



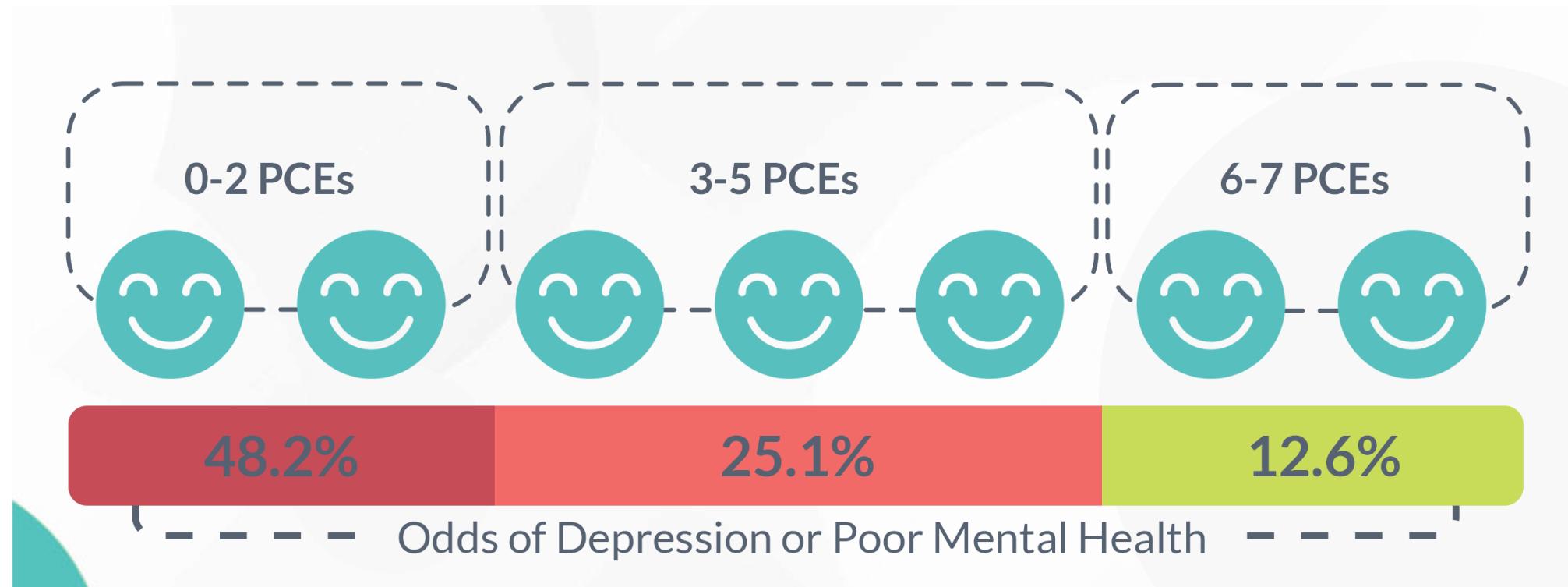
## What are Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)?



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



## DOWNWARD SPIRAL LNF

8. Boredom
9. Pessimism

10. Frustration / Irritation / Impatience

11. "Overwhelmment"

12. Disappointment

13. Doubt

14. Worry

15. Blame

16. Discouragement

17. Anger

18. Revenge

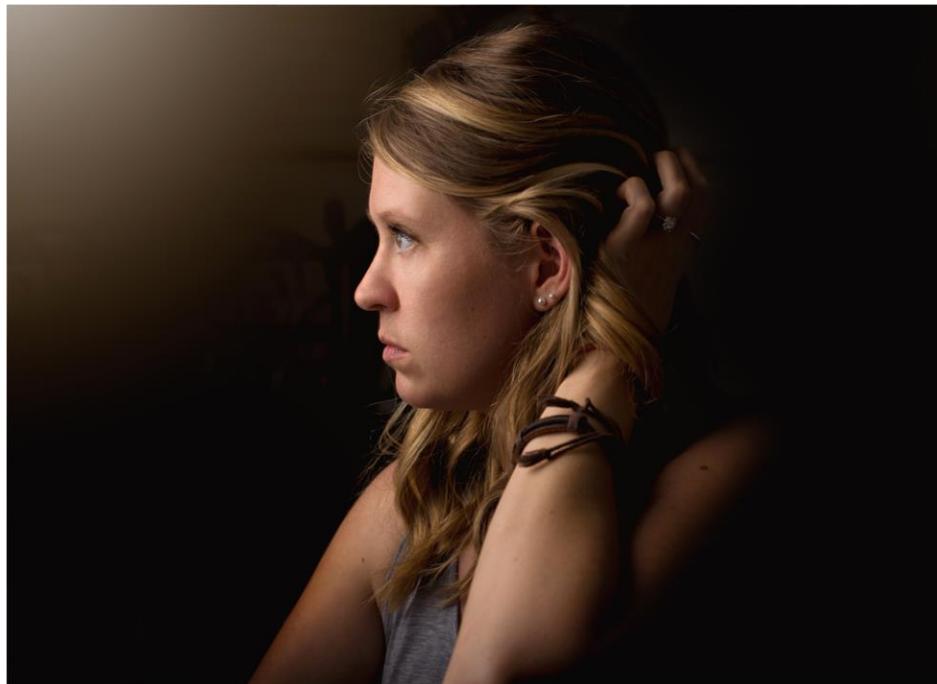
19. Hatred / Rage

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

## GRATITUDE

An attitude of gratitude keeps you in a positive mood



## FOCUS

Daily focus is taking action on next steps

## BELIEF

Believing you will succeed removes barriers that hold you back

Brian Krolczyk, Ph.D

[www.revealyourpower.com](http://www.revealyourpower.com)

© 2018, RYP GLOBAL LLC

# Vision Board



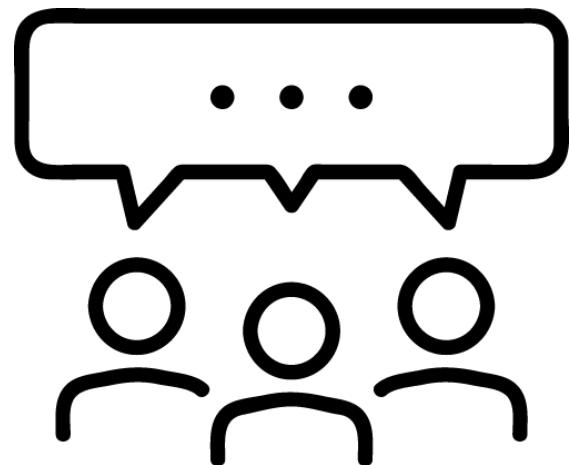
# Vision Board



# 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



# Connect with Us



[Facebook:](#)  
OCMHWI



[Instagram:](#)  
[@YouthMentalHealthWI](#)



[X/Twitter:](#)  
[@WIKidsMH](#)



[LinkedIn:](#)  
[OCMHWI](#)



[Newsletters:](#)  
OCMH News  
Research News  
Lived Experience



[YouTube:](#)  
Wisconsin OCMH