

How are Wisconsin Kids Doing?

Data and Trends in Youth Mental Health





About These Data

- The following data are representative of all youth and young adults, not just those with diagnosed mental health conditions.
- Unless otherwise noted, the data source is the 2021 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey ([YRBS](#)).
- Additional data can be found in the [OCMH Annual Report](#) and [Fact Sheets](#).
- If you have questions about the data, please contact OCMH Senior Research Analyst Amy Marsman (amy.marsman@wisconsin.gov).



Overall Trends

Rates are increasing over time

- Anxiety ↑
- Depression ↑
- Self-Harm ↑
- Suicidality ↑
- Vaping ↑

Rates are decreasing over time

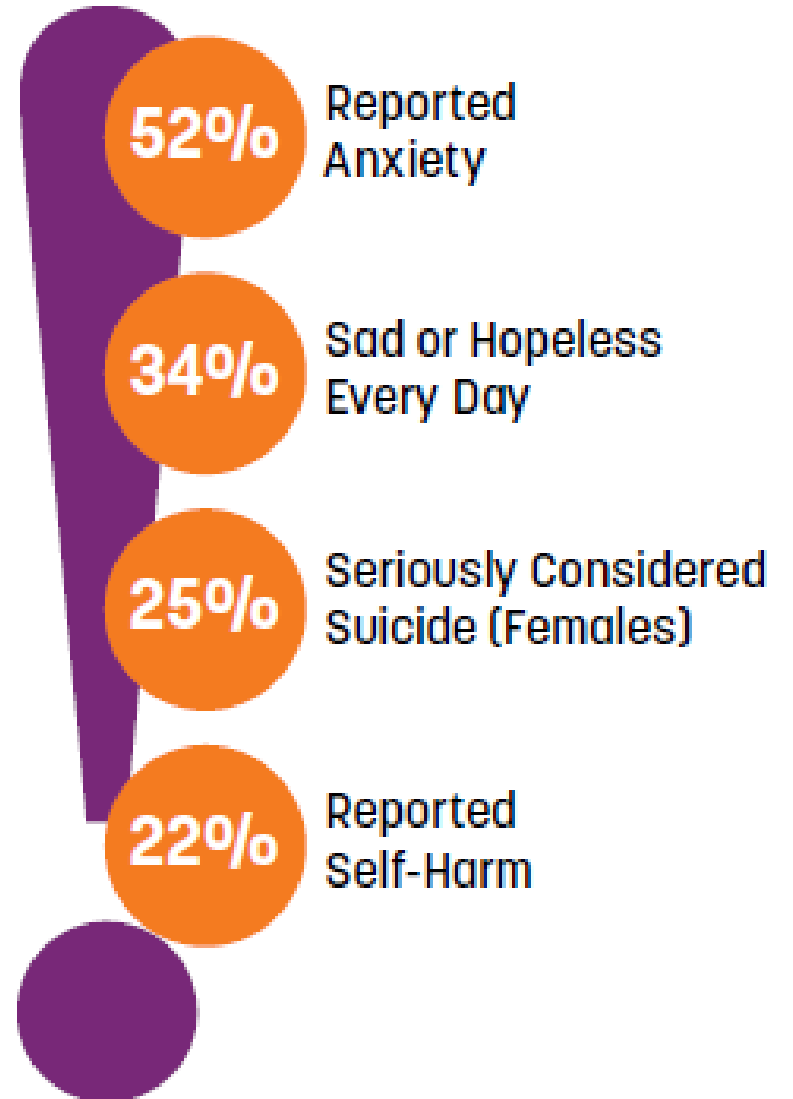
- Sufficient Sleep ↓
- School Belonging ↓
- Extracurricular Activities ↓
- Teen birth rate ↓
- Drinking, cigarette use, drug use ↓

Well-Being Trends for Wisconsin Teens



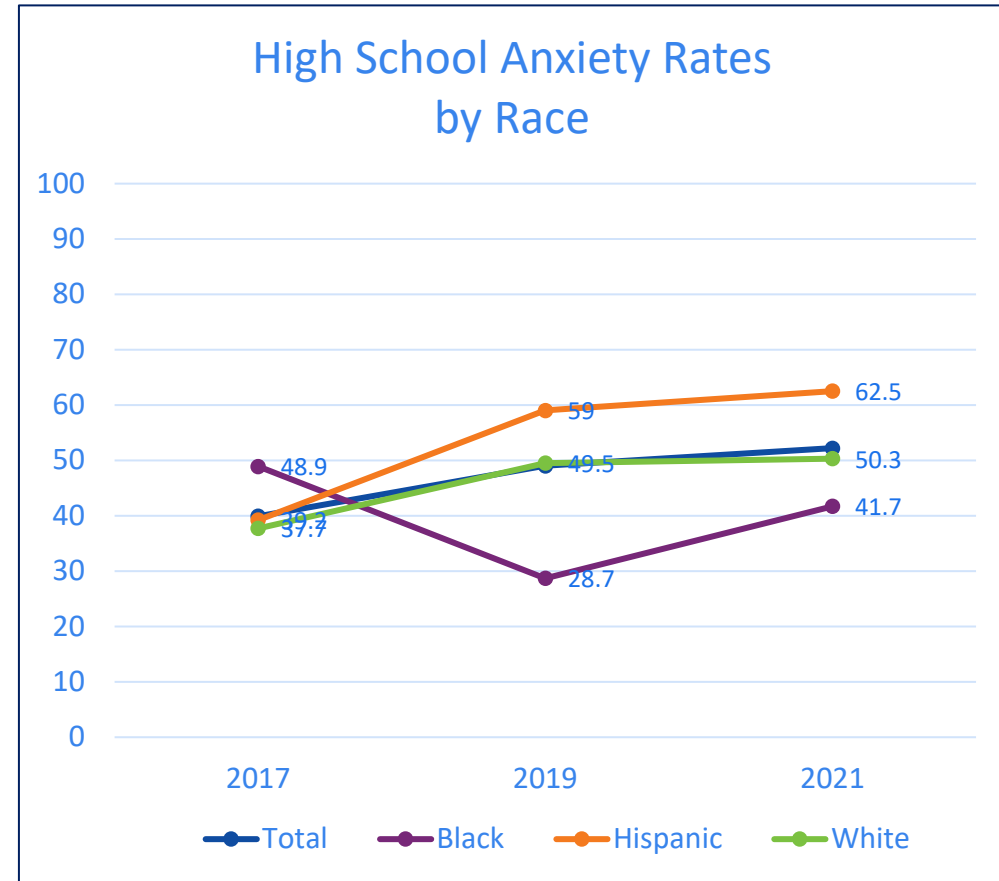
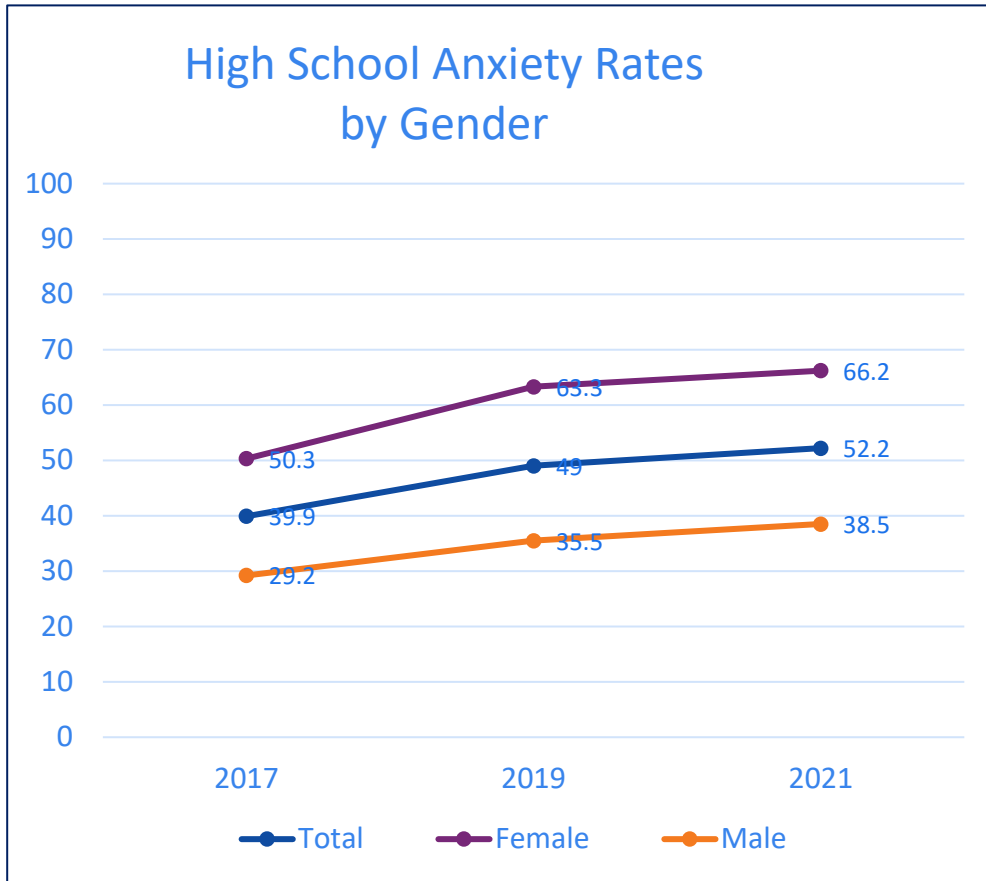
- 1 in 2 feel anxious
- 1 in 3 feel sad or hopeless
- 1 in 4 girls seriously considered suicide
- 1 in 5 kids self-harm

WISCONSIN YOUTH'S DECLINING MENTAL HEALTH



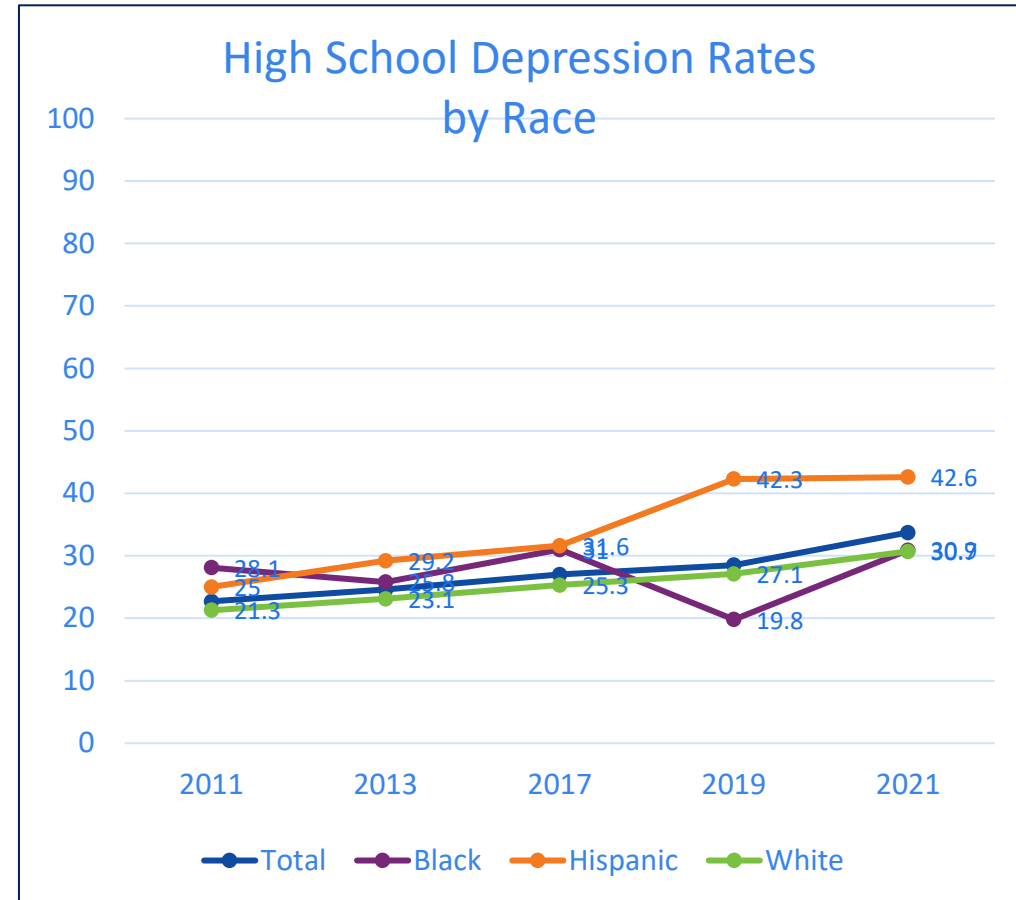
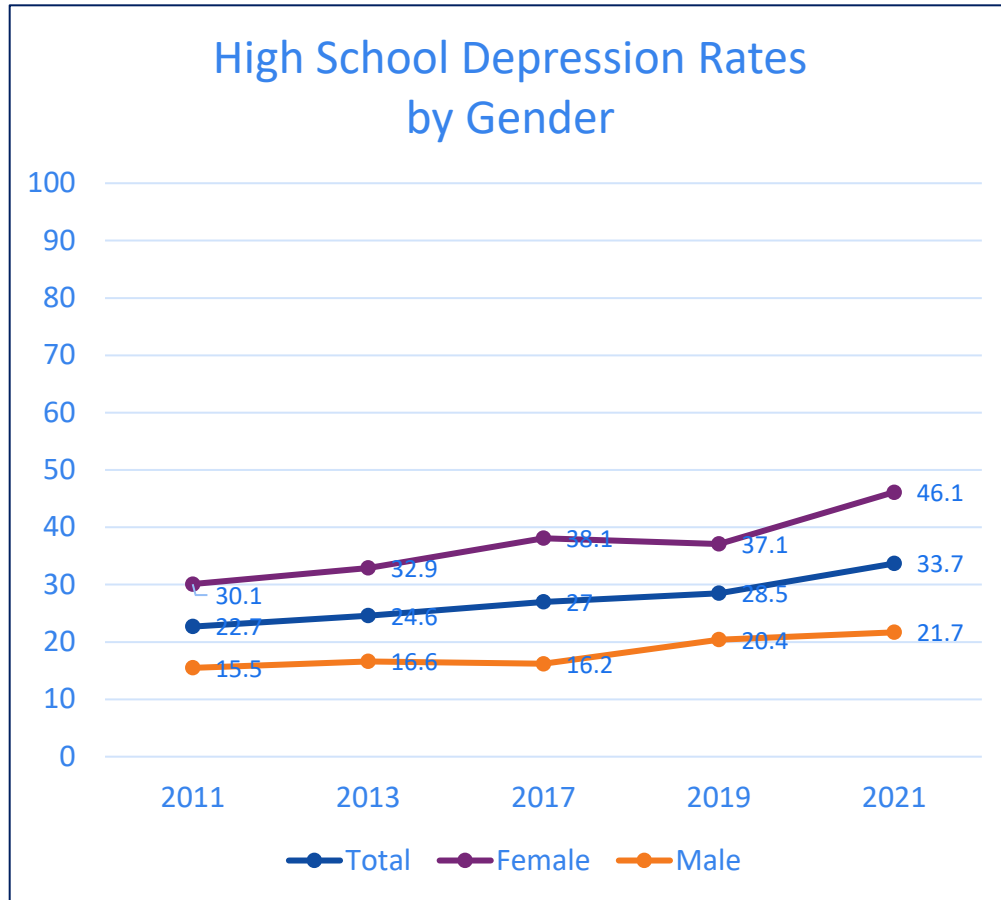


Anxiety



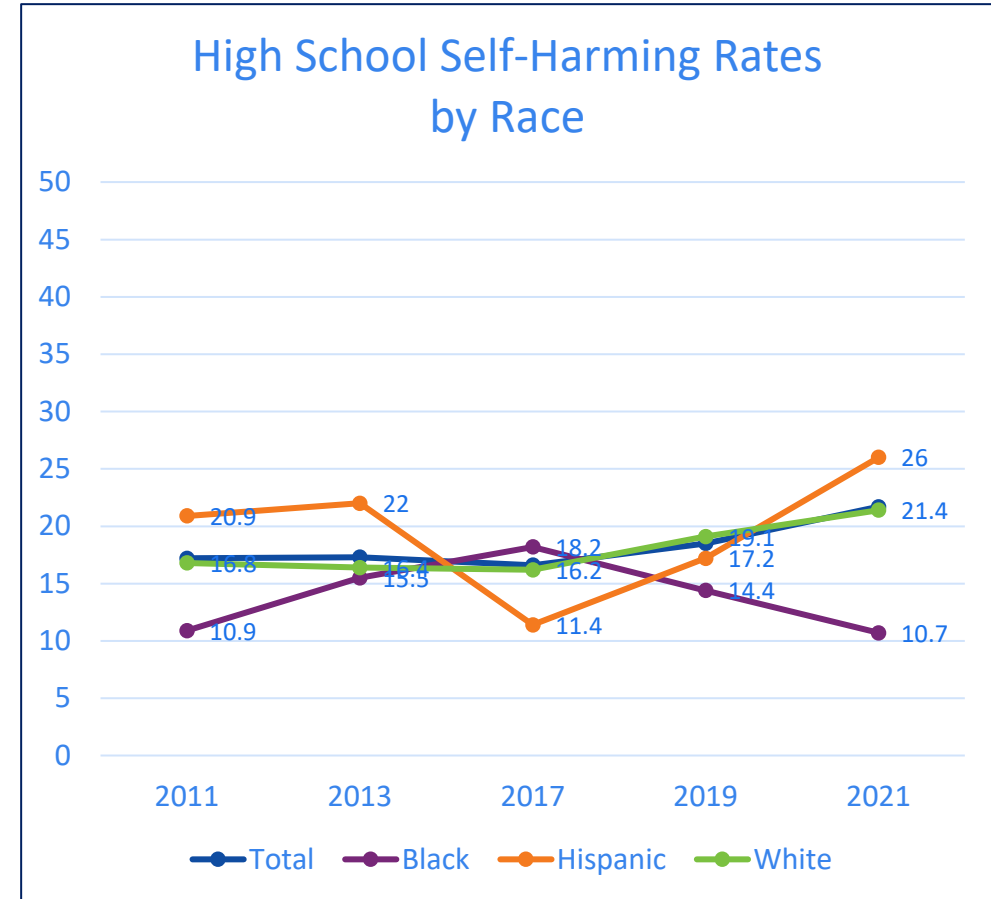
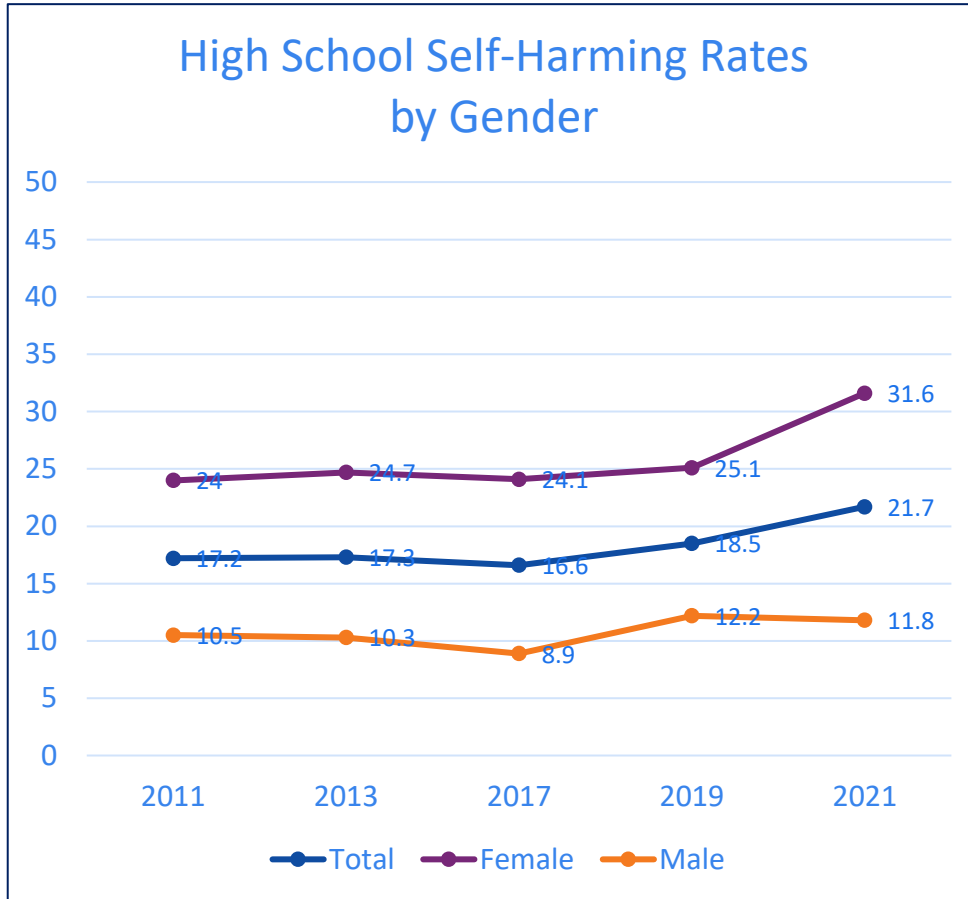


Depression



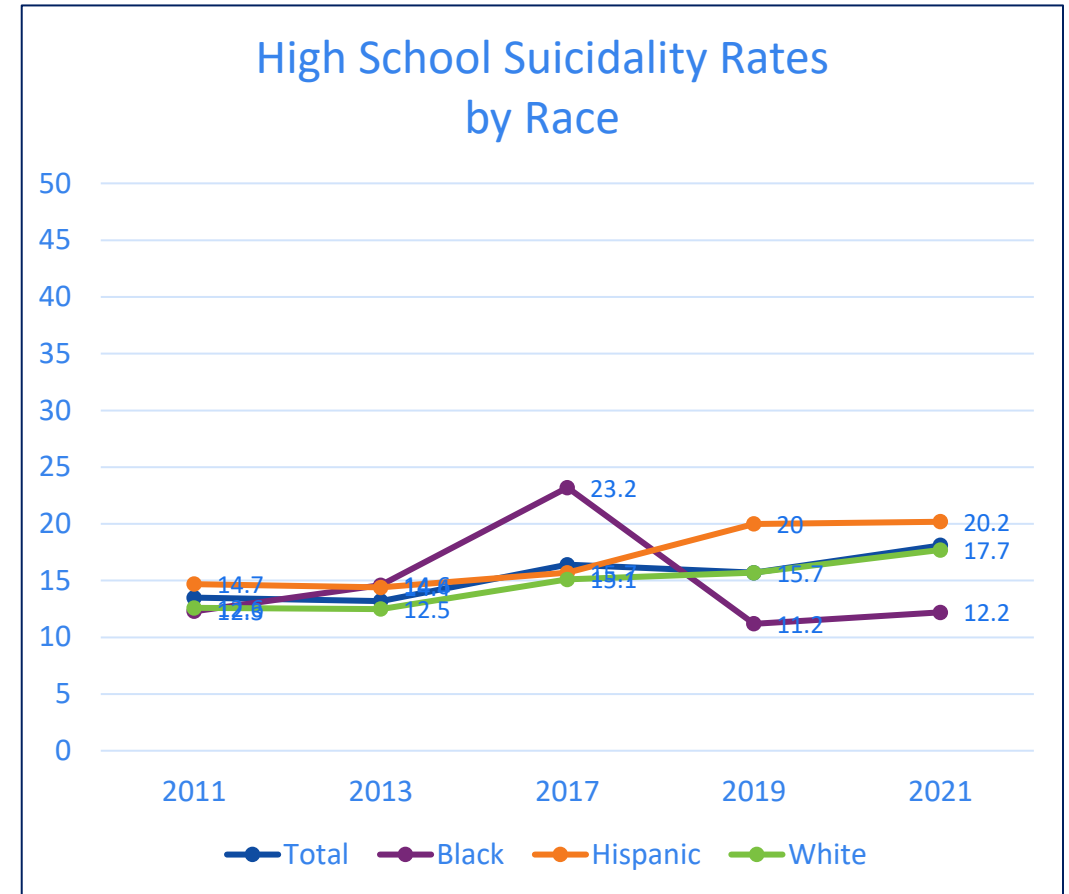
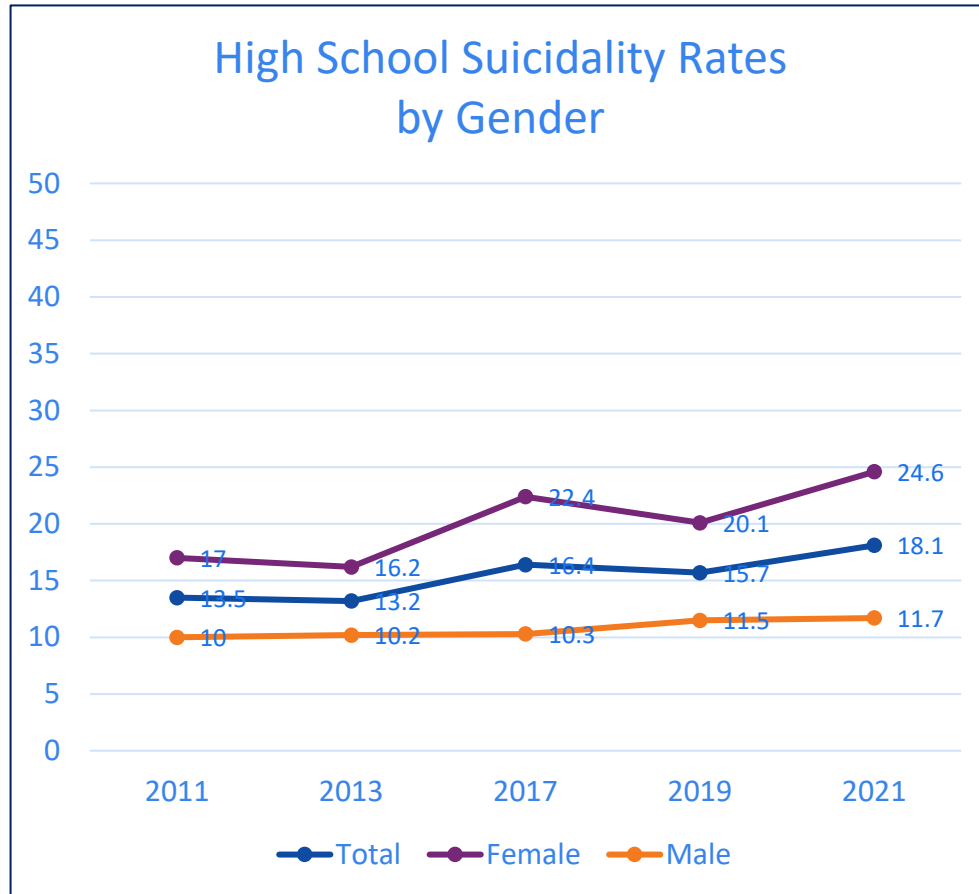


Self Harm





Seriously Considered Suicide



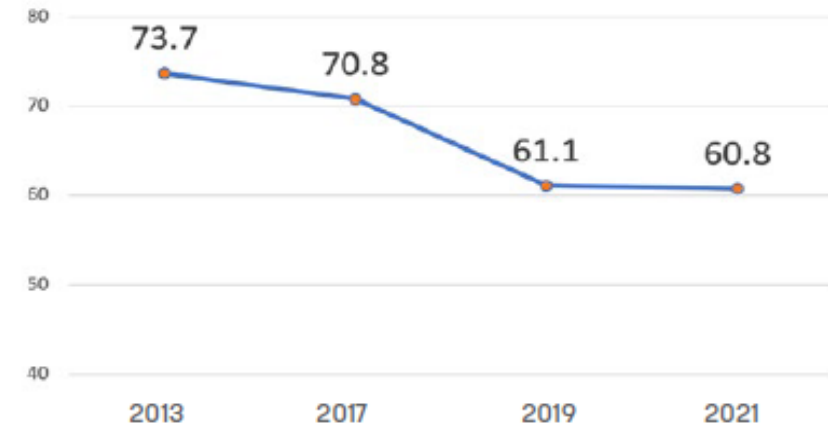


Belonging

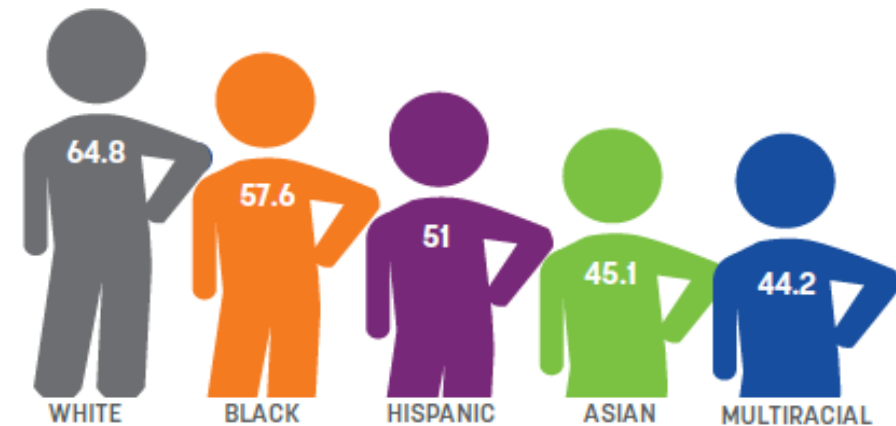
Kids who feel they belong at school have better mental health.

- 60% of high school students feel they belong at school. This has **declined over the last five years** from 70%.
- Noticeable **disparities by race**: Half of Hispanic students do not feel they belong at their school. More than half of Asian and multiracial kids say they feel they do not belong.

PERCENT OF WISCONSIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO FEEL THEY BELONG AT SCHOOL, 2013-2021



PERCENT OF WISCONSIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO FEEL THEY BELONG AT SCHOOL BY RACE, 2021



Belonging

School connectedness has substantial protective impact **during adolescence and extends into adulthood.**

Research finds that school connectedness in adolescence reduces multiple mental health issues and risky behaviors – well into adulthood.





Belonging

- Students who participate in **extracurriculars**, who feel connected to their school, are less likely to report depression.

Source: [2019 Wisconsin YRBS Summary Report](#)

- School connectedness acts as a **protective factor**. This held true during virtual learning too.

Source: Using Intersectionality and School Connectedness to Understand Health Disparities During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Adolescent Health* (2022). Vol 70 (5).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2022.02.001>



Friends and Peers

- The **quality of teen friendships** can predict physical and mental health in adulthood.
- Quality relationships among teens is a far better predictor of **long-term outcomes** than the quality of teens' relationships with their parents.

Source: Running with the Pack: Teen Peer-Relationship Qualities as Predictors of Adult Physical Health. *Association of Psychological Science* (2015). Vol 26 (10).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615594118>

Source: Adolescent Relationship Qualities and Adult Psychosocial Functioning. *Child Development*. (2021). Vol 93 (3).

<https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13713>

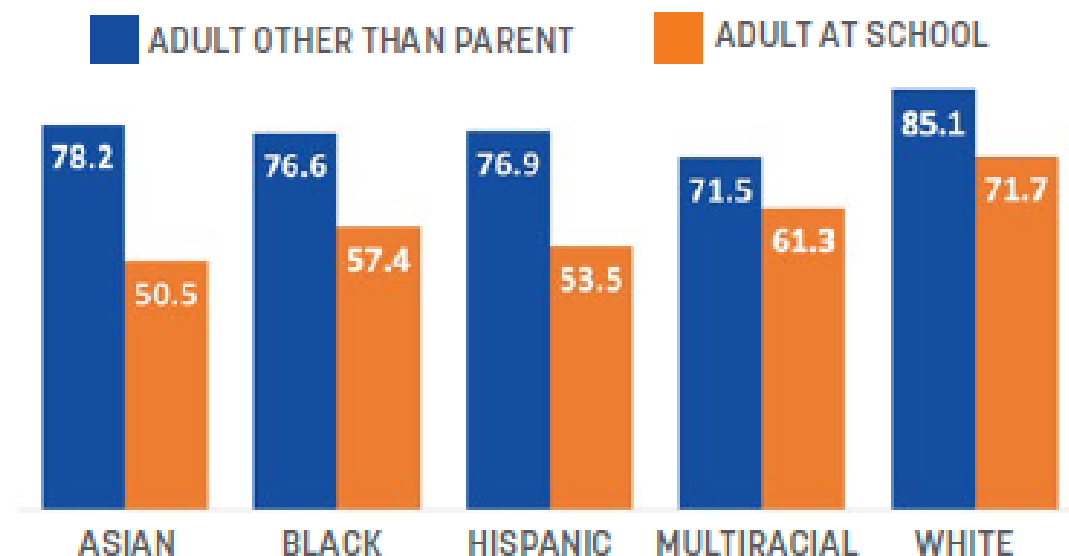




Adults at School

- **67% of kids have an adult at school that they can talk to if they have a problem** about their feelings. This has declined over the last ten years from 73%.
- **Asian and Hispanic students are less likely** to have an adult at school to turn to, with nearly half reporting they have no teacher or adult at school they can talk to about a problem.

PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO HAVE ADULTS THEY CAN TALK TO

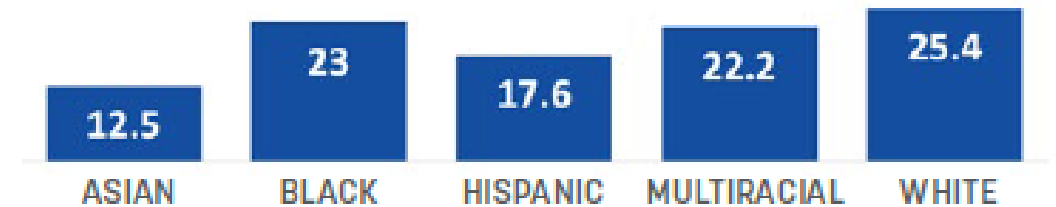




Kids Help Seeking

- **76% of kids would NOT talk with their family** about their feelings. Among those who felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious.
- **Asian and Hispanic students are the least likely to talk** with adult family members.

PERCENT WHO WOULD TALK WITH
ADULT FAMILY MEMBER ABOUT FEELINGS
*Among those who felt sad, empty,
hopeless, angry, or anxious*



Accepting Adults



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

Source: The Trevor Project. 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/>

- LGBTQ youth who have at least one accepting adult were **40% less likely** to attempt suicide.

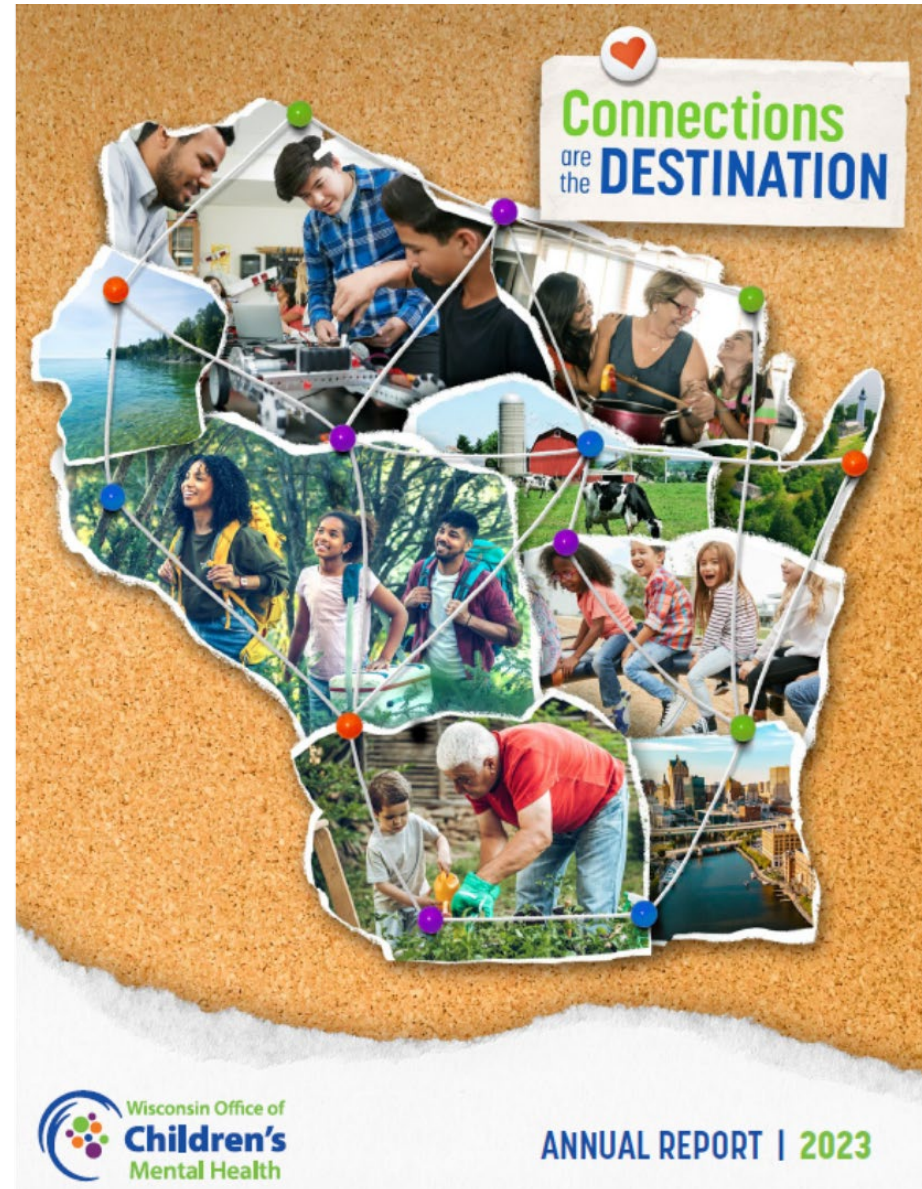
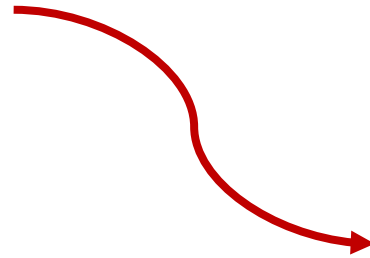
Source: The Trevor Project. Accepting Adults Reduce Suicide Attempts Among LGBTQ Youth. June 2019 Research Brief. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Trevor-Project-Accepting-Adult-Research-Brief_June-2019.pdf



Data Next Steps

Review data on youth mental health in your community to help understand the scope of the problem, and craft local solutions.

For example, you could compare local data to the child well-being dashboard in the [OCMH 2023 Annual Report](#).





Find Your Local YRBS Data 2021 Results by County

- YRBS county-level reports are produced for those with sufficient data to support public reporting.
 - ✓ 53 counties have high school reports
 - ✓ 47 counties have middle school reports
- Access county reports here, under the 2021 County Reports section:
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs/online>



2021 County Reports

The folders below contain the 2021 YRBS high school and middle school reports for counties with sufficient local data.

- [High School County Reports A - N](#)
- [High School County Reports O - Z](#)
- [Middle School County Reports A - N](#)
- [Middle School County Reports O - Z](#)



Taking Action

- OCMH shares data **to build awareness** of the status of youth mental health in Wisconsin, and **to inspire action**.
- **Everyone can take action** and help improve youth mental health.
 - *Individuals*
 - *Families*
 - *Youth organizations*
 - *Legislators*
 - *Early care providers*
 - *Schools*
 - *Doctors and pediatricians*
 - *Libraries*
 - *Local businesses*
- If you have questions on how to act on a concerning data point, or where to find resources, please contact us (OCMH@wi.gov).



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