2023

Indiana Girl Report

INDIANA YOUTH INSTITUTE

Inspired by Girl Scouts
Girl Coalition
of Indiana

Report commissioned by
Girl Scout Councils serving Indiana

About Indiana Youth Institute

Since 1988, Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) has worked to achieve its mission to improve the lives of all Indiana children by strengthening and connecting the people, organizations, and communities that are focused on kids and youth. IYI provides critical data, capacity-building resources, and innovative training for over 2,500 diverse youth-serving organizations and 17,000 youth workers each year. IYI has a long history of actively listening to Indiana's youth workers and community leaders, leveraging their feedback to facilitate collaboration and promote problem-solving and collective advocacy on a statewide scale.

IYI is the Indiana state partner in the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT® network. Annually, IYI produces the Indiana KIDS COUNT® Data Book, one of 53 state- and territory-level projects designed to provide a detailed picture of child well-being.

IYI's vision is to be a catalyst for healthy youth development and for achieving statewide child success. We strive to create best practice models, provide critical resources, and advocate for policies that result in positive youth outcomes.

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📷 @indianayouthinstitute | in Indiana Youth Institute

About Girl Coalition of Indiana, inspired by Girl Scouts

Six Girl Scout councils currently serve girls in the state of Indiana. To ensure every girl in Indiana lives her best life physically, academically, emotionally, and socially, all six councils aligned in an unprecedented collaboration to form a Girl Coalition of Indiana (Girl Co.) funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.. The vision of the Girl Coalition of Indiana is to enable every girl in Indiana to live her best life physically, academically, emotionally, and socially. These dimensions of wellness were, in part, determined at the request of Lilly Endowment Inc. who charged Girl Scouts with making an impact on girls in three of these areas. Over the next three years, the project vision will accomplish measurable goals including increasing overall Girl Scout membership of girls in low-income households through several initiatives, including conducting, sharing, and acting on annual research of the State of the Indiana Girl.

GirlCoalitionIndiana.org | ⓕ in 📷 girlcoalitionofindiana

🐦 girlcoindiana | ▶ @girlcoalitionofindiana | ♪ @girlcoalitionofin

About Indiana Girl Report

The 2023 Indiana Girl Report is an overview of the well-being of Indiana girls statewide. A partnership between Indiana Youth Institute and the Girl Coalition of Indiana, the Indiana Girl Report aims to understand the realities girls face and the variances across regions. The Indiana Girl Report includes: girl-specific data sourced from IYI's Indiana KIDS COUNT® Data Book and other relevant data sets; girl-specific data by sub-groups inclusive of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, age, mental and physical ability, and other characteristics when available; girl-specific multi-year trends related to emotional health indicators, physical health indicators, academic performance, and social wellness; data-driven actions for parents, youth service providers, and policymakers to improve support and overall conditions for Indiana girls.

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Content Warning
This report contains information, discussion, and data regarding self-harm, physical and sexual abuse, racial trauma, violence, death, and traumatic healthcare experiences.

Congratulations to the Girl Coalition of Indiana!

Girl Co.'s partnership, shared purpose, and this first data report are evidence of a collaborative and innovative approach to increasing the well-being of Indiana girls. As the state's leader in child and youth data, Indiana Youth Institute is delighted to be part of this transformative project.

Essential to increasing the well-being of Indiana girls is understanding who they are. While it is tempting to think about the girls we know best – perhaps those in our families, neighborhoods, or troops – it is crucial that we start with a lens that reflects the entirety of girls across our state. What does homelessness look like for Indiana girls? What about hunger? Or college completion? The list goes on and on. Understanding the data surrounding the well-being of Hoosiers is a foundation to better serve our children and families.

Indiana Youth Institute is honored to have served as our state's KIDS COUNT® affiliate for almost 30 years. This national network of youth services providers, universities, and data experts collects, analyzes, and shares hundreds of child well-being data points. Data is abundant and our goal is to make it easier to understand and use to benefit youth-serving organizations, their missions, and their goals.
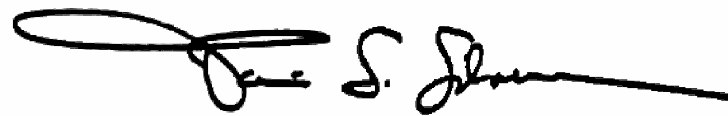
At the same time, data is only as good as what we do with it. The Girl Coalition of Indiana has big goals and aspirations. Using data as both a foundation and catalyst, they are starting with the fuel that will equip them to reach their goals. Data is a tool, the start of discussions, plans, collaborations, and impact. We must continue to prioritize understanding the facts to best serve our children and youth. But we cannot stop there. **It is the connection with the kids, families, and communities that creates lasting change.**

We know that increasing the well-being of our kids is complex and complicated. The pandemic accelerated many issues, such as the value of peer connection and the importance of adult mentorship, that have been present for many years. The data also reminds us of the multitude of issues facing our youth.

Yet our kids are also hopeful and ambitious. **It will take an all-in, collaborative approach where we look for new ways to engage and support our children.** The Girl Coalition of Indiana is a shining example of this type of bold innovation. Again, we are grateful to be part of this project and are committed to supporting its success.

With gratitude,

Tami Silverman
President & CEO
Indiana Youth Institute

Girls have enormous potential.
Girls are in a state of crisis.

These two true statements embody the conflict girls face every day.

Girls who thrive physically, academically, emotionally, and socially can change the course of a community's trajectory for the better. However, girls continue to experience mental health challenges, pressure to meet high academic standards, and dynamic social standards.

So, who is watching out for the needs and wellbeing of girls in our state?

We are. With the release of this 2023 Indiana Girl Report, I am proud to introduce the Girl Coalition of Indiana, a statewide, girl-focused, social innovation start-up inspired by the vision of six Girl Scout councils dedicated to improving the lives of girls.

As its own entity, the Girl Coalition of Indiana will focus on:

- Using data to elevate awareness of the state of girls' wellbeing,
- Initiating community conversations to better understand barriers that prevent girls from thriving, especially those living in low-income households,
- Advocating for systemic change on behalf of girls and their families, and
- Innovating partnerships and experiences that build programs and initiatives to best support Indiana girls.

Why now? Because there are clear indicators that our **girls are not okay**.

- Girls in Indiana are twice as likely to become victims of traditional bullying and three times as likely to become victims of cyberbullying compared to boys.
- Among 7th to 12th grade girls in Indiana, 47.1% experienced depression in 2022 and nearly 1 in 4 girls seriously considered suicide. Of these, more than 6,000 girls in high school moved beyond considering suicide and actively began to think about how they would carry it out.
- Data also shows, despite the shocking state of girls' mental well-being, they are persevering and achieving in school even though gender gaps persist, and more support is needed.

Addressing the unique challenges girls face and creating an environment that allows girls to meet their full potential starts with understanding girl-specific insights. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research and data focused on girls in Indiana. Without gender-specific data, we are not able to see the full and accurate picture of how girls are faring overall.

This report is a rally cry for girls in Indiana. We must listen with empathy to the girls in our lives. We must seek to understand what they are facing. Then, we must advocate for programs and systems to be designed for girls in a way that supports their overall wellbeing.

Our vision for this report is two-fold:

- To affirm what girls are feeling and experiencing as they navigate uniquely challenging times. As a coalition, we will listen to girls and advocate on their behalf.
- To inspire the collective action of caregivers, educators, youth development professionals, and corporate, local, and state decisionmakers to advocate for the necessary changes that girls need.

Thank you for your passion and commitment to improving the lives of girls in our great state. We cannot wait to do this work alongside you. Join us.

In partnership,

Mackenzie Pickerrell
Executive Director
Girl Coalition of Indiana

Time for All Girls to Thrive

One woman with a dream to bring equitable experiences to girls brought Girl Scouts to life more than a century ago, starting a world-wide movement with a small group of girls in Savannah, Georgia.

Today, we bring another dream to life.

A collective of six Girl Scout councils spent more than a year dreaming of a way to help girls live their best lives physically, academically, emotionally, and socially in a state where girls living in low-income and trauma-impacted households face incredible, inequitable challenges in their daily lives.

The result is the debut of the Girl Coalition of Indiana, a start-up initiative with the ability to innovate, advocate, and connect with communities on issues that impact girls' overall wellness. Igniting the work of the coalition is the data collected and analyzed in this report by the Indiana Youth Institute.

We must first understand the current state of girls across the state. And the truth is that we do not yet have a full picture.

Data specific to girls is limited. Available data points serve to generate deeper questions about how well our girls are doing, and what they need to thrive. A girl's world is complicated.

As CEOs, we see the impact of societal expectations, childhood trauma, stress, worrying, and bullying in our everyday interactions with families. We also witness the dichotomy of girls who are achieving, leading with resiliency, and focusing on their futures. We know that we can help bring positive learning experiences to more girls in communities who do not have traditional ties to, or even an understanding of, Girl Scouts.

The Girl Coalition of Indiana has the support of Girl Scouts behind it, and it also has a strong purpose of its own, thanks to Executive Director Mackenzie Pickerrell. Under her leadership, Girl Co. will seek to gain a better understanding of what families and communities want for their girls, what girls want for themselves, and how we can structure that support in new ways that are equitable, fundable, and exciting.

Today we leverage our legacy of support to this unique approach to be bolder, prototype new ideas, and take more risks. Together we will advocate on behalf of girls and offer solutions that help them thrive in today's world.

Nancy Wright
girl scouts of greater chicago and northwest indiana

Sharon Pohly
girl scouts of northern indiana-michiana

Danielle Shockey
girl scouts of central indiana

Aimée Sproles
girl scouts of western ohio

Maggie Elder
girl scouts of kentuckiana

Aimee Stachura
girl scouts of southwest indiana

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Overview of Indiana Girl Wellness

The realities of data on girl-specific needs

To achieve the vision of the Girl Coalition of Indiana, Indiana Youth Institute compiled **girl-specific data and research from the KIDS COUNT® data domains of Family & Community, Health, Economic Well-Being, and Education to identify barriers and to support girls** living their best life, using data to inform and spark action. The Indiana Girl Report also includes recommendations for parents, youth service providers, and policymakers to improve support and overall conditions for girls in the state of Indiana.

Understanding Girl Co.'s Dimensions of Wellness

Together, the four Dimensions of Wellness define key areas under which girls need support to thrive. While additional areas of wellness have been researched and defined over time, these four were selected because they are important for the holistic development of girls.

Physical Wellness for Girls: For girls to thrive, communities should create conditions for girls to develop healthy bodies and live in healthy environments. Proper development of her physical body requires access to nutritional foods, outlets for physical fitness, health education, and more. Girls also need safe, nurturing environments in which to grow, including access to safe housing, adequate healthcare, and protective communities of peers and adults who are capable of supporting her overall development.

Academic Wellness for Girls: Creating an educational environment which fosters curiosity, champions risk-taking, and encourages girls to try new things is necessary to level the playing field in the classroom. While girls face pressure to be high academic achievers, social influences create pressure that can limit academic success or narrow their chosen fields of study. Academic wellness for girls begins with high-quality early childhood education, equitable access to all fields of study including STEM topics throughout their K–12 education, and programs which enable ongoing education in higher education or technical training.

Emotional Wellness for Girls: When girls develop the ability to identify, express, and manage their feelings, they build a foundation for emotional resiliency. Nurturing these capabilities requires safe environments where girls learn preventative coregulation and proactive self-care which necessitates the presence of caring adults. Together, these circumstances help in the reduction of the mental health challenges girls face, including bullying, eating disorders, and depression.

Social Wellness for Girls: A robust ecosystem of support including a strong family unit, adequate economic resources, and opportunities to create and sustain social networks in her community helps girls build social skills and social connections needed to thrive. In these environments, girls learn both their intrinsic worth – a precursor for healthy self-confidence – and receive necessary support to navigate complicated social situations. Disruptions to this social fabric such as childhood trauma, poverty, or the prevalence of substance abuse in the family can create significant challenges now and later in life.

Understanding IYI's KIDS COUNT® Data Domains

IYI is the Indiana state partner in the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT® network and tracks hundreds of data indicators each year related to the following Annie E. Casey Foundation data topics and domains.

Family & Community

Children and youth who live in nurturing families and safe, supportive communities generally have stronger personal connections, higher educational achievement, and better mental health. Parents also need adequate resources to help foster their children's development. Similarly, children and youth are more likely to thrive in neighborhoods with strong schools, support services, and opportunities for community engagement.

Health

Children's good health is fundamental to their development, and ensuring kids are born healthy is the first step. Children and youth of color and those who face disadvantages such as inadequate family or community resources, exposure to traumatic events or other family stress tend to experience worse health outcomes. Leaders can address these disadvantages and ensure equitable access to quality health insurance and care.

Economic Well-Being

Family economic success provides a critical foundation for healthy child development, which, in turn, related to more positive outcomes in adulthood. Ongoing exposure to economic stress and hardship can negatively affect children's physical and mental health, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being.

Education

Establishing conditions to promote children's educational achievements begins before birth and continues into the elementary school years. With a strong beginning – followed by ongoing quality education, learning environments, and support – children are more likely to stay on track in school and graduate, pursue postsecondary education and training and successfully transition to adulthood.

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center

Addressing Limitations in Available Data

This report is meant to give insight into the obstacles and challenges that girls in Indiana are facing. It also provides greater context for all youth-serving organizations, specifically those working with girls, to address the gender gaps that are present across all dimensions of well-being.

Just as there are gaps in the experiences and opportunities impacting girls, we recognize that gender gaps also exist in data and data collection. Gender biases and accurate representation are not issues unique to Indiana as organizations around the world work towards equitable data collection standards to address gender data gaps.

When available, gender-specific data and research have been utilized in order to minimize gender biases and highlight the unique experiences that girls face. While efforts have been made to limit the amount of gender biases found in the data, it is not yet possible to present data that is free from gender bias. It's important to recognize that biases exist in data collection, reporting, and availability that affect the data surrounding all genders, but especially impacting the availability of girl-focused data.

As a result of these biases, limitations are present in available gender-specific data. However, these limitations do not dismiss what the data shows, but should be viewed as an additional data point that provides a lens by which to view and interpret this report. Barriers currently present in gender data make it difficult to monitor and assess the progress that Indiana girls are making.

Indiana Youth Institute and the Girl Coalition of Indiana are aware of existing data shortcomings and are continually working to source more robust, equitable, and gender specific data to advance the use of data in the decision-making process. By addressing systemic biases in collection, definitions, experiences, and methodologies, we are better equipped to ensure that data is representative of the lived reality of girls, in all their diversity. It's this acknowledgment and continued work that is critical to making sure that girls in Indiana are visible and thriving in all areas of well-being.

How to Use & Understand This Report

Example Legend

The visual below shows the intersectionality between the Girl Coalition of Indiana Dimensions of Wellness and IYI's KIDS COUNT® Data Domains.

Girl Coalition of Indiana Dimensions of Wellness

Physical Wellness

Family & Community

Health

Economic Well-Being

Education

IYI's KIDS COUNT® Data Domains
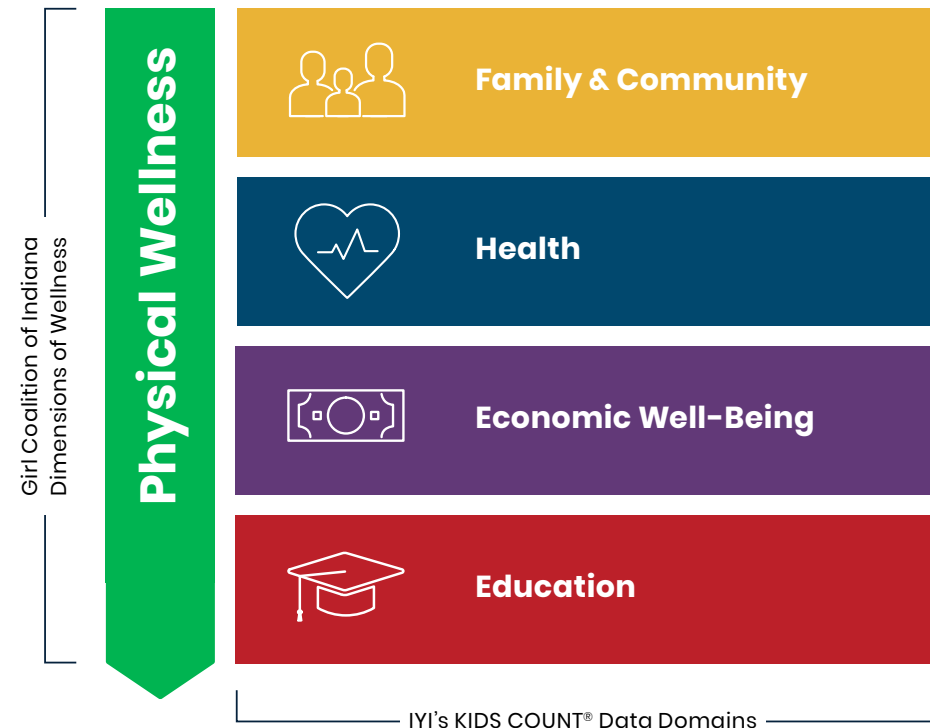
Taking Action with Girl Co.

Data Collection

Call to action: Data shows there is a 'crisis in American girlhood.'
Data also proves we don't know the full extent of the problem.

In February 2023, the Washington Post reported a 'crisis in American girlhood,' citing just one of the source reports used throughout this State of the Indiana Girl (the Youth Risk Behavior Survey). The article presented the alarming increases in rates of depression, suicidality, and sexual violence among girls. In the development of this report, in partnership with the Indiana Youth Institute, Girl Co. continued to find similar disparities – often deeply concerning differences – among boys and girls. What we also found is that the ability to separate data between girls and boys is surprisingly limited.

Using available data, this report highlights the disparities between the lived experience of girls and boys in the state of Indiana. However, available data is limited: key sources are unable to separate data among girls, boys, and demographics such as race and ethnicity, household income, and county.

Across state and local levels of government, within academic research settings, and among independent research agencies, we must ensure data collection methods include gender. In addition, prioritize youth-centered research practices on topics which impact their lives, when possible. Many reports on the status or experience of youth do not allow researchers to distinguish between boys and girls or are gathered from the perspective of the youth's caregiver.

Demographics of Indiana Girls

Recognizing the various demographics that make up the girl population in Indiana is vital to understanding the work is being done throughout the state. While it is important to recognize the diverse populations and backgrounds that many of our girls come from, it is also important to establish a collective understanding of how youth-serving agencies and the Indiana Youth Institute define these demographics.

Demographic Definitions

Although some definitions are commonly understood, others may not be as well known in their data-reporting application. Definitions of many of the key tracked demographics include:

Sex: the determination of female/male populations based on the biological attributes of men and women (chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, etc.)

Age: the length of time during which a child has been alive

Race: a sociological designation that separates people into groups that may share common outward physical appearances and commonalities of culture and history

Ethnicity: the culture, language, religion, heritage, and customs that a family or people group acquired from a geographic region

Place of birth: the location where a person was born

Language: a system of communication (speech, writing, gestures, etc.) used by a particular country or community

Household type: the composition of the household in which a child under the age of 18 lives. Household type captures makeup such as single parents, married couples, and cohabiting couples as well as the relationship that ties the child to the householder.

In this report, the definition of "girls in Indiana" is defined as youth under the age of 18, unless otherwise noted, whose sex assigned at birth was marked as female.

Number and Percent of Youth Under 18 Years, Indiana: 2021

	# of Youth	% of Total Population
Female	776,671	48.8%
Male	815,416	51.2%

U.S. Census, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B01001

Number and Percent of Youth Under 18 years by Age Group, Indiana: 2021

|	Under 5 Years		5 to 9 Years		10 to 14 Years		15 to 17 Years	
	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18
Female	202,506	12.7%	213,179	13.4%	225,170	14.1%	135,816	8.5%
Male	213,036	13.4%	222,731	14.0%	237,190	14.9%	142,459	8.9%

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B01001

Number and Percent of Youth Under 18 Years by Race/Ethnicity, Indiana: 2021

	American Indian		Asian		Black		Hispanic		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Two or More Races		White	
	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18	# of Youth	% of Youth Under 18
Female	1,112	0.1%	18,920	1.2%	87,327	5.5%	90,494	5.7%	209	0.01%	62,730	3.9%	579,510	36.4%
Male	1,210	0.1%	19,171	1.2%	89,274	5.6%	93,165	5.9%	217	0.01%	63,369	4.0%	614,629	38.6%

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B01001A-I

Place of Birth for Total Youth Under 18 Years, Indiana: 2021

- 1.9%
- 0.7%
- 13.9%
- 83.5%
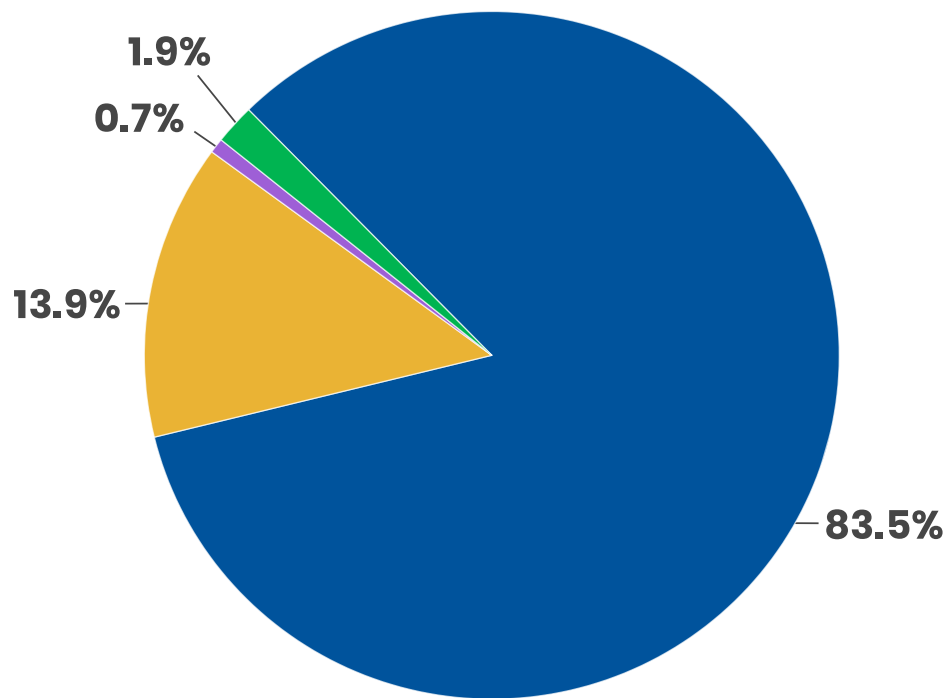
● **Born in Indiana** ● **Born in Other State**
● **Native; Born outside the U.S.** ● **Foreign Born**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B06001

Language Spoken at Home for Total Youth Ages 5 to 17 Years, Indiana: 2021

- 0.5%
- 1.5%
- 2.3%
- 6.2%
- 89.5%
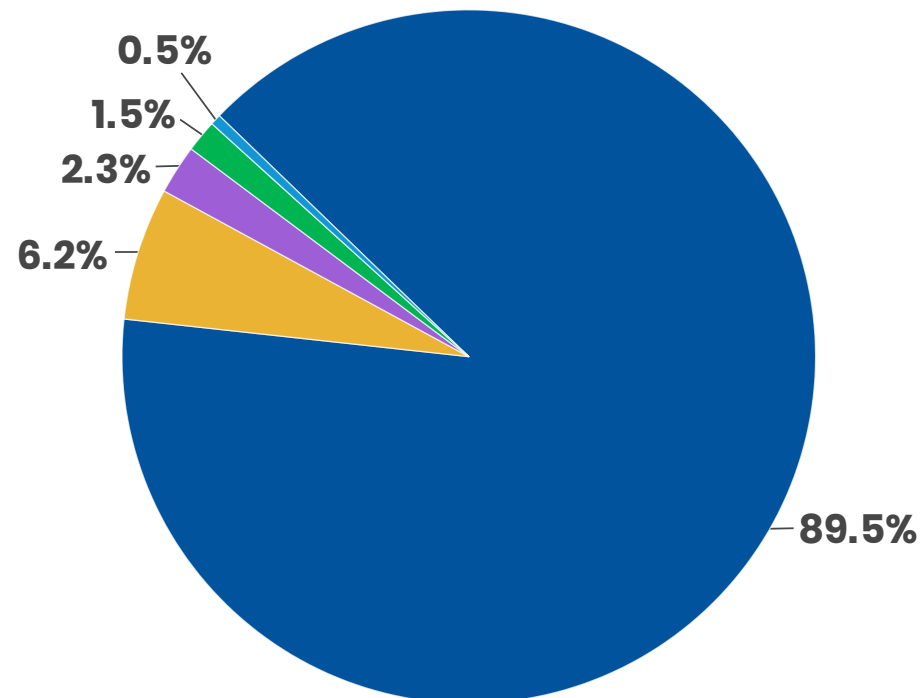
● **Speak Only English** ● **Speak Spanish**
● **Speak Other Indo-European Languages**
● **Speak Asian and Pacific Island Languages**
● **Speak Other Languages**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B06001

Household Type for Total Youth Under 18 Years, Indiana: 2021
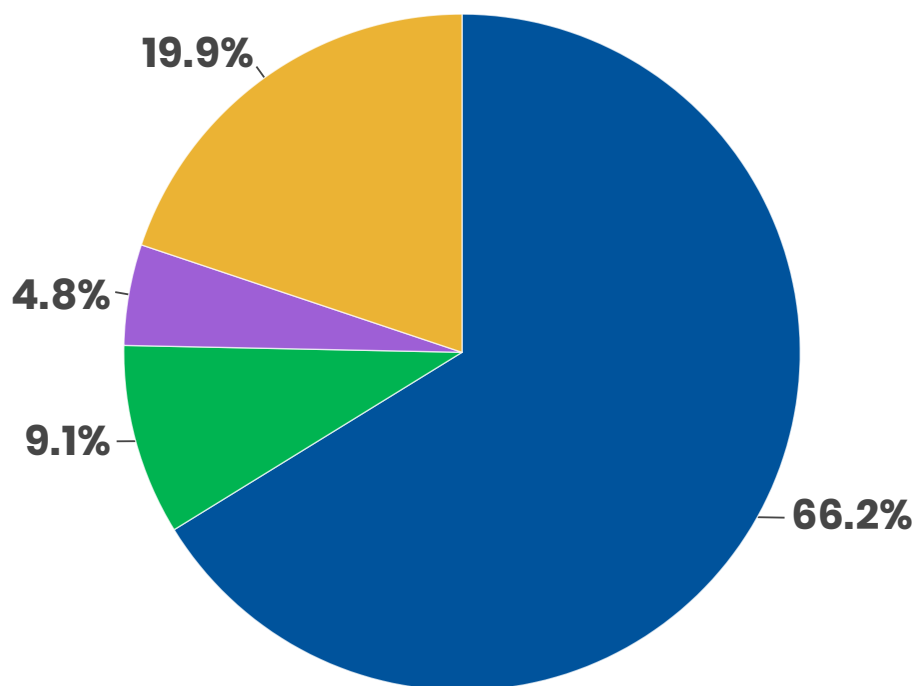
Legend:
- ● Married-Couple Household
- ● Cohabiting Couple Household
- ● Single Father Household
- ● Single Mother Household

19.9%
4.8%
9.1%
66.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B09005

Relationship to Primary Householder for Total Youth Under 18 Years, Indiana: 2021
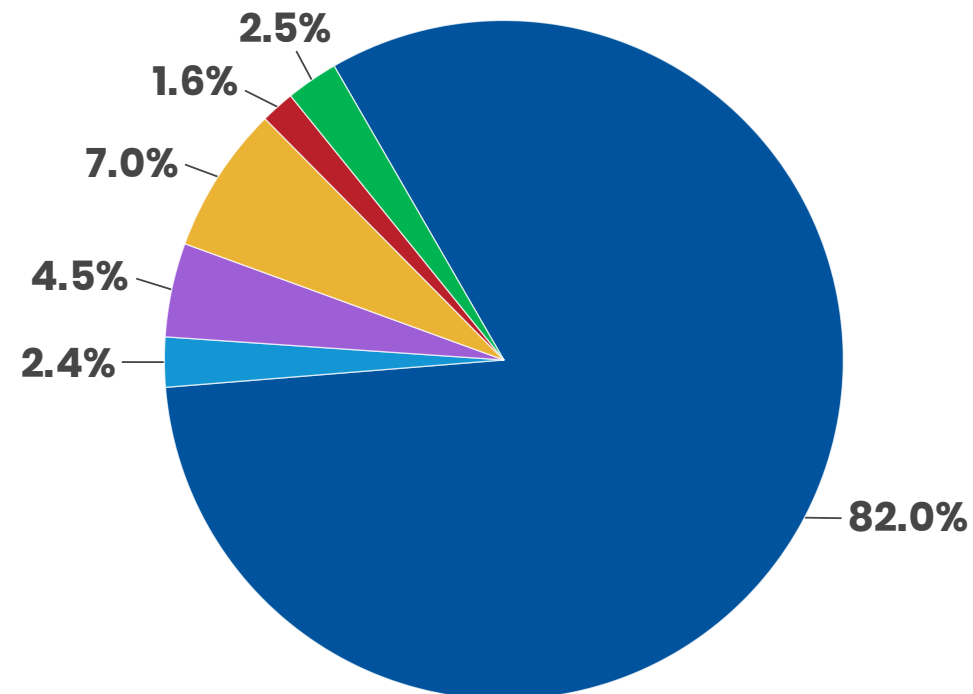
Legend:
- ● Biological Child
- ● Adopted Child
- ● Stepchild
- ● Grandchild

2.5%
1.6%
7.0%
4.5%
2.4%
82.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table B09018
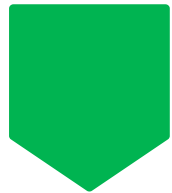
Physical Wellness for Girls

Why It Matters

For girls to thrive, communities should create conditions for them to develop healthy bodies and live in healthy environments. Proper development of girls' physical bodies requires access to nutritional foods, outlets for physical fitness, health education, and more. Girls also need safe, nurturing environments in which to grow, including access to safe housing, adequate healthcare, and protective communities of peers and adults who are capable of supporting their holistic development.

Physical Wellness

Family & Community

Community and Neighborhood Safety

Economic Well-Being

Physical Environment and Homelessness

Health

Health Insurance and Healthcare

Physical Activity and Weight Status

Sexual and Physical Violence

How are our girls doing?

- More than **80% of girls in Indiana said either "no" or "NO!"** when asked if neighbors noticed when they were doing a good job, compared to 75.3% of boys.

- In 2021, more than 54,000 girls, or **6.5% of the Indiana girl population under 18**, were not covered by health insurance – in line with 2020.

- Girls were admitted for an inpatient stay at a hospital more than three times the rate of boys' admission in 2021, **making up 76% of all inpatient discharges for youth 0-24 in Indiana.**

- From 2015 to 2021, the rate of physical and sexual dating violence among girls in Indiana has increased, while the prevalence among boys has decreased. **17% of high school girls reported having experienced sexual dating violence in 2021.**

Community and Neighborhood Safety

One of the more nuanced contributors to physical health is children's perception of their neighborhood and community. Girls should be confident in relying on their neighbors and community members to support their health and they should feel safe, secure, and supported within their communities. However, 7th-12th grade girls often have negative perceptions of their neighborhoods.

The Indiana Youth Survey is administered every two years to thousands of students throughout the state. It asks students questions about substance and alcohol use, mental health, and how they perceive the supportive nature of their neighborhoods or communities. **When asked if "neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it," 80.6% of girls respond with either "no" or an emphatic "NO!"** compared to 75.3% of boys when asked the same question.[1] Girls also do not feel that people within their neighborhood encourage them to do their best. In short, girls feel less encouraged and supported by adults in their community than boys. While these perceptions may not always be representative of the facts, they do provide insight into the lens of how children, especially girls, are experiencing their neighborhoods and communities. It speaks to the environments in which Indiana girls are living and how community leaders can work to change or correct these perceptions, so that girls throughout the state know that people in their community care for them, are proud of them, and are there to support their physical well-being and development.

Girls in Indiana said

"**NO!**

80.6%
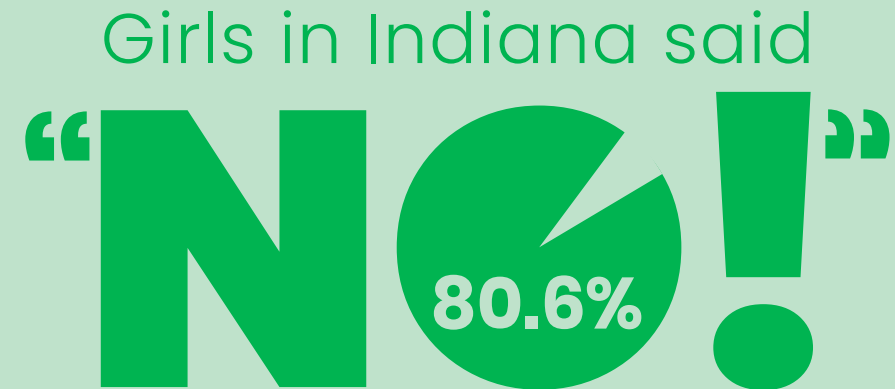
when asked if "neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it, according to the 2022 Indiana Youth Survey.

Physical Environment and Homelessness

Just as the social and community environments impact the health of Indiana girls, so too does the physical environment. The physical environment is made up of external conditions that individuals interact with such as air and water quality, transportation, and the homes in which they live. These factors influence the overall health of all Indiana children, but for many girls, the physical environment has a much more direct impact on their health.

Among the student population in the **2021-2022 school year, there were 7,306 kindergarten-12th (K-12) grade girls, and 7,239 K-12 boys who were homeless in the state.**[2] The Indiana Department of Education utilizes the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**[3] in defining homeless students and includes "those who lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence."[4] While children's brains adapt to traumatic and challenging circumstances such as episodic homelessness, the negative effect of this adaptation is often seen later in life. Those children experiencing more prolonged or chronic homelessness realize more immediate consequences that directly affect their physical health.

Children who are homeless are at a higher risk of serious health complications and generally do not get the adequate amount of quality sleep that is vital to a child's development. Homelessness and food insecurity often go hand-in-hand as students who are homeless have reduced access to nutritious foods and are twice as likely to report not eating breakfast compared to housed students. Asthma rates are nearly double among students who are homeless compared to housed students. With inadequate sleep and nutrition, students who are homeless are almost twice as likely as housed students to not be physically active for the recommended 60 minutes or more per day.[5] Children who are homeless are also more likely to engage in substance use which often leads to developmental complications later in childhood and physical health problems into adulthood.[6,7,8]

Girls who were homeless

7,306

Among Kindergarten-12th (K-12) grade girls during the 2021-2022 school year, according to the Indiana Department of Education.

Health Insurance and Healthcare

The physical well-being of girls is not dependent on only one, or even a handful, of factors. Ensuring healthy outcomes for girls as they grow up requires a comprehensive approach that provides services, resources, and conditions that contribute to their physical well-being. As girls develop, access to healthcare through health insurance is a critical factor in promoting their well-being in many important areas of their lives. Research[9] shows that health insurance, or the absence of it, has long-lasting effects on the health outcomes, educational outcomes, and economic outcomes of children. Better outcomes have even been observed among children who were covered by health insurance prior to birth. **While there are not wide gaps in health insurance coverage between boys and girls, 6.5% of Indiana girls were not covered by health insurance in 2021 – or roughly 50,000 girls in Indiana who did not have access to health insurance. Of those who were covered, 33.8% received coverage via public health insurance.[10]**

Roughly 50,000 girls in Indiana did not have access to health insurance in 2021, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

= 2,000

Inpatient Hospital Discharges for Youth 0-24 Years, Indiana: 2021

33,107

10,044

● **Female** ● **Male**
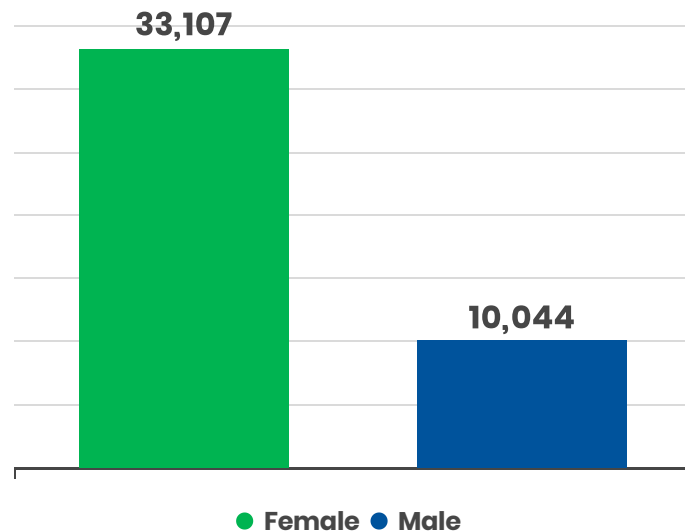
Source: Indiana Department of Health

Health insurance plays a significant role in bolstering the physical health of girls throughout the nation and in Indiana. The coverage of health insurance dramatically impacts the health outcomes girls experience and the financial burdens their families may face, but it does not always account for time spent in the emergency room or admissions to the hospital. Time spent in the hospital and often the time spent recovering after a hospital stay is time girls are not in school and time not spent at work, for both the parent and older children. Even for families with health insurance, prolonged hospital stays can present several stressful scenarios including burdensome medical bills. In 2021, Indiana girls were substantially more likely to end up in the emergency room and be admitted to the hospital. **Among all youth in Indiana ages 0-24, girls made up 65% of emergency room visits and 76% of all inpatient hospital stays. Over 33,000 girls were admitted for inpatient care in 2021, more than tripling the rate of boys' inpatient care**.

Taking Action with Girl Co.

Hospitalizations of Youth

Data shows that girls are admitted for inpatient care at three-times the rate of boys. That's alarming. What's more alarming is the lack of explanation.

Girls vs. Boys
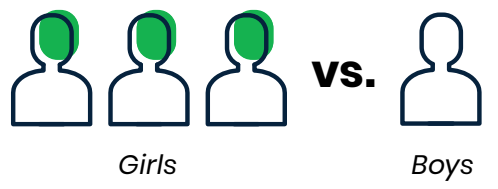
That same data, or other sources, fall short in explaining the difference between girls' and boy's admission rates to hospitals in Indiana. We have theories: inpatient admissions may be related to teen births; inpatient admissions in other states have resulted from higher incidents of mental health treatment; in some states, higher rates of hospitalizations have been linked to higher rates of victimization among girls and women, namely domestic or sexual violence.

At Girl Co., our priority is ensuring the state of Indiana allows girls to live their best lives. According to the Indiana Department of Health, girls in Indiana require more intensive medical treatment than boys by a rate of 3x. Our first priority must be uncovering the cause of the disparity. Then, our top priority as a state must be not only working to prevent the root cause, but also support the adjacent impacts to hospitalizations for girls, including the impact on their family's financial health, the impact to her schooling, and the impact to her ongoing mental and physical health.

A Vignette from Girl Scouts

Often, an overlooked impact of extended hospitalization on girls is the social and emotional impact of isolation. Sarah, a pediatric cancer survivor, realized that some patients must be isolated to protect themselves from germs; some may find themselves alone when parents or family members have to return to work; and others receive treatments that disrupt their sleep schedules, leading children to end up awake and alone throughout the night. Sarah identified creative ways to break the feeling of being "trapped," creating a program to offer pediatric patients walkie talkies to engage with other children during their stay. "I got to meet other kids instead of just sitting in my bed watching TV" she beamed.
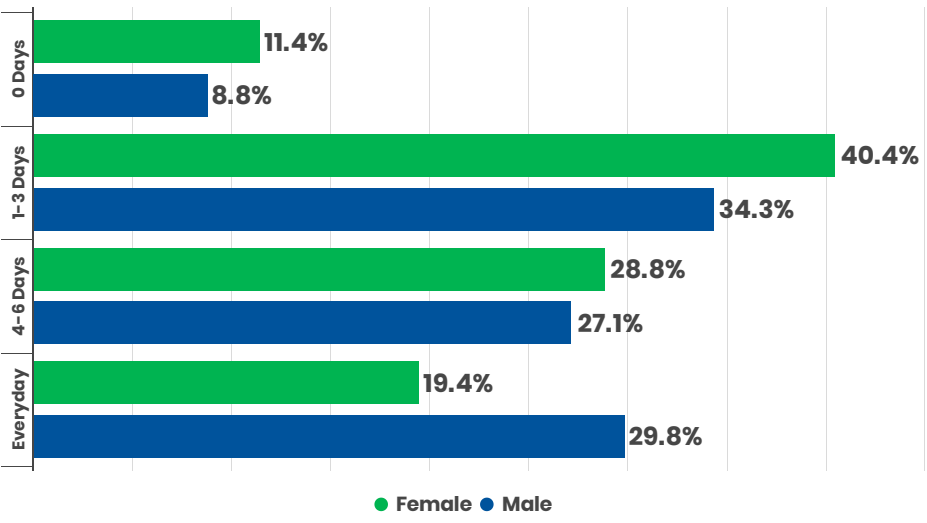
Physical Activity and Weight Status

Continued research[11, 12, 13, 14, 15] shows the wide-ranging benefits of exercise and physical activity for children, especially for those ages 6-17. It's important that children get enough physical activity each day so they can develop their muscles, bones and cardiovascular system as they grow. Regardless of gender, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children engage in 60 minutes of age-appropriate, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day.

For many families, especially those living in more urban settings, having access to neighborhood amenities like recreation centers, parks, and trails is important in ensuring that children have safe places to engage in physical activities. Throughout Indiana, there exists little difference between boys and girls when evaluating access to neighborhood amenities.

Number of Days Per Week Spent Exercising, Playing a Sport or Participating in Physical Activity for at Least 60 Minutes, Indiana: 2020-2021

- 0 Days: Female 11.4%, Male 8.8%
- 1-3 Days: Female 40.4%, Male 34.3%
- 4-6 Days: Female 28.8%, Male 27.1%
- Everyday: Female 19.4%, Male 29.8%

● Female ● Male

Source: National Survey of Children's Health

While access to physical activity appears to be available to most boys and girls throughout the state, Indiana girls tend to exercise less regularly compared to boys. The majority of girls, 40.4%, exercise 60 minutes per day, 1-3 days per week. While many boys, 34.3%, also exercise 1-3 days per week, nearly 30% of boys engage in some sort of physical activity every day compared to the 19.4% of girls who exercise every day. In addition to its developmental benefits, regular physical activity has been shown to increase academic performance, improve mental health, and contribute to long-term health goals like maintaining a healthy weight.

The determination of weight status is based on the Body Mass Index (BMI). Although medical and advocacy groups debate the accuracy of BMI as an accurate indicator of weight and health, particularly among women and people of color, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) continue to rely on its measurement as an indicator of overall health. Amidst the debate, experts have yet to reach a consensus on an alternative measurement of weight status. Interestingly, BMI data for youth in Indiana does not align with most social beliefs about girls and their weight.

Even with reduced physical activity compared to boys, 71.6% of girls ages 10-17 in Indiana have a weight status categorized as "normal" or within the 5th-84th percentile, while 56.5% of boys fall within the "normal" weight category. A quarter of girls fall into the overweight or obese categories, and while concerning, girls are less likely to be considered overweight or obese compared to boys of the same age; 34.5% of boys are in these categories.

Physical Activity and Weight Status Continued

Research[16, 17, 18] has shown that girls are more prone to eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia and this is often linked to the assumption that girls are more likely to be underweight. However, as the data surrounding weight status in Indiana shows, girls are more likely than boys to have a normal weight.

Even as a majority of girls in Indiana are placed in the BMI's "normal weight" category, perception of their weight can be distorted. Studies[19, 20, 21, 22] have repeatedly shown a negative correlation between social media and positive body image, especially among adolescent girls. Body image is often negatively influenced by many external factors, including social media, and this negative influence can result in body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction regularly results in individuals engaging in unhealthy weight-control behaviors such as repetitive dieting, counting calories, eating disorders, and excessive exercise.

Parent Reported Concerns About Child's Weight, Indiana: 2020-2021

Yes (Too High): 5.7% Female, 8.9% Male
Yes (Too Low): 2.4% Female, 1.9% Male
No: 91.9% Female, 89.2% Male

● Female ● Male
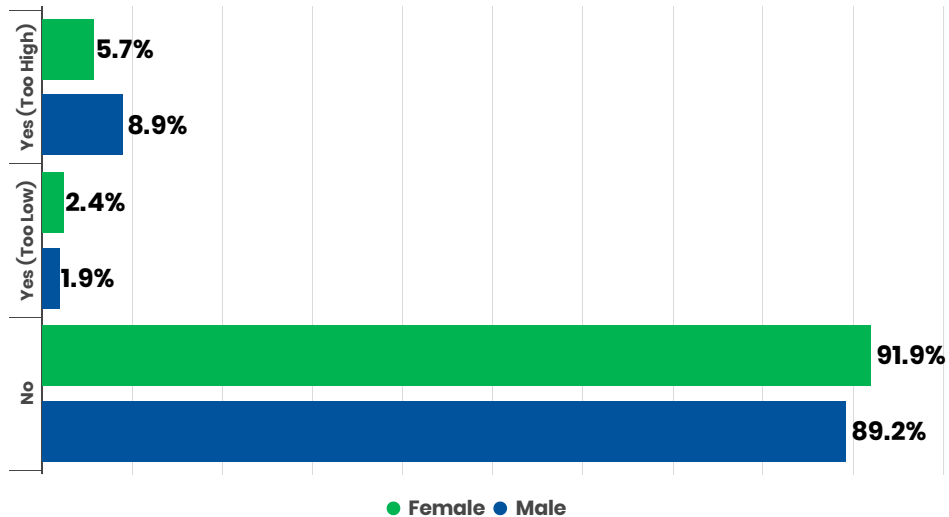
Source: National Survey of Children's Health

BMI Weight Status for Girls 10-17 Years, Indiana: 2016-2021

Underweight (Less than 5th Percentile): 3.6%, 9.0%, 3.4%
Normal Weight (5th-84th Percentile): 65.0%, 57.4%, 71.6%
Overweight (84th-95th Percentile): 15.5%, 18.0%, 12.9%
Obese (95th Percentile or Above): 15.9%, 15.6%, 12.1%

● 2016-2017 ● 2018-2019 ● 2020-2021
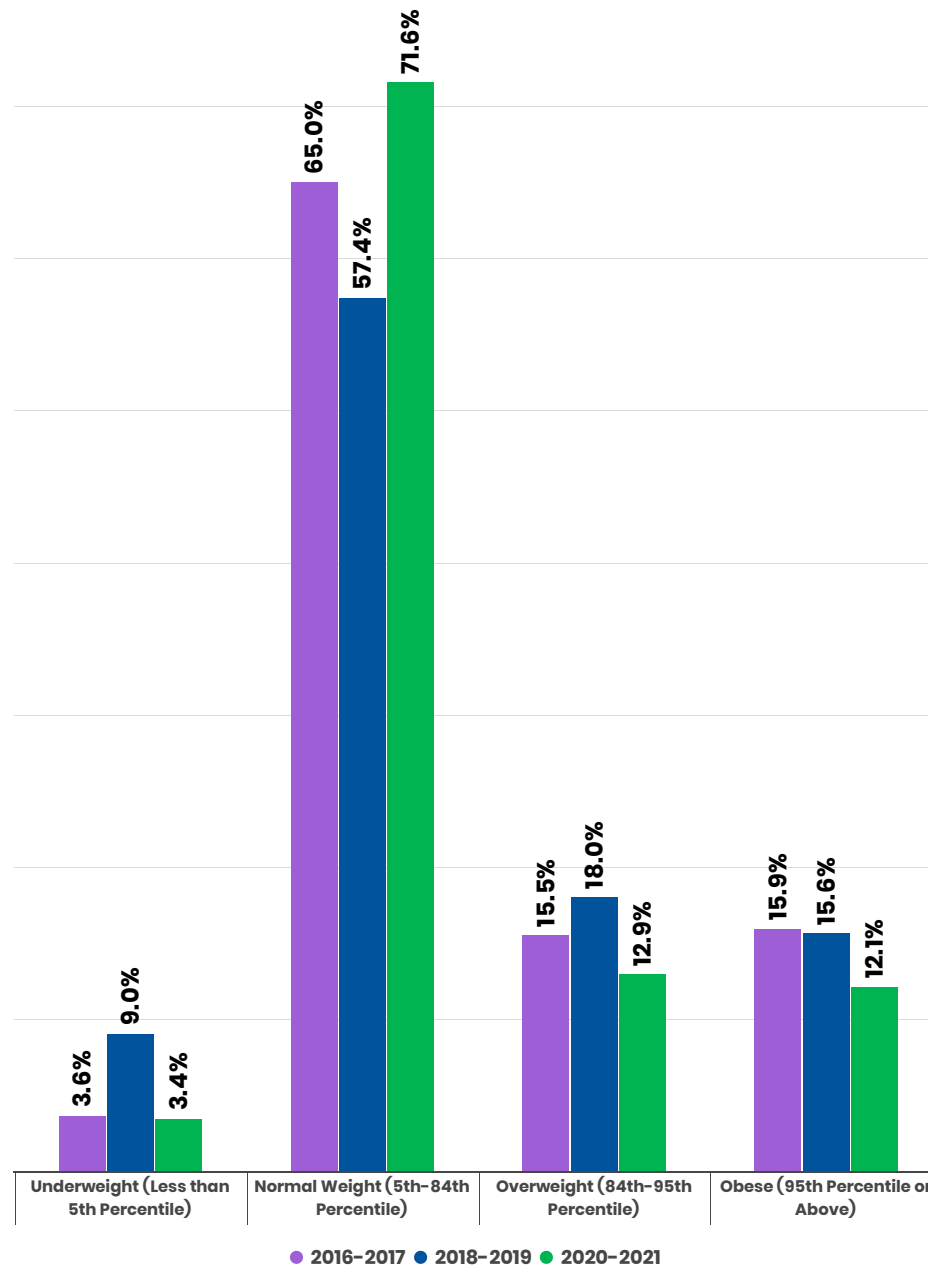
Source: National Survey of Children's Health

Sexual and Physical Violence

Girls in Indiana have historically reported higher levels of sexual and physical violence compared to boys, according to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). As this data is collected via survey biennially, it's likely that the numbers, for both boys and girls, are underreported. Despite possible underreporting, the number of Indiana high school girls who reported having experienced sexual violence in 2021 was 17.2%, an increase of 4.9% since 2015. The number of girls who said they were physically forced to have sexual intercourse increased to 16.8% in 2021, more than 4.5 times higher than the reported prevalence among boys.

These numbers are not specific to girls in dating relationships and include any forced sexual intercourse. When asked specifically about dating relationships, 17.2% of high school girls in Indiana said they had experienced sexual dating violence while 2.5% of male respondents indicated the same. 11.7% of girls said they had experienced physical dating violence. Dating violence is not limited to physical or sexual acts, and we see elevated rates of non-physical violence among girls as well. 37.2% of high school girls in Indiana reported that someone they were dating purposely tried to control them physically or emotionally. As discussed in the Emotional Well-Being section of this report, emotional trauma and its effects can extend into the overall physical well-being of an individual. The impacts of childhood sexual and physical violence on girls do not end in adolescence. In the short-term, trauma and physical harm can create significant hurdles for girls to overcome; survivors of physical and sexual violence often experience long-term consequences as well, such as depressed mood, antisocial behavior, suicidal ideation, and illicit drug use.[23, 24]

Percentage of High School Students Who Were Physically Forced to Have Sexual Intercourse, Indiana: 2011-2021
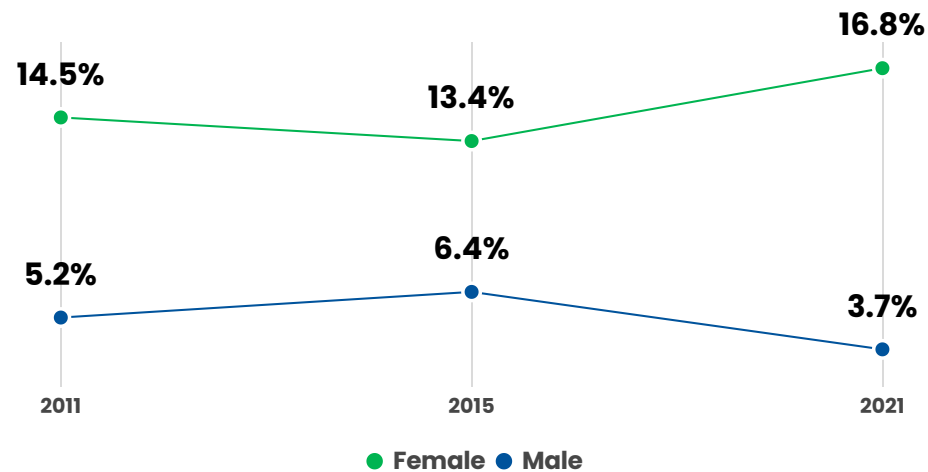
Source: Indiana Department of Health

Percentage of High School Students Who Reported Someone They Were Dating Purposely Tried to Control Them or Emotionally Hurt Them, Indiana: 2021
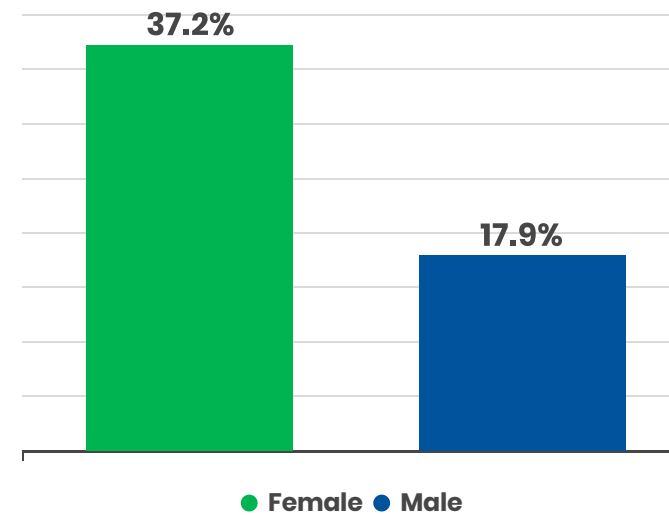
Source: Indiana Department of Health

Girl Coalition Speaks Out on

Physical Wellness

Call Out: Girls experience sexual violence in dating relationships at 5x the rate of boys.

Call to Action: Break the cycle of violence by prioritizing girls' physical wellbeing.

Girls continue to experience a startling increase in physical violence or emotional harm in dating relationships.

- In 2021, nearly 17% of high school girls reported being physically forced to have sexual intercourse vs. 4% of high school boys.
- For girls, this trend has increased over the ten-year reporting period; boys saw a decrease.

Experiencing dating violence creates a complex set of negative repercussions for girls: in the short-term, girls are more likely to turn to substance use, unhealthy weight control behaviors, risky sexual behaviors, pregnancy, and suicidality (Teen Dating Violence Literature Review, 2022).

In the long term, experiencing teen dating violence is found to create a vicious cycle: a ten-year study of dating violence found that victims had an increased likelihood of experiencing intimate-partner violence later in life. (Teen Dating Violence Literature Review, 2022). Considering the emotional trauma and negative social impacts of dating or intimate partner violence, an alarming number of girls and women are unwillingly entering a long-term cycle of abuse.

Parents, educators, and youth-providers can keep girls safe by educating youth on respectful conduct, consent, and healthy emotional coping mechanisms. A program developed through the CDC, Dating Matters, relies on evidence-based youth programs to lower rates of dating violence among teens. The results are telling: the multi-faceted program for youth, parents, and educators found decreases in dating violence by 10% in middle schools. At Girl Co., we believe that sustainable solutions for girls require comprehensive approaches like this: education and positive role models for youth; resources for parents and youth providers to support positive dating relationships among youth; and policy that ensures protections for victims of violence.

Number of high school girls reported being physically forced to have sexual intercourse in 2021, vs. number of high school boys.

17%

Girls

VS.

4%
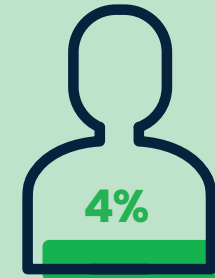
Boys

According to the Teen Dating Violence Literature Review, 2022

Academic Wellness for Girls

Why It Matters

Creating an educational environment which fosters curiosity, champions risk-taking, and encourages girls to try new things is necessary to level the playing field in the classroom. While girls face pressure to be high academic achievers, social influences often create pressure that can limit academic success or narrow their chosen fields of study. Academic wellness for girls begins with high-quality early childhood education, equitable access to all fields of study including STEM topics throughout their K-12 education, and programs which enable ongoing education in higher education or technical training.

Academic Wellness

Education

- K-12 Student Enrollment
- Academic Proficiency
- High School Graduation
- College & Career Readiness

How are our girls doing?

- In 2022, high school girls achieved an attendance rate of 92.7% statewide, consistent with boys' attendance rate of 93%.

- Girls tend to trail boys in math and science proficiency exams by nearly 3.5%.

- Indiana girls achieved a graduation rate of 88.7% in 2022, higher than the male graduation rate by just over 4%.

- Nearly **one-third of Indiana girls graduating in 2019, met income eligibility requirements for the 21st Century Scholars Program**, but either did not enroll or were unable to maintain eligibility. Compared to 28% of boys who were eligible for the program.

- **Girls in Indiana are less likely to declare STEM as their first major**, just 25.4%, compared to 41% of college-going boys declaring STEM field as their first declared major.
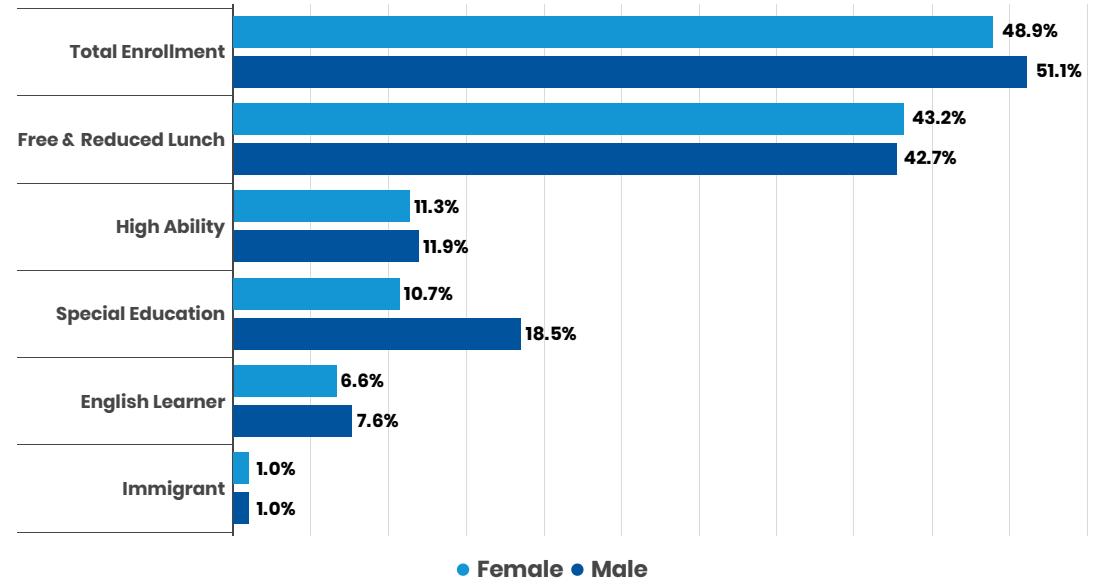
Kindergarten – 12th Grade Student Enrollment

There were 1.09 million kindergarten – 12th Grade (K-12) students in Indiana in 2022 and nearly half of those students, 48.9%, were girls. With nearly a half million female students in the state of Indiana, it is important to identify the demographic makeup of Indiana's female K-12 population to understand the factors impacting their academic performance. Research shows that gender, along with family background, socioeconomic status, and race are factors that often heavily influence the academic success that children experience. An influential factor in academic success is socioeconomic status. Of the 532,690 female students in 2022, 43.2% qualified for and were receiving free or reduced lunch, indicating that socioeconomic disparities exist among our female student population.

In 2022, 11.3% of K-12 Indiana girls were high-ability students, or a student who "performs at or shows the potential for performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one (1) domain when compared with other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests."[1] Just over 10% of girls were enrolled in special education programs, significantly lower than their male counterparts at 18.5%.

Several students in Indiana's K-12 female population are also multilingual; while just 1% of girls are immigrants, 6.6% of girls, or 35,157, are English Language Learners (ELL). For all students, regardless of their gender or if they fall into one of these sub-populations, there are many ways to gauge academic success and performance, and many are tailored to the needs that students have. At a basic level however, whether or not a student can fully exhibit grade level mastery and proficiency of certain subjects is a baseline metric for measuring academic success in the state of Indiana.

K-12th Grade Student Populations, Indiana: 2022

Category	Female	Male
Total Enrollment	48.9%	51.1%
Free & Reduced Lunch	43.2%	42.7%
High Ability	11.3%	11.9%
Special Education	10.7%	18.5%
English Learner	6.6%	7.6%
Immigrant	1.0%	1.0%

● **Female** ● **Male**

Source: Indiana Department of Education

DATA DEFINITION

"Special education" means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, designed to meet the unique needs of a student eligible for special education and related services. The term may include, but is not limited to, the following:

(1) Instruction conducted in:
    (A) the classroom;
    (B) the home;
    (C) hospitals and institutions; and (D) other settings.
(2) Instruction in physical education.
(3) Travel training.
(4) Transition services.
(5) Vocational education
(6) Speech-language pathology services.

Source: Indiana Department of Education

Academic Proficiency

Proficiency scores for girls in Indiana tend to reflect the false narrative that girls test as a monolith, performing better than boys in English Language Arts (ELA) competencies and worse than boys in math and science tests. Outdated research[2] previously suggested that girls are largely unable to achieve the same math and science scores as boys because of developmental differences. While girls in Indiana do tend to test lower in these fields and are less likely to pursue math and science fields, more recent research[3, 4, 5] suggests these test scores are not the result of gender-specific competencies; they are likely based in social beliefs, instructional bias, or other pressures.

Indiana's Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN) data shows that girls, grades 3-8, achieved 45.4% proficiency in ELA, 8.2% higher than their male counterparts. In mathematical competency, girls tend to lag slightly behind their male classmates, achieving 37.2% proficiency compared to boys' 41.5%. Grade-specific assessments show similar results, especially in early grade levels. Among 4th graders in 2022, boys had an average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math score (243) that was 8 points higher than girls' average math score (235). However, by the 8th grade that disparity disappears. In the same year, 8th grade girls in Indiana had an average NAEP math score (278) that was not significantly different from that of Indiana boys (279).[6, 7]

Amidst the gender differences in academic proficiency that still exist among Indiana students, girls and boys both experienced a decline in proficiency following the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2019 to 2021, both genders saw learning loss that manifested in an average **10% decline in both math and science proficiency**. Students in Indiana regained some lost ground in 2022 proficiency scores but are still below pre-pandemic proficiency rates. Researchers have also recently quantified the learning loss among students, finding that students in Indiana lost nearly six months of learning in math between 2019 and 2022 and over four months of reading in that same time.[8] District level data can be found at the **Education Recovery Scorecard**.

From 2019 to 2021, both boys and girls saw a 10% decline in proficiency in

MATH AND SCIENCE

according to the Indiana's Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN)

DATA DEFINITION

Indiana's Learning Evaluation and Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN) is the summative accountability assessment for Indiana students in grades three through eight and high school biology. ILEARN measures student achievement and growth according to Indiana Academic Standards for English/Language Arts for grades three through eight, Mathematics for grades three through eight, Science for grades four and six, and Social Studies for grade five.
Source: IDOE

ILEARN Science Proficiency for Grades 4th and 6th, Indiana: 2019-2022

Female
- 47.3%
- 36.0%
- 37.0%

Male
- 47.6%
- 38.9%
- 40.2%

● 2019 ● 2021 ● 2022
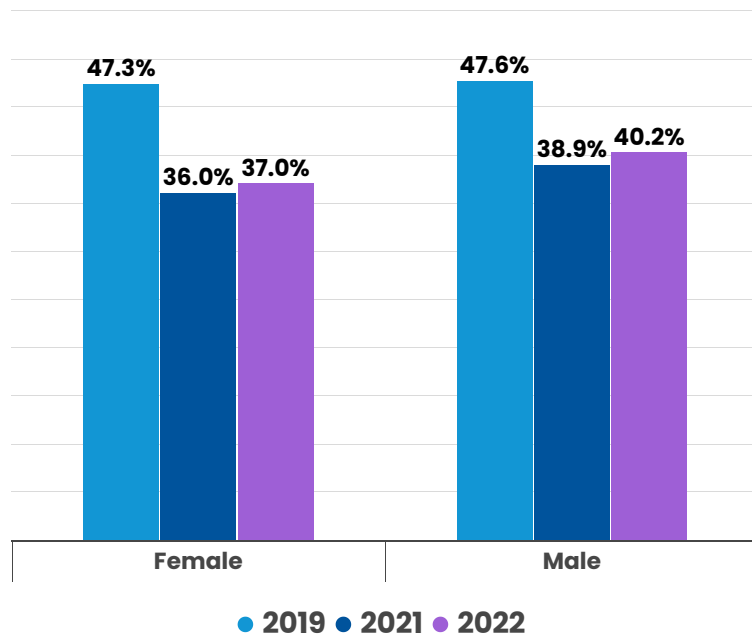
Source: Indiana Department of Education

ILEARN Math Proficiency for Grades 3rd throuah 8th. Indiana: 2019-2022

Female
- 47.2%
- 35.0%
- 37.2%

Male
- 48.4%
- 38.8%
- 41.5%

● 2019 ● 2021 ● 2022
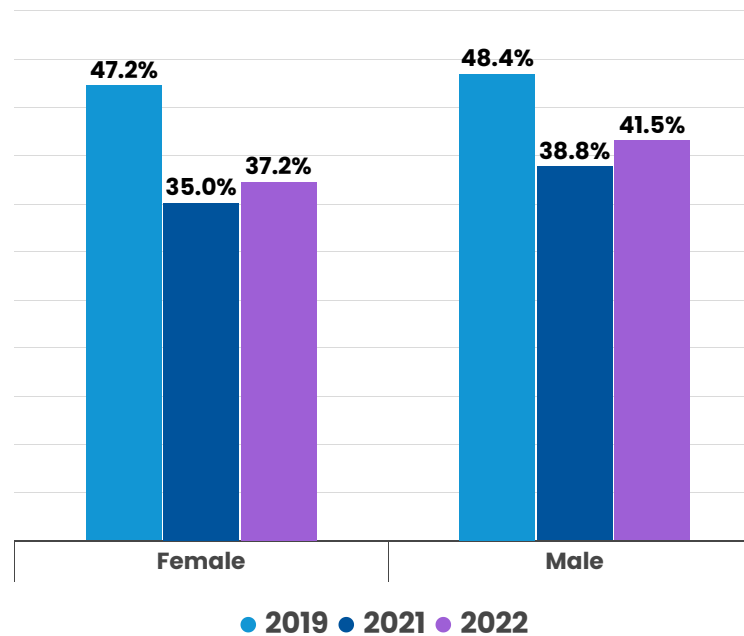
Source: Indiana Department of Education

ILEARN ELA & Math Proficiency for Grades 3rd through 8th, Indiana: 2022

ELA Proficient
- 45.4%
- 37.2%

Math Proficient
- 37.2%
- 41.5%

Both ELA & Math Proficient
- 30.8%
- 29.7%

● **Female** ● **Male**
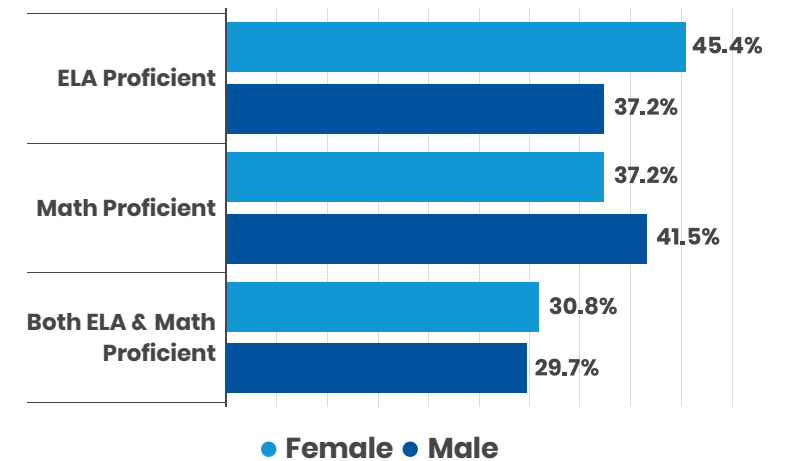
Source: Indiana Department of Education

High School Graduation

Girls graduated at a rate of 4.16% higher than their male peers, achieving a graduation rate of 88.73% in 2022. The data also shows differences in the types of diplomas that girls are graduating with. **For the same 2022 cohort, 45.1% of girl students graduated with an Honors diploma compared to 32.2% of boys.** Statewide, this difference suggests that high school girls in Indiana are graduating with a broader depth of academic awareness and are increasing the range of courses taken in school.

This difference between boys and girls in diploma type is not entirely surprising as research[9, 10] has shown that girls tend to be more disciplined, study harder, and achieve better grades than their male counterparts.

DATA DEFINITION

Indiana Diploma Types

Indiana Core40 Diploma: the foundational set of credits that nearly every student in Indiana must earn for graduation
- Comprised of 40 credits across English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health and Wellness, as well as electives and directed electives

Technical Honors or Academic Honors designation: students must earn additional credits while still completing all necessary requirements for the Core40
- Academic Honors: additional credits in math, world languages, and fine arts class
- Technical Honors: additional credits in college and career preparation classes

The specific requirements for all Core40 and Honors diploma types can be found here.
Source: IDOE

Attendance, Graduation, and Dropout Rate, Indiana: 2022

Female
- 92.7%
- 88.7%
- 6.23%

Male
- 93.0%
- 84.5%
- 8.7%
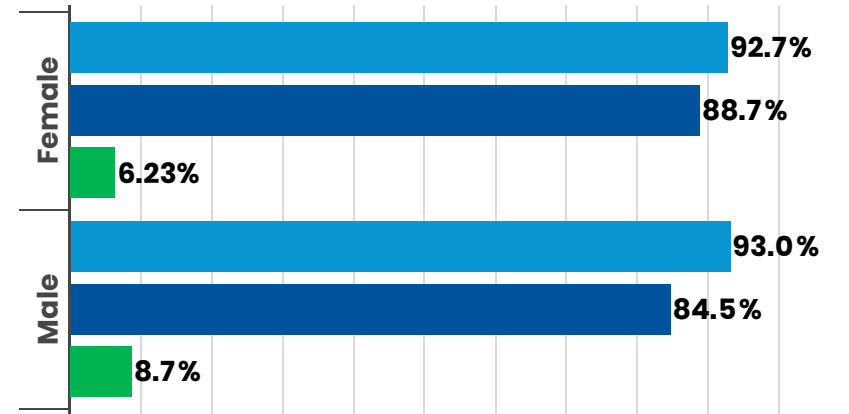
● **Attendance Rate** ● **Graduation Rate** ● **Dropout Rate**

Source: Indiana Department of Education

High School Graduation Rate by Diploma, Indiana: 2022

Female
- 47.9%
- 7.0%
- 45.1%

Male
- 55.9%
- 11.9%
- 32.2%
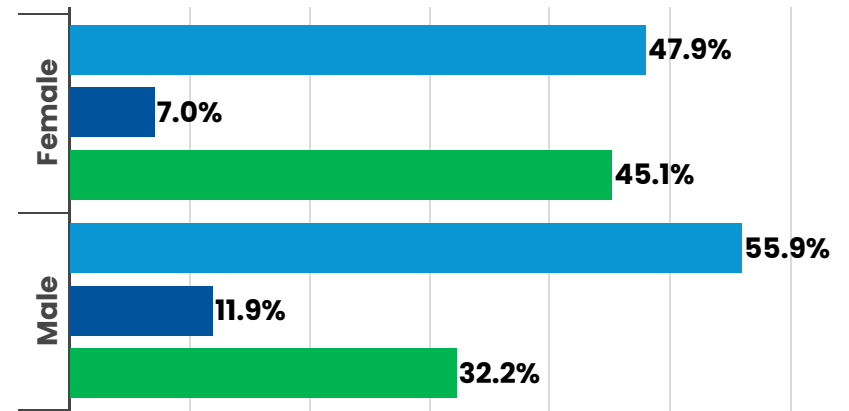
● **Core 40** ● **General** ● **Honors**

Source: Indiana Department of Education

A diploma with a Core40 designation is an Indiana graduation requirement. Parents believing their student may benefit more from a diploma with a General designation may follow a formal opt-out process, found here.

College and Career Readiness

While there is research[11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16] that offers possible causes for the math and science proficiency disparities between the sexes, the effect of these inequities has long produced the same outcome: too many girls in Indiana don't view Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields as potential careers. **In 2021, among Indiana college graduates ages 25-39, only 25% of females declared science and engineering as their first major, compared to 41% of males in the same age group.** The Girl Scouts and Indiana Youth Institute have both highlighted the need for accessibility and attainability of STEM professions for girls, ensuring that all aspiring youth, especially young girls, can see themselves in these careers.[17]

In 2021, Indiana female college graduates ages 25-39 declared

25%

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
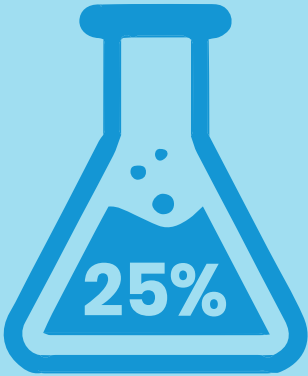
their first major.

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table S1502

Field of Bachelor's Degree for First Major, Indiana: 2021

Science and Engineering: Female 25.4%, Male 41.0%
Science and Engineering Related Fields: Female 18.0%, Male 7.3%
Business: Female 16.4%, Male 21.1%
Education: Female 14.3%, Male 5.9%
Arts, Humanities and Others: Female 25.9%, Male 24.7%

● Female ● Male
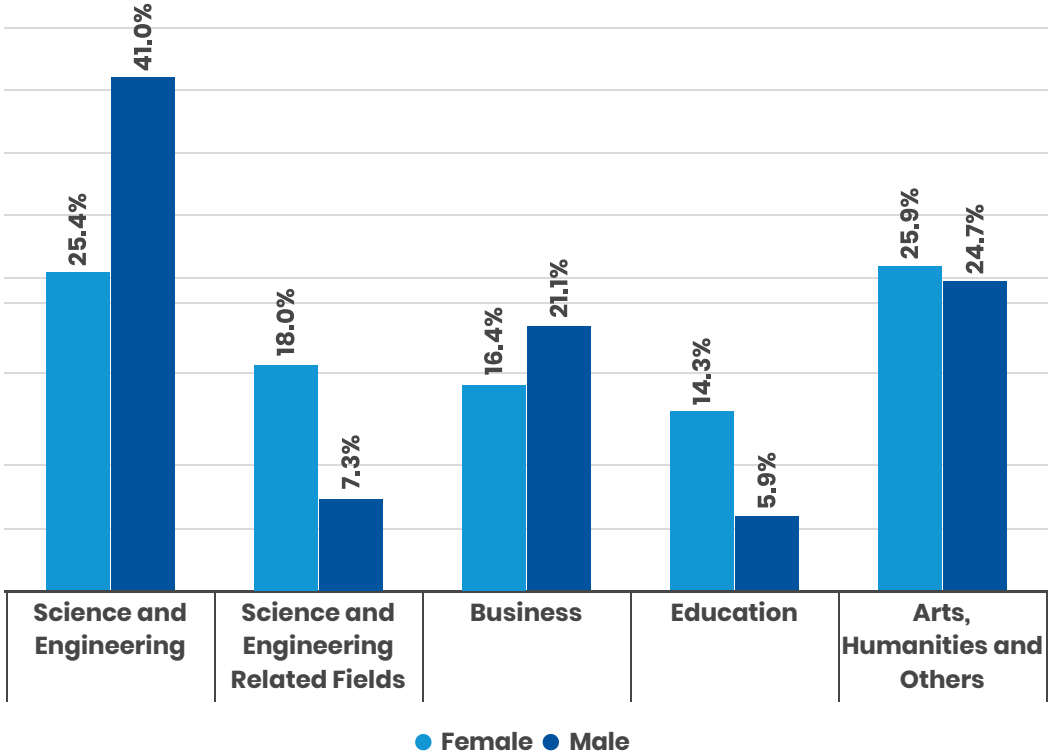
Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-Year Estimate, Table S1502

Note: STEM occupations include computer specialists, mathematicians, engineers, life scientists, physical scientists, social scientists and science technicians.

STEM-related occupations consist primarily of architects, healthcare practitioners, and healthcare technicians."

College and Career Readiness Continued

Regardless of the post-secondary field Indiana girls aspire towards, all Indiana girls who want to enroll in college should know what is attainable. Among the 2019 cohort, 14% of high school girls were 21st Century Scholars, almost double the 8% of 21st Century Scholar males. Girls continue to attend college at much higher rates than boys in Indiana, but there are still many more girls who could go to college via the 21st Century Scholar Program and yet don't capitalize on the opportunity. Statewide, of the 2019 class, 27% of girls met the income eligibility requirements to become a 21st Century Scholar, but either did not enroll in the program or were unable to maintain their eligibility, compared to 28% of boys. **Nearly one-third of graduating Indiana girls were eligible to attend an Indiana college at a deeply subsidized rate, up to 100% of tuition, and yet did not fully take advantage of the program.**
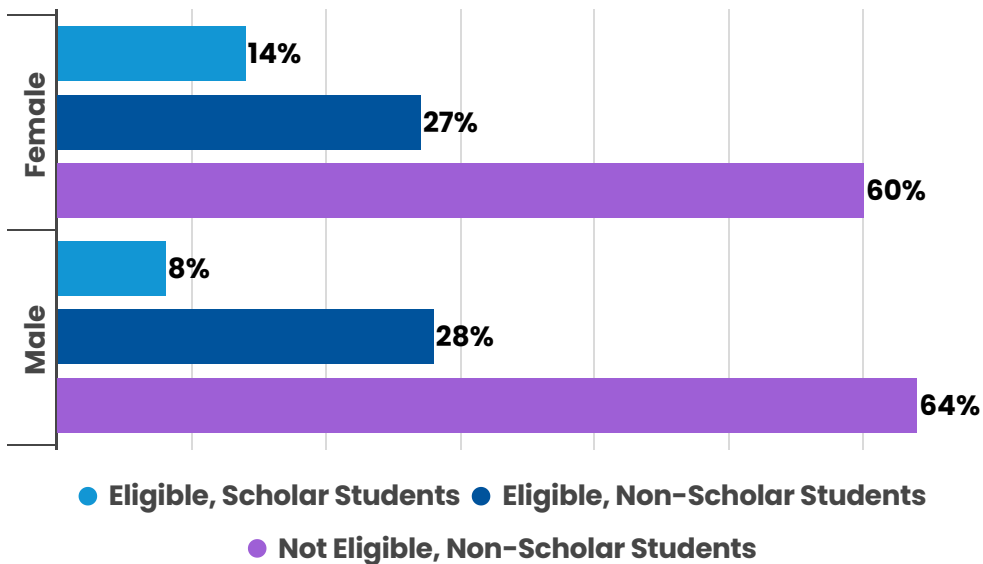
21st Century Scholar Program Student Eligibility and Enrollment, Indiana: 2019 Cohort

Female
- 14% — Eligible, Scholar Students
- 27% — Eligible, Non-Scholar Students
- 60% — Not Eligible, Non-Scholar Students

Male
- 8% — Eligible, Scholar Students
- 28% — Eligible, Non-Scholar Students
- 64% — Not Eligible, Non-Scholar Students

● **Eligible, Scholar Students**   ● **Eligible, Non-Scholar Students**
● **Not Eligible, Non-Scholar Students**

Source: Indiana Commission for Higher Education

What is the 21st Century Scholar Program?

The 21st Century Scholars program is a scholarship that provides the opportunity for Indiana students to afford college in Indiana. The 21st Century Scholarship will pay up to 100% of public college tuition in Indiana and part of the tuition at private or independent colleges. Colleges must participate in the program for students to utilize the scholarship, and students must enroll and maintain eligibility throughout high school and college. To qualify for the scholarship, a student must:

- Be an Indiana resident
- Be enrolled in the 7th or 8th grade and complete the application during this time
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Be a member of a family that meets **income eligibility requirements**

Once a student has applied and is determined to be eligible for the 21st Century Scholarship, they must maintain eligibility by continuing to meet the income requirements, maintain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.5 out 4 and earn at least a Core 40 diploma.

*At time of writing, HB 1449, a bill making changes to the 21st Century Scholars Program has been passed by both chambers and signed into law by the governor. The amended code now requires the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to notify students meeting the requirements of the 21st Century Scholars program, of their eligibility to participate in the program. All requirements of the program and the amended language can be found **here**.

Girl Coalition Speaks Out on
Academic Wellness

Call Out: Social beliefs, instructional bias, and other pressures impact girls' academic proficiencies.

Call to Action: Early encouragement from mentors can positively impact a girl's academic trajectory.

Data shows that despite girls' slightly higher graduation rates and propensity for studying harder and achieving better grades than their male counterparts, gaps still exist in the number of girls enrolling in honors programs, and women embracing careers in science, technology, engineering, and math. To address those gaps, as well as the loss of academic proficiency following the pandemic, girls need support structures and mentors to help them navigate the transition into careers that provide more long-term economic potential and close workforce gaps hindering advancement in STEM-related fields.

A Vignette from the Girl Scouts

" I get stressed about the SATs, college applications, my struggles with learning, having special needs, health issues, thinking about the future, and the expectations I have for myself — like what kind of woman am I supposed to be."

Research from the Girl Scout Research Institute, 2020, Girls Speak Out About Mental Health found that school is a significant source of stress, including both the normative aspects of school and the exceptional circumstances youth found themselves in during the pandemic.

GSUSA-GSRI-Girls-Speak-Out-About-Mental-Health
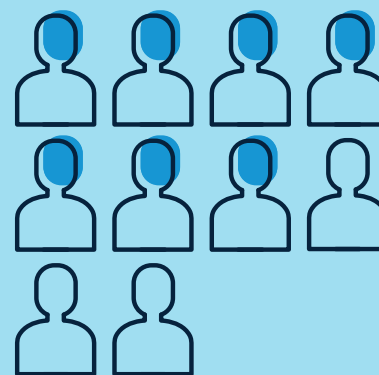
7 in 10 girls
report feeling stressed about tests or homework.

Source: The Girl Scout Research Institute, 2020

Emotional Wellness for Girls

Why It Matters

When girls develop the ability to identify, express, and manage their feelings, they build a foundation for emotional resiliency. Nurturing these capabilities requires safe environments where girls learn to care for the full range of their emotions which necessitates the presence of supportive adults. Together, these circumstances can help girls manage the emotional impact of challenges such as bullying, eating disorders, and depression.

Emotional Wellness

Family & Community

Mentorship and Support

Bullying

Health

Suicide and Suicide Ideation

Depression

How are our girls doing?

- 9 out of every 10 girls in Indiana, ages 6-17, **have a caring adult or mentor outside of their parents.**
  - This percentage drops slightly among high school girls but remains above 80% and is consistently higher compared to mentorship among boys.

- Statewide, Indiana lacks enough in-school support professionals for students: there are **4.5 times more students per school psychologist and 11 times more students per school social worker than is recommended.**

- Indiana girls are **almost three times more likely** to be victims of cyberbullying than boys, with 22.1% of girls reporting cyberbullying victimization in 2021.

- Among girls in 7th to 12th grades in Indiana, 47.1% experienced depression in 2022, an increase from 45.2% in 2020. **Nearly 1 in 4 girls reported they seriously considered suicide.**
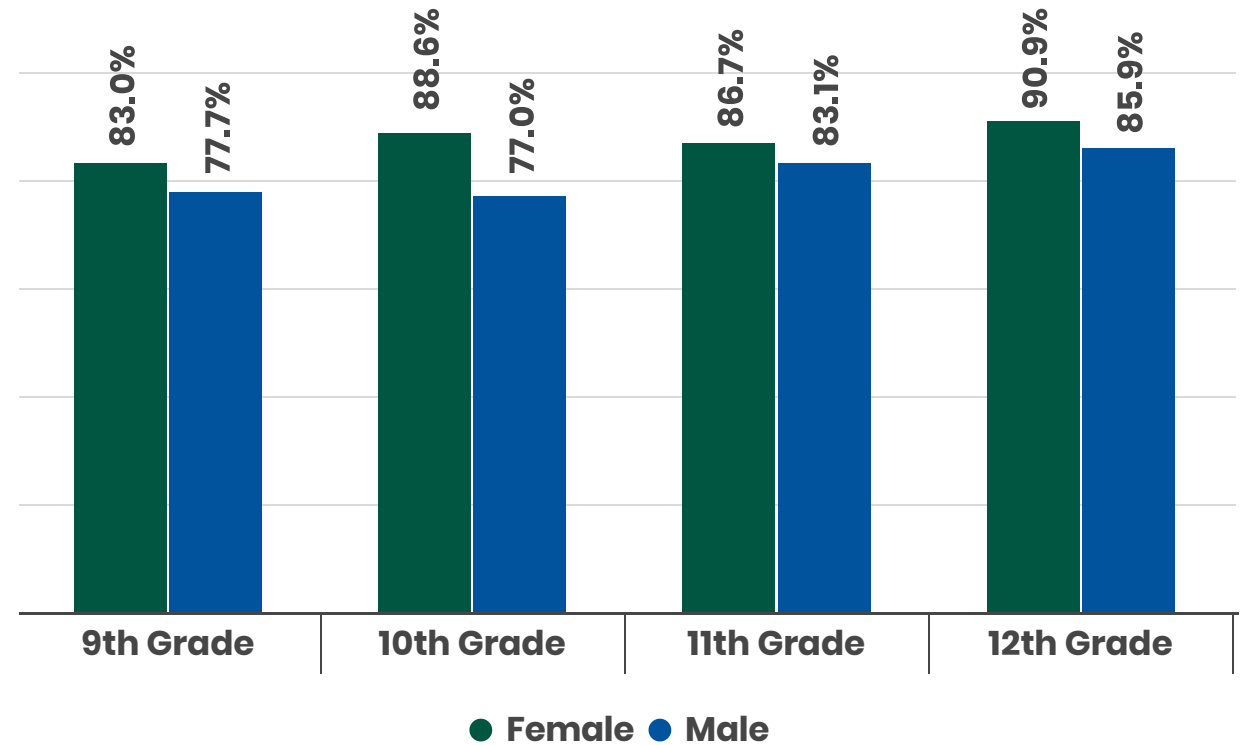
Mentorship and Support

Throughout their lives, children need guidance, instruction, and investment from dependable and committed adults. For many children, this role is filled by a family member or members who are engaged and involved in their child's life. Quality mentors outside of a child's family members can expand an existing support system or fill the gap for those who don't already have family involvement. **Quality mentoring is the presence of a non-parent adult that provides youth with support and guidance, and upholds standards in recruitment, screening, training, matching and initiating, monitoring and support, and closure of the relationship.** Quality mentors help youth know that someone cares about them and provide a support system for children as they deal with challenges.

Among Indiana youth ages 6-17, girls and boys are both highly likely to have a mentor outside of their parent or guardian. For girls, that rate is 90.7% and for boys it is 89.4%. The presence of a mentor in a child's life is linked to benefits in academics, social well-being and career opportunities, but effective and quality mentoring must also be grounded in the youth's confidence to seek out help in certain situations.

In addition to mentors, adults that children trust are made up of a variety of positions: a family friend, a teacher, a counselor, or a coach. For those students who have limited connections with those adults outside of school, critical staff positions at school play an important role in providing necessary resources. Students in grades 9th through 12th report the presence of one or more adults in whom they are comfortable seeking help from on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). **On average, 87.3% of girls reported having an adult in their lives that they felt comfortable seeking help from, compared to 81% of boys.**

Percentage of High School Students Who Felt Comfortable Seeking Help from One or More Adults Besides Their Parents, Indiana: 2021

	Female	Male
9th Grade	83.0%	77.7%
10th Grade	88.6%	77.0%
11th Grade	86.7%	83.1%
12th Grade	90.9%	85.9%

● Female ● Male

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Mentorship and Support Continued

When physically at school, students may not have immediate access or communication with adult staff in positions such as counselors, nurses, school social workers, and school psychologists. Even among students who have a robust system of caring adults, these staff provide essential support during the school day, where most students spend 30 hours a week. Indiana currently does not meet the recommended ratio for any student support service. It is also one of just a few states in the nation where the ratio of students to counselors has increased, thereby decreasing access for girls at a time when depression and rates of suicide are on the rise. Students in Indiana are especially lacking access to school social workers and psychologists, with **4.5 times more students than recommended per psychologist and 11 times more students than recommended** per social worker. The combination of involved parents, trusted mentors, and trained professionals is one that often sets up a child for improved outcomes later in life. When filled, these roles also have immediate impacts on children, proving to be barriers against the harmful impacts of bullying, poor mental health, eating disorders, and suicidality.

Support Staff to Student Ratio, Indiana: 2021–2022		
Support Staff Type	**Recommendation**	**Indiana**
School Counselors	250:1	624:1
School Social Workers	250:1	2,788:1
School Psychologists	500–700:1	2,699:1
School Nurses	750:1	959:1

Source: Indiana Department of Education

Recommendation Sources:

School Counselors – American School Counselor Association

School Social Workers – School Social Work Association of America

*School Psychologists – National Association of School Psychologists*

School Nurses – National Association of School Nurses

Bullying

Many Indiana youth experience bullying. Bullying includes overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner, physical acts, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment. Although bullying has reportedly decreased in the last several years,[1,2] it remains a prevalent experience in the lives of many students, regardless of gender. However, girls and boys experience bullying differently, exhibiting differing responses and coping mechanisms.

Cyberbullying, or bullying that takes place on electronic platforms (i.e. Snapchat, Instagram, texting), has shifted the way that both girls and boys engage in and respond to bullying. Researchers struggle to quantify the extent of cyberbullying and its effects on victims due to issues in capturing data and the many ways individuals can engage in cyberbullying. Studies suggest, however, that cyberbullying has more extensive consequences than traditional in-person bullying.[3] This is likely due in part to the pervasive reach of cyberbullying and prevalence of digital devices and platforms used by youth, causing victims to feel that there is no escape from abuse, compared to the physical reprieve that can be available from traditional bullying. Prior to the emergence of cyberbullying, girls engaging in bullying behavior would typically, though not exclusively, engage in indirect or relational bullying. Indirect bullying generally manifests as verbal abuse, gossip, and rumors, resulting in the victim becoming an outcast among social groups. This type of bullying is often disguised through passive-aggressive behavior and can be difficult to identify – as this behavior manifests in digital spaces, it is made even more difficult by the anonymity provided by cyberbullying.

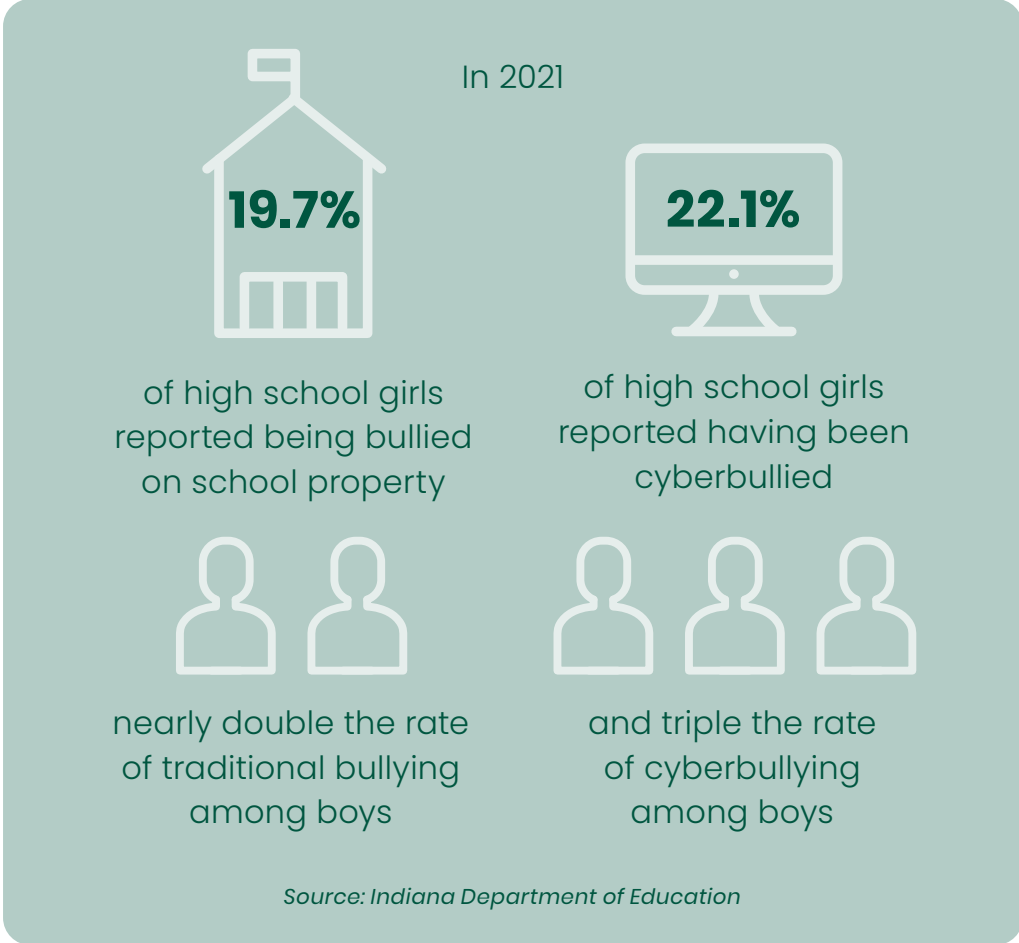**Percentage of High School Students Who Were Electronically Bullied, Indiana: 2021**

	2011	2015	2021
Female	25.5%	20.6%	22.1%
Male	12.1%	11.0%	8.6%

● Female ● Male
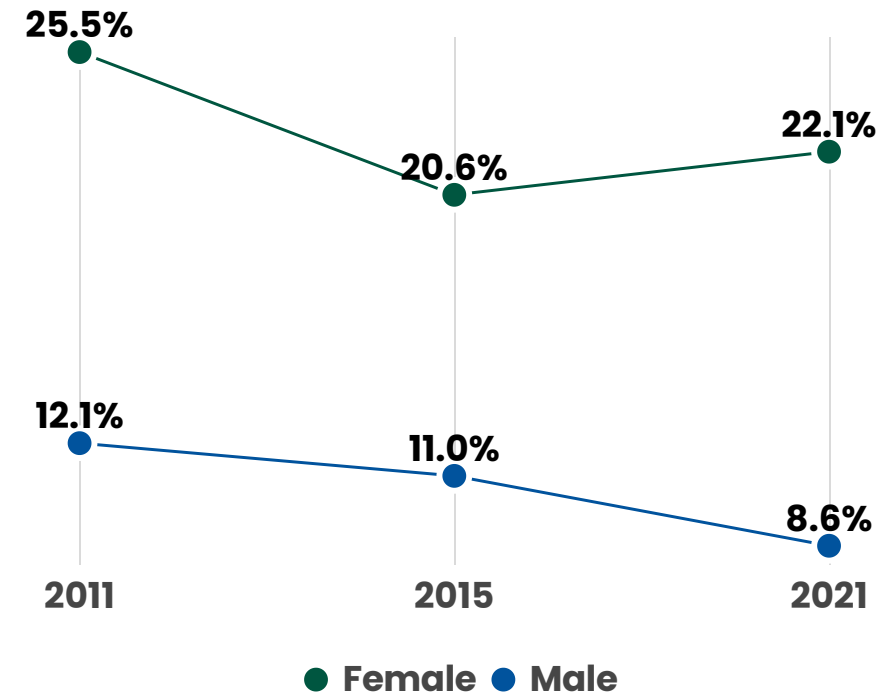
Source: Indiana Department of Health

Bullying Continued

For all forms of bullying, girls in Indiana were more likely to become victims. **In 2021, 19.7% of high school girls reported being bullied on school property and 22.1% of girls reported having been cyberbullied** — nearly double the rate of traditional bullying and triple the rate of cyberbullying among boys. Statewide Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) bullying incident numbers show low numbers throughout the state and tend to display more bullying incidents among male students, further displaying the challenge in identifying and preventing current bullying tactics.

Just as girls and boys engage in bullying behavior differently, they handle the impacts of being bullied differently too. As girls tend to practice more relational bullying, victims of such bullying tend to have more wide-ranging consequences compared to youth experiencing physical or verbal bullying. Because relational or indirect bullying is intended to ostracize an individual or individuals, victims can often experience not only emotional distress, but social and academic implications as well. As victims of bullying begin to feel more and more removed from society and friend groups, they might also withdraw from academic opportunities and rely less on their social safety net. Ultimately, female bullying victims are more likely to develop emotional disturbances such as decreased mental health and eating disorders.[4, 5, 6]

In 2021

19.7%

of high school girls reported being bullied on school property

nearly double the rate of traditional bullying among boys

22.1%

of high school girls reported having been cyberbullied

and triple the rate of cyberbullying among boys

Source: Indiana Department of Education

Mental Health and Suicide

Girls, especially teenage girls, are more likely to develop mental illnesses like depression and anxiety. Girls and boys process emotional stimuli differently and because girls typically undergo puberty and emotional maturity earlier than their male counterparts, they not only are placed at a higher risk of experiencing depression, but at earlier ages.[7,8] This heightened risk applies to most girls, even without external factors such as bullying and trauma. When factors like bullying and trauma are present in girl's lives however, the risk and manifestation of mental health disorders, as many adolescents have yet to fully develop healthy coping methods and regulation while in high school. Trauma is often defined and perceived differently across cultures and fields of study. A clear but encompassing definition of trauma is an event or circumstance resulting in physical harm, emotional harm, and/or life-threatening harm. The event or circumstance also has lasting adverse effects on the individuals' mental, physical, and emotional health, as well as their social and spiritual well-being.[9] While continued research is needed to fully understand the differences in how traumatic experiences impact boys and girls, some studies[10,11,12] show that trauma affects boys and girls differently, placing girls at higher risk for increased mental health problems and disorders.

Prevalence of Mental Health Issues in Youth
Grades 7th-12th, Indiana: 2022

Felt sad or hopeless for 2+ weeks in a row
- 47.1% (Female)
- 23.9% (Male)

Seriously considered attempting suicide
- 23.3% (Female)
- 10.8% (Male)

Made a plan to attempt suicide
- 17.5% (Female)
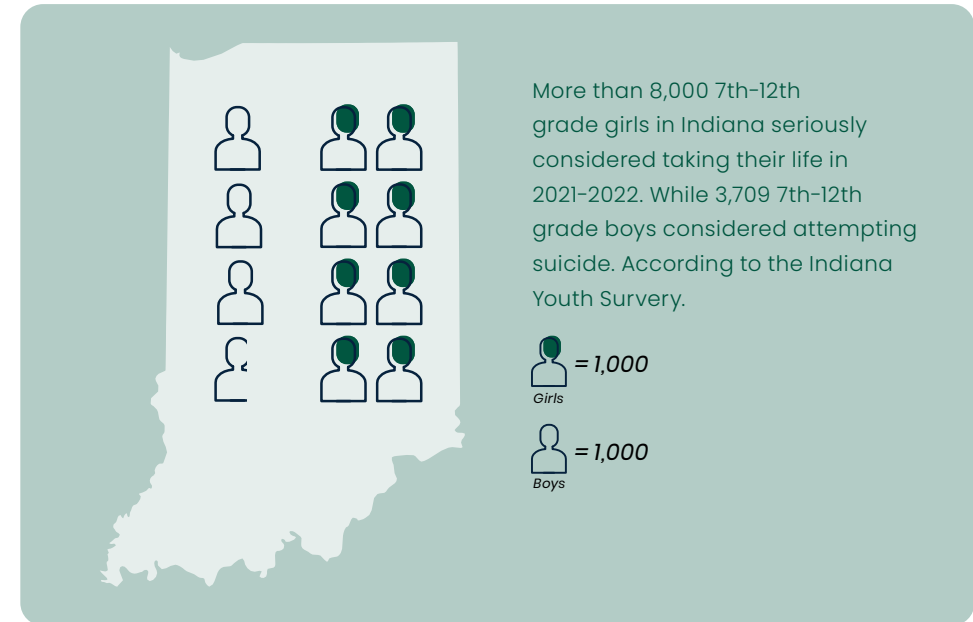- 8.0% (Male)

● Female ● Male
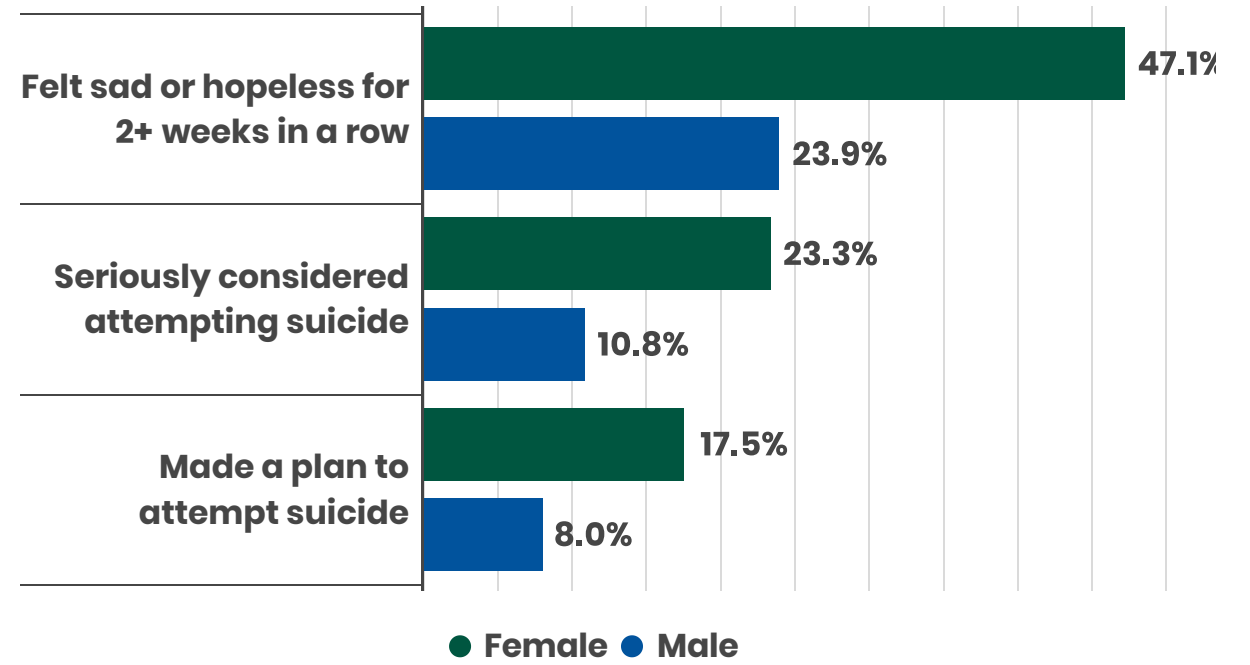
Source: Indiana Youth Survey

Mental Health and Suicide Continued

A common mental health issue girls encounter is eating disorders. Eating disorders are "behavioral conditions characterized by severe and persistent disturbance in eating behaviors and associated distressing thoughts and emotions."[13] Eating disorders have clear physical consequences and inflict deep emotional damage as many eating disorders are rooted in the social pressures of how a female body should look. Girls with pre-existing mental health disorders are also more likely to develop eating disorders. While boys can develop eating disorders, some estimates place the prevalence among girls at more than double that compared to boys.[14] While any percentage of girls suffering from eating disorders is too many, the data shows that many girls are also experiencing poorer mental health through things like anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation.

Many students throughout the state of Indiana have the opportunity to participate in the Indiana Youth Survey (INSY) that is administered every two years to assess certain risk factors present in children's lives in the state. These risk factors include topics like substance use, neighborhood perceptions, gambling, mental health, and population demographics. The INYS asks mental health-related questions, focusing on depression and suicide ideation. In each category, for each question, the prevalence of high school girls experiencing these mental health issues is two times higher compared to boys. Among the almost 36,000 female high school students that participated in the survey in 2022, 47.1% reported that they had felt sad or hopeless, every day for two or more weeks in a row at some point within the last year – the clinical definition of experiencing depression. **At least 16,835 7th-12th Grade girls in Indiana indicated they experienced depression from 2021-2022.** Nearly a quarter of female respondents indicated that they had seriously considered attempting suicide sometime in the past year. **More than 8,000 Junior/Senior. High School girls in Indiana seriously considered taking their life in 2021-2022. And 17.5% of high school girls participating in the 2022 survey made a plan to attempt suicide.** More than 6,000 Indiana girls in high school not just considered suicide, but began to engage and think about the details of how they would carry it out.

More than 8,000 7th-12th grade girls in Indiana seriously considered taking their life in 2021-2022. While 3,709 7th-12th grade boys considered attempting suicide. According to the Indiana Youth Survery.

= 1,000
Girls

= 1,000
Boys

Girl Coalition Speaks Out on
Emotional Wellness

Call Out: Today's girls are experiencing alarming increases in serious mental health concerns.

Call to Action: Girls need early interventions to limit the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The widely cited mental health crisis among girls made headlines as the country reckoned with the COVID-19 pandemic. While the immediate impacts of youth mental health are clearly presented throughout this report, the individual long-term and societal impacts are an urgent concern at Girl Co.

Consider two bodies of research emerging from the mental health field: the comprehensive long-term effects of childhood trauma and the impacts of generational trauma. As this report finds, today's girls are experiencing alarming increases in serious mental health concerns, including rates of depression and suicidality. Taken together, we are witnessing generational trauma in the making, potentially putting not only today's girls in long-term risk, but the generations to follow.

Long-Term Effects of Trauma:
Research surrounding adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, proves that exposure to multiple traumas during adolescence can set off a chain reaction of lifelong impacts. The CDC reports that girls and women are at greater risk for experiencing four or more types of ACEs and that ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on areas such as physical health and economic opportunity. Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin used data to explore the relationship between the number and type of ACEs and five health risks – depression, obesity, tobacco use, binge drinking, and self-reported sub-optimal health. Researchers reported that experiencing child abuse, specifically, was strongly associated with several adult health risks, regardless of other adversities such as socioeconomic conditions.

Example of Generational Trauma from the Past:
Generational trauma is the transmission of trauma – in its many forms, including physical and cognitive– from one generation to the next. In 2011, the Guardian summarized a longitudinal study of 38 pregnant women who survived the attacks at the World Trade Center on 9/11 demonstrated this phenomenon: among the women who had developed PTSD following exposure to the attacks, their children demonstrated both physiological and emotional symptoms of PTSD, evident in lower levels of cortisol and exhibiting an increase distress response with basic stimuli. Research is confirming that society faces unique impacts when higher rates of girls and women face trauma: the physical effects of trauma carried into child-bearing years put not only the expectant mother at risk, but also her future children.
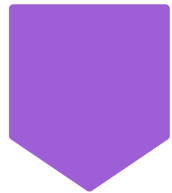
Social Wellness for Girls

Why It Matters

A robust ecosystem of support including a strong family unit, adequate economic resources, and opportunities to create and sustain social networks in her community helps girls build social skills and social connections needed to thrive. In these environments, girls learn both their intrinsic worth – a precursor for healthy self-confidence – and receive necessary support to navigate complicated social situations. Disruptions to this social fabric such as childhood trauma, poverty, or the prevalence of substance abuse in the family can create significant challenges now and later in life.

Social Wellness

Education

After-school Programs and Organized Activities

Family & Community

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Teen Birth Rate

How are our girls doing?

- Girls made up 47% of students enrolled in after-school programs in 2020.

- **More than 1 out of every 5** girls in Indiana have been exposed to at least two Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Boys in Indiana experience a similar prevalence rate.

- Among females in Indiana, ages 0-17, **girls living below the poverty line make up more than 16%** of the total female population. Boys in Indiana had a similar rate of poverty at 16.3%.

- Teen births have been steadily declining, but **Black and Hispanic girls are much more likely to become pregnant as teens compared to other racial groups.**

After-School Programs and Organized Activities

A key component to providing robust social networks and safe spaces for growth and development for students is the availability of after-school programs. Parents often look to after-school activities to fill the gap between the end of the school day and the end of the workday. The benefits of after-school programs are numerous, including providing a safe and monitored environment for students, receiving homework help, engagement in STEM programs, access to healthy snacks or meals, and the availability of supportive adults like mentors or coaches. These benefits and opportunities provide value to both parents and their children. Parents are confident in knowing their children are safe and engaging in productive activities and children are enrolled in an environment that allows them to explore their likes and dislikes and better understand themselves and their worth.

While after-school programs play an important role in the social health and well-being of children and families, **Indiana parents report that they have trouble enrolling their children in after-school programs. In 2020, For every one child enrolled in after-school programs in Indiana, three more are waiting for a spot to become available.** Parents living in other states in our region often face a greater shortage of available spots. In both Michigan and Illinois, for every one child enrolled in care, there are four more waiting for an opening. In Ohio, the number of children waiting for every one child enrolled in care is five. Accessibility to after-school programs and other organized activities is often dependent on income, creating an opportunity gap between low-income students and more affluent students. While data does not exist that breaks down income barriers by gender, 58% of parents in 2020 reported that after-school programs are too expensive.[1] Parents in surrounding states report similar barriers to after-school enrollment, with 57% in Ohio and 56% in Kentucky also saying that after-school programs are too expensive. When evaluating overall enrollment, the data shows that there is no statistically significant difference between girls and boys. Of the students enrolled in after-school programs, 47% were girls and 53% were boys. These numbers track closely with the population breakdown of youth in Indiana with 48.8% of the total youth population being girls and 51.2% being boys.

In 2020 Indiana parents report that they have trouble in enrolling their children in after-school programs.
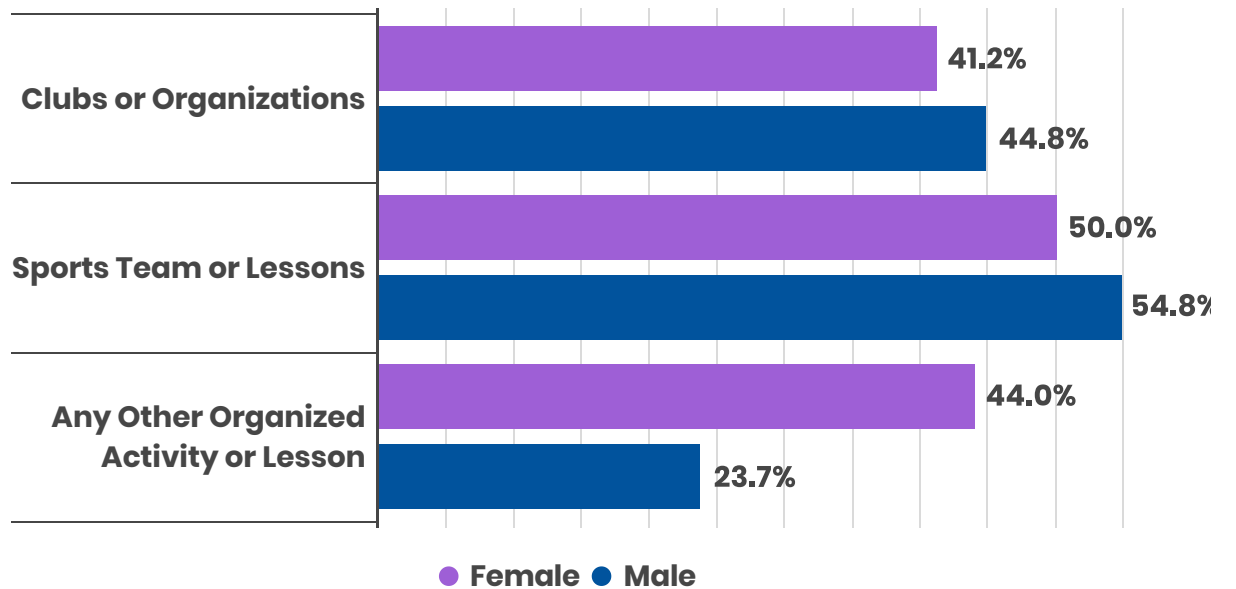
1 child enrolled in
after-school programs

3 are waiting

Source: Afterschool Alliance

After-School Programs and Organized Activities Continued

Expanding the analysis to organized activities by type however, gender disparities do emerge. That data shows that compared to boys, girls are less likely to be involved in clubs or organizations or in sports teams or lessons. Parents did report that 44% of their female children were involved in "any other organized activity or lesson" which includes activities such as music, dance, language, or arts. It is important to note that dance is considered by many, including the International Olympics Committee, to be a sport. The omission of dance from sports and its inclusion in the "other" category can be interpreted as a gender bias in definition and terminology.

A strong social network is imperative for girls, and all children, to gain confidence, self-awareness, and an understanding of the word around them. A girl's involvement in after-school programs or organized activities provides an avenue for them to build social networks, connections, and skills which are contributors to a girl's social well-being. As there are contributors to a child's social well-being, there are also detractors. One of the largest encompassing detractors is the presence of Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs.

Youth 6-17 Years Participation in Organized Activities, Indiana: 2020-2021

Clubs or Organizations
- Female: 41.2%
- Male: 44.8%

Sports Team or Lessons
- Female: 50.0%
- Male: 54.8%

Any Other Organized Activity or Lesson
- Female: 44.0%
- Male: 23.7%

● Female ● Male

Source: National Survey of Children's Health

Note: Any other organized activity or lesson could include music, dance, language, or other arts.
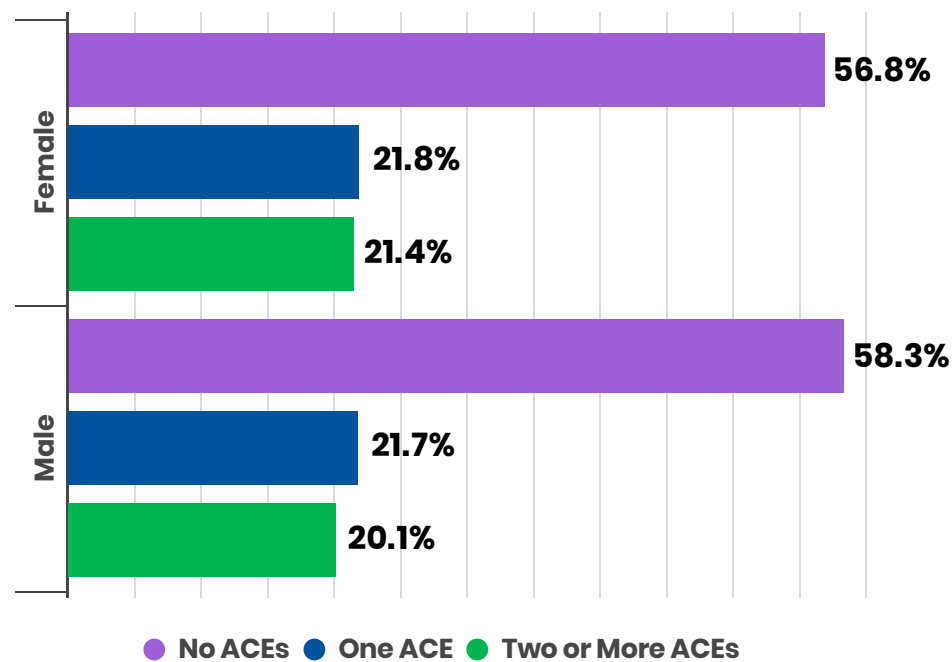
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that occur while the child is still below the age of 18. These traumatic events can occur through experiences such as abuse or neglect, parental substance use, parental incarceration, and domestic violence. ACEs can also originate from situational trauma such as a divorce or living with a parent experiencing a mental illness. The presence of multiple ACEs throughout a child's life has been repeatedly linked by research to both short-term and long-term consequences,[2] particularly toxic stress which can alter the makeup and development of a child's brain.[3] Children exhibiting a score of 1-3 ACEs with no associated health conditions are at an "intermediate risk" level for negative mental and physical health outcomes for toxic stress. Children with a score of 1-3 ACEs who also display associated health conditions are "high risk" for toxic stress, as well as children who have 4 or more ACEs, with or without associated health conditions. Toxic stress is not the only outcome of children experiencing multiple ACEs, but as they age, children affected by these adverse experiences are more likely to suffer from substance use, decreased life opportunities like steady employment, poor mental health, and suicidal ideation.

The original ACEs study[4] published in 1998 found that children who are subject to four or more ACEs are up to 12 times more likely to have negative health consequences such as alcoholism, substance use, depression, and suicide attempts compared to their peers having no adverse experiences. This elevated risk demonstrated that ACEs are compounding and cumulative in nature, meaning that the presence of multiple adverse experiences can heighten the risk of negative outcomes. This finding led to the presence of four or more ACEs becoming the threshold for identifying children who are at elevated risk of adverse health and social outcomes. **While children who have four or more ACEs ARE considered high risk**, the cut-point of four ACEs often assumes that all ACEs have equal impact and each ACE results in similar outcomes. Recent research[5,6] shows however, that ACEs are NOT equal in impact and the negative outcomes can vary based on ACE type, and the gender or age of the child. In fact, children who experience sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, or neglect paired with **any other trauma or adversity** may be more at risk of negative outcomes than a child who experienced 4 or more ACEs.[7]

An estimated 21.4% of girls in Indiana had a prevalence of two or more ACEs in their lives from 2020-2021, with the potential to experience increased compound and negative outcomes. **That means that 1 out of every 5 girls under the age of 18 in Indiana have experienced two or more adverse experiences.** For girls with associated health conditions or additional ACEs, their risks are increased and carried into adulthood.

Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for Youth 0-17 Years, Indiana: 2020-2021

Female
- No ACEs: 56.8%
- One ACE: 21.8%
- Two or More ACEs: 21.4%

Male
- No ACEs: 58.3%
- One ACE: 21.7%
- Two or More ACEs: 20.1%

● No ACEs ● One ACE ● Two or More ACEs

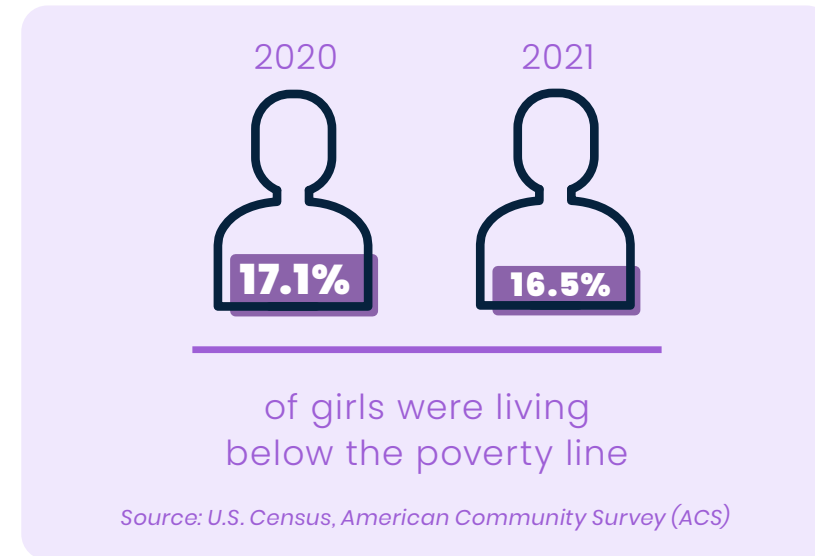*Source: National Survey of Children's Health*

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Continued

The difference of prevalence of ACEs among boys and girls in the state is slight, but the data does indicate that Indiana girls are more likely to experience particular ACEs compared to male counterparts. 14% of Indiana girls have lived in a household where it has been somewhat or very hard to afford basic necessities (vs 12% of boys) and 26.8% of girls in the state have a parent or guardian who has been divorced or separated (vs 23% of boys). Nearly 13% of girls have lived with someone who had a problem with alcohol and/or drugs (vs 9.3% of boys). Each of these circumstances can contribute to stressful family dynamics and dysfunctional home environments, and research suggests that not only are the risks and experiences of ACEs different for boys and girls, but conditions that create dysfunctional home environments are significant risk factors for girls.[8]

Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by Type for Youth 0-17 Years, Indiana: 2020-2021		
	Female	Male
Somewhat or very often hard to cover the basics, like food or housing, on family's income	14.1%	12.4%
Parent or guardian divorced or separated	26.8%	22.7%
Parent or guardian died	4.1%	4.0%
Parent or guardian served time in jail	9.7%	10.7%
Witnessed domestic violence	5.7%	7.4%
Victim or witness of neighborhood violence	5.2%	3.6%
Lived with anyone who was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed	8.6%	9.4%
Lived with anyone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs	12.9%	9.3%
Treated or judged unfairly because of their race or ethnic group	4.3%	6.1%

Experiencing issues in affording basic necessities such as food or clothing has been identified as a significant ACE for children. While this can be experienced temporarily, the continuous inability to afford these items is broadly categorized as poverty and a significant number of girls in Indiana were living in poverty in 2021. **Of the 776,671 girls under the age of 18, 127,898 were living in poverty – 16.5% of girls under the age of 18 in Indiana.** Boys in Indiana had a similar rate of poverty at 16.3%.

The prevalence of recognized adverse childhood experiences among Indiana girls is cause for concern. However, the list of ACEs measured by the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) is not a comprehensive list or complete measure of an individual's exposure to trauma and stressful life events. The questions cannot capture frequency or severity, which are important to understand the potential impact an ACE might have on a child. They also do not include other stressful occurrences that can affect children in both the short-term and long-term. One example not captured by the NSCH, which is particularly stressful and immediately impactful on the female population, is teen births.

2020   2021

17.1%   16.5%

of girls were living below the poverty line

*Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS)*

Teen Birth Rate

Teen birth rates (TBR) in Indiana have been declining steadily for the better part of a decade and in 2021, the TBR reached an all-time low of 17 births per 1,000 teens. While teen births have been declining overall, the data also shows that Black and Hispanic/Latina girls are experiencing teen pregnancy at elevated rates compared to any other race or ethnicity. Hispanic/Latina Indiana girls had a TBR of 27.2 per 1,000 in 2021 and Black Indiana girls had 7 additional teen births per 1,000 with a TBR of 34.5. Some research shows that girls born to teen mothers are 66% more likely to become teen mothers themselves, even after accounting for other risk factors.[9] This research suggests that teen pregnancy and teen births are cyclical and transgenerational.

Teen pregnancy can present difficulties for adolescent mothers and is frequently associated with reduced schooling, lower earning potential, and negative outcomes for the child of the adolescent. When a teen becomes pregnant, the child-bearing process occurs while the mother is still growing and developing, which undoubtedly adds additional stress, emotional strain, and isolation to a sometimes already turbulent season of a girl's life[10]. While teen pregnancy is accompanied by many challenges, some research has shown that not all teens experience the same effects or even the same degree of difficulty associated with those effects. In fact, it's difficult to determine the extent of how teen pregnancy affects an adolescent's life because in many cases, their future outcomes are heavily influenced by their surrounding culture and socioeconomic situation prior to having the baby. For example, a girl coming from a lower socioeconomic status is less likely to experience negative outcomes, because of the pregnancy, than a teen mother coming from higher socioeconomic status.[11]

Teen Birth Rate (per 1,000) for Girls Age 15 – 19 Years, Indiana: 2012–2021
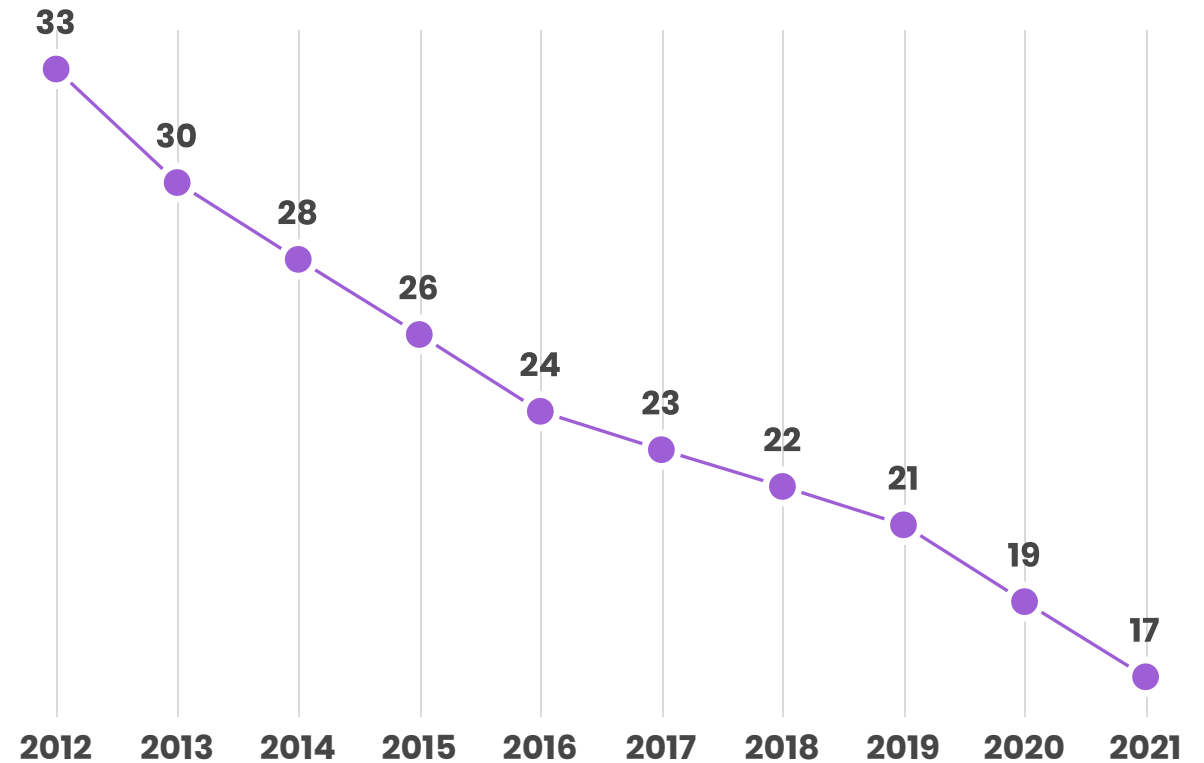
Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

Girl Coalition Speaks Out on
Social Wellness

Call Out: Not enough girls have access to programs that help them build their social networks and skills.

Call to Action: Close gaps with more mentoring programs and out-of-school-time opportunities for girls.

A girl's involvement in after-school programs or organized activities provides an avenue for them to build social networks, connections, and skills which are contributors to a girl's social well-being.

Indiana parents report that they have trouble in enrolling their children in after-school programs. For every one child enrolled, three more are waiting for a spot to become available. Accessibility to these programs is often dependent on income, creating an opportunity gap between low-income students and more affluent students.

In 2020 Indiana parents report that they have trouble in enrolling their children in after-school programs.

Source: Afterschool Alliance

1 child enrolled in after-school programs

3 are waiting

A Vignette from the Girl Scouts

" The enrollment of youth in out-of-school activities is impacted by economic opportunity. A national poll of parents of K-5 girls conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute in November 2021 found that 28% of girls in the Midwest were not enrolled in any afterschool activity; when those parents reported an annual household income less than $50K, that percentage grew to 52% of K-5 girls were not enrolled in out-of-school activities."

A Call for Change with Girl Coalition of Indiana

The data detailed in this report is, frankly, a starting point. Nearly 800,000 girls live in Indiana, each one experiencing a spectrum of pressures, challenges, and stressors that prevent her from living her best life.

Starting with data gives us perspective and fuels us to seek better solutions through validation, innovation, and advocacy. The stats below give us pause, with good reason. Some are shocking. Some hint at optimistic opportunities. A girl's world is a complicated one.

Yet, in order to have a clear picture of the state of girls using data, we must advocate for change within data collection policies. It is essential the data collection process is designed in a way that allows for the data to be disaggregated across gender.

The following page of summary data points show the urgency of our work. Girls need us. Join us as we prioritize the needs of girls in Indiana.

Girls Deserve Physical and Emotional Safety

Bullying

In 2021, nearly 20% of high school girls reported being bullied on school property. Unfortunately, it does not stop there because 22.1% of girls reported experiencing bullying online. Where once girls could escape bullying in the safety of their own home, **cyberbullying torments girls in every aspect of their lives.**

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence against high school girls is real, and girls must be believed. In 2021, 37.2% of high school girls reported they were dating someone who purposely tried to control them physically or emotionally. **One girl is too many**, yet 16.8% of girls reported being forced to have sexual intercourse. In addition, 17% have reported dating violence, and this has been increasing since 2015.

Health Issues

Girls account for 65% of the emergency room visits among youth ages 0-24 in Indiana. Girls are three times as likely to be admitted for inpatient care. **Health issues are preventing Indiana girls from living their best lives.**

Nearly 50,000 Hoosier girls are not covered by health insurance. Among those with coverage, nearly 34% received coverage via public health insurance. **Health care based upon tenuous eligibility at best, or nonexistent coverage put girls' lives at risk.**

Girls Are Missing Out on Career Opportunities

Nearly one-third of graduating Indiana girls were eligible to attend an Indiana college at a deeply subsidized rate, up to 100% of tuition, and **yet they did not fully take advantage of the program.**

STEM-related jobs will continue to be the most abundant and sought after jobs, yet women make up only 28% of the STEM workforce. **Girls are missing opportunities that can provide them with financial resources and fulfilling careers.**

Girls' Mental Health is at Stake

The prevalence of girls experiencing depression and suicidal ideation is twice as high among high school girls as compared to boys, with 47% of the girls surveyed reporting these mental health issues. **Depression is curtailing the potential of girls in Indiana.**

More than 8,000 girls across Indiana considered suicide in the 2021-2022 school year, with 17% of those reporting that they made serious plans to carry it out. **Girls in Indiana are suffering, yet they aren't getting the support they need.**

Girls Need Accessible After-School Activities

Indiana parents report that they have trouble enrolling children in after-school programs. Accessibility to after-school programs and other organized activities is often dependent on income, creating an opportunity gap between low income and affluent students. With only 47% of girls enrolled and 53% of boys in after-school activities, opportunities for improved access exist. **Without access to out-of-school time activities, girls lose out on an important avenue to build social networks, connections, and skills contributing to well-being.**

Scan the QR code or connect with Mackenzie Pickerrell, Executive Director of Girl Coalition of Indiana, at mpickerrell@girlcoalitionindiana.org to add your voice to the movement to enable all Indiana girls to live their best life!

Sources & Citations

Physical Well-Being

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Methodology & Process

Methodology

The 2023 State of the Indiana Girl Report is a comprehensive collection of significant indicators on the well-being of Indiana youth and families across the four areas of Family & Community, Health, Economic Well-Being, and Education. **Indiana Youth Institute's expertise is collecting, analyzing, and reporting secondary research. IYI does not design or implement primary research.** This report provides the most recent data and research from state partner agencies, peer-reviewed journals, national and state level surveys, as well as credible national entities, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Census Bureau. Sources and direct links can be found at the end of each section. All data are evaluated to ensure they are from a reliable source, recently available, consistent over time, easily understandable, and relevant. A focus is placed on visualizing data with context and analysis to show trends over time, county comparisons, and disparities by race, place, or income. In certain circumstances, studies older than 10 years were utilized due to the level of respect and impact to the field of child well-being and to provide historical context.

Disaggregating Data

To promote equity and inclusion in our data regarding Indiana children and youth and to better understand the outcomes of specific groups, throughout the report, data are disaggregated by place, race and ethnicity, age, gender, income, ability, or immigrant status. Our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion comes from the University of California-Berkeley Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the University of Houston's Center for Diversity and Inclusion:

We understand 'diversity' as including race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, mental or physical ability, sexual orientation, and other characteristics that add to the individuality of our community members.

We understand 'equity' as the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under-served and under-represented populations. Fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in providing adequate opportunities to all groups.

We understand 'inclusion' as authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and groups into processes, activities, decision making, and policymaking. Inclusion involves genuine and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging, allowing historically marginalized or disenfranchised groups to share power and ensure equal access to opportunities and resources.

We disaggregate the data to demonstrate trends and disparities, provide insights on where vulnerable populations lag, and highlight opportunities for improvement. Despite documented gains for children of all races and income levels, the nation's and State's racial inequities are deep and stubbornly persistent, as evidenced by the data throughout the report. To ensure that a child's life circumstances, or obstacles should not dictate his/her/their opportunity to succeed, an equitable distribution of funding and resources is critical to providing the necessary supports to ensure all children find long-term success in Indiana.

Leaders, policymakers, and community members are encouraged to use the data showing disparities among Indiana youth to engage in advocacy, generate essential conversations, and inform policies, practices, and decision-making. Moreover, our state and local leaders are encouraged to include traditionally excluded individuals in developing and considering policies, practices, and decision-making.

Process

The State of the Indiana Girl Report is a collaboration between Indiana Youth Institute, the Girl Coalition of Indiana, and the Girl Scouts of Indiana. To ensure the current issues and barriers facing youth are addressed, a collaborative process with stakeholders, partners, and peers determines the content for IYI's overall Indiana KIDS COUNT® data work. Essential feedback is gathered through partner organizations, surveys and from those in the Indiana youth-serving profession, providing insights on youth topics, data availability, context, and recommendations. Partners and agencies provide support on data checking, clarity on definitions, data context, and changes to methodology to ensure accuracy.

Accuracy

Data were collected through request or by accessing publicly available sources from various agencies at the time of publication. State agencies often depend on local communities reporting their data. Data collection and availability differs among agencies. Every effort is made to ensure information is accurate, valid, and reliable. However, the accuracy of data that is supplied cannot be guaranteed. Reporting and tabulation errors may occur at the source of the data, and this may affect the validity. In addition, agencies may publish updated data throughout the year which may conflict with what is published in this report.

About the Use and Definition of Sex According to the U.S. Census Bureau

Source
U.S. Census Bureau, **American Community Survey** (ACS). Updated annually.

About
The number of females is expressed as a percent of the total population.

American Community Survey
Sex estimates of the population are produced for places, zona urbanas and comunidades (place-equivalents for Puerto Rico), and minor civil divisions. The sex data collected on the forms are aggregated and provide the number of males and females in the population. These data are needed to interpret most social and economic characteristics used to plan and analyze programs and policies. Data about sex are critical because so many federal programs must differentiate between males and females. For more information, **go to ACS subject definitions "Sex**."

Data users should be aware of methodology differences that may exist between different data sources.

Important Data Reminders
- Data and percentages were calculated using standard mathematical formulas.
- Data are based on different timeframes (i.e., calendar year, school year, and five-year estimates). Readers should check each indicator and data source to determine the reported time period.
- When a small number exists for a data source, data suppression may be used to protect confidentiality.
- County rankings allow for comparisons between counties, but they do not necessarily mean a county is doing well. In a similar way, changes in a ranking from year to year may be due to how data has changed in other counties.
- Data collection and methodology vary among sources and agencies. When comparing data from different sources, readers are encouraged to understand the different methodologies of each source.
- Data presented may not be comparable due to different sources employing varying methodologies and sample sizes.
- Data from different surveys or questionnaires may use different definitions for data indicators. It is advised to review the original source methodology to understand their definitions.

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To join us in championing Indiana girls or to learn more, please contact Mackenzie Pickerell at mpickerrell@girlcoalitionindiana.org or 317-924-6800