



Washington State of the Girl Report 2026

Presented by Girl Scouts of Western Washington

Executive Summary

Nearly one million girls under the age of 20 call Washington home. They are growing up in a rapidly changing world filled with unprecedented opportunities alongside increasing pressures and uncertainty. Across our state, girls continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, leadership, creativity, compassion, and determination. This report explores the gap between girls' potential and the conditions surrounding them.

Washington girls graduate from high school at higher rates than boys, are increasingly engaged in school, and continue to achieve academically despite significant challenges. These successes deserve celebration, but resilience should not be mistaken for the absence of need.

Despite their achievements, Washington continues to have one of the nation's largest gender wage gaps, highlighting the need to create stronger pathways from education to economic opportunity.

Across five domains: Physical Health, Emotional Well-being, Social Wellness, Academic & Career Outcomes, and Safety, the report identifies the challenges girls face and the protective factors that help them thrive. One finding is consistent: girls experience better outcomes when they have trusted adults, safe and welcoming spaces, meaningful relationships, opportunities to lead, and communities where they feel they belong.

Opportunity, especially in Washington, is not evenly distributed. Where a girl lives, her race or ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, family circumstances, and access to resources shape her experience. Washington is one of the nation's most diverse states, we can ensure that policies, programs, and investments reflect the lived experiences of all girls.

The data also underscores the importance of early intervention. Nearly one in four sixth-grade girls reported contemplating suicide, dating violence increases during middle school, and many girls experience anxiety, isolation, and barriers to opportunity long before adulthood. Investing early in mentoring, culturally responsive support, and prevention helps girls thrive before challenges become crises.

This report is ultimately one of hope. It is an invitation to move beyond awareness and into action by investing in the conditions that help every girl reach her full potential. Through leadership experiences, outdoor adventures, STEM, entrepreneurship, and lifelong mentoring, Girl Scouts of Western Washington is helping build those conditions—strengthening girls, families, and communities across our state.

*Andrea Anderson,
CEO, Girl Scouts of Western Washington*

Everything we do is for girls, with girls. Their voices, experiences, and aspirations are woven throughout this report because the future of girlhood should be shaped by the girls living it.

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Demographics of Washington State Girls

Washington is home to nearly **one million girls under the age of 20**, each with unique strengths and circumstances shaped by where they live, their demographics, and the opportunities available to them. This report brings together data on the statistics, experiences, and outcomes of girls across our state, to better advocate for every girl in every community.

Washington State is becoming more diverse. 12% of girls in Washington identify as two or more races, the national rate of 8.4%.



Washington State Girls by Race and Ethnicity (2024)

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
White (Non-Hispanic)	47%
Black	4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%
Asian	9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%
Hispanic/Latina	25%
Other	1%
Two or More Races	12%

Washington’s growing and richly diverse girl population reflects Pacific Northwest realities. Culturally specific approaches for connection are key to effectively support girls.

Source: 2024 Kids Count Data Center

To explore the full dataset, navigate to State Data Tables > 2020–2025 state data tables for population figures, or Race and Hispanic Origin > Postcensal race and Hispanic origin estimates: 2020–2025

Physical Health | Overview

Physical health indicators for girls in Washington highlight key trends in activity, safety, and access to care. Many girls are not meeting recommended physical activity guidelines and accessing preventive care. Structural factors such as rural healthcare access and early life experiences also shape long-term health outcomes.

Physical Health Risks and Trends

Data from the Washington Healthy Youth Survey shows that **only 38% of 10th grade girls meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity**. Early health experiences indicate: over **one-third of youth report at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)***, which can influence health outcomes and sense of safety. Access to healthcare services is not evenly distributed, with rural areas facing fewer healthcare providers and longer travel distances to care.

Injury and Preventable Health Outcomes

The **leading causes of death in Washington for girls ages 10–19 are accidental injury, suicide, and homicide**. Unlike many adult health risks, deaths in adolescence are more often linked to injuries or other external causes rather than chronic disease. These patterns highlight the importance of prevention, safety education, and early intervention in supporting girls' long-term health.

Key Takeaways

1. Only 38% of 10th-grade girls meet daily physical activity guidelines.
2. Over 1/3 of Washington girls have 1+ Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE).
3. Top three causes of death for girls 10-19: Accidental injury, suicide, and homicide.

*According to the Center for Disease Control, ACEs are potentially traumatic events occurring before age 18, including abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. ACEs alter brain development and significantly increase risks for chronic challenges later in life.

Physical Health

Girls’ physical health in Washington State reflects both progress and gaps across early health, physical activity, sleep, injury, and access to care. Using data from the Washington Healthy Youth Survey, the Washington Department of Health, CDC datasets, and environmental health indicators, we assess where girls are meeting health benchmarks and where structural gaps persist.

Early Health Foundations

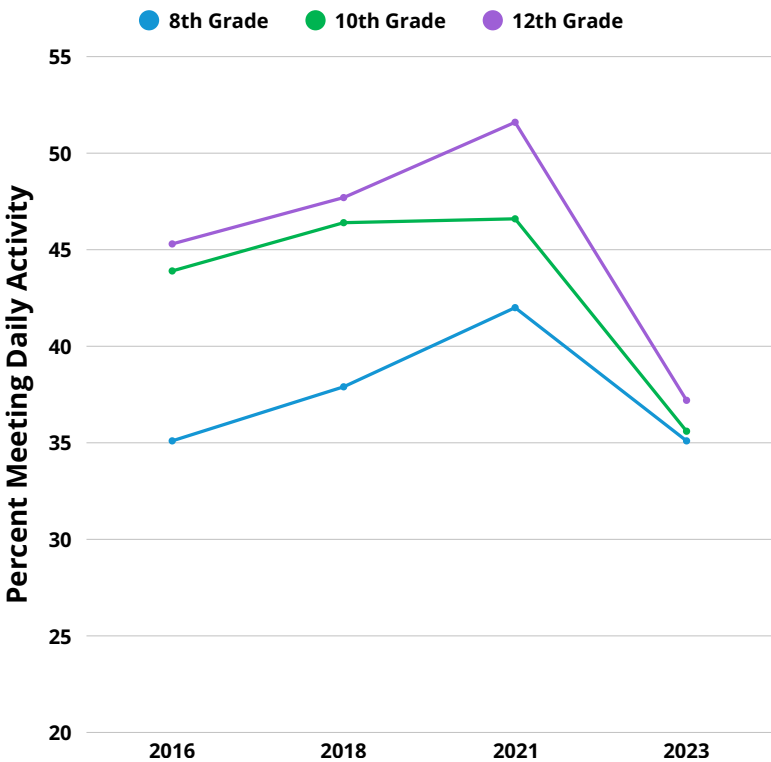
Over one-third of Washington girls report at least one Adverse Childhood Experience*.

Disparities often begin early in life through chronic conditions, environmental conditions, and income status. Chronic conditions such as asthma, Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) exposure, and inconsistent preventive care access shape long-term health trajectories.

In Washington:

- 23.9% of youth report one ACE
- 12.1% report two or more ACEs

Physical Activity By Grade



Source: [Healthy Youth Survey](#)

To access [Healthy Youth Survey Data](#), navigate to the data dashboard and select the corresponding year, grade, topic, and measure.

*[What is an adverse childhood experience?](#)

Physical Activity & Sleep

National guidelines recommend **60 minutes of daily physical activity**, yet a minority of high school girls meet that benchmark. Sleep patterns also decline during high school, with **fewer girls reporting eight or more hours per night**.

While some indicators declined sharply during the pandemic and have slightly improved, many have not returned to earlier levels.

Nationally, 3 in 5 girls are not confident at school due to their appearance, starting at age 5. Only 38% of 10th grade girls in Washington meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

Geographic & Access Gaps

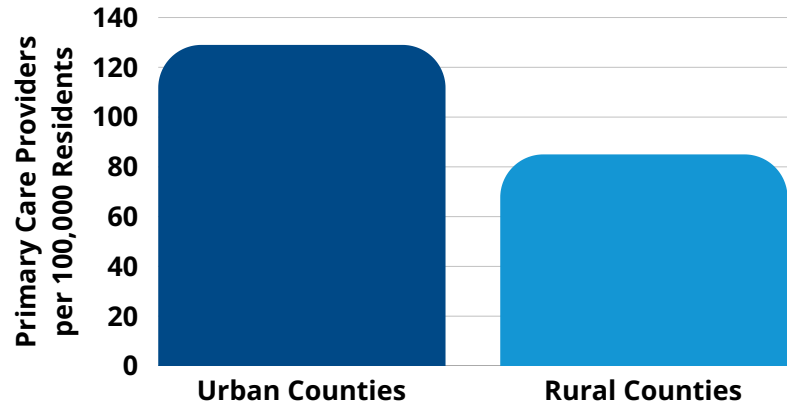
Where a girl lives significantly shapes her access to healthcare. Rural counties may face:

- **Fewer providers**
- **Longer travel distances**
- **Limited confidential services**

Urban regions may offer stronger provider density, but environmental stressors such as pollution and higher housing costs. Workforce shortages may further widen geographic health disparities.

Healthcare Provider Access: Rural vs. Urban Washington

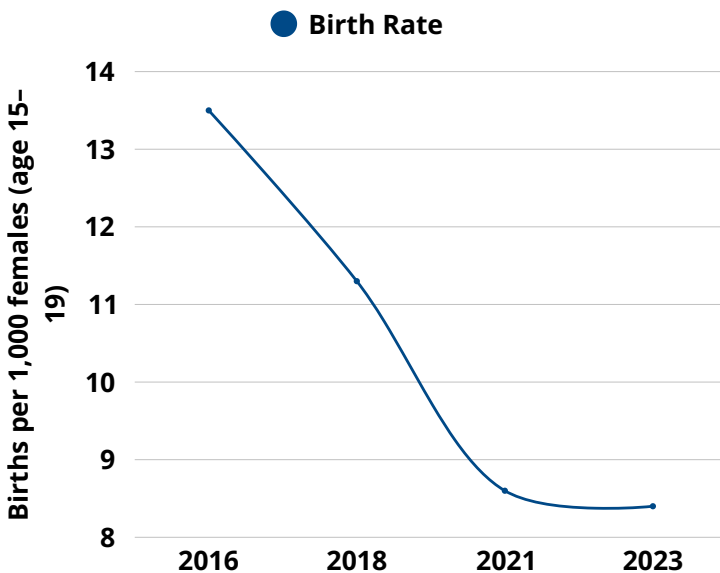
2025



Access to healthcare varies significantly between rural and urban communities in Washington.

1

Washington State Teen Birth Rate (Ages 15–19)



Sources: [Washington Healthy Workforce Survey](#),
[Washington Department of Health](#)

*To explore the full dataset, go to [Washington State Department of Health](#) > navigate to [Data & Statistical Reports](#) > [Washington Tracking Network](#) > [Birth Outcomes Data](#) > [All Births Dashboard](#) and filter by Age 15–19.

Reproductive Care

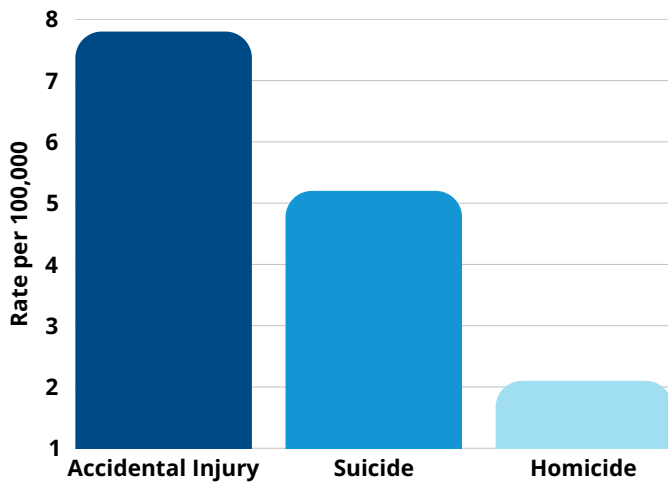
Preventive healthcare access strongly influences long-term outcomes. In 2022, there were **2,144 live births to girls ages 15–19 in Washington**. Teen birth rates, STI rates, and annual checkups reflect access to care and health education.

Girls without confidential access to healthcare are less likely to seek early screening or preventive services.

2

Injury & Mortality

Leading Causes of Death for Washington Girls (Ages 10–19)
2024



Source: [CDC WONDER - Mortality Data](#)

**To explore the full CDC dataset, navigate to Underlying Cause of Death 2018–2024 and group by Cause of Death. Filter by State: Washington, Age: 10–19, and Sex: Female. Under cause of death, select "113 Selected Causes" and choose Accidents (unintentional injuries), Intentional self-harm (suicide), and Assault (homicide).*

For girls ages **10–19** in Washington, the leading causes of death include:

- **Accidental injury**
- **Suicide**
- **Homicide**

Accidental injuries, particularly motor vehicle incidents, remain a major physical safety risk. Unlike adult mortality, where chronic disease dominates, adolescent deaths are largely external and often preventable.

Many injuries among adolescents are **preventable** through education and community prevention efforts.

Our Call to Action for Washington Girls

1

Promote Physical Activity, Especially the Outdoors

Many girls in Washington fall short of recommended daily physical activity levels. Schools should shift Physical Education models toward lifetime fitness skills, with inclusive programming, including outdoor activities, that keep girls engaged.

2

Improve Access to Preventive Healthcare

Healthcare access varies widely across Washington, with rural communities facing provider shortages and long travel distances. Expanding school-based health centers and telehealth would bring care directly to girls who need it most.

3

Strengthen Safety Education

Accidental injuries are a leading cause of death among adolescent girls. Expanding safety and prevention programs can reduce these risks and improve outcomes.

Emotional Health | Overview

Mental illness indicators for girls in Washington declined around 2020-2021. Despite some improvement by 2023, mental illness indicators in girls remain elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2016 and 2018.

Widespread Anxiety, Depression, Slowly Improving

Rates of anxiety in Washington girls are still high, with **nearly one in two 12th grade girls meeting the criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder statewide.**

Depression is also widespread: in 2023, **35.1% of Eighth-grade girls in Washington reported depressive symptoms.** Anxiety and depression in Washington State girls peaked in 2021, however rates of both are on a gradual decline, **a hopeful sign that girls' mental health overall may be slowly but surely improving.**

Disparities and Support Barriers Persist

Data shows significant mental health disparities across race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. **LGBTQ+, gender and sexuality questioning girls and American Indian/Alaska Native girls experience depressive symptoms at higher rates,** suggesting that more support for marginalized groups are needed.

Additionally, many girls are lacking support: **roughly one in eight high school girls in Washington reported they did not have a trusted adult they could talk with.**

Key Takeaways

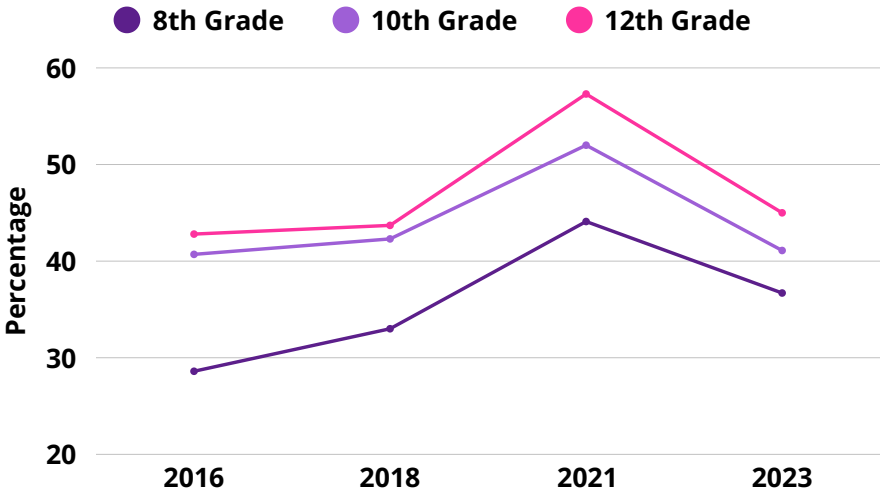
1. Mental health is improving, but remains worse than pre-pandemic levels.
2. Anxiety and depression remain widespread among girls.
3. Mental health support disparities persist, especially for marginalized girls.

Emotional Health

Anxiety

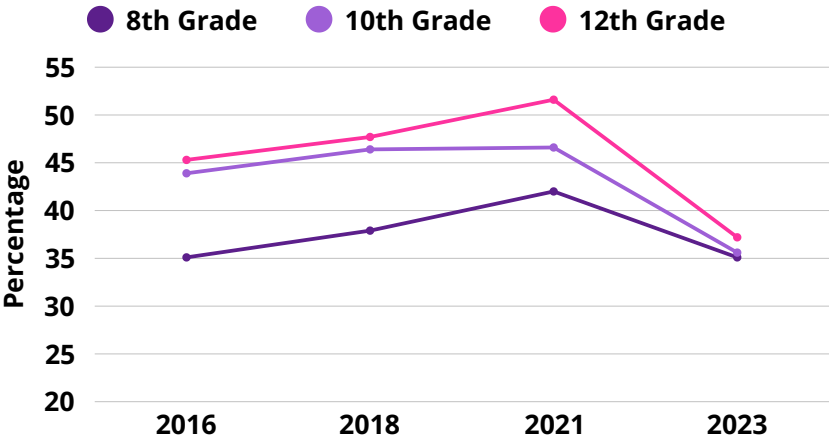
Nationally, 29% of girls 12-17 show symptoms of anxiety and 25% of girls show symptoms of depression. Nearly **50% of Washington senior girls met criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder** in 2023.

Washington Girls Meeting Generalized Anxiety Disorder Criteria



Depression

Washington Girls Reporting Depressive Symptoms



Depression rates followed a similar trajectory. However, unlike anxiety, depressive symptoms in Washington State girls have dipped back **below 2016 rates** as of 2023.

Washington data also indicates that contemplation of suicide is more common in girls in **early middle school** than in **high school**. Suicide prevention and education efforts may need to expand to target a wider age range, including **early adolescence**.



Nearly **1 in 4** 6th grade girls in Washington reported contemplating suicide in 2023.

Source: [Washington Healthy Youth Survey](#).

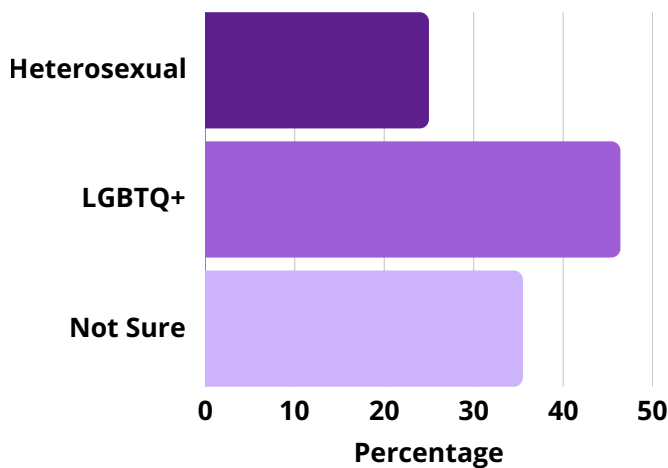
Support Gaps

The highest rates of depression are found in **American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander groups** and **LGBTQ+ identities** in Washington State youth.

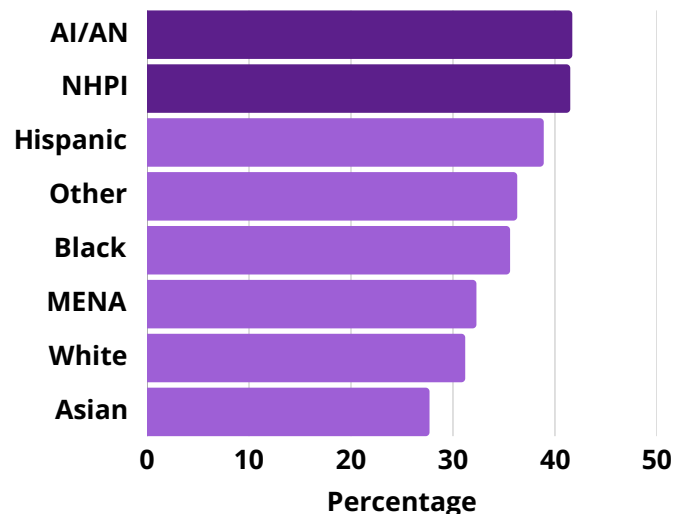
In King County:

- **46.4% of LGBTQ+ girls** and **35.5% of girls unsure of their sexuality** reported depressive feelings in 2023.
- **American Indian/Alaska Native** and **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander** girls had the highest rates of depressive symptoms (41.7% and 41.5%) in 2023.

Depressive Feelings in King County Girls by LGBTQ+ Identity
2023



Depressive Feelings in King County Girls by Ethnicity
2023



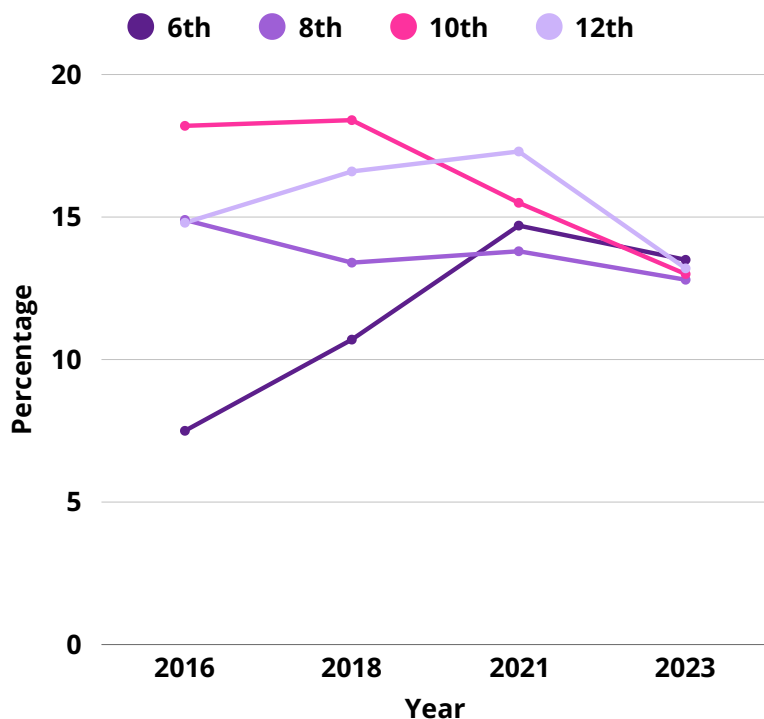
Source: [Communities Count](#)

While statewide and county-level girl-specific data is limited, available statewide data for all youth show similar disparities, with BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth reporting higher rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and attempts than their white and heterosexual peers.

This suggests that more **tailored, affirming, and culturally responsive** support is needed for **girls of color** and **LGBTQ+ girls**.

While Washington girls are showing a slightly higher connection with a trusted adult than the national average, roughly **1 in 8** high school girls **did not have an adult to turn to when depressed** in 2023

Washington Girls Reporting No Adult to Turn to When Depressed



Source: [Healthy Youth Survey](#)

Given elevated rates of mental health struggles among girls in Washington, trusted adult support is especially important.

Although the percentage of girls lacking support has declined over time, **too many girls still lack a reliable adult when they need one most.**

Consistent, caring adult relationships are a well-established protective factor against poor mental health outcomes in adolescents.

Our Call to Action for Washington Girls

1

Invest in Early Mental Health Support

Suicidal ideation is already high by early middle school. Screening, prevention, and mental health education need to begin in early adolescence.

2

Expand Culturally Affirming Mental Health Support

BIPOC and LGBTQ+ girls suffer higher rates of mental illness symptoms. Culturally responsive, identity-affirming care is needed.

3

Build Communities with Trusted Adult Support

Mentors, counselors, and supportive school staff are protective factors for girls' mental health. Funding relationship-based youth supports should be a priority.

Social Wellness | Overview

School environments, peer relationships, and digital spaces shape girls' social wellness in Washington. While many girls demonstrate strong engagement in school, disparities remain for those with behavioral health needs or limited resources. Strengthening supportive relationships, inclusive school practices, and healthy social environments can help ensure that all girls feel connected and supported.

School Engagement Progresses; Disparities Remain

The percentage of Washington girls who "always care about doing well in school" rose from 57.3% (2021-22) to 63.5% (2023-24), higher than the statewide average for all students. Despite this, girls with behavioral, emotional, neurodivergence or developmental challenges often report lower engagement and face exclusionary discipline, indicating gaps in school support.

Social Connection and Belonging are Important

Supportive school environments, positive peer relationships, and trusted adult connections act as protective factors against mental health challenges, substance use and isolation.

Some Girls Face Structural Barriers to Belonging

Girls facing barriers, especially those in under-resourced communities, can experience lower engagement, higher online vulnerability, or greater risk behaviors, compared to the state average, highlighting the need for inclusive support systems.

Key Takeaways

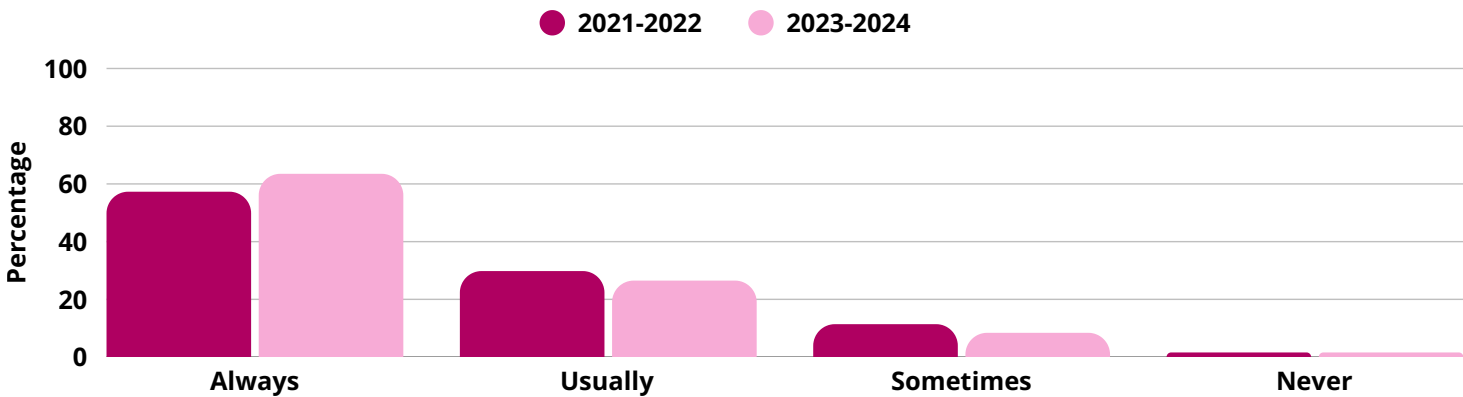
1. Positive trends in girls' school engagement show resilience.
2. Substance use reflects social context and stress.
3. Problematic internet use intersects with social vulnerabilities.

Social Wellness

School Belonging and Engagement

School connectedness, such as club or team membership, is one of the strongest protective factors against suicide, substance use, and other behavioral health challenges among youth. Supportive relationships with school staff, like a counselor or coach, play an important role in fostering this sense of belonging, as students who feel cared for by adults at school are more likely to remain engaged academically and socially.

Washington Girls Age 6-17 Caring About School & Doing Homework



Girls in Washington report increasing engagement in school, with those who say they 'always care about doing well in school' **rising from 57.3% in 2021-22 to 63.5% in 2023-24**, higher than the statewide average (56.4%). However, engagement is not evenly experienced: among Washington youth with emotional, behavioral, or developmental health needs, **43.2% report being sometimes or never engaged in school and 33% report being only usually engaged.**

Source: [Child Health Data Survey](#).

National data suggests boys act out more visibly when upset, whereas girls tend to internalize their emotions making detection more complicated and potentially less supported.

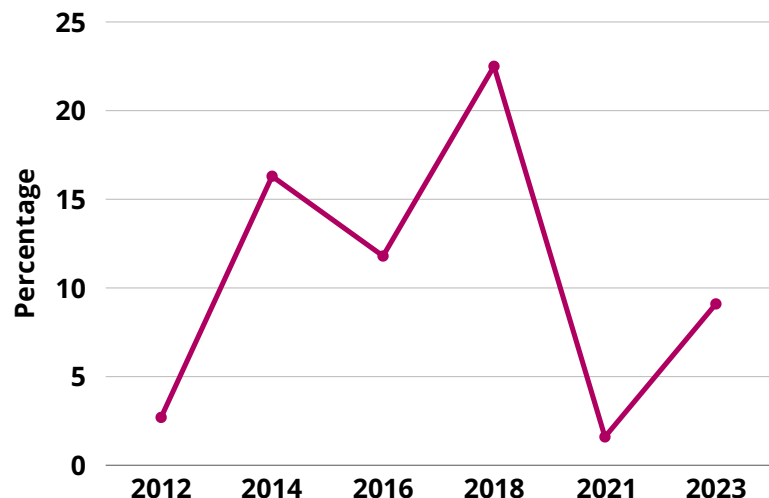
Source: [Science News](#)

While many girls in Washington demonstrate strong academic engagement, **barriers to belonging may still exist for girls**, highlighting the importance of inclusive school environments that foster connection for all students.

E-Cigarette Usage

E-Cigarette usage among adolescent girls reflects more than a health behavior, it is often shaped by peer dynamics, social stress, and community context. Due to a majority of vapes containing nicotine, this can harm the parts of an adolescent's brain that control learning, attention, mood, and impulse control due to a majority of vapes containing nicotine. **Girls in Washington State are now consistently using e-cigarettes more than their male peers.**

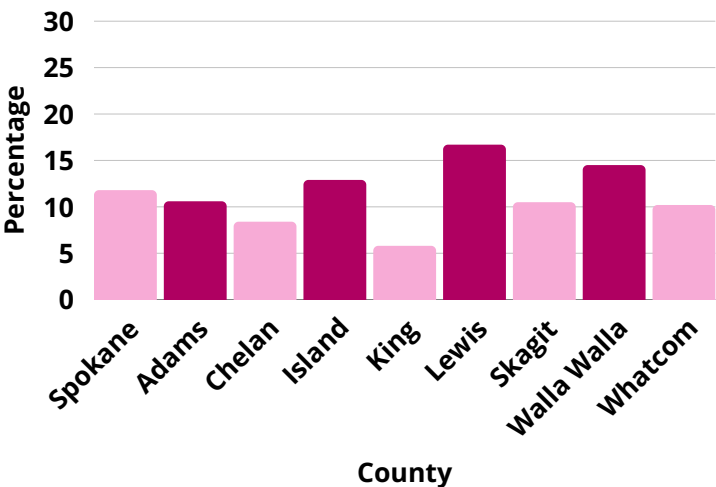
Statewide Usage of E-Cigarettes for 10th Grade Girls



Statewide e-cigarette usage among 10th grade girls dropped from 22.5% in 2018 to 8.9% in 2021, while slightly increasing in 2023. Though data for 2019–2020 are missing due to COVID-19, and pandemic-related changes in social behavior may have contributed to the decline.

County-level data shows disparities in e-cigarette use among girls in Washington. While the statewide average in 2023 was 9.1%, King County remains below this level, potentially reflecting stronger access to school and community supports. Vaping may serve as a way to cope with stress or fit into peer groups.

10th Grade Girl's Current E-Cigarette Usage by County in 2023



Source: [Healthy Youth Survey](#)

Access to supportive social environments, like strong school programs, extracurricular opportunities, and community resources, reduces risky behaviors such as e-cigarette use.

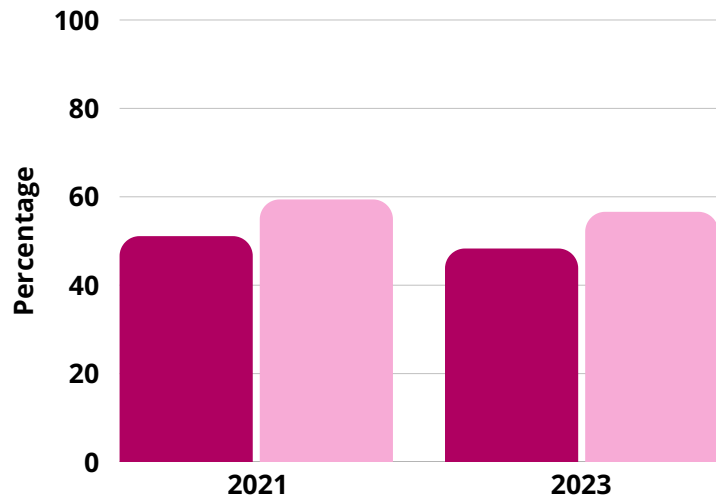
Problematic Internet Use

Girls in Washington consistently report higher rates of problematic internet use (defined as excessive, impulsive, or uncontrolled internet usage that leads to significant impairment in daily life) than boys and exceeding United States' averages. Students with emotional or learning disabilities report significantly higher rates of problematic internet use compared to others.

Nationally, 41% of girls 13-14 experience cyberbullying, rising to 54% by ages 15-17. In Washington, nearly one in three teens use social media **"almost constantly."***

These patterns are notable because youth with emotional or developmental challenges already face greater barriers to school engagement and belonging, suggesting that problematic internet use may intersect with broader social and behavioral health vulnerabilities for girls.

Eighth and 10th Grade Washington Teen Girls at Risk for Problematic Internet Usage



*US Department of Health and Human Services

Source: Healthy Youth Survey

Our Call to Action for Washington Girls

1

Strengthen supportive relationships

Prioritize trusted adult relationships, extracurriculars clubs, and inclusive classroom practices so girls feel supported and connected to their environments.

2

Expand inclusive resources for students

Provide training and resources to help educators better support all types of girls, reduce discipline, promote belonging and connection.

3

Promote healthy peer and digital environments

Support digital wellness education and provide structured extracurricular and outdoor opportunities that encourage positive peer relationships and community, and reduce reliance on unhealthy coping behaviors such as substance use or excessive internet use.

Academic & Career Outcomes | Overview

Girls in Washington demonstrate strong on-time high school graduation rates and assessment performance in English language arts. However, disparities persist in math and science proficiency, particularly across low-income and rural districts, and participation in Career and Technical Education pathways. While strong academic performance opens doors, other factors can influence long-term economic options.

Girls Are Excelling Academically, but Gaps Persist:

Nationally, by 9th grade, 70% of girls have seriously thought about their careers but 58% report that they don't feel “smart enough” for their dream job. Washington girls graduate on time at higher rates than boys and are more likely to finish with a GPA above 3.0.

STEM Options in Schools Should be Expanded

Girls are most drawn to STEM professions that offer clear opportunities for direct community impact and creative problem-solving. Girls should have a broader option of STEM programs in schools to reflect their interests such as software engineering, data science, biomedical engineering, environmental science, and cybersecurity.

Academic Success Doesn't Close the Wage Gap

Washington has the second largest wage gap in the U.S. Even controlling for education level, women earn significantly less than men pointing to structural educational barriers that academic achievement alone cannot overcome.

Source: [Stem Blazers](#)

Source: [Washington Women's Commission](#)

Key Takeaways

1. Girls excel academically but trail in math and science, especially in rural and low-income school districts.
2. Girls cluster in certain lower income career pathways.
3. Washington's wage gaps persists regardless of education level.

Academic & Career Outcomes

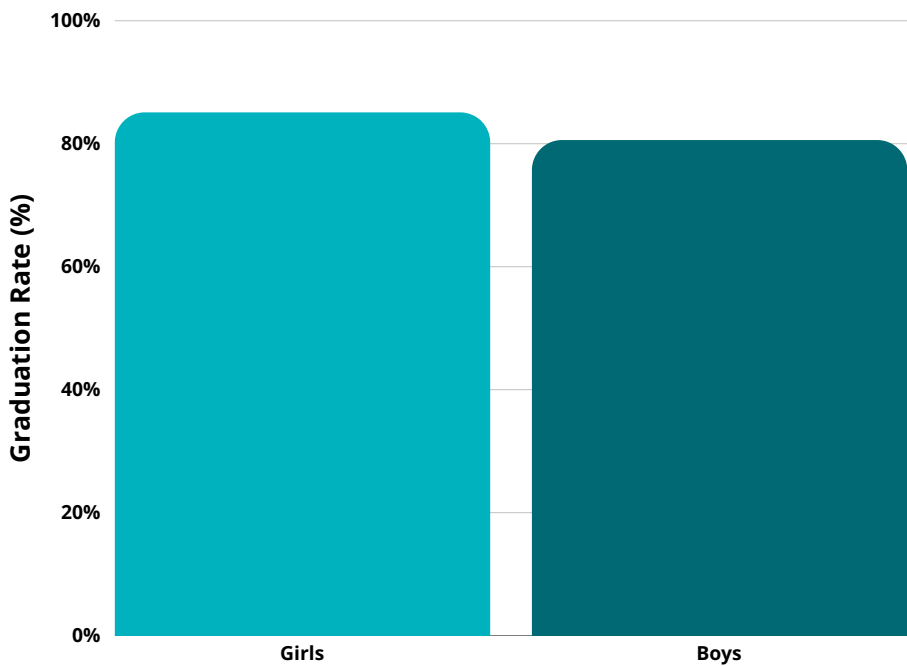
Academic Performance in K-12

51% of girls graduate high school with a GPA above 3.0 compared to 36% of boys.

Girls (**85.1%**) tend to graduate on time at higher rates than boys (**80.6%**) across Washington.

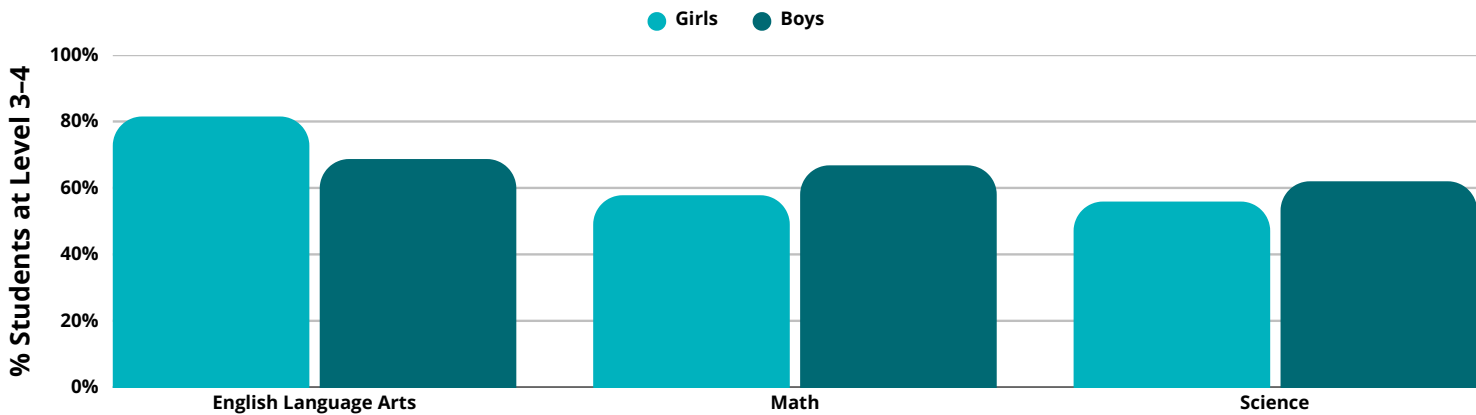
While graduation rates reflect overall academic success, they do not capture differences in subject proficiency. The charts below show the share of students meeting state standards in English language arts, math, and science.

On-Time High School Graduation Rates by Gender
2024-25 School Year



Percent of Students Meeting Level 3–4 Proficiency by Gender (2024-25)

L3 = consistent grade-level knowledge | L4 = advanced grade-level knowledge



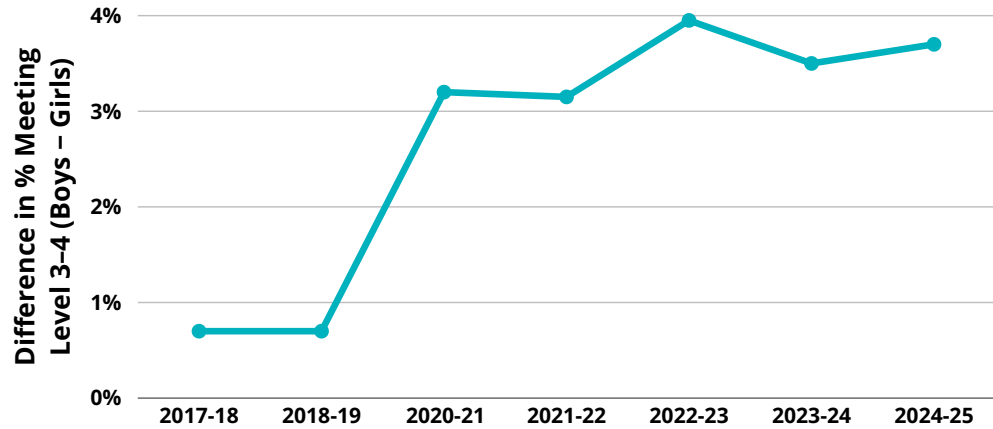
While girls meet proficiency at higher rates in English language arts, boys meet proficiency more often in math and science.*

Source: [Washington OSPI Report Card](#)
*[American Institute for Boys and Men](#)

The proficiency gap between boys and girls in math and science has been increasing

Difference in Boys' and Girls' Level 3–4 Proficiency in Math and Science

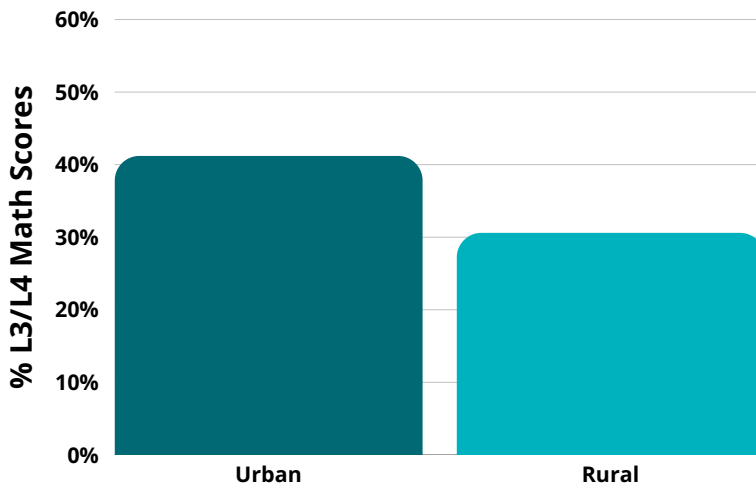
Data not gathered in the 2019–2020 school year due to COVID-19.



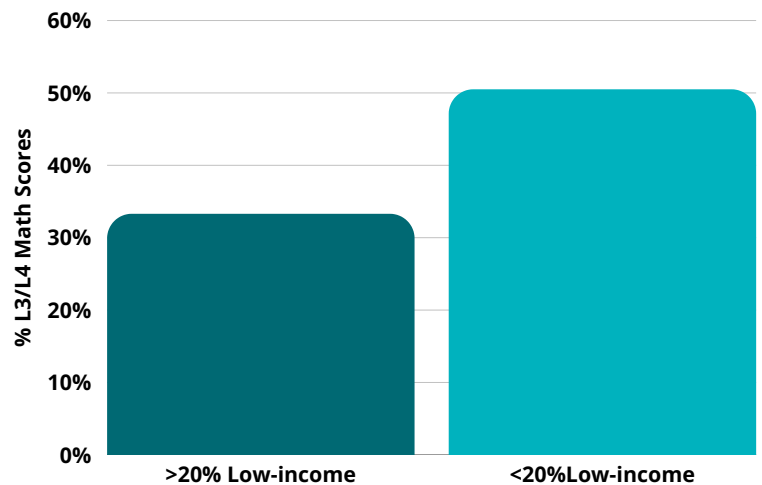
The gender gap in math and science proficiency has grown since 2017–18. **After statewide testing resumed, the difference increased from 1% to 3%.** While girls demonstrate strong academic performance overall, disparities are growing in STEM-related subject proficiency.

Percent of Girls Meeting Level 3-4 Proficiency in Math (2024-25)

Urban vs. Rural Districts



Low-income Districts (>20%)



Girls in rural areas and districts with higher rates of low-income students tend to have lower math proficiency rates compared to other districts. Nationally 39% of girls are proficient in math.

These patterns suggest that broader structural conditions such as school resources, course availability, and access to academic support may shape learning opportunities.

Differences in opportunity, geography, and other structural barriers, not just whether girls graduate, can influence economic futures.

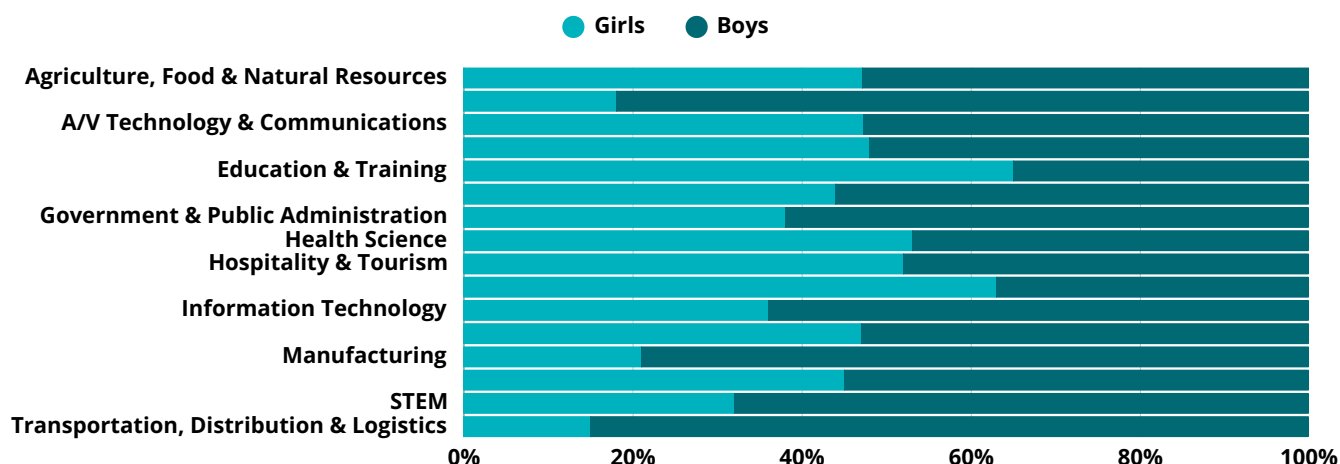
Source: [Washington OSPI Report Card](#)

Career & Technical Education (CTE) Participation

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs connect high school learning with career exploration and workforce preparation. Enrollment patterns across career clusters provide insight into gender differences in career pathways beginning during high school.

CTE Participation Ratio by Gender and Career Cluster

2023-24 School Year



Girls are most represented in fields traditionally associated with care, service, and education, including **Education (65%)**, **Human Services (63%)**, **Health Science (53%)**, and **Hospitality and Tourism (52%)**. They are underrepresented in technical and industrial pathways such as **Architecture and Construction (18%)**, **Manufacturing (21%)**, **Transportation (15%)**, and **STEM (32%)**.

These patterns mirror broader occupational trends in the labor market and may influence the industries and wage levels girls experience later in life. Differences in early career pathways can shape access to long-term earnings and opportunities for economic mobility.

Source: [U.S. Department of Education, Career and Tech Ed](#)

Women are concentrated in lower-paying occupations like sales (\$36K) and service (\$27K) roles.

1

Women's different distribution across occupations and industries accounts for half of the wage gap.

2

Median earnings are highest in male-dominated fields and lowest in female-dominated ones at the same skill levels.

3

Male-dominated pathways increase the likelihood of earning a credential and living wage six years after high school.

4

Source 1: [Women's Funding Alliance](#)

Source 3: [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#)

Source 2: [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#)

Source 4: [Education Research and Data Center](#)

Long-Term Economic Context

Median Earnings and Women-to-Men Earnings Ratios by Education Level*

	Women	Men	Ratio
Less than High School Diploma	\$24,400	\$32,000	76.3%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	\$32,400	\$42,000	77.1%
Some College Education	\$38,000	\$50,000	76%

Washington has the 2nd largest wage gap in the United States.**



In Washington, women earn 72 cents for every dollar earned by men.

*[Women’s Funding Alliance](#)

**[Washington State Women’s Commission](#)

Our Call to Action for Washington Girls

1

Find Ways to Close the STEM Gap

STEM programming should be engaging for girls, especially in math and science, so they can be inspired to pursue new pathways to higher income employment.

2

Resource Schools to Diversify CTE Enrollment

Course decisions happen early. Support school and community programs that help girls explore the range of career paths, including entrepreneurship, before choosing courses.

3

Support Policies That Address the Wage Gap

Support policies and enforcement efforts that advance pay equity and hold employers accountable.

Safety | Overview

Safety indicators for girls in Washington reveal persistent disparities in school safety, dating violence, and support systems. **Structural factors such as school climate, adult support, and foster care** involvement shape how safe girls feel at school, in relationships, and in their communities.

Weapons and Feeling Unsafe

In Washington, weapon carrying is highest among students who report feeling unsafe at school. Available data shows disparities by gender identity and disability status, but **data limitations make it difficult to fully disaggregate by gender across all subgroups**. When data is broken down, disparities emerge clearly. One-size-fits-all safety approaches fail our most vulnerable students.

Dating Violence Escalates Without Intervention

Dating violence nearly doubles between middle school and senior year.

One in 13 senior girls felt unsafe with a dating partner. For **LGBTQ+ girls, the risk is nearly twice as high**.

Foster Girls Face Compounding Crises

Girls in foster care **ages 12–17 are twice as likely to need mental health treatment than her peers** with over 80% struggling by adolescence. They face higher rates of bullying, dating violence, and school instability.

*Health Care Authority/Mercer

Key Takeaways

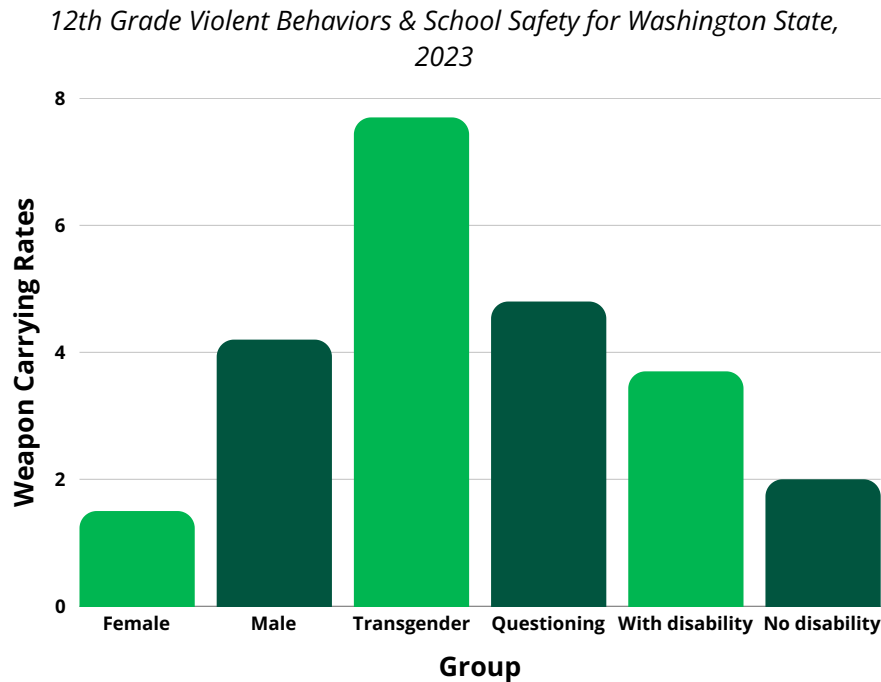
1. One-size-fits-all approaches fail girls with the highest risk of feeling unsafe.
2. Safety risks begin escalating in middle school.
3. Bullying and dating violence compound the crisis of instability for girls.

Safety

Weapons

2,275 weapon incidents were reported in Washington schools during the 2022-23 school year: an 11.6% increase from the previous year. Of those, **316 involved a firearm, all at public schools.**

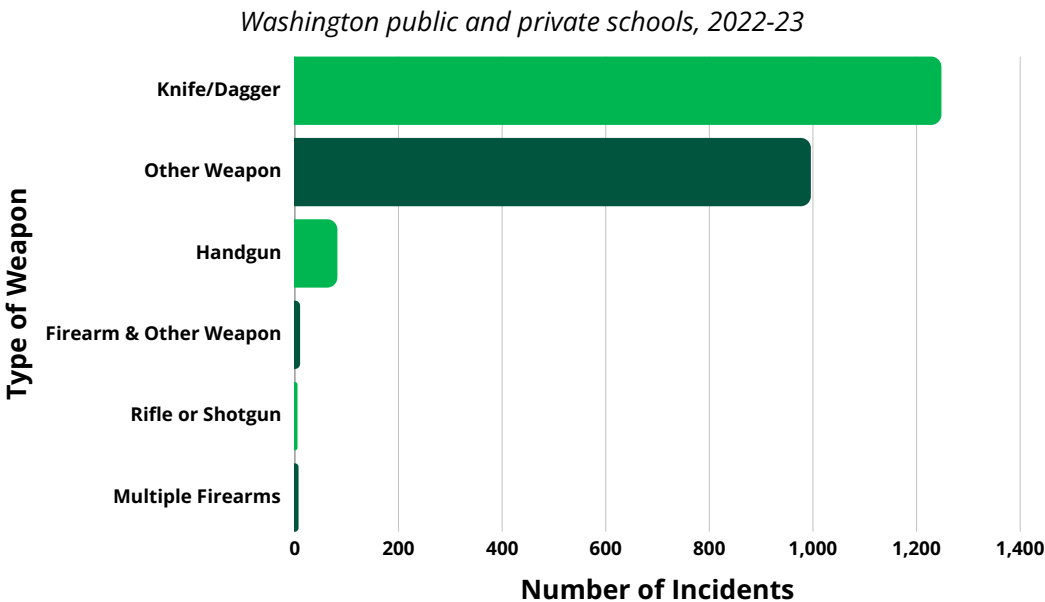
Weapon Carrying at School by Group



Students who feel most vulnerable at school report higher rates of weapon-carrying, suggesting these **students may be arming themselves in response to feeling unsafe rather than posing a threat.**

Other weapons include protective spray devices, air guns, tasers, and metal knuckles.

Weapons Brought to School

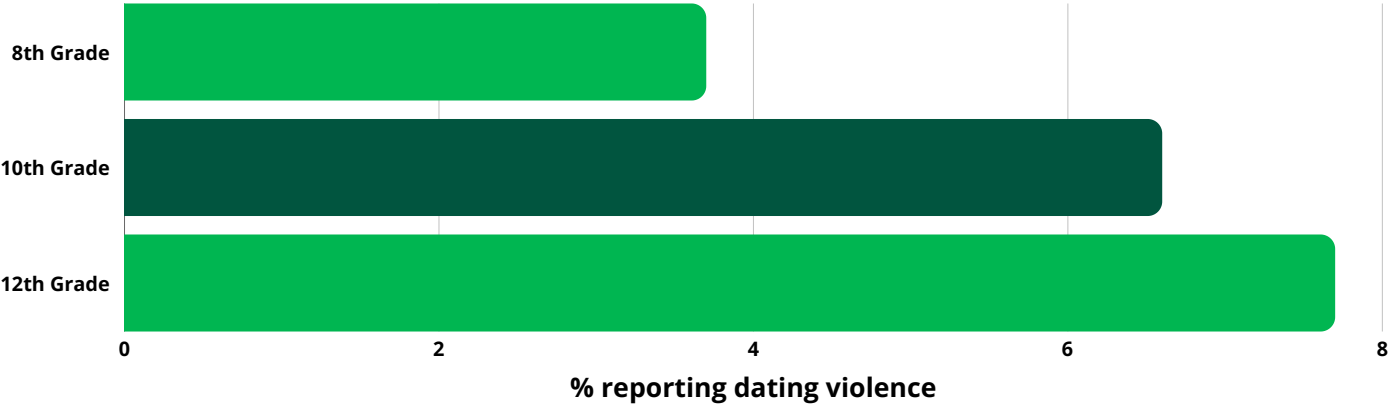


Source 1: [Healthy Youth Survey](#)
Source 2: [WA Office of Superintendent Public Instruction](#)

Dating Violence

Dating violence nearly doubles between middle school and senior year. The **CDC (2023) reports that teen girls are experiencing record-high rates of violence.*** Washington's data shows: risk escalates as girls get older, yet prevention efforts lag. The girls most unsafe at school are often the most unsafe in relationships.

King County Dating Violence by Grade, Washington Girls
Percent who report being controlled, threatened, or made to feel unsafe by a dating partner, 2023

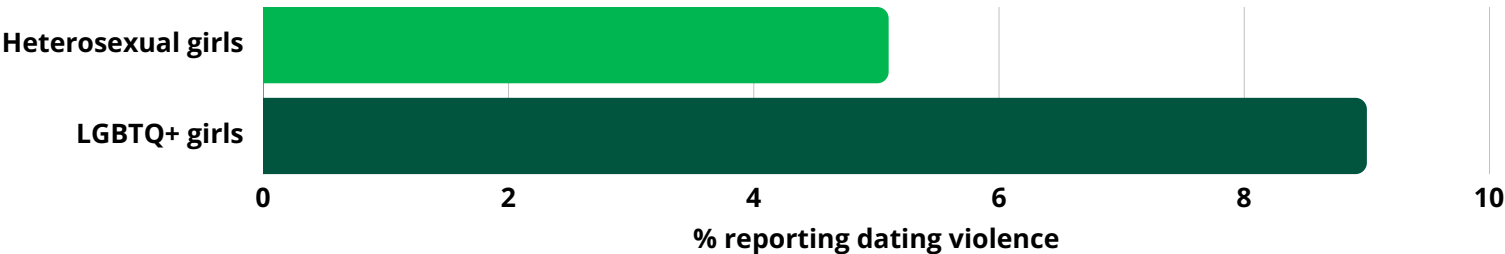


Dating Violence Disparities by Sexual Orientation

A girl's sexual orientation predicts her risk of dating violence. **LGBTQ+ girls without affirming spaces face higher rates of victimization**, and without trusted adults, abuse can go undisclosed and escalate. Research suggests **safe, inclusive schools may reduce their vulnerability to violence**.

Schools that affirm LGBTQ+ identities **create the trust girls need to report abuse early**, making them a direct prevention tool.*

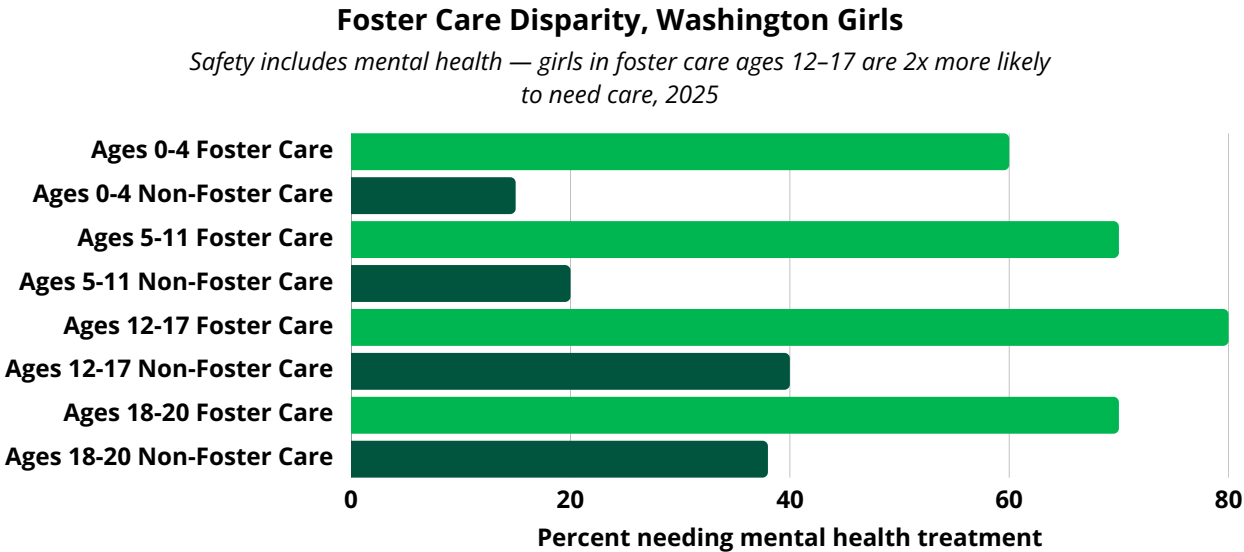
King County Dating Violence by Sexual Orientation
Percent of girls who report dating violence, 2023



*[CDC Newsroom](#)
 Sources: [Healthy Youth Survey](#) and [Communities Count](#)

Foster Care Disparities

A girl in foster care, aged 12–17, is twice as likely to need mental health treatment as her peers. **By adolescence, 80+% of foster girls are struggling with mental health needs, compared to 40% of their peers.** These same girls face higher rates of bullying, unsafe relationships, and school instability. Safety is not just about physical harm. It is about **whether a girl has the support she needs to survive and thrive.** For foster girls, that support is rarely there.*



*Health Care Authority/Mercer
 Source: [Washington Thriving Report 2025](#)

Our Call to Action for Washington Girls

- 1 Train Staff in Affirming Practices**
 Youth organizations should provide annual training so adults can understand the variety of youth lived experiences and challenges and help build safe communities.
- 2 Offer Visible Safe Spaces**
 Every school needs funded student groups and trained staff students can identify by name, especially for those that identify LGBTQ+ or are navigating disabilities, Trusted relationships are what make reporting possible.
- 3 Create Safer Environments for All**
 Youth should have access to safe environments such as affinity groups.

What Washington Girls Need From Us

1

Every Girl Deserves A Trusted Adult They Can Count On.

A trusted adult can change the trajectory of a girl's life. When girls have someone they can turn to, they are better equipped to navigate challenges, build resilience, and thrive. In 2023, nearly one in four sixth-grade girls reported seriously considering suicide, and dating violence begins increasing as early as eighth grade. Supporting girls can include trusted adults through families, schools, mentors, after-school programs, volunteers, and mental health professionals. Supporting girls also means supporting the adults who care for them. Investing in trusted adults strengthens the support systems that help every girl succeed.

2

Expanding Opportunity and Access to Close the Wage Gap

Girls in Washington graduate at higher rates than boys and show strong academic engagement despite barriers including unequal access to rural healthcare and STEM opportunities that are not always designed with girls in mind. Let girls have input on what types of STEM programs they want more of. Yet these early successes do not translate into economic equity. Washington has the nation's second-largest gender wage gap, with women earning just 72 cents for every dollar earned by men. By providing expanded access and opportunities, especially in STEM fields, we can move toward closing the gap.

3

Culturally Specific Support For Girls of All Ages

Washington is home to a large and growing population of Indigenous, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+ youth. Representation matters. When girls see themselves reflected in those who support them and have access to culturally responsive programs and mentors, they are more likely to feel safe, valued, and connected. Investing in culturally relevant support and prevention efforts starting in elementary school can ensure every girl is able to reach her full potential.

Strengthen the Systems That Impact Girls

Girls' outcomes are shaped by interconnected factors: zip code, access to healthcare, economic opportunity, culturally responsive support, and trusted adults. Improving outcomes for Washington's girls requires investing early in prevention, expanding access to caring adults and mentors, providing culturally responsive support, and closing persistent economic inequities such as the gender wage gap. By strengthening the systems that surround girls, we can ensure every girl has the opportunity to feel safe, connected, and able to reach their full potential.

Our Beacons of Hope

Washington is home to many organizations that support youth. Some are intentionally designed to address the distinct needs of girls, highlighting a foundation to build on and service gaps to address.

Girl Scouts of Western Washington, Eastern Washington, and Southwest Washington: provides leadership development, belonging, life skills, outdoor experiences, and confidence-building for girls throughout Washington.

Physical

- **Girls on the Run of Puget Sound:** supports girls through movement-based social-emotional learning, confidence, and healthy relationships.

Social/Emotional

- **Camp Fire:** inclusive development, leadership, and social-emotional growth.
- **Washington School-Based Health Alliance:** Health equity and school-based health centers.
- **Northwest Youth Corps:** youth leadership, conservation, and workforce pathways.
- **YMCA of Greater Seattle:** focused on wellness, safety, leadership, and youth programming.

Safety

- **TeamChild:** supports youth at risk of involvement with juvenile justice and welfare systems.
- **Treehouse:** for girls in foster care; focuses on educational, material, and financial support.
- **YouthCare:** supports young people experiencing homelessness, including girls.
- **The Mockingbird Society:** youth-led systems advocacy, focused on child welfare.
- **Youth Against Sexual Violence:** youth-led related to prevention and survivor support.

Academic/Career

- **Believe in Me:** supports youth facing poverty, trauma, isolation, and systemic barriers
- **Boys & Girls Clubs:** after-school access, safety, belonging, and enrichment for girls.
- **Big Brothers Big Sisters:** one-to-one mentoring and protective adult relationships.
- **College Success Foundation:** college and career access support for underserved students.
- **Cougs 4 Kids:** mentorship and leadership development for marginalized youth.
- **Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest:** focused on leadership, education, and helping girls.
- **Glover Empower Mentoring (GEM):** mentoring, justice, education, and case management.
- **MENTOR Washington:** statewide mentoring backbone organization.
- **School's Out Washington:** strengthens afterschool and learning systems.

Washington Thriving: Statewide effort to plan for equitable behavioral health for children.

Methodology & Data Limitations

The Washington State of the Girl Report compiles metrics across five core areas: Physical Health, Emotional Well-being, Social/Behavioral Health, Academic/Career Readiness, and Safety. Data visuals present comparisons and disparities across grade levels, sexual orientations, race and ethnicity, disability status, foster care involvement, and geographic regions using publicly available state and national sources.

Agency Data

This report cites national research for context across all five content areas: CDC YRBS and WONDER for Physical Health; the Trevor Project (2023) for Emotional Well-being and Safety; peer-reviewed ACEs research and social media data for Social/Behavioral Health; national wage gap research for Academic/Career Readiness; and Stop AAPI Hate (2023) for disaggregated AAPI Safety data. Cited research is contextual only and does not replace Washington-specific data.

Data Collection

Data sources include the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey, Communities Count, Washington State Department of Health, Washington State Health Care Authority, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, CDC YRBS, CDC WONDER, Washington Tracking Network, Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, Education Research and Data Center, and the Status of Women in Washington report. All data is anonymized; no primary research was conducted.

Disaggregating Data

To understand differences among girls in Washington, data are disaggregated by grade level, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability status, foster care involvement, and county where available. The ability to disaggregate is limited by the availability of statewide data; this report acknowledges its inability to fully capture all intersectionalities of the target audience. Where data is suppressed to protect confidentiality, it is noted accordingly.

Accuracy

All reasonable efforts were made to ensure accuracy. Metrics may be under-reported or unavailable, and data from different sources should not be compared due to differing methodologies.

About the Authors

Natalie Cohen

Natalie contributed to the Physical Health section of this report, examining physical activity trends, early health foundations, geographic access gaps, and injury and mortality patterns among girls across Washington. She analyzed data from the Washington Healthy Youth Survey, the Washington State Department of Health, and CDC WONDER mortality data.



Isabelle Henderson

Isabelle conducted research on the academic and career outcomes of Washington state girls and their demographic splits. She analyzed online data from the Washington State Office of Financial Management and the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, focusing on academic performance, CTE program participation, and long-term wage gaps.



Kelvyn Joaquin

Kelvyn contributed to the Safety section of this report, examining disparities, dating violence escalation, foster care mental health gaps, and identity-based risk among girls across Washington. He also supported data verification and source citation across the report, ensuring findings were accurately attributed and grounded in publicly available research.



Ashley Moua

Ashley contributed to the visual design and branding of the report, including the cover page, headers, and footers. In addition, she conducted research on social wellness and compiled data from the Healthy Youth Survey and ChildHealth Data identifying trends in school engagement, substance use, and internet use for the Social Wellness section.



Hannah Rose

Hannah conducted research for and created the Emotional Health section of the report, compiling and visualizing data from the Healthy Youth Survey and Communities Count to analyze trends and support gaps in areas including depression, anxiety, and suicidality. She also led the formatting and design of the report, ensuring consistent styling, layout, and visual coherence.



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The Marketplace Inc.

The WMarketplace Inc. is a women-led business consulting and training company dedicated to advancing economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs and small business owners. Through partnerships with government agencies, corporations, nonprofits, and economic development organizations, The WMarketplace delivers programs focused on digital skills, e-commerce, exporting, and AI adoption. The company has supported thousands of women-owned businesses across the United States and internationally, including initiatives for underserved communities and Ukrainian women entrepreneurs. The WMarketplace combines research, education, and mentorship to help women build sustainable businesses, increase economic participation, and strengthen pathways to leadership and financial independence in the digital economy.



MARKETPLACE
The Economic Engine for Women



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**To access specific Healthy Youth Survey Data, navigate to the data dashboard and select the corresponding year, grade, topic, and measure.*