



DANE COUNTY YOUTH COMMISSION

Health & Human Needs Committee Presentation – November 12, 2025

WHO WE ARE

The Commission was created in 1980 by the Dane County Board to work on behalf of the interests of young people in Dane County

Consists of eleven members appointed by the County Executive:

Two Board
Supervisors

One MMSD
representative

One representative
from a school
district outside of
Madison

One representative
of a youth serving
organization

Six citizen members
including two youth
under age 25

WHAT WE DO

Encourage & promote youth participation in decision-making that affects them

Conduct youth needs assessments (e.g., surveys & listening sessions)

Work with agencies & community groups to establish priorities for youth services & programs

Consult planning & funding agencies on allocation of funding for youth services & programs

Collaborate with schools & organizations to evaluate the outcomes of youth services & programs

Submit reports, including recommendations, to the County Board & County Executive

HOW WE DO IT



Youth Governance
Program (YGP)



By Youth For Youth
(BYFY) Grants



Dane County Youth
Assessment (DCYA)



Advocacy for
Programs &
Services

YGP & BYFY PROGRAMS

Both programs provide opportunities for high school youth to learn, lead, gain new experiences, and connect with other youth and supportive adults



YGP recruits and pairs young people with a Board Supervisor to learn more about local government and policy-making



BYFY recruits and trains young people to make decisions about a grant program benefiting other youth

DANE COUNTY YOUTH ASSESSMENT (DCYA)

Conducted regularly since 1980 – currently every three years since 2009

Funding partners include Dane County Human Services, City of Madison, United Way of Dane County, Public Health Madison Dane County, and local school districts

Data include demographics, individual health behaviors and outcomes, peer and social influences, school environment, family and community characteristics, and more

Primarily used locally to inform services, programs, and funding with some data analyses conducted through academic partnerships

Possible future Voices of Our Youth Summit

DCYA 2024 UPDATE

17 School District Partners

Belleville, Cambridge, Columbus, Deerfield,
DeForest, Madison, McFarland, Middleton-Cross
Plains, Monona Grove, Mount Horeb, Oregon,
Sauk Prairie, Stoughton, Sun Prairie, Verona,
Waunakee & Wisconsin Heights

Survey administered in schools from January 15 – April 15, 2024

Voluntary & anonymous

Support & resources offered to students, as
needed

24,471 7th-12th grade students completed the
survey

OVERVIEW REPORT & DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWNS

<https://www.dcdhs.com/About-Us/Commissions-Boards-and-Committees/Youth-Commission/Youth-Assessment>

SENSITIVE CONTENT NOTICE

Data related to mental health (including suicide), gun violence, and other sensitive topics will be shared during the remainder of this presentation

DCYA 2024 KEY FINDINGS – TRENDS OVER TIME (2015-2024)

Positive Trends

Decline in risky behaviors, such as tobacco use,
alcohol use, binge drinking & sexual activity

Increase in access to mental health services

*Declines in anxiety, suicide ideation &
depression – BUT they remain high*

Family/parent engagement remains high (e.g.,
family meals, monitoring school progress)

Negative Trends

Bullying at school remains high

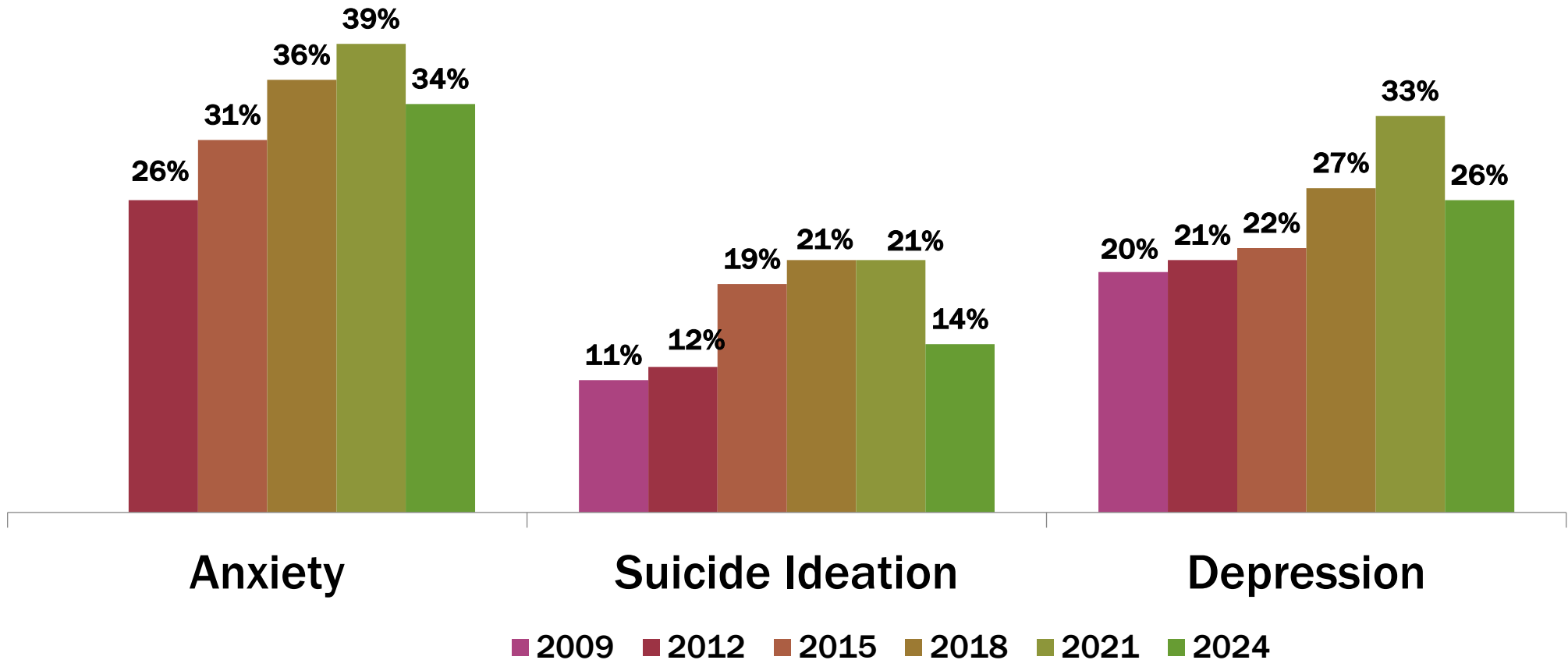
Declining sense of belonging at school

Struggling with homework remains high

Staying up late on school nights remains high

Declining involvement activities like music, art
and drama

IMPROVEMENTS IN MENTAL HEALTH POST-PANDEMIC



DCYA 2024 – DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN ANXIETY

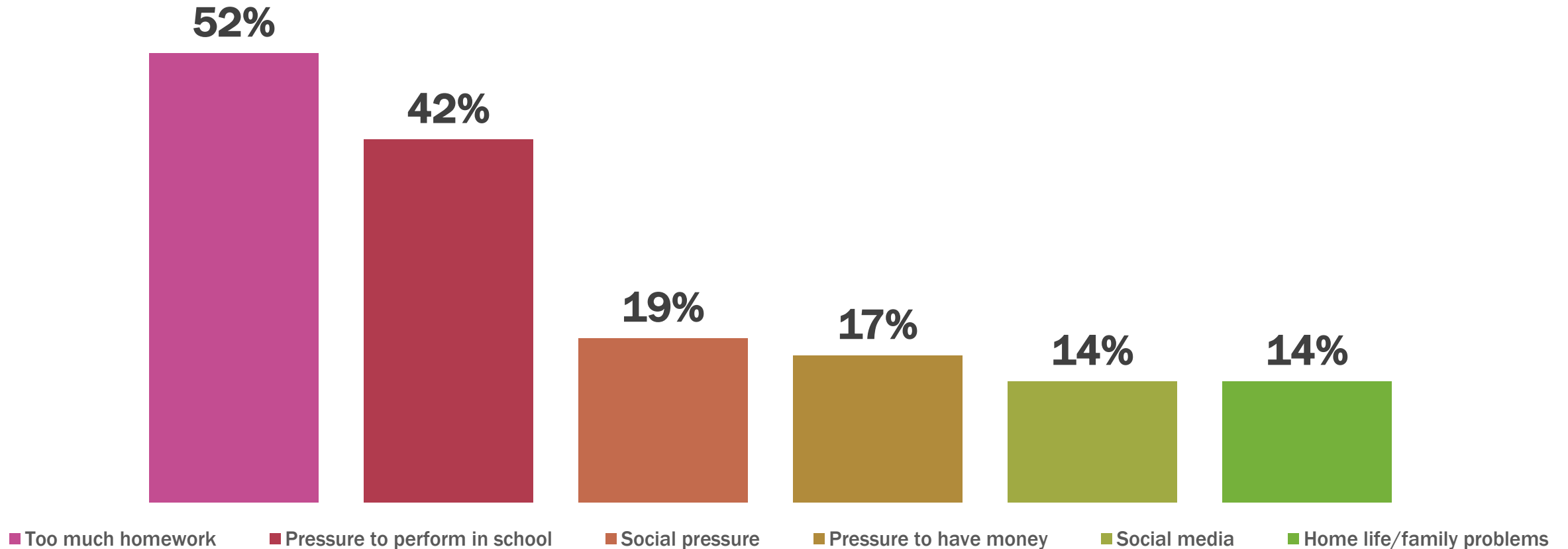
Gender Identity: **71%** of gender expansive students, **44%** of girls, **21%** of boys

Sexual Orientation: **59%** of LGBTQ+ students, **27%** of straight students

Race & Ethnicity: **37%** of BIPOC students, **34%** of white students

Income: **69%** who report family financial struggles, **27%** who say money is not a problem for their family

DCYA 2024 – REPORTED REASONS FOR ANXIETY



YOUTH COMMISSION RECENTLY FOCUSED IN ON GUN ACCESS



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NEWS

Police kill armed student outside Mount Horeb school

Students, families shaken after incident that officials say 'could have been a far worse tragedy'

BY CORRINNE HESS AND ROBERT D'ANDREA • MAY 1, 2024 • UPDATED MAY 2, 2024 at 10:14 AM



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"Everyone was targeted" in Wisconsin school shooting, police say

By [Kerry Breen](#)

Updated on: December 17, 2024 / 7:44 PM EST / CBS News

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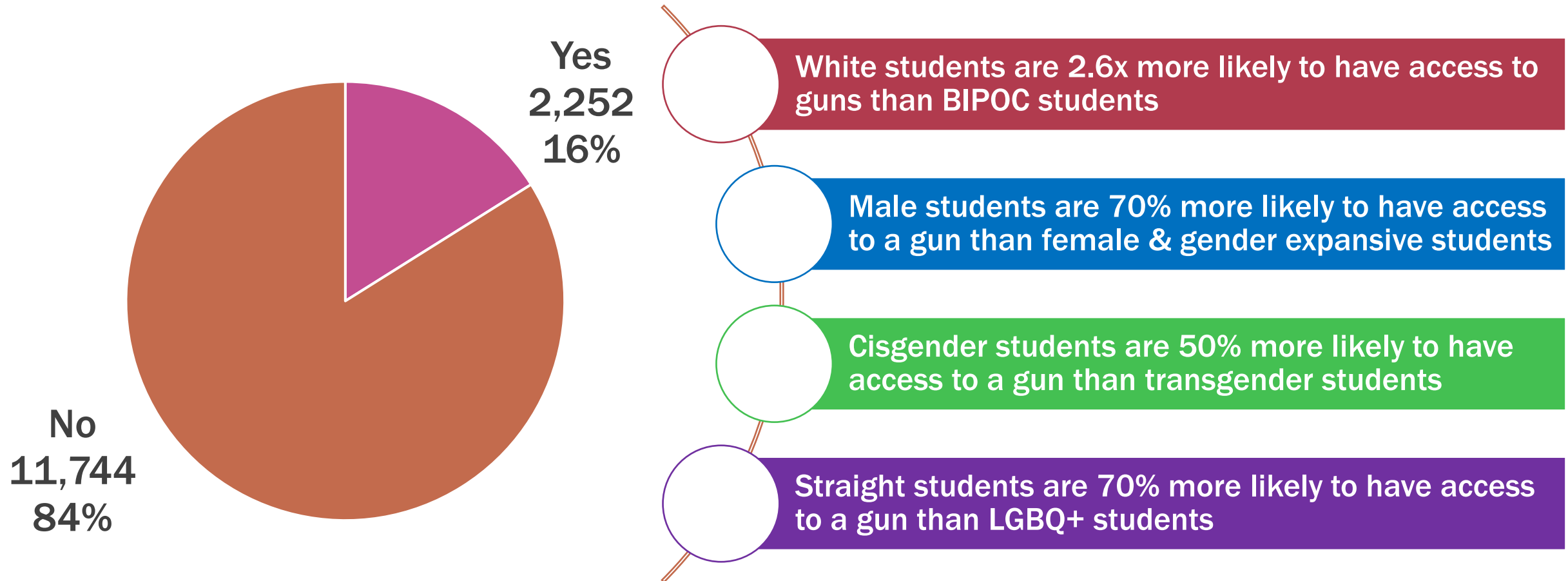
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COURTS

Judge orders Abundant Life shooter's father to stand trial

The father of a 15-year-old girl who shot and killed a student and teacher at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison before killing herself was ordered to stand trial on charges that he allowed his daughter access to guns she used in the attack.

SURVEY QUESTION: DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A GUN?



GUN ACCESS & SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

Using a 6-item scale to measure connectedness at school, those who report **not feeling connected** at school are **24% more likely** to have access to a gun than those report feeling connected at school (18.8% vs. 15.2%)

Those who report **not feeling close to people** at school are **5% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report feeling close to people at school

Those who report **not feeling safe** at school are **7% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report feeling safe at school

Those who report **not feeling a sense of belonging** at school are **14% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report feeling a sense of belonging at school

GUN ACCESS & MENTAL HEALTH

Students with access to a gun, compared to those without are:

12% more likely to report feelings of loneliness

42% more likely to report suicide ideation, **55%** more likely to have made a plan to attempt suicide, and **47%** more likely to have attempted suicide

When considering only white male students, the above percentages increase to **51%**, **67%**, and **220%**

26% less likely to have received mental health services

What questions do you have?