

# U.S. Teen Girls Experiencing Increased Sadness and Violence


## Press Release

For Immediate Release: Monday, February 13, 2023

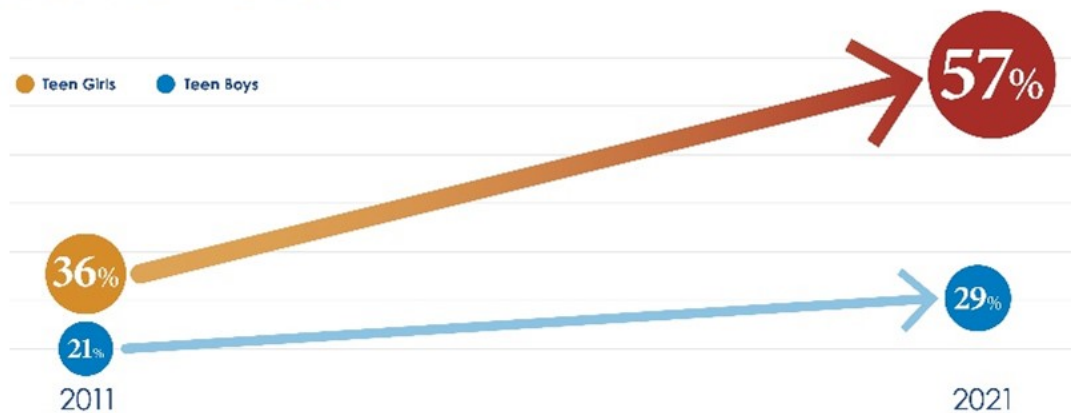
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- New CDC report raises urgency to invest in schools as a vital lifeline to help struggling youth
- Teen girls are experiencing record high levels of violence, sadness, and suicide risk
- LGBTQ+ teens continue to face extremely high levels of violence and mental health challenges

According to [new CDC data](#)  [9.8 MB, 89 pages] released today, nearly 3 in 5 (57%) U.S. teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless in 2021—double that of boys, representing a nearly 60% increase and the highest level reported over the past decade.

## TEEN GIRLS WHO PERSISTENTLY FELT SAD OR HOPELESS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY FROM 2011 TO 2021



While all teens reported increasing mental health challenges, experiences of violence, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors, girls fared worse than boys across nearly all measures. The new report also confirms ongoing and extreme distress among teens who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (LGBTQ+).

“High school should be a time for trailblazing, not trauma. These data show our kids need far more support to cope, hope, and thrive,” Debra Houry, M.D., M.P.H., CDC’s Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Director for Program and Science. “Proven school prevention programs can offer teens a vital lifeline in these growing waves of trauma.”

The analysis includes 2021 data and trends from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which examines health behaviors and experiences among U.S. high school students. Youth mental health has continued to worsen—with particularly stark increases in widespread reports of harmful experiences among teen girls:

- Nearly 1 in 3 (30%) seriously considered attempting suicide—up nearly 60% from a decade ago.
- 1 in 5 (18%) experienced sexual violence in the past year—up 20% since 2017, when CDC started monitoring this measure.
- More than 1 in 10 (14%) had ever been forced to have sex—up 27% since 2019 and the first increase since CDC began

monitoring this measure.

## TEEN GIRLS WHO EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE INCREASED

20% ↑  
BETWEEN 2017 AND 2021

The report also found more than half (52%) of LGBTQ+ students had recently experienced poor mental health and, concerning, that more than 1 in 5 (22%) attempted suicide in the past year. Trend data are not available for students who identify as LGBTQ+ due to changes in survey methods.

Findings by race and ethnicity also show high and worsening levels of persistent sadness or hopelessness across all racial and ethnic groups; and that reported suicide attempts increased among Black youth and White youth.

“Young people are experiencing a level of distress that calls on us to act with urgency and compassion,” said CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health Director Kathleen Ethier, Ph.D. “With the right programs and services in place, schools have the unique ability to help our youth flourish.”

School-based activities can make a profound difference in the lives of teens with a relatively small infusion of support to schools. More than 95% of U.S. youth spend much of their daily lives in school. While their primary goal is academic learning, schools can take evidence-based steps to foster the knowledge, skills and support needed to help prevent and reduce the negative impact of violence and other trauma and improve mental health. For example, safe and trusted adults—like mentors, trained teachers, and staff—can help foster [school connectedness](#), so that teens know the people around them care about them, their well-being, and their success. Schools can provide education that equips teens with essential skills, such as understanding and ensuring true sexual consent, managing emotions, and asking for what they need. Schools can also connect teens to their classmates and communities through school-based clubs and community outreach.


CDC has collected and analyzed data on youth health and well-being for more than three decades. These data are a critical first step to revealing, understanding, and addressing emerging threats to the health and well-being of the nation’s youth.

### 988 Suicide Prevention

Contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline if you are experiencing mental health-related distress or are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. Call or text 988. Chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) [↗](#). Connect with a trained crisis counselor. 988 is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365. Visit the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for more information at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) [↗](#).

### Additional Resources

- [CDC Media Fact Sheet: Concerning Increases in Sadness and Exposure to Violence Among Teen Girls](#)

- [CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2011-2021](#)  [9.8 MB, 89 pages]
- [CDC's What Works in Schools](#)
- [CDC Suicide Prevention](#)

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Last Reviewed: February 13, 2023