

ECHO IDAHO

K12 Youth Well-being & Upstream
Prevention

A Deep Dive into Risk & Protective Factors

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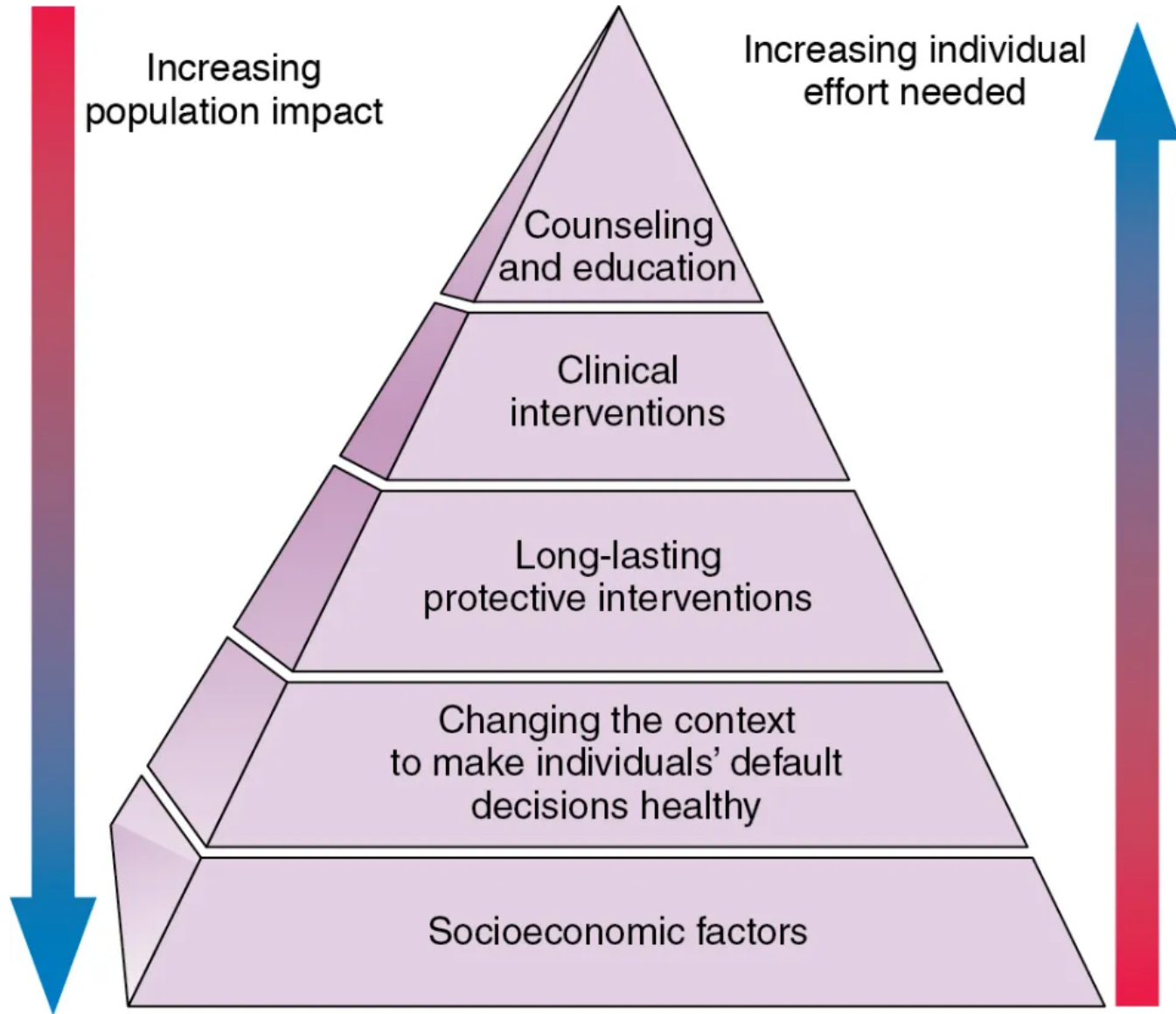
University of Idaho
School of Health and Medical
Professions



Learning Objectives

- Explain the impact of risk and protective factors on student well-being.
- Identify key risk and protective factors important to Idaho students.
- Apply research findings on key risk and protective factors to tangible actions you can take at your school.

Health Impact Pyramid



Our goal is to promote the most well - being for the most people.

Upstream Prevention



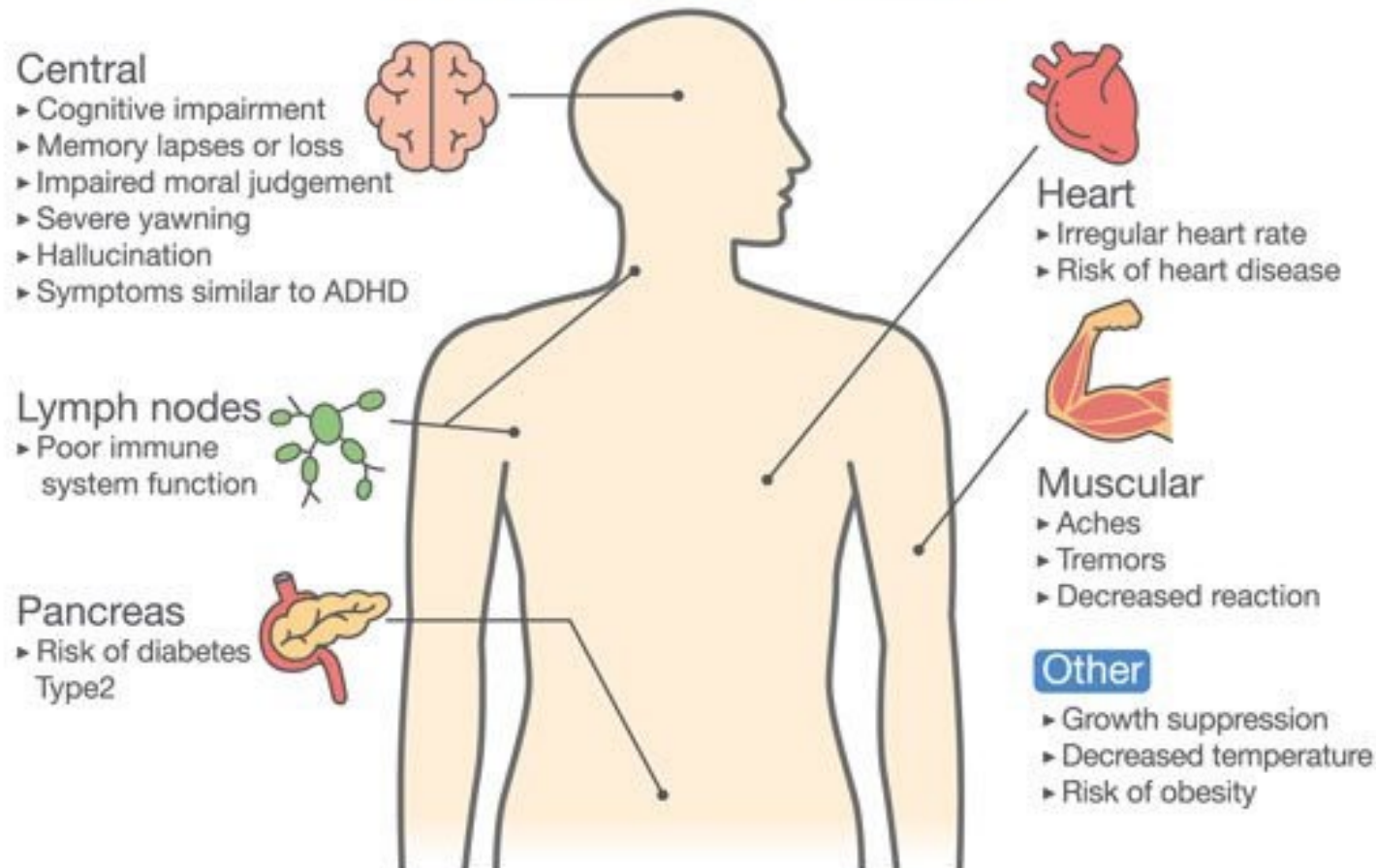
- Work on root causes instead of waiting for crisis to occur.
- Addressing mental health and well-being takes more than clinicians, speakers, or programs.
- We can co-create school communities **high** in protective factors and **low** in risk factors.

KEY Risk and Protective Factors for Idaho Youth in 2025

1. Social Connection
2. Stress
3. Sleep
4. Family Support
5. Discrimination/ Violence

Protective Factor: Sleep

Effects of Sleep Deprivation



What does “Sleep Hygiene” mean?

Sleep environment and behavior

- **Age Range**

6- 12 years....9- 12 hours per 24 hours

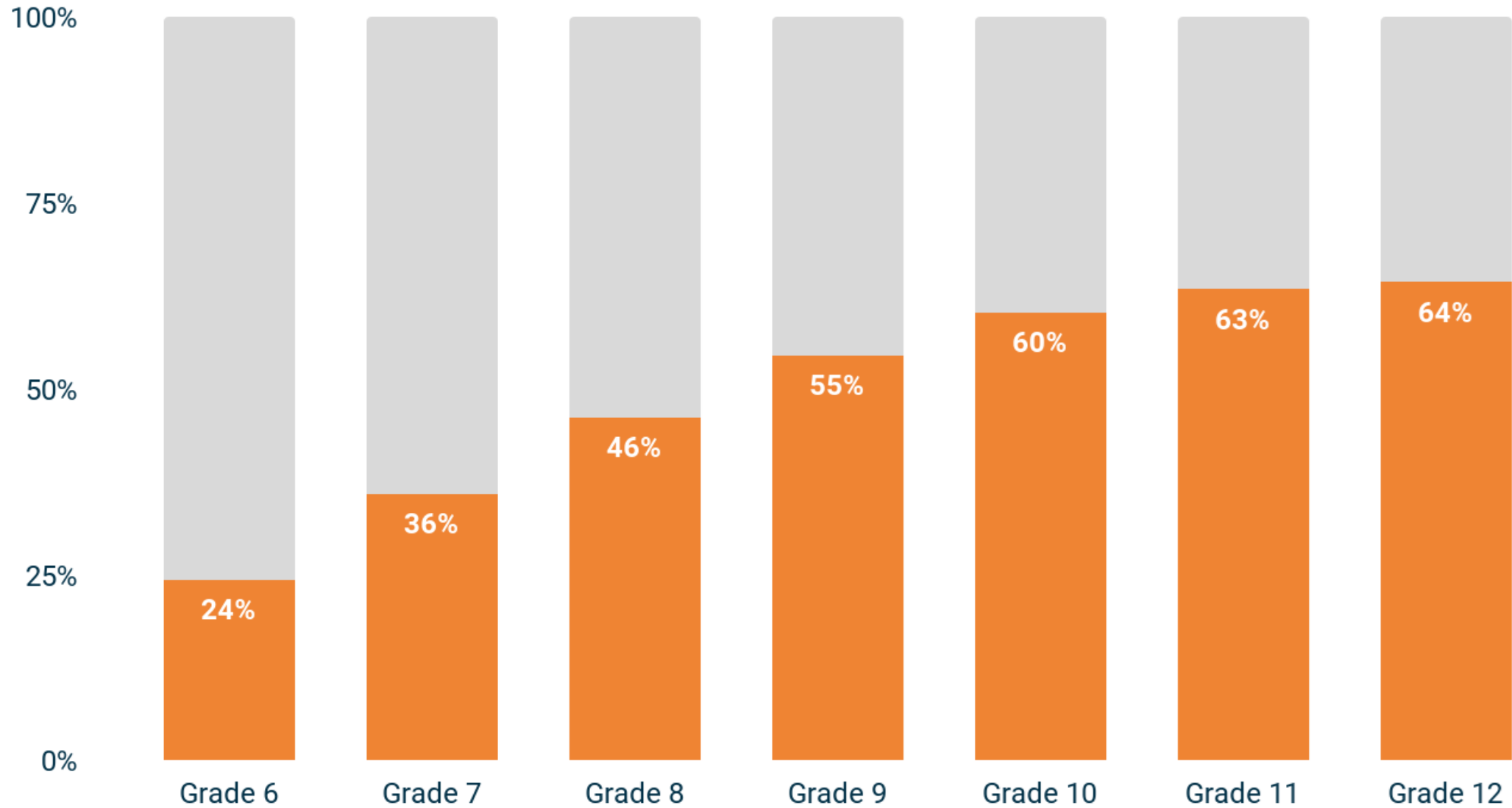
13- 18 years...8- 10 hours per 24 hours

18+ years.....7 or more hours per 24 hours

Tips:

- Consistency
- Bedroom environment
- Remove distractions

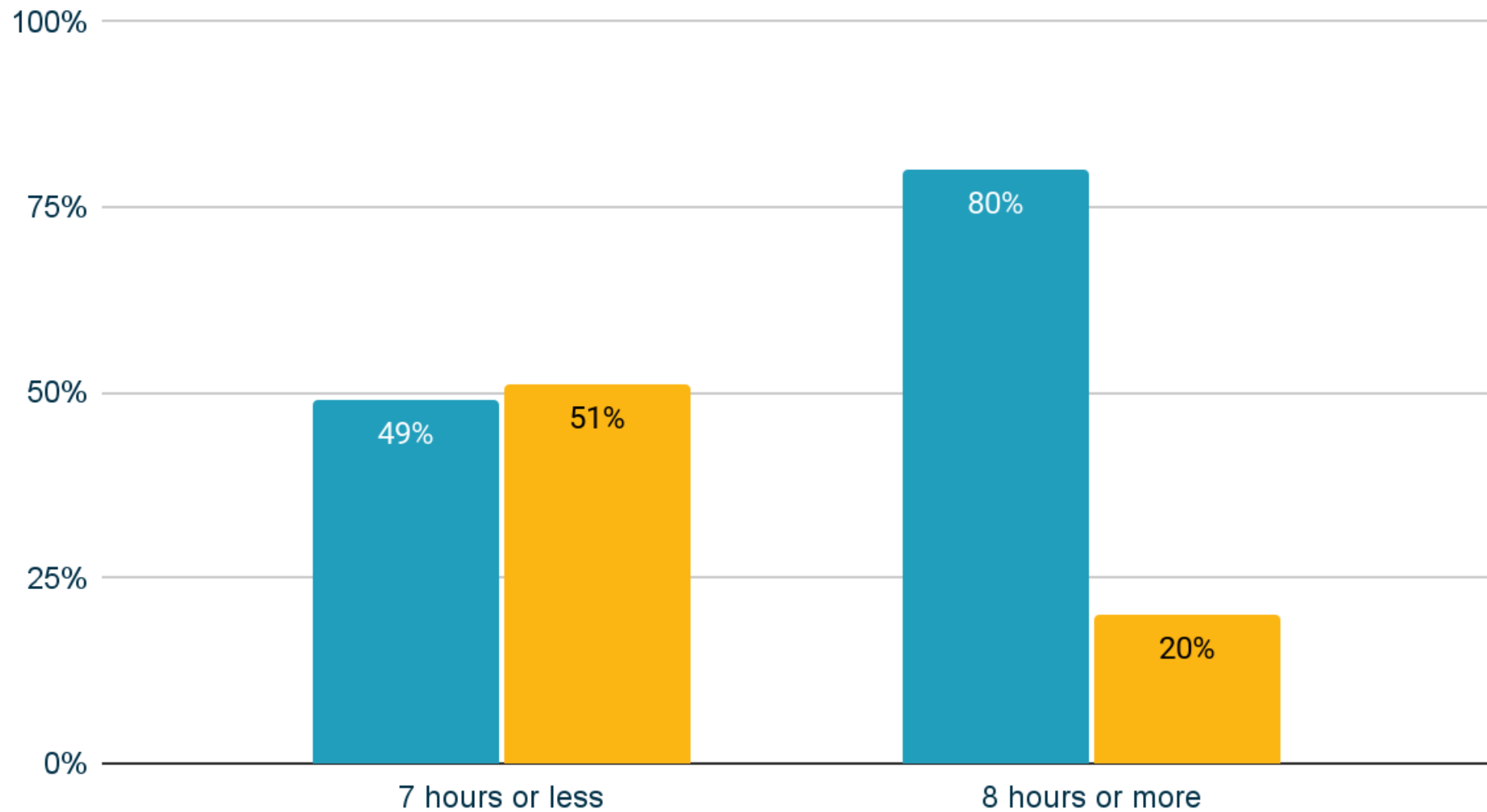
Percentage of Students Getting Less Than 8 Hours of Sleep



Drivers of Less Sleep in Idaho Students

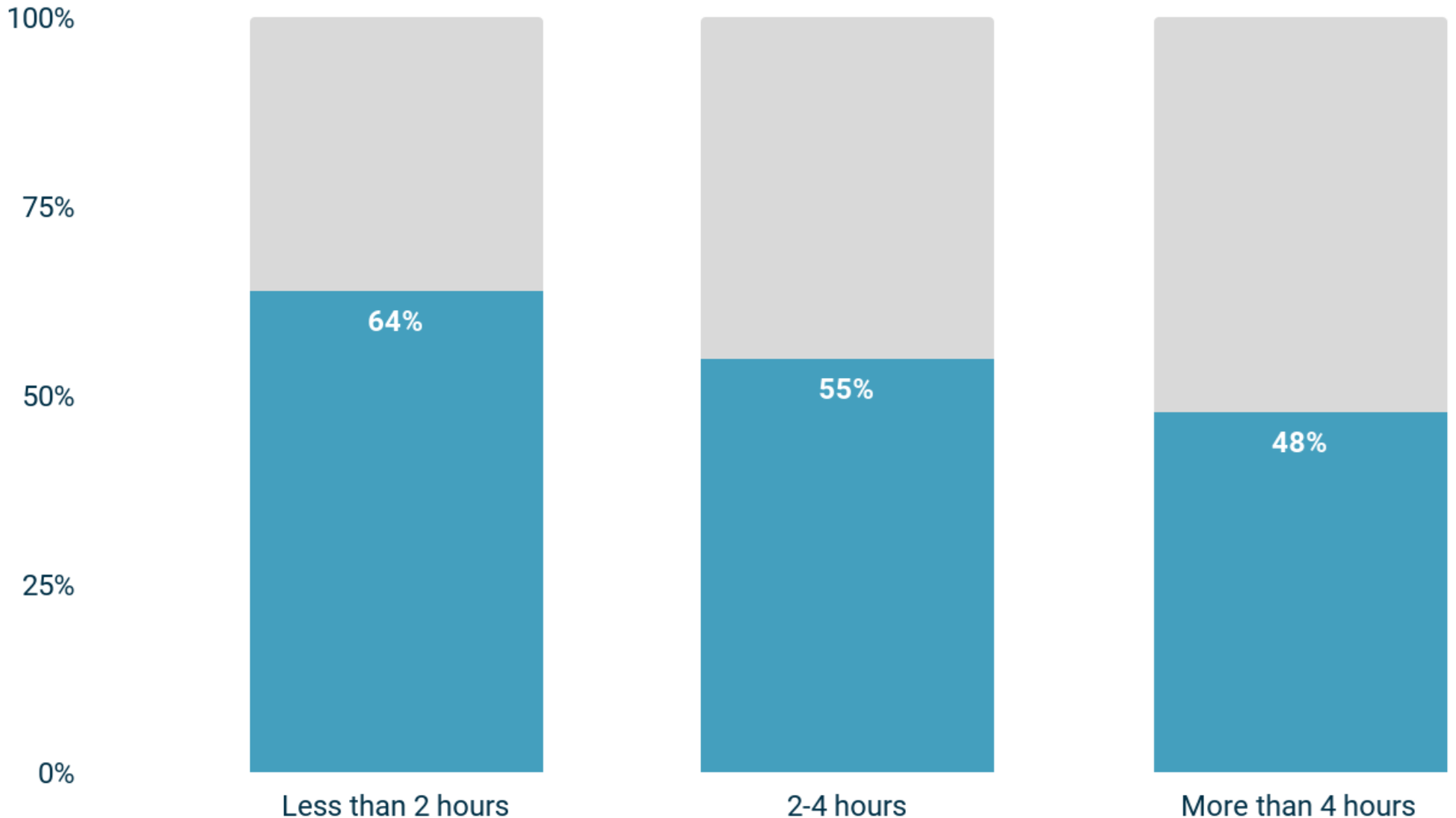
1. Grade Level
2. Family Support
3. Stress
4. Screen time

Students Reporting Depressive Symptoms by Duration of Sleep



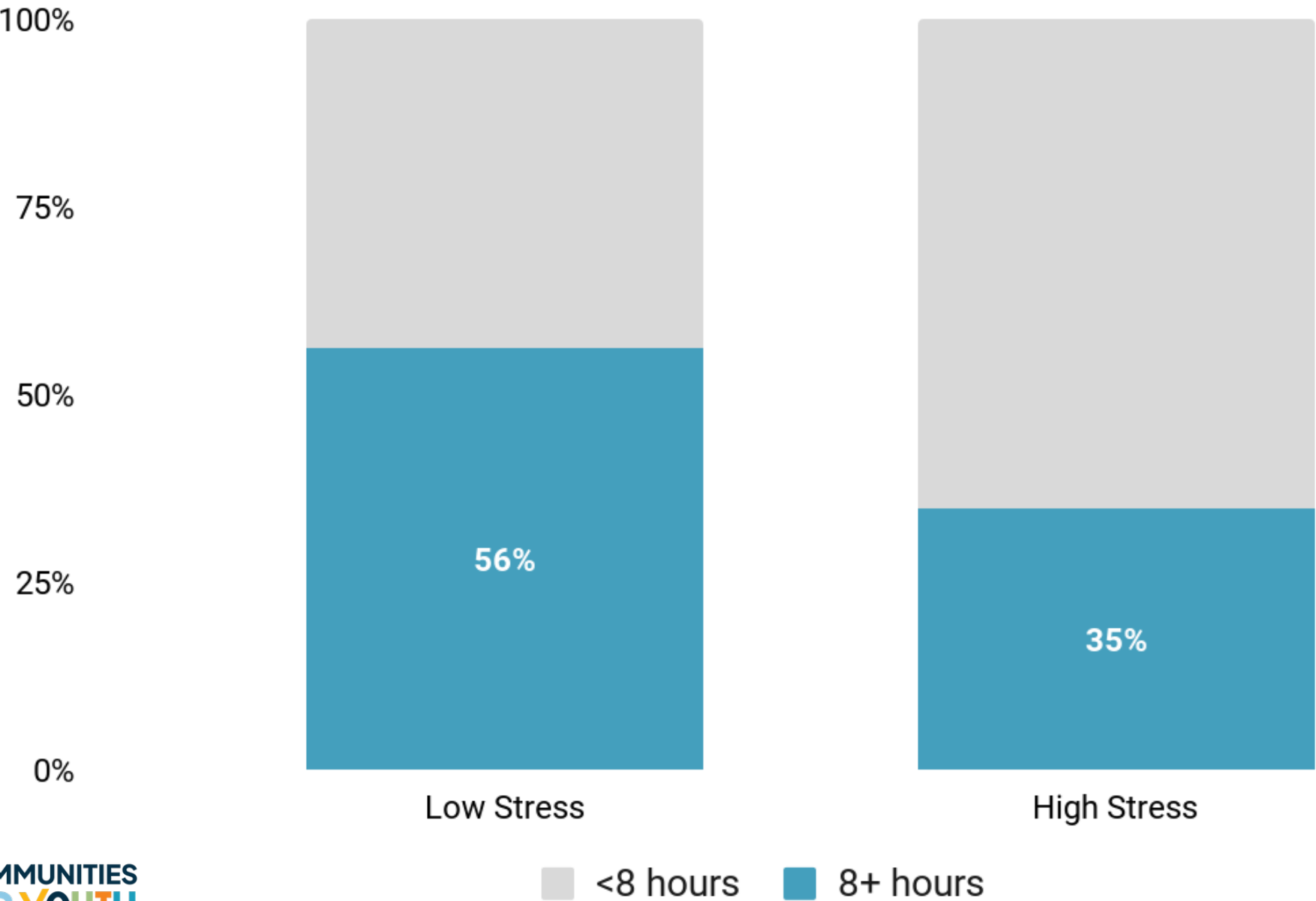
Percentage of Students Getting 8+ Hours of Sleep by Hourly Screen Time

Social media, video games, and streaming services



 <8 hours  8+ hours

Percentage of Students Getting 8+ Hours of Sleep by Stress Level

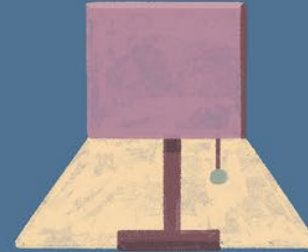




Establish a
nighttime routine



Get up and go to
sleep at the same time



Create a healthy
sleep environment



Turn off electronics
an hour before bed



Limit caffeine



Exercise



Reduce stress



Avoid large, fatty
meals prior to sleeping

Impactful Sleep Hygiene Practices

Explore Activities to Support Sleep



- ☐ Teach interactive lesson plans about various aspects of sleep, such as its impact on mental health and wellbeing, how students improve sleep hygiene.
- ☐ Teach students about sleep-related topics such organization and stress management, releasing stress, mindfulness, health screen/social media use, and physical and mental fitness.
- ☐ Promote homework policies that prioritize quality over quantity, and encourage open communication between teachers, students and parents about homework expectations.
- ☐ Coordinate with other teachers to ensure that students aren't overwhelmed with homework and assignments. Consider deadlines & due dates, sports and school schedules.
- ☐ Encourage students to seek support from school counselors or other relevant professionals if they're facing significant stress or mental health challenges.
- ☐ Promote sleep awareness through newsletters, posters, social media and the school website. Expand through parent & community.

Risk Factors: Stress & Discrimination

- Stress occurs when the demands placed on a young person exceed the resources they have to cope; in other words:
 - Too many demands, not enough resources



Demands Include:

- School climate
- Family responsibilities or conflict
- Social Expectations
- Identity based pressures
- Financial or environmental instability
- Exposure to discrimination or unsafe situation
- Code Switching for Global Majority Youth



"Global majority" is a collective term for people of African, Asian, indigenous, Latin American, or mixed-heritage backgrounds, who constitute approximately 85 percent of the global population

Resources Include

- Sleep
- Emotion Regulation Skills
- Supportive Relationships
- Family stability
- Coping tools
- Time, rest, or space
- Community & belonging
- access to mental health support



Key statistics

- ~20% of middle and high school students surveyed report high perceived stress (Idaho Youth Well-being Survey, 2025).
- 7 in 10 idaho 10th graders report *persistent nervousness, anxiety, or inability to control worrying* in the 2021 Idaho Healthy Youth Survey (IHYS)
- 20% of Idaho 10th graders reported having **seriously considered suicide** in the past 12 months
- 16% had created a suicide plan, 8% had attempted suicide
- Idaho adolescents have a **20.1% prevalence of major depressive episode** , higher than the national average

Stress Experienced by the Global Majority: Discrimination Stress

- Discrimination refers to **unfair treatment, exclusion, or negative assumptions** about a young person based on identity (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, immigration status)
- Stress for Global Majority Youth is shaped not only by typical developmental demands but also by **racialized, cultural, and systemic pressures** that white peers are less likely to face.
- They live in a world where **identity itself can become a source of stress**

"Global majority" is a collective term for people of African, Asian, indigenous, Latin American, or mixed-heritage backgrounds, who constitute approximately 85 percent of the global population

Structural & Systemic Demands

- Exposure to racism, microaggressions, or bias
- Stereotyping (“model minority”, “dangerous”, “Defiant”)
- Underrepresentation in staff and curriculum
- Disparities in discipline practices
- Immigration related fears (for self or family)
- Economic inequity and neighborhood under-resourcing

These create a constant baseline of vigilance that drains coping resources

Becomes “Chronic Stress” instead of “Episodic Stress”

Stress is layered across contexts

For adolescents of the Global Majority,
racial stress is chronic and cumulative

It occurs at school, in social settings,
and in family and community life



CDC Youth Discrimination & Suicide Data (2023)

Students reporting racism “often” or “very often” had:

- 3.5 x higher odds of suicidal thoughts
- 3.9 x higher odds of attempting suicide
- LGBTQIA+ students who experience discrimination are 4x more likely to report persistent sadness or hopelessness
- LGBTQIA+ students are 5x more likely to attempt suicide compared with peers with no discrimination experiences.



Youth who report discrimination (GM/LGBTQ+):

- Lower GPA
- Higher school absenteeism
- Lower school connectedness
- Higher risk of substance use
- Higher emotional distress & anxiety

The Protective Factor Gap

Stress becomes unmanageable when **demands become greater than resources** - and Global Majority youth often have fewer institutional resources due to

- Less access to **culturally responsive mental health support**
- Fewer staff who **share their cultural background**
- **Weaker representation** in school curriculum
- Environments that are unconsciously designed around whiteness as the default.
 - Example: Google a picture of a child and see that primarily white children come up as options.

An inequity in buffering stress

Physiological & Psychological impacts:

Stress/Chronic Stress leads to

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sleep Disruption
- Somatic Symptoms
- Difficulty concentrating
- Identify confusion or distress
- Increased suicidal ideation

Protection around stress

- Increasing school belonging
- Improve access to sleep
- Strengthening family- school relationships
- Make mental health supports visible and accessible



Explore Activities to Support Students Experiencing Stress and Discrimination

- Create predictability in school expectations and schedules
- Psychological Safety
 - Strong Relational connections
 - Cultural Responsiveness
 - No tolerance for discrimination or bias harm
 - Build Community Belonging
- Culturally affirming school environments and curriculum
 - Anti-bias & anti-racist school policies
 - Space for identity expression
- Strong adult relationships & mentorship
- Staff who model regulation skills

Explore Activities to Support Students Experiencing Stress and Discrimination

Questions School Leaders can ask:

- ☐ Where are we unintentionally creating unnecessary stress?
- ☐ Whose stress is invisible in our system?
- ☐ Do Global Majority students feel seen, valued, and safe in this school or do they experience daily microaggressions, stereotypes, or exclusion?
- ☐ Do students feel they belong here?
- ☐ How well do we partner with families as protective factors?
- ☐ Are we building environments that regulate or dysregulate?

Protective Factor: Social Connection

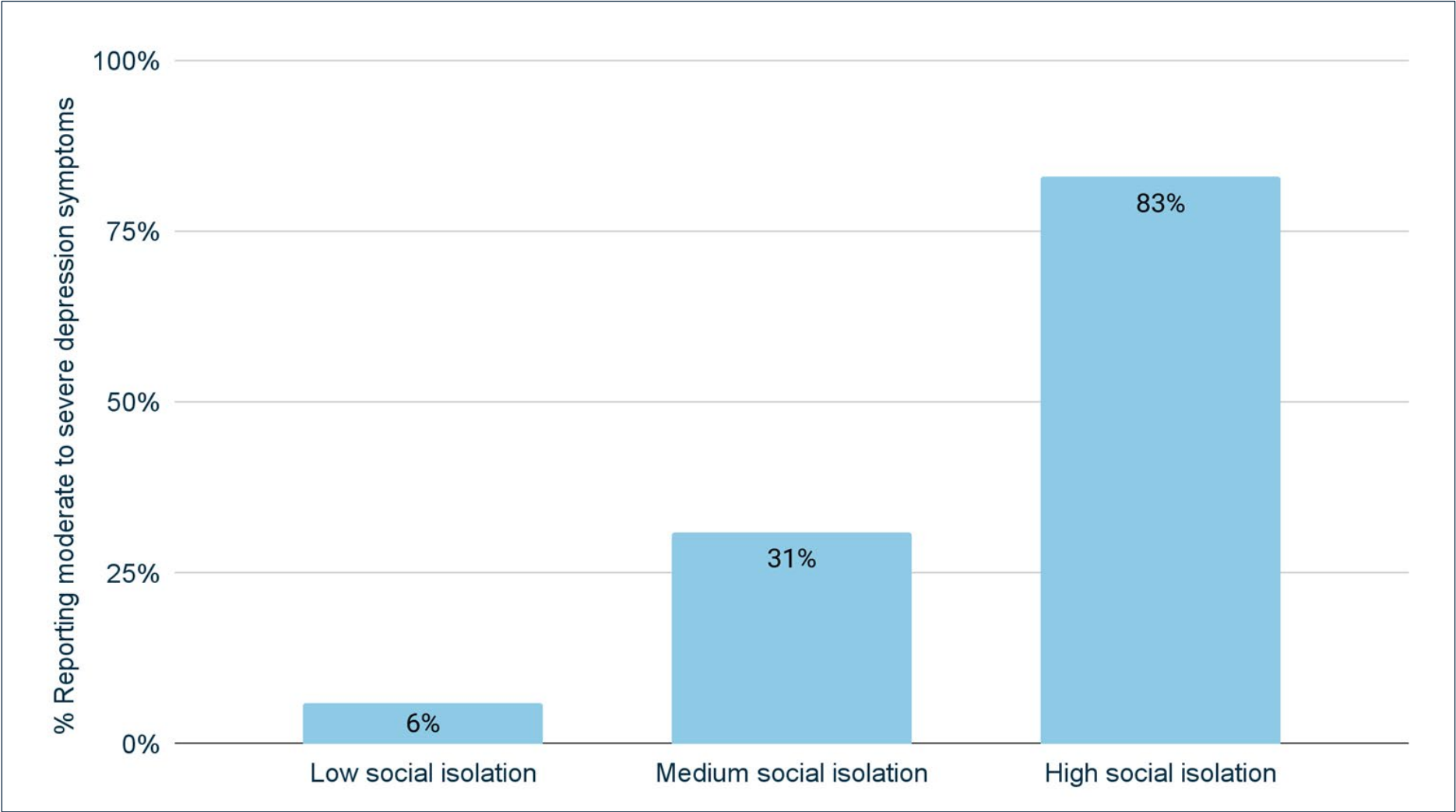


High quality, deep relationships in which we can be our authentic selves.



Depression and Social Isolation in Idaho Students

Teens who have lower social isolation report lower rates of depression.



What we know about Social Connection

- Social connection is a fundamental human need.
 - We are biologically wired for social connection.
- Poor or insufficient social connection is associated with
 - 29% increased risk of heart disease and a
 - 32% increased risk of stroke.
 - Similar risk to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.
 - increased risk for anxiety, depression, and dementia.
- Connection is one of the best protective factors for mental health *and* concerns like substance misuse.
 - helps mitigate high levels of stress.



Pillars of Social Connection for Youth

Connection to Self

- Exploration
- Purpose
- Autonomy & Competence
- Self Awareness

Connection to Peers

- Scaffold connection
- Intentionally build it into school activities

Connection to Safe Trusted Adults

- Lead with listening
- Notice kids
- Role model positive coping

Explore Activities to Support Connection



- ☐ Building youth's sense of value and mattering in their school community.
- ☐ Create opportunities for youth to interact in the group, such as icebreakers, recreation and dialogue or reflection points.
- ☐ Ensure that adults welcome youth as they arrive and call them by name.
- ☐ Taking genuine interest in teens' interests/activities.
- ☐ Creating school and class traditions.
- ☐ Giving youth decision making and planning power.
- ☐ Helping youth navigate conflict without solving for them.
- ☐ Helping youth connect to joy and purpose, trying new things.
- ☐ Display images from the community or play music suggested by youth when they are arriving.

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

+ Education

+ Emotional Well being

+ Physical Health

- Positive Relationships

☒ Close Relationships with Non-Parental Adults

☒ Close Relationships with Parents

☒ Close Relationships with Peers

☒ Positive Relationships with Positive Peers

☒ Prosocial with Peers

☒ Reciprocal Parent-Child Warmth

TARGET POPULATION

Program Search

This interactive search enables you to identify Blueprints-certified interventions based on specific criteria and then browse through a wide range of interventions that match those criteria. Select only a few criteria of importance, as the number of interventions may be reduced by selecting multiple items ACROSS categories, or increased by selecting multiple items WITHIN categories.

Model and Model Plus programs are listed separately from Promising programs. This is because only Model and Model Plus programs have demonstrated efficacy for changing outcomes over time and are recommended for large-scale implementation. Promising programs show promise of efficacy, but require follow-up research before being recommended for large-scale adoption.

16 Programs

Export to Excel

Copy Search URL

Model & Model Plus: 4		Promising: 12
> PROGRAM	∨ RATING	SUMMARY
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America		A community mentoring program which matches a volunteer adult mentor to a child or adolescent to delay or

Assignment Idea

Pick one of the Protective Factors we discussed today and describe how your school could increase this and what supports you think you would need to be successful.