

The Alliance is a program of



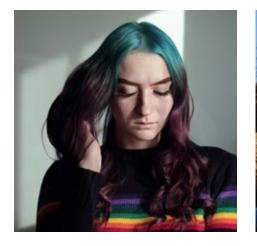
The State of Adolescent Health in Arizona: A Status Report FIRST-EVER
REPORT ON
THE HEALTH
STATUS
OF ARIZONA'S
YOUTH

snapshot of the health status of Arizona's youth. Additionally, they provide a mechanism to track changes, which aids in policy and program planning, analysis, and evaluation. I fervently hope that knowing how our youth are faring on measures of physical, emotional, social, economic, and environmental health spurs reflection, dialogue, and our collective action. Because our youth are counting on us."

– Dr. Veenod Chulani, Adolescent Medicine Specialist Founding Member, Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health



WORKING COLLECTIVELY TO IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR ARIZONA'S ADOLESCENTS











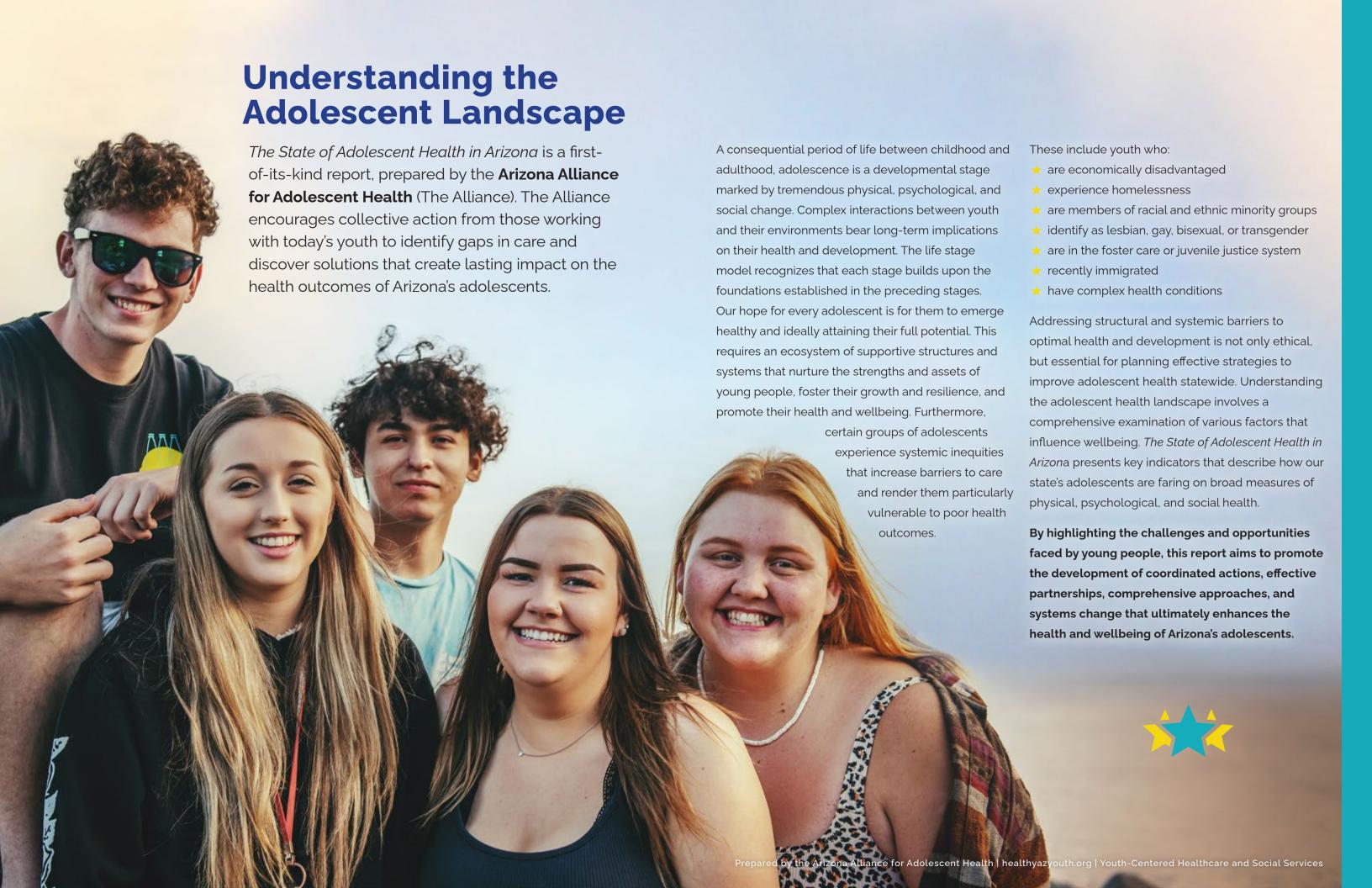








Prepared by the Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health | healthyazyouth.org | Youth-Centered Healthcare and Social Services



The Alliance aims to advance health equity for Arizona's youth and young adults 12-24 years of age by:

dialogue between experts in clinical practice, research, health policy, and public health about the factors contributing to health disparities in Arizona and the solutions needed to eliminate them.

Fostering a Community of Practice that shares innovative strategies and best practices to overcome barriers preventing the delivery of high-quality healthcare and social services.

Collectively coordinating opportunities and developing resources

to support training, education, workforce development, and capacity building for youth-serving professionals.

Supporting a Critical Period of Development

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

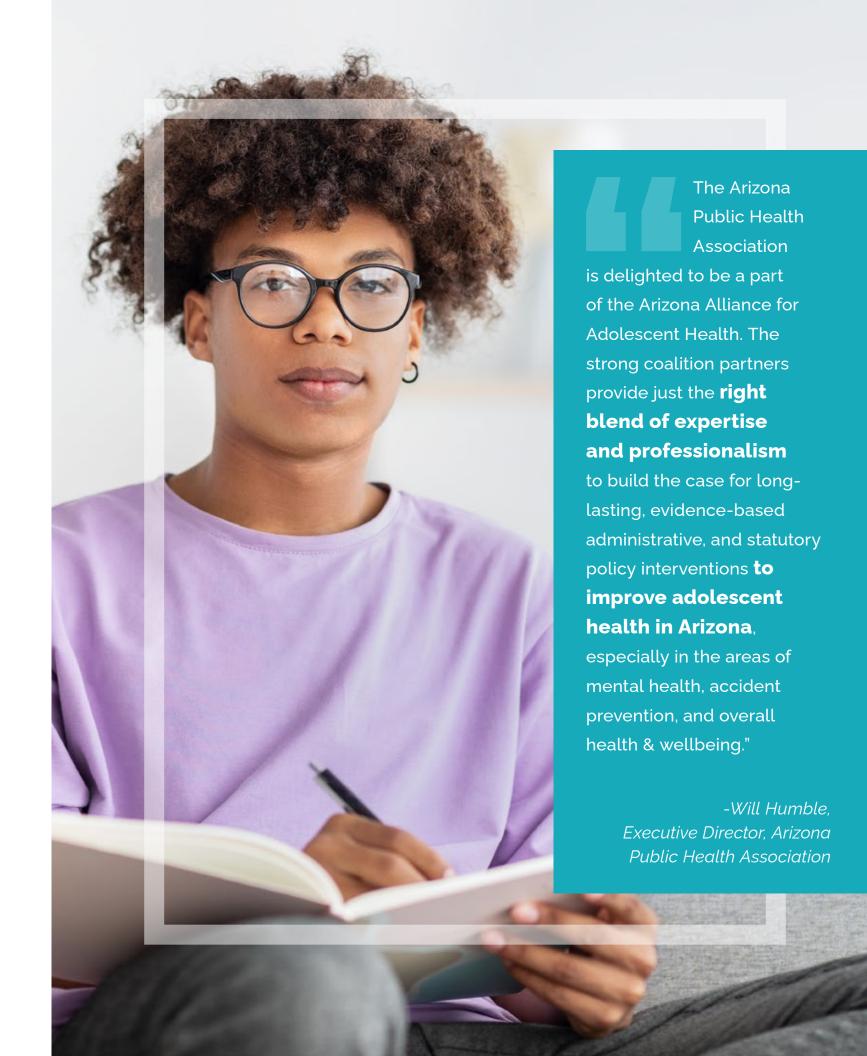
The Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health, or The Alliance, a program of Affirm, is a statewide coalition of medical, behavioral, and social service professionals who are committed to improving adolescent health outcomes by expanding access to high quality healthcare and social services, and improving coordination of care and service delivery across these systems.

Recognizing adolescence as a formative developmental phase, The Alliance understands the value of access to healthcare and social services that intentionally centers the physical, emotional, and social health needs of young people while minimizing gaps in care.

The Alliance continues to expand its statewide coalition of Organizational Partners and Members while engaging in work that informs and drives the goal of achieving optimal health and wellbeing and advancing equity for Arizona's adolescents.

To learn more about The Alliance visit www.healthyazyouth.org.





Data reflects the state of young people's health in these domains:



HEALTH & WELLNESS



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE



ECONOMIC WELLBEING



Identifying Indicators

The Alliance adopted a socioecological framework to identify a set of indicators that broadly describe the state of adolescent health and wellness in Arizona. The framework considers the complex interactions between youth and their social, cultural, economic, and physical environments. By examining the interplay between youth and these environments, we can better understand how these factors impact adolescents' developmental processes and health outcomes. This approach recognizes that the conditions surrounding youth and young adults have various levels of influence and long-term implications for their health and wellbeing.

Partners from Alliance member organizations conducted an exhaustive review of data sets and sources that address key factors impacting adolescent health and wellbeing. In selecting the specific indicators presented in this report, data sources had to meet the following standards: be available to the public at no cost, originate from a trusted source, be easily understood, and be relevant as a guidepost for policy or systems change.

The selected indicators fall into the following domains:

- ★ Health & Wellness
- **★** Education & Workforce Development
- **★** Family & Community
- **★** Environment & Climate
- **★** Economic Wellbeing

Together, they highlight the interconnectedness of these domains and the need for effective interventions to advance adolescent health.

While contemporary definitions of adolescence have evolved to include youth up to 24 years of age, the data presented in this report is primarily for youth ages 12-17 from 2020-2022, with a few exceptions. This reflects the categories available in national and state level data on key measures of adolescent health and wellbeing. Similar data is unavailable for young adults aged 18-24 years.

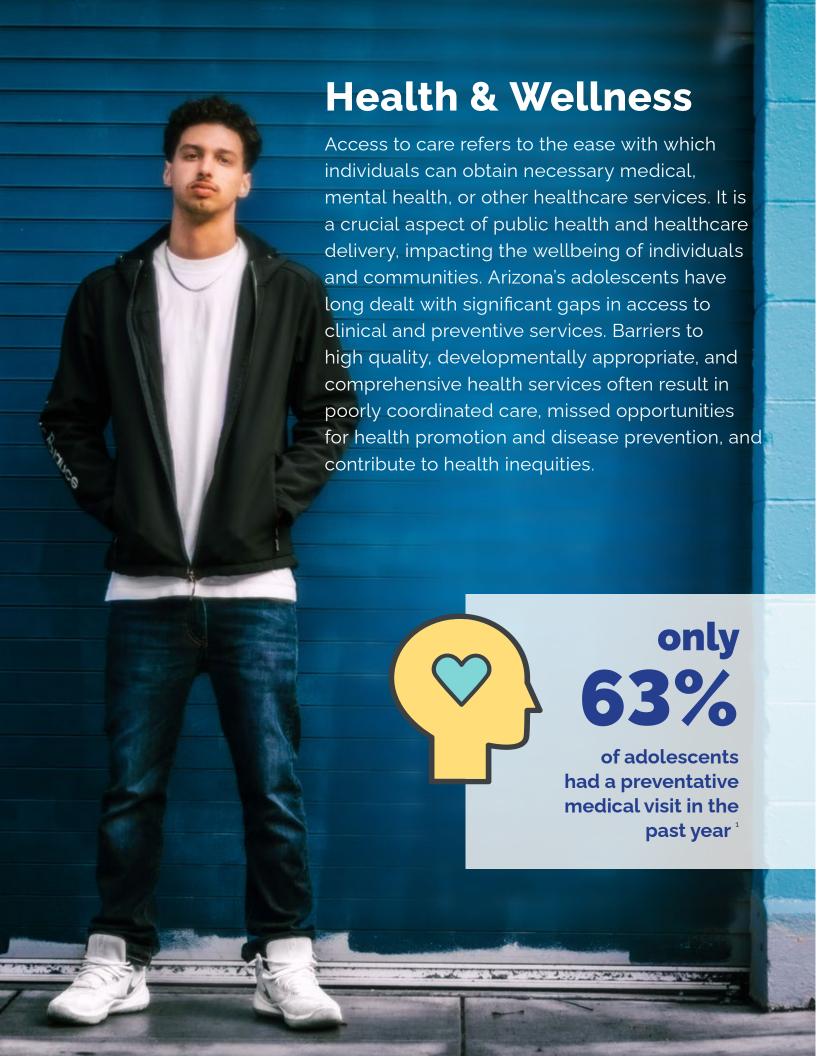


DATA LIMITATIONS & NEEDS

Sound data collection and analysis methods are paramount for understanding and addressing adolescent health and wellbeing. While there has been an increase in adolescent health related data from longitudinal surveys in the last two decades, critical gaps remain. The Alliance identified notable data limitations that negatively impact efforts to comprehensively measure adolescent health and wellbeing.

A lack of standardization in the age ranges of participants, varying data collection time frames, and inconsistencies in evaluation criteria result in data shortcomings. Additionally, data aggregation in existing data sets prevents a more nuanced view of adolescent health by race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, income, and geography. There is also a scarcity of data obtained directly from adolescents to provide subjective measures of health and wellbeing.

Improving data collection and analysis is key to designing adolescent health programs, delivering coordinated services, and developing systems and policy interventions that are responsive to the needs of youth and advance adolescent health and wellbeing.



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Efforts to improve access to care should consider the unique needs of diverse adolescent populations and aim to create an inclusive and equitable healthcare system that benefits individual health outcomes and contributes to a healthier and more resilient community.

Annual well visits provide a crucial opportunity for screening, health promotion, and disease prevention, especially during the adolescent years when significant physical and psychosocial changes occur. Yet during 2020-2021, less than two-thirds of Arizona adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 had a preventative medical visit in the past year.²

Concerns about confidentiality often keep young people from accessing the health services they need. Time alone with a provider allows adolescents to speak with a knowledgeable medical professional about health-related questions or concerns they may want to keep confidential, and that engagement builds skills to manage the health habits they will carry throughout their lives. However, 53% of adolescents did not have a chance to speak with the provider privately without an adult in the room during their last visit.²

78% of adolescents had a preventative dental visit in the past year, just below the national average of **81%**.²

25% had special healthcare needs, which require more intensive care for physical, developmental, and behavioral conditions compared to their typically developing peers. However, only 46% of youth with special healthcare needs received care from sources that meet medical home criteria for comprehensive and coordinated care.²

less than half

of children with a special healthcare need have a medical home²

What Local Teens 14-18 Are Saying:

- ★ "Suicide prevention hotlines and counseling should be much more accessible in schools, youth programs, and anywhere that youth predominantly are."
- ★ "The biggest barriers youth could face when seeking suicide prevention services is being unaware of the resources available, and the prevalence of stigma associated with seeking help."



49%

of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year

Health & Wellness

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is an inseparable aspect of overall wellbeing and adolescence is a critical period for mental health development. Access to prevention, screening, and services that address mental health concerns during this time can have a lasting impact. Investing in mental health awareness and services can contribute to better overall wellbeing and prevent long-term mental health challenges.

During 2020-2021, **27%** of adolescents 12-17 had a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem; however, less than half of them received treatment or counseling.²

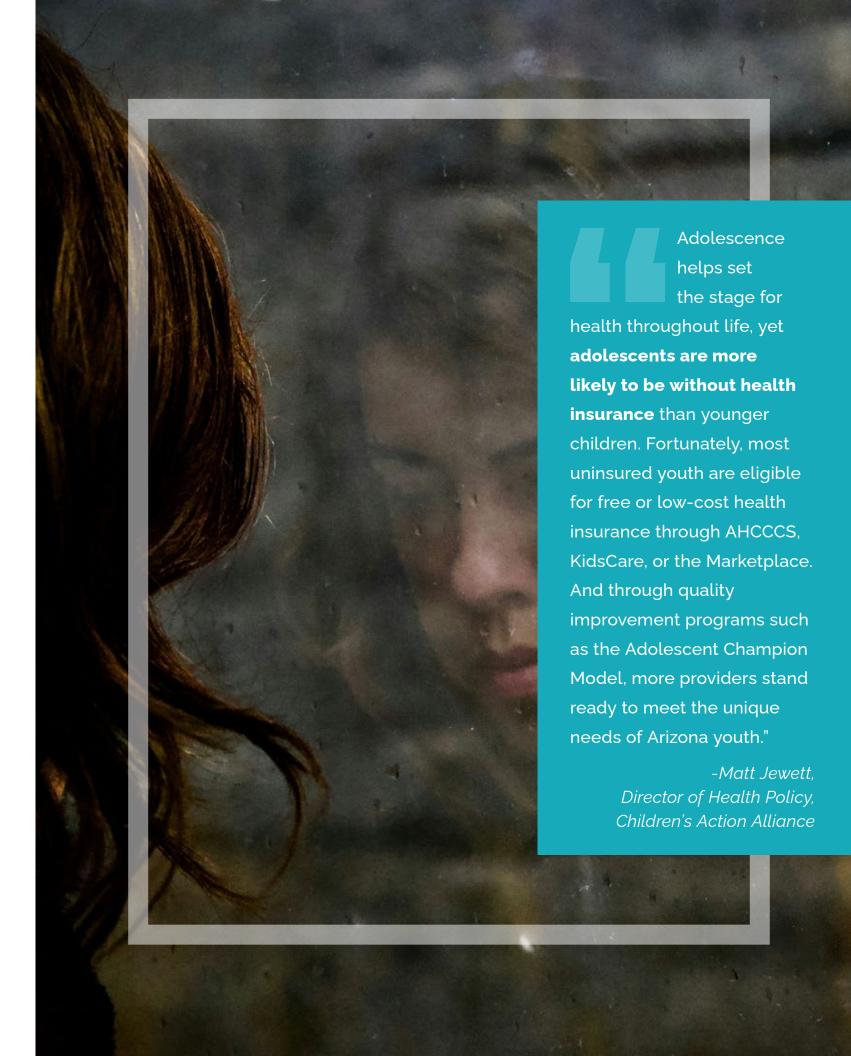
17% of adolescents experienced a major depressive episode (MDE) in the last year, ranking Arizona as 9th in the nation for the prevalence of youth who experienced a MDE in the last year.⁴

Only **30%** of youth who experienced a major depressive episode in the last year received treatment, ranking Arizona at 47th in the country for rates of affected youth receiving treatment, next only to Hawaii, Mississippi, and Texas.⁴

A significant proportion of adolescents face barriers that prevent them from accessing needed mental health care, including the lack of comprehensive healthcare coverage. Among adolescents in need of mental health services, only 52% had insurance benefits that adequately met their needs.²

According to The Trevor Project's 2022 survey of LGBTQ youth in Arizona:

- ★ **75%** reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety
- ★ 65% reported experiencing symptoms of depression
- ★ 49% seriously considered suicide in the past year
- ★ **16%** attempted suicide in the past year³



What Local Teens 11-17 Are Saying:

- * "Sex ed is considered taboo. Young people need a safe space to be educated on correct information and be able to freely speak about sexual health. This could help break taboo and reduce stigma."
- ★ "There is a lack of support in the community about reproductive and sexual health services."
- "Rural communities often lack accessible resources and bilingual staff."
- ★ "Youth would benefit from accurate information, especially the dangers of certain situations, as young people are often misinformed concerning sexual health."

Health & Wellness REPRODUCTIVE & SEXUAL HEALTH

Ensuring access to reproductive health services and education for adolescents is essential. Investing in this area can promote healthy relationships, reduce unintended pregnancies, improve maternal and child health, and empower young people to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

Adolescence is a crucial period for sexual and relationship development. Caring adults and surrounding systems must work collaboratively to ensure that youth not only have access to comprehensive clinical care but also develop the sexual literacy, agency, and recognition of healthy and unhealthy behaviors and relationships required to achieve optimal sexual and reproductive health. In 2021, almost 14% of high school students reported experiencing sexual violence one or more times in the past year.⁵

Chlamydia is the most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted infection in the United States. In 2022, over half of all reported chlamydia cases were among persons aged 15-24 years. Since this infection often has no signs or symptoms, screening women under 25 years of age at least annually is recommended. Despite this, less than 5% of high school females were tested for chlamydia in 2021.





In 2021, more than **91%** of Arizona high school students reported they did not use *both* a condom and birth control at the same time during their most recent sexual intercourse.⁵ **43%** reported using a condom, which protects against some sexually transmitted infections and may prevent pregnancy with opposite sex partners.⁵

Rates of pregnancies and births for youth under age 19 **reached a historic low** across the nation and in Arizona in 2021.

Despite the decline in teen pregnancy rates for all races and ethnicities combined, significant disparities remain. Adolescents who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Black experienced a higher pregnancy rate than adolescents who are White and Asian/Pacific Islander.

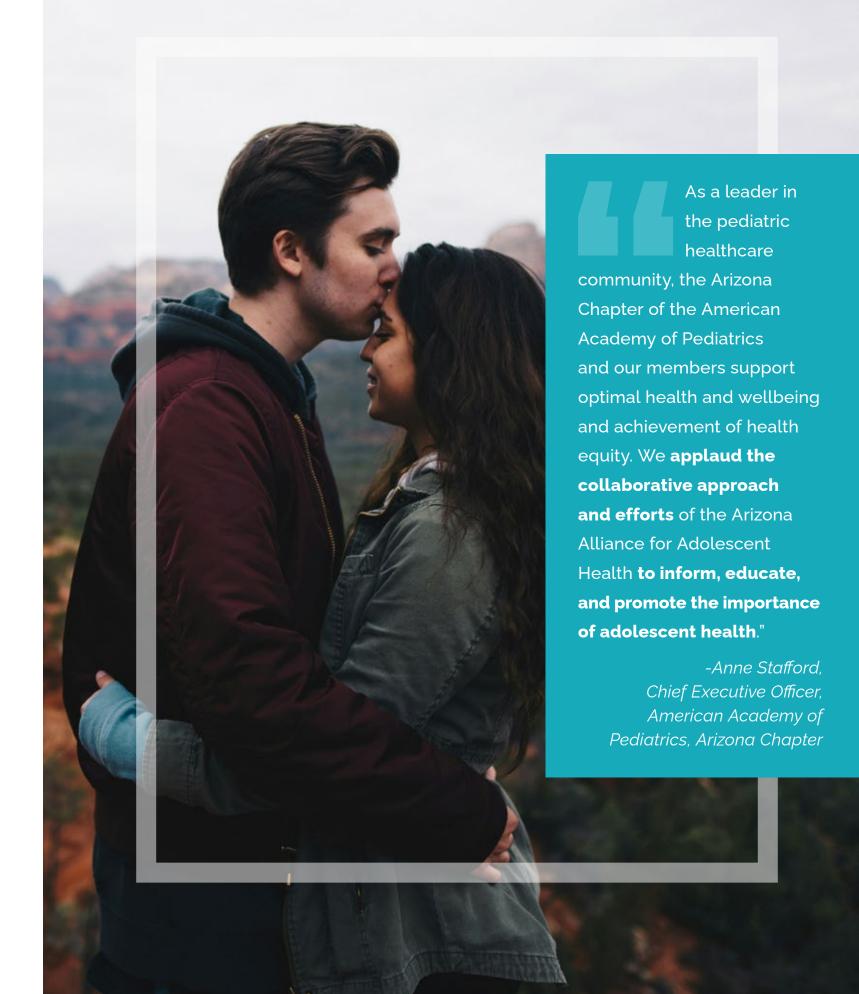


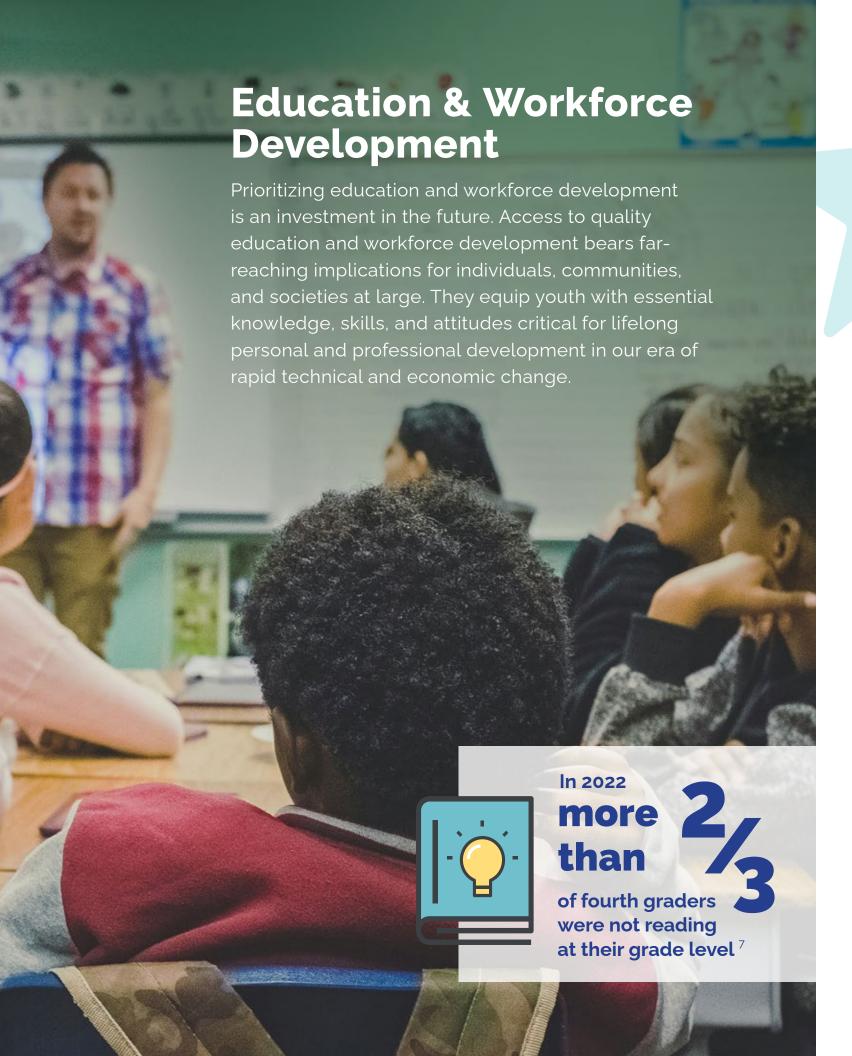
TEEN PREGNANCY RATES (per 1,000)⁶



88%

of Arizona high school students reported using some form of birth control to prevent pregnancy ⁵





Adolescents who receive quality education and workforce development support are more likely to have improved economic prospects, increased opportunities for employment, and greater social mobility. Education also empowers adolescents by

Education also empowers adolescents by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions and positive choices and is linked to better health outcomes.

According to U.S. News and World Report,⁹ in 2021, Arizona ranked:

- 48th in the nation for Pre-K-12 education.
- ★ 45th for college readiness.
- **47th** for high school graduation rates.

Opportunity youth are young people between the ages of 16 to 24 years who are disconnected from school and work. The term opportunity youth emphasizes the potential for positive change during this critical window and the importance of creating effective pathways for youth to reconnect with education, training programs, and employment opportunities to support their successful transition into adulthood and the workforce. Many of them have disabilities and experiences with homelessness or are involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Often from communities with higher levels of poverty and limited resources, youth of color are also disproportionately represented in this group. They frequently face various challenges and barriers that hinder their engagement in education or employment opportunities. In 2020, 13.4% of 16-24 year olds in Arizona versus 12.6% nationally were disconnected from school and work, totaling nearly 121,000 youth.

The over-representation of youth of color reflects systemic inequities:8

30.9%

13.6%

11

8.3%

Native American

Black/African American

18.2%

Hispanic/Latino

White

Prepared by the Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health | healthyazyouth.org | Youth-Centered Healthcare and Social Services

Environment & Climate

The environment and climate directly impact the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of adolescents. Poor air quality resulting from environmental pollution can lead to respiratory issues and exacerbate conditions such as asthma. Lack of access to clean water not only impacts hygiene and sanitation but also increases the likelihood of waterborne diseases. Increased temperatures place those living in regions with extreme heat at greater risk for heat-related illnesses. Vulnerable populations, including adolescents from low-income communities, may be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts due to limited resources to cope with and adapt to the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change.

According to America's Health Rankings, as of 2023, **Arizona was second worst in the nation for air pollution**¹⁰, yet only two state policies designed to impact climate change are in place. In addition, **Arizona ranked in the top 10 states for severe housing problems**, with **17%** of occupied housing units having at least one of the following: lack of complete kitchen or plumbing facilities, overcrowding, or severely cost-burdened occupants.¹⁰

In 2022, Maricopa County ranked the 7th most polluted county and the Phoenix-Mesa metro area ranked 5th in the U.S. as it relates to high ozone pollution.¹¹

Nearly one-third of the Navajo Nation population does not have access to clean, reliable drinking water.¹² Environment and climate indicators specific to adolescents in Arizona are almost non-existent; thus, the data presented here **provides a limited view on the conditions in which Arizona's adolescents are living**. Developing and monitoring such indicators is vital to understanding the unique challenges adolescents in Arizona face in relation to environmental factors.







Arizona outpaces the national average for youth 12-17 living in poverty.²

In Arizona, during 2020-2021, **1 in 5 adolescents lived in a household where the income level was at or below 99% of the federal poverty level**.² When analyzed across ethnic and racial intersections:

42% of children who are Black/Non-Hispanic² and **31%** of children who are Hispanic are living in households experiencing poverty.²

462,000 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 are living in households experiencing a high burden with the cost of housing.²

Almost **43%** of adolescents lived in a household that received 1-2 types of assistance in the previous year, outpacing the national average of **39%**.²

Nearly a third of Arizona adolescents live in households that can't always afford to eat healthy foods.²

Efforts to support adolescent development should recognize the intersectionality of economic factors with other determinants of wellbeing. Policies and programs that address economic disparities and promote overall economic stability can contribute to more equitable opportunities for adolescent development.

Family & Community

Safe, supportive, and nurturing settings foster secure foundations for growth and are crucial for adolescent wellbeing and development.

Positive home settings, optimal learning environments, and thriving community connections play integral roles in shaping individuals. Stable attachments at home with parents and caring adults are the cornerstone for emotional security and resilience. Safe schools create optimal learning environments that encourage student engagement, build relationships with teachers and peers, and support academic success. Safe and inclusive neighborhoods and communities foster healthy social interactions and promote a sense of belonging.

In 2021, less than three-quarters of high school students considered themselves "safe" at school, with more than 1 in 4 having experienced bullying.⁵

More than 11% of adolescents missed school because they felt unsafe.⁵

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that can have a significant impact on an individual's physical, mental and emotional health throughout their life. These experiences include abuse, neglect, substance abuse and mental illness in the household, parental separation or divorce, incarceration of a household member, and witnessing domestic violence. Research has shown a strong correlation between the number of ACEs a person experiences and negative outcomes later in life.¹³

Support at home, school, and in the community is important for all youth - especially LGBTQ+ youth who face social stigma and experience minority stress that places them at greater risk for adverse health outcomes compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are important aspects of a young person's identity. An estimated 286,000 Arizonans 13 years of age and older identify as LGBT. Nearly three-quarters of Arizona's LGBTQ youth experienced discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity in the previous year. In addition, just one-third of queer youth report living in LGBTQ-affirming spaces, while only 45% consider their school an LGBTQ-affirming space.

Collaborative efforts involving families, schools, and communities can create a supportive ecosystem that fosters the overall wellbeing of adolescents, setting the stage for a healthier adulthood.





Conclusion

The Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health prepared this report as part of its commitment to lead the charge of advocating for Arizona's adolescents. The Alliance's effort to identify and present critical indicators describing the state of adolescent health in Arizona reflects our commitment to advance adolescent health and equity.

Through this report, The Alliance seeks to inform and guide initiatives that will contribute to positive and equitable outcomes for all youth across the state.

The report was a significant undertaking and is the result of thoughtful deliberation and collaboration with Organizational Partners and our internal team. While preparing this report, The Alliance identified notable data limitations that impede efforts to comprehensively measure adolescent health. Improving data collection and analysis is key to designing and creating adolescent health programs, delivering services, and developing systems and policy interventions that advance adolescent health and equity. The Alliance provides the following recommendations to improve data collection and analysis:

★ Develop standardized indicators:

Establish standardized indicators for adolescent health and wellbeing that ensure consistency across locations and populations and reflect important developmental considerations for early, middle, and late adolescence. The World Health Organization's Global Action for Measurement of Adolescent Health is a promising initiative that has developed priority indicators for adolescents 10-19 years of age to guide actions toward improving adolescent health and to track progress toward and ultimately achieve global development goals.





- **★** Promote longitudinal studies:
 - Invest in research that tracks adolescents over time to provide insight into the dynamic nature of health and wellbeing, allowing for a more thorough understanding of the factors that influence health and development.
- Include representative and diverse samples: Ensure that data sets are inclusive of youth up to 24 years of age and embed data disaggregation in measurement approaches, allowing for tailored interventions that address the unique needs of subgroups within the diverse adolescent population.
- Incorporate measurement of positive assets, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes: Foster strength-based approaches and better target investments by including measures of adolescent health consistent with positive youth development approaches, rather than a narrow focus on negative behaviors, risks, and outcomes in current measurement approaches.
- Engage adolescents in the process:

 Center the voices of youth to include subjective measures of adolescent wellbeing. Participatory approaches in data collection efforts draw on young people's perceptions and experiences which ideally will lead to more accurate and relevant information.
- → Promote policy integration: Work towards integrating adolescent health indicators into broader health policies, which can prioritize adolescent health and wellbeing within local, state, and national health agendas.

By identifying and presenting critical indicators to describe how the state's adolescents are faring on broad measures of health. The Alliance aspires to lead coordinated actions, effective partnerships, comprehensive approaches, and systems change that ultimately enhances health and wellbeing and advances equity for Arizona's adolescents.

When we are united in purpose and act collectively, we possess the ability to create a society where the promise of a healthy and equitable future is not just a dream but a reality for all."

- Tracy Pedrotti, Adolescent Health Program Supervisor, Affirm Sexual and Reproductive Health Founding Member, Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health



Sources:

- 1. "AZDHS: Epidemiology & Disease Control Disease Integration Services- STD Control." *Arizona Department of Health Services*, www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/disease-integration-services/std-control/index.php#reports. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 2. Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2020-2021 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved 01/24/24 from www.childhealthdata.org.
- 3. "2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health." *The Trevor Project*, www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/. Accessed 22 Jan. 2024.
- 4. "2022 State of Mental Health in America Report. *Mental Health America*, 19 Oct. 2021, www.mhanational.org/research-reports/2022-state-mental-health-america-report.
- 5. "High School YRBS. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=AZB. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 6. Table 1A-7 Pregnancy Rates and Number of Live Births, Fetal Deaths, And ... pub.azdhs.gov/health-stats/report/ahs/ahs2021/pdf/1a7.pdf. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 7. "2023 Kids Count Data Book." *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*, www.aecf.org/resources/2023-kids-count-data-book. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 8. Lewis, Kristen. "A Disrupted Year: How the Arrival of Covid-19 Affected Youth Disconnection." *New York: Measure of America, Social Science Research Council*, 2022.port
- 9. Rankings: Pre-K-12 Best States for Childhood Education U.S. News ... www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education/prek-12. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 10. "Explore Health Measures and Rankings in Arizona: Ahr." *America's Health Rankings*, www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/states/AZ. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 11. "State of the Air 2023 Report." *American Lung Association State of the Air, American Lung Association*, 2023. www.lung.org/getmedia/338boc3c-6bf8-480f-ge6e-b93868c6c476/SOTA-2023.pdf.
- 12. "Home." Navajo Nation Water Resources, ndwr.navajo-nsn.gov/. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- 13. In "LGBT People in the United States Not Protected by State Nondiscrimination Statutes." (April 2020) *The Williams Institute*, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.



Sign up to receive updates in #TeenHealthTuesday or contact acm@affirmaz.org.

Recommended Citation: Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health. (2024 March) The State of Adolescent Health in Arizona: A Status Report. https://www.healthyazyouth.org/statusreport

Funded by: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Services, Title V Block Grant Bo4MC31472

The content presented in this report is not necessarily representative of the perspectives or opinions held by any affiliated partners mentioned.

Prepared by the Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health | healthyazyouth.org | Youth-Centered Healthcare and Social Services

Arizona Alliance for ADOLESCENT HEALTH

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health, an initiative within Affirm, encourages the collective action of those working with today's youth as a means to identify gaps and discover solutions that create lasting impact on the health outcomes of Arizona's adolescents. We aim to advance equity and improve health outcomes by promoting access to quality, coordinated, youth-centered health and social services.





To learn more about The Alliance, visit www.healthyazyouth.org.

We greatly appreciate the generous support of the Arizona Department of Health Services and Vitalyst Health Foundation, which made the development of this resource possible. We thank the following individuals for their assistance with the completion of this document: Zaida Dedolph-Piecoro, May Mgbolu, and former Affirm Board Member Emily Waldron. We also greatly appreciate the assistance of The Alliance Organizational Partners, members of the Youth Health Equity Project, the amazing content and branding studio Switchboard, and our always supportive team for their data and editorial contributions.







