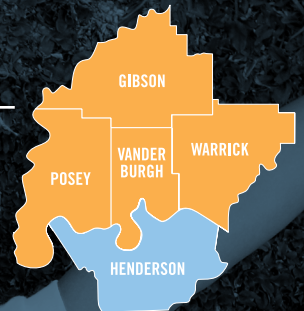


HEALTH CONCERNS: MENTAL HEALTH & ALCOHOL USE IN THE EVANSVILLE REGION

A GREATER EVANSVILLE HEALTH SURVEY ISSUE BRIEF
GEHS VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2



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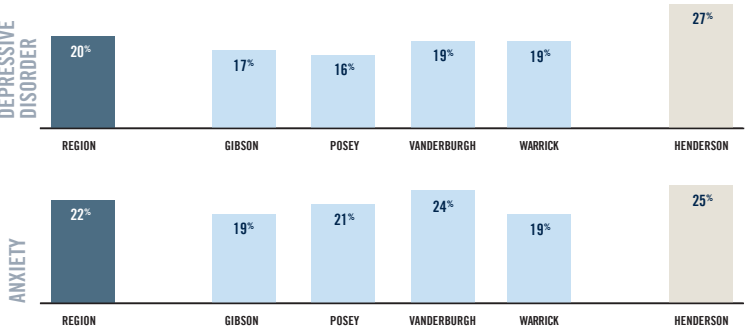
Data from 2021 Greater Evansville Health Survey

welbornfdn.org/gehs

Mental health and substance use are top concerns for the nation and the Greater Evansville region. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of these issues, with data from across the country telling a story of worsening conditions. The data for this survey highlight mental health and substance use concerns, even though they were collected pre-pandemic. Systemic community solutions should be strategic and comprehensive across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention, and treatment and consider social determinants of health factors like racism, discrimination, job opportunities, income, safe and affordable housing, etc. The conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age, have a significant impact on people's quality of life, including mental health, and are vital layers of consideration to any effort to improve community mental health.

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

1 OUT OF EVERY 5 RESIDENTS HAS A DEPRESSIVE DISORDER & NEARLY 1 IN 4 HAVE ANXIETY



Q: Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional told you in the past 12 months that you have (or still have):

- A depressive disorder (including depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression)?
- Any type of anxiety (including acute stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, phobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, or social anxiety disorder)?

MENTAL HEALTH REFERS TO OUR EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING.

There are many factors that contribute to mental health over the lifespan, including: family dynamics, biological factors (such as inherited genes or brain chemistry), and life experiences (both positive and negative). It affects how we think, feel, and act.

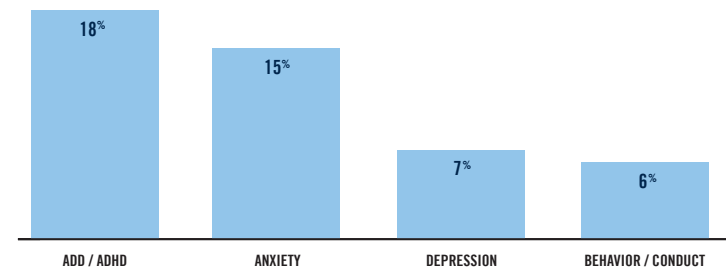
Nearly 5% of U.S. adults experience regular feelings of depression such as persistent sad or hopeless feelings, interruptions in eating and sleeping habits, or thoughts of self-harm. Over 11% of U.S. adults experience regular feelings of anxiety such as excessive, irrational fear, panic, or worry. Women tend to have higher rates of depression and anxiety than men. However, women are more likely to seek treatment, which may influence higher diagnosis rates.

*Social Determinants of Health*¹ factors like job opportunity and income are important when understanding what influences mental health. Based on the Greater Evansville Health Survey results (collected before the COVID-19 pandemic,) depression and anxiety were highest for those unable to work (depression 63%, anxiety 60%) and those out of work for one year or more (depression 62%, anxiety 60%). Depression and anxiety were lowest among those currently self-employed, employed, and retired (depression 14-16%, and anxiety 11-21%). During the COVID-19 pandemic, communities across the nation highlighted concerns about negative impacts on the job market and the mental health of residents.

5.4
Number of days
in the last month
that residents'
mental health
was "not good"

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

ADD OR ADHD AND ANXIETY ARE THE MOST PREVALENT OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS AMONG CHILDREN IN THE REGION



18% of the region's children have ever been diagnosed with ADD or ADHD. Symptoms can include being forgetful, impulsive, risk-taking, fidgety, and having trouble paying attention. Children may also have attention difficulties without hyperactivity.

15% of children in the region have ever been diagnosed with anxiety. Symptoms can include excessive worrying, experiencing panic, and having irrational fears or compulsions that interfere with their lives.

Like physical health conditions, a combination of genetic and environmental factors influence the development and severity of many mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. The role that trauma and toxic stress play in the development of mental, emotional, and behavioral health is becoming increasingly evident. Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) are negative experiences that can have a lasting impact on a child, e.g., violence, substance use, mental health issues in the home, parental instability, incarcerated family members, or being bullied. These experiences are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, education, job difficulty, and substance misuse in adulthood. *Resilience building*² is a crucial part of mitigating the effects of trauma and toxic stress.

Q: Has a doctor or other health care provider ever told you that this child had any of the conditions below, even if he/she does not have the condition now?

MENTAL HEALTH IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OVERALL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN.

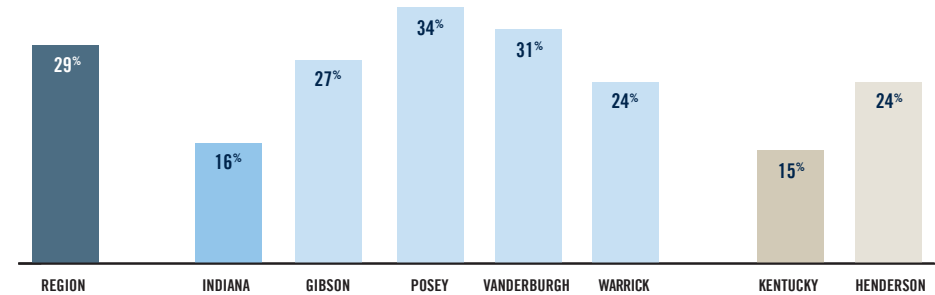
Some common childhood mental health conditions that affect children and youth are Attention Deficit Disorder with or without Hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD), depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders. Children can experience one single condition or in combination.

7% of the region's children have ever been diagnosed with depression. Children with depression can be tearful and withdrawn, angry, or easily irritated. Some older children who experience depression can act out or experiment with substances.

6% of children have ever been diagnosed with conduct or behavior disorders. Behaviors can include excessive noncompliance, aggression, and lack of compassion for others.

ADULT SUBSTANCE USE - ALCOHOL

MORE THAN 1 IN 4 ADULTS IN THE REGION DRINK TO EXCESS, NEARLY TWICE THE STATE AND NATIONAL RATES



Q: Considering all types of alcoholic beverages, how many times during the past 30 days did you have [5 for men, 4 for women] or more drinks on an occasion?



ADULT SUBSTANCE USE - ALCOHOL CONTINUED

THE USE AND MISUSE OF ALCOHOL SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTES TO DISEASE AND PREMATURE DEATH.

More than 1 in 4 Greater Evansville residents binge drink compared to the nation (29% region, 17% U.S.). Excessive alcohol use is a leading lifestyle-related cause of death for the nation, contributing to more than 95,000 deaths annually or 261 deaths per day. Binge drinking, the most common form of excessive alcohol consumption, is defined as four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men during a single occasion. In the short-term, binge drinking can result in injuries, violence, risky sexual behaviors, alcohol poisoning, and congenital disabilities, miscarriages, and stillbirths for pregnant women. Binge drinking can contribute to neurological and psychiatric problems, certain cancers, liver and gastrointestinal problems in the long term. Not surprisingly, about a third of binge drinkers report depression (30%) or anxiety (28%). Mental/emotional health and substance use issues can often co-occur.

Though alcohol use is a problem in the region overall, a higher percentage of men binge drink than women (33% M, 26% W.) Residents with higher incomes are also more likely than those with lower incomes to binge drink (33% higher income, 28% lower income.)

CONCLUSIONS

Mental health and substance use are issues worthy of investment. The solutions should involve strategic population, individual level, and equitable approaches. Actions at the population level should ideally include policy, systems, and environmental considerations. Communities can benefit from:

- A commitment to combat the stigma historically surrounding mental health, promote healthy and supportive choices, positive social relationships, and an overall trend of normalizing talking about mental health and substance use issues.
- A multi-faceted understanding of current conditions, e.g., data on mental health, substance use, and social determinants of health indicators.
- A multi-faceted understanding of contributing factors, e.g., child development, toxic stress, social determinants of health like safe and affordable housing, and child abuse/neglect, and a commitment to improving these conditions.
- A commitment to understanding what services exist. From emergency, life-saving services to general health, wellness, and skill-building services, communities should know what is available, the quality of those services, gaps, and barriers.
- A commitment to invest in what works and what will meet the needs, e.g., research-informed services, practices, and matching the right practitioners to the community's needs.
- A high degree of cooperation and coordination among all levels of care and easy ways for residents to understand, access, and navigate the systems to get their needs met.

At the individual level, solutions require focusing on what the individual needs to flourish. Leaning into the research on what helps people thrive is an excellent place to start. Harvard University studies on children and families offer the following three principles, grounded in science, to guide communities to design and adopt policies and programs to prevent, mitigate, and treat mental health and substance use and improve outcomes overall.

- **Reduce Sources of Stress:** Excessive activation of the body's stress response can overload the brain and other organ systems, affecting healthy development and making it challenging to use core life skills.
- **Strengthen Core Life Skills:** We all need a set of essential skills to manage life, work, and relationships successfully. These include planning, focus, self-control, awareness, and flexibility.
- **Support Responsive Relationships:** Responsive relationships build sturdy brain architecture, support overall well-being, and buffer children and adults from toxic stress.

Solutions should also use an equity lens to consider all residents, especially those with obstacles to obtaining early intervention or treatment services. For example, low-income residents are more likely than residents with higher incomes to report depression (26% low income, 15% higher incomes,) but income may be a barrier to paying for mental health or substance use treatment. Much of the region is rural, presenting potential access issues related to transportation. Prioritizing these and all populations with obstacles as part of community solutions will help provide equitable health for all.

Visit welbornfdn.org/gehs for full report including references, methods and limitations.
Welborn Baptist Foundation • Greater Evansville Health Survey 2021 Edition © Jan 2021

¹Social Determinants of Health information from Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. health.gov/healthypeople

²Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2021). *Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families, 2021 Update*. developingchild.harvard.edu

Low-income throughout report defined as less than 80% of the median family income for the Evansville MSA in 2020, accounting for the number in the household.

Also, see *County Health Rankings Scientifically Supported Community Strategies* for specific strategies supporting mental health, e.g., behavioral health primary care integration and responsible alcohol use. "What Works for Health" countyhealthrankings.org