

# Youth Setting a City's Agenda for Investment in Mental Wellness

Presentation to FamilyWise Resilient Communities Gathering

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**June 18, 2024**

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Executive Director, Children First

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School Psychologist, St. Louis Park, MN

# Goals for Today's Presentation

- Understand work to date by Youth For Change Coalition (Y4CC)
  - Review data informed process
  - Hear youth feedback
  - Learn how adults supported the youth-designed process



## How This Project Came to Be

- Children First shifted its focus to more actively work on 7 key milestones for youth and families
- Our Collective Impact approach requires the use of data to uncover challenges and opportunities within the community
- It also puts focus population members in the decision-making seat – in this case, youth
- They looked at many different outcomes for youth – academic and wellness-related



## Youth For Change Coalition

- Co-created by team of high school interns
- Started with 6 members
  - 4 female, 2 male
  - 3 from SLP High School, 3 from Benilde St. Margaret's
  - 2 – 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 4 – 11<sup>th</sup> grade
  - 4 White, 1 African American, 1 Hispanic
- Final product – report on the challenges and opportunities for mental wellness in SLP and recommendations for investment in proposed strategies

# Youth For Change Coalition (Y4CC) Support Team

- Overall direction and support – *Margaret Ganyo & Marla Destache*
- Mental health subject matter expert & Y4CC coach – *Daniel Philippe, School Psychologist*
- Y4CC coach – *Dr. Mary Wagner*
- Asset Map lead & Y4CC coach – *Lauren Vasilakos, University of Minnesota Medical Student*
- Strategy and data coach – *Ginger Walker*
- Leadership capacity and skill building to lead equitable systems change – *Youth Leadership Initiative/St. Paul, MN*
- Evaluation planning/data & Youth Participatory Action Research coach – *Bri Griffin / Wilder Research*
- Minnesota Student Survey results/implications – *Dr. Michael Rodriguez, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota*

# Minnesota Student Survey (MSS)

- How many of you are familiar with the MSS?

# Minnesota Student Survey

- Triennial (every 3 years) survey began in 1989
  - Anonymous & statewide
- Questions about activities, opinions, experiences, behaviors--including risk and protective factors
  - Racial/ethnic group (since 2007)
  - sexual orientation (2019)
- Surveys grades 5, 8, 9 and 11
- Last survey 2022, data collection for 2025 survey is January and June
- Optional for school districts and students
  - SLP HS participates
  - BSM does not participate



# Steps to Action – Required Level of Rigor

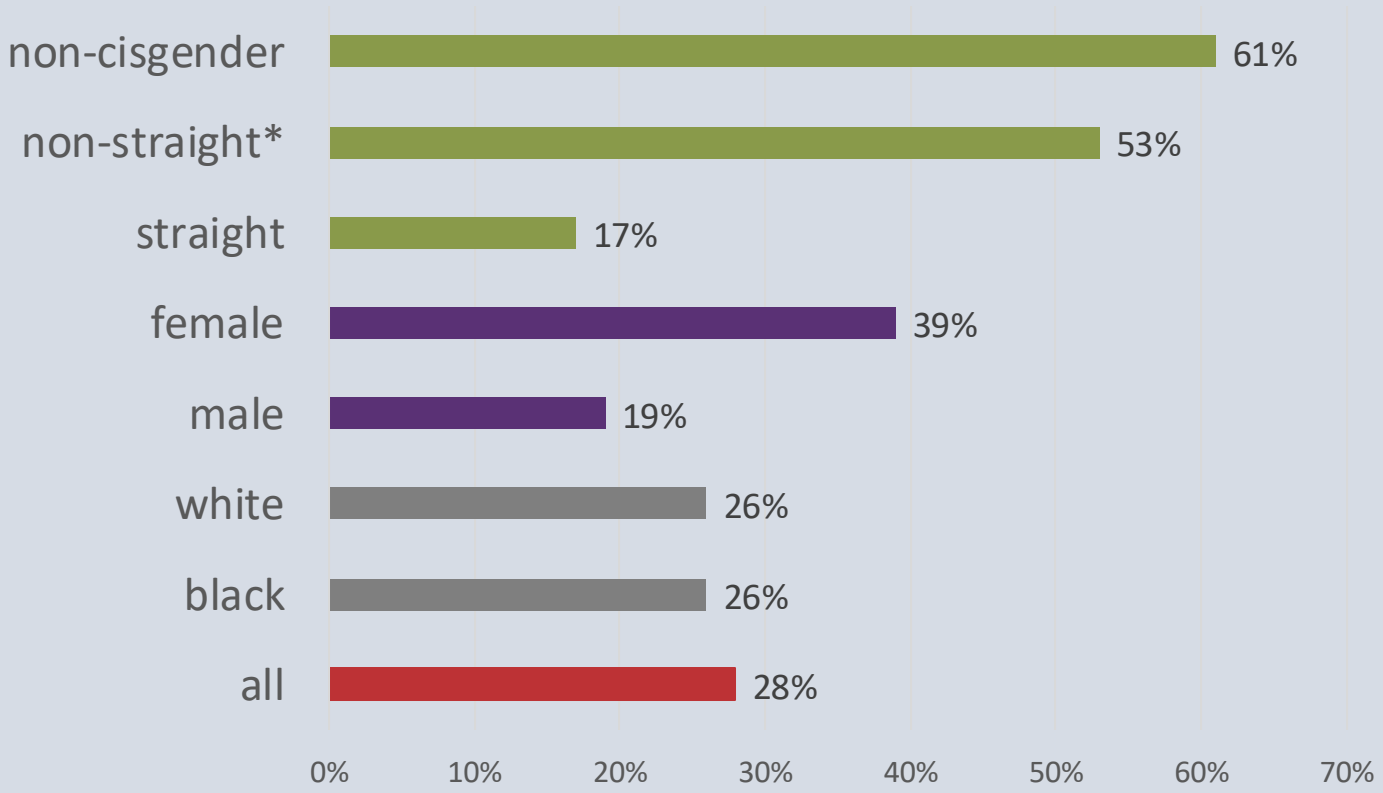
- High school youth **reviewed disaggregated data** for many youth outcomes, including mental wellness, to ensure people with lived experience were centered in the process
  - By race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, socio-economic status, age/grade, etc.
- Decided to move to action on Suicidal Ideation and adopted a Results Statement
- Identified the focus population as LGBTQIA youth
- Next steps:
  - Conduct an analysis of the root causes and key drivers of Suicidal Ideation
  - Complete a literature review to be sure we identify true key drivers proven to move the needle on Suicidal Ideation
  - Identify strategies that will move the key drivers and set SMART targets
  - Complete a literature review to be sure that the strategies are proven to move the needle on our key drivers
  - Plan how we will evaluate strategies with Wilder Research
  - Carry out strategies using Results Based Accountability/Continuous Improvement approach



# What population experiences the most challenges?

*How Y4CC identified a focus population*

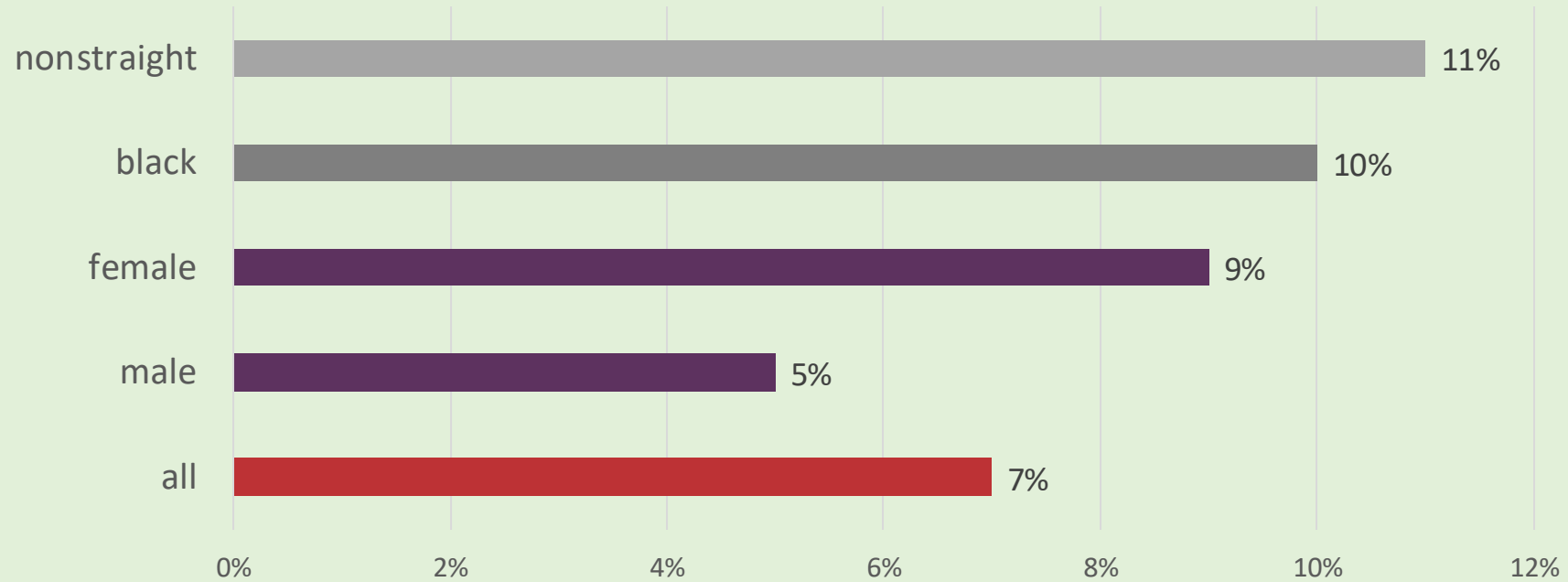
rate seriously considered suicide, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, 2022



Source: Minnesota Student Survey

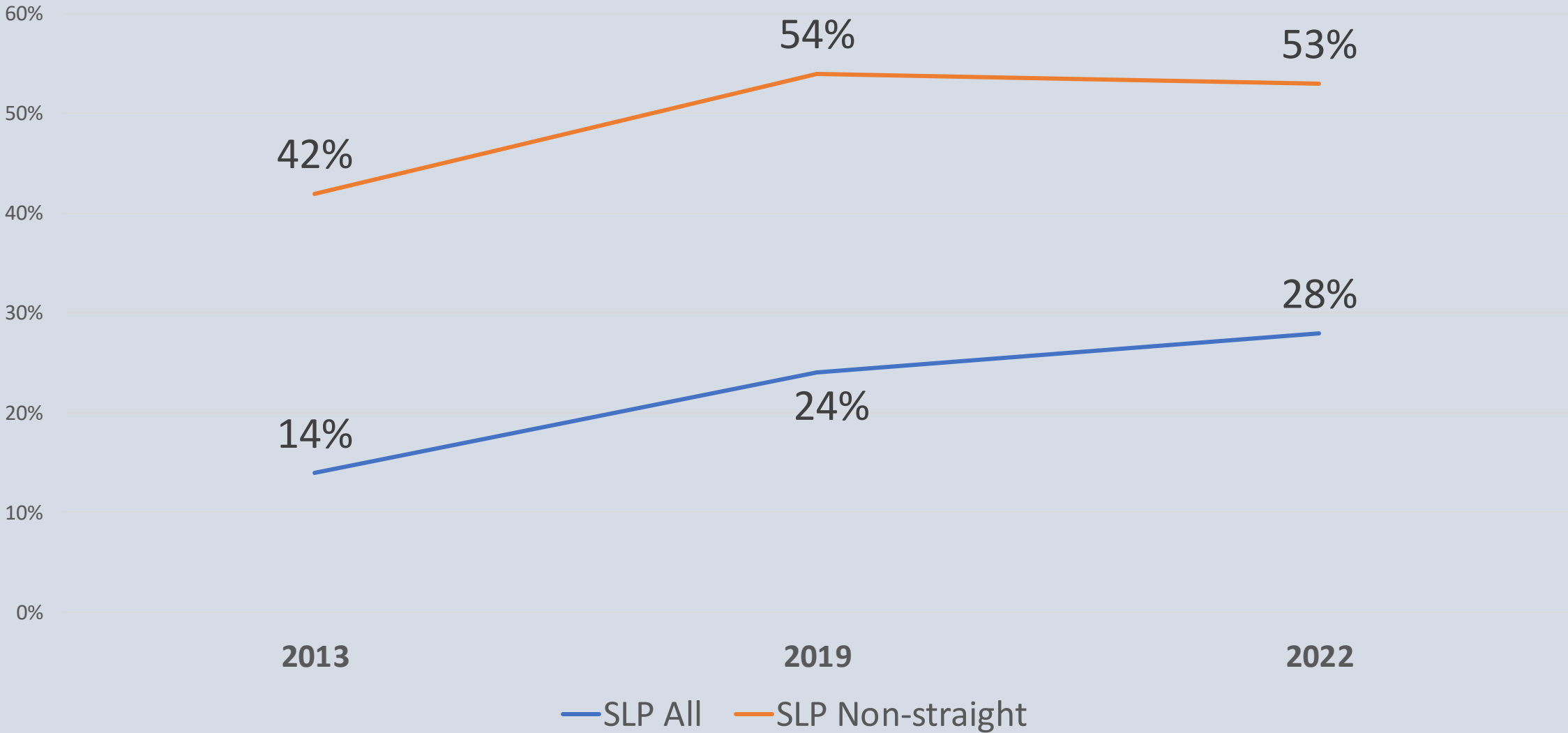
# Attempts by Population

rate attempted suicide, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, 2022



Source: Minnesota Student Survey

# Rate Seriously Considered Suicide (MSS, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, SLP HS)



Source: [Minnesota Student Survey](#) question “Have you ever seriously considered attempting suicide”, 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The rate seriously considered suicide is calculated as 100 percent minus the rate who answered no. This accounts for any combination of responses including yes - during the last year, yes - more than a year ago, and both.

# Steps to Action – Required Level of Rigor

- High school youth **reviewed disaggregated data** for youth mental health and wellness outcomes to ensure people with lived experience were centered in the process
- Decided to move to action on **Suicidal Ideation** and adopted a **Results Statement**
- Identified the focus population as **LGBTQIA youth**
- Next steps:
  - Conduct an analysis of the root causes and key drivers of Suicidal Ideation
  - Complete a literature review to be sure we identify true key drivers proven to move the needle on Suicidal Ideation
  - Identify strategies that will move the key drivers and set SMART targets
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# Focus Area: Suicidal Ideation

Y4CC youth leaders analyzed disaggregated data on academic and mental health outcomes for upper grades youth and prioritized suicidal ideation for initial focus.

Suicidal Ideation

Depression

Anxiety

P-S Completion

P-S Planning

P-S Readiness

P-S Enrollment

Their rationale:

- Impacts other academic and social outcomes
- Not enough is being done
- I see its impact on my friends and want to help
- Lives are at risk

# Mental Wellness Results

## Population

Middle & high school aged youth

## Place

St. Louis Park

All middle and high school aged youth in St. Louis Park are mentally thriving and have hope for a fulfilled life.

Mentally well most days. Feeling positive, capable, living a fulfilling life. Have love, sense of belonging & hope for the future. Optimistic, confident.

## Condition of Well-Being

All (with explicit prioritization of most challenged population, LGBTQIA youth)

## Equity Dimension

Measurement Tool: Minnesota Student Survey, 2025 (3 year survey; seeking shorter cycle tool)

Indicator: % seriously contemplated suicide; additional questions as we refine this result

# Steps to Action – Required Level of Rigor

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- Identified the focus population as LGBTQIA youth
- Conduct an analysis of the **root causes and key drivers** of Suicidal Ideation
- Next steps:
  - Complete a literature review to be sure we identify true key drivers proven to move the needle on Suicidal Ideation
  - Set SMART Targets
  - Identify strategies that will move the key drivers
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# Strong factors are...



**Systems Focused**

**Not...**



**People Focused**



**Root Causes (Factors)**

**Not...**



**Fixes/Solutions (Strategies)**



**Backed by data**

**Not...**



**Based on "ideas"**



**Clear & Specific**

**Not...**



**Fuzzy**



# Equitable factors are...



**Systems Focused**



**Based on lived experience**



**Takes History into  
Consideration**

What is pushing UP?

# Universal - all students

Rate Seriously Considered Suicide (MSS, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, SLP)



What is pushing up DOWN?

Dismissiveness, not listening about mental health concerns

Language: careless use of pathologizing language ("that's crazy"; "they're so OCD")

confusion

politics of fear and anger

Not being a talkable subject and not getting the attention students need

Stigma and ability to talk about it

Increasing openness of celebrities/athletes re: mental health

School clubs oriented around mental health

Not comparing struggles to friends/family

Parents claiming that mental illness is caused by phones

decrease in sense of community

No proper access to help or counselors or groups

narrow definition of what normal is

Social media +1. Can be comparing yourself to others-

Decreasing (albeit slowly) stigma regarding mental health and SI

clubs/orgs that increase connectedness, decrease isolation

understanding how to live with mental health

network of trusted adults equipped to support

down playing mental health as just a teen +1

Not offering unsolicited advice

Therapy provided for low cost +1 (or free!)

access to mental health supports

access to mental health workers in school or community

Religious beliefs

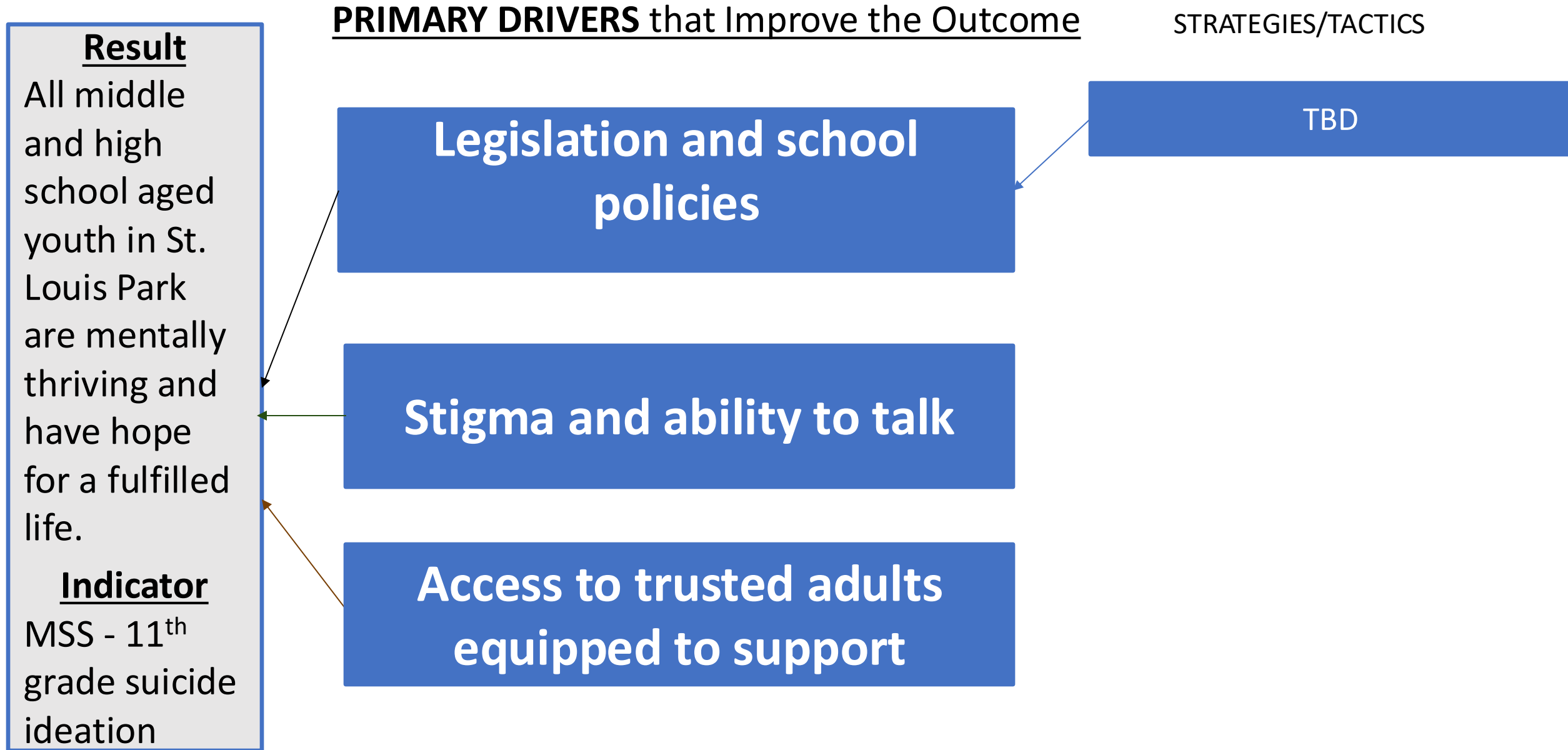
network of trusted adults equipped to support

Adverse Childhood Experiences

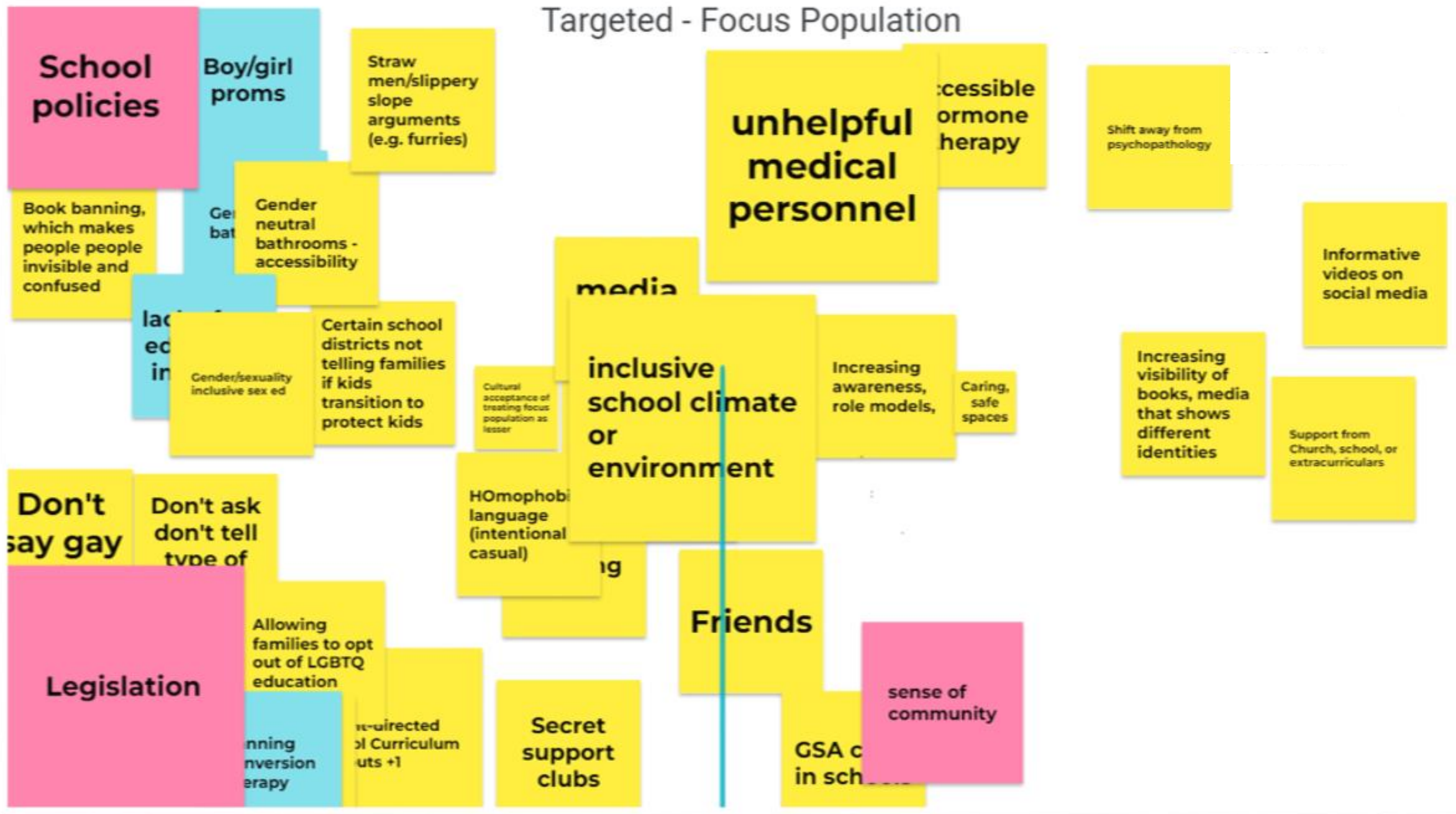
Family encouraging therapy sessions

Improving social awareness regarding gender and sexual differences

# ORIGINAL Key Driver Diagram

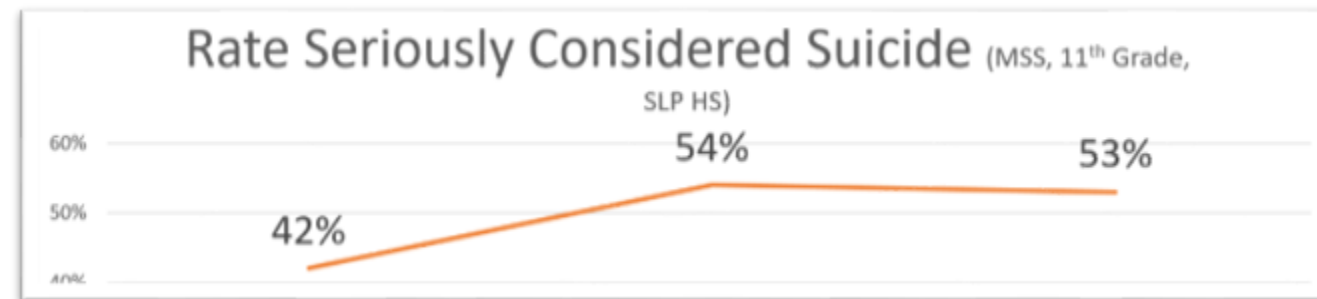


# Targeted - Focus Population



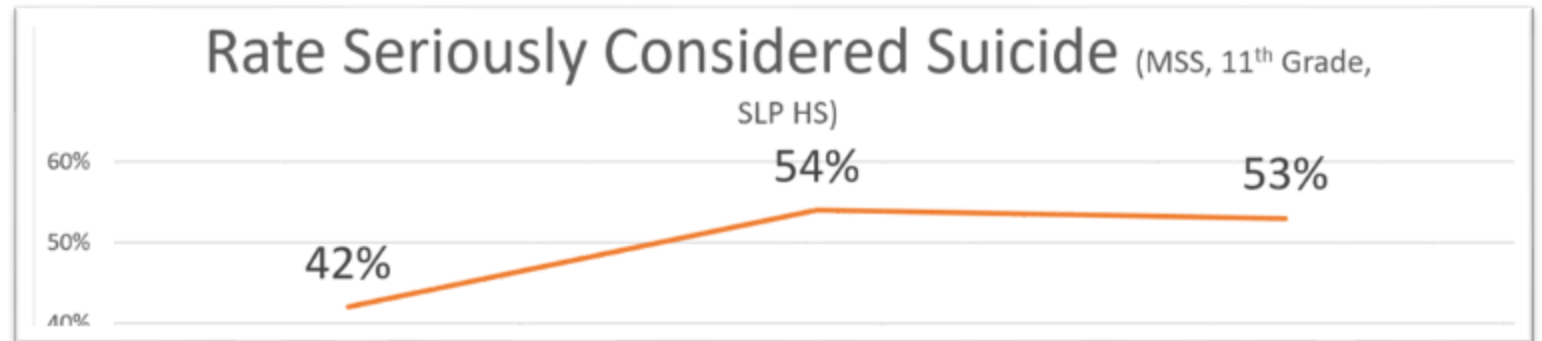
## Pushing UP (Focus Population Comments)

- LGBTQ+ children rarely know happy, thriving LGBTQ+ adults – doesn't seem possible to them
- Unsupportive family; a student's home life is the biggest factor to their happiness. If a student has a family that fundamentally rejects them for who they are, it can be a living hell. (+1)
- Microaggressions: (+1) - Intentionally messing up pronouns; Bathroom comments
- Hearing about all the anti-queer stuff in the world (+1)
- Religious trauma can push the number up. When one believes they are a sinner or some equivalent they have it put in their head that they deserve death.
- It's so much harder to find love as a gay teenager
- Parents just don't understand that by denying gender affirming care to their trans kids, it's essentially killing them. You watch your body change into something you dread, the passing of time is excruciating because it's like the control over your body is slipping out of your hands. (+1)

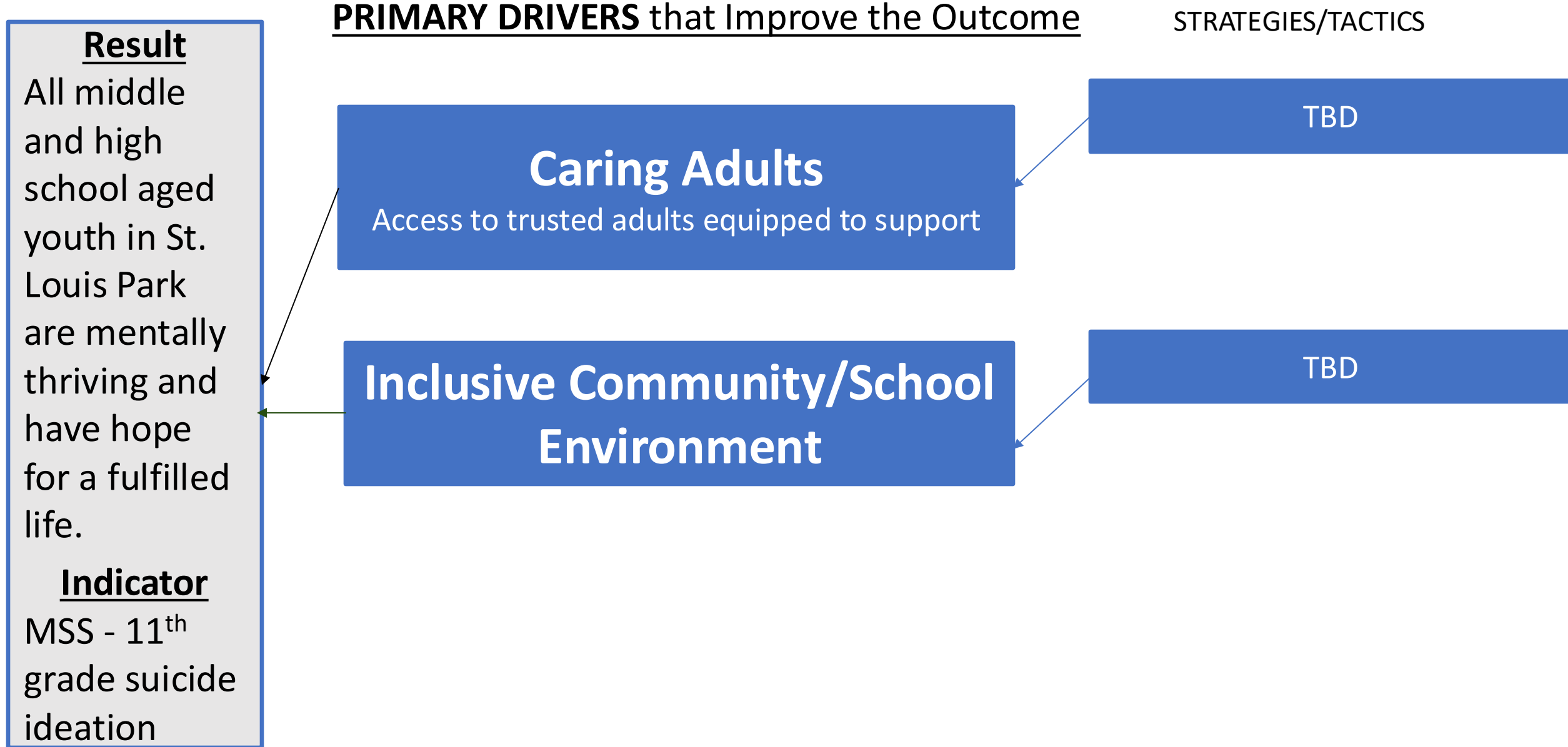


## Pushing DOWN (Focus Population Comments)

- Other students either being visibly queer or visibly supportive can help students feel less alone (+1)
- Being respected and referred to correctly (+1)
- Actual zero tolerance policies for bullying
- Having people who support you and relate
- Opportunities to build community w/LGBTQ people



# Key Driver Diagram AFTER Focus Population Convo



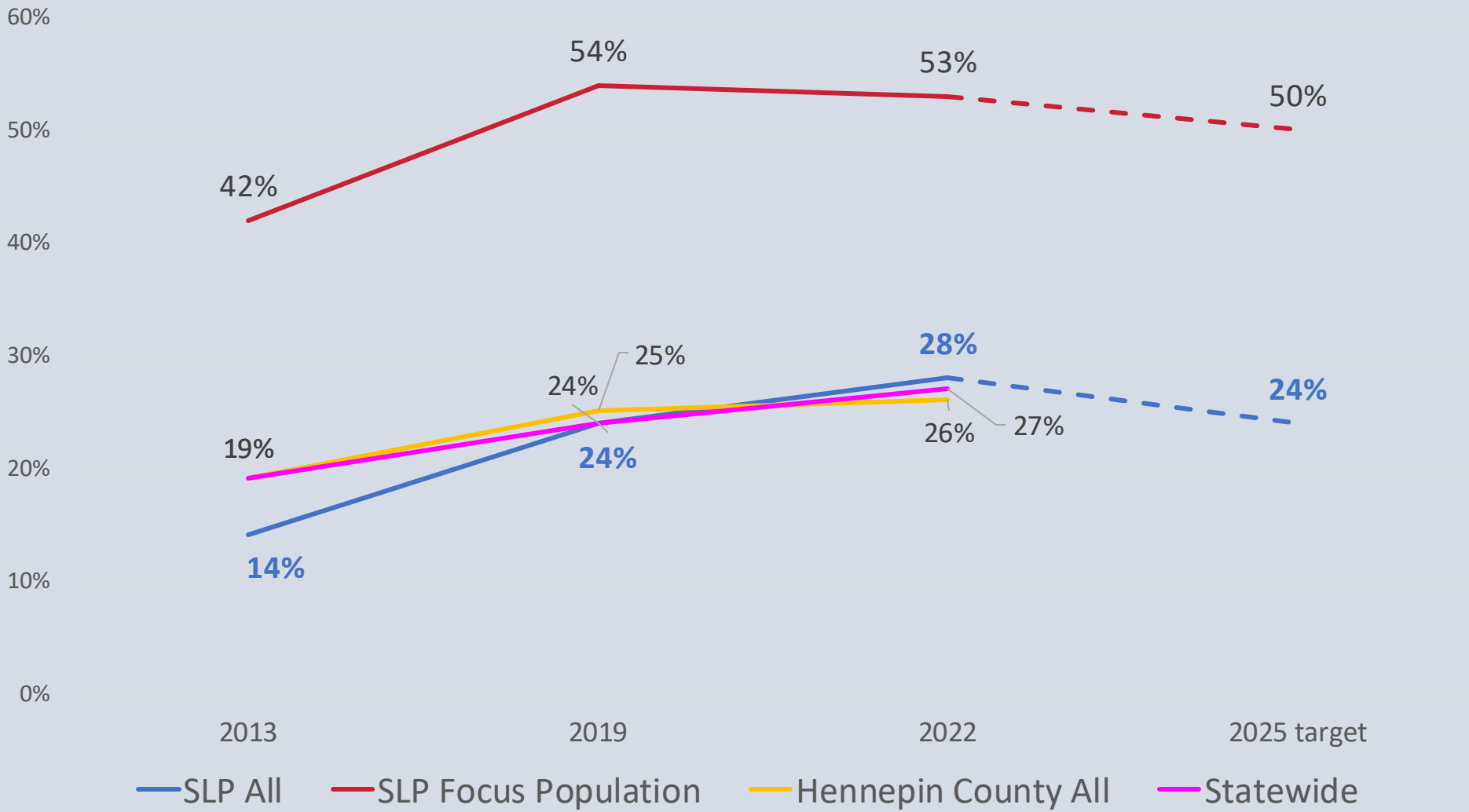
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# 2025 Targets

Rate Seriously Considered Suicide (MSS, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, SLP HS)



**Current Conditions:**

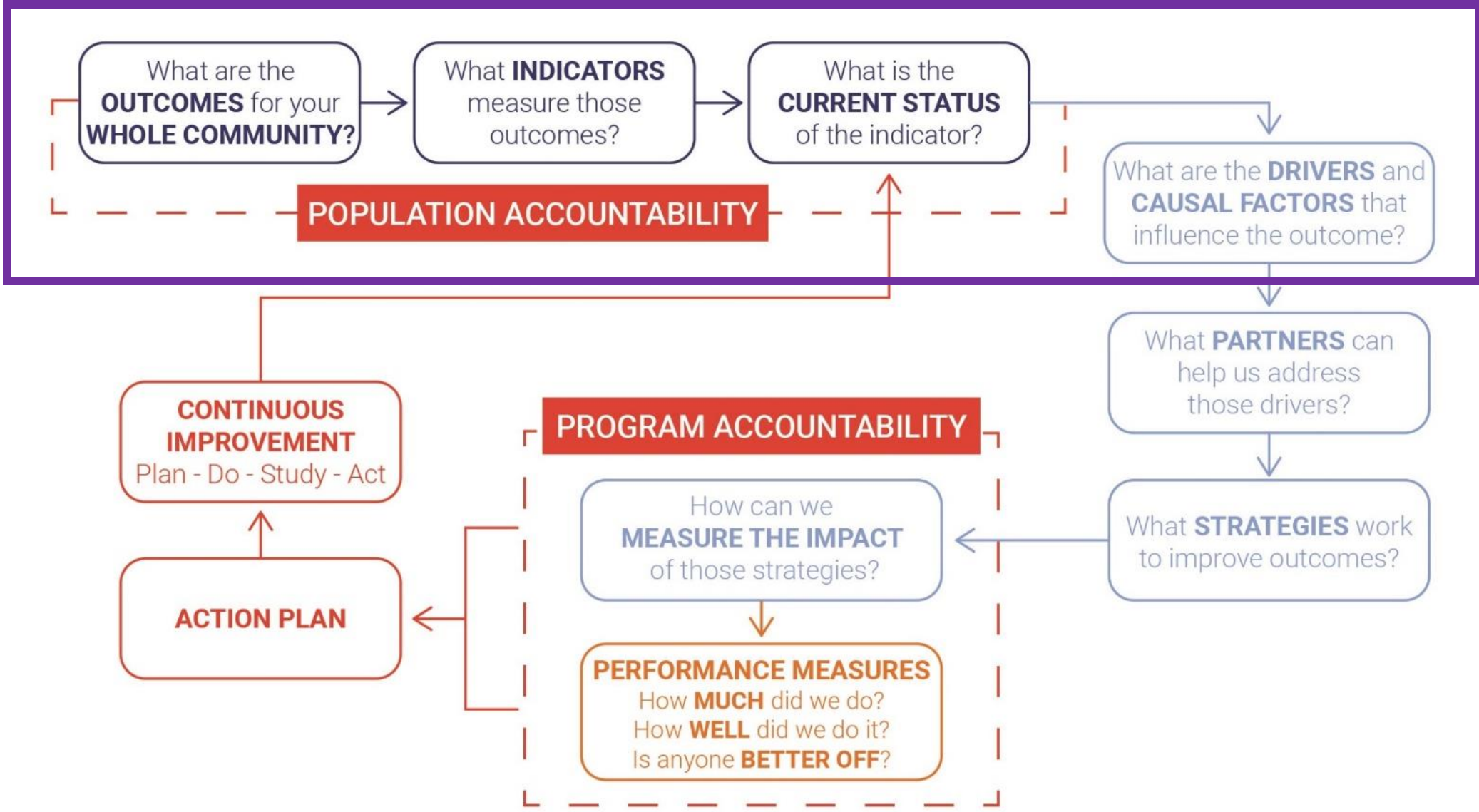
- 28% of all 11<sup>th</sup> grade MSS survey responders in **SLPPS** said they had seriously considered suicide.
- St. Louis Park rates are **increasing faster than the rest of the State**.
- The most recent St. Louis Park rates of suicide ideation **exceeded Hennepin County and the State**.
- Population experiencing the most challenges: **LGBTQIA**

Source: [Minnesota Student Survey](#) question “Have you ever seriously considered attempting suicide”, 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The rate seriously considered suicide is calculated as 100 percent minus the rate who answered no. This accounts for any combination of responses including yes- during the last year, yes – more than a year ago, and both.

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# Process Map – Equitable Results Cycle



# Mental Wellness Strategy Group

- Goal = develop/implement/evaluate strategies that improve mental wellness outcomes in SLP
- First phase = youth/multi-gen support systems
- Facilitator = Shannon Neale
- Coaching & data support = Children First
- Follow a data-informed approach using Results Based Accountability, continuous improvement and Collective Impact methods



Children First  
Youth For  
Change  
Coalition

SLP Mental  
Health  
Collaborative

SLP Mental  
Wellness  
Strategy  
Group

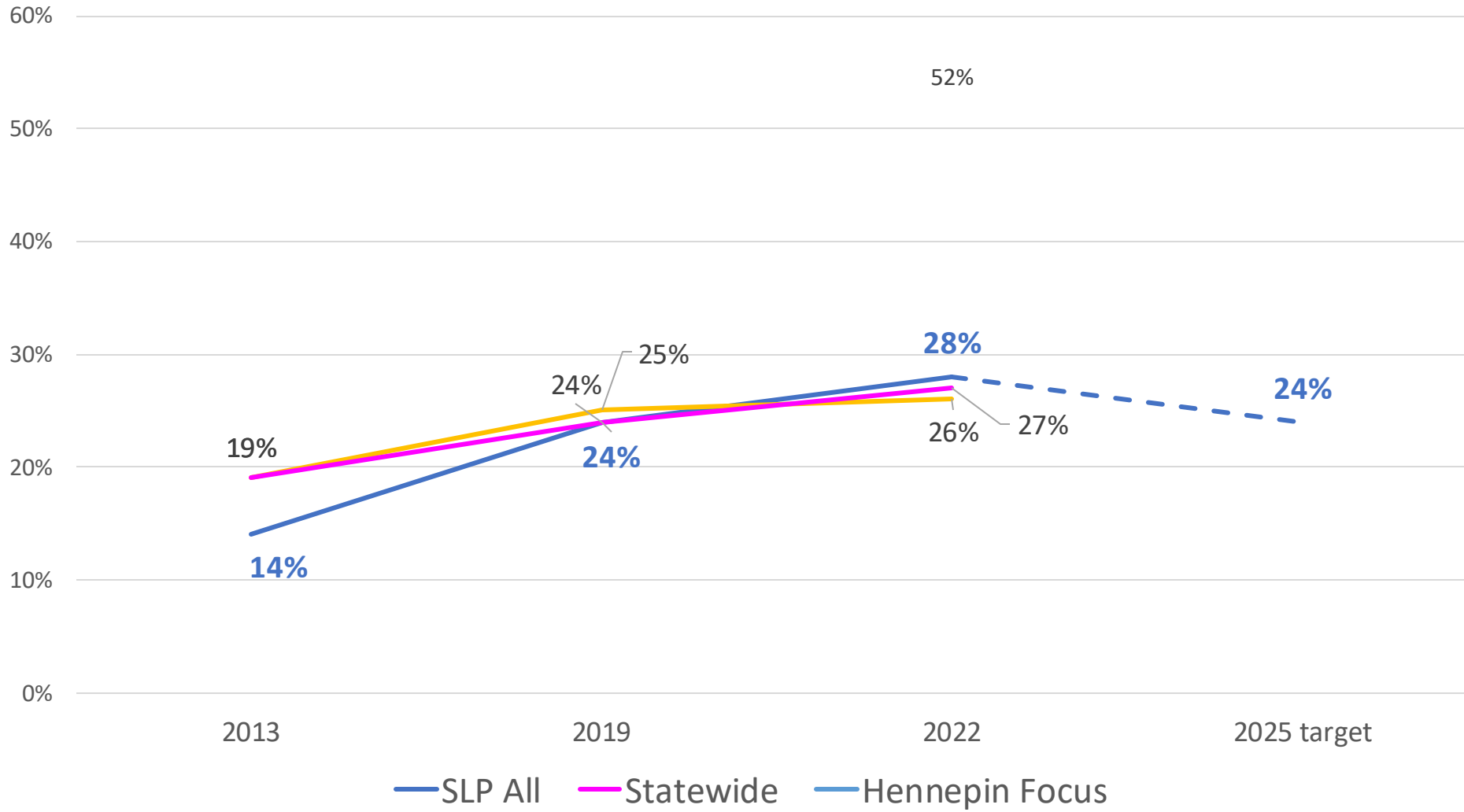
# Y4CC in Their Own Words



<https://youtu.be/BqkArTuqR0M?feature=shared>

Questions?

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