

# Public Knowledge Report: Youth Community Conversations Madison County, IN



# THE VOICES OF YOUTH

## MORE AND DIVERSE VOICES MADISON COUNTY

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# MORE AND DIVERSE VOICES

## Public Knowledge Report: Youth Community Conversations

Madison County, IN

December 2023

Funded by:



MADISON COUNTY  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



SOUTH MADISON COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

Positive change. Lasting impact.



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# YOUTH CONVERSATIONS EXPLAINED

## More and Diverse Voices Group Formation

The collective action group, “More and Diverse Voices” (MDV), was formed as a community leadership project undertaken by the South Madison Community Foundation and Madison County Community Foundation in 2022-2023. The MDV group completed community development coursework, analyzed data and community input from Madison County, and determined to focus their efforts on **ensuring the youth of Madison County are listened to and their voices are heard**. In this work, MDV members convened six community conversations with 102 diverse youth between 12-18 years old, hailing from Anderson, Lapel, Elwood, Alexandria, Frankton, and Pendleton. From those conversations, this report was formed.

## More and Diverse Voices Mission

Engage more and diverse voices to identify actionable steps that create change for the well-being of the whole community.

## Community Conversation Method

Conversations were held between January 2023–October 2023. The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation’s model for conducting community conversations was utilized. These conversations were held with selected groups of youth at the following six organizations: Anderson High School, Lapel High School, Youth Leadership Academy of Madison County, RISE (Redefining Identity through Service & Empowerment) Academy (The Village), The Crossing, and M.O.N.E.Y. (Moving Obstacles Now 4 Every Youth) Ministries. All of these groups gathered in the spaces where they normally meet to maximize the youth’s comfort (ie: school groups gathered at their high school during the school day; M.O.N.E.Y. Ministries gathered at the building where they normally meet). Leaders of each youth group selected participants whose voices are often ignored, dismissed, or not heard. The Appendices, on pages 8–10, contain demographic data of the participants.

MDV members, along with recruited community members interested in the work of MDV, conducted each conversation in the following manner: small groups of youth from each organization/agency sat around a table or in a circle; an adult group facilitator presented six identical questions to each small group; an adult note taker recorded responses. Those responses were collected, documented and synthesized into this report.

# YOUTH CONVERSATIONS EXPLAINED

## Questions Asked of Youth

- What kind of community do you want to live in?
- Other groups of youth identified important issues in Madison County. We wanted to focus on some of them with you including safety, political divide, community interactions, and mental health. What concerns do you have about these issues?
  - How does race and racial inequity fit with these important issues?
- Thinking back over the conversation (about our community and the issues that concern you), what groups or individuals would you trust to act on these issues?
- What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change? What role can you take in that change?
- What did we miss here that you wanted to share or add?
- What did you take away from this session?



# COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS AND CONCERNS

The youth of Madison County want a community that:

"where I'm not worrying about seeing what you're not supposed to see"

"I want to live in a community where I'm alive at the end of the day."

## Values and promotes safety

Youth express deep concerns about crime, including gun violence and drug abuse, and many types of unsafe relationships (fighting, bullying, sexual assault). Youth note various places where they feel unsafe to walk, visit, or be at ease.

## Embraces diversity and addresses racism

Our youth have witnessed multiple forms of people mistreating one another, from discriminatory language and jokes to other acts of discrimination based on race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation or gender identity. Youth expressed a desire for a more accepting community as well as more education about racial history and other forms of diversity.

"My ethnic studies class opened my eyes to racial issues-bank loans, history, red lining."

**Micro-aggressions**  
"Getting asked, 'Do you play basketball?' cause I'm Black. White people asking if they can touch your hair."

## Fosters supportive relationships

Negative interactions and divisiveness between people in the community are widely reported by youth. Disrespectful behaviors and negative interactions are exhibited by youth and adults alike. Beyond negative behaviors, youth feel undue pressure to compete at high levels in sports and academics or face dire, long-lasting consequences. Youth talk about depression, anxiety and loneliness and the lack of mental health support in school, home, and the community.

"People don't meet and talk with each other anymore. We used to meet and talk about what's going on. A lot of problems can be solved just by talking to each other."

Where there isn't that, "you're a kid – listen to me because I'm the adult" mentality.

# COMMUNITY ACTIONS AND TRUSTED PEOPLE

## Recommended Actions

**The youth in our county believe we need to have teens involved in all places. They believe that the following actions will help create the community they desire:**

- 1) provide youth with opportunities to increase their self-awareness and self-reflection to strengthen their status as positive role models;
- 2) build out more activities to do and safe places to go in the community for people of all ages;
- 3) increase clear communication about and opportunities for positive experiences in the school setting with a focus on interpersonal connection, college and career readiness and exposure to diversity;
- 4) fund and increase access to mental health services in and outside of school while normalizing the need for these services; and
- 5) include, listen to, and hear all voices with an open mind and acceptance.

### Notable points in the conversations:

Students identified that having positive activities and places to go would prevent poor decision-making.

7 out of 11 students in a conversation stated that they knew someone who had died by suicide.

Students said “adults need to change.” They trust adults who see their full value, listen, and protect their confidence.

## Building Trust

The youth trust a range of specific named individuals representative of the following groups: teachers, coaches, youth group leaders, family members (parents and siblings), faith leaders, peers, clubs and youth groups, role models and experts, local political figures, and therapists/counselors.

**They named the following characteristics of people they trust to help them and the community take action on their aspirations:**

- Honest
- Helpful
- Non-judgmental
- Trustworthy
- Relatable
- Comfortable to be with
- Accept feedback
- Inspire them to do better
- Make them feel safe and heard
- Someone they have a personal connection with
- Willing to take the lead
- Hold their confidence
- Live in the neighborhood

**The youth also said they trust and believe in themselves to impact change.**

# COLLABORATION PARTNERS

**The More and Diverse Voices team thank the partners and leaders below for collaborating with us to make these community conversations happen with youth across Madison County.**

- South Madison Community Foundation
- Madison County Community Foundation
- Madison County SURE (Standing Up for Racial Equity)
- Heart of Indiana United Way
- Youth Leadership Academy, Caitlin Haskett and Jesse Reynolds
- Anderson High School, Missy Morris and Betsy Dugan
- RISE (Redefining Identity through Service & Empowerment) Academy: The Village, Louis Jackson III
- The Crossing, Donita Thompson
- Lapel High School, Christy Jannings
- M.O.N.E.Y. (Moving Obstacles Now 4 Every Youth) Ministries, Kojak Fuller
- Anderson Community Schools printing services
- Special thank you to Candy Short for taking the lead on making each community conversation happen!
- Special thanks to the group facilitators, note takers and data team: Maria Alexander, Tammy Bowman, Jennette Harris, Tressena Jones, B (Brian) Martin, Lindsey Pancol Madinger, Sue Patton, Sherry Peak, Darlene Pease, Pam Shoot, Candy Short, Donita Thompson, Jackie Washington, Celeste Wilson, Annie Wood Bell

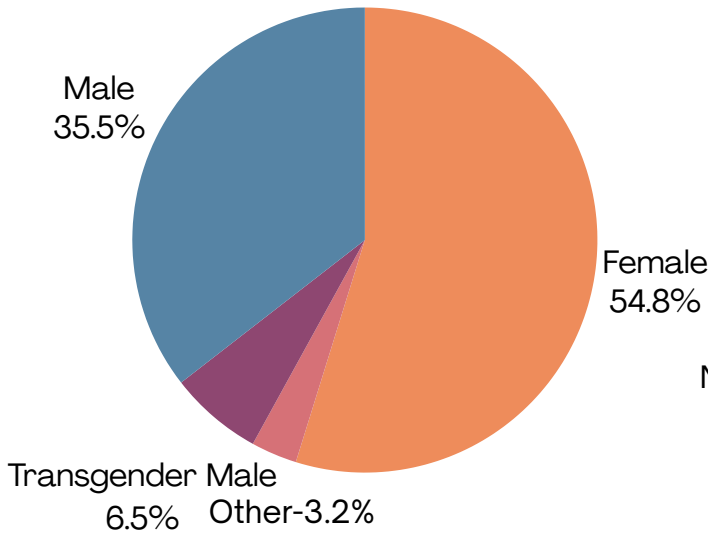


# APPENDIX I

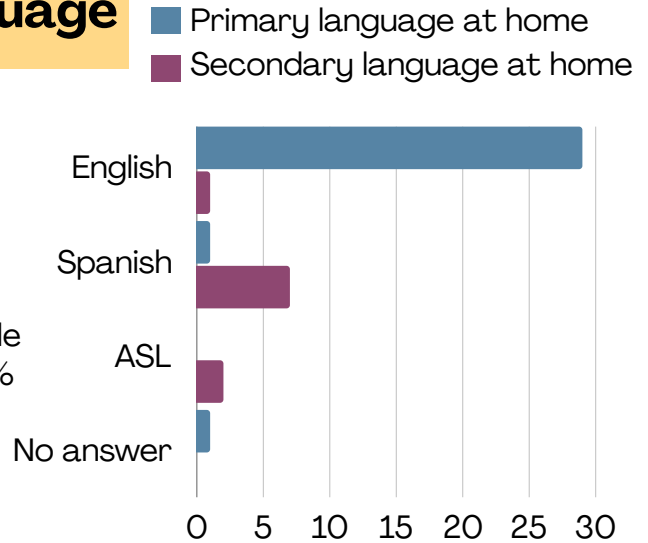
## DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH: Gender, Language, Race, Disability and LGBTQIA+

102 youth were involved. 31 provided demographic information. The MDV Team believes this represents the students as a whole while recognizing it doesn't include all of those who participated.

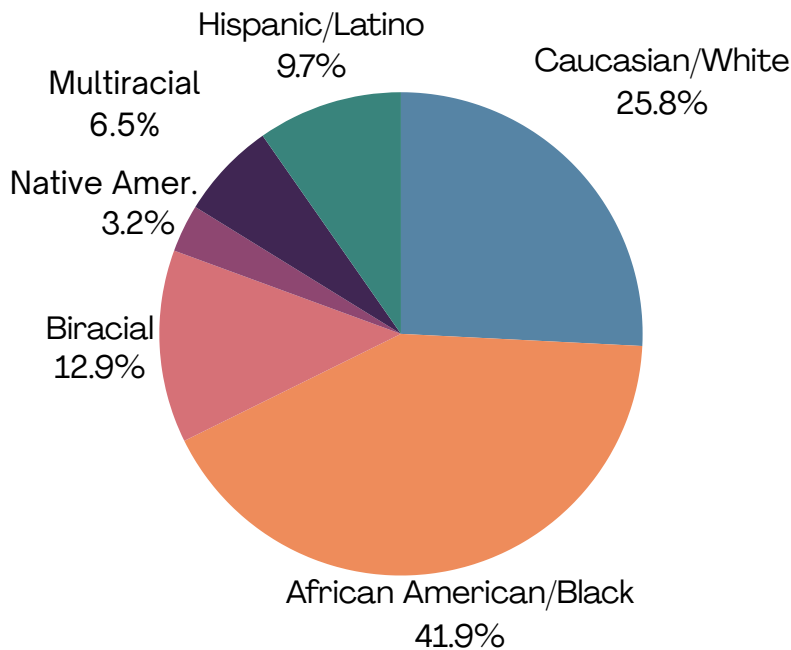
### Gender



### Language



### Race



### Disability reported

- 4 of 31 youth responded "yes" to having a disability.

### LGBTQIA+ community

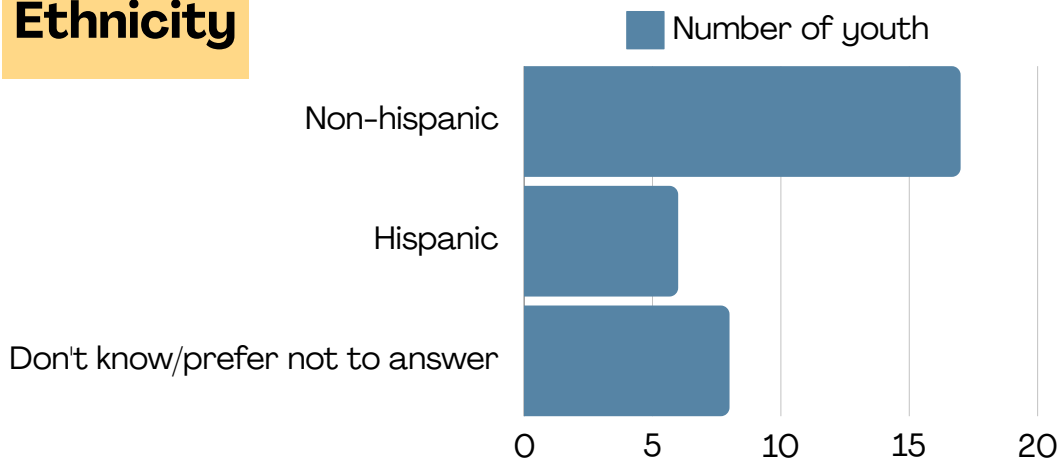
- 6 of 31 youth responded "yes" to being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and 2 replied "don't know/prefer not to answer."

# APPENDIX II

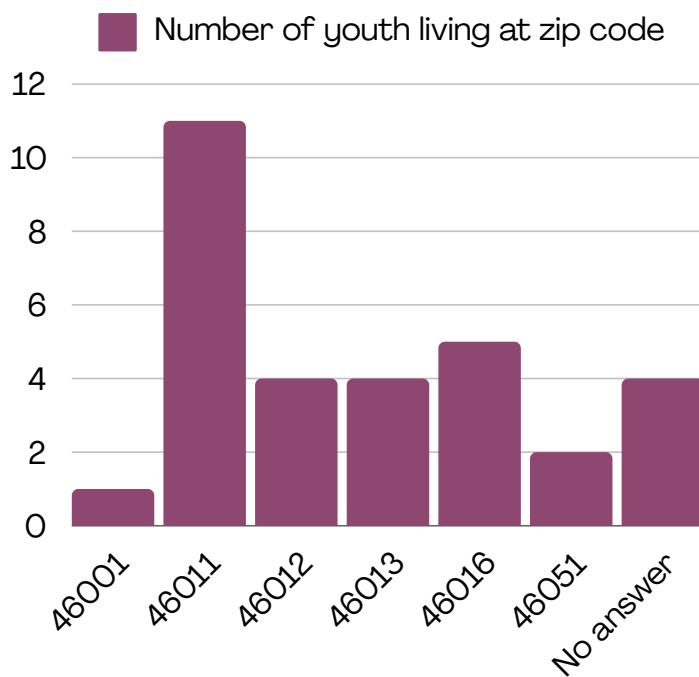
## DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH: Ethnicity and Zip Code

102 youth were involved, 31 provided demographic information.

### Ethnicity



### Zip code



One group of 30 did not provide full demographic information but reported the following zip codes represented among the youth:

- 46001, 46011, 46016, 46051, 46064, 46044, 47396, 46036, 46234

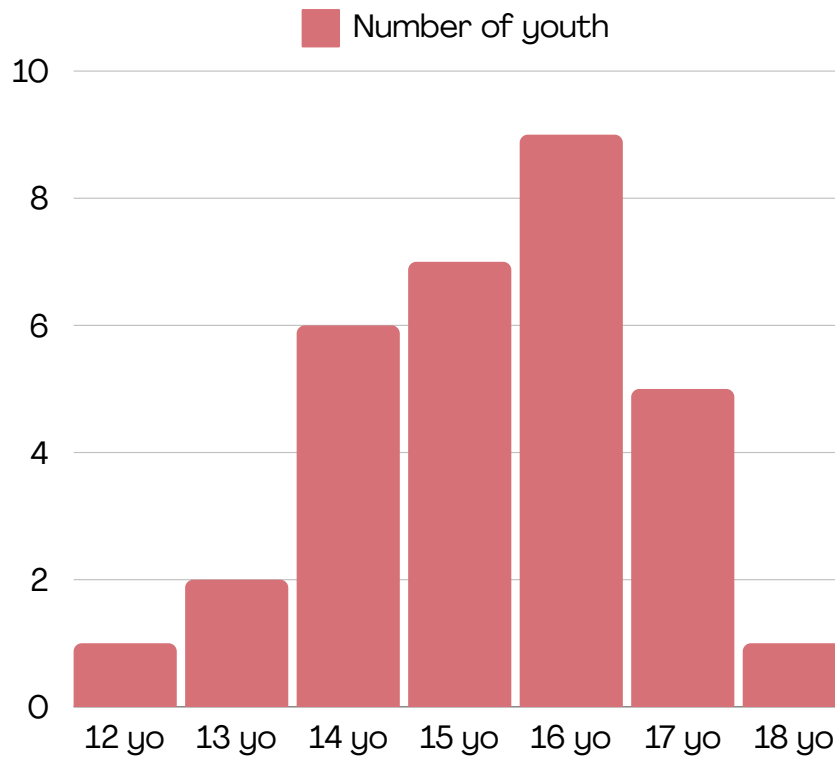
Alexandria- 46001  
 Anderson- 46011, 46012, 46013, 46016  
 Elwood- 46036  
 Frankton- 46044  
 Lapel- 46051  
 Pendleton- 46064  
 Yorktown- 47396 (1 youth with this)

# APPENDIX III

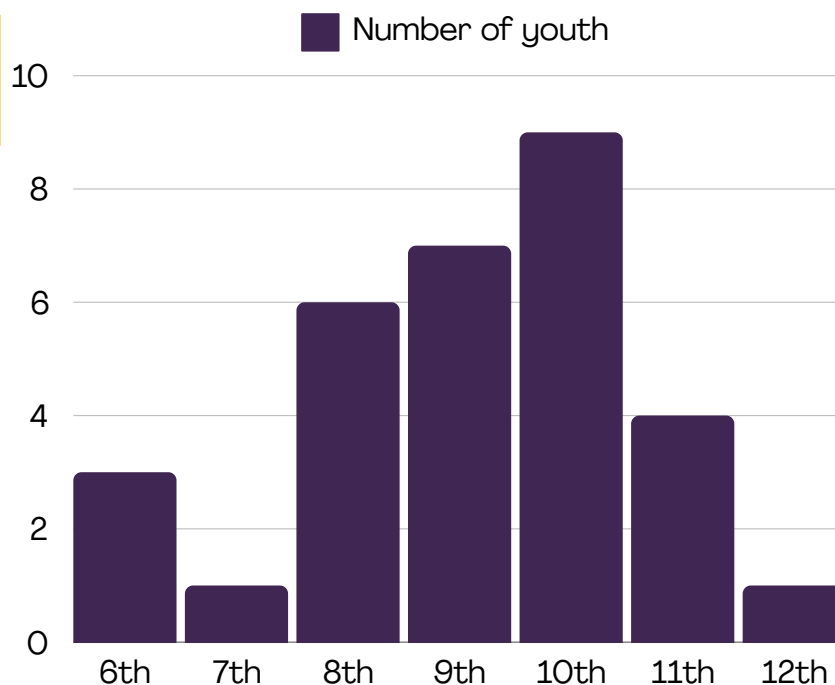
## DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH: Age and Grade Completed

102 youth were involved, 31 provided demographic information.

### Age



### Grade completed





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