

Cell phone use and mental health risks for children and youth

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Healthy Minds Policy Initiative

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About Healthy Minds Policy Initiative

Our mission

We help policymakers and community leaders advance data-driven strategies to overcome our state's substance use challenges and meet the mental health needs of all Oklahomans.

Our vision

Mental health is the catalyst for a more prosperous Oklahoma.



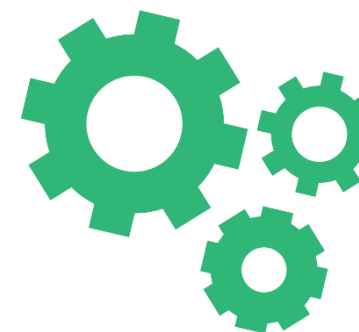
Data-driven insights

Illuminating gaps and opportunities in Oklahoma's behavioral health system



Policy guidance

Developing solutions to increase access to care for all Oklahomans



Collaborative partnerships

Coalitions of public- and private-sector leaders to elevate mental health policy and practices

Healthy Minds: Where we focus



Affordable, accessible treatment

Ensuring mental illness and substance use disorders are treated like any other health condition.



Children, youth, and families

Leading collaboration that helps Oklahoma's children and families thrive.



Mental health workforce

Expanding and empowering Oklahoma's behavioral health workforce.



Diversion to appropriate care

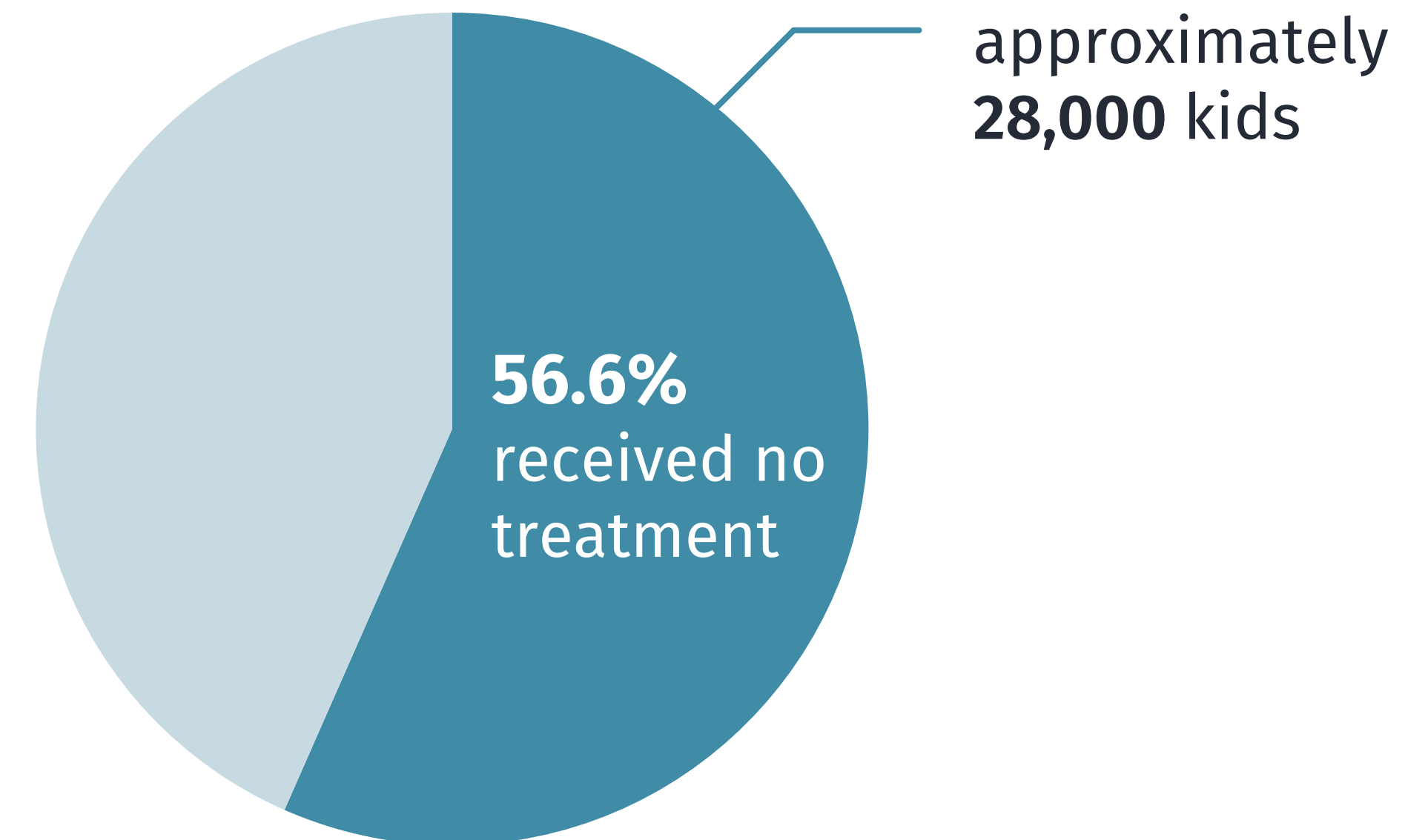
Ensuring Oklahomans receive mental health care in the least restrictive, least costly settings.



Children, youth, and families

Youth in Oklahoma face an uncoordinated, inadequate system of care — and they aren't getting the help they need.

Of Oklahoma children who had a major depressive episode, less than half received any mental health treatment



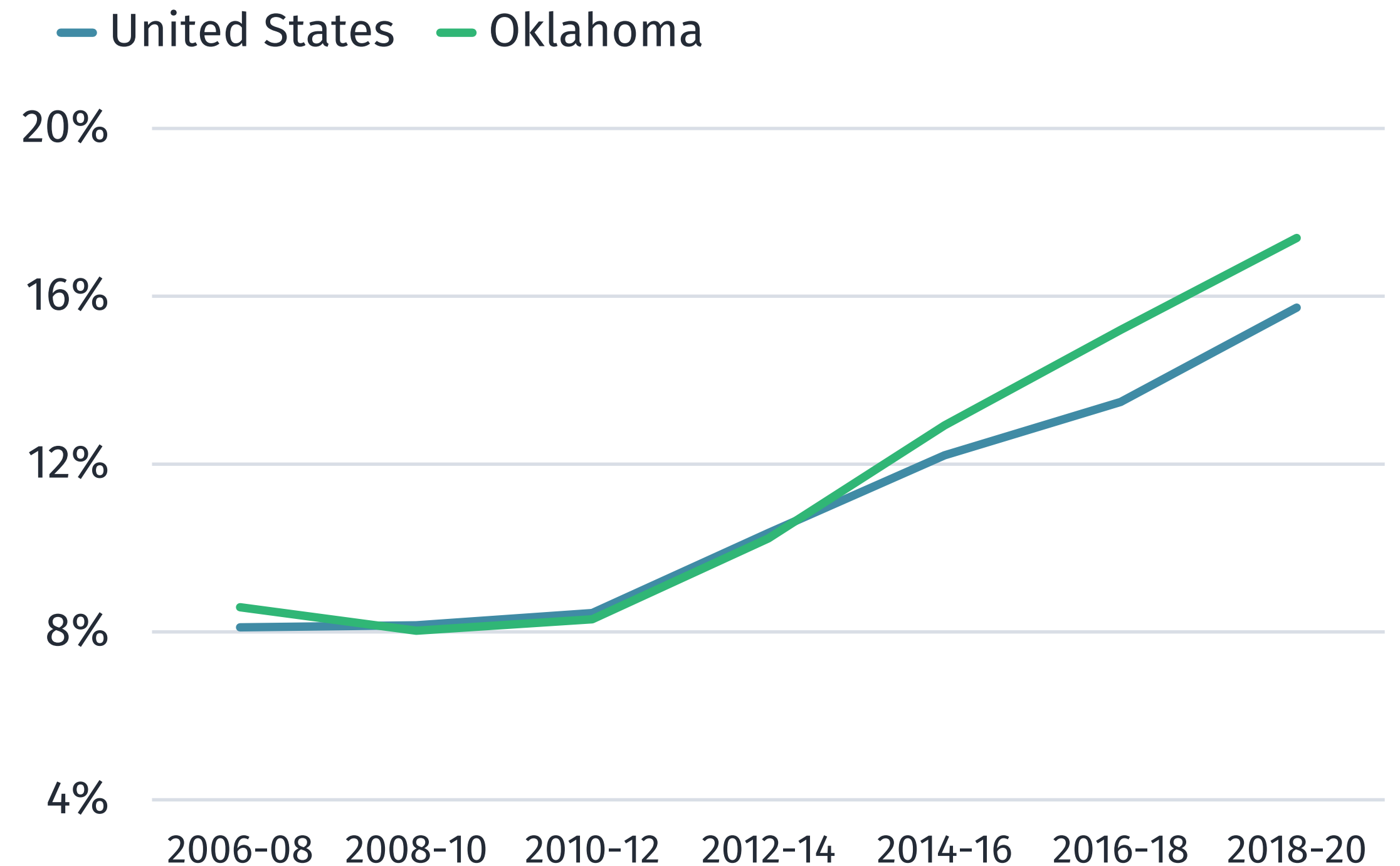
Some children are especially vulnerable to mental health challenges: nationally, **about 70% of children in the juvenile justice system** have a mental health disorder.

Youth mental illness and substance use prevalence

- **About 63,000 Oklahoma youth** had at least one major depressive episode in the past year
- **1 in 10** Oklahoma youth had a substance use disorder in the past year
- Nearly 1 in 3 Oklahoma middle- and high-school students had **high levels of psychological distress**

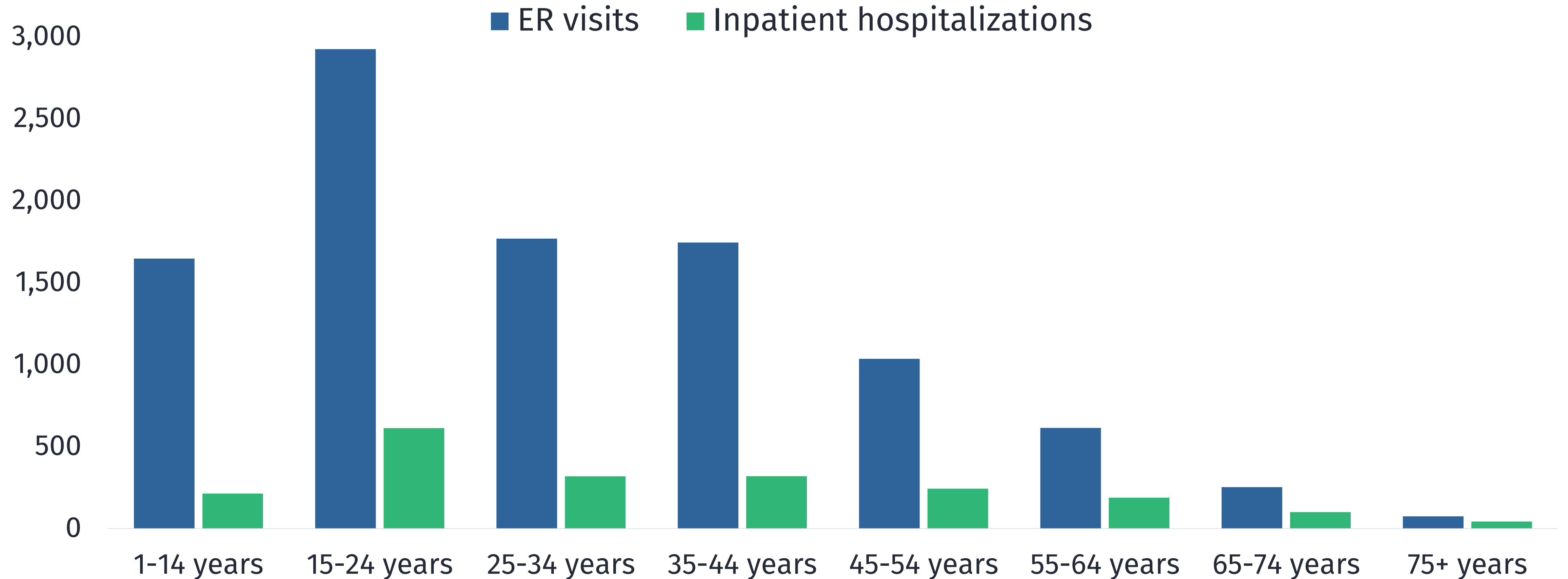
Rates of youth major depressive episodes have risen in Oklahoma and the U.S.

The share of children (ages 12-17) who report having a major depressive episode in the past year has risen significantly.



Suicidal ideation and self-harm among younger Oklahomans

2022 emergency room visits and inpatient hospitalizations for suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and other intentional self-harm



Youth mental health and cell phone use

- U.S. teens spend an average of **4.8 hours** on social media apps per day
- Compulsive and excessive use of social media is linked to:
 - Attention and sleep issues
 - A variety of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicide risk
- Social media can also leave children vulnerable to cyberbullying

Rates of youth mental health issues increase with hours spent on social media

- Suicidal or self-harmed in the past year
- Poor or very poor mental health

2 hours or less



More than 2 hours, less than 5 hours



More than 5 hours



Source: Gallup Familial Adolescent Health Survey, fielded June-July 2023

Oklahoma data on youth social media use



1 in 4

of Oklahoma middle- and high-school students said they “often” or “always” felt they couldn’t go a day without social media



1 in 3

students said they used social media to escape from problems or stress



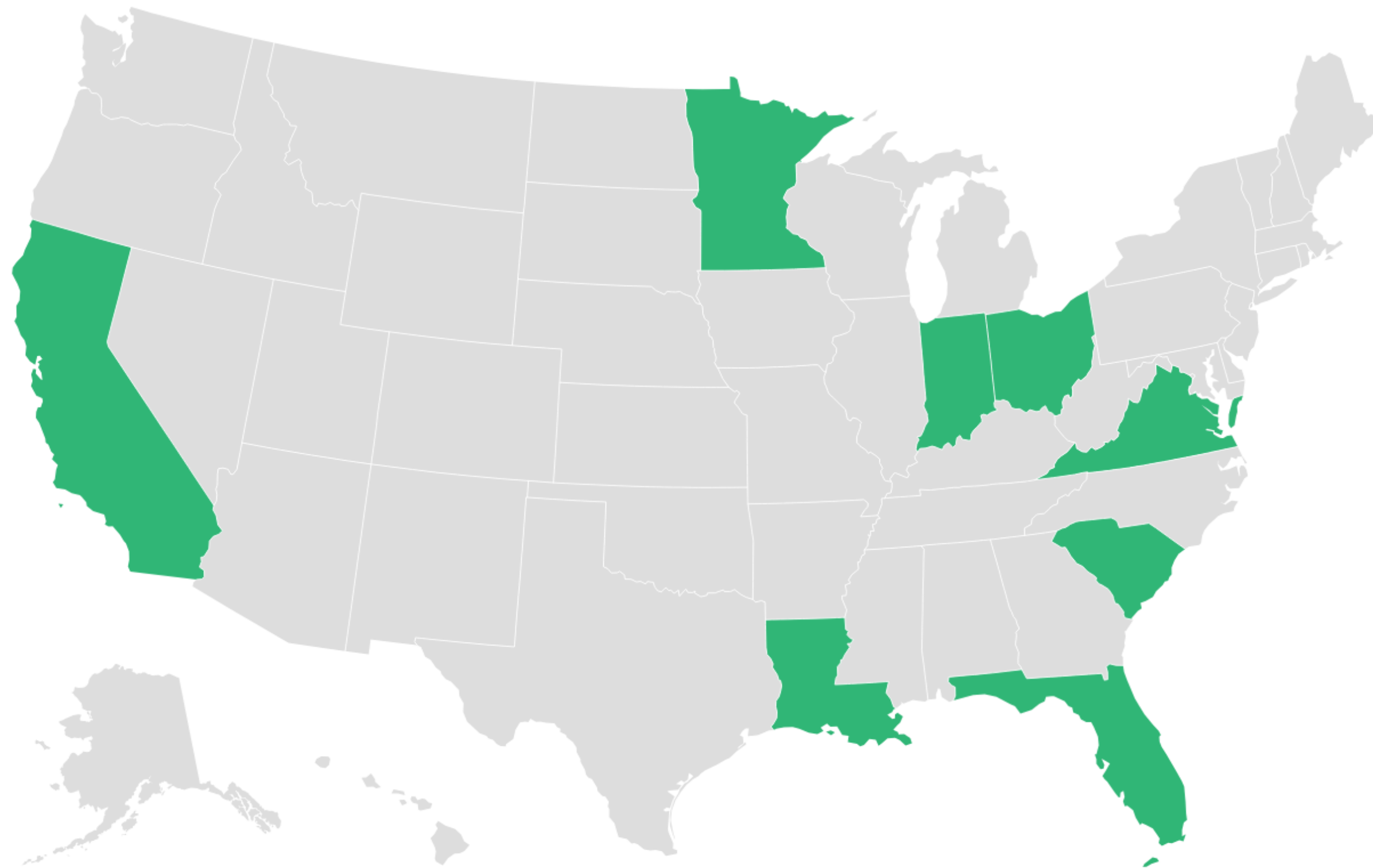
1 in 5

Oklahoma high-schoolers who use social media said it made them feel worse about their lives

How other states have responded

Eight states have passed statewide policies to ban or restrict cell phones in schools

■ Statewide ban or restriction



Source: KFF

- About **76%** of all U.S. public schools prohibited non-academic use of cell phones in 2020
- While local or district-level bans on cell phones aren't new, some states have begun to pass broader statewide bans or restrictions
- Generally, these policies include exceptions for students with medical needs

How Oklahoma school districts have responded

- **September 2024:** Gov. Stitt issues “Oklahoma Phone-Free Schools Challenge,” encouraging schools to limit student cell phone use through cost-neutral strategies
 - School districts may share their policies with the Stitt administration to inform a report on best practices
 - Bixby and Tulsa are among Oklahoma districts that have enacted policies in the past academic year
 - Warner Public Schools has had a zero-tolerance cell phone policy for over a decade — the district has seen an increase in their state school rating since implementation

Next steps for Oklahoma

- **Collect more data** to understand the impact of policies on youth mental health as well as academic performance
- **Establish model policy** at the state level for Oklahoma school districts to adopt and adapt as needed

Questions?

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