



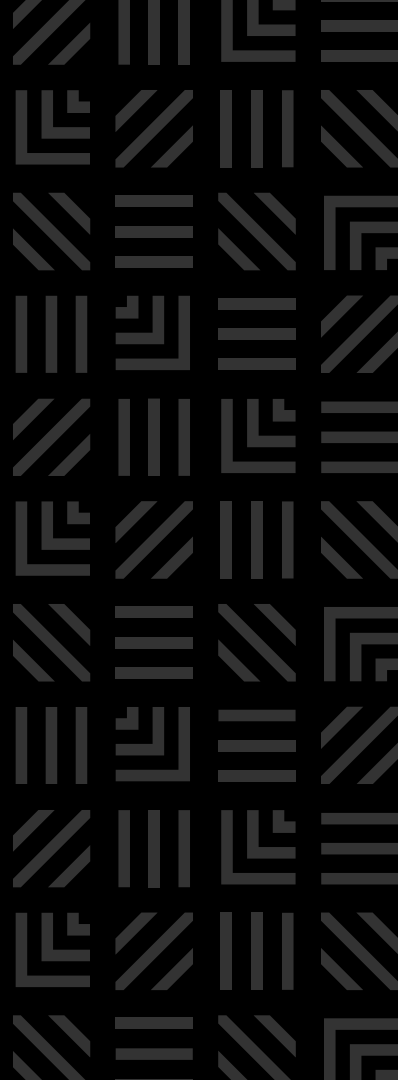
Big Brothers  
Big Sisters®

OF AMERICA

# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

## 2021

*Rebecca Porzig | Foundation Grants Department | Big Brothers Big Sisters of America | June 2022*

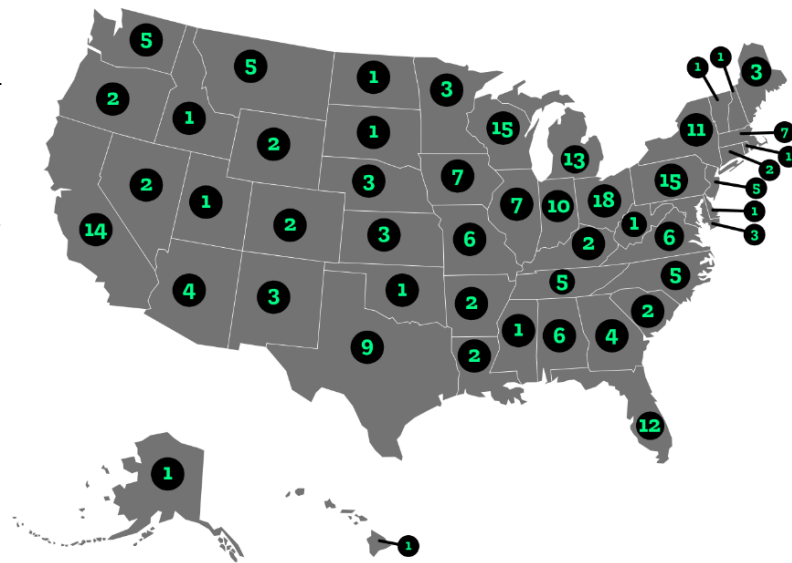


# WHO WE ARE

BBBSA is the oldest and largest Youth Equity & Empowerment Organization with a commitment to empower every kid on the path to graduate with a plan for their future and a mentor whose impact will last a lifetime.

We ignite and inspire Matches (mentoring relationships) between Bigs (mentors) and Littles (young persons).

We have more than 230 agencies in over 5,000 communities in all 50 states inspire and engage youth from age five through young adulthood. Established in 1904 as an alternative to the juvenile justice system to reach the most marginalized youth, more than 400,000 Littles, their families, and Bigs are part of our evidence-based programs each year.



Numbers represent an approximate count of BBBS agencies in each state

# OUR MISSION

Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships  
that ignite the power and promise of youth

# OUR VISION

All youth achieve their full potential

# SETTING CONTEXT

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We know young people are full of promise and potential, capable of great resilience. We also acknowledge the challenges and adversities faced by young people today. **The COVID-19 pandemic continues to adversely affect youth in America.** A CDC survey of high school students in 2021 revealed that 37% experienced poor mental health during COVID-19<sup>1</sup>.

We also know that adverse effects of the pandemic are not experienced equally. Communities of color experience pandemic-related challenges compounded by experiences of racism and stigma<sup>2</sup>. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth also experienced worse mental health threats than heterosexual peers during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>.

In the very beginning of the pandemic, BBBSA and the network quickly transitioned to virtual programming and partnered with community organizations to provide wraparound services and essential necessities to matches and families. This expansion of innovations was sustained in 2021 as staff continued to adapt to an ever-changing landscape in communities across the nation, supporting matches both virtually and in-person to reach those most in need of support.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/2022/2021-ABES-Findings.html#Graphics>

<sup>2</sup>Absher, L., Maze, J., and Brymer, M. (2021). The Traumatic Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families: Current Perspectives from the NCTSN. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

# OUR MODEL

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## **Common standards with space for innovation**

All agencies operate under the BBBS Standards of Practice. BBBSA also provides and regularly updates the Service Delivery Model (SDM) for agency use. The SDM provides a standardized guide, based on research and empirical evidence, for how agencies should engage Bigs, Littles, and parents or guardians to achieve safe, long, and strong matches with the best possible outcomes for Littles, from the point of inquiry to match closure. The SDM also provides space for innovation, so agencies can effectively meet the needs of their communities. Many agencies have expanded services and program enhancements. For example, some agencies have programs serving young people beyond high school, with an emphasis on college and career readiness; some offer group mentoring; some offer wraparound services for Littles and their families; many offer technology-enhanced mentoring that connects youth and mentors through virtual platforms.

## **Varied Settings**

**Community-Based** matches meet in local community spaces

**Site-Based** matches meet at a designated place such as a school or workplace

**Site-Based Facilitated** matches involve staff facilitators on site

**Site-Based Plus** matches combine elements of both community and site settings

# BIG IMPACTS

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## **Foundational research**

Conducted in 1995, the Public/Private Ventures study is widely considered to be foundational to the mentoring field and the BBBS Community-Based program model specifically. Researchers compared Littles to non-mentored peers after 18 months, finding that mentored young people were less likely to engage in a variety of risky and unhealthy behaviors, such as using illegal drugs or alcohol, skipping school, and hitting others.

## **Continuous evaluation with rigor**

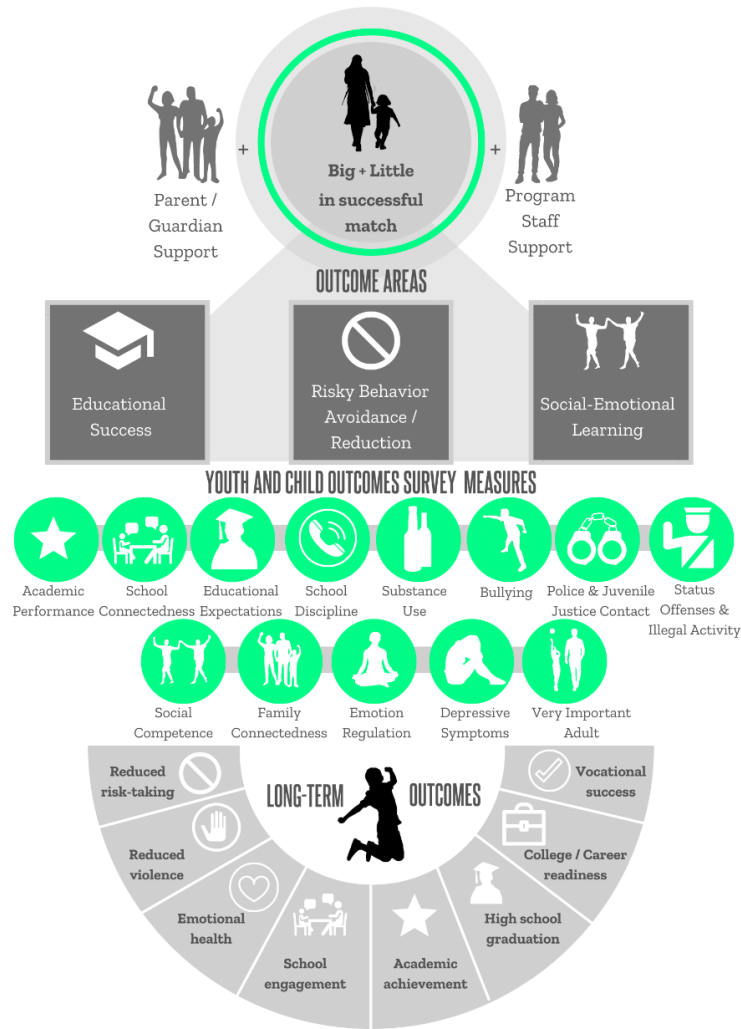
A new study, supported by Arnold Ventures, is rigorously examining effects of BBBS community-based mentoring. Study enrollment occurred between February 2018 and February 2022. Data are being collected at study enrollment, 18 months after enrollment, and four years after enrollment. A wide range of outcomes are being examined, including protective and risk factors for delinquent/criminal behavior and delinquent behavior such as substance use and arrest. Interim results from the 18-month follow-up survey will be released in late summer of 2022. Full results, including a peer-reviewed publication of the findings for public consumption, are anticipated late 2024.



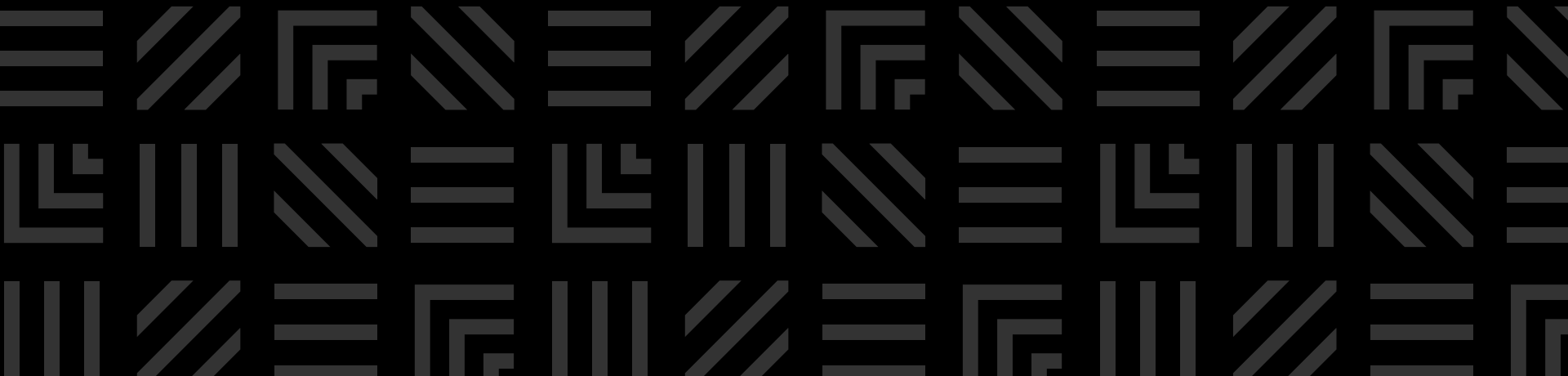
# OUR MEASUREMENT

BBBS strives to ensure all the young people experience quality mentoring relationships that uphold our Standards of Practice. Therefore, our agencies track outcomes that are proven predictors of long-term success. BBBS defines success in part through measurement of these outcomes using the Youth and Child Outcomes Survey. The surveys (one version for children aged 10 and younger, another for youth aged 11 and older) track outcomes in the following areas: educational success, risk behavior avoidance/reduction, and socio-emotional competency. Staff administer a baseline survey before the match begins and administer follow-ups annually.

See the figure to the right for an overview of how the outcomes we measure relate to long-term success.



# OUR LITTLES



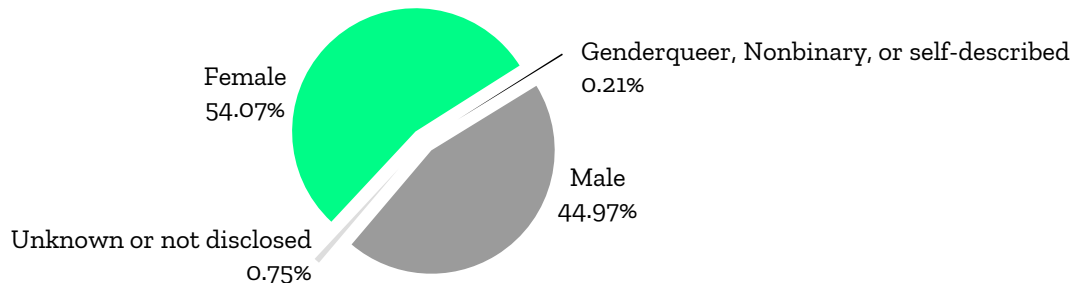


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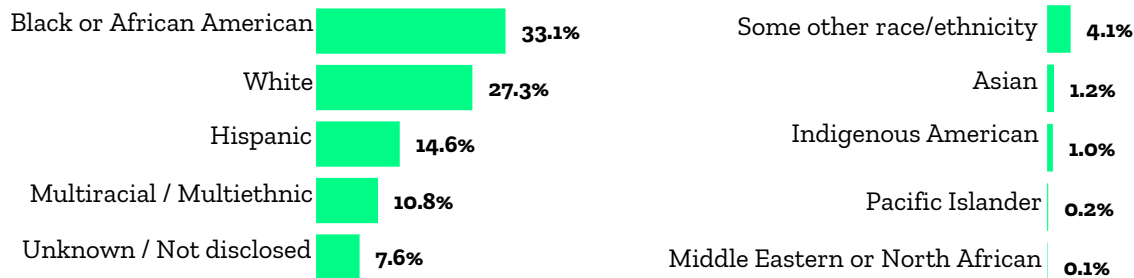
## Number of **young people empowered** through BBBS mentoring programs in 2021

Littles mentored through our programs represent a diversity of backgrounds and identities. We recognize that these identities and experiences are intersectional and complex. Even as our summary data highlight singular aspects of identity, as seen in the charts to the right, BBBS staff strive daily to honor each aspect of our young peoples' identities in everything from the process of matching with a mentor to giving ongoing support to mentoring relationships. Data here also reflect only youth served through traditional mentoring models; thousands more are served through group mentoring and other innovative programs throughout the BBBS network.

### Littles: Gender Identity / Expression



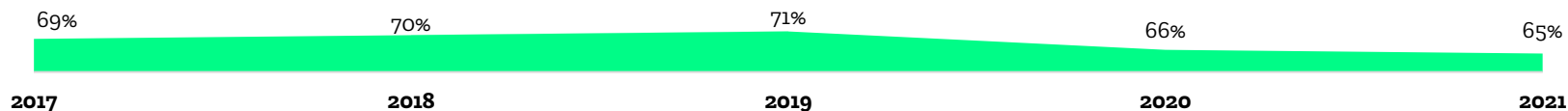
### Littles: Race / Ethnicity



## Trends in demographic qualities of Littles have emerged over the past five years

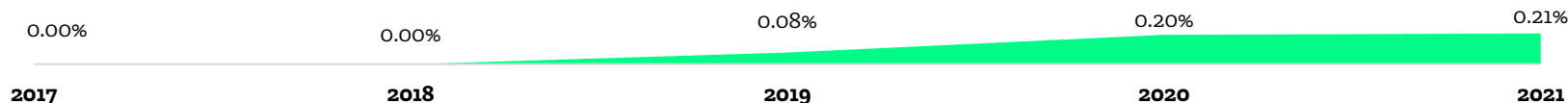
The slight decrease in BIPOC youth in recent years appears to be due not to higher enrollment of white youth but to a larger percentage of young people with unknown or undisclosed race/ethnicity.

### 5-Year View: percentage of BIPOC Littles



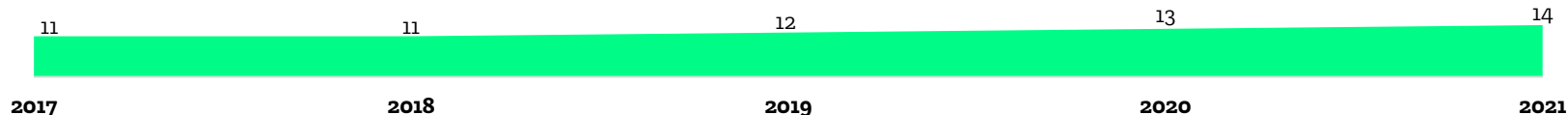
BBBSA implemented tracking gender identity outside of the female-male binary starting in 2019. In the time since, a growing number of youth have described their gender identity/expression in expansive ways.

### 5-Year View: percentage of Littles identifying outside of binary, cisgendered gender expressions and identities

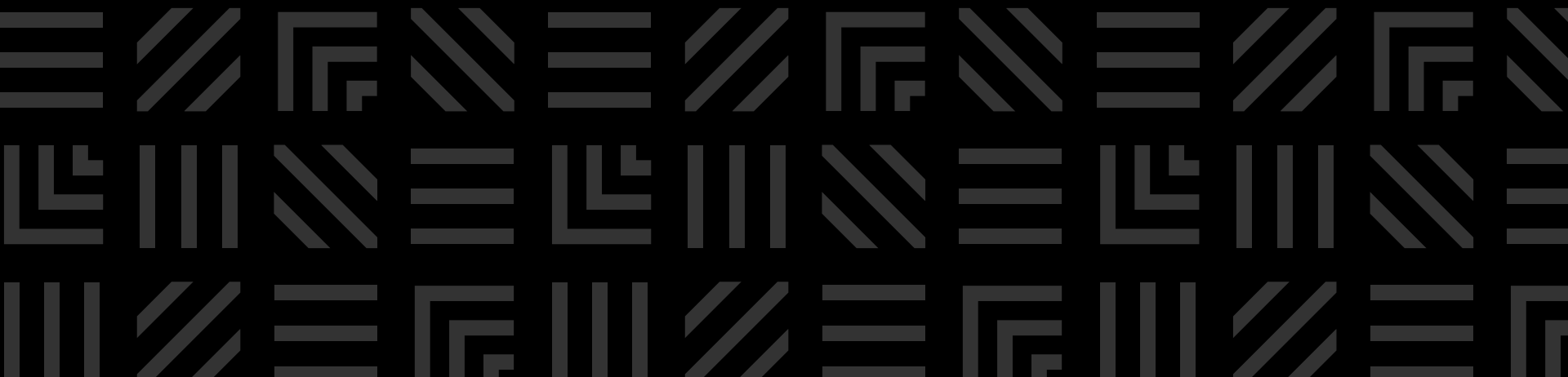


The largest age group of Littles in 2021 was 11 – 14 years; average age has slightly increased over the years. In 2021, five percent of all young people in matches were aged 19 or older; many agencies offer mentorship to young adults.

### 5-Year View: average age (in years) of Littles

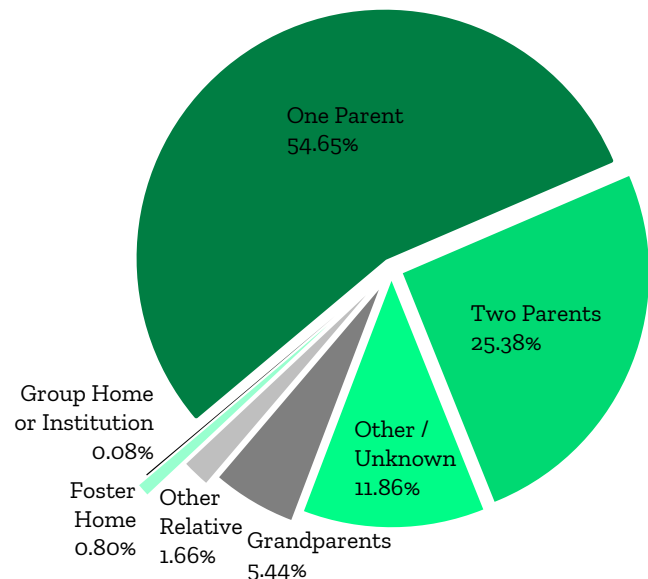


# OUR LITTLES AND THEIR FAMILIES

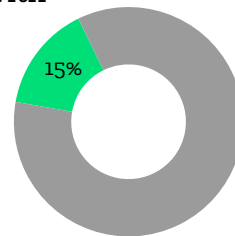


## The families of our Littles represent a diversity of life experiences and situations

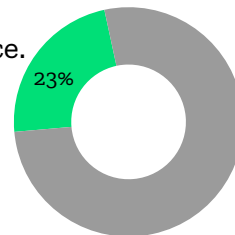
54% of our Littles live with one parent, though a variety of living situations are represented.



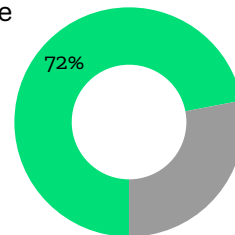
15% of Littles are navigating life with an incarcerated parent.



23% of Littles are in families who report receiving income assistance.



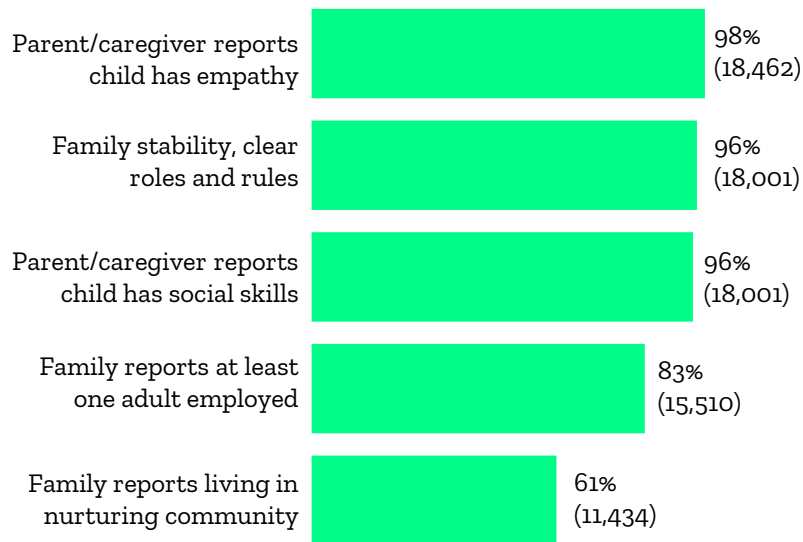
72% of Littles are recipients of free or reduced lunch at school.



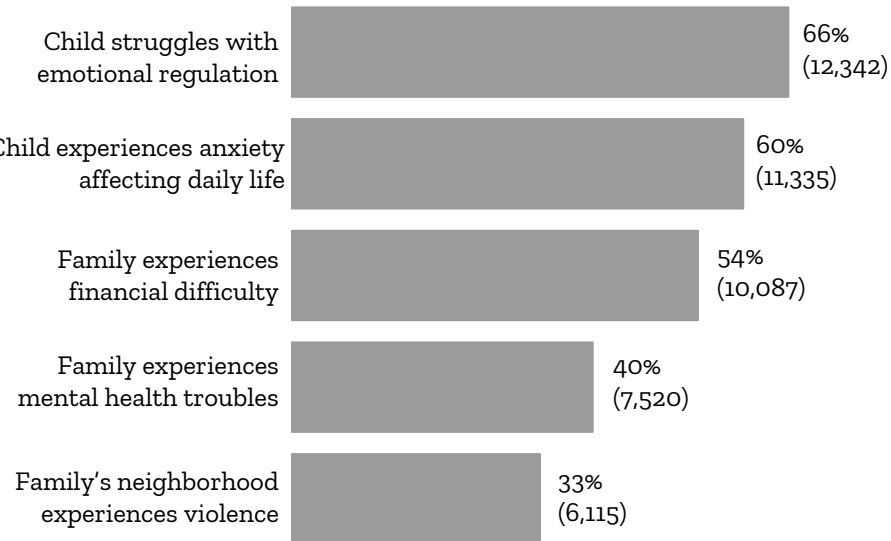
## Our Littles and their families are resilient in the face of life's challenges

Many agencies administer the Risk and Protective Inventory (RPI) to the families of Littles. This survey helps agency staff recognize the strengths of our Littles and their families while also helping staff better understand what additional resources families may need to navigate challenges within their lives and communities.

### Survey highlights: strengths reported by families



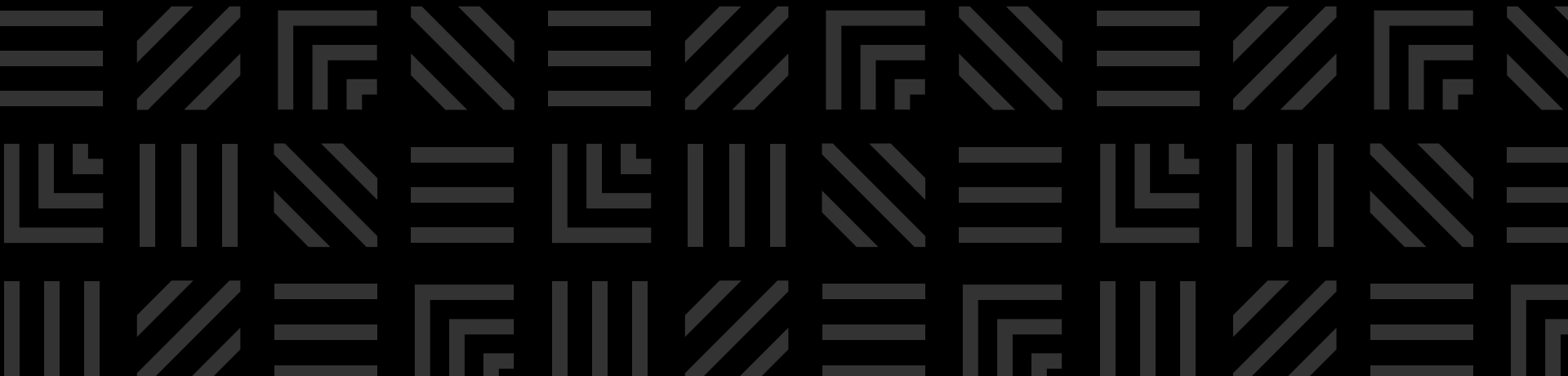
### Survey highlights: challenges reported by families



RPI data represent **18,790 surveys** administered to families in 2021



OUR LITTLES, THEIR FAMILIES, **AND BIGS**

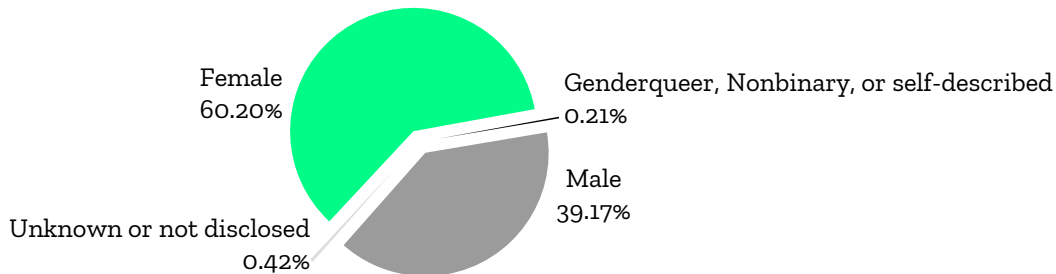


# 92,354

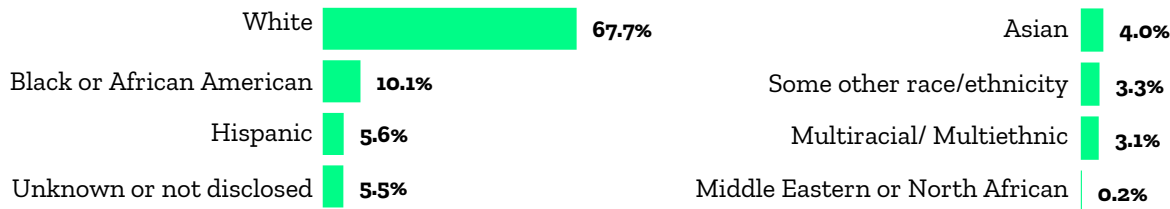
## Number of **Bigs volunteering** as mentors in BBBS programs in 2021

Bigs who volunteer through our programs represent a diversity of backgrounds and identities. We also recognize that there are differences in the demographic diversity of our Bigs compared to our Littles. BBBSA continues to develop and provide training to Bigs in all matches, including cross-race matches, while also actively working to reduce and remove barriers to volunteering for a greater diversity of individuals in communities across America.

### Bigs: Gender Identity / Expression



### Bigs: Race / Ethnicity

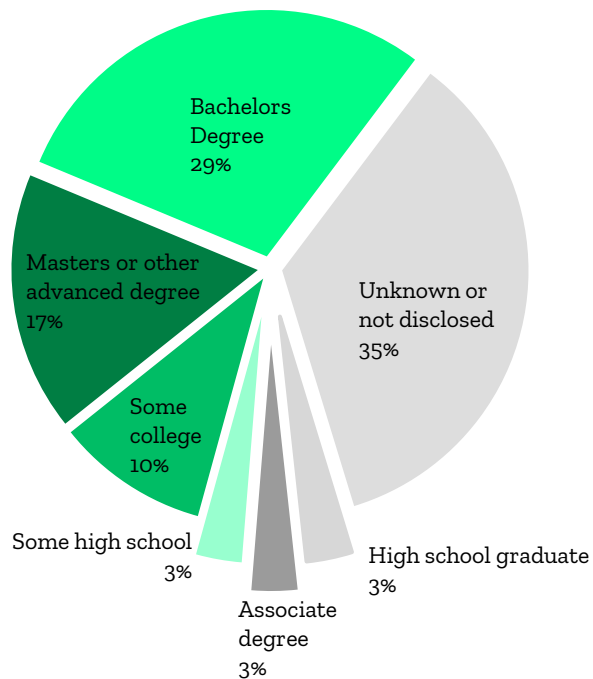


\*Count of volunteers from BBBSA's national data collection platform

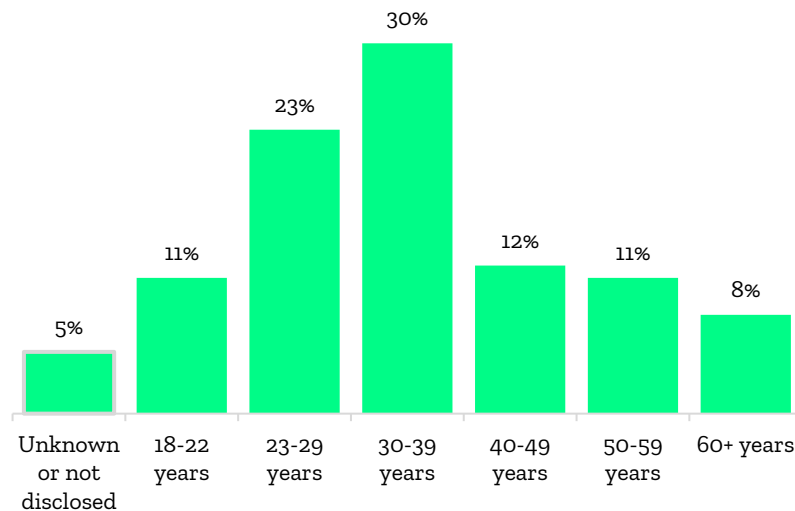


## Our Bigs represent individuals at varying stages of life and educational experience

Among Bigs for whom we have level of education recorded, most possessed a Bachelors Degree.



Bigs are diverse in age. Though the largest age group of Bigs was 30-39 years old, no group holds a majority.





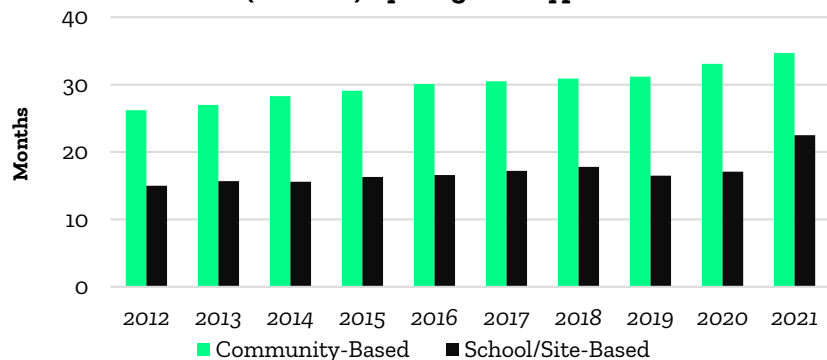


# MEASURING SUCCESS IN MATCHES

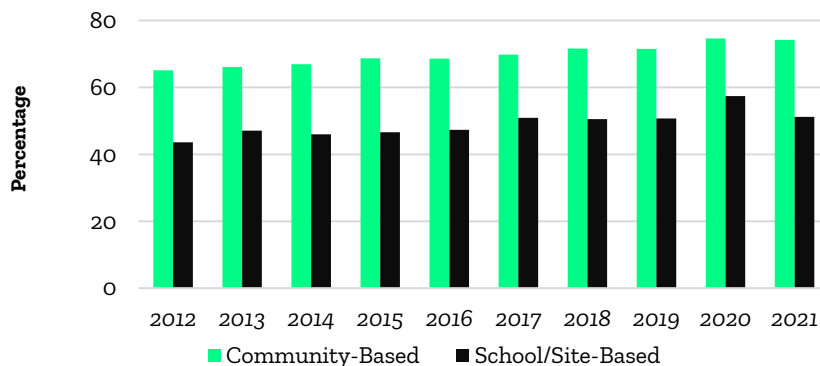
## 10-year trends in match length and retention rate

We gauge the quality of BBBS matches in part by measuring match length and 12-month match retention rate (the percent of matches lasting for at least 12 months, minimum match length goal). Mentoring relationships that last longer are associated with higher ratings of relationships quality<sup>1</sup>. It is also important to understand that these effects can be seen on the order of months and not necessarily years. Intention plays an important role as well. Many Site-Based matches, for example, follow a school year cycle and are intentionally shorter than Community-Based matches. In both types of matches, we see increases of length and retention rate. In 2021, Community-Based matches lasted almost three years; Site-Based matches lasted almost two years. Likewise, Community-Based retention rates increased from 65.1% in 2012 to 74.2% in 2021; Site-Based retention rates increased from 43.6% in 2012 to 51.2% in 2021.

**10-Year Snapshot of Average Match Length  
(Months) by Program Type**



**10-Year Snapshot of 12 Month Retention Rate (%) by  
Program**



<sup>1</sup>De Wit, DJ, DuBois, DL, Erdem, G, Larose, S, Lipman, EL. Predictors of mentoring relationship quality: Investigation from the perspectives of youth and parent participants in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada one-to-one mentoring programs. *J Community Psychol.* 2020; 48: 192– 208. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22244>



## Highlights from the Strength of Relationships Survey

The Strength of Relationships (SOR) survey measures the level of emotional attachment, satisfaction, and connection between Bigs and Littles. This tool helps BBBS staff protect child safety, create more positive experiences, and encourage more positive outcomes for children. There is one version of the survey for Littles and another for Bigs. Highlights from surveys administered during 2021 are shown below.



In 2021, Littles reported strong feelings of being listened to when bringing worries or problems to their Bigs (scoring on average of 4.6 of 5). Bigs can and do provide valuable emotional support to their Littles.



Bigs in 2021 felt a sense of confidence handling the challenges of being a mentor (scoring on average 4.5 of 5). When Bigs feel confident and capable, the potential of Littles is empowered.



Similarly, Littles overwhelmingly reported feeling safe with their Bigs (scoring on average 4.8 of 5). This question is especially useful to staff. If feelings of safety ever diminish, follow-up can immediately occur.



Similarly, Bigs did not report strong feelings of being overwhelmed by difficulties faced by Littles' families (scoring on average 1.8 of 5). Littles, their families, and Bigs can and do thrive together while navigating life.



# YOUTH AND CHILD OUTCOMES SURVEY DATA

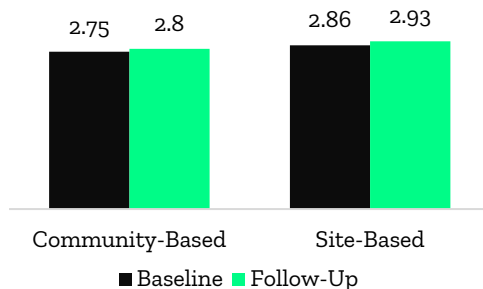


# EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Educational success encompasses: *Academic Performance*, *School Connectedness*, and *Educational Expectations*. In 2021, Littles experienced significant gains\* on Academic Performance, showing improvement in their grades. A high baseline score for school connectedness, even without significant change, suggests Littles started from a place of strength in terms of feeling engaged in their own education. Littles also experienced significant gains\* in *Education Expectations*. Most notably, 96% of Littles in 2021 made or strengthened plans for finishing high school and/or pursuing college. **This persistence toward educational goals indicates the young people we empower are on the path to graduate with a plan for their future.**

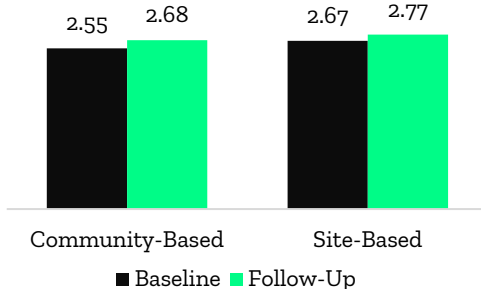
**Academic Performance baseline and follow-up average scores.**

Maximum possible score: 4



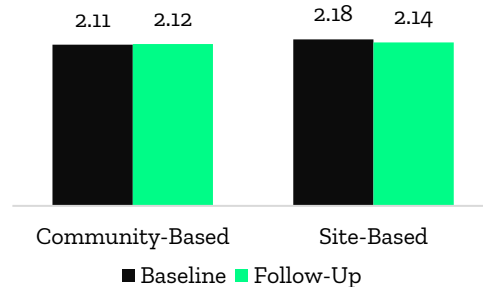
**Educational Expectations baseline and follow-up average scores.**

Maximum possible score: 3



**School Connectedness baseline and follow-up average scores.**

Maximum possible score: 3

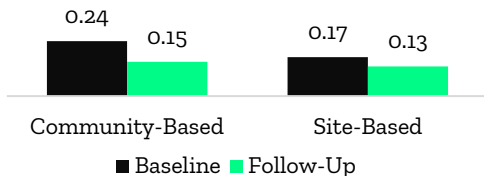


\* $p < .01$ , effect size of 0.06 for *Academic Performance* and effect size of 0.19 for *Educational Expectations*

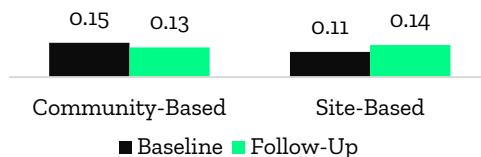
# RISKY BEHAVIOR AVOIDANCE / REDUCTION

The outcome area of risk avoidance/ reduction encompasses several measures: *Bullying, Police & Juvenile Justice Contact, School Discipline, Status Offenses and Illegal Activity, and Substance Use*. Lower scores are desirable on each measure in this outcome area. In 2021, Littles made significant gains reducing bullying behaviors and instances of discipline at school\*. Low baseline scores on each measure shown below, regardless of significant change, are another testament to our Littles starting from a place of strength and potential.

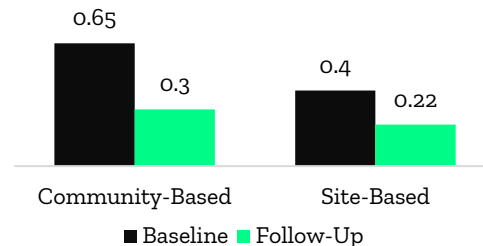
**Bullying baseline and follow-up average scores.** Maximum possible score: 3



**Status Offenses & Illegal Activity baseline and follow-up average scores.** Maximum possible score: 4



**School Discipline baseline and follow-up average scores.** Maximum possible score: 4



\* $p < .01$ , effect sizes of -0.14 for *Bullying* and effect size of -0.25 for *School Discipline*

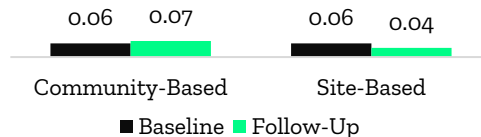
# RISKY BEHAVIOR AVOIDANCE / REDUCTION

Success in prevention can be seen on measures where baseline scores indicate extremely low or completely absent risky behaviors and experiences. Of Littles surveyed in 2021, 100% avoided police and juvenile justice contact and 97% avoided or reduced substance use. **Littles are making healthy choices and engaging in healthy behaviors.**

**Police and Juvenile Justice Contact baseline and follow-up average occurrence.** Maximum possible occurrence: 100%\*



**Substance Use baseline and follow-up average scores.** Maximum possible score: 4



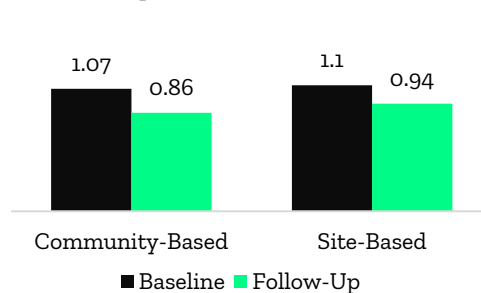
\*Values of 0% for *Police & Juvenile Justice Contact* indicate complete absence of self-reported juvenile justice system involvement among surveyed youth.

# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The outcome area of social-emotional learning encompasses the following measures: *Social Competence*, *Family Connectedness*, *Emotion Regulation*, *Depressive Symptoms*, and *Very Important Adult*. Each of these outcomes speaks to vital skills and indicators necessary for personal success, both in daily life and long-term. Littles improved in nearly all outcomes in this area\*, except for *Family Connectedness*. Keep in mind the average age of our Littles in 2021 was 14 and not uncommon to see decreased feelings of family connectedness in adolescence. In addition, baseline scores on this measure were relatively high and 75% of Littles felt a stable or increasing sense of connectedness to their families.

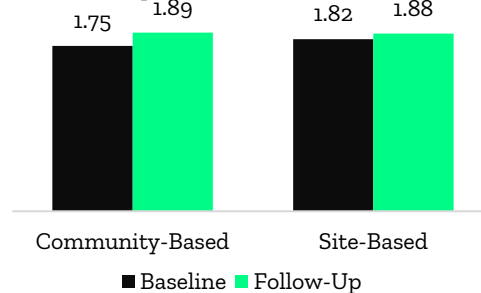
## Depressive Symptoms baseline and follow-up average scores.

Maximum possible score: 4



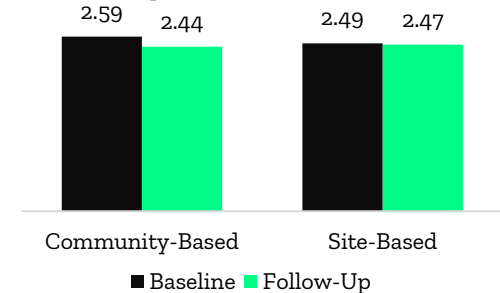
## Emotion Regulation baseline and follow-up average scores.

Maximum possible score: 3



## Family Connectedness baseline and follow-up average scores.

Maximum possible score: 3



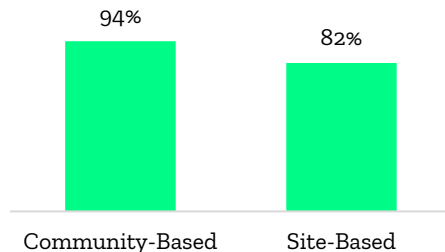
\* $p < .01$ , effect sizes of 0.29 for *Social Competence*, 0.12 for *Emotion Regulation*, and -0.20 for *Depressive Symptoms*



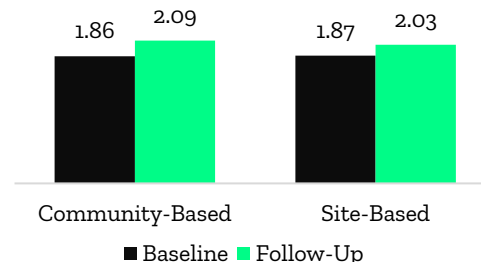
# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Building social competence and establishing strong interpersonal connections are also key to lifelong success both personally and communally. Mentoring can be especially beneficial in this area, and that is reflected in our *Social Competence* and *Very Important Adult* outcomes: Littles made significant gains in social competence\* and 90% of Littles saw their Big as a very important adult in their life. **Littles are resilient, full of potential and ready to thrive with the support of mentors whose impacts last a lifetime.**

**Very Important Adult: percentage of Littles endorsing.** Maximum possible value: 100%\*\*



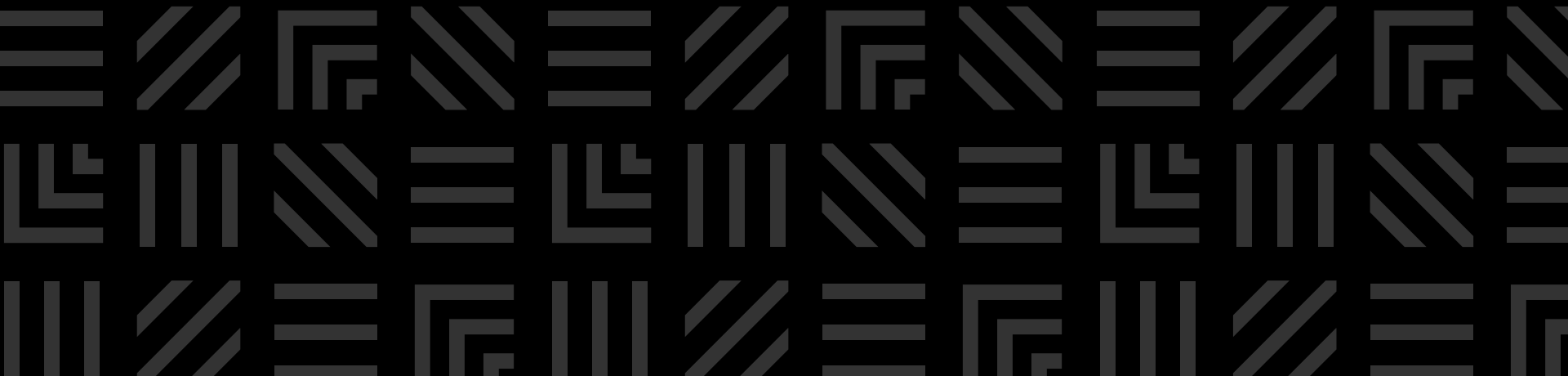
**Social Competence baseline and follow-up average scores.** Maximum possible score: 3



\* $p < .01$ , effect sizes of 0.29 for *Social Competence*

\*\*Very Important Adult is measured only at follow-up; there are no baseline data.

OUR FUTURE



# TRANSFORMING MENTORING

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BBBSA aims to transform mentorship in communities across America, furthering our mission to ensure every young person has access to powerful mentoring experiences that empower them for lifelong success.

The year of 2021 saw BBBSA expand the one-to-one mentoring model with a holistic approach to building positive relationships, and commit to establishing a National Youth Advisory Council to bring young people's ideas, insights, and input to the table. These efforts will continue into 2022 and beyond.

Youth empowerment is at the center of our governance, and we are committed to expanding our mentoring model, creating greater access to mentoring experiences by building stronger alliances, delivering mentoring strategies that account for the uniqueness and diversity of young people today, and attracting families and volunteers in ways that meet them where they are in life. Keep up with exactly what we are doing to pursue these aims at <https://www.bbbs.org/big-news/>



This report is written with thanks to the BBBS network of federated agencies.

Without the diligent work of agency staff, it would not be possible to show the successes of our network.





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