



Omni

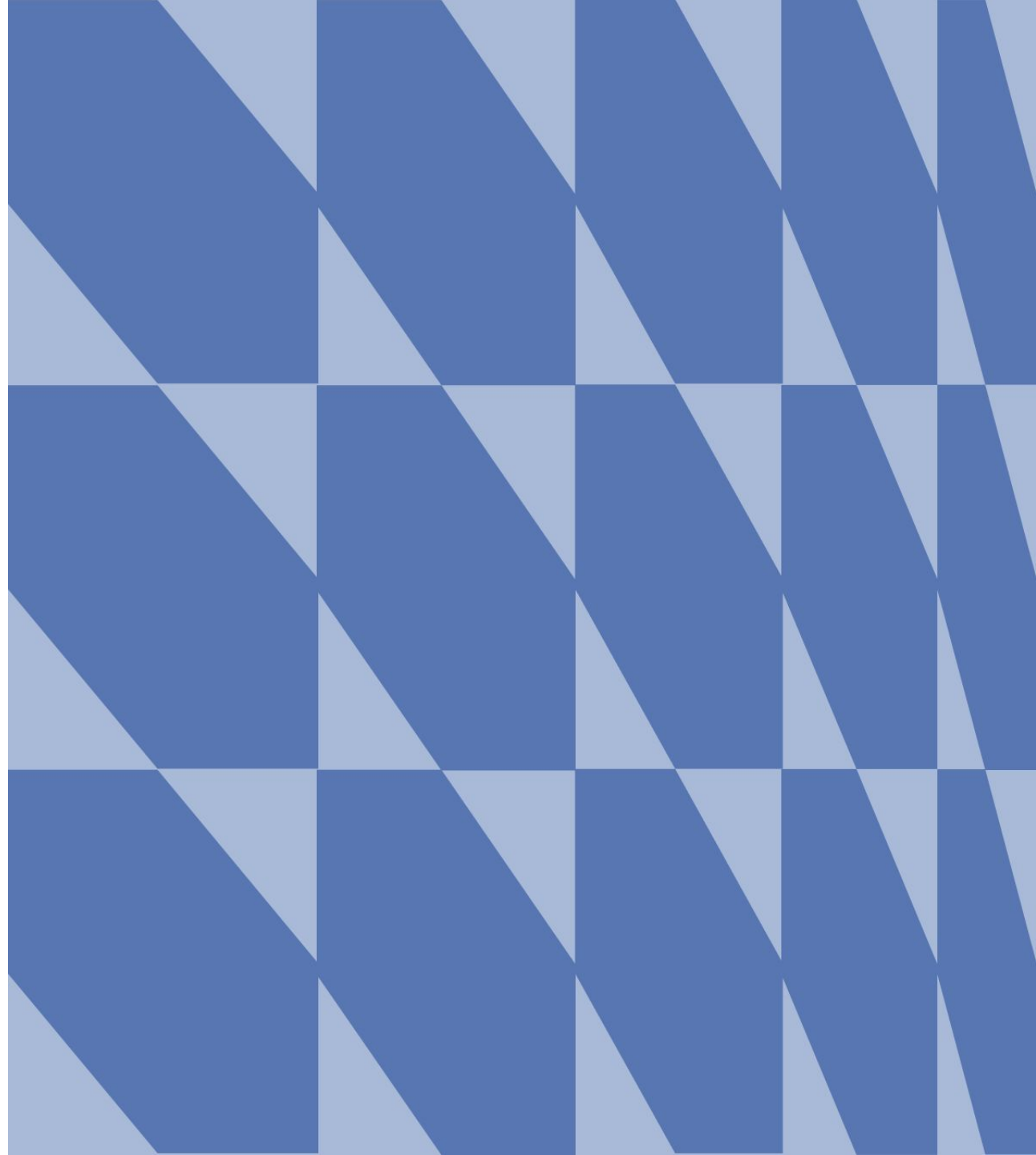


January 26, 2026

City of Medford Youth Health Data 2025 YRBS Results

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A Transition to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

In 2025, Medford Public Schools (MPS) transitioned from the Communities That Care Youth Survey (CTCYS), administered in 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2023, to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

This transition enables Medford to align their data collection practices with other communities in the region and across the state, and to compare local data with regional, state, and national trends.



What is the YRBS?

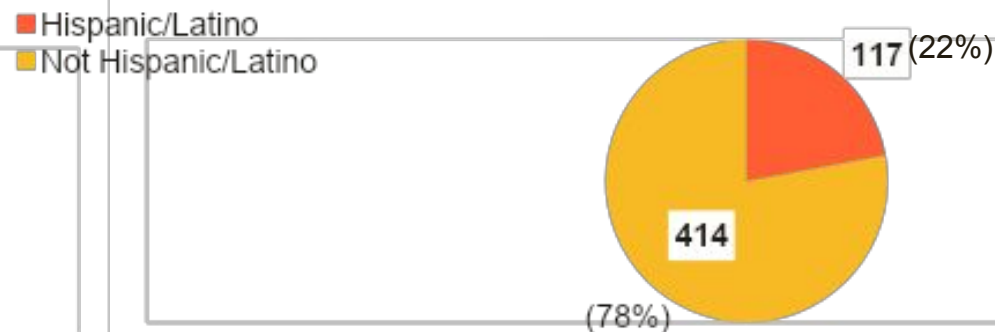
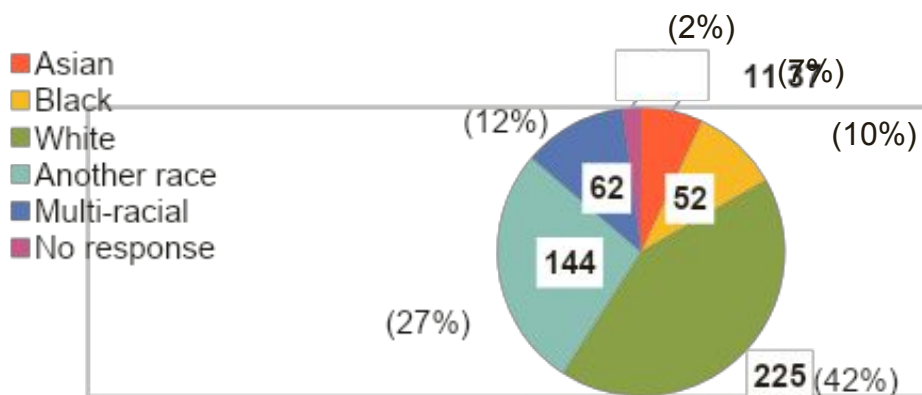
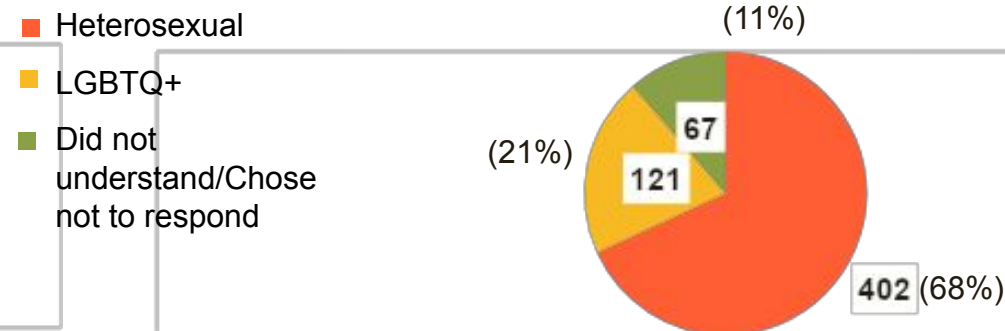
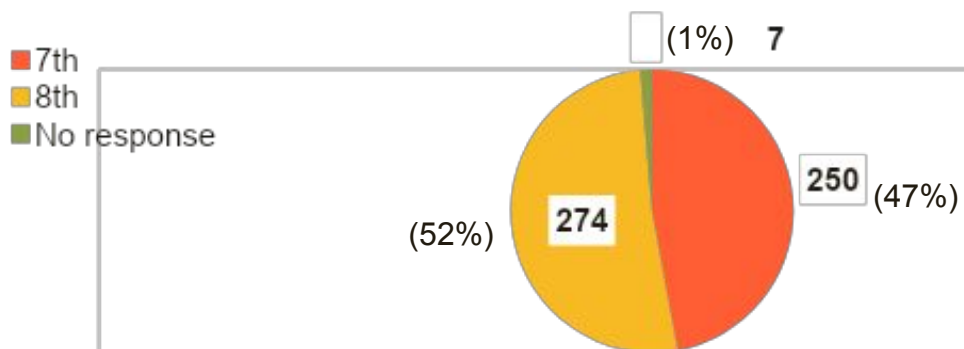
The YRBS is a biannual national survey developed by the CDC and administered across the U.S. to middle and high school students. The survey includes 80+ questions related to health, safety, and well-being.

This presentation presents selected findings from Middle and High School Samples participating in the 2025 YRBS, along with supplemental qualitative data from four focus groups conducted at Medford High School in November 2025.



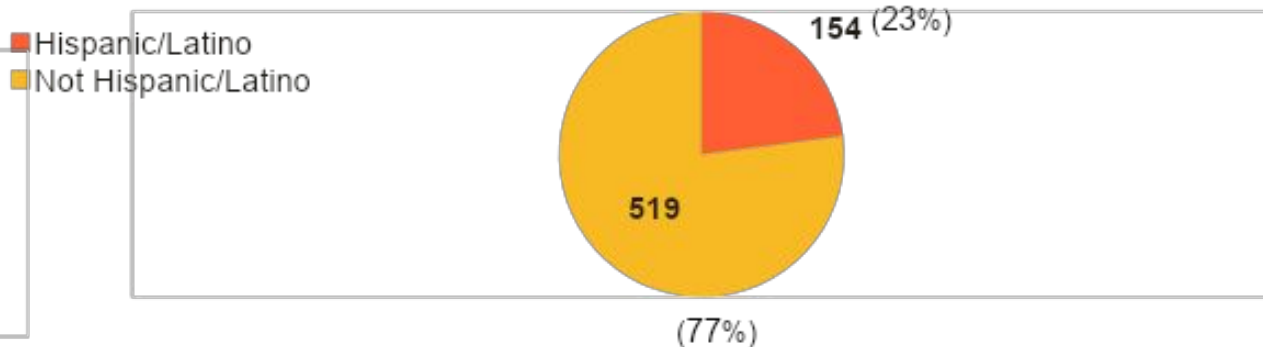
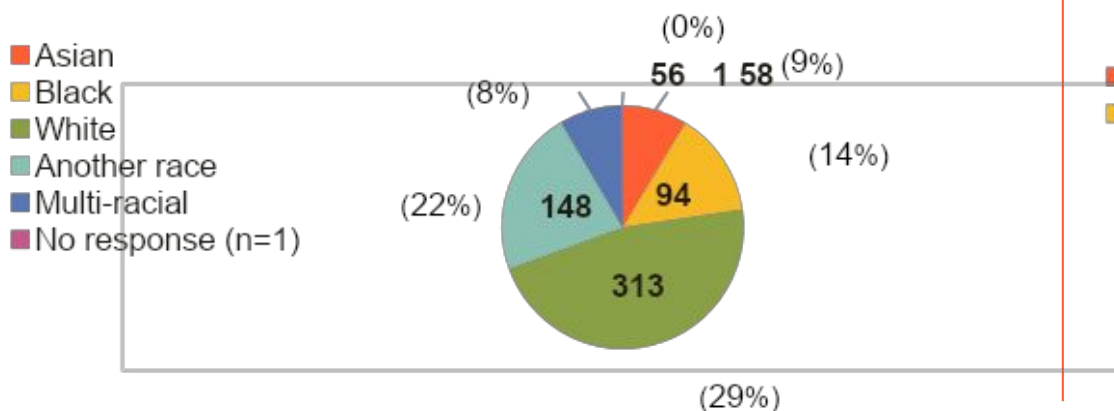
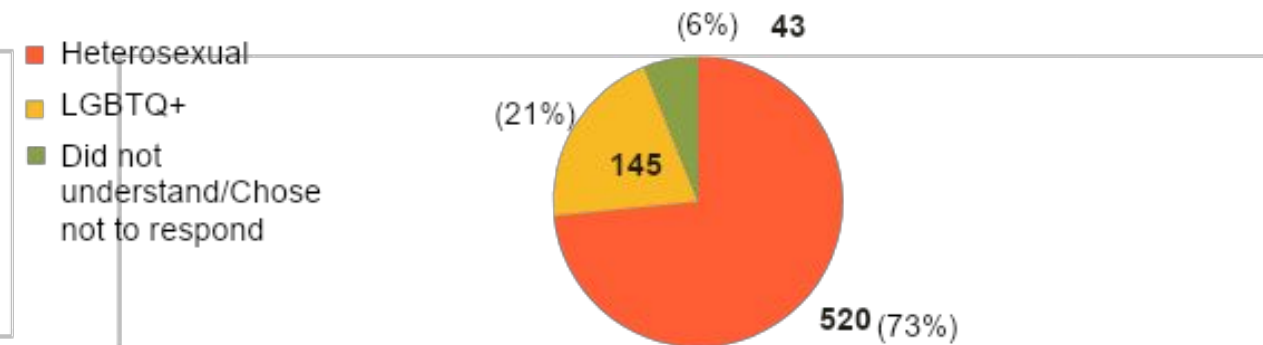
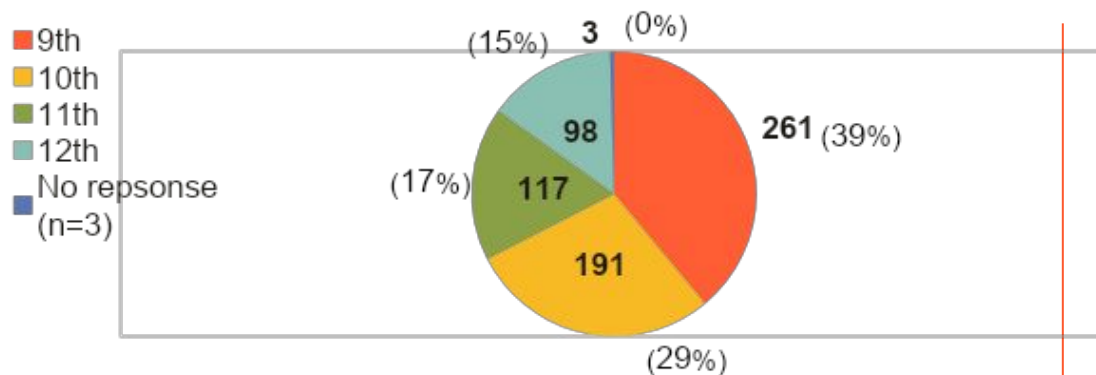
Demographics | Middle School Sample

A total of 674 students participated, but 143 responses were incomplete and were therefore excluded from analyses. **The final sample is 531 middle school students.**



Demographics | High School Sample

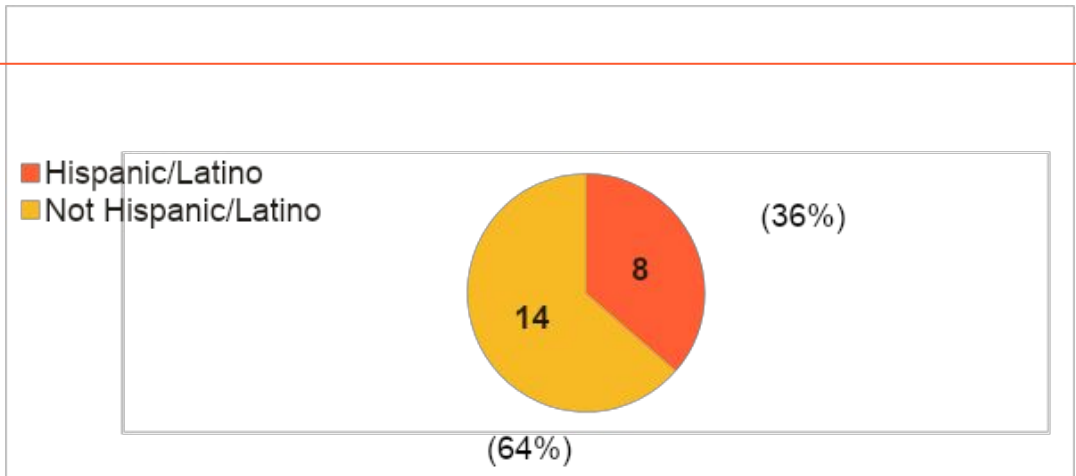
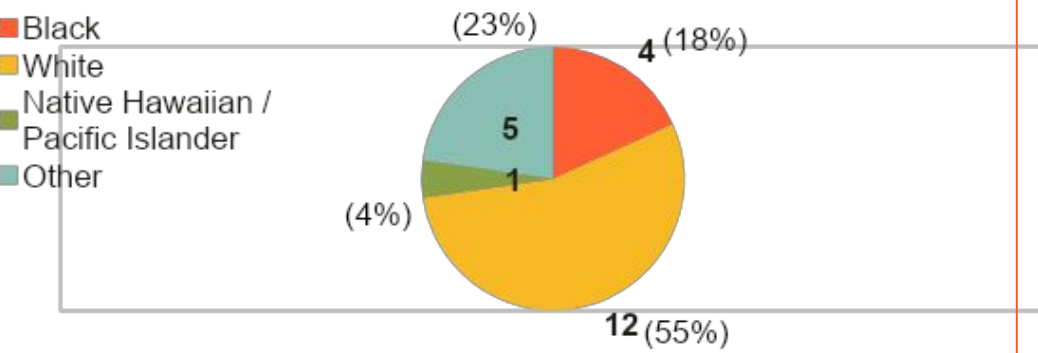
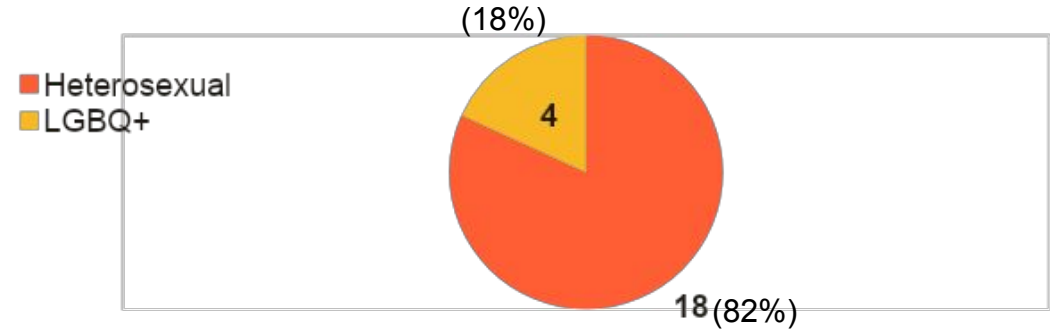
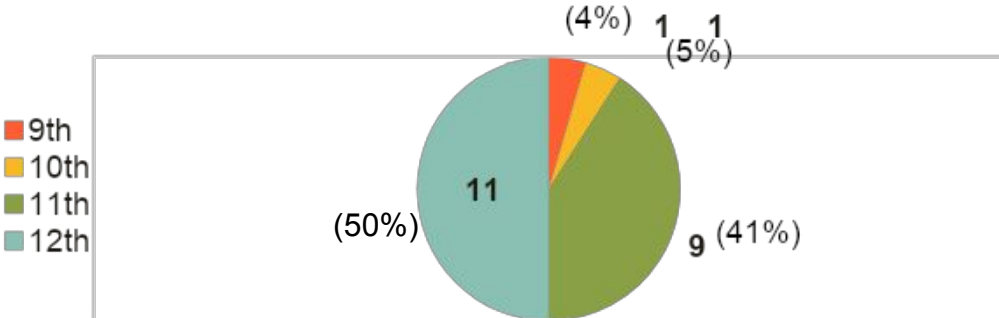
742 students participated, but 71 responses were incomplete and were therefore excluded from analyses. **The final sample is 670 high school students.**



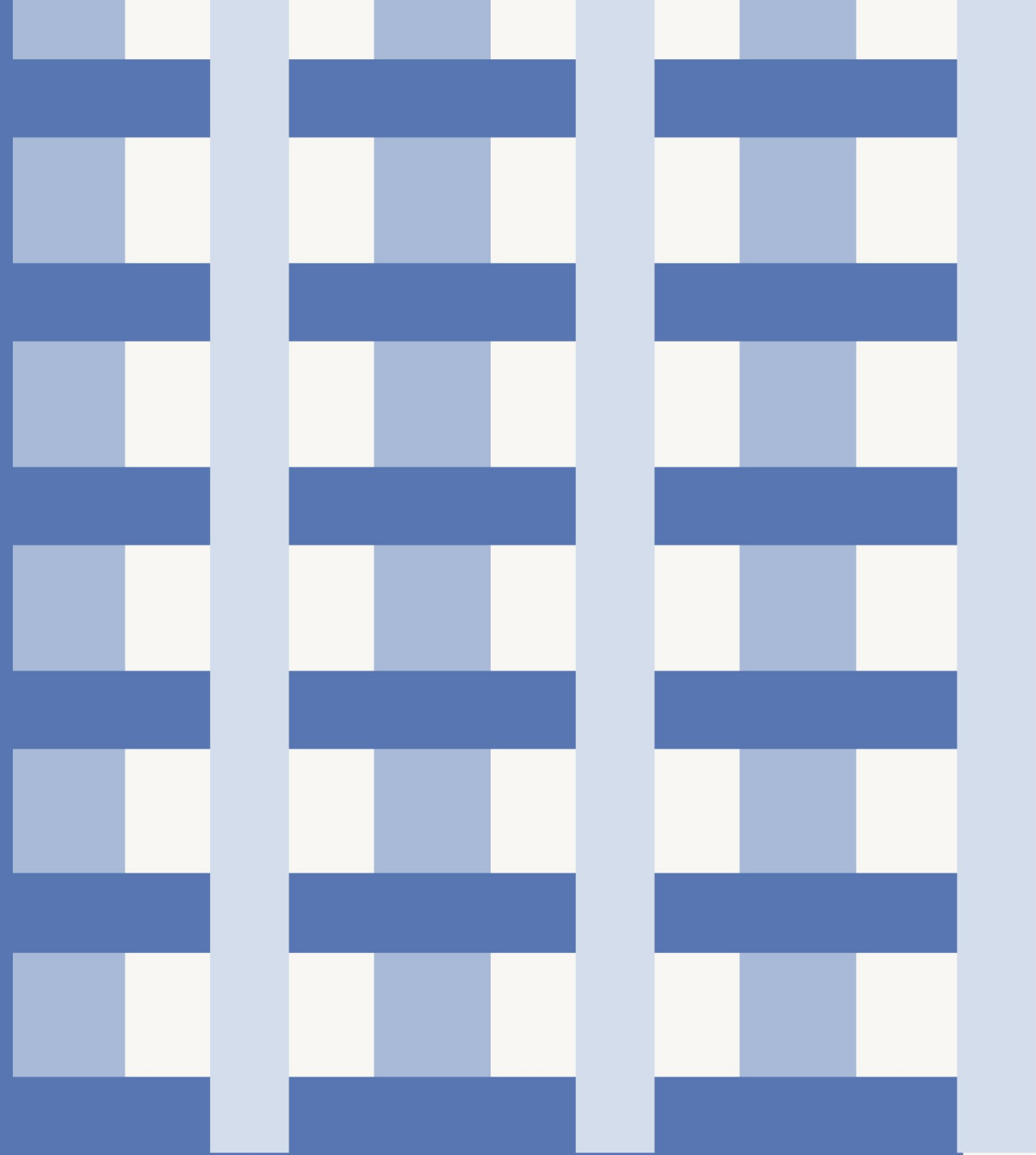
Note: Participation was low among 11th (40% participation rate) and 12th (35% participation rate) graders, which may skew results (e.g., older students are more likely to report substance use, so reported current rates may underrepresent actual trends).

Demographics | Focus Groups

22 students participated in one of four focus groups conducted at Medford High School in November 2025.



Student YRBS Data



A Note About Interpreting Data

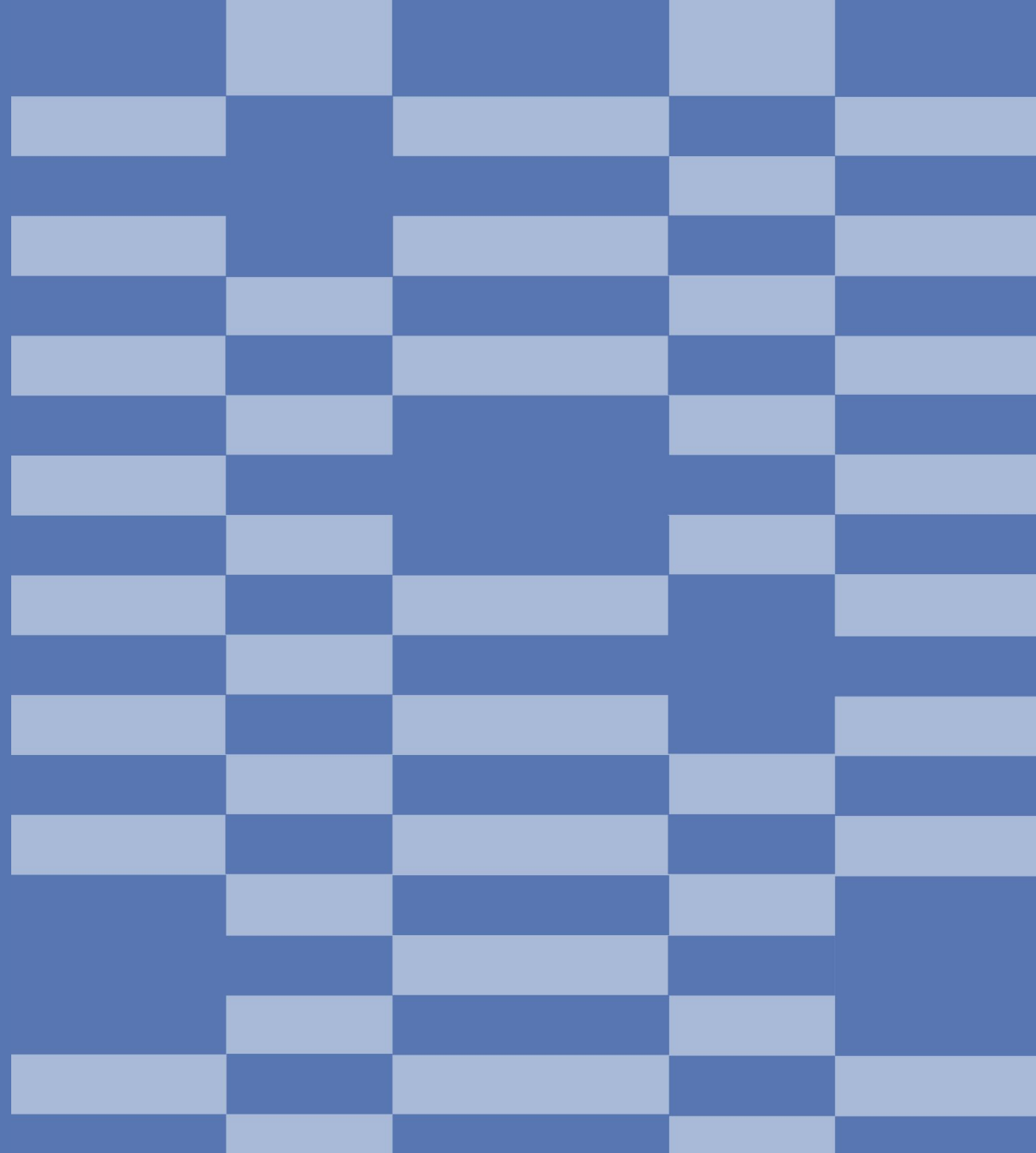
Student outcomes are shaped by the environments and systems in which they are situated. When we observe differences across groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation groups), these patterns:

- **Do not indicate anything inherent** or “deficient” within student groups
- Often **reflect inequitable access** to protective factors such as supportive adults, affirming environments, and safety
- Can **signal unequal exposure** to stress, discrimination, or harmful experiences

Our focus is on identifying where schools and communities can strengthen relationships, resources, and protective systems for all students.

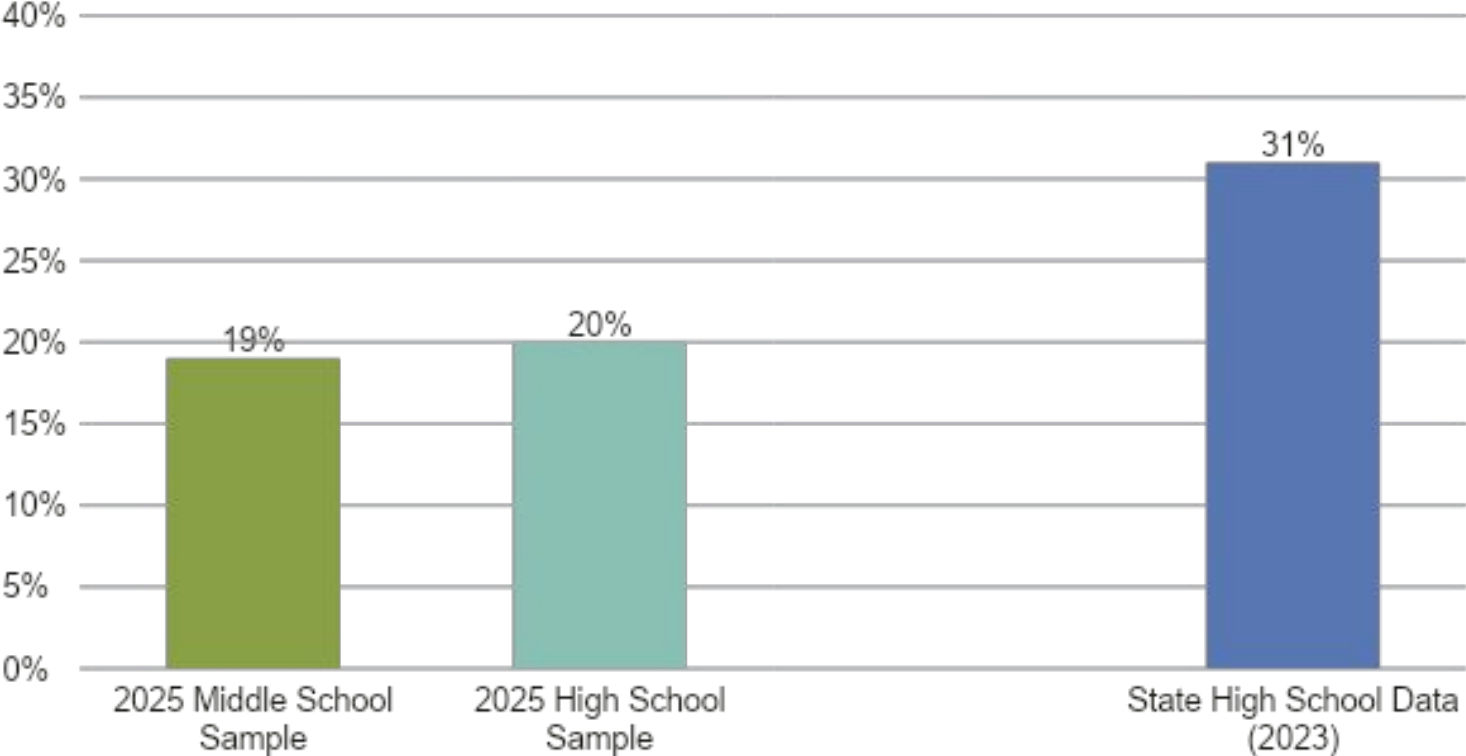


Student Mental Health



General Mental Health

Overall, 19% of Medford middle school students and 20% of Medford high school students reported that their mental health was ‘not good most of the time or always’ in the past 30 days. This is notably lower than state-level* data, where 31% of Massachusetts high school students reported poor mental health in 2023.



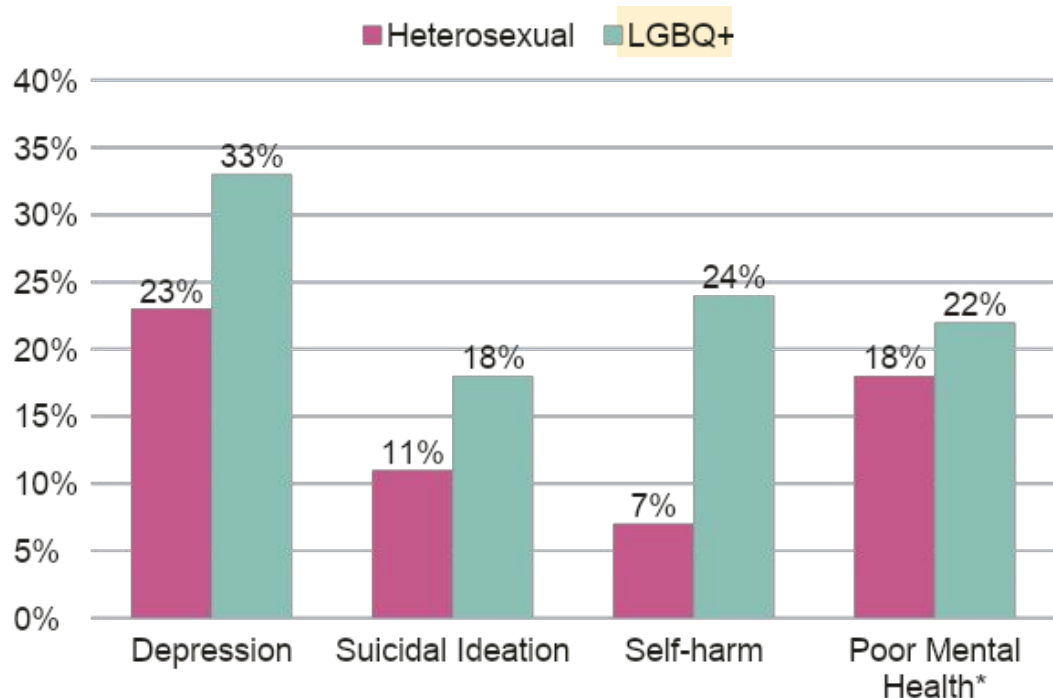
“When I was going through some [family] stuff, I wasn’t really motivated to come to school or to play the sport or just do the stuff I needed to do, and it was hard.”
 — Medford High School Student

*Note: There is no comparable state-level data for middle schoolers in Massachusetts.

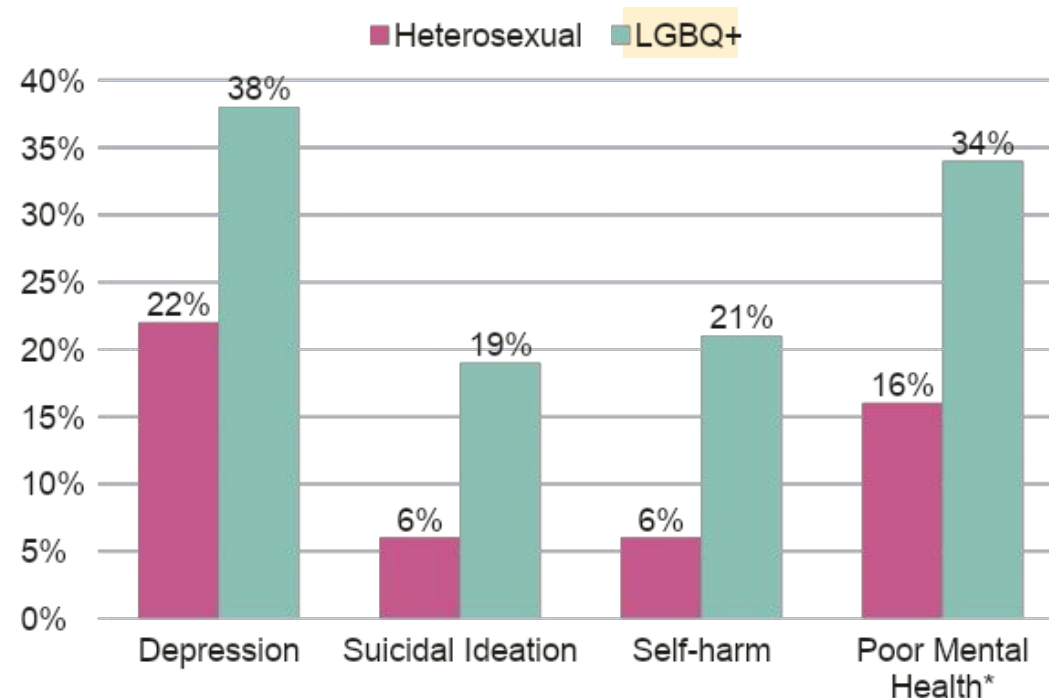
Mental Health

LGBQ+ students reported significantly worse mental health outcomes than their heterosexual peers, highlighting how unequal experiences with belonging, safety, and support can shape mental health and the importance of building affirming and protective school and community environments.

Middle School Sample



High School Sample

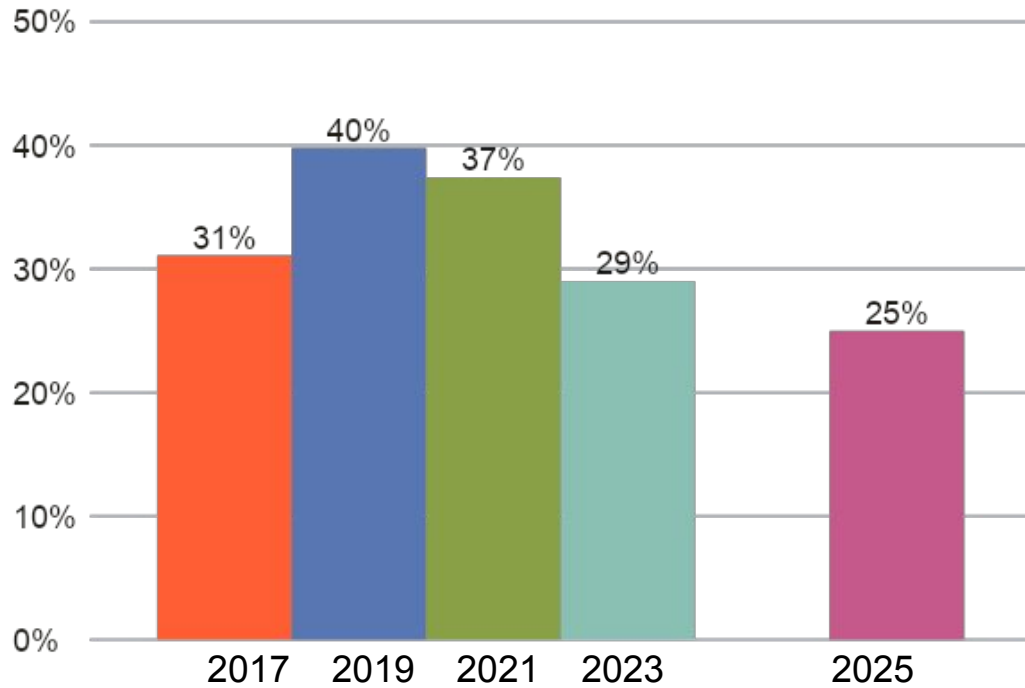


*Note: Poor mental health was defined as being 'not good most of the time or always' in the past 30 days.

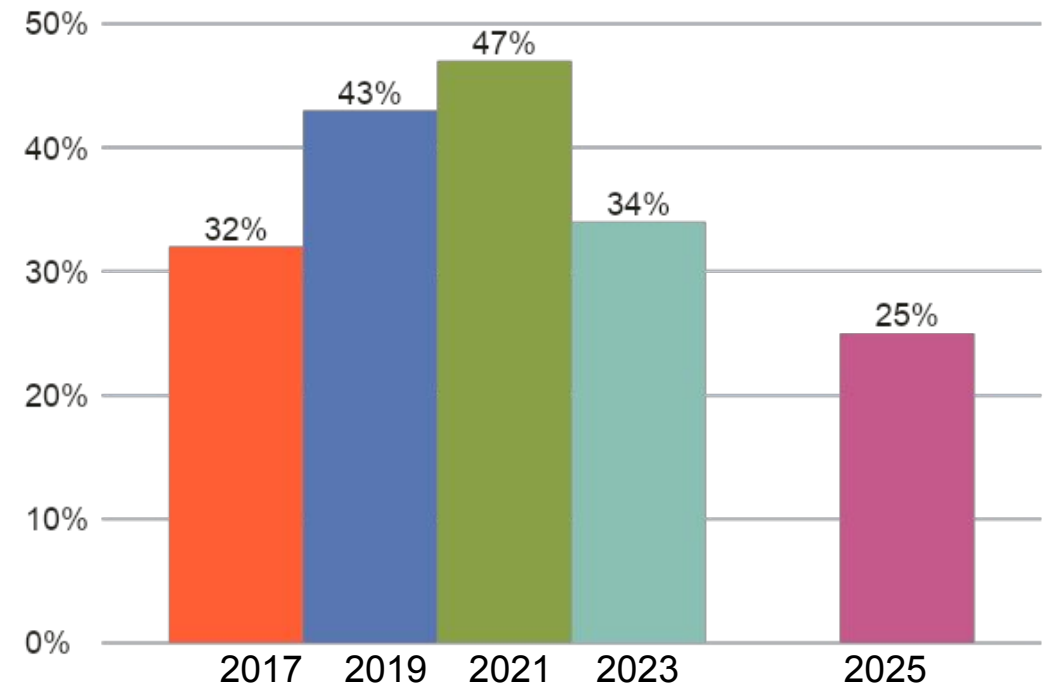
Depression

Overall, student-reported past 12-month depression symptoms (i.e., feeling so sad/hopeless almost daily for 2+ weeks that they stopped doing some of their usual activities) are the lowest they have been since 2017 for both middle and high school students:

Middle School Depressive Symptoms



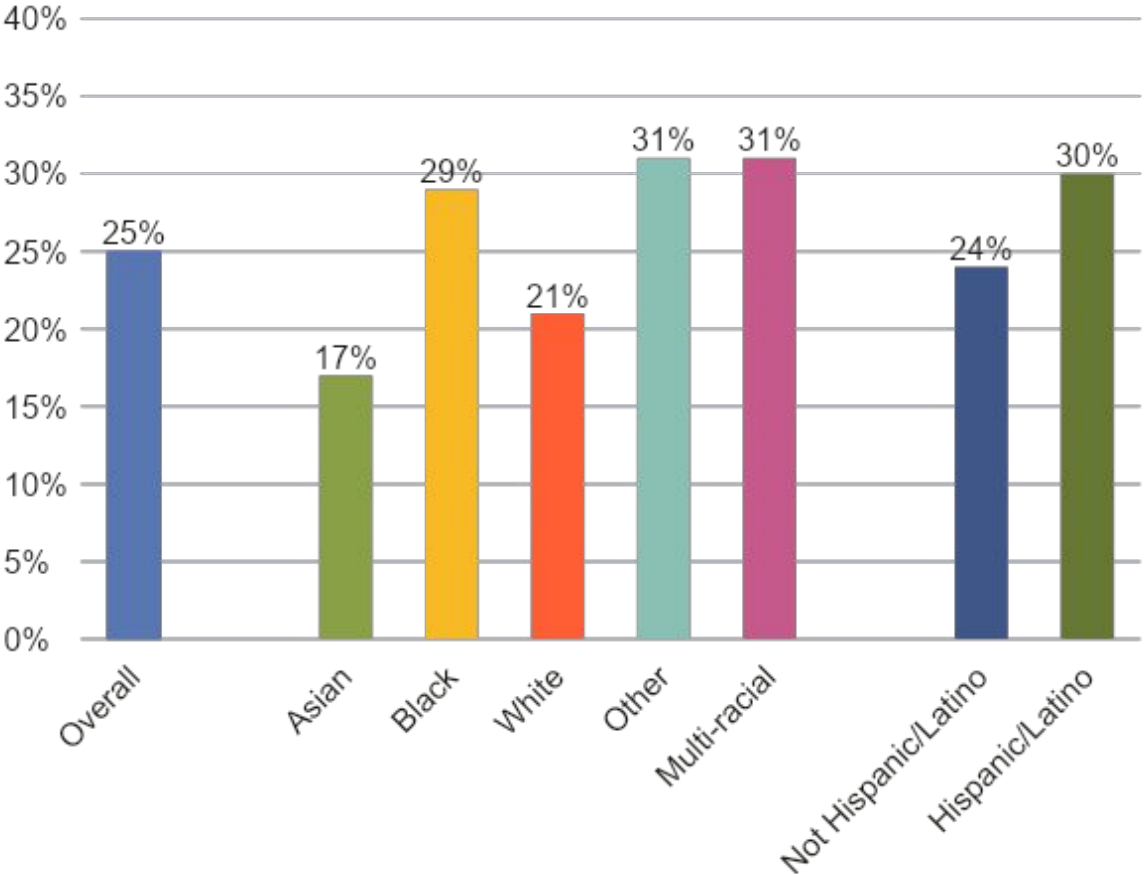
High School Depressive Symptoms



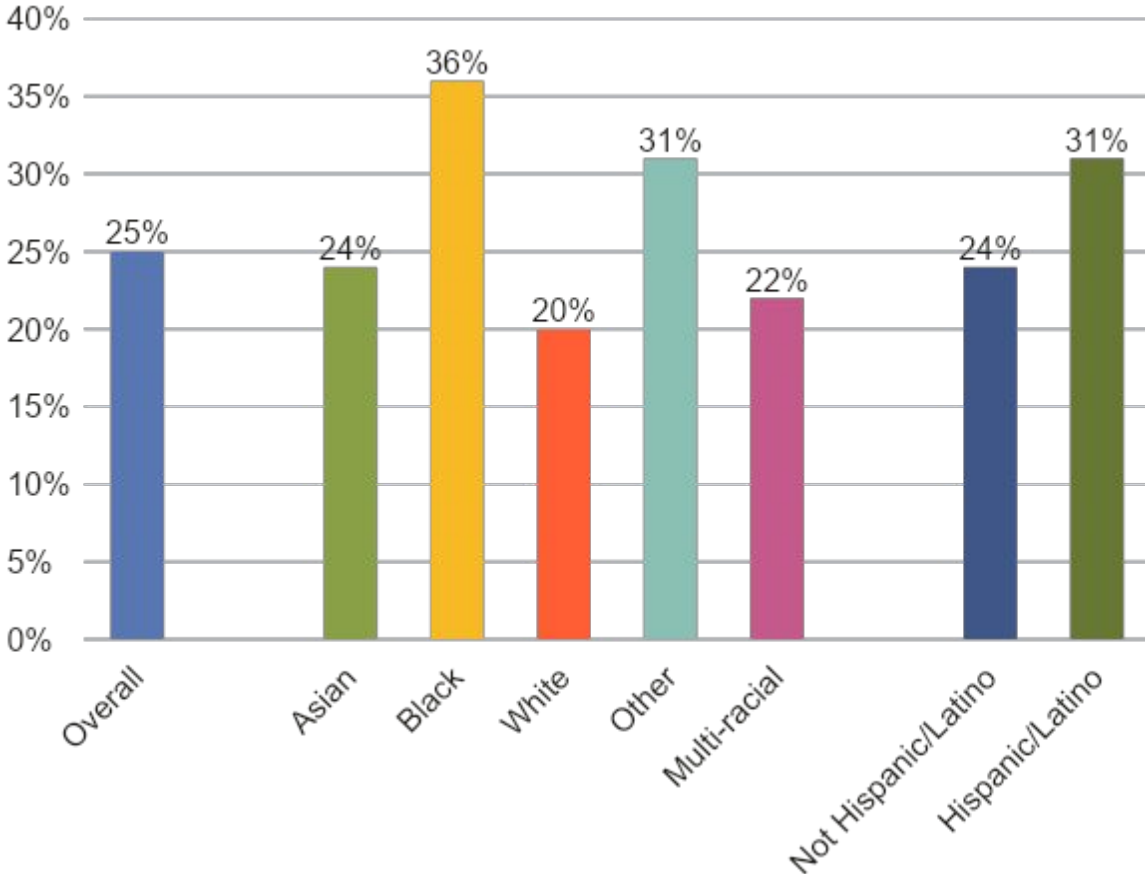
**Note: Comparable data from 2017 – 2023 (CTCYS) indicate the rates that students endorsed feeling ‘depressed or sad most days.’*

Depression | By Race & Ethnicity

Middle School Depressive Symptoms



High School Depressive Symptoms



Strategies for Student Mental Health



- Individual & Group Counseling
- Mustang All Stars/Mustang Way
- Circles in advisory
- PD on Equity, highlighting a sense of belonging
- Signs of Suicide Program
An evidence-based curriculum focused on educating on the signs of sui and how to access help
- Michigan Model for Health K-12
An evidence-based curriculum focused on promoting positive health behaviors and lifelong wellness
- NEXUS
- New: Partnership with CHA for support of school adjustment counselors



Strategies for Student Mental Health



NEW:

Three months of FREE mental health therapy through our partners with Sandy Hook Promise & BetterHelp!!

MHS Students

&

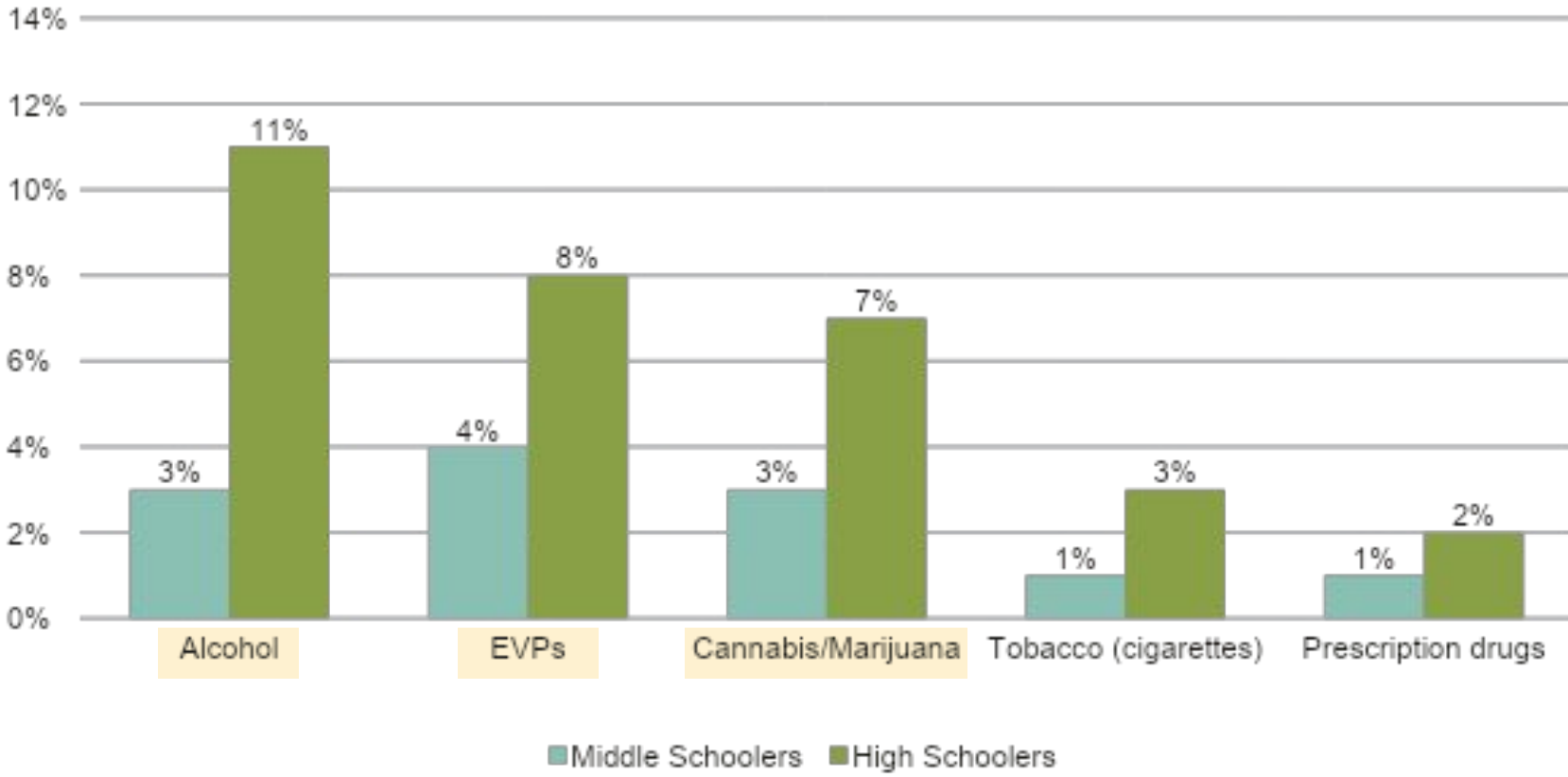
Adults (parents/caregivers/faculty)



Substance Use

Top Current* Substances Used

Alcohol, electronic vapor products (EVPs), and cannabis/marijuana were the most frequently reported substances used by students:



“People do [substances] for different reasons, like, if they're stressed out, that's not a good coping mechanism, but people do it to relieve stress and I feel like it can, in a way, help and hurt people. From what I've heard, marijuana, somewhat helps you focus.”
 — Medford High School Student

*Note: Students were asked to report if they had used a variety of substances in the past 30 days.

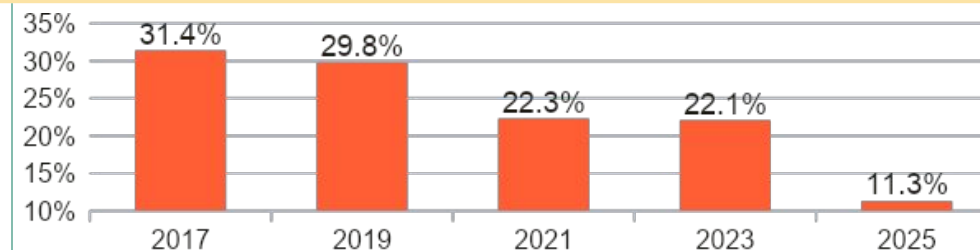
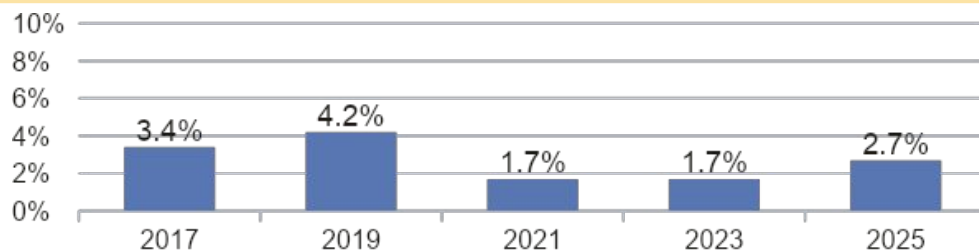
Student Substance Use

Middle school use of EVPs is at its highest since 2017, whereas High School use of these substances is at its lowest.

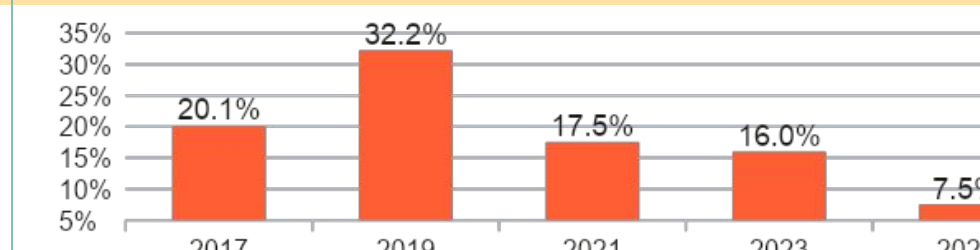
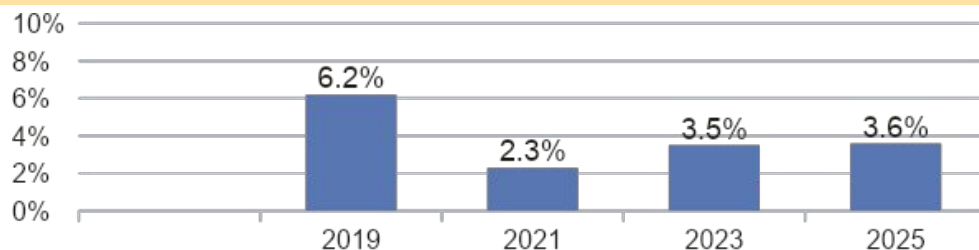
Middle Schoolers

High Schoolers

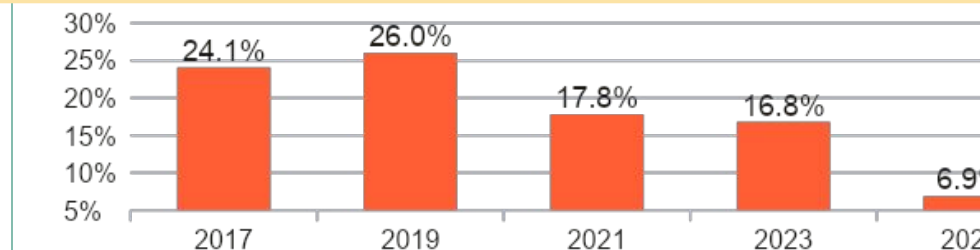
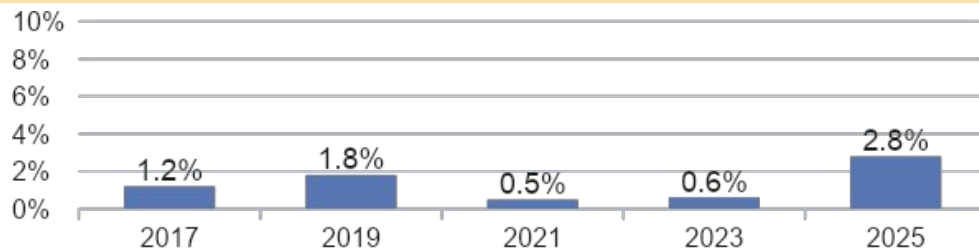
Past 30-day Alcohol Use



Past 30-day Use of EVPs



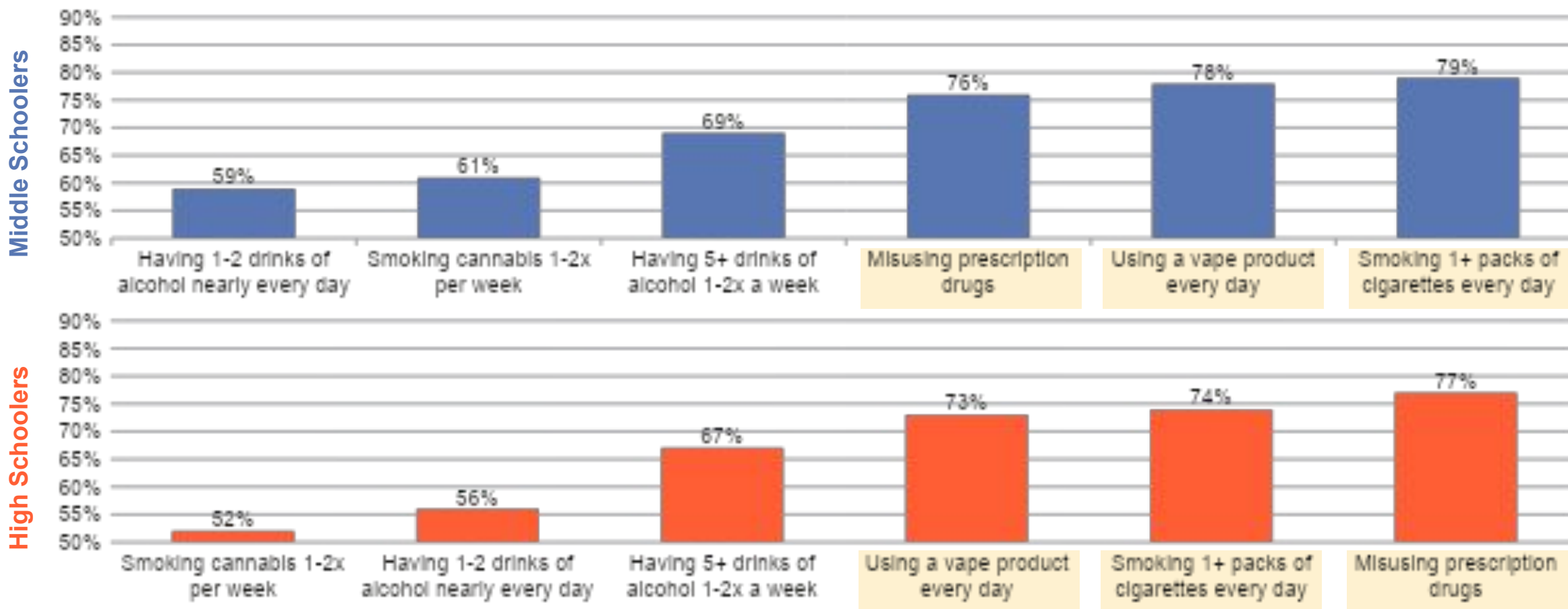
Past 30-day Cannabis/Marijuana Use



**Note: Comparable data for Middle Schoolers are from the 2017 – 2023 CTCYS; while 2017 – 2023 data for High Schoolers is state data.*

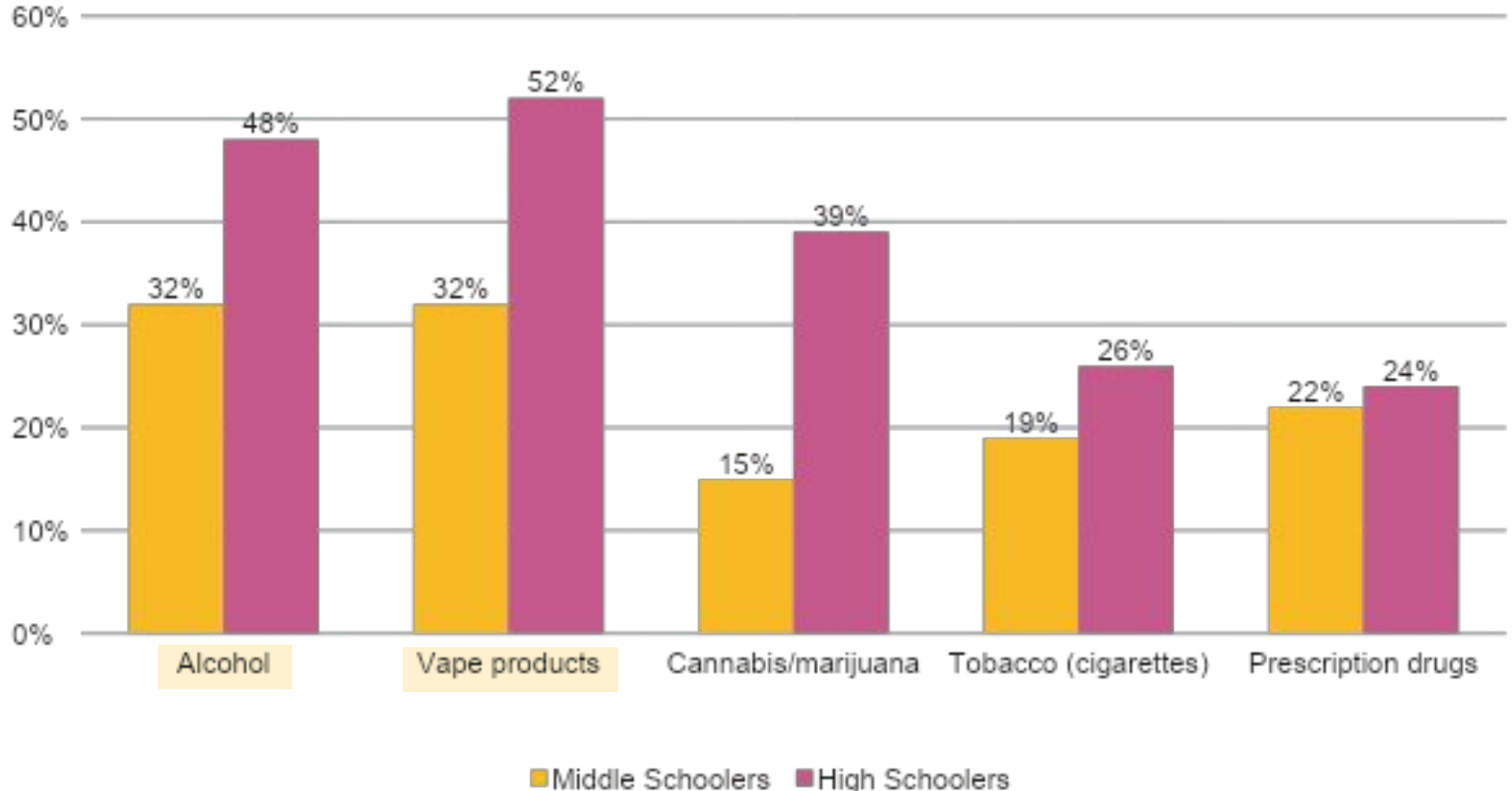
Student Perceived Risk of Harm

In general, students were most likely to report believing that **misusing prescription drugs** and **smoking 1+ packs of cigarettes** or **using a vape product everyday** pose “moderate” to “great” risk of harm:



Student Perceived Ease of Access

In general, students were most likely to think that **alcohol** and **vape products** were “easy” to “very easy” to access:



“It's so easy to give someone a box or something... I feel like all alcohol is harder because it's big cans... Stuff like vapes and marijuana, the little devices that you smoke out of, you can just... pass those so much easier. I feel like those are transmitted through the high school.”
 — Medford High School Student

Strategies for Substance Use

- **Michigan Model for Health K-12**
An evidence-based curriculum focused on promoting positive health behaviors and lifelong wellness
- **Catch My Breath Curriculum**
- **iDecide Program**
An evidence-based substance use intervention program for middle and high school students
- **C4 Innovations Wellness Coach/Project Amp**
Youth-driven substance use prevention and early intervention
- **Youth Action Team**
- **SBIRT screening**
- **Vape Detectors**

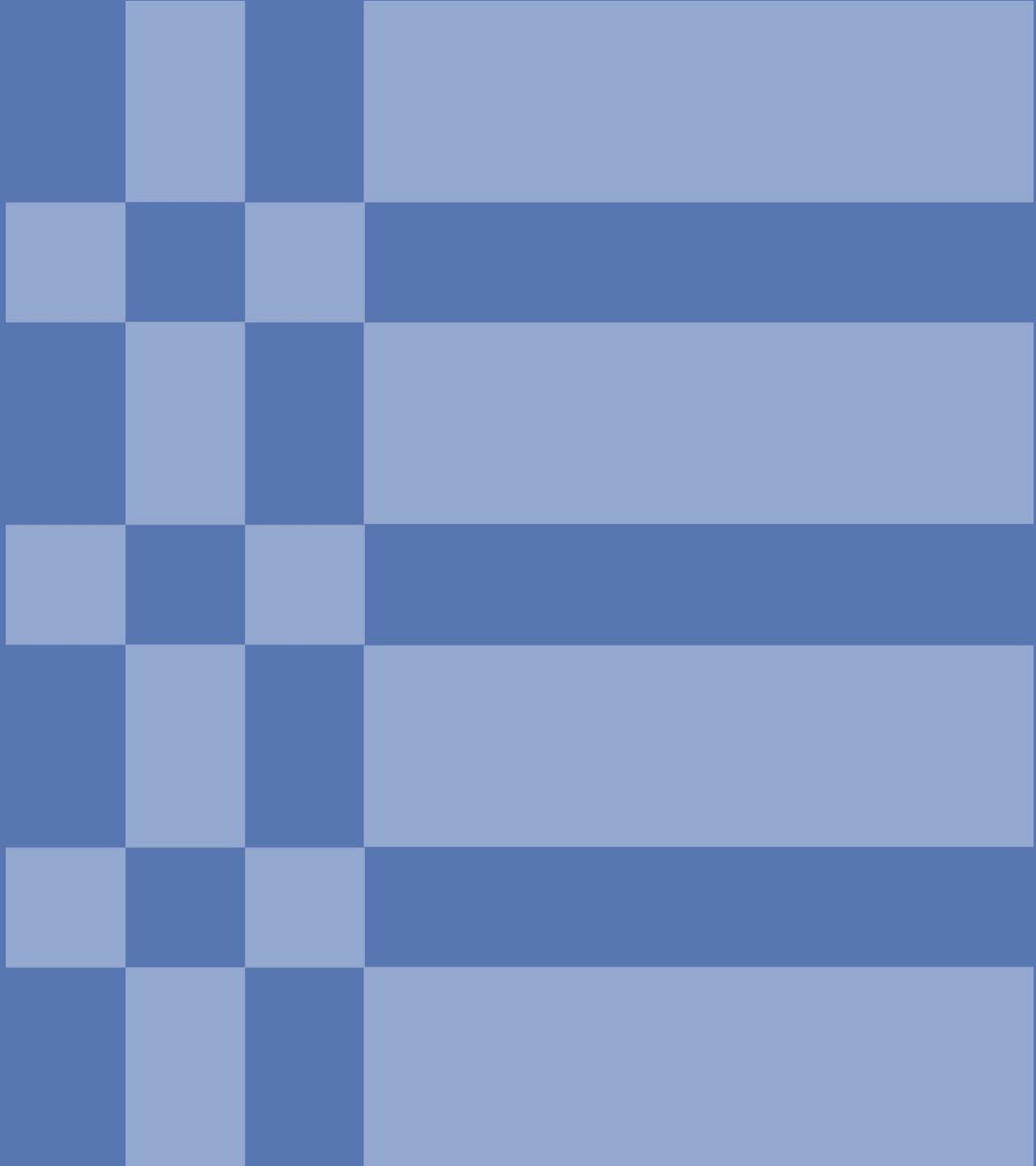


Medford Youth Action Team
Peer Leadership Club at MHS
Promoting Protective Factors & Healthy Decisions...
“Most of us”



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

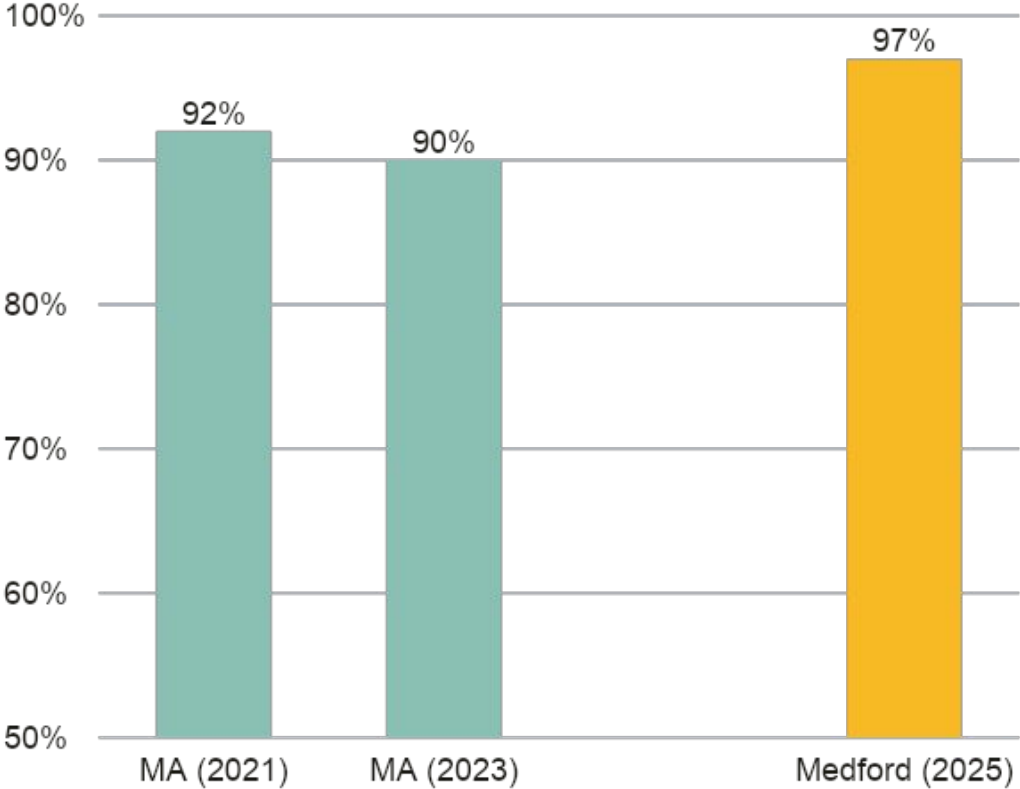
Student Safety



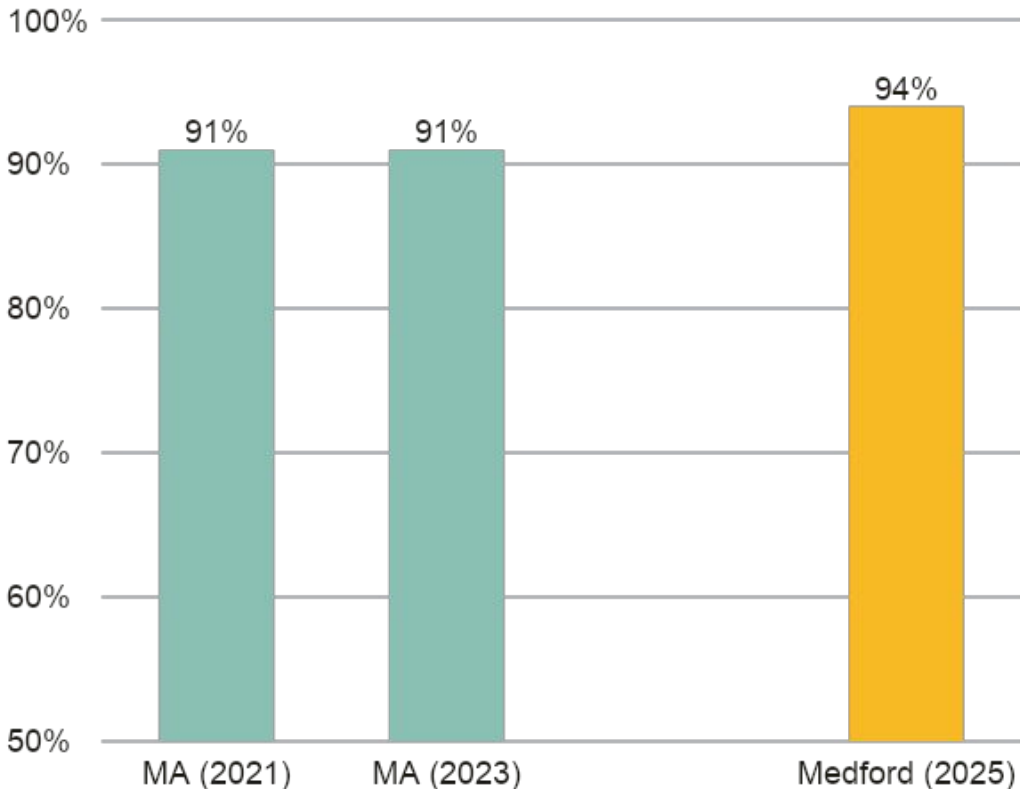
Student Safety

Most Medford High School and Middle School students reported thinking their neighborhood is **Extremely Safe** or **Safe** from crime.

Middle School

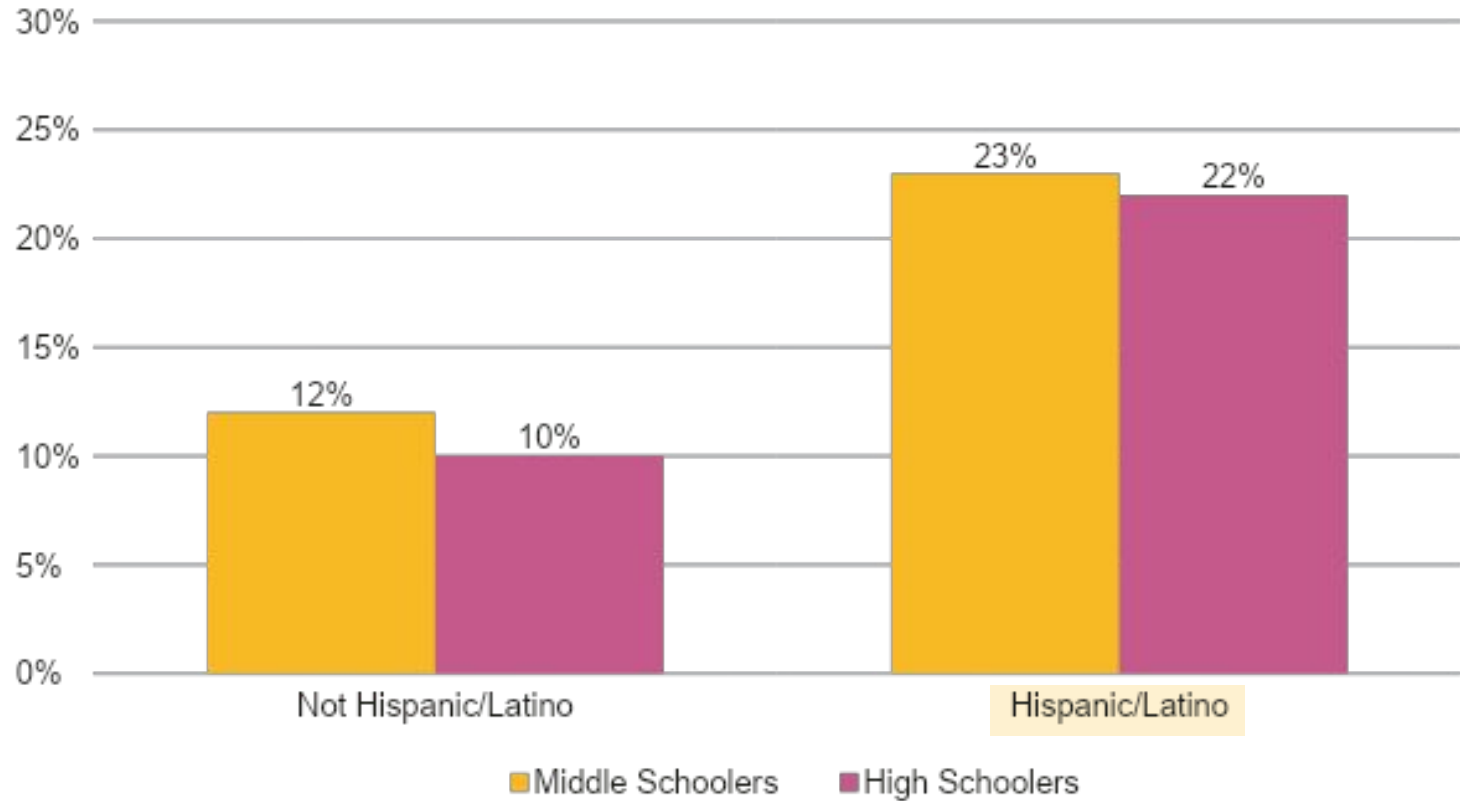


High School



School Safety

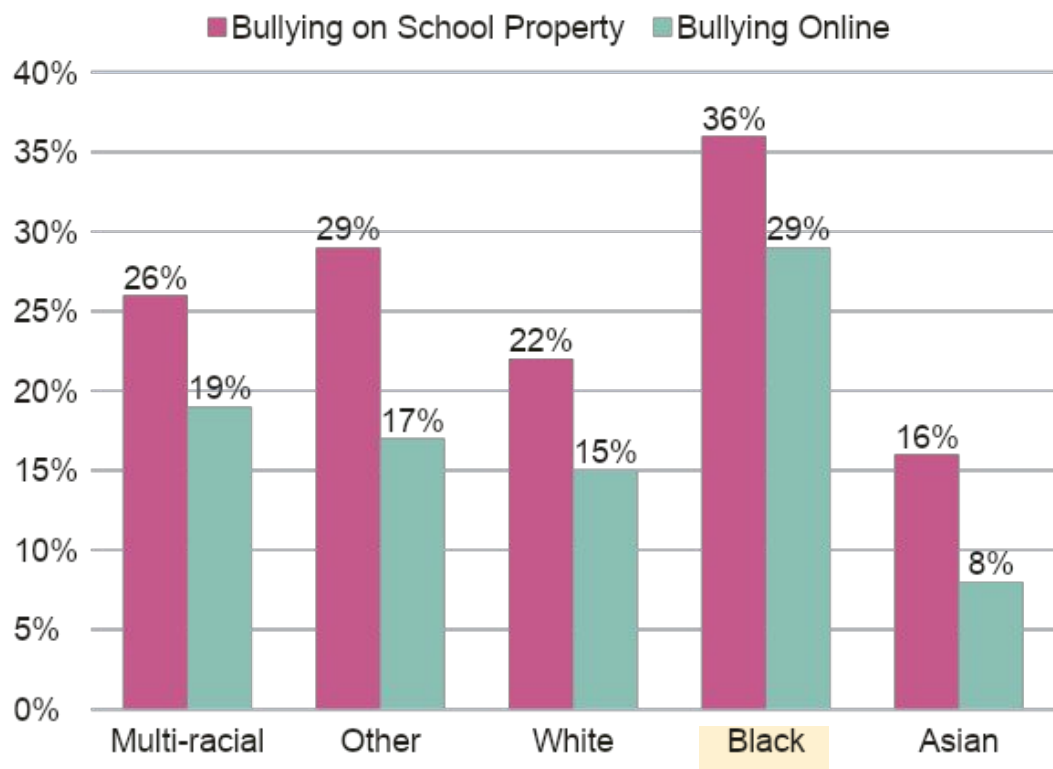
Students who identified as **Hispanic/Latino** were more likely to report skipping school in the past 30 days due to feeling unsafe at or on the way to school, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen safety and community support systems.



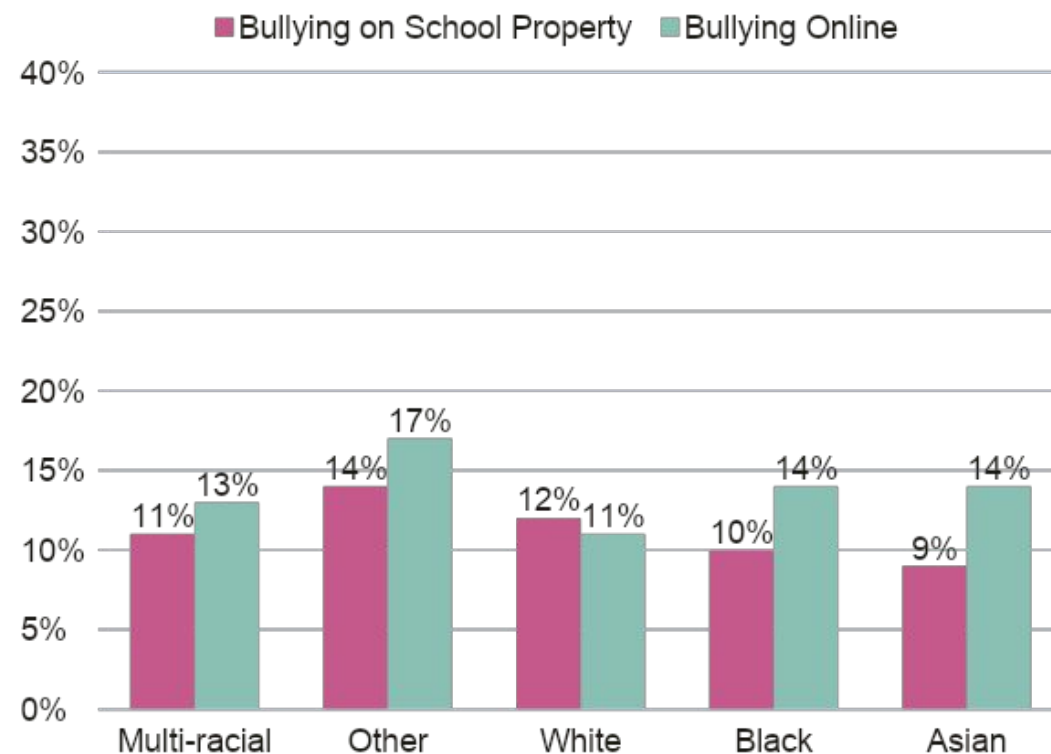
Bullying

Although reports of bullying decline as students transition from middle to high school, middle schoolers who identified as **Black** were most likely to report experiencing bullying on **school property** and **online**:

Middle School Sample



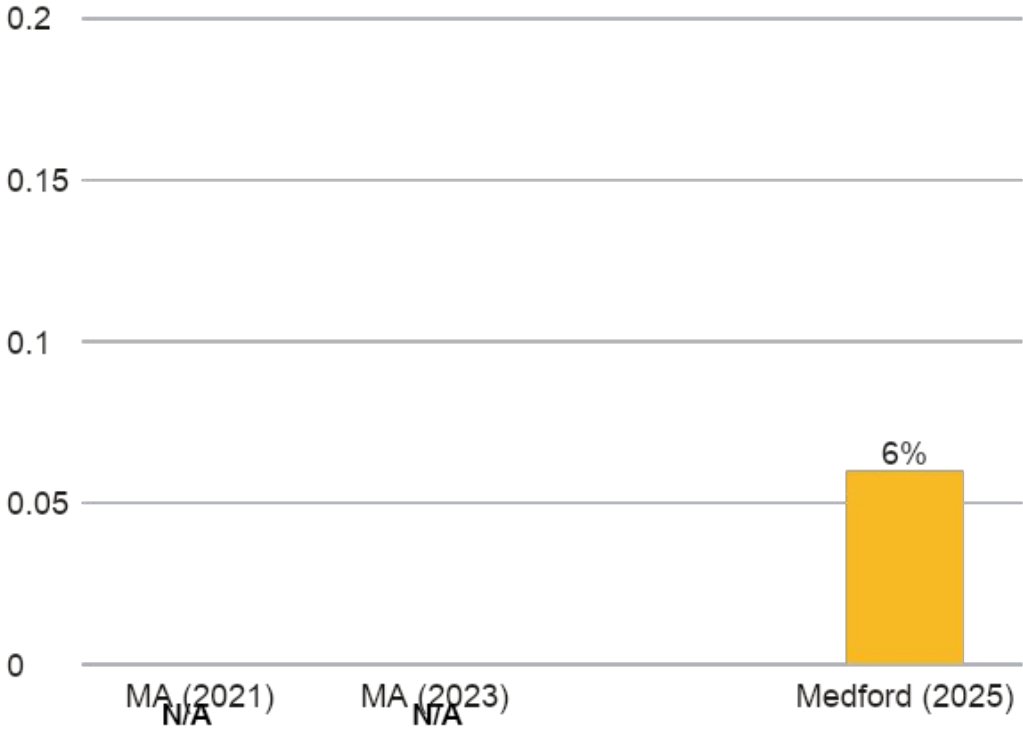
High School Sample



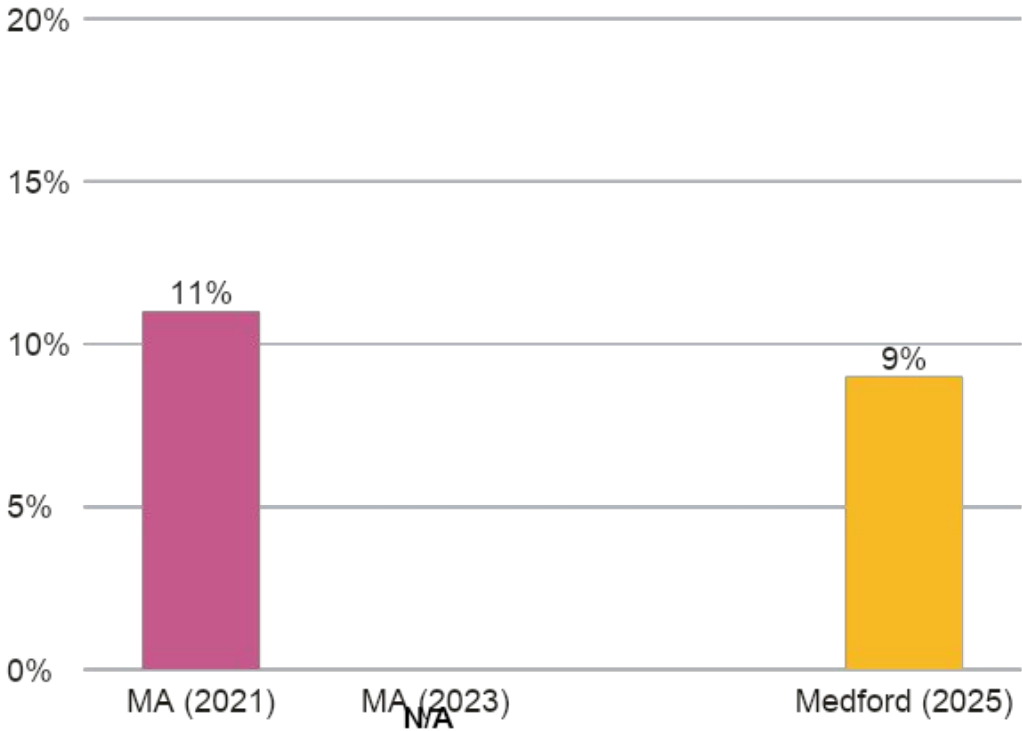
Sexual Violence

Medford students reported similar rates of having had “sexual things done to them or were forced to do sexual things they did not want (ever)” to that of available state data. *Note that no statewide comparison exists for middle and high school students in 2023 or middle school students in 2021.*

Middle School



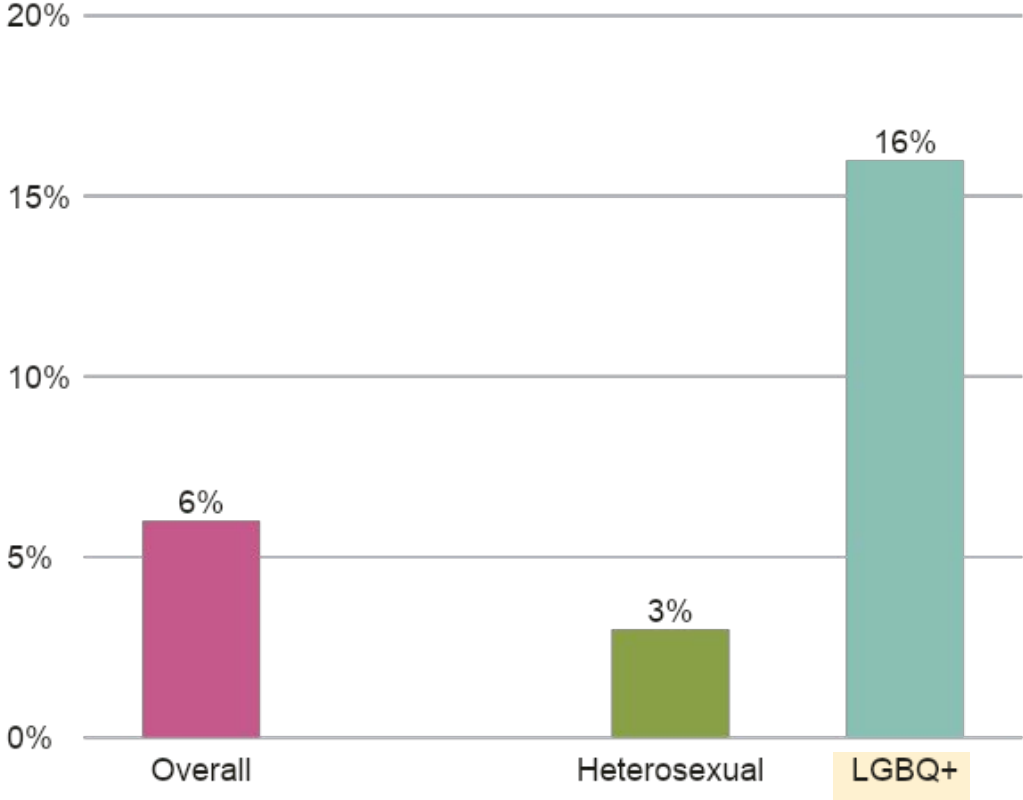
High School



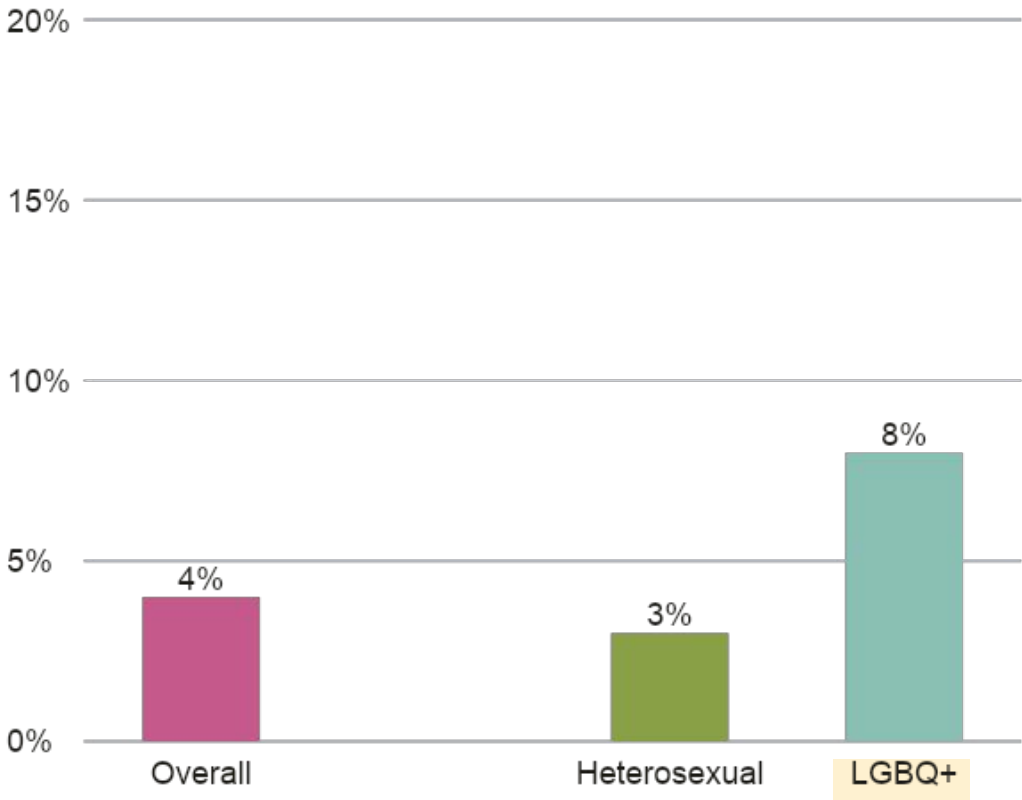
Sexual Violence

LGBQ+ students were more likely to experience unwanted sexual contact, highlighting unequal exposure to risk and emphasizing the need for stronger protective environments and affirming supports:

Middle School



High School



Strategies for Student Safety

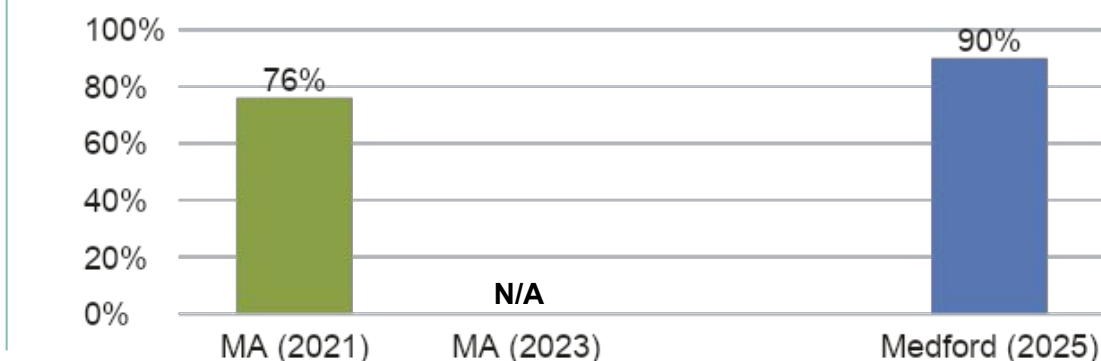
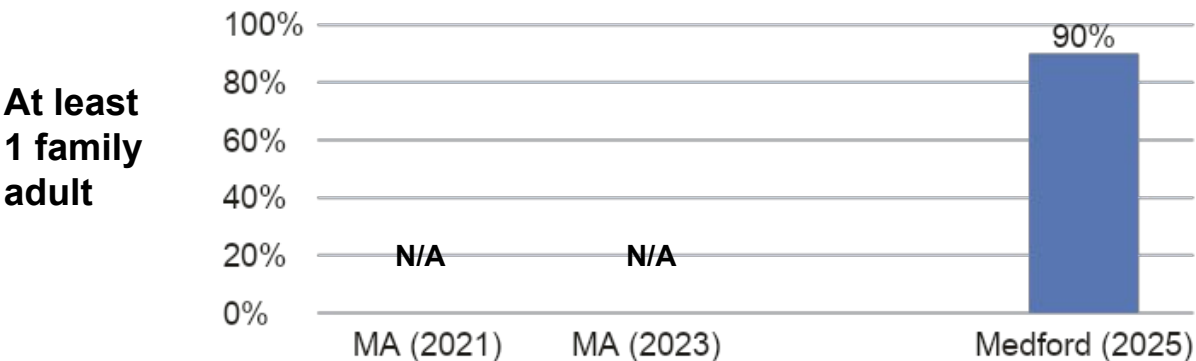
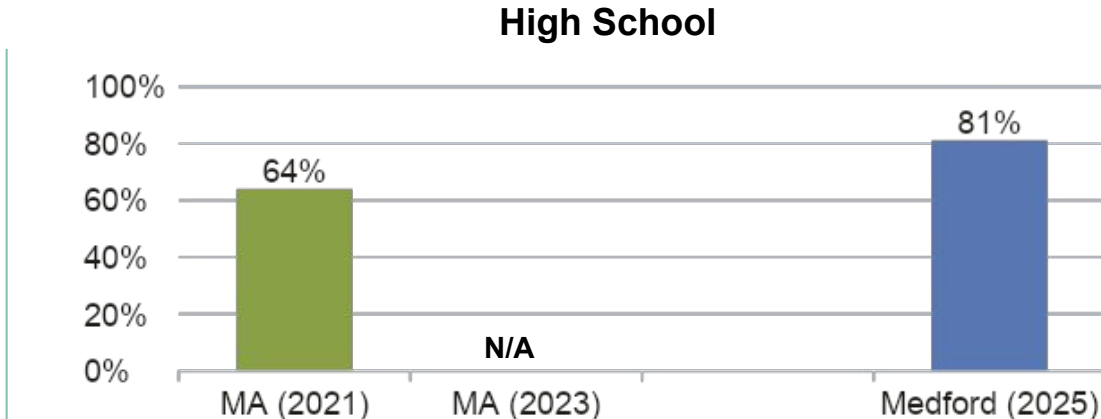
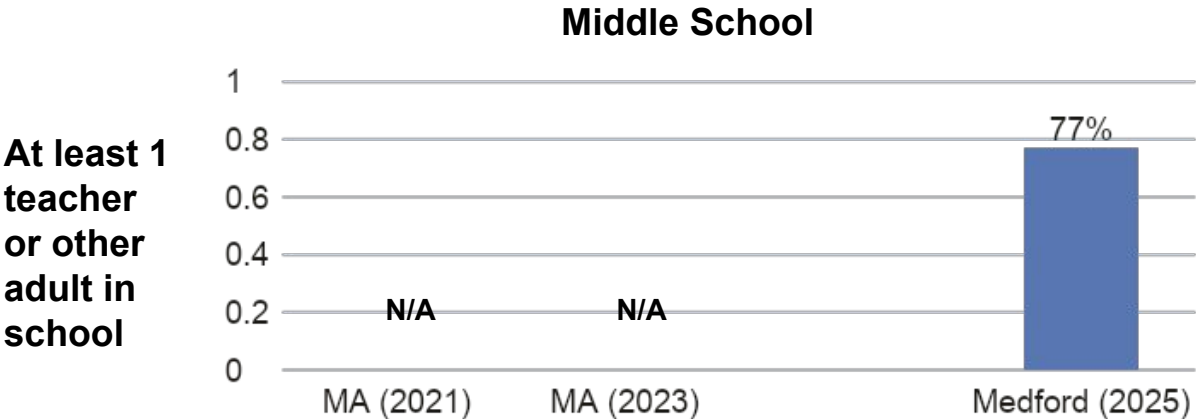
- **Get Real Sexual Health Curriculum**
- **Mentors in Violence Prevention Lessons**
A leadership program designed to empower young people to challenge gender-based violence
- **Portal to Hope Presentation**
Portal To Hope is an award-winning non-profit organization committed to helping victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking crimes
- **Social and Emotional Learning: Restorative Practices**
Interconnected frameworks aimed at fostering positive relationships and addressing conflict in schools
- **Sandy Hook Promise - ARS**



Protective Factors

Trusted Adults

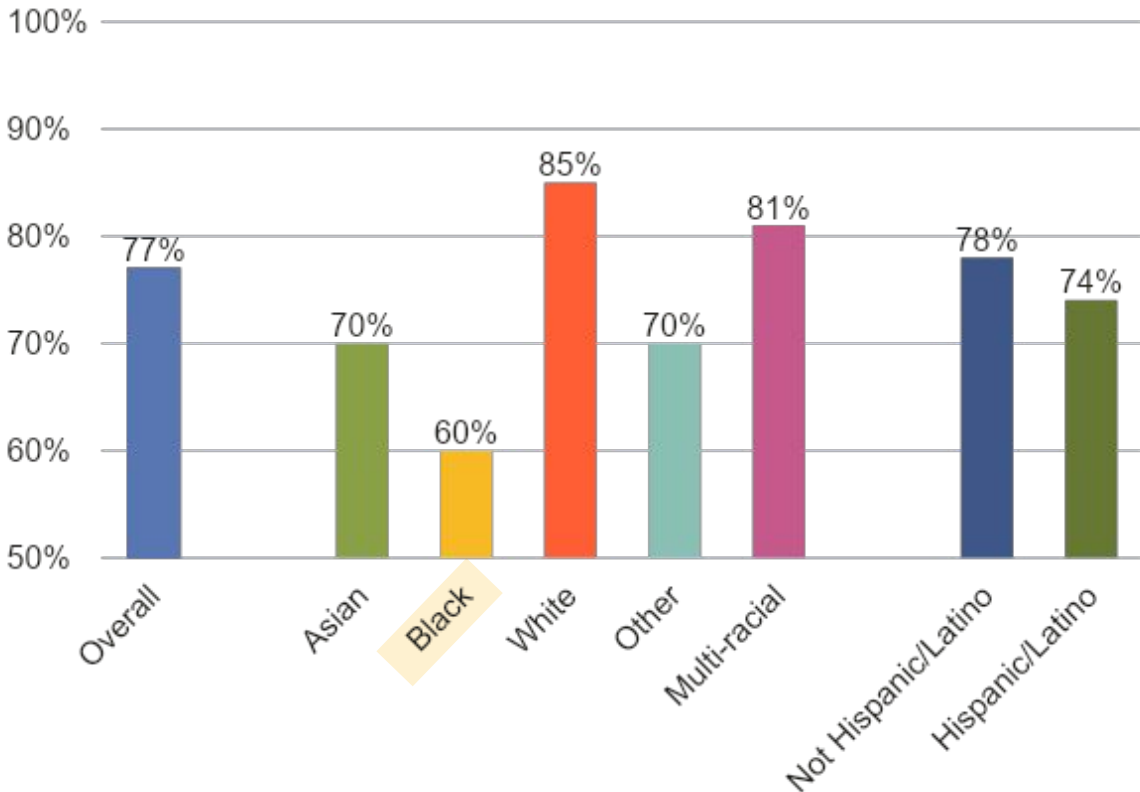
When asked about adults whom they could talk to about a problem, most students reported having **at least one teacher or other adult in this school, and at least one family adult.** *No statewide comparison exists for middle school data or 2023 high school data.*



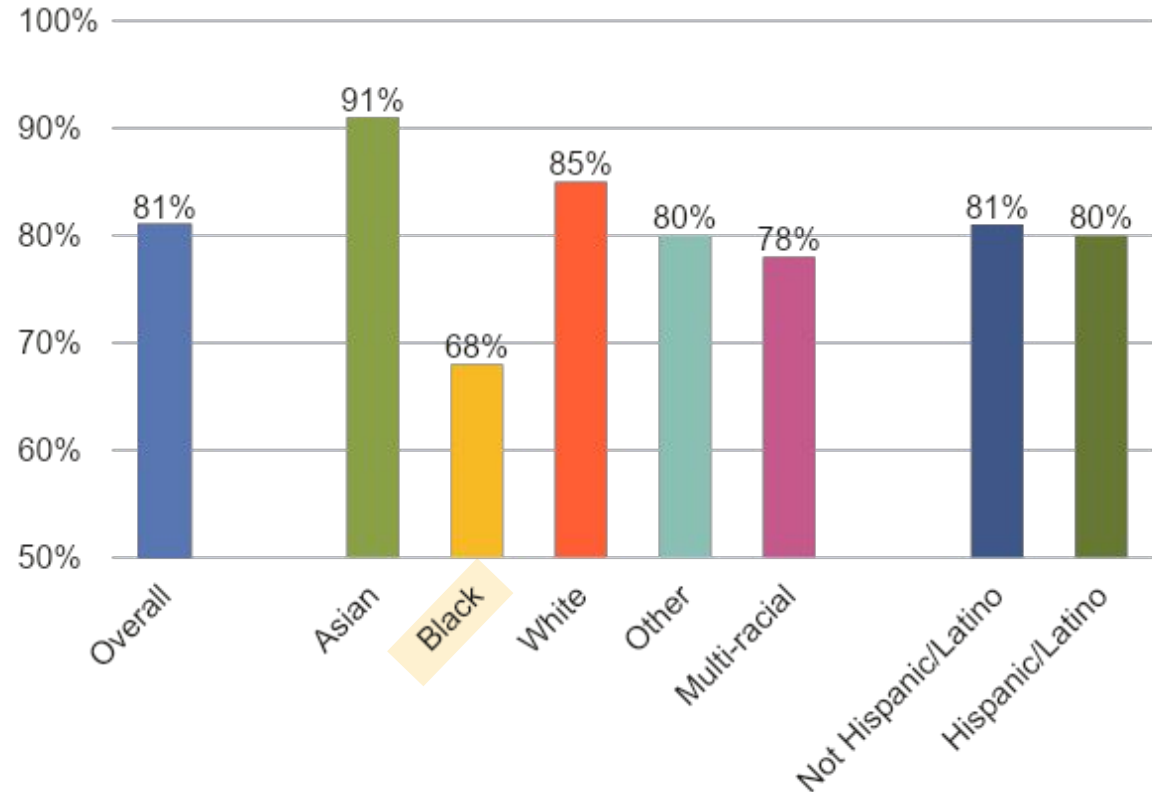
Trusted Adults at School

A majority of students reported having at least one teacher or other adult in their school whom they can talk to, but students who identified as **Black** were significantly less likely to report having that teacher/adult connection:

Middle School



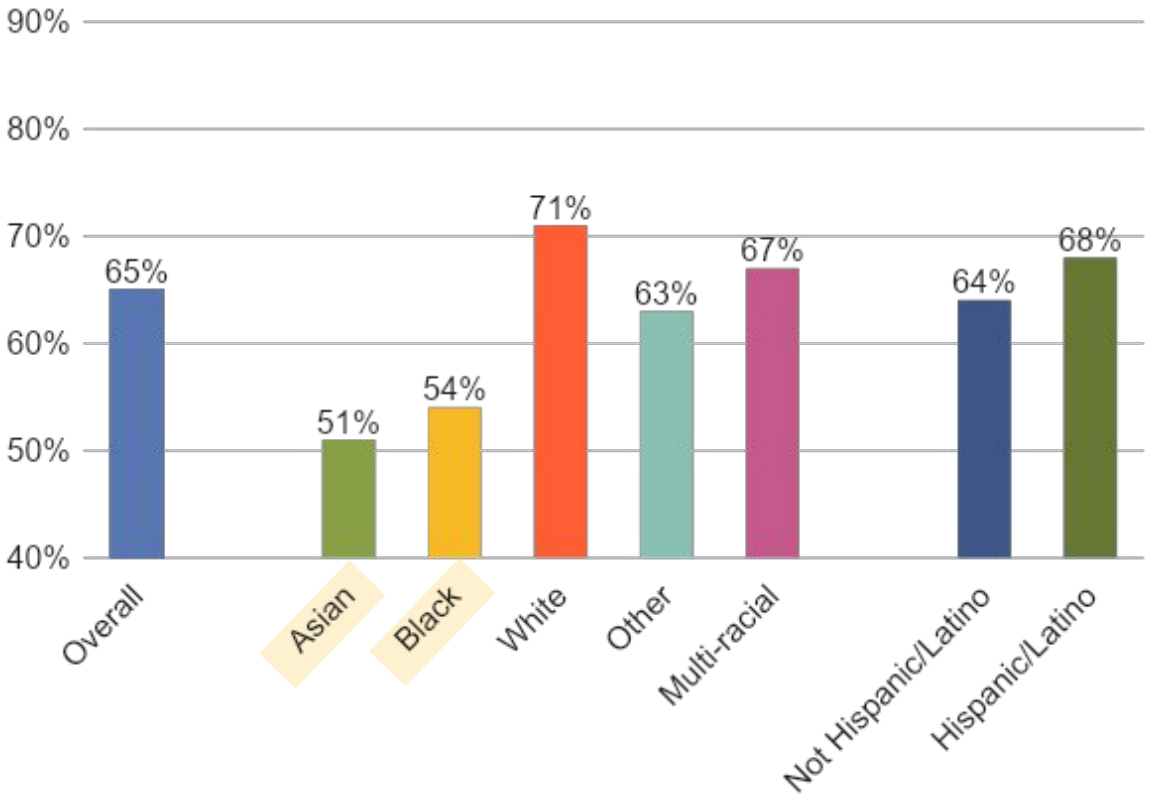
High School



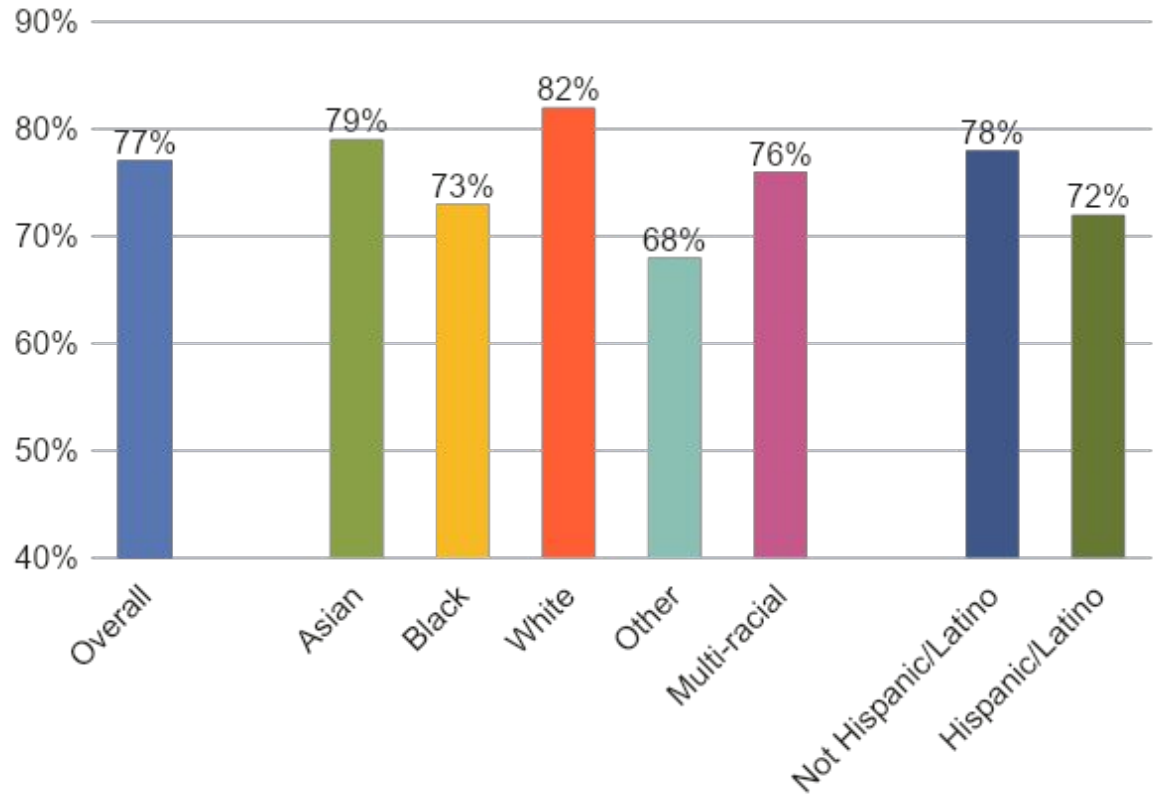
Trusted Adults Outside of School

Most students reported having at least one adult outside of school who is not in their family that they can talk to if they have a problem, but middle school students who identified as **Asian** or **Black** were less likely to report having that adult connection:

Middle School



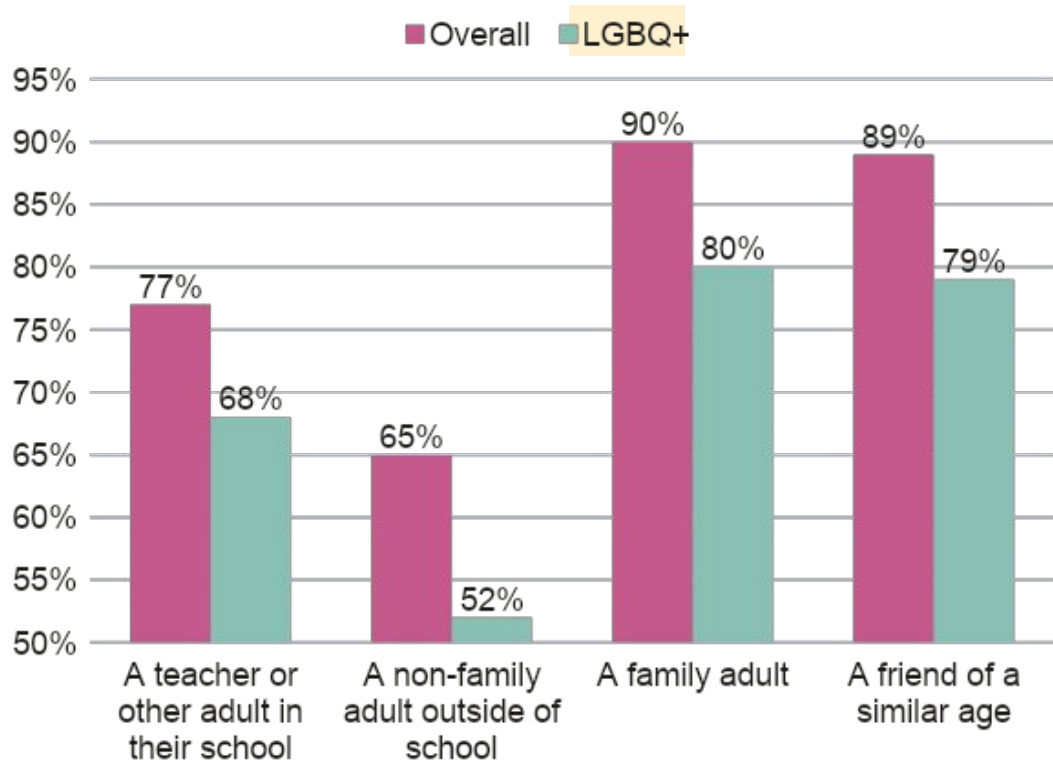
High School



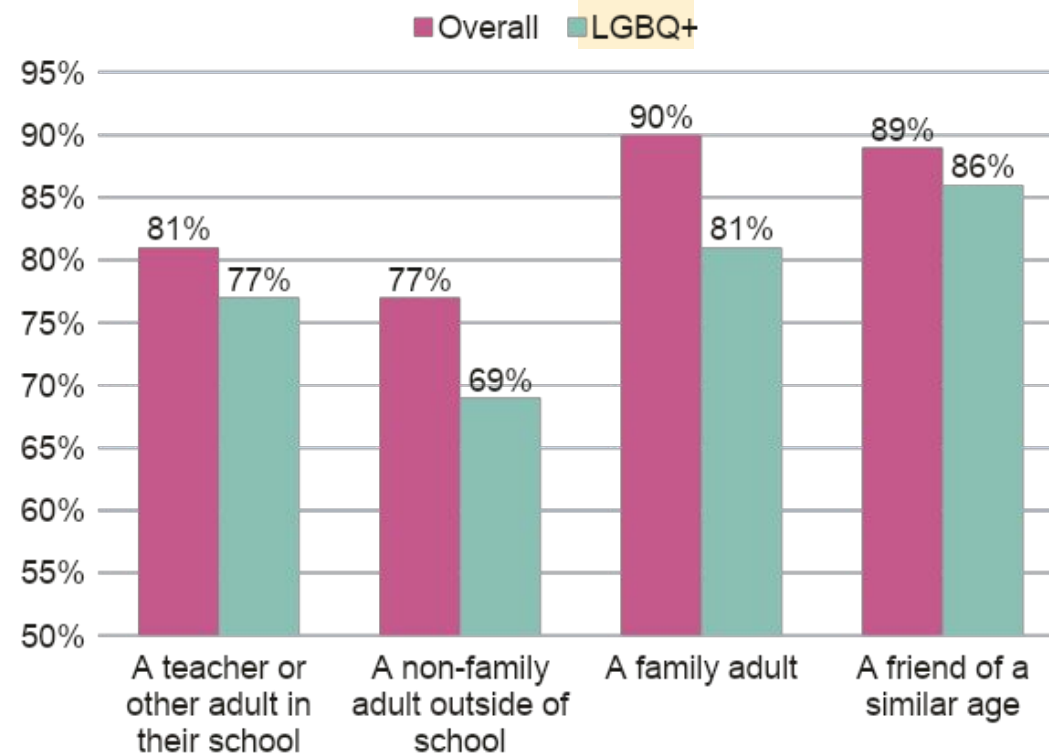
Supportive Relationships

LGBQ+ students were less likely to report having supportive relationships across multiple domains:

Middle School Sample



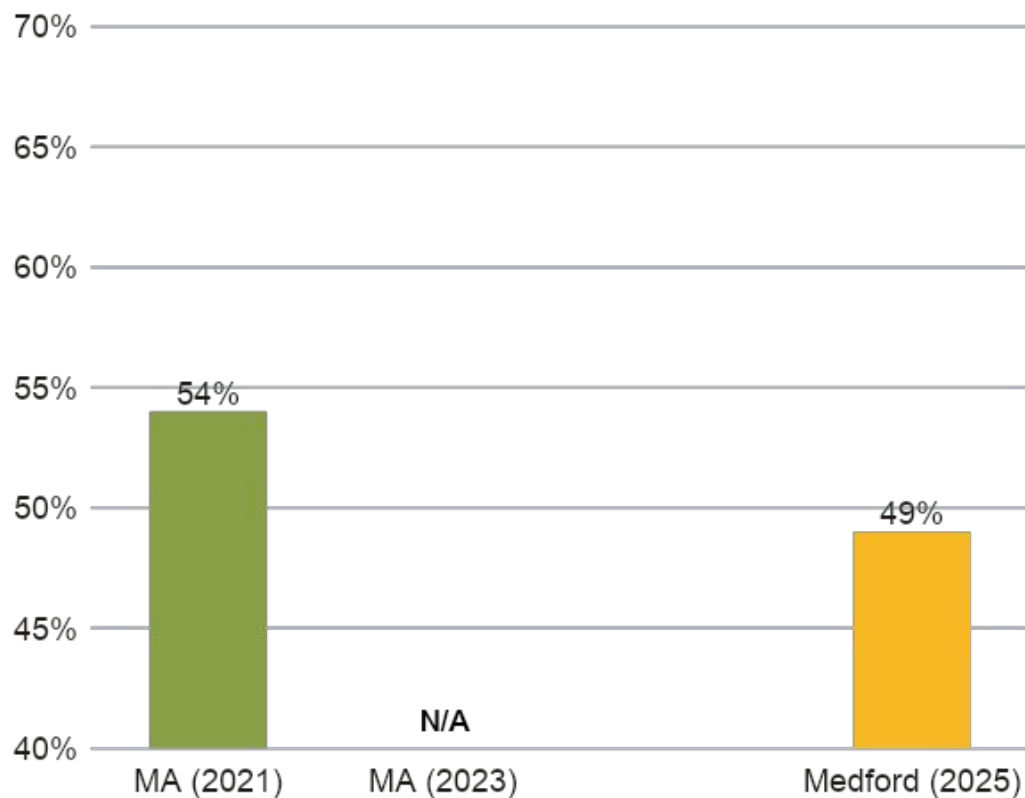
High School Sample



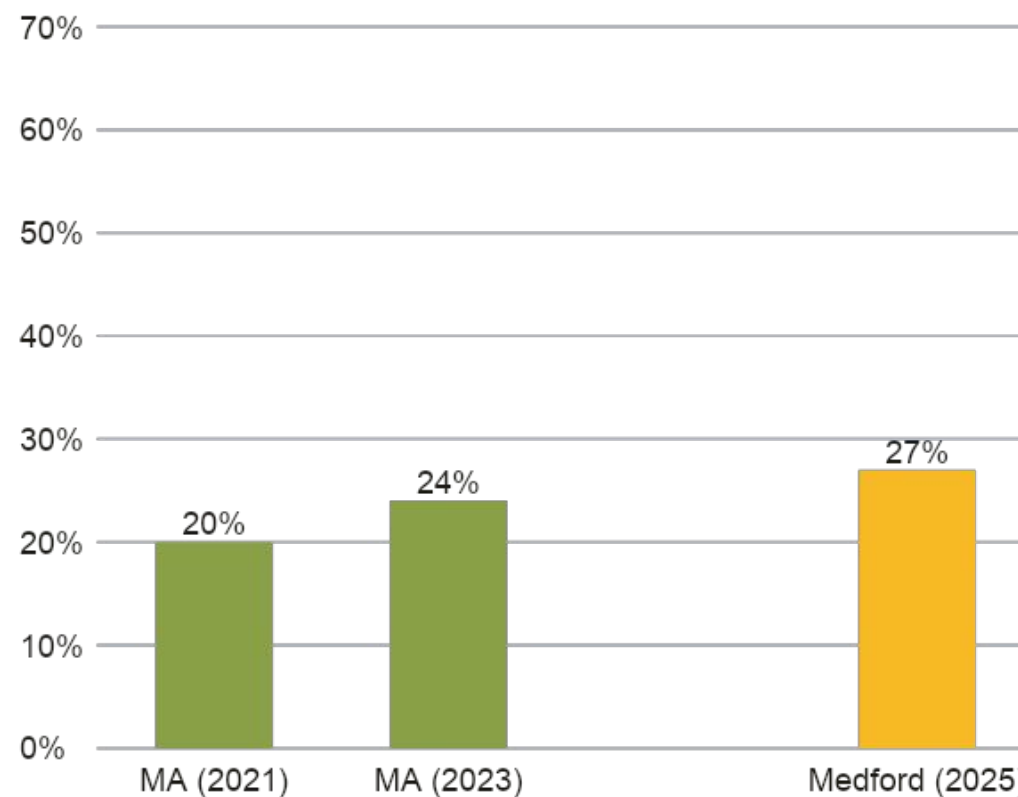
Sleep

Statewide comparison data shows middle school students are more likely to reported **sleeping for 8 or more hours on an average school night**. *No statewide comparison exists for 2023 middle school data.*

Middle School



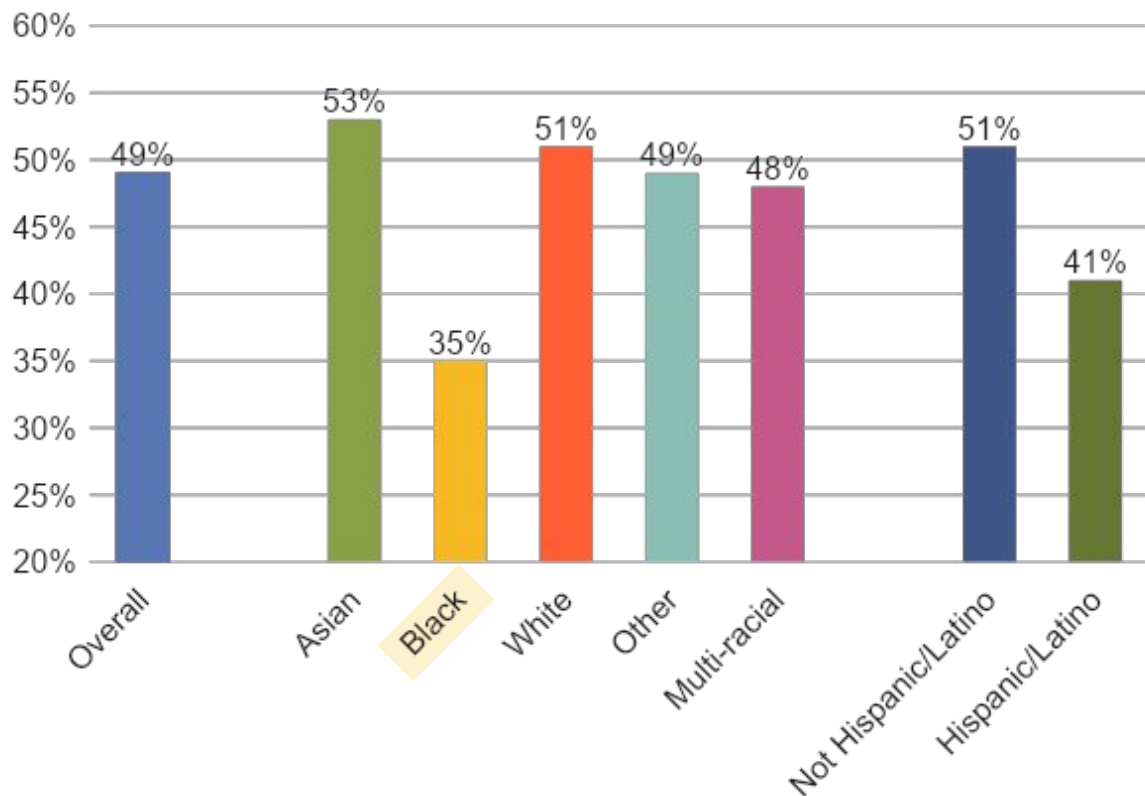
High School



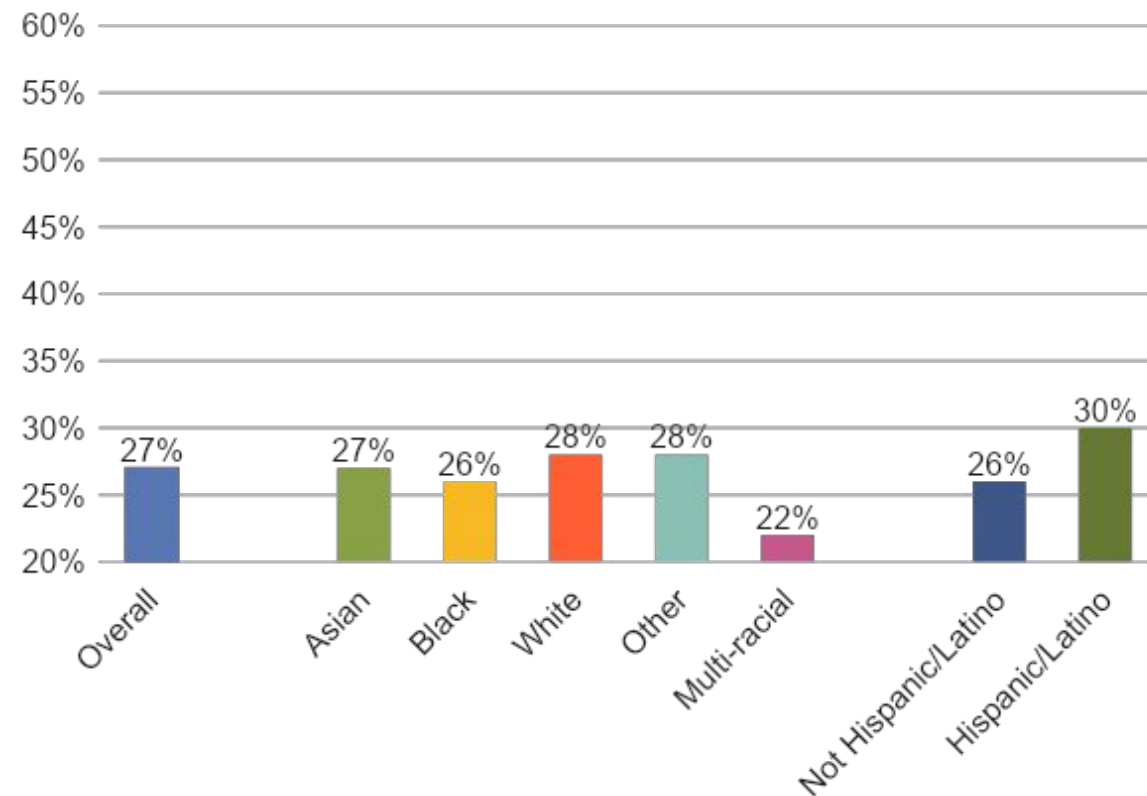
Sleep

In general, high school students were less likely to report getting 8+ hours of sleep on an average school night. Among middle school students, those who identified as **Black** were least likely to report getting adequate sleep:

Middle School



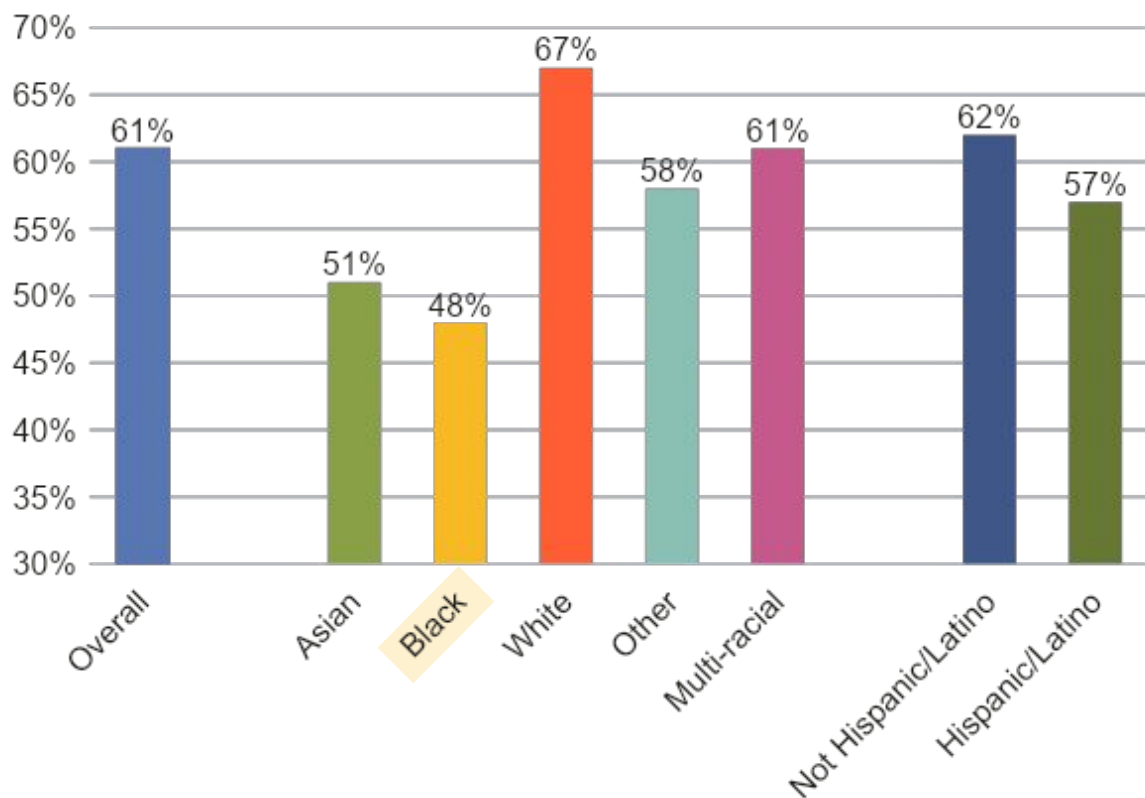
High School



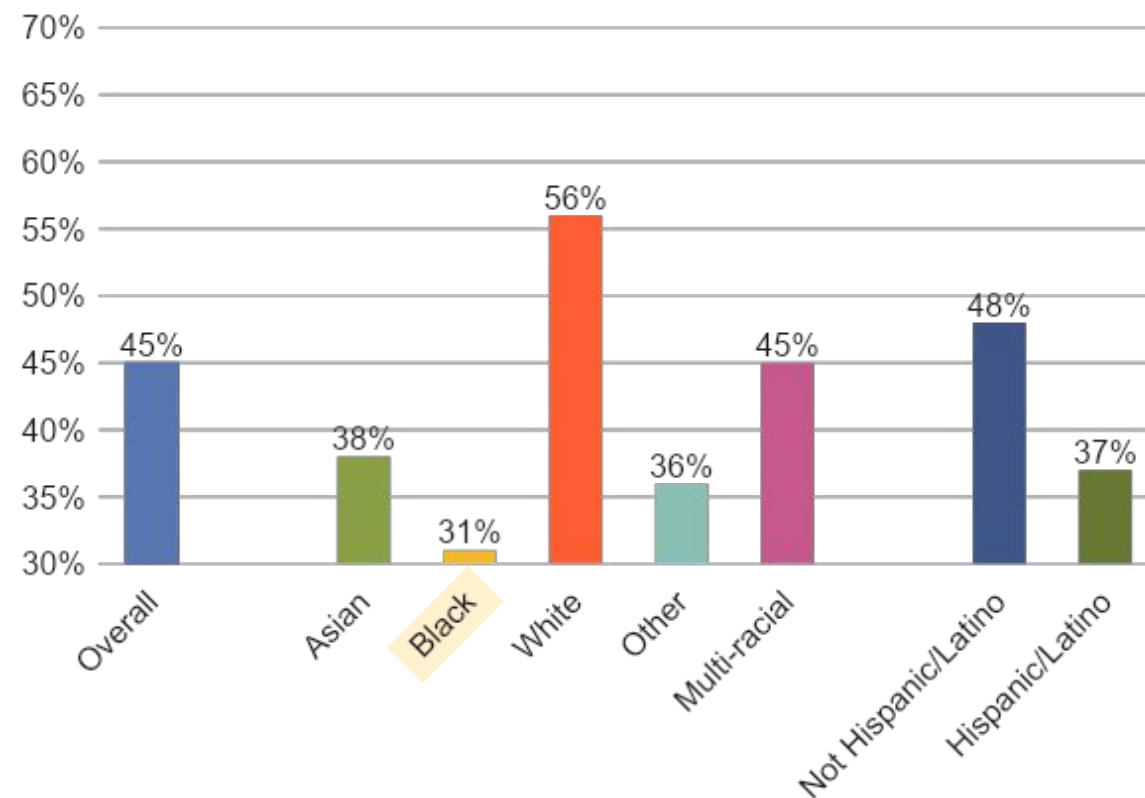
Physical Activity

In general, high school students were less likely to engage in 60+ minutes of physical activity on at least 5 of the past 7 days. Students who identified as **Black** were least likely to report engaging in 60+ minutes of physical activity:

Middle School



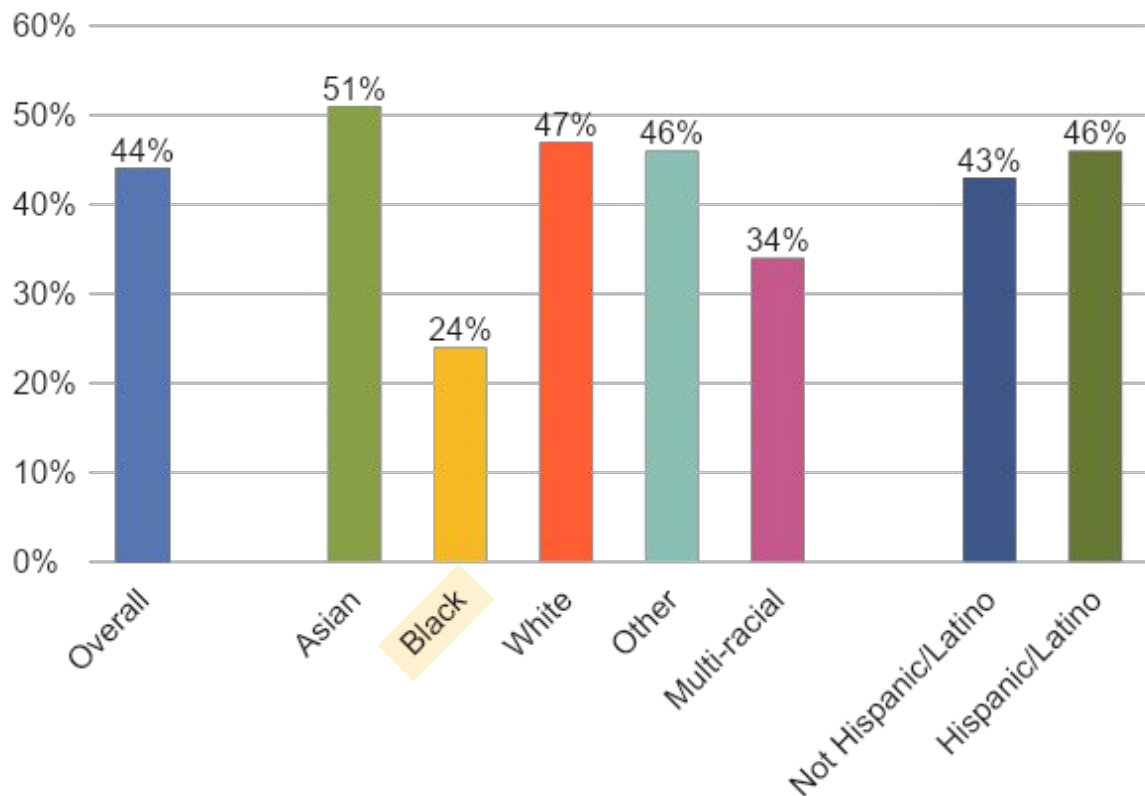
High School



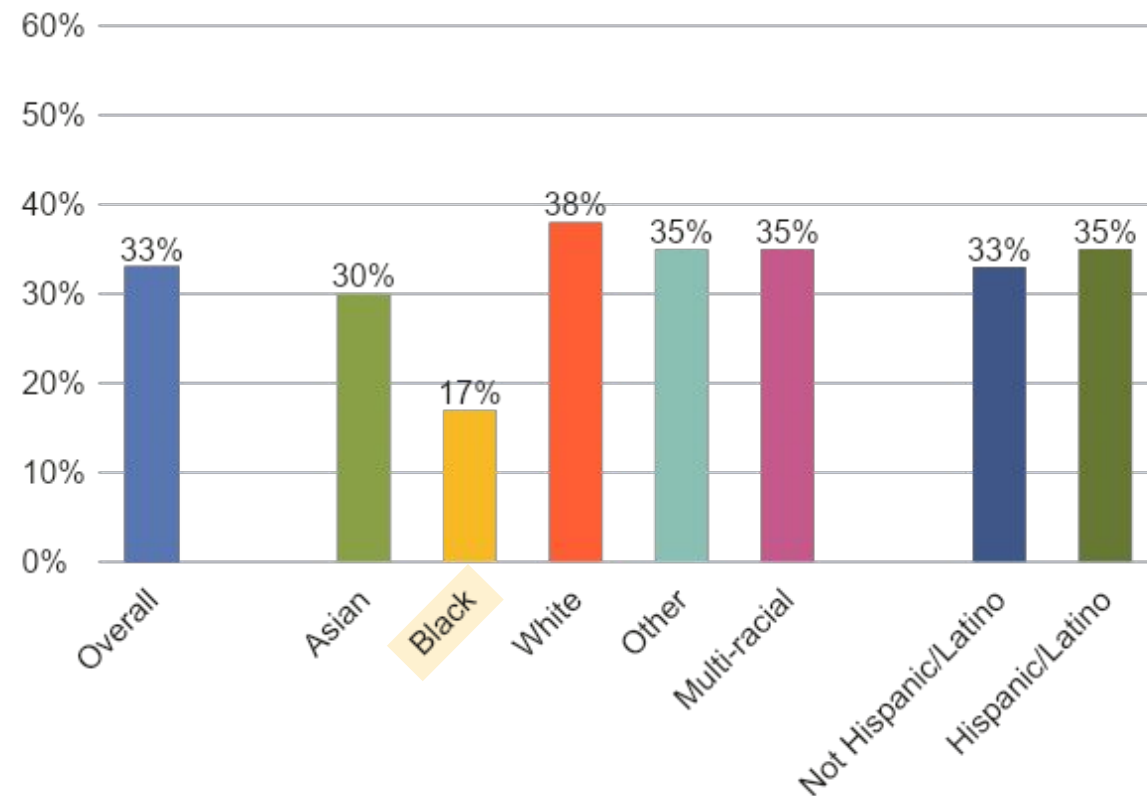
Nutrition

Students who identified as **Black** were significantly less likely to report eating breakfast every day in the past 7 days:

Middle School



High School

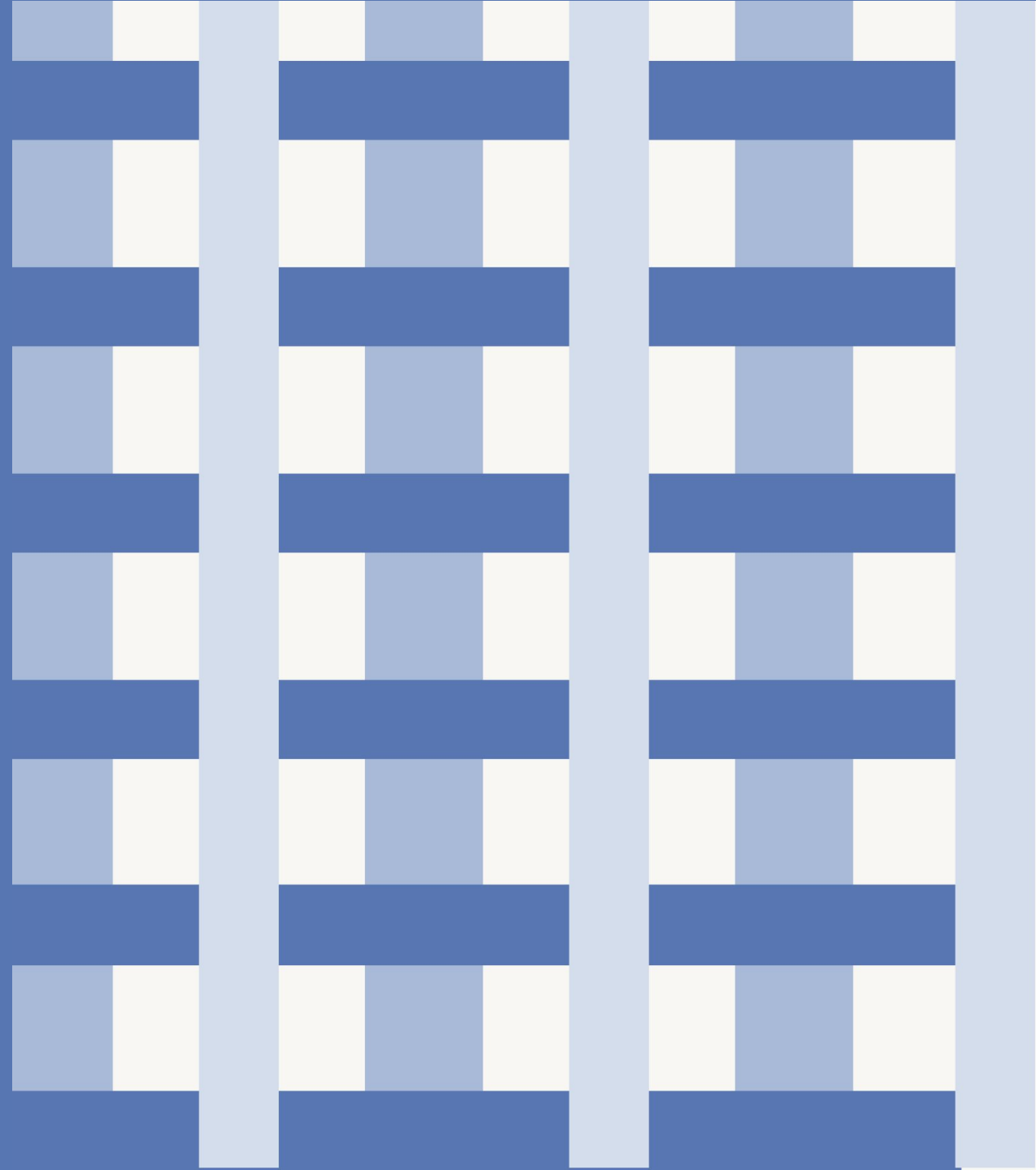


Strategies for Protective Factors

- **Professional Development**
With a focus on equity, highlighting a sense of belonging
- **Breakfast Carts**
- **Daily Movement Breaks**
- **Athletic opportunities**
- **YouthWorks Employment Program**
A state-funded program that connects teens and young adults with meaningful work experiences
- **Collaboration across the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition**
Works to build sustainable environments where communities can thrive
- **NEW: Caregiver University**
Workshops for caregivers (including substance use prevention and mental health)



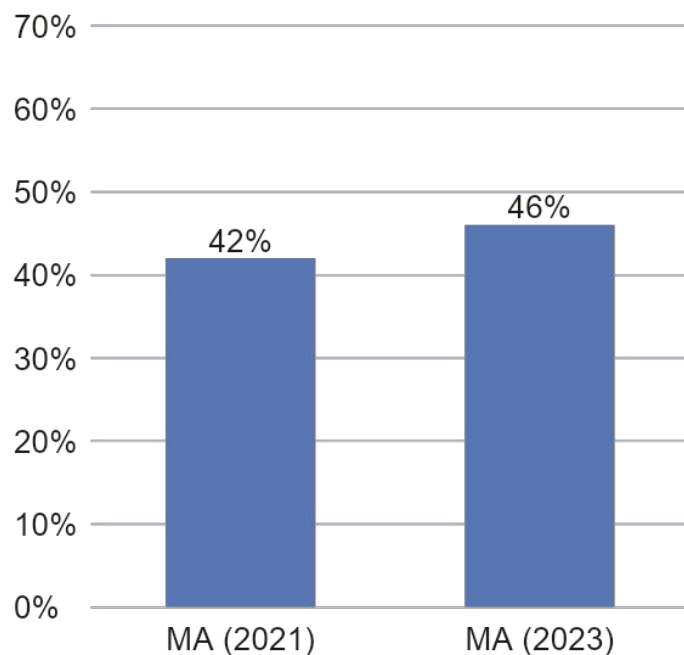
Gambling



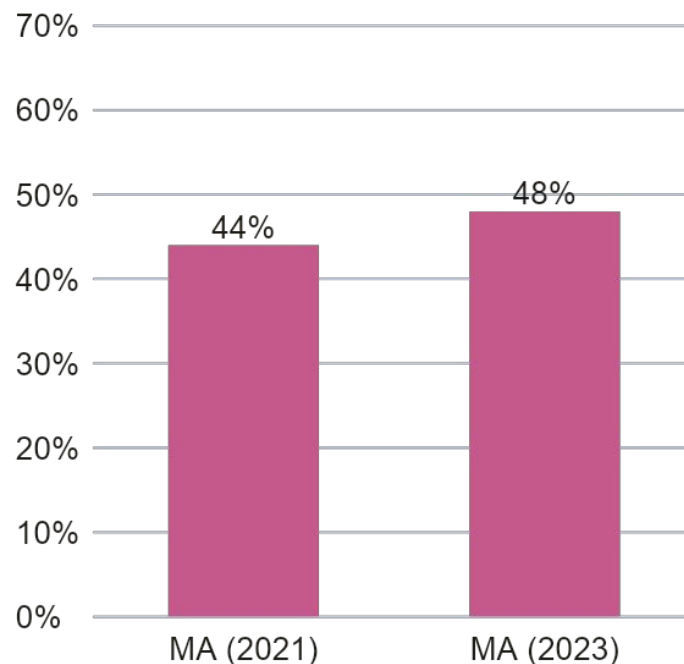
Gambling

State gambling data shows that prevalence is growing among Massachusetts youth, with over 45% of middle and high school students reporting gambling in some form in 2023. *Local comparison data does not exist.*

Middle School



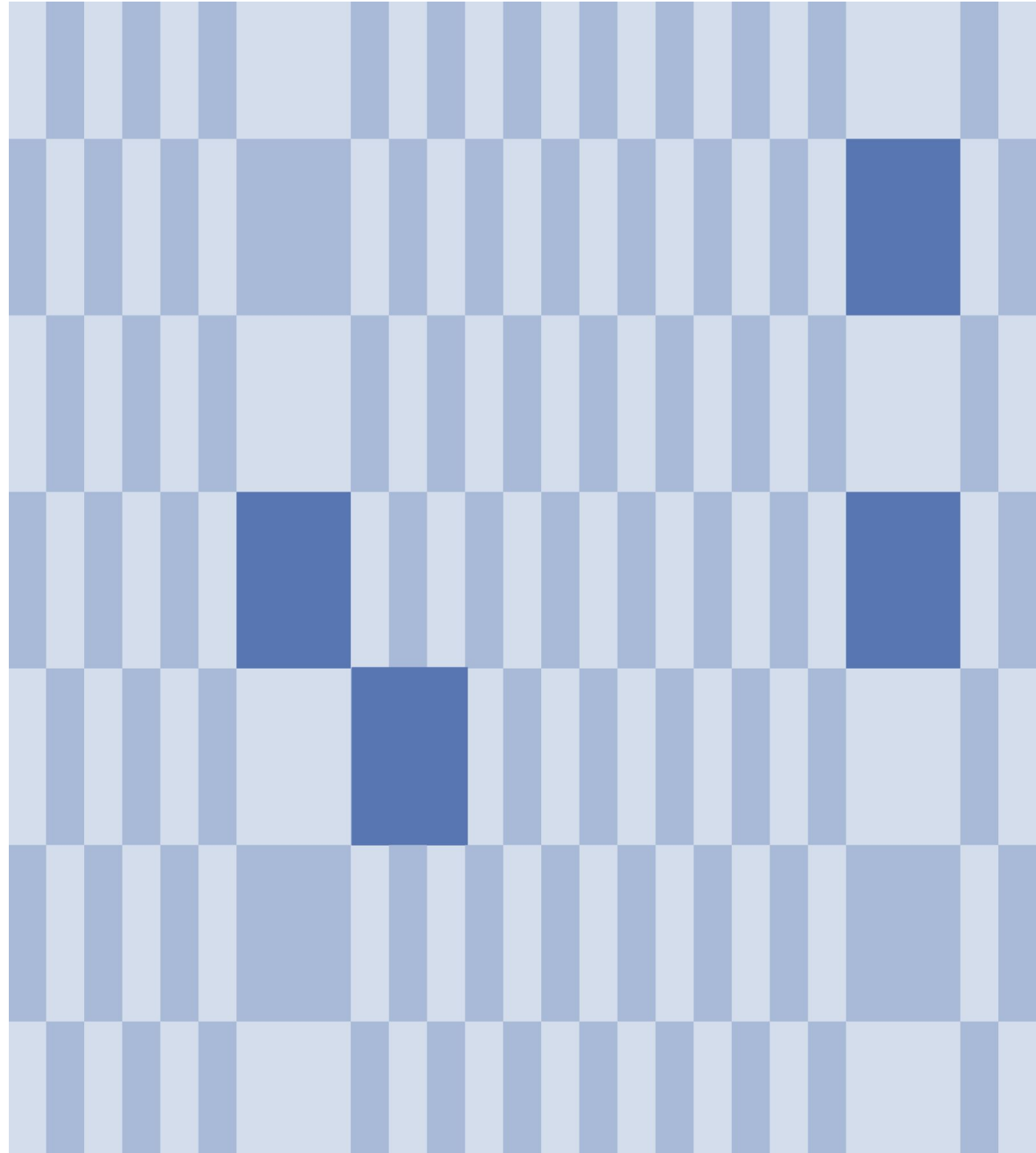
High School



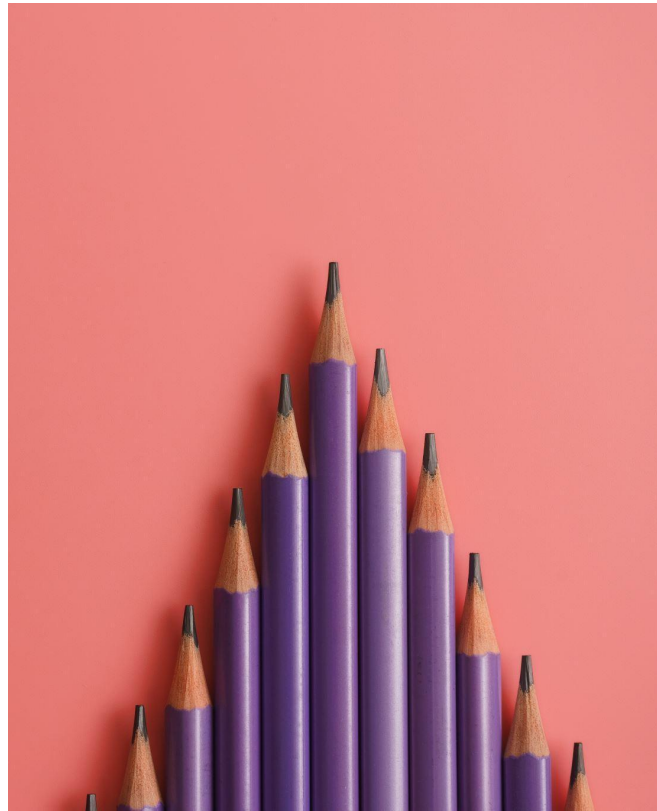
“There's literally apps and stuff you can just use your parents name or whatever email or number to say that you're 18. And you can just play mini games for stuff. I see these dumb ads on TikTok, and they promote it with rappers...and they say, ‘Oh, I made \$5,000 from this.’ And then you believe it.”
 — **Medford High School Student**

Strategies for: Gambling

- **Collaboration with other Communities**
Through Athletic Department networks
- **NEW: Coalition**
Capacity-building for local prevention coalitions



How the YRBS is Connecting MPS with the Region & Broader Community



- The YRBS is widely used across neighboring districts, Massachusetts, and nationally, creating a **shared framework for understanding youth health and wellbeing.**
- This alignment allows MPS to:
 - **Compare local data** with regional, state, and national trends
 - Identify **shared challenges and strengths** across communities
 - **Inform prevention and support strategies** using comparable, standardized data