

Durham County Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report

2023



DURHAM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Public Health

Introduction

The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a national survey conducted in each state by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This survey is administered every two years, the most recent survey data is contained in this report from 2023. This survey asks about many aspects of middle and high schooler's lives including mental health, substance use, nutrition, physical activity, bullying, and more. This report highlights inequities seen in the education system based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

Prior to the 2023 survey, the 2021 YRBS was administered. A detailed report of these data can be found [here](#).

This year's YRBS report contains details from the following subject areas:

- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Disability
- Mentalhealth
- Nutrition
- Personal health
- Personal safety
- Physical activity
- School support
- Sexual behavior
- Substance use
- Tobacco

These data are used to provide insight and evidence-based data to elected officials, grant writers, educators, and to the general public. The goal is to enact change in the community that benefits the youth and leads to their success in all areas.

Acknowledgements

The Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH) worked closely with Durham Public Schools (DPS) to conduct this survey. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DCoDPH's public health epidemiologist analyzed and disaggregated the data by race, ethnicity, gender, and grade level.

DCoDPH and DPS would also like to acknowledge the students that participated in this important survey.

In addition, support and leadership from the following people is gratefully acknowledged:

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Methods

The middle school survey asked 83 questions while the high school survey asked 121 questions. All questions were designed and validated by the CDC. At least two thirds of the questions on each survey must come from a national core set of questions. The remaining third of questions were selected by a multi-sector team at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Duke Health, the Durham County Department of Public Health, and the NC Healthy Schools to name a few.

Sampling:

Charter and public schools were eligible to conduct the surveys. All 12 eligible middle schools and all 11 eligible high schools participated. Surveys were administered electronically in the spring of 2023.

Analysis:

The CDC analyzed and weighed all results of the survey. Once completed, the data was sent to Durham Public Schools and North Carolina Healthy Schools at the state for review. State-level data was available first. DCoDPH’s public health epidemiologist analyzed the data using SAS 9.4 to generate weighted frequencies and percentages. Data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and grade when possible.

Analysis notes:

- In some cases, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- If the number of students in a particular response group was less than 10, results were suppressed to protect privacy.
- For analysis purposes, the race category, other, includes students that identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. This was due to low sample sizes in each separate race category.
- In this report, students that answered yes to the question on the survey that asked if they identify as Hispanic or Latino are included in the Hispanic or Latino race and ethnicity category. Therefore, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and white should be understood as mutually exclusive categories in the report.

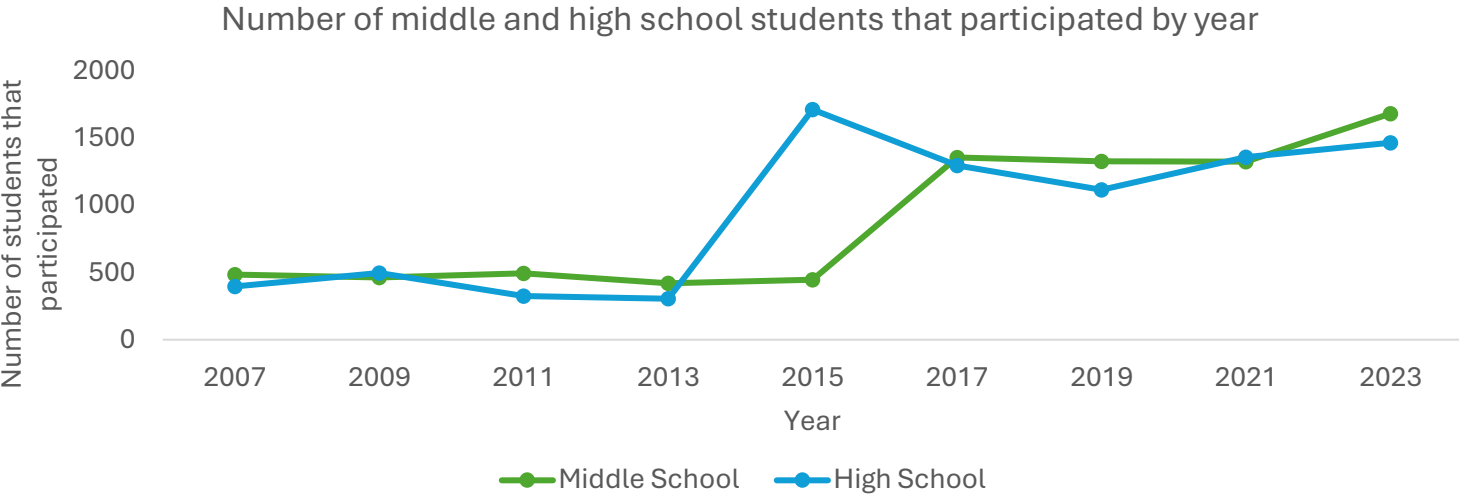
Limitations:

YRBS results do not include information from youth who attend private, alternative, vocational, or special education schools, and therefore cannot be generalized to all students in Durham County. Responses are limited to students who attended class on survey days. All data are self-reported and may be under or over-represented.

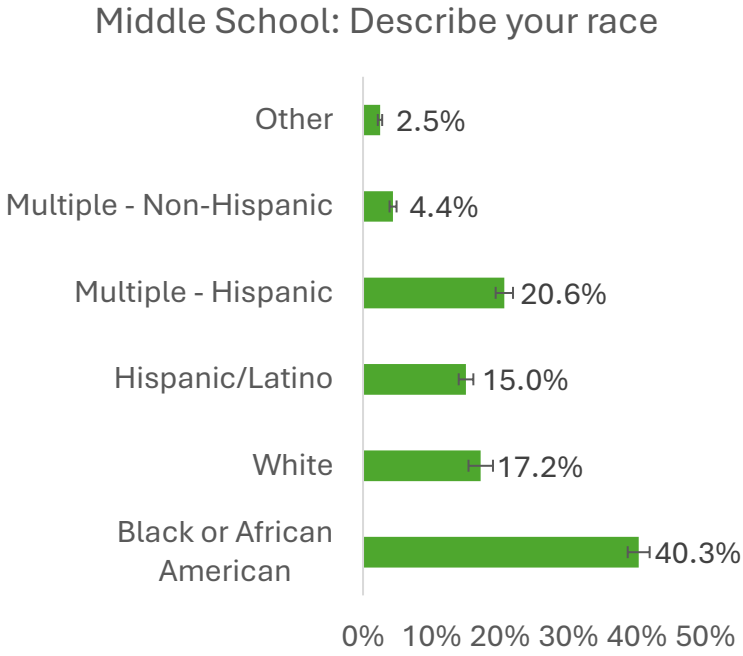
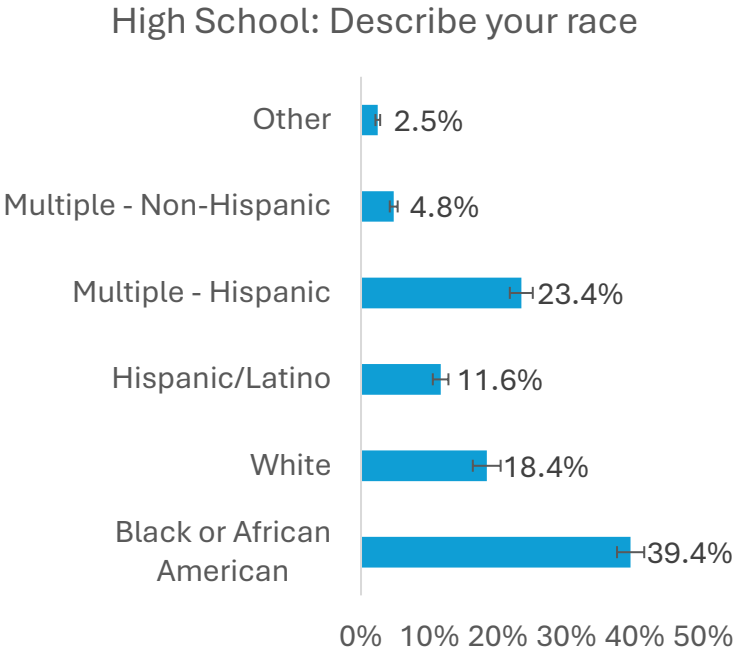
Survey Participant Characteristics

The YRBS sampling method changed in 2015 to draw a large enough sample to produce representative data for Durham Public School students. This is reflected in the chart below where a sharp increase in student participation is seen among high schoolers. This increase is reflected in 2017 for middle schoolers. As seen in the chart below, high school participation increased from 2021 by 7.7% and middle school participation increased by 27%.

All 12 eligible middle schools participated in survey administration with a total response rate of 82%. All 11 eligible high schools participated with a response rate of 69%.

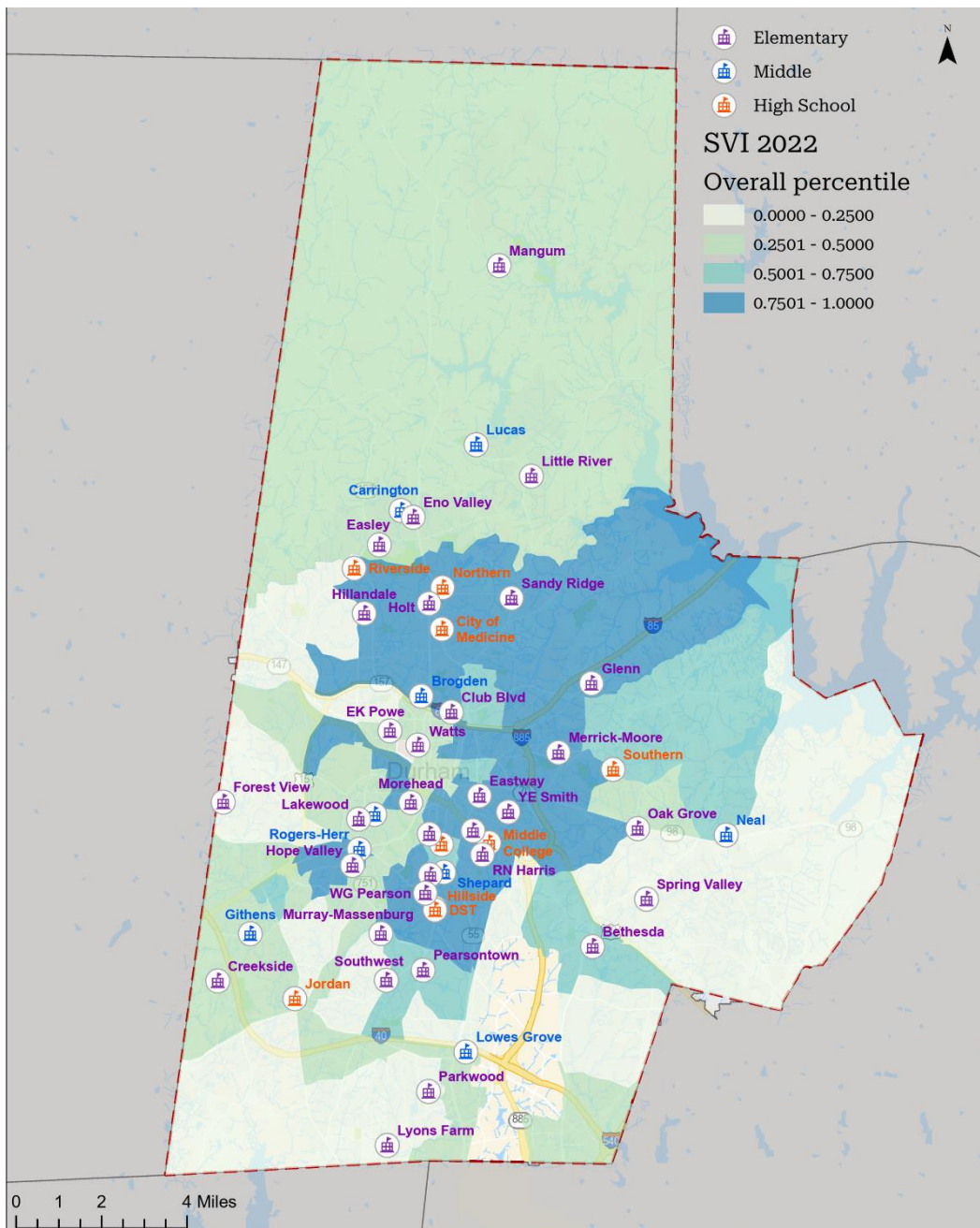


Below, there are two graphs: one for middle school race/ethnicity and one for high school race/ethnicity of those that participated in the 2023 YRBS and those of Durham Public School students from the 2022-2023 school year. The survey was administered electronically in Spring 2023. The YRBS population is representative of the DPS population and therefore can be used to make inferences about the 6-12th grade populations in Durham for eligible schools. Male and female populations were also representative but not pictured.



Survey Participant Characteristics

Responses were collected from 12 middle schools and 11 high schools. Many of the schools are in areas with a high Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) score. The SVI was developed by the CDC to examine community vulnerability to natural disasters and diseases based on various factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), household composition, racial and ethnic status, housing type and transportation.¹ A higher SVI percentage means that there is greater vulnerability in a particular area.¹ Racism is a core social determinant of health. Students of color experience racial inequalities such as lack of access to experienced teachers, resources, and advanced coursework.² Lower SES is linked to poorer psychological, mental, and physical health outcomes.³ However, SES is not the only contributing factor to academic success.

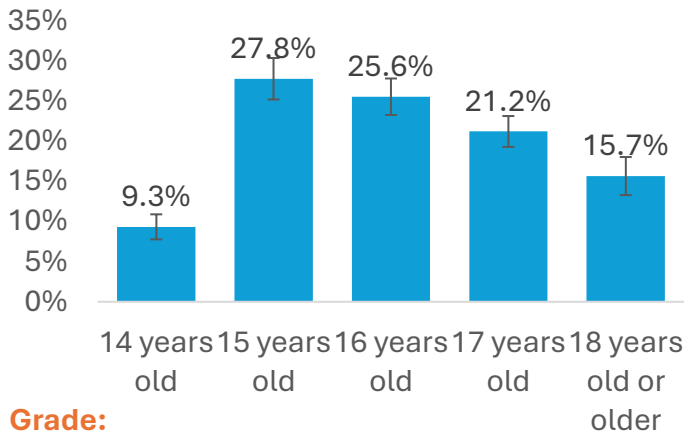


Survey Participant Characteristics

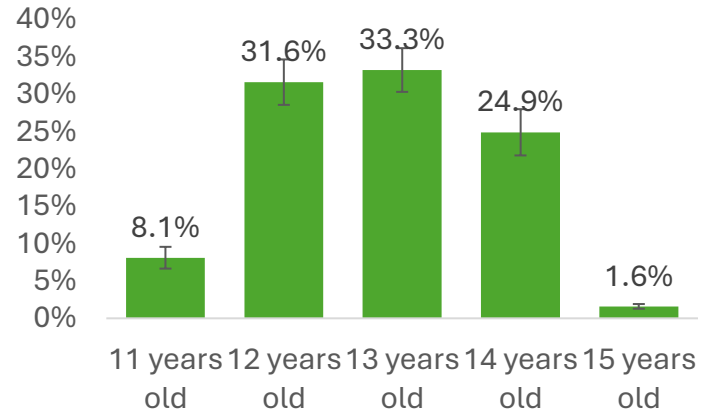
Age:

For both middle and high school student respondents, the age follows a normal distribution. There is some overlap of ages between middle and high school survey respondents. Among middle school participants (ranging from 11 years old – 15 years old) the greatest percentage of students are 13 years old (33.3%). Among high school participants (ranging from 13 years old – 18 years old), the greatest percentage is 15 years old (27.8%).

High School: Age demographics



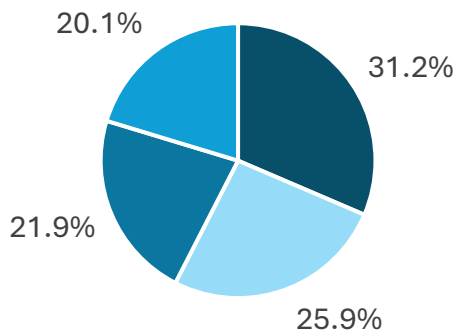
Middle School: Age demographics



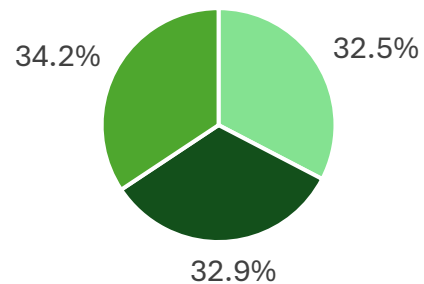
Grade:

Though age paints a better picture, grade was used in analysis to minimize confusion between middle and high schoolers. Middle school participants are evenly distributed by grade. Freshman (9th graders) are over-represented while 12th grade respondents are under-represented.

What grade are you in (n=1466)

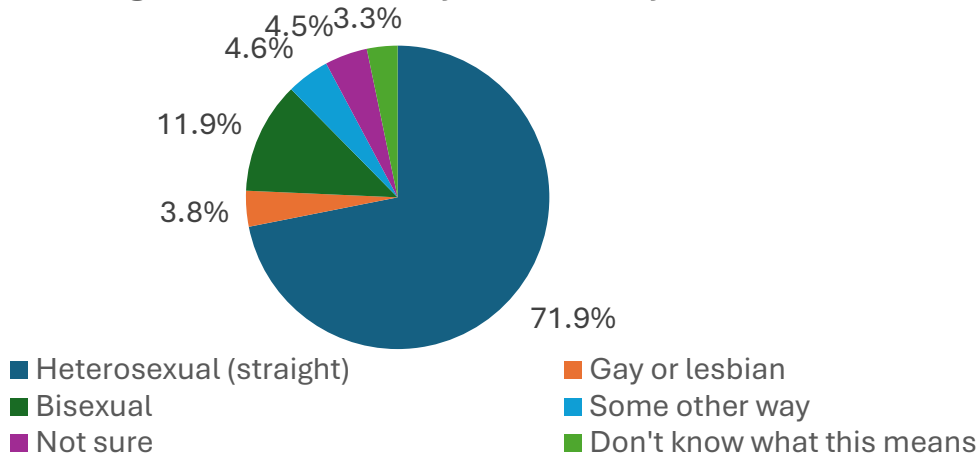


Middle School: Grade demographics



- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- 6th grade
- 7th grade
- 8th grade

High School: What is your sexuality?

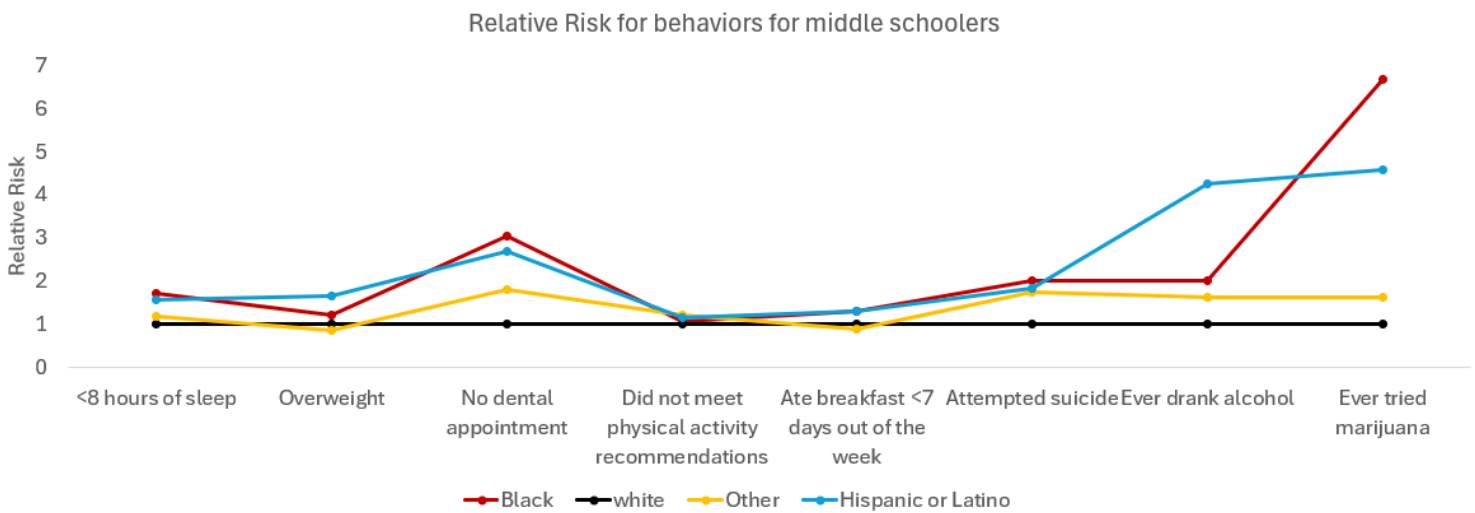


Sexuality:

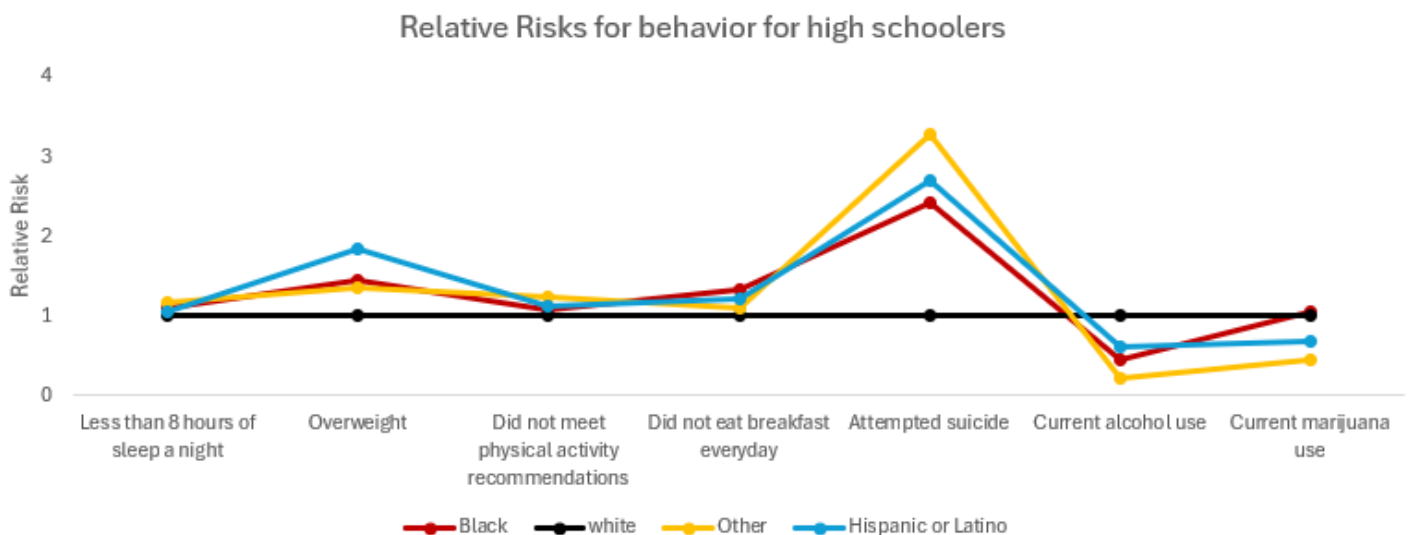
High school students were asked how they identify their sexuality. In 2023, 72% of students identified as heterosexual (straight). This is equal to the same percentage of heterosexual students in 2021. The most common response for LGBTQ+ students was bisexual.

Racial Inequities

Racial inequities are evident in this dataset. These inequities will be highlighted throughout the report. To understand the racial inequities seen in risky behaviors, a relative risk was calculated. Those identifying as Black or African American, Other race, and Hispanic or Latino were all compared to whites. A relative risk equal to one (as seen in the below figures for whites) indicates that there is no difference between the person of color and white counterparts. A relative risk greater than one indicates that the person of color is at a greater risk for this behavior than whites. A relative risk less than one indicates that the person of color is less likely to perform the risky behavior than whites.



Middle school: Many racial inequities exist for several youth behaviors. For example, Black or African Americans and Hispanics or Latinos are more at risk than whites for not having a dental appointment in over a year, attempting suicide, and ever drinking alcohol and ever trying marijuana.



High school: Racial inequities are seen among high school participants. For example, students of color are more likely than whites to be overweight or obese. Students of color are also at greater risk of attempting suicide. White students were more likely to use marijuana and drink alcohol within the past 30 days. There was minimal difference in getting 8 hours of sleep at night, meeting physical activity recommendations, and eating breakfast every day.

Racial Inequities

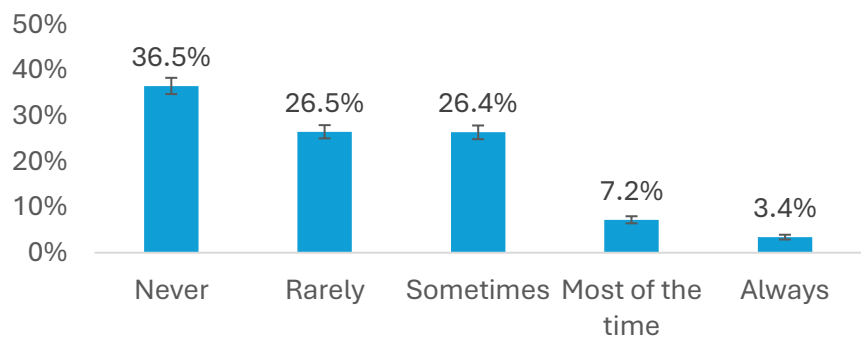
The institution of education in the United States has taught great minds like Maya Angelou, Barack Obama, Martin Luther King Jr. and more. Though their achievement cannot be overstated, the K-12 education system in the United States does not offer their services to everyone equally. After centuries of anti-literacy laws, unsafe and overcrowded learning environments, and racist teachers and staff, school integration was signed into law in 1954. In 70 years, the ethnic and racial isolation of students remains an issue.⁴ Legislators have banned teaching about race in 18 states.⁴ To combat this, schools across the country are rebuilding trust for the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community by introducing trauma-informed care into their curriculum to create an environment where students can heal from the toxic stress built up from daily micro- or macro-aggressions based on race and ethnicity.⁵

As students sit down at their desks at the beginning class, they may notice that some of their peers, students of color, combat daily discrimination either from other students, teachers, or staff. A Black or African American student brought to the principal's office for a minor disruption can be suspended or expelled while their white peers would not face those consequences for the same offense.⁴ Black or African American students are the most likely to be expelled in schools.⁴ They are also more likely to receive out of school suspensions.⁴ This discrimination gradually wears on these students and can increase the likelihood of them dropping out of school, only furthering the education gap.⁴

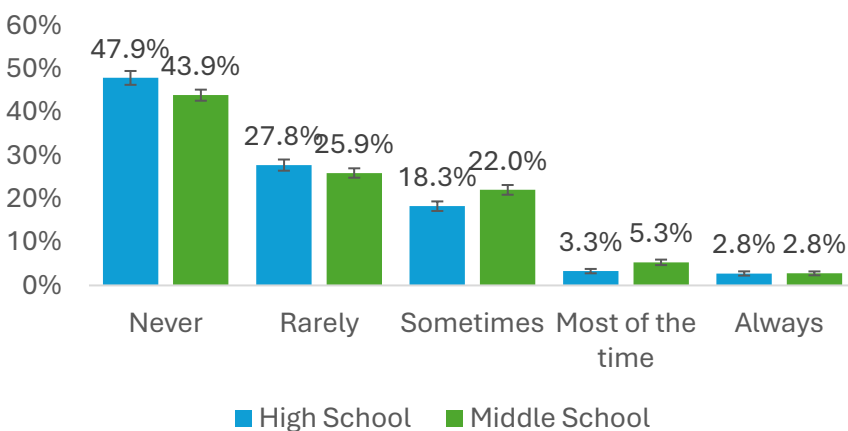
Black or African American students are 3.5 times more likely to be in a 'chronically underfunded' school district.⁴ This is the direct result of racism in housing and the continuance of systems contributing to generational poverty.⁴ Students in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods are less likely to succeed academically.⁴ There must be equitable federal funding for education to equip schools with counselors, nurses, and social workers instead of increasing surveillance and policing.⁴

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students are most successful when the educational institution understands their background and provides opportunities for mentorship, networking and connections, and career paths.⁶

High School: Have others assumed you were less intelligent because of your race or ethnicity?



Have you ever been treated unfairly or badly because of your race or ethnicity?



Report Highlights

Bullying

- Both bullying at school and bullying online occur more in middle schoolers than high schoolers.
- Girls are more likely to be bullied either at school or online than boys.

Disability

- Middle schoolers are more likely to consider themselves having a disability and having trouble learning, concentrating, or remembering. High schoolers are more likely to feel their daily activities are limited because of their disability.

Mental health

- Top causes of stress for middle and high schoolers were schoolwork, isolation as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and family.
- Girls were more likely than boys to report symptoms of depression
- High schoolers were more likely than middle schoolers to report symptoms of depression.
- Black or African American students were more likely to attempt suicide than any other race.
- Girls were more likely to report having more bad days when their mental health was not good than boys.

LGBTQ+ mental health

- Bisexual students were more likely to consider, make a plan for, and attempt suicide than their gay or lesbian peers.

Nutrition

- Students represented both ends of the spectrum for eating breakfast out of the past seven days; there was a peak at zero days and a peak at seven days.

Personal health

- Middle schoolers tended to get more sleep per night than high schoolers.
- 71.8% of high school students saw a dentist within the past 12 months.

Personal safety

- One in five high schoolers reported skipping school because they felt unsafe either at school or going to or from school.
- More middle schoolers than high schoolers saw violence in their neighborhood.
- Most middle schoolers that had access to a gun reported they could get the gun and be ready to fire the gun in under 10 minutes.

Physical activity

- There was a stark contrast in physical activity in the past seven days; students were more likely to either exercise 0 days or all seven days.

School support

- 50.7% of high schoolers felt they belonged at their school. The same was true for 52.7% of middle schoolers.
- 48.2% of high school students felt their teachers gave them support and a lot of encouragement.

Sexual behavior

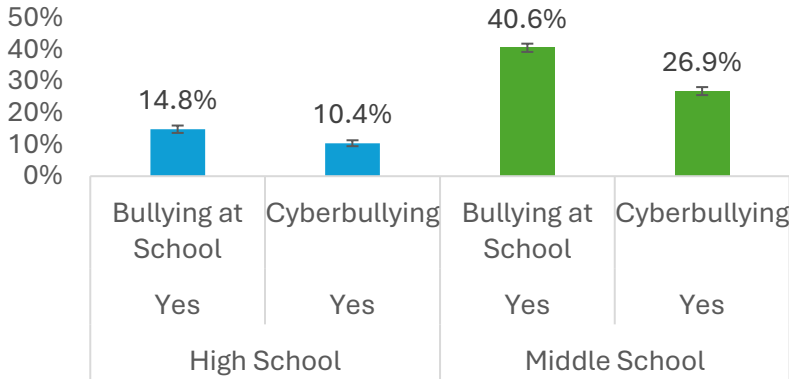
- Students most often reported using condoms as their primary form of birth control.
- More high schoolers reported ever having sexual intercourse than middle schoolers.

Substance use

- 16.7% of high schoolers reported drinking at least one drink in the past 30 days.
- 29.8% of high schoolers and 16.2% of middle schoolers reported ever having tried a vape.

Bullying

Bullying at school and online among middle and high schoolers



To the right, clear differences between girls and boys are seen when asked about if they experienced bullying. These differences are especially evident among middle schoolers. There are also differences between how girls and boys bully. For example, boys bully both boys and girls and are more likely to use physical intimidation.⁹ Girls on the other hand, are more likely to bully other girls and use verbal attacks and social isolation to bully.⁹

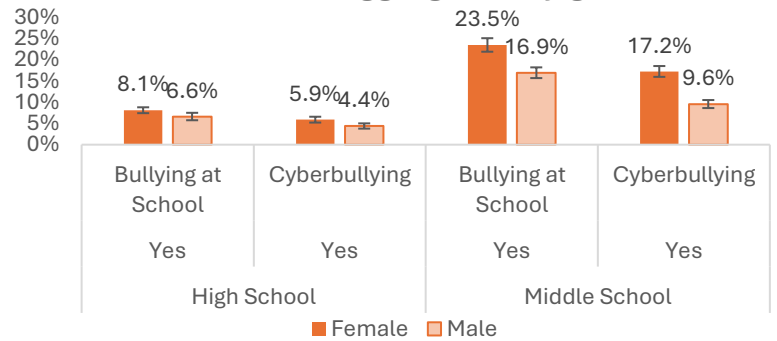
Nearly half of US teens have experienced bullying online, usually about their appearance. One study reported that 32% of online bullying was name-calling, 22% was spreading false rumors about someone, and 17% was sending explicit images without being asked. Older teen girls are more likely to be harassed online.¹⁰

Four in ten teens believe that if administrators on social media deleted negative posts would help prevent bullying online as well as requiring real names and pictures to be associated with accounts.¹⁰ According to the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 32% of high schoolers check social media multiple times an hour.

Studies show that race is the leading factor contributing to students being bullied.¹¹ Black students are significantly more likely to be bullied than their white peers.¹¹ Being bullied is associated with lower academic performance, unemployment, and mental health problems including depression and anxiety.¹¹ Students of color are over-represented among students that are bullied while the bullies themselves are less likely to be a student of color.¹¹

To the left, it is clear that bullying both at school and online is much greater in middle schoolers compared to high schoolers. Bullying tends to hit its peak in middle school due to students navigating key developmental stages.⁷ These stages include establishing a personal identity, developing independence, and expanding personal relationships.⁷ Finding themselves during this time often results in pressure to fit in and not stick out.⁷ This can result in feeling pressure from their peers to conform which leads to bullying those that are different.⁷ High school bullying can lead to developing anxiety, low self esteem, and depression and this can carry into adulthood.⁸

Have you ever been bullied at school or online? Disaggregated by gender

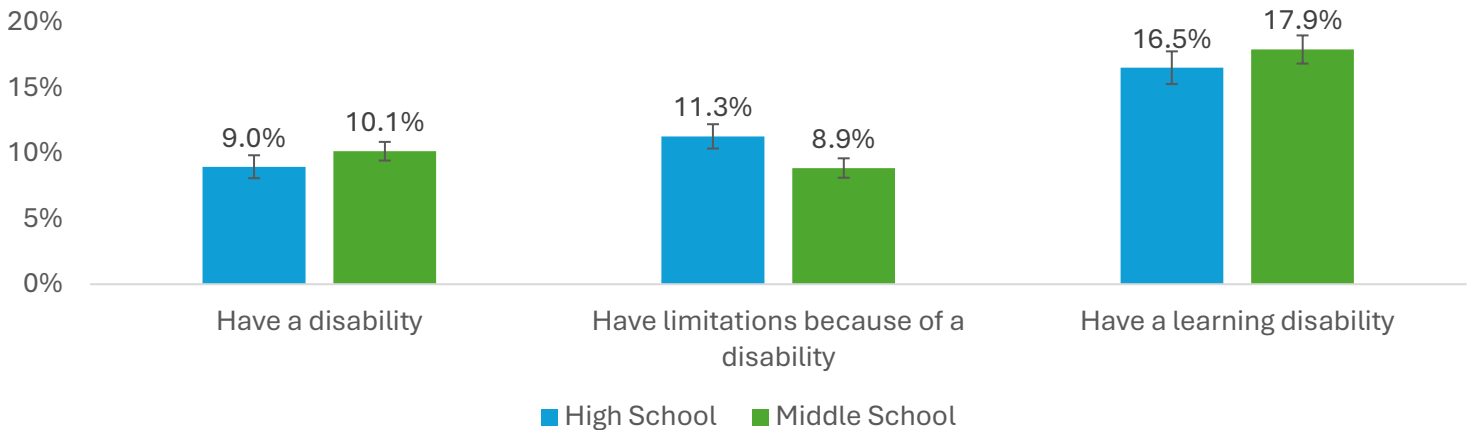


Durham Public Schools has two reporting systems available for bullying, drugs/alcohol, and violence. SAY SOMETHING allows students to use a hotline, website, or an app. Messages go to the SAY SOMETHING Crisis Center and are forwarded to DPS administration. The second reporting system is called TEXT-A-TIP which notifies school administrators and district staff when students offer tips for bullying and other safety concerns at school.

A youth listening session for high schoolers took place in August 2024 at the Emily K Center in Durham, NC and was conducted by the Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH). Students were asked about bullying. Some students said they would confront the bully to figure out what the problem was or go to an adult. Other students said that going to adults can make the situation worse.

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Do you have activities limited because of a disability? Do you have trouble learning, remembering, or concentrating because of a disability?



The figure above shows the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey questions on disability and the comparison between middle and high schoolers and the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey questions on disability. The statistics are close between middle and high schoolers with high schoolers believing slightly more that they have limitations in daily activities due to a disability. Middle schoolers were slightly more likely to report believing they have a disability and that they have trouble learning, remembering, and concentration due to a disability than high schoolers.

Disabilities are directly tied to a person's health. Regardless of disability status, the consequences of not getting the support needed in their education. If a person has difficulty, or is slower, at reading and writing and they don't get the support they need, they can face challenges such as not being able follow doctor's instructions or take medications correctly.¹² They may not be able to understand the importance of a healthy diet or taking care of their mental health.¹² This can result in unhealthy behaviors that could have been prevented by addressing their differences in a more appropriate way.¹²

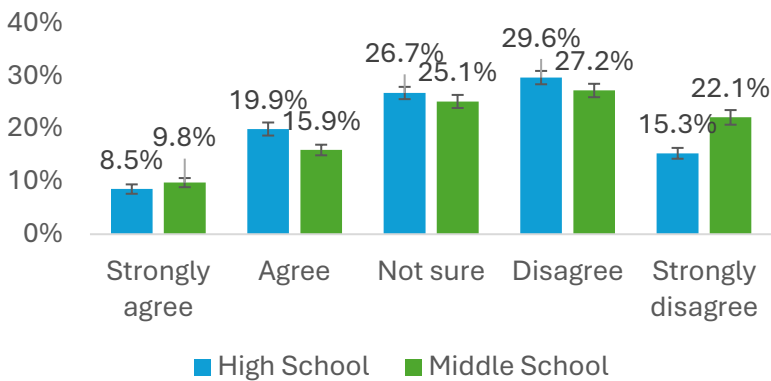


Durham Public Schools (DPS) houses the Exceptional Children's Department which provides special education and related services to children who are identified as having one or more disabilities, have there is an adverse effect on their educational performance, or they require specially designed instruction.

Project SEARCH is an award-winning training program designed to help students with significant developmental disabilities find work experience to gain employment after high school. The High School Transition Program is a one-year educational program held during the last year of high school. This program began in August 2011 and came about through partnership with Durham Public Schools, Duke Regional Hospital, Alliance Behavioral Health, OE Enterprises, Inc., and NC Vocational Rehabilitation. DPS students in Special Programs have the opportunity to apply to participate in this program.

Mental Health

Do you agree or disagree that you feel alone in life?



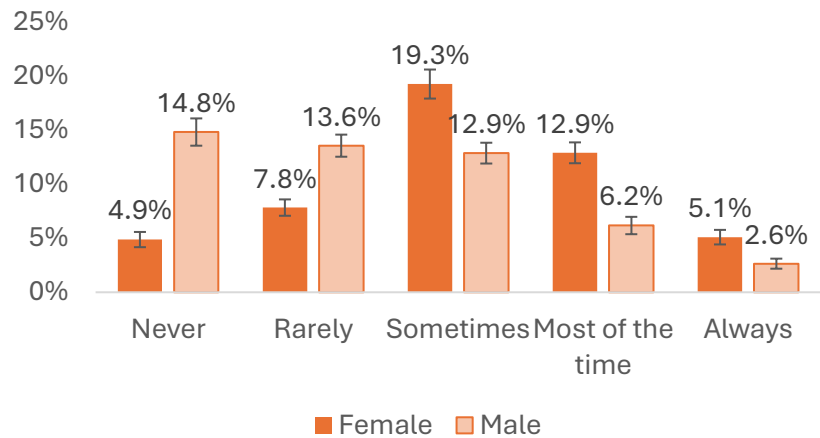
“Having a social life can be stressful. Before the pandemic I used to be outgoing but after all the isolation I got used to and now I kind of prefer being alone.” – Durham County High School student.

To the right, there is a clear distinction between girls and boys and their mental wellbeing. Girls are more likely than boys to report sometimes, most of the time, or always having poor mental health days in the past 30 days.

During a youth listening session with high schoolers conducted by DCoDPH at the Emily K Center in Durham, NC in August 2024, the top causes of stress were schoolwork, isolation as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and family. Middle schoolers said their top causes of stress was not having enough time to do schoolwork. They described feeling stress as being overstimulated, panicky, and anxious.

National experts have identified loneliness as a direct influence on academic success. An ‘epidemic of loneliness’ is on the rise among adolescents.¹³ One study showed that teenagers spend about 70% less time hanging out with friends in person in 2020 than they did in 2003.¹³ This is causing higher rates of depression and anxiety among students.¹³ The physical and social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning had a great affect on students.¹³ There is a correlation between time spent on social media and loneliness.¹³ Students that spent two hours a day on social media reported higher rates of isolation than students who spent 30 minutes a day on social media.¹³

High School: In the past 30 days, how often was your mental health not good?



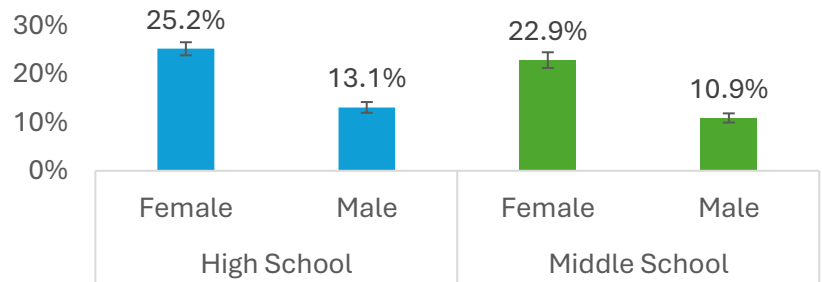
Durham Public Schools (DPS) offers Student Support Services that include mental health resources. Student Support Services focuses on the intertwined aspects of mental health including psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Co-located mental health services was piloted in 2010 and connects students and families to mental health services. Some co-located mental health providers include The Aya Center, Carolina Outreach, Diverse Family Services and more. This program began because there was a need to address lack of access to mental health services for students. Barriers include parental job commitments, no transportation, and issues scheduling. A student may be eligible for the services if they are feeling anxious or worried often, have trouble sleeping, lack of interest in doing usually pleasant activities, and harms themselves or others and more.

Youth Listening Session: When asked what promotes their mental health at the youth listening session, high schoolers mentioned being silly and not taking things too seriously, being with friends and family, working out, or playing games. Middle school students mentioned TV, especially anime, improved their mental health as well as having someone to talk to and being around other people.

Mental Health

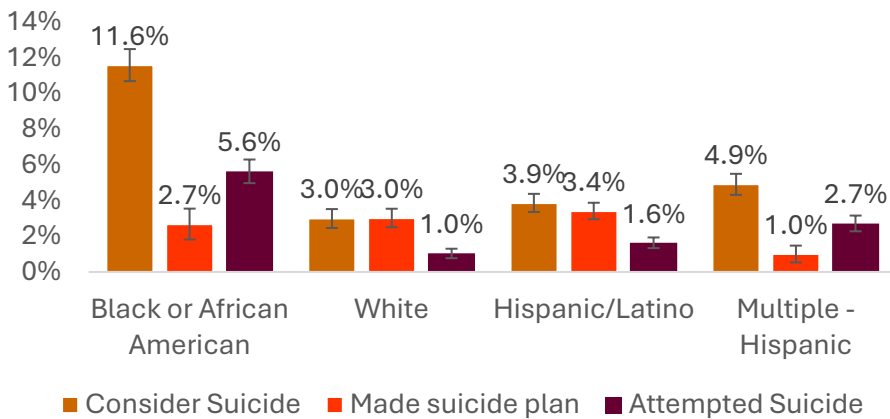
Depression looks different in every person, but the most common symptoms are feeling hopeless or empty, loss of interest in pleasurable things, and lasts for more than 14 days.¹⁴ The figure to the right shows that girls are more likely than boys to report symptoms of depression. Girls are twice as likely in middle and high school to report symptoms of depression than boys. The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey asked students if they felt there was someone they could talk to when they feel sad, angry, or anxious. The most common person for middle and high schoolers was a friend followed by a parent or another trusted adult. When asked how often they could talk to an adult about feelings, 33.6% of middle schoolers and 30.4% of high schoolers responded with most of the time or always.

Yes, in the past 12 months I felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row or more that I stopped doing some usual activities.

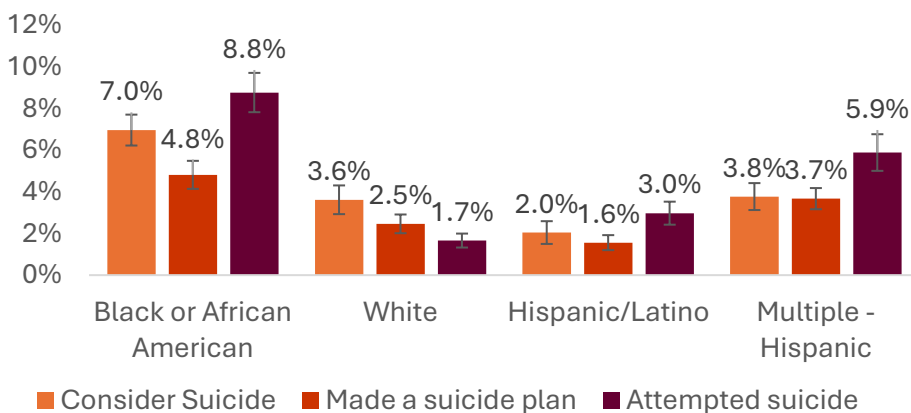


“Too many adults who are too narrow minded and not understanding. I seem self sufficient, but I am extremely anxious all the time.” – Durham County high school student

Middle School: Suicide



High School: Suicide



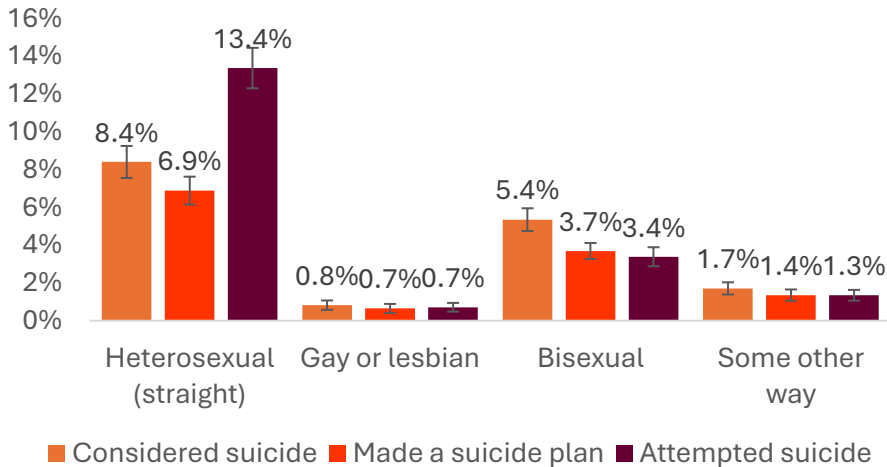
At a youth listening session conducted by DCoDPH at the Emily K Center in Durham, NC in August 2024, high schoolers mentioned they would like adults to be more understanding and not compare their experiences from when they were young. Validating emotions came up a few times as well as empathy and reassurance.

Poor mental health was already on the rise prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵ CDC data in 2021 showed that 37% of high schoolers reported they experienced poor mental health days during the pandemic.¹⁵ Nearly half of high schoolers said they reported feeling sad or hopeless in the past year.¹⁵ These disturbing findings show an increase in suicidality, drug use, and experiencing violence or high-risk sexual behavior.¹⁵

Schools play a vital role in the success of the health and wellbeing of students. School connectedness during the pandemic was associated with lower risk for suicidal ideation and persistent feelings of depression.¹⁵

LGBTQ+ Mental Health

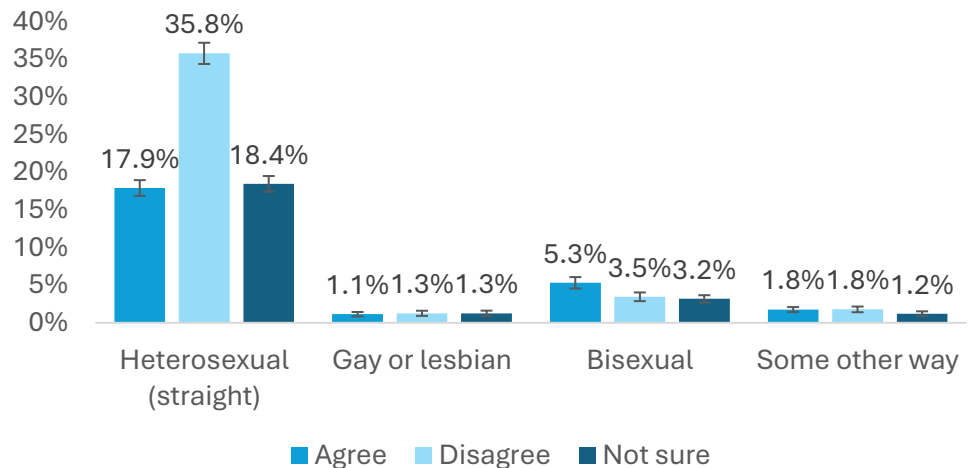
High School: LGBTQ Suicide



According to a study, lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and female youth reported greater levels of poor mental health, emotional abuse by a parent or caregiver, and having attempted suicide compared to their straight peers.¹⁵ Data shows that bisexual youth report higher rates of depression, bullying, sexual assault, and physical harm.¹⁶ The 2023 National Survey administered by the Trevor Project found that LGBTQ+ young people of color reported higher rates of attempting suicide than their white peers in the past year.¹⁶ Just 38% of LGBTQ+ young people report their home is LGBTQ+ affirming.¹⁶

Bisexual individuals often face a higher level of prejudice than their gay and lesbian peers.¹⁷ Biphobia and anti-bisexual beliefs exist and impact the mental wellbeing of these individuals.¹⁷ Bisexual people are often stigmatized as being 'disloyal' as they are attracted to both males and females.¹⁷ This furthers the exclusion of them from society. Often, this population is stereotyped as hypersexual, having sex with a higher number of partners.¹⁷

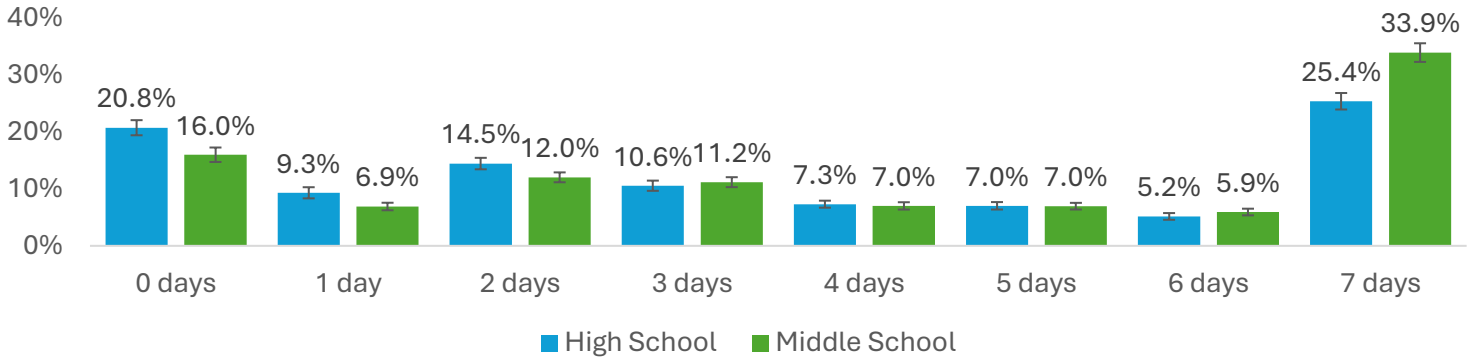
High School: Do you feel alone in your life?



Durham Public Schools (DPS) Board of Education LGBTQIA+ Task Force was adopted in December 2022. This policy will maintain a safe and supportive school environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals. This policy provides appropriate training for school staff to educate on fostering an affirmative and supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ students free from discrimination. The school district also adopted the LGBTQIA+ Gender Supports Policy¹⁸ which allows the school to keep a student's gender identity from his/her/their parents. This is approached on a case-by-case basis and takes into consideration the health and safety of the student. Staff are also mandated to use the student's preferred pronouns and new name.

Nutrition

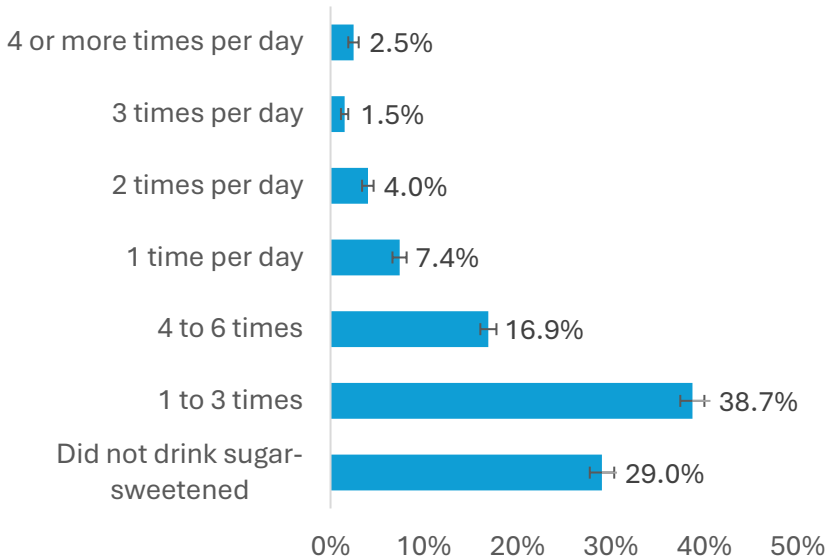
In the past seven days, on how many days did you eat breakfast?



The figure above shows an interesting trend. Both ends of the chart show the first and second highest peaks. This is a unique distribution as the ends of this chart are direct opposites. To the left, students responded that in the past seven days, they did not eat breakfast any day, while the right end shows students ate breakfast everyday. Between this stark contrast is evenly distributed. This question did not expand responses to identify which days students ate breakfast. For example, students that ate breakfast two out of the seven days could be eating breakfast only on the weekends. However, there is no way to know given the data accessible.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and has multiple health benefits. Students that consume breakfast have healthier body weights, improved nutrition, better memory, better test scores, and better attention spans.¹⁹ Black and Hispanic and Latino families have historically experienced food insecurity and are over-represented in this area.²⁰ This is a direct result of systemic racism perpetuating generational poverty which can lead to poor nutrition.²⁰ Students are set up for success when they have access to free school meals.²⁰ Eating school meals can help improve nutrition, mental and physical health wellbeing, and reduce childhood obesity rates.²⁰

High School: In the past seven days, how many times did you drink a sugar sweetened beverage?

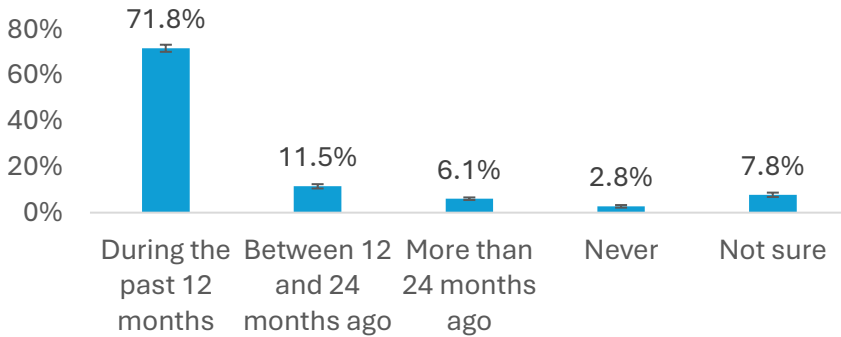


High school students were asked about sugary beverage consumption and over one-third of students reported drinking this type of beverage one to three times in the past seven days. However, nearly one-third of students reported not having any sugar sweetened beverages in the past seven days. These beverages are known to increase the chance of childhood obesity. However, the leading factors of childhood obesity come down to socioeconomic factors and racism.²¹

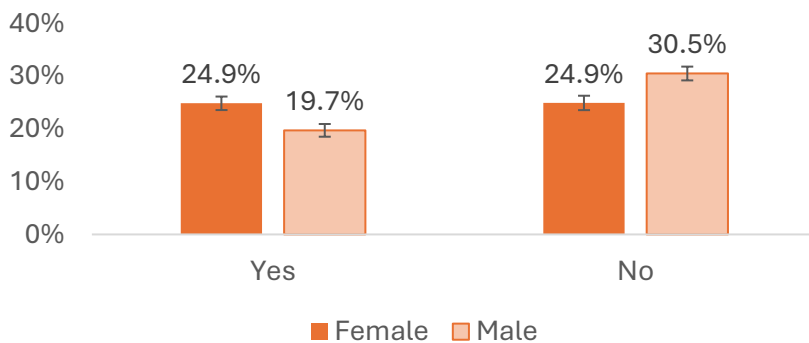
Durham Public Schools Board of Education unanimously approved a plan to provide all DPS students with free meals for all 56 schools in the district in the 2024-2025 school year. Currently, 28 DPS schools receive free meals. This plan no longer requires household applications.

Personal Health

High School: When was the last time you went to the dentist?

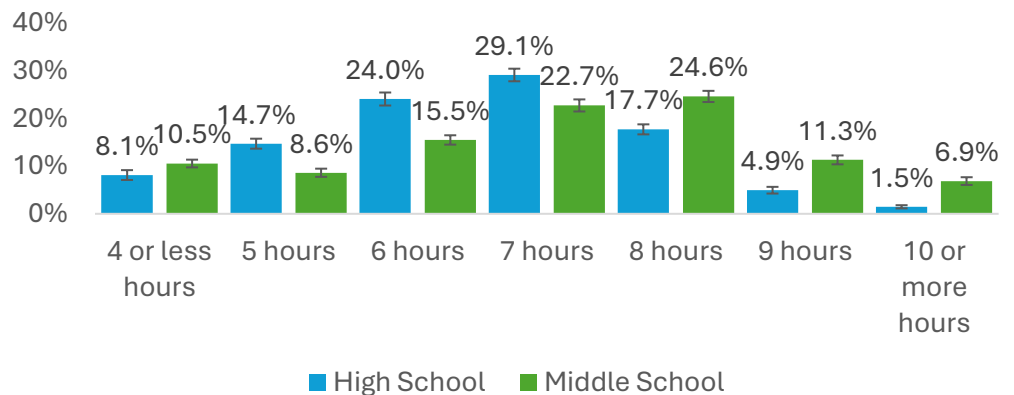


High School: Have you ever eaten less to lose weight or keep from gaining weight?



The figure above shows a noticeably higher percentage of high school girls (24.9%) reported dieting to lose weight or keep from gaining weight than boys (19.7%). Social media plays a pivotal role in body image and self-esteem.²⁴ Teenagers are often more likely to want to be thin than healthy.²⁴ One in every two teenage girls tried dieting to change their body shape.²⁴ Teens that diet are likely to not feel good about themselves, they have lower self-esteem, feel less in control of their lives, or are unhappy with their weight even if they are perfectly healthy.²⁴

On an average school night, how many hours of sleep do you get?



The figure above illustrates the differences in sleep patterns for middle and high schoolers. Middle schoolers are more likely to get more than eight hours of sleep on an average school night than high schoolers with 24.6% getting eight hours of sleep a night. High schoolers tend to sleep less with 29.1% sleeping seven hours on an average school night.

Preventative oral healthcare can help prevent tooth decay, gingivitis, and cavities.²² Dental screenings also provide an opportunity to check for cancer, gum disease, and any orthodontic needs that require further examinations by an orthodontist.²² In 2019, the CDC estimated that 86.9% of children between 2 and 17 years old had a dental visit in the past year.²²

Black or African American and American Indian and Alaskan Native children are at higher risk for missing dental visits due to systemic racism, generational poverty, and limited or no access to a dental clinic.²³ Expansions in public insurance programs have helped alleviate the barriers between a child's oral health and social determinants of health.²³

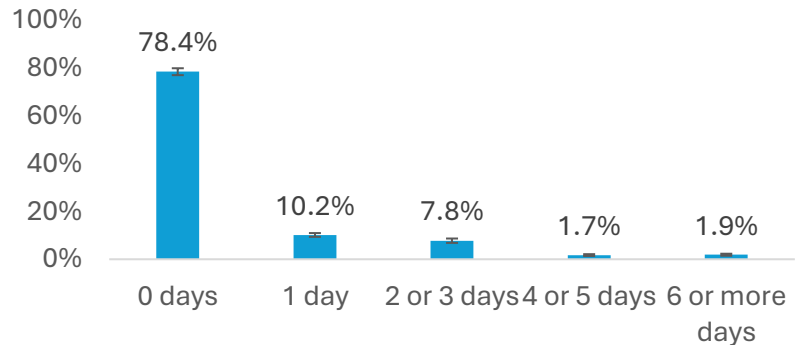
Access and use of tobacco products including vapes are on the rise among adolescents and can contribute to poor dental health.²³

Personal Safety

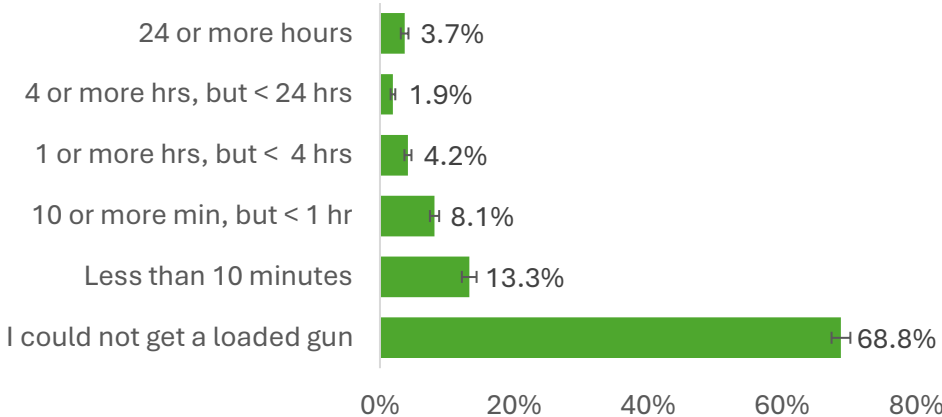
Student's fears about safety at school are linked to chronic absenteeism.²⁵ National Youth Risk Behavior Survey data noted that students were more likely to skip school because they feared being threatened with a weapon, have property damaged or stolen, or being bullied or cyberbullied at school.²⁵

Guns are the leading cause of death among American children and teens.²⁶ One in ten gun deaths are aged 19 or younger.²⁶

High School: How many days did you skip school because you felt unsafe?



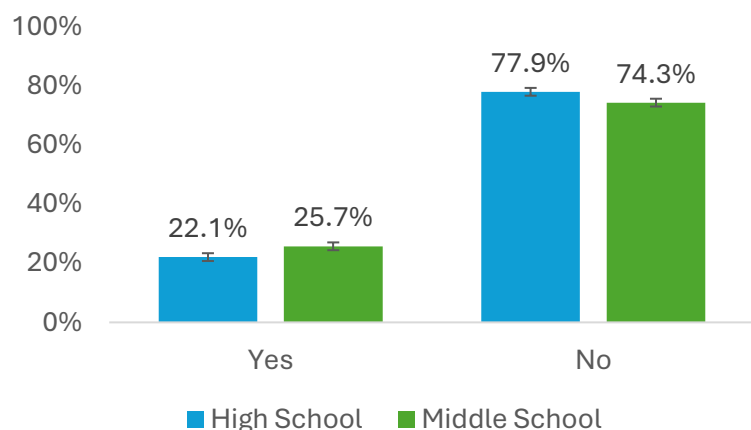
Middle School: How long would it take you to get and be ready to fire a gun?



Homes with improperly stored firearms contribute to school shootings and suicides and the deaths of family members.²⁶ 4.6 million American children live in a home with at least one gun kept unloaded and unlocked.²⁶ Children living in poverty are more likely to die from gun violence.²⁶ This is directly tied to systemic racism, over and under policing, and access to neighborhood safety measures like better lighting.²⁶

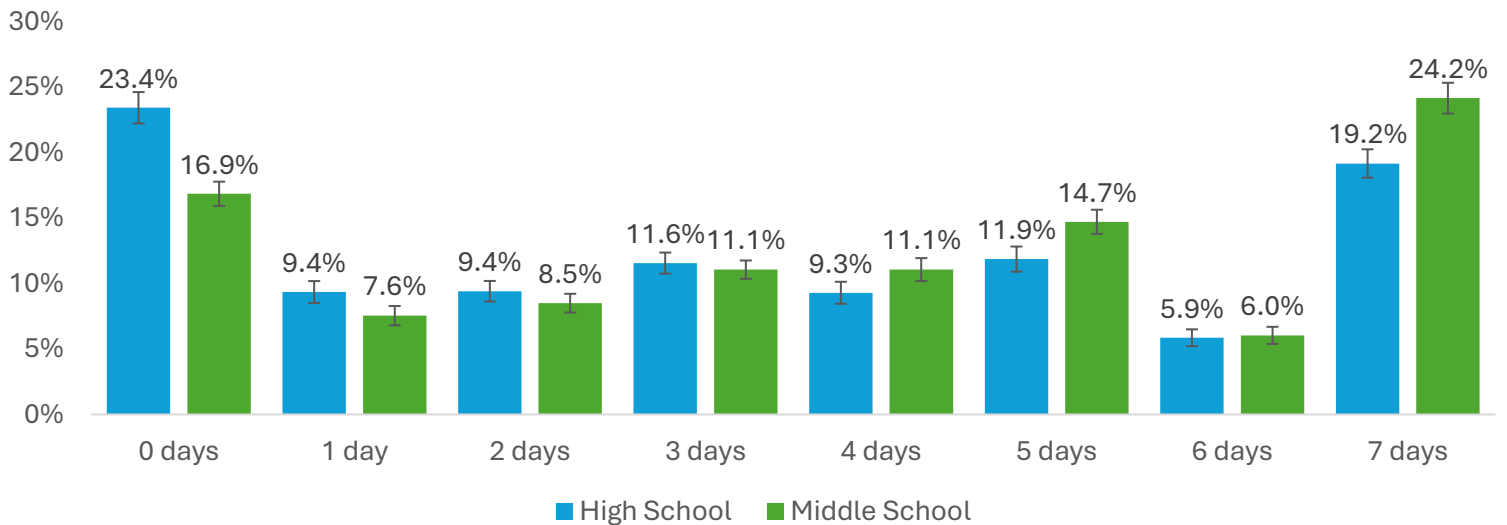
By measuring standardized test scores and coursework grades, studies have shown that students living in high crime areas are more likely to have poorer test outcomes.²⁷ High absenteeism and a decrease in school engagement are also consequences of unsafe neighborhoods.²⁷ This type of response to neighborhood violence is the result of trauma from exposure to violence. This interferes with learning, socialization norms associated with a violent context. This detracts from school behavior, and residential segregation, or the potential that certain families who live in high crime communities experience other challenges that lead to poorer academic outcomes.²⁷ The trauma experienced by these children affects their mental health, social life, and support systems.²⁷

Have you seen violence in your neighborhood?



Physical Activity

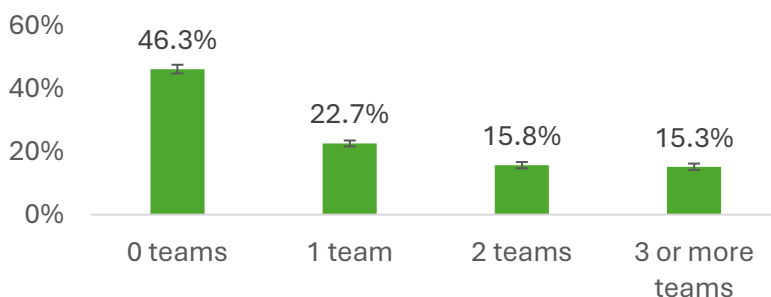
In the past 7 days, on how many days did you get 60 or more minutes of physical activity?



An interesting trend is shown here with the two opposite ends of the chart are the two highest peaks. Between these two peaks, physical activity remains consistent. Middle schoolers are more likely to exercise for at least 60 minutes all seven days of the week than high schoolers and high schoolers are more likely to exercise zero days out of the past seven. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that middle and high school students should have at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.²⁸ Only about one-fifth of high schoolers and one quarter of middle schoolers meet this recommendation.

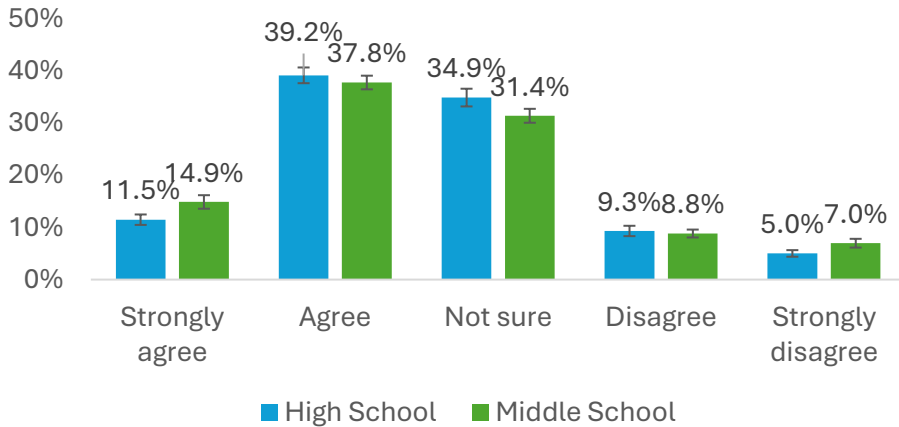
Kids participating in sports helps elevate a sense of belonging.²⁹ Sports teams provide a sense of camaraderie for young people and a place to blow off steam, get a workout in, and uplift their mental health.²⁹ Team building on these teams allows kids to develop communication, leadership and followership skills, and understanding of the power of sportsmanship.²⁹

Middle School: In the past 12 months, how many sports teams did you participate in?



School Support

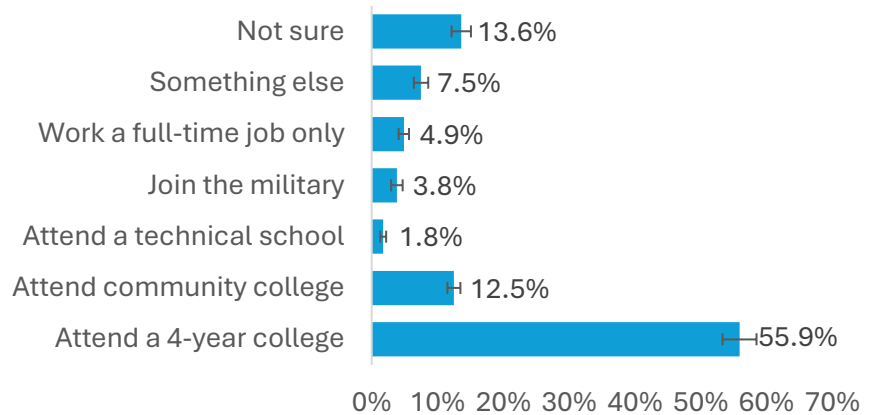
Do you feel like you belong at your school?



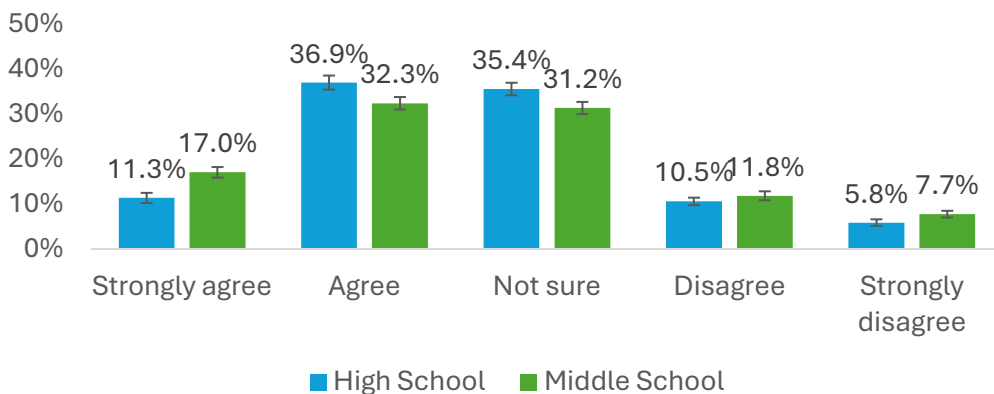
A sense of belonging provides inclusion, academic success, and community building.³⁰ The rates of loneliness among young adults has increased every year for over a decade.³⁰ School belonging can be influenced by things such as reciting the school's mission statement that promotes inclusion and diversity daily.³⁰ Other tactics include providing meals at school, and hiring social workers, nurses, and psychologists.³⁰ Creating the sense of 'having a home' can alleviate student stress and increase belonging.³⁰

The figure to the right shows a strong interest in attending a four-year college or university after graduating high school. At a youth listening session conducted by DCoDPH at the Emily K Center in Durham, NC in August 2024, many students spoke of aspiring to careers in medicine or therapy and counseling. Generation Z is experiencing repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and disruption to traditional learning styles.³¹ These gaps can lead to underdeveloped relationships with teachers and feelings of inadequacy.³¹ Cost of higher education is a major concern for students when deciding post-high school steps.³¹ One study found that 60% of high school students are anxious and overwhelmed in college.³¹ Creating an inclusive and supportive environment is key to student's success after graduation.³¹

High School: What do you want to do after high school?



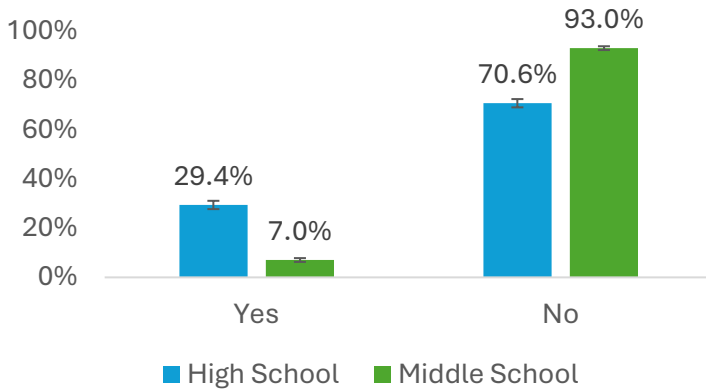
Do you agree or disagree that your teachers give you support and lots of encouragement?



Just like students, teachers need support as well. Fulfilling teacher needs leads to a classroom environment conducive to learning and academic success.³² Teachers should be trained in diversity and equity to address student needs and identify students that may need more assistance.³² To provide these services and support, multidisciplinary approaches are necessary including role clarification, programming, and training.³²

Sexual Behavior

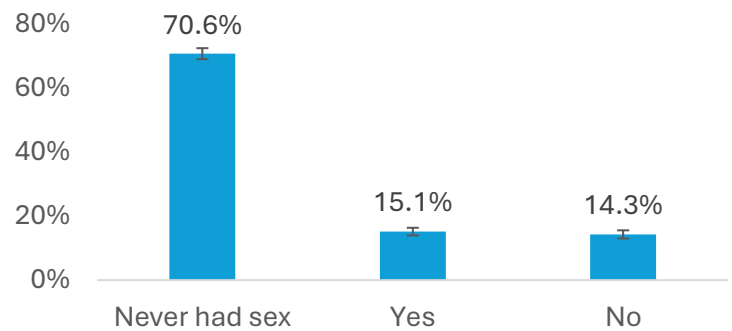
Have you ever had sexual intercourse?



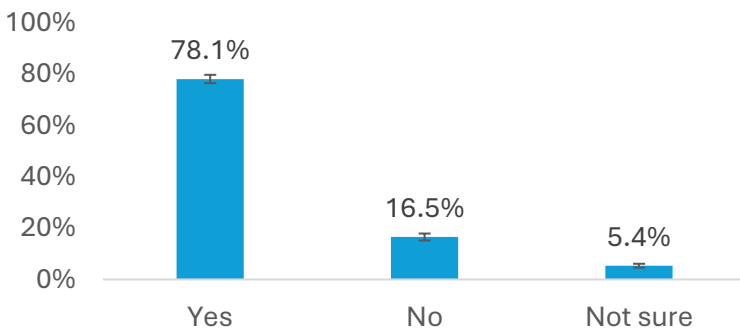
Adolescents that have sex at a younger age are more likely to have more sexual partners, not use condoms, become infected with a sexually transmitted disease, and conceive a pregnancy.³³ To the left, high schoolers (29.4%) are over four times more likely to report ever having sexual intercourse than middle school (7%). The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is recommended by CDC for both males and females. In North Carolina, 63.5% of children ages 13-17 are up to date with their HPV vaccines.³⁴ HPV can lead to cervical cancers and penis cancers and other complications of the reproductive health system.³⁵

To the right, high schoolers who had sex were equally likely to use a condom than not. Condoms were the most common form of birth control used by students having sexual intercourse. Over half of high school students reported that they did have a parent or other adult to talk to about what they expect them to do about sexual health. High school students were asked if they used drugs during or before they had sexual intercourse the last time they had sexual intercourse, and the vast majority said 'no'.

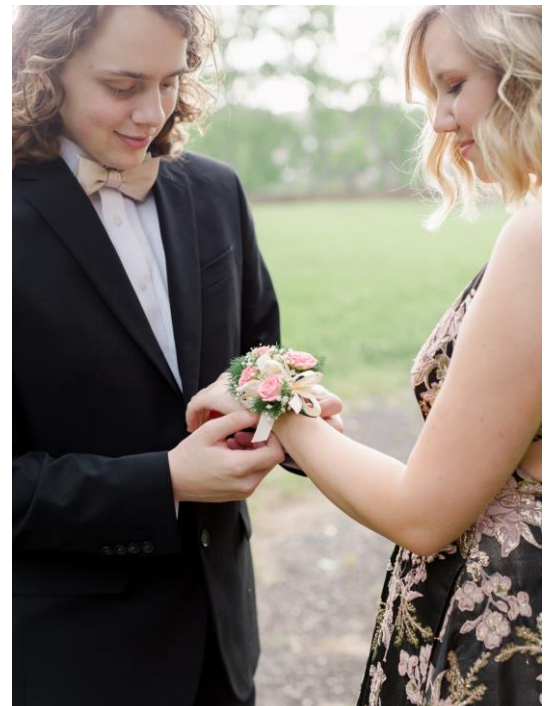
High School: Did you use a condom the last time you had sexual intercourse?



High School: Have you ever had sex education in school?

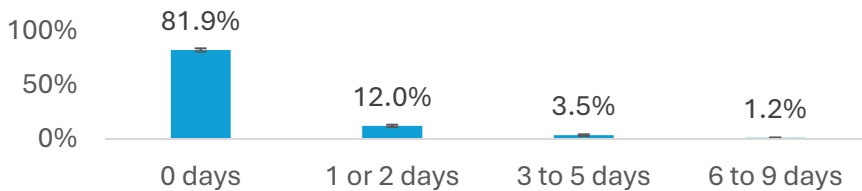


In North Carolina, each local school administrative shall provide a reproductive health and safety education program beginning in 7th grade. This contrasts with other southern states such as Louisiana where sexual health education is optional.³⁶



Substance Use

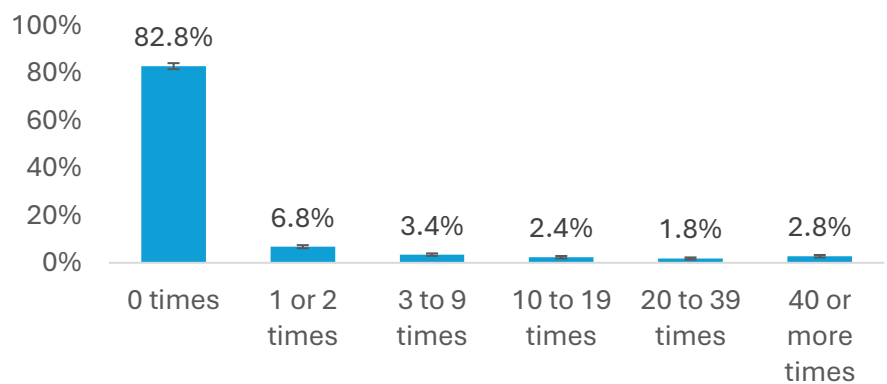
High School: In the past 30 days, on how many days did you drink alcohol?



Alcohol: Alcohol is the number one substance used by youth in America.³⁷ There are direct and indirect consequences of underage drinking including alcoholism at an early age, poor academic performance, and social isolation. The figure above shows that four out of five high school students did not drink alcohol in the past 30 days. The volume of alcoholic beverages consumed during these 30 days is not known however, studies show that youth often binge drink (five or more drinks in two hours for males and four drinks in two hours for females).³⁷ Many youth drink due to peer pressure, increased independence, and stress.³⁷ Above, 82% of high schoolers reported they did not drink any alcohol in the past 30 days. However, nearly one-fifth of high school students reported drinking at least once in the past 30 days – most of which only drank on one or two days. The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior survey did not have a question about binge drinking.

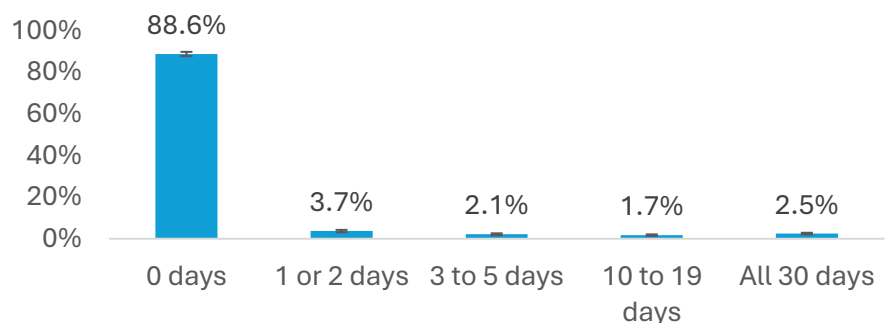
Marijuana: Marijuana came up multiple times at high school and middle school youth listening sessions conducted by DCoDPH at the Emily K Center in Durham, NC in August 2024, when students were asked about common or popular substances used by their peers at school. Students also mentioned that there was a belief that marijuana is better for you than vaping. Students explained that weed ‘carts’ or vapes are the most common form of using the substance. Other drugs were mentioned including shrooms and cocaine. To the right, four out of every five high school students reported never using marijuana in the past 30 days. Of those that reported using marijuana at least once were more likely to use a vape to get high.

High School: In the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana?



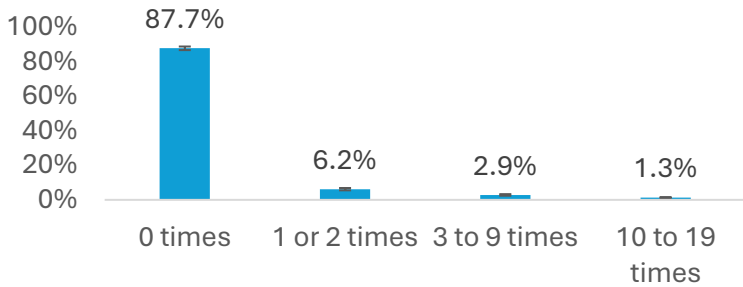
Cannabis is the most commonly used psychoactive substance among adolescents.³⁸ A study done out of the University of California Davis found that teens who have a higher interest in using marijuana will use it for enjoyment.³⁸ However, this increased use does lead to negative consequences.³⁸ The higher the usage of marijuana the more likely reason it’s being used is to cope.³⁸ Adolescents that use cannabis either for enjoyment or coping were more likely to get in trouble at school or work and experienced increased anxiety.³⁸

High School: In the past 30 days, how often do you vape marijuana?



Substance Use

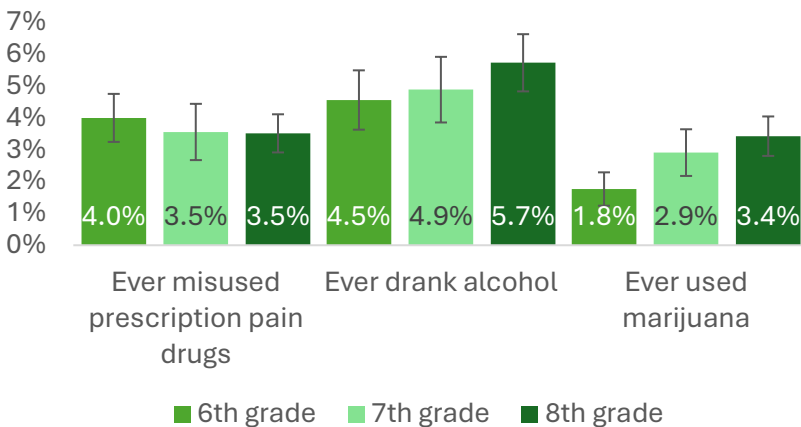
High School: During your life, how many times have you misused a prescription pain medicine?



Prescription pain medicines: The figure to the left shows how many times a high schooler used a prescription pain medicine differently than how the doctor instructed to or without a doctor's prescription. Nearly nine out of ten high schoolers reported never misusing prescription pain medicine. Teens and young adults are the biggest demographic contributing to prescription pain medicine misuse.³⁹ Misusing these medications can be the result of peer pressure, stress, and they can be easier to get than other drugs.³⁹ People 12 years old and older reported getting these medications from a friend or relative.³⁹

There are clear and divisive racial inequities surrounding adolescent drug use. For example, studies show that Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino adolescents have a lower completion rate of rehabilitation programs than their non-Hispanic counterparts.⁴⁰ This is linked to systemic issues such as racism, lack of access to treatment, discrimination from healthcare providers, and educational attainment.⁴⁰ Families of lower socioeconomic status may not have the capacity for substance use disorder treatment due to competing priorities such as housing and food security.⁴⁰ Language barriers also contribute to difficulty accessing treatment. Retaining bilingual staff members and having representative staff to the patient population are methods to improve treatment retention in BIPOC adolescents.⁴⁰

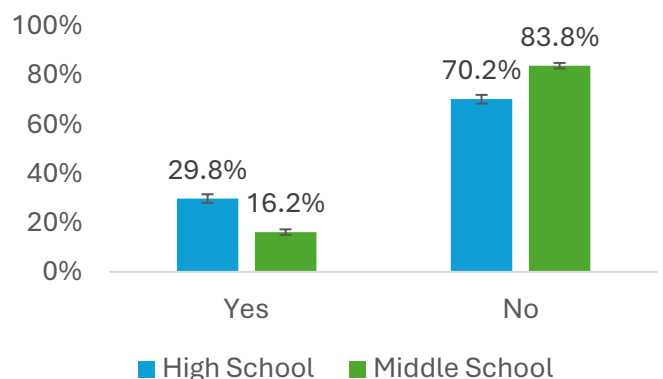
Middle School: Alcohol, Marijuana, and Prescription pain medicine misuse.



The figure to the left shows middle school drug use ever in their life by grade. For alcohol and marijuana, eighth graders were more likely to try than lower grades. Interestingly, sixth graders were more likely to report misusing prescription pain medicine than the higher grades. Middle schoolers are pressured by peers to fit in and be independent. This can lead to mental health issues later in adolescence or long into life.⁴¹ Students that misuse substances are less likely to succeed academically. Four out of five juveniles who are arrested were under the influence of substances.⁴¹

The figure to the right shows that high schoolers are more likely to have used an electronic vapor product (vape) than middle schoolers. The number one reason high schoolers said they used a vape was curiosity followed by to get a buzz or high. Cigarette use is negligible with under 3% of students using cigarettes in the past 30 days. At the youth listening sessions conducted in August 2024 by DCoDPH at the Emily K Center in Durham, NC, students mentioned that vaping was appealing to their peers as a form of escape or as a coping mechanism for all the stress they're under.

Have you ever used a vape?



Resources

Durham Together for Resilient Youth (TRY)

Together for Resilient Youth (TRY) is a coalition of youth and adults working together to prevent substance use among adolescents, with long term impacts on reduction in substance use in adults. The coalition focuses on advocacy, education, mobilization, and collective action. TRY facilitates work within many domains, including Youth Living in Future Tense (LIFT), young adults (CollegeTRY), parents, faith community, Forward Together (Community Support for Recovering), Resilient Together (family members that have lost loved ones due to overdose or substance use) and Achieving Health Hand in Hand (AHHH - ACE's and Resilience). For more information on TRY or to get involved, contact Dr. Wanda Boone at 919-491-7811 or visit www.DurhamTRY.org.

City of Durham Office of Youth

The City of Durham Office on Youth partners with Durham's young people and their families and others that support youth. This organization works to find ways that local government programs and systems can better support all young people ages 13-24. Several initiatives continue to benefit the young people of Durham including the Youth Listening Project which focuses on energizing youth, grow partnerships, and work together on shared priorities. The Protecting Our Dignity in Education program focuses on creating liberatory, joy-filled, and healing spaces for Black and Brown youth. The Changed by Youth (CBY) ambassador began in 2022 and was set up to work with partners to create leadership and consulting roles for youth. More information can be found here: <https://www.durhamnc.gov/1350/Office-on-Youth>.

Universal Free Breakfast

Free breakfast is available to all students enrolled in DPS. Students are not required to complete any forms or documents.

To receive a free breakfast on school days, students must go to their school cafeteria. Students are given a choice of four items and are asked to choose three of the four items for breakfast.

Breakfast offerings vary throughout the week; however, cereal, juice, fresh fruit, and milk are always available.

[School Nutrition Services / FAQs \(dpsnc.net\)](#)

Made in Durham's Durham Work-based Learning Collaborative

This Collaborative is a partnership of nineteen organizations working to align a system that will be easier to navigate for employers and youth and their families. Goals include the rollout of the Durham's Public School's 3-2-1 Work-based Learning Initiative and the expansion of the Youth Work Summer Internship Program. More information can be found at <https://madeindurham.org/strategies/work-based-learning/>.

SmokefreeTeen

SmokefreeTeen is a specific program to help teens quit vaping. There is also a SmokefreeTXT program and the quitStart App. All these resources are provided by National Cancer Institute as part of the Smokefree.gov series. More information can be found at <https://teen.smokefree.gov/quit-vaping>.

Duke Child Development and Behavioral Health Clinic

This clinic is staffed with child psychiatrists, child psychologists, a physician assistant, child psychiatric clinical social workers and licensed substance abuse counselors. Diagnostics and treatment services are available for a wide range of pediatric issues and psychiatric consultations. This clinic is located at 411 Trent Dr. Durham, NC 27705. To make an appointment call: 919-668-5559 or visit: <https://www.dukehealth.org/locations/duke-child-development-and-behavioral-health-clinic>.

The Lifeline and 988

The previous National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 remains available. In 2022, an additional number was made available and could be reached by dialing 9-8-8. More information can be found here: <https://988lifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/>.

Resources

Durham Parks and Recreation Department

Durham Parks and Recreation Department continues to provide residents with affordable and fun physical activities both indoors and outdoors across the city. One initiative of DPR, “MyDurham,” aims to engage youth in afterschool activities for peer support, health promotion, and physical activity in a developmental setting.

DPR also continues to partner with Duke Children’s to deliver “Bull City Fit” at the Edison Johnson Recreation Center. Bull City Fit is a free program for low-income families who have at least one child with obesity. The program offers family-centered and peer-based group physical fitness, cooking classes, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

DPR hosts numerous fitness classes and coordinates a wide variety of sports for all ages, from young children to older adults. Their “Play More” guide includes information about their programs, and it also includes other trails and greenways in the area where Durham residents can go to be physically active. More information can be found at <https://www.dprplaymore.org/200/Play-More-Guide> and <https://www.dprplaymore.org/>.

Carolina Outreach Behavioral Health Urgent Care

Carolina Outreach Behavioral Health Urgent Care is a walk-in clinic for children and adults experiencing a mental health crisis and/or substance use issues. For more information, visit <https://carolinaoutreachbhuc.com/>,

Durham Community Collaborative

Durham Community Collaborative is a group of community members and organizations who collaborate to implement a System of Care approach and build an array of services, supports and linkages to assist children and families. More information can be found at <https://www.alliancehealthplan.org/consumers-families/system-of-care/community-collaborative/>.

Durham Crisis Response Center

This Center offers free, confidential services to victims of sexual assault. Services include 24-hour help lines in English (919-403-6562) and Spanish (919-519-3735), information and referrals, case management, crisis intervention and ongoing emotional support, support groups in English and Spanish, advocacy, and accompaniment to the police, court, hospital and follow-up medical appointments. For more information, visit www.durhamcrisisresponse.org.

The Child and Adolescent Gender Care Clinic

This Clinic provides family-centered care to transgender and gender non-binary youth children and adolescents, as well as treatment for children with differences of sex development. The clinic staff includes pediatric mental health professionals with expertise in gender-affirming mental health care. There are also services available for spiritual care. For more information, visit <https://www.dukehealth.org/locations/duke-child-and-adolescent-gender-care>,

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