

# Dane County Youth Assessment 2021

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## OVERVIEW REPORT

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Dane County Youth Commission  
Issued on July 21, 2021



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# Acknowledgements

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# Report Availability, Usage and Citation

This report and future analysis reports are posted on the Dane County Youth Commission website:

<https://www.dcdhs.com/About-Us/Commissions-Boards-and-Committees/Youth-Commission/Youth-Assessment>

This report may be printed without permission. Citation for any reporting of data from the Dane County Youth Assessment: *2021 Dane County Youth Assessment, Dane County Youth Commission, Madison, Wisconsin*. The Dane County Youth Commission is interested to know how community organizations make use of this data and it requests that reports using this data be shared with the Commission and the community.

## About the Dane County Youth Assessment

The Dane County Youth Commission is pleased to release the summary report for the 2021 Dane County Youth Assessment (DCYA). Every three years, youth in grades 7-12 complete a survey that captures their opinions, concerns, behaviors, attitudes, and experiences on a range of topics. The DCYA is a collaborative effort led by the Dane County Youth Commission in partnership with the United Way of Dane County, Public Health Madison & Dane County, the City of Madison, and county schools.

This overview report is not exhaustive, rather we have tried to highlight topics we think are of interest to the broadest range of community stakeholders. We made efforts to highlight noticeable differences in answers among different demographic groups, however this report is not reflective of a complete, in-depth demographic analysis of each question. Therefore, if differences between demographic groups are not highlighted in a certain section of this report, that does not necessarily mean there were none. We invite and encourage researchers, stakeholders, community actors to do their own analysis of the data. Additionally, the survey taken by high school youth (9th-12th grade) has more items than that taken by middle school youth (7th and 8th grade), as some of the sections are less relevant or irrelevant for middle schoolers.

For the full results of the current and past Dane County Youth Assessments, as well as further demographic analyses, please go to: <https://danecountyhumanservices.org/About-Us/Commissions-Boards-and-Committees/Youth-Commission/Youth-Assessment>

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## Survey Development and Administration

Survey development is led by K12 Associates, LLC and a committee of educators, public health professionals, project funders, and parent representatives. The survey includes questions about protective and risk behaviors across contexts of school, peer relations, family, and community. The 2021 DCYA includes new questions on emerging youth issues while retaining important questions from past surveys to measure trends. The survey includes items from the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey and other national surveys to allow for comparisons to youth in the U.S. and in Wisconsin. Extensive efforts are made to ensure that questions are clear and understandable. A Spanish version is available.

Between January 15, 2021, and April 15, 2021, middle and high school students from nineteen public school districts and one private high school took the DCYA. Student participation is voluntary and anonymous. Parents are notified in advance of survey administration, may review the survey at their school district office, and may opt their child out of participating. School districts attempt to survey all 7th-12th graders, with most districts capturing over 80% of students. Due to the constraints of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, two districts were able to survey only a portion of their student population. The students surveyed in these districts were weighted so that race, gender and school size were at proper proportions commensurate with typical survey participation for their respective districts.

## Administration During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The 2021 DCYA was administered during the COVID-19 Pandemic, at a time when students were more likely to be receiving their education at home than in school. In fact, 97% of the students we surveyed spent the majority of this school year attending classes virtually.

Not surprisingly, this had a dramatic impact on certain student behaviors and ultimately on how we present the data in this report. For example, some antisocial behaviors (like bullying) that usually take place at school were down considerably. Also, behaviors that typically involve students congregating or socializing face-to-face (like alcohol use or sexual behavior) were down as well. Unfortunately, emotional health topics related to stress and worry (struggling with homework, depression) were higher.

It is impossible to know for sure the degree to which certain results are attributable to the COVID pandemic. However, we should be careful in interpreting these 2021 results as the beginning of new trends. Many behaviors may return to the past levels once students return to school and resume past behavior patterns.

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## Data Analysis and Reports

The data for the sample of under-surveyed schools were weighted to ensure their proper representation within Dane County's 7th-12th grade population. Results of student responses to survey questions are presented as percentages of the *weighted number* for each item. The actual number of students surveyed was 17,794, and the weighted number, based school census and demographic data, represents 26,933 students.

Behavioral risk surveys using self-report methodology are widely used and have been proven to be valid and reliable. The large number of participants in the DCYA, the fact that results are in line with national trends, and the consistency in findings over time supports the validity of the DCYA. While the survey is available at school district offices for public review prior to its administration, distribution is restricted until after it is administered in order to preserve the integrity of student responses. As mentioned above, this report provides an overview of survey findings. A complete set of data tables of youth responses to each question by demographic cohorts are posted on the Dane County Youth Commission website.

Ongoing analyses by research partners will yield additional information about Dane County youth including national and state comparisons, trends over time, and factors influencing youth behavior. These reports will be posted on the Youth Commission website as they become available. The Youth Commission would like to thank the funding partners, participating school districts, committee members, and the students and parents of Dane County for making this project possible.

## Interpreting These Data

The data in this report should be analyzed carefully with the understanding that these are *approximations* of student attitudes and behavior.

For the reader, this means each reported percentage falls in a range of possibilities. When using the whole high school data set, for example, there is more confidence that the percentage reflects the *real* number of youth in the county having this experience. When smaller subgroups are considered, for example 12<sup>th</sup> grade boys using alcohol every 30 days, there is less confidence in one, singular percentage. With a smaller set of respondents, it is safer to conclude that 25%, for example, really falls in a range of percentages, like 22% to 28%. In general, the larger the number of respondents the more likely the percentage approximates the real number of youth. There is also greater confidence in results by comparing percentages over time. Asking different students the same questions over time with similar responses is a good indicator data points are relatively accurate.



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## Acknowledging Health Inequities

Throughout the 2021 Dane County Youth Assessment, as in previous years, differences in health and other outcomes exist between various groups of students. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines these ongoing health inequities as health differences “closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage [which] adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on...characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.”

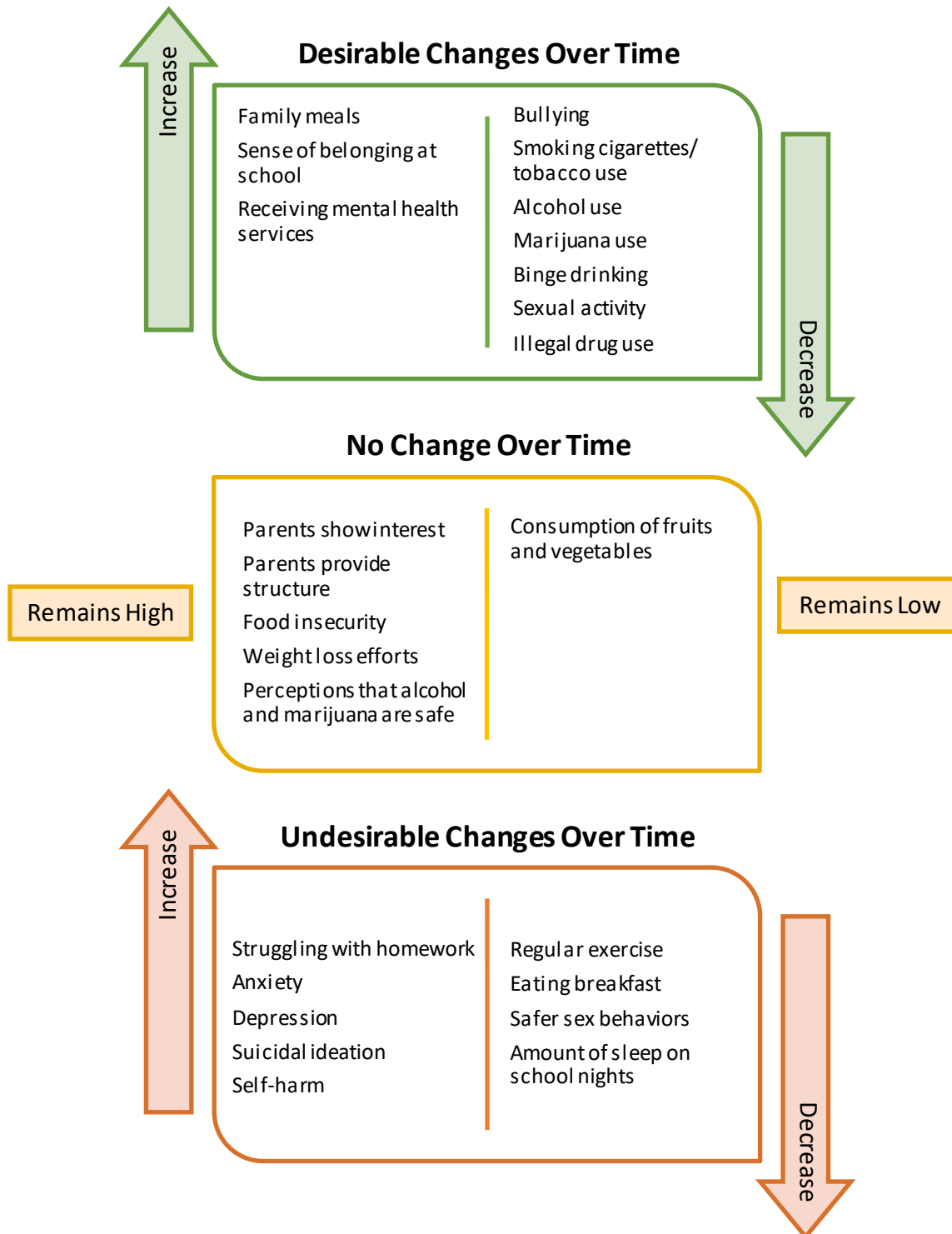
The following groups are more likely to experience these disparities:

- Girls and women
- Transgender and other gender non-conforming individuals
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals
- Black, Indigenous, and People of color
- Individuals with lower socioeconomic status
- People with disabilities

Eliminating the disparities faced by these and other marginalized groups will result in health equity, which is defined as “the attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and health care disparities.”

# Notable Trends

The DCYA asks students the same questions in order to capture trends or data changes over time. Of the factors examined for this overview report, those that are the same or comparable in 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021 DCYA questions were examined. Three or more of the same data points from the 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021 DCYA surveys reflect a desirable or undesirable pattern or trend over time.



## Emerging Issues Requiring Further Consideration

Several data points provide information for further research and consideration by stakeholders but are not considered a trend. These data points have not been analyzed for statistical significance for this report but are anticipated to be studied within subsequent issue papers:

- Use of e-cigarettes
- Vaping with THC
- School pressure related to anxiety
- Staying up later
- Anxiety and depression, particularly for females
- A range of serious risks and negative experiences, including anxiety, suicidal ideation, less feeling of belonging at school, and sexual assault, that are reported disproportionately by the growing number of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning their sexual identity, transgender, and gender-nonconforming
- Students who fell behind in school this year
- Race and family income disparities related to various risk factors

## Student Demographics

The weighted sample of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students who participated in 2021 DCYA is 26,993. The weighted demographic characteristics of those students are presented in the following table s:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
7 <sup>th</sup>	4,484	17.0%
8 <sup>th</sup>	4,549	17.2%
9 <sup>th</sup>	4,904	18.6%
10 <sup>th</sup>	5,013	19.0%
11 <sup>th</sup>	4,046	15.3%
12 <sup>th</sup>	3,387	12.8%

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
12 or younger	2,763	8.7%
13	5,408	17.1%
14	5,845	18.5%
15	5,826	18.4%
16	5,400	17.1%
17	4,449	14.1%
18 or older	1,935	6.1%

<i>Race</i>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Asian (not Hmong)</i>	1,293	4.9%
<i>American Indian or Alaskan Native</i>	197	0.7%
<i>Black or African American (not Hispanic)</i>	2,266	8.6%
<i>Hispanic or Latinx</i>	3,399	12.9%
<i>Asian (Hmong)</i>	321	1.2%
<i>Middle Eastern or North African</i>	74	0.3%
<i>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</i>	22	0.1%
<i>White (not Hispanic)</i>	16,840	64.1%
<i>Multiracial (more than one race)</i>	1,858	7.1%

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Female</i>	12,817	48.6%
<i>Male</i>	12,432	47.1%
<i>Non-binary</i>	510	1.9%
<i>Gender fluid</i>	306	1.2%
<i>Other</i>	306	1.2%

<b>Transgender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Yes</i>	505	1.9%
<i>No</i>	25,196	95.5%
<i>Not Sure</i>	688	2.6%

<b>Sex Assigned at Birth</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Female</i>	13,468	51.0%
<i>Male</i>	12,923	49.0%

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Straight/Heterosexual</i>	19,835	77.4%
<i>Gay or Lesbian</i>	799	3.1%
<i>Bisexual</i>	2,429	9.5%
<i>Pansexual</i>	709	2.8%
<i>Asexual</i>	336	1.3%
<i>Questioning</i>	1,524	5.9%

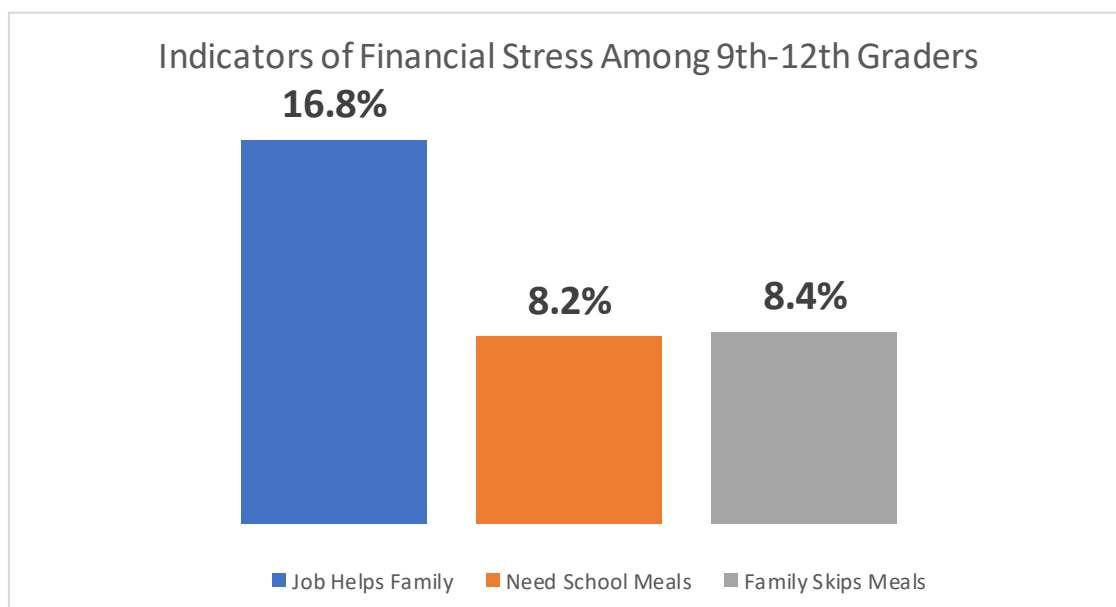
Please note that when data is broken down by demographic categories throughout this report, not all categories may be included due to small sample sizes, which may not provide representative data for that group. See page 30 of this report for additional information.

## Family and Home

Youth were asked questions about family economic conditions and parental risk and protective factors.

### Poverty, Food Insecurity and Homelessness

- 7.7% of all 7th-12th graders report skipping meals or eating less at least once in the past 30 days because their family did not have enough money for food. Youth reported 11.5% in 2018 and 12.2% in 2015.
- 20.3% of all 7th-12th graders said they are eligible for free or reduced school lunch, a federal food subsidy for lower income families, compared to 20.8% in 2018 and 21.4% in 2015.
- 5.2% of all 7th-12th graders report being homeless at one time in their lifetime, compared to 2.1% in 2018 and 3.4% in 2015.
- 47.4% of Latinx, 38.1% of Black/African-American and 9.4% of White high school youth report using some or all of their income to support their family.



### Immigration

- 3.5% of 9th-12th graders said they or a family member were recent immigrants to the U.S. Another 3.4% said they weren't sure.
- 85.4% of students from recent immigrant families said they felt supported by their school.

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- The problems they or their family worried about the most were relatives not in the U.S. (32.3% often or always) and fears about deportation (23.0% often or always)
  - Although 53.4% of students from recent immigrant families said they fell behind in school during COVID-19, this is similar to all other 9th-12th graders at 51.0%

## Parents and Caregivers

- 80.1% of high school and 86.0% of middle school students say their parents often or always monitor their school progress.
- 95.2% of high school and 96.8% of middle school students say their parents often or always know where they are when they go out.
- 64.3% of high school students say their parents talk with them about healthy dating relationships but only 36.1% say they talk with them about safe sex practices.
- 20.8% of high school youth report having at least one of the following happening in their home: parents abuse alcohol or drugs; a parent has been in jail; parents who physically fight; or a parent with a mental health problem that worries them.

## Other Supportive Adults

Students in 7th-8th grade and students in 9th-12th grade were asked how many adults in their lives (not counting their parents) they could go to if they had a problem or needed help.

- 77.7% of 9th-12th graders said they had 2 or more adults they could rely on. 43.1% had 4 or more adults they could rely on.
- Similarly, 78.6% of 7th-8th graders said they had 2 or more adults they could rely on. 52.1% had 4 or more adults they could rely on.
- 9th-12th grade students with 4 or more adults they can rely on said they fell behind less in school (43.0%) during COVID than other high school students (51.0%). They struggle less with homework (44.5% compared 53.4%) and are more likely to have conversations with their parents about plans after high school (92.2% compared to 82.9%)

## Physical Health

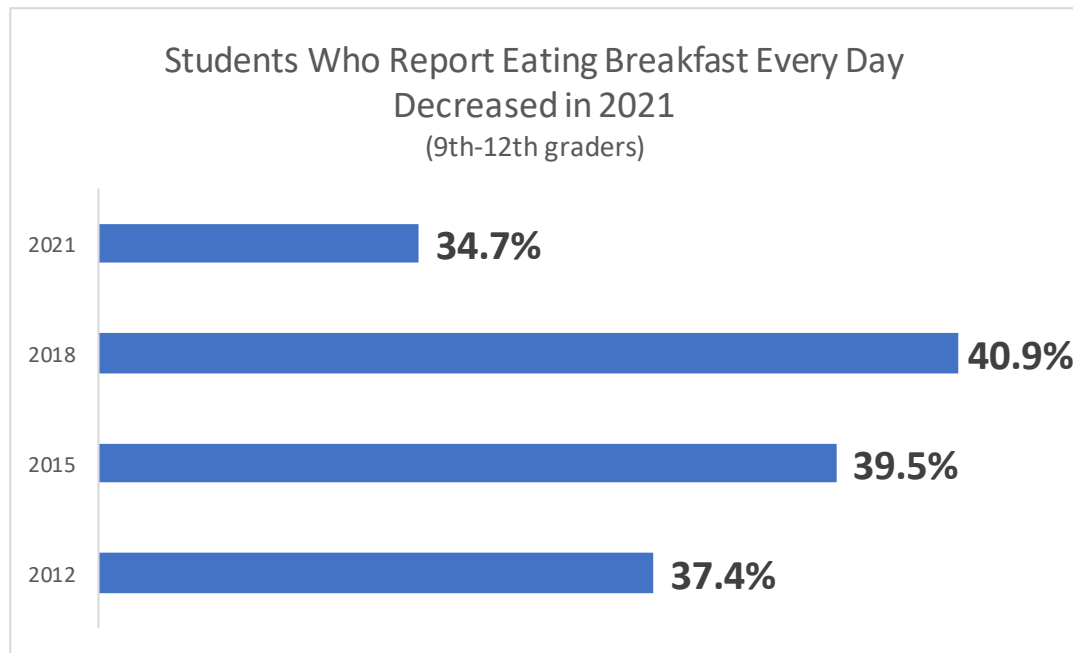
Youth were asked questions about their physical health, including nutrition, exercise and sleep.

### Nutrition

- 58.5% of high school students say they have at least one serving of fruits and vegetables each day and 23.0% say they have 3 or more servings a day, both virtually unchanged from 2018 (59.9%

and 23.8% respectively). Similar results are seen for middle school students.

- The percentage of all high school students who say they are trying to lose weight has stayed consistent from 2012 (35.7%) to 2015 (37.5%), 2018 (36.7%) and 2021 (37.3%).
- 54.8% of high school students had 5 or more evening meals with their families each week, which is more than 2018 at 47.3%.
- The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders having breakfast every day has steadily increased from 2009 to 2018 to 40.9%. In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this percentage decreased to 34.7%, which is lower than 2009 levels.



## Exercise

- 88.2% of high school students report being physically active for 60 minutes at least one or more days per week, slightly lower than 2018 at 91.2%.
- 78.8% of high school students report exercising on their own one or more times a week with 50.5% exercising on their own 3 or more days a week.
- Those high school students who do not exercise report the restrictions of COVID-19 as the main barrier (35.0%) followed closely by lack of time (25.2%).

## Sleep

The National Sleep Foundation states that nine or more hours of sleep a night is optimal for healthy adolescent development. Less than 8 hours of sleep a night is considered insufficient and associated with learning and discipline problems, risk behaviors, and health problems including

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obesity, depression, substance use, accidents, and infections. This year showed significant increases in going to bed later than 11pm, a trend we have been observing to some degree over time. It is likely that many students were also getting up later in the mornings, due to not having to be physically present at school, so it is unclear what the net effect on overall number of hours of sleep was. Regardless, youth who expressed they stayed up past 11pm three or more nights a week, also reported feeling more depressed, struggling more with homework, and skipping class more frequently than their peers.

- 48.8% (31.6% in 2018) of middle school youth and 71.4 % (59.3% in 2018) of high school youth report they stay awake later than 11:00 p.m. three or more school nights per week.
- 49.5% of high school youth stay up past 11p.m. every school night (31.2% in 2018)
- 28.8% of middle school youth stay up past 11 p.m. every school night (14.0% in 2018).
- 63.3% of high school students say they struggle with homework because they are too tired.
- Students that report staying up late or sleeping less than nine hours per night are far more likely to feel depressed, compared to all other students. They also report having missed scheduled classes in the last 30 days in a greater percentage.

## Phones on at Night

Teens, ages eleven to seventeen, who take their computers and other devices to bed with them most nights are 2.5 times more likely to be deprived of sleep during weekdays than teens that do not.

- 89.4 % of high school youth report leaving a phone or a tablet on in their room at night.
- 37.1% of high school youth say their sleep has been interrupted some nights to every night by their device.
- 83.5% of high school students say they stay up past 11pm at least one school night looking at their phone or computer. 39.7% do it every school night.



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# Mental and Emotional Health

Youth experience emotional and mental health challenges ranging from short-term adjustment issues to long-term mental illness impacting their lives including social interactions and educational achievements. The DCYA asked youth about anxiety, stress, depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. High school youth were also asked about long-term mental health disorders.

## Overview: Long-term mental health issues\*

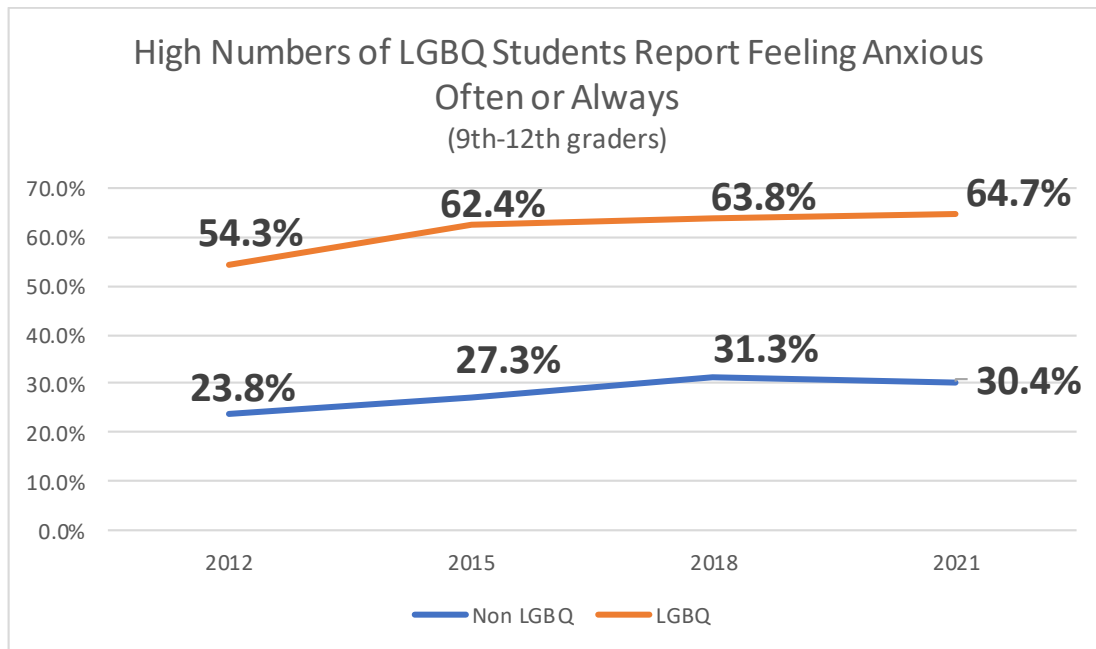
<b>Disorder</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>All High School Youth</b>
<i>Depression</i>	30.4%	12.1%	21.5%
<i>Anxiety</i>	45.8%	18.1%	32.3%
<i>Eating Disorder</i>	9.6%	1.5%	5.7%

*\*This chart indicates responses given by high school students to the following question: Do you have any of the following long-term (more than 6 months) emotional or mental health issues?*

## Anxiety

Questions asked from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale include how often youth “felt nervous, anxious or on edge,” “were not been able to stop or control worrying,” and “felt problems were piling up so high that you could not handle them.”

- 53.3% of high school females and 23.3% of high school males report having these feelings of anxiety often or always.
- 32.5% of BIPOC high school youth report having these feelings always or often, compared to all other students at 33.7%. This rises to 43.3% for BIPOC females.
- 77.5% of youth who identify as gay or lesbian, 70.5% of youth who identify as bi-sexual and 63.9% of youth questioning their sexual orientation report feeling anxious “Always or often” compared to 44.1% of youth who identify as straight/heterosexual.
- Youth whose families are struggling financially are more anxious (65.8%) than students who say money is not a problem for their family right now. (33.1%).



## Reasons for Anxiety

Students were asked to identify the three main reasons for feeling anxious.

<i><b>Reasons for feeling anxious</b></i>	<b>Percentage of high school students selecting this reason</b>
<i>Pressure to perform in school (hard classes, getting good grades)</i>	60.7%
<i>Too much homework</i>	57.4%
<i>Problems in the US and world</i>	29.7%
<i>Concerns about COVID-19</i>	27.4%
<i>Social pressures to be popular and look good</i>	16.7%
<i>Feeling like I don't fit in at school</i>	10.9%

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## Depression

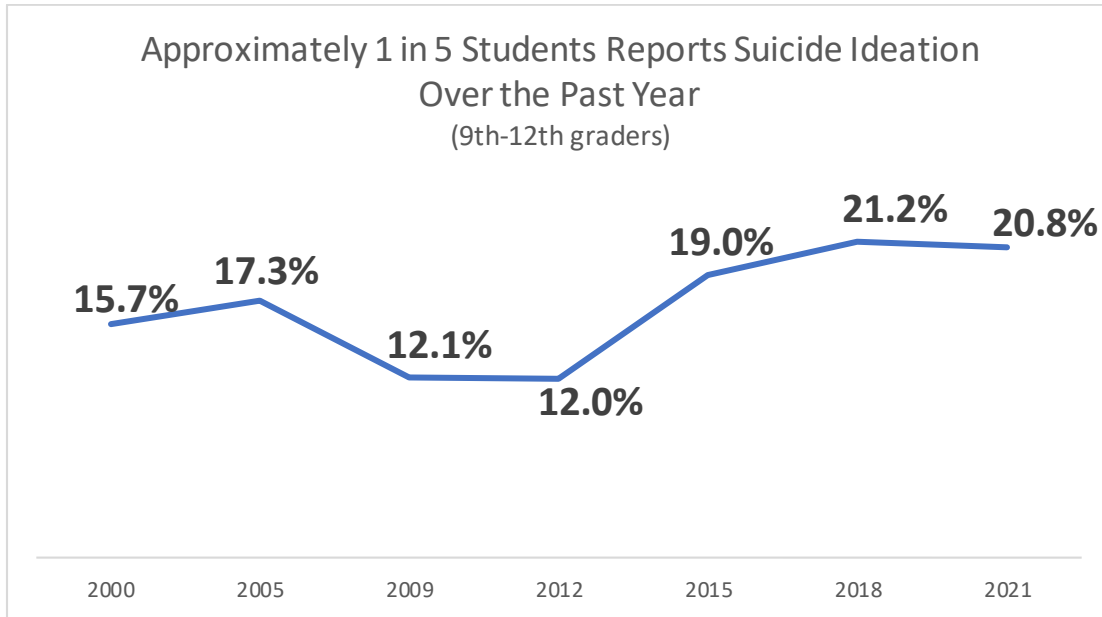
Loss of interest in activities and prolonged feelings of sadness and hopelessness suggest clinical depression. Youth were asked, “During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least 2 weeks in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?” We have been seeing an increase in this overtime, which aligns with national data, and that increase seems to have accelerated this year.

- 29.2% of all 7th-12th grade youth responded affirmatively to this question compared to 23.5% in 2018, 21.7% in 2015 and 19.4% in 2012.
- 44.0% of high school female youth report depressive symptoms up from 34.2% in 2018, 30.3% in 2015 and 25.6% in 2012.
- High school females (44.0%) are more likely than males (20.4%) to report depressive symptoms.
- 58.2% of high school youth who identify as LGBTQ responded affirmatively compared to 24.4% of youth who identify as straight or heterosexual.
- Youth whose families are struggling financially report more depression (63.1%) than students who say money is not a problem for their family right now (25.9%).

## Suicidal Thoughts and Suicide Attempts

Youth were asked, “During the past 30 days, have you thought seriously about killing yourself?” and “During the past 12 months, have you attempted to kill yourself?”

- 20.2% of all 7th-12th grade youth report having suicidal thoughts (ideation) during the past 30 days. This compares to 2018 at 20.7%, 2015 at 18.7% and 2012 at 12.3%.
- 27.4% 9th-12th grade females report having suicidal thoughts as do 25.9% of 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade females. This is largely unchanged, compared to 2018 reports of 27.6% and 25.1% respectively.
- Lower income high school youth report a higher rate of suicidal thoughts (41.9%) than their more affluent peers (16.3%).
- 13.9% of high school youth who identify as straight/heterosexual report they have thought seriously about killing themselves in the past 12 months compared to 38.7% gay/lesbian, 46.7% bi-sexual and 35.1% of youth questioning their sexual orientation.
- 15.7% of high school students have access to a gun, and 21.9% of high school males with some suicide ideation have access to a gun.
- 3.8% of middle and high school youth report that they have attempted suicide in the past 12 months compared to 2018 reports of 5.0% and 5.8% in 2015.



## Self-harm

Youth were asked if they had intentionally hurt themselves, such as cutting or burning, in the past 12 months.

- 17.2% of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and 17.7% of 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade youth report they had intentionally harmed themselves in the past 12 months compared to 15.5% and 14.9% respectively in 2018.
- 90.1% of males, 78.6% of females, and 43.1% of youth who identify as gender non-binary, genderfluid, or other, report they have “Never” engaged in self-harming behavior.

## Receiving Mental Health Services

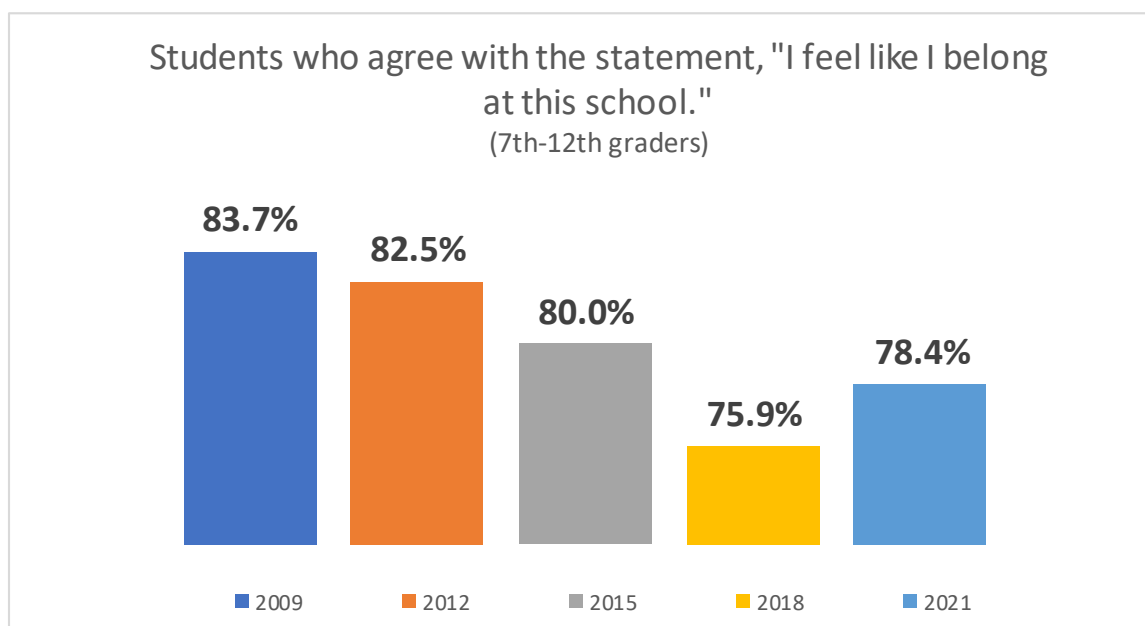
- 20.6% of all high school youth report they are receiving mental health services.
- 27.2% of high school females are receiving mental health services.
- 37.9% of high school students who identify as gay/lesbian/bi-sexual or questioning are receiving mental health services.
- 65.8% of high school students who report feeling anxious are not receiving mental health services.
- 64.6% of high school students reporting depression are NOT receiving mental health services.

## School Experience

Youth were asked about their school engagement, grades, aspirations, and experiences.

## School Connection and Attitudes about Education

- 78.4% of all 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth “Agree” when asked if they feel like they *belong* at their school slightly higher than pre-COVID 2018 at 75.9%
- 69.1% of Black/African American and 78.8% of White high school youth “Agree” when asked if they belong to their school compared to 77.5% of all high school youth.
- 58.9% of gay/lesbian youth feel like they belong at school compared to 64.2% in 2018.
- 79.4% of all 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth “Agree” when asked if they had adults at school they could talk to if they have a problem. These percentages are slightly higher than 2018 at 78.1%.
- 51.8% of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade Black/African-American students “Agree” that they feel close to people at their school compared to 64.1% in 2018 and 66.9% in 2015. 62.7% of all high school students agreed.



## Homework

- 53.8% high school students and 44.0% of middle school students “Agree” that they struggle getting homework done. This is higher than 2018 at 44.6% and 37.6% respectively.
- 41.8% of White, 60.4% of Black/African American, 63.6% of Latinx, and 49.4% of Asian/Hmong high school youth “Agree” that they struggle getting homework done.
- 64.7% of gay/lesbian youth “Agree” that they struggle getting homework done.
- The main reason high school students say they struggle with homework is because they have too much homework (71.4%) or are too tired (63.3%). These reasons are consistent across race and identified sexual orientation.

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## Missing Scheduled Classes

Upward trends seen in this section are likely at least partially attributable to virtual schooling, but it will be important to continue to monitor this item in future Assessments.

- 33.6% of high school youth reported they had skipped or missed scheduled class at least once in the past 30 days which is much higher than 2018 at 20.9%.
- 52.7% of Black/African American and 39.6% for Latinx high school youth missed classed.
- 18.6% of 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders said they missed classes in the last 30 days, which is much higher than 8.4% in 2018.

## School During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- 95.3% of students said they attended school remotely some or all of the school year.
- 51.0% of high school students and 48.9% of 7th-8th graders said they fell behind in the 2020-21 school year.
- 54.5% of students of color said they fell behind compared to 49.1% for White students.
- 19.5% of 7th-12th grade students said they struggled with home due to an unreliable internet connection.

## Out-of-School Time

The DCYA provides a snapshot of how youth spend their time outside of the school day, including activities that develop their skills and connection to community.

### Jobs and Volunteer Work

- 53.3% of all 9th-12th grade youth have done some volunteer work in the past 12 months compared to 82.6 % in the non-pandemic year of 2018.
- 44.9% of high school youth report regular or occasional work (e.g., babysitting or lawn work).
- 60.2% of high school females and 52.2% of high school males are employed.
- High school youth looking for work, but unable to find employment, had been declining since 2009 but increased to 21.4% in 2021 from a low of 18.1% in 2018.
- 31.3% of Black/African-American high school youth are looking for a job but cannot find one in 2021 compared to white students at 18.3%.

## High School Students Reporting Full or Part-time Employment

<b>Group</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2021</b>
<i>Females</i>	34.3%	28.4%	32.8%	35.4%	34.4%
<i>Males</i>	31.0%	26.6%	30.2%	34.9%	31.2%
<i>All High School Students</i>	32.6%	27.6%	31.5%	35.1%	32.9%

## Extracurricular Activities

Youth were asked about frequency of participation in extracurricular activities (dance, drama, music, sports and afterschool programs) and in team sports (lessons, practice or games).

- 73.1% high school youth are involved in some sort of extracurricular activities each week with 40.1% involved 3 or more days per week.
- 51.0% of high school students participating in extracurricular activities 3 days or more each week are involved in sports, compared to 80.7% in 2018.
- 40.4% of high school youth were involved in music, art or drama and 38.2% in afterschool clubs or neighborhood organizations.
- Middle school youth participate in sports more than any other activity (58.4%).
- 24.2% of high school students said they didn't participate in a sport due to COVID restrictions or worries.

## Social Involvement

In the 2021 DCYA we asked 9th-12th grade students about community involvement or engagement or if they had any conversations about racial issues in school or the larger community.

- 25.0% of all students have been involved in social activism, such as marches or protests. 29.0% say they haven't been involved but would like to.
- 74.0% say they think their opinion makes a difference.
- 94.7% agree that people, working together, can make changes.
- 31.9% say they have talked a lot with family and friends about racial inequality. This percentage is the same for students of color (31.8%).
- 50.7% said they talked about racial inequality a few times. 17.4% said they never really talked about it.

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# Bullying

Bullying is recognized as a widespread problem and research points to serious implications for youth who are victimized as well as for those who engage in bullying behavior. Bullies are at higher risk for anger, aggression, hyperactivity, and delinquency. Being victimized by peers has been linked to illnesses, school avoidance, poor academic performance, increased fear and anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and long-term internalizing difficulties including low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Nearly 97% of students said they participated in school virtually, all or part of the time in the 2020-21 school year. This, not surprisingly, reduced bullying behavior dramatically.

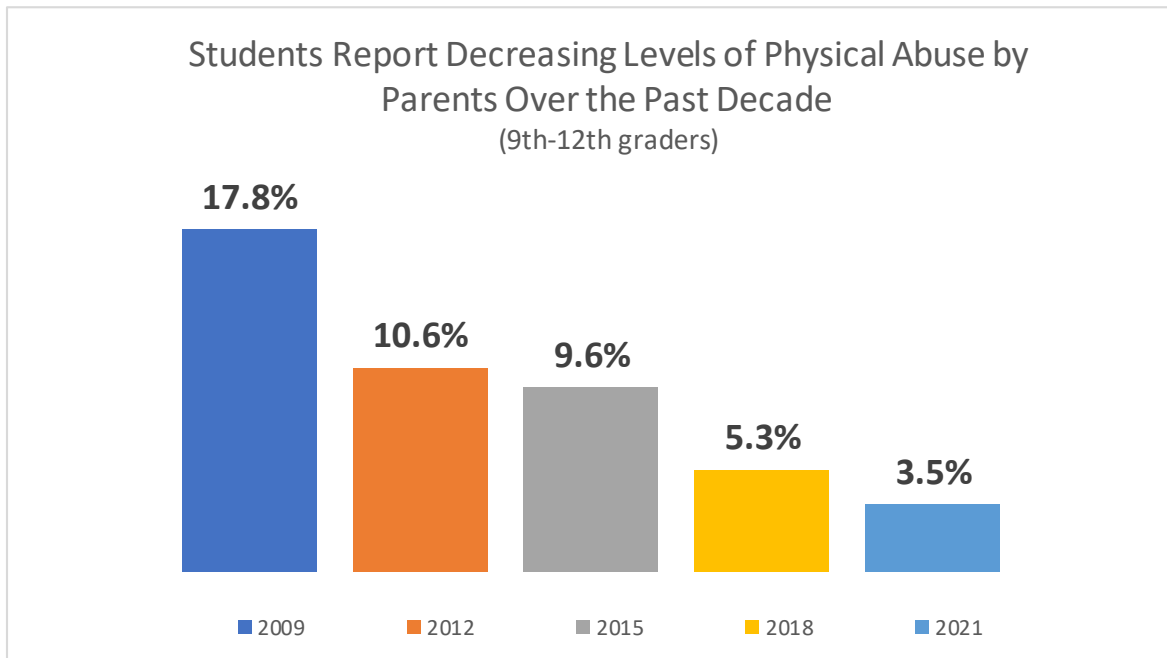
- 19.8% of 7th-8th grade students and 11.6% of high school students reported being the target of some face-to-face bullying. This was 48.9% and 35.7% respectively in 2018.
- 23.6% of 7th-8th grade youth said they were bullied or harassed electronically, a higher percentage than 2018 at 19.3%.
- High school students reported nearly identical levels of electronic bullying and harassment in 2018 (20.2%) and 2021 (20.8%).
- High school females report more electronic bullying (25.7%) than males (15.9%).

# Abuse

## Family Violence

- 3.5% of all 9th-12th grade youth report they have been hit by a parent, leaving signs of injury.
- 25.6% of high school youth who have been physically abused by their parents have run away from home compared to 4.1% all high school youth who have run away from home.
- 52.9% of abused high school youth have had some suicidal ideation compared to 20.8% suicidal ideation reported by all high school youth.





## Dating Violence

- 44.5% of high school youth say they have dated or “gone out” with someone in the last 12 months.
- 4.2% of high school students *who have dated* report being physically abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend.
- 3.7% of high school youth *who have dated* report that a boyfriend or girlfriend had forced them to have sexual contact.
- 9.0% of high school youth who are dating report that their partner put them down, calling them names, telling them no one wanted them, or they were ugly. 71.0% of these students are girls.

## Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking

- 6.1% of all 9th-12th grade youth report they have been forced, either verbally or physically, to take part in a sexual activity in their lifetime. It rises to 10.1% for all high school girls.
- 16.0% of high school youth who identify as lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/questioning report that they have been physically or verbally forced to participate in sexual activity in their lifetime.
- 84.1% of high school youth who have been forced to participate in sexual activity are female, up from 77.4% being female in 2018.
- 8.4% of high school youth girls, in the lowest income category, report having had sexual contact in order to stay safe or to get something like a place to stay, money, gifts, alcohol, or drugs (sex trafficking). This is 0.6% for girls in the highest income category.

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- 18.5% of high school girls say they have been encouraged or pressured to be part of sexually explicit photos or videos.

## Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Use

### Nicotine and Tobacco Use

The health, social, and financial consequences of nicotine and tobacco use are well known. Nearly all use begins in adolescence. If young people can remain free of tobacco and nicotine until age 18, most will never start to smoke. Tobacco use is considered a “gateway drug” because its use generally precedes and increases the risk of other drug use. The survey asks youth about cigarette and tobacco use including use of e-cigarettes.

- Less than 1% of high school youth report smoking a cigarette in the last 30 days compared to 3.0% in 2018 and 7.0% in 2015.
- 7.6% of high school students say they have used vapor electronic cigarettes in the last 30 days compared to 18.8% in 2018 and 16.0% in 2015.
- 20.1% of high school youth report there is a “Slight to no risk” to e-cigarette use daily compared to 55.4% in 2018.
- 1.5% of middle school youth report they used e-cigarettes and 15.8% said there is little or no risk to regular e-cigarette use compared to 34.5% in 2018.

### Alcohol, Marijuana, and Other Drug Use

The potential consequences of underage alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use are many. Understanding the patterns and trends of alcohol and drug use by Dane County youth allows parents, schools, and communities to implement effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Alcohol use in the past 12 months:

- 22.9% of high school youth report drinking alcohol in the past 12 months compared to 30.9 in 2018, 34.8% in 2015 and 43.1% in 2012.
- 38.2% of high school seniors had a drink in the last 12 months compared to 49.2% in 2018 and 71.6% in 2015.
- Asian/Not Hmong (84.8%), Black/African American (87.8%), Latinx (83.1%), White (74.0%), and Native American (69.6%) high school youth report “Never” drinking.
- 5.4% of middle school students report drinking alcohol in the past 12 months compared to 7.8% in 2018, 8.1% in 2015 and 12.3% in 2012.

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#### Alcohol use past 30 days:

- 60.4% of all high school students who drank alcohol in the last 12 months are female.
- 6.4% of 9th-12th graders drank 5 or more drinks a couple of hours (binge drinking).

Binge drinking is defined in the survey as “having 5 or more alcoholic drinks at one time, in a row, within a couple of hours.”

- 6.4% of high school youth report binge drinking in the past 30 days compared to 10.6% in 2018, 11.1% in 2015, 15.8% in 2012, and 12.6% in 2009.
- 13.8% of high school seniors report binge drinking.
- 60.1% of the binge drinkers were girls.

#### Marijuana use:

- 14.1% of high school youth and 2.5% of middle school youth report using marijuana in the past 12 months down from 2018 (HS 21.1% and MS 3.3%).
- 3.0% of high school youth report they used marijuana every day compared to 5.3% in 2018, 6.7% in 2015 and 8.2% in 2012.
- 63.0% of high school youth using marijuana have used it in a vaping device.

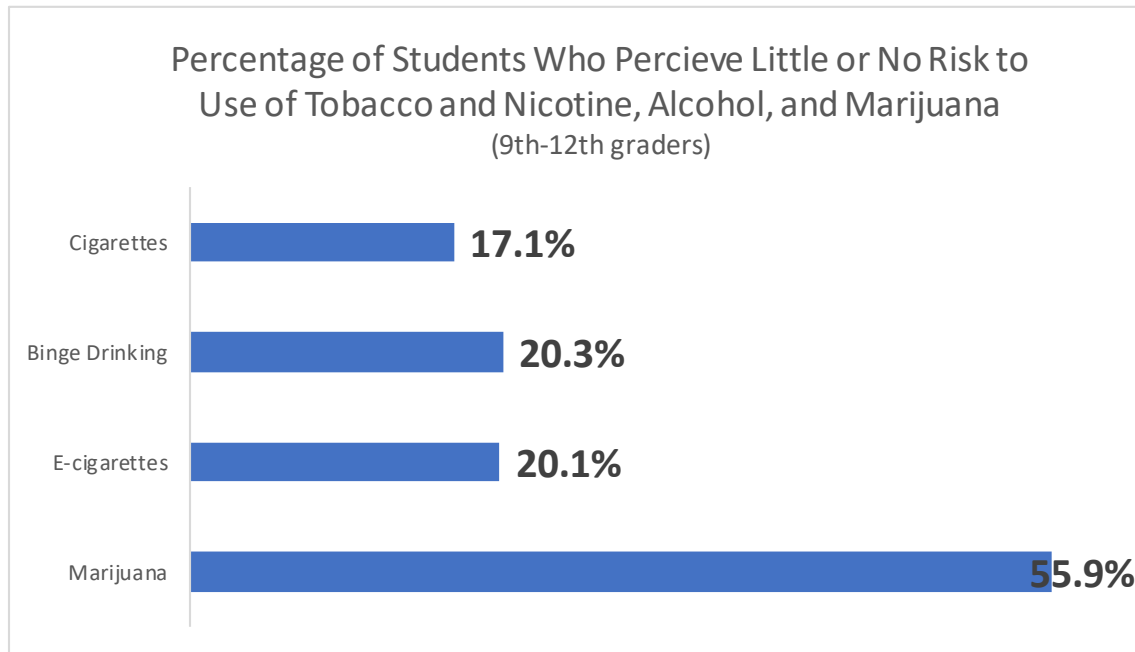
#### Prescription and non-prescription medications:

- 25.1% of high school youth report having no prescription drugs in their home.
- 24.6% of high school youth with prescriptions drugs in their home say they are locked in a secure place.
- 75.4% of high school youth with prescription drugs in their home say they can access them easily like a bathroom cabinet or kitchen counter.
- 1.6% of high school youth say they have abused prescription medication in the last 12 months.
- 2.4% of high school students say they have abused over-the-counter medications in the last 12 months.

Youth ranked how wrong their parents and their friends would consider it if they smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol, used prescription drugs, or smoked marijuana:

- 37.5% of high school youth said their parents would think it was “Very wrong” for them to drink alcohol compared to 73.2% for tobacco use, 81.1% for abuse of prescription drugs, 56.8% for marijuana use and 77.2% for e-cigarettes or a vaping device.
- 22.6% of high school youth said their friends would think drinking alcohol was “Very wrong” compared to 42.8% for tobacco, 55.7% for prescription drug abuse, and 31.5% for marijuana.

- 59.2% middle school youth said their parents would think it was “Very wrong” for them to drink alcohol compared to 82.9% for tobacco use, 82.2% for abuse of prescription drugs, 80.0% for marijuana use and 83.4% for vaping.
- 51.4% of middle school youth said their friends would think drinking alcohol was “very wrong” compared to 64.4% for tobacco, 69.3% for prescription drug abuse, and 66.7% for marijuana.



## Sexual Behaviors

Sexual activity begins during the teen years for many youth. Nationwide, 1 in 4 teen girls has a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The same sexual behaviors that put teens at risk for infections may also result in unintended pregnancy and other consequences. The 2021 DCYA high school survey included questions related to sexual activity to identify risks that can be prevented or addressed by parents, health care providers, schools, public health and others who work with youth.

- 28.0% of high school youth have engaged in some sexual activity in their lifetime, compared to 35.7% in 2018.
- 15.6% of all high school youth said they have voluntarily had sexual intercourse compared to 22.6% in 2018, 28.8% in 2015 and 28.1% in 2012.
- 53.2% of high school students say they have not been sexually active because they have never been in an intimate relationship.
- Of the high school youth who are sexually active, 60.0% of the lowest income students report having voluntarily had sexual intercourse, compared to 25.4% of the highest income high school cohort.

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Sexually active high school youth were asked questions about sexual behaviors that put them at higher risk for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy:

- 8.7% high school youth say they had sexual intercourse before age 16.
- 27.1% of sexually active high school youth have had intercourse while under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs, compared to 33.2% in 2018.
- 17.7% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who have had intercourse report they “Never” use birth control compared to 5.0% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders.
- 68.7% of high school youth who say they are having intercourse “Always” use some form of birth control compared to 74.3% in 2018, 70.1% in 2015 and 73.7% in 2012.
- 67.3% of Latinx, 78.5% of Asian/Not Hmong, 55.3% Black/African American and 75.6% of White youth report “Always” using birth control.

Discussions with parents:

- 64.3% of all 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth report having “had a good talk with their parents” about healthy dating relationships, 43.5% about waiting to have sex, and 38.8% about preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- 66.3% of high school females say they have had a good conversation with their parents about healthy dating relationships compared to 62.2% of males.

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## Notes about Demographic Categories

### Sex and Gender

For the first time, the 2021 DCYA asks students two separate questions regarding sex assigned at birth and gender identity. Sex assigned at birth is the classification given to individuals based on biological characteristics, such as physical anatomy or chromosomes. Gender identity is one's internal sense of being male, female, both genders, neither gender, or another gender or genders.

The options for sex assigned at birth are limited to female and male in order to make comparisons to prior years' data and analyze trends over time as these were the only two options included in previous DCYA surveys. The gender identity question was added this year to offer more expansive options for students, including female, male, non-binary, gender fluid, and other.

A person who does not identify as either female or male may identify as non-binary. A person whose gender is not fixed and shifts across more than one gender may identify as gender fluid. The number of responses for gender non-binary, gender fluid and other were too small to disaggregate. Factors impacting this cohort of students require more in-depth analysis than is intended for an overview report and will be presented in subsequent issue papers. As such, throughout this report, references to female or male are based on the sex assigned at birth question.

The question about whether students identify as transgender remains a separate question as it has since 2012 in order to analyze trends over time for this population of students in 2012, 2015, and 2021. Transgender is an "encompassing term of many gender identities of those who do not identify or exclusively identify with their sex assigned at birth."

### Sexual Orientation

The 2021 DCYA also expanded options for sexual orientation from gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning to include pansexual, asexual, and other. Those who identify as pansexual are sexually attracted to many genders or any gender, and those who identify as asexual lack sexual attraction toward others.

### Race

The race categories that were used in the 2021 DCYA were expanded from previous years' surveys to reflect the proposed changes for the 2020 US Census, which included collapsing the race and ethnicity categories into one category (which includes "Hispanic or Latino") and adding a "Middle Eastern or North African" category. However, after DCYA survey administration began in early 2021, the US Census Bureau announced that these changes will not be made in 2020.

Additionally, the 2021 DCYA includes Hmong as a separate race category in recognition of the relatively large Hmong population in Dane County and the different experiences that these students may have, especially those who are refugees or the children or grandchildren of refugees, compared to other Asian subpopulations.

Finally, throughout this report, the term "Latinx" will be used as a gender-neutral descriptor for students who identified themselves as "Hispanic or Latino" in the survey.

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## References & Additional Resources

CDC. (2008). *Nationally Representative CDC Study Finds 1 in 4 Teenage Girls Has a Sexually Transmitted Disease*. Retrieved July 13, 2012 from <http://www.cdc.gov/stdconference/2008/press/release-11march2008.pdf>

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2012 [www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use)

### Additional online resources:

<https://danecountyhumanservices.org/yth/dcvc.aspx>

<https://sleepfoundation.org/press-release/national-sleep-foundation-recommends-new-sleep-times/page/0/1>

<http://performwell.org/index.php/find-surveyassessments/outcomes/health-a-safety/aggression-or-violence-perpetration/illinois-bully-scale-victim-subscale-ibs>

<http://www.transstudent.org/definitions/>

<https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive>

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/14/u-s-census-looking-at-big-changes-in-how-it-asks-about-race-and-ethnicity/>

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