

**WISCONSIN**

Youth Risk Behavior  
Survey Summary Report

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2023



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**

## SUMMARY REPORT

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# 2023 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey

DEVELOPED BY:

**Casie Sulzle**

Research and Evaluation Consultant  
Student Services, Prevention and Wellness Team

and

**Denise Kohout**

Education Specialist  
Student Services, Prevention and Wellness Team



**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

Madison, Wisconsin

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Thank you.

## WHAT IS THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY?

The 2023 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was conducted as part of a national effort by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor the health risk behaviors of the nation’s high school students. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has administered the YRBS to a representative sample of Wisconsin high school students every other year since 1993.

The YRBS is a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire students take in a proctored environment during the school day. In 2023, the questionnaire included 89 questions in total. Survey procedures were designed to protect the privacy of students by allowing anonymous and voluntary participation. Permission procedures were followed at each school. Prior to survey administration, caregivers were notified of the procedures and that their student’s participation was voluntary.

The 2023 Wisconsin YRBS contained new questions on the following topic areas: social media usage and feelings of mistreatment due to race or ethnicity. The questions provide perspective into the issues facing young people today by including disaggregation of the data by economic indicators (access to food), special education, sex and race.

The data used for this report are based on a scientific sample representative of all public high school students in Wisconsin. The 2023 state sample includes responses from 1,882 students in 42 public, charter, and alternative high schools in Wisconsin during the spring of 2023. The school response rate was 84%, the student response rate was 76%, and the overall response rate was 64%.

The weighted demographic characteristics of the sample are as follows:

Sex	
Female	49.7%
Male	50.3%
Grade Level	
9th grade	25.3%
10th grade	25.3%
11th grade	24.2%
12th grade	25.0%
Other	0.2%
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian/Pacific Islander*	3.6%
Black/African-American*	8.6%
Hispanic/Latinx	13.2%
Multiple (two or more races selected)*	4.6%
White*	68.9%
All other races*	1.1%
*Non-Hispanic	

## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

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A small number of YRBS respondents were invited to offer open-ended feedback on the survey and the topics covered. Feedback is used to assist DPI in reviewing the questionnaire and better understanding the lived experiences behind the numbers. The following are examples of student responses that help illustrate some of the results in this report. Quotes are presented here as originally written and are not corrected for spelling or grammar, though some identifying information has been redacted.

*“Vaping in the bathrooms is a big problem at our school. I just want to use the bathroom and have to deal with a group of students standing in the corner, coming out of a stall together, etc.”*

*“Our school NEEDS to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students because a large number of our students are not being fed at home.”*

*“I think mental health is a large problem in schools whether it be home reasons or the stress from the work.”*

*“most teachers don’t notice how much bullying is happening in this school”*

*“Students that do well in school don’t always have perfect mental health. These students need somewhere to go to recharge and take a break from school.”*

*“I have people that I can talk to if I’m feeling anxious, but I don’t want to bother them in the case that they’re busy(I also have social anxiety). I usually talk to myself, and work it out on my own.”*

*“People around my age that you consider Genz, are struggling. We are all having to deal with these expectations of our age group while having to act our part in our dying society. We are rapidly becoming the most depressed and zombied age group of all... The technology you have built has given us more self-hatred, unachievable expectations, new mental illnesses and has crushed our sense of communication... Please understand that we are trying our best to find ourselves and it is difficult when the world that we look up to can be so cruel, and we feel we need to go through it alone...”*

*“Many members of the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities are heavily bullied/ judged by much of the student body.”*

*“It’s a really hard thing to be Transgender and gay in this state. I will always feel uncomfortable and unsafe here. No matter whether in school, in the store, or on the streets, I feel I’m always going to get judged or worst hurt.”*

## KEY FINDINGS



Compared to years prior, most YRBS indicators are statistically unchanged, however, there are some exceptions. Some statistics show improvements, but students are overall still struggling.

Wisconsin's results show notable decreases in protective factors such as social supports and school belonging. There are also decreases in perceived school safety and physical health. Screen usage continues to increase. Positive health indicators such as sleep and eating breakfast continue to decline, and mental health issues remain high.

Compared to recent years, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use have mostly decreased.

Some student groups show consistently higher risks across topic areas.

Overall, the following subgroups generally report fewer supports and more challenges:

- Female students
- Students of color
- Students with physical disabilities or chronic health conditions
- Students receiving special education services

- Students facing food insecurity (i.e., hunger due to a lack of food at home)
- Students who have moved many times (4 or more times)
- Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB), or transgender
- Students with low grades (D's or F's)

This list reflects statistical patterns in the YRBS data, but individual student differences still matter.

Those who are not in any of these groups may still face significant challenges and need additional support. Conversely, students who fall into one or more of the categories listed above can still thrive, especially in a supportive and responsive setting. Rather than painting a picture of students who are damaged, results provide a window into some of the many invisible struggles that so many strong and capable young people contend with every day.

As a note, sexuality, sex, and gender data are collected separately on the YRBS. As a result, LGB is used instead of LGBT or similar acronyms to most accurately reflect how student data was collected.

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Positive influences have been described as assets or protective factors. These assets have the power to protect youth from risk behaviors and some forms of victimization, as well as promote healthy behaviors and general well-being. Historically, Wisconsin high school students reported high levels of assets.
- In 2019, 2021, and again in 2023, students reported decreases to what have generally been high levels of social support and belonging.

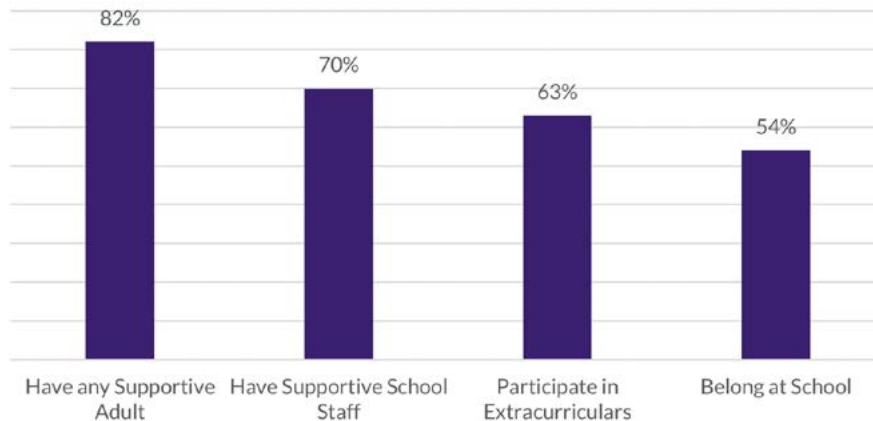
Generally, students who report having strong adult support, as well as high levels of school and extracurricular participation and belonging, are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., physical fights, carrying a weapon, alcohol and drug use, risky sexual behavior) and more likely to report positive mental health and higher grades.

- Overall, 53.6% of students agreed or strongly agreed they belong at their school; this percentage has been

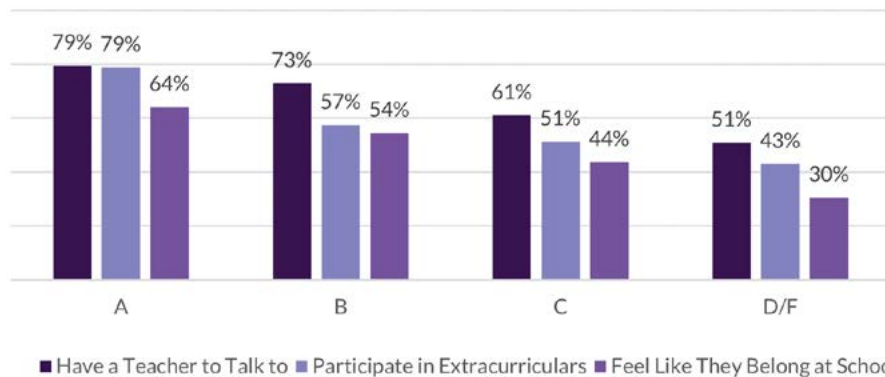
continuously decreasing since 2017 (70.8%).

- Students were asked how many adults, besides their parents, they felt comfortable talking to about a problem in their lives. The majority, 80.9%, of students had at least one such “supportive adult” in their lives. White students (83.9%) were more likely to have a supportive adult than Hispanic/Latinx (72.3%) or Black students (74.0%).

### Prevalence of Protective Factors



### School Inclusion and Belonging, By Self-Reported Grades

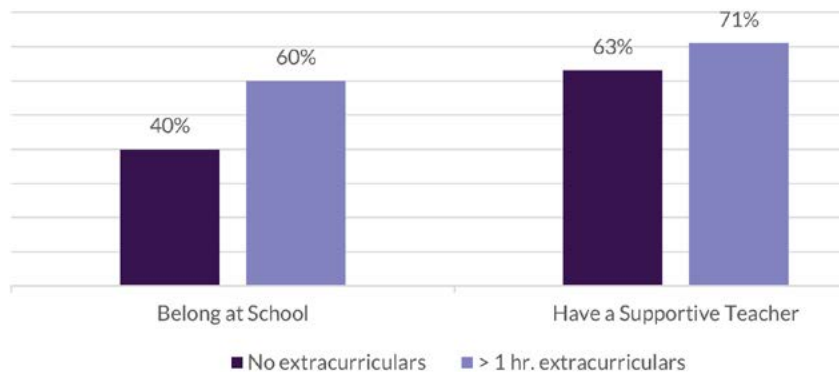




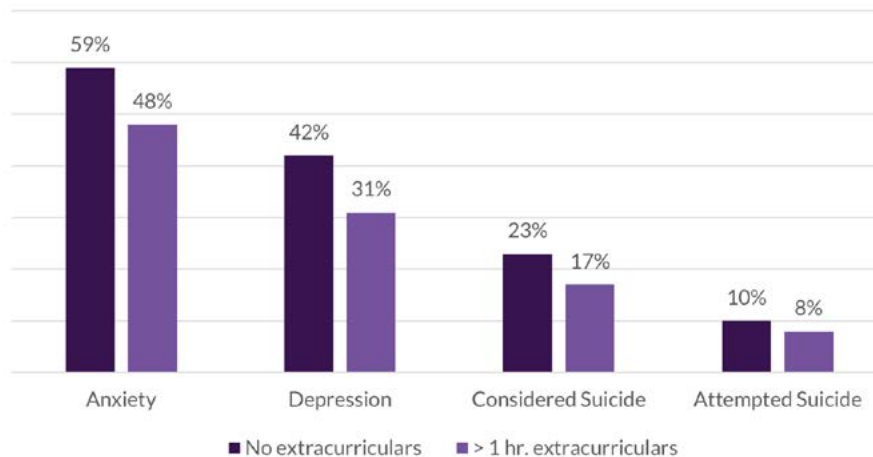
## PROTECTIVE FACTORS (cont'd)

- 70.4% of students reported having at least one teacher or other adult they could talk to at school. That figure was highest for students getting A's (79.4%). Students with low grades (D's or F's) were least likely to report having a teacher to talk to (50.8%).
- 63.3% of students participated in school extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, band, drama, or other groups or clubs).
- Students in extracurriculars were more likely to feel like they belonged at school (59.5% in extracurricular activities vs. 40.2% not in extracurricular activities)
- Students in extracurriculars were less likely to report depression (30.8%) compared to 42.0% not in extracurricular activities.
- Students identified lower levels of anxiety (47.8%) in extracurricular activities vs. 58.7% not in extracurricular activities.
- Efforts to expand extracurricular opportunities, especially to low-income and other marginalized student groups who are underrepresented, (Putnam, 2015) are highly recommended.
- Being involved in extracurriculars is associated with better mental health outcomes and a stronger sense of belonging.

### School Belonging and Protective Factors, By Extracurricular Involvement



### Mental Health Concerns and Suicidality, By Extracurricular Involvement

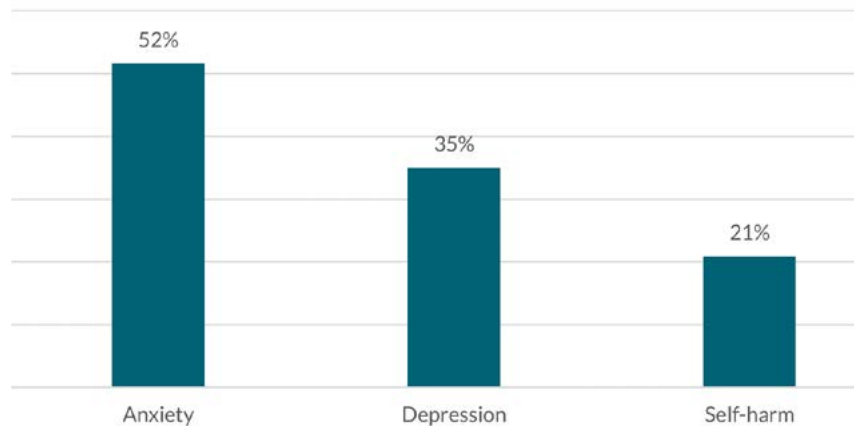


## MENTAL HEALTH

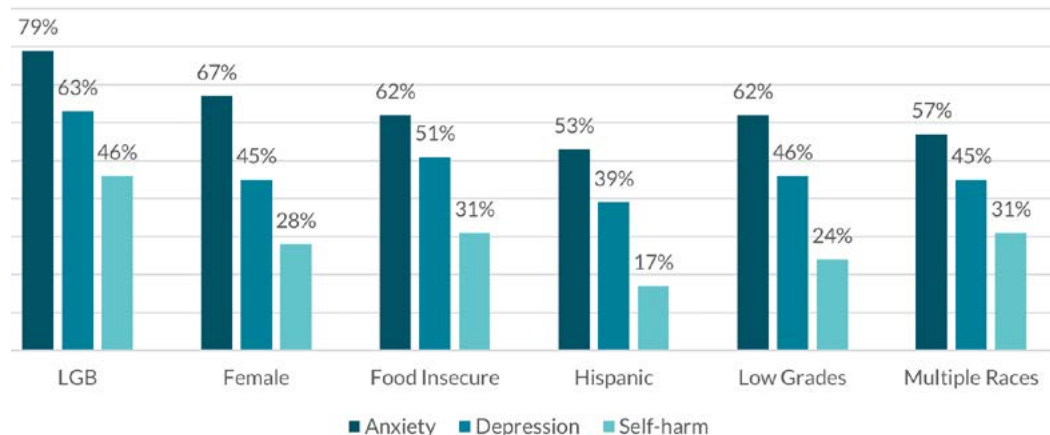
Mental and emotional well-being are paramount to school success. While many factors outside of school can influence a student's mental and emotional well-being, school environments can also influence a student's positive or negative mental health. The 2023 YRBS included questions related to depression, anxiety, and non-suicidal self-harm.

- More than half of students reported anxiety (51.6%). While this is a slightly lower percentage than 2021 (52.2%), this continues to be a significant increase from 2017 (39.9%).
- More than one in three students (35%) reported depression, feeling sad or hopeless (almost every day for two weeks or more in a row). This continues a long-term trend, with the percentage of students reporting depression in 2023 increasing by more than 10% in the last decade, from 24.6% in 2013.
- More female students reported experiencing anxiety (66.8%) and depression (45%) than male students (36.4% and 24.9%, respectively). Female students were also twice as likely to harm themselves (28.3%) compared to male students (13.7%).
- One in five students reported non-suicidal self-harm (20.9%), a rate which decreased slightly from 2021 (21.7%) and has increased over the last 10 years (17.3% in 2013).
- Students who identify as LGB and students with low grades reported the highest rates of mental health concerns (see chart below).

### Self-Reported Rates of Anxiety, Depression, and Self-Harm



### Mental Health Concerns For Select Groups

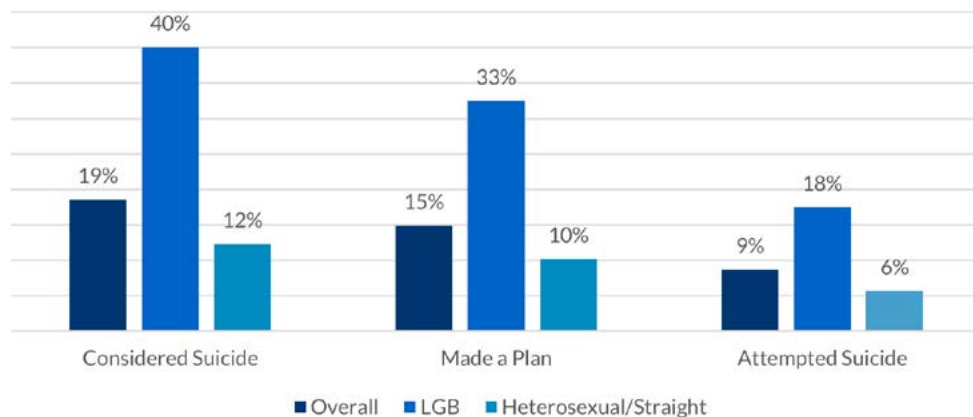


## SUICIDE AND HELP SEEKING

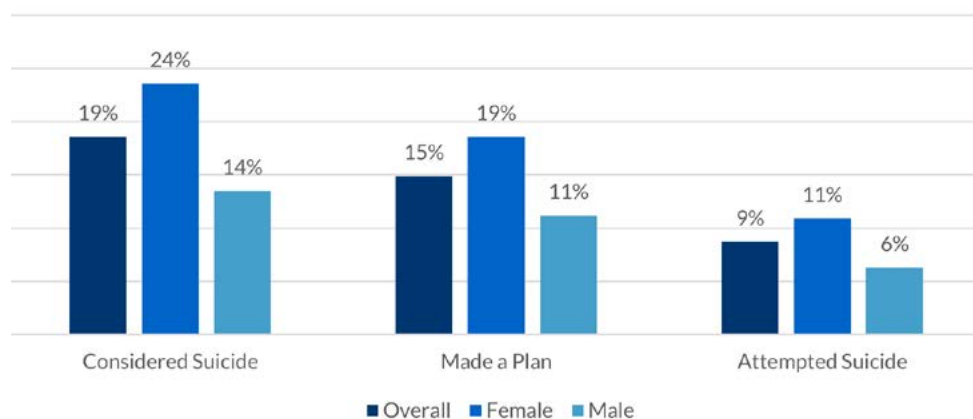
The YRBS asks students a series of questions about suicidal thoughts and behaviors during the past 12 months.

- 18.6% seriously considered suicide.
- 14.9% made a plan to attempt suicide.
- 8.7% attempted suicide.
- Rates of suicidality across all three categories remain statistically unchanged from 2021 results.
- Rates of students considering suicide have increased over the last 10 years. However, the percentage of students who made a plan, attempted suicide or both has remained unchanged.
- Seeking and finding help is an important component of mental health. Starting in 2017, students taking the YRBS were asked whether they received the kind of help they needed when they felt distressed. In 2023, approximately one in five students who felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious agreed that they received the help they needed “most of the time” or “always” (21.2%). This rate has continuously decreased since 2017.
- When asked who they are most likely to seek out for emotional support, students are most likely to turn to a friend (36.4%). Meanwhile, 24.3% of students reported they would seek out a parent, teacher, or other adult, while 14.2% of students were not sure who they would seek out.

### Suicide Ideation: Overall and By Sexual Orientation



### Suicide Ideation: Overall and By Sex

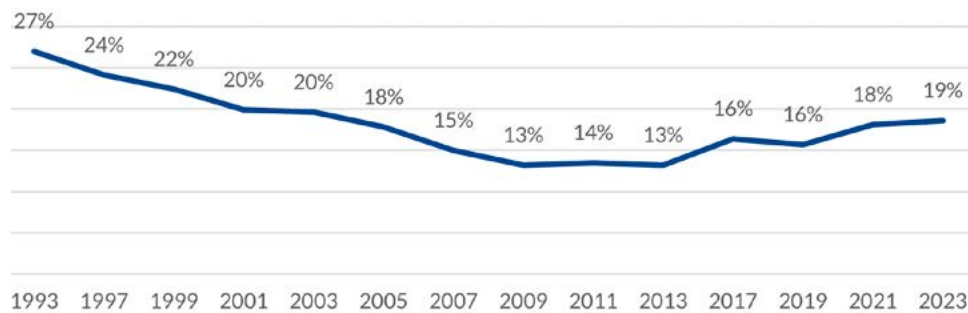


## SUICIDE AND HELP SEEKING (cont'd)

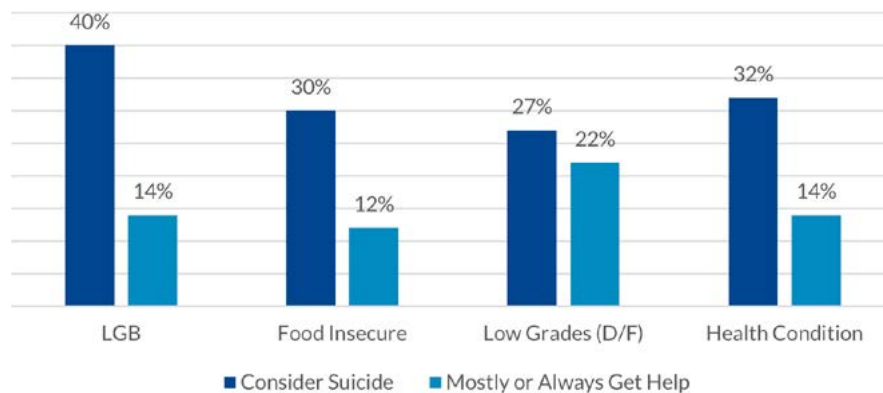
- Some student groups are more likely to seriously consider suicide than they are to receive the help they need when distressed. The chart below shows the most pronounced cases of this “help gap”.
- For instance, 40.2% of students who are LGB have seriously considered suicide, but only 14.2% of students who are LGB say they mostly or always receive the help they need when in emotional distress.
- The gap is similar for students facing food insecurity (30.0% considering suicide while only 12.3% receive the help they need.)
- If someone you know is struggling, encourage them to seek help. 24/7 assistance is available by calling or texting 988. Please see the Resources section at the end of this report for where to find information and support.

### Percentage of Students Who Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide

Data not available for 1995, 2015



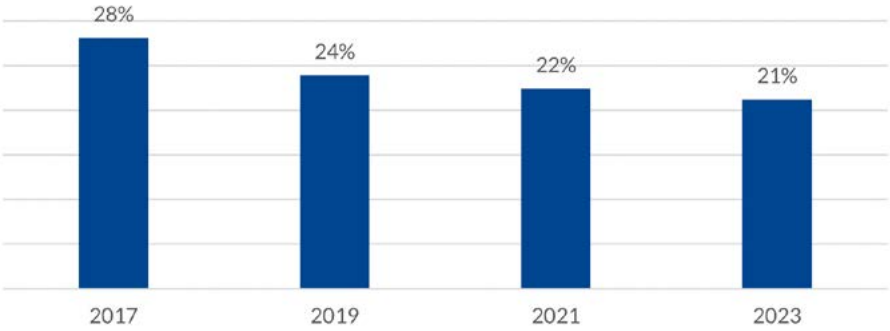
### Suicidality Help Gap for Select Groups



SUICIDE AND HELP SEEKING (cont'd)



Students Who Most of the Time or Always Receive the Help They Need



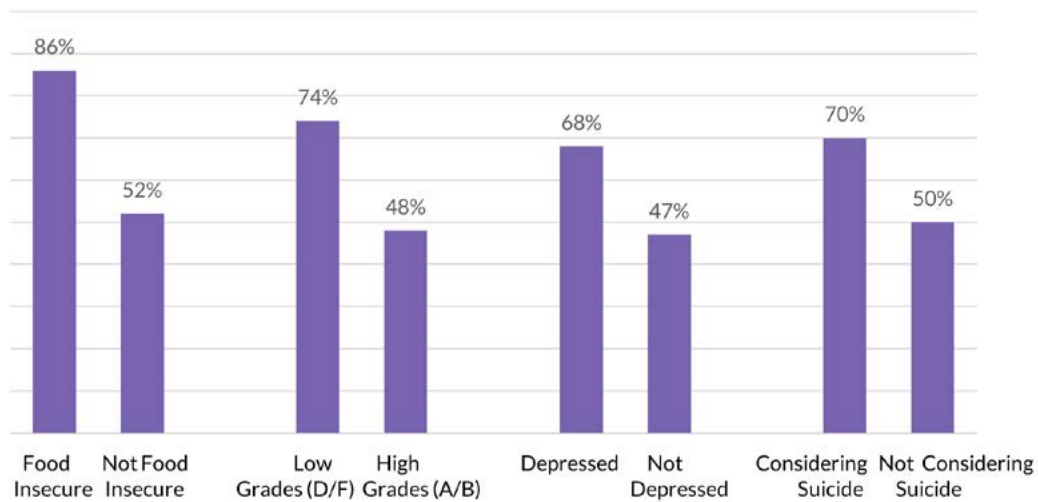
## SCREEN USE AND ONLINE BEHAVIOR

Like adults, young people spend much of their time online or otherwise in front of a screen. Daily reported screen time continues to increase. The 2023 Wisconsin YRBS question on technology usage was changed from recreational screen use excluding television to asking students the number of hours spent on any type of recreational screen, including time spent watching television. Screen usage does not include time spent on a computer doing schoolwork.

The 2023 Wisconsin YRBS also included two other questions related to screens and online behavior. The first question asked how many school nights students were online or otherwise using screens between midnight and 5:00 a.m. This was intended to capture the extent to which screen use was interfering with sleep. The second question was aimed at “sexting”, which asked students how many times in the past 30 days they sent, received, or shared nude photos or other sexual images.

- More than three-quarters of all students (78.9%) reported three or more hours of recreational time in front of a TV, computer, smartphone, or other electronic device each day (not counting time spent on schoolwork).
- More than half of students (53.3%) reported using screens after midnight at least one school night per week. 15.5% of students report such use every school night.

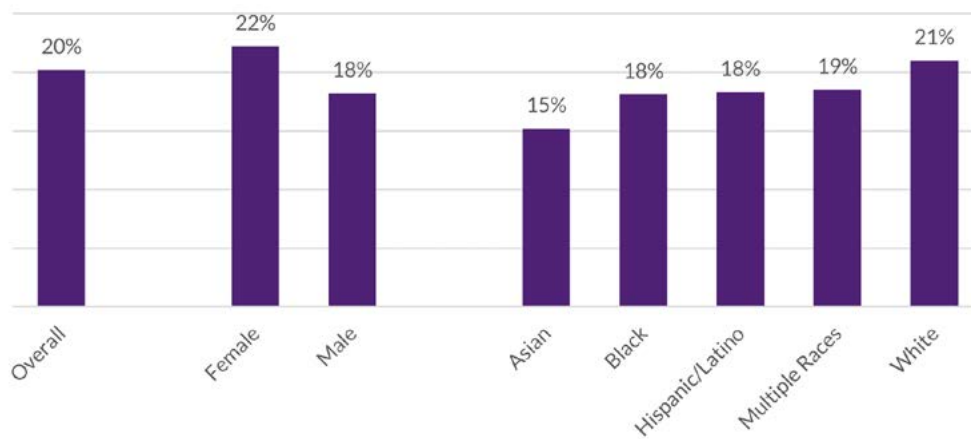
Screen Use After Midnight for Select Groups



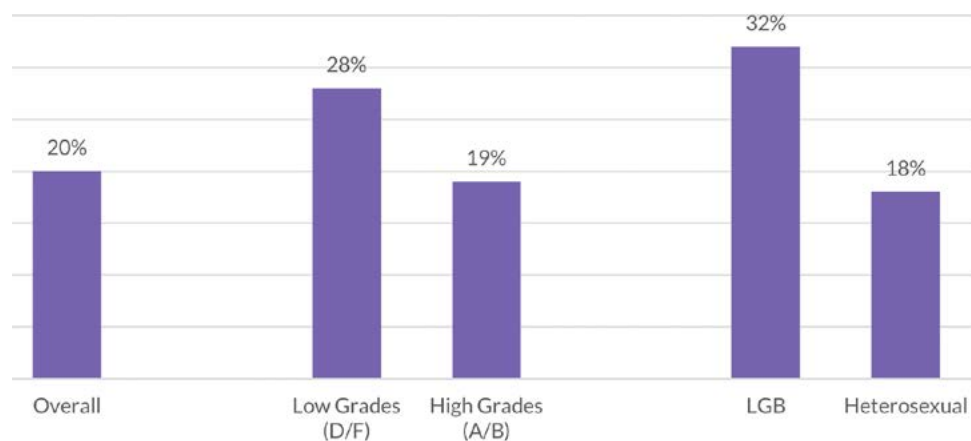
## SCREEN USE AND ONLINE BEHAVIOR (cont'd)

- Rates of screen use late at night were slightly higher for male students (55.6%) than female students (51.1%).
- While using screens after midnight is common for all groups, it is more common for some groups of students than others. Those who are most likely to use screens after midnight include students facing hunger (“food insecure”), students with low grades (D’s or F’s), as well as students who are depressed, anxious, or suicidal.
- Overall, 20.2% of teens reported sending, receiving, or sharing nude photos or sexual images in the past 30 days. This marked an increase from 2021 (18.5%) but a decrease from 2019 (24.9%).
- The percentage of female students reporting sexting was slightly higher than the percentage of male students (22.2% for female and 18.2% for male).
- White students reported sexting more than students of other races (21%). Asian students reported sexting the least of any other race (15.2%). However, differences between reported sexting were especially apparent between male Asian students (5.0%) and female Asian students (22.8%).
- In addition, students with low grades (D’s or F’s) and LGB students reported sexting more than their peers (see chart below).

Sent, Recieved, or Shared Nude Photos by Sex and Race/Ethnicity



Sent, Recieved, or Shared Nude Photos for Select Groups





# BULLYING

The Wisconsin YRBS asks students about being bullied at school as well as being bullied electronically (through social media or text; sometimes called cyberbullying) during the past 12 months.

- 21.6% of students reported being bullied on school property, and 17.8% of students reported being bullied electronically.
- There is a notable gap in rates of bullying, where female students reported much higher rates of both in-person bullying

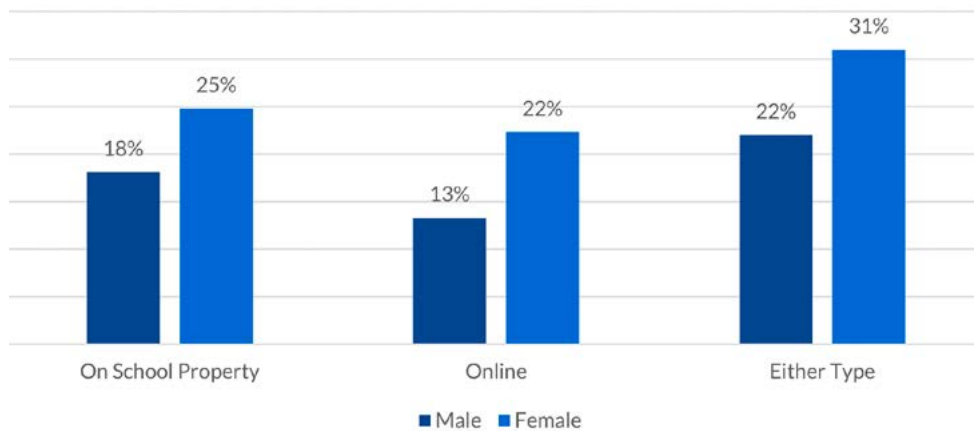
(24.8%) and electronic bullying (22.3%) compared to male students (18.1% and 13.3% respectively).

- Rates of bullying on school property declined in 2021 (13.4%) possibly due to virtual learning being utilized in the preceding 12 months. In 2023, the prevalence of being bullied on school property (18.1%) returned to levels similar to 2019 (22.3%).
- Rates of electronic bullying have remained consistent over

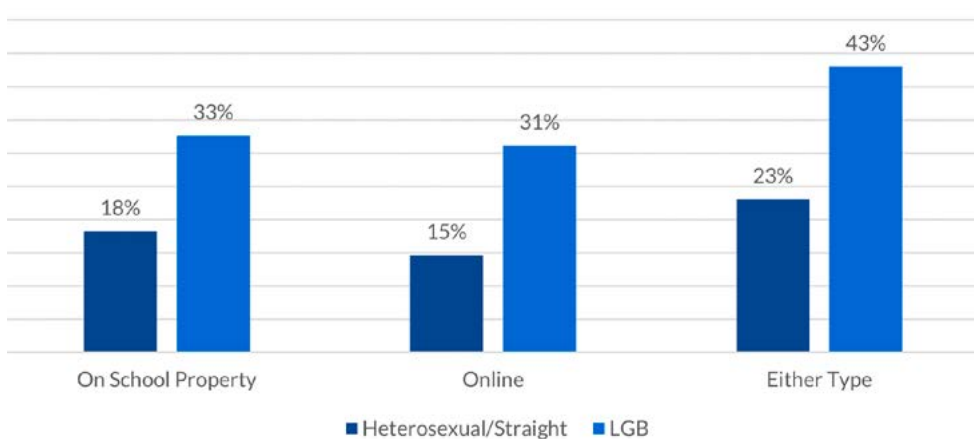
the last decade.

- Some student groups were more likely than their peers to see bullying as a problem at their school. The chart below shows these differences for three notable groups and their comparison groups: Students who have experienced hunger in the past 30 days (“Food Insecure”), students with physical disabilities or chronic health conditions, and LGB students.

## Experiences of Different Types of Bullying By Sex



## Experiences of Different Types of Bullying By Sexual Orientation

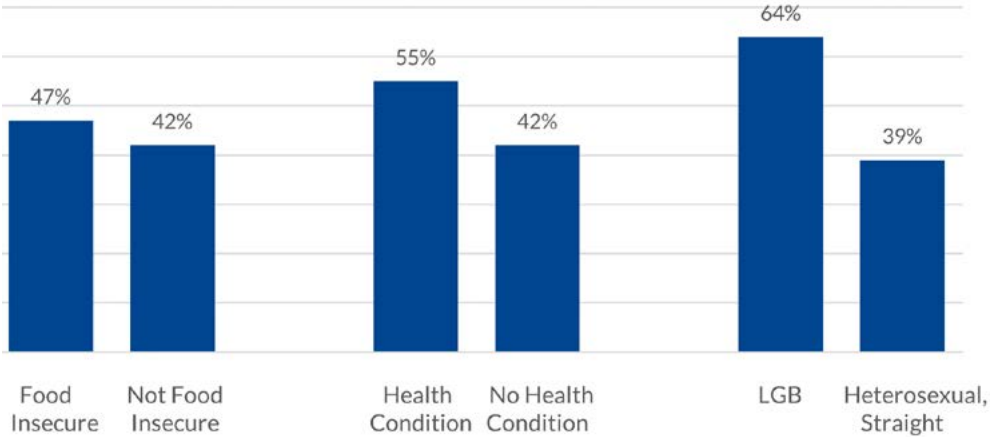




BULLYING (cont'd)



View Bullying as a Problem at School  
By Select Groups



## SCHOOL SAFETY

In general, most students continue to feel safe at school. In 2023, 74.9% of students felt safe at school “most of the time” or “always”. That figure decreased since 2021 (from 80.4%).

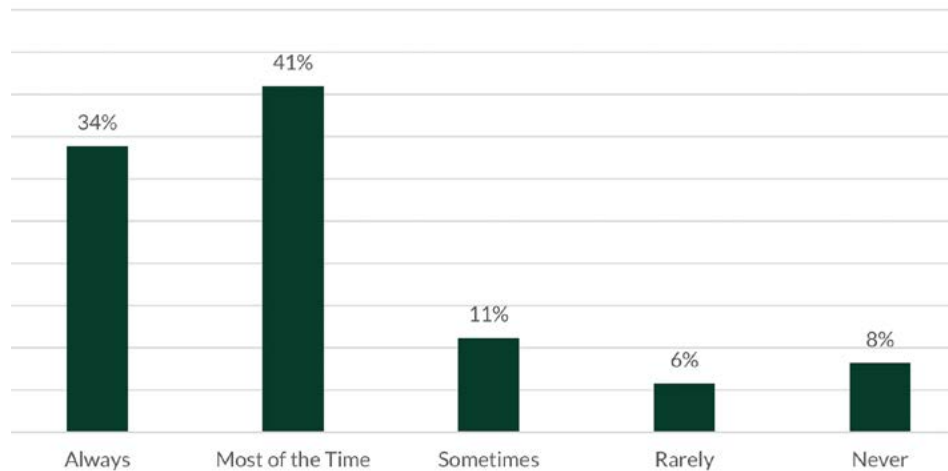
- In 2023, 13.9% of students “rarely” or “never” felt safe at school. This number has increased in the past 10 years (from 10.2% in 2013).
- Students of color were statistically more likely than

White students to say they do not feel safe at school. Among all racial groups, Black students and students who identified multiple races were least likely to report feeling safe at school (see chart below).

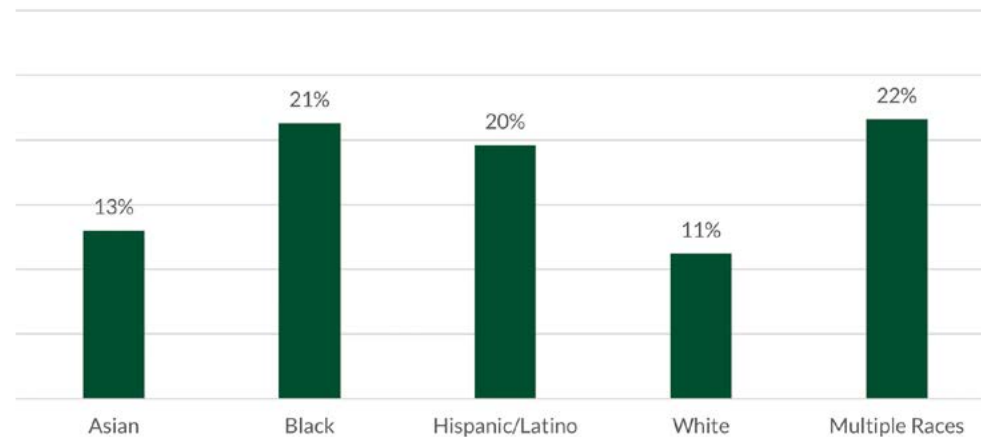
- Overall, the percent of students who had skipped school due to safety concerns (10.1%) has increased since 2021 (7.8%), following the increasing trend over the last 10 years (from 5.8% in 2013).

- Black students were most likely to skip school for safety concerns and were almost three times more likely to do so than White students (20.8% vs. 7.6%).
- Overall, 10.5% of students reported being involved in a physical fight on school property in the last 12 months. Male students (13.9%) were more likely than female students (7%) to get into a physical fight on school

### How Often Students Feel Safe at School



### Rarely or Never Feel Safe at School By Race/Ethnicity





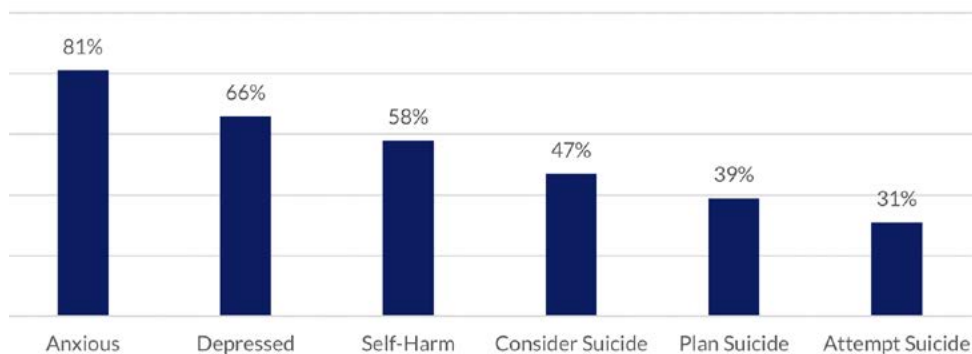
- property. Black students were the most likely to report involvement in a physical fight (20.3%), while Asian students were the least likely (4.8%).
- The 2023 YRBS contains a question about bringing a weapon to school in the past 30 days. Overall, 3.7% of respondents reported that they had carried “a gun, knife, or club on school property” in the past 30 days.
- 9.4% of students had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property within the past 12 months. This percentage of students has more than doubled in the last 10 years from 4.3% in 2013.
- Approximately one in three students (32.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that violence was a problem at their school. Conversely, 33.1% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that violence was a problem at school.

## SEXUAL AND DATING VIOLENCE

The YRBS includes some safety and victimization questions that are not restricted to the school environment. These include questions on whether a student has ever experienced rape, physical dating violence, sexual dating violence, or any unwanted sexual contact.

- Nearly one in eight students (13.2%) reported that at least once in the last year, someone had forced them “to do sexual things you did not want to do.” This is referred to as “sexual assault or coercion” in this report.
- Notable discrepancies in the prevalence of sexual assault exist for different subgroups. For example, female students were about 3 times more likely to experience sexual assault than male students (19.9% vs. 6.8%), and LGB students were more than 3 times more likely to report experiencing sexual assault than heterosexual students (27.3% vs. 8.7%).
- More than half of the students who experienced sexual assault or coercion in their lifetimes (55.3%), indicated that it had happened more than once.
- Students who had experienced sexual assault or coercion at least once in their lives were 3.3 times more likely to seriously consider suicide (47.2% vs. 14.1%) and six times more likely to have attempted suicide than students who had not experienced sexual assault (30.9% vs. 5.0%). Prevalence of mental health issues and suicidality among survivors of sexual assault or coercion appears in the chart below. Please see the Resources section at the end of this report for where to find information and support.
- 9.3% of students specifically indicated that they had been raped (i.e., forced to have sexual intercourse). However, female students were more likely to report rape than male students (13.8% of female vs. 4.9% of male). The overall rate of reported rape is statistically unchanged from prior years.

### Mental Health Concerns (During Past Year) Among Students Who Experienced Sexual Assault or Coercion







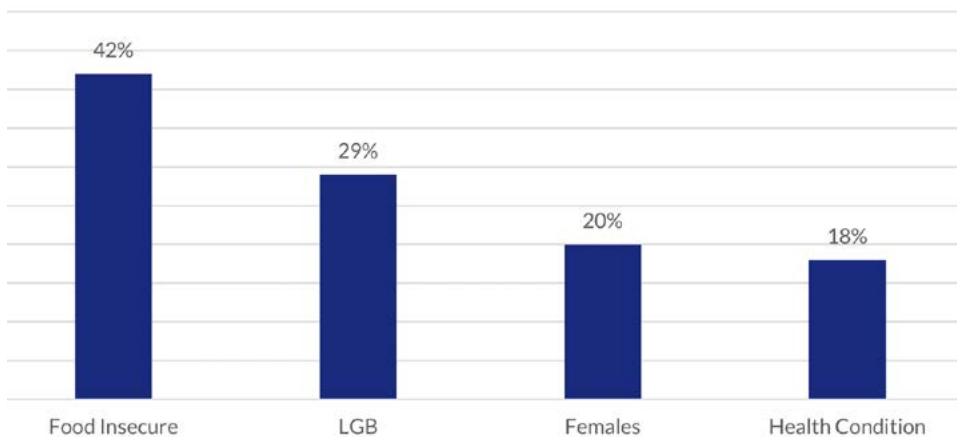
- Looking specifically at dating violence, 12.7% of students who had dated or gone out with someone during the past 12 months reported having been sexually assaulted by a dating partner in the past year. 10.5% of dating students reported having been physically assaulted (e.g., hit, slammed

into something, etc.) by a dating partner within the past year.

- Female students were much more likely to report dating violence than male students. Specifically, dating female students were more likely to report having been sexually assaulted by a dating partner in the past year (17.0% vs. 6.9%).

Moreover, dating female and male students were almost equally as likely to report having been physically assaulted by a dating partner within the past year (11.3% vs. 11.0%).

### Experienced Sexual Assault or Coercion in the Past Year for Select Groups



## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD

The YRBS includes three questions aimed at understanding students' experiences of security and stability outside of school. These included questions on access to food (food security), neighborhood violence, and housing mobility.

Having access to food, a safe neighborhood, and stable housing are all important determinants of both health and academic performance. The YRBS includes a question on whether students had

ever witnessed an attack in their neighborhood.

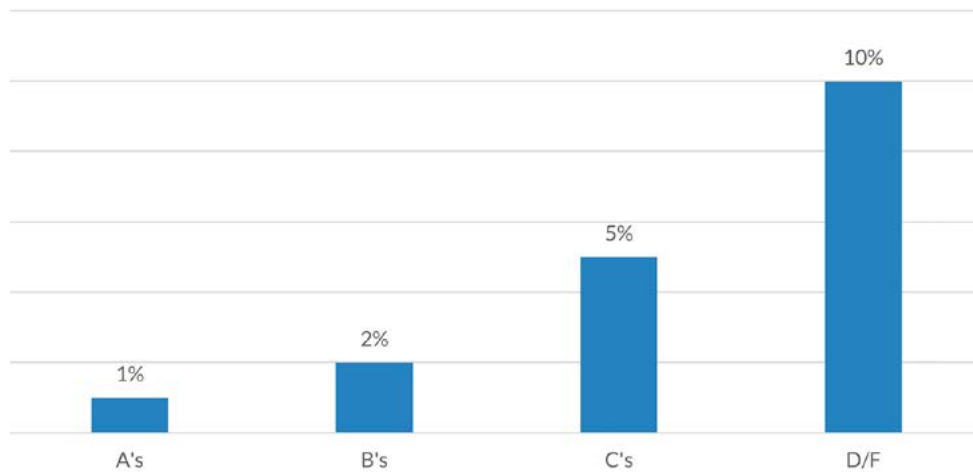
Exposure to violence can have lasting, adverse effects on a student's mental wellbeing.

- One in four students (25.4%) reported experiencing hunger due to lack of food in the home during the past 30 days. 2.6% of students reported going hungry "most of the time" or "always".
- Students who identified with multiple races were most likely

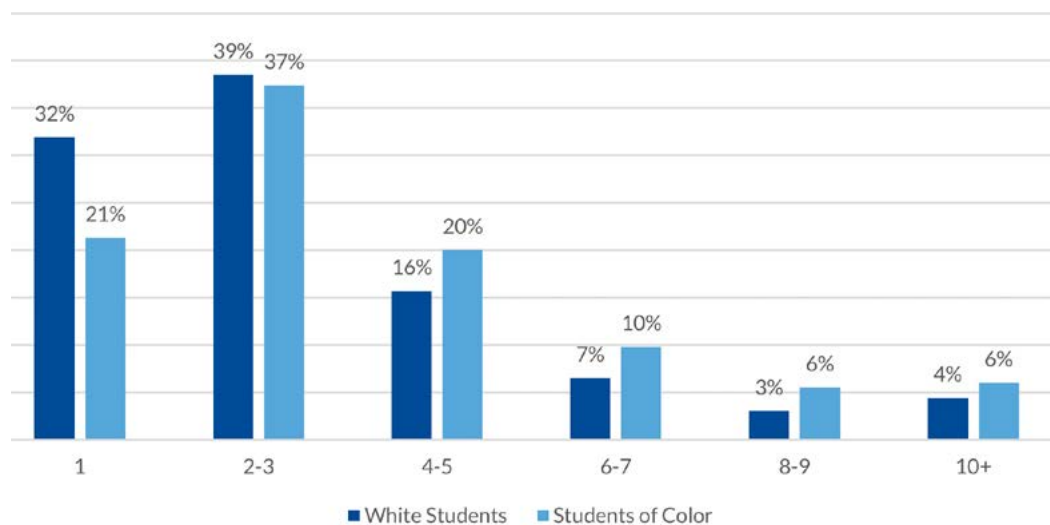
to report experiencing hunger (defined as going hungry "most of the time" or "always"; 7.1%), much higher than their white peers (1.2%).

- 10.3% of students with low grades (D's or F's) reported going hungry "most of the time" or "always" as compared to 2.3% of students with higher grades (A's or B's).
- Overall, 20.1% of students reported witnessing someone

### Food Insecurity by Self-Reported Grades



### Number of Places Lived (Residences) White Students vs. Students of Color





get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood. That rate was higher for students who identified as multiple races (33.4%), Black students (31.6%) and Hispanic/ Latinx students (31.0%). Each of these demographic groups were more than twice as likely to report witnessing an attack than White students (15.8%) and Asian students (10.1%).

- Students who witnessed an attack in their neighborhood also reported statistically

higher rates of anxiety (66.2%) than their peers who have not witnessed an attack in their neighborhood (33.3%).

- Multiple moves can disrupt a student's education. When moves are the result of financial stress, family violence, or other stressful factors, it can impact a young person's health, education, and long-term opportunities.
- Wisconsin students of color are much more likely than their White, non-Hispanic

counterparts to have faced multiple moves. Asian and White students were more than twice as likely as Black students to have lived in the same place (e.g., apartment, house, etc.) their entire lives. Black students and students who identified with multiple races were also more likely to have lived in ten or more places in their lives (6.7% and 9.7% respectively).

## NEGLECT AND FAMILY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

First added in 2021 and continued in 2023, the YRBS included a question regarding the presence of an adult to provide basic needs.

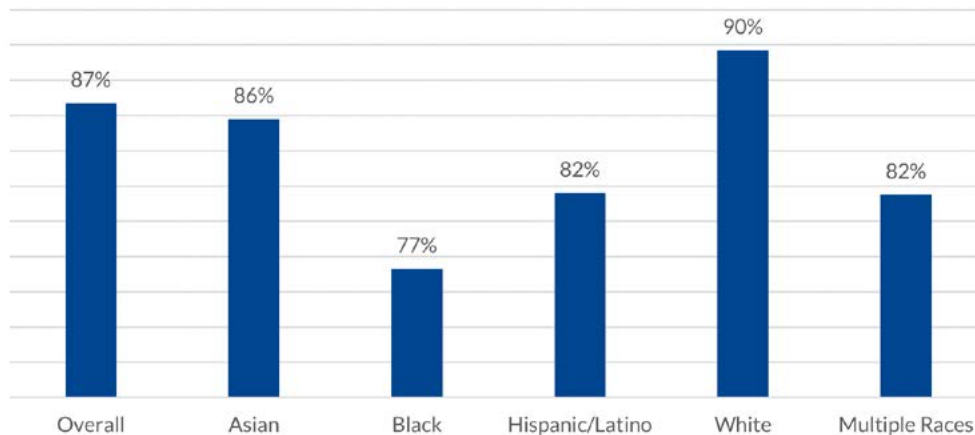
Specifically, the question asked students how often they had an adult in their household to try to provide for their basic needs. The YRBS also asked students whether they had ever lived with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal. Research has demonstrated exposure to childhood adversity has an impact on adult mental health, increasing the risk for depression and suicide.

- 7.4% of all students reported that they “never” or “rarely” had an adult in their household to provide for their basic needs.
- Black students were least likely to report having an adult present to support their needs. More specifically, only 77.3% of Black students reported they had a supportive adult compared to 89.7% of white students. The percentage of black students who reported they had a supportive adult also decreased by 10% since the 2021 YRBS, where 87.3% of black students reported having

had a supportive adult.

- 43.5% of all students reported ever having lived with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal.
- More than half of female students reported living with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal (51% of female vs. 35.8% of male).
- Students who identified with multiple races were most likely to live with someone with mental illness (52.4%) and Asian students (33%) and Black students (36.5%) were least likely.

### Basic Needs Met Most of the Time or Always By an Adult By Race/Ethnicity



In light of the unique situation posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the 2021 and 2023 YRBS asked students to report the number of people they know who died or got very sick from COVID-19. (“Very sick” was defined as “having to spend one

or more nights at the hospital.”) Knowing family and friends who suffered medical complications or even death from COVID-19 can significantly impair a student’s ability to learn.

- 53.6% of all students reported that they know at least one

person who died or got very sick from COVID-19. Female (57.6%) and Hispanic/ Latinx students (61.8%) were more likely to report knowing someone who got very sick or died from COVID-19.



# SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

Long-term trends over the past thirty years indicate young people are less sexually active than in the past. Those who are sexually active in high school start later and have fewer sexual partners than in the 1990s and early 2000s.

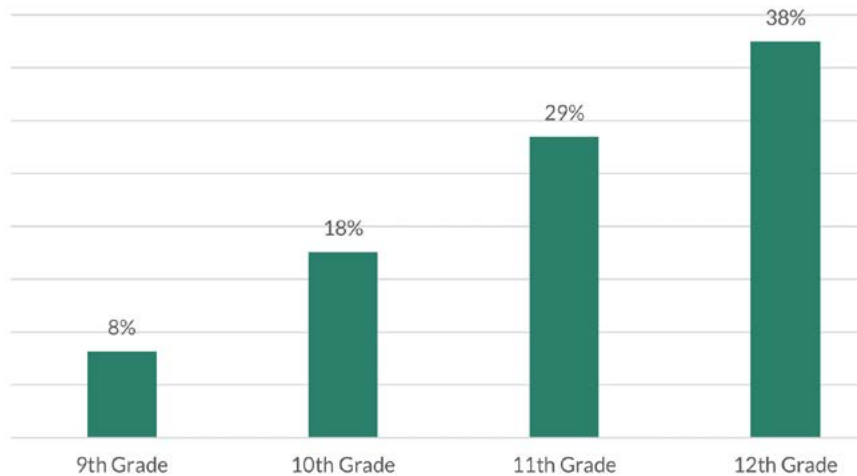
- 31.8% of students reported ever having sex. This is an increase from 2021 (25.8%) and a decrease from 2019 (34.6%).
- More than one in five students (23.0%) is currently sexually active (i.e., sexual intercourse in the past three months). This is statistically unchanged from

2021 rates but marks an overall 10-year decline.

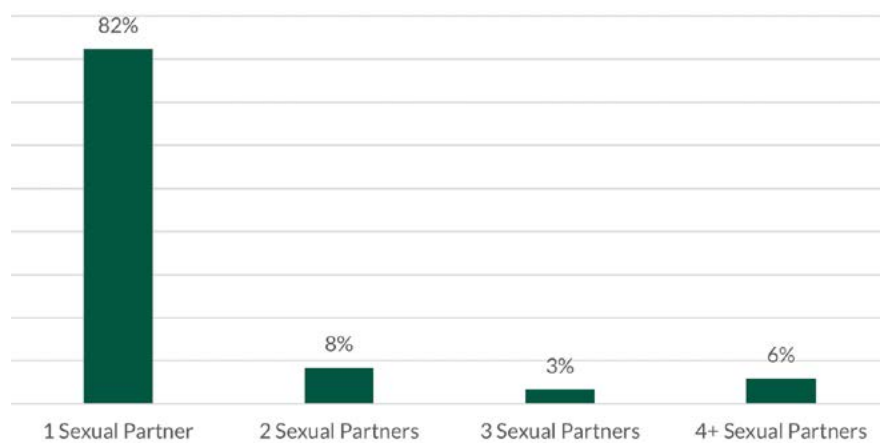
- While young people might believe that “everyone” is sexually active, in fact, most high school students are not currently sexually active, even by 12th grade (see chart below).
- 3.4% of students reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13. This represents less than one-ninth (10.7%) of all students who have ever had sexual intercourse.

- Relatively few students (6.2% of all students and 19.5% of recently sexually active students) report having had four or more sexual partners. The chart below shows the number of sexual partners reported by sexually active students.
- The majority of sexually active students (55.4%) reported having used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. 13.3% percent of sexually active students reported using a condom in addition to another method of birth control.

Currently Sexually Active By Grade Level



Number of Sexual Partners of Sexually Active Students in Past Three Months



## ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, VAPOR PRODUCTS, AND OTHER DRUGS

Alcohol use among Wisconsin youth remains higher than the national average, although it continued its downward trend, while other drug use in Wisconsin was generally unchanged from 2019 and 2021 rates. Long-term trends are indicating lower use rates across substances; however, pockets of concern exist, especially around alcohol use, prescription drug use, and vaping.

- 51.9% of students have ever had a drink. This was an

increase from 2021 (49.3%) and a statistical decrease from 58.4% in 2019.

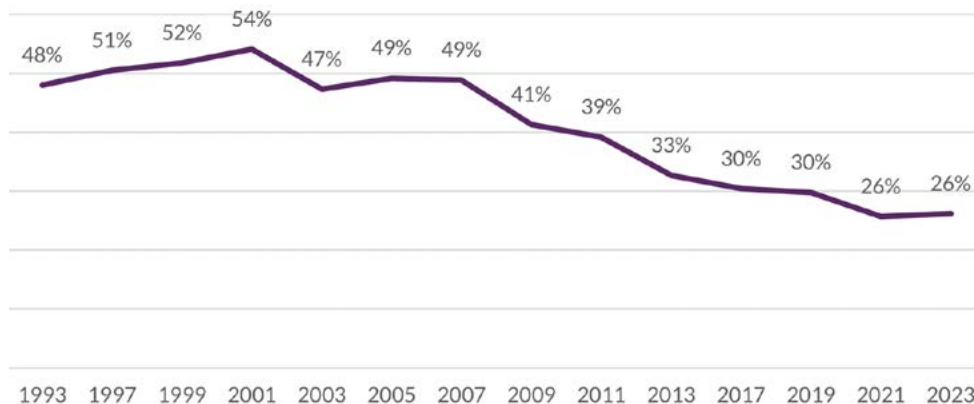
- While the rate of alcohol use has declined overall since 2007, use in Wisconsin remains high with 1 in 4 students (26.2%) reporting at least one drink in the last 30 days. That figure is statistically unchanged from 2021 (25.7%), but it has declined in the last 30 years.
- Using the sex-specific definition of binge drinking (five drinks

for male and four for female students), in 2023, 11.3% of students binge drank in the past 30 days: 9.5% of male students had five or more drinks 11.9% of female students had four or more drinks.

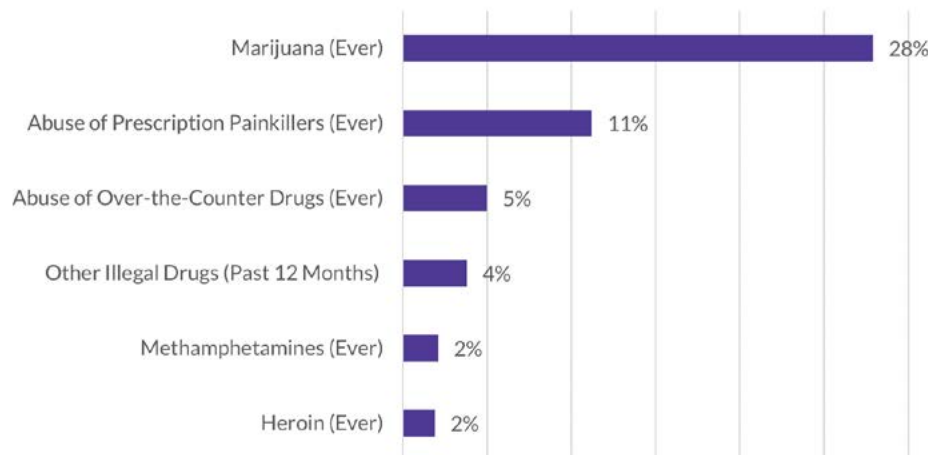
- 3.4% of students report having had ten or more drinks in a row during the past thirty days. This percentage is higher for male students (4.9%) than female students (2.0%).

### Percentage of Students Who Currently Drink Alcohol (Last 30 Days)

Data not available for 1995, 2015



### Drug Use Rates



## ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, VAPOR PRODUCTS, AND OTHER DRUGS (cont'd)

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The YRBS asks questions about the misuse of two legal drugs: prescription pain medicines and over-the-counter medications.

- Misuse of over-the-counter medications remained consistent (5.0%), and this rate has decreased since the question was first asked in 2009 (11.6%).
- Prescription pain medication misuse has not changed from 2021. However, given the dangers of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, 11.2% of students in 2023 reportedly misusing prescription pain medication is a concerning result.
- Prescription drug misuse was highest among students who identified multiple races (21.1%).
- Current (past 30 day) marijuana use is 16.2% and lifetime marijuana use is 28.0%. Black female students had the highest rate for both current use (31.7%) and having tried marijuana (61.3%).
- 2.0% of students reported having ever used methamphetamines (2.1%) or heroin (1.9%). 3.8% of students reported having used any illegal drug besides marijuana within the past 12 months.
- 13.8% of students reported they were offered, sold, or given drugs on school property during the past year. The percentage of students who reporting attending school under the influence of drugs or alcohol in the past 12 months was 11.4%.



## ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, VAPOR PRODUCTS, AND OTHER DRUGS (cont'd)

The trend data for the past ten years has remained consistent for usage of tobacco products. Despite efforts to decrease usage, the numbers have not statistically changed. A question regarding the use of electronic cigarettes or vaping devices was added to the YRBS in 2017. The trend data has also been primarily unchanged since that time.

- One in three students (34.4%) has ever vaped. Highest rates include about half of LGB students (49.8%), students who

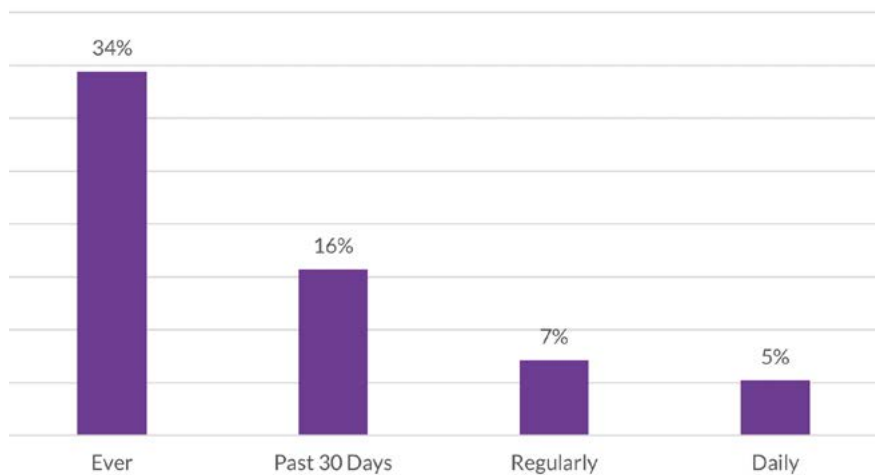
earn D's/F's in school (51.5%), and female students who identify with multiple races (48.6%).

- A closer look at the current vaping question shows one in six students (15.7%) has vaped in the past 30 days, 7.1% vape regularly (i.e., on at least 20 out of the last 30 days) and 5.2% report vaping every day.
- When looking at current vaping rates (past 30 days), female students (18.4%) reported a

higher prevalence than male students (13.0%). Twice as many 12th graders currently vape (20.1%) compared to 9.8% of 9th graders.

- 22.3% of students who currently vape also smoke conventional (sometimes called "combustible") cigarettes. Almost all students who smoke conventional cigarettes (91.3%), also vape.

### Vaping Frequency



### Current Vaping by Grade Level (Past 30 Days)

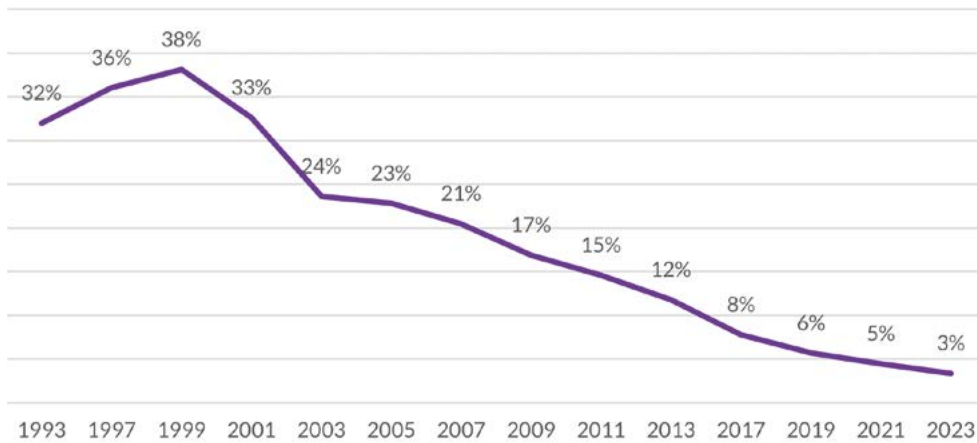


## ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS (cont'd)

- Past 30 day use for cigarettes was 3.4% of students; past 30 day use for chew is 3.4%; past 30 day use for cigars or cigarillos is 4.7%.
- 6% of students reported using any tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars or cigarillos, chew) in the past 30 days.
- 37.2% of students have ever used any tobacco product, including vaping products.
- The percentage of users (49.0%) who tried to quit all tobacco products has continuously increased since the question was originally asked in 2017.

### Percentage of Students Who Currently Smoke Cigarettes (Past 30 Days)

Data not available for 1995, 2015



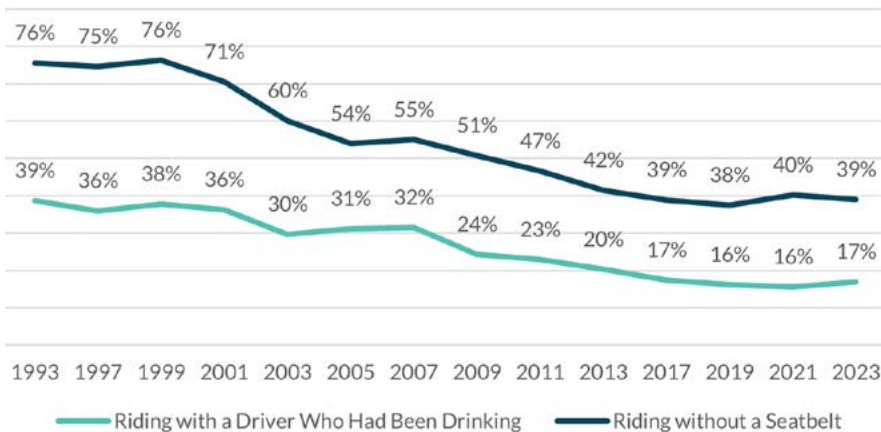
## TRAFFIC SAFETY

Wisconsin's 2023 YRBS data continue to show positive trends in traffic safety.

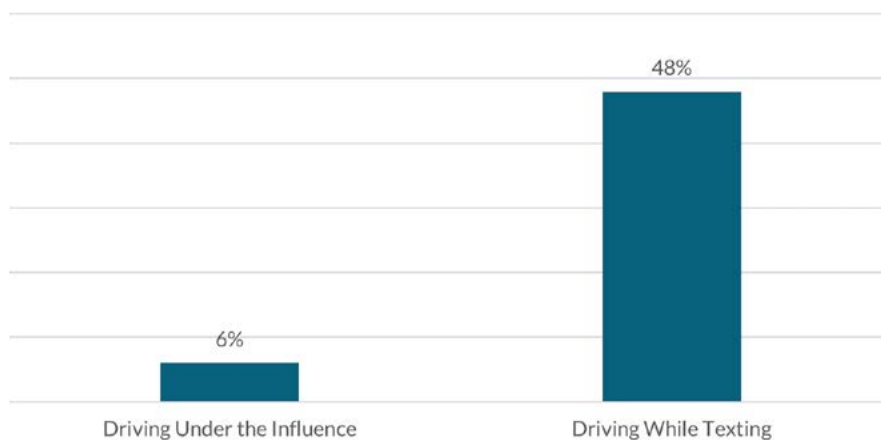
- The percent of students who “rarely” or “never” used a seatbelt in a car is 6.7%.
- All student groups report sustained improvement in seatbelt use, though racial and ethnic disparities remain. Rates of “rarely” or “never” wearing a seatbelt were 16.6% for Black students, 9.1% for Hispanic students, and 7.6% for Multiple Race students, compared to 4.7% for White students.
- 16.6% of students reported having ridden in a vehicle with a driver (of any age) who had been drinking.
- 6.4% of students who drove reported having driven when they had been drinking alcohol in the past thirty days.
- 48.0% of student drivers reported texting or emailing while driving. This percentage is an increase from 2021 (41.9%) but similar to previous years (45.7% in 2017 and 47.5% in 2019).

### Trends in Passenger Risks

Data not available for 1995, 2015



### Risky Driving Behaviors (Past 30 Days) Among Student Drivers Only

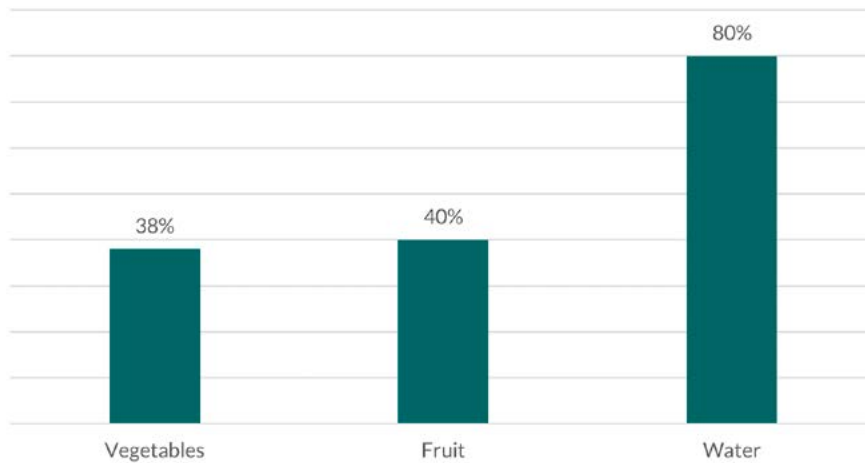


## NUTRITION

The 2023 YRBS asks a list of general nutrition questions on topics such as water consumption, fruit and vegetable consumption and breakfast habits.

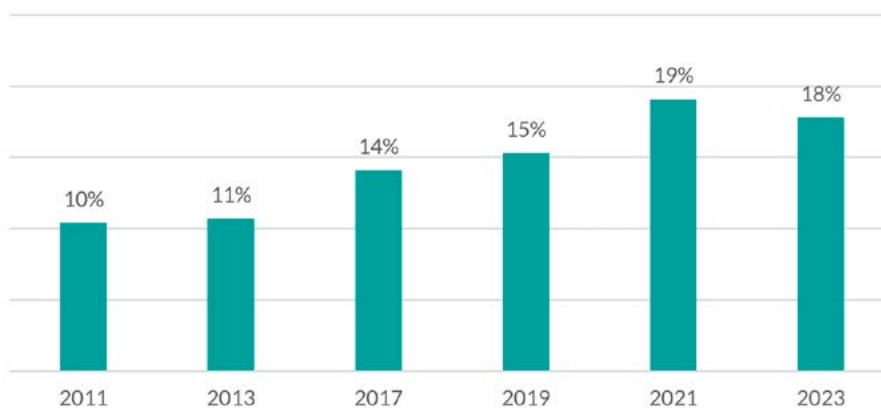
- Water consumption appears to have increased from previous cycles. Nearly all students (97.1%) reported that they drink a bottle or glass of plain water at least once a day; 54.6% drink plain water three or more times per day. Rates of water consumption did not differ significantly, although multiple race female students reported they were most likely to not drink any water during the seven days before the survey.
- Roughly one in four students (26.6%) eat breakfast every day. Conversely, less than one in five students (17.8%) do not eat breakfast. The percentage of students eating breakfast every day has decreased over the past ten years, while the percentage of students never eating breakfast has continued to increase.
- 89.6% of students reported that they eat fruit once or more per week. 88.2% eat vegetables at least once a week. Black students reported they were most likely not to eat either fruits or vegetables during the seven days before the survey.
- Students who use screens late at night, as well as those who report getting on average less than eight hours of sleep a night, are less likely to eat breakfast. For instance, 35.8% of students who did not use screens after midnight ate breakfast every day, compared to 18.1% of students who did use screens between midnight and 5 am. While it's not clear that late nights cause students to miss breakfast, the same conditions within the home could lead students to both lack sleep and miss breakfast. Also, arriving to school both sleep-deprived and without breakfast can place those students at a significant disadvantage.

### Daily Consumption of Healthy Food and Water



### Trends in Not Consuming Breakfast

*Data not available for 2015*





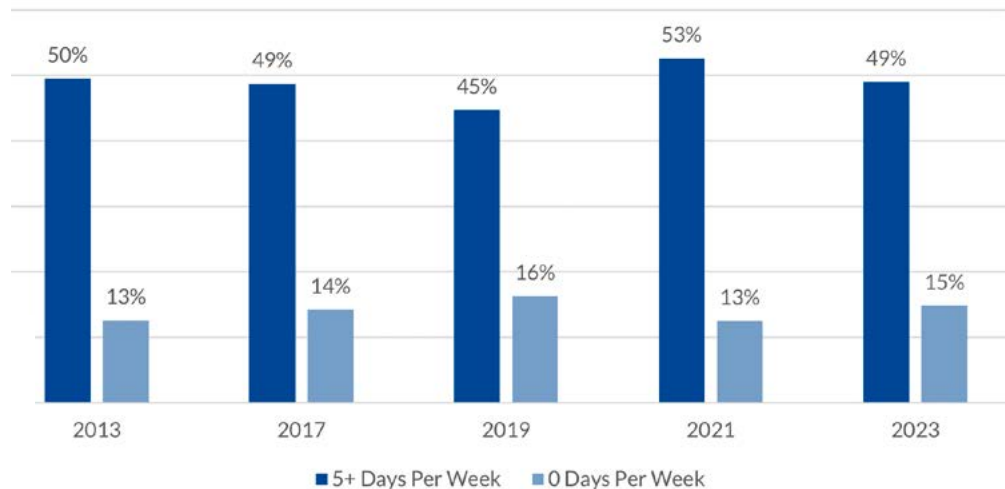
## PHYSICAL HEALTH

The 2023 YRBS showed some sustained improvements in nutrition and reductions in alcohol and drug use (please see the section on alcohol and drug use as well as the section on nutrition). Of note, students reported increases in physical activity in 2021 for the first time since the question was first asked in 2011. At the same time, students continued to report less sleep and worse self-reported overall health.

- 48.6% of students reported engaging in at least 60 minutes of physical activity five or more days per week. That number has decreased from 52.6% in 2021. That is still an increase from 44.7% in 2019 and consistent with other rates over the past ten years.
- Conversely, the percentage of students who reported no physical activity in the past seven days (“0 days/week”) has increased from 12.5% in 2021 to 14.8% in 2023 but is still lower than 2019 (16.3%).
- There is a sex gap in physical activity, with 57.6% of male and 39.6% of female students reporting 60 or more minutes of physical activity five or more days per week. This gap was also present in the 2019 and 2021 results.
- The percentage of students who regularly get eight or more hours of sleep on a school night remained steady at 26.1%.
- When asked how much sleep they get on an average school night, the most common response was seven hours.
- Nearly one in five students reported five or fewer hours of sleep per night (19.5%); 23.5% reported six hours; 31.0% reported seven hours; and 26.1% reported eight or more hours.
- Compared to students who get eight or more hours of sleep, students who get five or fewer hours of sleep were more than three times as likely to report depression (56.4% vs. 18.5%) and 1.7 times more likely to report anxiety (67.8% vs. 39.1%).

### Trends in Physical Activity

Data not available for 2015



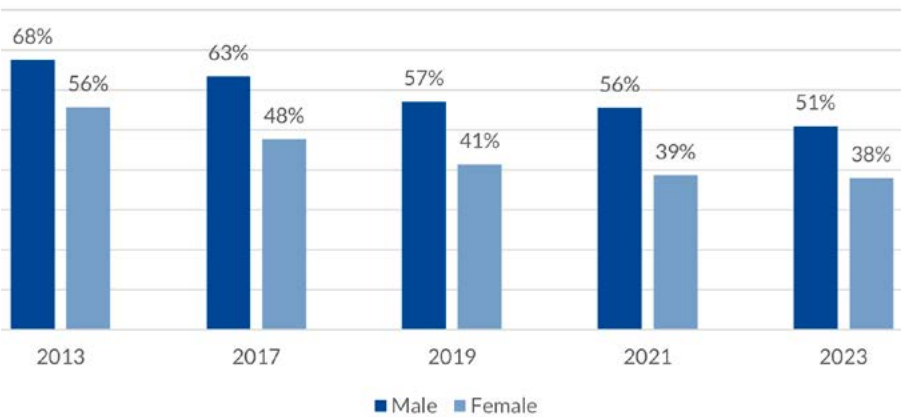


## PHYSICAL HEALTH (cont'd)

- The percentage of students who described their general health as “excellent” or “very good” has continually decreased in the past ten years. In 2023, 44.6% described their health as “excellent” or “very good” compared to 47.2% in 2021 and 61.8% in 2013.
- Male students were more likely than female students to describe their health as “excellent” or “very good”. The chart below shows the decline in self-reported health for both male and female students over time. In 2023, both sexes reported the lowest recorded rates of excellent or very good health.
- The percentage of students whose body mass index, as calculated through self-reported weight and height, qualifies them as obese (95th percentile or higher based on age and sex) continues to increase over the long-term (10.3% in 2003 to 16.5% in 2023).
- Male students had a higher prevalence of obesity than female students (18.5% v. 14.4%). Black (24.4%) and Hispanic/Latinx (25.0%) students had higher rates of obesity than Asian (12.8%) and White (13.7%) students. 11.7% of students reported a chronic health condition or physical disability.
- 76.5% of students reported having seen a dentist within the past 12 months.

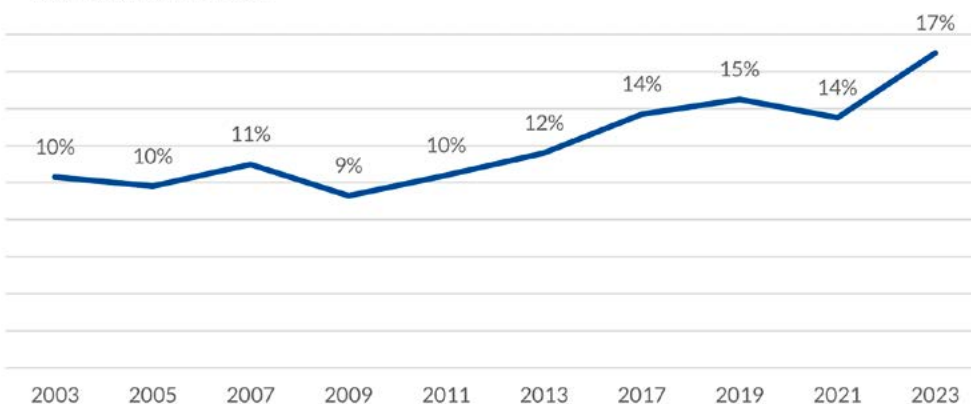
### Excellent or Very Good Health By Sex

Data not available for 2015



### Percentage of Students Reporting Obesity

Data not available for 2015



## STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

For the first time in 2021 and continued in 2023, the YRBS included a question on employment status, specifically asking students to report the number of hours they work at a paying job outside the home during a typical school week.

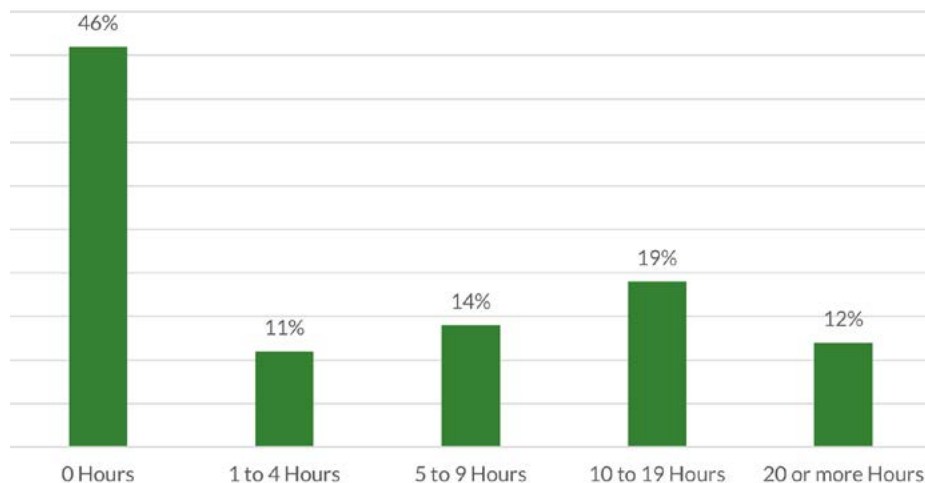
Students who are stressed by having to work several hours per week might also report several other risk factors, such as adverse mental health concerns and fewer supports at school and at home. Understanding students' realities outside of the classroom is crucial for addressing their

challenges at school and providing corresponding support.

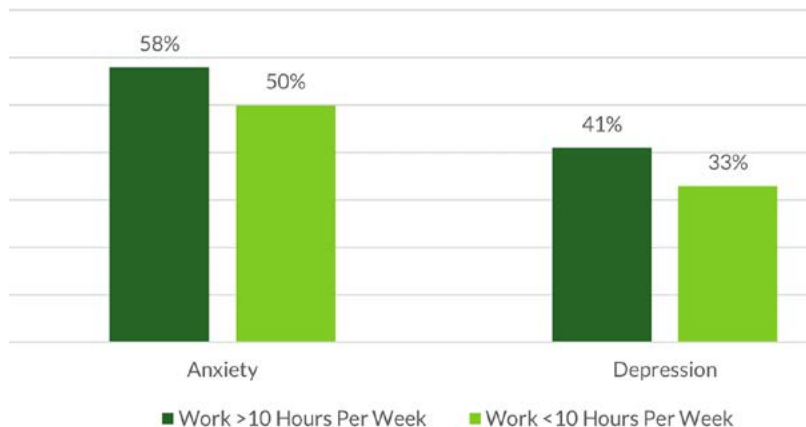
- Older students were more likely to work at least one hour at a paying job (74.5% for 12th graders vs. 29.7% for 9th graders). White female students were most likely to work one or more hours per week.
- When students must work many hours per week in addition to managing schoolwork, it can take a toll on their overall mental health and well-being. Analysis of the employment question found

that mental health concerns are greater among students who work at least 10 hours/week vs. those working less than 10 hours/week (see chart below). However, there were no significant differences in mental health problems between those working at least one hour per week and those who do not work at all. This suggests that students working many hours at a job each week in addition to managing schoolwork may have greater mental health concerns.

Students Who Work Various Hours Per Week



Self-Reported Mental Health Concerns By Number of Hours Worked Per Week



## NEWLY ADDED QUESTIONS IN 2023

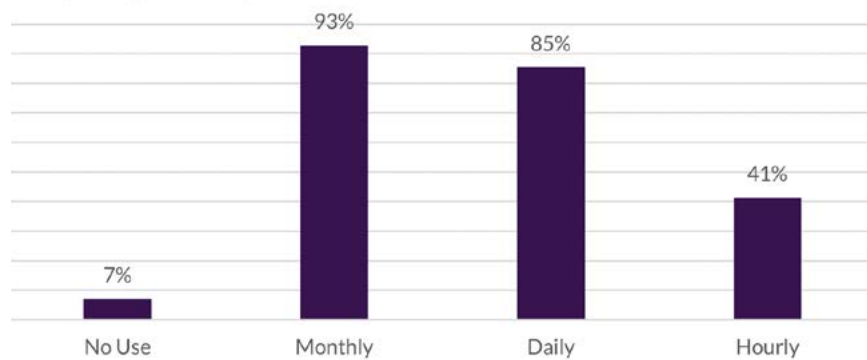
### SOCIAL MEDIA

The 2023 Wisconsin YRBS added a new question about social media usage. It is possible heavy social media use can play a role in a student's overall mental health, rates of e-bullying, or both. While further analysis is needed, this question will allow researchers to look at whether there are notable differences in mental health concerns among students who frequently use social media compared to those who do not.

The specific question asks: "How often do you use social media (such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter)?" Answer choices include frequencies varying from "a few times a month" to "more than once an hour." DPI defines "heavy" use as using social media "About once an hour" or "More than once an hour."

79.8% of students reported using social media several times per day, with more female students using social media than male students (83.1% and 76.8% respectively).

Frequency of Usage of Social Media



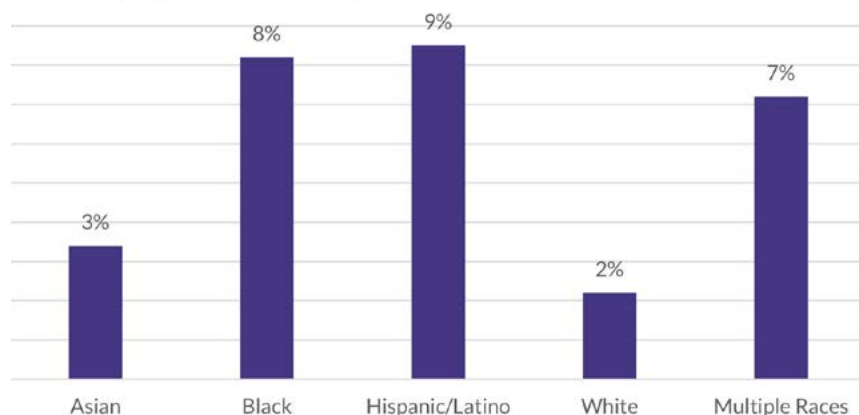
### MISTREATMENT

The 2023 Wisconsin YRBS added a new question on perceptions of mistreatment due to one's race/ethnicity.

Racial-ethnic minority students simultaneously and persistently face multiple types of victimization, including bullying, harassment, and racial discrimination. The 2023 Wisconsin YRBS asked students "During your life, how often have you felt that you were treated badly or unfairly in school because of your race or ethnicity?"

- Overall, 67.5% of students felt they had never been treated badly or unfairly due to their race/ethnicity.
- Unfortunately, 4.1% of students feel they are treated badly or unfairly most of the time or always.
- The chart below displays percentages of students who reported being treated badly or unfairly at school "Most of the time" or "Always."

Always or Most of the Time Feel Treated Badly or Unfairly By Race/Ethnicity





## WISCONSIN TREND SUMMARY (2003-2023)

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Below is a summary of key trends, as compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Only questions with statistically significant changes are provided here. If the trend is consistently significant across several time frames, all time frames are noted. If there were conflicting trends over time (e.g., first a decrease and then an increase), only the most recent trend is noted.

### Positive Health Trends

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#### ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND VAPOR PRODUCTS

- (-) First Drink before age 13 (a) (d)
- (-) Current Alcohol Use (a)
- (-) Ever smoked cigarettes (c)
- (-) Ever used electronic vapor products (d)
- (-) Currently smoke (a)
- (-) Currently smoke cigars (d)
- (-) Any type of tobacco or electronic vapor product use (c)

#### OTHER DRUGS

- (-) Ever used marijuana (a)
- (-) Tried marijuana before age 13 (a)
- (-) Current marijuana use (a)
- (-) Were offered, sold, or given drugs on school property (a)
- (-) Ever abused over-the-counter drugs (b)
- (-) Attended school under the influence of alcohol or other illegal drugs (d)

#### TRAFFIC SAFETY

- (-) Rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking alcohol (a)
- (-) Drove a car under the influence of alcohol (d)
- (+) Seatbelt use (a)

#### SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

- (-) Ever had sex (a)
- (-) First sexual intercourse before age 13 (a)
- (-) Currently sexually active (a)
- (-) Four or more sexual partners (a)
- (-) Received, sent, or shared nude photos (d)

#### BULLYING AND VIOLENCE

- (-) Bullied on school property (b)
- (-) Involved in physical fight on school property (a)

#### PHYSICAL HEALTH

- (+) Eat vegetables (c)

#### Key:

(-) = numbers are decreasing

(+) = numbers are increasing

a = 2003-2023 timeframe for the trend

b = 2009-2023 timeframe for the trend

c = 2017-2023 timeframe for the trend

d = See CDC trend reports on the DPI website for date range

## Negative Health Trends

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### MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE

(+) Report depression (a)

(+) Report anxiety (c)

(+) Consider suicide (b)

(+) Made a suicide plan (b)

(+) Attempted suicide (b)

(+) Self-harm (b)

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

(-) Sense of school belonging (c)

(-) 1 or more supportive adults besides parents (d)

(-) Have at least one supportive teacher or school staff member (b)

(-) Basic needs being met (d)

(-) Most of the time or always get the help they need when dealing with mental health problem (c)

### SCHOOL SAFETY

(+) Miss school for safety concerns (a)

(+) Threatened with a weapon on school property (d)

### OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

(+) Obesity (a)

(+) Overweight (a)

(-) Saw a dentist within a year(d)

(-) Sleep (d)

(-) Eat breakfast daily (c) (d)

(+) 3 or more hours of screen time per day (d)

(-) Say health is excellent or very good d (b) (d)

#### Key:

(-) = numbers are decreasing

(+) = numbers are increasing

a = 2003-2023 timeframe for the trend

b = 2009-2023 timeframe for the trend

c = 2017-2023 timeframe for the trend

d = other date ranges that are available on the DPI website

## RESOURCES

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At the end of the survey, students received the message below regardless of how they responded to the survey.

*The survey asked about a lot of important topics. If you need to speak to someone right away about any of those topics, you may want to speak with your school counselor. If you feel like you are in a crisis, you can also text “HOPELINE” to 741741; call or text 988; or use the chat feature at 988 [lifeline.org](https://lifeline.org).*

Additional support for students and schools on topics such as mental health, safe schools, alcohol and other drug use, and more are available through the Student Services/ Prevention and Wellness team. Please visit our website for more information: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw> or contact the team at [dpisspw@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:dpisspw@dpi.wi.gov) or (608) 266-8960.

## REFERENCES

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). *Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Leveraging the Best Available Evidence*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Putnam, Robert D. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

## CITING THIS REPORT

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This report was created by Research and Evaluation Consultant Casie Sulzle and Education Specialist Denise Kohout of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Data was collected by former Research and Evaluation Consultant Owen Tortora and Educational Specialist Denise Kohout.

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STUDENT SERVICES, PREVENTION AND  
WELLNESS TEAM

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Madison, Wisconsin  
(608) 266-8960

[dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs](https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs)

July 2024

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