

Norwalk 2024-2025

Youth Voices Count
Survey Report, Fall 2024

Grades 7-12



Survey October 2024, Reported December 2024

Survey Conducted by:

B. WEYLAND SMITH

C O N S U L T I N G

PROGRAM EVALUATION • GRANT PREPARATION • CAPACITY BUILDING

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-Table of Contents-

Norwalk Youth Voices Count Survey Report

Section Heading	Page Number
Introduction.....	3
Youth Lifestyles	7
Gaming.....	10
Social Media.....	11
Bullying.....	12
Emotional Health	14
Perceptions of Substance Use, Family Rules and Experiences.....	18
Ease of Access.....	24
Substance Use and Gambling.....	28
Other Substance Use.....	33
Driving Under the Influence.....	34
Sexual Behaviors High School Only	36
Extracurricular Activities	40
Toxic Stress.....	42
Connected and Thriving Youth.....	44
Norwalk Supplemental Questions.....	45
Youth Interest in Survey Results	51
Addendum	52

Introduction:

The following report is a summary of data that was gathered during October 2024 from Norwalk Public Schools for grades 7-8 and 9-12. Data collected from this year's student survey will be used in the planning and development of strategies, policies, and practices for the school district and community partners.

This survey was administered to youth enrolled in the Norwalk Public Schools to ensure a representative sample and reliable data. Please note that the findings presented in this report are not reflective of the school but are intended to reflect the greater community of Update.

It is important to note that COVID-19 greatly disrupted lives beginning in March 2020, which may have ongoing impacts on youth substance use rates and mental health concerns.

The Youth Voices Count Survey fulfills the following objectives:

1. Describes youth's perceptions and experiences regarding substance use, mental health, school environment, social media and online gaming school environment, and other related behaviors among students in grades 7-12.
2. Utilizes information provided by youth, allowing leaders to systematically **"hear" from youth**, in order to enhance and **plan initiatives and activities for youth** in the community.

Youth Voices Count Survey Background:

The Youth Voices Count Survey (YVCS) is adapted from the "ERASE Student Survey" which originated out of the Governor's Prevention Initiative for Youth (GPIY) Student Survey, a school survey that was distributed throughout the State of Connecticut in 2000. Other survey influences include: The CT School Health Survey, The Center for Prevention Evaluation and Statistics (CPES) Young Adults Statewide Survey and most importantly, emerging issues for youth today—including vaping, online gaming, and social media related behaviors.

The Youth Voices Count Survey is a product of B. Weyland Smith Consulting, LLC. Located in Wethersfield, CT. B. Weyland Smith Consulting researchers have over 50 years combined experience of survey and statistical research regarding youth behaviors, perspectives, and experience, specific to substance use, mental health and related risk and protective factors.

The Youth Voices Count Survey was established with the support of many youths and professionals in the field of survey development, program evaluation, internet safety and school mental health staff. They provided feedback through document review and focus groups.

The core elements of the YVCS are designed to understand youth's current substance use and mental health behaviors and perceptions. These data are aligned with Federal National Outcome Measures for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This allows for competitive grant applications and ongoing evaluation requirements to be met.

Topics assessed in the YVCS include: substance use, anxiety, depression, e-sports/online gaming, social media perspectives, gambling and accessing resources and supports in the community. Optional add-on topics include bullying/school climate, sexual behaviors, and electronic communications.

Survey Methodology:

Survey Consent:

The Youth Voices Count Survey was administered in October 2024 to students at Norwalk Public Schools. Students' guardians received e-mail letters notifying them of the purpose and content of the survey and were able to return a signed "passive consent" form to the school if they did not want their children to participate in the school survey. Guardians were provided with an opportunity to review the survey document.

Survey Administration:

All surveys were administered using SurveyMonkey.com website and software. Students received an email with the survey link and a link to a video including an overview of the survey, ensuring anonymity, resources if the survey brought up uncomfortable feelings and informing of their option to decline participation. Any question could be skipped if a student was not comfortable answering a question. Students who chose not to participate in the survey were asked to sit quietly until all classmates finished the survey.

Data Analysis:

Data Processing:

The student survey data was exported from the SurveyMonkey.com website and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for data analysis. A total of 113 surveys (2.7% of the original sample of 4,113 surveys) were omitted from the sample pool due to lack of any responses other than demographics (106) or due to implausible responses (7). The final sample size after surveys were omitted was 4,000 surveys for grades 7-12.

Sample Response Rates:

Response rates by grade level are listed in the table below. Response rates are calculated as a proportion of the number of surveys included in the sample to the number of total students enrolled in the 2024-2025 school year. Note that total sample counts only contain surveys that were used in the survey report; surveys that were omitted from the sample pool are not included in the following counts.

Sample Response Rates	Sample Count	Population Count	Response Rate (%)
Grade 7	709	844	84.00%
Grade 8	670	796	84.17%
Grade 9	784	936	83.76%
Grade 10	677	1083	62.51%
Grade 11	606	955	63.46%
Grade 12	543	1080	50.28%
Grades 7-8	1379	1640	84.09%
Grades 9-12	2610	4054	64.38%
Grades 7-12	3989	5694	70.06%

*11 students did not choose a grade and are not included in the table above.

The next table below shows the confidence intervals calculated for grades 7-8 and 7-12, using a 95% confidence level. A confidence interval means the percentage range you can expect the accurate rates to fall within. Smaller confidence intervals give you more accurate estimates of the actual use rates in the school population (and larger confidence intervals give you less accurate estimates of the actual use rates in the school population).

For example, if 25% of your sample reported using alcohol in the past month, a confidence interval of 2.0 means that if you randomly re-sampled your population 100 times, 95 of those times you would find past month alcohol use rates to fall somewhere between 23% (25-2) and 27% (25+2). In contrast, if your confidence interval is 5 (and 25% of your sample reported using alcohol in the past month), you would typically find past month use rates ranging between 20% (25-5) and 30% (25+5) if you repeatedly re-sampled students in this population.

	Confidence Level	Confidence Interval
Grade 7-8	95.00%	1.05
Grades 9-12	95.00%	1.14
Grades 7-12	95.00%	0.85

Data Reporting:

The survey tool utilized several skip patterns to reduce the time spent on the survey for students, in addition, no question was required to be answered by respondents. Unless otherwise stated, data presented represent the percent of students responding to each question. However, survey response and completion rates are high enough for those questions to make strong estimates of the total population’s behavior and perceptions.

Survey Sample Demographics:

The student survey sample consisted of a total of 3,989 students (1,977 males, 1,996 females; 16 students did not specify their biological sex). Refer to the table below for more descriptions of the sample by grade level.

	7th grade	8th grade	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
Total	709	670	784	677	606	543
Female	340	328	386	354	311	277
Male	365	338	396	320	292	266
Did not Identify	4	4	2	3	3	0

*11 students did not choose a grade and are not included in the table above.

Statistical Analyses:

Statistical comparisons by biological sex (male/female), race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual identity were conducted separately for grades 7-8 and grades 9-12 using the Chi-Square (χ^2) technique for key substance use measures (core GPRA measures for alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, marijuana, prescription drug use, and gambling).

No statistical analyses for grade level differences in substance use will be included in this report, but substance use percentages by grade level will be included for core GPRA measures for alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, marijuana, prescription drugs, and gambling.

Statistical Comparisons by Race:

We must be careful not to unfairly identify or stereotype a handful of students as using or misusing drugs, given the smaller sample size within specific minority groups in these schools. As also done in the CDC’s YRBSS (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System) National Survey, we classified students exclusively as Hispanic or Latino even if they also selected being one or more of the races, such as African American, White, and/or the other category. Thus, the core race/ethnicity groups included in the statistical analyses for race differences were: White, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, or All Other Races (organized in table below by row color).

Race/Ethnicity Category	Grades 7-8	Grades 9 - 12	Grades 7-12
Hispanic or Latino	62.29%	58.89%	60.07%
White	17.04%	19.54%	18.68%
Black or African American	11.31%	11.99%	11.76%
Other (2 or more races selected or race not Hispanic)	4.35%	3.95%	4.09%
Asian	2.68%	4.10%	3.61%
Middle Eastern or North African	1.02%	0.42%	0.63%
Not Specified	0.58%	0.65%	0.63%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.73%	0.42%	0.53%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.04%	0.03%

For information regarding race and ethnicity differences in substance use, refer to the national survey reports, such as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (<http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm>) or the Monitoring the Future Survey (<http://monitoringthefuture.org>).

Statistical Comparisons by Gender Identity:

In the interest of assessing how gender identity may impact youth behavioral health, analysis can be done to determine statistically significant differences among students identifying as the same gender as their biological sex (cisgender), and those that reported their gender as “non-binary,” “transgender,” or “I am not sure right now.” 108 students (2.71%) identified as non-binary, transgender, “I am not sure right now” or chose not to identify their gender (non-conforming).

	Gender Identity
Male	1950
Female	1922
Non-binary	24
Transgender male	25
Transgender female	9
I am not sure right now	50

	Sexual Identity
Heterosexual (straight)	3117
Bisexual or Pansexual	290
Gay or Lesbian	101
I do not know what this question is asking	193
I am not sure right now	152
I describe myself some other way	68

Statistical Comparisons by Sexual Identity:

In the interest of assessing how sexual identity may impact youth behavioral health, analysis can be done to determine statistically significant differences among students describing themselves as heterosexual, and those that described themselves as gay or lesbian, bisexual or pansexual, “I describe myself some other way,” and “I am not sure right now.” 611 (15.6%) students described themselves as gay or lesbian, bisexual or pansexual, “I describe myself some other way,” or “I am not sure right now.”

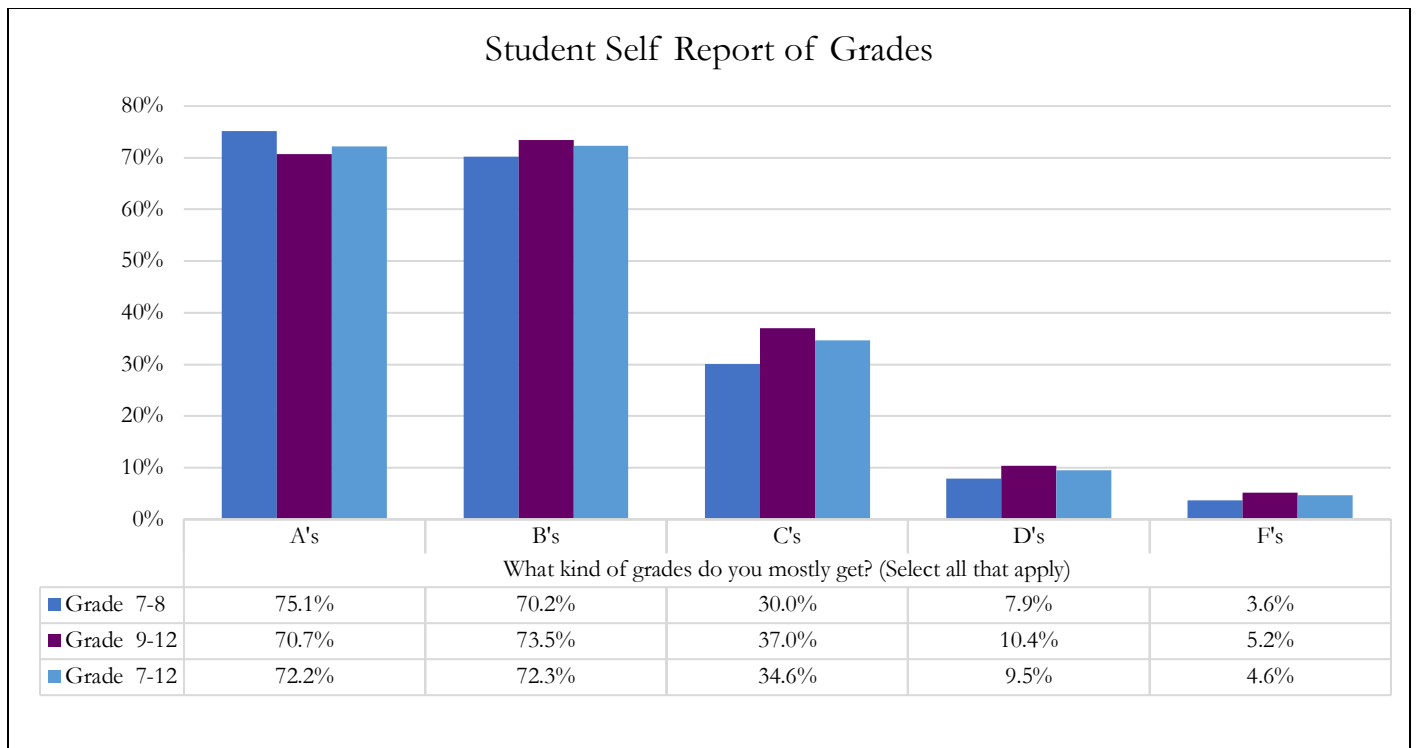
Equity, Disparities and Social Determinants of Health:

When evaluating statistically significant differences between population groups it is essential to consider historical, political, and cultural context with the intent of preventing the reinforcement of stereotypes. In the United States, minority groups have experienced discrimination leading to unequal access to resources (i.e. quality education, employment, and housing). Stigma is another driver of inequity, “because of its pervasiveness, its disruption of multiple life domains (e.g., resources, social relationships, and coping behaviors), and its corrosive impact on the health of populations, stigma should be considered alongside the other major organizing concepts for research on social determinants of population health.” (Hatzenbuehler ML et al. *Stigma as a fundamental cause of population health inequalities*. Am J Public Health. 2013 May)

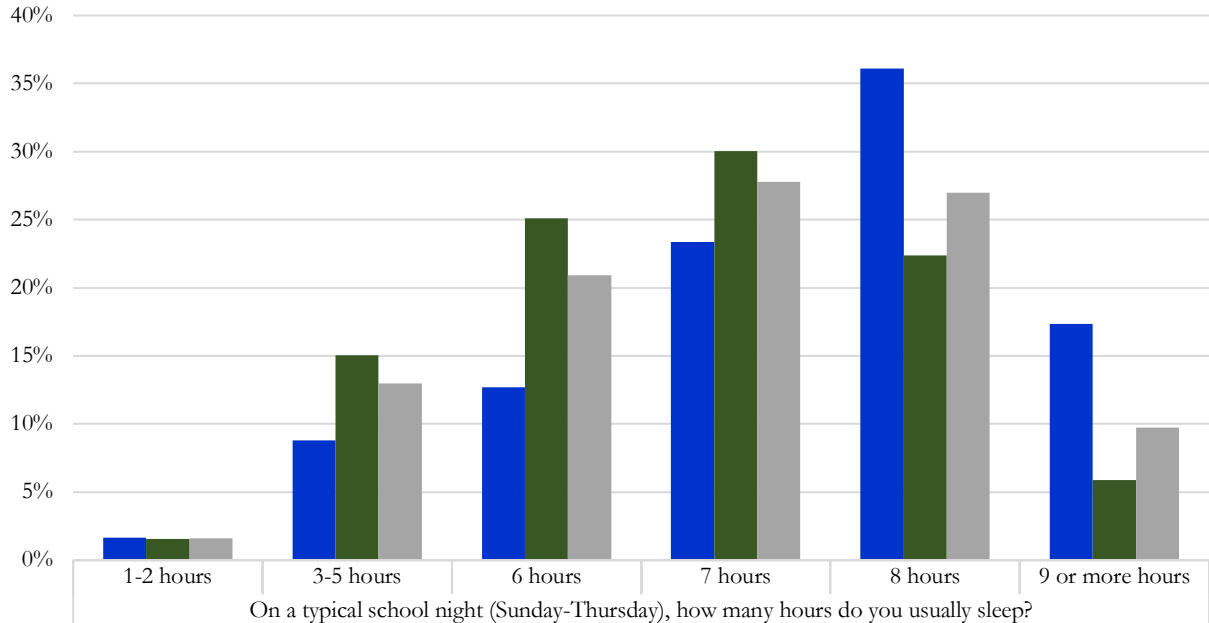
Norwalk Youth Voices Count Survey Report

For the following sections, tests for statistically significant differences were performed by biological sex, race and ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual identity for grades 7-8 and 9-12. Race was grouped into categories to allow for accurate statistical analysis and to ensure that students in race categories that represent a small number of students are not inadvertently identified. The categories are white, Hispanic or Latino, Black, or All Other Races. Any statistically significant differences in these groups are reported in an addendum to this report within Excel. This document allows for filtering between risk and protective factors for all significance testing and serves to inform which groups are experiencing more favorable outcomes due to protective factors and which groups would benefit from thoughtful or tailored approaches to address disparities seen within the data.

Youth Lifestyles:



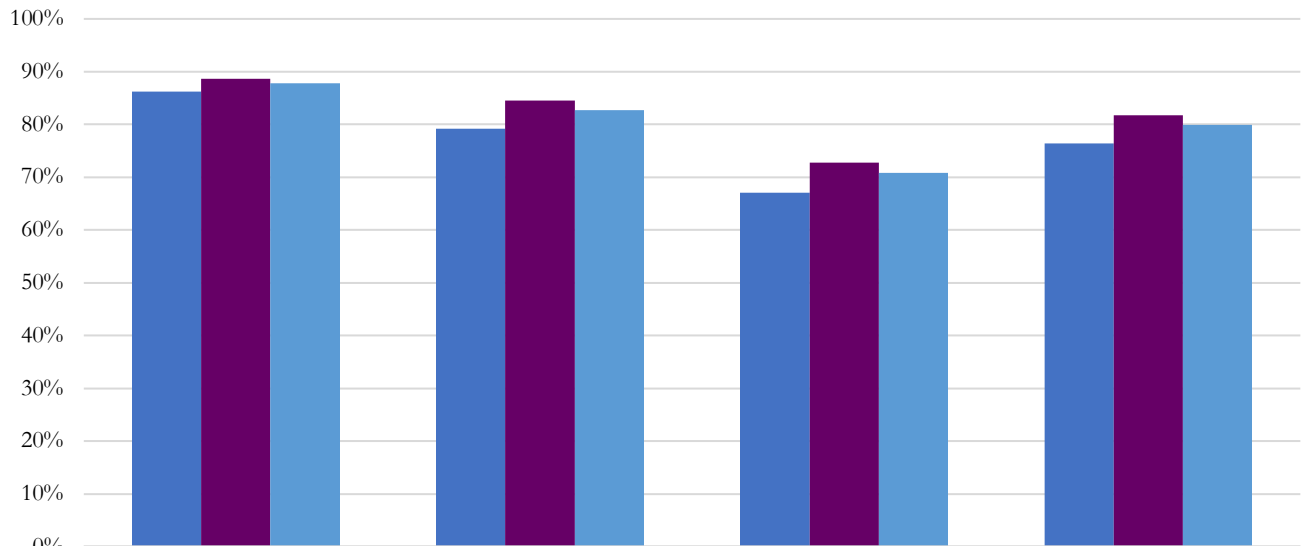
Youth Hours of Sleep on Weeknights



On a typical school night (Sunday-Thursday), how many hours do you usually sleep?

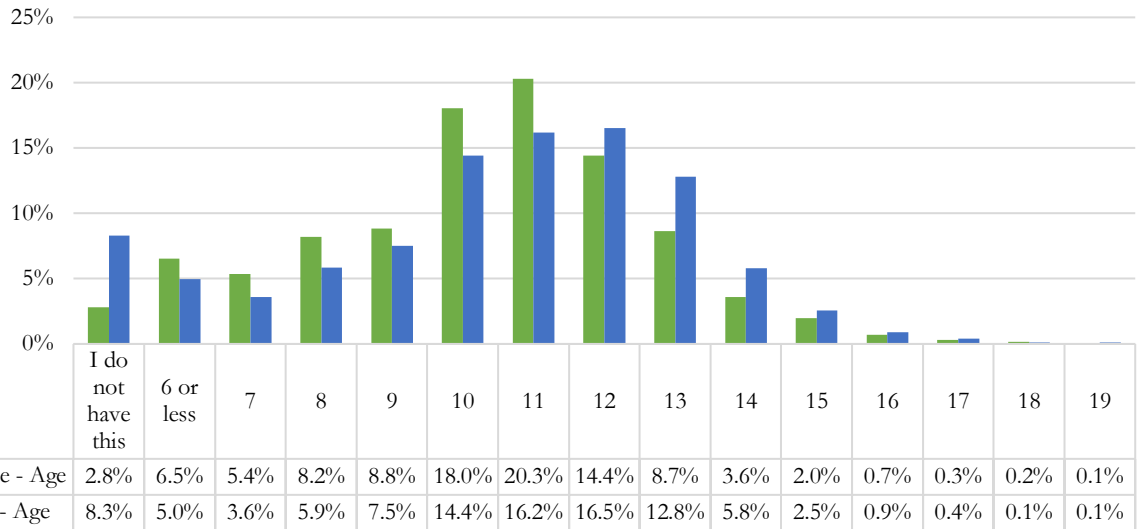
Grade 7-8	1.6%	8.8%	12.7%	23.4%	36.1%	17.3%
Grade 9-12	1.6%	15.1%	25.1%	30.0%	22.4%	5.9%
Grade 7-12	1.6%	13.0%	20.9%	27.8%	27.0%	9.7%

Perception of Having Trusted Adult and Feelings of Safety

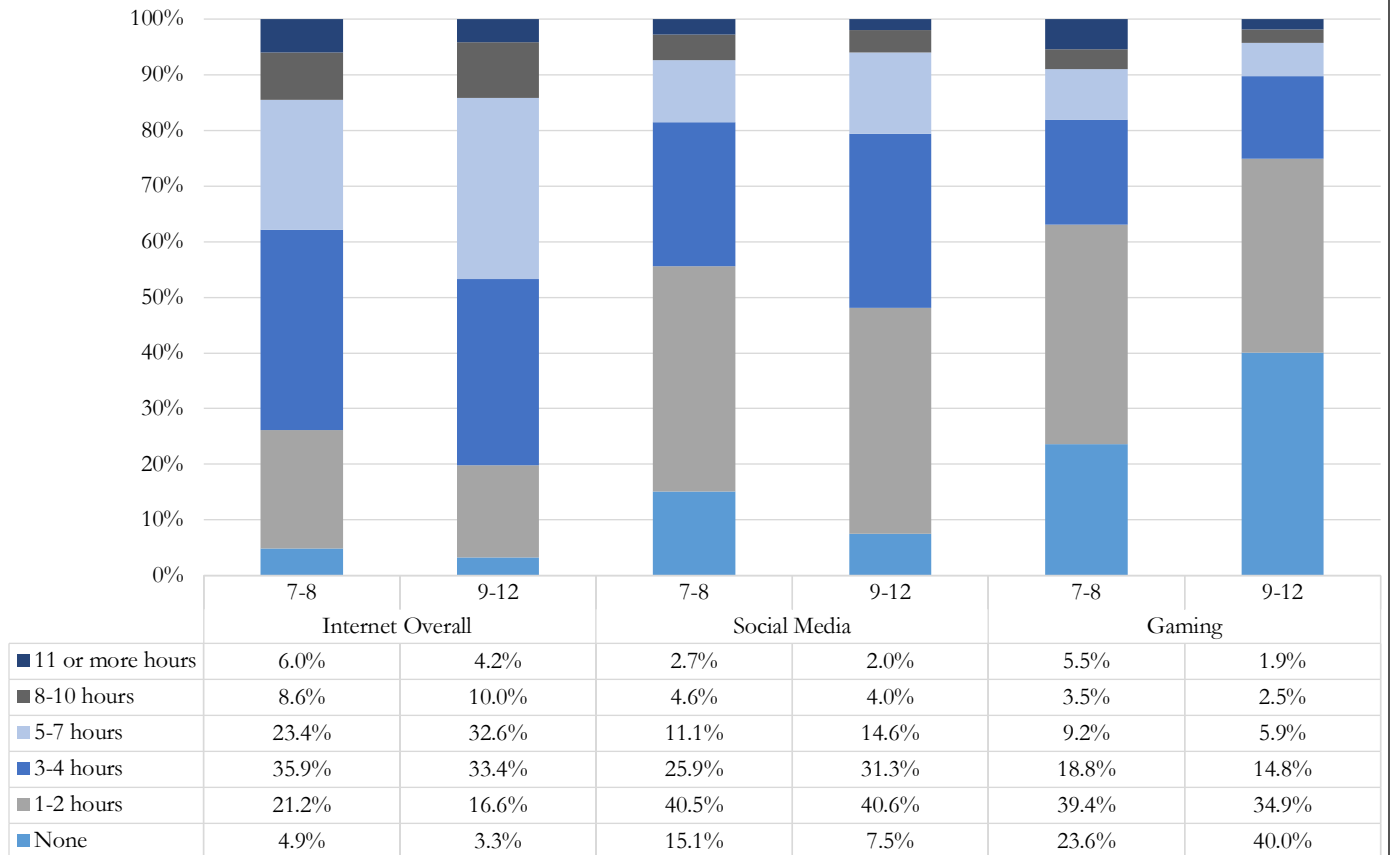


Grade 7-8	86.2%	79.2%	67.0%	76.4%
Grade 9-12	88.7%	84.6%	72.8%	81.7%
Grade 7-12	87.8%	82.8%	70.8%	79.9%

Smartphone and Social Media Age of Access

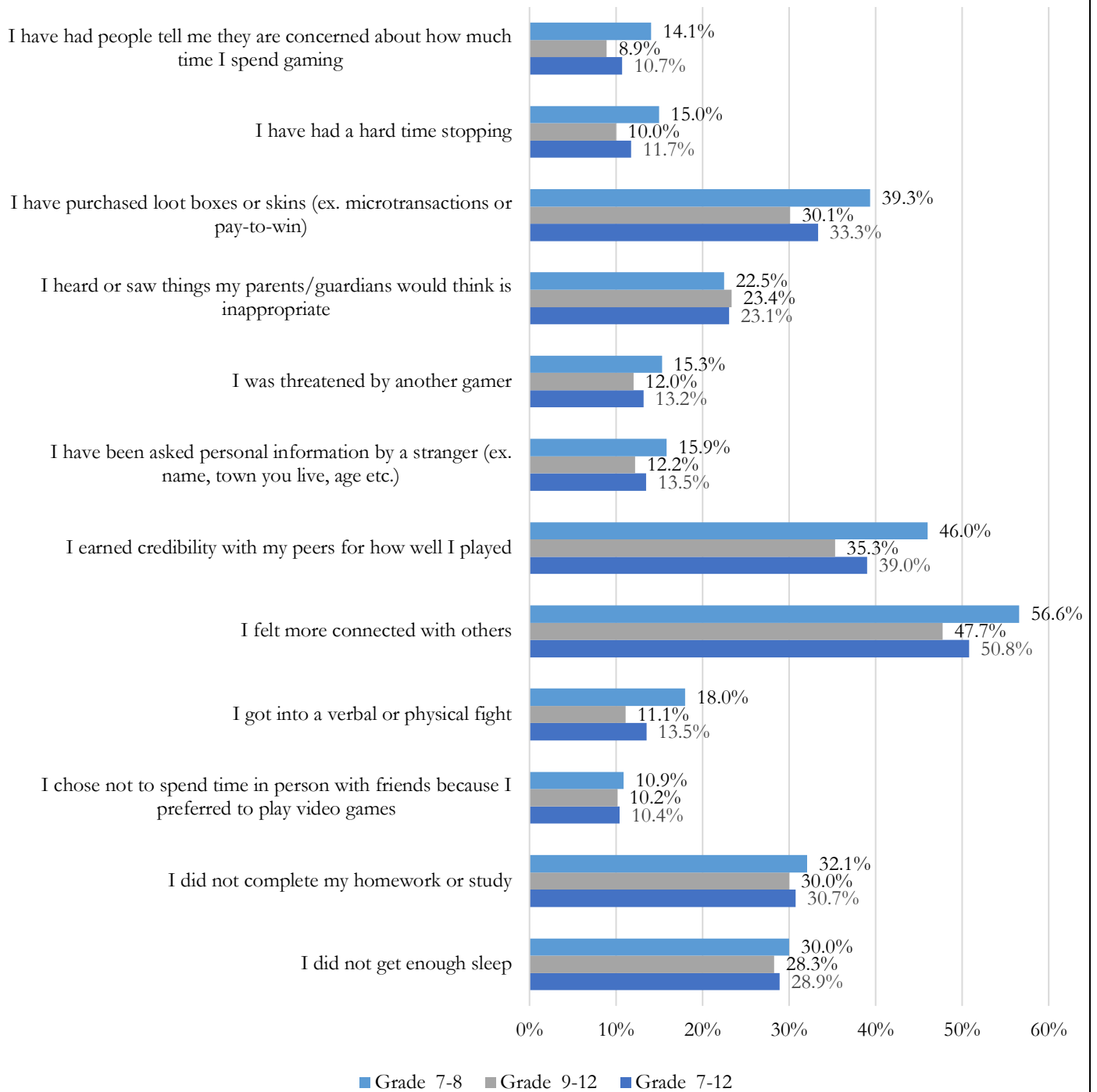


Daily Hours Using Internet, Social Media, or Gaming

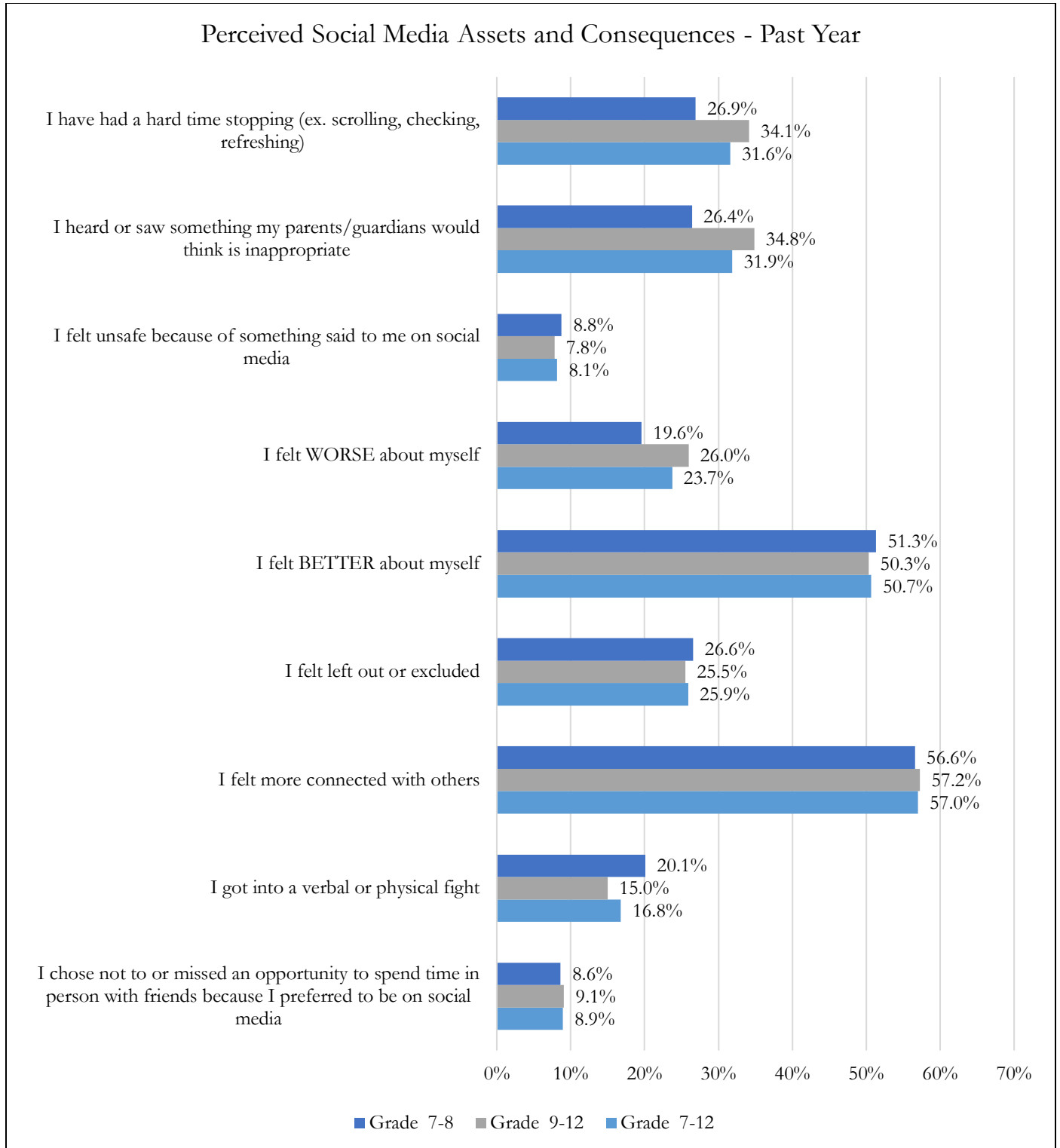


Gaming:

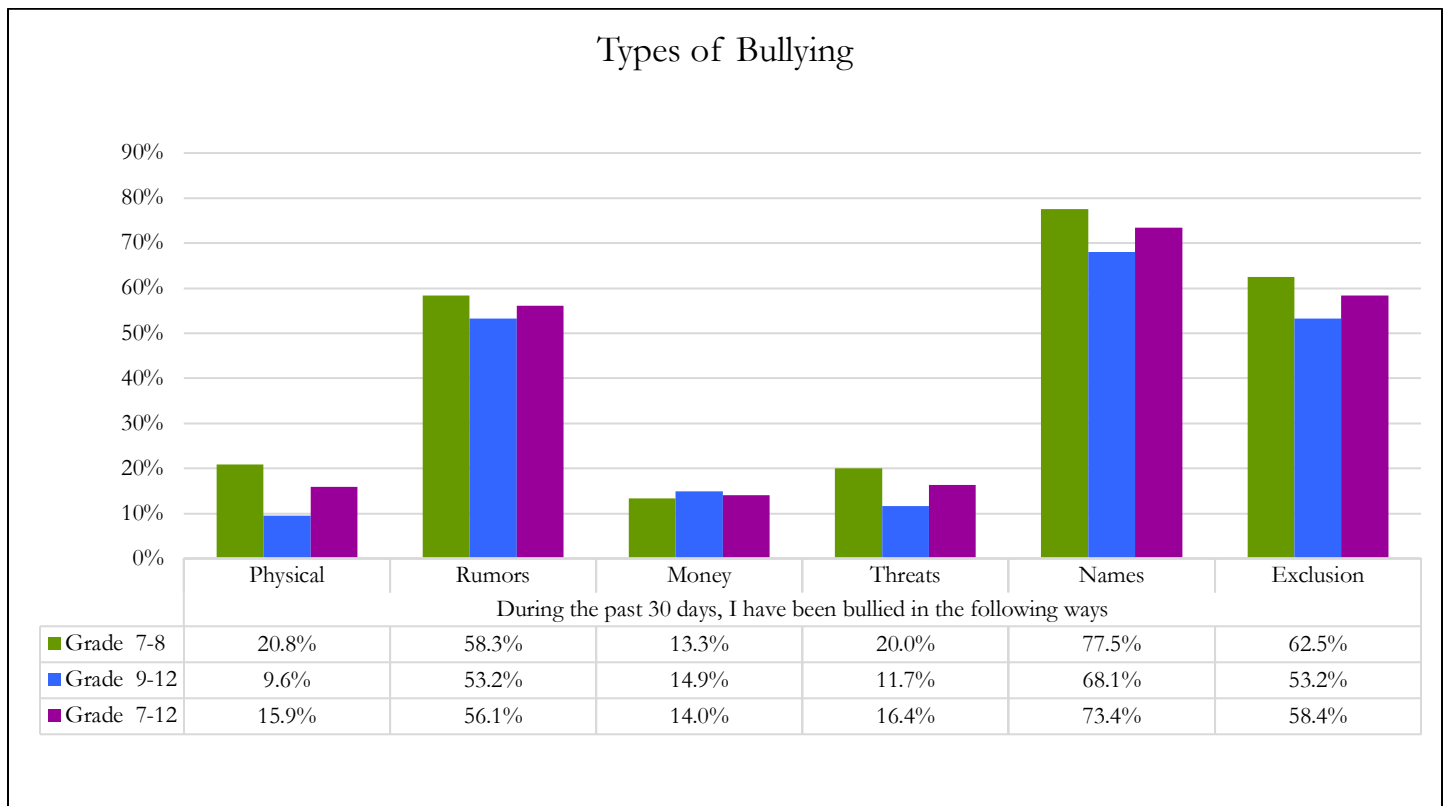
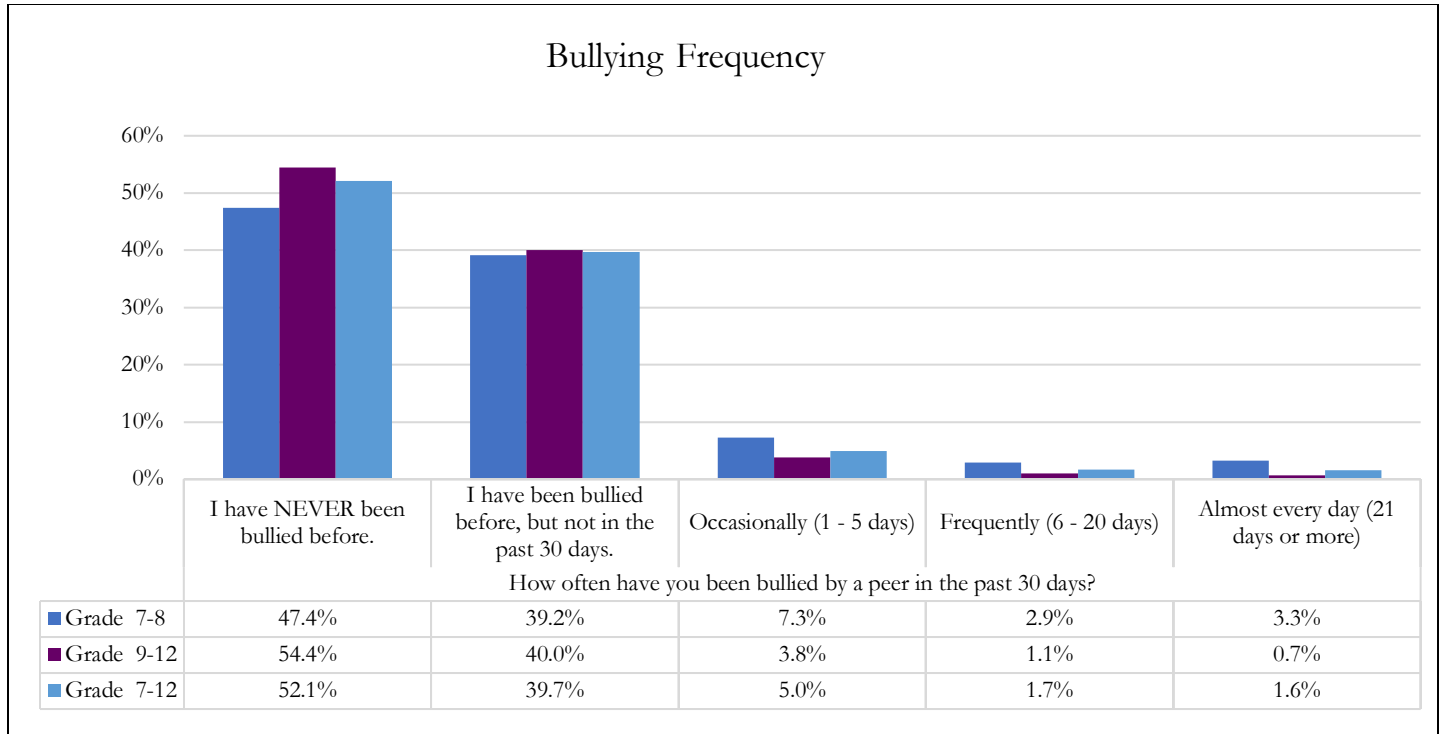
Perceived Gaming Assets and Consequences - Past Year



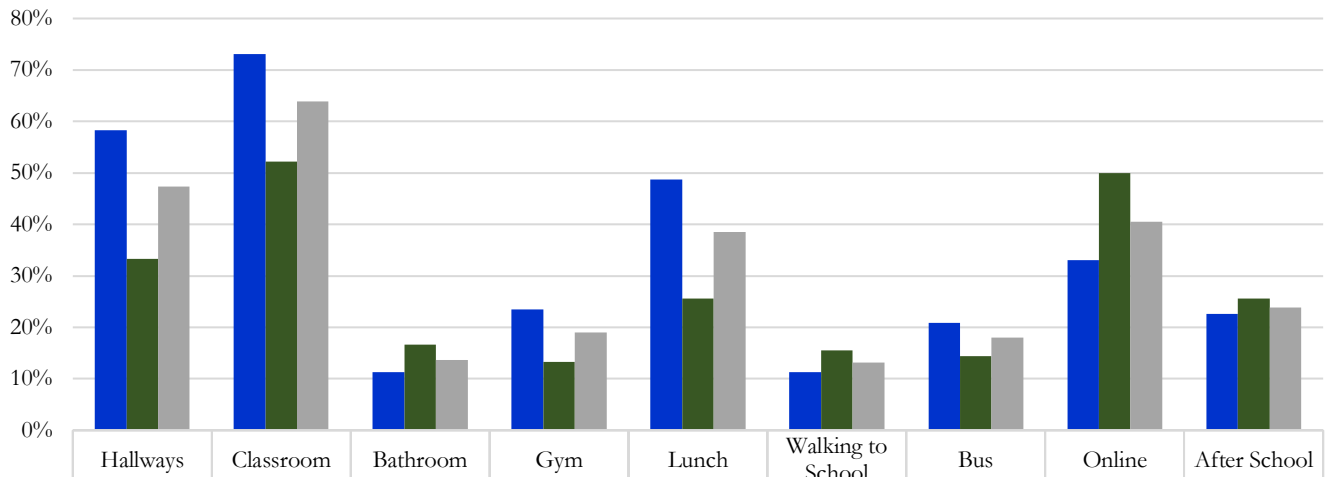
Social Media:



Bullying:



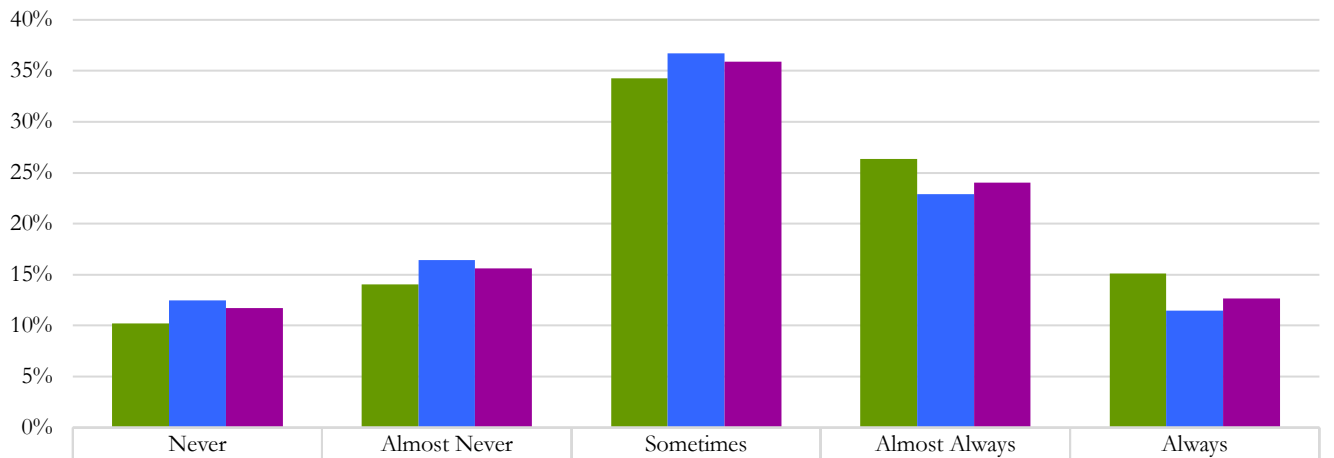
Locations of Bullying



In the past 30 days, I have been bullied in the following places (Select all that apply):

■ Grade 7-8	58.3%	73.0%	11.3%	23.5%	48.7%	11.3%	20.9%	33.0%	22.6%
■ Grade 9-12	33.3%	52.2%	16.7%	13.3%	25.6%	15.6%	14.4%	50.0%	25.6%
■ Grade 7-12	47.3%	63.9%	13.7%	19.0%	38.5%	13.2%	18.0%	40.5%	23.9%

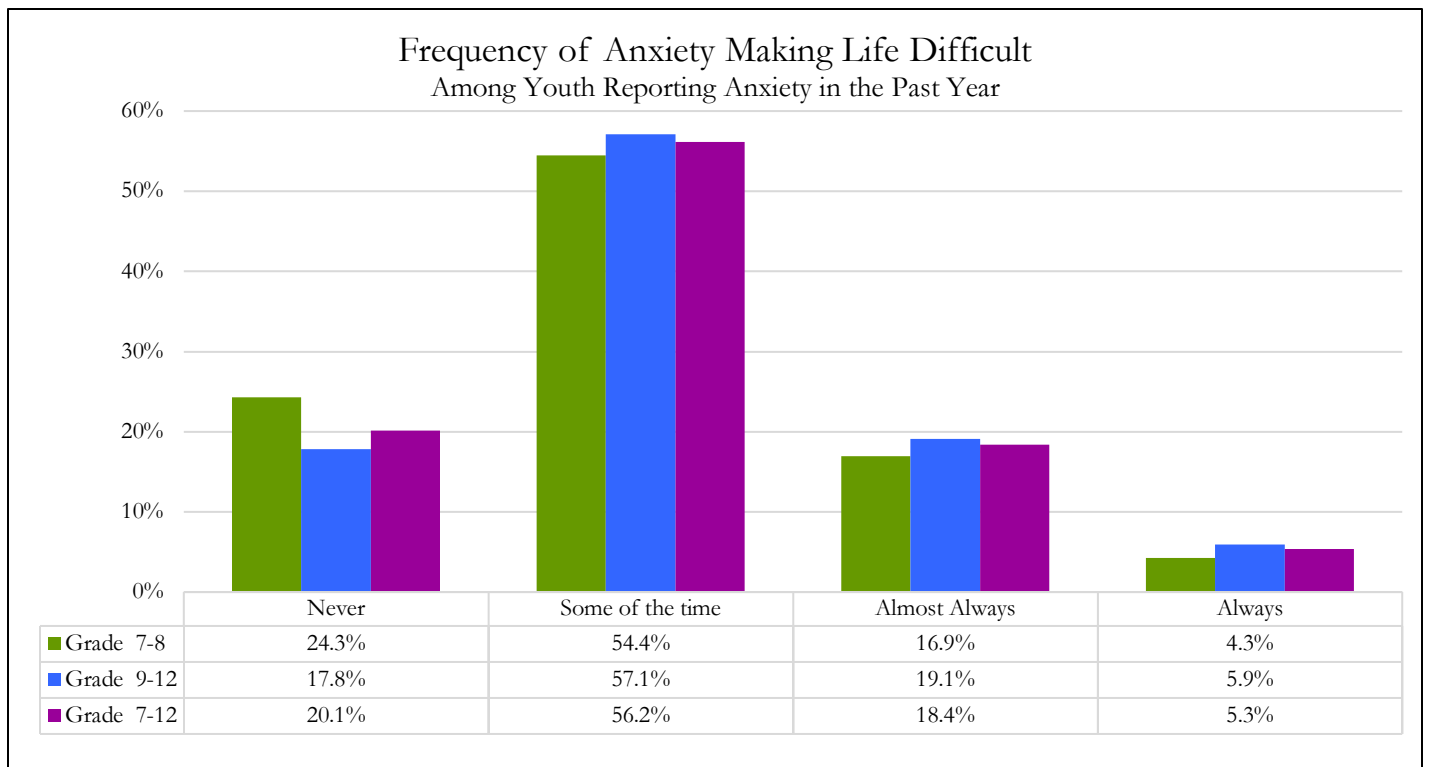
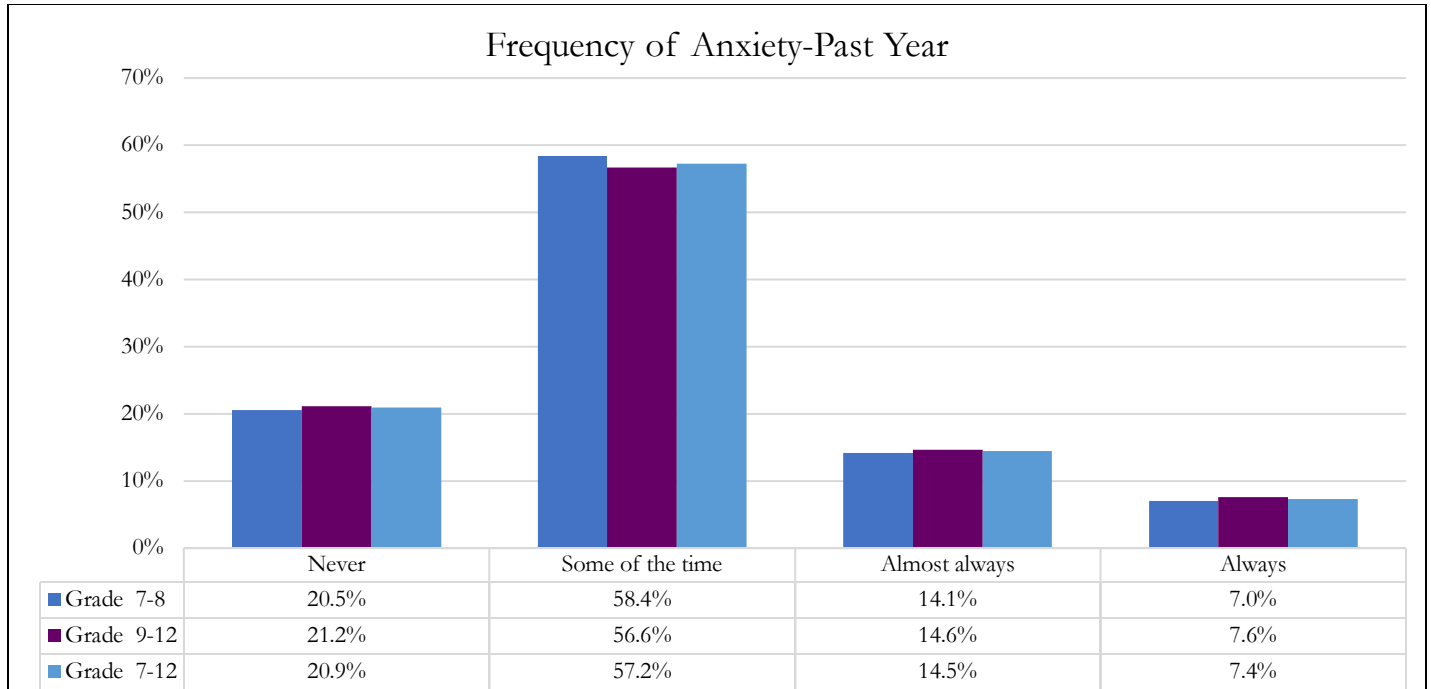
Frequency of Teachers/Adults Intervening When Bullying Occurs



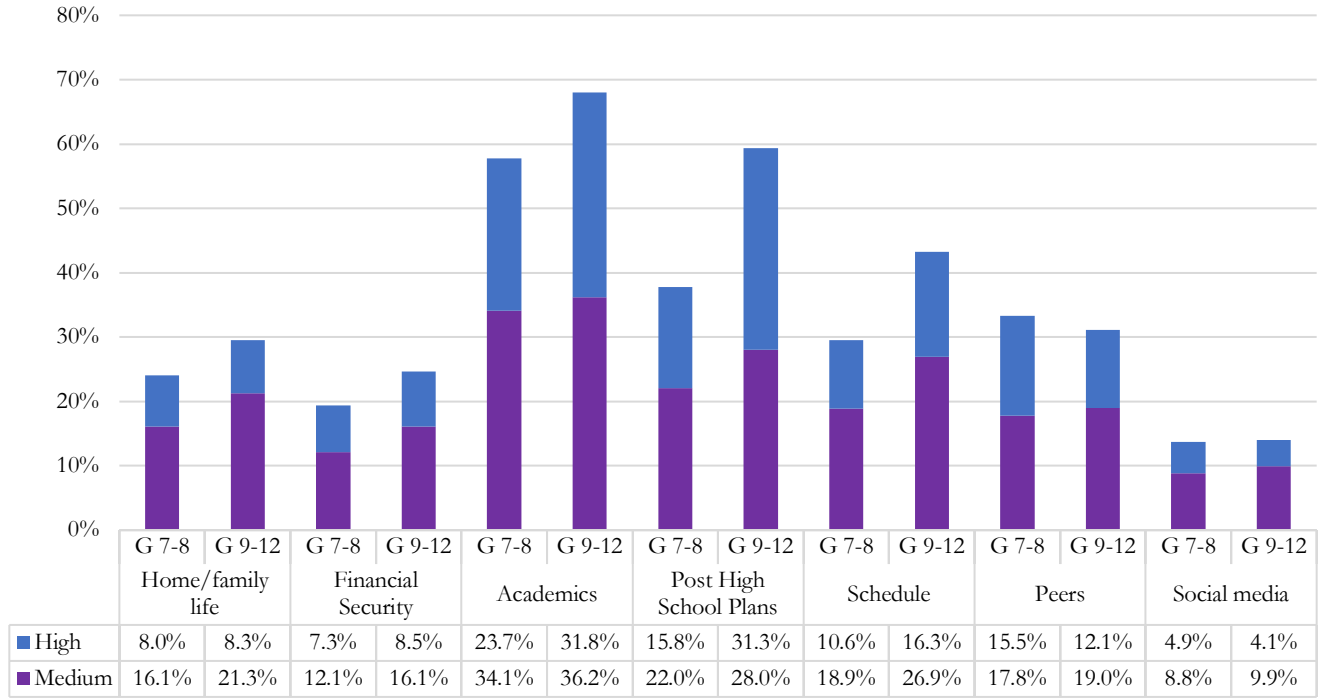
How often do the teachers or other adults at school try to stop it when they see that a student is being bullied at school?

■ Grade 7-8	10.2%	14.0%	34.3%	26.4%	15.1%
■ Grade 9-12	12.5%	16.4%	36.7%	22.9%	11.5%
■ Grade 7-12	11.7%	15.6%	35.9%	24.1%	12.7%

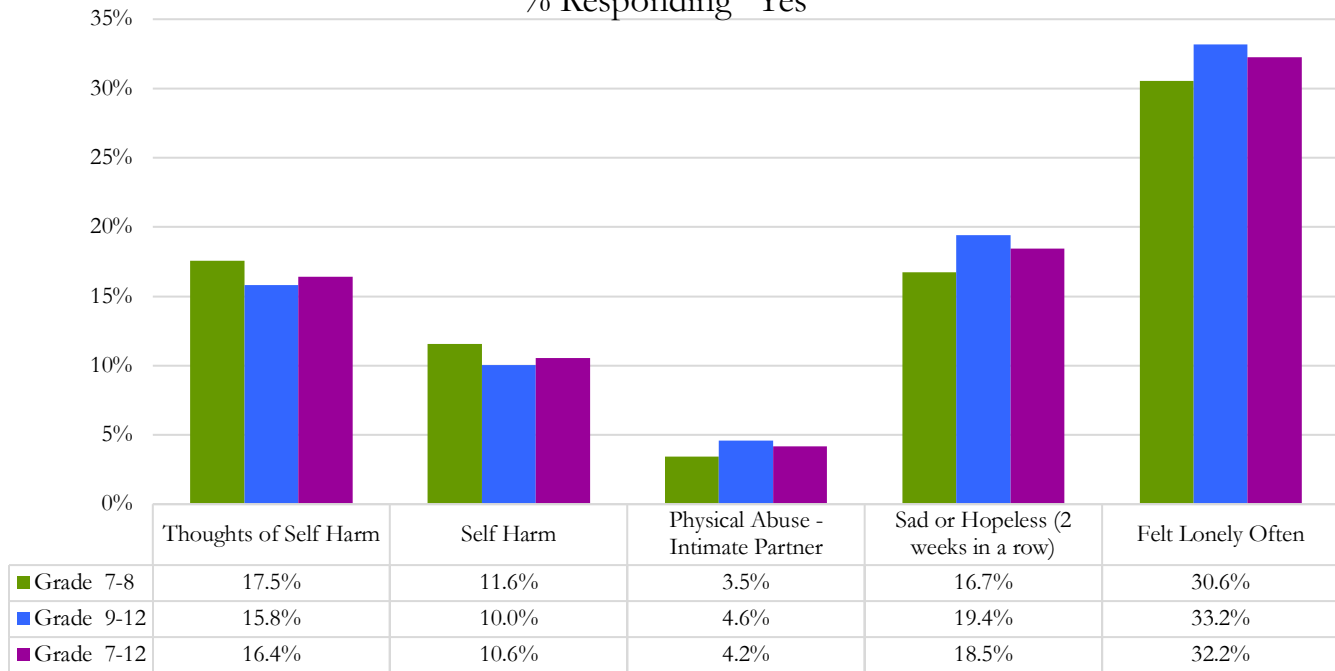
Emotional Health:



Sources of Stress, Anxiety, or Worry

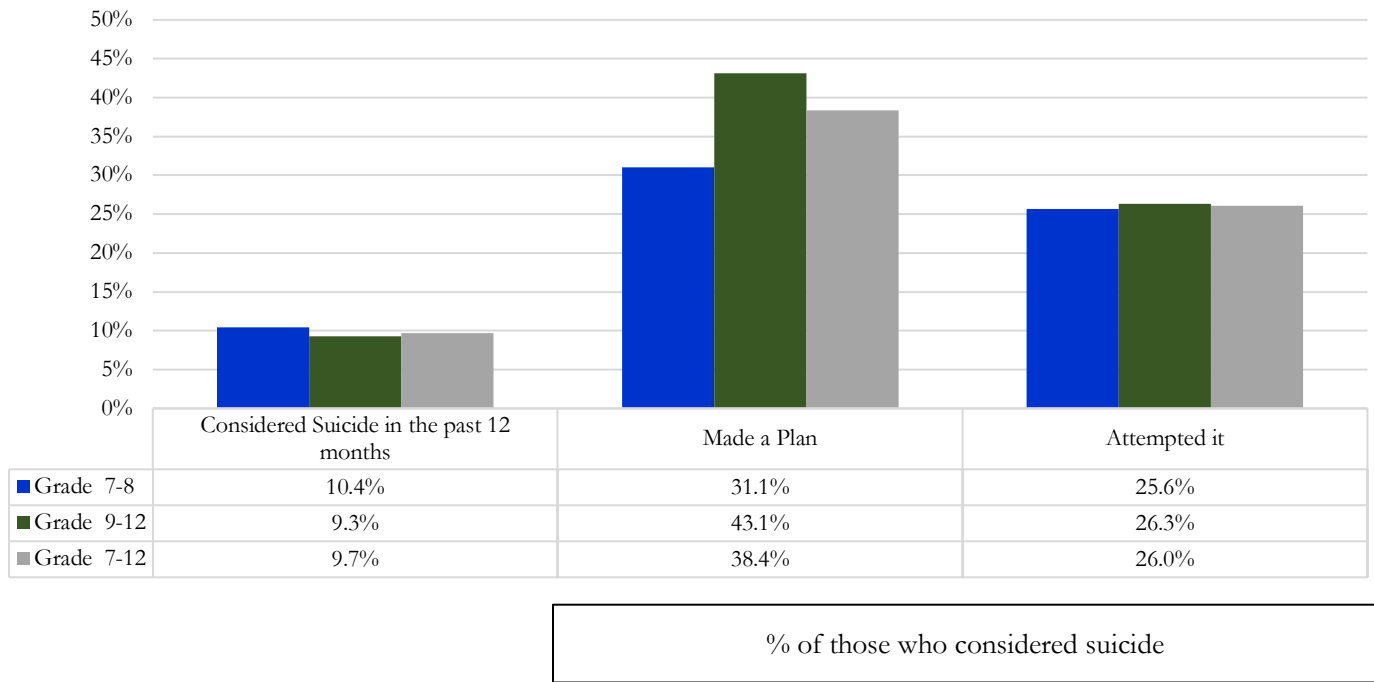


Other Emotional Health Indicators in the Past Year % Responding "Yes"

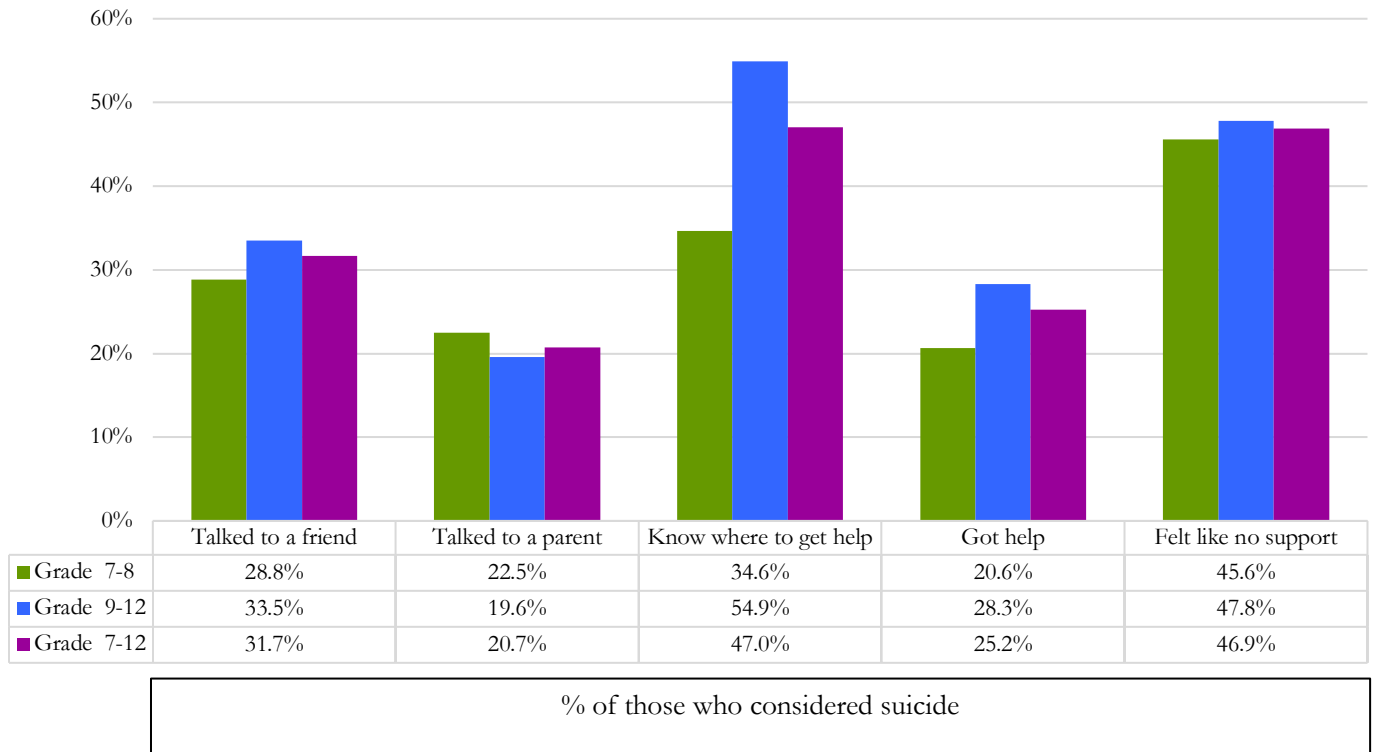


Note: State data for grades 9-12 (CSHS 2023) indicate that 35.2% of students felt sad or hopeless for 2 or more weeks in a row and 15.7% considered suicide in the past year.

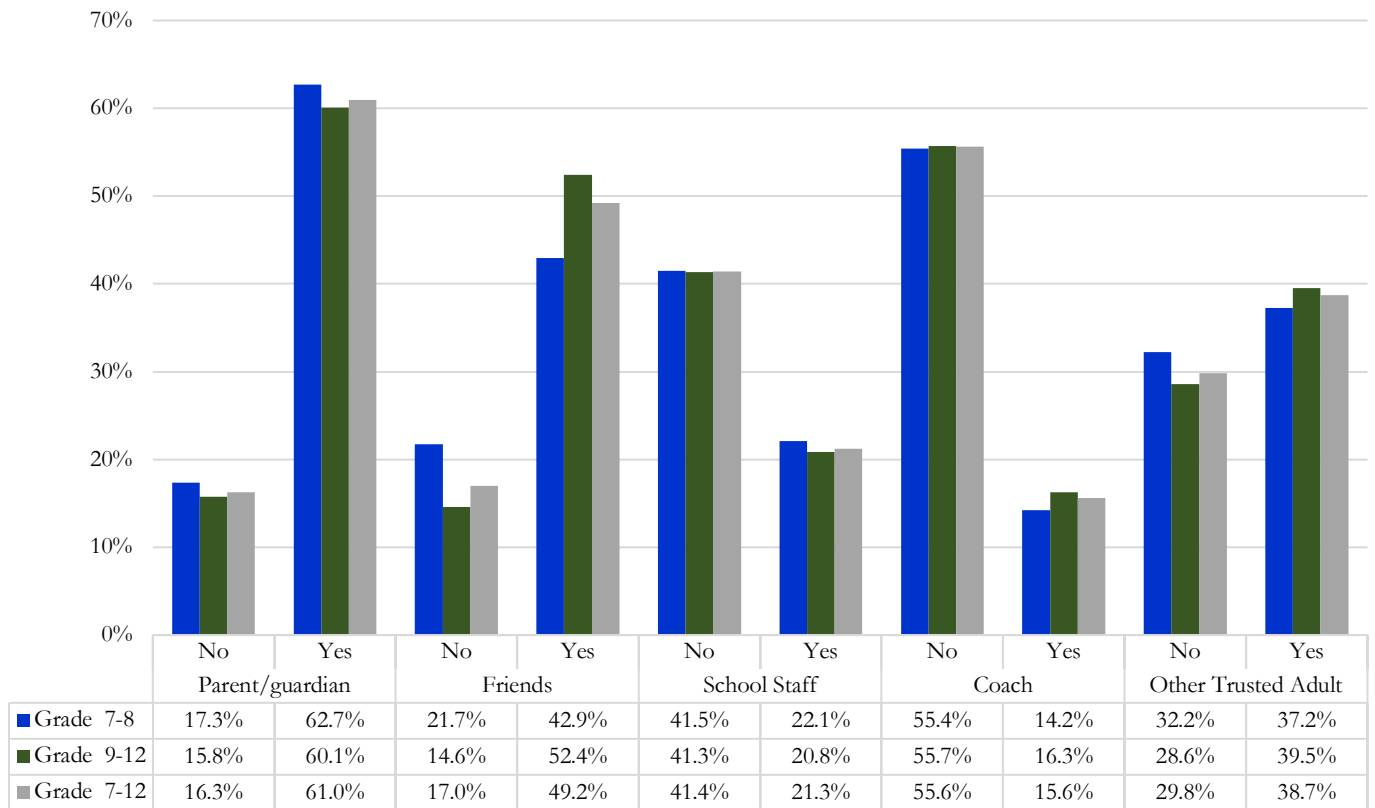
Understanding Suicide



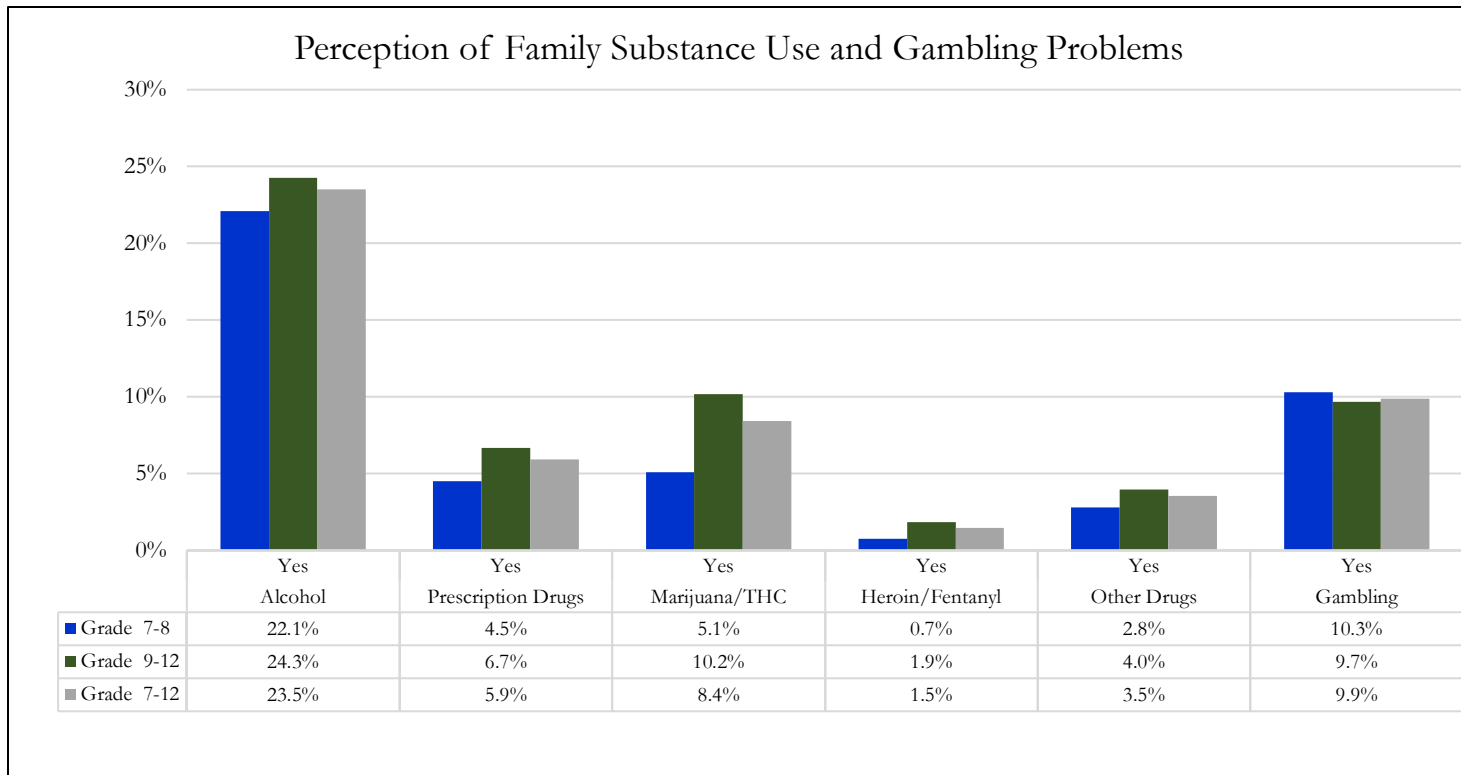
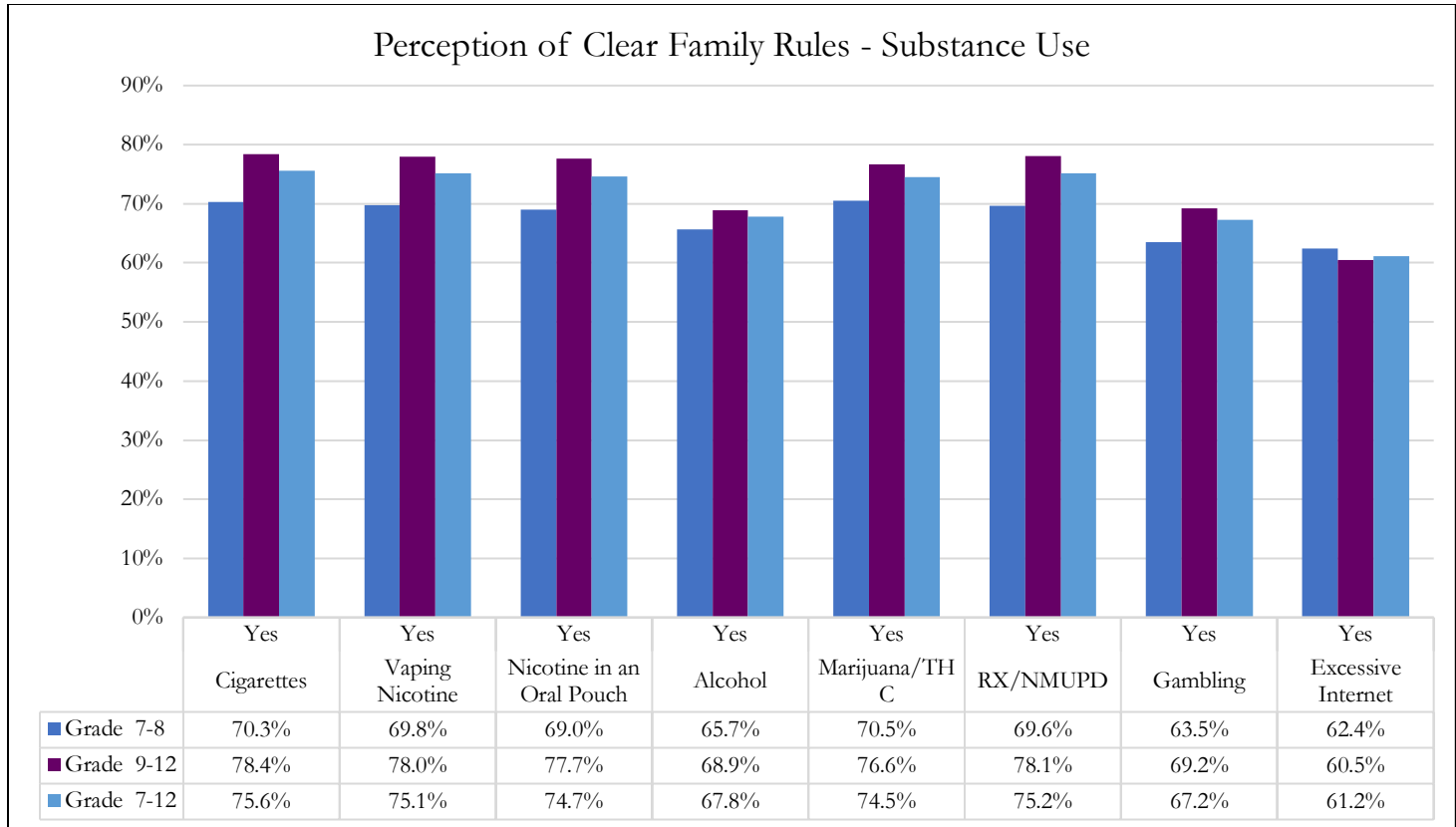
Suicide and Perceptions of Supports



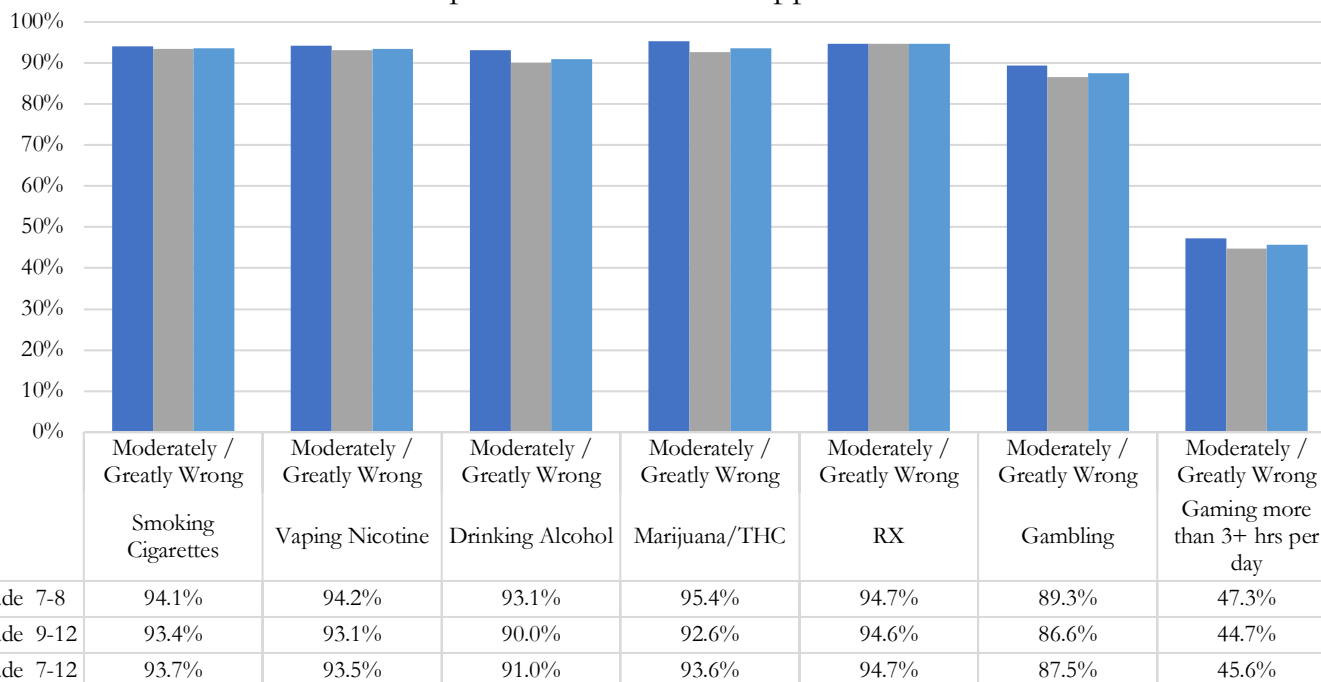
Comfort Seeking Help by Source-Family and School



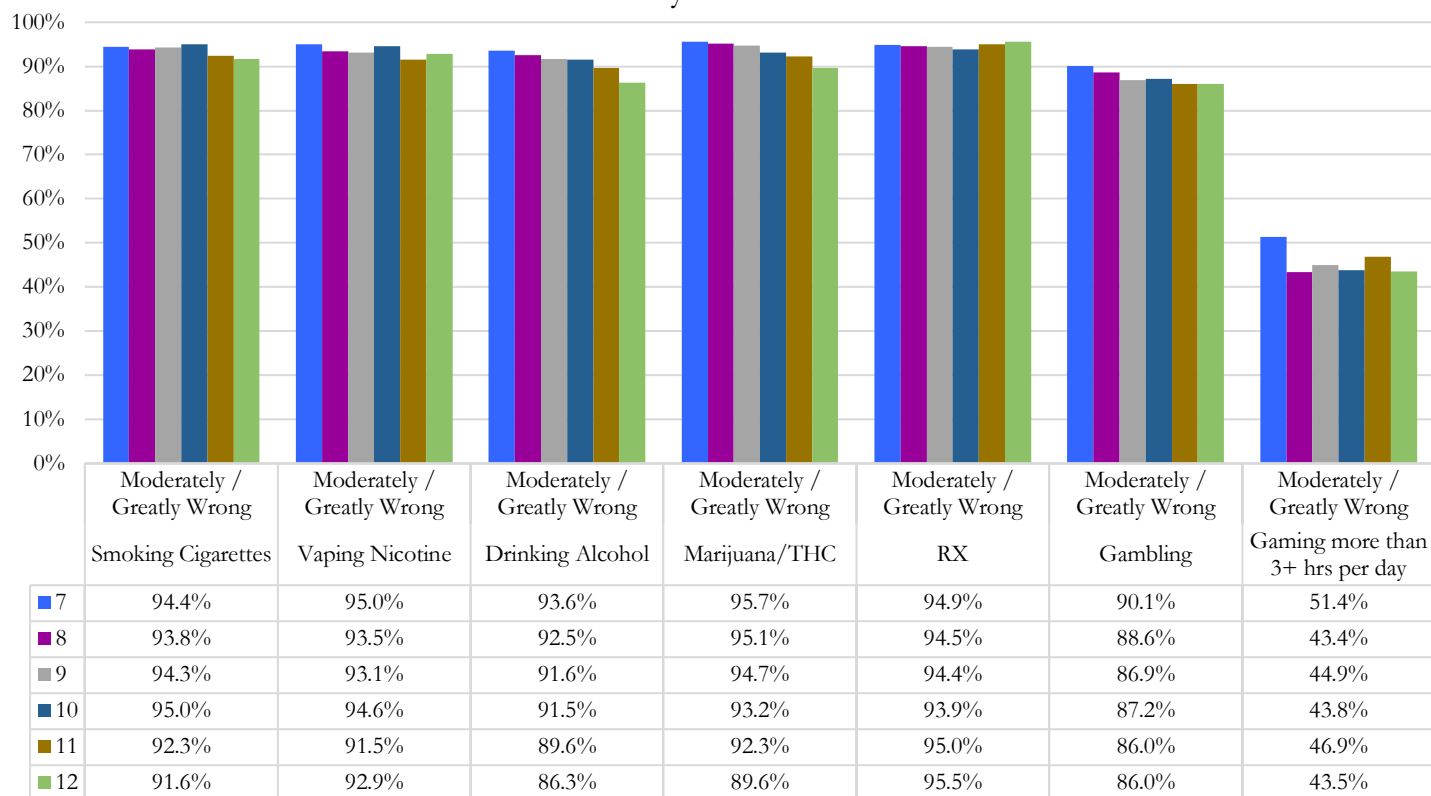
Perceptions of Substance Use, Family Rules and Experiences:



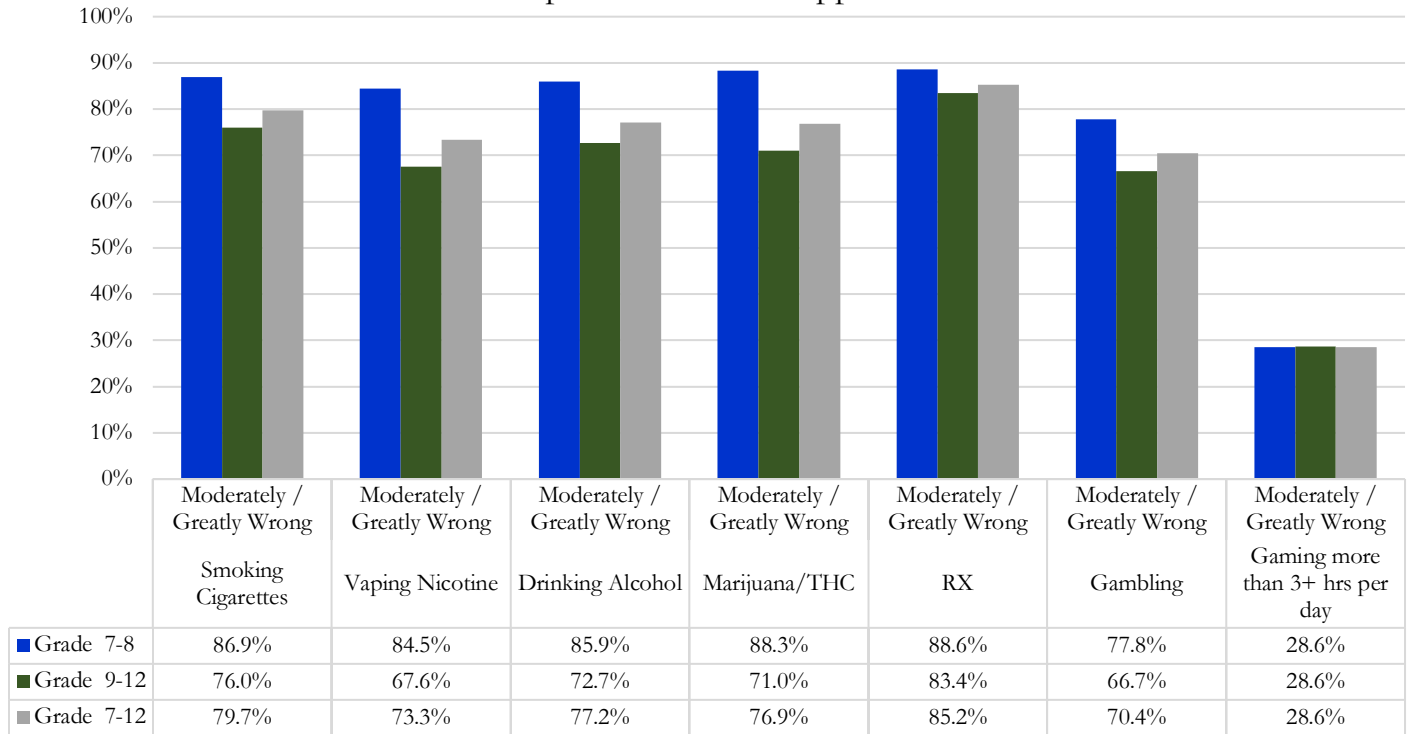
Perception of Parental Disapproval



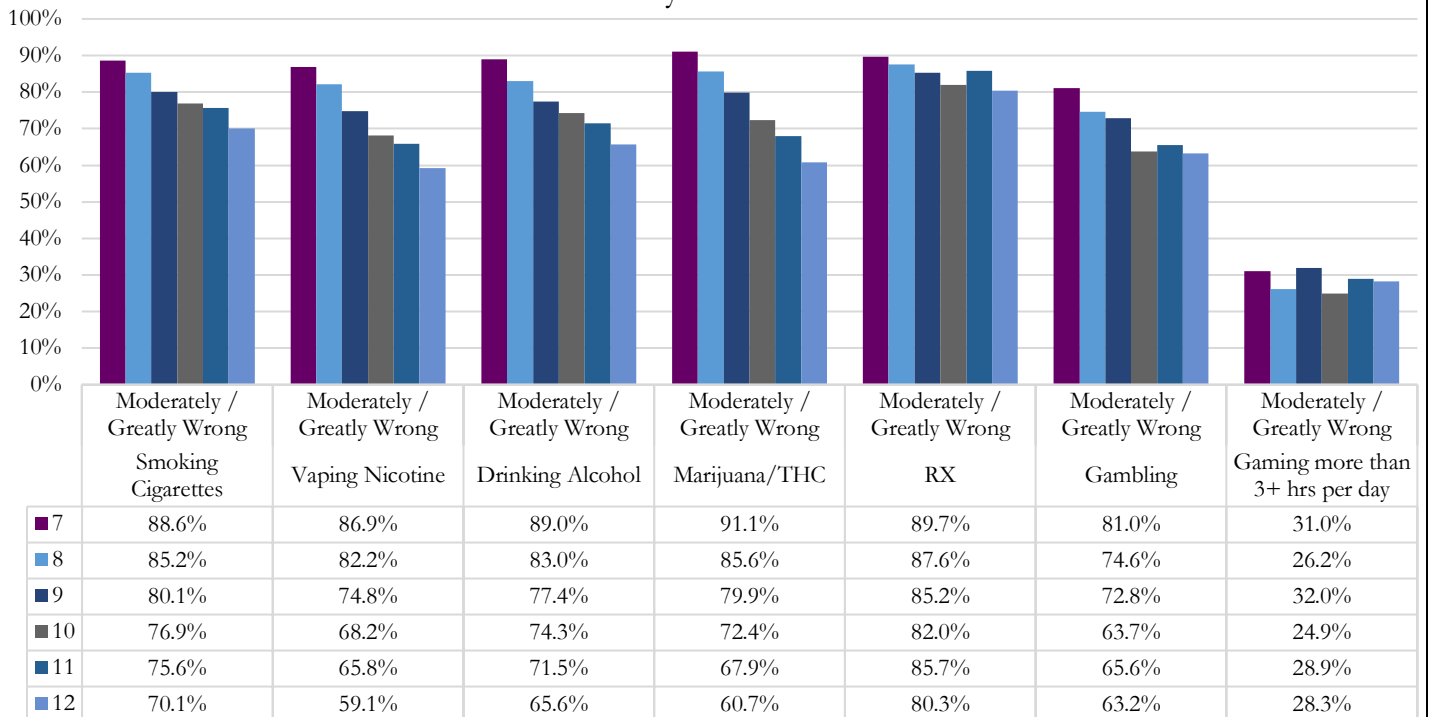
Perception of Parental Disapproval By Grade



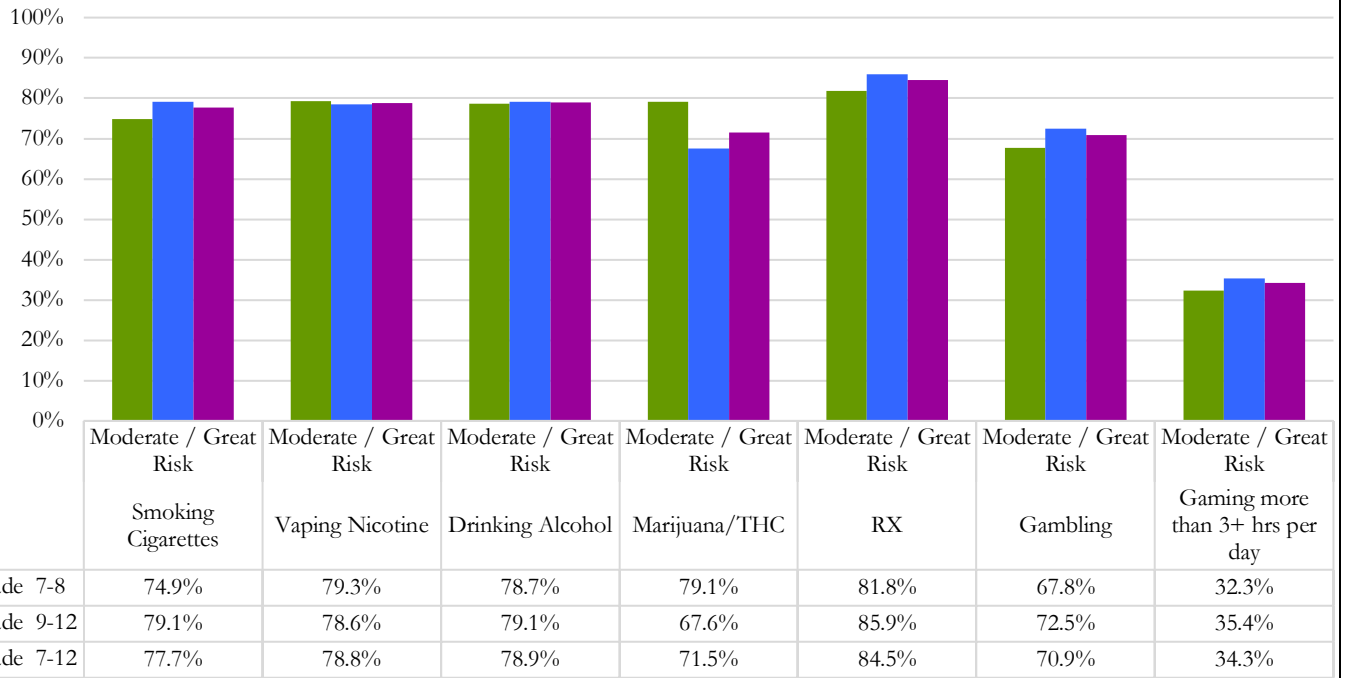
Perception of Peer Disapproval



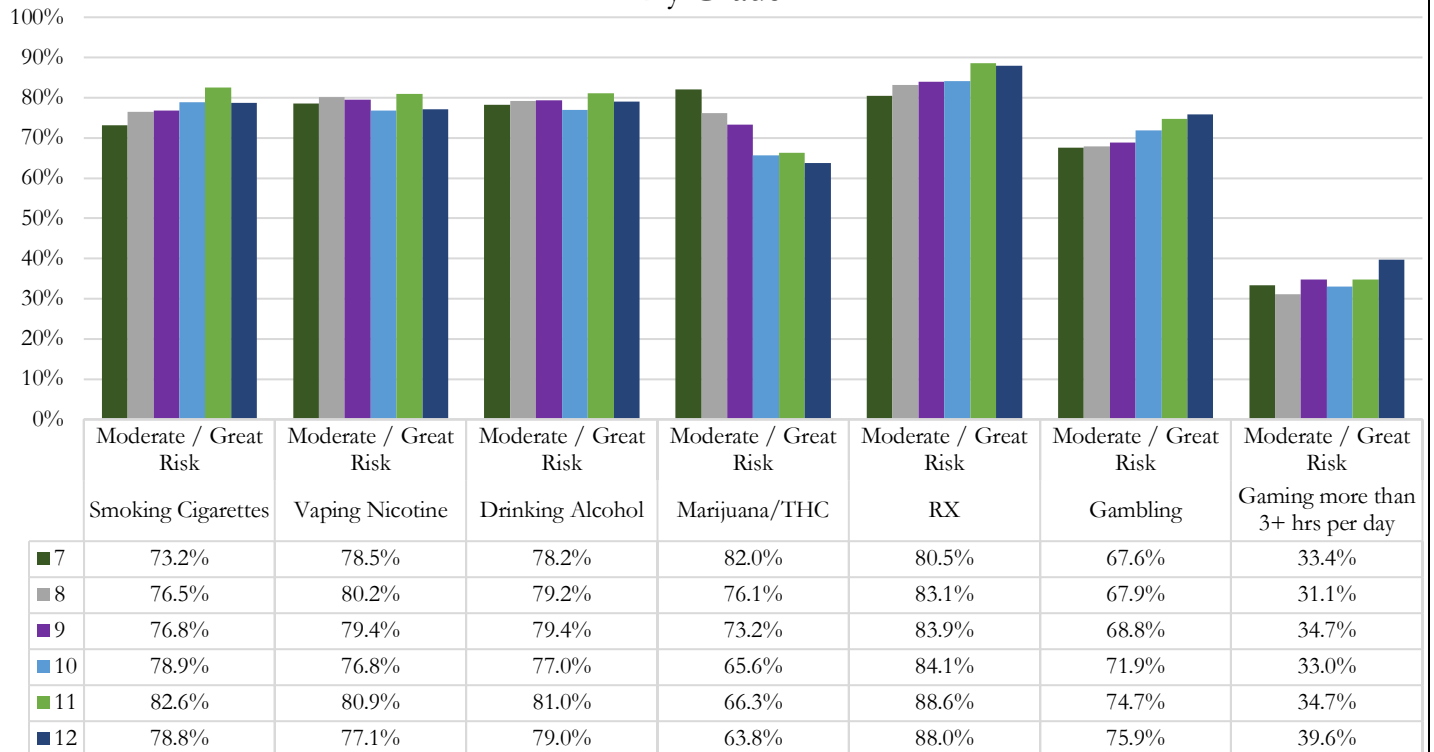
Perception of Peer Disapproval By Grade



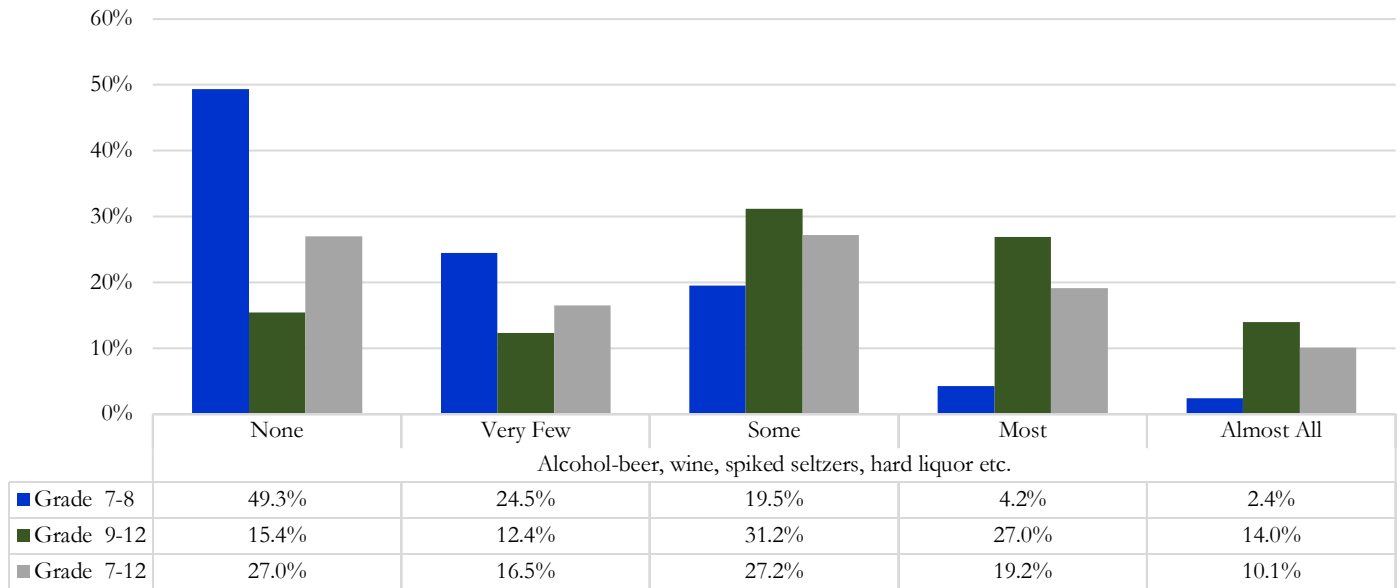
Perception of Risk/Harm



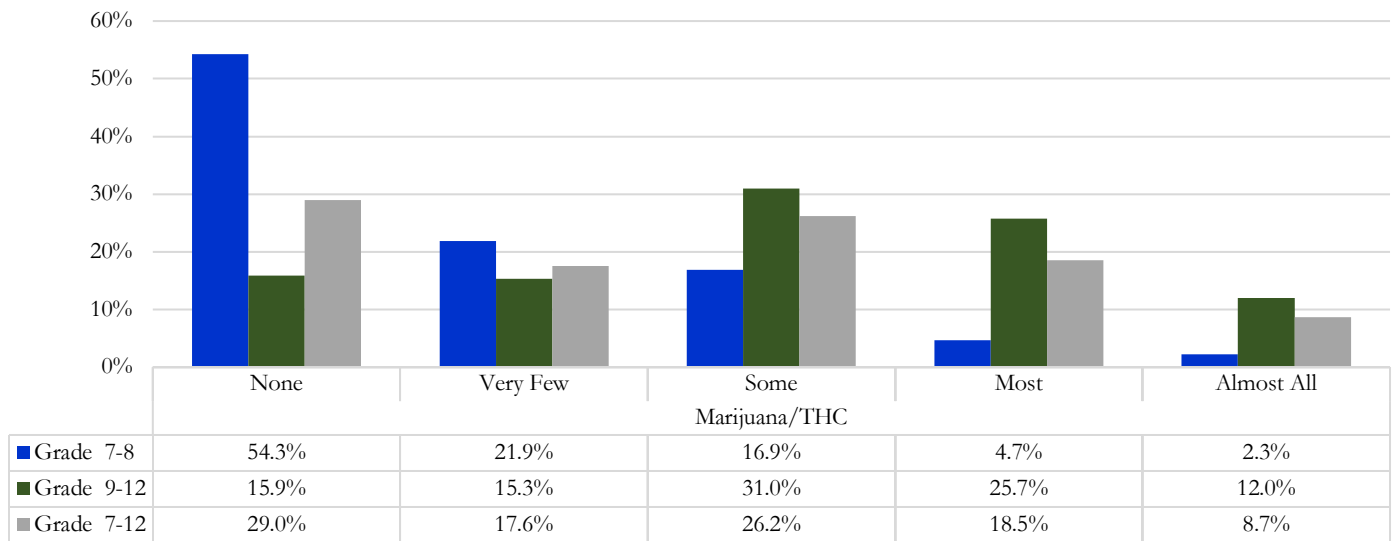
Perception of Risk / Harm By Grade



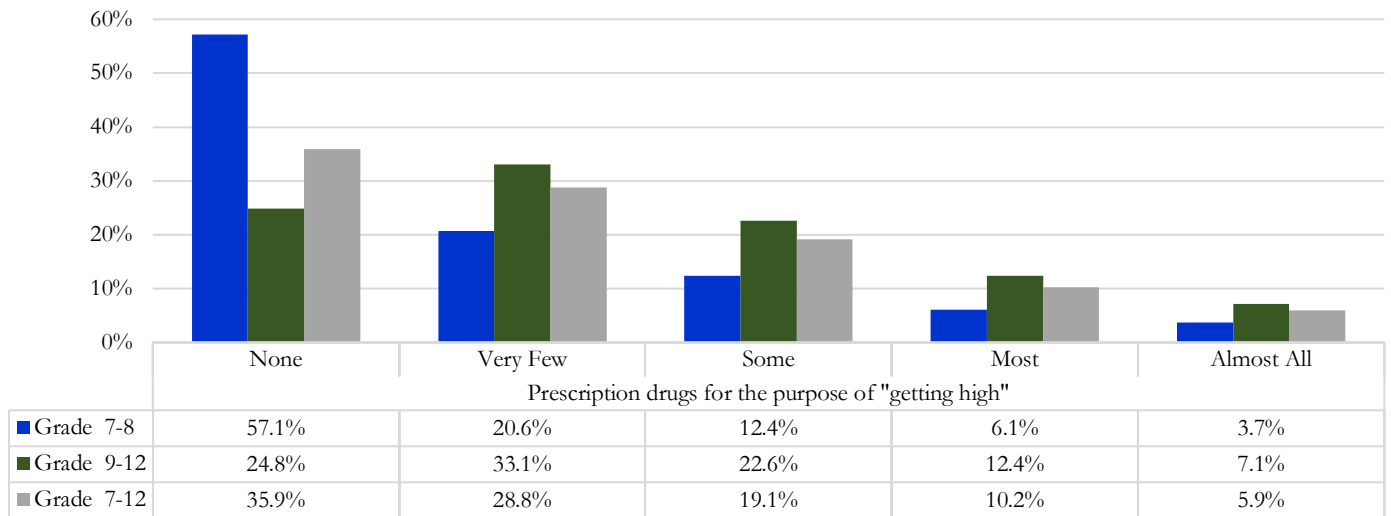
Perception of Peer Alcohol Use in Past Month



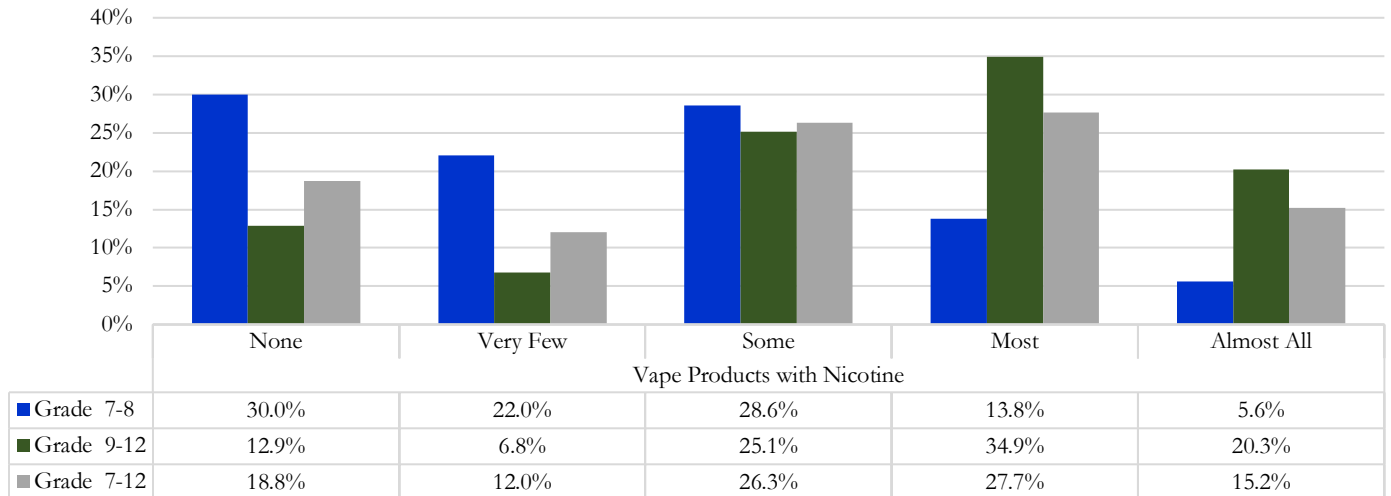
Perception of Peer Marijuana Use in Past Month



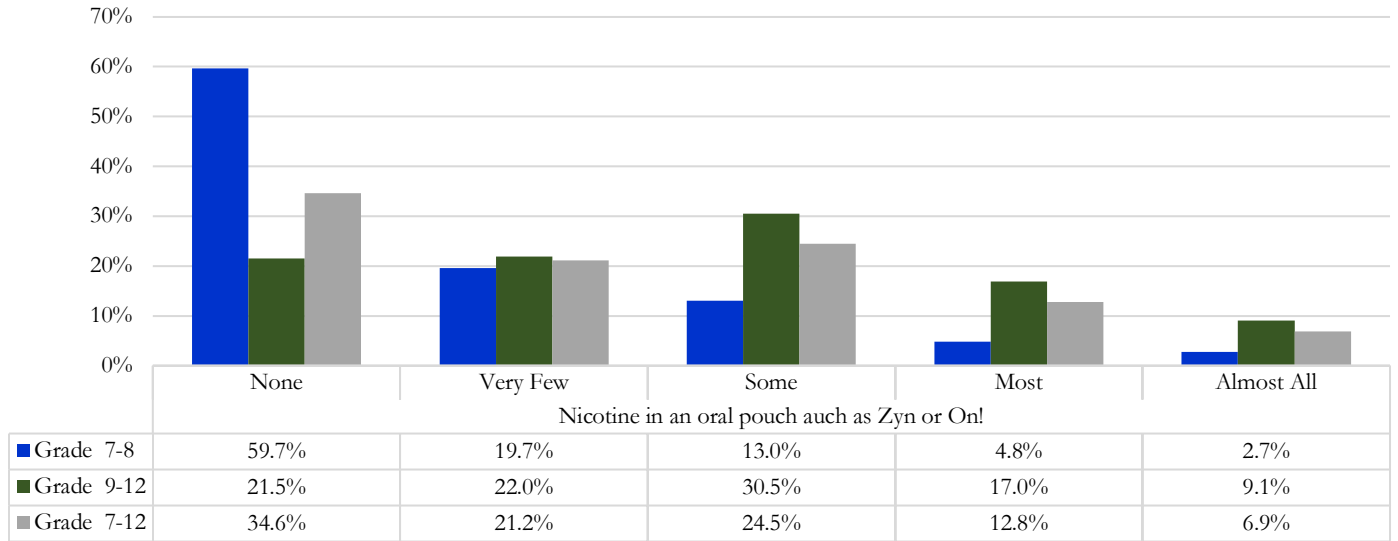
Perception of Peer Prescription Drug Use in Past Month



Perception of Peer Vape Product w/ Nicotine Use in Past Month

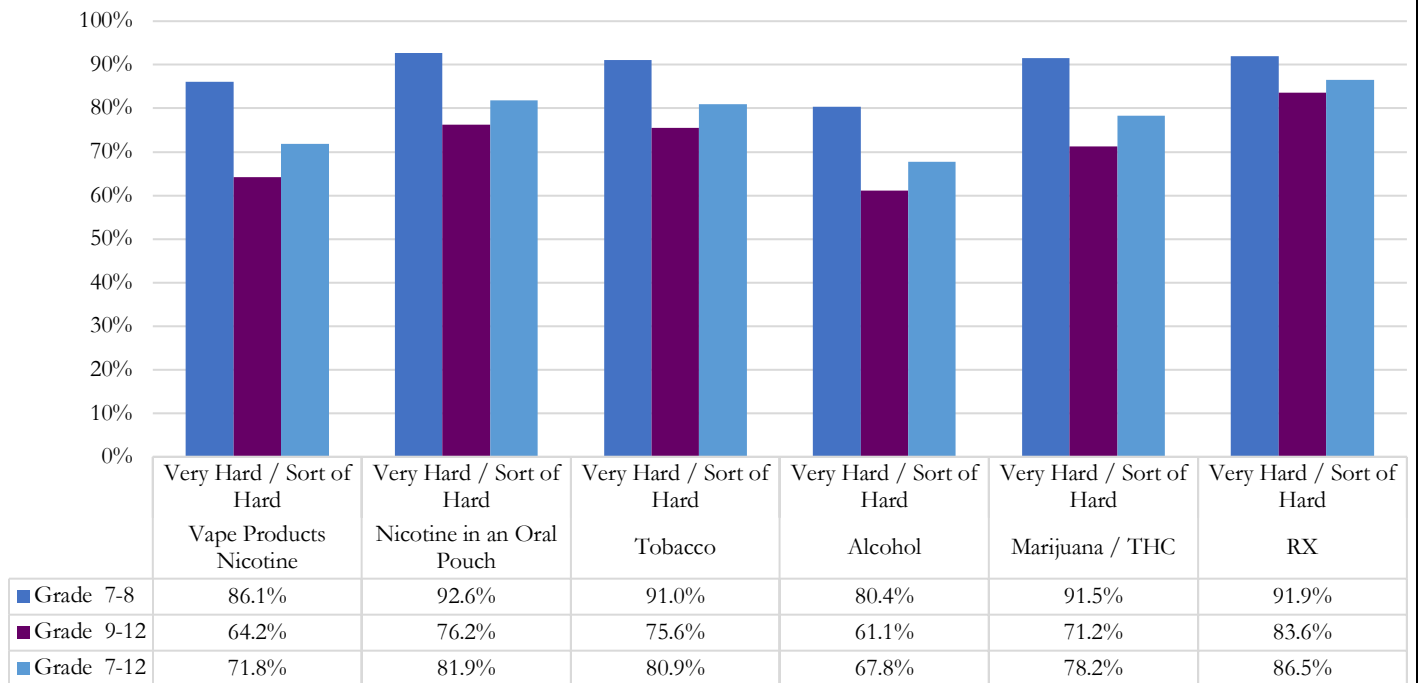


Perception of Peer Nicotine in an Oral Pouch Use in Past Month

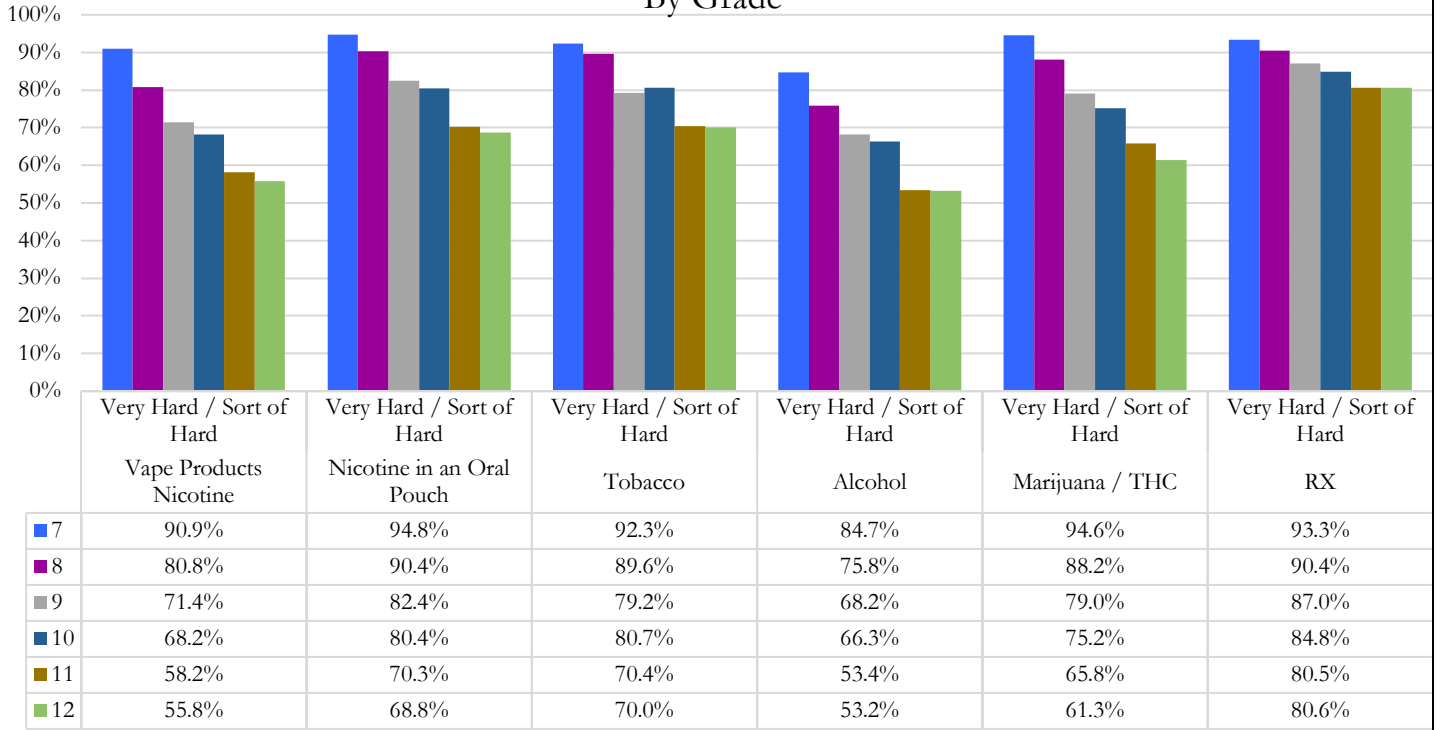


Ease of Access:

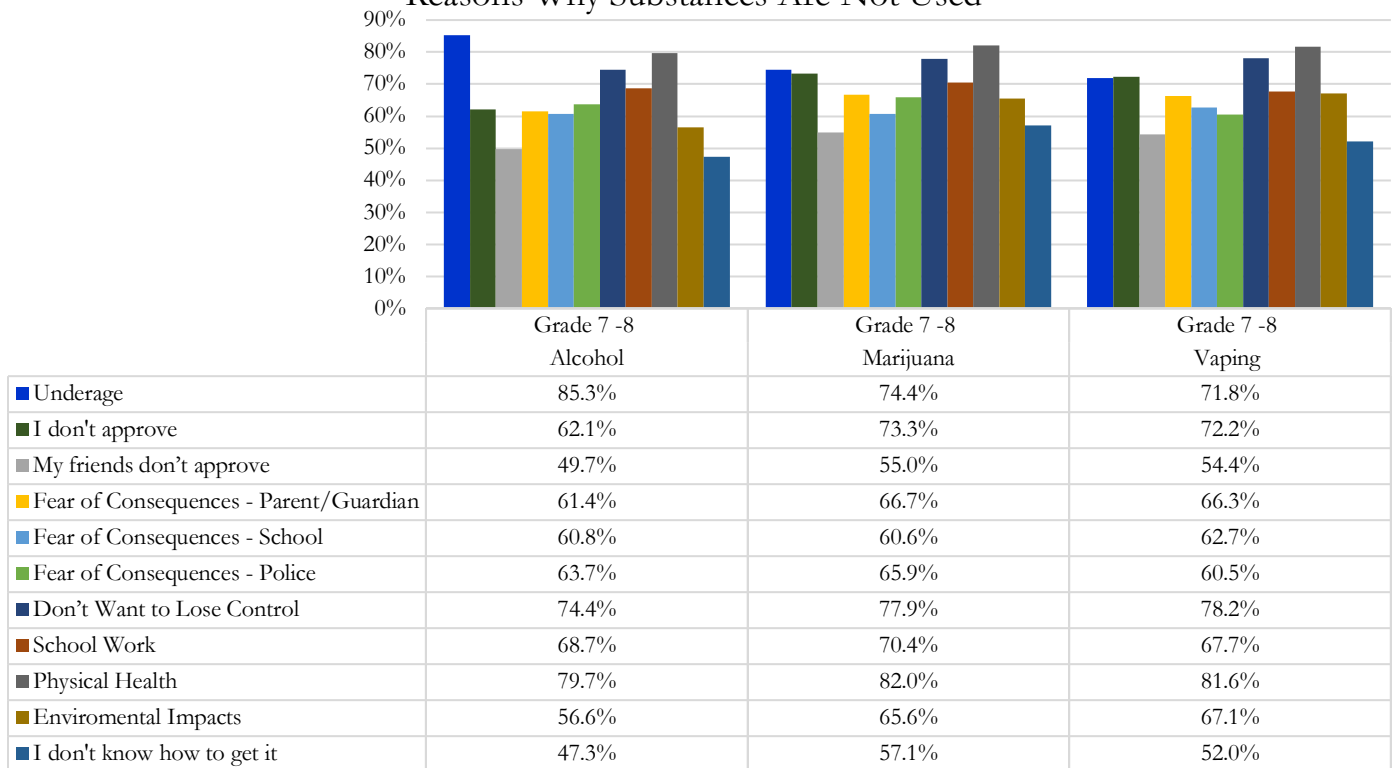
Perception of Access



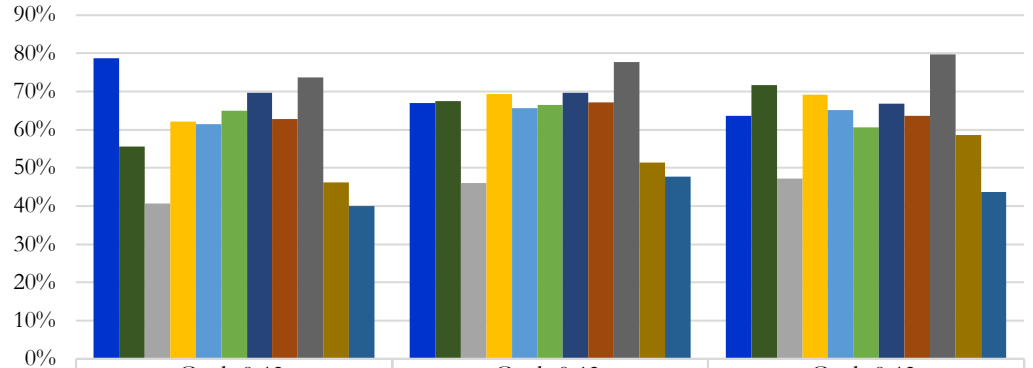
Perception of Access By Grade



Reasons Why Substances Are Not Used

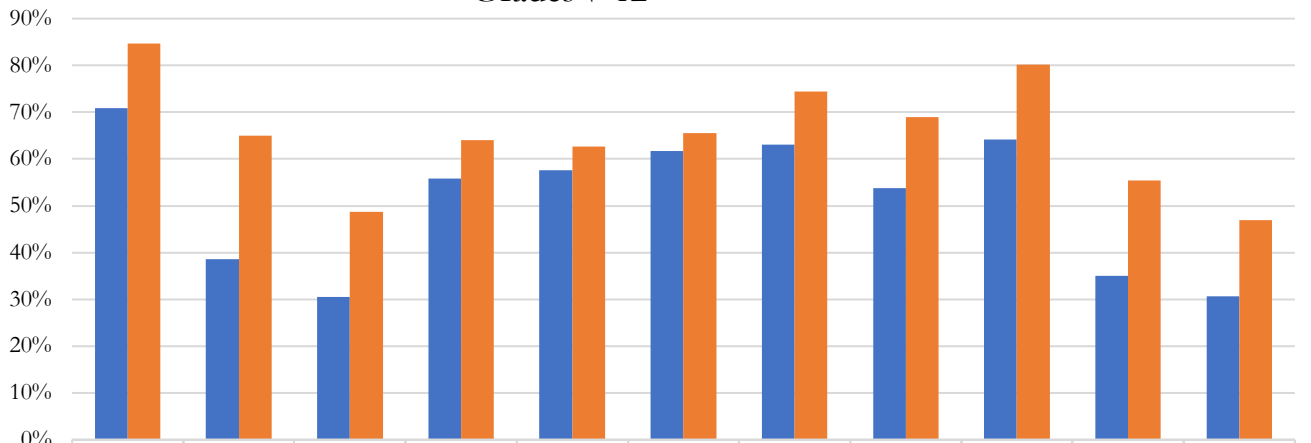


Reasons Why Substances are not Used



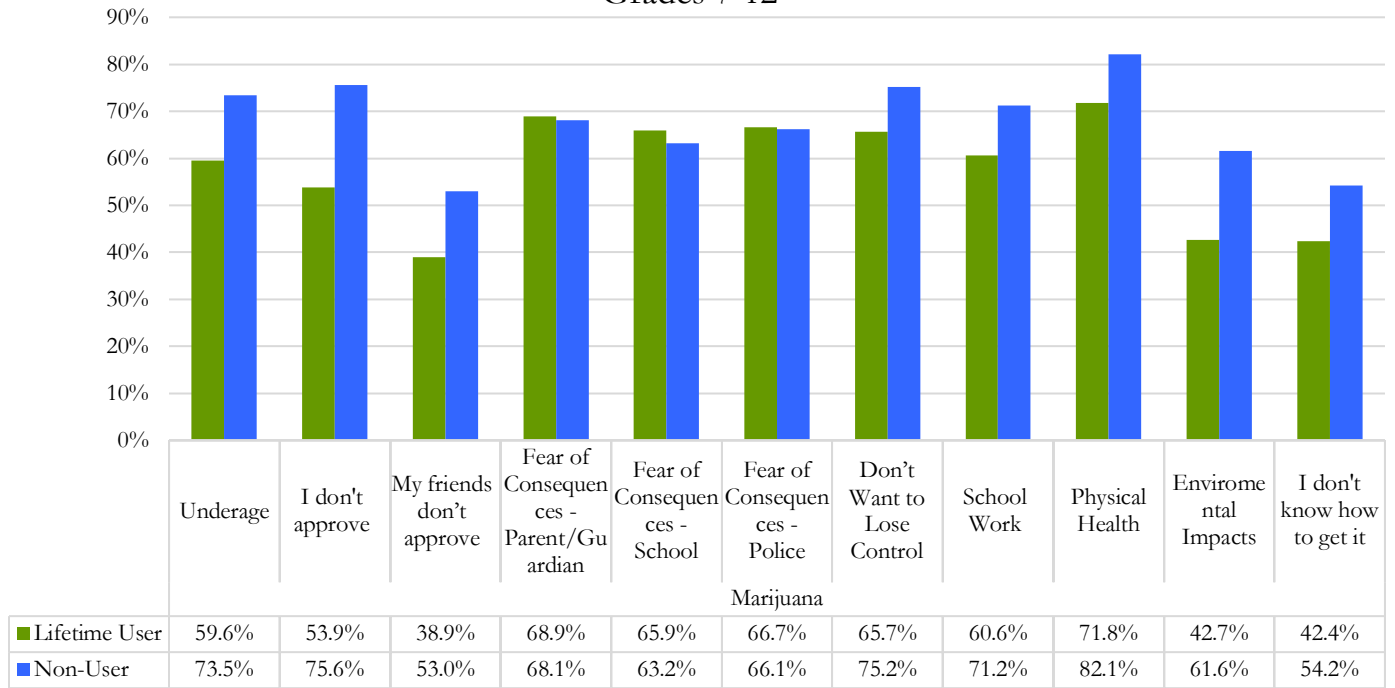
	Grade 9-12 Alcohol	Grade 9-12 Marijuana	Grade 9-12 Vaping
Underage	78.7%	67.1%	63.7%
I don't approve	55.6%	67.6%	71.7%
My friends don't approve	40.7%	46.1%	47.3%
Fear of Consequences - Parent/Guardian	62.1%	69.3%	69.3%
Fear of Consequences - School	61.5%	65.7%	65.1%
Fear of Consequences - Police	64.9%	66.5%	60.6%
Don't Want to Lose Control	69.7%	69.8%	66.8%
School Work	62.8%	67.1%	63.7%
Physical Health	73.8%	77.8%	79.7%
Enviromental Impacts	46.3%	51.4%	58.6%
I don't know how to get it	40.0%	47.7%	43.8%

Reasons Why Alcohol is not Used by Lifetime User Grades 7-12

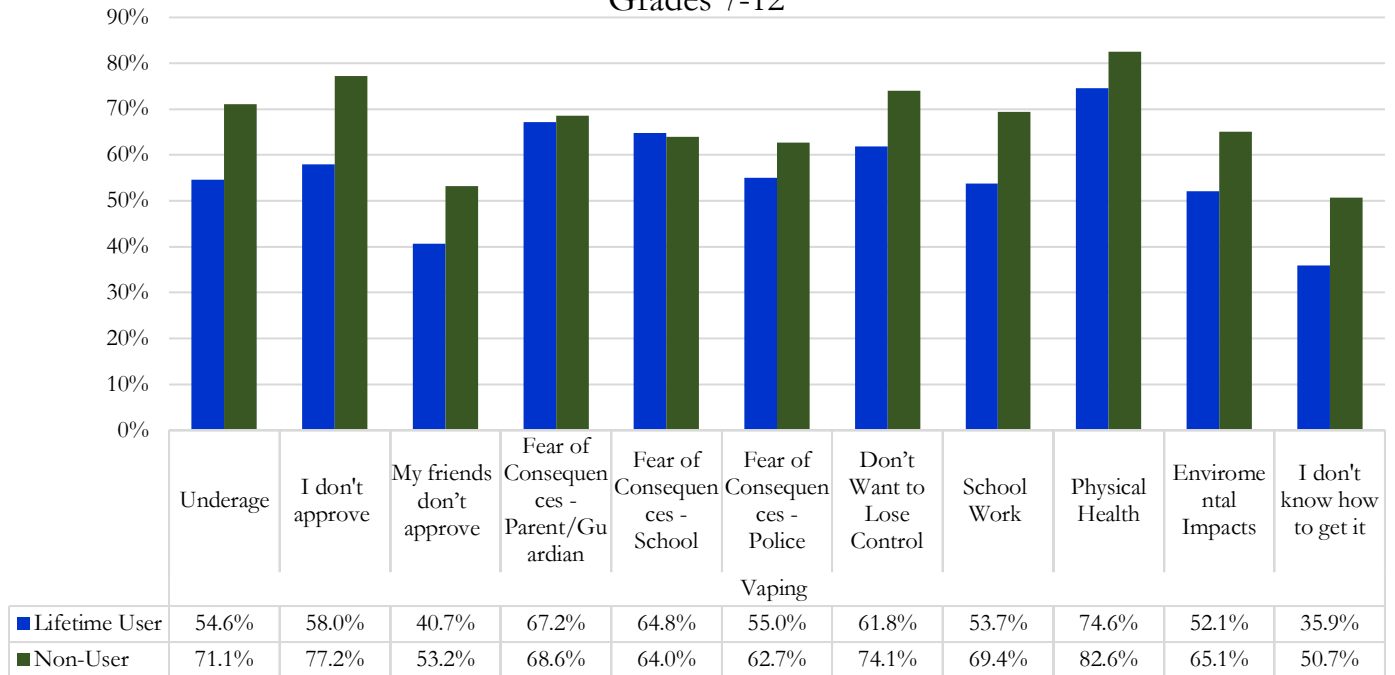


	Underage	I don't approve	My friends don't approve	Fear of Consequences - Parent/Guardian	Fear of Consequences - School	Fear of Consequences - Police	Don't Want to Lose Control	School Work	Physical Health	Enviromental Impacts	I don't know how to get it
Lifetime User	70.9%	38.6%	30.5%	55.8%	57.5%	61.7%	63.0%	53.8%	64.1%	35.0%	30.7%
Non-User	84.7%	65.1%	48.7%	64.1%	62.6%	65.5%	74.4%	68.9%	80.2%	55.4%	46.9%

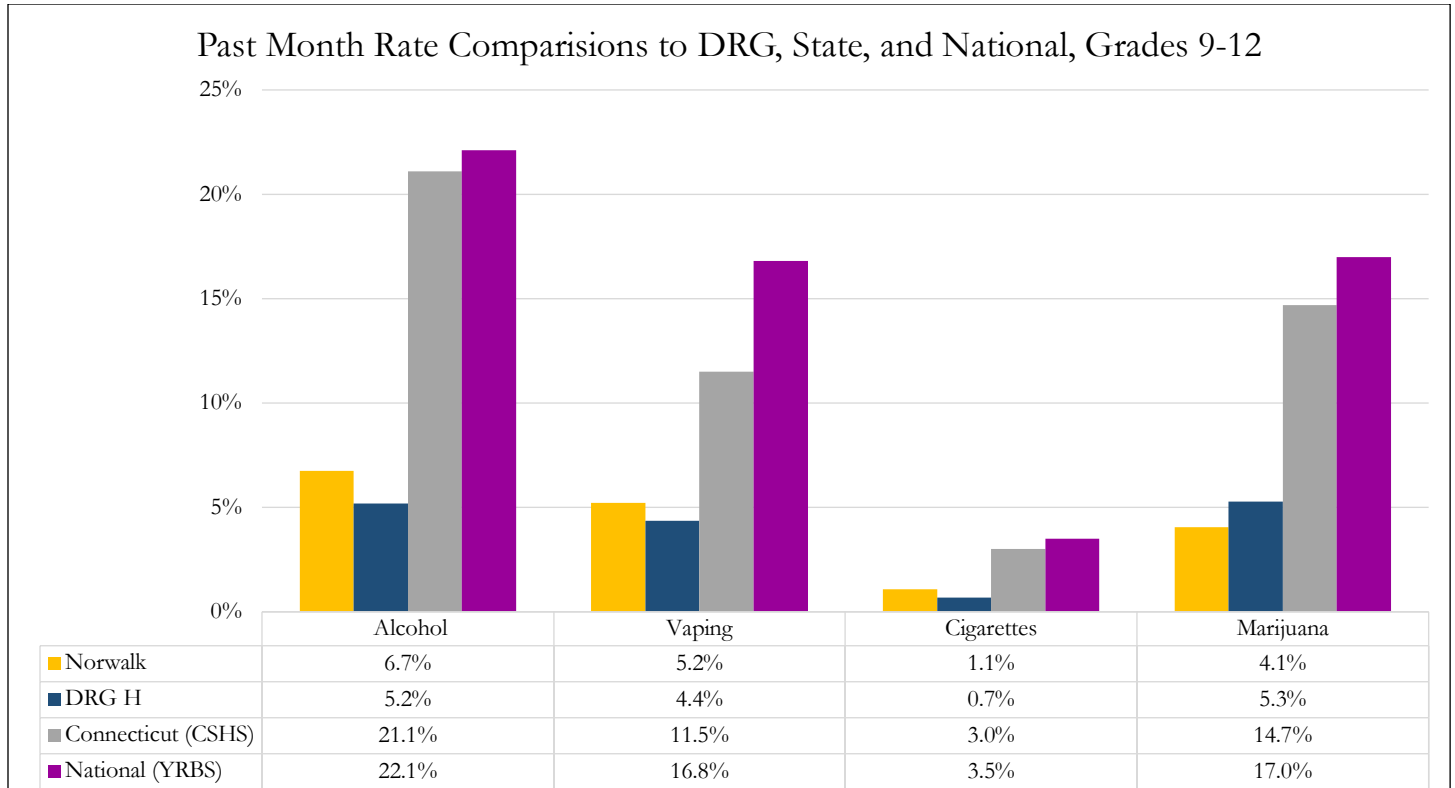
Reasons Why Marijuana is not Used by Lifetime User Grades 7-12



Reasons Why Vaping is not Used by Lifetime User Grades 7-12

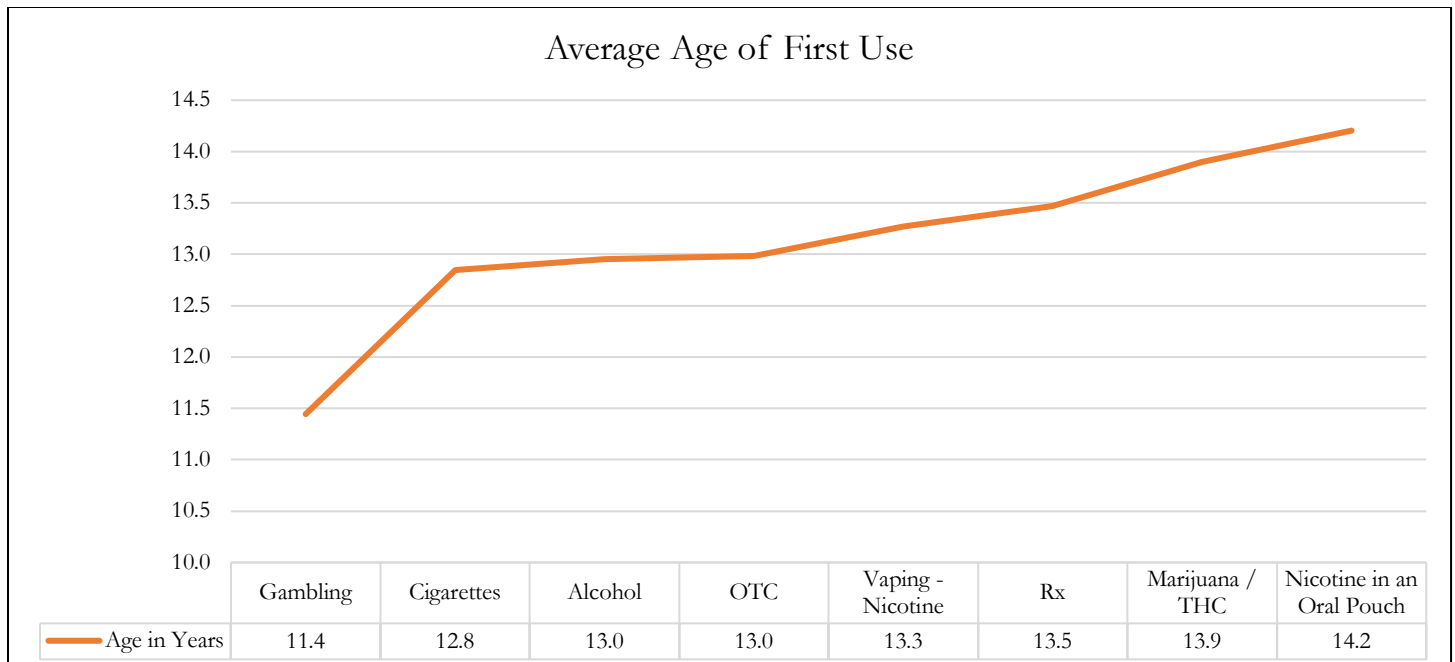


Substance Use and Gambling:

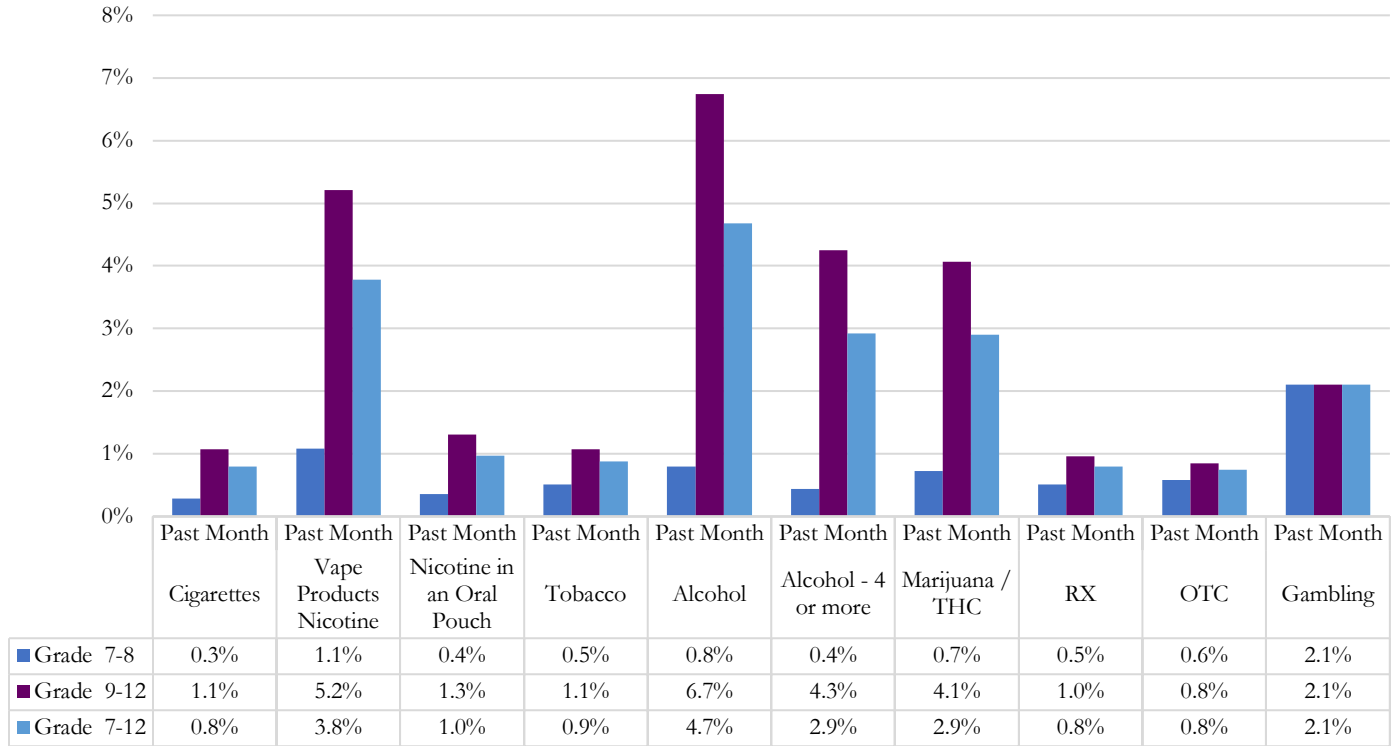


- CSHS and YRBS, 2023

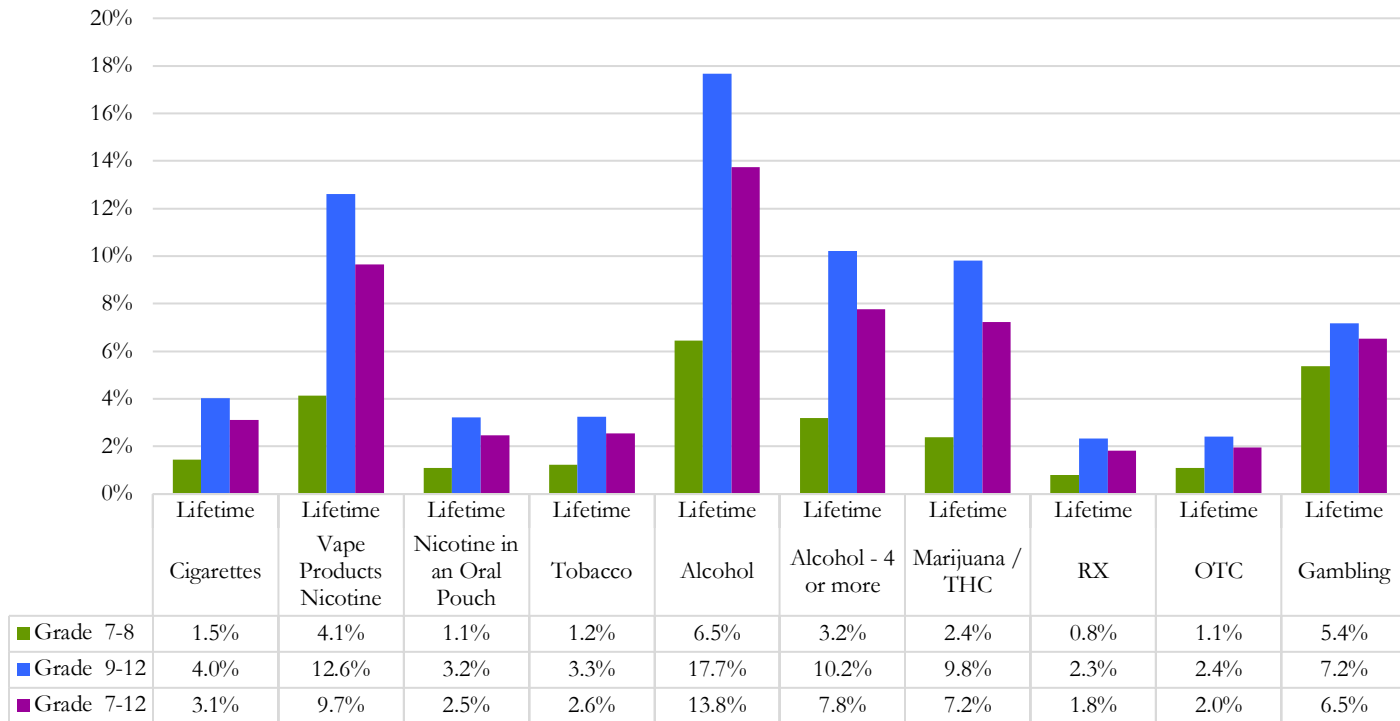
-DRG reflects aggregated data from Youth Voices Count Surveys administered in communities within the same District Reference Group as Update. District Reference Groups come from the Connecticut State Department of Education and are a classification system grouping school districts with similar socioeconomic status and need in order to make comparisons. For more information, see the following: https://sdeportal.ct.gov/cedar/files/pdf/reports/db_drg_06_2006.pdf



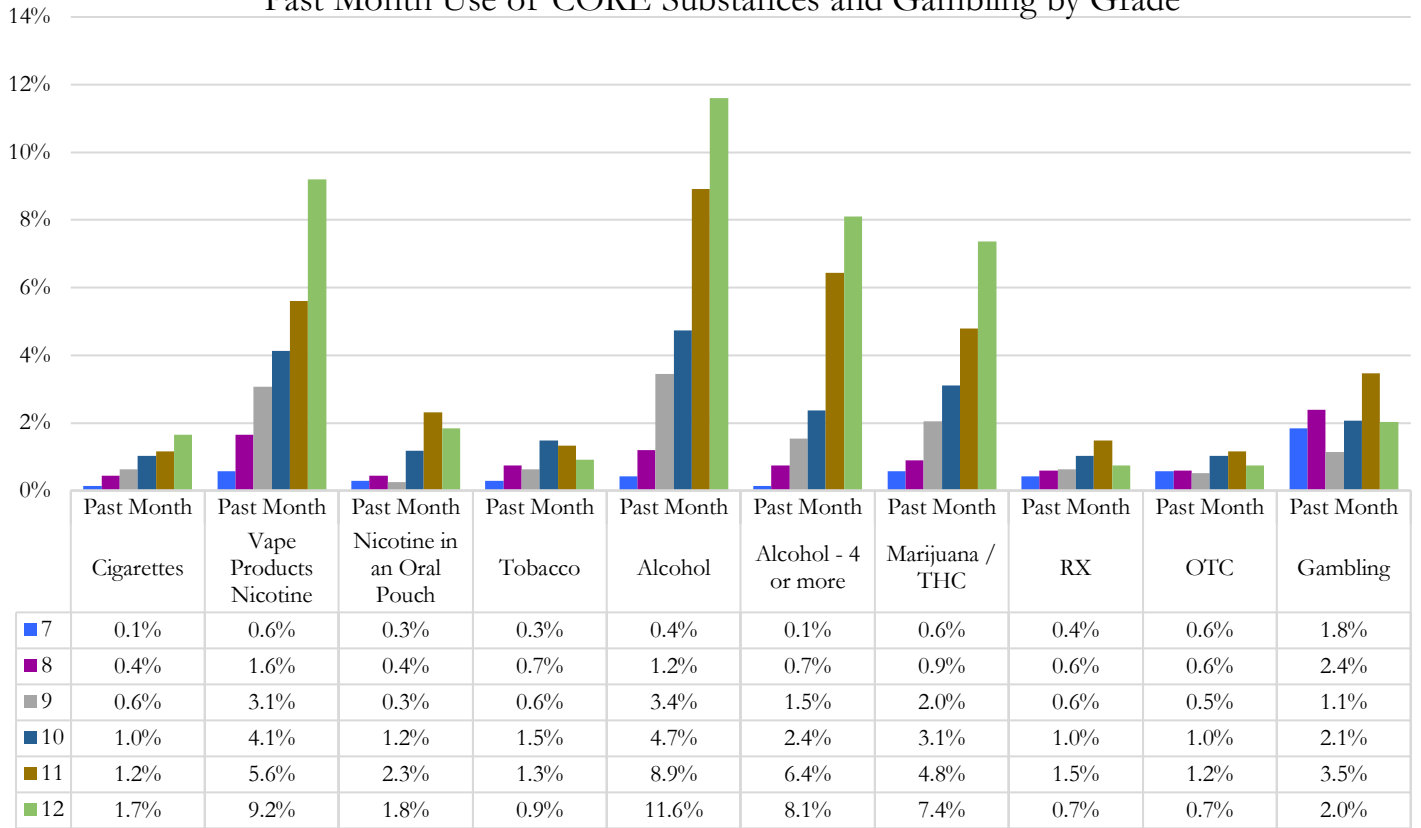
Past Month Use of CORE Substances and Gambling



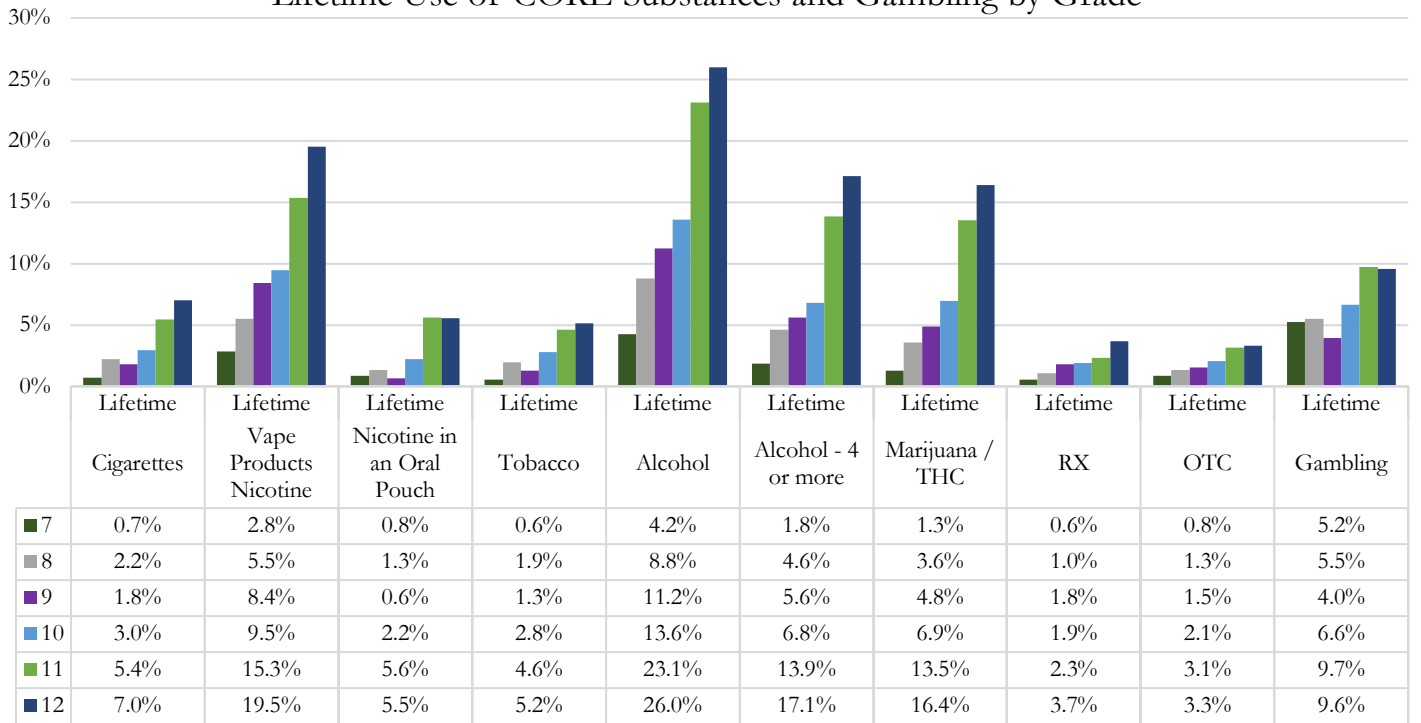
Lifetime Use of CORE Substances and Gambling



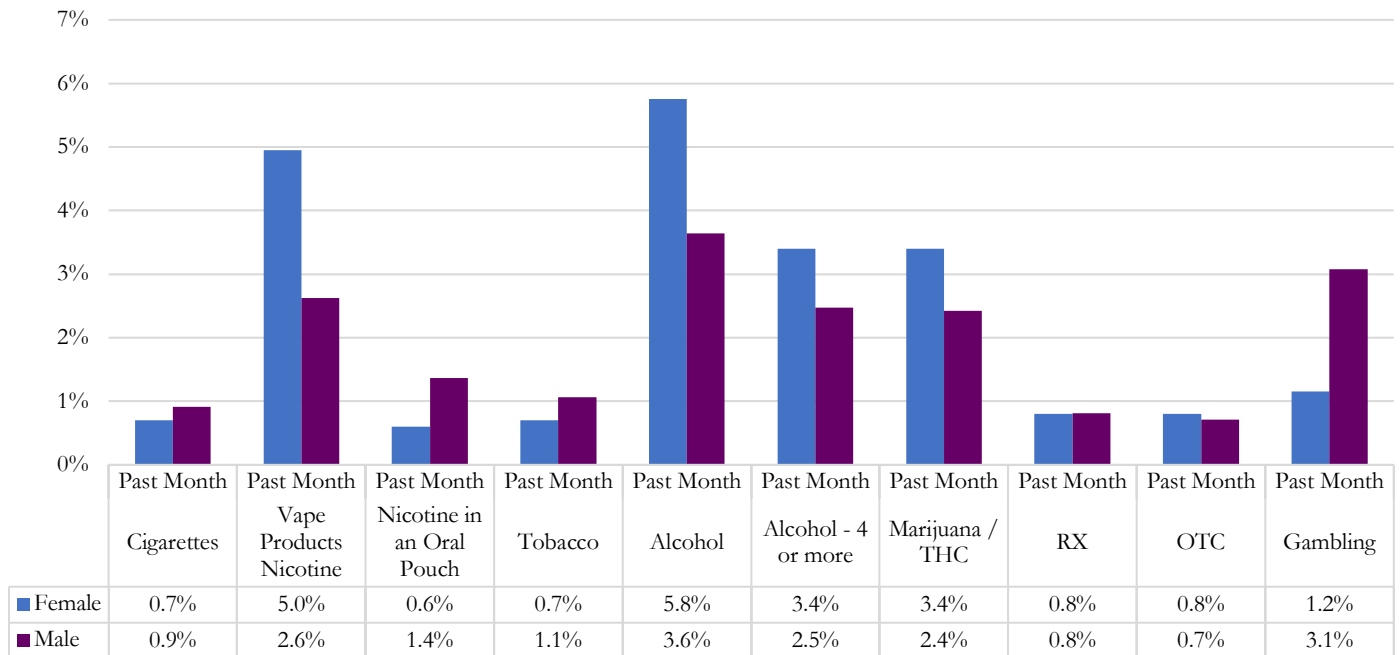
Past Month Use of CORE Substances and Gambling by Grade



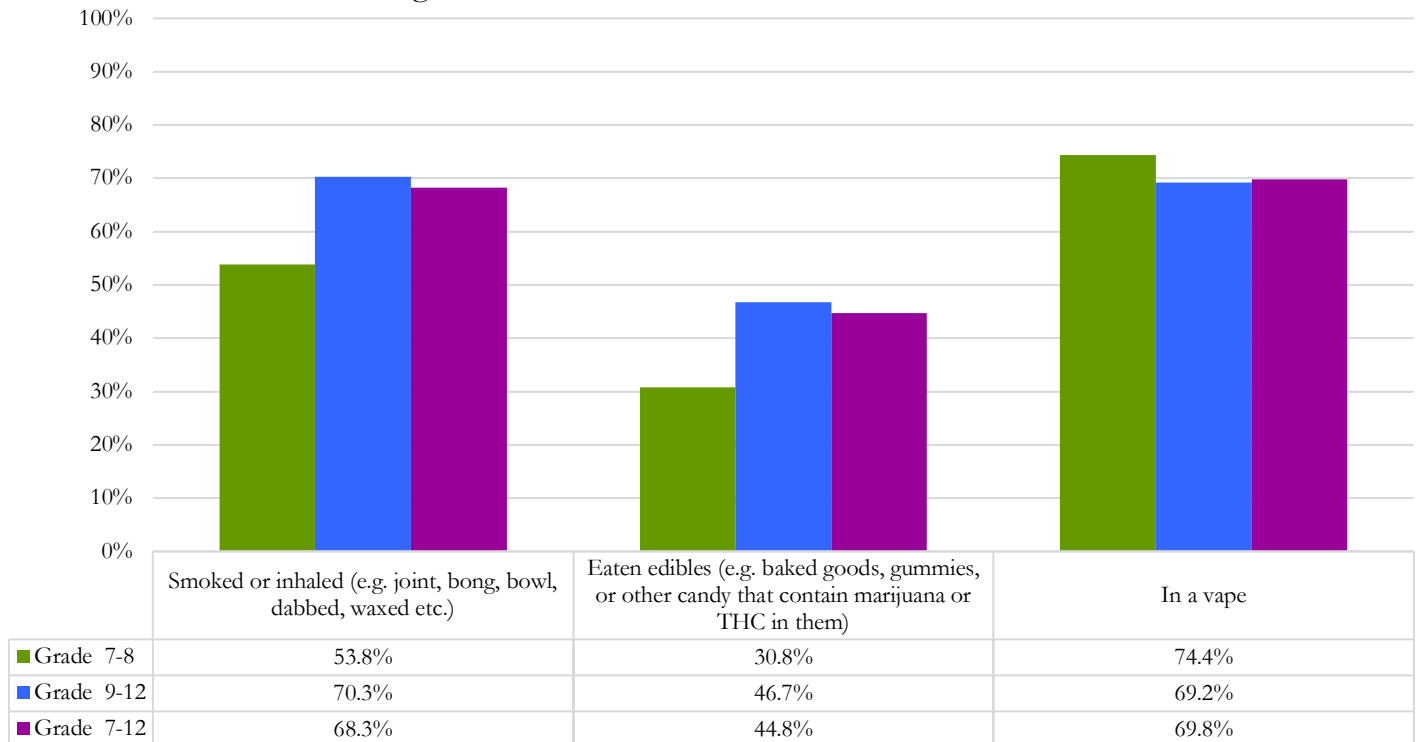
Lifetime Use of CORE Substances and Gambling by Grade



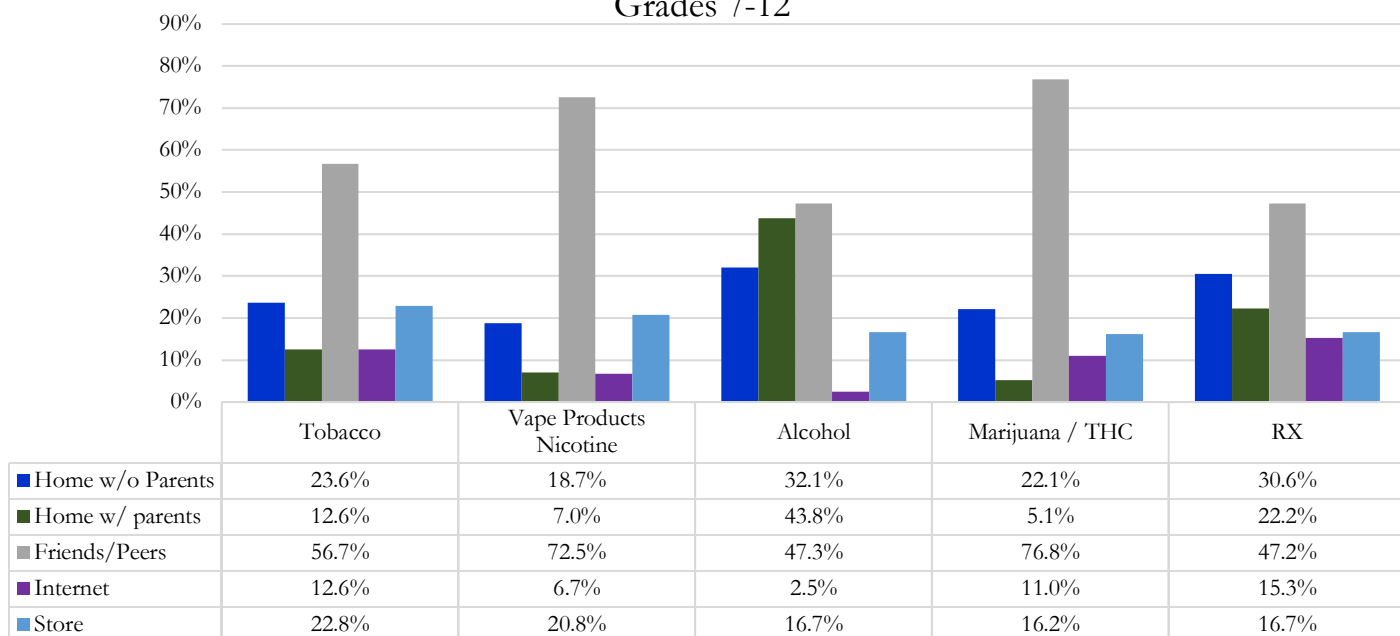
Biological Sex Differences in CORE Substance Use and Gambling Grades 7-12



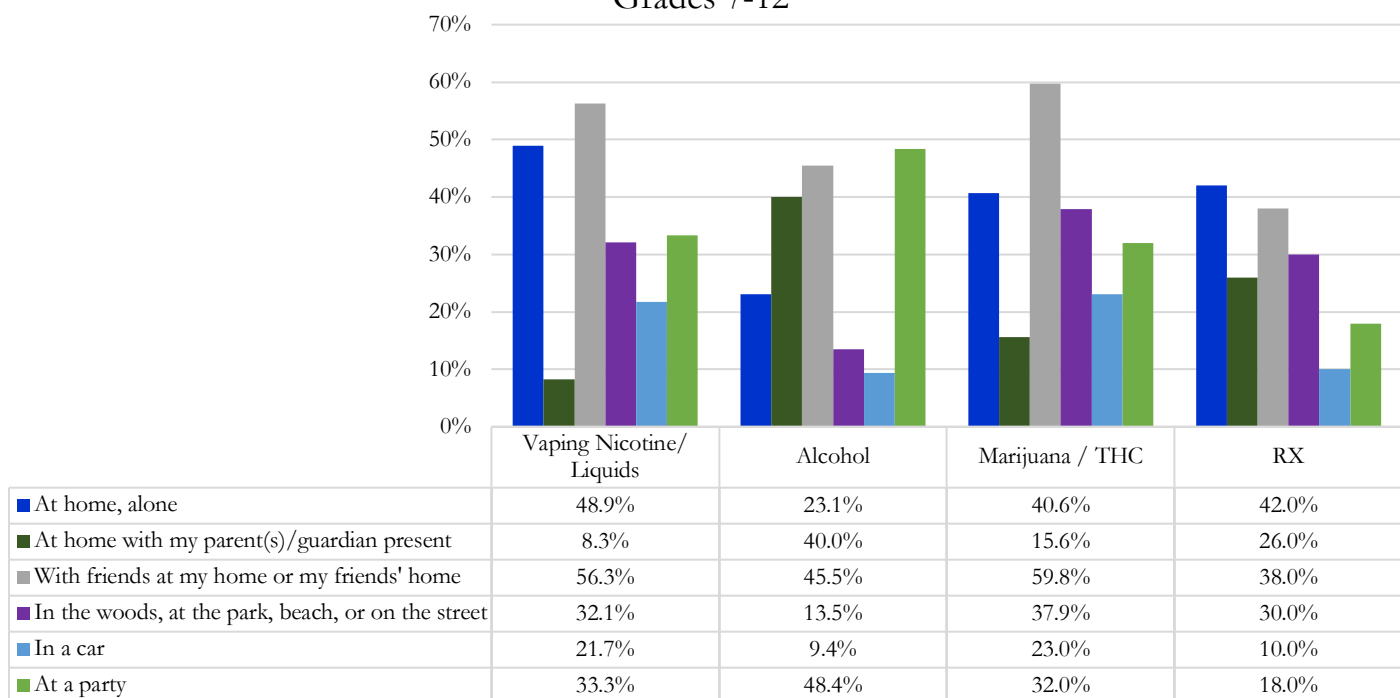
Methods of Marijuana Use Among Youth Who Have Used in the Past 12 Months



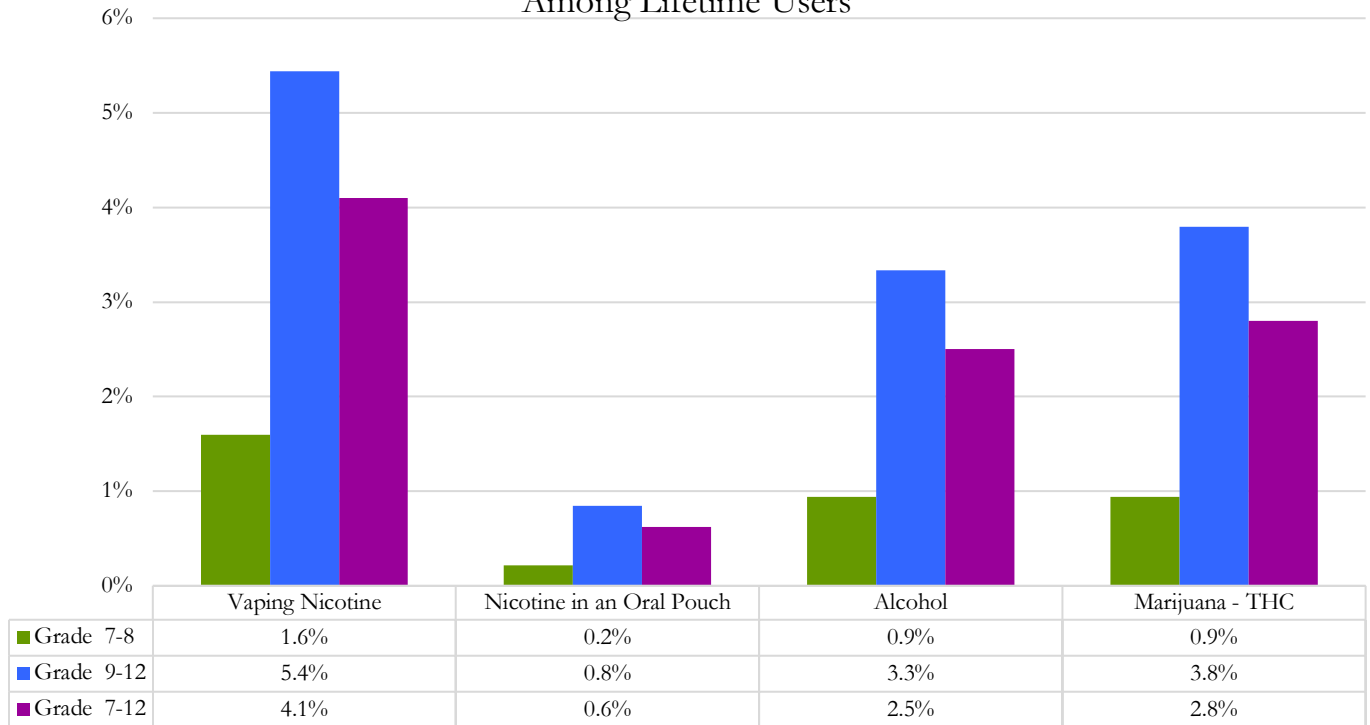
Where Substances Are **Acquired** Most Often Amongst Lifetime Users Grades 7-12



Where Substances Are **Used** Most Often Amongst Lifetime Users Grades 7-12

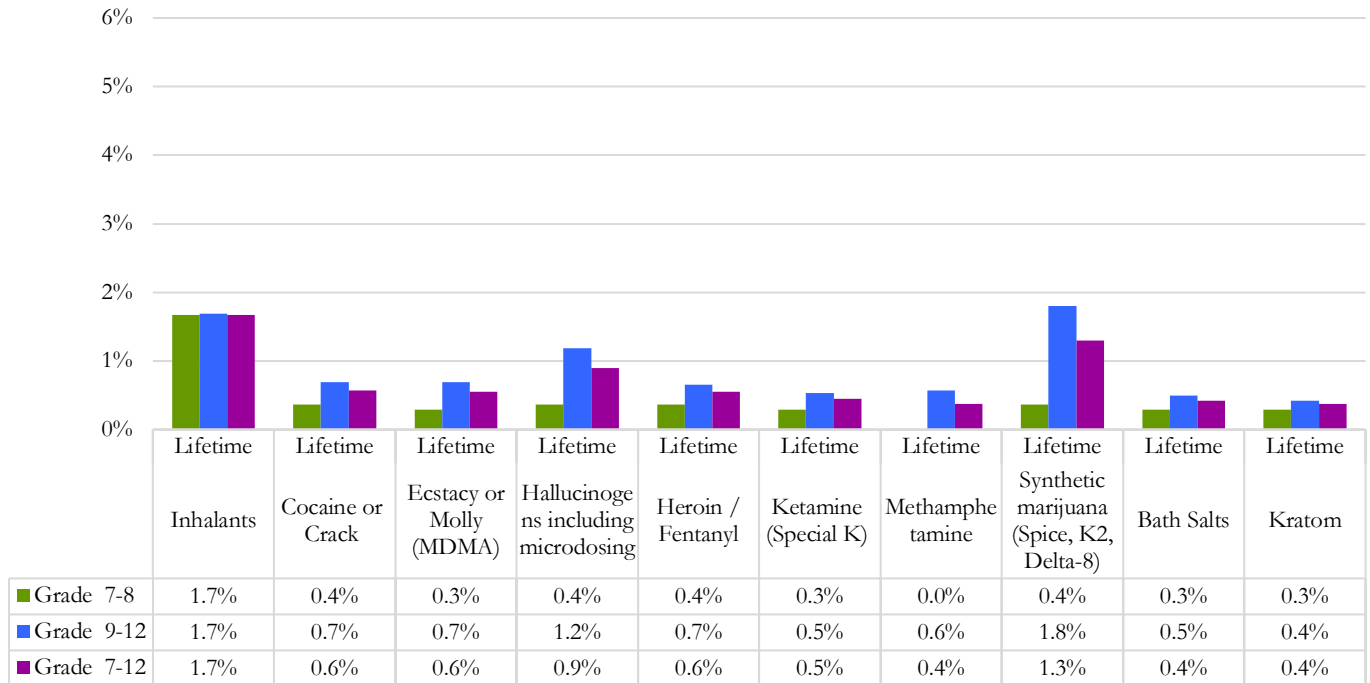


Youth Use of Substances at School- Including School Events Among Lifetime Users

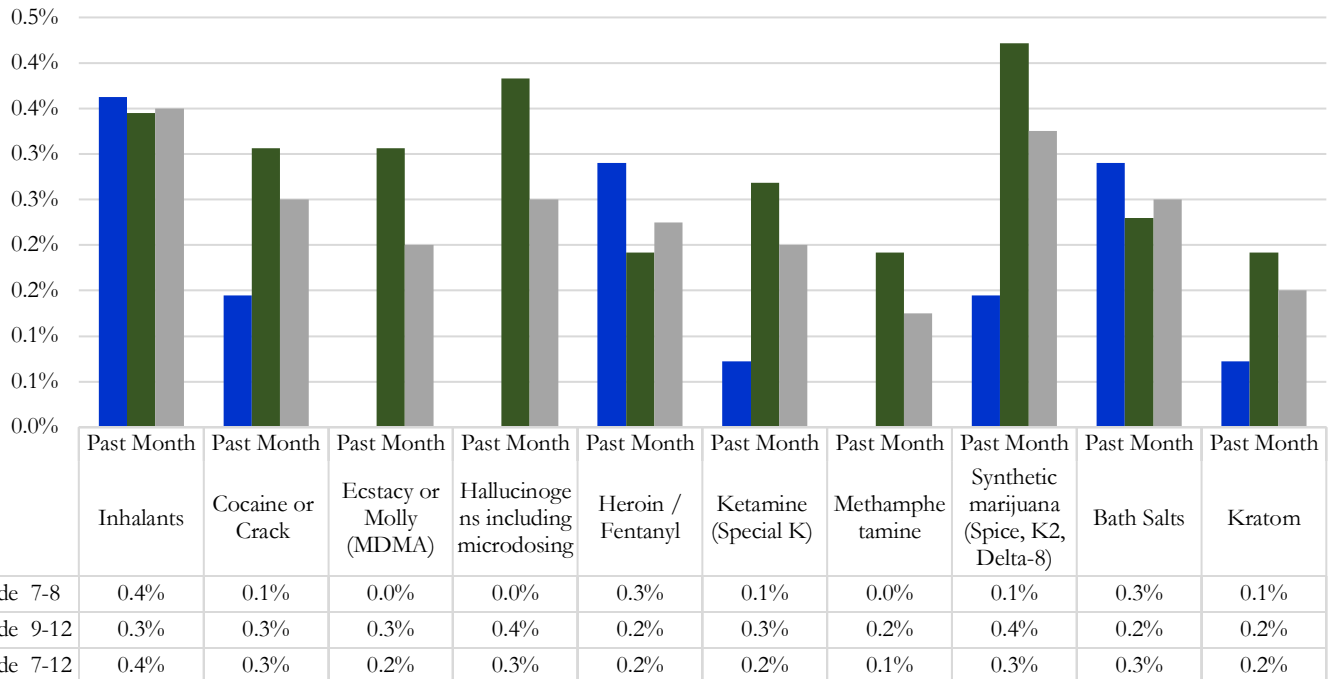


Other Substance Use:

Lifetime Other Substance Use

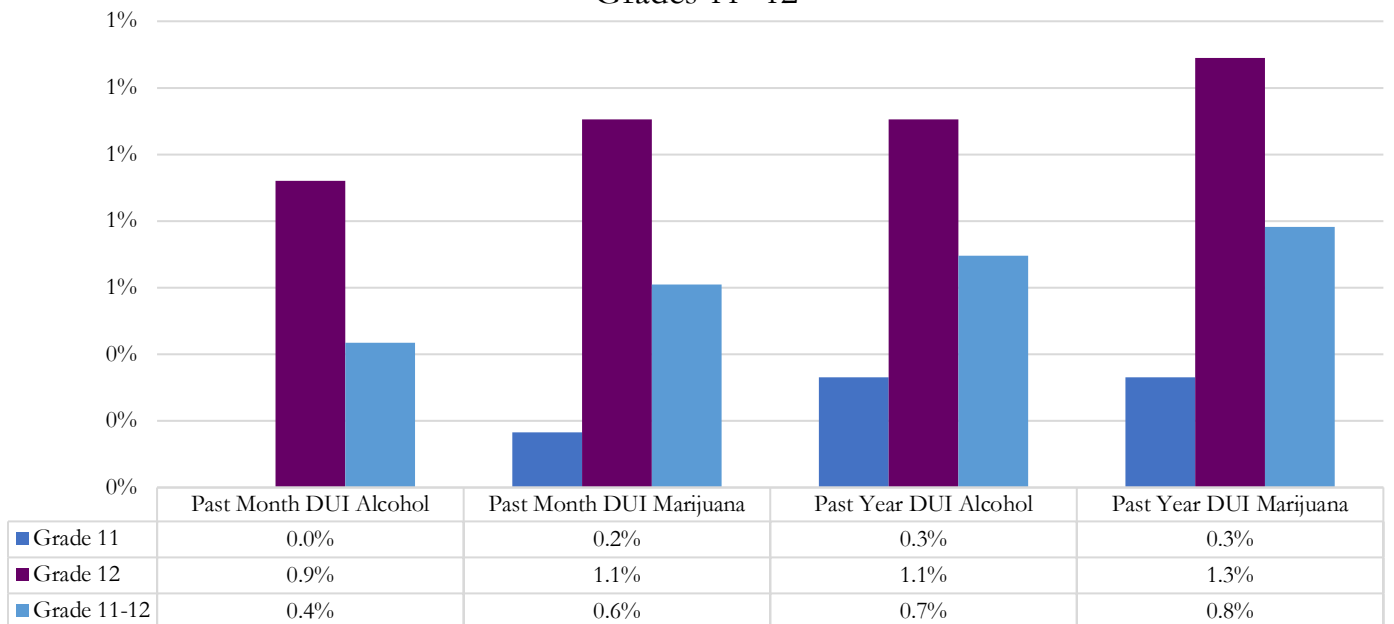


Past Month Other Substance Use

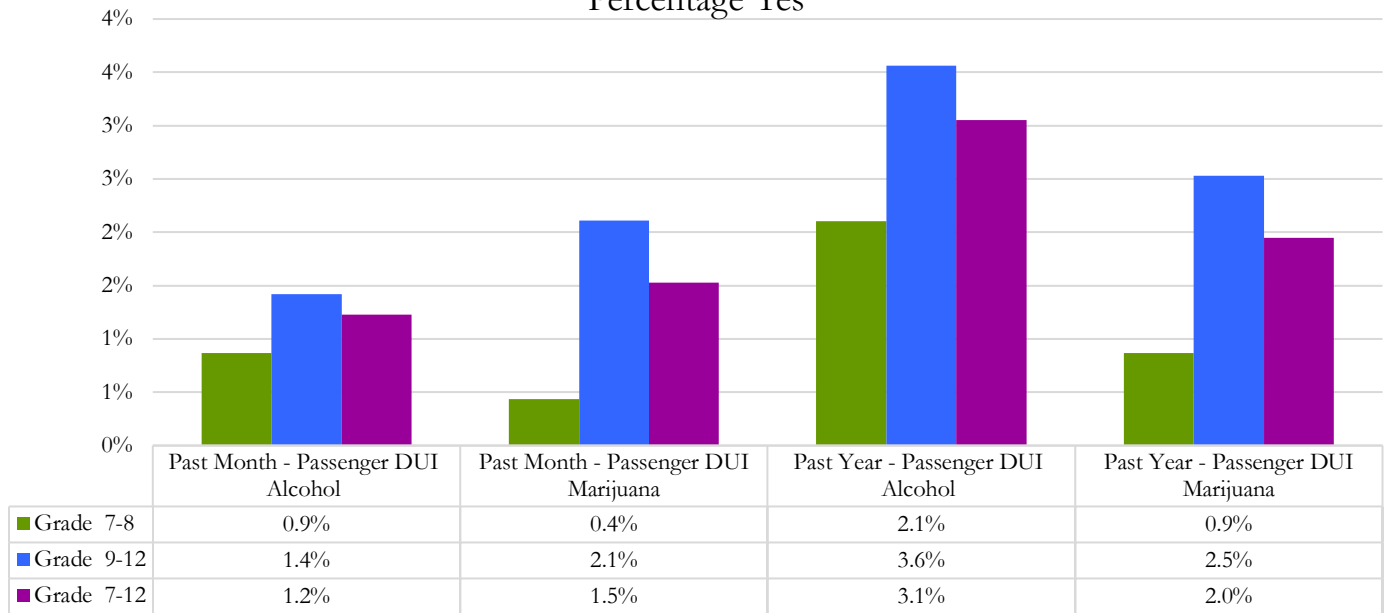


Driving Under the Influence:

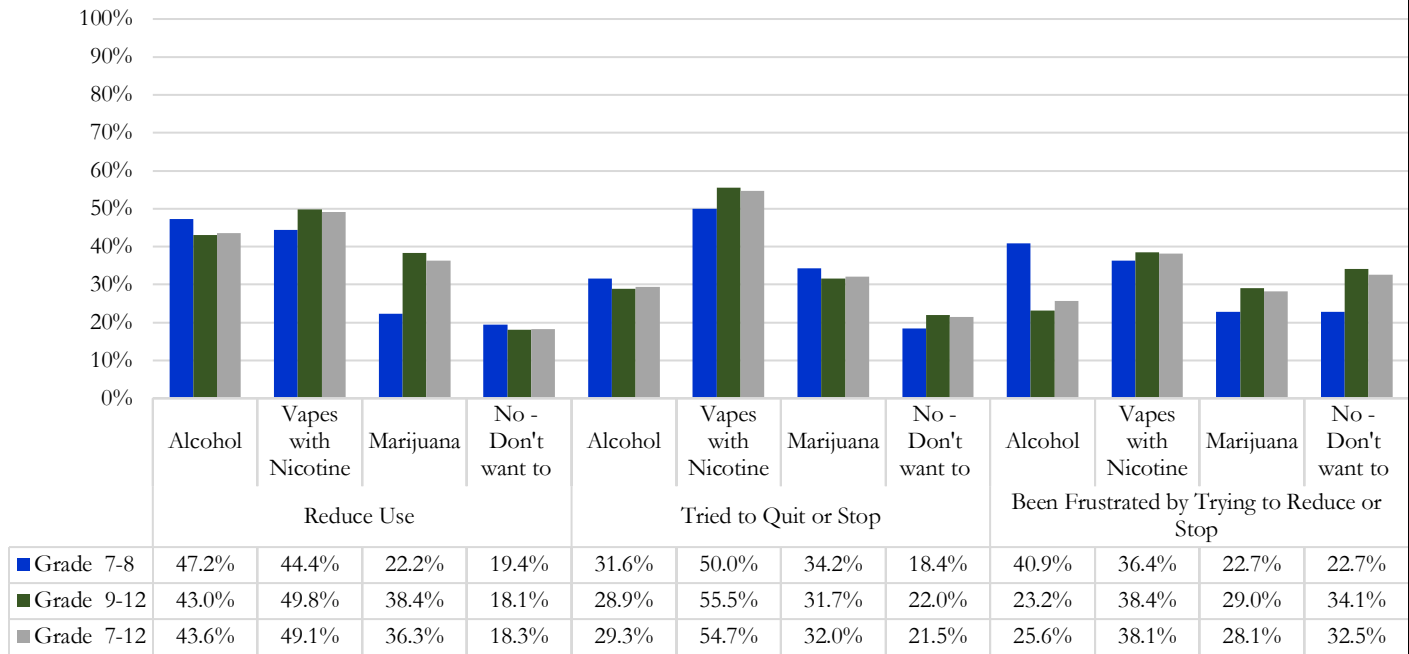
Driving Under the Influence Alcohol and Marijuana Grades 11 -12



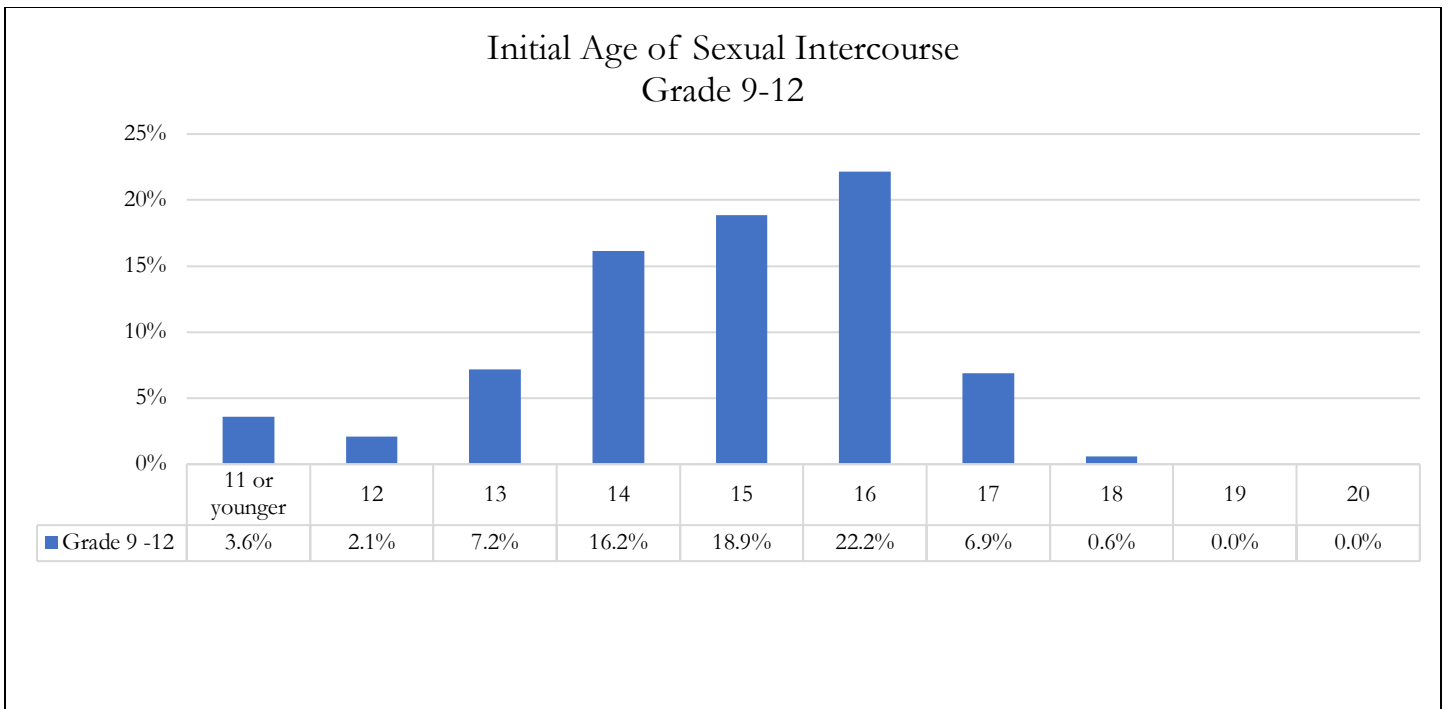
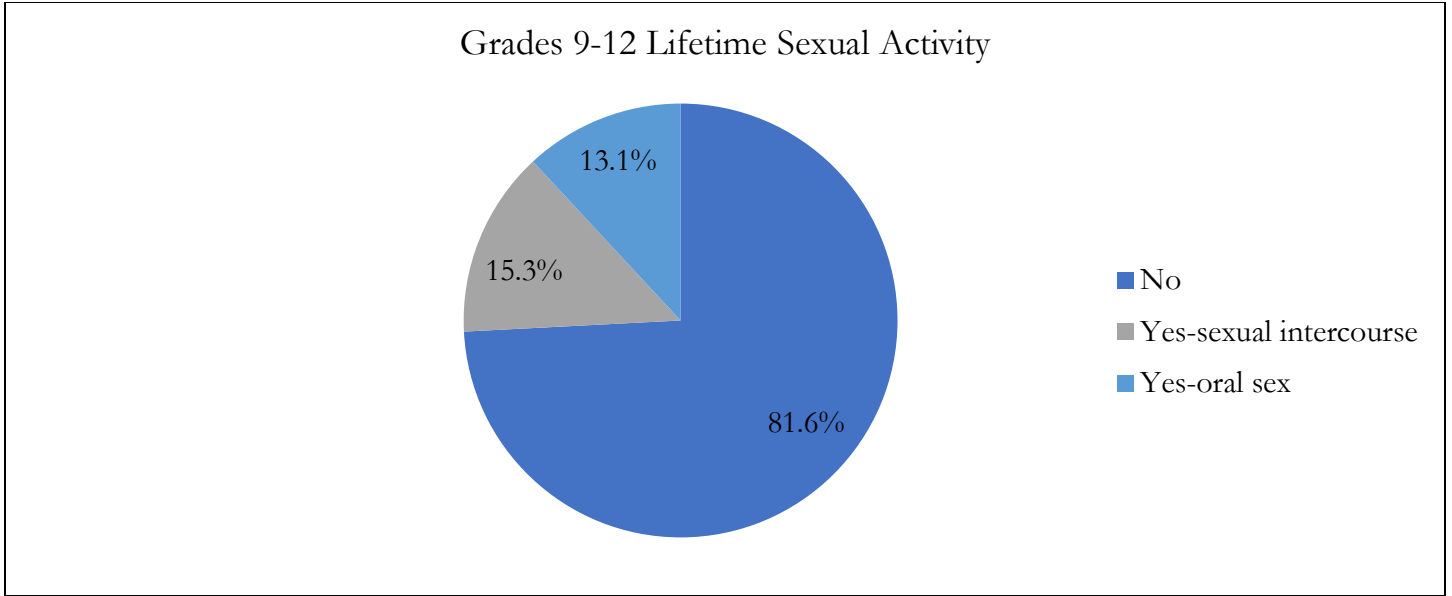
Passenger of Driver, Age 20 or Younger, Under the Influence Alcohol and/or Marijuana Percentage Yes



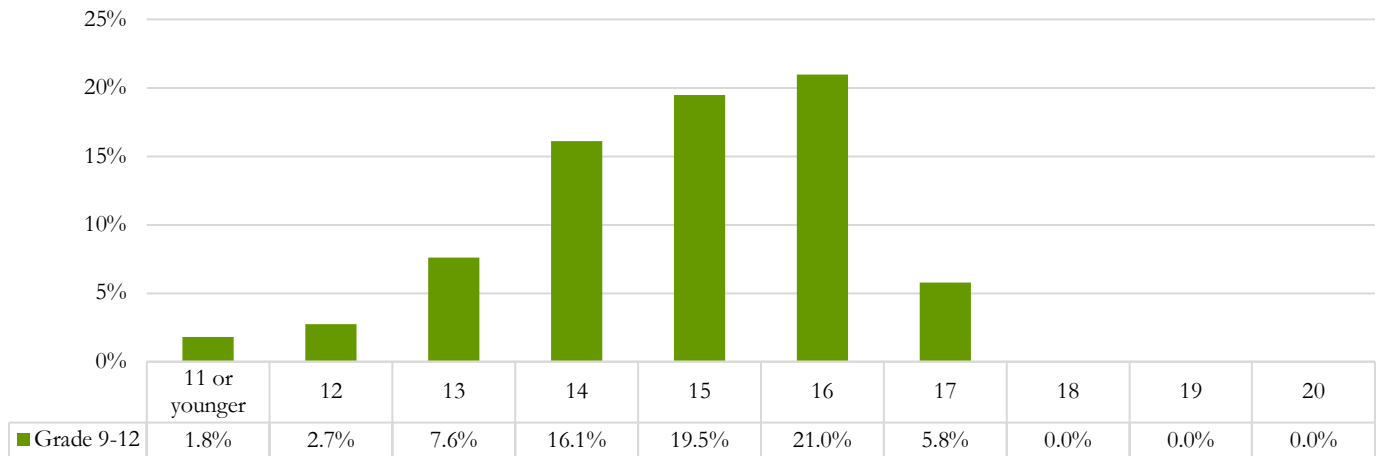
Substance Use Reduction or Trying to Quit



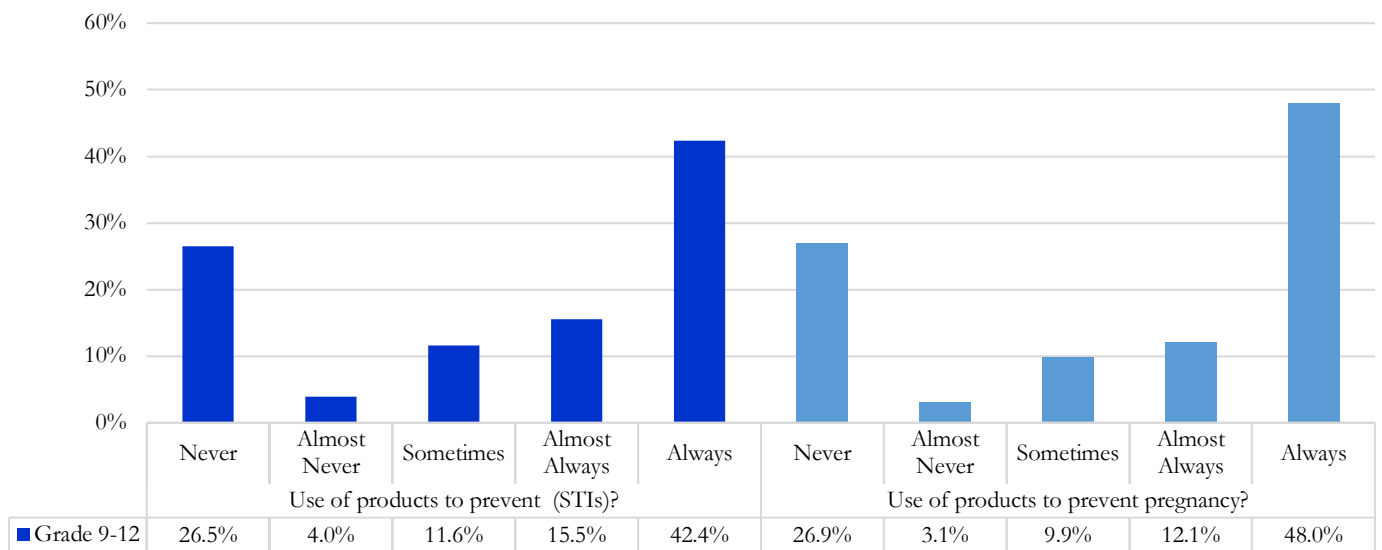
Sexual Behaviors High School Only:



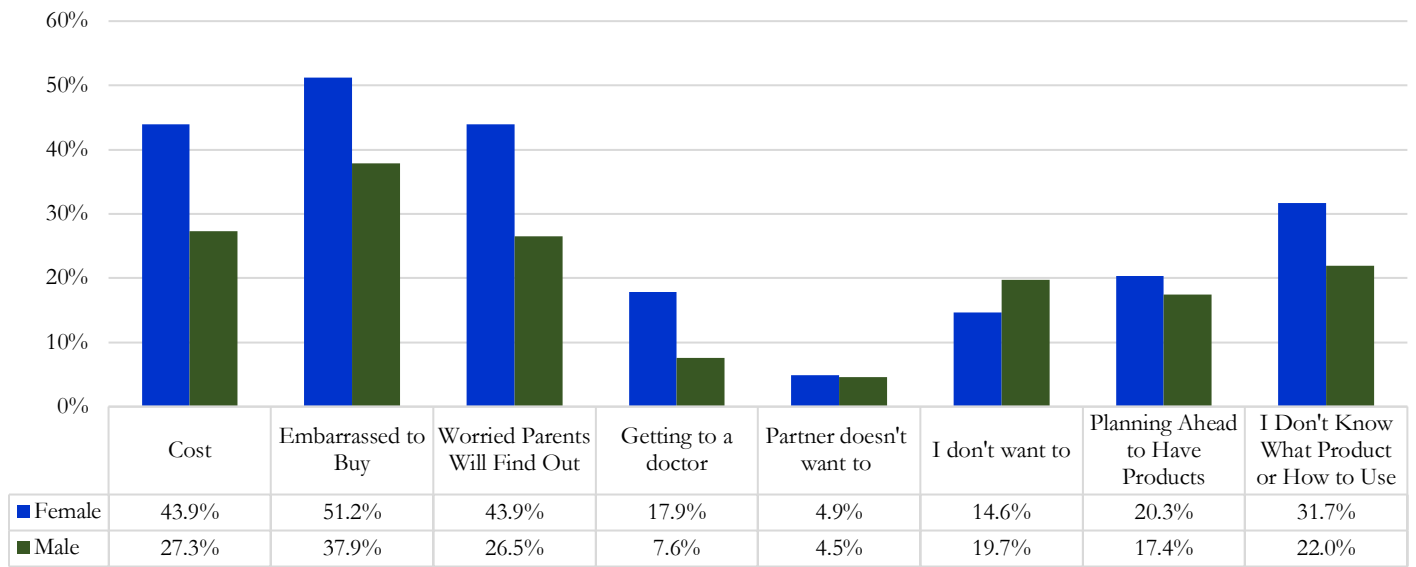
Initial Age of Oral Sex Grade 9 -12



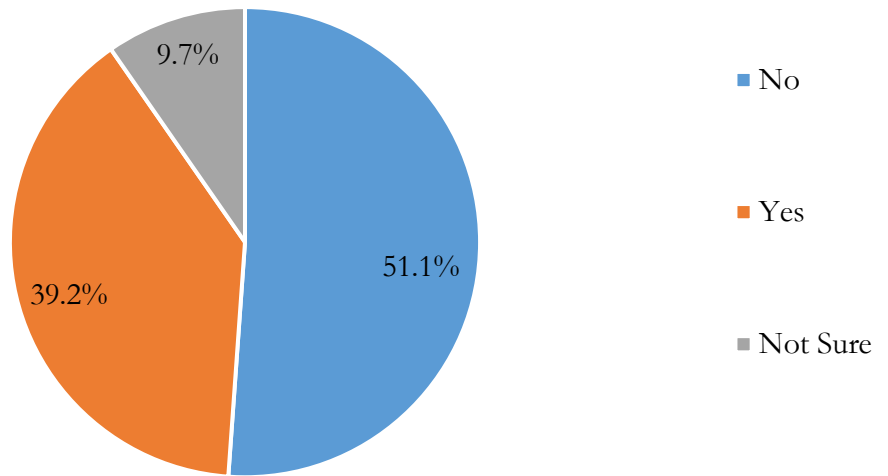
Sexually Transmitted Infection and Pregnancy Prevention Grade 9-12



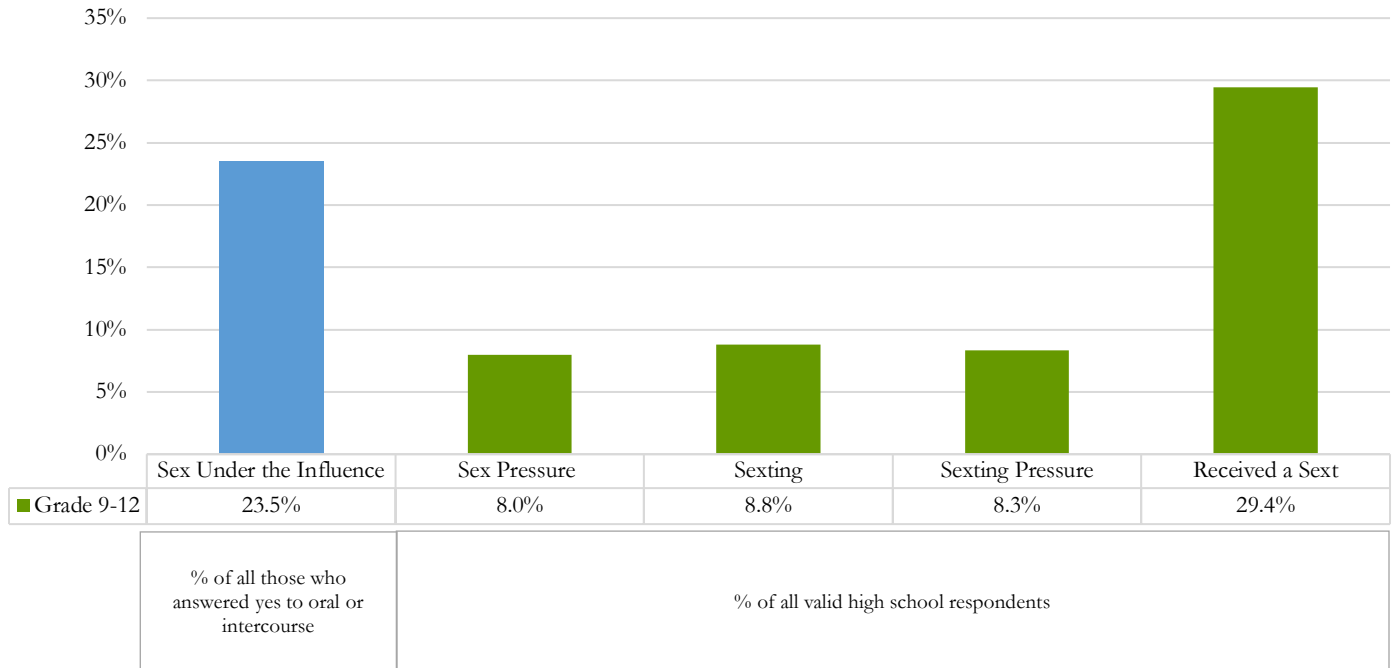
Perceived Barriers to Prevention of STIs and Pregnancy Grade 9-12



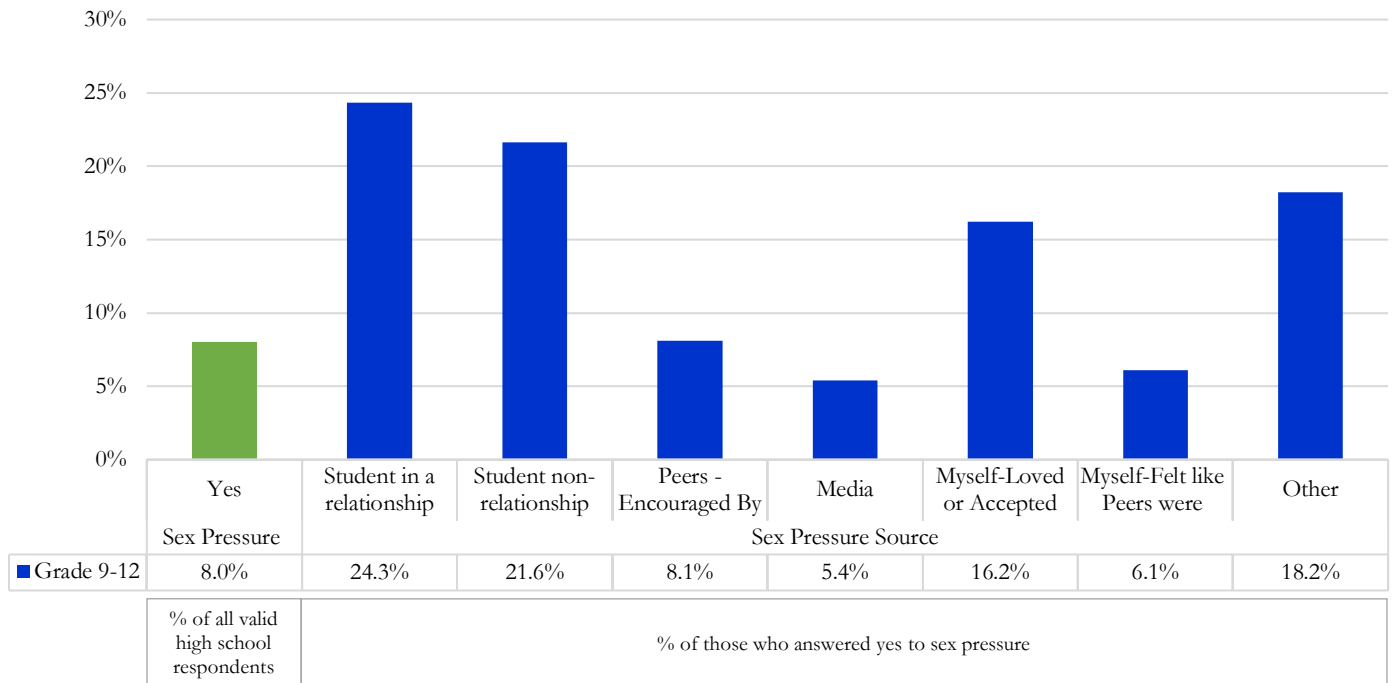
Status of Having Talked with Parent/Guardian About Birth Control, Risks of STI's, Delaying Pregnancy All Respondents



Sexual Behavior Risk Factors Grade 9 -12

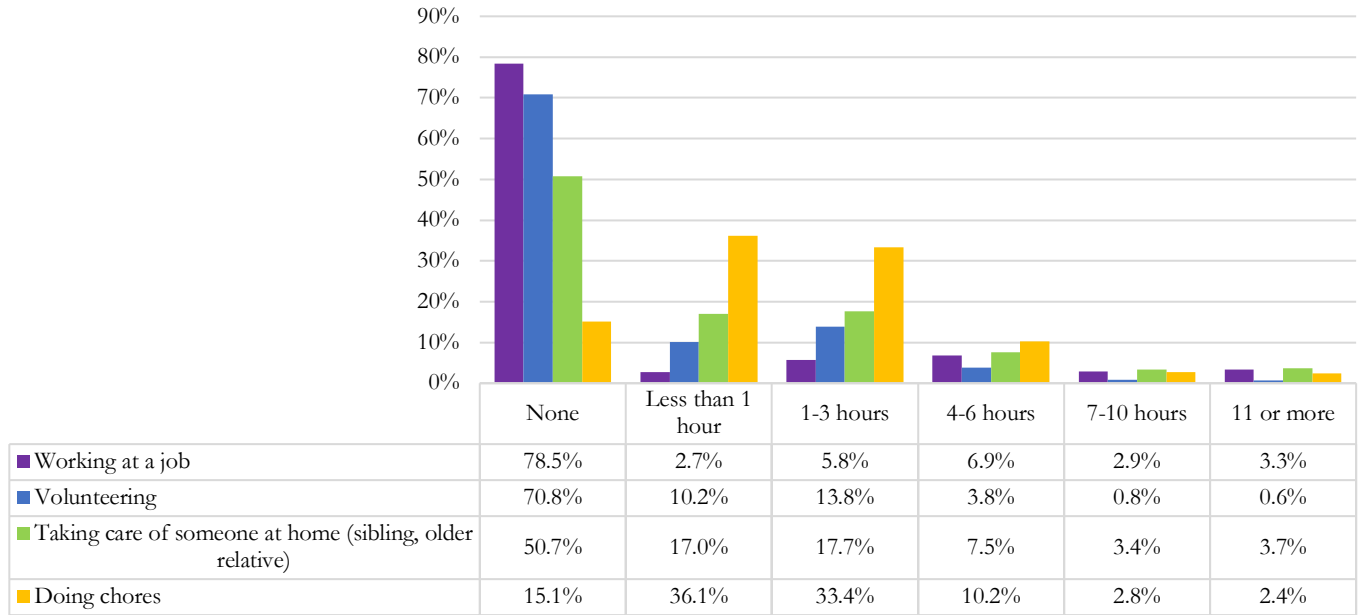


Sources of Pressure for Sexual Behaviors Grade 9 -12

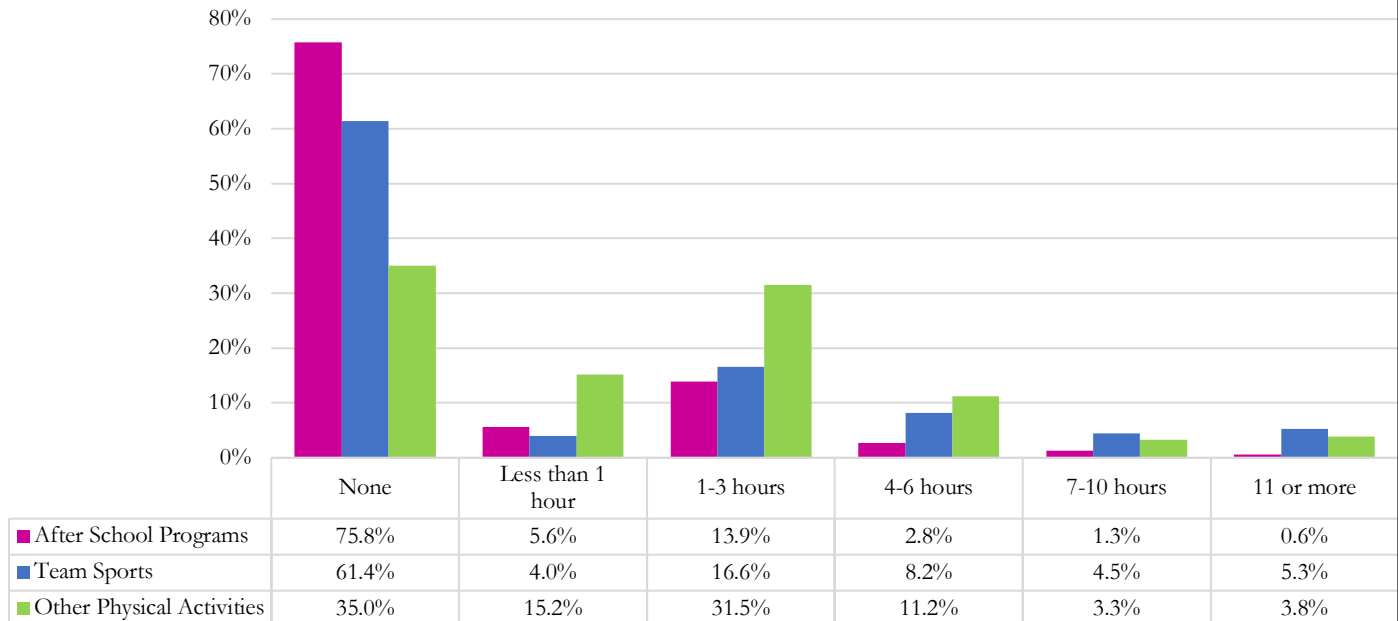


Extracurricular Activities:

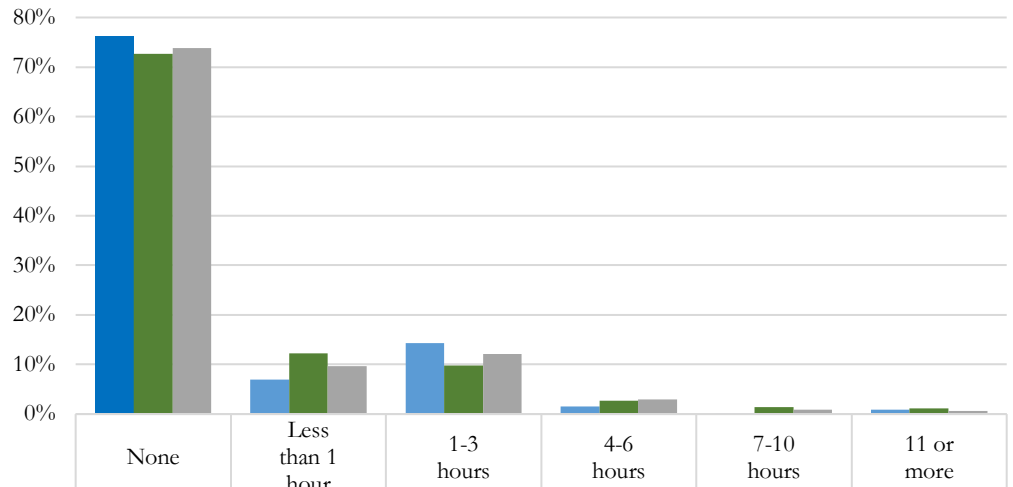
Time Spent on Jobs & Volunteering, Weekly
Grades 7-12



Time Spent on Physical Activities, Weekly
Grades 7-12

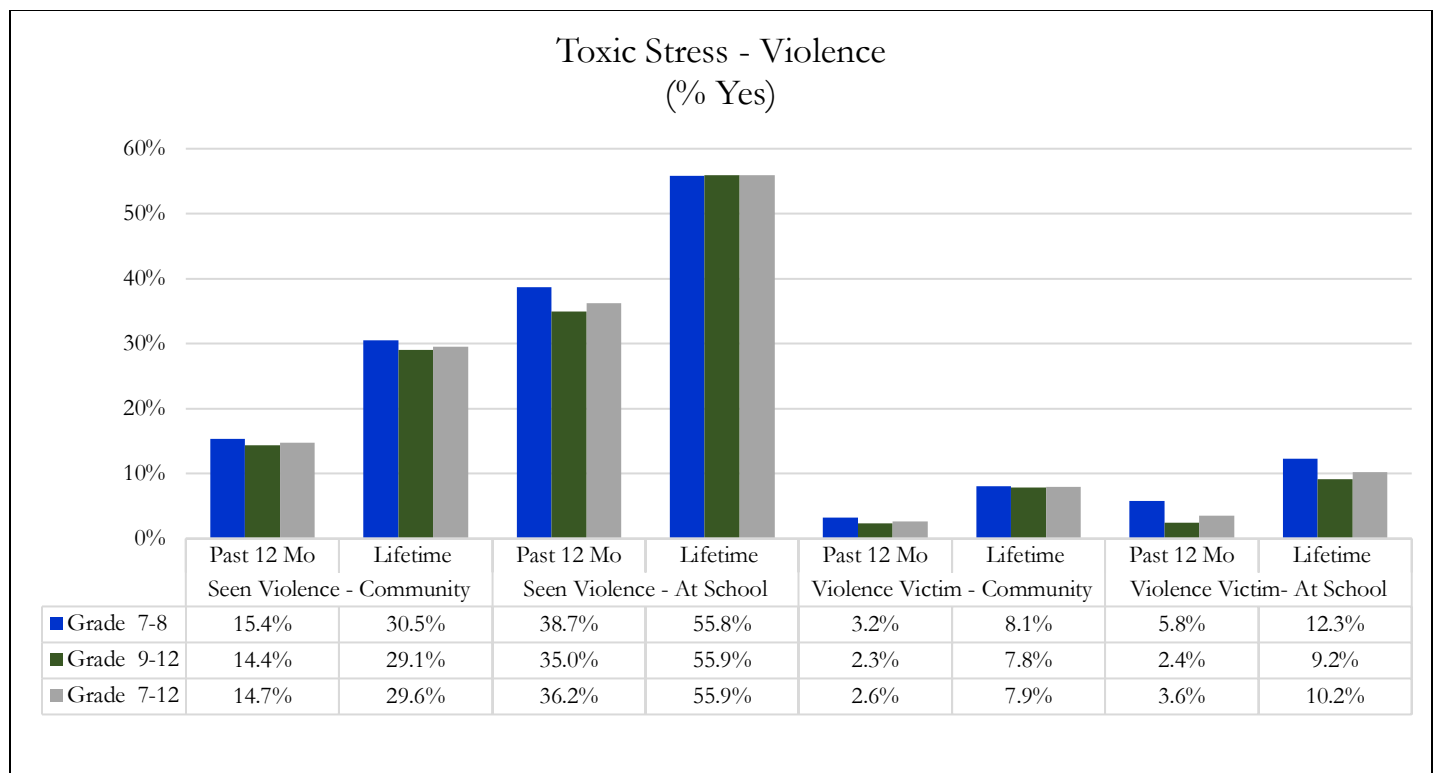
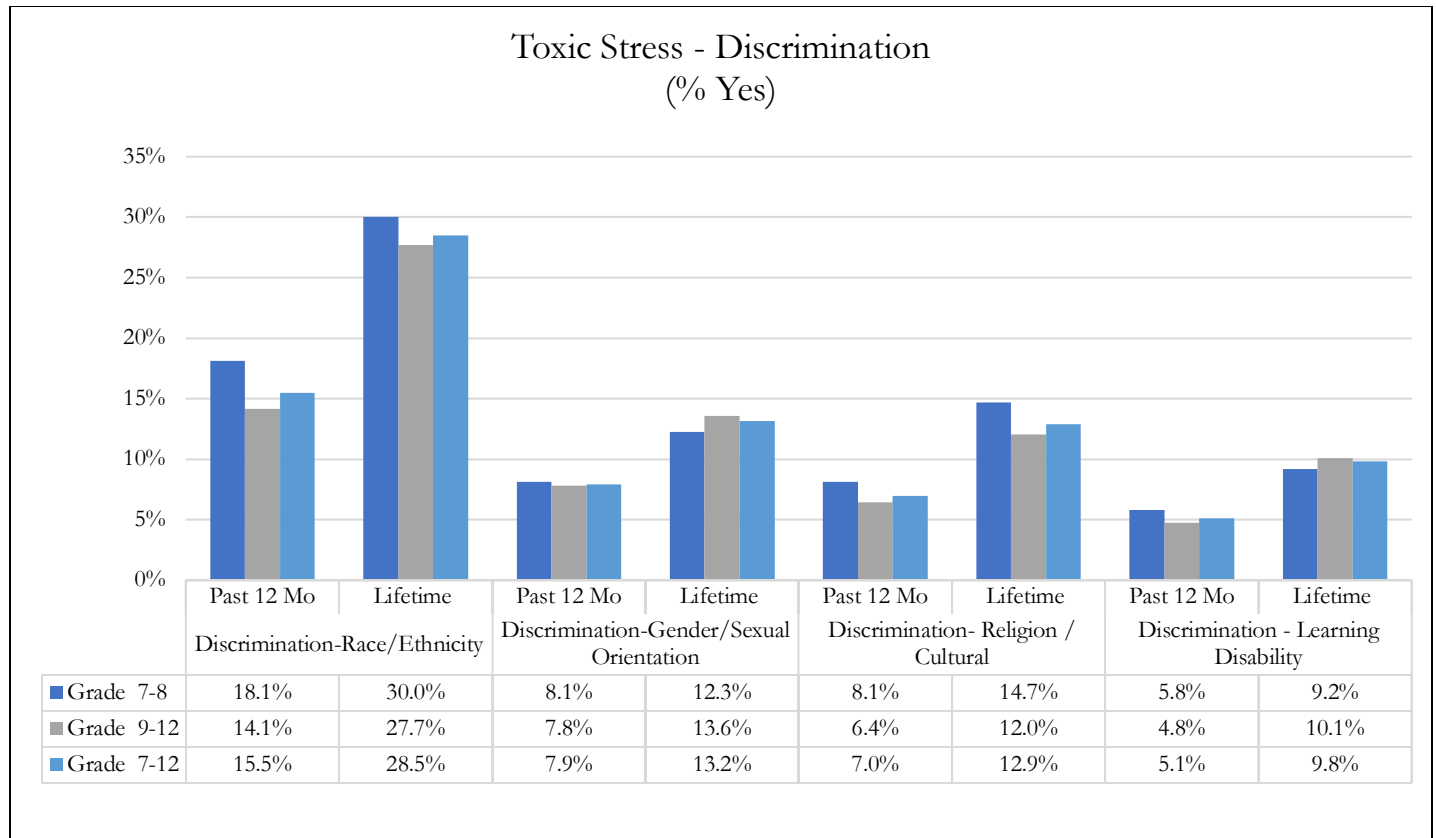


Time Spent on Faith-based Activities, Taking Lessons, Clubs or Orgs, Weekly, Grades 7-12

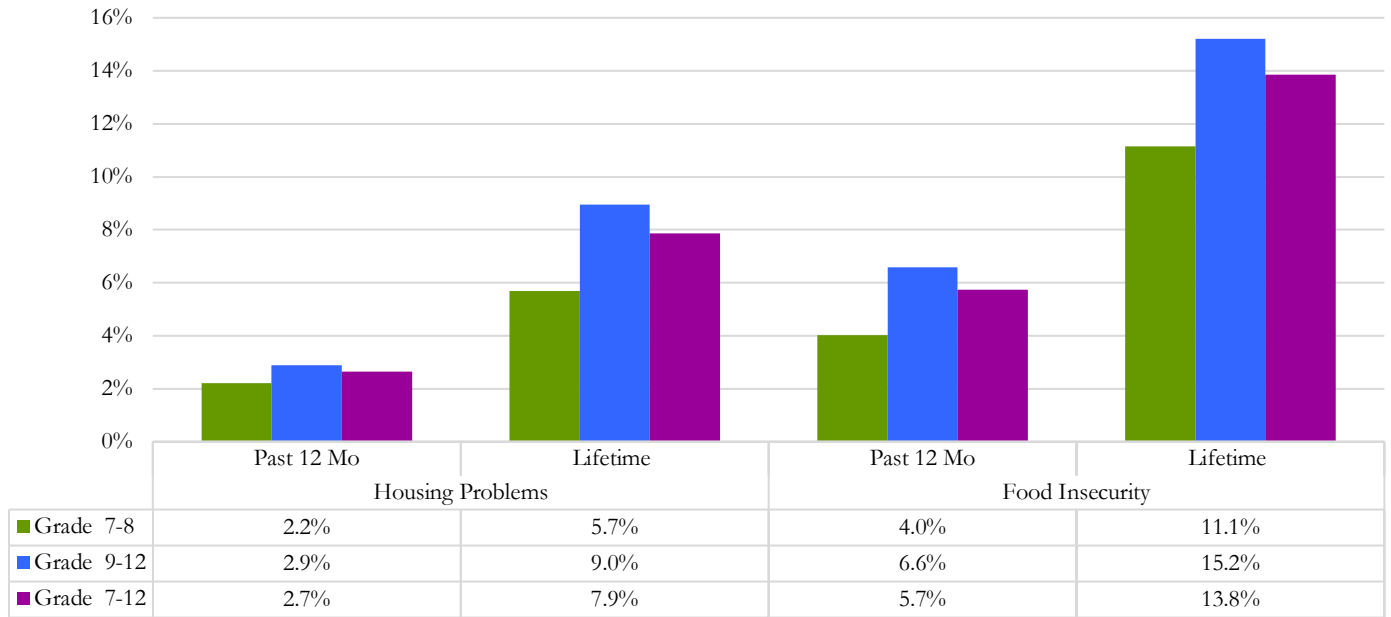


■ Faith or Religious Activities	76.1%	7.0%	14.3%	1.5%	0.2%	0.9%
■ Practicing / Taking lessons (music, art)	72.7%	12.2%	9.8%	2.7%	1.4%	1.2%
■ Club or organization (theater, Scouts)	73.8%	9.7%	12.1%	2.9%	0.9%	0.7%

Toxic Stress:

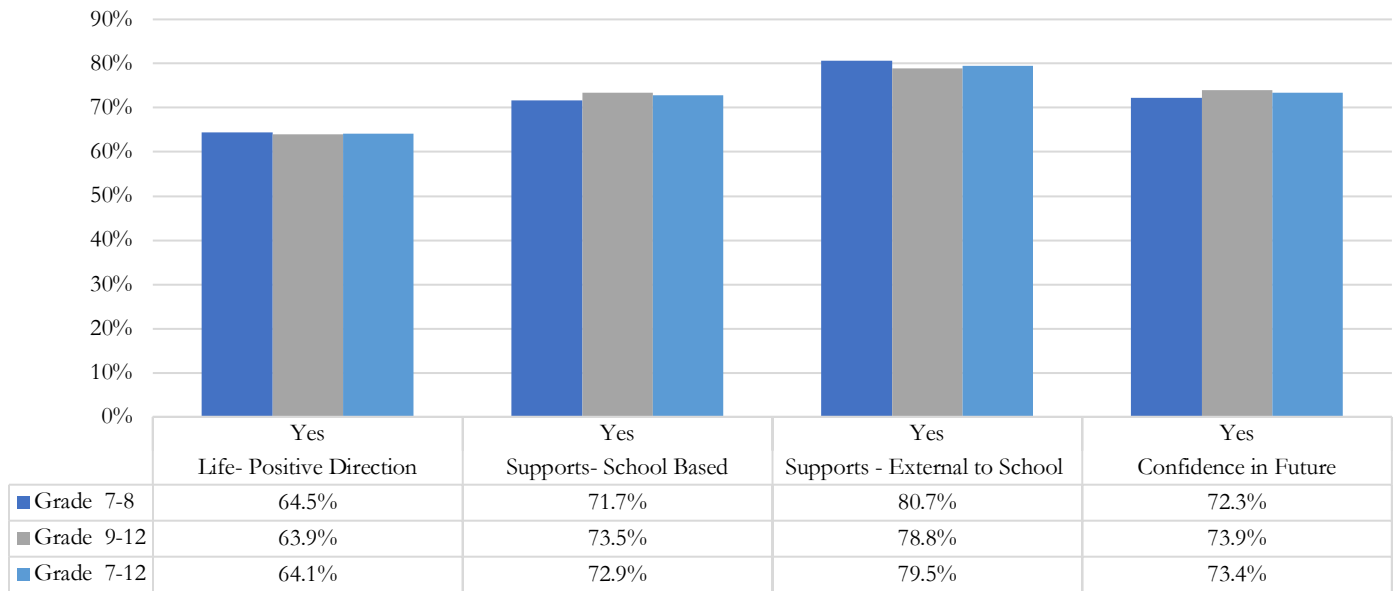


Toxic Stress - Basic Needs (% Yes)

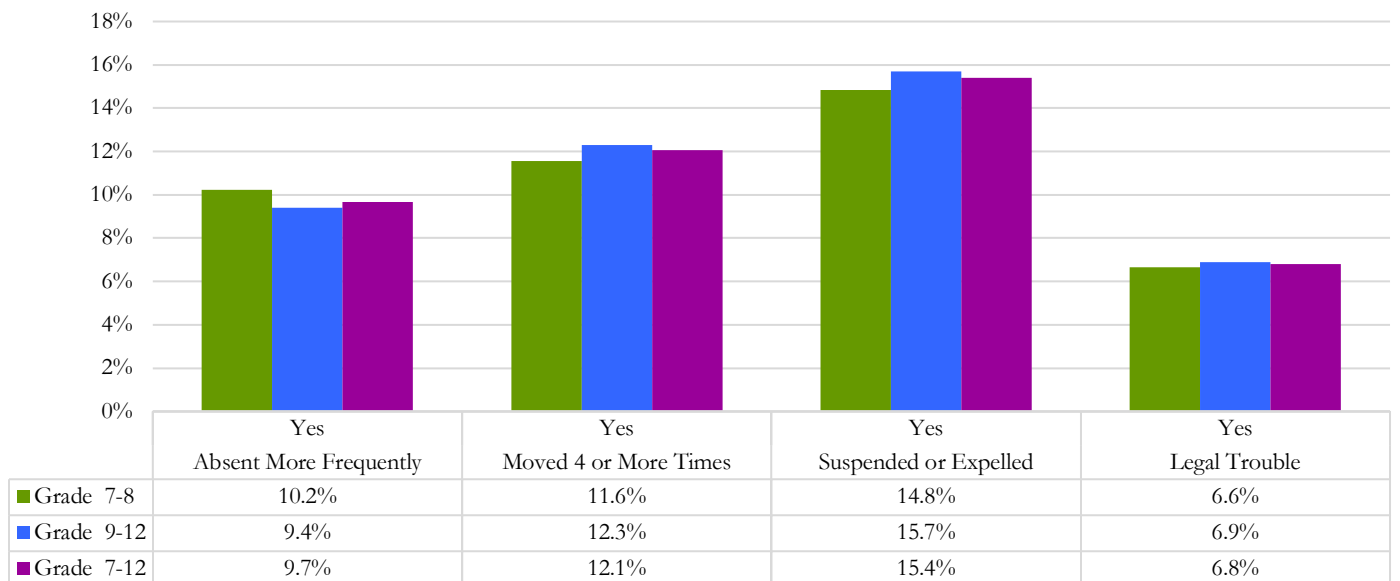


Connected and Thriving Youth:

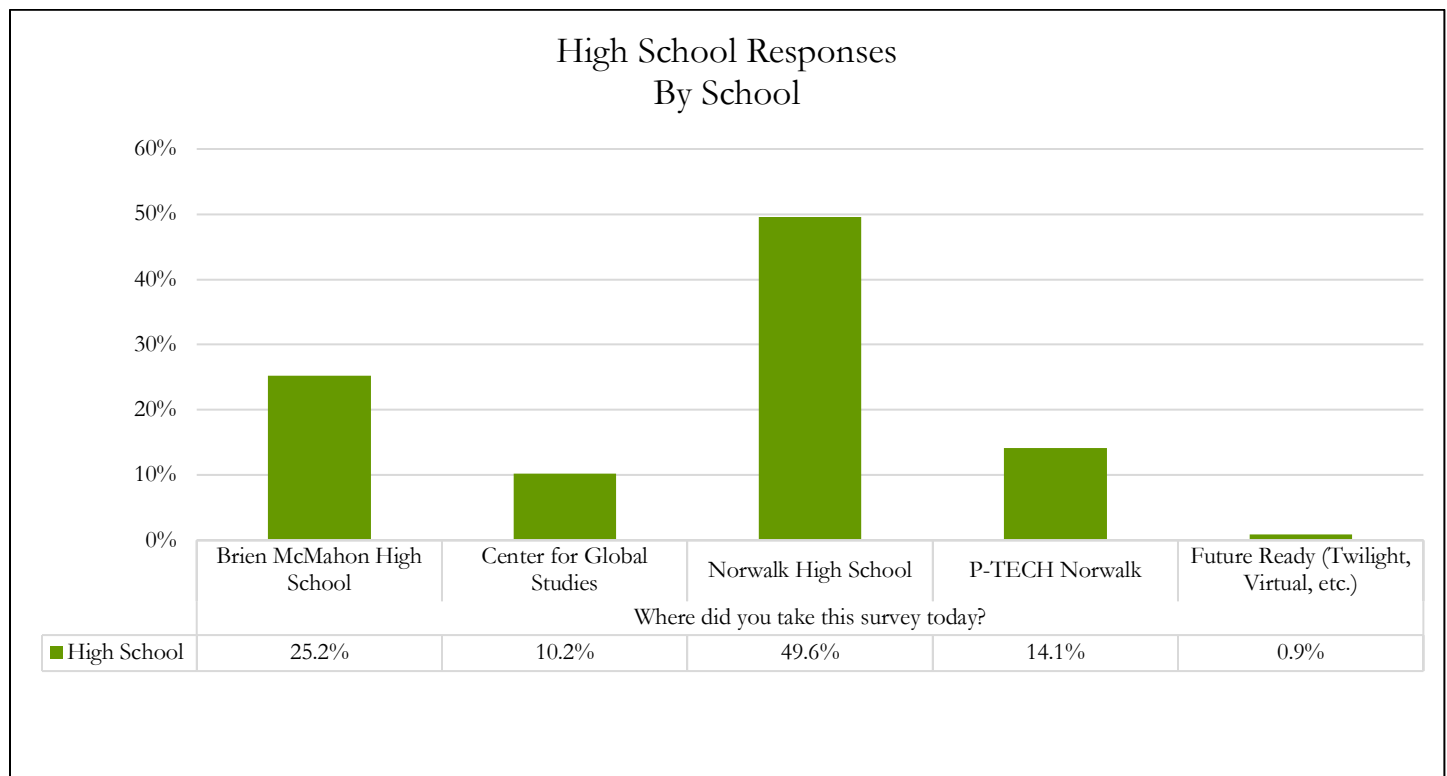
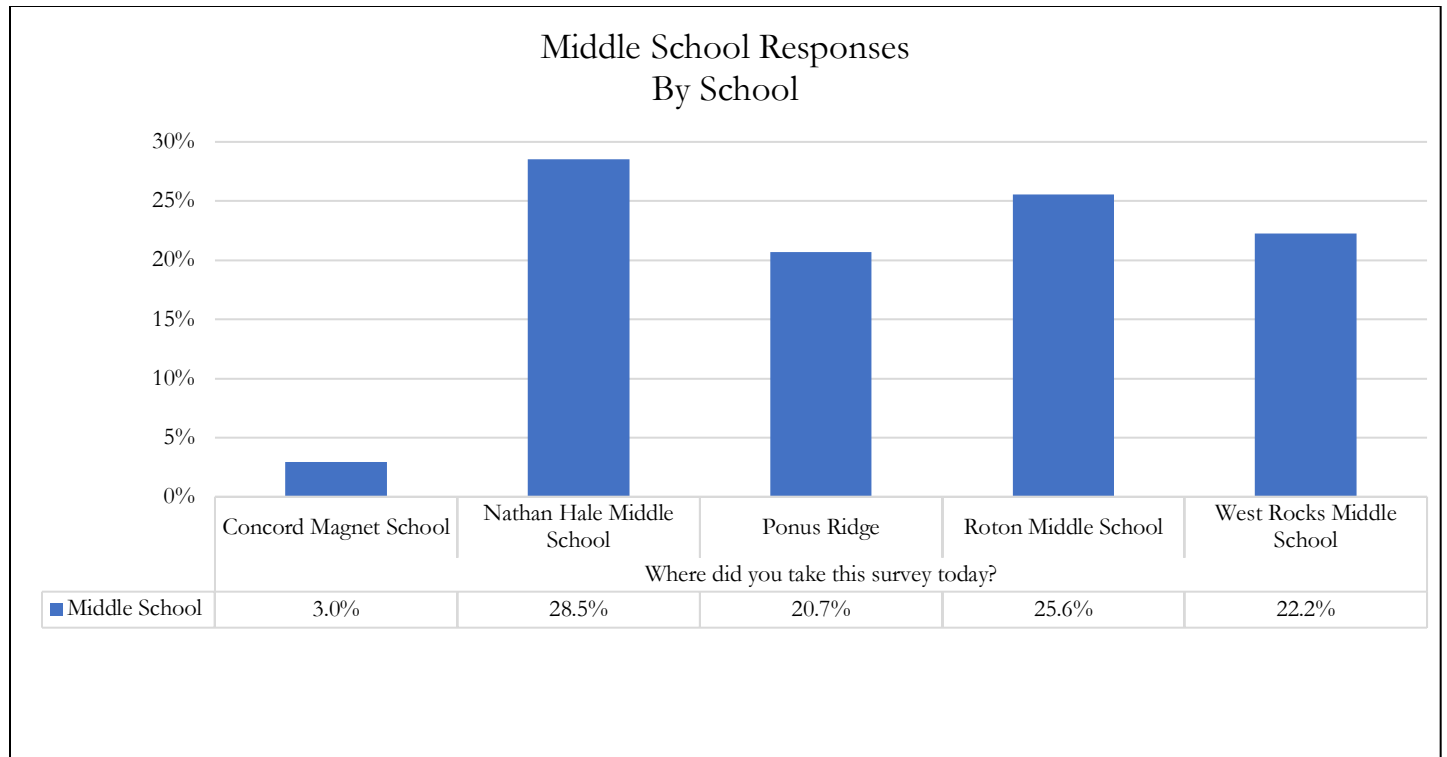
Connected and Thriving Youth- Direction, Confidence, and Supports



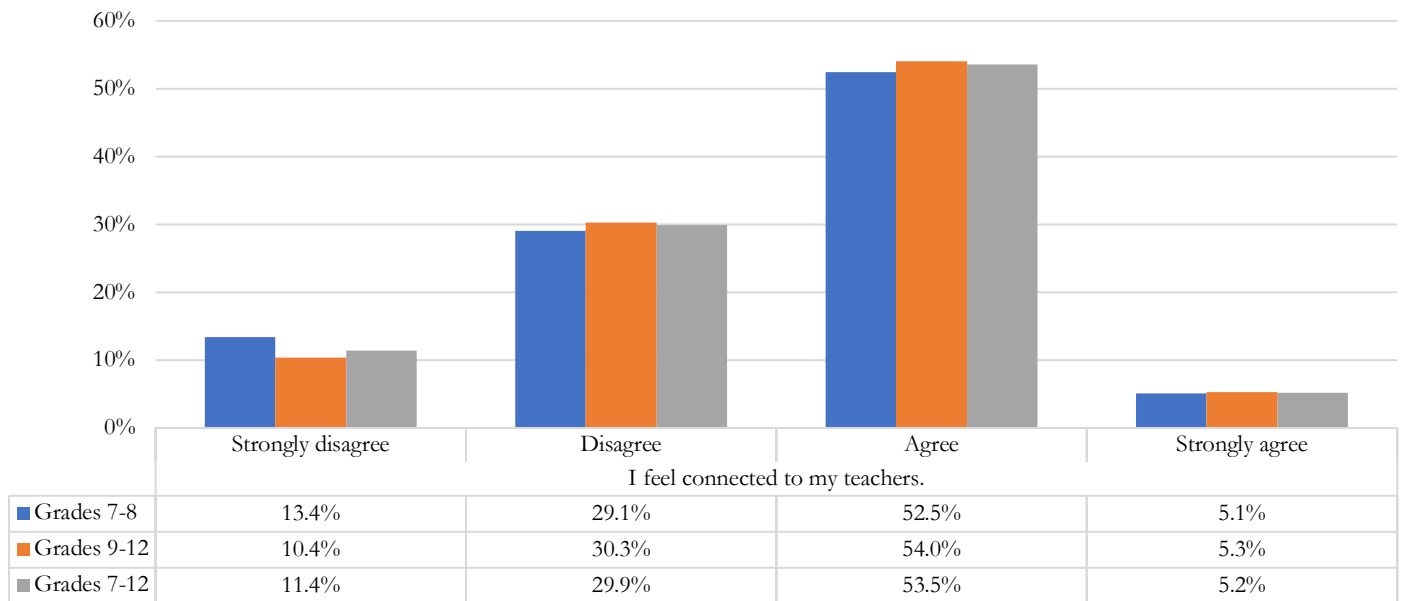
Connected and Thriving Youth- Risk Factors



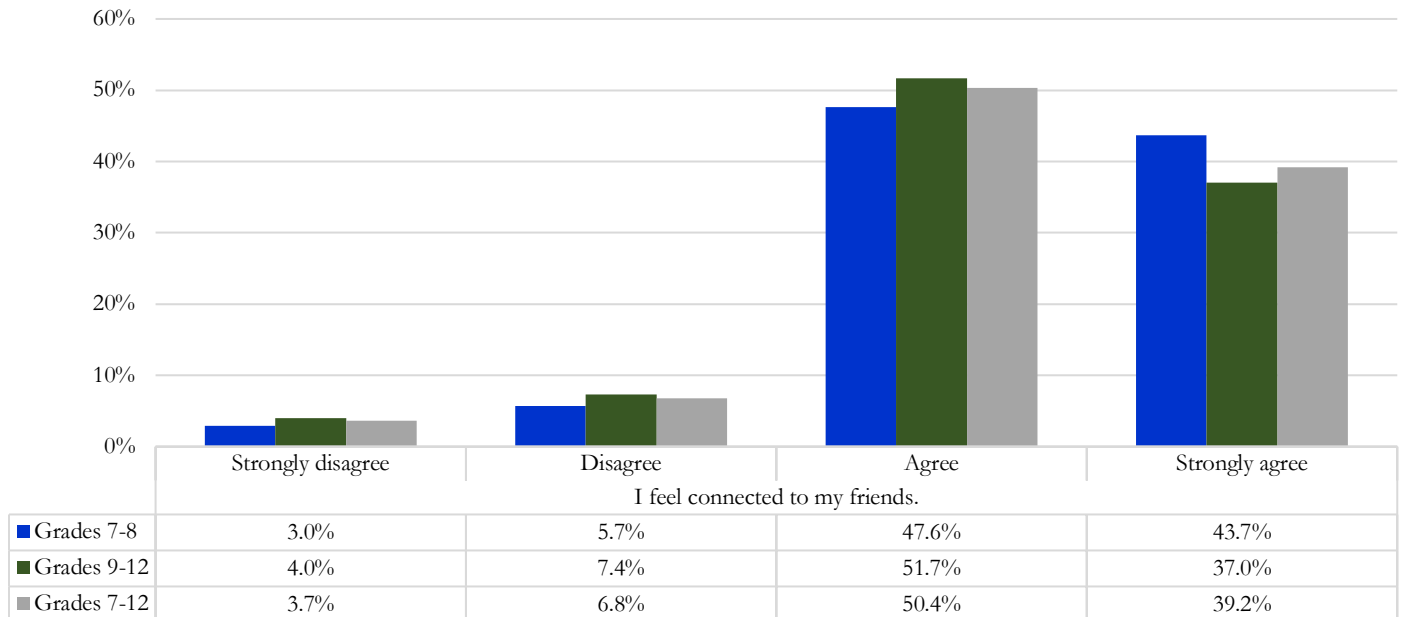
Norwalk Supplemental Questions



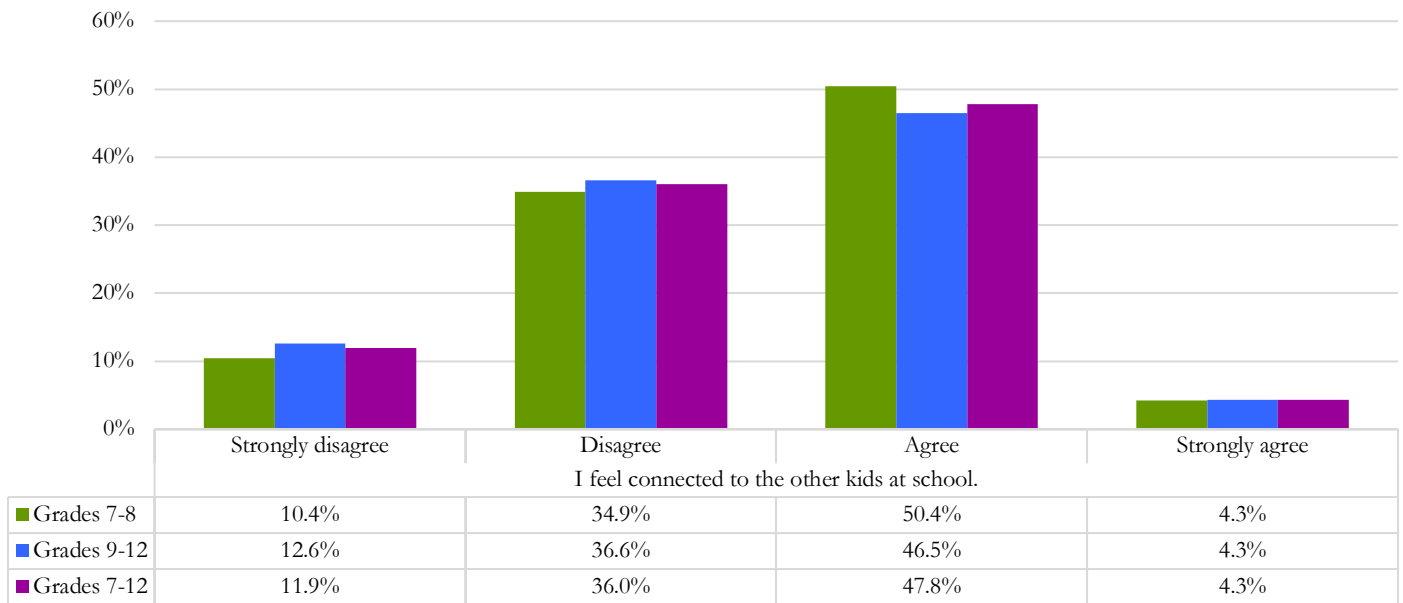
Connection to Teachers



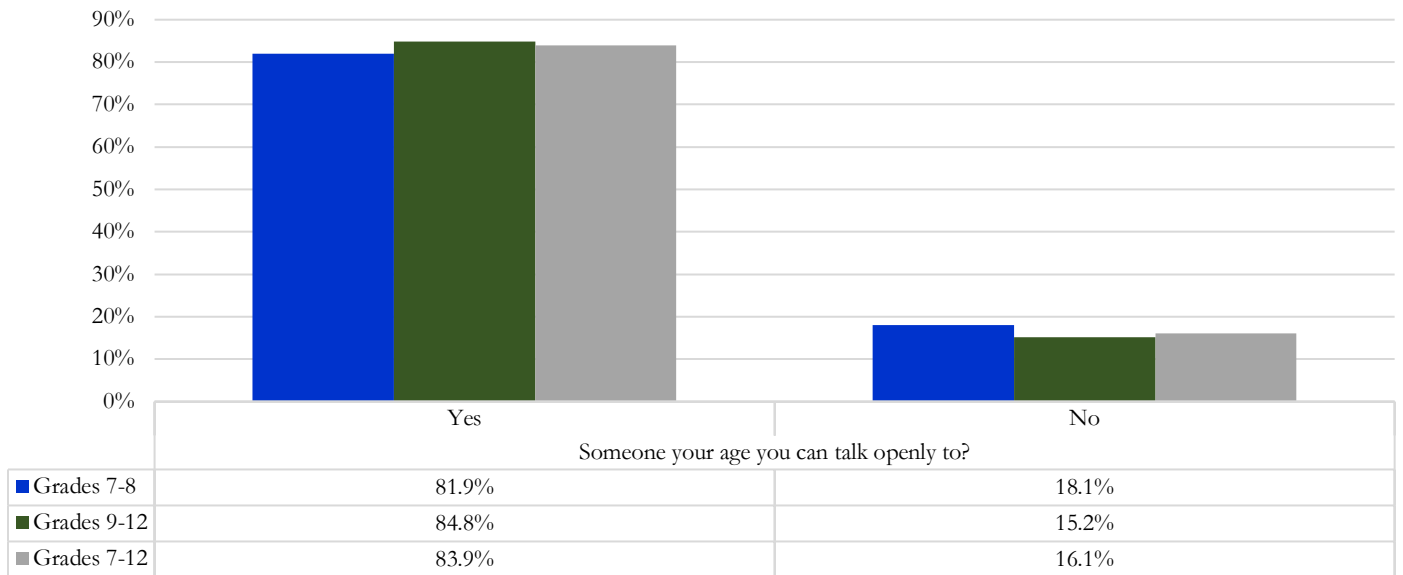
Connection to Friends



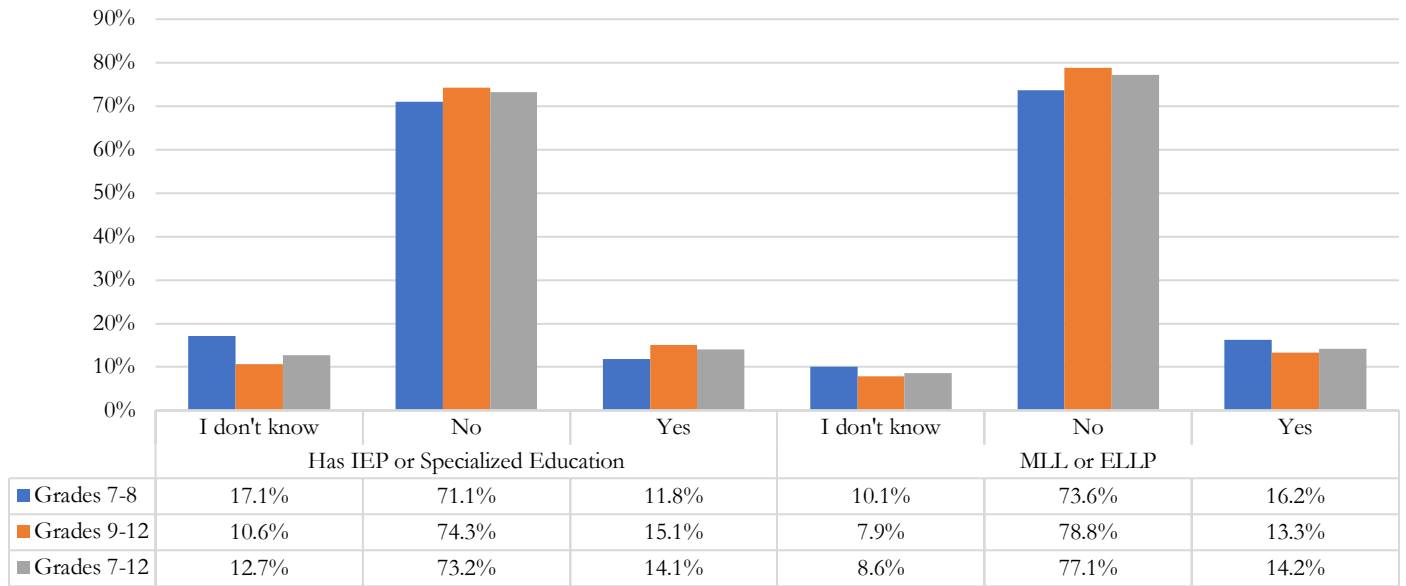
Connection to Other Kids



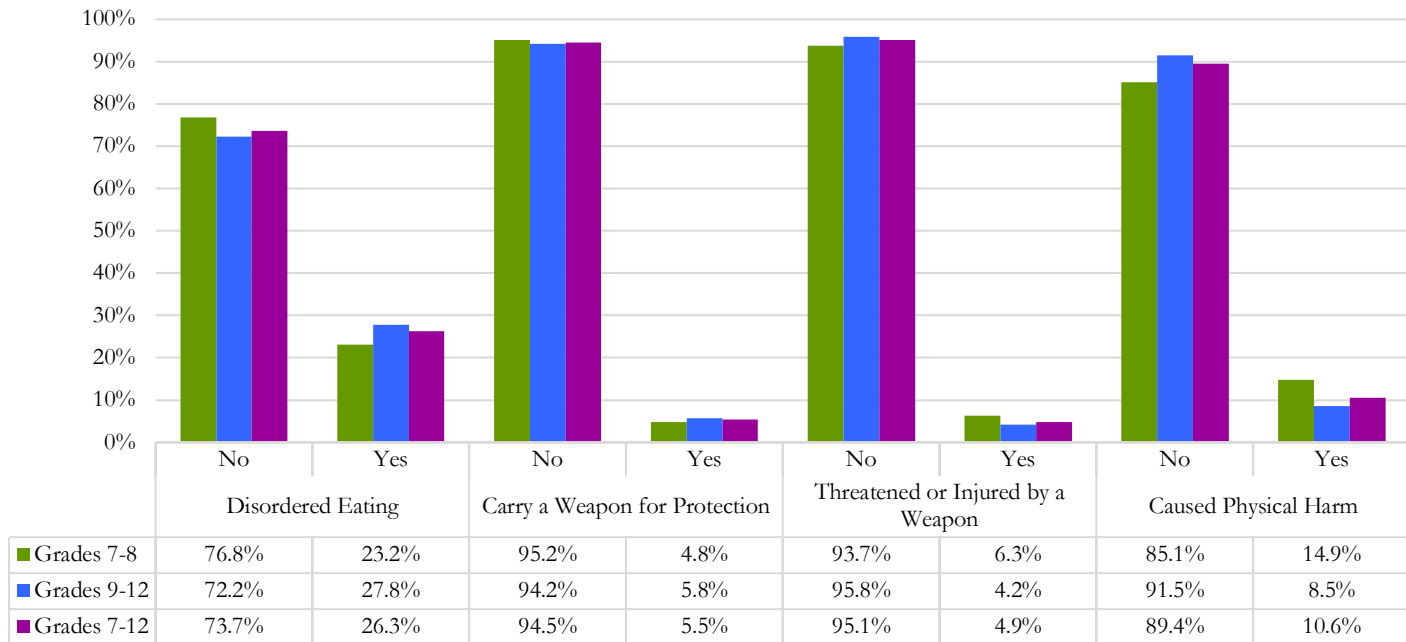
More About Social Supports



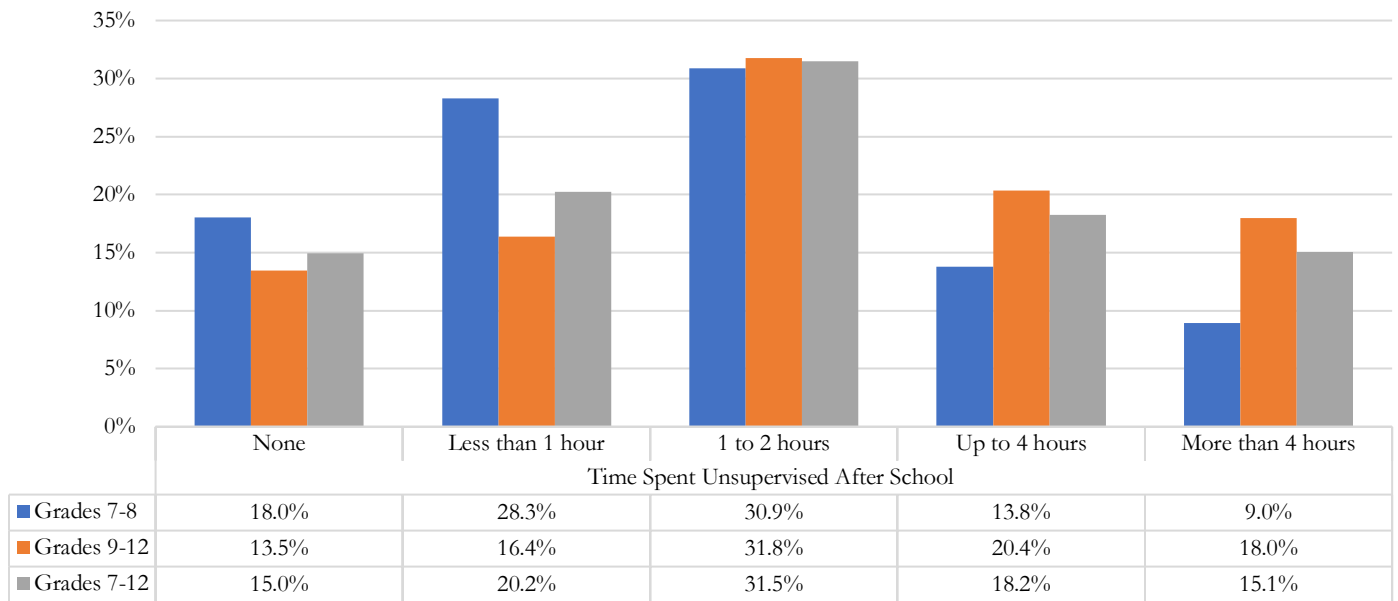
IEP and MLL



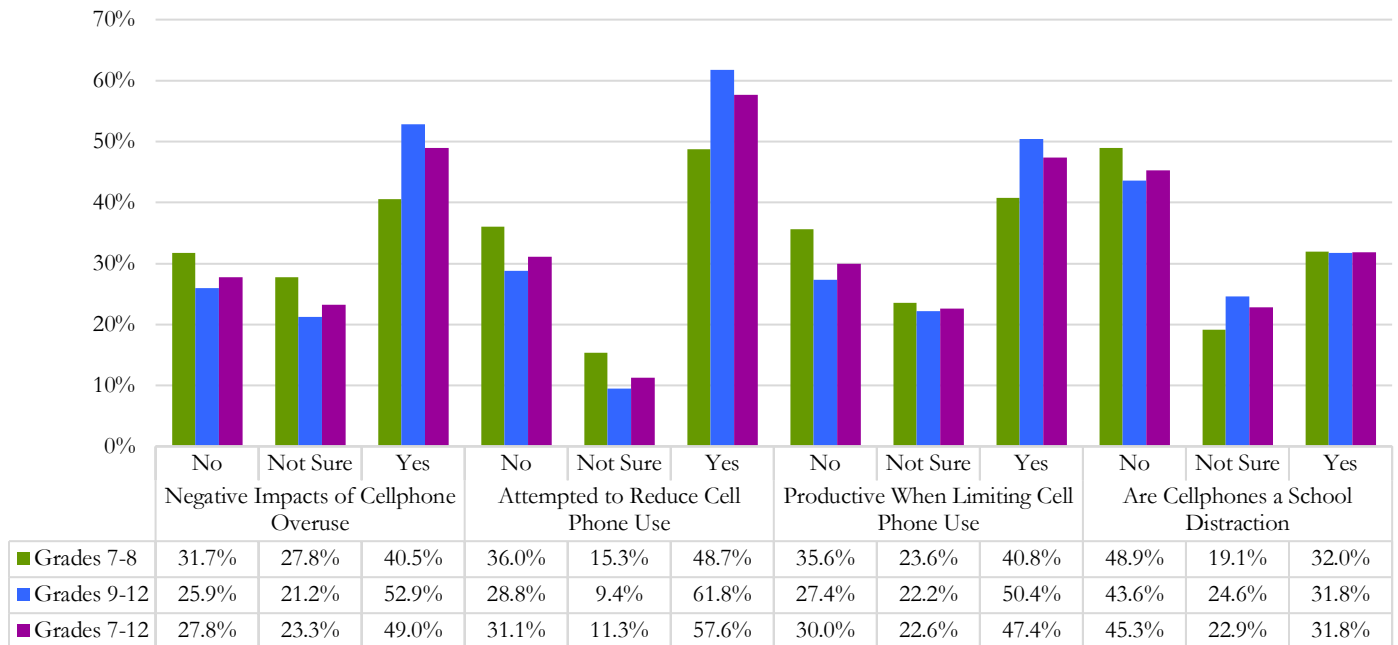
Norwalk Supplemental Questions



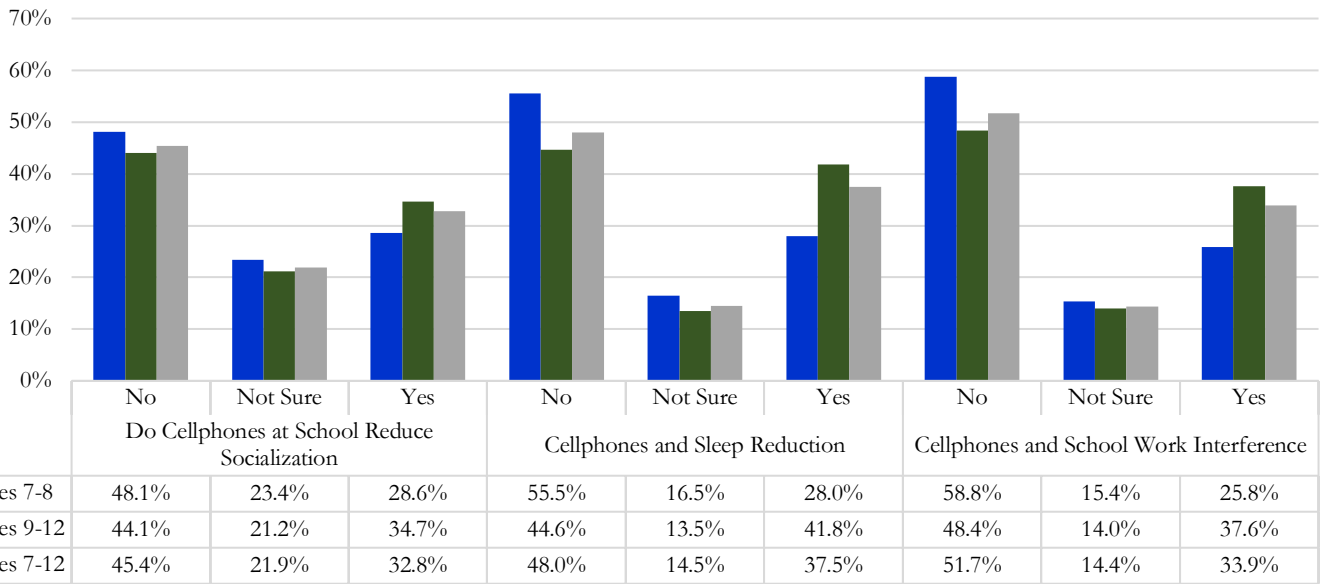
Supervision After School



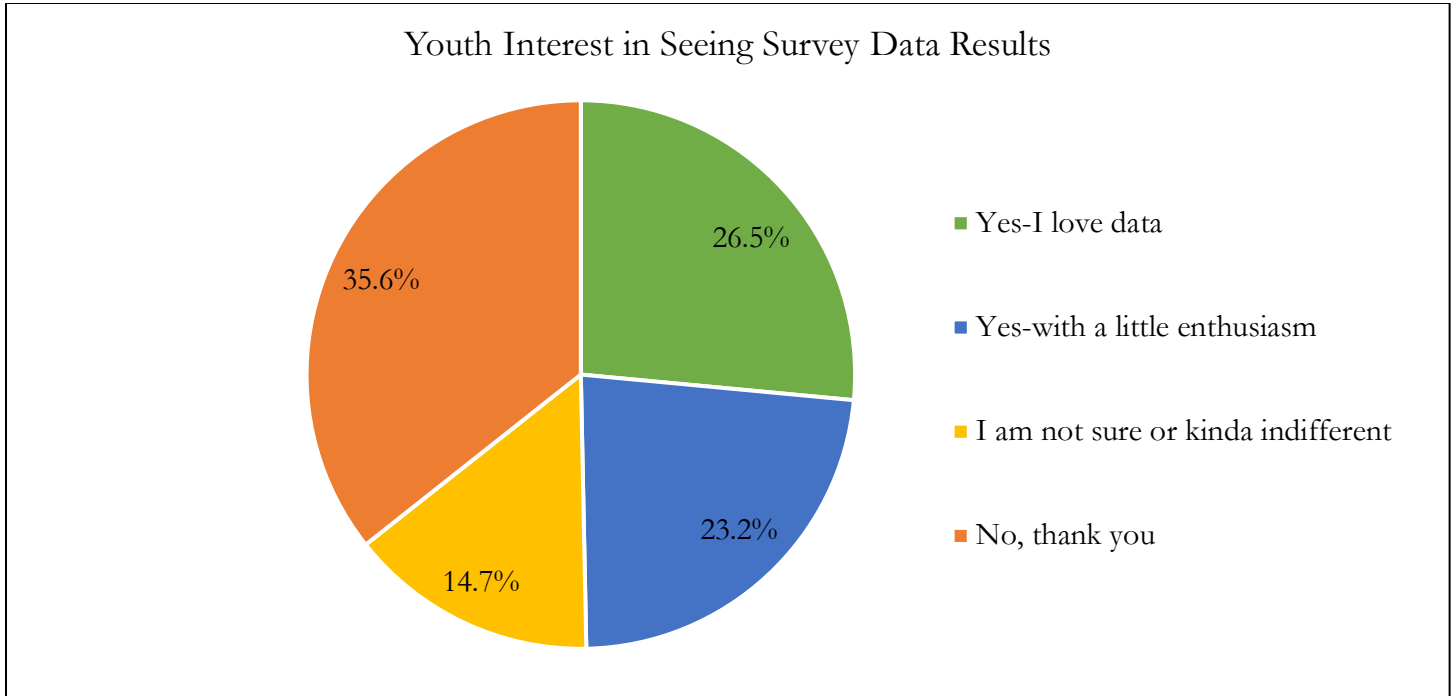
Norwalk Supplemental - Cell Phones



Norwalk Supplemental - Cell Phones



Youth Interest in Survey Results:



Addendum:

All analysis in the tables below reflects youth grades 7-12. Emotional health indicators (depression, anxiety, thoughts of self-harm, considered suicide, etc.) reflect the past year.

Substance Use and Other Emotional Health Indicators

		Non-User*		Lifetime Substance User*		Past Month Substance User*	
		Count	Col. %	Count	Col. %	Count	Col. %
Depression	No	2267	85.8%	454	72.4%	172	62.1%
	Yes	376	14.2%	173	27.6%	105	37.9%
Anxiety	Never/Some	2296	81.6%	448	70.6%	174	61.7%
	Almost/Always	518	18.4%	187	29.4%	108	38.3%
Considered Suicide	No	2444	93.1%	516	83.5%	217	79.8%
	Yes	182	6.9%	102	16.5%	55	20.2%

*Non-User: youth who had not reported any substance use in their lifetime

*Lifetime Substance User: youth who reported use of one or more core substances in their lifetime but NOT in the past month

*Past Month Substance User: youth who reported use of one or more core substances in the past month or 30-days

The following are **statistically significant** differences between groups:

Lifetime Substance Users were more likely to experience depression and anxiety than Non-Users.

Past Month Substance Users were more likely to experience depression and anxiety than Lifetime Users or Non-Users.

Past Month and Lifetime Substance Users were more likely to consider suicide than Non-Users.

Depression and Other Emotional Health Indicators and Risk Factors:

		Sad or hopeless for 2+ weeks in a row			
		No		Yes	
		Count	Col. %	Count	Col. %
Anxiety	Never/Some	2467	85.6%	301	46.2%
	Almost/Always	416	14.4%	351	53.8%
Thoughts of Self Harm	No	2636	91.4%	315	48.7%
	Yes	247	8.6%	332	51.3%
Self-Harm	No	2736	95.0%	413	64.0%
	Yes	143	5.0%	232	36.0%
Physical Abuse- Intimate Partner	No	2814	97.7%	566	87.5%
	Yes	67	2.3%	81	12.5%
Considered Suicide	No	2710	95.7%	423	66.3%
	Yes	122	4.3%	215	33.7%

The following are **statistically significant** differences between groups:

Youth who reported feeling sad or hopeless 2+ weeks in a row were more likely than those who did not to report feeling anxious always/almost always, have thoughts of self-harm, have self-harm behaviors, experience physical abuse from an intimate partner, and have considered suicide.