



SUMMIT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

# YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY - MIDDLE SCHOOL (YRBS), 2023



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## POPULATION HEALTH VITAL STATISTICS DATA BRIEF, JANUARY 2025

The *Population Health Vital Statistics Data Brief* series was created to provide regular updates to the Community Health Assessment and to provide the community with additional important information about population health. For more information on the Community Health Assessment and to access other reports in the *Vital Statistics Data Brief* series, please visit [scph.org/assessments-reports](https://scph.org/assessments-reports)



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## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This data brief presents a summary of the findings of the Summit County Public Health / County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The survey was conducted during the fall of 2023 in Middle Schools and High Schools throughout Summit County, in collaboration with the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) at Case Western Reserve University. The

YRBS is a cross-sectional tool developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to track adolescent risk behavior over time. The national YRBS has tracked major causes of morbidity and mortality for adolescents since 1991.





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## Methodology

Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Parents or guardians who approved took no action, while those who did not wish for their student to participate could opt out. Of the 26 middle schools selected, 15 participated. A total of 4,268 usable questionnaires were obtained from 8,791 eligible students, resulting in a school response rate of 66.7% and a student response rate of 68.9%. The overall response rate was 45.9%. Data were weighted to make it representative of the population of 7th-8th-grade students in Summit County. No statistical imputations were made for missing data.

Weighted data were analyzed with prevalence estimates and 95% confidence intervals calculated for all dichotomous variables. Significant differences were determined based on the non-overlapping of confidence intervals. Graphs and narrative descriptions were provided to illustrate the range of responses. In some sections differences are shown between students in Akron vs. the county as a whole. Due to sample size limitations, Akron was the only geographic area able to be analyzed separately. Differences between Akron and the county-wide sample (including Akron) are presented when those differences are statistically significant.

# PROGRESS VS. HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 OBJECTIVES

Though not an official goal of the Summit County YRBS, comparing ourselves to national health objectives provides the community with an important benchmark to measure the relative health of our youth. In some key areas like tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, several objectives have been met. In other areas such as physical activity and mental health, we lag behind the nation.

Category	Healthy People 2030 Objectives		Akron	Status	Summit County	Status
Unintentional injury, violence, mental health and suicide	MHMD-02	Reduce suicide attempts by adolescents to 1.8% or lower	12.0%	Not met	7.2%	Not met
	IVP-11	Reduce physical fighting among adolescents to 20.9% or lower	43.6%	Not met	31.6%	Not met
Tobacco and substance use	TU-04	Reduce current tobacco use in adolescents to 11.3% or lower	8.5%	Met	5.3%	Met
	TU-05	Reduce current e-cigarette use in adolescents to 10.5% or lower	7.7%	Met	4.8%	Met
	TU-06	Reduce current cigarette smoking in adolescents to 3.4% or lower	1.6%	Met	0.7%	Met
	TU-07	Reduce current cigar smoking in adolescents to 3.0% or lower	3.6%	Not met	2.2%	Met
	TU-08	Reduce current use of smokeless tobacco products among adolescents to 2.3% or lower	1.3%	Met	0.8%	Met
	SU-06	Reduce the proportion of adolescents who used marijuana in the past month to 5.8% or lower	6.3%	Not met	3.4%	Met
	SU-04	Reduce the proportion of adolescents who drank alcohol in the past month to 6.3% or lower	5.5%	Met	4.1%	Met
Sexual risk behaviors	FP-04	Increase the proportion of adolescents who have never had sex to 80.8% or higher	93.0%	Met	93.1%	Met
Physical activity, health and health care	EMC-03	Increase the proportion of children who get sufficient sleep to 70.6% or higher	29.8%	Not met	27.9%	Not met
	AH-01	Increase the proportion of adolescents who had a preventative health care visit in the past year to 82.6% or higher	56.3%	Not met	65.9%	Not met

FIGURE 1:  
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 MIDDLE SCHOOL OBJECTIVES

# DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

About 47% of the students in the YRBS were from Akron. The vast majority of the middle school students in both Akron and Summit County are 12 or 13 years old. Students are about evenly split between the two grades (7-8), though in Akron 8th graders make up a small majority.

Respondents were evenly split between male and female. Significant racial differences exist between Akron and students county-wide, with just over half of the Akron sample identifying as African-American vs. 33% for the county-wide sample, with about 3% and 2%, respectively, identifying as Hispanic or Latino. About 2% of Akron students and 1% of students countywide spoke either Spanish or another language at home.

About 3% of the Akron sample identified as either transgender or non-binary; the county-wide sample had only 0.6% identifying the same way.

Nearly three-quarters of students countywide said they live with either two parents or step-parents; a rate which drops to just over half for Akron students. Of those who live with one parent or have an alternate arrangement, living with their mother was the most common arrangement.

Demographic Characteristics		Percent of Respondents <sup>1,2</sup>	
		Akron	Summit County
Age	11 years old or younger	0.5%	0.7%
	12 years old	30.5%	32.8%
	13 years old	49.8%	49.3%
	14 years or older	19.2%	17.2%
Grade Level	7th	47.3%	49.8%
	8th	52.7%	50.2%
Sex	Female	50.8%	50.3%
	Male	49.2%	49.7%
Race & Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.4%	0.7%
	Asian	4.9%	3.4%
	Black or African American	56.4%	33.0%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%
	White	28.8%	55.7%
	Multiple Races	6.1%	5.1%
	Hispanic	3.2%	1.9%
Language Used at Home	English	91.0%	94.2%
	Spanish	1.5%	0.6%
	Another language	7.5%	5.2%
Gender Identity	Cisgender	94.9%	94.2%
	Transgender/Non-binary	3.4%	0.6%
	Other	1.6%	5.2%
Household Composition	Parents (Biological or Step-Parents)	53.8%	70.7%
	Mom Only	31.1%	18.8%
	Dad Only	3.6%	2.3%
	Parent and Other Adult Family Members	5.9%	3.9%
	Adults Family Members, No Parents	4.3%	3.2%
	Foster Family	0.6%	0.6%
	Other Living Situation	0.7%	0.5%

<sup>1</sup> "Akron" includes only those from Akron; "Summit County" includes all respondents including Akron

<sup>2</sup> Survey included 4,268 total respondents, of which 2,047 were from Akron

**FIGURE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING YRBS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

# TRENDS IN YOUTH RISK BEHAVIORS

The 2023 YRBS is the third such survey conducted in Summit County since 2013. In this section, we take a brief look at what has improved and what has gotten worse since the last survey in 2018.

- **Unintentional injuries and violence** - No significant changes were seen on violence-related indicators between 2018 and 2023.
- **Tobacco, alcohol, marijuana** - Reported use of all three substances (including e-cigarettes) were lower in 2023 than in 2018. This is true of both lifetime and current use.
- **Gambling and sexual behaviors** - Fewer students reported gambling than in 2018. No statistically significant changes were seen in terms of sexual activity or condom use.
- **Obesity, weight and diet** - More students met exercise guidelines in 2023 than 2018.
- **Physical activity and other health issues** - More students saw a doctor, and more students also visited a mental health provider in the past 12 months than in 2018.

Subject Areas	Questions	2013	2018	2023	Trend	2018-2023*
Unintentional injuries and violence	Carried a weapon	11.3%	9.4%	10.5%		Worse
	In a physical fight	32.7%	34.1%	31.6%		Better
	Showed symptoms of depressive sadness	21.7%	25.6%	25.8%		Worse
	Attempted suicide	9.7%	6.9%	7.2%		Worse
Tobacco, alcohol, and drugs	Ever used alcohol	23.4%	15.4%	16.0%		Worse
	Used alcohol in the past 30 days	8.6%	5.9%	4.1%		Better
	Alcohol use before age 11	10.0%	6.1%	7.9%		Worse
	Parents think it's very wrong to use alcohol	75.2%	68.6%	67.3%		Worse
	Currently use tobacco	--	9.9%	5.3%		Better
	Currently use e-cigarettes	--	8.6%	4.8%		Better
	Currently use marijuana	5.2%	3.7%	3.4%		Better
Parents think it's very wrong to use marijuana	89.0%	85.7%	85.4%		Worse	
Gambling and sexual behaviors	Gambled money or personal items	19.4%	16.9%	14.0%		Better
	Gambled over the internet	0.7%	0.8%	1.6%		Worse
	Ever had sexual intercourse	2.5%	6.1%	6.9%		Worse
	Currently sexually active	1.4%	5.0%	6.3%		Worse
	Currently active teens using a condom most / all the time	16.7%	46.7%	40.7%		Worse
Obesity, weight, diet	BMI in the obese category	11.7%	15.2%	15.8%		Worse
	Met recommended fruit / vegetable intake	25.7%	30.0%	33.2%		Better
	Met recommended exercise guidelines	48.2%	44.2%	49.2%		Better
	Ate fast food at least once during the week	66.6%	70.9%	71.2%		Worse
Physical activity and other health issues	Saw a doctor in the past 12 months	69.1%	68.5%	65.9%		Worse
	Saw a dentist in the past 12 months	75.6%	71.6%	70.2%		Worse
	Saw someone for a mental health issue in the past 12 months	25.7%	29.1%	38.3%		Better
	Got 8 hours of sleep per night	37.9%	31.7%	29.8%		Worse
	Talk to parents about school almost everyday	60.8%	57.4%	57.8%		Better

\* Entries in green or red represent statistically significant changes; other cells show no statistically significant changes between 2018 & 2023

FIGURE 3:  
SUMMARY OF TRENDS IN KEY YRBS QUESTIONS, 2013-2023

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY TOPIC AREA



## Unintentional Injuries and Violence

*This section of the survey focuses on the physical safety and related behaviors of high school students, their involvement in violence and bullying, and their mental health and risk for self-harm and suicide.*

### Driving Safety:

- **Seatbelts:** About 6% of students say they rarely or never wore seatbelts.
- **Drinking and driving:** Nearly 14% say they rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking in the past 30 days.

### Team Sports:

- **Head Injuries:** One-in-five students (21%) said they had a concussion from playing sports / participating in physical activity in the past 12 months.

### Experience with Violence:

- **Weapons:** Nearly 11% of students say they carried a weapon in the past 30 days. One quarter said they could get a loaded gun without permission. Of those who say they could get a gun, 79% say they could get a gun in less than 24 hours.
- **Physical Safety: Feeling of safety** - Thirteen percent of students said they felt unsafe at school or on their way to and from school.
- **Physical Safety: Fighting** - Just under one-in-three students say they've been in a physical fight during the past 12 months.
- **Witnessing violence** - Nearly one-fifth of students say they saw someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood at least once in their lives.
- **Differences in Violence:** Students in Akron were nearly twice as likely to say they carried or could get weapons and felt unsafe. Akron students were also more likely to say they've been in a fight, or were exposed to community violence as students in the county as a whole. In addition, students who report experiencing symptoms of depressive sadness and those who carried a gun in the past 30 days are more likely to report witnessing community violence than others.

### Bullying:

- **Bullying At School:** Nearly one-third of students say they were bullied on school property during the past 12 months.
- **Bullying Away From School:** Nearly 16% of students say they were bullied away from school during the past 12 months.
- **Bullying Online:** Almost one-in-five students say they were bullied electronically (online) during the past 12 months.
- **Overall Experience with Bullying:** Nearly 38% of students report experiencing at least one of the three forms of bullying asked about in the survey. More than 8% say they experienced all three forms of bullying.
- **Differences in Bullying:** Students who say they are non-cisgendered are more than 1.5 times as likely to say they experience any form of bullying. Those who say they experienced all three forms of bullying were more than twice as likely to say they carried a weapon in the past 30 days than others, though the statistical association is weak.
- **Teasing / Name Calling:** Nearly half of students say they were teased or name called for any reason. Nearly one-in-five say they were teased because of their weight, 6% say they were teased because of their religion, and 5% say they were teased because of their gender.

### Depressive Sadness and Suicide:

- **Sadness:** More than a quarter of students say they felt so sad that they stopped normal activities at some point in the past 12 months. More than half of students (54%) said they received help when they felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious.
- **Self-Harm:** Nearly 20% of students say they purposely hurt themselves at least once during the past 12 months.



- **Considering Suicide:** Twelve percent of students report seriously considering committing suicide during the past 12 months. Ten percent of students say they made a plan about how they would do so.
- **Suicide attempts:** More than 7% of students report having attempted suicide during the past 12 months.
- **Differences in Sadness and Suicide:** Students who report being teased or bullied are more likely to report depressive sadness than other students. Females and non-cisgendered students were significantly more likely to report depressive symptoms, self-harm, considering suicide, creating a plan, and attempting suicide in the past 12 months than males. Even though females were more likely than males to say they attempted suicide, the statistical association between them is weak.

Students who report ever trying alcohol were significantly more likely to report depressive symptoms, self-harm, considering suicide, creating a plan, and attempting suicide in the past 12 months than those who didn't.

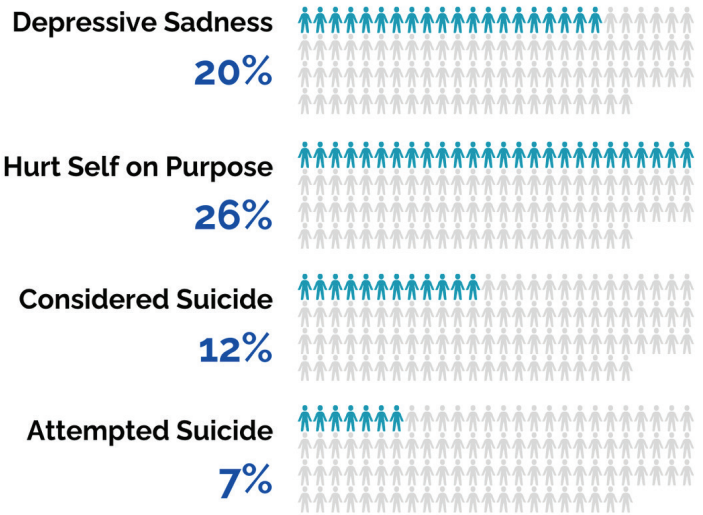


FIGURE 4: DEPRESSIVE SADNESS AND SUICIDE AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

## Middle School Bullying

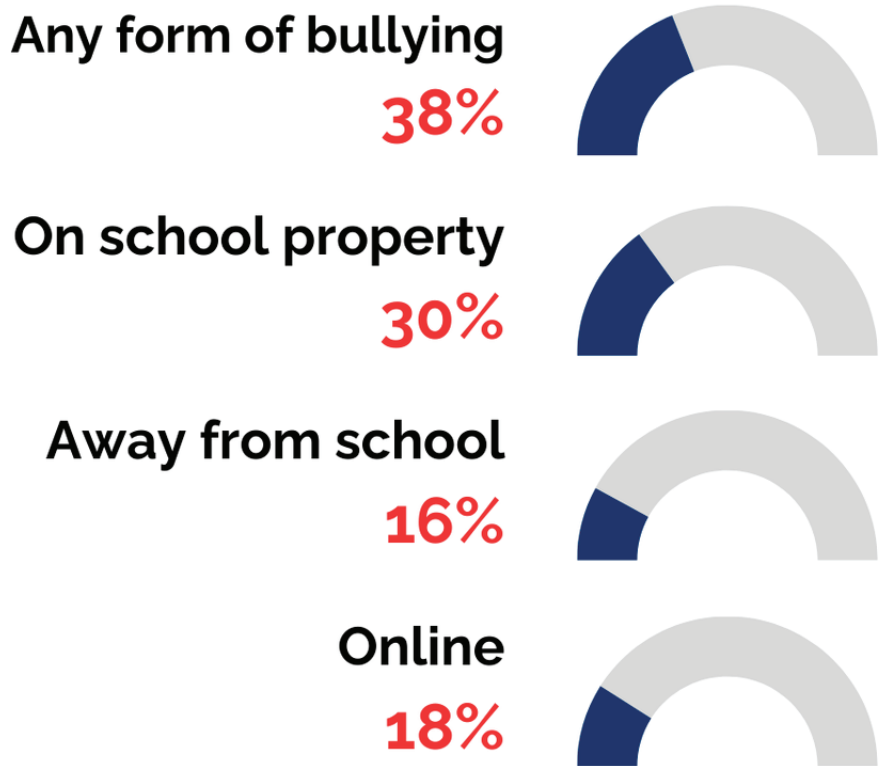


FIGURE 5: BULLYING AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS



## Mental Health / Suicide Behaviors and Substance Use

The associations between mental health and suicide behavior questions and students who report ever using either tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana are strong. Students who use one of more of these substances are far more likely to report sadness / self-harm, or suicide-related behaviors as shown below.

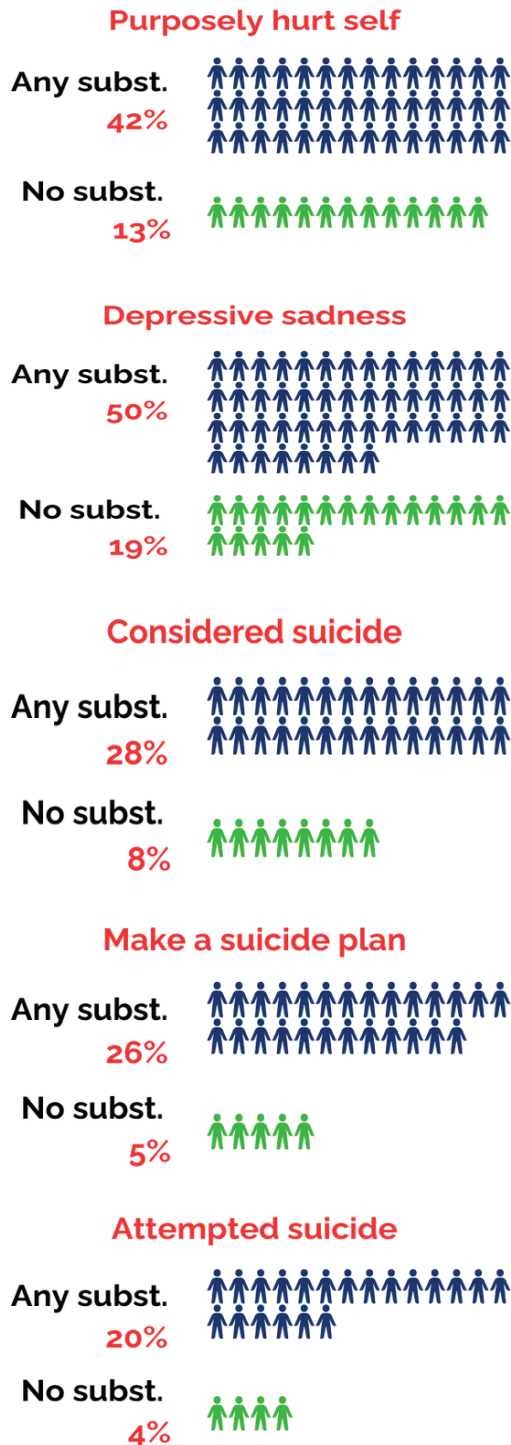
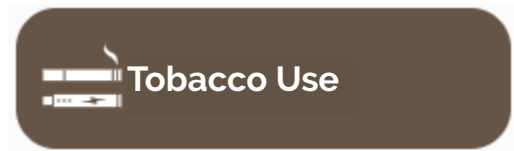


FIGURE 6: MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE



*This section of the survey focuses on use of tobacco and other tobacco products like e-cigarettes.*

Overall tobacco use:

- **Smoking and General Tobacco Use:** About 11% of students say they have used any tobacco product at some point in their lives. Just over 3% of all students say they began smoking before age 11 (about 28% of students who say they ever smoked). Only a small percentage (less than 1%) say they smoked in the past 30 days.
- **Other Tobacco Products:** Less than 1% of all students say they used chewing tobacco in the past 30 days. About 2% say they smoked cigars in the past 30 days.
- **Electronic Vapor Product Use:** Less than 5% of students say they used an electronic vapor product in the past 30 days.
- **Access to Tobacco:** Just over 40% of smokers say they got their tobacco products from someone else who gave it to them rather than purchasing it themselves.
- **Parental Attitudes About Tobacco Use:** About 84% of students say their parents think tobacco use is very wrong; an increase from past YRBS studies in Summit County.
- **Differences in Tobacco Use:** Akron students were twice as likely as all students to say they ever smoked (17% and 9%, respectively). Black and Hispanic students were more likely to have ever used tobacco or nicotine products compared to White students. Cisgendered students were more likely to say their parents thought tobacco use was wrong than non-cisgendered students.



## Alcohol and Other Drug Use

*This section of the survey focuses on students' use of dangerous substances such as alcohol and other drugs.*

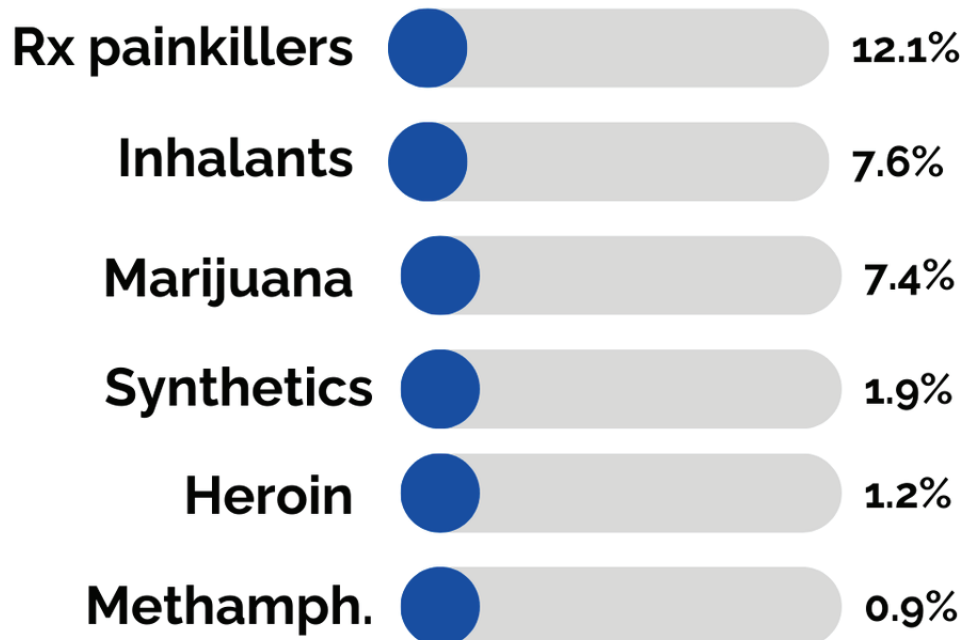
### Alcohol use:

- **Overall Use:** Sixteen percent of students say they ever drank alcohol. Of those who ever drank, 8% did so for the first time before age 11. Just 4% of students say they drank alcohol in the past 30 days.
- **Access to Alcohol:** Nearly half (49%) of those who drank in the past 30 days say they got their alcohol from someone else who gave it to them.
- **Parental Attitudes About Alcohol Use:** Two-thirds of students say their parents think it would be very wrong for them to use alcohol.
- **Differences in Alcohol Use:** White students were nearly twice as likely to say they got the alcohol they drank from someone who gave it to them than Black or Hispanic students (61% vs. 32% and 31%, respectively). Akron students are less likely to say they got the alcohol they drank from someone who gave it to them than others (39% and 54%, respectively).


- **Other Drug Use:** Among other drugs, prescription (Rx) pain killers were the most often cited (12% of drug users). Inhalants and synthetic drugs were the next most frequently cited (8% and 2%, respectively), followed by heroin or methamphetamines (1.2% and 0.9%, respectively).
- **Parental Attitudes About Marijuana Use:** Over 85% of students say their parents think it would be very wrong for them to use marijuana.
- **Differences in Marijuana and Other Drug Use:** Black and Hispanic students were more likely to say they ever tried marijuana than white students. Akron students were twice as likely as all students to ever try marijuana (12% vs. 6%). Students with depressive sadness were nearly three times more likely to say they used at least one hard drug than other students (34% vs. 12%). Those with depressive sadness were also more likely to have ever used marijuana (18% vs. 4%), and alcohol (32% vs. 11%).

### Drug use:

- **Hard Drug Use:** Seventeen percent of students say they took at least one illegal drug at some point in their lives (defined as one or more of heroin, methamphetamines, inhalants, or synthetic drugs). About 5% of all students report being offered illegal drugs on school property. Another 4% say they attended school under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the past year.
- **Marijuana Use:** About 7% of all students used marijuana at least once. Less than 2% of all students began marijuana use before age 11 (19% of those who ever used marijuana). About 3% of all students who ever used marijuana did so in the past 30 days.



**FIGURE 7:** REPORTED LIFETIME DRUG USE AMONG YRBS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

 **Sexual Behaviors**

*This section of the survey focuses on students' engagement in risky sexual behaviors.*

**Sexual behaviors:**

- **Overall:** Just under 7% of middle school students say they have had sexual intercourse at least once in their lives.
- **Multiple Partners:** Among the currently sexually active, just over 9% say they have had sex with four or more partners in the past 3 months. The vast majority of those who were sexually active (74%) report having only one partner in the past 3 months.
- **Safe Sexual Practices:** Of sexually active students, 41% report using a condom either all or most of the time.
- **Differences in Sexual Behaviors:** Black and Hispanic students were more likely to say they have ever had sex in their lives than white students. However, the strength of these associations were relatively weak. Sexually active white students were more likely to say they used a condom all or most of the time than Hispanic or Black students (72% vs. 46% for Hispanic and 31% for Black students)



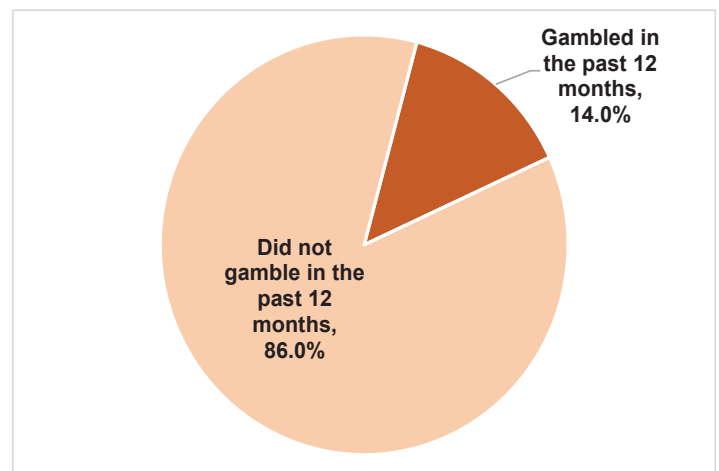
**FIGURE 7: SUMMARY OF REPORTED MIDDLE SCHOOL SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

 **Other Health Topics**

*This section of the survey focuses on students' responses on other important topics in the YRBS.*

**Gambling:**

- **Overall:** More than 14% of students say they gambled at some time over the past 12 months.
- **Types of Gambling:** The most common forms of gambling involve scratch-offs, games of personal skill and sports (7%, 6%, and 6%, respectively), were the most commonly reported forms of gambling. Dice, coin flips, or cards were the next most common form of gambling (roughly 2.5% each). Less than 2% report gambling on the internet.
- **Differences in Gambling:** Males were significantly more likely to say they ever gambled (21% vs. 8% for females). Those who have ever tried any substance (tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana) were twice as likely to say they ever gambled than those who didn't.



**FIGURE 7: REPORTED TYPES OF GAMBLING AMONG YRBS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**





## Other Health Topics

*Continued...*

### Obesity and Weight-Related Issues:

- **Overall:** About one-third of students were considered overweight or obese as measured by body-mass index or BMI. BMI was calculated using self-reported height and weight of respondents. These results were consistent with national YRBS results that showed estimated overweight / obesity rates to be about 31%.
- **Making Changes to Body Weight:** More than 43% of students were trying to lose weight; a higher rate than the 29% of students who were actually assessed as being overweight or obese.
- **Perceptions of Weight Problems:** As noted above, more students were trying to lose weight than actually needed to as measured by the BMI. Of those who described themselves as overweight or obese, only 67% had a measured BMI in the overweight or obese range. Of those who considered themselves to have a normal weight, 18% actually measured as overweight or obese. Nearly 7% of those who considered themselves to be underweight actually measured as overweight or obese.
- **Differences in Perceptions of Weight:** Females were slightly more likely to think of themselves as overweight (30% vs. 27% for males).
- **Differences in Weight:** Akron students were more likely than students county-wide to have a measured BMI in the overweight or obese range (38% and 26%, respectively).

### Healthy Eating and Exercise:

- **Healthy Eating:** One-third of students say they ate breakfast every day in the past week. Nearly three quarters of students say they ate fast food at least once in the past week (71%). A very small percentage (3%) say they ate fast food every day in the past 7 days.
- **Differences in Healthy Eating:** Female students were less likely than males to say they did not eat breakfast every day (25% and 41%, respectively).

- **Exercise:** Nearly half of students say they met the recommended amount of exercise (5 or more times in the past 7 days). More than 13% of students say they had no exercise in the past 7 days.
- **Differences in Exercise:** Male students were more likely than female students to say they met the recommended amount of exercise (57% and 42%, respectively). White students were more likely to say they met the recommended amount of exercise (55%) than either Black or Hispanic students (41% and 36%, respectively). Akron students were less likely as county-wide students to say met the recommended amount of exercise (36% and 54%, respectively).

### Screen Time:

- **Screen Time:** Nearly three-quarters of students say they spent 3 or more hours of screen time per day (71%). About the same percentage said they used social media. Of those who used social media, the vast majority (85%) used social media at least once per day.

### Sleep:

- **Sleep:** Only one-third of middle school students say they had slept the recommended 8 hours per night for their age group (30%).
- **Differences in Sleep:** Male students were more likely than female students to say they got the recommended amount of sleep (51% and 40%, respectively).

### Unsupervised Time:

- **Unsupervised Time:** Nearly 15% of middle school students say they spent at least 4 hours per day taking care of themselves after school without an adult present.
- **Differences in Unsupervised Time:** Akron students were twice as likely to report being unsupervised at least 4 hours or more per day than Summit County middle school students as a whole (23% and 12%, respectively). White students were less likely to say they spent at least 4 hours per day of unsupervised time than either Black or Hispanic students (10% vs. 22% for Black and Hispanic students, respectively).

## Youth Development:

- **Housing instability:** Just over 3% of students say they experienced homelessness at least once during the 30 days before the survey. Most students (68%) say they moved at least once since Kindergarten.
- **Physical Neglect:** Nearly 7% of students say they never or rarely had an adult who tried hard to make sure their basic needs were met.
- **Home Life:** The vast majority of students (89%) say they ate at least one meal with their family during the previous 7 days before the survey. Nearly the same amount (80%) say they have a supportive adult and supportive friend to talk to about their feelings always or most of the time. A little over half of students (68%) say they talk with their parents almost every day about school.
- **School Life:** Nearly 82% of students say they got A's or B's in the 12 months prior to the survey. Two thirds (68%) say they have one or more teachers or adults they can talk to at school if they have a problem. A slightly smaller percentage (60%) say they spent at least one day per week in clubs or organizations outside of school.
- **Differences in Youth Development:** Akron students were more likely to say they moved since Kindergarten than Summit County middle school students as a whole (78% and 65%, respectively). Akron students were also more likely than Summit County middle school students as a whole to say they experienced any food insecurity (40% and 28%, respectively).  
  
Black and Hispanic students were more likely to say they moved since Kindergarten than White students (83%, 85%, and 58%, respectively). Black and Hispanic students were also more likely than White students as a whole to say they experienced any food insecurity (43%, 38%, and 24%, respectively).