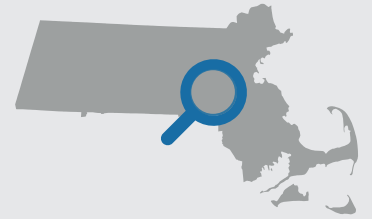


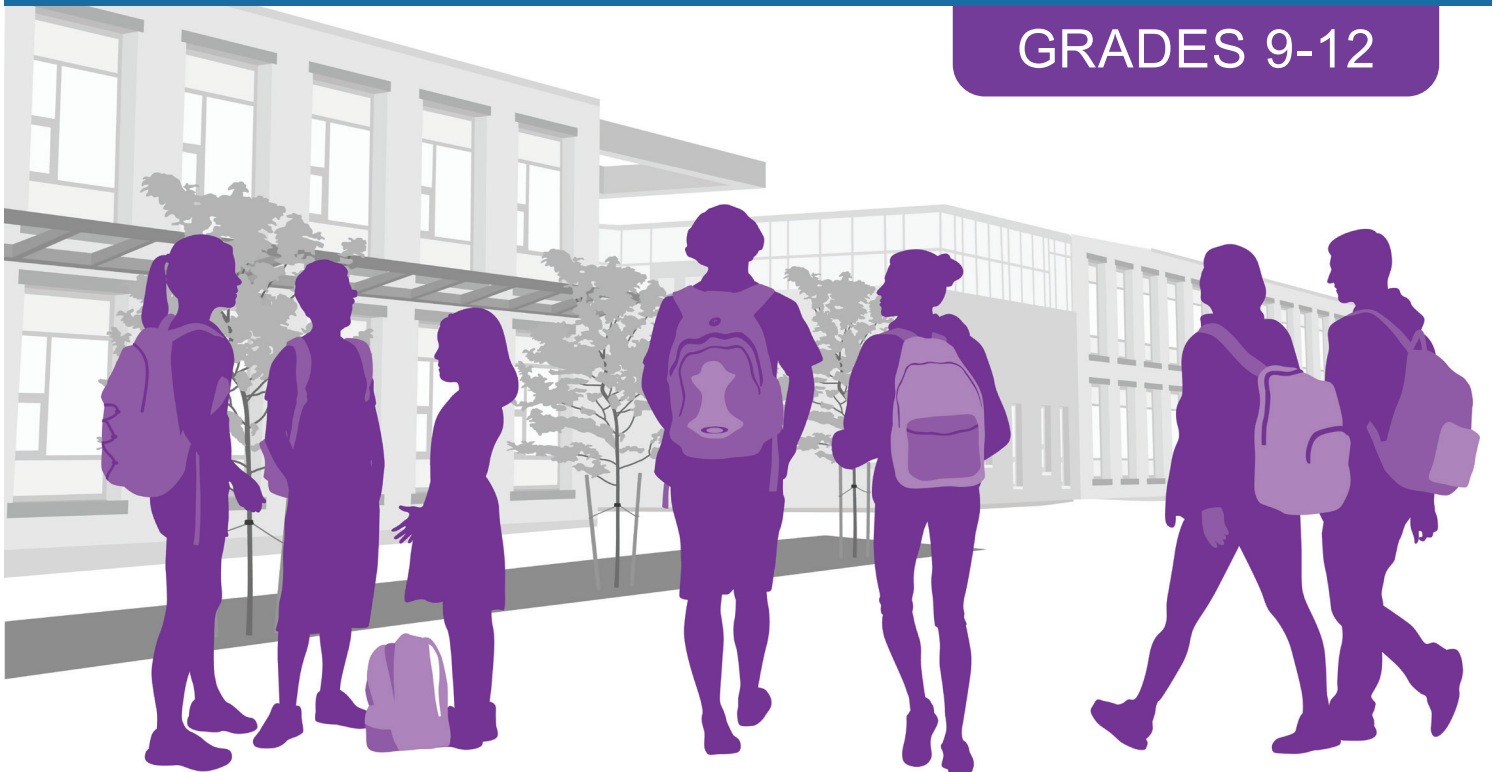
# Highlights from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

*Informing data-driven school and community  
health policies and practices*



## 2021 | Wellesley High School

GRADES 9-12



**METROWEST  
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# Highlights from the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

## Wellesley High School Report

### Background and Methodology

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The MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWHAS), an initiative of the MetroWest Health Foundation, has monitored trends in adolescent health and risk behaviors since 2006. The need for data to drive advancements in prevention efforts, programs, and policies has been made even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing timely, local data on pressing adolescent health issues, schools and communities are better equipped to understand, prioritize, and take action to address the challenges facing youth today.

The 2021 survey is the 8<sup>th</sup> administration of the MWAHS and the first online survey administration, made possible by increased technological capabilities of schools and one-to-one device programs. While the survey was administered every other year from 2006 to 2018, there was a one-year delay in the administration of the most recent survey in the fall of 2021 due to the challenges of surveying youth during remote learning. In 2021, over 39,000 middle and high school students in all 25 communities in the region participated in the survey.

The 2021 high school survey was administered to a census of students in grades 9 through 12 in all 26 high schools in the region served by the MetroWest Health Foundation. In total, 22,903 high school students in the region participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. At Wellesley High School, 1,244 students in grades 9 through 12 participated in the 2021 MWAHS, representing 89% of students. Wellesley High School has participated in the MWAHS since 2006.

As in previous survey waves, local procedures were followed to inform parents of the survey and give them the choice to opt out their child(ren). Students were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that no names or other identifying information were being collected. Data collection at each school was guided by a protocol that protected the privacy of students' responses.

This report summarizes current youth behaviors on key health indicators in the areas of substance use, violence, bullying, mental health, sexual behavior, physical activity, and protective factors. Current data from 2021 are provided by sex and grade, and key behavioral trends are highlighted, with a focus on recent trends from 2018 to 2021. Reports of behaviors that reflect longer time periods (e.g., "past 12 months") and ask about risk behaviors "on school property" may include a period of time when some students were not attending school in person.

Findings from the MWAHS are used by schools and communities to improve health education, inform prevention and policy efforts, and determine priorities for improving the physical and emotional health of adolescents.

## Key Findings: Substance Use

### Cigarette Smoking (Conventional)

- 2021 Patterns** » **13% of students have smoked a cigarette in their lifetime, and 4% smoked recently (in the past 30 days).**
- » Reports of smoking are similar by sex: lifetime smoking is reported by 14% of females and 12% of males, and current smoking is reported by 3% of females and 5% of males.
  - » Initiation of smoking increases from 5% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 26% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Recent Trends** » **Cigarette smoking has continued to decline: Reports of lifetime smoking decreased from 31% in 2006 to 15% in 2018, lowering further to 13% in 2021.**
- » Current smoking has been steady at 4% since 2018.
  - » In the MetroWest region, reports of cigarette smoking have declined steadily since 2006.

### Electronic Vapor Products

- 2021 Patterns** » **22% of youth used electronic vapor products (EVPs)\* in their lifetime, and 12% used EVPs in the past 30 days.**
- » EVP use is higher among females than males. For example, current use is reported by 14% of females and 11% of males.
  - » Lifetime EVP use increases from 8% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 40% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and current use increases from 4% to 22%.
  - » 3% of high school students report frequent EVP use (on 20 or more of the past 30 days). By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 5% of youth report frequent use.
  - » 57% of youth report it would be “fairly easy” or “very easy” to obtain EVPs if they wanted to.
  - » 82% of youth perceive moderate or great risk of using EVPs, with higher perceptions of risk among females and younger students.
- Recent Trends** » **After a sharp rise in vaping from 2016 to 2018, the proportion of youth who ever tried EVPs decreased substantially from 42% in 2018 to 22% in 2021.**
- » Current EVP use decreased from 26% in 2018 to 12% in 2021.
  - » EVP use decreased notably among females and males. For example, lifetime use lowered from 45% in 2018 to 23% in 2021 among females, and from 38% to 21% among males.
  - » Consistent with the decrease in EVP use, perception of moderate/great risk of EVP use rose from 69% in 2018 to 82% in 2021.
  - » Reports of EVP use in the MetroWest region decreased sharply from 2018 to 2021.

\* EVPs include electronic cigarettes like JUUL, Phix, Vuse, MarkTen, and blu, and other products like vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods. They also include disposable products that can only be used once, such as Puff Bars, Stig, or Viigo.

## Alcohol Use

- 2021 Patterns** » **51% of students drank alcohol in their lifetime, and 35% drank in the past 30 days.**
- » 24% of youth report binge drinking in the past 30 days.\*
  - » Lifetime and current alcohol use are higher among females than males. For example, 37% of females and 34% of males report current drinking.
  - » Reports of binge drinking are slightly higher among males (25%) than females (23%).
  - » Alcohol use increases substantially by grade: Current drinking increases from 14% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 55% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and binge drinking increases from 8% to 43%.
- Recent Trends** » **From 2006 to 2018, lifetime alcohol use decreased from 64% to 58%, further decreasing to 51% in 2021.**
- » Both females and males are less likely to initiate alcohol use: Lifetime drinking decreased from 62% in 2018 to 53% in 2021 among females, and from 53% to 48% among males.
  - » However, current use was steady at 36-37% from 2018 to 2021, and binge drinking was steady at 23-24%.
  - » While current drinking did not change overall, there was a decrease among females (from 42% to 37%) whereas reports among males increased slightly from 32-34%. Binge drinking increased slightly among males (from 22% to 25%) while remaining steady at 23-24% among females.
  - » In the MetroWest region, alcohol use in high school also declined from 2018 to 2021.

## Marijuana Use

- 2021 Patterns** » **21% of youth have ever used marijuana,<sup>†</sup> and 13% used marijuana in the past 30 days.**
- » Lifetime and current marijuana use are similar by sex. For example, current use is reported by 13% of females and 14% of males.
  - » Marijuana use increases substantially by grade. For example, lifetime use increases from 5% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 43% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 27% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have used marijuana in the past 30 days.
  - » 2% of youth have used marijuana on school property in the past 30 days, and 5% were offered, given, or sold marijuana on school property in the past 12 months.
  - » 16% of youth have used marijuana in an electronic vaping device, 16% have smoked it, and 14% have eaten or drank products made with marijuana in their lifetime.
  - » 47% of youth report that marijuana would be “fairly easy” or “very easy” to obtain if they wanted to.
  - » 51% of youth perceive that using marijuana once or twice a week is of moderate or great risk.

\* Binge drinking is defined as consuming 4 or more drinks in a row for females, or 5 or more drinks in a row for males in the past 30 days. This does not take into account body weight or other factors that influence intoxication levels.

† Does not include CBD only or hemp products

- Recent Trends** » **Marijuana use decreased substantially from 2018 to 2021. For example, lifetime use decreased from 30% in 2018 to 21% in 2021.**
- » Current marijuana use also decreased notably, from 19% in 2018 to 13% in 2021.
  - » Marijuana use is lower among both sexes: For example, lifetime use decreased from 30% in 2018 to 21% in 2021 among males, and from 30% to 21% among females.
  - » The proportion of youth who think it is “fairly easy” or “very easy” to obtain marijuana decreased from 64% in 2018 to 47% in 2021. This may be related to decreased “social access” to marijuana due to decreased in-person peer interactions COVID-19.
  - » Despite the decrease in youth marijuana use, perceived risk of marijuana also decreased, from 58% in 2018 to 51% in 2021. This change in perception may be related to recent changes in state marijuana policy, including legalization and opening of retail outlets.
  - » Marijuana use in the MetroWest region is also substantially lower in 2021 compared to 2018.

## Prescription Drug Misuse

- 2021 Patterns** » **4% of youth have misused prescription drugs\* in their lifetime, and 4% have misused prescription drugs in the past 30 days.**
- » Lifetime prescription drug misuse is reported by similar proportions of females and males.
  - » Reports of lifetime misuse increase by grade, from 1% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 11% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » 4% of youth have misused prescription pain medication, including opioids, in their lifetime.†
- Recent Trends** » **Lifetime misuse of prescription drugs decreased from 12% in 2006 to 4% in 2018, remaining at that level in 2021.**
- » Reports of prescription drug misuse are lower among both females and males since the beginning of the MWAHS.
  - » There has also been a substantial decrease in prescription drug misuse in the region since 2006.

\* Without a doctor’s prescription or differently than how a doctor told you to use them; includes using someone else’s prescription or obtaining the medicine illegally.

† Includes opioids like codeine, Vicodin, OxyContin, Hydrocodone, and Percocet. The wording “prescription pain medicine” was used for consistency with wording used on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

## Key Findings: Impaired and Distracted Driving

### Impaired Driving

- 2021 Patterns**
- » **12% of students report being a passenger in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, and 5% rode with a high school driver who had been drinking.**
  - » **9% of students report being a passenger in a car driven by a high school student who had been using marijuana in the past 30 days.**
  - » 5% of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who drive report driving after drinking in the past 30 days, and 7% report driving after using marijuana.
  - » Males are more likely than females to report driving after using alcohol (7% compared to 3%) or marijuana (11% compared to 4%).
  - » 12<sup>th</sup> grade drivers are more likely to report driving after using marijuana (12% vs. 4%), compared to 11<sup>th</sup> grade drivers. Reports of driving after using alcohol are similar by grade.
- Recent Trends**
- » **Reports of riding in a car driven by a high school student who has been drinking decreased steadily from 10% in 2012 to 5% in 2018, remaining at 5% in 2021.**
  - » Reports of driving after drinking have been steady at 4-5% since 2018.
  - » Reports of driving after using marijuana decreased substantially from 2018 (12%) to 2021 (7%), consistent with the decrease in marijuana use.
  - » Drinking and driving among youth in the MetroWest region has not changed substantially since 2018, but driving after using marijuana decreased notably from 2018 to 2021.

### Distracted Driving

- 2021 Patterns**
- » **26% of youth rode in a car with a high school driver who was texting in the past 30 days, and 36% of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade drivers report recently texting while driving.**
  - » Reports of texting while driving are similar among females (35%) and males (36%).
  - » Many more 12<sup>th</sup> grade drivers report texting while driving (51%) compared to 11<sup>th</sup> grade drivers (20%).
- Recent Trends**
- » **Reports of texting while driving among 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade drivers are similar in 2018 and 2021 at 36-37%. However, reports of riding with a high school driver who was texting decreased from 32% in 2018 to 26% in 2021.**
  - » In the MetroWest region, reports of texting while driving have been similar from 2018 to 2021.

## Key Findings: Violence

### Physical Fighting

- 2021 Patterns** » **10% of youth have been in a physical fight in the past 12 months, and 3% have been in a fight on school property.**
- » Many more males than females report fighting (16% compared to 4%) and fighting on school property (5% compared to 1%).
  - » Reports of physical fighting range from 8-12% by grade.
- Recent Trends** » **Reports of fighting in the past 12 months decreased steadily from 24% in 2006 to 13% in 2018, and further declined to 10% in 2021.**
- » There were recent declines in fighting among males (from 20% in 2018 to 16% in 2021) and females (from 7% to 4%).
  - » Reports of fighting on school property have been similar at 3-4% since 2014.
  - » In the MetroWest region, overall reports of physical fighting decreased from 2018 to 2021.

### Weapon Carrying

- 2021 Patterns** » **4% of youth carried a weapon in the past 30 days, and 1% carried a weapon on school property.**
- » More males (6%) than females (2%) report carrying weapons.
  - » Reports of recent weapon carrying range from 2-8% by grade and are highest among 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.
  - » 5% of youth were threatened or injured with a weapon in the past 12 months, and 2% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.
- Recent Trends** » **Overall reports of weapon carrying in the past 30 days have remained steady at 4% since 2018.**
- » Weapon carrying on school property has also been similar at 1-2% since 2014.
  - » In the MetroWest region, weapon carrying has not changed notably in recent surveys.

## Key Findings: Bullying and Cyberbullying

### Bullying

- 2021 Patterns** » **24% of high school youth have been bullied in the past 12 months, and 17% have been bullied on school property. 7% of students report bullying other students.**
- » More females than males are victims of bullying in general (26% compared to 21%) and on school property (18% compared to 15%).
  - » Reports of bullying at school range from 15-20% by grade.
  - » Many bullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among students bullied at school, 27% had talked to a school adult, and 46% had talked to a parent/adult outside of school.
  - » 13% of youth reported being bullied or verbally harassed in the past 12 months due to their race or ethnicity, 8% due to their religion or culture, 8% due to their gender, 8% due to their sexual identity, 5% due to a disability, and 21% due to their appearance (height, weight, or how they look).
  - » LGBTQ youth are at elevated risk of bullying at school (25%) compared with heterosexual cisgender youth (14%).
  - » Youth with learning and/or physical disabilities are also more likely to be bullied at school than youth without disabilities (28% vs. 14%).
- Recent Trends** » **School bullying victimization has been similar in the range of 16-18% since 2016.**
- » Reports of school bullying have declined slightly among males (from 18% in 2018 to 15% in 2021), whereas they remained steady among females at 18%.
  - » School bullying victimization in the MetroWest region has not changed substantially since 2016.

### Cyberbullying

- 2021 Patterns** » **23% of youth report being victims of cyberbullying in the past 12 months, and 9% report cyberbullying someone else.**
- » Females are more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than males (25% vs. 21%).
  - » Reports of cyberbullying range from 19-30% by grade.
  - » The majority of cyberbullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among students who were cyberbullied in the past 12 months, only 12% had talked to an adult at school and 28% had talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
  - » LGBTQ youth are much more likely than be cyberbullied than heterosexual cisgender youth (30% vs. 21%).
  - » Youth with disabilities are also at elevated risk of being victimized online compared to youth without disabilities (33% vs. 20%).



- Recent Trends**
- » **Cyberbullying victimization increased substantially from 18% in 2018 to 23% in 2021.**
  - » There were increases in cyberbullying among both females (from 21% to 25%) and males (from 15% to 21%).
  - » Cyberbullying victimization also increased in the MetroWest region from 2018 to 2021.

## Key Findings: Mental Health

### Stress and Anxiety

- 2021 Patterns**
- » **43% of students report that their life was very stressful in the past 30 days.**
  - » Females are far more likely to report this level of stress than males (53% vs. 31%).
  - » Reports of stress increase substantially by grade, from 27% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 63% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » School (grades, homework, tests) is the most common source of stress, reported by 79% of youth. This is followed by stress related to physical and/or emotional health (44%), social issues (41%), and appearance issues (38%).
  - » 47% of students report feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge on at least half the days in the past two weeks, and 37% report feeling unable to stop or control worrying. Reports of anxiety symptoms are over twice as high among females as males and increase during the high school years.
  - » Many students experience symptoms of being stressed, anxious, or worried: 50% of youth report feeling tired or having little energy, 36% report problems with sleep (trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much), 36% report having trouble concentrating in school, and 33% report eating issues (poor appetite or eating too much) often or very often in the past 2 weeks.
- Recent Trends**
- » **After rising in earlier years of the survey, overall reports of life being very stressful were steady at 42-43% from 2018 to 2021.**
  - » Recent stress increased among males (from 27% in 2018 to 31% in 2021) but decreased among females (from 56% to 53%).
  - » While reports of overall stress did not change, stress due to certain issues did increase from 2018 to 2021, including: social issues (from 33% to 41%), appearance issues (from 30% to 38%), and physical and/or emotional health (from 28% to 44%).
  - » Reports of generalized anxiety symptoms increased from 2018 to 2021. For example, feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge on more than half the days in the past two weeks increased from 36% to 47%.
  - » The increase in anxiety symptoms is somewhat greater among females than males. For example, reports of feeling unable to stop/control worrying increased from 39% in 2018 to 51% in 2021 among females, and from 14% to 22% among males.
  - » In the MetroWest region, overall stress decreased slightly from 2018 to 2021, but there were substantial increases in reports of generalized anxiety symptoms.

## Depressive Symptoms, Self-Injury, and Suicidality

- 2021 Patterns**
- » **24% of students reported depressive symptoms in the past 12 months.\***
  - » **Intentional self-injury is reported by 19% of youth in the past 12 months.†**
  - » **15% of youth seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months, and 4% attempted suicide during this time.**
  - » Females are much more likely than males to report mental health issues. For example, 29% of females and 17% of males report depressive symptoms.
  - » Reports of mental health issues do not follow a consistent pattern by grade.
  - » LGBTQ youth report elevated mental health issues. For example, compared with heterosexual cisgender youth, they are far more likely to report depressive symptoms (38% vs. 19%), self-injury (41% vs. 12%), and suicidal ideation (33% vs. 9%).
  - » Youth with disabilities also report more mental health issues than youth without disabilities, including depressive symptoms (38% vs. 19%), self-injury (32% vs. 15%) and considering suicide (26% vs. 12%).
  - » Among students reporting depressive symptoms, 36% talked to a school counselor, therapist, or psychologist at school, 9% talked to a school nurse, and 46% of students talked to a therapist, psychologist, or other mental health professional outside of school.
  - » 34% of youth experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic most of the time or always (47% of females and 18% of males). 50% of youth said their mental health became a little worse or a lot worse since the beginning of the pandemic (59% of females and 39% of males).
- Recent Trends**
- » **Reports of mental health issues have increased from 2018 to 2021: Depressive symptoms increased from 16% to 24%, self-injury increased from 13% to 19%, and seriously considering suicide increased from 13% to 15%.**
  - » Reports of attempting suicide in the past 12 months were steady at 4% from 2018 to 2021.
  - » Depressive symptoms and self-injury increased substantially among both females and males. For example, depressive symptoms increased from 20% in 2018 to 29% in 2021 among females, and from 11% to 17% among males.
  - » The increase in suicidal ideation was due primarily to an increase among females (from 14% in 2018 to 17% in 2021), whereas reports were similar among males at 11%-12%.
  - » Depressive symptoms, self-injury, and suicidal ideation increased substantially in the MetroWest region from 2018 to 2021.

\* Depressive symptoms are defined as feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks during the past 12 months.

† Self-injury is defined as cutting, burning, or bruising oneself on purpose in the past 12 months.

## Key Findings: Sexual Behavior

### Sexual Intercourse and Condom Use

- 2021 Patterns** » **15% of youth have engaged in sexual intercourse during their lifetime, and 12% are currently sexually active (had intercourse within the past three months).**
- » The proportion of youth who have had intercourse in their lifetime increases from 2% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 33% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 28% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade youth are currently sexually active.
  - » Among sexually active youth, 58% used a condom the last time they had intercourse.
  - » 38% of youth used alcohol or drugs before they had sexual intercourse the last time.
- Recent Trends** » **Reports of lifetime sexual intercourse decreased from 20% in 2018 to 15% in 2021.**
- » There is also a decrease in the number of youth who are currently sexually active, from 16% in 2018 to 12% in 2021.
  - » While fewer youth report being sexually active, condom at last intercourse is also lower (58% in 2021, compared to 66% in 2018).
  - » MetroWest region data also shows a decrease in sexual intercourse in high school.

## Key Findings: Physical Activity, Weight, and Sleep

### Physical Activity

- 2021 Patterns** » **58% of youth report moderate physical activity in the past week,\* and 73% of youth report vigorous physical activity.†**
- » Males are more likely than females to report moderate physical activity (66% compared to 52%) and vigorous physical activity (77% compared to 69%).
  - » Reports of physical activity decrease by grade. For example, participation in moderate activity decreases from 65% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 43% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » 10% of youth (13% of females; 7% of males) report no moderate activity in the past 7 days.
- Recent Trends** » **The proportion of youth engaging in physical activity is slightly higher in 2021. For example, moderate physical activity increased from 54% in 2018 to 58% in 2021, with increases among females and males.**
- » Vigorous physical activity increased from 54% in 2018 to 58% in 2021.
  - » Physical activity reports have remained similar in the MetroWest region since 2018.

\* Moderate physical activity is defined as activity that increases heart rate and makes you breathe hard for ≥60 min on 5+ of the past 7 days.

† Vigorous physical activity is defined as exercising for at least 20 minutes that makes you sweat and breathe hard on 3+ of the past 7 days.

## Overweight/Obesity

- 2021** » **12% of youth are overweight or obese.\***
- Patterns** » Males are more likely than females to be overweight or obese (17% compared with 8%).  
 » Overweight/obesity ranges from 10-17% by grade.
- Recent Trends** » **Overweight/obesity has been steady at 12% since 2018.**  
 » In the MetroWest region, overweight/obesity has not changed notably in recent surveys.

## Sleep

- 2021** » **Only 25% of youth get 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.**
- Patterns** » More males than females get 8 hours of sleep per night (31% compared to 19%).  
 » Reports of getting 8 or more hours of sleep decrease substantially as students get older, from 34% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 14% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.  
 » As noted earlier, 36% of youth (48% of females and 21% of males) report sleep issues related to being stressed, anxious, or worried.  
 » Causes of reduced sleep include: time spent on school work/studying (52%), time spent on social media (23%), worrying about school, family, or friends (21%), and time spent on extracurricular activities (25%).  
 » Youth who sleep less than eight hours per night are more likely to report poor mental health, including depressive symptoms (26% vs. 14%), self-injury (21% vs. 10%) and seriously considering suicide (16% vs. 11%).
- Recent Trends** » **The proportion of youth sleeping 8 or more hours on an average school night is slightly lower in 2021 (25%) compared with 2018 (28%).**  
 » Reports of getting 8 or more hours of sleep are lower among females (from 23% in 2018 to 19% in 2021) and males (from 35% to 31%).  
 » Reports of sleep have also increased slightly in the MetroWest region from 2018 to 2021.

\* Overweight/obesity is based on self-reported height and weight, which is used to calculate body mass index. Overweight/obesity is defined as being in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for body mass index by age and sex, based on reference data.

## Key Findings: Online Behavior

### Time Spent Online, Social Media Use, and Gaming

- 2021 Patterns**
- » **52% of youth spend three or more hours on screen time and 37% spent three or more hours online on the average school day.** (These numbers do not include time spent on schoolwork or homework).
  - » **20% spend three or more hours per day on social media, specifically, and 8% spend three or more hours gaming.**
  - » Females are more likely than males to spend three or more hours on social media daily (24% vs. 15%), and males are more likely to spend three or more hours gaming (13% vs. 3%).
  - » Youth report both positive and negative attitudes towards social media. On the positive side, social media helps youth feel more connected to peers (64%), helps them find people with common interests and hobbies (59%), allows them to speak up/take action about issues that are important to them (38%), and provides a source of support during challenging times (25%). On the negative side, social media makes a sizeable minority of students feel badly about themselves or excluded (33%), keeps them from doing important things like homework or family responsibilities (37%), and has hurt relationships with peers (12%).
  - » 50% of all youth feel they spend too much time on social media (56% of females and 41% of males).
  - » Youth who spend three or more hours on social media daily are more likely to report cyberbullying victimization (29% vs. 21%) and perpetration (15% vs. 7%).
  - » Youth who spend more time on social media are more likely to report substance use and mental health issues. For example, high users of social media (3 or more hours daily) are more likely than less frequent users to report current alcohol use (45% vs. 32%) and marijuana use (18% vs. 12%). They are also more likely to report depressive symptoms (32% vs. 21%) and seriously considering suicide (22% vs. 13%).
- Recent Trends**
- » **The proportion of youth spending three or more hours on screen time on the average school day has increased substantially from 2018 (38%) to 2021 (52%).**
  - » Time spent on social media has been similar from 2018 to 2021 at 19%-20%.
  - » In the MetroWest region, the proportion of youth spending three or more hours on screen time daily also increased from 2018 to 2021, with reports of time spent on social media remaining steady in recent years.

## Key Findings: Protective Factors

### School Connectedness and Engagement

- 2021 Patterns** » **About three out of five youth report being engaged in and connected with their school.** This is indicated by agreement with statements such as “I feel close to people at this school” (63%), “I am happy to be at this school” (58%), and “I feel safe in my school” (72%).
- » While a majority of both males and females report feeling connected with their school, reports are higher among males across all measures.
  - » School connectedness does not follow a consistent pattern by grade.
- Recent Trends** » **Several indicators of school connectedness are lower in 2018 compared with 2021, which may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning.**
- » For example, the proportion of students reporting that they feel close to people at school decreased from 75% in 2018 to 63% in 2021, and reports of feeling like a part of this school decreased from 72% to 61%.
  - » These measures of school connectedness also declined in the MetroWest region from 2018 to 2021.

### Peer Support

- 2021 Patterns** » **64% of youth have a friend they can talk to about a personal problem often or very often.**
- » Having peer support is reported by 67% of females and 61% of males, and ranges from 59-69% by grade, with the lowest reports in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » 28% of youth report feeling lonely often or very often (34% of females and 20% of males), and 19% feel left out or excluded by others (22% of females and 16% of males).
- Recent Trends** » **Reports of having a friend to talk to about a personal problem decreased from 75% in 2018 to 64% in 2021.**
- » Peer support decreased among both sexes, but the decrease was greater among females (from 81% in 2018 to 67% in 2021) than males (from 68% to 61%).
  - » Feelings of frequent loneliness increased from 24% in 2018 to 28% in 2021, with a greater increase among females (from 28% to 34%) than males (from 18% to 20%).
  - » In the MetroWest region, there was also a decrease in peer support and an increase in feelings of loneliness.

## Adult Support

- 2021 Patterns** » **69% of youth have at least one teacher or other adult at school to talk to if they have a problem, and 89% of youth have a parent or other adult outside of school to talk to about things that are important to them.**
- » Adult support at school is slightly higher among females (70%) than males (67%), and increases during the high school years, from 60% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 82% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » Reports of adult support outside of school are similar by sex and decrease from 91% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 86% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Recent Trends** » **After rising in earlier years of the survey, adult support at school decreased from 79% in 2018 to 69% in 2021, likely related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school experiences and relationships.**
- » There were substantial declines in adult support at school among both females (from 82% in 2018 to 70% in 2021) and males (from 76% to 67%).
  - » Adult support outside of school is slightly lower in 2021 (89%) compared to 2018 (91%).
  - » In the MetroWest region, there have also been recent declines in adult support at school and outside of school.

## Conclusions

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The MWAHS is an invaluable tool in providing data to drive school and community actions to improve adolescent physical and emotional health. The data is particularly important in light of the many challenges adolescents have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 data highlights important progress that has been made in recent years in areas like substance misuse (cigarette smoking, vaping, and marijuana) and violence. These areas demand continued efforts, and it will be important to monitor whether these recent improvements will be sustained in the coming years. The 2021 data also identify areas of elevated concern, including increased cyberbullying and mental health issues, and a decline in school protective factors. Continued use of the MWAHS data to identify priorities and drive local strategies will ensure that efforts are focused on the greatest challenges to adolescent wellness, leading to safer and healthier communities.

# High School Key Indicators

2006–2021 Trends  
2021 Patterns by Sex  
2021 Patterns by Grade



# Wellesley High School (Grades 9-12)

## 2006-2021 Trends in Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Year of Survey (%)							
	2006 <i>(1,097)</i>	2008 <i>(1,108)</i>	2010 <i>(1,182)</i>	2012 <i>(1,268)</i>	2014 <i>(1,276)</i>	2016 <i>(1,413)</i>	2018 <i>(1,351)</i>	2021 <i>(1,244)</i>
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>								
Lifetime cigarette smoking	30.7	28.6	19.6	18.7	14.6	15.9	14.5	13.2
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	10.8	10.8	7.9	7.9	5.8	6.9	3.5	4.0
Lifetime electronic vapor product use*	–	–	–	–	29.1	29.9	41.8	22.1
Current electronic vapor product use (past 30 days)*	–	–	–	–	17.1	16.8	26.3	12.5
Lifetime alcohol use	64.1	62.8	61.6	62.6	54.6	61.7	57.6	51.0
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	40.9	39.4	39.5	41.8	34.9	43.3	36.9	35.5
Binge drinking (past 30 days) <sup>†</sup>	25.7	21.9	23.5	24.1	18.3	25.9	23.2	23.9
Rode with driver who had been drinking (past 30 days)	23.6	22.1	21.5	18.7	16.5	14.5	13.4	12.0
Lifetime marijuana use	28.0	26.4	28.9	31.0	23.6	27.7	30.2	20.8
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	17.3	16.2	17.6	19.8	12.8	18.0	19.5	13.4
Lifetime prescription drug misuse <sup>‡</sup>	12.4	8.0	6.6	7.8	4.3	7.0	4.2	4.2
<b>VIOLENCE</b>								
Physical fighting (past 12 months)	24.1	21.9	22.2	15.6	13.8	15.0	13.2	9.7
Physical fighting on school property (past 12 months)	6.7	7.1	7.1	5.0	3.2	3.3	3.5	2.8
Carried a weapon (past 30 days)	7.1	6.8	5.6	6.6	5.7	6.5	3.8	3.8
Carried a weapon on school property (past 30 days)	2.7	2.7	3.1	3.3	2.0	1.8	1.6	1.1
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>								
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	32.8	29.5	35.7	27.1	24.1	22.1	22.4	23.8
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	28.0	25.6	30.2	22.9	19.5	16.3	18.3	17.0
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	11.0	14.4	17.8	21.9	16.4	19.8	18.4	23.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>								
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	35.2	31.9	33.6	33.1	35.3	38.5	42.4	42.9
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	17.2	16.2	16.8	16.2	19.1	14.8	16.1	23.6
Self-injury (past 12 months)	12.0	11.4	14.8	13.6	11.8	11.9	12.6	18.8
Considered suicide (past 12 months)	9.7	9.7	10.7	11.8	11.6	11.5	12.6	15.0
Attempted suicide (past 12 months)	2.9	3.5	3.7	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.6	3.8
<b>SEXUAL BEHAVIOR</b>								
Lifetime sexual intercourse	21.5	20.1	18.6	21.0	15.1	20.5	20.3	15.2
Currently sexually active (past 3 months)	16.9	16.8	14.0	17.3	11.8	17.2	16.2	12.4
Condom use at last intercourse <sup>§</sup>	66.1	68.1	70.6	65.9	77.4	69.2	65.7	58.5
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>								
Exercised for ≥60 minutes on 5 or more days/week	39.2	37.9	50.1	47.6	46.1	53.5	54.0	58.4
Overweight or obese**	13.7	13.2	13.2	12.4	13.9	14.5	11.8	12.2

\* Includes electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) like JUUL, Phix, Vuse, MarkTen, and blu, and other electronic vapor products, like vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods; in 2021, disposable products like Puff Bars, Stig, and Viigo were added to the definition.

† From 2006 to 2014, binge drinking was defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasion for all students. Since 2016, binge drinking has been defined as 4 or more drinks in a row for females and 5 or more drinks in a row for males.

‡ Without a doctor's prescription; in 2021, added "or differently than how a doctor told you to use it"

§ Among currently sexually active youth

\*\*Students who were ≥85th percentile for body mass index by age and gender, based on reference data

# Wellesley High School (Grades 9-12)

## 2021 Key Indicator Patterns by Sex

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Sex (%)		Total (%)
	Female (652)	Male (588)	
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	13.9	12.4	13.2
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	3.0	5.1	4.0
Lifetime electronic vapor product use*	23.2	20.8	22.1
Current electronic vapor product use (past 30 days)*	13.7	11.1	12.5
Lifetime alcohol use	53.3	48.2	51.0
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	37.0	33.5	35.5
Binge drinking (past 30 days) <sup>†</sup>	23.0	24.9	23.9
Rode with driver who had been drinking (past 30 days)	12.6	11.4	12.0
Lifetime marijuana use	20.7	21.0	20.8
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	12.6	14.4	13.4
Lifetime prescription drug misuse <sup>‡</sup>	4.1	4.4	4.2
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (past 12 months)	4.2	15.8	9.7
Physical fighting on school property (past 12 months)	1.1	4.6	2.8
Carried a weapon (past 30 days)	2.0	5.6	3.8
Carried a weapon on school property (past 30 days)	0.5	1.6	1.1
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	25.9	21.2	23.8
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	18.1	15.5	17.0
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	25.1	21.0	23.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	53.3	30.8	42.9
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	29.1	16.8	23.6
Self-injury (past 12 months)	24.0	12.3	18.8
Considered suicide (past 12 months)	17.0	12.4	15.0
Attempted suicide (past 12 months)	4.3	3.4	3.8
<b>SEXUAL BEHAVIOR</b>			
Lifetime sexual intercourse	13.1	17.6	15.2
Currently sexually active (past 3 months)	11.4	13.6	12.4
Condom use at last intercourse <sup>§</sup>	64.8	52.1	58.5
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥60 minutes on 5 or more days/week	51.8	66.3	58.4
Overweight or obese**	8.3	16.5	12.2

\* Includes electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) like JUUL, Phix, Vuse, MarkTen, and blu, and other electronic vapor products, like vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods; in 2021, disposable products like Puff Bars, Stig, and Viigo were added to the definition.

† From 2006 to 2014, binge drinking was defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasion for all students. Since 2016, binge drinking has been defined as 4 or more drinks in a row for females and 5 or more drinks in a row for males.

‡ Without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told you to use it

§ Among currently sexually active youth

\*\*Students who were ≥85th percentile for body mass index by age and gender, based on reference data

# Wellesley High School (Grades 9-12)

## 2021 Key Indicator Patterns by Grade

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Grade (%)				Total (%) (1,244)
	9 <sup>th</sup> (314)	10 <sup>th</sup> (334)	11 <sup>th</sup> (325)	12 <sup>th</sup> (265)	
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>					
Lifetime cigarette smoking	5.5	9.7	14.2	25.9	13.2
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.7	3.6	3.2	9.4	4.0
Lifetime electronic vapor product use*	8.1	18.5	25.2	39.7	22.1
Current electronic vapor product use (past 30 days)*	4.2	12.5	12.7	22.3	12.5
Lifetime alcohol use	28.7	48.3	58.9	71.4	51.0
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	14.1	32.6	42.8	55.4	35.5
Binge drinking (past 30 days) <sup>†</sup>	7.5	18.0	30.8	43.0	23.9
Rode with driver who had been drinking (past 30 days)	11.0	9.9	11.8	16.1	12.0
Lifetime marijuana use	5.2	15.5	23.5	43.4	20.8
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	2.6	11.4	15.6	26.8	13.4
Lifetime prescription drug misuse <sup>‡</sup>	1.0	4.7	1.3	11.5	4.2
<b>VIOLENCE</b>					
Physical fighting (past 12 months)	7.8	12.1	9.7	8.7	9.7
Physical fighting on school property (past 12 months)	2.3	3.4	1.9	3.6	2.8
Carried a weapon (past 30 days)	2.3	3.0	2.5	7.9	3.8
Carried a weapon on school property (past 30 days)	0.0	0.9	0.6	2.8	1.1
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>					
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	23.9	30.0	19.4	20.6	23.8
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	16.6	19.8	14.7	16.3	17.0
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	18.9	30.3	20.4	22.6	23.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>					
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	26.6	38.2	47.7	62.9	42.9
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	17.8	26.3	22.4	28.2	23.6
Self-injury (past 12 months)	20.1	21.3	14.4	18.6	18.8
Considered suicide (past 12 months)	13.2	18.0	11.5	17.5	15.0
Attempted suicide (past 12 months)	3.6	4.7	2.3	5.0	3.8
<b>SEXUAL BEHAVIOR</b>					
Lifetime sexual intercourse	2.3	9.1	20.1	32.5	15.2
Currently sexually active (past 3 months)	2.0	6.0	17.2	27.5	12.4
Condom use at last intercourse <sup>§</sup>	66.7	57.9	66.7	52.3	58.5
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>					
Exercised for ≥60 minutes on 5 or more days/week	65.3	61.8	60.7	42.7	58.4
Overweight or obese**	10.0	12.0	16.6	9.5	12.2

\* Includes electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) like JUUL, Phix, Vuse, MarkTen, and blu, and other electronic vapor products, like vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods; in 2021, disposable products like Puff Bars, Stig, and Viigo were added to the definition.

† From 2006 to 2014, binge drinking was defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasion for all students. Since 2016, binge drinking has been defined as 4 or more drinks in a row for females and 5 or more drinks in a row for males.

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