

# + L J K O L J K W MetroWest W K H Adolescent Health Survey

Informing data driven school and community  
health policies and practices

# 2021

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GRADES 8



Education  
Development  
Center

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# Highlights from the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

## Wellesley Middle 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 middle school survey was administered to a census of students in grades 7 and 8 in all 24 school districts in the region served by the MetroWest Health Foundation. Eighteen school districts chose to include 6<sup>th</sup> grade in their surveys. In total, 18,548 middle school students in the region participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. At Wellesley Middle School, 945 students in grades 6 through 8 participated in the 2021 MWAHS, representing 94% of students. Wellesley Middle 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, 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.





## Key Findings: Violence

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- 2021** » 30% of youth have been in a physical fight in their lifetime, and 8% have been in a fight  
**Patterns** on school property.
- (Grades 6-8)** » Many more males than females report fighting overall (45% compared with 15%) and on school property (14% compared with 3%).
- » The proportion of youth who have engaged in physical fighting in their lifetime ranges from 27-



2021  
Patterns (9.6 SterR 2021)

- Recent Trends**  
(Grades 7-8)
- » After rising steadily from 9% in 2006 to 24% in 2018, overall reports of life being very stressful were lower in 2021 at 16% .
  - » Reports of stress declined recently among females (from 31% in 2018 to 22% in 2021) and males (from 17% to 10%).
  - » However, while overall stress is lower, stress due to certain issues did increase from 2018 to 2021, including: appearance issues (from 23% to 29%), and physical and/or emotional health (from 19% to 25%).

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\* 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.





- 2021** » 12% of youth are overweight or obese. \*
- Patterns** » Males are more likely than females to be overweight or obese (17% compared with 7%).  
(Grades 6-8) » Overweight/obesity is similar across grades at 11-14%.
- Recent** » Overweight/obesity has ranged from 10 -14% since 2006, with 2021 reports at 12%.  
**Trends** » In the MetroWest region, overweight/obesity in middle school has not changed notably since  
(Grades 7-8) the beginning of the MWAHS.

- 2021** » Only 64% 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 (67% compared to 60%).  
(Grades 6-8) » Reports of getting 8 or more hours of sleep decrease substantially as students get older, from 76% in 6

# Key Findings: Online Behavior

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2021  
Patterns  
(Grades 6-8)

## Key Findings: Protective Factors

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- 2021** » About two-thirds of youth report being engaged in and connected with their school.  
**Patterns** This is indicated by agreement with statements such as “I feel close to people at this school”  
(Grades 6-8) (63%), “I am happy to be at this school” (65%), and “I feel safe in my school” (82%).
- » While a majority of both males and females report high levels of school connectedness, reports are higher among males across all measures.
  - » School connectedness is higher in 6<sup>th</sup> grade than in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Recent** » Several indicators of school connectedness  
**Trends**  
(Grades 7-8)





2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2021  
 (625) (656) (696) (733) (708) (714) (726) (650)

Lifetime cigarette smoking	6.6	4.9	4.7	6.5	3.8	2.4	2.5	1.5
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	2.1	2.9	1.3	2.5	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.2
Lifetime electronic vapor product use*	t	t	t	t	4.9	4.7	7.2	1.7
Current electronic vapor product use (past 30 days)*	t	t	t	t	2.6	2.0	3.9	0.3
Lifetime alcohol use	18.1	17.5	14.4	12.9	10.4	10.3	12.0	8.9
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	5.6	8.1	4.3	6.3	5.0	3.2	4.2	2.2
Binge drinking (past 30 days)	0.6	1.8	1.2	2.3	0.7	0.9	0.6	0.0
Lifetime marijuana use	1.8	3.4	3.8	4.4	2.5	1.4	1.3	0.5
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	1.3	3.1	2.0	3.0	1.4	1.0	1.3	0.0
Lifetime inhalant use	5.1	4.1	3.6	5.1	2.3	3.3	4.1	2.5

#### VIOLENCE

Physical fighting (lifetime)	38.2	50.2	41.4	43.4	36.9	31.7	36.5	27.7
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	13.2	19.8	14.6	12.8	11.5	10.3	9.6	6.9
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	14.4	17.8	12.0	13.9	13.1	13.3	11.8	8.5
Carried a weapon on school property (lifetime)	2.3	2.0	2.2	1.9	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.5

#### BULLYING VICTIMIZATION

Bullying victim (past 12 months)	49.3	56.4	40.0	41.4	27.8	23.3	29.3	27.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	41.6	48.8	35.0	34.9	22.2	17.8	24.3	19.6



	Female (477)	Male (461)	Total (%) (945)
<b>Lifetime cigarette smoking</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	2.1	0.7	1.4
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.0	0.2	0.1
<b>Lifetime electronic vapor product use*</b>			
Lifetime electronic vapor product use*	1.7	0.9	1.3
Current electronic vapor product use (past 30 days)*	0.2	0.2	0.2
<b>Lifetime alcohol use</b>			
Lifetime alcohol use	8.1	8.3	8.2
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.9	2.2	2.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days)	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Lifetime marijuana use</b>			
Lifetime marijuana use	0.6	0.2	0.4
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Lifetime inhalant use</b>			
Lifetime inhalant use	2.3	2.6	2.5
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	14.6	45.1	29.6
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	2.5	13.8	8.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	5.1	11.4	8.1
Carried a weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.2	0.4	0.3
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	30.6	23.2	27.0
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	22.0	16.2	19.1
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	17.5	12.7	15.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	18.3	7.2	12.9
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	19.1	8.6	14.2
Self-injury (past 12 months)	13.9	6.6	10.6
Considered suicide (lifetime)	15.8		







	6 <sup>th</sup> (295)	7 <sup>th</sup> (308)	8 <sup>th</sup> (342)	Total (%) (945)
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Lifetime cigarette smoking	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.4
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
Lifetime electronic vapor product use*	0.3	0.3	2.9	1.3
Current electronic vapor product use (past 30 days)*	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.2
Lifetime alcohol use	6.8	9.1	8.6	8.2
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.7	2.3	2.1	2.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lifetime marijuana use	0.3	0.0	0.9	0.4
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lifetime inhalant use	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.5

**VIOLENCE**

Physical fighting (lifetime)	33.8	28.7	26.9	29.6
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	10.4	6.2	7.6	8.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	7.3	9.8	7.4	8.1
Carried a weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.0	0.7	0.3	0.3

**BULLYING VICTIMIZATION**

Bullying victim (past 12 months)	26.6	32.0	22.9	27.0
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	18.2	24.7	15.0	19.1
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	12.1	15.7	17.3	15.2

**MENTAL HEALTH**

Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)				
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Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)  
) LIWK \$YHQXH 6XLWH  
Waltham, MA 0245  
[www.edc.org](http://www.edc.org)