

Insights from the 2024 Ludlow Youth Health Surveys

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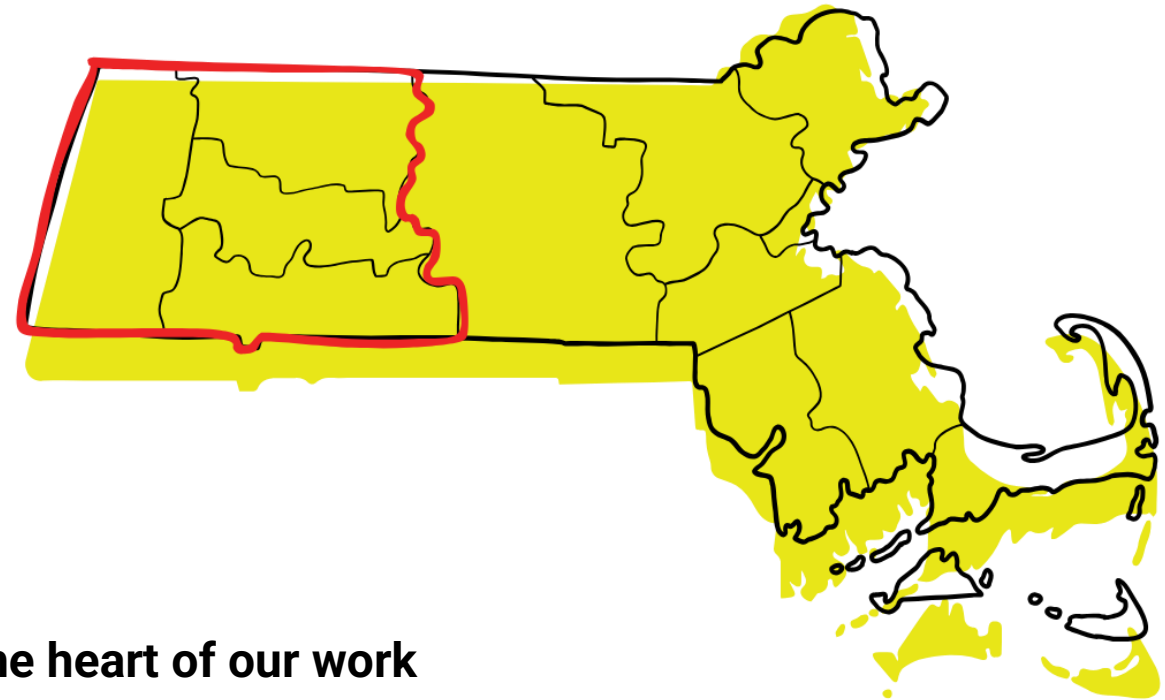
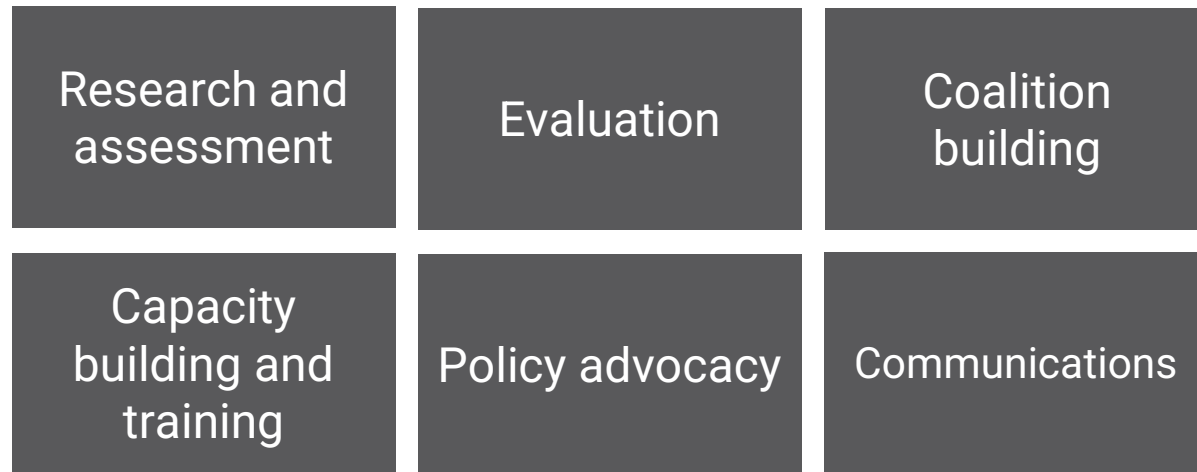
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About The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts

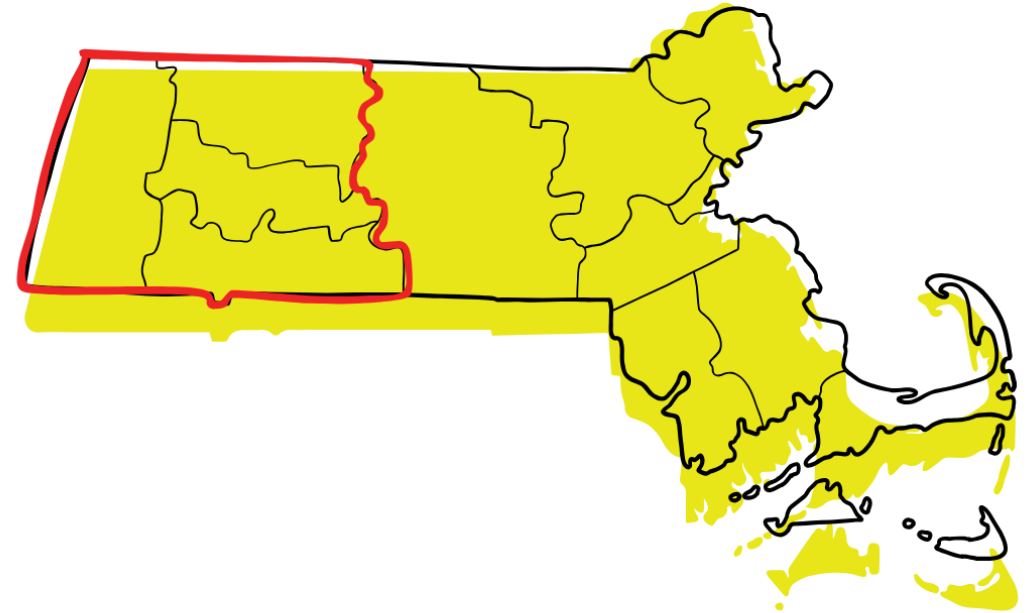
The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts supports communities in their efforts to become measurably healthier and more equitable through community engagement, convening collaborative partnerships, communications, data analysis, research and evaluation, and policy advocacy.



Social Justice is at the heart of our work

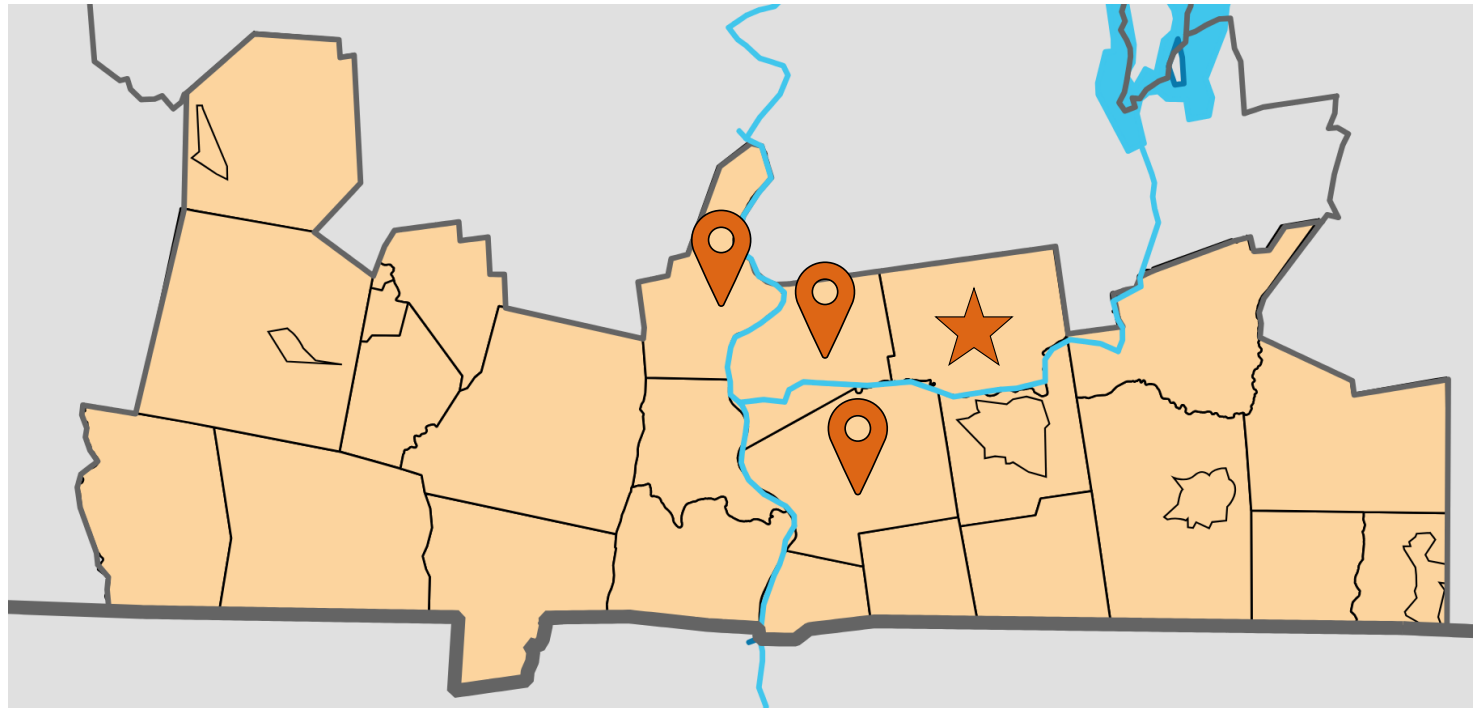
Health Equity Statement

A historic legacy of social, economic, and environmental inequities, such as racism and gender-based discrimination, are embedded in societal institutions and result in poor health. These unjust inequities affect communities differently with some bearing a greater burden of poorer health. These inequities can influence health more than individual choices or access to healthcare. **PHIWM recognizes its responsibility to dismantle these injustices by promoting health through policies, practices, and organizational systems that benefit all.**



What is the Youth Health Survey?

- Since 2015, PHIWM has administered surveys to Springfield 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in collaboration with Springfield Public Schools and community organizations
- 2025: Chicopee, Holyoke and Ludlow Districts administered
- Modified Centers for Disease Control and MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education/MA Department of Public Health surveys to fit local needs



Survey methods

- Adapted from MDESE/MDPH/CDC surveys to cater to local needs
- Parents of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders at Ludlow Public Schools gave passive consent
- Surveys administered via Alchemer (online survey platform) from 4/14/25 - 4/18/25
- Data cleaning:
 - Excluded blank surveys or those <5% complete
 - No evaluation for logical consistency
 - Suppress small numbers to protect student privacy

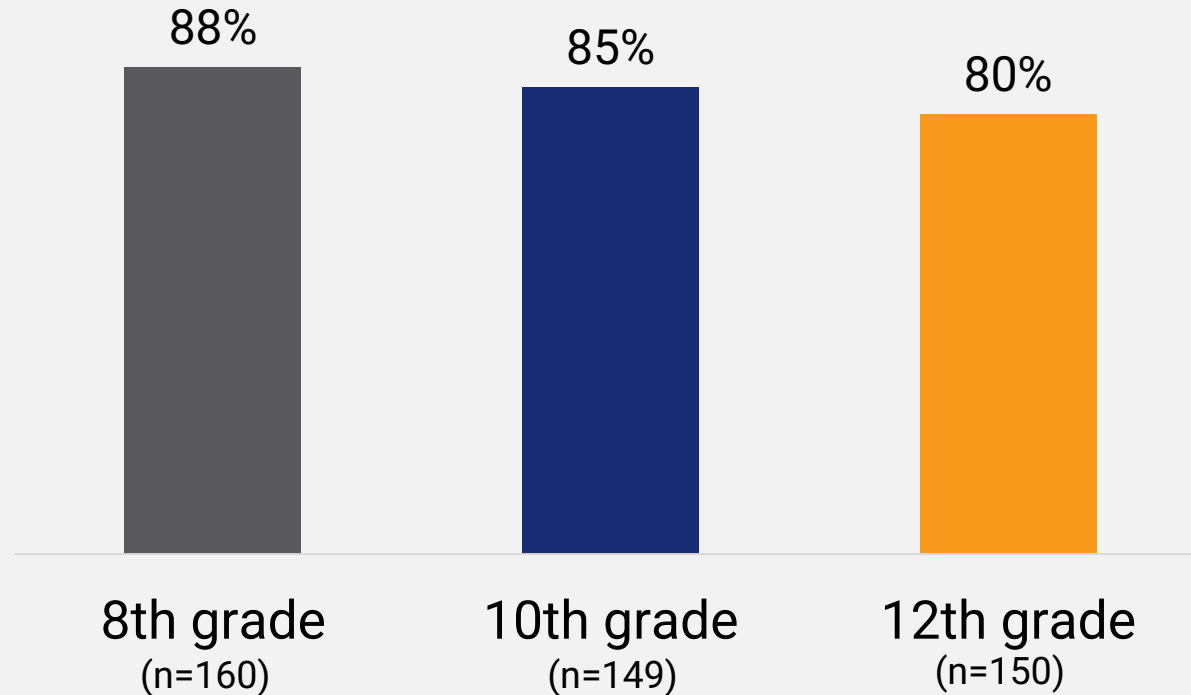
What were students asked?

- Students were asked questions on a wide range of health topics and behaviors:
 - Diet and physical activity
 - **Mental health**
 - Gambling
 - Sexual activity and sexual violence
 - **Social media** and news sources
 - **Substance use**



Who took the survey?

2025 Ludlow Youth Survey Participation Rates

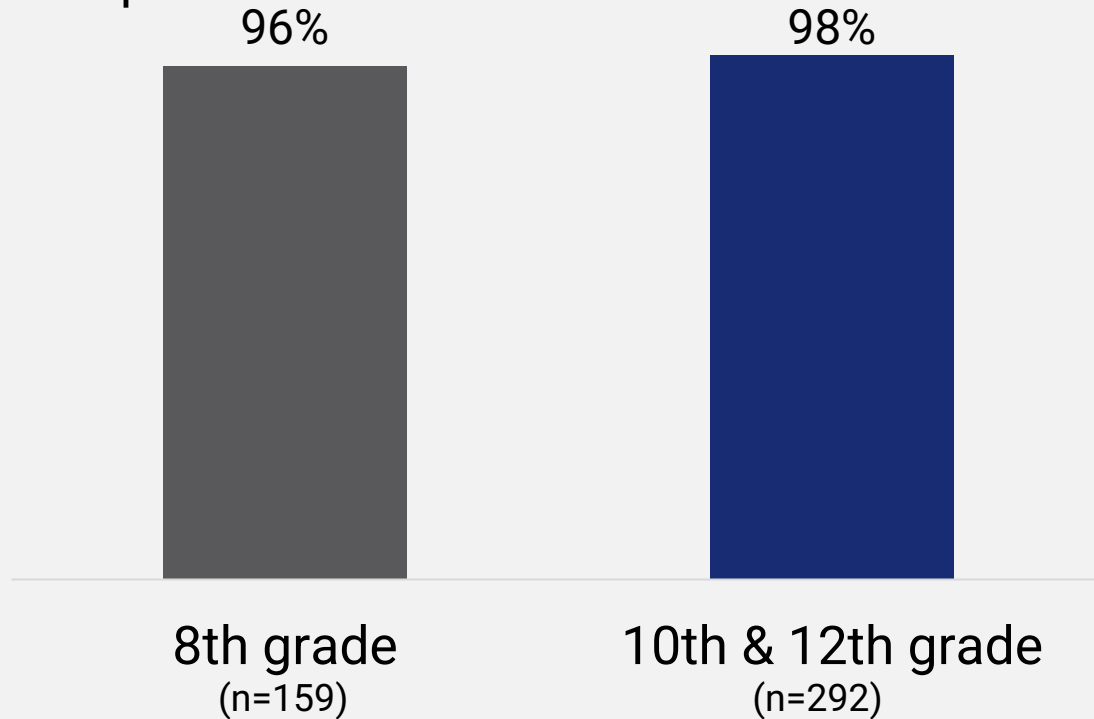


These data give us a good sense of student experiences as a whole but may not tell us about everyone. For example, students with chronic absenteeism (who may not have taken the survey) may be more at risk for certain health behaviors.



Most students had someone they could talk to about a problem.

Percentage of students who had any person to talk to about a problem

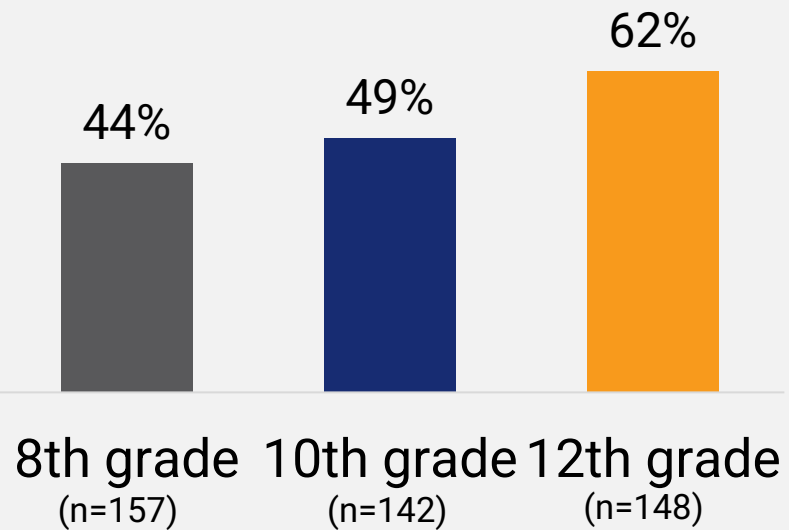


The most commonly reported people students reported being able to talk to were adults at home (8th grade: 87%; 10th grade: 88%; 12th grade: 91%) and friends or non-adult family members (8th grade: 86%; 10th grade: 88%; 12th grade: 89%).

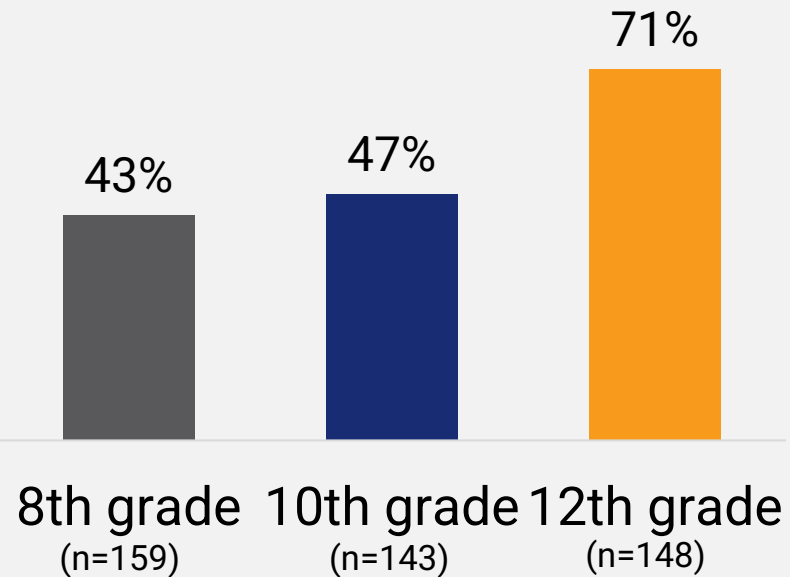


What did students report about adults at school?

Percentage of students who could talk to a school psychologist, counselor, or nurse



Percentage of students who could talk to a teacher or other adult at school

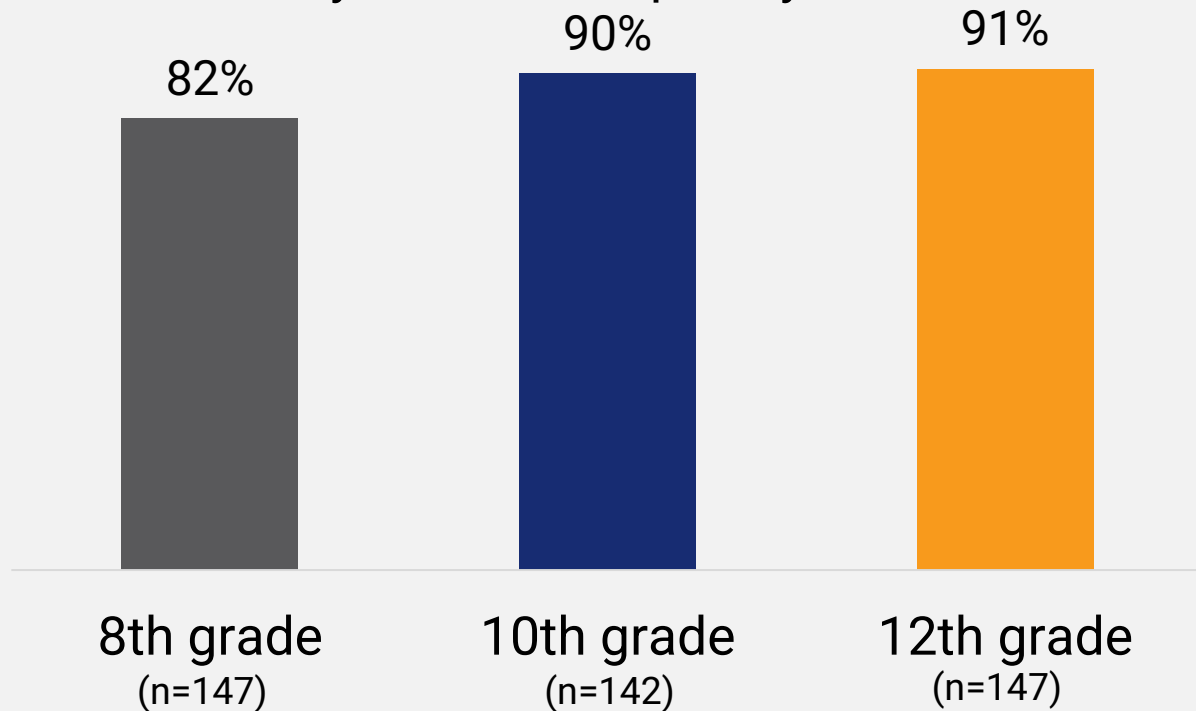


Overall, students reported having someone to talk to (8th grade: 96%; 10th/12th grade: 98%), even if that person was not someone at school.



Most students reported frequent social media use.

Percentage of students who reported using social media once a day or more frequently:

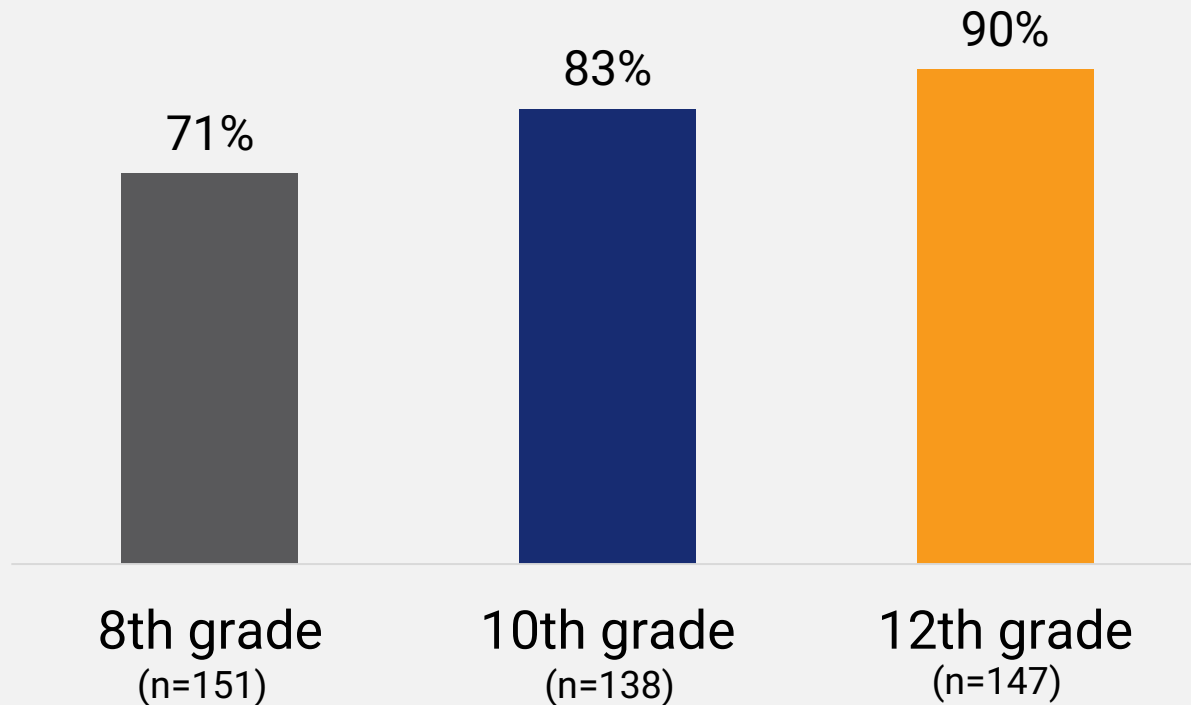


We are still learning about the complicated relationship between social media and mental health. Social media can impact young people in both positive and negative ways, such as:

- Support for marginalized students
- Engagement in community
- Potential exposure to harmful content
- Negative impacts on sleep

Most students reported no parental supervision on social media.

Percentage of students who reported that their parents do not supervise their social media use:

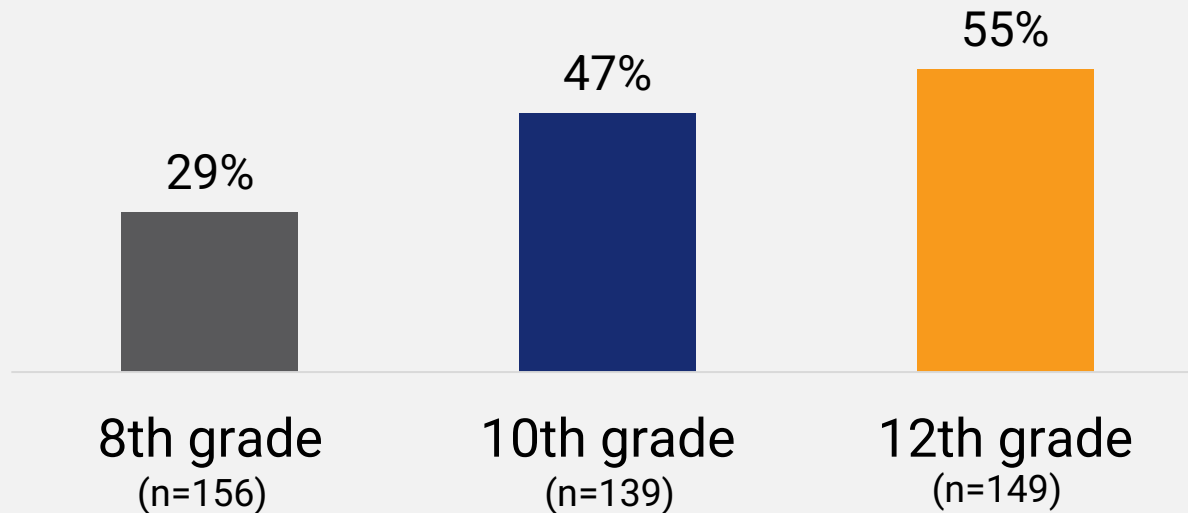


The most common modes of supervision reported by students were parental controls (8th) and following accounts weekly or more often (10th & 12th).



Gambling was commonly reported, particularly among older students.

Percentage of students who reported gambling in the past year:

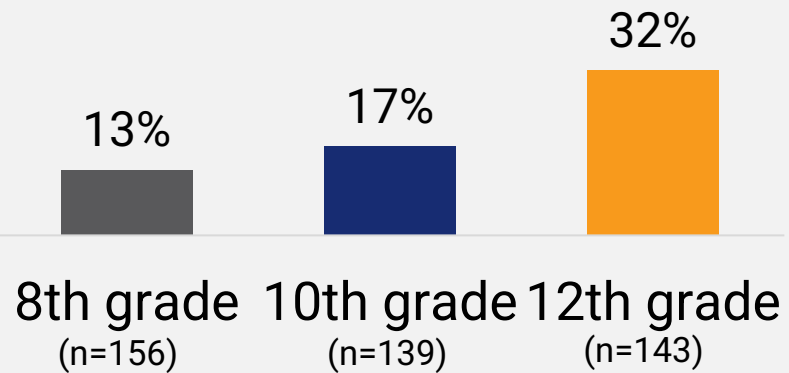


Gambling at a young age is associated with increased risk of problem gambling later in life.

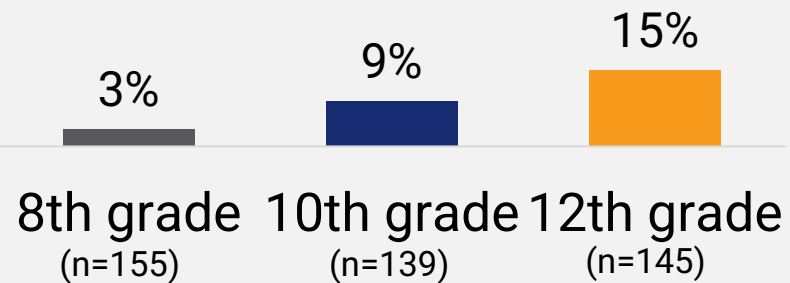


Most students reported never vaping or smoking cigarettes.

Percentage of students who reported ever vaping



Percentage of students who reported ever smoking a cigarette



So few students reported use of these substances in the past 30 days that we cannot report those numbers by grade!

Resources

- Learn more about our work at publichealthwm.org
 - Read about our youth survey work
 - Access data from other communities in Hampden County
 - Read the Youth Mental Health Roadmap for Western MA
 - Coming in 2026: **Youth Health Dashboard** with data from all four WMA counties!

