

2023

Somerville Public  
Schools Student  
Health Survey

**Middle School Presentation**

2023

# Background

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Somerville Public Schools conducts a biennial middle school youth health survey to capture vital information related to health status and certain behaviors that have been deemed as putting the health of students in middle school at-risk.

The purpose of this presentation is to highlight key middle school findings for eight domains: safety, discrimination, violence-related behaviors and experiences, mental health, substance use, sexual behaviors, physical activity and nutrition, and protective factors. Data is reported and analyzed for all students, as well as by age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity.

The information provided is meant to highlight key themes and provide a perspective on how Somerville middle school data compares to the prior year and state benchmark data.

# Sample

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In 2023, the Youth Health Survey was administered to all Somerville middle school students. The data were cleaned per CDC standards and surveys were not included in the final analysis if a student started but did not answer any survey questions, answered less than 50% of the questions, or took less than 50% of the average time to complete the survey.

Overall, 77% of middle school students (N=766) were included in the analyses.

## **KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS**

- MA '21 – 2021 Massachusetts Youth Health Survey Data
- 11 – 12 years old
- 12 – 12 years old
- 13 – 13 years old
- 14 – 14 years old
- 15 – 15 years old
- AI/AN
- M – Male
- F – Female
- TGD – Transgender and Gender Diverse (non-binary, genderfluid, genderqueer, transgender, questioning, etc.)
- HS – Heterosexual
- LGBTQ+ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, another sexual orientation, questioning, etc.
- MR – Multi-Racial
- HL – Hispanic or Latino/a
- EVP – Electronic vapor product
- PDM – Prescription drug misuse

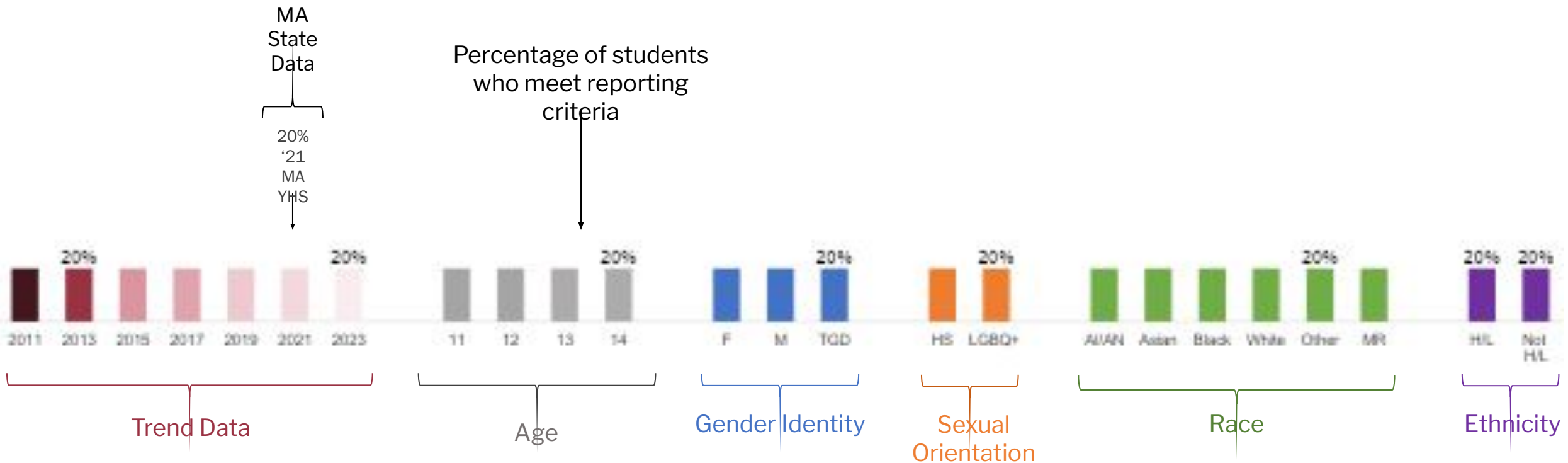
# Sample

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Middle School Student Characteristics		
<b>Age</b>		
	11	15%
	12	34%
	13	33%
	14	17%
	15	0%
<b>Gender Identity</b>		
	Woman/Girl	38%
	Man/Boy	55%
	TGD	5%
	Chose not to respond	2%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
	Heterosexual	69%
	LGBQ+	15%
	Not sure/Chose not to respond	15%
<b>Race</b>		
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
	Asian	6%
	Black	8%
	White	34%
	Another Race	34%
	Multi-Racial	13%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
	Hispanic/Latino	43%

# Reporting on the Student Health Survey

Throughout this report, we show differences by age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Some students have a higher prevalence of many health-risk behaviors. These are noted throughout the report as being more or less likely to report the behavior than another group. In addition, changes over time and comparisons to 2021 Massachusetts data are noted.



# Results

**During the past 30 days, on how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to or from school?**  
(1 or more days)



Overall, 11% of middle school students skipped school because they felt unsafe on their way to or from school in the past 30 days.\* *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to skip school because they felt unsafe at school or on the way to or from school in the past 30 days.

**Ethnicity:** Hispanic/Latino students were significantly more likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to skip school because they felt unsafe at school or on the way to or from school in the past 30 days.

\*This question was not included in the 2021 Pulse Check Survey.

## Discrimination

**During this school year (since September), how often have you felt that you were treated badly or unfairly in school because of your race or ethnicity?**

**During this school year (since September), how often have you felt that you were treated badly or unfairly in school because of your gender identity?**

**During this school year (since September), how often have you felt that you were treated badly or unfairly because of your sexual orientation?**

**During this school year (since September), how often have you felt that you were treated badly or unfairly because of your religion?**  
(sometimes, most of the time, always)



Overall, 9% of middle school students reported that they were sometimes, most of the time, or always treated badly or unfairly in school because of their race or ethnicity, 4% because of their gender identity, 4% because of their sexual orientation, and 3% because of their religion. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences

**Gender:** Gender minority students were significantly more likely than the average middle school student to experience discrimination because of their sexual orientation, and significantly less likely than the average middle school student to experience discrimination because of their religion.

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual minority students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to have experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation and religion.

**Race:** Black students were significantly more likely than the average middle school student to experience discrimination because of their race or ethnicity, and White students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student. AI/AN students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have experienced discrimination because of their religion.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.



## During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?

(1 or more times)



Overall, 16% of middle school students were in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** There were no significant differences.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.

# Has anyone ever done sexual things to you or forced you to do sexual things that you did not want? (yes)



Overall, 7% of middle school students have experienced unwanted sexual contact or been forced to do sexual things that they did not want to. This is the first year that this question was asked so there is no trend data. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** There were no significant differences.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.

## During the past 12 months, how many times were you bullied at school? (1 or more times)



Overall, 16% of middle school students were bullied in school in the past 12 months. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** There were no significant differences.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.

The 2023 Somerville YHS defined bullying as when one or more student's tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way. Electronic bullying is things such as someone spreading a rumor or something untrue about you online; someone sending you a threatening or aggressive message; someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission; someone taking a private message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it.

## During the past 12 months, how many times were you bullied electronically? (1 or more times)



Overall, 6% of middle school students reported being electronically bullied in the past 12 months. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** AI/AN students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have been bullied electronically during the past 12 months.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.

The 2023 Somerville YHS defined bullying as when one or more student's tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way. Electronic bullying is things such as someone spreading a rumor or something untrue about you online; someone sending you a threatening or aggressive message; someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission; someone taking a private message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it.

- **During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities? (i.e., experienced depression)?** (yes)
- **During the past 12 months, how many times did you do something to purposely hurt yourself without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning yourself on purpose? (i.e., engaged in self-harm)?** (1 or more times)
  - **During the past 12 months, did you ever consider attempting suicide?** (yes)
  - **During the past 12 months, how many times did you attempt suicide?** (1 or more times)

2021 - 26%

2011 - 9%  
2013 - 9%  
2015 - 10%  
2017 - 8%  
2019 - 11%  
2021 - 17%

2011 - 9%  
2013 - 10%  
2015 - 12%  
2017 - 10%  
2019 - 13%  
2021 - 12%

2011 - 2%  
2013 - 2%  
2015 - 3%  
2017 - 2%  
2019 - 3%  
2021 - 4%

**MA '21**  
Depression - 29%  
Self-harm - 27%  
Consider suicide - 13%  
Attempted suicide - 6%

Experienced depression

Engaged in self-harm

Considered suicide

Attempted suicide

**Experienced depression:** Female and TGD students were significantly more likely to experience depression than the average middle school student. LGBQ+ students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to experience depression. Hispanic/Latino students were significantly more likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to experience depression.

**Engaged in self-harm:** Gender minority students were significantly more likely than the average middle school student to engage in self-harm. LGBQ+ students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to engage in self-harm.

**Considered suicide:** Gender minority students were significantly more likely than the average middle school student to consider attempting suicide. Sexual minority students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to consider attempting suicide.

**Attempted suicide:** Sexual minority students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to attempt suicide. Hispanic/Latino students were significantly more likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to attempt suicide.

## Is there at least one teacher or other adult in this school that you can talk to if you have a problem?

(yes)



Overall, when asked about adults whom they could talk to about a problem, 64% of middle students reported having at least one teacher or other adult in this school. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

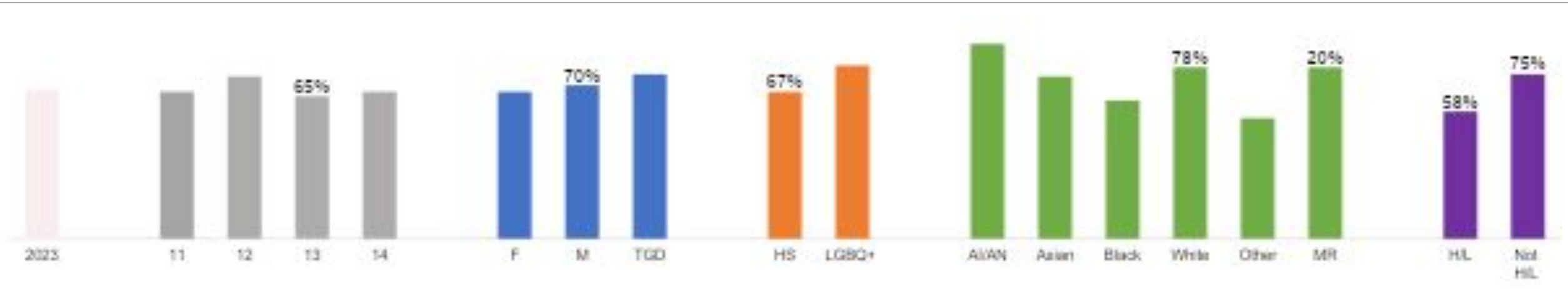
**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** AI/AN students were significantly more likely than the average middle school student to have at least one teacher or other adult in this school that they could talk to if they had a problem.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.

# During this school year (since September), how many days per week did you typically participate in out of school time programs such as after school program, youth center, club, arts, sports, tutoring, etc.? (1 or more times)



Overall, 68% of middle school students reported that they typically participate in out of school time programs 1 or more days per week during the past school year. This is the first time this question was asked so there is no trend data *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

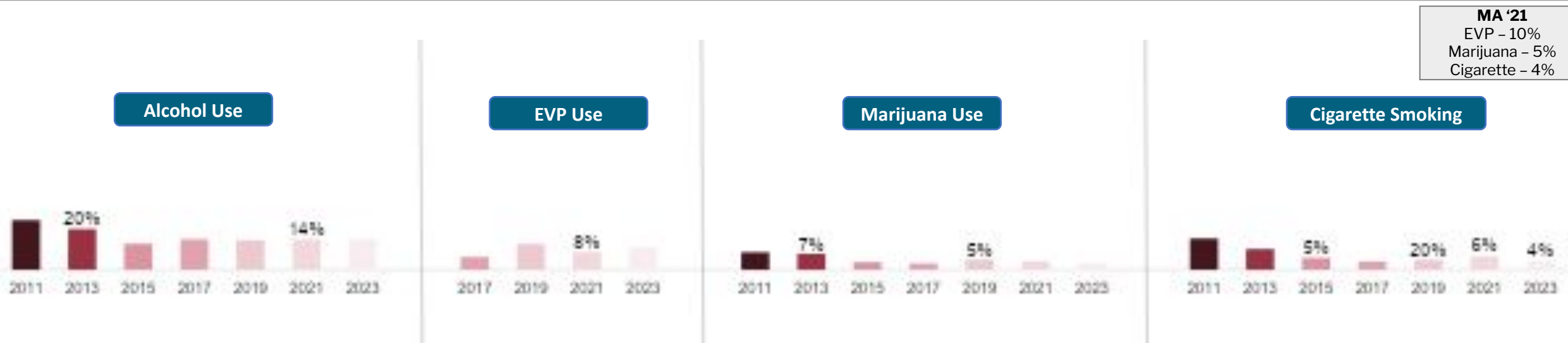
**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual minority students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to participate in out of school programs.

**Race:** Students of another race were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to participate in out of school programs, and White students were significantly more likely than the average middle school student.

**Ethnicity:** Hispanic/Latino students were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to participate in out of school programs.

**Have you ever had a drink of alcohol other than a few sips?** (yes)  
**Have you ever used an electronic vapor product?** (yes)  
**Have you ever tried marijuana?** (yes)  
**Have you ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs?** (yes)



**Alcohol use:** AI/AN were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever had a drink of alcohol.

**EVP use:** Eleven-year-old students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever used an electronic vapor product. AI/AN and Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever used an electronic vapor product. Hispanic/Latino students were significantly more likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to have ever used an electronic vapor product.

**Marijuana use:** Twelve-year-old students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever tried marijuana. AI/AN and Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever tried marijuana.

**Cigarette smoking:** AI/AN and Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever tried cigarette smoking.

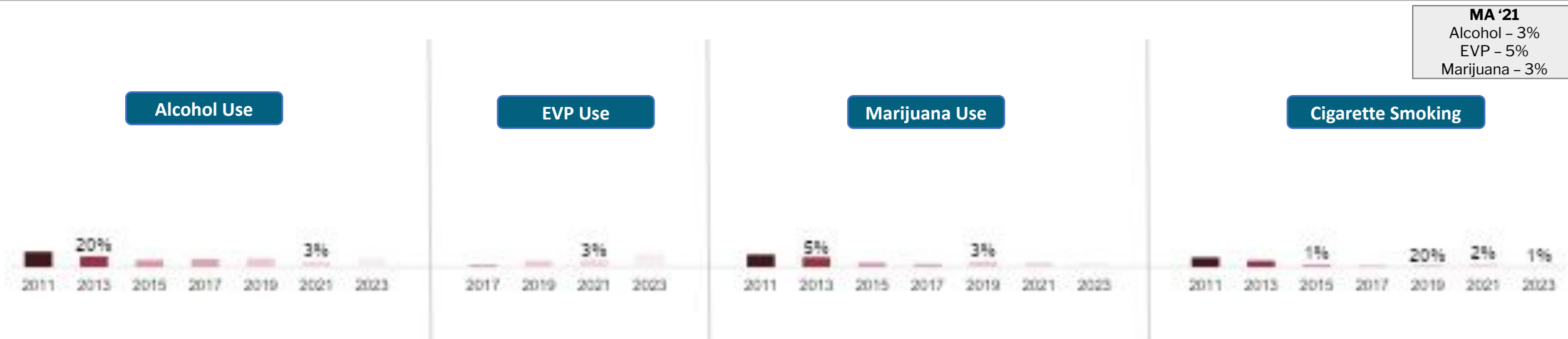


**During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?** (1 or more days)

**During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use an electronic vapor product?** (1 or more days)

**During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana?** (1 or more days)

**During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?** (1 or more days)



**Alcohol use:** AI/AN were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever had a drink of alcohol.

**EVP use:** Eleven-year-old students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever used an electronic vapor product. AI/AN and Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever used an electronic vapor product. Hispanic/Latino students were significantly more likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to have ever used an electronic vapor product.

**Marijuana use:** Twelve-year-old students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever tried marijuana. AI/AN and Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever tried marijuana.

**Cigarette smoking:** AI/AN and Asian students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever tried cigarette smoking.

## Have you ever had sexual intercourse? (yes)



Overall, 2% of middle school students have ever had sexual intercourse. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

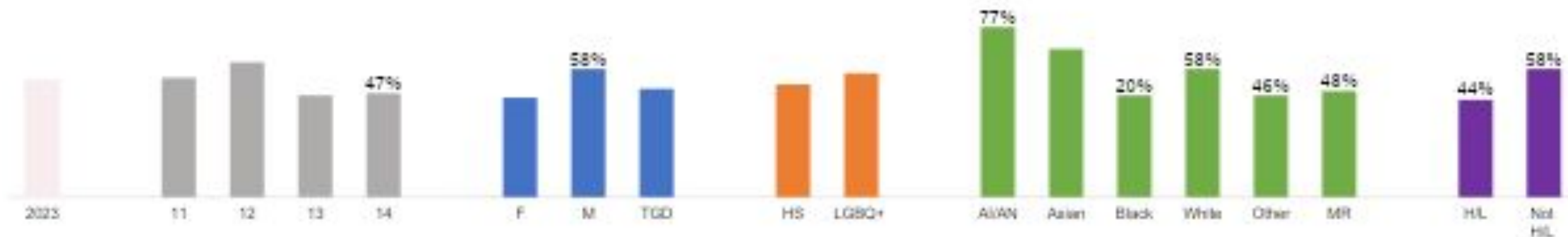
**Gender:** Gender minority students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever had sexual intercourse.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** AI/AN students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to have ever had sexual intercourse.

**Ethnicity:** There were no significant differences.

## On how many of the past 7 days did you eat breakfast? (6 or 7 days)



Overall, 53% of middle school students ate breakfast on 6 of the past 7 days. This question was new in 2023, so there is no trend data. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** There were no significant differences.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** There were no significant differences.

**Ethnicity:** Hispanic/Latino students were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to eat breakfast on 6 of the past 7 days.

## During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day? (5 or more days)



Overall, 44% of middle school students engaged in 60 minutes of physical activity on at least 5 of the past 7 days. *There is no statewide comparison data.*

**Age:** There were no significant differences.

**Gender:** Female students were significantly less likely than the average middle school student to be physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on at least 5 of the last 7 days.

**Sexual Orientation:** There were no significant differences.

**Race:** There were no significant differences.

**Ethnicity:** Hispanic/Latino students were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic/Latino students to be physically active.