



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

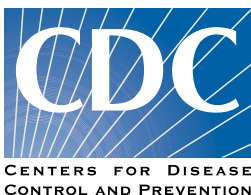
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION &
OFFICE OF STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY:

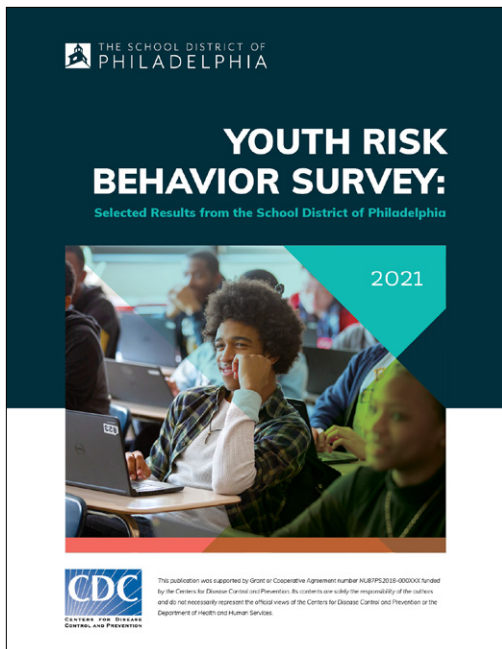
Selected Results from the School District of Philadelphia



2021



This publication was supported by Grant or Cooperative Agreement number NU87PS004289 funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.



About This Report

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) was developed by the Division of Adolescent and School Health, a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The YRBSS monitors six health-related behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults: 1) behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; 2) tobacco use; 3) alcohol and other drug use; 4) sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease; 5) unhealthy dietary behaviors; and 6) inadequate physical activity. The surveys are conducted every two years. The surveys are completely anonymous and voluntary, and include 99 questions.¹

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to 1,351 randomly selected high school students from 30 Philadelphia District schools in the fall of 2021.² Data collection, availability, and analysis were significantly delayed in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The overall response rate was 67%. This report highlights statistically weighted results from the 2021 Philadelphia YRBS, which means that the results are considered representative of high school students in the entire District.

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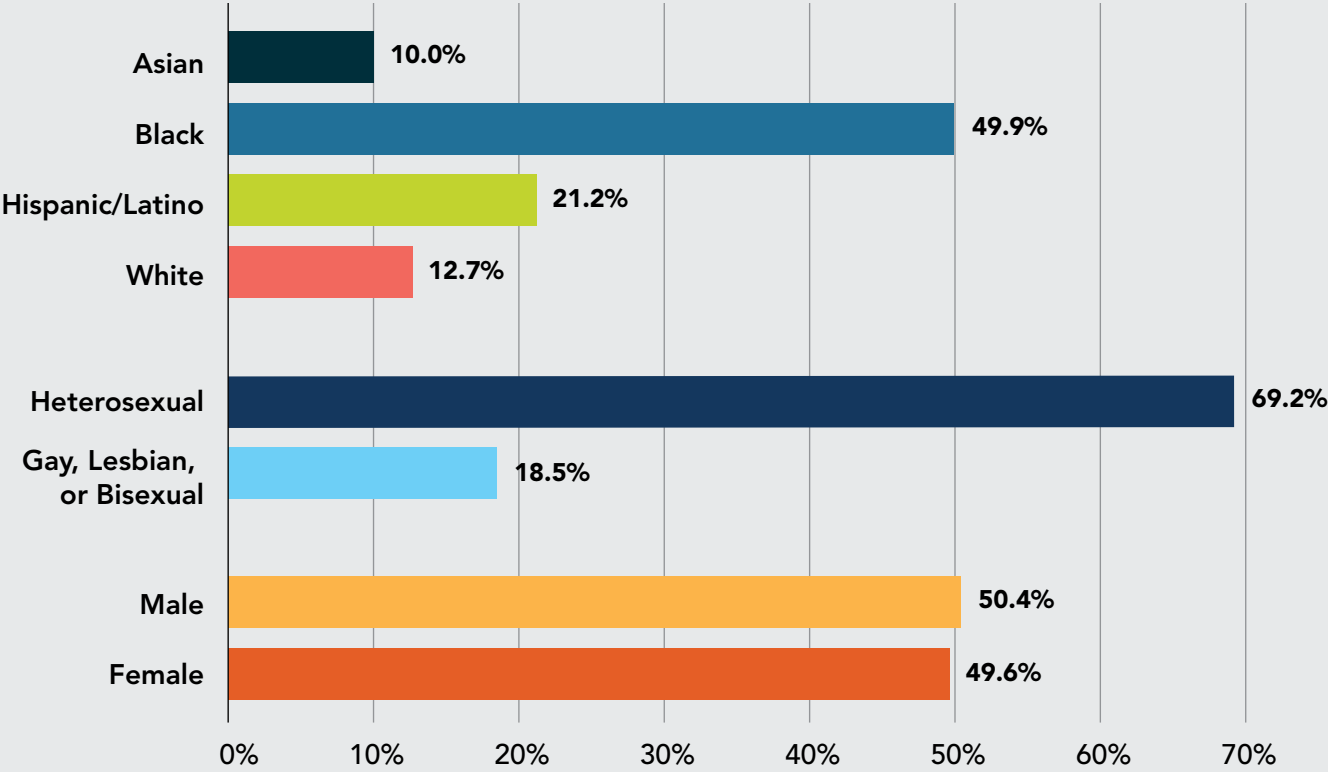
¹ For more information about the YRBSS, visit: www.cdc.gov/yrbs

² Philadelphia's raw data can be found on our Open Data website: www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data

This report also explores how certain subgroups (based on student race/ethnicity, gender, and identification as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual) are more at risk.³ The demographics of the overall sample are below (Figure 1). Please note that the percentage of students who self-identified as transgender was too small to observe any relevant risk behavior trends.

Schools play an essential role in promoting health and safety and in helping young people establish lifelong healthy behaviors.⁴ For these reasons, it is important that SDP offices use data from the YRBS to inform holistic approaches to programming and promote healthful behaviors in schools across the City of Philadelphia. For more information about this report, please contact research@philasd.org.

FIG. 01 Demographics of the Philadelphia YRBS sample (2021)



Note: Representative data are not always available for the following student subgroups and are not included in this report: Race/Ethnicity = 'All other races' or 'Multiple races', and Sexual Identity = 'Other' or 'Questioning'.

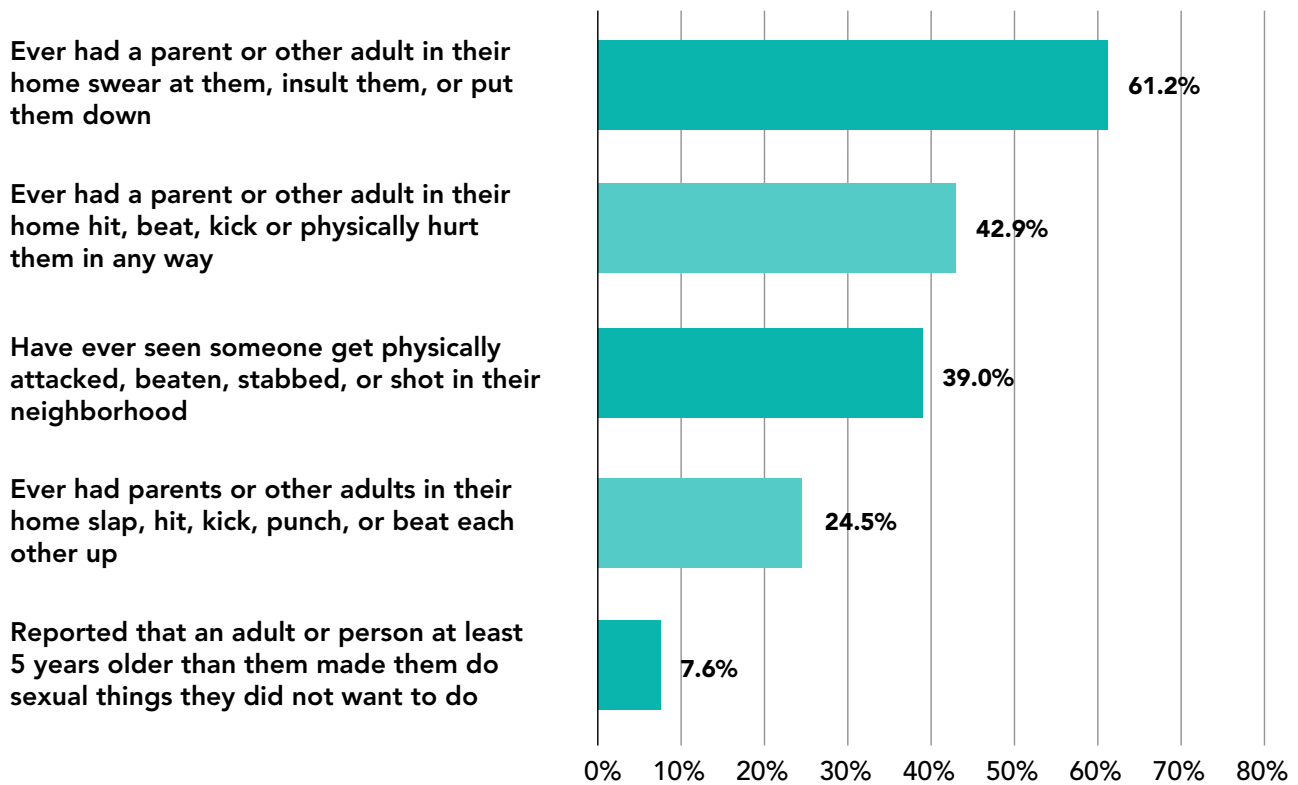
³ To see subgroup breakdowns for all questions, see details tables here: www.philasd.org/research/2021/10/21/summary-of-student-responses-from-the-2021-philadelphia-youth-risk-behavior-survey

⁴ More information about the relationship between education and health can be found at: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/index.htm

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The YRBS asks students about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years), as well as aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding. According to the CDC, ACEs are common, preventable, and can have lasting, negative effects on health and well-being.⁵

FIG. 02 Percentage of students who reported Adverse Childhood Experiences

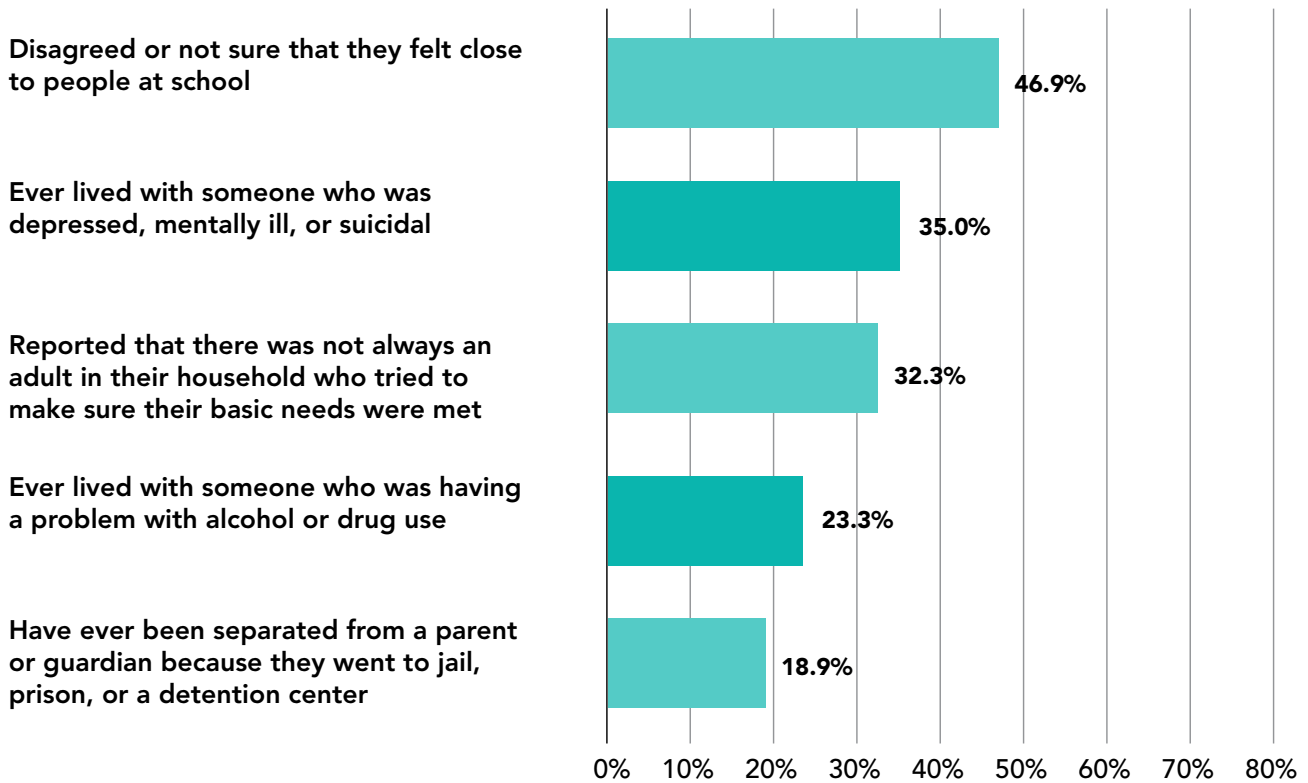


⁵ For more information on preventing ACEs, see: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html

In 2021, about 3 in 5 Philadelphia high school students reported having a parent or other adult in their home swear at them, insult them, or put them down. Approximately 2 in 5 students reported ever being physically hurt by a parent or other adult in their home or ever seeing someone get physically attacked in their neighborhood. Nearly 1 in 4 students have ever had parents or other adults in their home slap, hit, kick, punch, or beat each other up, and approximately 8% of students reported that an adult or person at least 5 years older than them made them do sexual things they did not want to do (Figure 2).

In 2021, almost half of students in Philadelphia disagreed or were not sure that they felt close to people at school. Over 1 in 3 Philadelphia students reported ever living with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal. Nearly 1 in 3 students reported that there has not always been an adult in their household who tried to make sure their basic needs were met. Nearly 1 in 4 students have ever lived with someone who was having a problem with alcohol or drug use, and nearly 1 in 5 have ever been separated from a parent or guardian because they went to jail, prison, or a detention center (Figure 3).

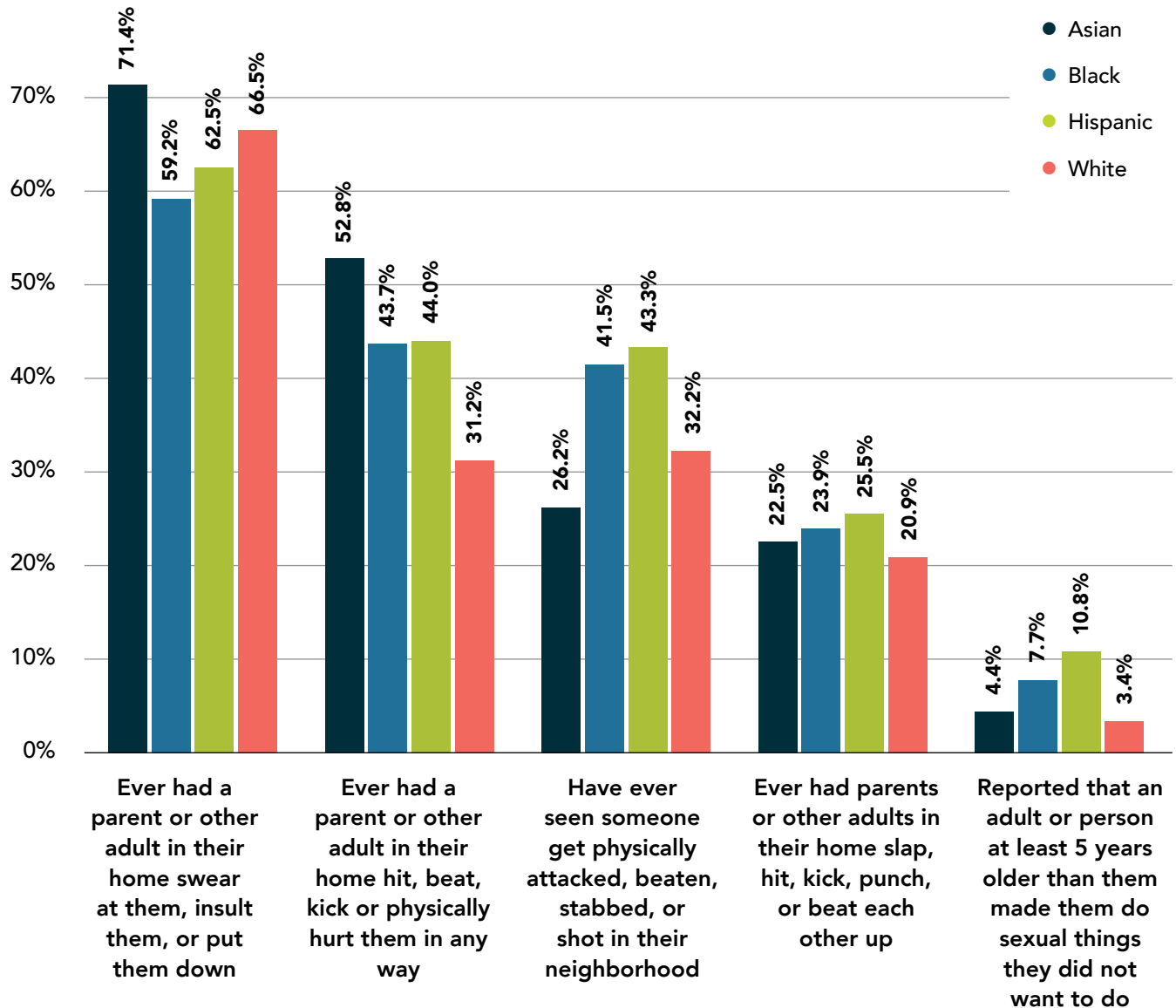
FIG. 03 Percentage of students who reported Adverse Childhood Experiences questions (continued)



On the 2021 YRBS, students responded differently to questions based on their race/ethnicity. For example, Asian students reported at higher rates than Black, Hispanic, or White students that they ever had a parent or other adult in their home swear at, insult, or put them down; and ever had a parent or other adult in their home physically hurt them (Figure 4).

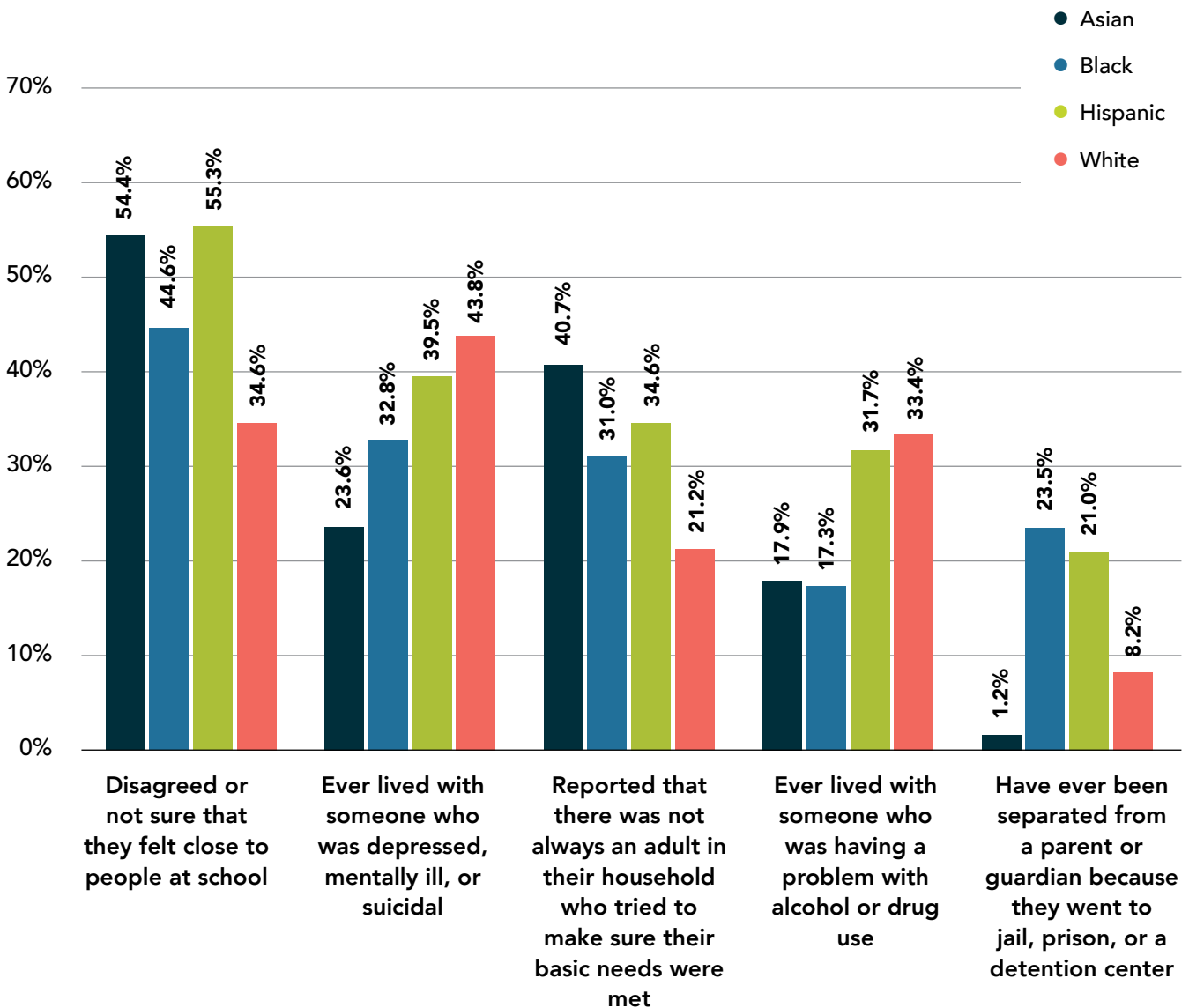
Additionally, Black and Hispanic students reported higher rates compared to White and Asian students for ever seeing someone get physically attacked in their neighborhood, and having an adult or person at least 5 years older than them make them do sexual things they did not want to do (Figure 4).

FIG. 04 Percentage of students who reported Adverse Childhood Experiences, by race/ethnicity



In 2021, Asian students reported higher rates than Black, Hispanic, or White students that there was not always an adult in their household who tried to make sure their basic needs were met. Asian and Hispanic students reported disagreeing or being not sure that they felt close to people at school at higher rates than Black and White students. Black and Hispanic students reported ever being separated from a parent or guardian because they went to jail, prison, or a detention center at rates over twice that of their White and Asian peers (Figure 5).

FIG. 05 Percentage of students who reported Adverse Childhood Experiences, by race/ethnicity (continued)

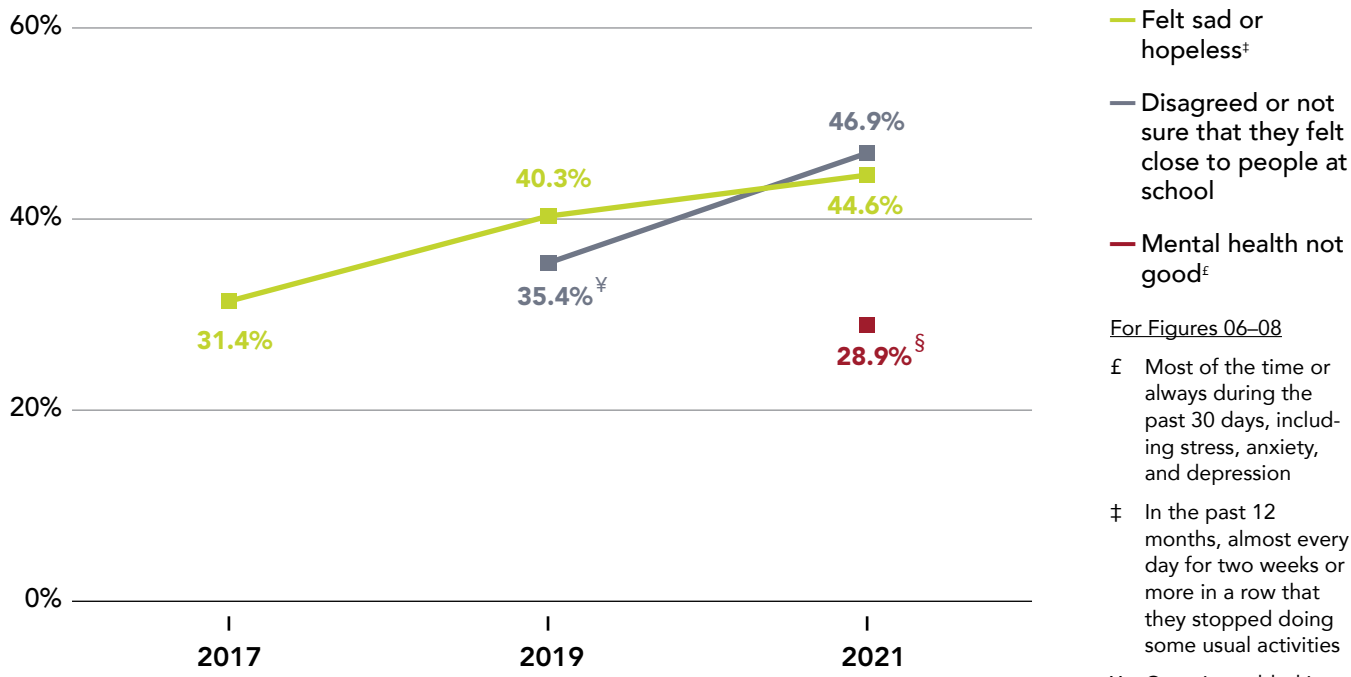


MENTAL HEALTH

The YRBS asks students about their mental health. The CDC describes mental health as “...an important part of overall health and wellbeing” that “affects how we think, feel, and act.”⁶ The YRBS asks students about their mental health in terms of prolonged sadness or hopelessness, suicidal ideation and attempts, and feelings of closeness to people at school.

The percentage of students who reported that they felt sad or hopeless for long periods of time increased from 31.4% in 2017 to 44.6% in 2021, and the percentage of students who did not feel close to people at school increased from 35.4% in 2019 to 46.9% in 2021. In 2021, nearly 30% of students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always during the last 30 days (Figure 6).

FIG. 06 Trends in student responses to questions about mental health over time indicate increasing need



⁶ The CDC’s definition of and resources for mental health can be found at www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm.

For Figures 06–08
[£] Most of the time or always during the past 30 days, including stress, anxiety, and depression
[‡] In the past 12 months, almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities
[¥] Question added in 2019
[§] Question added in 2021

STUDENT POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED

- More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students than heterosexual students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always and that they felt sad or hopeless for long periods of time (Figure 7).
- Female students reported that their mental health was not good and that they felt sad or hopeless for long periods of time at over twice the rate of their male peers (Figure 8).

FIG. 07 Responses to questions about mental health by sexual orientation

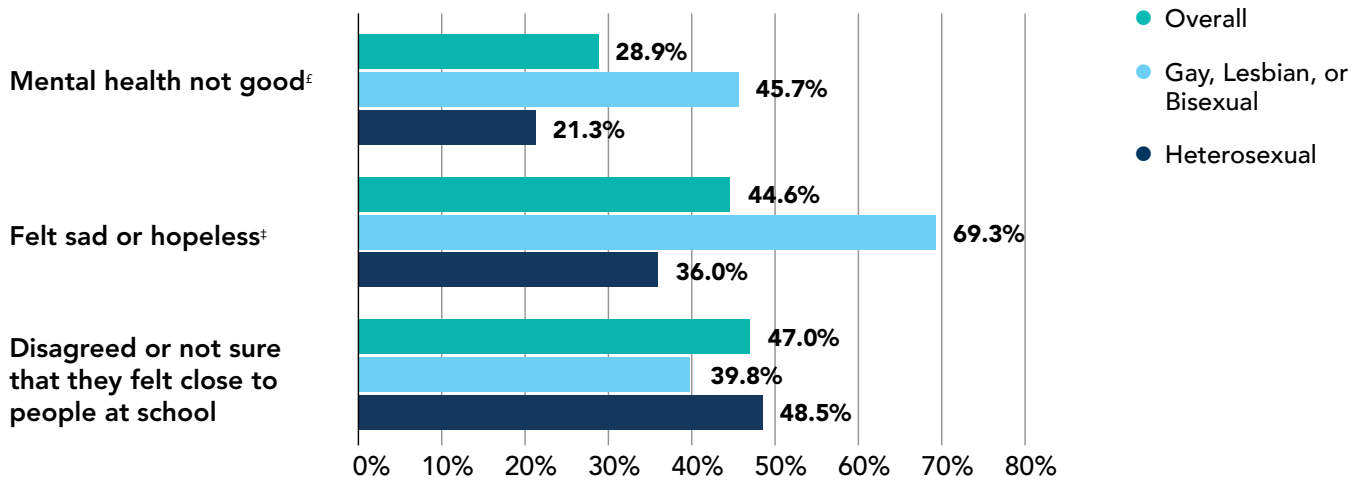
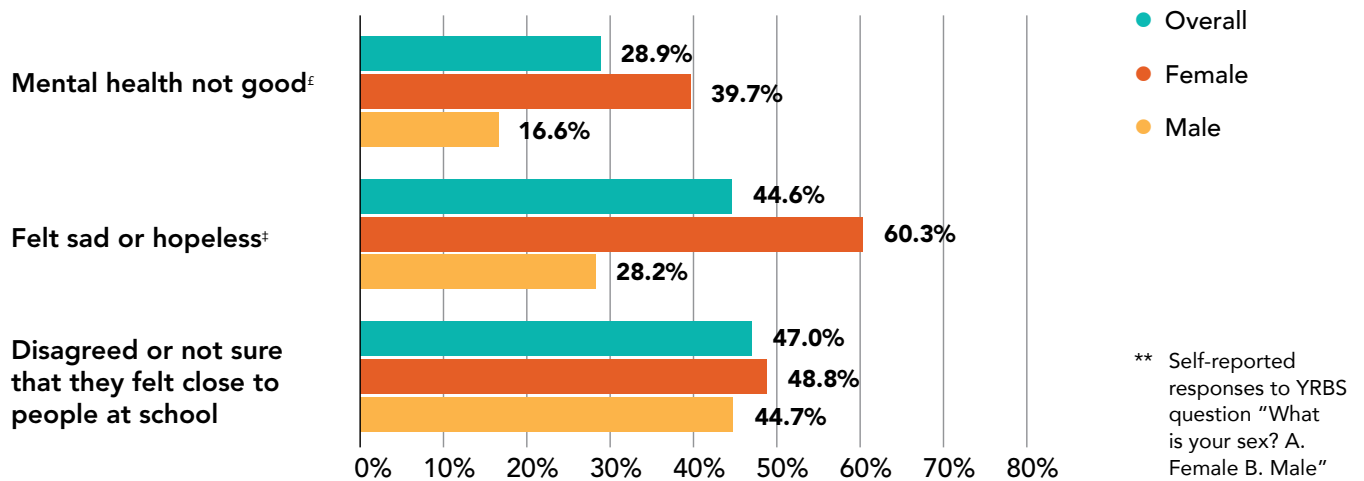
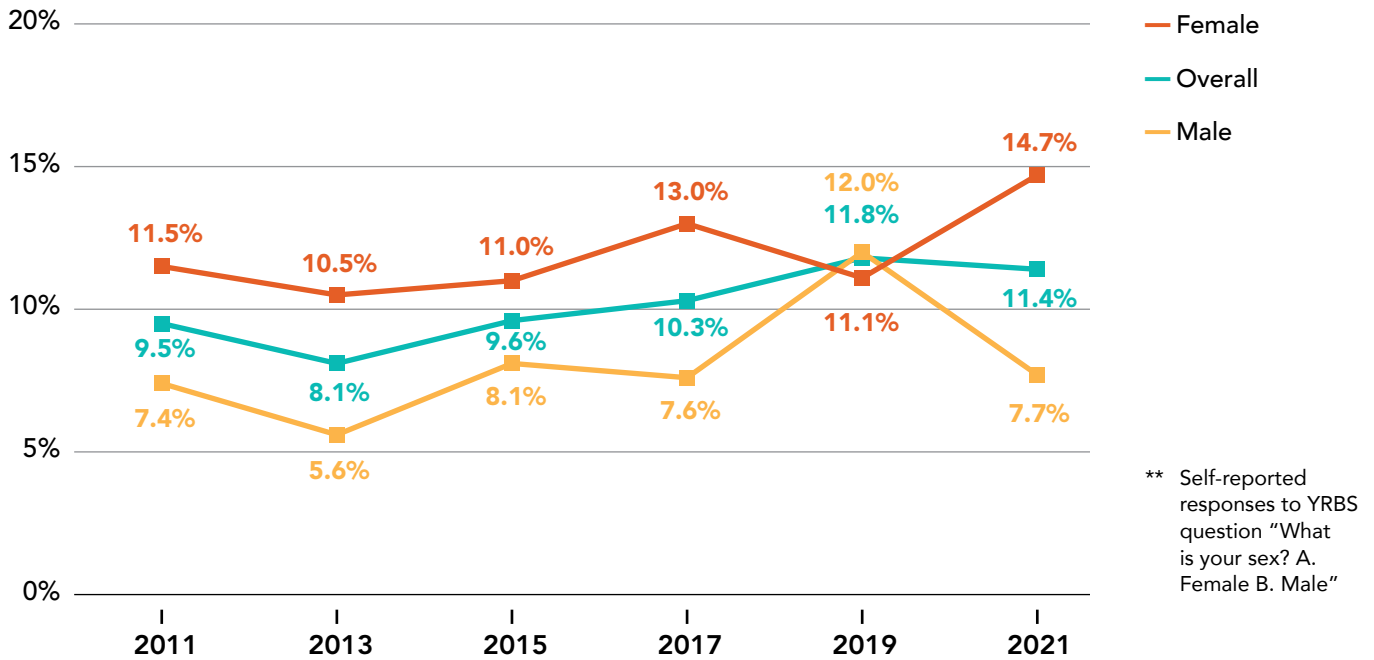


FIG. 08 Responses to questions about mental health by sex**



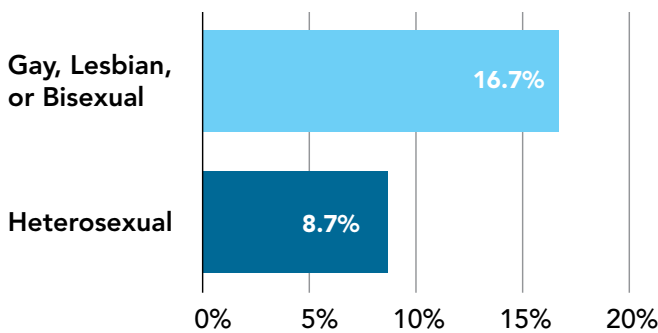
** Self-reported responses to YRBS question "What is your sex? A. Female B. Male"

FIG. 09 Trends of students experiencing electronic bullying over time, by sex**



The rates of Philadelphia students who report experiencing electronic bullying has increased over the past decade. In 2021, female students in Philadelphia reported experiencing electronic bullying at rates nearly twice those of their male peers (Figure 9). Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students also experienced higher rates of electronic bullying, reporting it at nearly twice the rate of their heterosexual peers (Figure 10).

FIG. 10 Percentage of students who were electronically bullied in the last 12 months, by sexual orientation



RESOURCES

PhillyHope Line: 1-833-PHL-HOPE (1-833-745-4673) offers free, confidential grief and loss support, counseling and referrals specifically for grieving LGBTQ+ youth and caregivers. The Philly HopeLine is a program of the Uplift Center for Grieving Children and is open to all youth and caregivers in the Philadelphia region. Additionally, our interpretation line supports over 150 different language needs. For more information: www.upliftphilly.org/programs/uplift-resources/philly-hopeline

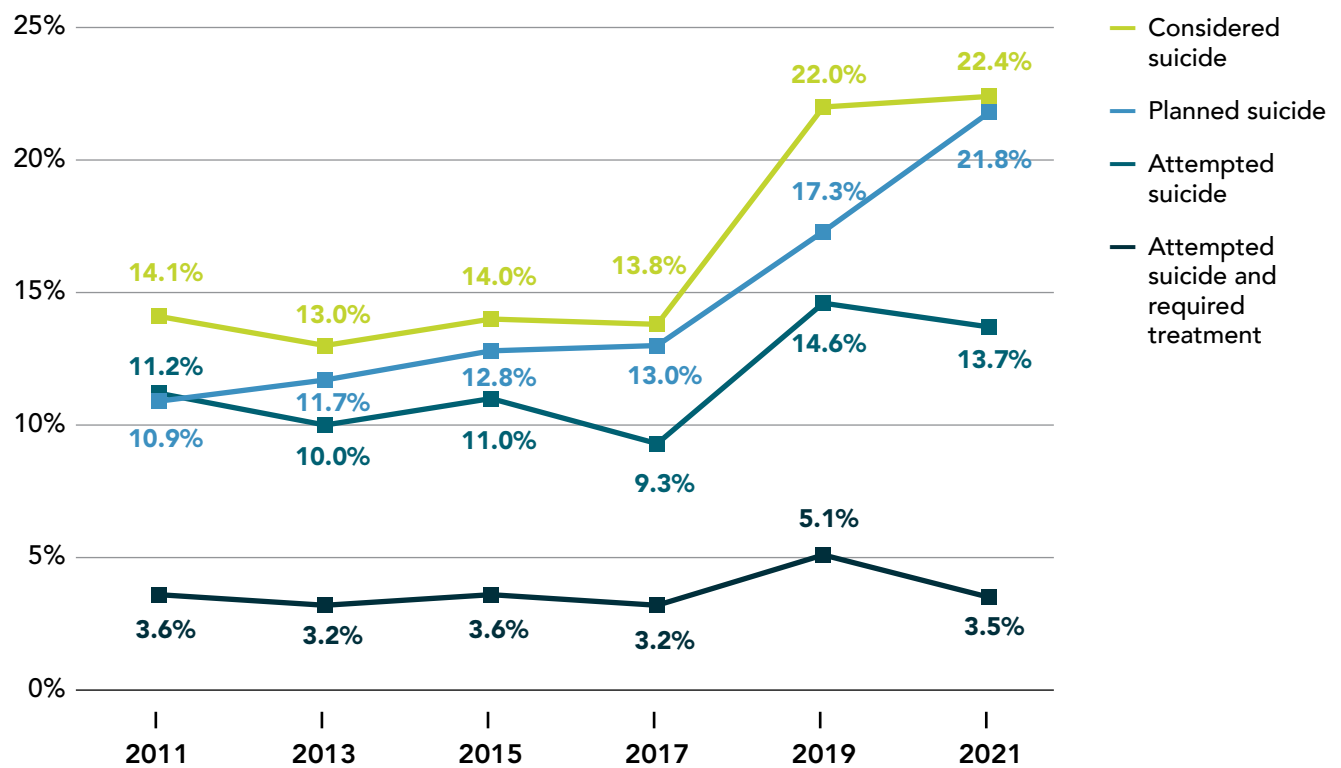
Kooth: Students now have immediate access to self-help content, anonymous and safe moderated forums, journaling, goal setting, and even chat-based counseling all through their smartphones and computers. Kooth has been designed to help students with whatever is on their mind—no matter how big or small. Kooth’s team is online to ensure that students have access to trained professionals who can help them overcome any issues they are facing: us.Kooth.com/philasd

The YRBS asks students about their experiences with suicidal ideation and attempts.

The number of students who reported suicidal ideation and attempts have increased in recent years (2019 and 2021). Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students, as well as female students, reported the highest rates of suicidal ideation and attempts.

The data from 2019 to 2021 show a continued increase in the number of Philadelphia students who reported that they made a plan to attempt suicide. The percentage of students who attempted suicide and the percentage who required treatment from a medical professional after attempting suicide both decreased slightly in 2021, following sharp increases in 2019 (Figure 11).

FIG. 11 Trends in responses to questions about suicidal ideation and suicide attempts over time



STUDENT POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED

- ➔ In 2021, Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students reported that they considered suicide, that they planned how to attempt suicide, attempted suicide, and required treatment following an attempted suicide at much higher rates than heterosexual students (Figure 12).
- ➔ In 2021, female students reported that they considered suicide, planned how to attempt suicide, and that they attempted suicide at much higher rates than male students (Figure 13).
- ➔ Black (14.5%) and Hispanic (15.8%) students reported attempting suicide in the last 12 months at higher rates than Asian (8.3%) or White (7.5%) students.

FIG. 12 Responses to questions about suicide by sexual orientation

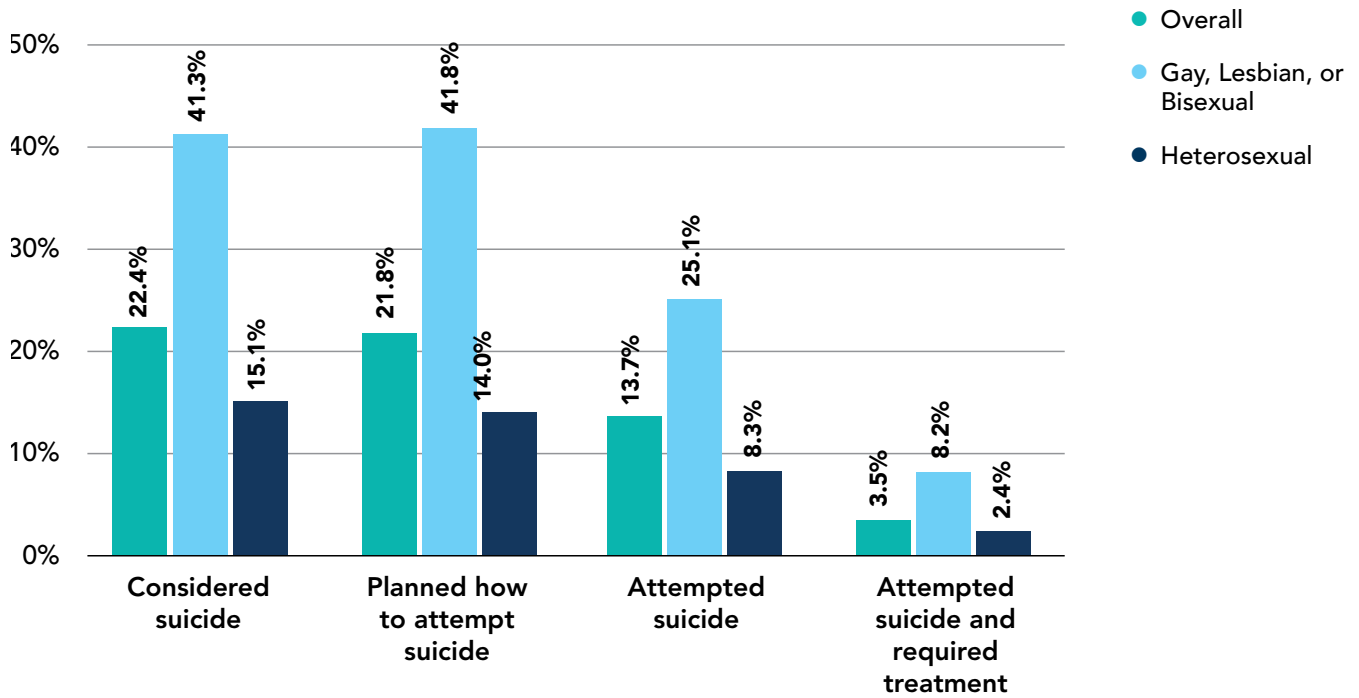
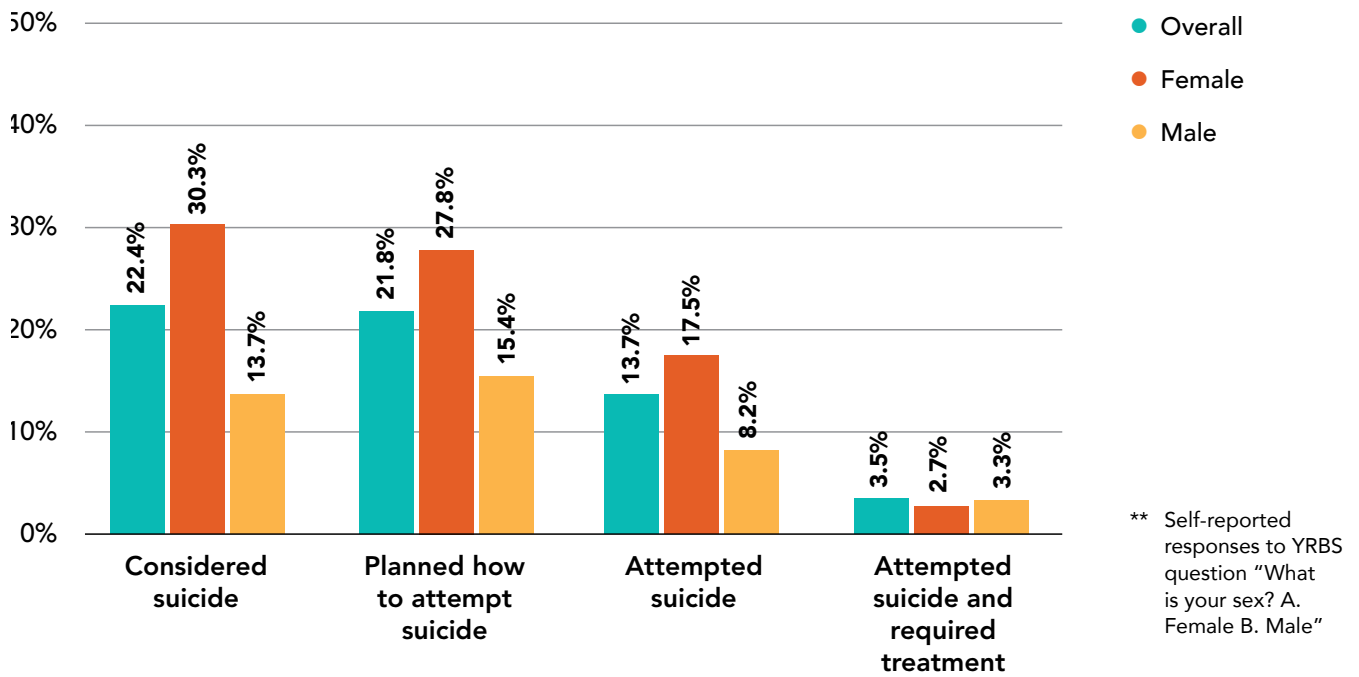


FIG. 13 Responses to questions about suicide by sex**



** Self-reported responses to YRBS question "What is your sex? A. Female B. Male"

Using student responses to the 2019 Philadelphia YRBS, the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Research and Evaluation conducted statistical analyses that identified risk and protective factors for suicide and poor mental health.⁷



RISK FACTORS

FOOD INSECURITY was identified as a risk factor for feeling sad or hopeless, considering suicide, and planning suicide.

- In 2021, 15.2% of students reported going hungry during the past 30 days sometimes, most of the time, or always because there was not enough food in their home.

ELECTRONIC BULLYING was identified as a risk factor for feeling sad/hopeless and considering, planning, and attempting suicide.

- In 2021, 11.4% of students reported being electronically bullied during the past 12 months.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE was identified as a protective factor that was related to reduced rates of attempting suicide for male students.

- In 2021, only 79.8% of male students were physically active (for a total of at least 60 minutes) at least 1 day during the past 7 days.

SLEEPING 8+ HOURS was identified as a protective factor that was related to reduced rates of attempting suicide for male students, and feeling sad/hopeless, considering suicide, and planning suicide for female students.

- In 2021, only 18.8% of male students got 8+ hours of sleep on an average school night.
- In 2021, only 13.4% of female students got 8+ hours of sleep on an average school night.

RESOURCES

- **The Philadelphia Suicide/Crisis Intervention Hotline** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 215-686-4420.
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** is available 24/7 nationally. Call, text, or chat 988 to be connected to trained counselors who will listen, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.
- **The Trevor Project** provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ youth. Text "START" to 678678 for confidential messaging with a counselor.
- **LGBTQIA National Youth Talkline** is available for teens and young adults who need to talk about coming-out issues, relationship concerns, parent issues, school problems, HIV/AIDS anxiety, and safer-sex information. Call 1-800-246-7743.

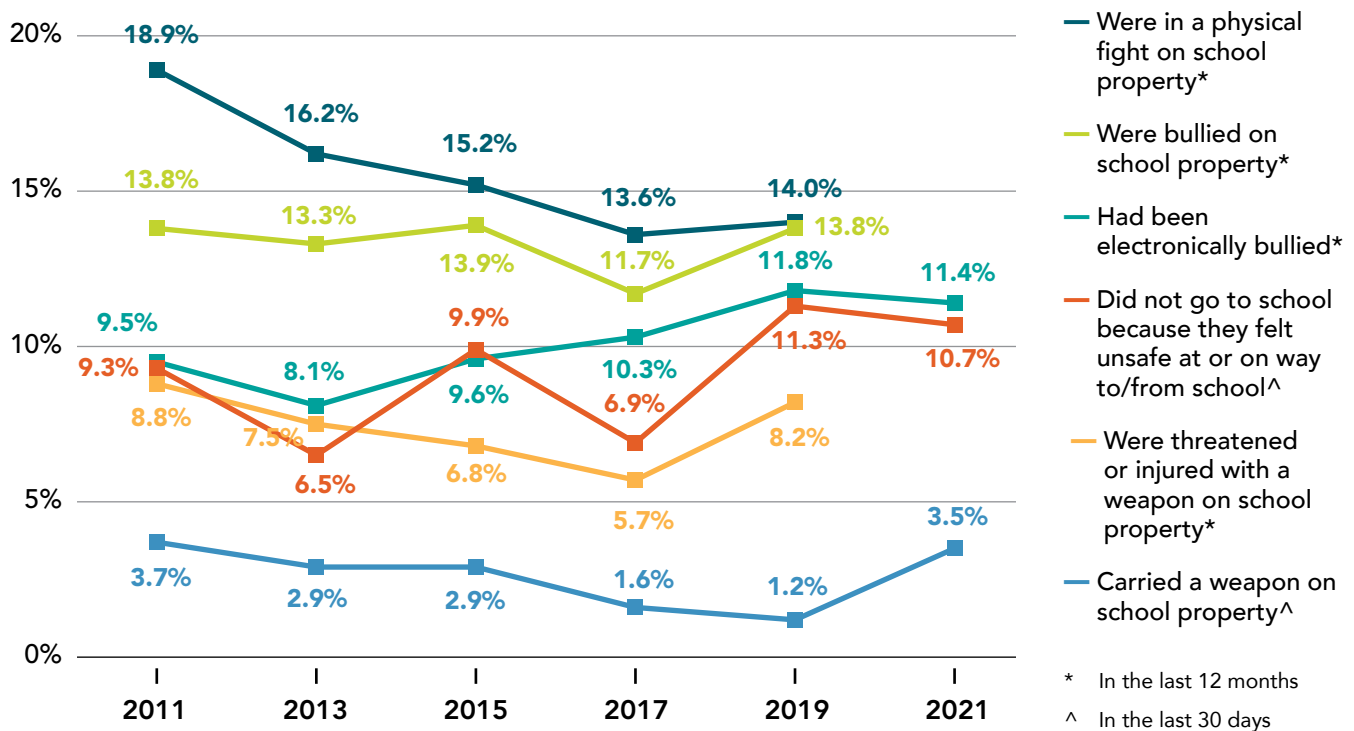
⁷ The Office of Research and Evaluation's Mental Health Report can be found on SDP's website: www.philasd.org/research/2020/11/09/findings-from-student-responses-to-questions-about-mental-health-and-suicide-from-the-2019-philadelphia-youth-risk-behavior-survey/

SAFETY AND VIOLENCE

The YRBS asks students about their experiences with bullying, physical violence, and sexual and dating violence.

The percentage of students who reported that they carried a weapon to school increased in 2021 to 3.5%, following what had been a consistent decrease over the last decade to 1.2% in 2019. Over 1 in 10 Philadelphia students reported not going to school at least once in the past 30 days due to feeling unsafe at or on the way to/from school (Figure 14).

FIG. 14 Trends in responses to questions about safety and violence on school property over time⁸



⁸ The following questions were not included on the 2021 YRBS due to COVID-related school closures:

'During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied on school property?'

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

'During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?'

Approximately 2 in 5 students reported ever being physically hurt by a parent or other adult in their home. Similarly, about 2 in 5 students reported ever seeing someone get physically attacked in their neighborhood (Figure 15).

In 2021, 1 in 10 students reported experiencing sexual violence in the past 12 months. Over the past decade, nearly 1 in 10 students have reported ever being physically forced to have sex. While the percentage of students who reported experiencing physical dating violence decreased from 2019 to 2021, the percentage who reported experiencing sexual dating violence increased during this time (Figure 16).

FIG. 15 Responses to questions about student safety at home and in their neighborhood

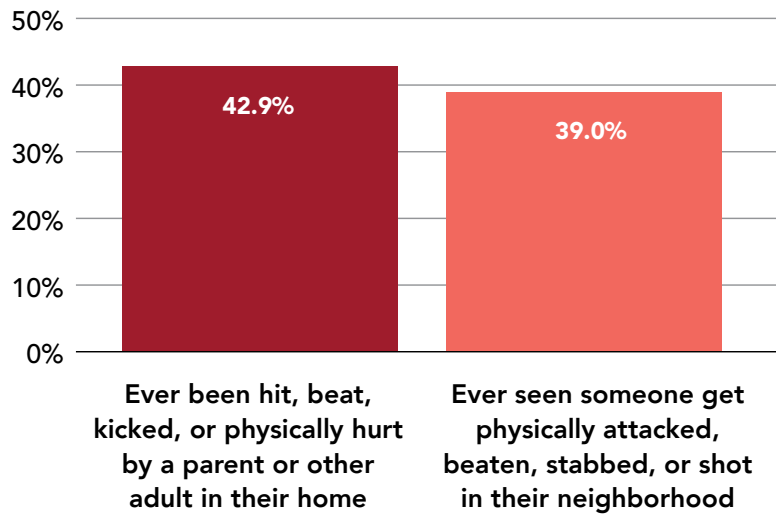


FIG. 16 Trends in responses to questions about sexual and dating violence over time

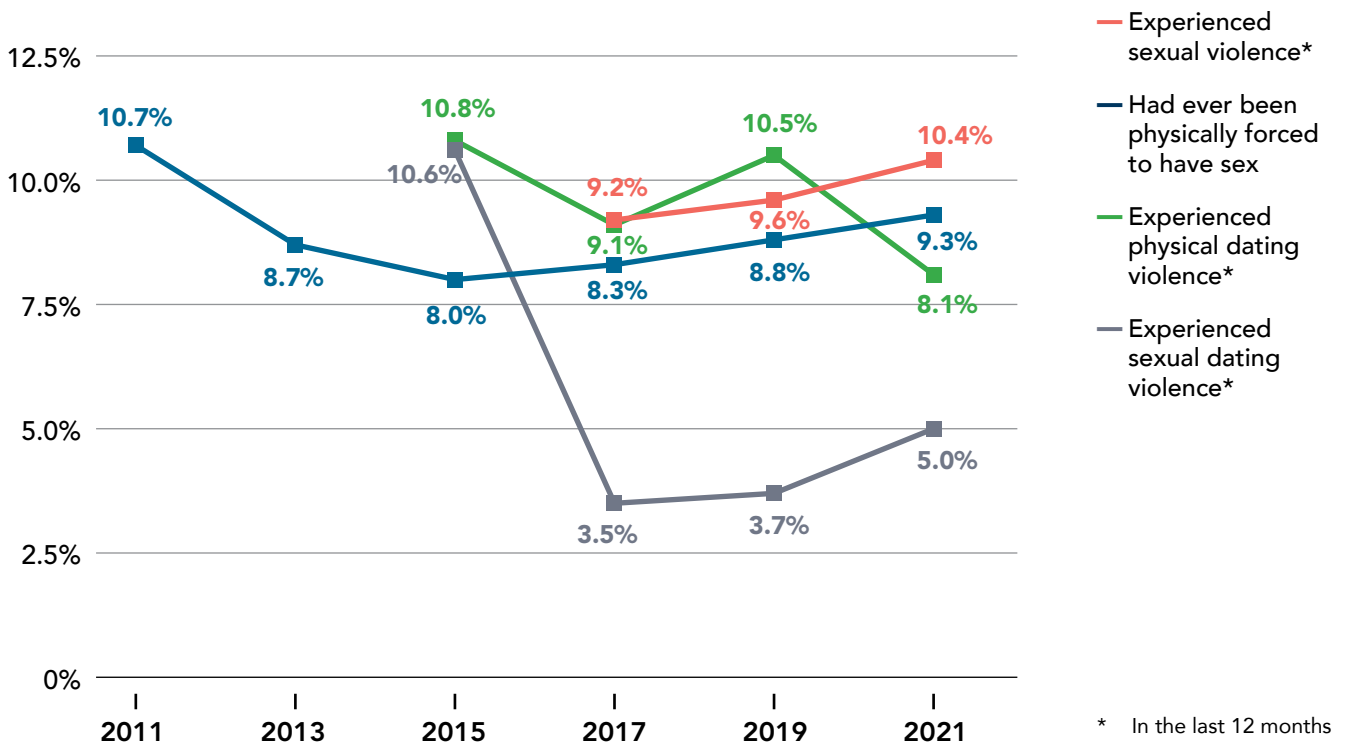


FIG. 17 Responses to questions about sexual and dating violence by sexual orientation

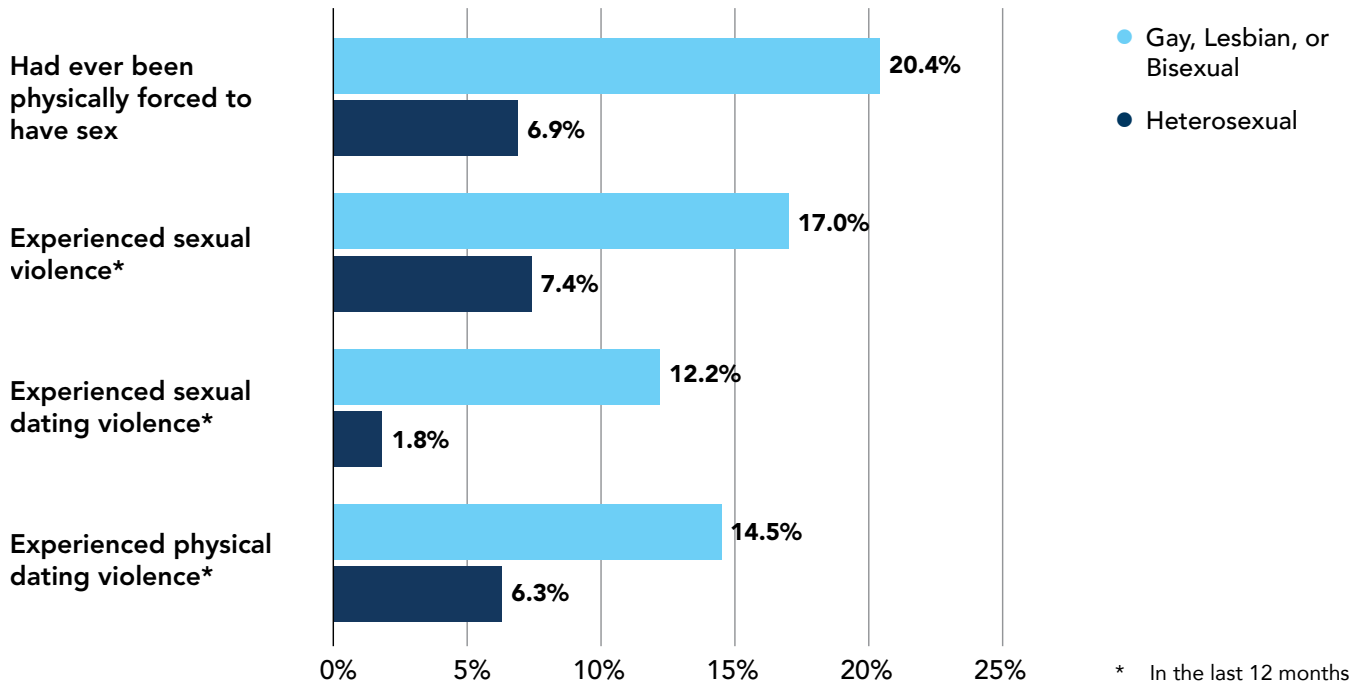
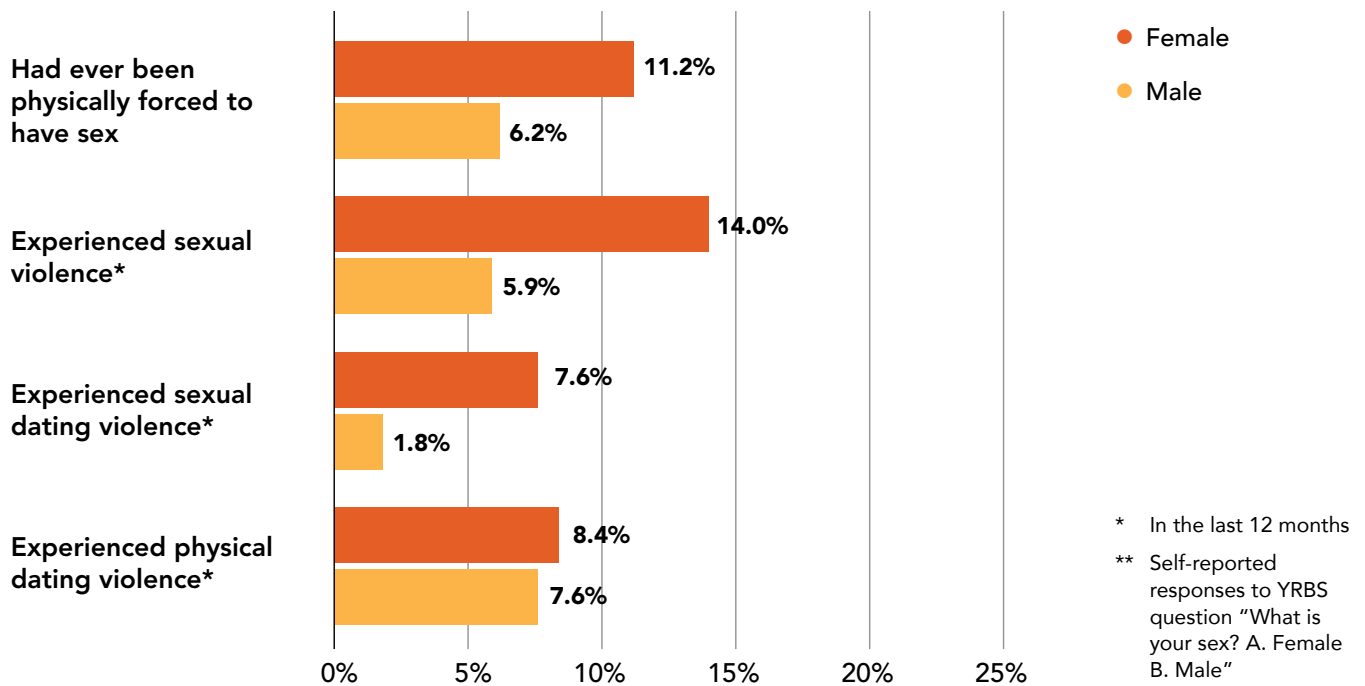


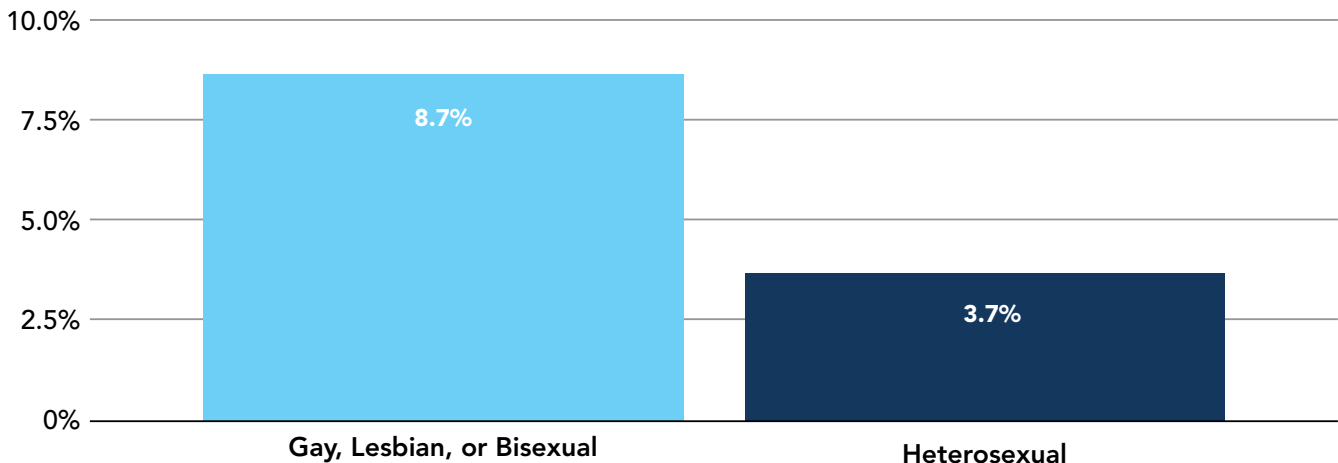
FIG. 18 Responses to questions about sexual and dating violence by sex**



STUDENT POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED

- In 2021, more female students (14.7%) than male students (7.7%), and more Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students (16.7%) than heterosexual students (8.7%), reported experiencing electronic bullying in the last 12 months.
- More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students than heterosexual students (Figure 17), and more female students than male students (Figure 18), had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse, experienced sexual violence, experienced sexual dating violence, and experienced physical dating violence.
- More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students than heterosexual students reported that they did not usually sleep at the home of their parent or guardian in the 30 days prior to the survey (Figure 19).

FIG. 19 Percentage of students who reported not sleeping at a parent/guardian's home in the past 30 days by sexual orientation



RESOURCE

Safe Place is a national youth outreach and prevention program for young people under the age of 18 in need of immediate help and safety. The text line is a nationwide, text-for-support service for youth in crisis. Text "safe" and your current location (address, city, state) to 4HELP (44357).

SEXUAL HEALTH

The YRBS asks students about current and past sexual behaviors. These include having sexual intercourse, learning about contraception and HIV/STI testing, and using contraceptives and other preventive measures to practice safer sex.

In Philadelphia, the trend of students reporting they ever had sex and who are currently sexually active has declined over time (Figure 20).

FIG. 20 Trends in responses to questions about sexual behaviors over time

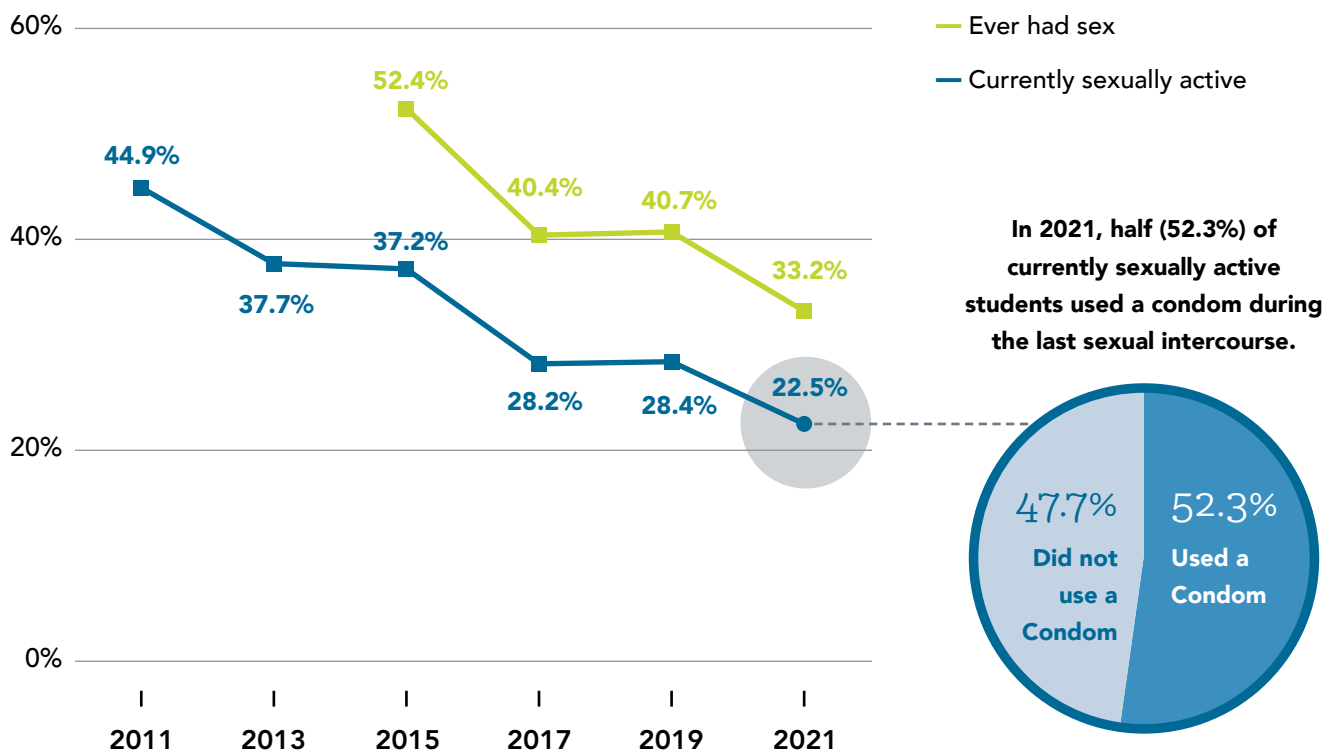


FIG. 21 Responses to questions about sexual health education and services

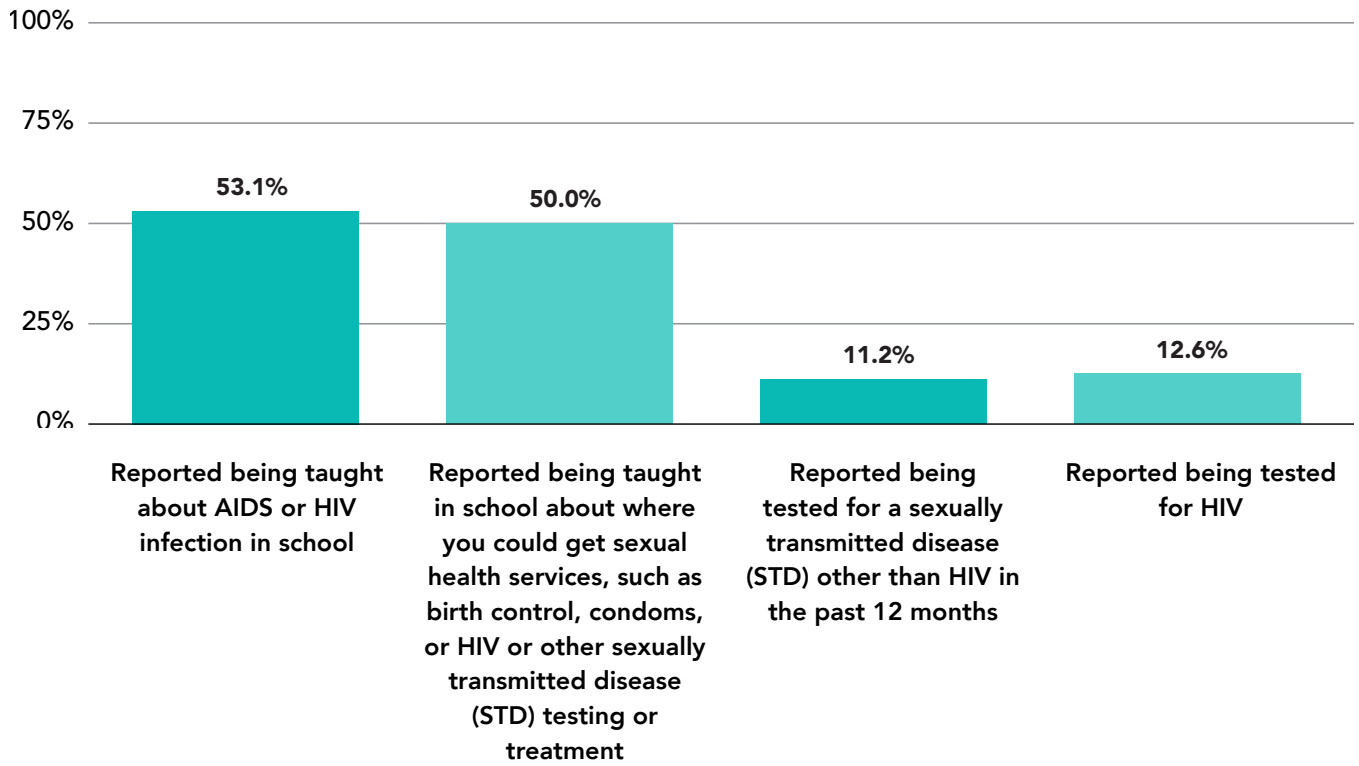
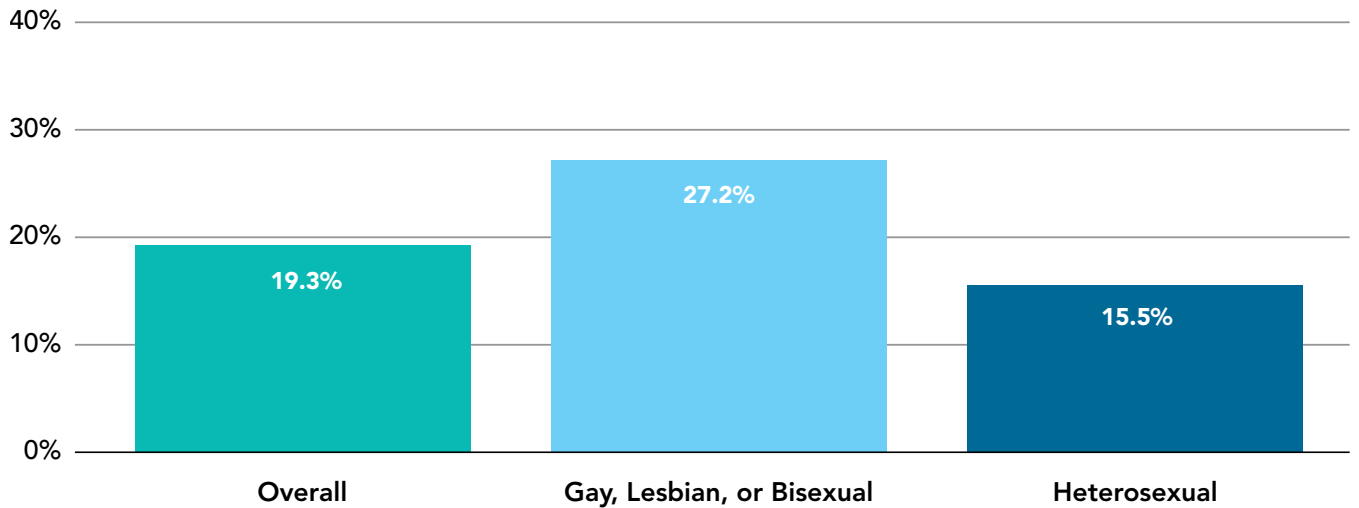
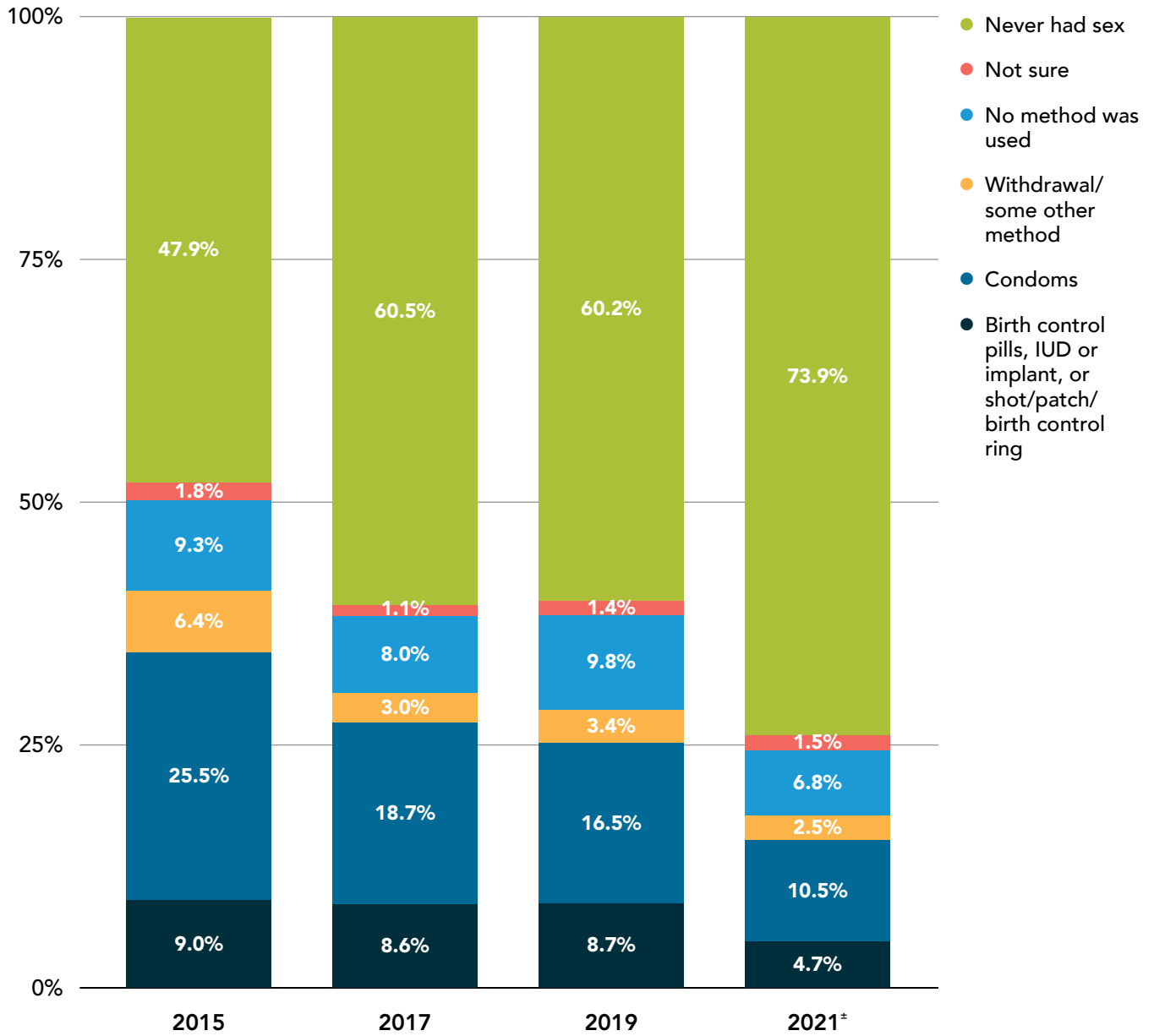


FIG. 22 Percentage of currently sexually active students who drank alcohol or used drugs before last sexual intercourse



Since 2015, when asked what one pregnancy prevention method students used the last time they had sexual intercourse, sexually active students have most frequently reported using condoms. Though the percentage of students who report being sexually active has decreased over the past decade, a considerable percentage of students continue to report using no pregnancy prevention method (Figure 23). In 2021, about 1 in 4 sexually active students reported not using any method to prevent pregnancy during last sexual intercourse with an opposite-sex partner.

FIG. 23 Pregnancy prevention method used by students during last sexual intercourse, 2015 - 2021[±]



The last time you had sexual intercourse [with an opposite-sex partner], what one method did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy?"

[±] "with an opposite-sex partner" was added to the question wording in 2021

STUDENT POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED

- More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students (55.2%) reported that they did not use a condom in their last sexual intercourse, compared to heterosexual students (45.4%).

RESOURCES

- **AccessMatters' Information Hotline** is an information, referral, and counseling hotline. Call the hotline at 215-985-3300 for free, confidential information. Text the hotline at: 833-667-3377. All calls and texts are anonymous, and translation services are available.
- **Planned Parenthood** is a trusted health care provider, delivering vital reproductive health care, sex education, and information to millions of people worldwide: plannedparenthood.org
- **Mazzoni Center** is a multi-service, community-based, health and social service provider aiming to advance the health and well-being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities: mazzonicenter.org
- **The Department of Public Health** provides family planning services, birth control supplies, and pregnancy options counseling at eight City health centers. Call the Health Information Helpline at 215-985-2437 or visit: phillykeeponloving.com

PASH

Promoting Adolescent Student Health

Promoting Adolescent Student Health (PASH) is the HIV, STIs, and unintended pregnancy prevention program at the School District of Philadelphia. PASH provides access to evidence-based curriculum, technical assistance, workshops, and professional development to students, teachers, staff, and parents on topics such as HIV/AIDS prevention, safer sex, LGBTQ+ support, healthy relationships, parent/child communication, and peer mediation. Learn more about PASH here: www.philasd.org/studenthealth/pash/ or by emailing pash@philasd.org.

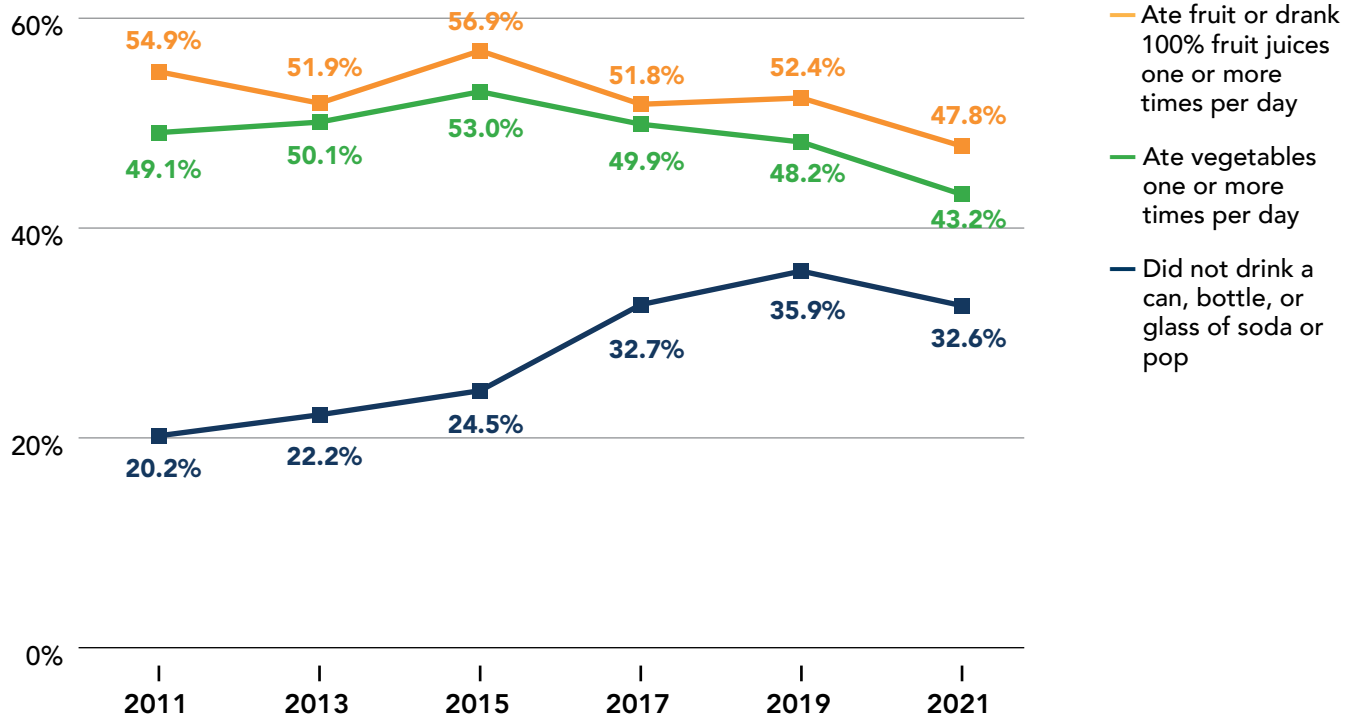
PASH also coordinates the Materials Review Board (MRB), a subgroup of the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) that is required to review and approve all sexual health-related materials prior to use with SDP students. Materials may be submitted to the MRB here: www.philasd.org/studenthealth/#pash

NUTRITION

The YRBS asks students about healthy behaviors, including consumption of breakfast, soda/pop, fruits, and vegetables, as well as their physical activity and involvement in sports.

In Philadelphia, the percentage of students who did not drink soda in the prior week has increased over the past decade. The percentage of students who reported eating fruit/drinking 100% juices or eating vegetables daily has generally declined over the last decade (Figure 24).

FIG. 24 Trends in responses to questions about fruit, vegetable, and soda consumption over time



Overall in 2021, 15.2% of Philadelphia high school students reported that they were hungry sometimes, most of the time, or always because there was not enough food in their home (Figure 25).

In 2021, 25.6% of Philadelphia high school students reported not eating breakfast at all in the past 7 days, while 19.1% of students reported eating breakfast on all 7 days (Figure 26).

STUDENT POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED

- ➔ More Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students (84.7%) did **not** eat breakfast on all 7 days of the week, compared to heterosexual students (79.6%).
- ➔ Asian, Black, and Hispanic students reported going hungry because there was not enough food in their home at higher rates than White students (Figure 25).

FIG. 25 Percentage of students who were hungry sometimes, most of the time, or always because there was not enough food in their home, by race/ethnicity

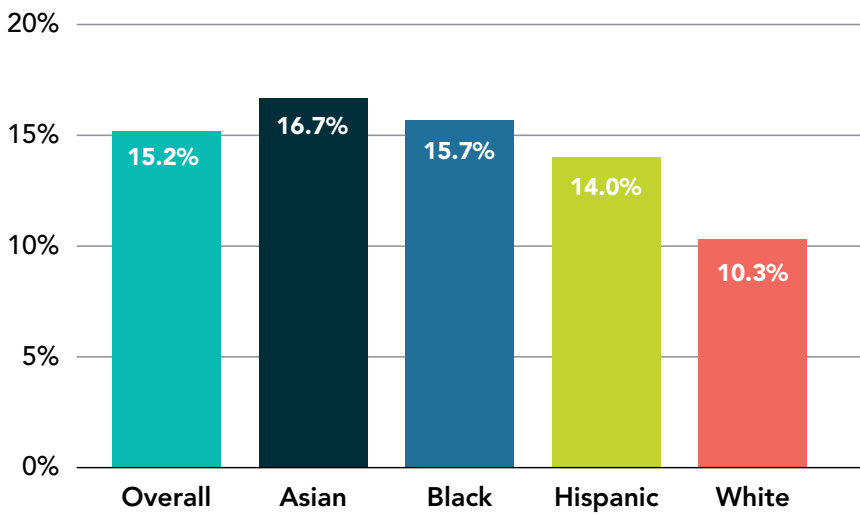
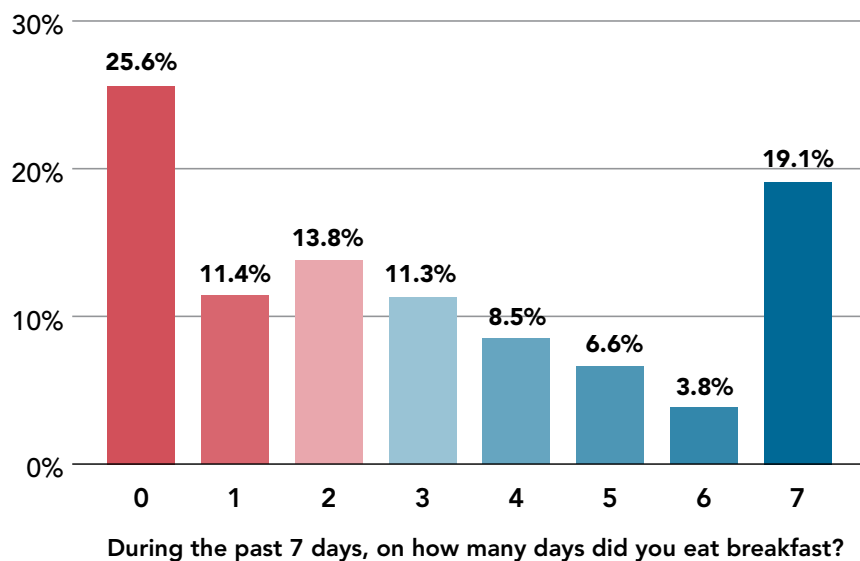


FIG. 26 Breakfast consumption in the past 7 days



RESOURCES



The **Eat Right Philly** program, funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) provides workshops, support, resources, and technical assistance focused on addressing nutrition, food insecurity, physical education & activity, and implementation of the District’s Wellness policy.

For more information on healthy eating, including recipes and food shopping guidance:

- **USDA MyPlate**
www.myplate.gov
- **Be Healthy PA** (Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network)
www.behealthypa.org

Healthy Food Access provides assistance with finding free food sources in Philadelphia:

- **City of Philadelphia, Free food and meal finder**
www.phila.gov/food

PHYSICAL HEALTH



The YRBS asks students about their physical health, including questions about weight, dental health, asthma, and sleep, among others.

In 2021, 25.3% of students reported that they had asthma (Figure 27). Nearly one-fourth of students were not physically active at least 60 minutes per week, which has increased over the past decade.

FIG. 27 Trends in responses to questions about physical health over time

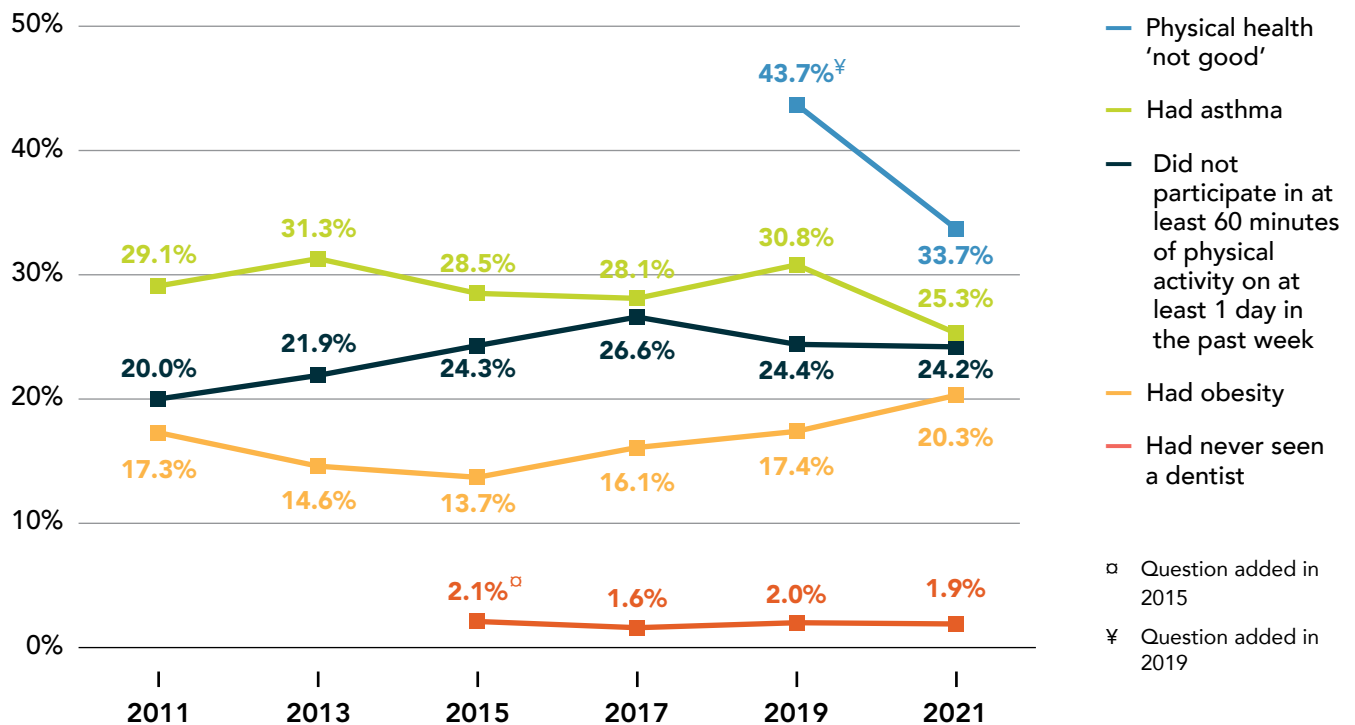
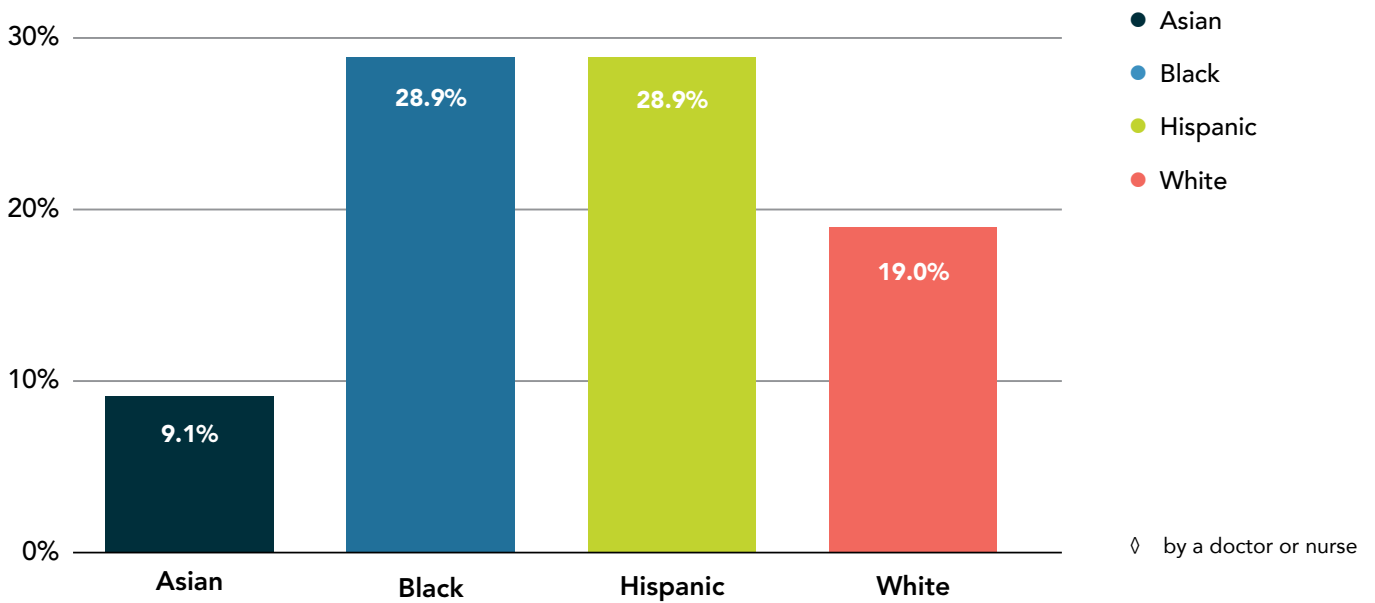


FIG. 28 Percentage of students who have ever been told they have asthma,[◇] by race/ethnicity



9.6%

of students reported having a concussion from playing a sport or being physically active.

83.7%

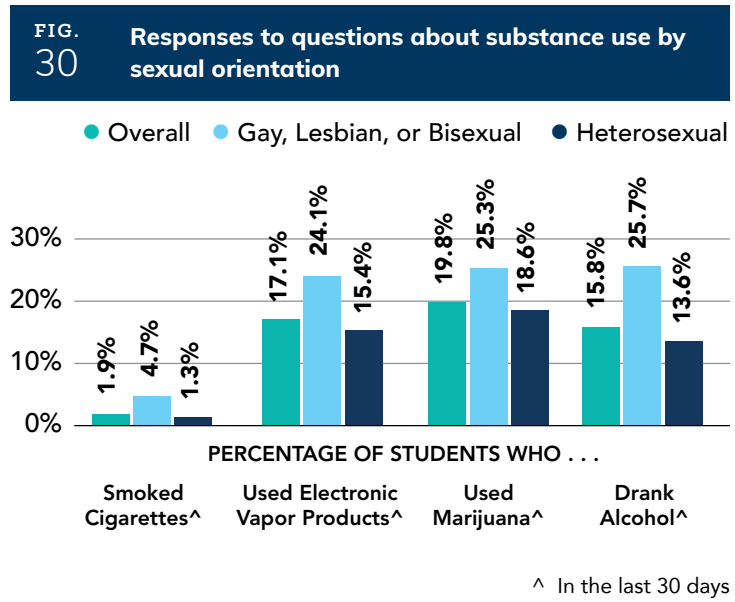
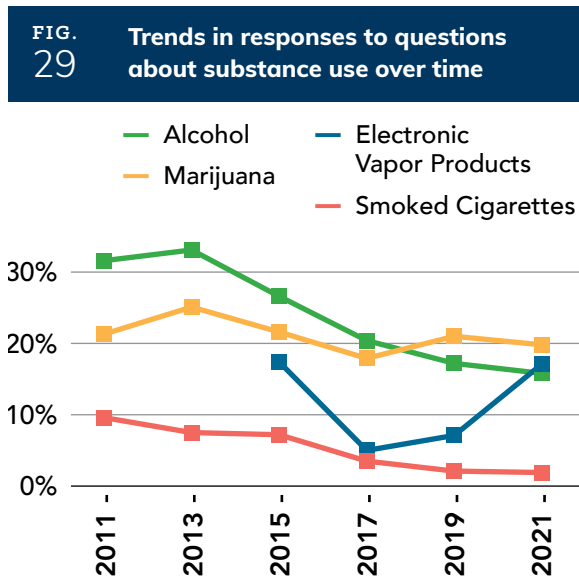
of students reported getting less than 8 hours of sleep on an average school night.

STUDENT POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED

- Female students reported that their physical health was 'not good' at higher rates than male students (37.7% and 28.8%, respectively), and participated in physical activity at lower rates than male students (71.8% and 79.8%, respectively).
- Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students reported that their physical health was 'not good' at higher rates than heterosexual students (45.3% and 28.5%, respectively), and participated in physical activity at lower rates than heterosexual students (68.3% and 78.8%, respectively).
- White students (46.1%) reported that their physical health was 'not good' at higher rates than their Asian (31.4%), Black (30.3%), and Hispanic (35.4%) peers.
- Black and Hispanic students reported having asthma at higher rates than their White and Asian peers (Figure 28).

SUBSTANCE USE

The YRBS asks students about their experiences with substance use. Cigarette and alcohol use have decreased over the last decade. Use of electronic vapor products more than doubled from 2011 to 2021 (Figure 29). The percentage of Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual students who used substances is greater than the percentage of heterosexual students (Figure 30).



A small percentage of students reported smoking cigarettes (0.1%) or using electronic vapor products (2.6%) 20 or more days in the past 30 days.

4.2% of students reported binge drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.

12% of students reported ever taking prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it.

19.6% of students reported being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property.

RESOURCES

As part of the School District's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the **Student Assistance Program (SAP)** helps to identify substance abuse issues and connect students to appropriate treatment. To receive a Substance Abuse Assessment please contact your school counselor. For more information: www.philasd.org/prevention/programs-and-services/

The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) offers online substance use resources aimed specifically at adolescents and young adults. For more information: www.adolescenthealth.org/Resources/Clinical-Care-Resources/Substance-Use/Substance-Use-Resources-For-Adolesc.aspx

For more resources, please visit SDP's Promoting Adolescent Student Health (PASH) website:
www.philasd.org/studenthealth/#pash

Additional support and programming for health and wellness is provided by the following SDP offices, which collaborate using the CDC's "Whole Child, Whole Community, Whole School" model^{9,10}
www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/index.htm



For contact information for each of these offices, please visit www.philasd.org/office-directory

⁹ Centers for Disease Control & ASCD. (2014). Whole school, whole community, whole child: A collaborative approach to learning and health. Available: www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/WSCCmodel_Update_508tagged.pdf

¹⁰ Hunt, H. (Ed). (2015). Special Issue: The whole school, whole community, whole child model. Journal of School Health 85(11): 729-823. Available: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17461561/2015/85/11

PASH

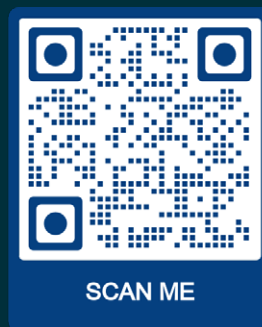
Promoting Adolescent
Student Health

In collaboration with the
Office of Research and Evaluation and
Office of Student Health Services

Special Thanks

We would like to thank the SDP high school students who took the time to complete the surveys so that we can better understand how to support our students. We also thank the principals, teachers, and other school personnel who helped in the administration of the survey.

For a complete list of resources included in this booklet, scan code



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA