

# Highlights from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

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

2014

DC`UfX`A JXX`Y`GW cc`  
BYYX\ Ua

GRADES 7-8



**METROWEST  
HEALTH  
FOUNDATION**

Funded by:  
MetroWest Health Foundation

**EDC** Learning  
transforms  
lives.

Submitted by:  
Education Development Center, Inc.  
Health & Human Development Division

Spring 2015



# Highlights from the 2014 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

## Pollard Middle School, Needham

### Background and Methodology

---

The 2014 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWAHS) marks a decade-long, ground-breaking initiative to support data-driven improvements in adolescent health in the 25 communities served by the MetroWest Health Foundation. Since 2006, the MWAHS has been administered every other year to middle and high schools in the region to monitor trends in risk behaviors and identify emerging health issues at the local and regional levels. The Pollard Middle School in Needham has participated in the MWAHS since 2006.

The 2014 middle school survey was administered to a census of students in grades 7 and 8 in all 24 school districts containing middle schools in the region served by the MetroWest Health Foundation. 17 school districts also chose to survey 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. In total, 16,171 middle school students in grades 6 through 8 in the region participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. In Needham, 804 students in grades 7 and 8 participated in the 2014 MWAHS, representing 93% of students.

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.

Findings from the MWAHS are used by schools and communities to improve health education, inform prevention efforts, and set priorities for achieving a healthier youth population. Highlights from your district's data in the areas of substance use, violence, bullying, unintentional injury, mental health, physical activity, and protective factors are provided.

## Key Findings: Substance Use

### Cigarette Smoking

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **3% of students have smoked a cigarette in their lifetime, and less than 1% smoked recently (in the past 30 days).**
- » Cigarette smoking is similarly low among both females and males.
  - » Reports of smoking do not differ in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - » 6% of middle school youth have tried an electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) in their lifetime, and 3% have used one in the past 30 days. More males than females have smoked e-cigarettes. (E-cigarettes are products that create a mist or vapor that you breathe in like smoke.)
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Youth smoking has declined substantially: Reports of lifetime smoking decreased from 7% in 2006 to 3% in 2014.**
- » During the same time period, recent smoking decreased from 3% to less than 1%.
  - » Cigarette smoking decreased among both males and females.
  - » In the MetroWest region, reports of cigarette smoking among middle school youth have declined substantially 2006.
  - » E-cigarettes were first included on the survey in 2014, so trend data is not available.

### Alcohol Use and Drinking and Driving

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **8% of students drank alcohol in their lifetime, and 2% drank in the past 30 days.**
- » Less than 1% of students report recent binge drinking (defined as consuming 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasions in the past 30 days).
  - » More males than females initiate alcohol use during the middle school years (11% vs. 6%).
  - » Lifetime alcohol use increases substantially by grade, from 6% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 10% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Current drinking is steady at 2% in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - » 15% of students report being a passenger in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. Reports are similar among both genders and increase by grade.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer middle school youth are drinking: From 2006 to 2012, lifetime alcohol use decreased from 20% to 14%, and further decreased to 8% in 2014.**
- » Current alcohol use decreased from 8% in 2006 to 2% 2014.
  - » Binge drinking is also lower in 2014 (less than 1%) compared with 2006 (2%).
  - » Drinking declined among both males and females. For example, lifetime drinking decreased from 17% in 2006 to 6% in 2014 among females, and from 22% to 11% among males.
  - » Drinking among middle school youth also declined substantially in the MetroWest region from 2006 to 2014.

## Marijuana Use

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **2% of youth have used marijuana in their lifetime, and 1% of youth used marijuana in the past 30 days.**
- » Marijuana use is low among both females and males, and does not increase substantially from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **There may be a small decline in marijuana use in recent surveys. For example, lifetime marijuana use was steady at 3-4% from 2006 to 2012 and is slightly lower in 2014 at 2%.**
- » Current marijuana use was steady at 2-3% from 2006 to 2012; in 2014, 1% report current use.
- » Marijuana use in the MetroWest region also decreased slightly from 2006 to 2014.

## Inhalant Use

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **1% of youth have used inhalants in their lifetime (defined as sniffing glue, breathing the contents of spray cans, or inhaling any paints or sprays to get high).**
- » Inhalant use does not differ notably by gender or grade.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Use of inhalants has steadily decreased from 13% in 2006 to 1% in 2014.**
- » Reports of inhalant use are lower among both females and males.
- » There has also been a substantial decrease in inhalant use in the region since 2006.

## Key Findings: Violence

### Physical Fighting

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **32% of youth have been in a physical fight in their lifetime, and 7% have been in a fight on school property.**
- » Many more males than females report fighting (47% compared with 16%) and fighting on school property (11% compared with 3%).
- » The proportion of youth who have engaged in physical fighting in their lifetime increases from 28% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 35% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer youth are involved in fighting: Reports of lifetime physical fighting have decreased from 45% in 2006 to 32% in 2014.**
- » Lifetime reports of fighting on school property decreased from 20% to 7% during this time.
- » There were notable decreases in fighting among both males and females.
- » In the MetroWest region, physical fighting among middle school youth also decreased steadily since 2006.

### Weapon Carrying

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **10% of youth have carried a weapon in their lifetime, and 1% have carried a weapon on school property.**
- » Consistent with gender patterns for fighting, many more males (15%) than females (4%) report carrying weapons.
- » Lifetime reports of carrying weapons are similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of weapon carrying are slightly lower in 2014 (10%) compared with 2006 (13%).**
- » Reports of weapon carrying on school property also declined, from 3% in 2006 to 1% in 2014.
- » In the MetroWest region, weapon carrying has decreased slightly over the five surveys.

## Key Findings: Bullying and Cyberbullying

### Bullying

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **19% of middle school youth have been bullied in the past 12 months, and 12% have been bullied on school property. 4% of students report bullying other students.**
- » More females than males are victims of bullying (21% compared with 17%) and bullying on school property (14% compared with 11%).
  - » Reports of bullying are similar during the middle school years.
  - » Many bullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among students who were bullied at school in the past 12 months, 37% talked to a school adult about being bullied, and 56% talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
  - » 23% of youth intervened as bystanders by trying to stop a student from bullying someone else at school in the past 12 months. 11% told an adult at school that someone was being bullied.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer students are being bullied at school: Reports of victimization on school property decreased steadily from 41% in 2006 to 12% in 2014.**
- » Reports of overall bullying victimization in the past 12 months also decreased substantially, from 46% in 2006 to 19% in 2014.
  - » There were considerable declines in bullying among both males (from 50% in 2006 to 17% in 2014) and females (from 42% to 21%).
  - » Reports of bullying victimization decreased in the MetroWest region from 2008 to 2014.

### Cyberbullying

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **14% of youth report being victims of cyberbullying in the past 12 months, and 6% report cyberbullying someone else.**
- » Females are far more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than males (19% vs. 10%).
  - » Cyberbullying is similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - » The majority of cyberbullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among students who were cyberbullied in the past 12 months, only 13% talked to an adult at school and 32% talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
  - » 11% of youth have tried to stop a student from cyberbullying someone else in the past 12 months. 3% told an adult at school that someone was being cyberbullied, and 6% told a parent or other adult outside of school.
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of cyberbullying decreased from 17% in 2006 to 12% in 2010, but have been slightly higher in 2012 and 2014 at 14-15%.**
- » From 2010 to 2014, cyberbullying increased among females (from 13% to 19%), whereas it was steady among males at 9-10%.
  - » In the MetroWest region, cyberbullying victimization has increased slightly in recent surveys.

## Key Findings: Mental Health

### Stress

- 2014** » **9% of students report that their life was very stressful in the past 30 days.**
- Patterns** » Females are more likely to report stress than males (11% compared with 6%).
- (Grades 7-8)** » Reports of stress increase substantially by grade, from 5% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 12% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2006-2014** » **Overall reports of stress among middle school youth decreased slightly from 12% in 2006 to 9% in 2014.**
- Trends** » From 2006 to 2014, reports of stress decreased from 17% to 11% among females, and from 8% to 6% among males.
- (Grades 7-8)** » In the MetroWest region, reports of stress have been similar since 2006.

### Depressive Symptoms, Self-Injury, and Suicidality

- 2014** » **9% of students report depressive symptoms in the past 12 months (defined as feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row).**
- Patterns** » 5% of youth report self-injury (defined as cutting, burning, or bruising oneself on purpose) in the past 12 months.
- (Grades 7-8)** » 8% of youth report that they had seriously considered suicide in their lifetime, and 2% had made a suicide attempt.
- » Females are more likely than males to report mental health problems.
- » Reports of depressive symptoms increase from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Reports of self-injury are similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- 2006-2014** » **Overall, reports of mental health problems among middle school youth have remained similar since 2006.**
- Trends** » Reports of self-injury has been steady at 4-5% since 2006, and reports of seriously considering suicide have been steady at 8%.
- (Grades 7-8)** » Reports of depressive symptoms have been steady at 9% since 2008 and were slightly higher in 2006 at 13%.
- » These overall trends in mental health are also found for both females and males.
- » There have been small increases in mental health problems among middle school females in the MetroWest region.

# Key Findings: Physical Activity, Sleep and Overweight/Obesity

## Physical Activity and Sleep

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **89% of youth report engaging in vigorous physical activity for 20 minutes or longer on at least 3 days per week, and 66% of youth get 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.**
- » Males are more likely than females to report this level of physical activity (92% compared with 86%). They are also more likely to get the recommended amount of sleep (71% vs. 62%).
  - » Reports of physical activity are similar by grade. Reports of getting 8 or more hours of sleep decrease as students get older (from 77% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 58% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade).
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **The proportion of youth who exercised vigorously on at least 3 days per week was steady at 81-83% from 2006 to 2012 and increased to 89% in 2014.**
- » Physical activity levels in the MetroWest region have been similar since 2006.
  - » No trend data is available regarding sleep as it was first included in the survey in 2014.

## Overweight/Obesity

- 2014 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **13% of youth are overweight or obese (based on self-reported height and weight, which is used to calculate body mass index).**
- » Males are more likely than females to be overweight or obese (15% compared with 10%).
  - » Overweight/obesity is slightly higher in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (15%) compared with 7<sup>th</sup> grade (11%).
- 2006-2014 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Overweight/obesity has ranged from 13-17% since 2006; in 2014, 13% of middle school youth were overweight/obese.**
- » In the MetroWest region, overweight/obesity has not changed notably over the five surveys.

## Key Findings: Protective Factors

### School Attachment and Engagement

- 2014 Patterns**  
(Grades 7-8) » **About three-quarters of 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” (78%), “I am happy to be at this school” (73%), and “I feel safe in my school” (89%).
- » Reports of school attachment are similar among males and females.
- 2006-2014 Trends**  
(Grades 7-8) » **Reports of school attachment have not changed substantially since 2006.**
- » School attachment has also been similar in the MetroWest region in the last decade.

### Adult Support

- 2014 Patterns**  
(Grades 7-8) » **71% of youth have at least one teacher or other adult at school to talk to if they have a problem, and 96% of youth have a parent or other adult outside of school to talk to about things that are important to them.**
- » Adult support both at school and outside of school are similar by gender and grade.
- 2006-2014 Trends**  
(Grades 7-8) » **Reports of adult support at school are higher in 2014 (71%) compared with 2006 (63%).**
- » Adult support outside of school is also higher in 2014 (96%) than in prior years (88-92%).
- » In the MetroWest region, adult support at school increased slightly since 2006, but has been similar in recent surveys.

## Conclusions

---

Over the last decade, the MWAHS has provided insight into adolescent health trends, driving key decisions on health-related practices in local communities and across the region. With each survey wave, the data paints a more resounding picture of advances to address risk behaviors. It also continues to identify emerging risks that demand greater attention. The 2014 data show that Needham is making important advances in some behavioral health areas, such as tobacco use, alcohol use, physical fighting, and school bullying. While these demand continued attention, the data also highlight other areas of concern, including cyberbullying and mental health. Continued use of the MWAHS data to drive decisions around programs, policies, and practices will ensure that the greatest adolescent health challenges continue to be targeted in communities across the region.



## Pollard Middle School, Needham (Grades 7-8)

### 2006-2014 Trends in Key Indicators\*

	Year of Survey (%)				
	2006 (654)	2008 (653)	2010 (772)	2012 (787)	2014 (804)
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>					
Lifetime cigarette smoking	6.9	6.6	5.7	5.5	2.9
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	3.4	2.0	2.0	1.6	0.4
Lifetime alcohol use	19.7	19.8	14.8	13.6	8.3
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	8.1	6.3	6.4	6.2	1.9
Binge drinking (past 30 days) <sup>†</sup>	2.3	2.0	2.0	0.9	0.4
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	14.9	15.8	15.5	12.5	15.3
Lifetime marijuana use	3.5	3.3	4.3	3.5	1.6
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	2.6	2.0	3.0	1.9	0.8
Lifetime inhalant use	13.4	6.8	7.1	3.3	1.1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>					
Physical fighting (lifetime)	45.4	42.3	36.9	39.3	31.7
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	20.3	14.9	12.3	9.5	7.1
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	12.6	10.9	8.8	10.8	9.8
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	2.8	2.5	1.2	1.3	0.7
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>					
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	46.1	46.4	30.4	22.2	19.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	41.0	41.6	24.1	16.5	12.5
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	17.3	14.9	11.5	14.6	14.1
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>					
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	12.4	10.2	10.6	10.2	8.5
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	12.8	9.4	8.5	8.6	9.2
Self-injury (past 12 months)	4.5	5.6	4.4	4.9	4.9
Considered suicide (lifetime)	8.0	7.6	8.1	8.1	7.9
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	2.5	1.7	1.7	1.3	1.5
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>					
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	81.3	83.3	81.7	83.7	89.1
Overweight or obese <sup>‡</sup>	16.3	12.8	14.8	16.8	13.0

\* Source: MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

† Consumed 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasions

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

## Pollard Middle School, Needham (Grades 7-8) 2014 Gender Patterns for Key Indicators\*

	Gender (%)		Total (%)
	Female (400)	Male (403)	(804)
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	2.3	3.5	2.9
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.0	0.8	0.4
Lifetime alcohol use	5.8	10.8	8.3
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	0.8	3.0	1.9
Binge drinking (past 30 days) <sup>†</sup>	0.3	0.5	0.4
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	14.6	16.0	15.3
Lifetime marijuana use	0.8	2.5	1.6
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.3	1.3	0.8
Lifetime inhalant use	1.5	0.8	1.1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	15.7	47.4	31.7
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	2.8	11.5	7.1
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	4.3	15.3	9.8
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.0	1.5	0.7
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	21.3	17.3	19.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	14.2	10.8	12.5
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	18.5	9.7	14.1
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	10.8	6.3	8.5
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	11.6	6.8	9.2
Self-injury (past 12 months)	6.5	3.3	4.9
Considered suicide (lifetime)	9.9	5.8	7.9
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.8	1.3	1.5
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	86.5	91.7	89.1
Overweight or obese <sup>‡</sup>	10.4	15.4	13.0

\* Source: MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

† Consumed 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasions

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

## Pollard Middle School, Needham (Grades 7-8)

### 2014 Grade Patterns for Key Indicators\*

	Grade (%)		Total (%)
	7 <sup>th</sup> (373)	8 <sup>th</sup> (431)	
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	2.7	3.0	2.9
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.5	0.2	0.4
Lifetime alcohol use	6.2	10.1	8.3
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.9	1.9	1.9
Binge drinking (past 30 days) <sup>†</sup>	0.3	0.5	0.4
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	10.9	19.2	15.3
Lifetime marijuana use	1.3	1.9	1.6
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.5	0.9	0.8
Lifetime inhalant use	1.1	1.2	1.1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	28.1	34.8	31.7
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	7.8	6.5	7.1
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	9.2	10.3	9.8
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.0	1.4	0.7
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	19.2	19.2	19.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	13.0	12.0	12.5
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	13.7	14.4	14.1
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	4.8	11.8	8.5
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	6.2	11.8	9.2
Self-injury (past 12 months)	4.8	5.0	4.9
Considered suicide (lifetime)	6.5	9.0	7.9
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.6	1.4	1.5
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	90.4	88.0	89.1
Overweight or obese <sup>‡</sup>	11.1	14.5	13.0

\* Source: MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

† Consumed 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasions

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

This report was prepared by the Health and Human Development Division at  
Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in Waltham, MA.

For technical assistance in interpreting and utilizing the MWAHS data, please contact:  
Shari Kessel Schneider, MSPH, MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Project Director  
617-969-7100 or [MetroWestSurvey@edc.org](mailto:MetroWestSurvey@edc.org)

For information about EDC, visit our website at [www.edc.org](http://www.edc.org).