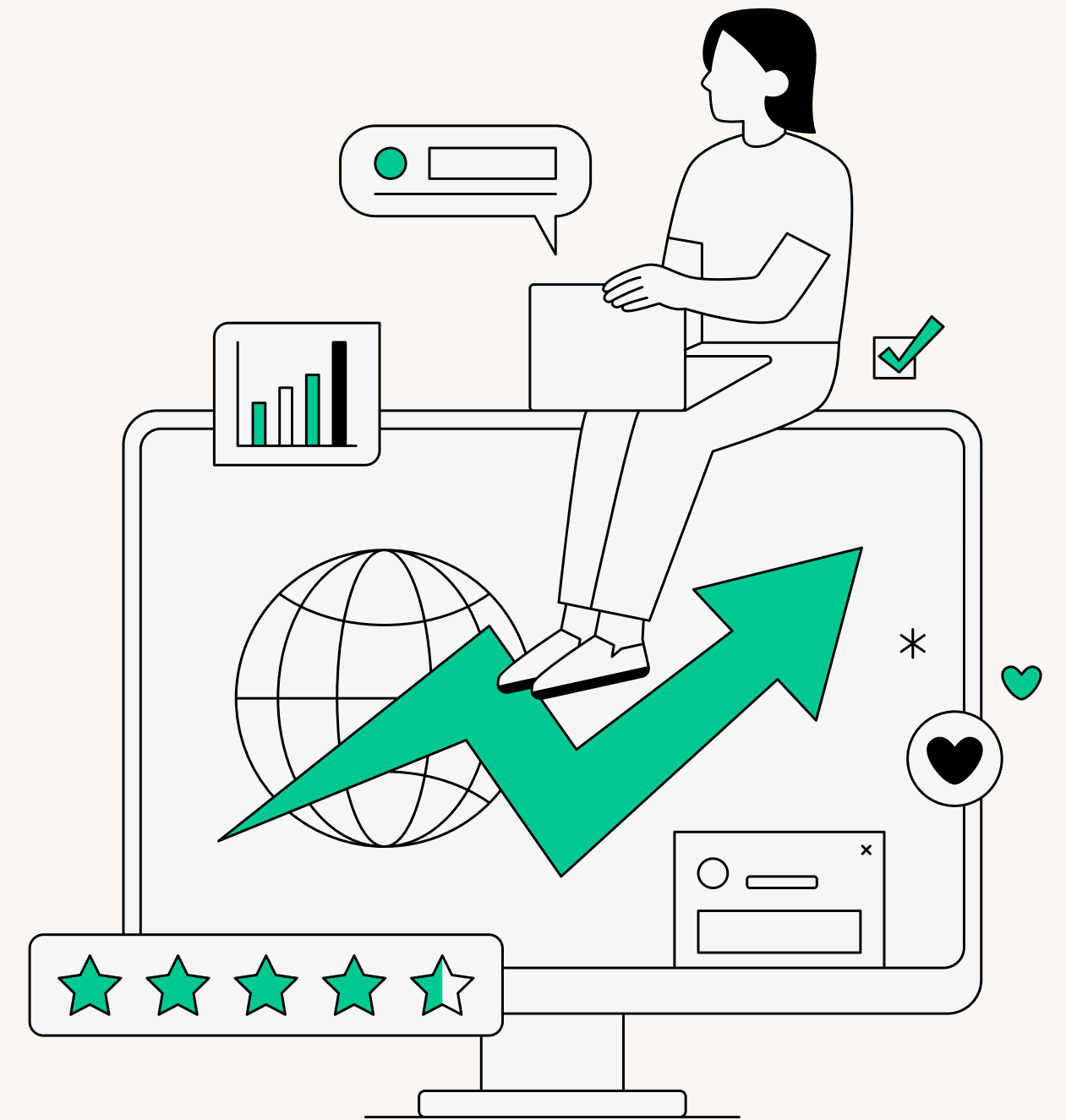


# 2025 Somerville Public Schools Youth Health Survey

Presentation by Tina Los, MPH

Director of Prevention Services  
City of Somerville



# Risk vs. Protective Factors

## Risk Factors

A characteristic, experience, or environmental condition that increases the likelihood of a young person developing negative health outcomes, such as behavioral, emotional, or social problems.

## Protective Factors

A characteristic, experience, or behavior that promotes the positive health outcomes and helps to lessen the impact of risk factors. It can be considered a “buffer” or “shield” that promotes resilience and positive development, even in the presence of adversity.



# Sample

1041 high school youth (72%)

803 middle school youth (81%)

\*If a youth identified as “Hispanic or Latino/a” and another race, they were categorized as multi-racial.

\*\*Includes youth who identified as “Middle Eastern or North African,” “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,” or “Another race.”

\*\*\*Includes any youth who identified as more than one race and/or ethnicity.

	Middle School		High School	
Grade	#	%	#	%
6th / 9th	286	35%	313	30%
7th / 10th	265	32%	272	26%
8th / 11th	252	31%	251	24%
x / 12th	-	-	205	19%
Gender Identity				
Woman or girl	334	41%	415	39%
Man or boy	356	44%	457	43%
Transgender (TGD)	47	6%	71	7%
Did not understand/Chose not to respond	66	8%	97	9%
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	592	72%	747	71%
LGBQ+	124	15%	211	20%
Did not understand /Chose not to respond	87	11%	80	8%
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino/a*	219	27%	313	30%
Asian	39	5%	44	4%
Black	54	7%	77	7%
White	293	36%	331	31%
Another race**	48	6%	43	4%
Multi-racial***	150	18%	231	22%

# Risk Factors

01.

**Sexual Messaging**

03

**Mental Health**

02.

**Bullying**

04.

**Substance Use**

05

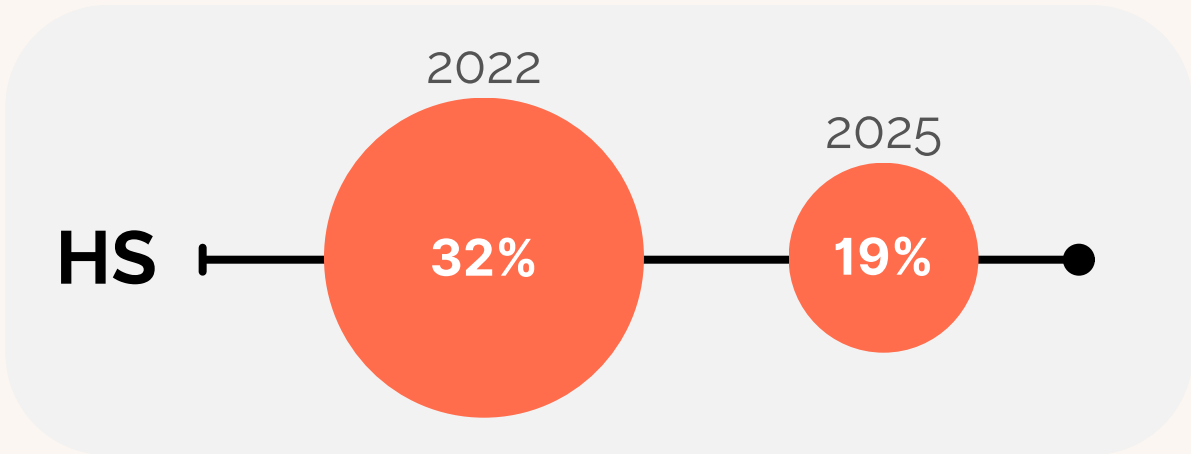
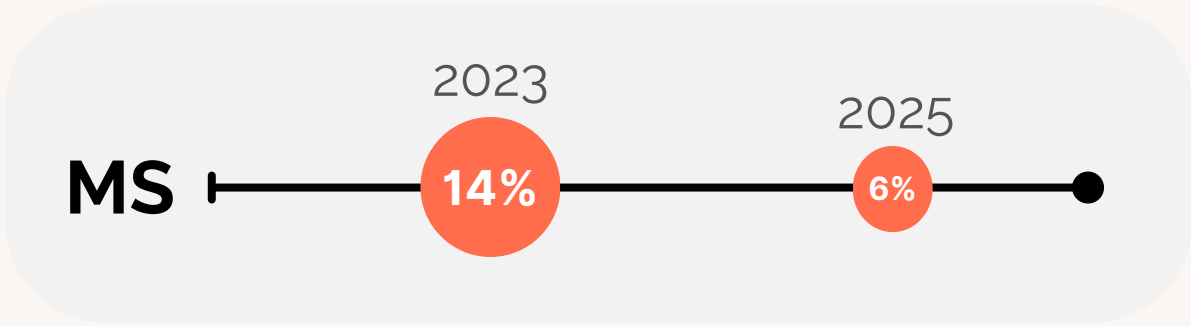
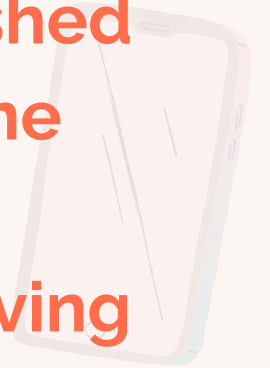
**Social Media**

# Risk Factor Sexual Messaging

Have you ever sent or received sexual messages or nude or semi-nude pictures or videos electronically?



Research in adolescent development and media studies has established a clear relationship between the increasing prevalence of smartphone access among youth and the rise of sexting behaviors.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the percentage of middle school and high school youth sending or receiving sexual messages or nude or semi-nude pictures or videos electronically has decreased since this question was first asked in 2023.



**Female** and **LGBQ+ HS** youth were significantly more likely than the average high school youth to ever send or receive sexual messages or nude or semi-nude pictures or videos electronically.

Category	Percentage
Overall	19
F	26
LGBQ+	31

# Bullying

The 2025 Somerville YHS defined bullying as repeated teasing, threats, rumors, hitting, shoving, or harm by one or more students. It does not include friendly teasing or conflicts between students of similar strength. Bullying can happen in person or electronically (cyberbullying). Cyberbullying is done using digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets via text messaging or in online spaces like social media.

During the past 12 months, how many times were you bullied on school property?

During the past 12 months, how many times were you bullied electronically?

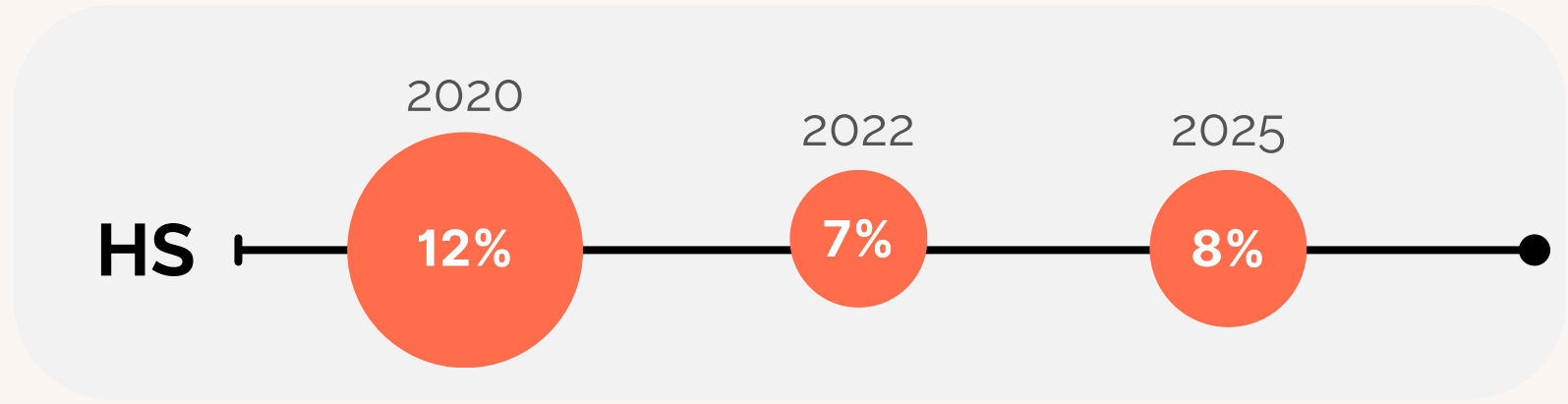
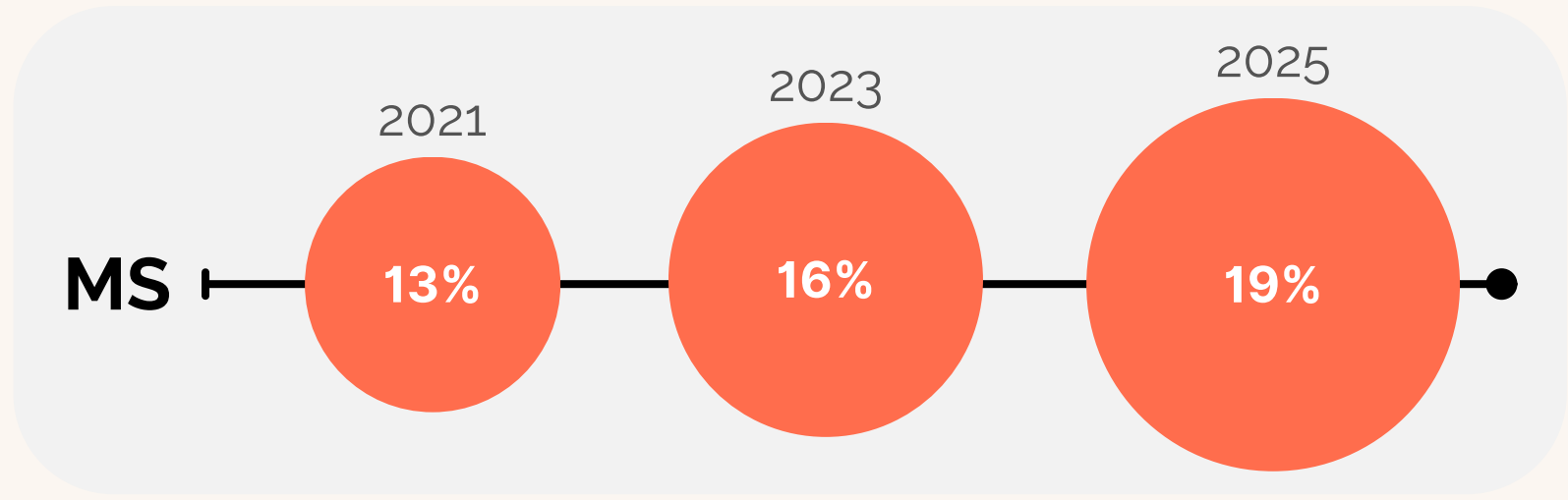


# Risk Factor Bullying on School Property

During the past 12 months, how many times were you bullied on school property?



Overall, 19% of MS youth and 8% of high school youth reported that they were bullied on school property in the past 12 months.



There were no *significant* differences for MS or HS youth, however, **Transgender (TGD)** and **LGBQ+** youth were the most likely to report experiencing bullying on school property in the past 12 months.

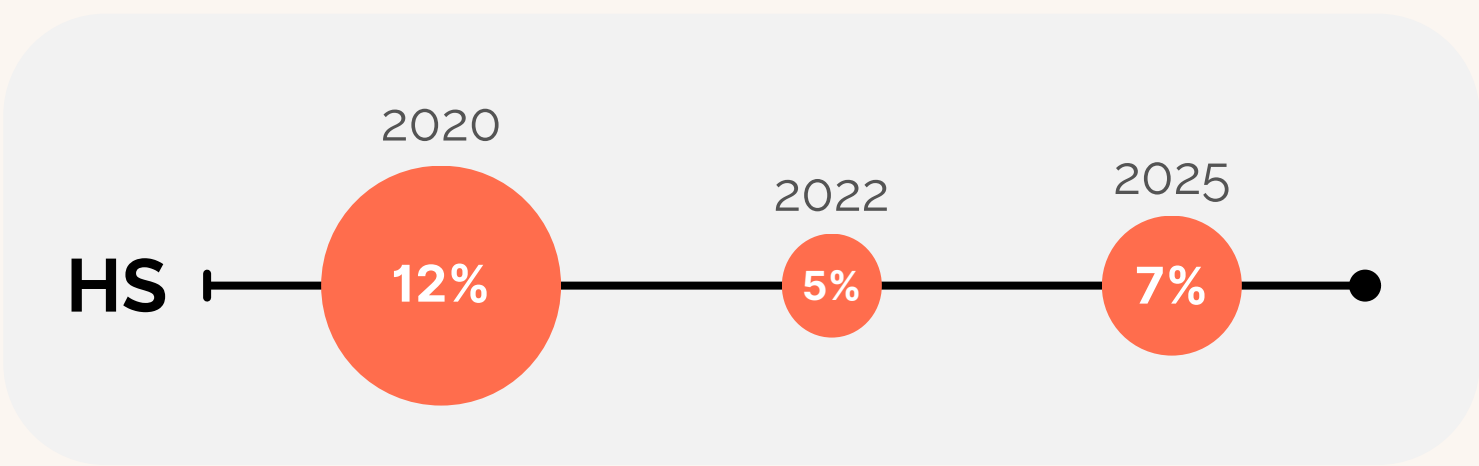
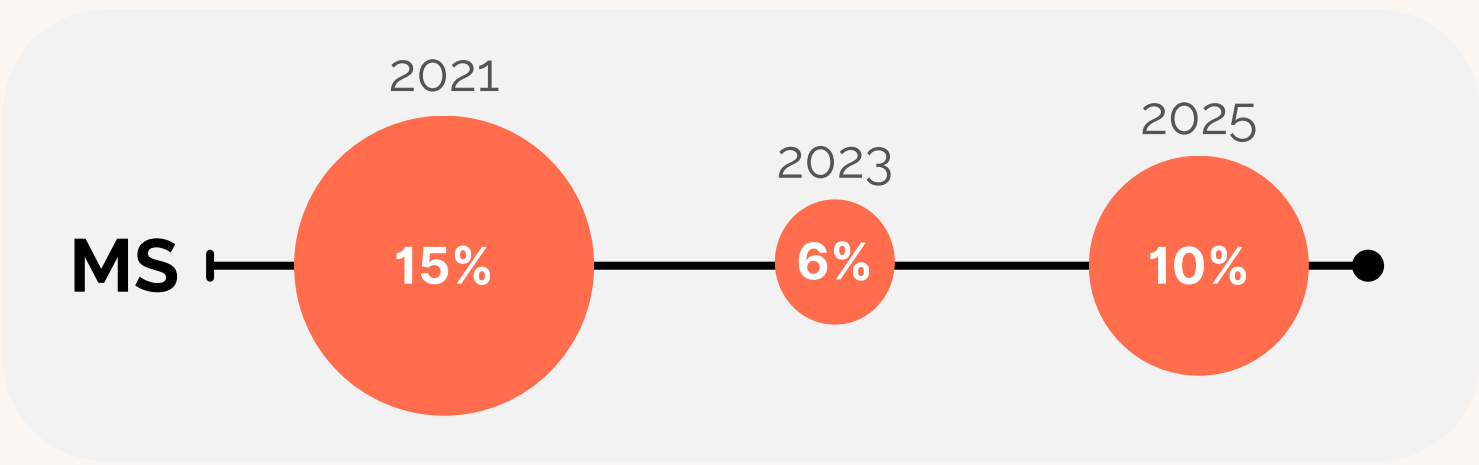
	TGD	LGBQ+
Middle School	27%	29%
High School	17%	14%

# Risk Factor Electronic Bullying



During the past 12 months, how many times were you bullied electronically?

Overall, 10% of middle school youth and 7% of high school youth were bullied electronically in the past 12 months.



There were no *significant* differences, however, **LGBQ+ MS** youth and **transgender HS** youth were the most likely to experience electronic bullying in the past 12 months.

Middle School	<b>LGBQ+ - 18%</b>
High School	<b>TGD - 17%</b>

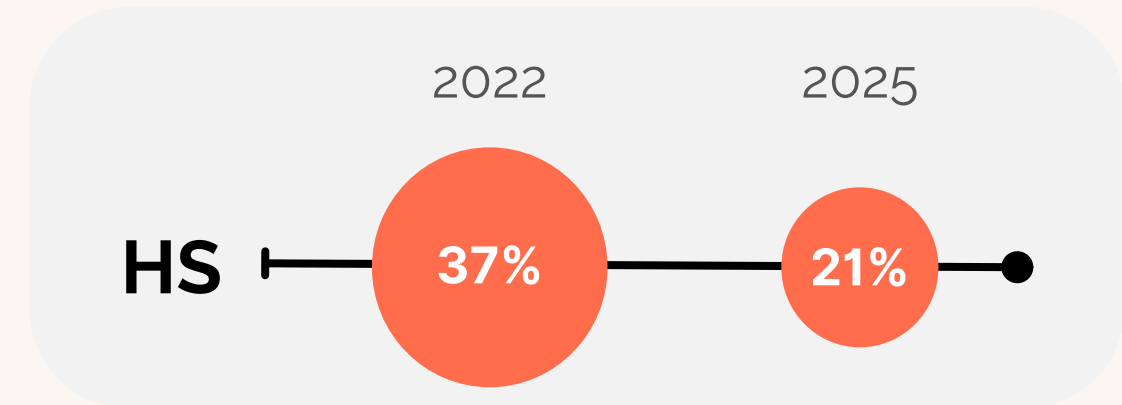
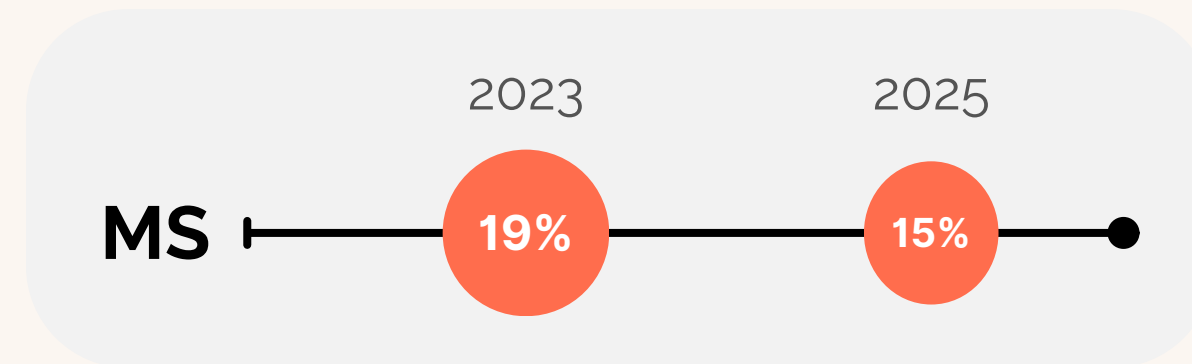
# Risk Factor Mental Health

The high prevalence of mental health challenges and risk for suicide among young people remains a national concern.<sup>1</sup> Youth were asked a series of questions about their mental health and the extent to which they perceive that they are receiving help in response to negative emotions.

During the past 30 days how often was your mental health not good?



Overall, 15% of middle school youth and 21% of high school youth reported that their mental health was not good in the past 30 days.



In the past two weeks how often did you have trouble concentrating on things?

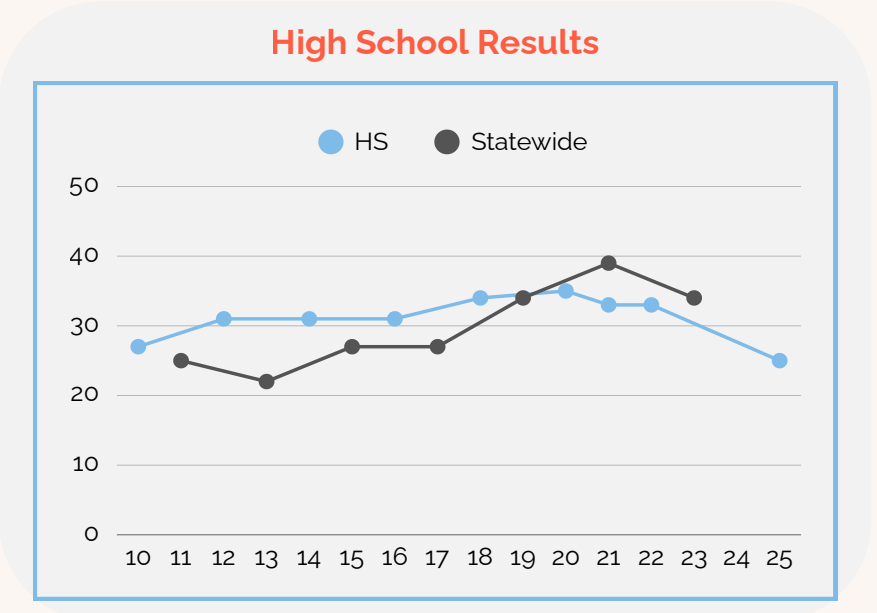
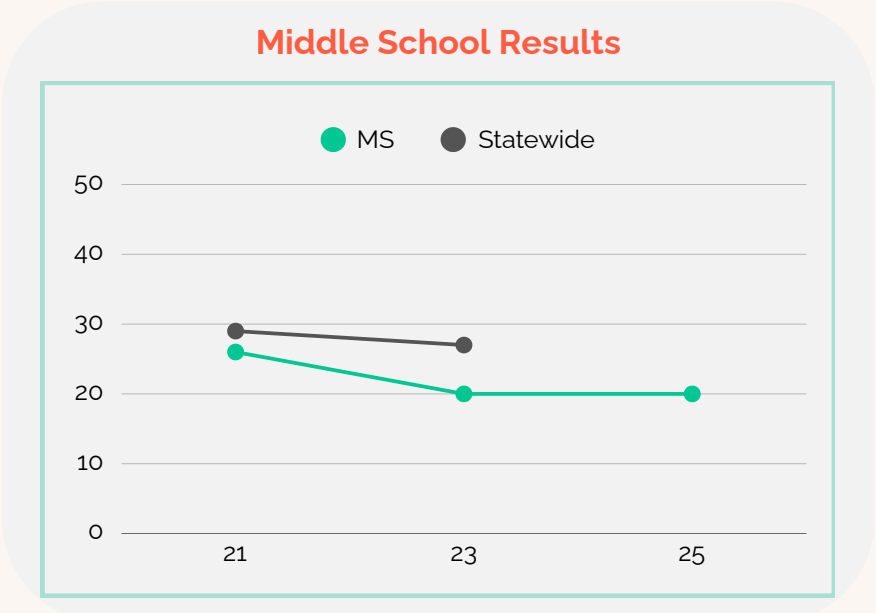


Overall, 15% of middle school youth and 27% of high school youth reported that they had trouble concentrating on things more than half or nearly every day in the past two weeks.



# Risk Factor Mental Health

From 2021 to now, seeing a decrease in reports of struggles with mental health among high school youth. Middle school youth show a slight increase in reports of depression and self-harm, and a slight decrease in attempted suicides.



Trend results of youth self reported depression from 2025 administration of the survey

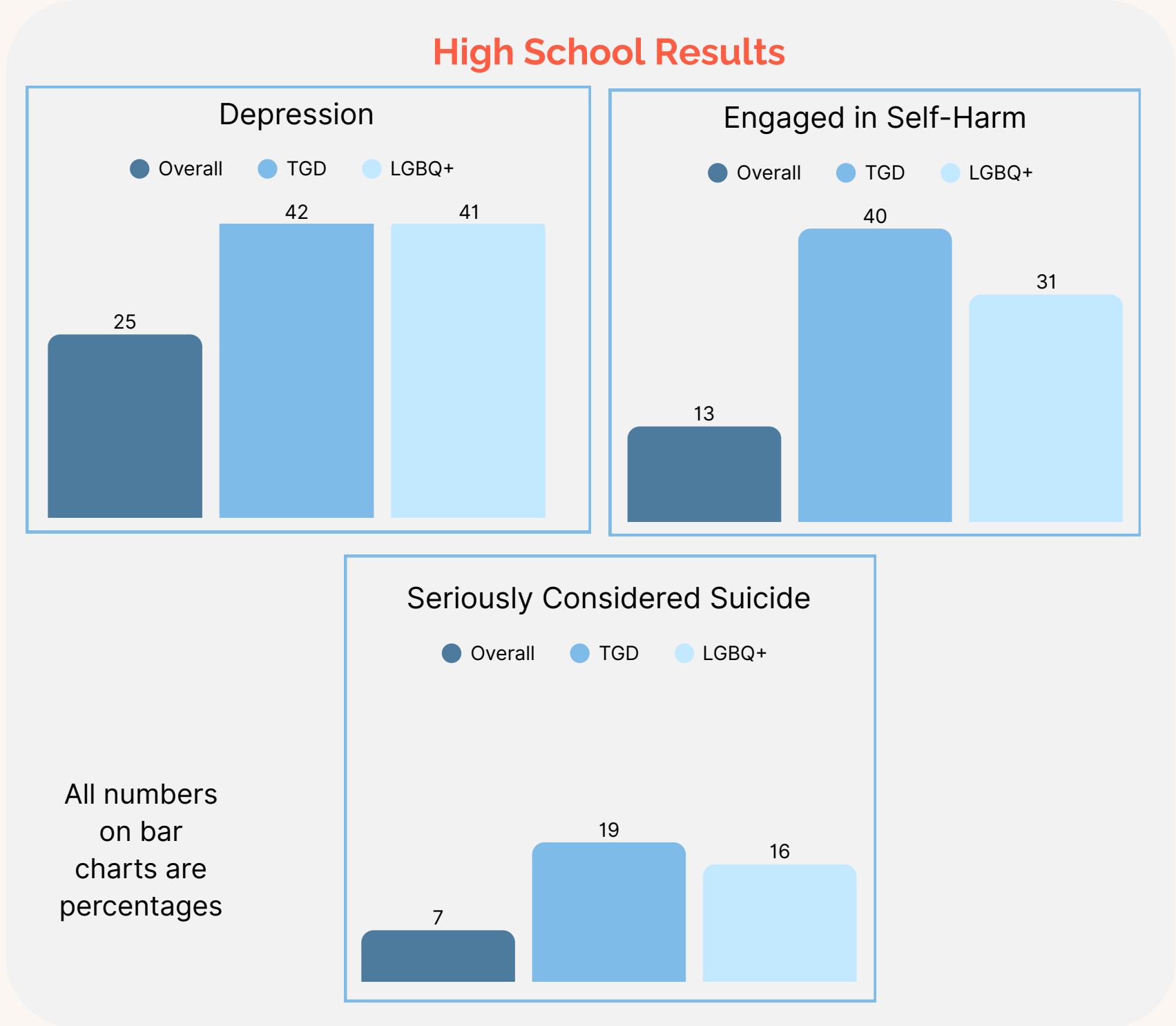
Question	MS	HS
<b>Depression:</b> Youth felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row they stopped doing some usual activities	20%	25%
<b>Self-harm:</b> Youth hurt or injured themselves on purpose in the past 12 months	21%	13%
<b>Attempted suicide:</b> Youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months	9%	7%



LGBTQ+ youth exhibit a heightened vulnerability to mental health conditions and suicidal ideation compared to their peers. Results in 2025 indicate that transgender and LGBQ+ youth are more likely than the average youth to report enduring feelings of sadness or hopelessness, engagement in self-harm, and contemplate suicide.

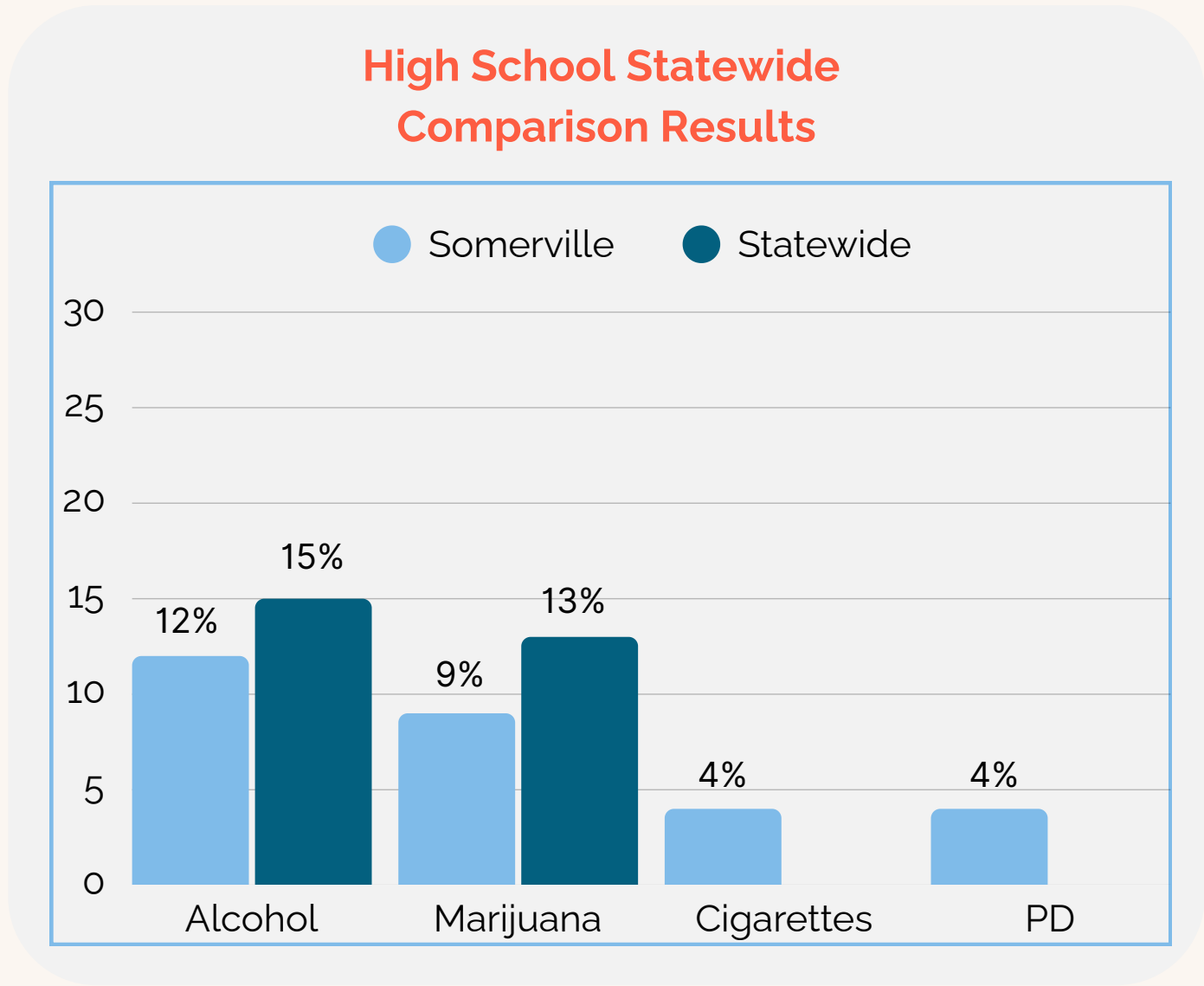
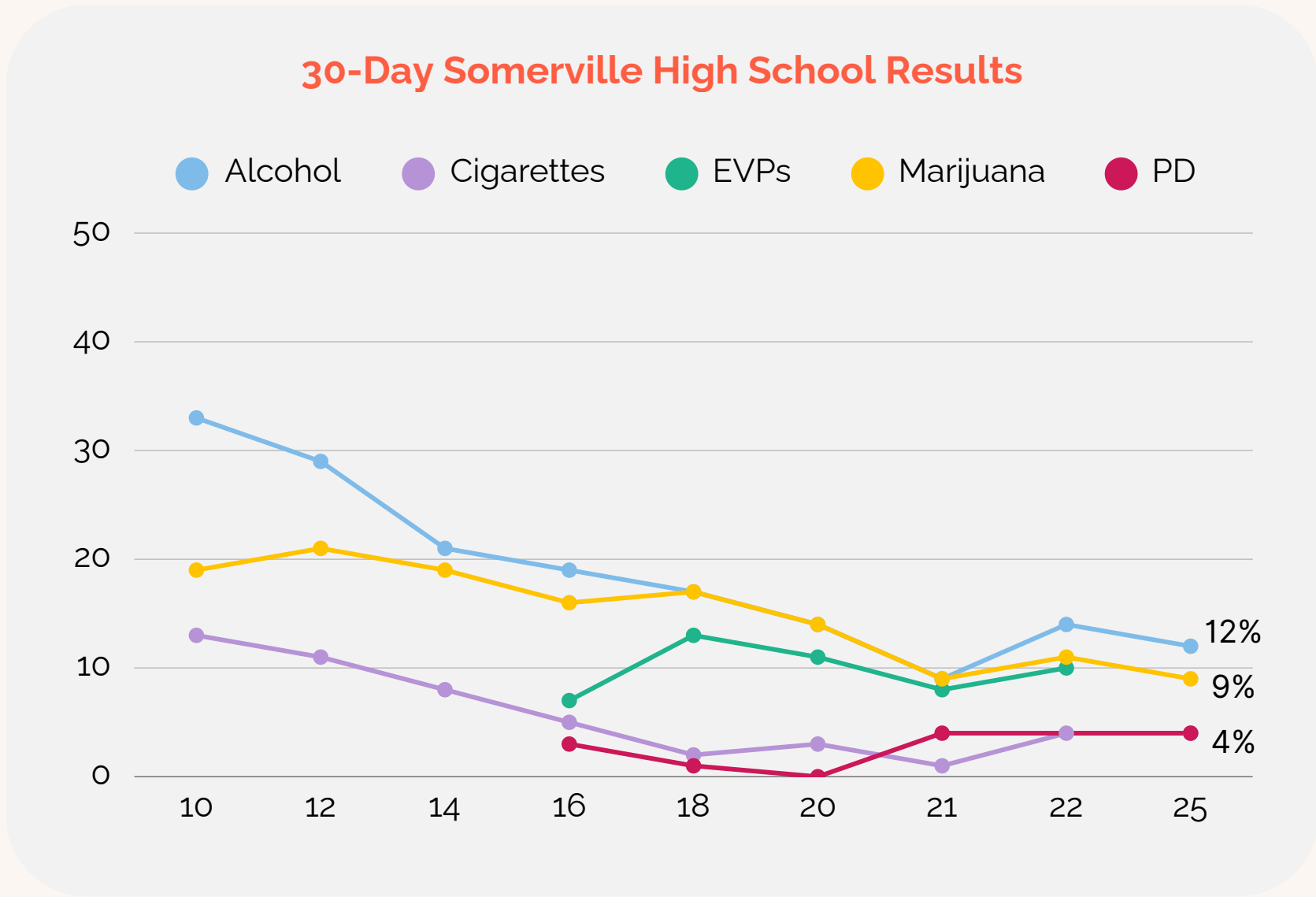
**LGBTQ+ youth are**

- **2 times more likely to report depression**
- **3 times more likely to report self-harm**
- **Almost 3 times more likely to report considering suicide**



# Substance Use

Major national surveys, such as the Monitoring the Future (MTF) study, confirm that substance use among adolescents has fallen to historic lows.<sup>1</sup> The use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs has steadily decreased over the past several decades.<sup>2</sup> Despite this positive trend, experts emphasize that vigilance is critical due to increased lethality of the drug supply, emergence of new substances, and the potential for a rebound in use.

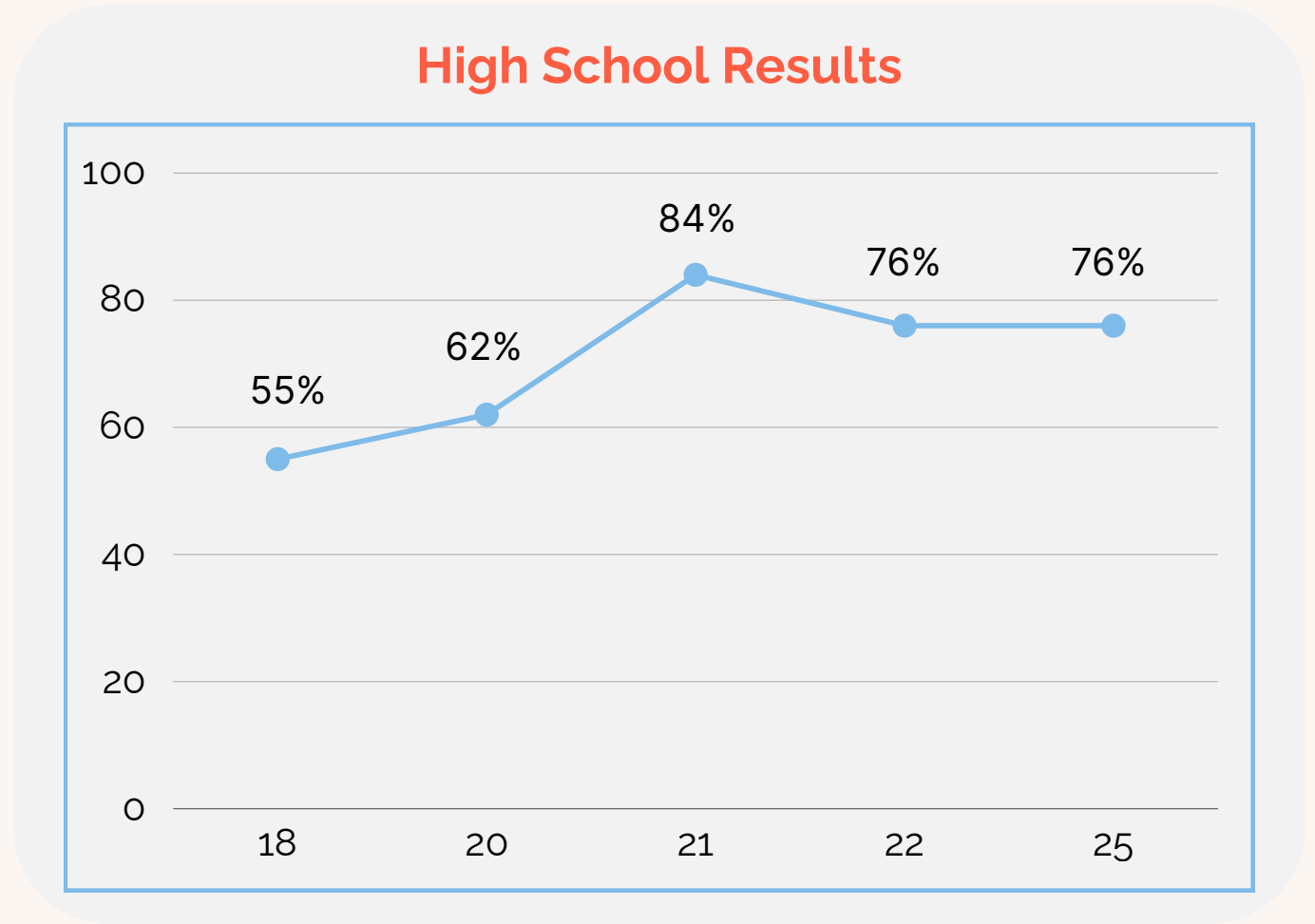
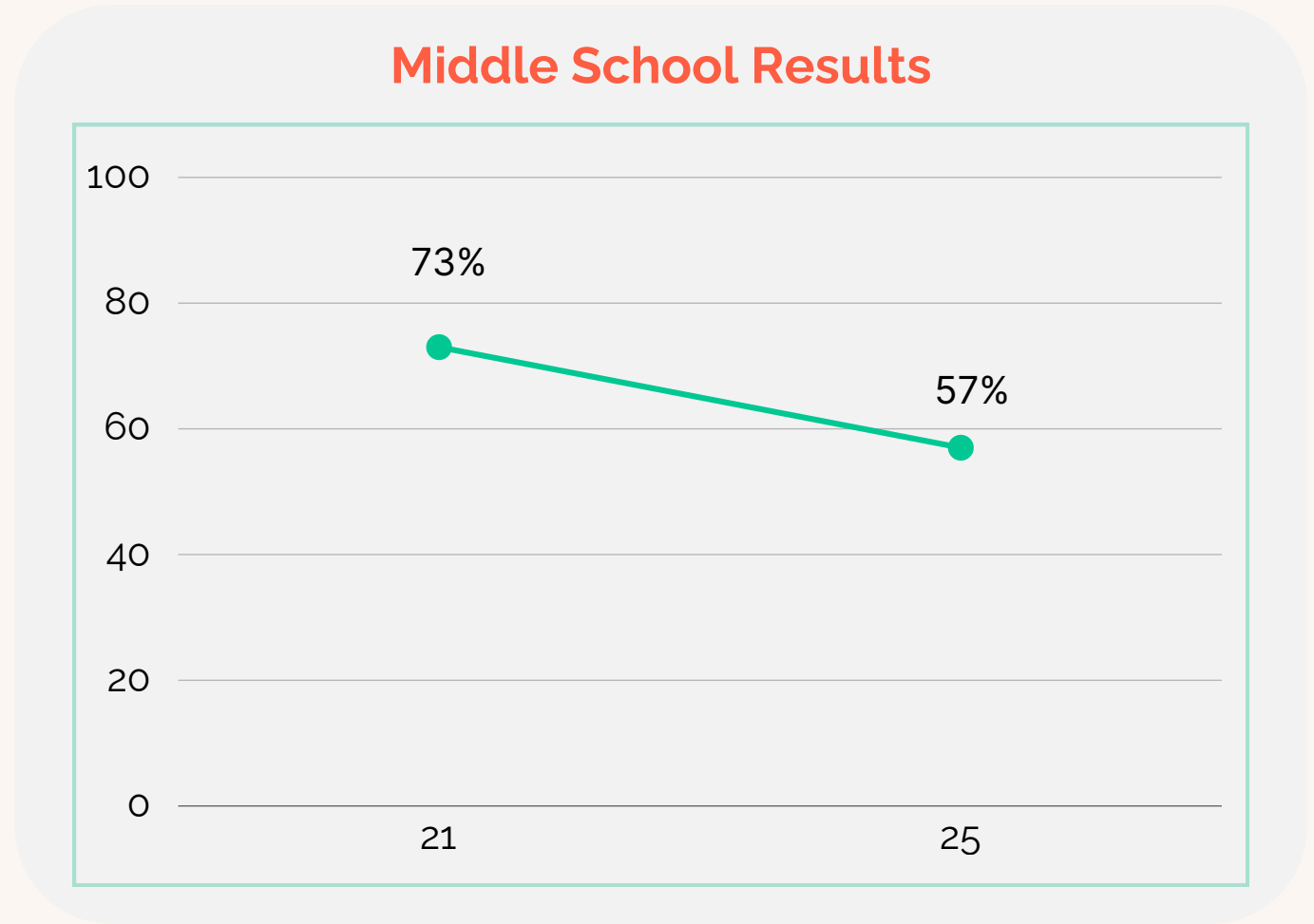


# Risk Factor

# Screen Time

On an average weekday, other than time spent doing schoolwork, how many hours do you spend in front of a screen?

Overall, **57%** of middle school youth and **76%** of high school youth had 3 or more hours of screen time for things other than schoolwork on an average weekday. Screen time for middle and high school youth reached its peak in 2021, likely related to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures and physical isolation.



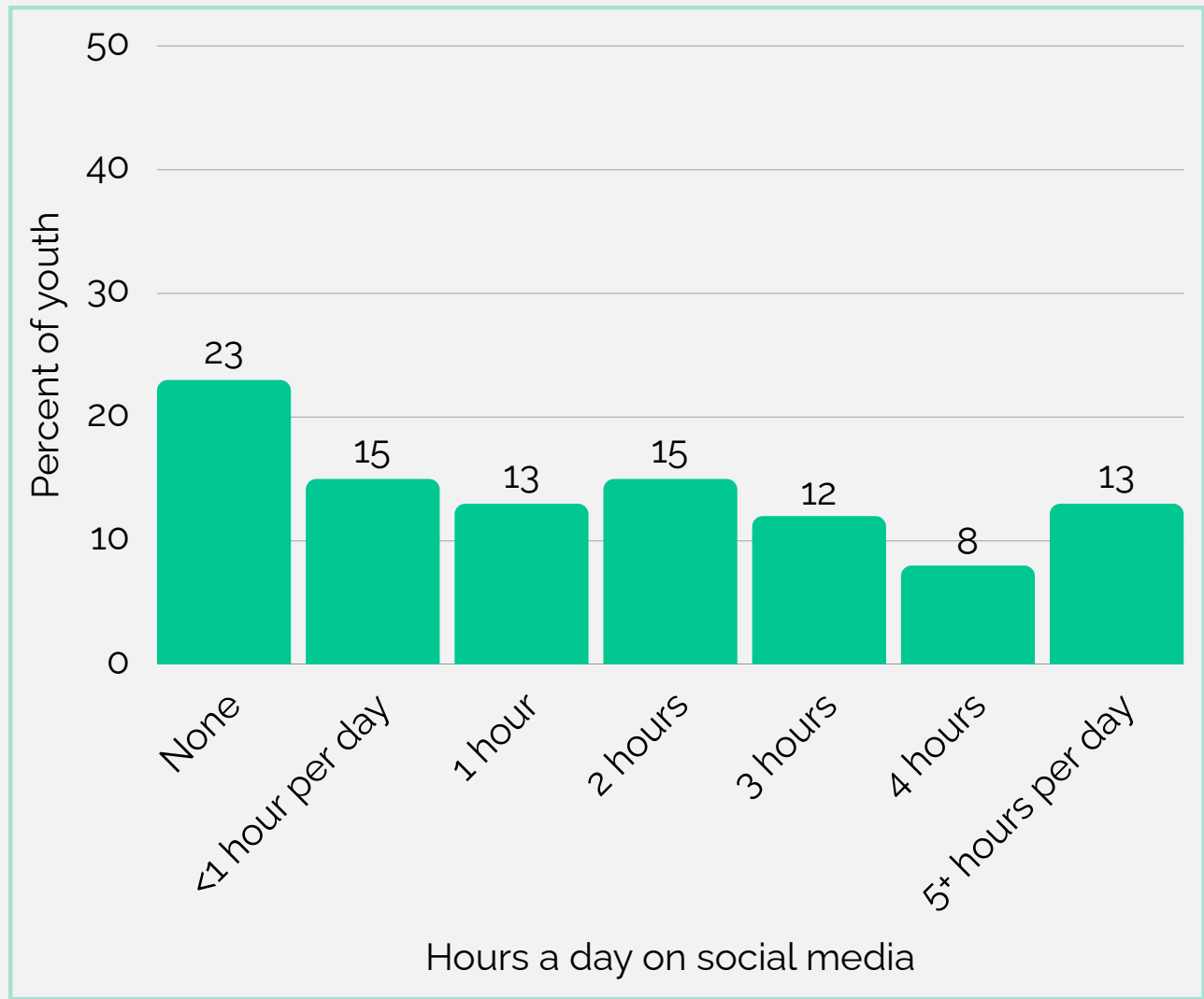
# Risk Factor

# Social Media

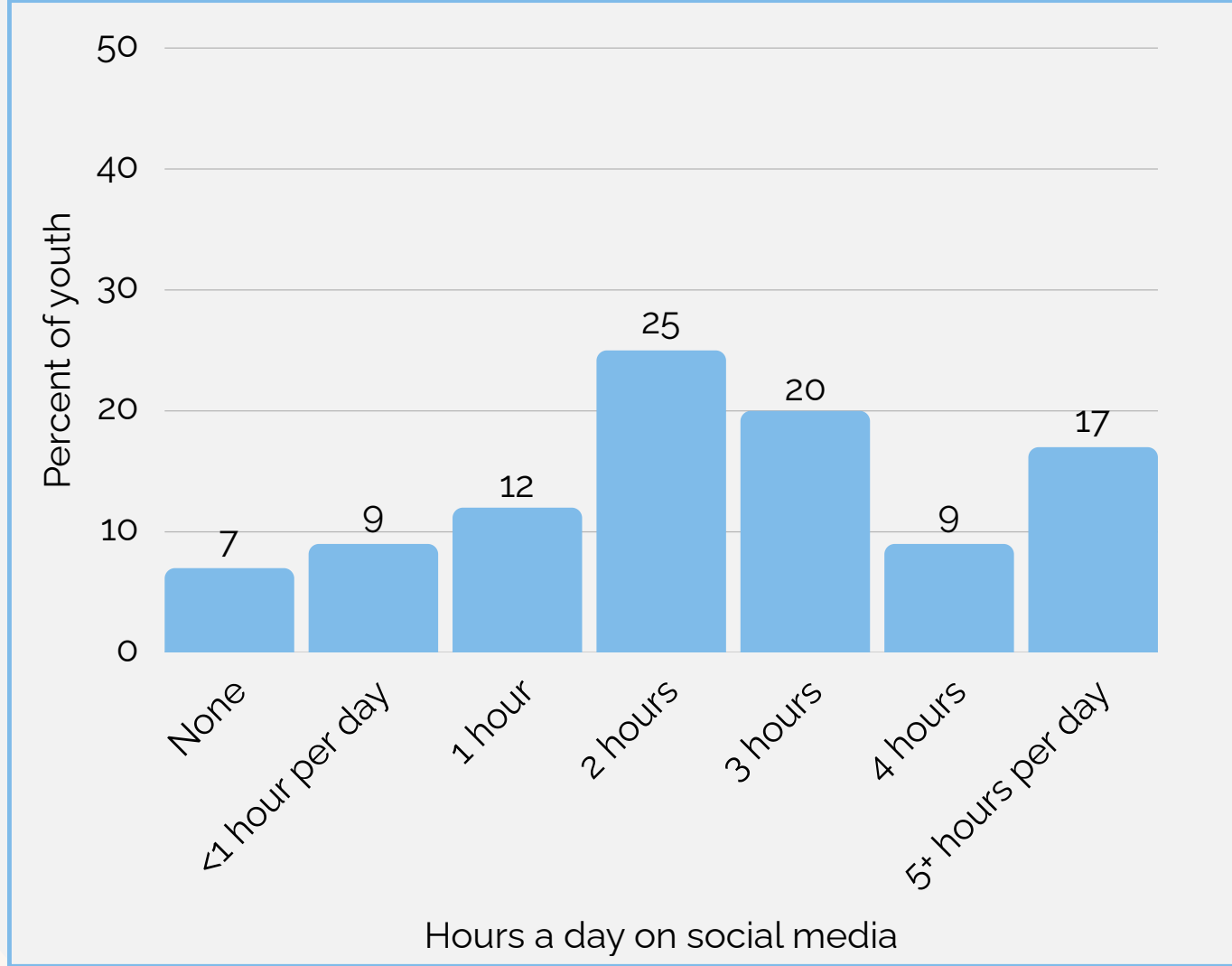
On an average day, about how many hours do you use social media?

Overall, 34% of middle school youth and 46% of high school youth use social media for 3 or more hours on an average day.

### Middle School Results

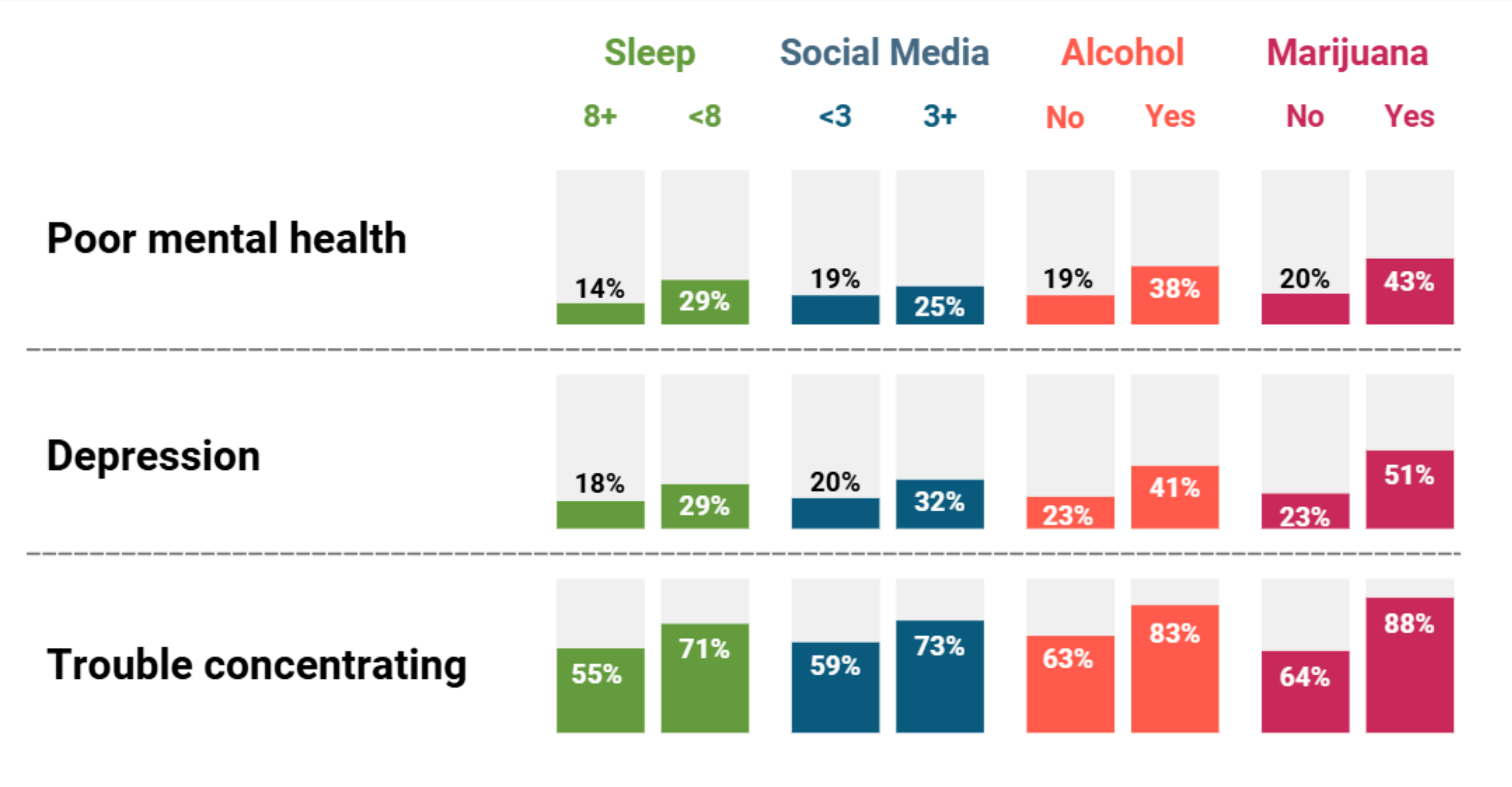


### High School Results



# Take aways

Youth who used alcohol, marijuana, were on social media for 3 or more hours a day, or slept for less than 8 hours a night reported significantly higher poor mental health, depression and trouble concentrating.



# Protective Factors

01.

**Access to Support**

03.

**Out of School Time  
Activities**

02.

**Social Connectedness**

04.

**Physical Health**

# Protective Factor

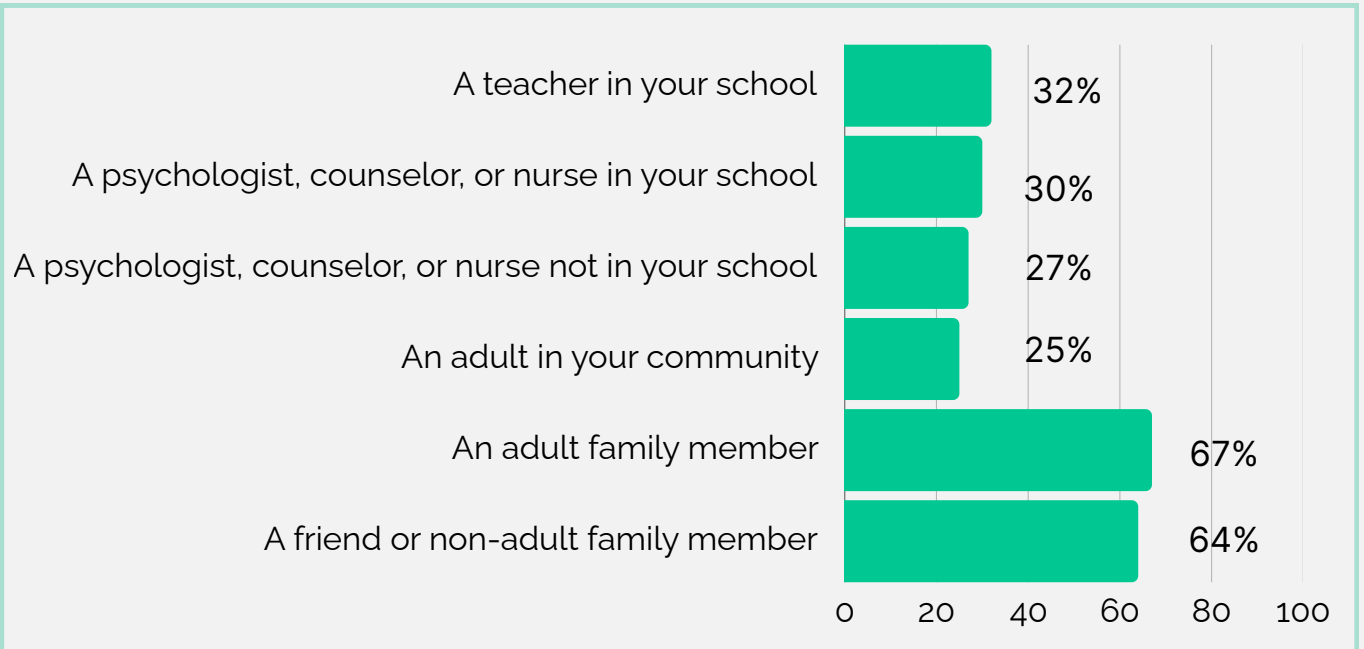
# Access to Support

During the past year, when you feel sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious, how often do you get the kind of help you need?

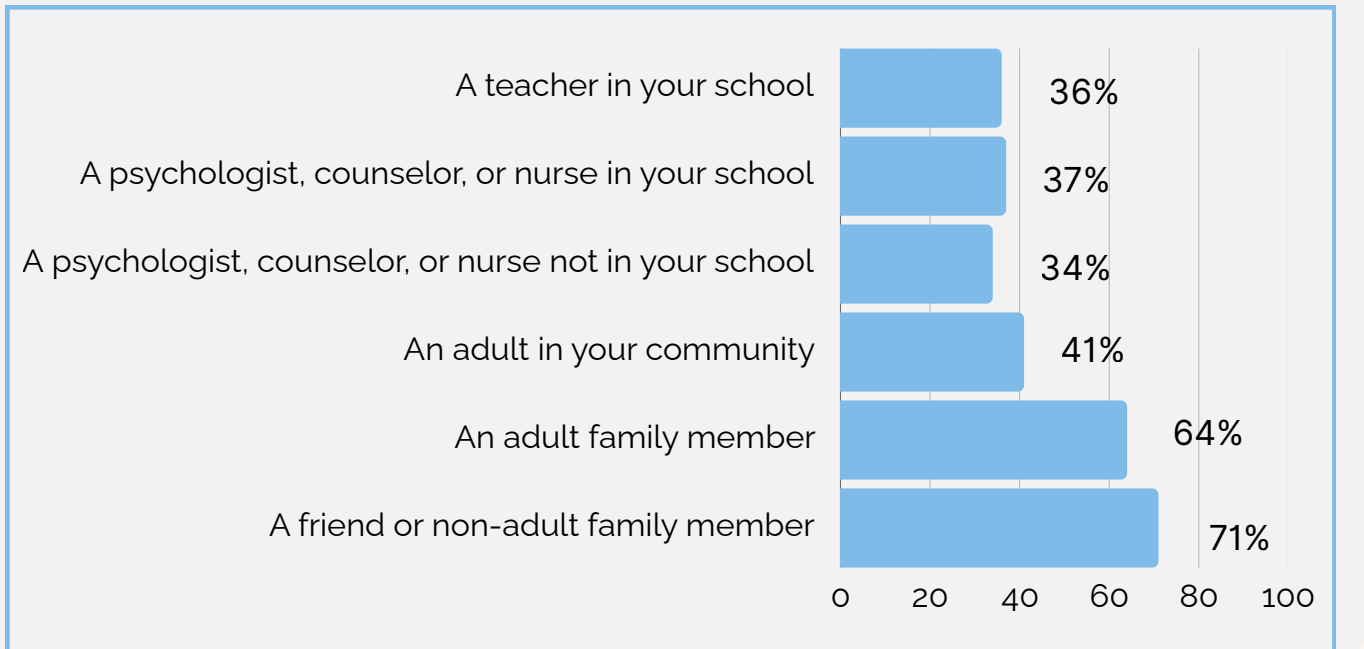


**Only 22% of middle school youth and 20% of high school youth agree or strongly agree they were able to get the kind of help they needed.**

### Middle School Results



### High School Results



**Youth seek support from adult family members and friends.**

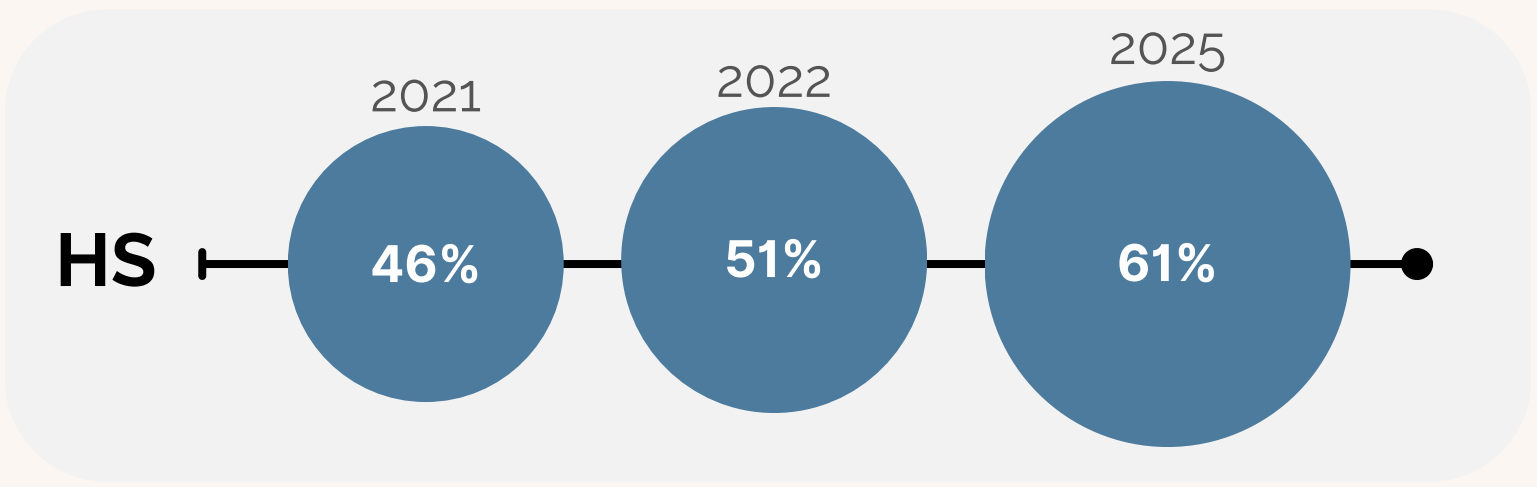
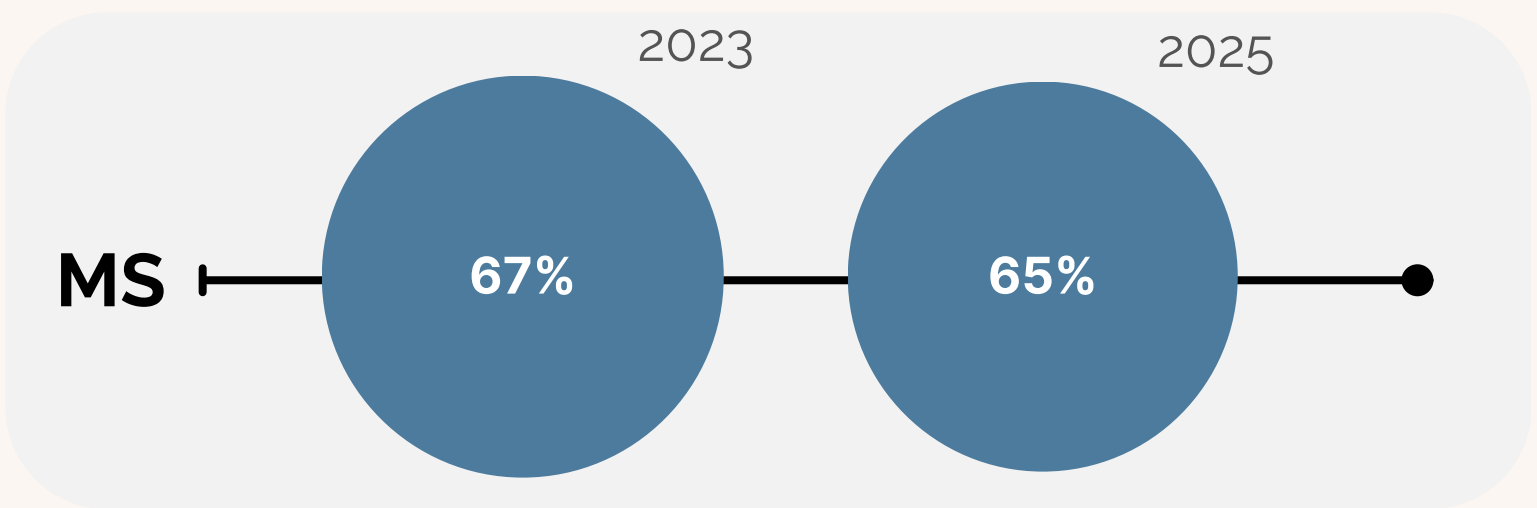
# Protective Factor

# Social Connectedness



How much do you agree or disagree that you feel close to people at this school?

Overall, **65% of middle school youth and 61% of high school youth** agreed or strongly agreed that they feel close to people at their school.



**White high school** youth were significantly more likely than the average peer to agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people at their school.

Group	Percentage
Overall	61
White	70

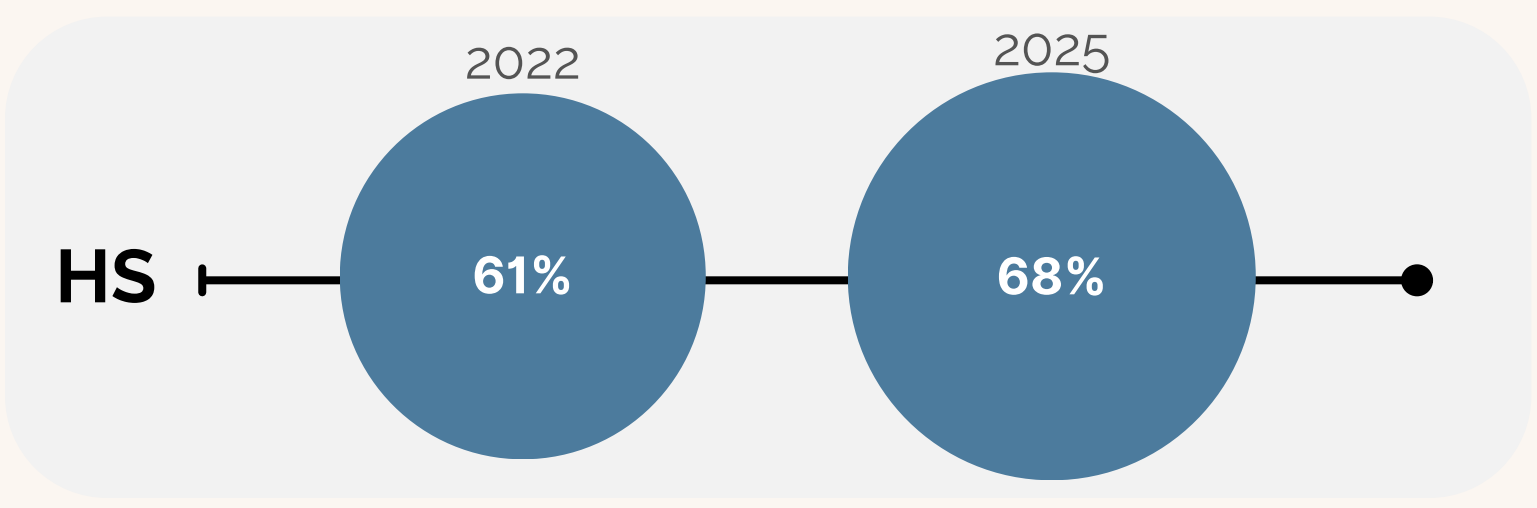
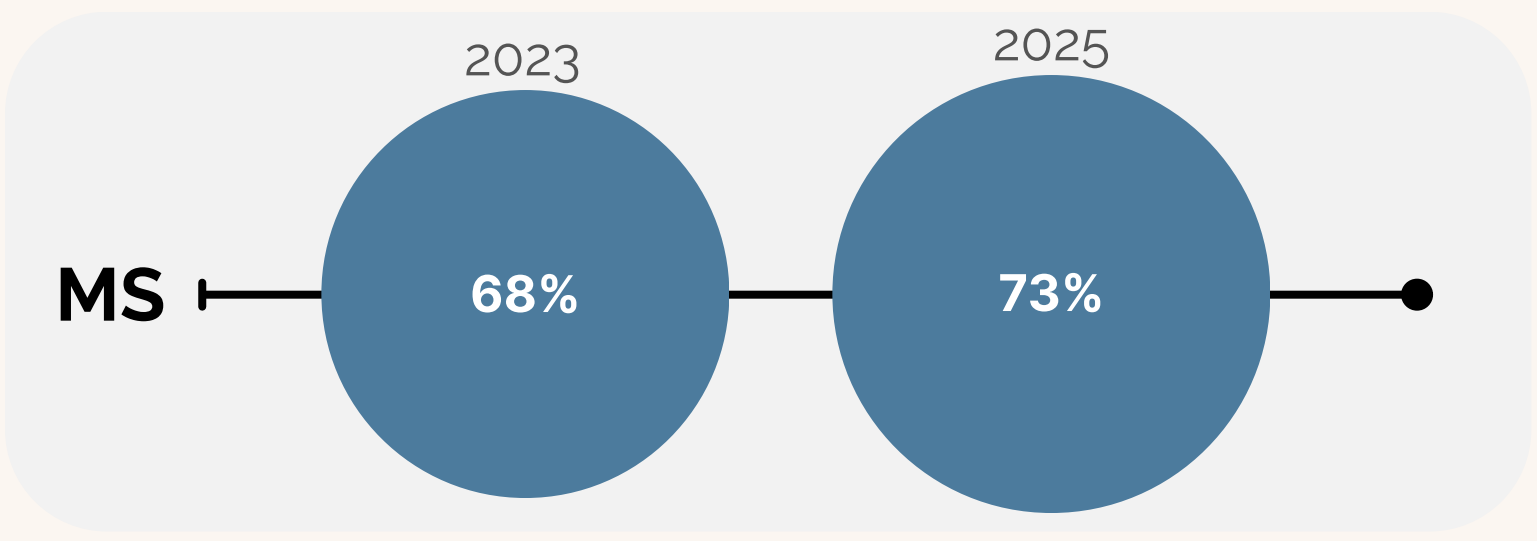
# Protective Factor

# Out of School Time Activities

During this school year (since September), how many days per week did you usually participate in out of school time programs or activities?



**73% of middle school youth and 68% of high school youth** typically participate in out of school time programs one or more days per week this school year.



**Transgender, LGBTQ+, and white youth in both the MS and HS** were significantly more likely than the average high school youth to typically participate in out of school time programs one or more days per week.

**Hispanic youth** in middle and high school were significantly less likely.

### Middle School Results

Group	Percentage
Overall	73
TGD	90
LGBQ+	87
White	86
HL	53

### High School Results

Group	Percentage
Overall	68
TGD	90
LGBQ+	79
White	78
HL	50

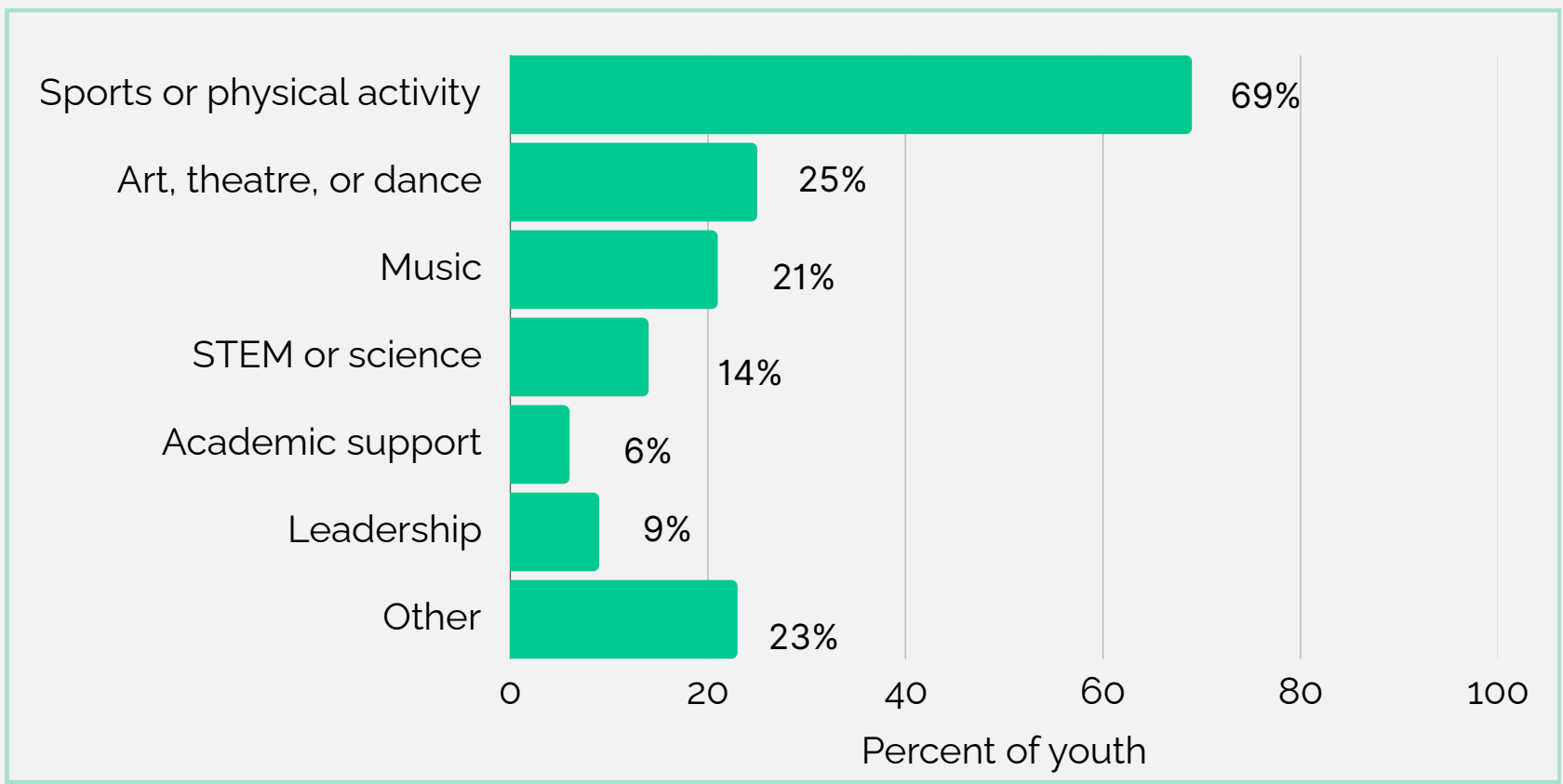
# Protective Factor

# Out of School Time Activities

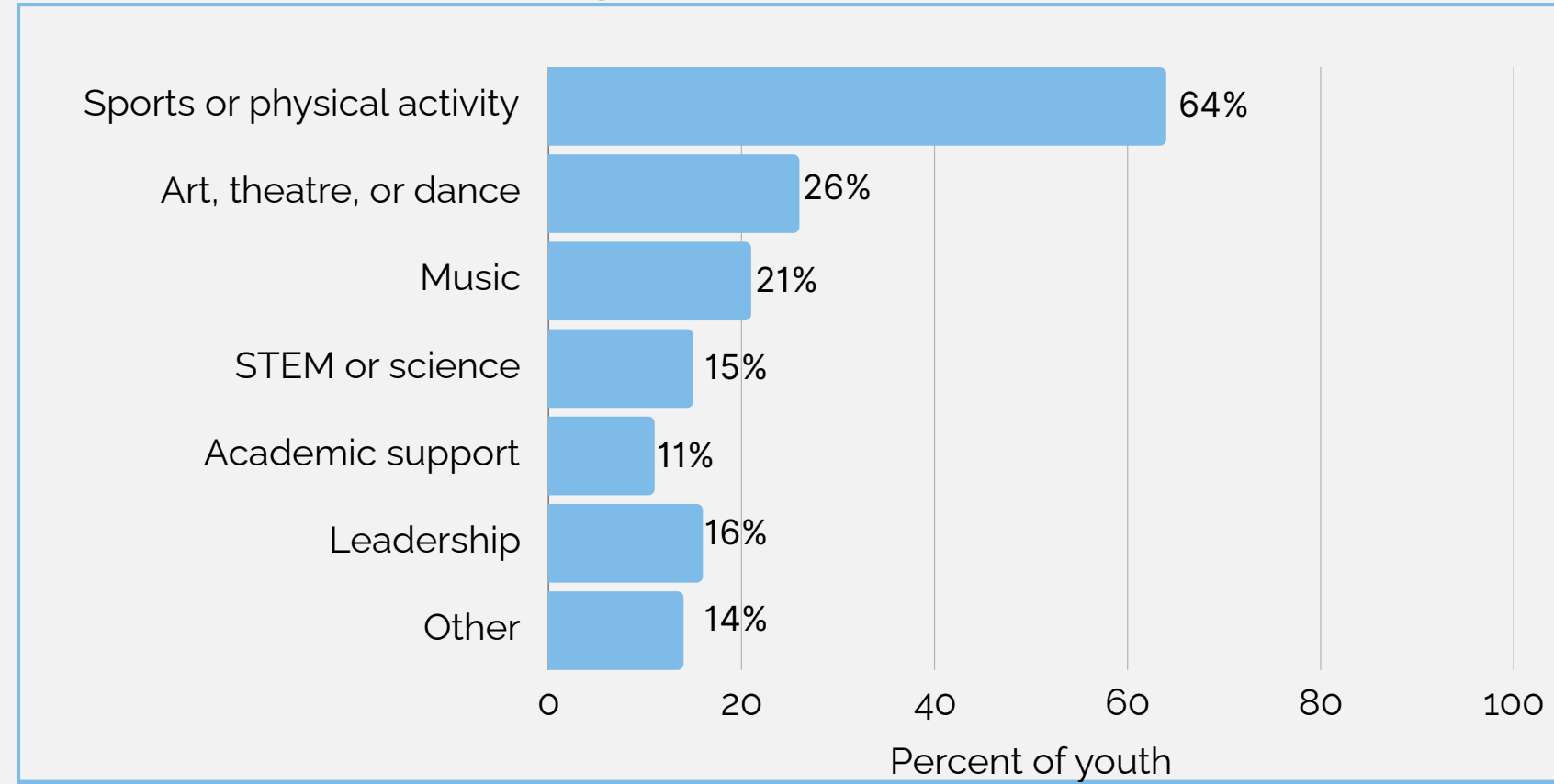
What out of school time programs or activities would you want to do?

Both middle and high school youth were most interested in participating in sports or physical activities.

### Middle School Results



### High School Results



## Barriers to Participating

- 1. Lack of interest in programs or activities
- 2. Conflicts with other activities
- 3. Lack of transportation
- 4. Familial responsibilities or responsibilities at home

- 1. Familial responsibilities or responsibilities at home
- 2. Working for pay
- 3. Conflicting activities
- 4. Lack of interest in programs or activities

# Protective Factor

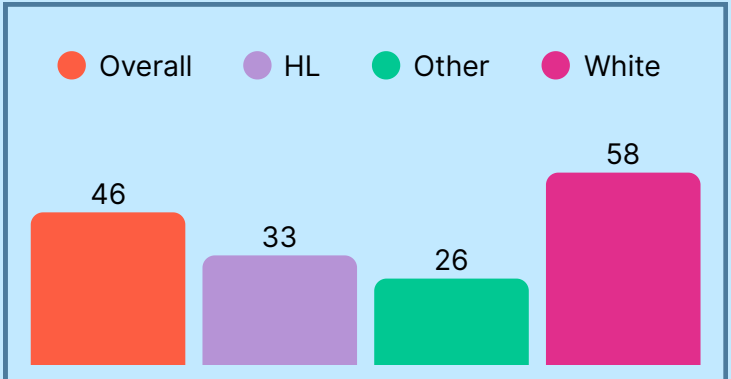
# Physical Health

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

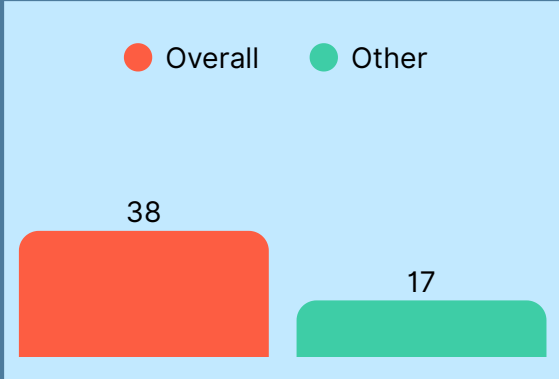
Overall, **46% of middle school youth and 38% of high school youth** engaged in physical activity on at least 5 of the past 7 days.

How do we ensure that all youth have equal access to physical activities?

**MS Hispanic youth and youth of another race** were significantly **less likely** than the average middle school youth to engage in 60 minutes of physical activity on at least 5 of the past 7 days, and **white** youth were significantly **more likely**.



**HS youth of another race** were significantly **less likely** than the average high school youth to engage in 60 minutes of physical activity on at least 5 of the past 7 days.

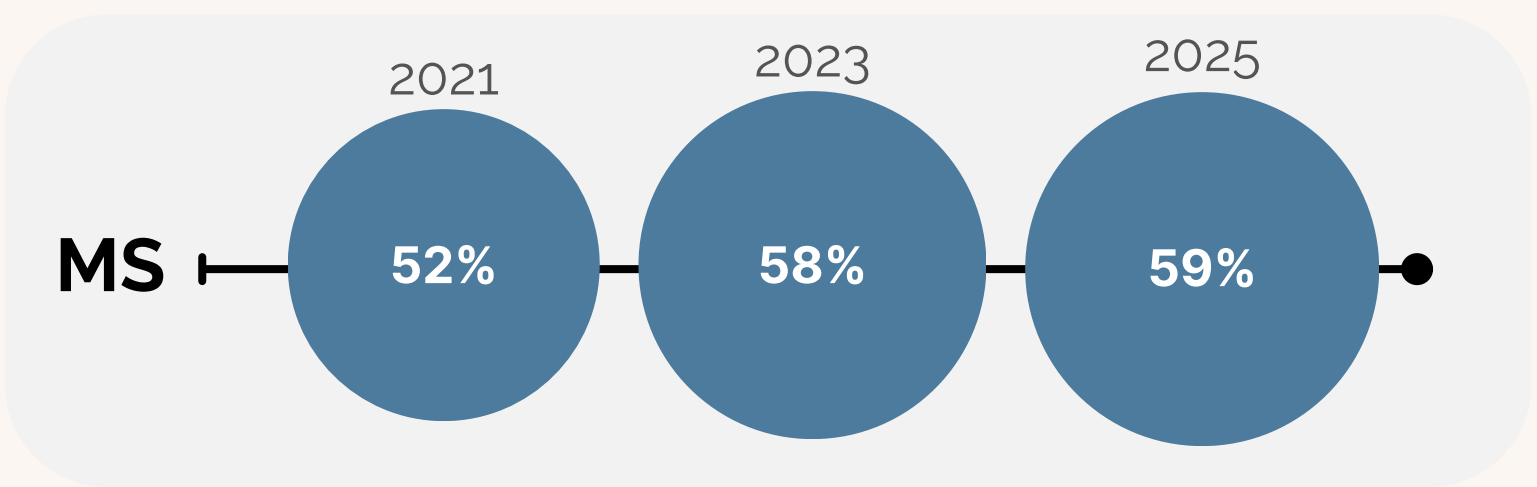


# Protective Factor Physical Health



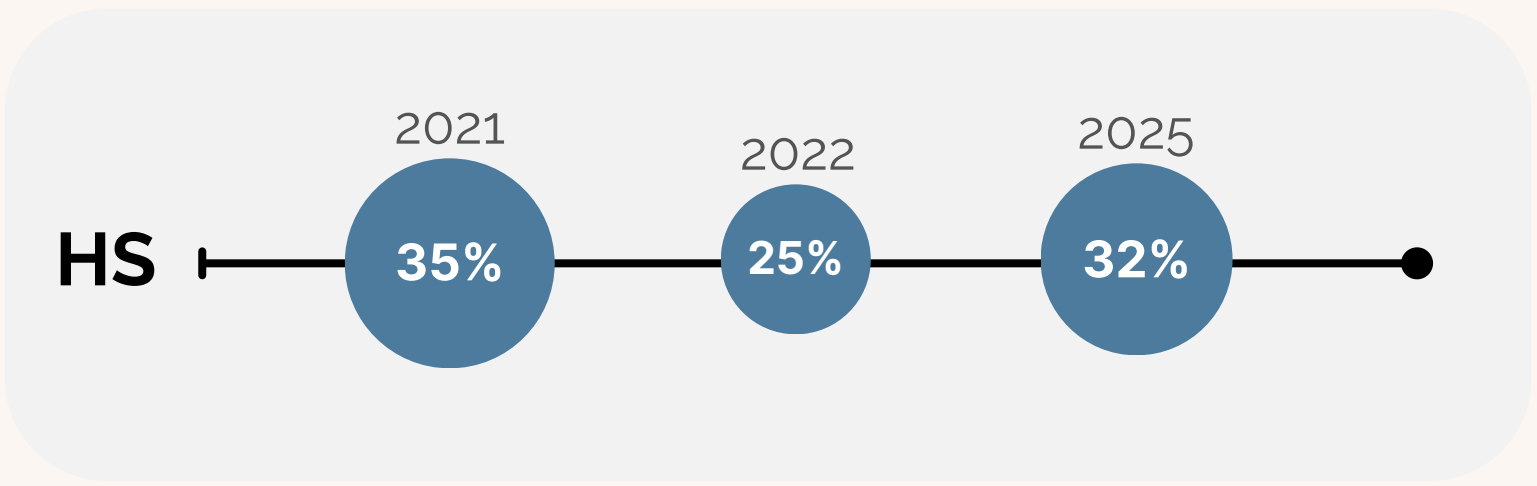
On an average school night, how many hours of sleep do you get?

According to the CDC, the daily recommended sleep for individuals aged 13-17 is 8-10 hours.<sup>1</sup> Overall, **59% of middle school youth and 32% of high school youth slept 8 or more hours on an average school night.**



**Youth in 6<sup>th</sup> grade** were significantly more likely to sleep 8 or more hours on an average school night than their MS peers.

Group	Percentage
Overall	59
6th graders	68



**LGBQ+ HS** youth were significantly less likely than the average high school youth to sleep 8 or more hours on an average school night.

Group	Percentage
Overall	32
LGBQ+	22

# HOPE

HEALTHY OUTCOMES FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES



## WHY IT WORKS

Individuals who have Positive Childhood Experiences report significantly lower rates of depression and poor mental health as adulthood. Research has shown that these positive childhood experiences are even protective if a young person has experienced trauma.

