

# Highlights from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

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

2016 | Pollard Middle School  
Needham

GRADES 7-8



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# Highlights from the 2016 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

## Pollard Middle School, Needham

### Background and Methodology

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The 2016 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWAHS) marks the beginning of a new decade in monitoring trends in adolescent health behaviors to advance school and community prevention efforts. Since 2006, the MWAHS has been administered every other year in communities served by the MetroWest Health Foundation, with the goal of supporting data-driven improvements in health programs and policies at the local and regional levels. The Pollard Middle School in Needham has participated in the MWAHS since 2006.

The 2016 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. 18 school districts also chose to survey 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. In total, 16,387 middle school students in grades 6 through 8 in the region participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. In Needham, 833 students in grades 7 and 8 participated in the 2016 MWAHS, representing 95% 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 and Use of Electronic Cigarettes

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **1% of students have smoked a cigarette in their lifetime, and less than 1% smoked recently (in the past 30 days).**
- » Reports of lifetime smoking do not differ by gender or grade.
  - » 3% of middle school youth have tried an electronic cigarette or other electronic vapor product in their lifetime, and 1% have used one in the past 30 days.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Youth smoking has continued to decline: Reports of lifetime smoking decreased from 7% in 2006 to 3% in 2014, and decreased further to 1% in 2016.**
- » During the same time period, recent smoking decreased from 3% to less than 1%.
  - » Cigarette smoking decreased similarly among both males and females.
  - » Lifetime use of electronic cigarettes or other electronic vapor products is lower in 2016 (3%) compared with 2016 (6%). (2014 was the first year that data on electronic cigarette use was collected.)
  - » In the MetroWest region, cigarette smoking among middle school youth has declined by more than two-thirds since 2006.

### Alcohol Use and Drinking and Driving

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **6% of students drank alcohol in their lifetime, and 2% drank in the past 30 days.**
- » Less than 1% of middle school youth report recent binge drinking (defined as consuming 4 or more drinks in a row for females, or 5 or more drinks in a row for males in the past 30 days).
  - » More males than females initiate alcohol use during the middle school years (8% compared with 5%).
  - » Alcohol use increases from 5% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 7% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and current drinking increases from 1% to 3%.
  - » 1% of students report ever being a passenger in a car driven by a high school student who had been drinking alcohol.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer middle school youth are drinking alcohol: From 2006 to 2016, lifetime alcohol use decreased from 20% to 6%, and current use decreased from 8% to 2%.**
- » Drinking declined among both males and females. For example, lifetime drinking decreased from 17% in 2006 to 5% in 2016 among females, and from 22% to 8% among males.
  - » Drinking among middle school youth declined by more than half in the MetroWest region from 2006 to 2016.

## Marijuana Use

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **1% of middle school youth have used marijuana in their lifetime, and 1% used marijuana in the past 30 days.**
- » Lifetime marijuana use is similarly low among both genders and increases very slightly from less than 1% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 2% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Lifetime marijuana use was steady at 3-4% from 2006 to 2012 and decreased to 1% in 2016.**
- » Current marijuana use is also lower in 2016 (1%) compared with 2006 (3%).
- » Marijuana use in the MetroWest region decreased slightly from 2006 to 2016.

## Inhalant Use

- 2016 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 by gender or grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Use of inhalants decreased substantially from 13% in 2006 to 1% in 2016.**
- » Reports of inhalant use are lower among both females and males.
- » There has also been a substantial decrease in inhalant use among MetroWest region middle school youth since 2006.

## Key Findings: Violence

### Physical Fighting

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **25% of youth have been in a physical fight in their lifetime, and 5% have been in a fight on school property.**
- » Many more males than females report fighting overall (36% compared with 14%) and on school property (9% compared with 1%).
  - » The proportion of youth who have engaged in physical fighting in their lifetime is similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Many fewer youth are involved in fighting: Reports of lifetime physical fighting decreased from 45% in 2006 to 32% in 2014, and dropped further to 25% in 2016.**
- » During this time period, lifetime reports of fighting on school property decreased steadily from 20% to 5%.
  - » There were notable decreases in fighting among both males and females. For example, lifetime reports of fighting decreased from 66% in 2006 to 36% in 2016 among males, and from 24% to 14% among females.
  - » In the MetroWest region, physical fighting among middle school youth also decreased substantially since 2006.

### Weapon Carrying

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **12% of youth have carried a weapon in their lifetime, and 1% have carried a weapon on school property.**
- » Consistent with gender patterns for physical fighting, many more males (19%) than females (5%) report carrying weapons.
  - » Lifetime reports of carrying weapons increase from 10% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 14% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Lifetime reports of weapon carrying on school property are lower in 2016 (1%) compared with 2006 (3%).**
- » Overall reports of weapon carrying have ranged from 9-13% since 2006, with 12% of youth reporting lifetime weapon carrying in 2016.
  - » In the MetroWest region, weapon carrying has remained somewhat similar since 2006.

## Key Findings: Bullying and Cyberbullying

### Bullying

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **15% of middle school youth have been bullied in the past 12 months, and 10% have been bullied on school property. 2% of students report bullying other students.**
- » More males than females are victims of bullying overall (17% compared with 13%) and on school property (11% compared with 8%).
  - » School bullying victimization is similar in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (9%) and 8<sup>th</sup> grade (11%).
  - » Among students who were bullied at school in the past 12 months, 40% talked to a school adult about being bullied, and 59% talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
  - » 7% of youth reported being verbally harassed in the past 12 months due to their race, ethnicity or culture, 4% due to their sexual orientation, 3% due to a disability, and 17% due to their appearance (height, weight, or how they look). This data was first collected in 2016.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer students are being bullied at school: Victimization on school property decreased from 41-42% in 2006-2008 to 12% in 2014, and lowered further to 10% in 2016.**
- » Reports of overall bullying victimization in the past 12 months also decreased, from 46% in 2006-2008 to 15% in 2016.
  - » There were considerable declines in bullying among both genders. For example, bullying on school property decreased from 37% in 2006 to 8% in 2016 among females, and from 45% to 11% among males.
  - » Reports of bullying decreased substantially in the MetroWest region from 2008 to 2016.

### Cyberbullying

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **14% of youth report being victims of cyberbullying in the past 12 months, and 4% report cyberbullying someone else.**
- » Females are far more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than males (17% vs. 10%).
  - » Cyberbullying increases by grade, from 12% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 16% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » Many cyberbullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among youth who were cyberbullied in the past 12 months, only 21% talked to an adult at school and 48% talked to a parent/adult outside of school.
  - » 10% of youth spend three or more hours daily on social media (12% of females and 6% of males). Youth who spend more time online and on social media are more likely to also report being involved in cyberbullying.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **After decreasing from 17% in 2006 to 11% in 2010, cyberbullying increased to 15% in 2012 and remained steady over the two most recent surveys.**
- » Cyberbullying in 2016 is slightly lower among both females and males compared with 2006.
  - » Cyberbullying victimization is higher in MetroWest in 2014-2016 than in prior years.

## Key Findings: Mental Health

### Stress

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **9% of middle school students report that their life was very stressful in the past 30 days.**
- » Females are more likely to report this level of stress than males (13% compared with 5%).
  - » Reports of stress are similar in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (8%) and 8<sup>th</sup> grade (10%).
  - » The most common source of stress is worrying due to school issues (36%), followed by social issues (13%), appearance issues (13%), and family issues (11%).
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Overall reports of stress among middle school youth decreased slightly from 12% in 2006 to 9% in 2014 and remained at that level in 2016.**
- » Since 2006, reports of stress have decreased slightly among both females and males.
  - » In the MetroWest region, stress has increased in recent years.

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

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **7% of students report depressive symptoms in the past 12 months (defined as feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row).**
- » 5% of youth report self-injury (defined as cutting, burning, or bruising oneself on purpose) in the past 12 months.
  - » 8% of youth report that they had considered suicide in their lifetime, and 1% had made a suicide attempt.
  - » Females are more likely than males to report mental health problems. For example, 10% of females and 4% of males report depressive symptoms.
  - » 2% of middle school youth missed school in the past 30 days due to feeling sad or hopeless, or having thoughts about hurting themselves.
  - » Reports of depressive symptoms and self-injury in the past 12 months increase from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Lifetime reports of suicidal ideation also increase by grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of depressive symptoms decreased from 13% in 2006 to 7% in 2016, with declines among both females and males.**
- » However, reports of self-injury have been steady at 4-6% since 2006, and reports of suicidal thoughts have been steady at 8% across all six surveys.
  - » There has been a recent decrease in depressive symptoms among MetroWest region middle school youth, and reports of suicidality have remained similar since 2006.



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

## Physical Activity

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **85% of youth report engaging in vigorous physical activity.** (Vigorous physical activity is defined as exercising for at least 20 minutes that makes you sweat and breathe hard on three or more of the past seven days).
- » Males are more likely than females to report this level of physical activity (88% compared with 83%), though reports are high among both genders.
  - » Reports of vigorous physical activity are higher in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (88%) than in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (82%).
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **The proportion of youth who exercised vigorously on at least 3 days per week has ranged from 81-89% since the MWAHS began, with reports at 85% in 2016.**
- » Physical activity among MetroWest region youth has been similar since 2006.

## Sleep

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **65% of middle school youth get 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.**
- » More males than females get 8 hours of sleep per night (69% compared to 62%).
  - » Reports of getting 8 or more hours of sleep decrease from 68% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 63% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **The proportion of youth sleeping 8 or more hours per night is slightly lower in 2016 (65%) compared with 2014 (67%).** (2014 was the first year that sleep data was collected.)
- » Youth in the MetroWest region report slightly less sleep over the last two surveys.

## Overweight/Obesity

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **12% of youth are overweight or obese.** (Reports are based on self-reported height and weight, which is used to calculate body mass index. Overweight/obesity is defined as being in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for body mass index by age and gender.)
- » Overweight/obesity is similar by gender and grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Overweight/obesity has ranged from 12-17% since 2006, but reports have not followed a consistent trend.**
- » In the MetroWest region, overweight/obesity has not changed notably over the six surveys.

## Key Findings: Protective Factors

### School Attachment and Engagement

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **About four out of five 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” (77%), and “I feel safe in my school” (89%).
- » Reports of school attachment are similar by gender and grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of school attachment have not changed substantially since 2006.** School attachment has also been similar among MetroWest region middle school students since the beginning of the MWAHS.

### Adult Support

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **76% 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 at school is similar by gender and grade. Adult support outside of school also does not vary substantially by gender or grade.
- 2006-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **More youth are reporting adult support at school: Reports of having an adult at school to talk to increased notably over the course of the MWAHS, from 63% in 2006 to 76% in 2016.**
- » Adult support outside of school is higher in 2016 (96%) compared with 2006 (90%).
- » In the MetroWest region, adult support at school has also increased since 2006.

## Conclusions

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For more than a decade, the MWAHS has monitored trends in adolescent health, informing local decisions and strategies to improve education, policy, and prevention efforts across the MetroWest region. Each survey that is administered provides new data to highlight areas of progress as well as to draw attention to emerging risks and continued areas for concern. The 2016 data show that Needham is making important advances in some behavioral health areas, such as cigarette smoking, alcohol use, 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 identify priorities and drive local decisions will help to address the greatest challenges to adolescent health and lead to safer and healthier communities.



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

### 2006-2016 Trends in Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Year of Survey (%)					
	2006 (654)	2008 (653)	2010 (772)	2012 (787)	2014 (804)	2016 (833)
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>						
Lifetime cigarette smoking	6.9	6.6	5.7	5.5	2.9	1.3
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	3.4	2.0	2.0	1.6	0.4	0.5
Lifetime alcohol use	19.7	19.8	14.8	13.6	8.3	6.2
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	8.1	6.3	6.4	6.2	1.9	1.9
Binge drinking (past 30 days)*	2.3	2.0	2.0	0.9	0.4	0.5
Lifetime marijuana use	3.5	3.3	4.3	3.5	1.6	0.8
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	2.6	2.0	3.0	1.9	0.8	0.7
Lifetime inhalant use	13.4	6.8	7.1	3.3	1.1	1.1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>						
Physical fighting (lifetime)	45.4	42.3	36.9	39.3	31.7	25.0
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	20.3	14.9	12.3	9.5	7.1	5.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	12.6	10.9	8.8	10.8	9.8	12.0
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	2.8	2.5	1.2	1.3	0.7	1.0
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>						
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	46.1	46.4	30.4	22.2	19.2	15.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	41.0	41.6	24.1	16.5	12.5	9.7
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	17.3	14.9	11.5	14.6	14.1	14.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>						
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	12.4	10.2	10.6	10.2	8.5	9.0
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	12.8	9.4	8.5	8.6	9.2	6.8
Self-injury (past 12 months)	4.5	5.6	4.4	4.9	4.9	4.9
Considered suicide (lifetime)	8.0	7.6	8.1	8.1	7.9	7.6
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	2.5	1.7	1.7	1.3	1.5	1.1
<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	85.2
Overweight or obese <sup>†</sup>	16.3	12.8	14.8	16.8	13.0	12.0

\* From 2006 to 2014, binge drinking was defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasion for all students. In 2016, binge drinking was defined as 4 or more drinks in a row for females and 5 or more drinks in a row for males.

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

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

### 2016 Gender Patterns for Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Gender (%)		Total (%)
	Female (423)	Male (407)	(833)
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	0.7	2.0	1.3
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.2	0.5	0.5
Lifetime alcohol use	4.7	7.7	6.2
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.9	1.7	1.9
Binge drinking (past 30 days)*	0.2	0.5	0.5
Lifetime marijuana use	1.2	0.5	0.8
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.7	0.5	0.7
Lifetime inhalant use	0.7	1.2	1.1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	13.8	36.3	25.0
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	1.2	8.7	5.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	4.8	19.4	12.0
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.5	1.2	1.0
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	13.3	16.6	15.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	7.8	10.9	9.7
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	17.2	10.4	14.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	12.8	4.7	9.0
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	9.6	3.5	6.8
Self-injury (past 12 months)	6.3	3.3	4.9
Considered suicide (lifetime)	9.2	5.8	7.6
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.5	0.8	1.1
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	83.5	87.6	85.2
Overweight or obese <sup>†</sup>	11.0	13.0	12.0

\* From 2006 to 2014, binge drinking was defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasion for all students. In 2016, binge drinking was defined as 4 or more drinks in a row for females and 5 or more drinks in a row for males.

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

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

### 2016 Grade Patterns for Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Grade		Total (%) (833)
	7 <sup>th</sup> (419)	8 <sup>th</sup> (414)	
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	1.4	1.2	1.3
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.2	0.7	0.5
Lifetime alcohol use	5.0	7.3	6.2
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.2	2.7	1.9
Binge drinking (past 30 days)*	0.5	0.5	0.5
Lifetime marijuana use	0.2	1.5	0.8
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.2	1.2	0.7
Lifetime inhalant use	1.0	1.2	1.1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	25.4	24.6	25.0
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	4.8	5.1	5.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	10.4	13.6	12.0
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.0	1.9	1.0
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	11.1	19.4	15.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	8.7	10.7	9.7
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	12.3	16.1	14.2
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	7.9	10.2	9.0
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	4.6	9.1	6.8
Self-injury (past 12 months)	4.1	5.7	4.9
Considered suicide (lifetime)	4.8	10.4	7.6
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	0.5	1.8	1.1
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	88.0	82.3	85.2
Overweight or obese <sup>†</sup>	11.7	12.3	12.0

\* From 2006 to 2014, binge drinking was defined as 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasion for all students. In 2016, binge drinking was defined as 4 or more drinks in a row for females and 5 or more drinks in a row for males.

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

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