



MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

Informing data driven school and community
health policies and practices

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE METROWEST ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY

NATICK MIDDLE SCHOOLS

2012

**METROWEST
HEALTH
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Highlights from the 2012 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Natick Middle School Report

Background and Methodology

The MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWAHS) is a decade-long initiative of the MetroWest Health Foundation (MHF) to support efforts to improve the health of youth in the region. Beginning in 2006, the MWAHS has been administered every other year to middle and high school students in the region to monitor trends in health and risk behaviors and identify emerging health issues at the local and regional levels. 2012 was the first year that all 25 communities served by the MHF participated in the survey, with a total of over 40,000 students surveyed. Natick has participated in the MWAHS at the middle school level since 2006.

The most recent 2012 survey was administered to a census of students in grades 7 and 8 in all 24 middle schools in the region. Fourteen districts also chose to survey 6th grade students. In total, 15,605 students in grades 6 through 8 in the region participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. In Natick, 1,044 students in grades 6 through 8 at the Wilson and Kennedy Middle Schools participated in the 2012 MWAHS, representing 94% of students.

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, mental health, and physical activity are provided below.

Substance Use: Natick Middle Schools

Cigarette Smoking

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **5% of students have smoked a cigarette in their lifetime, and 1% smoked recently (in the past 30 days).**
- Similar proportions of males and females have smoked in their lifetime.
- By 8th grade, 9% of youth have smoked a cigarette.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Reports of lifetime smoking were similar from 2006 to 2012 at 4-6%.**
- Recent smoking (in the past 30 days) was steady at 2-3%.
- In the MetroWest region, cigarette smoking decreased from 2006 to 2010 and remained steady in 2012.

Alcohol Use and Drinking and Driving

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **8% of students drank alcohol in their lifetime, 3% drank in the past 30 days, and 1% reported recent binge drinking (defined as consuming 5 or more drinks in a row on one or more occasions in the past 30 days).**
- Males and females are equally likely to initiate alcohol use during the middle school years.
- Alcohol use increases substantially by grade: Lifetime use increases from 3% in 6th grade to 15% in 8th grade. Current drinking increases from 1% to 7%.
- 12% of students reported being a passenger in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. Reports are slightly higher among females (13%) than males (10%), and increase by grade, from 8% in 6th grade to 17% in 8th grade.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Lifetime drinking decreased from 16% in 2006 to 10% in 2012.**
- The decrease in lifetime drinking was greater among males (from 20% in 2006 to 11% in 2012) than among females (from 12% to 10%).
- Current alcohol use in 2012 (4%) is slightly lower than in prior surveys (6-7%).
- Reports of riding with a driver who had been drinking decreased from 18% in 2008 to 14% in 2010 and then remained steady in 2012 at 13%.
- In the MetroWest region, alcohol use decreased from 2006 to 2010 and then remained similar in 2012.

Marijuana Use

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **3% of youth have used marijuana in their lifetime, and 2% used marijuana in the past 30 days.**
- Males and females are equally likely to initiate marijuana use.
- Initiation of marijuana use increases by grade, from less than 1% in 6th grade to 6% in 8th grade.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **From 2006 to 2012, reports of marijuana use were similar at 2-4%.**
- Current marijuana use was steady in the range of 2-3%.
- Marijuana use in the region has been similar since 2006.

Inhalant Use

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **4% of youth used inhalants in their lifetime (defined as sniffing glue, breathing the contents of spray cans, or inhaling paints/sprays to get high).**
- Similar proportions of males (4%) and females (3%) have used inhalants.
- Lifetime inhalant use ranges from 2% to 6% during the middle school years.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Lifetime use of inhalants has varied from 4-7% since 2006 and is lower in 2012 (4%) than in prior survey waves.**
- From 2006 to 2012, inhalant use decreased in the MetroWest region.

Violence: Natick Middle Schools

Physical Fighting

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **33% of youth have been in a physical fight in their lifetime, and 7% have been in a fight on school property.**
- More males than females report fighting (46% compared with 20%) and fighting on school property (9% compared with 5%).
- The proportion of youth who have engaged in physical fighting in their lifetime varies from 30% to 35% during the middle school years.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Fighting has decreased steadily among middle school youth, from a high of 43% in 2008 to 32% in 2012.**
- Lifetime reports of fighting on school property decreased steadily from 17% in 2006 to 7% in 2012.
- The decrease in fighting is largely due to a decrease among males, from 64% in 2008 to 46% in 2006. During this time, fighting among females decreased from 23% to 19%.
- The overall trends in physical fighting are similar to those in the region.

Weapon Carrying

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **16% of youth have carried a weapon in their lifetime, and 1% have carried a weapon on school property.**
- Consistent with gender patterns for fighting, more males (24%) than females (9%) report carrying weapons.
- Reports of lifetime weapon carrying do not differ by grade.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Reports of weapon carrying have varied from 13-18% since 2006; in 2012, 16% of youth reported carrying a weapon in their lifetime.**
- Weapon carrying declined in the MetroWest region from 2006 to 2010 and then did not change notably in 2012.

Bullying and Cyberbullying: Natick Middle Schools

Bullying

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **31% of youth have been bullied in the past 12 months, and 25% have been bullied on school property. 10% of students report bullying other students.**
- More females than males are victims of bullying (35% compared with 27%) and bullying on school property (27% compared with 23%). Slightly more females than males also report bullying others (11% compared with 9%).
- Reports of bullying are similar throughout the middle school grades.
- Many bullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among the 25% of students who were bullied at school in the past 12 months, 41% had talked to a school adult about being bullied, and 52% had talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
- 37% of youth have intervened as bystanders by trying to stop a student from bullying someone else at school, and 19% have told an adult at school that someone else was being bullied.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Fewer students are reporting bullying: Reports of school bullying victimization decreased from 40% in 2008 to 26% in 2012.**
- Reports of overall bullying victimization in the past 12 months also decreased, from a high of 44% in 2008 to 32% in 2012.
- The declines in bullying are similar for both genders: For example, school bullying victimization decreased from 45% in 2008 to 27% in 2012 among females, and from 35% in 2008 to 24% in 2012 among males.
- Reports of bullying victimization have also decreased in the MetroWest region since 2008.

Cyberbullying

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **14% of youth report being victims of cyberbullying in the past 12 months, and 4% report cyberbullying someone else.**
- Cyberbullying is reported by more females than males: Females are more likely to be both cyberbullying victims (19% compared with 8%) and perpetrators (5% compared with 2%).
- Cyberbullying victimization is highest among 8th grade youth (15%).
- The majority of cyberbullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among students who were cyberbullied, only 19% had talked to an adult at school and 36% had talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
- 12% of youth have tried to stop a student from cyberbullying someone else.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Despite the decrease in school bullying, reports of cyberbullying victimization have remained similar at 13-15% since 2006.**
- Cyberbullying also remained similar in the region from 2006 to 2012.

Mental Health: Natick Middle Schools

2012 PATTERNS (Grades 6-8)

- **11% of students reported that their life was “very” stressful in the past 30 days. 11% reported depressive symptoms and 7% reported self-injury (defined as cutting, burning, or bruising oneself on purpose) in the past 12 months.**
- 8% of youth said they had considered suicide in their lifetime, and 2% had made a suicide attempt.
- Females are more likely than males to report stress, depressive symptoms, and self-injury.
- Reports of stress, depressive symptoms, and self-injury increase from 6th to 8th grade. Lifetime reports of suicidal ideation and attempts also increase by grade.

2006-2012 TRENDS (Grades 7-8)

- **Overall reports of mental health problems have remained similar since 2006.**
- District and regional reports of mental health trends are similar.

Physical Activity and Body Weight: Natick Middle Schools

2012 **PATTERNS** (Grades 6-8)

- **83% of youth engaged in vigorous physical activity for 20 minutes or longer at least 3 times per week.**
- 16% of youth are overweight/obese (based on self-reported height and weight, which is used to calculate body mass index).
- Males are slightly more likely than females to report this level of physical activity (85% compared with 81%), but overweight/obesity is similar by gender.
- Physical activity reports do not differ substantially by grade. Overweight/obesity increases slightly from 15% in 6th grade to 18% in 8th grade.

2006-2012 **TRENDS** (Grades 7-8)

- **Since 2006, the proportion of youth exercising vigorously three or more times a week was in the range of 78-84%; in 2012, 82% reported this level of physical activity.**
- Overweight/obesity was similar at 21-22% from 2006 to 2010; in 2012, 17% of youth were overweight/obese.
- In MetroWest, physical activity and overweight/obesity have been similar since 2006.

Conclusions

The fourth administration of the MWAHS in 2012 provides important data to monitor trends in several key areas of youth risk behaviors. Additional time points are important for establishing trends, especially in areas where the data does not show a consistent trend. The 2012 data show that Natick is making important advances in some behavioral health areas, such as physical fighting and school bullying. While these demand continued attention, the data also highlight other areas of concern, including cyberbullying and mental health. The 2014 MWAHS will mark a decade of data collection in the region, and will provide additional information to inform school and community efforts to improve the health of middle school youth.

Natick Middle Schools (Grades 7-8)

2006-2012 Trends in Key Indicators*

	Year of Survey (%)			
	2006 (508)	2008 (629)	2010 (657)	2012 (696)
SUBSTANCE USE				
Lifetime cigarette smoking	6.2	4.3	5.4	6.4
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	3.0	1.8	2.5	1.9
Lifetime alcohol use	16.4	13.6	13.2	10.4
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	6.6	5.6	6.2	4.1
Binge drinking (past 30 days) [†]	2.4	1.9	2.2	0.7
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	16.2	18.0	13.5	13.4
Lifetime marijuana use	2.2	3.4	3.5	4.4
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	1.8	2.9	2.3	2.6
Lifetime inhalant use	6.0	4.8	7.3	3.8
VIOLENCE				
Physical fighting (lifetime)	37.1	42.9	39.6	32.3
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	17.3	14.2	12.7	7.4
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	17.5	12.7	14.7	16.0
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	2.4	2.4	1.2	0.9
BULLYING VICTIMIZATION				
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	42.9	44.2	39.5	31.7
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	39.1	39.7	33.7	25.8
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	13.6	12.8	15.3	14.0
MENTAL HEALTH				
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	12.5	14.6	12.5	13.5
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	13.0	14.4	12.0	13.1
Self-injury (past 12 months)	6.5	7.4	7.3	8.0
Considered suicide (lifetime)	8.5	8.8	9.6	9.9
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.6	2.6	1.8	1.9
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT				
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	83.5	81.1	77.6	82.1
Overweight or obese [‡]	21.6	20.6	22.1	17.2

* 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

Natick Middle Schools (Grades 6-8)

2012 Gender Patterns for Key Indicators*

	Gender (%)		Total (%)
	Female (528)	Male (512)	(1,044)
SUBSTANCE USE			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	5.0	5.4	5.2
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.6	2.2	1.4
Lifetime alcohol use	7.8	8.1	7.9
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	3.1	3.0	3.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days) [†]	0.4	0.6	0.5
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	13.0	10.3	11.6
Lifetime marijuana use	3.1	3.0	3.0
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	1.7	2.0	1.8
Lifetime inhalant use	3.4	3.8	3.7
VIOLENCE			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	20.2	45.8	32.8
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	4.5	8.7	6.6
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	9.4	23.5	16.2
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.4	1.0	0.7
BULLYING VICTIMIZATION			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	34.7	27.3	31.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	27.4	22.8	25.3
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	19.3	7.7	13.7
MENTAL HEALTH			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	14.4	7.8	11.2
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	12.7	8.7	10.8
Self-injury (past 12 months)	8.0	5.3	6.7
Considered suicide (lifetime)	7.9	7.9	8.0
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.0	2.6	1.7
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	80.8	84.7	82.7
Overweight or obese [‡]	16.6	16.2	16.4

* 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

Natick Middle Schools (Grades 6-8)

2012 Grade Patterns for Key Indicators*

	Grade (%)			Total (%)
	6 th (348)	7 th (362)	8 th (334)	(1,044)
SUBSTANCE USE				
Lifetime cigarette smoking	2.6	3.7	9.4	5.2
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.3	0.8	3.0	1.4
Lifetime alcohol use	2.9	6.4	14.7	7.9
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	0.9	1.7	6.6	3.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days) [†]	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.5
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	8.1	10.4	16.5	11.6
Lifetime marijuana use	0.3	2.8	6.1	3.0
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.3	1.1	4.2	1.8
Lifetime inhalant use	3.5	2.0	5.7	3.7
VIOLENCE				
Physical fighting (lifetime)	33.9	29.9	34.8	32.8
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	4.9	6.7	8.1	6.6
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	16.6	16.1	16.0	16.2
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.3	0.6	1.2	0.7
BULLYING VICTIMIZATION				
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	30.2	30.5	33.0	31.2
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	24.4	24.7	26.9	25.3
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	13.1	13.0	15.0	13.7
MENTAL HEALTH				
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	6.7	9.1	18.1	11.2
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	6.1	9.7	16.8	10.8
Self-injury (past 12 months)	4.1	5.0	11.1	6.7
Considered suicide (lifetime)	4.1	6.5	13.6	8.0
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.5	0.6	3.3	1.7
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT				
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	84.1	82.0	82.2	82.7
Overweight or obese [‡]	14.6	16.0	18.4	16.4

* 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

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