

**PLEASE NOTE:** This document contains only the portions of the full report that directly relate to student mental health. Highlights have been added to note relevant detail.

Click [here](#) to access the full report and additional analysis of the data, including regional data breakdowns.

# 2021

# Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey High School Results



AND 2021 COMPARATIVE TABLES FOR:  
- GRADES 7-8  
- AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS ON OR NEAR A RESERVATION  
- AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS IN URBAN SCHOOLS  
- NONPUBLIC ACCREDITED SCHOOLS  
- ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS  
- STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) report is a continuation of the surveillance and reporting system for adolescent risk behaviors developed by the Division of Adolescent and School Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The YRBS was first used in Montana in 1991. Superintendent Elsie Arntzen, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction, acknowledge the participation, support and cooperation of those persons who made the 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey possible. Sincere appreciation is expressed to:

- the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Surveillance Research Section, and WESTAT Technical Assistance Project;
- the cosponsors of the YRBS – Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Board of Crime Control, Billings Area Indian Health Service, Montana Department of Transportation – State Highway Traffic Safety Section, and the Montana Department of Justice Special Services Bureau.
- the district superintendents, school principals, YRBS coordinators and teachers who cooperated with and supported the survey; and, most importantly,
- the Montana students who participated in the survey.

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## Preface

Montana is proud to have completed over three decades of participation in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). These results are valuable to educators, school boards, and communities, including parents and students, in understanding the health risks of our Montana students; enabling districts to design local health and physical education curriculum to address local needs. In addition, these results drive state collaboration as well as program and policy decisions. The Montana Office of Public Instruction uses these results to establish benchmarks for reducing adolescent risk behaviors and increasing pro-social behaviors, designing state priorities for health programs, and evaluating the effectiveness of many health-related programs across the health and education systems.

The Office of Public Instruction believes in making data-driven decisions and uses the Youth Risk Behavior Survey as the platform to make program and policy decisions within the agency regarding the health of Montana students. We encourage our 825 schools to use this plan to focus on suicide prevention, school safety, and support for students to address substance abuse and mental health topics within their own school plans.

Thank you to all the schools who continue to administer this survey, providing Montana with this critical data. Especially noteworthy is during the spring of the 2020-2021 school year, when schools faced many challenges, 98% of all school districts, and 22,576 students in grades 7 through 12 completed the survey. The 2021 YRBS results are the students' story and a 'snapshot in time' of their experiences.

- Most unintentional injuries and violence behaviors showed improving trends; however, increases were seen in texting or e-mailing (57%), and apps use (52%) while driving; behaviors in which Montana students already had the highest rates in the nation in 2019.
- A 30-year high of 41% of high school students reported feelings of sadness or hopelessness (depression) over the last year. Suicide ideation rates remained level from past years.
- Current tobacco usage rates declined for all tobacco products – cigarettes (7%), electronic vapor products (26%), smokeless tobacco (5%), and cigars (5%).
- Alcohol and other drug use rates continue to decrease from those of students 30 years ago.
- Current marijuana use (past 30 days) was reported by 20% of students; continuing a downward trend from 37% in 2001.
- Fewer students are currently sexually active (30%); however, of these students, fewer are using a condom to prevent pregnancy (52%).
- Among nutrition and dietary behaviors, the rates of daily soda or pop consumption are favorably decreasing (12%). However, 17% of students did not eat breakfast and only 30% ate breakfast daily.
- Physical activity rates remained steady, but screen time of 3 or more hours per day was reported by 72% of students.



## INTRODUCTION

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is an epidemiologic surveillance system that was established by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help monitor the prevalence of behaviors that not only influence youth health, but also put youth at risk for the most significant health and social problems that can occur during adolescence and adulthood.

In 2019 in the United States, 86 percent of all deaths among persons aged 10-24 years resulted from four causes: motor vehicle crashes (23%), other unintentional injuries (22%), suicide (23%), and homicide (18%). Among persons aged 15-19 years, 209,809 births; 488,700 cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis; and 1,652 diagnoses of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) were reported. Among persons aged 25 years or more, 54% of all deaths in the United States resulted from cardiovascular disease (31%) and cancer (23%). These leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults in the United States are related to six categories of priority health-risk behaviors: behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV infection; unhealthy dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity. These behaviors frequently are interrelated and are established during childhood and adolescence and extend into adulthood.

To monitor priority health-risk behaviors in each of these six categories and obesity and asthma among youth and young adults, CDC developed the YRBS. Since 1991, the YRBS has been administered biennially by the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

The purpose of the YRBS is to assist educators and health professionals in determining the prevalence of the health-risk behaviors among youth. This report describes the results of the survey and the methods used to conduct the survey. The results will be used to focus the continuing development of statewide comprehensive health education and to reduce those health behaviors that place Montana youth at risk.

Survey results are presented in the following parts:

- Introduction
- Survey Methods
- Frequency Distributions
- Point of Interest (POI) Graphs - Gender, Grade Level and Race
- Trend Analysis Tables (2009 - 2021)
- Comparative Tables by Student Population

## SURVEY METHODS

### DESCRIPTION OF YRBS

The YRBS was developed cooperatively by the CDC, 19 other federal agencies, and state and local departments of education to measure the extent to which adolescents engage in health-risk behaviors. The 2021 survey instrument consisted of 98 questions which assessed six priority health-risk behaviors which result in the greatest amount of morbidity, mortality, and social problems among youth. These behaviors include behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV infection; unhealthy dietary behaviors and physical inactivity.

### SAMPLE SELECTION PROCESS

All public schools in Montana with students in grades 9 through 12 were eligible to be selected for inclusion in the sample. Fifty schools were randomly selected with probability proportional to enrollment. The 2021 Montana YRBS was completed by 4,467 students in 50 public high schools during the spring of 2021. The school response rate was 100%, the student response rate was 85%, and the overall response rate was 85%. The results are representative of all students in grades 9-12 in Montana.

Superintendents of school districts were contacted during October 2020 to obtain approval to administer the YRBS. Sufficient time was allowed to gain school board and/or parent approval, and to answer any questions about the survey. Each participating school submitted a list of second-period classes, and a random set of these classes were selected and surveyed. In smaller schools, a census of students was provided. Survey coordinators for each school were assigned by school administrators and packets of information, including instructions, survey booklets, and answer sheets, were mailed to each school during February 2021. Surveys were administered during second period classes during the last week of February-March and returned to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) for processing within one week of survey administration.

The teachers who administered the survey to students were provided detailed written instructions to ensure uniform survey administration across sites. To encourage accurate responses to sensitive questions, a strict protocol was implemented to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participating students.

Students completed a self-administered, anonymous, 98-item questionnaire. Survey procedures were designed to protect the privacy of students by allowing for anonymous and voluntary participation. Students could decline to participate, turn in blank or incomplete survey forms, or stop completing the survey at any time.

Local parental permission procedures were followed before survey administration. The protocols used in the YRBS ensure that participating schools are not violating any federal laws protecting students' rights and privacy, including the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

#### **SURVEY VALIDITY AND LIMITATIONS**

A weighting procedure was performed to reduce bias by compensating for differing patterns of nonresponse at the school and student levels and to reflect the likelihood of sampling each student. The weighted results contained in this report can be used to make inferences about the priority health-risk behaviors of all high school students in grades 9 through 12 in all schools in Montana.

The approximate error rate, using a normal approximation, is plus-or-minus 3 percent. However, users should be careful when using the data since respondents in self-reported surveys may have a tendency to underreport behaviors that are socially undesirable, unhealthy, or illegal (alcohol consumption, drug use, seat belt non-usage, etc.) and overreport behaviors that are socially desirable (amount of exercise, etc.).

20. Have you ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?	
A. Yes	11.0
B. No	89.0

21. During the past 12 months, how many times did <b>anyone</b> force you to do sexual things that you did not want to do? (Count such things as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.)	
A. 0 times	86.5
B. 1 time	7.5
C. 2 or 3 times	3.7
D. 4 or 5 times	0.9
E. 6 or more times	1.3

22. During the past 12 months, how many times did <b>someone you were dating or going out with</b> force you to do sexual things that you did not want to do? (Count such things as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.)	
A. I did not date or go out with anyone during the past 12 months	40.4
B. 0 times	54.8
C. 1 time	2.2
D. 2 or 3 times	1.5
E. 4 or 5 times	0.4
F. 6 or more times	0.7

23. During the past 12 months, how many times did <b>someone you were dating or going out with</b> physically hurt you on purpose? (Count such things as being hit, slammed into something, or injured with an object or weapon.)	
A. I did not date or go out with anyone during the past 12 months	39.5
B. 0 times	56.2
C. 1 time	1.8
D. 2 or 3 times	1.2
E. 4 or 5 times	0.4
F. 6 or more times	0.9

The next 3 questions ask about bullying. Bullying is when 1 or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when 2 students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way.

24. During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied <b>on school property</b> ?	
A. Yes	15.6
B. No	84.4

25. During the past 12 months, have you ever been <b>electronically</b> bullied? (Count being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media.)	
A. Yes	16.4
B. No	83.6

26. During the past 12 months, have you ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought you were gay, lesbian or bisexual?	
A. Yes	13.6
B. No	86.4

The next 5 questions ask about sad feelings and attempted suicide. Sometimes people feel so depressed about the future that they may consider attempting suicide, that is, taking some action to end their own life.

27. During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for <b>two weeks or more in a row</b> that you stopped doing some usual activities?	
A. Yes	41.4
B. No	58.6

28. During the past 12 months, did you ever <b>seriously</b> consider attempting suicide?	
A. Yes	21.7
B. No	78.3

29. During the past 12 months, did you make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?	
A. Yes	18.0
B. No	82.0

30. During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?	
A. 0 times	89.8
B. 1 time	6.7
C. 2 or 3 times	2.5
D. 4 or 5 times	0.5
E. 6 or more times	0.5

31. <b>If you attempted suicide</b> during the past 12 months, did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?	
A. <b>I did not attempt suicide</b> during the past 12 months	89.9
B. Yes	3.2
C. No	6.9

The next 4 questions ask about cigarette smoking.

32. Have you ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs?	
A. Yes	27.8
B. No	72.2

33. How old were you when you first tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs?	
A. I have never tried cigarette smoking, not even one or two puffs	72.3
B. 8 years old or younger	3.2
C. 9 or 10 years old	2.3
D. 11 or 12 years old	4.1
E. 13 or 14 years old	7.8
F. 15 or 16 years old	8.2
G. 17 years old or older	2.1

34. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?	
A. 0 days	93.0
B. 1 or 2 days	3.2
C. 3 to 5 days	1.2
D. 6 to 9 days	1.0
E. 10 to 19 days	0.5
F. 20 to 29 days	0.3
G. All 30 days	0.8

35. During the past 30 days, on the days you smoked, how many cigarettes did you smoke <b>per day</b> ?	
A. I did not smoke cigarettes during the past 30 days	92.9
B. Less than 1 cigarette per day	3.4
C. 1 cigarette per day	1.3
D. 2 to 5 cigarettes per day	1.7
E. 6 to 10 cigarettes per day	0.3
F. 11 to 20 cigarettes per day	0.0
G. More than 20 cigarettes per day	0.2

The next 5 questions ask about electronic vapor products, such as JUUL, SMOK, Suorin, Vuse, and blu. Electronic vapor products include e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods.

36. Have you ever used an electronic vapor product?	
A. Yes	48.3
B. No	51.7

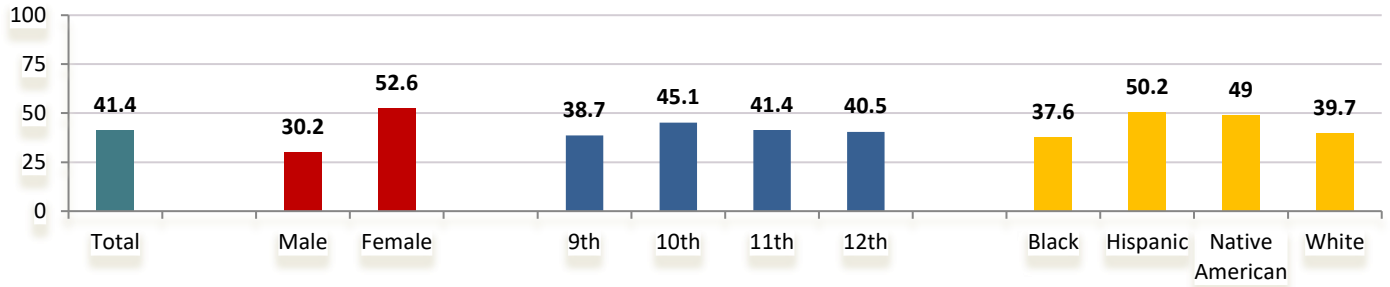
37. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use an electronic vapor product?	
A. 0 days	74.5
B. 1 or 2 days	5.5
C. 3 to 5 days	3.5
D. 6 to 9 days	2.4
E. 10 to 19 days	3.6
F. 20 to 29 days	3.7
G. All 30 days	6.7

38. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use an electronic vapor product <b>on school property</b> ?	
A. 0 days	86.6
B. 1 or 2 days	3.8
C. 3 to 5 days	1.9
D. 6 to 9 days	1.4
E. 10 to 19 days	2.1
F. 20 to 29 days	1.4
G. All 30 days	2.9

# UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES AND VIOLENCE

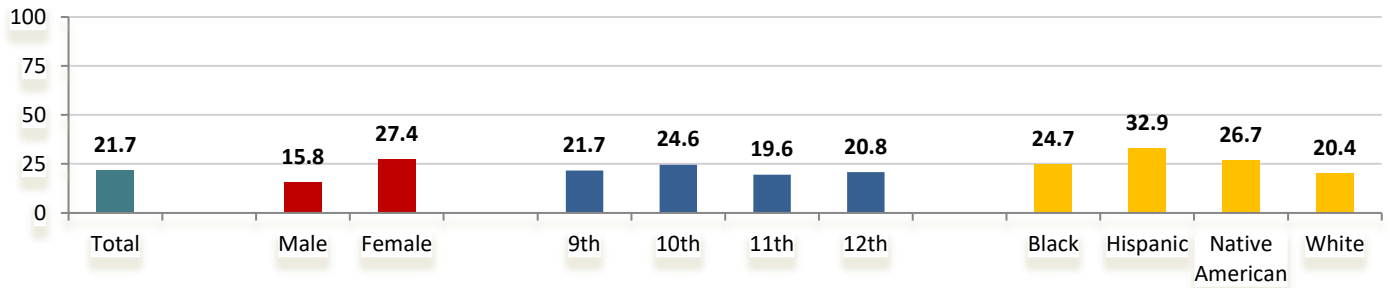
## FELT SAD OR HOPELESS

During the past 12 months, 41.4 percent of students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.



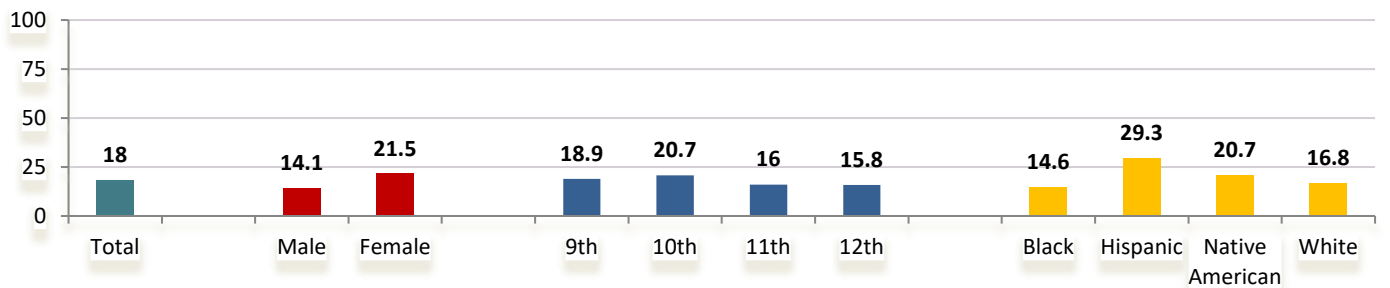
## SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE

During the past 12 months, 23.4 percent of students seriously considered attempting suicide.



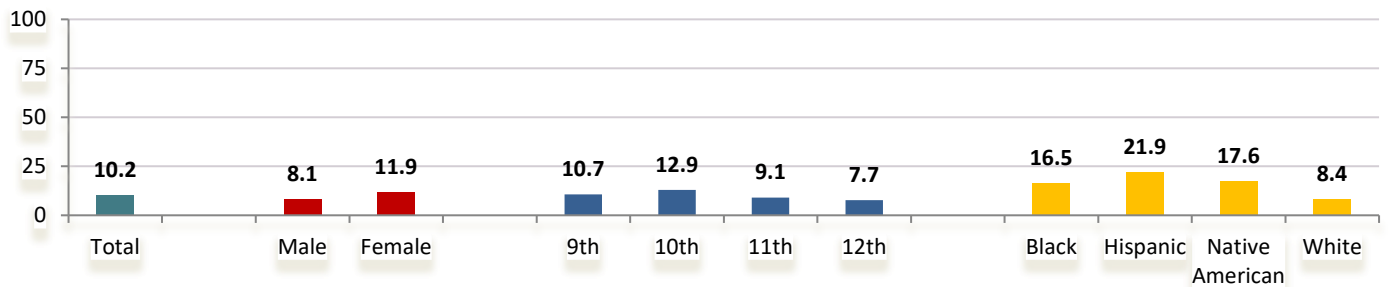
## MADE A SUICIDE PLAN

During the past 12 months, 18.0 percent of students made a plan about how they would attempt suicide.



## ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

During the past 12 months, 10.2 percent of students actually attempted suicide one or more times.

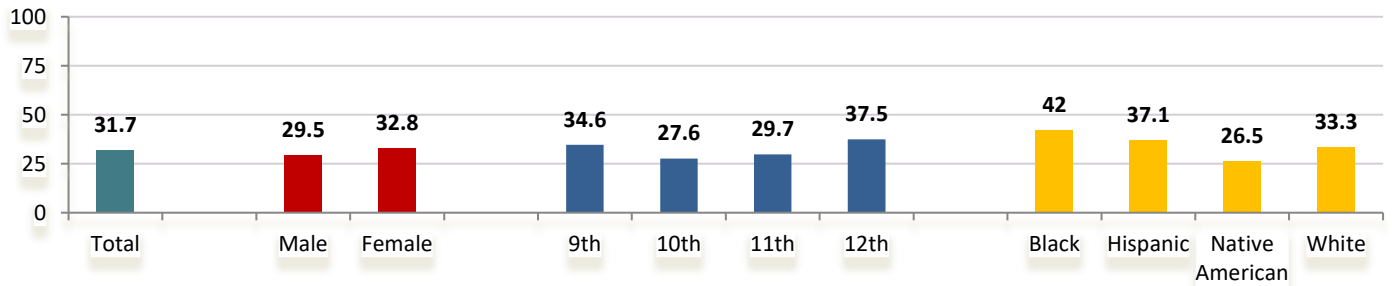




# Unintentional Injuries and Violence

## SUICIDE ATTEMPT TREATED BY A DOCTOR OR NURSE

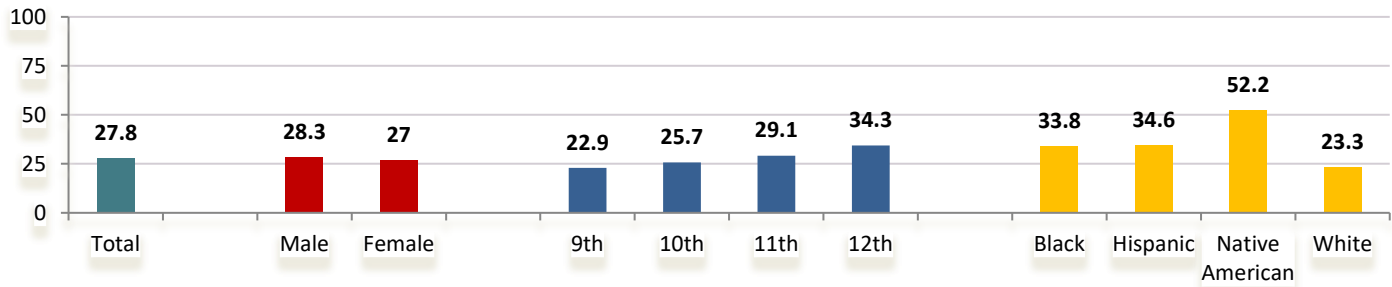
Among students who attempted suicide during the past 12 months, 31.7 percent had a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse.



# Tobacco Use

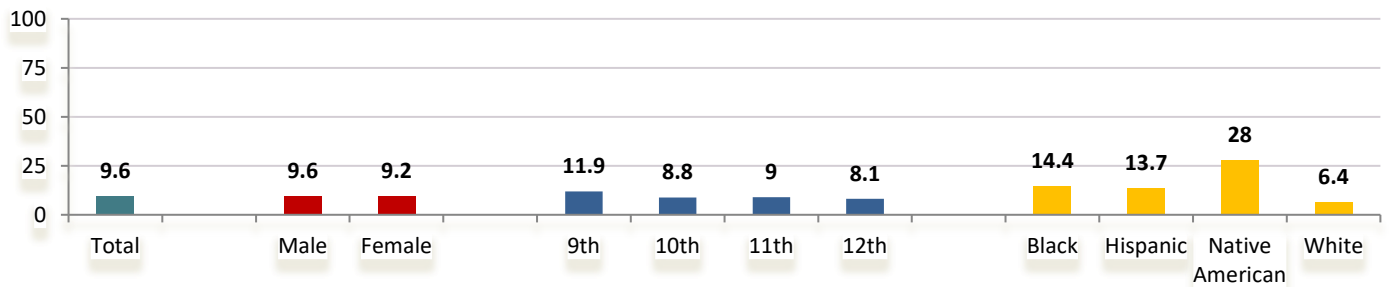
## LIFETIME CIGARETTE USE

Statewide, 27.8 percent of students had ever tried cigarette smoking (even one or two puffs).



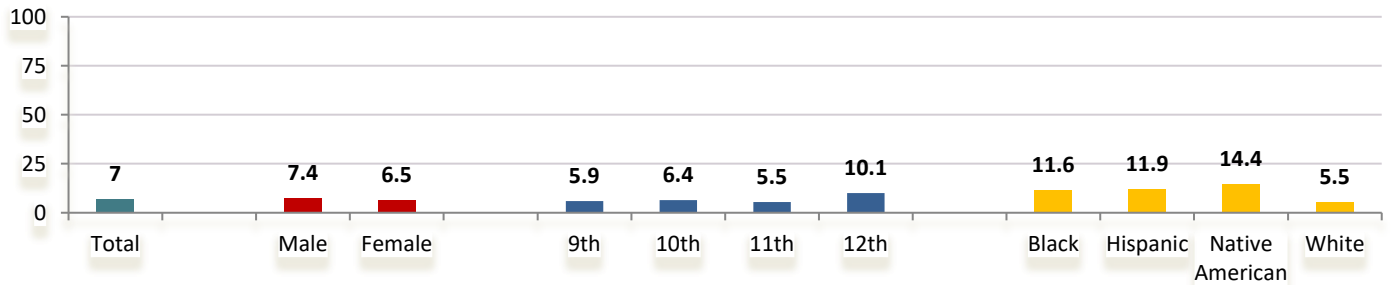
## FIRST TRIED CIGARETTE SMOKING BEFORE AGE 13 YEARS

Statewide, 9.6 percent of students had first tried cigarette smoking before age 13 years.



## CURRENT SMOKER

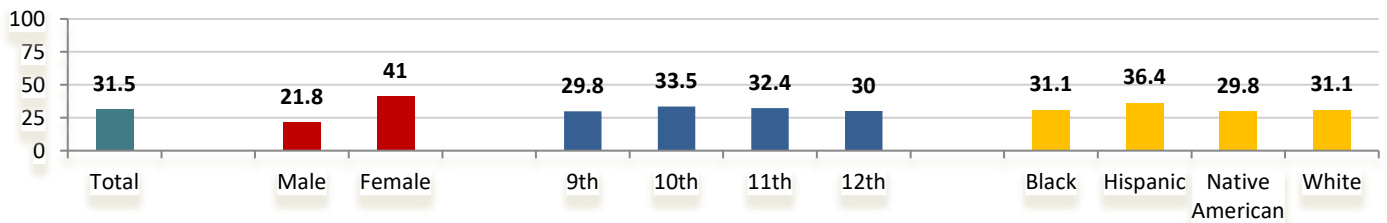
Statewide, 7.0 percent of students smoked cigarettes on one or more of the past 30 days.



## Other Health-Related Behaviors

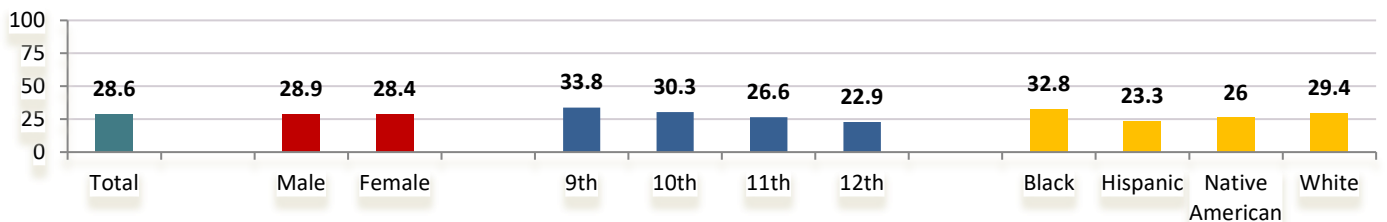
### CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

Statewide, 31.5 percent of students reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good during the past 30 days.



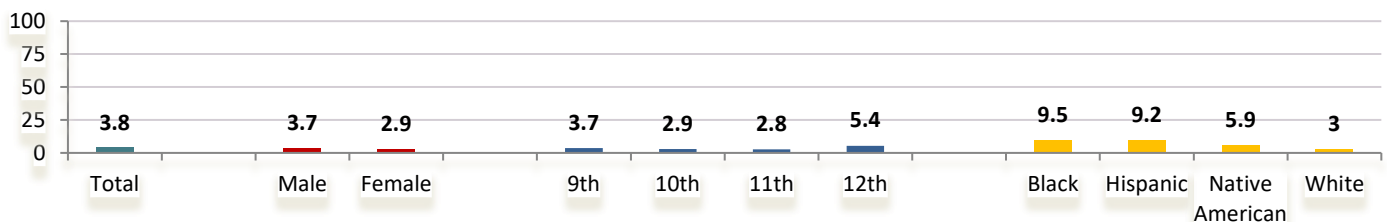
### 8 HOURS OF SLEEP

Statewide, 28.6 percent of students had 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.



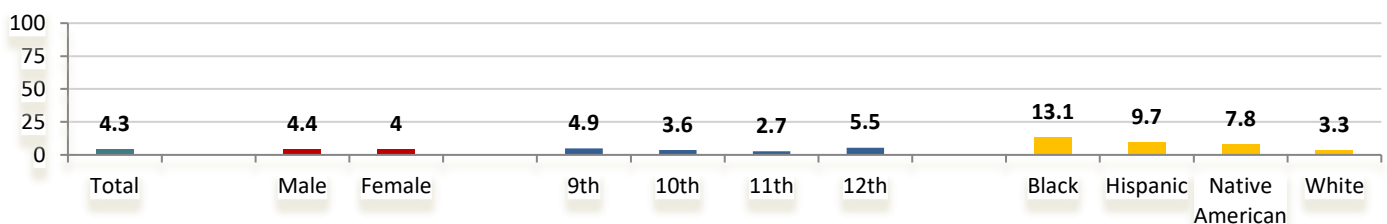
### HOMELESSNESS

During the past 30 days, 3.8 percent of students did not usually sleep in their parent's or guardian's home.



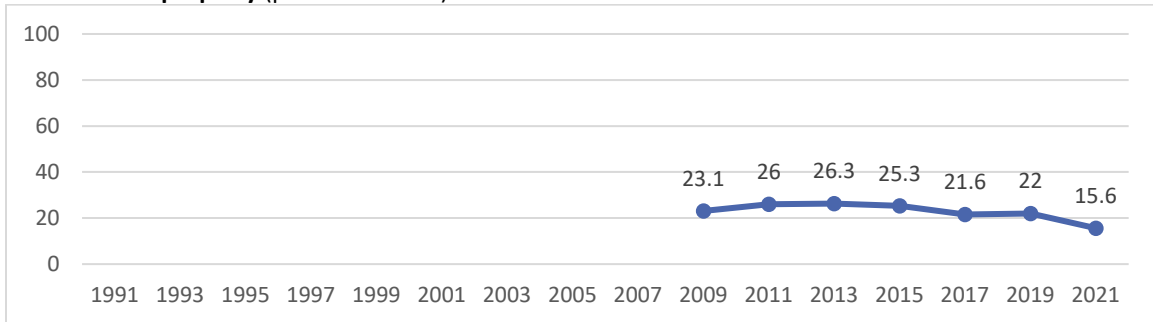
### RUNAWAY YOUTH

During the past 30 days, 4.3 percent of students had slept away from their parents or guardians because they were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned, during the past 30 days.



## 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results 30-Year Trend Charts (1991-2021)

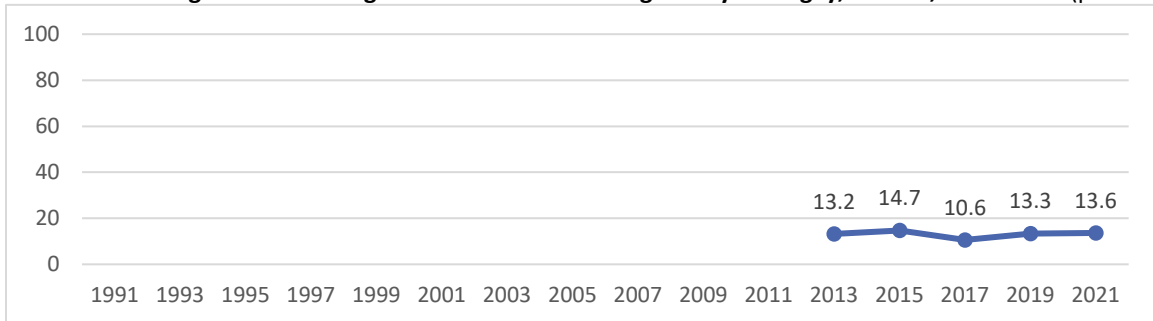
**Were bullied on school property (past 12 months)**



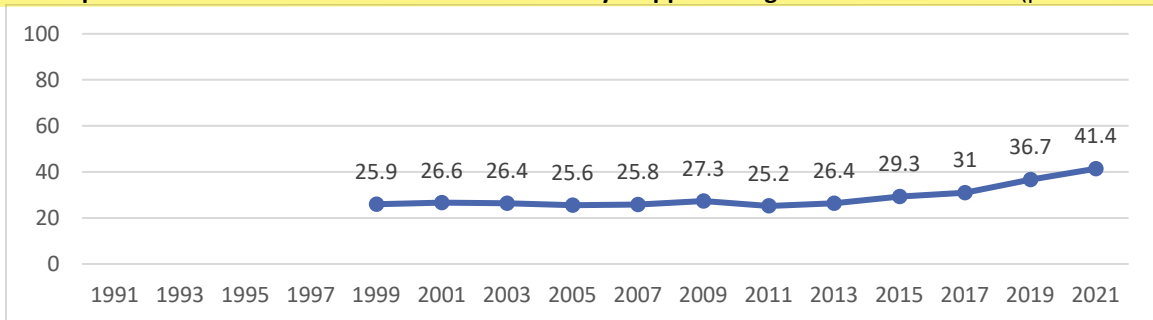
**Were electronically bullied (past 12 months)**



**Were the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual (past 12 months)**

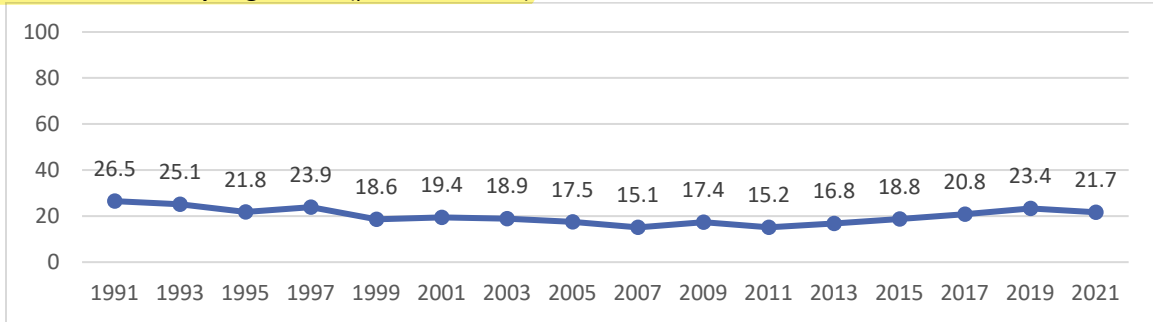


**Felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities (past 12 months)**

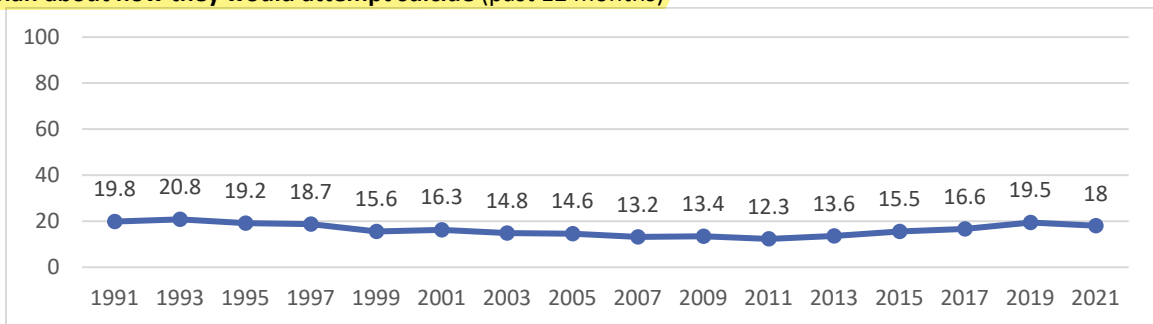


## 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results 30-Year Trend Charts (1991-2021)

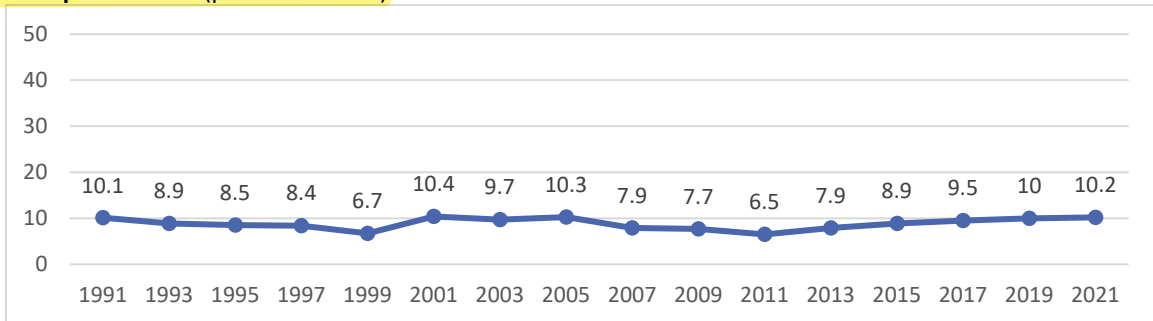
**Seriously considered attempting suicide (past 12 months)**



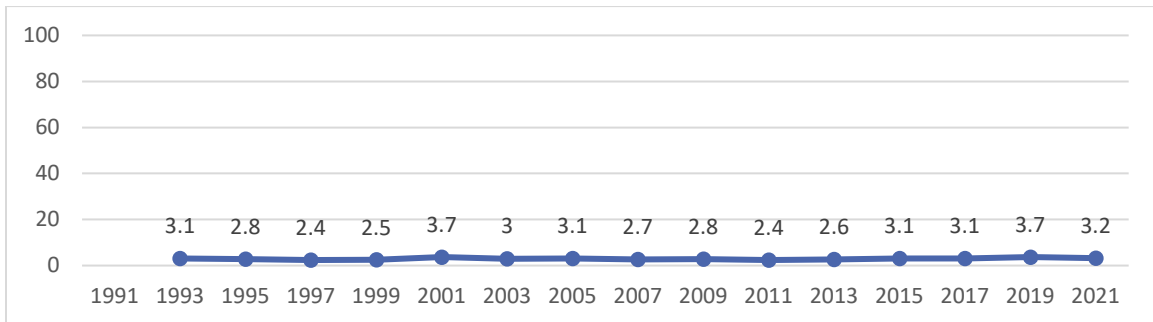
**Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (past 12 months)**



**Actually attempted suicide (past 12 months)**

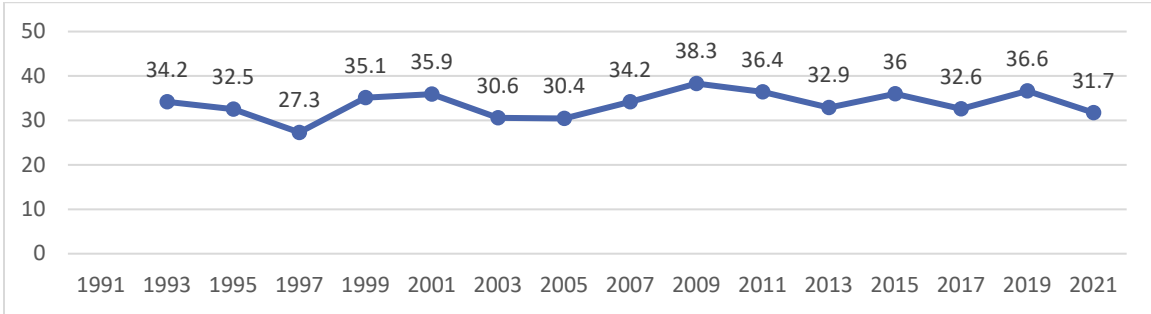


**Had a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse (past 12 months)**



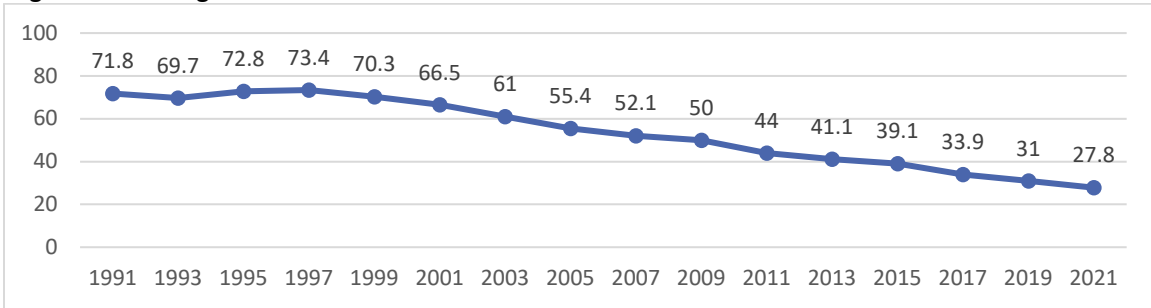
## 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results 30-Year Trend Charts (1991-2021)

**Among students who attempted suicide, had an attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse (past 12 months)**

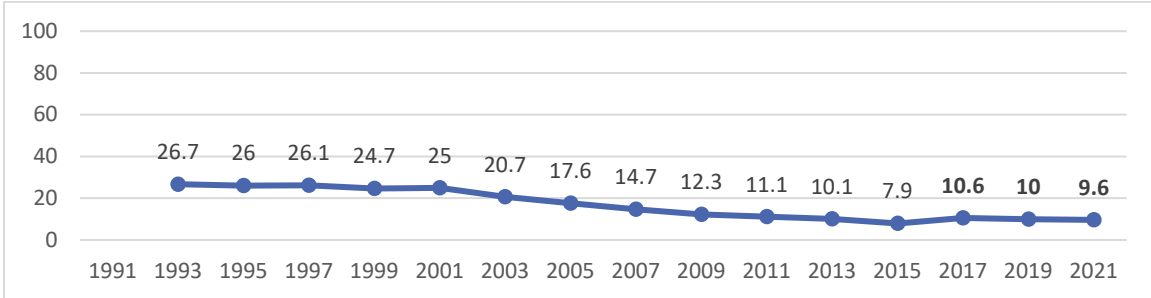


### Tobacco Use

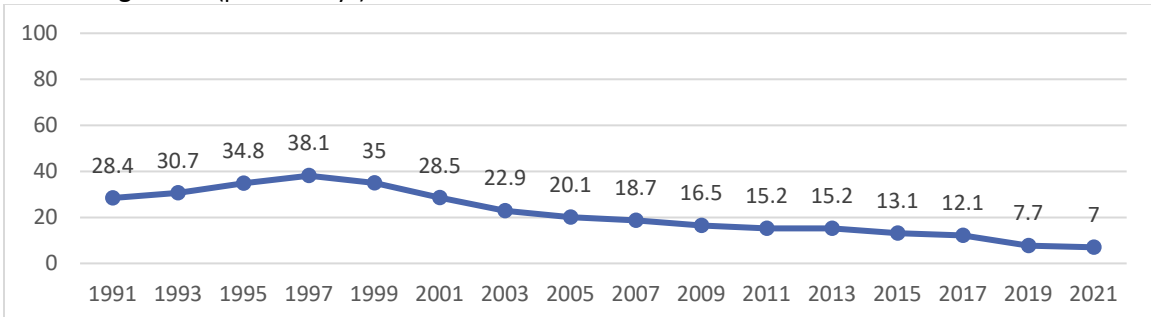
**Ever tried cigarette smoking**



**First tried cigarette smoking before age 13 years (whole cigarette 1993-2015), even one or two puffs (2017-current)**



**Currently smoked cigarettes (past 30 days)**



## 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Comparative Tables

The Montana High Schools results, with Native American, Black, and Hispanic subgroups, are based on random sampling procedures with a plus-or-minus 3 percent error rate. These weighted data can be used to make inferences about all high school students in Montana. A total of 11,596 students participated in the High School YRBS; 4,467 students from randomly sampled schools (Montana YRBS) and 7,129 high school students from non-sampled Montana high schools.

Data results for all other reports are based on census sampling procedures and are representative of those students who completed the survey. The data for these reports are based on the following number of students:

Grades 7-8 – 10,195  
 American Indian Students On or Near a Reservation – 861  
 American Indian Students in Urban Schools – 784  
 Nonpublic Accredited Schools – 503  
 Alternative Schools – 282  
 Students with Disabilities – 1,889

**Table (left to right):** Montana YRBS High School ~ Grades 7-8 ~ American Indian Students on Reservations (AI-R)  
 American Indian Students in Urban Schools (AI-U) ~ Nonpublic Accredited Schools (NPA)  
 Alternative Schools (ALT) ~ Students with Disabilities (SWD)

<b><i>Injury and Violence</i></b>	<b>Montana YRBS HS</b>	<b>Grades 7-8</b>	<b>AI-R</b>	<b>AI-U</b>	<b>NPA</b>	<b>ALT</b>	<b>SWD</b>
Percentage of students who:							
Did not <i>always</i> wear a seat belt when riding in a car	46.0	51.3	70.6	60.2	30.9	56.7	58.2
Did not <i>always</i> wear a seat belt when driving a car	28.7	41.4	50.2	35.5	15.2	33.7	41.2
Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol during the past 30 days	20.7	21.0	25.2	22.6	15.7	28.8	24.5
Drove when drinking alcohol during the past 30 days	7.5	NA	10.6	9.6	8.9	15.3	12.1
Texted or e-mailed while driving a car during the past 30 days	57.1	NA	51.7	51.8	60.0	59.9	52.2
Used the Internet or apps on a cell phone (such as YouTube, Instagram, or Facebook) while driving during the past 30 days	51.5	NA	53.3	49.6	56.5	52.0	49.1
Carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property during the past 30 days	9.1	4.8	6.7	12.8	4.2	12.1	13.4
Carried a gun during the past 12 months (do not count days when you carried a gun only for hunting or for a sport, such as target shooting)	8.9	7.4	9.1	10.3	3.8	8.1	11.1
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school during the past 30 days	6.6	9.6	9.9	8.9	6.6	8.2	12.4
Were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the past 12 months	6	7.3	5.0	7.4	2.4	6.7	9.8
Were in a physical fight during the past 12 months	19.7	31.0	23.8	29.0	16.1	35.3	28.6
Were in a physical fight on school property during the past 12 months	5.2	12.1	6.6	11.0	1.2	6.8	10.8

## 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Comparative Tables

<b>Injury and Violence</b>	<b>Montana YRBS HS</b>	<b>Grades 7-8</b>	<b>AI-R</b>	<b>AI-U</b>	<b>NPA</b>	<b>ALT</b>	<b>SWD</b>
Percentage of students who:							
Were ever physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to	11.0	6.9	15.1	14.1	10.0	29.9	18.4
Experienced sexual violence by force during the past 12 months	13.5	7.4	11.9	15.6	12.8	22.3	18.0
Experienced <i>sexual dating violence</i> by someone they <b>dated</b> or went out with during the past 12 months	8.1	7.7	9.4	12.5	12.0	18.2	15.9
Experienced <i>physical dating violence</i> by someone they <b>dated</b> or went out with during the past 12 months	7.2	5.3	10.5	10.4	5.6	15.6	10.1
Were bullied on school property during the past 12 months	15.6	26.4	15.1	25.2	14.5	13.9	30.0
Were electronically bullied during the past 12 months	16.4	21.2	15.4	19.7	17.4	24.4	26.4
Have ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual during the past 12 months	13.6	20.4	13.0	18.1	12.0	19.9	22.2
Felt sad or hopeless for 2 or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities during the past 12 months	41.4	36.1	46.8	53.8	35.4	65.0	54.3
Seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months	21.7	20.8	27.5	33.8	18.2	41.2	34.0
Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months	18.0	18.3	24.0	28.0	14.6	29.9	28.5
Attempted suicide during the past 12 months	10.2	13.5	22.3	20.5	10.5	21.8	23.9
Among students who attempted suicide, had a suicide attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse during the past 12 months	31.7	22.4	25.2	25.8	29.6	31.3	30.0
<b>Tobacco Use</b>	<b>Montana YRBS HS</b>	<b>Grades 7-8</b>	<b>AI-R</b>	<b>AI-U</b>	<b>NPA</b>	<b>ALT</b>	<b>SWD</b>
Percentage of students who:							
Ever tried cigarette smoking in their life	27.8	17.2	49.5	42.3	20.8	71.8	40.7
First tried cigarette smoking before age 13 years	9.6	12.8	25.0	19.5	41.8	30.8	17.5
Currently smoked cigarettes, past 30 days	7.0	4.4	20.3	12.3	3.4	35.4	14.8
Currently smoked cigarettes frequently, 20 or more of the past 30 days	1.2	0.4	4.5	2.1	0.4	10.4	2.9
Currently smoked cigarettes daily, all of the past 30 days	0.8	0.3	3.4	1.7	0.2	6.8	2.0
Smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day during the past 30 days, among current smokers	3.5	2.7	1.8	7.5	12.5	2.2	5.3
Ever used an electronic vapor product	48.3	24.0	55.3	59.5	45.4	79.1	55.9
Currently used an electronic vapor product, past 30 days	25.5	11.5	35.9	35.5	24.8	60.7	34.1
Used an electronic vapor product on school property, past 30 days	13.4	3.4	15.5	15.2	11.6	34.1	17.0

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