

2021 Middlesex Youth Behavioral Health Survey

Watertown Report



Introduction

Middlesex League YRBS

Since 2017, 11 school districts in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, collectively called the Middlesex League, have collaborated to jointly conduct a youth health survey to capture vital information related to health status and certain behaviors that have been deemed as putting the health of students in middle and high school at-risk. Local superintendents have engaged the services of John Snow, Inc. (JSI) a public health consulting firm with expertise in survey administration, to support this initiative. The superintendents and health coordinators work with JSI to develop a common middle and high school youth health survey instrument based on the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Youth Health Survey. These national and State instruments, as well as the Middlesex League Youth Health Survey instruments, are updated every two years in response to emerging health issues. Individual school districts are also given the opportunity to incorporate additional questions, tailored to their unique circumstances and needs, which are added to the standard core survey, to create their specific district survey. This process allows individual school districts and the region, overall, to better understand and respond to the health risks facing youth in their communities, as well as to promote information sharing and coordination across school districts, health officials, and other community-based service providers.

The 2021 YRBS builds upon the 2017 and 2019 assessments, and includes the districts of Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, Wilmington, Winchester, Woburn, and Watertown.

Survey Administration & Consent Process

Once the content for each school district survey is finalized, JSI designed self-administered, online surveys for each district using a nationally recognized, specialized survey platform called Alchemer (formerly SurveyGizmo). JSI then created a series of unique URLs for each district to use to administer their survey. Typically, JSI creates a URL for each of the district's middle and high schools, so that school-specific data can be captured and then aggregated to create a district-level dataset. JSI then worked with each school district to develop a survey administration plan and schedule. Schools were given a period of 2 months to administer surveys (between March and April 2021). At the district-level, survey administration occurred over 1 to 3 day period, during the students' regular class time. Given the COVID-19 public health emergency, the 2021 survey process was typically administered while students were participating in remote learning, although some districts had students take the it in the school-setting.

Prior to administration, the districts are provided additional, tailored assistance with respect to implementing the student opt-out process, confidentiality practices, and other procedures to ensure the quality and integrity of the data collection process. Schools obtain passive parental permission. Parents are mailed a form explaining the purpose of the survey and given the opportunity to have their child out "opt out" of taking it. JSI is wholly responsible for protecting data and ensuring student confidentiality. The surveys are considered anonymous in that students are not asked to provide their names and no identifying information (e.g., Geodata, IP address) is collected. Individual student surveys are never shared, but are combined to create school- and district-specific datasets. The individual district datasets are then combined to create a Middlesex League or regional dataset, which provides benchmark data for the schools to compare themselves against.

Data Cleaning & Analysis

Online administration of the survey allowed for results to be immediately transferred to JSI's secure computer servers, where the data were aggregated and analyzed using SAS 9.4 (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC). Overall rate of completion was checked for each survey. Records with fewer than 30 valid responses for high schools and fewer than 25 responses for middle schools (shorter overall survey length) were removed. Logical edits on each questionnaire were performed and responses that conflicted in logical terms were both set to missing. A descriptive analysis of survey responses was conducted and summary reports were developed for each district, highlighting key findings in comparison to the Middlesex League region, Commonwealth, and national averages, whenever possible.

Content of the Survey and Reporting

Survey Content

The Middlesex Youth Health Survey asks students to report risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults. Six major health behaviors that are related to the leading causes of illness and death among youth in the United States have been identified and categorized into the following domains:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence
- Behaviors related to mental health
- Smoking and tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV infection
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors and physical inactivity.

In addition, given the unique circumstances related to the COVID-19 public health emergency, questions have been added this year to gather relevant information to assess the impact of COVID-19 and put the consequences of this emergency in the appropriate context.

Reporting

The purpose of this report is to highlight key findings for each of the six core domains, and the COVID-19 questions. Data is reported and analyzed for all students in Watertown, as well as by grade, gender identity, and race when relevant. The following report includes a brief narrative summary of each domain to provide national context. This narrative is then followed by a series of bulleted statements and graphs, which together summarize the survey finding by domain. The information provided below is meant to highlight key themes and provide a perspective on how the district-specific data compares to the regional benchmark data. The school-districts have been provided detailed data outputs and raw reports that allow them to look more carefully at data from each question on the survey, including information that allows the school districts to analyze their data by specific demographic cohorts, such as for girls, boys, different racial categories, middle school students, or high school students. The 2021 school year was unprecedented with the impact of the pandemic, and therefore, comparisons to prior year data will be limited this year.

Key Findings

Respondent Characteristics

How do you describe yourself?

A total of 516 middle school (MS) and 524 high school (HS) students were included in the Watertown analysis. Tables 1 and 2 show the distribution of survey respondents by grade, race, sex assigned at birth, and gender.

Given the low number of respondents who report identifying as genderqueer, findings reflect unstable estimates.

Table 1. Distribution of Watertown MS respondents

Total	516	100%
Grade		
6 th Grade	166	32.7%
7 th Grade	158	31.2%
8 th Grade	182	35.9%
Race/Ethnicity		
AI/AN*	11	2.4%
Asian	38	8.1%
Black or African American	36	7.7%
NH/PI**	4	0.9%
White	343	73.5%
Multi-Racial	35	7.5%
Gender		
Male	254	50.1%
Female	221	43.6%
Genderqueer	17	3.4%

*American Indian/Alaska Native

**Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Table 2. Distribution of Watertown HS respondents

Total	524	100%
Grade		
9 th Grade	152	29.1%
10 th Grade	129	24.7%
11 th Grade	130	24.9%
12 th Grade	111	21.2%
Race/Ethnicity		
AI/AN*	3	0.3%
Asian	196	17.7%
Black or African American	16	1.4%
NH/PI**	3	0.3%
White	830	74.9%
Multi-Racial	60	5.4%
Hispanic/Latino	58	5.2%
Sex Assigned at Birth		
Male	258	49.6%
Female	263	50.4%
Gender		
Male	258	49.5%
Female	250	48.0%
Genderqueer	8	1.5%

*American Indian/Alaska Native

**Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Key Findings

Coronavirus Pandemic

Beginning in early 2020, the United States experienced the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. While the extent of the pandemic's effects on adolescents is unknown, early evidence shows that it has had a profound effect on student's mental and physical well-being. Major findings conclude that more than one-quarter of students (29%) say they do not feel connect at all to school adults.¹ A similar percentage do not feel connected to their classmates or school community. Additionally, more than 1 in 4 young people report sleeping fewer hours because of worry, loss of self-confidence, and feelings of unhappiness, depression, and constant strain. The distress that students face has been greatly exacerbated by COVID-19, however, it follows the historical trend of increasing depression, anxiety, and stress experienced by young people.

Watertown Summary

- Watertown's students reported experiencing poor mental health at similar rates to the Middlesex League Region.
- Over one-third of HS and MS students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always. Genderqueer students were significantly more likely to report poor mental health.
- While the majority of students did not experience any adverse financial or health-related affects of COVID-19, **25% of HS and 24% of MS students had a family member or close friend who died.**
- More than half of HS students reported experiencing feelings of anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration in reaction to the coronavirus. 50% of HS students reported experiencing changes in appetite, energy, desires and interests.
- Just over half of HS and MS students reported feeling close to people in their school (53% and 54%, respectively).

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- During the coronavirus pandemic, how often was your mental health not good?
- During the past 12 months, did any of these things happen to you?
- During the coronavirus pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?
- Do you agree or disagree that you feel close to people at your school?

¹ <https://www.americaspromise.org/press-release/national-survey-high-school-students-during-covid-19-finds-widespread-negative-impact>

Key Findings

Coronavirus Pandemic

During the coronavirus pandemic, how often was students' mental health not good?

- **Overall:** Over one-third of Watertown HS and MS students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always.
- **Race:** Asian Watertown HS and Black Watertown MS students were more likely to report that their mental health was not good most of the time or always.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer Watertown students were significantly more likely to report that their mental health was not good most of the time or always followed by female and male students.

Figure 1. Percent of HS students who reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always due to the coronavirus pandemic

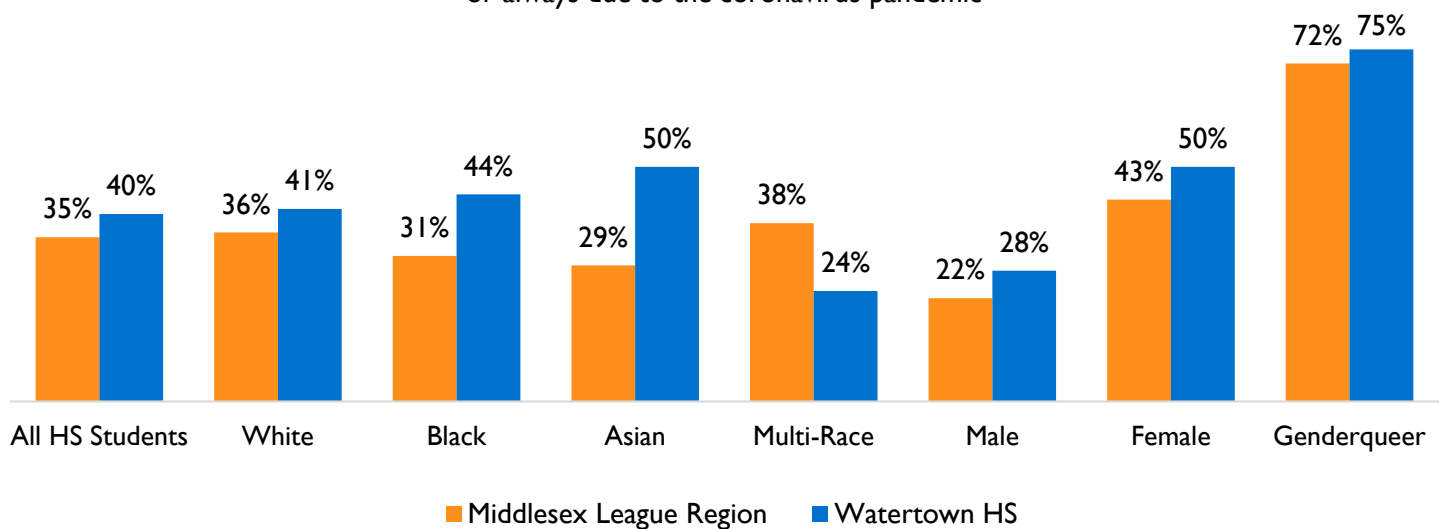
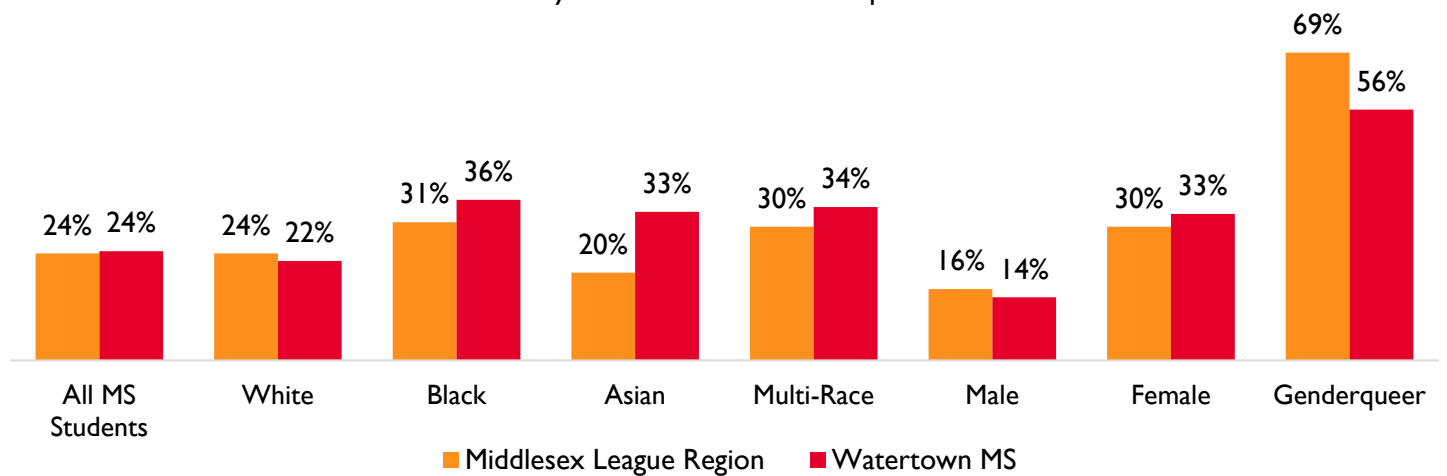


Figure 2. Percent of MS students who reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always due to the coronavirus pandemic



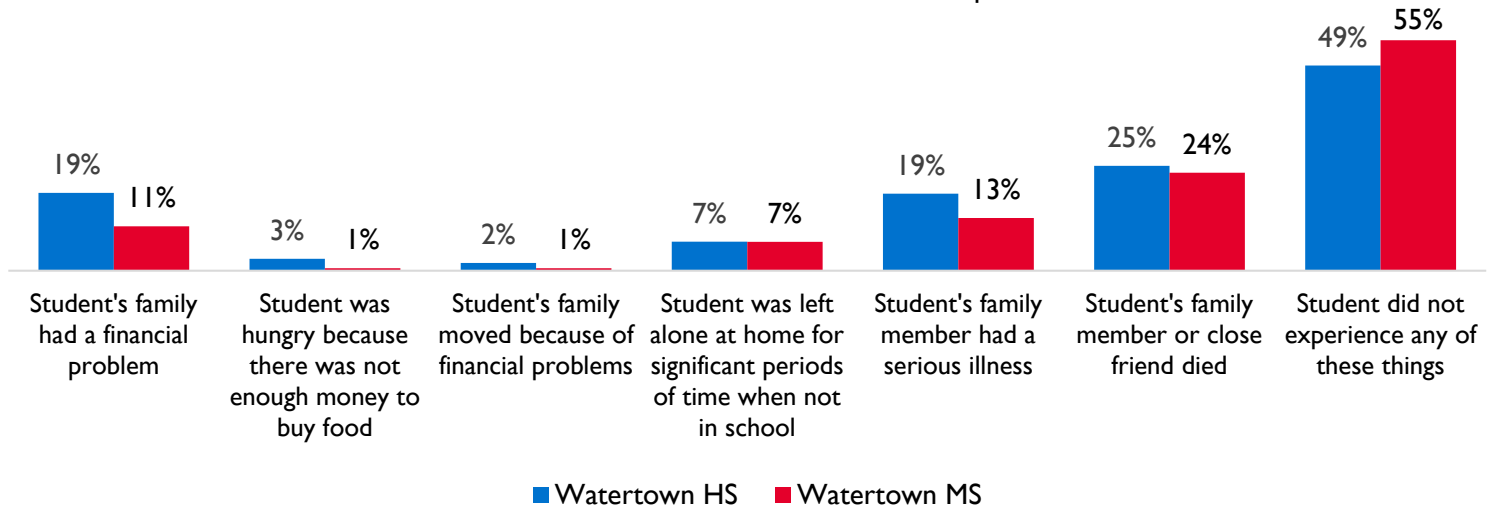
Key Findings

Coronavirus Pandemic

During the past 12 months, did any of these things happen to you?

- **Overall:** Watertown HS and MS students were most likely to report that they did not experience any adverse effects of coronavirus (49% and 55%, respectively), followed by the death of a family member or close friend (25% and 24%, respectively) and a family member having a serious illness (19% and 13%, respectively),

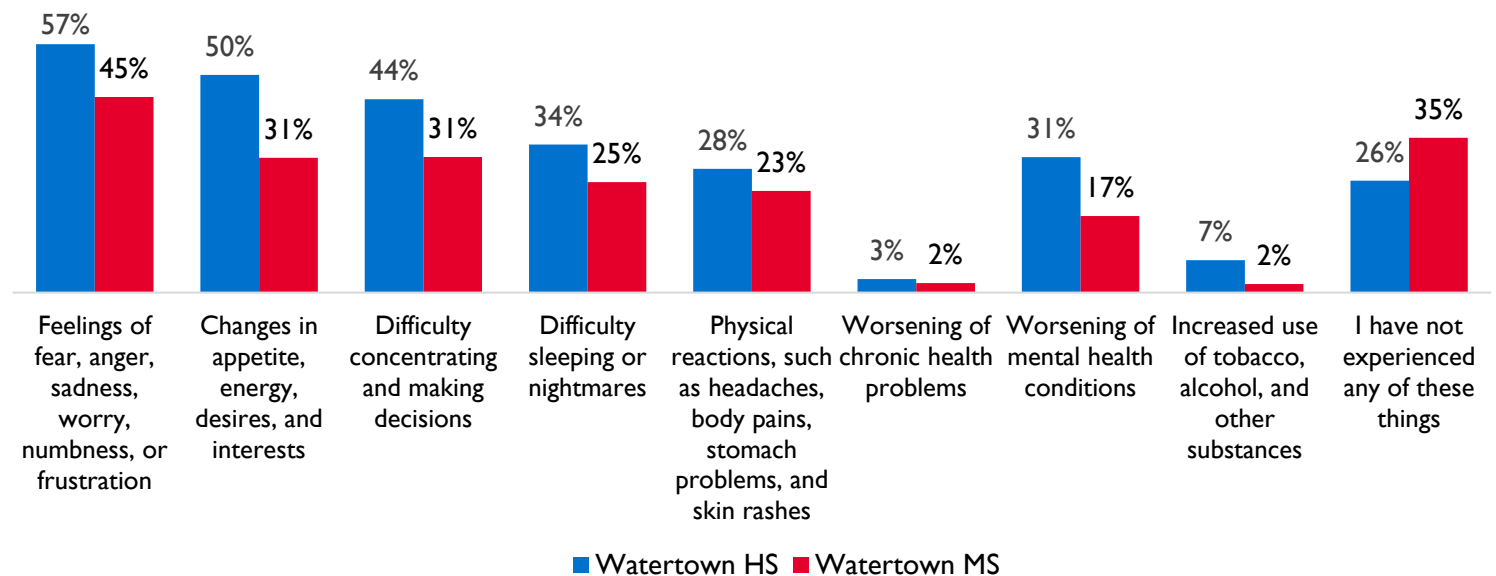
Figure 3. Percent of Watertown students who reported that their family experience adverse financial or health effects from the coronavirus pandemic



During the coronavirus pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

- **Overall:** Watertown HS students were more likely than MS students to report having experienced emotional and physical stress reactions to the coronavirus, as well as increased substance use.

Figure 4. Watertown student reactions to the stress of the coronavirus pandemic



Key Findings

Coronavirus Pandemic

Do you agree or disagree that you feel close to people at your school?

- **Overall:** The majority of Watertown MS and HS students agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people in their school (53% and 54%, respectively).
- **Race:** For HS respondents, White students were most likely to agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people in their school (56%), however for MS respondents, Black and Multi-Racial students were most likely (62%) compared to students of other races.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer students were significantly less likely to agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people at their school than female and male students, but in MS were more likely than the Middlesex League Region.
- **Grade:** Watertown students responded similarly by grade.

Figure 5. Percent of HS students who reported that they agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people in their school

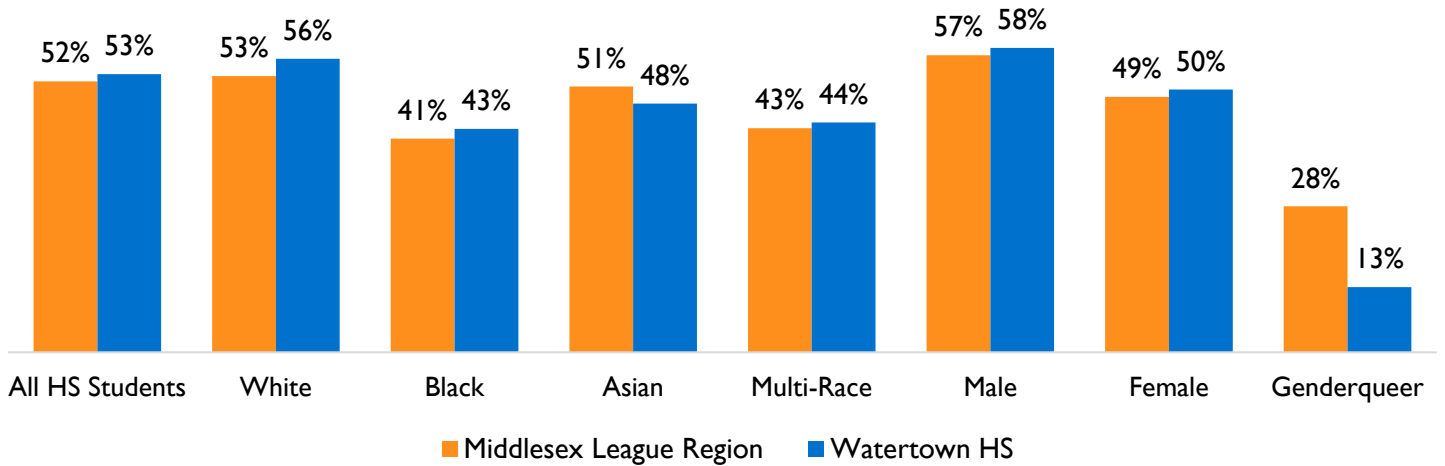
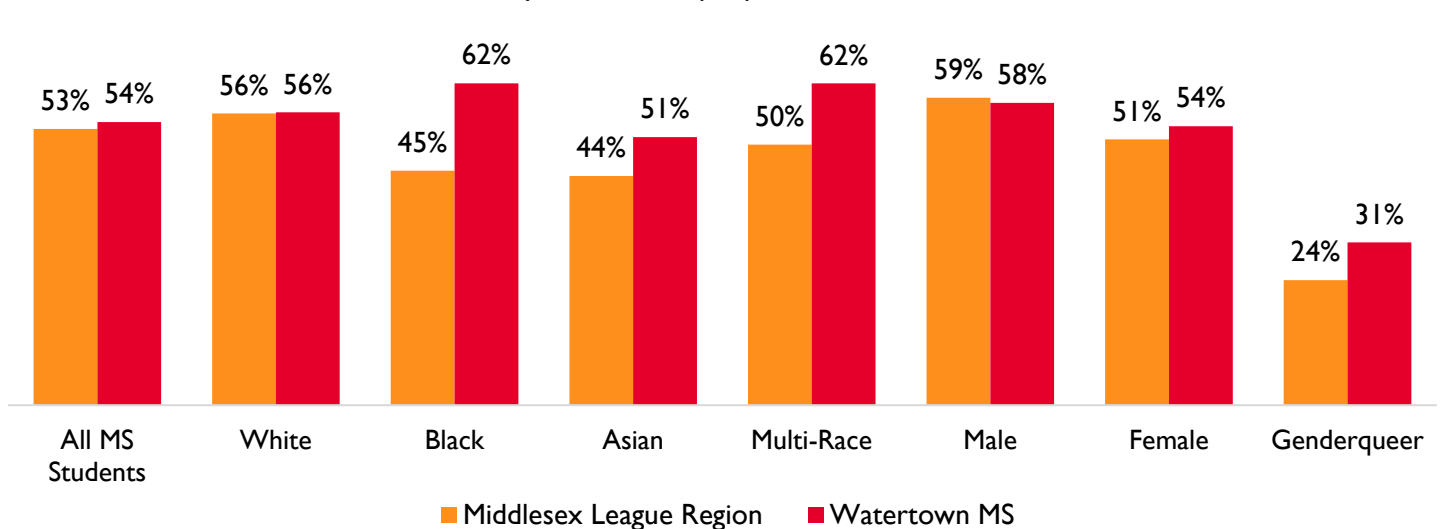


Figure 6. Percent of MS students who reported that they agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people in their school



Key Findings

Mental Health

In the United States, approximately 1 in 4 youth meet criteria for a lifetime mental disorder such as depression, anxiety, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).¹ This can cause serious changes in the way youth learn, behave, or handle their emotions, causing distress and problems getting through the day. The CDC reports that 7.4% of children aged 3-17 years (~4.5 million) have a diagnosed behavior problem, 7.1% (~4.4 million) have diagnosed anxiety, and 3.2% (~1.9 million) have diagnosed depression.² According to data from the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, the CDC reports that the rate of suicide for youth and young adults ages 10 to 24 increased nearly 60% between 2007 and 2018.³

Watertown Summary

- 26% of HS and 23% of MS students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always.
- Watertown genderqueer students were more likely to report experiencing overwhelming stress, depression, and suicidal ideations than male or female students.
- Similar to the Middlesex League Region, school demands and expectations caused Watertown students the most negative stress, with keeping up with schoolwork reported as the primary contributing factor.
- Suicidal ideation and attempts were reported at similar rates compared to prior YRBS data.
- Students most often identified a parent as their support network.

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- **General**
 - During the past 30 days, how often was your mental health not good?
- **Stress**
 - Which of the following do you find causes the most negative stress for you?
 - Which of the following do you find the most stressful about school?
- **Depression**
 - During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?
- **Self-harm and suicide**
 - During the past 12 months, how many times did you do something to purposely hurt yourself without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning yourself on purpose? (HS)
 - Have you ever seriously thought about killing yourself? (MS)
 - During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide? (HS)
 - Have you ever tried to kill yourself? (MS)
 - During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide? (HS)
 - If you attempted suicide 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?
- **Support networks and treatment access**
 - Do you have a healthy activity or behavior (coping strategy) that helps you relieve stress?
 - Is there at least one teacher or other adult in your school that you can talk to if you have a problem?
 - Can you talk with at least one of your parents or other adult family members about things that are important to you?
 - Are you taking medicine or receiving treatment from a doctor or other health professional for any type of behavioral health, mental health condition or emotional problem?

¹ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/prevalence-mental-health-disorders-among-youth#:~:text=Click%20to%20Enlarge%20Most%20youth,with%20anxiety%20disorders%2C%20and%209.6>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/anxiety-depression-children.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr69/NVSR-69-11-508.pdf>

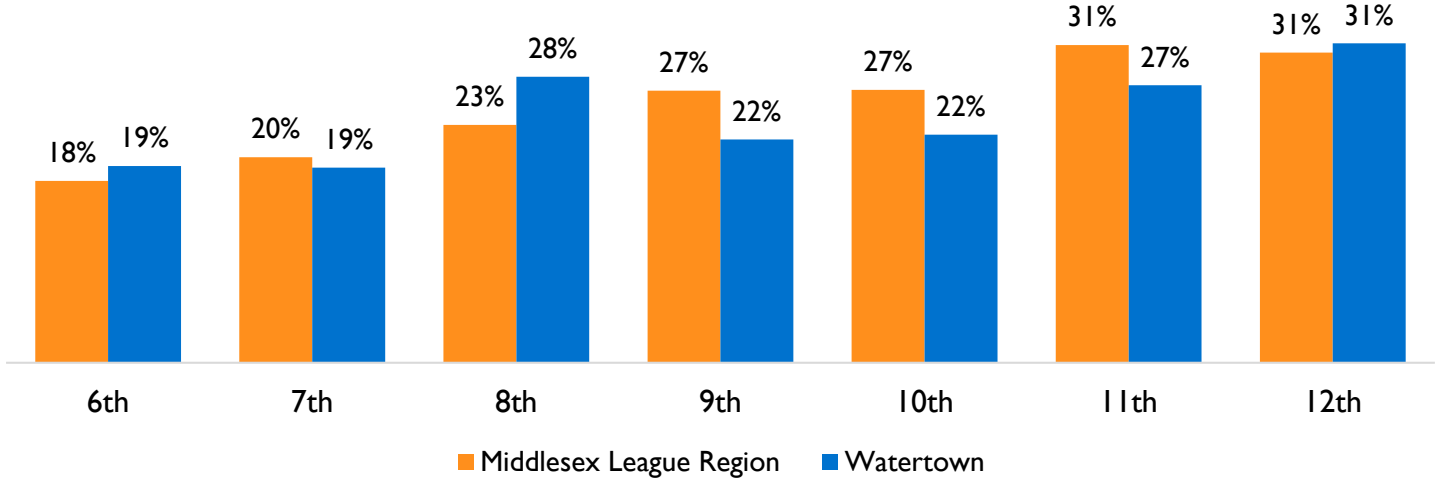
Key Findings

Mental Health

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

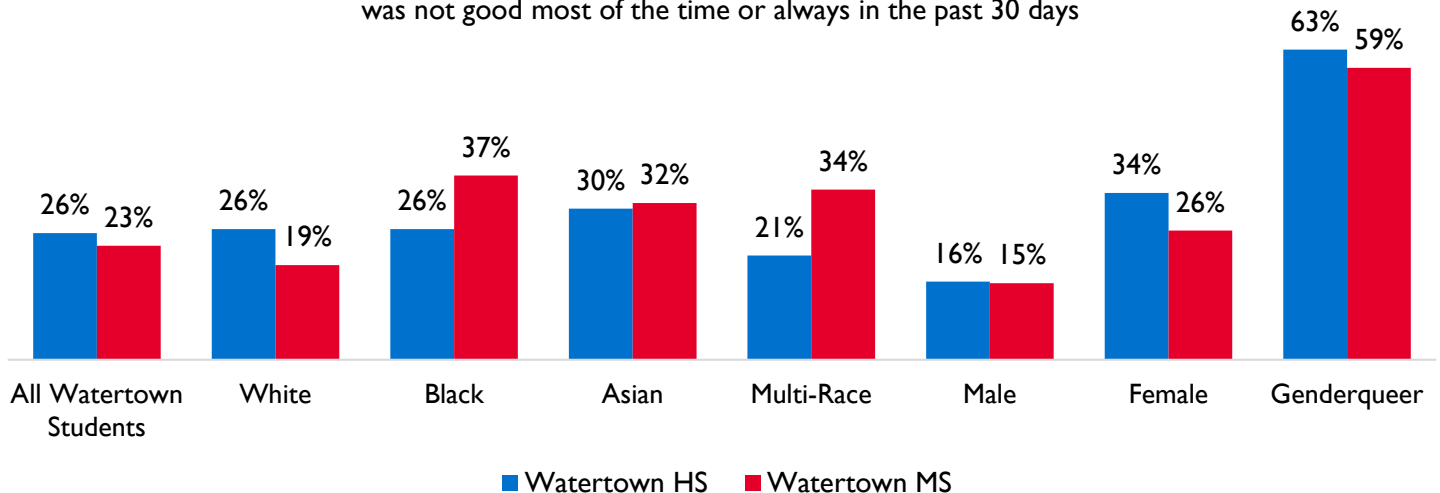
- **Overall:** 26% of Watertown HS and 23% of MS students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always. This is similar to the Middlesex League Region (29% HS, 21% MS).
- **Grade:** Mental health struggles of Watertown students increased with grade level from 19% to 31% between 6th and 12th grade.

Figure 7. Percent of students who reported having “poor” mental health in the past 30 days by grade



- **Race:** In HS, Asian students were more likely to report that their mental health was not good most of the time or always in the past 30 days. In MS, students reported similarly across races with Black students most likely to report that their mental health was not good most of the time or always in the past 30 days.
- **Gender:** In both MS and HS female students are about two times and genderqueer students about three to four times more likely than male students to report their mental health was not good most of the time or always in the past 30 days.

Figure 8. Percent of Watertown students who reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always in the past 30 days



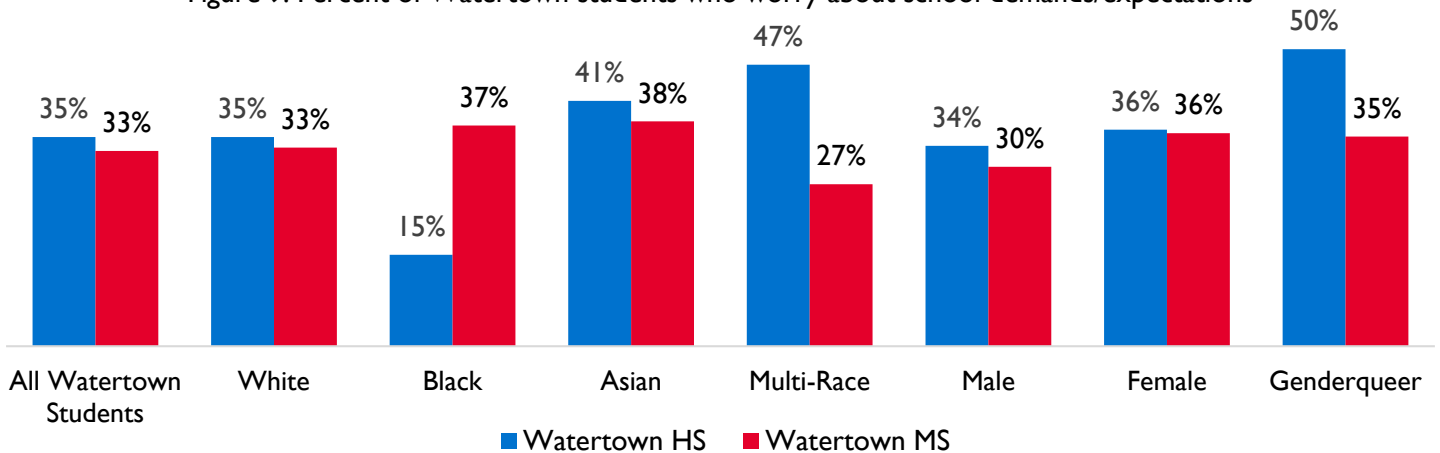
Key Findings

Mental Health

Which of the following do you find causes the most negative stress for you?

- Overall: About 35% of Watertown HS students reported that school demands/expectations caused them the most negative stress, 27% reported busy schedules, and 10% worry about their future (e.g., college, career, etc.) as well as parent/family demands/expectations (10%). About 33% of MS students reported that school demands/expectations caused them the most negative stress, followed by busy schedules (28%) and parent demands/expectations (13%).
- Gender: Genderqueer MS students reported parent/family demands/expectations about academics, grades (35%) and other family or personal issues (24%) most after school demands.

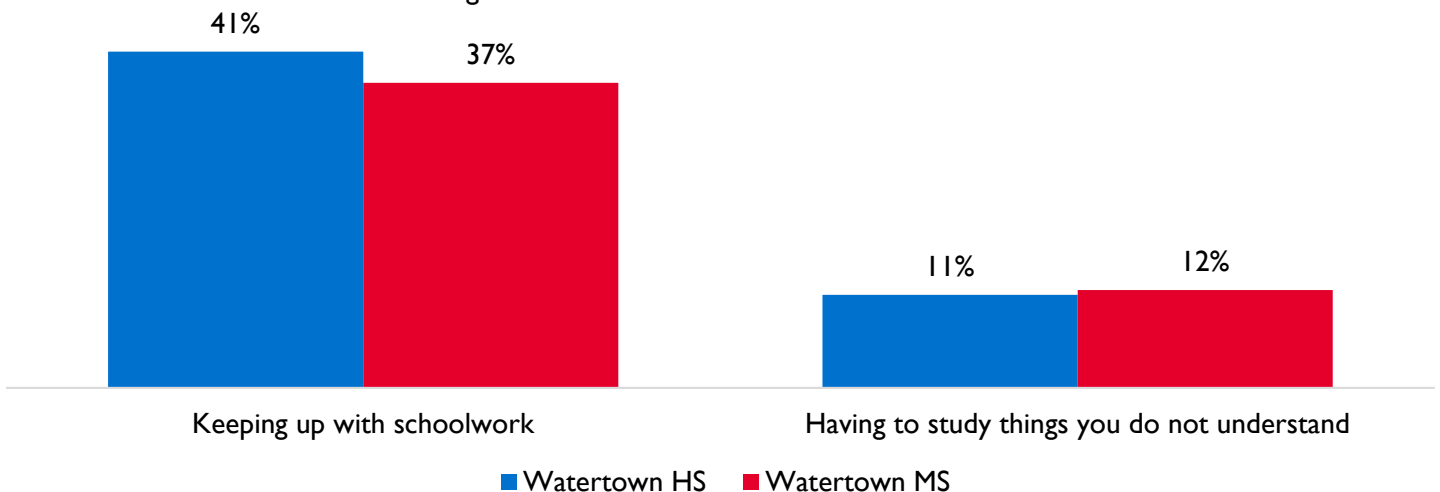
Figure 9. Percent of Watertown students who worry about school demands/expectations



Which of the following do you find the most stressful about school?

- **Overall:** In Watertown HS and MS the greatest source of stress for students are:
 - Keeping up with schoolwork (35-37%)
 - Having to study things you they do not understand (15-19%)

Figure 10. Causes of most stress about school



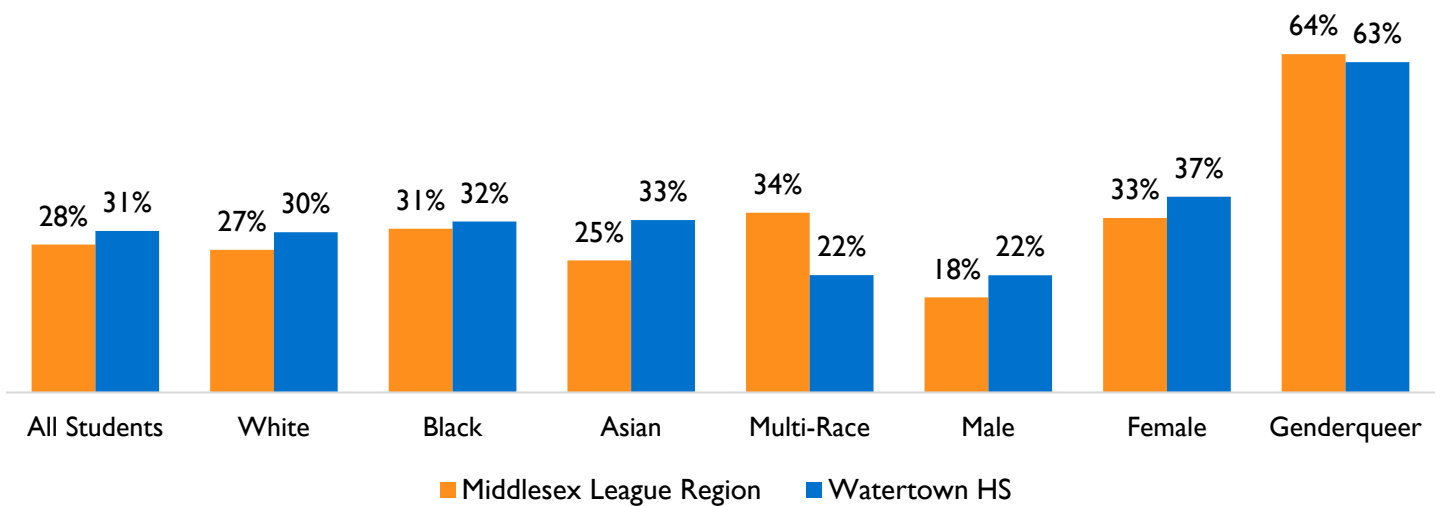
Key Findings

Mental Health

During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?

- **Overall:** 31% of Watertown HS students feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more that they stop doing usual activities, compared to 28% in the Middlesex League Region.
- **Race:** Black and Asian Watertown HS students report higher levels of depression than other races.
- **Gender:** Female and genderqueer HS students are two and three times more likely, respectively, to suffer from depression than male students.

Figure 11. Percent of HS students who reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities



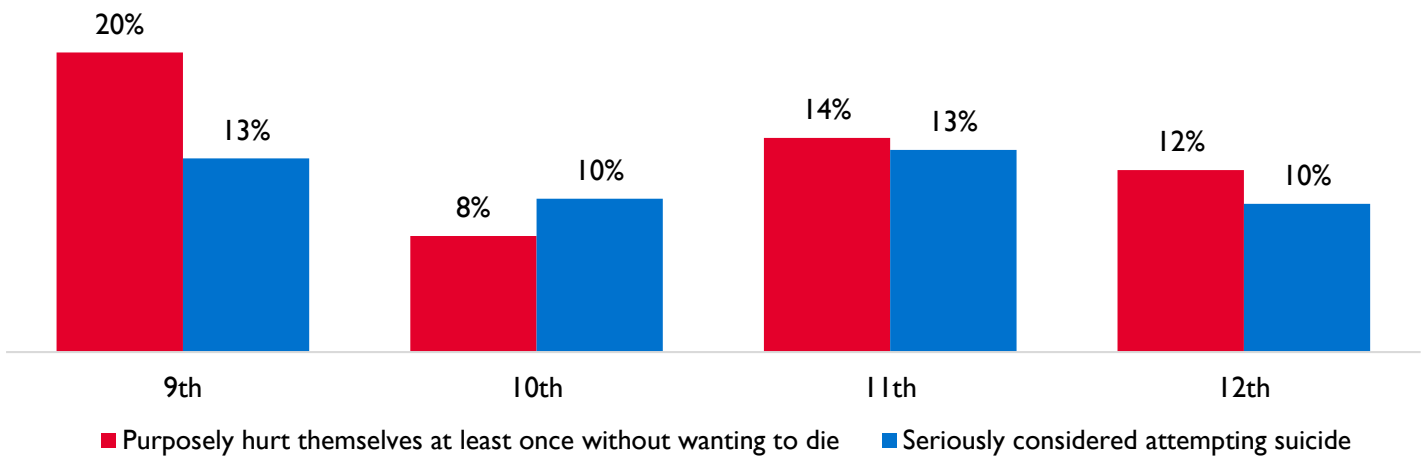
Key Findings

Mental Health

Self-harm or seriously considered committing suicide in the past 12 months.

- **Overall:** 8-20% of Watertown HS students did something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die. 10-11% of HS students reported having considered attempting suicide.
- **Grade:** 9th grader students were more likely to report purposely hurting themselves without wanting to die, and both 9th grade students and 11th grade students were most likely to consider suicide.

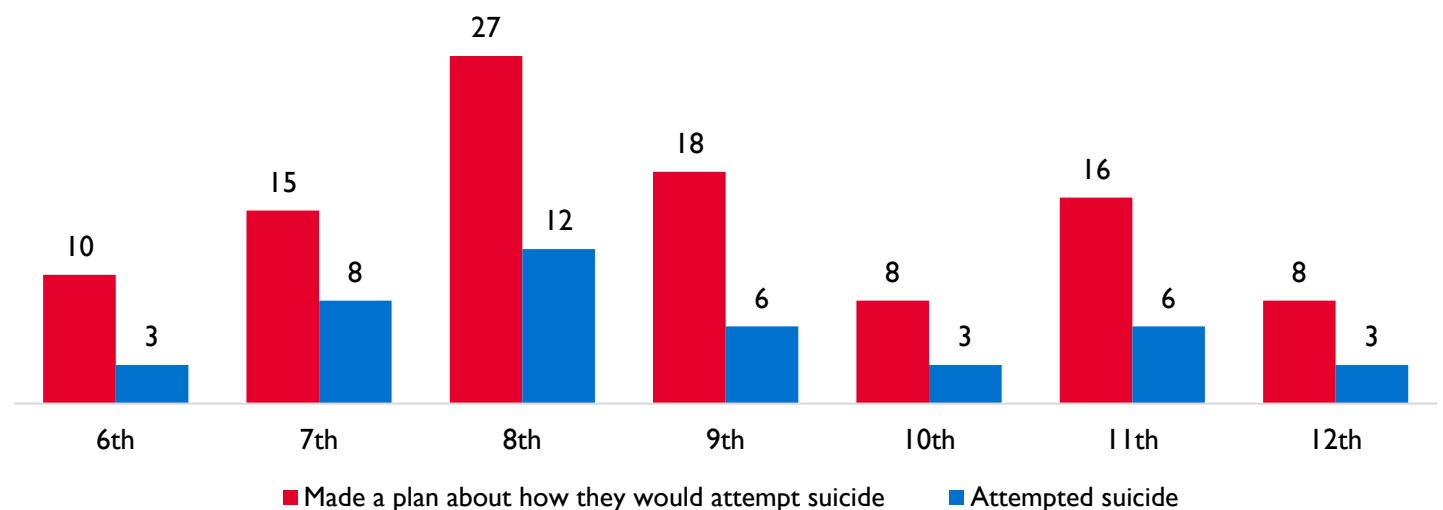
Figure 12. Percent of Watertown HS students who purposely hurt themselves at least once without wanting to die in the past 12 months or seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months by grade



Made a plan or attempted suicide in the past 12 months.

- **Overall:** 4% of Watertown students report having made a suicide attempt.
- **Grade:** Students in 8th grade report particularly high risk for planning and attempting suicide (10%).

Figure 13. Number of Watertown students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide and attempted suicide by grade



Key Findings

Mental Health

Made a plan or attempted suicide in the past 12 months (HS) or ever (MS)

- **Gender:** Female and genderqueer students report two to five times higher rates of planning for suicide. Watertown MS students were significantly more likely to report making a suicide attempt.
- **Race:** Genderqueer students were reported up to 5 times more likely to report planning and attempting suicide.

Figure 14. Percent of students who have ever made a plan about how they would attempt suicide

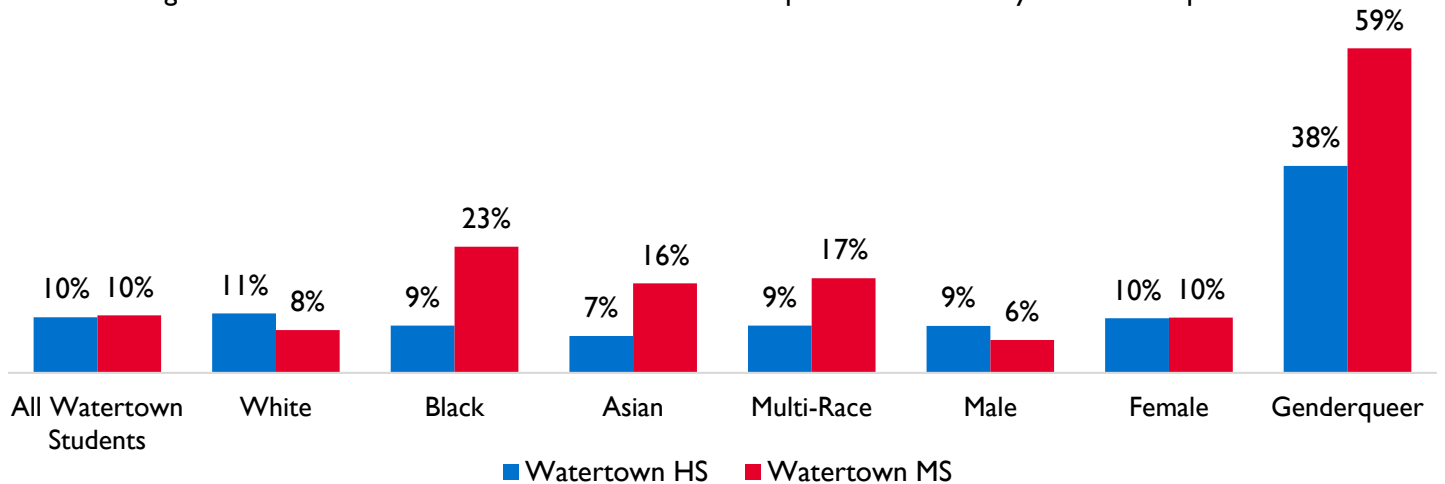
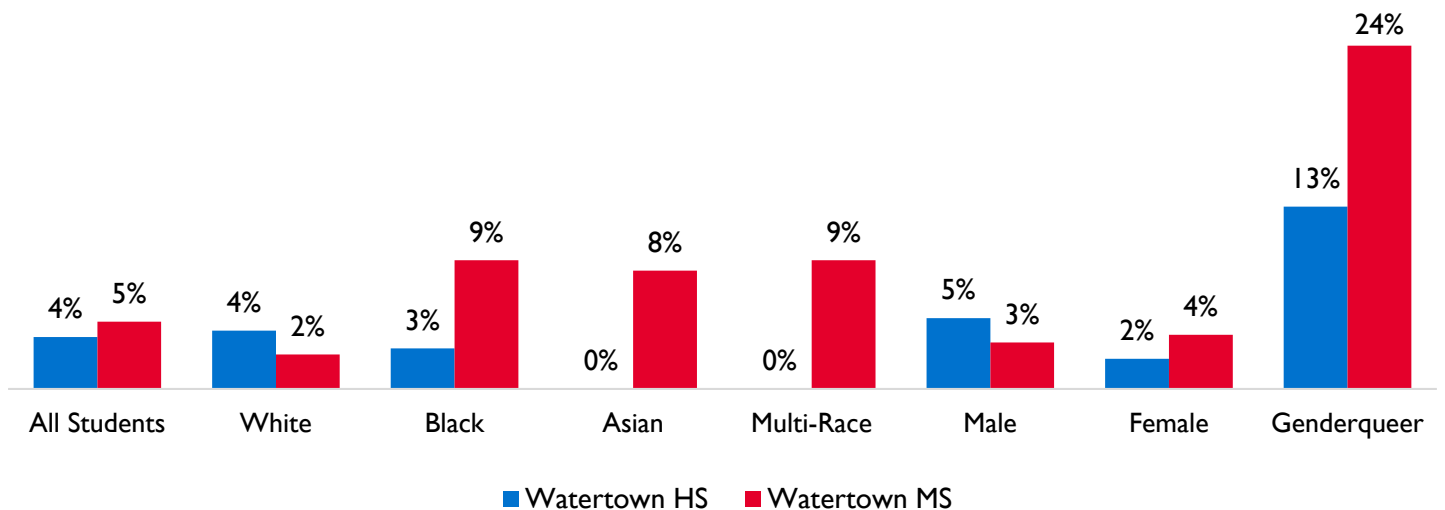


Figure 15. Percent of Watertown students who attempted suicide in the past 12 months (HS) or ever (MS)



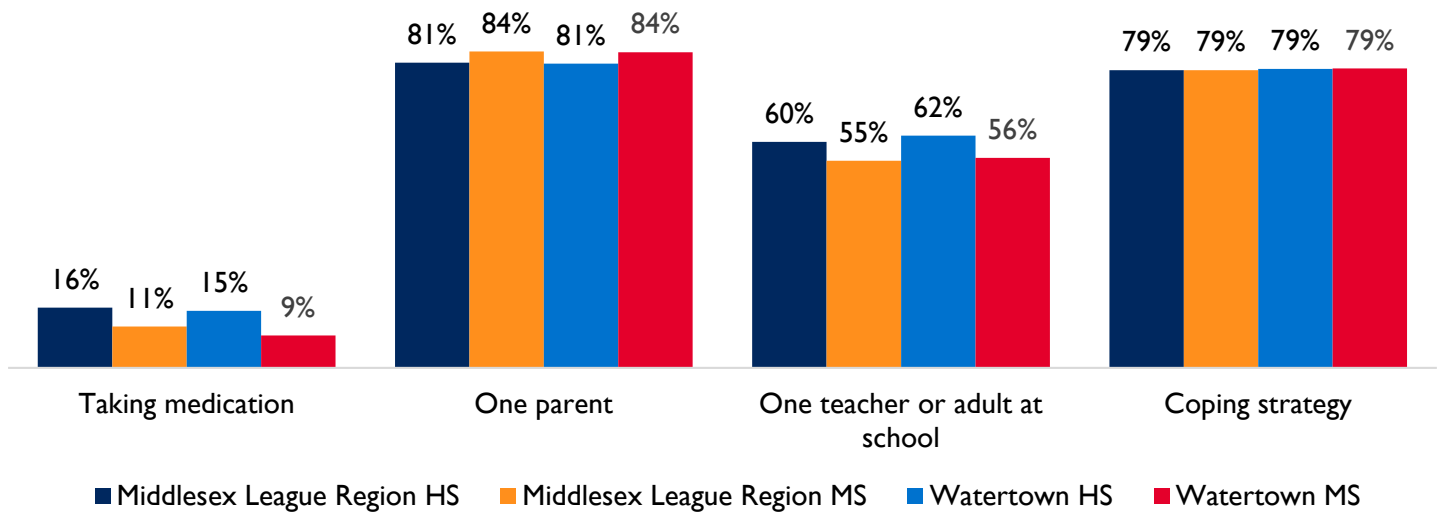
Key Findings

Mental Health

Support networks and treatment access (overall)

- Most Watertown students (81-84%) are able to use a coping strategy to relieve stress.
- The majority of Watertown students (56-62%) have at least one teacher or other adult at school they can talk to.
- Most Watertown students (81-84%) have at least one parent they can talk to.
- 9-15% of Watertown students receive care through prescribed medications.

Figure 16. Percent of students who reported having a support network or access to treatment



Key Findings

Substance Use

Studies show that the earlier substance use begins, the more likely a continued use of substance and development of substance use problems are to occur. Adolescents use alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco most commonly with about two-thirds of students across the country having tried alcohol by 12th grade.¹ From 2017 to 2019, the national percentage of teenagers who said they have vaped nicotine in the past 12 months roughly doubled for 8th graders from 7.5% to 16.5%, for 10th graders from 15.8% to 30.7% and for 12th graders from 18.8% to 35.3%.² While rates steadied in 2020, they have not decreased and remain a cause for health concern amongst youth.³

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it remains to be analyzed whether reduced ability to interact with peers and having access to other sources of drugs may be a mitigating factor in youth substance use.

Watertown Summary

- Overall, substance use increased as students increased in grade.
- Alcohol was most commonly used by HS and MS students. Almost one-fourth of HS students report having drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Black HS students were more likely to report drinking alcohol, using marijuana, and using electronic vapor products.
- Female students were more likely to report drinking alcohol. Male students were more likely to report using marijuana and electronic vapor products.
- HS students generally accessed substances through friends or family members.
- Use of prescription drugs not prescribed to you was perceived as the most risky and marijuana use the least among HS students.

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- **30 day (current) use**
 - During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke part of all of a substance? (Question was asked for each substance)
- **Access to substances**
 - During the past 30 days, how did you usually get a substance that you used? (Question was asked for each substance)
- **Risk of substance use**
 - How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways if they use a substance? (Question was asked for each substance)

1 <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/features/teen-substance-use.html>

2 <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers/stats-trends-teen-drug-use>

3 Ibid.

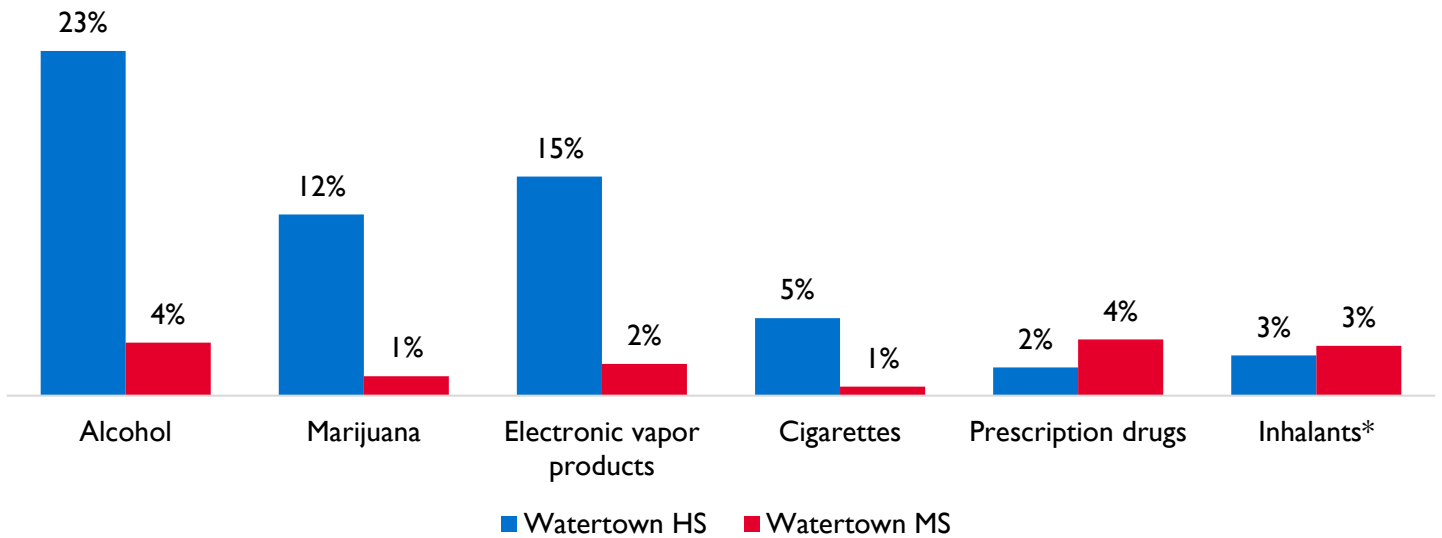
Key Findings

Substance Use

Past 30 day (current) use

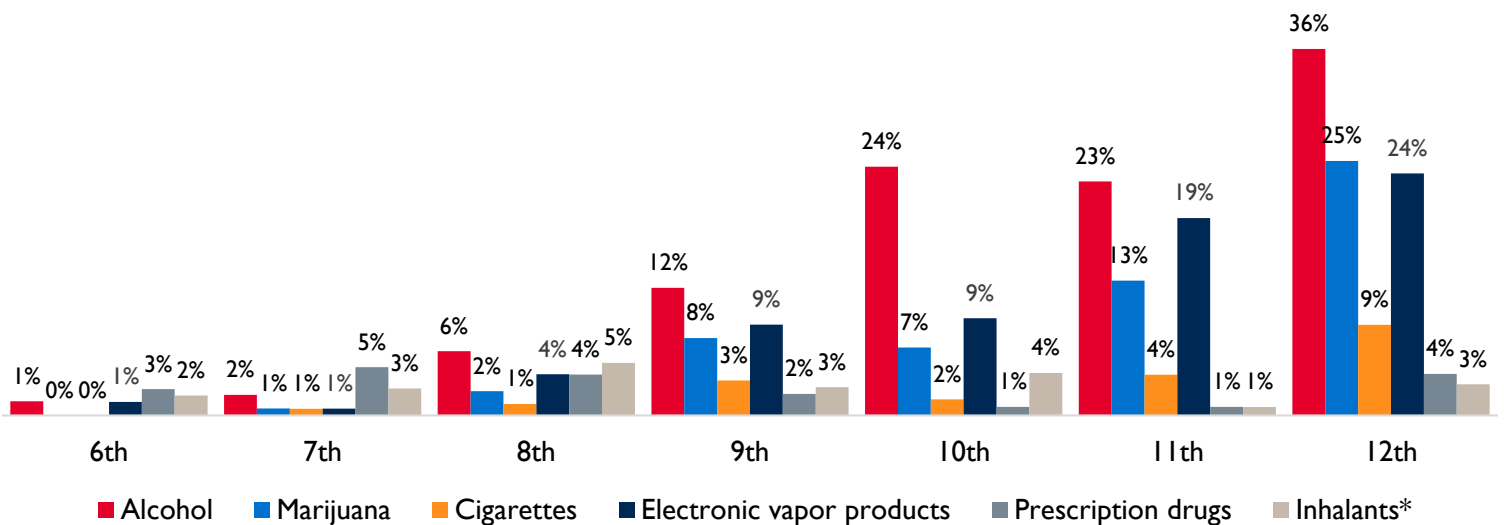
- **Overall:** Alcohol is the most reported substance used by Watertown HS students. Alcohol and prescription drugs were the most reported substances used by MS students.

Figure 17. Percent of Watertown students reporting past 30 day (current) use of substances



- **Overall:** The percent of Watertown students reporting use of any substance increases by grade in a dose-response manner.

Figure 18. Percent of Watertown students reporting past 30 day (current) use of substances by grade



*MS students were asked about lifetime use of inhalants.

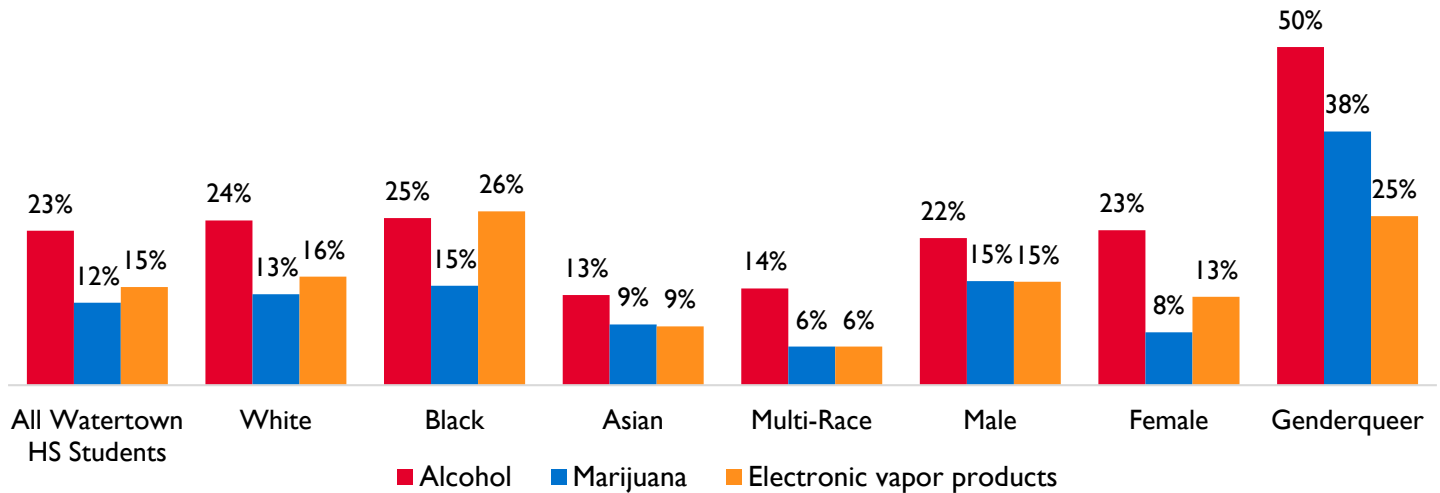
Key Findings

Substance Use

Past 30 day (current) use

- **Race:** Black Watertown HS students are more likely to report alcohol and electronic vapor product use. Black students were more likely to report using marijuana.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer Watertown HS students were two times more likely to report use of alcohol and marijuana.

Figure 19. Percent of Watertown HS students reporting past 30 day (current) use of substances



Availability of substances

- How did you usually get the alcohol you drank?
 - **HS:** Got it from a friend or family member (56%), got it some other way (23%), bought it in a liquor store, convenience store, supermarket, discount store, or gas station (7%).
- How did you usually get the marijuana you smoked?
 - **HS:** Got it from friends (38%), bought it from someone else (24%), got it some other way (19%).
- How did you usually get the electronic vapor products you used?
 - **HS:** Got or bought them from a friend, family member, or someone else (49%), got them some other way (27%), bought them myself in a vape or tobacco shop (7%).
 - **MS:** Got or bought them from a friend, family member, or someone else (47%), got them some other way (47%), took them from a store or another person (7%).

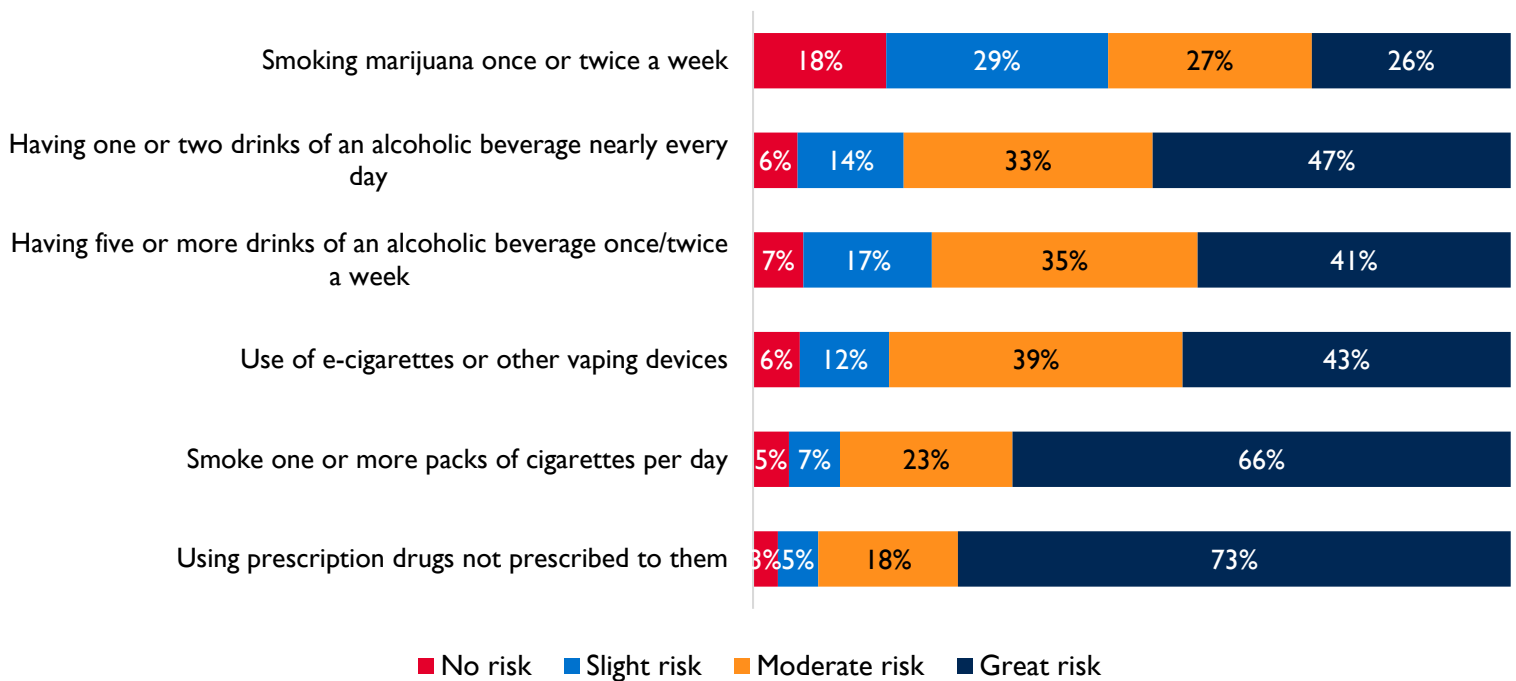
Key Findings

Substance Use

Perception of Risk Among HS students

- **Overall:** Watertown HS students perceived using prescription drugs not prescribed to them as the greatest risk, followed by smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day, and having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day. HS students perceived smoking marijuana once or twice a week as the least risky, with 18% reporting that they believe there is no risk.
- **Race:** White students were less likely to report a great risk of harm from having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day (45%), while Multi-Racial students were more likely (51%). Multi-Racial students were less likely to report a great risk from smoking marijuana (14%), while Asian students were more likely (29%).
- **Gender:** Female students were more likely to report a great risk of harm from using substances than male students.

Figure 20. Perceived risk of substance use among Watertown HS students



Key Findings

Unintentional Injury & Violence

Unintentional injuries are defined as accidental injuries where the harmful outcome was not sought, occurred in a short period of time, or normal body functions were blocked by external means. Some of the most common unintentional injuries result from motor vehicle crashes, falls, fires and burns, drowning, poisonings, and suffocation.

According to a new analysis by CDC, between 1999-2016, mortality from all three forms of injury death – unintentional injury/accidents, suicide, and homicide – have increased for children and adolescents ages 10-19, after years of sharp decline.¹

This section also reports data on sexual or physical dating violence amongst students. Unhealthy relationship dynamics during adolescence can be detrimental to emotional development and lead to other long-term negative impacts on future relationships. Teen dating violence (TDV) occurs between two people in a close relationship and includes four types of behavior; physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression. The CDC reports nationally, nearly 1 in 9 female teens and 1 in 13 male teens report experiencing physical dating violence in the last 12 months.² Primary prevention initiatives include early education about safe dating practices, problem-solving skills and avoidance of risky behaviors. In the state of Massachusetts, 2010 Mass. Acts, Chap. 256 requires school districts to implement a specific policy to address teen dating violence in public schools.

Watertown Summary

- Watertown HS students drove a car or other vehicle under the influence of alcohol or marijuana at similar rates to the Middlesex League Region.
- Black HS students were more likely to report driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana.
- Watertown HS students checked their phone while driving a car or other vehicle at similar rates to the Middlesex League Region.
- Male HS students were more likely to report checking their phone while driving.
- Watertown HS students were more likely than the Middlesex League region to report being forced to do sexual things they did not want to do in the past 12 months (9% vs 4%). Students reported forced sexual activity at slightly higher rates compared to prior years.
- Genderqueer students were most likely to report being electronically bullied. Overall rates of electronic bullying is similar to prior years.

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- **Driving while under the influence**
 - How many times did you drive a car or other vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol or using marijuana?
- **Texting or emailing while driving**
 - How many days did you check your cell phone, text, or e-mail while driving a car or other vehicle?
- **Sexual or physical dating violence**
 - How many times did someone you were dating or going out with physically hurt you or force you to do sexual things that you did not want to do?
- **Bullying**
 - Have you ever been bullied?

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2018/201806_Youth_Injury_Mortality.htm

² <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-dating-violence.aspx>

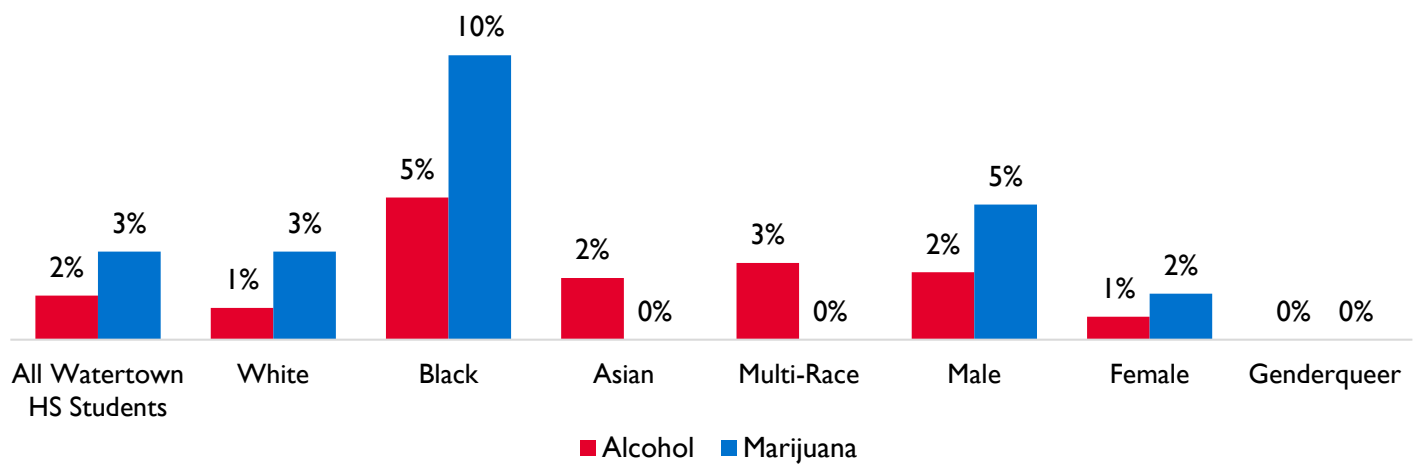
Key Findings

Unintentional Injury and Violence

Driving under the influence of alcohol and marijuana

- **Overall:** 1% of Watertown HS students reported that they drove a car or other vehicle when under the influence of alcohol and 2% reported that they drove a car or other vehicle under the influence of marijuana in the past 30 days.
- **Race:** Black HS students were more likely to drive under the influence of alcohol or marijuana than students of other reported races.
- **Gender:** Male HS students were most likely to drive under the influence of alcohol and genderqueer students under the influence of marijuana.

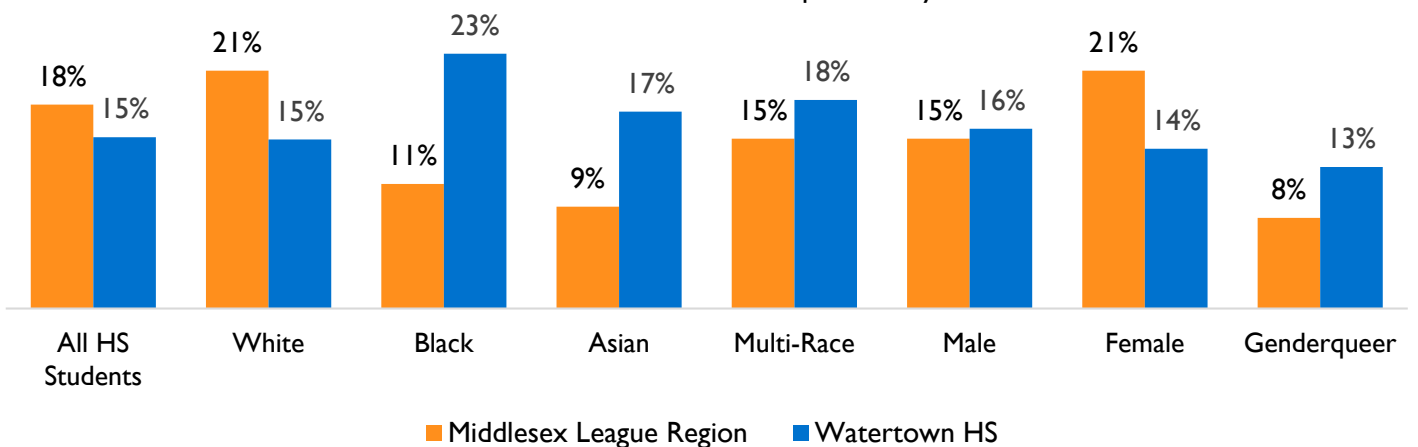
Figure 21. Percent of Watertown HS students who drove a car or other vehicle when under the influence of alcohol or marijuana



Cell phone use while driving a car or other vehicle

- **Overall:** 18% of Watertown HS students reported that they checked their cell phone, texted, or e-mailed while driving a car or other vehicle. in the past 30 days.
- **Race:** Black students were most likely to use their cell phone while driving (23%), followed by White (21%) and Multi-Racial (15%) students.
- **Gender:** Female students are more likely to use their cell phone while driving compared to male and genderqueer students.

Figure 22. Percent of HS students who checked their cell phone, texted, or e-mailed while driving a car or other vehicle, in the past 30 days



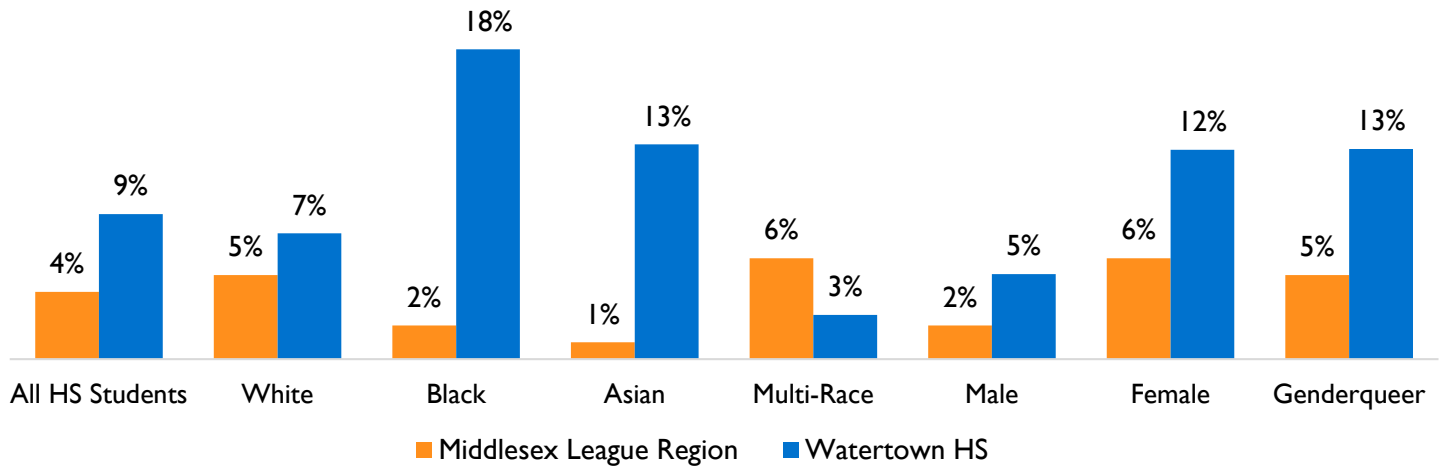
Key Findings

Unintentional Injury and Violence

HS students who report being forced to do sexual things they did not want to do in the past 12 months

- **Overall:** Watertown HS students reported that they were forced to do sexual things that they did not want to do at a higher rate than the Middlesex League Region (9% compared to 4%).
- **Race:** Black Watertown students were more likely to report being forced to do sexual things they did not want to do (18%), followed by Asian (13%) and White (7%) students.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer Watertown students were most likely to report being forced to do sexual things they did not want to do (13%), followed by female students (12%) and male (5%) students.

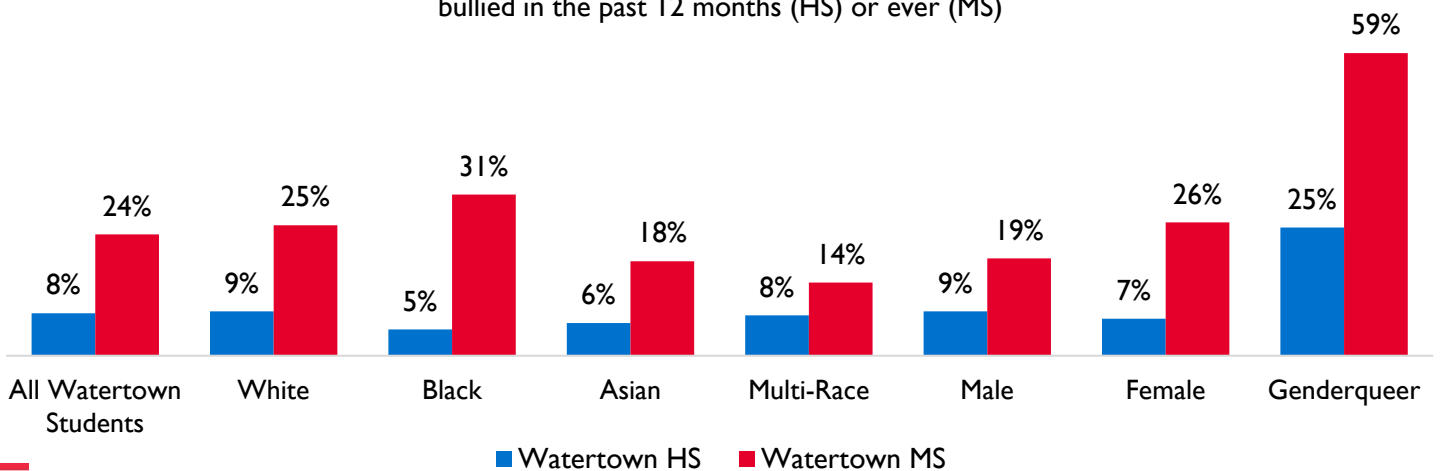
Figure 23. Percent of HS students who reported being forced to do sexual things they did not want to do



Students who report being electronically bullied in the past 12 months (HS) or ever (MS)

- **Overall:** Watertown HS students are less likely to report being electronically bullied than the Middlesex League Region (8% vs 10%) while Watertown MS students reported higher rates of electronic bullying than the Middlesex League Region (24% vs 20%).
- **Race:** White HS students and Black MS students were more likely to report being electronically bullied.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer MS students were significantly more likely to report having been electronically bullied compared to male and female students.

Figure 24. Percent of Watertown students who reported that they had been electronically bullied in the past 12 months (HS) or ever (MS)



Key Findings

Sexual Behavior and HIV

Youth who engage in sexual behaviors are at risk for unintended health outcomes such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unintended pregnancy. Sexual minority youth including lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students in particular are at substantial risk for serious health outcomes relative to their peers. The CDC reports that nationwide, 11% of students identifying as LGBT have had sex with four or more partners, compared to 8% of students identifying as heterosexual. ¹

Despite a decline in high school student sexual risk behavior from 2009 to 2019, students continue to engage in risky health-related behaviors. For example, there has been a decline in condom use among sexually active students from 61% in 2009 to 54% in 2019. ²

Watertown Summary

- Overall, Watertown HS students are more likely to report that they ever had sexual intercourse compared to the Middlesex League Region.
- In general, percent of sexual intercourse by Watertown students increased by grade.
- Black and genderqueer students were more likely to report having more than 2 sexual partners.
- Black Watertown HS students were more likely to report drinking alcohol or using drugs before sexual intercourse.
- Condoms were the most used method to prevent pregnancy.

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- Sexual intercourse
 - Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
- Sexual partners
 - How many people have you had sexual intercourse with?
- Use of alcohol or drugs before sex
 - Did you use alcohol/drugs before you had sexual intercourse the last time?
- Methods of protection
 - Did you use any of the following methods to prevent pregnancy?

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/youth_hiv/hiv-information-and-youth.htm

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/su/su6901a2.htm>

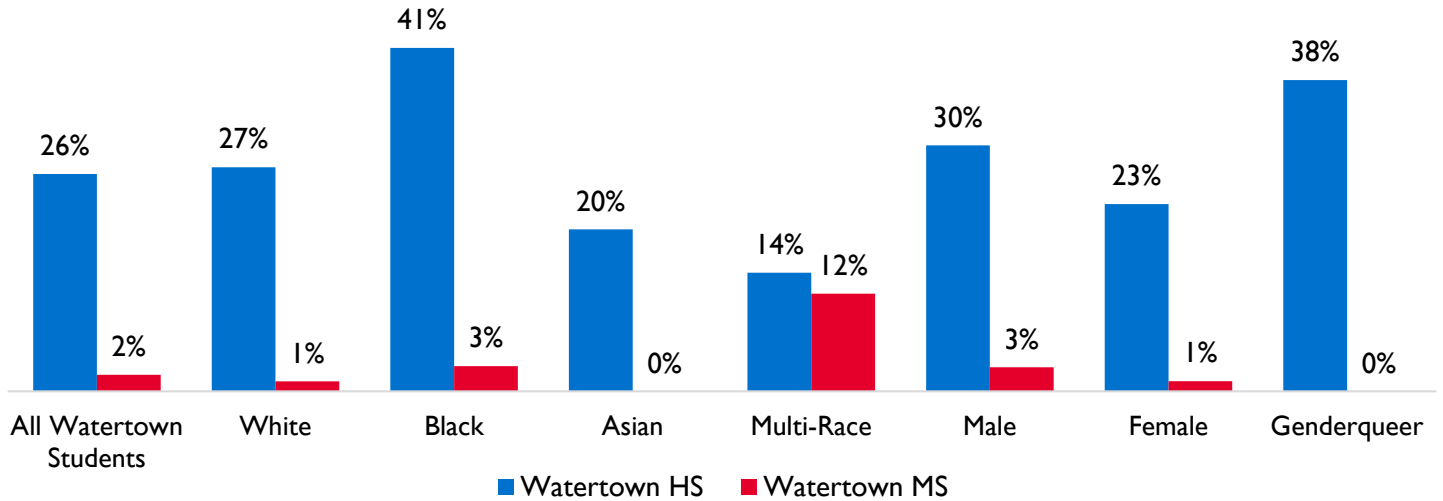
Key Findings

Sexual Behavior and HIV

Ever had sexual intercourse

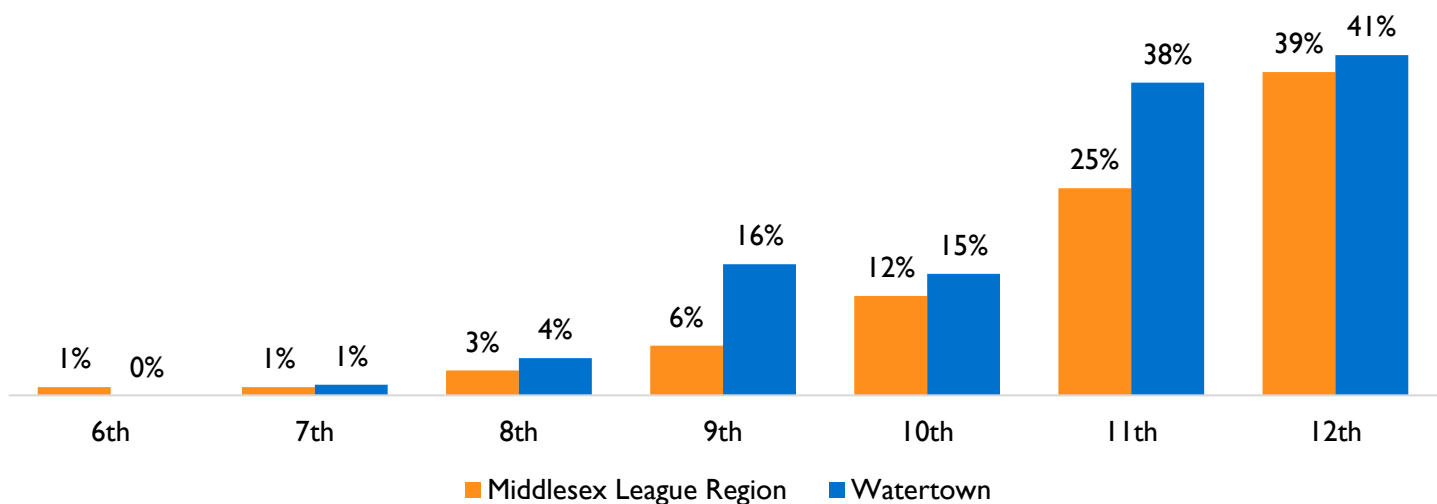
- **Overall:** 26% of Watertown HS and 2% of MS students reported that they ever had sexual intercourse.
- **Race:** Black HS students were more likely to report ever having had sexual intercourse (41%), followed by White (27%) and Asian (20%) students.

Figure 25. Percent of Watertown students who reported that they had sexual intercourse



- **Grade:** 41% of Watertown HS 12th graders reported that they had ever had sexual intercourse, compared to 38% of 11th graders, and 15% of 10th graders.

Figure 26. Percent of students who reported that they had ever had sexual intercourse by grade



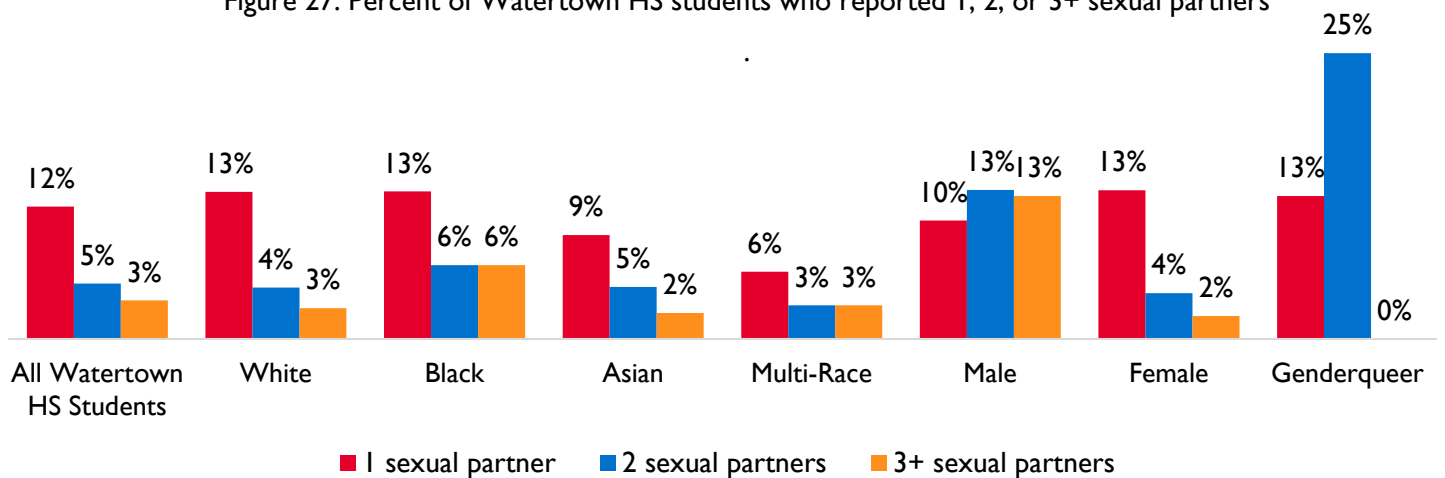
Key Findings

Sexual Behavior and HIV

Number of sexual partners

- **Overall:** 5% of Watertown HS students reported having 2 or more sexual partners.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer HS students significantly more likely to report having 2 sexual partners in comparison to male and female students.
- **Race:** Black HS students were more likely to report 2 or more sexual partner than other segments of the HS population.

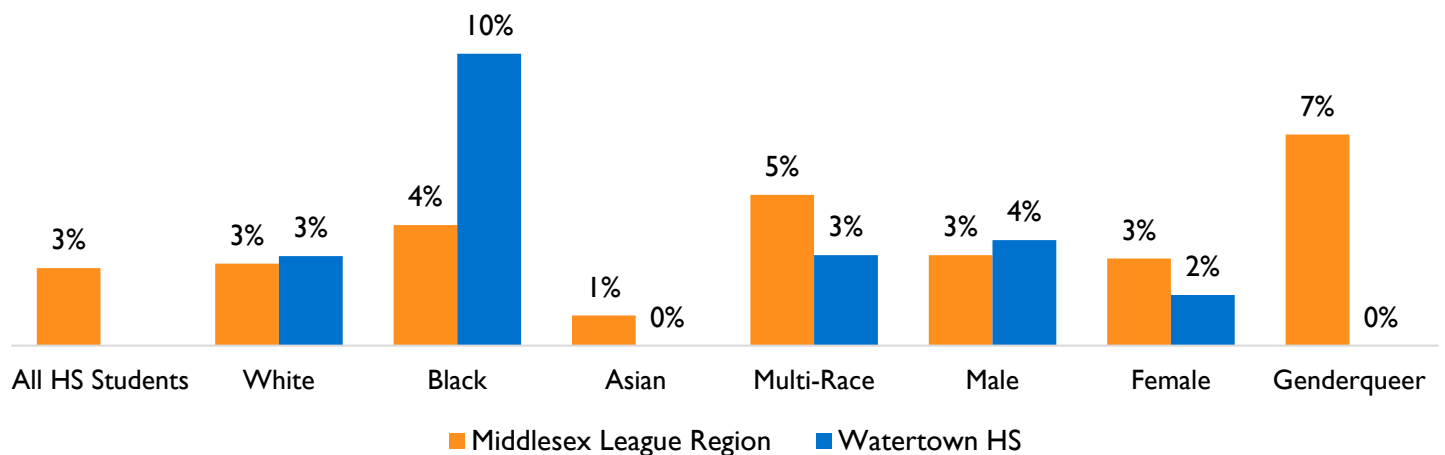
Figure 27. Percent of Watertown HS students who reported 1, 2, or 3+ sexual partners



Did you drink alcohol or used drugs before they had sexual intercourse the last time?

- **Overall:** Watertown HS students reported using alcohol or drugs before they had sexual intercourse the last time at similar rates to the Middlesex League Region.
- **Race:** Black Watertown students were more likely to report drinking alcohol or using drugs.

Figure 28. Percent of HS students reporting that they drank alcohol or used drugs before they had sexual intercourse the last time



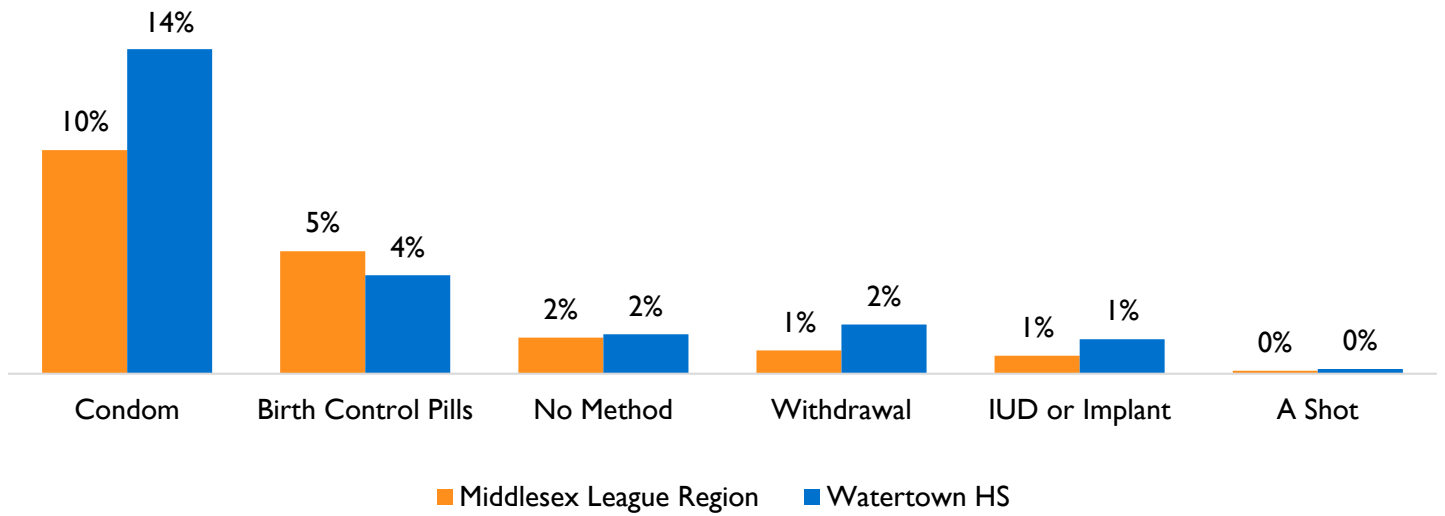
Key Findings

Sexual Behavior and HIV

Methods of pregnancy prevention

- **Overall:** Similar to the Middlesex League Region, condoms were the most common method used to prevent pregnancy by Watertown HS students.

Figure 29. Methods used by HS students to prevent pregnancy



Key Findings

Dietary Behaviors and Physical Activity

Nutrition and physical activity are important for optimal growth and development and chronic disease prevention. Establishing healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors early in life is a vital public health strategy for promoting lifelong physical health. The CDC recommends that children and adolescents ages 6-17 years eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, and engage in more than 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily. ¹ Data analyzed by the CDC indicates that most American adolescents are not meeting these recommendations for healthy eating or physical activity, which puts them at increased risk for chronic diseases, (e.g., type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, or obesity). ²

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the primary source of added sugars in U.S. youths' diets. Studies show higher SSB intake among male adolescents compared to female adolescents and among Black and Hispanic adolescents compared to White adolescents. ³

Watertown Summary

- About 11% of HS students were obese (\geq 95th percentile for body mass index, based on sex- and age-specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts) and 17% were overweight (\geq 85th percentile but $<$ 95th percentile for body mass index), both greater than the Middlesex League Region (7% and 14%, respectively).
- The majority of Watertown MS and HS students report that they are about the right weight.
- Watertown MS and HS students were more likely to report that are trying to lose weight (45% and 38%).
- Watertown students report slightly higher percentages of screen time compared to the Middlesex League Region.
- Physical activity decreased while average screen time per day increased as students increased in age.

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- **Dietary Behaviors**
 - How would you describe your weight?
 - Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?
- **Physical Activity**
 - During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day?
 - On an average school day, how many hours do you spend in front of a screen other than to do schoolwork?

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/su/su6901a8.htm>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/index.htm>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/su/su6901a8.htm>

Key Findings

Dietary Behaviors and Physical Activity

How do students describe their weight?

- Overall:** Watertown students are most likely to report that they are about the right weight, followed by slightly overweight and slightly underweight. Compared to last year, students were less likely to report themselves as slightly or very overweight (24% v 28% for HS, 19% v 21% for MS).
- Race:** In HS, Black students were most likely to report being slightly or very overweight (36%). In MS, Asian students were most likely to report that they were slightly or very overweight (34%).
- Gender:** Genderqueer MS students and female HS students were most likely to report that they were slightly or very overweight.
- Grade:** There were no significant differences in student description of their weight by grade.

Figure 30. Watertown student description of their weight

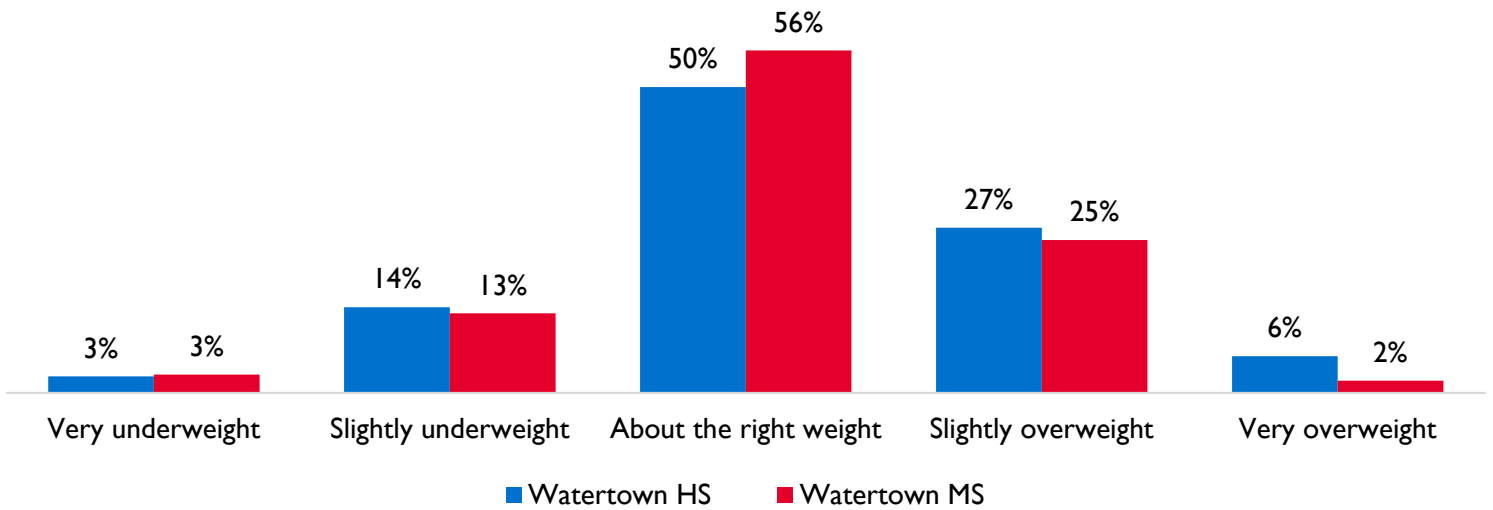
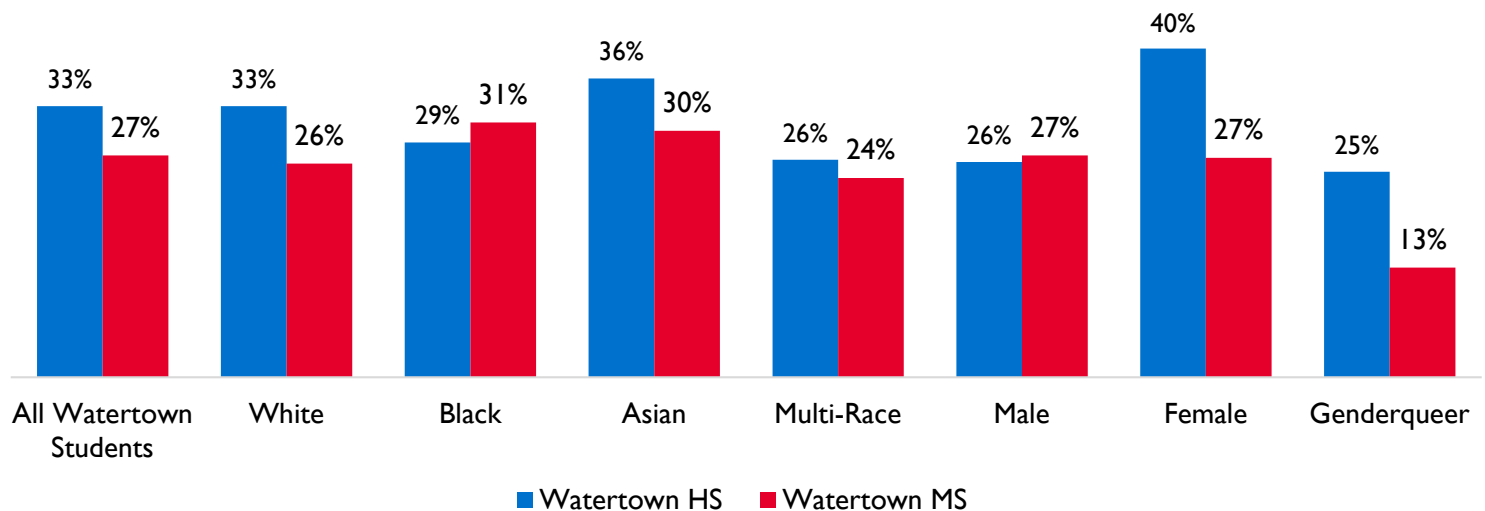


Figure 31. Percent of Watertown students who described themselves as slightly or very overweight



Key Findings

Dietary Behaviors and Physical Activity

What are students doing about their weight?

- **Overall:** Watertown HS students were more likely to report that they are trying to lose weight (38%). MS students were more likely to report that they are not trying to do anything about their weight (42%).
- **Race:** Asian HS students and Black MS students were more likely to report trying to lose weight.
- **Gender:** More than half of HS female students reported that they are trying to lose weight (52%). MS genderqueer students were more likely to report that they are trying to lose weight (58%) than male or female students.
- **Grade:** Student reporting that they are trying to lose weight increased from 6th-12th grade (24, 30%, 31%, 38%, 36%, 39%, 42%).

Figure 32. What Watertown students are trying to do about their weight

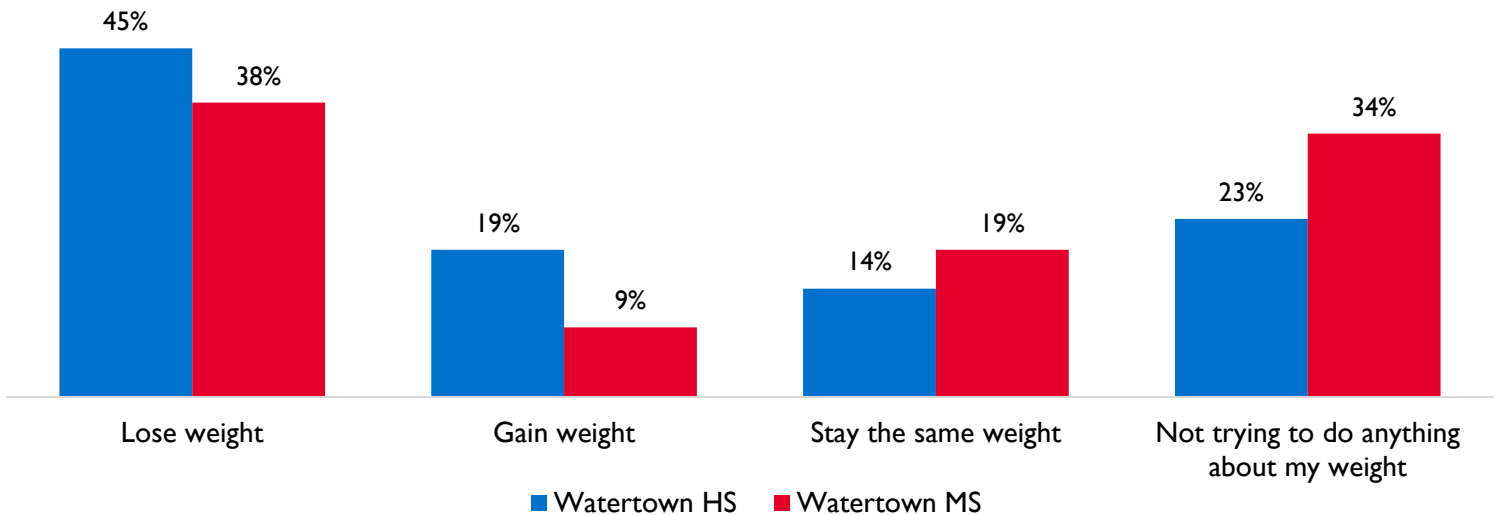
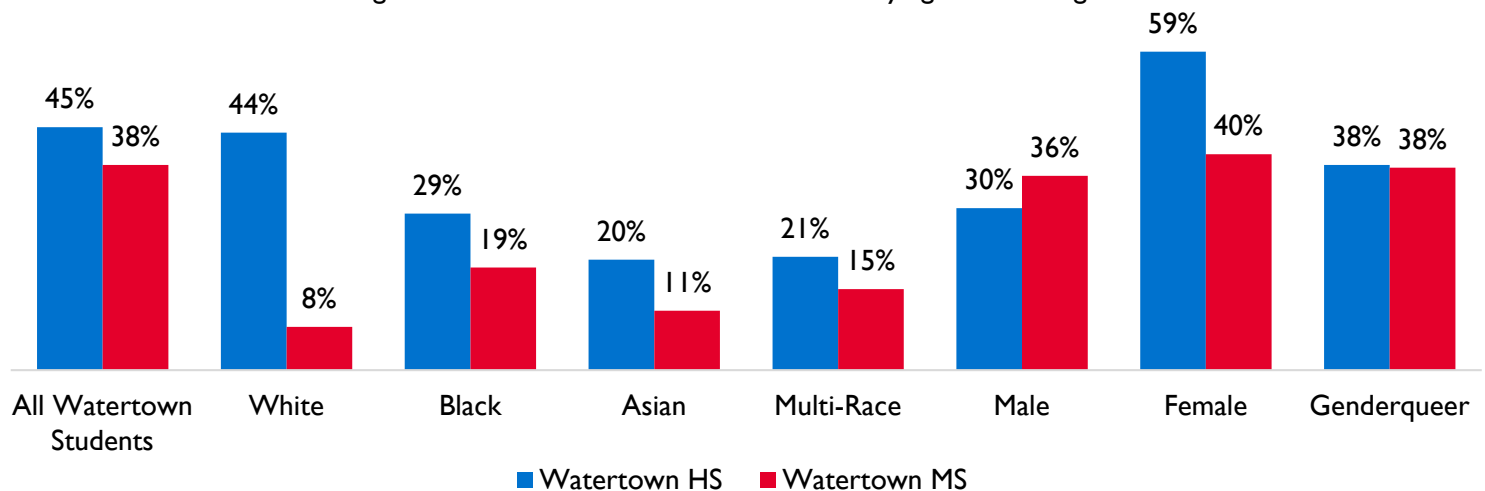


Figure 33. Percent of Watertown students trying to lose weight



Key Findings

Dietary Behaviors and Physical Activity

In the past 7 days, on how many days were students physically active for more than 60 minutes per day?

- **Overall:** Watertown students report similar physical activity levels compared to the Middlesex League Region.
- **Race:** Multi-Racial Watertown HS students and Black MS students were most likely to report not being physically active on all 7 days.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer Watertown students were significantly less likely to report being physically active than male and female students.
- **Grade:** Watertown students were less likely to be physically active as they increased in grade.

Figure 34. Physically active for 60 minutes on all 7 days during the past 7 days by grade

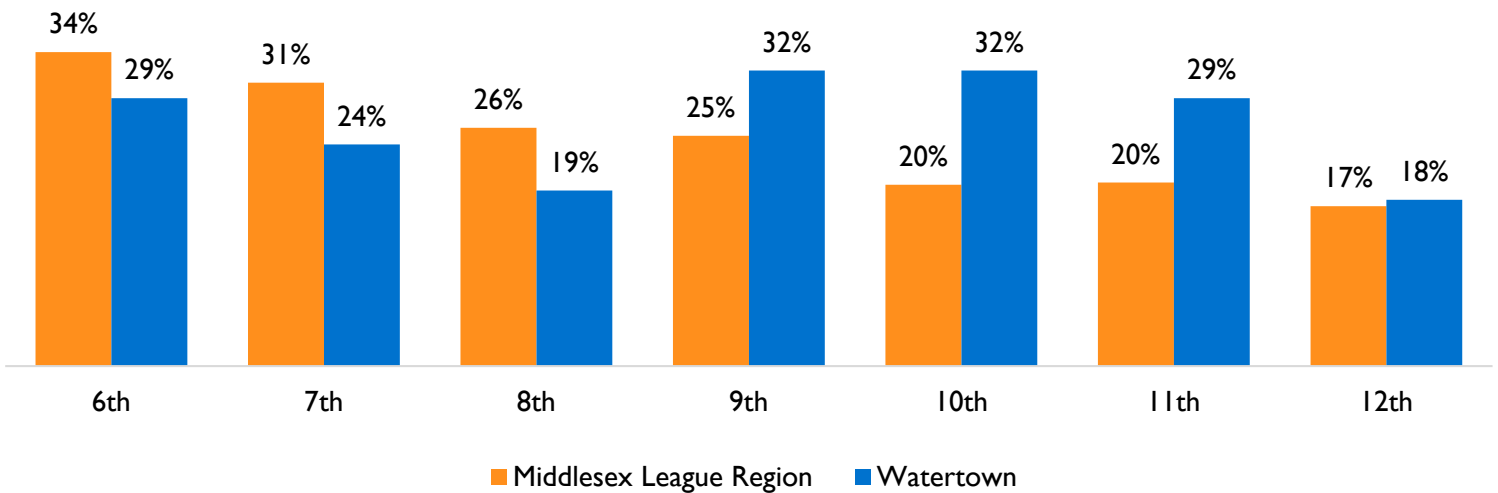
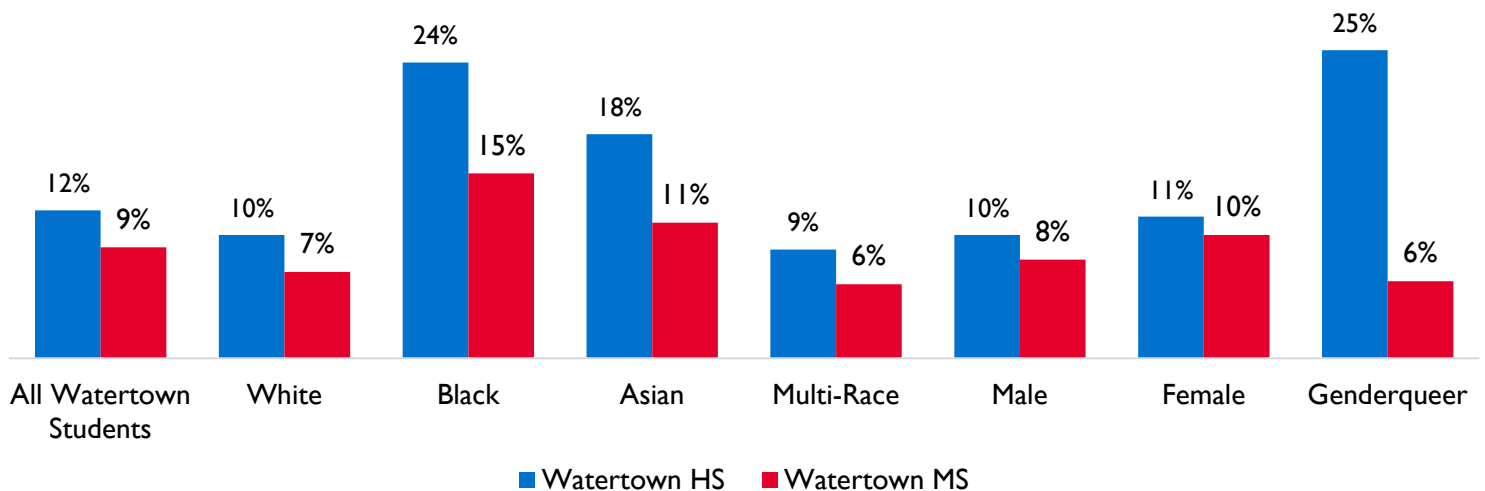


Figure 35. Percent of Watertown students who reported no physical activity in the past 7 days



Key Findings

Dietary Behaviors and Physical Activity

On an average school day, how many hours of screen time (not including school work) did students have?

- **Overall:** Watertown students reported a significant amount of screen time per day, but less than the Middlesex League Region.
- **Race:** Black Watertown students were more likely to report 5 or more hours of screen time.
- **Gender:** Genderqueer Watertown students were more likely to report 5 or more hours of screen time per day compared to male and female students. In MS, this difference is significant.
- **Grade:** Watertown students had more screen time as they increased in grade.

Figure 36. Percent of students who reported 5 or more hours of screen time per day during the past 7 days by grade

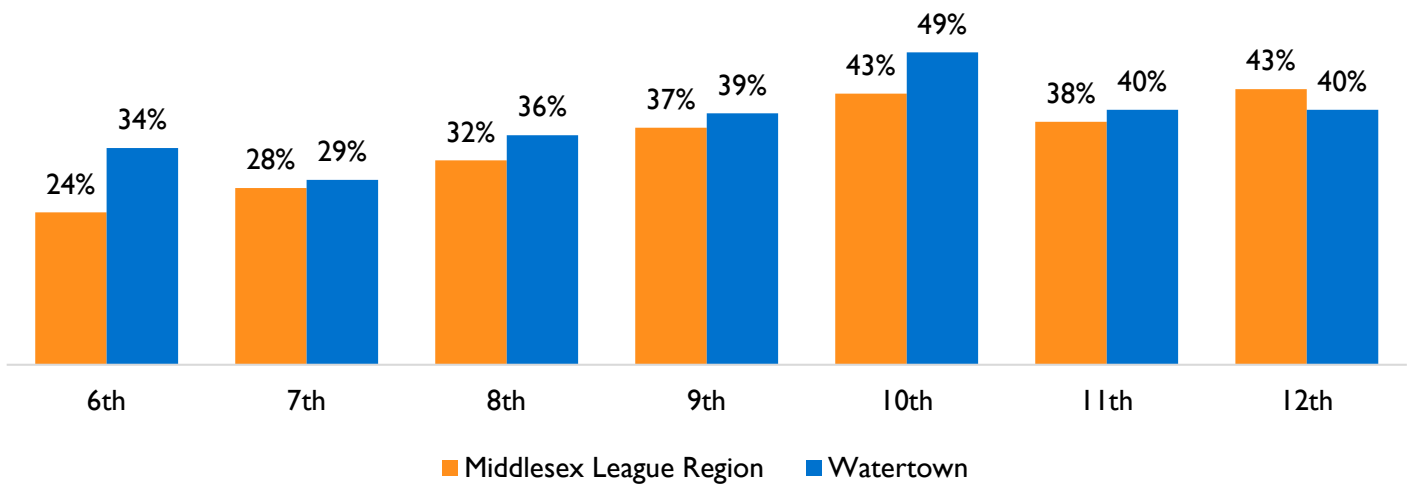
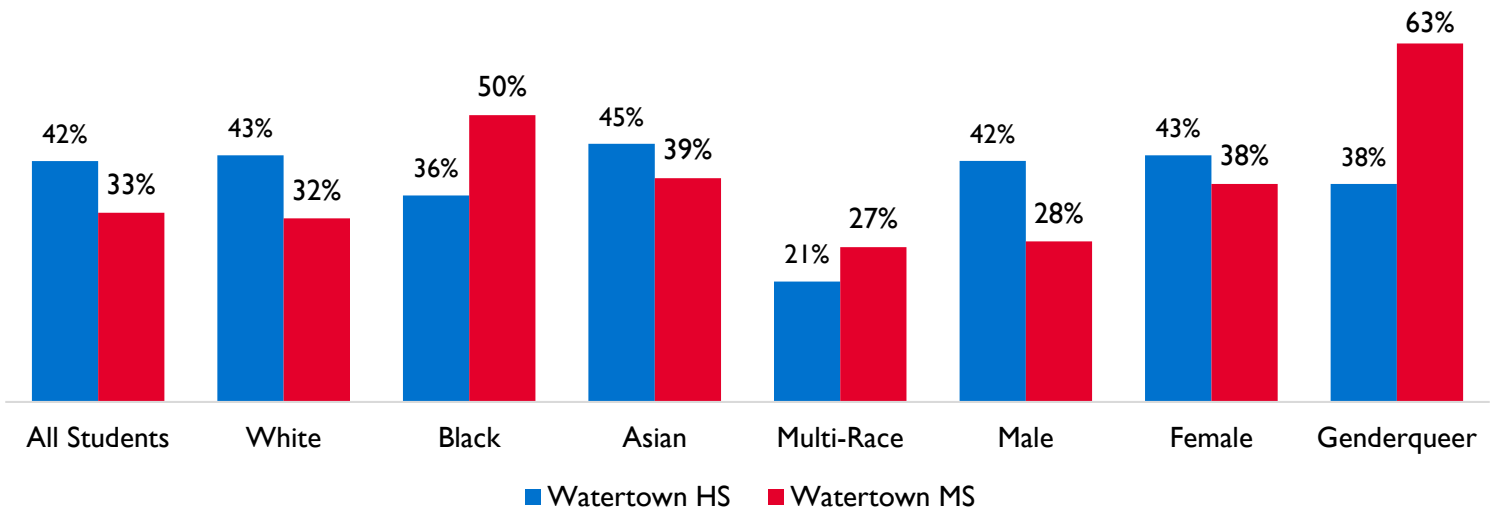


Figure 37. Percent of Watertown students who reported 5 or more hours of screen time per day during the past 7 days



Key Findings

Organized Activities

Organized, or extracurricular, activities help adolescents build social skills, self-esteem, and stay mentally, emotionally, and physically health. For older adolescents, these activities offer an opportunity to assume meaningful roles and responsibilities. Reports from the U.S. Census Bureau show that children involved in one or more activities (sports, lessons or clubs) are more likely to have higher levels of school engagement. ¹

In 2021, it was expected that student participation in organized activities would drop as in-person gatherings were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, across the United States, about 75% of students reported that they participated sports, school clubs, community groups, drama, etc.

Watertown Summary

- Overall, about 73% of HS and 60% of MS students reported that they were involved in afterschool activities.

Core Survey Questions Analyzed

- During this school year (since September), did you do any of these [afterschool activities]?

¹ <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/childs-day.html>

Key Findings

Organized Activities

During this school year (since September), did you do any of these things?

- **Overall:** Watertown MS and HS students continued to participate in afterschool activities. HS students were more likely to participate in school organized or interscholastic sports, and MS students were more likely to participate in community organized youth sports.

Figure 38. Watertown student participation in afterschool activities by school

