

# Highlights from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

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

2016

**Gibbons Middle School  
Westborough**

GRADES 7-8



**METROWEST  
HEALTH  
FOUNDATION**

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# Highlights from the 2016 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

## Gibbons Middle School, Westborough

### Background and Methodology

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The 2016 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWAHS) marks the beginning of a new decade in monitoring trends in adolescent health behaviors to advance school and community prevention efforts. Since 2006, the MWAHS has been administered every other year in communities served by the MetroWest Health Foundation, with the goal of supporting data-driven improvements in health programs and policies at the local and regional levels. The Gibbons Middle School in Westborough has participated in the MWAHS since 2008.

The 2016 middle school survey was administered to a census of students in grades 7 and 8 in all 24 school districts containing middle schools in the region served by the MetroWest Health Foundation. 18 school districts also chose to survey 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. In total, 16,387 middle school students in grades 6 through 8 in the region participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. In Westborough, 599 students in grades 7 and 8 participated in the 2016 MWAHS, representing 94% of students.

As in previous survey waves, local procedures were followed to inform parents of the survey and give them the choice to opt out their child(ren). Students were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that no names or other identifying information were being collected. Data collection at each school was guided by a protocol that protected the privacy of students' responses.

Findings from the MWAHS are used by schools and communities to improve health education, inform prevention efforts, and set priorities for achieving a healthier youth population. Highlights from your district's data in the areas of substance use, violence, bullying, unintentional injury, mental health, physical activity, and protective factors are provided.

## Key Findings: Substance Use

### Cigarette Smoking and Use of Electronic Cigarettes

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **2% of students have smoked a cigarette in their lifetime, and 1% smoked recently (in the past 30 days).**
- » Lifetime smoking is similar by gender and increases slightly from 1% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 3% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » 4% of middle school youth have tried an electronic cigarette or other electronic vapor product in their lifetime, and 2% have used one in the past 30 days. Reports are slightly higher among males than females (5% compared with 3%) and increase from 2% in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 6% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Lifetime youth smoking has decreased gradually from 4% in 2008 to 2% in 2016.**
- » Recent smoking has been steady at 1-2% since 2008, and was reported by 1% of youth in 2016.
  - » Lifetime use of electronic cigarettes or other electronic vapor products was similar in 2014 and 2016 at 3-4%. (2014 was the first year that data on electronic cigarette use was collected.)
  - » In the MetroWest region, cigarette smoking among middle school youth has declined by more than two-thirds since 2006.

### Alcohol Use and Drinking and Driving

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **6% of students drank alcohol in their lifetime, and 2% drank in the past 30 days.**
- » Less than 1% of youth report recent binge drinking (defined as consuming 4 or more drinks in a row for females, or 5 or more drinks in a row for males in the past 30 days).
  - » Initiation of alcohol use is similar among females and males.
  - » Drinking increases substantially by grade: Lifetime use increases from 2% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 10% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Current drinking increases from 1% to 3%.
  - » 1% of students report ever being a passenger in a car driven by a high school student who had been drinking alcohol.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer middle school youth are drinking alcohol: Lifetime use decreased from 14% in 2008 to 5% in 2012, and remained similar at 5-6% in recent surveys.**
- » Following a similar trend, current use decreased from 7% in 2008 to 2% in 2010 and has been steady at 2-3% over the past three surveys.
  - » Drinking declined among both males and females: For example, lifetime drinking decreased from 14% in 2008 to 5% in 2016 among females, and from 14% to 7% among males.
  - » Drinking among middle school youth declined by more than half in the MetroWest region from 2006 to 2016.

## Marijuana Use

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **1% of middle school youth have used marijuana in their lifetime, and less than 1% used marijuana in the past 30 days.**
- » Lifetime marijuana use is does not differ by grade and increases very slightly from less than 1% of youth in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 2% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Lifetime marijuana use has been steady at 1-2% since 2008 and was reported by 1% of youth in 2016.**
- » Current marijuana use has been reported by fewer than 1% of youth at all surveys.
- » Marijuana use in the MetroWest region decreased slightly from 2006 to 2016.

## Inhalant Use

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **2% of youth have used inhalants in their lifetime (defined as sniffing glue, breathing the contents of spray cans, or inhaling any paints or sprays to get high).**
- » Inhalant use is reported by 3% of males and less than 1% of females.
- » Lifetime inhalant use increases very slightly from less than 1% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 2% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Use of inhalants decreased from 6% in 2008 to 2% in 2016.**
- » Reports of inhalant use are lower among both females and males.
- » There has been a substantial decrease in inhalant use among MetroWest region middle school youth since 2006.

## Key Findings: Violence

### Physical Fighting

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **31% of youth have been in a physical fight in their lifetime, and 6% have been in a fight on school property.**
- » Many more males than females report fighting overall (46% compared with 14%) and on school property (10% compared with 1%).
  - » The proportion of youth who have engaged in physical fighting in their lifetime is similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Many fewer youth are involved in fighting: Reports of lifetime physical fighting decreased from 45% in 2008 to 29% in 2014, and were slightly higher in 2016 at 31%.**
- » Lifetime reports of fighting on school property decreased from 16% in 2008 to 6% in 2016.
  - » There were notable decreases in fighting among both males and females. For example, lifetime reports of fighting decreased from 65% in 2008 to 46% in 2016 among males, and from 25% to 14% among females.
  - » In the MetroWest region, physical fighting among middle school youth decreased substantially since 2006.

### Weapon Carrying

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **13% of youth have carried a weapon in their lifetime, and less than 1% have carried a weapon on school property.**
- » Consistent with gender patterns for physical fighting, many more males (21%) than females (5%) report carrying weapons.
  - » Lifetime reports of carrying weapons are similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Lifetime reports of weapon carrying on school property have been steady at under 1% since 2008.**
- » Overall reports of weapon carrying have been similar at 11-13% since 2010 and are slightly lower than 2008 reports (15%).
  - » In the MetroWest region, weapon carrying has remained somewhat similar since 2006.

## Key Findings: Bullying and Cyberbullying

### Bullying

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **23% of middle school youth have been bullied in the past 12 months, and 19% have been bullied on school property. 7% of students report bullying other students.**
- » Reports of overall bullying victimization are similar by gender, and slightly more males than females report being bullied at school (20% compared with 17%).
  - » School bullying reports are similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - » Among students who were bullied at school in the past 12 months, 39% talked to a school adult about being bullied, and 66% talked to a parent or other adult outside of school.
  - » 11% of youth reported being verbally harassed in the past 12 months due to their race, ethnicity or culture, 5% due to their sexual orientation, 6% due to a disability, and 25% due to their appearance (height, weight, or how they look). This data was first collected in 2016.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Fewer students are being bullied at school: Victimization on school property decreased from 38% in 2008 to 18% in 2014, and was similar in 2016 at 19%.**
- » Reports of overall bullying victimization in the past 12 months also decreased, from 45% in 2008 to 23% in 2016.
  - » There were considerable declines in bullying among both genders: For example, bullying on school property decreased from 40% in 2008 to 17% in 2016 among females, and from 38% to 20% among males.
  - » Reports of bullying also decreased substantially in the MetroWest region from 2008 to 2016.

### Cyberbullying

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **18% of youth report being victims of cyberbullying in the past 12 months, and 7% report cyberbullying someone else.**
- » Females are more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than males (21% vs. 15%).
  - » Cyberbullying increases by grade, from 16% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 20% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - » The majority of cyberbullying victims do not seek help from adults: Among youth who were cyberbullied in the past 12 months, only 11% talked to an adult at school and 33% talked to a parent/adult outside of school.
  - » 13% of youth spend three or more hours daily on social media (16% of females and 10% of males). Youth who spend more time online and on social media are also more likely to report being involved in cyberbullying.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of cyberbullying victimization are slightly higher in 2016 (18%) compared with prior surveys (15-16%).**
- » Overall, cyberbullying has been steady among females at 19-21% across all surveys, but there has been an increase among males, from 11% in 2008 to 15% in 2016.
  - » Cyberbullying victimization is higher in MetroWest in 2014-2016 than in prior years.

## Key Findings: Mental Health

### Stress

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **14% of middle school students report that their life was very stressful in the past 30 days.**
- » Females are more likely to report this level of stress than males (16% compared with 12%).
  - » 13% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade youth and 15% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade youth report feeling very stressed.
  - » The most common source of stress is worrying due to school issues (43%), followed by social issues (18%), appearance issues (18%), and family issues (15%).
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Overall reports of stress among middle school youth decreased from 15% in 2008 to 9% in 2012, but increased to earlier levels in 2016 (14%).**
- » Since 2012, reports of stress increased both among males (from 6% in 2012 to 12% in 2016) and among females (from 12% to 16%).
  - » In the MetroWest region, stress has also increased in recent years.

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

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **10% of students report depressive symptoms in the past 12 months (defined as feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row).**
- » 7% of youth report self-injury (defined as cutting, burning, or bruising oneself on purpose) in the past 12 months.
  - » 9% of youth report that they had considered suicide in their lifetime, and 1% had made a suicide attempt.
  - » Females are more likely than males to report all of the above mental health problems. For example, 10% of females and 4% of males report self-injury.
  - » 3% of middle school youth missed school in the past 30 days due to feeling sad or hopeless, or having thoughts about hurting themselves.
  - » Reports of mental health problems are similar in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of depressive symptoms have been similar at 10-12% since 2008, with 10% of youth reporting depressive symptoms in 2016.**
- » Self-injury is slightly lower in 2016 (7%) compared with 2008 (10%), but reports have ranged from 5-10% over the five surveys.
  - » Reports of suicidal thoughts have ranged from 6-11% since 2008, with 9% of youth reporting seriously considering suicide in 2016.
  - » There has been a recent decrease in depressive symptoms among MetroWest region middle school youth, and reports of suicidality have remained similar since 2006.

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

## Physical Activity

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **83% of youth report engaging in vigorous physical activity.** (Vigorous physical activity is defined as exercising for at least 20 minutes that makes you sweat and breathe hard on three or more of the past seven days).
- » Males are more likely than females to report this level of physical activity (86% compared with 79%), though reports are high among both genders.
  - » Reports of physical activity are similar by grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **The proportion of youth who exercised vigorously on at least 3 days per week has ranged from 77-83% since the MWAHS began, with reports at 83% in 2016.**
- » Physical activity among MetroWest region youth has been similar since 2006.

## Sleep

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **61% of middle school youth get 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.**
- » More males than females get 8 hours of sleep per night (66% compared to 57%).
  - » Reports of getting 8 or more hours of sleep decrease as students get older, from 64% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 59% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **The proportion of youth sleeping 8 or more hours per night is slightly lower in 2016 (61%) compared with 2014 (64%).** (2014 was the first year that sleep data was collected.)
- » Youth in the MetroWest region also report slightly less sleep over the last two surveys.

## Overweight/Obesity

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **18% of youth are overweight or obese.** (Reports are based on self-reported height and weight, which is used to calculate body mass index. Overweight/obesity is defined as being in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for body mass index by age and gender.)
- » 19% of females and 16% of males are overweight or obese.
  - » Overweight/obesity is higher in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (20%) than in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (15%).
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Overweight/obesity has ranged from 14-18% since 2008.**
- » In the MetroWest region, overweight/obesity has not changed notably over the six surveys.

## Key Findings: Protective Factors

### School Attachment and Engagement

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **About three-quarters of youth report being engaged in and connected with their school.** This is indicated by agreement with statements such as “I feel close to people at this school” (74%), “I am happy to be at this school” (74%), and “I feel safe in my school” (87%).
- » Reports of school attachment are similar by gender and grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of school attachment are slightly lower in 2016 compared with 2008, though three out of four youth still report high levels of school attachment.**
- » School attachment has been similar among MetroWest region middle school students since the beginning of the MWAHS.

### Adult Support

- 2016 Patterns (Grades 7-8)** » **62% of youth have at least one teacher or other adult at school to talk to if they have a problem, and 93% of youth have a parent or other adult outside of school to talk to about things that are important to them.**
- » Adult support at school is reported by 64% of females and 61% of males and increases from 7<sup>th</sup> grade (59%) to 8<sup>th</sup> grade (66%).
  - » Adult support outside of school is similar by gender and grade.
- 2008-2016 Trends (Grades 7-8)** » **Reports of having an adult at school to talk to increased over the course of the MWAHS, from 58% in 2008-2012 to 62% in 2016.**
- » Adult support outside of school is slightly higher in 2016 (93%) compared with 2008 (89%).
  - » In the MetroWest region, adult support at school has also increased since 2006.

## Conclusions

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



## Gibbons Middle School, Westborough (Grades 7-8)

### 2006-2016 Trends in Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Year of Survey (%)					
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
	–	(528)	(516)	(488)	(526)	(599)
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>						
Lifetime cigarette smoking	–	4.2	2.7	2.5	2.3	1.9
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	–	1.5	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.8
Lifetime alcohol use	–	13.7	10.7	5.4	6.5	6.0
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	–	6.7	2.9	1.7	1.5	2.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days)*	–	1.3	1.6	0.4	0.6	0.5
Lifetime marijuana use	–	1.9	1.9	0.6	0.6	1.0
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	–	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.3
Lifetime inhalant use	–	5.7	2.9	2.3	1.4	1.5
<b>VIOLENCE</b>						
Physical fighting (lifetime)	–	45.1	32.3	32.5	29.4	30.9
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	–	16.1	9.2	9.1	7.3	6.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	–	15.0	11.4	10.7	11.6	13.4
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	–	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.3
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>						
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	–	45.3	30.7	28.2	24.6	22.8
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	–	38.5	25.1	23.9	17.7	19.0
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	–	16.3	14.5	15.6	14.8	17.6
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>						
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	–	14.6	13.8	8.8	10.5	14.3
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	–	12.1	12.5	9.8	11.1	10.4
Self-injury (past 12 months)	–	9.5	5.4	5.7	5.9	7.0
Considered suicide (lifetime)	–	11.2	10.5	6.4	9.4	9.3
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	–	2.9	1.4	1.9	1.5	1.4
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>						
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	–	79.4	77.1	81.4	80.5	82.9
Overweight or obese <sup>†</sup>	–	16.2	18.2	16.0	14.3	17.6

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

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

## Gibbons Middle School, Westborough (Grades 7-8)

### 2016 Gender Patterns for Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Gender (%)		Total (%)
	Female (277)	Male (318)	(599)
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	1.5	2.2	1.9
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	1.1	0.6	0.8
Lifetime alcohol use	5.1	6.5	6.0
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.5	2.3	2.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days)*	0.4	0.6	0.5
Lifetime marijuana use	0.7	1.3	1.0
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.4	0.3	0.3
Lifetime inhalant use	0.4	2.6	1.5
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	13.8	46.0	30.9
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	1.1	10.1	6.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	4.7	21.0	13.4
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.4	0.3	0.3
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	22.0	23.2	22.8
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	17.3	20.1	19.0
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	21.4	14.6	17.6
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	16.4	12.3	14.3
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	11.9	8.5	10.4
Self-injury (past 12 months)	10.1	3.6	7.0
Considered suicide (lifetime)	10.9	7.7	9.3
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.5	1.3	1.4
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	79.0	86.5	82.9
Overweight or obese <sup>†</sup>	19.2	16.2	17.6

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

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

## Gibbons Middle School, Westborough (Grades 7-8)

### 2016 Grade Patterns for Key Indicators

*MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey*

	Grade		Total (%) (599)
	7 <sup>th</sup> (297)	8 <sup>th</sup> (302)	
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b>			
Lifetime cigarette smoking	1.0	2.7	1.9
Current cigarette smoking (past 30 days)	0.0	1.7	0.8
Lifetime alcohol use	2.1	9.7	6.0
Current alcohol use (past 30 days)	1.0	3.0	2.0
Binge drinking (past 30 days)*	0.0	1.0	0.5
Lifetime marijuana use	0.4	1.7	1.0
Current marijuana use (past 30 days)	0.0	0.7	0.3
Lifetime inhalant use	1.4	1.7	1.5
<b>VIOLENCE</b>			
Physical fighting (lifetime)	30.7	31.0	30.9
Physical fighting on school property (lifetime)	6.8	5.3	6.0
Carried a weapon (lifetime)	13.7	13.1	13.4
Carried weapon on school property (lifetime)	0.0	0.7	0.3
<b>BULLYING VICTIMIZATION</b>			
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	24.8	20.9	22.8
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	19.5	18.5	19.0
Cyberbullying victim (past 12 months)	15.7	19.5	17.6
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>			
Life "very" stressful (past 30 days)	13.4	15.1	14.3
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	10.4	10.4	10.4
Self-injury (past 12 months)	6.9	7.1	7.0
Considered suicide (lifetime)	9.7	8.9	9.3
Attempted suicide (lifetime)	1.4	1.4	1.4
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BODY WEIGHT</b>			
Exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week	84.4	81.4	82.9
Overweight or obese <sup>†</sup>	15.2	19.8	17.6

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

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

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