

2022

Cambridge Public Schools

Teen and Middle Grades Health Survey

Executive Summary – High School



2022

In partnership with John Snow, Inc.

The Cambridge Teen Health Survey was administered in May 2022 at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School to high school students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Overall, 1,282 students participated, accounting for 69% of Cambridge's total high school student population. Results from the 2022 data indicate that many risk behaviors and health-related factors improved over the past decade, while others worsened. The following is a summary of leading overall findings organized by key topic areas. It highlights trends for the student body as a whole and calls attention to segments of the school student population that are most at-risk. The full report is available on the Cambridge Public School Department and the Cambridge Public Health Department websites.

MENTAL HEALTH (Depression, stress, self-harm, and suicidal ideation)

○ **General.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who described their mental health as not good decreased slightly from 2021 to 2022. This differs from the middle grades findings for which there was an increase in the percentage of students who described their mental health as not good during this time period. In 2022, 63% percent of all high school students reported that their mental health was not good sometimes, most of the time, or always in the past 30 days. While the rates were relatively consistent across all segments of the school population, gender non-conforming students (85%), female students (79%), Multi-Racial students (70%), 11th grade students (69%), and students receiving special education services (67%) were most likely to describe their mental health as not good.

Stress. Overall, in 2022, Cambridge high school students were most likely to worry fairly or very often about school issues (65%), followed by appearance issues (39%), social issues (38%), social justice issues (30%), family issues (26%), health issues (20%), and community violence (6%).

● **School Issues.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who worried about school issues has increased slightly from 2021 to 2022. In 2022, 65% of all high school students reported worrying fairly often or very often about school issues in the past 30 days. Once again, gender non-conforming students were most likely to worry about school issues, followed by female students, students identifying as Multi-racial or Asian, and 11th graders (83%, 74%, 73%, 68%, and 70%, respectively).

● **Depression.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who experienced depression has increased since 2012 to its highest percentage. In 2022, 37% of students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some of their usual activities (i.e., experienced depression) in the past 12 months. Gender-nonconforming students, female students, students receiving special education services, and students identifying as Hispanic/Latino were mostly likely to experience depression (56%, 46%, 44%, and 41%, respectively). The percentages were similar across all grades and all racial categories.

● **Self-Harm.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who engaged in self-harm has increased since 2012. Although percentages decreased between 2018 and 2021, they increased in 2022 to their highest level since 2012. In 2022, 17% of all high school students hurt or injured themselves on purpose in the past 12 months. Once again, students identifying as gender-nonconforming, Multi-Racial, and/or female were among those most likely to engage in self-harm (33%, 23%, and 22%, respectively).

● **Suicide.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who considered attempting suicide has continued to increase since 2012. In 2022, 20% of all high school students reported that they had considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months. Once again, students identifying as gender-nonconforming, female, Multi-Racial, Hispanic/Latino, and/or students receiving special education services were among those most likely to report considering suicide (43%, 24%, 23%, 23%, and 23%, respectively). Note that in 2021, this question was changed from asking students if they “seriously considered attempting suicide” to “considered attempting suicide”.

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

- **Overall.** Overall, the percentages of high school students with social supports rebounded from 2021 when students spent the majority of the school year in remote learning, but are still lower than they were in 2018. In 2022, 78% of students said that they a friend of similar age to talk to if they had a problem. Sixty-eight percent reported having an adult in their family to talk to if they had a problem, followed by a teacher in school (43%), another adult in school (35%), an adult in their community (29%), and an adult in an afterschool program (20%).
- **Friendship.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported having three or more close friends decreased from 2018 to 2021, but has increased from 2021 to 2022. 63% of high school students reported having three or more close friends. The percentages across all segments of the high school population were relatively consistent.
- **Teachers or Other Adults in School.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported having a teacher or other adult at school to talk to about a problem decreased significantly from 2018 to 2021, but increased from 2021 to 2022. In 2022, 51% of all high school students reported having at least one teacher or other adult in school to talk to about a problem. Students receiving special education services were most likely to have a teacher or other adult at school to talk to about a problem, followed by 12th graders, Hispanic/Latino students, and/or gender-nonconforming students (63%, 60%, 59%, and 56%, respectively).

DISCRIMINATION, SAFETY, SEXUAL/DATING VIOLENCE, AND BULLYING

- **Discrimination (Race/Ethnicity).** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported bad or unfair treatment in school because of their race or ethnicity increased to its highest percentage in 2022. In 2022, 14% of all high school students reported bad or unfair treatment in school because of their race or ethnicity. Asian students were most likely to report bad or unfair treatment in school because of their race or ethnicity (26%), followed by Black students, Multi-Racial students, students of another race, and White students (21%, 20%, 19%, and 4%, respectively). Sixteen percent of Hispanic/Latino students reported bad or unfair treatment in school because of their race or ethnicity. The percentages were similar across all grades and gender identities.
- **Discrimination (Sex/Gender Identity).** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported bad or unfair treatment in school because of their sex or gender identity increased to its highest percentage in 2022. In 2022, 17% of all high school students reported bad or unfair treatment in school because of their sex or gender identity. Nearly half (48%) of students who identify as gender nonconforming reported bad or unfair treatment in school because of their sex or gender identity, followed by female and male students (26% and 3%, respectively).
- **Safety.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who stayed home from school for fear for their safety has increased since 2012 to its highest percentage in 2022. In 2022, 12% of high school students stayed home from school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school, compared to 5% in 2012. The percentages across grade, race, Hispanic/Latino identity, gender identity, and special education status were all relatively consistent.
- **Sexual/Dating Violence.** In 2022, 15% of all high school students experienced unwanted sexual contact or reported being forced to do sexual things that they did not want to. Students identifying as gender-nonconforming, female, and/or in 11th grade were mostly likely to report experiencing unwanted or forced sexual contact (25%, 23%, and 19% respectively).

● Improvement

● Worsening

● No change

- **Bullying In School.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported being bullied in school has decreased since 2012 to its lowest percentage in 2022. In 2022, 9% of high school students reported being bullied in school in the past 12 months, compared to 14% in 2012. The percentages across grade, race, Hispanic/Latino identity, gender identity, and special education status were relatively consistent.
- **Electronic Bullying.** The percentage of high school grades students who reported being bullied electronically has been consistent since 2012. In 2022, 9% of high school students reported being electronically bullied in the past 12 months. Students identifying as gender-nonconforming are most likely to experience bullying (18%), followed by Multi-racial students (12%), and 10th graders (12%).

SUBSTANCE USE

- **Lifetime Substance Use.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported ever using alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes has decreased steadily since 2012, and, for all three substances, decreased by its largest margin since 2012 between 2021 and 2022. For example, in 2012, 62% of all high school students reported having ever drunk alcohol, compared to 39% of high school students in 2022.
 - Electronic vapor product (EVP) use also decreased substantially (33%) between 2018 and 2022, but was still greater in 2022 (22%) than when it was first reported in 2014 (16%).
- **Current Substance Use.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported current use of alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes has also declined steadily since 2012. The rates of use in 2022 were higher than the rates in 2021, likely due to how isolated students were during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the 2022 rates still reflect a steady decline from rates over the past 10 years.
 - Similar to lifetime EVP use, there has been an increase in current EVP use rates since 2012. Use rates decreased substantially from 2018 to 2021, but increased between 2021 and 2022. In 2022, 13% of all high school students used electronic vapor products.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION

- **Physical Activity.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who engage in physical activity continues to increase across all physical activity categories. In 2022, 96% of all high school students reported engaging in physical activity on at least 1 of the past 7 days, compared to 78% in 2012. In 2022, 46% of all students reported engaging in physical activity on at least 5 or the past 7 days, compared to 43% in 2012. In 2022, 28% of all high school students reported engaging in physical activity on all of the past 7 days, compared to 17% of students in 2012.
- **Nutrition.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who ate breakfast on 6 of the past 7 days has been consistent since 2012. In 2022, 43% of all high school students ate breakfast on 6 of the past 7 days.

SLEEP

- **Sleep.** The percentage of Cambridge high school students who reported sleeping 8 or more hours on a regular school night was the same in 2021 and 2022. In 2022, only 8% of high school students reported sleeping 8 or more hours on a regular school night. Percentages were relatively consistent across all segments of the high school population, except for gender-nonconforming students who were least likely to sleep 8 hours a night (3%). Note that 38% of high school students reported checking their phone after they go into bed to go to sleep.