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Department of Education

2005

Maryland Youth Risk
Behavior Survey



2005
MARYLAND YOUTH RISK
BEHAVIOR SURVEY

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Student, Family, and School Support
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FOREWORD

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is pleased to publish the results of the 2005 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). In 2004, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation requiring MSDE to conduct the YRBS. Beginning in 2005 and every two years thereafter, the YRBS will be conducted to collect information about a variety of priority health risk behaviors among youth.

The YRBS is a part of a Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1990. This surveillance system monitors six categories of priority health risk behaviors considered to contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth in the United States. The YRBSS includes national, state, and local school-based surveys of high school students in grades 9 through 12. The 2005 Maryland YRBS includes responses to questions on: traffic safety; weapons; personal safety and harassment; tobacco, alcohol and other drug use; suicide; diet, nutrition, and physical activity; and protective factors such as HIV prevention education, extracurricular activities, and support from parents, teachers, and other adults.

We are also pleased that the 2005 YRBS obtained data that is generalized at the State level. The success of Maryland's first iteration of the YRBS is attributed to the hard work and professionalism of staff and administrators in our local school systems and schools who did everything possible to ensure the survey was conducted in a timely and professional manner. The 2005 Maryland YRBS findings are linked to the Leading Health Indicators around which state and national health policies are organized. The 2005 YRBS provides data that may be used for policy development and program planning at the State and local levels. However, because this is Maryland's first iteration of the YRBS, comparisons can only be made with the 2005 national YRBS. Once data are collected and analyzed in 2007, Maryland can begin to establish its own trend data.

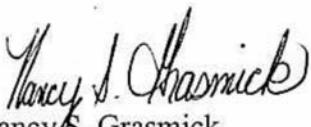

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

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Executive Summary

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) implemented the state's first YRBS in 2005.

The profile of high school behaviors revealed in the 2005 Maryland YRBS is generally similar to the findings in earlier and current national surveys. This report covers seven areas of concern:

- Traffic safety
- Personal safety
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Suicide
- Diet, nutrition, and physical activity
- Protective factors

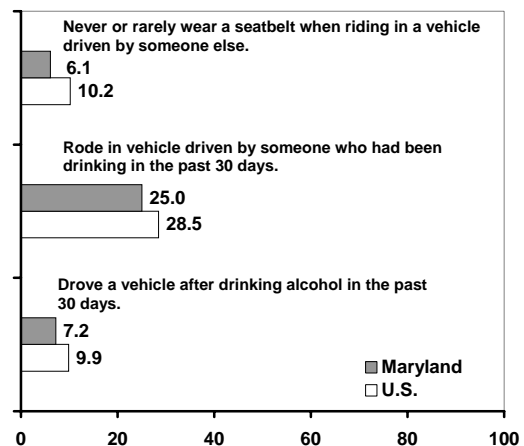
The YRBS findings in each of these areas will help MSDE, educators, and parents develop and refine initiatives aimed at improving Maryland high school students' health and well-being.

Traffic safety

The YRBS examined bicycle helmet and seatbelt use and driving after drinking.

- Only 6.1 percent of Maryland high school students say they never or rarely wear seatbelts, significantly better than students nationwide.
- One fourth of Maryland high school students recently rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking.
- 7.2 percent of Maryland students recently drove a vehicle after drinking; one in 10 Maryland 11th and 12th graders recently drove a vehicle after drinking (not shown).

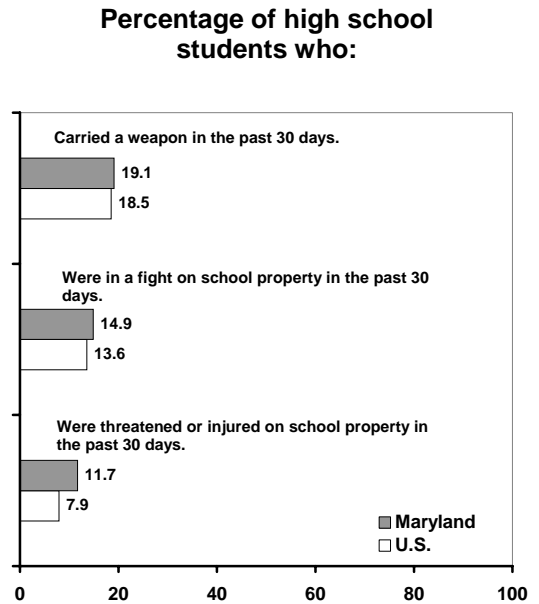
Percentage of high school students who:



Personal safety

The YRBS focused on verbal slurs, harassment and bullying, fighting, carrying weapons, and perceptions of safety.

- About 1 in 5 Maryland high school students (19.1 percent) carried a weapon in the past 30 days.
- 14.9 percent of Maryland high school students have been involved in a physical fight on school property over the past 12 months.
- Maryland high school students are significantly more likely to report being threatened or injured by a weapon on school property than students in the national YRBS sample; 10th grade students are at the greatest risk (not shown).

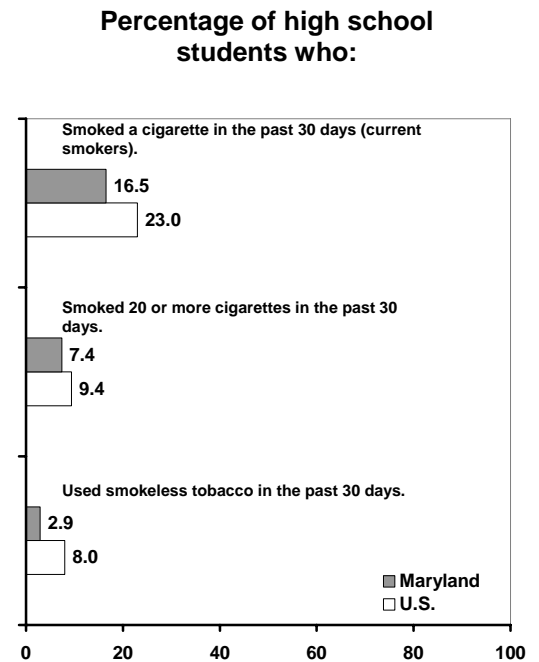


MSDE’s Bullying and Harassment prevention program will use YRBS data to benchmark and track these behaviors.

Tobacco use

The YRBS investigated cigarette smoking, smokeless tobacco use, and underage cigarette purchases.

- Maryland high school students are significantly less likely than students nationwide to be current smokers (16.5 vs. 23 percent).
- Maryland high school students are less likely to smoke heavily than students nationally (7.4 vs. 9.4 percent).
- Maryland high school students are less likely than their national counterparts to use smokeless tobacco products (2.9 vs. 8 percent).



MSDE supports local school districts in their efforts to assist smokers to quit and encourage others not to start.

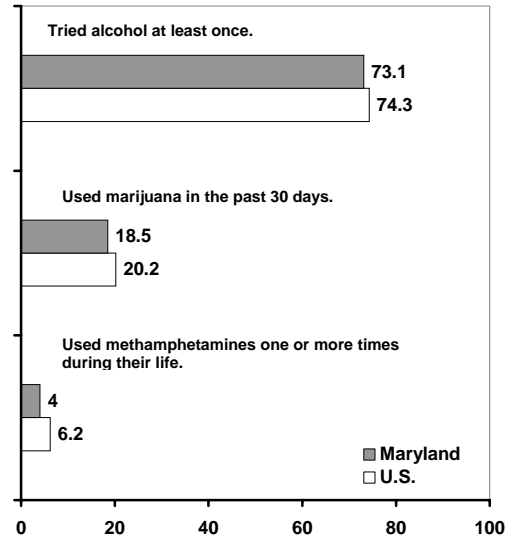
Alcohol and other drug use

The YRBS focused on students’ use of alcohol and drugs and the prevalence of drugs on school property.

- Nearly 75 percent of Maryland and nationwide high school students have tried alcohol at least once.
- The percentage of Maryland high school students who currently use marijuana is 18.5 percent.
- A low percentage of Maryland high school students use other illegal drugs such as methamphetamines, cocaine, heroin, or ecstasy.

MSDE in partnership with First Lady Kendel Ehrlich sponsors the “I Want to Know” Campaign. This initiative fosters communication between parents and teens to prevent drug and alcohol use.

Percentage of high school students who:

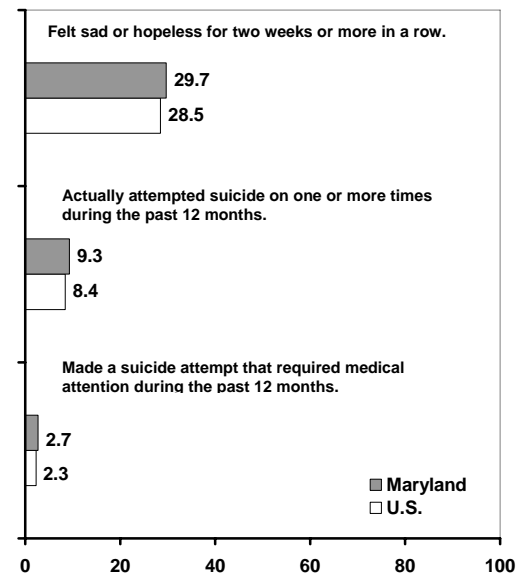


Suicide

The YRBS examined students’ feelings, suicide plans, actual attempts, and injuries.

- Nearly 30 percent of Maryland high school students report feelings of sadness for two weeks or more.
- While the percentage of Maryland high school students who commit suicide is low, 9.3 percent of students attempted suicide in the past year.
- Less than 3 percent of Maryland students made a suicide attempt requiring medical treatment in the past year.

Percentage of high school students who:

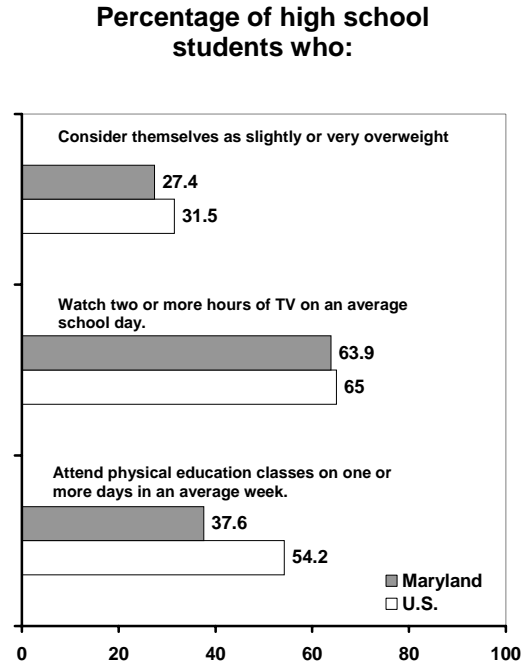


MSDE has programs to address mental health including Youth Suicide Prevention. MSDE partners with local universities and other state agencies regarding these mental health initiatives.

Diet, nutrition and physical activity

The YRBS investigated obesity, weight control, food preferences, and fitness.

- More than one-fourth of Maryland high school students (27.4 percent) say they are slightly or very overweight, which is significantly below the 31.5 percent of students who do so nationwide.
- Almost two-thirds of high school students, in Maryland and nationally, watch two or more hours of TV on an average school day.
- Maryland high school students are significantly less likely to attend physical education classes than students nationwide.

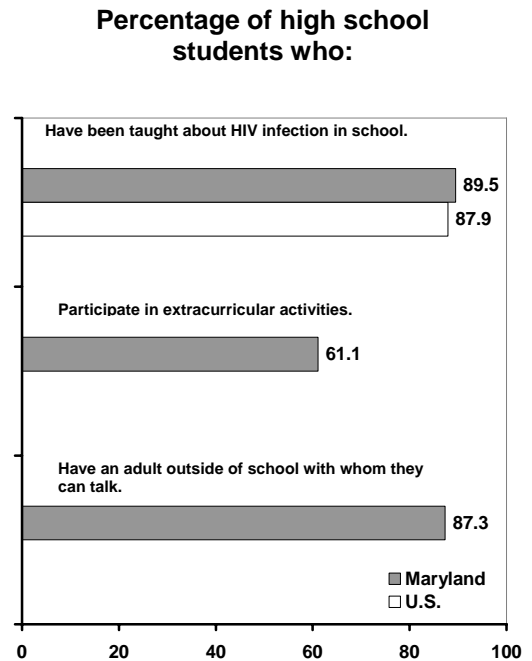


MSDE is aiding school districts to develop and execute Comprehensive Wellness Plans.

Protective factors

The Maryland YRBS looked at several factors that can protect students from risky behaviors and promote health and wellbeing. Most of these questions did not appear in the national YRBS survey.

- About 90 percent of Maryland high school students say they have been taught in school about AIDS or HIV infection.
- Most Maryland high school students participate in extracurricular activities.
- Approximately 87 percent of Maryland high school students say they would be comfortable seeking help from one or more adults besides their parents.



Most Maryland school systems already have character education programs in operation.

The next Maryland YRBS will be conducted in the spring of 2007. As in 2005, the 2007 Maryland YRBS will monitor attitudes and behaviors of Maryland high school students that could affect morbidity (disease) and mortality (death).

For more information on the 2005 Maryland YRBS contact Ms. Alicia Mezu at 410-767-0353 or email amezu@msde.state.md.us.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor behaviors that affect morbidity (disease) and mortality (death) among youth. The YRBS program has been in existence since 1990, and data are collected during odd-numbered years. The national YRBS, therefore, provides a series of snapshots of high school students' behavior which policy-makers, educators, and parents can use to develop and refine initiatives aimed at improving high school students' health and wellbeing.

In 2004, the Maryland General Assembly authorized the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to participate in the YRBS for the first time, starting with the 2005 survey. Thirty high schools from across the state were randomly selected to form a representative sample. Three of these high schools were also part of the national YRBS sample.

The 2005 Maryland YRBS covered seven major categories of student attitudes and behavior:

- Traffic safety
- Personal safety
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Suicide
- Diet, nutrition, and physical activity
- Protective factors

The YRBS is part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveillance system designed to monitor factors that affect youth morbidity and mortality.

Maryland first participated in the YRBS in 2005.

The 2005 Maryland YRBS assessed seven major categories of student attitudes and behavior.

This report provides information on all seven of these dimensions, including the extent to which different health-related behaviors are exhibited by Maryland high school students, how Maryland youth compare to youth in the national YRBS, and how the attitudes and behaviors of Maryland high school students vary by gender and grade level. These findings will be used, as they are in other states, to help health educators and other specialists plan and deliver programs addressing those behaviors.

The report is divided into ten chapters.

Chapter 2 summarizes the methodology Maryland used to implement the 2005 YRBS.

Chapters 3 through 9 detail the results related to each of the seven major categories of student attitudes and behavior covered by the YRBS.

Chapter 10 puts the YRBS data in the context of the major health indicators being addressed through the Healthy Maryland Project 2010, the state's government-wide initiative to promote good health. Through numerous initiatives to reduce risk behaviors among high school students, MSDE is supporting the Project 2010 goal of creating *healthy people in healthy communities*.

Additional information on the YRBS can be found at the CDC's website (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/YRBS>).

The report compares the YRBS results for Maryland and the U.S., and explores differences by gender and grade level.

Chapter 2 summarizes the survey methodology.

Chapters 3 through 9 examine the seven major YRBS topics.

Chapter 10 examines current policy and program initiatives that address the YRBS findings.

Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/YRBS>.

Chapter 2.

Survey Methodology

This chapter summarizes the implementation of the Maryland YRBS in 2005. It reviews how MSDE, the selected school districts, individual high schools and the survey contractor worked together to obtain the sample and conduct the survey

There are 24 school districts in the state of Maryland, one for each of 23 counties plus Baltimore City. The 30 schools in the 2005 Maryland YRBS were randomly drawn from the 24 districts, and provide a representative sample for the entire state. The sample includes schools from 8 districts.

The Maryland YRBS was administered between mid-April and mid-May 2005, with most schools surveyed during the last two weeks of April. Depending on a school's overall enrollment, two to four classroom sections were randomly chosen to participate in the YRBS. The classes chosen had a total of about 2,000 students registered.

Each student enrolled in the selected classes was asked to complete the survey. The General Assembly required the signature of a parent or guardian, specifically authorizing the student's participation, before the student could be given a survey to complete. This process is referred to as "active consent," and was designed to ensure that parents were aware of and comfortable with their student's participation. Only students returning forms with signed parental consent were surveyed.

A representative sample of 30 high schools was surveyed.

About 2,000 students were invited to participate in the survey, which was fielded in April and May 2005.

Active parental consent was required for student participation in the survey.

The data were collected in each school by a team of trained survey staff. Priority was given to ensuring the confidentiality of each student's survey form.

Maryland's survey contractor followed strict procedures to ensure student privacy and confidentiality.

Usable surveys were obtained for 1,414 students statewide, about 65 percent of the enrollment in the sampled classes. This number was large enough that the survey data could be weighted to represent the entire population of Maryland high school students. These weighted data yield statistically valid estimates for the entire state. Table 2.1 shows the composition of the Maryland 2005 YRBS sample, and the corresponding breakdown of Maryland high school enrollment.

With a response rate of about 65 percent, weighting could be used to represent the entire state population of public high school students.

The report presents baseline data for Maryland in each of the major risk behavior categories in the YRBS, and compares Maryland and U.S. high school students, except where such comparisons are not possible due to differences in the items included on the Maryland and national surveys.

2.1 Composition of Maryland 2005 High School Enrollment and 2005 YRBS Sample

Demographic Subgroup	State Enrollment (Percent)	YRBS Sample (Percent)
Gender*		
Males	50.6	50.2
Females	49.4	49.8
Total	100.0	100.0
Race/Ethnicity**		
African American	37.0	35.4
White	51.2	53.1
Hispanic/Latino	6.3	6.5
All others	5.5	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Grade**		
9 th	29.4	30.1
10 th	25.8	25.6
11 th	23.2	22.9
12 th	21.6	21.4
Total	100.0	100.0

The report also breaks down the survey results by gender and by grade, except where the subgroup sample for a question contained fewer than 100 students, in which case estimates could not be made.

Differences in reported percentages between any two groups are noted as statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

*Maryland Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, and Number of Schools, September 30, 2005. MSDE, Division of Accountability and Assessment, January 2006.
 **2004 Maryland Adolescent Survey, October 2005; MSDE

Chapter 3.

Traffic Safety

Motor vehicle accidents are one of the leading causes of death among Maryland youth. As students progress through high school, they tend to reduce their use of bicycles and increase their use of motor vehicles. In either mode, however, precautions can be taken to reduce the likelihood and severity of accidents.

The 2005 YRBS asked about the frequency of use of bike helmets and seatbelts, and also about whether high school students rode with drinking drivers or drove themselves after consuming alcohol. The most significant finding was that seatbelt use is nearly universal in Maryland; only 6.1 percent of high school students said they never or rarely wore them, significantly better than students nationwide.

Other survey findings are not so positive and show that Maryland high school students are comparable to students nationwide. More than 80 percent of Maryland high school students who ride a bicycle do not wear a helmet.

The YRBS also reveals the need to reduce Maryland high school students' mix of driving and alcohol.

One fourth of Maryland high school students reported having been a passenger in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking.

One in 10 Maryland 11th and 12th graders said they had recently driven a car after drinking.

Seatbelt use is widespread in Maryland; only 6.1 percent of high school students report not using them.

More than 80 percent of Maryland high school students who ride a bicycle fail to wear a helmet.

One fourth of Maryland high school students recently rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking.

About 1 in 10 Maryland 11th and 12th graders recently drove a car after consuming alcohol.

3.1 Bicycle Helmet Use

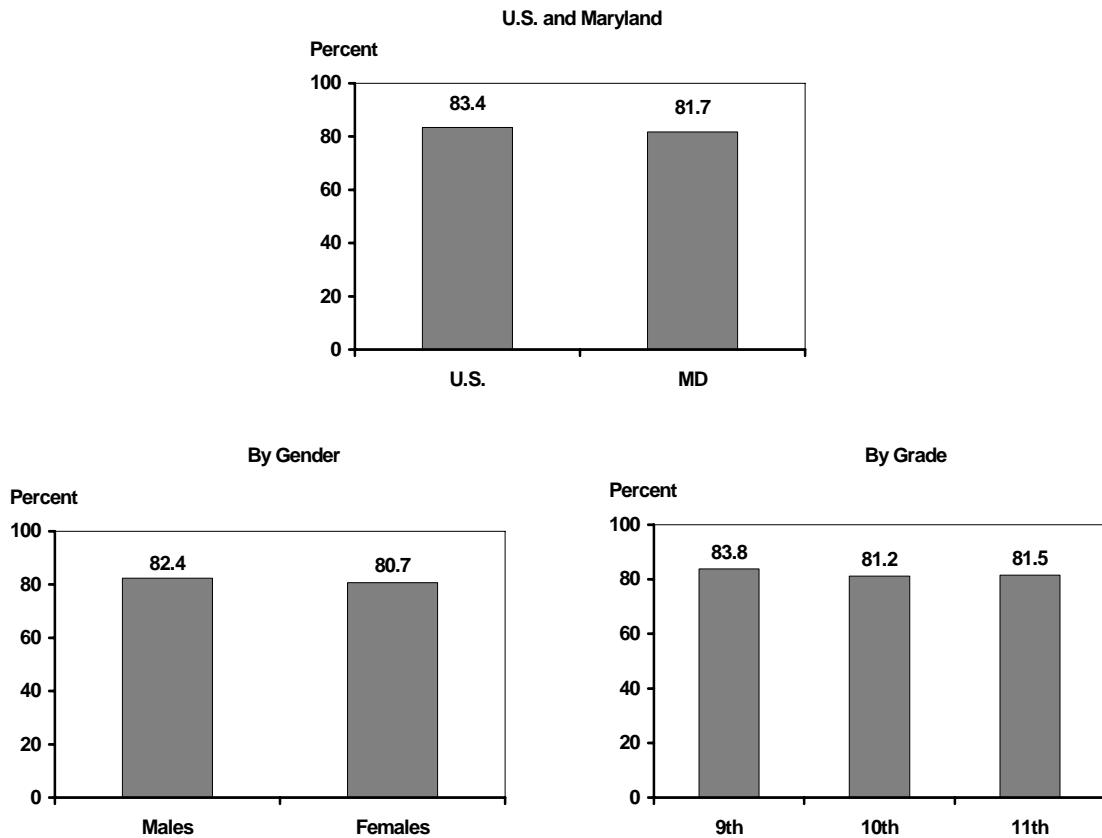
The percentage of Maryland high school students who fail to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle is high, but comparable to the rate for high school students nationwide. The 2005 YRBS shows that 81.7 percent of bicycle riding Maryland high school students fail to wear a helmet compared to 83.4 percent nationwide.

The YRBS shows that bicycle helmet use is equally low among all student subgroups. The percentage of female students who never or rarely wear a helmet when riding a

bicycle is less than the percentage of male students who fail to do so (80.7 vs. 82.4 percent); however the difference is not statistically different.

The survey also shows that failure to wear a helmet declines by grade level, although this dip is not statistically significant. The 12th grade sample of bicycle riders was too small to support an estimate of helmet use.

3.1 Percentage of student bicycle riders who never or rarely wore a helmet in the past 12 months



The 12th grade sample of bicycle riders was too small to support an estimate of helmet use.

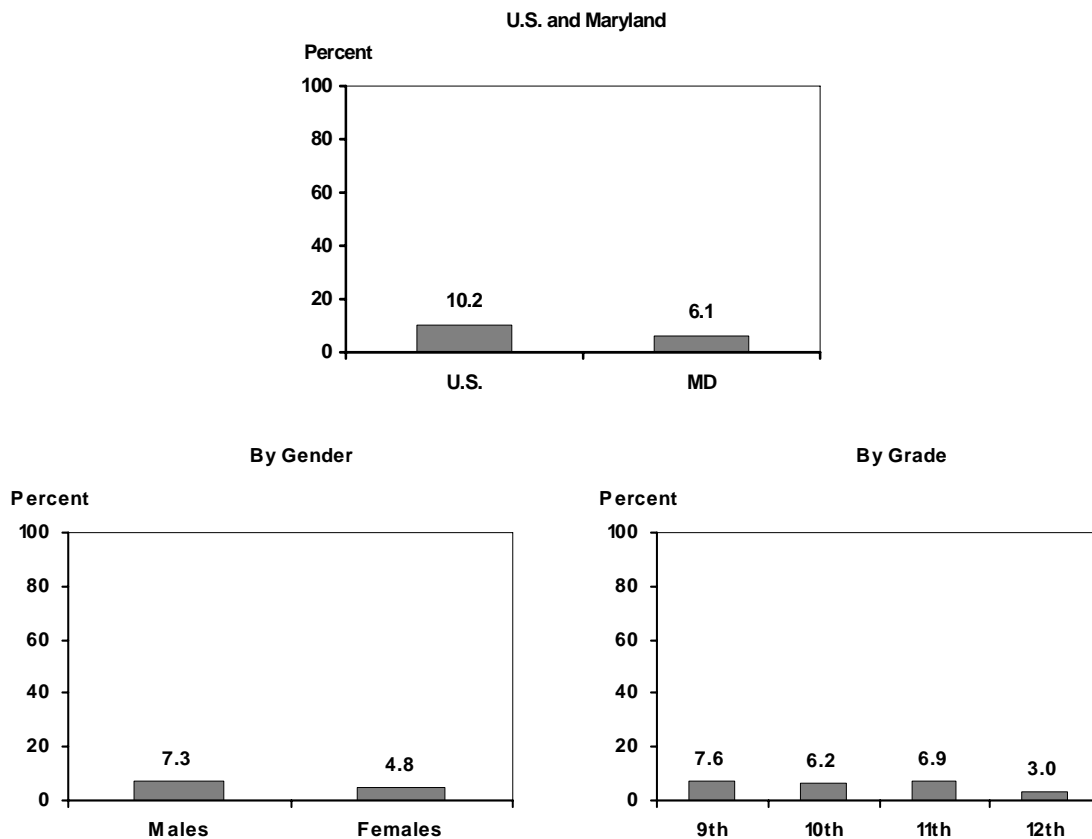
3.2 Seat Belt Use

Seat belt use among Maryland high school students is high and significantly better than the rate of seat belt use nationwide.

The YRBS shows that 6.1 percent of Maryland high school students never or rarely wear a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else, compared with 10.2 percent of students nationwide.

According to the YRBS, a lower percentage of female high school students omit the use of seatbelts than do males (4.8 vs. 7.3 percent). Seat belt use also increases across the high school grade levels. By 12th grade, the percent of students who never or rarely wear seatbelts declines to 3 percent from 7.6 percent in the 9th grade. However, the differences by gender and by grade are not statistically significant.

3.2 Percentage of students who never or rarely wore a seatbelt when riding in a car driven by someone else



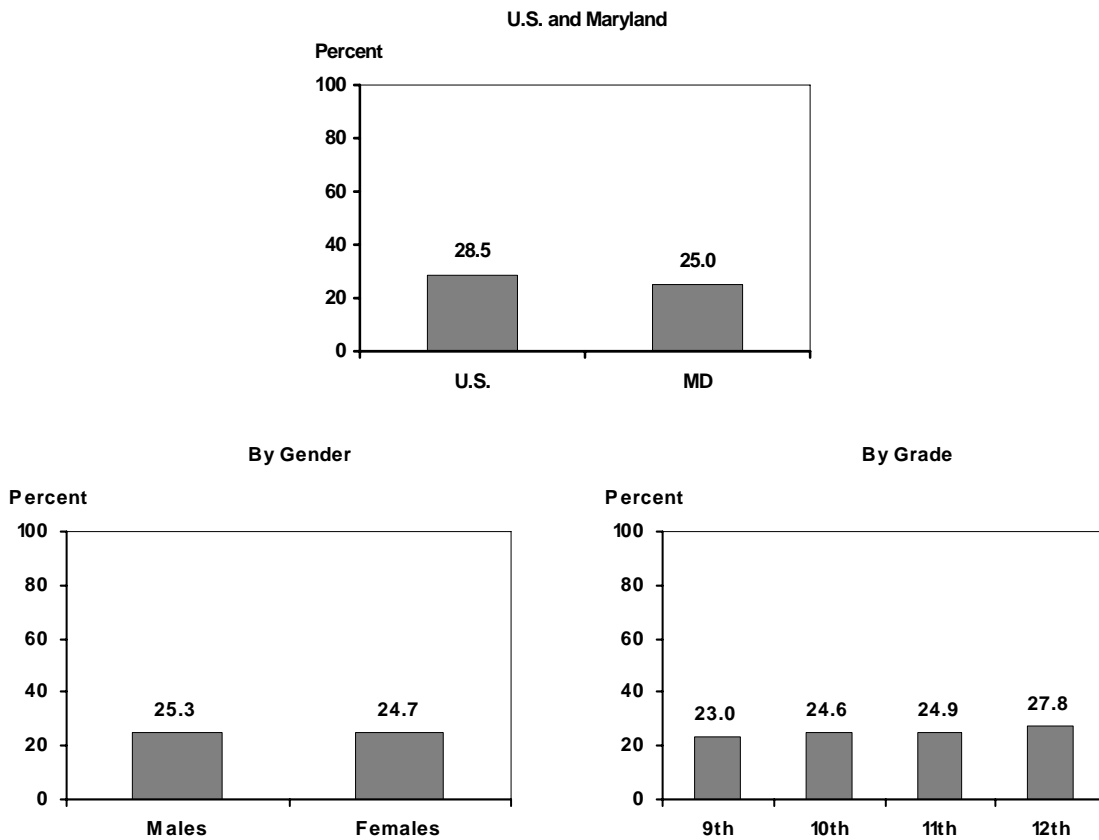
3.3 Riding in a Car Driven by Someone Who Consumed Alcohol

Exactly 25 percent of Maryland high school students report riding in a vehicle during the past 30 days with someone who had been drinking, which is comparable to the percentage of students who do so nationwide (28.5 percent).

About the same percentage of males as females report having been a passenger in a vehicle driven by someone who had been

drinking (25.3 and 24.7 percent, respectively). The percentage of students who report riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol increases across the high school grades from 23 percent in the 9th grade to 27.8 percent in the 12th grade. However, the variation across grade levels is not statistically significant.

3.3 Percentage of students who, at least once in the past 30 days, rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol



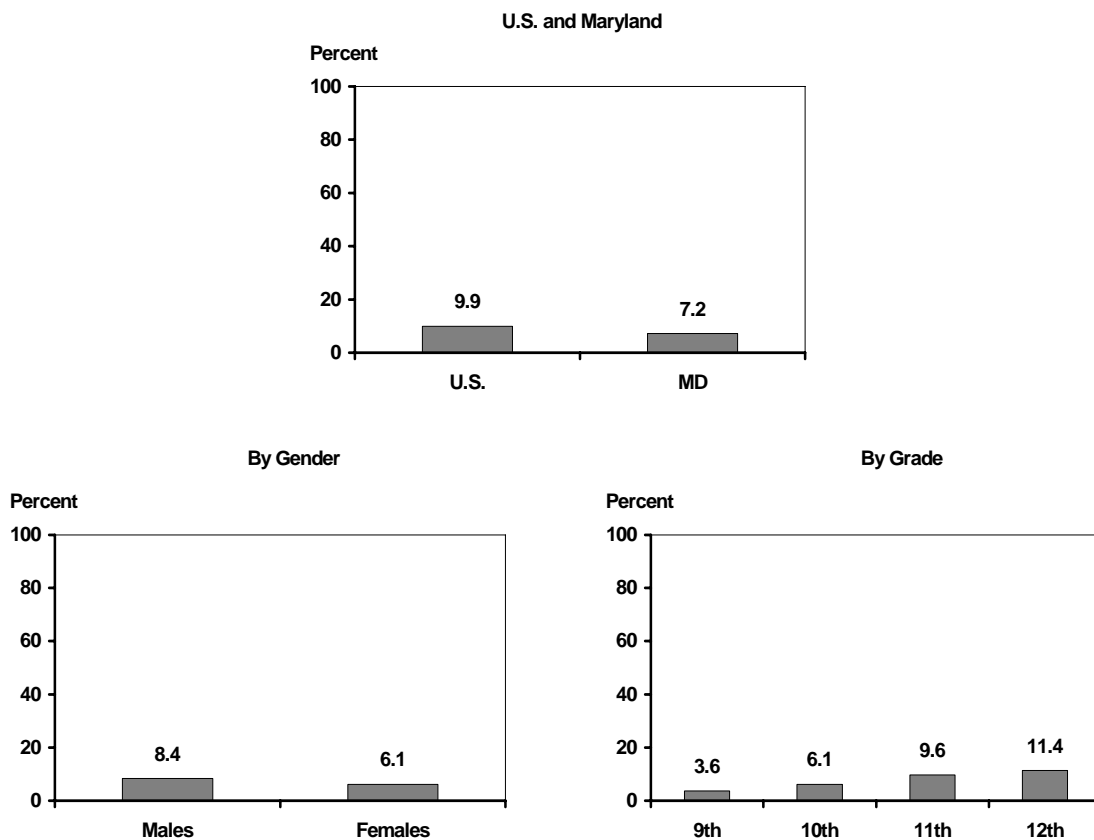
3.4 Students Driving After Drinking

In Maryland, 7.2 percent of high school students have driven a vehicle within the past 30 days after drinking, which is comparable to the percentage among students nationwide (9.9 percent).

Male high school students are somewhat more likely to drive after drinking than are female high school students, although this difference is not statistically significant.

Between 9th and 12th grades, an increase of about 3 percentage points per year is reported by students in the incidence of driving after drinking within the past 30 days, from 3.6 percent in 9th grade to 11.4 percent in 12th grade. This could reflect a larger percentage of drivers among students in the upper grades, as well as higher rates of alcohol use.

3.4 Percentage of students who, at least once in the past 30 days, drove a vehicle after drinking alcohol



Chapter 4.

Personal Safety

Unintentional injury can result from many risk behaviors in addition to those related to traffic safety. The national YRBS survey asked about weapons-carrying behavior, fighting, being threatened or injured at school, and school absences due to concerns about safety. The Maryland survey included additional items about experiencing harassment or verbal slurs, which are important indicators of school climate, and students' perception of safety in their neighborhoods.

The survey reveals that over one fourth of Maryland high school students have been harassed or bullied on school property in the past 12 months (28.4 percent). A similar portion of students report verbal slurs due to weight, size, or physical appearance.

Approximately 1 in every 7 Maryland high school students (14.9 percent) has been involved in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months, and about 1 in 3 students (36.6 percent) has had property stolen or deliberately damaged at school.

The survey reveals that Maryland students are as likely as students nationwide to carry guns or other weapons, and to carry weapons on school property. Approximately 1 in every 15 Maryland high school students (6.9 percent) report carrying a weapon on school property in the last 30 days.

Maryland students are, however, more likely than students nationwide to have been threatened or injured by a weapon at school. Moreover, while the YRBS reveals a consistent decline in harassment, bullying, and fighting across the grade levels as students mature, there is a spike in weapons carrying and weapons related threats and injury in the 10th grade.

Over one fourth of Maryland high school students report being harassed, bullied, or subject to verbal slurs over the last 12 months.

Maryland high school students are as likely as students nationwide to carry guns and other weapons.

Maryland high school students are more likely than students nationwide to have been threatened or injured by a weapon at school, and 10th grade students are at greatest risk.

The impact of these behaviors and experiences is revealed by the YRBS in student perceptions of safety. About 1 in every 13 students (7.6 percent) report not going to high school at least once in the last 30 days for safety reasons, and school absences due to safety concerns are greatest in the 10th grade, underscoring the need for personal safety programs for 10th graders.¹

About 1 in 13 high school students report not going to school at least once in the last month for safety reasons.

¹ For additional information, see “2004 Maryland Adolescent Survey” and “Report on Bullying and Harassment in Maryland Public Schools” Maryland State Department of Education, 2005.

4.1 Students Who Have Received Verbal Slurs

The Maryland YRBS asked high school students whether they had recently been the target of verbal slurs, either related to their weight, size, or physical appearance, or because of their race or ethnic background.

Almost one third of all high school students (32.8 percent, not shown) report being the victim of a verbal slur during the past 30 days due to their physical appearance.

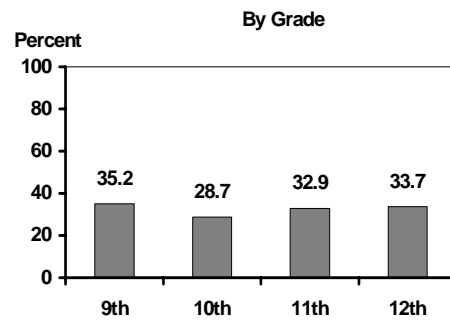
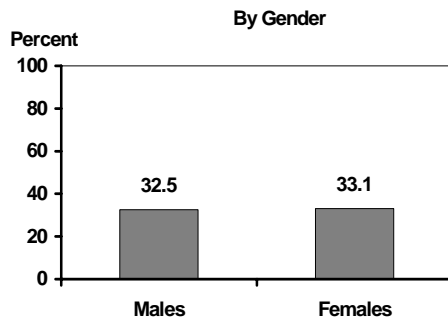
The survey reveals that male and female students experience virtually the same incidence of verbal abuse based on appearance (32.5 vs. 33.1 percent).

Furthermore, the incidence of verbal slurs over the past 30 days does not vary significantly by grade, but is highest in the 9th grade (35.2 percent).

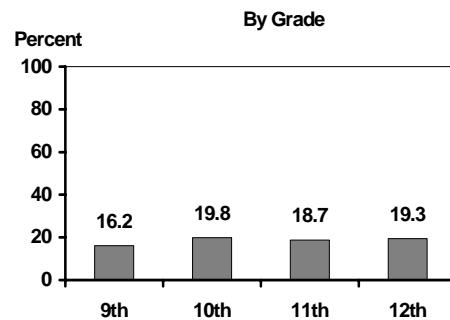
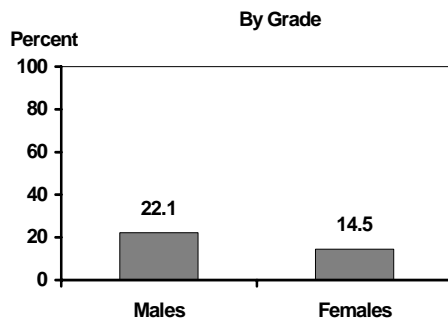
Almost 1 in every 5 Maryland high school students (18.3 percent, not shown) report being the victim of a verbal slur during the past 30 days because of their race or ethnic background.

The incidence of racial or ethnic slurs is consistent throughout high school, although it is highest among male students (22.1 percent) and in the 10th grade (19.8 percent).

4.1.a Percentage of Maryland students who, during the past 30 days, have been the victim of a verbal slur because of their weight, size or physical appearance



4.1.b Percentage of Maryland students who, during the past 30 days, have been the victim of a verbal slur because of their race or ethnic background



4.2 Students Who Have Been Harassed or Bullied

The Maryland 2005 YRBS included questions on the incidence of harassment and bullying on school property for unspecified reasons, and the incidence of harassment related to perceived sexual orientation.

The YRBS results show that almost one third of Maryland high school students (28.4 percent, not shown) has been harassed or bullied on school property in the past 12 months.

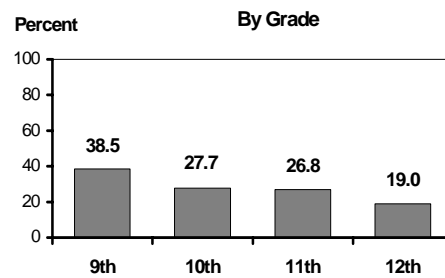
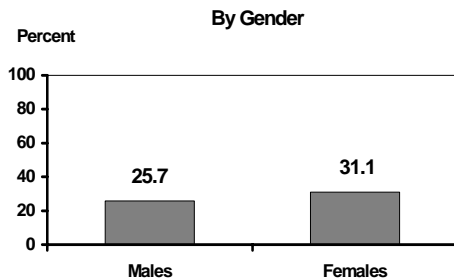
Female high school students are somewhat more likely to experience harassment at school, at 31.1 percent versus 25.7 percent for males. The highest incidence of harassment or bullying at school is among 9th graders (38.5 percent), decreasing to 19 percent by the 12th grade.

The difference between 9th grade and 12th grade is statistically significant.

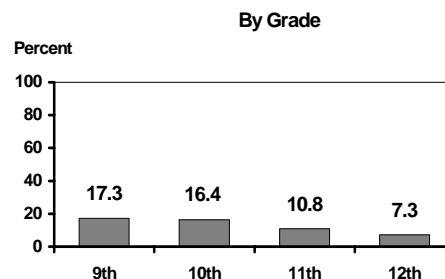
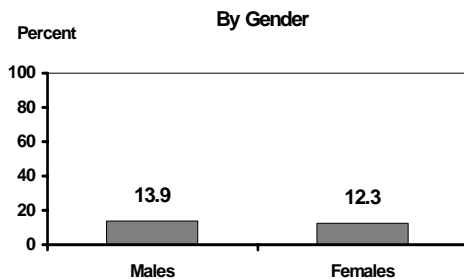
About 1 in every 8 Maryland high school students (13.1 percent, not shown) report being harassed or bullied during the past year due to perceived sexual orientation.

There is a steady decline in harassment and verbal abuse due to perceived sexual orientation as students progress through high school, with a decline by more than half from 9th to 12th grades (17.3 to 7.3 percent). The differences between 9th graders and 12th graders, and between 10th graders and 12th graders are both statistically significant.

4.2.a Percentage of Maryland students who, one or more times during the past 12 months, have been harassed or bullied on school property



4.2.b Percentage of Maryland students who, one or more times during the past 12 months, have been harassed or bullied because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual



4.3 Students in a Physical Fight

More than one third of Maryland high school students (36.6 percent) participated in a fight over the past 12 months, and approximately 1 in every 7 students (14.9 percent) was involved in a fight during the past 12 months on school property.

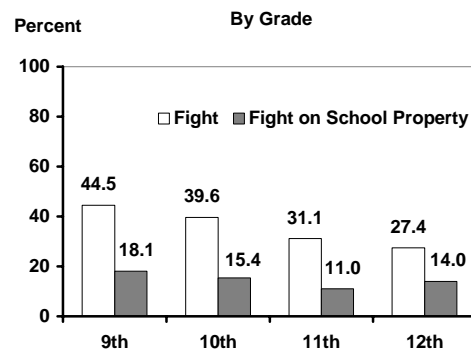
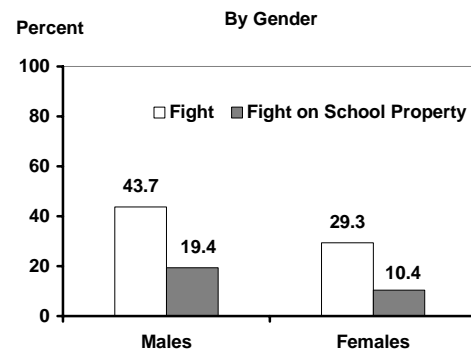
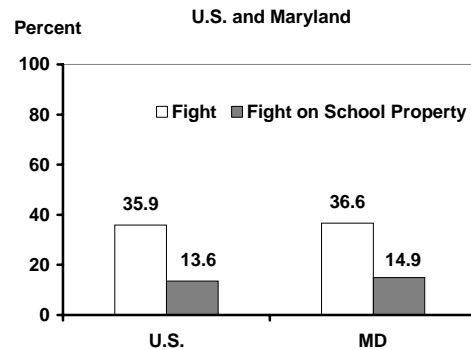
At these rates, Maryland high school students are about as likely to be involved in physical fights, and involved in fights on school property, as students in the 2005 national YRBS sample.

The YRBS shows that male high school students are significantly more likely than female students to be involved in fights (43.7 vs. 29.3 percent). Moreover, the percentage of male involvement in fights at school is almost double the percentage for female students. Nearly 1 in every 5 male high school students (19.4 percent) has been involved in a fight at school over the last 12 months.

The YRBS reveals that involvement with fights decreases across the high school grades, as students mature.

By 12th grade, the incidence of fighting declines from 44.5 percent to 27.4 percent and the incidence of fighting at school declines from 18.1 to 14.0 percent. Differences between 9th and 11th, 9th and 12th, and 10th and 12th grades are statistically significant.

4.3 Percentage of students who were in a physical fight, and who were in a physical fight on school property, one or more times during the past 12 months



4.4 Students Who Had Property Stolen or Deliberately Damaged on School Property

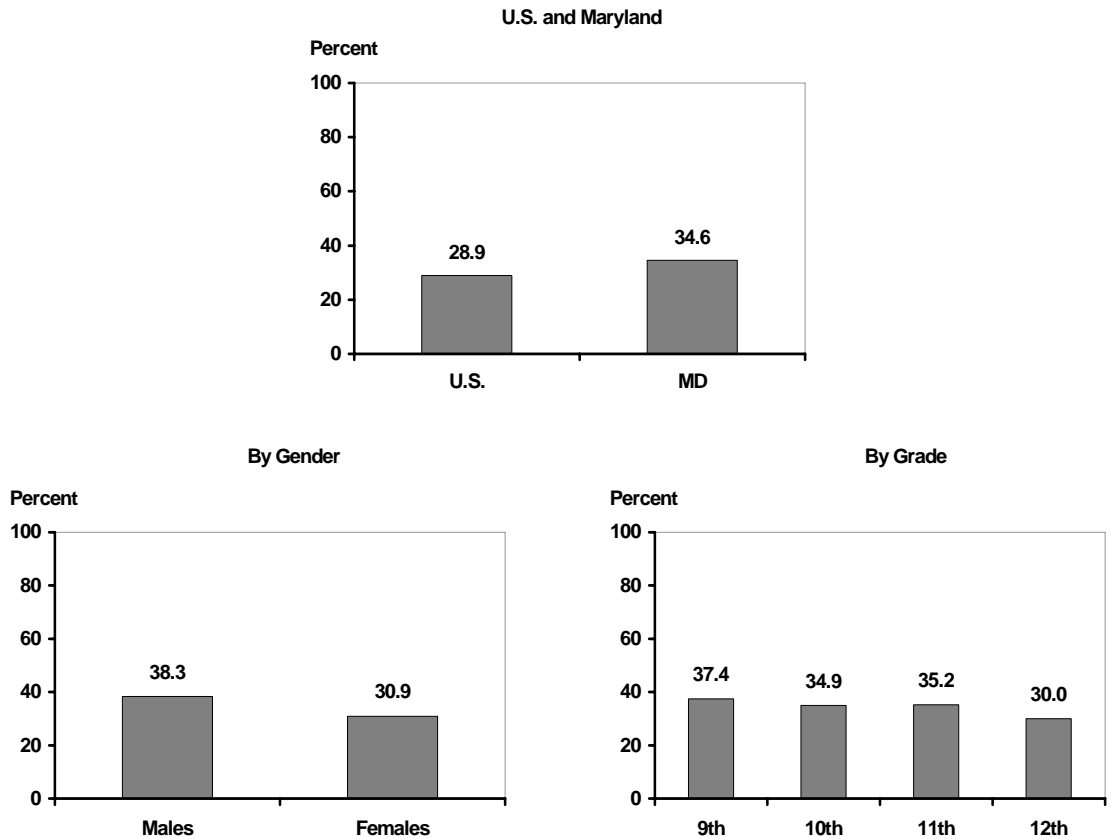
The incidence of property theft or damage at school is significantly higher for Maryland high school students than for those in the national YRBS sample. More than one third of Maryland high school students (34.6 percent) had property stolen or damaged on school property over the past 12 months, compared to 28.9 percent of students nationwide.

Male Maryland high school students experience a greater rate of having property

damaged or stolen at school than do female Maryland students (38.3 vs. 30.9 percent).

Furthermore, the incidence of property theft or damage decreases across the high school grades, the same as verbal slurs, harassment and bullying, and fighting. In the 9th grade, 37.4 percent of students experience property theft or damage, and in the 12th grade just 30 percent do so.

4.4 Percentage of students who had property, such as their car, clothing, or books stolen or deliberately damaged on school property one or more times during the past 12 months



4.5 Students Carrying Weapons

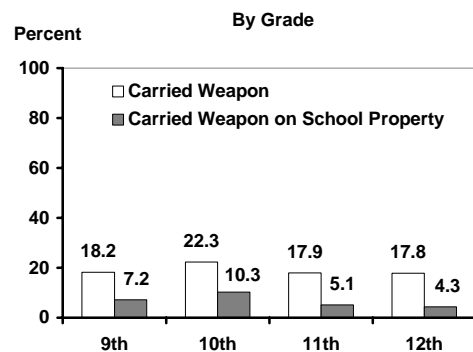
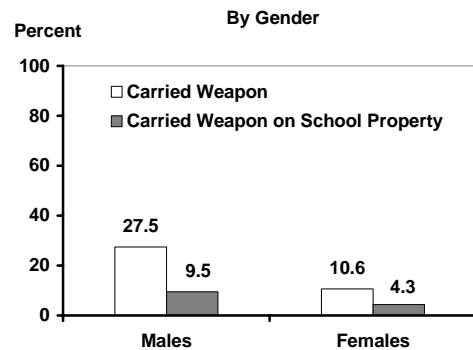
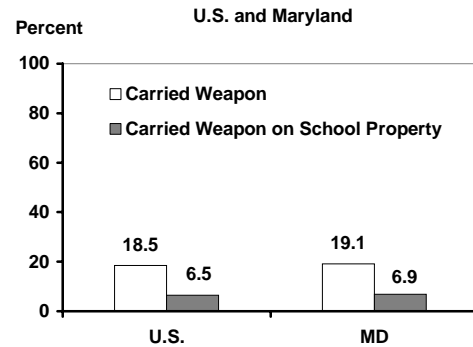
Maryland high school students are about as likely to carry weapons, and to carry weapons on school property, as students in the 2005 national YRBS sample. In Maryland, 19.1 percent of high school students have carried a weapon on one or more of the past 30 days, compared to 18.5 percent of students nationwide. An estimated 6.9 percent of Maryland high school students recently carried a weapon on school property, compared to 6.5 percent nationwide.

Male high school students are about 2.5 times more likely to carry a weapon than are female students, which represents a statistically significant difference (27.5 versus 10.6 percent). Similarly, male high school students are significantly more likely to carry weapons on school property than female students (9.5 versus 4.3 percent).

The greatest incidence of carrying a weapon is by 10th graders (22.3 percent), a statistically significant difference from the other grades. There is also a peak for 10th graders in bringing weapons to school (10.3 percent), but this difference is not statistically significant.

The higher incidence of weapons-carrying in the 10th grade appears to reflect the greater level of verbal slurs, harassment and bullying, fighting, and property theft and damage in the early high school grades, and highlights the need for additional preventive measures, conflict resolution, and personal safety initiatives targeted to students in the 9th and 10th grades.

4.5 Percentage of students who carried a weapon, and who carried a weapon on school property, on one or more of the past 30 days



4.6 Students Carrying Guns

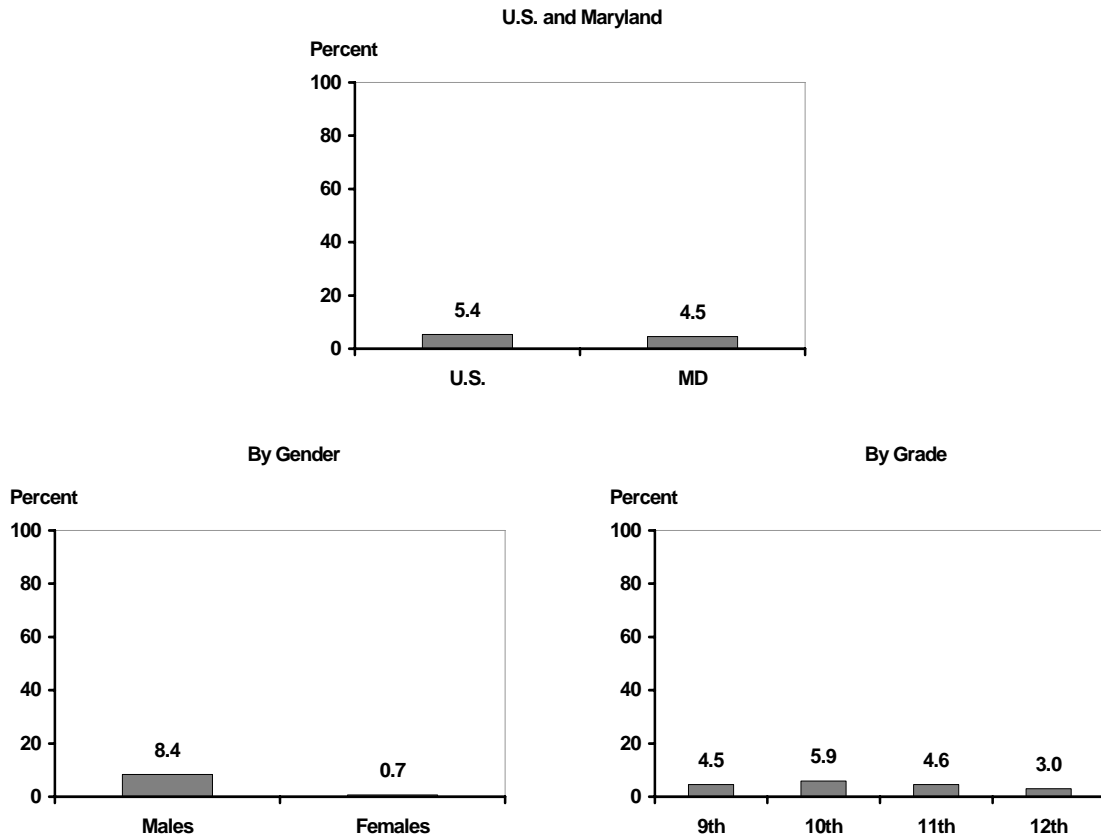
Like weapons carrying, the incidence of gun carrying is comparable for the 2005 national YRBS sample and the Maryland high school student sample. According to the YRBS, the percentage of Maryland students who carried a gun on one or more of the past 30 days is 4.5 percent.

While fewer than 1 percent of female students carried guns, 8.4 percent of male

students report carrying them. This represents a statistically significant difference.

Gun carrying rates do not vary significantly across grade levels, but are slightly higher in 10th grade (5.9 percent), like the overall incidence of weapons carrying and carrying weapons on school property.

4.6 Percentage of students who carried a gun on one or more of the past 30 days

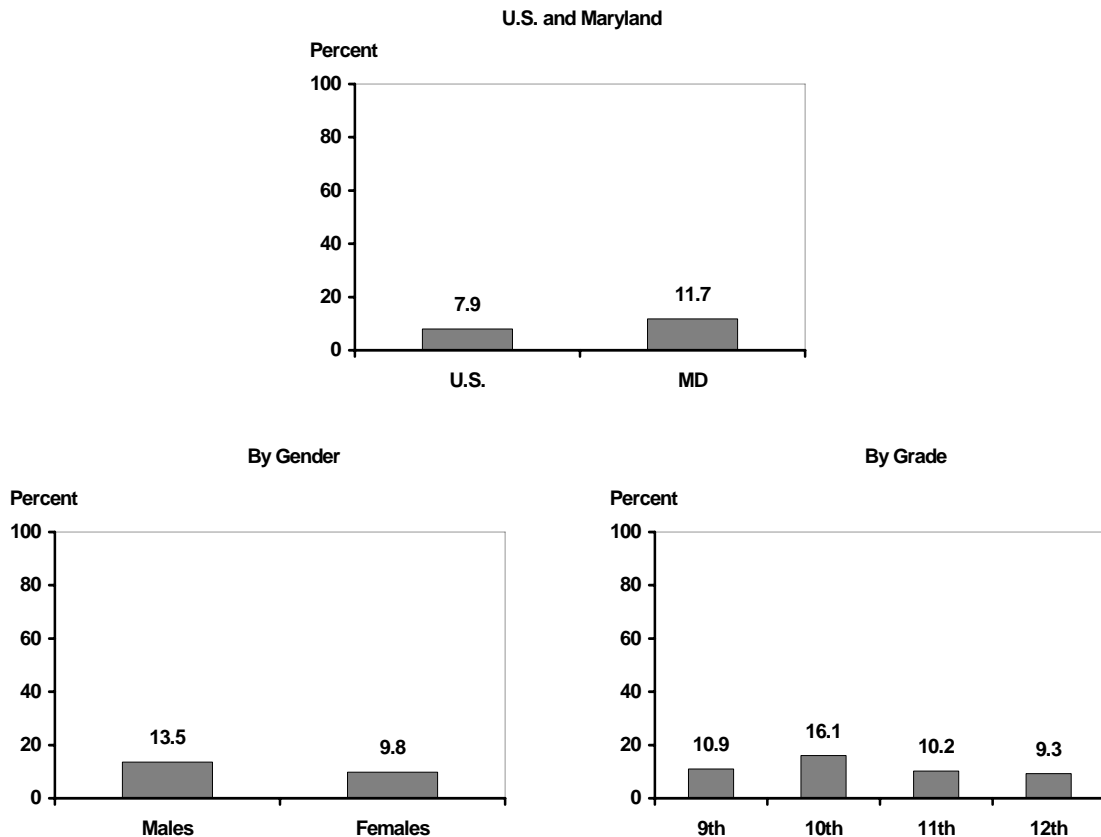


4.7 Students Who Were Threatened or Injured With a Weapon on School Property

Maryland high school students are more likely to report being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property than students in the YRBS national sample, by a statistically significant margin. More than 1 in 9 Maryland high school students were threatened with a weapon on school property over the past 12 months, compared to 1 in 13 students nationwide (11.7 percent versus 7.9 percent).

Maryland’s male high school students are significantly more likely than female students to experience such threats or injury (13.5 vs. 9.8 percent). Moreover, 10th grade students are more likely than other students to have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, just as they are more likely to carry a weapon on school property. This finding underscores the need for additional interventions targeted for 10th grade students.

4.7 Percentage of students who had been threatened or injured with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property one or more times during the past 12 months



4.8 Students Who Did Not Go to School Due to Feeling Unsafe

The impact of high school students' behaviors, attitudes, and experience related to weapons, harassment, and fighting is reflected in their perceptions of safety.

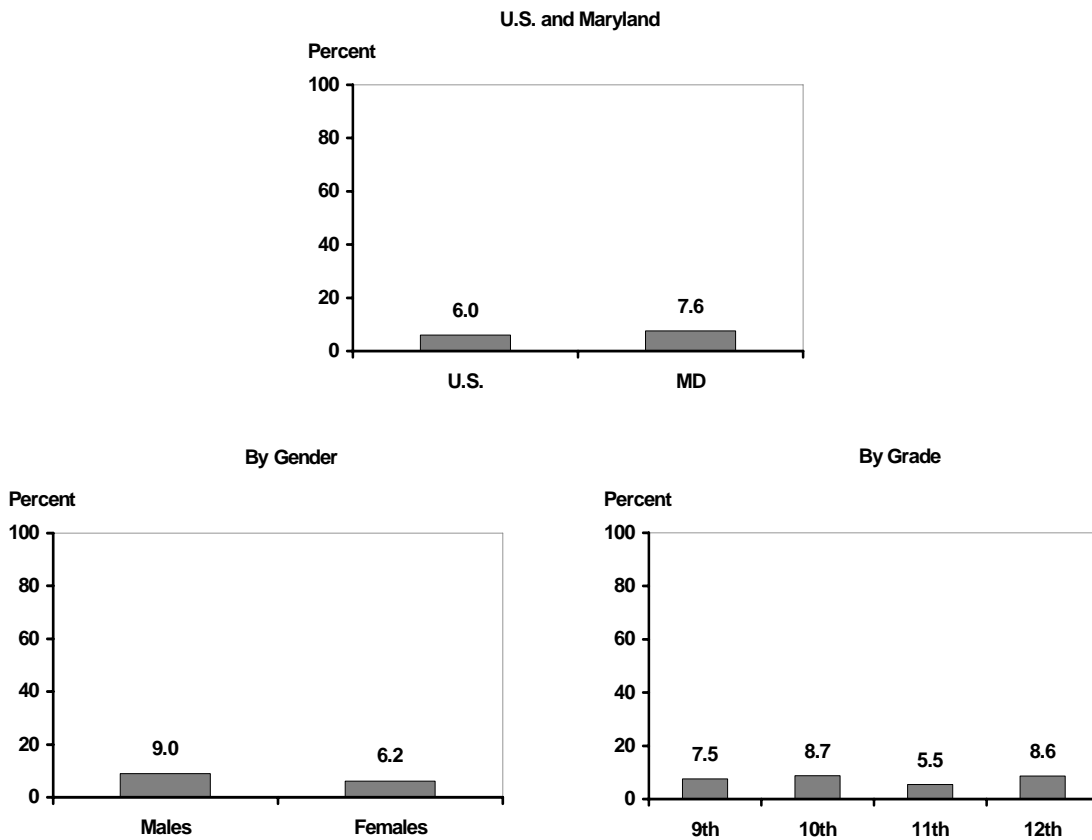
About 1 in every 13 Maryland high school students (7.6 percent) report not going to school at least once in the past 30 days for safety reasons, a finding comparable to the 6.0 percent reported in the national YRBS.

Male high school students are slightly more likely than female students to not go to

school due to feelings of insecurity at school or while traveling to and from school.

The highest incidence of concerns about safety resulting in school absences is among 10th grade students, the same group that reports the highest rate of weapons carrying. However, in contrast to some of the other findings in this chapter, there is no significant difference among grades.

4.8 Percentage of students who did not go to school, on one or more of the past 30 days, because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to and from school



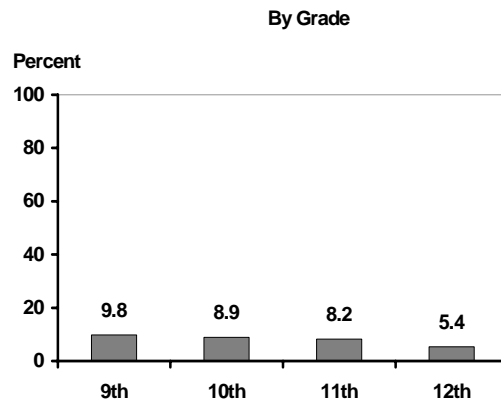
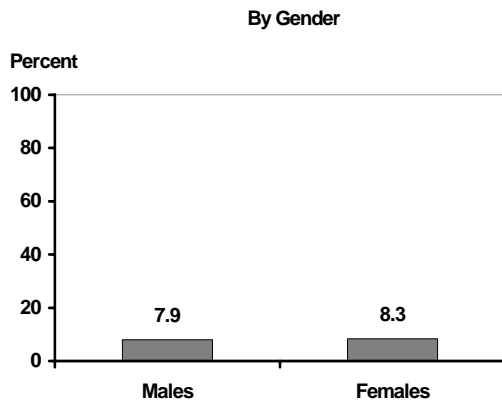
4.9 Students Who Felt Unsafe in Their Neighborhoods

Overall, 8.1 percent of Maryland high school students report never or rarely feeling safe and secure in their neighborhoods. Data are not available for the entire US on neighborhood safety because this question was not asked of the national YRBS sample.

Female high school students report a slightly higher rate of feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods than do male students (8.3 vs. 7.9 percent).

The percentage of students who feel unsafe in their neighborhoods is similar through 11th grade, and declines somewhat by 12th grade. This is consistent with earlier findings concerning higher rates of weapons-carrying and adversarial behavior among students in the 9th and 10th grades.

4.9 Percentage of Maryland high school students who never or rarely feel safe and secure in their neighborhood



Chapter 5.

Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. Smoking results in more deaths each year in the United States than AIDS, alcohol, cocaine, heroin, homicide, suicide, motor vehicle crashes and fires—combined.²

The 2005 YRBS examined the incidence and intensity of smoking and other forms of tobacco use, and revealed that almost half of Maryland high school students (48.5 percent) have tried cigarettes.

Maryland students' current tobacco use is significantly lower than the rate nationwide. Maryland high school students are less likely than students nationwide to have smoked cigarettes, or to have used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip, within the past 30 days.

Tobacco use among Maryland students is, however, comparable to U.S. students according to other measures, including the percentage of students who first smoked before the age of 13 (13.7 percent), the percentage of students who are heavy regular smokers (smoked on at least 20 out of the past 30 days) (7.4 percent), and the percentage of students who smoke on school property (6.4 percent).

Moreover, the YRBS data show that almost one third of underage Maryland high school students who smoke (29.6 percent) regularly buy their own cigarettes from a store or gas station, which is significantly higher than the portion of students that do so nationwide.

Almost half of all Maryland high school students have tried cigarettes.

The percentage of Maryland high school students who currently use tobacco is significantly less than the percentage of students nationwide.

Approximately 1 in every 15 Maryland high school students is a heavy smoker.

Almost one-third of underage Maryland high school students who smoke buy their own cigarettes from a store or gas station

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, The Health Consequences of Smoking. A Report of the Surgeon General 2004.

5.1 Students Who Have Tried Smoking

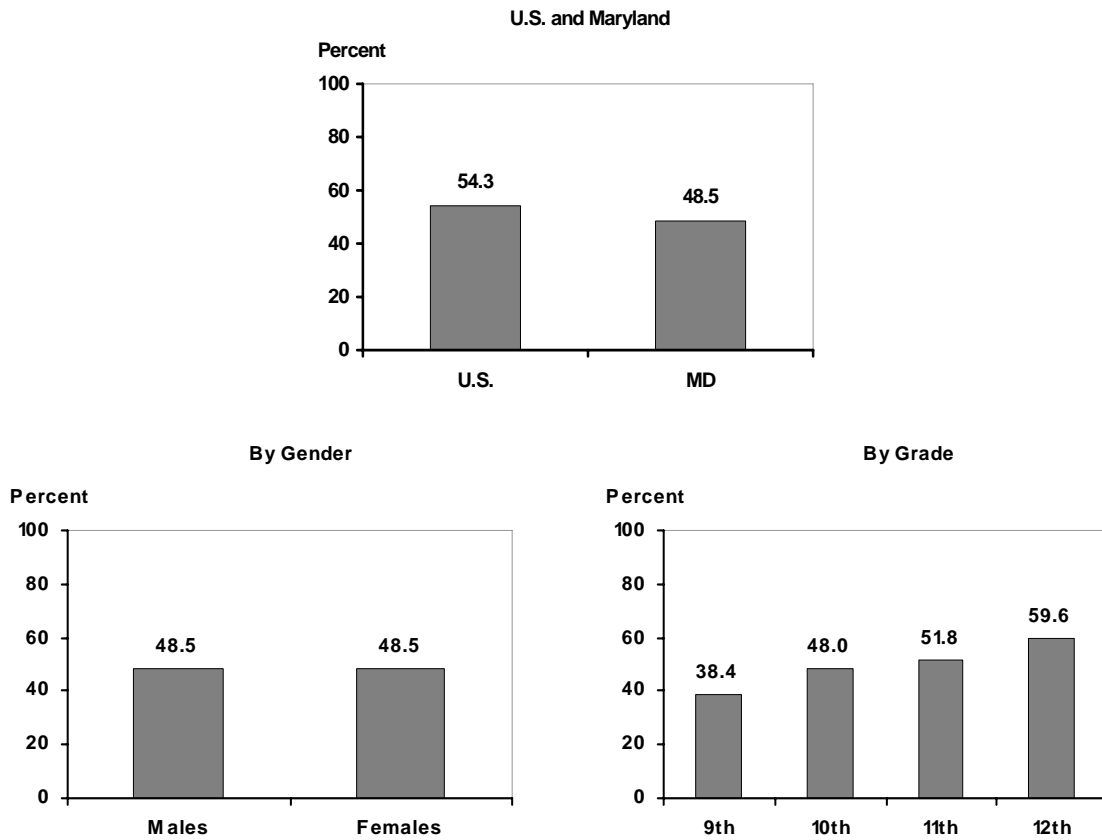
The overall percentage of Maryland high school students who ever tried cigarette smoking is comparable to the percentage of students nationwide.

The YRBS shows that approximately one half of both Maryland and U.S. high school students have tried smoking—48.5 percent in Maryland and 54.3 percent for the U.S. as a whole.

In Maryland, the percentage of high school students who have tried smoking does not vary by gender.

The YRBS also shows how experimentation with smoking varies across the high school grades. In the first year of high school, approximately 4 in 10 students have ever tried smoking (38.4 percent). In the 12th grade, approximately 6 in 10 students have tried smoking (59.6 percent). This suggests about 20 percent of high schoolers try smoking for the first time during their high school years.

5.1 Percentage of students who ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs



5.2 Students Smoking for First Time Prior to Age 13

While the YRBS provides data on smoking during the high school years, it also sheds light on earlier smoking.

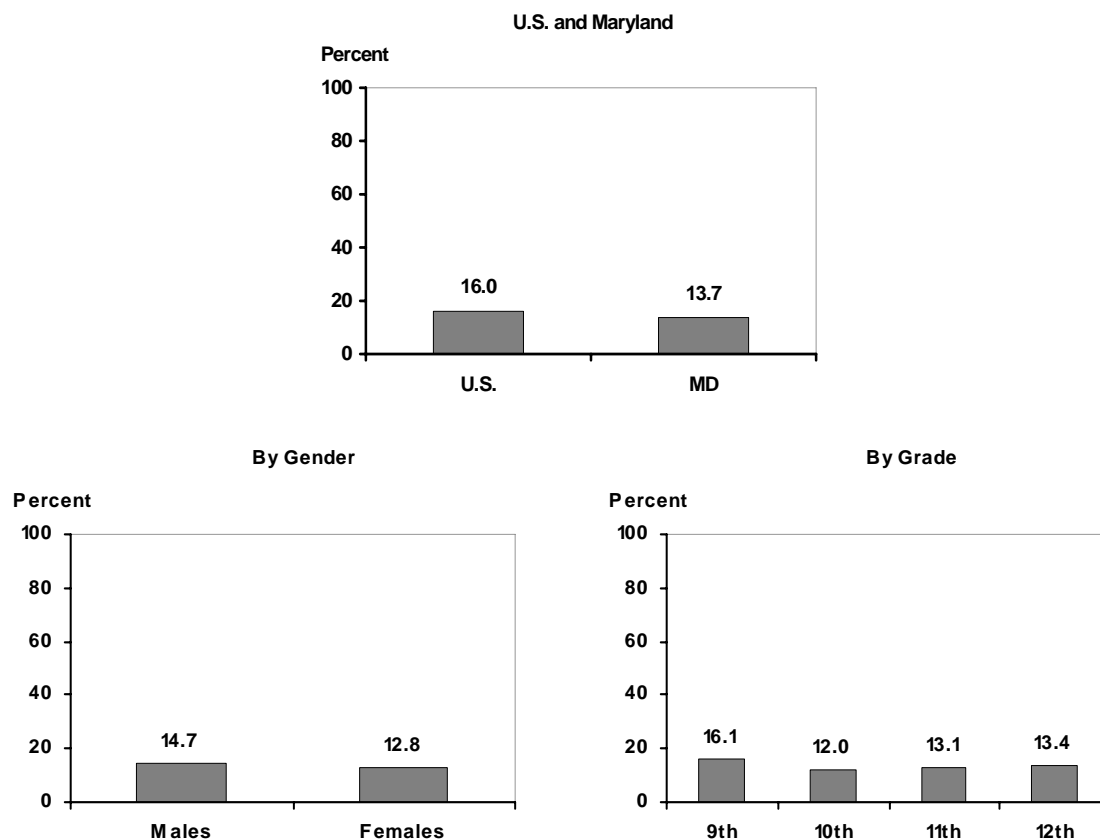
According to the survey, 13.7 percent of Maryland high school students first smoked a cigarette before they were 13 years of age. This is slightly below the 16.0 percent of students in the national YRBS.

Smoking for the first time before age 13 is more prevalent among male high school

students (14.7 percent) than among female students (12.8 percent). The highest incidence of early smoking was reported by 9th grade students (16.1 percent).

None of the differences by gender and grade level are statistically significant; however, the higher rate of early smoking for 9th graders suggests that early smokers are more likely to drop out of high school, lowering the percentages in later grades.

5.2 Percentage of students who smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13



5.3 Students Who Currently Smoke Cigarettes

Current smokers (students who smoked on one or more of the past 30 days) are a group of particular interest to health educators and policymakers. Since it excludes most high school students who only ever experimented with smoking, this group is the primary target for efforts to encourage smoking cessation within the current student body.

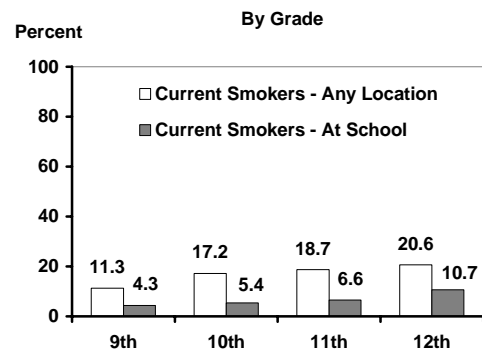
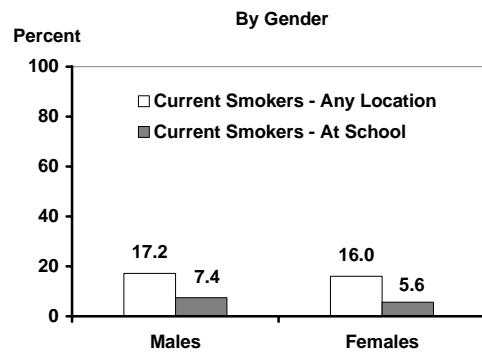
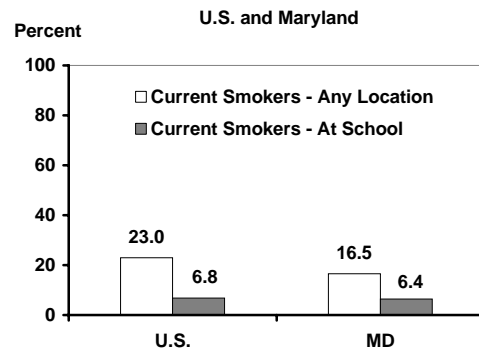
In Maryland, approximately 1 in every 6 high school students (16.5 percent) is a current smoker. This rate is significantly lower than the rate for students in the U.S. as a whole (23.0 percent). Moreover, the YRBS shows that 53.5 percent of Maryland high school students who currently smoke tried to quit at least once during the past 12 months (not shown).

Only a small percentage of high school students smoke on school property, according to the YRBS. Maryland students are similar in this regard to students nationally (6.4 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively).

Male and female students in Maryland are about equally likely to be current smokers (17.2 versus 16.0 percent). The incidence of smoking on school property is slightly higher for males than for females (7.4 versus 5.6 percent).

The rate of current smokers increases across the high school grades to reach 20.6 percent by 12th grade. Similarly, smoking on school property increases by grade to 10.7 percent in the 12th grade.

5.3 Percentage of students who smoked one or more cigarettes in the past 30 days (current smokers), at any location and on school property.



5.4 Students Who Smoke Heavily

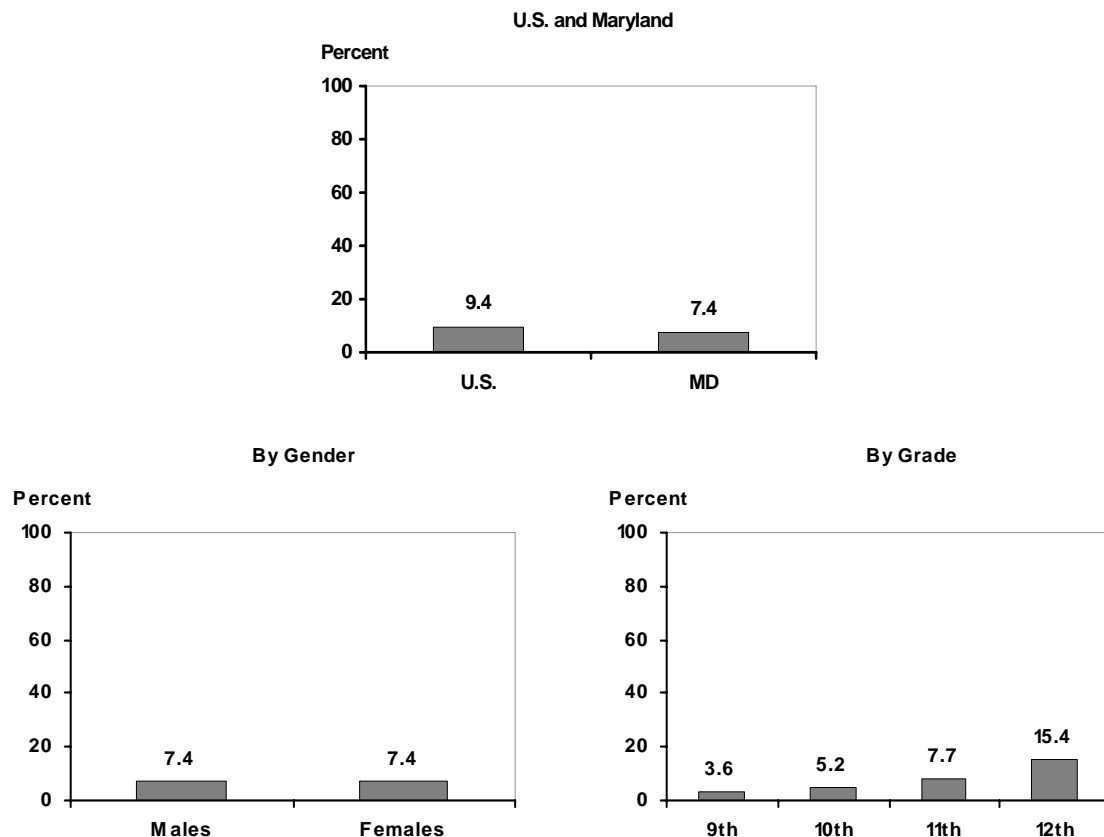
Current smokers who smoked on at least 20 days out of the last 30 are categorized in the YRBS as heavy smokers.

Heavy smoking is slightly less prevalent among Maryland high school students than in the national YRBS (7.4 versus 9.4 percent), but not by a statistically significant margin.

The YRBS shows that heavy smoking among Maryland high school students

increases noticeably with grade level. Therefore, not only is the percentage of students who currently smoke greatest in the 12th grade, so too is the incidence of heavy smoking. In fact, about three quarters of 12th grade current smokers are heavy smokers (74 percent, not shown) compared to approximately one third of the 9th and 10th graders (31.8 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, not shown).

5.4 Percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the past 30 days



5.5 Cigarette Purchases by Underage Smokers

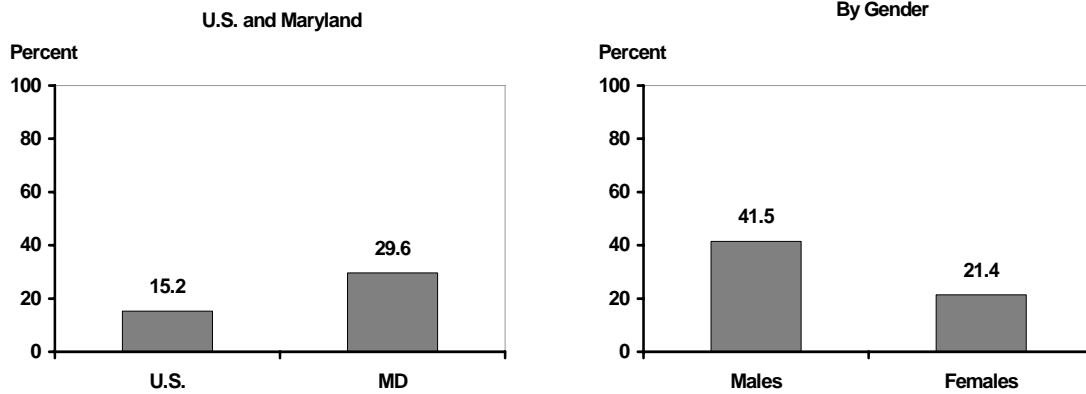
The YRBS reveals the limits of efforts in recent years to reduce youth smoking by prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors.

According to the YRBS, nearly one third of all Maryland underage current smokers (29.6 percent) regularly buy their own cigarettes in a store or gas station. Moreover, this rate is significantly higher than the rate for underage current smokers nationwide (15.2 percent).

Current smokers who are less than 18 frequently are able to purchase cigarettes illegally, especially males (41.5 percent buy their own cigarettes).

The number of underage smokers in each grade was too small to support estimates by grade level.

5.5 Among students who are less than 18 years of age and who are current smokers, the percentage who buy their own cigarettes in a store or gas station

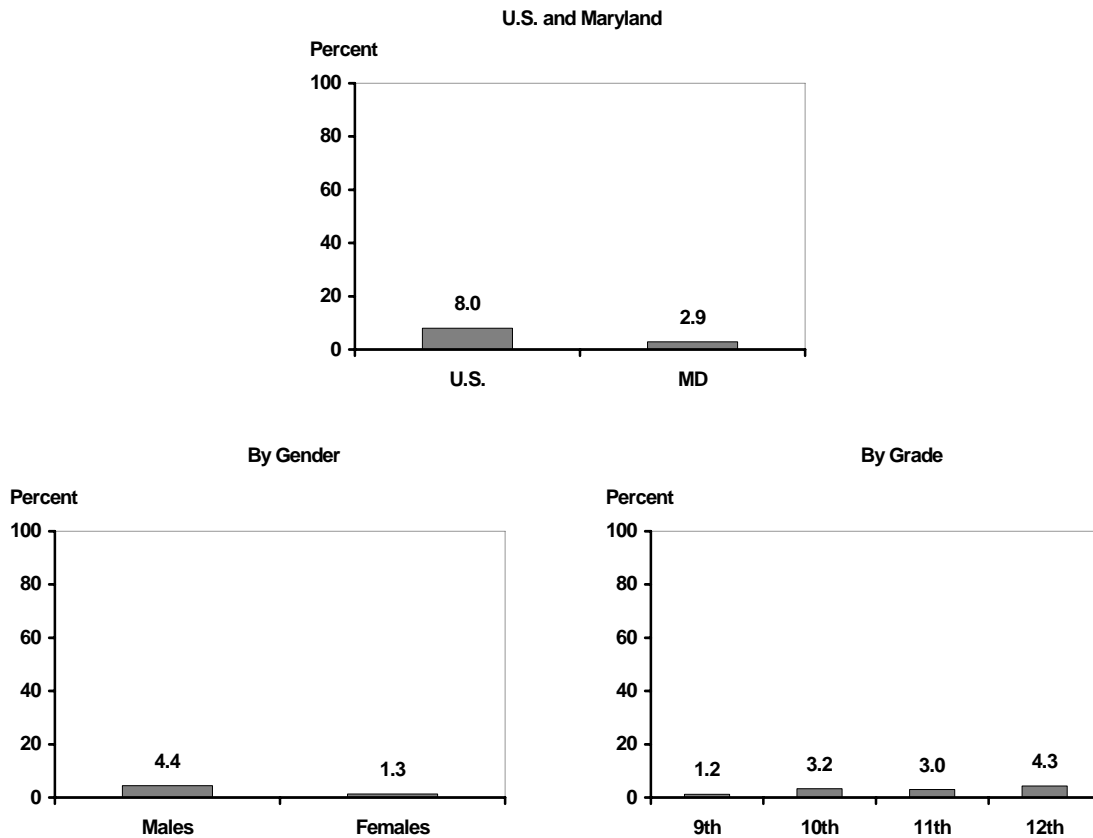


5.6 Smokeless Tobacco Use

Only a small percentage of Maryland high school students use smokeless tobacco. Just 2.9 percent of Maryland high school students used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip within the last 30 days, compared to 8.0 percent of students nationwide, a statistically significant difference.

In Maryland, smokeless tobacco use is greater among male high school students (4.4 percent) than among female students (1.3 percent). Also, smokeless tobacco use increases across the high school grades from 1.2 percent in the 9th grade to 4.3 percent in the 12th grade; however, these differences are not statistically significant.

5.6 Percentage of students who used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip on one or more of the past 30 days



Chapter 6.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol and other drugs are associated with many of the nation's most serious problems, including violence, injury, and HIV infection. Alcohol and drug abuse is also a major barrier to some students' educational progress. The 2005 YRBS examined use of alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit drugs, and found that in almost all instances Maryland high school students are comparable to students nationwide.

Alcohol use is widespread among high school students in Maryland, as it is nationally. Nearly 75 percent of all Maryland high school students have tried alcohol, while about 4 in every 10 students are current users. About a fifth of Maryland students report one or more episodes of binge drinking (drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours) in the past month.

The percentage of Maryland high school students who are current users of marijuana (18.5 percent) is comparable to the rate nationwide, and notably exceeds the percentage of Maryland high school students who smoke cigarettes.

There is a low incidence of use of other illegal drugs among Maryland high school students. Methamphetamines are the only drug category in which Maryland high school students differed from students nationwide. At 4.0 percent, use is significantly lower among Maryland students.

Although usage rates are low overall, there is a pattern of increased illegal drug use across the high school grades, and a jump in usage rates between 11th and 12th grades.

The rate of alcohol and drug use among Maryland high school students is comparable to the rate among students nationwide.

Nearly 75 percent of Maryland high school students have tried alcohol, nearly 40 percent are current users, and about 20 percent engage in binge drinking.

Nearly 1 in 5 Maryland high school students use marijuana.

Methamphetamine use among high school students is significantly lower in Maryland than it is nationwide.

There is a jump in illegal drug use between 11th and 12th grade.

This points to the need for additional preventive measures as students enter their last year of high school.

Furthermore, almost one third of Maryland high school students (28.9 percent) report being offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property during the last 12 months.

Almost one third of Maryland high school students were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug at school in the last year.

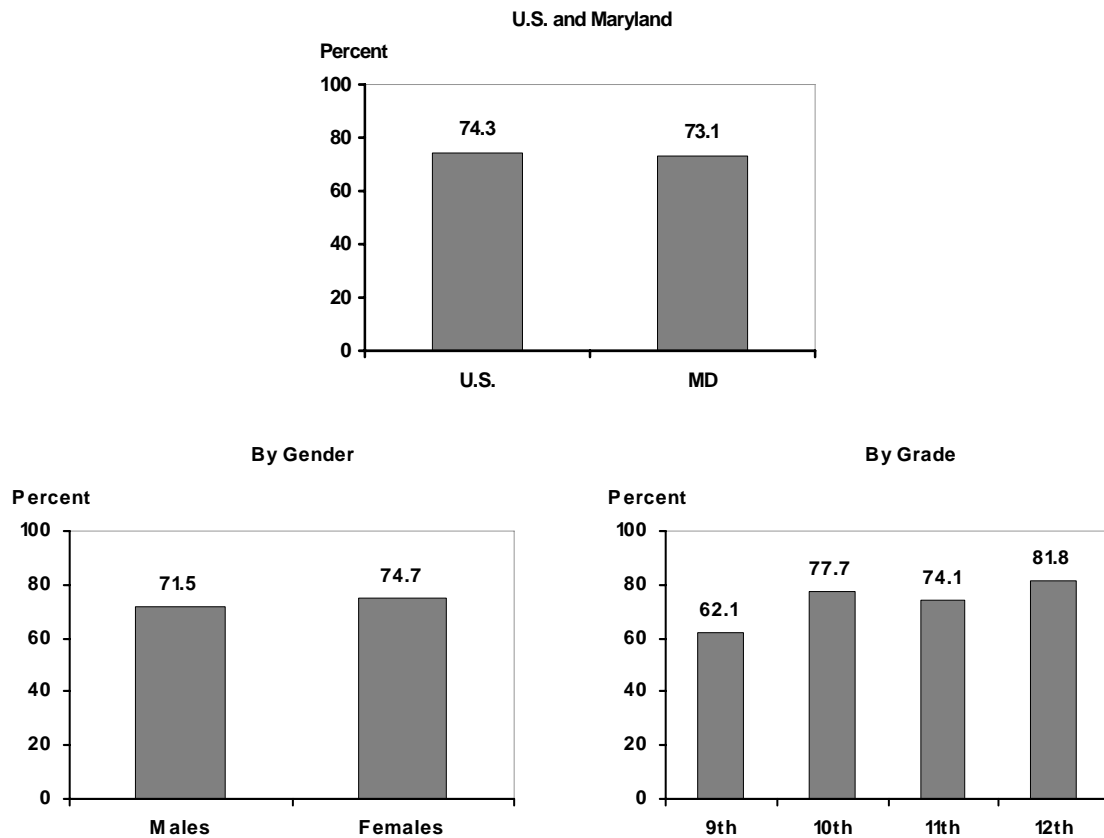
6.1 Students Who Had At Least One Drink of Alcohol in Their Life

Maryland and U.S. high school students have virtually identical rates of alcohol exposure. The 2005 YRBS reveals that more than 70 percent of students have tried an alcoholic beverage at least once.

Male and female high school students in Maryland have tried alcohol at similar rates, with alcohol use slightly higher among females than among males (74.7 vs. 71.5 percent).

The percentage of students who have tried alcohol ratchets up across the high school grades, from 62.1 in the 9th grade to 81.8 percent in the 12th grade. About 15 percentage points of this 20 percentage point increase occurs between 9th and 10th grade, a statistically significant difference.

6.1 Percentage of students who have tried alcohol at least once



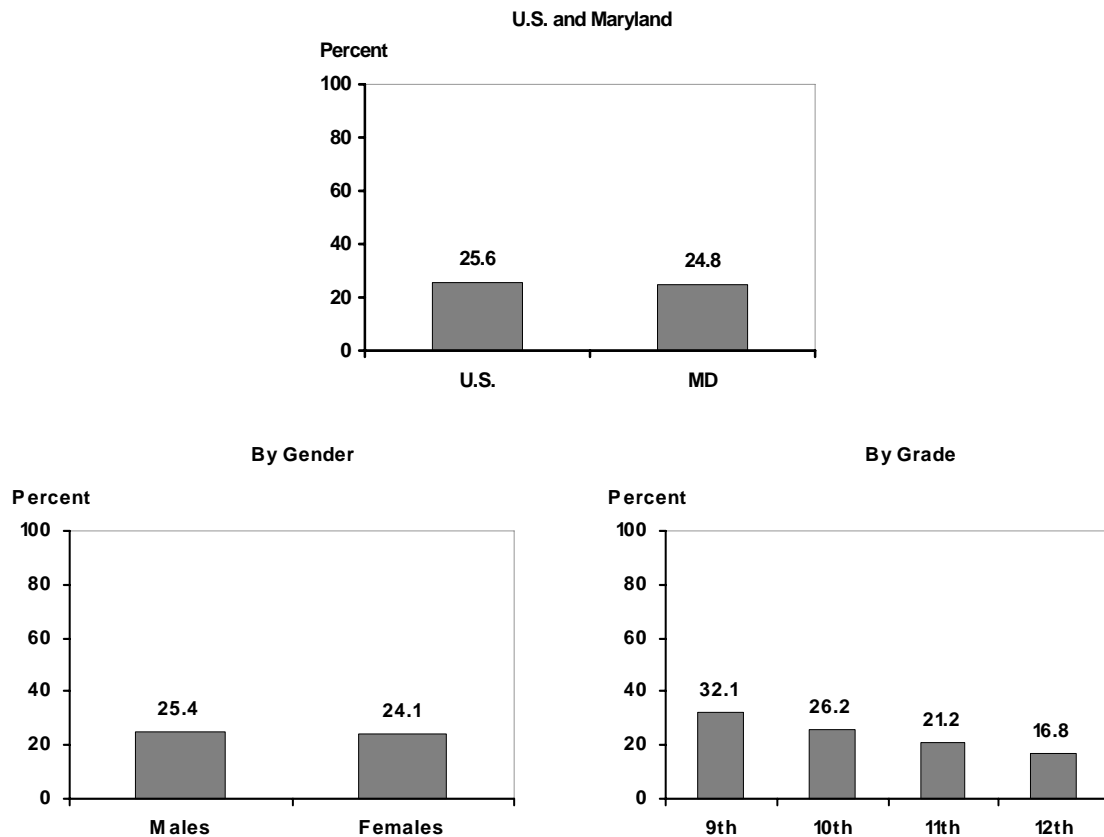
6.2 Students Taking First Drink Before Age 13

Approximately one fourth of Maryland high school students (24.8 percent) report early experimentation with alcohol (before age 13), which is equivalent to the rate of early alcohol experimentation in the national YRBS sample (25.6 percent).

Within the Maryland high school student population, male and female students report comparable levels of early experimentation with alcohol (25.4 vs. 24.1 percent, respectively).

There is, however, a pattern of decreased early exposure to alcohol across the high school grades, from a high of 32.1 percent for 9th graders to a low of 16.8 percent for 12th grade students. This difference is statistically significant and suggests that students who experiment earlier with alcohol are also more likely to drop out of high school.

6.2 Percentage of students who had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13



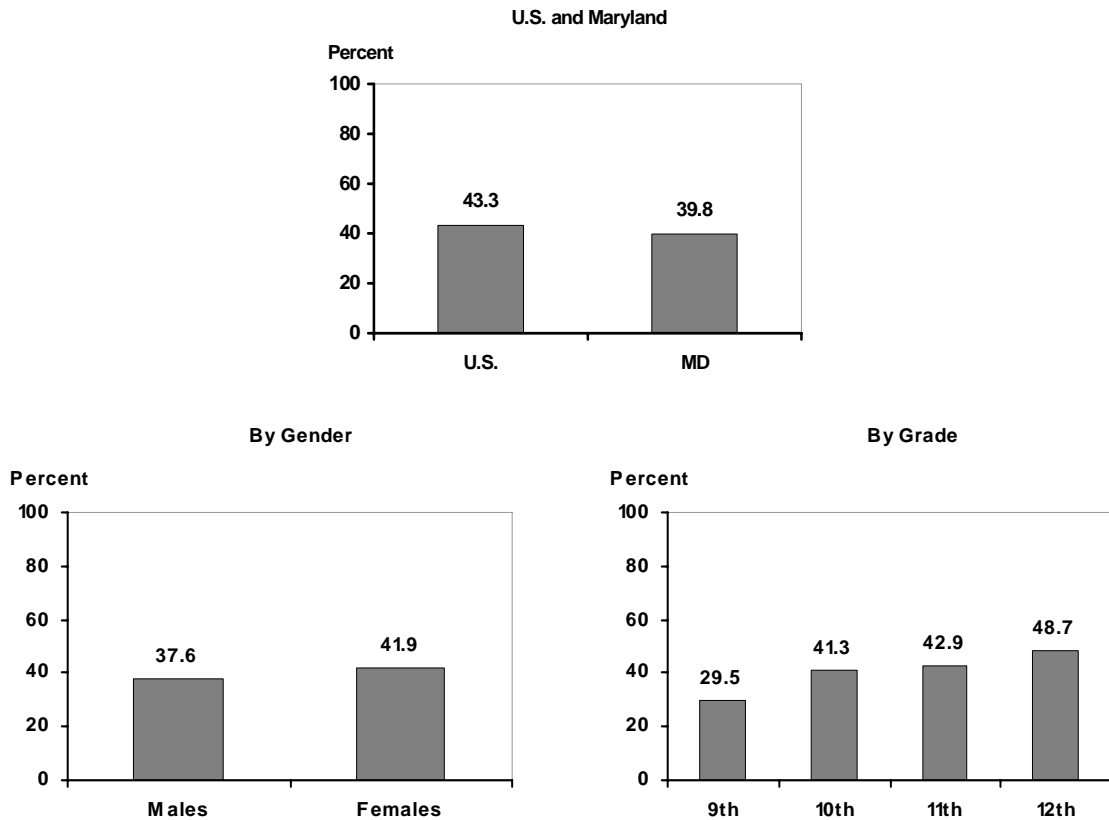
6.3 Current Drinkers

According to the YRBS, approximately 4 out of every 10 Maryland high school students (39.8 percent) currently drink; that is, they have had at least one or more drink of alcohol over the past 30 days. These current drinkers represent over half of the Maryland high school students who report ever trying an alcoholic drink.

Nationally, 43.3 percent of high school students are current drinkers. There is no significant difference between Maryland and national rates.

Within the Maryland high school population, female and male students exhibit a similar percentage of current drinkers (37.6 vs. 41.9 percent). However, there is a statistically significant increase in the percentage of students who are current drinkers between the 9th and 12th grades. In the 9th grade, 29.5 percent of students say they are current drinkers. By the 12th grade, this figure increases to 48.7 percent.

6.3 Percentage of students who had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days (current drinkers)

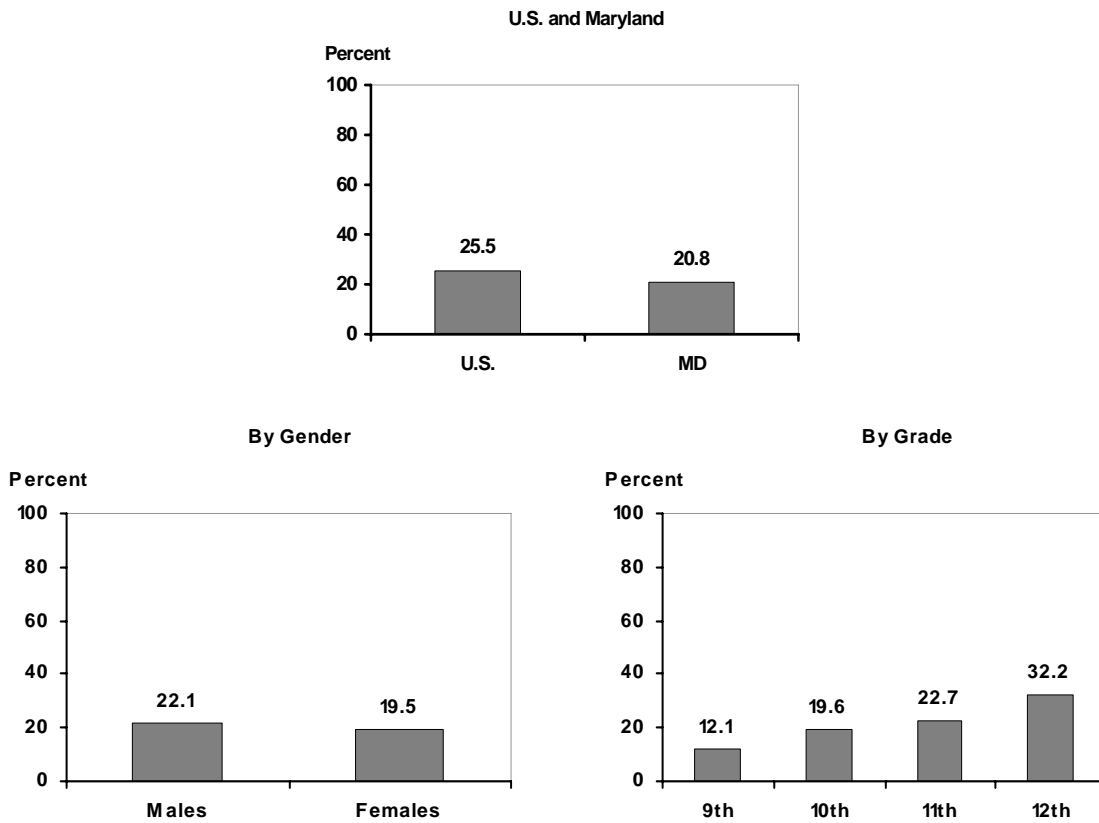


6.4 Binge Drinkers

The 2005 YRBS explored the incidence of binge drinking, defined as drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours, at least once during the previous month. The survey reveals that approximately 1 in every 5 Maryland high school students (20.8 percent) is a binge drinker according to this definition, which is comparable to the incidence of binge drinking among students nationwide (25.5 percent).

Binge drinking is comparable among male and female students (22.1 vs. 19.5 percent); however, the rate of binge drinking steadily increases from 12.1 percent of all Maryland students in 9th grade to 32.2 percent of all Maryland students in 12th grade. This pattern of increased binge drinking between the first and last year of high school is a statistically significant difference.

6.4 Percentage of students who had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple hours, on one or more of the past 30 days



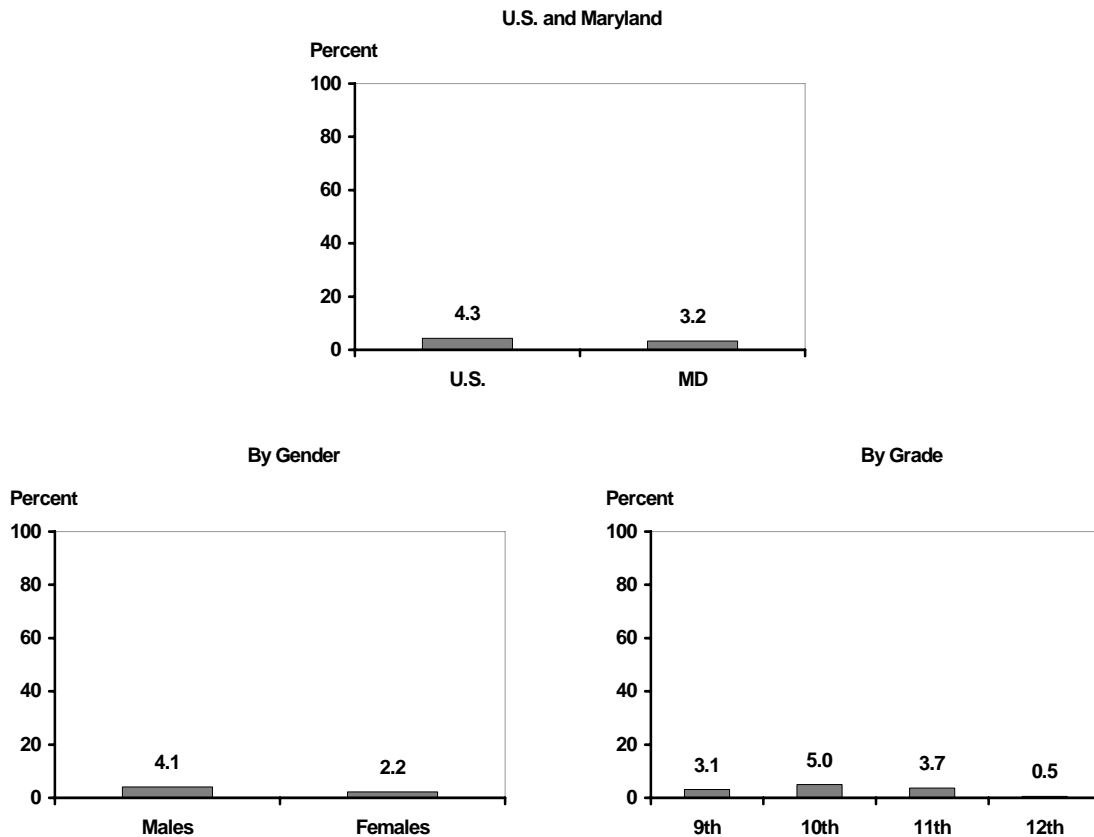
6.5 Recent Drinking on School Property

A small percentage of high school students report recent consumption of alcohol on school property, both in Maryland and nationally (3.2 and 4.3 percent, respectively). However, the difference between Maryland high school students and students nationwide is statistically significant.

Furthermore, 10th grade students report the highest rate of drinking on school property, but the difference with other grades is not significant.

In Maryland, male high school students are almost twice as likely to drink on school property as are female students (4.1 percent vs. 2.2 percent).

6.5 Percentage of students who had at least one drink of alcohol on school property on one or more of the past 30 days



6.6 Marijuana Use

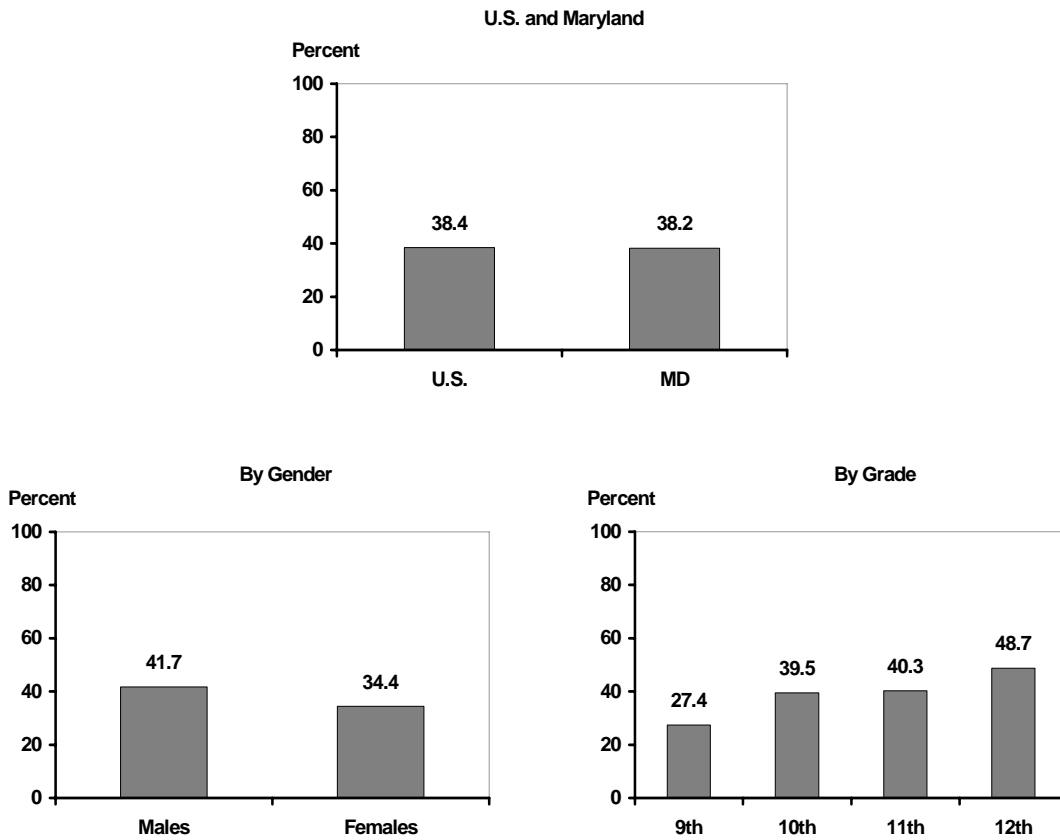
More than one-third of all high school students, in Maryland and nationally, have used marijuana at least once (38.2 and 38.4 percent, respectively).

A higher percentage of Maryland male high school students than female students have tried marijuana (41.7 vs. 34.4), although this

difference is not statistically significant.

The percentage of high school students who have tried marijuana increases significantly across the high school grades. Experience using marijuana doubles from about one fourth of 9th grade students (27.4 percent) to about one half (48.7 percent) of 12th grade students.

6.6 Percentage of students who used marijuana one or more times during their life



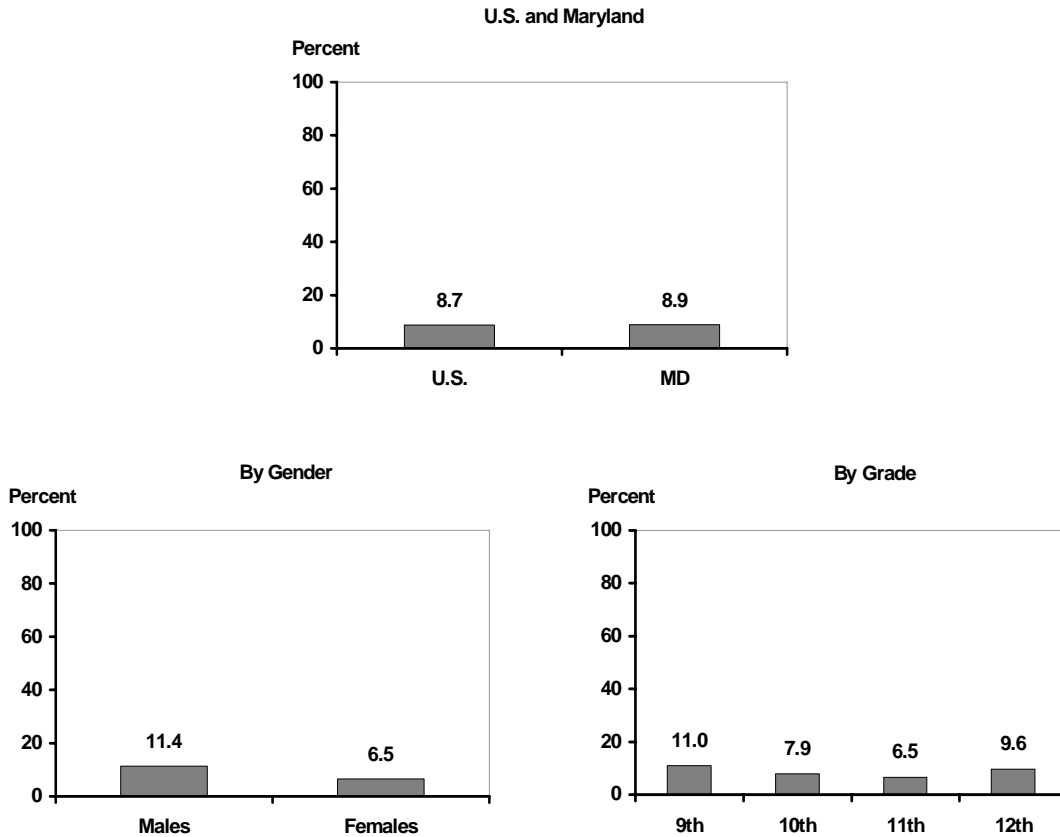
6.7 Students Who Tried Marijuana Before Age 13

Rates of marijuana use prior to age 13 are about the same for Maryland high school students and those in the national YRBS sample (8.9 and 8.7 percent, respectively).

In Maryland, male high school students are more likely than female students to report

early marijuana use (11.4 vs. 6.5 percent, respectively). Across the high school grades, 9th graders report the highest rate of early marijuana experimentation. The gender and grade level differences in the early experimentation with marijuana are not statistically significant, however.

6.7 Percentage of students who tried marijuana for the first time before age 13

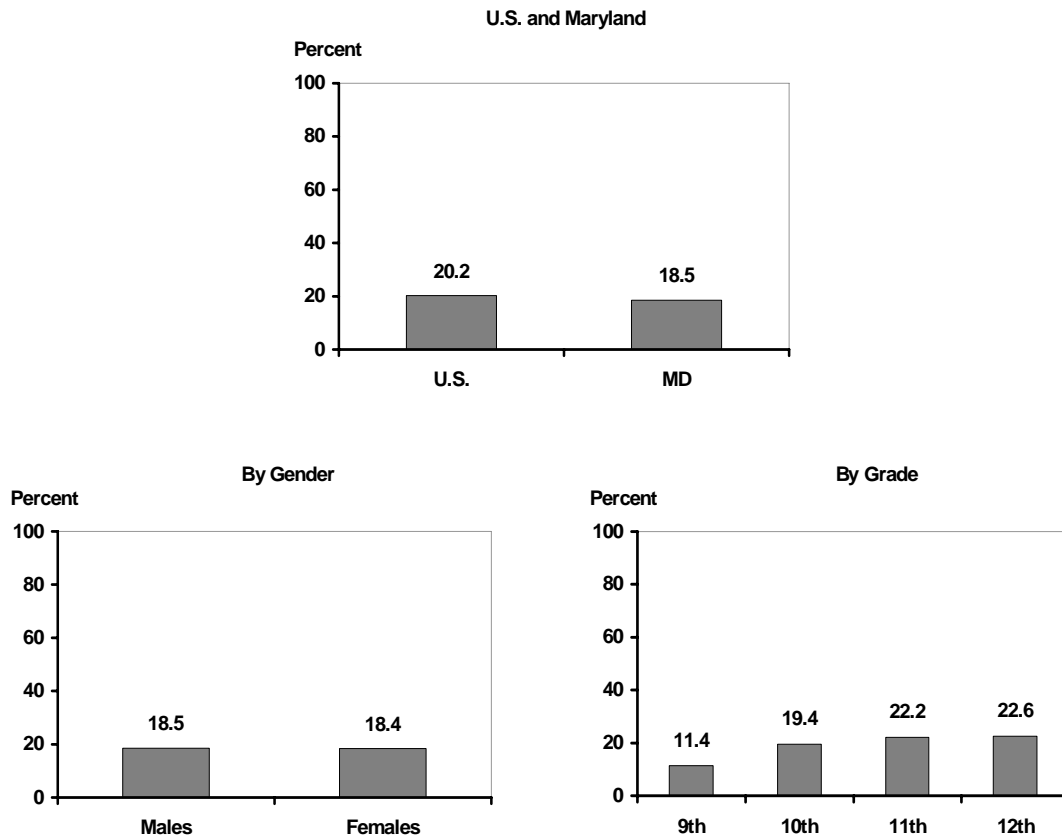


6.8 Current Marijuana Use

Nearly 1 in every 5 Maryland high school students reports that they currently use marijuana (18.5 percent), a rate that is comparable to students nationwide. At this rate, current marijuana use among Maryland high school students exceeds the percent of high school students who currently smoke cigarettes.

The YRBS shows that a high level of current marijuana use occurs among male and female high school students alike. Furthermore, students in all high school grades have a similar rate, with the exception of students in the 9th grade. The percentage of students who are current marijuana users increases sharply between 9th and 10th grades from 11.4 to 19.4 percent.

6.8 Percentage of students who used marijuana one or more times during the past 30 days

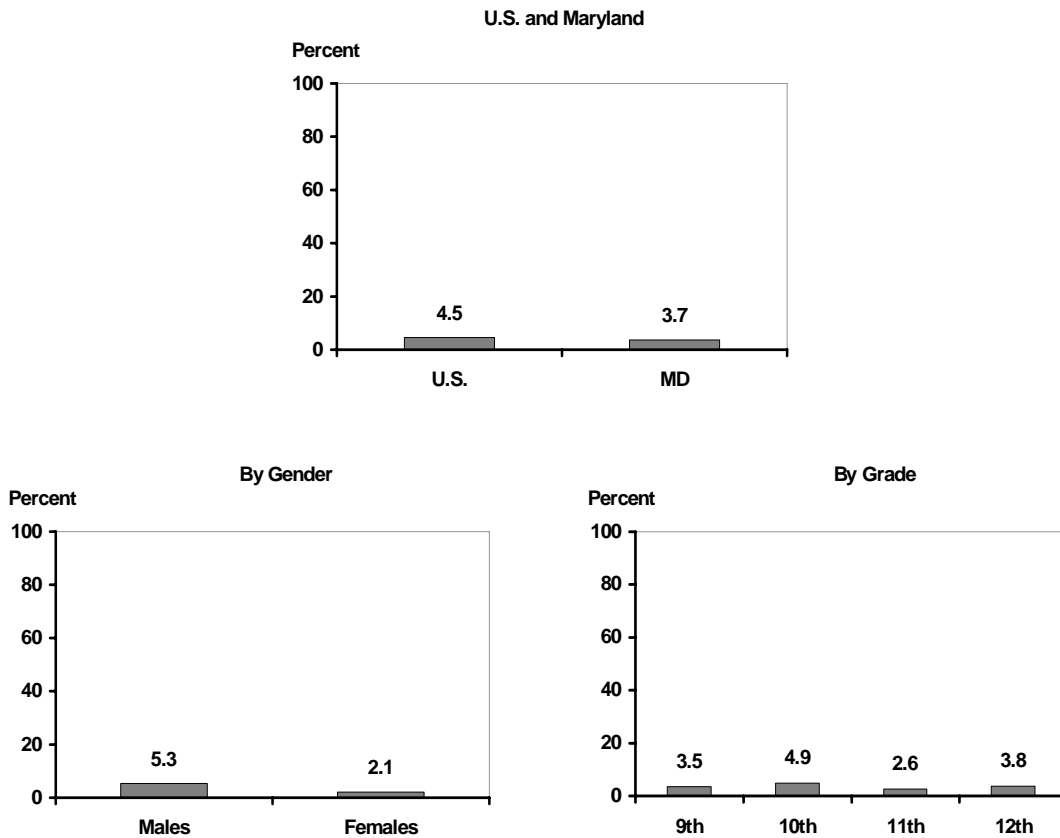


6.9 Smoking Marijuana on School Property

While current marijuana use is widespread among Maryland high school students, a small percentage of students smoke marijuana on school property. Only 3.7 percent of Maryland high school students recently smoked marijuana at school, which is comparable to the rate nationwide (4.5 percent).

Female high school students are less likely than male students to smoke marijuana at school (2.1 vs. 5.3 percent); however, this difference is not statistically significant. There is no significant difference across the high school grades in the rate of marijuana smoking on school property.

6.9 Percentage of students who used marijuana on school property one or more times during the past 30 days



6.10 Other Drug Use

The 2005 YRBS examined high school students' use of several other illegal drugs, including cocaine, inhalants, methamphetamines, heroin, ecstasy, and steroids.

The survey shows that use of these illegal drugs is low among Maryland high school students as a whole. In fact, fewer than 1 in every 20 Maryland high school students have ever used these illegal drugs, with the exception of inhalants (12.5 percent) and cocaine (6.9 percent).

In almost every drug category, the level of use among Maryland high school students is comparable to the usage in the national YRBS sample. Methamphetamines are the

only drug category in which there is a statistically significant difference between Maryland high school students and students nationwide, and, at 4.0 percent, use is significantly lower among Maryland students than it is nationwide (6.2 percent).

Among Maryland high school students, male and female students have comparable usage rates for these illegal drugs. According to the YRBS, a higher percentage of male students have used cocaine, methamphetamines, heroin, and steroids; and a higher percentage of female students have used inhalants and ecstasy. However, these differences are not statistically significant.

6.10.a Other Drug Use: Percentage of students who used listed drugs one or more times during their life

Other Drugs	U.S.	MD	Males	Females
Cocaine (including powder, crack or freebase)	7.6	6.9	8.5	5.3
Methamphetamines	6.2	4.0	5.8	2.2
Heroin	2.4	2.6	2.8	2.3
Ecstasy	6.3	5.0	4.8	5.1
Steroids (pills or shots without prescription)	4.0	3.6	4.9	2.2
Inhalants (glue, aerosol cans, paint)	12.4	12.5	11.4	13.6

The percentage of students who have used illegal drugs generally increases across the high school grades. Experimentation with the drugs continues through high school, so the share of students who have ever tried the drugs is highest among 12th grade students. For example, 4 percent of the students in 9th grade have tried cocaine. By 12th grade, 14.2 percent of students have tried cocaine, a statistically significant increase.

The rise in drug use between 11th grade and 12th grade is particularly noteworthy. For each of the drugs, there is a marked increase between 11th and 12th grade, as shown by the percent increase in the right hand column of

Table 6.10.b. As indicated, the greatest 11th to 12th grade increase in use (154 percent) is for methamphetamines. This spike in drug use in the 12th grade points to the need for targeted drug prevention measures in the last years of high school.

The exception to the pattern of increased use across the high school grades is in the use of inhalants such as glue, aerosol cans, and paint. The YRBS reveals that 15.7 percent of 9th grade students have used inhalants versus 11.6 percent of 12th grade students. This is consistent with other Maryland and national surveys that show this is a practice of middle school not high school students.

6.10.b Other Drug Use: Percentage of students who used listed drugs one or more times during their life, by grade level

Other Drugs	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Percent increase in use from 11 th to 12 th Grade
Cocaine (including powder, crack or freebase)	4.0	4.2	6.8	14.2*	108
Methamphetamines	2.4	2.8	3.3	8.4	154
Heroin	1.3	1.6	2.8	5.3	89
Ecstasy	2.6	3.1	5.2	10.3	98
Steroids (pills or shots without prescription)	3.2	2.0	3.8	5.8	52
Inhalants (glue, aerosol cans, paint)	15.7	13.0	8.4	11.6	38

*12th grade use of cocaine is consistent with the Maryland Adolescent Survey use rate.

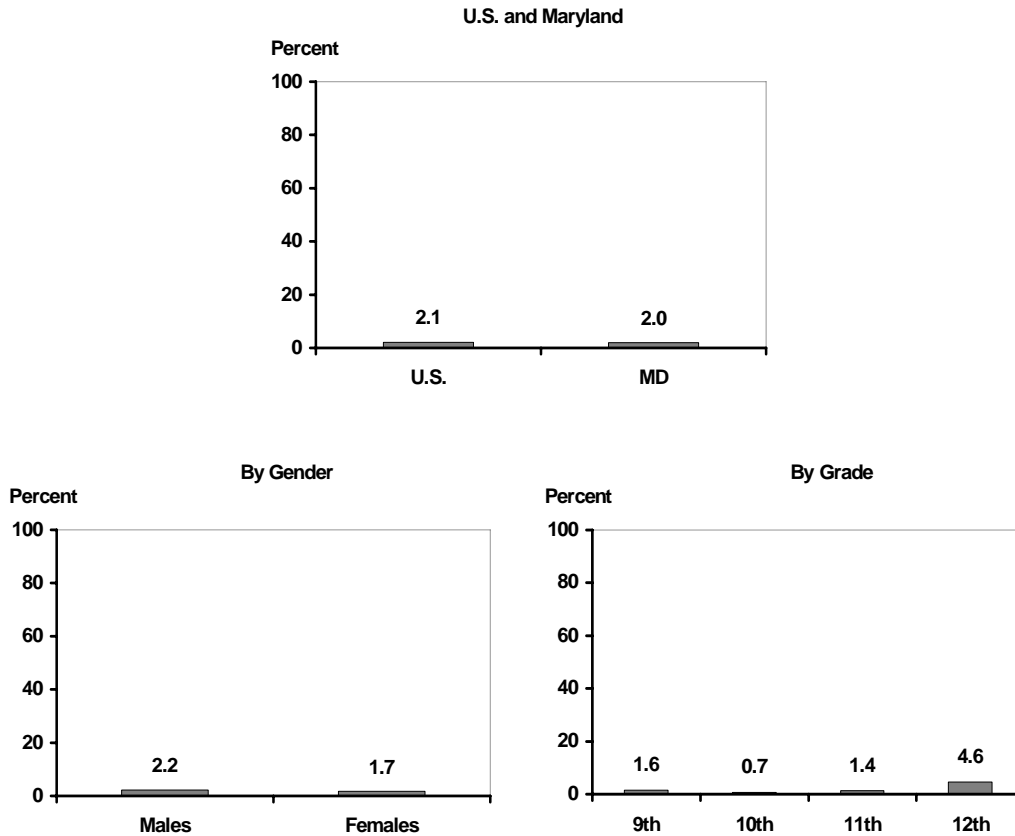
6.11 Use of Illegal Drugs Injected by Needle

Although a very small percentage of high school students, both nationally and in Maryland, reported injecting illegal drugs, the consequences of doing so can be devastating for users, their families and their communities. In Maryland, 2 percent of high school students have tried using a

needle to inject an illegal drug, compared to 2.1 percent in the national YRBS sample.

The YRBS data show little gender difference in rates of needle use. The higher rate among 12th graders (4.6 percent) is not statistically significant, but may be worth further attention in actual school settings.

6.11 Percentage of students who used a needle to inject any illegal drug into their body one or more times during their life

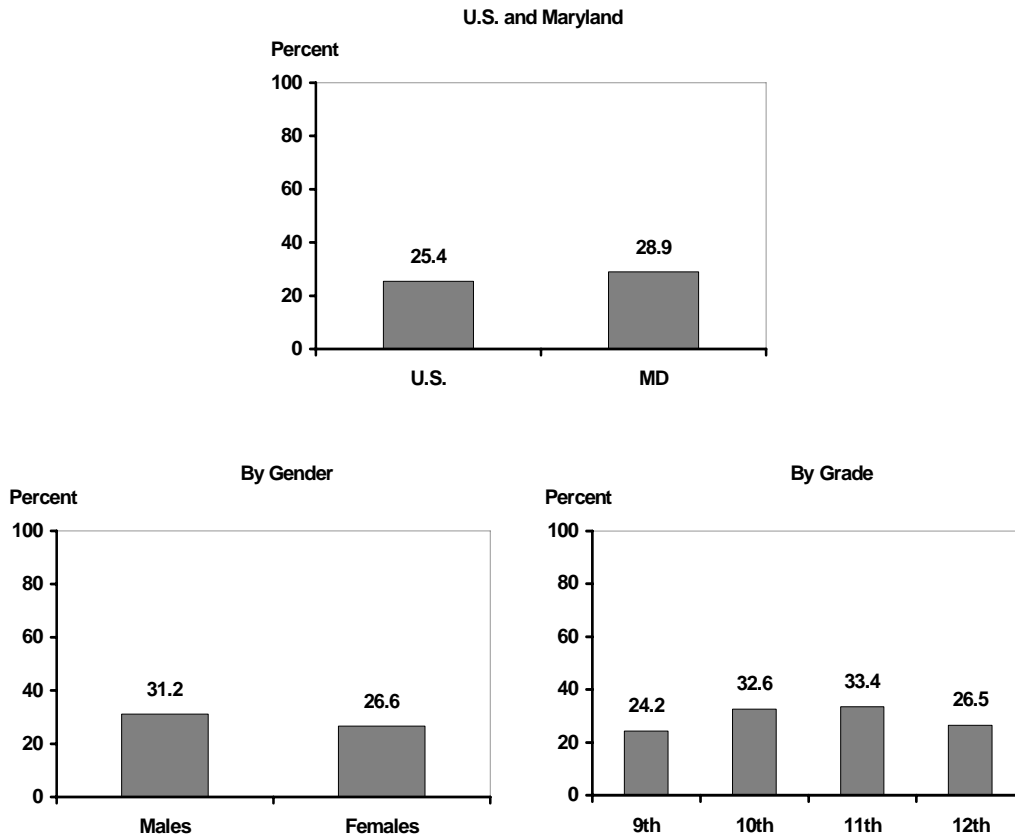


6.12 Students Offered, Sold, or Given Illegal Drugs on School Property

More than 25 percent of high school students in Maryland and nationally have been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property (28.9 and 25.4 percent, respectively). At this rate, the trading of drugs at school far exceeds the rate of drug use at school, as well as the percent of students who have ever tried most of the illegal drugs covered by the YRBS.

Within the Maryland high school population, experience in being offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property is highest for male students (31.2 percent) and for 11th graders (33.4 percent). None of the subgroup differences are statistically significant, however.

6.12 Percentage of students who were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property by someone during the past 12 months



Chapter 7.

Suicide

The 2005 YRBS asked several questions related to mental health and potentially suicidal behavior. The results underscore the seriousness of the risk of suicide among Maryland high school students, although the behavior and experience in Maryland are comparable to high school students nationwide, and a very small percentage of Maryland high school students actually commit suicide. Suicide is still the third leading cause of death among Maryland youth age 15-19.³

According to the YRBS, approximately 1 in every 10 Maryland high school students attempted suicide in the previous 12 months.

Increasing percentages of Maryland high school students say they planned a suicide attempt (12.2 percent), seriously considered suicide (17.4 percent), and experienced persistent sadness or hopelessness (29.7 percent).

The survey shows that female high school students are at a significantly greater risk of suicidal behavior than males.

Over a third of female high school students (38.1 percent) report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, almost double the percent of male students (21.5 percent). Also, the percentage of female high school students reporting one or more suicide attempts in the past 12 months is 12.4 percent compared to 6.1 percent of male students.

The incidence of suicidal behavior among Maryland high school students is comparable to students nationwide.

1 in 10 Maryland high school students attempted suicide in the previous 12 months.

Almost one third of Maryland students report sustained periods of depression.

The YRBS shows that female students are at greatest risk of suicidal behavior.

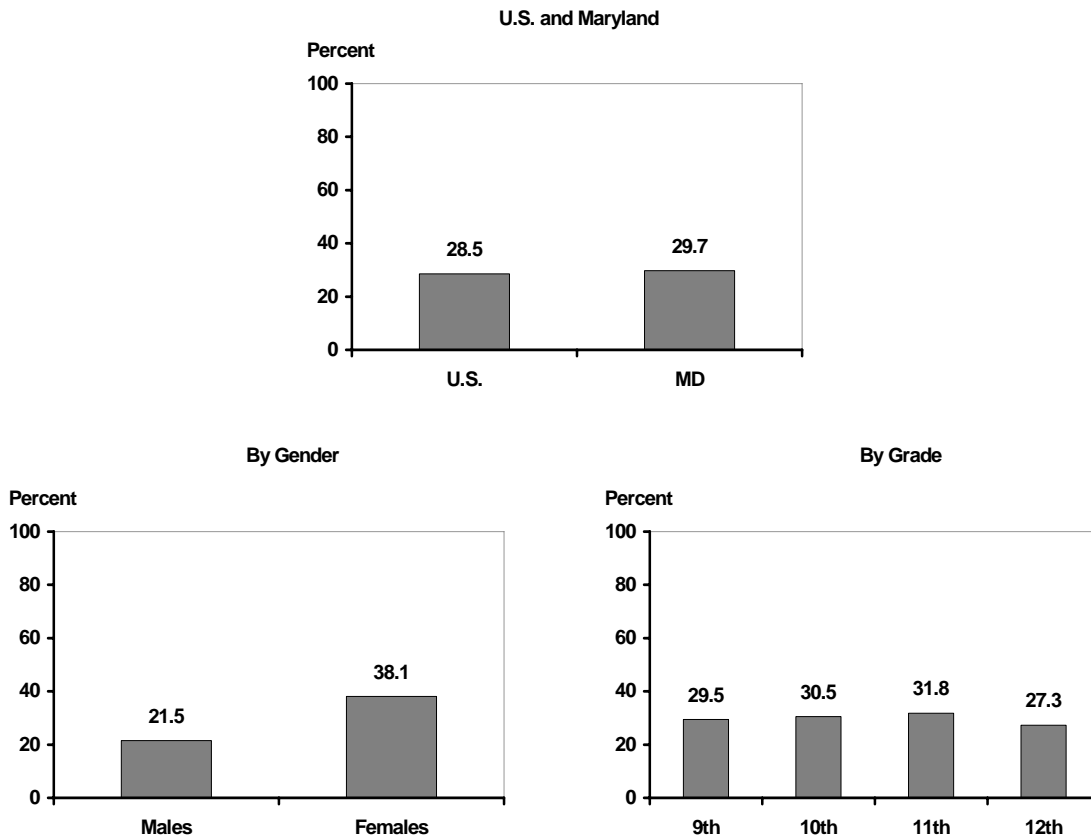
³ See www.vsa.state.md.us/04annual.pdf, Table 44: Leading Causes of Death Among Adolescents by Age, Race, and Sex, Maryland, 2004.

7.1 Persistent Sadness/Hopelessness for Two Weeks or More

According to the YRBS, more than one-quarter of all Maryland high school students experienced sustained periods of sadness or hopelessness over a 2-week period during the past 12 months (29.7 percent). At this rate, the incidence of prolonged sadness and hopelessness among Maryland students is comparable to the rate nationwide (28.5 percent).

Female high school students in Maryland are almost twice as likely as male students to experience prolonged periods of depression (38.1 percent versus 21.5 percent), and rates of depression appear consistent in grades 9, 10, 11, then decline slightly in 12th grade.

7.1 Percentage of students who felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped some usual activities during the past 12 months



7.2 Students Who Seriously Considered Suicide in the Past 12 Months

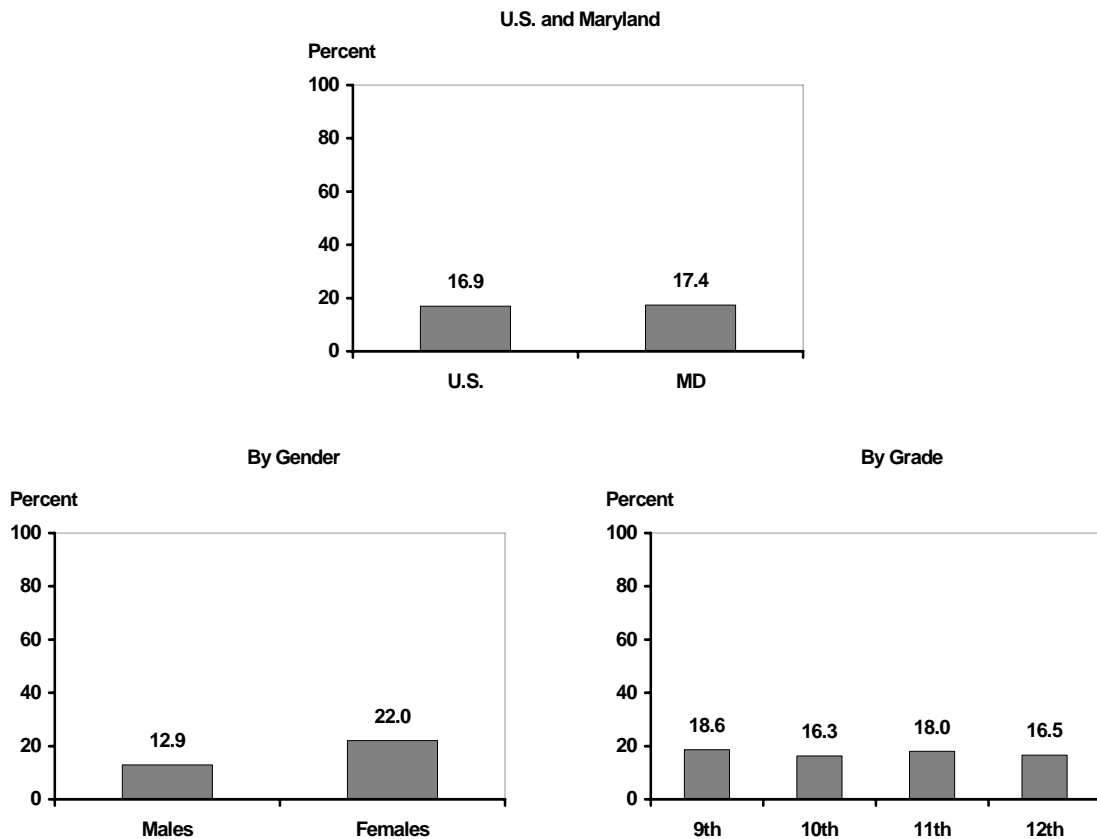
About 1 in every 6 Maryland high school students (17.4 percent) say that they seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months. At this rate, Maryland high school students are about as likely to seriously consider a suicide attempt as students in the YRBS national sample.

Within Maryland's high school population, female students are significantly more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide

within the past 12 months than their male counterparts (22 percent for females vs. 12.9 percent for males).

There are no statistically significant differences across the high school grades in the percent of students who have seriously considered suicide. However, the greatest incidence of such behavior occurs in the 9th grade (18.6 percent).

7.2 Percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months

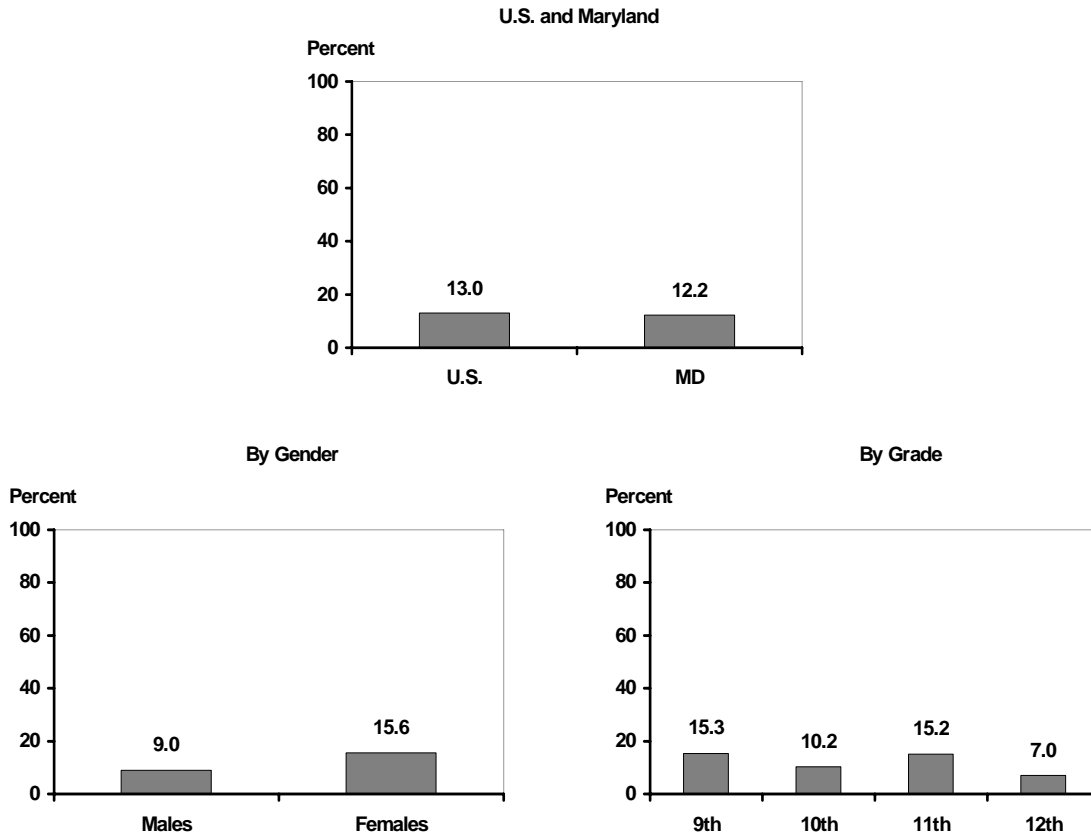


7.3 Students Who Had a Plan for Committing Suicide During the Past 12 Months

According to the YRBS, more than 1 in 10 Maryland high school students made a plan to commit suicide in the past 12 months. The incidence of planning suicide is slightly lower for Maryland high school students than for students in the national YRBS sample, however, this difference is not statistically significant.

Female high school students in Maryland are significantly more likely than male students to have put a plan in place to commit suicide (15.6 and 9 percent, respectively). Furthermore, the incidence of suicide planning is higher for students in the 9th and 11th grades than for students in the 10th and 12th grades, but these differences were not statistically significant.

7.3 Percentage of students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months.



7.4 Students Who Attempted Suicide During the Past 12 Months

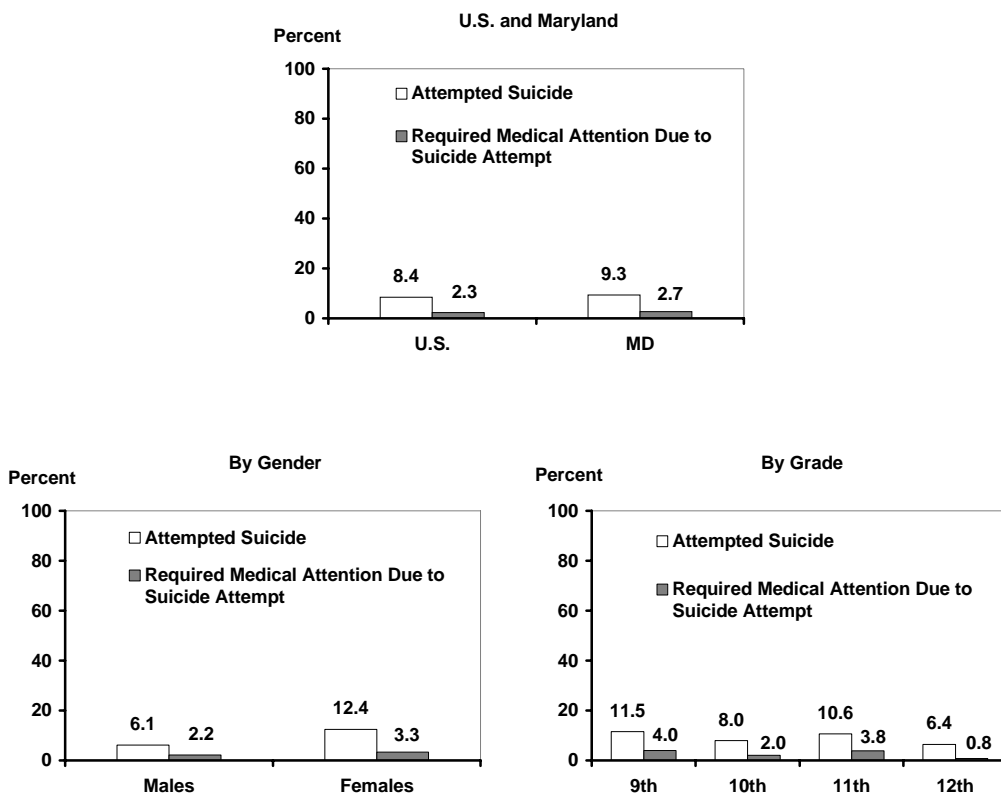
Almost 1 in 10 Maryland high school students (9.3 percent) attempted to commit suicide within the past 12 months, according to the YRBS. At this rate, Maryland students are comparable to high school students nationwide.

Among Maryland high school students, female students are significantly more likely to have attempted suicide than male students. In fact, the percentage of female students who attempted suicide in the past 12 months is over twice the rate for male students (12.4 vs. 6.1 percent).

The incidence of suicide attempts does not vary significantly across the high school grades; however, it is greatest in the 9th grade (11.5 percent).

Suicide attempts requiring medical treatment are infrequent for high school students in both the Maryland and the national YRBS samples (2.7 vs. 2.3 percent, respectively). There is no significant difference between genders or between grades in the incidence of suicide attempts that require medical attention.

7.4 Percentage of students who actually attempted suicide, and whose suicide attempt required medical attention, during the past 12 months.



Chapter 8.

Diet, Nutrition and Physical Activity

In 2001-2002, nationally, there were more than three times as many overweight adolescents as there were in 1980.⁴

According to the YRBS, about 27 percent of Maryland high school students describe themselves as slightly or very overweight. This finding is confirmed by a Body Mass Index calculation for students reporting their height and weight.

About 6 in every 10 Maryland high school students (63.9 percent) say they are trying to lose or control their weight. Exercise and dietary changes are the most popular ways to control weight. Female high school students are significantly more likely than males to regard themselves as overweight, and female students report a greater incidence of fasting, using medications or vomiting to lose weight.

The dietary habits of Maryland students are generally similar to the habits of students surveyed in the 2005 national YRBS. Like students nationwide, more than one fourth of Maryland students consume at least one serving of milk, fruit juice, and fruit every day.

Maryland high school students are less physically active than students nationwide, according to several YRBS measures. Compared to students in the national YRBS sample, Maryland high school students exercise with less frequency and intensity.

One fourth of Maryland high school students identify themselves as being overweight.

About 6 in every 10 Maryland students say they are trying to lose or control their weight.

Dietary habits among Maryland students are similar to those nationwide.

Compared to high school students nationwide, Maryland students exercise with less frequency and intensity.

⁴ Headly, A. A., et al., Prevalence of overweight and obesity among U.S. children, adolescents and adults, 1999-2002. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2004: 291(23): 2847-2850.

8.1 Student Perceptions of Their Weight and Calculated Body Mass Index (BMI)

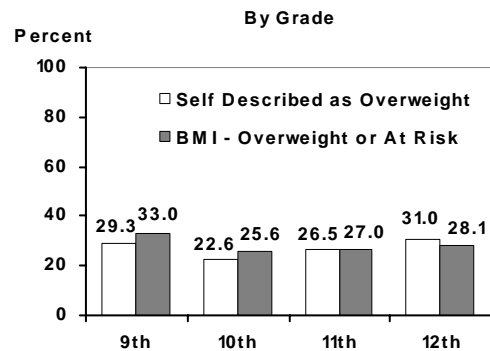
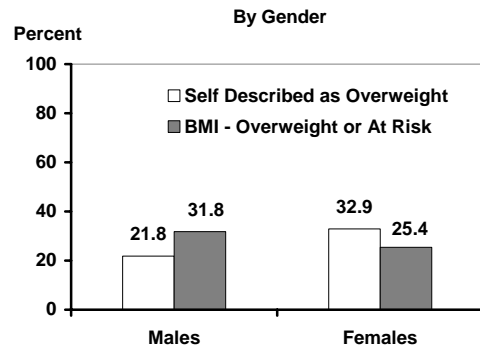
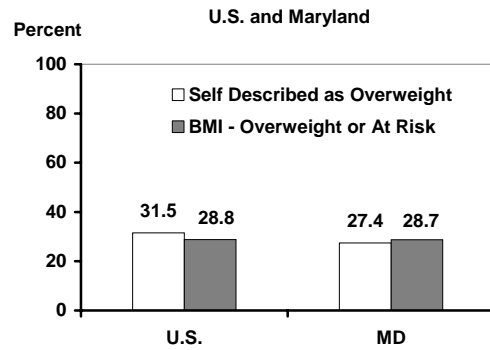
According to the YRBS, more than one fourth of Maryland high school students consider themselves slightly or very overweight (27.4 percent). High school students in the national sample are more likely than Maryland students to describe themselves as slightly or very overweight—a statistically significant difference of 31.5 vs. 27.4 percent, respectively.

Student perceptions of their weight are confirmed by the Body Mass Index (BMI), which was calculated for students who reported their height and weight in the YRBS (1,344 of the 1,414 sampled). Using the BMI, 28.7 percent of Maryland high school students are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. This rate is about the same as the percentage of students who self-reported being slightly or very overweight.

The percentage of Maryland students with a BMI indicating they are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight is 31.8 for males and 25.4 for females. The male-female difference in the BMI percentage is not statistically significant. This contrasts with the male-female difference in being self-described as overweight, which is statistically significant (21.8 vs. 32.9 percent). Therefore, female students on average perceive that they have a greater problem being overweight than is in fact the case; whereas male students tend to underestimate their weight problems.

The perception of being slightly or very overweight is highest among 9th grade and 12th grade students (29.3 and 31 percent respectively).

8.1 Percentage of students who described themselves as slightly or very overweight, and who were overweight or at risk of becoming overweight as measured by BMI



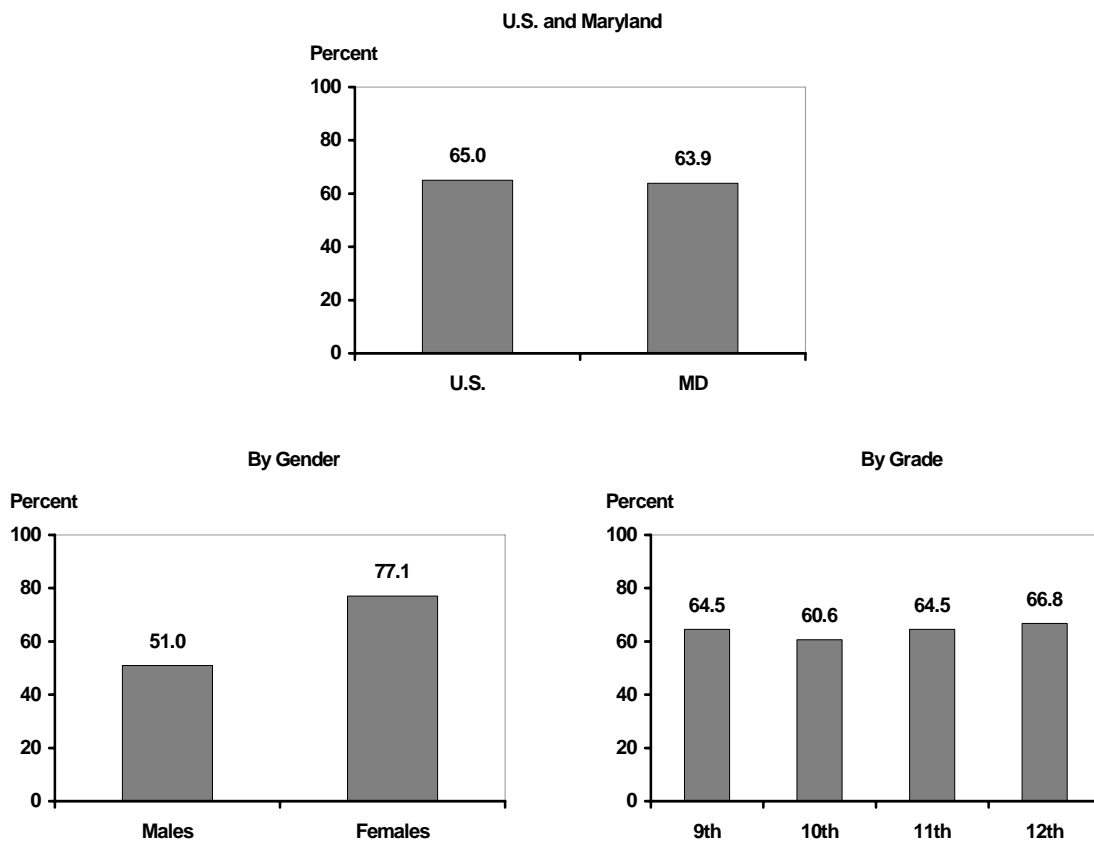
8.2 Students Trying to Lose or Control Their Weight

Almost two thirds of Maryland high school students say that they are trying to lose or control their weight (63.9 percent).

Within the Maryland high school population, efforts to lose or control weight are much more prevalent among female students than among male students.

According to the YRBS, more than three fourths of female high school students are trying to lose or control their weight (77.1 percent), compared to one half of the male student body (51 percent). The incidence of efforts to lose and control body weight is consistent across the high school grades.

8.2 Percentage of students who were trying to lose or control their weight



8.3 Weight Loss and Control Methods

The 2005 YRBS examined different methods high school students use to lose weight or maintain their weight, including:

- Exercise
- Dieting – eating less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat
- Fasting – going without food for 24 hours or more
- Using diet pills or liquids without a doctor’s advice
- Vomiting or laxatives

Exercise is the most common means of weight loss and control among Maryland high school students (58.4 percent). Dieting (38.6 percent) and fasting (12.3 percent) are also quite commonplace; however, fewer than 1 in 15 high school students use diet pills (5.5 percent) to control their weight and fewer than 1 in 25 use vomiting or laxatives (3.2 percent).

The percentage of Maryland high school students using each weight control method is

comparable to the percentage nationwide, except fasting and vomiting or laxatives. Maryland students are significantly less likely than students nationwide to employ these dangerous weight control measures.

Female high school students in Maryland are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to use dieting or fasting to lose or maintain their weight. In fact the percentage of female high school students who diet is more than twice the percentage of male students who do so (51.7 vs. 25.7 percent). The use of exercise, diet pills, and vomiting or laxatives is comparable between female and male high schoolers.

The use of weight control methods does not vary significantly across the high school grades; however, several of the behaviors are most prevalent in the 9th grade. The 9th grade has the highest percentage of students who use exercise (64.0 percent), dieting (42.7 percent), fasting (12.1 percent), and vomiting or laxatives (5.0 percent).

8.3 Percentage of students who used different weight loss methods

Weight Loss Method	U.S.	MD	Males	Females	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Exercise	60.0	58.4	52.5	64.5	64.0	54.9	60.7	52.8
Dieting	40.7	38.6	25.7	51.7	42.7	33.8	36.9	40.6
Fasting	12.3	10.3	7.5	13.2	12.1	11.0	6.8	11.2
Diet Pills/Liquids	6.3	5.5	4.7	6.4	5.5	3.0	5.4	8.9
Vomiting or Laxatives	4.5	3.2	2.0	4.4	5.0	1.9	3.6	1.8

8.4 Student Diet Preferences

The YRBS explored, in detail, students' consumption of different types of healthful food. More than one fourth of Maryland high school students consume at least one serving a day of milk, fruit, and fruit juices, which is comparable to consumption among students in the national YRBS sample.

The only statistically significant differences between high school students in Maryland and the national sample is the percentage who consume at least one serving of carrots per week (41.2 percent for Maryland, 46.9 percent for the national sample), and the

percentage who consume at least one serving of other vegetables per week (85.5 percent for Maryland, 82.1 percent for the national sample).

The YRBS also provides estimates of the percentage of high school students who consume 5 or more servings per day of fruits and vegetables (not shown in the table). This recommended consumption pattern is reported by one-fifth of the students in both the Maryland and national samples (19.9 vs. 20.1 percent).

8.4 Student Diet Preferences: Frequency that students consumed different types of healthful foods in the past 7 days

Food	In last 7 days, percent who:			
	Consumed at least one serving		Consumed at least one serving per day	
	U.S.	MD	U.S.	MD
Glass of milk	83.5	76.3	44.4	35.4
100% fruit juice	81.5	82.8	28.3	29.4
Fruit	85.1	84.4	26.1	26.0
Green salad	65.6	63.6	11.8	10.6
Potatoes	68.6	65.8	7.9	6.4
Carrots	46.9	41.2	5.8	5.3
Other vegetables	82.1	85.5	19.8	23.2

8.5 Physical Activity

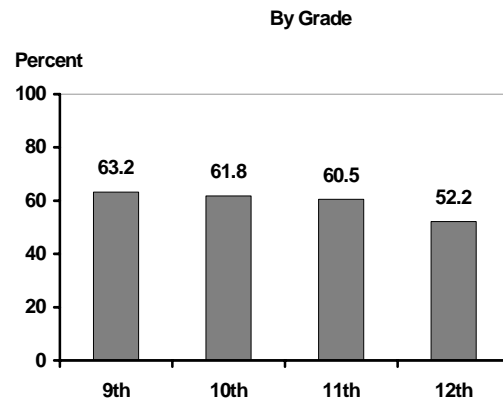
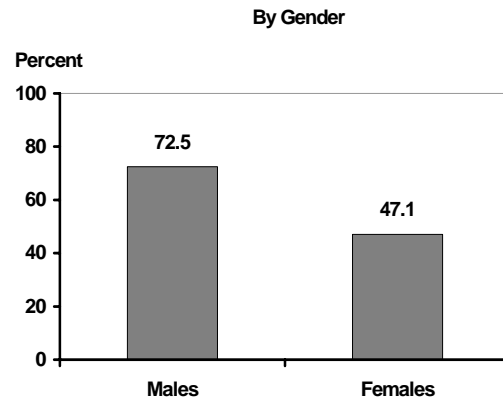
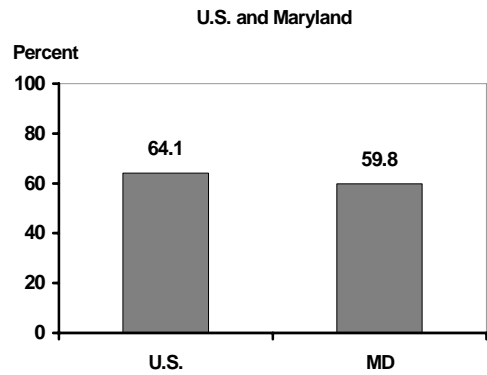
Maryland high school students' levels of physical activity are significantly below those reported in the 2005 national YRBS survey on several measures. These include participation in vigorous physical activity on at least 3 of the past 7 days; participation in moderate physical activity on 5 or more of the past 7 days; participation in physical education at least one day a week; and daily participation in physical education.

In Maryland, 59.8 percent of high school students exercised or participated in a physical activity that made them sweat and breathe hard for more than 20 minutes or more on 3 or more days during the week preceding the survey. The rate for students in the national sample is significantly higher at 64.1 percent.

There are also significant differences between male and female Maryland high school students in the frequency and intensity of their exercise. Almost three fourths of male students (72.5 percent) exercised vigorously more than 20 minutes on 3 or more of the preceding 7 days, compared to fewer than one half of female students (47.1 percent).

There is a decline in the frequency and intensity of exercise across the high school grades. In 9th grade, 63.2 percent of students exercised more than 20 minutes on 3 or more of the preceding days, compared to 52.2 percent of 12th grade students. This difference, however, is not statistically significant.

8.5 Percentage of students who exercised or participated in physical activity that made them sweat and breathe hard for 20 minutes or more on 3 or more of the past 7 days

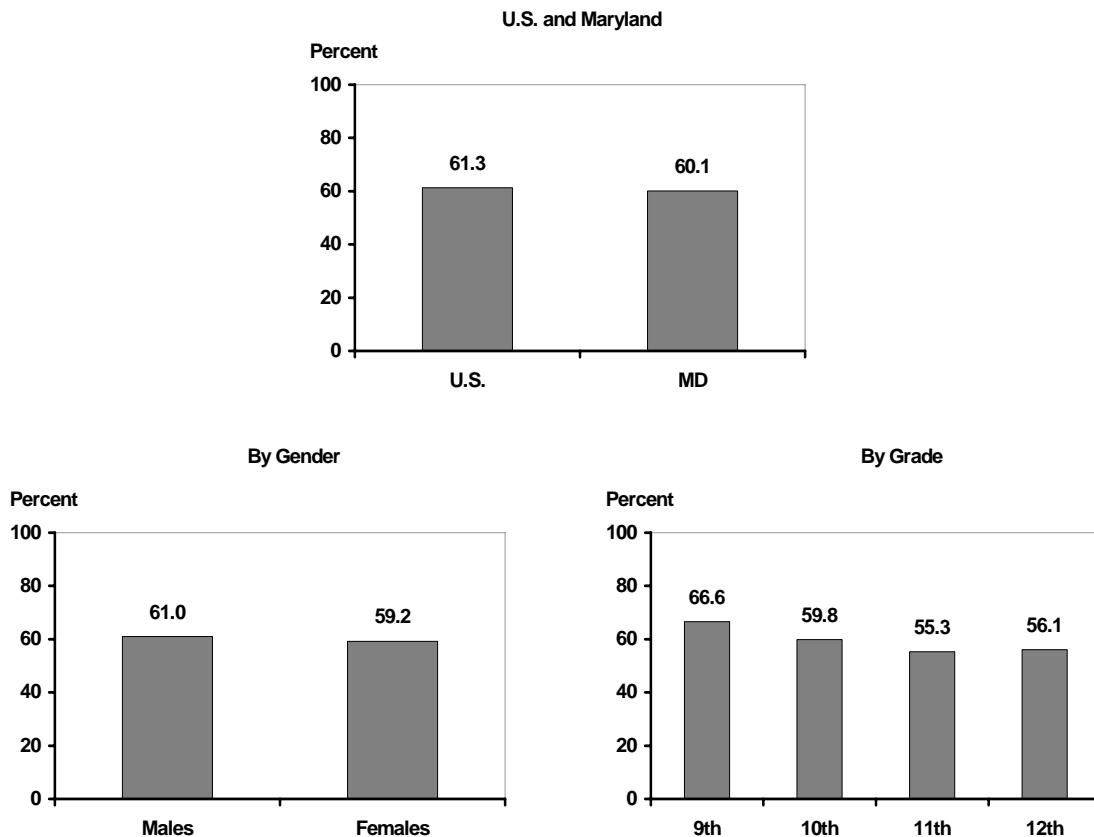


8.6 Television Viewing

About 60 percent of Maryland high school students watch 2 or more hours per day of TV on an average school day, comparable to the rate in the national YRBS sample. The national goal is to have fewer than 25 percent of students watching TV for 2 hours or more on an average school day.⁵

In Maryland, rates of TV watching are similar for male and female high school students, with the highest percentage of students watching TV for 2 hours or more in the 9th grade (66.6 percent). The rate drops to 59.8 percent in the 10th grade.

8.6 Percentage of students who watched two or more hours per day of TV on an average school day



⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2010. 2nd ed. 2004. Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, pp. 22-23.

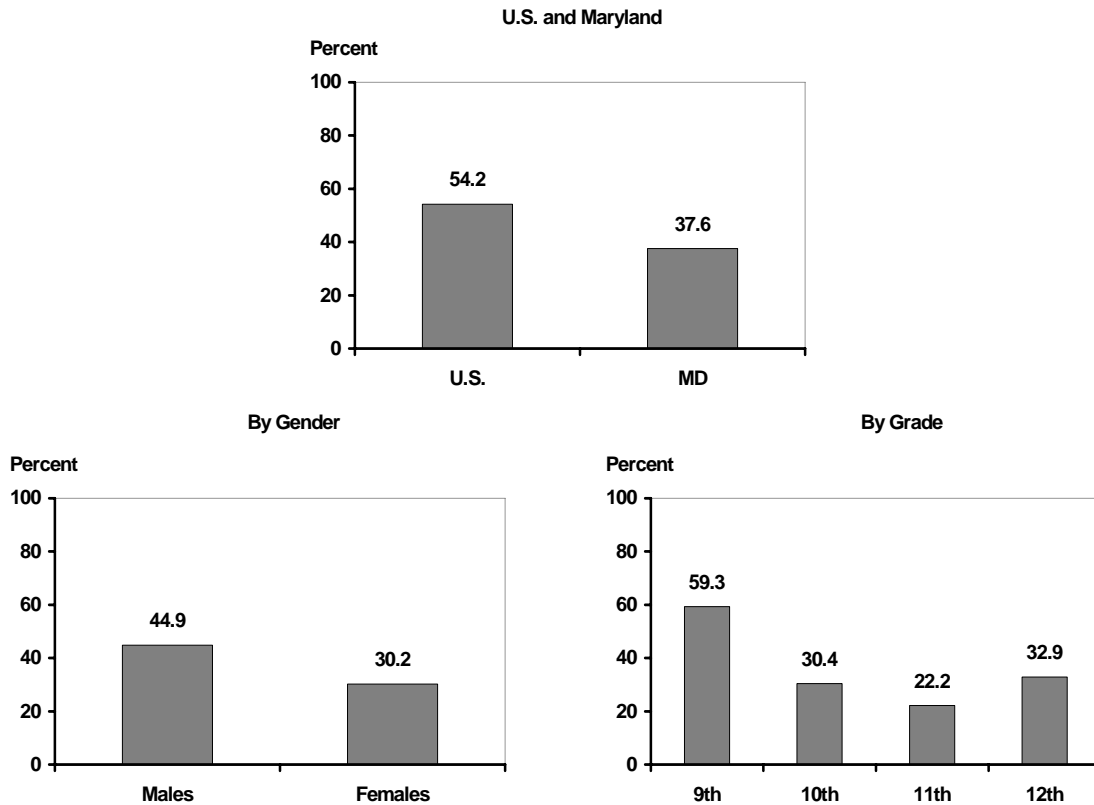
8.7 Physical Education Class Attendance

The YRBS also shows that organized, school-based exercise is significantly less prevalent in Maryland than in the U.S. as a whole.

The percentage of Maryland high school students who attend physical education classes on one or more days in the average week when they are in school is just 37.6 percent, compared to 54.2 percent nationwide.

Participation in organized physical education is greatest for male students and students in the 9th grade. Almost one half (44.9 percent) of male high school students attend physical education classes one or more days a week compared with fewer than one third (30.2 percent) of female students. Almost two thirds of 9th grade students (59.3 percent) attend regular physical education classes, while fewer than one third of students in the other high school grades do the same.

8.7 Percentage of students who attended physical education classes on one or more days in an average week when they were in school



Chapter 9.

Protective Factors

Protective factors represent the support structures within students' families, schools and communities that can help protect students from risky behaviors and promote healthy behaviors. These include having parents, teachers or other adults to whom a student can turn to for advice or to discuss problems, receiving support from school personnel, acquiring knowledge about specific risks, and participating in extracurricular activities.

The Maryland YRBS requested information on selected protective factors that did not appear on the national survey. According to the survey results, protective factors are prevalent among Maryland high school students.

About 60 percent of Maryland high school students participate in extracurricular activities.

Approximately 85 percent of Maryland high school students say they would be comfortable seeking help from one or more adults besides their parents if they had an important question affecting their life, and about 55 percent indicate that a teacher or other school staff person plays this role.

Furthermore, about 90 percent of Maryland high school students report having been taught in school about AIDS or HIV infection, slightly above the level reported in the 2005 national YRBS.

Protective factors are prevalent among Maryland high school students.

Most Maryland high school students participate in extracurricular activities.

Approximately 85 percent of Maryland high school students have an adult, other than a parent, in whom they confide.

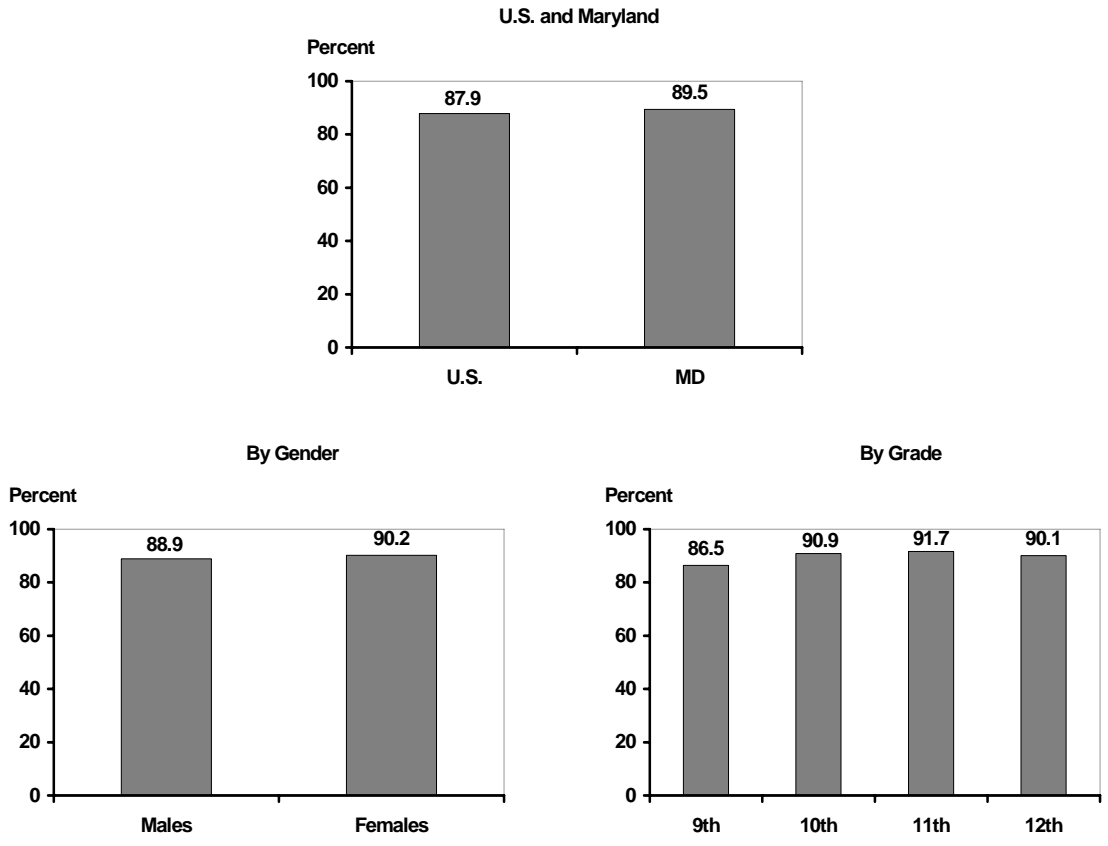
Almost all Maryland high school students have been taught about HIV/AIDS.

9.1 Students Taught About HIV/AIDS Infection

For Maryland high school students, like high school students nationwide, there has been widespread school-based delivery of information about HIV/AIDS. According to the 2005 YRBS, 89.5 percent of Maryland high school students have received HIV/AIDS education at school, as have 87.9 percent of students nationwide.

There is no significant variation among subgroups within the Maryland high school population in terms of the percentage of students who have been taught about HIV/AIDS. Female and male high school students both report high levels of exposure to HIV/AIDS education (90.2 and 88.9 percent, respectively), as do students in every high school grade.

9.1 Percentage of students who had ever been taught in school about AIDS or HIV infection



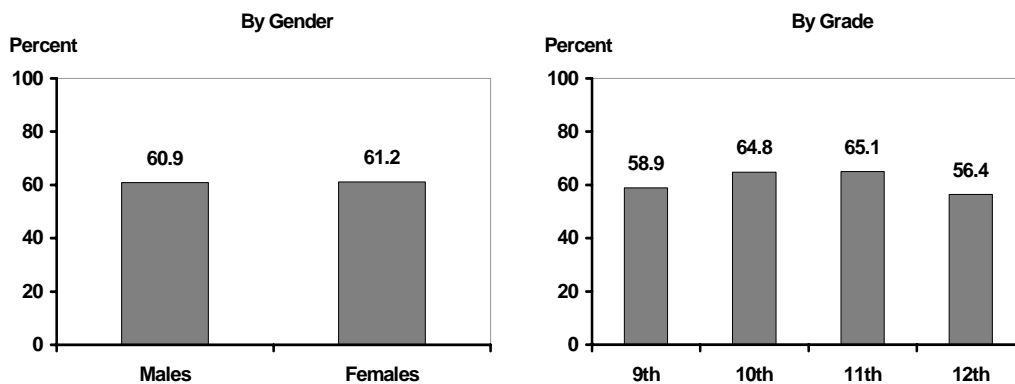
9.2 Extracurricular Activities

The YRBS reveals that approximately 6 out of every 10 Maryland high school students participate in extracurricular activities such as school sports, student government, and clubs.

The rate of involvement in extracurricular activities is comparable for male and female

high school students (60.9 percent and 61.2 percent, respectively). Furthermore, students consistently engage in extracurricular activities throughout their high school careers at rates between 56.4 percent in 12th grade (the lowest rate), to 65.1 percent in 11th grade (the highest rate).

9.2 Percentage of Maryland students reporting participation in extracurricular activities



9.3 Students Who Have an Adult to Whom They Can Turn

Maryland’s 2005 YRBS asked high school students a number of questions about having an adult to whom they could talk about problems, an important factor in protecting students against risky behaviors.

As shown in the table below, the availability of such adult support is widespread among Maryland high school students.

Approximately 9 out of 10 high school students in Maryland have an adult outside of school to whom they can talk “about things that are important” to them. A similar share of Maryland high school students would feel comfortable seeking help from an adult besides their parents about an important life question.

Furthermore, more than half of all high school students have a teacher or other adult *at school* with whom they can talk about a problem.

On all these measures there is no significant difference between male and female students, or across the high school grades,

with one exception. The percentage of students who have a teacher or other adult in whom they can confide at school increases across the high school grades, reflecting greater contact and familiarity with faculty and staff as students progress through high school. The differences between 9th and 12th grades, and 10th and 12th grades on this measure are statistically significant.

A similar but not significant pattern is reflected in the final protective factor addressed on the Maryland 2005 YRBS, namely the percentage of students who believe their teachers “really care about and encourage them.” Overall, about 50 percent of Maryland high school students agree with this statement.

9.3 Percentage of Maryland students who have an adult to whom they can turn for advice or to discuss a problem, and who feel that their teachers really care about them

Type of Adult	MD	Males	Females	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Adult outside of school	87.3	86.7	87.9	85.6	86.6	87.4	89.6
Adult other than a parent	84.7	82.0	87.5	83.5	82.7	86.4	86.2
Teacher or other adult in school	55.2	54.6	55.6	45.6	50.1	60.3	65.4
Teachers really care	49.4	48.3	50.4	41.7	52.2	52.6	52.4

Chapter 10.

Policy and Program Initiatives

The YRBS is conducted every other year to document trends in youth behaviors related to health. Because this is the first time that Maryland has participated in the YRBS, meaningful comparisons can be made only with 2005 data from the national survey, but these provide a baseline or snapshot against which future progress can be measured. Once data are collected in 2007 and analyzed, some inferences may be drawn about trends and prospects, both positive and negative.

This chapter links major YRBS findings to the Leading Health Indicators around which state and national health policies are organized.⁶

The Leading Health Indicators reflect ten major public health concerns for the United States. This chapter links the YRBS findings presented in the preceding chapters to the indicators listed below, and provides information on programs underway or being developed by MSDE and other relevant state agencies. The ten indicators and the corresponding report chapters are:

1. Physical activity (Chapter 8)
2. Overweight and obesity (Chapter 8)
3. Tobacco use (Chapter 5)
4. Substance abuse (Chapter 6)
5. Responsible sexual behavior (Chapter 9)
6. Mental health (Chapters 7 & 9)

7. Injury and Violence (Chapters 3 & 4)
8. Environmental Quality
9. Immunization
10. Access to Health Care

The last three indicators were not directly addressed in the YRBS.

10.1 Physical Activity

Regular physical activity throughout life is important for bodily and mental health; laying a foundation for continued activity during the high school years can contribute to reduced morbidity and mortality.

About 90 percent of students, both in Maryland and nationally, participated in some moderate or vigorous physical activity during the week preceding the YRBS. However, when queried about more extensive or intensive activity, these percentages are substantially reduced. Only about 60 percent of Maryland students engaged in vigorous activity for 20 minutes or more on 3 or more of the previous 7 days.

Related to activity level questions, the YRBS also asked about hours spent watching TV on an average school day: 60.1 percent of Maryland students watch 2 or more hours per day, which is in excess of the recommended maximum.

⁶ "Leading Health Indicators." Healthy People 2010. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. October 2, 2006. http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/html/uih/uih_4.htm#environqual.

“Maryland on the Move” is a joint project of the Governor’s office and the Departments of Education, Health and Mental Hygiene, and Agriculture to provide information on good nutrition and physical activity. A website has been developed and an event is planned at one of the Department of Natural Resources’ walking trails.

10.2 Overweight and Obesity

A major health and educational policy concern is the rising number of young people who are overweight or obese. Over a quarter of Maryland high school students are overweight or obese, based on self-description in the YRBS and calculated Body Mass Indexes. This translates to approximately 75,000 Maryland high school students.

Diet, physical activity and other weight loss or control techniques were assessed by a number of questions in the YRBS.

According to the YRBS, female high school students are more likely than male students to describe themselves as overweight and as trying to lose weight. Females report higher usage rates of all of the surveyed methods used to lose weight or keep from gaining weight than do males.

Concern over rising medical costs, lost productivity and personal impacts has engaged the attention of both legislators and state agencies in recent years. Maryland’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has developed and issued a statewide Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan. MSDE’s Community and School Nutrition Branch is aiding school districts to develop Comprehensive Wellness plans for their schools.

10.3 Tobacco Use

Cigarette smoking is the single largest preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. About 20 percent of students in the Maryland YRBS report currently using one or more forms of tobacco. Maryland is significantly below the national rate of students’ current cigarette smoking (16.5 versus 23.0 percent), and also significantly below the national student rate of current smokeless tobacco use (2.9 versus 8.0 percent). However, Maryland smokers under 18 are significantly more likely than students in the national YRBS to buy their own cigarettes in a store or gas station (29.6 vs. 15.2 percent).

MSDE and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provide tobacco use prevention and cessation grants to school districts, as do many local health departments, to reduce tobacco use. The Maryland Adolescent Survey (MAS) has been tracking smoking trends among Maryland youth for more than 30 years.

10.4 Substance Abuse

Drinking alcohol and the use of illegal drugs are associated with violence, injuries and HIV infection. About 40 percent of Maryland high school students are current drinkers, and according to the YRBS slightly more than 20 percent engage in binge drinking. Approximately 20 percent of Maryland high school students currently use marijuana, however, the percentage of students who have ever tried other drugs is low and comparable to the rate nationwide. The only significant difference between Maryland high school students and the national YRBS sample is in the use of methamphetamines, for which the Maryland

rate is 4.0 percent versus the national rate of 6.2 percent.

One pattern revealed by almost all the YRBS questions related to illegal drug use is a sharp increase in the percentage of 12th graders using drugs compared to the other grades. For example, there is a statistically significant increase in the use of cocaine between the 11th and 12th grades (6.8 vs. 14.2 percent). This pattern points to the need to reinforce drug use prevention as students enter their final year of high school.

MSDE provides grants to school districts to support a variety of prevention education programs. These programs include:

- Kindergarten – 12th Grade Drug Prevention Education
- Peer Leadership
- (SA/EI) Student Assistance/Early Intervention
- Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Policy

Alcohol and drug use can also be tracked through the Maryland Adolescent Survey (MAS) and now through the YRBS. In addition, MSDE in partnership with First Lady Kendel Ehrlich sponsors the “I Want to Know” campaign. This initiative fosters communication between parents and teens to prevent drug and alcohol use.

10.5 Responsible Sexual Behavior

About 90 percent of YRBS respondents report having been taught in school about HIV/AIDS. This indicates that MSDE’s prevention education and technical assistance programs are reaching almost all Maryland high school students.

MSDE is a recipient of a federal grant that addresses HIV Prevention Education. Technical assistance is provided to local health educators, school nurses and school based health centers staff regarding HIV Prevention and Teen Pregnancy Prevention. MSDE and the Maryland AIDS Administration work closely with partners to bring updated information to schools and to plan prevention activities. Child Abuse Programs are established in each local school system and annual training to school staff is mandated by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).

10.6 Mental Health

Depression is the most common form of mental illness and is estimated to be involved in about two-thirds of all suicides, a major area highlighted in the 2005 YRBS.

The YRBS shows that suicidal behavior and ideation among Maryland high school students are comparable to the national YRBS sample. However, female students in Maryland are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to exhibit suicidal behavior, pointing to the need to develop targeted indicators of distress and intervention strategies. For example, 12 percent of female students actually attempted suicide within the past 12 months, compared to 6 percent of male students.

MSDE was previously awarded a federal School Mental Health Integration grant. MSDE and its partner agencies are using grant funds to increase the knowledge and skills needed for appropriate diagnosis and referrals, and to improve links among school personnel, students and their families, health care providers and the wider public mental health system. Most Maryland school systems already have character education programs in operation, acting as one of the “protective factors” addressed in this report.

In addition, MSDE has other programs in place to address mental health, including Youth Suicide Prevention, Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution, Character Education, Dropout Prevention/Alternative Programs, Maryland School Alliance Mental Health Alliance, Positive Behavioral Interventions Systems and Supports (PBIS), School Psychological Services, and Child Abuse Programs. MSDE partners with local universities and other state agencies to implement these mental health initiatives.

10.7 Injury and Violence

According to the results of the Maryland YRBS, substantial proportions of students carry weapons, engage in fights, are victims of harassment and bullying, and have property damaged or stolen at school. Moreover, the percentage of Maryland high school students being threatened or injured at school is significantly greater than reported in the national YRBS.

MSDE's program in Bullying and Harassment Prevention will be able to use the data from YRBS to benchmark and track these behaviors and inform programs to reduce them.

Of particular concern is a pattern of higher incidence of several behaviors and attitudes on the part of students in the 10th grade. Students in the 10th grade, and especially males, have higher rates of weapons-carrying, being threatened or injured by a weapon at school, and not going to school because of feeling unsafe. These findings support interventions targeted at this grade level.

In addition, behaviors such as riding a bike without a helmet, traveling in a car with a driver who has been drinking, or driving oneself after drinking have significant potentials for harm. Maryland students report a significantly lower percentage of

never or rarely using a seat belt as a passenger compared to the national YRBS.

Clearly, prevention of injury and interpersonal violence is a high priority to be addressed within Maryland high schools.

10.8 Further Information

The unit within MSDE that is responsible for Maryland's participation in the YRBS is the Student Services and Alternative Programs Branch (SSAP). Among SSAP's array of programs and initiatives are guidance and career development, school psychology, pupil personnel, school social work, school health services, safe and drug-free schools, dropout prevention and alternative programs, home instruction, and initiatives to reduce disruption and violence, address at-risk behaviors, and facilitate achievement. For more information on the YRBS, contact Ms. Alicia Mezu at 410-767-0353 or email amezu@msde.state.md.us.



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