

Strategies for Success
Youth Survey Results for 2024
Carlsbad Municipal Schools

The Strategies for Success (SFS) survey was collected online from middle and high school students across the Carlsbad Municipal Schools in April of 2024. **A total of 1,211 middle school students completed the SFS survey and 846 high school students completed the survey, for a total of 2,057 surveys.** Questions on the SFS are used to monitor and measure the Carlsbad Community Anti-Drug and Gang Coalition's outcomes related to youth substance use, access to alcohol and other drugs, and perceptions of risk for using substances in the community and school. In addition to monitoring outcomes, the data help the community plan the most effective and needed prevention services.

Positive Findings

- + High school substance use decreased for alcohol, e-cigarettes, and marijuana, and binge drinking compared with last year.
- + Students offered resiliency factors such as wanting to take care of their health, to avoid negative consequences or get in trouble, and protecting their future plans as reasons for not drinking or using other using substances.
- + Almost 90% of students have at least one friend their own age who cares about them.
- + More than 90% of students say their parent/guardian knows who they are with and what they are doing when not at home and that they have an adult who believes they will be a success (these both increased since last year).
- + Perception of harm increased (desired) for marijuana, alcohol, cigarette and e-cigarette use, and misuse of prescription painkillers. High school perception of the risk of using marijuana weekly increased from 49% to 56%, and middle school perception increased from 61% to 64%.

Troubling Findings

- Middle school substance use increased slightly for all substances.
- Perception of peer disapproval of substance use is lowest (compared to parents and self).
- Over 20% of high school students who reported past 30-day e-cigarette use reported buying it in a store, despite it being illegal for anyone under age 21. This is also an increase from last year when it was nearly 17%.
- Students are most likely to access alcohol by taking it from their home or someone else's home, at parties, and from parents. Last year they were more likely to access it from unrelated adults.
- Youth access marijuana by purchasing or receiving it from others, at parties, and parents. Youth report using marijuana to cope with stress or anxiety, to help them sleep, and to have fun with friends. Little understanding exists regarding the impacts of marijuana use on the adolescent brain.
- Students are reporting concerning levels of mental distress and suicide ideation. These mental health risks compound or increase substance use.
- Middle school students report using alcohol, marijuana, and e-cigarettes before age 13 at very high levels (even higher than high schoolers).

- The percentage of students reporting driving after alcohol or marijuana use or riding with a driver who had been drinking is very high.

Recommendations

- Support mental health services and help equip teachers to better identify and refer students who are struggling to those services.
- Have clear rules about what youth can and cannot do at school and at home.
- Support programs, teachers, students, and staff who strive to make school the safest and best part of each students' day.
- Encourage students to think about going to college or technical school after they graduate high school.
- Tell students you believe in them.
- Show interest in students' schoolwork.
- Encourage students to pursue their interests and get involved in drama, debate, art, music, math league, sports, or other hobbies and areas of interest.
- Give students opportunities to use their skills and recognize them for trying.

These are all protective factors that help buffer youth from risks and help them succeed. [Read more here:](https://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence) <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence>

Creating a safe school climate can prevent bullying, substance use, and truancy. ¹

School climate is all of our responsibility. Students have the most influence on school climate but can also be influenced by volunteers, families, school staff, and community members.

- Be personable
- Encourage peer support
- Have an open door for students
- Make an effort to include students who are left out

Thank You!

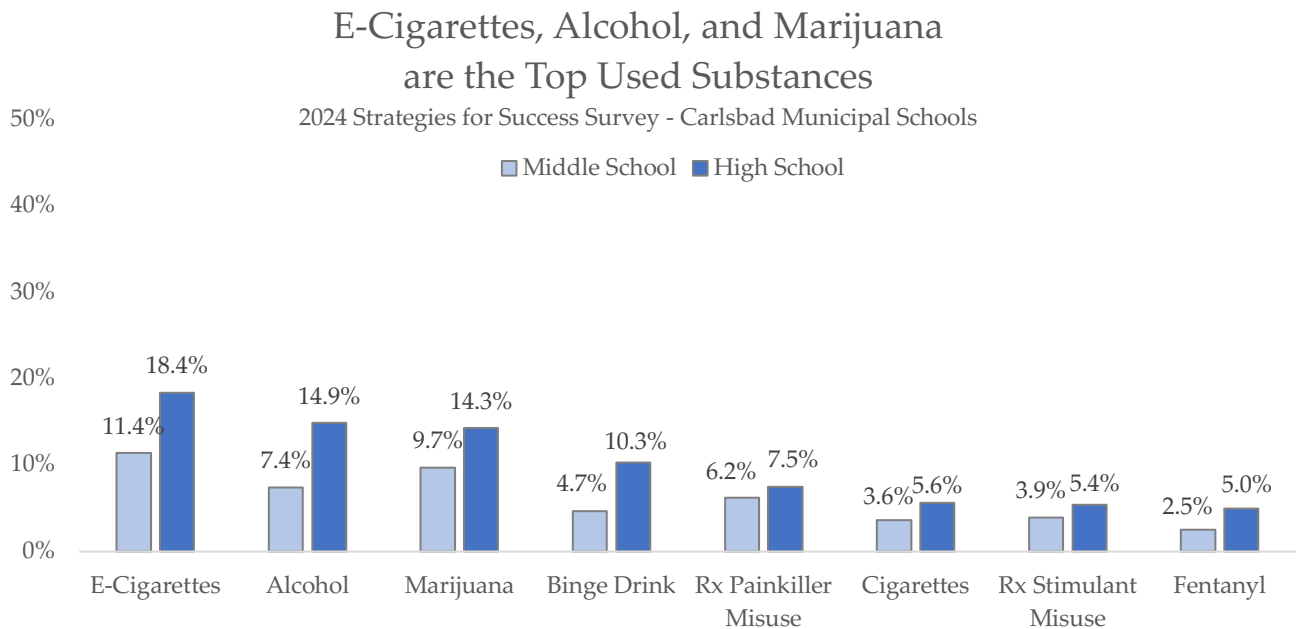
We would like to THANK everyone who played a role in helping us collect these data.

- All the **students** who took the time to answer the questions honestly;
- All the **teachers** who helped give instructions to students on completing the survey, took time out of their busy day, and gave up precious instruction time; and
- The **school administration and staff** who supported the data collection and want to use the findings to plan, implement, and evaluate programming.

¹ Sulkowski, M. and Lazarus, P., Creating Safe and Supportive Schools and Fostering Students' Mental Health, (Routledge, 2016), 227-246.

Current Substance Use

Current substance use is measured by the percentage of people who report using the specific substance in the past-30 days. Adolescent substance use is risky because research literature confirms that the brain does not stop developing until the early twenties and substance use during development can have lasting effects. ² The graph below shows the current substance use among middle and high school students.



	Middle School	High School
Positive changes since 2023	*All substance use increased slightly	E-Cigarette use decreased from 23.3% Alcohol use decreased slightly from 20.7% Marijuana use decreased from 19.5% Binge drinking decreased from 14.9%



Boys

High school boys are more likely to use alcohol, binge drink, use marijuana stimulants, and fentanyl than high school girls.



Girls

Middle school girls are more likely to use e-cigs, alcohol, marijuana, Rx, and cigarettes than middle school boys.

² Volkow, ND. (2017). Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2017.10.002>

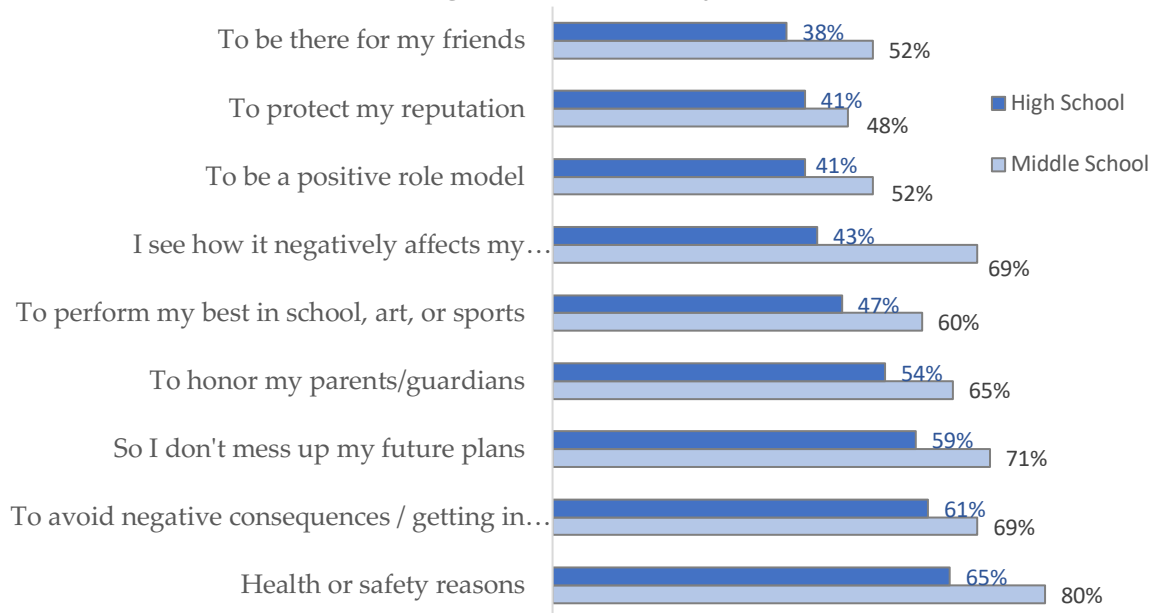
Prevention Focuses on the Positive

Most students are not using alcohol or other substances. Prevention research shows that students with goals, supportive adults and peers, and connection to school and community are less likely to engage in risky behavior. The graph below displays the top reasons why students choose not to drink or use other substances.

If you choose not to drink alcohol or use other substances, what would be your main reasons?

Students say health reasons, their future plans, and other negative consequences keep them from using substances

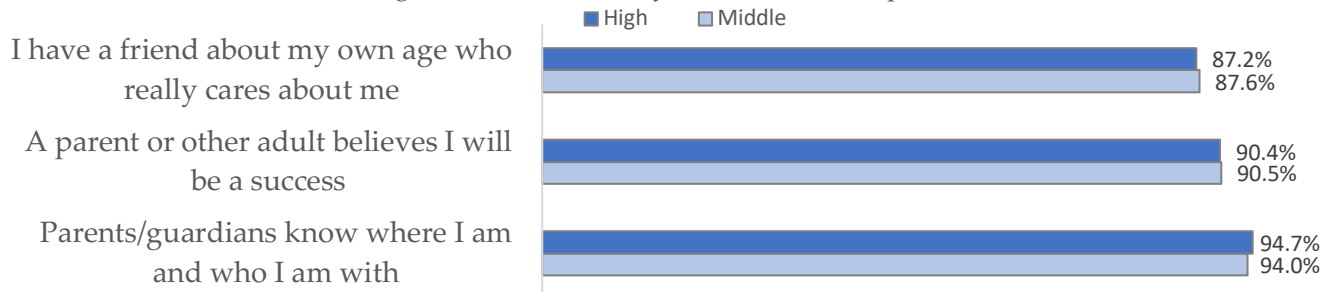
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Most Students have Supportive Friends and Adults in their Life

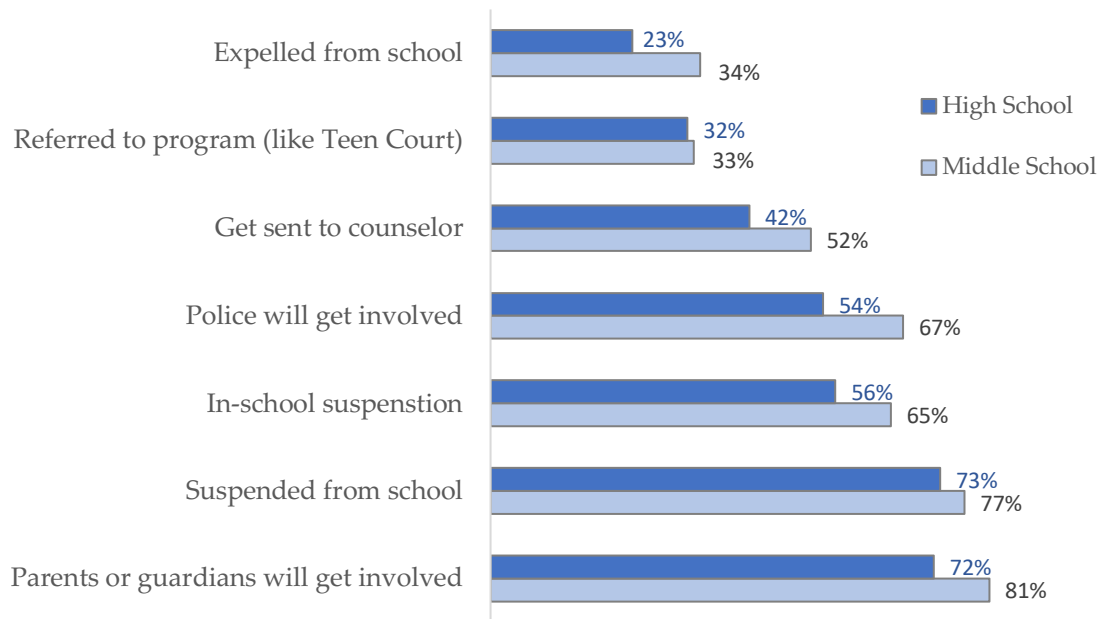
% who said "mostly true" or "very true"

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What are the consequences if you get caught using substances on school campus?
Most students think their parents will be involved and/or they will be suspended if they get caught using substances

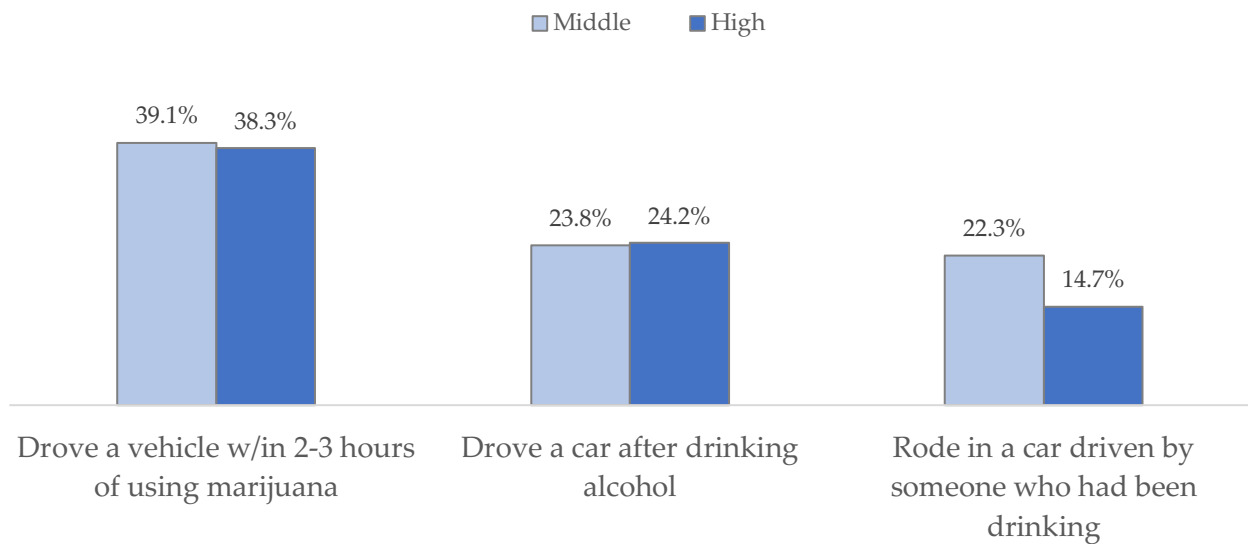
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Substance Use and Vehicles

Past 30-day behaviors (driving is among students who reported current substance use riding in vehicles is among all respondents)

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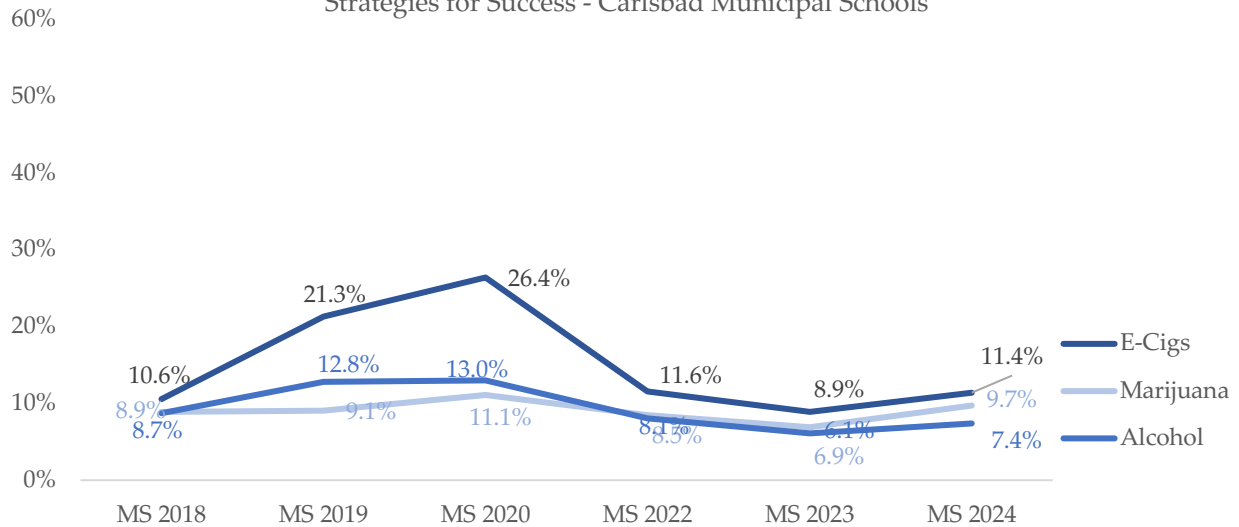


Trends Among the Top Three Substances Show Reductions

No surveys were collected in 2021 due to COVID/school closures

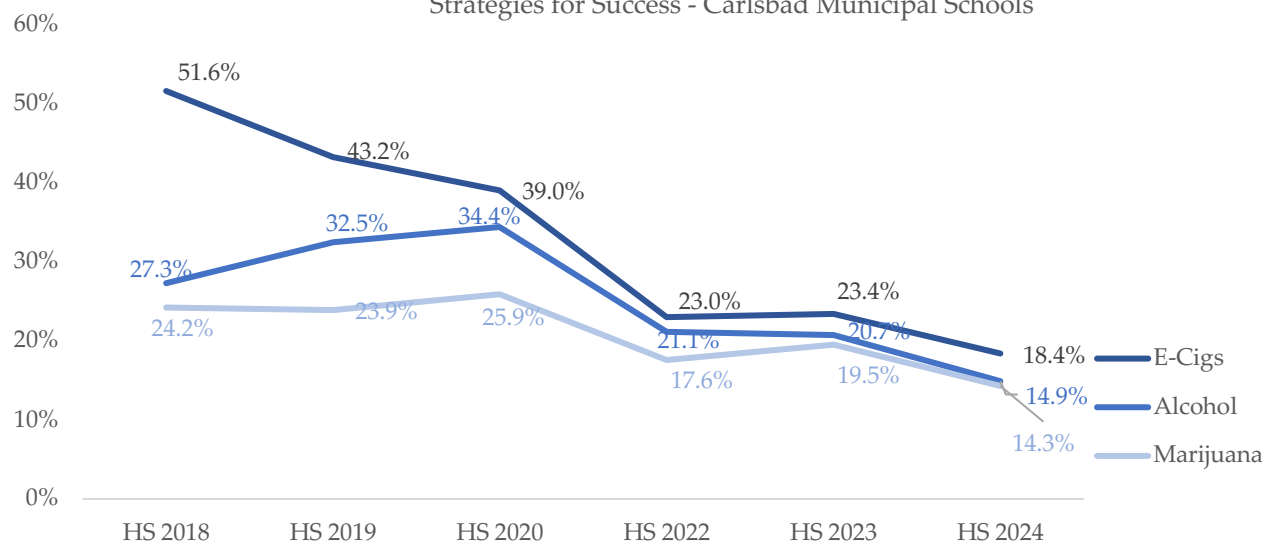
Middle School Substance Use Increased Slightly in 2024

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High School Substance Use Continues to Decline

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High School Substance Use (past 30-days)	U.S. YRBS 2021	New Mexico YRRS 2021	Carlsbad SFS 2024
E-Cigarettes	18.0%	25.3%	18.4%
Alcohol	15.8%	19.5%	14.9%
Marijuana	22.7%	20.3%	14.3%

SOURCES: NM <https://youthrisk.org> and U.S. <https://yrbs-explorer.services.cdc.gov/#/>

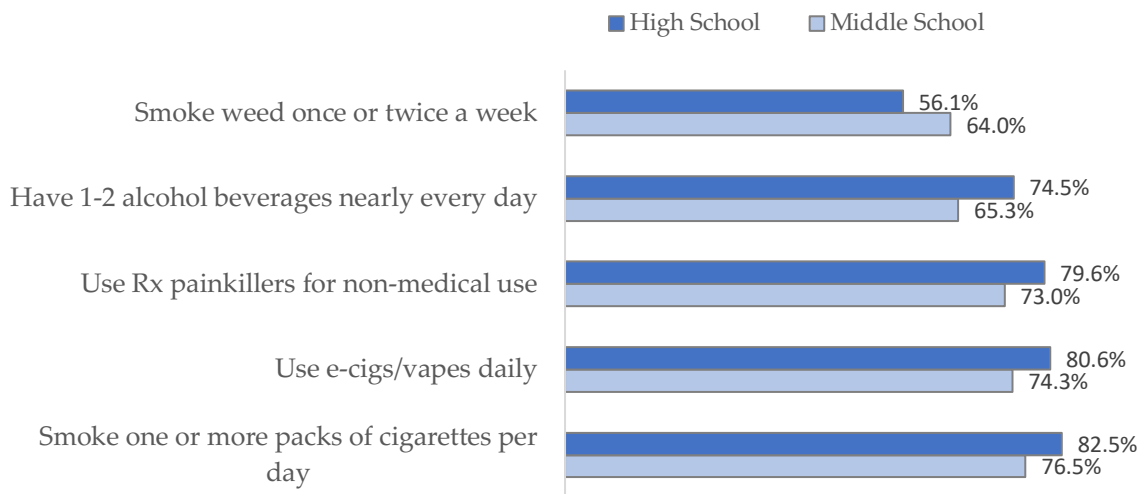
Perception of Harm from Using Substances

A set of questions on the SFS asks about the perceived risk of harm associated with substance use. Higher perceived risk is associated with lower use. The graph below shows the percentage of students who said they risk “great” or “moderate” harm from using the substance as described.

Perceived Harm is Lowest for Weed and Alcohol Use

% who said "moderate" or "great" risk

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A higher perceived risk of harm is associated with a decreased tendency to engage in that behavior.

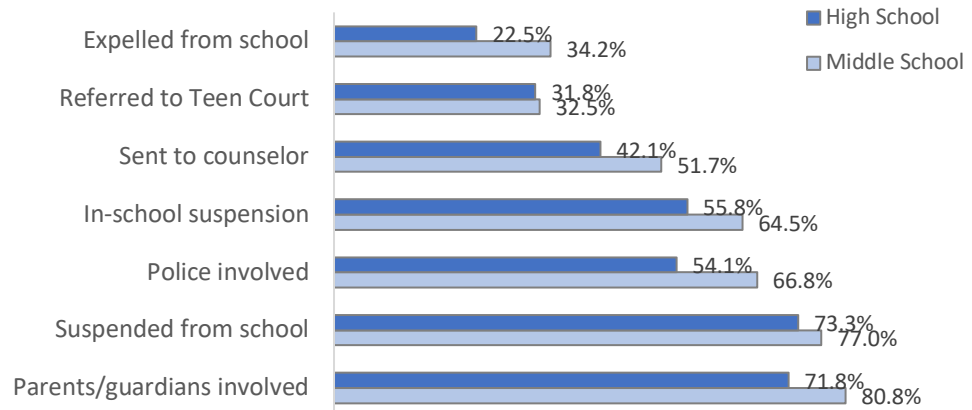
Perceived Risk of Harm <i>% who said moderate or great risk</i>	Middle			High		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Smoking marijuana once or twice a week	62.6%	61.2%	64.0%	45.0%	49.3%	56.1%
Having 1-2 alcoholic beverages nearly every day	66.0%	60.8%	65.3%	67.6%	66.4%	74.5%
Using e-cigarettes daily	72.4%	69.2%	74.3%	73.1%	71.7%	80.6%

Perception of harm increased in 2024 for all items (desired change).

Perceived Consequences of Use on Campus

Students think their parents will be called and/or they will be suspended if they are caught using substances on campus

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Perception of Disapproval of Substance Use

Youth were asked “how wrong” they think parents and peers would think it is for someone their age to drink alcohol or use weed regularly. The tables show the percentage of students who answered “wrong” or “very wrong” to the question. Normative beliefs of substance use influence youth decisions to try substances.

Perceived peer disapproval is lower than personal and parental disapproval.

Alcohol	Middle			High		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
My <u>parents</u> feel it is wrong for me to drink regularly	92.1%	93.2%	93.1%	86.4%	85.0%	89.4%
<u>I think</u> it is wrong for someone my age to drink regularly	88.1%	89.6%	89.2%	68.8%	77.8%	83.6%
My <u>peers</u> think it is wrong for someone my age to drink alcohol	80.4%	80.0%	79.2%	47.0%	61.7%	70.6%

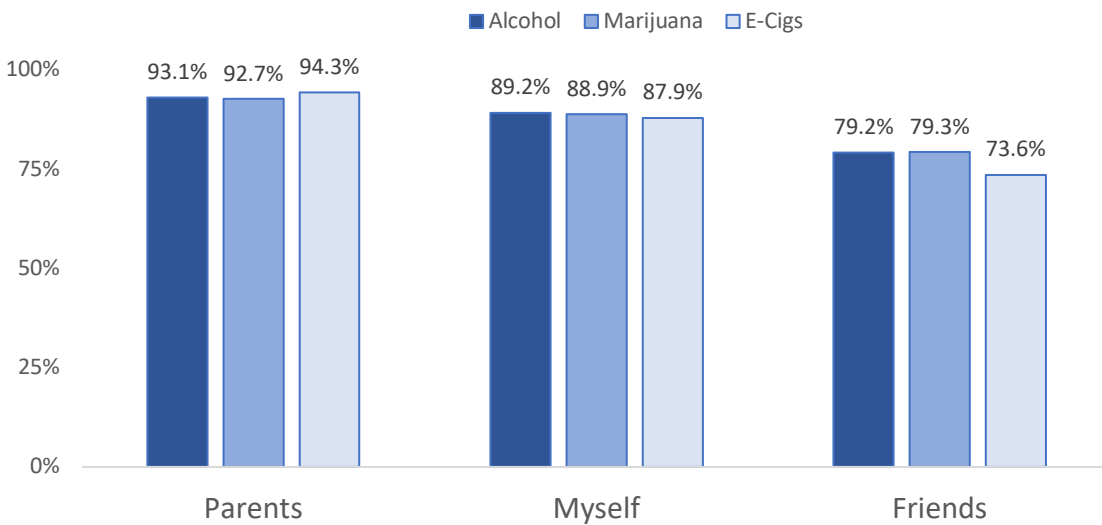
Marijuana	Middle			High		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
My <u>parents</u> feel it is wrong for me to use marijuana 1-2 times a week	93.0%	93.9%	92.7%	86.4%	84.7%	87.2%
<u>I think</u> it is wrong for someone my age to use marijuana 1-2 times a week	85.5%	88.8%	88.9%	63.5%	72.6%	78.6%

My peers think it is wrong for someone my age use marijuana 1-2 times a week	78.8%	80.0%	79.3%	42.3%	55.9%	66.2%
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Middle School Students' Perceived Parental Disapproval of Substance use is Highest

2024 Carlsbad Strategies for Success Survey

% who said it is "wrong" or "very wrong" for them to use each substance

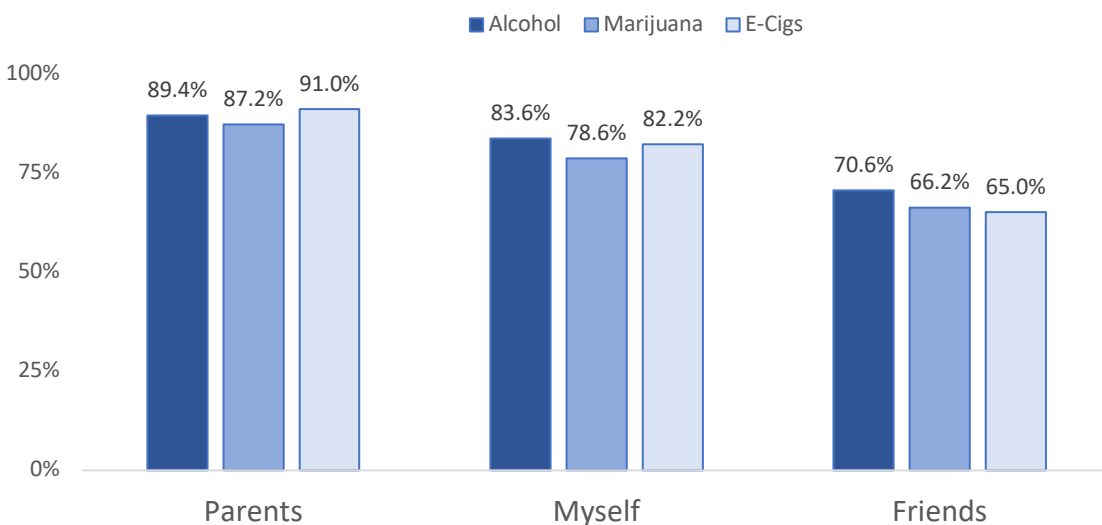


How wrong would [each person/group] think it is for you / someone your age to use each substance?

High School Students' Perceived Parental Disapproval of Substance use is Highest, Peers is Lowest

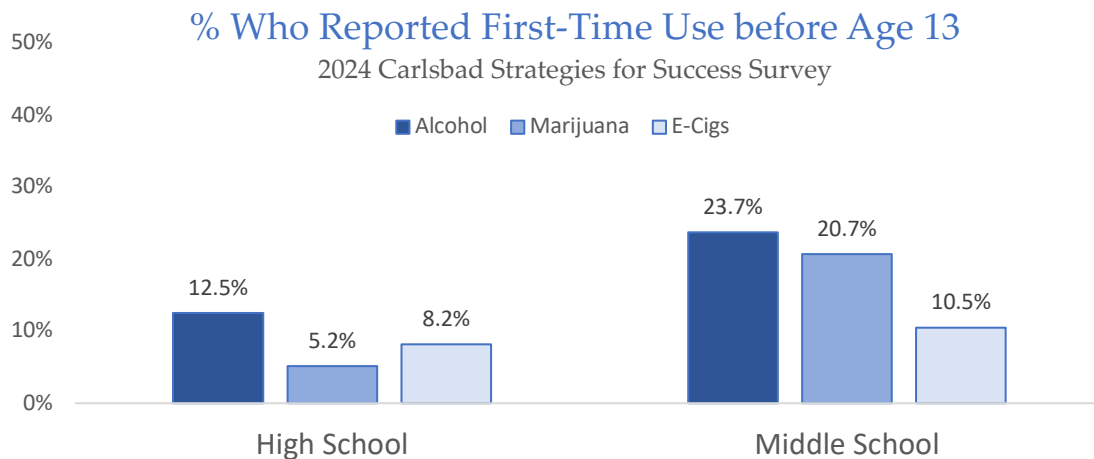
2024 Carlsbad Strategies for Success Survey

% who said it is "wrong" or "very wrong" for them to use each substance



Early Initiation

Research shows that young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are at a higher risk for developing alcohol use disorder later in life. Early initiation of alcohol use can interfere with healthy brain development causing learning disabilities as well as increased risk of physical and/or sexual assault.³ Additionally, many young people have easy access to alcohol in the community. In a 2019 national SAMHSA survey, 96.5% of 12–14-year old’s who reported past-30-day alcohol use said that they got the alcohol “for free” or from relatives or friends.⁴



Early Initiation* 2021 YRRS/YRBS	New Mexico		U.S.	
	Alcohol	Marijuana	Alcohol	Marijuana
Middle School	10.6%	2.9%	--	--
High School	17.8%	11.1%	15.0%	4.9%

*Use before age 11 (Middle school) and before age 13 (high school)

³ Squeglia, L.M.; Tapert, S.F.; Sullivan, E.V.; Jacobus, J.; Meloy, M.J.; Rohlfing, T.; and Pfefferbaum, A. Brain development in heavy-drinking adolescents. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 172(6):531–542, 2015. [PMID: 25982660](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25982660/)

⁴ SAMHSA, CBHSQ. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Table 6.16B—Source Where Alcohol Was Obtained for Most Recent Use in Past Month among Past Month Alcohol Users Aged 12 to 20, by Age Group and Gender: Percentages, 2018 and 2019. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSect6pe2019.htm#tab6-16b>

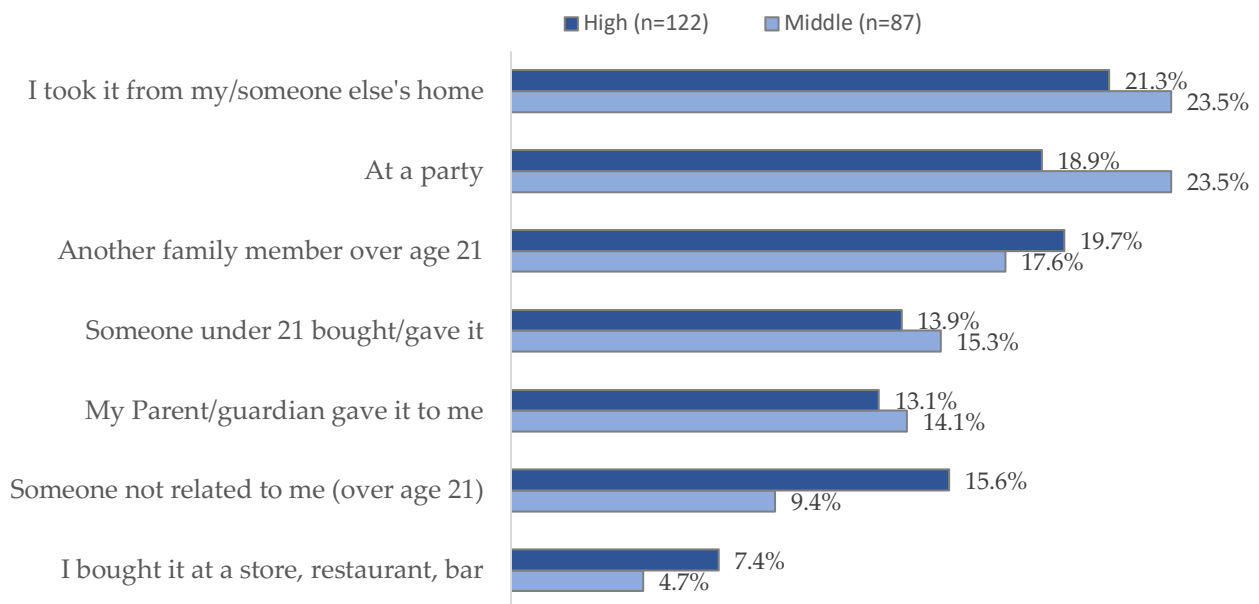
Alcohol Access

The Coalition works to reduce social access of alcohol to minors through coordination with law enforcement to hold adults accountable and educating parents and the community that it is a 4th degree felony to provide alcohol to minors.

Youth are Most Likely to Get Alcohol through Social Sources: Taking it from home, at parties, and from adult family

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% among current users

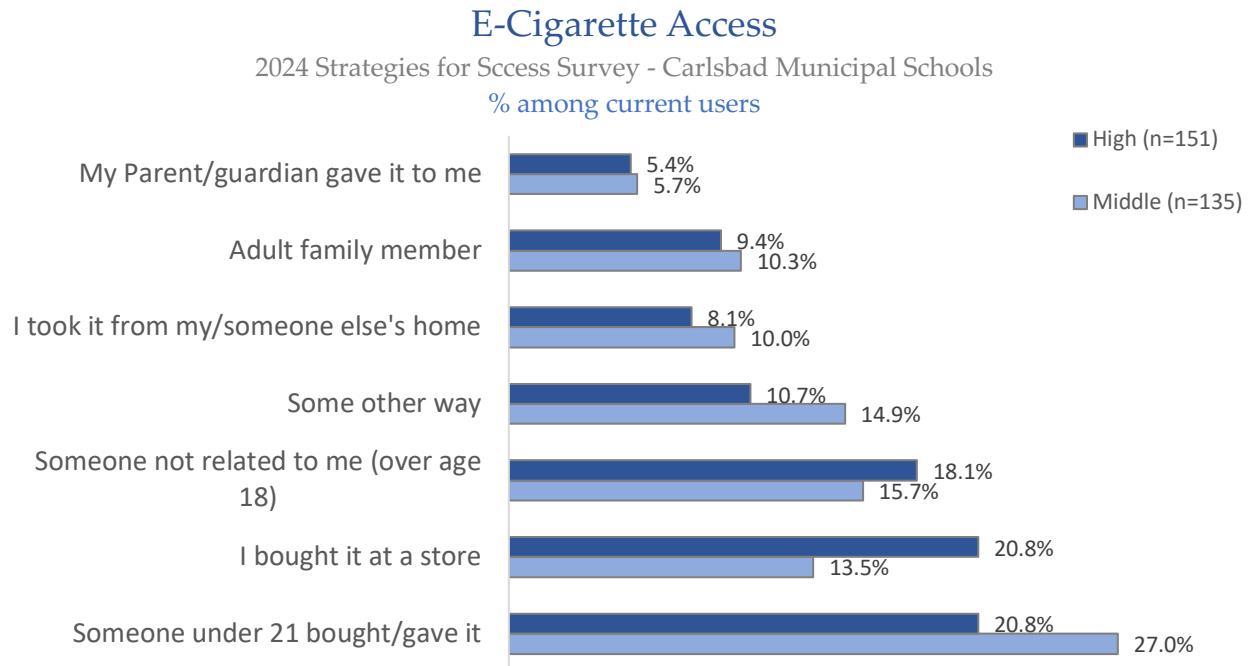


The most common sources of alcohol includes taking it from home or someone else’s home, parties, and family members (other than parents) who are over age 21.

Alcohol Access	Parent Guardian			At a Party		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Middle School	21%	12%	14%	38%	20%	23.5%
High School	16%	14%	13%	48%	36%	21%

Youth E-Cigarette Access

It is illegal for anyone under age 21 to possess or use tobacco products, including e-cigarettes or vapes. The Strategies for Success survey asked about access to vapes for the first time in 2023. In 2024, most youth get vapes from someone under 21, buying it, or from someone not related who is over 18. Twenty percent (20.8%) of high school vape users report buying it themselves in a store.

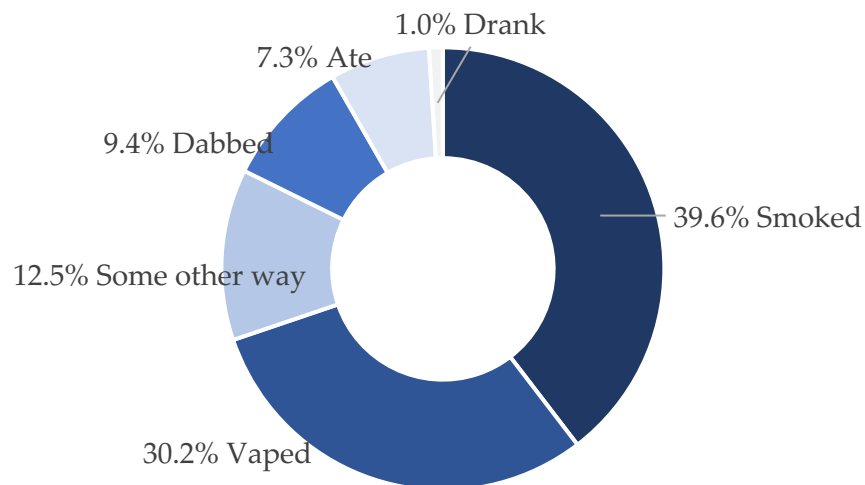


Marijuana Consumption Method

Marijuana use has become one of the most commonly used substances among youth in Carlsbad. Youth often perceive that marijuana is *safe* and even *healthy*, especially since medical and recreational marijuana have been legalized in New Mexico. There is a general lack of awareness of the damage marijuana causes to the developing brain.

Smoking Marijuana is Most Common Consumption Method Followed by Vaping

2024 Strategies for Success Survey - High School - Carlsbad Municipal Schools
Current Users n=117

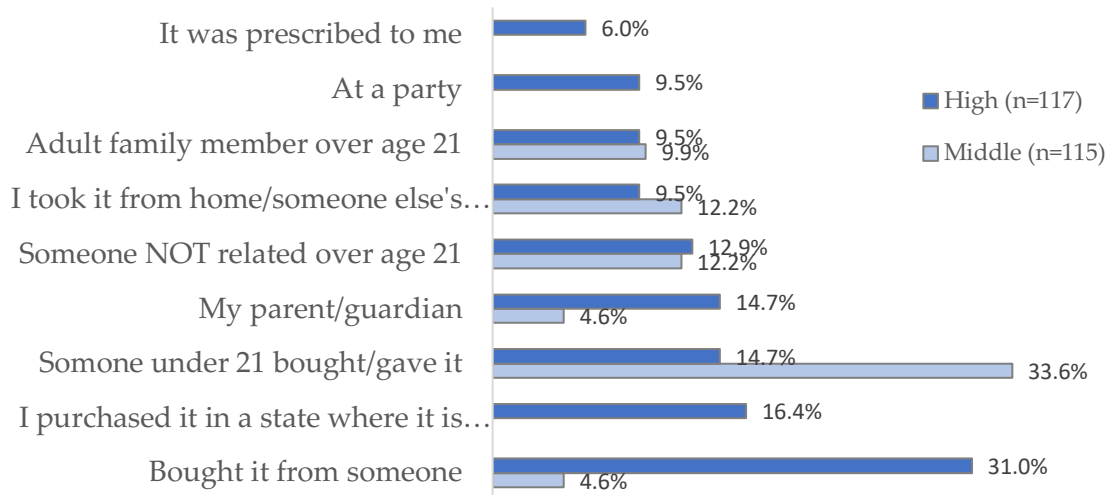


Middle school youth who used marijuana (n=115) were most likely to vape it (47%), or smoke it (32%), followed by eating it (11%), some other way (4%), then dabbing (3%).

Marijuana Access and Reasons for Use

Youth Usually Access Marijuana from Social Sources

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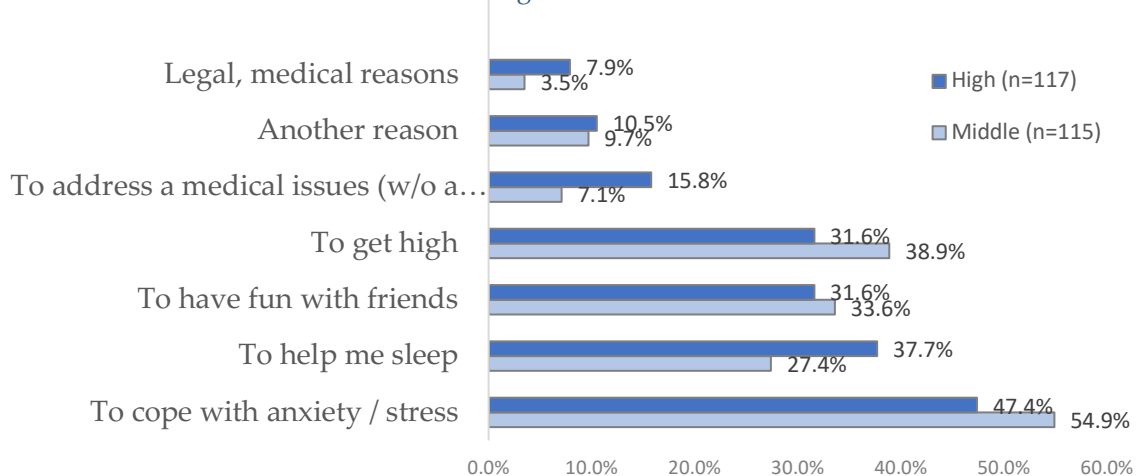
Reasons for Using Marijuana

Numerous studies link marijuana use to impaired development of the adolescent brain. Particularly, differences are found among adolescent marijuana smokers in the frontal cortex which is critical to judgement, planning, decision-making, personality, and the amygdala, which directs memory, decision-making, and emotion.^{5 6}

Reasons for Adolescent Marijuana Use

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% among current users



⁵ Weir, K. (2015). Marijuana and the Developing Brain. American Psychological Association, Vol 46, No. 10.

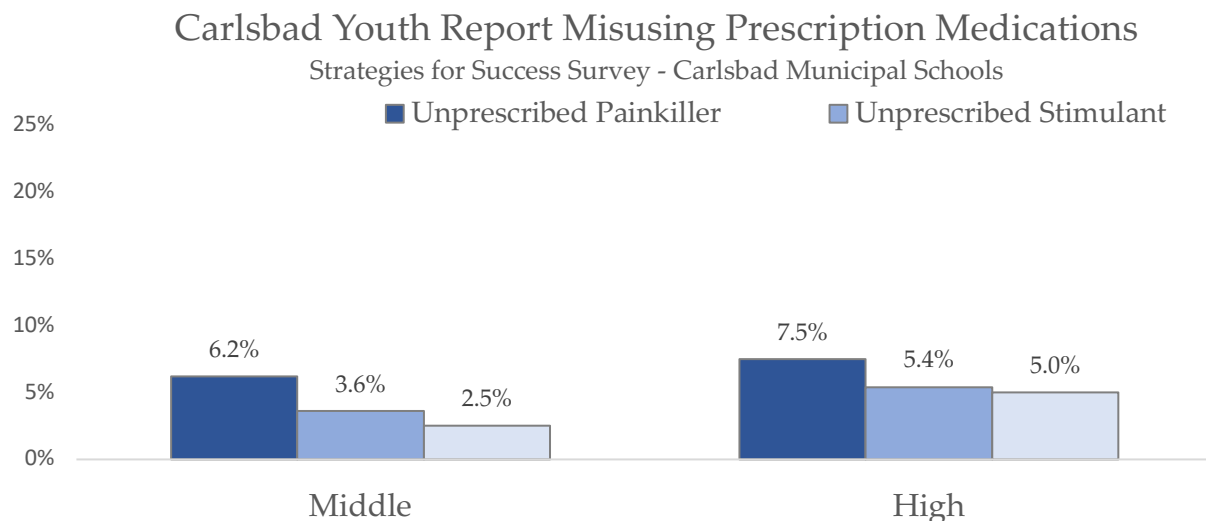
⁶ Grubner SA, Sagar KA, Dahlgren MK, Racine M, Lukas SE. (2012). Age of Onset of Marijuana Use and Executive Functioning. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 2012 Sep;26(3):496-506.

Prescription Painkiller Use and Access

The Coalition aims to reduce prescription painkiller misuse by educating adults on the dangers of sharing them with anyone to whom they were not prescribed, educating on safe storage and disposal, and promoting Drug Take Back Days. The graph below shows the percentage of students who took a prescription painkiller in the past 30-days for any reason and who used stimulants in a manner not prescribed by their doctor.

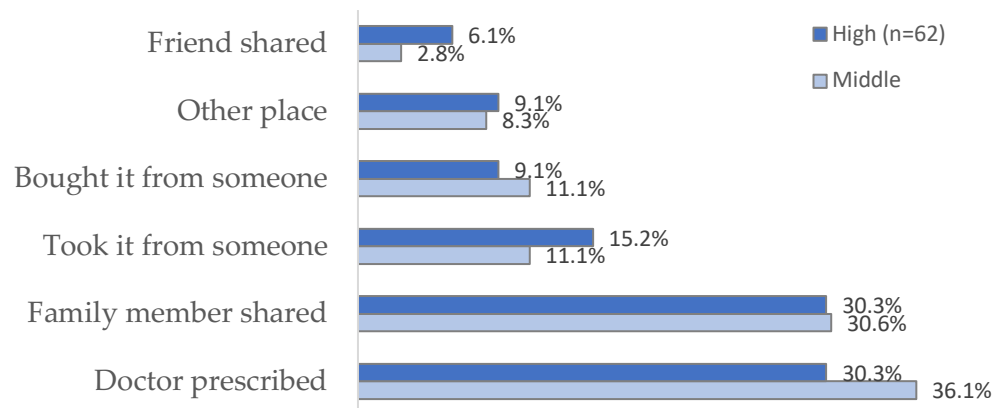
6.2% of High Schoolers reported misusing a prescription painkiller in 2024.

7.5% of Middle Schoolers reported misusing a prescription painkiller in 2024.



Youth Usually Access Prescription Pain Medication From Doctors but Also From Social Sources

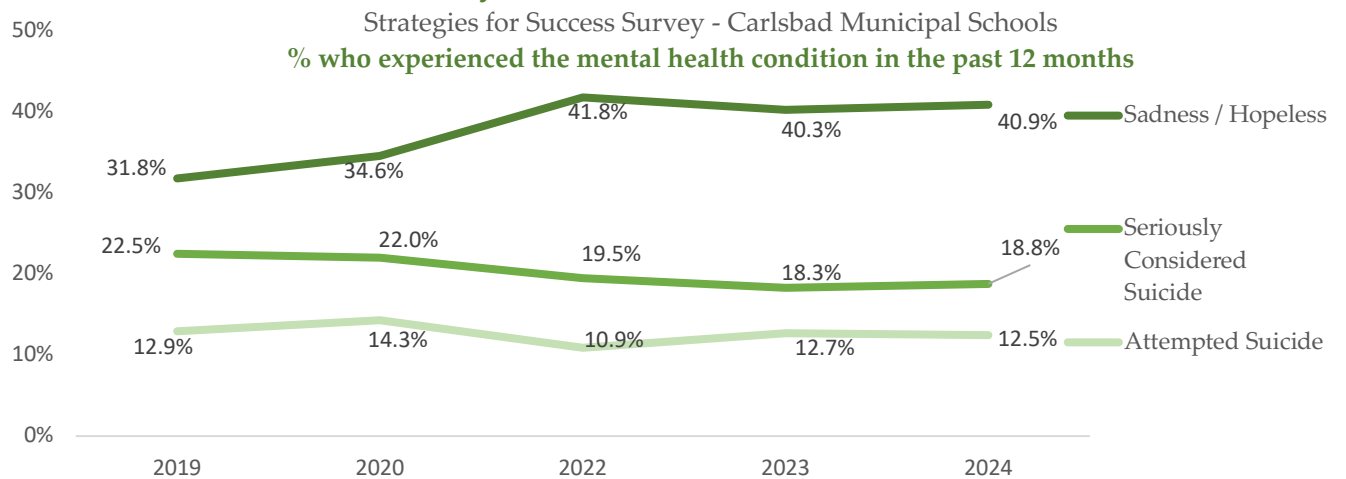
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Mental Health Concerns

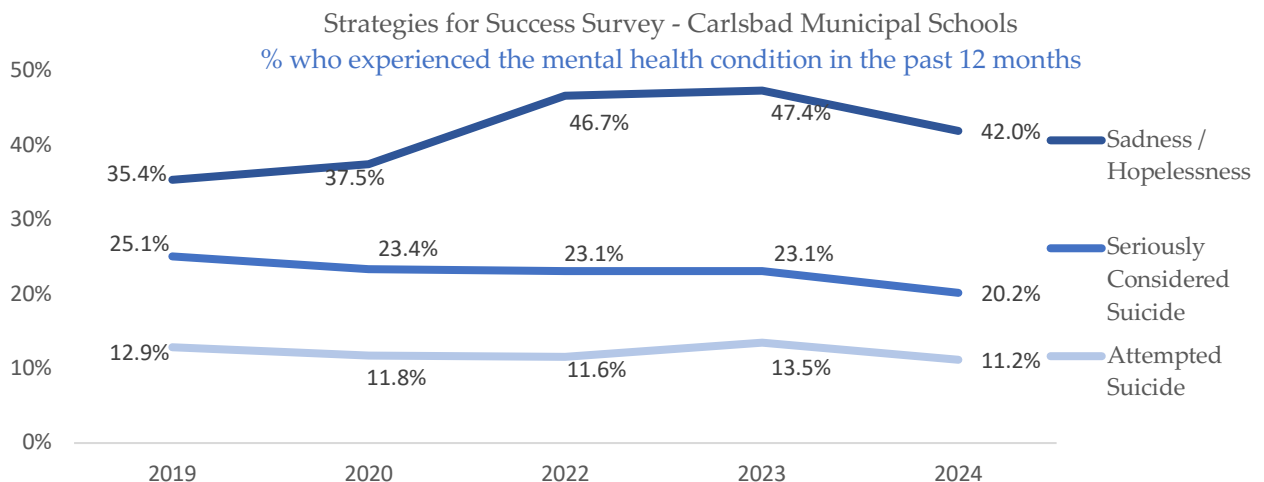
Mental health is closely linked with physical health, success in school, and other important youth outcomes. The graphs show the percentage of students who report **feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that it kept them from doing regular activities**, and those who seriously considered suicide and attempted suicide in the past year.

Middle School Sadness/Hopelessness and Considering Suicide Stays About the Same as Last Year



Mental Health Risks Carlsbad SFS 2024	Seriously Considered Suicide		Attempted Suicide	
	#	%	#	%
Middle School	223	18.8%	149	12.5%
High School	167	20.2%	93	11.2%

High School Youth Report Slight Decreases in Mental Health Risk Factors



2024 Strategies for Success – Respondent Demographics Carlsbad Municipal Schools

School	Number of Surveys
Carlsbad High School	756
Carlsbad Early College High School	87
Alta Vista	578
P. R. Leyva	630
*Unanswered	6
	2,057

Surveys by Grade	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	Total
Middle School	435	432	346					1,211
High School				267	293	216	58	842

Not all students selected a grade.

Carlsbad SFS 2024	Middle School		High School	
	#	Mean Age	#	Mean Age
N	1,211	12.9	842	15.9
Gender	#	%	#	%
Male	600	49.5%	412	48.9%
Female	566	46.7%	391	46.4%
Non-Binary or Genderfluid, other	43	3.5%	34	4.0%
Race/Ethnicity*				
Asian	37	3.1%	34	4.0%
Black	77	6.4%	46	5.5%
Hispanic	818	67.5%	524	62.2%
Native American	109	9.0%	53	6.3%
White	385	31.8%	319	37.9%
Other	67	5.5%	19	2.3%
Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Questioning	153	12.6%	120	14.2%

*Students could check all that apply

Data Limitations and Considerations

Due to a mistake and early release of the survey link in March 2024, survey collection was halted until approval to continue was received from the Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation who was overseeing the administration. This delayed survey collection until after spring break instead of before spring break as was done in previous years. The change in time periods for data collection may have contributed to higher risk behaviors being reported. Additionally, data from the years immediately after COVID may be skewed in unknown ways, therefore changes reflected in the data (positive or negative) must be interpreted with caution. Lastly, the 2024 high school sample is smaller than previous years and had higher responses from 9th and 10th grade students (very few 12th graders completed it), which may sway the aggregate responses to a lower risk level.