

# Mental Health During the Pandemic Among Fairfax Students: What the 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey Data Tells Us

*Countywide Data Analytics, Department of Management and Budget*

The pandemic may have provided some protections for certain youth due to increased time at home leading to increased family support and supervision, while enhancing stressors and risk factors for others. The grief, loss and stress attributed to the loss of a loved one, financial stresses from the loss of a job by a parent, and the loss of social and physical activities, may have contributed to the increase in certain mental health challenges<sup>1</sup> among youth nationwide and within Fairfax County. Even prior to the pandemic, both the national and local data has pointed toward declining mental health among youth in recent years. The 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey data sheds light on Fairfax County students' experience with mental health issues, risk behaviors and other challenges during the pandemic, including disproportionate levels of risks on vulnerable and marginalized populations.

## Key Highlights

- The rates of reporting persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts increased among Fairfax County youth this year, following the national trends.
- More than 38% of the students in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade reported feeling so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row in the past year that they stopped doing some usual activities (persistently sad or hopeless). Approximately 17% reported suicidal thoughts and 6% reported suicide attempts.
- Female students were more likely to express high stress, persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, consider attempting suicide, and attempt suicide compared to male students.
- Students of Hispanic ethnicity and students of other/multiple races were most likely to express feelings of persistent sadness or hopelessness, consider suicide, and attempt suicide.
- Students who identified themselves as transgender or gay/lesbian/bisexual reported higher rates of stress, feelings of sadness/hopelessness, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. The data shows that they also face greater challenges that can affect their mental health including emotional and physical abuse by a parent or adult, forced sexual intercourse, and sexual harassment.
- Students who reported a lack of food in their home were more likely to report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts than those from food-secure homes.
- Students who reported having more attention and support (“assets” or “protective factors”) within the family tend to report lower rates of mental health issues and risk behaviors. Similar patterns were observed for students with assets within the school and the community domains.

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<sup>1</sup> MMWR, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7108e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm7108e2\\_w&fbclid=IwAR3c3M7RyGzohZmLZMlxfHgRasWO4DmXUTZDpoagz7JMZUGLgd5YAyvEA00](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7108e2.htm?s_cid=mm7108e2_w&fbclid=IwAR3c3M7RyGzohZmLZMlxfHgRasWO4DmXUTZDpoagz7JMZUGLgd5YAyvEA00)

This suggests that supportive family, school, and community environments play an important role for students to develop a healthy mindset and build resilience.

### Fairfax County Youth Survey and Questions about Youth Mental Health

The Fairfax County Youth Survey is a comprehensive, anonymous, and voluntary survey given each year to students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 that examines behaviors, experiences, and other factors that influence the health and well-being of Fairfax County's youth. Students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade take a shorter, abbreviated survey.

The Fairfax County Youth Survey asks questions about risky behavior, mental health, physical health, and safety. Survey topics include behavioral questions related to alcohol, depression, bullying, personal health, eating disorders, illegal drugs, stress, harassment, obesity, sexual activity, misuse of prescription drugs, extracurricular activities, time spent helping others, screen time, etc. Students are also asked about the positive aspects of their lives and activities, as well as specific protective factors concerning health and safety.

The 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grade survey includes four questions targeting mental health and well-being among youth including level of stress, persistent sadness or hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts. Sixth graders are asked about the level of stress and experience of persistently feeling sad or hopeless. Comparisons are made with previous years' data and with national samples whenever appropriate and possible.

The question on experiencing stress was changed in the 2021 survey. Thus, a direct comparison between 2021 and the previous years' data is not recommended. In the following analysis, the questions of persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness, suicidal ideations and suicide attempts were used to examine the prevalence of mental health issues among youth in Fairfax County during the pandemic.

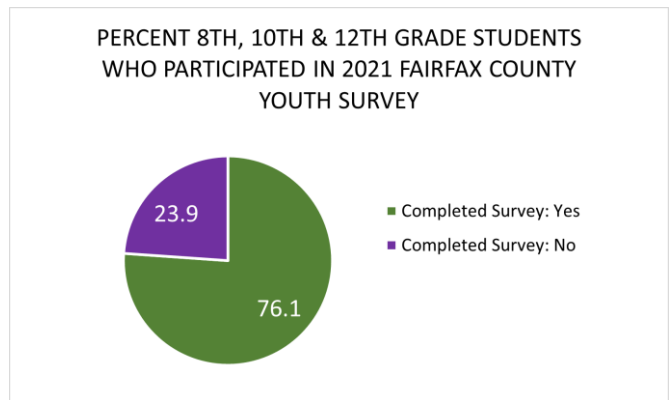
#### During the past 12 months, did you ever:

- 81.** ...feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?  
 Yes                       No
- 82.** ...seriously consider attempting suicide?  
 Yes                       No
- 83.** During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?  
 0 times                       4 or 5 times  
 1 time                       6 or more times  
 2 or 3 times
- 84.** Stress means a situation in which a person feels tense, restless, nervous, or anxious, or is unable to sleep at night because their mind is troubled all the time. Within the last 30 days, how often have you felt this kind of stress?  
 None of the time  
 A little of the time  
 Some of the time  
 Most of the time  
 All of the time



*Fairfax County Public Schools Pyramid Boundaries: In 2021, 44,548 students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 from 25 pyramids participated in the Youth Survey.*

The data in this special report is primarily from the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grade survey unless otherwise noted. A total of 33,479 students in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades participated in the 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey, representing 76.1% of all students in those grades enrolled in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), excluding alternative schools. An additional 82.6% of all 6<sup>th</sup> grade students (11,069) also took a shorter, abbreviated version of the youth survey. Henceforth, Fairfax/Fairfax County refers to FCPS youth who took the survey.



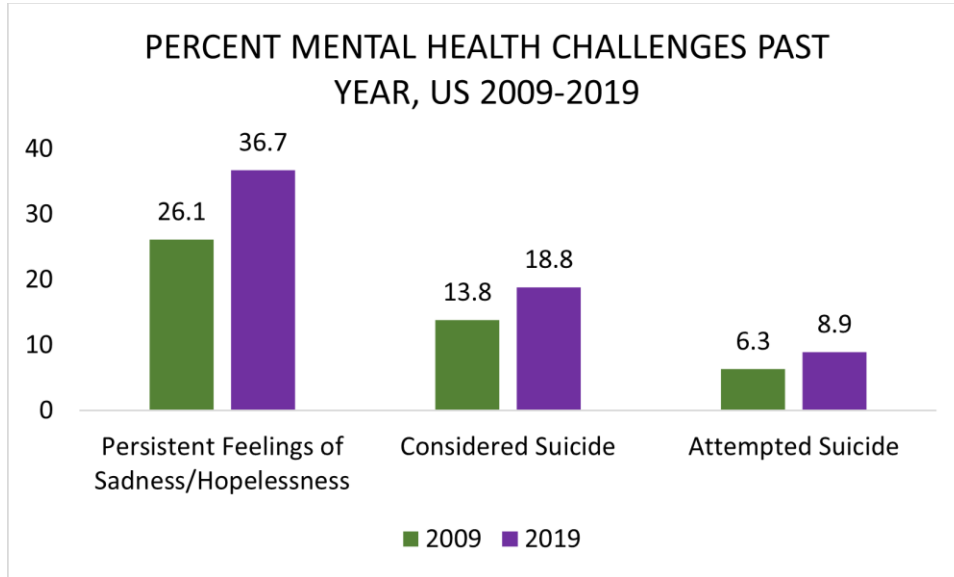
In 2020, the Fairfax County Youth Survey was not conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 survey was administered in November 2021 and was the first Youth Survey since the start of the pandemic.

For more information about this year’s Fairfax County Youth Survey, please visit the [Fairfax County Youth Survey](#) webpage.

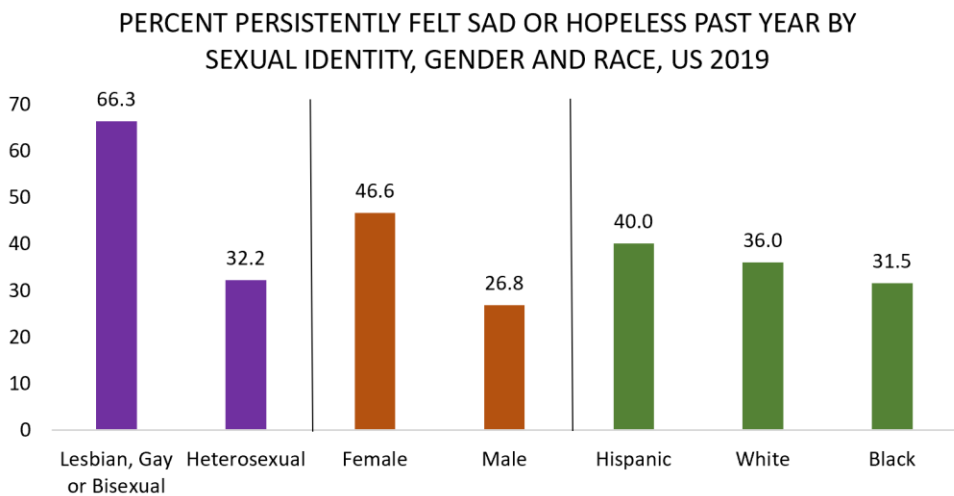
### Youth Mental Health Before the Pandemic

In recent years, mental health challenges have been an increasing concern among adolescents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) Survey Data

Summary and Trends Report determined that during the decade before the pandemic (2009-2019), persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased 40% among high school students in the U.S. Additionally, increases were seen for those who seriously considered attempting suicide (36%) and attempted suicide (41%).<sup>2</sup>



In 2019, disparities were evident among students in the U.S. by sexual orientation, gender, and race as well, with 66.3% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students and 46.6% of female students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.<sup>3</sup>

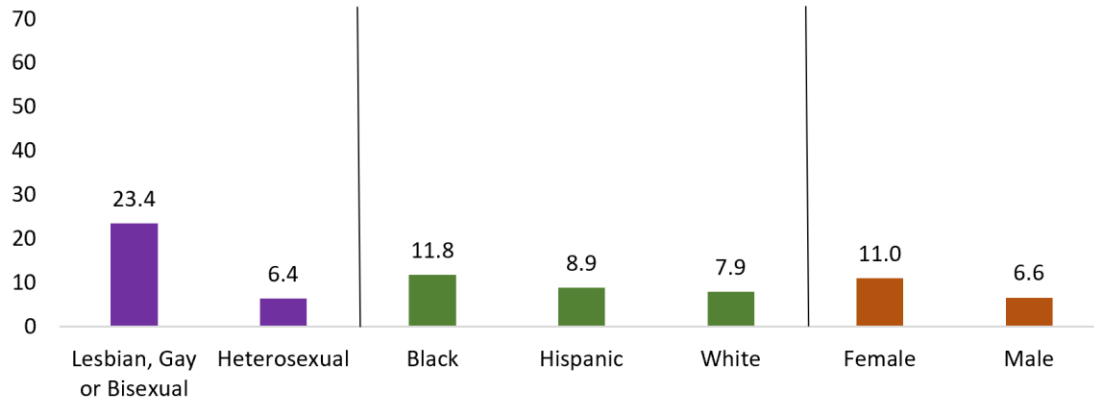


<sup>2</sup> Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2009-2019 Fact Sheet, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/docs/factsheets/dash-mental-health.pdf>

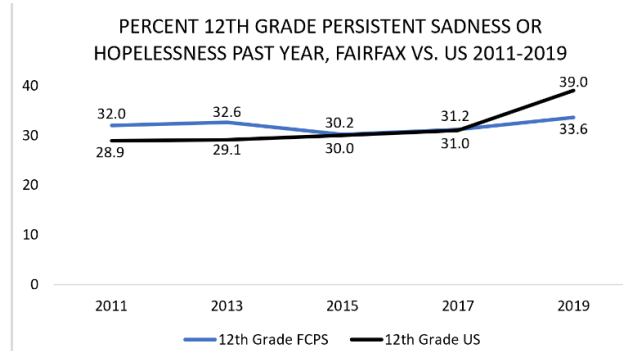
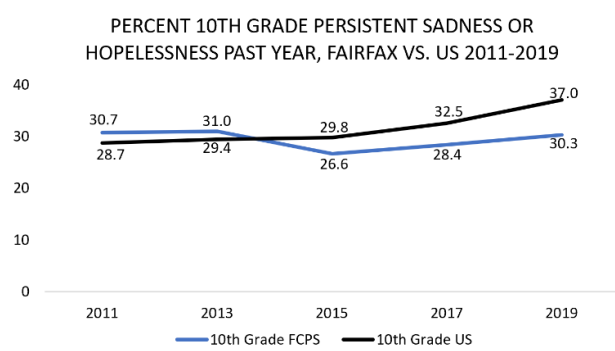
<sup>3</sup> Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2009-2019 Fact Sheet, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/docs/factsheets/dash-mental-health.pdf>

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in the U.S. were also four times as likely to have attempted suicide than their heterosexual peers (23.4% versus 6.4%). Black students were also more likely to have attempted suicide than their peers (11.8% Black students to 8.9% Hispanic and 7.9% White students).<sup>4</sup>

PERCENT ATTEMPTED SUICIDE PAST YEAR BY SEXUAL IDENTITY, RACE AND GENDER, US 2019

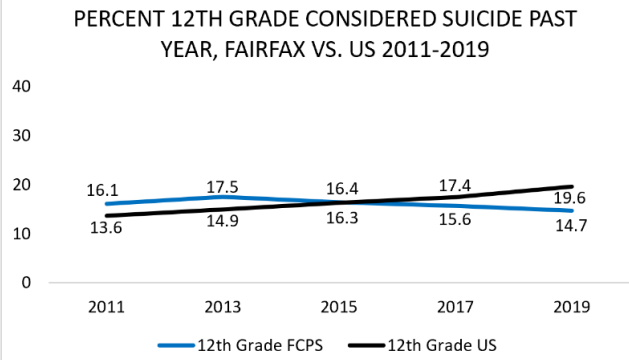
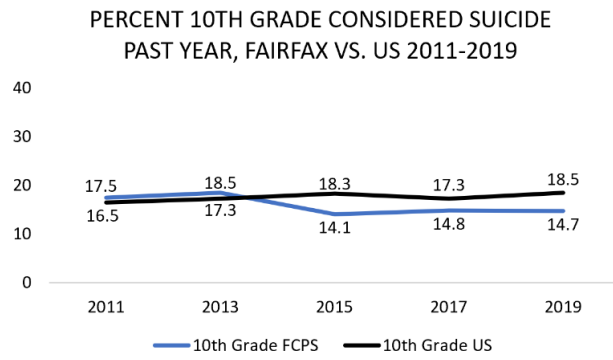


The same questions in regard to persistent sadness/hopelessness, considered suicide and attempted suicide that are used on the YRBS, are also asked on the Fairfax County Youth Survey. The survey is administered annually and is only given to 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, instead of only in odd years and to 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders for the YRBS. Therefore, comparisons can only be made by grade level between the national and Fairfax County data for 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Within Fairfax County, the percentage of students who felt persistent sadness or hopelessness has gradually increased since 2015.

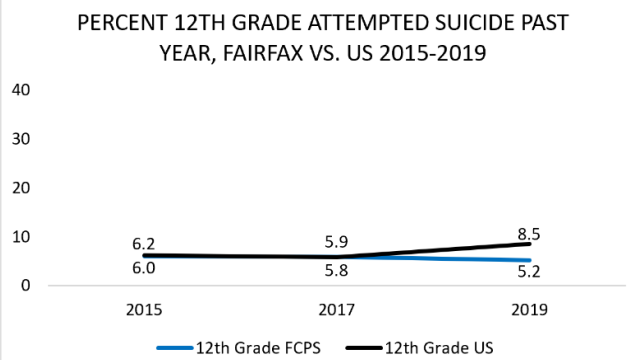
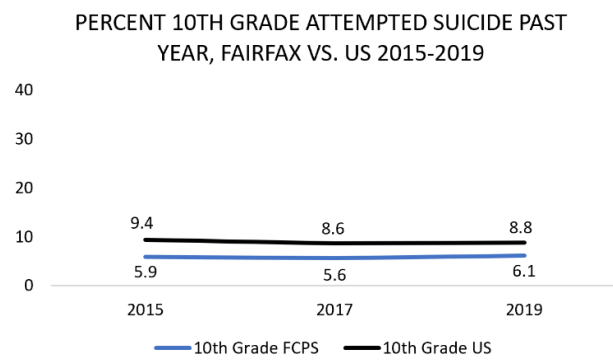


Despite yearly fluctuations, between 2011 and 2019, the percentage of Fairfax County students who seriously considered suicide in the past year went down from 2011 while national rates trended up.

<sup>4</sup> Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2009-2019 Fact Sheet, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/docs/factsheets/dash-mental-health.pdf>



Within Fairfax County, the question regarding students who reported attempting suicide in the past year was changed in 2015 to align with the YRBS question, and therefore data cannot be compared to the years prior. Between 2015 and 2019, the percentage of students who attempted suicide in the past year has stayed relatively constant. The Fairfax rates were lower than the national average for students in 10th and 12th grades.

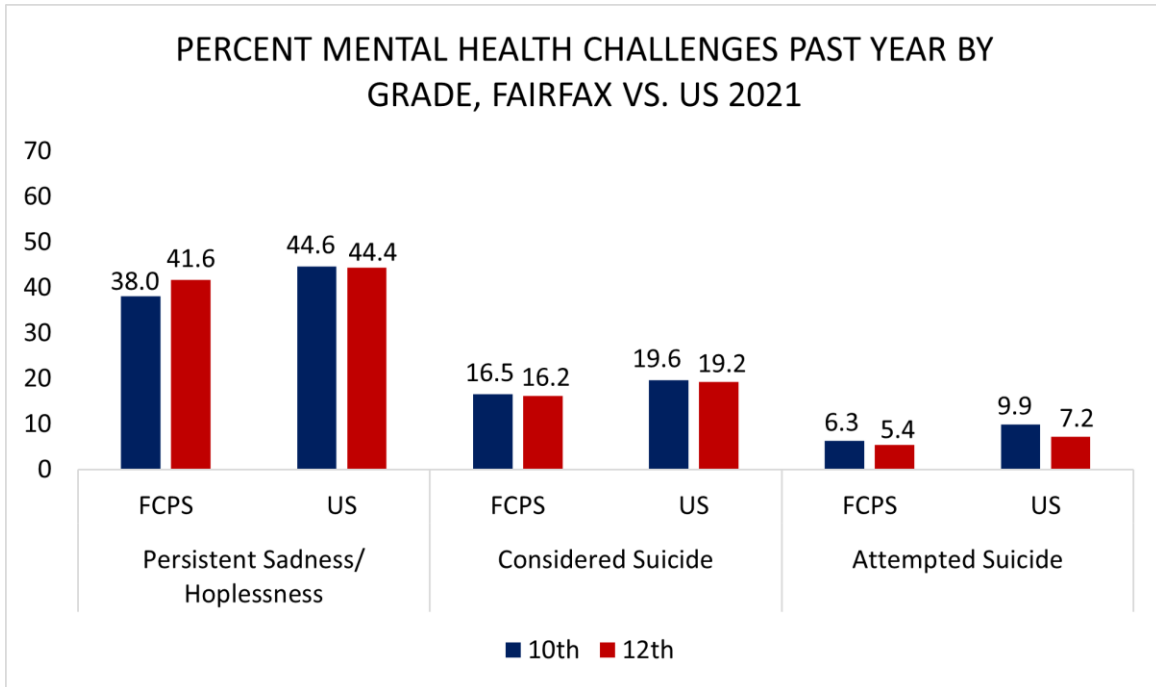


### The COVID-19 Pandemic and Increasing Mental Health Concerns Among Youth: National and Local Trends

Throughout the pandemic concerns arose regarding the potential detrimental effects of the pandemic on the mental health of youth around the country. The 2021 YRBS data were not available at the time of this report. However, in March of 2022, CDC released the results of the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES) based on a survey of high school students in early-mid 2021. The results indicated that 44.6% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 44.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported that they had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness during the past year. More than 19% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders (19.6%) and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (19.2%) had considered attempting suicide during the past year and 9.9% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 7.2% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders had attempted suicide at least once during the past year.<sup>5</sup>

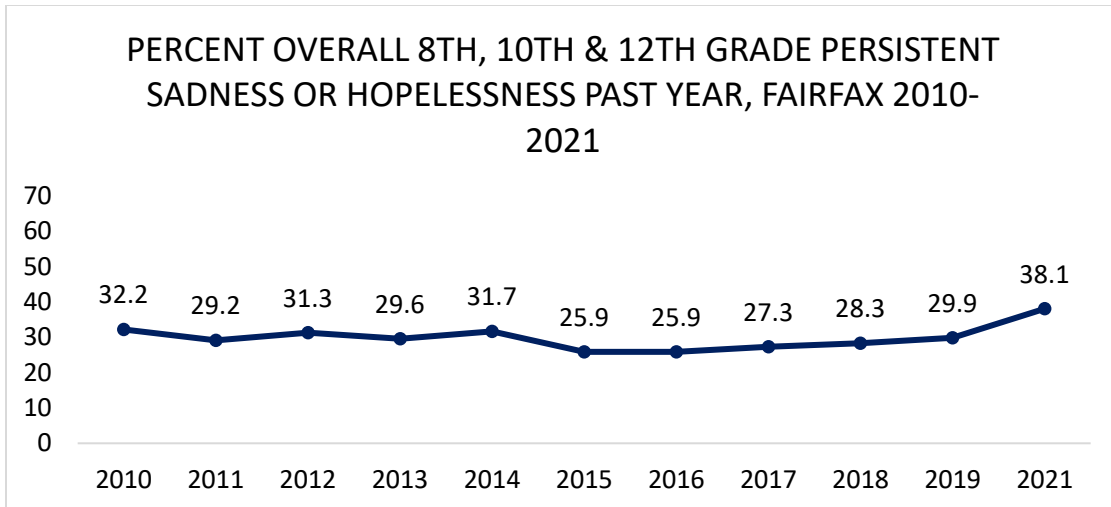
In comparison to the ABES survey detailed above, Fairfax County youth in grades 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> had consistently lower rates of persistent sadness/hopelessness, considered attempting suicide, and attempted suicide in the past year.

<sup>5</sup> ABES Result by Grade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/tables/grade.htm#MH>

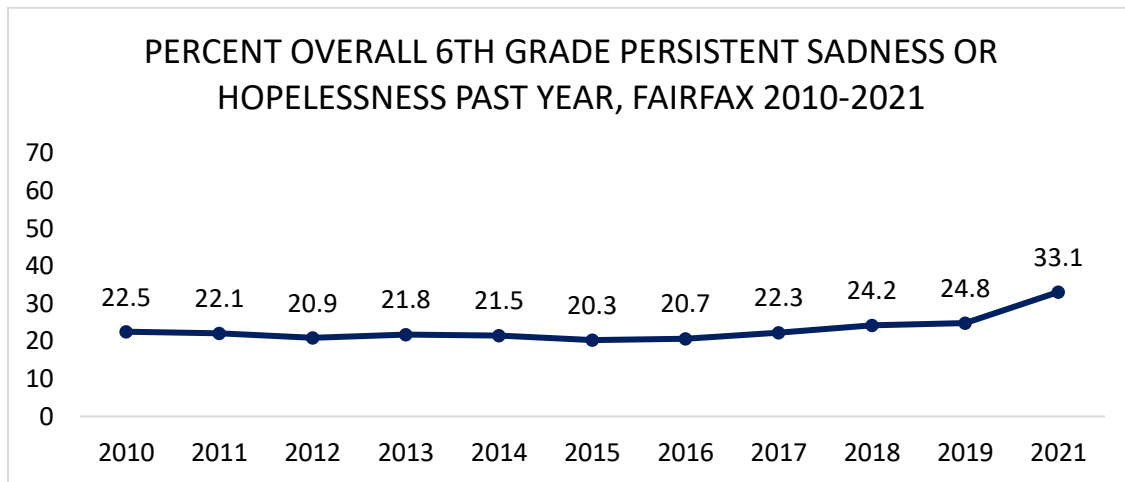


When comparing pre-pandemic to current rates within Fairfax County for 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, mental health concerns emerge, as rates for persistent sadness/hopelessness, considered attempting suicide, and attempted suicide in the past year all increased. The greatest increase was observed in the percentage of students with persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness. Overall, almost two fifths of the students in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (38.1%) reported feeling so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row in the past year that they stopped doing some usual activities. More than 41% (41.6%) of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported such feelings, as compared to 35.0% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Overall, the percentage of students reporting this level of sadness was about 8 percentage points higher than in 2019 (29.9%), reaching the highest point in the past 10 years.

In 2021, the rates of feeling persistent sadness or hopelessness among Fairfax County youth were highest in the past 10 years.

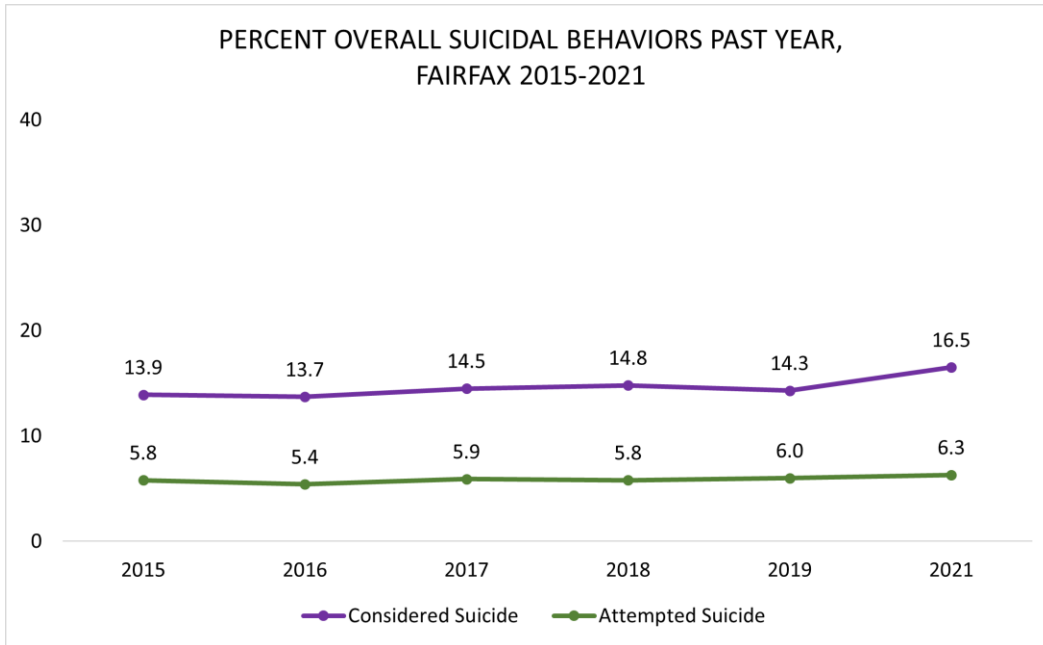


Among 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in Fairfax County, one third of the students (33.1%) reported feeling so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row within the past year that they stopped doing usual activities. The percentage of students who reported feeling this sad or hopeless in the past year has risen gradually since 2015 and was the highest recorded since 2010, increasing by 8.3 percentage points in 2021 from 2019.



One in six 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in Fairfax County (16.5%) reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year and another six percent (6.3%) reported attempting suicide. Over 7% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (7.2%) reported attempting suicide compared to 5.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Both suicidal thoughts and attempts were the highest since 2015.





CDC analyzed data from the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP) which tracks visits for pediatric patients from 71% of the nation’s emergency departments (ED), which are often the first point of care for mental health emergencies. In May of 2020, ED visits for suspected suicide attempt began to increase among adolescents (age 12-17), especially among females. Between February and March 2021, ED visits were 50.6% higher among females compared to the same period in 2019. Males saw an increase of only 3.7%.<sup>6</sup>

In Fairfax County, visits by youth with behavioral health issues to Inova ED’s increased by 28% in 2021 and the number of psychiatric hospitalizations under Temporary Detention Order increased 25%.<sup>7</sup>

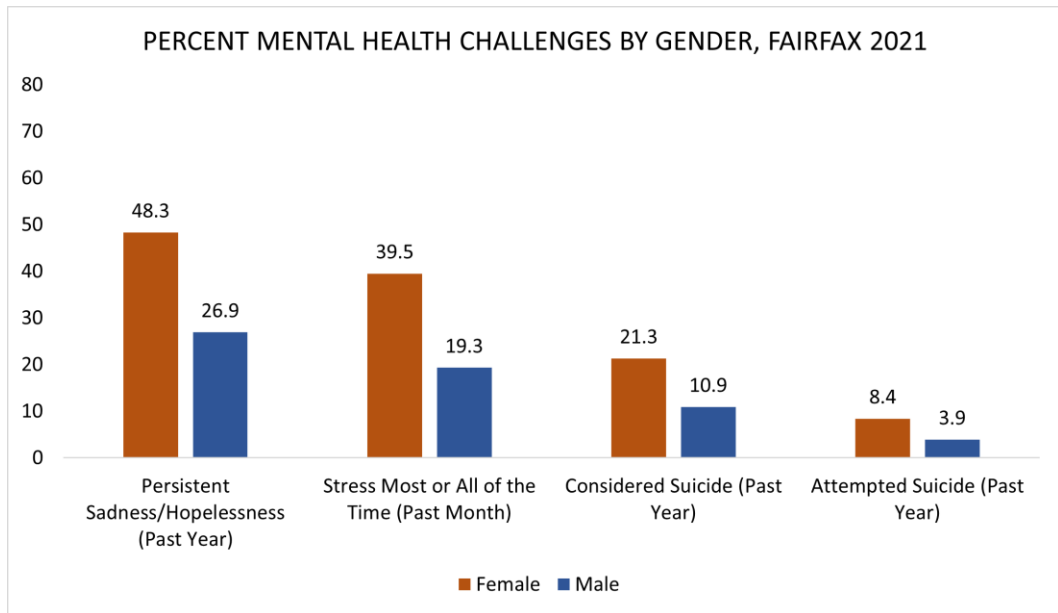
### Who Are More At Risk?: Sociodemographic Factors that Disproportionately Affect Youth Mental Health

According to the Fairfax County Youth Survey data, mental health distress and symptoms were disproportionately experienced by students of different demographic groups, including groups based on gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

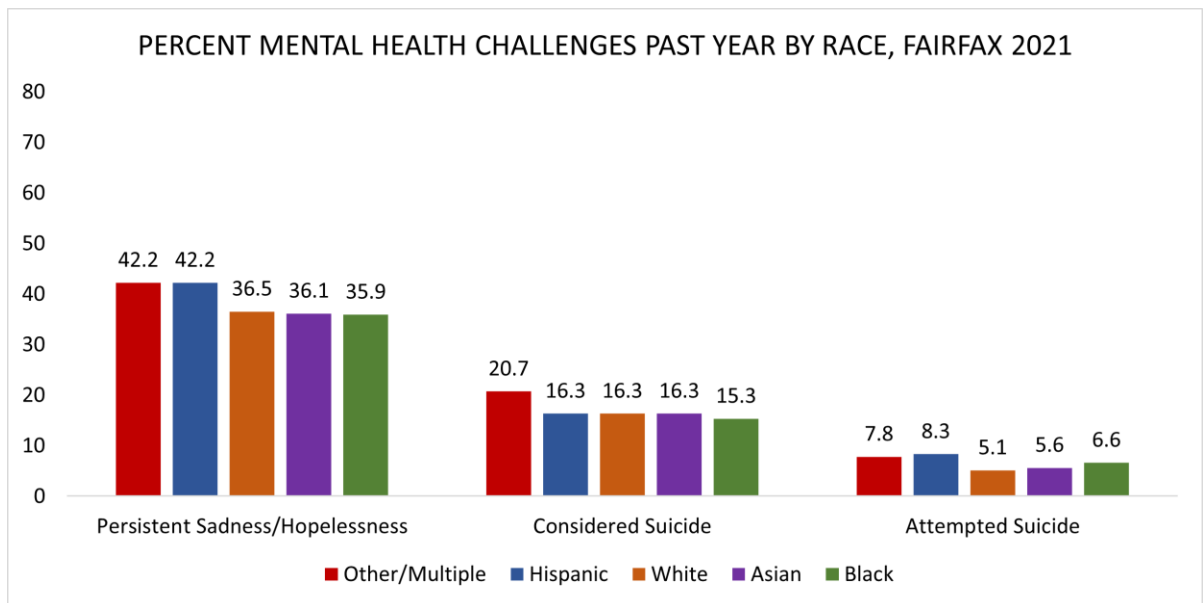
- 1) **Female students were at a greater risk:** Female students reported significantly higher rates of feelings of persistent sadness/hopelessness and other mental health related issues than their male peers. Over 48% of the female students (48.3%) reported feeling sad or hopeless to the point that they stopped doing usual activities, as compared to 26.9% of their male peers. In addition, female students were nearly twice as likely to report frequent or consistent stress in the past 30 days (39.5% vs. 19.3%). Female students also reported higher percentage of suicidal ideations than male students (21.3% vs. 10.9%) and suicide attempt (8.4% vs. 3.9%).

<sup>6</sup> MMWR, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7024e1.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Fairfax County Youth Mental Health Update  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/dec14-hhs-youth-mental-health.pdf>

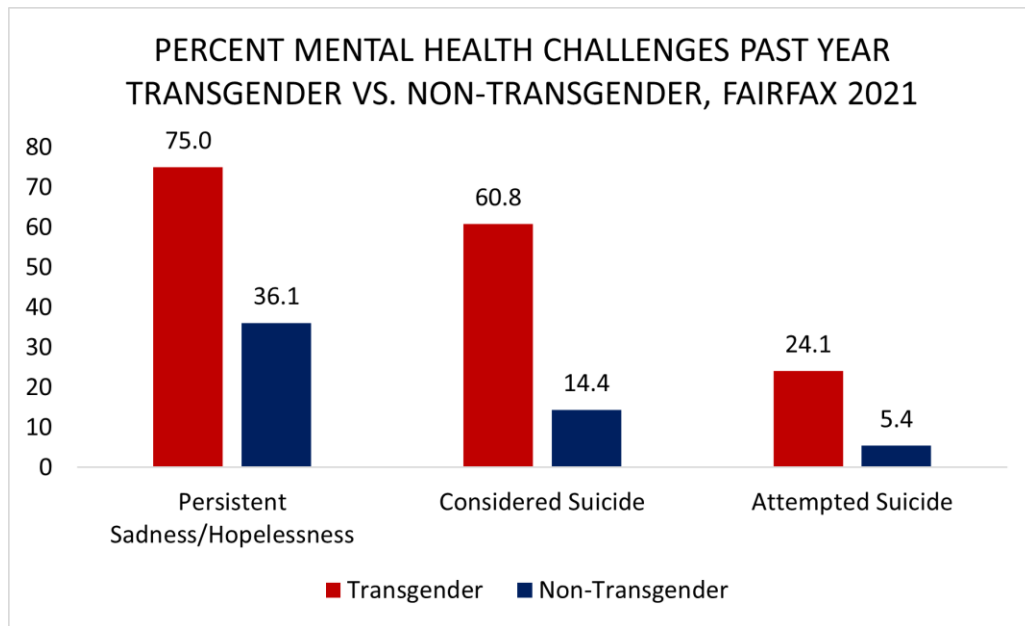


2) **Race and ethnicity matters:** Hispanic students and students of other/multiple races reported slightly higher rates of feelings of persistent sadness or hopelessness. Both groups had the highest rates at 42.2%, followed by White (36.5%), Asian (36.1%), and Black (35.9%). Suicidal thoughts and attempts were also more prevalent among Hispanic students and students of other/multiple races. One in five students of other/multiple races (20.7%) reported having considered attempting suicide in the past year. More than 8% of Hispanic students (8.3%) reported suicide attempts in the past year.

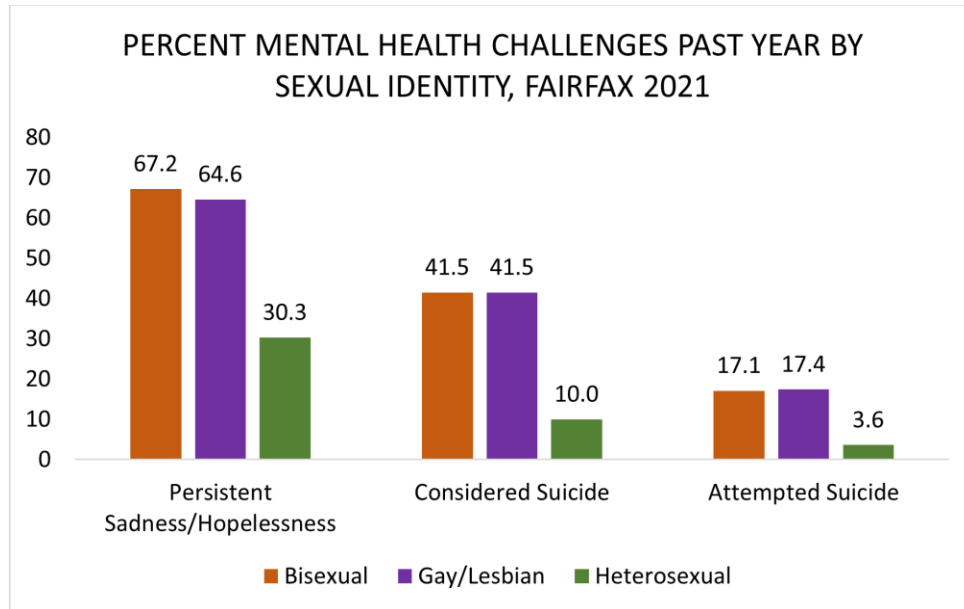


3) **Transgender students are at a disproportionately higher risk:** Transgender students reported significantly higher rates of experiencing feelings of persistent sadness/hopelessness as well as suicidal thoughts and actions than their non-transgender peers. Transgender students were

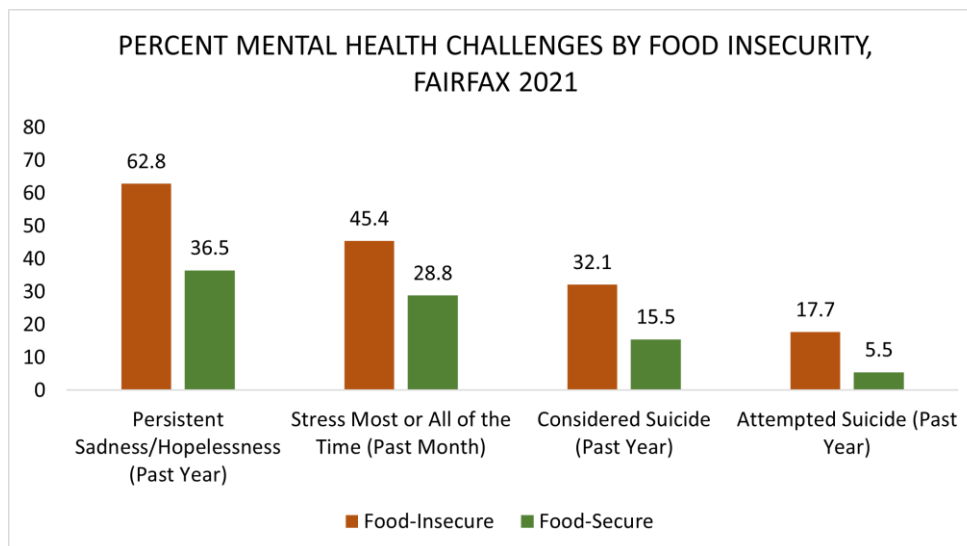
more than twice as likely to report feeling persistent sadness or hopelessness (75.0%) than non-transgender students (36.1%). The reported differences between the two groups were even wider for suicidal thoughts and attempts. Over 60% of transgender students (60.8%) reported having considered attempting suicide in the past year whereas a little over 14% of the non-transgender students (14.4%) reported so. The prevalence of suicide attempts among transgender students in the past year was also nearly five times higher than that of non-transgender students. According to the data, almost one in four (24.1%) transgender students attempted suicide in the past year, as compared to 5.4% of non-transgender students. In the 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey, nearly 800 students in grades 8, 10, and 12 (2.6%) reported their gender identity as transgender. The transgender question was added to the Youth Survey in 2021.



- 4) **Students who identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual can experience higher rates of mental health related issues:** Students who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual reported higher rates of feelings of persistent sadness/hopelessness, suicidal ideations and suicide attempts than heterosexual students. Approximately two thirds of gay/lesbian students (64.6%) and bisexual students (67.2%) reported feeling sad or hopeless to the degree that they stopped doing usual activities whereas less than one-third (30.3%) of heterosexual students reported such feelings. Similarly, gay/lesbian students (41.5%) and bisexual students (41.5%) were four times more likely to report suicidal thoughts compared to their heterosexual peers (10.0%). Over 17% of gay/lesbian students (17.4%) and bisexual students (17.1%) reported suicide attempts in the past year. The rate for heterosexual students was at 3.6%. In the 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey, 1,126 students (3.7%) identified their sexual orientation as gay/lesbian and 3,886 (12.8%) identified as bisexual.



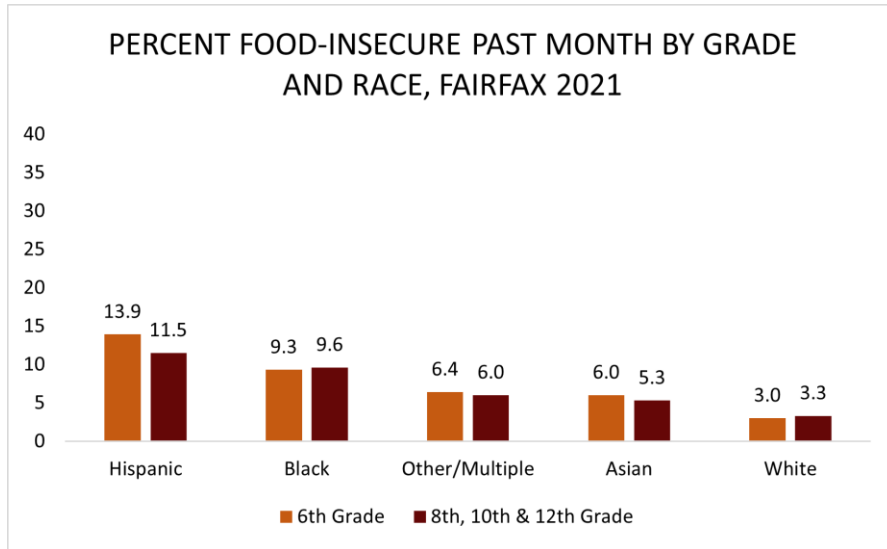
- 5) **Students from food-insecure homes may be at a greater risk of persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness and other mental health issues:** Students who reported going hungry due to a lack of food in their home were more likely to report frequent stress, feeling persistently sad or hopeless, and suicidal thoughts and actions than students from food-secure homes. Nearly half of the students who reported food insecurity (45.4%) reported experiencing stress most or all of the time in the past month compared to 28.8% of the students with no food security issues. Students who reported food insecurity at home were more likely to report persistently feeling sadness or hopelessness than their peers with no such issues (62.8% vs. 36.5%). The rates of suicidal thoughts (32.1%) and attempts (17.7%) were two to three times higher for this population as well compared to students from food-secure homes (15.5% and 5.5% respectively). Similar trends were observed among 6<sup>th</sup> grade students.



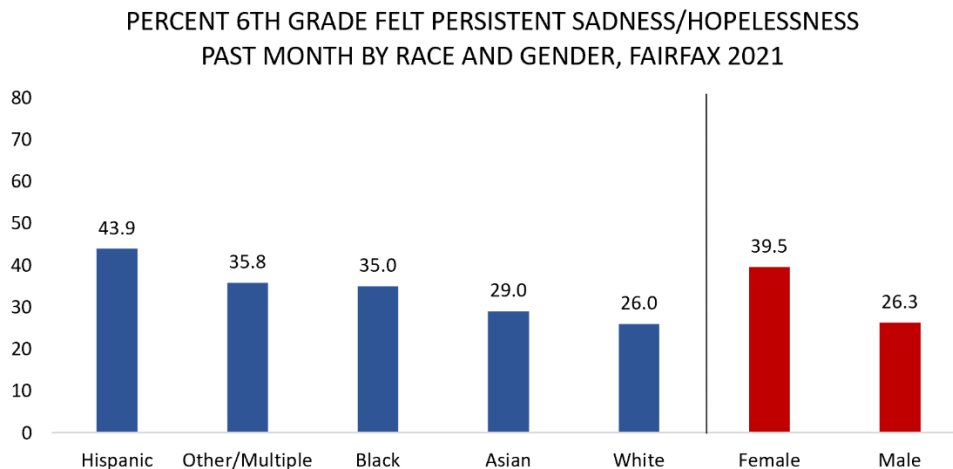
In Fairfax County, nearly seven percent of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (6.6%) reported going hungry in the past month due to a lack of food in the home. Incidence of hunger due to a

lack of food in the home varied by race/ethnicity, ranging from 3.3% of White students to 11.5% of Hispanic students. There has been very little change since 2010 in the percentage of students who report going hungry; however, the 2021 rate (6.6%) is 1.1 percentage points lower than the 2019 rate (7.7%), which is more of a decrease than most years.

Among 6<sup>th</sup> graders, almost eight percent of the students (7.5%) reported going hungry in the past month due to a lack of food in the home. White students were least likely to report going hungry in the past month (3.0%) while Hispanic students reported the highest rate (13.9%).



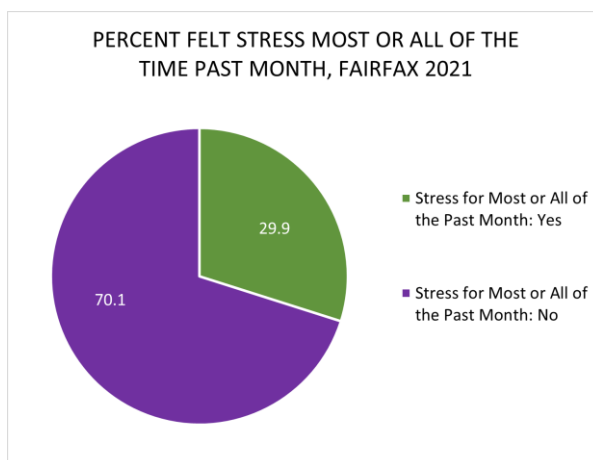
- 6) **More 6<sup>th</sup> graders are experiencing persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness than prior to the pandemic:** While 6<sup>th</sup> graders are not at a greater risk of feeling persistently sad or hopeless than their older peers, more younger students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless than before (33.1% in 2021 vs. 24.8% in 2019). Consistent with the trends observed among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, female 6<sup>th</sup> grade students were more likely to report experiencing this level of sadness (39.5% compared to 26.3% of male students). Among racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic students reported the highest rate of experiencing this level of sadness (43.9%) while White students reported the lowest rate (26.0%).



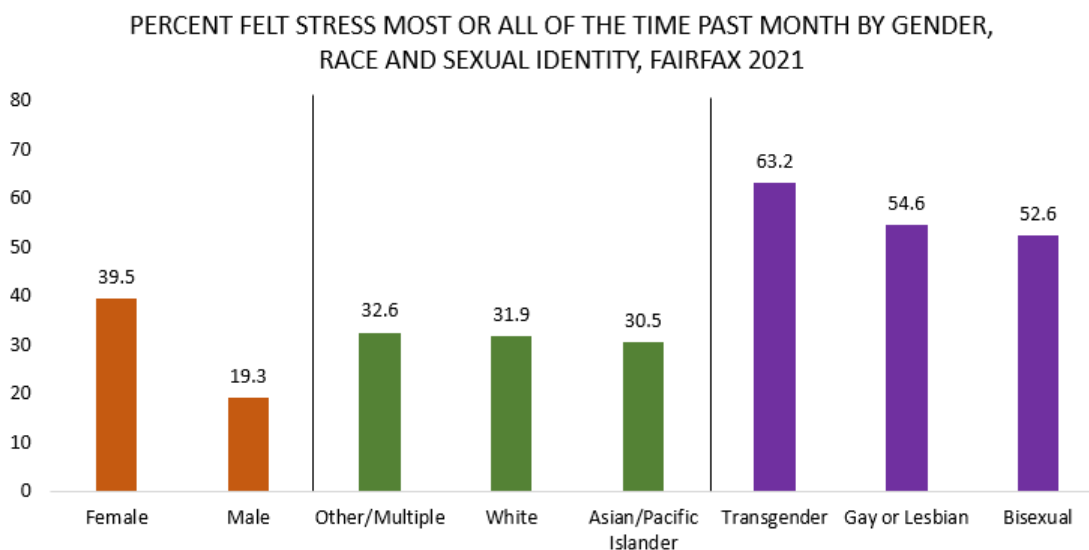
## Exploring the Complex Interplays: Other Challenges that Could Affect Youth Mental Health

In addition to the questions about persistent sadness/hopelessness and suicide, other related questions asked on the Fairfax County Youth Survey also point to severe challenges encountered among students that could affect their mental health.

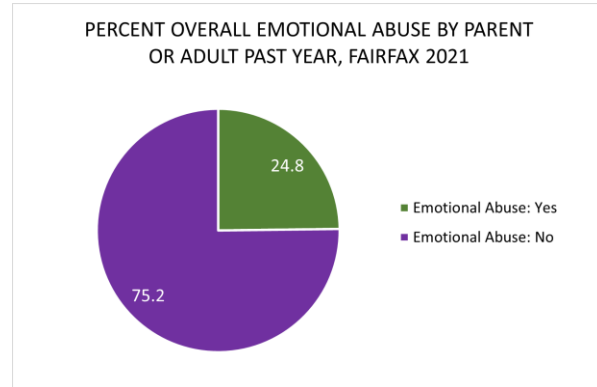
- 1) **Stress:** When asked how often they felt stressed in the past month, with stress being defined as a situation in which a person feels tense, restless, nervous, anxious, or is unable to sleep at night because their mind is troubled, almost one third of Fairfax County students (29.9%) reported experiencing stress for most or all of the past month. The rates were higher among female students. Almost two in five female students (39.5%) reported a high level of stress compared to less than one in five (19.3%) male students.



Levels of stress also increased by grade level, with approximately one in six (17.8%) of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students reported experiencing stress most/all of the time in the past month, compared to 36.8% of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Among racial/ethnic groups, students of other/multiple races had the highest rate at 32.6%. More than 63% (63.2%) of the students who identified themselves as transgender reported experiencing stress for most or all of the past month, compared to 28.3% of non-transgender students. More than half of gay/ lesbian (54.6%) and bisexual (52.6%) students reported experiencing stress at this level, compared to 23.5% of their heterosexual peers.



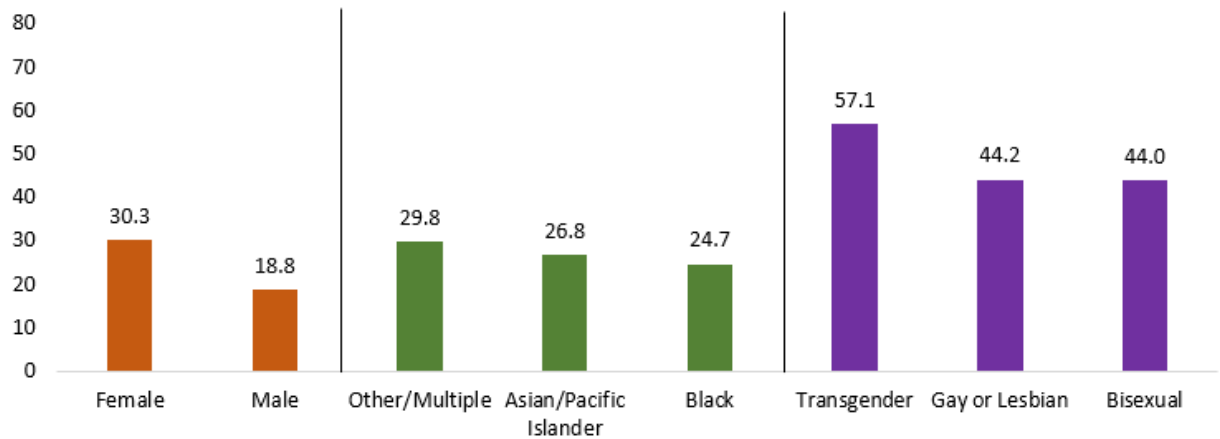
2) **Emotional Abuse:** One in four students (24.8%) reported having been bullied, taunted, ridiculed, or teased by a parent or other adult in their household in the past year, which increased from 22.9% in 2019, and is the highest in the past 6 years.



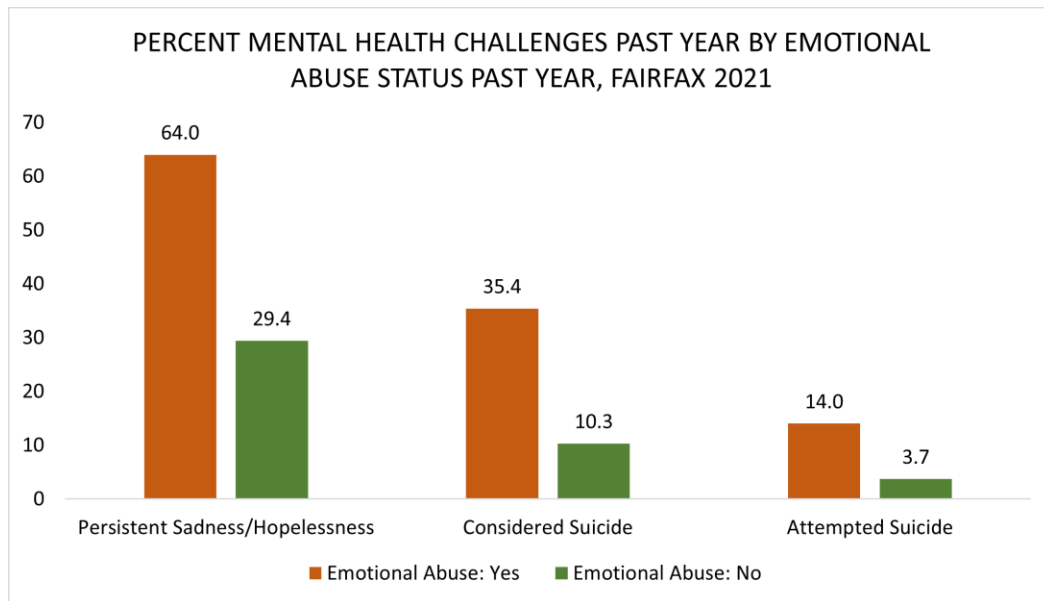
Female students were significantly more likely to report emotional abuse by a parent (30.3% versus 18.8% for males).

Among racial/ethnic groups, students of other/multiple races had the highest rate at 29.8%. Transgender students were at a greater risk (57.1%) of being emotionally abused by a parent or adult than their non-transgender peers (23.4%). Similarly, sexual minority students reported higher rates of emotional abuse, with over 44% of gay/lesbian and of bisexual students reporting the experience in the past year, compared to less than 20% (19.7%) of their heterosexual peers. Among 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, 21.4% reported having been emotionally abused by a parent or other adult in their household in the past year.

PERCENT EMOTIONAL ABUSE BY A PARENT OR ADULT PAST YEAR BY GENDER, RACE AND SEXUAL IDENTITY, FAIRFAX 2021

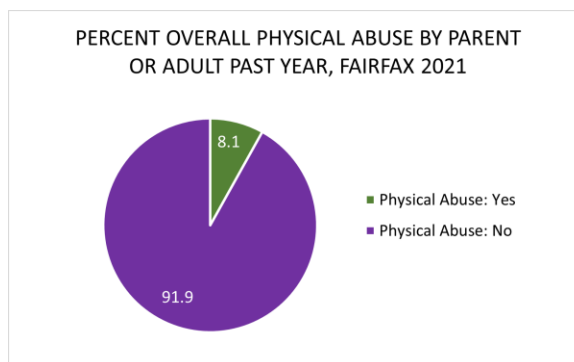


Students who reported being emotionally abused in their home also reported significantly higher rate of feeling persistently sad or hopeless in the past month. Of the students who reported emotional abuse, 64% also reported persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness, as compared to less than 30% (29.4%) of the students with no such experience in the past year. The students who experienced emotional abuse were also three times more likely to report suicidal thoughts in the past year. More than one in three students (35.4%) who reported emotional abuse at home also reported suicidal ideations, as compared to one in ten (10.3%) students with no such experience. A similar pattern has been observed in suicide attempts. Of students who reported emotional abuse by a parent or adult, 14% reported attempting suicide at least once in the past year, which is almost four times higher than the suicide attempt rate among the students who did not report emotional abuse (3.7%).



3) **Physical Abuse:** Overall, 8.1% of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported having been hit, kicked, or physically hurt by a parent or adult in the past year.

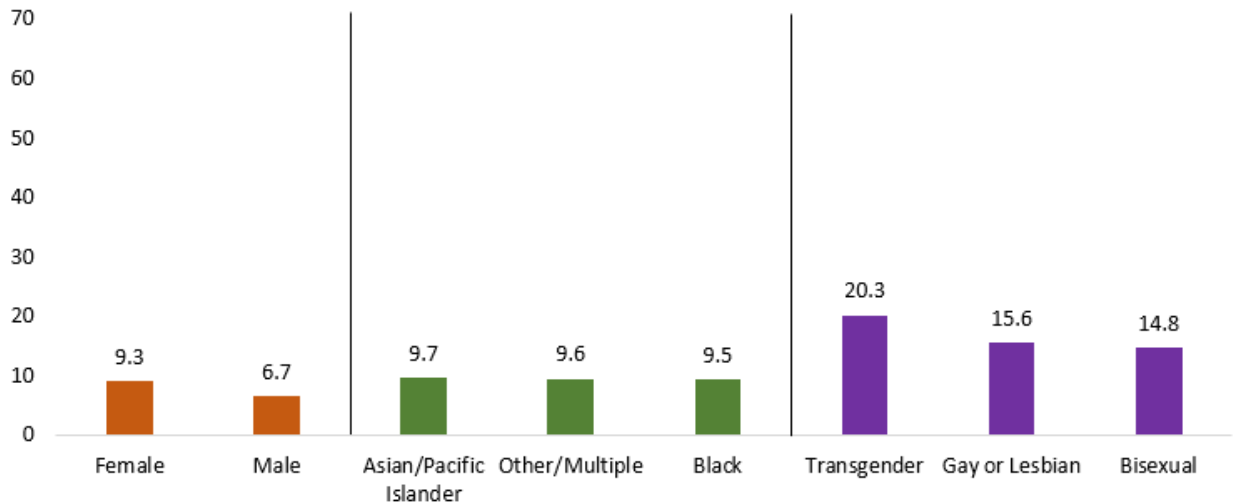
Female students reported higher rates at 9.3% (versus 6.7% for males). Among racial/ethnic groups, Asian, other/multiple races and Black students reported the highest rates at 9.7%, 9.6% and 9.5% respectively, while White students had the lowest rates at 6.0%. The rate was higher for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at 12.0%.



One in five (20.3%) transgender students reported physical abuse by a parent or adult in the past year whereas approximately 7% (6.8%) of non-transgender students reported the experience. The reported risk of being a victim of physical abuse was greater for sexual minority students than for heterosexual students. About 15% (15.6% for gay or lesbian and 14.8% for bisexual) of sexual minority students reported physical abuse by a parent or adult in the past year, as compared to 5.5% of their heterosexual peers.



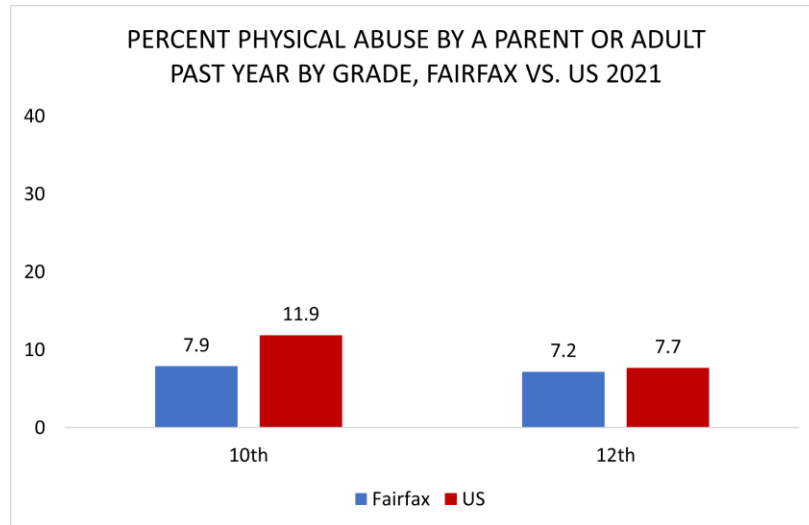
PERCENT PHYSICAL ABUSE BY A PARENT OR ADULT PAST YEAR BY GENDER, RACE AND SEXUAL IDENTITY, FAIRFAX 2021



While female students were more likely to report being a victim of physical abuse, male gay students (17.1%) reported higher rates of physical abuse experience than female lesbian students (14.3%). Similarly, physical abuse was more prevalent among male transgender students (22.6%) than female transgender students (20.3%). Students who reported physical abuse were likely to report emotional abuse as well. Nearly 80% of the students (79.1%) who reported physical abuse also responded that they were emotionally abused by a parent or adult in the past year. The physical abuse question was newly added in 2021, therefore no Fairfax County data prior to the pandemic is available for comparison.

Survey data according to ABES showed slightly higher results with 11.9% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 7.7% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting that a parent or other adult in their home hit, beat, kicked, or physically hurt them in any way.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> ABES Result by Grade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/tables/grade.htm#MH>

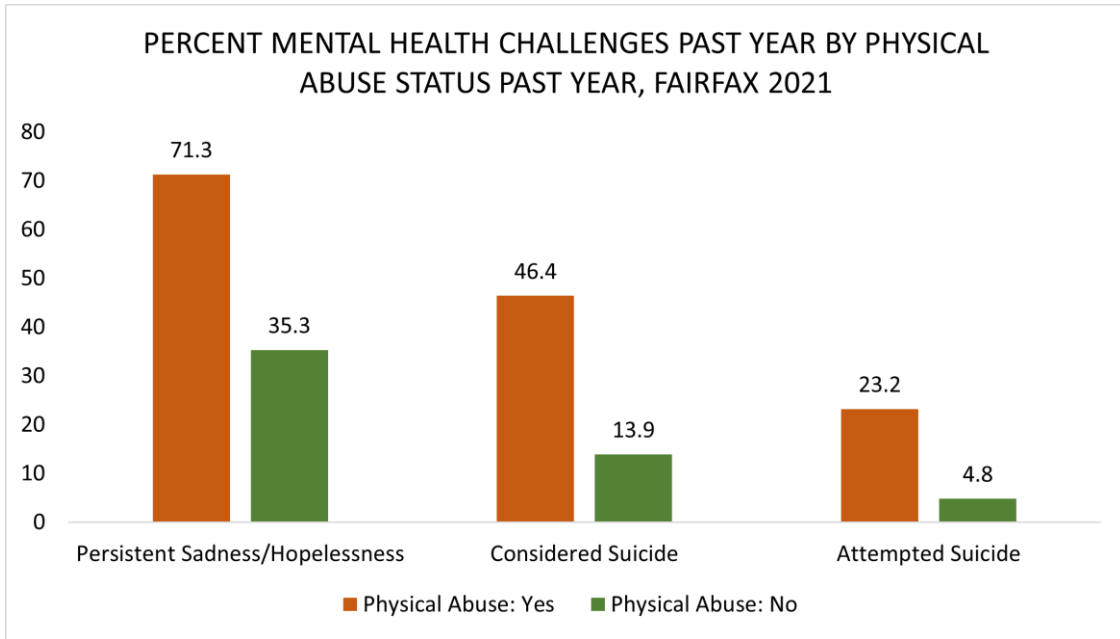


(ABES asks “During the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did a parent or other adult in your home hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?”<sup>9</sup> compared to the FCYS which asks “How often did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way? Do not include spanking.”)

Overall, students who reported physical abuse reported higher rates of persistent sadness/hopelessness and suicide-related issues. Over 71% (71.3%) of the students who reported physical abuse also reported feelings of persistent sadness or hopelessness, as compared to 35.3% of the students who did not. Nearly half of the students (46.4%) who reported physical abuse by a parent or adult reported that they considered attempting suicide in the past year (vs. 13.9% of the students who did not). They were nearly five times more likely to report attempting suicide in the past year than their peers who did not report such experience (23.2% vs. 4.8%).

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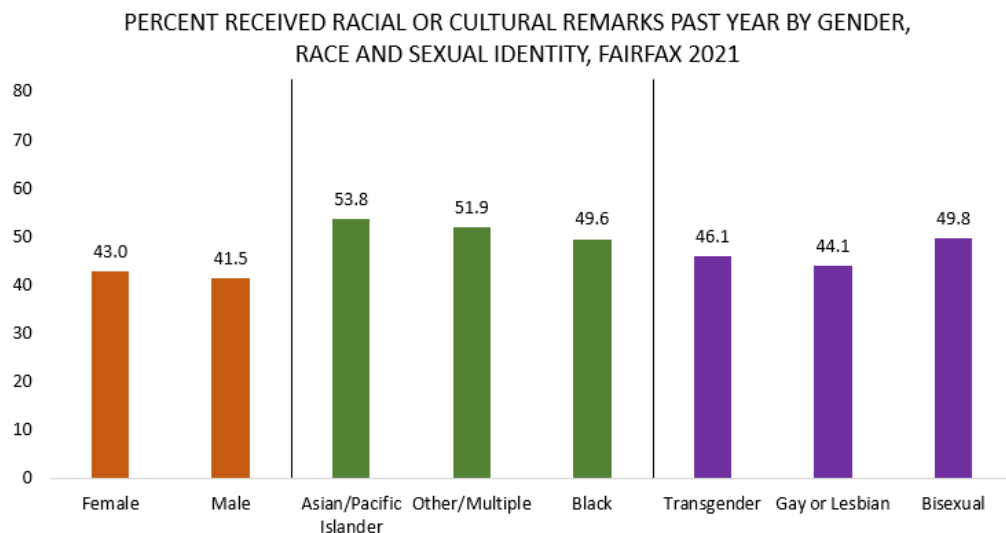
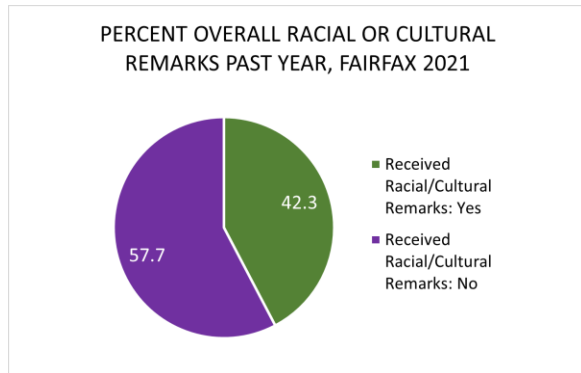
<sup>9</sup> 2021 ABES Data User’s Guide  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/data/2021\\_ABES\\_Data\\_Users\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/data/2021_ABES_Data_Users_Guide.pdf)



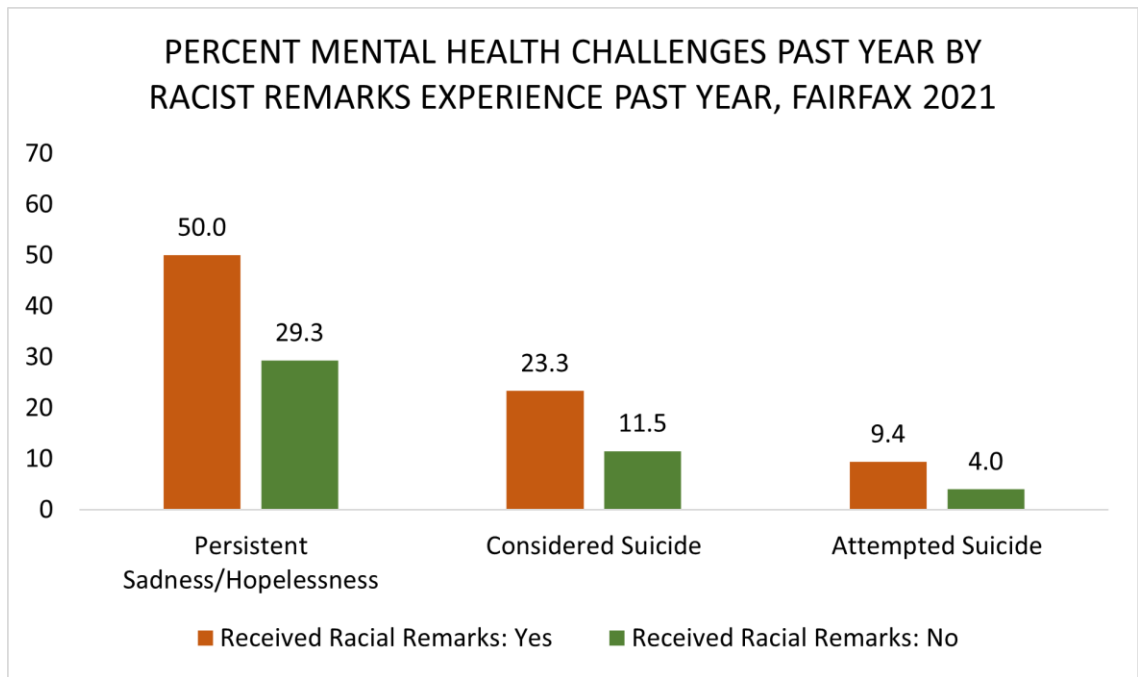
4) **Racism:** Almost half of the students (42.3%) reported that they had something bad said to them about their race or culture in the past year.

Asian students were most likely to receive such comments (53.8%), followed by students of other/multiple races at 51.9%. The percentage of 6<sup>th</sup> graders who reported such comments was lower, at 34.4% overall.

The percentage of students who reported receiving derogatory comments in the past year was the lowest reported in the past six years for all grade levels.



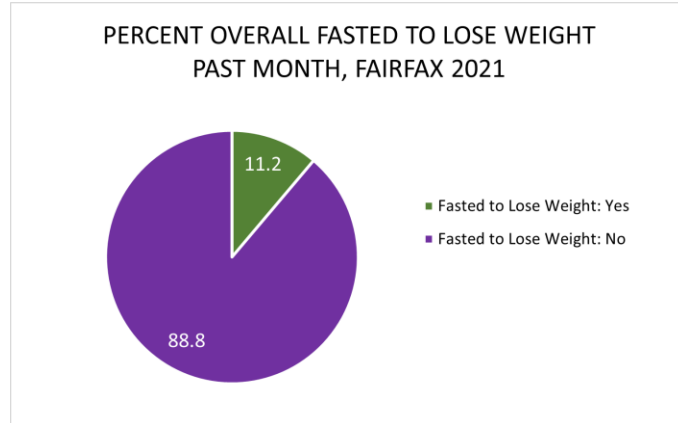
Studies have shown that perceived discrimination based on race and ethnicity can affect levels of depressive symptoms among adolescents<sup>10 11</sup>. Consistent with these findings, in Fairfax County, students who reported receiving derogatory racial or cultural comments in the past year also reported higher rates of persistent sadness/hopelessness, suicidal thoughts and attempts than those without such experience. According to the Youth Survey data, half of the students (50.0%) who received derogatory racial comments also experienced persistent sadness/hopelessness compared to students who did not receive such comments (29.3%). They also experienced higher rates of suicidal thoughts (23.3%) and attempts (9.4%) in the past year, compared to their peers who did not report receiving derogatory racial/cultural comments (11.5% and 4.0%, respectively).



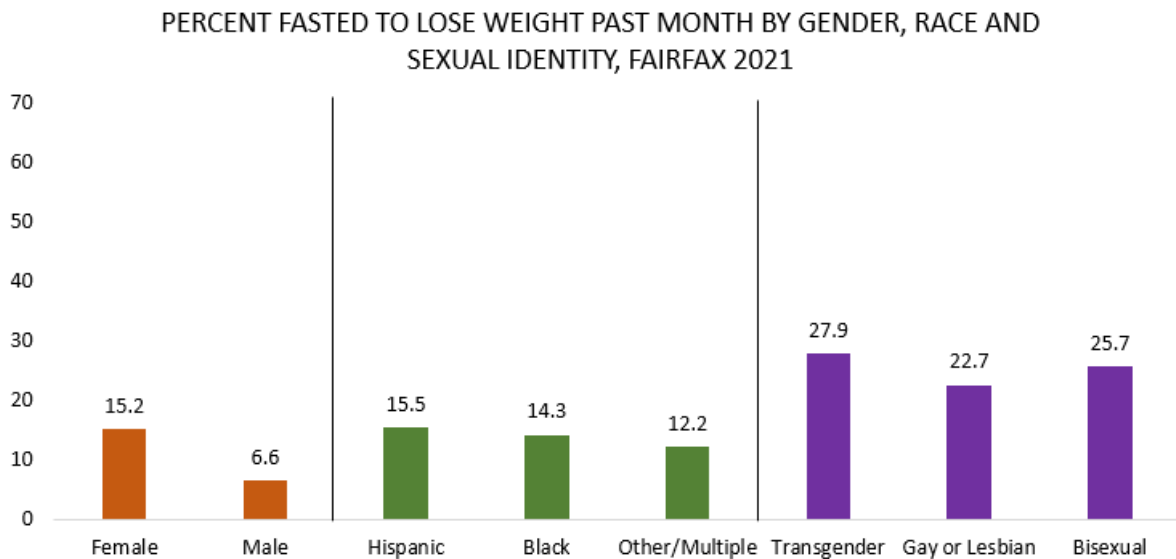
<sup>10</sup> Lambert, S.F., Herman, K.C., Bynum, M.S. *et al.* [Perceptions of Racism and Depressive Symptoms in African American Adolescents: The Role of Perceived Academic and Social Control](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9393-0). *J Youth Adolescence* **38**, 519–531 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9393-0>

<sup>11</sup> Tummala-Narra, P. & Claudius, M. (2013) [Perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms among immigrant-origin adolescents](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032960). *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 19(3), 257-269. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032960>

- 5) **Fasted to Lose Weight:** Over eleven percent of the students (11.2%) reported going without eating for 24 hours or more in the past month in order to lose weight or keep from gaining weight, with over twice as many female students (15.2%) reporting the behavior compared to male students (6.6%).



This is the highest rate recorded since 2015 (6.5%), an increase of three percentage points from the 2019 rate (8.2%). Among racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic and Black students had the highest rates at 15.5% and 14.3%. Transgender students were more than twice more likely to report that they fasted to lose weight than non-transgender students (27.9% vs. 12.1%). Nearly one in four students who identified themselves as gay/lesbian (22.7%) and bisexual (25.7%) also reported fasting to lose weight compared to less than 10% (9.7%) of heterosexual students.

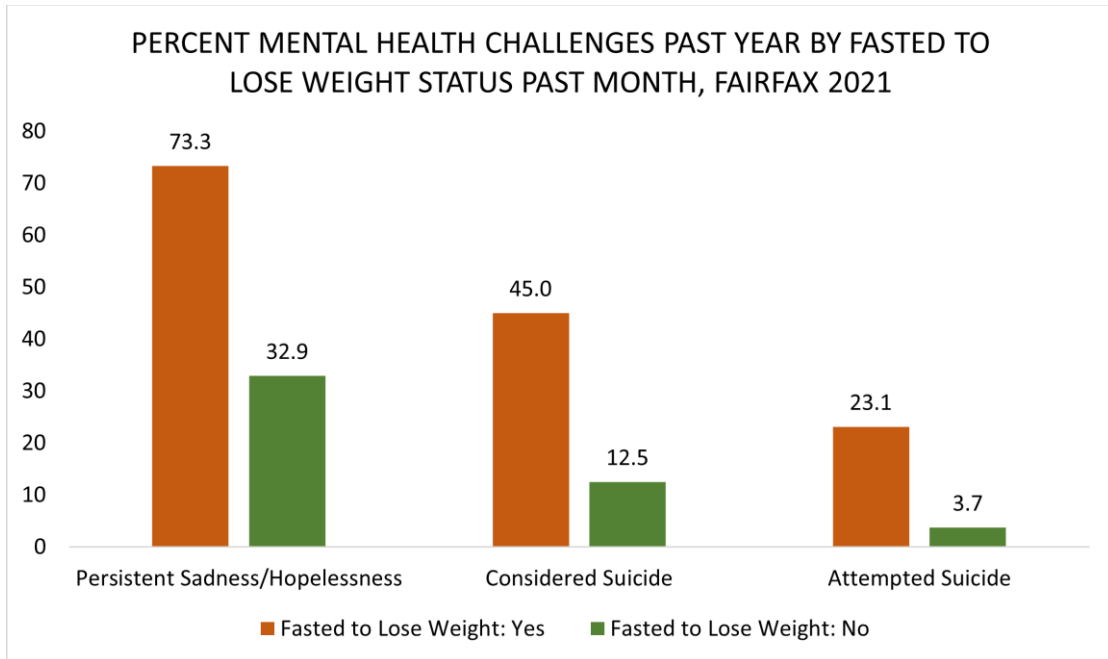


While female students were more likely to report exhibiting the behavior, transgender male students (28.8%) reported slightly higher rates of such behavior than transgender female students (27.8%). Transgender male students' risk of reporting that they fasted to lose weight (28.8%) were nearly four times greater than that of non-transgender male students (7.3%).

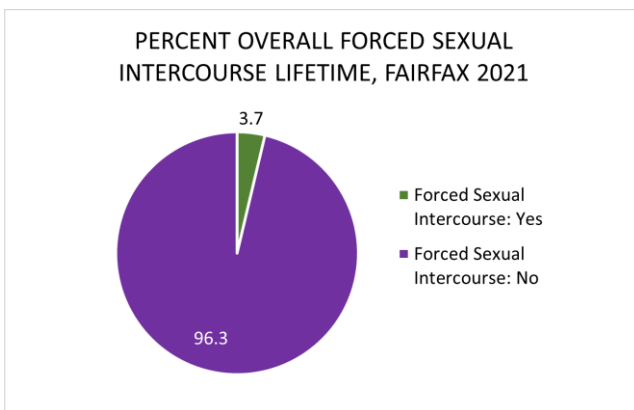
ABES did not ask questions specific to weight loss or eating disorder behaviors, however, the [National Syndromic Surveillance Program](#) (NSSP), uses a convenience sample during specific time periods to track emergency department (ED) visits for pediatric patients, which is often the first point of care for mental health emergencies. When comparing to pre-pandemic data, similar to Fairfax County, adolescent females showed greater need. Compared to 2019, weekly

ED visits for females age 12-17 increased for eating disorders during 2020, 2021, and 2022, with the proportion of ED visits with eating disorders doubling.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Fairfax County Youth Survey, students who fasted to lose weight in the past month reported significantly higher rates of persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness than those who did not (73.3% vs. 32.9%). The rates of suicidal ideations and attempts were greater for students who reported fasting to lose weight than their peers who did not. In particular, nearly one in four (23.1%) students who reported fasting to lose weight also reported suicide attempt in the past year, compared to 3.7% of the students with no such behavior.



- 6) **Forced Sexual Intercourse and Sexual Harassment:** The lifetime prevalence of being physically forced to have sexual intercourse went up from 2.9% in 2019 to 3.7% in 2021 recording the highest rate in 6 years.

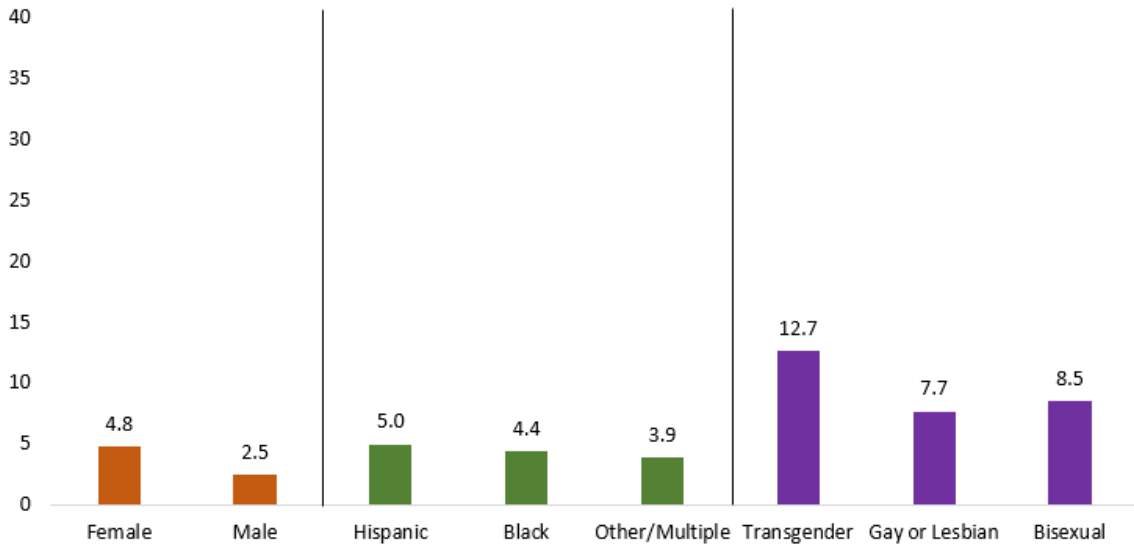


Rates were higher for females (4.8%) than males (2.5%). Students of Hispanic ethnicity (5.0%) had the highest rates followed by Black (4.4%) and other/multiple (3.9%). Transgender students (12.7%) reported higher rates of being forced to have sexual intercourse in their lifetime than their non-transgender peers (3.3%). Both

<sup>12</sup> MMWR, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7108e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm7108e2\\_w&fbclid=IwAR3c3M7RyGzohZmLZMlxfHgRasWO4DmXUTZDpoagz7JMZUGLgd5YAyvEA00](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7108e2.htm?s_cid=mm7108e2_w&fbclid=IwAR3c3M7RyGzohZmLZMlxfHgRasWO4DmXUTZDpoagz7JMZUGLgd5YAyvEA00)

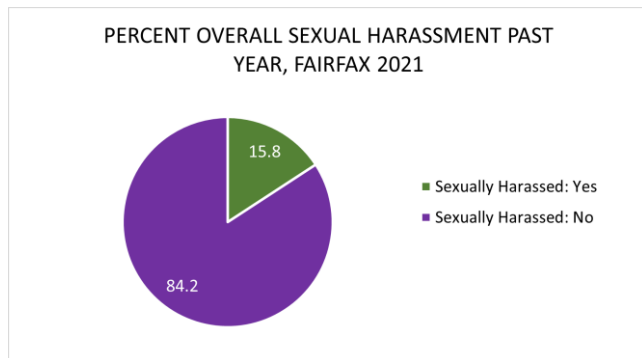
gay/lesbian students (7.7%) and bisexual students (8.5%) were more likely to report the experience than heterosexual students (2.6%). Male transgender students (17.1%) reported higher rates of forced sexual intercourse than female transgender students (13.3%).

PERCENT FORCED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE LIFETIME BY GENDER, RACE, AND SEXUAL IDENTITY, FAIRFAX 2021



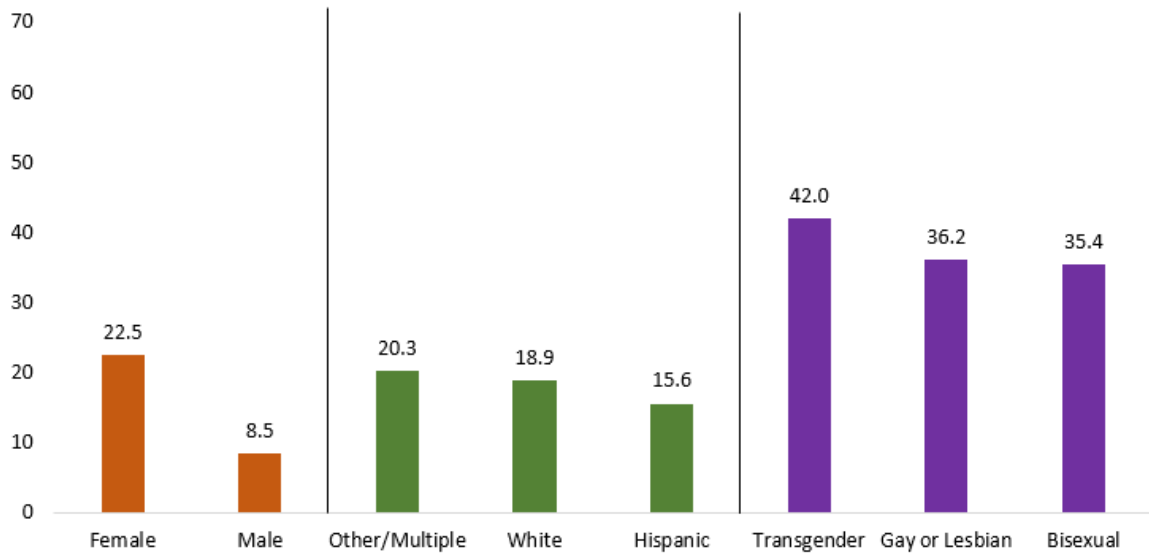
Similarly, the prevalence of being sexually harassed in the past year increased from 13.5% in 2019 to 15.8% in 2021 (the highest rate in 6 years), with significantly higher rates for females (22.5%) than males (8.5%).

PERCENT OVERALL SEXUAL HARASSMENT PAST YEAR, FAIRFAX 2021

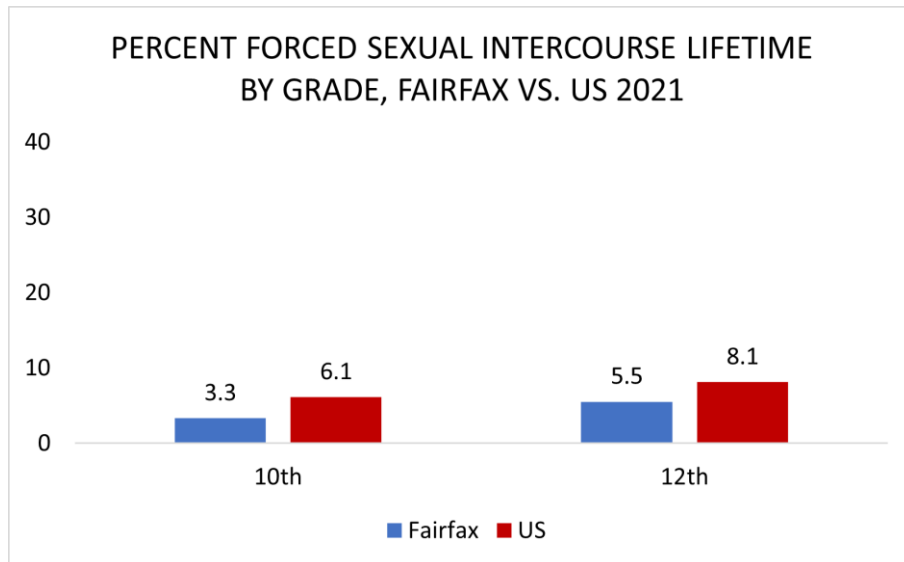


Among racial/ethnic groups, students of other/multiple races had the highest rate at 20.3%, compared to the lowest rates among Asian students at 10.9%. Transgender students (42.0%) were nearly three times more likely to report being sexually harassed in the past year than non-transgender students (14.6%). Similarly, the experience of sexual harassment was more common among gay/lesbian students (36.2%) and bisexual students (35.4%) than heterosexual students (10.9%).

PERCENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT PAST YEAR BY GENDER, RACE, AND SEXUAL IDENTITY, FAIRFAX 2021



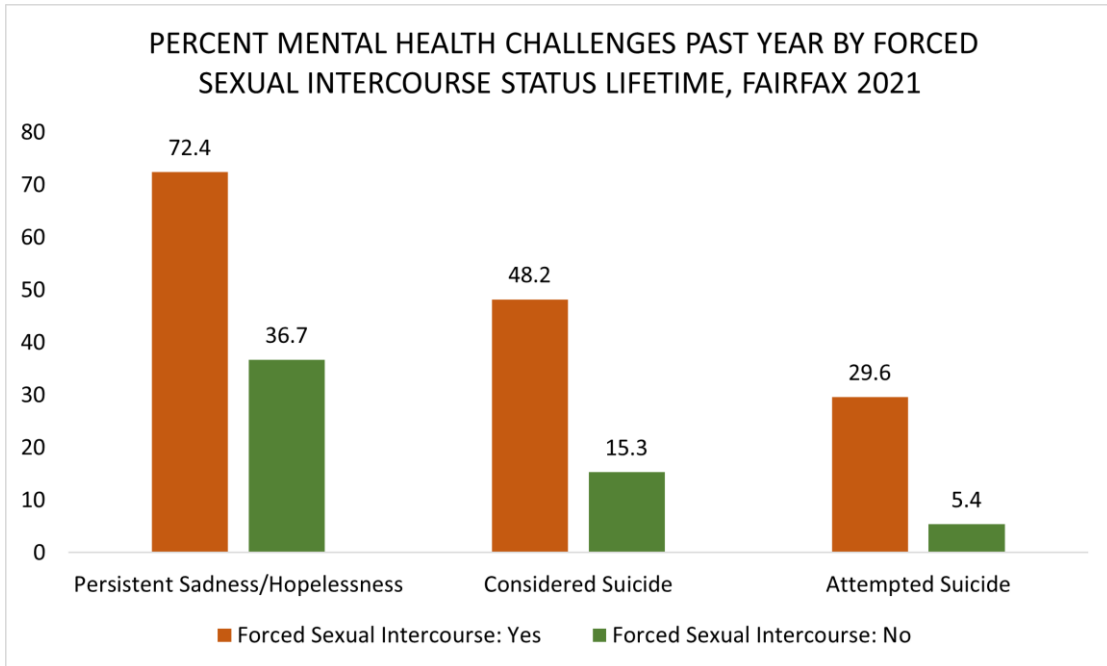
Survey data according to ABES showed higher national rates of ever being forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to by grade, with 6.1% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 8.1% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders<sup>13</sup> (versus 3.3% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 5.5% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Fairfax County).



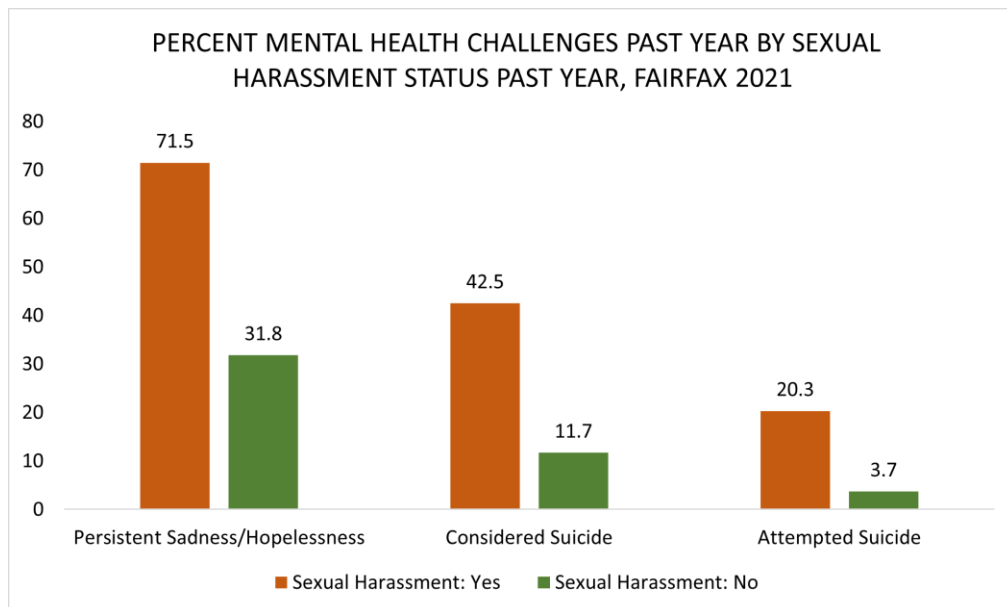
According to the Youth Survey data, nearly three in four students (72.4%) who reported forced sexual intercourse in their lifetime also reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless as opposed to 36.7% of the students with no such experience. Almost half of the students with the experience (48.2%) considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months and 29.6% attempted suicide, both of which were significantly higher than the rates of their comparison group.

<sup>13</sup> ABES Result by Grade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/tables/grade.htm#MH>





Similar patterns were observed for the students with sexual harassment experience. Over 70% (71.5%) of the students who reported sexual harassment in the past year also reported feeling persistently sad/hopeless while only 31.8% of the students without the experience reported such feelings. Both suicidal thoughts (42.5%) and attempts (20.3%) were reported at a significantly higher rate among the students with sexual harassment experience than their peers (11.7% and 3.7%, respectively).

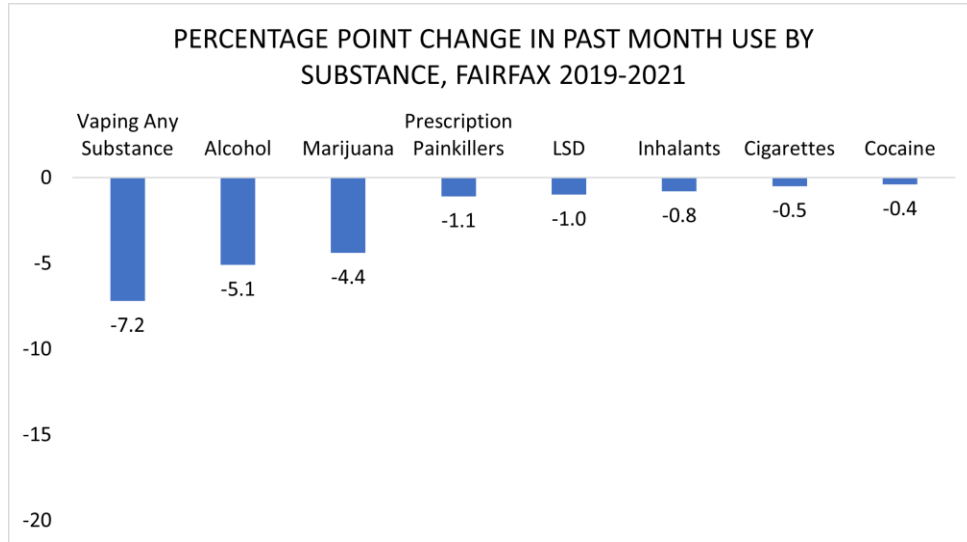


### Reduction in Risk Behaviors

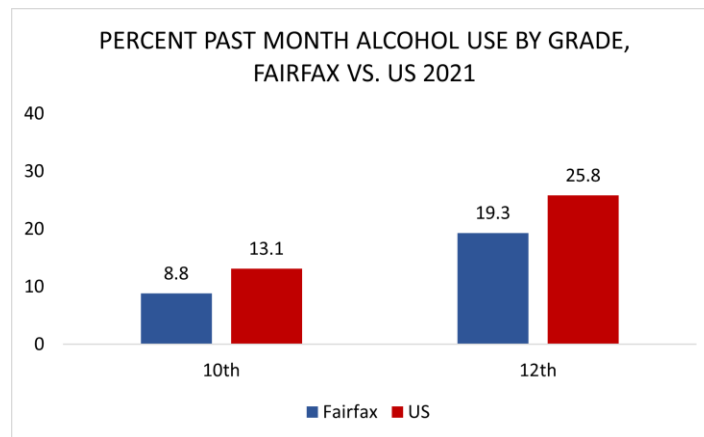
Despite the increases in mental health challenges since the start of the pandemic, there were also some reductions in risk behaviors when comparing data from 2019 to 2021 in Fairfax County. With only one

year of data a trend cannot be established, however, overall, the percentage of students who reported risky behaviors went down this year in many areas including substance use and aggressive and delinquent behavior. When available a comparison to national data by grade is provided below.

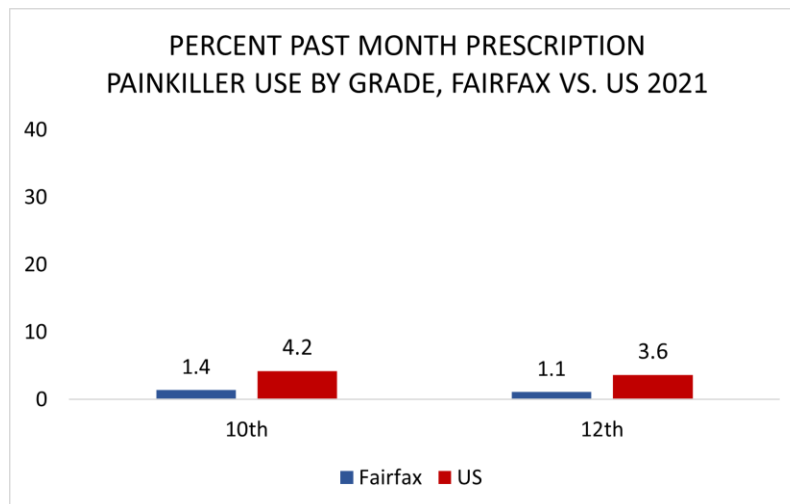
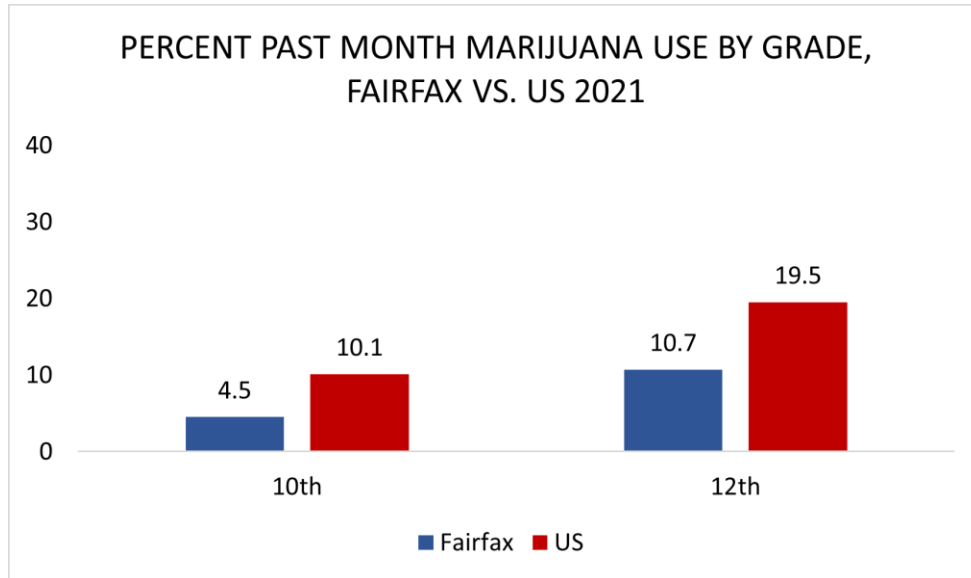
In 2021, Fairfax County youth reported lower rates of substance use, compared to 2019, including past month use of vaping any substance (7.2 percentage points decrease), alcohol (5.1 percentage points decrease), marijuana (4.4 percentage points decrease), prescription painkillers (1.1 percentage points decrease), LSD (1.0 percentage points decrease), inhalants (0.8 percentage points decrease), cigarettes (0.5 percentage points decrease), and cocaine (0.4 percentage points decrease).



Compared to US (national) data from the Monitoring the Future Survey and ABES, Fairfax had lower rates of past month use of alcohol, marijuana, and prescription painkillers.<sup>14</sup>



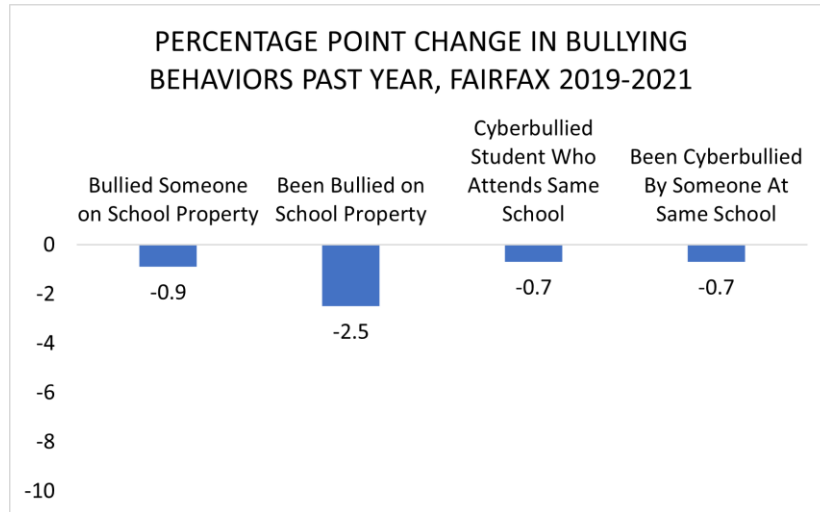
<sup>14</sup> The national comparison data for painkiller use is from the ABES Result by Grade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/tables/grade.htm>. The national data for alcohol use and marijuana use are from the Monitoring the Future Survey.



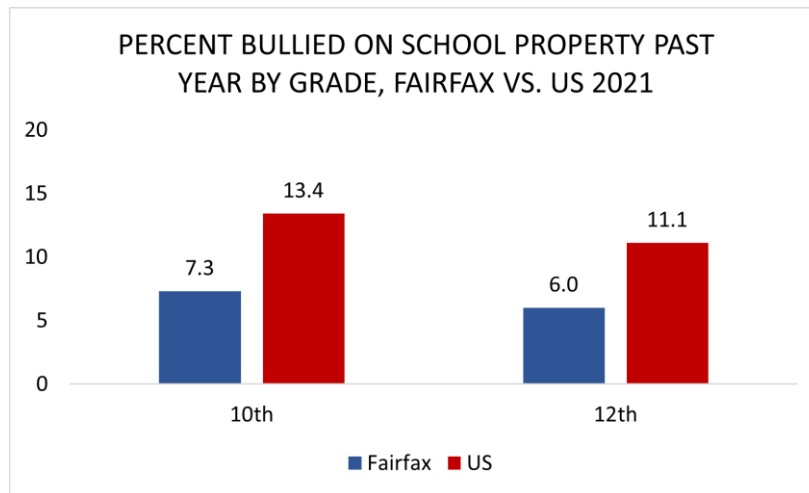
(ABES asks students “During the past 30 days, how many times did you take prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told you to use it?”<sup>15</sup> compared to the FCYS which asks “On how many occasions (if any) have you taken painkillers (such as Oxycontin, Vicodin, Percocet, Codeine, and Opium) without a doctor’s order in the past 30 days?”)

The 2021 rate for having been bullied and bullying others was the lowest over the past six years. The percentage of students reporting bullying someone on school property in the past year decreased by 0.9 percentage points from 2019 to 2021, while the percentage of students reporting being bullied on school property in the past year decreased by 2.5 percentage points. In addition, the rates of both cyberbullying and being cyberbullied by a student who attends the same school decreased slightly (0.7 percentage points) since 2019 as well, with both rates having generally trended downward since 2010.

<sup>15</sup> 2021 ABES Data User’s Guide  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/data/2021\\_ABES\\_Data\\_Users\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/data/2021_ABES_Data_Users_Guide.pdf)

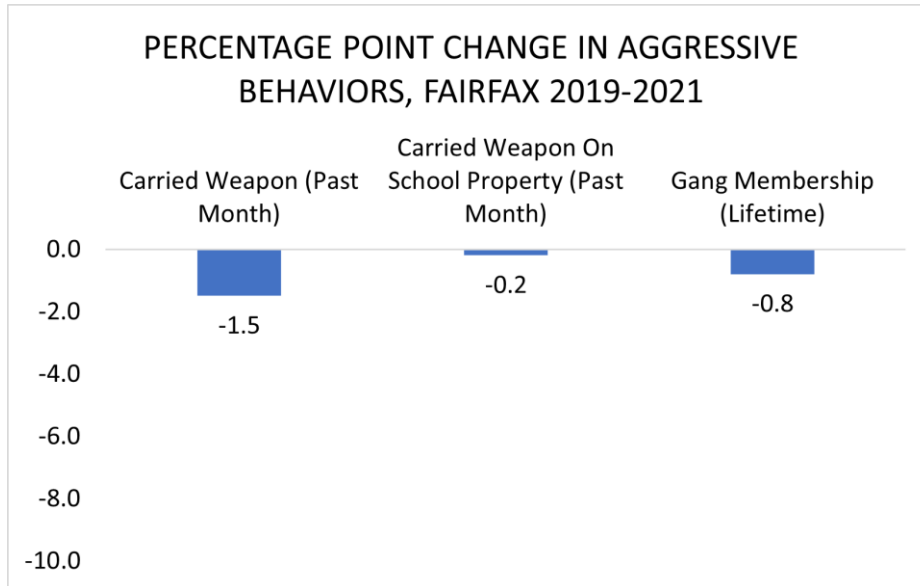


Compared to ABES data, Fairfax had lower rates of being bullied on school property.<sup>16</sup>

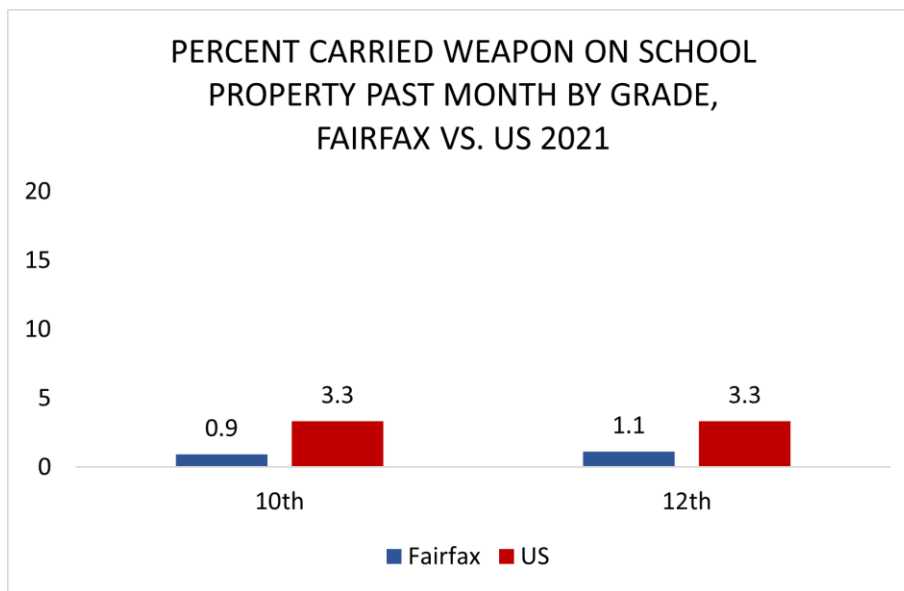


In addition, the prevalence of carrying a weapon in the past month was the lowest in 6 years (5.8%). The percentage decreased by 1.5 percentage points since 2019, with the highest rates for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, males, and white students and students of other/multiple races. Past month prevalence of carrying a weapon on school property also dropped by 0.2 percentage points. Lifetime prevalence of gang membership decreased as well by 0.8 percentage points from 2019 to 2021, the lowest reported rate since 2010.

<sup>16</sup> ABES Result by Grade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/tables/grade.htm>

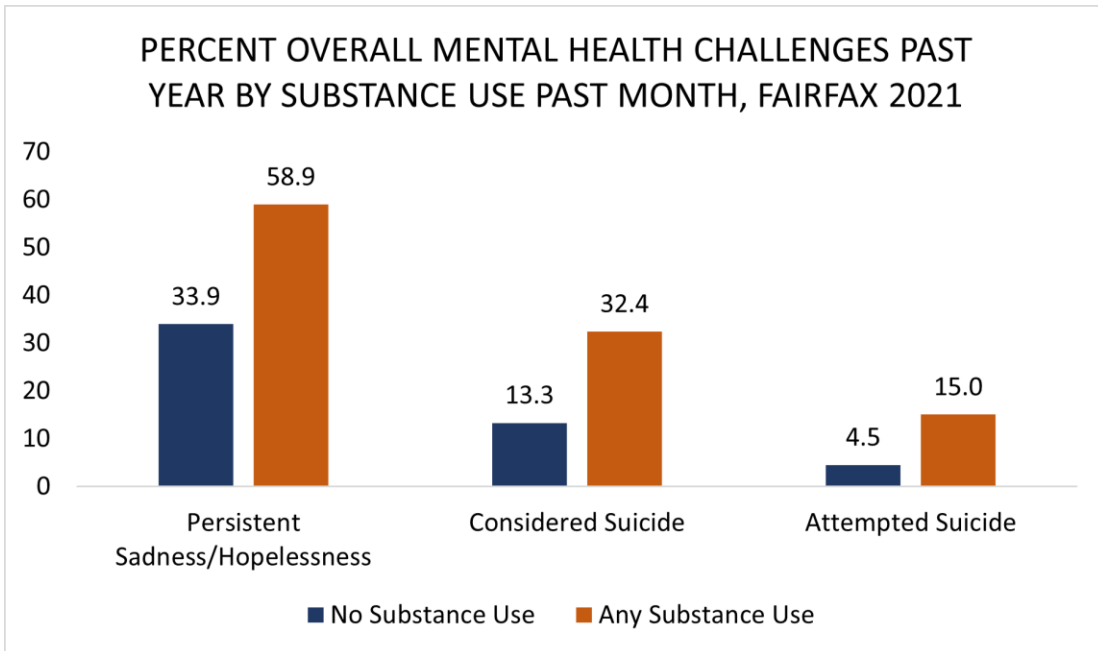


Compared to ABES data, Fairfax had lower rates of carrying a weapon on school property.<sup>17</sup>

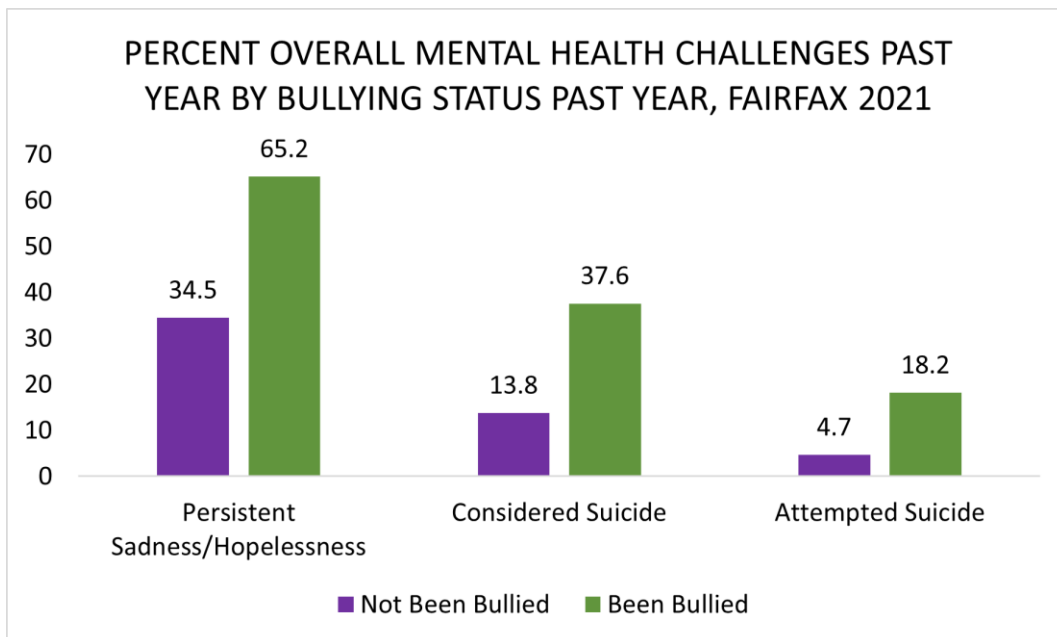


Despite lower rates of risk behaviors, the data reveals that risk behaviors were highly associated with persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness, suicidal ideations, and suicide attempts. For example, students who used any substances in the past month showed significantly higher rates of feeling persistently sad/hopeless (58.9%), considering attempting suicide (32.4%), and attempting suicide (15.0%) than the students who did not report substance use (33.9%, 13.3%, and 4.5% respectively).

<sup>17</sup> ABES Result by Grade, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/abes/tables/grade.htm>



In addition, students who reported being bullied in the past year were also more likely to report experiencing persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness than those who did not report being a bully victim. Close to two thirds of the bullied students reported persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness, as compared to 34.5% of the students who did not report being a bully victim. They also reported higher rates of suicidal ideations (37.6%) and actions (18.2%) than their peers with no bullying experience (13.8% and 4.7%, respectively).



## Protective Factors: What You Can Do

The Fairfax County Youth Survey assesses the [assets or protective factors](#) that promote well-being and positive development in youth. Research suggests that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of risky behaviors and the more likely they are to thrive.

Assets enhance a young person's ability to resist risks and make good decisions. Assets are characteristics of youth and their environments (families, schools, and communities) that foster resilience, which helps individuals overcome adversity. The 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey investigated assets within the school, community, and family domains to determine how prevalent these external supports are in the students' environments. Additional items measured individual behaviors and attitudes that help young people develop into successful adults.

### School Assets:

- Teachers noticing a good job of students
- Opportunities to talk to teachers one-on-one
- Feeling safe at school
- School communication with parents when students do well

### Community Assets:

- Availability of extracurricular activities
- Adults' disapproval of youth marijuana use
- Adults in community to talk to
- Neighbors noticing a good job of students

### Family Assets:

- Parents available to help
- Parents who know whereabouts of their children
- Parents' disapproval of marijuana use by youth
- Family members respectful of each other
- Having youth's input in family decisions

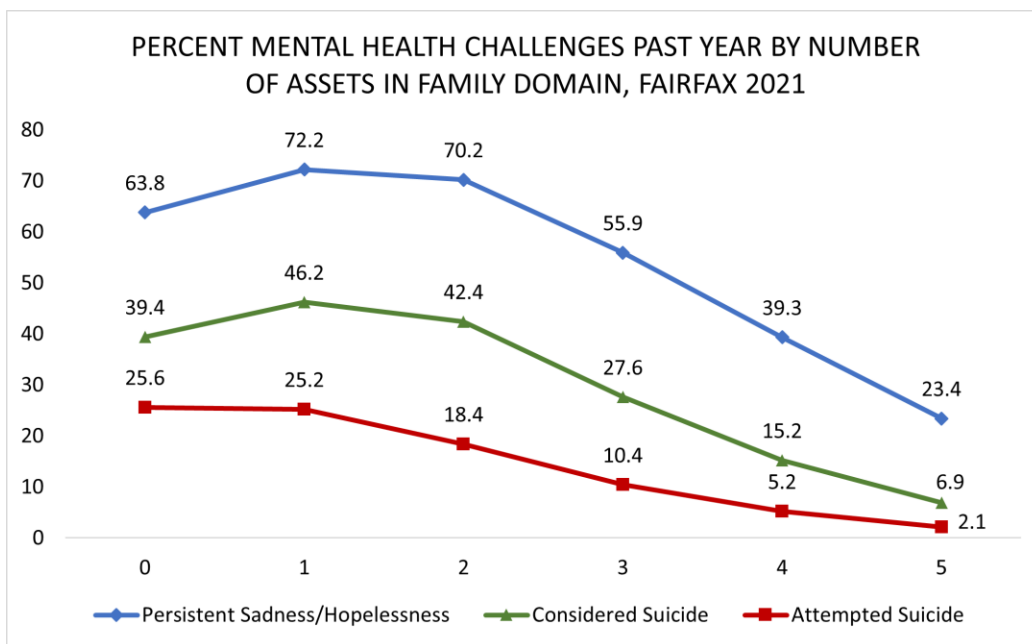
### Individual Assets:

- Regular participation in extracurricular activities
- Regular volunteer activities
- Following rules
- Thinking through possible results before making a decision
- Accepting responsibility for actions and mistakes
- Doing their best even for jobs they dislike

## Protective Factors Highlights

A vast majority of students reported **school assets**, feeling safe at their school (83.9%) and having opportunities to talk to their teacher one-on-one (78.2%). Over ninety percent of students reported that their parents would disapprove of marijuana use by the students (94.2%) and that their parents are aware of the students' whereabouts (93.6%). Approximately 71% of the students reported that their family members are respectful of each other. These three **family assets** (out of five total) had the highest rates reported in the past five years. In addition, nearly all students reported having two of the **community assets**, including availability of extracurricular activities at 93.6% and neighbors would disapprove of youth's use of marijuana at 94.9%. In the **individual asset** domain, less than 30% of the students (29.9%) reported that they volunteered regularly. Most students reported that they take responsibility for their actions (76.5%) and that they do their best even for jobs they dislike (69.4%).

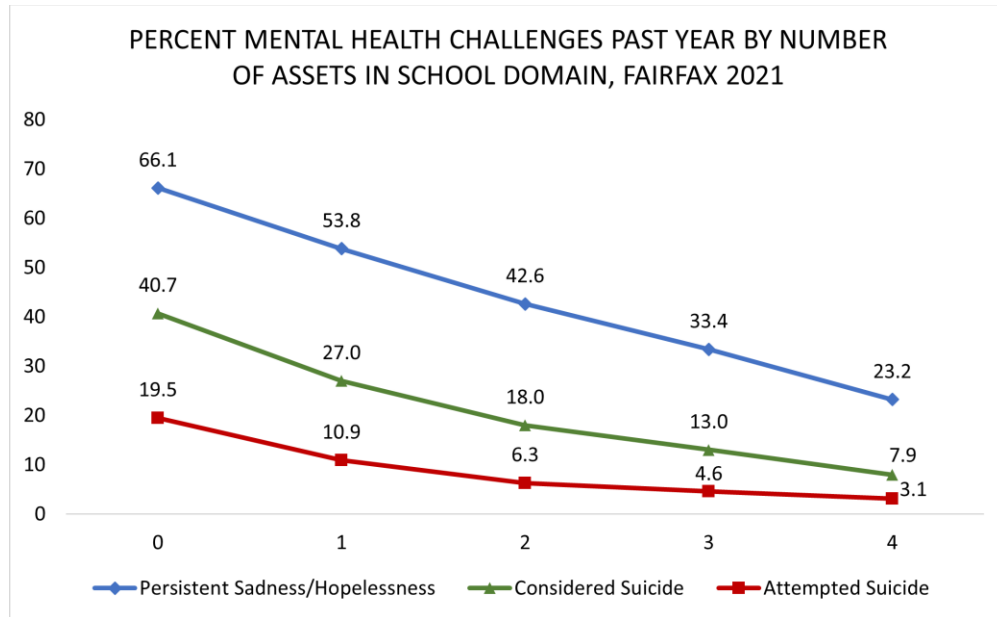
Students with more assets in the **family domain** are less likely to report mental health issues. Overall, students with more assets were also less likely to report persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness, suicidal thoughts and attempts. Nearly two-thirds of the students (63.8%) who reported no **family assets** and more than 72% of the students (72.2%) with only one asset also reported feeling persistently sad/hopeless compared to 23.4% of the students with all five **family assets**. Almost 40% (39.4%) of the students with no **family assets** reported having considered attempting suicide in the past year whereas less than 7% (6.9%) of the students with all five assets in the family domain reported such thoughts. Students with fewer **family assets** were also more likely to attempt suicide with more than one in four students with no **family assets** (25.6%) reporting suicidal attempts in the past year.



The more **school assets** students have, the better their mental health indicators are. Students with more **school assets** showed lower rates of persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness than students with fewer assets. Two-thirds of the students (66.1%) who reported none of the **school assets** in the survey indicated they felt persistent sadness or hopelessness compared to one in four

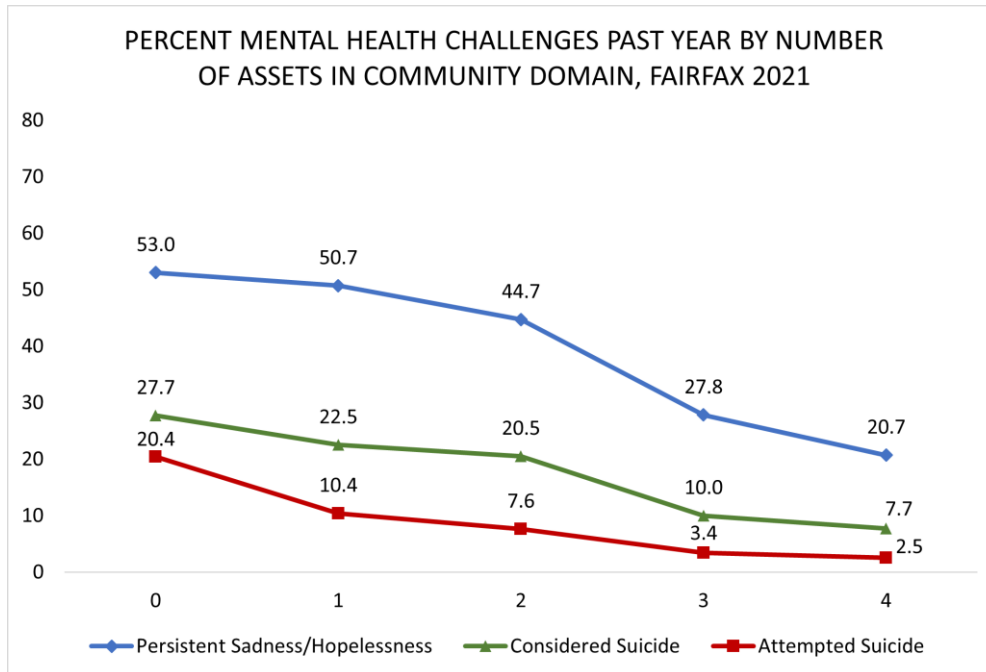


(23.2%) students with all four **school assets**. More than 40% of the students (40.7%) with no **school assets** reported suicidal ideations in the past year whereas less than 8% (7.9%) of students with all four assets did so. One in five students (19.5%) with no **school assets** also reported suicide attempts, as compared to only a little over 3% of the students (3.1%) with all four assets in the school domain.



**Community and neighborhood can make a difference.**

Students who reported having more **community assets** had lower risks of reporting persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness than those with fewer assets in the community domain. More than half (53.0%) of the students with no **community assets** reported feeling persistently sad/hopeless whereas one in five (20.7%) with all four assets in the community domain reported such feelings. More than one in four students (27.7%) who reported none of the assets in this domain also indicated that they had considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months, as compared to 7.7% of the students with all four assets. The rates of suicide attempts were about eight times higher for students with no **community assets** (20.4%) than for students with all four assets in the domain (2.5%).



The data shows us that when we give youth opportunities to be involved, offer supportive relationships, and recognize their good work and accomplishments, we give them the assets to help them make good decisions, become resilient to risky behaviors, and develop a healthy mindset. Above all else, it is vital that youth have at least one caring, trusted, and supportive adult relationship in building resiliency, whether they be from their family, schools, or community.

### Youth Mental Health Resources

Research has suggested that prevention and early intervention for depression and other mental health issues is critical for youth experiencing depressive symptoms because they are at a high risk of developing lifelong disabling mental health conditions<sup>18</sup>. To support the need of youth at risk; high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care should be provided. Mental health must be also supported in educational and community settings to create “positive, safe, and affirming educational environments, expand programming that promotes healthy development (such as social and emotional learning), and provide a continuum of supports to meet the social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of children and youth”<sup>19</sup>.

Fairfax County leads coordinated efforts with county agencies, FCPS, and community organizations to ensure the well-being of the social, emotional, and mental health of our youth. Healthy Minds Fairfax (HMF) helps coordinate the full range of behavioral health services and resources for children and youth across multiple county agencies, the school system, and private treatment providers. Its work is guided by, and HMF leads the implementation of, the HMF Blueprint, a strategic plan for youth behavioral health. The new version of the Healthy Minds Fairfax Blueprint is under development to address

<sup>18</sup> Christopher, G.P. & McGorry, P.D. [Early intervention for depression in young people: a blind spot in mental health care](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30292-X), *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 6(3), 267-272 (2019). [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(18\)30292-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30292-X).

<sup>19</sup> [Protecting Youth Mental Health, The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory](#) (2021)

substance use and overdoses and youth behavioral health issues. The updated blueprint will contain new and enhanced strategies such as:

- An immediate focus on developing a service navigation program to help ensure the rising number of youth with mental health concerns are able to identify and access relevant services;
- Targeted prevention and intervention services for LGBTQ and Hispanic youth; and
- Continued substance use prevention efforts to maintain low prevalence rates, combined with greater access to intervention supports to address rising levels of addiction and overdose.

The revised Blueprint is expected to be completed this winter. Its development has been informed through extensive outreach and engagement. Over 700 people participated in surveys, focus groups, and other input gathering activities earlier this year. The HMF Youth Advisory Council and Family Advisory Board have provided significant input and guidance.

Additionally, the Fairfax County Roundtable on Youth Mental Health and Substance Use (the Roundtable) met on July 25 and August 23, 2022. The roundtable membership consisted of young people and families, clinical and non-clinical service providers, advocates, higher education, FCPS, and County staff, and elected officials. Some of the goals of the roundtable included:

- Increase awareness among key stakeholders of current issues related to and efforts to address youth behavioral health in Fairfax County.
- Identify and gain support for ways in which organizations and sectors across Fairfax County can contribute to efforts.
- Identify strategies to amplify and broaden these efforts to address systemwide gaps/weaknesses.
- Identify potential legislative initiatives to recommend that the Board consider to address youth behavioral health issues in Fairfax County.

Roundtable input led to the acceleration of a budget proposal for a new service navigation initiative and helped to shape the strategies being developed for the new Blueprint.

It is important to address any additional challenges for youth that may have occurred during the pandemic, including changes in routines, breaks in continuity of learning, breaks in continuity of health care, missed significant life events, and lost security and safety<sup>20</sup>. Know the signs of depression and suicidal ideation, talk to youth and listen non-judgmentally, provide support and seek professional help when needed. The following resources are available:

- All Fairfax County Public Schools have at least one school counselor, school psychologist, and school social worker. These professionals work with students and families to provide valuable services and resources, and can be reached by contacting the school.
- [Signs of Suicide \(SOS\)](#) is an evidence-based suicide prevention program developed for middle and high schools that includes education and screening. Students in grades 7, 9, and 11 participate in this program which teaches the Acknowledge, Care, Tell (ACT) framework to

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<sup>20</sup> COVID-19 Parental Resources Kit, CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/parental-resources/index.html>

empower students to support others in seeking help, and to seek help themselves. Training for staff and [parents](#) is available and teaches adults to use the ACT protocol.

- The Fairfax County Youth Survey results indicate that when children and youth have three or more positive, protective factors in their lives, they are more likely to manage stress, make better choices, and develop healthy habits. Learn more about [Three to Succeed](#).
- The [CDC Parental Resources Kit](#) includes resources by age group (early childhood, childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood) to support the parents, caregivers and other adults in addressing the mental health of youth impacted by the pandemic.
- We can increase awareness around mental health issues by becoming certified in Mental Health First Aid, available through the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. Visit [Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Mental Health First Aid](#) page to learn more. Fairfax County Public Schools also offer Mental Health First Aid trainings to students, school staff and families.
- A new national mental health emergency three-digit dialing code was launched in July 2022 through [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#). Callers can dial 988 to connect to trained counselors who can provide support and connect them to local resources. Students who find themselves in crisis can also text “NEEDHELP” to 85511 ([PRS Crisis Link](#)) from their cell phones for immediate help and access to mental health resources.
- There are several online resources geared toward female teenagers. The [Center for Young Women’s Health](#) offers guidance on emotional health and online health chats. The [Girls Health.Gov](#) site provides information on recognizing a mental health problem, getting help, and talking to parents.
- For LGBTQ youth, the Trevor Project provides trained counselors for young people ages 24 years or younger who are suicidal or in crisis. The Trevor Lifeline is free and available 24/7 at 1-866-588-7386. Crisis counselors can be also reached by texting “START” to 678678 or via online chat at [We’re here for you Now – The Trevor Project](#).
- The [Kognito Safe and Caring Schools training](#) is available to community members and youth, recognizing that it takes a community to prevent violence. This training provides users with an opportunity to learn how to recognize signs that a young person may be in distress, understand potential resources for support, and practice engaging in a caring conversation with a young person.

To get additional information and resources on youth mental health, visit:

- [The Jed Foundation](#) – Works to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for teens and young adults.
- [Mental Health Literacy](#) – Provides mental health literacy information, research, education and resources.
- [Suicide Prevention Alliance of Northern Virginia](#) – Local alliance to raise awareness and share resources to prevent suicide.
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) – Works to prevent suicide through research, education and advocacy.
- [Our Minds Matter](#) – Mental health tools for teens to prevent suicide.
- [National Academies](#) - Tools for supporting emotional well-being in children and youth.
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) – Mental health support for kids, teens and young adults.
- [AAKOMA](#) – Serves mental health needs of Youth of Color.

- [The Steve Fund](#) – Supports the mental health and emotional well-being of young people of color.  
[Protecting Youth Mental Health](#) – U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory.

### Cautions about Interpreting the Data

While this report examines the state of youth mental health after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, no causal inferences should be made between mental health and the pandemic based on the data. The findings are based on the cross-sectional (observations are from many different subjects at one point), self-reported survey data, which is insufficient to make causal inferences.

Even with noticeable increases in rates of persistent feelings of sadness/hopelessness and suicide-related indicators this year, it is necessary to establish longer-term trends to determine meaningful patterns. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and Fairfax County will continuously monitor mental health trends to identify increasing needs of the community as well as youths at risk who might be disproportionately affected.

### Questions?

If you have any questions about this report, please contact [Countywide Data Analytics](#), Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget.