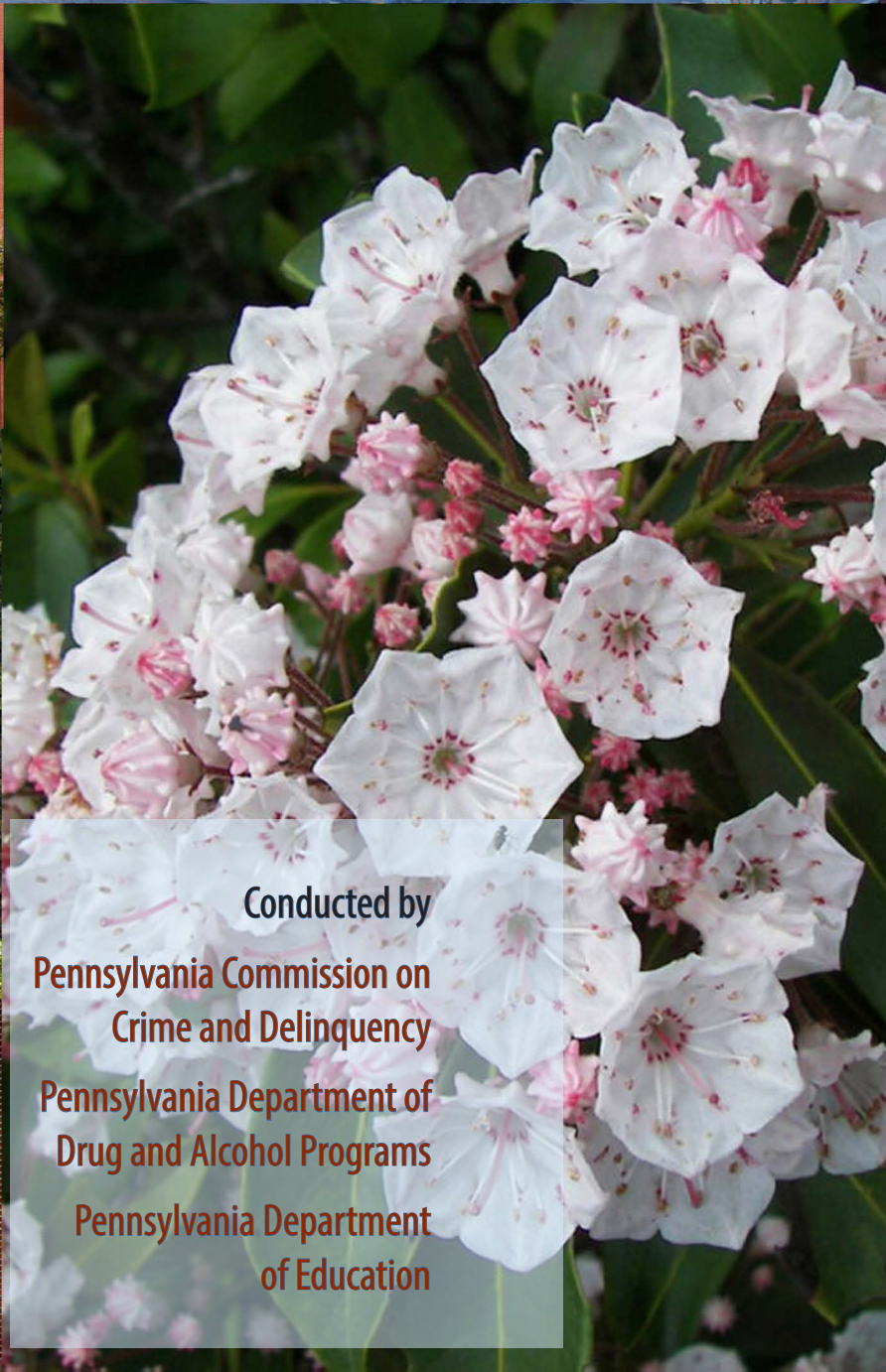


# 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

Empowering Communities to Develop  
Strategic Prevention Programming

## Mercer County



Conducted by  
Pennsylvania Commission on  
Crime and Delinquency  
Pennsylvania Department of  
Drug and Alcohol Programs  
Pennsylvania Department  
of Education



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COMMISSION ON CRIME  
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Additionally, a great deal of thanks for the leadership of this survey needs to go to the PCCD Prevention Subcommittee, who provided guidance and oversight to this effort.

The administration of the survey would not have been a success without the contributions of PAYS Advisory Group (PAYSAG), whose tireless efforts and ideas helped make this year's PAYS administration a success.. The 2023 PAYSAG members included:

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The success of the 2023 PAYS could not have been achieved without the support and participation of school superintendents, administrators, principals, prevention coordinators, and teachers throughout the state. We extend our appreciation to the students who responded to the survey. Their thoughtful participation resulted in a wealth of information that can be used to improve the circumstances in which they live and learn.

Please note that this report does not contain data from all survey questions. To access and analyze county or state level data from the entire survey dataset, please visit [www.bach-harrison.com/PAYSWebTool](http://www.bach-harrison.com/PAYSWebTool). For more information about PAYS, and to see aggregate reporting of responses provided by Pennsylvania youth, please visit [www.pays.pa.gov](http://www.pays.pa.gov). This site contains links to materials developed for the 2023 administration, as well as materials from prior survey administrations. Results from earlier PAYS administrations (e.g. reports from 2021 and earlier) can be found by consulting the links to past years' reports.

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# PAYS: GOALS AND OVERVIEW

Since 1989, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has conducted a biennial survey of youth in the 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades to gather information about their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors towards alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use to help communities address root causes of antisocial behavior.

The “Pennsylvania Youth Survey” or “PAYS” is conducted every other year, in the fall of odd-numbered years. Beginning with the 2013 administration, PAYS was offered at no charge to any school or district (public, private, charter, and parochial) courtesy of funding provided by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

The 2023 PAYS was the seventeenth biennial administration (1989-2023). Comparisons in this report were made between the results of the 2019, 2021, and 2023 surveys, as well as comparisons to youth nationwide.

PAYS is administered in each participating school using either paper/pencil or an online tool. The survey is voluntary – youth are able to skip any questions they do not wish to answer or to opt out of the survey entirely. Additionally, students are made aware that their responses will remain anonymous and confidential. No individual student-level data can be obtained from the data set, and the results are reported in aggregate at the local, county, and state levels.

PAYS is a primary tool in Pennsylvania’s prevention approach of using data to drive decision making. By looking not just at rates of problem behaviors but also at the root causes of those behaviors, PAYS allows schools and communities to address reasons (such as a lack of commitment to school) rather than only looking at the symptoms after the fact (like poor grades). This approach has been repeatedly shown in national research studies to be the most effective in helping youth develop into healthy, productive members of their society.

## Participation by Pennsylvania youth

The 2023 PAYS was administered during the fall of 2023 to youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12, resulting in 262,535 valid surveys.

There were 1,048 schools that chose to participate in the 2023 PAYS (out of 1,953 eligible). Estimated enrollment figures for the 2022-23 school year show that participating schools had 361,092 students enrolled in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 who were eligible to participate in the survey. An attempt was made to survey all eligible Pennsylvania students, resulting in 262,535 valid participants in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 (a participation rate of 72.7%), represented evenly across the state.

Grade	County 2023			State 2023		
	Surveys	Enrolled in participating school(s)*	Participation rate	Surveys	Enrolled in participating school(s)*	Participation rate
6	597	768	77.7	67,795	83,639	81.1
8	807	1,020	79.1	73,765	91,916	80.3
10	759	1,016	74.7	67,290	96,306	69.9
12	660	1,027	64.3	53,685	89,231	60.2
Total	2,823	3,831	73.7	262,535	361,092	72.7

\* Enrollment in the this table refers to the number of students enrolled in participating schools.

In this county, 24 out of 37 schools (in 12 of 13 districts or charter/private schools) participated in the 2023 PAYS. 2022-23 enrollment show that of the 3,831 students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 enrolled in participating schools, 2,823 valid surveys were submitted (a participation rate of 73.7%).

Grade	County 2023			State 2023		
	Surveys	Enrolled in all schools(s)**	Modified participation rate**	Surveys	Enrolled in all schools(s)**	Modified participation rate**
6	597	989	60.4	67,795	121,427	55.8
8	807	1,088	74.2	73,765	124,428	59.3
10	759	1,089	69.7	67,290	132,408	50.8
12	660	1,070	61.7	53,685	123,489	43.5
Total	2,823	4,236	66.6	262,535	501,752	52.3

\*\* Enrollment in the second table refers to the number of students enrolled in all schools in the district, county or community that were eligible to participate in 2023 PAYS, even if they did not participate.

Enrollment figures for all 37 schools in this county show that 4,236 students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12

were eligible to participate in the 2023 PAYS administration. This means that the 2,823 valid surveys submitted from this county resulted in a modified participation rate of 66.6% (as seen in the second table).

Statewide, the 1,953 schools eligible to participate in the 2023 PAYS had an estimated enrollment of 501,752 public school students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12. The 262,535 valid surveys submitted resulted in a modified participation rate of 52.3% statewide.

## Sample Confidence Intervals

When reviewing survey results people often ask, “What is the margin of error?” This is referred to as the “confidence interval,” and it reflects the precision of a statistical estimate. For example, the overall statewide confidence interval for drug use with a prevalence rate of 50.0% is ±0.8 points, meaning that there is a 95% chance that the true score is between 49.2% and 50.8%.

Grade	Statewide Sample †	Enrollment for Statewide Sample †	Confidence Interval
6	8,222	105,674	±1.5
8	8,447	111,223	±1.5
10	6,712	118,120	±1.7
12	5,844	110,869	±1.8
Total	29,225	445,886	±0.8

† Information on the design of statewide sample can be found in the 2017 thru 2023 PAYS State Full Details reports.

Note that these confidence intervals are for prevalence rates of 50%. For less prevalent behaviors, such as heroin use and bringing a weapon to school, the confidence interval narrows substantially.

## Validity of PAYS data

In order to ensure the highest level of confidence in the survey results, measures are implemented to retain only valid surveys. The following validity checks were utilized:

1. the student indicated that they had used a fictitious drug (1,807 surveys statewide were identified as dishonest with this check)
2. the student reported an improbably high level of multiple drug use (1,183 surveys statewide)
3. the student reported an age that was inconsistent with their grade or the grades served by their school (1,063 surveys statewide)

Invalid and incomplete surveys were eliminated from the data and are not included in the final analyses. Of the 265,606 survey questionnaires from grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 completed and returned to Bach Harrison for analysis, 3,071 (1.2%) were eliminated for meeting one or more of the above criteria.

The results within this county report are based on 2,823 valid responses (out of 2,874 surveys submitted).

Want to dig deeper into the PAYS data or put the data into action? Check out these additional resources:

### [PAYS Webtool:](#)

An online tool allowing you to analyze data at a county or state level for specific questions. Schools also receive access to their own private webtool to further analyze their school's data.

### [PAYS Guide:](#)

Designed to help you and your team to get the most out of your PAYS data. In each module, you will find a library of worksheets, report examples/templates, and other resources to assist with successful PAYS analysis and planning.

### [PAYS First Wednesdays at 1 Webinar Series:](#)

Webinars that address key PAYS-related topics. Past webinar recordings are also available.

### [All Questions by Grade Report:](#)

Report provides the count and percent of students by grade selecting each answer choice for each question. County reports are available on the PAYS website and school reports are sent to schools.

Learn more at [www.pays.pa.gov](http://www.pays.pa.gov)!

# 1. DEMOGRAPHICS

48.5% of participants were female, 49.2% were male, and 2.2% were other. 8th graders were the best represented, with an estimated 79.1% participation rate based on most recent enrollment.

Overall, 79.6% of students surveyed in this county were white or Caucasian, 7.3% of students were black or African American, and the remainder were a combination of the remaining categories. 5.8% of students identified as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

*Grade-level data are only displayed in this report when there were a minimum of 25 valid participants. “All Grades” represents the combined responses of all participating students from grades 6, 8, 10, and 12. Please note the distribution of participants in “All Grades” data for this county and keep this in mind when comparing local data to state data. State-level “All Grades” data are most useful when the county data are available for all four grades, meet the minimum cutoff for the total number of participants, and have a similar distribution of participants to the state.*

	County 2019		County 2021		County 2023		State 2023	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Survey respondents</b>								
All	3,468	100.0	2,641	100.0	2,823	100.0	262,535	100.0
<b>Survey respondents by grade</b>								
6	631	18.2	533	20.2	597	21.1	67,795	25.8
8	995	28.7	733	27.8	807	28.6	73,765	28.1
10	987	28.5	694	26.3	759	26.9	67,290	25.6
12	855	24.7	681	25.8	660	23.4	53,685	20.4
<b>Survey respondents by gender</b>								
Male	1,685	49.6	1,248	47.7	1,371	49.2	129,070	49.8
Female	1,710	50.4	1,282	49.0	1,352	48.5	124,928	48.2
Other	0	0.0	86	3.3	62	2.2	5,003	1.9
<b>Survey respondents by ethnicity</b>								
Yes, of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	202	5.8	154	5.8	164	5.8	44,946	17.1
No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	3,266	94.2	2,487	94.2	2,659	94.2	217,589	82.9
<b>Survey respondents by race</b>								
Black, African American	268	7.7	252	9.5	207	7.3	29,320	11.2
American Indian	46	1.3	38	1.4	28	1.0	3,968	1.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	80	2.3	51	1.9	58	2.1	18,630	7.1
White, Caucasian	2,727	78.6	2,053	77.7	2,246	79.6	172,923	65.9
Multi-racial	227	6.5	149	5.6	147	5.2	16,730	6.4
Race Unmarked	120	3.5	98	3.7	137	4.9	20,964	8.0



**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Demographic questions**

*How old are you?*

*10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15 / 16 / 17 / 18 / 19 or older*

*What grade are you in?*

*6th / 7th / 8th / 9th / 10th / 11th / 12th*

*Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?*

*No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin*

*Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano*

*Yes, Puerto Rican*

*Yes, Cuban*

*Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (for example, Argentinean, Columbian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, etc.)*

*What is your race? (Select all that apply)*

*White, Caucasian*

*Black, African American*

*American Indian or Alaska Native*

*Asian Indian, Japanese, Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Korean, Guamanian or Chamorro, Filipino, Vietnamese, Samoan, Other Asian, Other Pacific Islander*

*Are you male, female or other?*

*Think of where you live most of the time. Which of the following people live there with you? (Choose all that apply)*

*Mother(s) / Father(s) / Stepparent(s) / Foster Parent(s)*

*/ Grandparent(s) / Other adult(s) / Sibling(s) / Other children*

*What is the language you use most often at home?*

*English*

*Spanish*

*Another language*

## 2. SUBSTANCE USE

### Monitoring Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug (ATOD) Trends in Pennsylvania Youth

#### Measurement

Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use and access is measured in PAYS by a set of 34 questions. The questions are similar to those used in the Monitoring the Future study, a nationwide study of drug use by middle and high school students.

Prevalence-of-use tables and graphs show the percentages of students who reported using ATODs. These results are presented for both lifetime and past 30-day prevalence of use periods.

#### Lifetime Use

Lifetime use is a measure of the percentage of students who tried the particular substance at least once in their lifetime and is used to show the percentage of students who have had experience with a particular substance. Lifetime prevalence of use (whether the student has ever used the drug) is a good measure of student experimentation with a given substance.

#### 30-Day Use

30-day use (whether the student has recently used the drug) is a more sensitive measure of current activities.

## Comparisons to National Results

Comparing and contrasting findings from a county- or school-district-level survey to relevant data from a national survey provides a valuable perspective on local data. In this report, national comparisons for ATOD use will be made to the 2023 Monitoring the Future study and to the 2018 Bach Harrison Norm.

## Monitoring the Future Data

The Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey project, which provides prevalence-of-use information for ATODs from a nationally representative sample of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, is conducted annually by the Survey Research Center of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (see [www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org)). For a review of the methodology of this study, please see <https://monitoringthefuture.org/about/>.

Monitoring the Future data appear on the charts as “MTF 2023”

## Bach Harrison Norm

The Bach Harrison Norm was developed by Bach Harrison L.L.C. to provide states and communities with the ability to compare their results on risk, protection, and antisocial measures with more national measures. Survey participants from 11 statewide surveys were combined into a database of approximately 878,000 students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12. The results were weighted by state and grade to make each state’s contributions more in line with the nation’s student population. Bach Harrison analysts then calculated rates for antisocial behavior, students at risk, and students with protection. The results appear on the charts as “BH Norm.” In order to keep the Bach Harrison Norm relevant, it is updated approximately every two years as new data become available. The most recent update to the Bach Harrison Norm was completed using 2016-2017 data.

A comparison to state-wide and national results provides additional information for your county in determining the relative importance of levels of ATOD use, antisocial behavior, risk, and protection. Information about other students in the state and the nation can be helpful in determining the seriousness of a given level of problem behavior. Scanning across the charts, it is important to observe the factors that differ the most from the Bach Harrison Norm. This is the first step in identifying the levels of risk and protection that are higher or lower than those in other communities. The risk factors that are higher than the Bach Harrison Norm and the protective factors that are lower than the Bach Harrison Norm may be factors that your county should consider addressing when planning prevention programs.



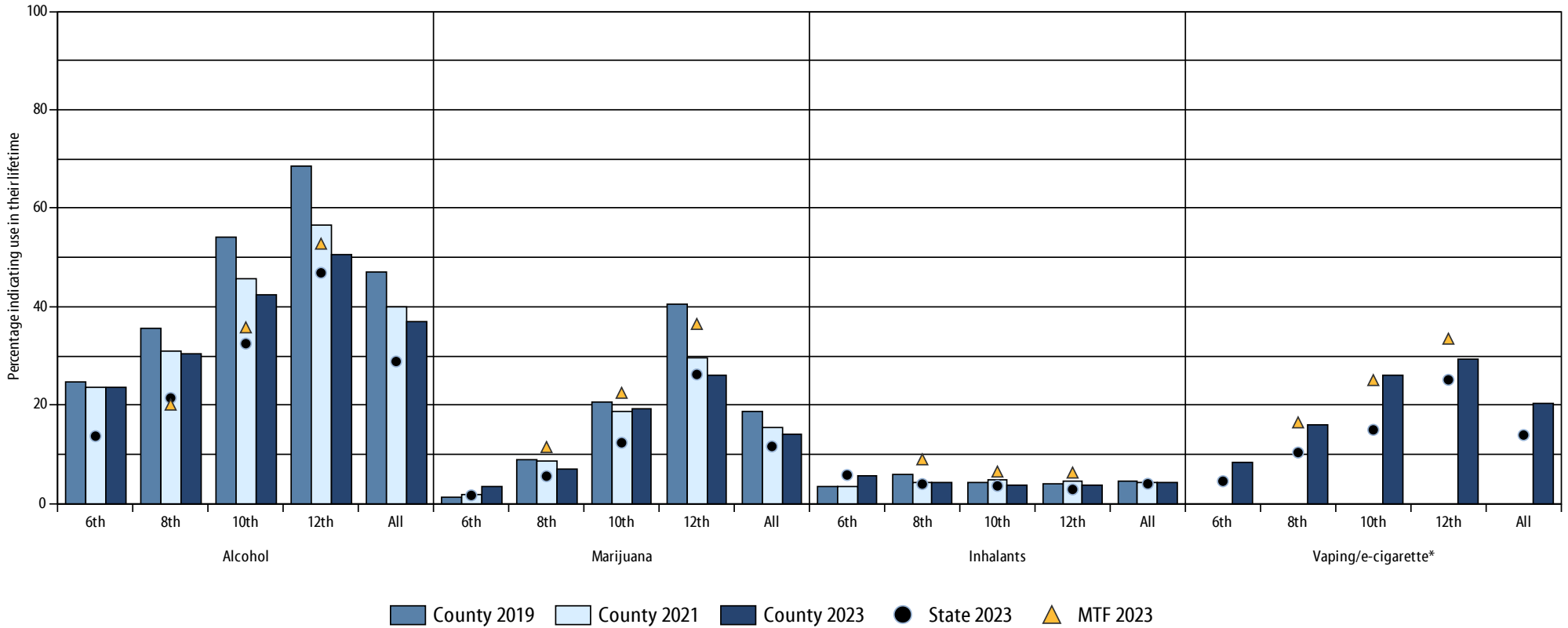
# HIGH PREVALENCE/EARLY INITIATION DRUGS

This section covers alcohol, vaping, tobacco (cigarettes and smokeless), marijuana, and inhalants, the drugs first and most commonly used by youth. The higher prevalence and earlier initiation of use makes monitoring these drugs useful when monitoring students at risk for progression from experimentation to social use to addiction to these and other substances.

The highest lifetime usage rates were seen in alcohol (36.9% of students in this county, compared to 28.9% at the state level). The next highest lifetime use rate was vaping, with 20.3% indicating use (compared to 13.9% at the state level).

PAYS 2023 category:	PAYS 2023 question text:
<b>Alcohol</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30 days</u>: had beer, wine, or hard liquor?</i>
<b>Marijuana</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30 days</u>: Used marijuana (pot, hash, cannabis, weed, THC)?</i>
<b>Inhalants</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30 days</u>: Sniffed glue, breathed the contents of an aerosol spray can, or inhaled other gases or sprays <u>in order to get high</u>?</i>
<b>Tobacco</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30 days</u>: smoked cigarettes?</i>  <i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30 days</u>: Used smokless tobacco (chew, snuff, plug, dipping tobacco, chewing tobacco)?</i>
<b>Vaping</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30 days</u>: Used an electronic vapor product such as e-cigarettes, vapes, mods, e-cigs, e-hookahs, or vape pens?</i>  <i>If you used an electronic vapor product such as e-cigarettes, vapes, mods, e-cigs, e-hookahs, or vape pens during the past 12 months, with which substances did you use it? (Mark all that apply.)</i>  <i>Just flavoring</i> <i>Nicotine</i> <i>Marijuana or THC</i> <i>Other substance</i> <i>I don't know</i>

# Early initiation and higher prevalence drugs - Lifetime use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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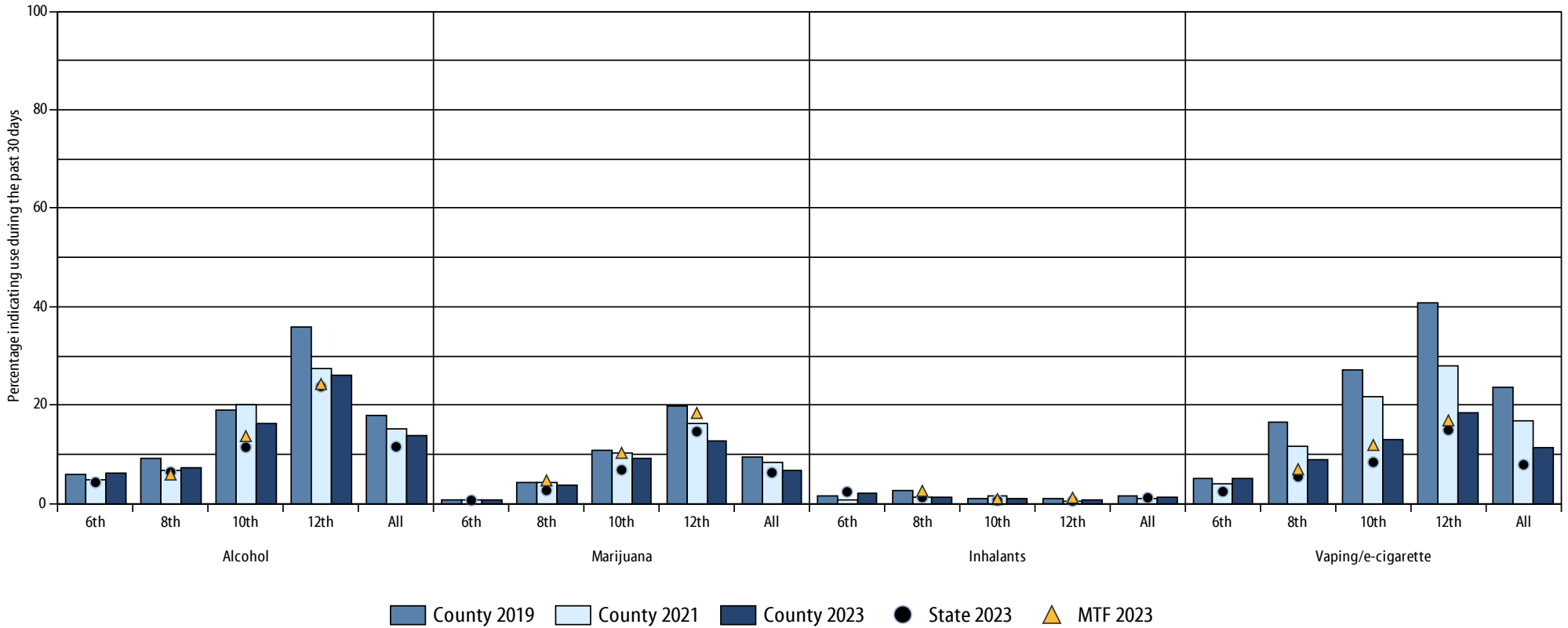
\*Lifetime vaping question was added to survey in 2023.

Grade	Alcohol					Marijuana					Inhalants					Vaping/e-cigarette*				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	24.6	23.6	23.7	13.7	n/a	1.3	1.9	3.5	1.7	n/a	3.4	3.5	5.7	5.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.4	4.6	n/a
8th	35.6	31.0	30.3	21.5	20.1	8.9	8.6	7.1	5.6	11.5	6.0	4.3	4.2	4.0	9.0	n/a	n/a	15.9	10.4	16.5
10th	54.2	45.7	42.5	32.5	35.8	20.6	18.8	19.1	12.4	22.5	4.3	4.8	3.8	3.6	6.5	n/a	n/a	26.2	15.0	25.1
12th	68.7	56.7	50.5	46.9	52.8	40.6	29.6	26.1	26.2	36.5	4.0	4.6	3.7	2.9	6.3	n/a	n/a	29.5	25.2	33.5
All	47.1	39.9	36.9	28.9	n/a	18.8	15.4	14.0	11.6	n/a	4.6	4.4	4.3	4.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	20.3	13.9	n/a

\*\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.



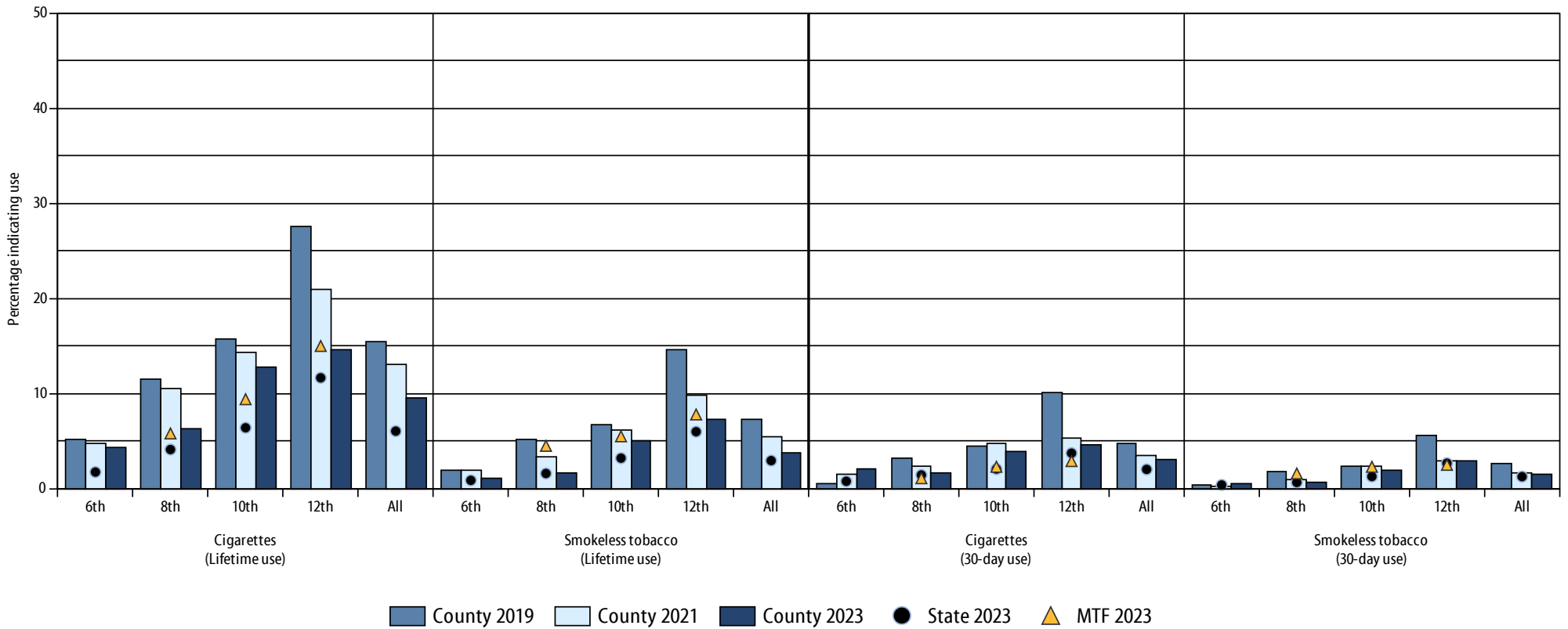
# Early initiation and higher prevalence drugs - 30-day use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	Alcohol					Marijuana					Inhalants					Vaping/e-cigarette				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	6.0	4.8	6.2	4.3	n/a	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.7	n/a	1.6	0.8	2.1	2.4	n/a	5.2	4.1	5.2	2.4	n/a
8th	9.2	6.7	7.4	6.4	5.9	4.2	4.4	3.6	2.7	4.7	2.7	1.4	1.2	1.2	2.6	16.5	11.5	8.8	5.5	7.0
10th	19.1	20.0	16.2	11.4	13.7	10.9	10.4	9.1	6.8	10.3	0.9	1.5	0.9	0.6	0.9	27.3	21.6	12.9	8.4	11.9
12th	35.8	27.5	26.0	23.8	24.3	19.8	16.2	12.8	14.6	18.4	0.9	0.4	0.6	0.5	1.2	40.7	28.0	18.5	14.9	16.9
All	18.0	15.1	13.9	11.5	n/a	9.4	8.3	6.7	6.3	n/a	1.6	1.0	1.2	1.2	n/a	23.5	16.9	11.4	7.9	n/a

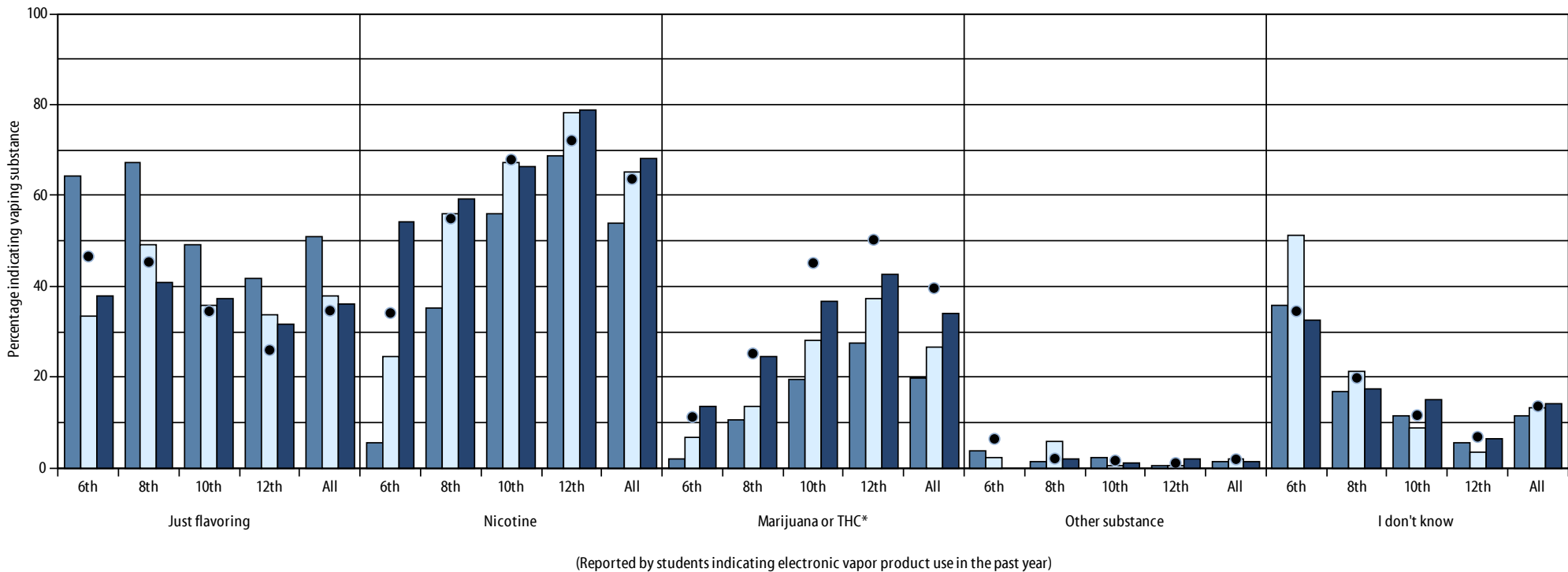
# Tobacco - Lifetime and 30-day use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	Cigarettes (Lifetime use)					Smokeless tobacco (Lifetime use)					Cigarettes (30-day use)					Smokeless tobacco (30-day use)				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	5.2	4.8	4.4	1.7	n/a	1.9	1.9	1.0	0.9	n/a	0.5	1.5	2.1	0.8	n/a	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.4	n/a
8th	11.5	10.5	6.3	4.1	5.8	5.2	3.3	1.6	1.6	4.5	3.3	2.4	1.6	1.4	1.1	1.7	1.0	0.6	0.7	1.6
10th	15.7	14.3	12.8	6.4	9.4	6.7	6.2	5.1	3.2	5.5	4.4	4.7	3.9	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.4	1.9	1.3	2.3
12th	27.6	21.0	14.6	11.6	15.0	14.6	9.8	7.3	6.0	7.8	10.0	5.2	4.7	3.7	2.9	5.6	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.5
All	15.5	13.1	9.6	6.1	n/a	7.3	5.5	3.7	3.0	n/a	4.8	3.6	3.0	2.0	n/a	2.6	1.7	1.5	1.3	n/a

# Vaping substances used by students indicating electronic vaping product use in the past year Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

\* Prior to 2023 "Marijuana or THC" was worded as "marijuana or hash oil" which could impact comparability of 2023 data to prior years

Grade	Just flavoring				Nicotine				Marijuana or THC*				Other substance				I don't know			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	64.2	33.3	37.8	46.6	5.7	24.4	54.1	34.1	1.9	6.7	13.5	11.2	3.8	2.2	0.0	6.4	35.8	51.1	32.4	34.5
8th	67.3	49.2	40.8	45.4	35.1	55.9	59.2	54.9	10.6	13.6	24.5	25.2	1.4	5.9	2.0	2.1	16.8	21.2	17.3	19.9
10th	49.2	35.7	37.3	34.5	56.1	67.3	66.5	67.9	19.4	28.0	36.7	45.1	2.2	0.6	1.3	1.7	11.6	8.9	15.2	11.6
12th	41.6	33.8	31.6	26.0	68.8	78.1	78.7	72.1	27.4	37.3	42.6	50.3	0.5	0.5	1.9	1.1	5.6	3.5	6.5	6.9
All	50.8	37.8	36.2	34.6	54.0	65.2	68.1	63.6	19.8	26.5	34.2	39.6	1.4	1.9	1.6	2.0	11.6	13.2	14.1	13.6

\*\* See All questions by Grade report to see the percentage of total students who report vaping a specific substance.



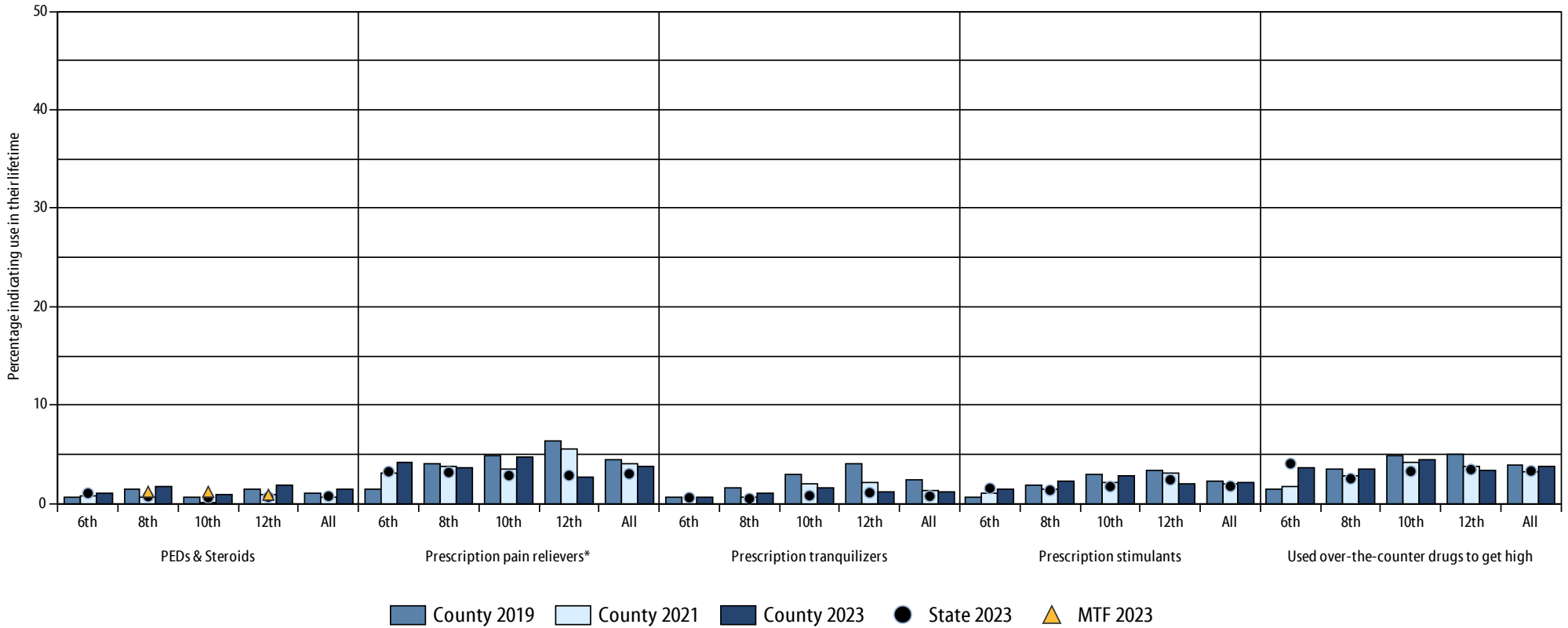
# PRESCRIPTION AND OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS AND MEDICATIONS

According to the recent Monitoring the Future study, prescription drugs are the most misused category of drugs after alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.

The type of prescription drug most frequently misused by students in this county was prescription pain relievers (3.8% of students indicating lifetime use, compared to 3.0% at the state level). The next most frequently misused substance was over-the-counter drugs to get high (3.8% of students indicating lifetime use, compared to 3.3% at the state level).

<b>PAYS 2023 category:</b>	<i>PAYS 2023 question text:</i>
<b>Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs)</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Taken performance enhancing drugs (such as steroids, human growth hormone) without a doctor telling you to take them?</i>
<b>Prescription Pain Relievers</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used prescription pain relievers (such as Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet or Codeine) without a doctor telling you to take them?</i>
<b>Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used over-the-counter medicine (cough syrup, cold medicine, etc.) <u>in order to get high</u>?</i>
<b>Prescription Tranquilizers</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used prescription tranquilizers (such as Ambien, Lunesta, Valium, or Xanax) without a doctor telling you to take them?</i>
<b>Prescription Stimulants</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used prescription stimulants (such as Ritalin or Adderall) without a doctor telling you to take them?</i>

# Prescription and over-the-counter drugs and medications - Lifetime use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



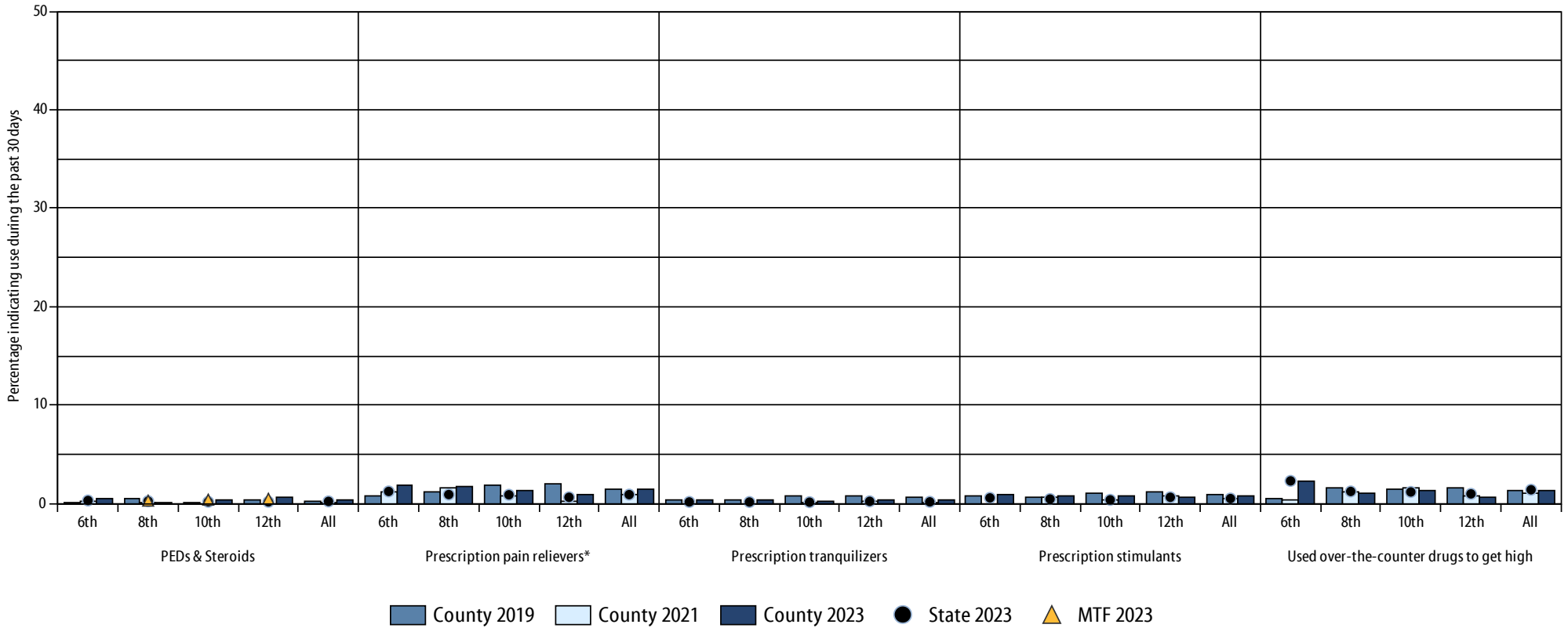
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\*MTF comparison data for prescription pain reliever use are only available for the 12th grade

Grade	PEDs & Steroids					Prescription pain relievers*					Prescription tranquilizers					Prescription stimulants					Used over-the-counter drugs to get high				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.1	n/a	1.5	3.1	4.2	3.2	n/a	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.6	n/a	0.7	1.0	1.4	1.5	n/a	1.5	1.8	3.6	4.1	n/a
8th	1.4	0.7	1.7	0.7	1.2	4.1	3.7	3.6	3.2	n/a	1.5	0.7	1.0	0.5	n/a	1.9	1.5	2.3	1.4	n/a	3.5	2.8	3.5	2.5	n/a
10th	0.6	0.1	0.9	0.6	1.2	4.8	3.5	4.8	2.9	n/a	2.9	2.1	1.6	0.8	n/a	2.9	2.2	2.8	1.7	n/a	4.8	4.2	4.4	3.3	n/a
12th	1.4	0.9	1.9	0.7	0.9	6.4	5.5	2.6	2.9	n/a	4.1	2.1	1.2	1.1	n/a	3.4	3.1	2.0	2.4	n/a	5.0	3.8	3.4	3.5	n/a
All	1.1	0.6	1.4	0.7	n/a	4.4	4.0	3.8	3.0	n/a	2.4	1.3	1.2	0.8	n/a	2.3	2.0	2.2	1.8	n/a	3.9	3.2	3.8	3.3	n/a

\*\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.

# Prescription and over-the-counter drugs and medications - 30-day use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

\*MTF comparison data for prescription pain reliever use are only available for the 12th grade

Grade	PEDs & Steroids					Prescription pain relievers*					Prescription tranquilizers					Prescription stimulants					Used over-the-counter drugs to get high				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3	n/a	0.8	1.2	1.9	1.2	n/a	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.2	n/a	0.8	0.0	0.9	0.6	n/a	0.5	0.4	2.2	2.3	n/a
8th	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	1.2	1.7	1.8	0.9	n/a	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.2	n/a	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.5	n/a	1.5	1.2	1.0	1.2	n/a
10th	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.4	1.8	0.7	1.3	0.9	n/a	0.8	0.1	0.3	0.1	n/a	1.0	0.4	0.8	0.4	n/a	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.2	n/a
12th	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.5	2.0	0.3	0.9	0.6	n/a	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.2	n/a	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.6	n/a	1.5	0.7	0.6	1.0	n/a
All	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.2	n/a	1.5	1.0	1.5	0.9	n/a	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.2	n/a	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.5	n/a	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.4	n/a

\*\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.



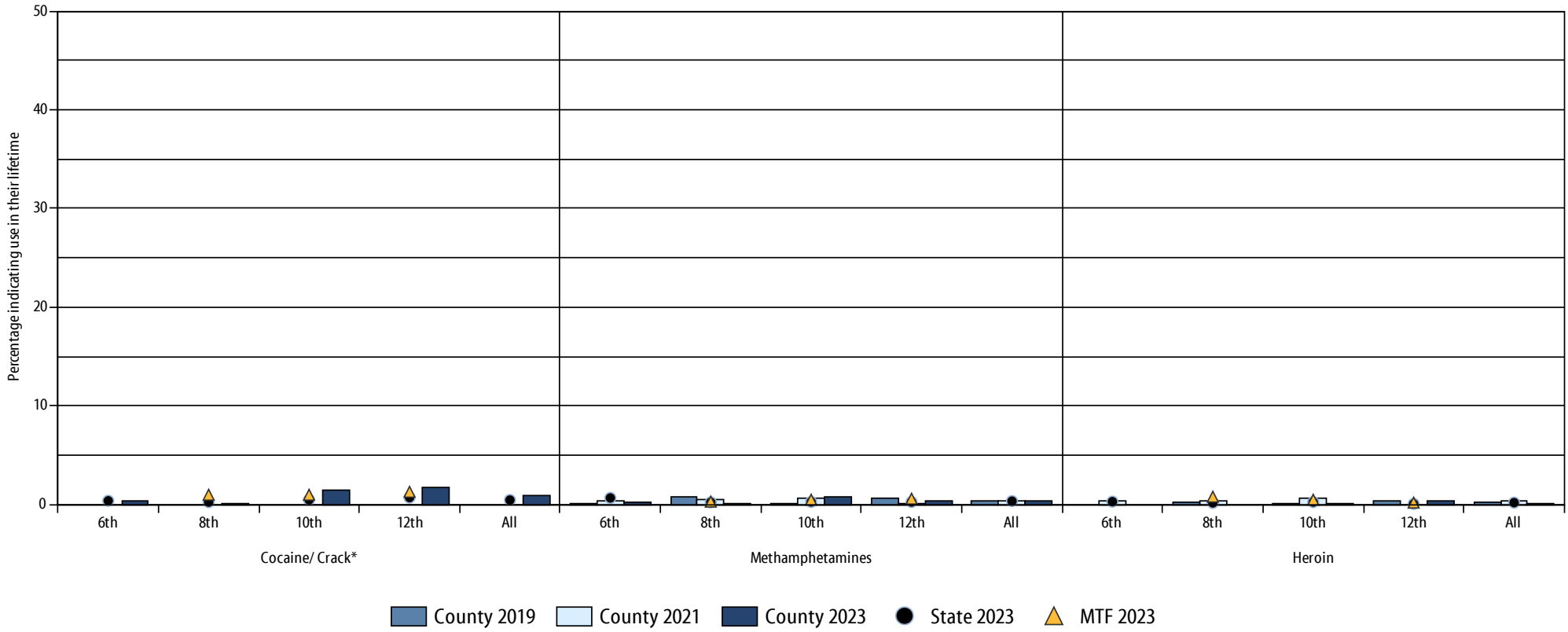
# OTHER DRUGS

PAYS also measures the prevalence of use for a variety of other drugs. The rates for prevalence of use of these other drugs are generally lower than the rates for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants. Use of these other drugs tends to be concentrated in the upper grade levels.

The most frequently used substance in the “other” category in this county was hallucinogens (2.4% of students indicating lifetime use, compared to 1.9% at the state level).

PAYS 2023 category:	PAYS 2023 question text:
<b>Cocaine/ Crack</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used cocaine or crack?</i>
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used methamphetamine (meth, crystal meth, speed)?</i>
<b>Heroin</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used heroin?</i>
<b>Hallucinogens</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used hallucinogens (acid, LSD, shrooms)?</i>
<b>Ecstasy/ Molly</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used Ecstasy or Molly?</i>
<b>Synthetic Drugs</b>	<i>Have you <u>ever</u>:/ How often have you, <u>In the past 30days</u>: Used synthetic drugs (man-made drugs such as K2, Spice, Fake Weed, Bath Salts)?</i>

# Other drugs (cocaine/crack, methamphetamines, and heroin) - Lifetime use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



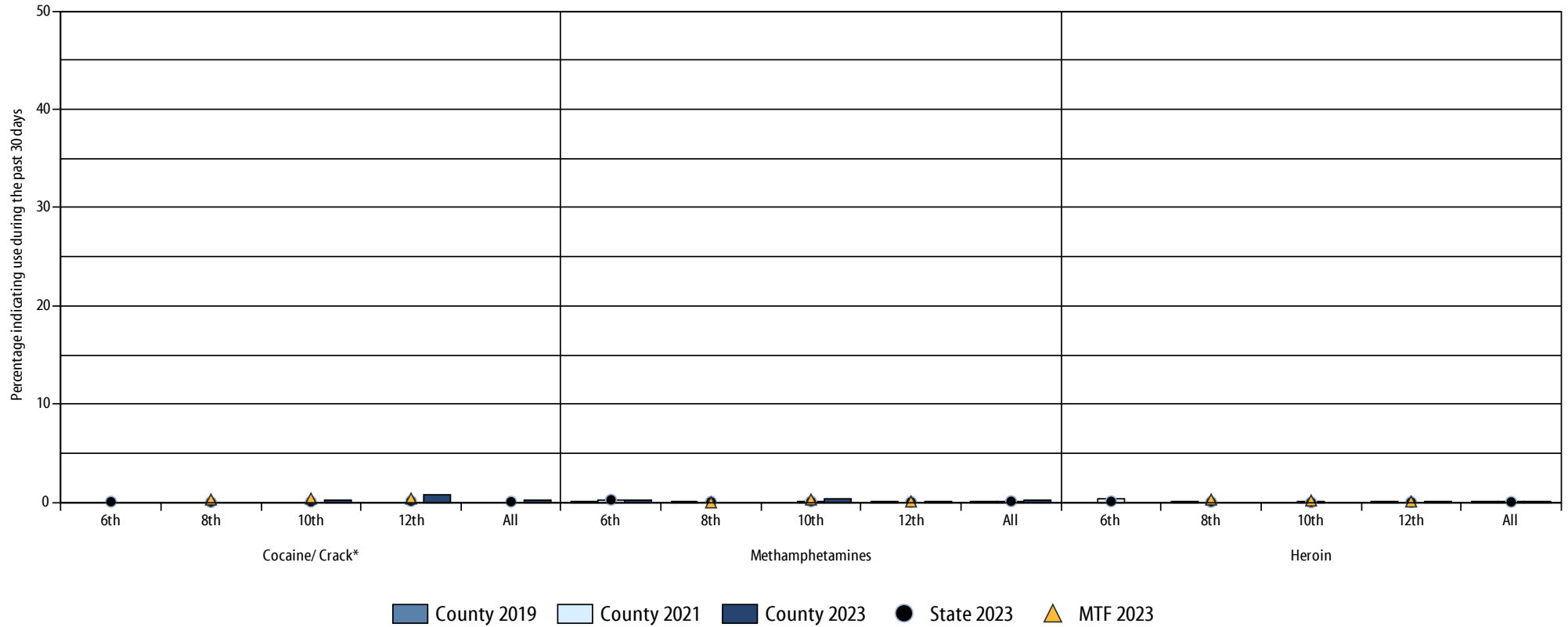
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\*Prior to 2023 cocaine and crack usage were asked as separate questions.

Grade	Cocaine/ Crack*					Methamphetamines					Heroin				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	0.3	0.4	n/a	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.7	n/a	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.3	n/a
8th	n/a	n/a	0.1	0.2	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.8
10th	n/a	n/a	1.5	0.5	1.0	0.1	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.5
12th	n/a	n/a	1.7	0.7	1.3	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.2
All	n/a	n/a	0.9	0.5	n/a	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	n/a	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	n/a

\*\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.

# Other drugs (cocaine/crack, methamphetamines, and heroin) - 30-day use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

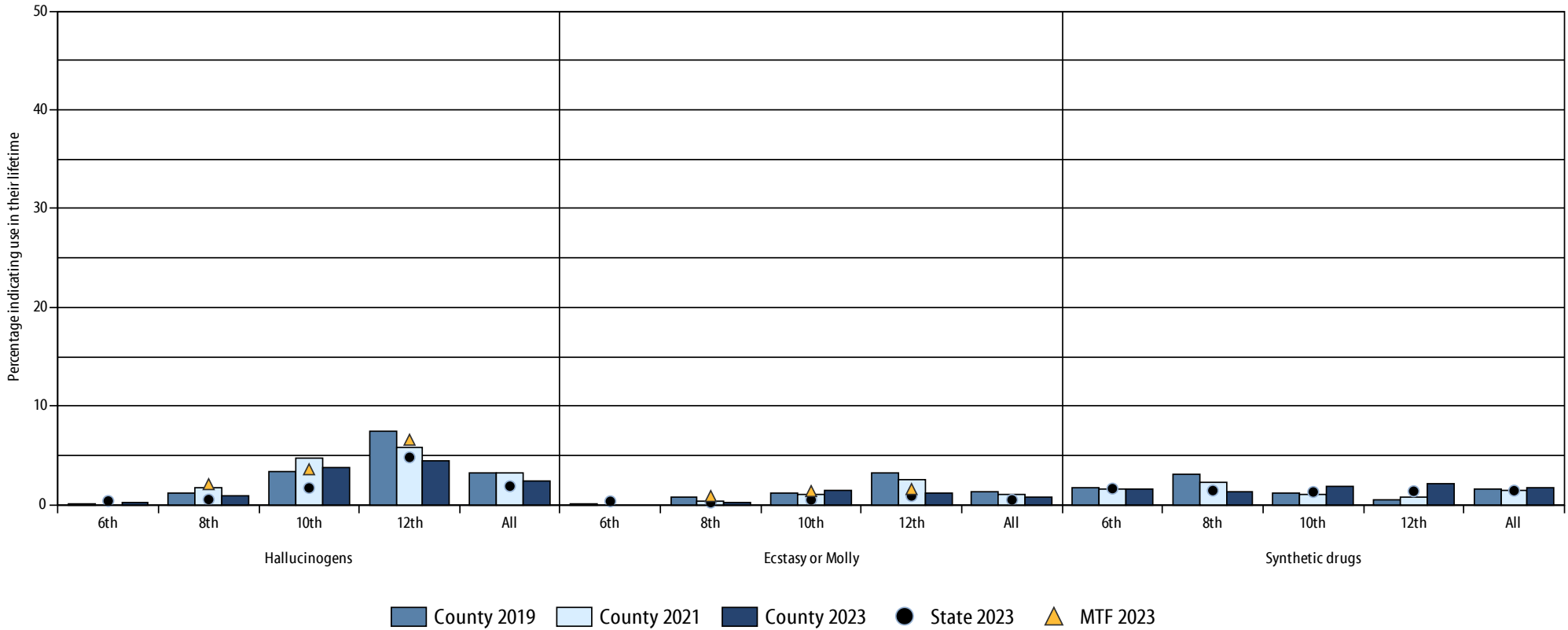


\*Prior to 2023 cocaine and crack usage were asked as separate questions.

Grade	Cocaine/ Crack*					Methamphetamines					Heroin				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	0.0	0.1	n/a	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	n/a	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.1	n/a
8th	n/a	n/a	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3
10th	n/a	n/a	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
12th	n/a	n/a	0.8	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1
All	n/a	n/a	0.3	0.1	n/a	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	n/a	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	n/a

\*\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.

# Other drugs (hallucinogens, ecstasy, and synthetic drugs) - Lifetime use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

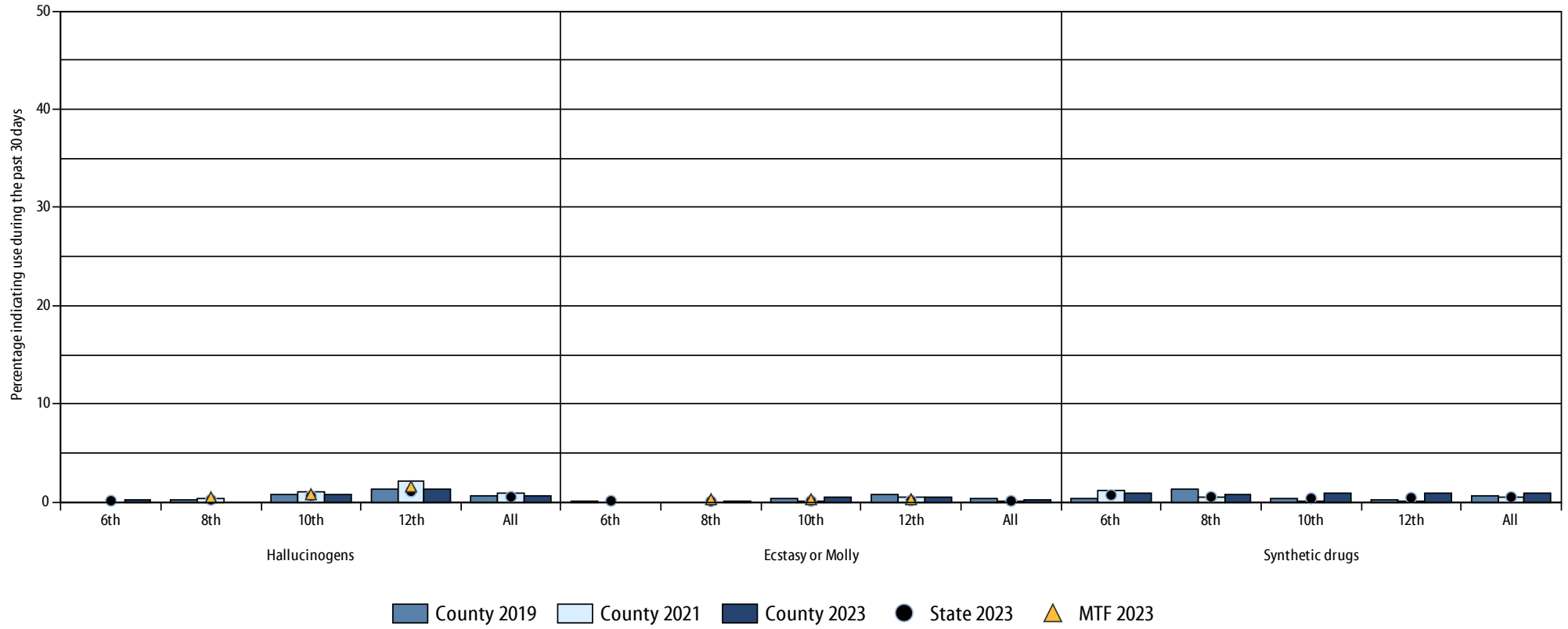


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Grade	Hallucinogens					Ecstasy or Molly					Synthetic drugs				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.4	n/a	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	n/a	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	n/a
8th	1.2	1.8	0.9	0.5	2.1	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.9	3.1	2.2	1.4	1.5	n/a
10th	3.4	4.7	3.7	1.7	3.6	1.1	1.0	1.5	0.5	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.9	1.3	n/a
12th	7.5	5.9	4.5	4.8	6.6	3.2	2.5	1.2	0.9	1.6	0.5	0.8	2.2	1.4	n/a
All	3.2	3.2	2.4	1.9	n/a	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.5	n/a	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.4	n/a

\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.

# Other drugs (hallucinogens, ecstasy, and synthetic drugs) - 30-day use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	Hallucinogens					Ecstasy or Molly					Synthetic drugs				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	n/a	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	n/a	0.3	1.2	0.9	0.7	n/a
8th	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.3	0.6	0.8	0.5	n/a
10th	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.4	n/a
12th	1.3	2.1	1.4	1.1	1.6	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.4	n/a
All	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.5	n/a	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.1	n/a	0.6	0.5	0.9	0.5	n/a

\*See Appendix B for changes made to substance use questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.



# BINGE DRINKING AND DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Binge drinking and driving while intoxicated are particularly risky substance use-related behaviors. These behaviors are strongly linked to serious negative health consequences, such as alcohol poisoning, automobile fatality, as well as DUI conviction and resulting complications with employment, college applications, and financial aid.

4.8% of students in this county engaged in binge drinking in the past two weeks (compared to 4.0% at the state level). 2.7% of 12th grade students reported driving while or shortly after drinking (compared to 2.3% at the state level).

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Risky substance use-related behaviors**

*Think back over the last two weeks.*

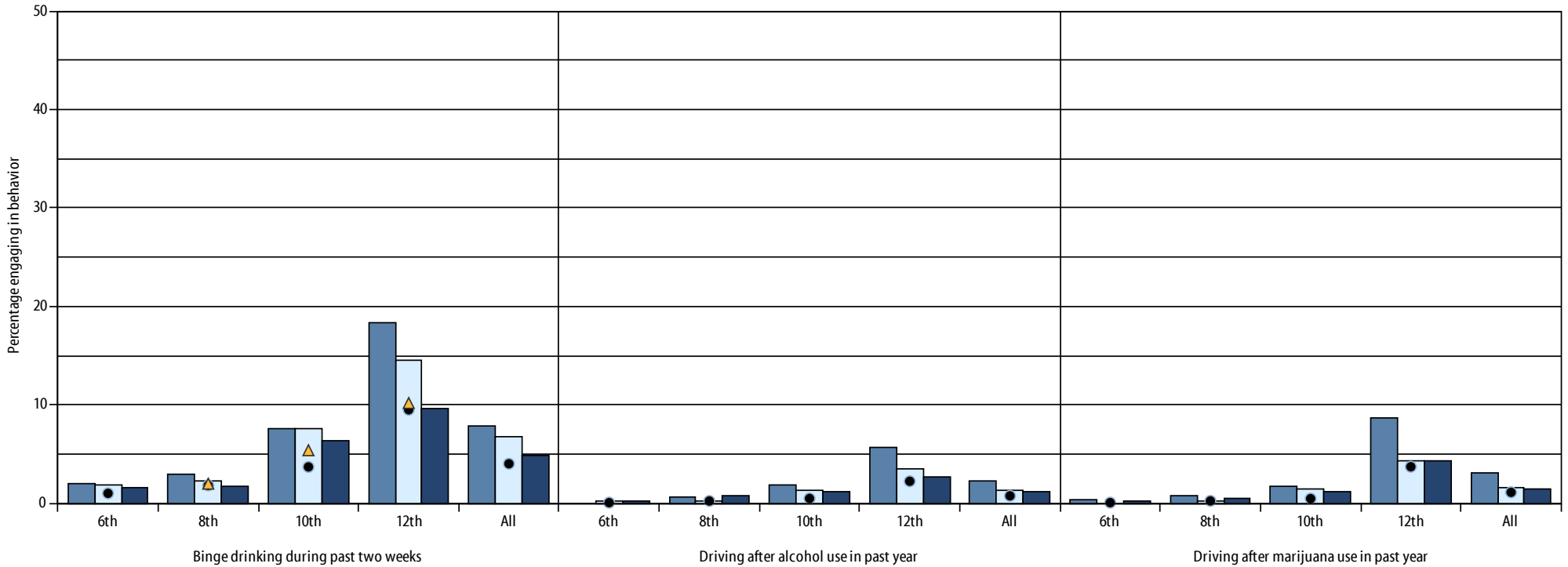
*How many times have you had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row?*

*How often have you:*

*Driven a motor vehicle while or shortly after drinking alcohol?*

*Driven a motor vehicle while or shortly after using marijuana (pot, hash, cannabis, weed, THC)?*

# Binge drinking and driving under the influence Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023 MTF 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Binge drinking during past two weeks					Driving after alcohol use in past year					Driving after marijuana use in past year				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	MTF 2023
6th	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.0	n/a	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	n/a	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.1	n/a
8th	3.0	2.2	1.8	1.8	2.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.2	n/a	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.3	n/a
10th	7.5	7.6	6.4	3.7	5.4	1.9	1.3	1.2	0.5	n/a	1.7	1.5	1.2	0.5	n/a
12th	18.3	14.5	9.6	9.5	10.2	5.7	3.5	2.7	2.3	n/a	8.6	4.4	4.3	3.7	n/a
All	7.9	6.7	4.8	4.0	n/a	2.3	1.3	1.2	0.8	n/a	3.1	1.6	1.5	1.1	n/a

# 3. MENTAL HEALTH

Stress, anxiety, loneliness, and frustration are all emotions that can negatively impact student health when students do not have the strategies and supports to cope effectively.

## Mental Health

Important skills—including coping, problem-solving, and help-seeking—help adolescents to achieve overall wellbeing and set the stage for positive mental health in adulthood. Building these skills and promoting other protective factors in schools, at home and in the community, can help mitigate risk of experiencing a mental health concern. Prevention and early identification are crucial in helping students who are struggling to get the help they need and in preventing a mental health concern from worsening. Friends and family can watch for warning signs of social and emotional distress and urge young people to get help.

## Mental Health Disorders

It can sometimes be challenging to distinguish a mental health challenge from typical adolescent development. Noticing changes in behavior, as well as the extent to which that change is impacting that youth, provide the opportunity for outreach and support. While approximately one out of five adolescents has a diagnosable mental health disorder, not all challenges are indicative of a disorder. Identifying challenges early on helps improve positive outcomes and reduces the likelihood that a youth will develop a mental health disorder or experience a mental health crisis (e.g., suicidal thoughts or behaviors). Effective strategies and supports for mental health challenges, as well as universal prevention efforts that promote mental health and wellness, can help equip adolescents to cope effectively with life stressors and reduce the risk of adverse outcomes.

## Access to Mental Health Care

Less than half of adolescents who need mental health services receive them. Barriers to receiving help include limited mental health knowledge or perceived social stigma and embarrassment. Initially identifying a mental health disorder can be challenging—issues are often first identified at school. Researchers have documented a number of disparities in access: among adolescents, those who are homeless; served by state child welfare and juvenile justice systems; and are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender are often the least likely to receive services.

## Positive Mental Health: Resilience

Resilient youth are able to cope effectively with stress and other difficult circumstances, and are likely to enter adulthood with good mental health. Some important factors that promote resilience in youth include caring relationships with adults, regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and emotional intelligence. Schools and communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of social and emotional learning and coping skills for youth, and are offering more courses and programs in this area.

# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AND SUICIDE RISK

PAYS includes one question about self-harm and four questions that ask students about feelings—sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness—that can be symptoms of depression. PAYS also asks five questions specific to suicide, measuring depressed behavior, suicidal intention, actual suicide attempts, and the seriousness of those attempts (by asking about resulting medical intervention).

The most common depressed thought was “at times I think I am no good at all,” reported by 40.8% of students in this county. 43.8% of students reported they felt sad or depressed MOST days in the past 12 months. Overall, 19.3% of students had seriously considered attempting suicide, compared to 16.1% of students at the state level.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Mental health concerns** *My overall mental health in the past month has been good.*

*In the past 12 months have you felt depressed or sad MOST days, even if you feel OK sometimes?*

*How many times in the past 12 months have you:  
Done anything to harm yourself (such as cutting, scraping, burning) as a way to relieve difficult feelings, or to communicate emotions that may be difficult to express verbally?*

*Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.*

*At times I think I am no good at all.*

*All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.*

*If you have felt sad, lonely or worried in the past month who did you talk to?*

- No one*
- Parent/caregiver*
- Other family member*
- Friend*
- Teacher of another adult at school (e.g. coach, counselor, nurse)*
- Doctor or therapist*
- Religious or spiritual leader (e.g. Rabbi, Pastor, Imam, Priest, or Nun, Bishop)*
- Other adult in the community*
- I have not felt this way in the past 30 days*

**Suicide risk** *During the past 12 months:*

The next questions ask about sad feelings and attempted suicide.

*Did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?*

Sometimes people feel so depressed about the future that they may consider attempting suicide, that is, taking some action to end their own life.

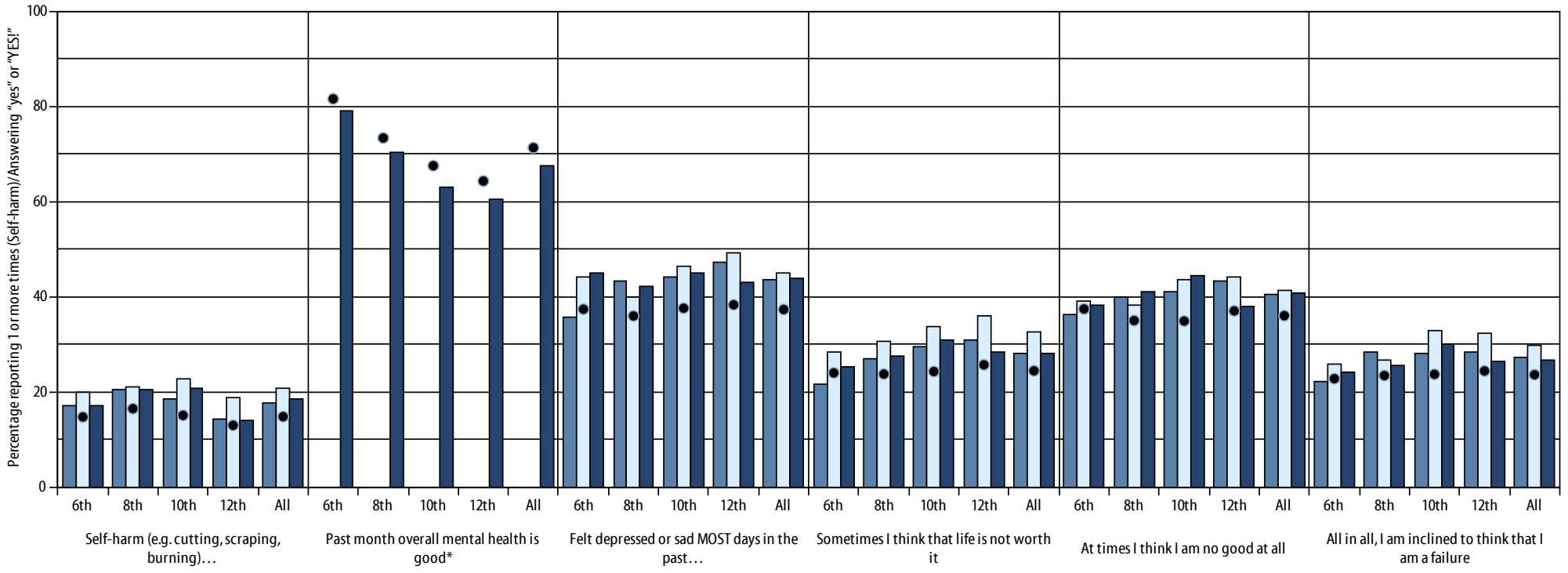
*Did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?*

*Did you make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?*

*Did you actually attempt suicide?*

*If you attempted suicide during the past 12 months, did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?*

# Mental Health Concerns Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



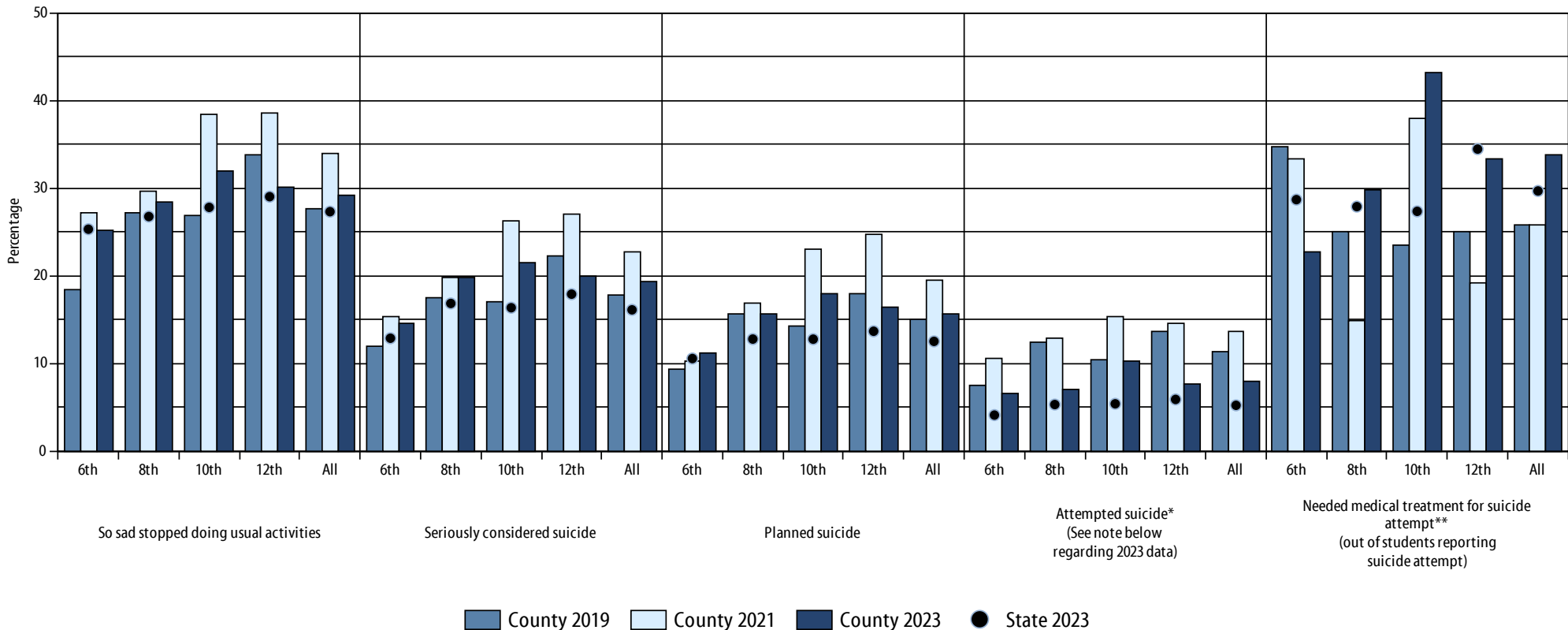
County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Self-harm (e.g. cutting, scraping, burning) in the past 12 months				Past month overall mental health is good*				Felt depressed or sad MOST days in the past 12 months				Sometimes I think that life is not worth it				At times I think I am no good at all				All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	17.2	20.1	17.1	14.7	n/a	n/a	79.1	81.5	35.6	44.2	45.1	37.4	21.7	28.3	25.1	24.0	36.2	39.2	38.2	37.4	22.1	25.9	24.1	22.8
8th	20.5	21.1	20.6	16.5	n/a	n/a	70.4	73.3	43.2	40.0	42.1	36.0	26.9	30.6	27.4	23.7	40.0	38.2	41.2	35.0	28.2	26.6	25.6	23.4
10th	18.6	22.7	20.9	15.1	n/a	n/a	63.1	67.5	44.2	46.5	45.0	37.6	29.4	33.8	30.9	24.3	40.9	43.6	44.4	34.9	28.1	32.8	30.2	23.7
12th	14.2	18.8	13.9	13.0	n/a	n/a	60.3	64.3	47.3	49.1	43.1	38.3	31.0	36.0	28.3	25.7	43.4	44.3	38.0	37.0	28.4	32.2	26.4	24.4
All	17.8	20.8	18.4	14.8	n/a	n/a	67.6	71.3	43.4	44.9	43.8	37.3	27.9	32.5	28.2	24.4	40.6	41.4	40.8	36.0	27.3	29.6	26.8	23.6

\*Past month overall mental health question was added to survey in 2023.

# Suicide risk Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



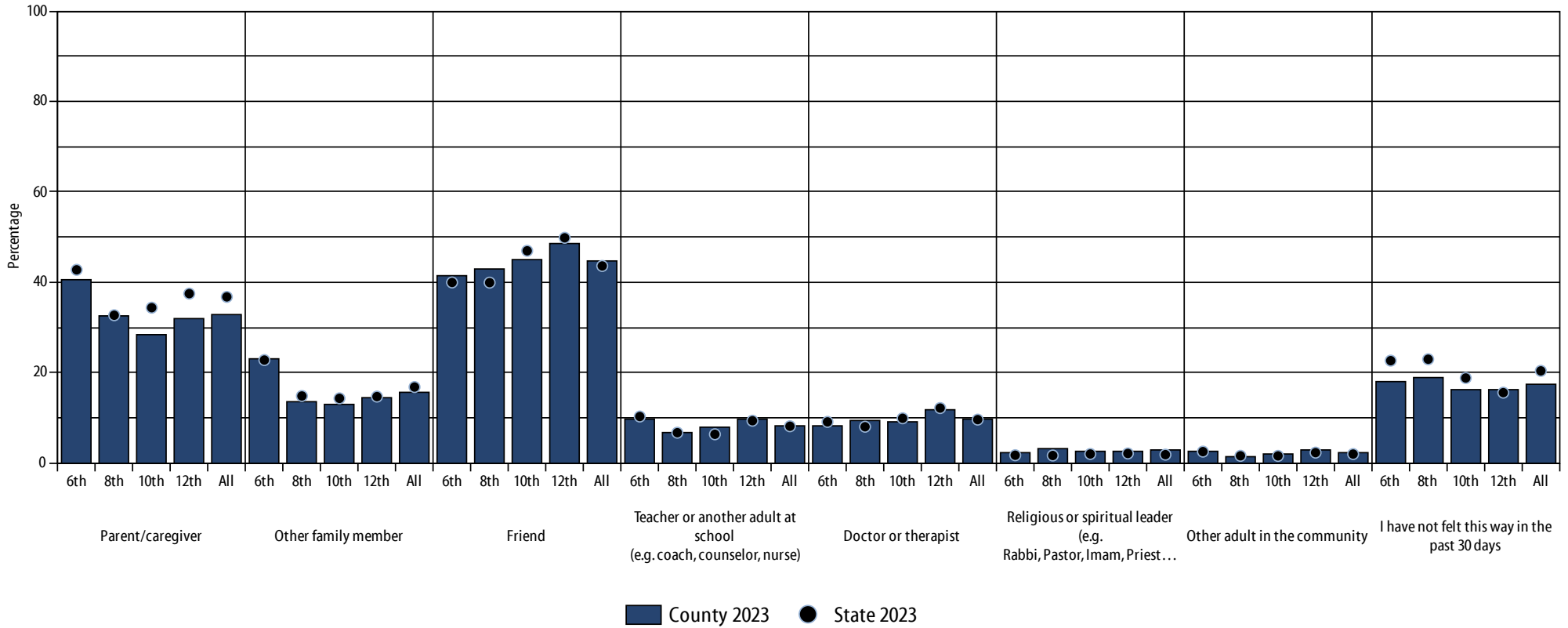
Grade	So sad stopped doing usual activities				Seriously considered suicide				Planned suicide				Attempted suicide*				Needed medical treatment for suicide attempt			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	18.3	27.1	25.2	25.3	12.0	15.4	14.5	12.9	9.3	10.3	11.2	10.6	7.4	10.5	6.5	4.1	34.8	33.3	22.7	28.7
8th	27.2	29.6	28.4	26.8	17.4	19.7	19.7	16.8	15.7	16.9	15.6	12.8	12.4	12.8	7.1	5.3	25.0	14.8	29.7	27.9
10th	26.9	38.3	32.0	27.8	17.0	26.2	21.4	16.4	14.3	23.0	17.9	12.8	10.4	15.4	10.3	5.4	23.5	37.9	43.2	27.3
12th	33.8	38.6	30.1	29.0	22.3	27.0	20.0	17.9	17.9	24.7	16.5	13.7	13.7	14.6	7.6	5.9	25.0	19.1	33.3	34.4
All	27.6	34.0	29.2	27.3	17.8	22.8	19.3	16.1	15.0	19.6	15.7	12.5	11.4	13.6	8.0	5.2	25.8	25.8	33.8	29.7

\*The question regarding suicide attempts was revised in 2023 from a question on how many times attempted suicide to a yes/no question on if attempted suicide. The 2023 data should be interpreted with caution when comparing to prior years.

\*\*In the 2023 survey, skip logic ensured that only participants who marked that they had actually attempted suicide were given this question, the past data was recalculated to match.



# Who talked to when felt sad, lonely or worried Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	Parent/caregiver				Other family member				Friend				Teacher or another adult at school (e.g. coach, counselor, nurse)				Doctor or therapist				Religious or spiritual leader (e.g. Rabbi, Pastor, Imam, Priest or Nun, Bishop)				Other adult in the community				I have not felt this way in the past 30 days			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	40.7	42.8	n/a	n/a	23.2	22.8	n/a	n/a	41.5	40.0	n/a	n/a	9.7	10.3	n/a	n/a	8.2	9.1	n/a	n/a	2.3	1.7	n/a	n/a	2.7	2.5	n/a	n/a	18.1	22.7
8th	n/a	n/a	32.7	32.7	n/a	n/a	13.6	14.9	n/a	n/a	42.9	39.9	n/a	n/a	6.8	6.7	n/a	n/a	9.4	8.0	n/a	n/a	3.2	1.7	n/a	n/a	1.4	1.6	n/a	n/a	18.8	23.0
10th	n/a	n/a	28.5	34.4	n/a	n/a	13.0	14.3	n/a	n/a	45.1	47.0	n/a	n/a	8.0	6.4	n/a	n/a	9.1	9.9	n/a	n/a	2.7	2.0	n/a	n/a	2.1	1.6	n/a	n/a	16.1	18.8
12th	n/a	n/a	32.0	37.5	n/a	n/a	14.6	14.7	n/a	n/a	48.6	49.8	n/a	n/a	9.8	9.4	n/a	n/a	11.9	12.2	n/a	n/a	2.7	2.1	n/a	n/a	2.9	2.3	n/a	n/a	16.2	15.6
All	n/a	n/a	32.9	36.8	n/a	n/a	15.5	16.8	n/a	n/a	44.6	43.6	n/a	n/a	8.4	8.1	n/a	n/a	9.7	9.6	n/a	n/a	2.8	1.9	n/a	n/a	2.2	2.0	n/a	n/a	17.3	20.4

\*Question on who talked to when felt said, lonely or worried was added to survey in 2023.

# DEPRESSION AND SUBSTANCE USE

The substance use rate of youth who reported depressive symptoms is much greater than those who have a much more positive outlook on life.

The four depressive symptoms that were asked on the survey questionnaire were: 1) *Sometimes I think that life is not worth it*, 2) *At times I think I am no good at all*, 3) *All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure*, and 4) *In the past year, have you felt depressed or sad MOST days, even if you felt OK sometimes?* The questions were scored on a scale of 1 to 4 (NO!, no, yes, YES!). The survey respondents were divided into three groups.

The high depressive symptoms group scored at least a mean of 3.75 on the depressive symptoms. This meant that those individuals marked “YES!” to all four items or marked “yes” to one item and “YES!” to three. The no depressive symptoms group marked “NO!” to all four of the items, and the moderate depressive symptoms group comprised the remaining respondents. Of the statewide sample, 24.8% of students scored no depressive symptoms on this scale; 69.8% scored moderate symptoms; and 5.4% scored high symptoms.

The table below shows the relationship between youth who report depressive symptoms and ATOD use.

When compared to the non-depressed group, youth in the state of Pennsylvania with high depressive symptoms indicate 30-day alcohol use rates that are four times higher than non-depressed students. Statewide, depressed students indicate use rates that are 12 times higher for past-month cigarette use and eight times higher for past month marijuana use in comparison to non-depressed students.

The ATOD use rates of the moderate depressive symptoms group (69.8% of Pennsylvania youth), were closer to the rates of the non-depressed group than they were to the depressed. For the three substances, the past month usage rates for the this group were higher than those without depressive symptoms but lower than the high depressive symptoms group. Even with some depressive symptoms, individuals with a positive outlook tend to use fewer substances than peers with high levels of depressive symptoms.

	No Depressive Symptoms		Moderate Depressive Symptoms		High Depressive Symptoms	
	County 2023	State 2023	County 2023	State 2023	County 2023	State 2023
Depressive symptom alone	22.5	24.8	70.1	69.8	7.3	5.4
Alcohol Lifetime	20.9	15.5	40.4	32.4	61.3	51.2
Alcohol 30-Day	6.6	5.8	15.2	12.7	24.2	22.1
Cigarettes Lifetime	4.0	2.2	10.1	6.3	21.0	19.6
Cigarettes 30-Day	0.7	0.7	3.0	1.9	8.1	8.2
Marijuana Lifetime	5.4	4.5	14.8	12.7	33.0	28.2
Marijuana 30-Day	2.3	2.2	6.8	6.7	18.3	17.5

# BULLYING AND DEPRESSION/SUICIDE

PAYS data show a strong relationship between being bullied and depression and suicidal behaviors.

When PAYS data for bullying measures (*Have you stayed home from school this year because you were worried about being bullied?* and *Have you been bullied during the past 12 months?*) are analyzed alongside measures of depression (*Did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?*) and of suicidal ideation (*During the past 12 months did you: seriously consider attempting suicide? Make a plan of how you would attempt suicide? Actually attempted suicide?*) a compelling relationship emerges.

For example, students at the state level who indicated they hadn't been bullied in the past year, 19.7% reported that they felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.

Of students who indicated they *had* been bullied, 48.7% indicated feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks in past year that they stopped doing usual activities. In the past year, 32.0% of those students had seriously considered suicide, 24.5% had made a suicide plan, and 10.5% had attempted suicide.

Similar relationships exist for students who indicated they had skipped school due to bullying fears in the past year. Of those students, 66.4% had felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks in past year that they stopped doing usual activities, 46.0% had seriously considered suicide, 35.2% had made a suicide plan, and 3.1% had attempted suicide.

	Have you have been bullied during the past 12 months?				Skipped school due to bullying fears in the past year?			
	No		Yes (any)		NO/no		YES/yes	
	County 2023	State 2023	County 2023	State 2023	County 2023	State 2023	County 2023	State 2023
Felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least 2 weeks in past year that stopped doing usual activities	20.7	19.7	46.6	48.7	26.6	24.8	59.3	66.4
Seriously considered suicide in the past year	12.8	10.5	32.9	32.0	17.1	14.3	45.8	46.0
Made suicide plan in the past year	10.7	8.3	25.9	24.5	13.6	11.1	40.9	35.2
Attempted suicide one or more times in the past year	4.8	3.4	14.3	10.5	6.4	4.5	5.3	3.1

To create other crosstabs at the state and county level for other comparisons, visit [www.bach-harrison.com/PAYSWebTool](http://www.bach-harrison.com/PAYSWebTool).

# 4. GAMBLING

Even though gambling activities are legally restricted to adults, there is clear evidence that underage youth actively participate in gambling.

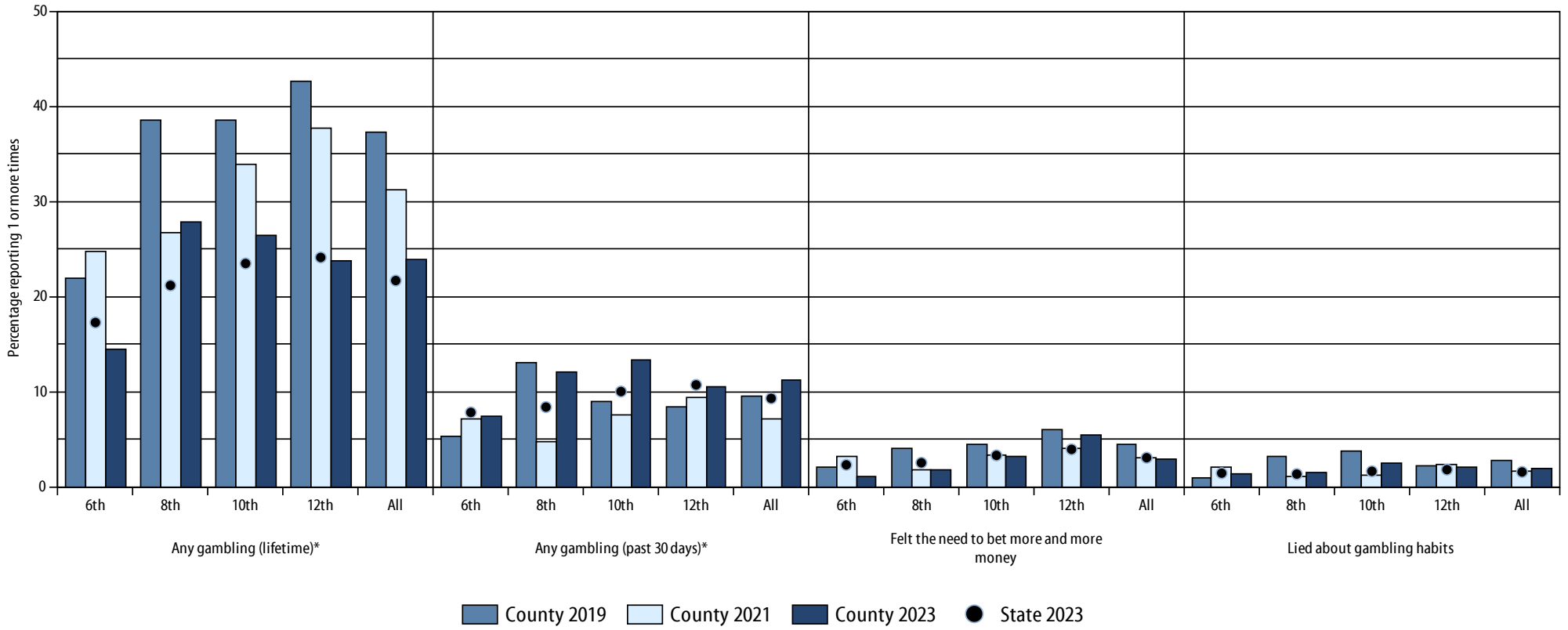
Despite being promoted as a harmless form of entertainment, gambling operates on the same reward pathways and the same neurotransmitters as ATOD addiction. Youth gambling is associated with alcohol and drug use, truancy, low grades, and risk-taking behavior.

Overall, 23.9% of students in this county engaged in gambling for money or anything of value in their lifetime (compared to 21.7% at the state level).

The most frequently reported form of gambling was “Sporting events, sports pools, or fantasy sports” reported by 9.5% of students who had gambled in the past 12 months (compared to 7.7% at the state level).

<b>PAYS 2023 category:</b>	<i>PAYS 2023 question text:</i>
<b>Students engaging in gambling</b>	<i>Have you ever bet/gambled for money or anything of value? How often have you bet/gambled for money or anything of value during the past 30 days?</i>
<b>Specific types of student gambling</b>	<i>During the past 12 months, how often have you bet/gambled, even casually, for money or valuables in the following ways: Games such as poker, card games, dice, pool, darts Lottery (scratch cards, numbers, etc.) Sporting events, sports pools, or fantasy sports Online (Internet) gambling Video games or online gaming Bet/gambled in some other way</i>
<b>Problematic gambling behavior</b>	<i>Have you ever felt the need to: Bet more and more money? Lie to important people (such as your family/friends) about how much you gamble?</i>

# Gambling Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

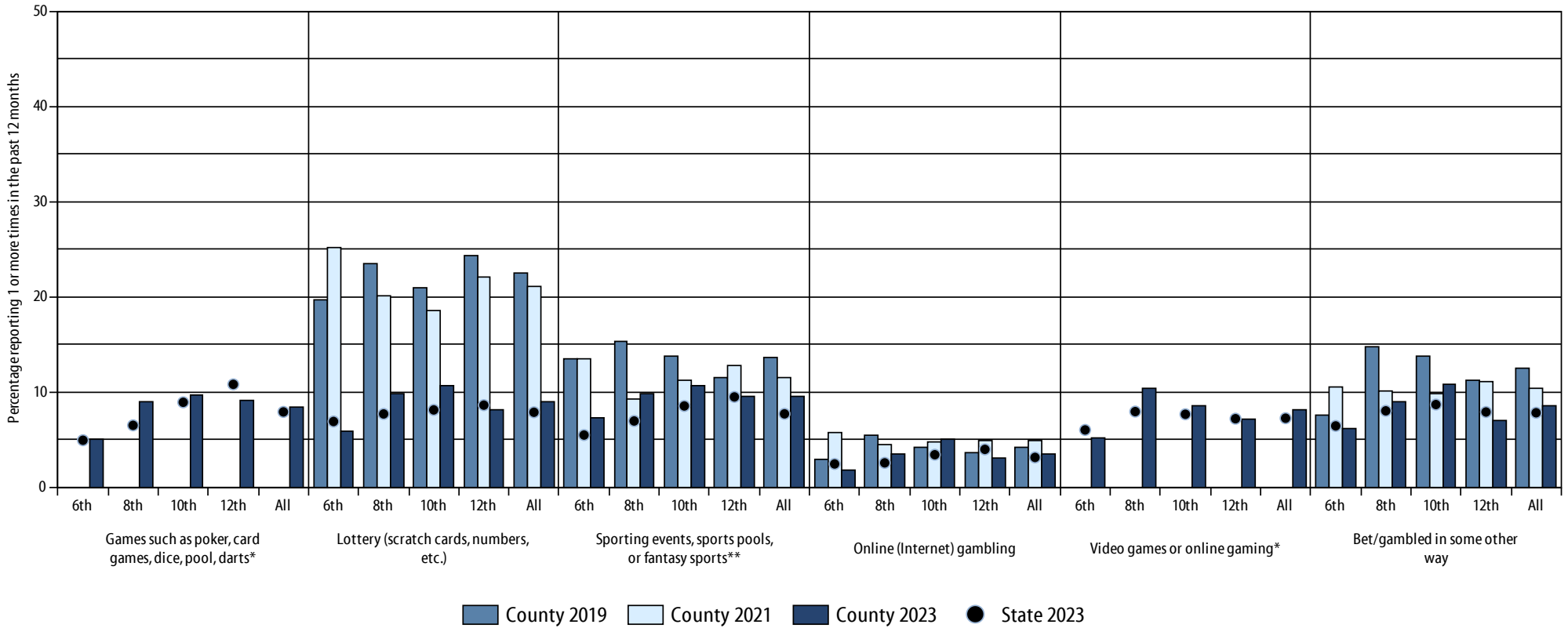


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Grade	Any gambling (lifetime)*				Any gambling (past 30 days)*				Felt the need to bet more and more money				Lied about gambling habits			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	21.9	24.7	14.4	17.3	5.3	7.2	7.4	7.8	2.1	3.2	1.1	2.3	0.9	2.0	1.4	1.5
8th	38.6	26.7	27.9	21.2	13.0	4.8	12.1	8.4	4.1	1.8	1.8	2.5	3.1	1.1	1.5	1.4
10th	38.5	33.9	26.4	23.5	9.0	7.5	13.3	10.0	4.5	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.8	1.3	2.5	1.6
12th	42.6	37.6	23.7	24.1	8.4	9.4	10.5	10.7	6.0	4.1	5.5	3.9	2.2	2.4	2.1	1.8
All	37.2	31.2	23.9	21.7	9.5	7.2	11.2	9.3	4.4	3.0	2.9	3.1	2.8	1.6	1.9	1.6

\*See Appendix B for changes made to lifetime and past 30 day gambling questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.

# Types of gambling Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	Games such as poker, card games, dice, pool, darts				Lottery (scratch cards, numbers, etc.)				Sporting events, sports pools, or fantasy sports**				Online (Internet) gambling				Video games or online gaming				Bet/gambled in some other way			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	5.0	4.9	19.7	25.2	5.9	6.9	13.5	13.5	7.3	5.5	2.9	5.7	1.8	2.4	n/a	n/a	5.2	6.0	7.6	10.5	6.2	6.4
8th	n/a	n/a	9.0	6.5	23.5	20.1	9.8	7.7	15.4	9.3	9.9	7.0	5.4	4.4	3.5	2.6	n/a	n/a	10.4	7.9	14.7	10.1	9.0	8.0
10th	n/a	n/a	9.6	8.9	21.0	18.6	10.7	8.1	13.8	11.2	10.7	8.5	4.2	4.8	5.1	3.4	n/a	n/a	8.5	7.7	13.8	9.9	10.9	8.7
12th	n/a	n/a	9.1	10.8	24.4	22.0	8.2	8.6	11.4	12.7	9.5	9.5	3.6	4.9	3.0	4.0	n/a	n/a	7.2	7.2	11.3	11.2	7.0	7.9
All	n/a	n/a	8.4	7.9	22.4	21.1	8.9	7.9	13.6	11.4	9.5	7.7	4.2	4.9	3.5	3.1	n/a	n/a	8.1	7.2	12.5	10.4	8.5	7.8

\*\*"Games such as poker, card games, dice, pool, darts" and "Video games or online gaming" were reworded in 2023 and are not comparable to questions asked in prior years.

\*\*\*"Fantasy sports" was added to the question wording for "sporting events, sports pools or fantasy sports" in 2023.



# 5. COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SAFETY

Over the last 15 years, many youth surveys, including PAYS, have moved to incorporate risk and protective factor data alongside more traditional health behavior assessments. As this approach has evolved, school climate and safety have emerged as focal points for prevention programming and policy planning.

Creating safe supportive schools is essential to ensuring students' academic and social success. There are multiple elements to establishing learning environments in which youth feel a sense of belonging which prompts feelings of safety, connectedness, value, and responsibility for their behavior and learning. School climate and safety are measured in four ways: commitment and involvement at school, involvement in after-school and community programs, violence (actual and threatened), and bullying.

# COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL

Students who feel appreciated and rewarded for their involvement in school have reduced likelihood of involvement in drug use and problem behaviors. Giving students opportunities to participate in important activities at school helps to create a feeling of personal investment in their school. This increased investment results in greater bonding and adoption of the school’s standard of behavior, reducing the likelihood that the students will become involved in problem behaviors.

Students who demonstrate a lack of commitment to school are more likely to have ceased viewing being a student as a positive role. These students have a higher risk for a variety of problem behaviors.

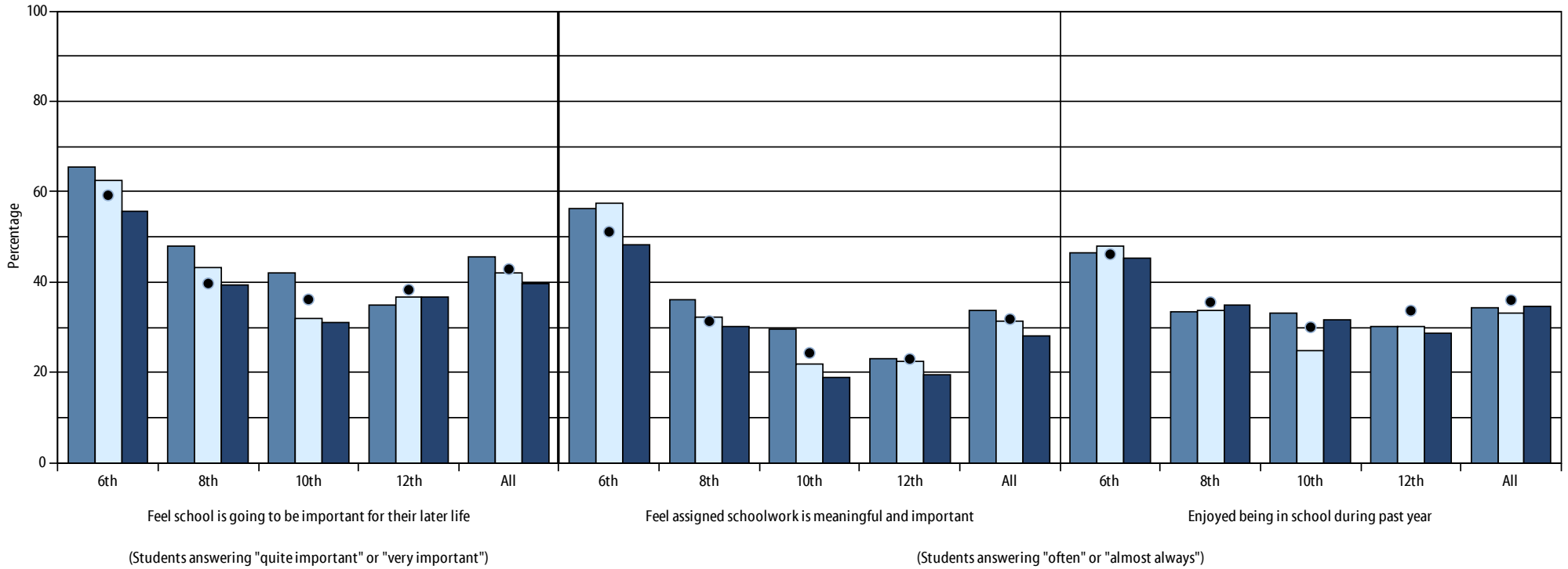
39.8% students in this county viewed the things they are learning in school as going to be important later in life (compared to 42.9% at the state level). School work was viewed as meaningful and important by 28.2% of students (state rate: 31.8%) and 34.7% enjoyed being in school during the past year (state rate: 36.0%).

A feeling of safety was reported by 79.3% of the students, compared to 78.4% at the state level. 75.5% students reported opportunities to talk with a teacher one-on-one (state rate: 77.4%) and 84.0% reported chances to be part of class discussions or activities (state rate: 85.8%). 50.1% of students reported that teachers praise them when they work hard in school (state rate: 54.2%).

<b>PAYS 2023 category:</b>	<i>PAYS 2023 question text:</i>
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<b>Perceived importance of school</b>	<p><i>How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?</i></p> <p><i>How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?</i></p> <p><i>Now thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you: Enjoy being in school?</i></p>
<b>Positive school environment</b>	<p><i>There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk one-on-one with a teacher.</i></p> <p><i>I have lots of chances to be part of class discussions or activities.</i></p> <p><i>I feel safe at my school.</i></p> <p><i>My teachers praise me when I work hard in school.</i></p>

# Commitment to school - Perceived importance of school Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

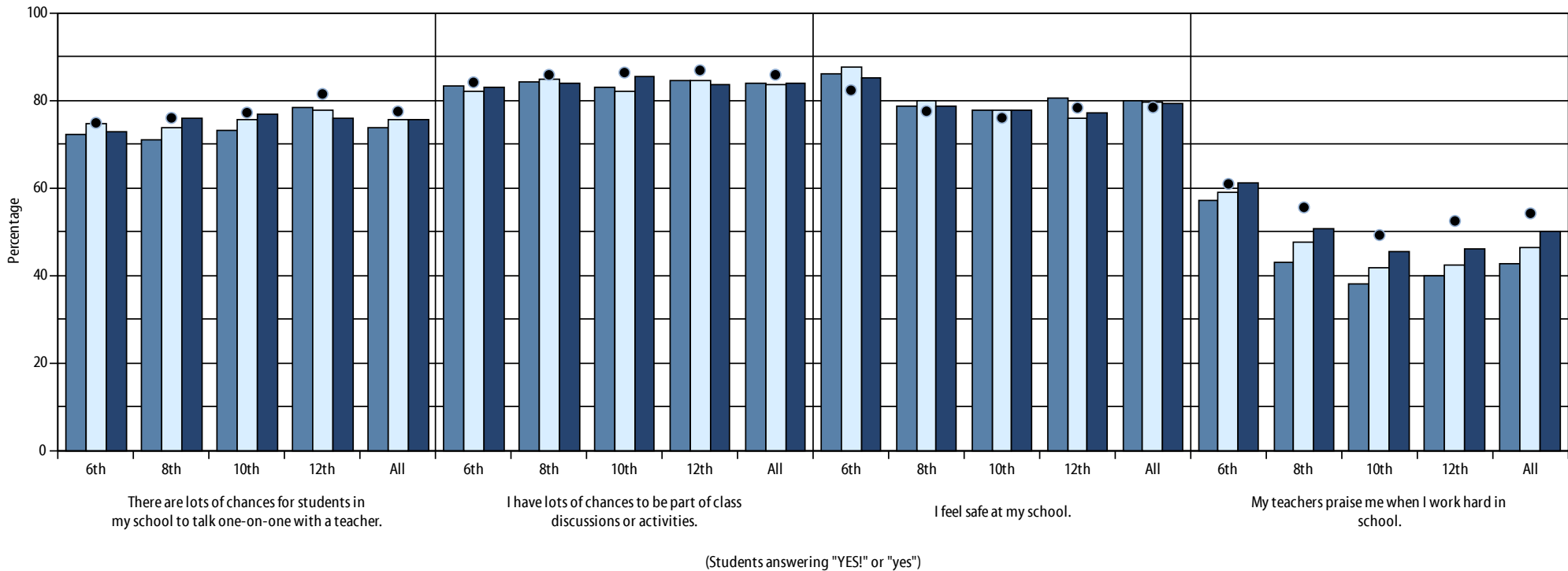


County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Feel school is going to be important for their later life				Feel assigned schoolwork is meaningful and important				Enjoyed being in school during past year			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	65.5	62.5	55.6	59.2	56.3	57.5	48.4	51.1	46.4	47.8	45.4	46.2
8th	48.1	43.3	39.4	39.7	36.1	32.3	30.0	31.4	33.4	33.8	34.8	35.6
10th	42.1	31.9	31.1	36.2	29.5	22.0	18.8	24.3	33.3	24.9	31.8	30.0
12th	34.9	36.8	36.7	38.3	23.0	22.4	19.6	23.0	30.2	30.1	28.6	33.7
All	45.6	42.1	39.8	42.9	33.7	31.5	28.2	31.8	34.5	33.0	34.7	36.0

# Commitment to school - Positive school environment Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk one-on-one with a teacher.				I have lots of chances to be part of class discussions or activities.				I feel safe at my school.				My teachers praise me when I work hard in school.			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	72.1	74.7	72.9	74.8	83.3	82.1	82.9	84.1	86.2	87.6	85.2	82.3	57.0	58.9	61.2	60.9
8th	71.0	73.8	75.8	76.0	84.3	84.9	83.9	85.8	78.7	79.9	78.7	77.5	43.0	47.5	50.5	55.5
10th	73.0	75.4	76.9	77.2	83.0	82.0	85.3	86.3	77.7	77.9	77.6	76.0	38.2	41.6	45.4	49.2
12th	78.4	77.7	75.8	81.4	84.4	84.4	83.4	86.8	80.4	75.8	77.1	78.3	40.0	42.4	46.2	52.4
All	73.7	75.5	75.5	77.4	83.8	83.5	84.0	85.8	79.9	79.6	79.3	78.4	42.8	46.4	50.1	54.2

# INVOLVEMENT IN PRO-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

When young people participate in pro-social activities that foster healthy development, they are more likely to develop connections with peers and members of the community who engage in prosocial behaviors. Being engaged in pro-social activities provides opportunities for bonding with adult role models—such as community leaders, neighbors, police, or clergy—who can offer moral guidance and emotional support.

87.3% of students in this county reported participating in at least one pro-social activity, compared to 86.9% at the state level.

Students most frequently participated in school sponsored activities (64.5% of students). The second and third most frequent pro-social activities were family supported activities or hobbies (45.0%) and other activities (28.9%).

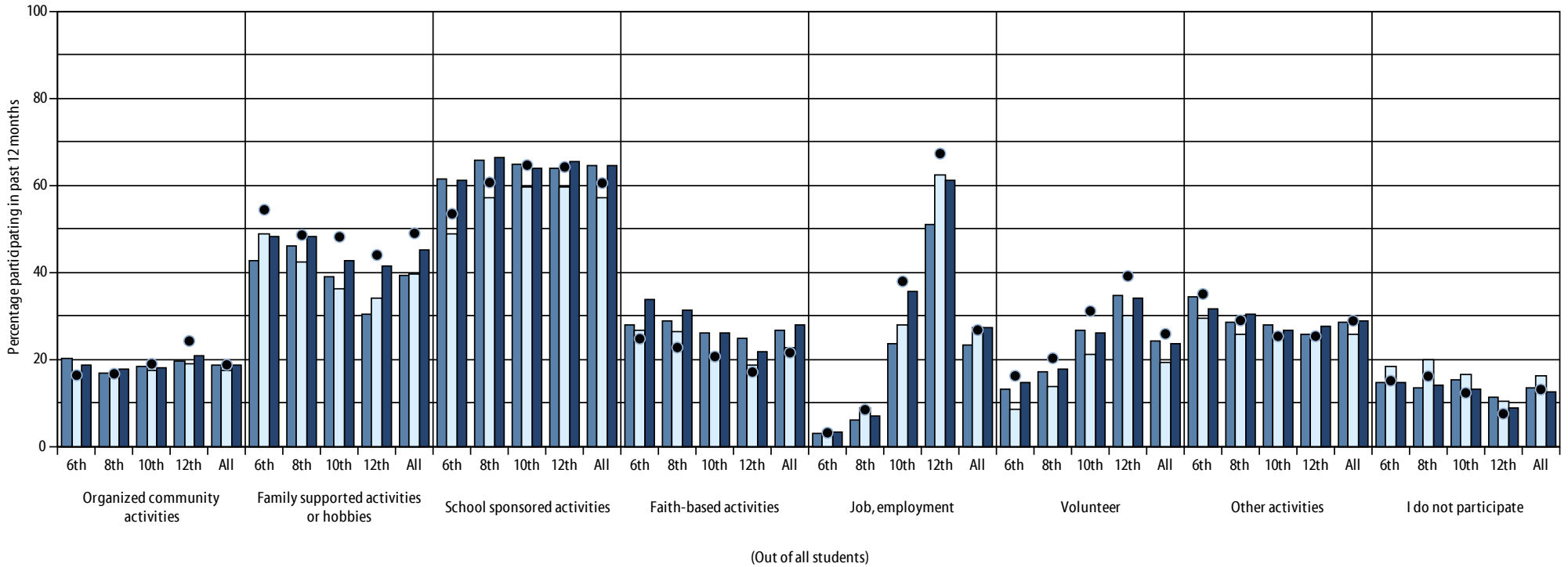
PAYS 2023 category:	PAYS 2023 question text:
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**Involvement in pro-social activities**

*In the past 12 months, in which of the following activities did you participate? (Mark all that apply.)*

- Organized community activities (such as scouting, 4-H, service clubs, YMCA, etc)*
- Family supported activities or hobbies (such as dance, gymnastics, hiking, biking, skating, etc.)*
- School sponsored activities (such as sports, music, clubs, after-school programs, etc.)*
- Faith-based activities (such as choir, youth group, mission, church leagues, etc)*
- Job, employment*
- Volunteer*
- Other activities*
- I do not participate.*

# Involvement in pro-social activities Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2019    County 2021    County 2023    State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Organized community activities				Family supported activities or hobbies				School sponsored activities				Faith-based activities				Job, employment				Volunteer				Other activities				I do not participate			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	20.4	16.0	18.8	16.4	42.6	48.9	48.3	54.4	61.4	48.9	61.1	53.4	27.9	26.8	33.9	24.8	3.1	2.8	3.2	3.2	13.2	8.6	14.9	16.2	34.5	29.5	31.7	35.0	14.7	18.5	14.9	15.1
8th	17.0	16.9	17.7	16.7	46.1	42.4	48.2	48.6	65.6	57.0	66.4	60.6	28.8	26.4	31.4	22.7	6.2	8.7	6.9	8.5	17.3	13.7	17.8	20.3	28.7	25.7	30.2	29.0	13.5	20.0	14.0	16.1
10th	18.5	17.6	17.9	19.0	39.1	36.1	42.8	48.1	64.8	59.6	64.0	64.6	26.0	20.4	26.0	20.7	23.7	28.0	35.7	37.9	26.7	21.1	26.0	31.1	27.9	24.8	26.6	25.3	15.3	16.7	13.2	12.3
12th	19.7	19.1	21.0	24.2	30.3	34.2	41.3	44.0	64.0	59.6	65.6	64.2	24.8	18.7	21.7	17.1	51.1	62.4	61.2	67.3	34.8	30.2	34.0	39.1	25.8	24.7	27.7	25.3	11.2	10.5	8.8	7.5
All	18.6	17.5	18.8	18.8	39.3	39.6	45.0	49.0	64.4	57.1	64.5	60.5	26.8	22.7	28.0	21.6	23.2	27.2	27.4	26.8	24.3	19.2	23.5	25.9	28.4	25.8	28.9	28.9	13.6	16.3	12.7	13.1



# VIOLENCE/DRUGS IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

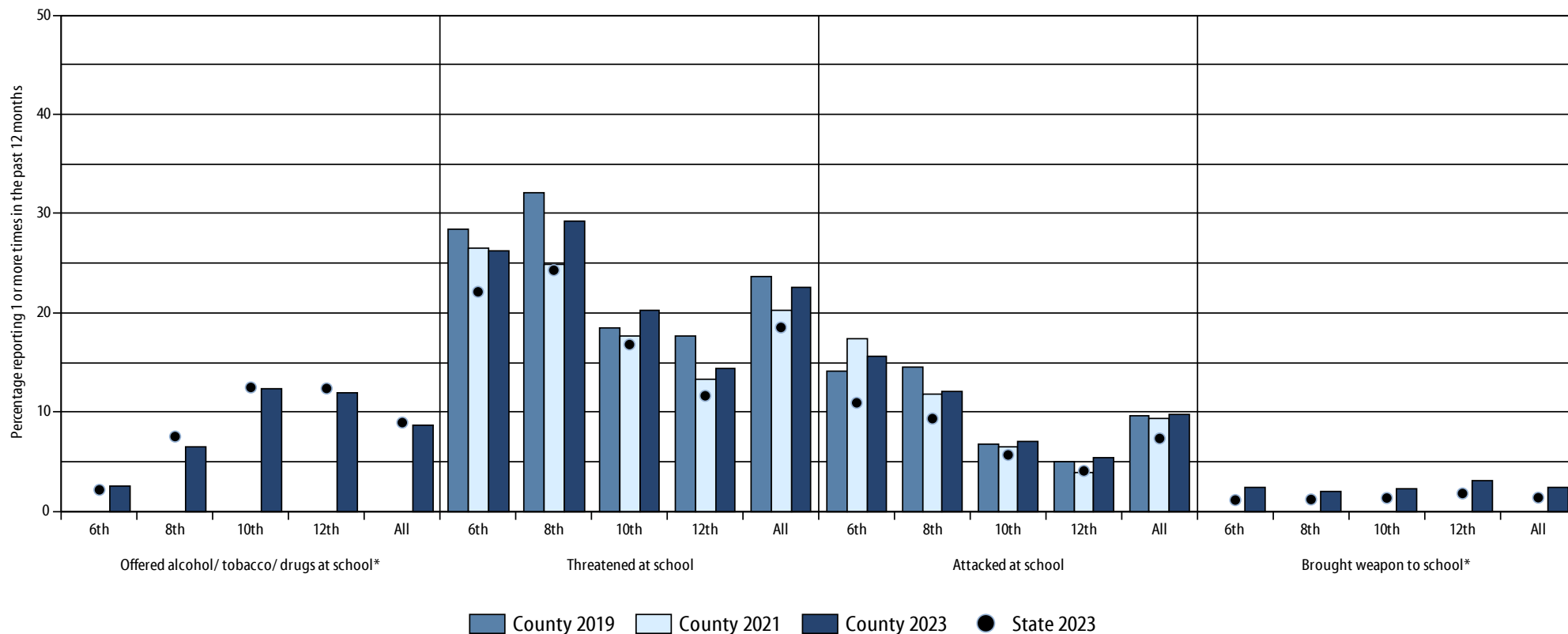
This section highlights the presence of violence and drugs on school property and in the community. This section also presents the percentage of youth who reported engaging in concerning behaviors (e.g., attacking someone with the idea of seriously hurting them, selling substances, attending school while drunk or high), and related consequences (e.g., being suspended from school or arrested).

In the past twelve months, 22.6% of students in this county reported being threatened with violent behavior on school property (compared to 18.5% at the state level). 9.8% of students reported having been attacked on school property (compared to 7.3% at the state level).

In the past twelve months, 8.7% of students in this county reported being offered alcohol, tobacco or other drugs on school property (compared to 8.9% at the state level) and 4.9% reported being drunk or high at school (compared to 4.3% at the state level).

PAYS 2023 category:	PAYS 2023 question text:
<b>Violence and drugs on school property</b>	<p><i>How many times in the past 12 months have you been offered, given, or sold alcohol, tobacco product or other drug on school property?</i></p> <p><i>In the past 12 months, how often have you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Been threatened to be hit or beaten up on school property?</i></li> <li><i>Been attacked and hit by someone or beaten up on school property?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>How many times in the past 12 months have you brought a weapon (such as a handgun, knife, etc. ) to school?</i></p>
<b>Other concerning behaviors</b>	<p><i>How many times in the past 12 months have you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?</i></li> <li><i>Sold substances such as vapes, alcohol, drugs or medications?</i></li> <li><i>Been drunk or high at school?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Consequences of concerning behaviors</b>	<p><i>How many times in the past 12 months have you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Been arrested?</i></li> <li><i>Been suspended from school?</i></li> </ul>

## Violence and drugs on school property Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

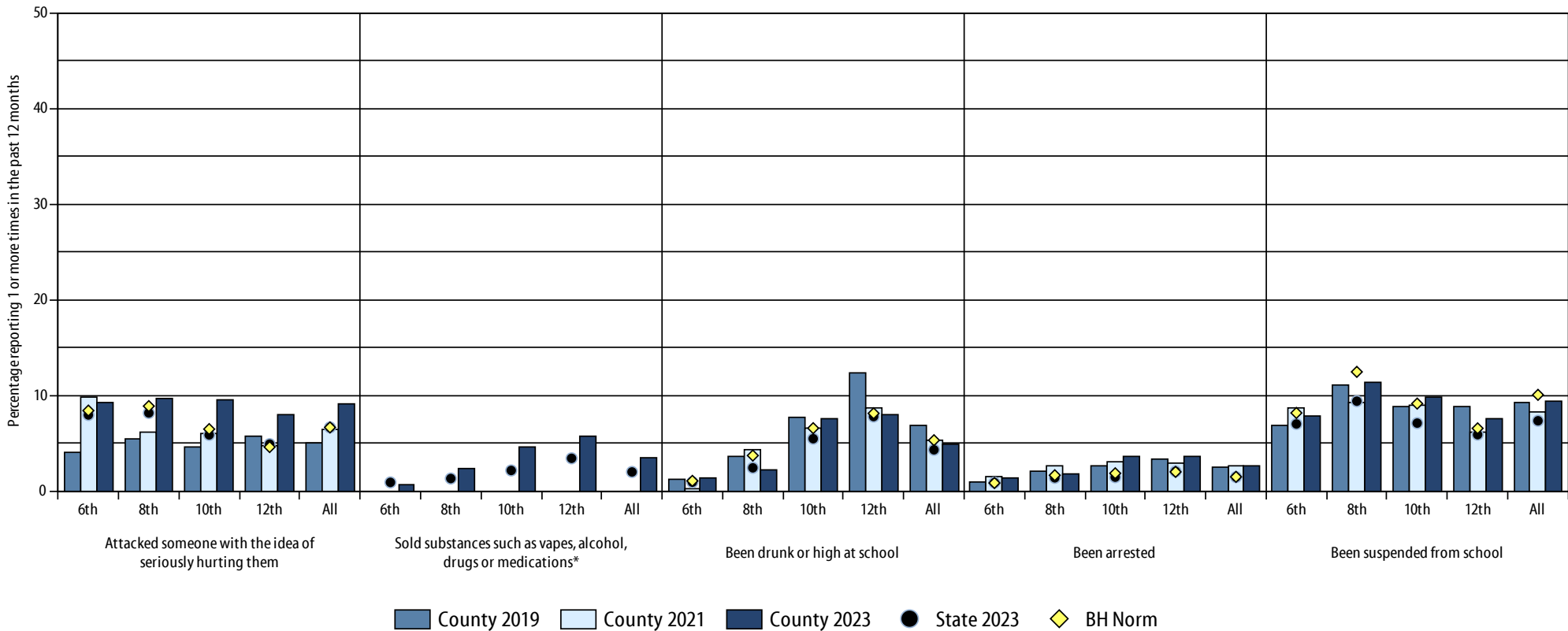


5\_29\_2024

Grade	Offered alcohol/ tobacco/ drugs at school*				Threatened at school				Attacked at school				Brought weapon to school*			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	2.5	2.2	28.4	26.6	26.2	22.1	14.2	17.3	15.7	10.9	n/a	n/a	2.4	1.1
8th	n/a	n/a	6.5	7.5	32.1	24.8	29.3	24.3	14.5	11.8	12.1	9.3	n/a	n/a	2.1	1.2
10th	n/a	n/a	12.4	12.5	18.4	17.7	20.2	16.8	6.8	6.5	7.0	5.7	n/a	n/a	2.2	1.4
12th	n/a	n/a	11.9	12.4	17.6	13.4	14.4	11.6	5.1	3.9	5.5	4.1	n/a	n/a	3.0	1.8
All	n/a	n/a	8.7	8.9	23.7	20.2	22.6	18.5	9.7	9.3	9.8	7.3	n/a	n/a	2.4	1.4

\*Offered substances at school and brought weapon to school questions were revised in 2023 and are not comparable to prior years.

# Other concerning behaviors Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them					Sold substances such as vapes, alcohol, drugs or medications*					Been drunk or high at school					Been arrested					Been suspended from school				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm
6th	4.1	9.9	9.2	8.0	8.4	n/a	n/a	0.7	0.9	n/a	1.2	0.3	1.4	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.5	1.4	0.9	0.9	6.8	8.7	7.8	7.0	8.2
8th	5.5	6.2	9.7	8.2	8.9	n/a	n/a	2.4	1.3	n/a	3.6	4.3	2.2	2.4	3.7	2.1	2.7	1.7	1.4	1.7	11.1	9.3	11.4	9.4	12.5
10th	4.6	6.0	9.6	5.9	6.5	n/a	n/a	4.6	2.2	n/a	7.7	6.6	7.5	5.5	6.6	2.6	3.1	3.7	1.5	1.9	8.8	9.0	9.8	7.1	9.2
12th	5.7	4.7	8.0	4.9	4.6	n/a	n/a	5.7	3.4	n/a	12.4	8.7	8.0	7.8	8.1	3.4	3.0	3.6	2.1	2.0	8.8	6.2	7.6	5.9	6.6
All	5.1	6.4	9.2	6.7	6.7	n/a	n/a	3.5	2.0	n/a	6.8	5.4	4.9	4.3	5.3	2.4	2.7	2.7	1.5	1.5	9.2	8.3	9.3	7.3	10.1

\*Question on selling substances was revised in 2023 and is not comparable to prior years.

# BULLYING, INTERNET SAFETY AND ABUSE

While bullying is not a new phenomenon, the serious consequences for both students and schools continues to grow.

Bullying behavior contributes to lower attendance rates, lower student achievement, low self-esteem, and depression, as well as higher rates of both juvenile and adult crime. Although the problem of bullying continues to receive public attention, actual incidences of bullying often go undetected by teachers and parents. The most effective way to address bullying is through comprehensive, school-wide programs.

Overall, 32.8% of students in this county indicated experiencing bullying in the past 12 months (compared to 26.2% of students at the state level). Students who indicated experiencing bullying in the past 12 months reported that “the way I look [clothing, hairstyle, etc.]” (48.1% of students), “my size [height, weight, etc.]” (40.5% of students), and “some other reason” (35.6% of students) were the most frequent reasons they were bullied.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Bullying behavior**

Bullying is a student or students doing any of the following to another student on purpose repeatedly:

- making fun of
  - excluding
  - threatening
- spreading rumors about
  - hitting
  - shoving
  - hurting

It is not bullying if:

- two students argue or fight with each other
- friends tease each other.

*Have you stayed home from school this year because you were worried about being bullied?*

*Do adults at your school stop bullying when they see/hear it or when a student tells them about it?*

*Have you been bullied in the past 12 months*

*No • Yes, very rarely • Yes, now and then • Yes, several times per month • Yes, several times per week • Yes, almost daily*

*If you have been bullied in any way in the past 12 months, where were you bullied? (Mark all that apply.)*

*I was not bullied*

*On school property*

*At a school-sponsored event*

*While going to or from school*

*In the community*

*At home*

*Online, social media, phone*

*If you have been bullied in the past 12 months by other students, why were you bullied? (Mark all that apply.)*

*I have not been made fun of by other students*

*The color of my skin*

*My religion*

*My size (height, weight, etc.)*

*My accent*

*The country I was born in*

*The country my family (parents, grandparents) was born in*

*The way I look (clothing, hairstyle, etc.)*

*How much money my family has or does not have*

*My gender*

*My grades or school achievement*

*My social standing*

*Social conflict*

*My sexual-orientation*

*I have a disability (learning or physical disability)*

*Some other reason*

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Internet safety and other hurt or abuse**

*In the past 12 months, did anyone when using technology ever try to get you to talk online about sex, look at sexual pictures, or do something else sexual?*

*If you were hurt or abused by another person in the past 12 months, how were you hurt or abused? (Mark all that apply.)*

*Physical injury*

*Threats*

*Emotional abuse, insults, name-calling*

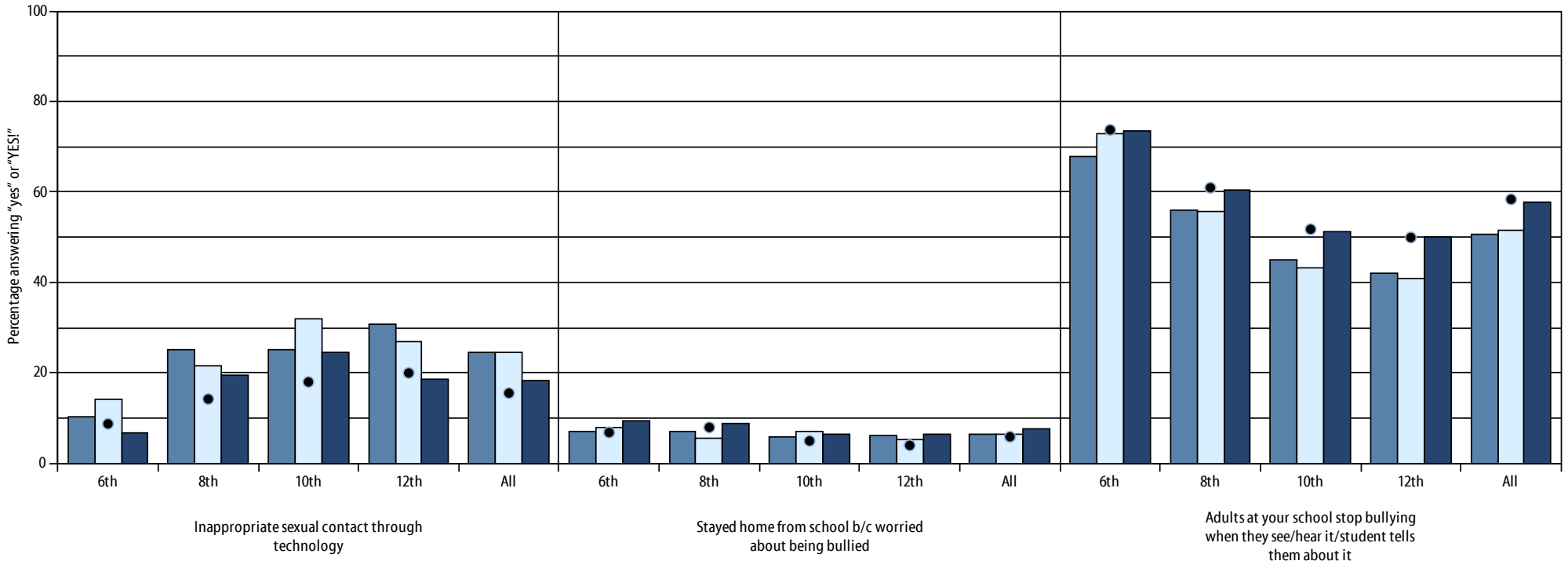
*Isolation from friends and family*

*Control of what you were wearing*

*Control of who you socialized with*

*Other injury or abuse*

# Bullying and Internet safety Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



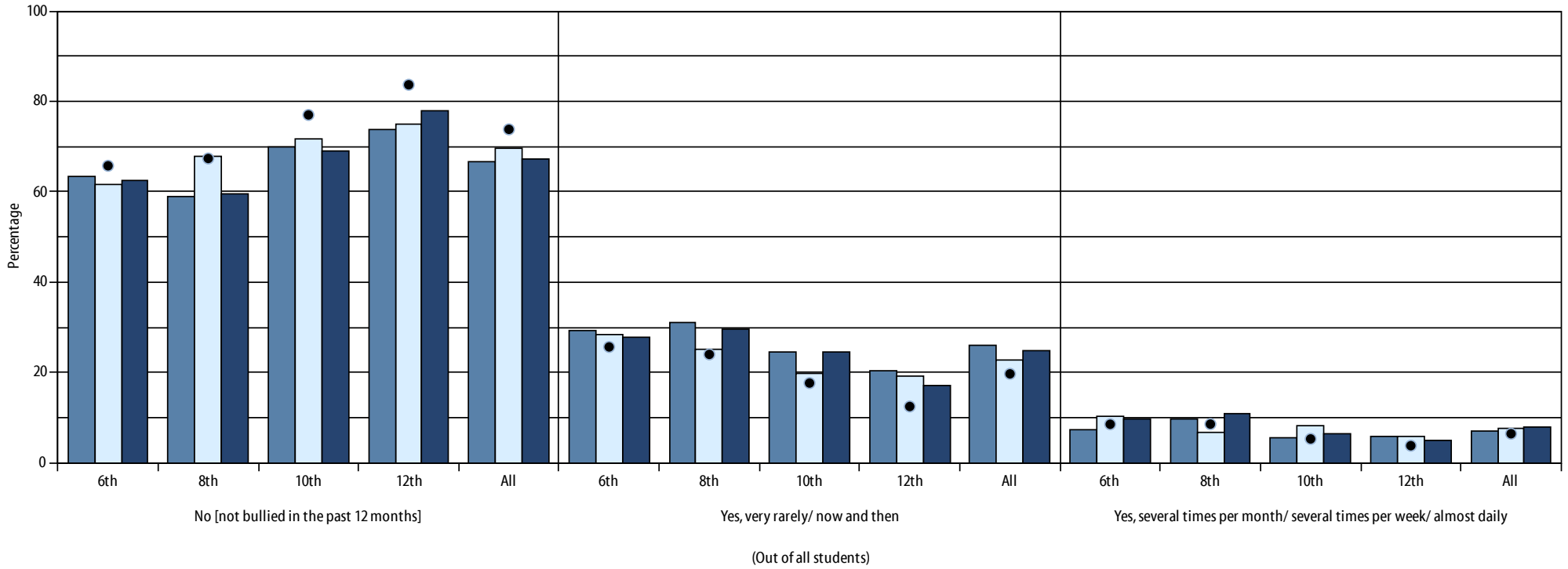
County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Inappropriate sexual contact through technology				Stayed home from school b/c worried about being bullied				Adults at your school stop bullying when they see/hear it/student tells them about it			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	10.3	14.2	6.9	8.8	7.2	7.8	9.5	6.8	67.9	72.8	73.5	73.7
8th	25.0	21.5	19.4	14.2	7.2	5.7	8.8	8.0	56.1	55.8	60.5	60.9
10th	25.3	31.9	24.5	18.0	6.0	7.1	6.4	5.0	44.9	43.3	51.4	51.8
12th	30.8	26.9	18.7	20.0	6.1	5.3	6.5	4.0	41.9	41.0	50.0	49.9
All	24.5	24.6	18.3	15.5	6.6	6.3	7.7	5.9	50.7	51.4	57.8	58.4



# Frequency of bullying Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

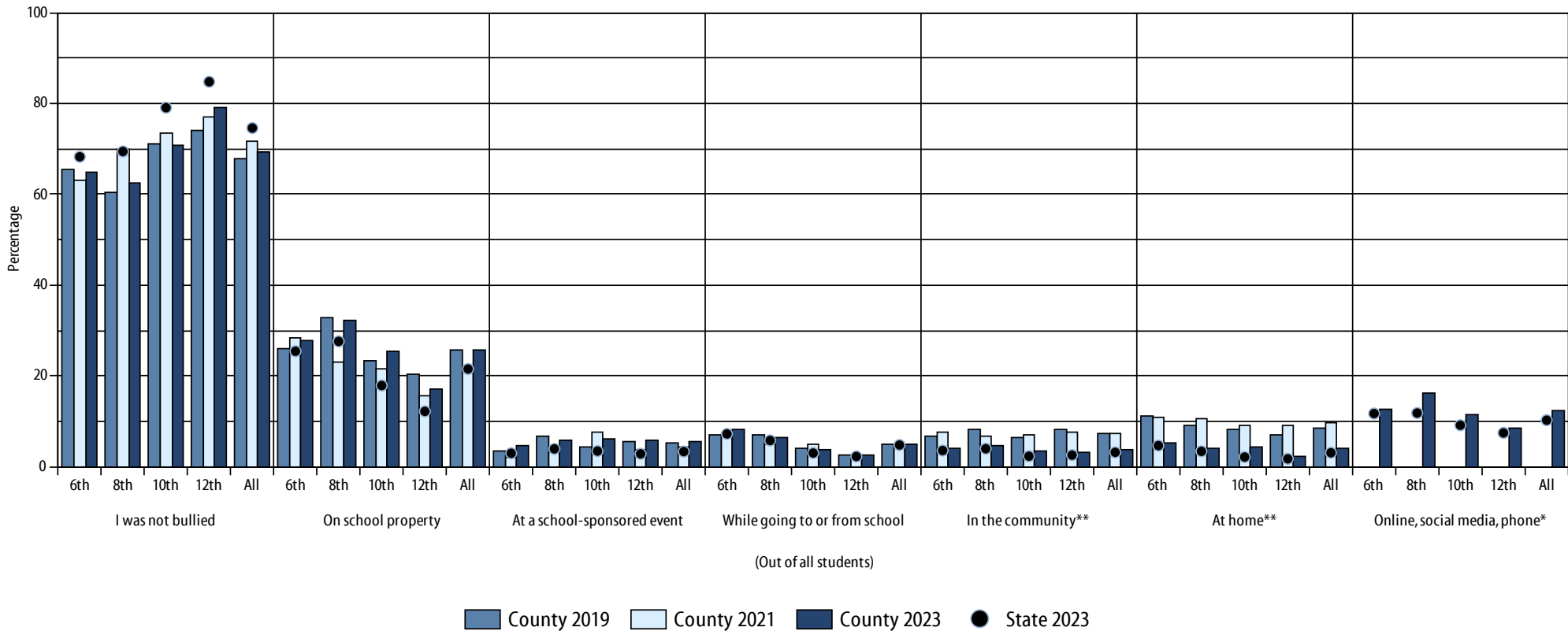


County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	No [not bullied in the past 12 months]				Yes, very rarely/ now and then				Yes, several times per month/ several times per week/ almost daily			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	63.5	61.5	62.5	65.7	29.2	28.3	27.8	25.7	7.3	10.2	9.7	8.6
8th	59.0	67.9	59.4	67.4	31.2	25.2	29.6	24.0	9.8	6.9	11.0	8.6
10th	69.9	71.7	69.0	77.0	24.5	19.9	24.6	17.7	5.6	8.4	6.3	5.3
12th	73.7	74.9	77.9	83.7	20.5	19.2	17.2	12.5	5.8	5.9	4.9	3.8
All	66.7	69.6	67.2	73.8	26.1	22.7	24.9	19.7	7.1	7.6	8.0	6.5

# Location of bullying Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



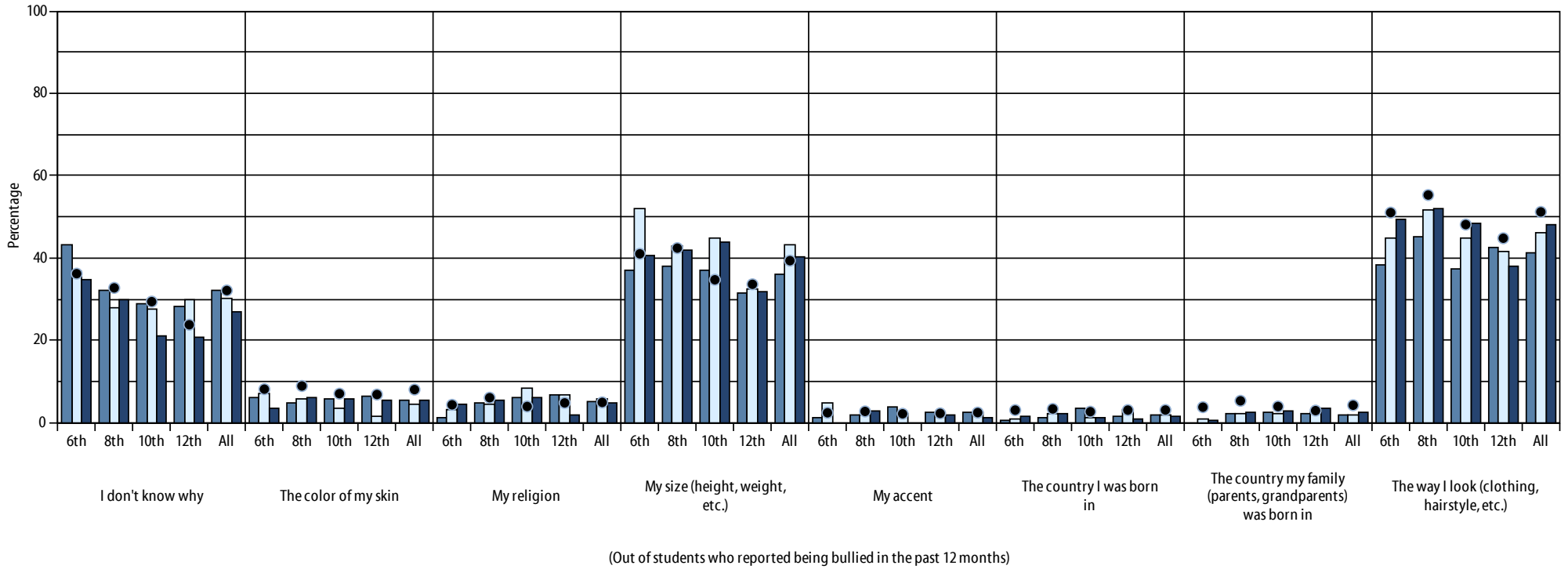
5\_29\_2024

Grade	I was not bullied				On school property				At a school-sponsored event				While going to or from school				In the community**				At home**				Online, social media, phone*			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	65.3	63.2	64.8	68.3	26.1	28.4	27.8	25.5	3.4	2.0	4.8	3.0	7.2	7.0	8.3	7.3	6.9	7.6	4.0	3.6	11.2	10.8	5.2	4.7	n/a	n/a	12.6	11.7
8th	60.5	70.1	62.4	69.4	32.8	23.0	32.3	27.6	6.7	3.2	5.8	4.0	7.1	5.0	6.4	5.8	8.2	6.8	4.8	4.0	9.2	10.7	4.2	3.4	n/a	n/a	16.3	11.9
10th	71.0	73.6	70.7	79.1	23.5	21.5	25.5	17.9	4.4	7.7	6.1	3.5	4.2	5.1	3.8	3.1	6.4	7.1	3.5	2.4	8.2	9.2	4.3	2.2	n/a	n/a	11.6	9.2
12th	74.0	77.0	79.2	84.8	20.4	15.7	17.0	12.2	5.6	3.9	5.8	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.3	8.1	7.7	3.2	2.6	7.2	9.0	2.4	1.8	n/a	n/a	8.4	7.5
All	67.9	71.6	69.2	74.6	25.8	21.6	25.9	21.6	5.2	4.4	5.7	3.4	5.1	4.7	5.1	4.8	7.5	7.2	3.9	3.2	8.6	9.9	4.0	3.1	n/a	n/a	12.4	10.3

\*Online, social media, phone was added as an answer choice in 2023. Prior to 2023 bullying through texting and social media was asked as a separate question.

\*\*Decreases in 2023 in those reporting "At home" and "In the community" maybe be impacted by the addition of "online, social media, phone" answer choice in 2023.

# Perceived reasons for bullying Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

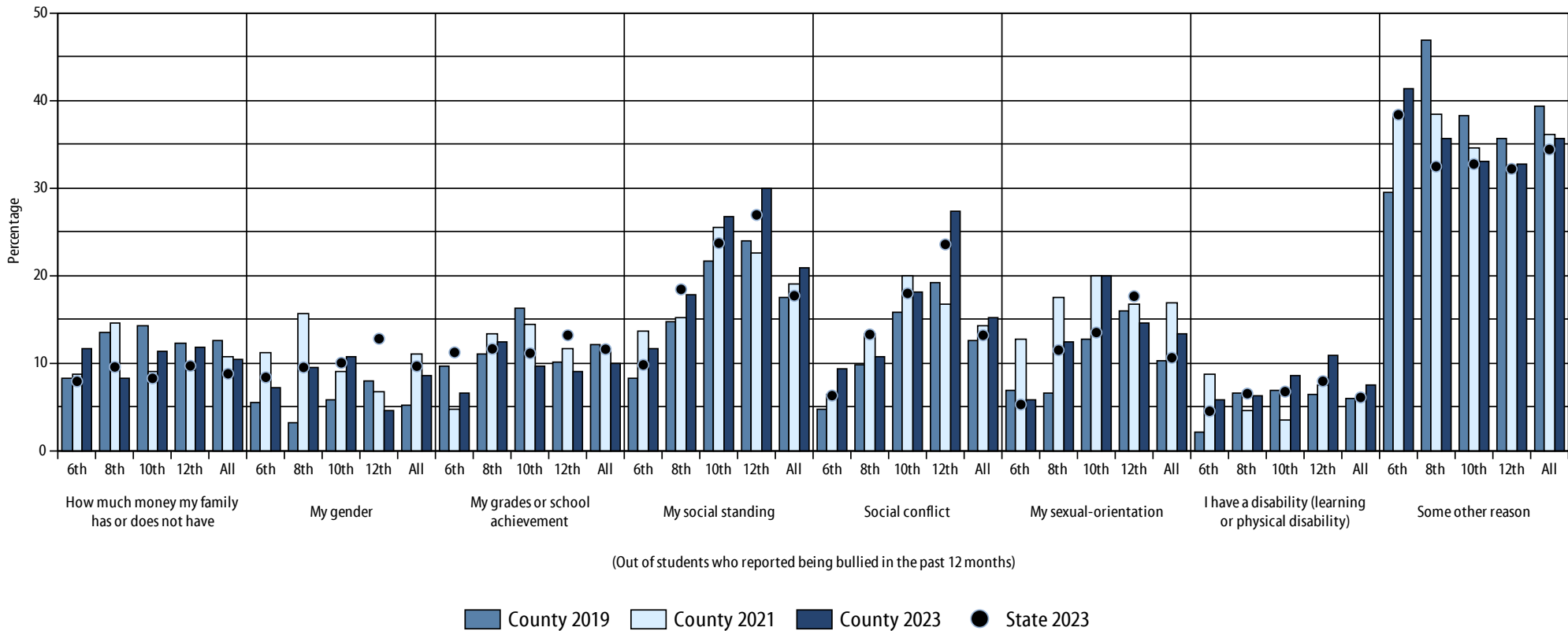


County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	I don't know why				The color of my skin				My religion				My size (height, weight, etc.)				My accent				The country I was born in				The country my family (parents, grandparents) was born in				The way I look (clothing, hairstyle, etc.)			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	43.2	36.8	34.8	36.2	6.2	7.2	3.6	8.2	1.4	3.2	4.3	4.4	37.0	52.0	40.6	41.0	1.4	4.8	0.0	2.4	0.7	0.8	1.4	3.1	0.0	0.8	0.7	3.8	38.4	44.8	49.3	51.0
8th	32.1	27.9	29.9	32.8	4.7	5.8	6.2	9.0	4.7	4.7	5.4	6.1	38.1	43.0	41.9	42.4	1.9	1.7	2.9	2.8	1.3	2.3	2.1	3.4	2.2	2.3	2.5	5.3	45.3	51.7	51.9	55.3
10th	29.0	27.6	21.0	29.4	5.8	3.4	5.7	7.1	6.2	8.3	6.3	4.0	37.1	44.8	43.8	34.7	3.9	2.1	0.0	2.2	3.5	1.4	1.1	2.7	2.7	2.1	2.8	4.0	37.5	44.8	48.3	48.1
12th	28.2	30.0	20.9	23.8	6.4	1.7	5.5	6.9	6.9	6.7	1.8	4.8	31.4	32.5	31.8	33.6	2.7	1.7	1.8	2.3	1.6	3.3	0.9	3.1	2.1	2.5	3.6	3.0	42.6	41.7	38.2	44.8
All	32.2	30.2	27.1	32.1	5.6	4.6	5.4	8.1	5.0	5.7	4.8	5.0	36.2	43.2	40.5	39.4	2.5	2.5	1.4	2.5	1.9	2.0	1.5	3.1	2.0	2.0	2.4	4.3	41.4	46.3	48.1	51.2

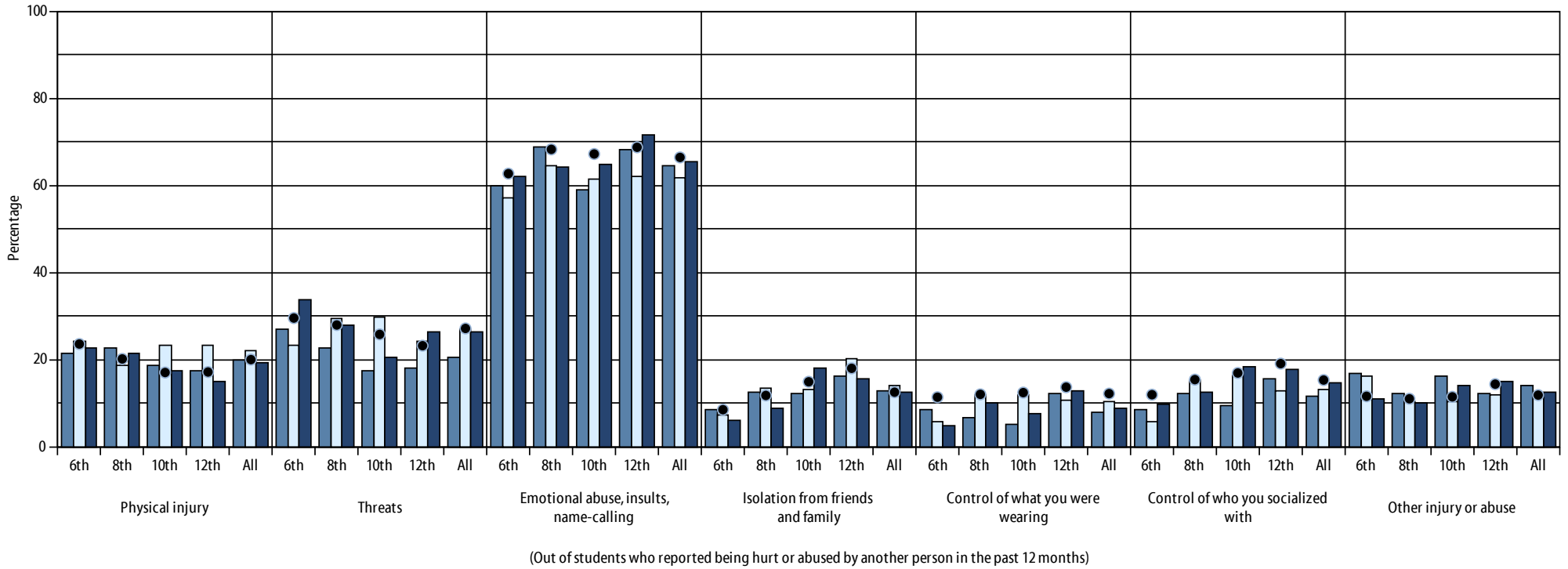
# Perceived reasons for bullying (cont'd) Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	How much money my family has or does not have				My gender				My grades or school achievement				My social standing				Social conflict				My sexual-orientation				I have a disability (learning or physical disability)				Some other reason			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	8.2	8.8	11.6	7.9	5.5	11.2	7.2	8.4	9.6	4.8	6.5	11.2	8.2	13.6	11.6	9.8	4.8	6.4	9.4	6.3	6.8	12.8	5.8	5.3	2.1	8.8	5.8	4.5	29.5	38.4	41.3	38.3
8th	13.5	14.5	8.3	9.6	3.1	15.7	9.5	9.5	11.0	13.4	12.4	11.6	14.8	15.1	17.8	18.4	9.7	13.4	10.8	13.3	6.6	17.4	12.4	11.5	6.6	4.7	6.2	6.5	46.9	38.4	35.7	32.4
10th	14.3	9.0	11.4	8.3	5.8	9.0	10.8	10.0	16.2	14.5	9.7	11.1	21.6	25.5	26.7	23.7	15.8	20.0	18.2	18.0	12.7	20.0	19.9	13.5	6.9	3.4	8.5	6.7	38.2	34.5	33.0	32.7
12th	12.2	9.2	11.8	9.7	8.0	6.7	4.5	12.8	10.1	11.7	9.1	13.2	23.9	22.5	30.0	26.9	19.1	16.7	27.3	23.6	16.0	16.7	14.5	17.6	6.4	7.5	10.9	7.9	35.6	32.5	32.7	32.2
All	12.6	10.7	10.4	8.8	5.3	11.0	8.6	9.7	12.1	11.4	9.9	11.6	17.6	19.0	20.9	17.7	12.6	14.2	15.2	13.2	10.3	16.9	13.4	10.6	5.9	5.9	7.5	6.1	39.3	36.1	35.6	34.4

# How students were hurt or abused Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Physical injury				Threats				Emotional abuse, insults, name-calling				Isolation from friends and family				Control of what you were wearing				Control of who you socialized with				Other injury or abuse			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	21.5	24.2	22.8	23.6	27.1	23.4	33.8	29.6	59.8	57.3	62.1	62.7	8.4	7.3	6.2	8.5	8.4	5.6	4.8	11.4	8.4	5.6	9.7	12.0	16.8	16.1	11.0	11.6
8th	22.7	18.8	21.4	20.2	22.7	29.3	27.9	28.0	68.8	64.4	64.2	68.3	12.6	13.6	8.8	11.8	6.7	12.0	10.2	12.1	12.3	15.2	12.6	15.4	12.3	10.5	10.2	11.0
10th	18.7	23.4	17.5	17.1	17.6	29.9	20.5	25.8	59.0	61.4	65.0	67.2	12.1	13.0	17.9	14.9	5.1	12.0	7.7	12.5	9.5	16.8	18.4	17.0	16.1	10.3	14.1	11.5
12th	17.6	23.2	14.9	17.2	18.1	24.3	26.2	23.2	68.1	62.1	71.6	68.7	16.2	20.3	15.6	18.0	12.4	10.7	12.8	13.7	15.7	13.0	17.7	19.1	12.4	11.9	14.9	14.4
All	20.0	22.2	19.2	20.0	20.5	27.1	26.4	27.2	64.4	61.7	65.4	66.4	12.8	14.1	12.5	12.6	7.8	10.5	8.8	12.2	11.8	13.3	14.8	15.3	14.1	11.8	12.5	11.9

# 6. INDICATORS OF RISK

This section highlights the following indicators of risk that can increase the likelihood of substance use, mental health concerns, and/or other concerning behaviors among youth.

- Stressful events (housing insecurity, grief, food insecurity) and sleep
- Perception of risk of substance use
- Perception of parental disapproval of substance use
- Perception of peer disapproval of substance use
- Attitudes toward substance use
- Laws/norms favorable to substance use
- Availability of substances/handguns
- Willingness to use substances
- Sources of substances used
- Other indicators of risk

# STRESSFUL EVENTS AND SLEEP

Death of friends or family members, moving homes, and worrying about having enough food are stressful events that can negatively affect a student's life. Lack of sleep can increase risk for mental health concerns, substance use and impact academic achievement.

38.3% of students in this county reported the death of close friend or family member in the past twelve months, compared to 34.8% at the state level. 12.5% of students reported changing homes once or twice within the past 12 months, and 5.7% of students reported having changed homes three or more times in the past three years.

Students also said “they were worried they would run out of food at home due to money issues” (reported by 23.8% of students in this county), “they had skipped a meal because their family didn't have enough money for food” (reported by 12.8% of students). 25.2% of students reported at least one of these two items.

39.3% of students in this county reported sleeping less than seven hours a night on an average school night, compared to 35.7% at the state level. 65.5% of students reported feeling tired or sleepy “every day” or “several times” during the day in the past 2 weeks, compared to 64.4% at the state level.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Housing Insecurity** *How many times have you changed homes:  
in the past 12 months?  
including the past 12 months, in the last 3 years?  
During the past 12 months, have you or your family  
lived in a shelter, hotel, motel, car, campground, or  
someone else's home, etc. due to loss of housing, lack  
of money, or did not have another place to stay?  
In the past 12 months, did you ever live away  
from your parents or guardians because you were  
kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned?*

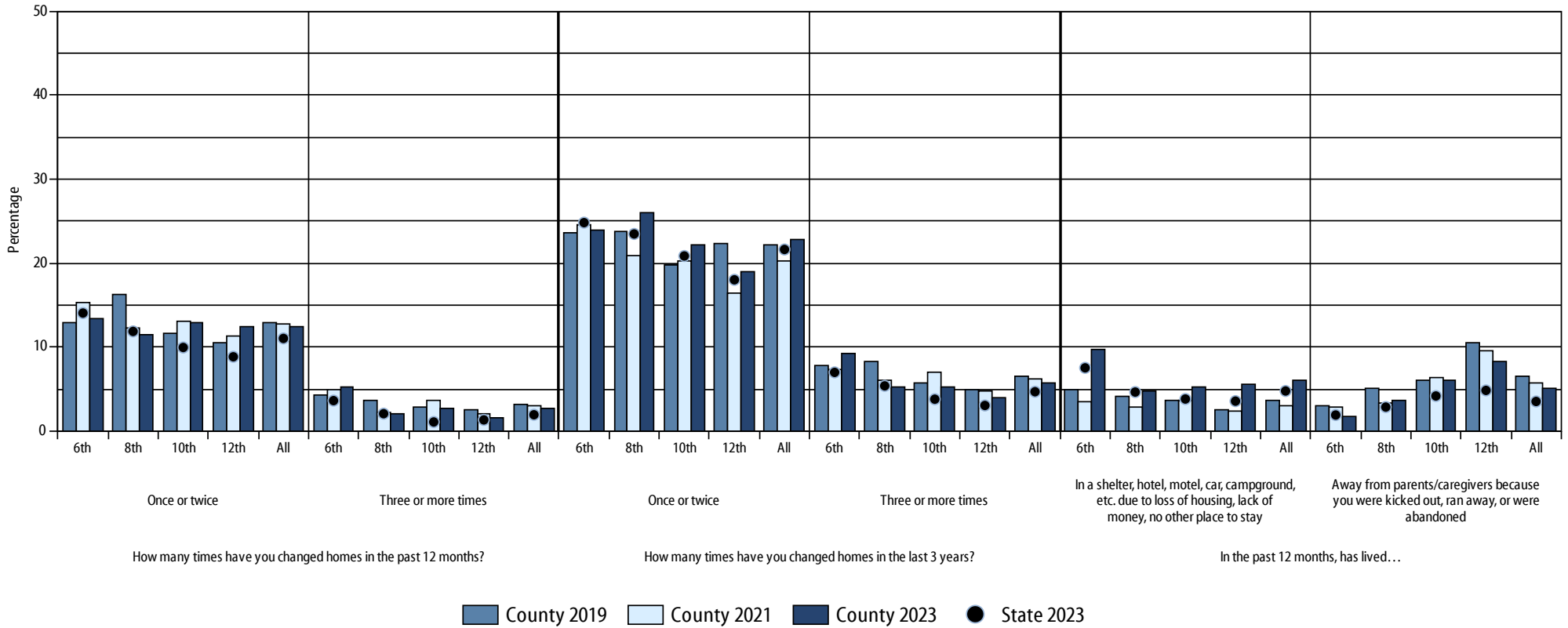
**Sleep** *On an average school night, how many hours of sleep do you get?  
In the last two weeks, how often have you  
felt tired or sleepy during the day?*

**Grief** *In the past 12 months, have any of your friends  
or family members close to you died?*

**Food insecurity** *How often in the past year have you:  
Worried that food at home would run out before  
your family got money to buy more?  
Skipped a meal because your family didn't  
have enough money to buy food?*



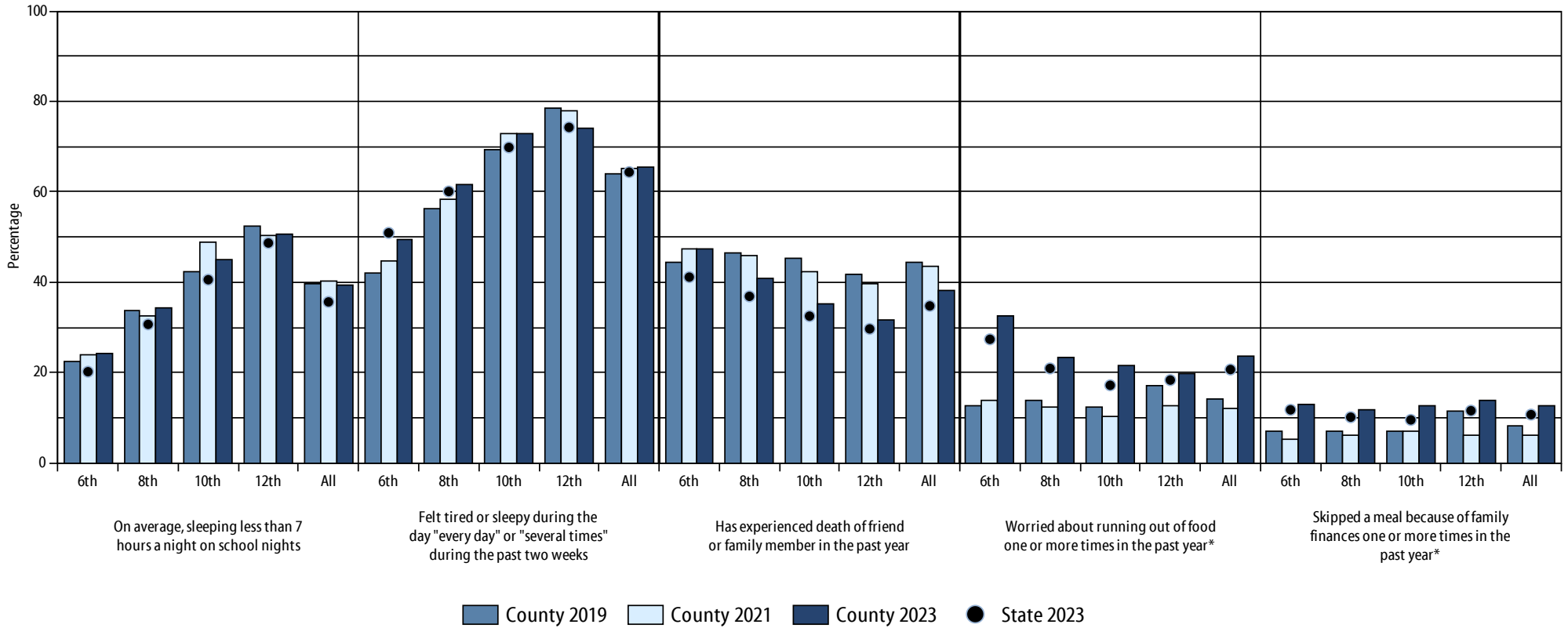
# Housing Insecurity Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	How many times have you changed homes in the past 12 months?				How many times have you changed homes in the last 3 years?				In the past 12 months, has lived...															
	Once or twice in the last year		Three or more times in the last year		Once or twice in last 3 years		Three or more times in last 3 years		In a shelter, hotel, motel, car, campground, etc. due to loss of housing, lack of money, no place to stay		Away from parents/caregivers because you were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned													
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023								
6th	13.0	15.2	13.4	14.0	4.3	4.9	5.2	3.6	23.6	24.5	24.0	24.8	7.9	7.3	9.3	7.0	4.8	3.5	9.7	7.5	3.0	2.9	1.7	1.9
8th	16.2	12.2	11.5	11.9	3.7	2.2	2.1	2.1	23.7	20.9	26.0	23.5	8.2	6.0	5.2	5.4	4.1	2.9	4.7	4.6	5.1	3.4	3.6	2.8
10th	11.7	13.0	13.0	9.9	2.9	3.7	2.8	1.1	19.8	20.3	22.2	20.8	5.7	7.0	5.2	3.8	3.6	3.7	5.3	3.8	6.1	6.4	6.1	4.2
12th	10.5	11.3	12.4	8.8	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.3	22.2	16.4	19.0	18.0	4.9	4.8	4.0	3.0	2.5	2.4	5.5	3.6	10.5	9.5	8.3	4.8
All	12.9	12.7	12.5	11.0	3.2	3.0	2.7	1.9	22.1	20.2	22.9	21.6	6.5	6.2	5.7	4.7	3.6	3.1	6.0	4.8	6.6	5.7	5.0	3.5

# Sleep, grief, and food insecurity Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

Grade	On average, sleeping less than 7 hours a night on school nights				Felt tired or sleepy during the day "every day" or "several times" during the past two weeks				Has experienced death of friend or family member in the past year				Worried about running out of food one or more times in the past year*				Skipped a meal because of family finances one or more times in the past year*			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	22.5	23.9	24.2	20.2	41.9	44.6	49.5	50.9	44.4	47.3	47.5	41.1	12.8	13.8	32.6	27.4	7.0	5.3	13.1	11.8
8th	33.8	32.6	34.4	30.7	56.1	58.3	61.7	60.1	46.5	45.8	40.9	36.9	13.9	12.3	23.3	20.9	6.9	6.1	11.9	10.2
10th	42.4	48.9	45.1	40.6	69.3	72.9	73.0	69.8	45.2	42.2	35.3	32.5	12.4	10.4	21.4	17.2	7.0	7.0	12.6	9.6
12th	52.3	50.5	50.6	48.7	78.5	77.8	74.2	74.3	41.7	39.7	31.7	29.7	17.1	12.6	19.8	18.4	11.5	6.2	13.8	11.6
All	39.8	40.2	39.3	35.7	64.0	65.1	65.5	64.4	44.6	43.4	38.3	34.8	14.2	12.1	23.8	20.7	8.2	6.2	12.8	10.7

\*See Appendix B for changes made to food insecurity questions in 2023 which could influence comparability of 2023 data to prior years.

# PERCEPTION OF RISK

Perception of risk is an important determinant in the decision-making process young people go through when deciding whether or not to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Data analysis shows a consistent negative correlation between perception of risk and the level of reported ATOD use. That is, generally when the perceived risk of harm is high, reported frequency of use is low.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Perception of Risk**

*How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they:*

*Take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, hard liquor) nearly every day?*

*Take five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, hard liquor) once or twice a week?*

*Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?*

*Try marijuana once or twice?*

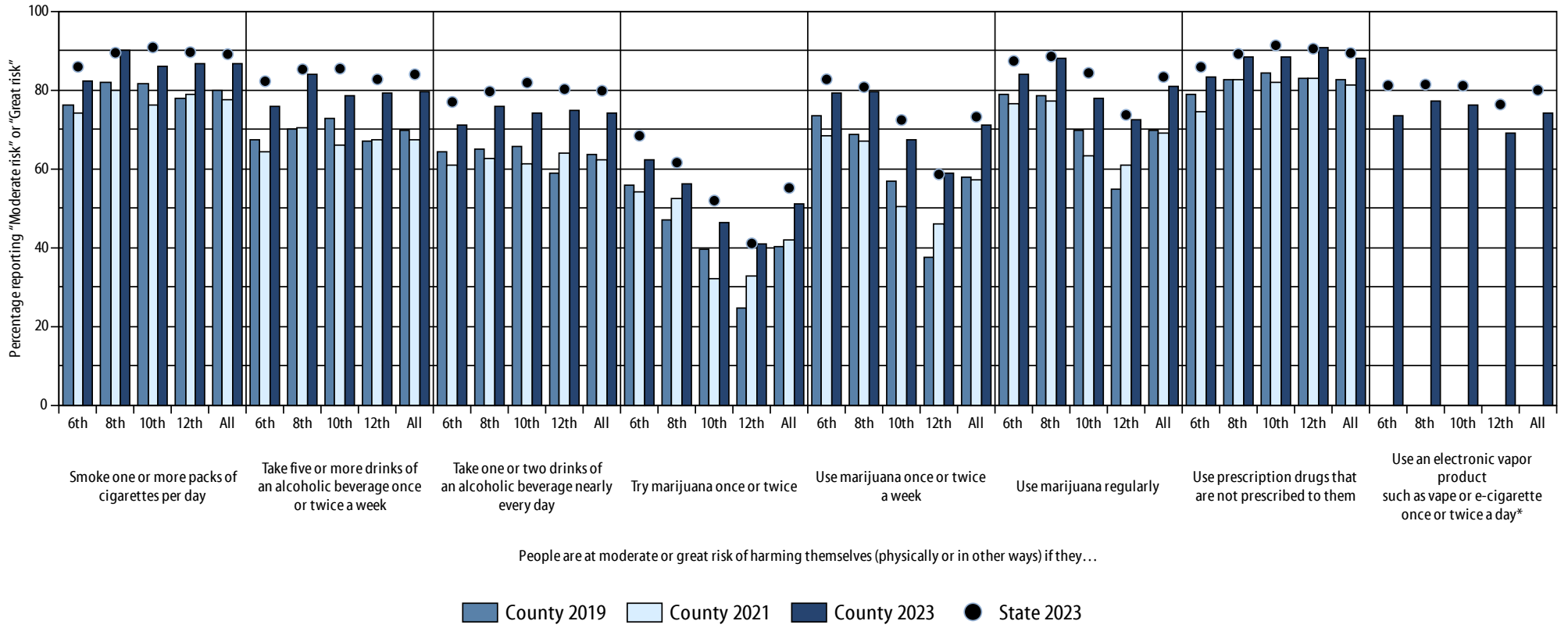
*Use marijuana once or twice a week?*

*Use marijuana regularly?*

*Use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to them?*

*Use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette once or twice a day?*

# Perception of risk Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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People are at moderate or great risk of harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they...

Grade	Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day				Take five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage once or twice a week				Take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day				Try marijuana once or twice				Use marijuana once or twice a week				Use marijuana regularly				Use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to them				Use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette once or twice a day*						
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023
6th	76.2	74.0	82.2	85.8	67.4	64.4	75.7	82.2	64.2	61.0	71.2	76.9	55.7	54.0	62.4	68.4	73.3	68.5	79.1	82.7	79.0	76.4	83.9	87.3	79.0	74.6	83.1	85.8	n/a	n/a	73.3	81.1			
8th	82.1	79.9	89.9	89.4	70.2	70.3	83.9	85.2	65.1	62.4	76.0	79.6	46.9	52.3	56.2	61.5	68.7	67.1	79.4	80.7	78.4	77.3	88.0	88.5	82.7	82.5	88.3	89.1	n/a	n/a	77.3	81.4			
10th	81.4	76.1	85.9	90.8	72.7	65.8	78.5	85.4	65.8	61.3	74.0	81.8	39.6	32.2	46.4	51.9	56.9	50.6	67.4	72.4	69.8	63.1	78.0	84.3	84.1	81.9	88.2	91.3	n/a	n/a	76.0	81.0			
12th	77.8	78.8	86.6	89.6	66.8	67.2	79.1	82.7	58.9	64.0	74.9	80.2	24.8	32.8	40.9	41.1	37.7	45.9	59.0	58.6	54.7	60.9	72.5	73.7	83.1	83.1	90.9	90.4	n/a	n/a	68.9	76.3			
All	79.9	77.5	86.5	89.0	69.6	67.2	79.7	83.9	63.6	62.3	74.3	79.8	40.2	41.9	50.9	55.1	57.8	57.2	71.1	73.2	69.7	68.9	80.7	83.3	82.7	81.1	87.9	89.3	n/a	n/a	74.2	79.9			

\*Use of an electronic vapor product such as a vape or e-cigarette was added in 2023

# PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL/CAREGIVER DISAPPROVAL

Parents/caregivers influence the attitudes and behavior of their children, including their perceptions on drug and alcohol use.

For example, parental approval of drinking, even under parental supervision, increases the likelihood of the young person using alcohol.

The data presented on the next page shows the percentages of youth who reported that their parents/caregivers feel it would be “wrong” or “very wrong” to use the substance.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Perception of parental/ caregiver disapproval** *How wrong do your parents/caregivers feel it would be for you to:*

*Drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) regularly?*

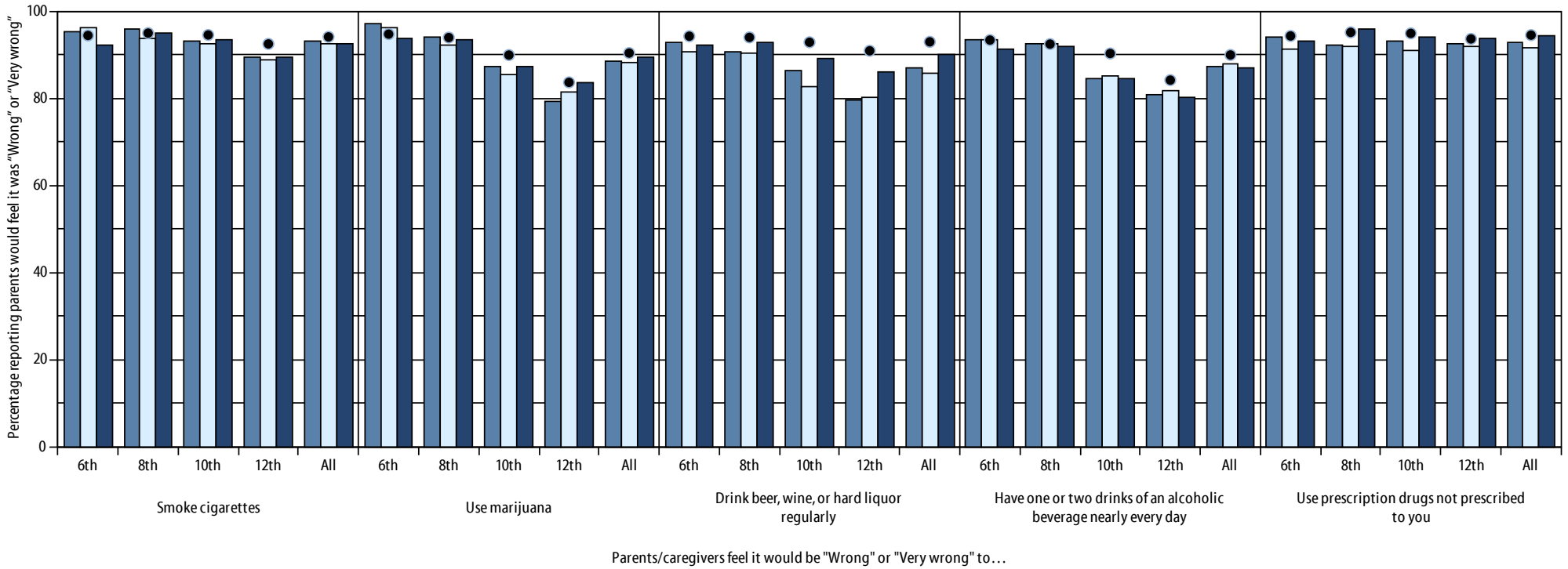
*Have one or two drinks of alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, or hard liquor (vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) nearly every day?*

*Smoke cigarettes?*

*Use marijuana?*

*Use prescription drugs not prescribed to you?*

# Perception of parental/caregiver disapproval Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

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Grade	Smoke cigarettes				Use marijuana				Drink beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly				Have one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day				Use prescription drugs not prescribed to you			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	95.1	96.0	92.0	94.4	97.2	96.3	93.7	94.7	92.9	90.5	92.3	94.2	93.5	93.5	91.3	93.3	94.0	91.3	93.0	94.3
8th	95.7	93.9	95.0	94.9	94.1	92.1	93.4	93.9	90.7	90.4	92.7	94.0	92.5	92.3	92.0	92.4	92.2	91.8	96.0	95.1
10th	93.1	92.4	93.4	94.5	87.2	85.5	87.2	89.9	86.3	82.5	89.0	92.8	84.6	85.1	84.6	90.3	93.0	90.9	94.0	94.9
12th	89.6	88.9	89.3	92.5	79.2	81.6	83.5	83.6	79.7	80.1	86.0	90.9	80.9	81.7	80.3	84.1	92.5	91.9	93.7	93.6
All	93.2	92.5	92.6	94.1	88.5	88.3	89.4	90.4	87.0	85.7	90.0	92.9	87.2	87.8	87.0	89.9	92.8	91.4	94.3	94.5

# PERCEPTION OF PEER DISAPPROVAL

The older the student is, the more influence a student’s peers exert on the student’s behavior.

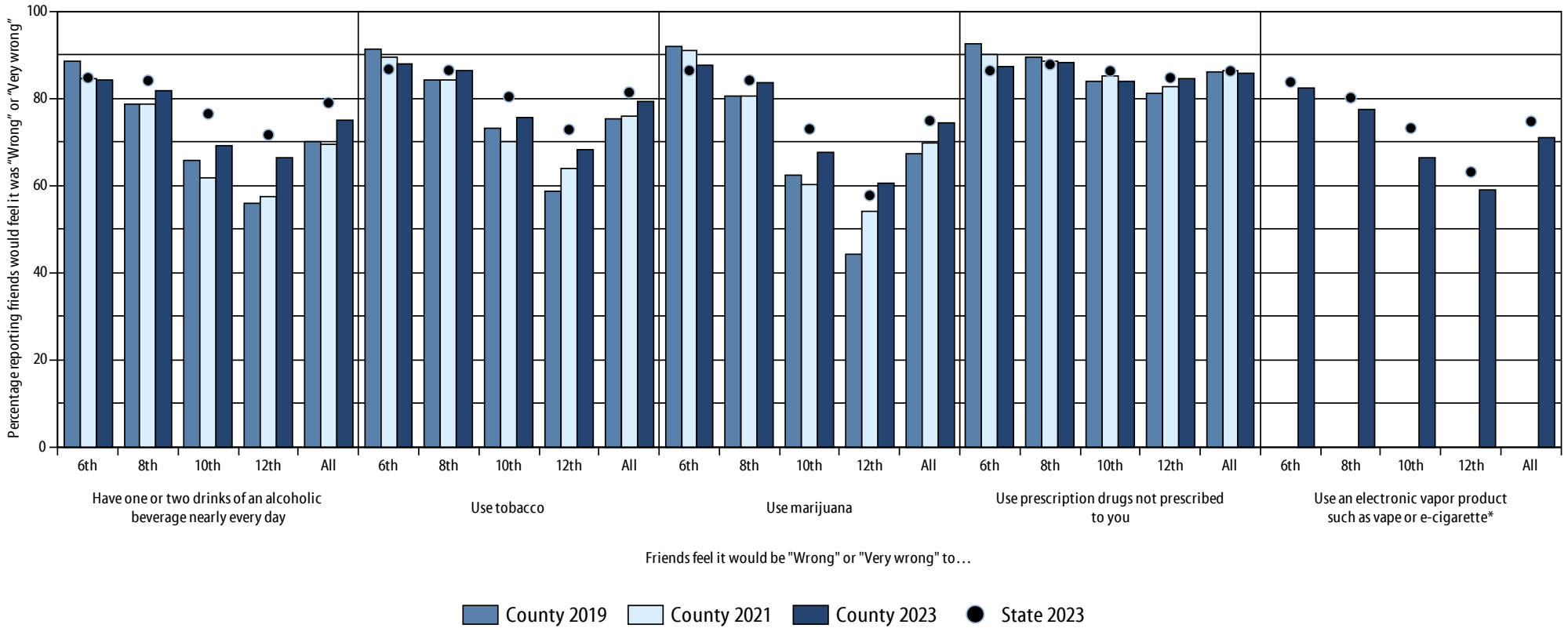
Researchers have identified a positive correlation between the amount of peer disapproval of alcohol and other drug use and the level of alcohol and other drug use among students. Thus, the greater the peer disapproval, the less likely students are to use alcohol and other drugs. The rates are the percentages of surveyed youth who reported that their friends feel it would be “wrong” or “very wrong” for them to use the substance.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Perception of peer disapproval** *How wrong do your friends feel it would be for you to:*

- Have one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day?*
- Use tobacco?*
- Use marijuana?*
- Use prescription drugs not prescribed to you?*
- Use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette?*

# Perception of peer disapproval Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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Grade	Have one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day				Use tobacco				Use marijuana				Use prescription drugs not prescribed to you				Use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette*			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	88.6	84.3	84.0	84.7	91.3	89.4	87.9	86.6	92.0	90.9	87.4	86.4	92.5	90.1	87.2	86.3	n/a	n/a	82.4	83.7
8th	78.6	78.5	81.9	84.0	84.2	84.2	86.3	86.4	80.4	80.5	83.6	84.1	89.5	88.6	88.1	87.7	n/a	n/a	77.5	80.1
10th	65.8	61.8	69.2	76.4	73.0	70.2	75.5	80.3	62.3	60.1	67.6	72.9	84.0	85.0	83.8	86.2	n/a	n/a	66.4	73.1
12th	55.7	57.4	66.4	71.6	58.7	63.8	68.3	72.8	44.3	54.0	60.4	57.7	81.1	82.8	84.5	84.7	n/a	n/a	58.9	63.1
All	70.2	69.3	75.1	78.9	75.1	75.9	79.3	81.4	67.2	69.7	74.3	74.8	86.1	86.3	85.8	86.2	n/a	n/a	70.9	74.7

\*Use of an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette question was added to survey in 2023.



# ATTITUDES TOWARD SUBSTANCE USE

Personal approval or disapproval is another key attitudinal construct that influences substance use behavior.

Personal disapproval was measured by asking surveyed youth how wrong it would be for someone their age to use certain substances or how they feel about someone their age using certain substances.

80.6% of the students thought it was “Wrong” or “Very wrong” for someone their age to use alcohol regularly (state rate: 83.2%) and 78.8% thought it was “Wrong” or “Very wrong” for someone their age to use marijuana (state rate: 80.6%).

PAYS 2023 category:	PAYS 2023 question text:
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**Attitudes toward substance use**

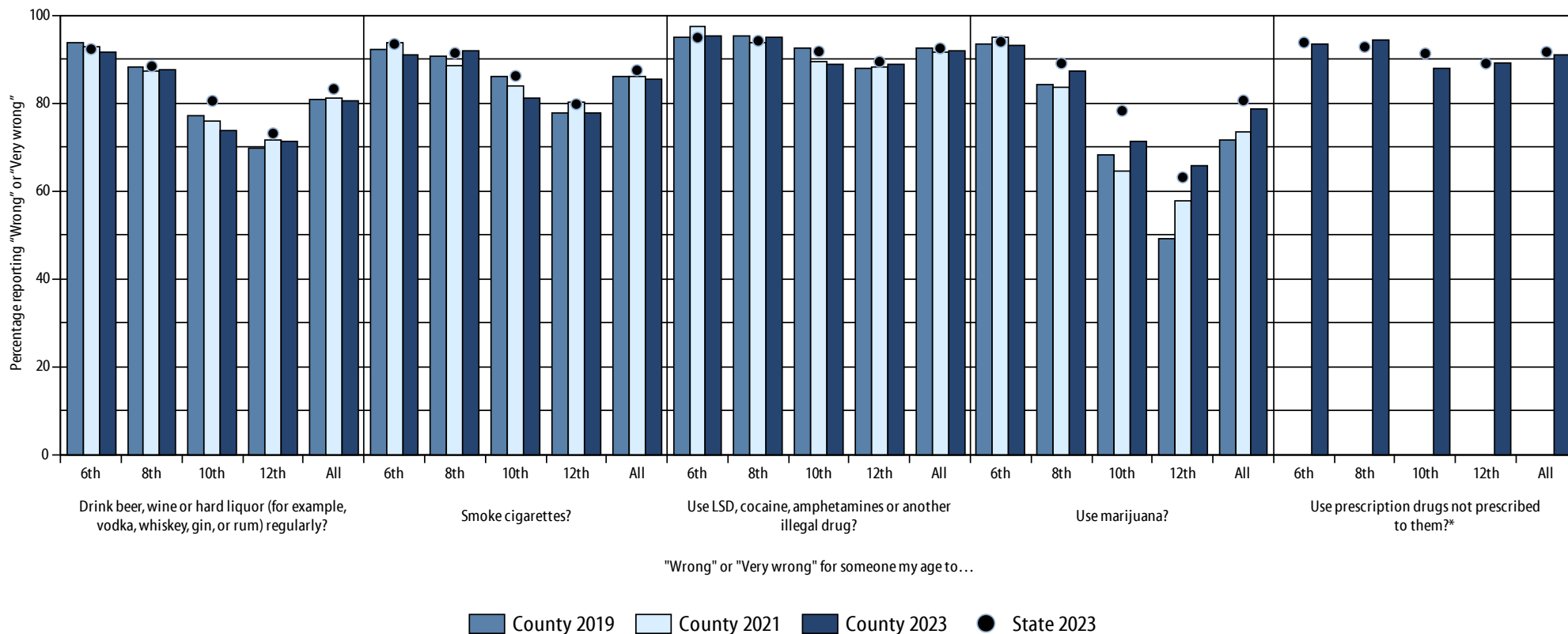
*How do you feel about someone your age:*

- Having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, hard liquor) nearly every day?*
- Using marijuana once a month or more?*

*How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to:*

- Drink beer, wine, hard liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, gin or rum) regularly?*
- Smoke cigarettes?*
- Use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines or another illegal drug?*
- Using marijuana?*
- Using prescription drugs not prescribed to them?*

## Attitudes toward peer use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



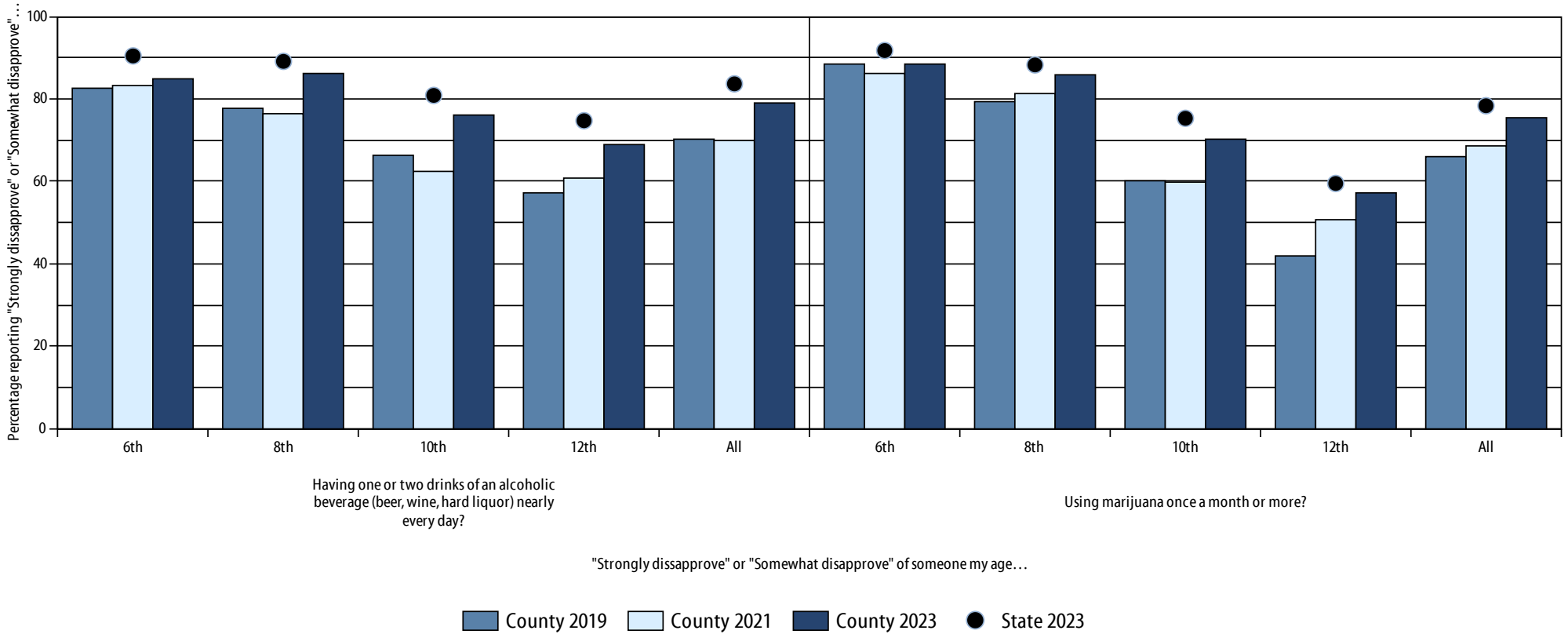
5\_29\_2024

"Wrong" or "Very wrong" for someone my age to...

Grade	Drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) regularly?				Smoke cigarettes?				Use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines or another illegal drug?				Use marijuana?				Use prescription drugs not prescribed to them?*			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	93.7	92.7	91.4	92.3	92.1	93.7	91.0	93.4	95.0	97.3	95.3	94.9	93.4	94.8	93.2	93.9	n/a	n/a	93.5	93.8
8th	88.2	87.1	87.6	88.4	90.5	88.4	91.9	91.4	95.4	93.7	94.9	94.1	84.3	83.5	87.1	89.0	n/a	n/a	94.3	92.8
10th	77.2	75.9	73.8	80.5	85.9	83.8	81.0	86.2	92.5	89.3	88.9	91.7	68.2	64.5	71.4	78.2	n/a	n/a	87.9	91.3
12th	69.6	71.7	71.3	73.1	77.7	80.0	77.9	79.7	88.0	88.2	88.7	89.4	49.3	57.8	65.7	63.1	n/a	n/a	89.0	89.0
All	80.9	81.0	80.6	83.2	86.0	85.9	85.4	87.4	92.5	91.7	91.8	92.4	71.6	73.5	78.8	80.6	n/a	n/a	91.1	91.6

\*Question on using prescription drugs not prescribed to them was revised in 2023 and is not comparable to prior years.

# Disapproval of peer substance use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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"Strongly disapprove" or "Somewhat disapprove" of someone my age...

Grade	Having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, hard liquor) nearly every day?				Using marijuana once a month or more?			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	82.6	83.2	84.8	90.4	88.3	86.1	88.3	91.7
8th	77.7	76.3	86.0	89.1	79.4	81.3	85.9	88.3
10th	66.3	62.4	76.0	80.9	60.1	59.9	70.4	75.3
12th	57.2	60.7	69.0	74.7	41.9	50.7	57.3	59.5
All	70.2	70.0	79.1	83.7	66.1	68.6	75.4	78.4

# LAWS/NORMS FAVORABLE TO USE

Students' perceptions of the rules, regulations and norms in their community related to substance use are connected to the extent of substance use and other concerning behaviors during adolescence.

The attitudes and policies a community holds about substance use and other concerning behaviors are communicated through laws, written policies, informal social practices, and expectations by parents and community members of young people. When laws and community standards are unclear or perceived as favorable toward substance use, violence, and crime, young people are more likely to engage in negative behaviors.

35.8% of students in this county think that if a kid drank alcohol, they would be caught by the police (state rate: 39.1%).

75.9% of students report that most adults in their neighborhood would think it was "Very wrong" or "Wrong" for kids their age to drink alcohol (compared to 79.8% at the state level) and 83.4% of students reports that adults would think it was "Very wrong" or "Wrong" for kids their age to use marijuana (compared to 85.6% at the state level).

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Laws and Norms Favorable to Use**

*If a kid drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example: vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) in your neighborhood would he or she be caught by the police?*

*If a kid smoked marijuana in your neighborhood would he or she be caught by the police?*

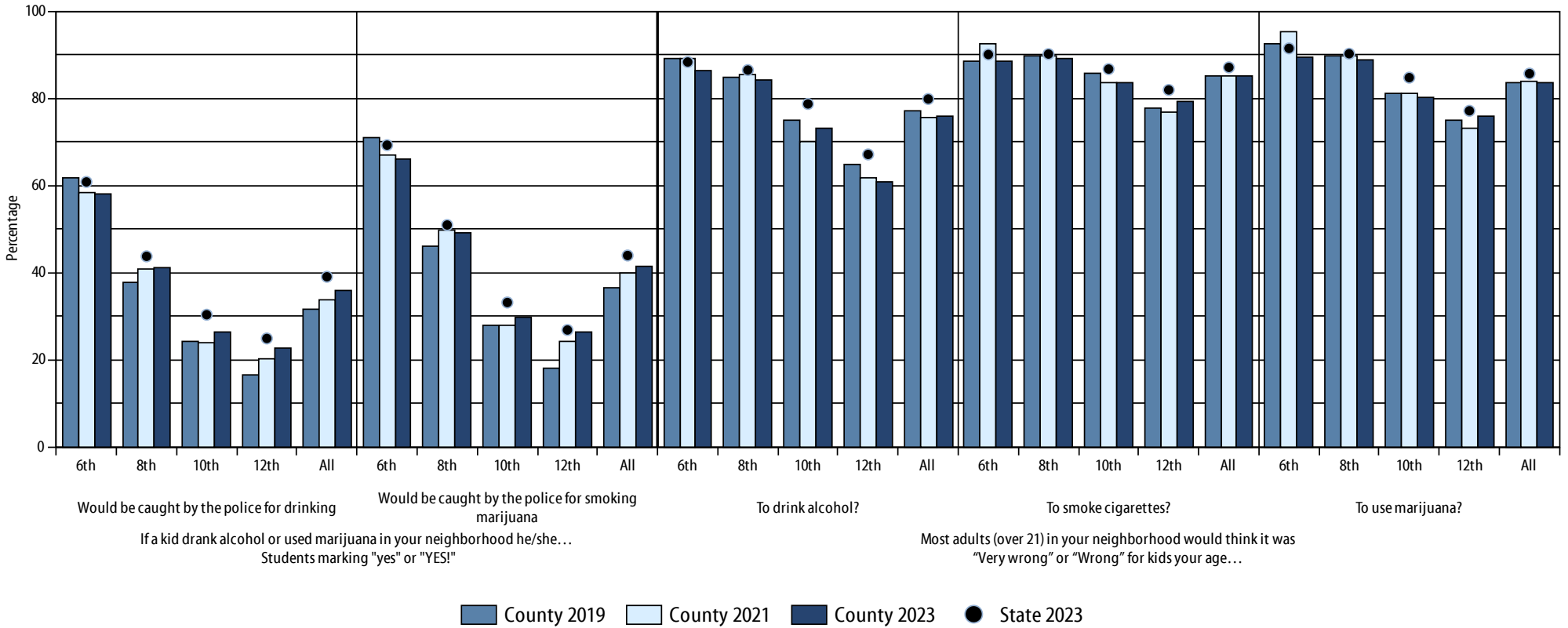
*How wrong would most adults (over 21) in your neighborhood think it was for kids your age:*

*To drink alcohol?*

*To smoke cigarettes?*

*To use marijuana?*

# Laws/Norms favorable to use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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Grade	If a kid drank alcohol or used marijuana in your neighborhood he/she... Students marking "yes" or "YES!"				To drink alcohol?				To smoke cigarettes?				Most adults (over 21) in your neighborhood would think it was "Very wrong" or "Wrong" for kids your age...							
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023				
6th	61.9	58.3	58.0	60.8	70.9	67.1	66.0	69.2	89.0	89.2	86.3	88.3	88.4	92.6	88.3	90.0	92.5	95.1	89.5	91.4
8th	37.7	40.9	41.0	43.7	46.0	49.8	49.2	50.9	84.7	85.4	84.2	86.5	89.6	89.6	89.0	90.1	89.8	89.8	88.7	90.2
10th	24.4	23.8	26.4	30.3	28.0	27.9	29.9	33.2	74.9	70.1	73.2	78.7	85.6	83.6	83.5	86.7	81.2	81.1	80.3	84.7
12th	16.6	20.2	22.7	24.9	18.1	24.4	26.5	26.8	64.8	61.7	61.0	67.1	77.7	76.9	79.4	81.9	75.0	73.1	75.9	77.1
All	31.5	33.7	35.8	39.1	36.6	39.9	41.5	43.9	77.1	75.6	75.9	79.8	85.1	85.1	85.0	87.1	83.7	83.9	83.4	85.6

# AVAILABILITY OF SUBSTANCES/ HANDGUNS

Students' perceptions of the availability of substances and handguns in their community influences involvement with substances and guns.

In schools where youth believe that drugs are easily available, a higher rate of drug use has been found to occur. If students believe that acquiring a handgun is or would be difficult, they are less likely to become involved with the unauthorized and unsupervised use of firearms.

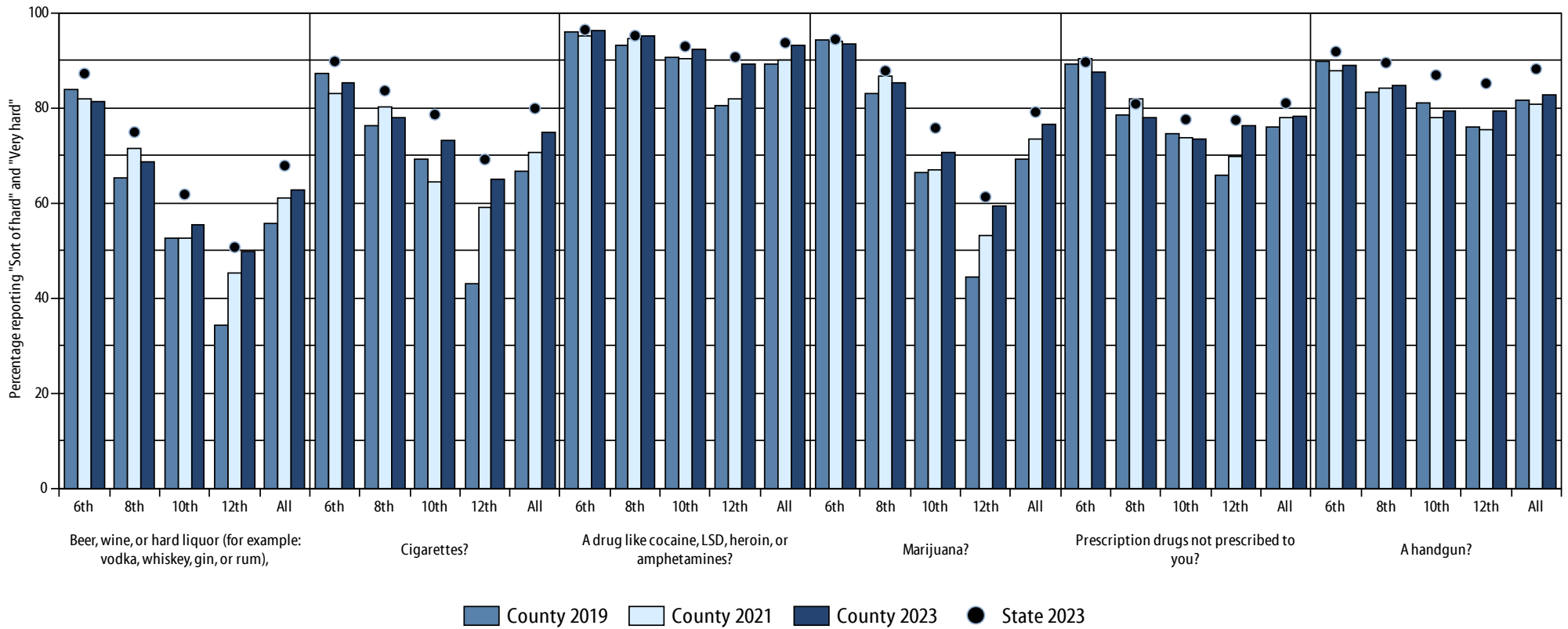
62.8% of students reported that alcohol would be "Sort of hard" or "Very hard" to get, and 82.7% reported that a handgun would be "Sort of hard" or "Very hard" to get (compared to state rates of 67.8% and 88.1%, respectively).

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Availability of Substances/Handguns** *How easy would it be for you to get any, if you wanted to get any of the following:*

- Beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example: vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum)*
- Cigarettes?*
- A drug like cocaine, LSD, heroin, or amphetamines?*
- Marijuana?*
- Prescription drugs not prescribed to you?*
- A handgun?*

## Availability of substances/handguns Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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"Sort of hard" or "Very hard" to get...

Grade	Beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example: vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum),				Cigarettes?				A drug like cocaine, LSD, heroin, or amphetamines?				Marijuana?				Prescription drugs not prescribed to you?				A handgun?			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	84.0	81.9	81.2	87.2	87.2	83.1	85.1	89.7	96.0	95.0	96.3	96.4	94.3	93.9	93.4	94.4	89.2	90.2	87.6	89.6	89.8	87.8	88.9	91.8
8th	65.2	71.3	68.6	74.9	76.2	80.1	77.8	83.6	93.1	94.4	95.2	95.2	83.0	86.5	85.1	87.7	78.5	82.0	78.0	80.8	83.3	84.2	84.6	89.4
10th	52.5	52.6	55.4	61.8	69.1	64.3	73.1	78.6	90.5	90.2	92.3	92.9	66.4	66.8	70.5	75.7	74.5	73.6	73.5	77.5	81.0	77.8	79.2	86.9
12th	34.4	45.3	49.7	50.7	42.9	59.1	65.0	69.1	80.3	81.8	89.2	90.7	44.3	53.0	59.3	61.3	65.9	69.7	76.1	77.4	76.0	75.5	79.3	85.1
All	55.8	61.0	62.8	67.8	66.8	70.6	74.9	79.9	89.3	90.0	93.2	93.7	69.3	73.3	76.5	79.1	75.9	77.9	78.1	81.0	81.6	80.7	82.7	88.1



# WILLINGNESS TO USE SUBSTANCES

Along with perceptions of substance use risk and level of substance use disapproval, student willingness to try or use substances is one of the attitudes that facilitates substance use.

18.2% of students showed a willingness to use alcohol (indicating they “would like to try it or use it” or “would use it any chance I got”), compared to 14.6% at the state level.

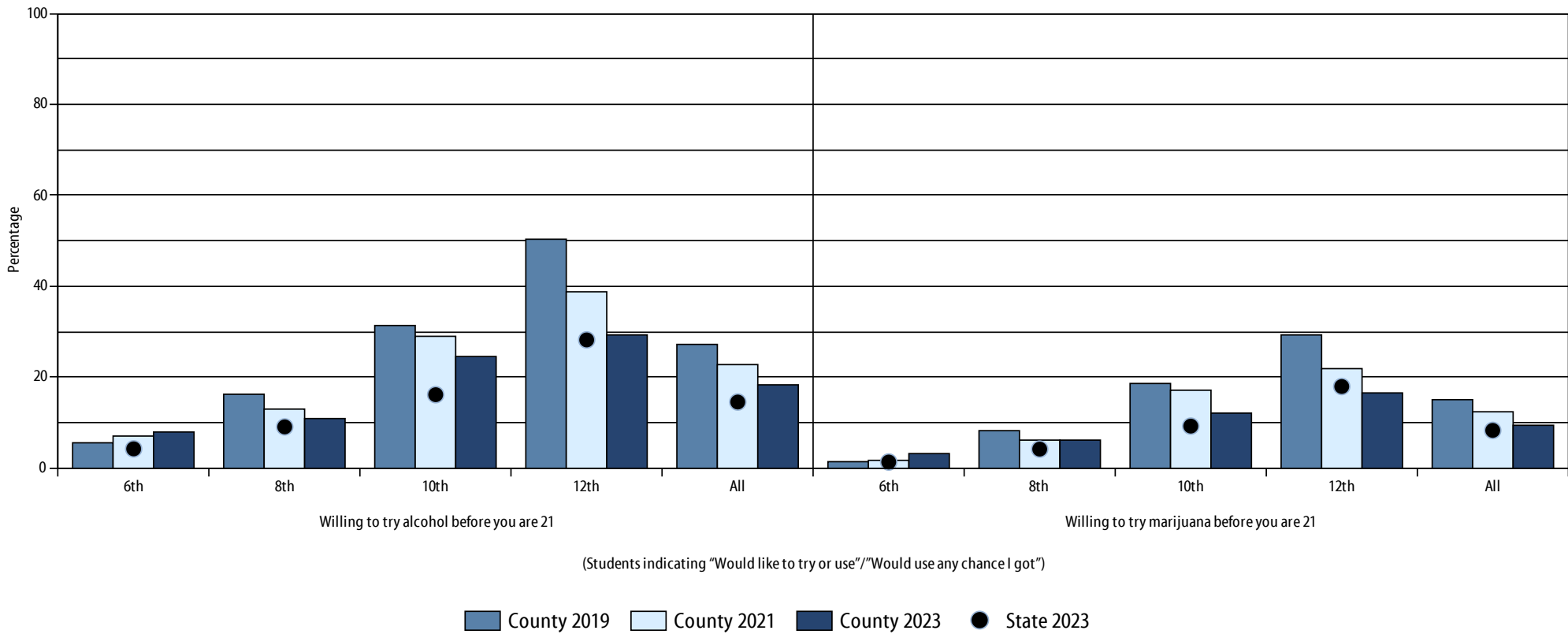
**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Willingness to use** *How willing are you to try the drugs listed below before you are 21? These are not questions about current or past use of these drugs.*

*ALCOHOL (beer, wine, coolers, hard liquor  
such as vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum)*

*MARIJUANA (pot, hash, cannabis, weed, THC)*

# Willingness to use substances Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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Grade	Willing to try alcohol				Willing to try marijuana			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	5.5	7.1	7.8	4.2	1.3	1.8	3.2	1.3
8th	16.3	13.1	10.8	9.1	8.2	6.2	6.1	4.2
10th	31.4	29.0	24.5	16.2	18.5	17.1	12.0	9.3
12th	50.4	38.8	29.4	28.2	29.3	21.9	16.5	18.0
All	27.2	22.8	18.2	14.6	15.1	12.2	9.5	8.3

# SOURCES OF SUBSTANCES USED

Questions about how and where substances were obtained help suggest new approaches for preventing substance use.

Of the students who reported drinking alcohol in the past year, 31.0% of students chose “took it without permission [from my home, friend’s home, store, etc.]” as their most frequent source/method of obtaining the alcohol they used, compared to 27.1% at the state level. The next most frequently reported source of alcohol was “Parents/caregivers provided it to me” with 28.7% of students who used alcohol in the past year indicating this method, compared to 33.6% at the state level. The third most frequently reported source was “other source provided it to me” with 22.8% of students who used alcohol in the past year indicating this method, compared to 18.0% at the state level.

48.3% of students who used prescription drugs not prescribed in the past year chose “took them from a family member living in my home” as their most frequent source/method of obtaining the prescription drugs they used without a doctor’s prescription, compared to 47.2% at the state level. The next most frequently reported source of prescription drugs was “a friend or family member gave them to me” with 31.0% of students who used prescription drugs not prescribed in the past year indicating this method, compared to 37.0% at the state level.

40.9% of students who used electronic vapor products in the past year chose “A friend gave it to me for free” as their most frequent source/method of obtaining the electronic vapor product, compared to 43.1% at the state level. The next most frequently reported source of electronic vapor product was “Other source not listed here” with 20.5% of students who used electronic vapor products in the past year indicating this method, compared to 24.5% at the state level.

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

**Sources of alcohol**

*If you drank alcohol during the past 12 months, how did you usually get it? (Mark all that apply.)*

- Did not drink any alcohol*
- Bought it in a store*
- Bought it at a restaurant, bar, or club*
- Bought it at a public event such as a concert or sporting event*
- Gave someone money to buy it for me*
- Parents/caregivers provided it to me*
- Friends' parents/caregivers provided it to me*
- Friends, brothers, or sisters over 21 provided it to me*
- Friends, brothers, or sisters under 21 provided it to me*
- Other relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.) provided it to me*
- Other source provided it to me*
- Took without permission, stole, or found it (my home, friend's home, store, etc.)*

**Sources of prescription drugs**

*If you used any prescription drugs without a prescription from your doctor during the last 12 months, how did you get them? (Mark all that apply.)*

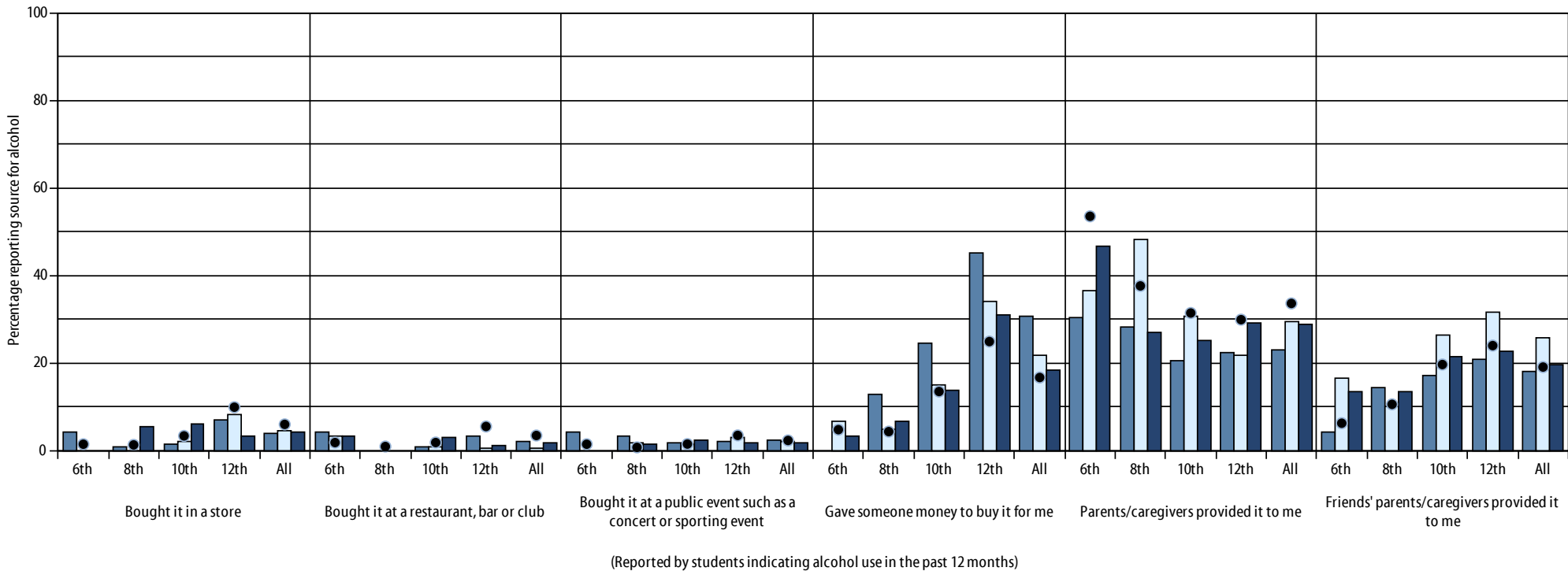
- I did not take any prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.*
- Took them from a family member living in my home.*
- Took them from other relatives not living in my home.*
- Took them from someone not related to me.*
- A friend or family member gave them to me.*
- Bought them from someone.*
- Ordered them over the Internet.*

**Sources of vape**

*If you used an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette in the past year, how did you get it? (Mark all that apply.)*

- Did not use electronic vapor product*
- A friend gave it to me for free*
- A family member gave it to me for free*
- I bought it from someone under 21*
- I bought it from someone over 21*
- I bought it from a store*
- I bought it on the internet*
- I gave someone money to buy it for me*
- I took it from someone*
- Other source not listed here*

# Sources of alcohol by students who reported alcohol use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

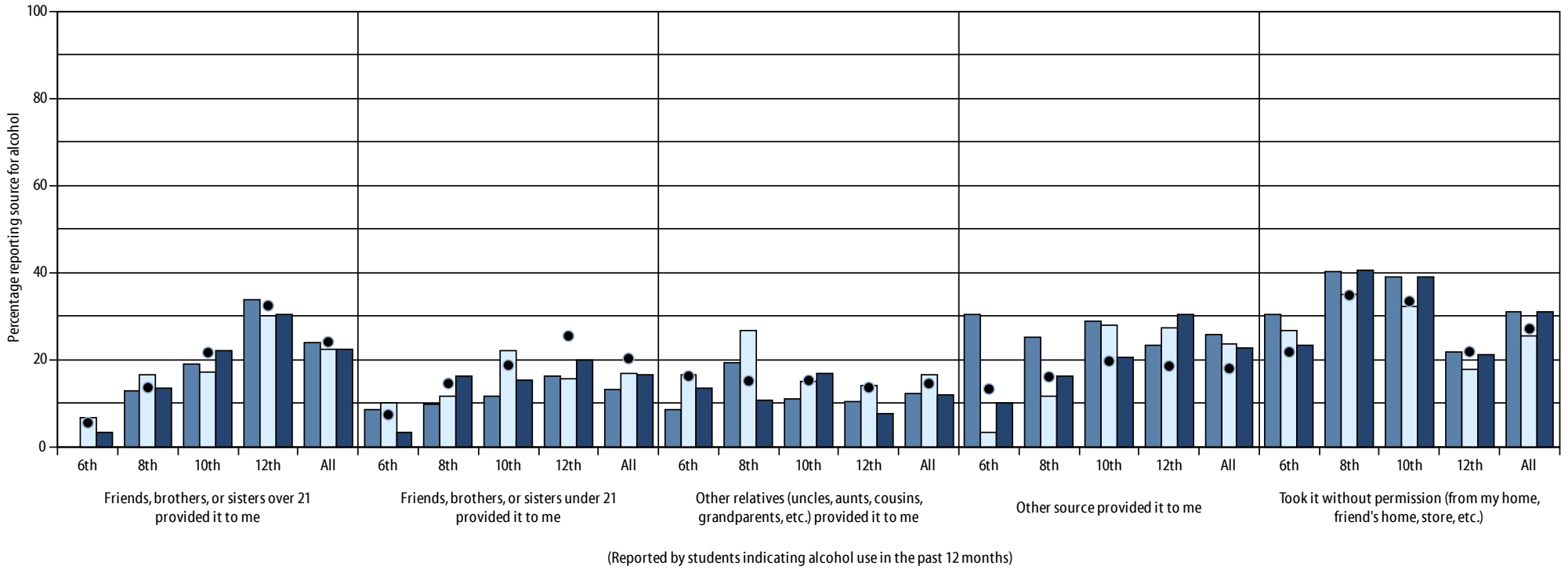


County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

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Grade	Bought it in a store				Bought it at a restaurant, bar or club				Bought it at a public event such as a concert or sporting event				Gave someone money to buy it for me				Parents/caregivers provided it to me				Friends' parents/caregivers provided it to me			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	4.3	0.0	0.0	1.5	4.3	3.3	3.3	1.8	4.3	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	6.7	3.3	4.8	30.4	36.7	46.7	53.5	4.3	16.7	13.3	6.3
8th	0.8	0.0	5.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	3.2	1.7	1.4	0.8	12.9	5.0	6.8	4.3	28.2	48.3	27.0	37.6	14.5	10.0	13.5	10.6
10th	1.4	2.1	6.1	3.4	0.9	0.7	3.1	1.9	1.9	1.4	2.3	1.5	24.7	15.0	13.7	13.5	20.5	30.7	25.2	31.4	17.2	26.4	21.4	19.7
12th	7.0	8.1	3.2	9.9	3.3	0.5	1.3	5.5	2.0	3.0	1.9	3.5	45.0	34.0	31.0	24.9	22.3	21.8	29.0	29.9	21.0	31.5	22.6	24.0
All	3.9	4.4	4.4	6.0	2.0	0.7	1.8	3.5	2.3	2.1	1.8	2.3	30.8	21.8	18.5	16.7	23.1	29.5	28.7	33.6	18.0	25.8	19.7	19.1

# Sources of alcohol by students who reported alcohol use (cont'd) Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

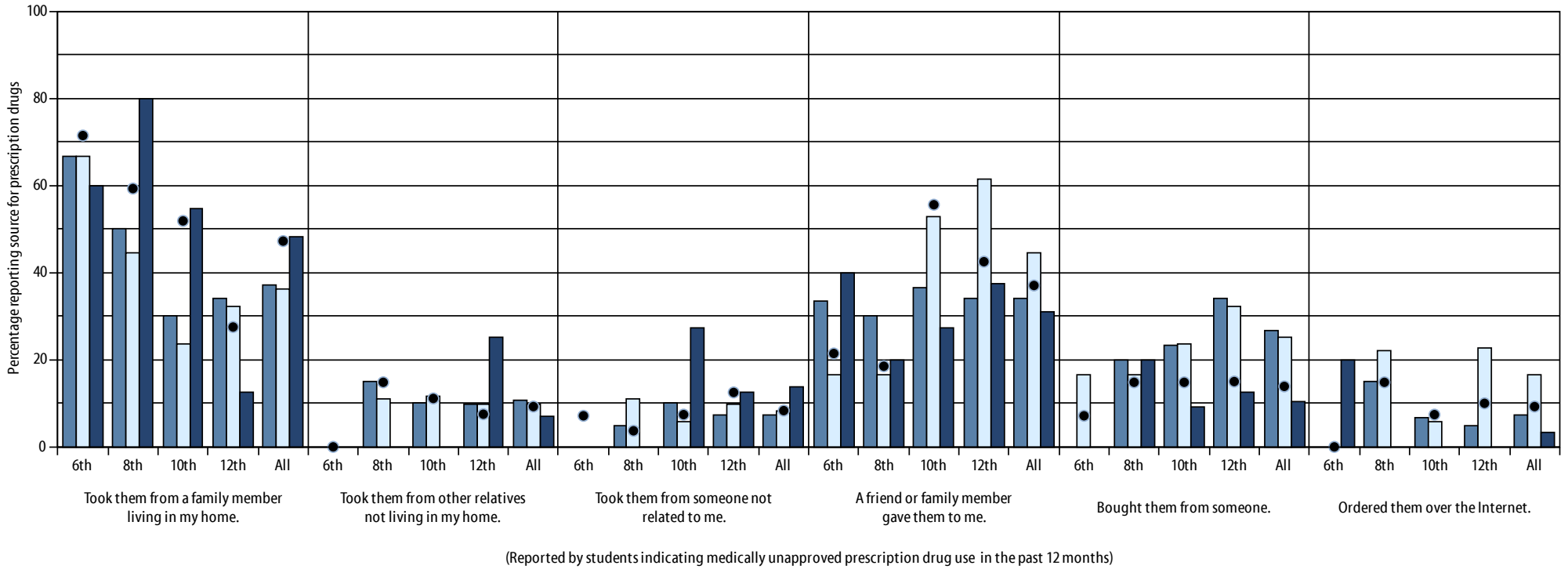


County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	Friends, brothers, or sisters over 21 provided it to me				Friends, brothers, or sisters under 21 provided it to me				Other relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.) provided it to me				Other source provided it to me				Took it without permission (from my home, friend's home, store, etc.)			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	0.0	6.7	3.3	5.5	8.7	10.0	3.3	7.4	8.7	16.7	13.3	16.2	30.4	3.3	10.0	13.3	30.4	26.7	23.3	21.8
8th	12.9	16.7	13.5	13.6	9.7	11.7	16.2	14.6	19.4	26.7	10.8	15.1	25.0	11.7	16.2	16.1	40.3	35.0	40.5	34.8
10th	19.1	17.1	22.1	21.7	11.6	22.1	15.3	18.7	11.2	15.0	16.8	15.3	28.8	27.9	20.6	19.7	39.1	32.1	38.9	33.4
12th	33.7	29.9	30.3	32.4	16.3	15.7	20.0	25.4	10.3	14.2	7.7	13.6	23.3	27.4	30.3	18.5	21.7	17.8	21.3	21.8
All	23.9	22.2	22.3	24.1	13.3	16.9	16.4	20.3	12.2	16.4	11.8	14.5	25.7	23.7	22.8	18.0	31.1	25.5	31.0	27.1

# Sources of prescription drugs by students who reported prescription drug use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

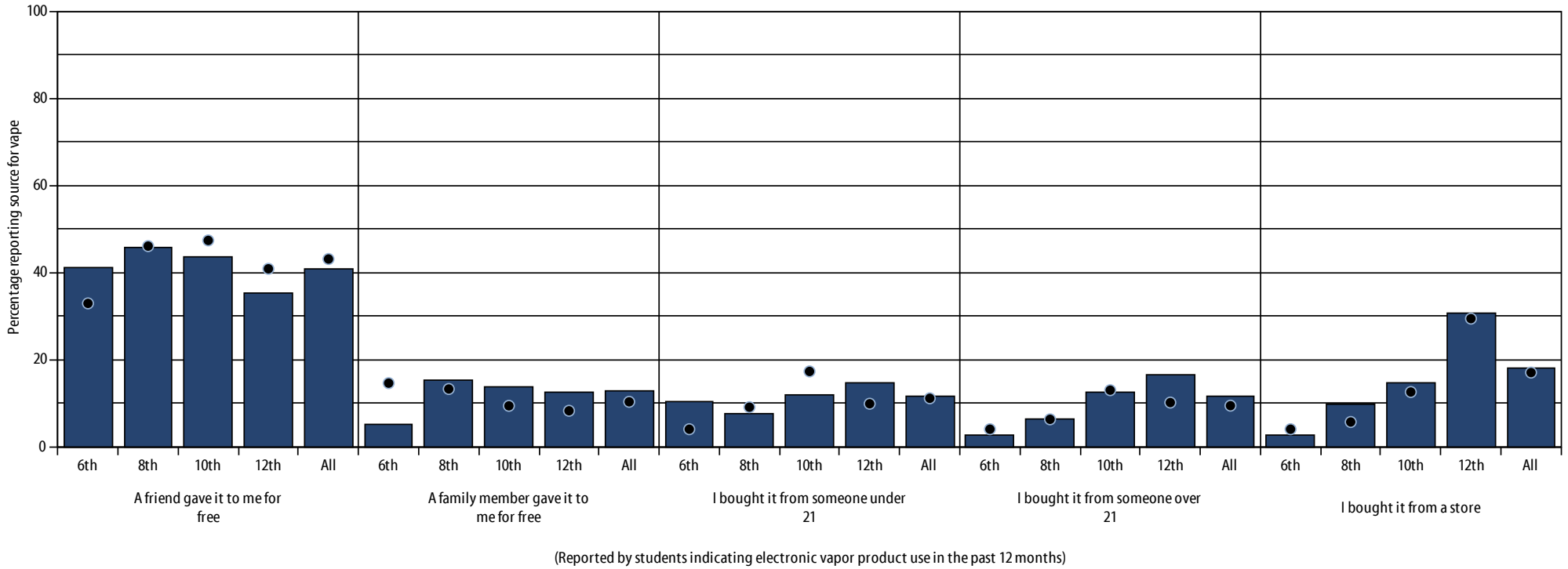


County 2019 County 2021 County 2023 State 2023

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Grade	Took them from a family member living in my home.				Took them from other relatives not living in my home.				Took them from someone not related to me.				A friend or family member gave them to me.				Bought them from someone.				Ordered them over the Internet.			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	66.7	66.7	60.0	71.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	33.3	16.7	40.0	21.4	0.0	16.7	0.0	7.1	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
8th	50.0	44.4	80.0	59.3	15.0	11.1	0.0	14.8	5.0	11.1	0.0	3.7	30.0	16.7	20.0	18.5	20.0	16.7	20.0	14.8	15.0	22.2	0.0	14.8
10th	30.0	23.5	54.5	51.9	10.0	11.8	0.0	11.1	10.0	5.9	27.3	7.4	36.7	52.9	27.3	55.6	23.3	23.5	9.1	14.8	6.7	5.9	0.0	7.4
12th	34.1	32.3	12.5	27.5	9.8	9.7	25.0	7.5	7.3	9.7	12.5	12.5	34.1	61.3	37.5	42.5	34.1	32.3	12.5	15.0	4.9	22.6	0.0	10.0
All	37.2	36.1	48.3	47.2	10.6	9.7	6.9	9.3	7.4	8.3	13.8	8.3	34.0	44.4	31.0	37.0	26.6	25.0	10.3	13.9	7.4	16.7	3.4	9.3

# Sources of vape by students who reported vape use Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



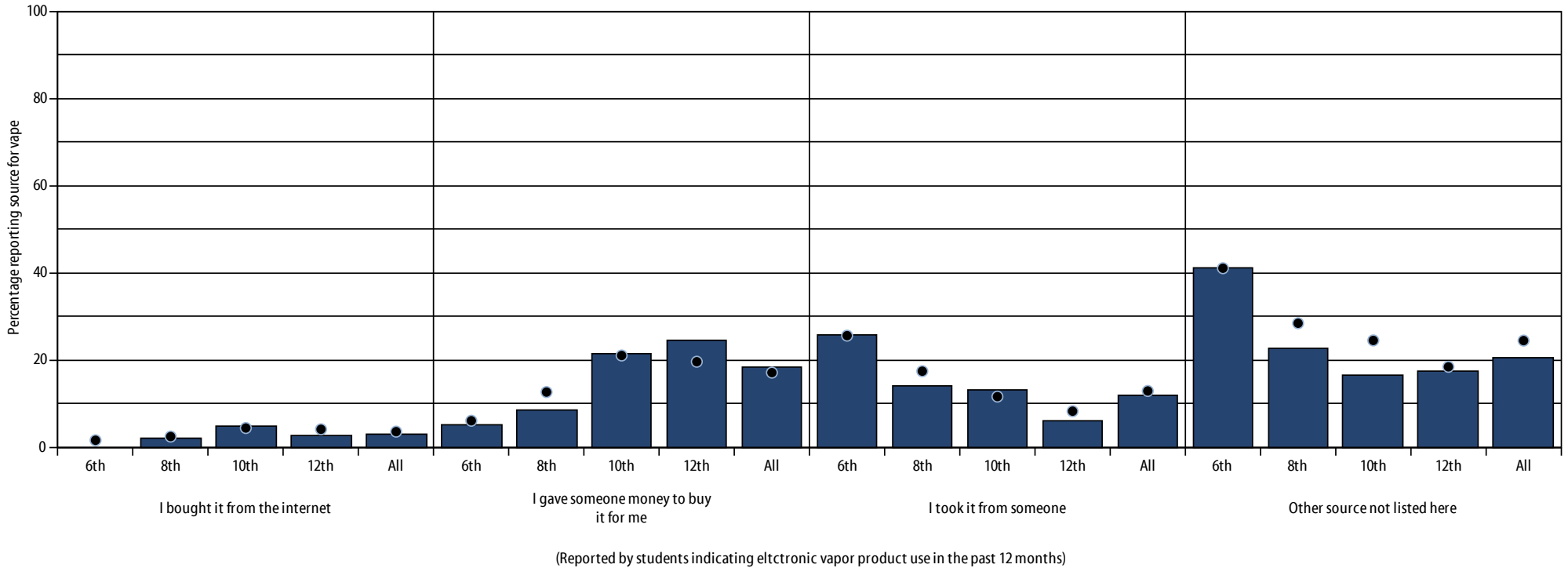
■ County 2023 ● State 2023

5\_29\_2024

Grade	A friend gave it to me for free				A family member gave it to me for free				I bought it from someone under 21				I bought it from someone over 21				I bought it from a store			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	41.0	32.9	n/a	n/a	5.1	14.6	n/a	n/a	10.3	4.1	n/a	n/a	2.6	4.1	n/a	n/a	2.6	4.1
8th	n/a	n/a	45.7	46.1	n/a	n/a	15.2	13.3	n/a	n/a	7.6	9.1	n/a	n/a	6.5	6.3	n/a	n/a	9.8	5.7
10th	n/a	n/a	43.8	47.4	n/a	n/a	13.9	9.4	n/a	n/a	11.8	17.3	n/a	n/a	12.5	13.0	n/a	n/a	14.6	12.6
12th	n/a	n/a	35.3	40.9	n/a	n/a	12.7	8.3	n/a	n/a	14.7	9.9	n/a	n/a	16.7	10.2	n/a	n/a	30.7	29.4
All	n/a	n/a	40.9	43.1	n/a	n/a	12.9	10.3	n/a	n/a	11.8	11.2	n/a	n/a	11.8	9.5	n/a	n/a	18.1	17.1



## Sources of vape by students who reported vape use (cont'd) Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



County 2023 State 2023

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Grade	I bought it from the internet				I gave someone money to buy it for me				I took it from someone				Other source not listed here			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	n/a	n/a	0.0	1.6	n/a	n/a	5.1	6.1	n/a	n/a	25.6	25.6	n/a	n/a	41.0	41.1
8th	n/a	n/a	2.2	2.5	n/a	n/a	8.7	12.7	n/a	n/a	14.1	17.5	n/a	n/a	22.8	28.4
10th	n/a	n/a	4.9	4.4	n/a	n/a	21.5	21.1	n/a	n/a	13.2	11.6	n/a	n/a	16.7	24.5
12th	n/a	n/a	2.7	4.1	n/a	n/a	24.7	19.6	n/a	n/a	6.0	8.3	n/a	n/a	17.3	18.5
All	n/a	n/a	3.1	3.6	n/a	n/a	18.4	17.1	n/a	n/a	12.0	12.9	n/a	n/a	20.5	24.5

# OTHER INDICATORS OF RISK

Family rules, parental/caregiver monitoring, and the actions of adults in youth’s lives can influence their risk of using substances or engaging in other concerning behaviors.

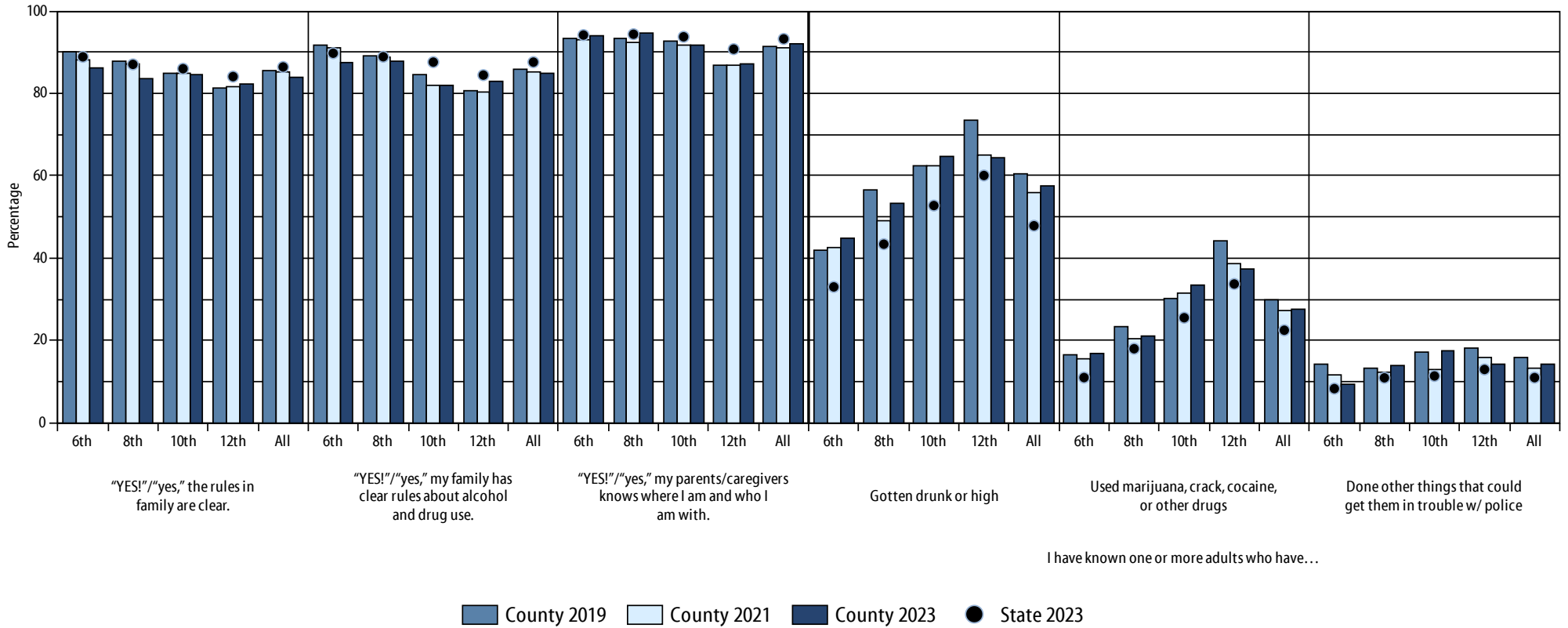
84.0% of students in this county say the rules in their family are clear (compared to 86.4% at the state level), with 85.0% reporting their families have clear rules about drugs and alcohol (state rate: 87.6%). When the students are not home, 91.9% of students stated their parents know where they are and who they are with.

Adult actions influence youth. Students reported they have personally known someone over 21 who has: gotten high or drunk (57.4%, compared to 47.9% at the state level); used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs (27.6%, compared to 22.5% at the state level); or has done other things that could get them in trouble with the police (14.1%, compared to 11.0% at the state level).

**PAYS 2023 category:** PAYS 2023 question text:

- Rules and antisocial behavior** *My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.*
- When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and who I am with.*
- The rules in my family are clear.*
- About how many adults (over 21) have you known personally who in the past 12 months have:*
  - Gotten drunk or high?*
  - Used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs?*
  - Done other things that could get them in trouble with the police, like stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging or assaulting others, etc.?*

# Other indicators of risk Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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Grade	"YES!"/"yes," the rules in family are clear.				"YES!"/"yes," my family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.				"YES!"/"yes," my parents/caregivers knows where I am and who I am with.				Gotten drunk or high				Used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs				Done other things that could get them in trouble w/ police			
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023
6th	90.1	88.2	86.0	88.9	91.7	91.2	87.6	89.8	93.3	93.2	94.0	94.2	41.9	42.5	44.8	33.0	16.5	15.6	16.9	11.0	14.1	11.7	9.4	8.3
8th	87.7	87.0	83.5	87.0	89.2	88.8	87.8	88.9	93.4	92.5	94.6	94.4	56.5	49.2	53.3	43.4	23.4	20.5	21.1	18.0	13.3	12.3	13.9	11.0
10th	84.9	84.8	84.5	86.0	84.5	82.1	81.8	87.6	92.5	91.8	91.6	93.7	62.4	62.6	64.7	52.8	30.2	31.4	33.6	25.6	17.0	12.9	17.4	11.4
12th	81.4	81.7	82.1	84.1	80.8	80.5	83.1	84.4	86.8	87.0	87.1	90.7	73.6	65.1	64.4	60.1	44.1	38.7	37.4	33.7	18.2	15.8	14.4	13.0
All	85.6	85.2	84.0	86.4	85.9	85.2	85.0	87.6	91.4	91.0	91.9	93.2	60.6	55.8	57.4	47.9	29.9	27.3	27.6	22.5	15.8	13.2	14.1	11.0

# 7. RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Prevention is a science. The Risk and Protective Factor Model of Prevention is a proven effective way of reducing substance use and its related consequences.

This model is based on the simple premise that to prevent a problem from happening, we need to identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risks. Just as medical researchers have found risk factors for heart disease such as diets high in fat, lack of exercise, and smoking, a team of researchers at the University of Washington have defined a set of risk factors for youth problem behaviors.

Known to predict increased likelihood of drug use, delinquency, school dropout, and violent behaviors among youth, risk factors are characteristics of community, family, and school environments, and of students and their peer groups. For example, children who live in families with high levels of conflict are more likely to become involved in delinquency and drug use than children who live in families characterized by lower levels of conflict.

Protective factors exert a positive influence and buffer against the negative influence of risk, thus reducing the likelihood that adolescents will engage in problem behaviors.

Bonding confers a protective influence only when there is a positive climate in the bonded community. Peers and adults in these neighborhoods, families, and schools must communicate healthy values and

set clear standards for behavior in order to ensure a protective effect. For example, strong bonds to anti-social peers would not be likely to reinforce positive behavior.

**Risk factors** are conditions that increase the likelihood of a young person becoming involved in drug use, delinquency, school dropout, and/or violence.

	Substance Use	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
Community	Low Neighborhood Attachment	✓	✓		✓	
	Perceived Availability of Drugs	✓			✓	
	Perceived Availability of Handguns		✓		✓	
	Community Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use, Firearms and Crime	✓	✓		✓	
Family	Family History of Antisocial Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Poor Family Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Family Conflict	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Drugs and Antisocial Behavior	✓	✓		✓	
School	Academic Failure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Low Commitment to School	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Rebelliousness	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Gang Involvement	✓	✓		✓	
Peer / Individual	Low Perceived Risk of Drug Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Friend's Use of Drugs	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Interaction with Antisocial Peers	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Depressive Symptoms	✓			✓	✓

Protective factors identified through research include strong bonding to community, family, school, and peers, and healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior. Protective bonding depends on three conditions:

- Opportunities for young people to actively contribute

- Skills to be able to successfully contribute
- Consistent recognition or reinforcement for their efforts and accomplishments

Research on risk and protective factors has important implications for children’s academic success, positive youth development, and prevention of health and behavior problems. In order to promote

academic success and positive youth development and prevent problem behaviors, it is necessary to address the factors that predict these outcomes. By measuring risk and protective factors in a population, specific risk factors that are elevated and widespread can be identified and targeted by policies, programs, and actions shown to reduce those risk factors and to promote protective factors.

**Protective factors**, also known as “assets,” are conditions that buffer youth from risk by reducing the impact of the risks or changing the way they respond to risks.

		Healthy Beliefs and Clear Standards	Bonding	Opportunities	Skills	Recognition
Community	Rewards for Prosocial Involvement		✓			✓
	Family Attachment		✓			
Family	Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement		✓	✓		
	Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	✓	✓			✓
School	Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement		✓	✓		
	Rewards for Prosocial Involvement		✓			✓
Peer / Individual	Interaction with Prosocial Peers		✓		✓	
	Prosocial Involvement		✓		✓	
	Rewards for Prosocial Involvement		✓			✓
	Belief in the Moral Order	✓				
	Religiosity	✓				

Each risk and protective factor can be linked to specific types of interventions that have been shown to be effective in either reducing risk(s) or enhancing protection(s). The steps outlined here will help your county make key decisions regarding allocation of resources, how and when to address specific needs, and which strategies are most effective and known to produce results.

# RISK AND PROTECTIVE SCALES DEFINED

To access data at the state and county level for individual risk and protective factor questions, visit [www.bach-harrison.com/PAYSWebTool](http://www.bach-harrison.com/PAYSWebTool).

## Community Domain

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### Risk Factors

#### Low Neighborhood Attachment

Low neighborhood bonding is related to higher levels of juvenile crime and drug selling.

- A20** I like my neighborhood.
- A21** I'd like to get out of my neighborhood.
- A22** If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood I now live in.

#### Perceived Availability of Drugs and Handguns

The availability of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs has been related to the use of these substances by adolescents. The availability of handguns has also been related to a higher risk of crime and substance use by adolescents.

- A24** How easy would it be for you to get any, if you wanted to get any of the following:
  - a** Beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example: vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum)?
  - b** Cigarettes?
  - e** Marijuana?
  - d** A drug like cocaine, LSD, heroin, or amphetamines, how easy would it be for you to get some?
  - c** A handgun?

#### Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use

Research has shown that legal restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, such as raising the legal drinking age, restricting smoking in public places, and increased taxation have been followed by decreases in consumption. Moreover, national surveys of high school seniors have shown that shifts in normative attitudes toward drug use have preceded changes in prevalence of use.

- A25** If a kid drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example: vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) in your neighborhood would he or she be caught by the police?
- A26** If a kid smoked marijuana in your neighborhood would he or she be caught by the police?
- A27** How wrong would most adults (over 21) in your neighborhood think it was for kids your age:
  - a** To drink alcohol?
  - b** To smoke cigarettes?
  - c** To use marijuana?

### Protective Factors

#### Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

Rewards for positive participation in activities help youth bond to the community, thus lowering their risk for substance use.

- A17** My neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know.
- A18** There are people in my neighborhood who are proud of me when I do something well.
- A19** There are people in my neighborhood who encourage me to do my best.

## Family Domain

### Risk Factors

#### Family History of Antisocial Behavior

When children are raised in a family with a history of problem behaviors (e.g., violence or ATOD use), the children are more likely to engage in these behaviors.

- B19** About how many adults (over 21) have you known personally who in the past year have:
- a** Gotten drunk or high?
  - b** Used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs?
  - c** Sold or dealt drugs?
  - d** Done other things that could get them in trouble with the police, like stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging or assaulting others, etc.?
- B20** How many of your brothers or sisters ever:
- a** Drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) regularly?
  - b** Smoked cigarettes?
  - c** Smoked marijuana?
  - d** Took a handgun to school?
  - e** Been suspended or expelled from school?
- B21** Has anyone in your family ever had a severe alcohol or drug problem?

#### Poor Family Management

Inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishments inflicted by parents increases the likelihood that their children will be at higher risk for substance use and other problem behaviors. Also, a failure to provide clear expectations and to monitor children's behavior makes it more likely that they will engage in substance use.

- B9** When I am not at home, one of my parents/cargivers knows where I am and who I am with.
- B10** If you skipped school, would you be caught by your parents/cargivers?
- B11** My parents/cargivers ask if I've gotten my homework done.
- B12** Would your parents/cargivers know if you did not come home on time?
- B13** The rules in my family are clear.
- B14** If you carried a handgun without your parent's/caregiver's permission, would you be caught by them?
- B18** If you drank some beer, wine, or liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) without your parent's/caregiver's permission, would you be caught by them?
- B22** My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.

#### Family Conflict

Children raised in families high in conflict, whether or not the child is directly involved in the conflict, appear at risk for both delinquency and drug use.

- B15** People in my family often insult or yell at each other.
- B16** We argue about the same things in my family over and over.
- B17** People in my family have serious arguments.

## Family Domain (cont'd)

### Risk Factors (cont'd)

#### Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Drugs and Antisocial Behavior

In families where parents use illegal drugs, are heavy users of alcohol, or are tolerant of children's use, children are more likely to use substances during adolescence. The risk is further increased if parents involve children in their own drug (or alcohol) using behavior.

- B23** How wrong do your parents/cargivers feel it would be for you to:
- a** Pick a fight with someone?
  - b** Steal anything worth more than \$5
  - c** Draw graffiti, or write things or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)?
  - d** Drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) regularly?
  - f** Smoke cigarettes?
  - g** Use marijuana?
  - h** Use prescription drugs not prescribed to you?

### Protective Factors

#### Family Attachment

Young people who feel that they are a valued part of their family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.

- B6** Do you feel very close to your parents/cargivers?
- B7** Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your parents/cargivers?

#### Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

Young people who are exposed to more opportunities to participate meaningfully in the responsibilities and activities of the family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.

- B1** My parents/cargivers ask me what I think before most family decisions affecting me are made.
- B2** If I had a personal problem, I could ask my parents/caregivers for help
- B3** My parents/cargivers give me lots of chances to do fun things with them.

#### Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

When parents, siblings, and other family members praise, encourage, and attend to things done well by youths, the youth are less likely to engage in substance use and problem behaviors.

- B4** My parents/cargivers notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it.
- B5** How often do your parents/cargivers tell you they're proud of you for something you've done?
- B8** Do you enjoy spending time with your parents/cargivers?



## School Domain

### Risk Factors

#### Academic Failure

Academic failure that occurs between late elementary school (grades 4-6) and high school increases the risk of both substance use and delinquency. It appears that the experience of failure itself, for whatever reasons, increases the risk of problem behaviors.

- A4** Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?
- A7** Are your school grades better than the grades of most students in your class?

#### Low Commitment to School

Surveys of high school seniors have shown that the use of drugs is significantly lower among students who expect to attend college than among those who do not. Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving the coursework as relevant are also negatively related to drug use.

- A1** During the LAST FOUR WEEKS, how many whole days of school have you missed because you skipped or "cut"?
- A2** How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?
- A3** How interesting are most of your courses to you?
- A5** How often do you feel that the schoolwork you are assigned is meaningful and important?
- A6** Now, thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you:
  - a** Enjoy being in school?
  - b** Hate being in school?
  - c** Try to do your best work in school?

### Protective Factors

#### Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

When young people are given more opportunities to participate meaningfully in important activities at school, they are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.

- A8** Teachers ask me to work on special classroom projects.
- A9** There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk one-on-one with a teacher.
- A10** I have lots of chances to be part of class discussions or activities.
- A11** In my school, students have lots of chances to help decide things like class activities and rules.
- A12** There are lots of chances for students in my school to get involved in sports, clubs, and other school activities outside of class.

#### Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

When young people are recognized and rewarded for their contributions at school, they are less likely to be involved in substance use and other problem behaviors.

- A13** My teacher(s) notices when I am doing a good job and lets me know about it.
- A14** I feel safe at my school.
- A15** The school lets my parents/cargivers know when I have done something well.
- A16** My teachers praise me when I work hard in school.

## Peer-Individual Domain

### Risk Factors

#### Rebelliousness

Young people who do not feel part of society, are not bound by rules, don't believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society, are at higher risk of substance use. In addition, high tolerance for deviance, a strong need for independence, and normlessness have all been linked with drug use.

- C1** I like to see how much I can get away with.
- C2** I ignore the rules that get in my way.
- C3** I do the opposite of what people tell me, just to get them mad.

#### Low Perceived Risk of Drug Use

Young people who do not perceive substance use to be risky are far more likely to engage in substance use.

- C13** How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they:
  - a** Take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor) nearly every day?
  - c** Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?
  - d** Try marijuana once or twice?
  - f** Use marijuana regularly?

#### Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use

During the elementary school years, most children express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes and have difficulty imagining why people use drugs or engage in anti-social behaviors. However, in middle school, as more youth are exposed to others who use drugs and engage in antisocial behavior, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. Youth who express positive attitudes toward substance use and antisocial behavior are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors.

- C12** How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to:
  - a** Stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?
  - b** Take a handgun to school?
  - c** Steal anything worth more than \$5?
  - d** Pick a fight with someone?
  - e** Attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?
  - f** Drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) regularly?
  - g** Smoke cigarettes?
  - h** Use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines or another illegal drug?
  - i** Use marijuana?
  - j** Use prescription drugs not prescribed to them?

## Peer-Individual Domain (cont'd)

### Risk Factors (cont'd)

#### Sensation Seeking

Young people who seek out opportunities for dangerous, risky behavior in general are at higher risk for participating in substance use and other problem behaviors.

**C11** How many times have you:

- a** Done what feels good no matter what.
- b** Done something dangerous because someone dared you to do it.
- c** Done crazy things even if they are a little dangerous.

#### Rewards for Antisocial Behavior

Young people who receive rewards for their antisocial behavior are at higher risk for engaging further in antisocial behavior and substance use.

**C14** What are the chances you would be seen as cool if you:

- a** Carried a handgun?
- b** Began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?
- c** Smoked cigarettes?
- d** Used marijuana?

#### Friends' Use of Drugs

Young people who associate with peers who engage in substance use are much more likely to engage in the same behavior. Peer drug use has consistently been found to be among the strongest predictors of substance use among youth. Even when young people come from well-managed families and do not experience other risk factors, spending time with friends who use substances greatly increases the risk of that problem developing.

**C19** Think of up to four of your best friends (the friends you feel closest to). In the past 12 months, how many of your best friends have:

- f** Tried beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, gin, or rum) when their parents didn't know about it?
- g** Smoked cigarettes?
- i** Used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines, or other illegal drugs?
- j** Used marijuana?

## Peer-Individual Domain (cont'd)

### Risk Factors (cont'd)

#### Interaction with Antisocial Peers

Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors are at higher risk for engaging in antisocial behavior themselves.

- C19** Think of up to four of your best friends (the friends you feel closest to). In the past 12 months, how many of your best friends have:
- a** Been arrested?
  - b** Dropped out of school?
  - c** Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle?
  - d** Been suspended from school?
  - e** Carried a handgun?
  - h** Sold illegal drugs?

#### Depressive Symptoms

Young people who are depressed are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to use substances. Survey research and other studies have shown a link between depression and other youth problem behaviors.

- C5** In the past 12 months have you felt depressed or sad MOST days, even if you feel OK sometimes?
- C6** Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.
- C7** At times I think I am no good at all.
- C8** All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.

### Protective Factors

#### Belief in the Moral Order

Young people who have a belief in what is “right” or “wrong” are less likely to use substances.

- C15** I think it is okay to take something without asking as long as you get away with it.
- C16** It is all right to beat up people if they start the fight.
- C17** I think sometimes it’s okay to cheat at school.
- C18** It is important to be honest with your parents, even if they become upset or you get punished.

#### Religiosity

Young people who regularly attend religious services are less likely to engage in problem behaviors.

- C10** How often do you attend religious services or activities?

# UNDERSTANDING CUT-POINTS

It is important that the reader gain an understanding of the cut-points that are used to create the risk and protective factor scale scores presented in this section, and to understand how to interpret and analyze these results.

## What are Cut-Points?

A cut-point is a way to represent the percentage of students whose answers reflect significant risk or protection on a given scale. Statistical analyses are conducted for each scale to determine the point that separates students at risk of engaging in problem behaviors from those not at risk. Similarly, protective cut-points separate students who are buffered against engaging in problem behaviors (due to the protective effects of positive behaviors and interactions) from those who are not. In this way, when you are provided a percentage for a particular scale, you will know that this percentage represents the population of your youth that are either at greater risk or higher level of protection than the national cut-point level. Cut-points also provide a standard for comparisons of risk and protection over time.

The PAYS questionnaire was designed to assess adolescent substance use, antisocial behavior, and the risk and protective factors that predict these adolescent problem behaviors. However, before the percentage of youth at risk or with protection on a given scale could be calculated, a scale value or cut-point needed to be determined that would separate the at-risk group from the group that was not at-risk. Because surveys measuring the risk and protective factors had been given to thousands of youth across the United States through federally funded

research projects, it was possible to select two groups of youth, one that was more at-risk for problem behaviors and another group that was less at-risk. A cut-point score was then determined for each risk and protective factor scale that best divided the youth into their appropriate group, more at-risk or less at-risk. The criteria for selecting the more at-risk and the less at-risk groups included academic grades (the more at-risk group received “D” and “F” grades, the less at-risk group received “A” and “B” grades); alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (the more at-risk group had more regular use, the less at-risk group had no drug use and use of alcohol or tobacco on only a few occasions); and antisocial behavior (the more at-risk group had two or more serious delinquent acts in the past year, the less at-risk group had no serious delinquent acts).

## How to use Cut-Points

The scale cut-points that were determined to best classify youth into the more at-risk and less at-risk groups have remained constant and are used to produce the profiles in this report. Because the cut-points for each scale will remain fixed, the percentage of youth above

the cut-point on each of the risk and protective factor scales provides a method for evaluating the progress of prevention programs over time. For example, if the percentage of youth at risk for family conflict in a community prior to implementing a community-wide family/parenting program was 60% and then decreased to 50% one year after the program was implemented, the program could be viewed as helping to reduce family conflict.

### How does using Cut-Points affect my data?

Risk and Protective Factor data presented in this report use the scale cut-points discussed above. Instead of the percentile scores used prior to 2013, percentage of youth at-risk and with protection are presented in the report. For example:

- If your Community Laws and Norms Favorable toward Drug Use, Firearms, and Crime risk factor scale for 8th graders is at 35%, this means that 35% of 8th graders are at risk for engaging in problem behaviors due to Community Laws and Norms Favorable toward Drug Use, Firearms, and Crime.
- If your School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement protective factor scale is at 60% for your 10th graders, the interpretation of this is that 60% of your 10th graders are protected against engaging in problem behaviors due to School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement.

### What is the Bach Harrison Norm and how do I use it?

The Bach Harrison Norm was developed by Bach Harrison L.L.C. to provide states and communities with the ability to compare their results on risk, protection,

and antisocial measures with more national results (see page 11 for more information on BH Norm development).

Information about other students in the state and the nation can be helpful in determining the seriousness of a given level of problem behavior in your county. Scanning across the charts, it is important to observe the factors that differ the most from the Bach Harrison Norm. This is the first step in identifying the levels of risk and protection that are higher or lower than the national sample.

The risk factors that are higher than the Bach Harrison Norm and the protective factors that are lower than the Bach Harrison Norm are probably the factors that your county should consider including in prevention planning programs. The Bach Harrison Norm is especially helpful when reviewing scales with a small percentage of youth at-risk such as the Rebelliousness scale. For example, even though a small percentage of youth are at-risk within this scale, if you notice that the percentage at risk on your Rebelliousness scale is higher than the Bach Harrison Norm, then that is probably an issue that should be considered for an intervention in your county. As you look through your data, we would encourage you to circle or mark risk scales that are higher than the BH Norm and protective factor scales that are lower than the BH Norm and add these items to your list of possible areas to tackle with prevention efforts.

# OVERALL RISK AND PROTECTIVE SCORES

Overall risk and protective factor scales are a good way to review the health of Mercer County. Scales are grouped into four domains: community, family, school, and peer/individual. The charts show the overall percentage of students at risk and with protection for each of the scales.

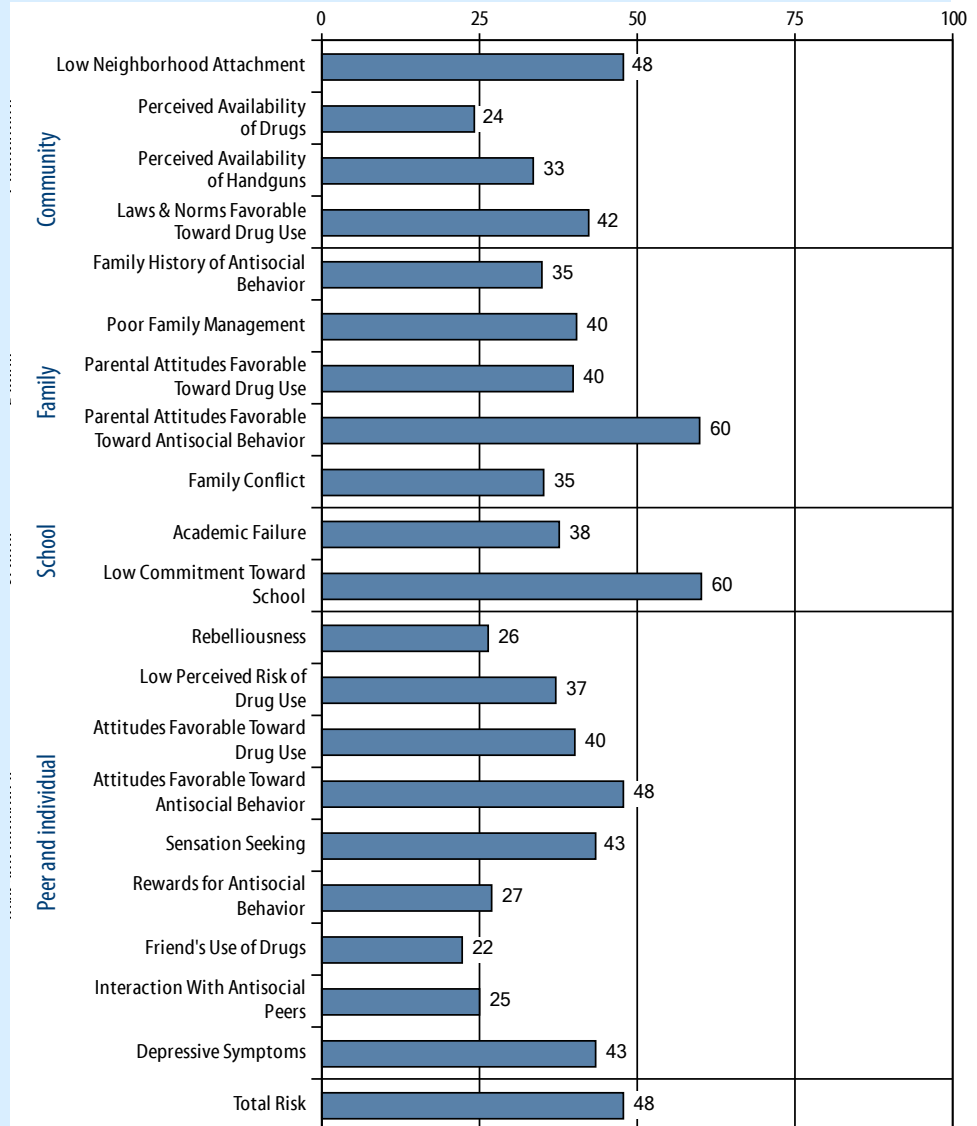
Students in Mercer County reported the three highest overall (all grades combined) scores for the following risk factor scales: Low Commitment Toward School (60.1% of students at risk), Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior (59.8% at risk), and Peer Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior (47.9% at risk).

The three lowest overall scale scores were Friend’s Use of Drugs (22.4% at risk), Perceived Availability of Drugs in the Community (24.1% at risk), and Interaction With Antisocial Peers (25.1% at risk).

Of the eight protective factor scales, the highest scores in the overall sample of students in this county were reported for Family Attachment (63.3% of students with protection), Family Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement (61.0% with protection) and Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement (52.1% with protection).

The lowest protective factor scales in the overall sample

## Mercer County Risk Factors, 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



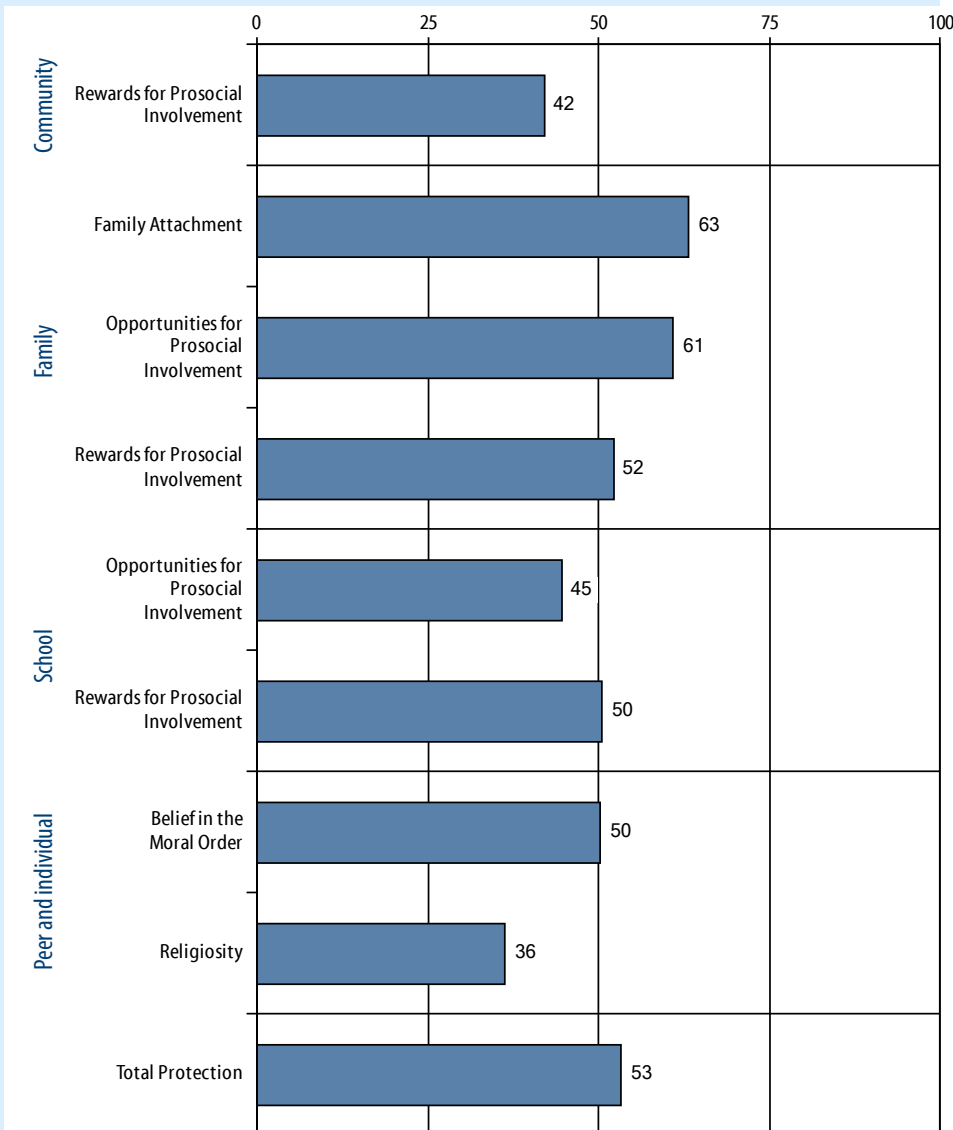
"TOTAL RISK" IS DEFINED AS THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE MORE THAN A SPECIFIED NUMBER OF RISK FACTORS OPERATING IN THEIR LIVES. (6TH AND 8TH GRADES: 5 OR MORE RISK FACTORS, 10TH AND 12TH GRADES: 7 OR MORE RISK FACTORS.)



were Religiosity (36.4% with protection), Community Rewards for Prosocial Involvement (42.0% with protection) and School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement (44.5% with protection).

While policies that target any risk or protective factor could potentially be an important resource for students in this County, focusing prevention planning in high risk and low protection areas could be especially beneficial. Similarly, factors with low risk or high protection represent strengths that this County can build on. In conjunction with a review of community-specific issues and resources, this information can help direct prevention efforts for Mercer County.

## Mercer County Protective Factors, 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



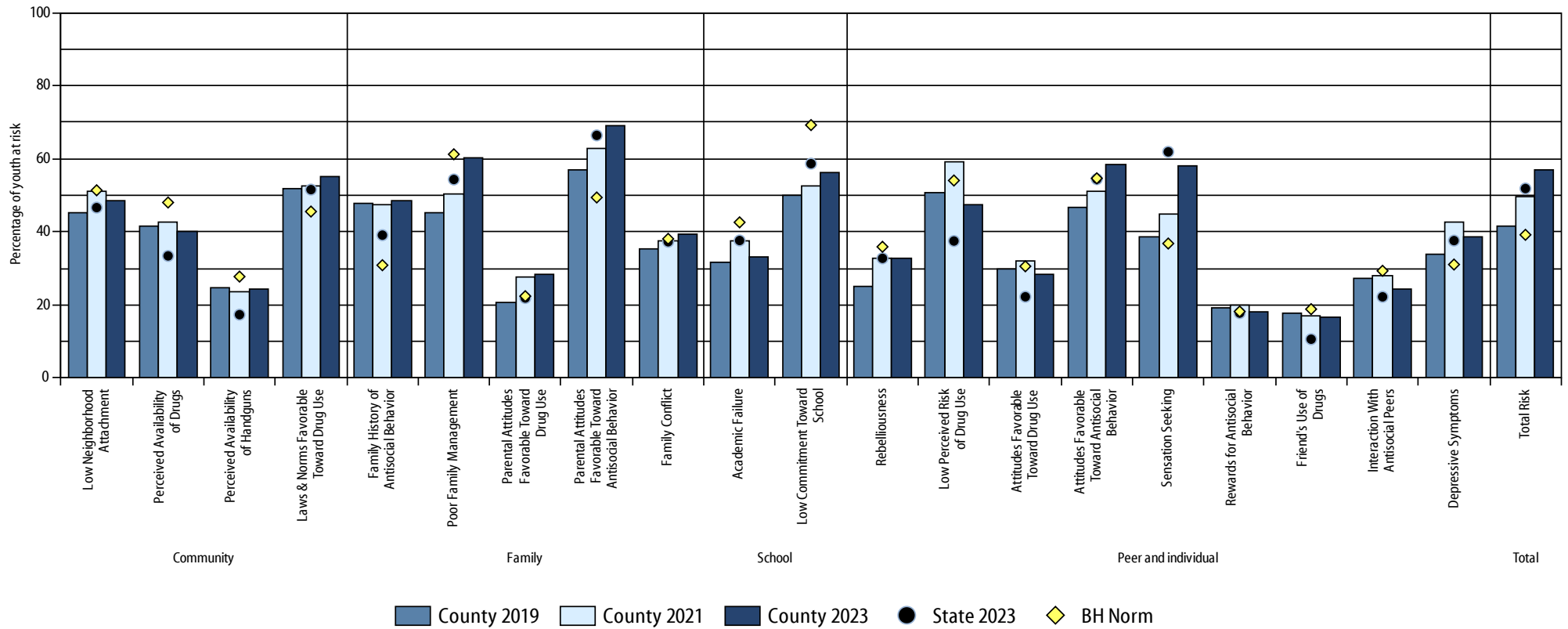
## Grade-Level Results

While grouped-grade scale scores provide a general picture of the risk and protective factor profile for this county, they can mask problems within individual grades. The next pages of this report present individual-grade data, where available, for risk and protective factor scale scores. This detailed information provides prevention planners with a snapshot revealing which risk and protective factor scales are of greatest concern by grade. It allows those prevention planners to focus on the most appropriate points in youth development for preventive intervention action—and to target their prevention efforts as precisely as possible.

"TOTAL PROTECTION" IS DEFINED AS THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE MORE THAN A SPECIFIED NUMBER OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS OPERATING IN THEIR LIVES. (6TH, 8TH, 10TH, AND 12TH GRADES: 3 OR MORE PROTECTIVE FACTORS.)

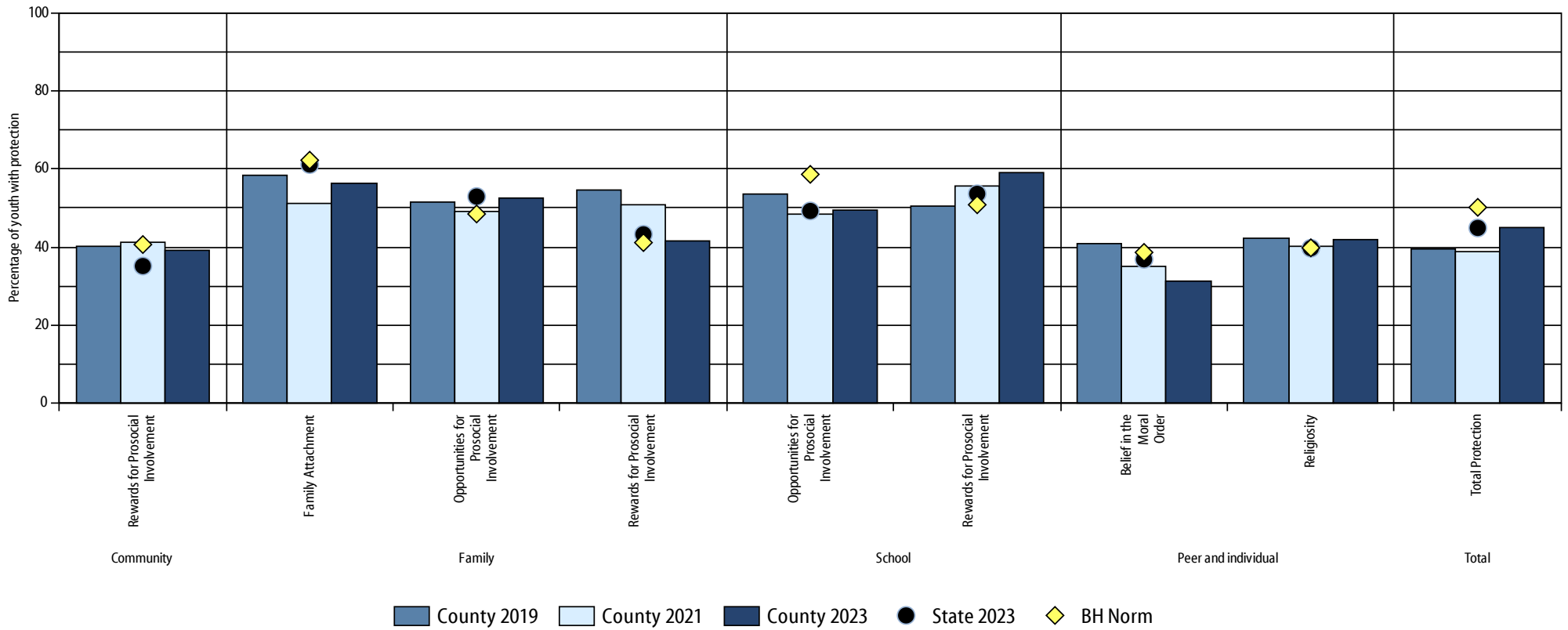


# Risk factors, 6th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



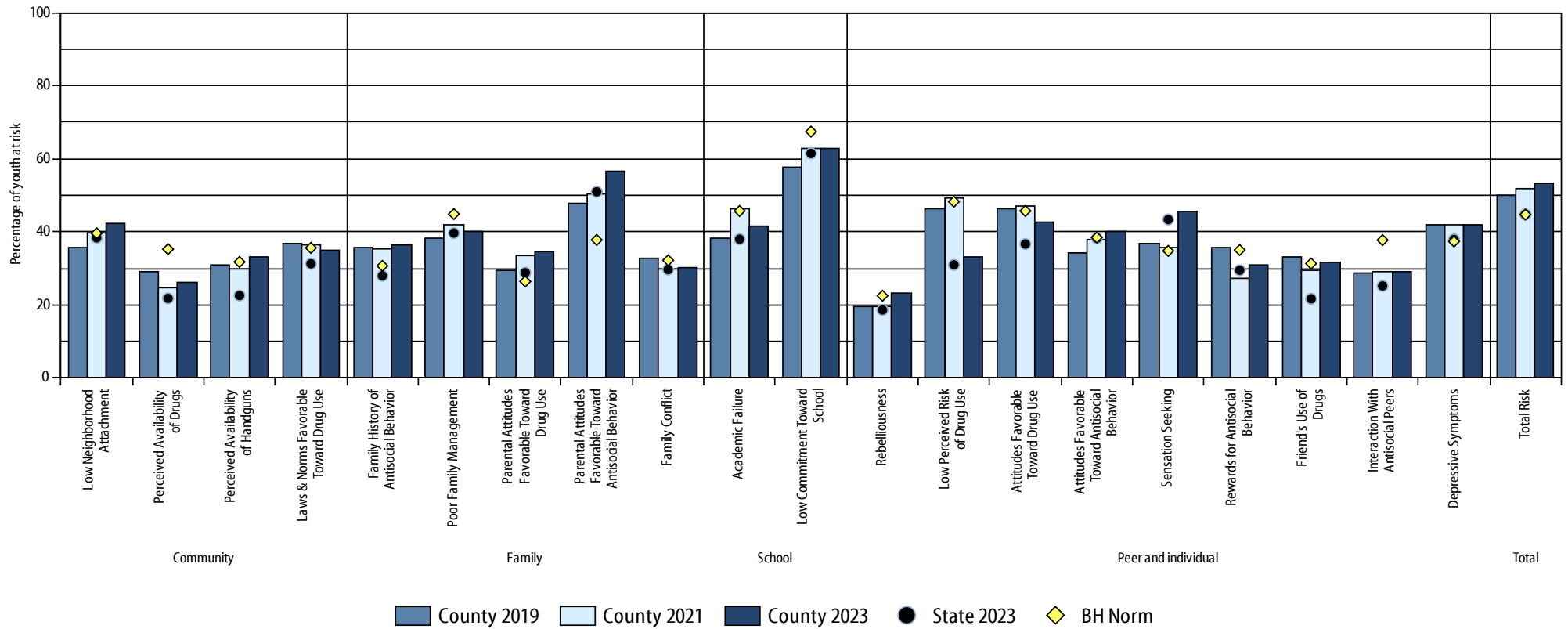
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## Protective factors, 6th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



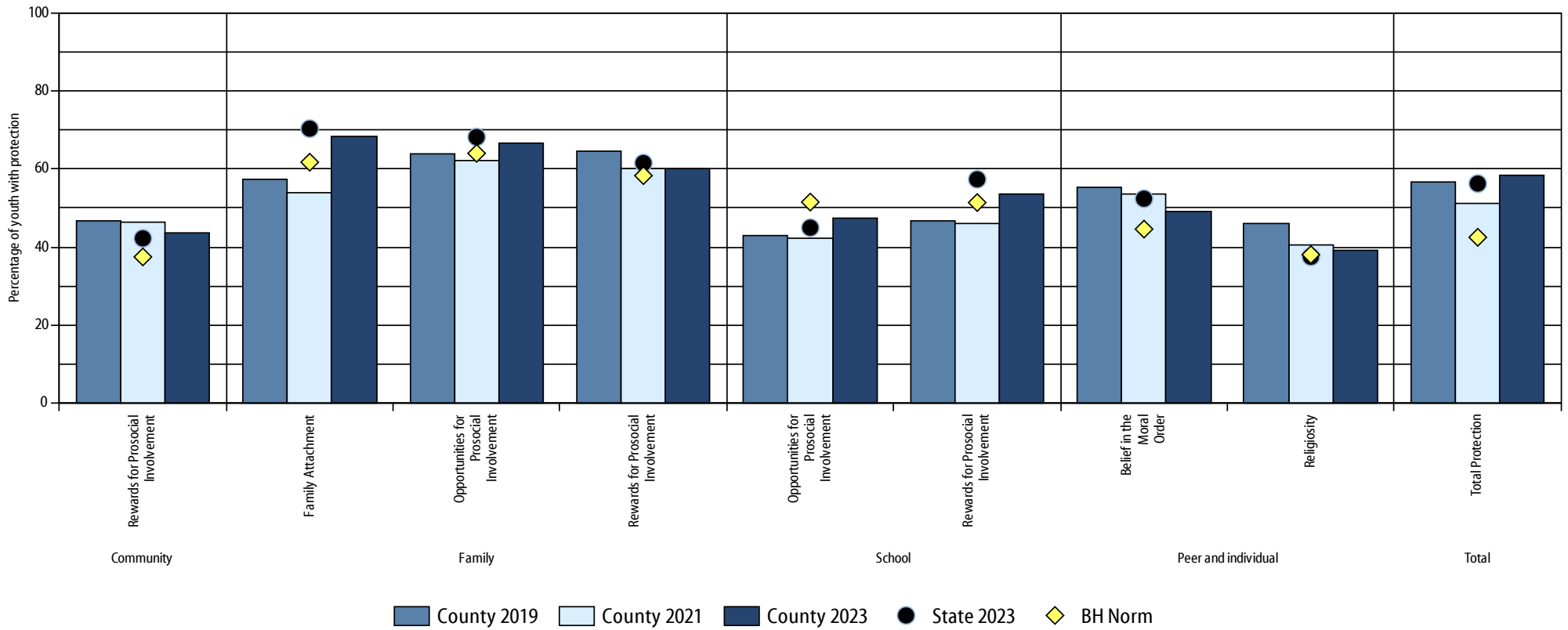
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# Risk factors, 8th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



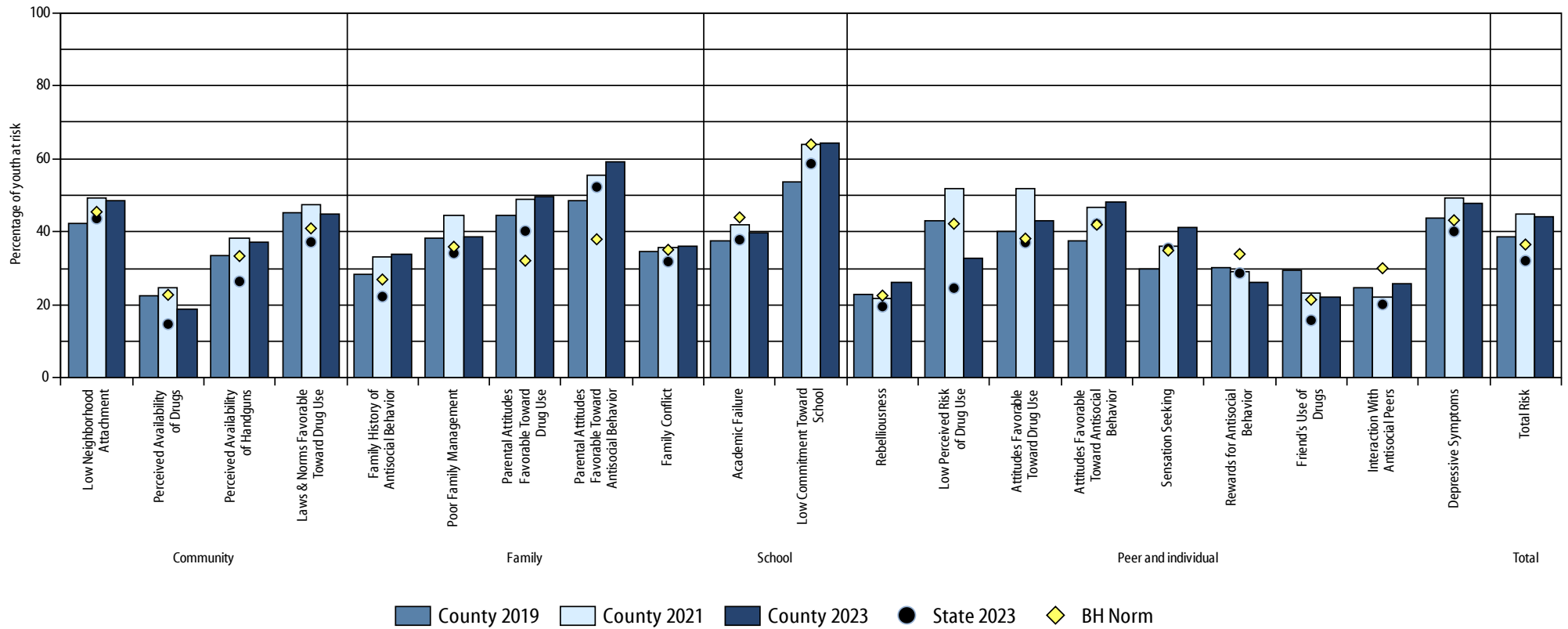
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## Protective factors, 8th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



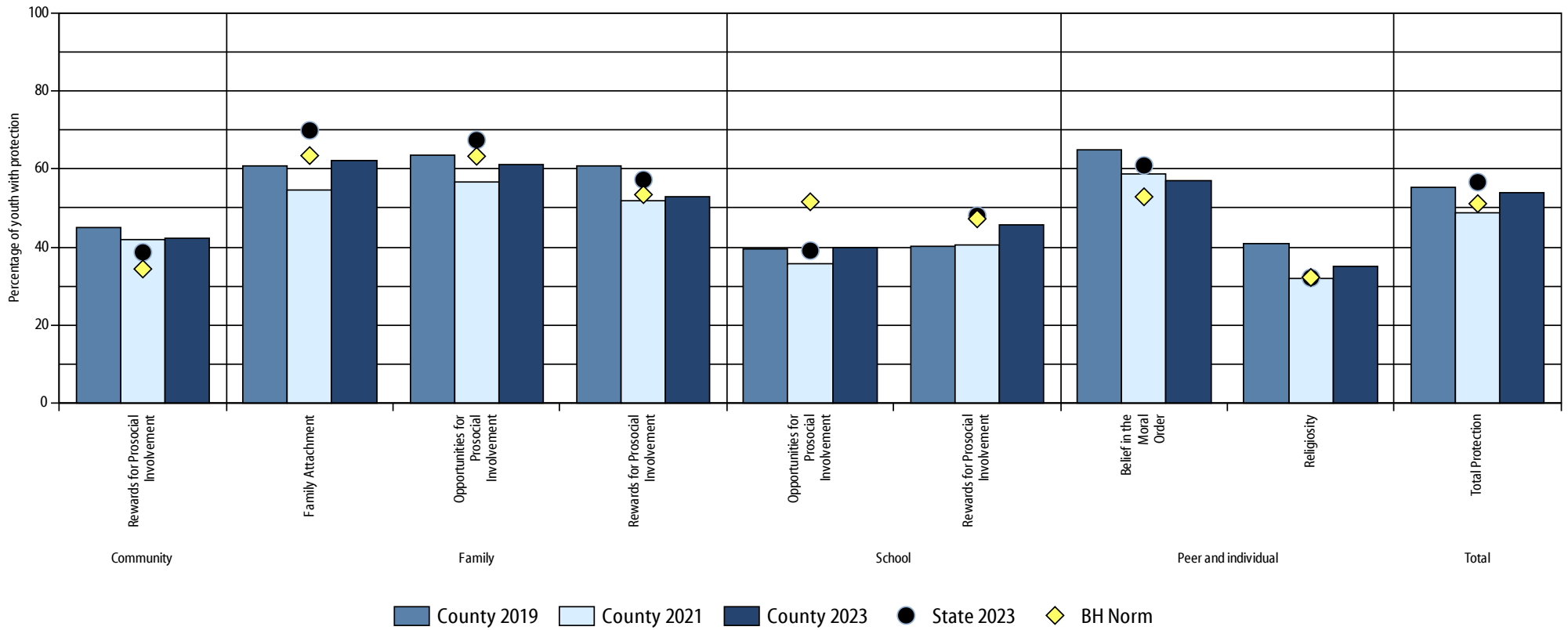
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# Risk factors, 10th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



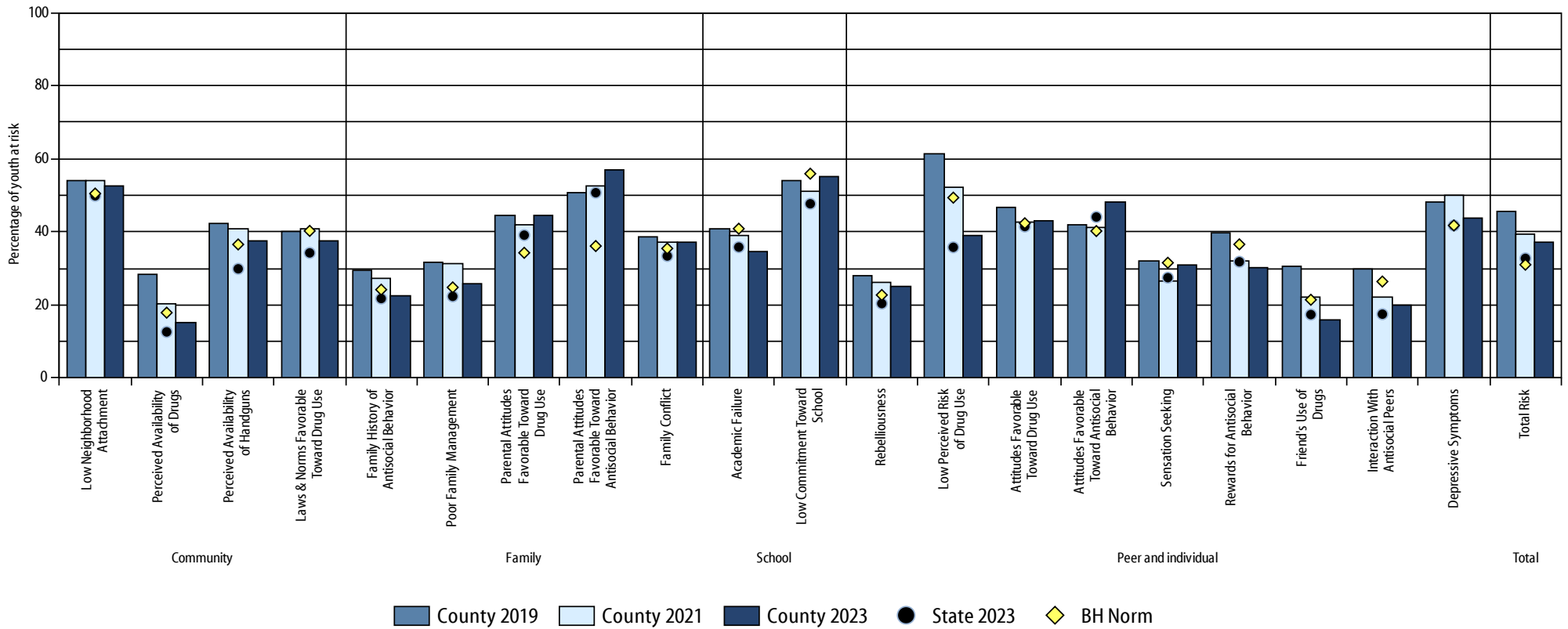
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## Protective factors, 10th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



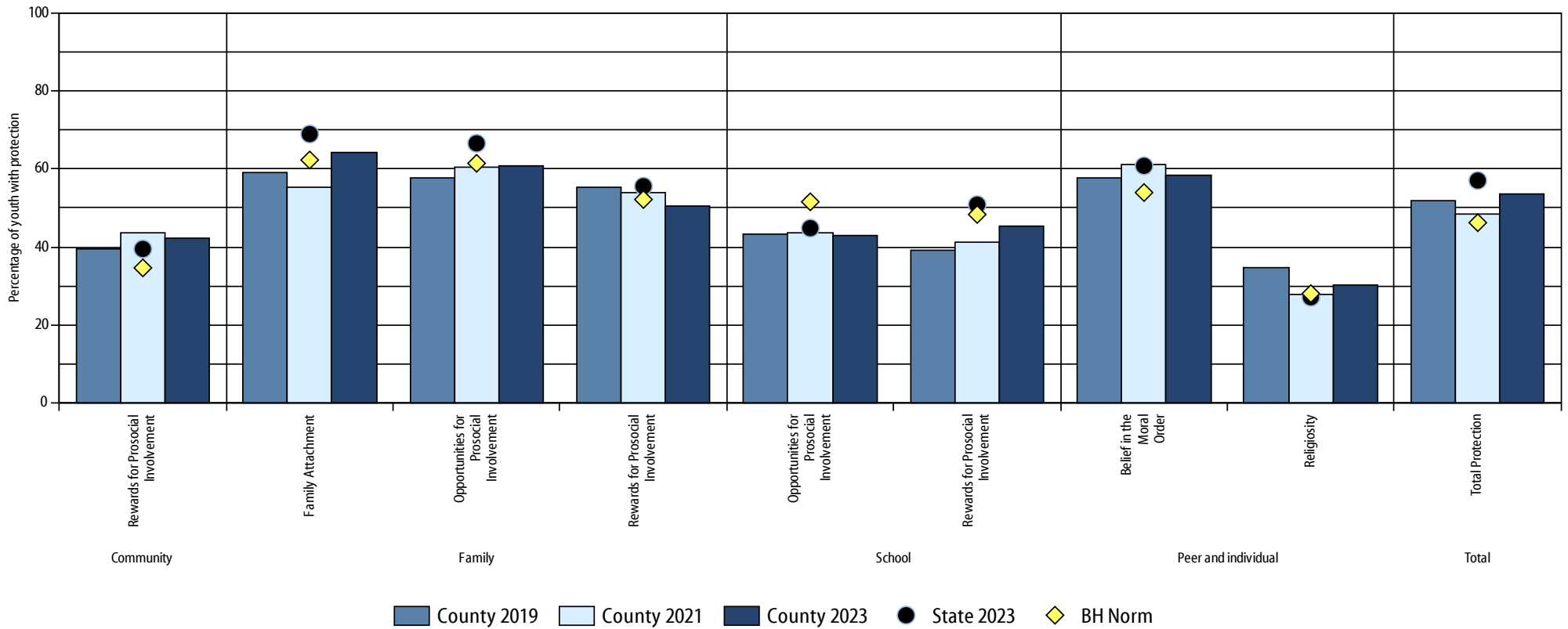
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# Risk factors, 12th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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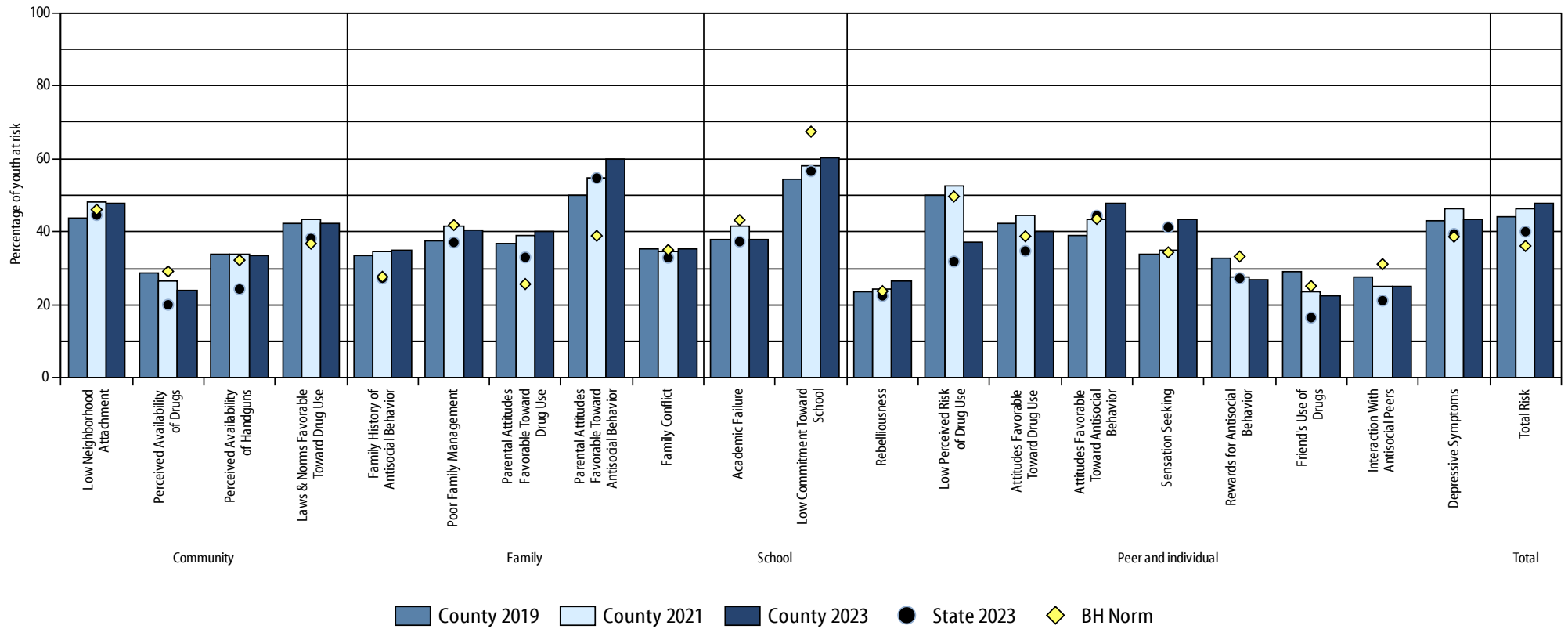
## Protective factors, 12th grade Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



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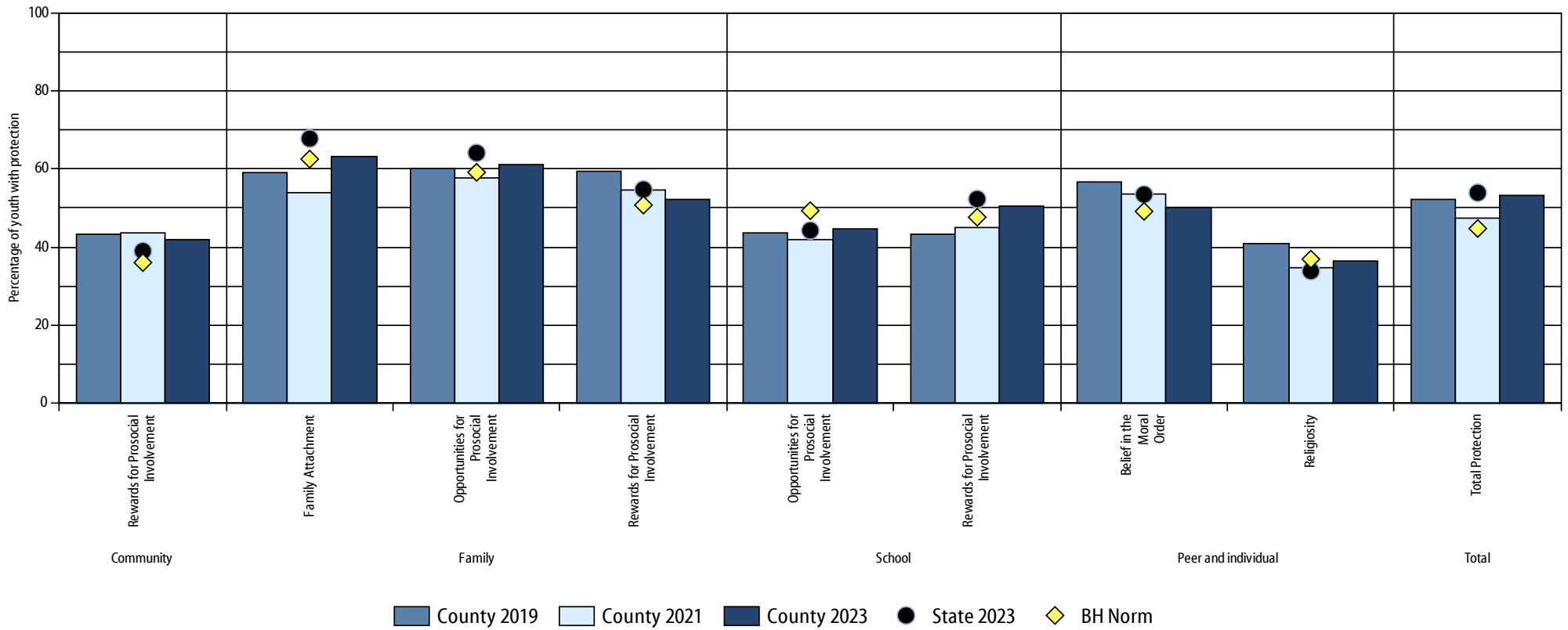


# Risk factors, All grades Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

## Protective factors, All grades Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey



5\_29\_2024

# Risk Factors

## Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

	6th					8th					10th					12th					All				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm
<b>Community</b>																									
Low Neighborhood Attachment	45.2	51.1	48.6	46.6	51.4	35.6	39.6	42.3	38.4	39.6	42.5	49.3	48.6	43.6	45.5	54.2	54.1	52.5	49.9	50.5	43.9	48.1	47.7	44.6	46.1
Perceived Availability of Drugs	41.7	42.6	40.2	33.4	48.0	29.1	24.7	26.2	21.8	35.3	22.6	24.9	18.7	14.7	22.8	28.4	20.3	15.0	12.6	17.9	28.7	26.6	24.1	20.1	29.2
Perceived Availability of Handguns	24.8	23.6	24.2	17.3	27.8	31.0	29.7	33.0	22.6	31.8	33.7	38.3	37.0	26.4	33.4	42.3	40.8	37.5	29.9	36.6	33.9	34.0	33.5	24.4	32.3
Laws & Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use	51.9	52.6	55.0	51.6	45.6	36.7	36.4	35.0	31.3	35.6	45.3	47.6	44.7	37.2	41.0	39.9	40.9	37.6	34.2	40.3	42.3	43.5	42.2	38.2	36.8
<b>Family</b>																									
Family History of Antisocial Behavior	47.7	47.6	48.7	39.1	30.9	35.7	35.2	36.6	28.0	30.7	28.3	33.0	34.0	22.3	27.0	29.6	27.3	22.6	21.8	24.2	33.6	34.8	34.9	27.3	27.7
Poor Family Management	45.4	50.4	60.4	54.3	61.2	38.3	42.1	40.2	39.7	44.9	38.3	44.5	38.8	34.2	35.9	31.5	31.1	25.8	22.3	24.8	37.6	41.4	40.5	37.1	41.9
Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Drug Use	20.7	27.8	28.3	21.9	22.4	29.4	33.3	34.6	28.8	26.4	44.4	48.9	49.5	40.2	32.1	44.6	41.9	44.7	39.1	34.3	36.7	38.9	39.9	33.0	25.7
Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior	57.1	63.0	69.0	66.4	49.4	47.8	50.5	56.6	51.0	37.8	48.4	55.4	59.0	52.3	38.0	50.8	52.6	57.0	50.7	36.1	50.1	54.6	59.8	54.7	38.9
Family Conflict	35.4	37.5	39.5	37.3	38.1	32.7	29.7	30.0	29.7	32.2	34.7	35.9	36.0	31.9	35.1	38.6	37.0	37.2	33.4	35.5	35.3	34.7	35.2	32.9	35.1
<b>School</b>																									
Academic Failure	31.6	37.4	33.0	37.6	42.6	38.2	46.3	41.7	38.0	45.7	37.7	41.8	39.6	37.8	44.0	40.8	39.1	34.5	35.8	40.9	37.8	41.6	37.7	37.3	43.2
Low Commitment Toward School	50.1	52.5	56.2	58.6	69.2	57.6	62.7	62.7	61.5	67.4	53.6	64.1	64.3	58.6	63.9	53.9	51.1	55.3	47.7	55.9	54.3	58.2	60.1	56.6	67.4
<b>Peer and individual</b>																									
Rebelliousness	24.9	32.7	32.7	32.8	35.9	19.6	19.7	23.3	18.6	22.5	23.0	21.9	26.1	19.6	22.6	27.9	26.0	25.2	20.4	22.7	23.5	24.3	26.4	22.5	23.8
Low Perceived Risk of Drug Use	50.8	59.2	47.5	37.5	54.1	46.3	49.4	33.2	31.0	48.3	43.0	51.6	32.7	24.6	42.2	61.2	52.1	38.8	35.8	49.4	49.9	52.4	37.1	31.9	49.7
Attitudes Favorable Toward Drug Use	29.8	32.0	28.5	22.2	30.6	46.3	47.1	42.7	36.7	45.7	40.2	51.6	42.9	37.1	38.2	46.7	42.8	43.0	41.5	42.3	42.2	44.5	40.1	34.8	38.8
Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior	46.5	51.0	58.5	54.4	54.6	34.3	37.8	39.9	38.3	38.5	37.6	46.9	48.3	42.2	42.0	42.0	41.3	48.3	44.1	40.2	39.1	43.5	47.9	44.4	43.5
Sensation Seeking	38.8	45.0	58.1	61.9	36.8	36.7	35.8	45.7	43.4	34.8	29.8	36.2	41.2	35.5	34.9	32.0	26.6	30.9	27.5	31.5	33.7	35.1	43.3	41.3	34.4
Rewards for Antisocial Behavior	19.1	19.9	18.1	17.8	18.2	35.6	27.4	31.1	29.5	35.0	30.2	29.3	26.2	28.7	33.9	39.6	32.1	30.1	31.8	36.6	32.7	27.8	27.0	27.3	33.3
Friend's Use of Drugs	17.8	16.9	16.6	10.6	18.9	33.0	29.6	31.5	21.7	31.3	29.4	23.2	22.2	15.8	21.4	30.7	22.0	16.0	17.4	21.4	29.1	23.6	22.4	16.5	25.2
Interaction With Antisocial Peers	27.4	27.8	24.3	22.2	29.3	28.6	29.1	29.2	25.2	37.8	24.8	22.2	25.9	20.2	30.0	29.7	22.0	19.9	17.5	26.4	27.6	25.1	25.1	21.2	31.2
Depressive Symptoms	33.8	42.5	38.6	37.6	31.1	41.8	42.1	41.9	37.9	37.4	43.8	49.2	47.9	40.1	43.2	48.2	50.1	43.9	41.7	41.8	42.9	46.2	43.4	39.4	38.7
<b>Total</b>																									
Total Risk	41.5	49.6	57.1	51.8	39.2	50.1	51.8	53.1	44.8	44.7	38.7	44.7	44.0	32.1	36.5	45.6	39.5	37.3	32.7	31.0	44.2	46.4	47.8	40.1	36.1

## Protective Factors Mercer County 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

	6th					8th					10th					12th					All				
	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm	County 2019	County 2021	County 2023	State 2023	BH Norm
<b>Community</b>																									
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	40.1	41.2	39.1	35.2	40.7	46.6	46.5	43.6	42.2	37.5	44.9	41.9	42.3	38.7	34.4	39.6	43.7	42.2	39.5	34.7	43.3	43.5	42.0	39.0	36.1
<b>Family</b>																									
Family Attachment	58.2	51.3	56.3	61.1	62.2	57.5	54.1	68.3	70.3	61.7	60.9	54.5	62.2	69.9	63.4	58.9	55.4	64.3	68.9	62.3	59.0	54.0	63.3	67.8	62.5
Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	51.6	49.0	52.5	52.9	48.5	63.7	62.2	66.7	68.2	64.0	63.4	56.7	61.2	67.4	63.2	57.7	60.6	60.8	66.5	61.4	60.2	57.8	61.0	64.1	59.1
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	54.5	50.8	41.6	43.3	41.2	64.6	60.2	60.1	61.5	58.3	60.6	51.8	52.7	57.2	53.4	55.3	53.9	50.6	55.6	52.2	59.5	54.6	52.1	54.7	50.8
<b>School</b>																									
Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	53.6	48.5	49.3	49.2	58.6	43.0	42.4	47.3	45.0	51.5	39.7	35.6	39.7	39.1	51.6	43.2	43.5	43.0	44.8	51.6	43.6	41.9	44.5	44.3	49.3
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	50.6	55.8	59.0	53.6	50.8	46.9	46.0	53.6	57.3	51.4	40.2	40.6	45.6	48.0	47.2	39.2	41.3	45.5	50.8	48.3	43.4	45.0	50.5	52.3	47.7
<b>Peer and individual</b>																									
Belief In The Moral Order	40.9	34.9	31.4	36.9	38.6	55.4	53.6	49.2	52.4	44.6	64.9	58.8	56.9	60.9	52.9	57.6	61.1	58.4	60.8	54.0	56.7	53.7	50.2	53.5	49.1
Religiosity	42.4	40.1	42.0	39.7	39.8	46.0	40.5	39.0	37.5	38.1	41.0	32.1	35.1	32.1	32.2	34.8	27.7	30.1	27.1	28.1	41.0	34.8	36.4	33.9	36.9
<b>Total</b>																									
Total Protection	39.4	38.8	44.8	44.9	50.2	56.6	51.3	58.3	56.2	42.5	55.3	48.8	54.1	56.6	51.1	51.8	48.4	53.6	57.0	46.2	52.1	47.4	53.3	53.9	44.8

# APPENDIX A. DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES DATA

Core Measure	Definition	Substance	6th		8th		10th		12th		Male		Female	
			Percent	Sample	Percent	Sample	Percent	Sample	Percent	Sample	Percent	Sample	Percent	Sample
Perception of risk (People are at moderate or great risk of harming themselves if they...)	take five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor) once or twice a week?	Binge drinking	75.7	477	83.9	731	78.5	713	79.1	602	76.0	1,214	83.2	1,226
	smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?	Tobacco	82.2	477	89.9	735	85.9	711	86.6	603	82.9	1,214	90.1	1,229
	smoke marijuana once or twice a week?	Marijuana	79.1	464	79.4	733	67.4	712	59.0	603	68.8	1,209	73.4	1,221
	use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to them?	Prescription drugs	83.1	474	88.3	725	88.2	713	90.9	602	85.6	1,206	90.4	1,226
	Use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette once or twice a day?	Vapor Products	73.3	472	77.3	727	76.0	712	68.9	602	74.1	1,206	74.4	1,226
Perception of parental disapproval (Parents feel it would be wrong or very wrong to...)	Drink beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly?	Regular Alcohol Use	92.3	506	92.7	724	89.0	717	86.0	606	88.3	1,235	91.4	1,238
	have one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day?	Daily Alcohol Use	91.3	503	92.0	725	84.6	714	80.3	605	86.0	1,227	88.1	1,240
	smoke cigarettes?	Tobacco	92.0	502	95.0	725	93.4	715	89.3	608	91.6	1,232	93.9	1,237
	smoke marijuana?	Marijuana	93.7	495	93.4	727	87.2	718	83.5	605	88.2	1,225	90.5	1,240
	use prescription drugs not prescribed to you?	Prescription drugs	93.0	498	96.0	724	94.0	713	93.7	607	92.9	1,228	95.7	1,234
Perception of peer disapproval (Friends feel it would be wrong or very wrong to...)	have one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day?	Alcohol	84.0	495	81.9	733	69.2	714	66.4	608	72.2	1,218	77.6	1,252
	smoke tobacco?	Tobacco	87.9	494	86.3	737	75.5	711	68.3	608	77.8	1,218	81.2	1,252
	smoke marijuana?	Marijuana	87.4	493	83.6	731	67.6	710	60.4	606	72.8	1,215	76.0	1,248
	use prescription drugs not prescribed to you?	Prescription drugs	87.2	493	88.1	729	83.8	708	84.5	606	82.8	1,212	89.4	1,246
Stop act grantees: Somewhat or strongly disapprove of someone your age...	Having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, hard liquor) nearly every day?	Alcohol	84.8	564	86.0	787	76.0	750	69.0	639	77.9	1,333	80.4	1,319
People are at moderate or great risk of harming themselves if they...	take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor) nearly every day?	Regular alcohol use	71.2	483	76.0	736	74.0	715	74.9	606	70.5	1,223	77.8	1,234
Past 30-day use (at least one use in the past 30 days)	had beer, wine, or hard liquor	Alcohol	6.2	582	7.4	800	16.2	751	26.0	649	13.4	1,355	14.0	1,335
	smoked cigarettes?	Tobacco	2.1	574	1.6	795	3.9	753	4.7	643	3.5	1,348	2.4	1,328
	used marijuana	Marijuana	0.9	580	3.6	803	9.1	751	12.8	646	6.4	1,353	6.9	1,336
	combined results of prescription stimulant/tranquilizer/ pain reliever questions	Prescription drugs	2.8	577	2.1	801	2.1	756	1.2	651	2.1	1,357	1.9	1,337

# APPENDIX B. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Communities That Care Youth Survey (CTCYS) was adopted as the basis for PAYS. Based on the work of Dr. J. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard F. Catalano, the CTCYS is designed to identify the levels of risk factors related to problem behaviors such as ATOD use—and to identify the levels of protective factors that help guard against those behaviors. In addition to measuring risk and protective factors, the CTCYS also measures the actual prevalence of drug use, violence, and other antisocial behaviors among surveyed students. Three articles ([Pollard, Hawkins & Arthur, 1999](#); [Arthur, Hawkins, Pollard, Catalano & Baglioni, 2002](#); [Glaser, Van Horn, Arthur, Hawkins & Catalano, 2005](#)) describe the CTCYS, its uses and its ongoing development.

## Comparability of the 2023 PAYS to Prior Administrations

The 2023 PAYS instrument and administration enhanced the three-form design, first implemented in 2013 to address the difference in response rates for questions at the beginning of the survey versus those located at the end of the survey. Each of the three forms began with question section X, with sections A-F presented in different order on each of the three forms to offset the tendency for response rates to fall off in the later sections of the survey.

Further, while X, A, B, and C were present on all three survey forms, sections D, E, and F were each presented on two of three forms, which kept the amount of time required to administer the survey manageable while allowing approximately thirty additional questions for a total of 228 questions answered by students in the paper-based format.

For the online survey administration, question sections A, B, C, D, E, and F were presented in a random order. Efficiencies in the online survey and the increased speed of response allowed all survey questions to be presented to the respondents.

The survey retained its two column format to improve readability and speed of response. Focus groups were

held with students enrolled in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 during the 2014-2015 school year. These students were new to the survey and were not expected to be within the grades completing the survey during subsequent survey administrations. To enhance readability and reduce confusion related to the non-alphabetic order of the presentation of the survey sections, each section of the survey contains a label indicating the topic of the questions within the section. A heading was placed on the page of the 30-day and lifetime use questions to encourage honest responses by reassuring the students they would not be punished for their responses.

A comparative analysis of the enhanced survey and the 2013 survey was completed. No differences in question responses were determined based upon which form of the survey a student completed, indicating that the students were not primed to answer a particular way due to having seen a set of questions prior to another set.

2023 Question Changes and Additions

Subject	2023 PAYS	Notes Regarding Changes
Lifetime Use Questions	Lifetime use questions for all substances except for cigarettes and smokeless tobacco shifted from a how many times frame in 2021 to a <i>have you ever</i> frame in 2023. Response options were revised to: <i>Never, Once or twice, Once in a while but not regularly, Regularly in the past, Regularly now</i> . The lifetime use question for vaping is new to the 2023 survey.	This change allowed for continued data collection of lifetime in a frame that allowed for more meaningful connection with students and understanding of their use patterns.
30-Day Use Questions	30-day use questions for all substances except cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and electronic vapor products shifted from a <i>how many times</i> frame in 2021 to a <i>how often</i> frame in 2023. Response options were revised to: <i>Never, Once or twice, Once or twice per week, About once a day, More than once a day</i> . For cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and electronic vapor products 30-day use questions, the lead-in text for the questions changed from <i>How frequently</i> to <i>How often</i> , but the response options did NOT change.	This change allowed for continued data collection of 30-day use in a frame that allowed for more meaningful connection with students and understanding of their use patterns.
Lifetime/30-Day Crack/Cocaine Use	Previous to the 2023 PAYS, the survey asked about crack and cocaine use separately. The 2023 PAYS combined the substances to ask one lifetime use and one 30-day use question asking about <b>cocaine or crack</b> use.	There was no need to gather data for each substance separately. Combining the two substances contributed to a more streamlined survey.
Student Perceptions of Peer Cigarette Use	The question <i>How do you feel about someone your age smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day?</i> was removed from the 2023 PAYS.	This question is duplicative of the question: “How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: Smoke cigarettes?”.
Updated Lifetime, 30-Day, and Other Substance Use Definitions/Examples	<p>The substance examples provided for some lifetime and 30-day substance questions and questions about perceptions/behavior around substances were updated to include new and/or more relevant examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Questions regarding marijuana now include <i>THC</i> in the list of examples</li> <li>*Questions regarding cocaine use are now framed as <i>cocaine or crack</i></li> <li>*Questions regarding methamphetamine use now include <i>speed</i> as one of the examples</li> <li>*Questions regarding synthetic drugs have been reframed as man-made drugs such as <i>K2, Spice, Fake Weed, Bath Salts</i></li> <li>*Questions regarding vape device use shifted from product such as <i>JUUL, Vuse, MarkTen, and blu or other e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, ehookahs, hookah pens, and mods to product such as e-cigarettes, vapes, mods, e-cigs, e-hookahs, or vape pens</i>.</li> </ul>	These changes modernized the questions and increased youth understanding of the question wording.
Disapproval of Prescription Drug Use	<p>The PAYS prescription drug disapproval question was revised:</p> <p>2021: <i>How do you feel about someone your age using prescription drugs not prescribed to them?</i> Response options: <i>Strongly disapprove, Somewhat disapprove, Neither approve or disapprove, Approve, Don't know/Can't say</i></p> <p>2023: <i>How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to use prescription drugs not prescribed to them?</i> Response options: <i>Not at all wrong, A little bit wrong, Wrong, Very wrong</i></p>	This change was intended to simplify and streamline the survey by having the question be asked in the same format as this question is asked for other substances.
Drinking Alcohol and Driving	<p>The PAYS drinking and driving question changed from:</p> <p>2021: <i>How often have you: Driven a motor vehicle while or shortly after drinking?</i></p> <p>2023: <i>How often have you: Driven a motor vehicle while or shortly after drinking alcohol?</i></p>	These changes made the question more specific and understandable.
Mother/Father-Specific Questions	All questions specifically referring to a student’s <i>mother or father</i> were replaced with questions with a <i>parent/caregiver</i> frame.	The parent/caregiver language was tested in the 2019 and 2021 PAYS and the data proved to be comparable to mother/father questions. It is very important that these questions be inclusive of youth who do not have a mother or father, or who live with a caregiver that is not a mother or father.
Parent Questions	All questions referring to parents were revised to <i>parents/caregivers</i> .	This revision allowed questions to be inclusive of students who live with caregivers other than their parents.

Subject	2023 PAYS	Notes Regarding Changes
<b>People Who Live With You</b>	The response options for the question <i>Think of where you live most of the time. Which of the following people live there with you? (Choose all that apply)</i> were reduced to include only <i>Mother(s), Father(s), Stepparent(s), Foster Parent(s), Grandparent(s), Other Adult(s), Sibling(s), Other Children.</i>	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>Gang Involvement Questions</b>	Four questions regarding gang involvement (i.e., <i>Have you ever belonged to a gang?, If you have ever belonged to a gang, did that gang have a name?, How old were you when you first belonged to a gang?, and In the past year, how many of your best friends have been a member of a gang?)</i> were removed from the 2023 PAYS.	These were removed due to the information being less actionable and due to very low prevalence.
<b>Threatened/Attacked With a Weapon</b>	The following questions were removed: <i>In the past 12 months, how often have you: Been threatened by someone with a weapon on school property?</i> <i>In the past 12 months, how often have you: Been attacked by someone with a weapon on school property?</i>	The PAYS already includes questions about being threatened or attacked; there is not a need to know specifically about threats/attacks with a weapon.
<b>Bringing Weapon to School</b>	The questions <i>How many times in your lifetime have you brought a weapon (such as a handgun, knife, etc.) and How many times in the last 30 days have you: Brought a weapon (such as a handgun, knife, etc.) to school?</i> were removed and replaced with a single question asking about past-year bringing a weapon to school: <i>How many times in the past 12 months have you brought a weapon (such as a handgun, knife, etc.) to school?.</i>	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>Drugs/Violence Response Option Changes</b>	Response options for the violence and antisocial behaviors questions below were changed to <i>Never, Once or Twice, Several Times, Often</i>  In the past 12 months, how often have you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Been threatened to be hit or beaten up on school property?</i></li> <li>• <i>Been attacked and hit by someone or beaten up on school property?</i></li> <li>• <i>Been offered, given or sold alcohol, tobacco product or other drug on school property?</i></li> </ul> How many times in the past 12 months have you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?</i></li> <li>• <i>Been arrested?</i></li> <li>• <i>Been drunk or high at school?</i></li> <li>• <i>Been suspended from school?</i></li> <li>• <i>Sold substances such as vapes, alcohol, drugs, or medications?</i></li> <li>• <i>Done anything to harm yourself (such as cutting, scraping, burning) as a way to relieve difficult feelings, or to communicate emotions that may be difficult to express verbally?</i></li> <li>• <i>Brought a weapon (such as a handgun, knife, etc.) to school?</i></li> </ul>	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>Drugs/Violence Question Changes</b>	The following questions in this topic area were revised:  2021: <i>How many times in the past 12 months have you: Sold Illegal Drugs?</i> 2023: <i>How many times in the past 12 months have you: Sold substances such as vapes, alcohol, drugs, or medications?</i>  2021: <i>Been offered, given, or sold an illegal drug on school property?</i> 2023: <i>Been offered, given or sold alcohol, tobacco product or other drug on school property?</i>	These revisions aimed to modernize the survey content and bring clarity to the existing questions.
<b>Bullying</b>	The question <i>Please state whether you have been bullied during the past 12 months?</i> was revised to <i>Have you been bullied during the past 12 months?</i>	This revision intended to simplify the question wording.
<b>Cyberbullying</b>	The way that cyberbullying data are collected changed. The following question was removed from the survey in 2023: <i>During the past 12 months, have you been bullied through texting and/or social media; and the response option Online, social media, phone</i> was added to an existing question about where a student was bullied.	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>Gambling Definition</b>	Gambling questions in the 2023 PAYS now are prefaced with the following definition <i>Gambling is taking part in any game or activity where you risk something of value on the chance of winning something.</i>	This addition aims to increase student understanding of the concept of gambling and establish a common definition before asking gambling-related questions.



Subject	2023 PAYS	Notes Regarding Changes
<b>Gambling Questions</b>	The lifetime gambling question shifted from a how many times frame in 2021 to a have you ever frame 2023. Response options were revised to: <i>Never, Once or twice, Once in a while but not regularly, Regularly in the past, Regularly now.</i>	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>30-Day Gambling</b>	30-Day gambling question shifted from only including Yes and No response options in 2021 to a how often frame with the following response options: <i>Never, Once or twice, Once or twice per week, About once a day, More than once a day.</i>	This revision aimed to provide more detailed and meaningful response options.
<b>Types of Gambling</b>	Three questions on types of gambling students participated in during the past year were revised to be more relevant and specific: 2021: <i>Table games like poker or other card games, dice, backgammon, or dominoes</i> 2023: <i>Games such as poker, card games, dice, pool, darts</i>  2021: <i>Sporting events or sports pools</i> 2023: <i>Sporting events, sports pools, or fantasy sports</i>  2021: <i>Personal skill games (such as pool, darts, coin tossing, video games)</i> 2023: <i>Video games or online gaming</i>	This revision intended to provide more current and relevant types of gambling activities.
<b>Abuse</b>	Question regarding types of abuse was revised to edit the response option <i>Control with whom you socialized</i> to <i>Control of who you socialized with.</i>	This revision aimed to simplify and clarify the wording of the response option
<b>Suicide</b>	The PAYS suicide attempt question was revised: 2021: <i>How many times did you actually attempt suicide? Response options: 0 times, 1 time, 2 or 3 times, 4 or 5 times, 6 or more times</i> 2023: <i>Did you actually attempt suicide? Response options: Yes, No</i>	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>Food Insecurity</b>	Food insecurity questions were changed in the following ways:  2021: <i>How many times have you: Worried that food at home would run out before your family got money to buy more? Response options: Never, Not in the past 12 months, Less than once a month, About once a month, 2-3 times a month, Once or more a week</i> 2023: <i>How often in the past year have you: Worried that food at home would run out before your family got money to buy more? Response options: Never, A Few Times, Sometimes, Often</i>  2021: <i>How many times have you: Skipped a meal because your family didn't have enough money to buy food? Response options: Never, Not in the past 12 months, Less than once a month, About once a month, 2-3 times a month, Once or more a week</i> 2023: <i>How often in the past year have you: Skipped a meal because your family didn't have enough money to buy food? Response options: Never, A Few Times, Sometimes, Often</i>	This revision intended to simplify and streamline the survey.
<b>New Questions</b>	<p>The following items added to the 2023 PAYS:</p> <p><i>Have you ever used an electronic vapor product as such as e-cigarettes, vapes, mods, e-cigs, e-hookahs, or vape pens? Response options: Never, Once or twice, Once in a while but not regularly, Regularly in the past, Regularly now</i></p> <p><i>How much do people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they: Use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette once or twice a day? Response options: No risk, Slight risk, Moderate risk, Great risk</i></p> <p><i>How wrong do your friends feel it would be for you to use an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette? Response options: Not at all wrong, A little bit wrong, Wrong, Very wrong</i></p> <p><i>My overall mental health in the past month has been good. Response options: NO!, no, yes, YES!</i></p> <p><i>If you have felt sad, lonely or worried in the past month who did you talk to? (Mark all that apply) Response options: No one, Parent/caregiver, Other family member, Friend, Teacher or another adult at school (g. coach, counselor, nurse), Doctor or therapist, Religious or spiritual leader (g. Rabbi, Paster, Imam, Priest or Nun, Bishop), Other adult in the community, I have not felt this way in the past 30 days</i></p> <p><i>If you used an electronic vapor product such as vape or e-cigarette in the past year, how did you usually get it? (Mark all that apply.) Response options: Did not use electronic vapor product, A friend gave it to me for free, A family member gave it to me for free, I bought it from someone under 21, I bought it from someone over 21, I bought it from a store, I bought it on the Internet, I gave someone money to buy it for me, I took it from someone, Other source not listed here</i></p>	

# APPENDIX C. FOR MORE INFORMATION...

## Prevention Web Sites

- The Center for Communities That Care: [www.communitiesthatcare.net/](http://www.communitiesthatcare.net/)
- Social Development Research Group: [www.sdr.org](http://www.sdr.org)
- Evidence-Based Prevention and Intervention Support: <https://www.episcenter.psu.edu/index.php/paysquestion>
- Commonwealth Prevention Alliance: [www.commonwealthpreventionalliance.org](http://www.commonwealthpreventionalliance.org)
- Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System: [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm)
- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): [www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh](http://www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh)
- Monitoring the Future: [www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org)
- The Partnership to End Addiction: [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD): [www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)
- PA DUI Association: [www.padui.org](http://www.padui.org)
- The Commonwealth Prevention Alliance Campaign to Stop Opiate Misuse: [pastop.org](http://pastop.org)
- CPA Campaign to Start Building Healthy Families: [pastart.org](http://pastart.org)
- Prevent Suicide PA: [www.preventsuicidepa.org](http://www.preventsuicidepa.org)
- Youth Suicide Warning Signs: [www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org](http://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org)
- Overdose Free PA: [www.overdosefreepa.org](http://www.overdosefreepa.org)

## Guides to Prevention Programs

- Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development: [www.blueprintsprograms.com](http://www.blueprintsprograms.com)
- National Institute of Justice: [www.crimesolutions.gov](http://www.crimesolutions.gov)

- Federal OJJDP Model Programs Guide: [www.ojjdp.gov/mpg](http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg)
- SAMHSA Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center: [www.samhsa.gov/ebp-resource-center](http://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-resource-center)
- Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP): [www.wsipp.wa.gov](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov)
- WSIPP Benefit/Cost Results: [www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost)

## State Resources

- Pennsylvania General Assembly: [www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us)
- DDAP – PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs: [www.ddap.pa.gov](http://www.ddap.pa.gov)
- DOH – PA Department of Health: [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov)
- PLCB – PA Liquor Control Board: [www.lcb.pa.gov](http://www.lcb.pa.gov)
- PCCD – PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency: [www.pccd.pa.gov](http://www.pccd.pa.gov)
- PDE – PA Department of Education: [www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/Pages/default.aspx)
- CCAP – County Commissioners Association of PA: [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org)
- Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators: [www.pacdaa.org](http://www.pacdaa.org)
- Safe2Say Something [www.safe2saypa.org](http://www.safe2saypa.org)

## Federal Resources

- Office of National Drug Control Policy: [www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp](http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp)
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: [www.store.samhsa.gov](http://www.store.samhsa.gov)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA): [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/alcoholdrug/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/alcoholdrug/index.htm)  
[www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm)
- National Resource Center for Domestic Violence and Child Abuse:  
1-800-932-4632

## If You Need Assistance

### *With bullying:*

- US Department of Health and Human Services: [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- PA Bullying Prevention Toolkit: [bptoolkit.safeschools.info/](http://bptoolkit.safeschools.info/)
- PA Department of Education: [www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/bullying/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/bullying/Pages/default.aspx)
- Bullying Prevention Consultation Line:  
1-866-716-0424

### *With drugs and alcohol:*

- PA Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs: Find Drug & Alcohol Treatment 1-800-662-HELP [www.ddap.pa.gov/Pages/Find-Treatment.aspx](http://www.ddap.pa.gov/Pages/Find-Treatment.aspx)
- Alcoholics Anonymous: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)
- Pennsylvania Area Al-Anon: [www.pa-al-anon.org](http://www.pa-al-anon.org)

### *With smoking cessation:*

- [pa.quitlogix.org/en-US/](http://pa.quitlogix.org/en-US/) or 1-800 QUIT NOW (784-8669)
- Youth Tobacco and Vaping Cessation Program: [mylifemyquit.com](http://mylifemyquit.com) or 1-855-891-9989

### *With gambling:*

- Pennsylvania Gambling Addiction 24 Hour Hotline: 1-800-GAMBLER

### *Talking with a child about drugs and alcohol:*

- SAMHSA – Talk. They Hear You: [www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking](http://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking)
- MADD – Power of Parents: [www.madd.org/the-solution/power-of-parents/](http://www.madd.org/the-solution/power-of-parents/)

### *With child/parent coaching:*

- Partnership to End Addiction: [drugfree.org/](http://drugfree.org/)
- NIDA Resources for Parents: [teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/drugs-and-your-kids](http://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/drugs-and-your-kids)  
[www.drugabuse.gov/parents-educators](http://www.drugabuse.gov/parents-educators)

### *With depression or suicidal thoughts:*

For immediate help, call a hotline or check the phone book under “suicide,” “crisis” or “mental health.” In an emergency, call 911. If you call for someone else, stay with the person until help arrives.

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Crisis Text Line: Text PA to 741-741
- TrevorLifeline for LGBTQ+ youth: 1-866-488-7386

## APPENDIX D. SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS IN THIS REPORT

As follows is a list of school districts, charter schools, and private schools which participated in the 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey and are also represented in this profile report. If this report is intended for a school district, charter school, or private school, you will find that only the district/school in question is included. However, County and Community reports will include two or more districts, charter schools, or private schools. In the instance of those reports, this appendix will provide key information for understanding the participants represented in your data.

2019:

Commodore Perry SD  
Farrell Area SD  
Greenville Area SD  
Grove City Area SD  
Hermitage SD  
Jamestown Area SD  
Kennedy Catholic Middle/  
High School  
Keystone Education Center  
Charter School  
Lakeview SD  
Mercer Area SD  
Reynolds SD  
Sharon City SD  
Sharpsville Area SD  
West Middlesex Area SD

2021:

Commodore Perry SD  
Farrell Area SD  
Greenville Area SD  
Grove City Area SD  
Jamestown Area School Distirci  
Kennedy Catholic Middle School  
Keystone Education Center  
Charter School  
Lakeview SD  
Mercer Area SD  
Reynolds SD  
Sharon City SD  
Sharpsville Area SD  
West Middlesex Area SD

2023:

Commodore Perry SD  
Greenville Area SD  
Grove City Area SD  
Hermitage SD  
Jamestown Area SD  
Keystone Education Center  
Charter School  
Lakeview SD  
Mercer Area SD  
Reynolds SD  
Sharon City SD  
Sharpsville Area SD  
West Middlesex Area SD