Prevention Working in Berks County

What can be learned from the 2023 PAYS Data?

January 7, 2025

Agenda

- **Introduction**
  - COCA Overview
  - COCA Partners
- **Why is Prevention Important?**
- **2023 PAYS Data Dive**
  - Questions & Answers

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COCA Overview

The Council on Chemical Abuse
YOUR BRIDGE TO ADDICTION RESOURCES

- The Council on Chemical Abuse, known as COCA, provides Berks County, PA with leadership and assistance in preventing substance use, and promoting treatment and recovery from addiction.

- COCA serves as the coordinating agency for publicly supported drug and alcohol programming.

- Prevention Specialists are available to teach programs on vaping, drug and alcohol prevention, teens and technology and more.

- Prevention programs are offered FREE to Berks County schools and community groups.

Scan the QR Code to learn more about COCA's Education Services!
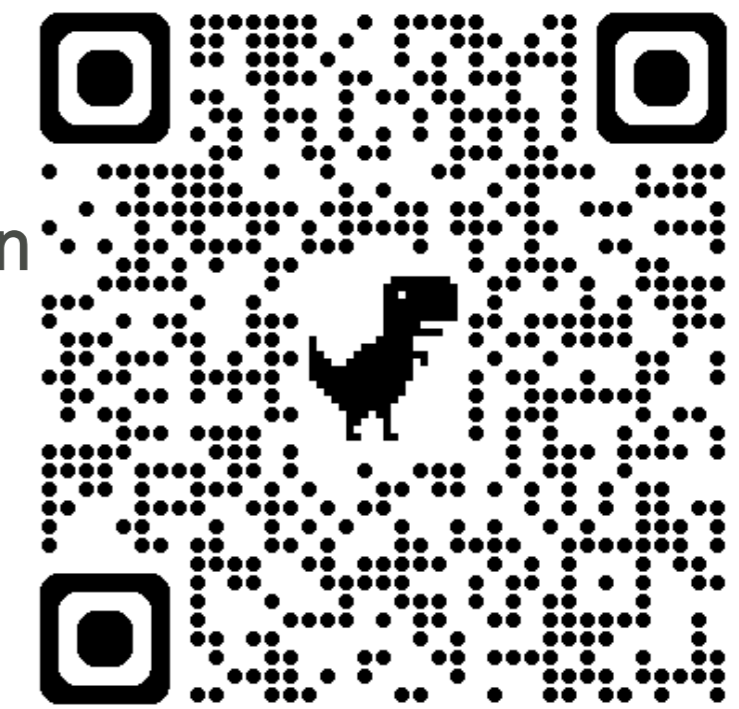
COCA Evaluation and Data Partners

WestEd Justice & Prevention RESEARCH CENTER

- The Justice and Prevention Research Center (JPRC) at WestEd focuses on safety, justice systems, and public health.

- The JPRC conducts research & evaluation projects and provides technical assistance for a variety of funders and partners.

- COCA has partnered with the JPRC since 2022 to evaluate prevention programs and assist with the county's Needs and Resource Assessment process.

Deerfield Data Management, LLC
transforming data into knowledge

- Jolynn Haney is the owner of Deerfield Data Management, LLC, a firm specializing in data analysis services for COCA and other publicly funded behavioral health programs across Pennsylvania.

- Dr. Haney has worked with COCA in a variety of roles since 1999.

Why is Prevention Important?

What is Prevention?

- For prevention to be successful, it should be data-driven and based on the needs of the community.

- Quality prevention utilizes evidence-based and evidence-informed programs

- There are three types of prevention programs:

1 UNIVERSAL — Designed to reach all segments of a population.

2 SELECTIVE — Designed to target a specific population who may be at increased risk.

3 INDICATED — Designed to target individuals already demonstrating risky behaviors.

Source: https://pttcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-JUL-06-pttc-brief-prevention.pdf

- Research and experience have shown that prevention must begin with an understanding of complex behavioral health problems within their complex environmental contexts; only then can communities establish and implement effective plans to address substance misuse.

SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework

1 **ASSESSMENT:** Identify local prevention needs based on data (e.g., *What is the problem?*)

2 **CAPACITY:** Build local resources and readiness to address prevention needs (e.g., *What do you have to work with? How can you facilitate the communication of prevention science?*)

3 **PLANNING:** Find out what works to address prevention needs and how to do it (e.g., *What should you do and how should you do it?*)

4 **IMPLEMENTATION:** Deliver evidence-based programs and practices as intended (e.g., *How can you and your coalition put your plan into action?*)

5 **EVALUATION:** Examine the process and outcomes of programs and practices (e.g., *Is your plan succeeding?*)

https://www.samhsa.gov/sptac/strategic-prevention-framework
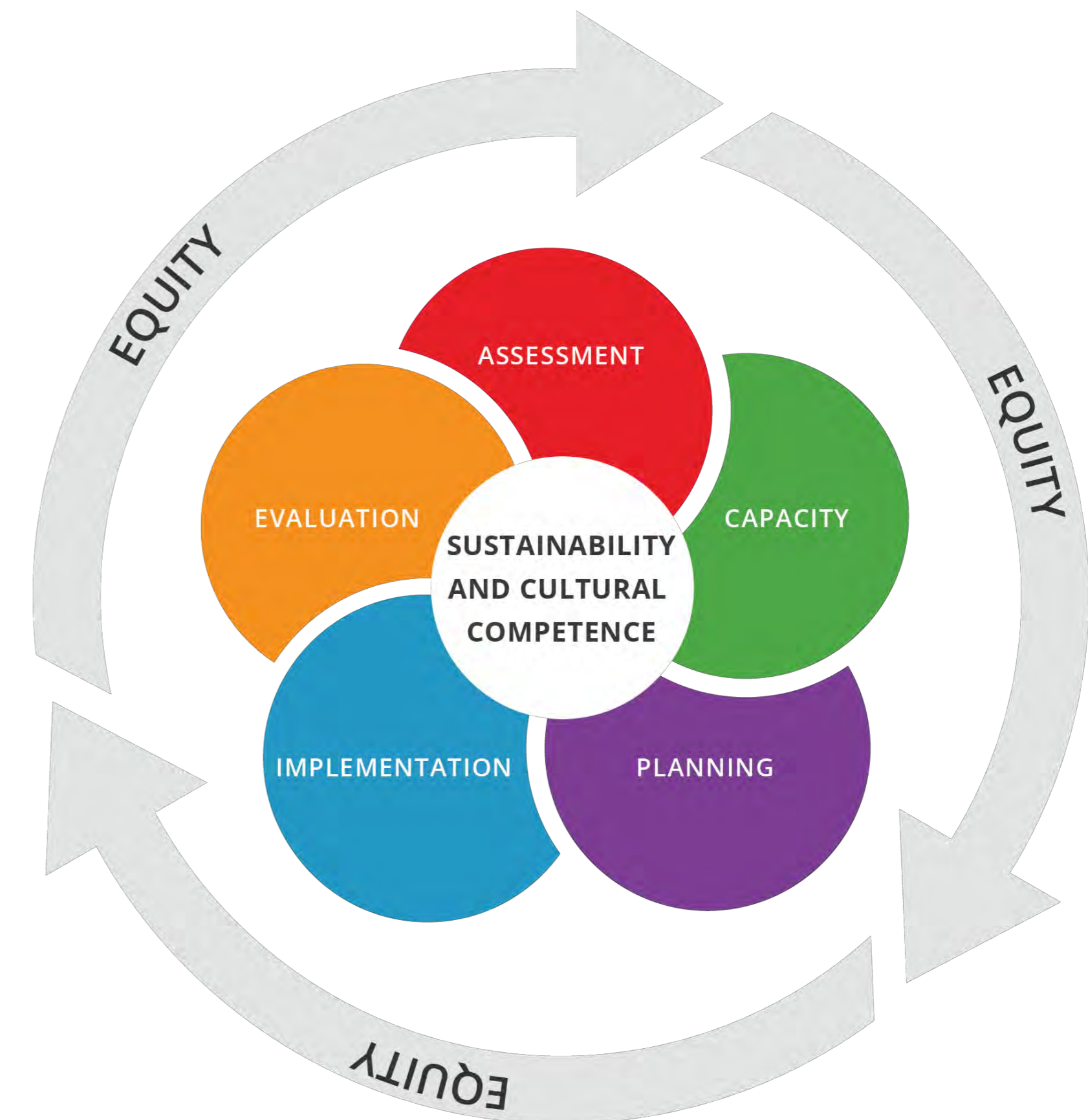
Prevention in Pennsylvania

- The PA Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs (DDAP) requires a multi-year Needs/Resource Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation Process.

- The first strategic planning cycle took place between 2018-2023. The current strategic planning cycle kicked off in Summer 2024 and will run through 2030.

2024–2025
Needs/Resource Assessment

1

PART 1: August–November 2024
- Review and analyze data (e.g., statewide & county PAYS data, other statewide data, Berks-specific data)
- Select top areas of concern
- Plan Community Conversations

PART 2: Dec. 2024–June 2025
- Conduct Community Conversations
- Inventory prevention programs and services being provided in the County
- Assess resources and readiness
- Reassess top areas of concerns
- Select final priority problems

2

3 **2025–2026**
Prevention Action Plan

4

5 **2026–2027**
Evaluation Report

Prevention in Berks County

Elementary School Programs

- Too Good for Drugs
- Kids & Technology
- ...and more!

Middle School Programs

- Teens & Technology
- Escape the Vape
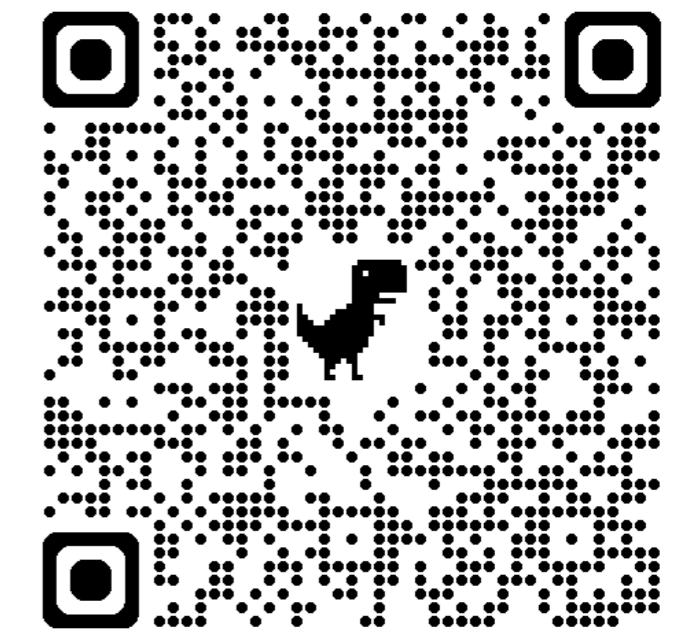- ...and more!

High School Programs

- Marijuana Education
- Vaping Education
- ...and more!

What prevention programs are you currently offering in your school district?

Scan the QR Code to see COCA's Menu of School Programs!

2023 PAYS Data Dive

About the 2023 PAYS Survey

- Funding for the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) is provided by:

pennsylvania COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

pennsylvania DEPARTMENT OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAMS

pennsylvania DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- 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 (participation rate of 52.3% statewide).

- In **Berks County**, PAYS results were based on **13,422** valid surveys.

THANK YOU!

...to the **13 School Districts** in Berks County who participated in the 2023 PAYS.

...to **Bach Harrison, L.L.C.** for providing the Berks County PAYS data used in this presentation.

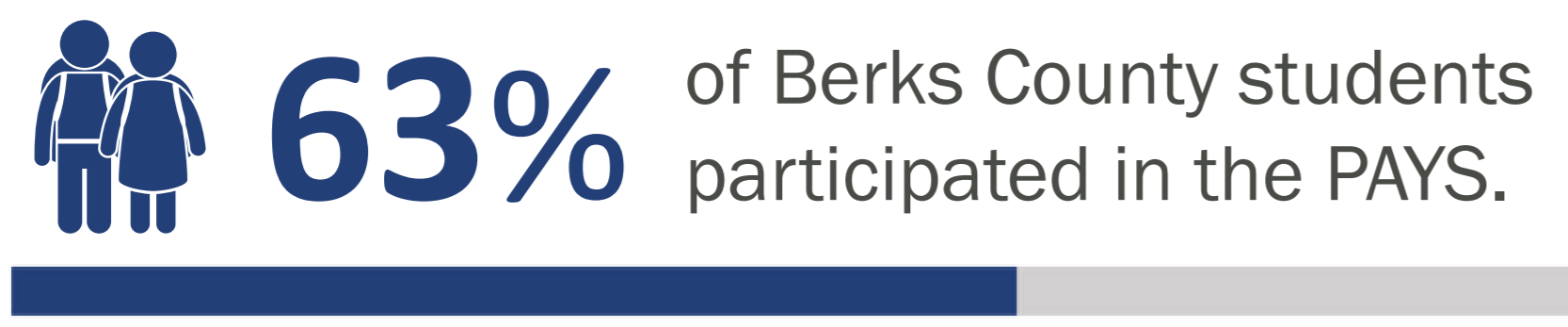# PAYS Overview

Exhibit 1. 2023 PAYS Participation

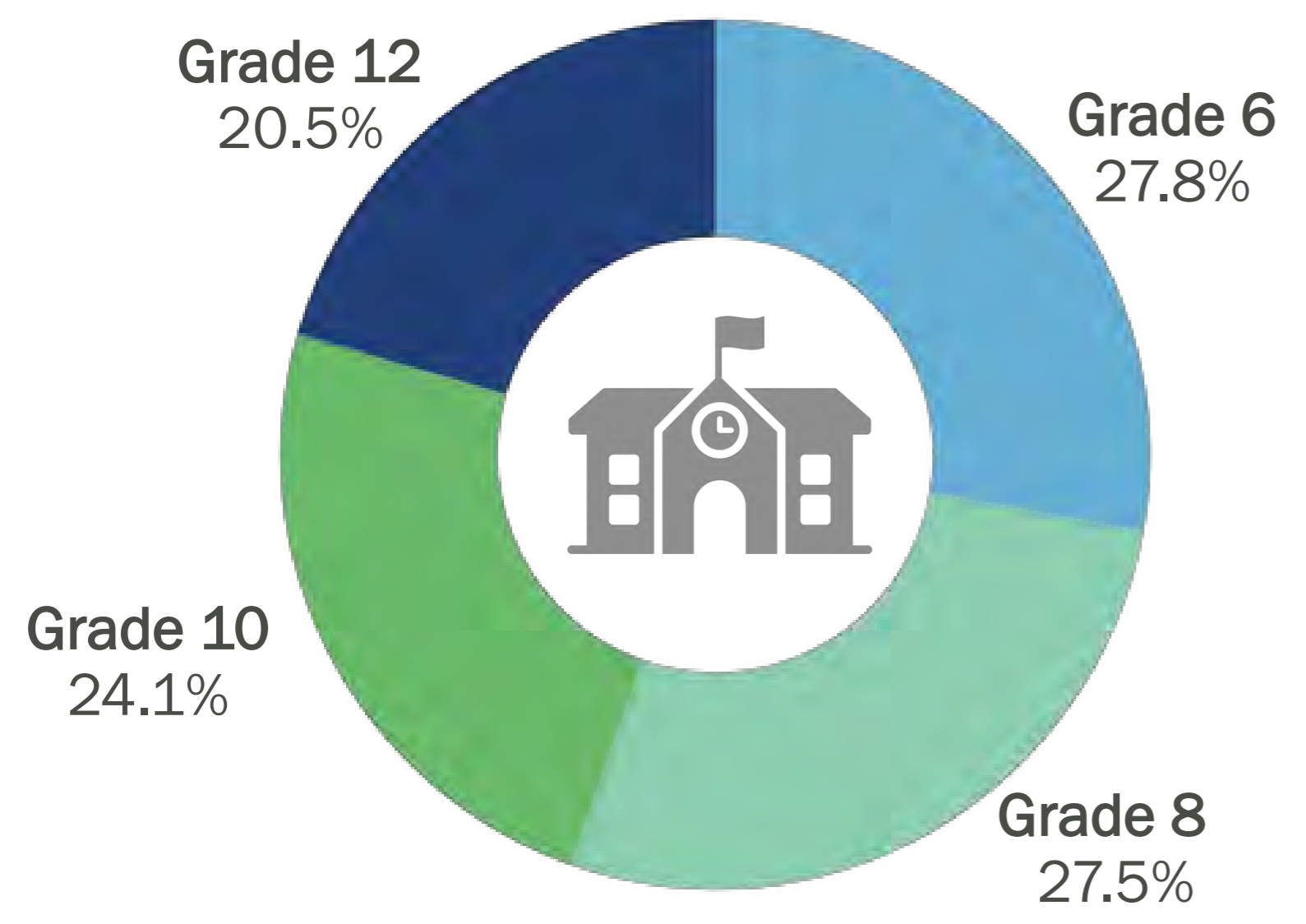**63%** of Berks County students participated in the PAYS.

PAYS Grade Representation

Grade 12
20.5%

Grade 6
27.8%

Grade 10
24.1%

Grade 8
27.5%

Berks County N = 13,422 valid responses

Exhibit 2. Gender

Male 49.8%
Female 48.2%
Other 1.9%

Exhibit 3. Ethnicity

41% of respondents are of **Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish** origin.

State rate is 17.1%

Exhibit 4. Race

PAYS Respondents by Race

| Race	Percentage
White, Caucasian	56.8%
Black, African American	14.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.2%
Multi-racial	6.2%
American Indian	2.2%
Race Unmarked	13.3%

Substance Use

Exhibit 5. County Lifetime Alcohol Use

Proportion of students who reported **using alcohol at least once** is trending **downward**. 2023 **county proportion** is **lower** than the state.*

County Students Who Reported Using Alcohol at Least Once in Their Life

Legend: Grade 6, Grade 8, Grade 10, Grade 12, All Students
X-axis: 2019, 2021, 2023
Y-axis: 0% to 70%
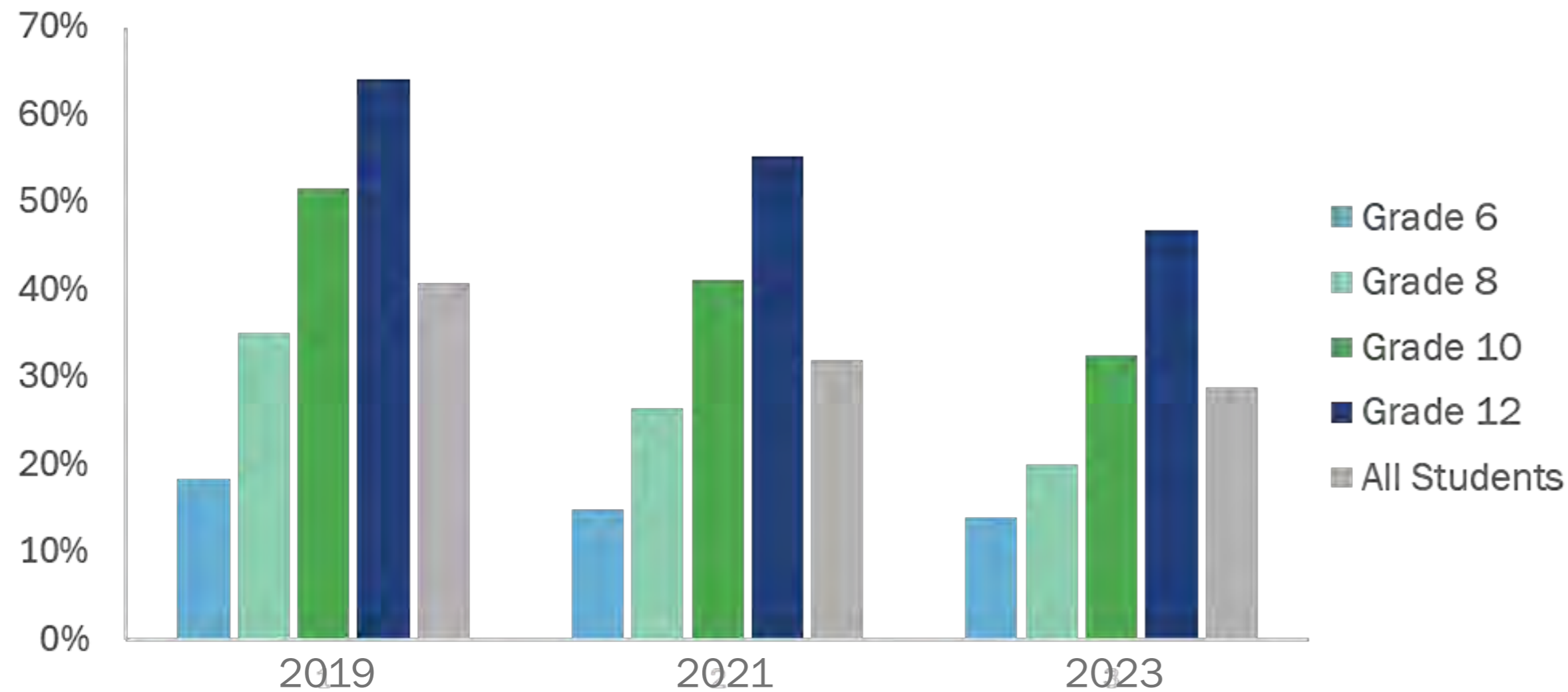
* Lifetime use questions shifted from a *how many times frame* in 2021 to a *have you ever* frame in 2023. Response options were revised to: *Never*, *Once or twice*, *Once in a while but not regularly*, *Regularly in the past*, *Regularly now*. This graph represents students who selected any response option indicating they had used the substance at least once in their life.

Exhibit 6. County Lifetime Marijuana Use

Proportions of students who reported **using marijuana at least once** are **lower** than state results for **grades 6, 8, and 12.**

Students Who Used Marijuana at Least Once in Life – 2023 County		% Diff. from State (2023)
Grade 6	**1.3%**	↓ 0.4% lower
Grade 8	**4.7%**	↓ 0.9% lower
Grade 10	**13.8%**	↑ 1.4% higher
Grade 12	**22.0%**	↓ 4.2% lower
All Students	**9.5%**	↓ 2.1% lower

Substance Use

Exhibit 7. County Lifetime Vaping Use

Students in **grade 12** reported the **highest** rates of **lifetime vaping**, but county rates are notably **lower**, compared to the **state**.

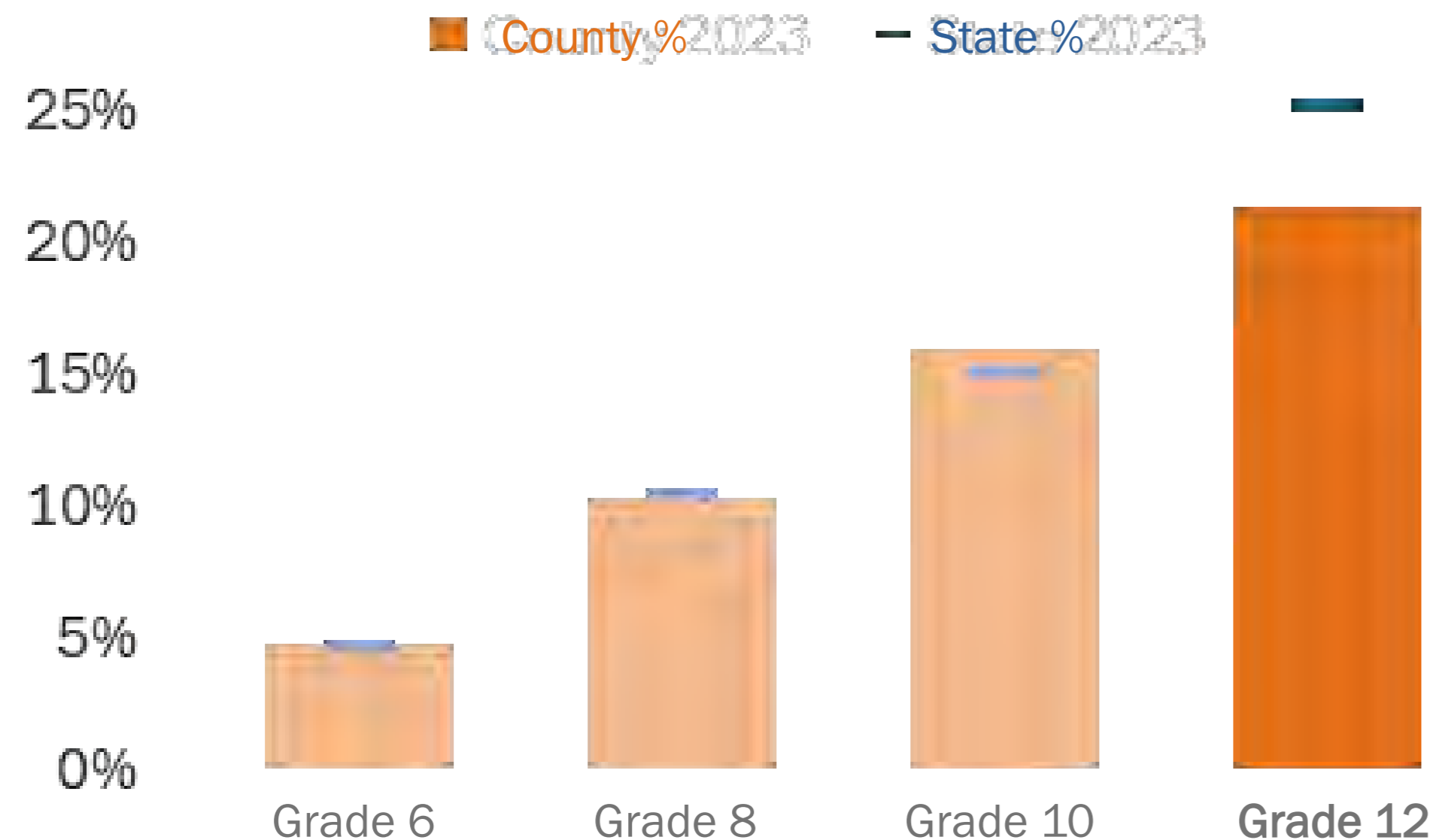### Students Who Reported Vaping at Least Once in Their Life (2023)

Legend: ■ County %2023 — State %2023

Grade	Value
Grade 6	~5%
Grade 8	~10%
Grade 10	~16%
Grade 12	~21%

Exhibit 8. Substances Vaped

Nicotine was reported as the **most commonly vaped substance** in the past year.*

% County Students Who Reported Vaping Substance in Past Year (2023)

Substance	Percentage
Nicotine	58.4%
Just flavoring	40.5%
Marijuana	39.1%
Don't know	14.0%
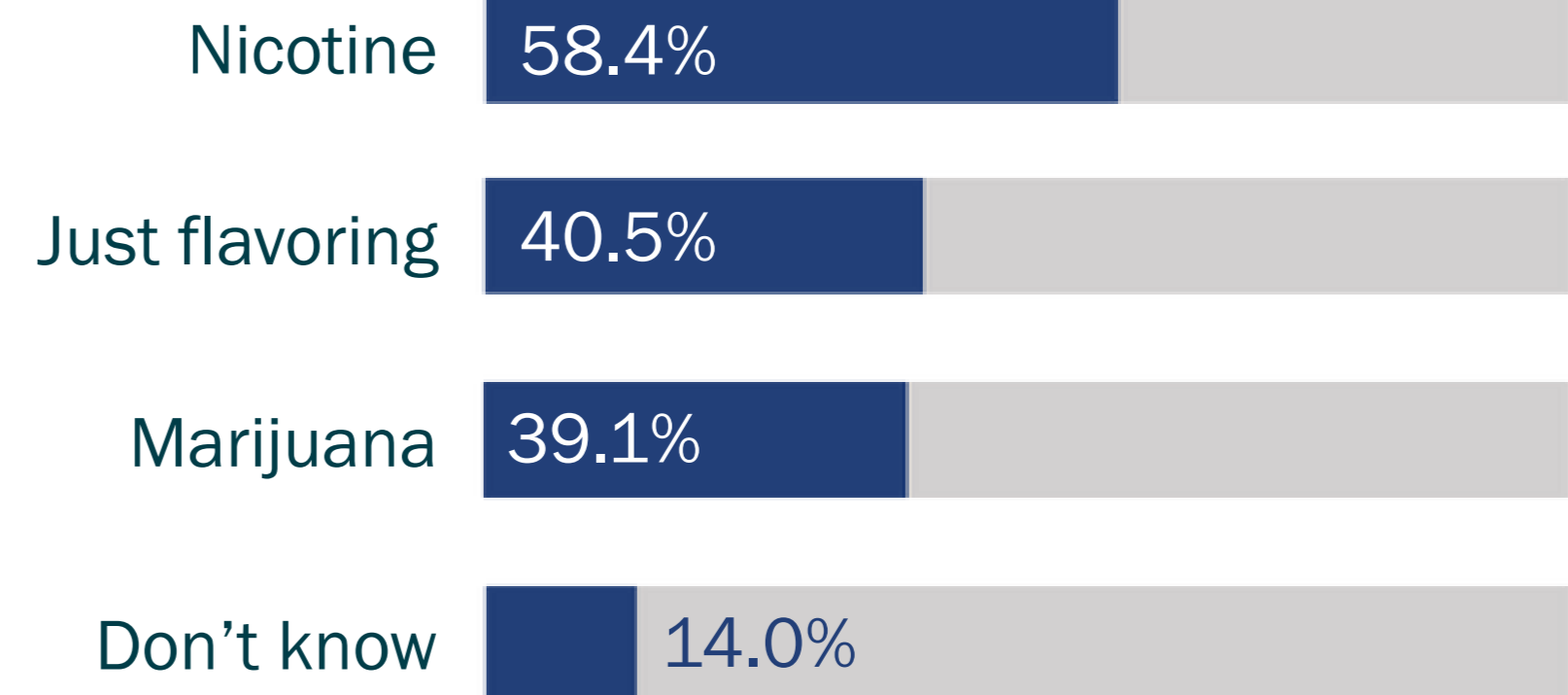
*Reported by students indicating electronic vapor product use in the past 12 months. Respondents selected all that applied.

REMINDER

PAYS began assessing lifetime vaping and vaping activities in 2023.

Mental Health

Exhibit 9. Mental Health Concerns

Nearly **three-quarters** of Berks County students (72.5%) reported **good overall mental health** in the past month.
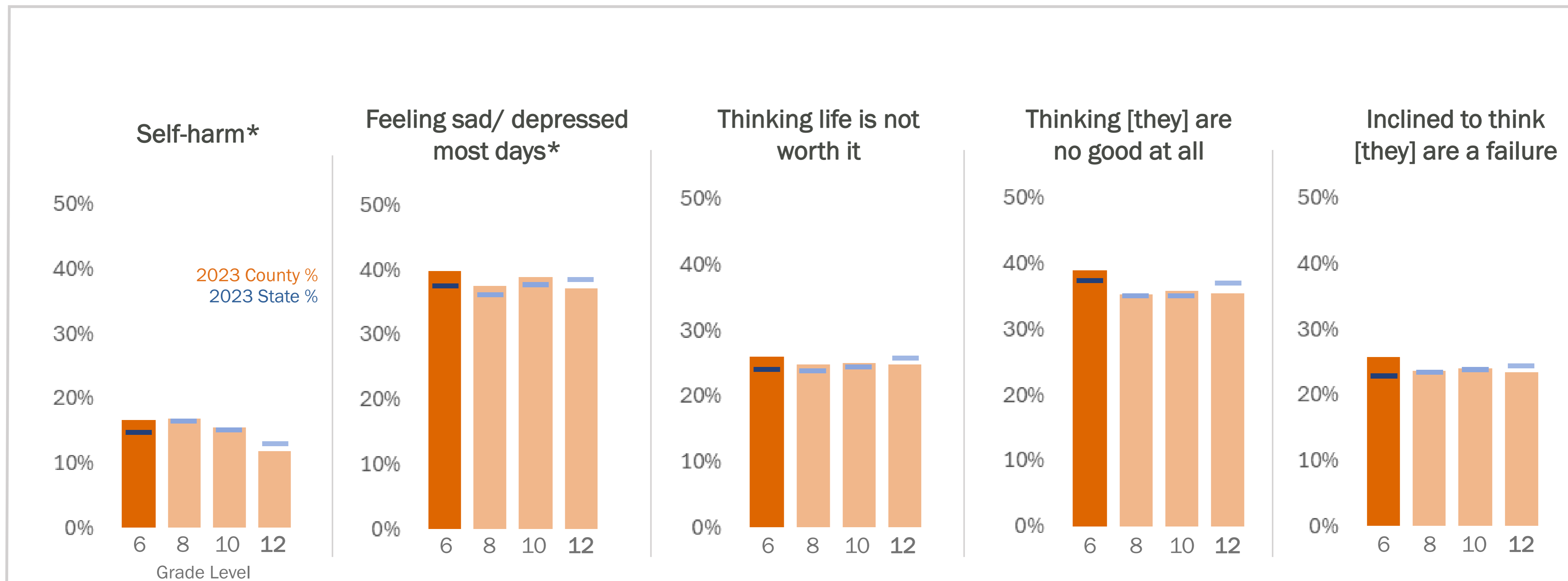
1.2% higher than the state rate.

All the while, students in the county reported **mental health concerns** at **slightly higher** proportions, compared to the state.

In 2023, students reported...	County % - All Students	% Diff. from State (2023)
Feeling sad/depressed most days*	**38.4%**	↑ 1.1% higher
Thinking they are no good at all	**36.4%**	↑ 0.4% higher
Thinking life is not worth it sometimes	**25.2%**	↑ 0.8% higher
Being inclined to think they are a failure	**24.3%**	↑ 0.7% higher
Self-harm*	**15.5%**	↑ 0.7% higher

* in the past 12 months

Mentai Health

Council on Chemical Abuse
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Exhibit 10. Mental Health Concerns by Grade (2023)

Self-harm*

2023 County %
2023 State %

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

6   8   10   12
Grade Level

Feeling sad/ depressed most days*

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

6   8   10   12

Thinking life is not worth it

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

6   8   10   12

Thinking [they] are no good at all

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

6   8   10   12

Inclined to think [they] are a failure

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

6   8   10   12

* in the past 12 months

Mental Health

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Exhibit 11. Suicide Risks – So Sad, Stopped Usual Activities

Over a quarter of students in the county reported being **so sad they stopped doing their usual activities.***

Results are **similar** across grades and compared to state rates.

Students Who Reported Being So Sad, They Stopped Usual Activities (2023)

■ County %   — State %
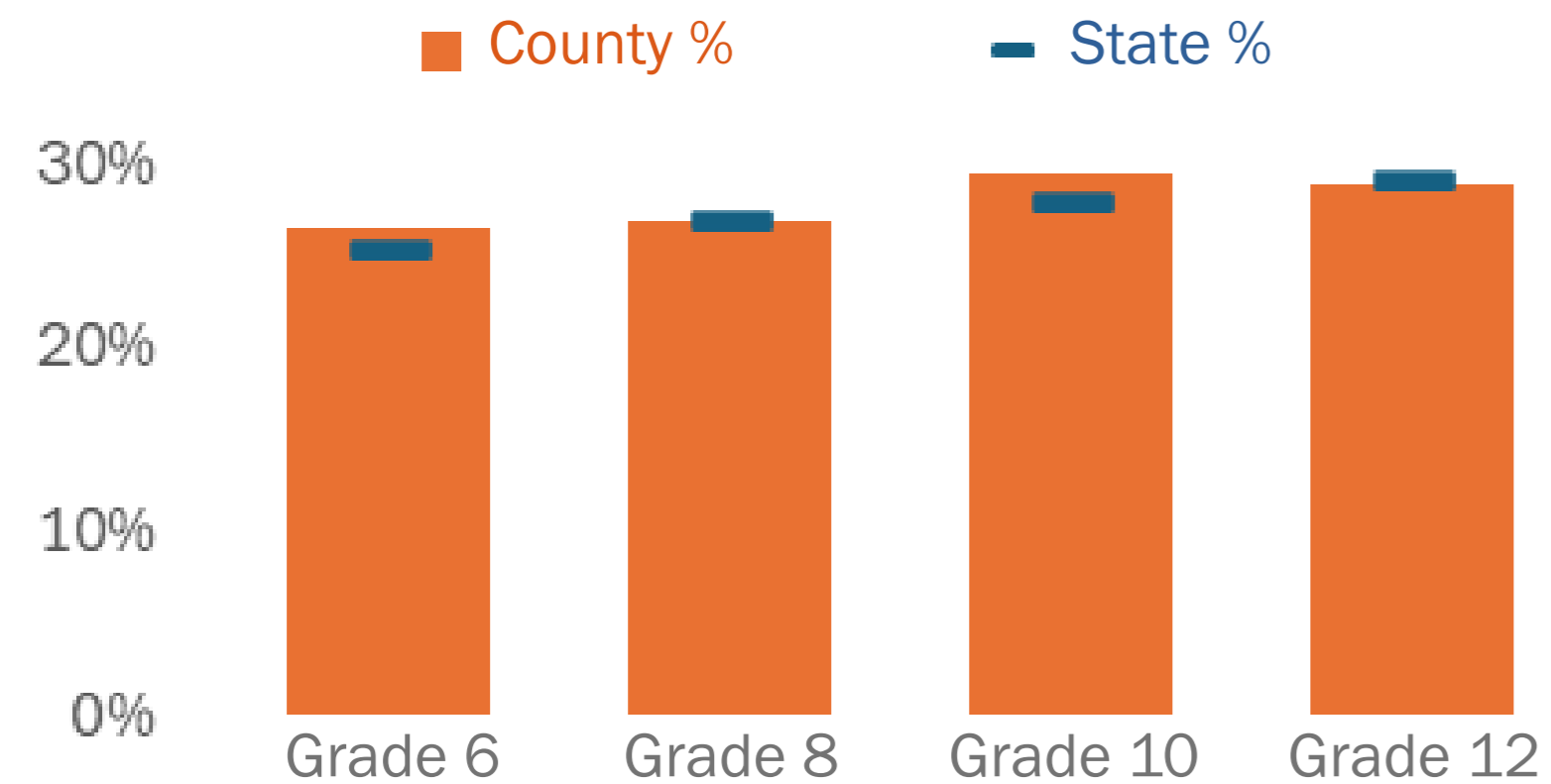
* Survey question asks, "During the past 12 months… Did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?"

Exhibit 12. Suicide Risks - Serious Consideration of Suicide

The number of students who reported they've **seriously considered suicide** have **decreased** for **older** students in the County since 2021 but have **increased** for students in **grade 6.**

| Students who Seriously Considered Suicide (2023)		% Diff. from County in 2021	% Diff. from State (2023)
Grade 6	**15.7%**	↑ 2.3% higher	↑ 2.8% higher
Grade 8	**16.0%**	↓ 1.5% lower	↓ 0.8% lower
Grade 10	**18.0%**	↓ 2.9% lower	↑ 1.6% higher
Grade 12	**15.1%**	↓ 6.4% lower	↓ 2.8% lower

Mental Health

Exhibit 13. Depressive Symptoms 2023

Depressive Symptoms Categories

Based on responses to 4 survey items assessing **mental health concerns**

"No" Depressive Symptoms

"Moderate" Depressive Symptoms

"High" Depressive Symptoms
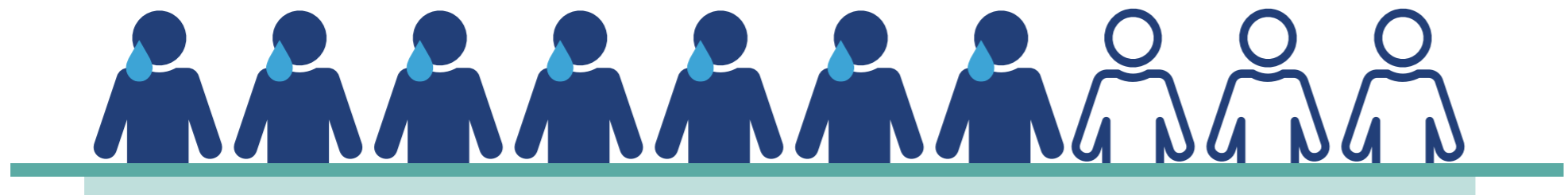
In 2023, nearly **seven out of ten** students (69.7%) in the county reported **moderate depressive symptoms**, a proportion similar to the state.

6.1% of students in the county reported **high depressive symptoms**, a proportion higher than the state (5.4%).

Exhibit 14. Depressive Symptoms and Substance Use

Reported **use of substances** is **higher** among students with **high depressive symptoms** than students with no depressive symptoms.

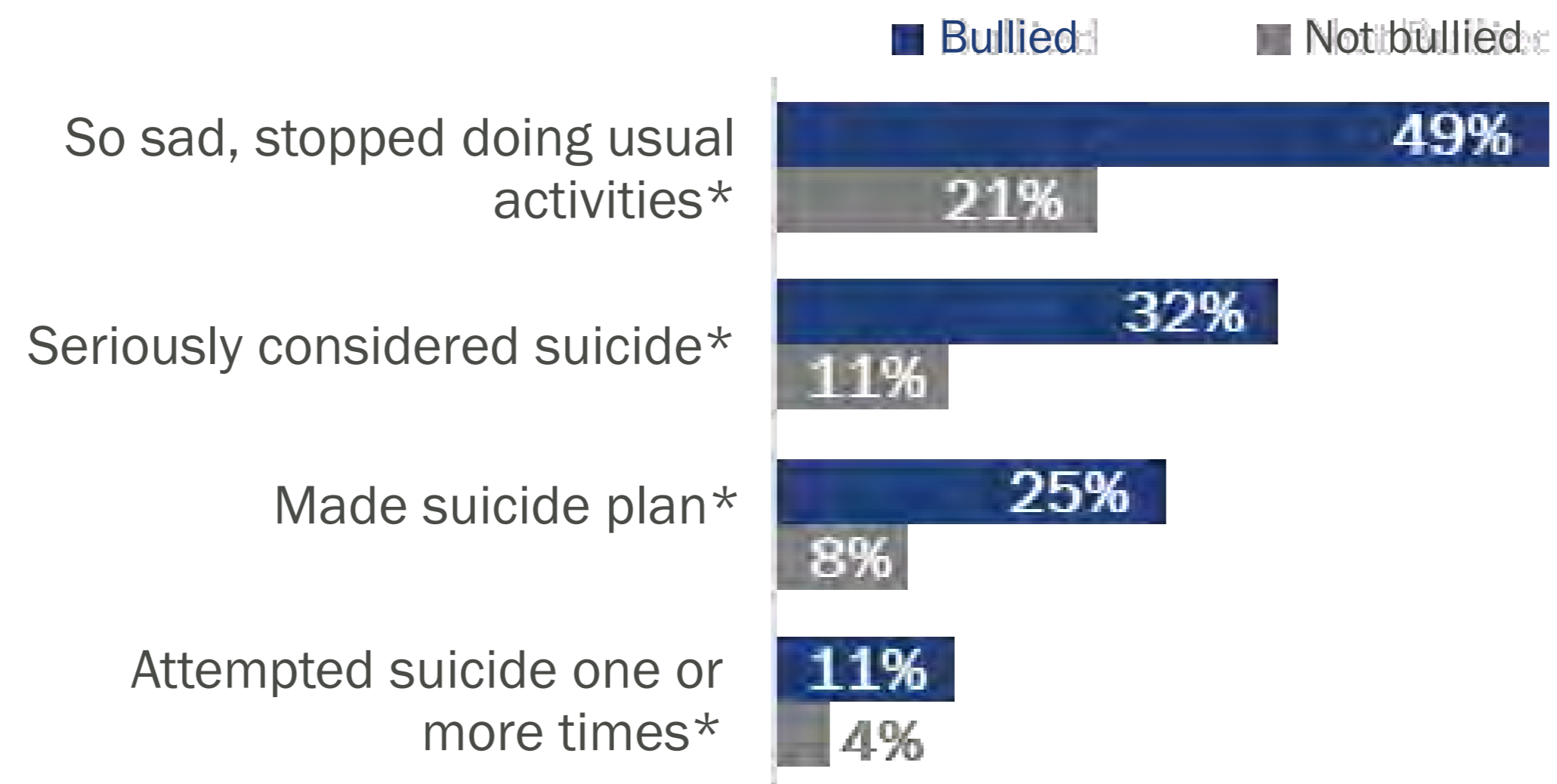|	% County Students with High Depressive Symptoms Who Used Substance at Least Once in Life (2023)	Comparison to % of County Students with No Depressive Symptoms (2023)
Alcohol	**47.4%**	⬆ 3.8x higher
Marijuana	**21.2%**	⬆ 7.1x higher
Cigarettes	**10.9%**	⬆ 18.2x higher

Mental Health

Exhibit 15. Bullying and Suicide Risks

Students who indicated they **had been bullied** in the last 12 months reported **depression and suicide risks** at **higher** proportions than those who had not.

**Students Who Reported Suicide Risks in the County (2023)**

■ Bullied   ■ Not bullied

	Bullied	Not bullied
So sad, stopped doing usual activities*	49%	21%
Seriously considered suicide*	32%	11%
Made suicide plan*	25%	8%
Attempted suicide one or more times*	11%	4%

* in the past year

Gambling

Exhibit 16. Lifetime Gambling

County proportions of students who have **bet/gambled** for money/anything of value **at least once** in their life are trending **downward across all grades.***

County Students Who Have Gambled at Least Once in Their Life

Legend: Grade 6, Grade 8, Grade 10, Grade 12, All Students (years 2019, 2021, 2023)
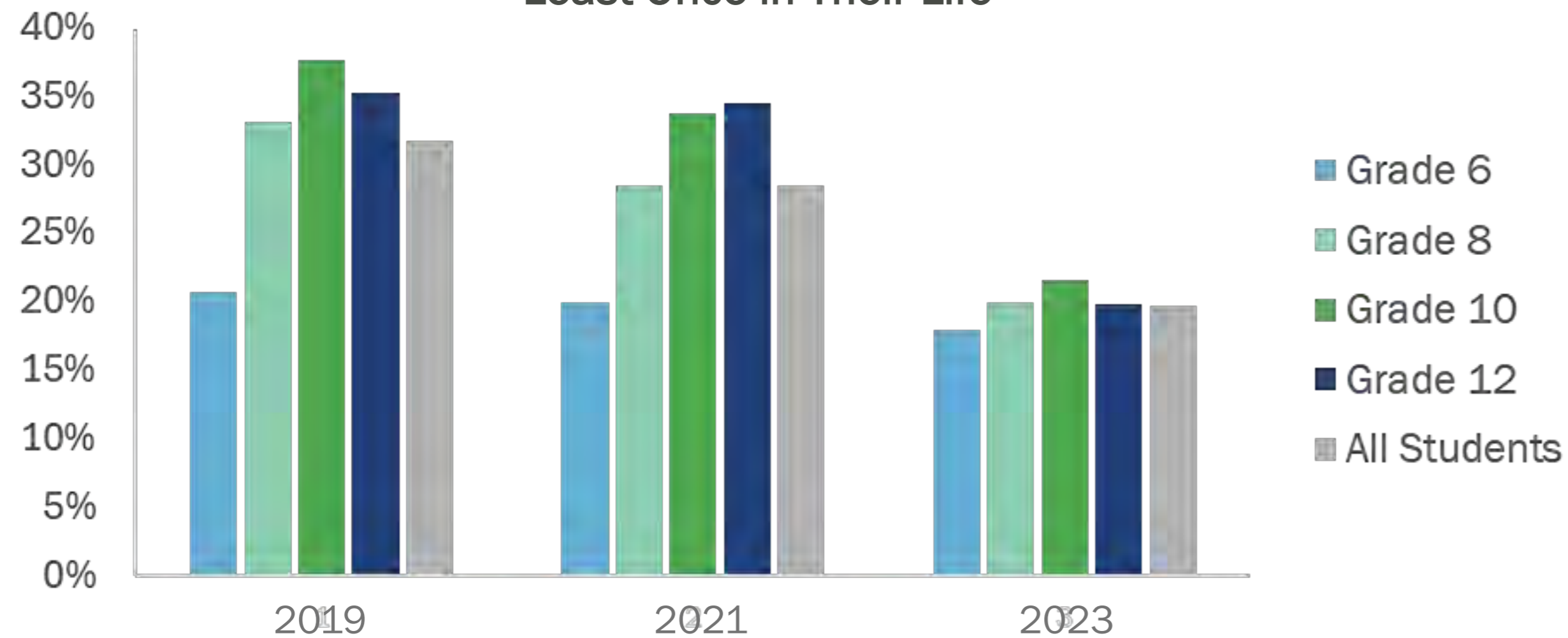
* Lifetime use question shifted from a *how many times frame* in 2021 to a *have you ever frame* in 2023. Response options were revised to: *Never*, *Once or twice*, *Once in a while but not regularly*, *Regularly in the past*, *Regularly now*. This graph represents students who selected any response option indicating they had gambled at least once in their life.

Exhibit 17. Lifetime Gambling by Grade

For most grades in 2023, proportions of students who **gambled at least once** were **lower** than the state, **except for grade 6.**

Students Who Have Gambled at Least Once in Their Life by Grade (2023)

Legend: County %, State % (Grade 6, Grade 8, Grade 10, Grade 12)
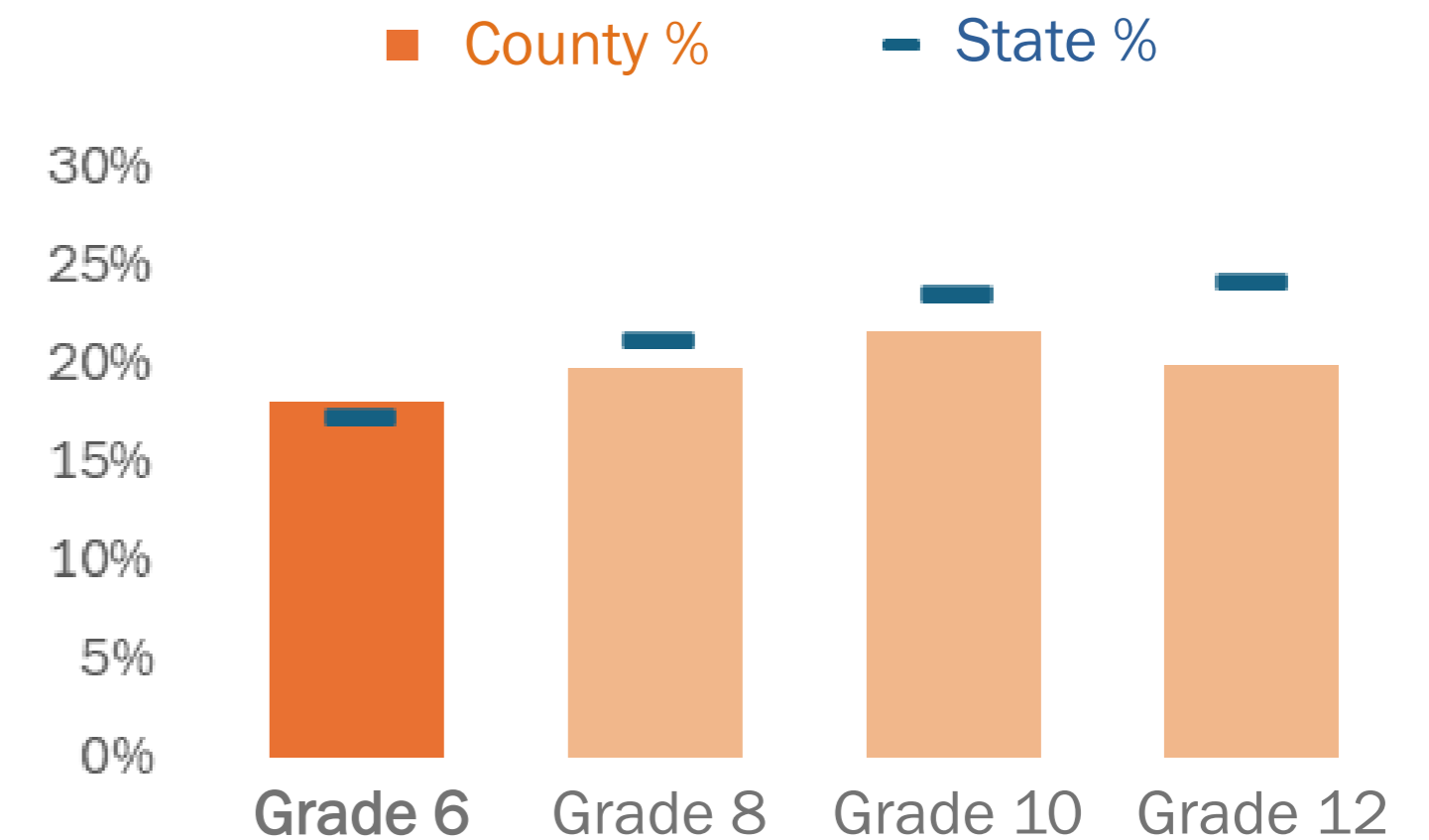
Gambling

Exhibit 18. Types of Gambling

In 2023, county students reported participating in a variety of gambling methods in the last 12 months.
Video games or online games were **most popular.**

7.1%
Video games or online gaming

6.6%
Some other way of gambling

6.3%
Lottery (scratch cards, numbers, etc.)

6.3%
Sporting events, sports pools, or fantasy sports

6.2%
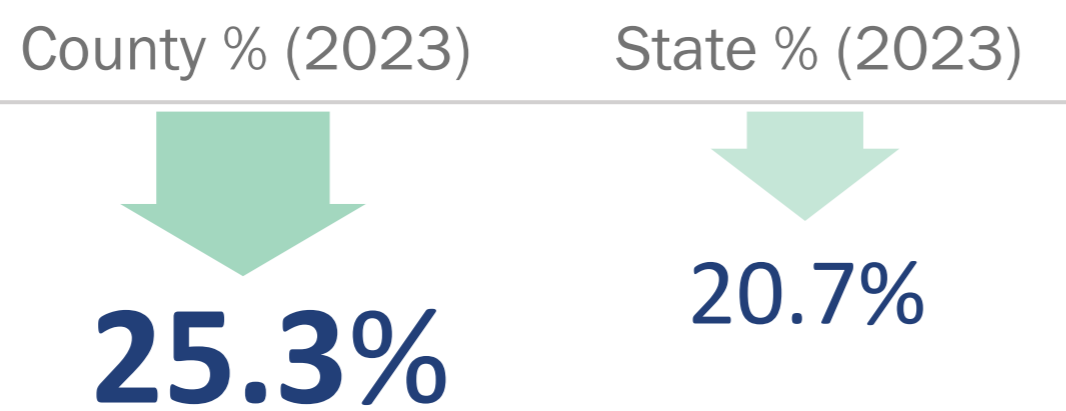Games (cards, pool, darts)

2.9%
Online/internet gambling

For each type of gambling, **county proportions** in 2023 were **similar or lower** than the state.

Indicators of Risk

Exhibit 19. Food Insecurity

In 2023, **a quarter** of students in the county were **worried about running out of food** in the past year, a proportion **higher** than the state.

County % (2023)	State % (2023)
25.3%	20.7%

Proportion of county students who reported **skipping a meal due to family finances** in the past year were also **higher** than the state in 2023.
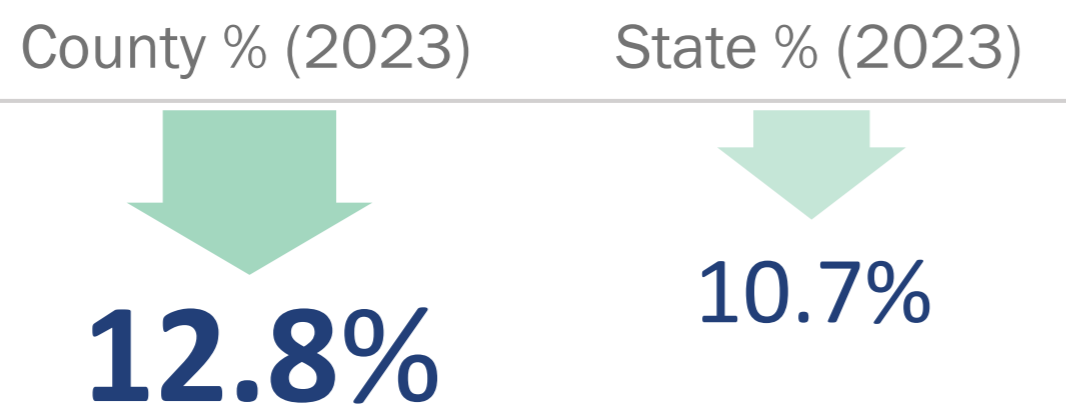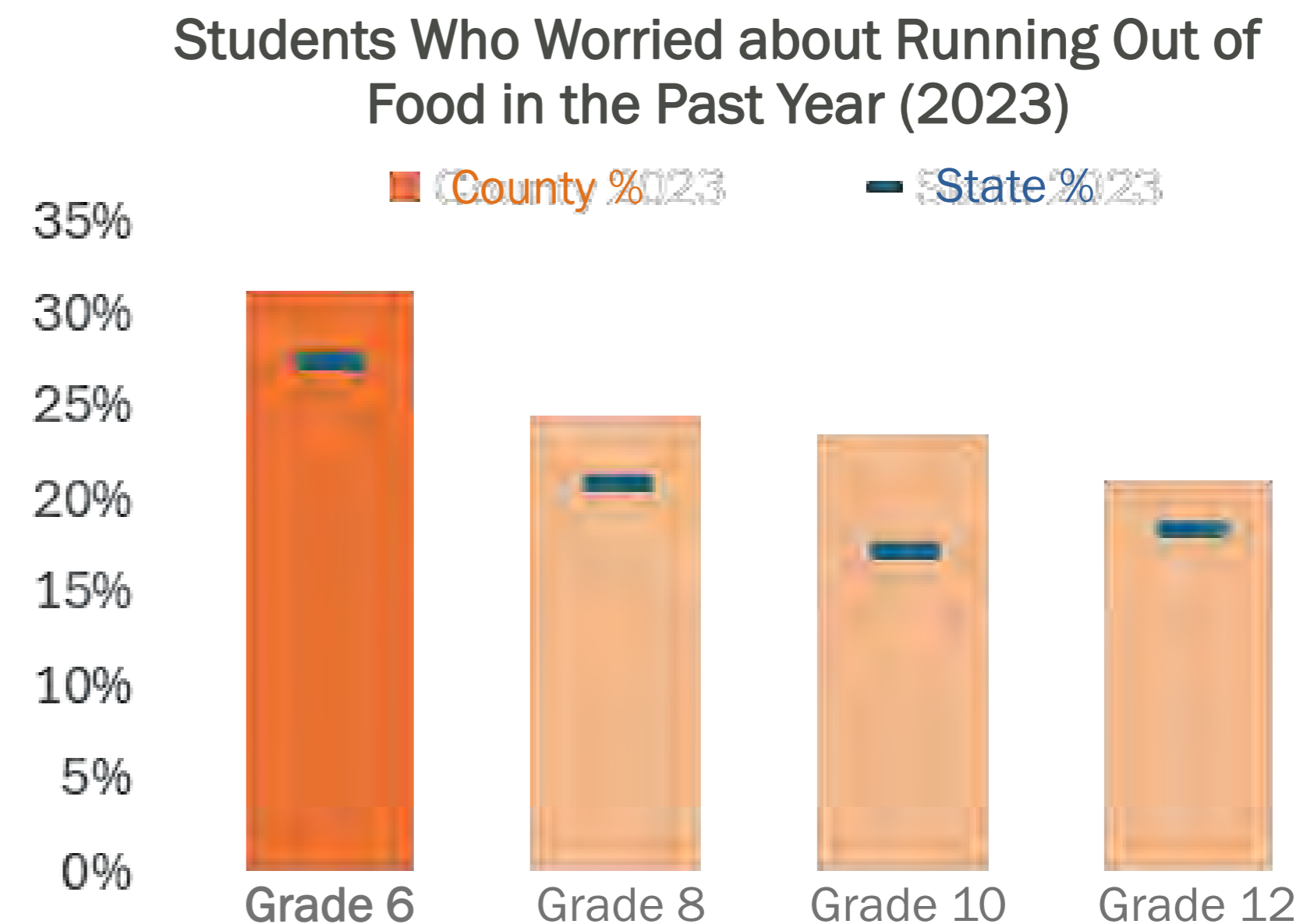
County % (2023)	State % (2023)
12.8%	10.7%

Exhibit 20. Food Insecurity by Grade

In 2023, **Grade 6** had the **highest** proportion of students **worrying about running out of food.**
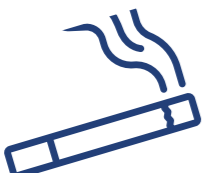
Proportions for **each grade** in the county **exceed** those of the state.

Students Who Worried about Running Out of Food in the Past Year (2023)

Legend: ■ County % 2023   ━ State % 2023

Bar chart showing Grade 6, Grade 8, Grade 10, Grade 12 (y-axis 0% to 35%)

Indicators of Risk

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Exhibit 21. Perception of Risk

Higher proportions of students in the county **perceive** the following activities as **harmful**, compared to 2019:

	County Students Who Perceive Activity as Harmful (2023)	% Diff. from County in 2019	% Diff. from State (2023)
Cigarette Use			
Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	**87.4%**	⬆ 9.3% higher	⬇ 1.6% lower
Alcohol Use			
Take five or more alcoholic drinks once or twice a week	**83.3%**	⬆ 13.2% higher	⬇ 0.6% lower
Take one or two alcoholic drinks nearly every day	**78.5%**	⬆ 14.0% higher	⬇ 1.3% lower
Prescription Drug Use			
Use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to them	**87.8%**	⬆ 7.7% higher	⬇ 1.5% lower
Marijuana Use			
Try marijuana once or twice	**56.5%**	⬆ 15.6% higher	⬆ 1.4% higher
Use marijuana once or twice a week	**73.3%**	⬆ 16.9% higher	⬆ 0.1% higher
Use marijuana regularly	**82.9%**	⬆ 14.5% higher	⬇ 0.4% lower
Vape Use (added to PAYS in 2023)			
Use electronic vapor product once or twice a day	**79.1%**	N/A	⬇ 0.8% lower

Indicators of Risk

Exhibit 22. Perceptions of Peer Disapproval Towards Substance Use

Exhibit 23. Personal Disapproval of Peer Substance Use

Since 2019, **negative attitudes towards marijuana** use have **increased** for **nearly all grades**.

Similarly, **disapproval of peer marijuana use** has **increased** for **all grades**.

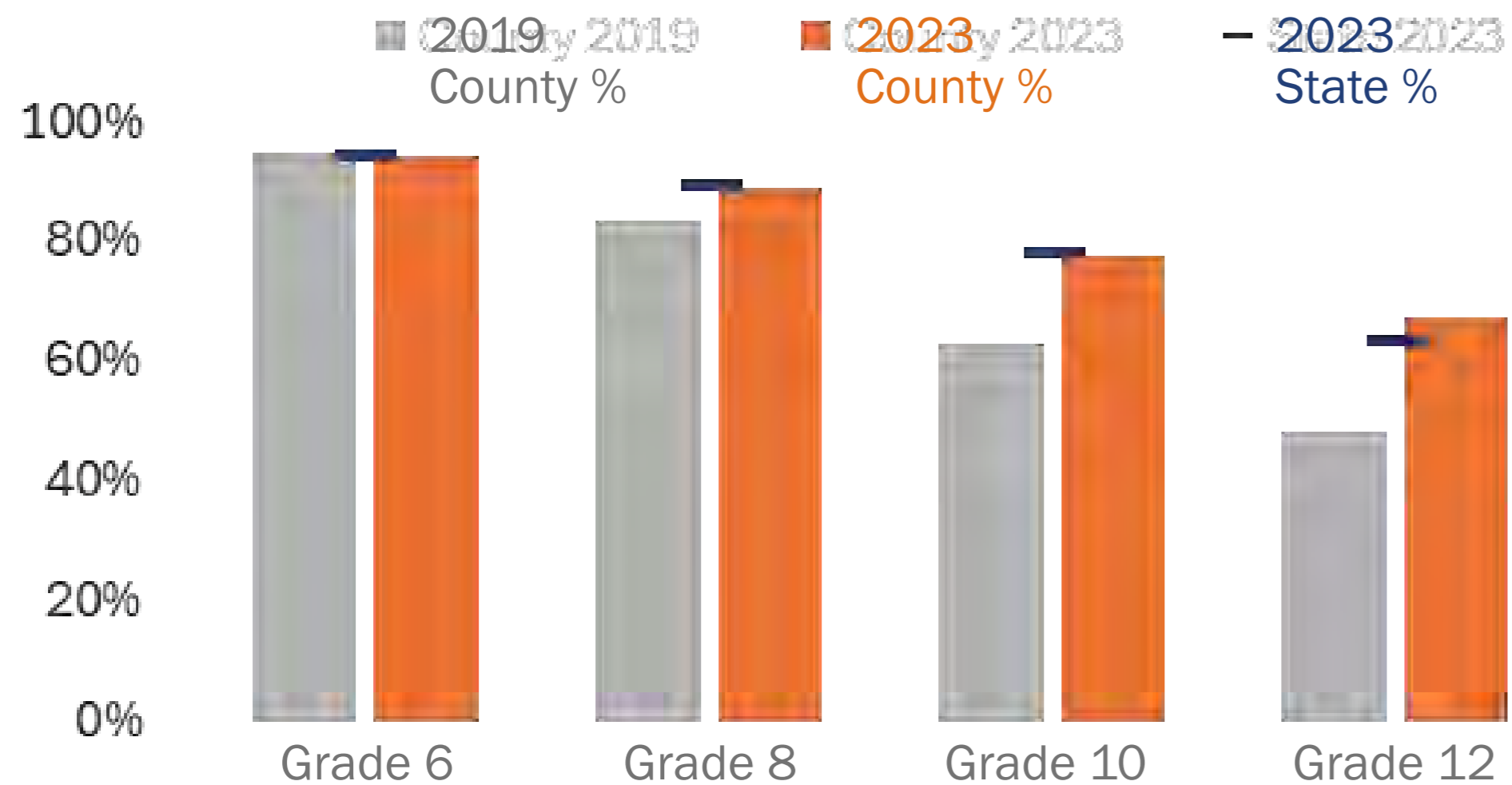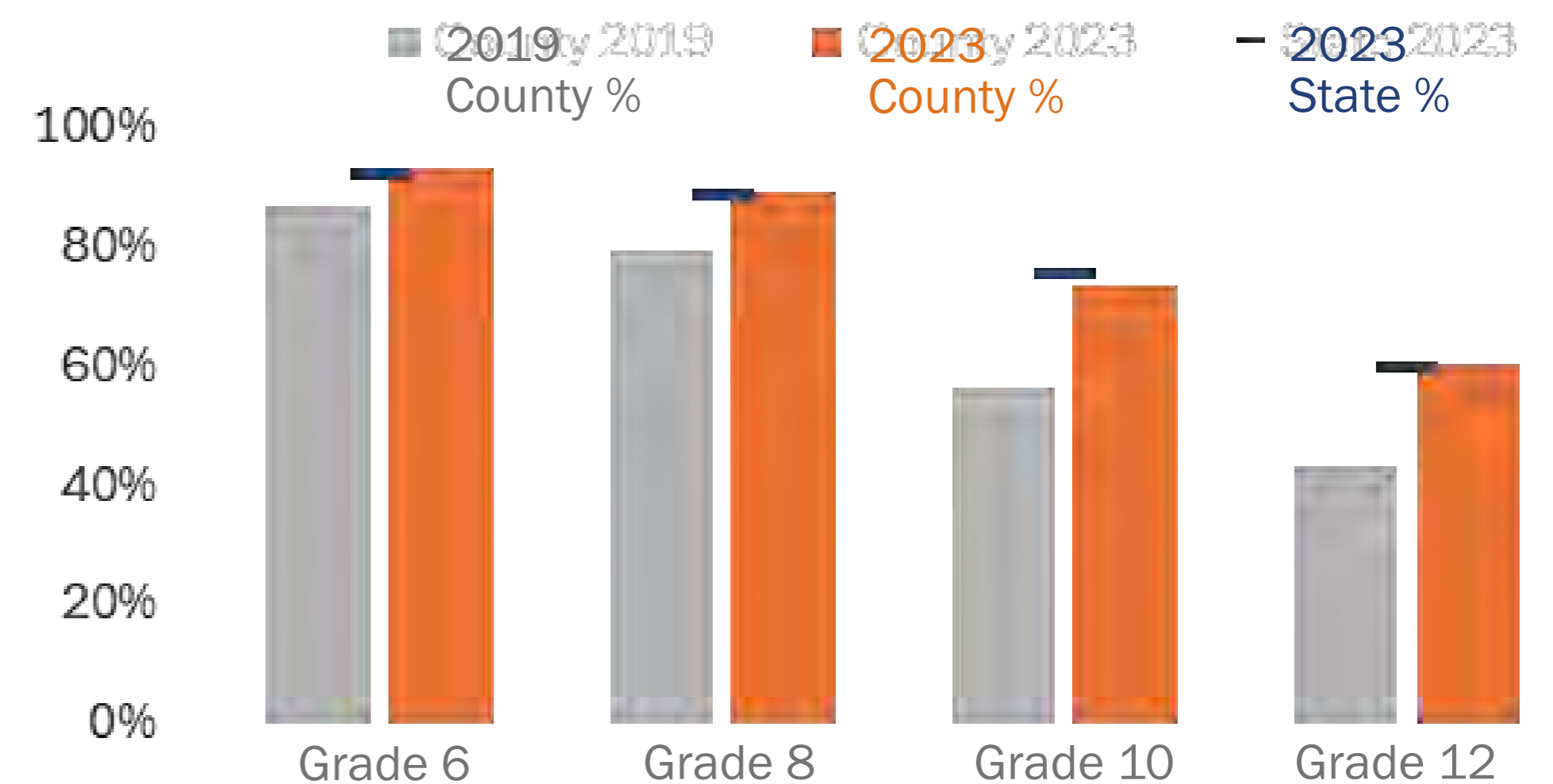### Students Who Reported Negative Attitudes Towards Peer Marijuana Use

Students Who Disapprove of Someone Their Age Using Marijuana Once a Month or More

Indicators of Risk

Exhibit 24. Willingness to Try Substances

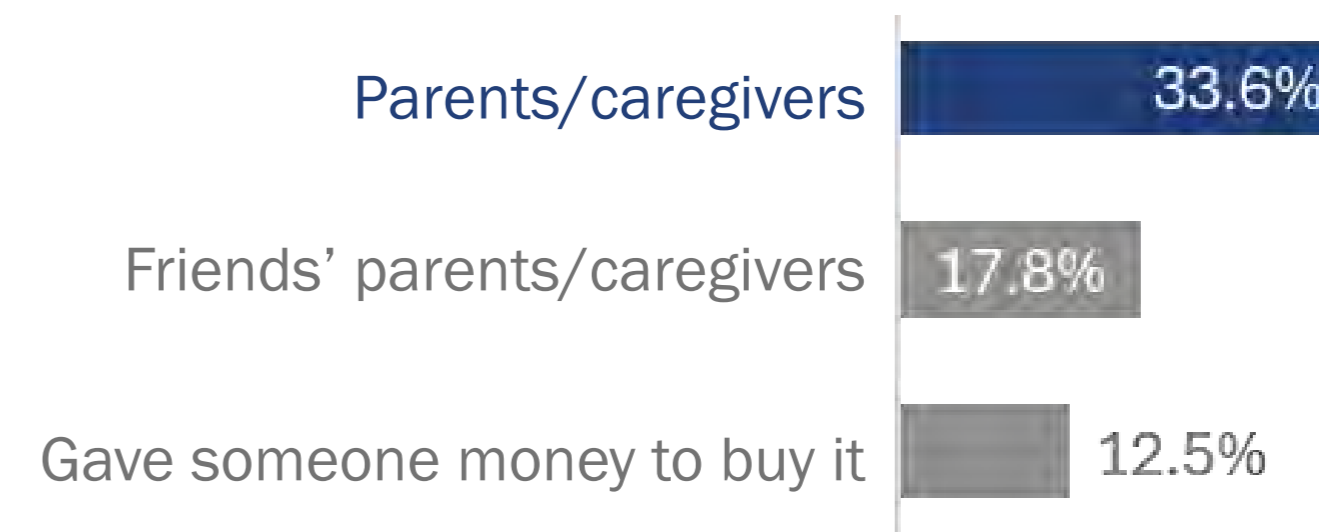**Willingness to try substances** before age 21 has **decreased** among students from **all grades.**

Students in County Who Are Willing to Try Substance Before Age 21 (2023)	% Diff. from County in 2019
Alcohol **12.4%**	⬇ 10.5% lower
Marijuana **6.9%**	⬇ 7.0% lower

Exhibit 25. Sources of Alcohol and Prescription Drugs

Parents/caregivers/family members were the **most common source** of alcohol and prescription drugs in 2023.

Top 3 Sources of Alcohol in County – All Students*

Parents/caregivers	33.6%
Friends' parents/caregivers	17.8%
Gave someone money to buy it	12.5%

Top 3 Sources of Prescription Drugs in County – All Students*

Taken from a family member living at home	56.3%
A friend/family member gave them	53.1%
Taken from other relatives or someone not related	18.8%

*Reported by students who indicated use of the respective substance in the last 12 months. Respondents selected all that applied.

Risk & Protective Factor Scales

Exhibit 26. Highest Risk Factor Scales

Three Highest Risk Factors Among County Students

Low Commitment to School
59% of students are at risk for engaging in problem behaviors due to low commitment to school.

Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior
58% of students are at risk for engaging in problem behaviors due to parental attitudes favorable towards antisocial behavior.
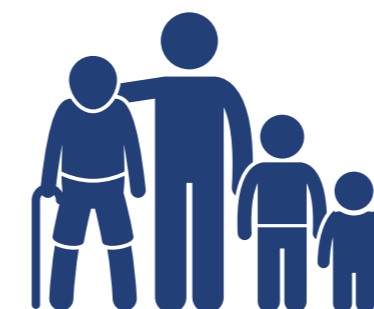
Low Neighborhood Attachment
48% of students are at risk for engaging in problem behaviors due to low neighborhood attachment.

Exhibit 27. Highest Protective Factor Scales

Three Highest Protective Factors Among County Students

Family Attachment
64% of students are protected against engaging in problem behaviors due to family attachment.

Family Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement
62% of students are protected against engaging in problem behaviors due to family opportunities for prosocial involvement.

School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement
53% of students are protected against engaging in problem behaviors due to school opportunity for prosocial involvement.

? Questions?

Thank You.

For more information, please contact:

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Alicia Kline, akline@cocaberks.org

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Deerfield Data Management, LLC
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