

**REPORT ON**  
**THE 2012 YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY**  
**FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 7 AND 8**  
**FOR THE**  
**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

PREPARED BY:

JAMES E. BYRNE, JR. MPA  
NORTHEAST HEALTH RESOURCES  
P.O. Box 1421  
HAVERHILL, MA 01831

JULY 2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY PROCESS	Page 1
OVERVIEW OF MAJOR FINDINGS	Page 2
VEHICLE RELATED SAFETY	Page 2
VIOLENCE RELATED BEHAVIORS	Page 3
SUICIDE	Page 4
TOBACCO USE	Page 5
ALCOHOL USE	Page 6
ILLEGAL DRUG USE	Page 7
HIV/AIDS EDUCATION	Page 8
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR	Page 8
DIETARY BEHAVIOR	Page 9
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Page 10
APPENDIX	Page 11

## **INTRODUCTION**

For the third time the Waltham Public Schools contracted with Northeast Health Resources (NHR) to assist in the design and carry out an overview analysis of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey which had been implemented with students in grades 7 and 8. This survey was based on one which was developed specifically for middle school students at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. The survey contains 66 questions. Students responded to questions which fall under general categories of risk behaviors including: safety, violence, suicide, tobacco use, alcohol use, illegal drug use, HIV/AIDS education, sexual behavior, dietary behavior, and physical activity.

## **SURVEY PROCESS**

It was agreed that the Youth Risk Behavior Survey would be distributed to all students in attendance on the day of the survey from grades 7 and 8. Parents were informed in advance of the survey and seven students were withheld at parental request. The survey was implemented on May 23, 2012 and was administered simultaneously to all students by classroom teachers. Teachers were provided with written instructions which were read to all students before taking the survey.

Once all of the surveys were completed, they were gathered and tabulated. There were a total of 599 students who responded to the survey, 309 from grade 7 and 283 from grade 8. There were 295 females and 303 males who responded to the survey. One student did not indicate her/his gender and seven students did not indicate their grade.

## **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Frequencies of responses are reported for all items in the survey and cross-tabulations are provided for three demographic characteristics: grade, gender, and grade/gender. The results of the survey, including all cross-tabulations, are presented in percentages under separate cover. Please note that the data results were tabulated in percentages, rounded to the nearest tenth of one percent and not all percentages will total exactly 100 due to rounding and no responses in some cases.

## OVERVIEW OF MAJOR FINDINGS

There is much important and relevant information to be found in an analysis of the tabulations of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey as taken by students from the Waltham Public Schools. This is true when one looks at the tabulations of all students taken as a group, and is especially so when one looks at the cross-tabulations by grade and gender.

With students having responded to 66 questions, much can be said about the responses to each of those questions. However, it is not the intention here to discuss the results of each question. Rather, it is the intention of this report to highlight certain of the results and to offer comparisons by grade and gender as well as with the results from the 2010 Waltham Middle School YRBS. It is hoped that the following as well as a more detailed analysis of the results of this survey, will assist the Waltham Public Schools and their Health Advisory Committee in their on-going development of health education curriculum.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL – GRADES 7 AND 8

### VEHICLE RELATED SAFETY

- **10.2%** of all respondents (10.7% - 2010) report “never” or “rarely” wearing a seatbelt when riding in a car. There was no variation by grade but the incidence was higher among males (females – 8.0%, males – 12.5%).
- **Nearly half (48.1%) of all respondents (59.0% - 2010) report that they “never” or “rarely” wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.** There was no variation by grade, while male respondents (58.0%) report lack of bicycle helmet use much more frequently than females (38.0%).
- **23.4%** of all respondents (23.5% - 2010) report having ever ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol (grade 7 – 18.8%, grade 8 – 28.1%). The incidence of this experience was higher among female respondents (females – 26.2%, males – 20.3%).

VIOLENCE RELATED BEHAVIORS

- **2.7%** of all respondents (2.4% - 2010) **report having carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property on at least one occasion during the thirty days prior to the survey.** There was no variation by grade or gender.
- **8.5%** of all respondents (6.2% - 2010) **report not going to school because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on the way to or from school, at least once during the thirty days prior to the survey.** The incidence of this behavior was higher in grade 7 (grade 7 – 9.7%, grade 8 – 6.7%) and among females (females – 9.8%, males – 7.3%).
- **More than two-fifths (41.5%)** of all respondents (43.2% - 2010) **report having been bullied at school at least once during the 12 months prior to the survey.** Female respondents report being bullied more frequently than males.

**“During the past 12 months, how many times have you been bullied at school?”**

**“At least once.”**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2010</u> <u>Total</u>
<b>Grade</b>				
7	49.3%	38.5%	43.7%	42.7%
8	45.8%	31.9%	39.0%	43.4%
<b>Total</b>	47.6%	35.2%	41.5%	43.2%

- **One respondent in five (19.4%)** (16.7% - 2010) **reports having hurt or injured themselves on purpose (for example cutting, burning or bruising) at least once during the 12 months prior to the survey** (grade 7 – 17.2%, grade 8 – 21.6%). Female respondents (27.6%) report such self-injury much more frequently than males (11.2%).
- **24.5%** of all respondents (20.0% - 2010) **report ever meeting someone in person who they initially met over the internet.** The incidence of this behavior was much higher in grade 8 (grade 7 – 18.9%, grade 8 – 30.6%) and slightly higher among males (females – 22.9%, males – 25.8%).
- **17.7%** of all respondents (18.1% - 2010) **report having been threatened, humiliated, or experienced hostile behaviors from others through electronic communication in any form during the previous 12 months** (grade 7 – 19.2%, grade 8 – 16.6%). The incidence of being cyber-bullied was higher among females (females – 22.4%, males – 13.2%).

SUICIDE

- **18.9%** of all respondents (14.0% - 2010) **report having seriously thought about committing suicide during the 12 months prior to the survey** and **10.5%** (7.3% - 2010) **report having made a plan to do so**. The incidence of students reporting having seriously considered suicide varied very little by grade but was much higher among females (females – 26.5%, males – 11.6%).
- **4.4%** of all respondents (4.6% - 2010) **report having actually tried to commit suicide during the previous 12 months**. The incidence of this behavior was higher among female respondents, especially those in grade 7.

**“During the past 12 months, did you actually try to kill yourself?”**

**“Yes”**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2010</u> <u>Total</u>
<b>Grade</b>				
7	8.1%	2.5%	5.2%	4.6%
8	4.2%	2.9%	3.5%	4.7%
<b>Total</b>	6.1%	2.7%	4.4%	4.6%

TOBACCO USE

- **One-fifth (19.4%)** of all respondents (19.8% - 2010) **report having ever tried cigarette smoking** (even one or two puffs) and **4.3%** of all respondents **report having smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before the age of 12**. The incidence of those having ever tried cigarette smoking was higher in grade 8 (grade 7 – 15.9%, grade 8 – 23.3%) and higher among male respondents (females – 16.3%, males – 22.4%).
- **5.7%** of all respondents (9.7% - 2010) **report having smoked cigarettes on at least one occasion during the thirty days prior to the survey**. This recent cigarette use was higher in grade 8, especially among males.

**“During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?”**

**“At least once”**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2010</u> <u>Total</u>
<b>Grade</b>				
7	4.7%	2.5%	3.6%	12.5%
8	3.4%	10.9%	7.1%	7.2%
<b>Total</b>	4.4%	7.0%	5.7%	9.7%

- **5.4%** among all respondents (8.3% - 2010) **report having smoked cigars, cigarillos, or little cigars on at least one occasion during the thirty days prior to the survey**. There was little variation by grade or gender (females – 4.4%, males – 6.3%).

## ALCOHOL USE

- **30.4%** of all respondents (32.9% - 2010) **report having ever had a drink of alcohol, other than a few sips and other than for religious reasons.** By grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade respondents (35.7%) were more likely to have ever done so (grade 7 – 25.2%) (females – 29.0%, males – 31.5%). Further, **9.2%** of all respondents (13.0% - 2010) **report having had their first drink of alcohol before the age of 12.**
- **14.5%** of all respondents (16.5% - 2010) **report having had at least one drink of alcohol at least once during the thirty days prior to the survey.** The incidence of recent alcohol use was higher in grade 8 (grade 7 – 10.1%, grade 8 – 19.4%) but there was little variation by gender (females – 13.6%, males – 15.6%).



ILLEGAL DRUG USE

- **One respondent in nine (11.4%) (12.7% - 2010) reports having ever used marijuana.** The incidence of this behavior was higher in grade 8 (grade 7 – 9.2%, grade 8 – 13.8%) and among males (females – 9.2%, males – 13.6%). Further **7.7%** of all respondents (8.5% - 2010) **report having used marijuana at least once during the thirty days prior to the survey.**
- **2.7%** of all respondents (3.3% - 2010) **report having ever tried any form of cocaine.** There was no variation by grade or gender.
- **7.2%** of all respondents (13.0% - 2010) **report having ever sniffed glue, or breathed the contents of spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high.** Female respondents were most likely to have ever done so. Further, **7.0%** (9.9% - 2010) **report doing so during the previous 30 days.**

**“Have you ever sniffed glue, or breathed the contents of spray cans or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high?”**

**“Yes”**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2010</u> <u>Total</u>
<b>Grade</b>				
7	8.7%	6.9%	7.8%	15.0%
8	10.4%	2.9%	6.7%	11.2%
<b>Total</b>	9.5%	5.0%	7.2%	13.0%

- **6.3%** of all respondents (6.2% - 2010) **report having been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property at least once during the twelve months prior to the survey.** The incidence of this experience was higher in grade 8 (grade 7 – 3.6%, grade 8 – 8.5%). There was no variation by gender.

## HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

- **Three-quarters (75.3%)** of all respondents (74.5% - 2010) **report having ever been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school** (grade 7 – 66.7%, grade 8 – 85.2%). There was little variation by gender.
- **60.6%** of all respondents (57.9% - 2010) **report having not had a conversation with their parents or other adults in their family about sexuality or ways to prevent HIV infection, other STD's or pregnancy during the 12 months prior to the survey.** There was no variation by grade and there was little variation by gender.

## SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

- **9.3%** of all respondents (11.5% - 2010) **report having ever had sexual intercourse.** The incidence of this behavior was slightly higher in grade 8 and among males. Further, **3.4%** (2.7% - 2010) **report having done so for the first time before the age of 12.**

**“Have you ever had sexual intercourse?”**

**“Yes”**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2010</u> <u>Total</u>
<b>Grade</b>				
7	4.7%	9.4%	7.2%	10.7%
8	9.1%	11.7%	10.4%	12.3%
<b>Total</b>	7.2%	11.0%	9.3%	11.5%

## DIETARY BEHAVIOR

- **While half (51.9%) of all respondents described themselves as being at about the right weight, 54.3% (48.4% - 2010) were trying to lose weight and 10.4% were trying to gain weight.** Females (65.6%) were much more likely to be trying to lose weight than were males (43.2%).
  
- During the previous 30 days, in order to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight:
  - **69.7%** of all respondents (67.3% - 2010) **report having exercised.** (females – 72.4%, males – 66.9%)
  
  - **40.6%** of all respondents (38.7% - 2010) **report having eaten less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat.** (females – 49.5%, males – 31.8%)
  
  - **9.7%** of all respondents (7.4% - 2010) **report having gone without eating for 24 hours or more.** (females – 12.9%, males – 6.6%)
  
  - **2.8%** of all respondents (2.7% - 2010) **report having taken diet pills, powders, or liquids without a doctor’s advice.** (females – 3.4%, males – 2.3%)
  
  - **3.5%** of all respondents (2.7% - 2010) **report having vomited or taken laxatives.** (females – 4.8%, males – 2.3%)
  
- **47.3%** of all respondents (43.7% - 2010) **report eating breakfast on all seven days during the week prior to the survey** (grade 7 – 44.9%, grade 8 – 49.6%). Male respondents (51.7%) report eating breakfast on all seven days more frequently than females (42.7%). Further, **10.3%** (10.6% - 2010) **report having not eaten breakfast at all during the previous week.**

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- **Nearly four respondents in five (79.1%) (74.3% - 2010) report having exercised or participated in physical activity for at least 20 minutes on at least three days during the seven days prior to the survey** (grade 7 – 81.2%, grade 8 – 77.4%). Male respondents (84.2%) report such regular exercise more frequently than females (73.8%).
- **32.9%** of all respondents (36.5% - 2010) **report that they watch television 3 hours or more per day on an average school day.** The incidence of this behavior was higher among eighth graders (grade 7 – 29.4%, grade 8 – 36.4%) while there was no variation by gender.

**APPENDIX**

**TO THE REPORT ON THE**

**2012 YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY**

**FOR THE**

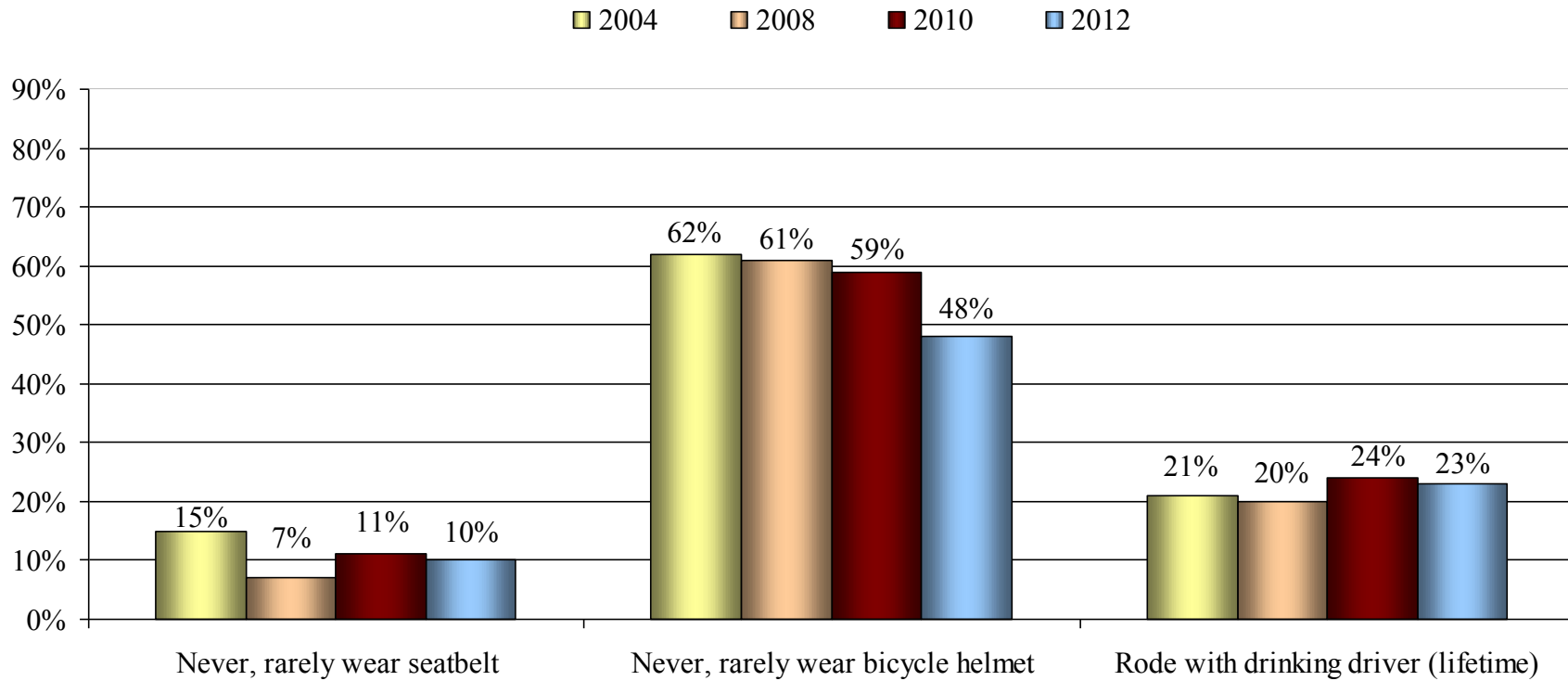
**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**(GRADES 7 AND 8)**

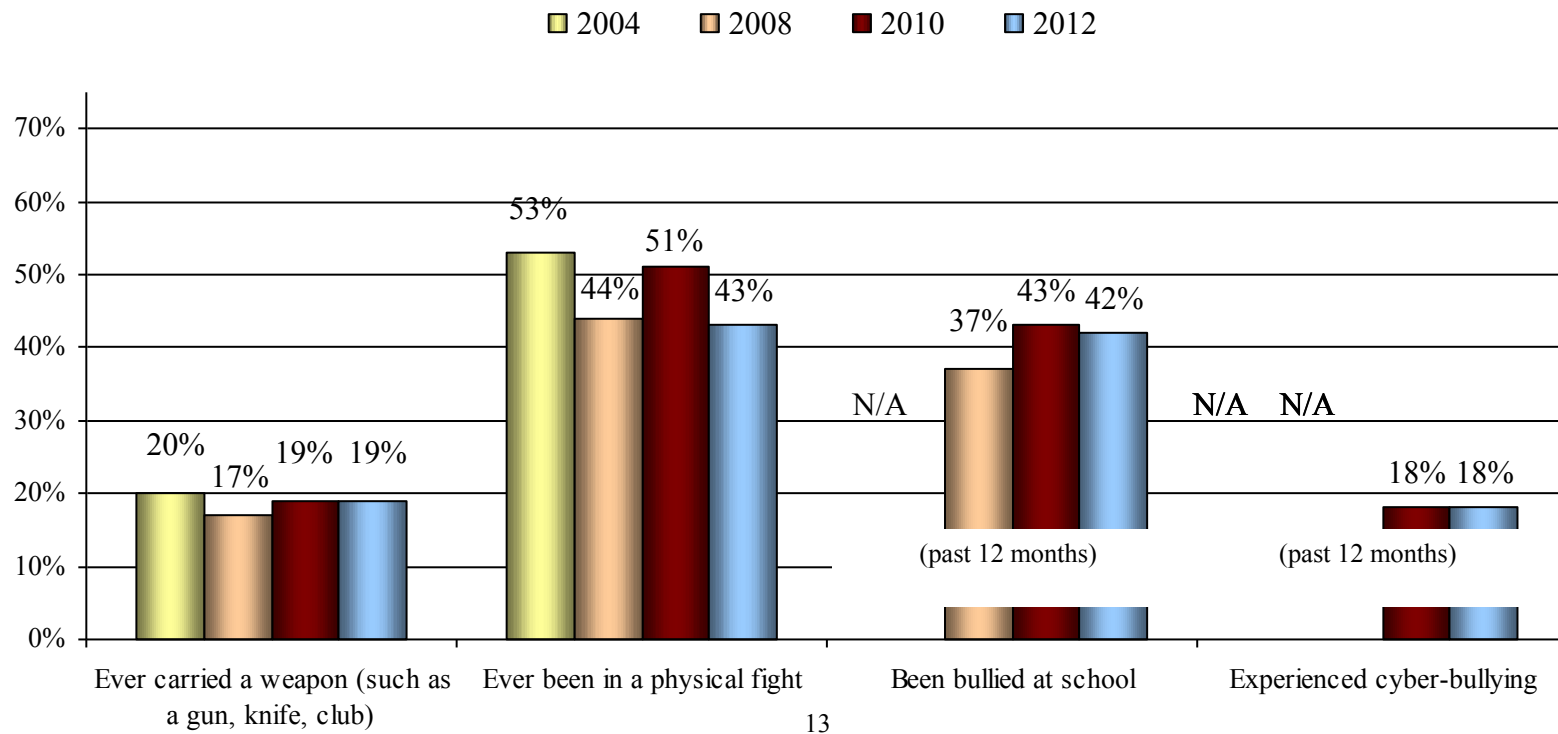
**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7 & 8 COMBINED)**

**VEHICLE RELATED SAFETY**



**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7 & 8 COMBINED)**

**VIOLENCE RELATED BEHAVIORS**

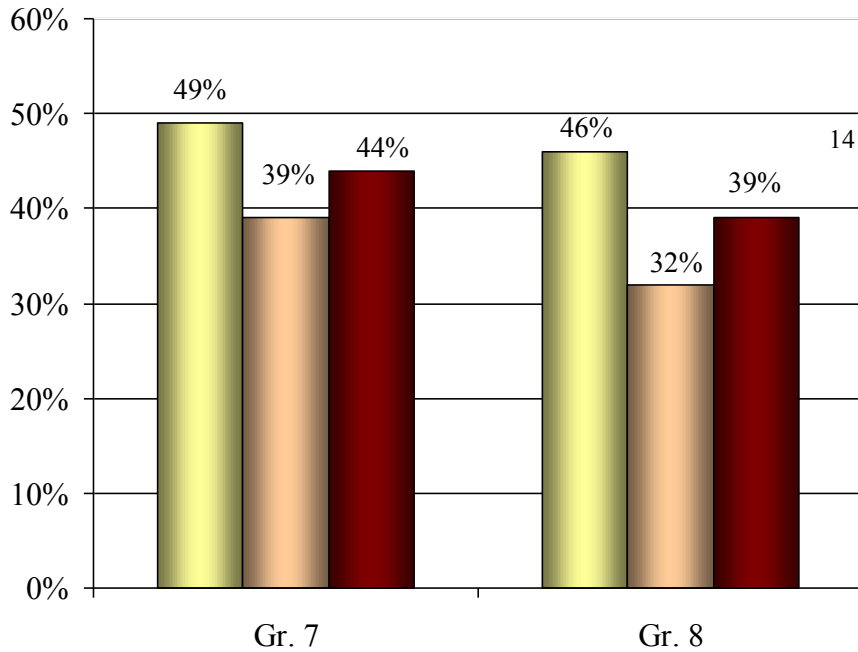


**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**VIOLENCE RELATED BEHAVIORS**

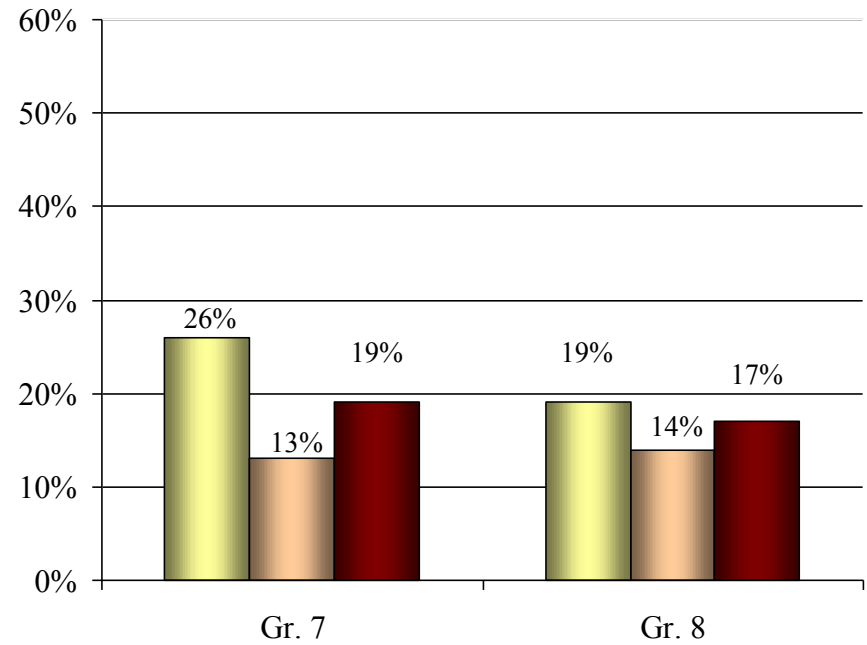
Been bullied at school  
(past 12 months)

Female Male Total



Experienced cyber-bullying  
(past 12 months)

Female Male Total

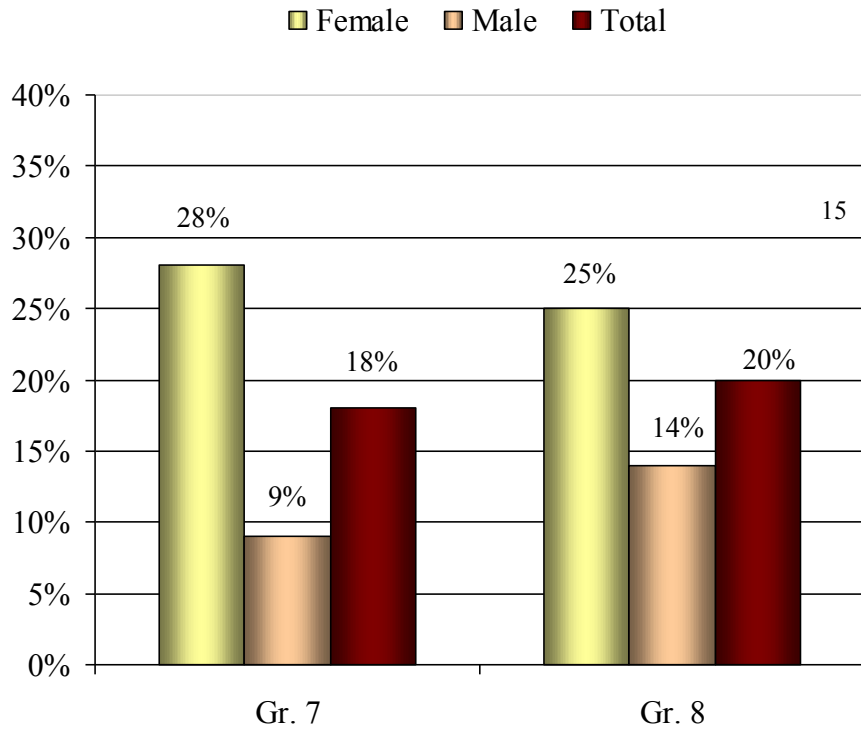




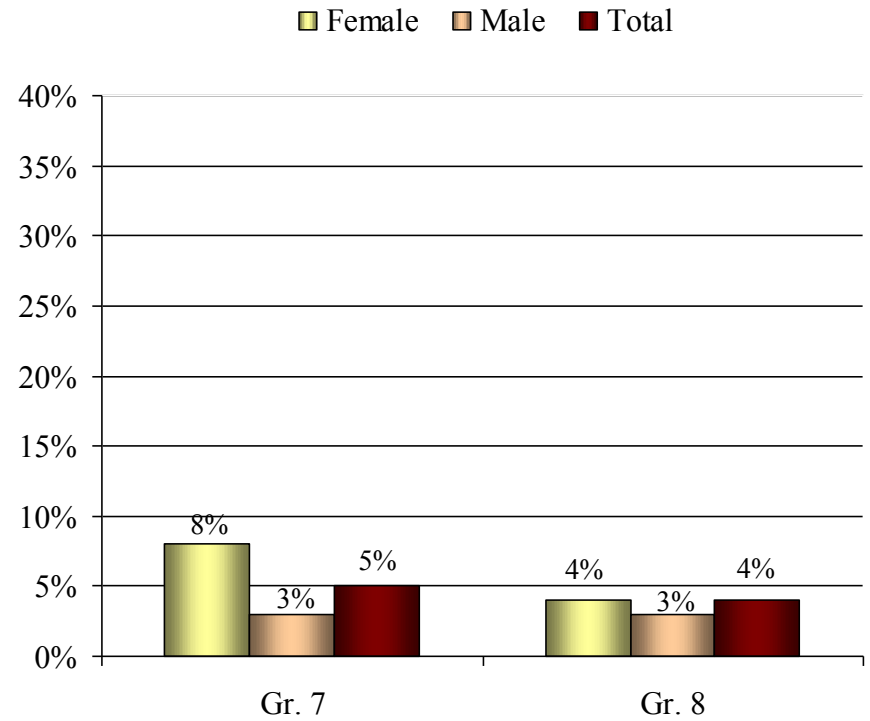
**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**SUICIDE**

Seriously thought about killing yourself  
(past 12 months)

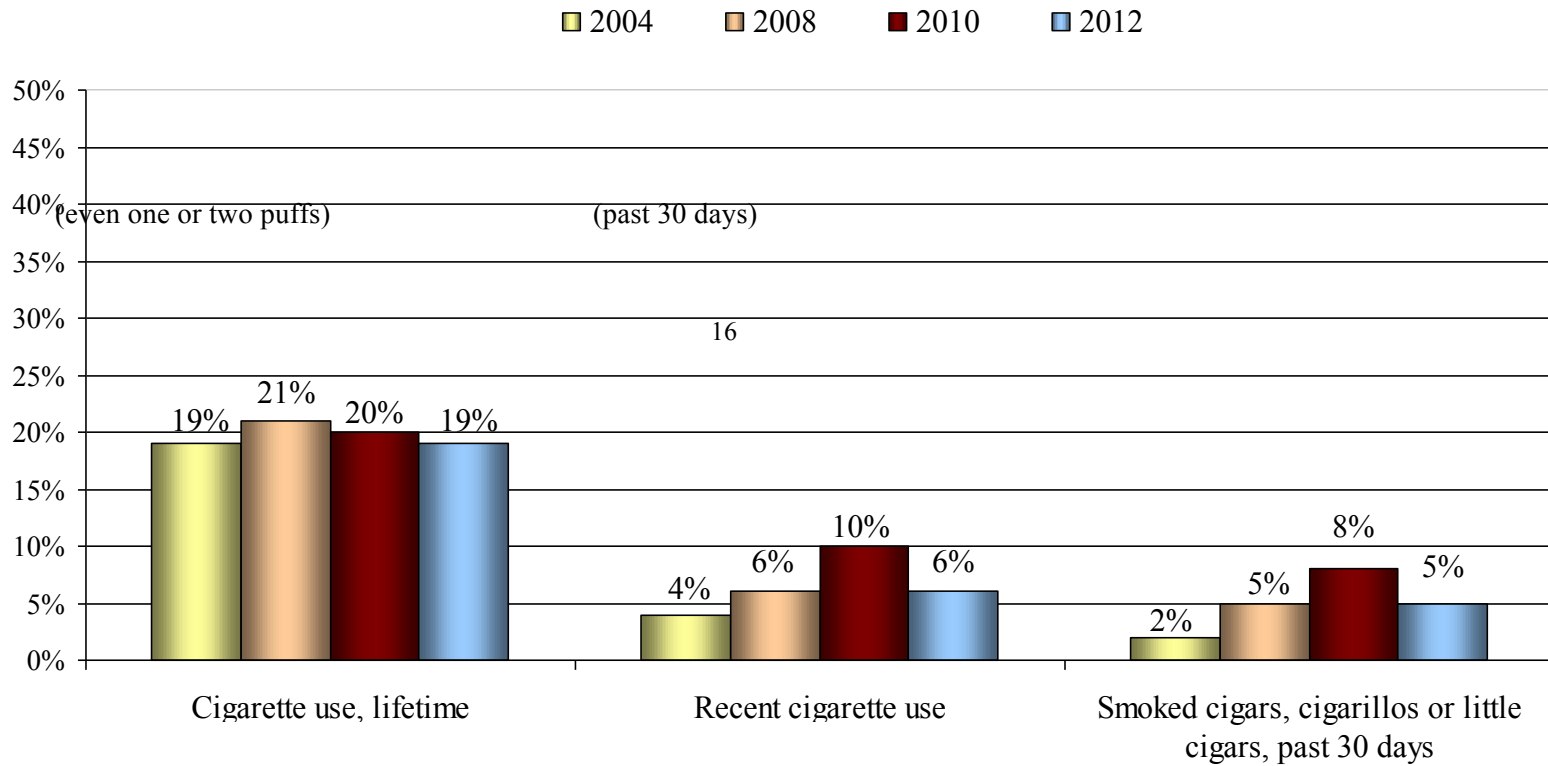


Tried to kill yourself  
(past 12 months)



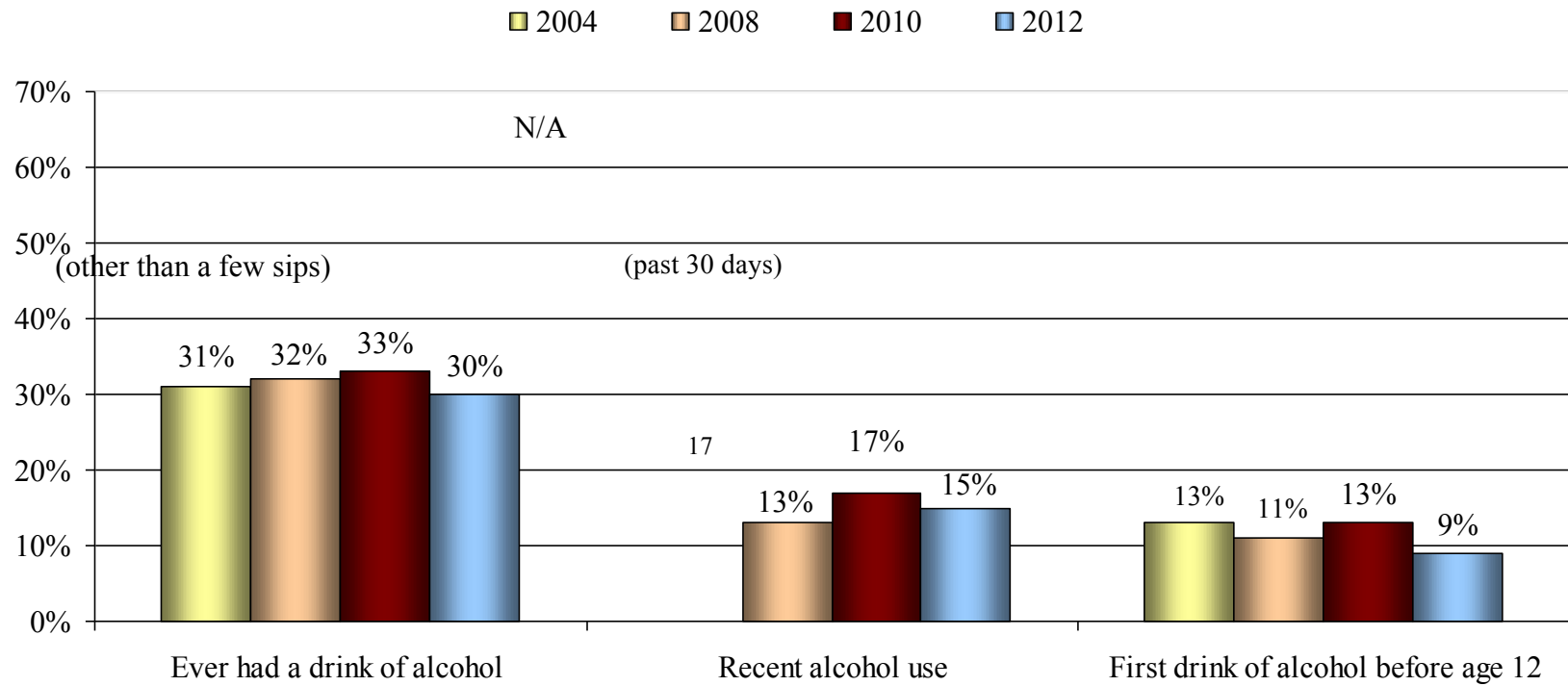
**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7 & 8 COMBINED)**

**TOBACCO USE**



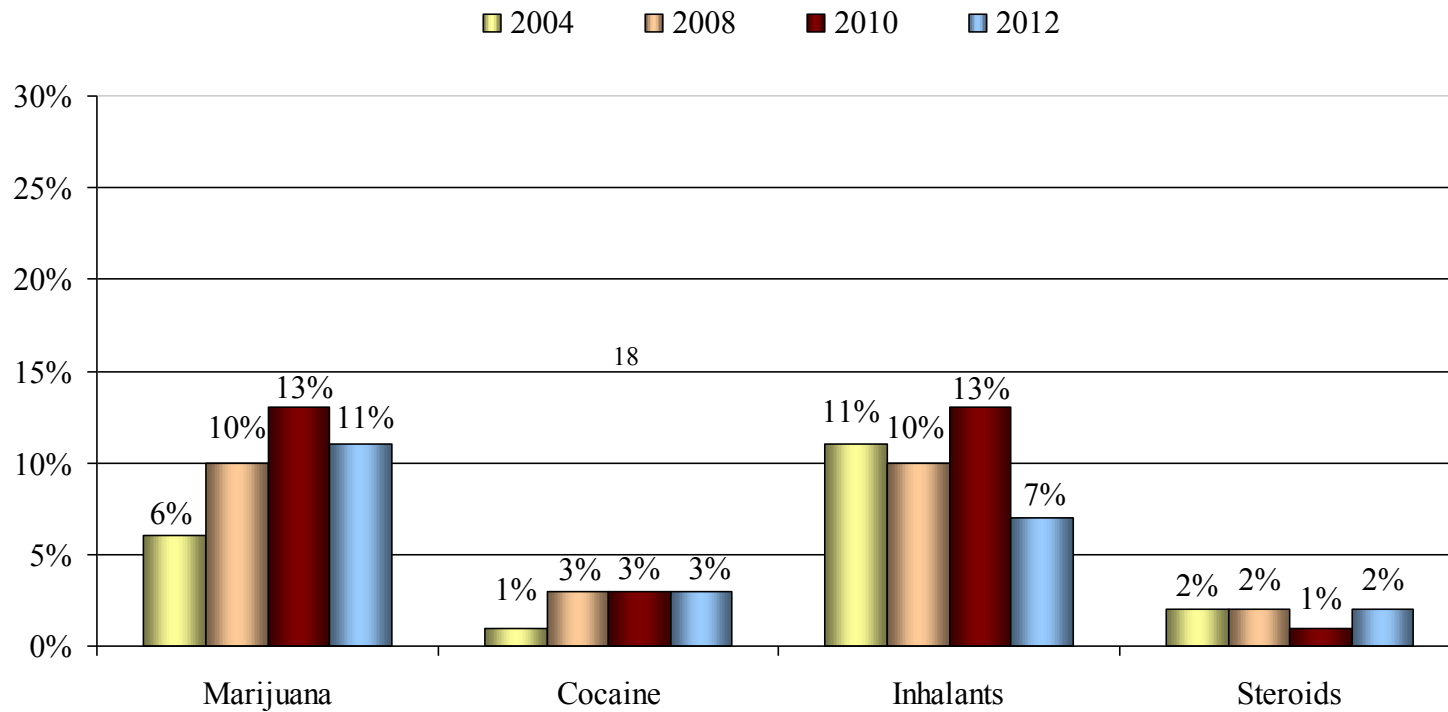
**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7 & 8 COMBINED)**

**ALCOHOL USE**



**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7 & 8 COMBINED)**

**ILLEGAL DRUG USE  
LIFETIME USE**



**WALTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2012 YRBS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 7 & 8 COMBINED)**

**SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

