

# Charlotte-Mecklenburg Youth Risk Behavior Survey



Summary Data and Trend Report  
High School Students

2021



MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
North Carolina

Public Health

# 2021 Charlotte Mecklenburg Youth Risk Behavior Survey

## Introduction

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), produced by the Centers for Disease Control and conducted every two years, assesses health risk behaviors that contribute to some of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in youth.

The survey measures behaviors such as: unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco, alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies; nutrition; and physical activity. The YRBS also measures self-reported height and weight to allow calculation of body mass index.

## Methodology

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Youth Risk Behavior S is conducted every two years during odd-numbered years. Typically, the survey occurs during the spring (January–June) and is given to grades 9–12 students enrolled in district public and charter schools.

### COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 CMS YRBS administration was postponed until the first week of December 2021 and was administered electronically instead of in-person paper surveys. Additionally, the shift to virtual and hybrid school instructional models and ongoing school closures during the height of the pandemic created unique challenges during survey administration. Based on these changes, comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data but may be a result of differences in methodology and data collection methods.

### New Questions for 2021

Several new questions were added to the local CMS survey in 2015. New questions that were asked included:

- Access to guns
- Mental Health
- Screen time (TV, computer, phone, etc.) outside of schoolwork
- Schoolwork during COVID 19 pandemic

The complete list of questions can be found on page 10 of this report.

## Demographic Profiles

The first YRBS was administered in 2005 and included 18 high schools in the county. While participation varies from year to year, the survey has expanded. The 2021 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS was administered in 24 schools to 1,452 high school students.

<b>Characteristics of Students Participating in Charlotte-Mecklenburg High School YRBS</b> <b>Total Number of Student Surveyed 1,452</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Weighted Percentage</b>
Male	726	50.4%
Female	717	49.6%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Asian	93	6.2%
Black	482	38.2%
Hispanic/Latino	379	25.9%
White	405	26.6%
All other races	4	0.2%
Multiple races	77	2.9%
<b>Grade</b>		
9th	496	31.2%
10th	408	25.9%
11th	288	21.9%
12th	254	20.6%
Ungraded or other grade	4	0.3%
<b>Age Group</b>		
≤ 15 years	736	46.2%
16-17 years	622	46.2%
≥ 18 years	89	7.6%

## Trends for Select Health Indicators

### 2021 Positive Trends



- The percentage of teens reporting being involved in a physical fight decreased from 32% in 2011 to 24% in 2019.
- Physical fighting decreased from 26% in 2013 to 17% in 2021.
- Cigarette smoking continues to decline among students, from 10% in 2013 to approximately 3% in 2021.
- Approximately 16% of students report currently using an electronic vapor product in 2019, a decrease from 30% in 2021.
- Binge drinking among teens decreased between from 17% in 2013 to 8% 2021.
- Teens reporting ever having sexual intercourse has steadily decreased from 46% in 2013 to 25% in 2021.

### 2021 Areas for Improvement



- Students who reported not going to school because they felt unsafe increased from 7% in 2013 to 21% in 2021.
- Approximately 43% of teens reported not doing some regular activities during the past year because they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row, an increase from 29% in 2013.
- Approximately 75% of teens reported spending 3 or more hours per day on screen time (TV, computer, phone, or other electronic device) not counting schoolwork on an average school day.
- The percentage of teens who reported that their teachers really care about them and give them a lot of encouragement decreased from 52% in 2011 to almost 39% in 2021.

# Charlotte-Mecklenburg HIGH SCHOOL Students

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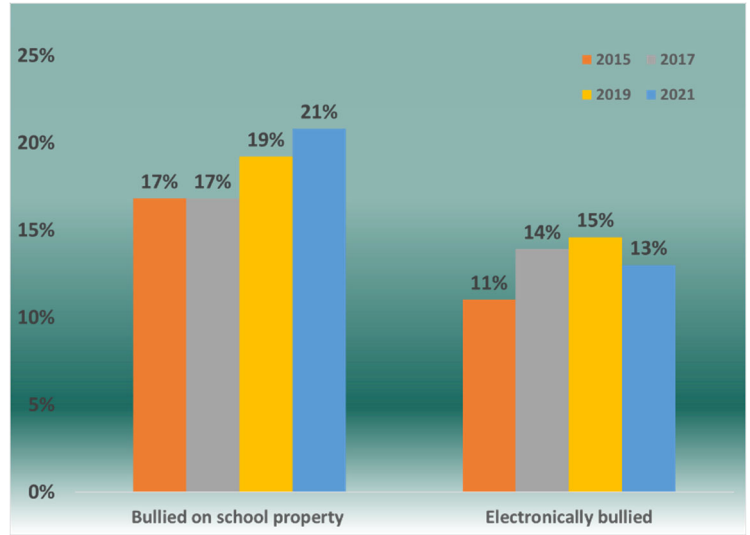


### Bullying on School Property

Bullying has been defined as any unwanted aggressive behavior by another youth or group of youths that involves a perceived power imbalance that is likely to be repeated. It is the most reported discipline problem in public schools. About 15% of high school students reported being bullied on school property nationwide.

- The percentage of teens who reported being bullied on school property decreased from 19% to around 11%.
- About 13% of high school students reported of being electronically bullied.
- Over a third of students report having seen other students being bullied in their school.

Figure 1. Bullying and Harassment



### Bullying and Harassment

	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Been bullied on school property <sup>3</sup>	16%	19%	20%	17%	16%	20%	17%	19%	19%	19%	19%	20%	11%	14%	15%
Have ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual <sup>3</sup>	10%	11%	N/A	12%	12%	N/A	12%	13%	N/A	14%	13%	N/A	12%	15%	N/A
Have been electronically bullied, such as through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, Web sites, or text messaging <sup>2</sup>	10%	13%	15%	11%	12%	16%	14%	14%	15%	15%	15%	16%	13%	13%	16%
Have seen other students being bullied in their school <sup>2</sup>	N/A	59%	N/A	52%	53%	N/A	48%	51%	N/A	45%	47%	N/A	36%	42%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

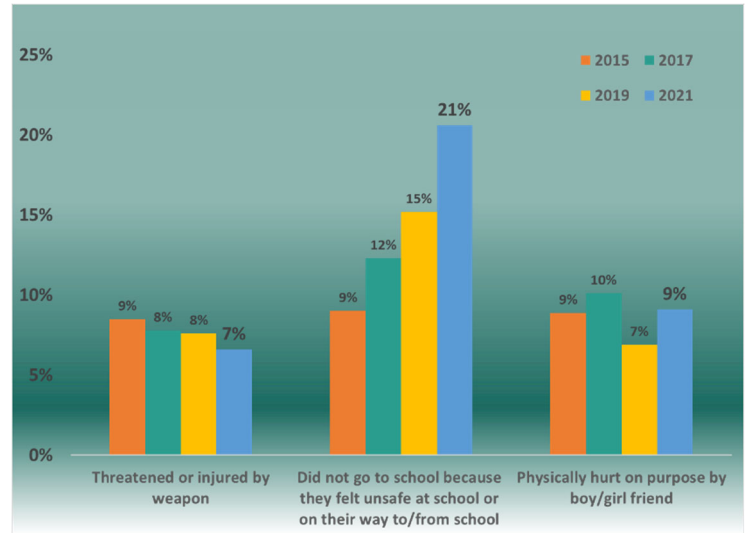
<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Unintentional Injury and Violence

Community violence, including homicides involving firearms, is a significant public health concern. Witnessing community violence increases teen’s risk of carrying firearms, substance use, and increases risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Interpersonal violence which includes dating and sexual violence, is also a serious problem among youth.

- More than a third of teens reported either texting or emailing while driving a car or other vehicle within the past month.
- Physical fighting decreased from 26% in 2013 to 17% in 2021.
- Students who reported not going to school because they felt unsafe increased from 7% in 2013 to 21% in 2021.

Figure 2. Unintentional Injury and Violence



- Reports of being physically hurt by someone they were dating or going out with one or more times in the past 12 months increased from 7% in 2017 to 9% in 2019.
- About 1 out of 5 teens have seen someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed or shot in their neighborhood.

Unintentional Injury and Violence	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Rode in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol <sup>2</sup>	24%	19%	22%	22%	17%	20%	19%	15%	17%	18%	16%	17%	12%	13%	14%
Texted or emailed while driving <sup>2</sup>	39%	34%	41%	35%	38%	42%	33%	25%	39%	37%	36%	39%	36%	40%	36%
Had been threatened or injured by a weapon <sup>3</sup>	9%	7%	7%	9%	5%	6%	8%	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	7%	5%	7%
Been in a physical fight <sup>3</sup>	26%	24%	25%	22%	21%	23%	25%	22%	24%	24%	24%	22%	17%	20%	18%
Physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend <sup>3</sup>	9%	9%	10%	9%	8%	10%	10%	6%	8%	7%	7%	8%	9%	13%	9%
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school <sup>2</sup>	7%	7%	7%	9%	6%	6%	12%	10%	7%	15%	14%	9%	21%	17%	9%
Ever saw someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed or shot in their neighborhood	N/A												18%	21%	20%
Reported it would take them less than an hour to get and be ready to fire a loaded gun without a parent or other adult's permission	N/A												20%	30%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

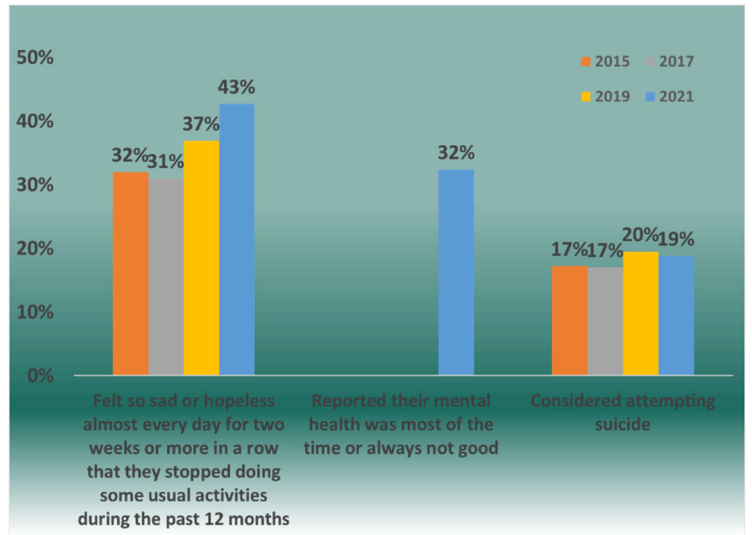
<sup>2</sup>In the past month

<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Psychological Health

- Approximately 43% of teens reported not doing some regular activities during the past year because they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row, an increase from 29% in 2013.
- Almost a third of teens reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good.
- Teens reporting that they considered attempting suicide increased from 17% in 2013 to 19% in 2021.
- About 9% of students reported having attempted suicide.

Figure 3. Psychological Health



Psychological Health	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities <sup>3</sup>	29%	29%	30%	32%	26%	30%	31%	29%	32%	37%	36%	37%	43%	43%	42%
Reported their mental health was most of the time or always not good (including stress, anxiety, and depression) <sup>2</sup>	N/A												32%	34%	29%
Seriously considered attempting suicide <sup>3</sup>	15%	17%	17%	17%	16%	18%	17%	16%	17%	20%	19%	19%	19%	22%	22%
Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide <sup>3</sup>	14%	13%	14%	14%	14%	15%	14%	14%	14%	17%	15%	16%	15%	18%	18%
Attempted suicide one or more times <sup>3</sup>	8%	N/A	8%	N/A	9%	10%	8%	7%	12%	10%	9%	9%	10%	10%	
Did something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die (such as cutting, or burning) <sup>2</sup>	N/A												19%	22%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

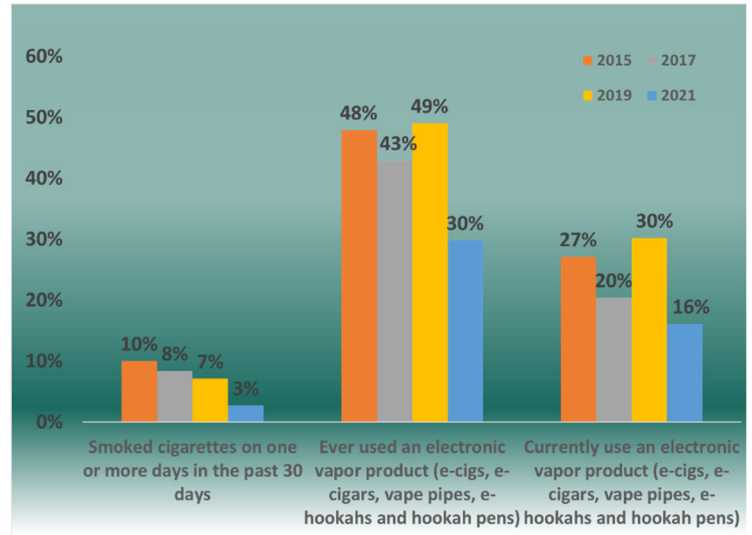
<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the US. Cigarette use has declined among teens nationwide. Use of electronic vapor products has also decreased but remains higher than cigarette use. In 2015, questions about use of electronic vapor products (e-cigs, e-cigars, vape pipes, e-hookahs and hookah pens) were added to the survey.

- Cigarette smoking continues to decline among students, from 10% in 2013 to about 3% in 2021.
- Almost a third of students reported ever having used an electronic vapor product.
- Approximately 16% of students report currently using an electronic vapor product in 2019, a decrease from 30% in 2021.

Figure 4. Tobacco Use



Tobacco Use	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Smoked cigarettes on one or more days <sup>2</sup>	10%	15%	16%	10%	13%	11%	8%	12%	9%	7%	8%	6%	3%	4%	4%
Ever used an electronic vapor product (e-cigs, e-cigars, vape pipes, e-hookahs and hookah pens)	N/A			48%	49%	45%	43%	44%	42%	49%	52%	50%	30%	38%	36%
Currently use an electronic vapor product (e-cigs, e-cigars, vape pipes, e-hookahs and hookah pens) <sup>2</sup>	N/A			27%	30%	24%	20%	22%	13%	30%	36%	33%	16%	24%	18%

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

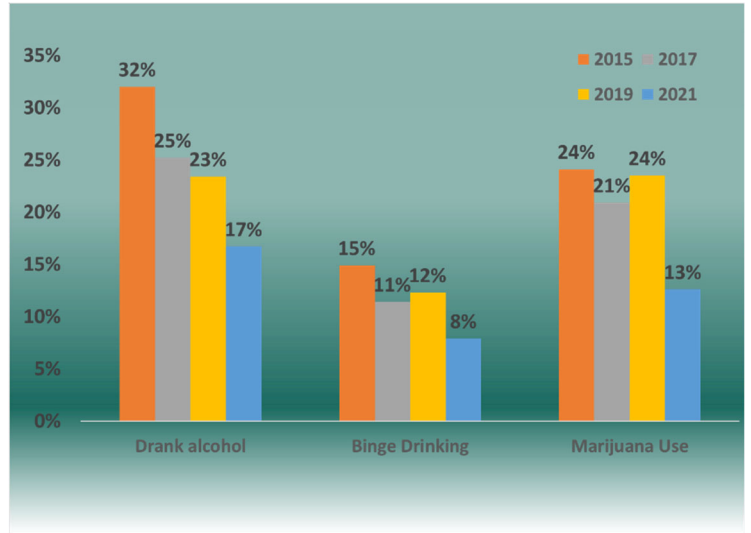
<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Substance Use

Estimates show that most teens will engage in some form of substance use before they graduate. Substance use among youth is associated with sexually transmitted diseases, violence, injuries mental health problems and other adverse health outcomes. Nearly a third of teens in the US reported substance use in the past 30 days.

- Approximately 17% of teens reported having a least one alcoholic drink in the past 30 days.
- Binge drinking among teens decreased between 2013 and 2021 (17% to 8%).
- Marijuana use decreased among teens from 29% in 2013 to 13% in 2021.
- About 12% of teens reported having been offered, sold or given drugs on school property in 2021, down from about 31% in 2011.

Figure 5. Substance Use



## Substance Use

	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days <sup>2</sup>	34%	32%	35%	32%	29%	33%	25%	27%	30%	23%	24%	29%	17%	19%	23%
Had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours (binge drinking) <sup>2</sup>	17%	15%	21%	15%	13%	18%	11%	12%	14%	12%	13%	14%	8%	10%	11%
Used marijuana one or more times <sup>2</sup>	29%	23%	23%	24%	22%	22%	21%	19%	20%	24%	22%	22%	13%	16%	16%
Sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high one or more times during their life	10%	8%	9%	8%	8%	7%	10%	9%	6%	8%	8%	6%	N/A		
Offered, sold, or given an illegal drug by someone on school property <sup>3</sup>	33%	24%	22%	31%	25%	22%	25%	22%	20%	26%	22%	22%	12%	14%	14%

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

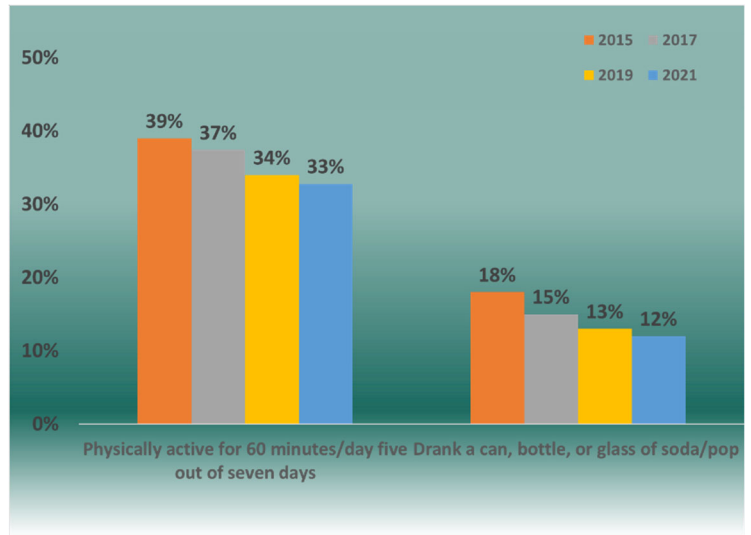
<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Physical Activity and Nutrition

Physical activity and health dietary are important to decrease risk of cardiovascular disease. Over half of all teens reported being physically active for 60 minutes or more on five or more of the past seven days.

- The percentage of teens who reported being physically active for 60 minutes per day on five out of seven days decreased from about 45% in 2013 to 33% in 2021.
- Approximately 75% of teens reported spending 3 or more hours per day on screen time (TV, computer, phone, or other electronic device) not counting schoolwork on an average school day.
- About 12% of teens reported drinking soda or pop one or more times a day, a decline from 20% in 2013.
- Over 13% reported drinking a sugar sweetened beverage that was not soda or pop one or more times per day.

Figure 6. Physical Activity and Nutrition



Physical Activity and Nutrition	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Physically active for a total of 60 minutes or more per day on five or more of the past seven days	45%	47%	47%	39%	43%	49%	37%	42%	47%	34%	38%	44%	33%	34%	55%
Spent more 3 hours or more per day on screen time (TV, computer, phone or other electronic device) not counting time spent doing school work on an average school day	N/A												75%	74%	76%
Drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda/pop one or more times per day (not counting diet soda/pop)	20%	28%	27%	18%	27%	20%	15%	18%	19%	13%	16%	15%	12%	13%	15%
Drank a can, bottle, or glass of a sugar-sweetened beverage (such as sports drinks, energy drinks, lemonade, sweetened tea/coffee drinks, flavored milk, Snapple, or Sunny Delight, not counting soda/pop or 100% fruit juice, one or more times per day during the 7 days before the survey)	N/A			22%	26%	N/A	18%	22%	N/A	16%	18%	N/A	13%	18%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Weight Management and Nutrition

Obesity in teens puts them at risk for immediate and future health risks. Body weight perception is an important predictor of weight control behaviors among teenagers. Teens who incorrectly judge their body weight may practice unhealthy weight control measures to lose weight or place themselves at greater risk for obesity.

- According to BMI data, 17% of teens were reported as being overweight and 14% are obese. However, 26% of teens described themselves as slightly or very overweight.
- Over half of teens reported exercising to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight.

Figure 7. Weight Management and Nutrition



### Weight Management

	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Overweight (at or above the 85th percentile but below the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex)	14%	15%	17%	14%	16%	16%	15%	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	17%	14%	16%
Obese (at or above the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex)	12%	13%	14%	13%	16%	14%	12%	15%	15%	13%	15%	16%	14%	19%	16%
Described themselves as slightly or very overweight	27%	29%	31%	28%	28%	32%	28%	30%	32%	27%	30%	32%	26%	29%	32%
Exercised to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight <sup>2</sup>	60%	61%	N/A	59%	62%	N/A	56%	58%	N/A	58%	58%	N/A	55%	55%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

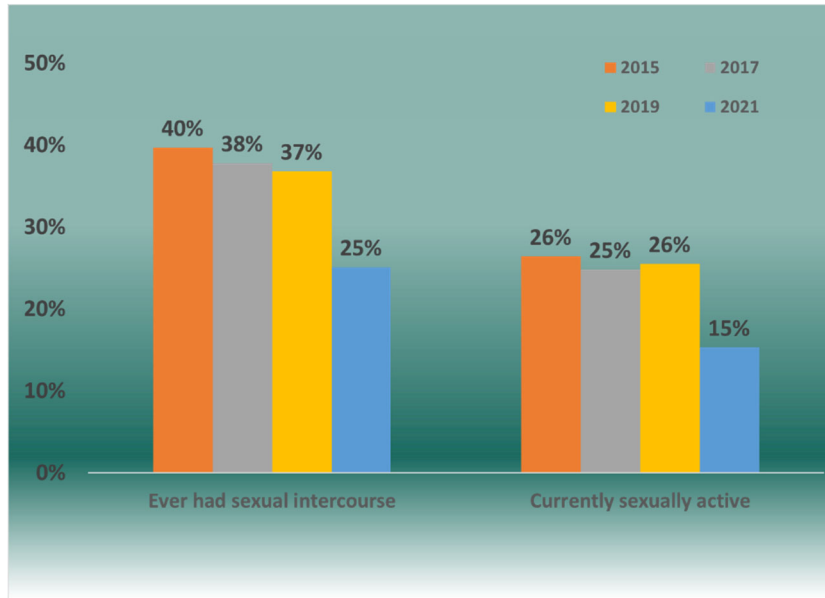
<sup>2</sup>In the past month

<sup>3</sup>In the past year

## Sexual Behavior

- Teens reporting ever having sexual intercourse has steadily decreased from 46% in 2013 to 25% in 2021.
- Approximately 15% of teens are currently sexually active.
- In 2019, 9% of teens reported having had sexual intercourse with four or more people in their lifetime. This was a decrease, down from 20% in 2011.

Figure 8. Sexual Behavior



## Sexual Behavior

	2013			2015			2017			2019			2021 <sup>1</sup>		
	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US	Meck	NC	US
Ever had sexual intercourse	46%	47%	47%	40%	44%	41%	38%	38%	40%	37%	41%	38%	25%	29%	30%
Currently sexually active (sexual intercourse with at least one person) <sup>2</sup>	31%	32%	34%	26%	33%	30%	25%	25%	29%	26%	29%	27%	15%	20%	21%
Had sexual intercourse with four or more people during their lifetime	16%	15%	15%	12%	13%	12%	8%	9%	10%	9%	10%	9%	4%	5%	6%
Parents or other adults in their family talked with them about what they expect them to do or not to do when it comes to sex	27%	73%	N/A	67%	70%	N/A	64%	61%	N/A	61%	62%	N/A	55%	55%	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

<sup>3</sup>In the past year

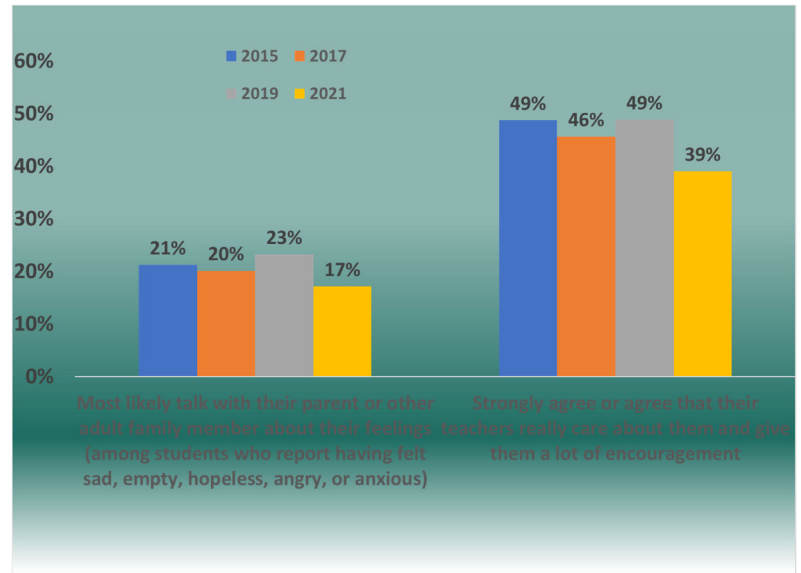


### Developmental Assets

Developmental assets are the experiences and opportunities that all young people need to grow into healthy, responsible adults. Research has shown that the more assets young people, the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviors.

- The percentage of teens who reported that their teachers really care about them and give them a lot of encouragement decreased from 52% in 2011 to almost 39% in 2021.
- About 56% of students report that they feel good about themselves, a decline from 76% in 2013.
- Approximately 61% of teens agree that doing their schoolwork was more difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it started.

Figure 9. Developmental Assets



Developmental Assets	2013		2015		2017		2019		2021 <sup>1</sup>	
	Meck	NC	Meck	NC	Meck	NC	Meck	NC	Meck	NC
Strongly agree or agree that they feel good about themselves	76%	75%	69%	71%	69%	68%	62%	60%	56%	49%
Disagree or strongly disagree they they feel alone in their life	N/A	67%	58%	61%	56%	57%	51%	54%	46%	46%
Most likely talk with their parent or other adult family member about their feelings (among students who report having felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious)	N/A	18%	21%	22%	20%	22%	23%	20%	17%	16%
Strongly agree or agree that their teachers really care about them and give them a lot of encouragement	52%	59%	49%	55%	46%	55%	49%	51%	39%	42%
Are alone without a parent or adult three or more hours per day on an average school day	35%	27%	33%	24%	34%	25%	31%	24%	N/A	
Strongly agree or agree that doing their schoolwork was more difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it started	N/A								61%	69%

<sup>1</sup>Comparing 2021 data with previous years should be done with caution as any observed trends may not represent actual changes in data

<sup>2</sup>In the past month

<sup>3</sup>In the past year

<b>New Questions for 2021 YRBS Charlotte-Mecklenburg High Schools and NC</b>		
<b>Unintentional Injury and Violence</b>	<b>Meck</b>	<b>NC</b>
Reported it would take them less than an hour to get and be ready to fire a loaded gun without a parent or other adult's permission	20%	30%
<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Meck</b>	<b>NC</b>
Reported their mental health was most of the time or always not good (including stress, anxiety, and depression)	32%	34%
<b>Physical Activity</b>	<b>Meck</b>	<b>NC</b>
Spent more 3 hours or more per day on screen time (TV, computer, phone or other electronic device) not counting time spent doing school work on an average school day	75%	74%
<b>Developmental Assessts</b>	<b>Meck</b>	<b>NC</b>
Agree that doing schoolwork was more difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic than before the pandemic started	61%	69%