

October 2015

Publication Number 14.124

# Results of the 2015 Student Substance Use and Safety Survey

## Austin Independent School District Report



## Description of Survey

Every year, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) administers the Student Substance Use and Safety Survey (SSUSS) to a random, representative sample of AISD middle and high school students. The survey tracks self-reported student knowledge, attitudes, and behavior over time. In the spring of 2015, a sample of 9,089 students in grades 6 through 12 submitted valid responses to the survey, yielding a response rate of 78%.<sup>1</sup> Respondents' demographics and all survey results are included in this report. The report presents survey questions by topic, and includes results from the 2013–2014 school year for year-to-year comparisons.

## Highlights

When asked how safe they felt at school, 82% of high school respondents and 77% of middle school respondents answered “Very safe” or “Somewhat safe.”

The survey asked students to select the most serious problem at their campus. The most popular choice for middle school respondents was student fighting and physical aggression, at 22%, and for high school respondents, marijuana use, at 32%.

The percentage of middle school respondents who indicated they had never experienced bullying at their school increased significantly, from 51% in 2014 to 55% in 2015. However, the percentage of middle school respondents who said bullying was a very big problem at their school did not change significantly.

A significantly higher percentage of middle school students in 2015 than in 2014 indicated they received information on drugs, alcohol, or violence from various sources.

Middle and high school respondents reported they believed it was more dangerous to use tobacco than e-cigarettes. At the middle school level, 67% indicated tobacco use was very dangerous, compared with 56% for e-cigarettes. At the high school level, 55% indicated tobacco use was very dangerous, compared with 37% for e-cigarettes.

---

<sup>1</sup> A total of 9,484 surveys were returned to the Department of Research and Evaluation from an original sample of 11,666 students. Of those returned, 395 surveys were removed from analysis due to invalid responses.

## How should I interpret sample data?

When it is not feasible to survey an entire population, researchers may use samples instead. When using a sample to make inferences about a population, interpret results with caution. For example, although 87% of a sample may select a particular survey response, this does not necessarily mean 87% of the entire population feels the same way. To interpret the sample data cautiously, researchers from the AISD Department of Research and Evaluation used the population size and the sample size to construct a 95% confidence interval for each item. The interval allows one to be 95% confident that the true population result falls within that range. Based on the high school sample of 4,015 students and population enrollment of 20,526, the confidence interval for high schools is + and - 1 percentage point. Based on the middle school sample of 5,073 students and population enrollment of 16,184, the confidence interval for middle schools is + and - 1 percentage point. To determine whether a significant change occurred from one school year to the next, check whether the confidence intervals from both years overlap. If the intervals or ranges do *not* overlap, there is 95% certainty that a significant change occurred.

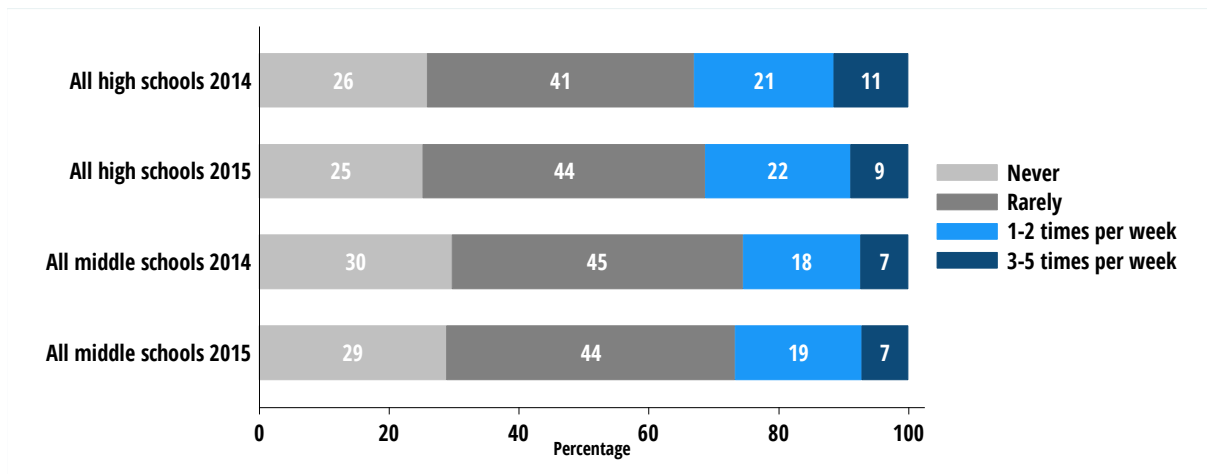
**RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND ITEMS THAT ADDRESS BOTH  
SUBSTANCE USE AND SAFETY**

**Survey Sample Demographics**

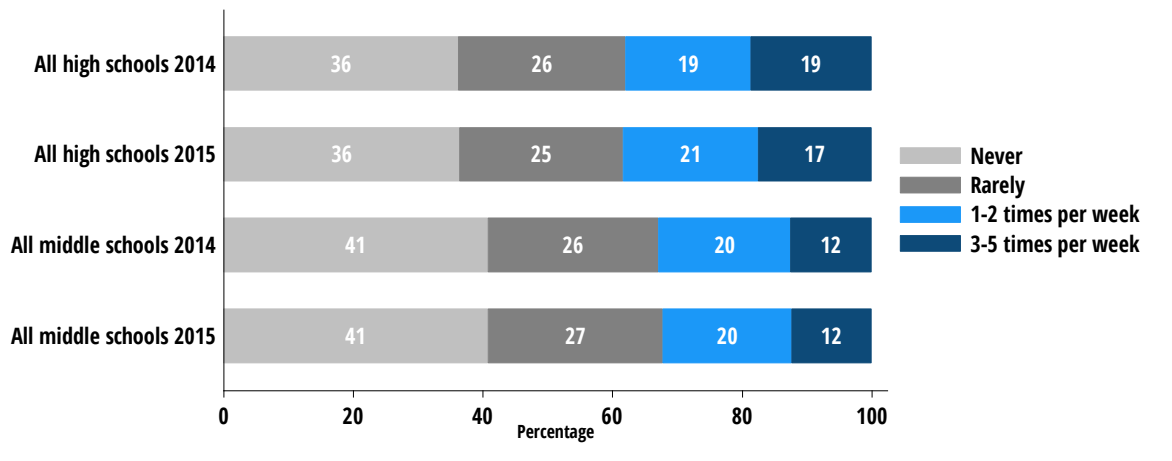
	All high schools 2015		All high schools 2014		All middle schools 2015		All middle schools 2014	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Male	1,887	48%	2,000	47%	2,491	50%	2,646	48%
Female	2,070	52%	2,287	53%	2,532	50%	2,819	52%
6th grade	-	-	-	-	1,705	34%	1,888	34%
7th grade	-	-	-	-	1,690	34%	1,861	34%
8th grade	-	-	-	-	1,644	33%	1,726	32%
9th grade	1,143	29%	1,217	28%	-	-	-	-
10th grade	1,024	26%	1,165	27%	-	-	-	-
11th grade	965	24%	992	23%	-	-	-	-
12th grade	859	22%	915	21%	-	-	-	-

*Note.* Numbers may not sum to total and percentages may not sum to 100 because some students skipped the demographic questions.

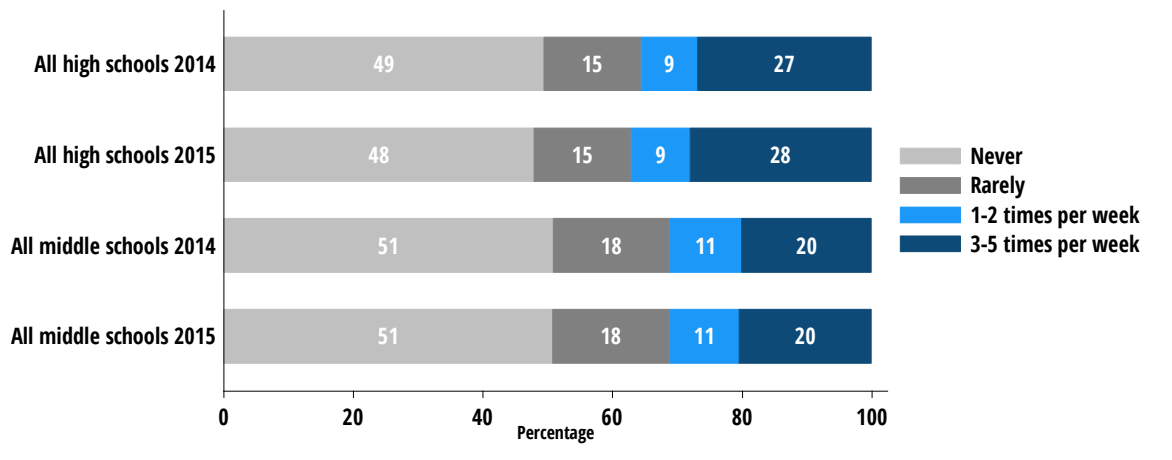
**Q4. How often do you participate in after school programs to help you with your school work (e.g., tutoring, homework, etc.)?**



**Q5. How often do you participate in other after school programs (e.g., clubs, art, technology, leadership, dance, etc.)?**



**Q6. How often do you participate in organized school sports?**



**Q22: During this school year, have you brought any of the following items to school?**

	All high schools 2015	All high schools 2014	Δ	All middle schools 2015	All middle schools 2014	Δ
Illegal drugs	7%	8%	-1	5%	5%	0
Tobacco	6%	6%	0	3%	3%	0
E-cigarettes	6%	-	-	3%	-	-
Prescription drugs or other medications	5%	6%	-1	3%	4%	-1
Alcohol	4%	5%	-1	3%	3%	0
Knife	7%	7%	0	5%	5%	0
Gun	2%	2%	0	3%	3%	0
Other weapon	4%	4%	0	4%	5%	-1

\* Negative percentage point changes indicate fewer students reported bringing those items to school in 2014–2015 than in 2013–2014.

**Q23: Of the following, which do you consider to be the most serious problem on your campus?**

	All high schools 2015	All high schools 2014	Δ	All middle schools 2015	All middle schools 2014	Δ
Student marijuana use	32%	33%	-1	15%	16%	-1
Student fighting and physical aggression	11%	7%	4	22%	21%	1
Student harassment, threats, and bullying	7%	8%	-1	20%	19%	1
Student alcohol use	5%	5%	0	1%	1%	0
Student use of prescription drugs or other medications, to get high	3%	4%	-1	3%	4%	-1
Student tobacco use	2%	3%	-1	1%	1%	0
Student e-cigarette use	2%	-	-	1%	-	-
Student weapon possession	2%	3%	-1	3%	6%	-3
Student vandalism, criminal mischief	2%	1%	1	2%	3%	-1
Violence or threats of violence toward staff	1%	1%	0	2%	2%	0
None of these are serious problems on my campus	33%	18%	15	31%	27%	4

*Note.* Percentages may sum to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to choose multiple items.

\* Negative percentage point changes indicate fewer students reported those items as the most serious problem on their campus in 2014–2015 than in 2013–2014.

**Q7. During this school year, have you received any information on drugs, alcohol, or violence from any of the following school sources?**

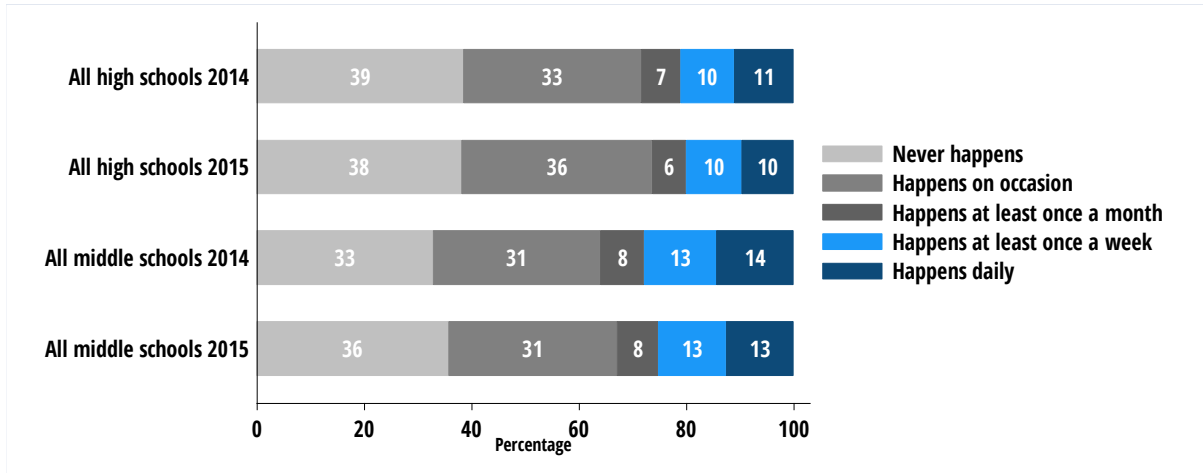
	All high schools 2015	All high schools 2014	Δ	All middle schools 2015	All middle schools 2014	Δ
Special school event (e.g., an assembly or guest speaker)	39%	39%	0	41%	36%	5
Health class	39%	43%	-4	41%	37%	4
Science class	33%	35%	-2	44%	43%	1
Another class	40%	34%	6	47%	38%	9
Coach or P.E. teacher	35%	36%	-1	74%	71%	3
The guidance counselor	20%	18%	2	28%	25%	3
School nurse	14%	15%	-1	21%	21%	0
Student support group meeting at your school	14%	14%	0	16%	16%	0
Afterschool program	13%	14%	-1	13%	14%	-1
Other school source not mentioned above	19%	18%	1	20%	20%	0

*Note.* Percentages may sum to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to choose multiple items.

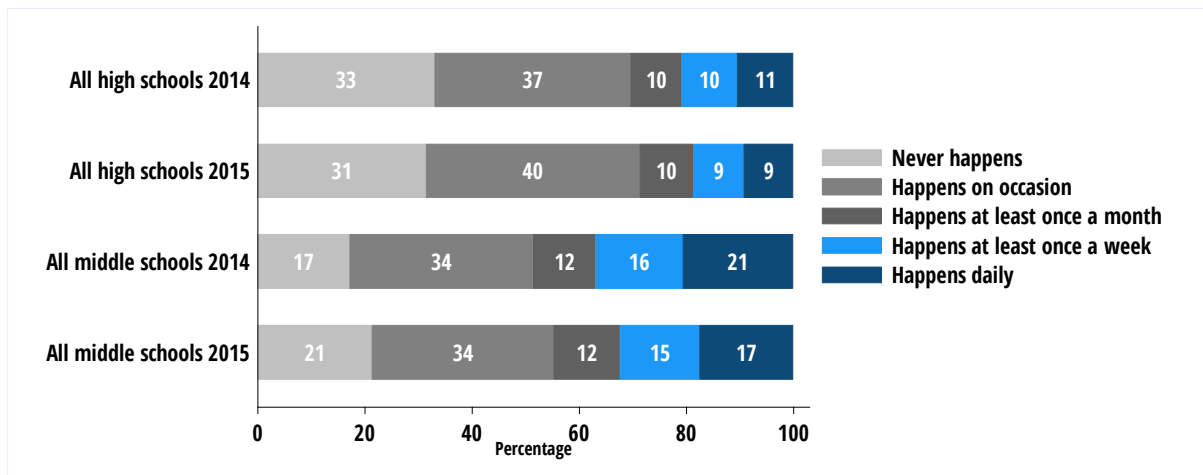
\* Positive percentage point changes indicate more students reported having received information on drugs, alcohol, or violence from school sources in 2014–2015 than in 2013–2014.

## SCHOOL SAFETY ITEMS

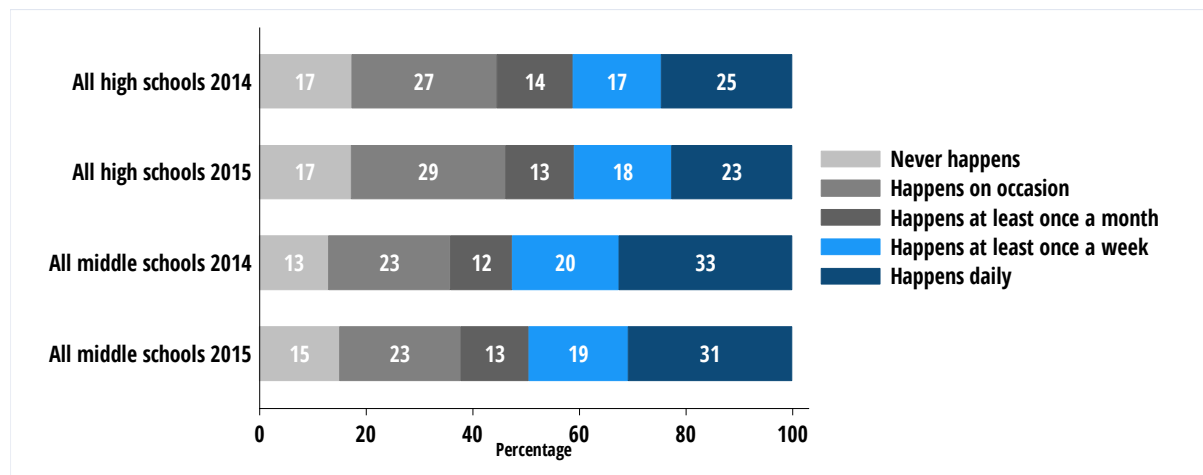
Q15a: How often does racial tension occur at your school?



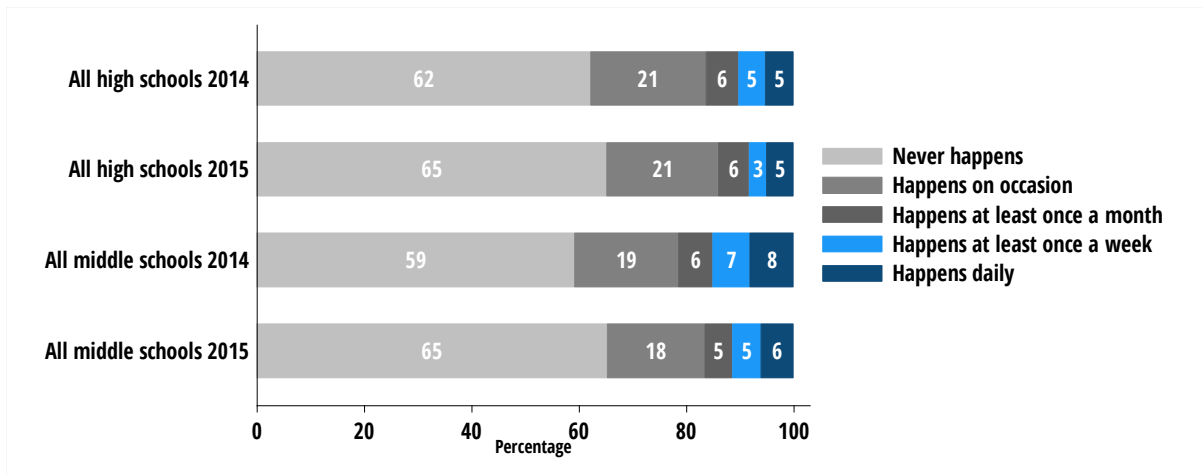
Q15b: How often does student bullying occur at your school?



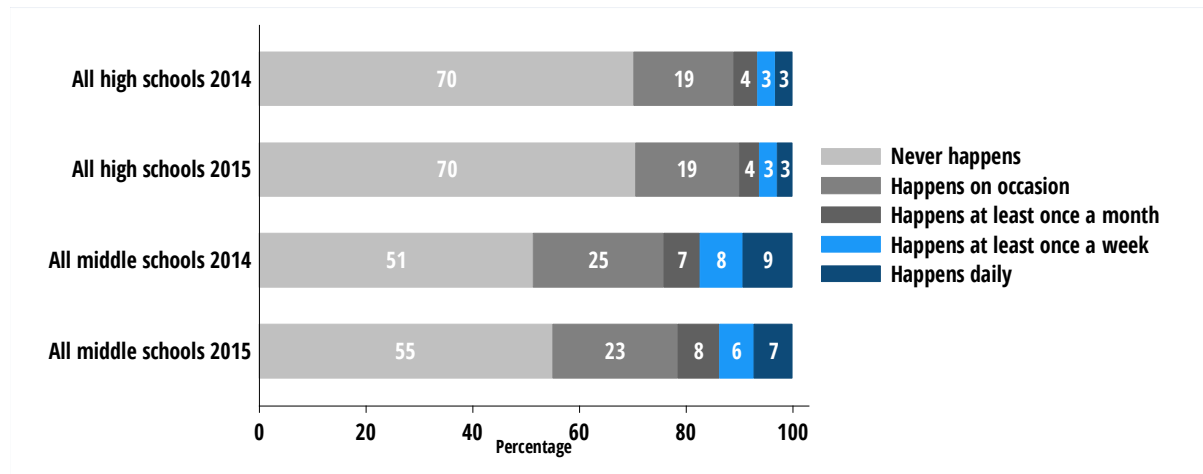
Q15c: How often do acts of disrespect for teachers occur at your school?



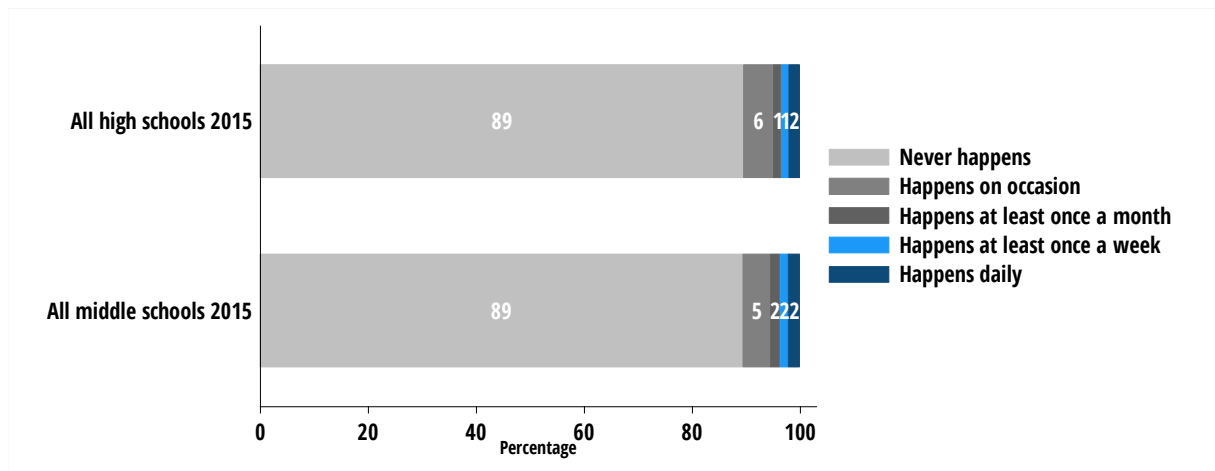
**Q15d: How often do gang activities occur at your school?**



**Q15e: How often have you experienced any type of bullying at your school?**

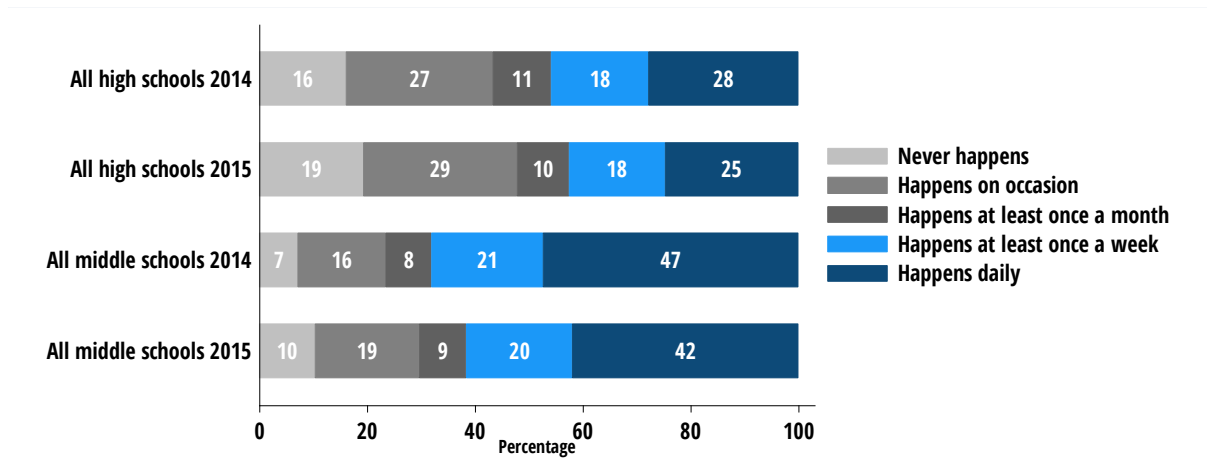


**Q15f: How often were you absent because you did not feel safe on the way to/from school?**

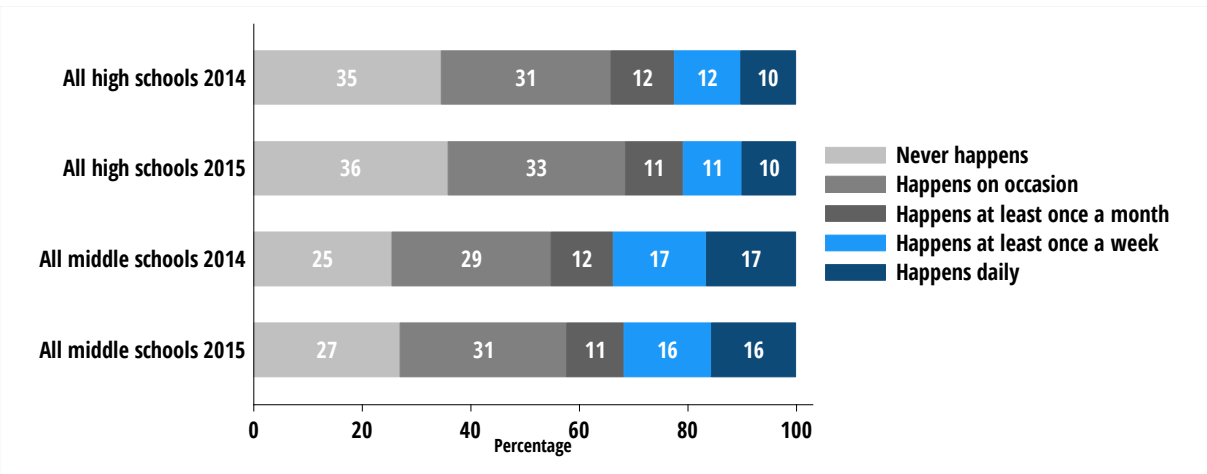




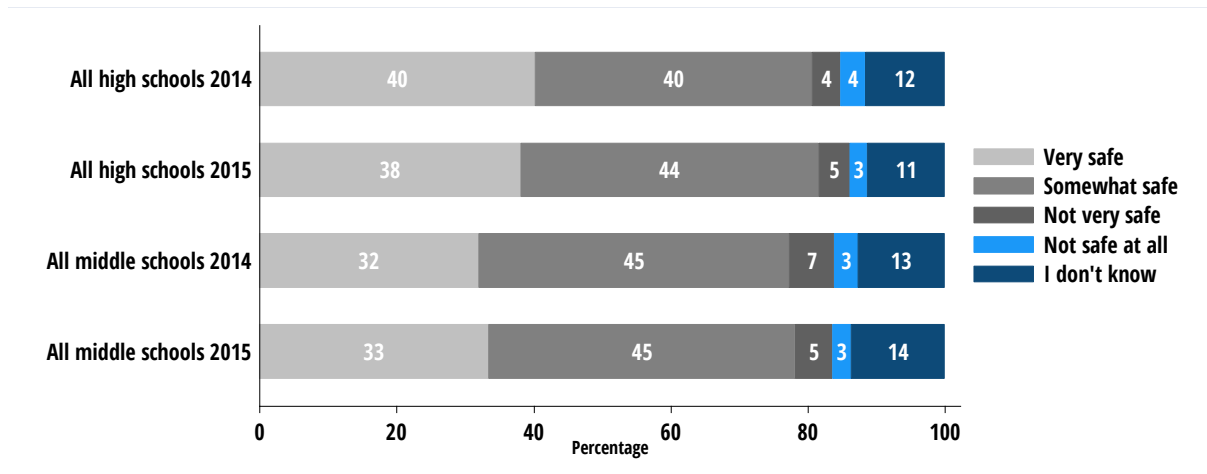
**Q15g: How often does your teacher have to interrupt class to deal with student misbehavior?**



**Q15h: Do teachers or staff give you praise or rewards for good behavior?**



**Q8: How safe do you feel when you are at school?**



**Q9: During the last month, did you miss one or more school days due to any of the following reasons?**

	All high schools 2015	All high schools 2014	Δ	All middle schools 2015	All middle schools 2014	Δ
You were sick?	60%	59%	1	54%	56%	-2
You had to do something with your family?	40%	40%	0	33%	34%	-1
You were too tired?	35%	35%	0	20%	20%	0
You felt too sad or depressed to attend?	18%	18%	0	11%	12%	-1
You didn't have a way to get to school?	16%	15%	1	11%	11%	0
You wanted to hang out with your friends?	16%	19%	-3	10%	10%	0
You didn't get along well with your teachers?	11%	10%	1	9%	9%	0
You didn't feel safe at school?	6%	5%	1	6%	7%	-1
You didn't feel safe on the way to/from school?	6%	6%	0	6%	5%	1
You had to go to work?	6%	8%	-2	4%	4%	0

*Note.* Percentages may sum to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to choose multiple items.

\* Negative percentage point changes indicate fewer students reported missing school due to any of the above reasons in 2014–2015 than in 2013–2014.

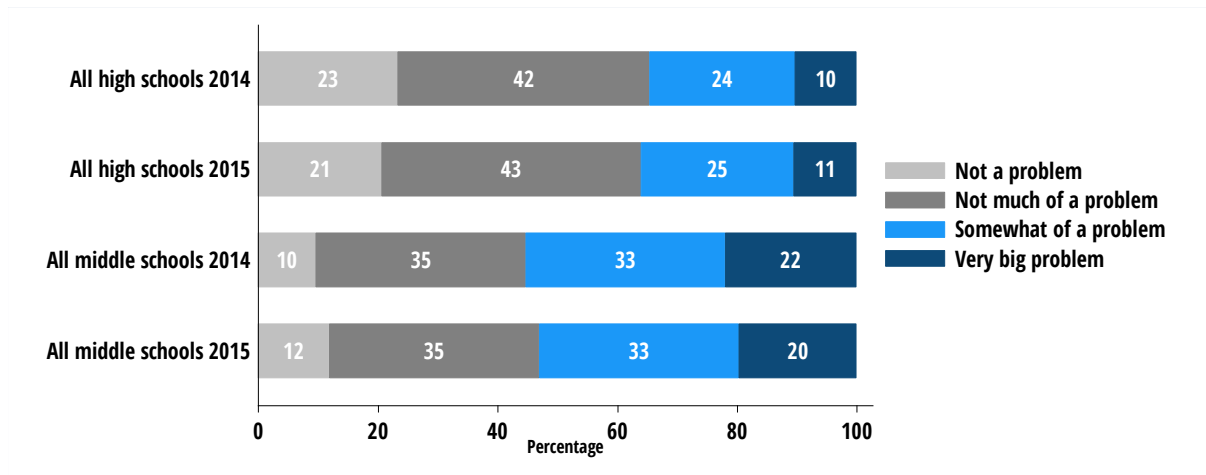
**Q10: During this school year, have you experienced any of the following types of bullying at school?**

	All high schools 2015	All high schools 2014	Δ	All middle schools 2015	All middle schools 2014	Δ
Verbal	19%	19%	0	31%	33%	-2
Social	18%	20%	-2	29%	32%	-3
Racial or ethnic harassment	12%	12%	0	16%	16%	0
Sexual harassment	8%	9%	-1	9%	10%	-1
Physical	7%	9%	-2	21%	22%	-1
Cyber bullying	7%	7%	0	10%	10%	0
Hurtful or controlling dating behavior	5%	6%	-1	6%	7%	-1
Written	3%	4%	-1	6%	8%	-2
Hazing/Initiation	3%	4%	-1	6%	6%	0

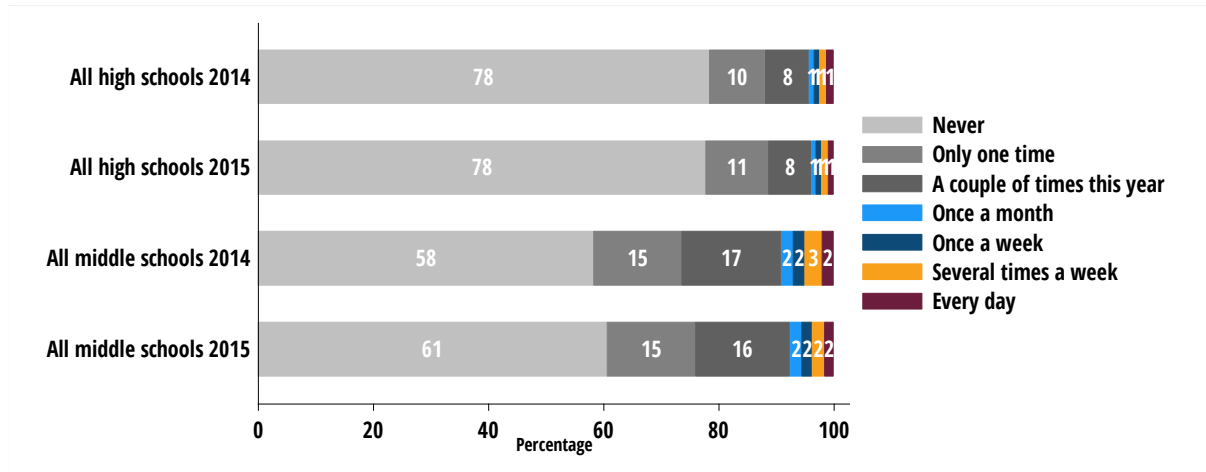
*Note.* Percentages may sum to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to choose multiple items.

\* Negative percentage point changes indicate fewer students reported experiencing types of bullying in 2014–2015 than in 2013–2014.

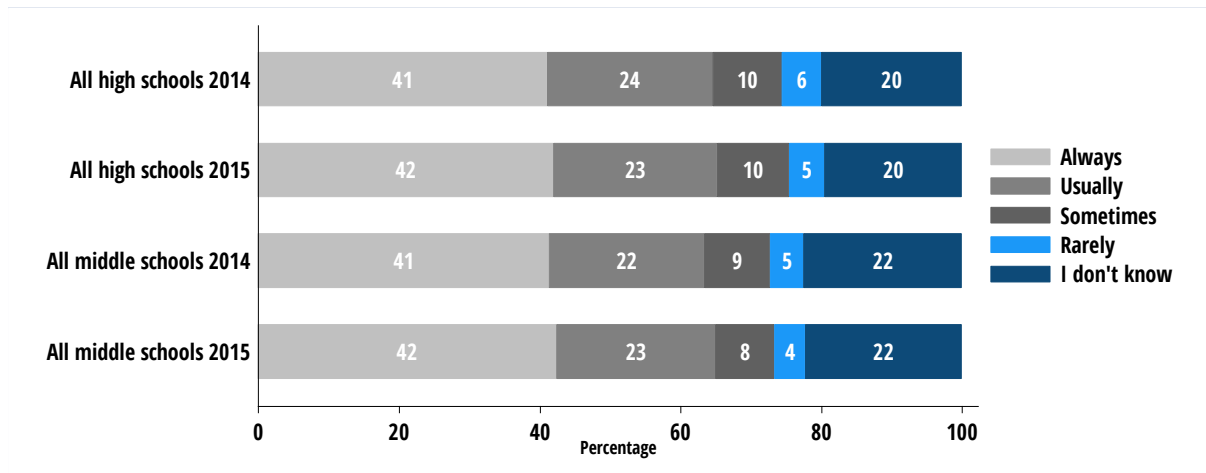
**Q12: How big a problem do you think bullying is at your school?**



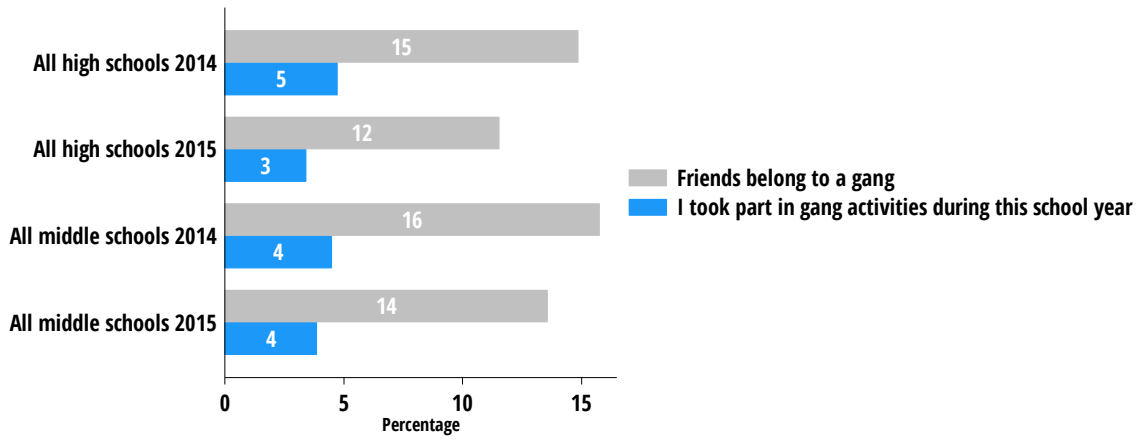
**Q11: During this school year, how often have you or your close friends been physically harmed or threatened with physical harm by another student at your school?**



**Q14: Are school rules about verbal or physical assaults or fighting enforced by school staff?**



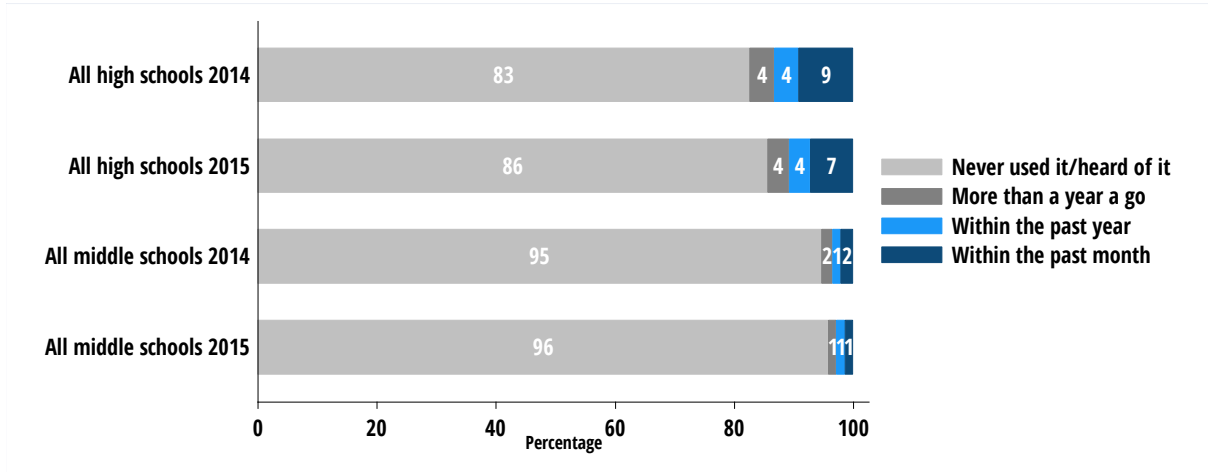
**Q16-Q17: Do any of your friends belong to a gang? During this school year, did you take part in any gang activities?**



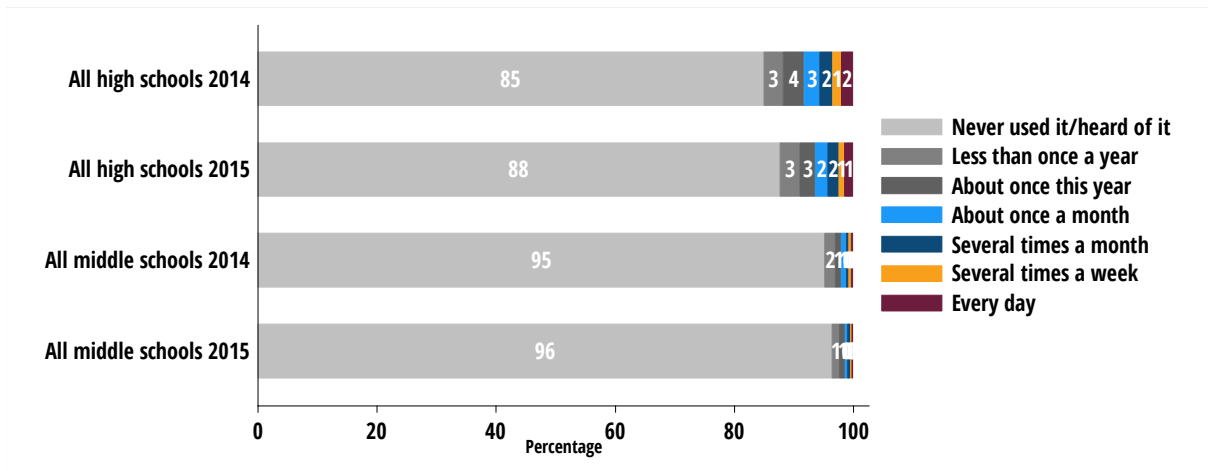
## SUBSTANCE USE ITEMS

### TOBACCO:

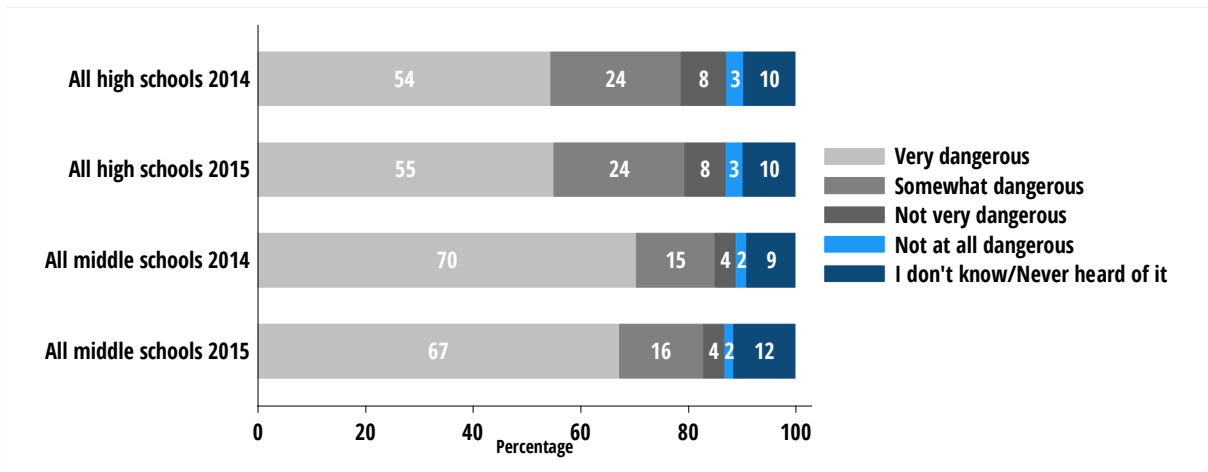
**Q20a: What is the most recently you have used tobacco?**



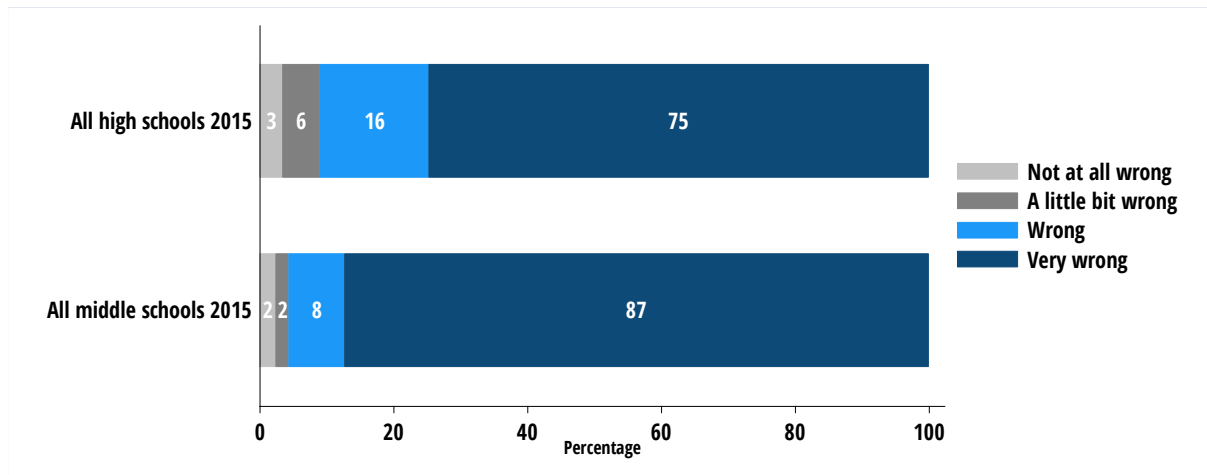
**Q21a: During this year, how often did you use tobacco?**



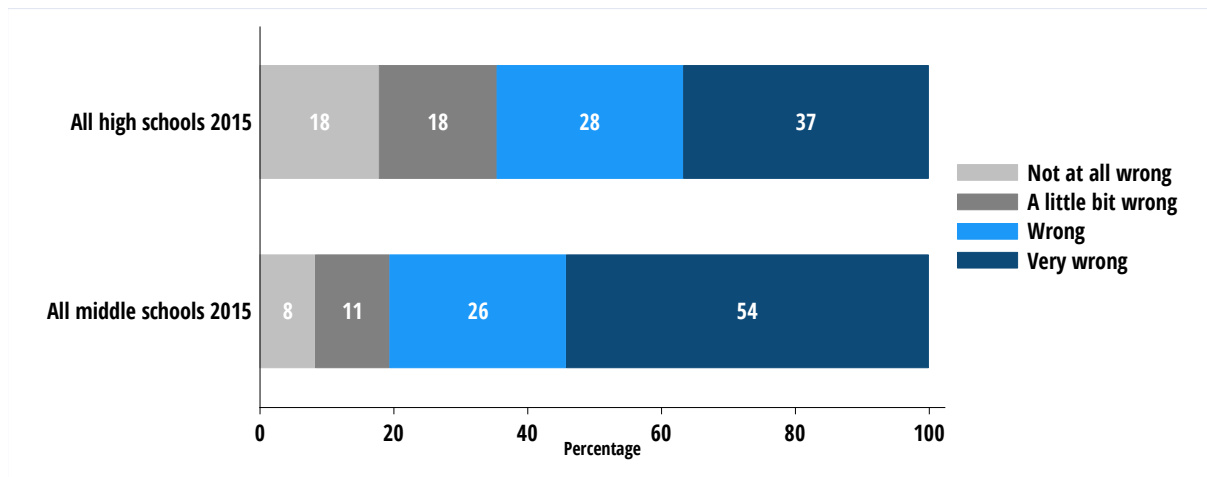
**Q25a: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use tobacco?**



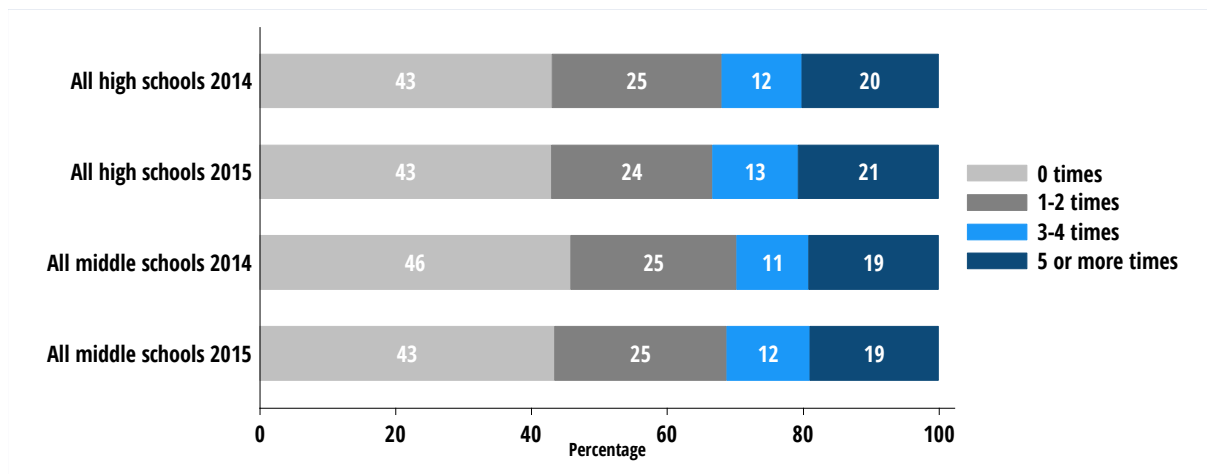
**Q26a: How wrong do your parents feel it would be if you used tobacco?**



**Q27a: How wrong do your friends feel it would be if you used tobacco?**

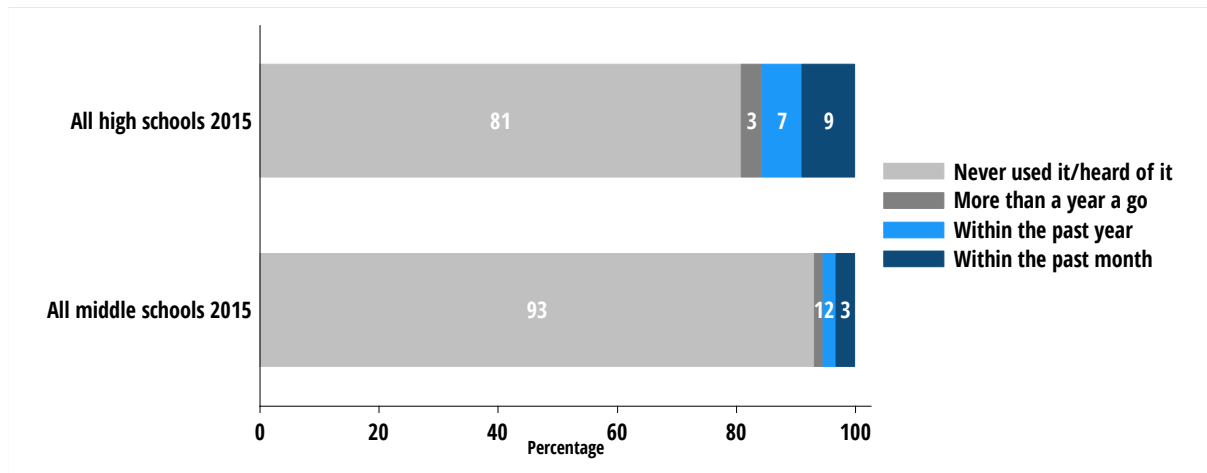


**Q28g. During the school year, how many times have you experienced advertisements (TV, radio, billboard, magazine, Internet, etc.) for tobacco products?**

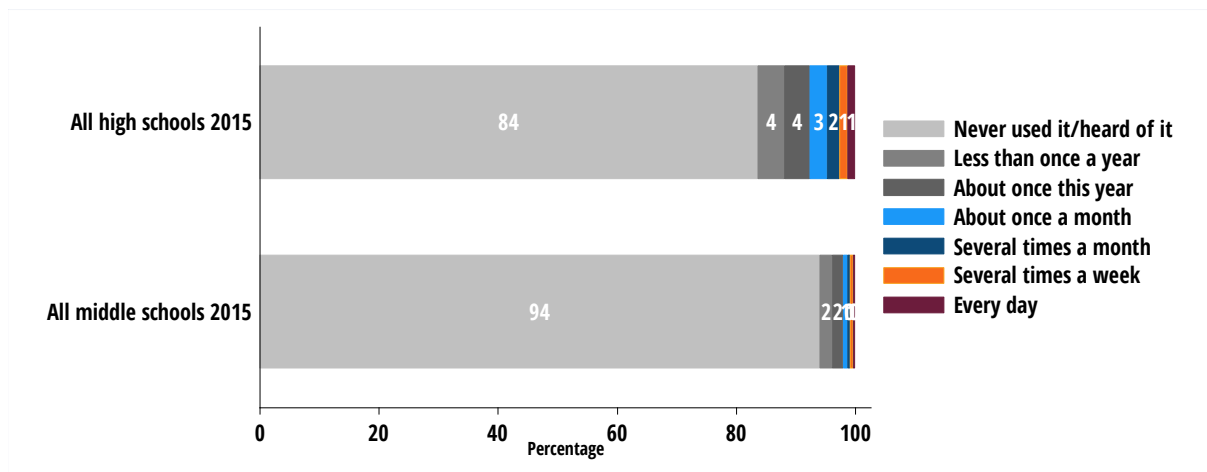


**E-CIGARETTES:**

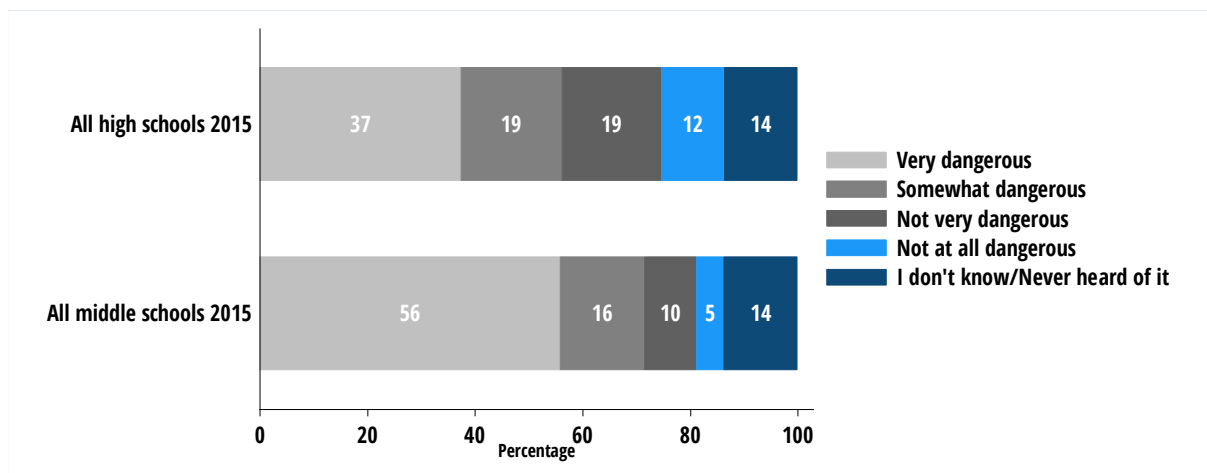
**Q20b: What is the most recently you have used e-cigarettes?**



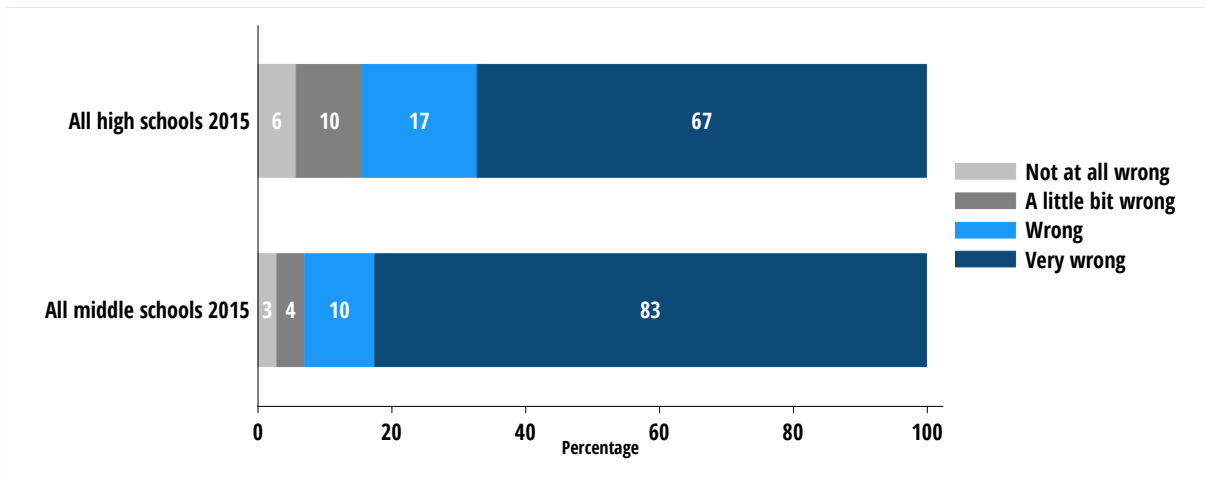
**Q21b: During this school year, how often did you use e-cigarettes?**



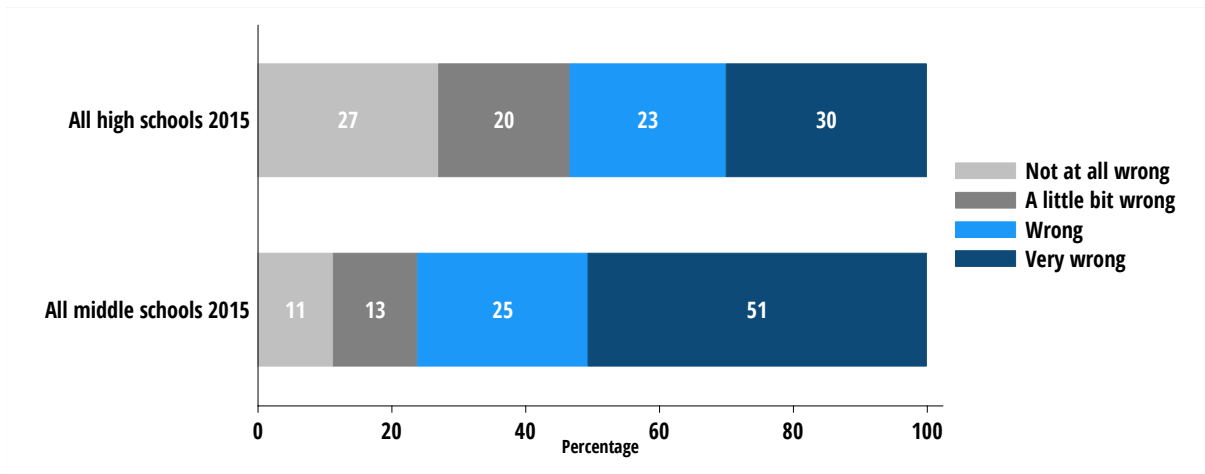
**Q25b: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use e-cigarettes?**



**Q26b: How wrong do your parents feel it would be if you used e-cigarettes?**



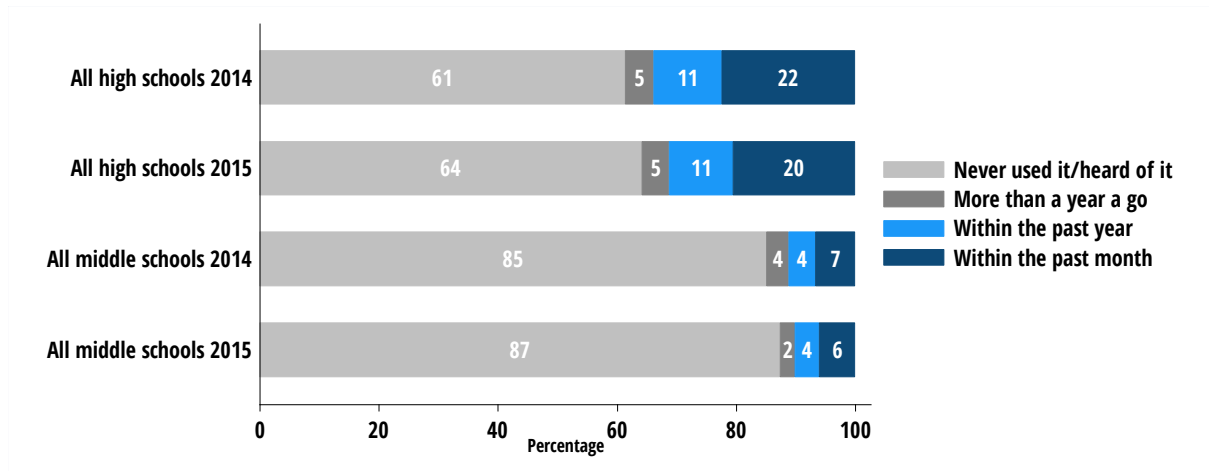
**Q27b: How wrong do your friends feel it would be if you used e-cigarettes?**



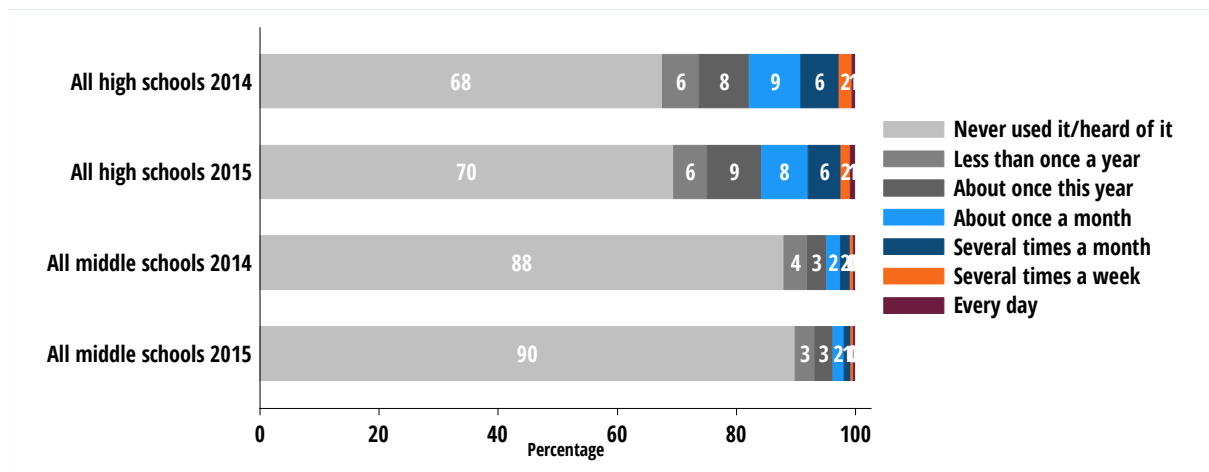


**ALCOHOL:**

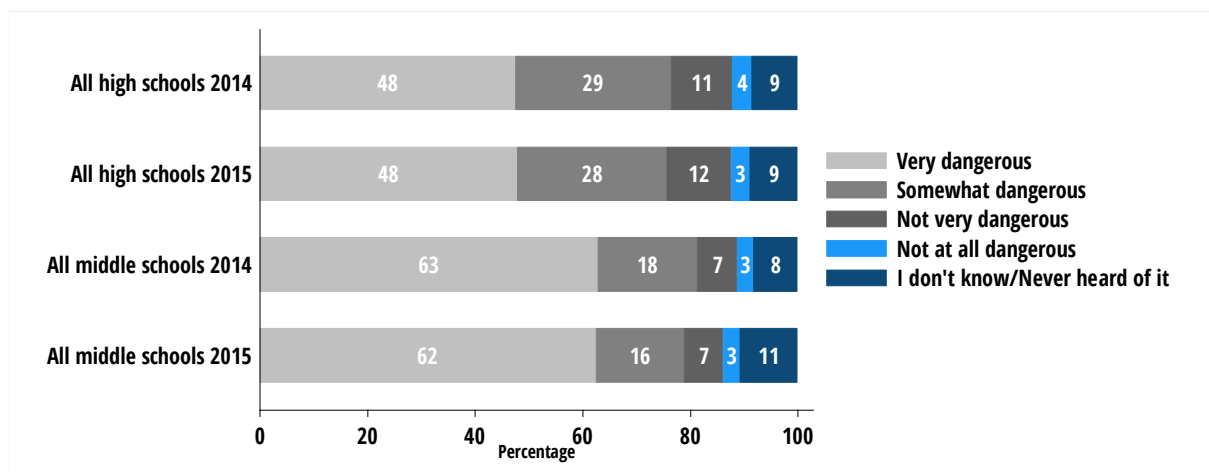
**Q20c: What is the most recently you have used alcohol?**



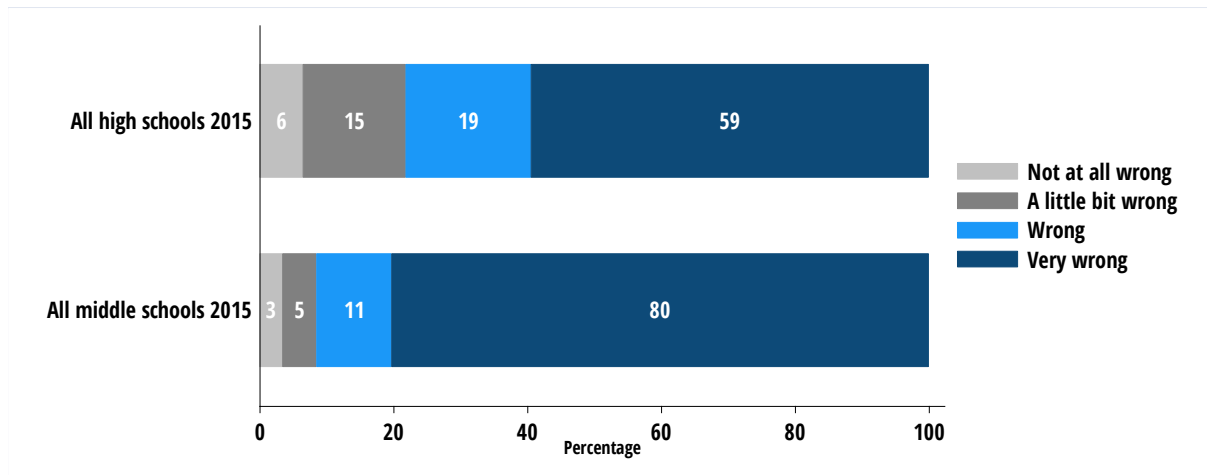
**Q21c: During this year, how often did you use alcohol?**



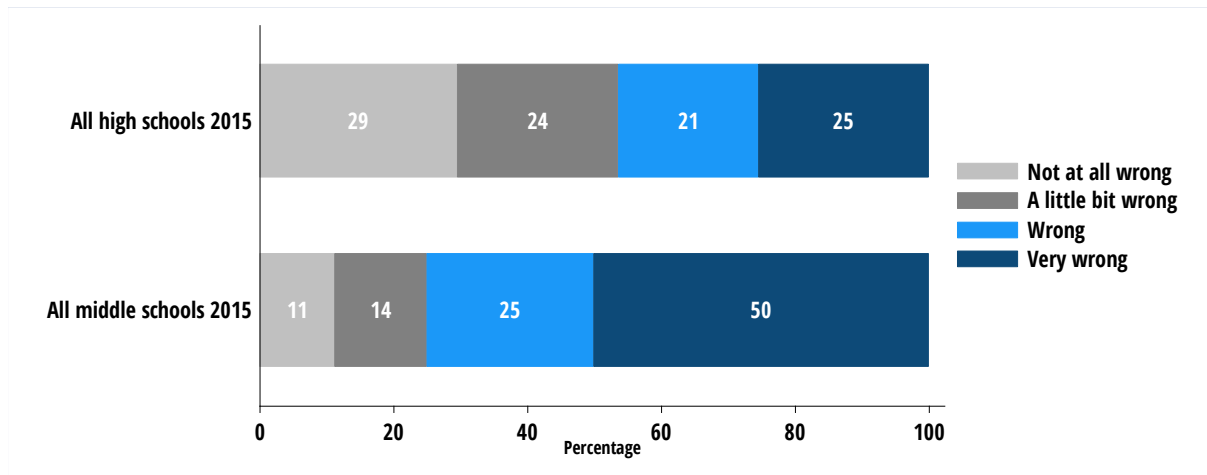
**Q25c: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use alcohol?**



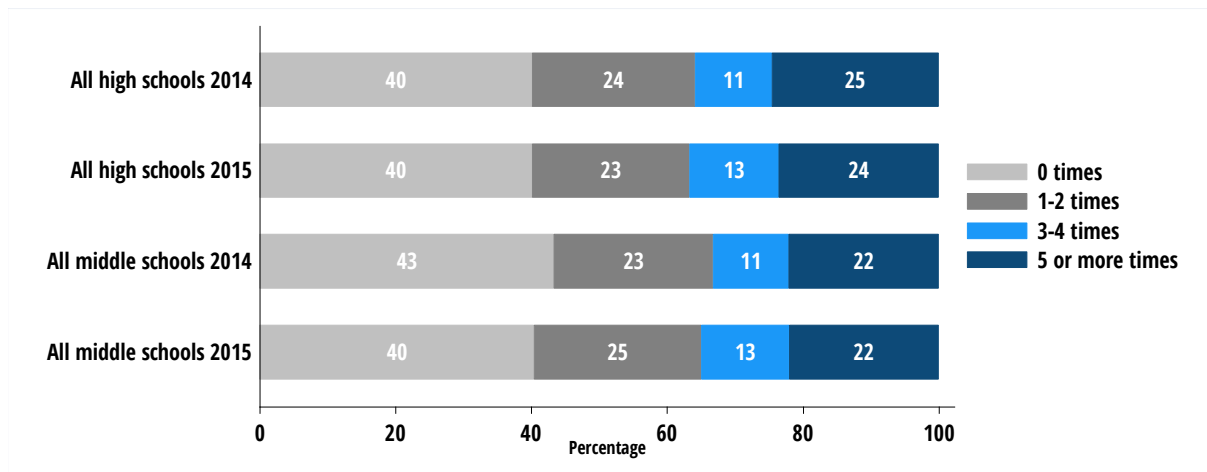
**Q26c: How wrong do your parents feel it would be if you used alcohol?**



**Q27c: How wrong do your friends feel it would be if you used alcohol?**

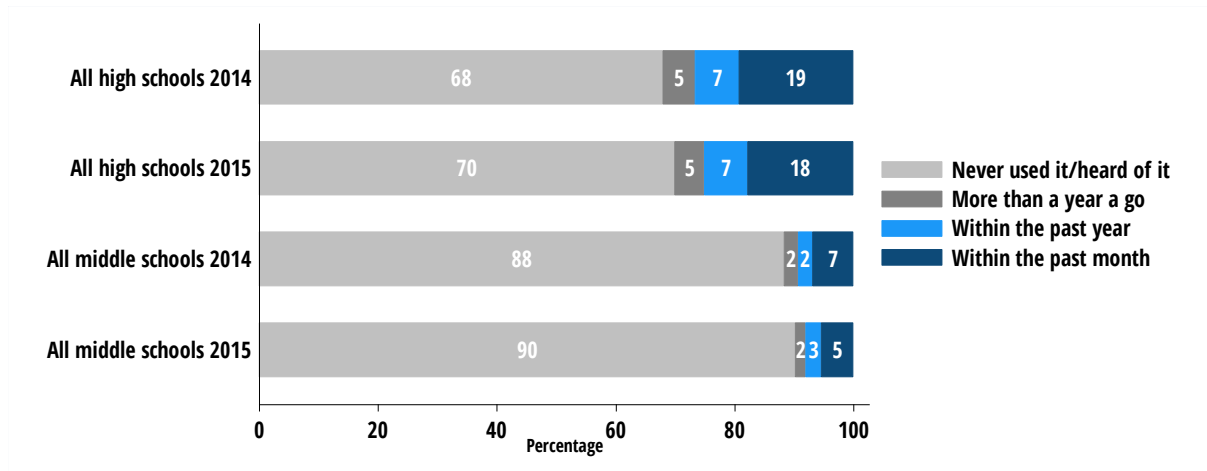


**Q28f. During the school year, how many times have you experienced advertisements (TV, radio, billboard, magazine, Internet, etc.) for alcohol products?**

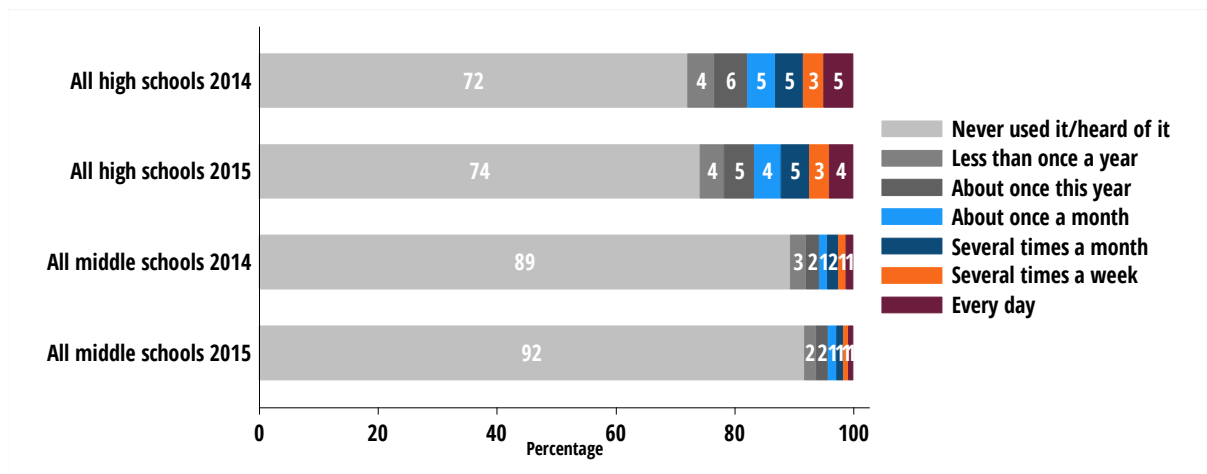


## MARIJUANA:

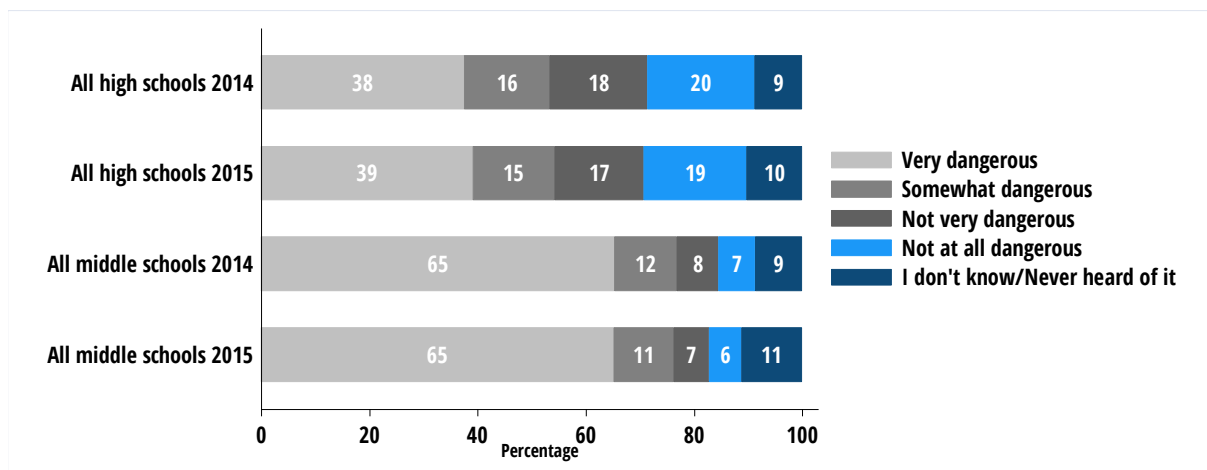
Q20d: What is the most recently you have used marijuana?



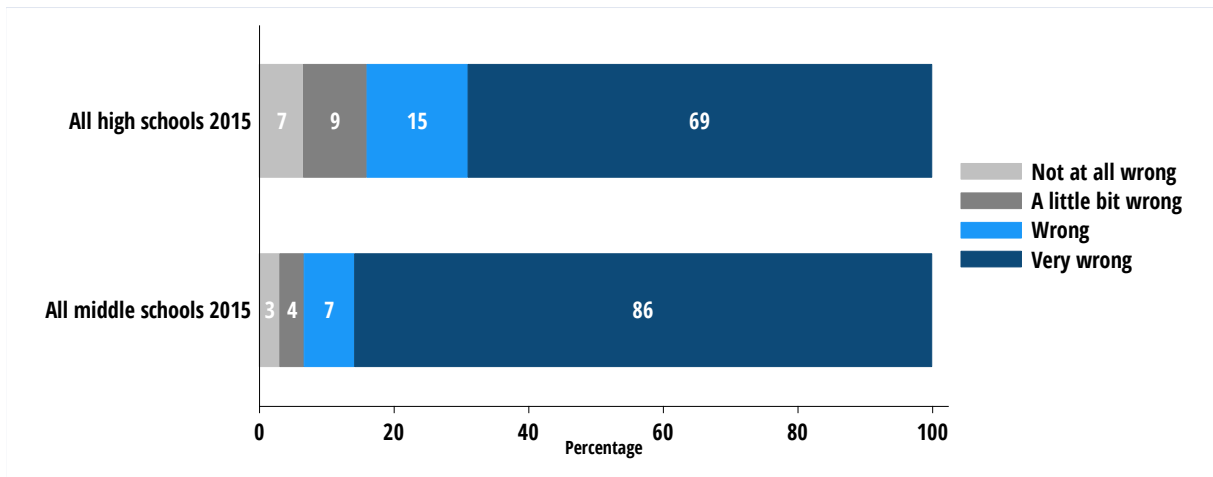
Q21d: During this year, how often did you use marijuana?



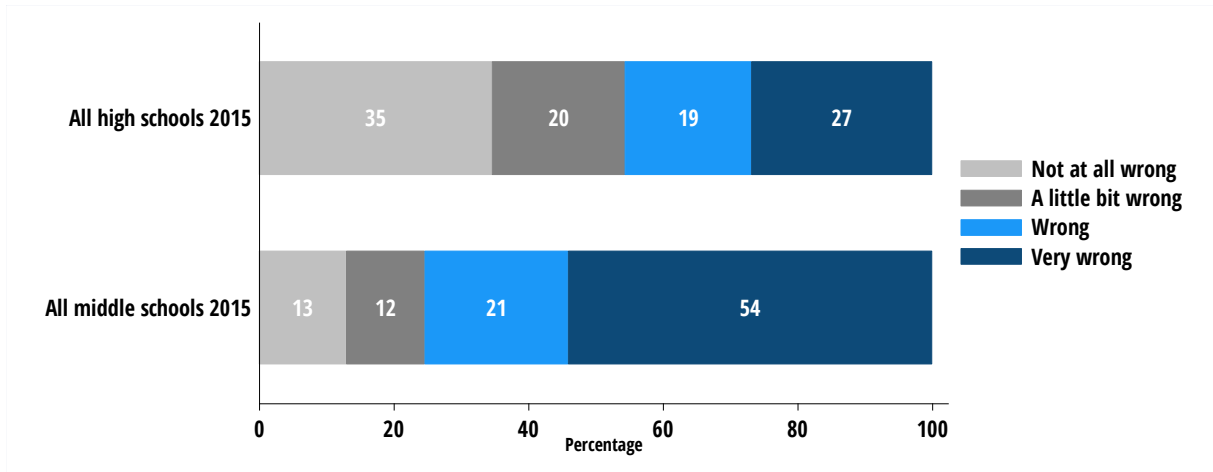
Q25d: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use marijuana?



**Q26d: How wrong do your parents feel it would be if you used marijuana?**

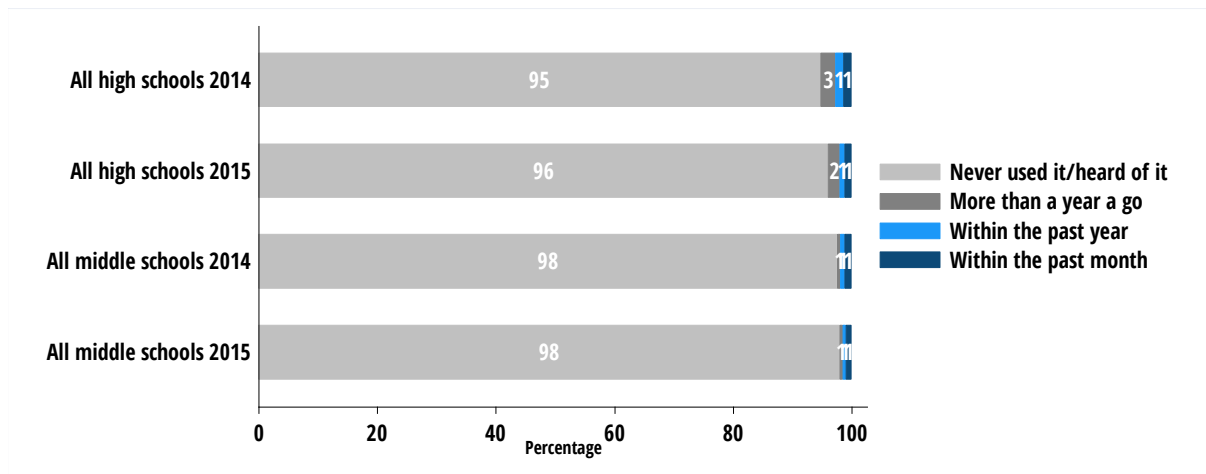


**Q27d: How wrong do your friends feel it would be if you used marijuana?**

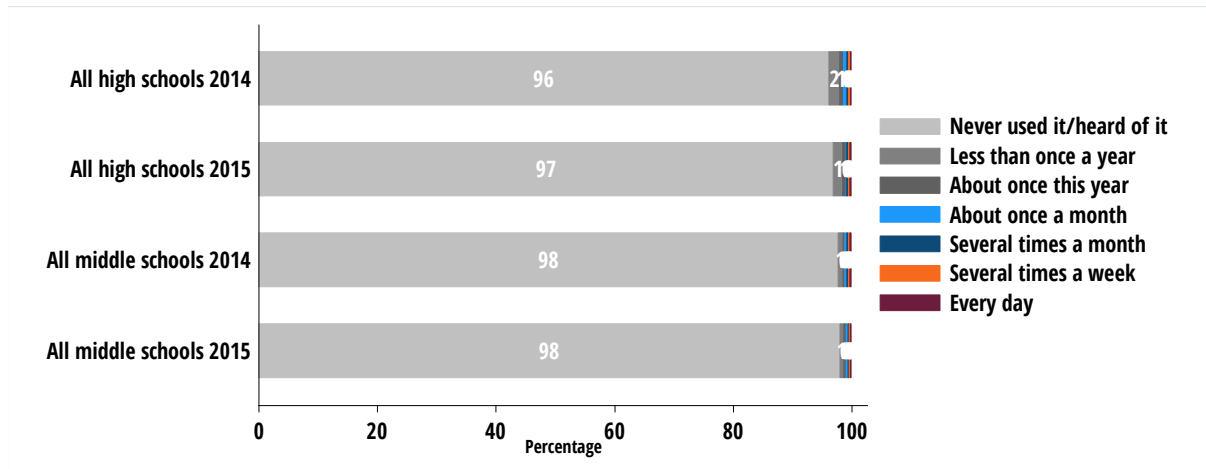


## K2 OR SPICE:

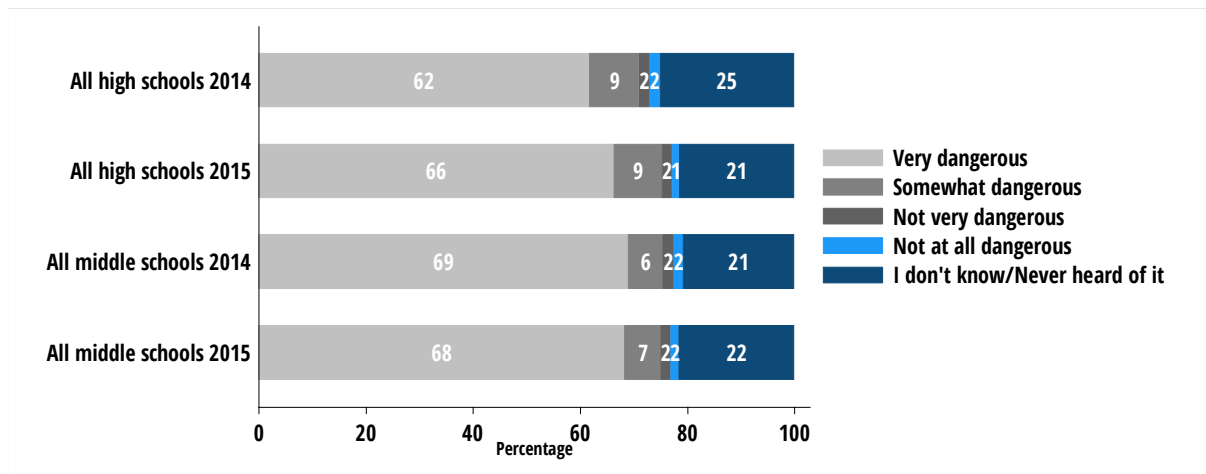
Q20e: What is the most recently you have used K2 or Spice?



Q21e: During this year, how often did you use K2 or Spice?

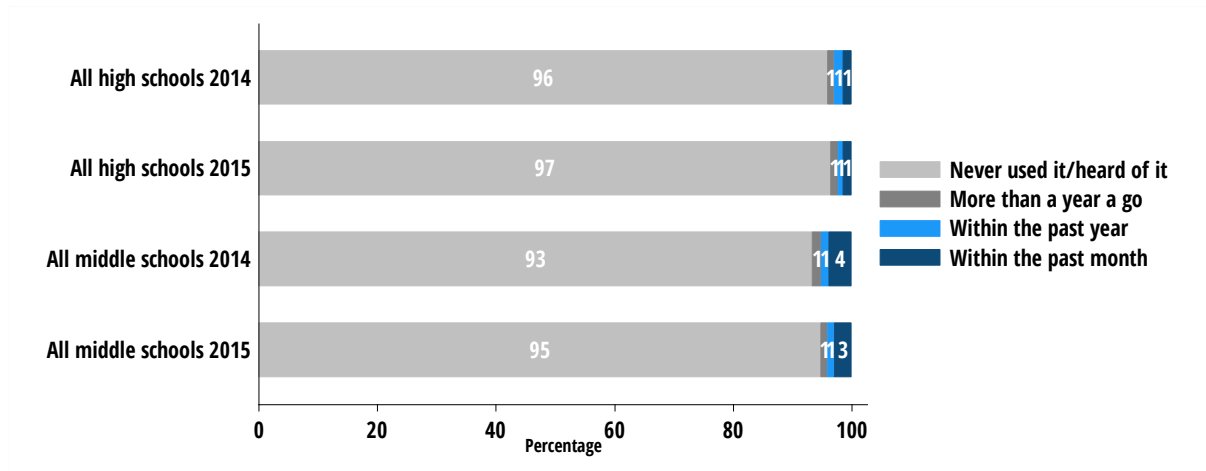


Q25e: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use K2 or Spice?

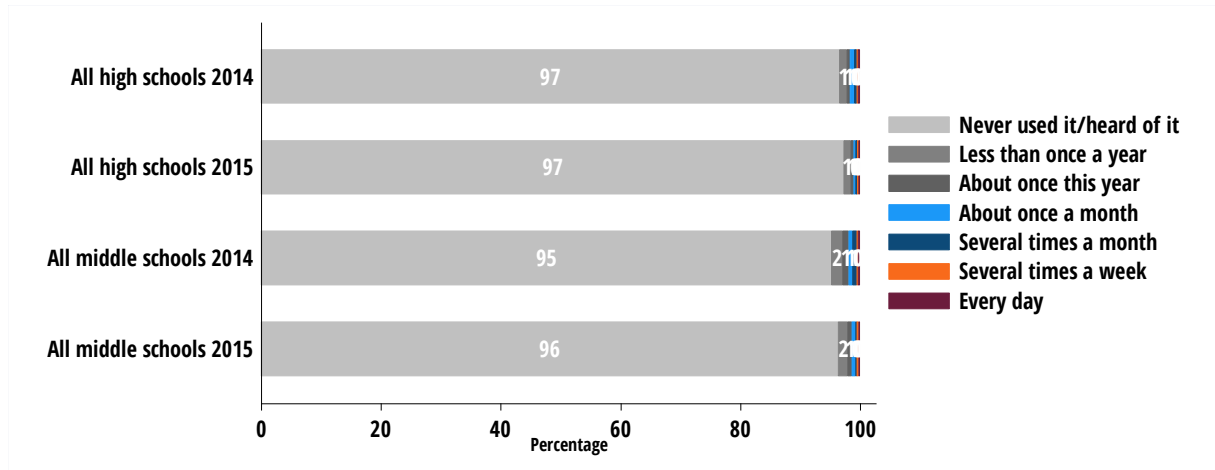


**INHALANTS:**

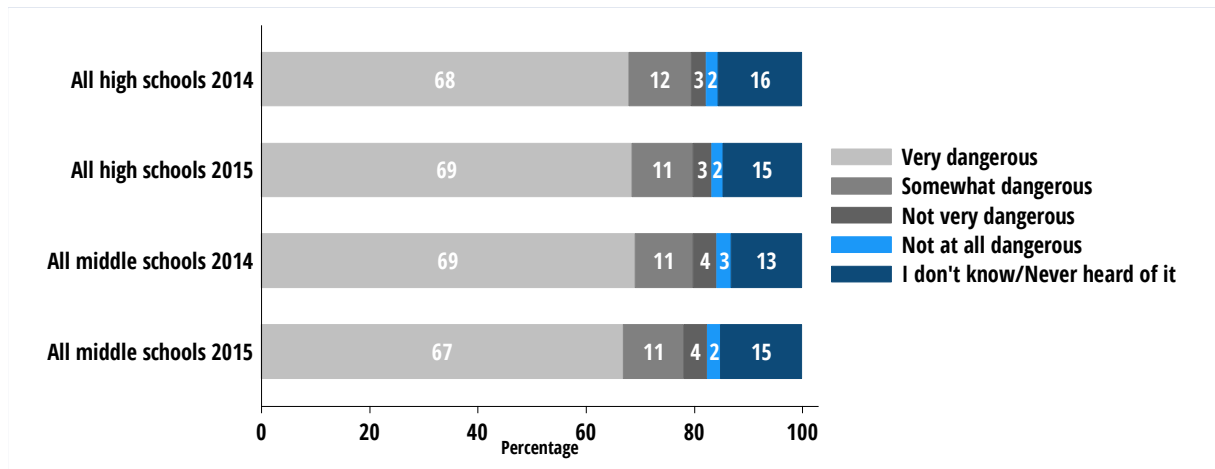
**Q20f: What is the most recently you have used inhalants?**



**Q21f: During this year, how often did you use inhalants?**

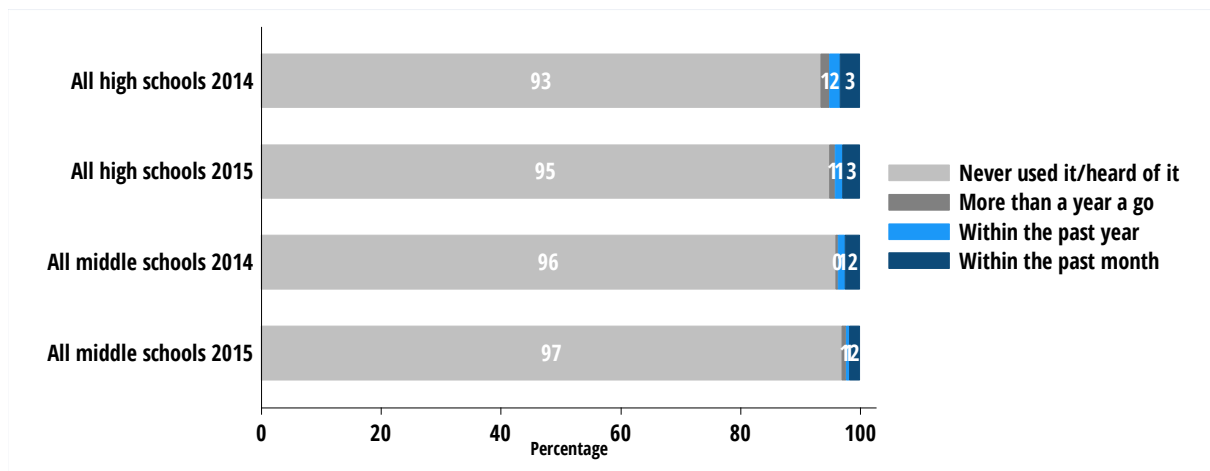


**Q25f: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use inhalants?**

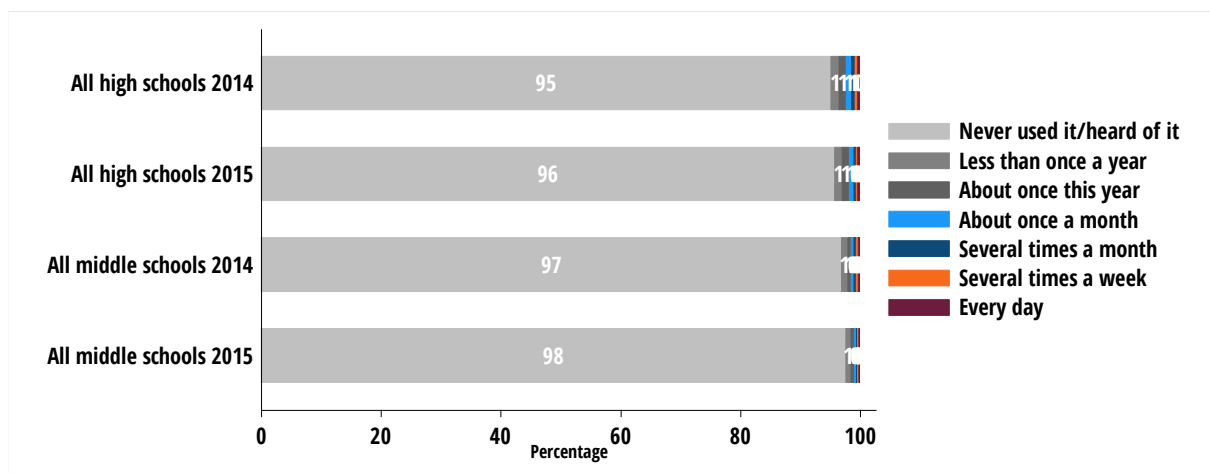


## OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATION:

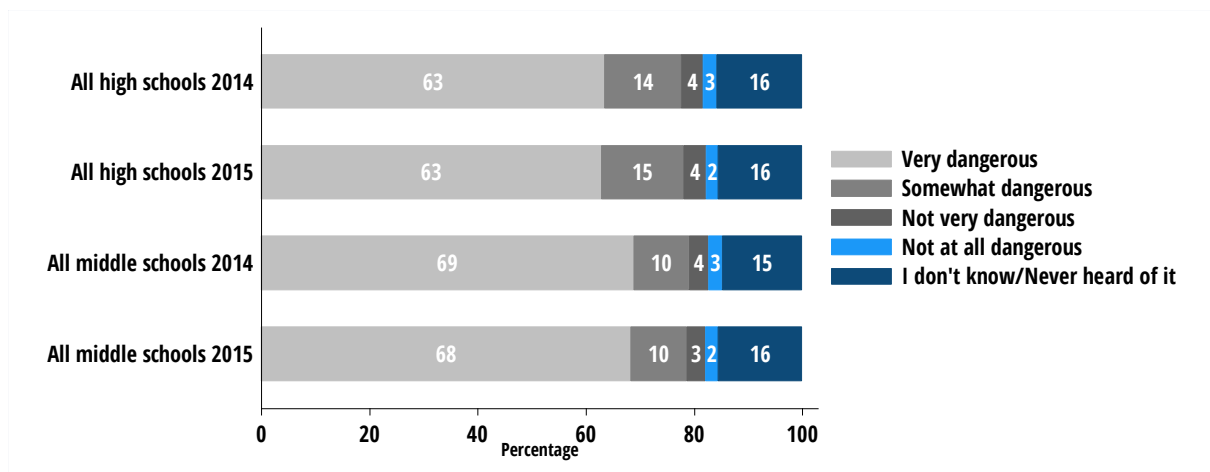
Q20g: What is the most recently you have used over-the-counter medication to get high?



Q21g: During this year, how often did you use over-the-counter medication to get high?

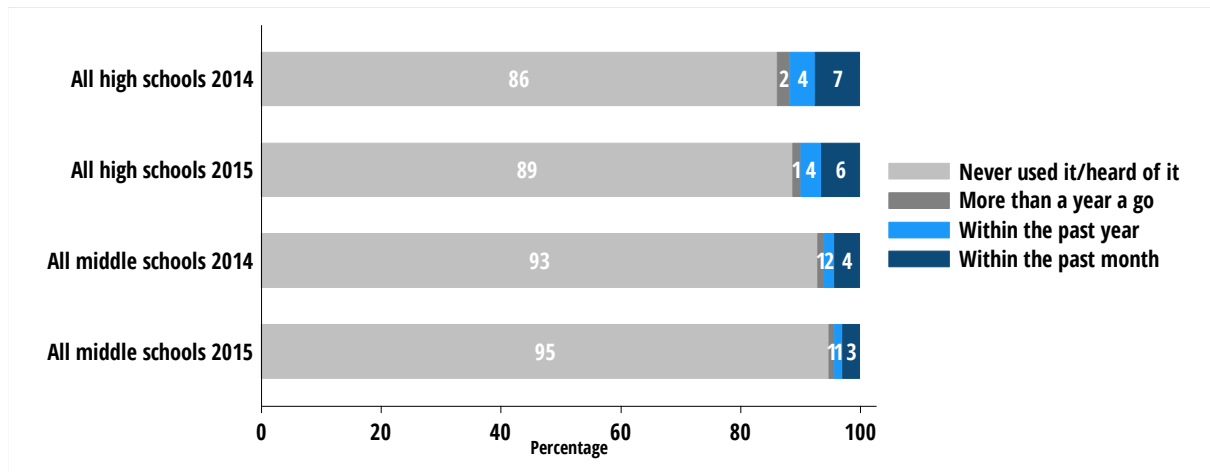


Q25g: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use over-the-counter medication to get high?

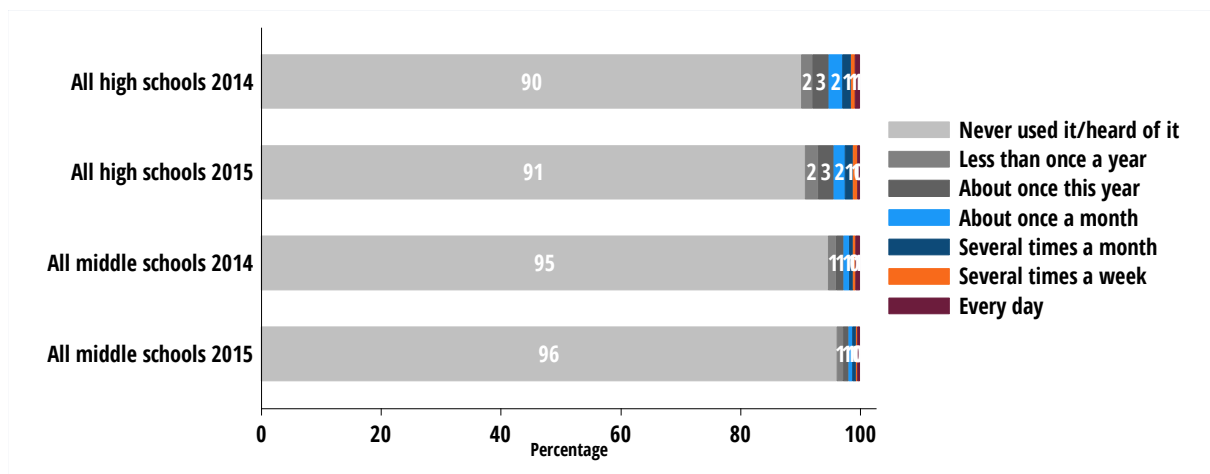


## PRESCRIPTION DRUGS:

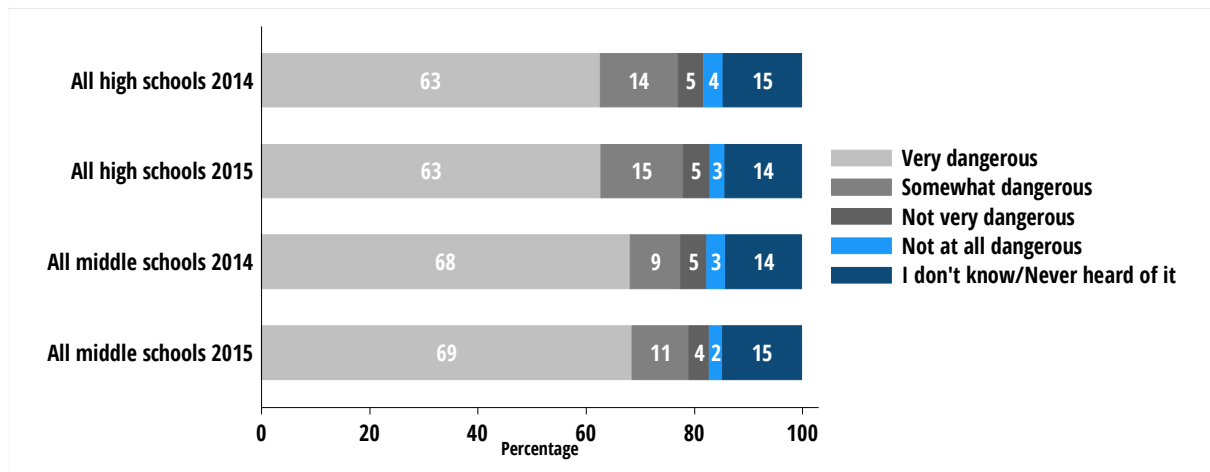
**Q20h: What is the most recently you have used prescription drugs that were not prescribed to you to get high?**



**Q21h: During this year, how often did you use prescription drugs that were not prescribed to you to get high?**



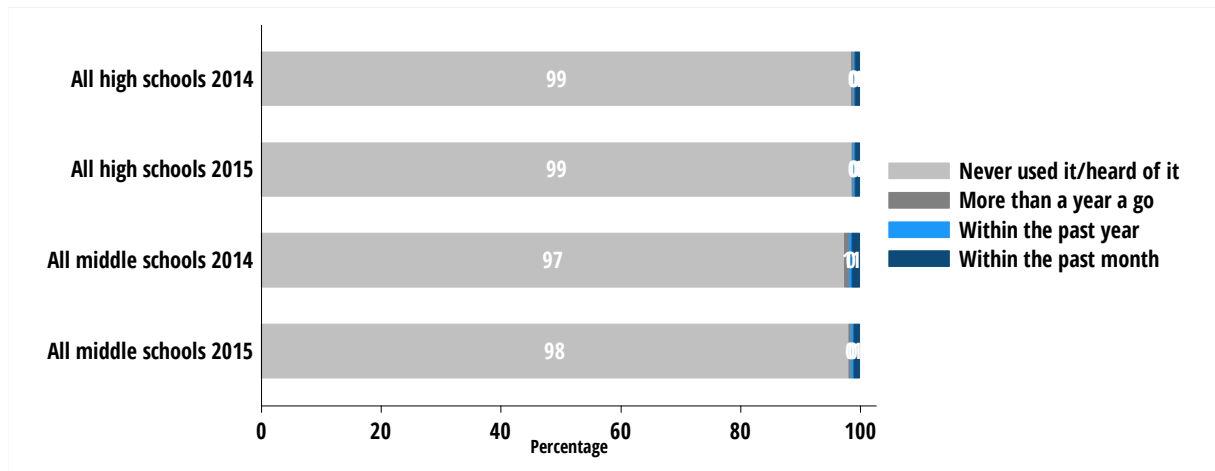
**Q25h: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to you to get high?**



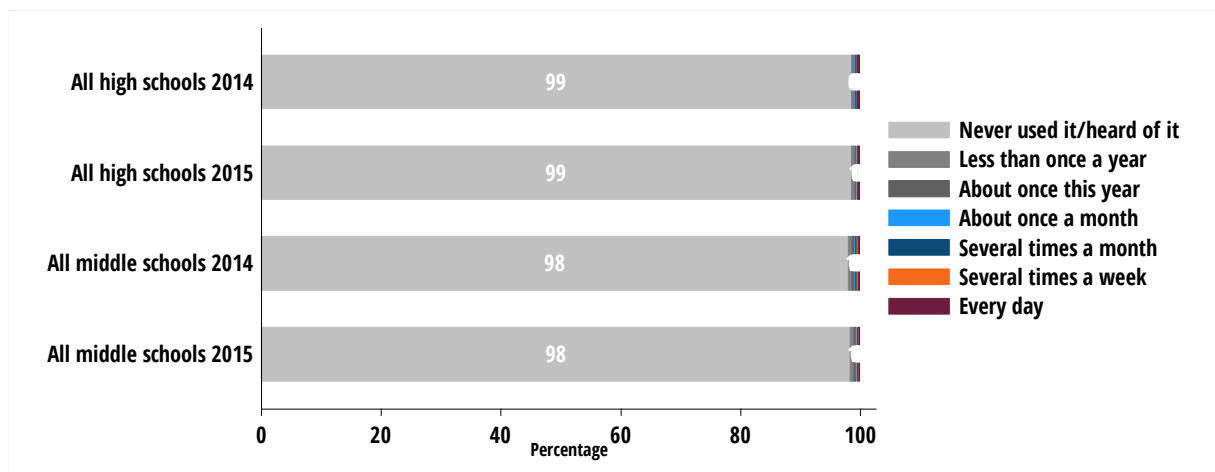


## STERIODS OR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS:

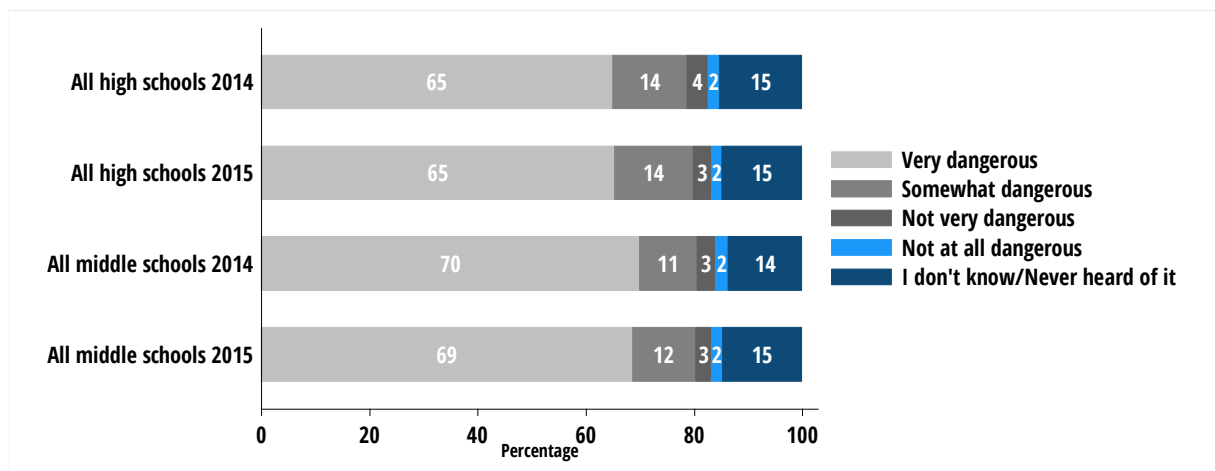
Q20i: What is the most recently you have used steroids or performance-enhancing drugs?



Q21i: During this year, how often did you use steroids or performance-enhancing drugs?

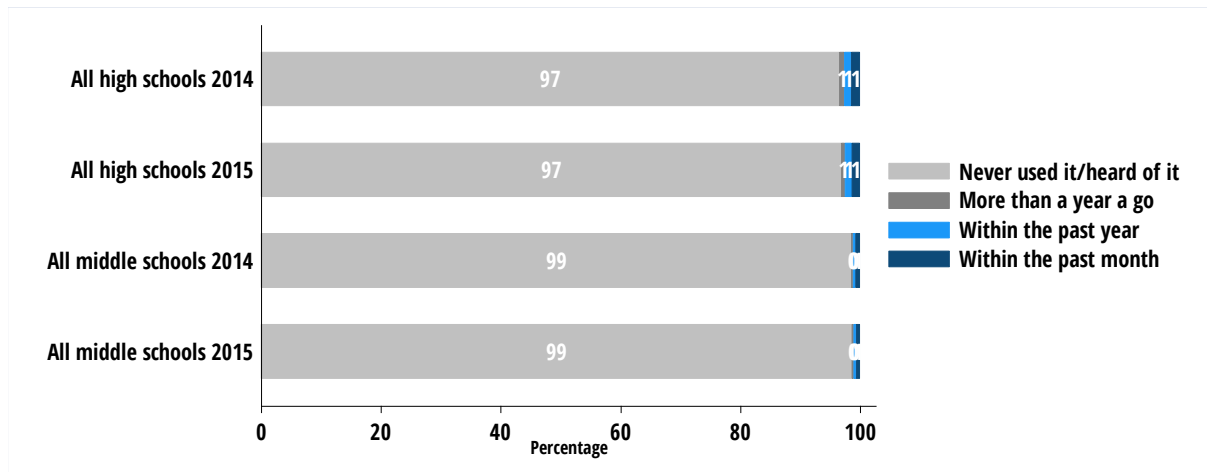


Q25i: How dangerous is it for kids your age to use steroids or performance-enhancing drugs?

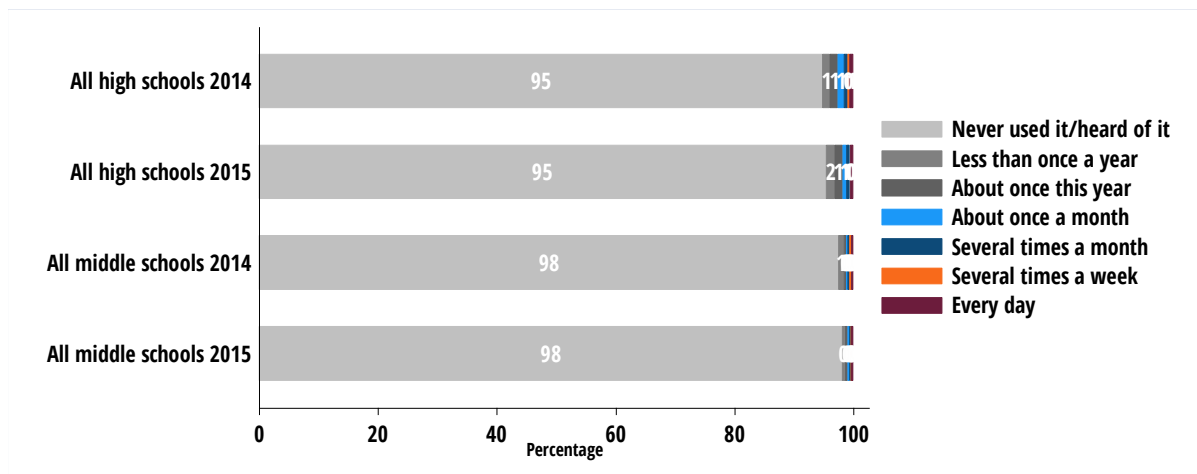


## OTHER ILLEGAL DRUGS:

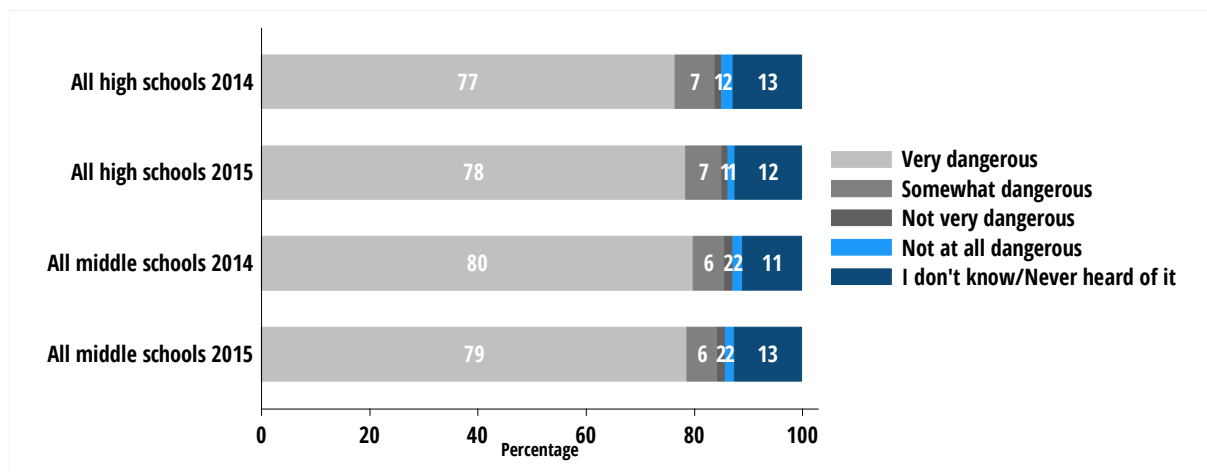
Q20j-o: What is the most recently you have used other illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, ecstasy, hallucinogens, heroin, methamphetamines)?



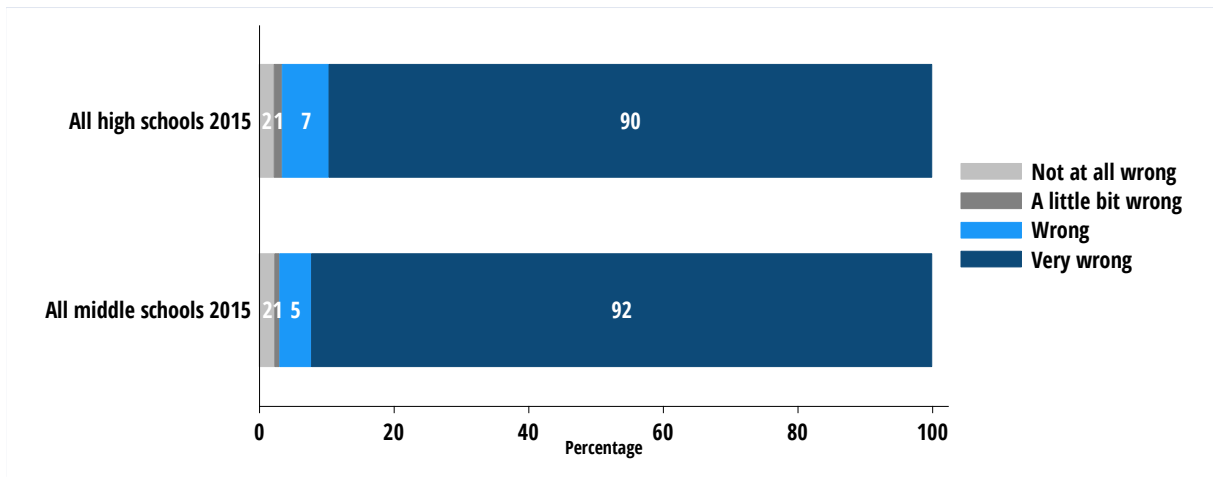
Q21j: During this school year, how often have you used other illegal drugs?



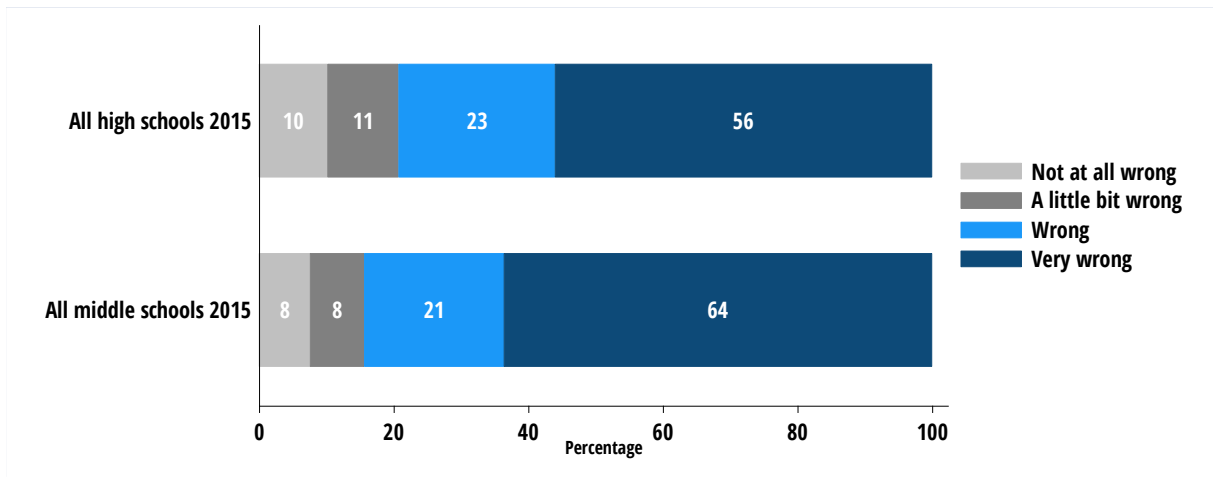
Q25j: How dangerous do you think it is for kids your age to use other illegal drugs?



**Q26e: How wrong do your parents feel it would be if you used other illegal drugs?**

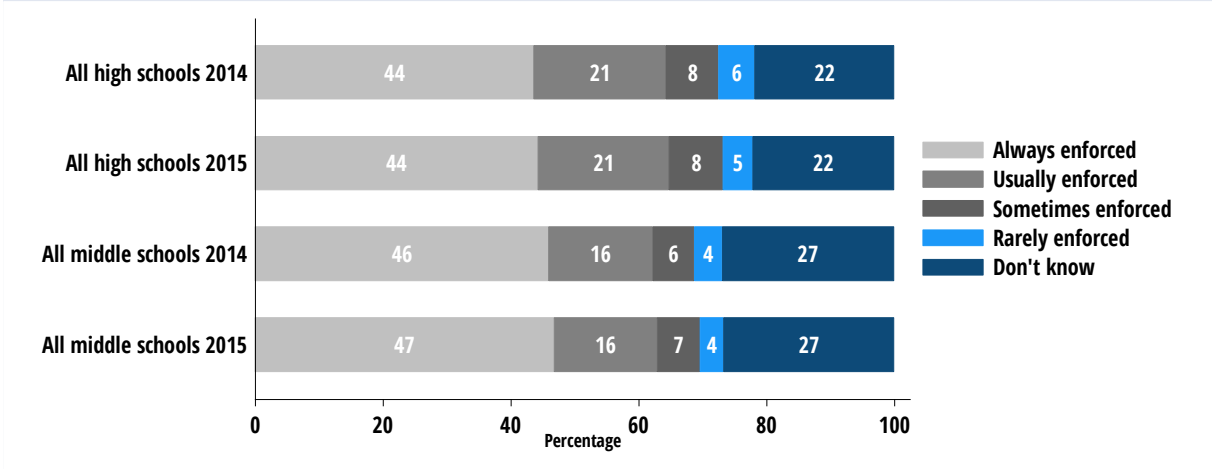


**Q27e: How wrong do your friends feel it would be if you used other illegal drugs?**



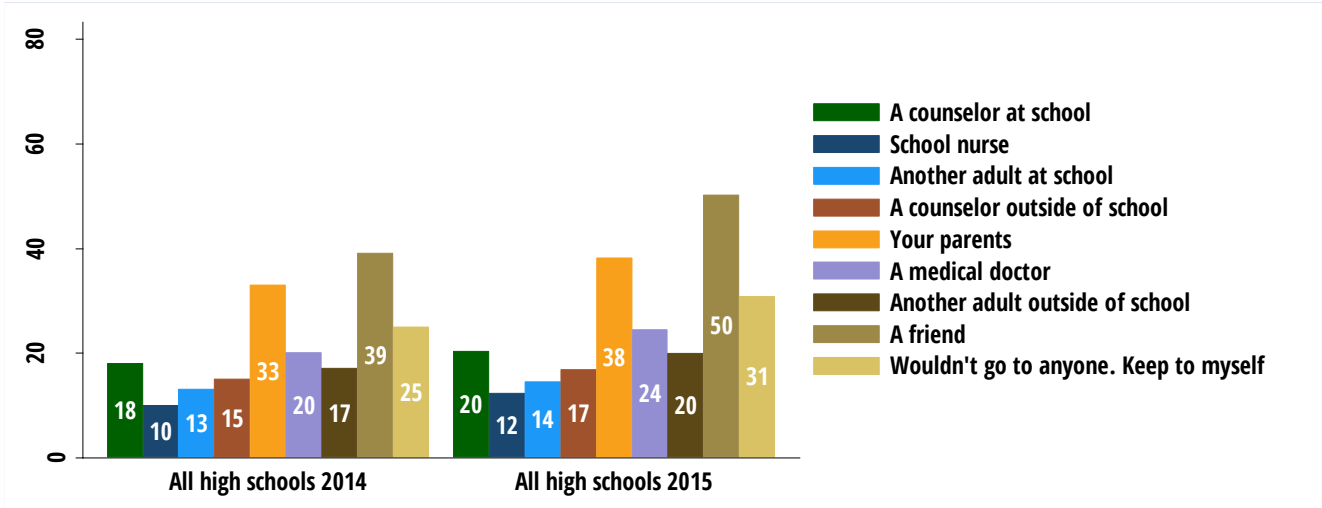
# Opinions, Experience, and Exposure

Q13: Are school rules about drug, alcohol, and tobacco use enforced by school staff?

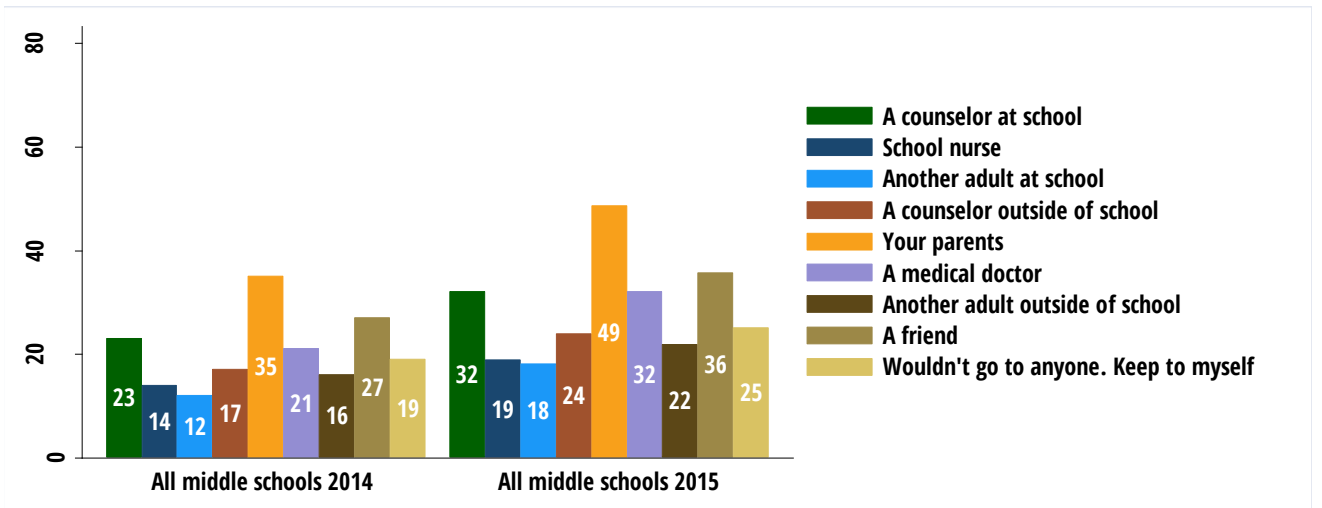


Q24a: If you had a drug or alcohol problem and needed help, who would you go to?

High school:

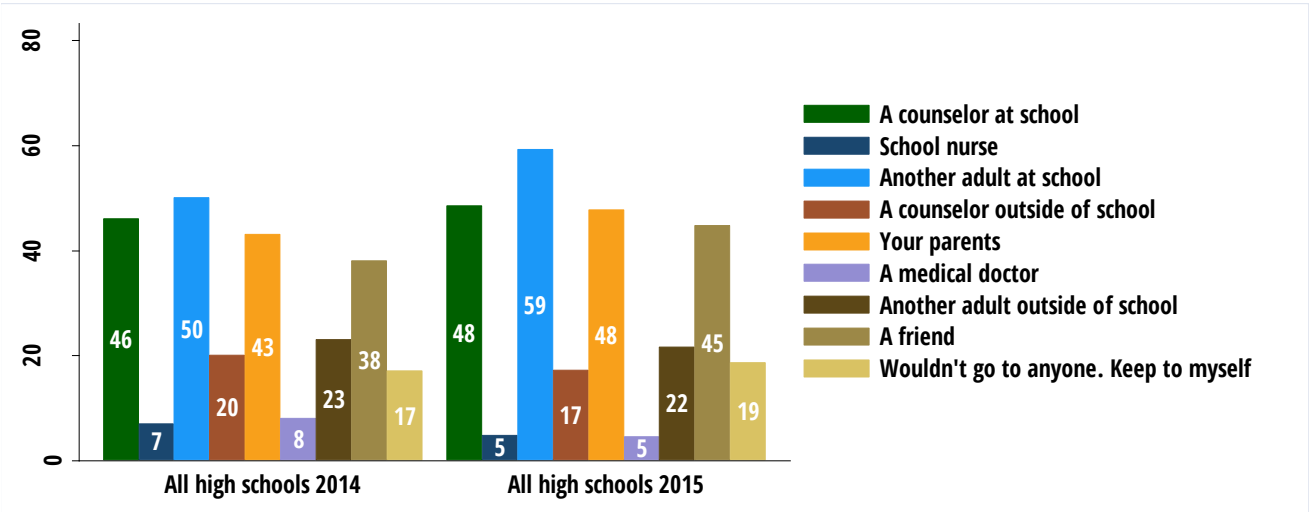


Middle school:

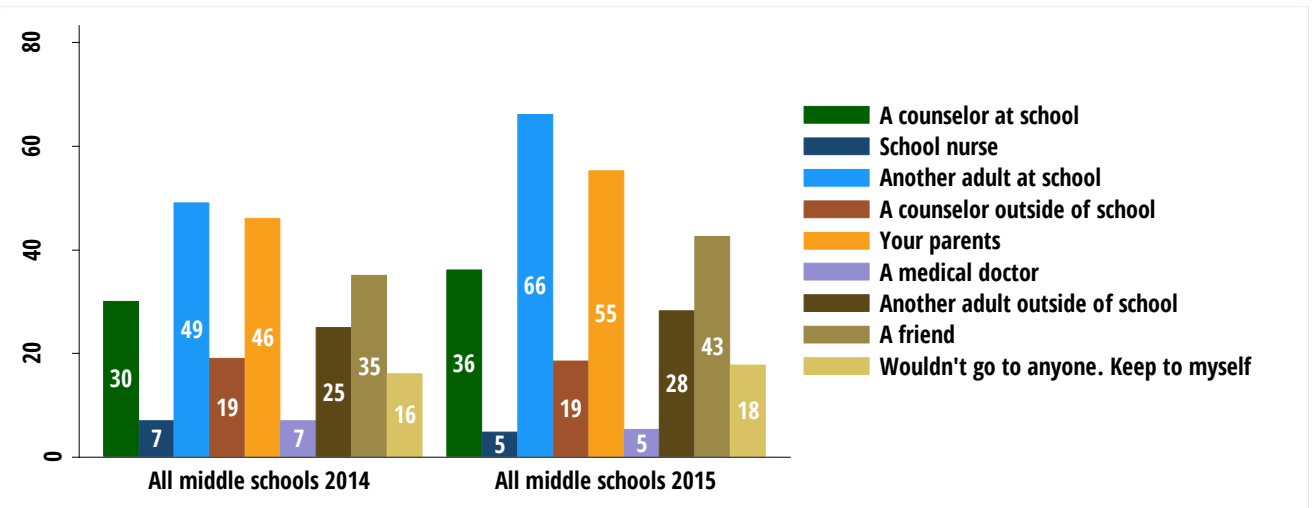


**Q24b: If you had problems with your schoolwork or academics and needed help, who would you go to?**

**High school:**

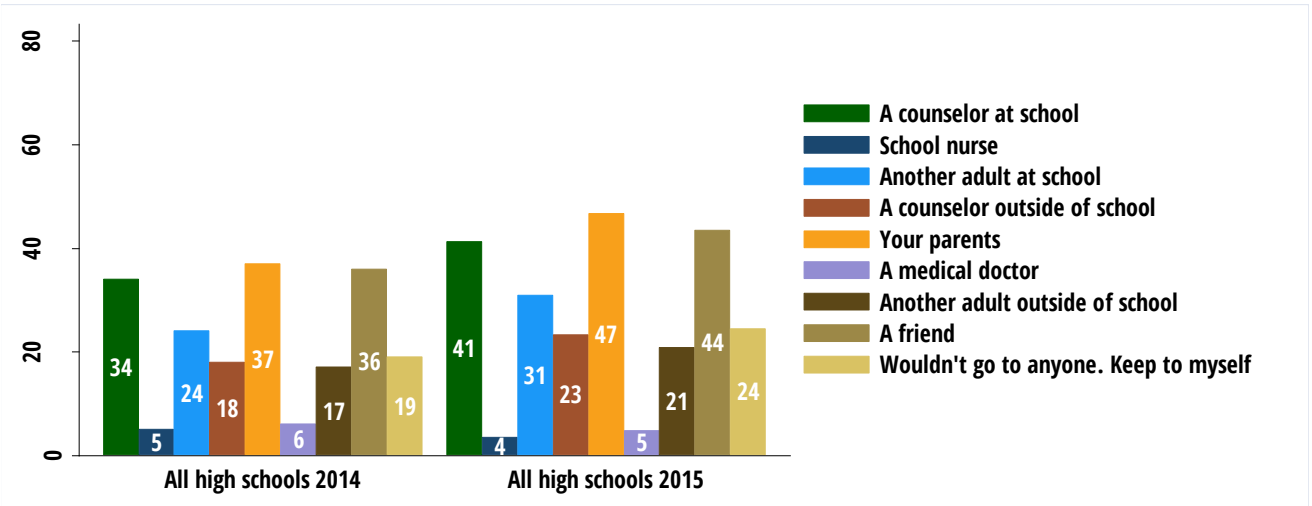


**Middle school:**

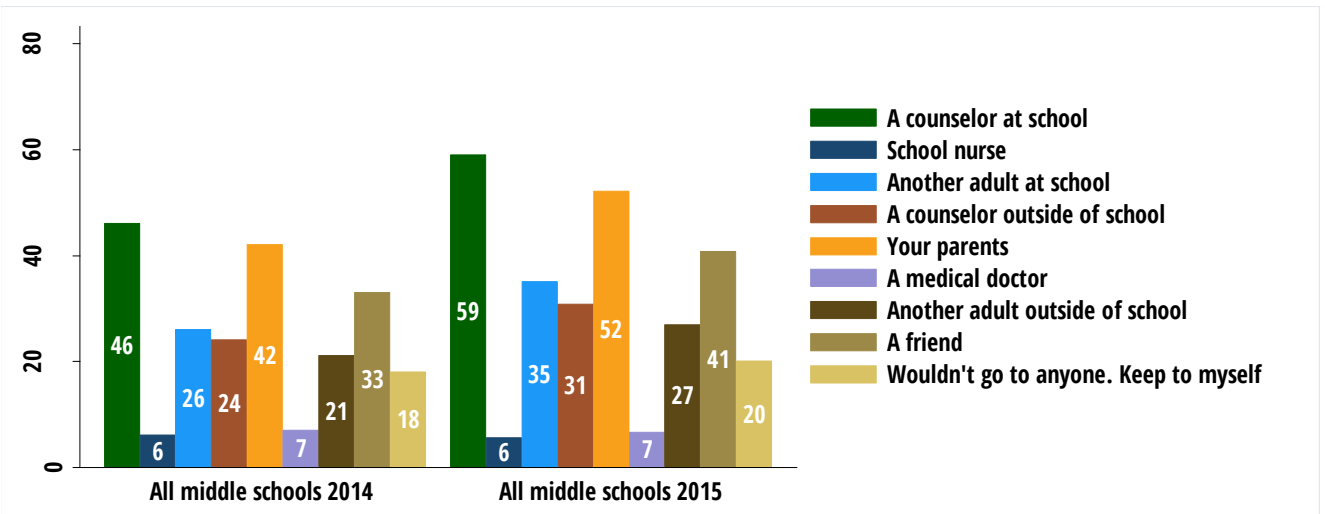


**Q24c: If you experienced bullying, violence, or threats to personal safety and needed help, who would you go to?**

**High school:**

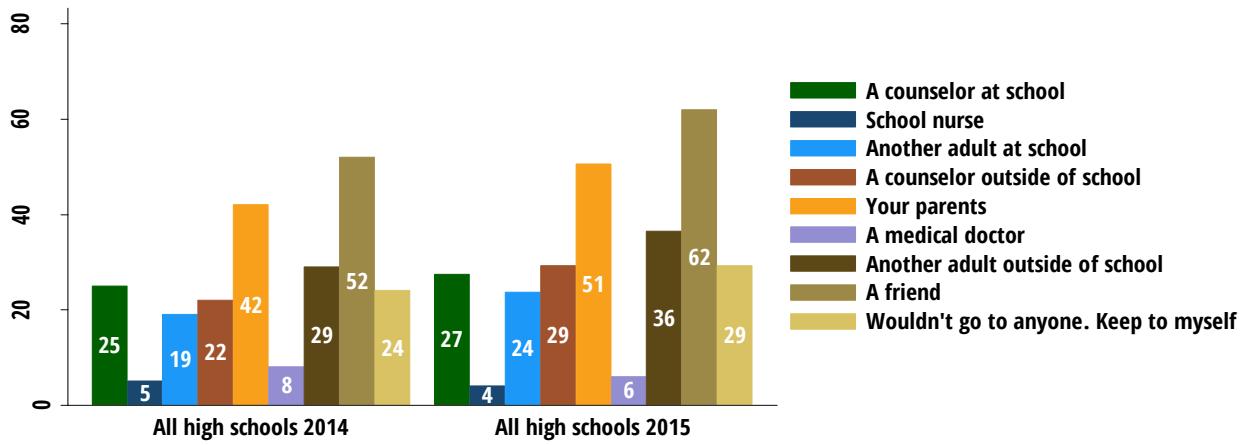


**Middle school:**

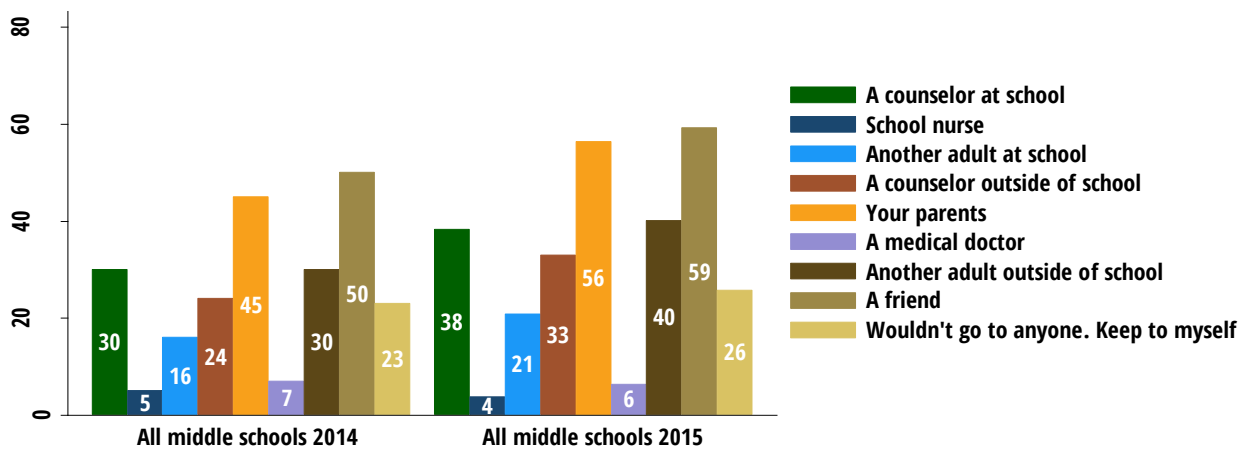


**Q24d: If you experienced social problems or problems with friends or family and needed help, who would you go to?**

**High School:**

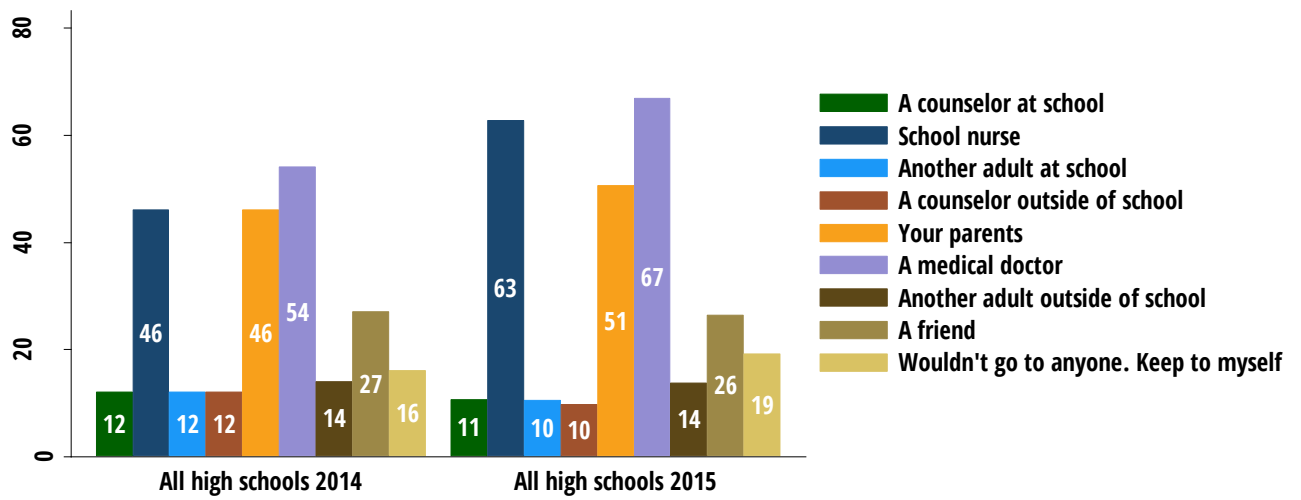


**Middle school:**

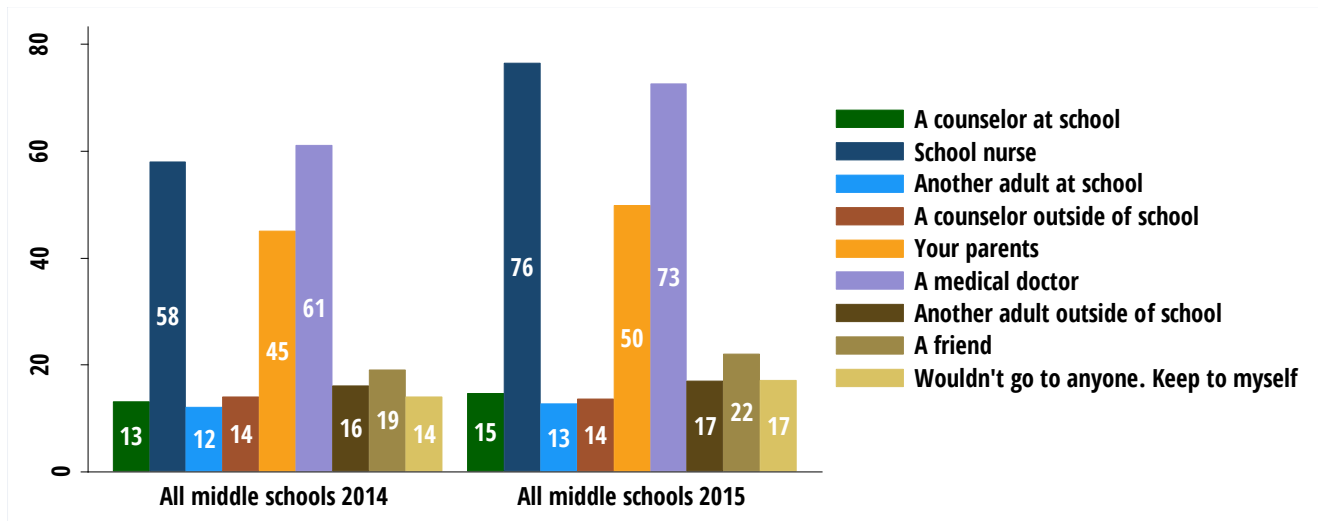


**Q24e: If you experienced problems with your health and needed help, who would you go to?**

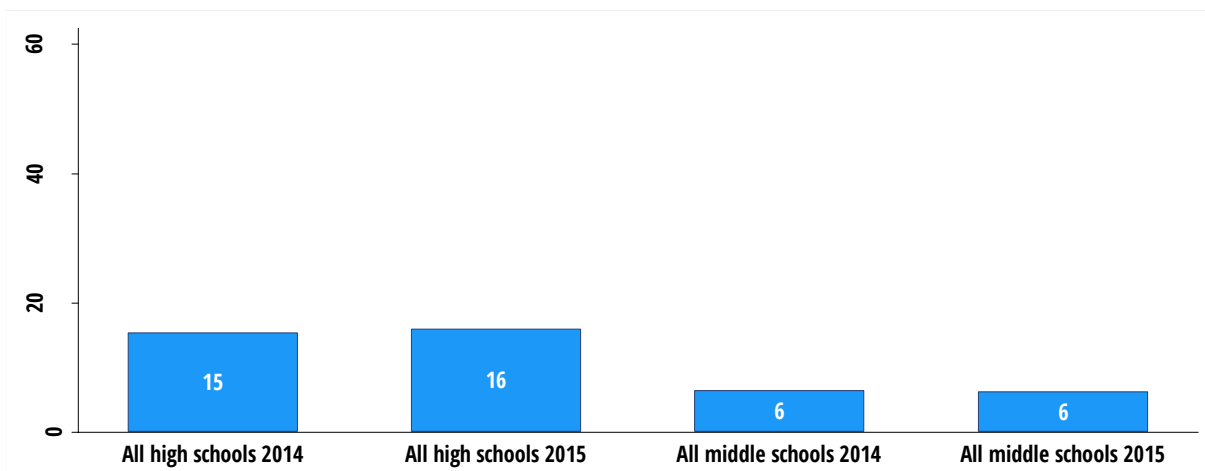
**High school:**



**Middle school:**

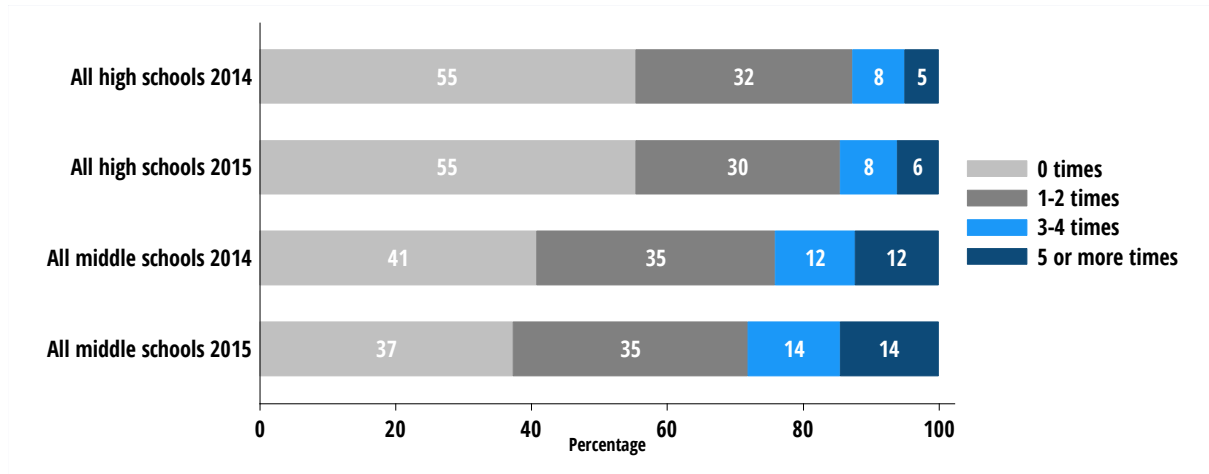


**Q19: During this school year, have you attended any class while "high," "stoned," or "drunk" on any substance?**

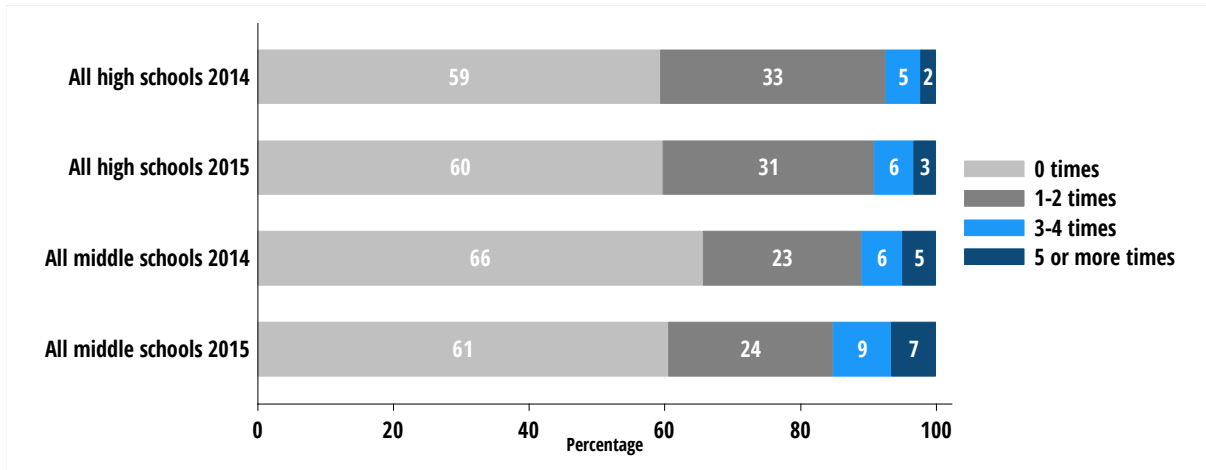




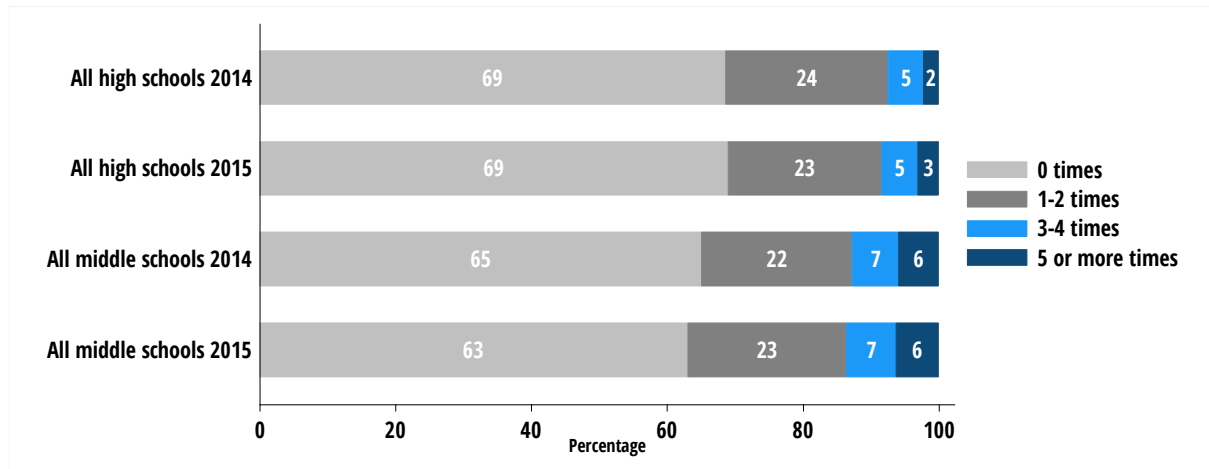
**Q28a. During the school year, how many times have you experienced classes in which you learned and practiced ways of resisting and avoiding substance abuse?**



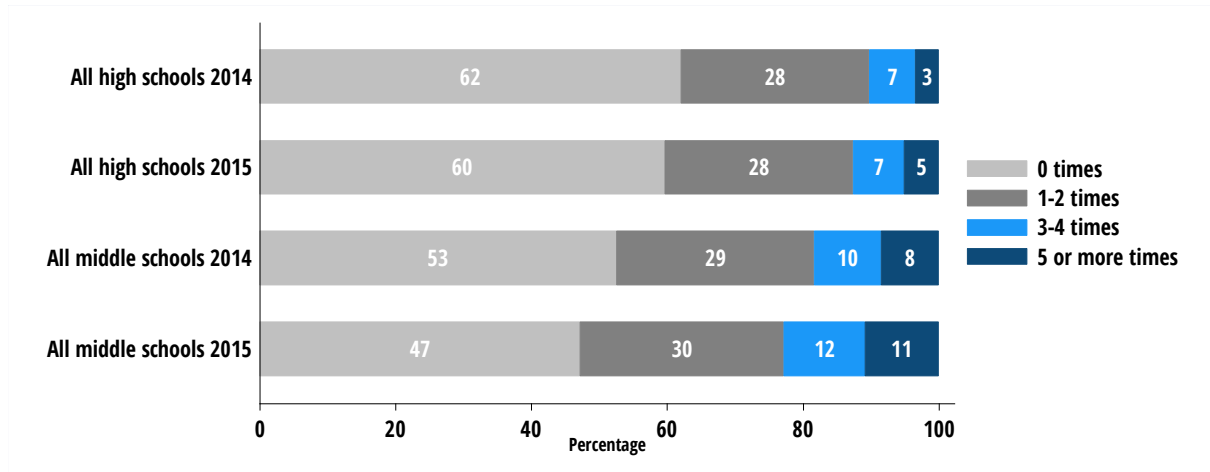
**Q28b. During the school year, how many times have you experienced presentations by people who recovered from alcohol and drug abuse?**



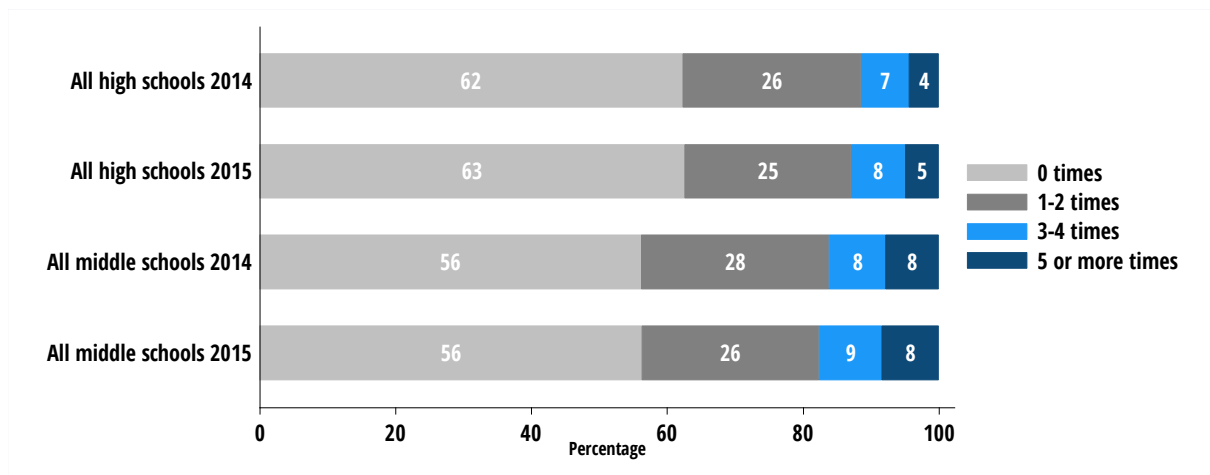
**Q28c. During the school year, how many times have you experienced presentations by students who tell about how to avoid substance abuse?**



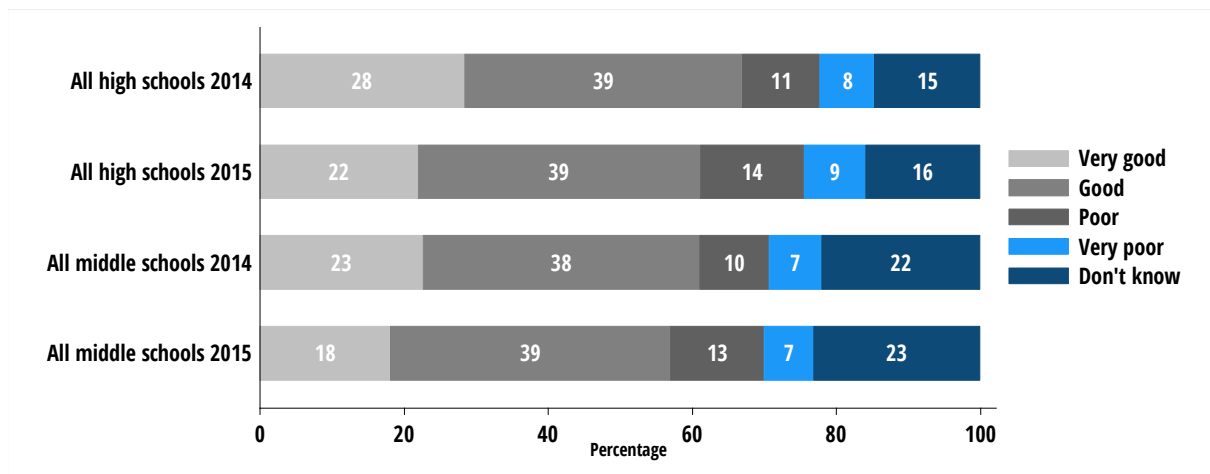
**Q28d. During the school year, how many times have you received information about counseling or services to help kids quit smoking and stop substance abuse?**



**Q28e. During the school year, how many times have you experienced printed materials with cartoons and stories about how students avoid substance abuse?**



**Q18. How good is your ability to cope with stress and negative emotions?**



## AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Authors

Laura Stelling, MPAff, M.Ed.

Karen Looby, Ph.D.

Carol Pazera, M.S., M.A.

### Department of Research and Evaluation



1111 West 6th Street, Suite D-350 | Austin, TX 78703-5338  
512.414.1724 | fax: 512.414.1707  
[www.austinisd.org/dre](http://www.austinisd.org/dre) | Twitter: @AISD\_DRE

October 2015  
Publication 14.124