

Student Mental Health

Longitudinal Trends in YRBS Data

School Funding Interim Commission (SFIC)

July 20-21, 2026

Prepared by

Becca Brown, LSD



What is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?

The YRBS is a national survey, conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that includes high school students from both private and public schools within the U.S.

*The YRBS is part of the larger **Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)**, a system of surveys that measure health-related behaviors and experiences that can lead to death and disability among youth and adults.*

Susan Court, former YRBS state coordinator and health enhancement specialist at the Montana Office of Public Instruction, explains the importance of CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and how it sheds light on the health issues students are facing. She explains how YRBSS data can be used to improve adolescent health and well-being.



Mental Health Lens: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_\(original_five-level_model\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_(original_five-level_model).png)



Mental Health

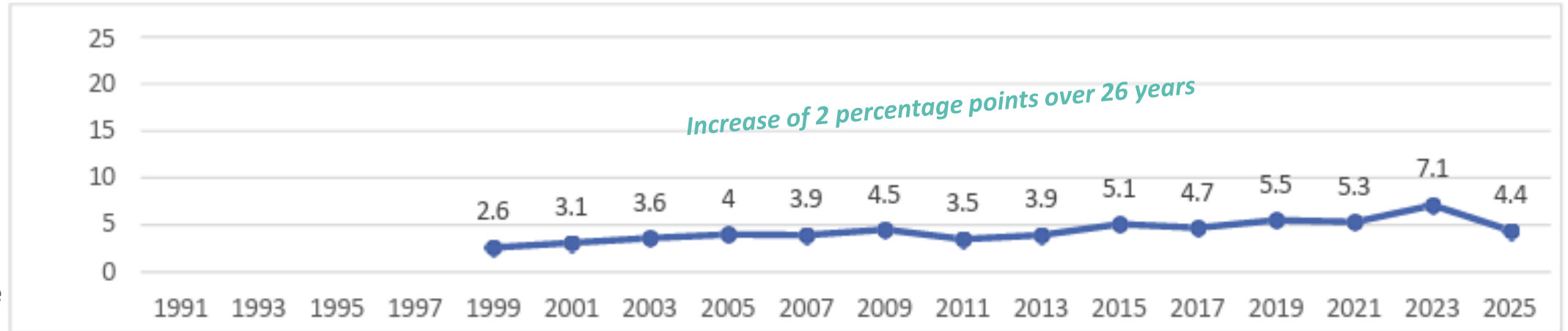
Physiological Needs



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_\(original_five-level_model\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_(original_five-level_model).png)

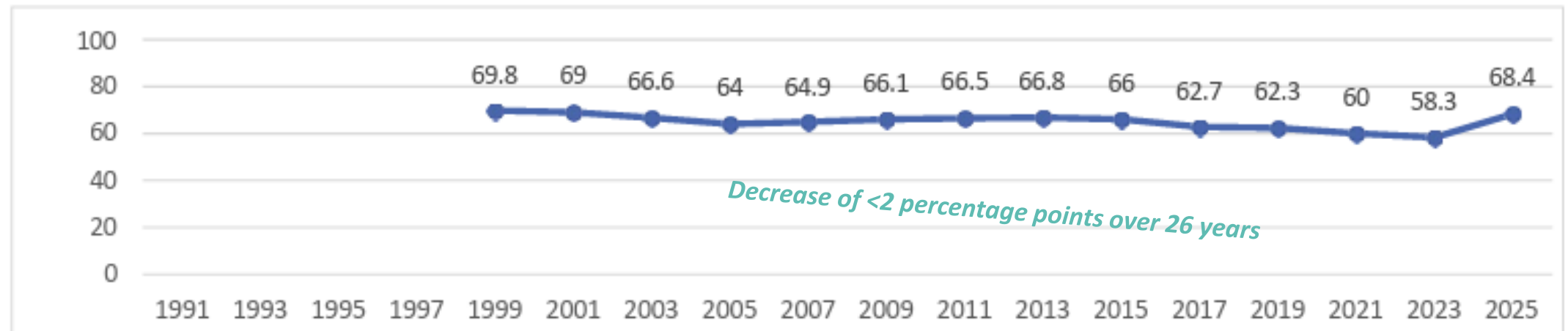
Mental Health and Diet

Did not eat vegetables (green salad, potatoes, carrots, or other vegetables, past 7 days)



Takeaway:
Despite an overall downward trend since 1999, more students reported consuming vegetables in 2025 than at any point in the past ~20 years.

Ate vegetables one or more times per day (past 7 days)



YRBS data 1999-2025

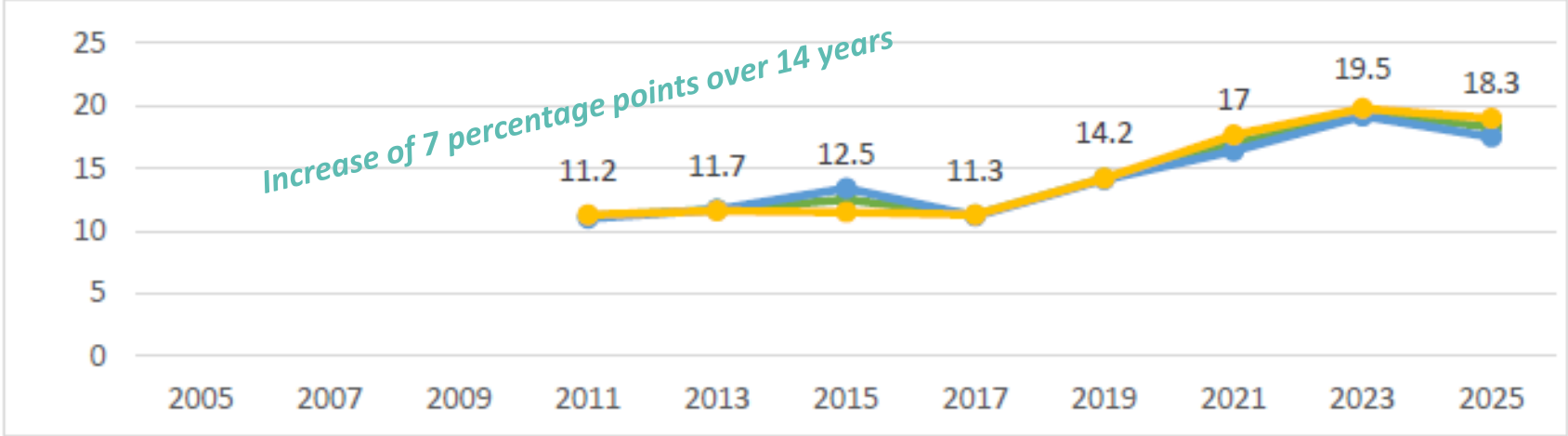
OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

Note that some questions have been added since data collection began in 1991. Longitudinal analysis covers the entire timespan that each question has been asked on the YRBS.

LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES
DIVISION

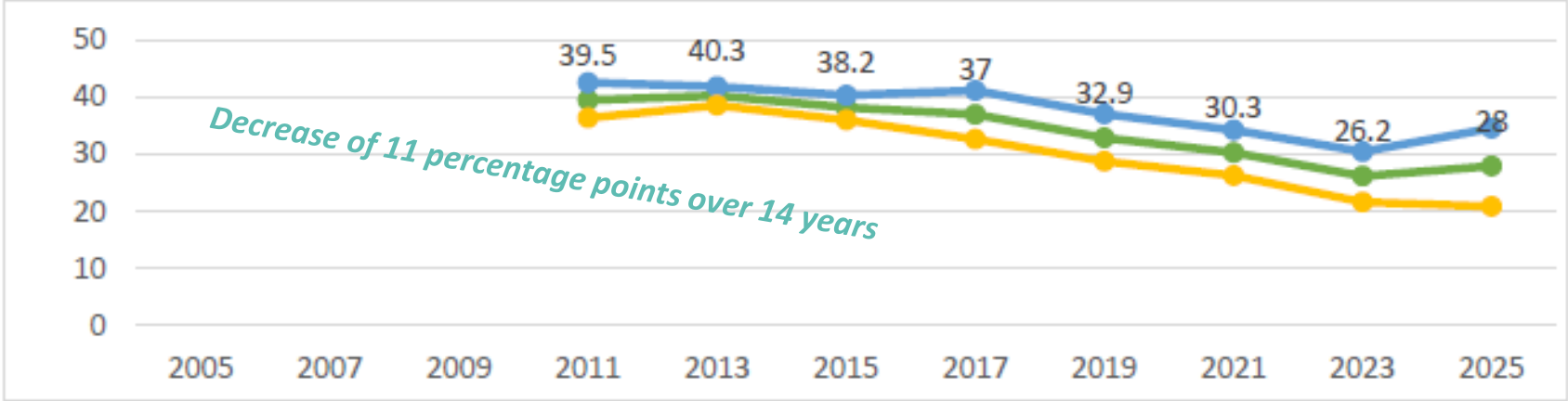
Mental Health and Diet

Did not eat breakfast (past seven days)



Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Ate breakfast on all seven days (past seven days)

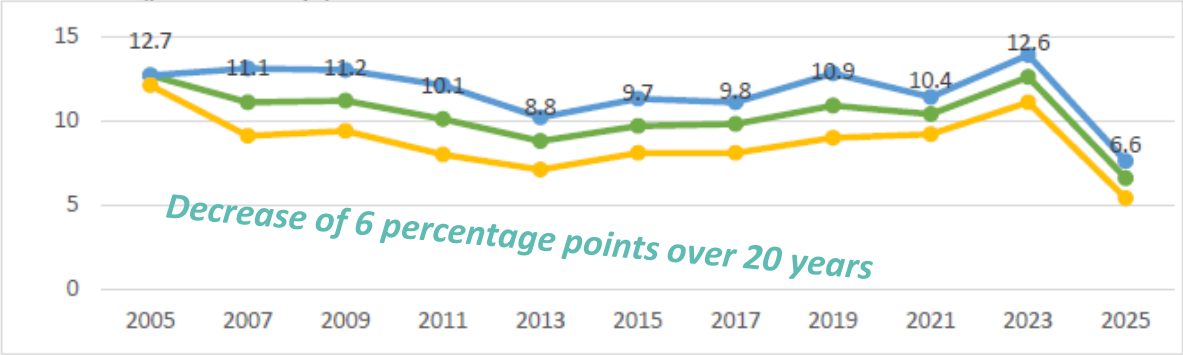


Takeaway:
Students report eating regular breakfasts at lower rates than in the past.

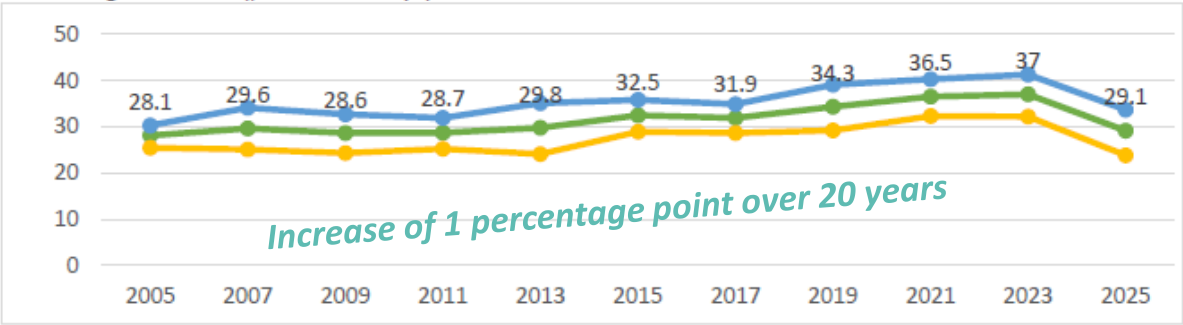


Mental Health and Diet

Did not eat fruit (past seven days)



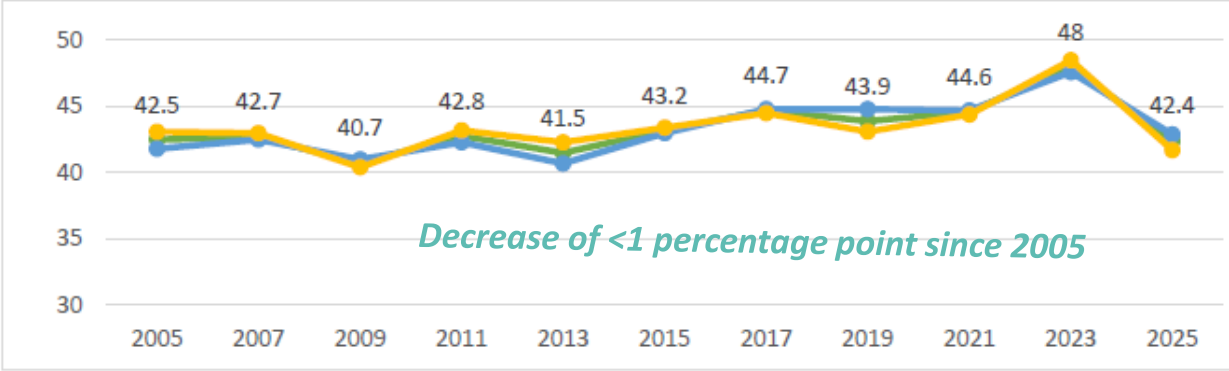
Did not eat a green salad (past seven days)



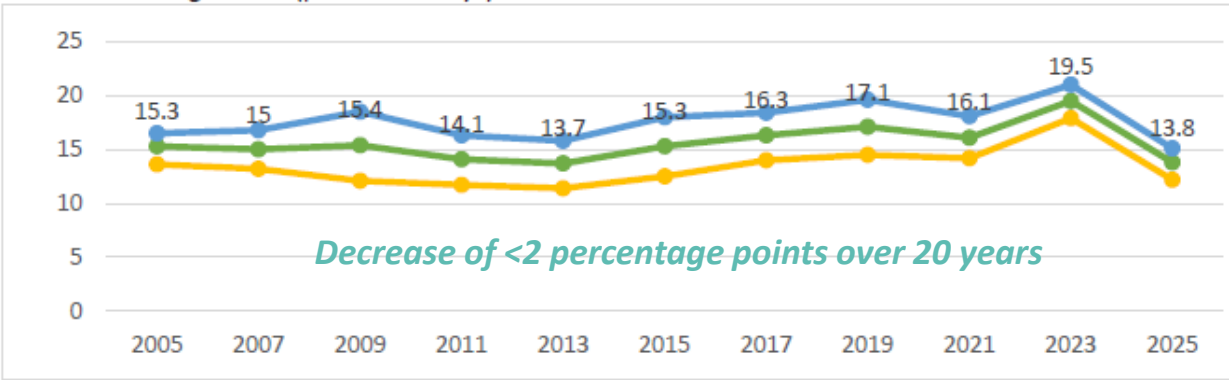
Takeaway:
Students report NOT eating fruits and vegetables at lower rates than in the past (indicating an increased number of students who DO eat fruits and vegetables)

Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Did not eat carrots (past seven days)

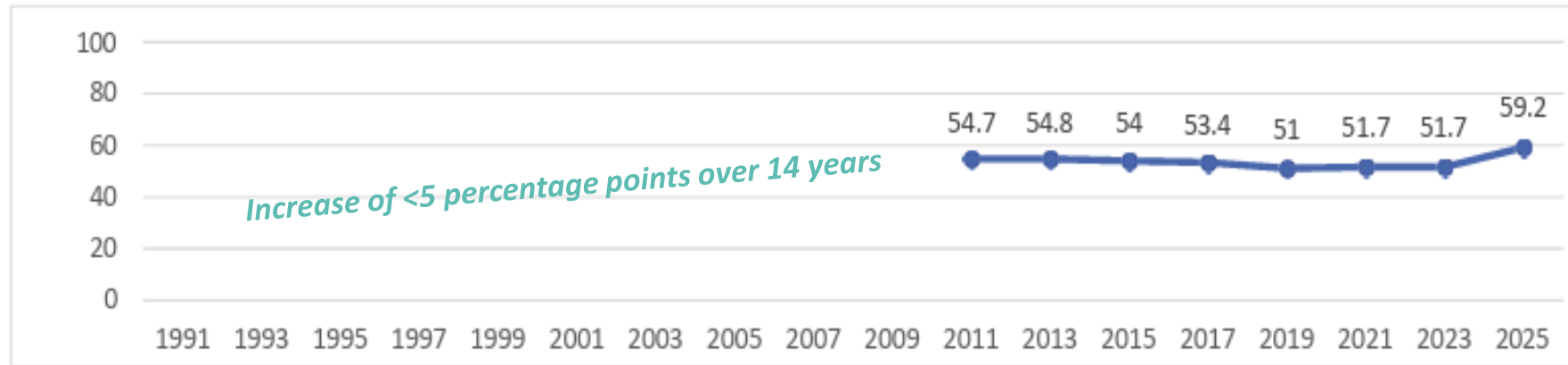


Did not eat other vegetables (past seven days)



Mental Health and Physical Activity

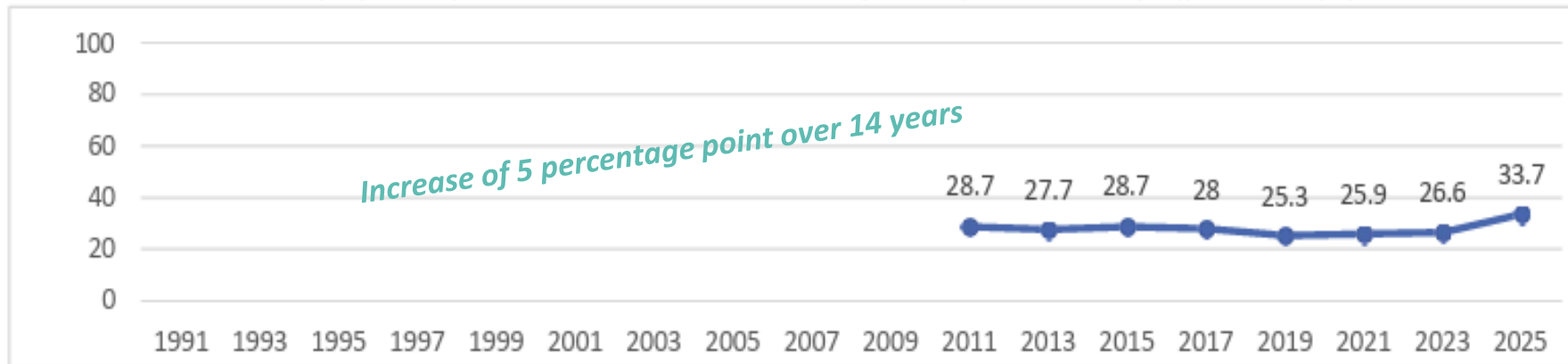
Were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more days (physical activity that increased their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time, past 7 days)



Takeaway:

Rates of physical activity have increased since the YRBS began collecting data in 2011.

Were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on all 7 days (past 7 days)



YRBS data 2011-2025

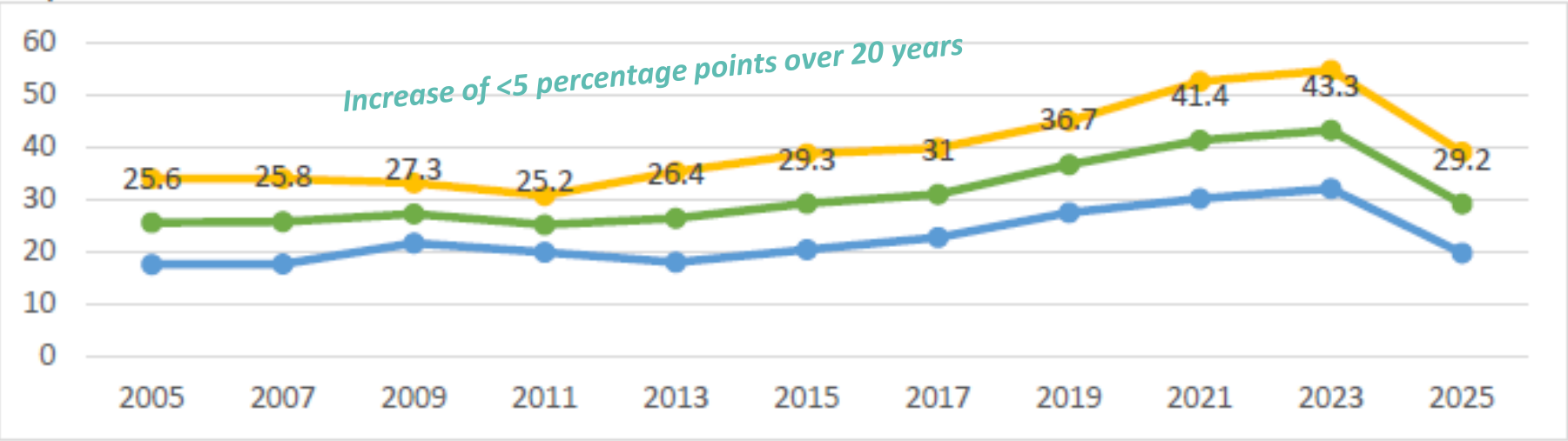
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Mental Health and Activity

Felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities (past 12 months)



Takeaway:
Students increasingly report feelings of sadness or hopelessness that are severe enough to limit the students' usual activities.

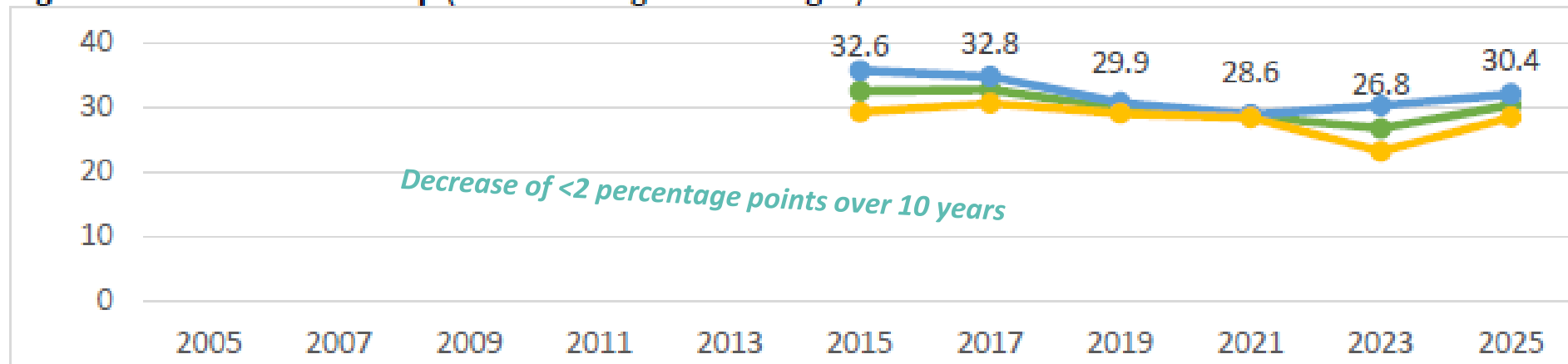
Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	



Mental Health and Sleep

Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Got eight or more hours of sleep (on an average school night)



Takeaway:

Students report getting adequate sleep at lower rates than in the past.



YRBS data 2015-2025

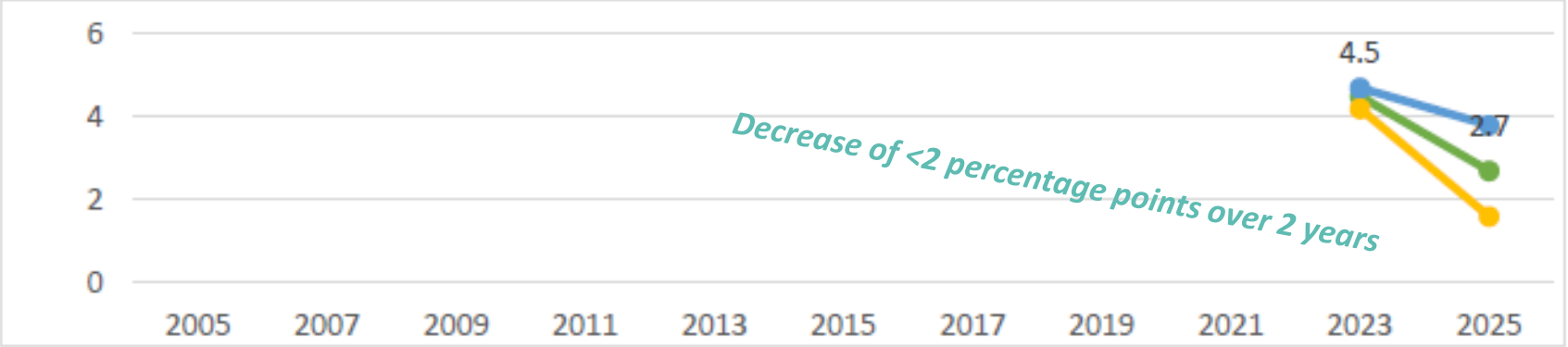
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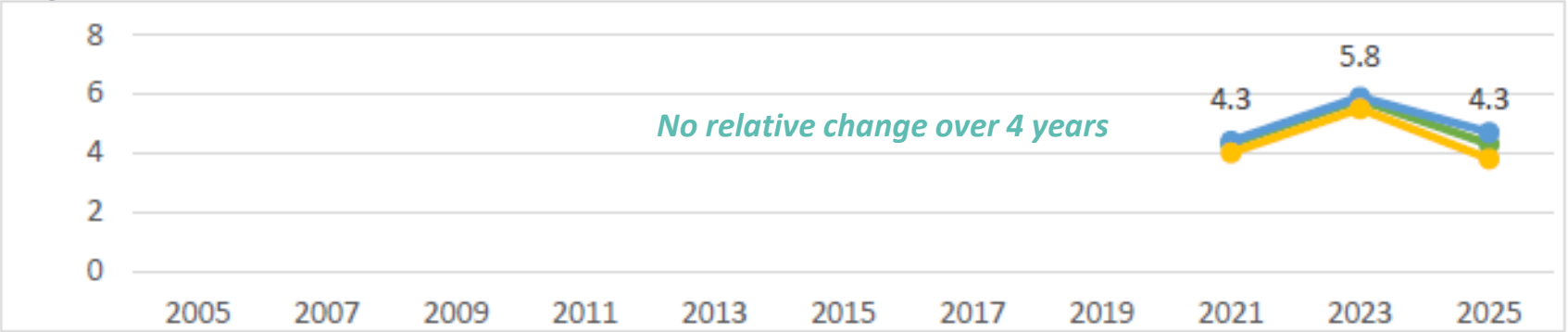
Mental Health and Shelter

Did not usually sleep in their parent's or guardian's home (past 30 days)



Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Slept away from parents or guardians because they were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned (past 12 months)



Takeaway:
There has been a small decrease in students experiencing housing instability in the few years since YRBS began collecting this data.





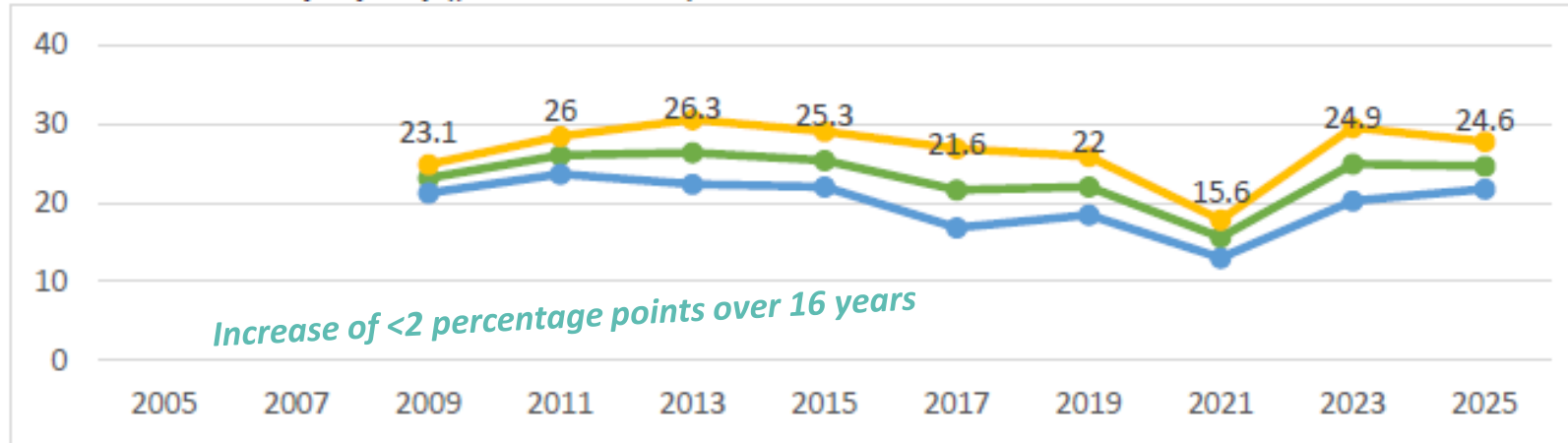
Mental Health Safety / Security Needs



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_\(original_five-level_model\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_(original_five-level_model).png)

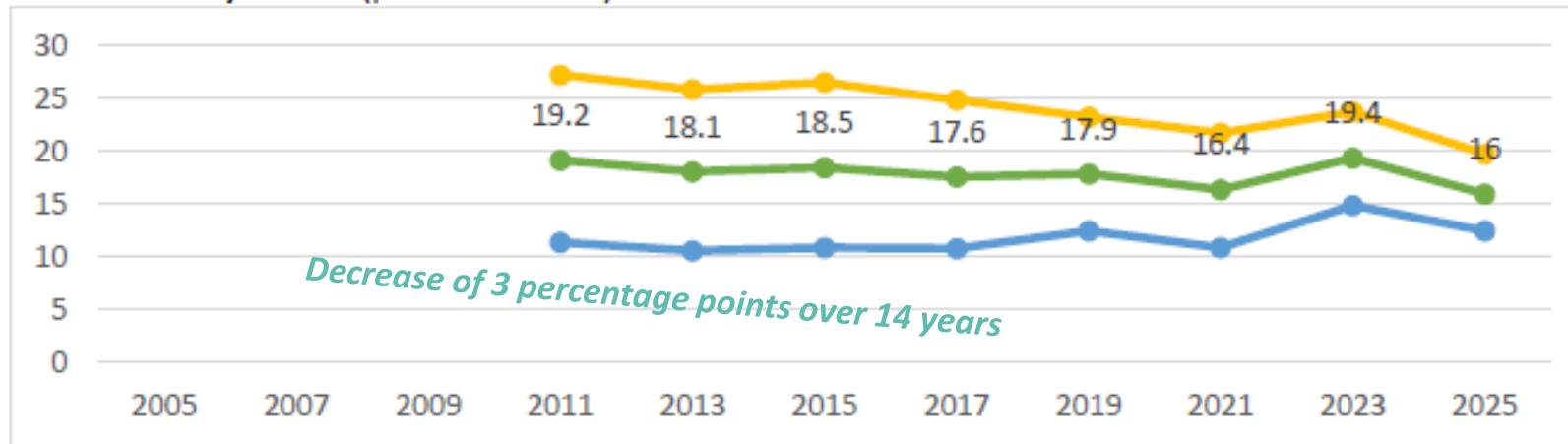
Mental Health and Bullying

Were bullied on school property (past 12 months)



Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Were electronically bullied (past 12 months)



Takeaway:

Rates at which students report being bullied have remained mostly the same since 2009, with an overall decrease in reported electronic bullying.



YRBS data 2009-2025

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

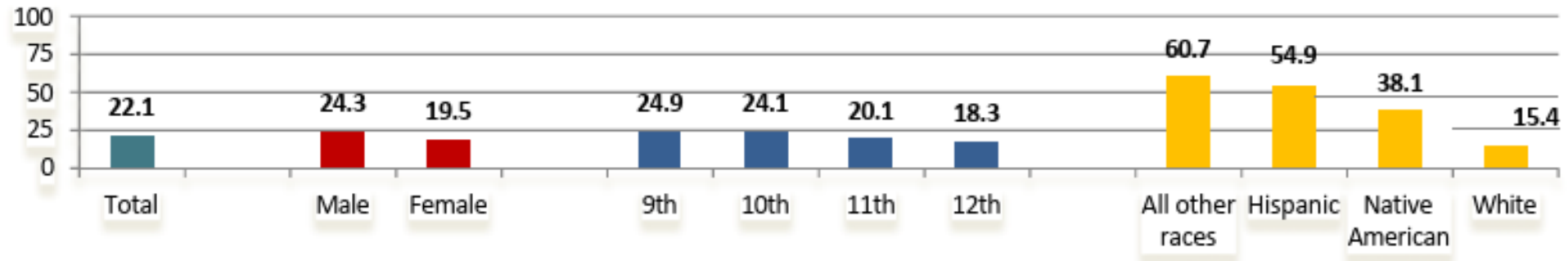
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Mental Health and Bullying

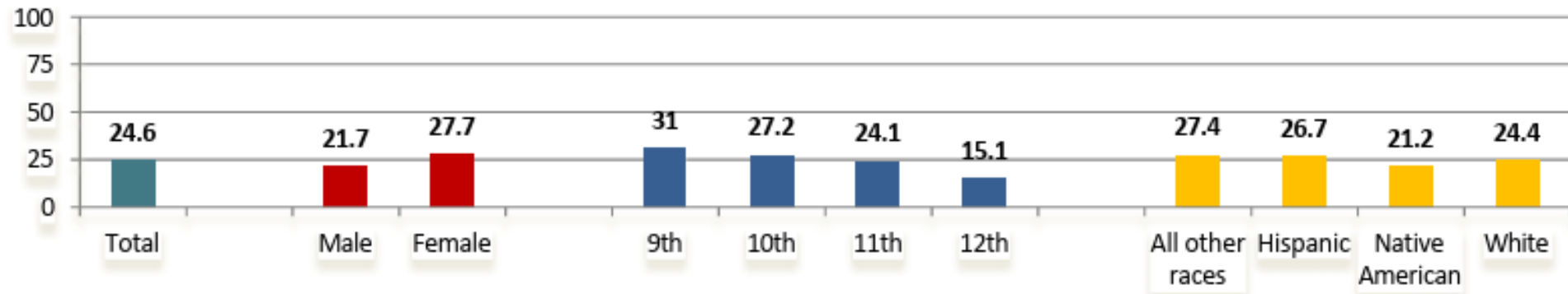
BULLYING AND ETHNICITY

During their life, 22.1 percent of students had been treated badly or unfairly because of their race or ethnicity.



BULLIED ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

During the past 12 months, 24.6 percent of students had been bullied on school property.



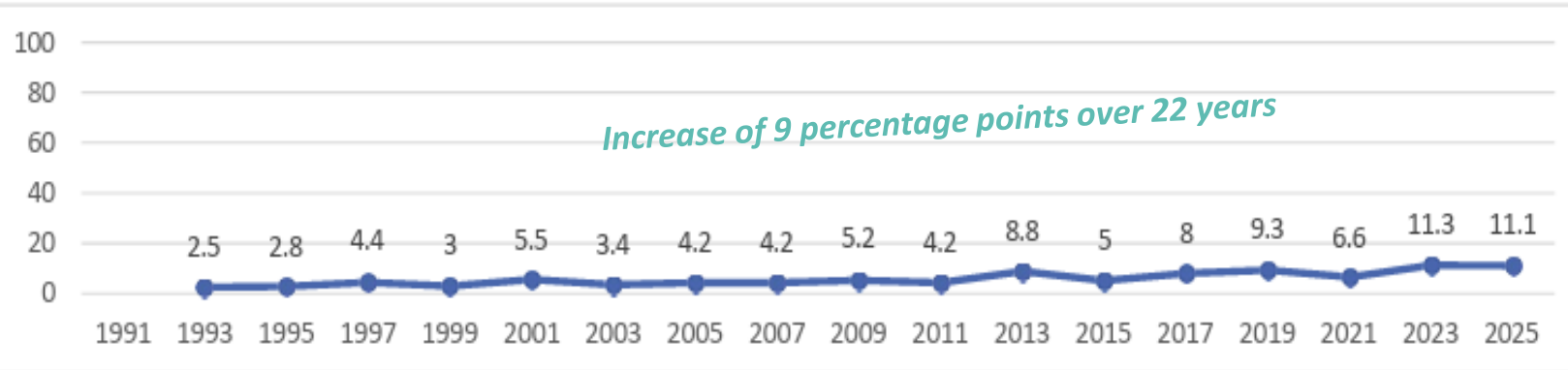
YRBS 2025 data – Separated by Sex, Grade, Ethnicity

- OPI YRBS webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>



Mental Health and Safety

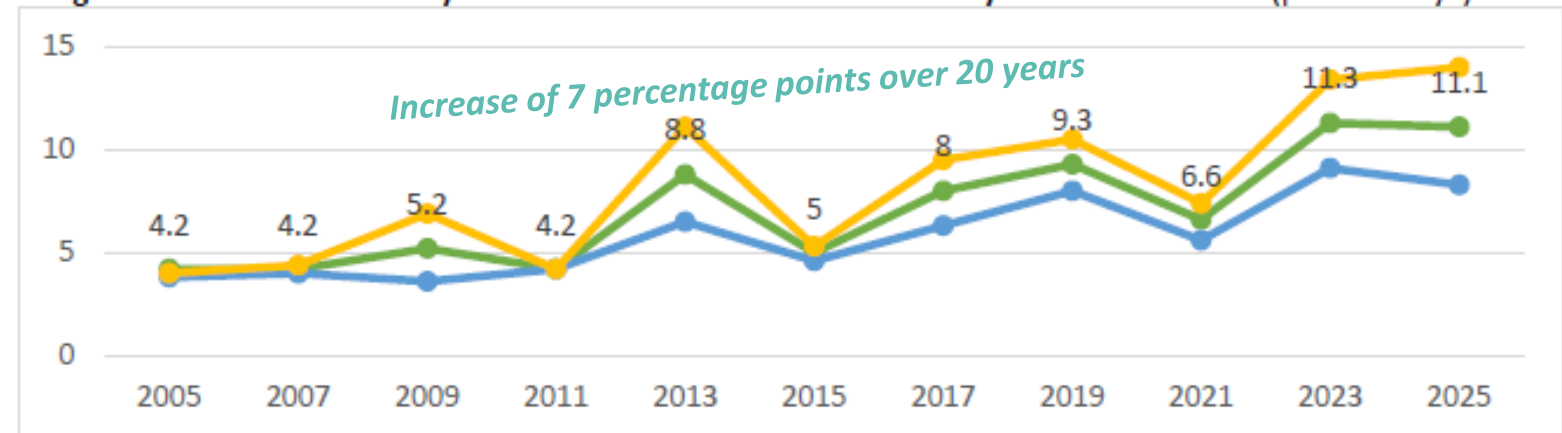
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (past 30 days)



Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Takeaway:
Students increasingly report experiencing feeling unsafe at school or on their way to/from school.

Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (past 30 days)



YRBS data 1993-2025

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

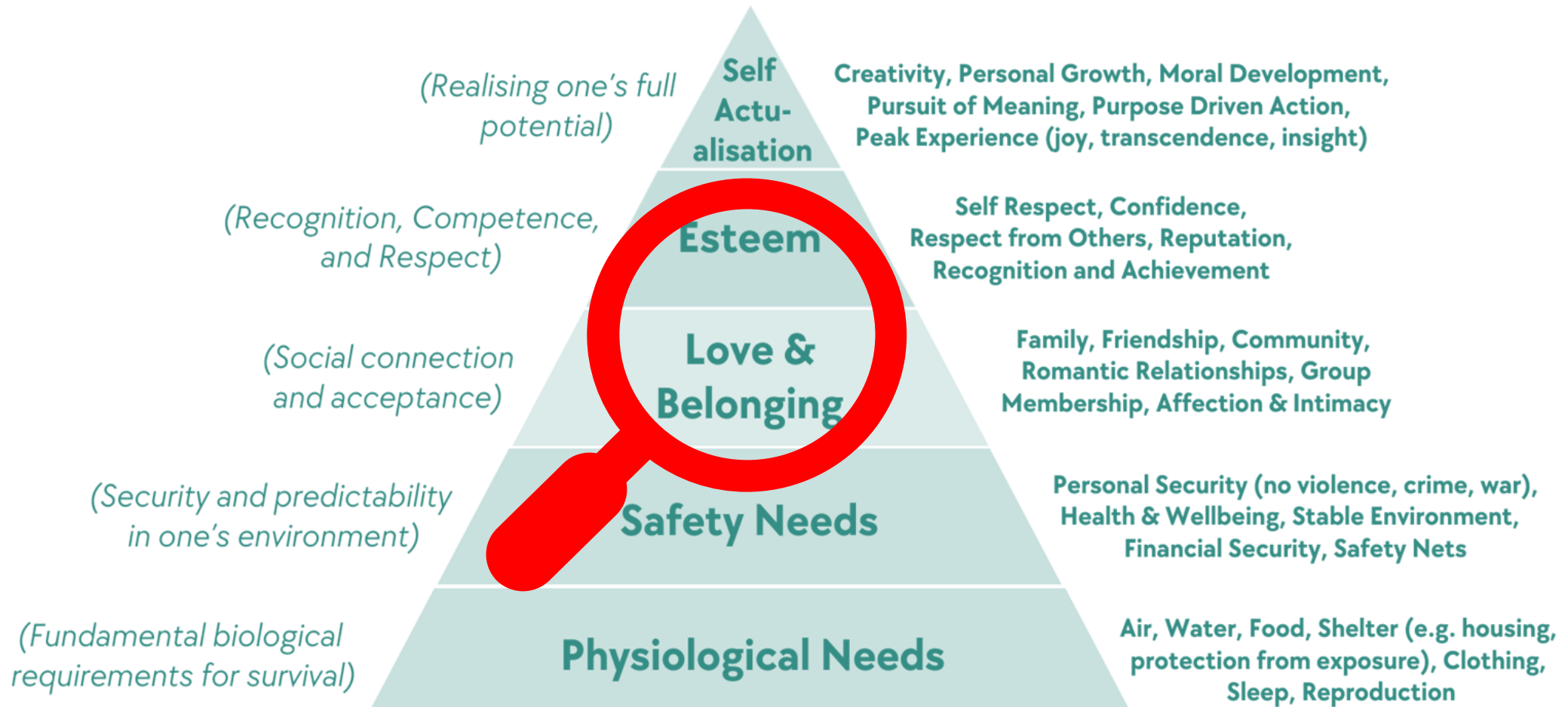
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Mental Health

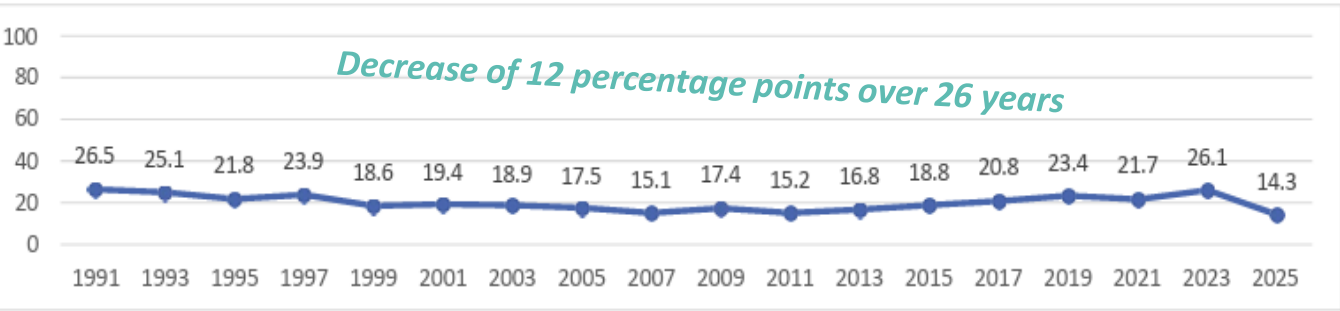
Social & Self Esteem Needs



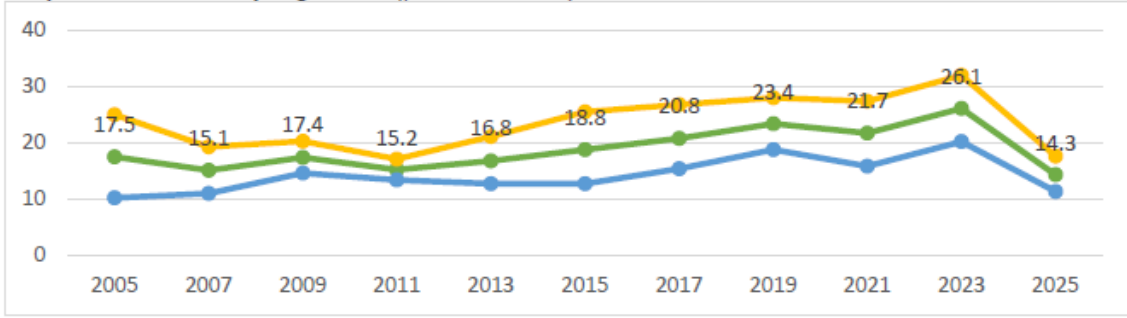
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Mental Health and Suicidal Ideation

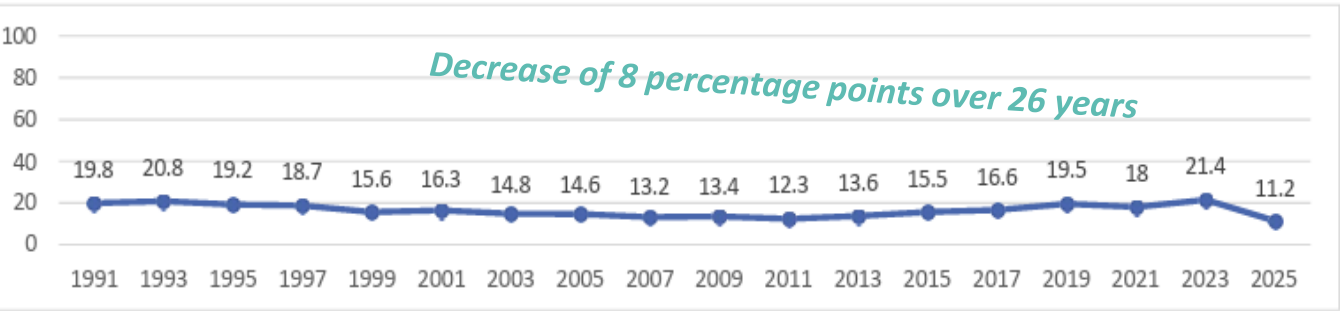
Seriously considered attempting suicide (past 12 months)



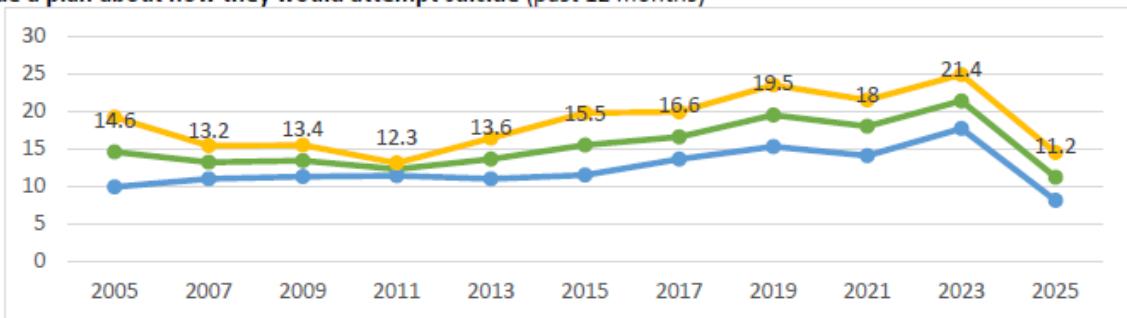
Seriously considered attempting suicide (past 12 months)



Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (past 12 months)



Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (past 12 months)



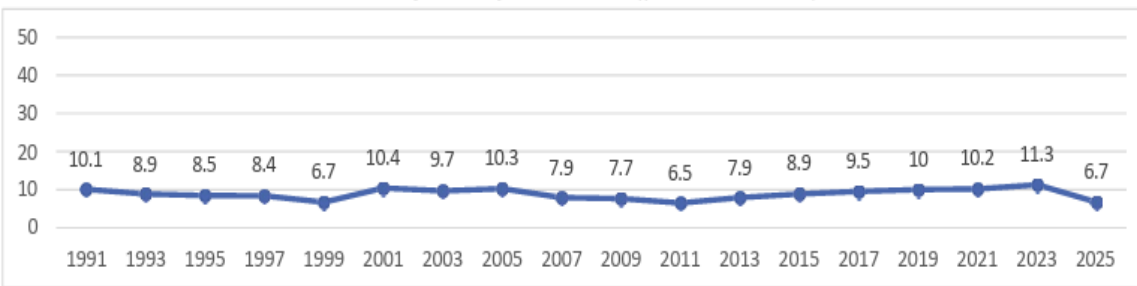
Takeaway:
Despite a recent upward trend, 2025 YRBS data shows suicidal ideation at an all-time low.

Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

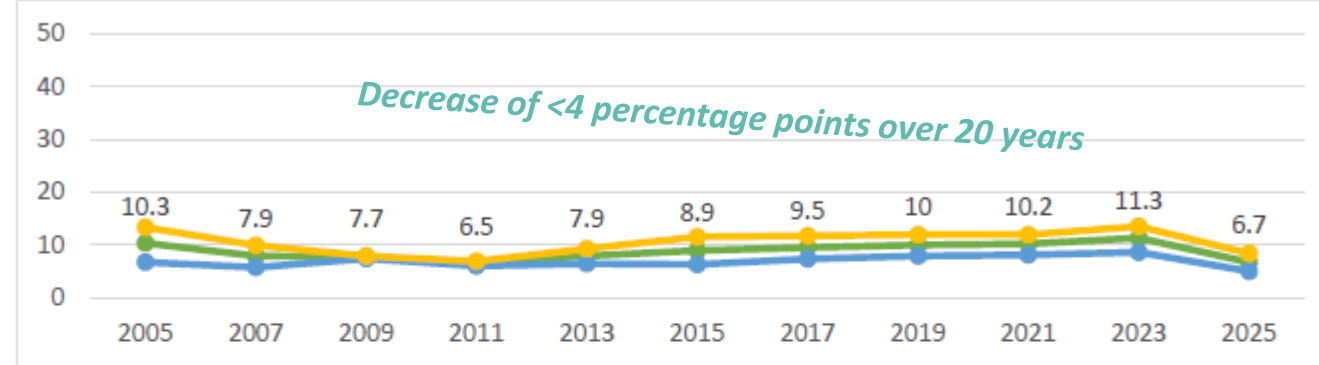


Mental Health and Suicidal Attempts

Actually attempted suicide (past 12 months)



Attempted suicide (past 12 months)

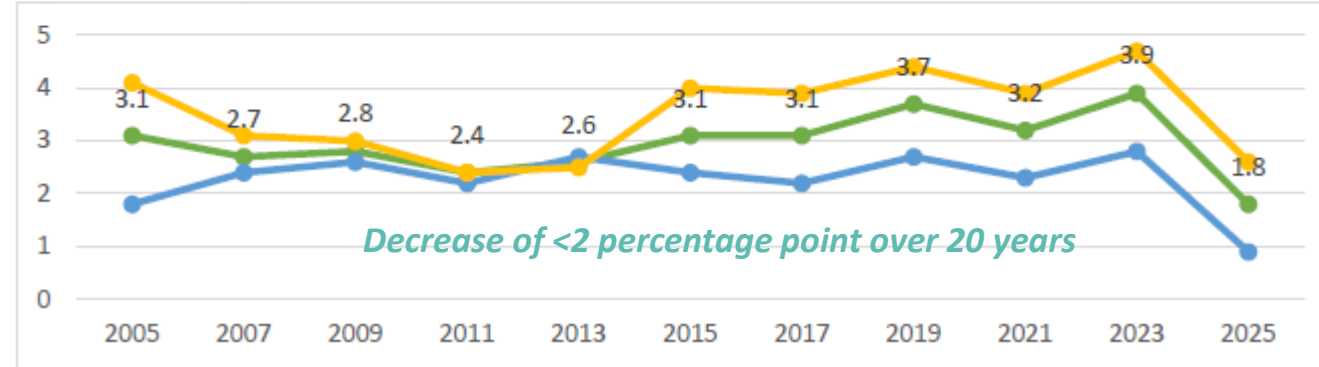


Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

Takeaway:

Students report a small decrease in suicide attempts, including attempts that result in a medical visit.

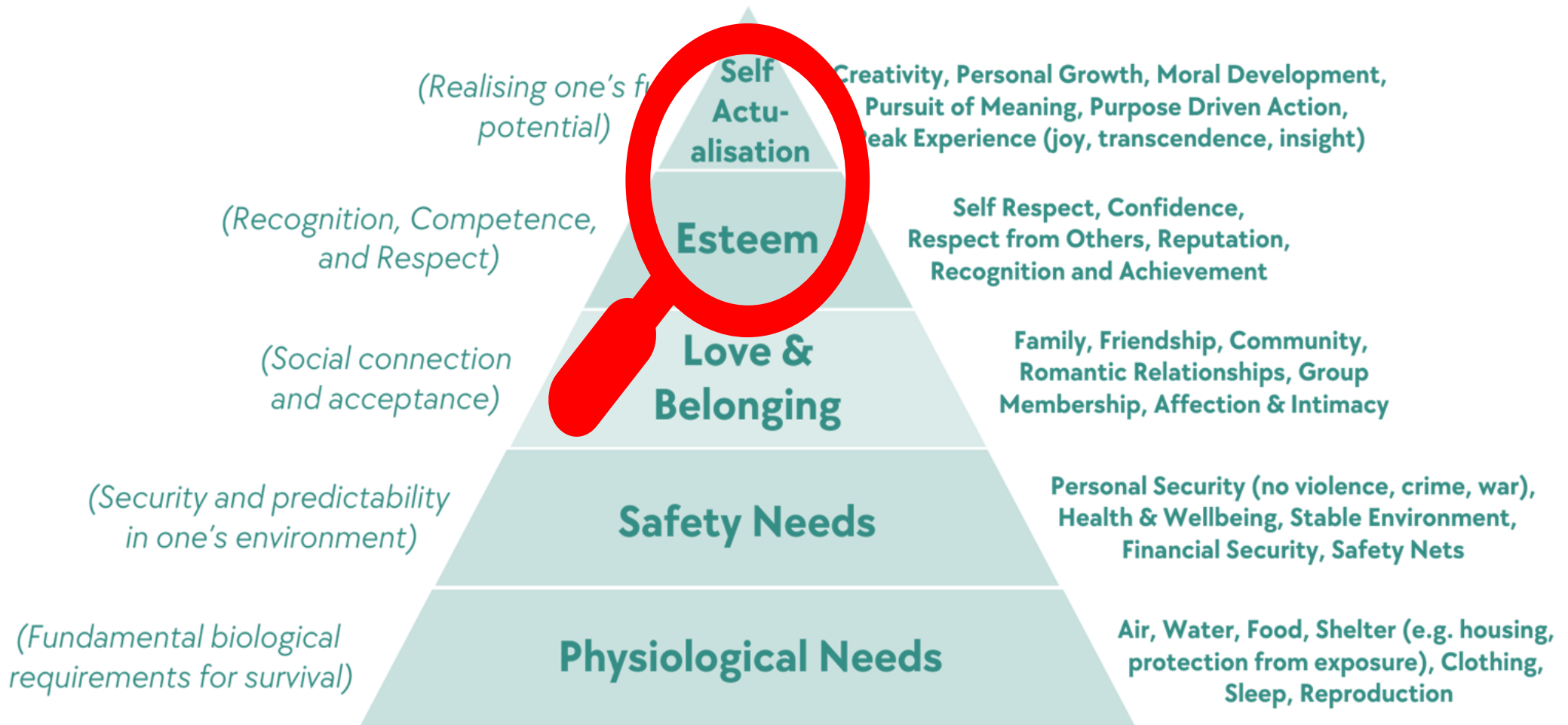
Had a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse (past 12 months)





Mental Health

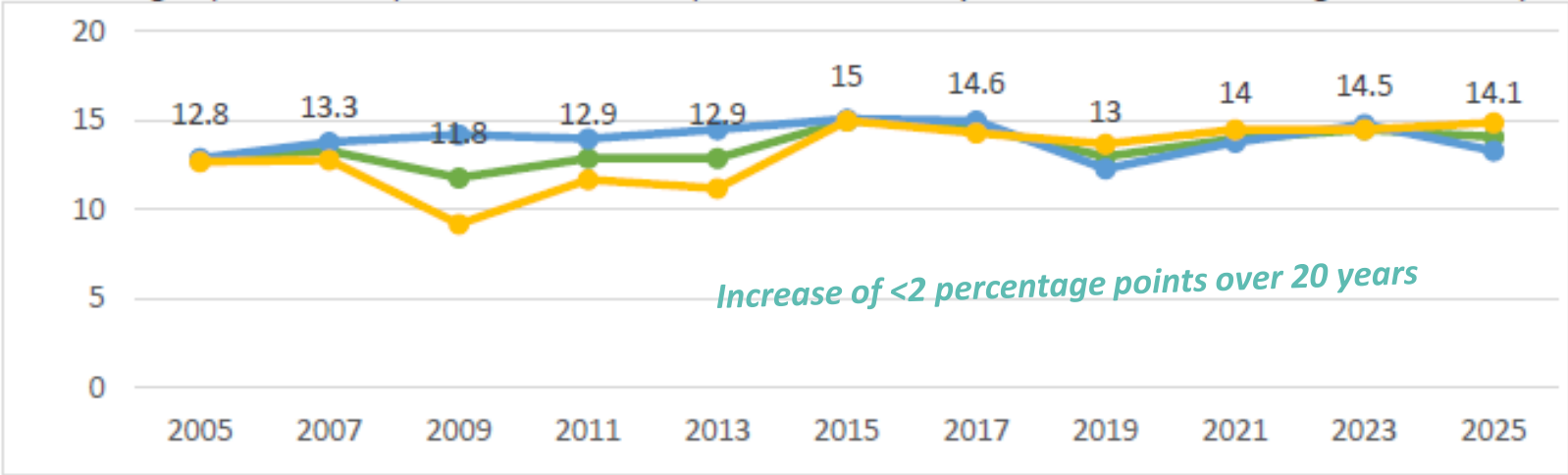
Self Esteem & Actualization Needs



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_\(original_five-level_model\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_(original_five-level_model).png)

Mental Health and Negative Self-Image

Were overweight (were $\geq 85^{\text{th}}$ percentile but $<95^{\text{th}}$ percentile for body mass index, 2000 CDC growth charts)

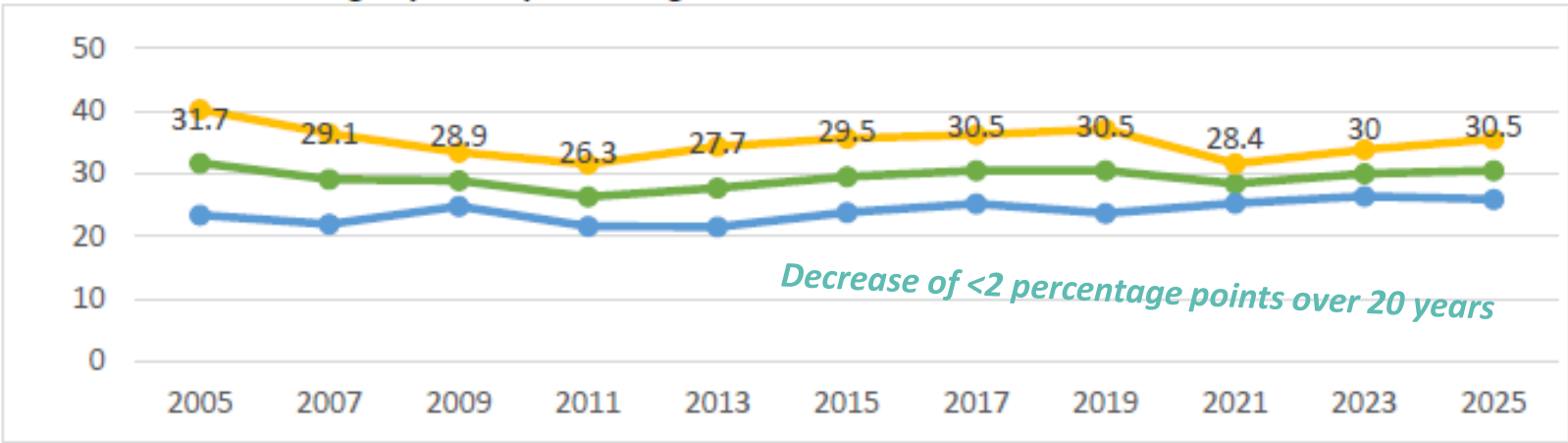


Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	

(Reality)

In 2025, 14.1% of students who took the YRBS were medically overweight.

Described themselves as slightly or very overweight.



(Perception)

In 2025, 30.5% of students who took the YRBS perceived themselves as overweight.

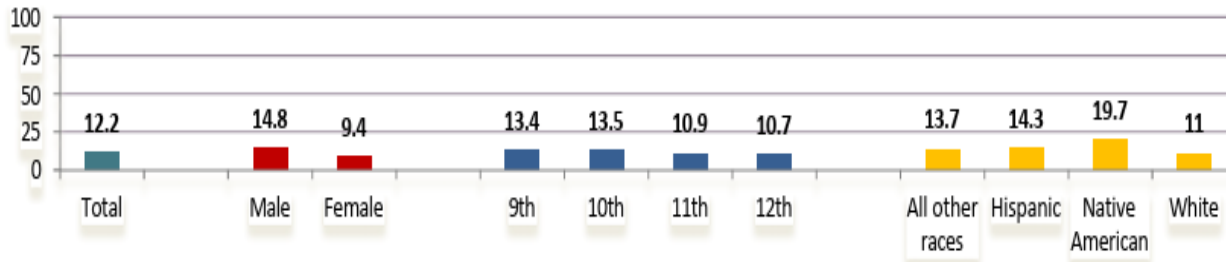
Takeaway:
Students tend to have a more negative view of their own weight than what is medically classified as overweight.



Mental Health and Negative Self-Image

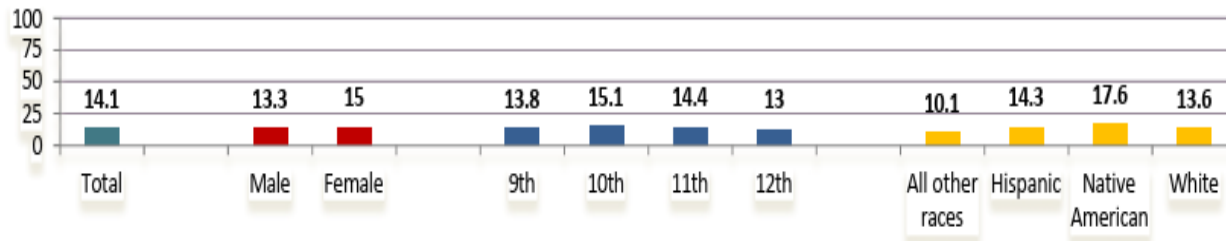
OBESITY

Statewide, 12.2 percent of students were obese (i.e., at or above the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex).



OVERWEIGHT

Statewide, 14.1 percent of students were overweight (i.e., at or between the 85th and the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex).

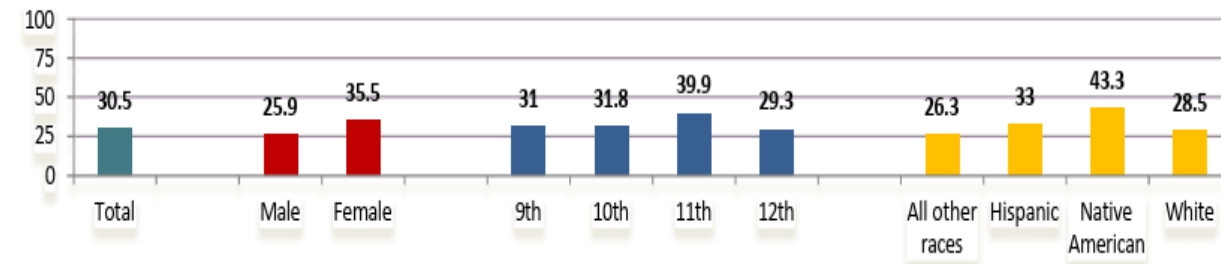


Note:

Data on this slide are from the 2025 YRBS only, and have been listed by sex, grade, and ethnicity.

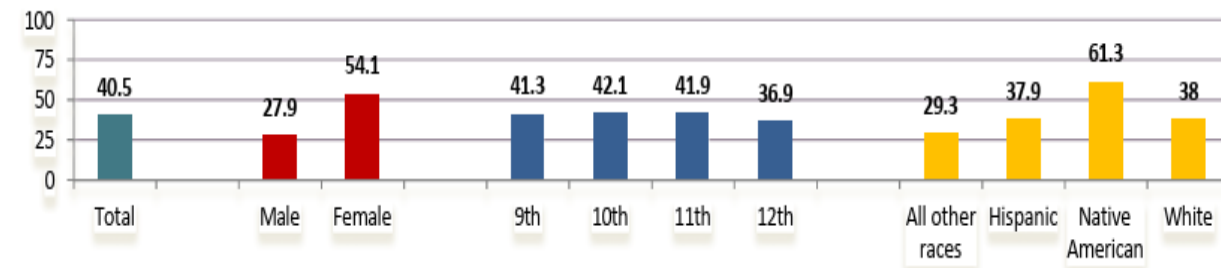
DESCRIBED THEMSELVES AS OVERWEIGHT

Statewide, 30.5 percent of students described themselves as slightly or very overweight.



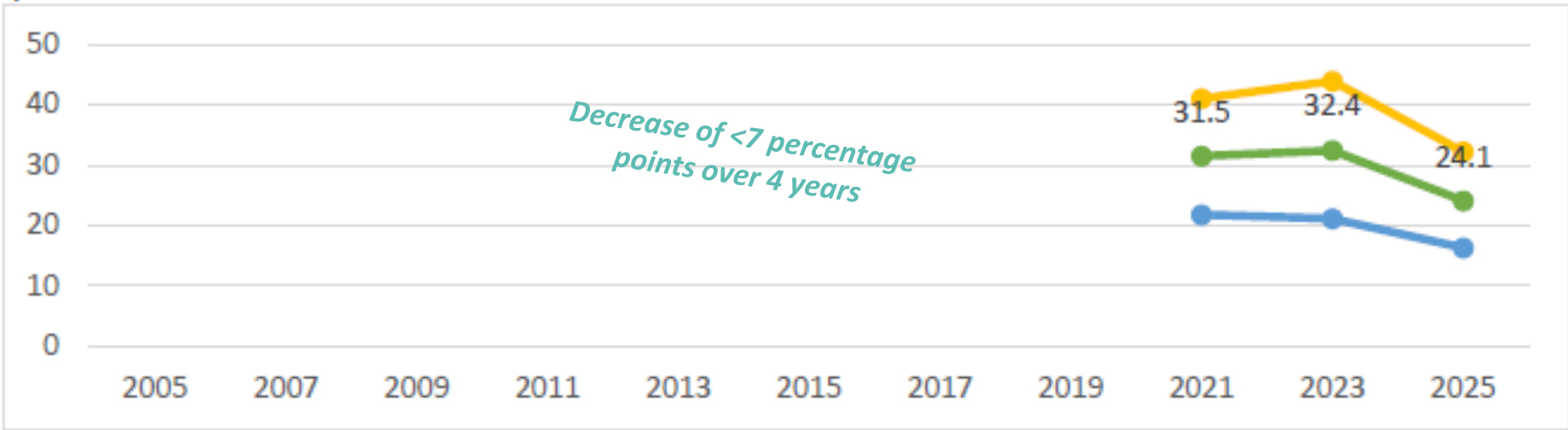
TRYING TO LOSE WEIGHT

Statewide, 40.5 percent of students were trying to lose weight.



Mental Health as Self-Reported

Reported poor mental health most of the time or always, could include stress, anxiety, and depression (past 30 days)



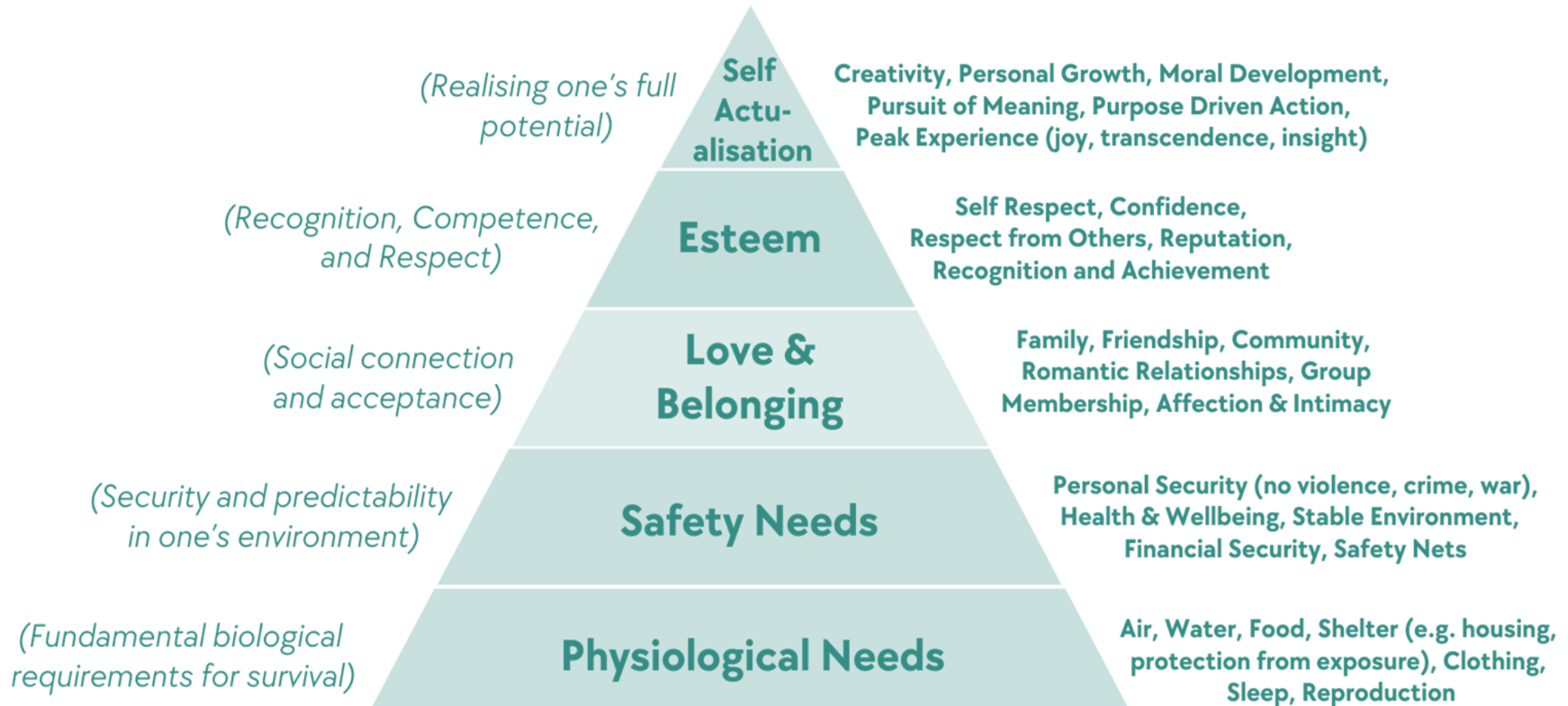
Takeaway:
Students report experiencing poor mental health at lower rates than when this question began being administered on the YRBS in 2021.

Key	
Montana State	
Male	
Female	





Mental Health Student Subpopulations



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_\(original_five-level_model\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs_Pyramid_(original_five-level_model).png)

Mental Health Subpopulations

Table (left to right): Montana YRBS High School ~ Grades 7-8 ~ American Indian Students on Reservations (AI-R)
 American Indian Students in Urban Schools (AI-U) ~ Nonpublic Accredited Schools (NPA)
 ~ Students with Disabilities (SWD)

<i>Injury and Violence</i>	Montana YRBS HS	Grades 7-8	AI-R	AI-U	NPA	SWD
Percentage of students who:						
Carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property during the past 30 days	6.7	3.0	3.3	8.3	5.0	5.1
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school during the past 30 days	11.1	N/A	17.2	17.7	2.9	6.9
Were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the past 12 months	9.0	10.2	6.9	11.8	5.0	5.4
Students were treated badly or unfairly in school because of their race or ethnicity	22.1	36.0	34.5	47.9	17.3	17.2
Were bullied on school property during the past 12 months	24.6	51.4	19.2	32.0	21.7	19.4
Were bullied when away from school property during the past 12 months	13.0	13.8	7.3	12.4	N/A	11.7
Were electronically bullied during the past 12 months	16.0	23.4	14.3	22.2	18.7	12.6
Have ever been the victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual during the past 12 months **Removed for DEI**	—	—	—	—	—	—
Have ever done something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning themselves on purpose?	17.6	21.3	90.7	84.6	89.9	91.6



YRBS 2025 data

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data summarized by SFIC staff



Mental Health Subpopulations

Table (left to right): Montana YRBS High School ~ Grades 7-8 ~ American Indian Students on Reservations (AI-R)
American Indian Students in Urban Schools (AI-U) ~ Nonpublic Accredited Schools (NPA)
~ Students with Disabilities (SWD)

<i>Injury and Violence</i>	Montana YRBS HS	Grades 7-8	AI-R	AI-U	NPA	SWD
Percentage of students who:						
Felt sad or hopeless for 2 or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities during the past 12 months	29.2	30.9	83.8	77.6	81.9	86.6
Seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months	14.3	21.9	30.6	37.2	23.7	22.6
Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months	11.2	16.2	12.2	23.1	12.3	11.2
Attempted suicide during the past 12 months	6.7	9.4	87.1	82.0	87.5	92.3
Among students who attempted suicide, had a suicide attempt resulting in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse during the past 12 months	26.7	85.8	66.1	42.5	66.7	55.3



YRBS 2025 data

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data summarized by SFIC staff



Mental Health Subpopulations

Table (left to right): Montana YRBS High School ~ Grades 7-8 ~ American Indian Students on Reservations (AI-R)
 American Indian Students in Urban Schools (AI-U) ~ Nonpublic Accredited Schools (NPA)
 ~ Students with Disabilities (SWD)

<i>Injury and Violence</i>	Montana YRBS HS	Grades 7-8	AI-R	AI-U	NPA	SWD
Percentage of students who:						
Always or most of the time had poor mental health (includes stress, anxiety, and depression) during the past 30 days	24.1	21.4	14.2	13.1	5.8	5.5
Among students who have felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious, students who got the kind of help they needed?	24.1	15.9	7.7	11.6	5.8	4.8
Got 4 or less hours of sleep on an average school night	6.9	6.9	13.7	18.5	5.0	7.6
Got 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night	30.4	47.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Did not usually sleep in their parent's or guardian's home during the past 30 days	2.7	1.5	91.5	88.9	95.0	96.0
Slept away from their parents or guardians because they were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned during the past 30 days	4.3	2.8	97.0	92.6	95.7	97.9

YRBS 2025 data

- OPI YRBS webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

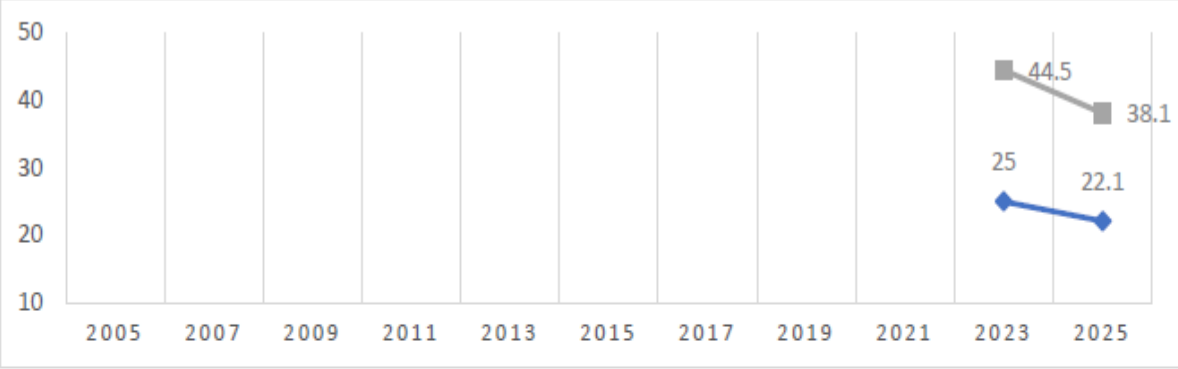
data summarized by SFIC staff



Mental Health Subpopulations

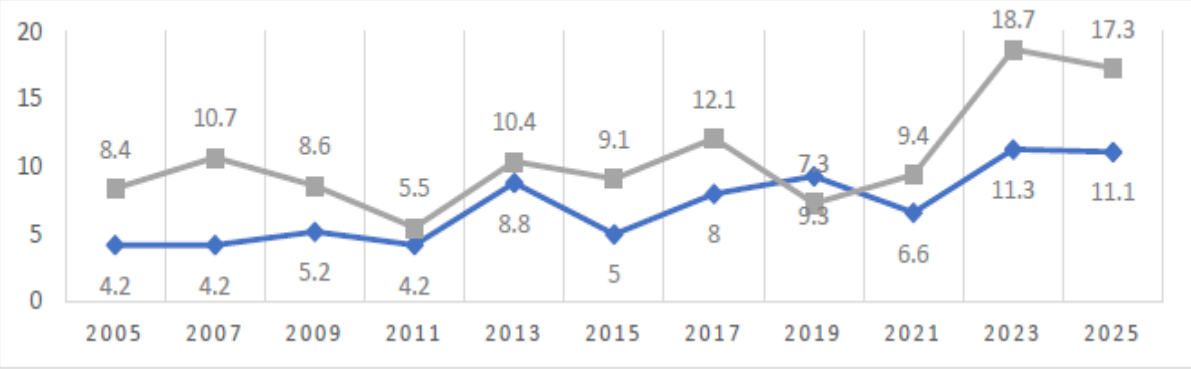
Native American Students

Percentage of students who felt that they were ever treated badly or unfairly in school because of their race or ethnicity (during their life)

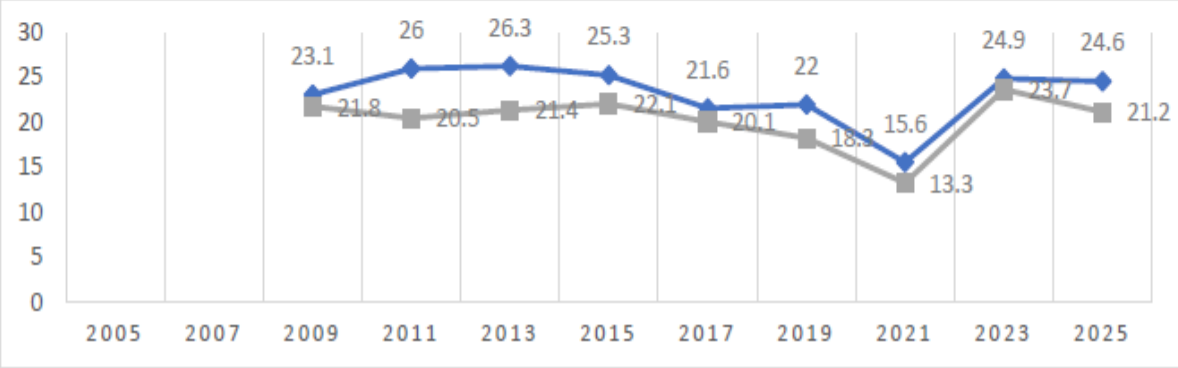


Key	
Montana State	
Native American Students	

Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (past 30 days)



Were bullied on school property (past 12 months)



Takeaway:
Native American students report feeling unsafe or discriminated against at higher rates than their peers, yet also report lower rates of being bullied *on school property*.

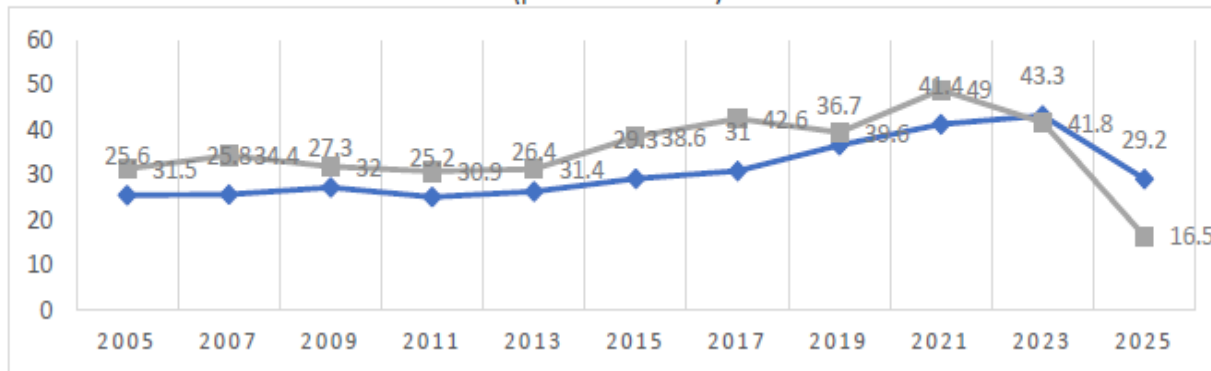


Mental Health Subpopulations

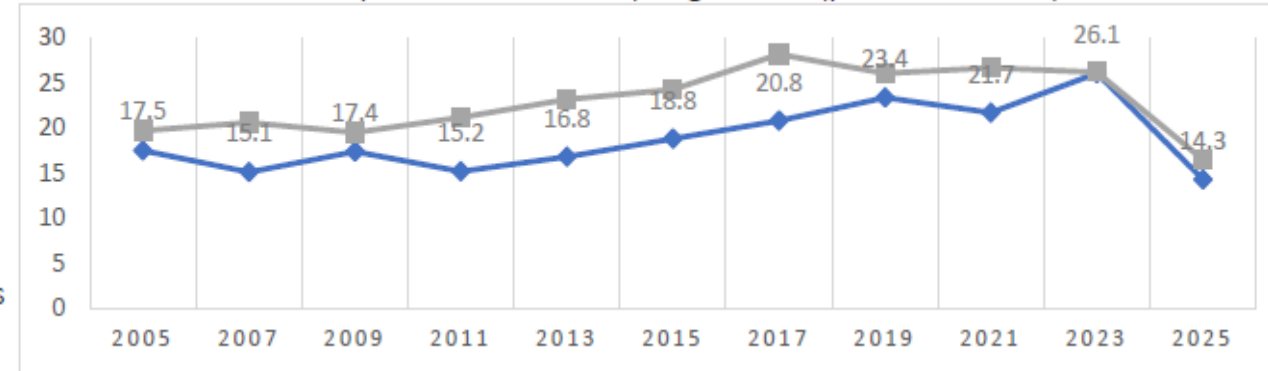
Native American Students

Key	
Montana State	
Native American Students	

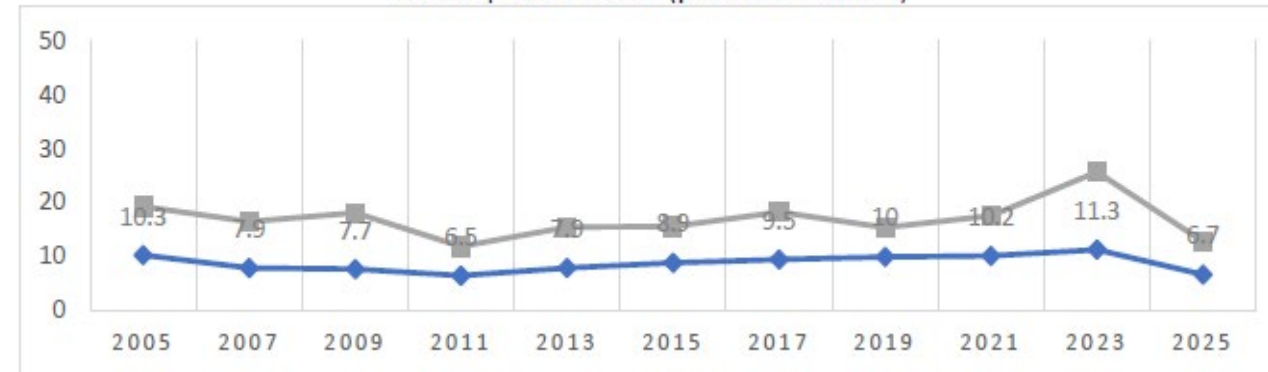
Felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities (past 12 months)



Seriously considered attempting suicide (past 12 months)



Attempted suicide (past 12 months)



Takeaway:

Native American students report feelings of hopelessness, as well as considering and/or attempting suicide, at higher rates than their peers.

YRBS data 2005-2025

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

Note that some questions have been added since data collection began in 1991. Longitudinal analysis covers the past 20yrs that each question has been asked on the YRBS.

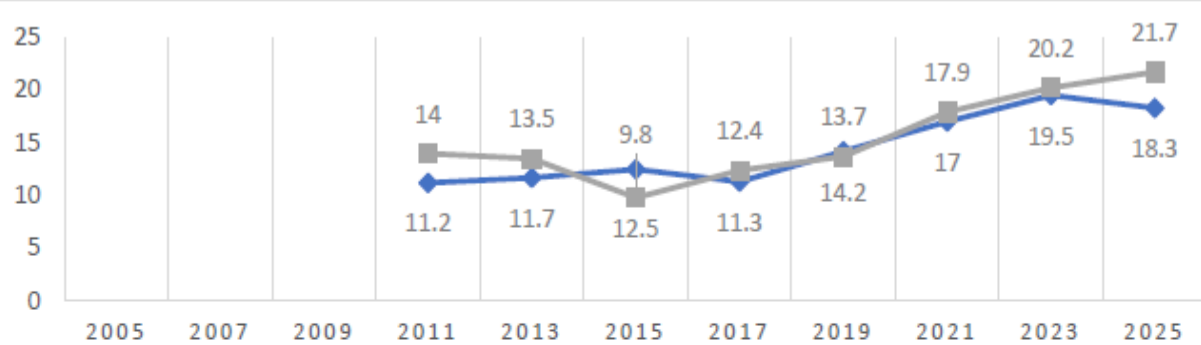


Mental Health Subpopulations

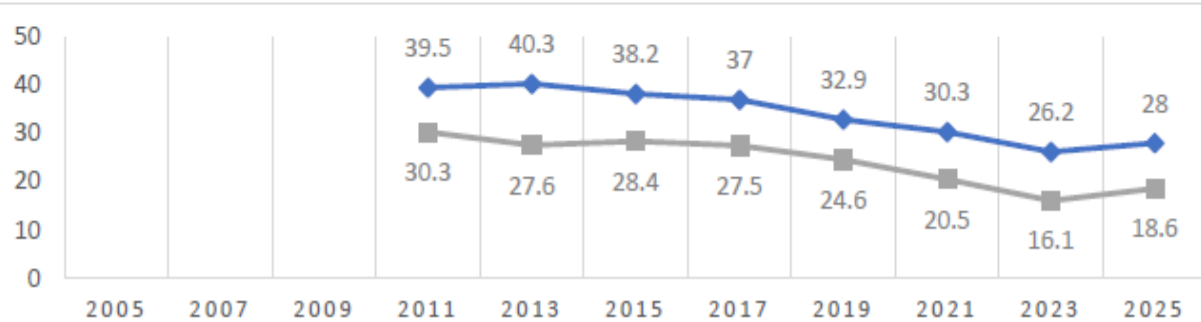
Native American Students

Key	
Montana State	
Native American Students	

Did not eat breakfast (past seven days)



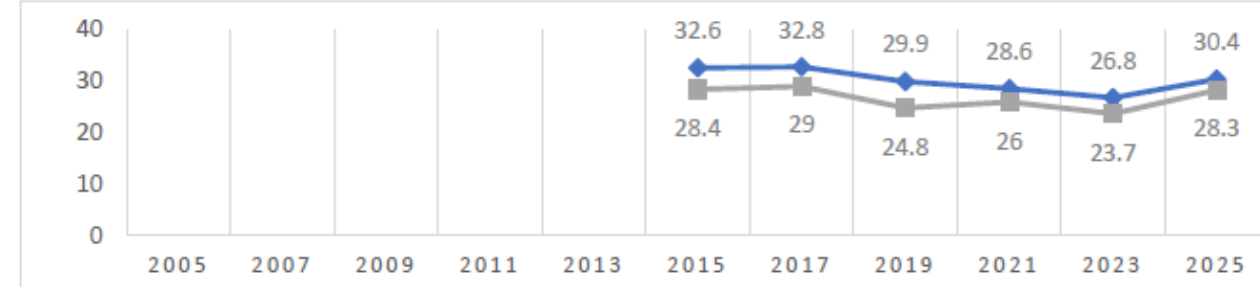
Ate breakfast on all seven days (past seven days)



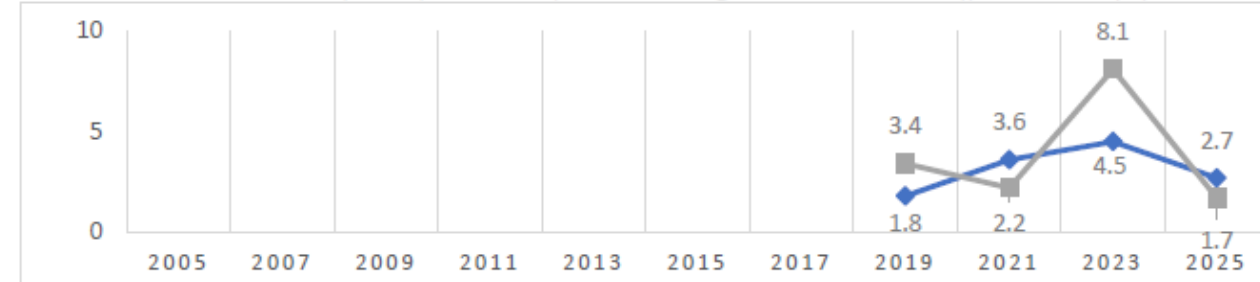
Takeaway:

Native American students tend to report higher rates of food and housing insecurity or volatility than their peers.

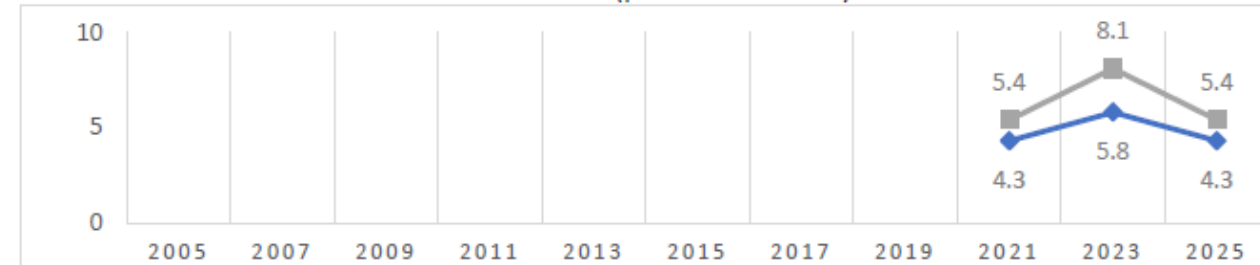
Got eight or more hours of sleep (on an average school night)



Did not usually sleep in their parent's or guardian's home (past 30 days)



Slept away from parents or guardians because they were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned (past 12 months)



YRBS data 2011-2025

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

Note that some questions have been added since data collection began in 1991. Longitudinal analysis covers the past 20yrs that each question has been asked on the YRBS.

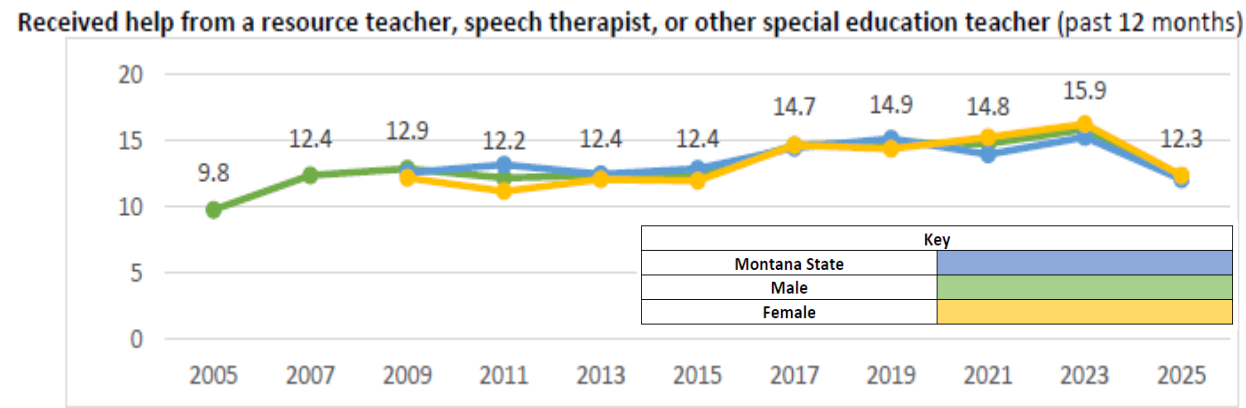


Mental Health Subpopulations

Students with disabilities*

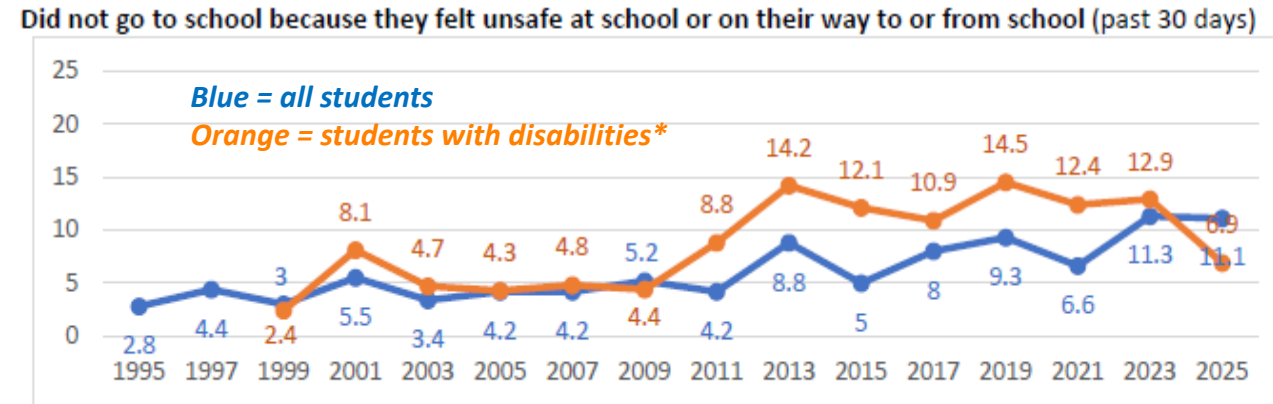
*Based on student responses to YRBS question:

In the past 12 months, have you received help from a resource teacher, speech therapist, or other special education teacher?

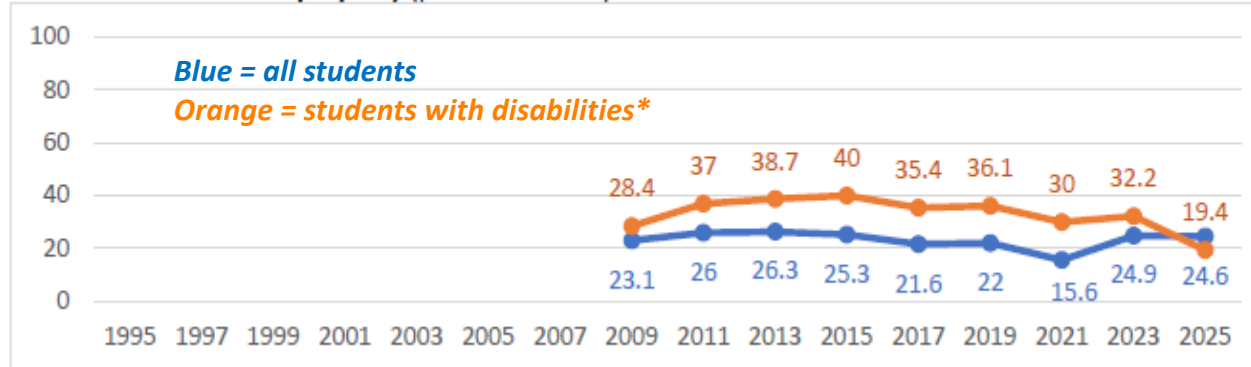


Takeaway:

Students with disabilities tend to report higher rates of feeling unsafe or being bullied than their peers.



Were bullied on school property (past 12 months)



YRBS 1995-2025 longitudinal data – **Students with disabilities***

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

Note that some questions have been added since data collection began in 1991. Longitudinal analysis covers the past 20yrs that each question has been asked on the YRBS.



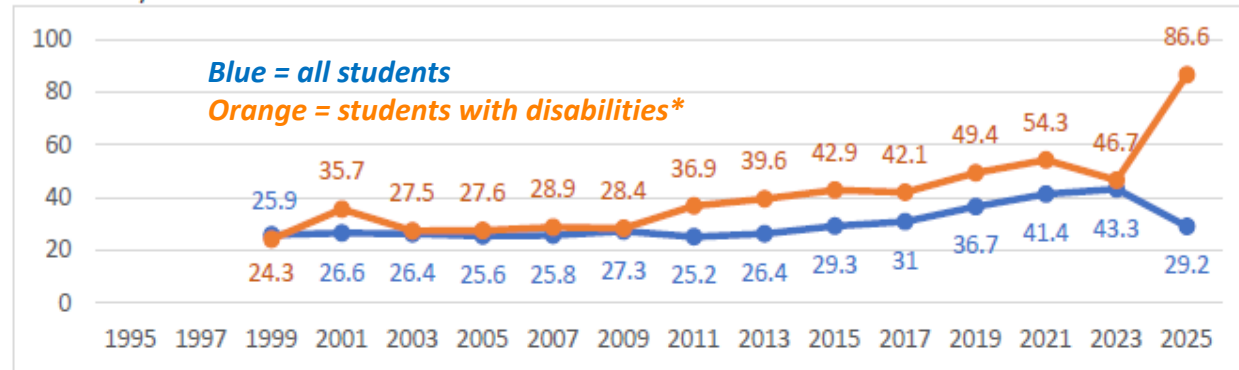
Mental Health Subpopulations

Students with disabilities*

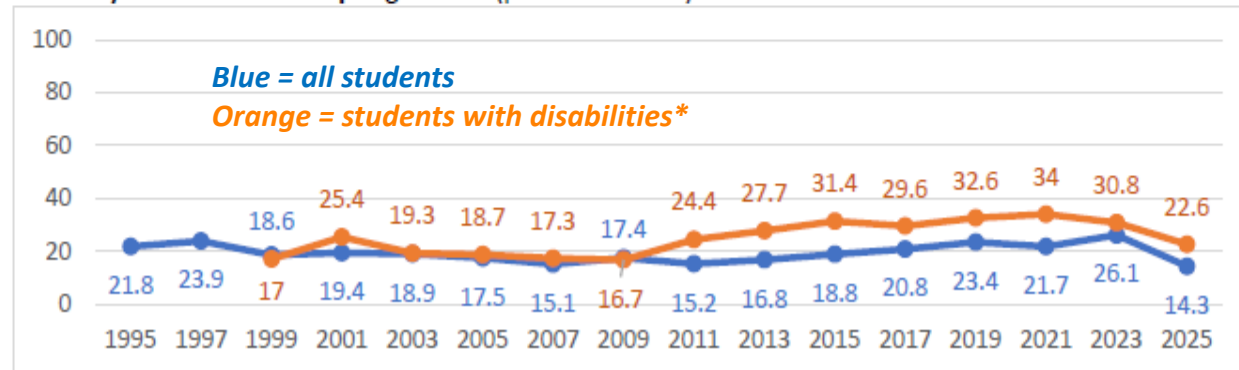
*Based on student responses to YRBS question:

In the past 12 months, have you received help from a resource teacher, speech therapist, or other special education teacher?

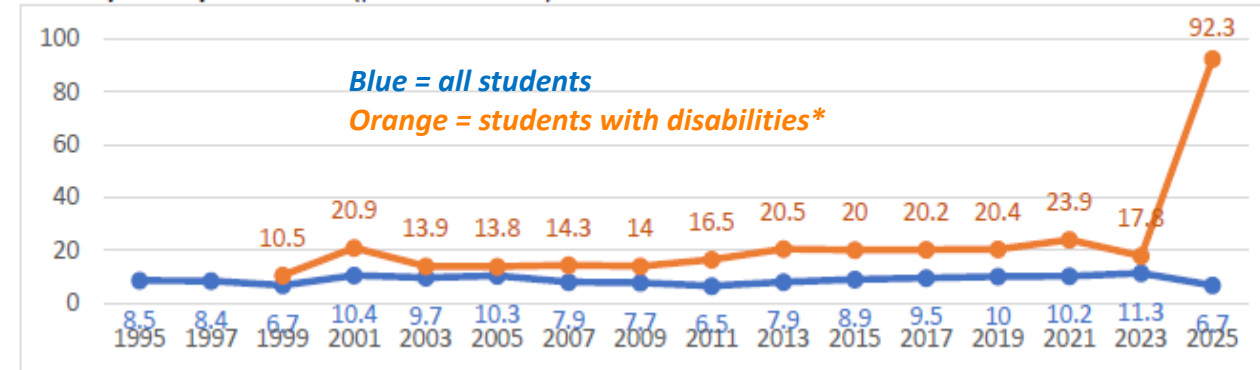
Felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities (past 12 months)



Seriously considered attempting suicide (past 12 months)



Actually attempted suicide (past 12 months)



Takeaway:

Students with disabilities tend to report feelings of hopelessness, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts at higher rates than their peers.



YRBS 1995-2025 longitudinal data – Students with disabilities*

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

Note that some questions have been added since data collection began in 1991. Longitudinal analysis covers the past 20yrs that each question has been asked on the YRBS.



Mental Health Subpopulations

Students with disabilities*

*Based on student responses to YRBS question:

In the past 12 months, have you received help from a resource teacher, speech therapist, or other special education teacher?

Did not usually sleep in their parent's or guardian's home (past 30 days)



Slept away from parents or guardians because they were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned (past 12 months)



Takeaway:

Students with disabilities have reported higher rates of housing instability than their peers, in the few years these questions have been administered on the YRBS.



YRBS 1995-2025 longitudinal data – Students with disabilities*

OPI webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

Note that some questions have been added since data collection began in 1991. Longitudinal analysis covers the entire timespan that each question has been asked on the YRBS.

LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES
DIVISION

Mental Health – Longitudinal Summary

Downward Trends:

- Eating regular breakfasts
- Getting adequate sleep
- Experiencing housing instability (since 2021)
- Despite a recent upward trend, 2025 YRBS data shows **suicidal ideation at an all-time low**
 - Small decrease in suicide attempts, including attempts that result in a medical visit.
- Experiencing poor mental health (since 2021)
- Overall decrease in reported electronic bullying

Stagnant or Little Change:

- Rates at which students report being bullied have remained mostly the same since 2009
- Students continue to have a more negative view of their own weight than what is medically classified as overweight.

Upward Trends:

- Despite an overall downward trend since 1999, more students reported **consuming fresh vegetables** in 2025 than at any point in the past ~20 years.
- Rates of physical activity
- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness that are severe enough to limit a students' usual activities
- Feeling unsafe at school or on the way to/from school

Subpopulation Highlights:

- **Students with disabilities** tend to experience higher rates of bullying, hopelessness, suicidal ideation, and housing instability than their peers.
- **Native American students** report food and housing volatility, discrimination, bullying, and suicidal ideation at higher rates than their peers.

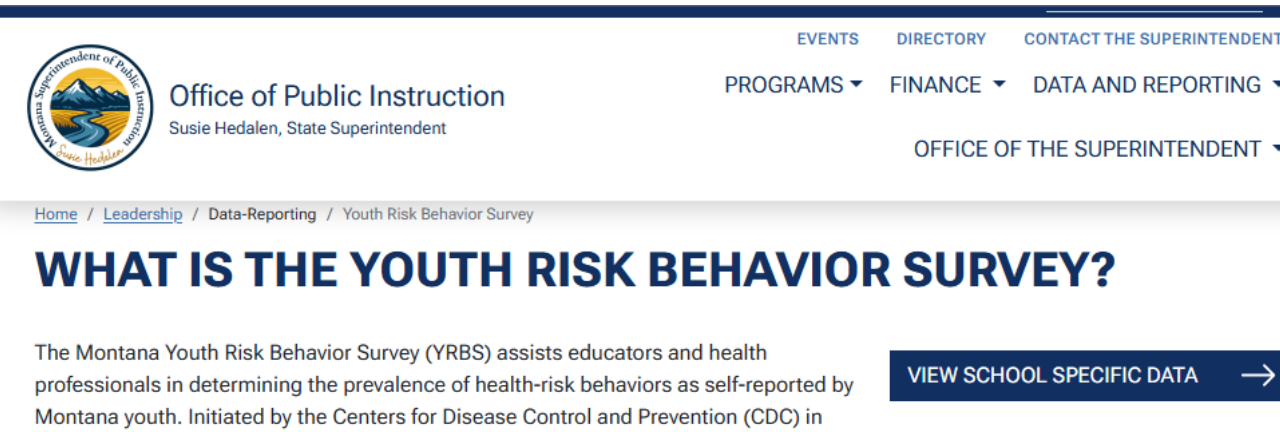
YRBS 1991-2025 data

- OPI YRBS webpage: <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Data-Reporting/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey>

data summarized by SFIC staff



YRBS Data at the Office of Public Instruction



Office of Public Instruction
Susie Hedalen, State Superintendent

EVENTS DIRECTORY CONTACT THE SUPERINTENDENT
PROGRAMS FINANCE DATA AND REPORTING
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Home / Leadership / Data-Reporting / Youth Risk Behavior Survey

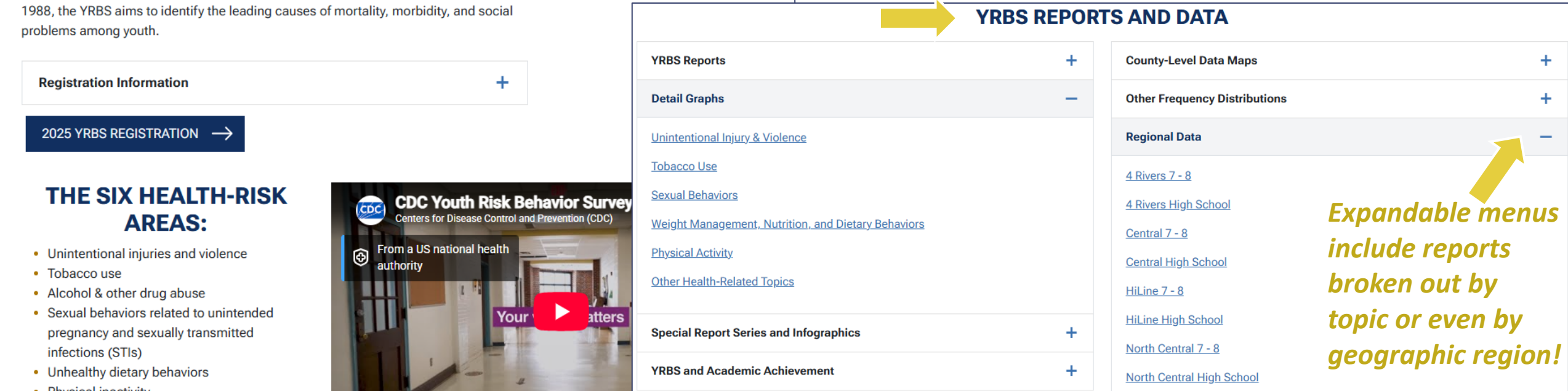
WHAT IS THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY?

The Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) assists educators and health professionals in determining the prevalence of health-risk behaviors as self-reported by Montana youth. Initiated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1988, the YRBS aims to identify the leading causes of mortality, morbidity, and social problems among youth.

[VIEW SCHOOL SPECIFIC DATA](#)

OPI STAFF ARE HERE TO HELP

For questions about YRBS data, email [Genie Zeeck](#)
For Legislative requests, contact [Sarah Music](#)
[Montana School Health Profiles](#)
For National and other State YRBS information, please check out [CDC's Website](#)
[View School-Specific Data](#)



Registration Information +

2025 YRBS REGISTRATION →

THE SIX HEALTH-RISK AREAS:

- Unintentional injuries and violence
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol & other drug abuse
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Physical inactivity



YRBS REPORTS AND DATA

YRBS Reports +	County-Level Data Maps +
Detail Graphs -	Other Frequency Distributions +
Unintentional Injury & Violence	Regional Data -
Tobacco Use	4 Rivers 7 - 8
Sexual Behaviors	4 Rivers High School
Weight Management, Nutrition, and Dietary Behaviors	Central 7 - 8
Physical Activity	Central High School
Other Health-Related Topics	HiLine 7 - 8
Special Report Series and Infographics +	HiLine High School
YRBS and Academic Achievement +	North Central 7 - 8
	North Central High School

Expandable menus include reports broken out by topic or even by geographic region!

Questions?

