



# Nebraska Adolescent Health Report 2025



# Adolescent Health

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) describes health as “optimal physical, mental, social, and emotional functioning and well-being”<sup>1</sup>. Schools and families play an important and unique role in providing environments where youth can learn and practice positive health behaviors. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) work together to support and enhance the efforts of schools and parents to facilitate optimal healthy outcomes for our youth.

Together, NDE and NDHHS monitor how common and widespread various health risk behaviors are among Nebraska youth. Vital statistics records and surveys provide data for this monitoring and the measurement of change and progress towards health goals. This report primarily focuses on the results of two sets of data collection: 1) the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and 2) the School Health Profiles (SHP). The findings in this report are intended to be a resource for future discussion and action around health education, risk reduction, and prevention activities targeted towards youth in Nebraska. Please note that only statistically significant differences between groups or over time are reported.

## Primary Data Sources

### 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) started the YRBS in 1990 to monitor youth health behaviors and provide comparable data across different populations. The survey covers six categories of behavior linked to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems for youth and adults in the United States:

- Unintentional injuries and violence
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity
- Risk behaviors

Administered every other year, the YRBS is collected from a random sample of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students within a random sample of public schools. The Nebraska survey results are weighted to generalize to the entire 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade public school population of Nebraska.

Learn more and view  
Nebraska YRBS data



### 2024 School Health Profiles (SHP)

The IOM recommends that all secondary schools require for graduation, at minimum, a one semester health education course. Starting in 1995, the CDC established SHPs to monitor school health practices. The data is intended to be used by decisionmakers to understand gaps in policies and practices that impact student academics and health. Topics include:

- Health education requirements
- Physical education and activity
- Safe and supportive environments
- Health services
- School health coordination
- Family involvement in schools

Conducted every other year, separate surveys are conducted with school principals and lead health educators in school enrolling students in 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades. In 2024, the principal data was not weighted due to non-response bias.

Learn more and view  
Nebraska SHP data



<sup>1</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 1997. Schools and Health: Our Nation's Investment. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/5153>.

# Health Education + Adolescent Health

Health education provides opportunities for students to learn and develop skills to make quality health decisions. To best address students' needs and work collaboratively with the community, schools are encouraged to follow National Health Education Standards and promote personal, family, and community health.

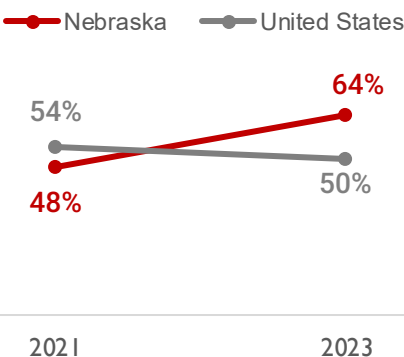
What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...

Four out of five (80%) lead health educators were certified, licensed, or endorsed by the state to teach health education

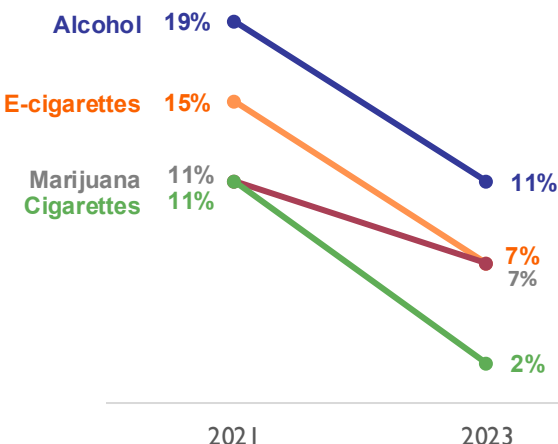
This is an increase from 66% in 2006

What students reported in 2023...

Nebraska students showed an increasing (though not significant) trend in quitting all tobacco products, opposite the national decline



Teens' substance use in the past 30 days declined significantly over the past 2 years



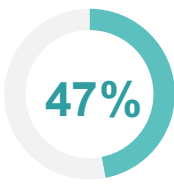
Lifetime marijuana use decreased from previous years and is lower than the national average

(14% in NE vs. 30% nationally)

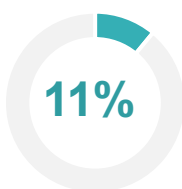
Past month teen behaviors associated with accidents



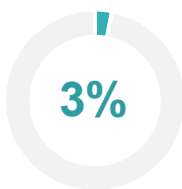
texted or emailed while driving



did not always wear a seatbelt



rode with a driver who was drinking



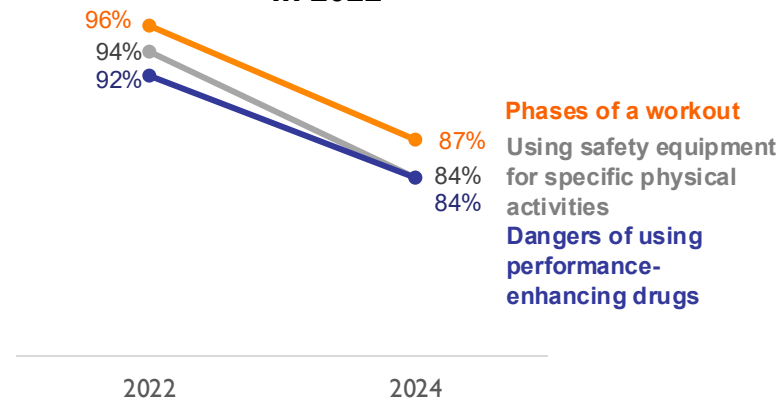
drove while under the influence of alcohol



# Physical Education and Physical Activity + Adolescent Health

The national framework for physical education (PE) and physical activity (PA) includes five components: physical education, physical activity during school, physical activity before & after school, staff involvement, and family & community engagement.

## Physical activity topics were less commonly covered in 2024 than in 2022

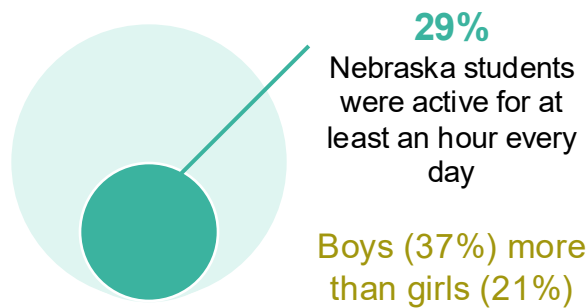


## What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...

There was an increase in teachers that **wanted** and **received** professional development in physical activity and fitness from 2000 to 2024



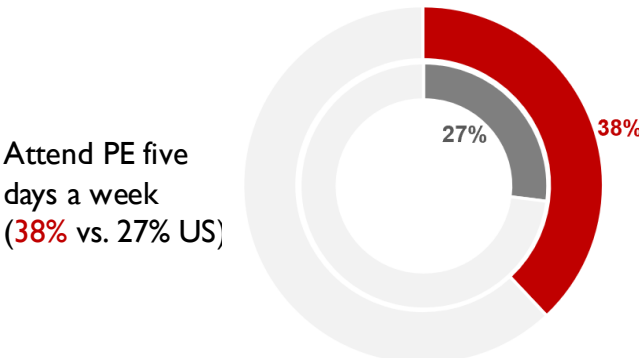
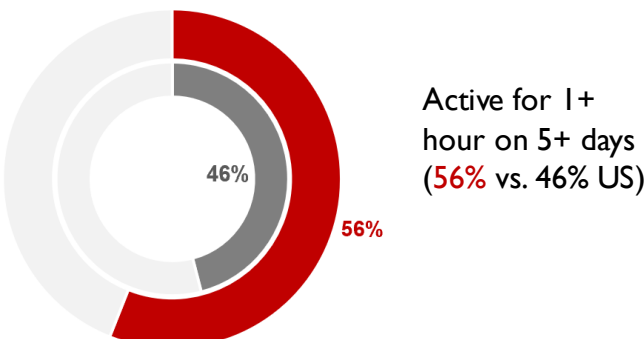
## What students reported in 2023...



One out of ten students (10%) had a concussion from playing sports or being physically active in the year prior to the survey

Down from 17% in 2021

## Nebraska teens were more likely than US teens to be...

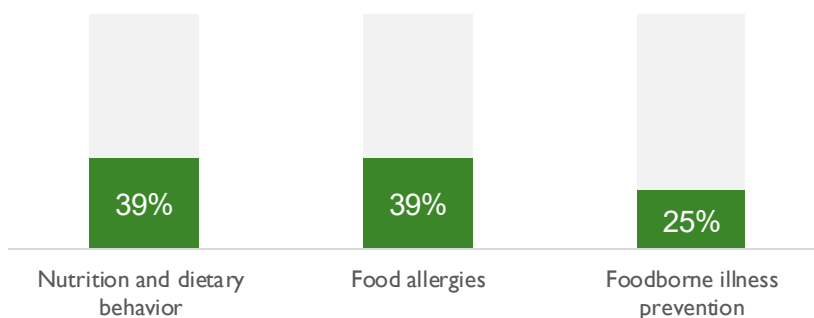


# Nutrition Environment and Services + Adolescent Health

The nutrition environment is about students' learning and healthy eating, including messaging and access to healthy food and drink. Nutrition services cover the school meal programs, making sure all food options meet standards, and education for those who provide these services.

## What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...

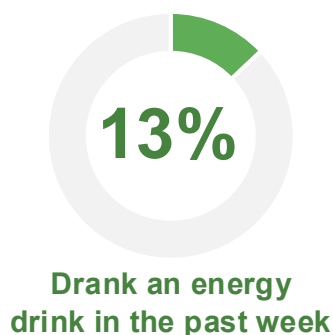
Less than half of health education instructors had nutrition related professional development on the following topics in the past two years



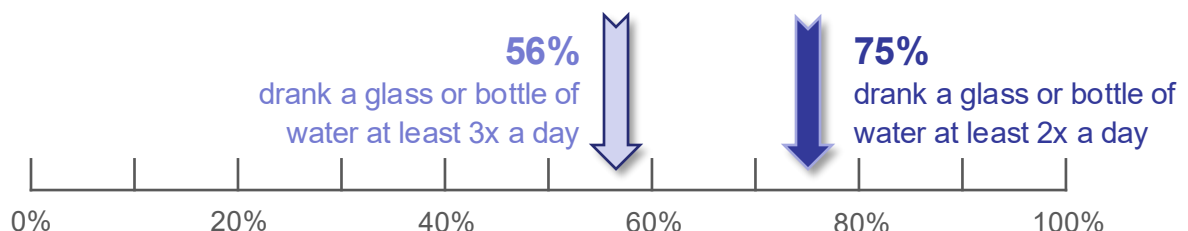
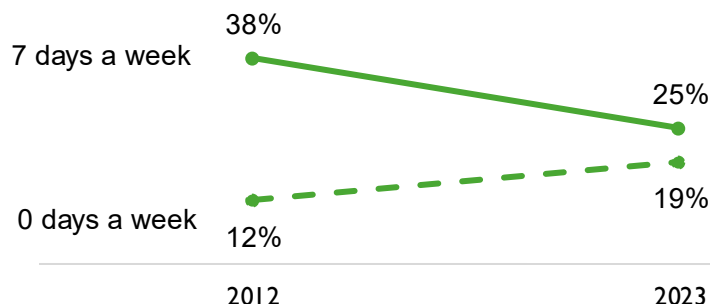
The largest increase in school coverage of topics related to nutrition and dietary behaviors was in finding valid information about nutrition (e.g., differentiating between advertising and factual information)

94% in 2024 vs.  
88% in 2022

## What students reported in 2023...



Despite 96% of schools teaching about the benefits of eating breakfast every day - eating breakfast is less common for teens than a decade ago



# Health Services + Adolescent Health

School health services address actual and potential health issues. Beyond first aid, emergency care, and chronic conditions, services include wellness promotion, student and parent education, and referrals to care. Health services also work with community services to help students and their families deal with stressors.



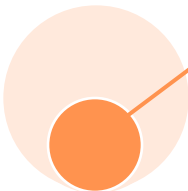
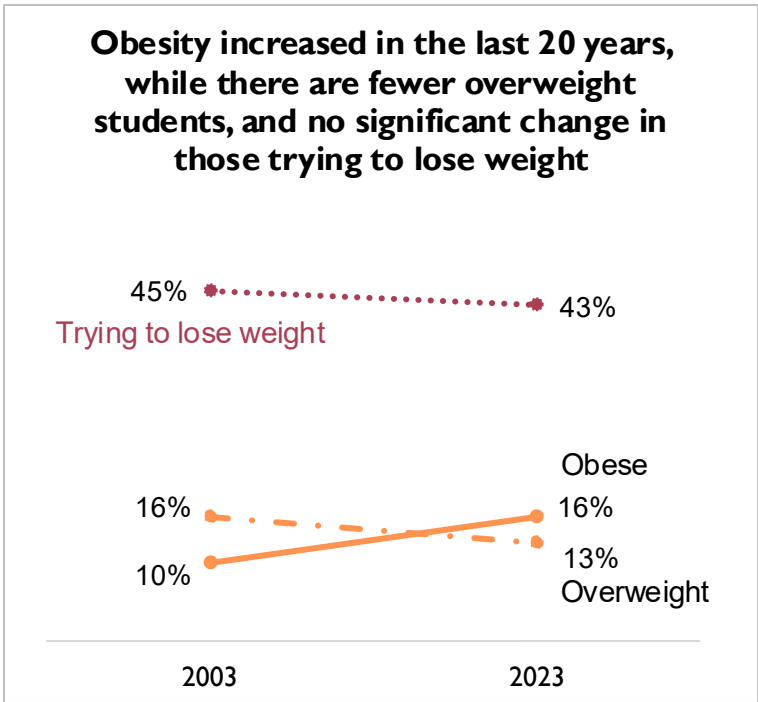
Nine out of ten lead health instructors (91%) covered chronic disease prevention (e.g. diabetes, obesity prevention) in a required course in the current school year

## What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...



Had professional development on this topic in the past 2 years, while 41% want it in the future

## What students reported in 2023...



3 out of 10 Nebraska teens describe themselves as overweight



Trying to lose weight was more common for girls than boys (57% vs. 31%)

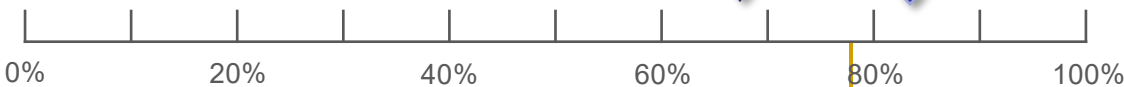


Fewer boys were overweight in 2023 than in 2012 (13% vs. 16%)



More girls were obese in 2023 than in 2012 – an increase from 8% to 13%

Seeing a dentist in the last year was more common for White teens (83%) than Hispanic teens (68%)



of students had seen a dentist in the last year

Up from 71% in 2021



Data from the Nebraska 2022 and 2024 School Health Profiles Lead Health Education Teacher data (2022 n=168, 2024 n=156). Funded by the CDC cooperative agreement, "Promote Adolescent Health through the School-Based HIV/STD Prevention and School-Based Surveillance"; 2021 YRBS data. Use the QR code to view more information.



# Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services + Adolescent Health

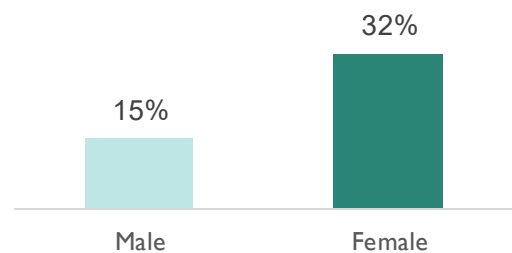
These services support behavioral, emotional, and mental health for students through on-site services, referrals to services, and school-community-family collaborations. Assessments and interventions help address psychological, academic, and social barriers to learning.

## What students reported in 2023...

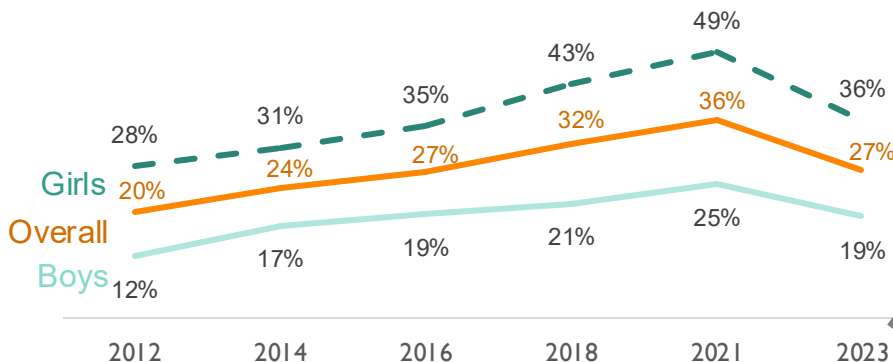


**Females** were significantly more likely to report that their mental health was not good most of the time or always

Nearly **one in four (23%)** students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always



**Girls** in Nebraska were twice as likely as boys to say they felt sad/hopeless, but there was a significant decrease in the past two years

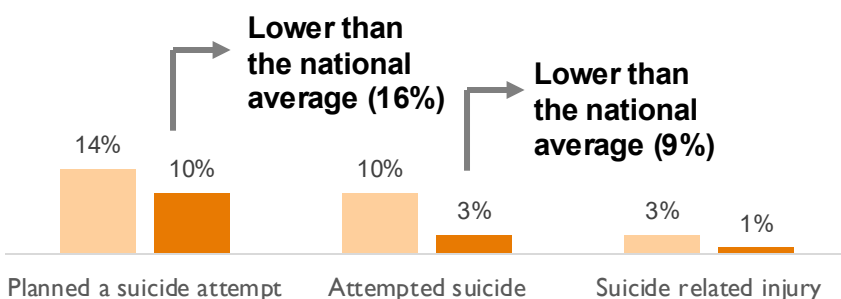


Nebraska's rates in 2023 were all lower than the national average

US Girls: 53%  
US Average: 40%  
US Boys: 28%

## Suicide related outcomes declined from 2021 to 2023

2021 2023



# 14X

Students who were often sad were much more likely than less sad peers to say they had seriously considered suicide (43% vs. 3%)



Emergency department hospitalizations show that **girls** are about two to three times as likely as boys to be treated for deliberate self-harm and suicide ideation among teens between 10-19.<sup>1</sup>

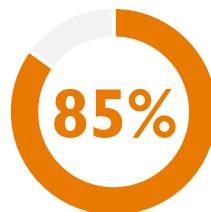
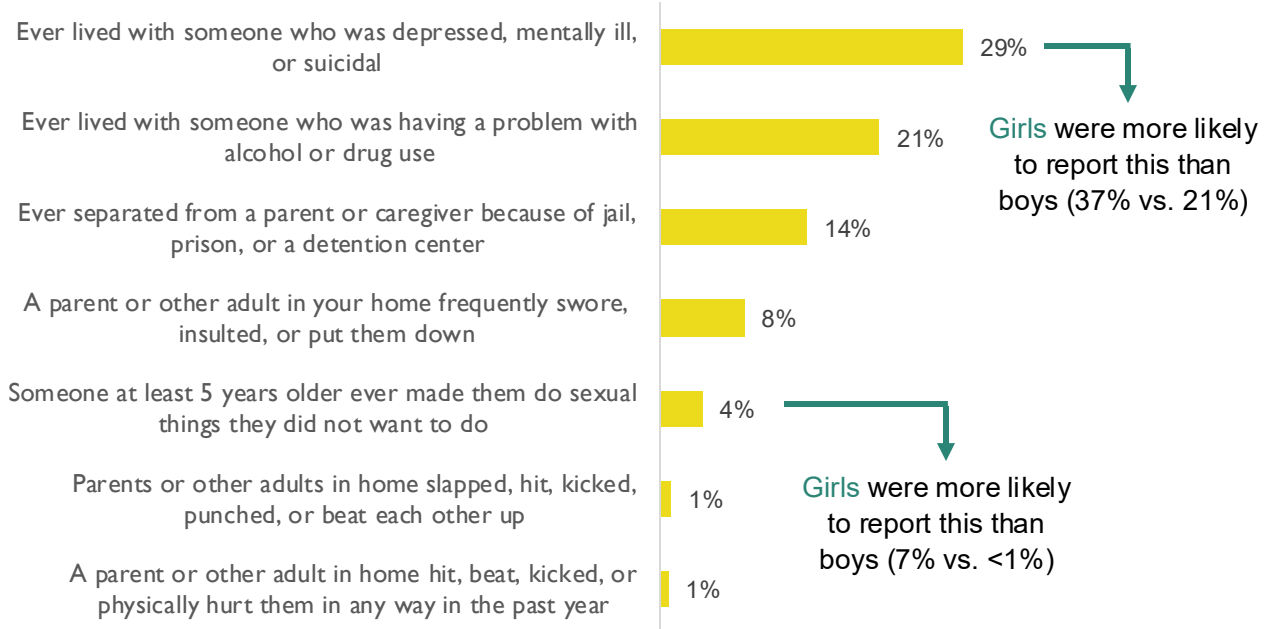
Between 2018-2023, the age adjusted suicide rate for Nebraska adolescents ages 15-19 was 13.94 per 100,000 persons.<sup>2</sup>

This was **much higher for males (20.52)** than **females (7.03)**.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are events experienced in childhood that are potentially traumatic and can be associated with various negative outcomes, such as increased risk for substance use and poor mental health.

**ACEs were reported by up to 73% of teens in Nebraska, with slightly less than one-third living with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal**



**85% of students said an adult in their household tried hard to make sure basic needs were met**

<sup>1</sup> Data from the Nebraska Hospital Discharge Data, May 4, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Data from the CDC's Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, June 6, 2025



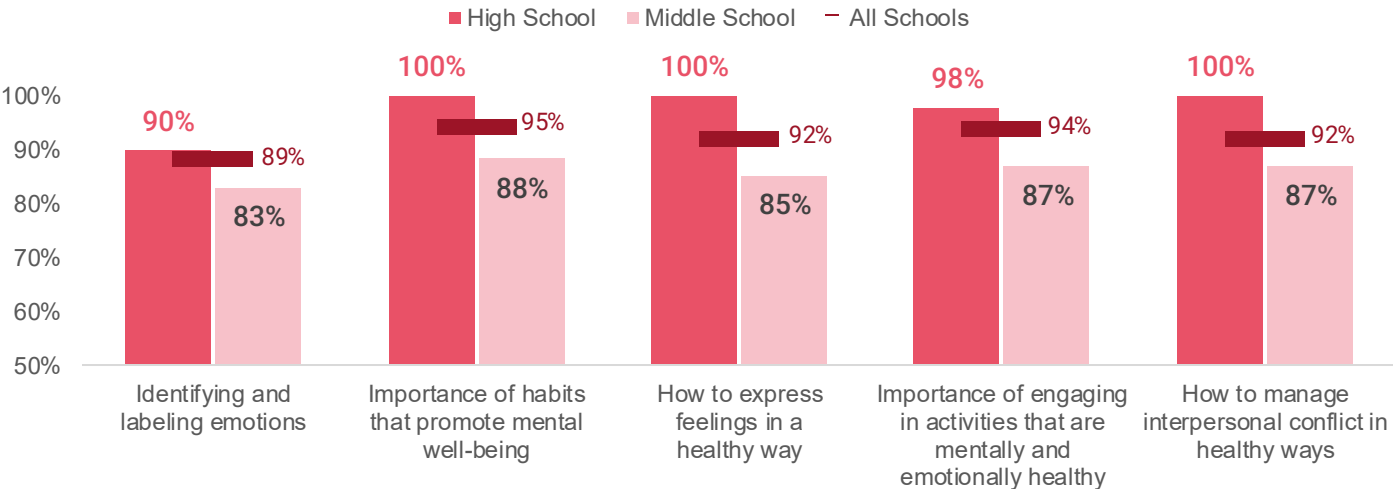


# Social and Emotional Climate + Adolescent Health

The interaction between society and students’ thoughts and behaviors impact development and the learning experience. A positive social and emotional climate promotes student academic performance, engagement, relationships, and feeling safe and supported.

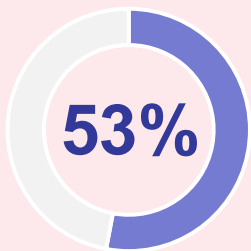
## What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...

In 2024, about nine in ten schools in Nebraska taught each of the mental and emotional health topics in a required course for students grades 6 through 12, with coverage generally **higher in high schools** than **middle schools**



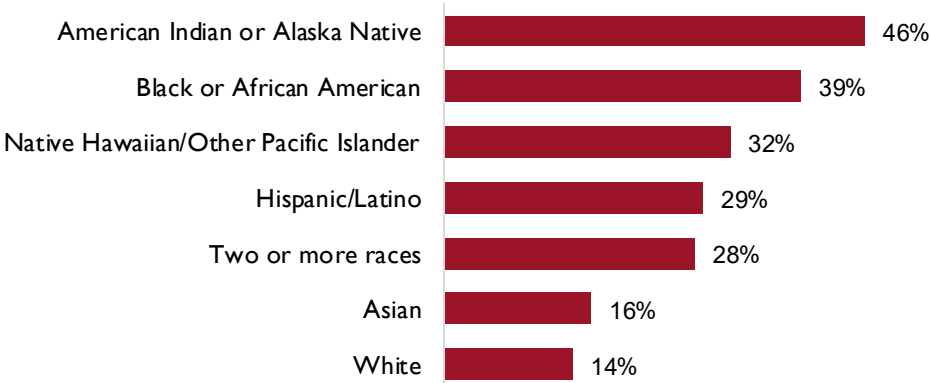
About nine in ten schools (92%) included analyzing the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors in their health curriculum

## What we know about students who were chronically absent (meaning students miss about 10% of school days)

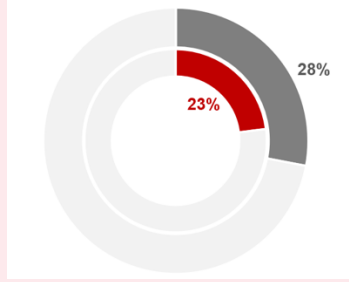


of children with disabilities were chronically absent<sup>1</sup>

### Nearly half of Native American students in Nebraska were chronically absent in the 2023-24 school year



In the 2022-23 academic year, about one in four **Nebraska students** were chronically absent. The average in the US was slightly higher.<sup>1</sup>



## High school students more likely to be chronically absent:<sup>2</sup>

- Those with poor relationships with teachers were **1.8X** more likely
- Those with low self-efficacy were **1.7X** more likely
- Those with low school climate were **1.6X** more likely

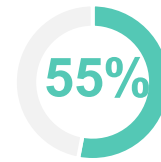
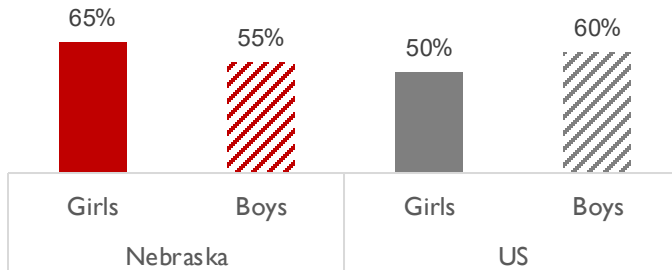
## What students reported in 2023...

**3 out of 5**

students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt close to people at their school



It was more common for **girls in Nebraska** - compared to boys in NE and females in the US - to strongly agree or agree they feel close to people at their school



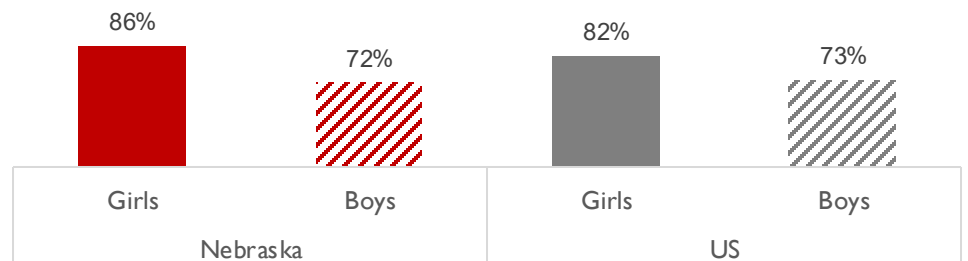
of teens felt they could often talk to a friend about their feelings

**Boys** were significantly less likely compared to **girls** to feel they could talk to a friend about their feelings most of the time or always



**Four out of five (79%) students used social media several times a day**

**In Nebraska and across the US, females are significantly more likely to use social media at least several times a day compares to males**



<sup>1</sup> Chronic Absenteeism, US Department of Education, Accessed February 23, 2025

<sup>2</sup> The State of Chronic Absenteeism, Panorama Education, Accessed February 23, 2025



# Physical Environment + Adolescent Health

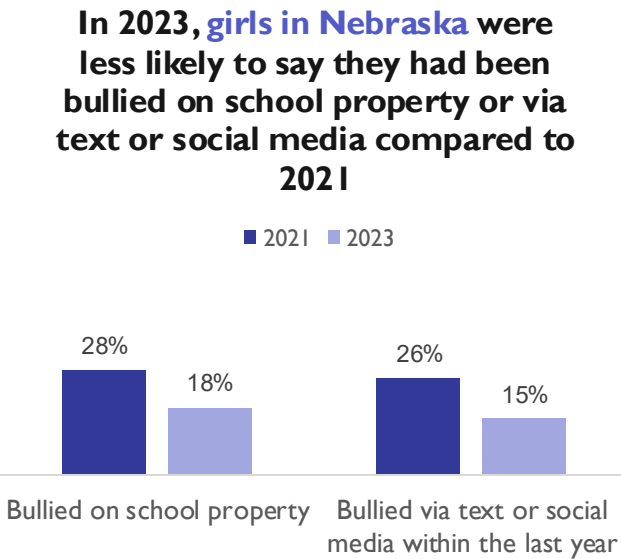
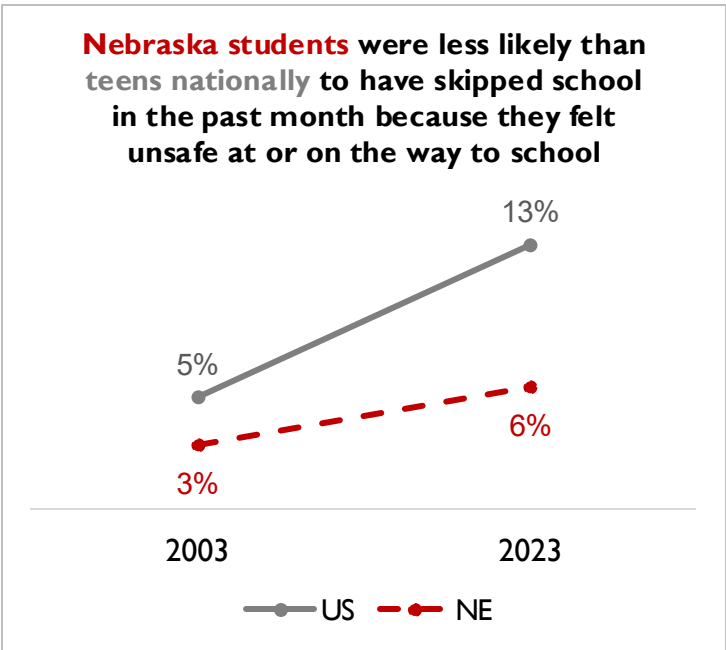
A healthy school environment includes the school building and its physical conditions, plus the surrounding area. The school should protect students and staff from physical threats to promote learning.

## What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...

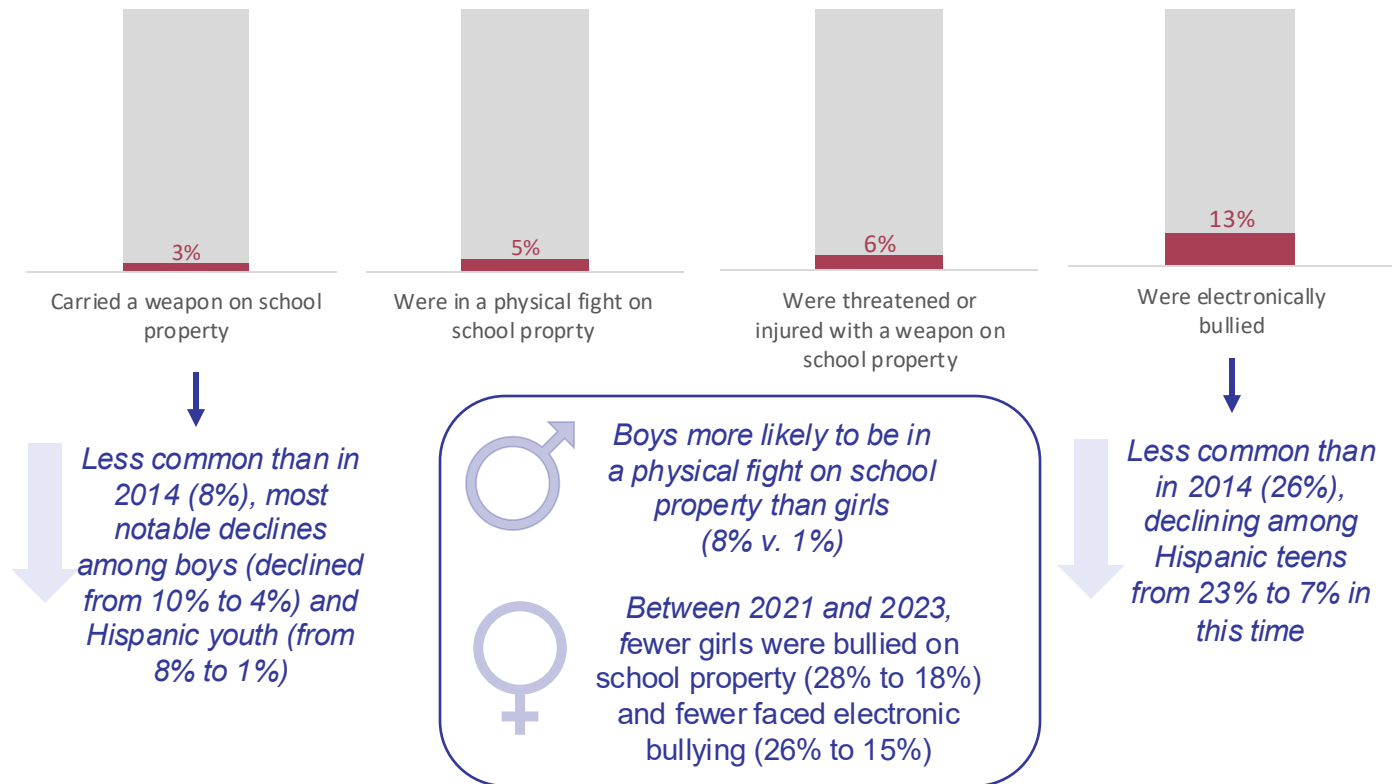
Overall trends show slightly fewer schools taught most of the following violence prevention topics in a required course for students in grades 6 through 12 in 2024 than in 2022



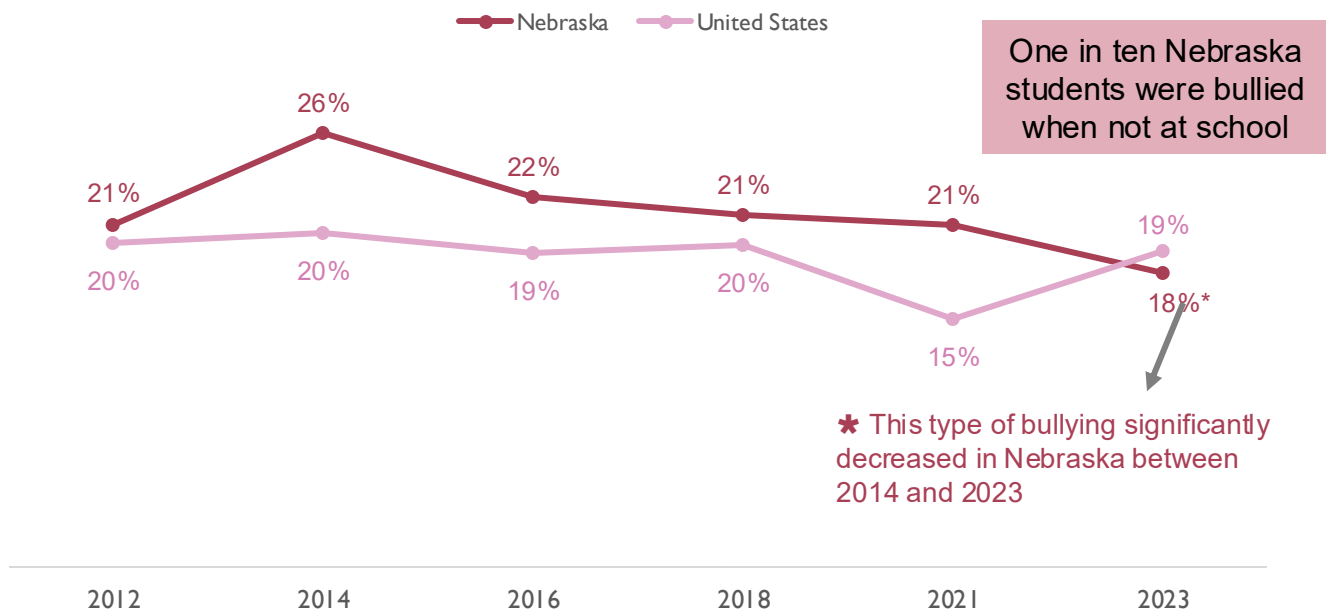
## What students reported in 2023...



## Among Nebraska students in 2023...



## Until 2023, Nebraska had consistently higher rates of students reporting being bullied on school property compared to the US



# Employee Wellness + Adolescent Health

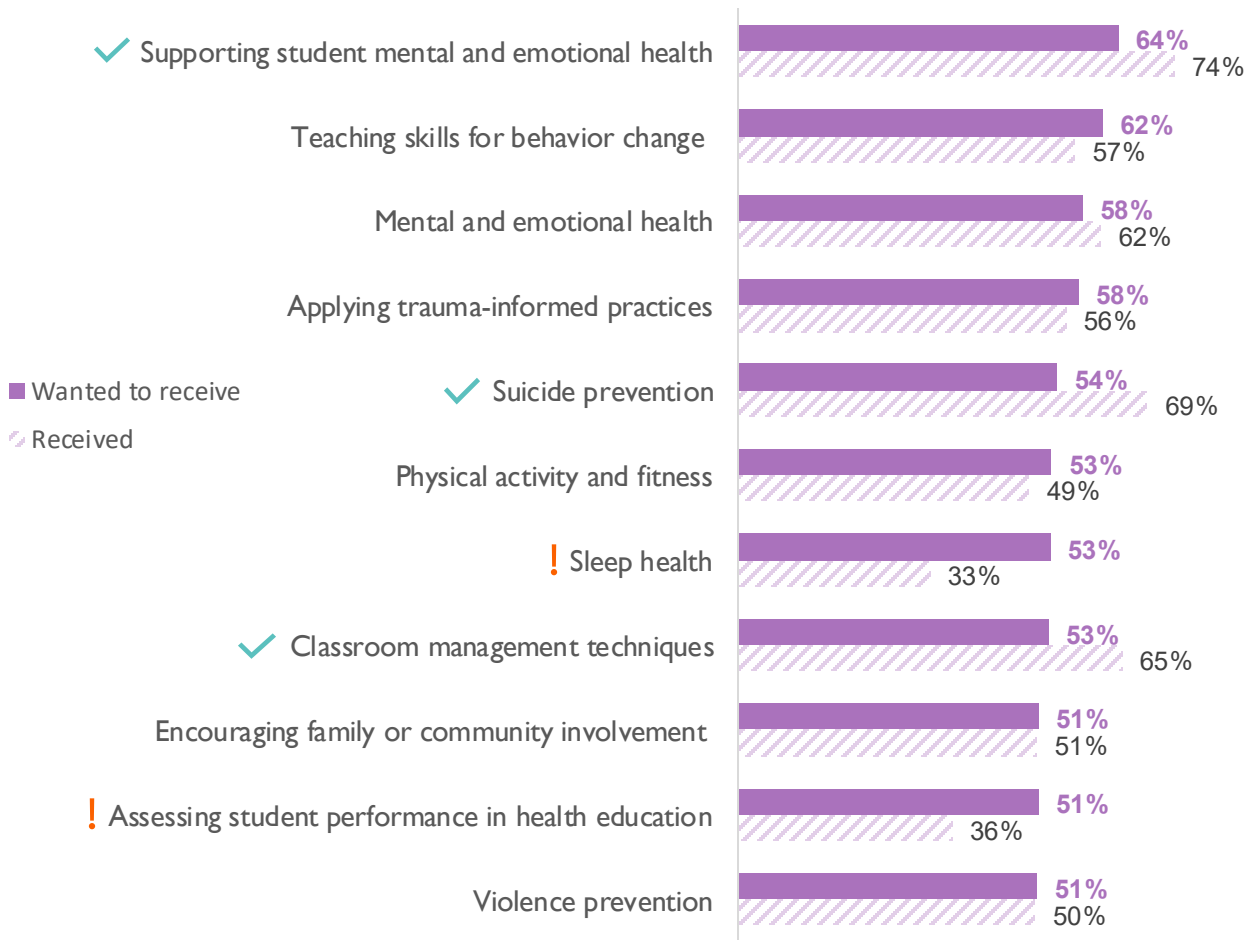
Healthy school staff support students’ wellbeing and academic success. As a worksite, schools foster employees’ physical and mental health. Staff who have appropriate training and resources are a benefit to their students and community.

**What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...**

✓ more people received PD in that topic than reported wanting PD

! more people reported wanting PD in that topic than receiving it

In 2024, there were 11 topics that more than half the lead health education teachers **wanted to receive** professional development around



**Nationally<sup>1</sup>**

**72%** of teachers were glad they selected teaching as a career

**76%** of teachers didn't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as they did when they began teaching

<sup>1</sup> Report: [State of the American Teacher Survey](#), 2024.

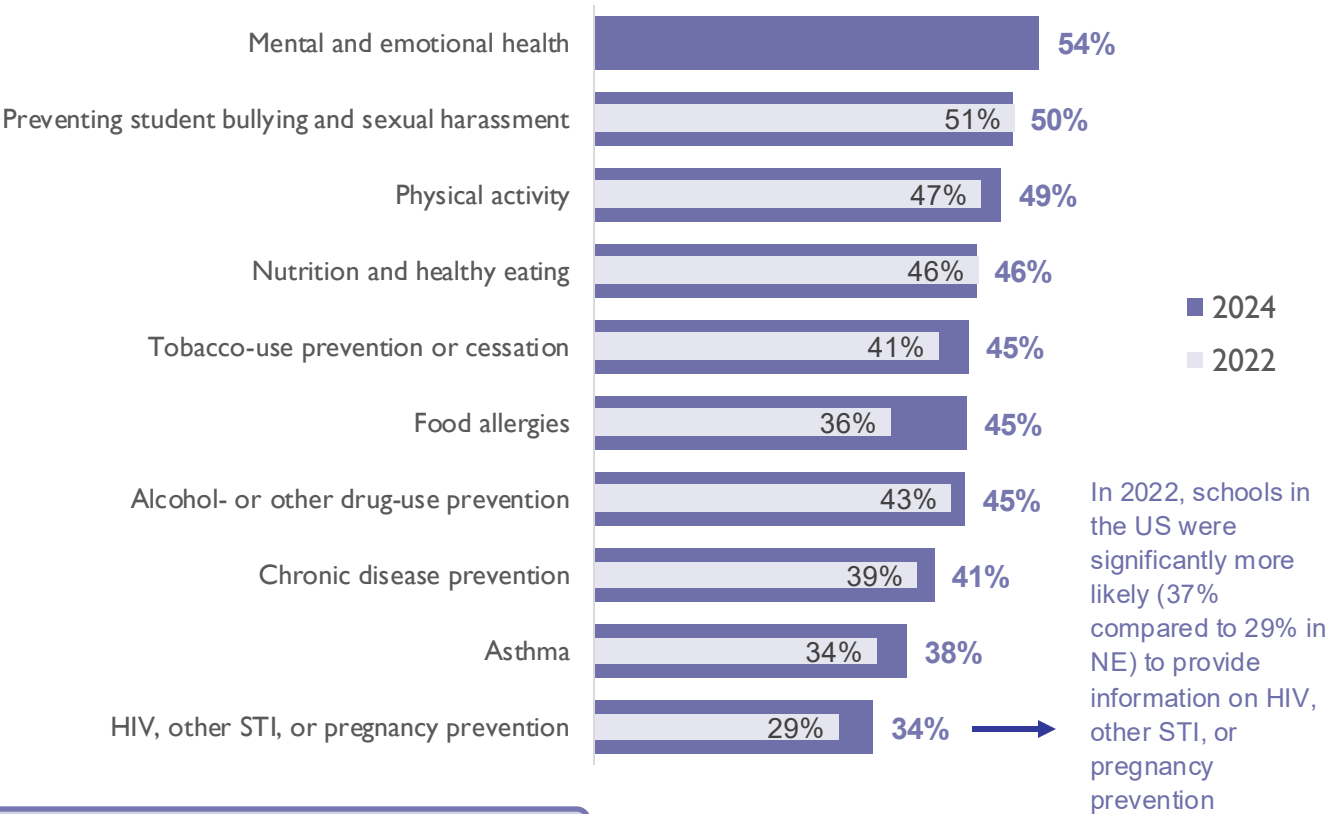


# Family Engagement & Community Involvement + Adolescent Health

Student learning and development is supported when family and school staff work together. When families feel welcomed and engaged, with the support of school staff, student health and wellbeing is reinforced.

## What lead health education teachers reported in 2024...

Overall trends show slightly more schools in Nebraska provided parents and families with health information designed to increase parent and family knowledge in 2024 than 2022



## What students report in 2023...

