

# Summary of Results from the 2008-2009 Somerville Health Survey

## Grades 6-8

**Submitted to:**

Somerville Cares About Prevention  
The Somerville Public Schools  
The Cambridge Health Alliance

**Submitted by:**

Social Science Research and Evaluation, Inc.  
21-C Cambridge Street  
Burlington, MA 01803  
781-270-6613

2009

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	1
Report Format .....	1
Who Conducted the Survey?.....	1
How and When Was the Survey Conducted? .....	1
What Did the Survey Ask About? .....	1
Validity .....	2
Non-Respondents.....	2
Trends .....	2
Comparative Data.....	2
Who Has the Problem? .....	3
Who Is Responsible? .....	3
<b>SUBSTANCE USE</b> .....	4
Lifetime and Current Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009) .....	5
Lifetime Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009), by Grade .....	6
Lifetime Substance Use for National 8th Grade Students (2008) and Somerville 8th Grade Students (2009) .....	7
Current Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009), by Gender .....	8
Current Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009), by Grade .....	9
Current Substance Use for National 8th Grade Students (2008) and Somerville 8th Grade Students (2009) .....	10
Current Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students ('03, '05, '07, '09) .....	11
<b>VIOLENCE AND SAFETY</b> .....	12
Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Experienced Physical Violence Issues in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09).....	13
Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Experienced Sexual Violence Issues in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09).....	14
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b> .....	15
Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Reported Experiencing Potential Stressors in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09).....	16
Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Reported Worrying About Problems in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09).....	17
Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation and Behavior in the Past 12 Months Among Somerville Middle School Students ('03, '05, '07, '09) .....	18
<b>PHYSICAL HEALTH</b> .....	19
Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Have Ever Had Sexual Intercourse, Total and by Grade ('03, '05, '07, '09).....	20
Perception of Body Weight Among Somerville Middle School Students, Total and by Gender (2009) .....	21
Current Weight Control Goal Among Somerville Middle School Students, Total and by Gender (2009) .....	22
Weight Loss Methods Used by Somerville Middle School Students in the Past 12 Months, Total and by Gender (2009) .....	23
Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Reported Physical Activity for 60+ Minutes on at Least 5 of the Past 7 Days (2009) .....	24
<b>APPENDIX A: Selected Data Tables</b>	
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use	
Substance Use-Related Issues	
Violence and Safety	
Health and Mental Health	

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# BACKGROUND

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## REPORT FORMAT

In April of 2009, 818 Somerville middle school students (grades 6-8) took part in the 2008-2009 Somerville Middle School Health Survey. The survey was developed by the Somerville Cares About Prevention Coalition, the Somerville Public Schools, and the Cambridge Health Alliance. Based on surveys such as the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, *Monitoring the Future*, *Profiles of Student Life – Attitudes and Behaviors*, and the *Survey of Student Resources and Assets*, the questionnaire was designed to gather information on some of the important issues facing youth in Somerville, such as substance use, violence and safety, and mental health. Similar surveys were conducted during the 2002-2003, 2004-2005, and 2006-2007 school years, and a high school version of the survey was conducted in 2001-2002, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, and 2007-2008.

This report is designed to provide an overview of key survey data, focusing on four main themes: (1) What do the data from this survey tell us about the challenges facing youth in Somerville?; (2) Are there any important sub-population differences among respondents (such as by gender or grade)?; (3) How have the data changed since previous administrations of the survey?; and (4) When possible, how do results in Somerville compare to those in other communities? The summary presents an overview of findings grouped according to the following themes: Substance Use; Violence and Safety; Mental Health; and, Physical Health. The main results in each section are illustrated using charts that are complemented by supplementary data or information. An appendix containing selected data follows the main results.

## WHO CONDUCTED THE SURVEY?

The survey was conducted by the Somerville Cares About Prevention Coalition, the Somerville Public Schools, and the Cambridge Health Alliance in collaboration with Social Science Research and Evaluation, Inc. (SSRE), a non-profit social science research firm located in Burlington, Massachusetts.

## HOW AND WHEN WAS THE SURVEY CONDUCTED?

The survey was administered as a questionnaire in April of 2009 to all Somerville public school students in grades 6 through 8. The number of respondents in each grade is as follows:

6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	Unknown	TOTAL
265	282	265	6	818

School administrators set aside approximately 30 minutes for students to complete the survey. The attending classroom teacher was responsible for passing out the questionnaires and maintaining order in the classroom. In addition to English, the survey was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian.

## WHAT DID THE SURVEY ASK ABOUT?

The survey focuses on issues ranging from demographic and background items (e.g., gender, age), to student substance use (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, other drugs), to other issues related to

student health such as stress and suicide, violence and safety, sexual behavior, dietary behavior, and physical activity.

## **VALIDITY**

There is a good deal of research about the ways in which students respond to surveys and whether they tell the truth. This work indicates that student survey results are reasonably accurate provided that student participation is voluntary and that the respondents cannot be identified. The Somerville Middle School Health Survey met these conditions. The voluntary nature of the survey was explained to both students and their parents. Prior to the survey, parents were given the opportunity to opt their child(ren) out of the survey. In addition, students could choose not to participate or to skip any items. The confidential nature of the survey was highlighted in the questionnaire instructions that asked students *not* to put their name on the questionnaire and explained that their answers would not be viewed by anyone who knows them.

Two other steps were taken to increase validity. First, each questionnaire was reviewed to identify any on which students obviously provided frivolous answers. Such questionnaires were omitted from all analyses. Second, analyses were conducted to test for the reasonableness of responses and for the consistency of responses across related items. When inconsistent responses were identified, the entire case or the suspect items for that case were treated as missing data in all subsequent analyses. These two procedures identified few problems.

The validity of the survey is also bolstered by using a questionnaire based largely upon existing instruments such as the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), *Monitoring the Future* (University of Michigan), and *Profiles of Student Life – Attitudes and Behaviors* and *Survey of Student Resources and Assets* (America's Promise and Search Institute). These standardized instruments have been thoroughly tested and administered in large-scale research studies (see Brener, N., Kann, L., McManus, T., Kinchen, S.A., Sundberg E.C., and Ross, J.G. [2002]. "Reliability of the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Questionnaire." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31, 336-342).

## **NON-RESPONDENTS**

It is important to keep in mind that the survey results can be generalized only to students who were present when the survey was administered. The results may not reflect responses that might have been obtained from students who were absent on the day that the survey was administered.

## **TRENDS**

Trend comparisons can provide extremely useful information on whether certain behaviors have improved, worsened, or stayed the same over time. In fact, it is best to repeat a survey such as this at regular intervals in order to track changes over time. Because similar surveys of Somerville middle school students were administered in 2003, 2005, and 2007, it is possible to make comparisons to results from those surveys when items are comparable.

## **COMPARATIVE DATA**

A limitation of such data is that it is difficult to compare results from Somerville to results from other communities. Making comparisons to other communities is quite complicated – surveys are not exactly alike, the populations used may differ in unknown ways, the timing of the

surveys may vary, and so on. Although it is natural to want to compare to other communities, the most useful comparisons are made by looking at Somerville over time.

When surveying high school students in grades nine through 12, limited comparisons can be made to Massachusetts as a whole since the Massachusetts Department of Education administers the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to a sample of Massachusetts students every two years. Massachusetts does not, however, administer a statewide survey of middle school students and there are few other large-scale surveys of middle school students.

The Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF), administered annually each Spring by the University of Michigan for the National Institute on Drug Abuse, does include selected comparable items related to 8th grade substance use (the survey is not administered to students in grades 6 or 7). When possible, substance use results for Somerville 8th graders will be compared to national 8th grade results using the most recent available MTF data. The most current data are from the 2008 MTF which was administered in the Spring of 2008. It is important to note that this survey was administered one year prior to the Somerville survey.

### **WHO HAS THE PROBLEM?**

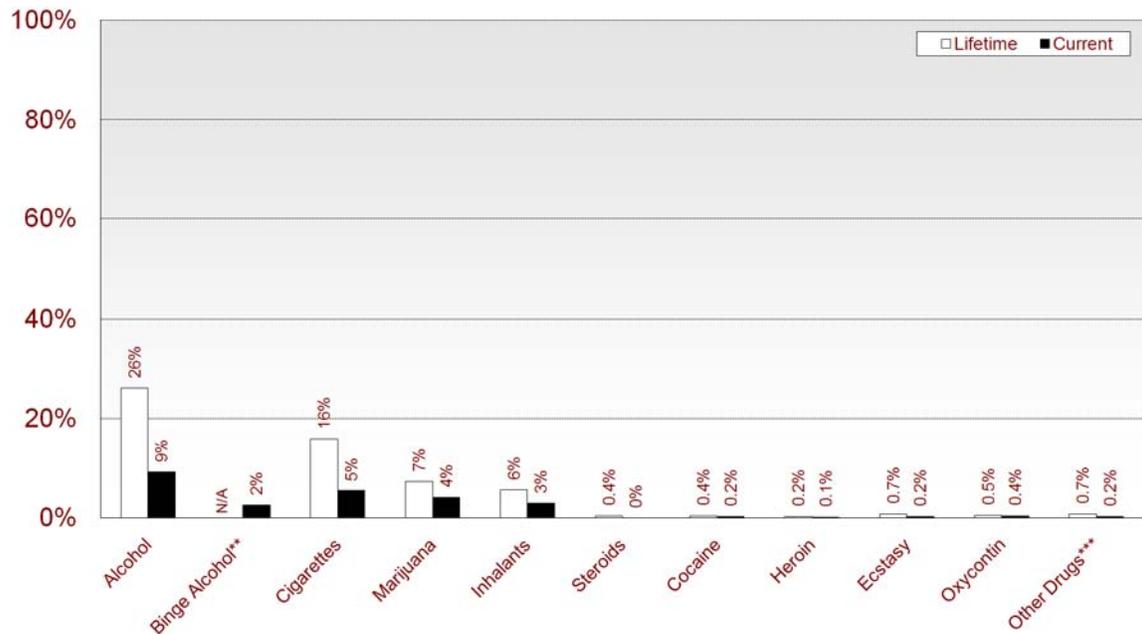
Although this survey was administered to middle school students, this does not mean that the issues addressed are confined solely to youth. For example, national studies of substance use show that rates of use are higher among young adults than adolescents. It is also important to keep in mind that while this survey focuses on a number of risky behaviors, it may not fully address the many positive aspects of adolescent life.

### **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?**

Data on health behavior among youth is typically collected in public schools because it is comparatively simple to collect data from what is essentially a "captive" audience. The fact that data on youth are collected in schools, however, does not mean that the schools bear the sole or even the largest responsibility for the behaviors revealed in these surveys. Issues such as those addressed in this survey are not school problems; they are community problems that require the attention of all community members and organizations.

# Substance Use

## Lifetime\* and Current\* Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009)

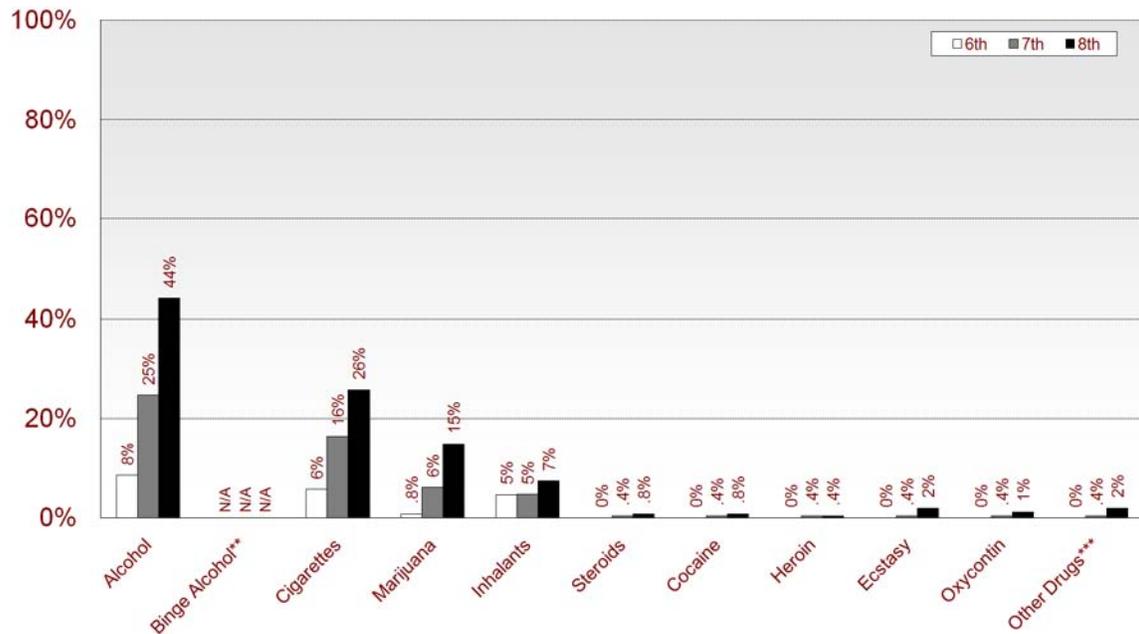


\* Lifetime use is any use in one's lifetime. Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.  
 \*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."  
 \*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Lifetime use is any use in one's lifetime. Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- The questions concerning alcohol use were preceded by the following instruction: "The next questions ask about drinking alcohol. This includes drinking beer, wine, wine coolers and alcohol such as rum, gin, vodka or whiskey. For these questions, drinking alcohol does *not* include drinking sips of wine for religious purposes."
- Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."
- Alcohol is the substance of choice, with 26% of 2009 Somerville middle school students reporting that they had consumed alcohol in their lifetime and 9% reporting that they had consumed it in the 30 days prior to the survey. Two percent (2%) of respondents reported binge alcohol use in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- Cigarette smoking was the next most common form of substance use with 16% of respondents reporting lifetime cigarette use and 5% reporting current use, followed by marijuana (7% lifetime, 4% current) and inhalants (6% lifetime, 3% current).
- Both lifetime and current use of substances other than alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, and inhalants was comparatively low.

## Lifetime\* Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009), by Grade



\* Lifetime use is any use in one's lifetime.

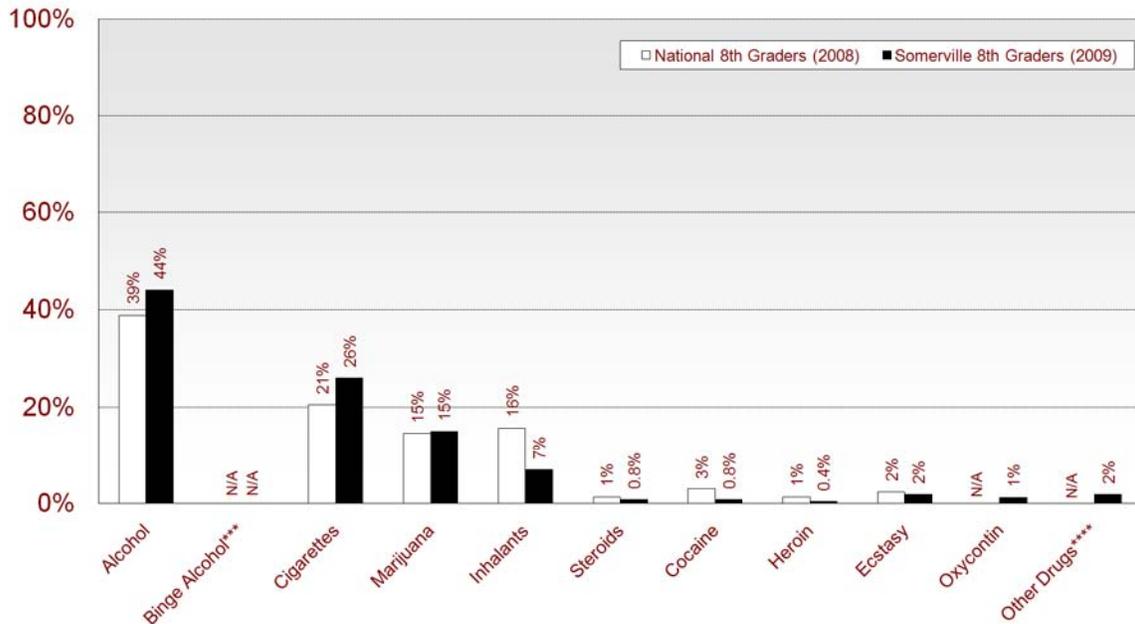
\*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."

\*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Overall, the percentage of 2009 Somerville middle school students who reported ever using each of these substances increased with age/grade. For example, the percentage who reported ever using alcohol in their lifetime increased from 8% in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 25% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 44% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- By spring of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, just under half of Somerville middle school students (44%) reported that they had ever tried alcohol, approximately one-quarter (26%) had tried cigarettes, 15% had tried marijuana, and 7% had tried inhalants.

## Lifetime\* Substance Use for National 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students (2008)\*\* and Somerville 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students (2009)



\* Lifetime use is any use in one's lifetime.

\*\* National 8<sup>th</sup> grade data from the 2008 Monitoring the Future Survey, National Institute on Drug Abuse.

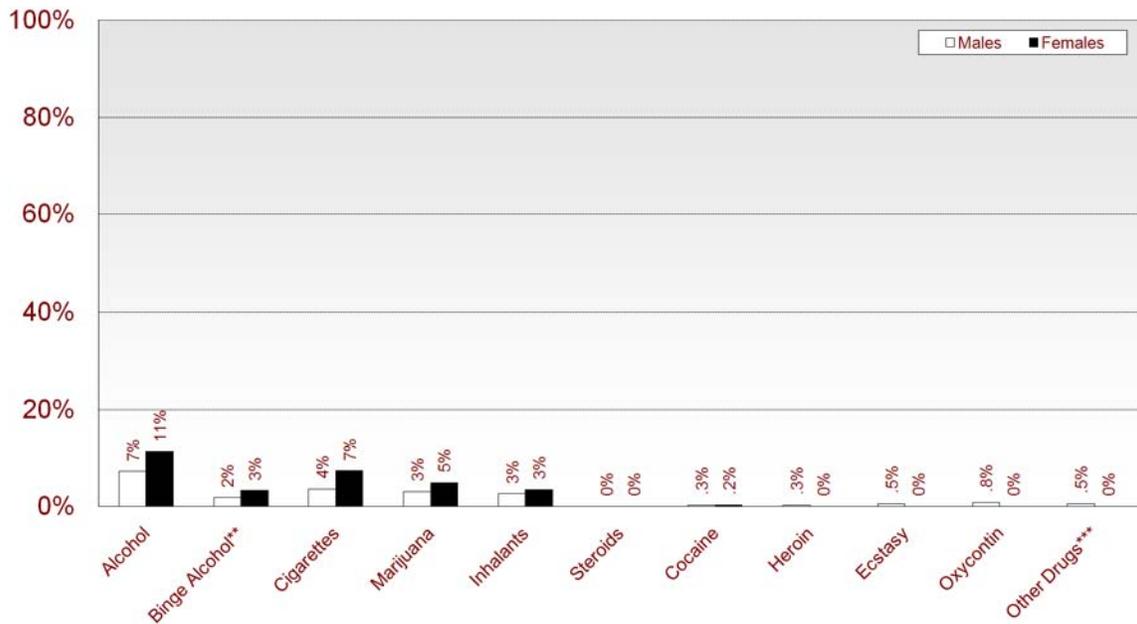
\*\*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."

\*\*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Comparative middle school data are from the 2008 *Monitoring the Future Survey*, conducted by the University of Michigan for the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- Because the *Monitoring the Future Survey* is conducted with students in grades 8, 10, and 12, comparative data are limited to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Rates of Somerville 8<sup>th</sup> grade lifetime use of the three most commonly used substances were *at or above* the national average: alcohol (44% Somerville, 39% National), cigarettes (26% Somerville, 21% National), and marijuana (15% Somerville, 15% National).
- Rates of 8<sup>th</sup> grade lifetime use of other substances were generally *lower* than the national average in Somerville: inhalants (7% Somerville, 16% National), steroids (0.8% Somerville, 1% National), cocaine (0.8% Somerville, 3% National), heroin (0.4% Somerville, 1% National), and ecstasy (2% Somerville, 2% National).
- National data for oxycontin and other illegal drugs are not available.

## Current\* Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009), by Gender



\* Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

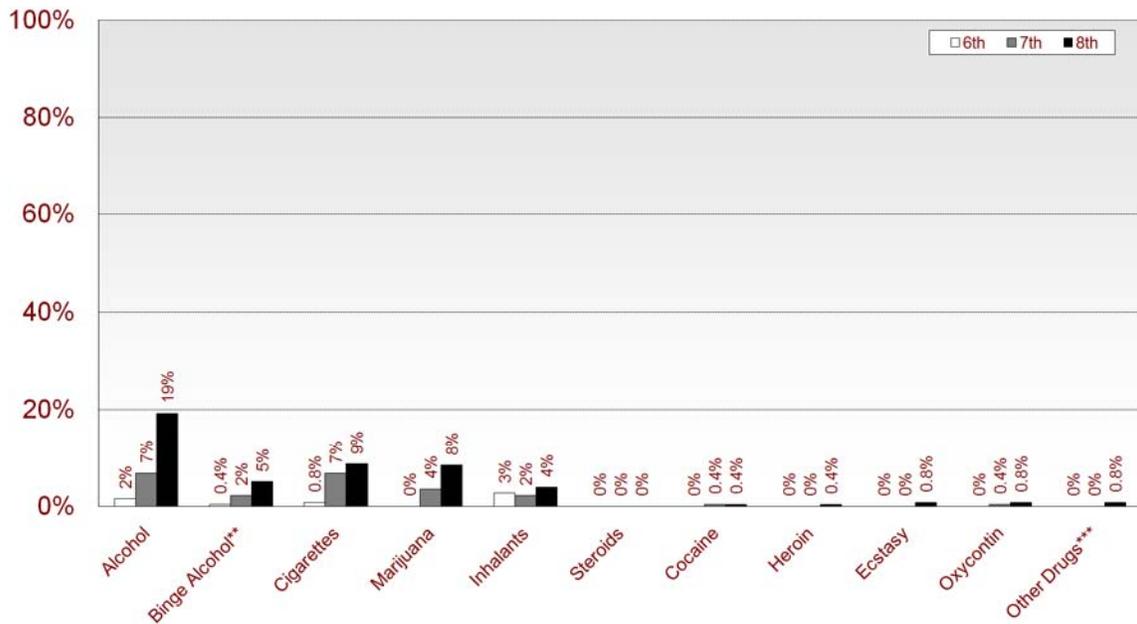
\*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."

\*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- Overall, Somerville middle school females reported higher rates of current substance use than males, most notably on more commonly used substances such as alcohol (7% males, 11% females), binge alcohol (2% males, 3% females), cigarettes (4% males, 7% females), and marijuana (3% males, 5% females).

## Current\* Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students (2009), by Grade



\* Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

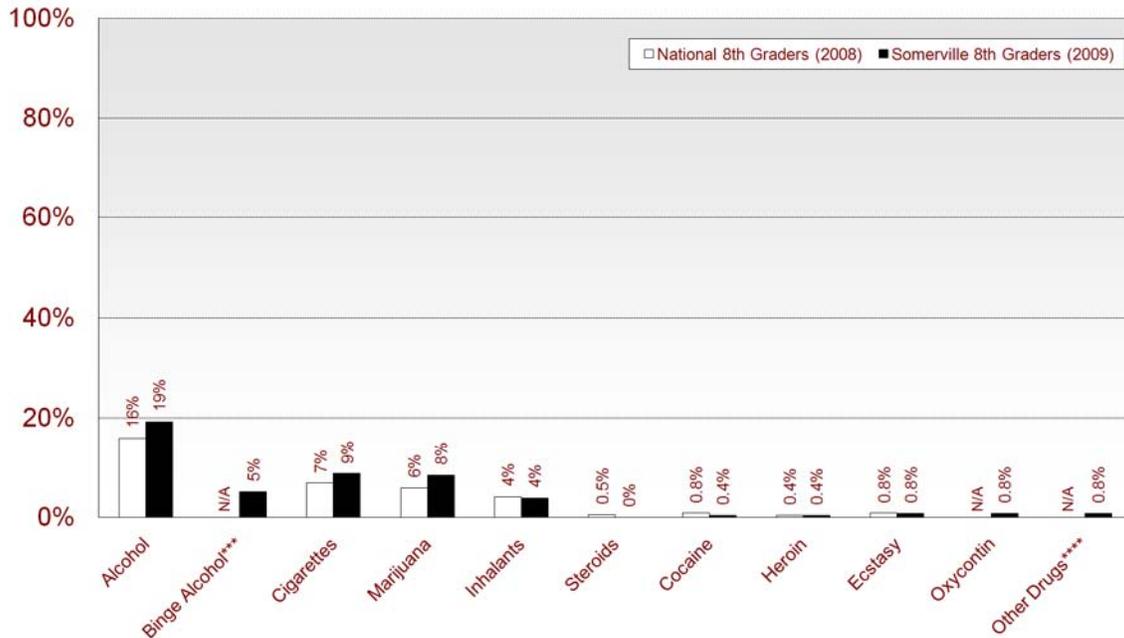
\*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."

\*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Overall, the percentage of Somerville middle school students who reported current use of more common substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana increased with age/grade. For example, the percentage of students who reported current marijuana use increased from 0% in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, to 4% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 8% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Current alcohol use rose from 2% among 6<sup>th</sup> graders to 7% among 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 19% among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Use rates for other illegal substances remained comparatively low across all grades.

## Current\* Substance Use for National 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students (2008)\*\* and Somerville 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students (2009)



\* Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

\*\* National 8<sup>th</sup> grade data from the 2008 Monitoring the Future Survey, National Institute of Drug Abuse.

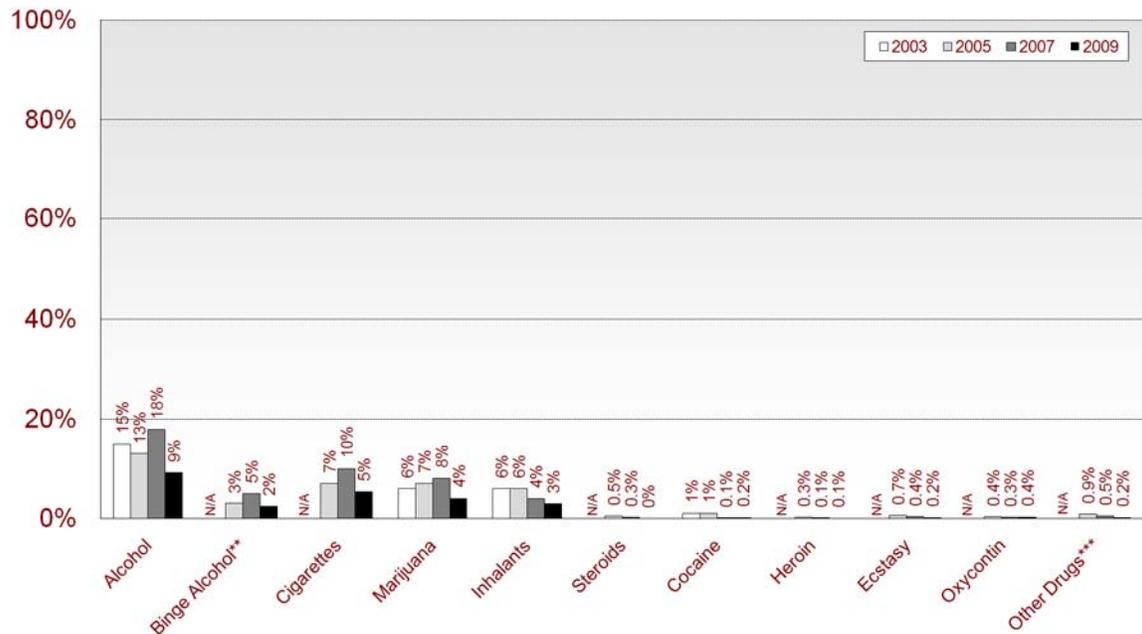
\*\*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."

\*\*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Somerville 8<sup>th</sup> grade current use rates for comparable substances were generally *similar to or slightly above* national averages.
- In particular, rates of current use of the more commonly used substances of alcohol (19% Somerville, 16% National), cigarettes (9% Somerville, 7% National), and marijuana (8% Somerville, 6% National) were above national 8<sup>th</sup> grade rates.
- Use rates for less commonly used substances were similar among both populations.

## Current\* Substance Use for Somerville Middle School Students ('03, '05, '07, '09)



\* Current use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

\*\* Binge alcohol use was defined in the survey as having "five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours."

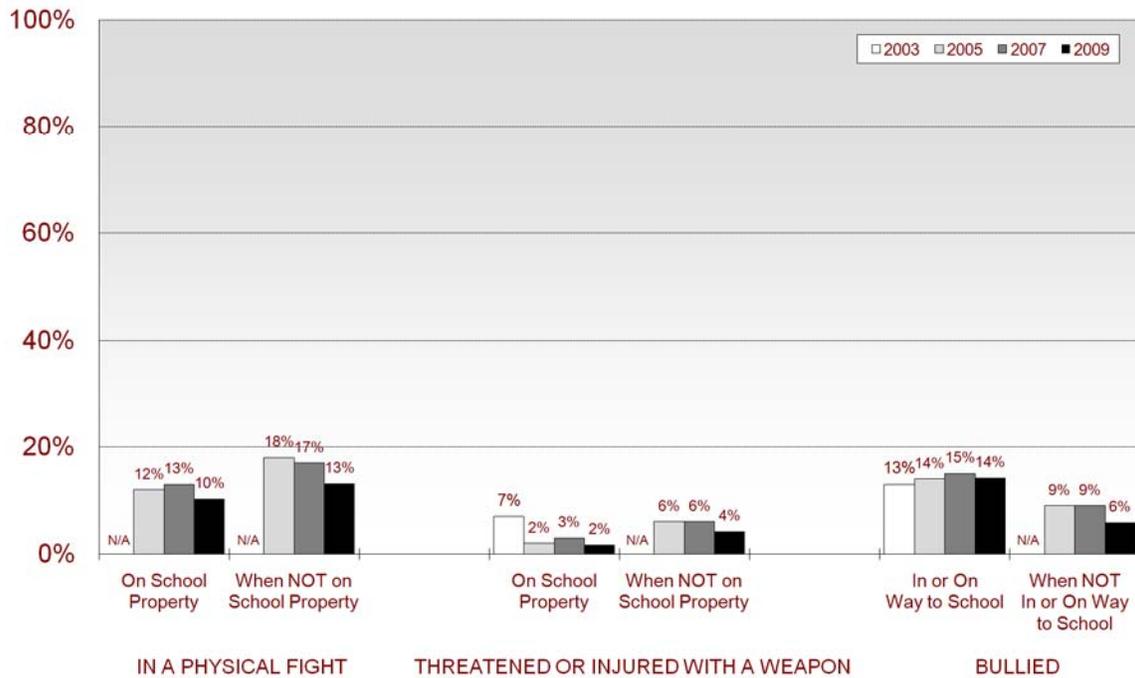
\*\*\* Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

### SELECTED POINTS

- Trend data from 2003 are not available for the following substances: binge alcohol, cigarettes, steroids, heroin, ecstasy, oxycontin, and other drugs.
- Available trend data reveal decreases in current use of the most commonly used substances, reversing increases previously observed: alcohol (15% in 2003, 13% in 2005, 18% in 2007, 9% in 2009), binge alcohol (3% in 2005, 5% in 2007, 2% in 2009), cigarettes (7% in 2005, 10% in 2007, 5% in 2009), and marijuana (6% in 2003, 7% in 2005, 8% in 2007, 4% in 2009).
- There was a continued decrease in the rate of current inhalant use, and use of other substances remained comparatively low and consistent.

# Violence and Safety

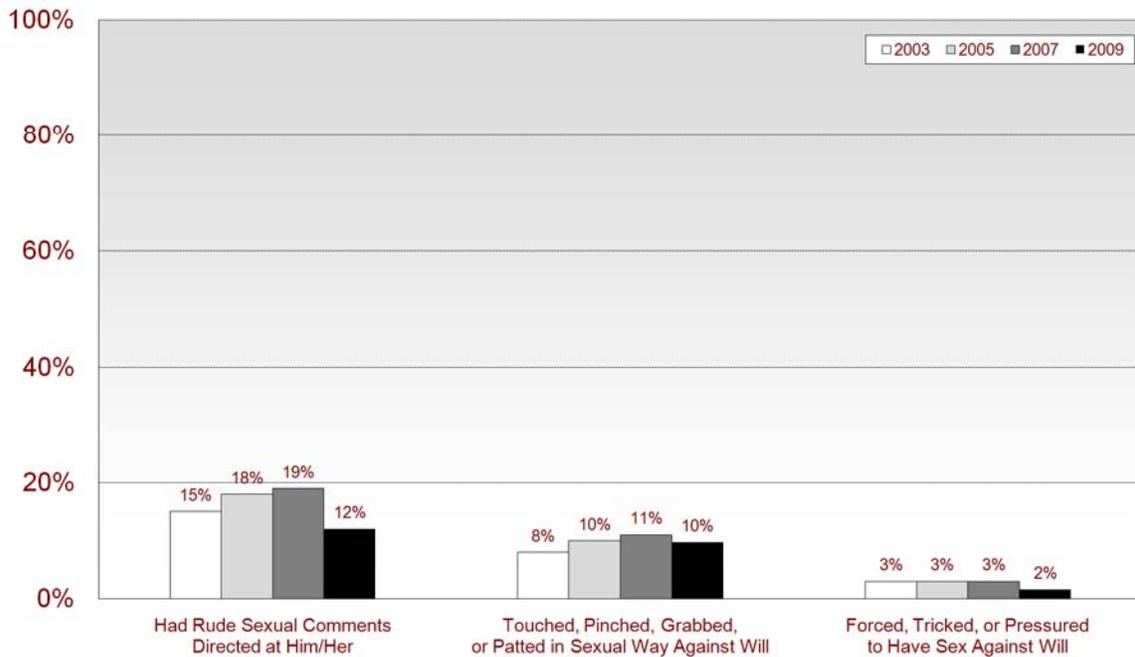
## Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Experienced Physical Violence Issues in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09)



### SELECTED POINTS

- As observed in prior years, 2009 Somerville middle school students were more likely to report that fighting and being threatened/injured with a weapon happened when they were *off* rather than *on* school property. Being bullied, however, happened more often *on* school property.
- **Trends:** Available trend data reveal decreases in 2009 in these experiences of physical violence and/or threats.
- **Gender:** 2009 Somerville male middle school students were more likely than females to report each of these issues: physical fighting *on* school property (14% males, 7% females), physical fighting *off* school property (17%, 10%), being threatened/injured with a weapon *on* school property (3%, 1%), being threatened/injured with a weapon *off* school property (6%, 3%), being bullied *in* or *on the way* to/from school (15%, 13%), and being bullied *off* school property (8%, 4%).
- **Grade:** Reported experiences with violence and/or threats among 2009 Somerville middle school students varied with age/grade. Most issues were more common among older than younger students. The exception was reported bullying, which was more common among younger than older respondents. Sixth to 8<sup>th</sup> grade data are as follows: fought *on* school property (10%, 9%, 12%), fought *off* school property (11%, 11%, 18%), threatened/injured *on* school property (1%, 2%, 2%), threatened/injured *off* school property (3%, 3%, 7%), bullied *on* school property (17%, 14%, 12%), bullied *off* school property (7%, 5%, 6%).

## Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Experienced Sexual Violence Issues in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09)

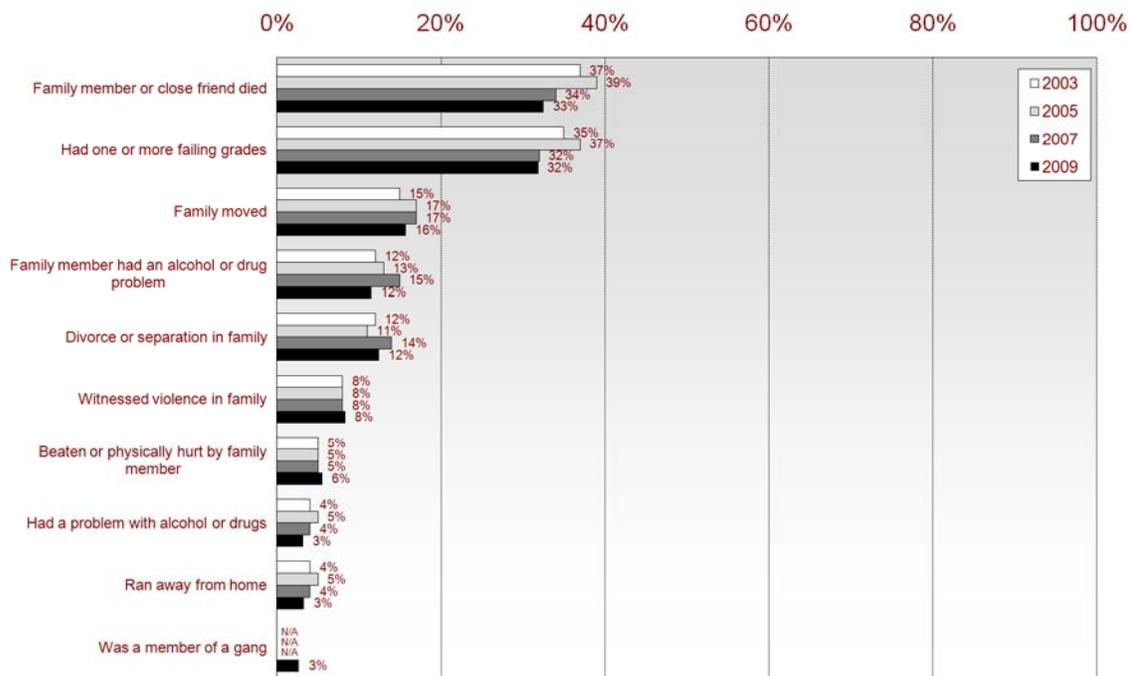


### SELECTED POINTS

- In 2009, 12% of Somerville middle school students reported that they had rude sexual comments directed at them in the 12 months prior to the survey, 10% had been touched, pinched, grabbed, or patted in a sexual way against their will, and 2% were forced, tricked, or pressured to have sex.
- **Trends:** Reports of each of these issues decreased somewhat in 2009, reversing some slight but consistent increases previously observed between 2003 and 2007: rude sexual comments directed at them (15%, 18%, 19%, 12%), touched, pinched, grabbed, or patted in a sexual way against their will (8%, 10%, 11%, 10%), forced, tricked, or pressured to have sex against their will (3%, 3%, 3%, 2%).
- **Gender:** Female 2009 Somerville middle school students were more likely than males to report having rude sexual comments directed at them (9% males, 15% females), being touched, pinched, grabbed, or patted in a sexual way against their will (7%, 12%), and forced to have sex (0.8%, 2%).
- **Grade:** The percentage of 2009 respondents in each grade who reported these experiences are as follows: had rude sexual comments directed at them (8%, 9%, 20%), touched, pinched, grabbed, or patted in a sexual way against their will (4%, 10%, 15%), forced, tricked, or pressured to have sex against their will (2%, 0.7%, 2%).

# Mental Health

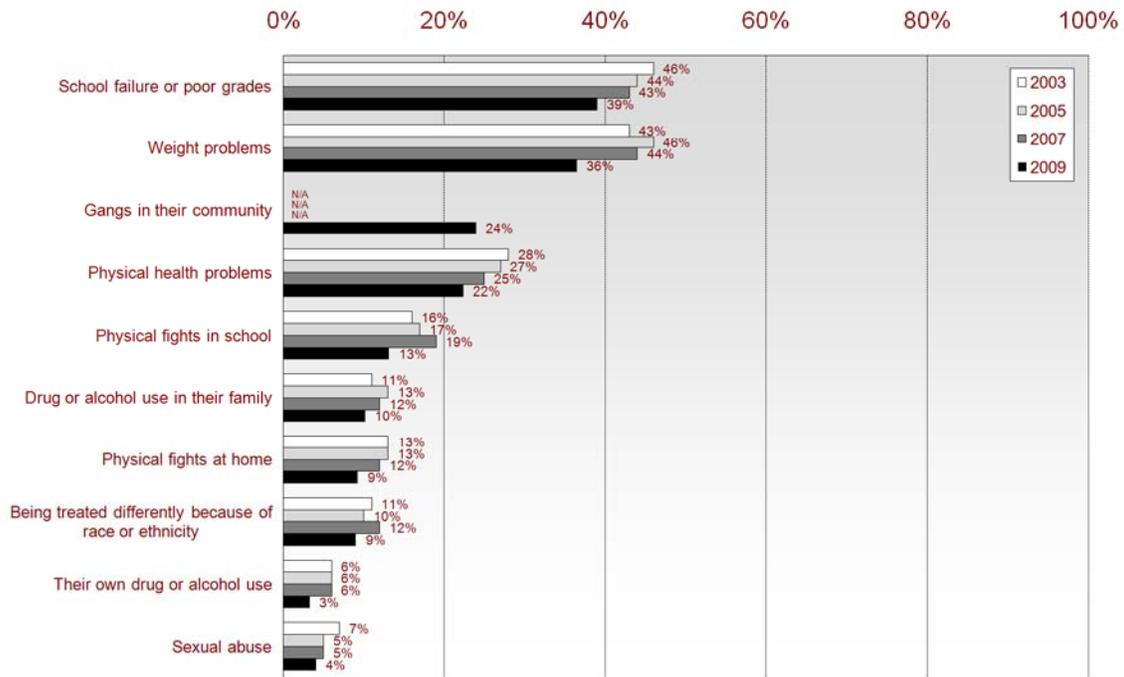
## Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Reported Experiencing Potential Stressors in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09)



### SELECTED POINTS

- In 2009, roughly one out of every three Somerville middle school students had a family member or close friend die (33%) or had one or more failing grades (32%) in the 12 months prior to the survey. Almost two of 10 had moved with their family (16%), and over one in 10 had a family member with an alcohol or drug problem (12%) or had experienced a divorce or separation in their family (12%). Less than one in 10 had witnessed violence in their family (8%), was beaten or physically hurt by a family member (6%), had a problem with alcohol or drugs (3%), ran away from home (3%), or were a member of a gang (3%).
- **Trends:** Overall, there was little substantive change between 2007 and 2009 in reports of these issues.
- **Gender:** Differences by gender in reports of these issues varied by item: had a family member or close friend die (29% males, 36% females), had one or more failing grades (37%, 27%), family moved (18%, 14%), family member with an alcohol or drug problem (11%, 13%), experienced a divorce or separation in their family (11%, 13%), witnessed violence in their family (7%, 9%), beaten or physically hurt by a family member (5%, 6%), had a problem with alcohol or drugs (4%, 3%), ran away from home (2%, 5%), member of a gang (4%, 2%).
- **Grade:** On the whole, most of these experiences varied slightly with age/grade. Two related issues that increased consistently between grades 6 and 8 were the percentage who reported having a problem with alcohol or drugs (1%, 3%, 6%) and the percentage who reported having a family member with an alcohol or drug problem (8%, 11%, 15%).

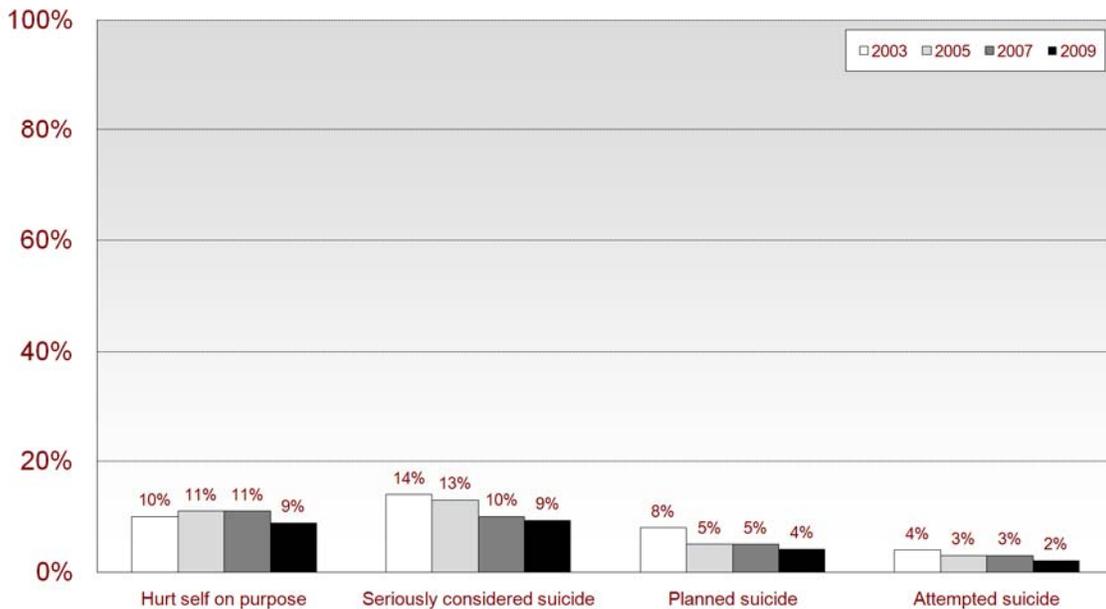
## Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Reported Worrying About Problems in the Past 12 Months ('03, '05, '07, '09)



### SELECTED POINTS

- The issue that the largest percentage of Somerville middle school students reported worrying about in 2009 was school failure or poor grades (39% reported worrying about this in the 12 months prior to the survey), followed closely by weight problems (36%). Almost one-quarter (24%) reported worrying about gangs in their community.
- **Trends:** As the chart displays, reported concern over all of these issues declined in 2009. In some instances, such as with school failure/poor grades, physical health problems, physical fights at home, and sexual abuse, the decrease continued declines observed in previous years. In the case of physical fights in school, the decrease reversed increases observed previously.
- **Gender:** Overall, female 2009 Somerville middle school students were more likely than males to report worrying about physical health problems (21% males, 24% females), weight problems (30%, 43%), drug or alcohol use in their family (8%, 12%), and sexual abuse (3%, 5% females). Males were more likely to report worrying about school failure/poor grades (40%, 38%), physical fights in school (16%, 11%), and gangs in their community (26%, 23%). They were almost equally likely to report worrying about their own drug or alcohol use (3%, 4%), physical fights at home (9%, 9%), and being treated differently because of their race or ethnicity (9%, 9%).
- **Grade:** The percentage of students in grades 6 through 8 who reported worrying about these issues is as follows: school failure or poor grades (34%, 38%, 46%), weight problems (38%, 37%, 35%), gangs in their community (25%, 25%, 24%), physical health problems (22%, 21%, 25%), physical fights in school (14%, 13%, 13%), drug/alcohol use in family (9%, 9%, 13%), physical fights at home (9%, 10%, 10%), being treated differently because of race or ethnicity (7%, 9%, 10%), own drug or alcohol use (2%, 2%, 7%), and sexual abuse (5%, 4%, 3%).

## Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation and Behavior in the Past 12 Months Among Somerville Middle School Students ('03, '05, '07, '09)

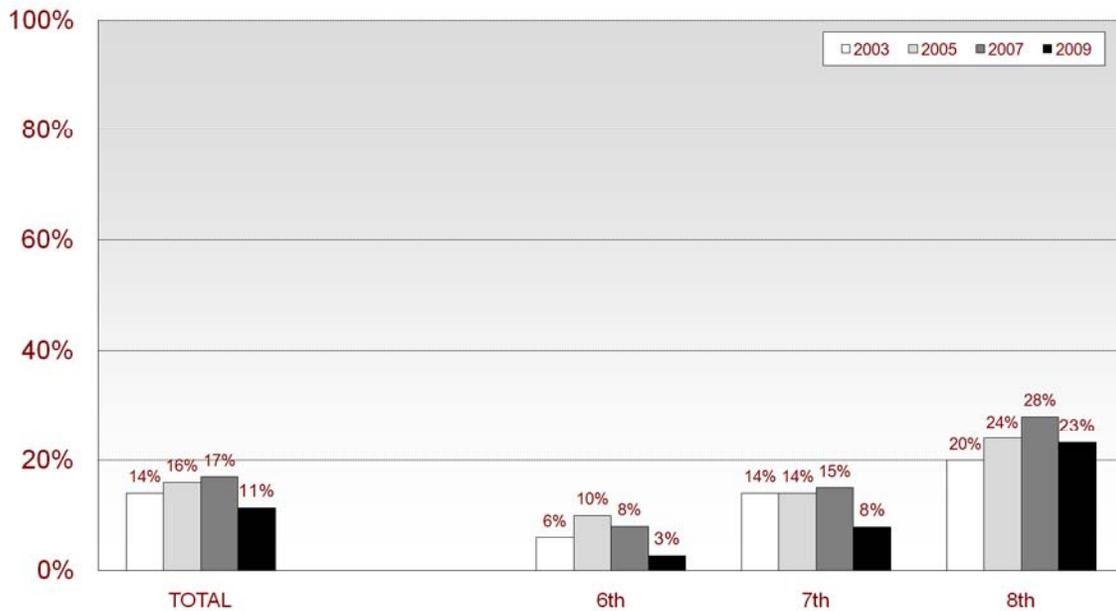


### SELECTED POINTS

- Nine percent (9%) of 2009 Somerville middle school students reported that they *hurt themselves on purpose* in the 12 months prior to the survey. Nine percent (9%) reported *seriously considering* suicide, 4% *made a plan* to commit suicide, and 2% *actually attempted* suicide in that time.
- **Trends:** Reports of each of these issues decreased in 2009, with 2009 levels below the highest rates reported since 2003: self-harm (10%, 11%, 11%, 9%), *considered* suicide (14%, 13%, 10%, 9%), *planned* suicide (8%, 5%, 5%, 4%), and *attempted* suicide (4%, 3%, 3%, 2%).
- **Gender:** In 2009, Somerville middle school females were more likely than males to have *hurt themselves on purpose* (7% males, 11% females), *seriously considered* suicide (7%, 11%), *made a plan to commit* suicide (3%, 5%), and *actually attempted* suicide (1%, 3%) in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- **Grade:** Rates of each of these issues generally increased between grades 6 and 8: *hurt self on purpose* (7%, 8%, 12%), *seriously considered* suicide (8%, 10%, 10%), *made a plan to commit* suicide (4%, 3%, 6%), *actually attempted* suicide (1%, 3%, 2%).

# Physical Health

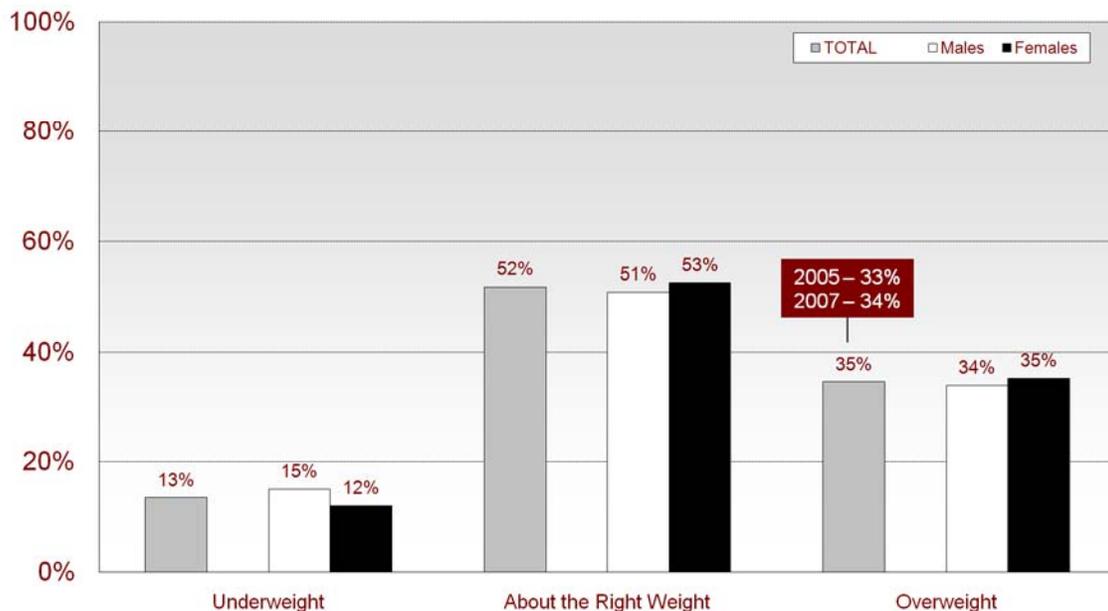
## Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Have Ever Had Sexual Intercourse, Total and by Grade ('03, '05, '07, '09)



### SELECTED POINTS

- Eleven percent (11%) of 2009 Somerville middle school students reported ever having sexual intercourse – 3% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 8% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and 23% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- **Trends:** The percentage of Somerville middle school students who reported ever having sexual intercourse decreased substantively in 2009, reversing increases previously observed since 2003 (14%, 16%, 17%, 11%). The 2009 decrease was reflected in all grades, most notably in grades 6 and 7 where the 2009 rates were roughly one-half those reported in 2007.
- **Gender:** 2009 Somerville middle school males (13%) were more likely than females (9%) to report ever having sexual intercourse.
- **Grade:** As displayed in the chart, the percentage of 2009 Somerville middle school students who reported ever having sexual intercourse increased from 3% in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 8% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 23% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

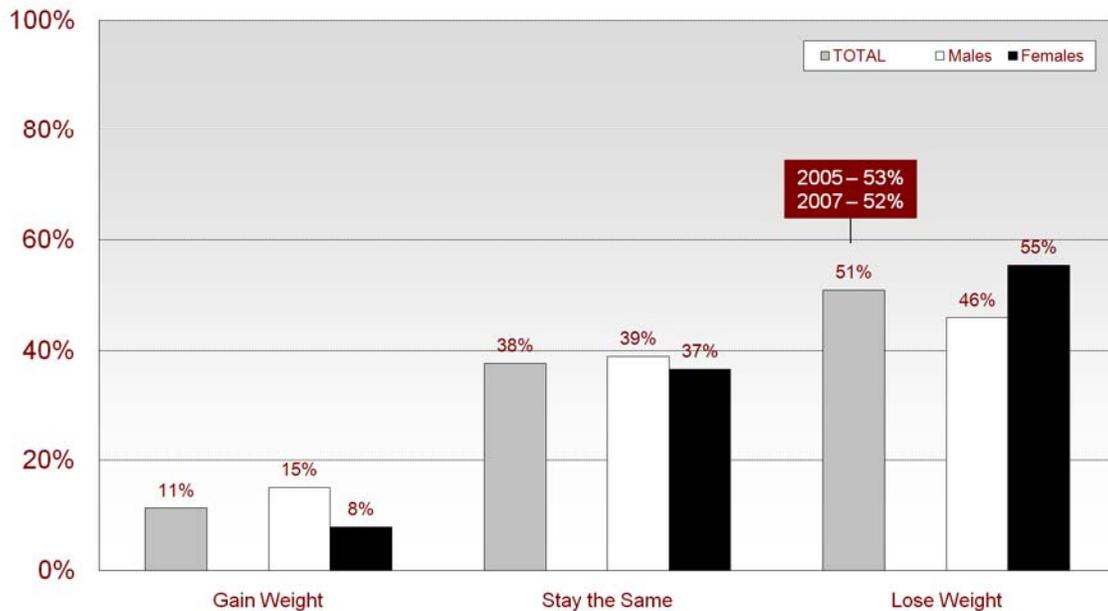
## Perception of Body Weight Among Somerville Middle School Students, Total and by Gender (2009)



### SELECTED POINTS

- Thirteen percent (13%) of 2009 Somerville middle school students described themselves as *underweight*, 52% as *about the right weight*, and 35% as *overweight*.
- Fifteen percent (15%) of males and 12% of females described themselves as *underweight*, 51% of males and 53% of females as *about the right weight*, and 34% of males and 35% of females as *overweight*.
- **Trends:** The percentage of Somerville middle school students who describe themselves as *overweight* remained consistent between 2005 (33%), 2007 (34%), and 2009 (35%). Trend data for 2003 are not available.
- **Gender:** As displayed in the chart and discussed above, there was little difference by gender in perceived weight among Somerville middle school students.
- **Grade:** There was also no consistent pattern observed in weight perception by age/grade: *underweight* (15% 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 15% 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 11% 8<sup>th</sup> grade), *about the right weight* (52%, 49%, 54%), *overweight* (32%, 37%, 35%).

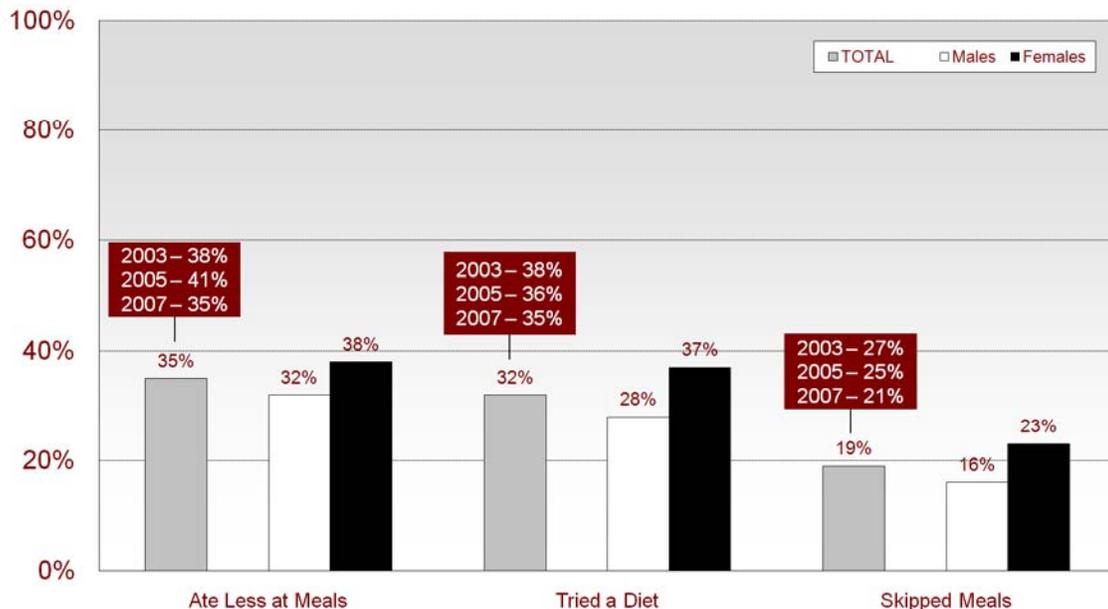
## Current Weight Control Goal Among Somerville Middle School Students, Total and by Gender (2009)



### SELECTED POINTS

- Eleven percent (11%) of 2009 Somerville middle school students reported that they were trying to *gain weight*, 38% that they were trying to *stay the same weight*, and 51% that they were trying to *lose weight*.
- **Trends:** The percentage of Somerville middle school students who reported that they were trying to *lose weight* has remained largely consistent with a slight downward trend between 2005 (53%), 2007 (52%), and 2009 (51%). Trend data from 2003 are not available.
- **Gender:** Female students were more likely to report trying to *lose weight* (46% males, 55% females) while males were much more likely to report trying to *gain weight* (15% males, 8% females). They were almost equally likely to report trying to *stay the same weight* (39% males, 37% females).
- **Grade:** Reported weight control efforts varied little with age/grade: *gain weight* (10%, 12%, 12%), *stay the same weight* (40%, 35%, 38%), *lose weight* (51%, 52%, 50%).

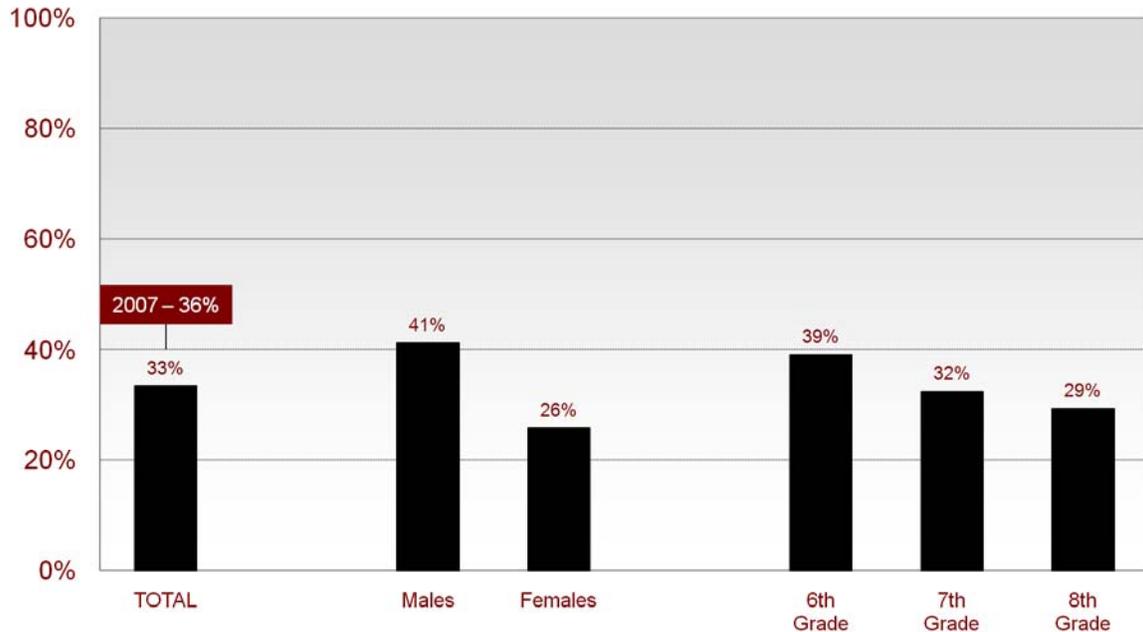
## Weight Loss Methods Used by Somerville Middle School Students in the Past 12 Months, Total and by Gender (2009)



### SELECTED POINTS

- Thirty-five percent (35%) of 2009 Somerville middle school students reported that they had *eaten less at meals* in the 12 months prior to the survey in order to lose weight. Thirty-two percent (32%) had *tried a diet* to do so and 19% had *skipped meals*.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of Somerville middle school females reported that they had *eaten less at meals* to lose weight compared to 32% of males, 37% had *tried a diet* compared to 28% of males, and 23% had *skipped meals* compared to 16% of males.
- **Trends:** Trend data reveal overall decreases since 2003 in these reported weight loss activities: *ate less at meals* (38% in 2003, 41% in 2005, 35% in 2007, 35% in 2009), *tried a diet* (38%, 36%, 35%, 32%), *skipped meals* (27%, 25%, 21%, 19%).
- **Gender:** Female middle school students were much more likely than males to report using each of these weight loss methods.
- **Grade:** Differences in methods used by age/grade among Somerville middle school students were inconsistent: *ate less at meals* (37%, 33%, 36%), *tried a diet* (32%, 30%, 35%), *skipped meals* (17%, 19%, 22%).

### Percent of Somerville Middle School Students Who Reported Physical Activity\* for 60+ Minutes on at Least 5 of the Past 7 Days\*\* (2009)



\* Respondents were instructed to *exclude* time spent in their physical education or gym class.

\*\* The US Department of Health and Human Services recommends that "children and adolescents should do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity daily."

#### SELECTED POINTS

- This chart displays the percentage of 2009 Somerville middle school students who reported engaging in 60 minutes or more of physical activity on at least five of the seven days prior to the survey, the level recommended for children and adolescents by the US Surgeon General.
- The survey instructed respondents *not* to include time spent in physical education or gym class; therefore reported activity is likely lower than actual activity levels.
- In 2009, 33% of Somerville middle school students reported this level of physical activity.
- **Trends:** There was a slight decrease in reported activity among Somerville middle school students between 2007 (36%) and 2009 (33%). Trend data for prior years are not available.
- **Grade:** As displayed in the chart, reported physical activity decreased throughout the middle school grades, from 39% among 6<sup>th</sup> graders, to 32% among 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and 29% among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- **Gender:** Male students (41%) were more likely than females (26%) to report that they engaged in physical activity for at least 60 minutes on five or more of the seven days prior to the survey.

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**Appendix A:**

**Selected Data Tables**

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## 2008-2009 SOMERVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

### Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

	TOTAL				GENDER		GRADE			MTF <sup>1</sup>
	2003 (1098)	2005 (1036)	2007 (926)	2009 (818)	Males (398)	Females (415)	6th (265)	7th (282)	8th (265)	8th
<b>LIFETIME (any use in lifetime)</b>										
Cigarettes	N/A	23.6%	23.4%	15.9%	14.9%	16.8%	5.7%	16.5%	25.8%	20.5%
Alcohol (other than a few sips)	30.1%	37.6%	38.4%	26.1%	25.1%	26.8%	8.5%	24.7%	44.0%	38.9%
Binge Alcohol	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marijuana	N/A	11.3%	11.9%	7.3%	6.1%	8.0%	0.8%	6.1%	14.9%	14.6%
Inhalants	N/A	10.9%	8.5%	5.6%	4.6%	6.4%	4.6%	4.7%	7.4%	15.7%
Steroids (no prescription)	3.9%	0.8%	1.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.8%	1.4%
Cocaine	N/A	2.1%	0.8%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.8%	3.0%
Heroin	N/A	1.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	1.4%
Ecstasy	N/A	1.2%	1.2%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%	0.0%	0.4%	1.9%	2.4%
Oxycontin	N/A	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	1.2%	N/A
Other Illegal Drugs <sup>2</sup>	N/A	2.0%	1.4%	0.7%	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%	1.9%	N/A
<b>CURRENT (any use in past 30 days)</b>										
Cigarettes	N/A	7.3%	9.5%	5.4%	3.5%	7.2%	0.8%	6.8%	8.7%	6.8%
Alcohol (other than a few sips)	15.2%	13.4%	17.7%	9.2%	7.2%	11.2%	1.5%	6.8%	19.2%	15.9%
Binge Alcohol	N/A	2.7%	4.7%	2.5%	1.8%	3.2%	0.4%	2.2%	5.0%	N/A
Marijuana	6.2%	7.1%	8.0%	4.1%	3.0%	4.8%	0.0%	3.6%	8.4%	5.8%
Inhalants	6.3%	6.1%	3.6%	3.0%	2.5%	3.4%	2.7%	2.1%	3.8%	4.1%
Steroids (no prescription)	N/A	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Cocaine	1.2%	1.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.8%
Heroin	N/A	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
Ecstasy	N/A	0.7%	0.4%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%
Oxycontin	N/A	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.8%	N/A
Other Illegal Drugs <sup>2</sup>	N/A	0.9%	0.5%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	N/A
Attended class within one hour of using alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs (past 30 days)	N/A	3.3%	5.6%	3.0%	2.8%	2.9%	1.2%	1.8%	5.7%	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Data from the 2008 Monitoring the Future Survey administered by the University of Michigan for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (spring 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked about their use of "any other type of illegal drug such as LSD (acid), PCP, Ketamine (Special K), Rohypnol (Roofies), or GHB."

## 2008-2009 SOMERVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

### Substance Use Related Issues

	TOTAL				GENDER		GRADE			MTF <sup>1</sup>
	2003 (1098)	2005 (1036)	2007 (926)	2009 (818)	Males (398)	Females (415)	6th (265)	7th (282)	8th (265)	8th
<b>PERCEIVED RISK – Percent who perceive use as a "Moderate Risk" or "Great Risk"</b>										
Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	N/A	N/A	80.4%	78.4%	76.2%	81.0%	77.6%	77.7%	81.1%	59.8%
Take 1 or 2 drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	N/A	N/A	54.9%	58.2%	52.5%	63.9%	58.1%	57.8%	59.3%	31.5%
Smoke marijuana regularly	N/A	N/A	83.3%	79.9%	74.9%	85.4%	85.8%	74.5%	80.6%	72.0%
Use illegal drugs other than marijuana	N/A	N/A	89.8%	87.7%	85.8%	89.6%	88.1%	85.8%	89.9%	N/A
<b>PERCEPTION OF FRIENDS' RESPONSE – Percent who indicated that their <i>friends</i> would think it was "Wrong" or "Very Wrong" for them to...</b>										
Smoke cigarettes	N/A	83.5%	79.1%	88.3%	89.9%	87.2%	98.0%	86.9%	80.8%	N/A
Drink beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly	N/A	74.3%	72.5%	80.7%	78.6%	82.6%	93.3%	80.5%	68.3%	N/A
Smoke marijuana	N/A	86.4%	84.5%	90.5%	90.3%	91.1%	98.4%	90.8%	82.6%	N/A
Use illegal drugs other than marijuana	N/A	92.9%	93.3%	96.5%	96.3%	96.8%	98.8%	96.3%	94.6%	N/A
<b>PERCEPTION OF PARENTS' RESPONSE – Percent who indicated that their <i>parents</i> would think it was "Wrong" or "Very Wrong" for them to...</b>										
Smoke cigarettes	N/A	97.4%	95.9%	98.1%	97.7%	98.5%	98.4%	96.7%	99.2%	N/A
Drink beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly	N/A	93.0%	92.4%	95.5%	93.5%	97.3%	96.5%	93.8%	96.1%	N/A
Smoke marijuana	N/A	98.0%	96.8%	98.4%	98.2%	98.8%	98.8%	97.4%	98.8%	N/A
Use illegal drugs other than marijuana	N/A	98.6%	98.0%	98.7%	98.7%	98.8%	98.8%	97.8%	99.6%	N/A
<b>EXPOSURE TO SUBSTANCE USE AT HOME – Percent who live with someone who...</b>										
Smokes cigarettes	45.0%	40.3%	38.1%	31.3%	28.6%	33.7%	28.0%	31.0%	35.6%	N/A
They think drinks too much alcohol	N/A	13.1%	12.8%	11.7%	10.4%	13.1%	10.9%	10.0%	14.7%	N/A
Smokes marijuana	N/A	6.6%	6.6%	5.4%	6.6%	4.2%	1.6%	4.5%	10.0%	N/A
Uses illegal drugs other than marijuana	N/A	3.4%	2.4%	1.9%	2.1%	1.7%	0.4%	3.0%	2.3%	N/A
<b>EVER RECEIVED INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOL ON...</b>										
The risks involved with smoking and other tobacco use	71.4%	79.3%	72.3%	55.8%	54.7%	57.1%	53.1%	52.0%	62.7%	N/A
The risks involved with drug use	75.9%	75.1%	69.4%	54.2%	55.1%	53.5%	48.8%	50.7%	64.0%	N/A
Handling peer pressure, including pressure to smoke, drink, or take drugs	69.8%	68.1%	65.4%	51.1%	52.7%	49.6%	41.1%	50.0%	62.6%	N/A
<b>EVER TALKED WITH PARENTS OR OTHER FAMILY ADULTS ABOUT...</b>										
The risks involved with smoking and other tobacco use	57.6%	60.7%	60.4%	58.4%	58.7%	58.6%	60.7%	54.1%	61.4%	N/A
The risks involved with drug use	54.1%	61.3%	60.9%	57.6%	56.5%	58.6%	56.0%	53.6%	63.5%	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Data from the 2008 Monitoring the Future Survey administered by the University of Michigan for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (spring 2008).

## 2008-2009 SOMERVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

### Violence and Safety

	TOTAL				GENDER		GRADE			MTF 8th
	2003 (1098)	2005 (1036)	2007 (926)	2009 (818)	Males (398)	Females (415)	6th (265)	7th (282)	8th (265)	
<b>VIOLENCE AND SAFETY EXPERIENCES (past 12 months)</b>										
In a physical fight - on school property	N/A	12.4%	12.9%	10.3%	13.7%	7.3%	10.0%	9.4%	11.8%	N/A
In a physical fight - when NOT on school property	N/A	17.8%	17.1%	13.2%	16.8%	9.9%	11.2%	10.7%	17.9%	N/A
Threatened or injured with a weapon <sup>1</sup> on school property	6.8%	2.0%	2.5%	1.8%	2.6%	1.0%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	N/A
Threatened or injured with a weapon <sup>1</sup> when NOT on school property	N/A	6.0%	6.3%	4.3%	6.0%	2.7%	3.1%	3.3%	6.5%	N/A
Bullied, threatened, or pushed around in/on the way to school	13.2%	14.3%	15.4%	14.2%	15.4%	13.2%	17.4%	13.7%	11.9%	N/A
Bullied, threatened, or pushed around when NOT in/on the way to school	N/A	8.9%	8.9%	5.9%	7.5%	4.4%	6.9%	4.8%	6.1%	N/A
Beaten or physically hurt by someone in family	4.9%	5.1%	4.9%	5.5%	4.6%	6.4%	4.3%	4.7%	7.6%	N/A
Beaten or physically hurt by someone NOT a family member	3.8%	4.8%	4.4%	4.2%	6.2%	2.4%	5.4%	3.3%	4.2%	N/A
Witnessed violence in family	7.6%	8.3%	7.7%	8.3%	7.2%	9.3%	7.7%	7.2%	10.3%	N/A
Was a member of a gang	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.7%	3.7%	1.7%	0.4%	3.3%	4.3%	N/A
<b>SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE (past 12 months)</b>										
Had rude sexual comments directed at him/her	14.5%	17.8%	18.6%	12.1%	8.7%	15.2%	7.7%	8.8%	20.2%	N/A
Touched, pinched, grabbed, or patted in a sexual way against will	8.1%	10.2%	11.1%	9.8%	7.0%	12.2%	4.2%	9.5%	15.3%	N/A
Forced, tricked, or pressured to have sex that he/she didn't want by a boyfriend, girlfriend, or some other person he/she knew	3.2%	3.1%	3.1%	1.6%	0.8%	2.4%	2.3%	0.7%	1.9%	N/A
<b>WEAPONS CARRYING (past 30 days)</b>										
Carried a weapon - on school property	N/A	3.0%	4.7%	3.0%	5.4%	0.7%	2.3%	3.6%	3.0%	N/A
Carried a weapon - when NOT on school property	N/A	8.4%	9.7%	5.6%	8.9%	2.4%	3.4%	5.7%	7.5%	N/A
<b>SCHOOL SAFETY (past 30 days)</b>										
Stayed home from school out of fear for safety	7.8%	6.8%	6.2%	5.7%	4.6%	6.8%	3.1%	7.5%	6.4%	N/A
<b>EVER RECEIVED INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOL ON...</b>										
How to resolve disputes without fighting	64.7%	65.3%	64.6%	64.8%	66.2%	63.5%	71.9%	60.9%	62.4%	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked about "a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club".

## 2008-2009 SOMERVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

### Health and Mental Health

	TOTAL				GENDER		GRADE			MTF 8th
	2003 (1098)	2005 (1036)	2007 (926)	2009 (818)	Males (398)	Females (415)	6th (265)	7th (282)	8th (265)	
<b>STRESSORS EXPERIENCED (past 12 months)</b>										
Had one or more failing grades on a report card	34.8%	37.3%	32.0%	31.9%	37.1%	26.8%	28.9%	33.7%	32.9%	N/A
Had a problem with alcohol or drugs	3.8%	5.1%	4.3%	3.2%	3.7%	2.7%	1.2%	2.6%	5.8%	N/A
A family member had an alcohol or drug problem	11.7%	13.3%	14.5%	11.5%	10.6%	12.6%	8.4%	11.1%	15.2%	N/A
There was a divorce or separation in family	11.8%	11.3%	13.5%	12.5%	11.3%	13.4%	12.8%	10.7%	13.4%	N/A
Family moved	14.9%	16.8%	16.8%	15.7%	17.8%	13.9%	16.5%	14.0%	16.2%	N/A
Ran away from home	4.0%	5.4%	4.1%	3.3%	2.1%	4.5%	2.4%	1.5%	6.2%	N/A
Family member or close friend died	36.9%	38.9%	33.8%	32.5%	28.9%	36.0%	32.7%	30.6%	33.7%	N/A
<b>WORRIED ABOUT PROBLEMS (past 12 months)</b>										
Physical health problems	27.5%	26.6%	24.7%	22.4%	20.9%	24.0%	22.2%	20.6%	24.8%	N/A
Weight problems	43.2%	45.5%	43.6%	36.5%	29.5%	43.0%	37.8%	37.2%	34.6%	N/A
Sexual abuse	6.7%	5.2%	5.1%	4.1%	3.2%	5.0%	4.7%	4.1%	3.5%	N/A
School failure or poor grades	45.8%	44.3%	42.9%	39.0%	40.2%	38.2%	33.6%	37.8%	45.7%	N/A
Drug or alcohol use in your family	11.3%	12.6%	12.3%	10.2%	8.4%	11.9%	8.7%	8.6%	13.5%	N/A
Your own drug or alcohol use	5.7%	5.9%	6.3%	3.3%	3.2%	3.5%	1.6%	1.5%	6.9%	N/A
Physical fights at home	13.0%	13.0%	11.8%	9.3%	9.2%	9.4%	8.6%	9.7%	9.6%	N/A
Physical fights in school	15.7%	16.8%	18.7%	13.2%	15.6%	11.0%	13.9%	12.6%	13.1%	N/A
Being treated differently because of your race or ethnicity	10.5%	10.3%	11.6%	9.0%	9.4%	8.7%	7.1%	9.3%	10.4%	N/A
Gangs in your community	N/A	N/A	N/A	24.3%	25.9%	22.6%	24.7%	24.8%	23.6%	N/A
<b>HURTING ONESELF AND SUICIDE (past 12 months)</b>										
Hurt self on purpose (cutting, burning, etc.)	9.7%	11.2%	10.9%	8.9%	6.7%	10.6%	6.6%	8.4%	11.9%	N/A
Seriously considered suicide	14.2%	12.8%	10.1%	9.4%	7.3%	11.4%	8.3%	9.5%	10.4%	N/A
Made a plan to commit suicide	7.5%	5.4%	5.4%	4.2%	2.9%	5.4%	3.5%	3.0%	6.2%	N/A
Actually attempted suicide	3.7%	3.1%	3.0%	2.1%	1.0%	3.2%	1.2%	3.0%	2.3%	N/A
<b>SOCIAL SUPPORTS</b>										
Have at least one teacher or other school adult to talk to about a problem	N/A	60.4%	54.9%	58.4%	56.5%	60.2%	75.6%	44.6%	56.3%	N/A
<b>SEXUAL ISSUES</b>										
Ever had sexual intercourse	13.5%	16.1%	17.1%	11.3%	13.4%	8.9%	2.7%	7.9%	23.2%	N/A
Ever taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school	N/A	80.5%	73.0%	62.9%	58.6%	67.3%	30.5%	72.5%	85.7%	N/A
Ever talked about AIDS or HIV infection with parents or other family adults	N/A	50.5%	45.1%	43.9%	39.8%	48.4%	34.6%	45.1%	52.5%	N/A