

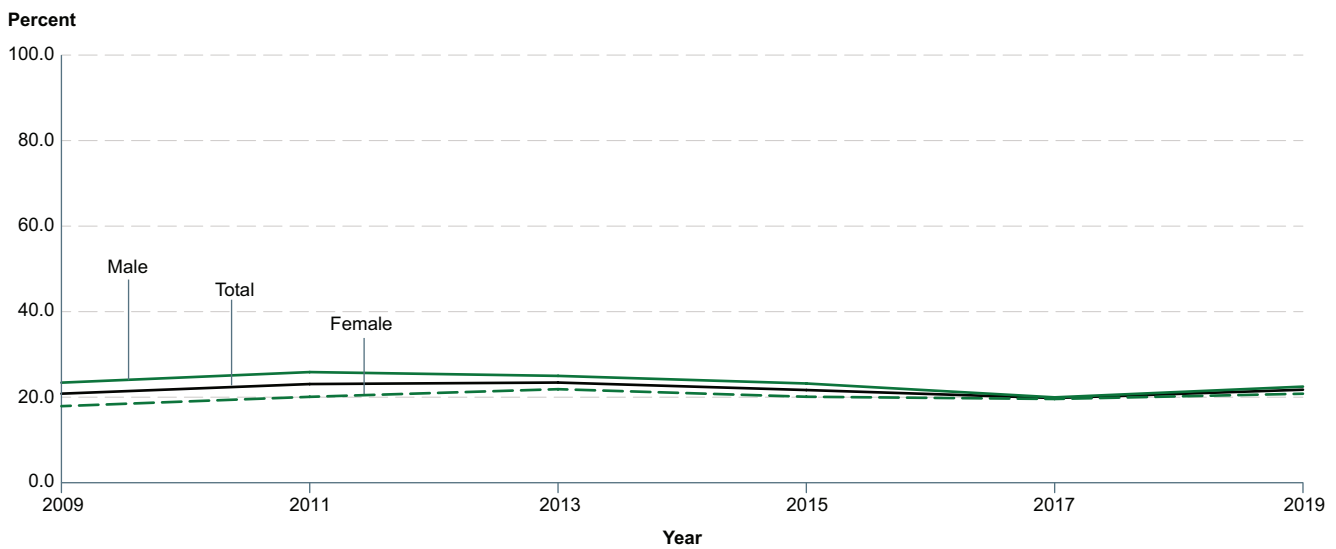
Marijuana Use and Illegal Drug Availability

In 2019, about 22 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported that illegal drugs were offered, sold, or given to them on school property during the previous 12 months.

This indicator uses data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) to examine the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported they had used marijuana during the previous 30 days. Adolescent marijuana use has been associated with lower academic performance^{1,2} and a higher risk of dropping out of

high school.³ Considering the school context directly, this indicator then examines the percentage of students who reported they had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Figure 1. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported using marijuana at least one time during the previous 30 days, by sex: Selected years, 2009 through 2019



NOTE: Estimates do not include the use of synthetic marijuana.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2009 through 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.40.

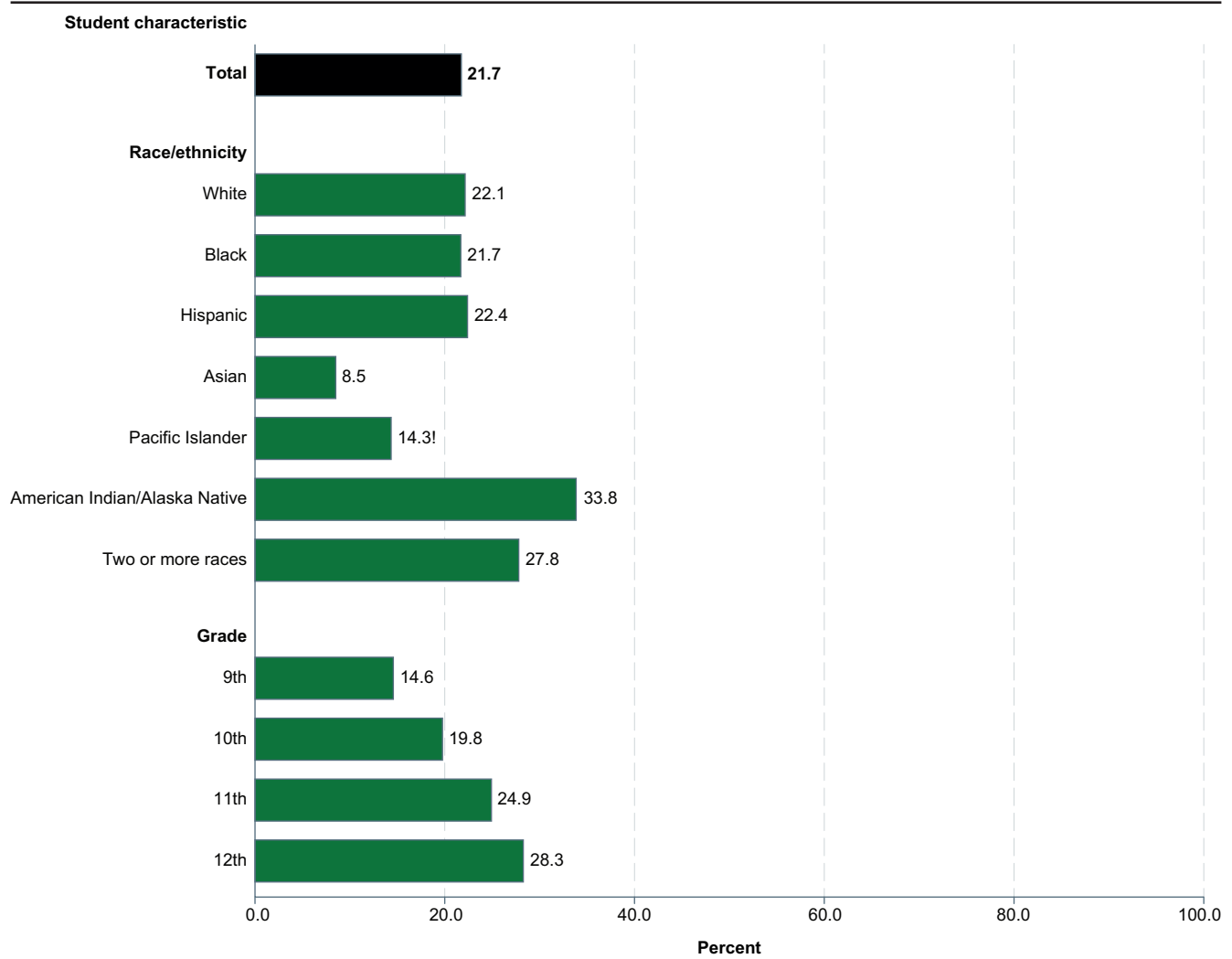
In 2019, about 22 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days (ranging from 10 percent in Utah to 29 percent in the District of Columbia).^{4,5} This included about 8 percent of students who reported using marijuana 1 or 2 times during the previous 30 days, 10 percent who reported using marijuana 3 to 39 times during the previous 30 days, and 4 percent who reported using marijuana 40 or more times during the previous 30 days.

The overall percentage of students who reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days in 2019 was not measurably different from the percentage in 2009 (21 percent). Similarly, there was no measurable difference in reported marijuana use between these years for male students (22 percent in 2019). However,

the percentage of female students who reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days was higher in 2019 than in 2009 (21 vs. 18 percent).

In 2009 and 2011, a higher percentage of male students than of female students in grades 9–12 reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days in. Since 2013, there has been no measurable difference in the percentages of males and females that reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days. However, male and female students differed in their reported frequency of use. Specifically, in 2019, a higher percentage of males (5 percent) than of females (3 percent) reported using marijuana 40 or more times during the previous 30 days.

Figure 2. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported using marijuana at least one time during the previous 30 days, by race/ethnicity and grade: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

NOTE: Estimates do not include the use of synthetic marijuana. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, figures are based on unrounded percentages.

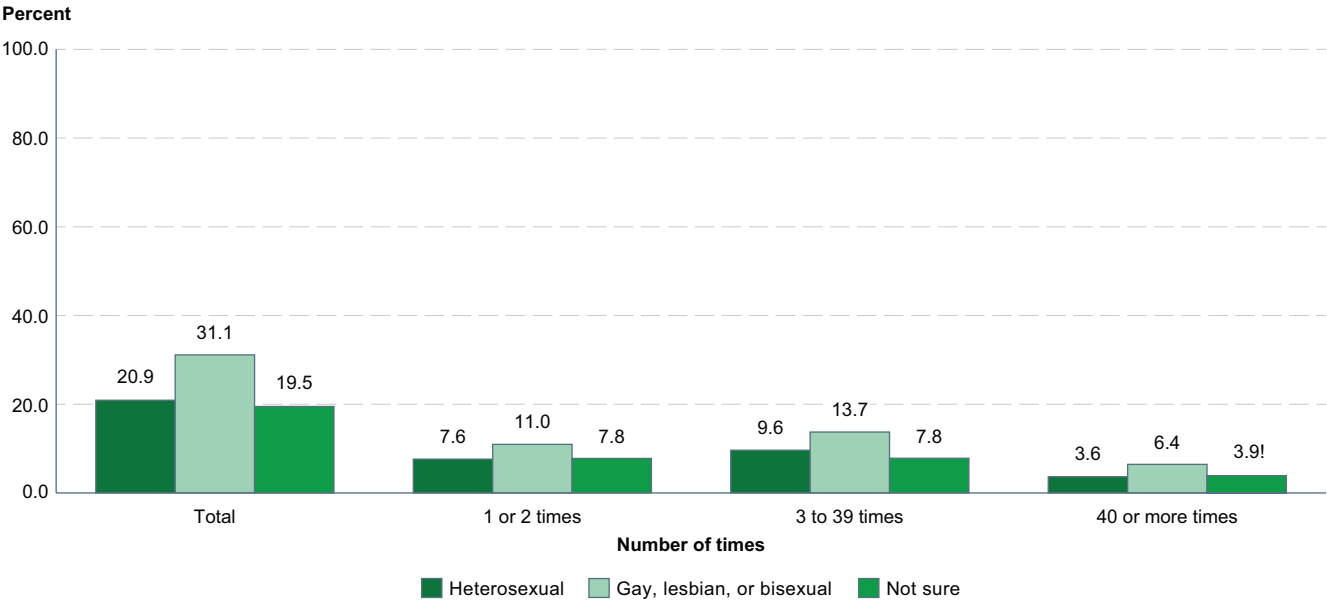
SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.40.

Considering marijuana use in 2019 by race/ethnicity, there was no measurable difference in the percentage of students who reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days among White, Black, and Hispanic students (22 percent each). These percentages were all higher than the percentage of Asian students (9 percent) and lower than the percentage of students of Two or more races (28 percent) who reported using marijuana. In addition, a higher percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native students (34 percent) than of Pacific

Islander students (14 percent) or Asian students reported using marijuana at least once in the previous 30 days.

When marijuana use is examined by grade level, a lower percentage of 9th-graders (15 percent) than of 10th-graders (20 percent) reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days, and both percentages were lower than the percentages for 11th- and 12th-graders (25 and 28 percent, respectively).

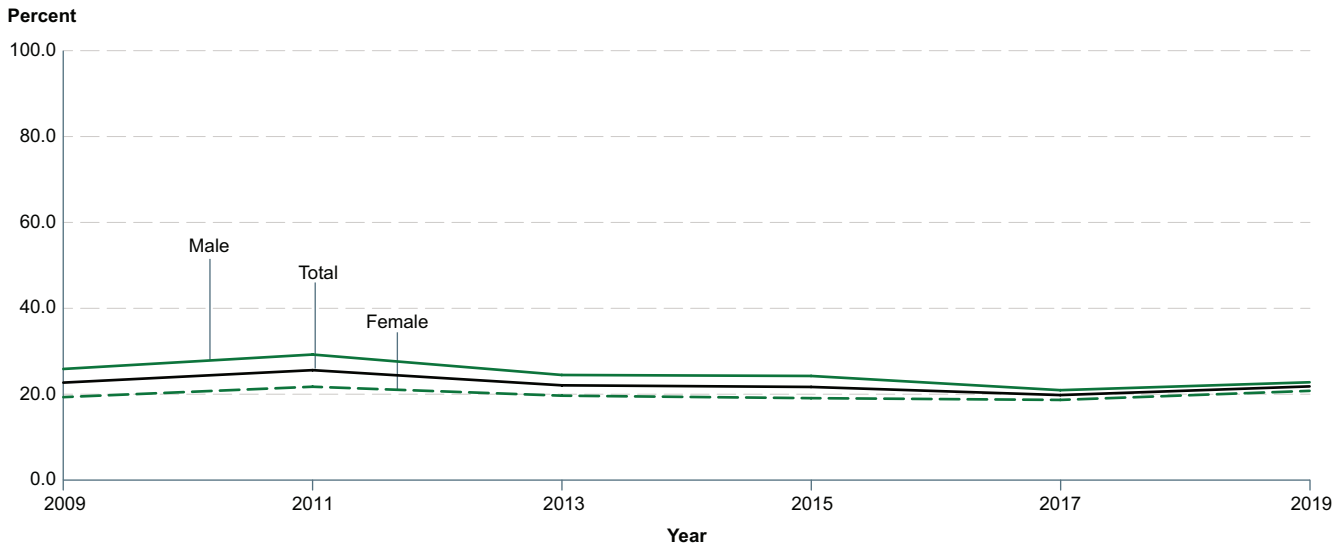
Figure 3. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported using marijuana at least one time during the previous 30 days, by number of times and sexual identity: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.
NOTE: Estimates do not include the use of synthetic marijuana. Students were asked which of the following—"heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," or "not sure"—best described them. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, figures are based on unrounded percentages.
SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.50.

In 2019, a higher percentage of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (31 percent) than of heterosexual students (21 percent) and students who were not sure about their sexual identity (19 percent) reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days.⁶ Moreover, higher percentages of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students than of heterosexual students reported using marijuana 1 to 2 times (11 vs. 8 percent), 3 to 39 times (14 vs. 10 percent), and 40 or more times (6 vs. 4 percent) during the previous

30 days. In contrast, although a higher percentage of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students than of students who were not sure about their sexual identity reported using marijuana 3 to 39 times during the previous 30 days (14 vs. 8 percent), there was no measurable difference between these groups in the percentage that reported using marijuana 1 to 2 times or 40 or more times in the last 30 days.

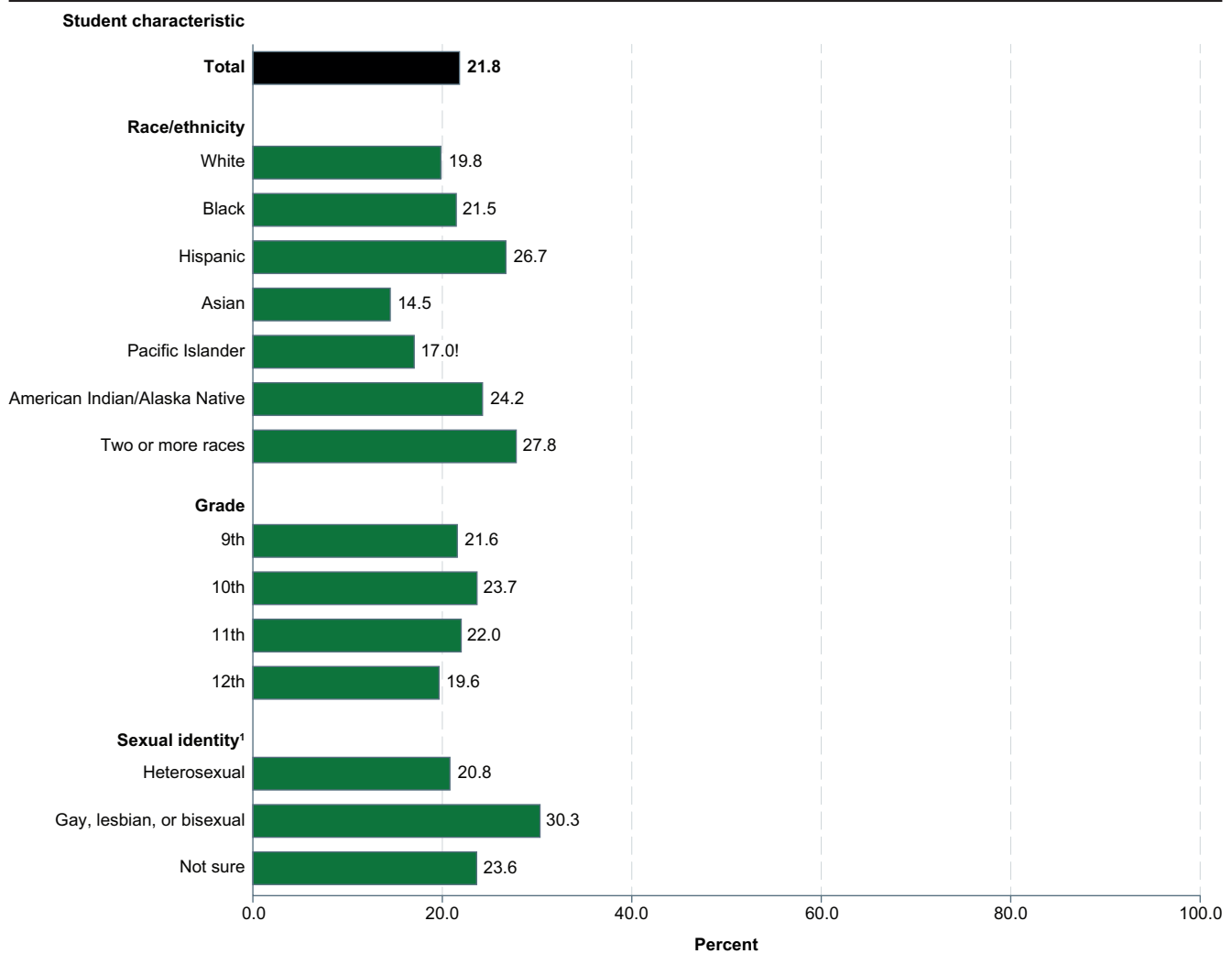
Figure 4. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property during the previous 12 months, by sex: Selected years, 2009 through 2019

NOTE: Students were asked if anyone offered, sold, or gave them an illegal drug on school property during the previous 12 months. "On school property" was not defined for respondents.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2009 through 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.70.

In the YRBSS, students in grades 9–12 were asked whether someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug (also referred to as "illegal drugs were made available to them" in this indicator) on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey.⁷ In 2019, about 22 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property (ranging from 13 percent in Colorado to 31 percent in California).⁸ There was no measurable difference between 2009 and 2019 in the percentage of students who reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property.

Between 2009 and 2015, a higher percentage of male than of female students reported that illegal drugs were offered, sold, or given to them on school property (ranging from 24 to 29 percent for male students, and 19 to 22 percent for female students). However, in 2017 and 2019, there was no measurable difference in the percentage of males and females who reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property.

Figure 5. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property during the previous 12 months, by selected student characteristics: 2019

¹ Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

¹ Students were asked which of the following—"heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," or "not sure"—best described them.

NOTE: Students were asked if anyone offered, sold, or gave them an illegal drug on school property during the previous 12 months. "On school property" was not defined for respondents. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.70.

There were some differences in the percentages of students who reported that illegal drugs were offered, sold, or given to them on school property by race/ethnicity, grade level, and sexual identity. In 2019, higher percentages of students of Two or more races (28 percent) and Hispanic students (27 percent) reported that illegal drugs were offered, sold, or given to them on school property, compared with Black students (21 percent) and White students (20 percent); all these percentages were higher than the percentage of Asian students (14 percent).

The percentage of students who reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property was higher for 10th-graders than for 12th-graders (24 vs. 20 percent). Additionally, a higher percentage of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (30 percent) than of students who were not sure about their sexual identity (24 percent) and students who were heterosexual (21 percent) reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property in 2019.

Endnotes:

¹ Meier, M.H., Hill, M.L., Small, P.J., and Luthar, S.S. (2015). Associations of Adolescent Cannabis Use With Academic Performance and Mental Health: A Longitudinal Study of Upper Middle Class Youth. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 156: 207-212. Retrieved November 17, 2020, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0376871615016580>.

² Pardini, D., White, H.R., Xiong, S., Bechtold, J., Chung, T., Loeber, R., and Hipwell, A. (2015). Unfazed or Dazed and Confused: Does Early Adolescent Marijuana Use Cause Sustained Impairments in Attention and Academic Functioning? *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 43(7): 1203-1217. Retrieved November 17, 2020, from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10802-015-0012-0>.

³ Bray, J.W., Zarkin, G.A., Ringwalt, C., and Qi, J. (2000). The Relationship Between Marijuana Initiation and Dropping Out of High School. *Health Economics*, 9(1): 9-18. Retrieved November 17, 2020, from [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1050\(200001\)9:1%3C9::AID-HEC471%3E3.O.CO;2-Z](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1050(200001)9:1%3C9::AID-HEC471%3E3.O.CO;2-Z).

⁴ U.S. total data are representative of all public and private school students in grades 9-12 in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. U.S. total data were collected through a separate national survey rather than being aggregated from state-level data. All discussions in this indicator, except those at the state level, were based on data from the national survey.

⁵ In 2019, state-level data on students' marijuana use were available for 44 states and the District of Columbia. For detailed state-level data on the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days, see [the table on current marijuana use for all locations in the YRBSS Youth Online Data Analysis Tool](#).

⁶ Since 2015, the YRBSS has included a question on students' sexual identity by asking students in grades 9-12 which of the following best described them—"heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," or "not sure." In this indicator, students who identified as "gay or lesbian" or "bisexual" are discussed together as the "gay, lesbian, or bisexual" group. Students were not asked whether they identified as transgender in the YRBSS.

⁷ "On school property" was not defined for survey respondents.

⁸ In 2019, state-level data on illegal drug availabilities were available for 36 states. For detailed state-level data on the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey, see [the table on illegal drugs on school property for all locations in the YRBSS Youth Online Data Analysis Tool](#).

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 232.40, 232.50, and 232.70

Related indicators and resources: [Students' Use of Alcohol](#); [Serious Disciplinary Actions Taken by Public Schools](#); [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2019](#)

Glossary: On school property; Sexual identity