

# Overview of Results from the 2021 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey

## Presenters:

Ashley Brooks-Russell, PhD, MPH - CSPH Survey Team

Emily Fine - CDPHE

## Analysis:

Ming Ma, MD, MPH

Sophie Rosenberg, MPH

# Overview

- Background Info on HKCS
- Working with schools during the pandemic
- Data through equity lens
- 2021 Results
- Discussion

# CSPH School & Youth Survey Team

## Admin Core:

Ashley Brooks-Russell PhD, MPH  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Christine Mulitauopele, MSPH  
RESEARCH PROGRAM DIRECTOR

## Data Core:

Ming Ma, MD, MPH  
LEAD ANALYST

Sophie Rosenberg, MPH Candidate  
DATA ANALYST

## Systems & Operation Core:

Whitney Israel, MPH  
SYSTEMS & OPERATIONS MANAGER

Hannah Cruz, MPH  
DATA COORDINATOR

## Recruitment & Outreach Core:

Anna Royer  
RECRUITMENT & OUTREACH MANAGER

Chelsie Covey, MPH  
RECRUITMENT & OUTREACH COORDINATOR

# School & Youth Survey Steering Committee

## Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE):

Ali Maffey

Rickey Tolliver

## Colorado Department of Education (CDE):

Andrea Pulskamp

## Colorado Department of Public Safety (CDPS):

Christine Harms

Jack Reed

## Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS):

Claudia Zundel

Elizabeth Brooks

# Background Info

# Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS)



Administered every odd-numbered year in the Fall



CDPHE contracts with CSPH, overseen by multi-agency Steering Committee



Informed by Advisory Committee



Aligned with CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey

# Methodology



Schools are randomly selected



Survey given to all students or to a random selection of students



Data are aggregated to maintain anonymity



Data are suppressed if 0% or 100% of responses are the same



Results are weighted to represent student enrollment

# Topics Covered in the HKCS

## Protective Factors

- Trusted adults
- Belonging
- Family involvement

## Health Behaviors

- Substance use
- Sexual health
- Safety and violence
- COVID-19

## Social-Emotional Indicators

- Feelings of Depression
- Suicide
- Bullying



# 2021 HKCS Participation

106,799

Students Participated

68,281

High Schoolers

38,518

Middle Schoolers

340

Schools Participated

179

High Schools

161

Middle Schools

# Working with Schools

Challenges & Successes in 2021

Challenges  
in schools  
in fall 2021

school board elections **CRT**

**mask mandates**

**COVID testing**

**fatigue**

social media

political climate

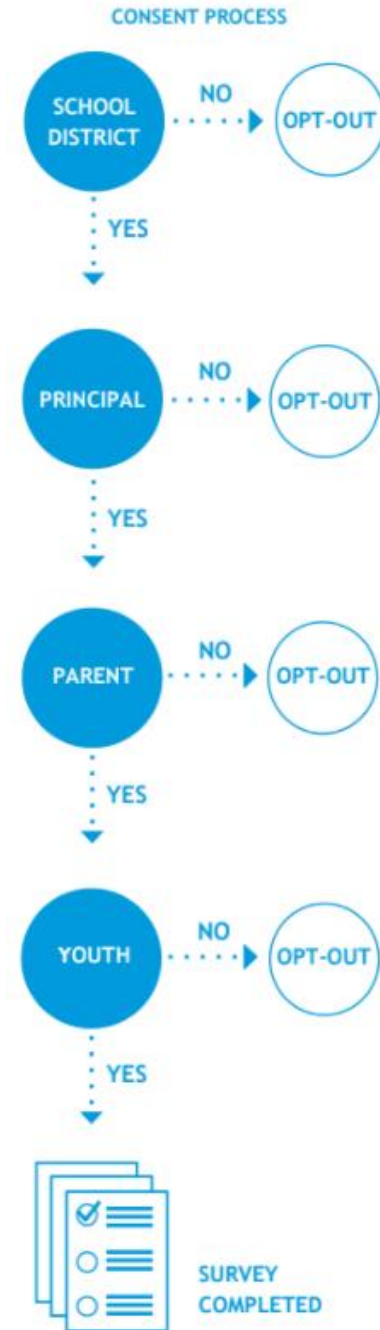
# Successes

- Several communities had successful administrations, including new schools who had never participated before
- Responsive online systems for survey administration
- Quick turn-around of results for informing student & school health
- Communication support from survey advocates & partners

# Key Messages

- Expansions to **demographic questions** on both middle and high school surveys to ensure the HKCS is inclusive of all young people
- New questions requested by several groups, including school districts and youth-led organizations, and revised through **youth focus groups**
- Over 30 years of adolescent health surveillance supports that asking a young person about their health **is not harmful**
- Districts can choose to use a **censored version** of the survey that removes questions on consent and sexual health

*THE HKCS IS, AND HAS  
ALWAYS BEEN, COMPLETELY  
VOLUNTARY, CONFIDENTIAL,  
AND ANONYMOUS.*



# Framing data with an equity lens

Builds from “The Role of Policies and Systems in Child Deaths in Colorado” found [here](#).

# Terminology

- **Inequities:** systemic, avoidable, and unjust factors that prevent people from reaching their highest level of health
- **Disparities:** differences in health outcomes between people related to social or demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or geographic region.

Measuring disparities helps measure our progress toward achieving equity.

Braveman, P. (2014). What are health disparities and health equity? We need to be clear. *Public health reports*, 129(1\_suppl2), 5-8.

American Public Health Association. Health Equity. [www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity](http://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity).



# The impact of policies and systems on youth health

Generations of social, economic, and environmental inequities result in some Colorado youth experiencing negative health outcomes and have a greater impact than individual choices.

# Inequities

Geography

Sexual Orientation

Race and Ethnicity

Gender Identity

# 2021 Results

Healthy Kids Colorado Survey

# Highlights from 2021 HKCS Results:

- An **increase** in the % of youth who experienced depression in the past year

# Highlights from 2021 HKCS Results:

- An **increase** in the % of youth who experienced depression in the past year
- **No change** in the % of youth who had thoughts of suicide, made a suicide plan, and attempted suicide in the past year

# Highlights from 2021 HKCS Results:

- An **increase** in the % of youth who experienced depression in the past year
- **No change** in the % of youth who had thoughts of suicide, made a suicide plan, and attempted suicide in the past year
- A **decrease** in the % of youth who currently use substances, including alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, electronic vapor products, and taking prescription pain medication without a prescription

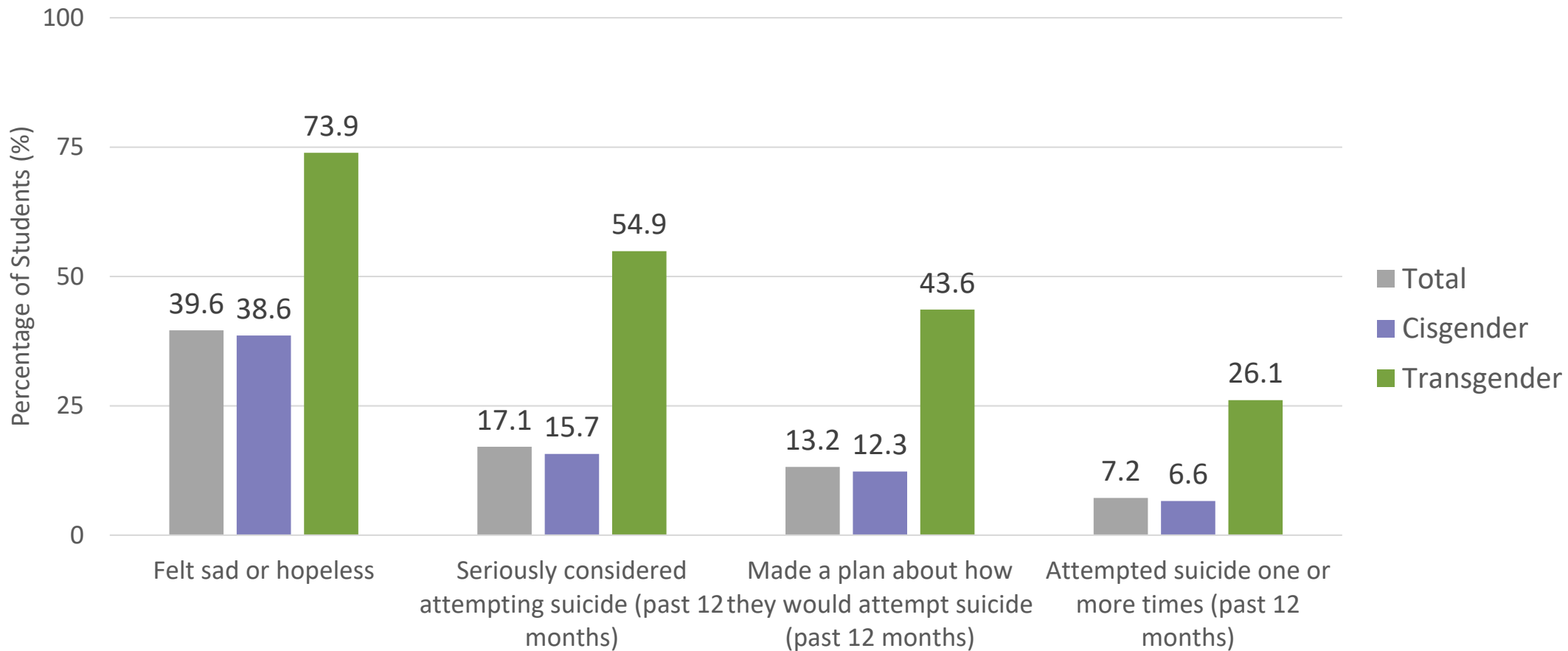
# Highlights from 2021 HKCS Results:

- An **increase** in the % of youth who experienced depression in the past year
- **No change** in the % of youth who had thoughts of suicide, made a suicide plan, and attempted suicide in the past year
- A **decrease** in the % of youth who currently use substances, including alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, electronic vapor products, and taking prescription pain medication without a prescription
  - Youth felt it is **harder** to access substances than in prior survey years
  - Youth reported **increased** perceived risk of harm by daily use of substances

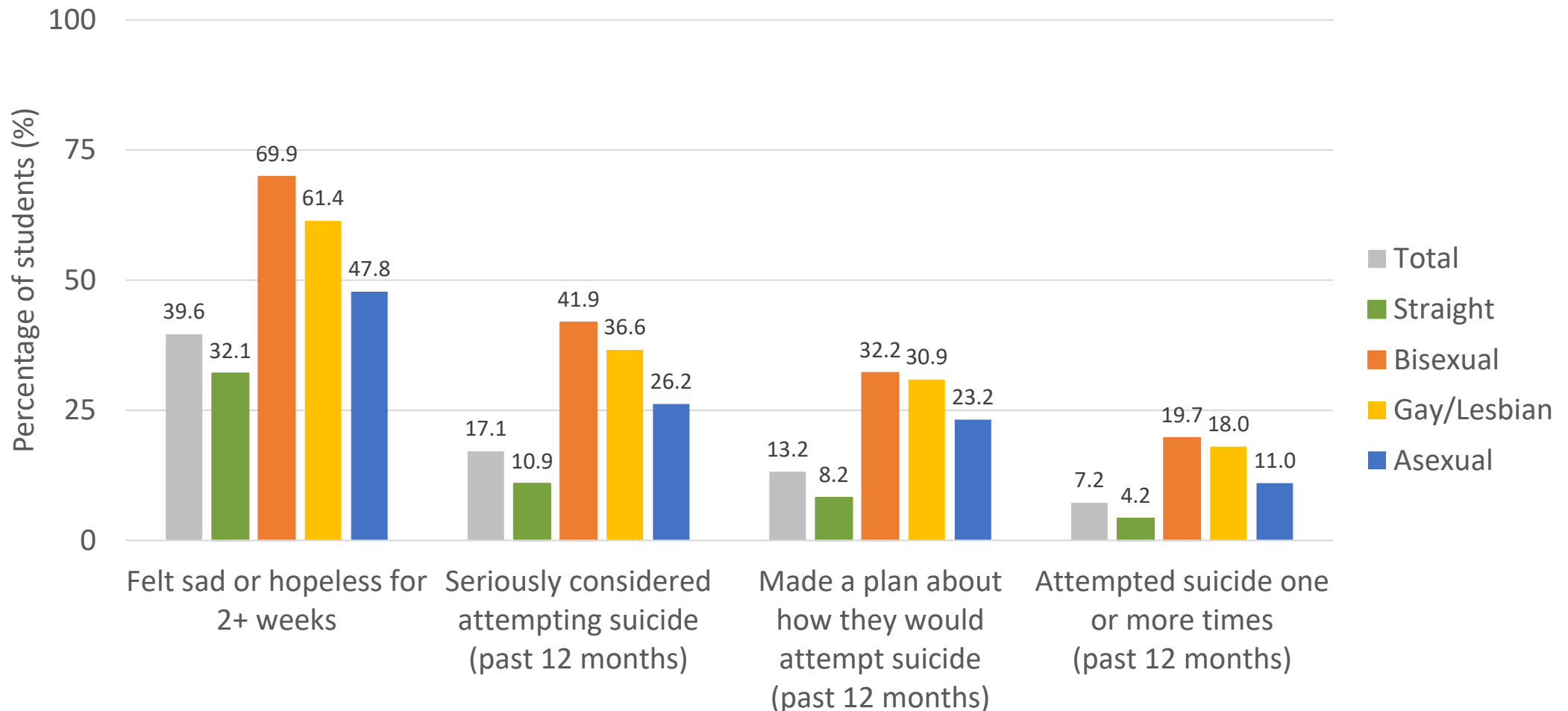
# Mental Health



# Mental Health by Gender Identity



# Mental Health by Sexual Orientation



# Mental Health: Risk & Protective Factors

**Risk factors:** *had poor mental health during COVID-19; experiencing increased stress during COVID-19; worrying about family/friends during COVID-19*

- LGB students > Straight students
- Transgender students > Cisgender students
- Females > males

**Protective factors:** *stress management & recovery*

- LGB students < Heterosexual students
- Transgender students < Cisgender students
- Females < males

# Mental Health: Further Analysis

*The HKCS asks several demographic questions, including age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and disability status.*

When looking at the **intersectionality** of gender identity, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity:

- **LGBTQ+ youth of color** report having a trusted adult at significantly **lower rates** compared to straight/cis/white students (59% vs. 82%).
- **LGBTQ+ youth of color** report feeling they belong at their school at significantly **lower rates** compared to straight/cis/white students (45% vs. 74%).

**Students with disabilities** (physical, emotional, or learning disabilities) report feeling they belong at their school at significantly **lower rates** compared to students without disabilities (50% vs. 70%).

# Importance of a Trusted Adult

When young people have a **trusted adult** in their lives who can help with challenges, they are **less likely** to experience poor mental health, attempt suicide, and engage in unhealthy behaviors like substance abuse and violence.

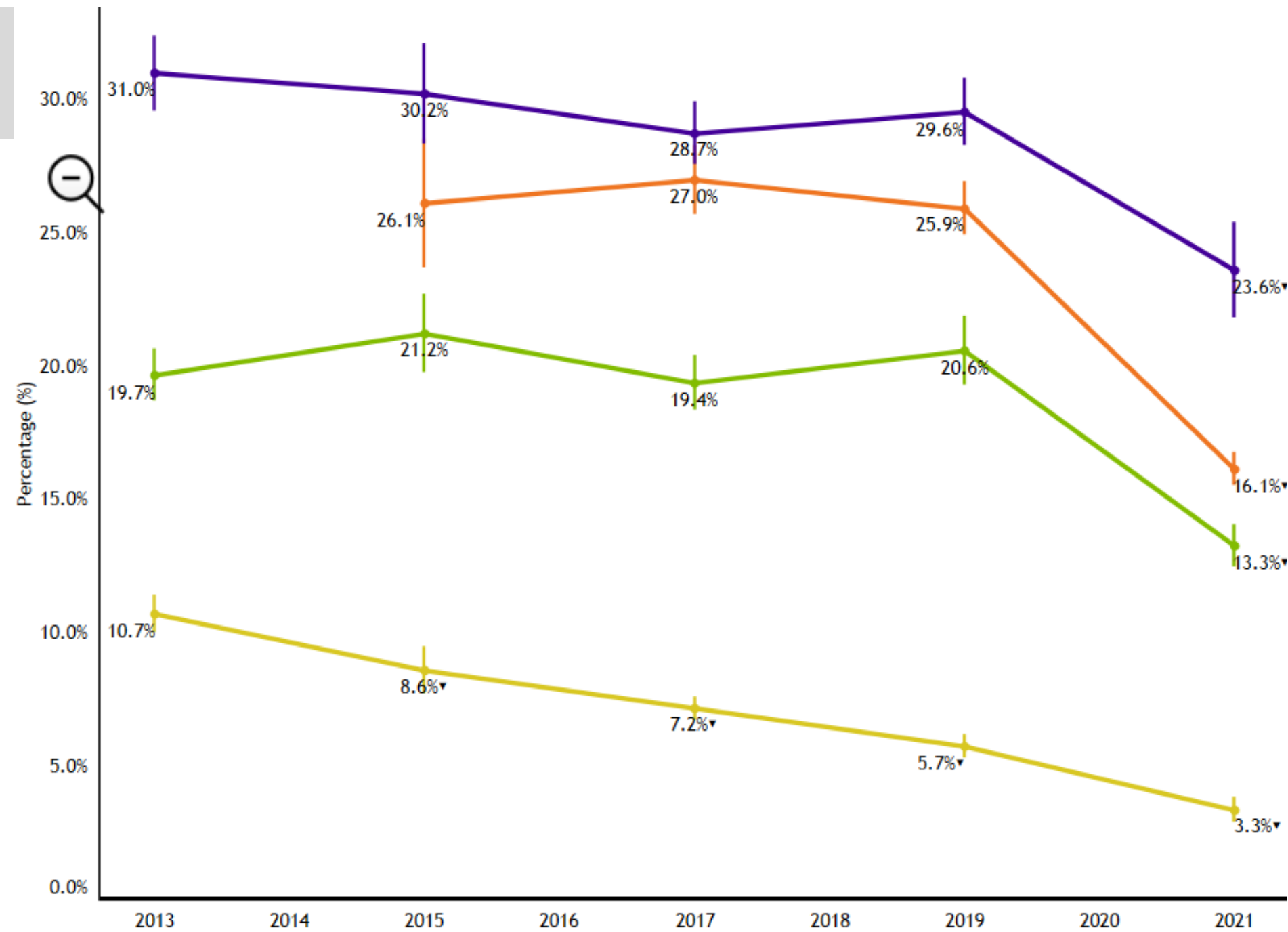
# Substance Use

# 2021 Statewide HKCS High School Results:

Significant decreases in current use of

Alcohol  
Vapor Products  
Marijuana  
Cigarettes

Compared to 2019



# Prescription Pain Medication

Survey prompt: The next section asks about the use of prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told you to use it. For these questions, count drugs such as codeine, Vicodin, OxyContin, Hydrocodone, and Percocet.

- 5.9% of high school youth currently use prescription pain medication without a prescription
  - Significant **decrease** from 6.9% in 2019



# What's Next?

- Continued analysis of 2021 results, including focus groups with youth to aid in meaning-making
- Instrument Refinement for 2023 tools (Aug - Dec)
- National comparisons (CDC's YRBS) available in Spring 2023
- Continuing to elevate youth voice in every part of survey cycle and pay youth for their time

# Discussion

Visit [healthykidscolo.org](https://healthykidscolo.org)

For more statewide and regional results

THANK YOU

# Contact Us!



Emily Fine: [Emily.Fine@state.co.us](mailto:Emily.Fine@state.co.us)

Ashley Brooks-Russell: [Ashley.Brooks-Russell@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Ashley.Brooks-Russell@cuanschutz.edu)