

Community & Family-Related Protective Factors Among Maine High School Students

2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey Data

Protective factors are conditions that help mitigate the impact of risk factors, build resilience, and are associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes. Research shows protective factors, can help mitigate effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and reduce adverse health outcomes among youth.¹

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this analysis was to examine the impact of community and family-related protective factors on risk outcomes among Maine high school students.

Protective Factors

54% Received support from adults other than their parents



43% Felt people at their school care about & encourage them

49% Felt they matter to people in their community

81% Received love & support from their families

Health Risk Behaviors



35% Experienced depressive symptoms

Felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities in the past 12 months



35% Current substance users

Past 30-day use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, electronic vapor products or prescription drug misuse



18% Experienced suicide ideation

Seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months



27% Experienced 4+ ACEs

Reported 4 or more ACEs including: divorce/separation, death of parent/guardian, adult with mental illness, emotional and/or physical abuse, incarceration of a parent/guardian, forced sexual contact, threat of violence at home, substance use in the home, lack of family love/support

Data are weighted to be representative of Maine's high school student population. In 2023, there were 29,915 total high school respondents.

¹ Cooper, L., Bignall, W. (May 2025) *Protective Factors Help Your Child's Mental Health*. The Kids Mental Health Foundation. <https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/grief-and-trauma/protective-factors-help-your-childs-emotional-well-being>

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Maine Department of Education

Key Findings

Maine high school students who feel they matter in their community, feel people at their school care about them and encourage them, receive support from adults other than their parents, or receive love and support from their families are less likely to experience depressive symptoms, consider suicide, use substances or experience 4 or more ACEs.



**Felt sad/hopeless
2+ weeks in a row**



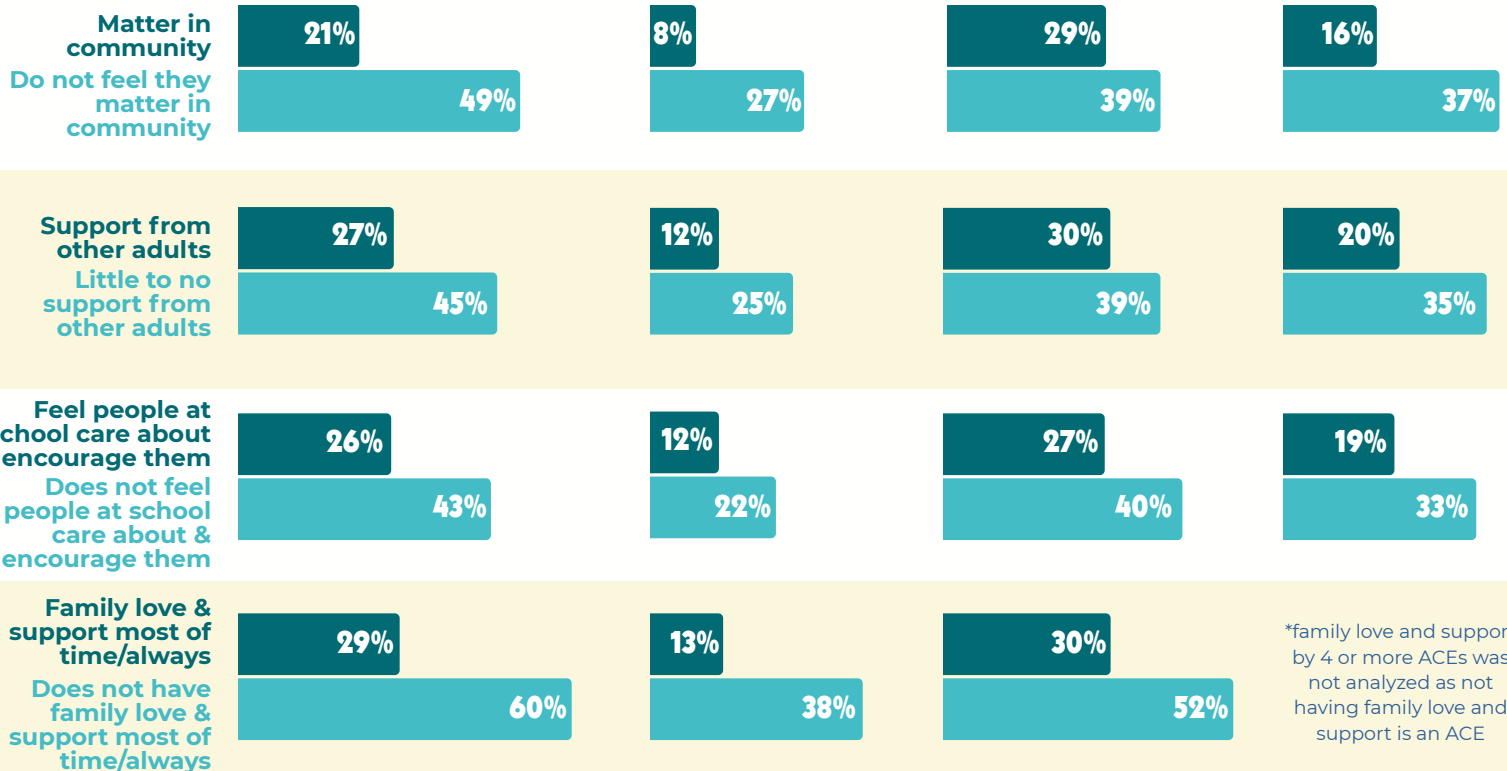
**Considered
suicide
past year**



**Current
substance use**



4+ ACEs



Take Away

Creating loving and supportive environments for youth at school, within their communities, and at home is important to reducing risk behaviors and improving health outcomes among youth in Maine.

LIMITATIONS: MIYHS is only representative of Maine youth in school. It is a cross-sectional survey and therefore cannot make statements about causation.

ABOUT MAINE INTEGRATED YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY (MIYHS)

The MIYHS is a biennial collaboration between the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Department of Education since 2009. It aims to identify youth health trends through direct surveys taken by Maine students in grades 5 - 12. All middle and high schools can participate.

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