

2024 Socorro Strategies for Success Youth Survey Results

Socorro County Highlights Report

The Strategies for Success (SFS) survey was collected online among middle and high school students in April 2024. This report contains aggregated data from Cottonwood, Sarracino, and Magdalena Middle Schools and the Magdalena and Socorro High Schools. **A total of 251 middle school students completed the SFS and 128 high school students completed it, for a grand total of 379 surveys**, which is a smaller sample size than previous years. Questions on the SFS cover substance use behaviors and attitudes, mental health indicators, and protective factors. Data are used to monitor trends among youth and measure outcomes related to the Socorro County Prevention Coalition grant from the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, and Socorro County Options, Prevention, and Education's (SCOPE) prevention grants, and helps community programs plan prevention services.

Positive Findings

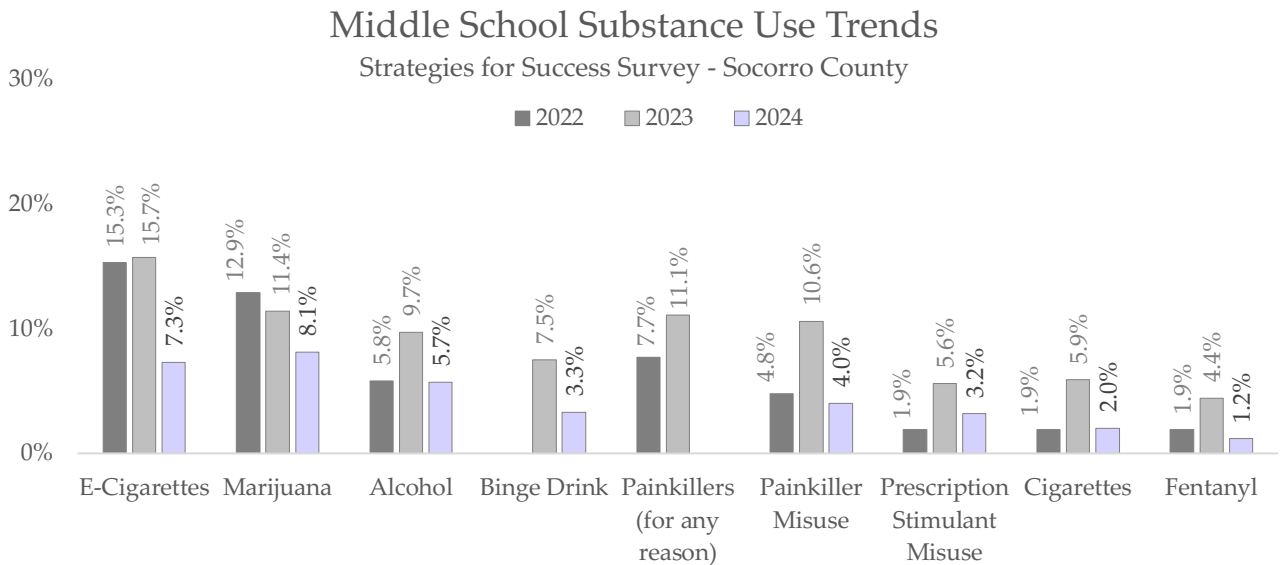
- + Substance use decreased for middle and high school youth in 2024 for every substance, including alcohol, e-cigarettes, marijuana, opioids, and cigarettes.
- + Students offered resiliency factors such as wanting to take care of their health, and to protect their future plans as reasons for not drinking or using other substances.
- + Over 97% of middle schoolers and 96% of high schoolers report healthy rules and boundaries at home, reporting that when they are not at home their parent/guardian knows where they are and who they are with.
- + More than 80% of students have an adult who believes they will be a success, and at least one friend their own age who cares about them, (both powerful protective factors).
- + Students generally believe (~90%) their parents think it is wrong for them to use alcohol, marijuana, and e-cigarettes, which is a strong protective factor.
- + Perception of harm for using marijuana 1-2 times a week and drinking 1-2 alcoholic beverages almost every day increased among middle and high school youth.
- + Past year sadness and hopelessness, and suicidal ideation decreased slightly in 2024 for the second year in a row.

Troubling Findings

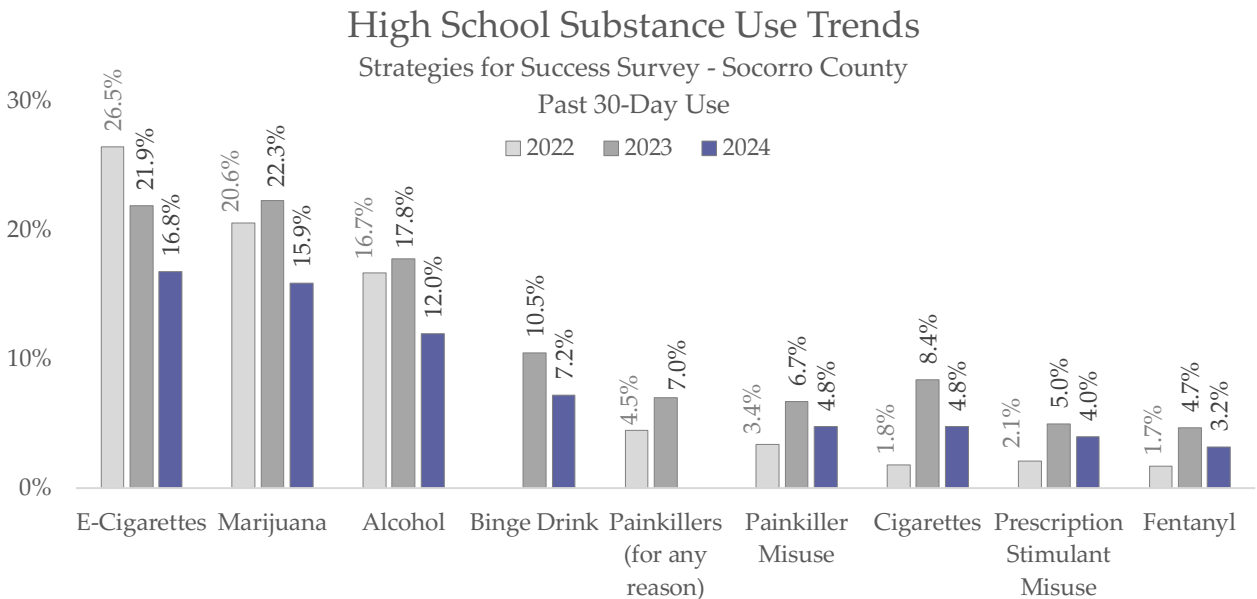
- Middle school you report initiating substance use at an early age (before age 13) at alarmingly high prevalence (nearly twice that of high school youth).
- Youth report getting alcohol from parties, peers, and adult family members.
- Mental health risks have reduced, but are still too high, and the overlap of substance use and mental health risks is concerning.
- Youth who report using marijuana say they use it to cope with stress and anxiety.

Current Substance Use

Current substance use is measured by the percentage of people who report using the specific substance in the past-30 days. Adolescent substance use is risky because studies reveal that the brain does not stop developing until young people reach their mid-twenties and substance use during development can have lasting effects.¹ The graph below shows the current substance use among middle and high school students.



Binge drinking was not asked in 2022, and use of painkillers for any reason was not asked in 2024.

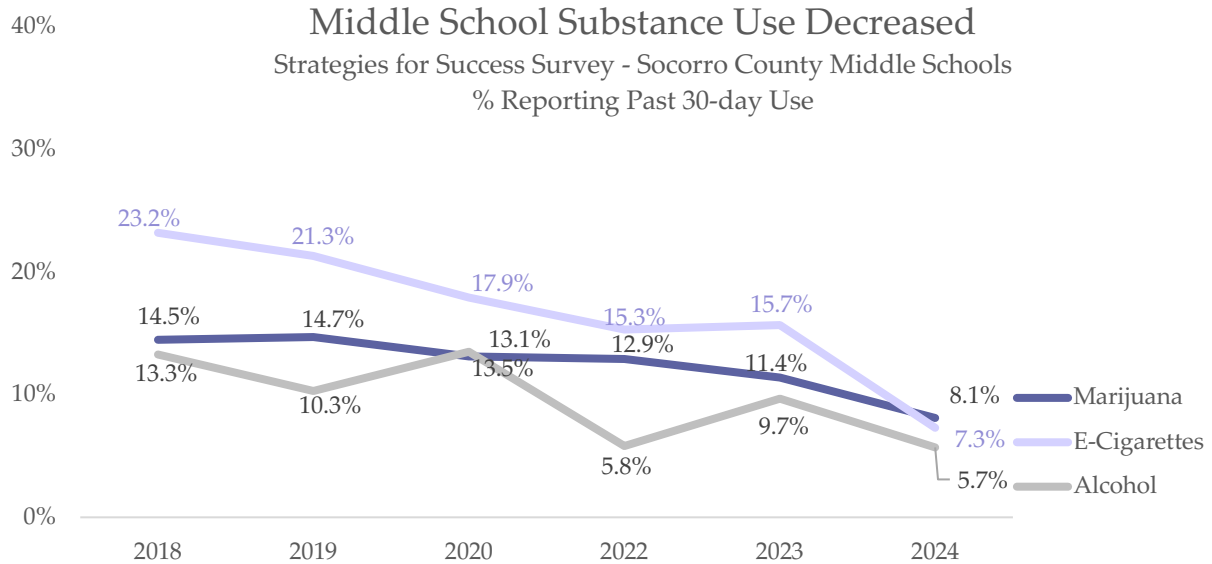


¹ Volkow, ND. (2017). Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2017.10.002>

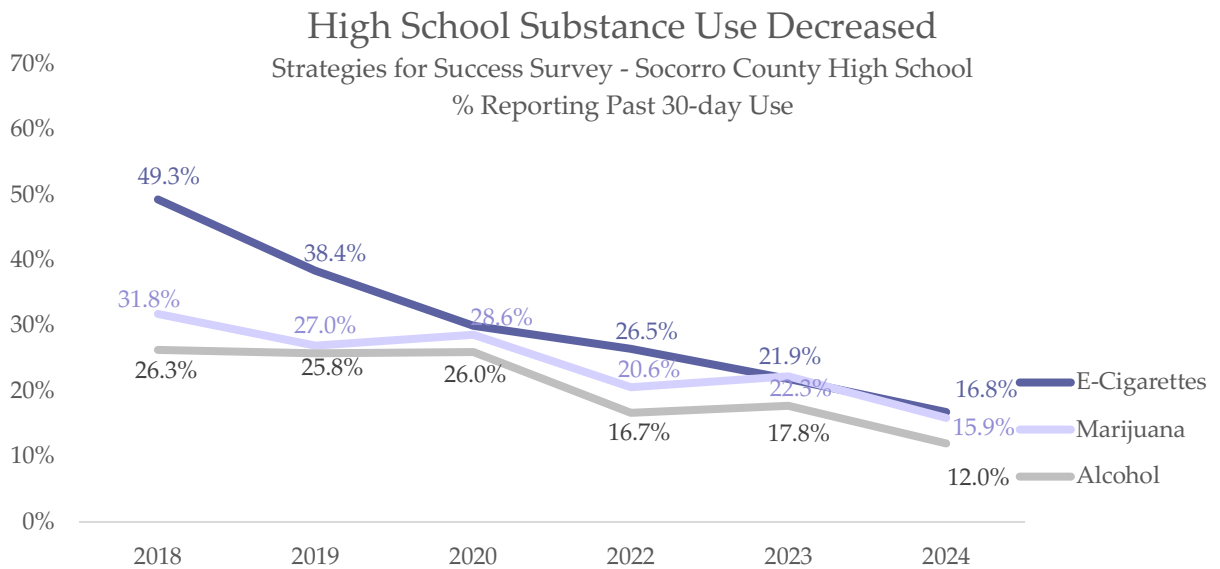
All substance use decreased in 2024.

How do we compare to NM and the US? HIGH SCHOOL	U.S. YRBS* (2021)	New Mexico YRRS* (2021)	Socorro SFS (2024)
E-Cigarettes	36.2%	25.3%	16.8%
Alcohol	22.7%	19.5%	12.0%
Marijuana	15.8%	20.3%	15.9%

*SOURCES: 2021 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (NM), and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (U.S.)



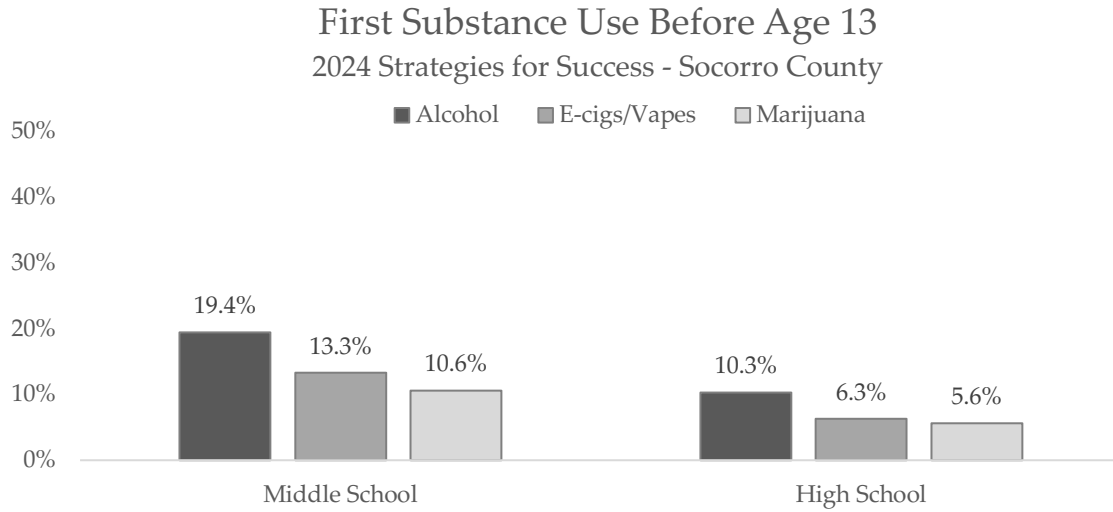
Middle school girls are more likely to report using e-cigarettes, and marijuana, and boys are more likely to report alcohol use.



High school boys report slightly higher substance use than high school girls.

Initiation of Substance Use

The earlier youth start drinking, the more likely they are to experience problems related to use later in life. Prevention programs aim to increase protective factors and delay initiation of use among youth.



How do we compare to NM and the US? HIGH SCHOOL	U.S. YRBS* (2021)	New Mexico YRRS* (2021)	Socorro SFS (2024)
Alcohol (use before age 13)	15.5%	17.8%	10.3%
Marijuana (use before age 13)	4.9%	11.1%	5.6%

*SOURCES: 2021 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (NM), and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (U.S.)

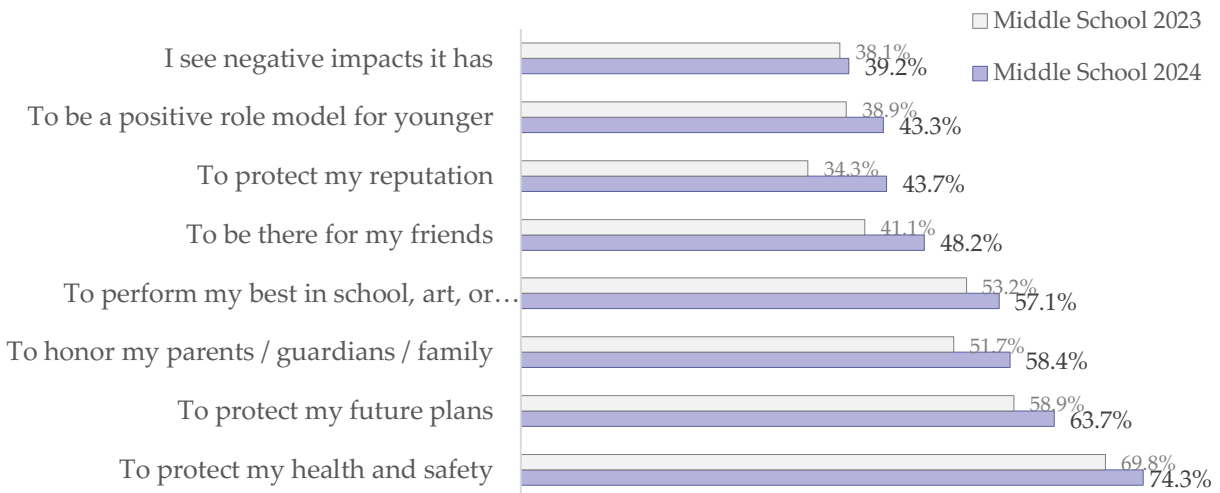
Prevention Focuses on Positive Youth Development

Most students are not using alcohol or other substances. Prevention research shows that students with goals, supportive adults and peers, and connection to school and community are less likely to engage in risky behavior. The graph below displays the top reasons why students choose not to drink or use other substances.

If you choose not to drink or use substances, what would your reasons be?

Reasons for NOT using Substances include Health and Safety, and Protecting Future Plans

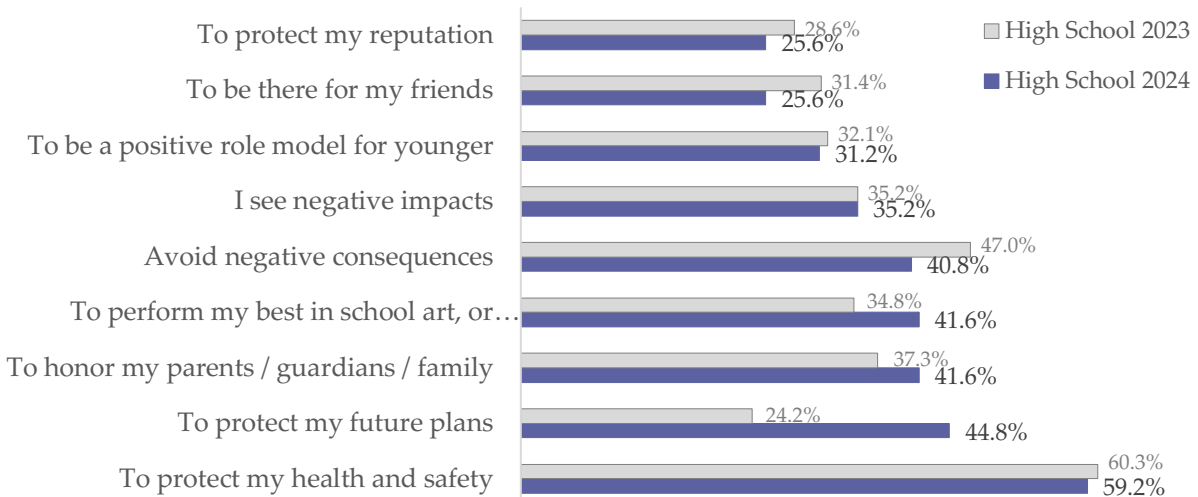
Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County Middle Schools



If you choose not to drink or use substances, what would your reasons be?

Reasons for NOT using Substances include Health and Safety, and Protecting Future Plans

Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County High Schools



Protective Factors

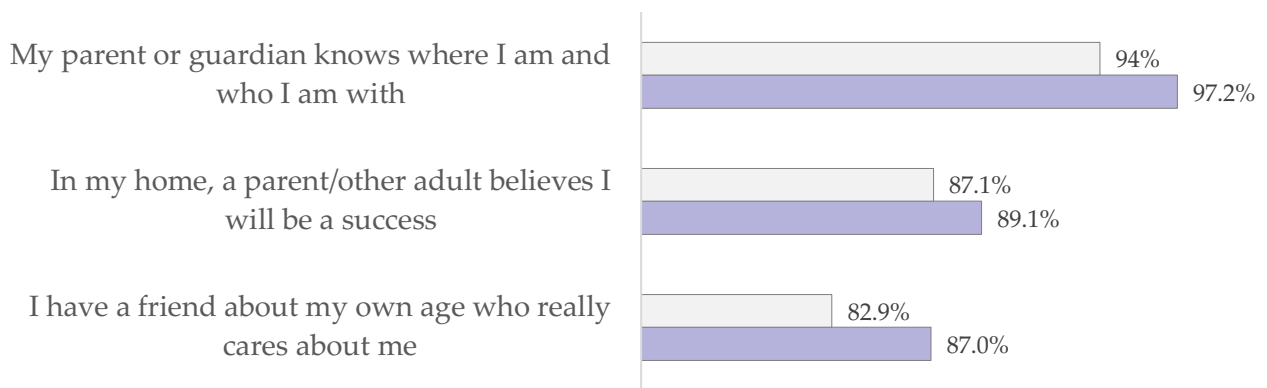
Positive, supportive, relationships serve as a buffer against negative influences and circumstances youth experience. Having boundaries at home, such as having parents/guardians knowing where their child is, who they are with, and what they are doing when not at home is a strong protective factor.

Most Middle School Students Have Supportive Adults and Friends

Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County

% who said true or very true

□ Middle School 2023 ■ Middle School 2024

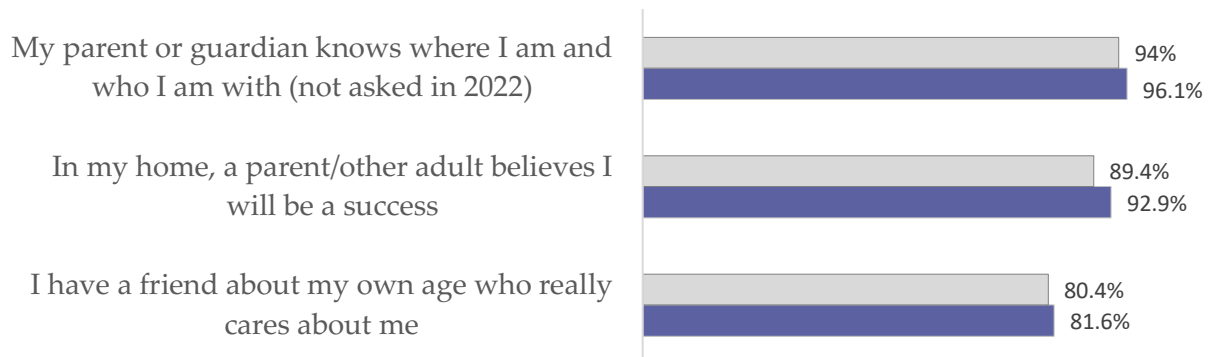


Most High School Students Have Supportive Adults and Friends

Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County

% who said true or mostly or very true

□ High School 2023 ■ High School 2024



Perception of Harm from Using Substances

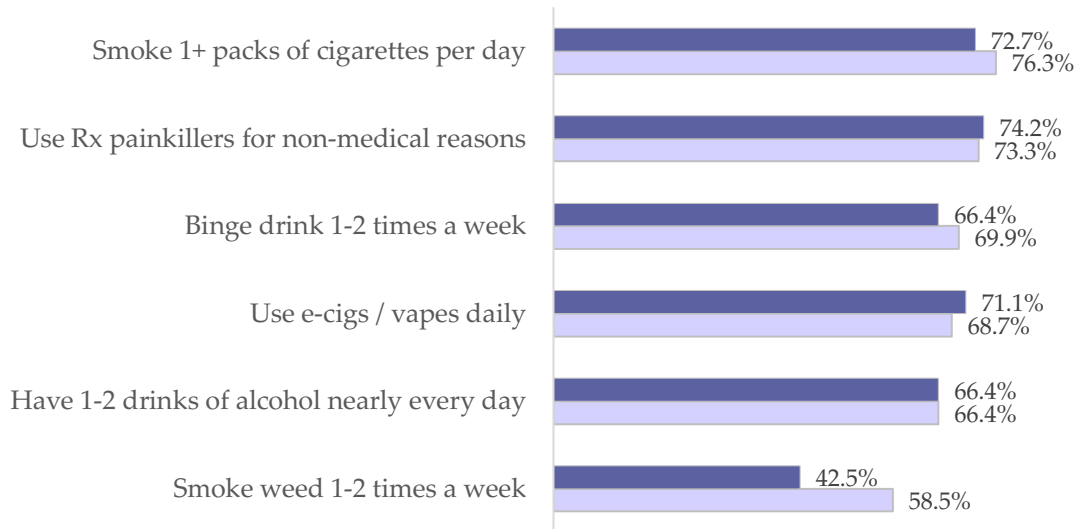
A set of questions on the SFS asks about the perceived risk of harm associated with substance use. Higher perceived risk is associated with lower use. The graph below shows the percentage of students who said they risk “great” or “moderate” harm from using the substance as described.

Perception of Harm is Lowest for Marijuana

Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County

% who said the substance use would cause "moderate" or "great harm"

■ High School 2024 ■ Middle School 2024

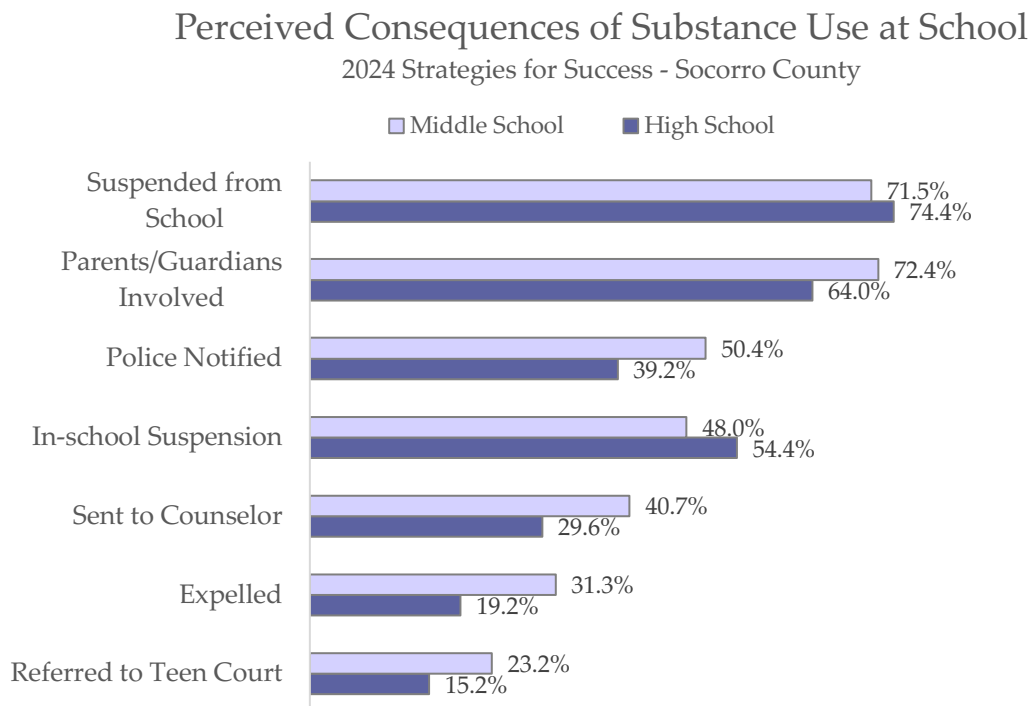
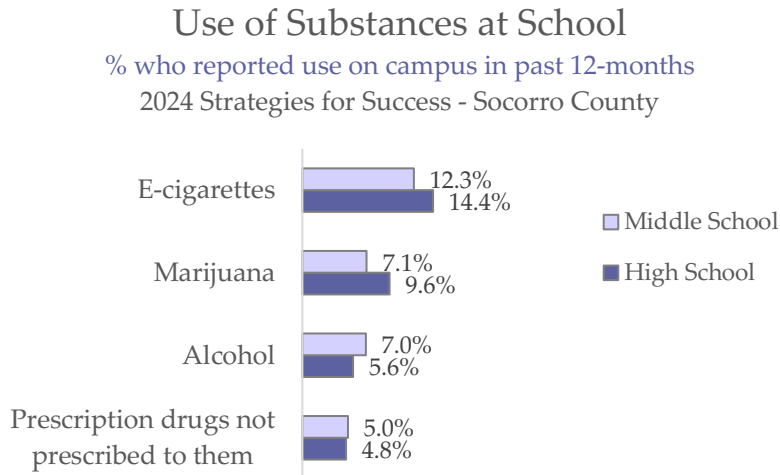


Marijuana consistently has the lowest perceived risk to students. Both middle and high school students report a slightly higher perceived risk of using marijuana once or twice a week, compared with last year. A higher perceived risk of harm is associated with decreased tendency to engage in that behavior.

Socorro SFS Perceived Risk of Harm <i>% Who said moderate or great risk</i>	Middle				High			
	2020	2022	2023	2024	2020	2022	2023	2024
Smoking marijuana once or twice a week	55.2%	45.0%	52.0%	58.5%	37.2%	38.5%	40.2%	42.5%
Having 1-2 alcoholic beverages nearly every day	63.5%	59.1%	61.0%	66.4%	58.1%	64.6%	58.7%	66.4%
Using e-cigarettes daily	68.4%	61.1%	69.8%	68.7%	66.8%	63.2%	67.1%	71.1%

Using Substances on Campus

The 2024 SFS asked students about substance use on campus for e-cigarettes, marijuana, alcohol, and prescription drugs.



Students are most likely to believe they will be suspended, or their parents will be involved if they get caught with substances on campus.

Perceived Disapproval of Substance Use

Youth were asked “how wrong” their parents and their peers would think it is for them to use various substances. The graphs show the percentage of students who answered parents and peers would think it “wrong” or “very wrong”.

Perceived peer disapproval is lower than personal and parental disapproval.

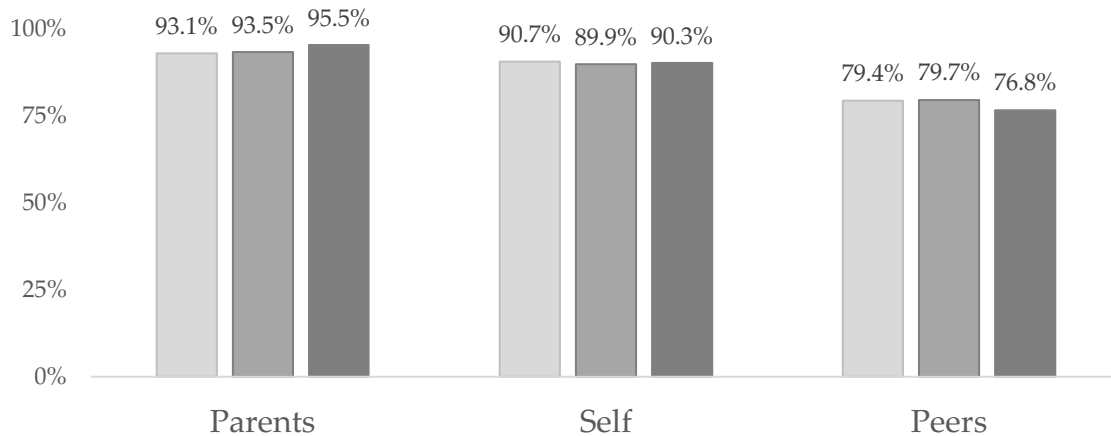
Alcohol	Middle			High		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
My <u>parents</u> feel it is wrong for me to drink regularly	93.9%	90.7%	93.1%	95.6%	89.6%	88.8%
I <u>think</u> it is wrong for someone my age to drink regularly	--	86.0%	90.7%	--	83.5%	87.2%
My <u>peers</u> think it is wrong for someone my age to drink alcohol	86.1%	71.1%	79.4%	73.9%	63.9%	76.6%

Middle School Perceived Disapproval by Substance

% who said wrong or very wrong

2024 Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County

Alcohol Marijuana E-cigarettes



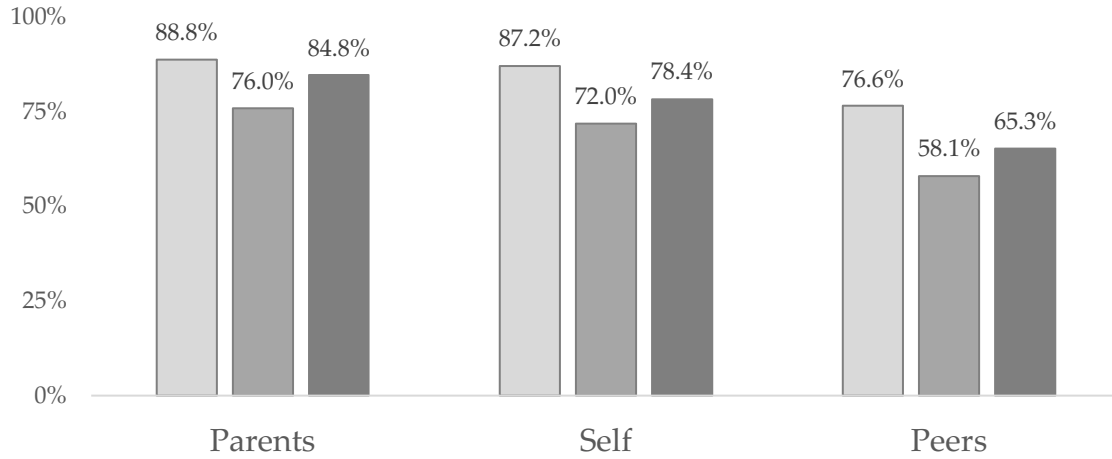
Both middle school and high school students rate their peers’ disapproval the lowest, but perceived disapproval overall is higher than last year (desired change), except for high school students’ perceptions of parental disapproval, which decreased slightly for alcohol, marijuana, and e-cigs.

High School Perceived Disapproval by Substance

% who said wrong or very wrong

2024 Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro School District

■ Alcohol
 ■ Marijuana
 ■ E-cigarettes



How wrong would {your parents / you / your peers} think it would be for you/someone your age to use {alcohol / marijuana / e-cigarettes}?

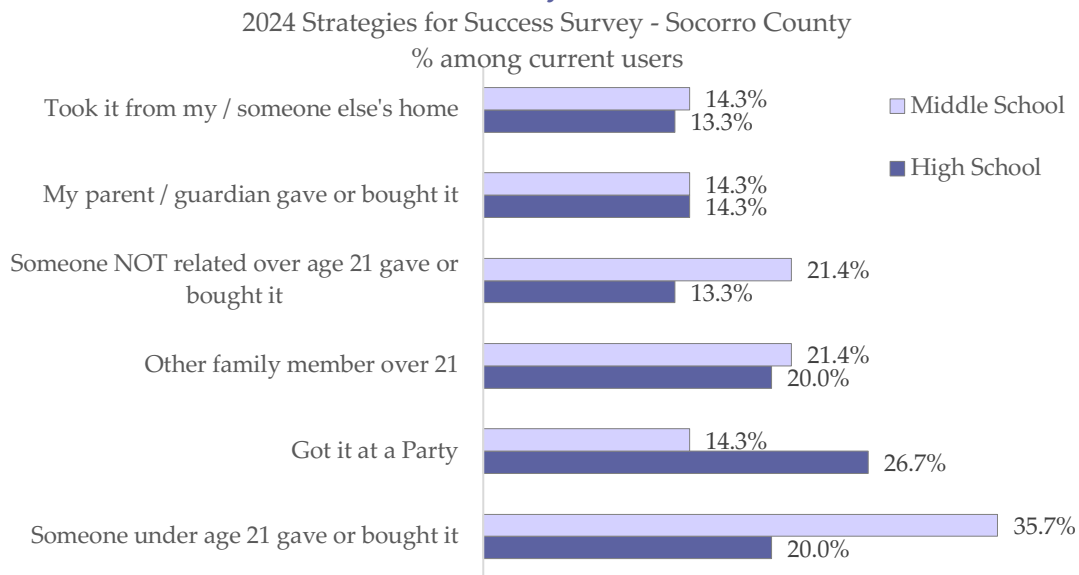
Marijuana	Middle			High		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
My <u>parents</u> feel it is wrong for me to use weed/marijuana regularly	93.9%	89.9%	93.1%	85.3%	83.5%	76.0%
<u>I think</u> it is wrong for someone my age to use weed/marijuana regularly	--	83.5%	89.9%	--	69.3%	72.0%
<u>My peers</u> think it is wrong for someone my age use weed/marijuana regularly	86.1%	66.1%	79.7%	57.7%	53.4%	58.1%

E-Cigarettes	Middle			High		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
My <u>parents</u> feel it is wrong for me to use E-cigs/vapes regularly	96.5%	92.6%	95.5%	98.0%	89.9%	84.8%
<u>I think</u> it is wrong for someone my age to use E-cigs/vapes regularly	--	84.5%	90.3%	--	76.0%	78.4%
<u>My peers</u> think it is wrong for someone my age use E-cigs/vapes regularly	89.8%	63.5%	76.8%	84.7%	52.4%	65.3%

Sources for Youth Alcohol

The Coalition works to reduce social access of alcohol to minors through coordination with law enforcement to hold adults accountable for providing to minors and educating parents and the community that it is a 4th degree felony to provide alcohol to minors. The graph shows where students report getting their alcohol. The percentage displayed below includes the students who reported drinking in the past 30 days.

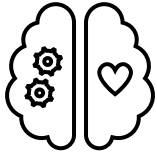
Youth get Alcohol from other Minors, at Parties, and from Family Members



Alcohol Access	Parent/Guardian				Got it at a Party			
	2020	2022	2023	2024	2020	2022	2023	2024
Socorro SFS								
Middle School	15.8%	0.0%	9.5%	14.3%	50.0%	42.0%	12.0%	14.3%
High School	7.4%	11.0%	4.6%	14.3%	50.6%	47.7%	30.2%	26.7%

Marijuana Consumption

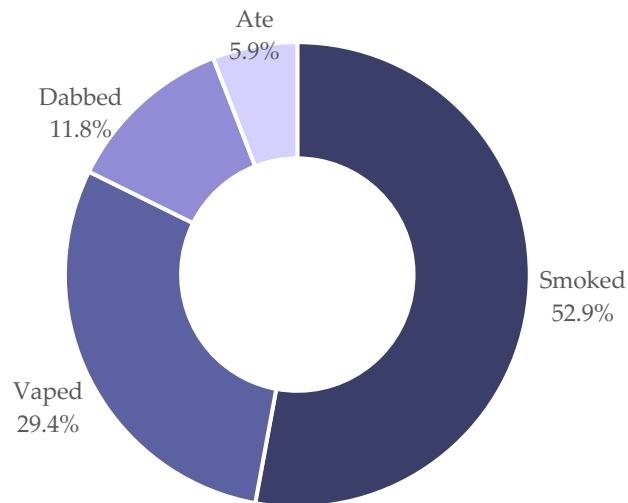
Marijuana use has become one of the most used substances among youth in Socorro. Youth often perceive that marijuana is *safe* and even *healthy*, especially since medical and recreational marijuana have been legalized in New Mexico. There is a general lack of awareness of the damage marijuana causes to the developing brain.



Marijuana use has been found to impair development of the adolescent brain. Particularly, differences are found among adolescent marijuana smokers in the frontal cortex which is critical to judgement, planning, decision-making, personality, and the amygdala, which directs memory, decision-making, and emotion.^{2 3}

High School Youth Usually Consume Marijuana by Smoking or Vaping it

2024 Strategies for Success - Socorro County High School
% among current users (n=20)



Socorro County Middle School students report similar consumption methods to high school students, with the majority of middle school users reporting smoking marijuana (73.7%) followed by vaping (10.5%) and eating it (10.5%).

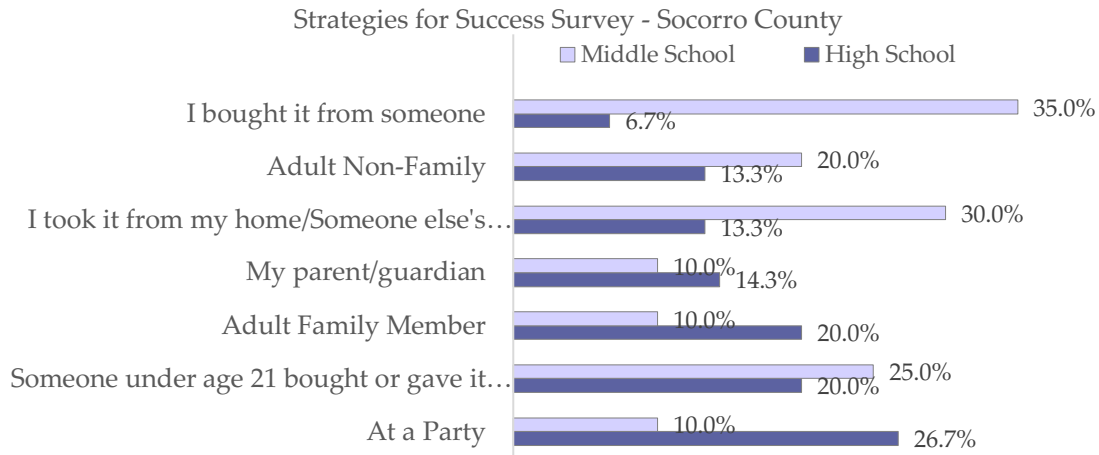
² Weir, K. (2015). Marijuana and the Developing Brain. American Psychological Association, Vol 46, No. 10.

³ Grubner SA, Sagar KA, Dahlgren MK, Racine M, Lukas SE. (2012). Age of Onset of Marijuana Use and Executive Functioning. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 2012 Sep;26(3):496-506.

Marijuana Access

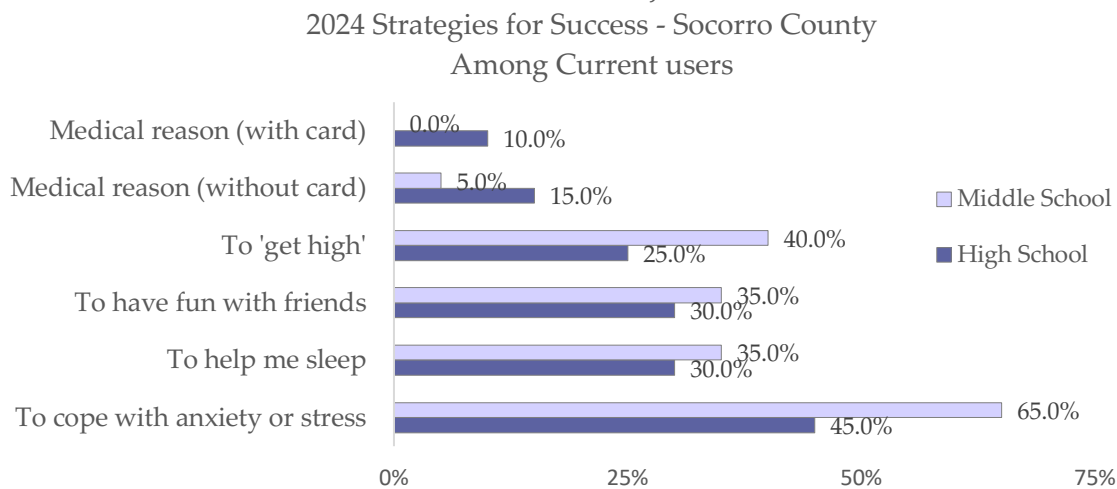
Prevention programs have begun to implement similar marijuana strategies to alcohol and prescription painkillers related to safe storage and the importance of not sharing. Most youth access marijuana through social sources, and access is more prevalent since recreational legalization for anyone over age 21 in New Mexico in 2022.

Middle and High School Students Report Different Access Points for Marijuana



- Middle school students are most likely to report accessing marijuana by purchasing it from someone or taking it from home.
- High school youth are most likely to report accessing marijuana at parties, from another young person or an adult family member (non-parent).

Reasons for Marijuana Use



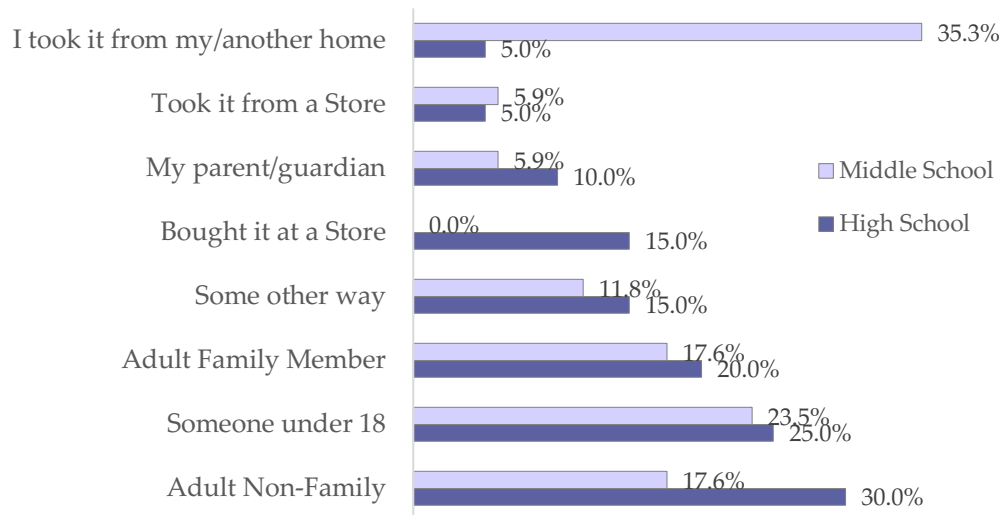
Among the youth who report using marijuana in the past 30-days, most are using it to cope with anxiety or stress.

Youth E-Cigarette Access

It is illegal for anyone under age 21 to possess or use tobacco products, including e-cigarettes or vapes. The Strategies for Success survey asked about access to vapes for the first time in 2023. Most youth get vapes from someone under 18, or someone not related who is over 18. Fifteen percent (15%) of high school vape users report buying it themselves in a store.

Middle Schoolers Take Vapes from Home High Schoolers get them from Adults and Peers

2024 Strategies for Success Survey - Socorro County

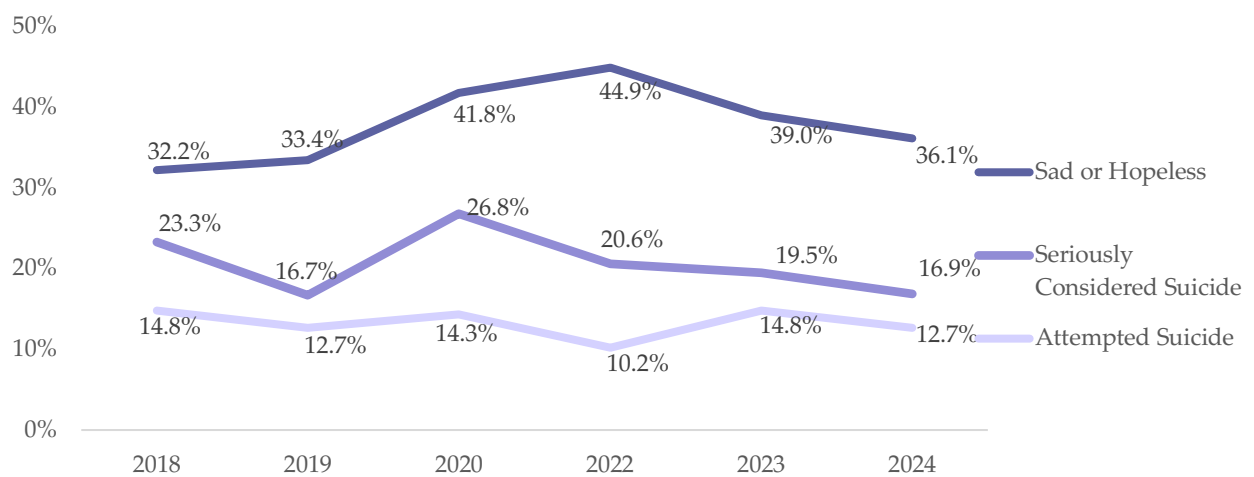


Mental Health Concerns

Risk factors for youth substance use are often similar to risk factors for mental distress. Understanding mental health risk factors can help the community respond in a more comprehensive manner. The graphs below show the percentage of students who report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that it kept them from doing regular activities, which is an indication of depression. It also shows those who seriously considered suicide and attempted suicide in the past year.

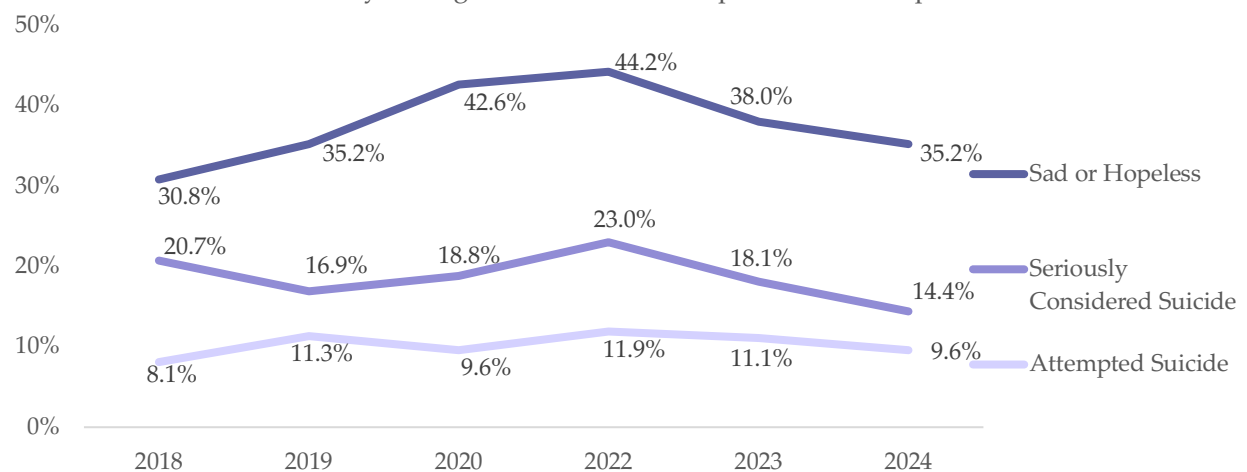
Middle School Mental Health Trends

Socorro County Strategies for Success - % Experienced in the Past 12-Months



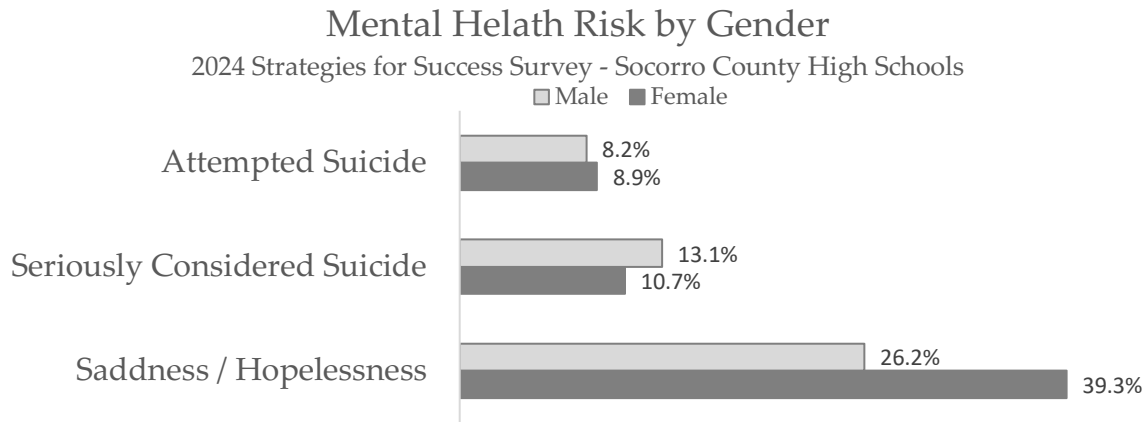
High School Mental Health Trends

Socorro County Strategies for Success - % Experienced in the past 12-months



Mental health risks for youth continue to decline.

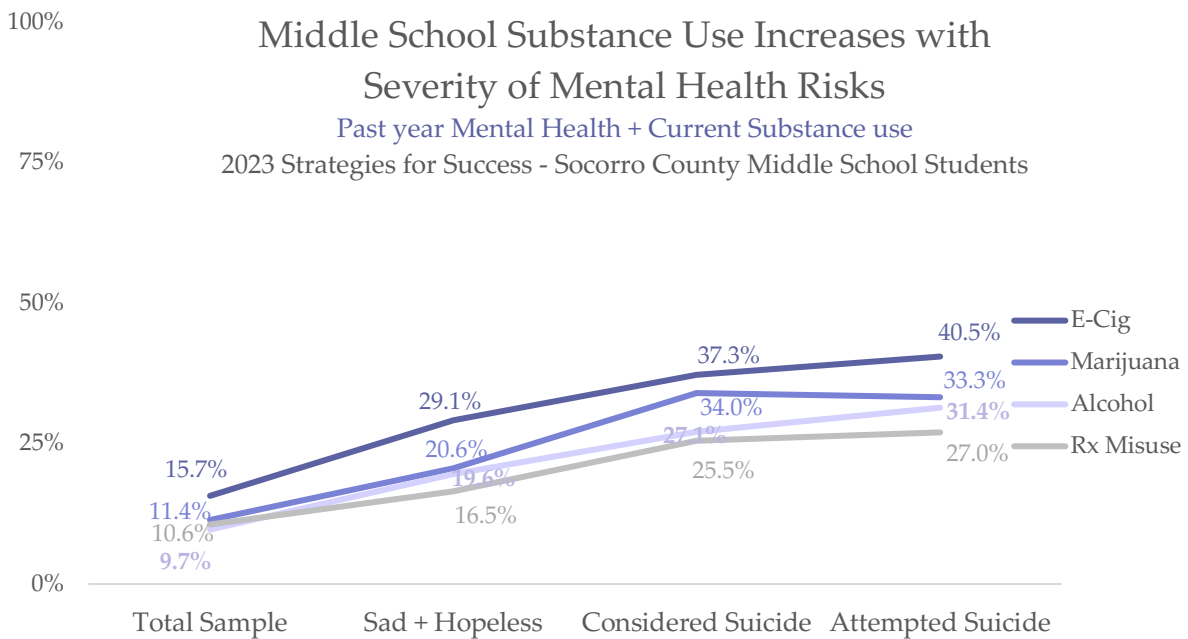
Young girls in Socorro are reporting higher feelings of sadness or hopelessness more than boys



Socorro County SFS 2024	Seriously Considered		Attempted	
	#	%	#	%
Middle School	41	16.9%	31	12.7%
High School	18	14.4%	12	9.6%

Mental Health and Substance Use

The graphs below include students who report having the mental health issue, compared to the entire survey sample (“total sample”). They show how substance use and mental health issues co-exist. Research shows close to half of the people who experience a mental illness will also experience a substance use disorder.^{4,5} Having untreated mental illness adversely impacts our daily functioning, and when left untreated, is a risk factor for suicide. Supporting behavioral health promotes well-being by preventing or intervening in mental illness, substance use disorders and addictions.

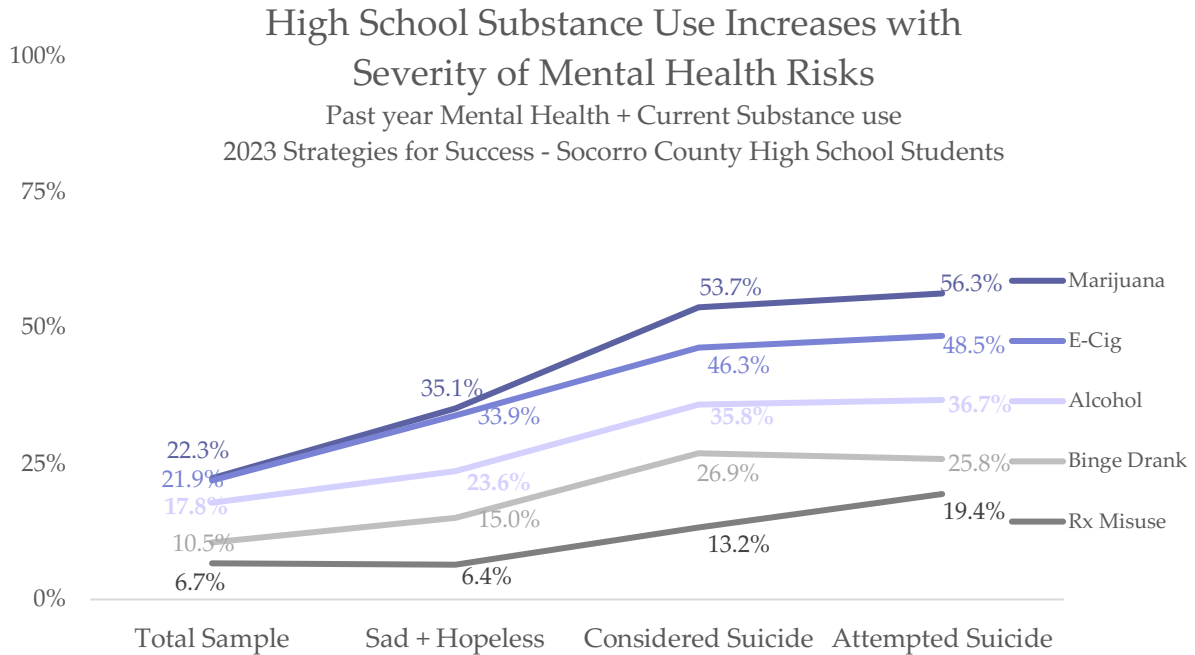


- 1. Middle School students who report feeling so sad or hopeless that it kept them from doing some usual activities in the past year, were more likely to report every substance use compared to the entire sample of students.*
- 2. Middle School students who report seriously considering suicide in the past year, were more likely to report every kind of substance use compared to the entire sample of middle school students.*
- 3. Middle School students who report attempting suicide in the past year, were more likely to report every kind of substance use compared to the entire sample of middle school students.*

⁴ Ross S, Peselow E. Co-occurring psychotic and addictive disorders: neurobiology and diagnosis. *Clin Neuropharmacol.* 2012;35(5):235-243. doi:10.1097/WNF.0b013e318261e193.

⁵ Kelly TM, Daley DC. Integrated Treatment of Substance Use and Psychiatric Disorders. *Soc Work Public Health.* 2013;28(0):388-406. doi:10.1080/19371918.2013.774673.

Using substances to treat or cope with an underlying mental health condition tends to make the mental health condition worse. We must provide other alternatives for young people to turn to, including easy access to trained healthcare professionals.



- 1. High School students who report feeling so sad or hopeless that it kept them from doing some usual activities in the past year, were more likely to report use of most substances compared to the entire sample of high school students.*
- 2. High School students who report seriously considering suicide in the past year, were more likely to report every kind of substance use compared to the entire sample of high school students.*
- 3. High School students who report attempting suicide in the past year, were more likely to report every kind of substance use compared to the entire sample of high school students.*

Recommendations

- Have clear rules about what youth can and cannot do at school and at home.
- Support programs, teachers, students, and staff who strive to make school the safest and best part of each students' day.
- Encourage students to think about going to college or technical school after they graduate high school.
- Tell students you believe in them.
- Show interest in students' schoolwork and activities.
- Encourage students to pursue their interests and get involved in drama, debate, art, music, math league, sports, or other hobbies and areas of interest.
- Give students opportunities to use their skills and recognize them for trying.
- Provide community outlets for activities and support.
- Recruit more young people to get involved with the coalition.

These are all protective factors that help buffer youth from risks and help them succeed. [Read more here:](https://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence) <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence>

Creating a safe school climate can prevent bullying, substance use, and truancy.⁶

- Be personable
- Encourage peer support
- Haven an open door
- Include students who are left out

School climate is all of our responsibility.

- Students have the most influence on school climate
- Volunteer and families
- School staff
- Community members

Thank You!

We would like to THANK everyone who played a role in helping us collect these data.

- All the students who took the time to answer the questions honestly.
- All the teachers who helped give instructions to students on completing the survey, took time out of their busy day, and gave up precious instruction time.
- The school administration and staff who supported the data collection and want to use the findings to plan, implement, and evaluate programming.

⁶ Sulkowski, M. and Lazarus, P., Creating Safe and Supportive Schools and Fostering Students' Mental Health, (Routledge, 2016), 227-246.

Strategies for Success Survey Respondent Demographics 2024 - Socorro County

School	Number of Surveys
Cottonwood Middle School	39
Sarracino Middle School	149
Socorro High School	91
Magdalena Middle	59
Magdalena High	36
Total	374

# of Surveys by Grade	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
Middle School	78	95	78				
High School				26	38	36	28

*Not all students reported their grade level

	Middle School		High School	
	#	%	#	%
	251		128	
Average Age				
Male	131	52.2%	62	48.8%
Female	106	42.2%	58	45.7%
Non-Binary + Self-describe	11	4.4%	7	5.5%
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	15	6%	6	5%
Hispanic	149	59%	80	62%
Native American	54	21%	31	24%
White	88	35%	53	41%
Other	31	12%	9	7%

Data Limitations

The sample size in 2024 was smaller and the average age was slightly younger than previous years. This may reduce the reliability of the data and / or bias the data in unknown ways. Comparisons to previous years should be made with caution. The SFS survey was not collected in 2021 due to COVID and the data from 2022 may have been skewed by the continued disruptions to daily life and learning during the COVID pandemic.

