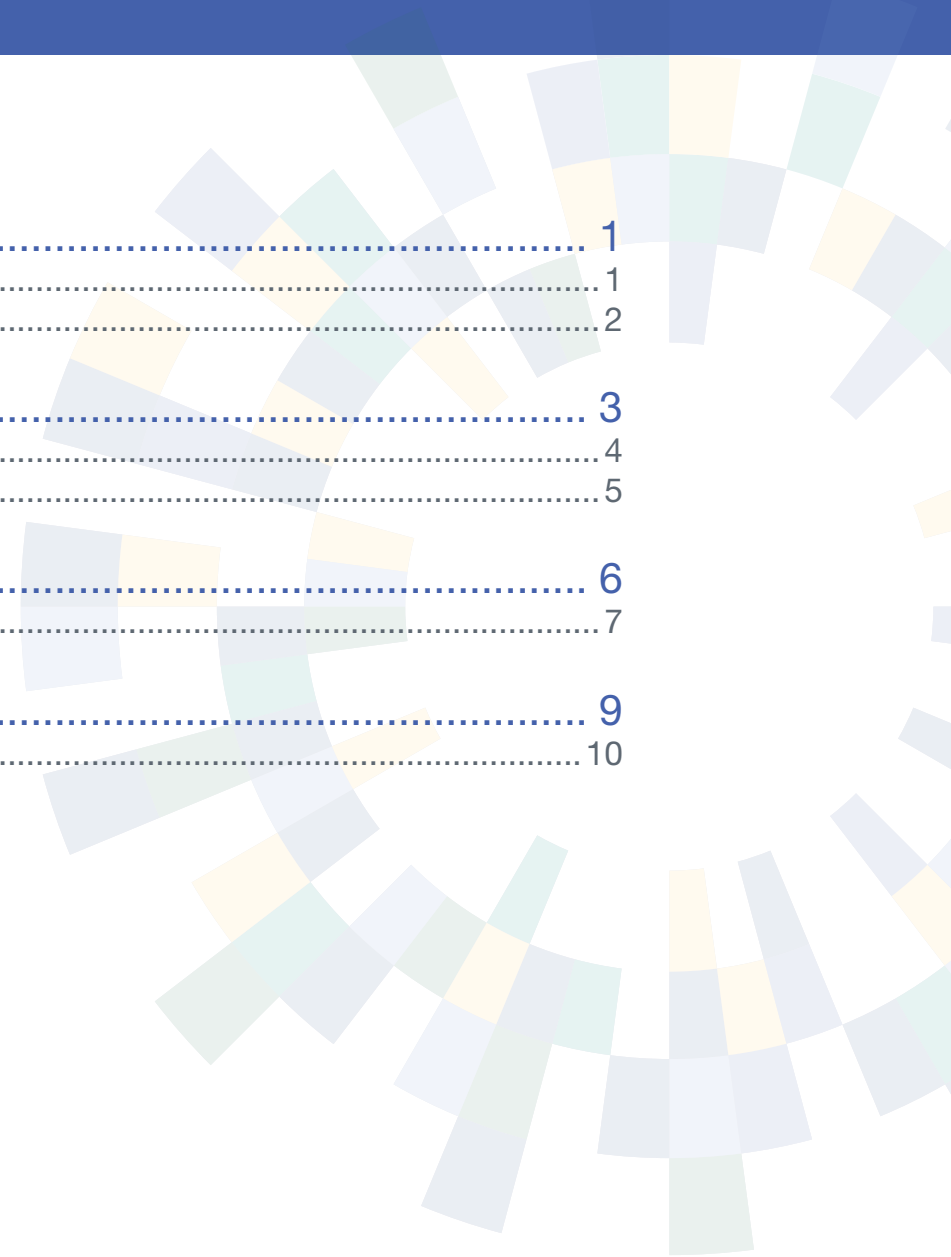


# MENTAL HEALTH

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# INTRODUCTION



In spring 2023, the Colorado State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) published this seven-part document as an overview of opioids, cannabis, alcohol, tobacco, and stimulant use and related harms in Colorado. Each substance is presented in its own profile, with demographics and mental health profiles provided for additional state context. The profiles were designed to be readily usable to all people working in fields related to substance use. They include many data sources and aim to present the most current and actionable findings.

This profile is a snapshot of mental health among Coloradans. Data are presented for adults and youth.

Certain considerations were taken into account in compiling these data, including time frame and the intended audience. First, the profiles contain all publicly available data. This ensures that anyone can access the original source for more information on any data point in the profile. It was also important to use a timespan in which the most complete data could be found within and across substances. Lag-time for data to become publicly available can vary widely. While the profiles were in development during the summer and fall of 2022, the most complete data were found and used for calendar year 2021. Exceptions include figures/charts featuring trend data prior to 2021, data collected biennially for which 2020 was the most recent year, and aggregate data when no single year yields a large enough sample size to make definitive statements.

**All Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) data presented are for public high school students, grades 9-12.**

Each page includes data sources and years. For more detailed information on references, see our [references page](#).

The SEOW compiled the profiles with deliberate attention to our intended audience. They were designed to be practical and useful for all Coloradans who are interested in talking to others in their communities about substance use and related harms. This includes anyone from youth groups and community organizations to school superintendents and state legislators. The eight profiles can be used as stand-alone publications or in conjunction with each other, as hard copy hand-outs or as a part of presentations.

**WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND REVIEWING AND USING THE DEMOGRAPHICS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFILES TO PROVIDE IMPORTANT CONTEXT TO DATA PRESENTED IN THE SUBSTANCE PROFILES.**

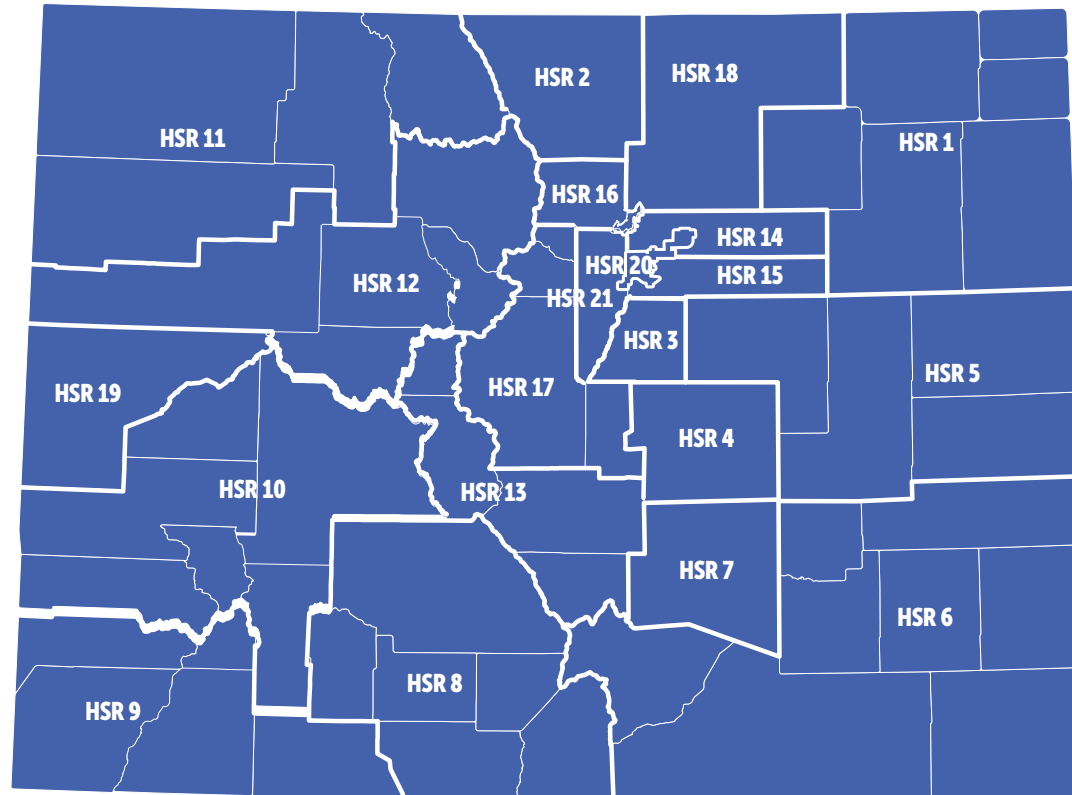
We hope the profiles facilitate conversation among Coloradans about the state of our state. For this reason, the profiles feature data from a variety of sources, include regional data when available, and introduce easily relatable use of benchmarks, such as national comparisons.

The SEOW partnered with The Evaluation Center – University of Colorado Denver on the development of the profiles, including the interpretation and visualization of data.

For more information, contact SEOW representative Sharon Liu ([sharon.liu@state.co.us](mailto:sharon.liu@state.co.us)) at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

## Colorado is divided into 21 Health Statistics Regions (HSR)

The boundaries of these regions were developed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and local public health professionals and agencies based on demographic and statistical criteria. Data within Colorado are frequently collected and presented at the HSR level.



**HSR 1:** Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma  
**HSR 2:** Larimer  
**HSR 3:** Douglas  
**HSR 4:** El Paso  
**HSR 5:** Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln

**HSR 6:** Baca, Bent, Crowley, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Otero, Prowers  
**HSR 7:** Pueblo  
**HSR 8:** Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache  
**HSR 9:** Archuleta, Delores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan

**HSR 10:** Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, San Miguel  
**HSR 11:** Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt  
**HSR 12:** Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Pitkin, Summit  
**HSR 13:** Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Lake  
**HSR 14:** Adams  
**HSR 15:** Arapahoe

**HSR 16:** Boulder, Broomfield  
**HSR 17:** Clear Creek, Gilpin, Park, Teller  
**HSR 18:** Weld  
**HSR 19:** Mesa  
**HSR 20:** Denver  
**HSR 21:** Jefferson

# ADULT MENTAL HEALTH



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states, “Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.”

THE COLORADO HEALTH INSTITUTE FOUND  
THE PANDEMIC TOOK A TOLL ON MANY  
COLORADANS’ MENTAL HEALTH.

## Nearly one in four

Coloradans ages 5+ had poor mental health\* in 2021 — far above the previous high of 15.3% in 2019.

However, **26.8%** of Coloradans ages 5+ (1.4 million) spoke to their doctor or a mental health professional about their mental health in 2021 - an indication that Coloradans want to address mental health issues.

**Younger Coloradans** had the hardest time with more than a third, ages 19 to 29, citing challenges with mental health.

\*Poor mental health is eight or more days of poor mental health in the past month.

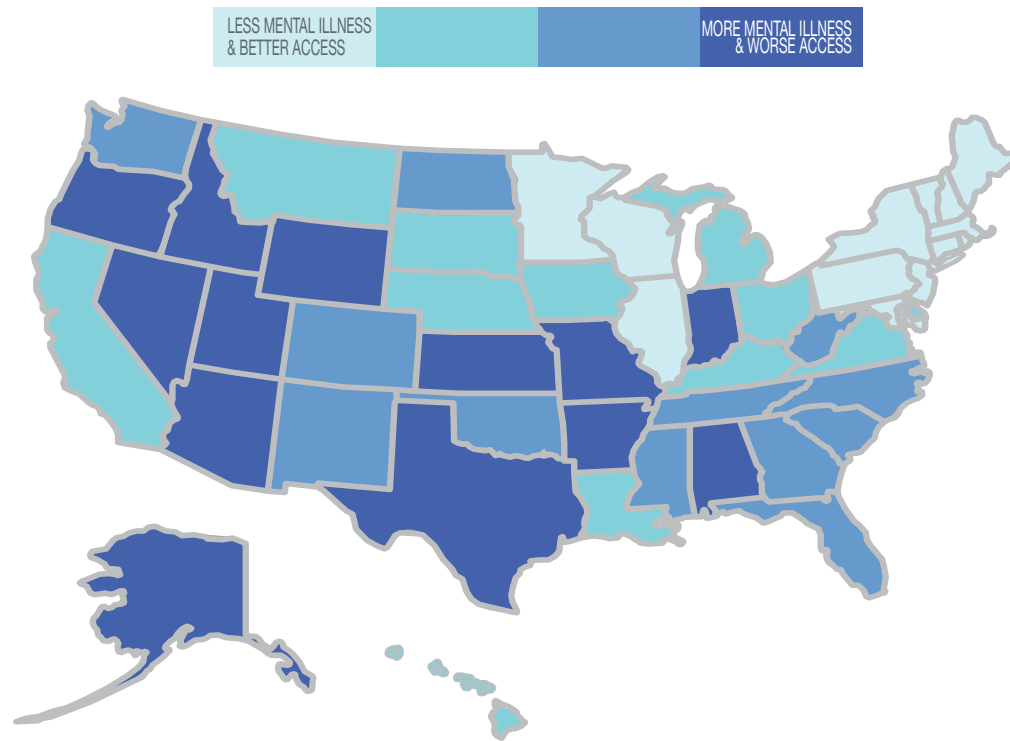


According to the American Psychological Association, parents and essential workers (health care workers and law enforcement) in the U.S. were more likely to report mental health issues, such as receiving treatment from a mental health professional or being diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

23% of adults drank more alcohol during the pandemic to cope with stress. Men averaged 12 drinks (median 7) per week. Women averaged 8 drinks (median 5) per week.

On the positive side, seven in 10 Americans (71%) said they have gotten better at prioritizing what is important to them because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than half (53%) have enjoyed having fewer plans than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Colorado ranks last, or 51st,** for prevalence of mental illness and access to mental health care for adults (18+) in the U.S.



The seven measures that make up the overall ranking include the following:

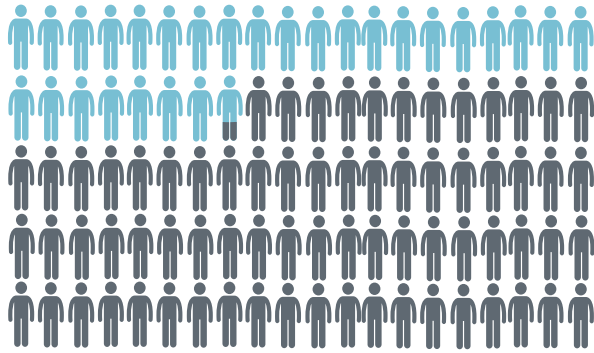
- Adults with any mental illness (AMI)
- Adults with substance use disorder in the past year
- Adults with serious thoughts of suicide
- Adults with AMI who did not receive treatment
- Adults with AMI reporting unmet need
- Adults with AMI who are uninsured
- Adults with cognitive disability who could not see a doctor due to costs

States that are ranked 1-10 have lower prevalence of mental illness and higher rates of access to care for adults. States that are ranked 39-51 indicate that adults have higher prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to care.



# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH





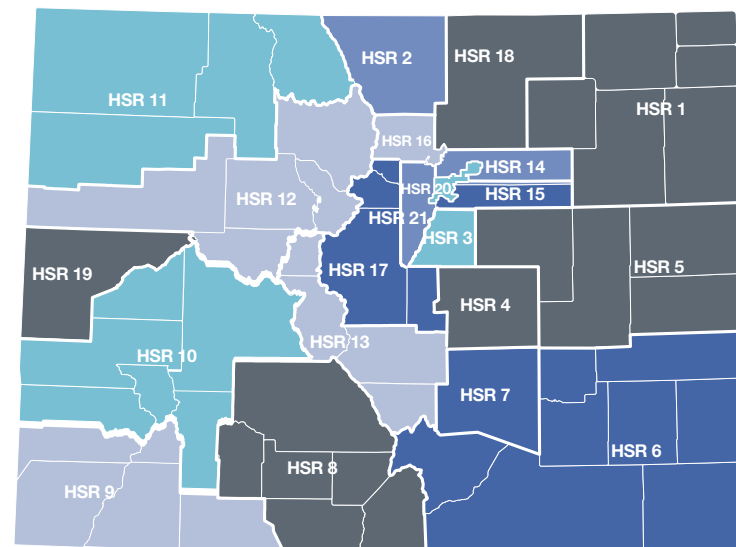
**20%** of youth aged 12 to 17 in the U.S. **had a major depressive episode** (MDE) in the past year in 2021. Youth who had an MDE were more likely to use illicit drugs.

**27.7%** of youth with a past-year MDE **used illicit drugs** compared with **10.7%** of youth without a past-year MDE.

A **major depressive episode** occurs when an individual experienced both of the following:

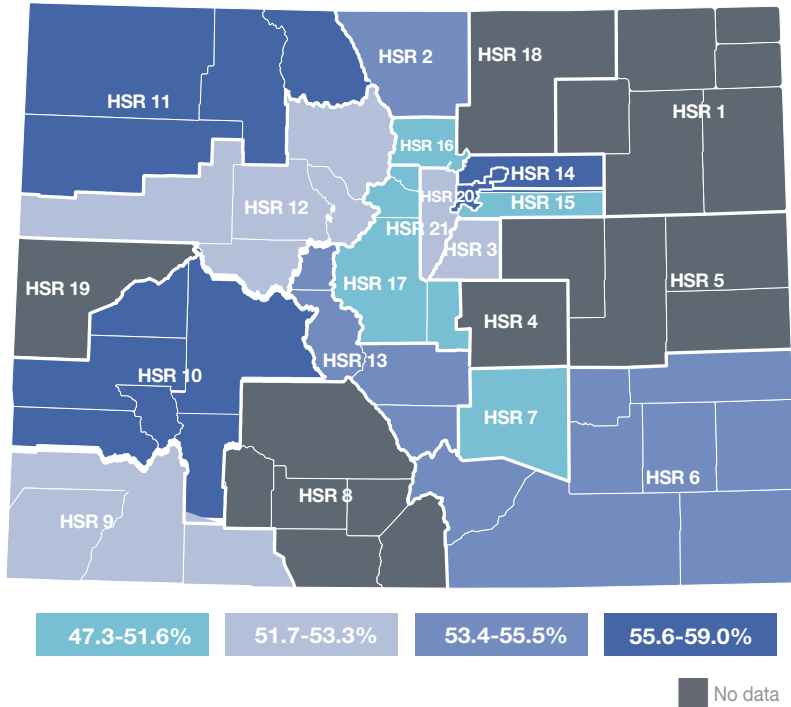
1. Had at least one period of two weeks or longer in the past year when, for most of the day nearly every day, they felt depressed or lost interest or pleasure in daily activities
2. Had problems with sleeping, eating, energy, concentration, self-worth, or having recurrent thoughts of death or recurrent suicidal ideation

IN COLORADO, NEARLY **40%** OF YOUTH WHO ATTEND PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS FELT SO SAD OR HOPELESS FOR 2 WEEKS OR MORE IN A ROW THAT THEY STOPPED DOING SOME USUAL ACTIVITIES.

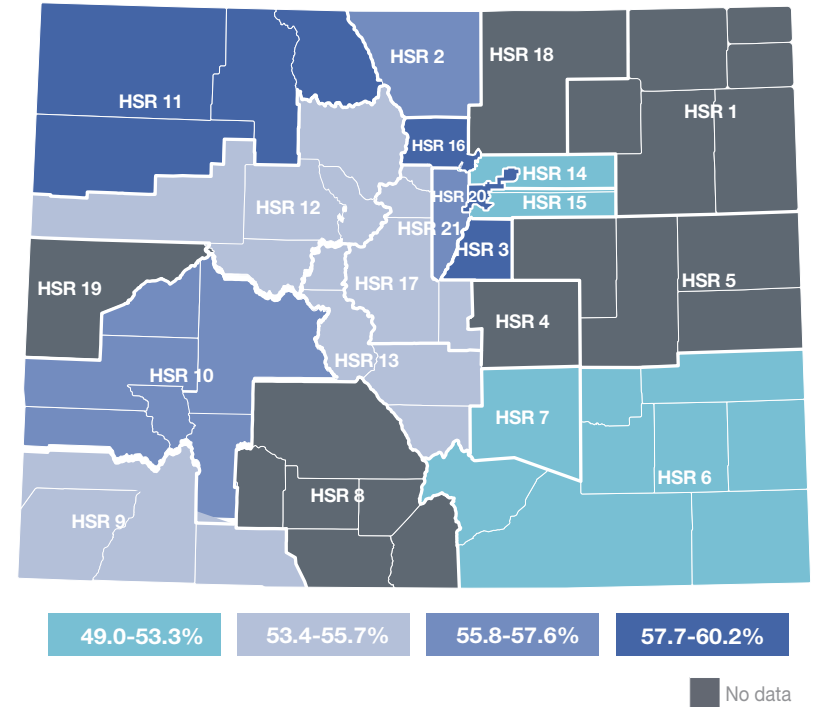


**NOTE:** THESE HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY RESULTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUTH WHO ATTEND PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN COLORADO  
**SOURCES:** NATIONAL SURVEY ON DRUG USE & HEALTH, 2021; HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY (HKCS), HIGH SCHOOL, 2021

STUDENTS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE THEIR STRESS LEVEL IS MANAGEABLE MOST DAYS



STUDENTS WHO MOST OF THE TIME OR ALWAYS COULD TALK TO A FRIEND ABOUT FEELINGS DURING THEIR LIFE



Among public high school students in Colorado

# 53%

of students report their stress level is manageable most days

Among public high school students in Colorado

# 55%

could talk to a friend about feelings during their life

**NOTE:** THESE HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY RESULTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUTH WHO ATTEND PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN COLORADO  
**SOURCE:** HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY (HKCS), HIGH SCHOOL, 2021

**SUICIDALITY**



# Suicide was the **8th** leading cause of death in Colorado in 2020.

NATIONALLY, SUICIDE WAS NOT AMONG THE TOP 10 CAUSES OF DEATH IN THE SAME YEAR.

The suicide rate in Colorado was

**22.6**

per 100,000 for 2021.

Across all age groups

**78.0%**

of suicide fatalities were male.

**17.1%**

of youth seriously considered suicide in the past year – no change from 2017 or 2019.

**7.2 %**

of youth attempted suicide in the past year – no change from 2017 or 2019.

**NOTE:** THESE HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY RESULTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUTH WHO ATTEND PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN COLORADO

**SOURCES:** CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, 2020; COLORADO VITAL STATISTICS PROGRAM, 2021; HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY (HKCS), HIGH SCHOOL, 2021; OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION, 2021

Of gay and lesbian youth

**18.0%**

attempted suicide in the past year, compared to

**4.2%**

of heterosexual peers.



Of transgender youth

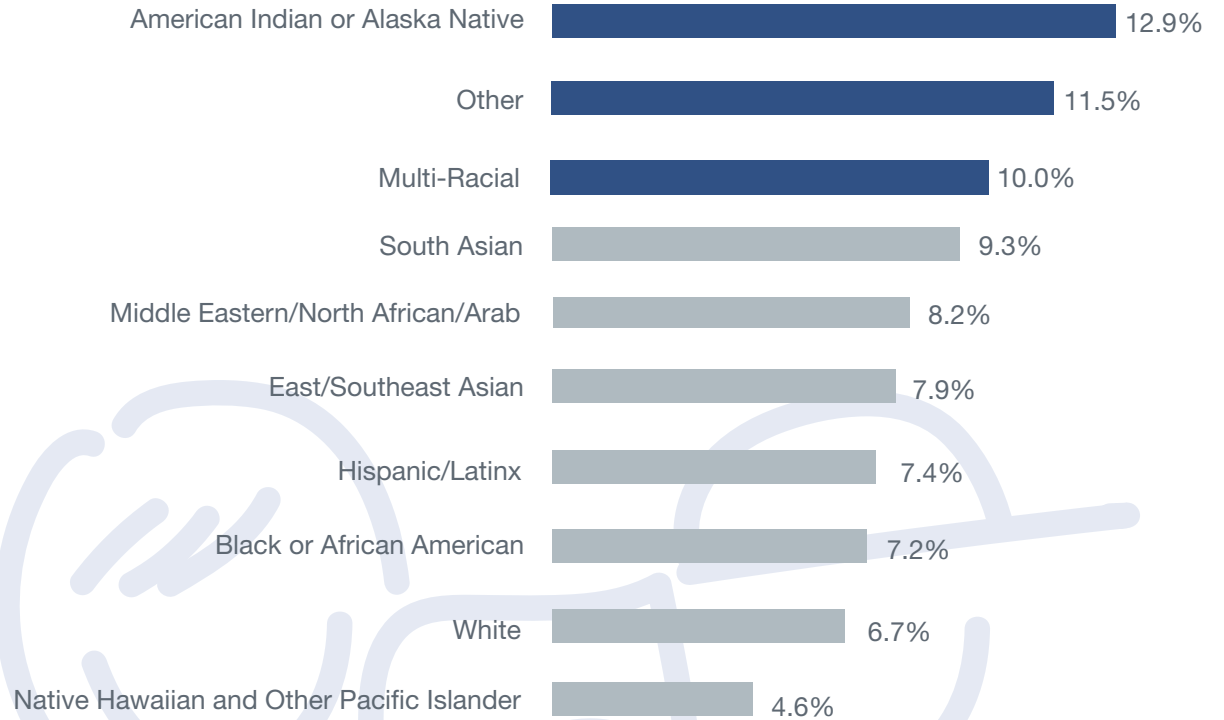
**26.1%**

attempted suicide in the past year, compared to

**6.6%**

of cisgender peers.

**Percent of Youth-Attempted Suicides by Race/Ethnicity**



**12.9%** of American Indian and Alaska Native youth reported they attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months, making them the highest among all racial and ethnic groups.

**NOTE:** THESE HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY RESULTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUTH WHO ATTEND PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN COLORADO

**SOURCE:** HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY (HKCS), HIGH SCHOOL, 2021



**We appreciate your feedback!**

[Click here](#) or scan above to take a one-minute survey.

**For more information**  
on the Colorado SEOW and additional  
publications, please visit our website:  
[www.coloradoseow.org](http://www.coloradoseow.org)