



# Student Mental Health in Montana



March 2026



# Overview

Since 2013 we have seen an increase in students experiencing mental health issues across the country. This trend is also seen in our Montana students. Although nationally we have seen a leveling out of students reporting feelings of sadness or hopelessness, Montana students continue to increase.

\*All data is from 2023 YRBS, still awaiting 2025 YRBS data from the federal government

The Percentage of High School Students Who: <sup>*</sup>	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	2021 Total	2023 Total	Trend (All Years Available)	2-Year Change (2021-2023)
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	30	30	31	37	42	40		
Experienced poor mental health <sup>†</sup>	–	–	–	–	29	29	–	
Seriously considered attempting suicide	17	18	17	19	22	20		
Made a suicide plan	14	15	14	16	18	16		
Attempted suicide	8	9	7	9	10	9		
Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse	3	3	2	3	3	2		

\*For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix A.  
<sup>†</sup>Question introduced in 2021.

In wrong direction

No change

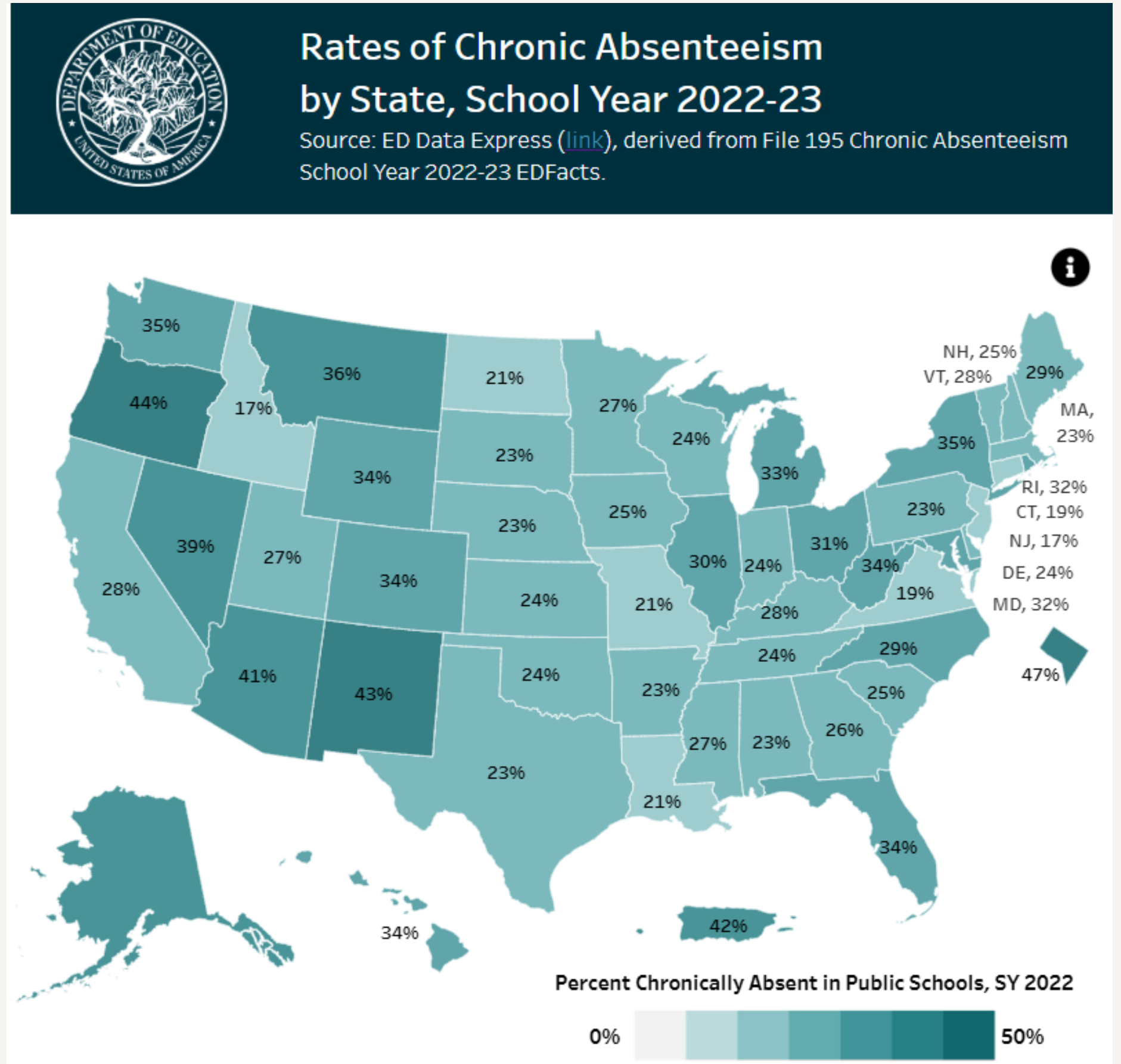
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# Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism — defined as students missing 10% or more of school — emerged as a serious challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. The national average is 28%.

\*U.S. Department of Education



# Current Mental Health Landscape in Montana

## Bullying

➤ 24.9% of students have reported being bullied on school property in the last year. Preliminary 2025 results show 23.1%.

➤ 19.4% of students reported being bullied electronically in the last year.

25. During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied on school property?	
A. Yes	24.9
B. No	75.1

26. During the past 12 months, have you ever been electronically bullied? (Count being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media.)	
A. Yes	19.4
B. No	80.6



# Suicide and Mental Health

- 43.3% of Montana students reported feeling sad or hopeless that they were able to do normal activities every day for two weeks or more. (Higher than national average). Preliminary 2025 results show 28.9%.
- 26.1% of Montana students seriously consider attempting suicide in the last year(2025-14.6%). With 21.4% making a plan for how they would attempt(2025-11.2%). 11.3% of students reported attempting suicide in the last year(2025-6.8%). All higher than national average.

28. During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for <b>two weeks or more</b> that you stopped doing some usual activities?	
A. Yes	43.3
B. No	56.7

29. During the past 12 months, did you ever <b>seriously</b> consider attempting suicide?	
A. Yes	26.1
B. No	73.9



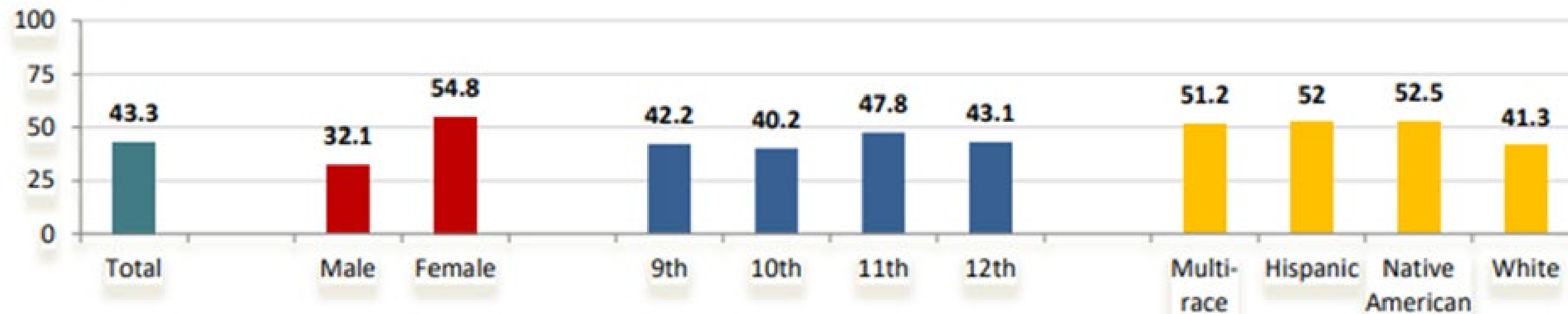
# Native American Populations and Mental Health

- Native American students have increased reports of being bullying on school property. With 27% of Native American students reporting (2025-19.6%).
- There is a higher amount of Native American students who feel sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more



### FELT SAD OR HOPELESS

During the past 12 months, 43.3 percent of students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some usual activities.





# School Response

## Percentage of schools that have written protocols for the following suicide prevention practices:

- Assessing student suicide risk- 92.2%
- Notifying parents when a student is at risk for suicide- 95.6%
- Referring students at risk for suicide to mental health services- 93.3%
- Responding to a suicide attempt at school- 86.6%
- Supporting students returning to school after a suicide attempt- 84.3%
- Responding to the death of a student or staff member from suicide- 86.8%

## School Mental Health Supports

- 76% of Montana schools have some form of universal mental health program.
- 72% of schools administer a confidential mental health screening to identify students in need of services.
- 70.6% of schools implement a school-wide trauma informed practice.

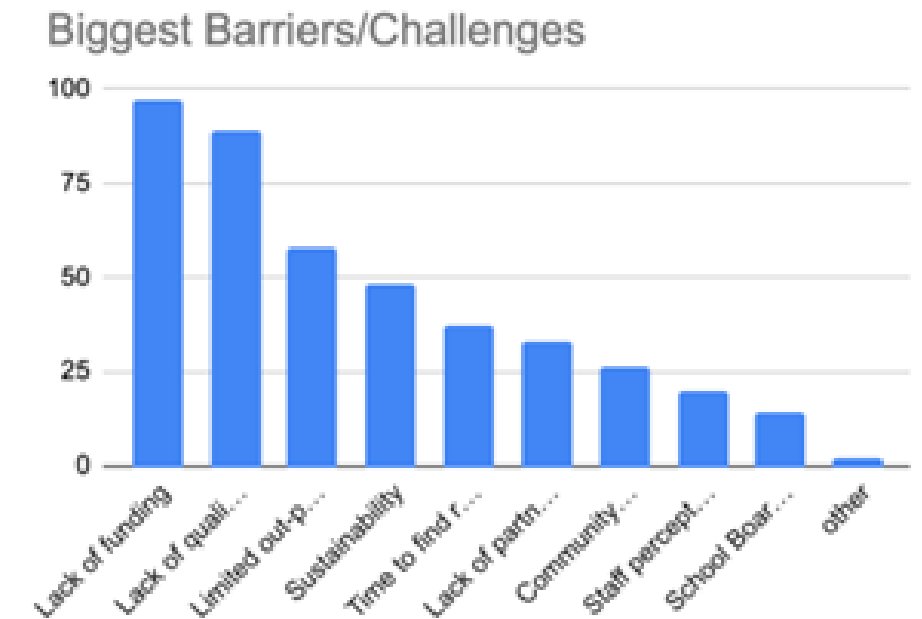
Percentage of schools that provide the following mental health programs or services to students:	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024	Linear Change
Universal mental health promotion programs (e.g., Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Social-Emotional Learning programs or supports)										84.5	76.0	↓
Confidential mental health screening to identify students in need of services (e.g., students at risk of mental health disorders, students experiencing trauma)										69.0	72.0	
School-wide trauma-informed practices (i.e., efforts to ensure that all students, including those affected by trauma, are experiencing social, emotional, and educational success)										85.7	70.6	↓

# Other Highlights

SAM administered a survey in 2024 to gather information about behavioral health programs in schools. 77.6% of respondents noted that lack of funding was a barrier to providing behavioral health supports in schools.

*12. What are the biggest barriers or challenges to providing behavioral health to your school?  
(Choose top 2 or 3)*

What are the biggest barriers or challenges to providing behavioral health to your school?	Number of participants citing barrier or challenge	Percent of participants citing barrier or challenge
Lack of funding	97	77.60%
Lack of qualified staff	89	71.20%
Limited out-patient options in our community	58	46.40%
Sustainability	48	38.40%
Time to find resources and/or time to develop a partnership	37	29.60%
Lack of partnership opportunities	33	26.40%
Community perceptions	26	20.80%
Staff perceptions	20	16.00%
School Board perceptions	14	11.20%
other	2	1.60%





# Questions?



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