Understanding youth gambling behavior using data from the Springfield Prevention Needs Assessment Survey

October 22, 2026

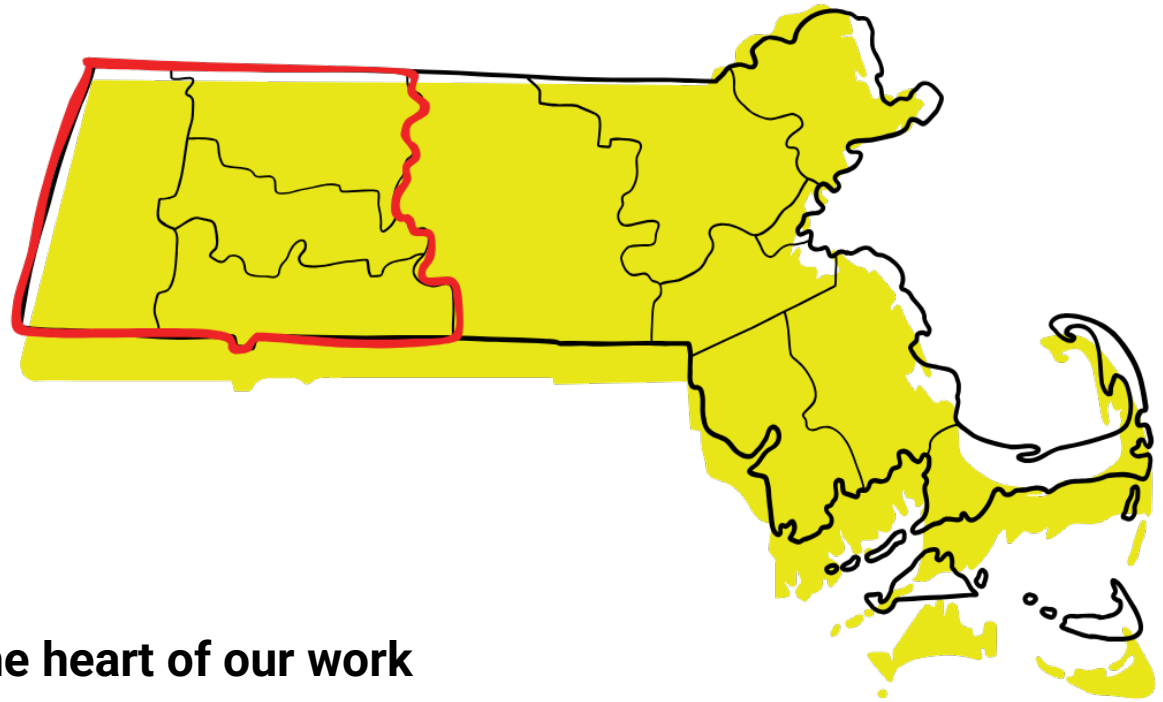
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PARTNERS FOR HEALTH EQUITY

About The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts supports communities in their efforts to become measurably healthier and more equitable through community engagement, convening collaborative partnerships, communications, data analysis, research and evaluation, and policy advocacy.

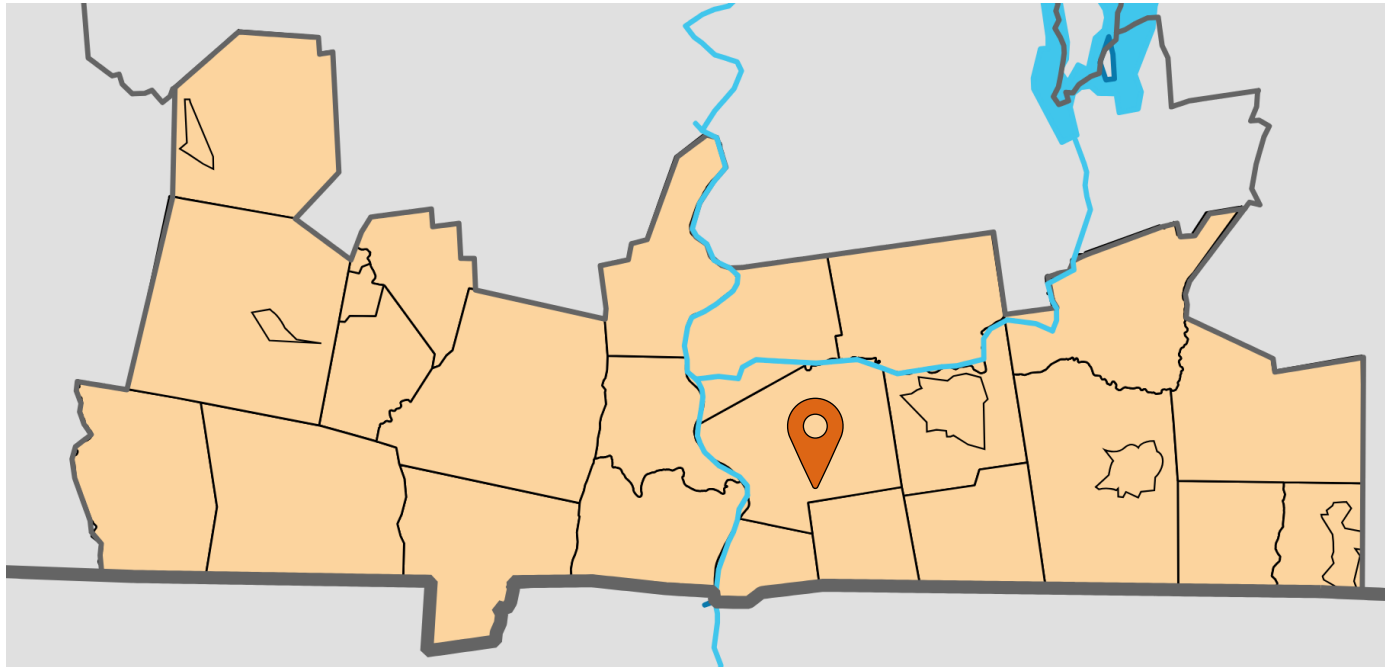
Research and assessment	Evaluation	Coalition building
Capacity building and training	Policy advocacy	Communications



Social Justice is at the heart of our work

What are the Youth Health Surveys?

- Since 2015, PHIWM has administered surveys to Springfield 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in collaboration with Springfield Public Schools and community organizations
- We modify national or state surveys to fit local needs
  - In 2025, we administered the Prevention Needs Assessment Survey (PNAS)
  - In 2026, we will administer the Youth Health Survey (YHS)



What are the Youth Health Surveys?

- **Goal:** Use data for action to support youth health in Springfield
- Partnership effort started in 2014

2024 Planning Team Partners:



Different funders have supported the initiative over time:

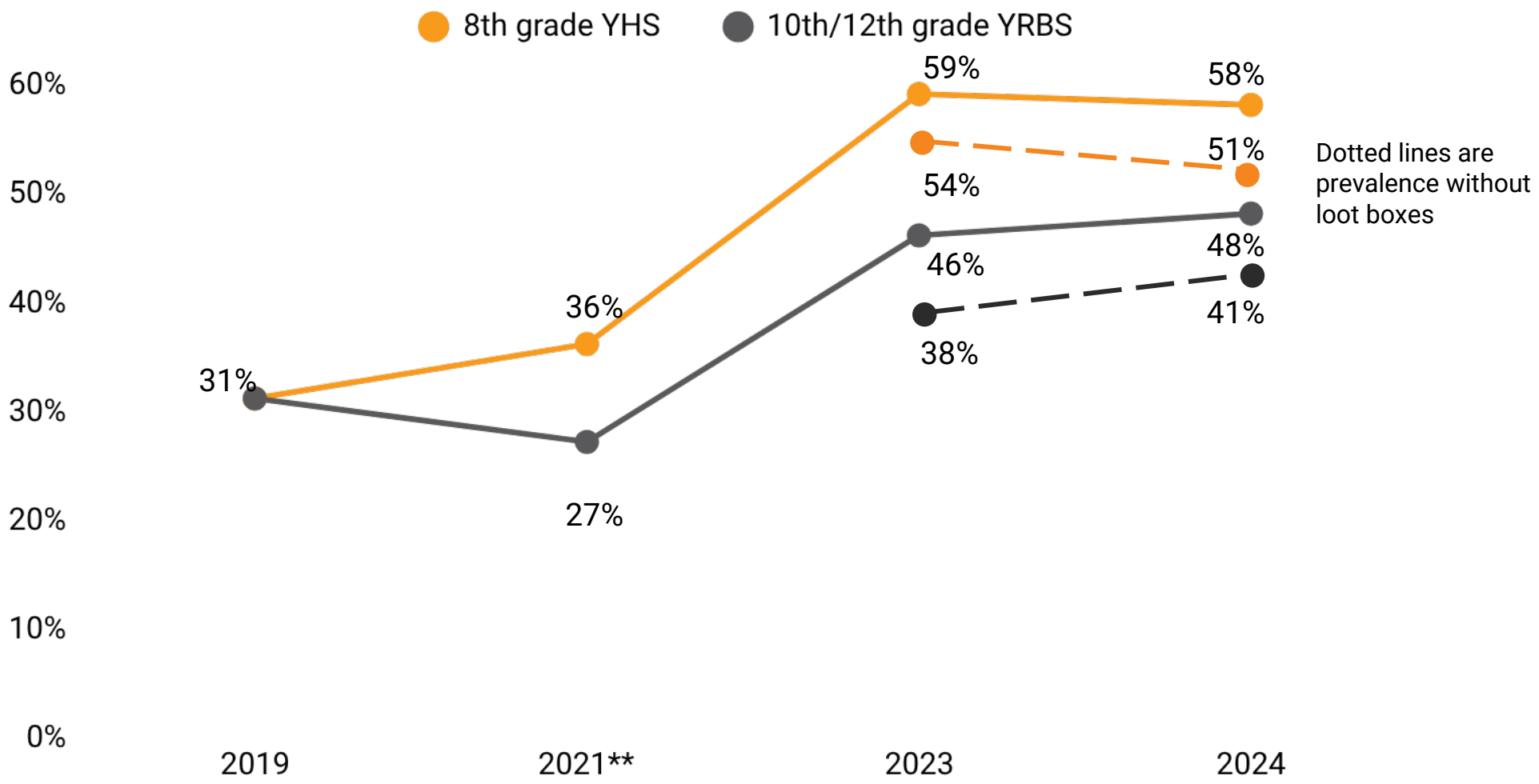
Understanding youth gambling behavior

- MGC initially funded surveys in 2019 after the opening of MGM in 2018
- Community concerns about the impact of a casino (WMCHIA)
- Interest in understanding the impact of a casino on youth gambling behavior
  - Starting gambling at a young age is a risk factor for problematic gambling later in life
  - Added gambling questions to understand the prevalence of gambling



Western MA Casino HIA, Public Health Institute of Western MA, (formerly Partners for a Healthier Community), 2014

Gambling prevalence* over time (2024 data)



* Not all gambling behaviors have been asked about each year. For example, more detailed sports betting questions were added in 2024, and loot boxes were asked about starting in 2023. Casino table games and slot machines were combined into one question in 2024.

** COVID-19 year; low response rates; interpret with caution

Other gambling prevalence data (2024)

- **Problematic gambling:** 11% of 8th grade respondents reported engaging in problematic gambling (based on series of three screening questions).

- **Sports gambling:** 28% of 8th grade respondents reported engaging in any types of sports gambling; it was the second most reported type of gambling after loot boxes.

Findings from the 2025 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey

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PNAS survey questions

- Questions were asked to complement prevalence questions in the Youth Health Survey/Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- We asked about:

Frequency of thinking about gambling

Location students have seen gambling ads*

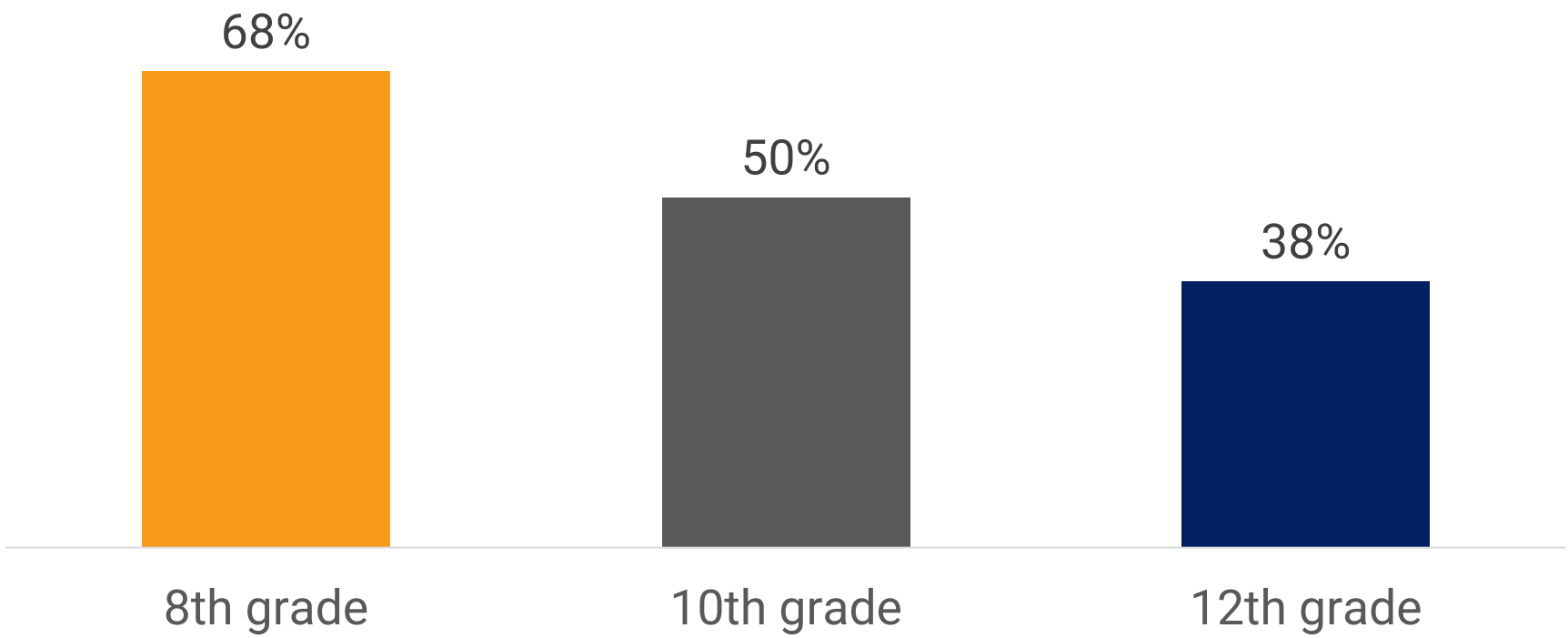
Whether students have used their parent/guardian's account to gamble

Whether a gambling ad has ever prompted students to spend money on gambling

* Includes: on TV, linked to sports events, on posters/signs/billboards, in video games, on social media, online, sponsorships on TV, and inside sports venues

Participation rates, 2025

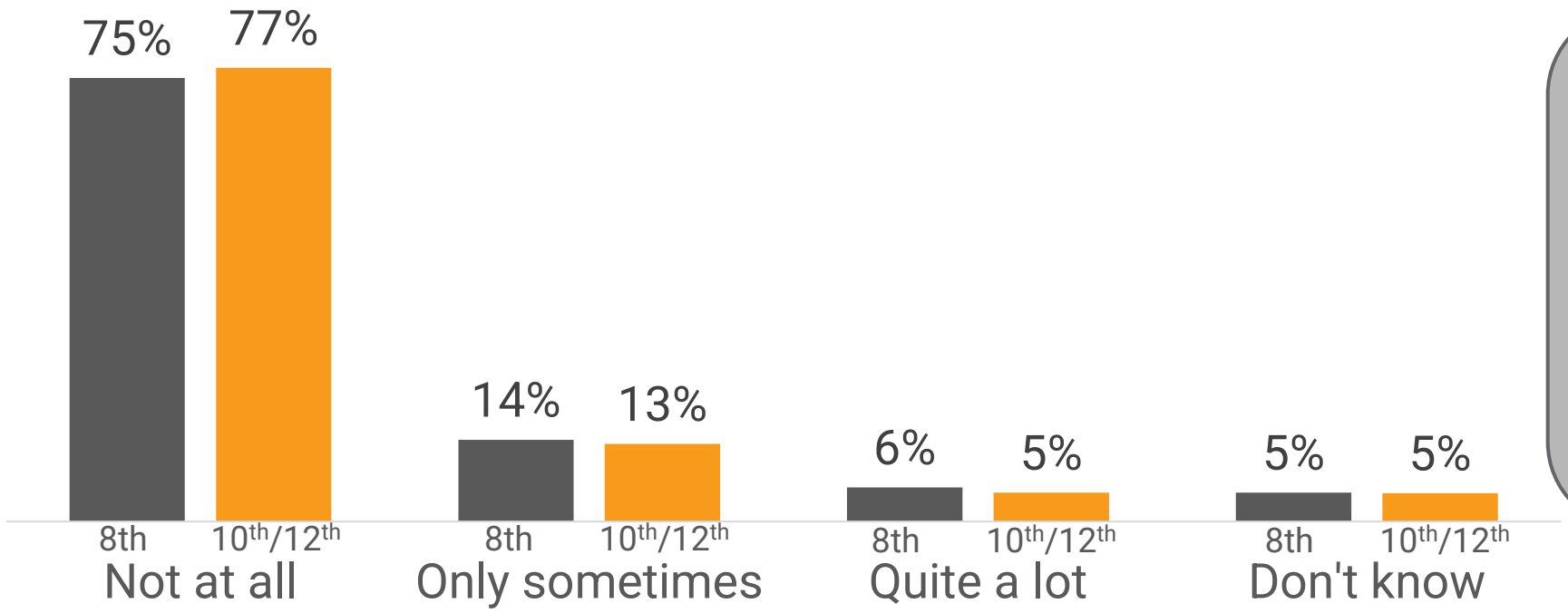
Percent of students in each grade that completed the survey out of all enrolled SPS students in each grade



In 2025, PHIWM began administering the Prevention Needs Assessment Survey.

Thinking about gambling or planning to gamble*

In the past 12 months, how often have you found yourself thinking about gambling or planning to gamble?

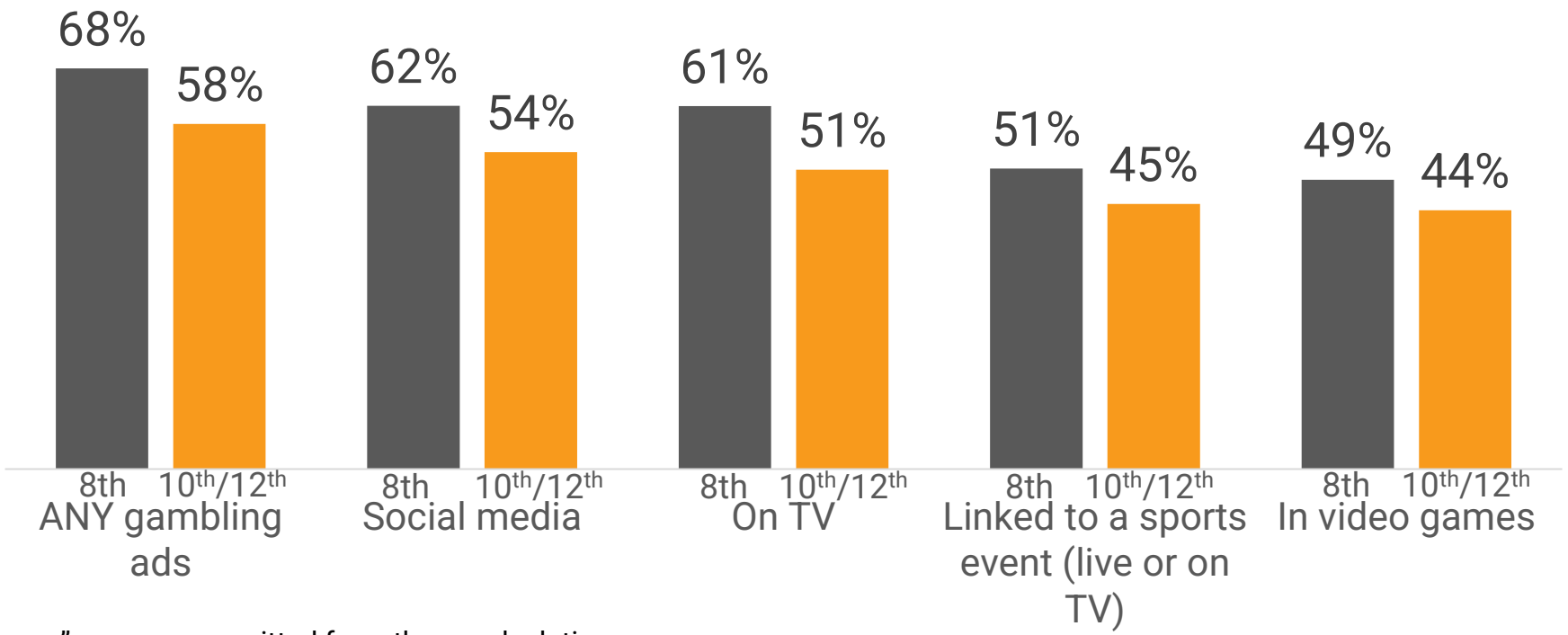


By and large, students did not report thinking about gambling or planning to gamble in the past year. Even still, roughly one quarter answered something other than "Not at all."

* This question is one of three on the NLCLiP, a problematic gambling screener. We use the full screener in alternate years:
Lepper J, Haden B. Testing NLCLiP: Validation of Estimates of Rates of Non-problematic and Problematic Gambling in a Sample of British Schoolchildren. *J Gambl Stud*. 2013;29(1):15-27. doi:10.1007/s10899-012-9294-0

Seeing gambling ads

During the past year (12 months), have you seen or heard gambling advertisements or gambling sponsorships in any of the following places? (Mark all that apply.)

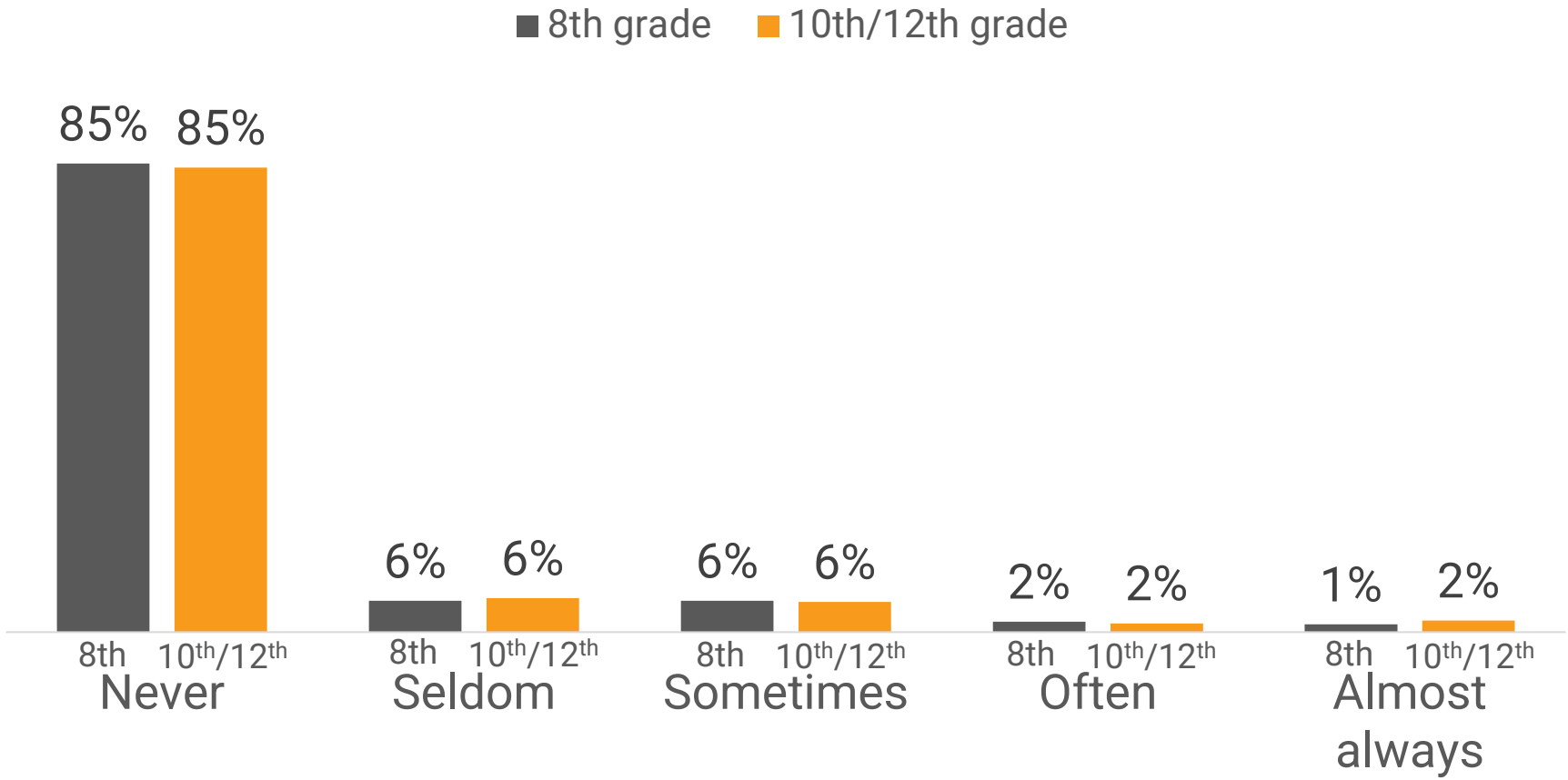


We found that gambling ads were pervasive, with more than six in ten students reporting that they saw gambling ads in the past year.

"Don't know" responses omitted from these calculations

Gambling ads prompting students to spend money

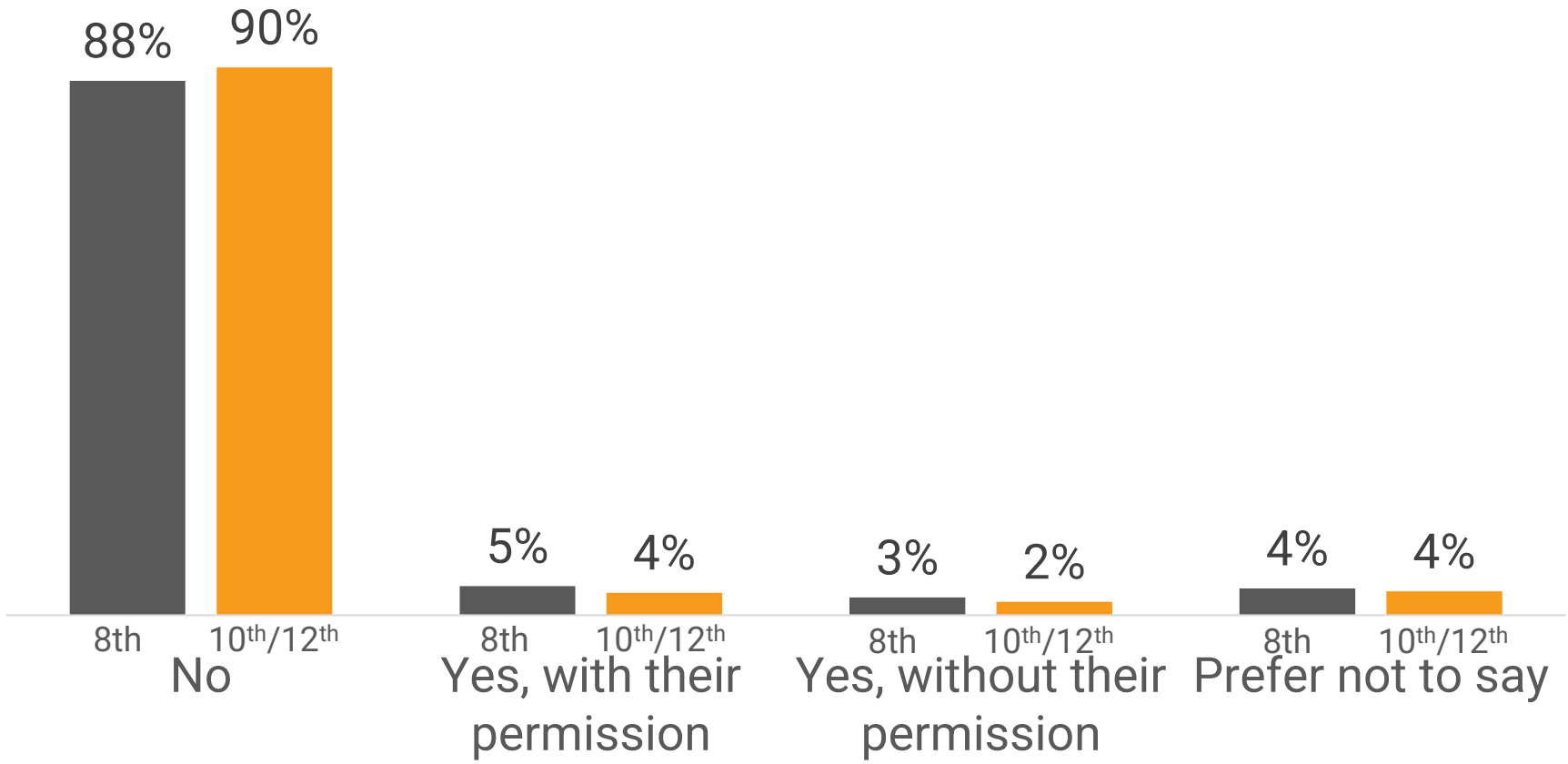
Has a gambling advertisement ever prompted you to spend money on gambling when you were not otherwise planning to?



In spite of the ubiquity of gambling ads, most students reported that gambling ads did **not** prompt them to spend money on gambling.

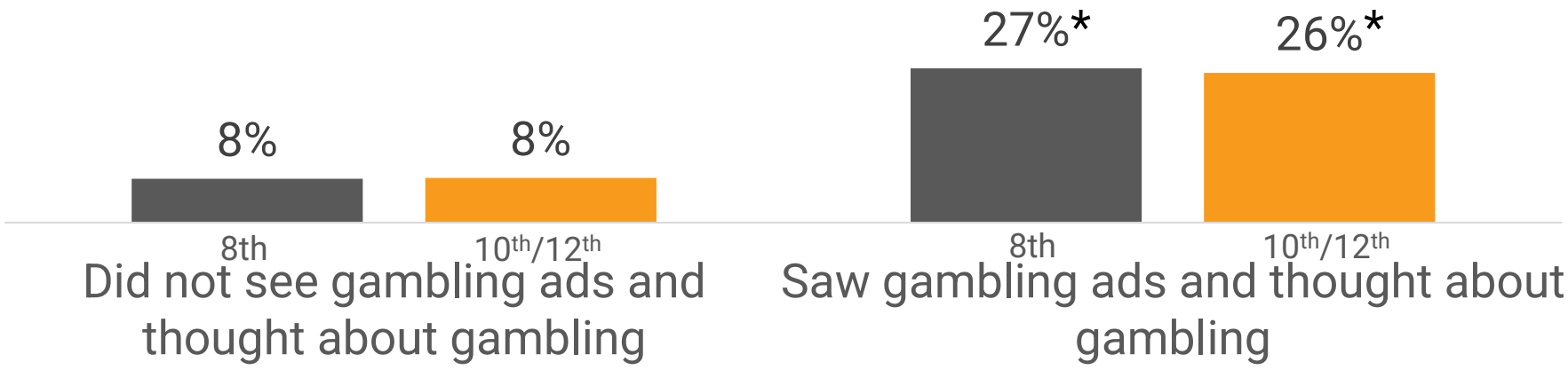
Using a parent or guardian's account to gamble

I have used my parents' and/or guardians' personal account to play on gambling websites, or to place bets online.



Most students reported not using a parent's account to gamble, but those who did reported doing so with and without permission at similar rates.

Percentage of students who thought about gambling or planned to gamble by whether they saw gambling ads



Across the board, students who said they had seen gambling ads were much more likely to report that they had thought about gambling or planned to gamble.

"Students who selected "Only sometimes" or "Quite a lot" when asked how often in the past 12 months they thought about gambling or planned to gamble are reflected in this graph.
* significant at p<0.05

Key takeaways from 2025 PNAS

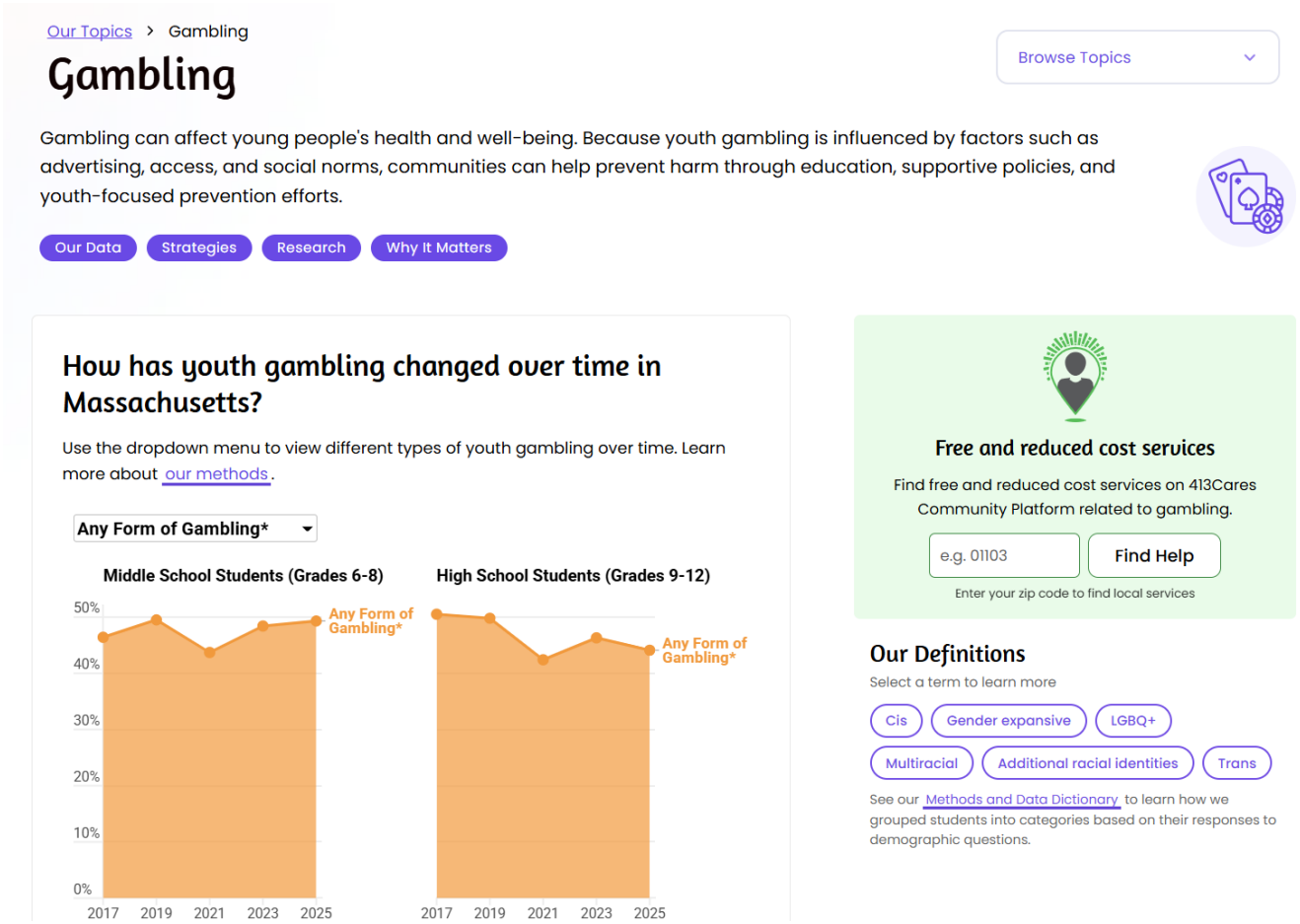
- **Gambling ads are everywhere.** And some youth are influenced by ads to spend money on gambling.

- **Young people are using their parents' accounts to gamble.** 8% of 8th graders reported that they had used a parent's account on an online site to gamble.

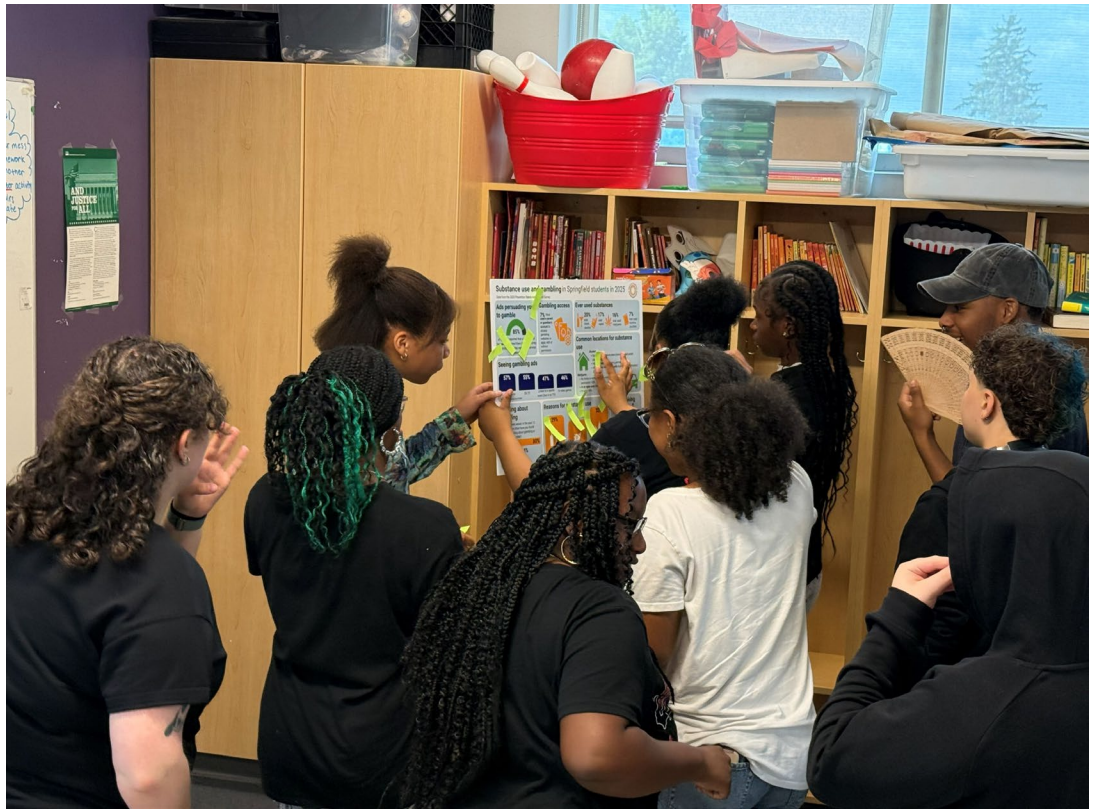
- **Youth exposure to ads and access to gambling platforms should be considered** in light of problem gambling and sports betting among 8th graders in 2024 data.

Engaging community with the data

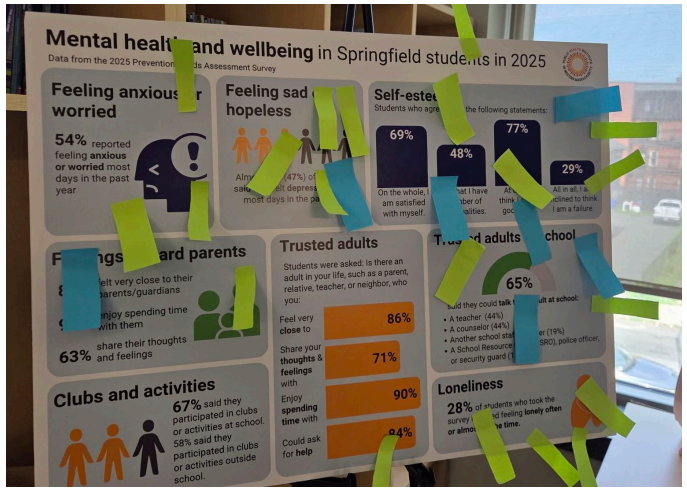
- We also share data on the Youth Health Data Hub, **launching this fall!**
- The Hub will include data from all four Western MA counties, disaggregated by different student experiences.
- Alongside the data will be resources and strategies to improve youth wellbeing!

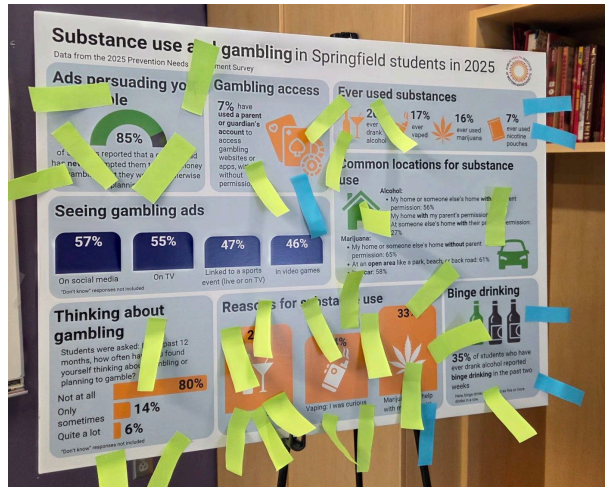


Engaging youth for action











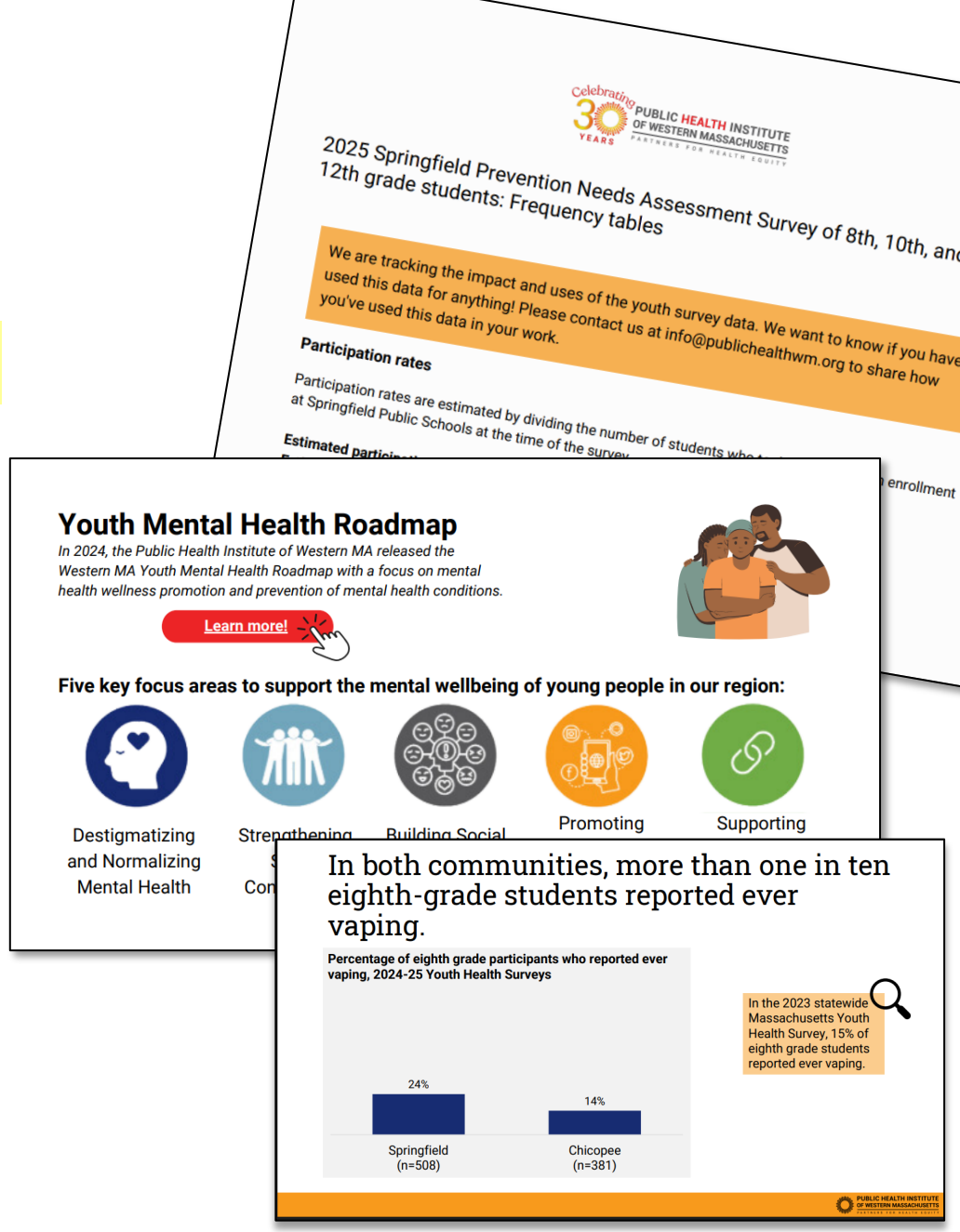
Photos from the Summer Leadership Academy in August 2026, hosted by the Springfield Youth Mental Health Coalition and Beat the Odds Youth Leaders in Problem Gambling Prevention

Next steps for the surveys

- We will administer YHS with gambling prevalence questions
  - in Holyoke, Ludlow, and Springfield in December 2026, with Chicopee likely to survey shortly thereafter
- We are adding a few new questions to the surveys for the 2026-27 school year, including:
  - In the past year (12 months), how often have you...
    - Played the Lottery online?
    - Bet on outcomes in a prediction market (e.g., Polymarket, Kalshi, PredictIt, Robinhood, Crypto.com)?
  - Have you ever used someone else's login information to:
    - Play the Lottery online?
    - Bet on sports online (e.g., FanDuel, DraftKings)?
    - Bet on outcomes in a prediction market (e.g., Polymarket, Kalshi, PredictIt, Robinhood, Crypto.com)?

Thank you!

- **Visit the PHIWM site at qrco.de/SYHS**
  Learn more about the Youth Health Survey Initiative
  - View our other data products
  - Read the Youth Mental Health Roadmap for Western Massachusetts
  - And more!
- **Sign up for the PHIWM newsletters at qrco.de/PHIWMnews**
  - Be the first to know about Youth Health Data Hub updates!



What questions do you have?