

2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Fact Sheet

What is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey?

Also referred to as the YRBS, this survey is designed for students in grades 6-12. The survey is conducted throughout the United States every two years.

The YRBS covers many different areas broadly related to health and wellness. The YRBS focuses on health-related behaviors that contribute to the leading cause of death, disability, and social problems during both adolescence and adulthood. These include many topics, such as: diet and physical activity; alcohol, tobacco and drug use; sexual activity; access to food and housing; bullying and school safety; anxiety, stress, and suicidality. In addition, the YRBS measures assets--such as a sense of belonging and healthy relationships--which have the power to protect youth from engaging in risk behaviors and help keep them safe, healthy, and successful.

Why is the survey being done?

The survey helps the state and local communities monitor trends in youth health and risk behaviors. Knowing which risk behaviors are on the rise--as well as which are not--helps schools and communities create smarter, more effective programs to help reduce these risk behaviors and promote health enhancing behaviors. In most cases, the YRBS is the only source of information for these important topics. In Wisconsin, results from the YRBS help many communities apply for grant money to fund more services for youth in areas such as drug and alcohol prevention, school safety, or mental health services.

What have YRBS data been used for?

YRBS data have been used to:

- 1) Describe student health behaviors, risks, and experiences.
- 2) Plan, monitor, and evaluate school health interventions.
- 3) Inform school policies and practices.
- 4) Support health-related policies, legislation, and laws.
- 5) Provide information and support for funding requests.
- 6) Inform teacher professional development.

Who supports this survey?

The survey is widely supported by national, state, and local education organizations, health care providers, parent groups, and youth organizations. In Wisconsin, the survey is voluntarily conducted by hundreds of schools all across the state because it helps answer some of our most important questions about what young people today are experiencing and feeling.

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When is the survey conducted and when are results available?

Data collection is scheduled to start in January 2023 and will end in June 2023. Reports summarizing the results will be published the following school year.

Are the surveys standardized?

All YRBS-administering schools must use either the standard high school survey (for grades 9-12) or the standard middle school survey (for grades 6-8). In addition, during the registration process schools may opt to add up to two optional modules: 1) Drug-Free Communities Core Measures; 2) Youth Tobacco Survey; 3) Adversity and Protective Factors; and 4) Safe and Supportive Schools. At the middle school level, four questions may be added related to the student's demographics.

What if my school has both middle school and high school grade levels?

Survey versions are determined by the grade level rather than the type of school. Students in grades 6-8 should take the middle school version, while students in grades 9-12 should take the high school version. Such schools can use one registration form to register for both versions of the standard survey.

Are schools required to participate?

Participation in the YRBS is voluntary, and many schools register to participate. However, for schools selected to participate in the national sample, participation rates must be high to develop accurate estimates of priority health risk behaviors among youth. Schools and students selected to participate in the national sample cannot be replaced, and the goal is to achieve 90 to 95 percent participation by selected schools and students.

My school just participated in the YRBS in Fall 2021, why are we being asked to do this again so soon?

The YRBS is administered in odd number years (2019, 2021, 2023). Typically, the survey is administered in the spring. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 survey was delayed, but spring administration is planned for 2023 and future years. Since the survey helps the state and local communities monitor trends in youth health and risk behaviors, participating in 2023 is more important than ever before. The data collected from 2021 was important but may not be the best data to measure long-term trends. 2023 data will set the baseline for trend data as well as help all of us better understand the effects the pandemic had on our youth.

Do students answer the question truthfully?

Generally, yes. Research from other sources confirms the trends students report through this survey. Research also indicates that data of this nature may be gathered as reliably from adolescents as from adults. To obtain truthful answers, students must perceive the

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survey as important and know that procedures have been developed to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation.

Are sensitive questions asked?

Yes. Some questions are sensitive. HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and injected drug use are behaviors that increase the risk of HIV infection. The only way to learn if youth are at risk of becoming infected with HIV or other STIs is to ask questions about these behaviors. Attempted suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, and weapon-carrying also may be considered sensitive topics. Questions are written in a direct but sensitive way.

Are students required to participate?

Students can opt out of the survey if they or their parents wish. In addition, students can skip any questions which make them feel uncomfortable.

Will students' names be used or linked to the surveys?

No. Survey administration procedures have been designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. Students will not put their names or other identifying information on the questionnaires and no one at the school sees any individual students' responses. Schools only get a summary report of their overall percentages.

Do students take the survey more than once to see how their behaviors change?

No. Each year a new sample of schools and students is picked. Students who take part one year cannot be tracked because their names are not on the survey.

How were specific students picked to be in the survey?

A class(es) within a school is selected to participate. All students in that class are then asked to participate.

How long does it take to fill out the survey? Does the survey include a physical test?

One class period is needed to fill out the survey. Most students finish the survey within 25-35 minutes. The survey does not include a physical test or exam.

Can I see the questions which will be asked?

Yes, the main survey is available on the [DPI website](#). In addition, schools may add up to two additional modules. The questions asked through the optional modules are also available on the [DPI website](#).

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What will be done with the results?

Results are combined and summarized to provide meaningful information while protecting students' privacy and anonymity. A report summarizing the results will be made available for the school to track its trends over time and make improvements to school health and wellness programs as needed. Results across several schools can be combined to produce county-level statistics, without identifying the schools. Such results are used to track health behaviors and risks in a county and help communities apply for funds in areas of greatest need. State-level results help policymakers assess how well Wisconsin is doing in the areas of youth wellness and to develop or enhance programming to meet today's needs.

How can I find YRBS Reports from previous years?

Please visit <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs> to view Wisconsin survey data. You may also want to visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm> to view the most recently published national results.

How do schools or districts access the reports?

Information regarding how to access reports can be found on the [Conducting a YRBS webpage](#) under the "School and District-level results" tab.

Whom can parents contact if they have questions about the survey?

Parents should contact their school's counselor or their child's teacher. If the counselor or teacher cannot immediately answer the questions, they can provide the appropriate contact information.

Whom can school staff and/or the YRBS School Contact reach out to if they have questions about the survey?

Contact Owen Tortora, the State of Wisconsin's YRBS Coordinator, by emailing owen.tortora@dpi.wi.gov or calling 608-264-6715.