



2019 Minnesota Student Survey Results Released

10.17.19 Today, Minnesota released the results of the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS), showing that fewer students feel engaged in school, believe their school provides a supportive place for learning, report good health, or feel safe.

The new data also shows more Minnesota students than ever report having long-term mental health, behavioral or emotional problems. This number is up from 18 percent of students surveyed in 2016 to 23 percent in 2019. Eleventh-grade female students who report having long-term mental health, behavioral or emotional problems has more than doubled from 2013 to 2019. In the 2019 survey, of the 11th-grade female students who reported missing a full or partial day of school in the last 30 days, 24 percent reported that they missed school because they felt very sad, hopeless, anxious, stressed or angry.

“Our students are talking to us and we must listen,” said Minnesota Education Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker. **“The results of the Minnesota Student Survey show a number of concerning pieces of data, including student vaping and declines in mental health. No matter what is happening in students’ lives outside of school, we must make sure that they feel supported, safe, and welcomed when they’re in the classroom so they can succeed academically. My fellow commissioners and I will be working with our school communities so we can better meet the needs of all of our students.”**

“Research tells us sleep, exercise, nutrition, mindfulness, a safe, nurturing environment, and caring adults can help youth thrive, avoid risky behaviors like vaping, and recover from toxic stress,” said Minnesota Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. **“We must focus on helping Minnesota’s kids in and outside of schools by strengthening the ability of families and communities to give our children the connections, supports, stable environments, and opportunities they need for a sense of well-being about their lives and futures.”**

“Girls deserve to grow up seeing the boundless possibilities that lie before them—that so many are instead buried in stress and anxiety is unacceptable,” said Minnesota Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. **“This survey shows that we need to continue to support efforts to bring mental health services to students at school, like the school-linked mental health program.”**

Notably, data show a strong correlation between students’ beliefs that others care about them and whether or not they have ever considered suicide. For example, ninth-graders who reported having long-term mental health problems are nearly five times as likely as others to seriously consider suicide. However, of those who reported that their teachers or other adults at school care very much about them, 35 percent reported they’ve considered suicide. In comparison, of those students who reported that their teachers do not care at all about them, 72 percent of them have considered suicide.

For the first time ever, the survey not only asked students if they have missed school in the last 30 days, but also asked for them to report on their reasons why they missed school. Of the students who report missing a full or partial day of school in the last 30 days, some notable findings show that black and Hispanic students are nearly three times as likely to miss school because they missed their ride or didn't have a way to get to school as their white peers. American Indian and Alaskan Native students were more likely than their peers to miss school because they felt very sad, hopeless, anxious, stressed, or angry.

Notable Data

Health

Sixty-five percent of Minnesota students surveyed reported excellent or very good health. This number down from 69 percent in the 2016 survey; however, teens are engaging in fewer risky behaviors. Student smoking rates have fallen to an all-time low. Alcohol use, sexual activity and marijuana use have also fallen. Students are also reporting higher rates of having long-term mental health, or emotional problems.

- *Vaping:* One in four Minnesota 11th-graders reported using an e-cigarette in the past 30 days. That one in four represents a 54 percent increase from the 2016 survey, in which 17 percent of 11th-graders reported vaping. The jump among eighth-graders is even more significant, with nearly twice as many students reporting using an e-cigarette in the past 30 days.
- *Mental Health:* Female students were nearly twice as likely as male students in all grades to report mental health, emotional or behavioral problems. The rates increased for all grades and genders, but the increase is more pronounced among female students. In 2013, 15 percent of ninth-grade females reported long-term mental health, emotional, or behavioral problems, compared to 30 percent in 2019.
- *Suicide Ideation:* Reports of suicide ideation increased for all grade levels in the last six years. In 2013, 20 percent of 11th-grade students reported seriously considering suicide at some point in their lives, compared to 24 percent of 11th-graders in 2019. Nearly one in ten students in 11th grade reported attempting suicide. The numbers become more troubling for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (LGBQ+) and transgender students. LGBQ+ students are about three times more likely as heterosexual students to report seriously considering suicide, and four times as likely to attempt suicide as heterosexual students. Transgender students in the 11th grade are most likely to attempt suicide, and are more than four times more likely to attempt suicide than their cisgender 11th-grade peers.

Safe

Eighty-seven percent of students say they feel safe at home, at school, in their neighborhood and going to and from school. This number is down from 90 percent in 2016. Of the 2019 survey respondents, 19 percent of students surveyed reported being bullied or harassed weekly in at least one way during the last 30 days. Economically disadvantaged students and LGBTQ+ students report higher rates of bullying.

- *Bullying:* Bullying and harassment increased for fifth-grade students, from 17 percent reporting weekly bullying in 2013 to 21 percent in 2019. After a decrease from 2013 to 2016 for students in grades eight and nine, the rates increased again in 2019. Eleventh-

grade students showed a slight decrease since 2013. Cyberbullying rates have remained largely the same between 2016 and 2019.

Engaged

Seventy-three percent of students feel highly engaged in school, compared to the 2016 survey results where 78 percent of students felt highly engaged in school.

- *Out-of-School Activities:* In 2019, 60 percent of students reported that they were engaged in out-of-school activities at least three days a week, which is down from 65 percent in 2016.

Supported

Seventy-one percent of students believe their school provides a supportive place for learning. This number is down from the 2016 survey results, where 75 percent of students believed their school provided a supportive place for learning.

- *Caring Relationships:* There was a slight drop in students reporting that they have caring relationships in at least three of the five groups (parents; other adult relatives; friends; teachers or other adults at school; other adults in the community), from 76 percent in 2016 to 74 percent in this year's survey results.

Walz Administration Approach

As a parent, teacher, and coach, Governor Walz recognizes that the mental health needs for students and its effect on education outcomes is a top priority. The Walz Administration is bringing together government leaders, local and tribal governments, and community and business voices to put children at the center of government to make Minnesota the best place to raise a family—for everyone. That's why the [Governor's Children's Cabinet](#) has built a cross-agency action team—comprised of eight agencies, including health, education, human services and corrections—focused on state strategies to improve the mental health and well-being of students in Minnesota. The Governor's Children's Cabinet is launching an interagency effort to focus on children's mental health and well-being. In 2019, Governor Walz and legislators increased funding for school-linked mental health grants by \$1.2 million. More Minnesota children and youth will have access to school-linked mental health services, which will improve access to treatment, engagement in treatment, and care coordination. School-linked services are often the first to identify children with serious mental health needs, and provide many students of color their first access to mental health services.

Data Available

The MSS data is available on the [Minnesota Department of Education's Data Center](#). Summaries of elements of the survey are also available on the [Minnesota Department of Health Minnesota Student Survey](#) webpage.

About the Minnesota Student Survey

Every three years, Minnesota's fifth-, eighth-, ninth- and 11th-grade students complete this voluntary, anonymous survey. It includes questions on school climate, bullying, out-of-school activities, healthy eating, emotional health, substance use, connections with school and family, and many other topics. State agencies use the survey to identify important trends and target effort and resources to more efficiently improve the well-being of the state's youth. More than 170,000 students participated in the 2019 survey.

The Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Public Safety collaborate with schools to administer the MSS. The MSS is the primary source of comprehensive data on youth at the state, county and local level in Minnesota. This data is the only consistent source of statewide data on the health and well-being of youth from smaller population groups, such as racial or ethnic groups.

All school districts are invited to participate in the survey. In 2019, 81 percent of Minnesota's school districts participated. Schools administered the surveys from January through May 2019.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

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