

DIGGING INTO YOUR DATA

with THE MINNESOTA STUDENT SURVEY

Spring 2020



Minnesota Student Survey

The Minnesota Students Survey is a confidential and anonymous survey that is administered every three years to public school students in Minnesota. The survey is the result of collaboration between the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Public Safety. From 1995 to 2010, 6th, 9th, and 12th graders took the survey. Since 2013, it's included 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders. In 2019, over 170,000 students from 81% of Minnesota's public school districts took the survey.

...2019 MSS CHANGES

ADDITIONS

- New adverse childhood experience: **living with a person with depression** or mental health issues
- New adverse childhood experience question: specifies whether student **lived with incarcerated parent** at the time of incarceration
- Questions about **access for alcohol** were reintroduced, and **access for e-cigarettes** were added
- A 2-part question about **anxiety** added
- Questions about **dental care** expanded to include specific problems and whether they were treated
- **Diabetes** and pre-diabetes added as specific diagnoses
- Reasons for **missing school** added
- Having been in **foster care** added
- Having ever **traded sex** for money, food, drugs, or a place to stay (9th and 11th graders only) added
- Past-year **synthetic marijuana use** added
- Risk of harm, perception of friend and parent disapproval, and perception of peer use now all include **vaping/e-cigarette use**

CHANGES

- The definition of **binge drinking for girls** changed from 5 or more drinks to 4 or more drinks in a sitting (which means 2019 data can't be used for trends!)
- **Being able to talk about problems** with Mom or Dad changed to being able to talk to parents, with the addition of being able to talk to other adults, or having no adults to talk to about problems
- **Perception of harm and disapproval** was removed for 5th graders
- **Options for race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity** expanded
- **Pregnancy and number of sexual partners** questions removed



Where to find your data

1. The Minnesota Department of Education website has links to static reports and interactive PDF tables.

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/mss/>

- Data can be searched by district or county; year, question category; grade; and demographic category
- Responses from all question categories can be found
- All response options are available
- Data separated by gender and grade
- Timeframe is limited

2. The MDE website also has a link to an **online data request form** to request files for individual school districts and counties that can be analyzed with statistical software (SPSS). This method allows a community to have all their data, analyzed in almost any format. Requesters who want data from individual school districts must have superintendent permission. <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5250891/MSS-Data-Request-Form-2019>

3. The **Center for Health Statistics** at MDH has PDFs of static tables that include all questions and response options, at the county, region, and state levels, and by racial and ethnic group. Past 3 surveys only. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/mss/index.html>

4. The **Substance Use in Minnesota** website, run in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division, has interactive tables and static reports by county, demographic group, and topic. <https://sumn.org>

- Data can be searched by county and region; year; substance; gender; grade; and demographic category
- SUMN only includes questions related to substance use, risk and protective factors, mental health, gambling, and adverse childhood experiences
- Data by gender and grade can be combined or separated
- Trend and other data are available to 1995



Data Considerations

Some limitations of small populations and sample sizes

- Restrictions to protect anonymity of students:
Identified by grade only: 20 students;
Identified by grade and gender: 25 students
- Small populations mean that very few students can change data by a lot: in a population of 20 students, just one student reporting past-month prescription drug misuse will put the percentage at 5%, which is already over the state average
- Rate ratios can be skewed, and over- or under-represent the importance of associations between factors

Combine genders, grades, and/or demographic groups, if necessary

Be aware of the magnitude or number of the population, not just the percentage of students reporting

Use regional or state-level data for more reliable relationships between risk or protective factors and substance use. Try not to make relationships between indicators too complicated: don't "stretch" the data

Again, use regional or state-level data to identify associations for at-risk (but small) populations in your community

Identifying at-risk populations

- By demographic group
 - Only available at some levels; may be excluded in your SPSS file
- By risk factors—use the *Power of Protective Factors* report or worksheet
 - Use risk ratios
 - Analyze by risk group: Students with depression, or with a high number of ACEs

In General

- Be careful not to overestimate the importance of small changes in trend data
- Be careful about comparing apples to oranges (or Granny Smith to Pink Lady) with trend data (like ACEs or binge drinking)
- Become familiar with the survey questions asked, and what they say, vs. what they mean

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