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2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Summary Report now available

Report shows Wisconsin students face significant mental health challenges, additional support needed

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction today announced that the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Summary Report [is now available on its website](#). Data outlined in the report, which provides a window into the mental and physical health and emotional well-being of Wisconsin's youth, includes high school, middle school, district, and county reports.

In the survey, Wisconsin students generally reported experiencing significant mental health challenges while having fewer supports at school and at home. Consistent with [previously released data](#) on mental health and wellbeing that the DPI [released in December 2022](#), students of color, students with disabilities, students facing food insecurity, students who had moved many times, students with low grades, LGBTQ+ students, and female students reported fewer supports and more challenges. The report includes data on mental and physical health, suicide, online behavior, sexual and dating violence, drug and alcohol use, nutrition, and protective factors, among other topics.

Due to a sample of the student respondents being provided the opportunity to offer open-ended feedback, the report begins with illustrative quotations by students, including one student stating, “We need help, we want help, we just don’t know how to ask for it.”

“When I talk to parents, caregivers, and educators across the state, youth mental health is a primary concern, but it means something different when we hear it directly from the kids,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “This data lays bare the youth mental health crisis in our state, and they do not have enough access to support at school. That is difficult to hear, but it is important information because we can do something about it – our legislative leaders can take action and budget significant funding for mental health supports in our schools. And every single one of us can take action ourselves and check in with the young people in our own lives. Reach out – it really can make a difference.”

(more)

The report summarizes the 2021 YRBS, which was administered to Wisconsin public school students on a voluntary basis in fall 2021 in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information on the YRBS, [visit the Wisconsin DPI's Student Services/Prevention and Wellness webpage](#).

About YRBS

The DPI has administered the YRBS to Wisconsin public high school students every two years starting in 1993. Survey procedures were designed to protect the privacy of students by allowing anonymous and voluntary participation. Local parent permission procedures were followed before administration, including informing parents that their child's participation was voluntary. A scientific sample of students at 771 Wisconsin middle and high schools completed a self-administered, anonymous, 90-item questionnaire in fall 2021. The 2023 YRBS is currently being administered to students, and will conclude on June 30, 2023. More information can be found [on the DPI's Conducting a YRBS webpage](#).

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