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## New data shows Wisconsin youth continue navigating mental health crisis

*DPI releases 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Summary Report*

MADISON – The Department of Public Instruction released data today showing Wisconsin students continue dealing with unprecedented mental health challenges.

“Our schools have a critical role in addressing the mental health needs of Wisconsin’s children,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “It is imperative that we implement inclusive policies in our schools instead of isolating students in need. We must invest in additional mental health services in our schools and prioritize the mental well-being of our kids alongside academic achievement.”

[The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Summary Report](#) provides a window into the mental and physical health and the emotional well-being of Wisconsin’s youth. Among key findings, students generally reported experiencing significant mental health challenges while having fewer supports at school and at home. According to the survey, 59 percent of high school students said they have experienced at least one mental health challenge over the past 12 months. Students also reported an increase in social media and overall screen usage, with additional decreases in the amount of sleep they get each night. Additional information and resources on the [YRBS can be found on the DPI's website](#).

“The statistics in the YRBS aren’t just numbers – each data point represents the very real needs of Wisconsin children who are telling us they need our support,” Dr. Underly said.

The 2023 YRBS included specific questions related to depression, anxiety, and non-suicidal self-harm. More than half of students reported experiencing anxiety (51.6 percent), one in three students (35 percent) reported experiencing depression almost every day for two weeks in a row or more, and one in five students (20.9 percent) reported non-suicidal self-harm.

LGBTQ+ and female students also reported a disproportionate number of mental health challenges compared to peers. Seventy-nine percent of LGB students surveyed reported experiencing anxiety,

(more)

63 percent reported experiencing depression, and 40 percent reported considering suicide. Female survey respondents were twice as likely (28.3 percent) to harm themselves compared to male students (13.7 percent), with 66.8 percent of female students also reporting experiencing anxiety and 45 percent reporting experiencing depression.

The YRBS offered students the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback on the topics covered in the survey. One student wrote, “I have people I can talk to if I’m feeling anxious, but I don’t want to bother them in case they’re busy. I usually talk to myself and work it out on my own.” Only one out of five students (21.2 percent) on the YRBS indicated they receive the help they needed “most of the time or “always,” a continuous decrease since 2017.

“We need to do better as Wisconsinites of being supportive adults to our kids,” Dr. Underly said. “We need to listen to them about their thoughts, their feelings, their concerns, and let them know they can trust you and that they and their mental health are a priority. It’s not just that we can do better. It’s that we must do better. And we have the knowledge and resources do just that.”

One of many proven strategies to support Wisconsin students [is being supportive adults](#). The DPI also encourages youth who may be struggling to contact the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, supported and funded](#) through the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

Data from the YRBS on social media and health risk behaviors indicate Wisconsin students continue to report less sleep and worsened overall physical health. About one in five students (19.5%) reported five or fewer hours of sleep a night, and 78.9 percent of survey respondents said they use screens three or more hours a day.

### **About the YRBS**

The YRBS 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. The 2023 state sample for the YRBS includes responses from 1,882 Wisconsin students in 42 public, charter and alternative high schools. The survey was administered in spring 2023.

The DPI has administered the YRBS to Wisconsin public high school students every two years since 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. More information can be found [on the DPI’s Conducting a YRBS webpage](#).

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**NOTE:** Sexuality, sex, and gender data are collected separately on the YRBS. As a result, LGB is used instead of LGBT or similar acronyms to most accurately reflect how student data was collected. This news release [is available online on the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s website](#).