2023 Healthy Youth Survey Interpretive Guide

Making the Most of Survey Data:

A Guide for Exploring and Interpreting the Results of the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (2023)

Sponsoring Washington State Agencies:

Department of Health

Health Care Authority

Liquor and Cannabis Board

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Updated by:

Looking Glass Analytics, Inc.

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Report Contents

Introduction

The Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), a biennial survey of youth in Washington state, invites students to share about their wellbeing, behaviors, attitudes, community and school experiences, and more. The HYS focuses on a broad range of topics, including mental health, substance use, physical movement, social engagement and support, families, and school experience. The survey also includes questions about risk and protective factors, which are attitudes and opinions that research has shown are linked to health outcomes.

The 2023 survey was the 18th statewide survey of Washington students to better understand the nature and extent of adolescent health behaviors in Washington (beginning in 1988). The current statewide survey, known as the Healthy Youth Survey, began in 2002. The 2023 Healthy Youth Survey was sponsored by the Department of Health (DOH); the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); the Health Care Authority - Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR); and the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB). Representatives from each of these agencies worked together to develop, plan, and implement the survey. The survey was administered under contract with Looking Glass Analytics, Inc. This biennial survey is administered to 6th-12th grade students across the state. Participation has been steadily increasing over time, with a drop in 2021 due to the COVID pandemic. In 2023, over 210,000 students from all 39 counties participated in the survey.

The results of the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey meet a wide variety of state and local needs for:

- Empirical needs assessment data necessary for planning prevention and early intervention programs.
- Information on trends in student substance use and misuse as well as associated risk and protective factors.
- Information on the progress of drug education programs funded under the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act and the state Omnibus Alcohol and Controlled Substances Act.
- Information on the progress of the state's attainment of the national public health objectives contained in Healthy People 2030 and the progress of state-funded programs.
- Data on risk and protective factors that can be used by state agency staff, local schools, and community members as they plan or refine school- and community-based prevention and intervention programs.

How Can the Data be Used?

Schools and Community Partners can use the data from the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey to:

- Learn the prevalence of health-related behaviors among students.
- Understand the school climate.
- Contribute to the School Improvement Planning process.
- Assist with creating Principles of Effectiveness plans.
- Help inform other needs assessments and strategic plans.
- Help justify new school programs or projects.
- Assist with evaluating or improving existing school programs or projects.
- Provide information for grant applications.

There is mounting evidence supporting the concept that reducing students' health-risk behaviors can have a positive impact on their academic performance. The 2023 Healthy Youth Survey measures a number of health-related issues such as substance use, food access, housing stability, lack of physical activity, asthma, depression, violence, and safety. Any of these issues can distract students from school. Survey results may help identify areas where students need help so that they can be successful at school. However, the usefulness of the data depends on several factors, described below.

Participation in the Survey

Public schools in Washington State with students in Grades 6, 8, 10, or 12 were invited to participate in the survey. Individual student participation was anonymous and voluntary; participating schools provided alternative activities for students who chose not to participate or whose parents opted them out of participating. The statewide results presented in the frequency reports are based on a sample chosen to be representative of students statewide. A detailed description of the sampling plan and other sampling issues will be included in the Healthy Youth Survey 2023 Analytic Report (available July 2024 at https://www.askhys.net/SurveyResults/OtherStateReports).

About the Interpretive Guide

Each school, district, county, and Educational Service District (ESD) with sufficient student participation in the Healthy Youth Survey 2023 received survey results. These results, which are highly specific to the

local area, can be of enormous value in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs to address adolescent behavior. To assist data users, this Interpretive Guide has been made to aid in reading frequency reports and interpreting results. This guide provides information that will help those involved in local program planning make the most of local survey results. Readers are encouraged to use the interpretive guide and survey results jointly, r often thinking about how the results can help inform decisions regarding local program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Statistical Issues

Validity and Reliability

A survey question is *valid* if it accurately measures the concept it is intended to measure. A survey question is *reliable* if it consistently produces the same results under the same circumstances. We attempted to maximize the validity and reliability of the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey by using questions from established surveys, ensuring standardized administration procedures, and conducting quality control processes to identify and remove unlikely or impossible results.

Many of the questions included on the Healthy Youth Survey originated from 4 established surveys that have been used throughout the United States, some for more than 25 years:

- Monitoring the Future survey sponsored by National Institute on Drug Abuse (2023)
- The University of Washington Social Development Research Group's Risk and Protective Factor Assessment instrument (Arthur, Hawkins, Catalano, & Pollard, 1998)
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2023)
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Tobacco Survey (2022)

Each of these surveys has been subjected to scientific research regarding reliability and validity and has been field tested extensively. Most of the questions on the 2023 edition appeared on previous versions of the statewide survey, although some were added or modified for the current survey administration. New survey questions were tested with youth focus groups.

The validity of self-report student surveys often comes under question, especially when reported rates of behavior seem higher or lower than might be expected. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Research indicates that data of this nature may be gathered as credibly from adolescents as from adults." Internal reliability checks help identify the small percentage of students who falsify their answers. To obtain truthful answers, students must perceive the survey as important and know procedures have been developed to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). The HYS includes language at the start to help students understand that their voices matter and how the survey will be used.

How do I know my school, district, ESD, or county data are valid?

Healthy Youth Survey questions come from standardized instruments that have been used over multiple years and tested for validity. New survey questions are field tested with youth to make sure they understand the questions correctly. Research shows that surveys like the Healthy Youth Survey can give valid results if youth are given a safe and confidential environment to take the survey. To determine if local school results are valid, consider how the survey was administered and who took the survey. The three important things schools should consider are:

- Were the administration procedures followed so that students felt safe that their answers were confidential?
- Was the survey administered during a time when certain groups of students were missing? (i.e., were honor students attending a college fair, or was the football team dismissed early for an away game?)
- Did most of the students in the surveyed grades take the survey—at least 70%?

These same questions apply for district, ESD, and county reports, though may not be answerable without working discussing with schools.

Several steps were taken in the administration of the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey to ensure validity of the student answers:

- The survey was administered during structured classroom time and in a 'test-like' environment to ensure the quality of the data and to help protect student privacy.
- Students were informed of the importance of the survey by adults administering the survey through verbal instructions and an instructional video.
- Students were informed that the survey is anonymous, and they can skip any questions they don't want to answer. Nowhere on the survey were students asked for their name, nor were there any codes to identify an individual student or any other identifying information.
- Alternative and online educational schools were allowed to administer the survey remotely to accommodate remote learning students if they could give the survey in a proctored classroom-like environment.
- Two questions were used to screen student from participating if they were not in an environment where they could answer privately and honestly.

If administration procedures were not followed, if groups of students were missing, or if there was low participation (below 70%), then survey results might not represent the students in the school, district, ESD, or county and should use caution when interpreting the results.

If administration procedures were followed, groups of students were not missing, and participation rate was higher than 70%, then one should feel confident that results are representative. During data processing and analysis, further steps were taken to ensure the validity of the data. Student responses were carefully screened for evidence that students may have been dishonest or not taken the survey according to the administration guidelines by removing surveys that have certain combinations of concerning features. Among these are:

- Having multiple inconsistent answers (e.g., if a student reports never drinking alcohol in their life and reports drinking alcohol in the past 30 days and provides other responses that similarly inconsistent with each other).
- Showing evidence of faking a high level of substance use (e.g., reporting the use of all substances every day).
- Improbable response patterns (e.g., selecting every single response option on multiple "check all that apply" questions).
- Dishonesty (if a student responds negatively to the item about honesty).
- Submitting the survey outside of school hours/the administration window.
- Incomplete/duplicate responses.

What are Confidence Intervals and How to Use Them to Identify Differences

Responses to the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey are displayed as a percentage of the students who gave an answer and a *margin of error* for the percentage (e.g., 83% plus or minus 5%), which can be used to form a *confidence interval*. Briefly, use of a confidence interval acknowledges that the percentage is an estimate and can be reasonably certain that the true percentage falls within the range defined by the confidence interval.

Confidence intervals give an estimate of how precise the results are. Specifically, the 95% confidence interval gives the range that contains the true value 95 percent of the time. Thus, for a result of 83%

plus or minus 5%, 95 percent of the time the true percentage falls somewhere between 78% and 88%. The size of the confidence intervals in the HYS will be smaller when:

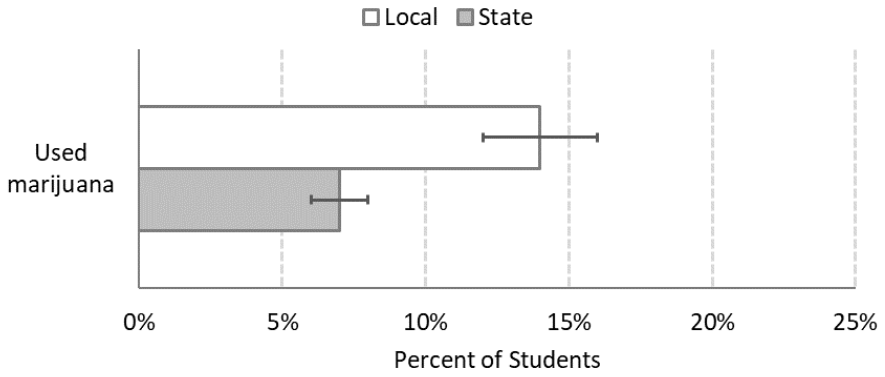
- There are more students taking the survey.
- The prevalence of an outcome or measure is more extreme.

Sometimes, people want to compare two groups. A statistical test can tell whether the difference between groups is greater than would be expected by chance. Commonly, if a difference as large as the one we see occurs less than 5% of the time by chance, we say that the difference is statistically significant. As the number of students taking the survey gets smaller, a larger difference is needed to rule out chance. In some cases, we can use confidence intervals to determine whether the difference between a local prevalence (percent) and the state sample is *statistically significant* —that is, whether school, district, or county truly has a different frequency of a particular behavior from the state or the apparent difference was likely to have resulted by chance.

Using this approach, we examine whether the confidence intervals overlap each other, and whether either of them overlaps the point estimate (the percent reported) of the other group. If the confidence intervals do NOT overlap each other, the difference is statistically significant (see the example in Chart 1). That is, probably not due to chance. If a confidence interval DOES overlap the point estimate in the other group, there is not a significant difference (see the example in Chart 2). If the two confidence intervals overlap each other, but do not overlap the other point estimate, then it is necessary to do a statistical test to determine whether the two groups are different (see the example in Chart 3).

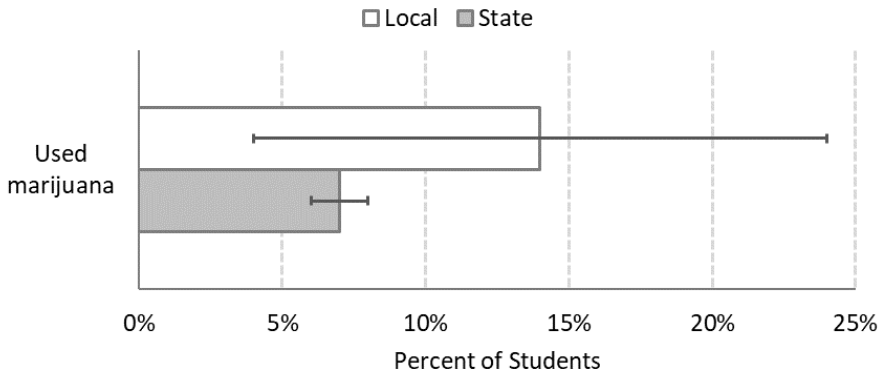
Suppose the percentage of 10th Grade students at a Washington high school who used marijuana in the past 30 days is 14% ± 2 (between 12% and 16%) and the percentage of 10th Grade students in the statewide sample who used marijuana is 7% ± 1 (between 6% and 8%, see Chart 1). Because statewide marijuana use is unlikely to be more than 8% and school marijuana is unlikely to be less than 12%, we can be reasonably certain that marijuana use at the school is greater than use statewide. Note that in Chart 1 the error bars (representing the confidence interval) at the end of each bar of the graph *do not* overlap, and the difference is considered statistically significant.

Chart 1: Example of a significant difference



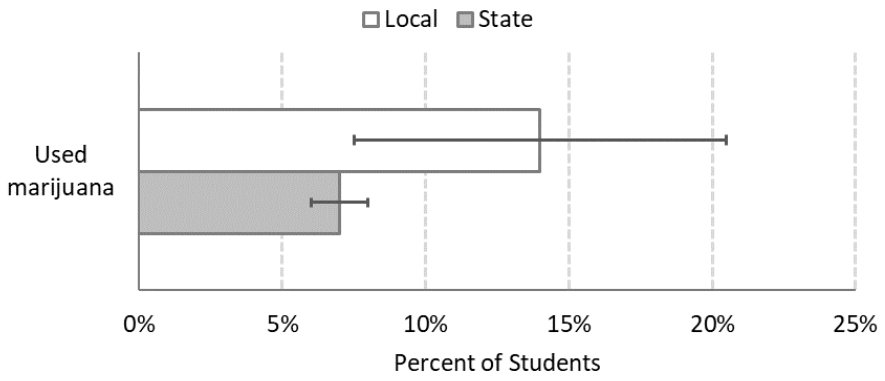
If the margin of error for the Washington high school in Chart 1 was 10% rather than 2%, then the true marijuana use rate could fall anywhere between 4% and 24% (see Chart 2). Thus, the school rate could be less than the statewide rate (e.g., 4% compared to a statewide rate of 6%), more than the statewide rate (e.g., 24% compared to a statewide rate of 8%), or the same as the statewide rate (e.g., both 7%). Note that in Chart 2 the error bar at the end of the bar for the local sample *does* overlap the point estimate for the state sample, and the difference is not considered statistically significant. As noted earlier, if the confidence intervals overlap each other but not the point estimates, it is necessary to do a statistical test to determine whether the difference is significantly significant.

Chart 2: Example of a non-significant difference



If the margin of error for the Washington high school in Chart 1 was 6.5%, then the true marijuana use rate could fall anywhere between 7.5% and 20.5% (see Chart 2). Thus, the school rate could be slightly less than the statewide rate (e.g., 7.5% compared to a statewide rate of 8%). Note that in Chart 3 the error bars slightly overlap but the error bar for the school does not cross the point estimate for the state so we can't determine if the difference is significantly significant or not. We'd need to do a statistical test to find out.

Chart 3: Example of a difference that needs further testing



To help make it easier to see differences, reports now include a single asterisk between two columns of results to indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the responses for students in the two groups. For example, in a district report, if the percentage of students absent from school for 3 or more days for any reason was 20% (±5) for the district and 35% (±2) statewide, there would be an asterisk between the two columns to highlight that the 95% confidence intervals (CI) do not overlap, and the results are statistically significantly different.

25. During the past 30 days, on how many days have you been absent from school for any reason? Include any day that you missed at least half of the school day.	Local Students % (±CI) (n=200)			Statewide % (±CI) (n=7,000)	
0 days	35.0%	(±5.0)		30.0%	(±2.0)
1 or 2 days	40.0%	(±5.0)		38.0%	(±2.0)
3 or more days	25.0%	(±5.0)	*	32.0%	(±2.0)

Readers should note that differences in results may be considered from either a statistical or a practical point of view. *Statistical significance* is influenced by several factors including the number of students who participated in the survey and how similar or different the answers the students gave were. *Practical significance* is a judgment of whether differences are programmatically meaningful. For instance, the difference between school marijuana use of 11% and statewide use of 9% could, depending on the margins of error, be statistically significant. From a practical point of view, however, this difference is probably not large enough to justify programmatic changes at the school. Readers are encouraged to consider both the practical and statistical significance of results and not to focus on small differences that may be statistically, but not practically, significant.

For more information on confidence intervals, see the Understanding Results - Confidence Interval section on page 6 of the frequency report or visit: https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/1500/ConfIntGuide.pdf.

An excel tool for determining statistical significance is posted on the AskHYS Data Resources page at https://www.askhys.net/Resources/Data. The tool allows for survey results to be entered and test for significant differences.

Frequency Report Overview

The following topics are covered in the frequency reports, as detailed in its Table of Contents:

- Demographics and general information
- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use
- Other health concerns
- School climate
- Risk and protective factors

Additional information about each topic area will be made available in the Healthy Youth Survey 2023 Analytic Report of the statewide survey results (available in July 2024 at: https://www.askhys.net/SurveyResults/OtherStateReports). For general information about these topics, readers are encouraged to contact the sponsoring agencies or to visit the web sites of relevant federal and state agencies.

Types of Frequency Reports

The main type of frequency report includes two columns of individual grade results, one column for local results and another column for statewide results. Results for a school, district, county, or ESD are referred to as *local* results. Results from the statewide sample are referred to as *statewide* results. The other type of frequency report is a multiple-grade-level report without a statewide comparison. Multi-grade reports include four columns – one for 6th grade results, one for 8th grade results, one for 10th grade results, and another for 12th grade results. A statewide multiple-grade report was also generated and can be used for comparison with local results.

Starting in 2014, "small" school districts were allowed to survey additional grade levels – grades 7, 9 and 11. Districts are considered to be "small" if they have 150 students or fewer in the surveyed grade levels. Districts that survey these additional grades and meet minimum reporting requirements also receive additional individual grade-level reports for the additional grades, combined grade reports for "middle school" that present grades 6, 7 and 8 combined together, and combined grade reports for "high school" that presented grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 combined together. They could also receive multiple-grade reports that included four columns for grades 6, 7, 8 and middle school combined and five columns for grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 and high school combined.

There is also one other set of frequency reports for non-geographic subpopulations. These frequency reports focus on a group of youth with some shared identity (e.g., Black/African American) or experience (.e.g., alcohol use). One column in these reports is for students with that shared identity or experience and the other is for other youth in the statewide comparison.

Survey Versions

For 2023, the Healthy Youth Survey was administered as a fully electronic survey. The survey was administered in-person at school. Approved schools with online instruction could administer the survey online if they could create test-like settings with students logged into a proctored class session online while they took the survey.

Prior to 2023, the Healthy Youth Survey used two questionnaires for grades 8-12: Forms A and B. The 6th grade questionnaire was a single version (Form C), with fewer questions. The 2023 Healthy Youth Survey switched from using Forms A and B to a single Secondary survey that employed a Core/Bank model for grades 8-12. To manage the length of the survey with the breadth of information desired by partners, only a subset of "core" questions was asked of all students in grades 8-12. The remaining "bank" questions were randomized so that each student received about half of the questions.

For 6th graders, the 2023 HYS switched from Form C to an Elementary survey that is a shorter survey with a single set of simplified questions.

Below is a description of some of the survey elements included in the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey:

- **Core questions:** a standard set of questions that were asked of all students in 8th grade and older. A list of core questions is available on the last page of all 2023 frequency reports.
- **Bank question:** questions that were randomized so that approximately half of the students received each question.
- **Randomization:** not all questions were asked of all students. While core questions were asked of all students in grades 8-12, bank questions were randomized so that approximately half of the students in each grade receive each bank question on their survey.
- **Skip logic:** allowed for students to be sent to a future point or end of the survey based on how they answered a question. For example, if a student responded they did not drink alcohol in the past 30 days, then they are not asked if they binge drank alcohol in the past two weeks.

There are several benefits of moving to a core/bank model with skip logic. Using core and bank questions, rather than the Form A/B model that was used for older students in past survey cycles, allows the cross-tabulation of all questions on the Secondary survey. This provides more information than could be obtained using the Form A/B model, which only allowed for cross-tabulation of questions that were asked on the same form. Skip logic asks some questions only when they are relevant. For example, if a student has never used a particular substance, skip logic doesn't ask them follow-up questions about where they obtained that substance or how often they used it. If we already know they didn't use the substance, we can carry that answer forward to the questions they skip and mark them as never having used the substance. This reduces the overall survey burden, while still allowing more questions to be asked than ever before.

The Secondary survey included six questions on sexual behavior and sexual violence. Schools that did not want to administer questions on either topic were required to seek an exemption from the Planning Committee. The Elementary survey included an optional gender question that schools could opt to include during the registration process.

Table 1: Summary of 2023 Healthy Youth Survey Elements

Survey Element	**Elementary Survey**	**Secondary Survey**
Grade Levels	Grade 6 (and grade 7 in small school districts)	Grades 8, 10, and 12 (and grades 9 and 11 in small districts)
Question Number and Type	116 questions	66 core and 182 bank questions
Skip Logic	Yes	Yes
Randomization	None	Yes, students receive about ½ of the bank questions.
Exempt Questions	No	Yes, exemptions for 4 sexual behavior questions and/or 2 sexual violence questions
Optional Questions	Yes, one optional question on gender	No

Number of Respondents

The "Number of students surveyed" on page 2 of the frequency reports refers to the total number of survey responses that were received electronically and passed some initial quality control checks (e.g., submitted within administration dates/times). The "Number of valid surveys" refers to those surveys that were retained after the data were run through a variety of validity checks. Surveys found to be invalid were removed. Only the results of the valid surveys are presented in the frequency reports. The estimated participation rate is also reported. This rate compares the number of valid surveys to the number of students enrolled, based on the most recent enrollment figures. This means that for the 2023 survey, the participation rates in the reports are based on October 2023 enrollment figures.

The number of respondents is also listed for each survey question. The number of respondents to a specific question is usually fewer than the number of valid surveys and differs between questions for several reasons:

- In Grades 8, 10, and 12, only core questions were asked of all students, bank questions were asked of about half of the students.
    - Skip logic applied to both some core and some bank questions.
- Schools could request an exemption for some questions. These questions are marked with a symbol (†) throughout the frequency reports.
- Any student may have chosen to skip any question.
- The survey was lengthy, and students may not have had time to answer all of the questions.

Caution about Participation Rates, Bias and Small Numbers

Readers should exercise caution with reviewing results and comparing them to other results. There may be limitations to results if participation in the survey was low. The following guidelines are recommended:

- 70% or greater participation–Results are likely representative of students in this grade
- 40–69% participation–Results may be representative of students in this grade
- Less than 40% participation–Results are likely not representative of students in this grade but do reflect students who completed the survey

There may be limitations to local results even if there is a high participation rate. For instance, a particular group of students (say, the school orchestra) may have been away from school the day of the survey, and that could bias the results. It is important to acknowledge the potential limitations when

using the results in this report. For reports summarizing results at the county or school district levels, consideration of whether the schools that participated represent all students in that area.

Results based on small numbers of students answering a question are unstable---that is, they could easily change with the absence from school of only a couple of students. This is especially the case when only a few students choose a particular answer option. Also, in this situation, the reported 95% confidence interval might wide. Thus, use caution if fewer than 30 students answered a question and fewer than 5 students selected a given response option. For example, if 20 students answered a question and of those 20 only 3 students answered "Yes", the estimate is unreliable.

Highlights of the Frequency Results

The Highlights section provides a summary for quick reference. The sponsoring agencies chose to highlight eight questions they felt would be of interest to the majority of readers. The same questions are highlighted in all frequency reports and were not specifically chosen for local school, district, county, or ESD.

Selected Results by Sex Assigned at Birth

Selected questions are presented by sex assigned at birth to highlight any differences between females and males. The *p*-values reported after each question can be used to examine whether differences in the local data between females and males are statistically significant (see the Healthy Youth Survey [2023] Analytic Report for more details – Coming in July 2024). To ensure student anonymity, frequency results are suppressed in cases where any cell (e.g., females who reported smoking) represents fewer than 10 students.

Frequency Results

Table 2 demonstrates each question in the report is reprinted as it appeared on the electronic survey along with the corresponding answer choices.

Table 2: Sample Frequency Report Question

25. During the past 30 days, on how many days have you been absent from school for any reason? Include any day that you missed at least half of the school day?	Local Students (n = 511)			Statewide (n = 6,929)	
0 days	40.0%	(± 8.0)		32.5%	(± 2.7)
1 or 2 days	42.0%	(± 3.0)		41.7%	(± 1.5)
3 or more days	18.0%	(± 2.0)	*	25.7%	(± 2.1)

To the right of each question are 4 columns showing local and statewide results. (Results for a school, district, county, or ESD are referred to as *local* results. This term is used to differentiate these results from the *statewide* results.) The first column displays the percentage of local students who selected each answer choice. The second column displays the margin of error for the percentage. For example, in Table 2, 40.0% plus or minus 8.0% of the local students were absent 0 days. The third and fourth columns contain comparative statewide results and margins of error based only on the results of those students from the schools drawn for the statewide sample. Note that 511 local students and 6,929 students in the state sample responded to this question. An asterisk (*) between the two sets of results, there is statistically significant difference between the responses. E.g., in this example, local students were significantly less likely to report missing 3 or more days of schools compared to students statewide (95% confidence intervals do not overlap).

Multi-grade reports include four or five columns showing statewide or local results only. Each column displays the percentage of students who selected the answer choice and the 95% confidence interval. There is a column for each grade-level or combination of grade levels:

- Grades 6, 8, 10, and 12
- Grades 6, 7, 8, and 6/7/8 combined middle school
- Grades 9, 10, 11, 12, and 9/10/11/12 combined high school

Question results may be presented with asterisks (*) replacing the numbers for 3 reasons:

- A single asterisk between two columns of results in this report indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the responses for students in the two groups. For example, in a district report, if the percentage of students absent from school for 3 or more days for any reason was 18% (±2) for the district and 26% (±2) statewide, there would be an asterisk

between the two columns to highlight that the 95% confidence intervals (CI) do not overlap, and the results are statistically significantly different.

- Select results by sex assigned at birth are marked with triple asterisks (***) if they are suppressed to protect anonymity.
- In multi-grade reports, double asterisks (**) are used to indicate that a question was not asked of a grade level.

Question results may be presented with dashes (- -) replacing the numbers for 2 reasons:

- No students responded to the question. The question may have been an exempt or optional question, or simply skipped by all of the students. Exempt questions are marked with this symbol †.
- Question 83 (BMI Status). This question poses a challenge to student anonymity because weight is a visibly identifiable trait. Consequently, local results were suppressed at the building level. These results are provided at the district, county, and ESD levels.

Readers are advised that question wording may have changed over time and results may not be comparable across survey administrations. For example, the definition of screen time has expanded over time. For a detailed description of survey questions since 2002, see the Healthy Youth Survey Data Dictionary and Crosswalk at: https://www.askhys.net/Resources/Data.

Risk and Protective Factors

The risk and protective factor model of prevention, pioneered by Drs. Hawkins and Catalano (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992), has been applied to the prevention of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and other problem behaviors. A risk factor is something that may contribute to a problem, whereas a protective factor is something that helps to prevent a problem. Several risk and protective factors have been identified and grouped into four domains: community, school, family, and peer-individual. Assessing youth risk and protective factors can help inform prevention programming and interventions, which aim to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors. Comprehensive prevention efforts aim to ensure that protective factors outweigh risk factors at the individual, peer, family, school, and community levels.

More information about the risk and protective factors is available on the Risk and Protective Factors Fact Sheet at https://www.askhys.net/SurveyResults/FactSheets.

Using the Data

Readers are encouraged to consider the following approach to reviewing local reports prior to delving into the details of individual survey questions.

Implement a Review Team

Using a team approach to reviewing reports can help make the greatest use of local results. Ideally, the team will include representatives of many segments of the community such as district staff, school staff, community service agencies, parents, and students themselves. There are many advantages to using a team approach, one of which is that each member of the team can contribute their own perspective on problems and their solutions. In addition, a broad-based team conveys the message that the entire community is responsible for promoting adolescent health rather than it being the sole responsibility of a single institution (e.g., schools or school districts). Some common steps in the team approach include the following:

- **Create a core leadership group.** This group is made up of key persons who are knowledgeable about or interested in student health risk behaviors and will respond to the challenge of addressing the identified health risk behaviors.
- **Assess needs and resources.** The core leadership group will need to determine which student indicators are of concern because of the severity and frequency of those behaviors. In addition, the group will want to identify the services that are available to help youth with mental health needs or to help them live free of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- **Develop a plan.** After determining needs and resources, the core leadership group will want to develop a plan that addresses issues or behaviors of concern. This plan should address stated goals and measurable objectives related to the behaviors identified as highest priority.
- **Implement the plan.** The first step in implementation is to gain key leader and community support for the plan. The plan can be implemented once support has been obtained.
- **Evaluate the plan.** The core leadership team should conduct ongoing evaluation of the programs implemented to fulfill the plan. Key elements of the evaluation include (a) identifying those with an interest in the program (i.e., the stakeholders/partners) and involving them in the evaluation, (b) posing evaluation questions related to the program's goals and objectives, (c) deciding what data to collect and how to collect those data, (d) analyzing the data that have been collected, and (e) preparing and disseminating findings.

Look at the Survey Results as a Whole

Because the survey covers a variety of topics, it is recommended to become familiar with the report prior to diving into the report details. First, look at the cover and the top of the first page of the report to determine which students the report represents – a specific geography (school, district, county, ESD, state) or a specific demographic group of students. Next, look at the Table of Contents to see the major groupings of questions. Then review the *Understanding Your Report* section which includes the survey participation and information about how to interpret and understand the results.

Become Familiar with the Survey Questions

Once major survey topics have been identified, one can become better acquainted with the individual survey questions. Notice that the questions are grouped within topic areas. This organization helps make the large number of questions more manageable. Because many questions address more than one topic, *Questions by Topic Index,* on the second to the last page of the report should be reviewed to locate additional questions related to the topic of interest.

Find Questions of Interest

Decisions about which questions are of greatest interest can be made once familiarity with the content of the survey has been established and have a sense about where in the report each content area is covered. Any program will be able to address only a limited number of concerns. In addition, when speaking before a group or preparing a written report, it is encouraged to limit the presentation to those few results of the most immediate interest. Questions may be selected for further presentation and discussion because of program-related interests, special concerns or interests, or noticeable differences in comparison to other data.

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