In 2019, 1,875 Alaska students in 39 traditional high schools statewide completed the anonymous and voluntary Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) that reports many different health and social behaviors.

The 2019 survey showed a significant increase in the percentage of adolescents vaping, feeling sad and hopeless, and attempting suicide. About 1 out of 4 adolescents currently vape. During the past year, more than 1 out of 3 felt sad or hopeless, and 1 out of 5 attempted suicide. This report highlights the challenges and improvements for Alaska high school students statewide.

The following is a brief summary of 2019 Alaska YRBS results showing the health risk behaviors and protective factors of Alaska's traditional high school students.

### Increases in Risk Factors

**Alaska high school students are increasingly using e-cigarettes, feeling sad or hopeless, and attempting suicide.**

#### Current use of e-cigarettes is up among Alaska high school students, after being flat since 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ever used an electronic vapor product</th>
<th>Used an electronic vapor product in the past 30 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Since 2007, there have been significant increases in students feeling sad or hopeless, and considering, planning for, and attempting suicide in the past 12 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felt sad or hopeless for two weeks or longer</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously considered suicide</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made a suicide plan</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Mental Health

The percentage of students attempting suicide during the past year nearly doubled, from 10.7% in 2007 to 19.7% in 2019. In fact, this measure increased significantly as of 2017 (12.1%).

#### Screen time

Between 2007 and 2019, more adolescents spent long periods of time in front of screens. More than half of students spent three or more hours each day on an average school day watching television, playing video or computer games, or using a computer, smartphone, or tablet for something other than school work (56.7% in 2019; 49.9% in 2007).³

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³ This symbol marks YRBS measures that are included in the 30 Healthy Alaskans 2030 health objectives.

¹ Use of electronic vaping products is termed, “vape,” “vaping” or “vaped.” Electronic vapor products include e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigs, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods; such as JUUL, Vuse, MarkTen (not currently on the market), and blu.

² Percentage of students at or above the 95th percentile for body mass index, based on sex- and age-specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts.

² Including time spent watching television or on things such as Xbox, PlayStation, an iPad or other tablet, a smartphone, texting, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media, for some thing that was not school work, on an average school day.
Many other behaviors have not changed significantly, but remain at levels that warrant concern.

### Other Areas of Concern

#### Physical Activity
- **20.9%**
  - Walked or rode their bike to or from school 3 or more days in an average week (when weather allowed).

#### Drugs
- **6.9%**
  - Ever used benzodiazepines differently than how a doctor told them or without a prescription.

#### Access to Guns
- **48.9%**
  - Could access a loaded gun.

#### Bullying
- **16.3%**
  - Were bullied outside of school or on the way to or from school in the past 12 months.

#### Sugary Drinks
- **49.1%**
  - Consumed sugary drinks one or more times each day in the previous week.

#### Emotional Health
- **66.3%**
  - Could control their emotions
- **61.4%**
  - Could remain calm when things go wrong

#### Homelessness
- **11.6%**
  - Experienced homelessness

#### Sexual Activity
- **26.2%**
  - Had sex in last 3 months.
  - Among students who had sex in the past 3 months:
    - **13.2%** Used both a condom and another contraceptive.
    - **15.7%** Did not use any method to prevent pregnancy.

#### Injury Prevention
- **29.8%** Texted or emailed while driving.
- **12.0%** Drove after using marijuana.

#### Other Issues
- **34.5%** Smoked cigarettes or cigars, used smokeless tobacco (including IQmik), or used electronic vapor products in the past 30 days.
- **12.4%** Engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days.
- **15.9%** Had their first drink of alcohol before age 13 (more than a few sips).
- **21.6%** Used marijuana in the past 30 days.
- **9.9%** Tried marijuana for the first time before age 13.
- **3.6%** Ever used methamphetamines.

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4 Homelessness includes having slept away from parents’ or guardians’ home because they were kicked out, ran away, were abandoned, or felt unsafe in their home in the past 12 months.

5 The percentage of students who drank soda, sports drink (such as Gatorade or PowerAde); energy drink (such as Red Bull, Rockstar, or Monster); or another sugar-sweetened beverage (such as lemonade, sweetened tea or coffee drinks, flavored milk, Snapple, or Sunny Delight) one or more times per day (during the past seven days).

6 Binge drinking: Females - four or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours; Males - five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours.
Other Areas of Concern (cont.)

Violence

The percentage of Alaska students who experience violence is concerning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual violence</th>
<th>Physical dating violence*</th>
<th>Sexual dating violence*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Among those who dated.

Health and Risk Behaviors at School

High school students spend more time at school than any place other than home. Therefore, it is important to understand the extent to which students experience health risk and protective behaviors at school. These results may be used to develop programs and policies that reduce health risk behaviors and strengthen social supports.

Improvements

There were significant decreases in cigarette smoking, secondhand smoke exposure, riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, and not wearing a bicycle helmet.

Tobacco Improvements between 2007 and 2019:

There was a significant decrease in second-hand smoke exposure.

- In 2007, 46.1% of students reported secondhand smoke exposure in the past week.
- By 2019, this had decreased to 26.8%.

There was a significant decrease in current smoking and starting to smoke by age 13.

- In 2007, 17.5% of students reported current cigarette use.
- By 2019, this had decreased to 6.5%.
- In 2007, 2.2% of students smoked cigarettes on school property in the past 30 days.
- By 2019, this had decreased to 0.7%.

Injury Prevention

14.7%

Rode in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol during the past 30 days in 2019, down from 23.5% in 2007.

64.5%

Among students who rode a bicycle in the past 12 months, 64.5% rarely or never wore a helmet in 2019, down from 76.0% in 2007.

Other Areas of Concern (cont.)

Sexual violence

- Almost 10% were in physical fights at school in the past 12 months.
- 8.5% carried a weapon onto school property in the past 30 days.

Tobacco

- More than one-fourth were bullied at school in the past 12 months.
- 20.5% of students smoked before age 13.

Physical Education

- More than half did not attend physical education classes in an average week.
- 53.0% of students did not attend physical education classes in an average week.

Tobacco

- 2.2% smoked cigarettes on school property in the past 30 days.
- 2.2% of students smoked cigarettes on school property in the past 30 days.

Violence-related

- Almost 10% were in physical fights at school in the past 12 months.
- 8.5% carried a weapon onto school property in the past 30 days.

Connectedness

- More than half participated in organized after school, evening, or weekend activities.
- 56.8% of students participated in organized after school, evening, or weekend activities.

Relationships

- Almost 10% were in physical fights at school in the past 12 months.
- 8.5% carried a weapon onto school property in the past 30 days.

Among students who dated:

- 7.0% were in physical fights at school in the past 12 months.
- 8.5% carried a weapon onto school property in the past 30 days.

Safety

- Almost 10% were in physical fights at school in the past 12 months.
- 8.5% carried a weapon onto school property in the past 30 days.

Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Perceptions & Connections

Risk perceptions
Adolescents perceived less risk of harm from binge drinking, electronic vapor product use, and marijuana use than from cigarette smoking or misuse of prescription pain medicine.

Alaska high school students believe people greatly risk harming themselves if they:

- **57.2%** Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day
- **54.4%** Misuse prescription pain medicine
- **38.5%** Binge drink*
- **27.1%** Use electronic vapor products daily
- **20.8%** Use marijuana once or twice a week

* Consume five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, once or twice a week.

Perceptions of friends and parents
Adolescents perceived that parents were more likely than their peers to think substance use is wrong. This gap was largest for marijuana use.

Social supports and connectedness
Less than half:
- Felt comfortable seeking help from three or more adults besides their parents (48.6%).
- Agreed that they feel like they matter to people in their community (47.8%).
- Talked with one of their parents about what they are doing in school nearly every day (38.3%).

More than half:
- Agreed that their teachers really care about them and give them a lot of encouragement (59.0%).

About the 2019 YRBS

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a school-based survey of Alaska high school students. Every other school year, the YRBS collects important information about the health and social connections of Alaska high school students. Alaska’s survey is part of a national effort run by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Healthy Alaskans
Healthy Alaskans, Alaska’s state health improvement plan, monitors progress toward maximizing the health potential of Alaskans, including Alaska adolescents. Healthy Alaskans 2020 included eight YRBS measures among 25 leading health indicators, or health objectives. Healthy Alaskans 2030 includes six YRBS measures among its thirty health objectives, noted in this report.

More information on Healthy Alaskans is available online: [www.healthyalaskans.org](http://www.healthyalaskans.org).

Alaska 2019 YRBS Stats

Participants included:
- **1,875** high school students from
- **39** traditional high schools in Alaska

Student participation was:
- Anonymous • Voluntary • With parents’ consent

Students answered questions about:
- Physical activity and nutrition
- Tobacco, alcohol and drug use
- Injury prevention
- Violence and bullying
- Suicide
- Sexual behaviors
- Connections with peers, adults, and community

Find more 2019 YRBS data online:
- **View the** 2019 Data Dashboard
- **Learn about** Alaska’s YRBS

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