

Mental Health among Minnesota Students: Highlights of Findings from the 2019 MN Student Survey (MSS)

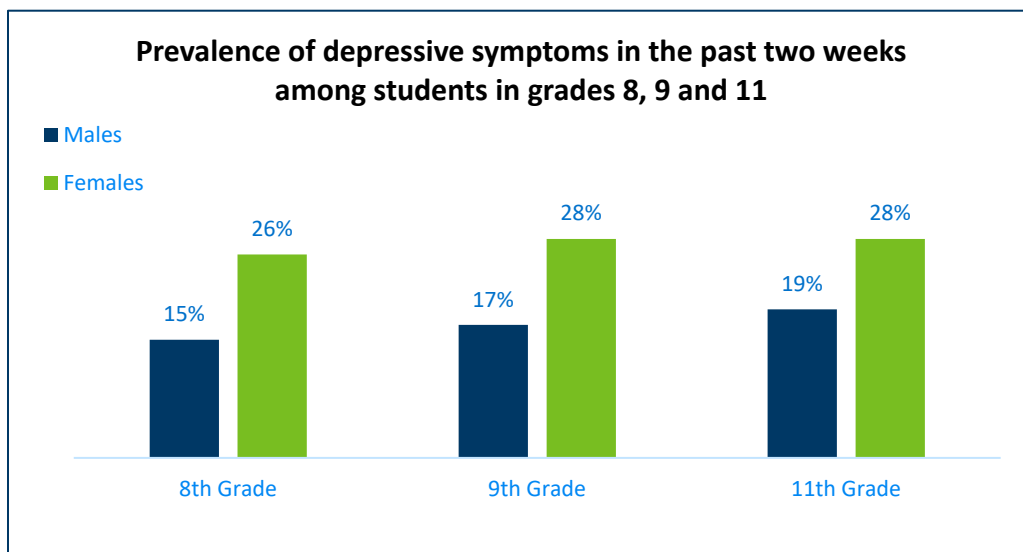
This report highlights the major findings on mental health reported by students in Minnesota from the 2019 MSS. Full list of frequency distribution for each question in the survey can be found in the [MSS Statewide Tables](#). More detailed reports on mental health among students will be available online at [SUMN.org](#)

Emotional Well-Being and Distress

The **2019 MSS** was the **first time both anxiety and depressive symptom related question items** were asked in grades 8, 9, and 11.

Depressive Symptoms

Students were asked if they experienced depressive symptoms measured by two indicators: 1.) a loss of interest in activities and 2.) having a low mood, within the last 2 weeks. Over 20% of students in each grade 8 (20.9%), 9 (22.6%), and 11 (24.1%) indicated that they have experienced depressive symptoms¹. Gender differences also existed across all three grades, such that approximately 10% more of female students reported experiencing more depressive symptoms compared to their male peers.



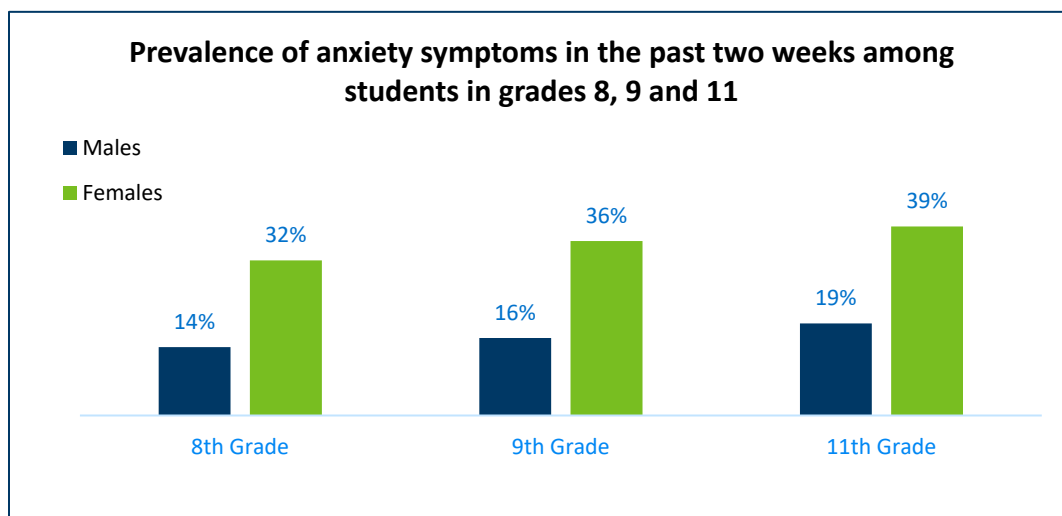
¹ The two question items (PHQ-2 for depression) were asked “Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things/feeling down, depressed or hopeless?” with four answering options: *Not at all/ Several days/ Half the days/ Nearly every day*. Each option was scored as 0 through 3 respectively, and the total score of 3 or higher was coded as having a depressive symptom.

Specifically, the difference in prevalence of depressive symptoms between female students and male students in 8th grade was 11% (26% vs. 15%), in 9th grade was 11% (28% vs. 17%), and in 11th grade was 9% (28% vs. 19%), respectively.

Anxiety Symptoms

Female students experience anxiety symptoms more than their male peers, at approximately a 2:1 rate

Students were asked if they experienced anxiety symptoms measured by two indicators: 1.) feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge and 2.) not being able to stop worrying, within the last 2 weeks. Over 20% of students in each grade 8 (23.4%), 9 (26.6%), and 11 (28.8%) indicated that they have experienced anxiety symptoms.² Similar to their reported depressive symptoms, gender differences existed across all grades with female students experiencing anxiety symptoms approximately twice as often as their male peers.



Specifically, the difference in reported anxiety symptoms between female students and male students in 8th grade was 18% (32% vs. 14%), in 9th grade was 20% (36% vs. 16%), and in 11th grade was 20% (39% vs. 19%), respectively.

² The two question items (PHQ-4 anxiety section) were asked “Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge/not being able to stop worrying?” with four answering options: *Not at all/ Several days/ Half the days/ Nearly every day*. Each option was scored as 0 through 3 respectively, and the total score of 3 or higher was coded as having an anxiety symptom.

Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors

Almost one in four students in grade 11 have seriously considered suicide in their lifetime.

In 2019, 19% of 8th graders, 21% of 9th graders and 24% of 11th graders reported that they seriously considered suicide at some time in their life. The lifetime suicide attempt was reported in 2019 by 7%, 8% and 9%, respectively. Both the ideation and attempt rates have steadily increased over the years.

Percentage of students who reported seriously considering suicide at some time in their life, by grade

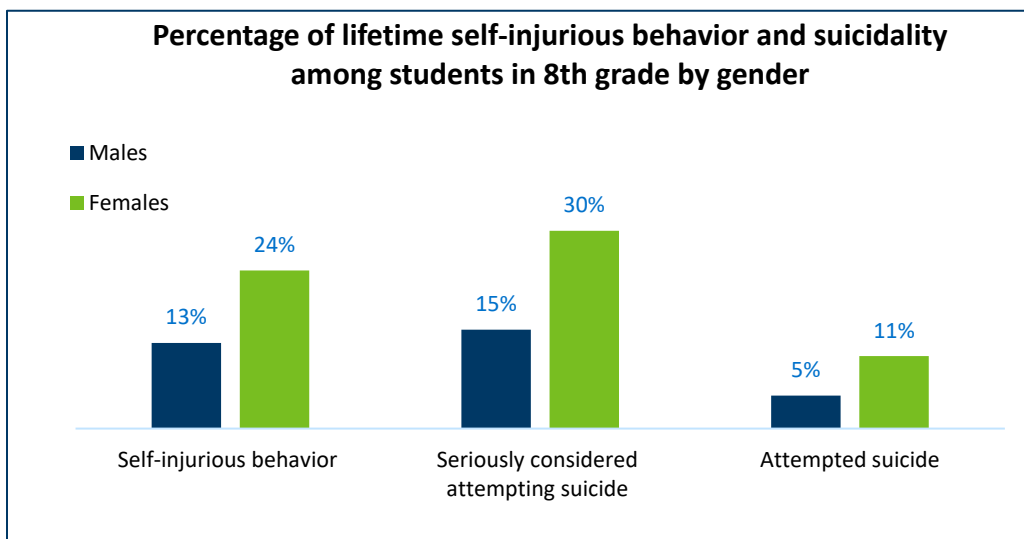
Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	15%	18%	19%
Grade 9	19%	19%	21%
Grade 11	20%	23%	24%

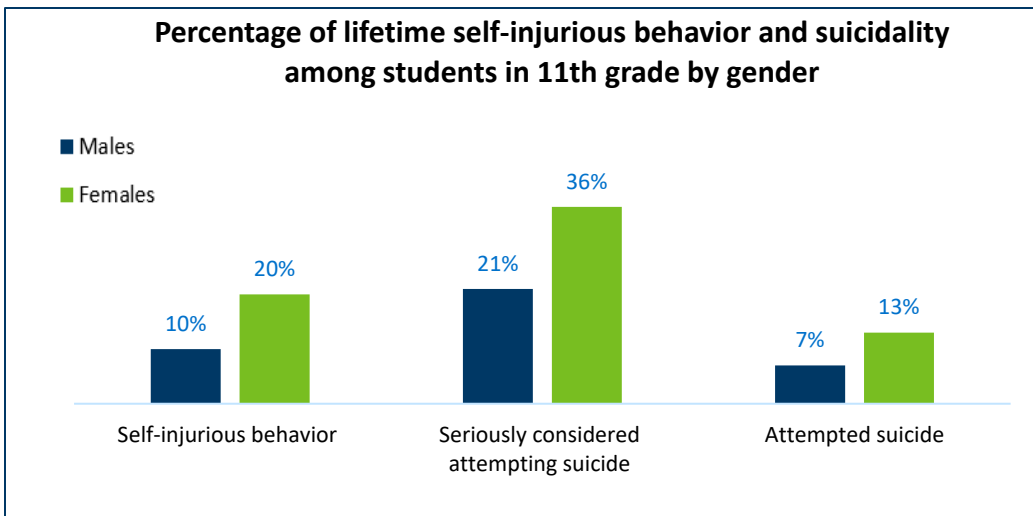
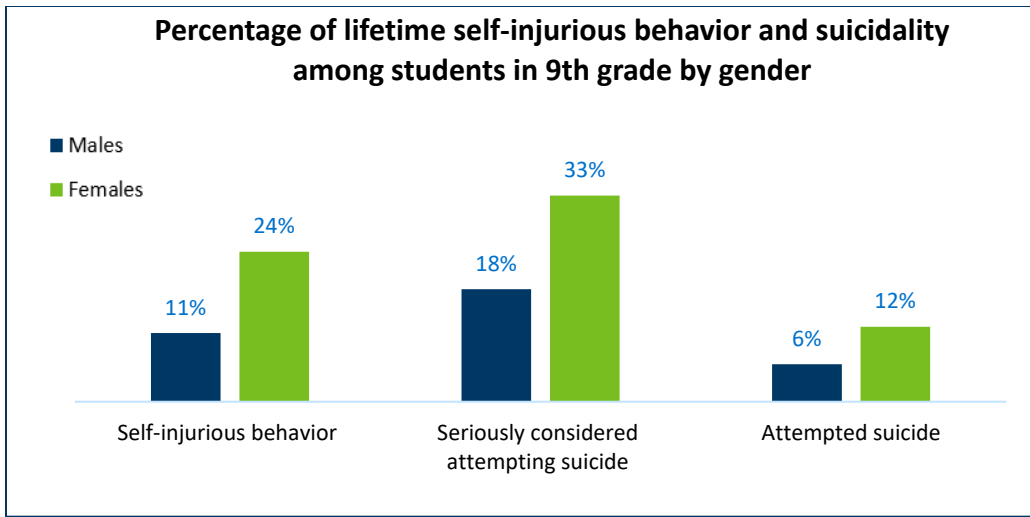
Percentage of students who reported actually attempting suicide at some time in their life, by grade

Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	5%	6%	7%
Grade 9	7%	7%	8%
Grade 11	7%	9%	9%

Female students report higher suicidality including self-injurious behaviors, serious suicidal consideration, and suicide attempts.

Among students in grades 8, 9, and 11, females report approximately two times as many self-injurious behaviors in the last 12 months compared to their male peers. A similar ratio between males and females was found across grades 8, 9, and 11 for seriously considering suicide and attempting suicide in their lifetime.





Students who identify as LGBPQ and/or transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid reported 3x higher rates of contemplating suicide and over 4x higher rates of attempting suicide than the statewide average

In 2019, at least 60% of 9th and 11th graders who self-identified within a minority gender and/or sexual orientation group, reported that they seriously considered suicide at some time in their life, compared to the Minnesota student average of approximately 22%. Both the contemplation and attempt rates increase by grade level.

Percentage of minority gender and/or sexual orientation students who reported seriously considering suicide at some time in their life, by grade

Grade	LGBPQ*	Transgender**	Statewide average
Grade 9	60%	62%	21%
Grade 11	61%	67%	24%

* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer

** Transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid

Students who identify as LGBPQ and/or transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid reported higher rates of attempting and compared to the statewide average

In 2019, more than 28% of 9th and 11th graders who self-identified within a minority gender and/or sexual orientation group, reported that they attempted suicide at some time in their life, compared to the Minnesota student average of approximately 8.5%.

Percentage of minority gender and/or sexual orientation students who reported actually attempting suicide at some time in their life, by grade

Grade	LGBPQ*	Transgender**	Statewide average
Grade 9	28%	32%	8%
Grade 11	29%	35%	9%

* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer

** Transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid

Long-term Emotional/Behavioral Problems and Treatment

Since 2013, students have reported an increase in long-term mental health problems and treatment.³

The number of students in grades 8, 9, and 11 who reported having long-term mental health problems in the past year substantially increased since 2013. Among students in 8th grade, the prevalence of long-term mental health problems has increased by 9 percentage points from 12% in 2013 to 21% in 2019 and the increase was 10 percentage points for 9th graders. Students in 11th grade reported the largest increase with over 1 in 5 of them reporting long-term mental health problems in 2019.

Percentage of students who reported long-term mental health, emotional or behavioral problems in the last year, by grade and year

Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	12%	16%	21%
Grade 9	13%	17%	23%
Grade 11	13%	20%	26%

Congruent with students reported increase in experiencing long-term mental health problems, the percentage of students receiving treatment has also increased since 2013.

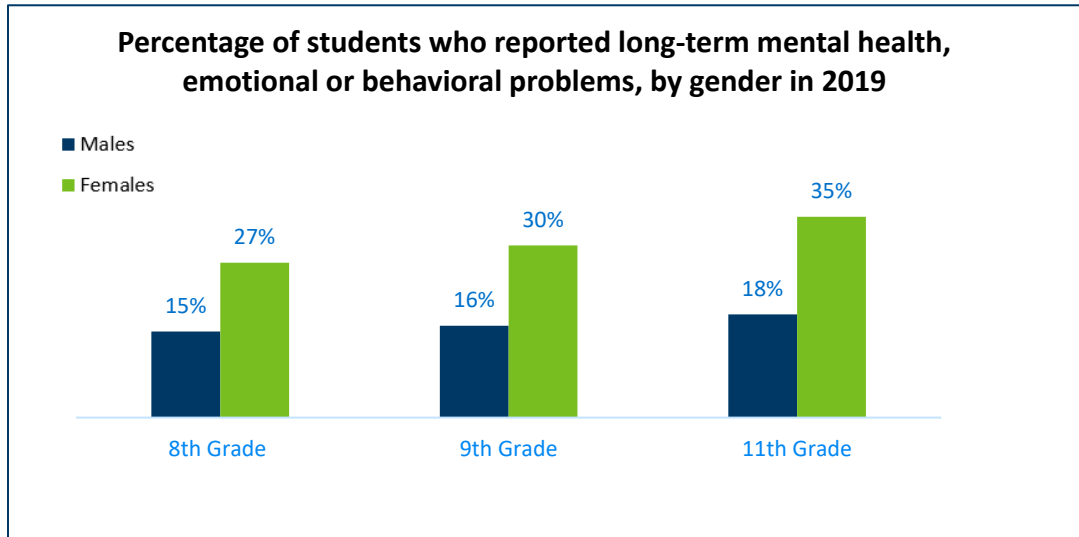
Percentage of students who reported receiving treatment for long-term mental health, emotional or behavioral problems in the last year, by grade and year

Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	7%	10%	12%
Grade 9	8%	11%	14%
Grade 11	9%	13%	17%

³ Long-term is defined as 6 months or longer.

Female students in grade 8, 9, and 11 reported a higher percentage of mental health problems when compared to their male peers, approximately a 2:1 ratio exists across grades.

Consistent with the findings above, female students are disproportionately impacted by long-term mental health problems. In 2019, more female students in grades 8, 9, and 11 than their male peers reported experiencing long-term mental health problems; specifically the percentage difference between female and male students in each grade was 12%, 14%, and 17%, respectively.



In 2019, more than 60% of 9th and 11th graders who self-identified within a minority gender and/or sexual orientation group reported experiencing long-term mental health problems, compared to approximately 20% of those who identified as heterosexual.

Percentage of students who identify as LGBPQ or transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid reported long-term mental health problems, by grade

Grade	LGBPQ*	Transgender**	Heterosexual
Grade 9	62.7%	68%	18.6%
Grade 11	65.4%	77.9%	21.6%

* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer

** Transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid

Coping Strategies

The majority of students in grades 8, 9, and 11 reported consistent social competencies and empowerment, but less than half of all students described having a positive identity

The 2019 MSS asked students to report on how they felt about themselves and their abilities to interact with the people and events they encounter. Below are the percentage of students who reported scores consistent with having social competence, a positive identity, and developing empowerment.

	Social Competencies	Positive Identity	Empowerment
Grade 8	59%	46%	60%
Grade 9	56%	42%	58%
Grade 11	55%	41%	58%

Healthy coping strategies are skills that help students regulate their emotions in an adaptive and helpful way. Social competence is an important skill to foster in youth and developing it would aid resiliency. The Social Competencies percentage shown is composed of the percent of students who endorsed an average score falling within “almost always” or “often” for the following eight questions: 1.) say no to things that are dangerous or unhealthy, 2.) build friendships with other people, 3.) express my feelings in proper ways, 4.) plan ahead and make good choices, 5.) stay away from bad influences, 6.) resolve conflicts without anyone getting hurt, 7.) accept people who are different than me, and 8.) sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.

Developing a positive identity toward oneself is known to be a protective factor and to mitigate negative consequences. The Positive Identity percentage shown in the table is the percent of students who endorsed an average score falling within “almost always” or “often” for the following questions: 1.) feel in control of my life and future, 2.) feel good about myself, 3.) feel good about my future, 4.) deal with disappointment without getting too upset, 5.) find good ways to deal with things that are hard in my life, 6.) am thinking about what my purpose is in life.

Developing empowerment, such as gaining increased responsibilities and meaningful roles, can help youth cope with everyday decisions and creating future-oriented plans. The Empowerment scale percentage shown in the related table encompasses students who endorsed an average score falling within “almost always” or “often” for the following questions: 1.) feel valued and appreciated by others, 2.) are included in family tasks and decisions, 3.) are given useful roles and responsibilities.

Fewer students in grades 8, 9, and 11 reported healthy coping strategies in 2019 compared to 2013 and 2016.

Social Competence by Grade in 2013, 2016, and 2019

Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	62%	63%	59%
Grade 9	59%	60%	56%
Grade 11	57%	57%	55%

Positive Identity by Grade in 2013, 2016, and 2019

Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	54%	55%	46%
Grade 9	52%	51%	42%
Grade 11	49%	47%	41%

Empowerment by Grade in 2013, 2016, and 2019

Grade	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	64%	64%	60%
Grade 9	61%	62%	58%
Grade 11	60%	60%	58%