

THE 2019 MINNESOTA STUDENT SURVEY—AN INTRODUCTION

Background

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is a statewide school-based survey conducted every three years by an interagency team consisting of four state agencies (Education, Health, Human Services, and Public Safety).

MSS is not a sample-based but census-like survey where all the public schools are invited to participate. Starting from the 2013 MSS, the survey has been administered among students in grades 5, 8, 9 and 11.¹ In addition to the regular public schools, MSS is also administered to students in Alternative Learning Settings as well as those in Juvenile Correctional Facilities, which are reported separately.

Questionnaires and Administration

There were three levels of questionnaires: Level 1 for 5th graders, level 2 for 8th graders and level 3 for 9th and 11th graders. The topics include school climate, educational engagement, health and nutrition, bullying/harassment, adverse childhood experiences, emotional and mental health, substance use and other health risk behaviors.

The survey is anonymous and participation is voluntary. Parents are informed in advance about the administration and offered an opt-out option. The survey administration occurs during the first half of the year of administration, usually from January to June. The participating schools can schedule their administration anytime during this period.

In 2019, all surveys were administered online, using the web-based survey. Only Juvenile Correctional Facilities could choose to administer the survey on paper.

Participation Rates

In 2019, 81% of public school districts had at least one school in the district participating in the survey. A total of 170,128 students-- approximately 64% of the statewide student population enrolled in the four grades-- participated. The grade specific participation rates are 66% for fifth graders, 68% for eighth graders, 66% for ninth graders, and 54% for eleventh graders.

¹ In the previous years, MSS had been administered among students in grades 6, 9 and 12, using traditional paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Starting from the 2013 administration, schools could select either the paper or the web survey mode, and in 2019 all schools administered the survey using the web survey mode.

Socio-demographic description of participating students

Overall, almost one third of students (32%) were members of a minority population or of multiple-race background. The proportion of minority students was higher among younger students ((35% of 5th graders; 33% of 8th graders; 31% of 9th graders; 28% of 11th graders), reflecting the general population trend.

Just under a quarter of students (23%) reported getting a free or reduced-price lunch at school at the time of survey. Substantial proportion of students, especially among 5th graders (39%), reported that they didn't know whether they were getting a free or reduced-price lunch at school.

Socio-demographic characteristics of survey participants

	Grade 5 (n=44,753)	Grade 8 (n=44,919)	Grade 9 (n=45,232)	Grade 11 (n=36,224)	Total (n=170,128)
Gender					
Female	49.3%	50.3%	50.3%	49.6%	49.9%
Race/Ethnicity					
White	65.4	67.3	68.8	72.2	68.2
American Indian	2.8	1.3	1.3	1.0	1.6
Black	10.4	8.5	8.0	6.7	8.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.2	7.2	6.7	6.7	6.9
Hispanic	6.1	6.3	6.4	5.7	6.1
Multiple ¹	8.1	9.5	8.7	7.8	8.6
Household income					
Currently get a free or reduced-price lunch at school	19.9	23.4	24.2	23.0	22.6
No	40.9	61.0	63.4	71.2	58.5
Not sure ²	39.3	15.6	12.4	5.8	18.8

¹ All students who selected more than one of the six answering options (white, American Indian, black, Asian, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) are included in "Multiple" category. This new way of categorization is due to the changes in questions asking about race and ethnicity in 2019.

² This answering option was newly added in the 2019 survey questionnaires.

Statewide Tables from the 2019 MSS

The statewide results from the 2019 MSS in the form of frequency distribution for each question in the survey are compiled by the interagency team and available at [MSS Statewide Tables](#)