

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 21, 2014

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2013 Minnesota Student Survey Provides Insight into Attitudes and Behaviors of Young People

Nine out of 10 eleventh graders plan to attend postsecondary education

Roseville – Minnesota students are planning to attend college in greater numbers, are drinking less soda and alcohol, are smoking less marijuana and fewer cigarettes, and about 82 percent of high-school juniors in Minnesota reported spending some time texting on typical school days. These are just some of the findings of the just-released 2013 Minnesota Student Survey.

More than 160,000 Minnesota students in grades five, eight, nine and 11 took the voluntary survey. High school students received the full version of the survey, while fifth- and eighth-grade students received shorter surveys more appropriate to their age. The survey—conducted every three years since 1989—covers numerous topic areas, several of which are new to the 2013 version. These areas include new or revised questions on bullying, student engagement, economic hardship, dating violence, sexual behaviors, nutrition and texting while driving.

The survey was created by the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Public Safety in an effort to better understand issues youth are dealing with on a daily basis.

When comparing results from previous years, it should be noted that districts taking part in the survey vary from year to year, that this was the first year that the survey was administered to some students electronically and many questions were new or revised this year. Trend information can be seen with a closer look at responses from ninth grade students from school districts that participated in consecutive administrations of the survey between 1995 and 2013.

The full set of statewide data from the survey is available at <http://bit.ly/MNStudentSurvey>. Initial trends and highlights from the new and updated topic areas follow. Additional analysis will be performed in the coming months by various agencies focusing on different populations of students, risk and protective factors, trauma and mental health.

College Plans

- About 70 percent of students in eighth, ninth and 11th grades plan on attending a four-year college or university right after high school. Another 8-16 percent of high school students plan to attend a two-year community or technical college.

After School Activities

- Six percent of ninth graders and 34 percent of 11th graders usually go to a job after school, although most students go home or to someone else's home right after

school. More than half of fifth graders (54 percent) are home alone, unsupervised at least one day a week after school.

Safety at School

- Students feel safe at school. In fact, 93 percent of fifth graders; 92 percent of eighth graders; 91 percent of ninth graders; and 94 percent of 11th graders reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel safe at school.” These numbers have remained roughly the same since the survey began in 1995.

Bullying

- Between 5-12 percent of students across all grades and both genders reported being harassed or bullied at least once in the past 30 days for the following reasons: race, ethnicity or national origin; religion; gender; because you are gay or someone thought you were; or physical or mental disability. However, nearly 1 in 4 students in grades five, eight and nine reported being harassed or bullied because of weight or physical appearance.
- Between 11 and 15 percent of students in each grade have experienced cyberbullying at least once in the last 30 days.

Economic Hardship

- Between 3-5 percent of eighth, ninth and 11th graders reported being homeless, along with their parents, at some time during the past 12 months. Between 1-2 percent of students reported being homeless and on their own.
- Five percent of students across grades reported they have had to skip meals in the past 30 days because their family did not have enough money to buy food.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Eleven percent of ninth and 11th graders reported living with someone who drinks too much alcohol; 6 percent reported living with someone who uses illegal drugs or abuses prescription drugs.
- Two percent of students reported they currently have a parent or guardian in jail or prison, while between 13-15 percent of eighth, ninth and 11th graders reported that a parent or guardian spent some time in jail or prison in the past.

Students and Relationship Violence

- Thirteen percent of 11th graders reported they have had a boyfriend or girlfriend who has called them names or verbally put them down.
- Six percent of 11th graders report physical abuse by someone they were dating, while 9 percent reported they have dated someone who has pressured them into having sex when they didn't want to.

Student Health

- Thirteen percent of fifth graders and 18 percent of 11th graders reported they have been told by a doctor or nurse that they have asthma.
- About 71 percent of fifth graders reported seeing a doctor in the past year for a check-up; this is true for about 58 percent of 11th graders. However, about eight in ten students in each grade reported seeing a dentist in the past year.

- Seventeen percent of 11th grade students reported they had used an indoor tanning device or tanning booth in the past year.

Texting and Screen Time

- Four out of five (82 percent) 11th graders spend at least some time texting during a typical school day.

Safe Driving

- Nearly half (47 percent) of 11th graders reported they sometimes read incoming text messages or emails when driving a car, while 39 percent reported they sometimes send text messages or emails when driving.
- Sixty-one percent of 11th graders either answer or place a phone call while driving.
- Three-quarters of 11th graders always wear a seat belt while driving a car; 86 percent always wear a seat belt when riding in the front seat; 69 percent always wear a seatbelt when riding in the back seat.

Alcohol and Drug Use

- Fourteen percent of ninth graders reported that they drank alcohol one or more times in the past 30 days, a steady decline from 36.3 percent in 1998. Marijuana use is similarly down to 9.5 percent versus 16.6 percent in 1998.
- Seven percent of 11th graders had used prescription drugs not prescribed to them on at least one day in the past 30 days.
- One percent of 11th graders also reported using synthetic drugs at least once in the past 12 months, while 3 percent reported using over-the-counter medications to get high.
- Seventeen percent of sexually-active 11th graders reported they had used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse.

Smoking

- Seven percent of ninth grader reported smoking cigarettes one or more times in the last 30 days, down from 18.7 percent in 2001.
- Between 22-36 percent of students in all grades reported at least one day in the past seven days when they were in the same room as someone who was smoking.
- Between 17-26 percent of students across grades reported at least one day in the past seven days when they were riding in a car with someone who was smoking.