

2019 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey Highlights

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

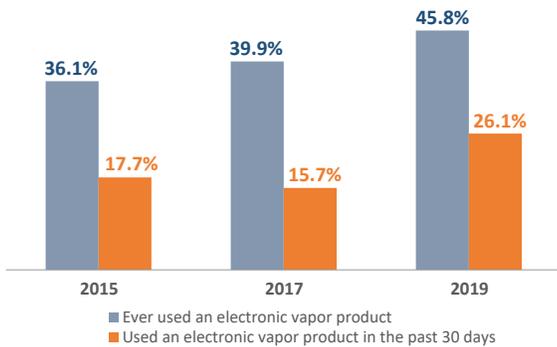
adolescents currently vape. During the past year, more than 1 out of 3 felt sad or hopeless, and 1 out of 5 attempted suicide. This report highlights the challenges and improvements for Alaska high school students statewide.

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.



Vaping¹

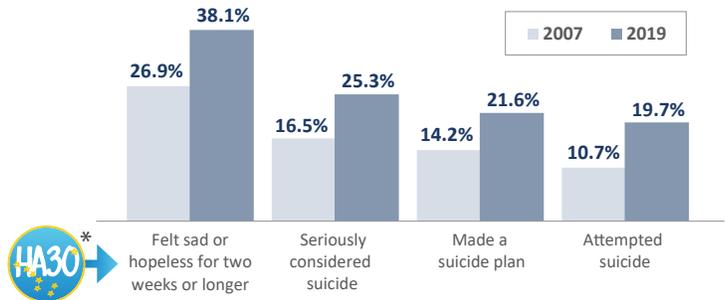
Between 2015 and 2019, there was a statistically significant increase in students starting to use and currently using electronic vapor products like e-cigarettes.

Current use means using at least once during the past 30 days. In 2019, 7.5% of Alaska high school students were currently smoking cigarettes, compared to 26.1% currently using e-cigarettes. That's a significant increase from 2017, when 15.7% were using e-cigarettes.

Obesity²

In 2019, 14.8% of Alaska high school students were obese, an increase from 10.9% in 2007.

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.



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

* 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-cigars, 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.

³ 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.



New YRBS Questions in 2019

Emotional Health

66.3%

Could control their emotions



61.4%

Could remain calm when things go wrong

Homelessness

11.6%

Experienced homelessness⁴



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.



Other Areas of Concern

Many other behaviors have not changed significantly, but remain at levels that warrant concern.

Physical Activity

Only 17.9%



Met the physical activity recommendations of 30 minutes every day in the past week for good health.

Sugary Drinks

49.1%

Consumed sugary drinks⁵ one or more times each day in the previous week.

Injury Prevention

Among students who drove in the past month:

29.8%

Texted or emailed while driving.



12.0%

Drove after using marijuana.

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.



34.5%

Smoked cigarettes or cigars, used smokeless tobacco (including Iqmiq), or used electronic vapor products in the past 30 days.



12.4%

Engaged in binge drinking⁶ 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.

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.

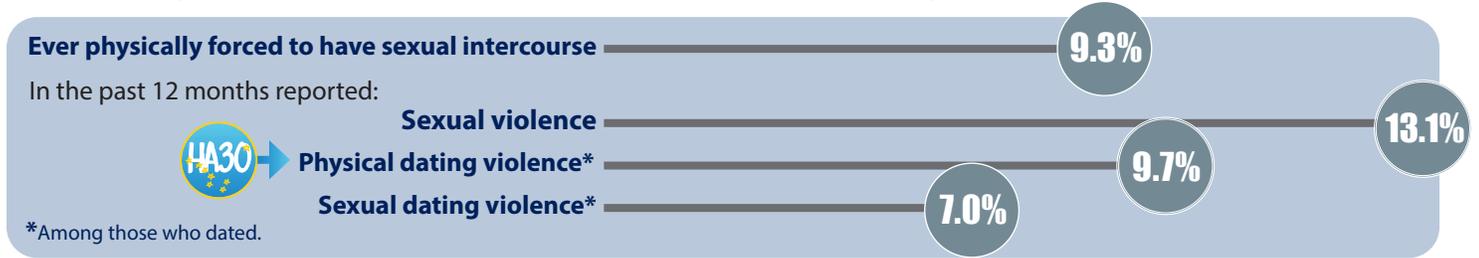
⁵ The percentage of students who drank soda, sports drink (such as Gatorade or PowerAde); energy drink (such as Red Bull, Rockstar, or Monster); or another sugar-sweetened beverage (such as lemonade, sweetened tea or coffee drinks, flavored milk, Snapple, or Sunny Delight) one or more times per day (during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

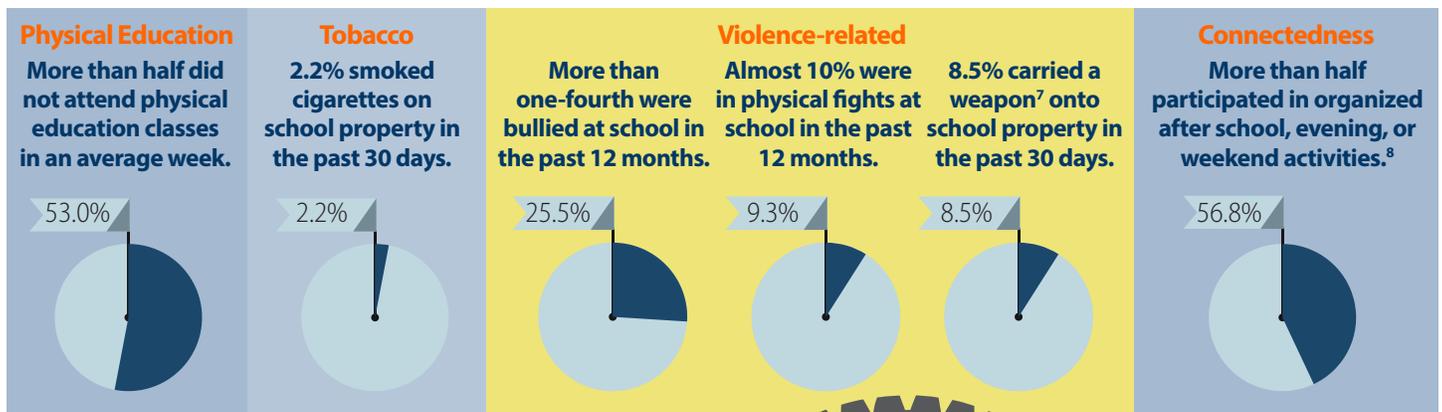
The percentage of Alaska students who experience violence is concerning.



Health and Risk Behaviors at School

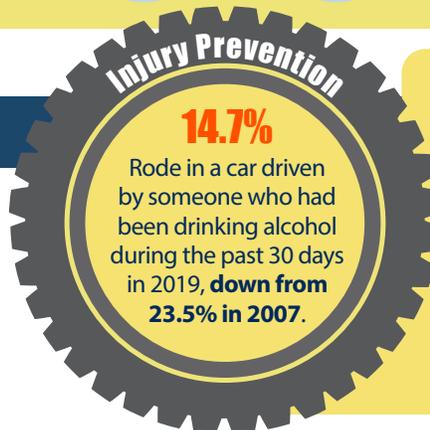
High school students spend more time at school than any place other than home. Therefore, it is important to understand the extent to which students experience

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.

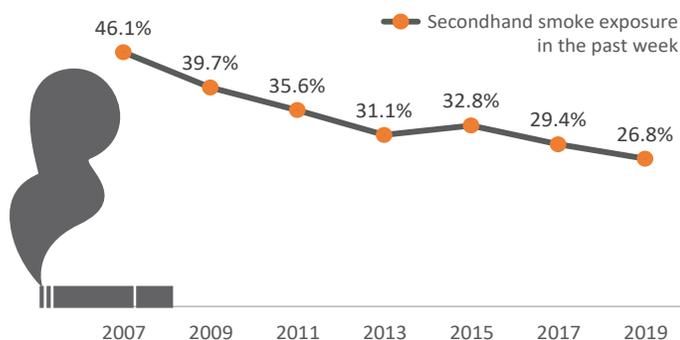


Among students who rode a bicycle in the past 12 months, 64.5% rarely or never wore a helmet in 2019, **down from 76.0% in 2007.**

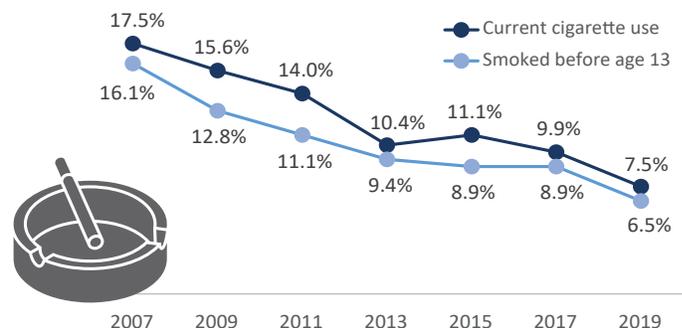
64.5%

Tobacco Improvements between 2007 and 2019:

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



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



⁷Such as a gun, knife, or club, on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey.

⁸Such as school clubs; community center groups; music, art, or dance lessons; drama; church; or cultural or other supervised activities.

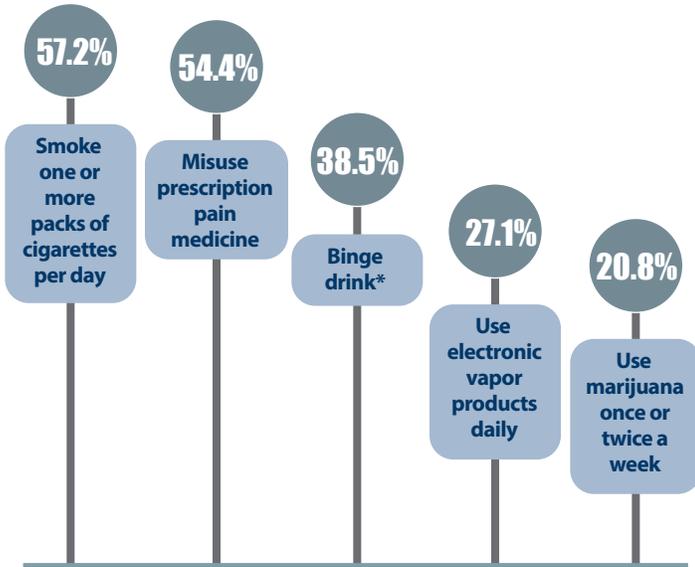
Perceptions & Connections



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:



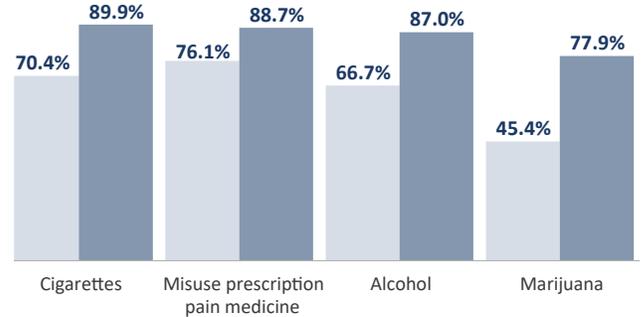
* Consume five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, once or twice a week.



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.

■ Friends think it's wrong or very wrong ■ Parents think it's wrong or very wrong



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.

This publication was supported by Grant/Cooperative Agreement #NU87PS004290, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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](#)

Published May 2020

