



RATIONALE and DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY CONTENT

Healthy Youth Survey 2023

This document describes the content, development, and design of the survey. It then provides the importance of and rationale for including each of the survey questions by topic area.

Survey Content Overview

The Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) contains questions related to topics including:

- Student demographic information (e.g., age, grade level, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity).
- Unintentional and intentional injury (e.g., depression/suicide, fighting, and weapon carrying).
- Physical activity and dietary behaviors (e.g., fruit and vegetable consumption).
- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.
- Related risk and protective factors (including community, school, and peer-individual factors).
- Access to school-based services.
- Sexual behavior and sexual abuse (schools can submit an exemption request for questions on these topics).

Survey Development

Prior to every administration of the HYS, survey questions are reviewed and modified to fit state and local needs. Staff from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Health (DOH), the Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), and the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) have collaborated on the content of the survey. Representatives from Washington local health jurisdictions, schools, ESDs, community mobilization, the prevention/intervention field, and universities were also invited to be involved in shaping the content of the survey.

Extra Survey Questions

Schools can submit an exemption request if they do not wish to administer the extra questions on sexual behavior and sexual abuse. Examples of these extra questions are included in this document.

Survey Content

Students in grades 8, 10 and 12 (and grades 9 and 11 in small school districts) will receive questions on some of the below topics:

- Demographics
- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Violence-related items
- School, family, and peer-individual risk and protective factors
- Nutrition and physical activity
- Safety behaviors
- Depressive feelings/suicide

Some of these questions about demographics, mental health, substance use, etc. are “core” questions, meaning all students will respond to these questions.

Students in grades 6 (and grade 7 in small school districts) will receive a shorter and simplified version of the form given to older students.

Survey Question Sources

Survey questions are generally chosen from previous Washington survey instruments or national established and tested surveys. New questions added to the HYS are field tested with students.

Survey questions primarily come from:

- Communities that Care Survey
- Monitoring the Future
- Recommendations from state and local agencies and universities.
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- National Youth Tobacco Survey

Survey Questions and Rationale

Sample survey questions and their rationale are presented by category below. An asterisk (*) indicates the question is also asked of grade 6 students. A double asterisk (**) indicates the question is asked of grade 6 students, but the wording is simplified from how it is asked of youth in grades 8 and higher. A superscript E € indicates that the question is an extra question.

Demographic Questions

Gathering basic demographic information helps to verify that the students participating in the survey are representative of the statewide student population in these grades. In addition, basic background information allows for examination of trends and differences in these health risk behaviors among students of varying background characteristics.

Sample questions:

- How old are you?*
- What sex were you assigned at birth? (Female/Male)*
- How do you describe yourself? Choose all that apply*. (American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Asian American; Black or African-American; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; White; Middle Eastern or North African; Other)

****Unintentional Injury Behavior Questions***

Unintentional injury is a leading cause of death for Washington residents aged 1 to 44. Some of the target behaviors of interest in the HYS include water safety, texting while driving, and drinking/marijuana use and driving.

State and local health jurisdictions run programs to increase awareness around water safety life vests and about the dangers of drunk, drugged and distracted driving. These programs strive to prevent injuries and death from motor vehicles and drowning.

Sample question:

- During the past 30 days, how many times did you ride in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol?*

Intentional Injury Behavior Questions

Intentional injury behaviors of interest include fighting, weapon carrying, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Suicide is another leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds in Washington. Fighting, weapon carrying, and attempted suicide are health risk behaviors associated with threats to personal safety, future injury, and death.

Sample question:

- During the past 30 days, on how many days did you: Carry a weapon such as a gun, knife on school property?

Safety and Violent Behavior Questions

Reducing violent behaviors such as bullying, harassment, physical abuse, and dating violence are important goals of state and local programs. Current federal and state goals for public health and education include the assurance of “safe and drug-free schools and communities” to promote student learning. The HYS includes questions designed to determine student safety and the extent to which students engage in selected violent behaviors.

Sample question:

- In the past 30 days, how often have you been bullied?

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

One of the target behaviors of interest in the HYS is the extent to which students have used—and are using—alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs. Asking these questions again maintains seamless local and statewide assessments of changes in patterns of substance use over time for Washington’s students. Further, these questions provide important data-driven direction for prevention both locally and across the state.

Core items of the HYS measure cigarette smoking, alcohol and marijuana use. Tobacco use is considered the most important preventable cause of death in the United States, and many smokers begin smoking in adolescence. Both alcohol and drug use (especially heavy use) are associated with other problem behaviors in youth such as school failure and delinquency.

Sample questions:

- During the past 30 days, on how many days did you: Drink a glass, can, or bottle of alcohol?*
- During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?*

Access to School-Based Services

Schools are increasingly perceived as a clearinghouse for students to access services. When schools do provide these services, students must be aware of their availability. Therefore, the HYS includes questions related to access to services.

Sample question:

- In the last year, did you have any contact with a school support personnel (such as a school counselor, nurse, social worker, intervention specialist, mental health counselor, therapist)?

Physical Activity and Dietary Behavior Questions

Exercise and physical activity have both immediate and long-term benefits. Proper nutrition is essential for health and wellbeing. The combination of moderate physical activity and proper nutrition contributes to maintaining a healthy weight.

Sample questions:

- Did you eat breakfast today?*
- In the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day? (Add up all the time you spent in any kind of physical activity that increases your heart rate or makes you breathe hard some of the time)*

Health Status and Health Care

The Healthy People 2020's overarching goals are to attain high-quality longer lives, achieve health equity, and promote good health for all across life stages. The HYS includes questions to assess behaviors that can impact people's quality of life and identify health disparities. Healthy People 2030 objectives emphasize the importance of health education and access to health care services for preventing disease and minimizing the long-term effects of disease¹. The HYS includes questions on physical and behavioral disabilities, and asthma. Questions are also asked about access to health care and health-related education in schools.

Sample question:

- Has a doctor or nurse ever told you that you have asthma?*

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk factors are characteristics of individuals and their families, schools, and communities that make them more vulnerable to ill health. Similarly, protective factors exert a positive influence or buffer against the negative influence of risk in these social environments.

Most of the risk and protective factors measured in the survey are associated with behaviors such as substance use, violence, and staying in school. The presence of multiple risk factors predicts an increased likelihood that an individual will engage in these behaviors, whereas the presence of protective factors helps to buffer the effect of risk factors and increase resilience.

These questions relate to the students themselves, their peers, their families, their schools, and the communities in which they live. Past survey responses have highlighted important patterns that guide school prevention and intervention programs across the state.

¹ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives>

Community Risk Factors

These risk factors include laws and norms favorable towards drug use, perceived availability of drugs, and perceived availability of handguns.

- If you wanted to get a handgun, how easy would it be for you to get one?

Community Protective Factors

These protective factors include opportunities for prosocial involvement and rewards for prosocial involvement.

- There are adults in my neighborhood I could talk to about something important.

School Risk Factors

These factors include academic failure and low commitment to school.

- Think back over the past year in school. How often did you enjoy school?*

School Protective Factors

These factors include opportunities for prosocial involvement and rewards for prosocial involvement.

- I feel safe during school.*

Peer-Individual Risk Factors

These factors include early initiation of drug use, favorable attitudes toward drug use, perceived risk of drug use, and friends' use of drugs.

- How much do you think people risk harming themselves if they: Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?*

Family Risk Factors

These factors address family management.

- My parent(s) ask if I've gotten my homework done.

Family Protective Factors

These factors include opportunities for prosocial involvement and rewards for prosocial involvement.

- If you skipped school, would you be caught by your parent(s)?

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Sexual orientation and gender identity are associated with serious health disparities. These questions can provide useful information to address these health disparities and inform local services. The two questions are asked with other demographic information on surveys for grades 8-12.

Sexual Orientation Question:

- Below is a list of terms that people often use to describe their sexuality or sexual orientation. Please choose all that apply to you. (Heterosexual/Straight, Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Questioning/Not sure of my sexual orientation, Something else fits better, I do not know what this question is asking.)

Gender identity question:

- Below is a list of terms that people may use to describe their gender identity. Please choose all that apply to you. (Boy/Man, Girl/Woman, Transgender boy/man, Transgender

girl/woman, Questioning/not sure of my gender identity, Something else fits better, I do not know what this question is asking)

A simplified and optional question is asked on surveys for 6th and 7th graders. Schools may opt into asking this simplified question: “What is your gender?” with the following response options: boy, girl, something else fits better. Unless schools specifically opt into asking this question, students will not be asked to report their gender.

Sexual Behavior and Abuse

Sexual behavior and abuse questions are only included in forms received by students in grades 8-12. Schools can request for an exemption for either or both topics.

Sexual behavior questions can provide useful information for how and where to direct appropriate interventions for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections with limited resources. It can also provide useful information in reshaping social norms by giving students who have not had sex an opportunity to be represented and providing all students with an accurate representation of the fact that not all teenagers are sexually active. Premature sexual behavior is associated with a variety of other health risk behaviors so the information can be used to generate support for other school and community-based services and programs, not just sexual health education.

Sexual behavior questions:

- *How old were you when you had sex for the first time? (I have never had sex; 11 years or younger; 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 years old or older).*
- *During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? Select all that apply. (I have not had sexual contact; Females; Males; Other)*
- *With how many people have you had sex? (I have never had sex; 1 person; 2 people, 3 people, 4 people, 5 people; 6 or more people)*
- *The last time you had sex, what method(s) did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections? (Select all that you used): (I have never had sex; No method was used; Birth control pills; Condoms; Dental dams; An IUD or implant (such as Mirena or ParaGard; Implanon or Nexplanon); A shot (such as Depo-Provera); Patch or birth control ring (such as Xulane; NuvaRing); Withdrawal; Some other method; Not sure)*

Sexual abuse questions:

- *Have you ever been in a situation where someone made you engage in kissing, sexual touch or having sex when you did not want to? (No, Yes).*
- *Have you ever seen someone about your age pressure someone else to kiss, touch, or have sex when they did not want to? (No; Yes).*

Validity and Honesty

Two questions are included to help determine how honestly youth answer the survey. These questions, along with other consistency checks, are used to determine if surveys are valid.

Sample question:

- How honest were you in filling out this survey?*