



2023

PA YOUTH SURVEY (PAYS) State Report Snapshot





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PARTICIPATION

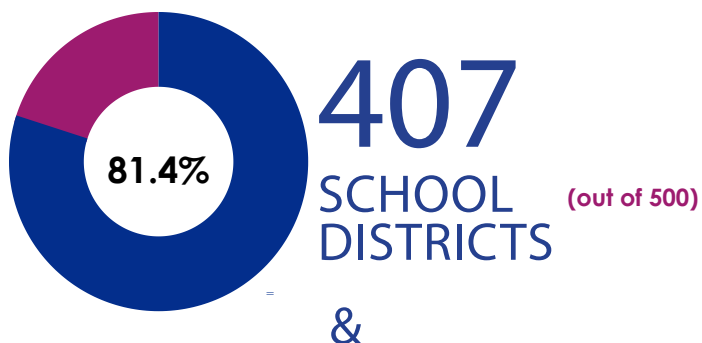
PA Youth Survey (PAYS)

PAYS is a primary tool in Pennsylvania’s prevention approach of using data to drive decision making. By looking not just at rates of problem behaviors but also at the root causes of those behaviors, PAYS allows schools and communities to address reasons (such as a lack of commitment to school) rather than only looking at the symptoms after the fact (like poor grades). This approach has been repeatedly shown in national research studies to be the most effective in helping youth develop into healthy, productive members of their society.

This report showcases data retrieved from the 2023 PA Youth Survey (PAYS) and will focus on data related to that administration. Key data points included in this report are those related to the causes of the problem behaviors also known as **risk factors**, **and protective factors**. PAYS was administered in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 in the state of Pennsylvania.

In 2023:

- 262,535 total students participated across 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades.
- The participation rate was 72.7% of students eligible to take the survey among participating schools.
- It was the second year students could indicate “Other” as their Gender. 5,000 students or 1.9% indicated this option.



in the 2023 PAYS Administration, representing 1,048 individual school buildings

To access the full 2023 State PAYS Report, visit: <https://bit.ly/3KTEUJH>



OR SCAN THIS QR CODE



HIGHEST 2023 RISK FACTORS

All Grades (% of youth at risk)

Low Commitment to School: 56.6% ↑

2021: 56.0%

2019: 50.6%

Parental Attitudes Favorable to Anti-Social Behavior: 54.7% ↑

2021: 51.5%

2019: 48.2%

Low Neighborhood Attachment: 44.6% ↑

2021: 44.2%

2019: 43.5%

Percent of Students with Total Risk (40.1) ↓

(defined as 5 or more risk factors for 6th and 8th graders and 7 or more risk factors for 10th and 12th graders) 2021: 41.1%

2019: 41.5%



Risk Factor	2019 PAYS	2021 PAYS	2023 PAYS	BH Norm
Low Commitment to School	50.6%	56.0%	56.6%	67.4%
Parental Attitudes Favorable to Anti-Social Behavior	48.2%	51.5%	54.7%	38.9%
Low Neighborhood Attachment	43.5%	44.2%	44.6%	46.1%
Peer Attitudes Favorable to Anti-Social Behavior	38.1%	42.5%	44.4%	43.5%
Depressive Symptoms	38.5%	41.5%	39.4%	38.7%
Total Risk <i>(Defined as 5 or more risk factors for 6th and 8th graders and 7 or more risk factors for 10th and 12th graders)</i>	41.5%	41.1%	40.1%	36.1%

*Percentages represent the percent of youth at risk of engaging in problem behaviors due to a given risk factor.



TOP RISK FACTORS BY GRADE

	Parental Attitudes Favorable to Anti-Social Behavior	Low Neighborhood Attachment	Low Commitment to School
6TH GRADE	66.4% 2021: 57.9% 2019: 53.3%	46.6% 2021: 44.2% 2019: 44.5%	58.6% 2021: 50.3% 2019: 45.4%
8TH GRADE	51.0% 2021: 47.2% 2019: 41.7%	38.4% 2021: 36.0% 2019: 35.2%	61.5% 2021: 58.3% 2019: 52.7%
10TH GRADE	52.3% 2021: 51.8% 2019: 50.4%	43.6% 2021: 42.9% 2019: 42.5%	58.6% 2021: 61.7% 2019: 55.3%
12TH GRADE	50.7% 2021: 49.4% 2019: 47.7%	49.9% 2021: 53.4% 2019: 51.9%	47.7% 2021: 53.1% 2019: 48.6%

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Highest levels of protection for 2023 remain in the Family Domain:



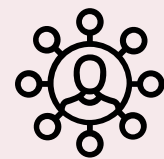
67.8%

Family Attachment



64.1%

Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement



54.7%

Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

Family Attachment and Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement went up from 2021↑

Total Protection is 53.9%, higher than the BH Norm at 44.8% ↑



ALCOHOL DATA

For the sixth straight administration, lifetime use continued to decrease in all grades.

National Average

PA is higher than the National Average in lifetime use for 8th and 10th grades.

8th: 21.5% (PA) to 20.1% (MTF*)

10th: 32.5% (PA) to 35.8% (MTF*)

30-day Use

30-day use of alcohol is slightly lower in PA 10th and 12th graders than their national peers.

The rates did decline from 2021:

10th: 16.1% (2021) to 11.4% (2023) ↓

12th: 27.4% (2021) to 23.8% (2023) ↓

Binge Drinking ↓

Binge drinking rates decreased

10th: 5.3% (2021) to 3.7% (2023)

12th: 11.8% (2021) to 9.5% (2023)

10th and 12th Graders

Female Students:

More 10th and 12th grade female students reported lifetime use of alcohol than their male counterparts:

10th: 36.1% (females) to 31.5% (males)

12th: 48.1% (females) to 43.5% (males)

However, male students reported slightly higher levels of binge drinking, 9.0% of male seniors to 8.6% of female seniors.

Driving Under the Influence: ↓

The rate of 12th graders who reported driving a vehicle after drinking alcohol during the past year continued to decline, from 5.5% in 2017, to 3.9% in 2019, to 2.5% in 2021 to 2.3% in 2023.

The rate of 12th graders who reported driving after using marijuana also continued to decline from 9.8% in 2019, to 5.9% in 2021 to 3.7% in 2023.

65.2%
NEVER USED
ALCOHOL
↑ 2019: 59%



Obtaining Alcohol

For youth who reported alcohol use in the past year, the two most commonly reported sources were “parents provided it to me” and “took it without permission (from home, store, etc.)”.

For 12th graders, the most commonly reported source was “friends, brothers, or sisters over 21 provided it to me”.

49.3% of seniors reported it would be easy or somewhat easy to obtain alcohol

(continuing the decline from 69.0% in 2015) ↓

Reported that they would not be caught by the police for underage drinking:

10th: 69.7%

12th: 75.1%

28.2% of seniors reported they would be willing to try alcohol before they were 21 ↓

2021: 37.3%

2019: 46.9%

2017: 49.9%

*Monitoring the Future survey project provides prevalence-of-use information for ATODS from a nationally representative sample.



MARIJUANA

PA students are using marijuana at lower levels than their national peers:

Lifetime

Change from 2021 to 2023

8th Grade: 5.7% to 5.6%

10th Grade: 14.8% to 12.4%

12th Grade: 30.4% to 26.2%

10th and 12th grade rates continued to drop while 8th grade remained steady

30-Day

Change from 2021 to 2023

8th Grade: 2.7% to 2.7%

10th Grade: 8.0% to 6.8%

12th Grade: 16.8% to 14.6%

Willingness to try marijuana

IN 2023 THERE WAS A CONTINUED DECREASE IN WILLINGNESS TO TRY MARIJUANA FOR ALL GRADES, WITH ONLY 18.0 % OF SENIORS REPORTING WILLINGNESS TO TRY



88% of PA youth have never tried marijuana!



TOBACCO DATA

Lifetime use of cigarettes continues to decline

8TH GRADE ↓

2023: 4.1%

2021: 5.4%

2019: 6.9%

2017: 9.4%

10TH GRADE ↓

2023: 6.4%

2021: 9.6%

2019: 12.2%

2017: 16.2%

12TH GRADE ↓

2023: 11.6%

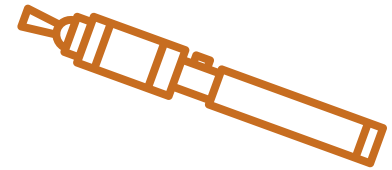
2021: 15.3%

2019: 21.9%

2017: 29.0%

30-Day use of cigarettes has decreased ↓

The percentage of 12th graders reporting 30-day use of cigarettes has halved since 2019.



VAPING & E-CIGARETTES

PA students are reporting 30-day e-cigarette use at the same rates as the national average.

30-Day (2021 - 2023)

8th Grade: 9.2% to 5.5%

10th Grade: 16.2% to 8.4%

12th Grade: 23.7% to 14.9%

Rates in all grades went down from 2021.

Lifetime (New to PAYS 2023)

8th Grade: 10.4%

10th Grade: 15.0%

12th Grade: 25.2%

50.3%

OF 12TH GRADERS WHO VAPED
IN THE PAST YEAR SAID THEY
VAPED MARIJUANA OR HASH OIL.

WHAT ARE YOUTH VAPING?

Nicotine is the most common substance youth report vaping

Among 12th graders who report vaping in the past year, the percent who report vaping marijuana has increased each year since 2015.

Among 6th graders who report vaping in the past year, the most commonly reported substance was “Just flavoring”.



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

12th Grade Lifetime Pain Reliever Misuse Continues to Decrease

2023: 2.9%
2021: 3.3%
2019: 6.1%
2017: 8.8%
2015: 12.1%

12th Grade 30-Day Pain Reliever Misuse remained about the same as 2021 at 0.6%



OVERALL PERCENTAGE

The overall percentage of students reporting it would be easy for them to obtain prescription drugs not prescribed continues to decrease:

- 27.8% in 2015
- 25.5% in 2017
- 23.9% in 2019
- 20.6% in 2021
- 19.0% in 2023

MODERATE/GREAT RISK

The percentage of students reporting moderate or great risk of harming themselves by using prescription drugs not prescribed to them continues to increase to 89.3% in 2023.

WRONG TO USE

84.7% of 12th graders reported that their friends would think it was wrong or very wrong to use prescription drugs not prescribed to them.

- 81.5% in 2017
- 83.2% in 2019
- 83.6% in 2021

LIFETIME USE

Lifetime use of prescription stimulants among 12th graders continues to decrease:

- 9.7% in 2015
- 6.8% in 2017
- 4.2% in 2019
- 2.9% in 2021
- 2.4% in 2023

The national rate for 2023 was 4.9%.

OTHER DRUGS

Lifetime Use

Inhalants

Lower than the national average, especially in 8th grade: 4.0% in (PA) compared to 9.0% (MTF)

Synthetic Drugs


Lifetime use among 12th graders:

4.8% in 2015 2.0% in 2017 1.4% in 2019 0.7% in 2021 1.4% in 2023

Heroin lifetime use remains low for 12th graders: 0.1%

12th graders reported lifetime use of hallucinogens: 4.8%

LESS THAN
1%



30-DAY USE OF COCAINE, CRACK, METHAMPHETAMINE, AND HEROIN REMAINS LOW



PERCEPTIONS OF RISK AND APPROVAL

The perceived risk of using marijuana regularly has increased:

Percentage of students who reported the view of moderate or great risk for regular use by grade

6th Grade: 87.3% (79.0% in 2021)

8th Grade: 88.5% (81.1% in 2021)

10th Grade: 84.3% (69.5% in 2021)

12th Grade: 73.7% (56.2% in 2021)



82.7%

OF 12TH GRADERS REPORTED

MODERATE OR GREAT RISK TO BINGE DRINK

6TH GRADE

86.4% reported that their friends would disapprove of using marijuana

8TH GRADE

84.1% reported that their friends would disapprove of using marijuana

10TH GRADE

72.9% reported that their friends would disapprove of using marijuana. Compared to 76.4% for daily alcohol use.

12TH GRADE

57.7% reported that their friends would disapprove of using marijuana. Compared to 71.6% for daily alcohol use.

All of these numbers are now increasing, reversing a trend toward peer acceptance.

90.4% OF STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THEIR PARENTS WOULD THINK IT WAS WRONG OR VERY WRONG FOR THEM TO USE MARIJUANA. THIS IS LOWER THAN THE RATES FOR ALCOHOL (92.9%), TOBACCO, (94.1%) AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS (94.5%).

83.7% of students reported they would disapprove of someone their age drinking nearly every day, including 74.7% of seniors.
















Overall, 87.4% of students reported it would be wrong for someone their age to smoke cigarettes. This figure has decreased from 89.0% in 2021.

In 2023, only 63.1% of seniors and 78.2% of 10th graders reported that they would somewhat or strongly disapprove of someone their age using marijuana. For 6th graders, this figure was 93.9% and for 8th graders it was 89.0%.



SCHOOL STATISTICS

	<p>The rate of students who said they felt school would be important later in life dropped for 6th and 8th grade, but increased for 10th and 12 grade.</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">6th Graders: 2023: 59.2%, 2021: 64.8%</td> <td style="width: 50%;">10th Graders: 2023: 36.2%, 2021: 30.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8th Graders: 2023: 39.7% 2021: 41.4%</td> <td>12 Graders: 2023: 38.3%, 2021: 32.1%</td> </tr> </table>	6th Graders: 2023: 59.2%, 2021: 64.8%	10th Graders: 2023: 36.2%, 2021: 30.4%	8th Graders: 2023: 39.7% 2021: 41.4%	12 Graders: 2023: 38.3%, 2021: 32.1%
6th Graders: 2023: 59.2%, 2021: 64.8%	10th Graders: 2023: 36.2%, 2021: 30.4%				
8th Graders: 2023: 39.7% 2021: 41.4%	12 Graders: 2023: 38.3%, 2021: 32.1%				
	<p>Overall, 31.8% of students felt their schoolwork was meaningful and important, down from 40.4% in 2017, 35.9% in 2019, and 32.4% in 2021. 6th Graders: 51.1%, 8th Graders: 31.4%, 10th Graders: 24.3%, 12th Graders: 23.0%</p>				
	<p>Overall, 78.4% of students reported they felt safe in their school. This is down from 84.1% in 2015, and 83.4% in 2017, 80.0% in 2019, and 82.0% in 2021.</p>				
	<p>77.4% of students reported there is an opportunity for students to talk one-on-one with a teacher, down from 78.5% in 2021.</p>				
	<p>18.5% of students reported being threatened at school over the last year, up from 16.7% in 2021. 6th Graders: 22.1%, 8th Graders: 24.3%</p>				
	<p>10.9% of 6th graders say they were attacked at school during the last year.</p>				
	<p>58.4% of students reported adults stop bullying when they see it or are told about it, up from 55.1% in 2021 and 54.8% in 2019. This ranges from 73.7% of 6th graders, down to only 49.9% of 12th graders.</p>				
	<p>18.0% of 10th graders and 20.0% of 12th graders reported inappropriate sexual contact when using technology. This is a decrease from 2019 in both grades (28.6% and 26.3%, respectively) and 2021 (25.0% and 24.9%).</p>				
	<p>26.2% of students reported having suffered some bullying over the last year, up from 23.2% in 2021 This was highest among 6th graders at 34.3%.</p>				
	<p>21.6% of students reported being bullied on school property over the past year, up from 16.1% in 2021. 6th Graders: 25.5%, 8th Graders: 27.6%</p>				
	<p>66.4% of students, including 67.2% of 10th graders and 68.7% of 12th graders, reported being emotionally abused through insults or name-calling.</p>				
	<p>14.9% of 10th graders and 18.0% of 12th graders reported being abused by being isolated from friends or family by another person.</p>				
	<p>The most common reasons students reported being bullied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51.2%: "The Way I Look (clothing, hairstyle, etc.)" • Highest rate among 8th graders (55.3%) • 39.4%: "My Size (height/weight)" • Highest rate among 8th graders (42.4%) 				



MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

	Feeling Sad or Depressed	Self Harm and Suicide Risk
ALL GRADES	<p>37.3% of students reported feeling sad or depressed most days 2021: 40.1% 2019: 38.0%</p> <p>24.4% ↓ down from 27.9% in 2021 of students stated “Sometimes they think life is not worth it” 2019: 25.2%</p>	<p>32.0% of students who reported being bullied also reported seriously considering suicide in the past year</p> <p>Student reported self-harm (such as cutting) decreased in all grades</p>
8TH GRADE	<p>36.0% of students reported feeling sad or depressed most days</p> <p>23.4% said that they are inclined to think they are a failure</p> <p>35.0% reported that “at times I think I am no good at all”</p>	<p>16.5% Student reported self-harm (such as cutting) 2021: 20.1%</p> <p>16.5% reported considering suicide and 5.3% attempting suicide</p>
10TH GRADE	<p>37.6% of students reported feeling sad or depressed most days</p> <p>23.7% said that they are inclined to think they are a failure</p> <p>34.9% reported that “at times I think I am no good at all”</p>	<p>15.1% Student reported self-harm (such as cutting) 2021: 19.5%</p> <p>16.4% reported considering suicide and 5.4% attempting suicide</p>
12TH GRADE	<p>38.3% of students reported feeling sad or depressed most days</p> <p>24.4% said that they are inclined to think they are a failure</p> <p>37.0% reported that “at times I think I am no good at all”</p>	<p>13.0% Student reported self-harm (such as cutting) 2021: 15.1%</p> <p>17.9% reported considering suicide and 5.9% attempting suicide</p>

27.3% ↓

students who reported they were so sad they ceased doing their usual activities increased.

2021: 31.0%
2019: 25.2%



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH



71.3%

OF STUDENTS REPORTED
IN THE PAST MONTH THEIR
MENTAL HEALTH HAS
BEEN GOOD*

6th: 81.5%
8th: 73.3%
10th: 67.5%
12th: 64.3%

*New to PAYS in 2023

20.4%

of students said they have not felt sad, lonely, or worried in the past 30 days.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

When students feel sad, lonely, or worried they talk to:

43.6% A friend

36.8% A parent or caregiver

16.8% Another family member





OTHER DATA



35.7%

of students reported sleeping less than 7 hours a night on school nights
10th Graders: 40.6%
12th Graders: 54.2%



60.5%

of all students reported engaging in school sponsored activities



64.4%

of students reported feeling tired or sleepy during the day every day or several times during the past two weeks
10th Graders: 69.8%
12th Graders: 74.3%



20.7%

of students worried that food would run out before their family could buy more



67.3%

of seniors reported having a job or employment up from 66.3% in 2021; 39.1% reported volunteering



93.2%

of students in all grades reported that their parents knew where they were and who they were with
This has remained about the same across all grades from 2021



86.4%

of students reported that there are clear family rules about alcohol and drug use
6th Graders: 88.9%
12th Graders: 84.1%



88.1%

of all students said it would be hard or very hard to obtain a handgun
This figure has increased from 87.2% in 2019 and 87.7% in 2021