

2025 Wilmington Youth Health Survey

FACT SHEET

What is the YHS?

Youth health surveys have been conducted for many years to track key health risk behaviors that contribute to major causes of death, disease, injury, and social issues among young people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), first administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to Massachusetts high school students in 1993. In 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) introduced the Massachusetts Youth Health Survey (MYHS) to further examine youth risk behaviors and protective factors of high school and middle school students. Since then, YRBS and MYHS have been conducted jointly.

The Wilmington Youth Health Survey (YHS) was modeled after the YRBS and YHS and is updated every year in response to emerging health issues. The 2024-2025 survey includes questions in the following topic areas:

- Social Determinants of Health
- Protective Factors
- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Safety
- Violence-Related Behaviors and Experiences
- Sexual Behaviors
- Nutrition and Physical Activity

Who is eligible for the Wilmington YHS?

All students in grades 6 through 12 are eligible to participate. Parents can opt their child out of taking the survey and students can, similarly, choose not to participate.

Is the YHS anonymous?

Yes, student participation in the YHS both anonymous and voluntary. The surveys are completed using an anonymous link and no identifying information is collected.

How is YHS data disseminated?

A report is created for the school district. Average results for the school will be made public in the fall of 2025 and will be used to improve the health and overall well-being of children and youth in Wilmington, Middlesex County, and across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

How are YHS data used?

The YHS is considered the primary source for comprehensive data on school-aged youth and young adult health practices and health risk behaviors. State governments, local communities, and public health organizations use YHS data to set and track progress toward meeting school health and health promotion program goals, support modification of school health curricula or other programs, support new legislation and policies that promote health, and seek funding and other support for new initiatives.

CDC and other federal agencies routinely use YRBS data to assess trends in priority health behaviors among high school students, monitor progress toward achieving national health objectives, and evaluate

the contribution of broad prevention efforts in schools and other settings toward helping the nation reduce health risk behaviors among youth.

Will this survey cause students to initiate or increase high-risk behaviors?

There is no evidence that simply asking students about health behaviors will encourage them to try that behavior. The causes and determinants of health risk behaviors are very complex. Students receive regular exposure to information about tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use; violence; and sexuality through their school curricula, the media, parents, friends, and community organizations. Exposure to a small number of questions on any one topic is not likely to cause a significant change in behavior—either good or bad.

Do students answer the questions truthfully?

Research indicates data of this nature may be gathered as reliably from adolescents as from adults. JSI follows the MA Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data cleaning methods when processing YHS data to help identify the small percentage of students who falsify their answers. To obtain truthful answers, students must perceive the survey as important and know that procedures have been developed to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation.

Who is JSI?

JSI has been subcontracted by your district to facilitate the administration of the YHS, analyze the results, and create reports. JSI is a health care research and consulting organization committed to improving the health of individuals and communities worldwide. Its fundamental goal is to ensure that all individuals can live their best and healthiest life, regardless of age or circumstances. In pursuit of our goal, JSI provides innovative management consulting and technical assistance incorporating a broad range of skills. Founded in 1978, they collaborate with government agencies, the private sector, and local nonprofit and civil society organizations to identify and implement solutions to public health challenges. These partnerships improve the quality, accessibility, and equity of health systems and lead to better health outcomes.