

# Healthy Kids Colorado Survey

## Top 2023 Data Stories



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**SATF Meeting: August 2, 2024**

Presentation by Emily Fine, School and Youth Survey Manager, CDPHE  
Analysis by Sophie Rosenberg, Data Program Manager, CSPH Survey Team



# Background Info

## HKCS PURPOSE

To better understand youth health and the factors that help young people make healthy choices.

Participation is voluntary, with a 4-tiered consent process that includes district administrators, school leaders, parents, and youth.

## 30+ Years

Colorado has been surveying youth in schools every other year since 1991, starting with the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

# Background Info

## OVERSIGHT

The Steering Committee oversees major decisions in survey content, methodology, and messaging.

The work is informed by paid youth focus groups and subject matter experts from our large network.

### Multi-agency collaboration:

- CDPHE
- CDPS
- CDE
- BHA

# Background Info

## CDPHE + CSPH Survey Team

CDPHE contracts with a team of researchers from the Colorado School of Public Health to recruit schools, administer the surveys, and analyze and return results.



# HKCS Results Timeline

## Schools

Within 3  
weeks of  
surveying

## Districts

By March,  
even  
years

## Regional & State

By June,  
even  
years

# 2023 Participation



**120,239 Students**

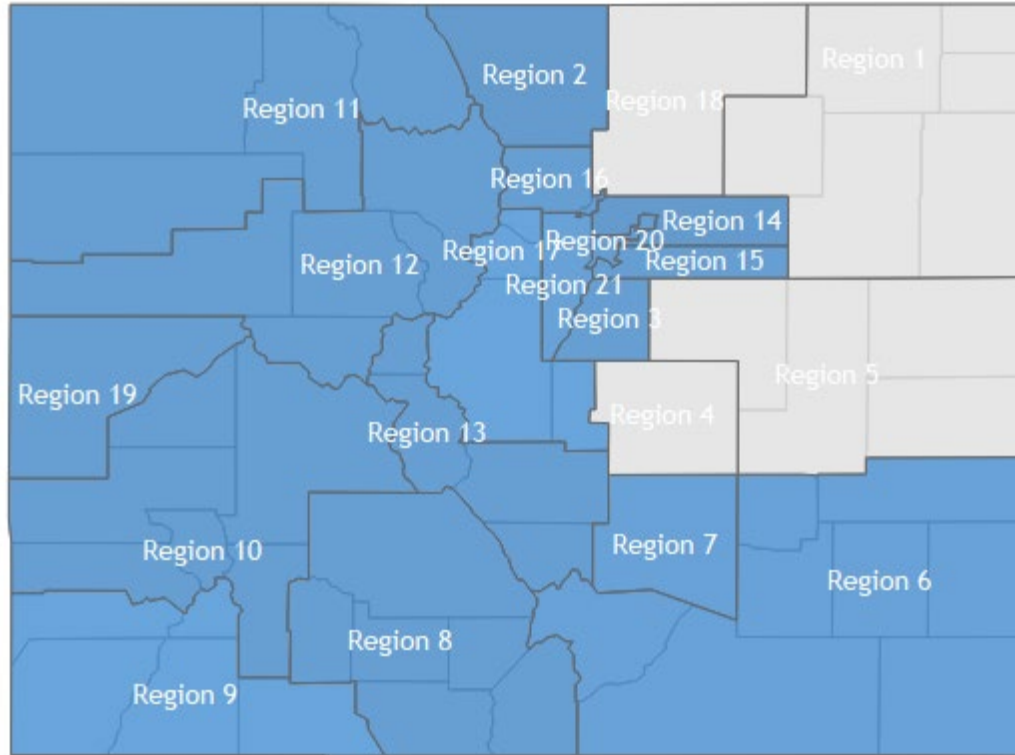


**344 Schools**



**46 Counties**

# Regions with Representative High School Results in 2023



# 2023 HKCS: Top Data Stories

## Improvements in Mental Health

**57.7%** of youth agree their stress level is manageable most days

- increase from 53.2% in 2021

**25.7%** of youth experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in the past year

- decrease from 39.6% in 2021

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.





# 2023 HKCS: Top Data Stories

## Improvements in Suicidality

**11.1%** of youth seriously considered suicide in the past year

- decrease from 17.1% in 2021

**5.5%** of youth attempted suicide one or more times in the past year

- decrease from 7.2% in 2021

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.



# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying



# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying

“ I feel like after COVID, everyone just kind of realized how much they need each other, and I feel that a lot of groups at school are better at leaning on each other. If you're in a particularly hard class or something, I see a lot more leaning on each other and working together than I think I did before. There's a lot more just support from peers than before. ”

# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying

“ I do kind of think people are starting to feel a bit better now that we are back in person, kind of making those **human connections** and getting to really **explore interests** again because just sitting behind your computer for eight hours a day is really difficult when you don't have that **human interaction**. So I think that coming back in person is really helpful. ”

# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying

“

I've noticed that **mental health support** has been **destigmatized** a little bit... it's more acceptable for someone who probably wouldn't have gone before to go seek out that help now.

”

# 2023 HKCS: Top Data Stories

The HKCS results consistently illuminate disparities in health outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth and 2023 is no exception.

“ We hope to build on some of the positive trends coming out of the survey to close the gaps we see for LGBTQ+ youth in Colorado. Protective factors, such as supportive adults, clear family rules, and feeling safe and connected at school, help youth to thrive. ”

—Lena Heilmann, Director of the Office of Suicide Prevention



# 2023 HKCS: Protective Factors



Youth with clear family rules were **72% less likely** to seriously consider suicide



Youth who feel safe at school were **72% less likely** to seriously consider suicide



Youth who have an adult they can go to for help with a serious problem were **61% less likely** to seriously consider suicide



Youth who got **8 or more** hours of sleep on average school nights were **58% less likely** to seriously consider suicide

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.





# 2023 HKCS: Top Data Stories

## Current Substance Use (Declines in 3 of top 5)

**20.5%** of youth drank alcohol within the past month

- decrease from 23.6% in 2021

**8.7%** of youth vaped within the past month

- decrease from 16.1% in 2021

**3.5%** of youth used prescription pain medicine without a prescription or differently than prescribed in the past month

- decrease from 5.9% in 2021

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.



# 2023 HKCS: Top Data Stories

## Current Substance Use (Steady in 2 of top 5)

**12.8%** of youth used marijuana within the past month

- no change from 2021

**3.1%** of youth smoked cigarettes within the past month

- no change from 2021

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.



# 2023 HKCS: Protective Factors



Youth who feel the rules in their family are clear are **57% less likely** to use substances.



Youth who feel like they belong at school are **41% less likely** to use substances.



Youth who have a trusted adult to go to with a serious problem are **34% less likely** to use substances.

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.



# New in 2023: Ever Use of More Drugs

**4.4%** of youth have ever used stimulants not prescribed to them or differently than prescribed

**3.8%** of youth have ever used psychedelics

**3.8%** of youth have ever used hemp-derived, intoxicating cannabinoid products like Delta-8 & Delta-10 THC

**0.8%** of youth have ever used fentanyl

**0.7%** of youth have ever used kratom

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public high school in Colorado.



# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying



# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying

“ And it's also because from -- at least the people that I know, a lot of it seems like it's sort of **a learned behavior** and it's peer-pressured. When they're seeing **their parents**, or **their friends** are forcing them into doing it, then they start doing it, and then it becomes an addiction and a habit, and they **can't break it.** ”

# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying

“ ...'Connect Effect' ad, and it's all about how it's pretty much like we're making sure that people understand that it's really not a lot of people that are doing these substances.” ”

# 2023 HKCS: What Youth Are Saying

“

I think for social media, it increased a lot because even when you're scrolling on a lot of the social, like Instagram, TikTok, you get the random ads... 'Hey, this is wrong in so many ways.'

”



# 2023 HKCS: Middle School

## Concerning increase in alcohol use

**24.2%** of youth ever had a drink of alcohol

- increase from 11.2% in 2021

**6.6%** of youth drank alcohol within the past month

- increase from 3.9% in 2021

**13.8%** of youth had their first drink before age 11

- increase from 4.9% in 2021

These HKCS results are representative of youth who attend public middle school in Colorado.



# HKCS Marijuana-Specific Findings

## Youth Marijuana Use Dashboard

Presentation by Elyse Contreras, Senior Epidemiologist and Manager, Marijuana Health Monitoring Section

Analysis by Wenhua Ren, Statistical Analyst, Marijuana Health Monitoring Section



# Discussion

# Thank You

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