

Provide Comparable State and Large Urban School District Data

One of the strengths of YRBSS is that it provides not just national but state and large urban school district data. These data are more likely to be used to develop, improve, and evaluate state and local policies, programs, and practices because they reflect a more relevant population for local stakeholders and decision makers than national data. Because participating states and large urban school districts use similar sampling designs, questionnaires, data collection strategies, and data processing procedures, their YRBS data can be compared which provides even more information to guide decision making about public health interventions that can help reduce health-risk behaviors among youth.

Across states, a range of 25 or more percentage points or a fivefold variation or greater was identified for the following 19 behaviors:

- having texted or e-mailed while driving (minimum: 27.4%; maximum: 55.2%);
- current frequent cigarette use (minimum: 0.4%; maximum: 5.5%);
- current daily cigarette use (minimum: 0.3%; maximum: 4.5%);
- having smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day (minimum: 2.3%; maximum: 18.1%);
- current frequent smokeless tobacco use (minimum: 0.6%; maximum: 5.8%);
- current daily smokeless tobacco use (minimum: 0.4%; maximum: 5.1%);
- current frequent cigar use (minimum: 0.4%; maximum: 2.9%);
- current daily cigar use (minimum: 0.3%; maximum: 2.4%);
- having ever drunk alcohol (minimum: 30.4%; maximum: 68.0%);
- having ever used marijuana (minimum: 16.6%; maximum: 44.1%);
- having ever used heroin (minimum: 1.2%; maximum: 9.6%);
- having ever used methamphetamines (minimum: 1.7%; maximum: 10.5%);
- having ever injected any illegal drug (minimum: 1.4%; maximum: 8.0%);
- having used an IUD or implant before last sexual intercourse (minimum: 1.9%; maximum: 13.3%);
- having used birth control pills; an IUD or implant; or a shot, patch, or birth control ring before last sexual intercourse (minimum: 20.9%; maximum: 50.2%);
- having drunk one or more glasses of milk per day (minimum: 19.8%; maximum: 48.3%);

- going to PE classes on 1 or more days (minimum: 27.9%; maximum: 91.5%);
- going to PE classes on all 5 days (minimum: 5.8%; maximum: 68.4%); and
- having never seen a dentist (minimum: 0.9%; maximum: 4.7%).

Across large urban school districts, a range of 25 or more percentage points or a fivefold variation or greater was identified for the following 13 behaviors:

- current frequent cigarette use (minimum: 0.1%; maximum: 1.4%);
- current daily cigarette use (minimum: 0.1%; maximum: 0.8%);
- current frequent electronic vapor product use (minimum: 0.4%; maximum: 2.5%);
- current daily electronic vapor product use (minimum: 0.1%; maximum: 1.9%);
- current daily smokeless tobacco use (minimum: 0.1%; maximum: 1.2%);
- having ever drunk alcohol (minimum: 38.2%; maximum: 64.8%);
- having ever used heroin (minimum: 1.3%; maximum: 7.6%);
- having ever had sexual intercourse (minimum: 21.7%; maximum: 49.2%);
- having used an IUD or implant before last sexual intercourse (minimum: 0.7%; maximum: 10.4%);
- having used a shot, patch, or birth control ring before last sexual intercourse (minimum: 0.0%; maximum: 9.3%);
- having ever been tested for HIV (minimum: 10.2%; maximum: 37.2%);
- going to PE classes on 1 or more days (minimum: 28.0%; maximum: 86.1%); and
- going to PE classes on all 5 days (minimum: 7.1%; maximum: 43.5%).

All these substantial differences across states and large urban school districts might reflect differences in state and local laws and policies, enforcement practices, access to drugs, availability of effective school and community interventions, prevailing behavioral and social norms (including attitudes toward sexual minorities), the amount of stigma and discrimination, demographic characteristics of the population, and adult practices and health-related behaviors. Positive changes in one or more of these factors might contribute to important reductions in health-risk behaviors within and across states and large urban school districts among students in grades 9–12.