

**Factors Related to Need for Mental Health Services among
School-Age Children:
Data from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

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At the time of this publication, Elinore F. McCance-Katz M.D, Ph.D., served as SAMHSA Assistant Secretary.

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Factors Related to Need for Mental Health Services among School-Age Children: Data from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is a national school-based survey conducted by CDC and state, territorial, tribal, and local surveys. The survey monitors six categories of health-related behaviors among samples of 9th through 12th grade public and private school students. These categories include behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence, sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV infection, alcohol and other drug use, tobacco use, dietary behaviors, and physical activity. These surveys are conducted every two years, usually during the spring semester, by student self-report. In 2019, YRBSS collected data in all states in the Southeast Region, including Alabama (AL), Florida (FL), Georgia (GA), Kentucky (KY), Mississippi (MS), North Carolina (NC), South Carolina (SC), and Tennessee (TN).

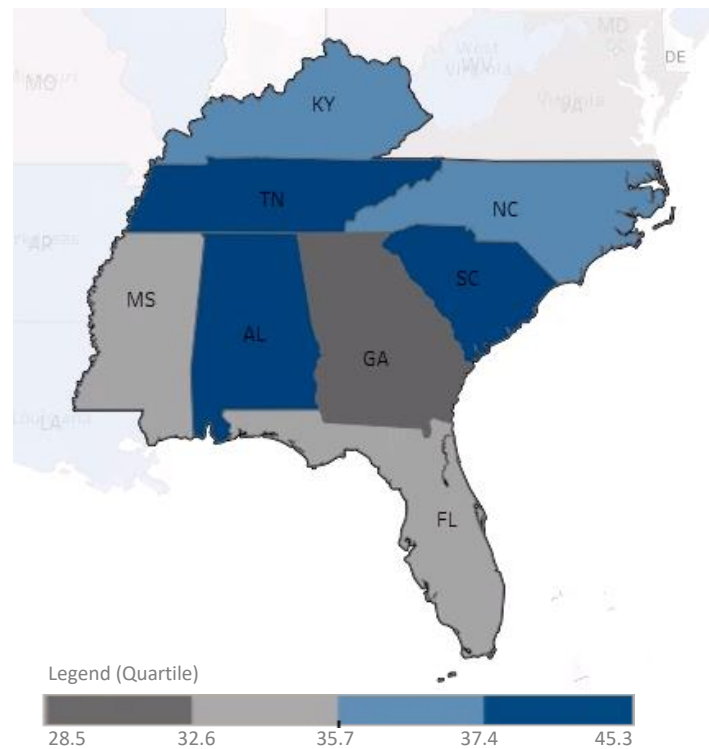
In 2019, high school students all over the United States struggled with feelings of sadness, suicidal ideation, being bullied, and fighting in school. For example, over one in three students reported feeling sad or hopeless for two weeks or more, so much so that they stop participating in some of their usual activities. Female students reported being affected by sadness, suicidal ideation, and bullying more than male students. However, male students are involved in more physical fights at school. Due to the self-reporting methodology used by YRBSS, it is important to keep in mind that students may under-report stigmatizing behaviors, including suicidal ideation and drug use. Therefore, the numbers in this report may underestimate how often these issues arise.

In the **Southeast region**, each state showed a different pattern of the reported factors. **South Carolina** had the highest sadness and suicidal ideation rates, while **Mississippi** had the highest rate of fighting at school. The region's highest prevalence of bullying at school – as well as the region's lowest rate of fighting at school – were reported in **Kentucky**. Meanwhile, reported rates of sadness, suicidal ideation, and bullying were relatively low in **Florida** and **Georgia**. Statistics are presented for all of these measures by the state in the Appendix.





Feelings of Sadness or Hopelessness



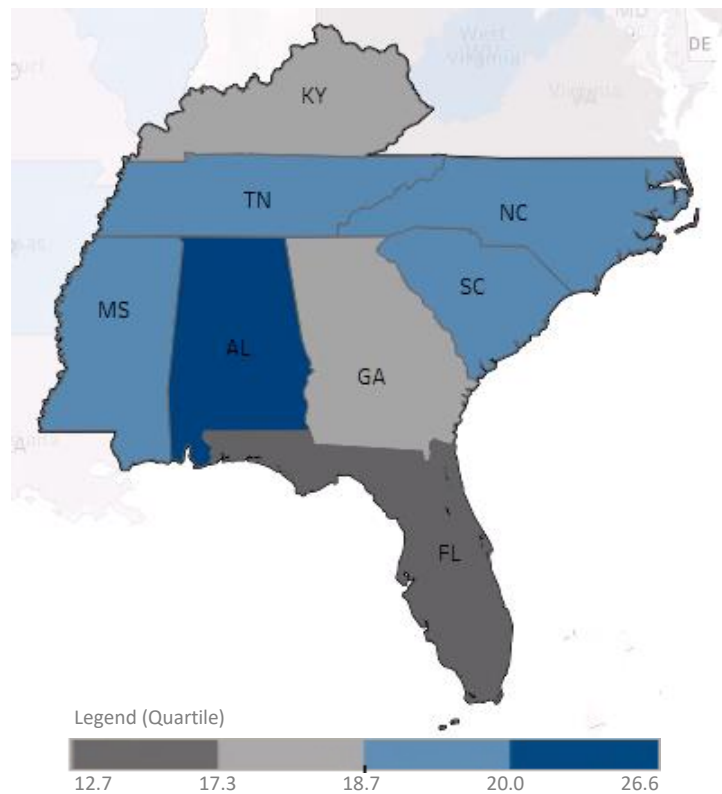
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2019 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, more than 1 in 3 students (36.7%) reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities during the 12 months before the survey.
- **Alabama (37.5%), Kentucky (37.2%), South Carolina (39.0%) and Tennessee (37.5%)** fell above the national average. The region's highest prevalence of sadness and hopelessness was reported among students in **South Carolina**.
- The prevalence of feelings of sadness and hopelessness reported in **North Carolina (36.3%)** was close to the national average.
- **Florida (33.7%), Georgia (29.9%), and Mississippi (35.7%)** fell below the national average. The region's lowest prevalence of sadness and hopelessness was reported among students in **Georgia**.





Suicidal Ideation



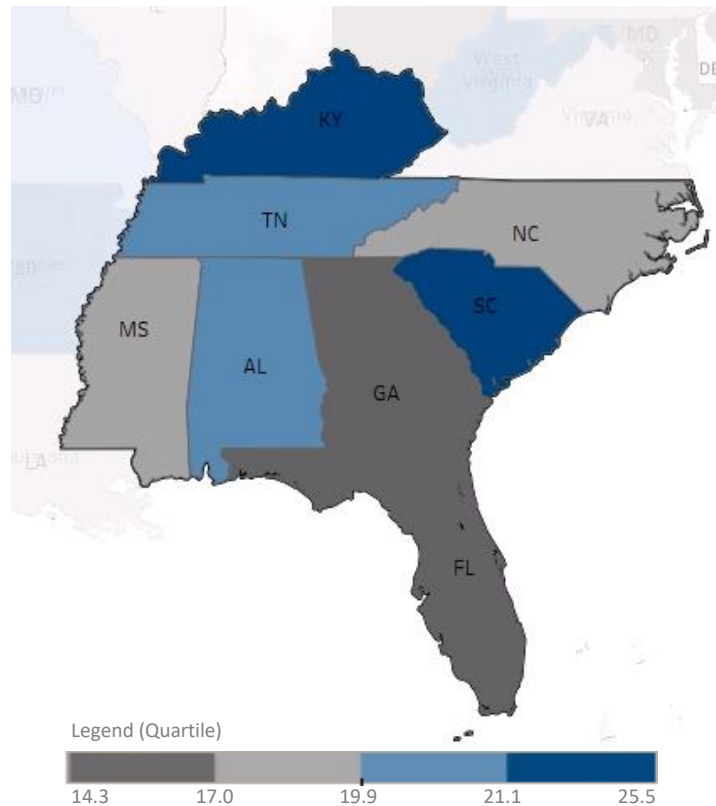
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2019 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, about one in five students (18.8%) seriously considered attempting suicide within the past 12 months.
- **Alabama** (20.7%) had the highest prevalence of suicidal ideation in the Southeast Region, with over 1 in 5 high school students seriously considered attempting suicide. Rates above the national average were also reported in **North Carolina** (18.9%) and **Tennessee** (19.2%).
 - **Mississippi** (18.8%) reported the same rate as the national average.
- The Southeast Region's lowest prevalence of suicidal ideation was reported in **Florida** (15.6%), close to the lowest rate for any state in the US (12.7% in CT). **Georgia** (18.5%) and **Kentucky** (18.4%) also fell below the national average.





Bullying



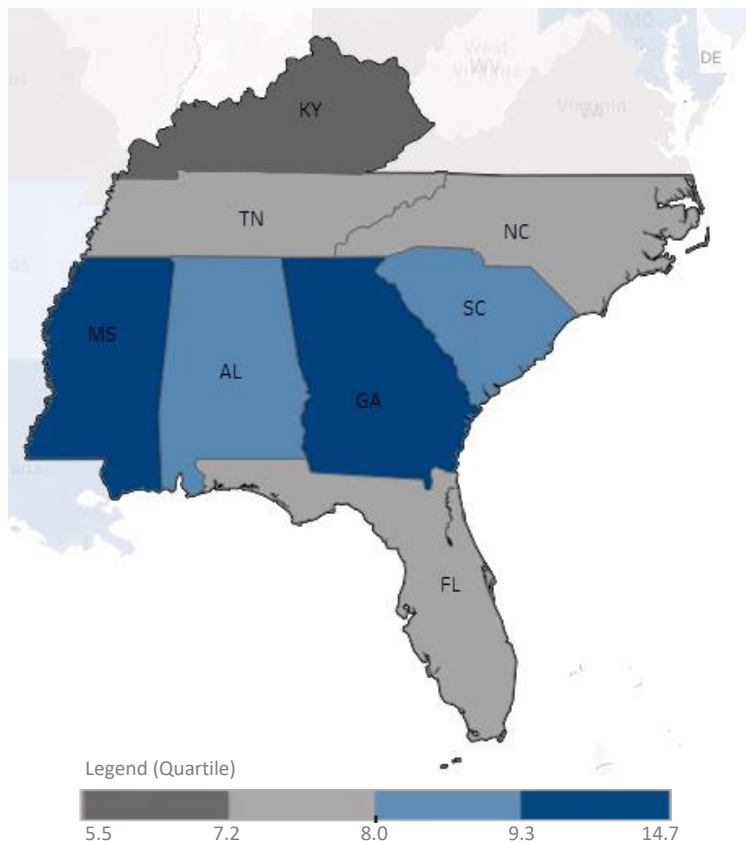
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2019 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Bullying is defined as “when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way.”
- Nationally, about one in five high school students (19.5%) reported being bullied on school property during the last 12 months.
- **Kentucky** (23.8%) had the highest prevalence of bullying, with over 1 in 5 high school students being bullied at school in the last 12 months. The prevalence of bullying was also reported to be above the national average in another three states in the Southeast Region: **Alabama** (20.9%), **South Carolina** (23.3%), and **Tennessee** (21.5%).
- **Mississippi** (18.5%) and **North Carolina** (18.9%) had a similar prevalence of bullying to the national average.
- The region’s lowest rates of bullying were reported in **Florida** (14.9%) and **Georgia** (14.5%).





Fighting



Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2019 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, about one in twelve high school students (8.0%) reported being in a physical fight on school property one or more times within the last 12 months.
 - The Southeast Region's highest reported prevalence of fighting was in **Mississippi** (10.3%). In addition to Mississippi, the prevalence of fighting was reported above the national average in **Alabama** (8.4%) and **Georgia** (9.8%).
 - The prevalence of fighting in **South Carolina** (8.1%) was close to the national average.
 - **Florida** (7.6%), **Kentucky** (5.6%), **North Carolina** (7.4%), and **Tennessee** (7.7%) fell below the national average.





Data source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at: www.cdc.gov/yrbs. Accessed on September 16, 2020.

Additional information about YRBSS

Since 1991, the YRBSS has collected data from more than 4.4 million high school students in more than 1,900 separate surveys. The YRBSS is designed to:

- Determine the prevalence of health behaviors
- Assess whether health behaviors increase, decrease or stay the same over time
- Examine the co-occurrence of health behaviors
- Provide comparable national, state, territorial, tribal and local data
- Provide comparable data among subpopulations of youth
- Monitor progress toward achieving the Health People objectives and other program indicators

The YRBSS also includes additional surveys conducted by CDC including the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey that was conducted in 1995 among undergraduate students and the National Alternative High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted in 1998 among students in alternative high schools.

Participating states of the 2019 YRBSS Representative State Surveys

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Appendix. Statistics of Factors Related to Need for Mental Health Services among School-Age Children across States in the Southeast Region, 2019

State	Feeling sadness or hopelessness (%)	Suicidal ideation (%)	Bullying (%)	Fighting (%)
Alabama	37.5	20.7	20.9	8.4
Florida	33.7	15.6	14.9	7.6
Georgia	29.9	18.5	14.5	9.8
Kentucky	37.2	18.4	23.8	5.6
Mississippi	35.7	18.8	18.5	10.3
North Carolina	36.3	18.9	18.9	7.4
South Carolina	39.0	19.9	23.3	8.1
Tennessee	37.5	19.2	21.5	7.7

