

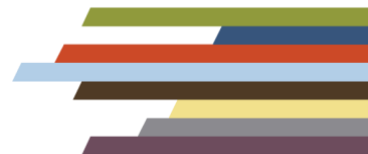


## Factors Related to Need for Mental Health Services among School-Age Children: Data from the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

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 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> 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. Many YRBSS questions ask students to report on experiences within the past 12 months, meaning that 2021 survey responses reflect students' experiences during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, 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).

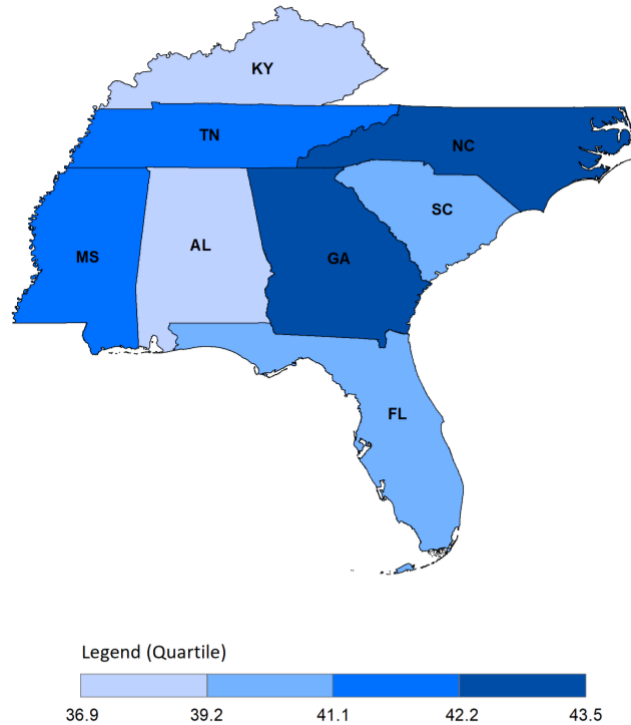
In 2021, high school students all over the United States struggled with feelings of sadness, suicidal ideation, being bullied, and fighting. Over one in three students reported feeling sad or hopeless for two weeks or more, so much so that they stopped participating in some of their usual activities. Female students reported being affected by sadness, suicidal ideation, and bullying more than male students. However, male students are involved in more physical fights. High school students throughout the United States also reported substance use behavior, with nearly one in five students currently using electronic vapor products in the past month and over one in five students drinking alcohol in the past month. 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. **Georgia** had the highest prevalence of sadness, suicidal ideation, and alcohol use, while **Alabama** had the highest prevalence of bullying at school and vaping and the lowest prevalence of sadness and marijuana use. **Mississippi** had the highest prevalence of fighting and current cigarette use, with all states in the Southeast Region except for Georgia (which did not include this question on the 2021 YRBSS) reporting prevalences of fighting above the national average. **Florida** had the lowest reported prevalence of suicidal ideation, bullying at school, and fighting and the highest prevalence of marijuana use in the region. **North Carolina** had the highest prevalence of vaping, and, along with **Florida** and **Georgia**, the lowest prevalence of cigarette use in the region. Statistics are presented for all of these measures by state in the Appendix.



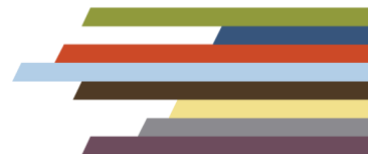


## Feelings of Sadness or Hopelessness



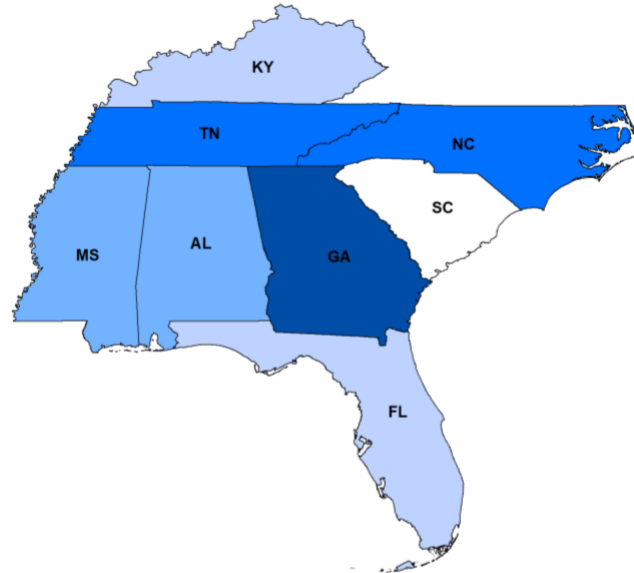
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, more than 1 in 3 students (42.3%) 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 completing the survey.
- **Georgia** (43.5%) and **North Carolina** (43.4%) fell above the national average. The region's highest prevalence of sadness and hopelessness was reported among students in **Georgia**.
- The prevalence of feelings of sadness and hopelessness reported in **Tennessee** (42.2%) was close to the national average.
- **Alabama** (36.9%), **Florida** (39.3%), **Kentucky** (39.2%), **Mississippi** (41.8%), and **South Carolina** (41.1%) fell below the national average. The region's lowest prevalence of sadness and hopelessness was reported among students in **Florida**.
- In each state in the Southeast Region except **Alabama**, the prevalence of feelings of sadness and hopelessness increased from 2019 by an average of 5.8%. In **Alabama**, the prevalence decreased by 0.6%.

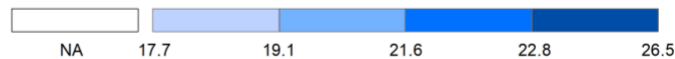




## Suicidal Ideation



Legend (Quartile)



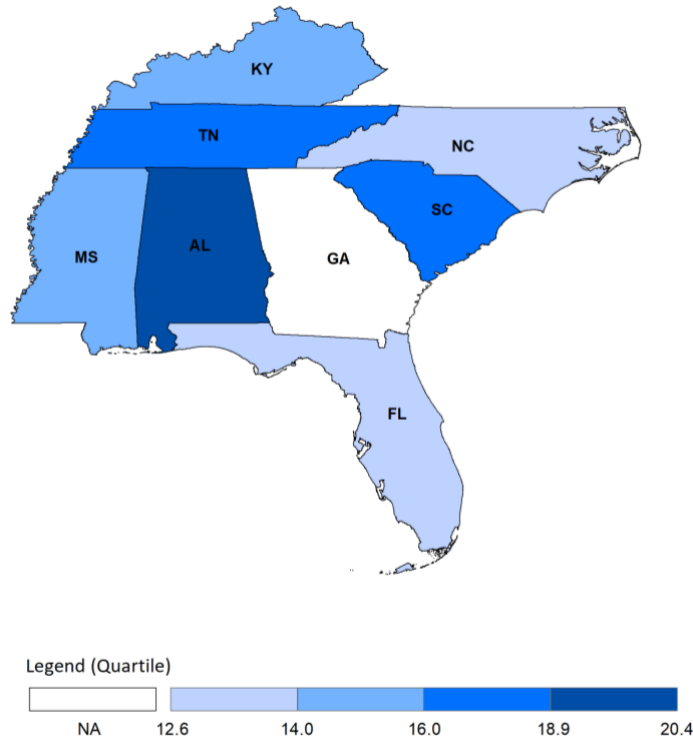
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, about one in five students (22.2%) seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months before completing the survey.
- **Georgia** (26.5%) had the highest prevalence of suicidal ideation in the Southeast Region, with over 1 in 4 high school students reporting that they seriously considered attempting suicide. Rates above the national average were also reported in **Tennessee** (22.8%).
- **North Carolina** (22.3%) reported a similar rate to the national average.
- The Southeast Region's lowest prevalence of suicidal ideation was reported in **Florida** (17.7%). **Alabama** (21.6%), **Kentucky** (22.3%), and **Mississippi** (21.6%) also fell below the national average.
- **South Carolina** did not ask about suicidal ideation on the 2021 YRBSS survey.
- The prevalence of suicidal ideation increased from 2019 by an average of 3.1% in the seven states in the Southeast Region that included this question.



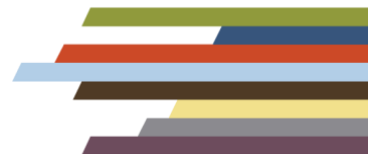


## Bullying on School Property



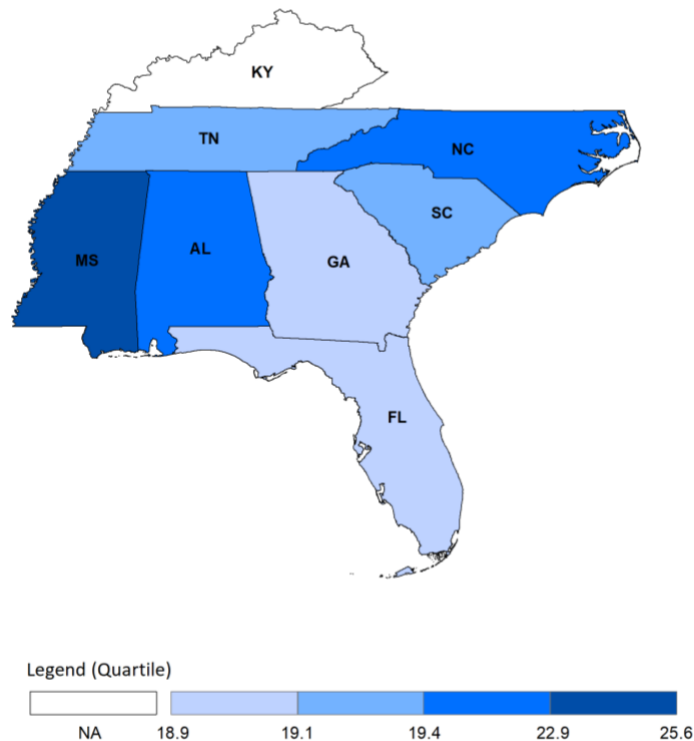
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, about one in six high school students (15.0%) reported being bullied on school property during the 12 months before completing the survey.
- **Alabama** (20.4%) had the highest prevalence of bullying, with 1 in 5 high school students being bullied on school property in the last 12 months. The prevalence of bullying also fell above the national average in **Kentucky** (16.0%), **Mississippi** (15.5%), **South Carolina** (16.1%), and **Tennessee** (18.9%).
- The region's lowest rates of bullying were reported in **Florida** (12.7%) and **North Carolina** (14.0%), while **Georgia** did not ask about bullying on school property on the 2021 YRBSS survey.
- In all states in the Southeast Region that included this question except **Alabama**, there was a decrease in the prevalence of bullying on school property since 2019 by an average of 4.6%. The prevalence in **Alabama** increased by 0.5%.
- Notably, many students were not on campus during the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.





## Fighting



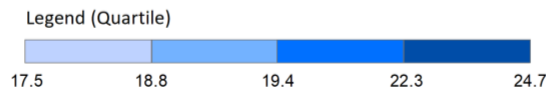
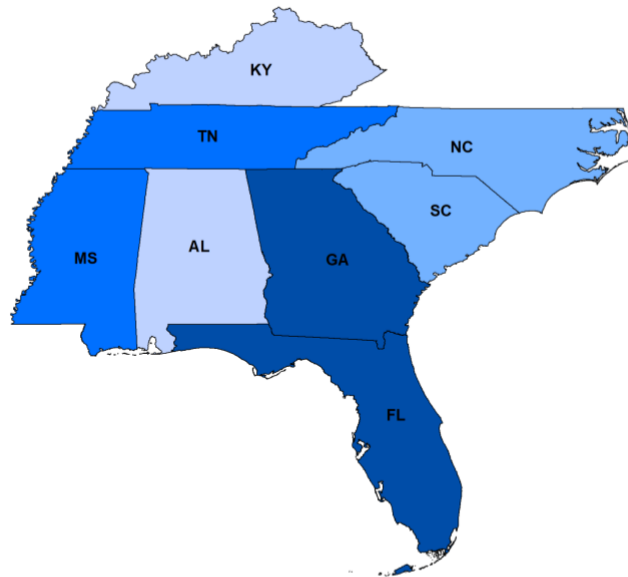
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, nearly one in five high school students (18.3%) reported being in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before completing the survey.
- The prevalence of fighting fell above the national average in seven states in the Southeast Region: **Alabama** (22.9%), **Florida** (18.9%), **Georgia** (19.1%), **Mississippi** (25.6%), **North Carolina** (19.7%), **South Carolina** (19.4%), and **Tennessee** (19.4%).
- The Southeast Region's highest reported prevalence of fighting was in **Mississippi** (25.6%) and lowest reported prevalence was in **Florida** (18.9%).
- There was a decrease from 2019 in the prevalence of fighting in all states except **Georgia**, which did not include this question in 2019, and **Kentucky**, which did not include this question in 2021. The average decrease in the prevalence of fighting in the Southeast Region was 2.4%.
- While this question was not specific to fighting on school property, many students were not on campus during the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may impact the prevalence of fighting.





## Current Alcohol Use



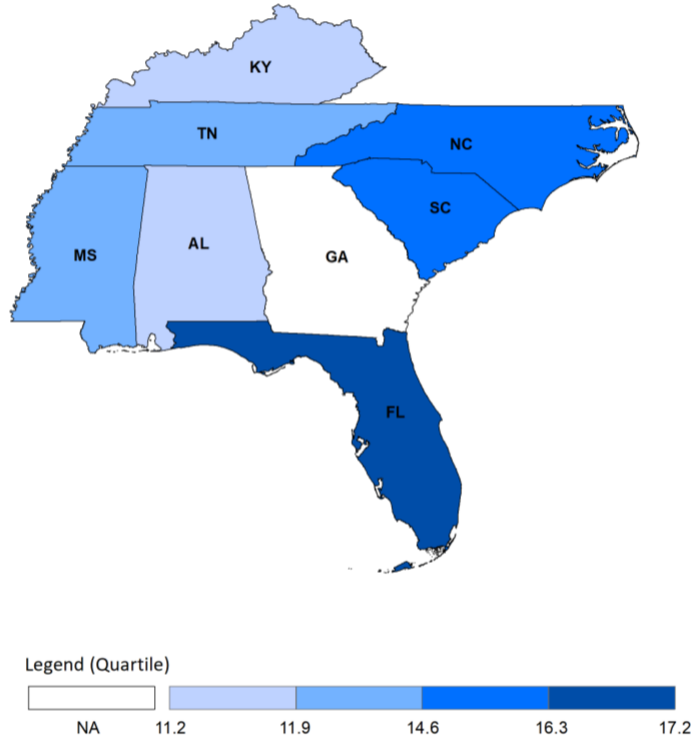
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, over one in five high school students (22.7%) reported having at least one drink of alcohol during the past 30 days before completing the survey.
- The prevalence of current alcohol use fell below the national average in **Alabama** (18.8%), **Kentucky** (17.5%), **Mississippi** (21.9%), **North Carolina** (19.4%), **South Carolina** (19.2%), and **Tennessee** (22.3%). **Kentucky** had the lowest prevalence of current alcohol use in the Southeast Region.
- **Florida** (23.7%) and **Georgia** (24.7%) fell above the national average, with nearly one in four high school students in Georgia having at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days before completing the survey.
- The prevalence of current alcohol use decreased from 2019 in **Alabama**, **Florida**, **Kentucky**, **Mississippi**, **North Carolina**, and **South Carolina** by an average of 4.1%, while the prevalence increased by 7.2% in **Georgia** and 0.7% in **Tennessee**.





## Current Marijuana Use



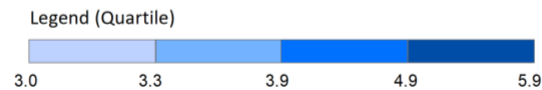
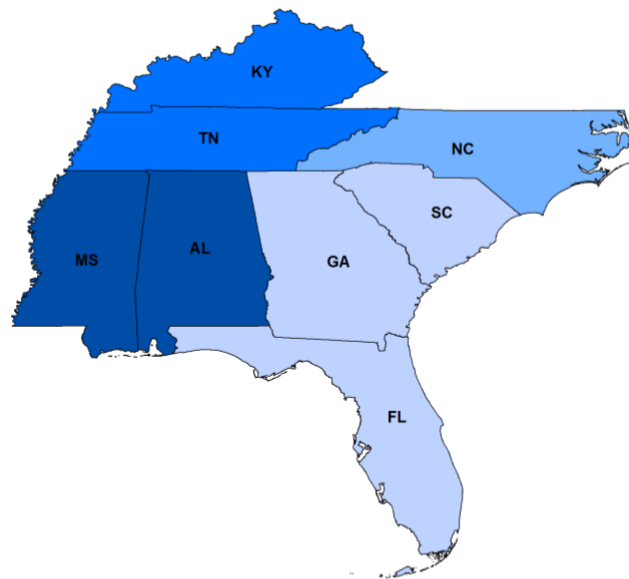
Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, nearly one in six high school students (15.8%) reported currently using marijuana one or more times during the past 30 days before completing the survey.
- In **Florida** (17.2%) and **North Carolina** (16.3%), the prevalence of current marijuana use fell above the national average, with **Florida** having the highest prevalence in the Southeast Region.
- The prevalence of current marijuana use fell below the national average in **Alabama** (11.3%), **Kentucky** (11.9%), **Mississippi** (13.4%), **South Carolina** (14.7%), and **Tennessee** (14.6%). **Alabama** had the lowest prevalence of current marijuana use in the region.
- **Georgia** did not ask about current marijuana use on the 2021 YRBSS.
- The prevalence of current marijuana use decreased from 2019 by an average of 3.4% in the seven states that included this question on the 2021 YRBSS.



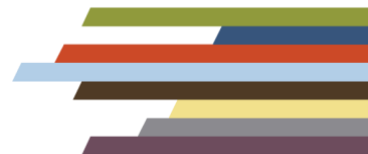


## Current Cigarette Use



Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

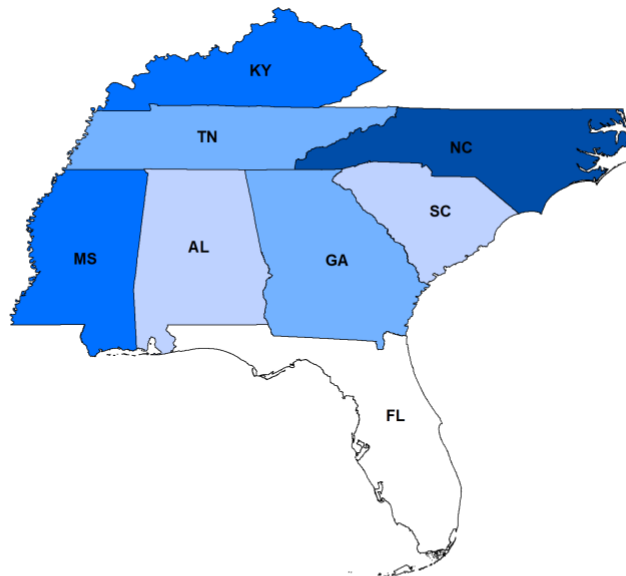
- Nationally, about one in 25 high school students (3.8%) reported smoking cigarettes on at least one day during the past 30 days before completing the survey.
- **Mississippi** (5.9%) had the highest prevalence of current cigarette use in the Southeast Region. In **Alabama** (5.7%), **Kentucky** (4.9%), and **Tennessee** (4.9%), the prevalence of current cigarette use also fell above the national average.
- The prevalence of cigarette use within the past 30 days before completing the survey fell below than the national average in **Florida** (3.3%), **Georgia** (3.3%), and **South Carolina** (3.3%).
- In **North Carolina** (3.9%), the prevalence of current cigarette use was similar to the national average.
- The prevalence of reported current alcohol use decreased from 2019 in all eight states in the Southeast Region by an average of 2.1%.



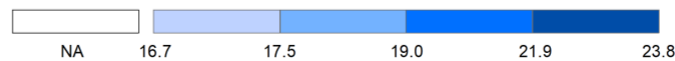




## Current Vaping

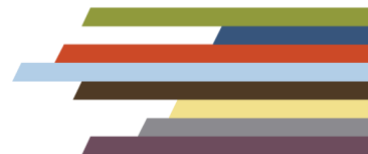


Legend (Quartile)



Note: State-level estimates weighted to represent all 9th through 12th graders in the state. The legend reports quartiles among 44 states in the 2021 YRBSS representative state surveys.

- Nationally, nearly one in five high school students (18.0%) reported currently using electronic vapor products on at least one day during the past 30 days before completing the survey.
- **Kentucky** (21.9%), **Mississippi** (20.9%), **North Carolina** (23.8%), and **Tennessee** (19.0%) had prevalences of vaping within the past 30 days before completing the survey fell above the national average. **Georgia** (18.2%) reported a similar prevalence to the national average.
- The prevalence of current vaping fell below than the national average in **Alabama** (17.5%) and **South Carolina** (16.7%).
- The highest prevalence of vaping in the Southeast region was in **North Carolina**, and the lowest prevalence was in **South Carolina**.
- **Florida** did not ask about the use of electronic vapor products on the 2021 YRBSS.
- The prevalence of reported current vaping decreased from 2019 in **Alabama**, **Kentucky**, **Mississippi**, **North Carolina**, **South Carolina**, and **Tennessee** by an average of 4.3% and increased from 2019 by 1.2% in **Georgia**.





Data source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/yrbs](http://www.cdc.gov/yrbs). **Accessed on June 27, 2023.**

Additional information about YRBSS

Since 1991, the YRBSS has collected data from more than 5 million high school students in more than 2,200 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 2021 YRBSS Representative State Surveys

Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, 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



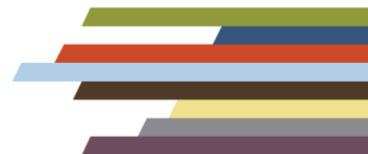


**Appendix. Statistics of Factors Related to Need for Mental Health Services among School-Age Children across States in the Southeast Region, 2021**

State	Feeling sadness or hopelessness	Suicidal ideation	Bullying	Fighting
Alabama	36.9%	21.6%	20.4%	22.9%
Florida	39.3%	17.7%	12.7%	18.9%
Georgia	43.5%	26.5%	n/a	19.1%
Kentucky	39.2%	19.1%	16.0%	n/a
Mississippi	41.8%	21.6%	15.5%	25.6%
North Carolina	43.4%	22.3%	14.0%	19.7%
South Carolina	41.1%	n/a	16.1%	19.4%
Tennessee	42.2%	22.8%	18.9%	19.4%

**Appendix. Statistics of Substance Use Factors among School-Age Children across States in the Southeast Region, 2021**

State	Current Alcohol Use	Current Marijuana Use	Current Cigarette Use	Current Vaping
Alabama	18.8%	11.3%	5.7%	17.5%
Florida	23.7%	17.2%	3.3%	n/a
Georgia	24.7%	n/a	3.3%	18.2%
Kentucky	17.5%	11.9%	4.9%	21.9%
Mississippi	21.9%	13.4%	5.9%	20.9%
North Carolina	19.4%	16.3%	3.9%	23.8%
South Carolina	19.2%	14.7%	3.3%	16.7%
Tennessee	22.3%	14.6%	4.9%	19.0%





**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%	23.3%
Florida	33.7%	15.6%	14.9%	21.2%
Georgia	29.9%	18.5%	14.5%	n/a
Kentucky	37.2%	18.4%	23.8%	19.7%
Mississippi	35.7%	18.8%	18.5%	27.3%
North Carolina	36.3%	18.9%	18.9%	23.7%
South Carolina	39.0%	n/a	23.3%	21.9%
Tennessee	37.5%	19.2%	21.5%	22.9%

**Appendix. Statistics of Substance Use Factors among School-Age Children across States in the Southeast Region, 2019**

State	Current Alcohol Use	Current Marijuana Use	Current Cigarette Use	Current Vaping
Alabama	22.5%	15.3%	7.1%	19.4%
Florida	26.1%	19.6%	4.8%	n/a
Georgia	17.5%	16.3%	4.0%	17.0%
Kentucky	23.5%	16.1%	8.9%	26.1%
Mississippi	25.9%	14.9%	6.6%	21.4%
North Carolina	24.2%	22.1%	8.3%	35.5%
South Carolina	23.1%	17.9%	5.9%	21.1%
Tennessee	21.6%	17.5%	7.1%	22.1%

