Racial Health Inequalities and the Impacts of Racism Among Kentucky Youth

The 2021 Kentucky Initiative for Prevention (KIP) Survey, our state’s largest source of data related to adolescent behavioral health, discovered disparities in substance use and mental health, as well as the impacts of racism, among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students.

This infographic portrays racial and ethnic disparities that exist among Kentucky’s students. Underrepresented and underserved adolescents are more likely to have experienced factors placing them at increased risk – not because of anything inherent to their race or ethnicity, but because of the social and institutional discrimination they face. Health outcomes are as never inherent to the identity of any particular group; rather, they are consequences that originate from systems that disproportionately favor white individuals over people of color. The elimination of disparities will require critical changes in those systems to ensure equitable opportunities for all students and their families.

### Mental Health and Substance Use

**Percentage of students in all grades reporting they had experienced serious psychological distress in the past 30 days**

- Black: 22.6%
- Hispanic: 23.1%
- Asian American Indian or Alaska Native: 18.3%
- Non-Hispanic Multiracial: 18.4%
- Non-Hispanic Black: 28.3%
- Non-Hispanic Black/Multiracial: 26.5%
- Asian American Indian or Alaska Native: 26.2%
- Non-Hispanic Other: 21.5%
- Non-Hispanic White: 21.5%

Among 10th grade students, Non-Hispanic Multiracial, Hispanic, and Asian American Indian or Alaska Native (AAIN) students were the most likely to report self-injurious and suicidal behavior in the past year:

- 4.4% for self-injurious behavior
- 3.7% for suicidal ideation
- 3.1% for attempting suicide

**Percentage of students in all grades reporting they had been a target of race-based threat in the past year**

- Black: 15.7%
- Hispanic: 9.5%
- Asian American Indian or Alaska Native: 7.5%
- Non-Hispanic Multiracial: 22.6%
- Non-Hispanic Black: 24.9%
- Hispanic: 19.0%
- Asian American Indian or Alaska Native: 11.0%
- Non-Hispanic Other: 2.9%
- Non-Hispanic White: 2.9%

Among 10th grade students, the racial/ethnic groups least likely to report being racially/ethnically targeted in the past 30 days were:

- Non-Hispanic Multiracial
- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic Black

**Mental Health**

- Students who reported being a target of racism were:
  - 2.0x as likely to report serious psychological distress
  - 2.4x as likely to report self-harm
  - 2.7x as likely to report suicidal ideation
  - 3.1x as likely to report attempting suicide

**Interventions to support youth who have been exposed to racial/ethnic discrimination**

- **Call to Action**
  - **Educate Yourself**
    - Support programs and policies intended to combat racism and its effects.
    - The survey found that programs that contribute to greater understanding of the causes, influences, and effects on all races, cultures, and ethnicities will be most effective in reducing disparities.
  - **Support Youth**
    - Listen. Open yourself up to understanding the experiences of your youth without desiring to hear.
    - Check in. Ask the youth in your life what they perceive is going on and how they think about it.
    - Be an active and authentic ally. Step up in what matters. Let your actions match your words (and your social media posts) reflect your values.
    - Be informed and up-to-date. Proactively seek out resources that allow you to engage in meaningful conversation with youth. Your care should be by being informed about current events, appropriate terminology, and issues important to the youth in your life.

**Substance Use**

- Students who reported being a target of racism were:
  - 2.0x as likely to report using vaping in the past 30 days
  - 1.9x as likely to report using alcohol in the past 30 days
  - 2.4x as likely to report using cannabis in the past 30 days

**Other Important Facts**

- **Impacts of Racism**
  - 1 in 3 8th Black and Non-Hispanic students and 1 in 5 8th Multiracial, Hispanic, and NH AAIN students reported a **stressor related to their race/ethnicity**
  - **x 7** for their safety because of their race/ethnicity

- **Take Action**
  - Support programs and policies intended to combat racism and its effects.
  - The survey found that programs that contribute to greater understanding of the causes, influences, and effects on all races, cultures, and ethnicities will be most effective in reducing disparities.

**Sources**

- Mental Health America: https://www.mhanational.org/carehub-helpfind
- The Pew Project: https://www.theproject.org/project/brief/together-black-looks-youth-mental-health
- https://www.thelatencyproject.com/

For additional information about the KIP Survey, please visit: www.kipsurvey.com

This report was prepared by KDHE Evaluation, Louisville, Kentucky: www.kacd.gov
Some districts were unable to participate in the 2021 administration.

KIP Survey participation on a district level is voluntary, and due to pressures and constraints in school districts returning from periods of non-traditional instruction, some districts were unable to participate in the KIP Survey 2021 administration. The most notable change from the prior survey administration in 2018 is that Jefferson County Public Schools, the largest school district in the state, did not participate in the 2021 KIP Survey. Fayette County, the second largest district in the state, did participate in 2021. Subsequently, the overall percentage of participating students who self-identified as African American was slightly lower in 2021 (6.5% as compared to 8.4% in 2018), and the percentage of participating students who self-identified as Hispanic was slightly higher (9.1% as compared to 7.9% in 2018).

The 2021 KIP Survey sample represents fewer students than in prior years.

It is crucial to note that due to COVID-19 causing increased illness and absences, classroom quarantines, and continued remote learning, the 2021 KIP Survey sample represents fewer students than in prior years. It is likely that the participation of students of different races or ethnicities has been impacted by these circumstances to differing degrees.

All students in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades are invited to participate, but some opt out or are not present to take the survey.

The KIP survey is designed to be a census, meaning that every student in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in participating school districts is invited to take the survey. Students and their parents/guardians have the right to opt out at any time before, during, or after the survey. Students who are absent or not present in the classroom at the time the survey is administered do not take the survey.

Racial and ethnic makeup differed substantially by grade.

In the 2021 KIP Survey administration, racial and ethnic makeup differed substantially by grade, with every racial and ethnic minority other than Asian students being more prominent among younger grades. While the reasons for this uneven racial/ethnic distribution are currently unknown and deserve further investigation, they are important to note and consider when portraying the data.

Due to small sample size among some race/ethnicity groups, rates are susceptible to fluctuation.

The non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander group of students had fewer than 570 students complete the survey statewide. Due to the small sample size, rates for this group are susceptible to fluctuation based on a small number of students. However, because it was desired to share as detailed information as possible about racial and ethnic groups, this group's data are presented with these limitations.

RESOURCES for understanding public health disparities rooted in systemic racism, as well as approaches to combat these disparities:

SAMHSA - Behavioral Health Equity Resources: [https://www.samhsa.gov/behavioral-health-equity/resources](https://www.samhsa.gov/behavioral-health-equity/resources)


Mental Health America – Racism and Mental Health: [https://www.mhanational.org/racism-and-mental-health](https://www.mhanational.org/racism-and-mental-health)


The Kentucky Incentives for Prevention (KIP) survey is Kentucky’s largest source of data related to youth use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD), as well as several additional factors related to adolescent social and emotional well-being. Participating school districts and communities utilize their KIP results extensively for grant-writing purposes, prevention activities and other efforts to recognize and meet the needs of their student population.

Survey administration typically takes place one other year in even-numbered years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planned October 2020 administration was cancelled. Administration resumed in October 2021, and over 93,000 students representing 129 school districts completed the survey.

The 2021 mid-pandemic administration included the addition of several new questions to address impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, impacts of the racial justice movement, experience of race-based discrimination, sleep habits, sexual orientation, social media use, connection to a trusted adult, extracurricular involvement, vaping and hallucinogenic drug use. Resultant data provide vital insight into the current behavioral health of youth throughout the state.

To learn more about the KIP Survey and to access data reports, infographics, resources, and more, visit: [www.kipsurvey.com](http://www.kipsurvey.com)