

Summary of Findings on Mental Distress and Substance Use among Youth in Iowa 11th Grade Students, Iowa Youth Survey, 2016

Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control, IDPH

Mental Health Status:

In the past 12 months:

- 1 in 20 attempted suicide
- 1 in 6 seriously thought about killing himself/herself
- 1 in 4 felt sad or hopeless (depressed) for two or more weeks in a row
- Students who reported mental distressⁱ of any kind were consistently more likely than those without mental distress to use substances (alcohol, tobacco or other drugs).
- Students who were depressed, had seriously thought of suicide or who attempted suicide were twice as likely as students without these mental distresses to use a substance (tobacco, alcohol or other drugs) in the past 30 days.
- Female students were about twice as likely as male students to experience each measure of mental distress in the past year.
- While female students are more likely to report mental distress, between 2012 and 2016, 82% of the 122 suicides among Iowa residents age 15-19 years were completed by males.ⁱⁱ

Substance Use Status:

During the past 30 days (current use):

- 1 in 3 used tobacco, alcohol or drugs
- 1 in 5 used alcohol
- 1 in 6 used drugs other than tobacco or alcohol
- 1 in 7 used some form of tobacco

Students who used tobacco, alcohol or other drugs in the past 30 days were consistently more likely than nonusers to have experienced some mental distress in the past 12 months.¹

Students who used these substances were more likely than nonusers to have attempted suicide:

- Students who used alcohol were three times more likely
- Students who used tobacco were more than four times more likely
- Students who used other drugs were more than five times more likely to have attempted suicide

Female and male students had similar rates of alcohol and other drug use.

Male students were about 30% more likely than female students to use tobacco (17% vs. 12%).

ⁱ Mental distress includes nervousness all or most of time, sadness/hopelessness (depression), taking prescription medication for mental health, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempt.

ⁱⁱ CDC WISQARS <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>