**Responses to reviewers**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to revise the paper. We have looked very carefully at the reviewers’ comments and have made extensive changes to the text. We hope the reviewers will find our changes satisfactory. Following is a point-by-point response to the Reviewers’ comments. Our responses are in italics.

**Reviewer Comments #1**“The headings need to be clearly stated and well distinguished from each other”

*This has been done.*

“The literature review would be richer if the interplay between equivalent prevalence of risk behavior and confidentiality concerns is made more apparent. “

*We have revamped the literature review accordingly (see under* ***Introduction****) and have incorporated additional references as well. We feel these additions have significantly enhanced the write-up.*  
“Under Methodology, the following items need to be more clearly stated: purpose of the study/research question, target population of the study, sampling procedure, data collection instruments and data collection methods.”

*These items have been made clearer under* ***Methods****.*  
“Under Results, adding a narrative section about the results will make them easier for the reader to understand (in addition to the tables). “

*Please review the* ***Results*** *section, which has undergone changes.*

“ Discussion and conclusion: needs stronger arguments.  It would be helpful to analyze why there was a difference on 3 questions of the survey (from authors' point of view). “

*The discussion and conclusion have been beefed up as well (see under* ***General Discussion****).*

*The paper and pencil showed higher risk prevalence on three items out of 17 items. We felt it was too small a number to draw any meaningful conclusions and instead focused on the broader outcome, i.e. the overall lack of differences in risk prevalence between the two conditions. We have also focused deeper on the interaction between gender and condition rather than the overall result.*

**Reviewer Comments #2**“In the Introduction the authors noted that previous research into the use of web-based surveys suggested several techniques for enhancing privacy; however, it didn't seem that these suggestions were used: distance between computers and physical barriers.  Why?  Also it should be clarified if the  
one-question-at-a-time technique helped increase privacy or whether it just minimized non-responses.”

*We have highlighted the programming safeguards that were undertaken to promote privacy that were not prevalent in earlier studies and these have been elaborated in the text (please see page 6 under* ***Study Purpose****, and page 8 under* ***Data Collection Instruments and Procedures****; also see* ***footnote 1****). The one question at a time technique increased privacy (by refreshing the screen instantly after an answer was entered), and minimized non-responses (the screen would not progress forward until the question was answered).*

“In "Discussion" the findings are said to be similar to previous research. Without the privacy measures above, how does this study differ from previous research?  There needs to be a way to distance this from other previous studies, to show innovation and originality.”

*We have added a write up on the differences between this study and the earlier one undertaken by Denniston et. al. (2010) in terms of privacy measures undertaken. Please see page 6 under* ***Study Purpose****, and page 8 under* ***Data Collection Instruments and Procedures****; also see* ***footnote 1****).*

**Reviewer Comments #3**“Please specify the statistical tests used for comparisons when you first present the results and findings.  The paper describes chi-squared when discussing the subgroup analysis, but the analysis approach should be presented when discussing the initial analysis.”

*Chi-squared and ANOVA were used. The tests have been mentioned in the revised text under* ***Results****.*

**Reviewer Comments #4**“It's not clear why the rural high school was chosen for the study and how the literature review shows relevancy for this population. “

*We were approached by the high school to conduct this analysis. The school specifically wanted to use the YRBS in an online format. We made a note of this in the revised text. We are presenting the findings of this study as we feel the results offer an insight that is important for future studies i.e. the differential impact of privacy concerns among boys and girls that can impact their responses. We have elaborated on this aspect in the very last paragraph on practical implications of the study.*

“The Methods section is not clearly delineated, and there were statements in the introduction that would be better put there.” “The discussion section was limited, and needs to include the practical application of the findings and any specific implications for the field.”

*Please see the revised* ***Methods and Discussion*** *section. The practical implications have been described in page 16, the very last paragraph of the article.*

“On page 5 it says "The goal of the present study was to determine whether there were significant differences in the prevalence of high-risk behaviors and attitudes regarding alcohol use" which seems to be at odds with the title of the paper.  Please clarify.”

*Such differences are the result of the differential effects of survey mode, and we did not view the statement to be inconsistent with the title. Please note the changed/shortened title as well.*