



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

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Nation's High School Students Showing Overall Improvements in Health-Related Behaviors

However, Hispanic Students Not Showing Progress in Some Key Areas

Today's high school students are less likely to engage in many health risk behaviors than high school students in the early 1990s, according to the 2007 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Although the study documents substantial improvements over time in many health risk behaviors among all high school students, Hispanic students remain at greater risk for certain health related behaviors and have not matched the progress made over time by black students and white students in reducing some sexual risk behaviors.

"We are pleased that more high school students today are doing things that will help them stay healthy and avoiding things that put their health in danger. Unfortunately we are not seeing that same progress among Hispanic teens for certain risk factors," said Howell Wechsler, Ed.D., MPH, director of CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health.

An analysis of trends from YRBS on sexual risk behaviors found the following:

- Significant decreases occurred overall in the percentage of black students who had ever had sexual intercourse (66 percent in 2007; 82 percent in 1991); and who had sex with four or more people during their lifetime (28 percent in 2007; 43 percent in 1991.)
- Significant decreases also occurred in the percentage of white students who had ever had sexual intercourse – 44 percent in 2007; 50 percent in 1991; and who had sex with four or more people during their lifetime – 12 percent in 2007; 15 percent in 1991.

- No significant change occurred in the percentage of Hispanic high school students who had ever had sexual intercourse (52 percent in 2007; 53 percent in 1991); and who had sex with four or more persons during their life (17 percent in both 2007 and 1991)
- The percentage of high school students who were taught about HIV/AIDS in school did not change significantly among Hispanics (85 percent in 2007; 82 percent in 1991), but did increase during 1991-2007 among black students (90 percent in 2007; 84 percent in 1991) and white students (91 percent in 2007; 83 percent in 1991.)

The 2007 National YRBS found that Hispanic students were more likely than either black students or white students to attempt suicide, use cocaine, heroin or ecstasy, ride with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, or go 24 hours or more without eating in an effort to lose weight. Hispanic students were also more likely than both black students and white students to say they did not go to school on occasion because of safety concerns, were offered or sold illegal drugs on school property or drank alcohol on school property.

There were, however, some positive findings concerning Hispanic students. Compared with Hispanic high school students in the 1990s, Hispanic students in 2007 were more likely to wear a seat belt at least some of the time and to use condoms during their most recent sexual intercourse and less likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, use drugs such as marijuana and methamphetamines, or ride with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.

National, state and local YRBS studies are conducted every two years among high school students throughout the United States. These surveys monitor health risk behaviors that lead to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco, alcohol and other drug use; and sexual behaviors that can lead to unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection. The surveys also monitor high school students' dietary behaviors, physical inactivity, and the prevalence of obesity and asthma.

More than 14,000 U.S. high school students participated in the 2007 National YRBS. Data are presented only for black, Hispanic and white students because the sample size of students from other racial/ethnic populations was too small for a meaningful analysis. Parental permission was obtained for students to participate in the survey. Student participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymous. States and cities could modify the questionnaire to meet their needs. The 2007 report includes national data and data from surveys conducted in 39 states and 22 large urban school districts.

The National YRBS is one of three HHS-sponsored surveys that provide data on substance abuse among youth. The others are the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and a primary source of statistics on

substance use among Americans age 12 and over (www.oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda.htm), and the Monitoring the Future (MTF) Study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (<http://monitoringthefuture.org>). MTF tracks substance use among students in the 8th, 10th and 12th grades.

The 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data are available at www.cdc.gov/yrbs.

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