

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2013 West Virginia Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results of High School Students

By Chad Morrison, January 2015

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with state and local departments of education and health, national education and health organizations, and other federal agencies. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a key component of this system, assesses how certain youth risk behaviors change over time. The YRBS focuses on priority health-risk behaviors established during youth that may affect academic performance and result in significant mortality and morbidity rates during both youth and adulthood. Additionally, the YRBS measures self-reported height and weight to allow for calculations of body mass index, and collects health data associated with asthma. The YRBS measures behaviors that fall in six categories:

1. ***Behaviors that resulted in unintentional injuries and violence***
2. ***Tobacco use***
3. ***Alcohol and other drug use***
4. ***Sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, unintended pregnancies and other sexually transmitted infections***
5. ***Dietary behaviors***
6. ***Physical activity***

The West Virginia High School YRBS is an 86-item self-reporting questionnaire that has been administered every two years since 1991 by the West Virginia Department of Education. During the 2013 High School YRBS administration, a total of 35

randomly selected public high schools from around the state participated. Survey procedures protected the privacy of students by allowing for anonymous and voluntary participation. Parental permission procedures were followed at the local level before surveys were administered to students.

In total, 1,793 students, Grades 9–12, participated in the survey (see demographics of respondents in Figures 1-3), representing a school response rate of 100% and a student response rate of 81%. The participation rates from individual schools along with the high student response rates have been scientifically weighted, which allows the results to be generalized to all public high school students in West Virginia. West Virginia YRBS data have been weighted each year the survey has been conducted, except 2001.

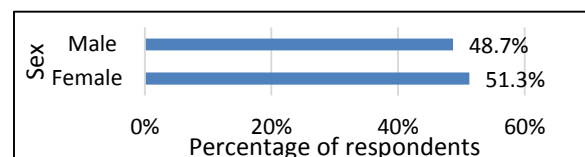


Figure 1. Respondent Gender Demographics

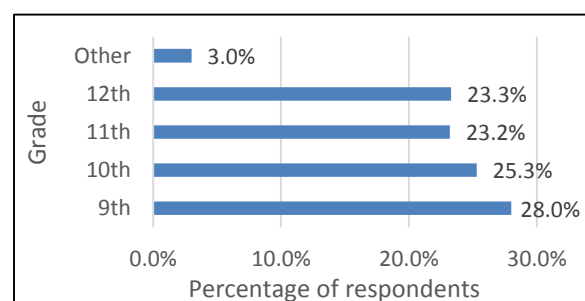


Figure 2. Respondent Grade Levels

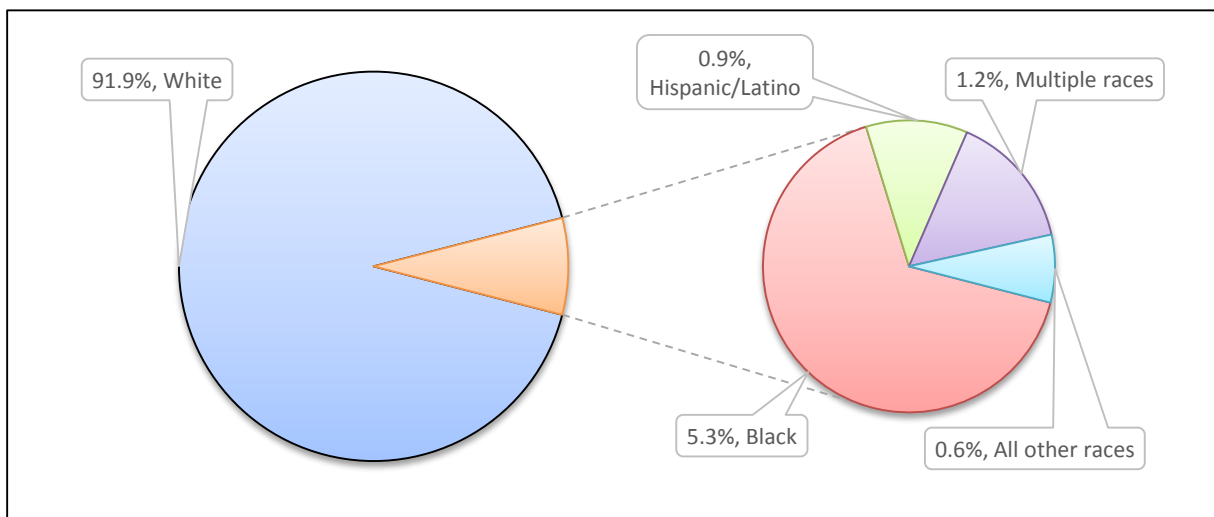


Figure 3. Respondent Race Demographics

The following results show year-to-year changes, with significant findings shaded.

Injury and Violence

- ↑ The percentage of students who *never or rarely* wore a bicycle helmet **increased** from 85.8% in 2011 to 88.7% in 2013.
- ↓ Students who *never or rarely* wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else **decreased** from 13.8% in 2011 to 11.5% in 2013.
- ↑ The percentage of students who had carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club **increased** from 20.7 % in 2011 to 24.3% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had carried a gun on one or more of the past 30 days **increased** from 5.6% in 2011 to 8.2% in 2013.
- ↓ The percentage of students who had been in physical fights on school property one or more times **decreased** from 10.3% in 2011 to 9.1 % in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had not gone to school due to feeling unsafe at school or on their way to or from school **increased** from 4.9% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2013.

Bullying

- ↑ Students who had *ever* been physically bullied on school property **increased** from 18.6% in 2011 to 22.1% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had *ever* been bullied on electronic media **increased** from 15.5% in 2011 to 17.2% in 2013.

Suicidal Thinking & Behavior

- ↑ Students who had felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row **increased** from 24.5% in 2011 to 27.5% in 2013.
- ↑ Those who had seriously considered attempting suicide **increased** from 13.0% in 2011 to 15.4% in 2013.
- ↑ The percentage of students who had made a plan about how they would attempt suicide **increased** from 10.1% in 2011 to 12.8% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had actually attempted suicide one or more times **increased** from 5.5% in 2011 to 7.5% in 2013.

Tobacco Use

- ↔ Students who had ever tried cigarette smoking **remained about the same** at 47.1% in 2011 to 47.0% in 2013.
- ↓ The percentage of students who had smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day on the days they smoked during the past 30 days **decreased** from 10.6% in 2011 to 8.9% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had ever smoked cigarettes *daily*, that is, at least one cigarette every day for 30 days **increased** from 12.0% in 2011 to 13.9% in 2013.
- ↓ Among students who reported current cigarette use, students who had ever tried to quit smoking cigarettes during the past 12 months **decreased** from 53.1% in 2011 to 49.8% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip on one or more of the past 30 days **increased** from 14.4% in 2011 to 15.9% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had used tobacco in any form (either cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff or dip) **increased** from 27.2% in 2011 to 29.7% in 2013.
- ↓ Smoking on school property **decreased** from 4.0% in 2011 to 3.5% in 2013.

Alcohol Use and Other Drug Use

- ↑ Students who had *at least* one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life **increased** from 68.5% in 2011 to 69.6% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had their first drink of alcohol before age 13 **increased** from 19.2% in 2011 to 20.6% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had *at least* one drink of alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days **increased** from 34.3% in 2011 to 37.1% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (within a couple of hours) on one or more of the past 30 days **increased** from 20.2% in 2011 to 24.4% in 2013.

- ↑ Students who had used marijuana one or more times during their life **increased** from 36.9% in 2011 to 39.0% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had tried marijuana before age 13 **increased** from 7.5% in 2011 to 9.1% in 2013.

Sexual Behaviors

- ↑ The percentage of students who had *ever* engaged in sexual intercourse **increased** from 50.9% in 2011 to 53.7% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had engaged in sexual intercourse with four or more people in their lifetime **increased** from 12.4% in 2011 to 16.1% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had sexual intercourse with one or more people during the past 3 months **increased** from 37.6% in 2011 to 40.2% in 2013.
- ↓ Among students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, those who drank alcohol or used drugs beforehand **decreased** from 19.8% in 2011 to 18.3% in 2013.
- ↓ The percentage who had used a condom during their last sexual intercourse **decreased** from 60.3% in 2011 to 53.4% in 2013.

Weight Management

- ↑ Students who reported being obese **increased** from 14.6% in 2011 to 15.6% in 2013. (Self-reported height and weight were used to calculate body-mass index.)
- ↑ Students who described themselves as slightly or very overweight **increased** from 32.7% in 2011 to 35.6% in 2013.
- ↑ The percentage of students trying to lose weight **increased** from 46.8% in 2011 to 50.1% in 2013.

Dietary Behaviors

- ↓ Students who ate vegetables two or more times per day **decreased** from 33.0% in 2011 to 28.6% in 2013.
- ↓ The percentage of students who ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juice two or more times per day **and** ate vegetables three or more times per day **decreased** from 13.8% in 2011 to 10.9% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who drank a can, bottle or glass of soda or pop two, three or more times per day **increased** from 15.6% in 2011 to 18.7% in 2013.

Physical Activity

- ↓ Students who were physically active for a total of *at least* 60 minutes per day on five more of the past seven days **decreased** from 52.4% in 2011 to 48.5% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who played video games or computer games that were not school work three or more hours per day **increased** from 32.2% in 2011 to 41.6% in 2013.
- ↓ Students who played on a sports team **decreased** from 56.9% in 2011 to 52.1% in 2013.
- ↓ The amount of students who had been told by a doctor that they had asthma **decreased** from 22.7% in 2011 to 20.9% in 2013.

Trends

Key findings include the following:

- Seat belt usage continues to **increase** for all students, with a **significant increase** among female students.
- **More** students overall reported carrying a weapon such as a gun, knife or club, but there was no change in students who carried weapons on school property.
- Students who had been bullied both on school property and on electronic media **increased**, with results specifically showing **significant increases** of female victims of bullying.
- Suicidal behaviors **increased** in every category.
- The percent of students who smoke cigarettes has **remained** relatively unchanged.
- On the other hand, the use of chewing tobacco, snuff and dip has **increased** to a 10-year high.
- More students are using alcohol regularly than in 2011, however, over the past 10 years, usage has significantly **declined**.
- Marijuana use **increased** from 2011, however, over the past 10 years fewer students are using marijuana **regularly**.
- Of students having sexual intercourse, **fewer** are using condoms; resulting in a 10-year usage **decrease** of over 10%.
- The percentage of students who self-reported obesity **increased** to a 10-year high.
- There was a **significant increase** in students who played video or computer games for three or more hours a day.

Conclusions

The 2013 West Virginia High School YRBS results revealed a backwards shift for high school youth engaging in risky behaviors that could place them in jeopardy for injury and/or serious health problems. While some trends showed youth behaviors going in the right direction, many others indicated that youth were returning to pre-2011 levels of risky behaviors. This is particularly concerning due to the decrease in risky behaviors shown in the 2011 survey results.

Behaviors that continue to increase in West Virginia high school students such as chewing tobacco use and obesity rates, are particularly concerning due to the significant risk of heart disease, mouth and gum cancer, diabetes and other illnesses related to these behaviors. Other behaviors, such as marijuana and alcohol use have declined, which gives hope for a similar trend in cigarette and smokeless tobacco usage in the future. The challenge going forward will be to focus attention and resources on areas of concern, while maintaining positive trends in successful areas.

Collaborations among community organizations, local social networks and effective school programs can play a large role in prevention of many of these risky behaviors. For the future, partnerships and community involvement will be instrumental in creating and maintaining school environments that are safe, healthy, clean, and free of bullying (Catsambis, 2001). The engagement of parents through partnership programs and communication will help students succeed in the future (Epstein, 2007).

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References

- Catsambis, S. (2001). Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: Connections with high school seniors' academic success. *Social Psychology of Education, 5*(2), 149-177.
- Epstein, J. L. (2007). *Connections Count: Improving Family and Community Involvement in Secondary Schools*. Principal Leadership. <http://www.principals.org/portals/o/content/56190.pdf>