

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2013 West Virginia Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results of Middle 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 could 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 Middle School YRBS is a 46-item self-reporting questionnaire that has been administered every two years since 1991 by the West Virginia Department of Education. During the 2013 Middle School YRBS administration, a total of

49 of 50 randomly selected public middle 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, 2,130 students, Grades 6–8 participated in the survey (see demographics of respondents in Figures 1-3), representing a school response rate of 98% and a student response rate of 81%. The participation rates from individual schools along with the high student response rates allow the results to be scientifically weighted and generalized to all public high school students in West Virginia. West Virginia YRBS data have been weighted every year the survey has been conducted, except 2001.

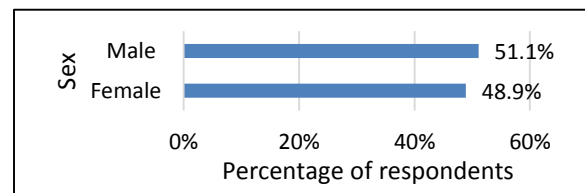


Figure 1. Respondent Gender Demographics

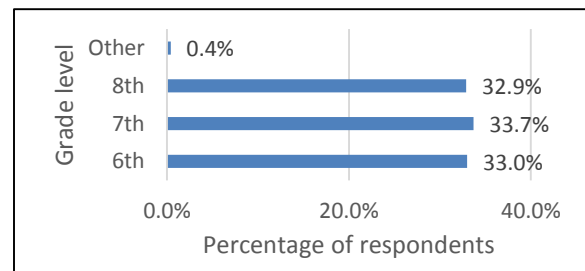


Figure 2. Respondent Grade Levels

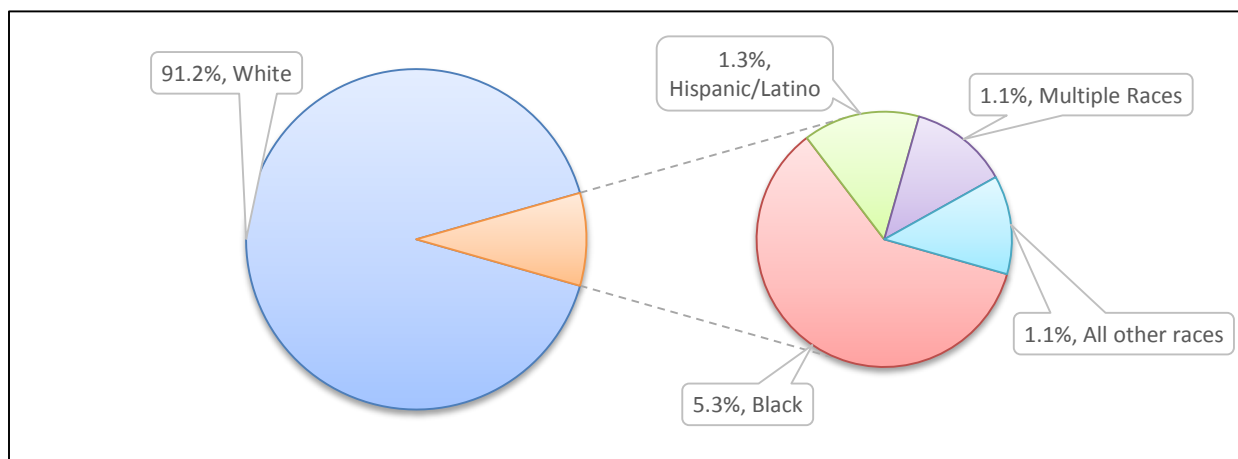


Figure 3. Respondent Ethnicity/Race Demographics

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 **decreased** from 74.4% in 2011 to 70.9% in 2013.
- ↓ Students who *never or rarely* wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else **decreased** from 11.5% in 2011 to 10.0% in 2013.
- ↓ Students who had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol **decreased** from 26.2% in 2011 to 23.1% in 2013.
- ↓ The percentage of students who had been in a physical fight significantly **decreased** from 55.0% in 2011 to 50.4% in 2013.

Bullying

- ↑ Students who had ever been physically bullied on school property significantly **increased** from 47.8% in 2011 to 52.1% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had ever been bullied on electronic media **increased** from 24.9% in 2011 to 27.3% in 2013.

Suicidal Thinking and Behavior

- ↓ Students who had seriously considered killing themselves **decreased** slightly from 20.1% in 2011 to 19.7% in 2013.
- ↑ The percentage of students who had made a plan about how they would attempt suicide **increased** from 12.2% in 2011 to 14.2% in 2013.

Tobacco Use

- ↓ Students who had ever tried cigarette smoking **decreased** from 28.9% in 2011 to 24.5% 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 **increased** from 8.4% in 2011 to 10.6% in 2013.
- ↓ Students who had used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip on one or more of the past 30 days **decreased** from 7.3% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2013.
- ↓ Of students who smoked, those who usually got their own cigarettes by buying them significantly **decreased** from 5.1% in 2011 to .8% in 2013.

Alcohol Use and Other Drug Use

- ↓ Students who had ever had a drink of alcohol significantly **decreased** from 36.1% in 2011 to 29.6% in 2013.
- ↓ The percentage of students who had their first drink of alcohol before age 11 **decreased** from 16.2% in 2011 to 12.7% in 2013.
- ↑ Students who had ever used marijuana slightly **increased** from 11.7% in 2011 to 12.2% in 2013.
- ↓ Students who had ever taken prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription significantly **decreased** from 7.1% in 2011 to 4.9% in 2013.

Weight Management

- ↑ Students who reporting having tried to lose weight increased from 48.1% in 2011 to 50.6% in 2013.

- ↓ Students who described themselves as slightly or very overweight **decreased** from 28.9% in 2011 to 27.4% in 2013.

Physical Activity

- ↑ Students who reported being physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on five or more of the past seven days **increased** significantly from 56.2% in 2011 to 64.0% in 2013.
- ↑ The percentage of students who reported playing video games or computer games for something that was not school work three or more hours per day significantly **increased** from 32.3% in 2011 to 43.1% in 2013.
- ↑ More students attended physical education (PE) classes daily in school with an **increase** from 46.9% in 2011 to 56.0% in 2013.

Trends

Key findings included the following:

- Seat belt usage continues to **increase** for all students.
- Fewer students reported being involved in a physical fight, with significant **decreases** among males.
- Students who had been bullied both on school property and via electronic media **increased**, with results specifically showing **significant increases** of female victims of bullying.
- Less students seriously thought about killing themselves, however, there was an increase of students who made a plan about how they would kill themselves.
- Tobacco use, specifically cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, **declined** reaching 6-year lows among middle school students.
- Fewer students were using alcohol, with significant **decreases** in 2013 to a 6-year low.
- Marijuana use slightly **increased** from 2011, however, prescription drug use without a doctor's prescription **decreased**.
- 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 Middle School YRBS results revealed a positive shift for middle school students, as many categories showed no growth or a decline in engagement in risky behaviors that could place them in jeopardy for injury and/or serious health problems. While many trends showed no significant change, behaviors such as tobacco and alcohol use declined to 6-year lows. Other risky behaviors such as fighting and prescription drug abuse use declined as well.

A concerning behavioral trend that continues to increase in West Virginia middle school students is the occurrence of bullying, both in person and via electronic media. Physical bullying has been tracked since 2009, showing significant increases each year. 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 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>