

.....
San Francisco Unified School District

High School Health Survey– Executive Summary



*1999 Data and Trend Data from 1991 to
1999*

Overview

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) was developed by the Division of Adolescent and School Health, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in collaboration with representatives from 71 state and local departments of education and 19 other federal agencies. Its main purpose is to monitor priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of morbidity, mortality and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

San Francisco Unified School District has taken part in the YRBSS since 1991. The District data are used to monitor the health behaviors of San Francisco's youth, guide program planning, and evaluate some of the District's school-based health programs.

The survey is administered to a random sample of classes at the high school level every other year. The average sample size across the years is approximately 1,600 students per survey. The last year of the survey was 1999. The next survey is scheduled for spring 2001.

1999 Survey

During the 1999 spring semester, the High School YRBS was administered to a random sample of 1,654 students in grades nine through twelve. Parent/guardian consent forms (in six languages) were sent home with students in selected classes. Only students with positive parent/guardian permission were allowed to complete the survey. The survey was administered by staff who had been trained in proper methods of survey administration, including protecting students' anonymity. Student participation was voluntary. They could decline to participate, turn in blank or incomplete surveys, or stop completing the survey at any time.

The results show some encouraging findings, but also show that a notable proportion of high school youth are engaging in behaviors that could result in serious health consequences. Key findings from the 1999 survey are highlighted below.

Unintentional and Intentional Injuries

- Over three-fourths (77%) of students reported wearing a seat belt most or all of the time.
- In the month prior to surveying, 18% of the students had ridden in a vehicle with someone who had been drinking alcohol; 4% had driven a car after they had been drinking.
- In the month prior to surveying, 8% of the students had carried a knife, 3% had carried a club, and 2% had carried a gun as a weapon; 7% had carried a weapon *on school property*.
- Five percent of students had not attended school in the 30 days prior to the survey because they felt that they would be unsafe at school, or on the way to or from school.
- In the year prior to the survey, 5% of students had been threatened or injured by someone with a weapon *on school property*.
- In the year prior to the survey, 23% of students had been in a physical fight; 9% of students reported fighting *on school property* during that time.

- In the 30 days prior to the survey, 33% of students had been victims of verbal slurs because of their ethnicity, physical appearance, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.
- In the year prior to the survey, 8% of students had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend. This percentage increased by grade level, from 7% in 9th grade to 10% in the 12th grade, and was higher for females (9%) than males (6%).
- Seven percent of students had been forced to have sex when they did not want to at least once in their life. This percentage increased by grade level, from 5% in 9th grade to 10% in 12th grade, and was higher for females (9%) than males (4%).
- Nearly one-fifth (18%) of students reported that they seriously thought about ending their life in the past year.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Use

- Just over half of the students (56%) have tried smoking cigarettes.
- Just over half of the students (56%) have tried alcohol.
- In the month prior to the survey, 11% of students reported heavy drinking--consuming five or more drinks within a couple of hours.
- Three of 10 students (31%) reported using marijuana at some time in their life; 5% reported cocaine use, 9% reported trying other illegal drugs, and 9% reported trying inhalants.

Sexual Behaviors

- Most students (73%) have not had sexual intercourse.
- Of those students who have had sexual intercourse, 39% reported having had sex with three or more partners (26% with four or more partners).
- Of those students who have had sexual intercourse, 62% used a condom the last time they had sex.
- Of those students who have had sexual intercourse, 15% of students used no method of protection the last time they had sex, and 11% used withdrawal.
- Of those students who have had sexual intercourse, 10% had been told by a doctor or nurse that they had a sexually transmitted disease.
- Nearly all students (90%) reported that they have been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school.

Dietary and Exercise Behaviors

- Just over one-third (35%) of students described themselves as slightly or very overweight.
- In the 30 days prior to the survey, 6% of males and 9% of females had fasted for 24 hours or more to lose weight.

- In the week prior to the survey, nearly one-fourth (23%) of students reported consuming two or more glasses of milk per day; one-third (33%) of students reported eating foods high in carbohydrates, such as rice, pasta, potatoes, or other grain products.
- In the week prior to the survey, about half (52%) of students had done aerobic exercise on three or more days.
- On an average school day, 45% of high school students reported watching three or more hours of TV.

Results that Show Positive Gains over the Past Decade

In analyzing the data from 1991 to 1999, there have been notable positive changes in most health areas. Key findings are summarized below.

Unintentional and Intentional Injuries

- More students are using seat belts
- Fewer students are riding in a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking
- Fewer students are carrying weapons
- Fewer students are fighting
- Fewer students are seriously considering suicide

Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Use

- Fewer students have tried smoking
- Fewer students have tried alcohol

Sexual Behaviors

- Fewer students are having sex
- Fewer students are reporting pregnancy (either experiencing or causing a pregnancy)
- Of those students who reported having sex, more of them are using condoms
- Of those students who reported having sex, fewer of them reported having four or more sexual partners in their lifetime

Summary of Positive Trends: High School Youth			
Indicator	1991 Rate	1999 Rate	Percentage Point Change
Unintentional and Intentional Injuries			
Seat belt use (general use)	59%	77%	+18
Riding with driver who has been drinking (past month)	24%	18%	-6
Carrying a weapon—gun, knife, or club (past month)	21%	10%	-11
Fighting (past 12 months)	35%	23%	-12
Seriously considered suicide (past year)	27%	18%	-9
Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Use			
Cigarette use (ever)	62%	56%	-6
Alcohol use (ever)	61%	56%	-5
Sexual Behaviors			
Sexual intercourse (ever)	38%	27%	-11
Pregnancy—been or gotten someone pregnant (all students, ever)	10%*	5%	-5
Condom use (last intercourse, among sexually experienced)	51%	62%	+11
Four or more sex partners (lifetime, among sexually experienced)	35%	26%	-9

* reflects 1993 rate.

Results that Show Continued Risk

Unfortunately, students continue to be at risk in many health areas. Several risk behaviors have increased over the years. Trend data show continued risk in the following areas.

Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drug Use

- More students reported smoking cigarettes in the past month (14% in 1991 versus 19% in 1999)

Dietary and Exercise Behaviors

- Fewer students are participating in aerobic exercises (62% in 1992 when it was first assessed versus 52% in 1999)
- Fewer students are attending physical education classes five days a week (47% in 1991 versus 36% in 1999)

Other behaviors have remained relatively stable over the years or have even declined slightly, but they are still occurring among a notable proportion of youth. Key findings from the 1999 survey that show continued risk are highlighted in the following table.

Key Findings from 1999 Suggesting Continued Risk: High School Youth

Indicator	1999 Rate
<i>Unintentional and intentional injuries</i>	
Inconsistent use of bicycle helmet (past year, among those riding a bicycle)	78%
Had personal property stolen or damaged at school (past year)	25%
Experienced verbal slurs due to ethnicity, Physical appearance, gender, sexual orientation, or religion (past month)	33%
Felt sad and hopeless for 2 weeks in a row that caused change in activities (past year)	30%
Made plan to commit suicide (past year)	15%
Attempted suicide 1 or more times (past year)	7%
Experienced relationship violence—hit, slapped, or hurt by boyfriend or girlfriend (past year)	8%
Forced to have sex (ever)	7%
<i>Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drug Use</i>	
Been offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property (past year)	37%
Cigarette use (past month)	19%
Alcohol use (past month)	27%
Marijuana use (past month)	15%
Cocaine use (ever)	5%
Other drug use—LSD, PCP, ecstasy, etc. (ever)	9%
<i>Sexual Behaviors</i>	
Four or more sex partners (lifetime, among sexually experienced)	26%
Use of alcohol or drugs before last intercourse (among sexually experienced)	17%
No use of protection at last intercourse or use of withdrawal (among sexually experienced)	26%
<i>Dietary and Exercise Behaviors</i>	
Aerobic exercises 3 or more days (past week)	52%
Strengthening exercises (past week)	43%
Attended PE 5 days in past week	36%
Watched TV 3 or more hours on average school day	45%

Summary

Based on the health survey data collected since 1991 from high school students in San Francisco, it appears that many students are making some *positive behavior changes*. In general, students are:

- taking more safety precautions (e.g., using seat belts more often, not riding with drivers who have been drinking as often);
- carrying weapons and fighting less often;
- less likely to seriously consider suicide;
- less likely to have ever tried cigarettes and alcohol;
- less likely to have sexual intercourse and experience or cause a pregnancy; and
- more likely to limit the number of their sexual partners and use condoms if they do have sex.

Some students also are *at risk* for numerous health problems. For example, based on 1999 data notable proportions of youth are:

- riding their bicycles without helmets;
- experiencing personal property theft or damage at school;
- experiencing verbal slurs due to their ethnicity, physical appearance, gender, sexual orientation, or religion;
- contemplating suicide;
- experiencing chronic hopelessness;
- receiving drug offers on school property;
- using tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs;
- engaging in sexual risk taking behaviors, such as reporting multiple partners, using alcohol and drugs before having sex, or choosing not to use any protection or ineffective protection against pregnancy or disease; and
- foregoing aerobic and strengthening exercises; and
- watching multiple hours of TV on school days.