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## **Youth Risk Behavior Survey**

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) studies the behaviors of adolescents across the United States every two years. The survey is administered in schools and measures substance use, sexual behavior, and other types of behaviors. This following is an overview of the results from the 2011 survey of about 4,000 students, grades 9-12, in the Rochester City School District.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE & SUPPORT.** Students were questioned about the social climate of their schools as well as their support networks (see Table 1 below). The results are summarized as follows:

- About 8 in 10 students reported that their family provides help and support when they need it.
- About <u>7 in 10</u> students reported that they received a lot of encouragement at their school.
- About <u>7 in 10</u> students reported that their school provided enough clubs, activities and afterschool programs.
- About <u>7 in 10</u>, reported that they felt a sense of belonging at their school.
- <u>3 to 4 students in 10</u> stated that they felt that students showed respect for one another.
- 2 to 3 students in 10 felt that students showed respect for their teachers.
- About <u>6 in 10</u> students believed that the teachers in their schools showed respect for students.
- Almost 9 in 10 students reported that they had friends at school.

| Table 1. School Climate and Support   |                            |              |  |  |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|--|--|
|   | # out of every 10 students | % who agreed |  |  |
| My family gives me help and support when I need it.                             | Over 8 in 10               | 83.4%        |  |  |
| I get a lot of encouragement at my school.                                      | About 7 in 10              | 71.2%        |  |  |
| My school provides enough choices for clubs, activities, after school programs. | About 7 in 10              | 72.9%        |  |  |
| I feel a sense of belonging at school.  | Nearly 7 in 10             | 69.5%        |  |  |
| Students show respect for each other.   | Between 3 to 4 in 10       | 34.3%        |  |  |
| Students show respect for teachers.   | Between 2 to 3 out of 10   | 25.6%        |  |  |
| Teachers show respect for students.   | Nearly 6 in 10             | 58.5%        |  |  |
| I have friends at school.   | Nearly 9 in 10             | 89.0%        |  |  |

<u>SUBSTANCE USE PATTERNS</u>. Students were asked questions about tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use and the results are presented in Table 2 below. The results are summarized as follows:

- Nearly 3 in 10 students have tried smoking tobacco at least once in their lives and 1 in 10 reported smoking tobacco in the past month.
- <u>6 in 10</u> students have consumed alcohol at least once in their lives and about <u>3 in 10</u> have admitted to drinking alcohol in the past month.
- <u>4 in 10</u> students have tried marijuana at least once in their lives and between <u>2 to 3</u> students reported using marijuana in the past month.
- Students were also asked if they had engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days. For the purposes of this study, binge drinking was defined as having 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours. The study reports that between 1 to 2 students in 10 engaged in binge drinking in the past month.

| Table 2. Substance Use Patterns in Rochester Schools |   |       |  |       |  |
|--|---|-------|--|-------|--|
|  | # out of every 10 students<br>that have <u>ever</u> used: | %     | # out of every 10 students that have used in the past 30 days: | %     |  |
| Tobacco  | Nearly 3 in 10 students                                   | 28.7% | 1 in 10 students   | 9.9%  |  |
| Alcohol  | 6 in 10 students  | 60.4% | About 3 in 10 students   | 31.7% |  |
| Marijuana  | 4 in 10 students  | 40.9% | Between 2 and 3 in 10 students                                 | 24.4% |  |
| Binge Drinking                                       | Not asked   |       | Between 1 and 2 in 10 students                                 | 14.1% |  |

**DEPRESSION & SUICIDAL THOUGHTS.** Students were asked if they had ever had suicidal thoughts, if they had planned to commit suicide, if they ever attempted to commit suicide, and if they engaged in self-harming behavior like cutting themselves (see Table 3 below). To summarize the results:

- About <u>1 in 10</u> students reported that they had, at some point in the past year, seriously considered attempting suicide.
- About 1 in 10 students reported that they had, at some point in the past year, made a plan about how they would go about attempting or committing suicide.
- Among those who attempted suicide in the past year, about <u>1 in 10</u> students reported that they had
  received treatment from a doctor or nurse for an injury, poisoning or overdose that was the result of
  this attempt.
- Nearly 2 in 10 students reported that they had purposefully hurt themselves. These instances of self-harm were committed without any intention of committing suicide.

| Table 3. Depression and Suicidal Thoughts  |                   |       |  |  |
|--|-------------------|-------|--|--|
|  | # out of every 10 | %     |  |  |
| During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?   | About 1 in 10     | 11.0% |  |  |
| During the past 12 months, did you make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?  | About 1 in 10     | 10.5% |  |  |
| If you attempted suicide during the past 12 months, did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse? | Nearly 1 in 10    | 9.6%  |  |  |
| Have you ever hurt yourself on purpose (by cutting, burning, or bruising for example) without the intentions of committing suicide?                          | Nearly 2 in 10    | 18.1% |  |  |

**ARE SELF-REPORT STUDIES VALID?** Given that the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is a self-report study, how can we be certain of the results? After all, if students can report anything they wish is there any guarantee that they will be truthful? While lying is always a concern, much research has demonstrated that the self-report technique can be trusted. For more information on the reliability and validity of self-reported surveys in general, click the following links to learn more:

## **MOST of Us Project**

<u>California Healthy Kids Survey - The Validity of Student Self-Report of Risk Behaviors</u>

Journal of Adolescent Health article that reviews the scientific literature

To learn more, specifically, about the reliability and validity of the YRBS, click the following links from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:

What kinds of validation or reliability studies have been done on the YRBS questionnaire?

YRBS Methodology Report