



# 1997 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey

## *Executive Summary Report*

Michigan State Board of Education  
1998

## Michigan State Board of Education

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# YRBS Background

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was developed by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The YRBS has been conducted by state and local education agencies across the United States since the spring of 1990 to assess the prevalence of six categories of health risk behaviors among youth in grades 9 through 12. The 1997 Michigan YRBS is significant because it is the first scientific study of Michigan youth risk behavior that is generalizable. The 1997 data serve as a baseline of information which will be used to measure progress and change in the risk behaviors of Michigan youth. After examining the YRBS results to determine current health and educational needs, the Michigan Department of Education, along with other state, local, and private agencies, will use the data to plan and implement additional targeted programs to address these needs.

The 1997 Michigan YRBS was administered to students in randomly selected public high schools across the state.<sup>1</sup> Of 84 schools randomly chosen, 71 (85%) agreed to participate. The 87-item,<sup>2</sup> multiple-choice YRBS was administered during the spring of 1997. Survey procedures were designed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all students. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Parents

were notified in advance and had the option of excluding their children from the survey. Of the 3,933 students participating in the Michigan YRBS, 47% (1,848) were male and 53% (2,069) were female. The grade distribution of respondents was as follows: 30% in 9th grade; 27% in 10th grade; 21% in 11th grade; and 22% in 12th grade. Students self-identified as white, black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or other.<sup>3</sup>

To correct for any differences between the YRBS sample and the overall Michigan high school population, the responses were statistically weighted by the CDC. The weighted survey results that are presented in this report accurately reflect the gender, grade, and race/ethnicity distribution of public high school students in the state. Therefore, these findings can be generalized beyond the sample to all Michigan public high school students.

This document summarizes overall trends; details are often included where differences between groups (e.g., males versus females and Michigan versus national) are statistically significant.<sup>4</sup> Because Michigan data (1997) are more current than the national YRBS (1995), differences noted may in part be due to time rather than regional trends.

<sup>1</sup> The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and Detroit Public Schools (DPS) were funded to administer the YRBS separately. The MDE administered the survey to students in outstate Michigan (i.e., all public schools in Michigan excluding DPS) while DPS administered the survey to students in its system. The CDC combined the 1997 data from the two separate survey administrations to allow for one cohesive statewide interpretive report.

<sup>2</sup> For the outstate survey, MDE independently added three questions to the original 84-item survey while DPS administered the original 84-item survey without added questions.

<sup>3</sup> Specific survey results for students identifying as Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native or other, could not be included in this report due to small sample sizes that yield relatively imprecise results (i.e., results that have large margins of error).

<sup>4</sup> Differences were considered statistically significant if  $p < .05$ .



# YRBS

## Key Findings

Michigan mirrors the nation in most adolescent health risk behaviors. Indeed, there are a couple of areas in which the behaviors of Michigan youth are more desirable than those of their national counterparts. Michigan students are more likely to wear motorcycle helmets (24% report never or rarely wearing a helmet versus 44% nationally) and to use exercise as a primary means of weight control (56% compared to 51% nationally).

Additional positive results of the survey include the findings that about half (51%) of all high school students and 68% of 9th graders have never had sex; almost two-thirds (58%) of those who recently had sexual intercourse used a condom; students are usually not purchasing their own cigarettes (only 15% bought them in a store or gas station); and, a significant number of students who smoke want to stop smoking (38% of all students have tried to quit). Other key findings are highlighted below.

### Unintentional Injuries

- **Seat belt use.** 19% of Michigan high school students never or rarely wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else. Male students (23%) were significantly more likely to report never or rarely wearing a seat belt than female students (14%).
- **Helmet use.** Only 2% of those who rode a bicycle (82% of all students rode a bicycle) and 4% of those who rollerbladed<sup>5</sup> (59% of all students rollerbladed) during the previous 12 months reported wearing a helmet always or most of the time. In contrast, 69% of those who rode a motorcycle (23% of all students rode a motorcycle) reported wearing a helmet always or most of the time.

### Intentional Injuries

- **Carrying weapons.** 19% of Michigan high school students carried a gun, knife, or club during the previous 30 days (31% of males versus 7% of females). 8% carried a weapon on school property (13% of males versus 4% of females).
- **Stolen or damaged property.** 35% had property stolen or deliberately damaged on school property during the previous 12 months.
- **Fighting.** During the previous 12 months, 36% were in a physical fight (48% of males versus 25% of females; 39% of 9th graders versus 29% of 12th graders).
- **Fighting on school property.** During the previous 12 months, 15% were in a physical fight on school property (22% of males versus 8% of females; 19% of 9th graders versus 10% of 12th graders).
- **Suicide attempts.** 10% attempted suicide during the previous 12 months. Suicide attempts were significantly higher among 9th and 10th grade females (15% in each grade) than among 12th grade females (6%).

<sup>5</sup> The Michigan Department of Education independently added two rollerblading/skateboarding questions to outstate Michigan surveys, hence the results apply to Michigan excluding Detroit.



## Tobacco Use

- **Recent cigarette use.** 38% of Michigan high school students smoked a cigarette during the previous 30 days (41% of white students compared to 19% of African-American students).
- **Regular cigarette use.** 20% of Michigan youth smoked on 20 or more of the previous 30 days.
- **Smoking cessation.** 38% of all students have tried to quit smoking cigarettes at least once during their lifetime.
- **Cigarette sales.** 15% of Michigan students got their own cigarettes by purchasing them in a store or gas station during the previous 30 days. 13% were not asked to show proof of age.

## Alcohol Use

- **Recent alcohol use.** 51% of Michigan high school students had one or more drinks of alcohol during the previous 30 days (44% of 9th graders compared to 62% of 12th graders).
- **Binge drinking.** 32% had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row during the previous 30 days (25% of 9th graders and 45% of 12th graders; 36% of white students and 15% of African-American students).
- **Riding with an impaired driver.** 37% reported riding in a vehicle during the previous 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.

- **Driving and alcohol use.** 18% of 11th graders and 30% of 12th graders reported driving a car during the previous 30 days when they had been drinking alcohol. Male students (21%) were more likely than female students (12%) and white students (18%) were more likely than African-American students (10%) to drink and drive.

## Marijuana, Cocaine, & Other Drug Use

- **Marijuana use.** 48% of Michigan high school students had tried marijuana and 28% had used marijuana one or more times during the previous 30 days.
- **Cocaine use.** 7% reported using some form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase, one or more times during their life.
- **Other drug use.** 20% had used another type of illegal drug (e.g., LSD, PCP, ecstasy, mushrooms, speed, ice, or heroin) one or more times during their life (22% of white students versus 5% of African-American students).
- **Drug exchange on school property.** 36% had someone offer, sell, or give them an illegal drug on school property during the previous 12 months.

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## HIV/AIDS Education & Sexual Behaviors

- **Education.** 88% of Michigan high school students reported being taught about HIV / AIDS in school. 60% report having talked about HIV / AIDS with their parents or other adults in their family.
- **Sexual intercourse.** 51% have never had sexual intercourse (68% of 9th graders, 54% of 10th graders, 42% of 11th graders, and 35% of 12th graders; 56% of white male students and 19% of African-American male students). 34% reported having had sex within the last 3 months (19% of 9th graders compared to 49% of 12th graders).
- **Serial monogamy or periodic abstinence.** Of those who have had sexual intercourse, 50% had only one sexual partner and 30% were sexually abstinent during the previous 3 months.
- **Early sexual intercourse and multiple partners.** 8% reported having sex for the first time before age 13 (6% of white males versus 37% of African-American males). 16% of students have had 4 or more sexual partners in their lifetime.
- **Sex under the influence.** 31% of those who have had sexual intercourse drank alcohol prior to the last time they had sexual intercourse.
- **Risk reduction.** Of those who have had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, 58% used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse (67% of 9th graders versus 48% of 12th graders; 56% of white students versus 75% of African-American students).
- **Pregnancy.** 6% of students reported having been pregnant or getting someone else pregnant (5% of white females compared to 18% of African-American females).

## Body Image, Weight Control, & Dietary Habits

- **Body image.** 39% of females, compared to 22% of males, thought they were overweight.
- **Weight loss attempts.** 63% of females, compared to 27% of males, were trying to lose weight.
- **Healthy weight control.** 56% of Michigan students, compared to 51% nationally, exercised to lose weight or keep from gaining weight during the previous 30 days.
- **Unhealthy weight control.** 9% of females and 3% of males had vomited or taken laxatives to lose weight or keep from gaining weight during the previous 30 days.
- **Healthier foods.** 26% had eaten five or more servings of fruits and vegetables the previous day.
- **Unhealthy foods.** 62% had eaten 0-2 servings of food typically high in fat (72% of females versus 50% of males).

## Physical Activity

- **Aerobic exercise.** 59% of the students reported doing some kind of vigorous physical activity 3 or more times during the previous 7 days.
- **Attended PE class.** 45% of males and 29% of females attended a physical education (PE) class at least once during an average school week (37% of Michigan students overall compared to 60% nationally).
- **Activity in PE class.** Among students enrolled in PE class, 80% of Michigan students versus 70% nationally, exercised or played sports for more than 20 minutes during an average class.



# YRBS

## *Implications*

The results of the 1997 Michigan YRBS illustrate that a substantial percentage of youth engage in behaviors that place them at risk for serious health problems that warrant broad-based and strategically targeted interventions. Michigan has effectively developed and implemented model curricula that address key issues such as substance abuse, tobacco, sexual activity, violence prevention, nutrition, and physical activity. Current state and local policies address some of these behaviors; however, the prevalence of violence and drug use on school property indicates the need for improved enforcement, early intervention, and referral services. Schools alone cannot address the personal, physical, and emotional needs of children. They must work in collaboration with parents and community agencies in helping students prevent health problems. In addition, not all youth engage in the same risk-taking behaviors. For example, males are significantly more likely to engage in violent behaviors and females are more likely to engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors. Successful programs need to be targeted towards the youth at greatest risk, and address the needs and issues specific to those populations.



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