



Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

As a valued partner in the promotion of adolescent and school health, we are reaching out to you to share information about the value of the [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\)](#).

National, state, and local versions of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) help inform our understanding of behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability and social problems among students. YRBS data allow us to monitor trends in health behaviors, guide programmatic interventions, and inform school health policies and practices.

To date, YRBS data have been used to:

- 1) Describe student health behaviors, risks, and experiences.
- 2) Plan, monitor, and evaluate school health interventions.
- 3) Inform school policies and practices.
- 4) Support health-related policies, legislation, and laws.
- 5) Provide information and support for funding requests.
- 6) Inform teacher professional development.

Ongoing, systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of YRBS data help CDC inform stakeholders, and guide school health programs and policies.

The data CDC and state and local agencies collect are vital to monitoring trends and changes in student health risks over time, and determining the extent to which school policies and practices can help improve these risks. We appreciate your continued support and ask that you share information about the value of YRBSS in your schools and communities.

For more information please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>.

Thank you so much for your efforts in helping to collect this valuable student data, especially during this period of uncertainty about our student's physical and mental health. We appreciate you!

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**Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention**
National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral
Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention



Youth Risk Behavior Survey Fact Sheet

Q. Why is the survey being done?

A. San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) will use the survey results to help measure the percentage of youth who practice health risk behaviors. The information will be used to create school health programs to help reduce these behaviors.

Q. Are sensitive questions asked?

A. Yes. Some questions are sensitive. HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and injected drug use are behaviors that increase the risk of HIV infection. The only way to learn if youth are at risk of becoming infected with HIV or other STIs is to ask questions about these behaviors. Attempted suicide, nicotine use, alcohol and other drug use, weapon-carrying, and situations regarding one's home or family life also may be considered sensitive topics. Questions are written in a direct but sensitive way.

Q. Will students' names be used or linked to the surveys?

A. No. The survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. Students do not put their name, student ID, or class or school information on the survey.

Q. Do students take the survey more than once to see how their behaviors change?

A. No. Each year that the survey is administered (in odd calendar years), a new random sample of classrooms and students are picked. Students who take part one year cannot be tracked because their names are not on the survey.

Q. How was my child picked to be in the survey?

A. A class your child is in was selected randomly to participate, and all students in that class are being asked to participate. A total of 1700 students in grades 9–12 in 24 SDUSD high schools were randomly selected to participate.

Q. How long does it take to fill out the survey? Does the survey include a physical test?

A. One class period is needed to fill out the survey, which has 99 questions. The survey does not include a physical test or exam.

Q. Can I see the questions my student will be asked?

A. Yes, a copy of the survey is located at your child's high school's front office and available on SDUSD's YRBS website: www.sandiegounified.org/YRBS.

Q. Who supports this survey?

A. This survey is supported by many organizations interested in the health of youth, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the California Department of Education (CDE), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). People from more than 100 state and district health and education agencies and 19 federal agencies helped develop the survey.



2019 SDUSD High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey

How are we doing?

Changes in Risky Behavior Since 2017

2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data indicates that among SDUSD high school students, many risk behaviors are improving:

- Percentage of students whose first sexual partner was three or more years older than them decreased.
- Percentage of students who have tried to quit using all tobacco products increased.
- Occurrence of concussions from playing sports or being physically active decreased.

Unfortunately, some risk behaviors and school safety factors have worsened since 2017:

- Use of electronic vapor products including e-cigarettes, e-pipes, vape pipes, vape pens, and e-hookahs has increased.
- Students who felt that their school does not have clear consequences for bullying and harassment increased.
- Student consumption of fresh fruit and 100% fruit juice has decreased.

In addition, some health risk behaviors and academic achievement are correlated:

- Students with D's and F's are more likely to: carry a weapon or engage in a physical fight while on school property, feel sad or hopeless or seriously consider attempting suicide, use alcohol and drugs, become pregnant or cause a pregnancy, have 4 or more sexual partners during their life, have had a concussion, and be teased or called names for appearing LGBT.
- However, there is no correlation between academic achievement and having had sexual intercourse, use of electronic vapor products, use of cocaine or heroin, and being in a relationship with someone who tried to control or hurt them.

To address these concerns, our district is providing students with sexual health information and access to services:

- 84.9% have been taught in school about AIDS and HIV infection and prevention.
- 86.2% were taught in school about how to use a condom to prevent pregnancy and HIV/STIs.
- 79.3% were taught in school about where they could get sexual health services.

What risks are our high school students taking?

Sexual Risk Behaviors

- 29.6% have had sexual intercourse.
- 32.7% have participated in oral sex.
- 45.7% of sexually active students did not use a condom during last sexual intercourse.
- 67.3% of sexually active students did not use birth control such as the pill, patch, shot, or IUD to prevent pregnancy.
- 13.0% have electronically posted a sexually revealing photo of themselves in the 30 days before the survey.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

- 41.4% have used an electronic vapor product (e.g., e-cigarettes, vape pipes, hookah pens).
- 22.3% drank alcohol during the 30 days before taking the survey.
- 36.9% have ever used marijuana.
- 20.2% of sexually active students drank alcohol or used drugs before their last sexual intercourse.

Unintentional Injury and Violence

- 19.6% purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die within the past year.
- 17.4% seriously considered attempting suicide within the year before the survey.
- 20.0% were dating or going out with someone who tried to control them or emotionally hurt them within the past year.
- 5.9% were forced to have sexual intercourse.
- 9.4% were in a physical fight on school property within the past year.
- 7.6% felt too unsafe to go to school within the year before the survey.

What are the solutions?

**COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION • CONTINUED ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES
INCLUSIVE INSTRUCTION AND PRACTICES • CONTINUED COLLABORATION
IMPLEMENT POLICIES • FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

www.sandiegounified.org/2019YRBS

For more information, please contact Rachel Miller at (619) 725-7121 or rmiller@sandi.net.



Do Students Tell the Truth on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?

While a very small number of students do not answer the YRBS honestly, most students tell the truth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confidence in YRBS data for the following reasons:

1. Survey environment

Survey administration procedures are designed to protect the confidentiality of schools and the anonymity of students.

- Students sit as far apart as possible throughout the classroom and have a piece of paper to cover their responses.
- Survey administrators and classroom teachers are instructed to not wander around the classroom while students are taking the survey.
- Students are told the importance of providing honest answers, that no one will know how they respond, and how the data will be used to improve programs and policies for students.
- Make-ups are done only when the privacy of students can be protected.

2. Questionnaire design and content

The YRBS questionnaire is designed to protect the anonymity of students.

- No names or other types of personally identifying information are ever requested.
- Skip patterns are not used to make sure all students complete the questionnaire in about the same amount of time. If skip patterns were used, some students who engaged in few risk behaviors would complete the questionnaire far faster than those students who engaged in many risk behaviors. All students are expected to answer every question.
- The YRBS questionnaire has about an 8th grade reading level. This helps students accurately comprehend questions and response options. The total number of questions is kept low to help ensure students have an adequate amount of time to respond to every question. Questions are written in a straightforward and direct manner and require only one response.

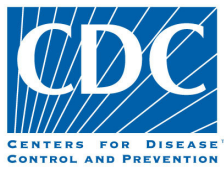
3. Edit checks

YRBS data are edited for inconsistent responses.

- More than 150 edit checks are conducted on each high school YRBS data set to remove inconsistent responses. For example, students who report a certain behavior on school property also must have reported the same behavior anywhere or the responses to these two questions will be deleted. Only a very small percentage of responses to each question are identified as inconsistent and removed from the data sets.
- Though it rarely occurs, questionnaires with only a few valid responses are removed entirely from the data set.

4. Logic within groups of questions

Questions on similar topics produce logical responses. For example, more students have thought about attempting suicide than have made a plan to attempt suicide. Fewer still have actually attempted suicide, and very few have made an injurious suicide attempt. This logical pattern of responses within groups of questions has occurred since the first surveys were conducted.



Do Students Tell the Truth on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?

5. Comparison of YRBS data with data from other surveys

When YRBS results are compared to results from other national, state, and district surveys on the same topics, the results are generally quite similar, particularly when differences in survey administration, sample selection, and question wording are taken into consideration.

6. Consistency over time

YRBS results have been fairly consistent since 1991. While the prevalence of some behaviors has increased or decreased significantly over time, most changes have been gradual and in one direction, either up or down, and have not bounced around from year to year.

7. Health outcome data

YRBS results are consistent with health outcome data. For example, YRBS data from the past decade indicate that the prevalence of sexual experience is decreasing. Decreases in teen pregnancies, teen births, and sexually transmitted disease rates among adolescents also were occurring.

8. Subgroup differences

Subgroup differences are logical and have remained generally constant over time. For example, many behaviors like drug use and sexual experience consistently increase by grade, while others like physical fighting consistently decrease by grade. Other behaviors vary consistently by gender. Males are always far more likely than females to use smokeless tobacco.

9. Psychometric studies

CDC has conducted a series of psychometric tests to better understand the quality of the questionnaire and the data collected with it. Based on the data available, the YRBSS data appear to be generally reliable and valid.

- When the YRBS questionnaire was developed, psychometric tests were conducted in a cognitive laboratory setting, in focus groups, and in regular classrooms among diverse groups of students.
- In 1992 and 2000, CDC conducted reliability studies to measure the stability of responses during a 2-week interval.
- In 2002, 2004, and 2008, CDC conducted additional methodological studies to examine other factors affecting the reliability and validity of YRBS data.
- Researchers not associated with CDC also have conducted psychometric tests using the YRBS questionnaire and similar questionnaires.
- In March 2018 and 2020, cognitive interviews were conducted to test the performance of ten proposed and current YRBS questions.

Instructions for Classroom Teachers Administering the YRBS

Before the day of the survey:

1. Distribute parental permission forms to students in your selected class according to the procedures that have been established by your school. Track the return of these forms so you know which students, if any, do not have permission to participate in the survey.
2. If you provide the date that you will administer the survey to Rachel Miller at rmiller@sandi.net, she will remain available via phone, email, or zoom to provide virtual support during survey administration.

On the day of the survey:

3. Complete (A) and (B) of the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form, located in the back pocket of your YRBS information folder**, by following the instructions below:
 - (A) Circle the **predominant grade** of the class. If the class contains equal numbers of students from more than one grade, circle all of these grades on the form.
 - (B) Enter the number of students who are currently **enrolled** in the class. Do not include students who have dropped the class, dropped out of school, moved away, been expelled, or are homebound in the entire semester in which the YRBS administration occurs.
4. Confirm the number of students who are currently enrolled in the class but will not be participating in the survey for the following reasons and enter the information on the Classroom-Level Sample Information Form:
 - (D1) Students who cannot complete the survey independently. This might include students who cannot read English well enough or students with disabilities such as visual or dexterity impairments.
 - (D2) Students who were absent the day of the survey for reasons such as illness, field trips, and suspensions, students who opted out of the survey because their parent refused permission, or students who refused to participate.
5. Spread students' desks throughout the classroom, if possible, to minimize the chance students will see each other's responses.
6. Distribute a questionnaire, answer sheet, blank piece of paper, and pre-sharpened pencil to every participating student.
7. Do not wander around the room or talk while students are completing the survey. Ensure that other students do not talk or leave their seats until all surveys have been completed and collected.
8. Encourage students to use an extra sheet of paper to cover their responses as they work.
9. Read the directions to the students before they begin. Remind students about the importance of the survey, that completing the survey is voluntary, that their responses are anonymous, and that their grade in the class will not be affected by whether they complete the survey.
10. Remind students **not** to write their name or any other identifying information else on the answer sheet and **to not fill out anything on the back of the answer sheet and to keep that side blank**.

Instructions for Classroom Teachers Administering the YRBS

11. Allow enough time for students to complete the survey without feeling rushed. About 35 minutes should be sufficient for most students to complete the survey.
12. Make sure that only #2 pencils are used. If a student needs another pencil or eraser, we have provided extra pre-sharpened pencils to give to them.
13. Do not look at the answers to the surveys as you collect and organize answer sheets. Students must be confident that their privacy will be maintained and that their participation will remain anonymous.
14. Respond to all student requests for question clarification with "Do the best you can." Unfortunately, survey administrators are not allowed to offer clarification on questions since the responses could inadvertently bias the answer.

After the survey is finished:

15. When all students have returned their answer sheets, record in (C) on the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** the number of students in the class who have completed the survey. The sum of the numbers entered in (C) + (D1) + (D2) should equal the number in (B). If it does not, try to resolve any inconsistencies between these numbers.
16. If five or more students were absent on the day of the survey, please allow them to make it up when they return to school. Use the same procedures to ensure their privacy. Make sure their completed answer sheets are placed with others from the same sampled classroom and the relevant fields [participating students (C), refusals and absent students (D2)] on the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** are updated appropriately.
17. Place the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** and all the answer sheets for your period 2 class in the pre-labeled completed-survey envelope provided.
18. Place the pre-labeled envelope containing the completed answer sheets and Classroom-Level Sample Information Form **into your site's District Mail bag**.
19. Recycle all the questionnaires and any unused answer sheets. Please keep extra pencils and blank colored paper for your classroom.
20. Once the SHEP office has received your answer sheets, you will be contacted about submitting a Timecard for any hours spent on YRBS administration performed outside of your regular contract hours. A package of gifts will also be sent to you and your students to show our appreciation for your participation in this important survey.

If you have any questions about YRBS administration, please contact SHEP Resource Teacher Rachel Miller at rmiller@sandi.net or (619) 725-7121.



A Script for YRBS Administrators

STEP 1 – VERIFY THAT ALL ASSEMBLED STUDENTS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED THE YRBS PARENT NOTIFICATION LETTER AND THAT NONPARTICIPATING STUDENTS (IF ANY) HAVE AN ALTERNATE ACTIVITY.

STEP 2 – SURVEY INTRODUCTION

“Thank you for participating in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey today. By participating in this survey, you are taking part in an extremely important effort to understand the health of students in San Diego Unified School District. (SDUSD) Educators and health officials value your input.

This survey is being conducted on behalf of the SDUSD and CDC. Participating in this survey is voluntary and your grade in this class will not be affected, whether or not you answer the questions. However, only a limited number of students in SDUSD high schools are participating in this survey, so the answers you give are important, as you are representing thousands of other students.

You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This is not a test of you or this school. In order to help develop better education programs, educators and health officials want to know more about students like you, and the answers you give are very important so that results are accurate. You will be asked about many different topics, including sexual behaviors, drug use, alcohol and nicotine use, your experience of COVID-19 the during these past couple of years, positive and negative experiences within your home life, and other behaviors that may lead to unintentional injury or violence.”

STEP 3 – DISTRIBUTE QUESTIONNAIRES, ANSWER SHEETS, PENCILS, AND BLANK SHEETS OF PAPER. EMPHASIZE PRIVACY/ANONYMITY.

“Throughout the entire survey process, I will maintain strict procedures to protect your privacy and allow for your anonymous participation. Because the survey is anonymous, no one will know your answers. Please **do not** write your name or any other identifying information on the questionnaire or answer sheet, and **keep the back of the answer sheet blank and do not fill in any information on the back of the answer sheet.** Your answers are private and we do not want to know your name. Results of this survey will never be reported by name, class, or school. When you finish the survey, cover your answer sheet with the blank sheet of paper provided.”

PAUSE HERE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS...

STEP 4 – INSTRUCT THE CLASS IN FILLING OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

“Now I would like you to look at the questionnaire. Please take a moment to read the instructions on the front cover of the questionnaire, but do not turn the page yet.

(PAUSE)

When I tell you to begin, use the #2 pencil you have been given to fill out the answer sheet. Do not use a pen or any other pencil. Notice that for each question on the questionnaire, there is a corresponding set of ovals on the answer sheet. For each question, choose the one answer that best fits what you know, feel, or do, then fill in the corresponding oval on the answer sheet. If you must change an answer, erase your first answer completely. Except for question 5, which asks you to identify your race, only one oval should be filled in for each question.

When you are finished, look over your answer sheet to make sure that you have not skipped any questions you wanted to answer. We have allowed 35 minutes for completing the survey but you may stop at any time. If you finish before that time, cover your answer sheet with the blank sheet of paper, and stay seated until I ask you to turn it in.



A Script for YRBS Administrators

It is important that you answer the questions based on what you really know, really believe, and really do. Do not pick a response just because you think that is what someone wants you to say. I am not allowed to answer any questions during the survey. Simply do the best that you can.

Please begin.”

STEP 5 – WHEN EVERYONE IS FINISHED, COLLECT THE COMPLETED ANSWER SHEETS AND THE QUESTIONNAIRES. PUT THE COMPLETED ANSWER SHEETS IN THE PRE-LABELED ENVELOPE. RECYCLE THE QUESTIONNAIRES AND UNUSED ANSWER SHEETS.

STEP 6 – COMPLETE THE CLASSROOM-LEVEL INFORMATION FORM TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL ANSWER SHEETS ARE ACCOUNTED FOR. PUT THE COMPLETED FORM WITH THE ANSWER SHEETS IN THE PRE-LABELED ENVELOPE.

STEP 7 – THANK PARTICIPANTS.

“Thank you for participating in the survey. The information you have provided will be used to develop better health education programs for students in SDUSD. If you have any questions related to the topics on the survey, please contact Rachel Miller at rmiller@sandi.net.”