

2021 and 2023 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Attachment P4

YRBS Fact Sheet for Schools – Booklet

{YEAR} NATIONAL YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducts a biennial national school-based survey to measure the prevalence of priority health risk behaviors among students in grades 9 through 12. This fact sheet answers important questions about the {YEAR} national YRBS.

Q. What is the purpose of the national YRBS?

A. The purpose of the national YRBS is to gather nationally representative data for students in grades 9 through 12 on priority health risk behaviors. These behaviors contribute to the leading causes of mortality and morbidity during both youth and adulthood and include: behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unintended pregnancies; unhealthy dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity.

Q. How frequently is the YRBS conducted?

A. The national YRBS has been conducted every other year since 1991.

Q. Why is the national YRBS conducted?

A. CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health is responsible for identifying and monitoring factors that may affect the health of our Nation's youth. CDC will use the results from the YRBS to (1) monitor how priority health risk behaviors among high school students increase, decrease, or remain the same over time; (2) evaluate the impact of broad national, state, and local efforts to prevent risk behaviors; and (3) improve school health education policies and programs.

Q. Does the survey have broad national support?

A. Yes. The survey is supported by many major national organizations interested in the health of youth, including: {INSERT LISTING}

Q. Are sensitive questions asked?

A. Some questions may be considered sensitive by some schools or school districts. HIV infection, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and injection drug use are among the behaviors known to increase the risk of HIV or other STDs. The only way to determine if adolescents are at risk of becoming infected with HIV or other STDs is to ask questions about these behaviors. Attempted suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, and weapon-carrying also may be considered sensitive topics. Questions are presented in a straightforward manner and the survey is administered under conditions that are designed to protect student anonymity, thus reducing any uneasiness about answering questions considered sensitive. Also, if students are not comfortable answering a question, they may leave it blank.

Q. Is student participation anonymous? How is student privacy protected?

A. Survey administration procedures are designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. The survey administration is coordinated by specially trained field staff. Students submit a completed optically scannable questionnaire booklet, containing no personal identifiers, in a sealed envelope which is then placed in a large box or envelope. Similar safeguards are used to complete make-ups. Students not participating in the survey are provided with an alternative activity by their school. Published reports do not include names of participating counties, cities, school districts, schools, or students.

Q. Are students tracked over time to see how their behavior changes?

A. No. Each year a new sample of states, schools, and students is drawn. Students who participated cannot be tracked because no identifying information is collected.

Q. Is this voluntary? What if school districts, schools, or students do not choose to participate?

A. Participation in the national YRBS is voluntary. However, to develop accurate national estimates of priority health risk behaviors among adolescents, participation rates must be high. Selected schools and students cannot be replaced. The goal is to achieve 90 to 95 percent participation by selected schools and students.

Q. What grades are included? What types of schools are included in the sample?

A. The {YEAR} national YRBS will be administered to students in grades 9 through 12. This includes students from public, Catholic, and private schools with one or more grades in this range (e.g., K-12, 7-12, 10-12, and 9-12).

Q. What is the sample size and how are schools selected?

A. A random sample of approximately {#} schools has been selected to participate in the {YEAR} national YRBS. The probability of a school being selected is based on enrollment in grades 9 through 12. One or two classes (approximately 25 to 50 students) in each grade 9 through 12 are selected randomly to participate in each school. Approximately 100 to 200 students are asked to participate in a school containing grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. In a junior high school with grades 7 through 9, approximately 25 to 50 ninth graders are asked to participate.

Q. How is the {YEAR} national YRBS coordinated at each school? What role do school staff play?

A. It is preferable to have a single spokesperson in each school. This can be the principal, another administrator, a teacher, or someone else designated by the principal. The spokesperson provides a list of class sections, distributes parental permission forms to teachers of the sampled classes, follows up to ensure permission forms have been distributed to students, helps to promote the survey in the school, and ensures a high participation rate. Teachers assist with tracking parental permission forms. Teachers generally are not asked to administer the survey except for make-ups with students absent during the initial administration.

Q. What is done to maximize student participation?

A. CDC provides information to school administrators explaining the importance of the national YRBS that can be shared with teachers, parents, and students. It is helpful if the school's spokesperson for the YRBS is familiar with the survey and is willing to gain support from teachers, parents, and students. The school spokesperson may work through the school's PTA to gain support for the survey. Many schools also notify parents of the survey in the school newsletter.

Q. What is the relationship between this national survey and similar surveys being conducted by state and local education and health agencies?

A. Many state and local education and health agencies use the same or a similar questionnaire to conduct their own YRBS as part of their cooperative agreement activities with CDC.

Q. Why can't a YRBS conducted by state and local education and health agencies be used to arrive at national estimates?

A. Many state and local education and health agencies regularly conduct their own school-based YRBS. However, the sampling procedures and questionnaires vary. Thus, it is not possible to combine results from these surveys, even if every state participated.

Q. What if a school is selected to be in a state or local YRBS as well as the national YRBS?

A. Every effort is made to avoid asking a school to participate in the state or local YRBS and national YRBS in the same school year. The CDC works collaboratively with each state to identify schools selected for both state and national surveys. Normally, agreement is reached that either the national or the state survey will be administered in the school.

Q. How long does it take to fill out the questionnaire? Is there some sort of physical test?

A. One class period is needed to complete the self-administered questionnaire. It takes approximately 10 minutes for the survey administrator to distribute survey materials and read directions to the students. It then takes approximately 35 minutes for students to record their responses. The questionnaire contains {#} multiple-choice questions. No physical test or exam is involved.

Q. Can state and local education and health agencies conducting their own YRBS obtain a waiver from the national survey?

A. No. This action would jeopardize the selection of a nationally representative sample of all students in grades 9 through 12. To develop valid national estimates, every state, school district, school, and student in grades 9 through 12 nationwide must have a chance to be selected as a survey participant. Otherwise, survey results will be biased. The burden for a state to participate in the national YRBS is low because of the small number of schools and students selected to participate in most states.

Q. Do students answer questions truthfully?

A. Research indicates data of this nature may be gathered as reliably from adolescents as from adults. Internal reliability checks help identify the small percentage of students who falsify their answers. To obtain truthful answers, students must perceive the survey as important and know procedures have been developed to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation.

Q. When is the survey conducted? When are results available?

A. Data collection is scheduled to start in {MONTH} and continue through {MONTH} with schools closing earlier in the year completed first. A report summarizing the results will be published the following year. All participating states, school districts, and schools will be notified when the report is available for download.

Q. What do the schools receive for participating in the {YEAR} national YRBS?

A. As a token of appreciation for contributing their time and support and for being a significant partner in the {YEAR} national YRBS effort, the CDC will provide each participating school with a monetary school award. One option is to use these funds for prevention curriculum and educational materials. However, no restrictions will be placed on how schools can use these funds.

Q. Who is the survey contractor for the {YEAR} YRBS?

A. ICF, a nationally recognized survey research company in Rockville, Maryland, has received a contract from CDC to work with states, school districts, and schools to help obtain clearance, select a sample of students, schedule data collection, distribute survey materials, and collect student data.

Q. Whom may I call to obtain additional information and/or make arrangements for data collection in my school?

A. To obtain additional information and/or arrange for the national YRBS to be conducted in your school, call the {YEAR} national YRBS information line *toll free*: 1-800-675-9727. Someone will be available to help make arrangements for your school between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. If no one is available, please leave a message and someone will call you back promptly.

Inquiries to CDC should be directed to Dr. Nancy Brener, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, 1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop US8-1, Atlanta, GA 30329-4027; email at nad1@cdc.gov or telephone at 404-718-8133.