

Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey

2009 Comparison: United States Traditional High School Students and Alaska Traditional High School Students

U.S. Students	Alaska Students	Alaska Students were at*:
Rarely or never wore a seat belt:		
10%	12%	= Equal risk
Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol:		
28%	21%	⊖ Less risk
Carried a weapon on school property on at least 1 day:		
6%	8%	⊕ Greater risk
In a physical fight during the past year:		
32%	28%	⊖ Less risk
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school on at least 1 day:		
5%	6%	= Equal risk
Seriously considered attempting suicide:		
14%	14%	= Equal risk
Attempted suicide during the past year:		
6%	9%	= Equal risk
Current smoking:		
20%	16%	⊖ Less risk
Current smokeless tobacco use:		
9%	14%	⊕ Greater risk
Current drinking:		
42%	33%	⊖ Less risk
Binge drinking:		
24%	22%	= Equal risk
Current marijuana use:		
21%	23%	= Equal risk
Ever had sexual intercourse:		
46%	44%	= Equal risk
Currently sexually active:		
34%	30%	= Equal risk
Had sexual intercourse with 4 or more people:		
14%	11%	= Equal risk
Used condom before last sexual intercourse:		
61%	62%	= Equal risk
Percentage of students who were overweight or obese:		
28%	26%	= Equal risk
Ate fruits and vegetables 5 or more times per day:		
22%	17%	⊕ Greater risk
Attended physical education daily in an average week:		
33%	18%	⊕ Greater risk

*Statistically significant difference.

Alaska's Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of an epidemiological surveillance system that was established in 1990 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor the prevalence of health-risk behaviors among youth. The survey was first implemented in Alaska in 1995. The YRBS is a biennial, anonymous and voluntary survey of students grades 9 - 12 in public traditional high schools (excluding boarding, correspondence, home study, alternative, and correctional schools). The YRBS is a joint project between the Department of Education & Early Development and the Department of Health and Social Services, in cooperation with the CDC.

The YRBS asks students to self-report on their behaviors in six major areas of health that directly lead to morbidity and mortality in youth and adult populations within our country. These six areas are:

- behaviors that result in unintentional and intentional injuries;
- tobacco use;
- alcohol and other drug use;
- sexual behaviors that can result in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unintended pregnancies;
- dietary behaviors; and
- physical activity.

In 2009, a statewide survey of alternative high schools in Alaska was implemented for the first time.

Supporters of Alaska's Youth Risk Behavior Survey

- Alaska Action for Healthy Kids
- Alaska Association of School Administrators
- Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
- Alaska Health Education Consortium
- Alaska Mental Health Board
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- Alaska Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Alaska Public Health Association
- Alaska School Nurses Association
- Alaska Tobacco Control Alliance
- All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association
- Association of Alaska School Boards
- Governor's Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
- United Way of Anchorage
- United Way of Mat-Su
- United Way of Southeast Alaska
- United Way of the Tanana Valley
- And more...

For more information on the Alaska YRBS go to:
<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/school/YRBS.htm>

Summary of the 2009 Survey Results

On average, in an Alaskan high school class of 30 students:

- 6 - 7 rode (in the past month) with a driver who had been drinking alcohol
- 2 - 3 had carried a weapon to school
- 3 were in a physical fight in the past year
- 2 - 3 attempted suicide in the past year
- 5 smoked cigarettes and 4 used smokeless tobacco in the past month
- 10 drank alcohol in the past month
- 7 engaged in binge drinking in the past month
- 7 used marijuana in the past month
- 13 had ever had sexual intercourse
- 8 were either overweight or obese
- 17 were physically active for less than the recommended total of at least 60 minutes per day (on 5 or more days of the past 7 days).

Many students started engaging in risk behaviors before the age of 13:

- 13% had smoked a whole cigarette
- 17% had consumed their first drink of alcohol
- 10% had tried marijuana.

We also know that 1 in 5 high school students:

- were bullied at school during the past year
- had ever used prescription medications without a doctor's prescription.

Other Findings:

- Many high school students are still engaging in unhealthy behaviors, increasing their likelihood of being hurt, fatally injured or developing diseases.
- Some of the goals set forth in Healthy Alaskans 2010 have been achieved and health-risk behaviors have been reduced in three major areas: current smoking, binge drinking, and current alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine use.
- Alaska high school students were at greater risk than U.S. students for dating violence, forced sexual intercourse, using smokeless tobacco, having ever used marijuana, carrying a weapon on school property, not eating enough fruits and vegetables, and not participating in physical education.
- Alaska high school students were at less risk than U.S. students for not wearing bicycle helmets, riding with a driver who had been drinking, being in a physical fight, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol in the past month, drinking soda or pop, and watching television.
- Alternative high school students were at significantly greater risk than students in traditional high schools in Alaska for most health-risk behaviors and more likely to have engaged in risky behavior before the age of 13.
- Alternative high school students were more likely than traditional high school students to feel that their teachers really cared about them and gave them a lot of encouragement, that their school had clear rules and consequences for behavior, and were less likely to be bullied at school.
- Alaska Native students were more likely than white students to consume soda pop and other sugary beverages.

2009 Comparison: Alaska Traditional High School and Alternative High School Students

Traditional High Schools	Alternative High Schools	Alternative Students were at*:
Rarely or never wore a seat belt:		
12%	14%	= Equal risk
Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol:		
21%	30%	⊕ Greater risk
Carried a weapon on school property on at least 1 day:		
8%	11%	⊕ Greater risk
In a physical fight during the past year:		
28%	46%	⊕ Greater risk
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school on at least 1 day:		
6%	7%	= Equal risk
Seriously considered attempting suicide:		
14%	18%	⊕ Greater risk
Attempted suicide during the past year:		
9%	11%	= Equal risk
Current smoking:		
16%	58%	⊕ Greater risk
Current smokeless tobacco use:		
14%	18%	⊕ Greater risk
Current drinking:		
33%	57%	⊕ Greater risk
Binge drinking:		
22%	43%	⊕ Greater risk
Current marijuana use:		
23%	51%	⊕ Greater risk
Ever had sexual intercourse:		
44%	82%	⊕ Greater risk
Currently sexually active:		
30%	66%	⊕ Greater risk
Had sexual intercourse with 4 or more people:		
11%	43%	⊕ Greater risk
Used condom before last sexual intercourse:		
62%	46%	⊕ Greater risk
Percentage of students who were overweight or obese:		
26%	37%	⊕ Greater risk
Ate fruits and vegetables 5 or more times per day:		
17%	20%	⊖ Less risk
Attended physical education daily in an average week:		
18%	13%	⊕ Greater risk

*Statistically significant difference.

Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey Trends 1995-2009

Prevalence of Selected Risk Behaviors for Students in Traditional High Schools (grades 9-12)

1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	Change from 1995-2009**
Rarely or never wore a seat belt:								
19.5%				15.1%		7.0%	12.1%	⊖ Decreased
Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol one or more times:								
31.9%				25.0%		23.5%	21.3%	⊖ Decreased
Carried a weapon on school property on at least one day:								
12.3%				7.1%		8.4%	7.8%	⊖ Decreased
In a physical fight during the past year:								
35.8%				27.1%		29.2%	27.8%	⊖ Decreased
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school on at least 1 day:								
3.6%				4.1%		5.5%	6.0%	⊕ Increased
Seriously considered attempting suicide:								
23.9%				16.7%		16.5%	13.9%	⊖ Decreased
Attempted suicide one or more times during the past year:								
9.4%				8.1%		10.7%	8.5%	No change
Current smoking:								
36.5%				19.2%		17.8%	15.7%	⊖ Decreased
Current smokeless tobacco use:								
15.6%				11.2%		10.4%	13.6%	⊖ Decreased
Current drinking:								
47.5%				38.7%		39.7%	33.2%	⊖ Decreased
Binge drinking:								
31.3%				26.5%		25.8%	21.7%	⊖ Decreased
Current marijuana use:								
28.7%				23.9%		20.5%	22.7%	⊖ Decreased
Ever had sexual intercourse:								
47.2%				39.6%		45.1%	43.5%	No change
Currently sexually active:								
30.5%				27.6%		30.9%	30.4%	No change
Had sexual intercourse with 4 or more people:								
17.1%				12.1%		13.4%	11.4%	⊖ Decreased
Used a condom before last sexual intercourse (among students who were sexually active):								
53.7%				62.3%		60.8%	62.2%	⊕ Increased
Percentage of students who were overweight or obese: (Question added in 2003)								
				25.4%		27.3%	26.2%	No change
Ate fruits and vegetables 5 or more times per day: (Question added in 2003)								
				16.1%		15.7%	17.2%	No change
Attended physical education daily in an average week:								
26.4%				18.2%		17.7%	17.7%	⊖ Decreased

*Data only presented in years when statewide representative data were obtained; **Statistically significant change.

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