



Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System: System Overview

What is the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)?

The YRBSS was developed in 1990 to monitor priority health risk behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. These behaviors, often established during childhood and early adolescence, include

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence.
- Sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Tobacco use.
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors.
- Inadequate physical activity.
- In addition the YRBSS monitors the prevalence of obesity and asthma.

From 1990 through 2011, the YRBSS has collected data from more than 1.7 million high school students in more than 800 separate surveys.

What are the purposes of the YRBSS?

The YRBSS was designed to

- Determine the prevalence of health risk behaviors.
- Assess whether health risk behaviors increase, decrease, or stay the same over time.
- Examine the co-occurrence of health risk behaviors.
- Provide comparable national, state, territorial, tribal, and local data.
- Provide comparable data among subpopulations of youth.
- Monitor progress toward achieving the Healthy People objectives and other program indicators.

What are the components of the YRBSS?

The YRBSS includes national, state, territorial, tribal government, and local school-based surveys of representative samples of 9th through 12th grade students. These surveys are conducted every two years, usually during the spring semester. The national survey, conducted by CDC, provides data representative of 9th through 12th grade students in public and private schools in the United States. The state, territorial, tribal government, and local surveys, conducted by departments of health and education, provide data representative of mostly public high school students in each jurisdiction.

The YRBSS also includes additional surveys conducted by CDC:

- A 2010 study to measure physical activity and nutrition-related behaviors and determinants of these behaviors among a nationally representative sample of high school students.
- A series of methods studies conducted in 1992, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2008 to improve the quality and interpretation of the YRBSS data.
- The National Alternative High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted in 1998 among a representative sample of almost 9,000 students in alternative high schools.
- The National College Health Risk Behavior Survey conducted in 1995 among a representative sample of about 5,000 undergraduate students.

Where can I get more information? Visit www.cdc.gov/yrbss or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

