

Executive Summary

Youth Risk Behavior Survey Lexington High School *2015 Results*

**Reported by
Amy Farrell, Ph.D.
Jack McDevitt, Ph.D.
Rachel Austin**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1,909 students participated in the spring 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Data were cleaned to remove extreme response cases resulting in a final analysis of 1,732 student responses. Those students were distributed across grades as follows:
 - 29% 9th grade (470)
 - 26% 10th grade (425)
 - 25% 11th grade (411)
 - 20% 12th grade (323)
- Similar surveys were given 1995 (n=655), 1999 (n=1,005), 2002 (n=1,422), 2004 (n=1,455), 2007 (n=1,533), 2009 (n=1,840), 2011 (n=1,715), 2013 (n=1,664).
- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey focuses on various areas of risk facing youth nationally (i.e. alcohol, drugs, sexual activity, nutrition, and violence). Lexington High School has integrated a number of specific questions that deal with high-risk issues that are being confronted by current programs such as stress, academic competition, and risky sexual activity.

Highlights from 2015 Survey

1. Alcohol and Drug Use

Students at Lexington High School report using a number of illegal or unhealthful substances.

- 63% of students report drinking alcohol in their lifetime (down from 67% reported in 2013, identical to the 63% for all Massachusetts high schools and higher than the 53% at comparable schools¹).
- *Of the 1,031 students who reported drinking alcohol in their lifetime:*
 - 41% (n=423) reported having at least one drink of alcohol during the prior 30 days (down from 50% in 2013).
 - 37% of males and 43% of females reported one or more drinks of alcohol during the prior 30 days.
 - 26% of 9th graders, 37% of 10th graders, 44% of 11th graders and 51% of 12th graders reported one or more drinks of alcohol in the prior 30 days.
 - 45% of white students, 32% of Black students, 26% of Hispanic students, 28% of Asian students, 29% of Southeast Asian/East Indian students, and 33% of multi-racial students reported one or more drinks of alcohol in the prior 30 days.
 - 19% (n=199) of students reported binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) at least once in last 30 days (down from 24% in 2013).
 - Of students who drank alcohol, 30% report drinking at home with parents present, 27% at a party, 25% at friend's houses with no adults present, 17% at home with no parents present, and 14% at friend's house with adults present.
 - Although the direction of the relationship is unknown, students who report higher levels of drinking also report significantly higher levels of stress due to classes, homework, and planning.

¹ Emerson Hospital Study of Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Groton-Dunstable, Harvard, Littleton, Maynard, Nashoba, Regional, and Westford Public Schools, 2014.

- 11% of students have ever tried smoking (down from 15% in 2013 and lower than the 32% average for Massachusetts High Schools and 16% of comparable schools) and only 3% of the students report smoking cigarettes during the prior 30 days (down from 5% in 2013).
- 21% of students report using marijuana in their lifetime (down from 23% in 2013 and lower than the 41% average for Massachusetts High Schools and 27% average for comparable schools)
 - 6% of 9th graders, 15% of 10th graders, 25% of 11th graders and 38% of 12th graders report trying marijuana in their lifetime.
 - Roughly equal proportions of male and female students have tried marijuana in their lifetime.
 - Black students were proportionately most likely to have tried marijuana (30%), followed by Hispanic (26%) and white (24%), Asian (8%) and Southeast Asian/East Indian (7%) students.
 - 13% of students report having used marijuana during the prior 30 days (roughly equal to 2013 data and lower than the 25% Massachusetts High School average and 17% comparable schools average).
 - Of students who report marijuana usage, 17% report getting marijuana from a friend and 4% report getting marijuana from a classmate.
 - Although the direction of the relationship is unknown, students who report higher usage of marijuana also report significantly higher levels of stress due to homework, classes, and planning.
- Less than 2% of students report other drug usage (i.e. sniffing glue, over the counter medications, heroin in their lifetime, or other drugs). There were no significant grade, gender or race differences in usage of other drugs.
- 10% of students (n=165) reported being on prescription medication for mental or behavioral issues. White students (13%) were proportionately most likely to report being on prescription medication for mental or behavioral issues, compared to Black (4%), Hispanic (9%), Asian (4%) or Southeast Asian/East Indian (3%) students.

2. Harassment and Violence

- 19% of students (n=314) report being a victim of harassment² at school or because of something that happened at school (down from 21% in 2013). 17% of students report being threatened at school over the past 12 months (compared to 7% of students at comparable schools who report being threatened or humiliated, or experiencing hostile behaviors from others in school).
 - Of the 314 students who report being harassed:
 - 81% report being harassed by students while in school (n=257)
 - 14% report being harassed by a teacher while in school (n=44)
 - 36% report being harassed over the internet or by email (n=78)
 - 30% told no one (n=94)
 - 60% told friends (n=182)
 - 27% told parents (n=85)
 - 14% told school officials (n=44)
- Male and female students equally report being harassed. Harassment does vary by student's self-reported sexual orientation. LGBT students were more likely to report harassment (47% of gay or lesbian students reported being harassed compared to 36% of bisexual students, 25% of students not sure of their sexual identify, and 17% of heterosexual students). Black students

² Harassment is defined in the survey as "being teased or threatened verbally or physically by an individual or group."

were also more likely to report harassment (23%) compared to white (20%), Hispanic (18%), Asian (15%), or South Asian/East Indian students (12%).

- The YRBS also asked questions about violence in the home and dating violence.
 - 16% of students (n=278) reported that they witnessed or experienced violence in the home over the past 12 months.
 - 6% (n=96) of students at Lexington report that they have experienced dating violence (compared to 4% of students at comparable schools). Experience with dating violence is more acute among female students (8%).

3. Sex

- Approximately 13% of Lexington students (n=187) report that they have ever had sexual intercourse (compared to 14% in 2013, 38% in Massachusetts High Schools and 24% in comparable schools).
 - Sexual experience varies greatly by grade.
 - 1% of 9th graders report ever having sex (n=6)
 - 7% of 10th graders report ever having sex (n=30)
 - 17% of 11th graders report ever having sex (n=69)
 - 26 % of 12th graders report ever having sex (n=82)
- For those students who reported that they have had sexual intercourse, 69% reported that they used a condom during the last sexual intercourse (up from 66% in 2013). Of those students who reported having sex but not using a condom, 78% indicated they or their partner took birth control pills.
- 21% of Lexington students (n=319) report that they have ever had oral sex (down from 22% in 2013 and lower than the 32% at comparable schools).
 - The proportion of students who report having oral sex at least once varies by grade.
 - 7% of 9th graders report ever having oral sex (n=32)
 - 14% of 10th graders report ever having oral sex (n=60)
 - 27% of 11th graders report ever having oral sex (n=109)
 - 37 % of 12th graders report ever having oral sex (n=117)
- 32% of students (n=500) reported sending or receiving a sexual message electronically and 24% of students (n=375) reported sending or receiving a sexual picture electronically (compared to 22% of youth at comparable schools that had sent or received sexually explicit message or photos electronically)
- The following list indicates the proportion of students in each grade and the proportion of male and female students that report sending and receiving sexual messages:
 - 25% of 9th graders (n=117)
 - 26% of 10th graders (n=107)
 - 36% of 11th graders (n=146)
 - 41% of 12th graders (n=130)
 - 29% of males (n=232)
 - 33% of females (n=259)

4. Suicide Ideation and Self Injury

- 15% of students (n=262) report they have seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months (roughly equivalent to the 2013 data; compared to 17% nationally and 12% in Massachusetts high schools and comparable communities).
 - Young women are more likely to consider suicide (18%) than young men (13%). Asian (17%), Southeast Asian (16%), and white (15%) students are more likely to consider suicide than Black (11%) and Hispanic (7%) students.

- Bisexual (48%), Gay and Lesbian (42%) and students who are unsure about their sexual orientation (18%) are more likely to consider suicide than heterosexual students (13%)
- 12th graders (11%) were less likely to consider suicide than 9th graders (16%), 10th graders (16%) and 11th graders (17%).
- 43% of the students that reported suicide ideation also report feeling hopelessness and loss of interest in activities, common indicators of depression.
- 8% of students (n=135) made a plan to commit suicide over the last year (roughly equivalent to the 2013 data; compared to 14% nationwide and 12% Massachusetts in 2013).
- 2% of students (n=39) of students attempted suicide over the last year (slightly down from 3% in 2013; compared to 8% nationwide, 6% Massachusetts, and 4% in comparable communities).
- 1% of students (n=9) reported an injury associated with a suicide attempt over the last year (comparable to past years at LHS and lower than 3% nationwide and 2% in Massachusetts).
- 13% of students have engaged in other self-injurious behavior in the last year (e.g. cutting, burning) (identical to proportion in 2013 and compared to 14% in Massachusetts High Schools and comparable schools).

5. Academic Stress

- Students experience very little stress from sports (15% report a lot or extreme stress), extracurricular activities (6%), or clubs (5%).
- 95% of students report being under “a lot of stress” or “extreme stress” stress due to classes
 - 14% of students report being under “extreme stress” due to classes (down from 15% in 2013)
 - Southeast Asian students are more likely to report that classes cause them extreme stress (18%) compared to Asian (15%), Black (15%), Hispanic (15%) and White (13%) students.
 - 13% of 9th grade, 12% of 10th grade, 20% of 11th grade, 12% of 12th grade felt extreme stress from classes.
 - 18% of females compared to 10% of males report extreme stress from classes.
- 96% of students report being under some stress due to homework.
 - 14% of students report being under “extreme stress” due to homework (down from 16% in 2013).
 - Black (16%), Hispanic (12%), White (14%) and Asian (13%) students are more likely to report extreme stress from homework compared to Southeast Asian/Indian students (8%).
 - 11% of 9th grade, 12% of 10th grade, 19% of 11th grade, 13% of 12th grade felt extreme stress from homework.
 - 16% of females compared to 11% of males report extreme stress from homework.
- Planning for the future causes students stress
 - 33% of students report “extreme stress” planning for life after high school.
 - Students from all grades feel stress planning for future but extreme stress most acute among juniors and young women.
 - 29% of 9th grade, 31% of 10th grade, 38% of 11th grade, 33% of 12th grade felt extreme stress planning for the future.
 - 24% of males compared to 41% of females report extreme stress due to planning for the future.
- Stress related to academic achievement has negative consequences.
 - When students feel they have not performed as well as they would have liked on an exam 47% report it “bothers them a lot”. Young women are more bothered 51% compared to 38% to young men.

- Students feel academic pressure from a variety of sources:
 - 66% of students indicated they felt in academic competition with their friends
 - 75% of students indicated feeling indirect pressure from friends to do well in school
 - 80% of students felt pressure from their parents to get good grades
 - 95% of students felt pressure from themselves to do well in school
 - 62% of students felt pressure from teachers to get good grades
 - 85% of students felt the atmosphere of the school encouraged academic competition
 - 80% of students felt the atmosphere of the town encouraged competition.
- 24% students thought their teachers were aware of their level of stress (comparable to 23% in 2013).

5. Mental Health, Coping Strategies and Supports

- The 2015 YRBS included questions dealing with student's views of themselves and their responses to certain situations or problems.
 - Overall students report being able to depend on their family and friends to support them if they encounter problems (83%); 79% of students indicate that when confronted with problems they can usually find several solutions.
 - 44% of students indicated that they often feel lonely, 31% of students indicated they often feel depressed.
 - Youth who are lonely or depressed report much less support (71% of students who are lonely have support; 69% of students who are depressed have support).
 - Youth who are lonely or depressed report less ability to find solutions (69% of students who are lonely can find solutions; 64% of students who are depressed can find solutions).
- The survey also indicates that programming at LHS designed to help reduce stress may be having a positive impact.
 - Students report a number of healthy responses for dealing with stress. Students most commonly dealt with stress by exercising (44%), listening to music (61%), and reading (22%). But some students coped with stress by using alcohol and drugs (7%), sleeping (48%) and watching television (43%)
- The health education program also appears to have a positive impact on student decision making around risky behavior.
 - 55% of students report that they receive the most accurate information about sex from their health teachers. This far exceeded parents (11%), friends (9%), or the internet (20%).
 - Parents (28%), health teachers (22%) and friends (20%) are the most important people that influence student decision making regarding sex.
 - 50% of students report that they receive the most accurate information about alcohol and substance abuse from their health teacher. This far exceeds parents (20%), friends (8%), or the internet (20%).
 - Parents (45%), friends (15%) and health teachers (14%) are the most important people that influence student decisions about alcohol and drug usage.
 - 31% of students report that they receive the most accurate information about stress management from their health teachers compared to parents (21%), friends (12%), or the internet (13%).