

Executive Summary

Youth Risk Behavior Survey Lexington Middle School *2015 Results*

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1,023 7th and 8th grade students from Clarke and Diamond Middle Schools participated in the spring 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The survey instrument that was utilized was a modified version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey administered by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Data were cleaned and extreme cases were removed resulting in a final analysis of 970 student responses.¹ Those students were distributed across grades as follows:
 - 49% 7th grade (n=471)
 - 51% 8th grade (n=489)
- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey focuses on various areas of risk facing youth nationally (i.e. alcohol, drugs, sexual activity, nutrition, and violence).

Highlights from 2015 Middle School Survey

1. Alcohol and Drug Use

- 9% of 7th grade (n=40) and 18% of 8th grade students (n=87) in Lexington report ever drinking alcohol (more than a few sips) in their lifetime (compared to 12% of 8th graders in comparable schools²).
- 2% of 7th grade (n=9) and 4% of 8th grade students (n=24) report having at least one drink of alcohol during the prior 30 days (compared to 4% of 8th graders at comparable schools).
- Only 2% (n=21) of students ever reported trying cigarettes (3.6% of 8th graders in comparable schools report ever trying cigarettes). Less than 1% of students report smoking cigarettes during the prior 30 day (n=2).
- Only 1% of 7th and 8th grade students report ever trying marijuana in their lifetime and less than 1% report using marijuana in the prior 30 days (n=3).
- Approximately 2% of students (n=20) report using other drugs (i.e. cocaine, sniffing glue, steroids, over the counter medication, prescriptions).

2. Harassment and Violence

- 32% of 7th graders (n=149) and 29% of 8th graders (n=142) report ever being bullied at school.³
 - Bullying varies by gender. 35% of females report ever being bullied at school compared to 28% of males.
- 20% of 7th graders (n=93) and 21% of 8th graders (n=101) report ever being bullied electronically.
 - Electronic bullying also varies by gender. 25% of females report being electronically bullied compared to only 16% of males.

3. Sex

¹ Responses from Clarke and Diamond Middle Schools were combined here for purpose of analysis.

² Emerson Hospital Study of Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Groton-Dunstable, Harvard, Littleton, Maynard, Nashoba, Regional, and Westford Public Schools, 2014. It is important to note that the Emerson Hospital 2014 comparison data includes only 6th and 8th graders. Lexington Middle School data is compared only to the 8th grade Emerson Hospital data. National Center for Disease Control YRBS summary data is unavailable for Middle School students. Most states, including Massachusetts, do not conduct YRBS in Middle School.

³ In Lexington, bullying was defined as “one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when 2 students of about the same strength or power argue or tease each other.” Comparable school data is not available. The Emerson Hospital study asked Middle School students about being bullied at school over the past 12 months. The Lexington study asked Middle School students about being bullied at school in their lifetime. In the comparison study, 7% of 8th graders reported being bullied at school over the past 12 months.

- Less than 1% (n=6) of Lexington students report ever having sexual intercourse
- 9% of 7th grade (n=41) and 17% of 8th grade students (n=84) report having sent or received sexual messages electronically.
- 3% of 7th grade (n=16) and 12% of 8th grade students (n=59) report having sent or received sexual pictures electronically.⁴

4. Suicide Ideation and Self Injury

- 13% of 7th and 8th grade students (n=125) report having *ever* seriously considered suicide.
 - 10% of 7th grade students (n=49) report *ever* seriously considering suicide.
 - 16% of 8th grade students (n=76) report *ever* seriously considering suicide (compared to 6.4% of 8th grade students in comparable schools who indicate seriously considering suicide in the past 12 months).
- Suicide ideation varies by gender, and race.
 - 10% of males ever considered suicide compared to 16% of females.
 - 17% of Southeast Asian students ever considered suicide compared to 16% of Asian students, 13% of Black students, 12% of White students, and 7% of Hispanic students.
- 8% of students (n=75) ever planned to commit suicide.
 - 5% of 7th grade students (n=25) report ever planning to commit suicide.
 - 10% of 8th grade students (n=50) report ever planning to commit suicide.
- 1% of students (n=11) who reported ever making a plan to attempt suicide actually attempted suicide.
- 7% of students (n=68) reported ever engaging in other self-injurious behavior (e.g. cutting, burning).
 - 6% of 7th grade students (n=28) report ever engaging in other self-injurious behavior.
 - 8% of 8th grade students (n=40) report ever engaging in other self-injurious behavior (compared to 11% of 8th grade students in comparable schools who report having engaged in other self-injurious behavior in the past 12 months).
- 143 7th and 8th grade students report ever seriously considering suicide and/or engaging in self-injurious behavior. Of these students:
 - 22 reported needing medical services for any kind of self-injury.
 - 73 reported that they told an adult about the self-injury or thoughts of suicide.

5. Academic Stress

- 23% of 7th and 8th grade students report that classes cause them “a lot of stress” (18%, n=174) or “extreme stress” (5%, n=50).
 - 3% of 7th graders report that classes cause them extreme stress compared to 7% of 8th graders who report that classes cause them extreme stress.
 - 11% of Hispanic students report that classes cause them extreme stress compared to 6% of White students, 5% of Black students, 2% of Asian students, and 6% of Southeast Asian students.
 - 7% of females report that classes cause extreme stress compared to 4% of males.
- 39% of 7th and 8th grade students report that homework causes either “a lot of stress” (32%) or “extreme stress” (7%)
 - 34% of 7th graders report that homework causes either “a lot of stress” or “extreme stress”

⁴ The Emerson Hospital study asks Middle School students about sending or receiving sexually explicit messages or pictures over the past 12 months. The Lexington study asks Middle School students about ever sending or receiving sexually explicit messages or pictures. 7% of 8th grade students in the comparable schools report sending or receiving sexually explicit messages or pictures in the last 12 months.

- 44% of 8th graders report that homework causes either “a lot of stress” or “extreme stress” (compared to 24% of 8th grade students in comparable schools who report “somewhat high” or “very high” levels of stress due to their academic workload).
- Stress caused by homework varies by race, and gender.
 - 13% of Black students report that homework causes them extreme stress compared to 9% of White students, 11% of Hispanic students, 4% of Asian students, and 6% of Southeast Asian students.
 - 10% of female students report homework causes extreme stress compared to 4% of males.