

Executive Summary

Youth Risk Behavior Survey Lexington High School *2011 Results*

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1,715 students participated in the spring 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Due to complications surrounding distribution and survey time, only 775 of students completed all sections of the survey. The following list provides the distribution of survey responses by grade.
 - 20% 9th grade (154)
 - 22% 10th grade (165)
 - 30% 11th grade (230)
 - 28% 12th grade (218)
- Similar surveys were given 1995 (n=655), 1999 (n=1,005), 2002 (1,422), 2004 (1,455), 2007 (1,533) and 2009 (1,840).
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey focuses on various areas of risk facing youth in Massachusetts (i.e. alcohol, drugs, sexual activity, nutrition, 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 2011 Survey

1. Alcohol and Drug Use

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

- 78% of students report drinking alcohol in their lifetime (identical to the percent reported in 2009) and 49% of students report having at least one drink of alcohol during the prior 30 days
 - 29% of students reported binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) at least once in last 30 days.
- 19% of students have ever tried smoking and only 8% of the students report smoking cigarettes during the prior 30 days (down from 11 percent in 2009)
- 28% of students report using marijuana in their lifetime and 18% of students report having used marijuana during the prior 30 days (identical to the percentage in 2009)
 - Of students who report marijuana usage, 25% report getting marijuana from a friend
- 3% of the students report sniffing glue or aerosol cans in their lifetime
- 5% of students report using prescription pain medication to get high in their lifetime
- 4% of students report using prescription anxiety or sleeping medication in their lifetime
- 4% of students report using prescription simulants in their lifetime
- 2% of the students report using cocaine in their lifetime

2. Academic Stress

- 92% of students report being under some stress due to classes
 - 11% report being under “extreme stress” due to classes (down from 13% in 2009)
- 90 % of students report that their level of stress has increased since they began attending Lexington High School
- 82% of students felt pressure from their parents to get good grades and 64% of students felt pressure from teachers to get good grades.
- Stress related to academic achievement has particularly negative consequences for women.

- When students feel they have not performed as well as they would have liked on an exam 44% of women report it “bothers them a lot” compared to 35% of men.
- Students rated not performing well on an exam as causing them an equal amount of stress (44% bothered a lot) as other stressful life events such as having a fight with a friend (44% bothered a lot) or breaking up with a significant other (42% bothered a lot).

3. Sex

Approximately 17% of Lexington students report that they have ever had sexual intercourse (compared to 20% in 2009). Not surprisingly, sexual experience varies greatly by age. The following list indicates the proportion of students in each grade who reported that they have had sexual intercourse at least once:

- 3% of 9th graders
- 8% of 10th graders
- 20% of 11th graders
- 30 % of 12th graders

For those students who reported that they have had sexual intercourse, 71% reported that they used a condom during the last sexual intercourse (identical to the proportion in 2009).

Twenty-seven percent (27%) of Lexington students report that they have ever had oral sex (down from 29% in 2009). Like intercourse, the proportion of students who report having oral sex at least once varies by grade. The following list indicates the proportion of students in each grade who reported that they have had oral sex at least once:

- 6% of 9th graders
- 9% of 10th graders
- 27% of 11th graders
- 42% of 12th graders

Of those students who have had oral sex, 17% of students report that they have had oral sex with four or more partners in their lifetime (down from 21% in 2009).

4. Harassment

22% of students report being a victim of harassment at school or because of something that happened at school. Of students who report being harassed:

- 89% report being harassed by students while in school
- 38% report being harassed over the internet or by email
- 13% report being harassed by phone calls
- 7% report being harassed by mail or written notes

Males and females equally report being harassed and harassment does not vary significantly by grade. Harassment does vary by student’s self-reported sexual orientation:

- 22% of heterosexual students report being harassed
- 29% of bisexual students report being harassed
- 31% of gay or lesbian students report being harassed
- 30% of students who are not sure of their sexual orientation report being harassed

5. Suicide Ideation and Self Injury

- 13% of students report they ever considered suicide in their lifetime.
 - Young women are more likely to consider suicide (17%) than young men (10%).
- 6% of students report they ever made a plan to attempt suicide in their lifetime
- 2% of students reported that they ever attempted suicide in their lifetime.
- 11% of students report engaging in self-injury such as cutting or burning over the past year.

6. Risky Behaviors of Selected Groups of Students

a. Students reporting stress

Students who report classes cause *a lot of stress* or *extreme stress* report being engaged in more risky and potentially self-injurious behavior.

Events for students who report:	No or a little stress	A lot of stress	Extreme Stress
In a fight	16%	17%	23%
Harassed at school	16%	25%	38%
Victim of hazing	6%	7%	13%
Dating violence	5%	8%	14%
Sexual contact against will	4%	8%	14%
Self-injury	7%	13%	19%
Consider suicide	8%	15%	28%

There is no relationship between academic stress and drinking, cigarette usage or marijuana usage

b. Students who drank in last 30 days

Students who report drinking over the past 30 days are more likely to engage in other risky behaviors than students who do not report drinking.

Of students who report:	No drinks	Drank 1-7 days	Drank more than 7 days
In a fight	17%	25%	56%
Harassed at school	22%	30%	33%
Hazing victim	5%	13%	16%
Smoked cigarettes	13%	35%	58%
Smoked marijuana	34%	69%	81%
Had oral sex	22%	54%	77%
Had sexual intercourse	11%	36%	65%
Dating violence	7%	13%	27%
Sex against your will	7%	11%	7%

Students who drink more are less likely to consider suicide and there is no relationship between drinking and self-injury.

c. Financial stress

New questions were added in 2009 to assess the level of stress caused by changes in family finances.

- 16% of students report that a parent lost a job during this last year. For those students whose parents lost a job, 35% were “bothered a lot”.
- 24% of students report a significant change in family finances during the last year. For those students who had a change in family finances, 38% were “bothered a lot”.
- Students who experience financial stress were more likely to engage in self-harming behavior.

- Students whose parents lost jobs were almost twice as likely to engage in self-injurious behavior as students whose parents did not lose their job (17% compared to 10% respectively). These students were also more likely to consider suicide than students whose parents had not lost jobs (18% compared to 12%).

7. Coping Strategies and Supports

The 2011 YRBS included questions dealing with student's views of themselves and their responses to certain situations or problems.

- 83% of students indicate that they can depend on their family and friends to support them if they encounter problems.
- 78% of students indicate that when confronted with problems they can usually find several solutions.
- 67% of students indicate that their belief in their self gets them through hard times
- 74% of students indicate that they can handle many things at once

The survey also indicates that programming at LHS designed to help reduce stress may be having a positive impact.

- The proportion of students who report classes cause them extreme stress decreased in 2011 to 11% compared to 20% in 2004.
- Students also report a number of healthy responses for dealing with stress. Nearly 77% indicated they listen to music when they experience stress and 61% reported they exercise when they are feeling stress. Only 13% of students indicated that they dealt with stress by drinking alcohol and 12% claimed they dealt with stress by using drugs.

The health education program also appears to have a positive impact on student decision making

- 60% of students report that they receive the most accurate information about sex from their health teachers. This far exceeded friends (13%) and parents (11%).
- 61% of students report that they receive the most accurate information about alcohol and substance abuse from their health teacher compared to friends (10%) and parents (10%).
- However, parents and friends are still the most important people that influence their decision making regarding sex and other risky behavior.