

Youth Risk Behaviors: Changes Over Time

ILLINOIS YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY, ISSUE 7, APRIL 2011

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) affords us the opportunity to examine risk behaviors among Illinois high school students over time. Results are available from 1993, 1995, 2007 and 2009. Analysis was conducted on all items on the YRBS; only those items that had a significant increase or decrease are presented in this brief. All of these differences reflect behavior changes in a positive direction.

Other items that are not illustrated in this report also showed a decrease in risk behavior. Students reported exercising to lose weight more frequently in 2009 compared to 1995 (60.8% in 2009 vs. 50.6% in 1995). Also, fewer students are reporting having sex before age 13 (10.7% in 1993 vs. 6.3% in 2009).

Illinois high school students were wearing their seat belts more and driving with someone who had been drinking less in 2007 and 2009 than in the mid 1990s (Figure 1). These are important indicators that public health education campaigns appear to be changing adolescent driving behavior.

Four violence-related items showed a decrease in prevalence between 1993 and 2009 (Figure 2). Over 50% fewer students reported carrying a weapon at school in the 30 days before the survey in 2009 compared to 1993. This change is mirrored in other important violence-related items and may reflect significant public health efforts since 2000.

Although there is a need to continue efforts to reduce these activities further, these improvements, as well as those detailed in this brief, suggest important changes in the norms of adolescent risk taking.

Figure 1. Percent of Illinois high school students reporting car-related risk behaviors, 1993, 1995, 2007, 2009

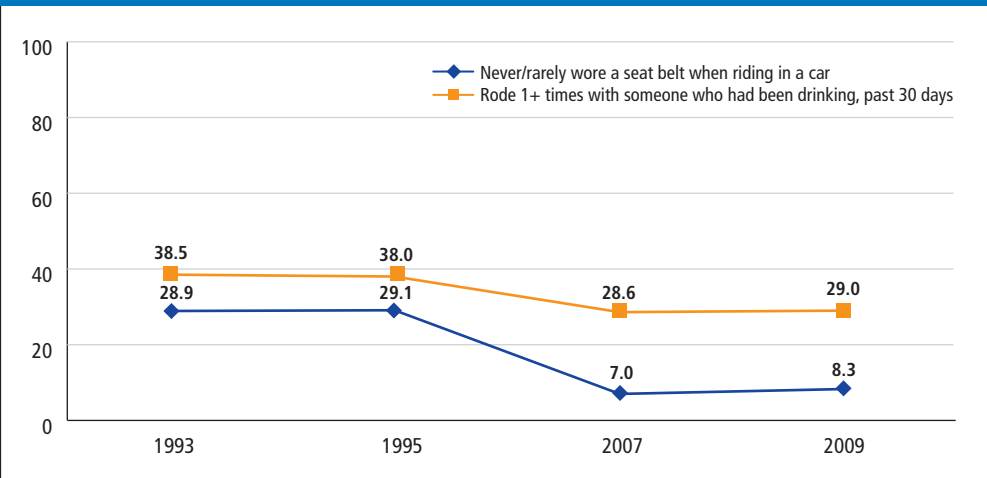
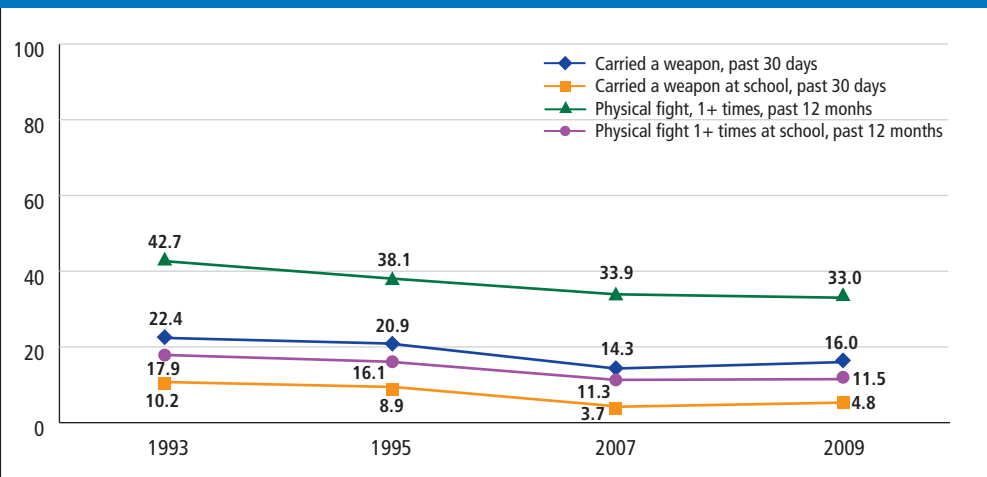


Figure 2. Percent of Illinois high school students reporting violence-related risk behaviors, 1993, 1995, 2007, 2009



THE BOTTOM LINE

- High school students show a decrease in a variety of risk behaviors from 1995 to 2007.
- Seat belt wearing is up and driving with someone who had been drinking is down.
- Fewer students are reporting seriously considering suicide and making a suicide plan.
- Alcohol and cigarette use has decreased between 1993 and 2009.
- Sniffing glue has decreased 43% from 1995 to 2009.



Suicide Plans, Drinking and Cigarette Use Have Decreased

Forty-two percent fewer students reported seriously considering suicide in 2009 compared to students in 1993, while those who reported making a suicide plan decreased 40% (Figure 3). However, there was no difference in the percent of students who reported attempting to commit suicide.

Decreases were seen in aspects of alcohol and cigarette use (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Thirty-three percent fewer students reported drinking before the age of 13, while 50% fewer students reported smoking a cigarette before the age of 13 in 2009 compared to 1993. Current use of alcohol and cigarettes (past 30 days) were also reported less in 2009 than in 1993, along with current cigarette use at school.

Sniffing glue was an additional behavior that showed a decrease between 1995 (first time the question was asked) and 2009 (Figure 4). In 1995 20.3% of students reported sniffing glue, while 11.6% reported doing so in 2009. This represents a 43% reduction in use.

Figure 4. Percent of Illinois high school students reporting alcohol-related risk behaviors, 1993, 1995, 2007, 2009

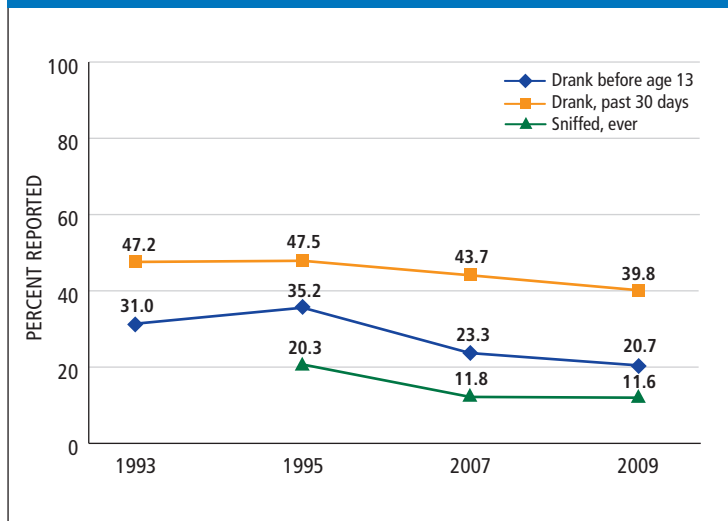


Figure 5. Percent of Illinois high school students reporting smoking-related risk behaviors, 1993, 1995, 2007, 2009

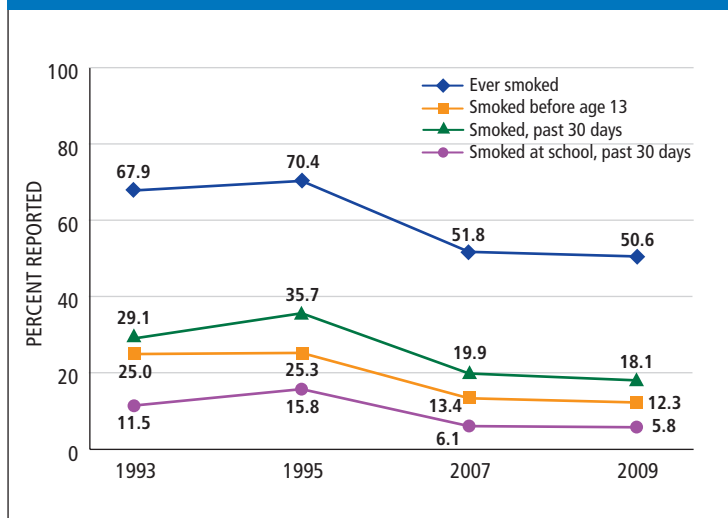
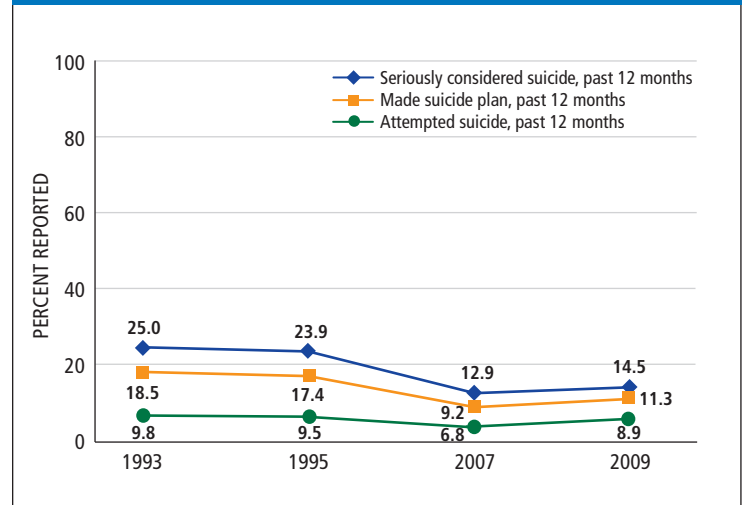


Figure 3. Percent of Illinois high school students reporting suicide-related risk behaviors, 1993, 1995, 2007, 2009



ABOUT THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY

The Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the Chicago YRBS were completed in randomly selected public high schools in Illinois and Chicago during the springs of 1993, 1995, 2007 and 2009. The survey focuses on priority health-risk behaviors established during youth that result in the most significant mortality, disability and social problems during both youth and adulthood. Questions cover nutrition, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, physical activity, injuries and sexual behavior resulting in sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.

YRBS is one component of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in collaboration with representatives from state and local departments of education and health, other federal agencies, and national education and health organizations.

For more information visit cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/.

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