

TOBACCO EXAMINER

A Monthly Newsletter of Writers Against Aids and Tobacco Smoking

January Edition

1998: ADOLESCENCE: U.S. TEENS RISKING HEALTH, STUDY SAYS

Archives consist of articles that originally appeared in Collier's Year Book (for events of 1997 and earlier) or as monthly updates in Encarta Yearbook (for events of 1998 and later). Because they were published shortly after events occurred, they reflect the information available at that time. Cross references refer to Archive articles of the same year.

1998: Adolescence: U.S. Teens Risking Health, Study Says

A study published in the August 14, 1998, issue of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) showed that large numbers of high school students in the United States engage in behaviors that increase their risk of death and disease. These behaviors include drinking and driving, drug and alcohol use, and carrying weapons. The study was part of an ongoing survey known as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), developed by health and education officials to design programs aimed at reducing high-risk behavior among teenagers.

Since 1990, YRBSS has monitored teenage behavior in six categories: unintentional and intentional injuries, tobacco use, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, diet, and physical inactivity. The most recent data were collected from national, state, and local surveys administered to more than 16,000 students in grades 9 through 12 between February and May 1997. The state of Wisconsin uses YRBSS data in a teen-pregnancy prevention program, Pennsylvania uses it to design health education teacher training courses, and authorities in California have used it in efforts to curb youth drinking.

The YRBSS data showed that many U.S. teenagers engage in behaviors that heighten their risk of falling victim to automobile crashes, accidents, homicide, or suicide—the four most common causes of death among people aged 10 through 24, according to the CDC. And because adolescent behavior often establishes lifelong behavioral patterns, the lifestyles many U.S. teenagers follow—including cigarette smoking, high rates of alcohol consumption, and poor eating and exercise habits—increase their risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer, which account for 67 percent of all deaths among those older than 25.

Below is a list of some of the findings published by the CDC:

Drinking and driving, helmet use, seatbelt use: 36.6 percent had, within the previous month, ridden with a driver who had been drinking 16.9 percent had, within the previous month, driven after drinking 19.3 reported rarely or never wearing seatbelts in vehicles driven by others 36.2 percent of those who had ridden a motorcycle within the previous year rarely or never wore a helmet 88.4 percent of those who had ridden a bicycle within the previous year rarely or never wore a helmet

Violence and suicide:

18.3 percent reported carrying a weapon (firearm, knife, or club) during the previous month 36.6 percent had been in a physical fight during the previous year 20.5 percent reported seriously considering suicide during the previous year 15.7 percent reported formulating a suicide plan during the previous year 7.7 percent reported attempting suicide during the previous year Tobacco use:

70.2 percent had tried cigarettes 36.4 percent had smoked one or more times within the previous month 16.7 percent had smoked on 20 or more days within the previous month 9.3 percent had used smokeless (chewing) tobacco within the previous month 66.7 percent of those under age 18 who purchased cigarettes were not asked to show proof of age 24.8 percent said they had smoked a whole cigarette before age 13

Alcohol and drug use:

79.1 percent reported consuming at least one alcoholic drink in their lifetime 50.8 percent had consumed at least one drink on one or more occasions within the previous month 33.4 percent had consumed five or more drinks on one or more occasions within the

previous month 31.1 percent had consumed their first alcoholic drink before age 13 47.1 percent had used marijuana in their lifetime 26.2 percent had used marijuana one or more times in the previous month 9.7 percent had tried marijuana before age 13 8.2 percent had used cocaine in their lifetime 3.3 percent had used cocaine within the previous month 1.1 percent had tried cocaine before age 13 17 percent had used lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), phencyclidine (PCP), methylenedioxymethamphetamine (also known as “ecstasy”), mushrooms, stimulants, methamphetamines, or heroin 16 percent had used inhalants, such as glue and gasoline

Sexual activity:

48.4 percent reported having had sexual intercourse at least once in their lifetime 7.2 percent had had sexual intercourse before age 13 16 percent had had four or more sexual partners in their lifetime 56.8 percent of sexually active students had used a condom during their most recent sexual intercourse 16.6 percent of sexually active students said they or their partner had used birth control pills prior to their most recent sexual intercourse 6.5 percent said they had been pregnant or had impregnated someone

Diet and exercise:

29.3 percent reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables the previous day 62.3 percent reported eating two or fewer servings of foods high in fat the previous day 27.3 percent said they viewed themselves as overweight 39.7 percent had tried to lose weight during the previous 30 days 63.8 percent reported having engaged in vigorous physical activity on three or more days within the previous week 48.8 percent were enrolled in physical education classes 49.5 percent played on school-sponsored sports teams during the year

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