

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (YRBSS)

Years Survey Included Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM)- Related Questions

2015–Present

Survey Description

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors six types of health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults, including:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence.
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Tobacco use.
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors.
- Inadequate physical activity.

The YRBSS also measures the prevalence of obesity and asthma, and other health-related behaviors in addition to sexual identity and sex of sexual contacts.

There are three versions of the survey:

1. The National Youth Risk Surveillance Survey, conducted by CDC.
2. The State and Local Youth Surveillance Survey, conducted by state, territorial and local education and health agencies and tribal governments.
3. The Middle School Youth Surveillance Survey, conducted by CDC.

The National and State and Local Surveys have the same SGM related questions while the Middle School version only asks for the participants sex (male or female).

Survey Sample Population

The YRBSS population consists of representative samples of students typically in grades 9–12. For the 2017 national YRBS, 14,956 questionnaires were completed in 144 schools. The student sample sizes ranged from 1,273 to 51,087 (median: 2,139) across the states and from 805 to 10,191 (median: 1,971) across the large urban school districts. Of those students, 2.4% self-identified as lesbian or gay, 8% self-identified as bisexual, and 4.2% self-identified as not sure.

Survey Mode

The YRBSS survey occurs biennially, usually during the spring semester of the school year, because the survey is school based, it uses a self-administered paper-and-pencil instrument (PAPI).

SGM-Related Survey Questions

Survey

The following questions are asked of students responding to the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the State and Local Youth Risk Behavioral Survey. Middle School Youth Survey respondents are only asked “(Q2) What is your sex?”. The following question numbers and question histories are taken from the National Youth Risk Behavioral Survey.

Category	Question	Question History
Sexual Identity	(Q68) Which of the following best describes you? A. Heterosexual (straight) B. Gay or lesbian C. Bisexual D. Not Sure	This is the only version of the question that has been used. In the 2017 version this question was listed as number 69. In the 2015 version this question was listed as number 70.
Sexual Attraction	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Sexual Behavior	(Q67) During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? A. I have never had sexual contact B. Females C. Males D. Females and males	This is the only version of the question that has been used. In the 2017 version this question was listed as number 68. In the 201 version this question was listed as number 69.
Gender Identity	(Q2) What is your sex? A. Female B. Male	This is the only version of the question that has been used.
Household Relationships	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.

Response Rates

For the 2017 national YRBSS, 14,956 questionnaires were completed in 144 schools. Among these completed questionnaires, 191 failed quality control and were excluded from analysis, resulting in 14,765 usable questionnaires. The school response rate was 75%, the student response rate was 81%, and the overall response rate was 60%.* Among the states, school response rates ranged from 68%–100%, student response rates ranged from 66%–90%, and overall response rates ranged from 60%–82%. Among the large urban school districts, school response rates ranged from 84%–100%, student response rates ranged from 63%–89%, and overall response rates ranged from 61%–89%.

Additional information about the 2017 response rates can be found at the link below. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/2017/ss6708.pdf>

*Overall response rate = (number of participating schools/number of eligible sampled schools) x (number of usable questionnaires/number of eligible students sampled).

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Organizations Involved

YRBSS is conducted by the CDC and state, territorial, tribal, and local surveys conducted by state, territorial, and local education and health agencies and tribal governments.

Survey Links

Questionnaires

Find the questionnaires at the link below. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/questionnaires.htm>

Data

Find a guide to analyzing YRBS sexual minority data at the link below. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/2015/2015_analyze_sexual_minority_data.pdf

Find links to the data at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/data.htm>

References

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/ss/ss6708a1.htm?s_cid=ss6708a1_w