



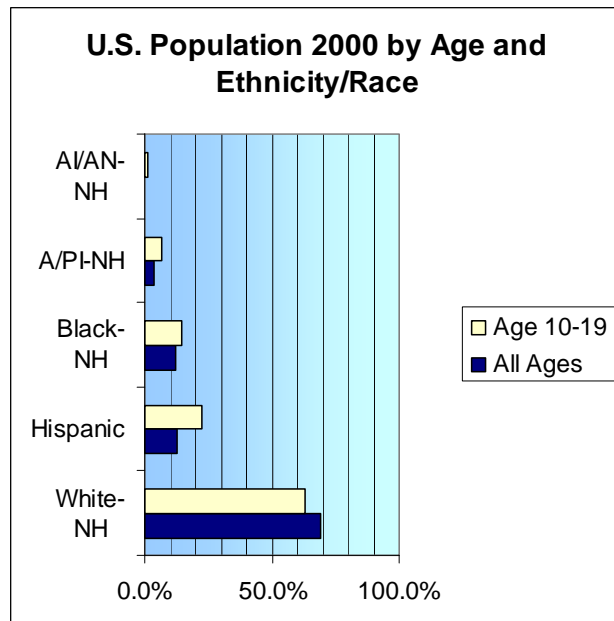
FACTs Regarding U.S. Teen Demographics, Attitudes, and Behaviors

(with selected statistics for New York State youth)

General Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 40,747,962 youth age 10-19 in the United States, 14.5% of the total U.S. population. Estimates for 2007 by the Census Bureau put these figures at 41,787,999, or 13.9% of the total population.¹ In New York State, according to July 2007 Census estimates, youth age 10-19 make up 13.7% of the state's total population.²

Racial/ethnic diversity is greater in the adolescent population than in the U.S. population as a whole, and diversity among adolescents is increasing.³ The Hispanic adolescent population is expected to grow by 50% between 2000 and 2020. Currently a comparatively small group, the Asian/Pacific Islander non-Hispanic (A/PI-NH) population is expected to grow by 83%. Black non-Hispanic (B-NH) and American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) populations will experience slower growth, while numbers of white non-Hispanic (W-NH) youth are expected to drop.³ Among all children (age 0-17), the Hispanic population is growing most quickly, from 9% in 1980 to 20% in 2006.⁴



Twenty-one percent of all children (age 0-17) are first or second generation immigrants (2006 numbers, here defined as living in the U.S. with at least one foreign-born parent).⁵ According to the Census Bureau, in 2005, 20% of children age 5-17 spoke a language other than English at home, and 5% of children in this age group had difficulty speaking English.⁶

Over half (54%) of adolescents live in suburbs, 27% in rural areas, and 19% in central cities.³

Of all children (age 0-17), 18% lived in poverty in 2005, and 14% lived with very high income (at or more than 600% of the federal poverty level).⁷

Health

Of all children age 0-17, 11% (8.1 million) had no health insurance in 2005.⁸

Dietary behaviors. Of all children (age 0-17), 17% experienced food insecurity at times during 2005.⁹ In the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, more than one in five (21.4%) high school students reported eating fruits and vegetables five or more times a day.¹⁰ Black students are more likely to eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables than are youth in other groups (24.9%). A downward trend has recently been seen in the number of high school students who tried to lose weight through vomiting or the use of laxatives, from 6% in 2003 to 4.3% in

2007.¹¹ Of women in late adolescence and young adulthood, 10% have symptoms of eating disorders.¹²

In 2003-2004, 17% of adolescents age 12 to 19 were overweight, up from 5% in 1976-1980. Black-NH girls were at particularly high risk (25%) of being overweight.¹³

Physical Activity. Over one-third of high school students reported a high level of physical activity in 2007 (at least 60 minutes a day for five or more days in the week before the survey). There is a significant gender disparity: 25.6% of girls and 43.7% of boys reported this level of activity. A majority of youth (56.3%) play on at least one sports team.¹⁴

Mental Health. While most adolescents experience good mental health, 20% of youth report mental health symptoms. Depression, anxiety disorders, attention-deficit disorder, and substance abuse are the most common disorders experienced by youth.¹⁵

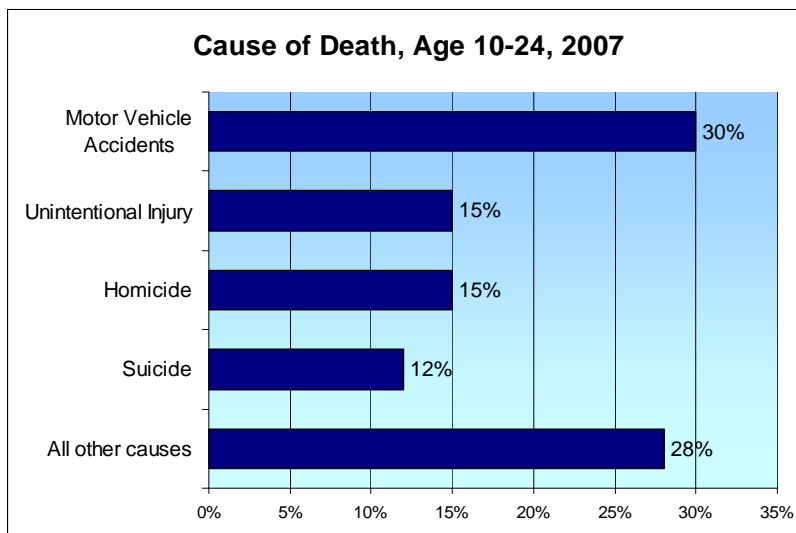
During 2004, 65% of high school students described themselves as happy everyday or almost everyday.¹⁶ There is little research measuring adolescent life satisfaction and social/emotional competence; however, researchers are beginning to develop and study more positive indicators and that information may gradually become available in the future.¹⁵

In 2005, 29% of all high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row in the last year (an indicator of clinical depression).¹⁷

The number of high school students who report serious thoughts of suicide dropped dramatically—from 29% in 1991 to 17% in 2003—then leveled off, remaining at 17% in 2005.¹⁸

- Hispanic (18%) and white N-H (17%) students were more likely than black N-H (12%) students to have seriously considered suicide.¹⁸ Black and Hispanic females have the lowest rates of suicide completion.¹⁹
- Among 15-19-year-old males, American Indians/Alaskan Natives have the highest suicide rate—two to four times the rate of any other ethnic/racial group.¹⁹
- Adolescent females are more likely than males to attempt suicide; however males complete suicide far more often than do females.¹⁹

Violence and Mortality



Mortality. Motor vehicle accidents (30%) are the leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults age 10-24 overall, followed by other unintentional injuries (15%), homicide (15%), and suicide (12%).²⁰

Among adolescents age 15-19, males are five times more likely than females to become homicide victims. For young black males, homicide is the leading cause of death. Homicide rates peaked in the early 1990s and declined significantly over the next decade.²¹

Fighting. The number of youth who report having been in at least one physical fight in the past year decreased from 43% in 1991 to 35.5% in 2007 (31.7% in New York State).²²

Weapons. In 2007, 18% of high school students reported having carried a weapon within the last 30 days (28.5% of males, 7.5% of females). The number is lower in New York State: 14.2% for the entire state, 14.8% for the state excluding New York City, and 11.7% for New York City.²³

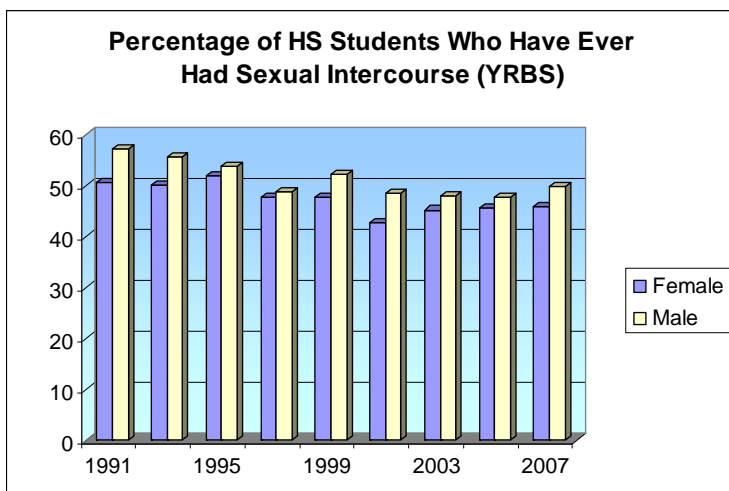
Violent crime. Juvenile arrests for violent crime peaked in the early 1990s, declined each year to its lowest level in 2004, then began to rise again. Although the rate of juvenile arrest is increasing, numbers remain significantly below the peak. One in 10 arrests for murder involved a juvenile in 2006; the figure was one in four arrests for weapons violations and for robbery. In 2006, 29% of juvenile arrests involved females.²⁴

In 2007, 11.3% of female high school students and 4.5% of male students reported having been raped at some point in their lives. (In New York State, the figures are 10% for girls and 7.1% for boys).²³

Dating violence. One out of every 10 high school students was a victim of dating violence in 2007, with 8.8% of girls reporting having been hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a romantic partner and 11% of boys reporting the same.²³

Sexual Health

Sexual orientation. Sexual orientation appears to be determined very early in a child's life, and awareness of attraction begins at about age 9 or 10.²⁵ Half of all teens have dated, and close to one third have been in a relationship they describe as serious.²⁶



Sexual experience. Just under half (47.8%) of high school students report having had sexual intercourse at some point in their lives (43.6% in New York State), and 35% are currently sexually active (see charts page 3 and 4).²⁷ Most youth first have sexual intercourse at age 17.²⁸ In 2002, most teen girls reported that their first sexual experience had been with a steady boyfriend, fiancé, husband, or cohabiting partner.²⁸

Among teens who have not had sexual intercourse, 12% of males and 10% of females have had heterosexual oral sex.²⁸ A Guttmacher Institute study of a 2002 survey indicates that of all adolescents age 15-19, 54-55% have had oral sex and 10% have had anal sex.²⁹

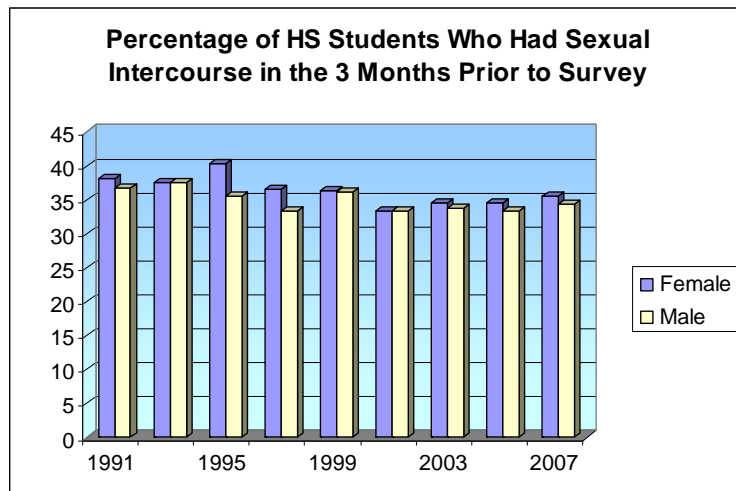
Condoms and contraceptives. Among sexually active students, condom use at most recent sexual intercourse increased from 46% in 1991 to 61.5% in 2007. Rates of condom use are higher in New York State than the national average, however, the percentage of students using condoms at last intercourse decreased from a high of 70.7% in 2005 to 66.7% in 2007.²⁷ Most teens use condoms the first time they have sexual intercourse (66% of sexually experienced females, 71% of males).²⁸ In 2005, black males reported the highest levels of condom use.³⁰ The numbers of youth who say they used contraceptives the last time they had sex increased significantly between 1995 and 2002.²⁸

Risky behaviors. Male adolescents are more likely than females to engage in certain risky sexual behaviors, including sexual intercourse before age 13 (as reported by high school students: 10% males and 4% females in 2007), having four or more sexual partners in their lifetime (18% male high school students; 12% female high school students). These numbers declined between 1991 and 2005, then leveled off or rose slightly in 2007.²⁷

Adolescent pregnancy. The teen birth rate peaked in 1991, then fell 35% by 2005,³¹ a decline that is attributed to combined factors: more young people choosing abstinence and better, more effective contraceptive practice among youth.³² Black-NH adolescents led the way with the greatest decrease in pregnancy rates.³⁰ The teen abortion rate declined by 50% between 1988 and 2002.³² Adolescent pregnancies are largely, but not entirely, unplanned: 82% are unintended.²⁸ Preliminary data suggest that since 2005 the adolescent birth rate has risen slightly.³¹

STDs and HIV. One in four girls age 14-19 has a sexually transmitted disease. Young black women are especially vulnerable, with 48% affected. The most common STDs among adolescent women are HPV and chlamydia.³³

Males accounted for 62% of HIV/AIDS diagnoses in adolescents and young people age 13-24 in the years 2001-2004. Black and Hispanic youth are at especially high risk, accounting for 84% of all new HIV infections among adolescents age 13-19 in 2005. In 2004, black and Hispanic women and girls made up 83% of new HIV infections among young women age 13-24; a disproportionate rate of infection given that together black and Hispanic youth make up only about 26% of this population.³⁴



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Substance Use

Overall, adolescent use of illegal drugs has declined since the mid- to late-1990s.³⁵ Increasing numbers of high school seniors report abstaining from cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs in the last 30 days prior to being surveyed; nearly half (48%) of seniors abstained in 2006 versus 26% in 1976.³⁶ However, drug use remains quite common. Through the high school years, the prevalence of substance use increases, doubling between 8th and 12th grade.³⁵

Cigarettes. Half of high school students report having tried cigarettes, while 12.4% report having smoked cigarettes daily at some point in their lives. One in five smokes at least occasionally (smoked cigarettes on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey), and half of this group had tried to quit smoking at some time during the last year.³⁷

Alcohol. Use of alcohol is also common:

- In 2007, 44.7% of students reported having had at least one drink during the 30 days before the survey.³⁸
- More than one in four students (26%) engages in binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row in previous 30 days).³⁸ Peers increasingly disapprove of this behavior.³⁹

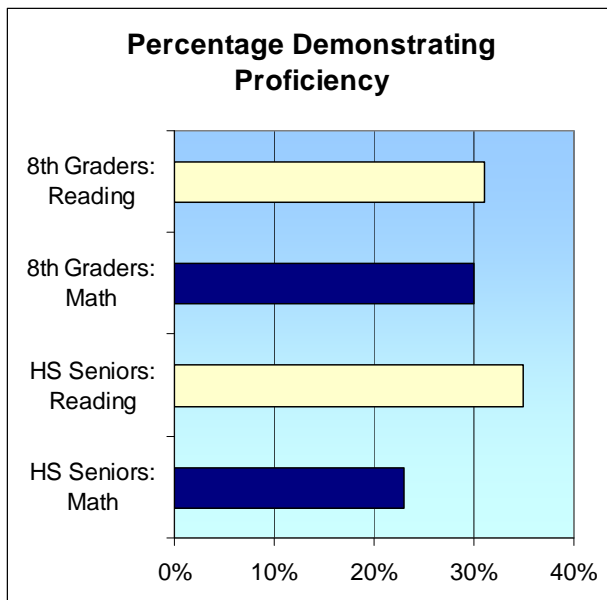
- Driving while drunk has declined among youth; however, in 2007 10.5% of high school students reported having driven while drinking at least once in the last 30 days, and 29.1% of students rode in a car driven by someone who had been drinking. (In New York State, 7.1% drove while drinking, and 20.2% rode with a driver who had been drinking.)²³
- Black teens are the least likely to drive while drinking (5.7%); white teens are the most likely (11.6%).²³

Marijuana. For many years, marijuana has been the most widely-used illegal drug among adolescents.³⁵ Nearly one in five students reported having used marijuana during the month before completing the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.³⁶

Other substances. Vicodin[®] was the prescription drug most widely used in 2006, with 10% of high school seniors reporting use.³⁵ Additional 2007 figures for lifetime use (percentage of high school students who have used a particular substance once or more at some point in their lives) are: inhalants (13.3%), hallucinogenics (7.8%), ecstasy/MDMA (5.8%), methamphetamine (4.4%), illegal steroids (3.9%), cocaine (3.3%), heroin (2.3%).⁴⁰

Education

Academic proficiency. Proficiency in reading was demonstrated by 31% of 8th graders and 35% of high school seniors in 2005. That same year, proficiency in mathematics was demonstrated by 30% of 8th graders and 23% of high school seniors.⁴¹



The percentage of high school students completing advanced academic courses has steadily increased since the early eighties. Half of students who graduated in 2004 completed an advanced math course (above Algebra II), 68% had taken an advanced science course, and 33% had taken honors-level English courses.⁴²

Music and performance. About half of 8th graders, 38% of 10th graders, and 41% of seniors participated in school music or performing arts programs in 2006.⁴³

Completing school. Of youth age 16–19 years, 95% are either enrolled in school or are part of the labor force.⁴⁴ In 2005, 88% of young adults (18-24 years old, excluding those currently enrolled in school) had completed high school.⁴⁵

Drop out rates are measured as percentages of the civilian, non-institutionalized population of young people, and thus do not reflect incarceration and military service. According to Child Trends,⁴⁶ in 2005, of the *civilian, non-institutionalized population* of youth age 16 to 24 the overall dropout rate was 9.4%, and:

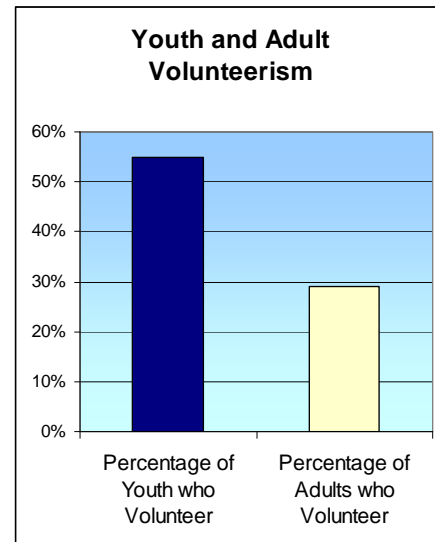
- Hispanic youth accounted for 41.3% of youth who were not enrolled or did not complete high school, though only 17.3% of the total youth population.
- 58% who dropped out of high school were male, 42% female.

Volunteerism, Civic Engagement, Religion

Volunteering and civic engagement. In a 2006 survey, the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) found that youth age 15-25 across all ethnic groups engage in community change: volunteering, participating in civic groups and activities, electoral work, lobbying, and protesting. Black youth demonstrate the highest levels of political engagement, while Asian American youth volunteer and engage in community problem-solving in significantly higher numbers than any other group.⁴⁷

According to a 2005 survey by the Corporation for National and Community Service and others:⁴⁸

- 55% of youth age 12-18 volunteer, typically contributing 29 hours a year. For comparison, only 29% of adults volunteer.
- Young people are responsible for more than 1.3 billion hours of community service each year.
- Most youth volunteer through religious organizations (34%), school-based groups (18%), and youth leadership organizations (12%). Only 5% attribute their participation to school requirements.



Religion. Nearly 30% of high school seniors reported in 2006 that religion played a very important role in their lives. Religion tends to be especially important to black youth; 53% of 12th-grade black students and 25% of white high school seniors rate religion as very important.⁴⁹

Government and elections. One study found that one-third of high school students do not understand the basics about how government works. Another study suggests that youth do not see a connection between the things they care about and government/elections. However, youth participation in presidential elections is on the rise. In the 2004 presidential election, 42% of young adults age 18-24 reported voting, up from 32% in 2000 and 1996.⁵⁰

Youth Online

The vast majority of young people—93% of youth age 12-17—spend time online.⁵¹

- Most families have rules about Internet access, restricting either the amount of time teens may spend online, or the sites that may be visited.⁵²
- In 2004, 45% of youth age 12-17 reported that they have friends who regularly view pornography on the Internet.⁵³
- Among youth who go online, 77% of youth use the Internet to get information about news and current events.⁵⁴
- 28% of online youth use the Internet to locate information about health, fitness, and dieting.⁵⁴
- Increasing numbers of teens are using the Internet for creative work; 59% of all youth (64% of online youth) age 12-17 create and often share an online blog or web page, videos, photography, stories, and other art work. Girls are more likely than boys to write blogs; boys are more likely than girls to upload video. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, online creative work frequently "starts a virtual conversation," as digital images and writings elicit comment from viewers.⁵¹
- Chatroom use has declined from 55% of online teens in 2000 to 18% in 2006.⁵⁴

- 55% of online youth use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook.⁵¹

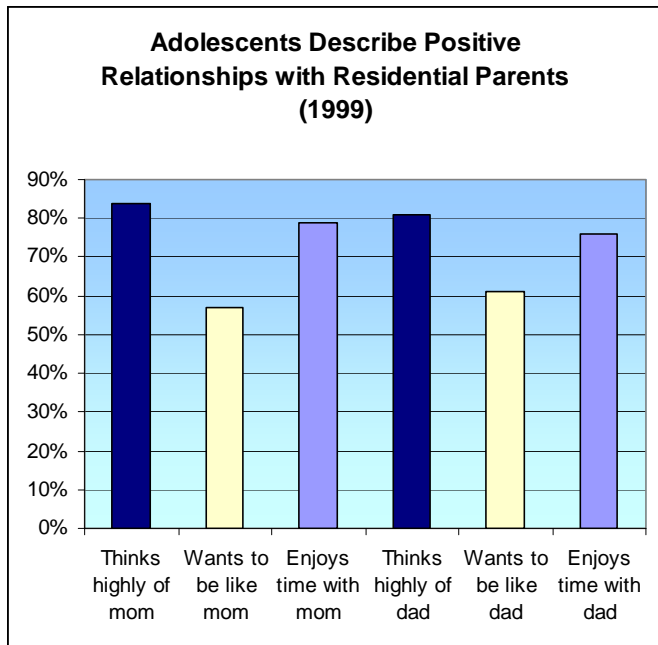
Peer communication. Email is not a popular method for teens to reach their peers; just 14% of youth age 12-17 say they email their friends daily. Youth communicate with each other most often via landline; for those youth who have greater access to technology, landlines and cell phones are the most frequently used methods for communicating with friends.⁵¹

Family Relationships

According to a study by Child Trends, adolescents describe their relationships with their parents in positive terms. A majority of youth report that they like and respect their parents and enjoy spending time with their parents. During the early teen years youth are less likely to indicate such positive feelings, and children who live apart from their parents are also less likely to indicate that the relationships are positive.⁵⁵

The National Adolescent Health Information Center reports that two-thirds of adolescents age 12-17 lived with both parents in 2002, and:³

- About three-quarters of Asian/Pacific Islander and white-NH youths age 12-17 lived with both parents, as did 63% of same-age Hispanics.
- Fewer than half (38.4%) of black adolescents lived with both parents; 46% lived with their mother only.



Immigrant youth are much more likely to eat dinner very frequently with their families than are native-born youth of native parents (61.6% versus 39.6%).⁵⁶

A majority of parents are involved in the schools their adolescent children attend, participating in teacher meetings, general meetings, and/or school events. Fifty-nine percent of 9th-10th grade students and 53% of 11th-12th grade students had parents who reported attending meetings with teachers.⁵⁷

Fully 90% of high school students report that they have at least one family member they can talk to and confide in.⁵⁸

Endnotes

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