

In the fall of 2013, over 44,000 students in public high schools and middle schools throughout Colorado completed the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS). The voluntary survey includes similar questions used for the national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) distributed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and asks students to self-report about their behaviors in the following areas: nutrition and physical activity, tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use, bullying, personal safety and violence, mental health, engagement in school, and sexual health (high school only). There was sufficient participation across Colorado to result in weighted data, meaning the results can be considered representative of all middle and high school students in Colorado. Middle school students are not asked sexual health questions, and the data below represents the Colorado high school population.

## Lifetime Sexual Activity<sup>1</sup>

Sexual activity among Colorado high school students overall is on the decline.

- In 2013, one in three Colorado high school students reported ever having had sexual intercourse (33.1%). This is much lower than the national average<sup>2</sup> (46.8%), and lower than the percentage of Colorado students who reported ever having had sexual intercourse in 2011 (40.8%).
- However, the majority of Colorado students will have had sex before they graduate from high school. Among 9th grade Colorado students, less than one in five, or 14.9%, reported ever having had sexual intercourse, compared to over half (52.8%) of 12th grade Colorado students.
- On average, sexual activity starts at age 17<sup>3</sup>. However, 3.4% of all high school students reported having sexual intercourse for the first time prior to the age of 13.
- Fewer than one in ten Colorado high school students reported having sexual intercourse with four or more people in their lifetime (9.1% in 2013 compared to 13.2% in 2011).

## Current Sexual Activity

About one in four (23.3%) Colorado high school students reported being sexually active in the three months prior to the survey (compared to 31.8% in 2011). Of those students:

- Just under a quarter (22.5%) of students reported drinking alcohol or using drugs before the last time they had sex.
- More students are putting themselves at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection as a result of decreased condom use. Only 63.7% reported using (or their partner using) a condom the last time they had sex, compared to 70.8% in 2011.
- Approximately one in five (21.9%) students reported that they or their partner used birth control pills the last time they had sex.



Colorado Youth Matter's mission is to actively engage Colorado communities to promote the healthy sexual development of all young people. One of the primary ways we do this is by disseminating research, such as this sexual health data from the HKCS, to build data-driven leadership and inform programmatic decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup>Comparisons to previous years and other geographies are intended to be general observations only. Statistically significant differences cannot be inferred due to differences in survey methodology.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2014). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance - United States, 2013. Accessed from: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6304.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>National Survey of Family Growth (2013). Sexual Activity Between Males and Females. Accessed from: [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key\\_statistics/s.htm#sexualactivity](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key_statistics/s.htm#sexualactivity)

## APPLICATIONS OF HKCS DATA

These data are collected and available to assess youth health and risk behaviors in Colorado, and measure comparisons nationally as well as changes over time. Data can be used by stakeholders including school administrators and staff, students, parents, community advocates, youth-serving professionals and legislators, to set goals, develop programs and policies, support health-related policies and seek funding.

Statewide and regional data are available by request at: [www.ephrequest.dphe.state.co.us/Requests/Create](http://www.ephrequest.dphe.state.co.us/Requests/Create)

An executive summary is available at: [www.healthykidscolo.org](http://www.healthykidscolo.org).

## HIV/AIDS Education

- The majority (78.0%) of high school students and approximately one third (32.8%) of middle school students reported ever having been taught in school about AIDS or HIV infection.

## Parent/Guardian Support\*

According to the HKCS, students who reported being able to ask a parent/guardian for help were **less likely to:**

- Have ever engaged in sexual intercourse (29.2% vs. 43.2%).
- Have had sex in the past three months (20.6% vs. 32.9%).
- Have had sex before age 13 (2.3% vs. 6.6%).
- Have had sex with four or more people in their lifetime (7.2% vs. 15.3%).
- Have used alcohol or drugs during last sexual intercourse (20.0% vs. 30.0%).

And were **more likely to:**

- Have used a condom during last intercourse (65.4% vs. 57.1%).
- Have used an effective method of birth control to prevent pregnancy during last intercourse (34.5% vs. 27.4%) (e.g., birth control pills, IUD, implant, patch, or birth control ring).

\*The differences noted in these sections are statistically significant.

## Dating Violence

- Among high school students who dated someone in the past year, almost one in ten (9.6%) were physically hurt on purpose by the person they were dating.
- An estimated 6.6% of high school students reported being physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to at some point in their lives.

## LGB Sexual Health\*

While 5.7% of students who completed the HKCS in 2013 identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), results from the data show stark disparities among this population:

- LGB youth were significantly more likely than their heterosexual peers to have had sexual intercourse (55.8% vs. 31.9%).
- LGB-identified students were more likely than their heterosexual peers to have had sex in the past three months (40.0% vs. 22.3%) or to have been forced to have sex (27.4% vs. 4.9%).

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The University of Colorado Denver - Anschutz Medical Campus implemented the survey in 2013.