

Youth Risk Behaviors: Depression and Suicide



ILLINOIS RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY, ISSUE 1, SEPTEMBER 2009

Preventing Suicides and Depressive Feelings in Teens

This issue brief from the Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) examines depression and suicide in adolescents in Illinois and in Chicago.

In the United States, suicide takes approximately 4,500 teen lives annually, and suicide attempts cause 149,000 emergency departments visits each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the top three methods of suicide in young people include firearms, suffocation and poisoning.

In the Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey, high school youth were asked about depressive feelings, suicide thoughts, plans and self-reported attempts in the past 12 months. More details about the survey can be found on page 2 of this report. The YRBS was completed by 2,437 youth in Illinois and Chicago.

25-30% of Illinois Youth Report Experiencing Depressive Feelings

A striking percentage of all youth report suffering from depressive feelings (Table 1). The survey defines depressive feelings as “feeling so sad and hopeless everyday for a two-week period that the youth stopped their usual activities.” The differences between the rates in the United States, Illinois and Chicago are not statistically significant.

All groups of youth report about the same percentage of suicidal thoughts and making suicide plans, with Illinois and Chicago youth reporting these things slightly less than other youth in the United States.

However, Chicago youth are statistically more likely than U.S. and other Illinois youth to report attempting suicide in the previous 12 months.

Table 1. Prevalence of Depressive Feelings and Factors Related to Suicide in the Past 12 Months, 2007

	U.S.*	Illinois	Illinois excluding Chicago	Chicago
	% (95% C.I.)	% (95% C.I.)	% (95% C.I.)	% (95% C.I.)
Depressive feelings	28.5 (27.1-29.8)	26.5 (24.0-29.1)	25.9 (23.0-29.1)	30.0 (26.1-34.2)
Suicidal thoughts	14.5 (13.4-15.6)	12.9 (11.4-14.7)	12.8 (10.9-15.1)	13.4 (11.8-15.2)
Suicide “plans”	11.3 (10.4-12.3)	9.2 (8.2-10.2)	9.0 (7.9-10.2)	10.4 (8.6-12.6)
Suicide “attempts”	6.9 (6.3-7.6)	6.8 (5.5-8.3)	6.3 (4.8-8.2)	10.1 (8.6-11.9)

*United States prevalence from National Youth Risk Behavior Survey

THE BOTTOM LINE

- 25-30% of Illinois youth report experiencing depressive feelings
- Hispanic/Latino youth are more likely to report depressive feelings
- Chicago youth have a higher suicide attempt rate than U.S. and Illinois youth
- Chicago males are statistically significantly more likely than teenage males in Illinois to attempt suicide

YOUTH SUICIDE RISK FACTORS

- History of previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Easy access to lethal methods
- Incarceration
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others

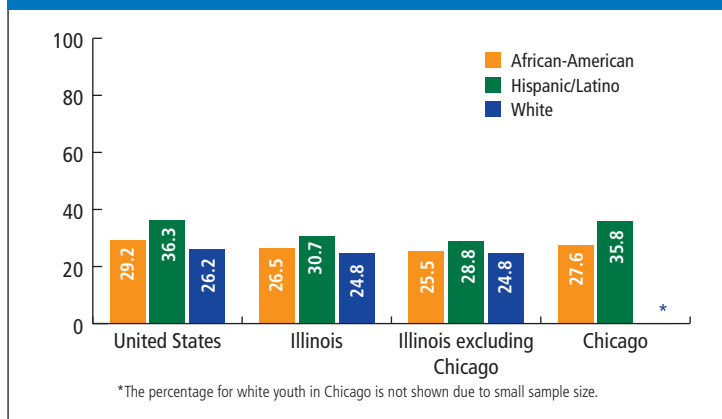
Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/Suicide/youthsuicide.htm>



Hispanic/Latino Youth More Likely to Suffer from Depressive Feelings

In 2007, U.S. Hispanic/Latino youth reported a statistically significant higher prevalence of depressive feelings compared with African American and white youth (36.3% vs. 26.2% respectively) (Figure 1). In Chicago Hispanic/Latino youth reported a marginally higher prevalence of depressive feelings compared to African American youth.

Figure 1. Prevalence of youth who report depressive feelings in the past 12 months by race and ethnicity, 2007



In Illinois, all race/ethnic groups have a similar prevalence of suicidal thoughts; however, Hispanic/Latino youth have higher a prevalence of both suicide plans and suicide attempts compared to white youth (Table 2). Additionally, African-American youth have a significantly higher prevalence of suicide attempts compared to White youth in Illinois.

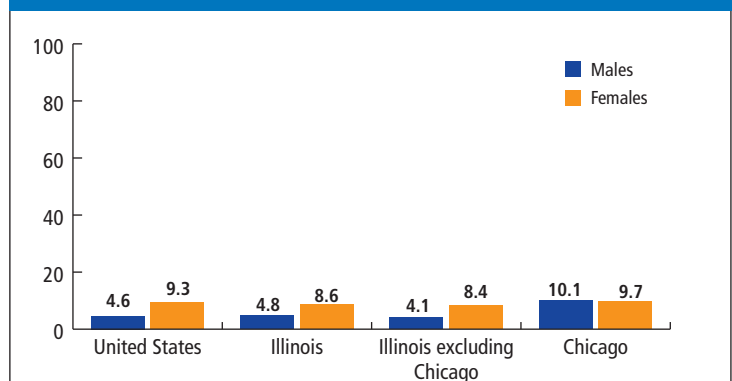
Table 2. Prevalence of suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts among Illinois youth by race and ethnicity, 2007

	Suicidal Thoughts	Suicide Plans	Suicide Attempts
	% (95% C.I.)	% (95% C.I.)	% (95% C.I.)
African-American	12.8 (9.5-17.0)	7.8 (5.4-11.1)	11.9 (9.2-15.2)
Hispanic/Latino	13.4 (11.2-15.9)	11.5 (7.9-16.5)	9.6 (7.2-12.6)
White	12.1 (9.9-14.7)	8.4 (7.0-9.9)	4.5 (3.2-6.4)

More Females Report Suicide Attempts, Except in Chicago

The YRBS asked students to report on suicide attempts in the previous 12 months. Female youth in the U.S. and in Illinois report significantly higher rates of suicide attempts compared to male youth, with 8.4% of Illinois (outside of Chicago) females attempting suicide compared to 4.1% of males (Figure 2). However, in Chicago, male and female youth have similar suicide attempt prevalence. The prevalence of suicide attempts among Chicago male youth is significantly different than the U.S. male youth. It is interesting to note that female youth in Chicago still have a significantly higher prevalence of suicidal thoughts and suicide plans compared to male youth in the U.S.

Figure 2. Prevalence of youth who reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months by gender, 2007



HELPFUL RESOURCES

Illinois Suicide Prevention Coalition www.ilsp.net Children's Mental Health Partnership www.ivpa.org/childrensmhtf

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 spring of 2007. The survey focuses on priority health-risk behaviors 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 <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

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