

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families (APCYF) was formed in 1999 as a joint venture between the Arlington County Board and the Arlington County School Board to improve the health, well-being and safety of children, youth and families in Arlington through researching young people’s needs, advocating for improved collaboration, policies and programs to meet those needs, and engaging all members of the community as part of the solution. In meeting this mission, APCYF began to conduct the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in 2001 to monitor and track the risk behaviors of Arlington youth. This work has continued by administering the YRBS approximately every three years.

In March 2017, APCYF administered the YRBS to a sample of approximately 2,800 APS students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 and all students attending APS alternative programs. Over 73% of students from sampled classrooms completed the survey.

Results from a representative, random sample of students are contained within this report. Additional information about the YRBS can be found online at: <https://apcyf.arlingtonva.us/youth-risk-behavior-survey/>.

Data Comparison Challenges:

The survey administered in 2017 had many differences from the survey administered in past years. This survey was administered online and included branching. While results will be compared over the years for some questions, caution should be taken in using this as true trend data. It is yet to be determined how much of an impact these updates have made to the survey results. Arlington anticipates having survey results from the Virginia Youth Survey to be administered in the fall of 2017, which should allow us to further confirm whether trends we have identified are continuing.

Key Findings

Bullying

- Youth who report being the victim of bullying has increased across multiple grades, and is particularly noticeable in 12th grade, which shows an increase from 14% in 2013 to 20% in 2017.
- The increase is seen across multiple indicators of bullying, including youth who report that bullying is a serious problem in their school. Of particular concern is the data for 6th graders, which shows an increase from 30% in 2013 to 37% in 2017.

Mental Health

- The number of youth who report feeling sad or hopeless for two weeks or more during the past year has increased. This is particularly true for 12th graders where the data shows an increase from 29% in 2013 to 37% in 2017.

Family, Home, Community, School

- Youth who report that adults in their community listen to what they have to say has increased, with nearly 60% across all grades reporting they agree or strongly agree.
- 73% of 12th graders, 69% of 10th graders and 67% of 8th graders report feeling stressed by school often or very often.

Relationship Violence

- Approximately 50% of females across grades 8th, 10th and 12th report being sexually harassed at school.

Tobacco Use

- Reported tobacco smoking is at an all-time low since 2004 with 13% of 12th graders reporting smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days, but many students now report vaping with 22% of 12th graders reporting usage in the past 30 days.

Alcohol Use

- High school youth who have ever had a drink of alcohol has decreased, but life time use of alcohol by middle school youth has increased from 7% in 2013 to 13% in 2017 for 6th graders.
- Drinking within the past 30 days has decreased across all grades.
- Binge drinking, defined by having 5+ drinks within a few hours during the past month, has decreased for 12th graders from 26% in 2013 to 20% in 2017.

Drug Use

- Use of marijuana within the past 30 days has increased for high school seniors, with an increase from 22% in 2013 to 27% in 2017.
- Use of prescription drugs other than their intended purpose has increased in particular for 6th and 12th graders, with 12th graders specifically reporting use of “other” prescription drugs such as Xanax and Adderall.
- Use of over-the-counter medication to get high has increased notably for 6th graders -- from 2% in 2013 to 11% in 2017.

Physical Health

- Self-description of weight and BMI calculations show that youth who consider themselves overweight or obese has decreased across all grades.
- Over 75% of high school youth spend 2 or more hours on an average school day using electronics for entertainment purposes.

Sexual Health

- Youth reporting ever having sexual intercourse has decreased across all grades.
- Youth who report ever being or getting someone pregnant has decreased across all grades.