

A Layman's Guide to Understanding the Study Done on the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

By Merlin Star

The youth are often at risk for mental health issues and physical issues. Every year, physical issues and mental health issues cost the United States billions and lead to lowered quality of life. Problems that begin in youth tend to stay unless treatment is given, so the US wanted to monitor the issues so that there was awareness of the severity and where it clustered. In 1990, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) was created to monitor health problems that heavily contributed to leading causes of death and/or disability. This was done in the hopes of not only monitoring these issues to see the general trend over time, but also to monitor what states were most and least affected by these issues. The YRBSS conducts written surveys on what behaviors adolescents are engaging in every 2 years. Due to COVID19, the most recent study at the time was in 2018. Using this data, I found out that there are 3 distinct groups within the adolescent population. The first group are those that are generally mentally well that do not date. The second group are those that are generally mentally well that do date. The last group are generally those that are not doing well. The first and second group in terms of outcomes are almost identical, while the third group does significantly worse. The third group was more likely to have suicidal thoughts, tended to report that their sexual consent was violated at one point in time, had a higher probability of being involved in fights, and had higher levels of depression compared to the other 2 groups. As a result, this 3rd group is at highest risk for lowered quality of life and future health issues unless suitable interventions are done.