



RHODE ISLAND DATA BRIEF

Rhode Island High School Health Risks (2013)

November 2013

Health compromising behaviors adopted during adolescence often translate into poor health status later in adulthood, so early recognition and interventions are critical to improving the Public's health. The purpose of this Brief is threefold:

- 1) to identify unfavorable risk factors among RI high schoolers (Chart 1),
- 2) to see if these factors have improved or worsened over time (Chart 1), and
- 3) to see if there are any gender differences in risks (Chart 2).

The findings are intended to inform interested parties and stimulate further research.

Twenty one¹ measures are examined, comprising seven areas of vulnerability (i.e., drugs & alcohol, injury, mental health, sex, tobacco, violence, and weight). Only those differences in values (over time or between males and females) that are statistically 'significant' at the 95% confidence level are noted.² Lastly, with the exception of the 'lesbian, gay or bisexual' measure, all others are unfavorable indicators, so lower/declining values are preferred.

Improving Measures:

Eight (of 21) measures improved significantly from 2007 (to 2013).

- Alcohol drinking fell from 43% to 31%.
- Students not wearing seat belts fell from 14% to 6%.
- Sexually active students fell from 33% to 27%.
- Occasional smoking decreased from 15% to 8%.
- Daily smoking decreased from 12% to 6%.
- The use of any tobacco product fell from 22% to 15%, and boys are more likely to use tobacco than girls (18% vs. 12%).
- Physical fighting decreased from 26% to 19%, and more boys fight than girls (23% vs. 14%).
- Dating violence decreased from 14% to 8%.

Worsening Measures:

One (of 21) measures worsened significantly from 2007 (to 2013).

- Students actually attempting suicide increased from 9% to 14%.

Other Measures:

Twelve (of 21) measures were not significantly different from 2007 (to 2013).

- Twenty four percent (24%) of students use marijuana.
- Fifteen percent (15%) of students abuse legal drugs (Rx and/or 'over-the-counter').
- Seventy eight percent (78%) of students do not wear bike helmets, and boys are more likely to not wear helmets than girls (83% vs. 72%).

KEY FINDINGS

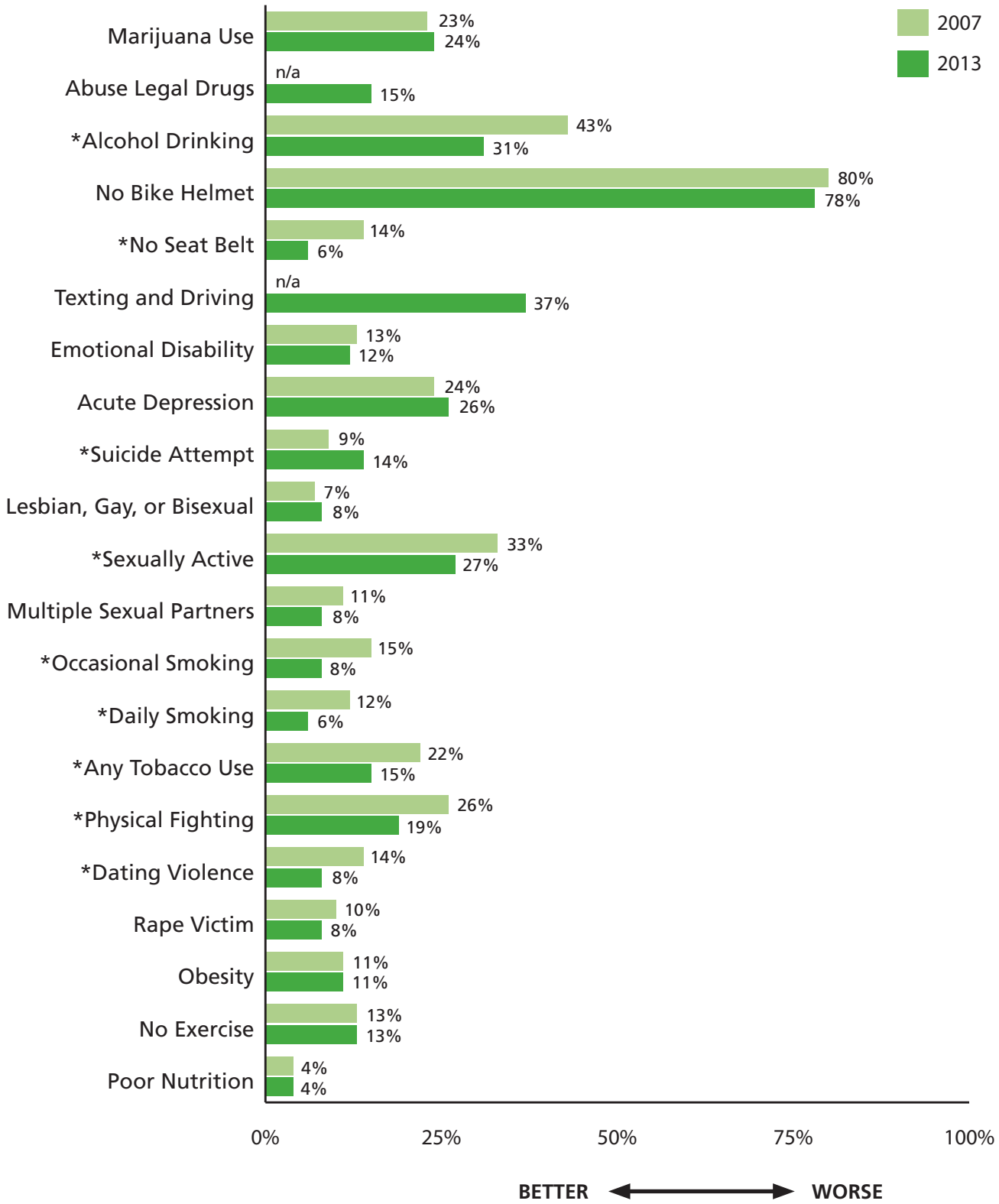
Eight (of 21) measures improved from 2007 to 2013, and one measure worsened (Suicide Attempt).

Boys are at greater risk from four measures and girls are at greater risk from two measures.



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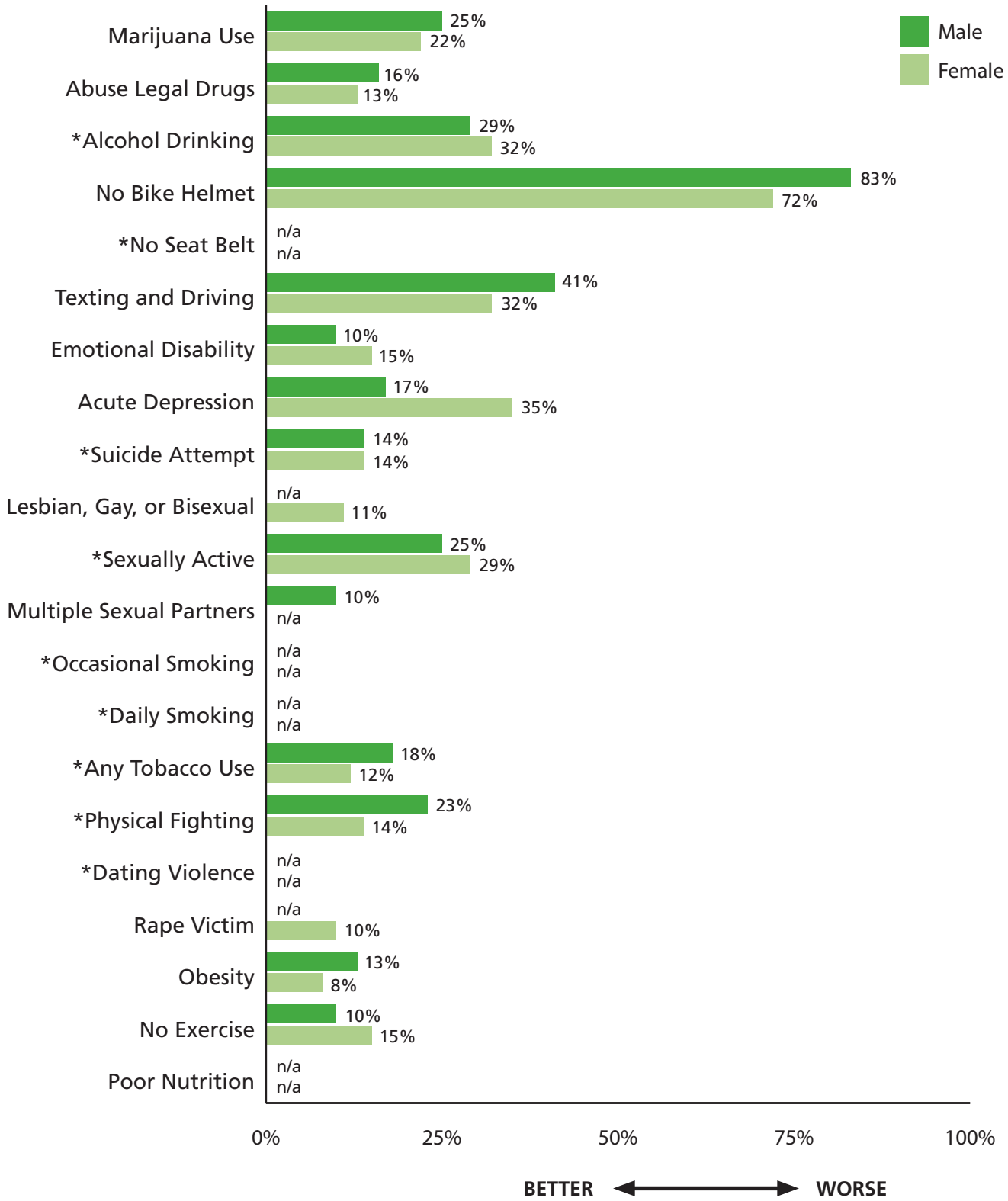
CHART 1: 2007 & 2013 RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL HEALTH RISKS



*statistically significant changes

N/A (not available), data were either not collected or the sample was too small to be statistically representative (i.e., less than 100 students). DRUGS & ALCOHOL MEASURES: Marijuana Use (1+ times, past mo.); Abuse Legal Drugs (abused prescription and/or 'over-the-counter' drugs 1+ times, ever); Alcohol Drinking (1+ days, past mo.); INJURY MEASURES: No Bike Helmet (never or rarely wore, past yr.); No Seat Belt (never or rarely wore, past yr.); Texting & Driving (on 1+ days, past mo.); MENTAL HEALTH MEASURES: Emotional Disability (for 6+ mos.); Acute Depression (for 2+ weeks, past yr.); Suicide Attempt (1+ times, past yr.); SEX MEASURES: Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (sexual self-identity); Sexually Active (1+ partner, past 3 mos.); Multiple Sexual

CHART 2: MALE & FEMALE 2013 RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL HEALTH RISKS



*statistically significant changes

Partners (4+ partners, ever); TOBACCO MEASURES: Occasional Smoking (on 1+ days, past mo.); Daily Smoking (smoked daily, past mo.); Any Tobacco Use (used chewing tobacco, snuff, dip, or smoked cigars or cigarettes on 1+ days, past mo.); VIOLENCE MEASURES: Physical Fighting (1+ times, past yr.); Dating Violence (physically abused by partner in the past yr.); Rape Victim (forced into sexual intercourse, ever); WEIGHT MEASURES: Obesity (over the 95th percentile for body mass index); No Exercise (60+ min. of exercise on 0 days, past wk.); Poor Nutrition (no fruit or vegetables, past wk.)

- Thirty seven percent (37%) of high schoolers text while driving.
- Twelve percent (12%) of students have an emotional disability, and girls are more likely to be emotionally disabled than boys (15% vs. 10%).
- One in four (26%) high schoolers is acutely depressed, and more girls suffer from depression than boys (35% vs. 17%).
- Eight percent (8%) of students identify themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Eight percent (8%) of students had multiple (4+) sexual partners.
- Eight percent (8%) of high schoolers were victims of forced intercourse (i.e., rape).
- Eleven percent (11%) of students are obese, and more boys are obese (13% vs. 8%).
- Thirteen percent (13%) of students are not physically active and get no exercise.
- Four percent (4%) of students have poor nutrition and don't consume fruits or vegetables.

Despite the considerable improvement in eight risk measures, current rates remain unacceptably high, and the rise in attempted suicides is alarming. For public health to improve and healthcare costs to moderate, these risk factors need to be addressed through concerted, committed effort.

¹Data are sourced from RI's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (a biennial survey of high school students on the major causes of disease and injury morbidity and mortality). For more information contact:

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²As the RI-YRBS is a sample survey, if the 95% Confidence Intervals of two values do not overlap, one may conclude (with 95% certainty) that there was a 'real' difference between the two values (i.e., the difference was not likely due to sampling bias)



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