

# 2009 RI Middle School Health-Risks Summary Report



RI Department of Health and Department of Elementary & Secondary Education  
~March 2011~



**A majority of Rhode Island (RI) middle school health-risks worsened, but not significantly.** From 2007-2009, 15 of the 21 measures (for which 2007 and 2009 data were available) worsened, four measures improved, and two remained steady. However, none of the changes was large enough to be statistically significant (at a 95% confidence level). The remaining six measures were new in 2009.

This report examines 27 health-risk indicators for RI public middle school (MS) students. Data are from the Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MS-YRBS), a bi-annual, anonymous survey of students across the country. The Centers for Disease Control sponsors the MS-YRBS, and RI has participated since 2007. RI's MS-YRBS data are statistically representative of public 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students statewide,<sup>1</sup> and the findings are used to inform policy and programs alike regarding the major causes of injury, disease and mortality.

Seven categories of health-risks are evaluated, comprising 27 individual measures in total. All the measures are negative indicators, meaning that lower values are preferred (national MS-YRBS data were not available for comparison). Six of the measures were new for 2009, so 2007-2009 changes could not be determined. For the remaining 21 measures, none of the 2007-2009 changes was large enough to be deemed 'significant' at the 95% Confidence Level.

In 2009, 32% of RI middle school students reported they were a racial or ethnic minority, 24% identified as being overweight, and 12% had a current diagnosis of asthma (Table 1). In addition, 8% of those students had a physical disability, 9% had an emotional disability, and 8% reported receiving mostly 'D&F' grades in school.

**Violence:** In 2009, 49% of students reported they had been 'in a physical fight' (the same rate as in 2007), and 35% were 'bullied at school' (new measure for 2009, 2007 rate not available). Twenty two percent (22%) of students 'carried a weapon,' compared with 20% in 2007.

**Mental Health:** Sixteen percent (16%) of RI middle school students 'considered suicide' in 2009, 10% 'planned suicide,' and 6% actually 'attempted suicide' in 2009 (new measures for 2009, 2007 rates not available).

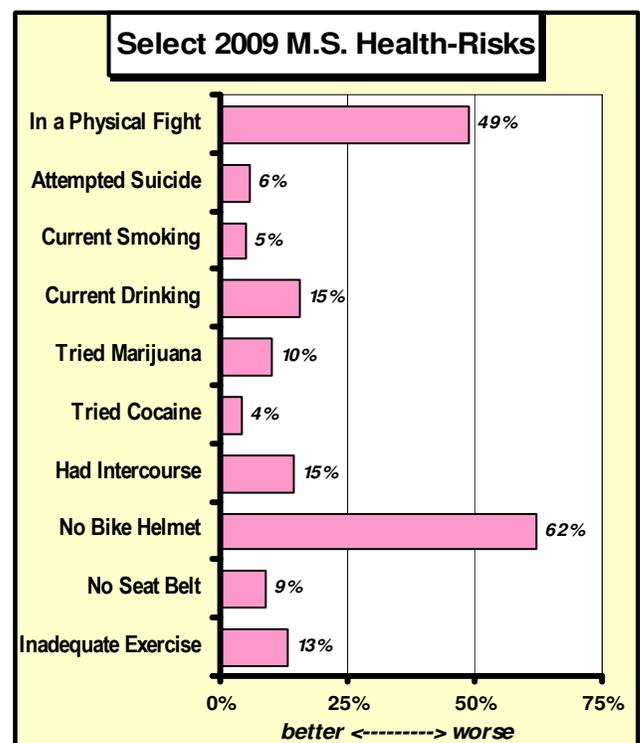
**Tobacco:** 'Current smoking' increased from 4% to 5% for 2007-2009, and 'any tobacco use' (e.g., cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff, dip etc.) increased from 7% to 8% over that same period.

**Alcohol & Drugs:** In 2009, 15% of RI middle school students were current drinkers, 10% had 'tried marijuana,' 4% had 'tried cocaine,' 9% had 'tried inhalants,' and 10% had 'abused painkillers.'

**Sex:** In 2009, 15% of students ever had intercourse, and 5% engaged in sexual activity before age 11 (new measures for 2009, 2007 rates not available).

**Injury:** A majority of RI students never/rarely wore a bike helmet (62%), or a helmet when skateboarding (68%). Nine percent (9%) rarely/never wore a seat belt, and 24% had ridden with a driver that had been drinking.

**Physical Activity:** Thirteen percent (13%) of students received 'inadequate exercise' in 2009 (versus 10% in 2007), 30% spent excessive leisure time on the computer (versus 24% in 2007), and 36% watched too much television (versus 35% in 2007).

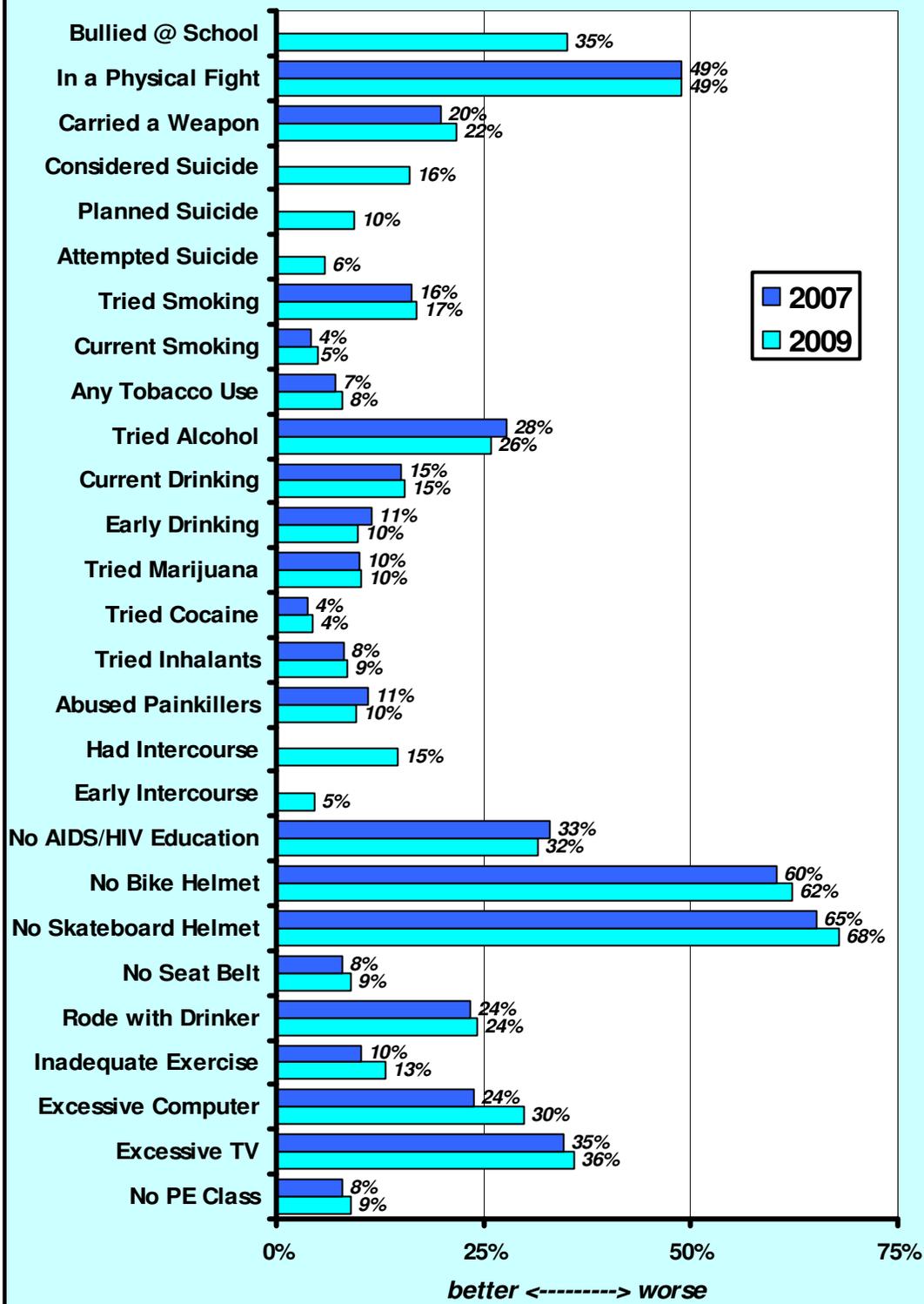


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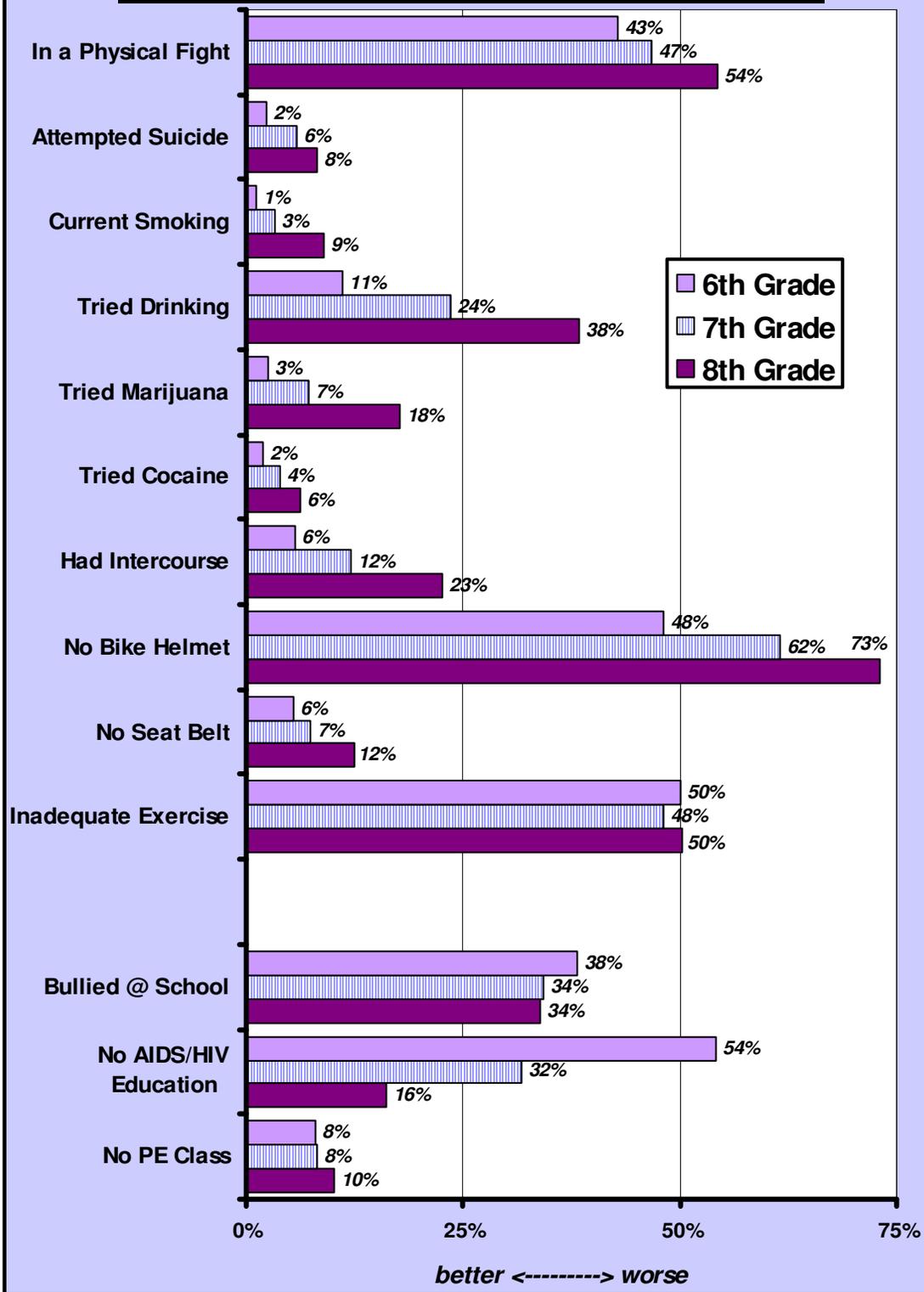
<sup>1</sup> The sample sizes for the 2007 & 2009 RI MS-YRBS were: 2,382 and 3,629, respectively, and the response rates were: 81% and 80%

**Chart 1: 2007 & 2009 (RI M.S. Health-Risks)**

~there were NO statistically significant changes (@95%)~



**Chart 2: Select RI 2009 M.S. Health-Risks -by grade**  
*~school-related measures at bottom~*



## Table 1: Middle School Health-Risks Data

		RI Data							
Measure	Description			2007 95% CIs <sup>1</sup>		2009 95% CIs <sup>1</sup>		2009 vs. 2007 Sig. Change (%)	
		2007	2009						
DESCRIPTIVE	Minority	<i>racial or ethnic minority</i>		31.9%					
	Asthma	<i>current diagnosis</i>		12.3%					
	'D&F' Grades	<i>self-reported</i>		7.6%					
	Physical Disability	<i>for 6+ mos.</i>		8.0%					
	Emotional disability	<i>for 6+ mos.</i>		8.6%					
	Perceived Overweight	<i>self-assessment</i>		24.0%					
VIOLENCE	Bullied @ School	<i>ever</i>	---	35.1%	---	---	32.2%	38.1%	---
	In a Physical Fight	<i>ever</i>	48.8%	48.8%	45.4%	52.1%	45.5%	52.1%	n/s
	Carried a Weapon	<i>ever</i>	19.8%	21.7%	18.0%	21.7%	19.5%	24.0%	n/s
MENTAL HEALTH	Considered Suicide	<i>ever</i>	---	16.0%	---	---	14.3%	17.9%	---
	Planned Suicide	<i>ever</i>	---	9.5%	---	---	8.4%	10.8%	---
	Attempted Suicide	<i>ever</i>	---	5.9%	---	---	5.1%	7.0%	---
TOBACCO	Tried Smoking	<i>ever</i>	16.2%	17.0%	13.4%	19.3%	15.0%	19.2%	n/s
	Current Smoking	<i>on 1+ days past mo.</i>	4.1%	5.0%	3.0%	5.6%	4.2%	6.0%	n/s
	Any Tobacco Use	<i>on 1+ days past mo.</i>	7.0%	7.9%	5.5%	8.8%	7.0%	8.8%	n/s
ALCOHOL	Tried Alcohol	<i>ever</i>	27.8%	26.0%	23.5%	32.5%	23.6%	28.6%	n/s
	Current Drinking	<i>acquired alcohol past mo.</i>	15.0%	15.4%	13.5%	16.5%	14.2%	16.7%	n/s
	Early Drinking	<i>&lt;age 11</i>	11.4%	9.8%	9.4%	13.7%	8.8%	10.9%	n/s
DRUGS	Tried Marijuana	<i>ever</i>	10.0%	10.2%	8.1%	12.2%	8.5%	12.3%	n/s
	Tried Cocaine	<i>ever</i>	3.8%	4.4%	2.9%	5.0%	3.7%	5.3%	n/s
	Tried Inhalants	<i>ever</i>	8.2%	8.5%	6.5%	10.4%	7.2%	10.0%	n/s
	Abused Painkillers	<i>w/out a prescription</i>	11.1%	9.7%	9.7%	12.6%	8.8%	10.7%	n/s
SEX	Had Intercourse	<i>ever</i>	---	14.6%	---	---	12.7%	16.7%	---
	Early Intercourse	<i>&lt;age 11</i>	---	4.5%	---	---	3.7%	5.4%	---
	No AIDS/HIV Education	<i>in school</i>	33.0%	31.6%	26.7%	39.9%	25.2%	38.8%	n/s
INJURY	No Bike Helmet	<i>'never/rarely' wore</i>	60.3%	62.3%	51.6%	68.5%	57.5%	67.0%	n/s
	No Skateboard Helmet	<i>'never/rarely' wore</i>	65.1%	67.8%	58.2%	71.5%	63.8%	71.5%	n/s
	No Seat Belt	<i>'never/rarely' wore</i>	7.9%	9.0%	6.1%	10.1%	7.5%	10.8%	n/s
	Rode with Drinker	<i>ever</i>	23.5%	24.3%	20.5%	26.8%	22.5%	26.1%	n/s
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Inadequate Exercise	<i>past wk.</i>	10.3%	13.1%	7.5%	13.9%	11.1%	15.4%	n/s
	Excessive Computer	<i>3+ hrs. per school day</i>	23.8%	29.9%	20.3%	27.7%	26.7%	33.3%	n/s
	Excessive TV	<i>3+ hrs. per school day</i>	34.6%	35.9%	29.6%	40.0%	31.9%	40.2%	n/s
	No PE Class	<i>on 0 days in avg. wk.</i>	8.0%	9.0%	4.9%	12.7%	5.2%	15.3%	n/s

<sup>1</sup> 95% Confidence Intervals (CIs) are used to determine statistical significance (e.g., if the CIs of two values overlap, one may not conclude with 95% certainty there is a 'real' difference between the two values as the difference may be due to sampling error)