

YOUTH SURVEY

FAIRFAX COUNTY

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS in Fairfax County

Self-reported by 10th and 12th grade girls on the Fairfax County Youth Survey

44% report ever trying alcohol



78% have never had sexual intercourse

9% report being cyberbullied



21% report being sexually harassed



13% report using unhealthy weight loss methods



40% report experiencing depressive symptoms



What You Need to Know

High school girls in Fairfax County report a high level of involvement and support in their families, schools and community and with their peers. While this is good news, high school girls also face challenges.

Depressive symptoms (feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some usual activities) affect 40% of girls. More than half (52%) report high levels of stress, and 18% have considered suicide.

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug by teens in Fairfax County. Nearly half of the 10th and 12th grade girls combined (44%) report having ever used alcohol, and 23% have used it in the past 30 days.

Seventy-eight percent of girls report never having had sexual intercourse. However, of those who have, 40% report they did not use a condom at last intercourse.

Five percent report that they have been physically forced to engage in sexual activity

when they did not want to. Three percent of girls report that they have bullied others, and 12% that they have been bullied. Nine percent of girls report being a victim of cyberbullying, while more than one in five (21%) report being a victim of sexual harassment.

Thirteen percent of girls surveyed have used at least one unhealthy weight loss method in the past year (fasting for 24 hours or more; vomiting or taking laxatives; using diet pills, powders or liquids without a doctor's order).

What Can You Do?

PROMOTE HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

- ▶ An adolescent girl has an intense need for connection. A strong connection with family, community, and peers can help her build healthy relationship skills and reduce risk-taking sexual behaviors.
- ▶ Spend time with her. Build a relationship that includes trust, honesty, open lines of communication and setting limits.
- ▶ Be a good role model. Eat right, exercise, deal with stress in healthy ways and avoid drug, tobacco and alcohol use.
- ▶ Teach her good values and a sense of responsibility. Then trust her to make good choices.
- ▶ Set rules and stick with them. Setting and enforcing fair rules can help girls avoid social settings where they may run into peer pressure they can't handle.

UNDERSTAND, ENCOURAGE, LEARN, AND ACT

- ▶ Understand that it's normal for a teen to want to try new things.
- ▶ Understand that when she is angry with you, she may rebel by making poor choices. Turn her mistakes into lessons, show her you still love her and point out the good things she does.
- ▶ Encourage and support her involvement in positive pro-social activities such as sports, school clubs, the arts, community service and any activity that provides a sense of belonging.
- ▶ Encourage her not to be ashamed of having a problem with stress, relationships, grades, weight, drugs or alcohol, but to learn how to handle problems in healthy ways.
- ▶ Learn about teen depression and suicide; alcohol and drug abuse; bullying and dating abuse; and eating disorders.
- ▶ Consult with your doctor, school staff, local hospitals or county services. Read books and get information from websites on preventing and handling risk-taking behaviors. Join and support school and community coalitions.

Adapted from www.cdc.gov/family and www.girlshealth.gov.

Who Can Help?

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB)
<http://bit.ly/FairfaxCSB>
 Entry & Referral 703-383-8500, TTY 711
 24-Hour Emergency Services 703-573-5679, TTY 711

Fairfax County Public Schools
<http://bit.ly/FCPSspecialsvcs>
 Intervention and Prevention Services 571-423-4020
 Student Safety and Wellness Office 571-423-4270

3 THREE to SUCCEED

The Factors That Matter

Data from the Youth Survey reinforces decades of research that shows that when youth have protective factors (also known as assets) in their lives, they do better in lots of different areas. **Having just three protective factors dramatically reduces the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors.** The Youth Survey shows that every protective factor makes a difference.

Young people in Fairfax County report positive influences from the people and opportunities in their lives. Take action to be an asset in a young person's life and help to build a stronger, more positive community that benefits ALL children and youth.

Sexual Health

EVER HAD SEX	22%
EVER HAD ORAL SEX	25%
NO CONDOM DURING LAST SEX*	40%
HAD 4+ SEXUAL PARTNERS*	18%

*Among students who have ever had sex.

Past 30-Day Drug Use

ALCOHOL	23%
CIGARETTES	1%
VAPING	20%
MARIJUANA	13%
PAINKILLERS*	3%
OTHER RX MEDS*	4%

WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Fairfax County Youth Survey
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/youthsurvey

Fairfax County Prevention System
<http://bit.ly/FairfaxPrevention>

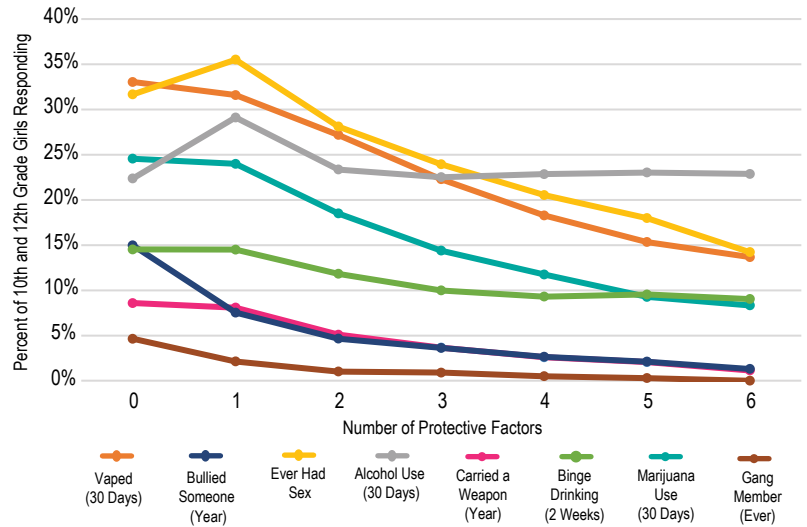
US Office of Adolescent Health
www.hhs.gov/ash/oah

GirlsHealth.gov
www.girlshealth.gov

NIDA for Teens
www.teens.drugabuse.gov

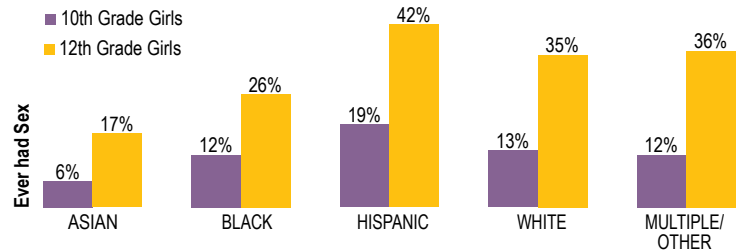
Stop Bullying
www.stopbullying.gov

The Fairfax County Youth Survey was administered in the fall of 2019.



Protective Factors

- Accepting responsibility for one's actions
- Having community adults to talk to
- Performing community service
- Participating in extracurricular activities
- Having teachers recognize good work
- Having parents available for help



Physical Health

3+ HOURS OF SCREENTIME DAILY	67%
ACTIVE 5+DAYS PER WEEK	27%
8+ HOURS OF SLEEP DAILY	17%
EAT 5 FRUITS OR VEGETABLES DAILY	21%
DRINK SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGE DAILY	27%

Related Factors

High school girls in Fairfax County report they:

- Are involved in extracurricular activities (81%) and that teachers notice their good work (57%).
- Volunteer for community service (67%).
- Have parents who are available for help (79%).
- Have community adults they can talk to (35%).



Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For information, call 703-324-4600, TTY 711.



A Fairfax County, Va., publication
 November 2020