

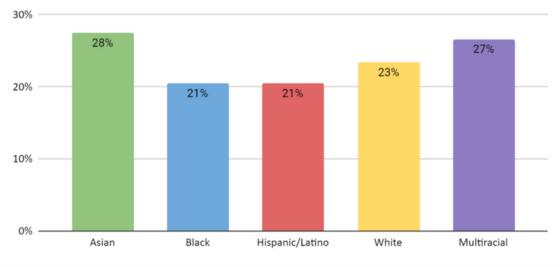
Prepared By: Every Texan Research and Data Team

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a biennial classroom-based survey that monitors health risk behaviors among high school students. The YRBS provides data on preventative health practices and health risk behaviors among high school students and is used to identify public health problems and develop policies and intervention. The 2021 Texas YRBS high school survey featured 107 questions in total. There were 1,682 high school students that completed the 2021 survey in Texas. Every Texan analyzed the 2021 Texas YRBS data and produced the following breakdown of findings on how Texas high school students have been faring. It is our hope that this data will be used to develop policies and solutions to improve well-being for all young Texans, regardless of race, sexuality, or gender identity.

#### SUICIDE AMONG TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Data show that Texas youth are facing a mental health crisis, as 22% of students reported seriously considering attempting suicide during the 12 months before the survey. Asian and multiracial students were most likely to report that they had seriously considered attempting suicide, at 28% and 27% respectively. Additionally, 20% of students reported going so far as to make a plan about how they would attempt suicide, with 21% of Black and Hispanic/Latino students making a plan, and 24% of multiracial students making a plan, compared to 18% of white students

## Percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide by race/ethnicity



<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services. (2022). Texas Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. https://dshs.texas.gov/chs/yrbs/default.shtm

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

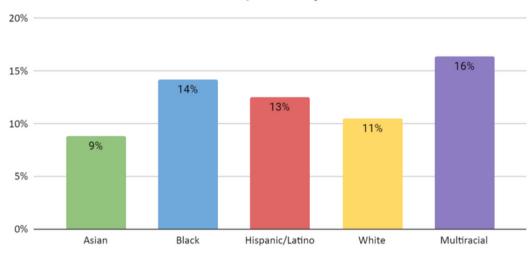


# YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) KEY FINDINGS DATA BRIEF

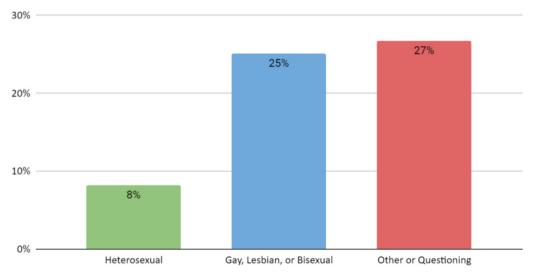
When broken down by sexual identity, there is a significant difference in responses. Students who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were over three times more likely to have seriously considered attempting suicide (51%) compared to straight students (15%). Students who responded "I describe my sexual identity some other way" or "I am not sure about my sexual identity (questioning)" were also much more likely to report having considered committing suicide (43%). The percentages of students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide were also similarly high for those who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (44%) compared to their straight counterparts (14%).

Of student respondents, 12% reported that they attempted suicide at least once. The percentage of students who reported actually attempting suicide is highest for multiracial, Black, and Hispanic/Latino students. Despite being less likely to attempt suicide, white students were more than twice as likely to ask for help from someone (such as a doctor, counselor, or hotline) before attempting suicide than Black or Hispanic/Latino students. LGBTQ students also disproportionately reported attempting suicide, with one in four gay, lesbian, and bisexual students reporting attempted suicide.

### Percentage of students who actually attempted suicide by race/ethnicity



## Percentage of students who actually attempted suicide by sexual identity



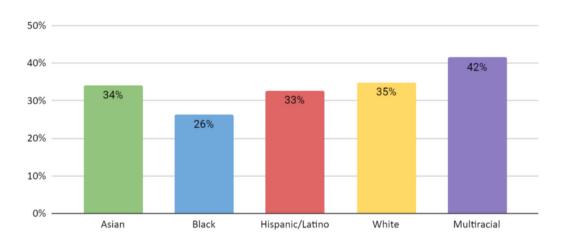


# YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) KEY FINDINGS DATA BRIEF

#### THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON YOUTH WELL-BEING

The pandemic exacerbated mental health issues Texas youth were already facing. Of student respondents, a third reported that their mental health was "most of the time" or "always" not good during the COVID-19 pandemic. Racial disparities contributed to students of color experiencing troubling mental health outcomes, with multiracial students being the most likely to report experiencing poor mental health during the pandemic.

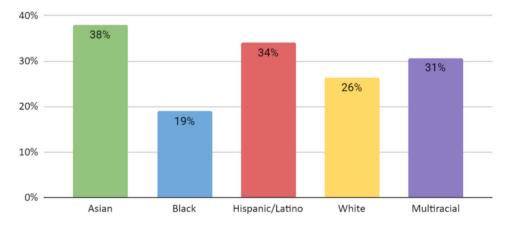
### Percentage of students who reported poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic by race/ethnicity



<sup>\*</sup>Note: Poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression.

Economic uncertainty during the pandemic has affected youth and families experiencing financial challenges, leading to increased anxiety and stress for many. Asian students had the highest rate, across all race and ethnicity groups, of students who reported that their parent or other adult in their home lost their job during the pandemic (even for a short amount of time, among students whose parents and adults in their homes had jobs before the COVID-19 pandemic).

### Percentage of students who reported parent or other adult in home lost job during COVID-19 by race/ethnicity



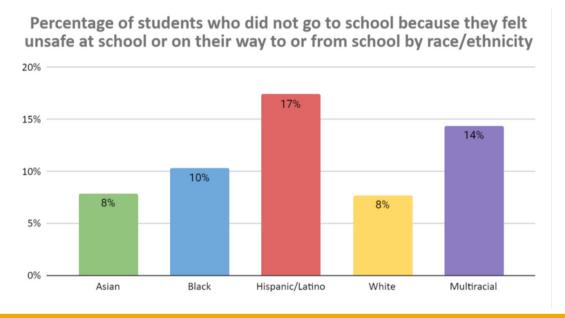
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## YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) KEY FINDINGS DATA BRIEF

#### SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Schools should be a place where students feel safe, yet many Texas high schools students report feeling unsafe at school. In 2021, 13% of students reported not going to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Hispanic/Latino students were most likely to skip school due to safety concerns compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and other/questioning students were more likely to skip school due to safety concerns (at 17% and 20%, respectively) compared to straight students (11%). Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and other/questioning students were also more likely to report experiencing bullying at school (26% and 25%, respectively), compared to straight students (10%). Youth deserve to feel safe in their communities, yet one in four students reported witnessing someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood.



#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

All students deserve to be happy, safe, and secure. It is crucial that Texas policymakers invest in students' well-being so that they are able to access high-quality mental health care and live happy, healthy lives. Policymakers and state leaders can:

- Develop programs and policies to ease mental health burdens on youth and their families, taking into account people's individual and unique identities and experiences.
- Expand Medicaid so that all Texas children and youth have health insurance and can access mental health services.
- Increase students' access to mental health services in schools, such as by hiring more school counselors so that all Texas schools follow the 250:1 student counselor ratio, as recommended by The American School Counselor Association.<sup>3</sup>
- Invest in communities so that all children and youth are able to easily access resources that lead to better opportunities, such as well-funded schools, community centers, and health centers. Children and youth who live in under-resourced communities may experience additional stress from safety and security concerns.

The American School Counselor Association. (2022). School Counselor Roles & Ratios. https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios