

HEALTH & SAFETY

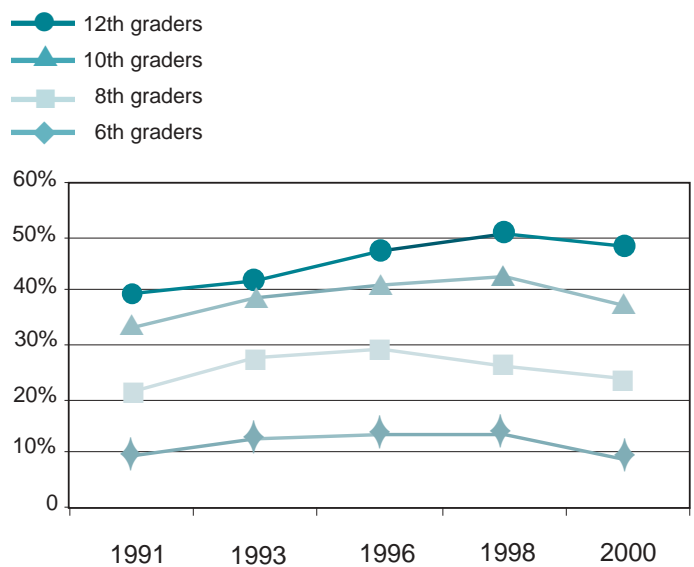
How safe are our teens? What are the health conditions and behaviors of youth in Hawai'i?

While there are variations in health and safety outcomes in teens of differing ages, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, gender, and neighborhood, the overall picture is good. On most measures there have been recent improvements in rates that are already better than their peers across the nation. Clearly there are still troublesome signals: too many feel unsafe in school, too many experience early initiation into sexual activity or trying alcohol or tobacco. However, this is the area in which parents and the community can have the most influence in protecting our youth.

- Of surveyed parents of public school students, almost 69% have confidence in the safety and well-being of their children at school. But of the students surveyed, only 44% of the middle school students and 47% of the high school students reported the same sense of safety.
- About 23 teens per 100,000 die violently each year in Hawai'i, either by suicide or as victims of accidents or crime. This is the lowest rate of any state, with the national average being 53 per 100,000.
- Hawai'i has the highest rate in the nation of teens who are so depressed that they seriously considered committing suicide. Twice as many Hawai'i girls than boys reported suicidal thinking in the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Yet the rate of completed suicides is below the national average and has been declining in recent years.
- Also in the 1999 YRBS, 64% of teens reported participating in vigorous exercise regularly while only 21% claimed to eat a healthy diet.
- Since 1990, Hawai'i has experienced a 29% decrease in births to teens ages 15 to 17, a decline better than the national average. In 2000, 22.7 female teens per 1,000 (or 542 young women in this age group) gave birth; there were 18 births to girls under the age of 15.
- The reported number of chlamydia cases has nearly doubled in Hawai'i since 1997 and 25% of those cases are attributed to youth ages 15 to 19.

- Alcohol, tobacco, and other substance use and abuse remain a serious problem in Hawai'i. However, the rates have trended slightly downward since the peak in 1996, and Hawai'i is doing better overall than the national average.

Percent of Hawaii Teens by Grade Who Ever Tried Illicit Drugs



Percent of Students Who Reported Drinking Daily in 2000

