



# Personal Safety, Depression, and Attempted Suicide Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students *1997 through 2005*

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is an anonymous and voluntary survey among random samples of high school students in over 50 states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed the YRBS to monitor risk behaviors for the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. In the spring of 1997, 2001, 2003 and 2005, Rhode Island (RI) administered the YRBS to 1,528, 1,392, 1,814 and 2,362 adolescents, with response rates of 60%, 63%, 66%, and 71% respectively. Weighted findings are representative of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade public high school students statewide and can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors. The RI Departments of Health, Education, and Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals provide funding and other support for the YRBS.

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## **KEY FINDINGS**

### ***Lack of Helmet Use***

In 1997, 91% of Rhode Island high school students never or rarely wore a helmet when riding a bike. Although there was a significant decrease in percentages among males and females in subsequent years, the absolute rates remained very high at 86% of males and 78% of females never or rarely wearing a helmet in 2005. There was little difference by grade in 2005, except that 9<sup>th</sup> graders appeared more likely to use a helmet than did older students.

### ***Lack of Motor Vehicle Seat Belt Use***

The percentage of high school students never or rarely wearing a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else showed a significant and steady decline from 33% in 1997 to 13% in 2005. While there were significant decreases among both male and female students, males were consistently less likely than females to wear a seat belt. In 2005, the rate of never or rarely wearing a seat belt was 16% for males and 9% for females. Usage was similar across grades in 2005, although 11<sup>th</sup> graders appeared more likely to use seatbelts than other students.

### ***Alcohol Use and Driving***

Rates of riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol decreased significantly between 1997 and 2005 from 36% to 29% among high school students. The rate fell for both sexes, but males remained slightly more likely than females in most years to ride with such a driver. In 2005, older students (11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade) appeared somewhat more likely than younger students to engage in this behavior. Regarding students who drove a car after drinking, there was a significant decrease in rates over time, attributable primarily to females. The rate among females declined from 12% in 1997 to 7% in 2005, compared to a relatively stable rate among males of 17% to 15%.

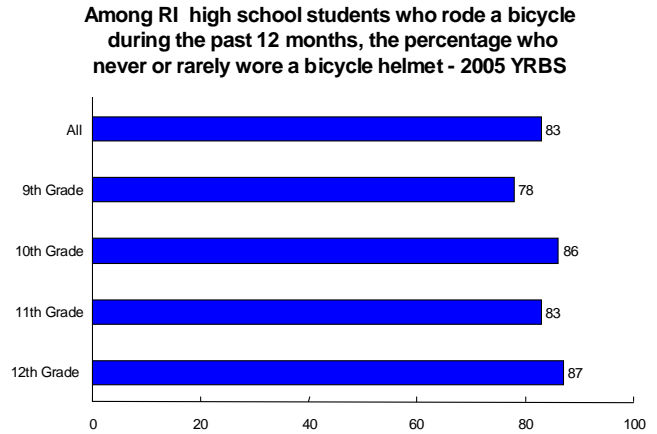
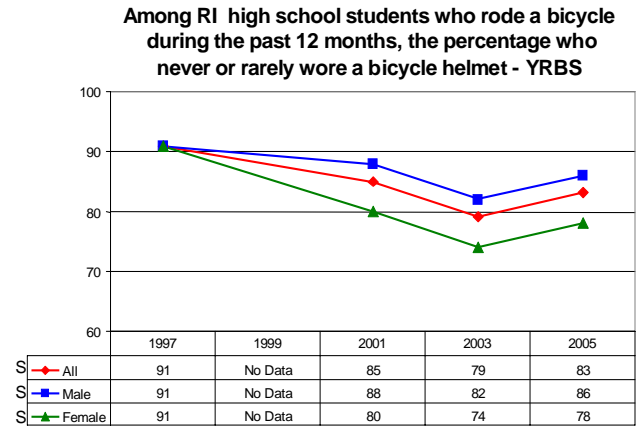
### ***Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts***

The percentage of high school students who felt sad and hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more during the past year was stable at 24% - 26% for all years. In 2005, females (34%) were twice as likely as males (17%) to report these feelings. There were only minor differences by grade level. The percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months dropped significantly from 24% in 1997 to 14% in 2005. More females seriously considered suicide than males in all survey periods, with rates of 17% for females and 11% for males in 2005. The percentage of students who made a plan to attempt suicide also decreased significantly from 17% in 1997 to 11% in 2005. Females were more likely than males to make a plan (13% vs. 9%) in 2005. The percentage of students who actually attempted suicide was stable at 8% to 10% between 1997 and 2005, with females being 1½ to 2 times more likely than males to make an attempt. Only 3% of students had to seek medical help for injuries as a result of an attempted suicide in 2005, a rate virtually unchanged since 1997. With the exception of injuries, rates for the suicide related data appeared to decrease somewhat by grade level in 2005.

# Personal Safety, Depression, and Attempted Suicide

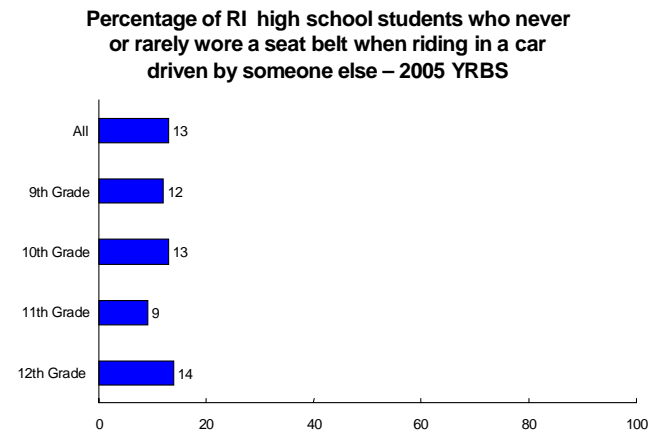
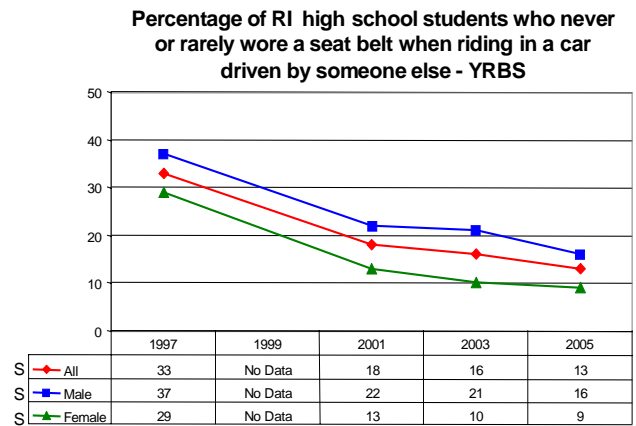
## Risk Behavior: Lack of Helmet Use

**Rationale:** In 2000 – 2001, bicycle activities were the third leading type of sports and recreation-related activities in the United States in which 15-19 year old males were injured and treated at an emergency department. Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle crashes, and helmet use protects against head injury. Estimates indicate bicycle helmets might prevent approximately 56% of bicycle related deaths, 65-88% of bicycle-related brain injuries, and 65% of serious injuries to the upper and middle regions of the face (i.e., facial fractures and lacerations seen in the emergency department).



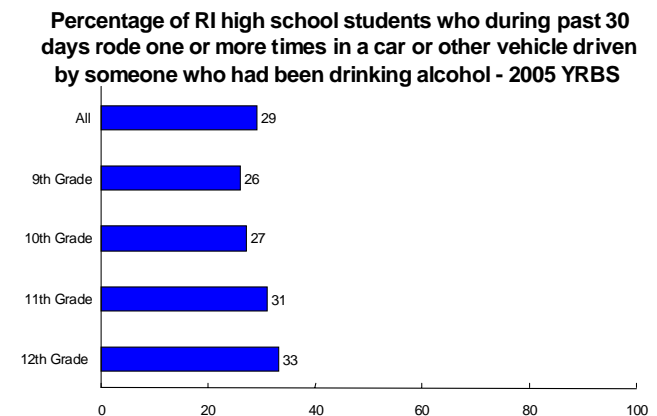
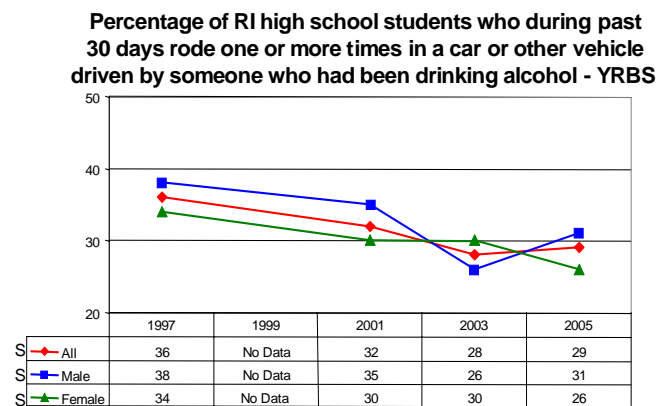
## Risk Behavior: Lack of Motor Vehicle Seatbelt Use

**Rationale:** Proper use of lap and shoulder belts reduces the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passengers by 45% and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50%.



## Risk Behavior: Alcohol Use and Driving

**Rationale:** According to national figures for 2000, 5% of 15-20 year old drivers who were involved in crashes that resulted in injuries had been drinking alcohol. In addition, 22% of 15-20 year old drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking alcohol. Alcohol use is associated with 20% of fatalities among those less than 15 years old in the United States.



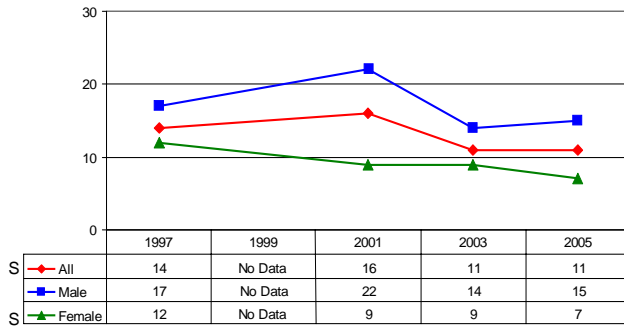
Note: An "S" next to the line graph legend box denotes a statistically significant linear change.

Source: 1997 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1528)      2003 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1814)  
 2001 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1392)      2005 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=2362)

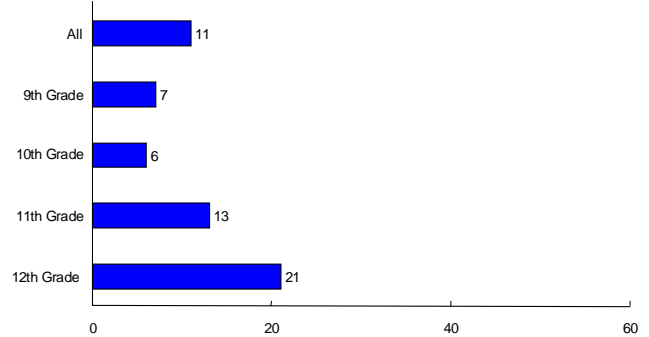
# Personal Safety, Depression, and Attempted Suicide

## Risk Behavior: Alcohol Use and Driving (Continued)

Percentage of RI high school students who during the past 30 days drove a car or other vehicle one or more times when they had been drinking alcohol - YRBS



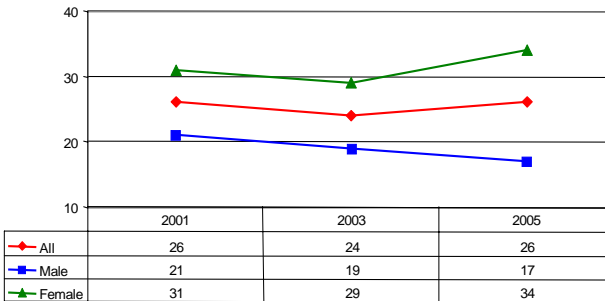
Percentage of RI high school students who during the past 30 days drove a car or other vehicle one or more times when they had been drinking alcohol - 2005 YRBS



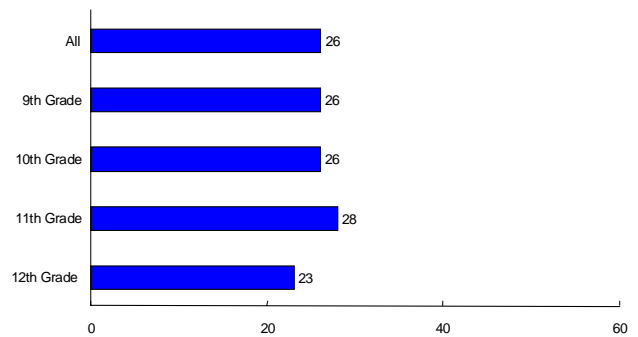
## Risk Behavior: Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts

**Rationale:** Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth aged 15-19 nationally. The suicide rate for persons aged 15-19 was 7.9 per 100,000 in 2001 down from a high of 10.9 per 100,000 in 1994.

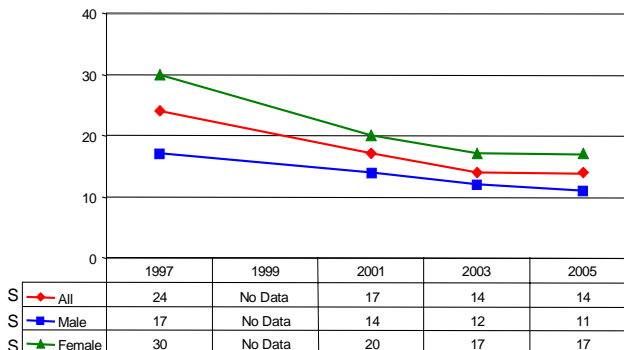
Percentage of RI high school students who during the past 12 months ever felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities - YRBS



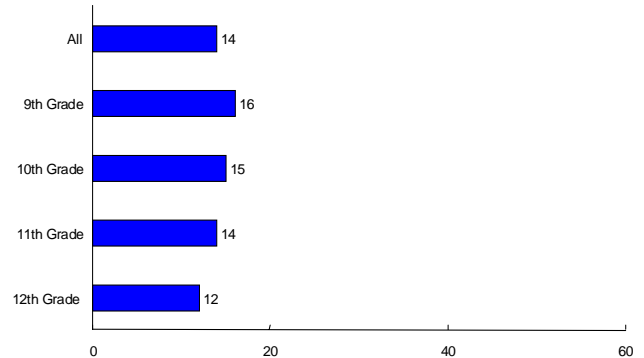
Percentage of RI high school students who during the past 12 months ever felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities - 2005 YRBS



Percentage of RI high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months - YRBS



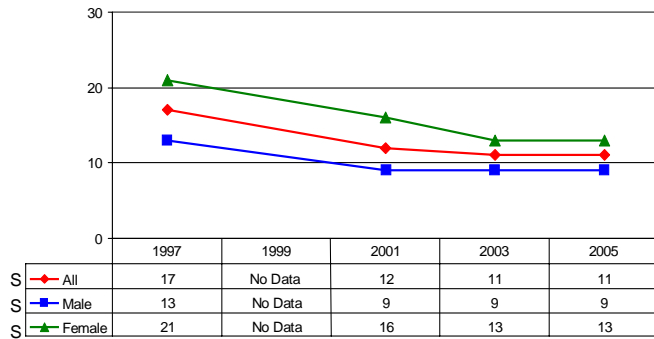
Percentage of RI high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months - 2005 YRBS



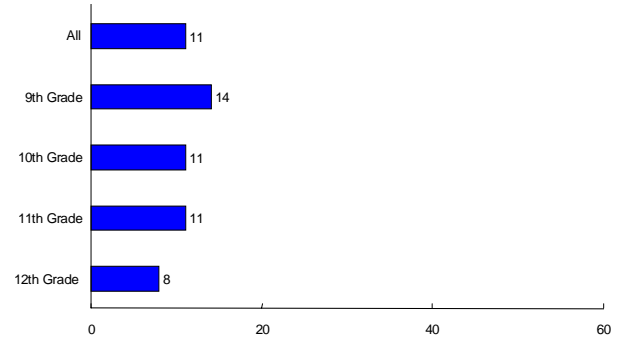
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## Risk Behavior: Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts (Continued)

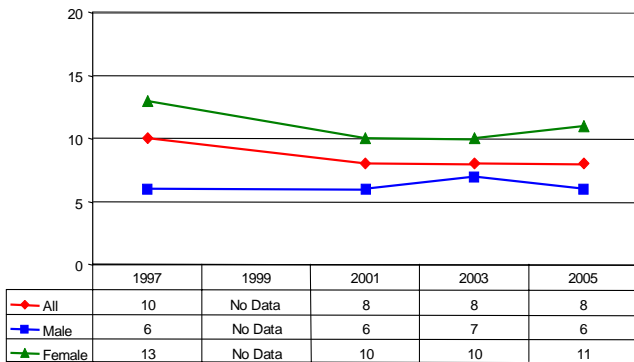
Percentage of RI high school students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months - YRBS



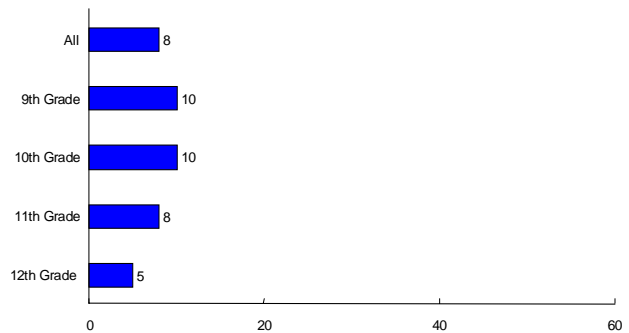
Percentage of RI high school students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months - 2005 YRBS



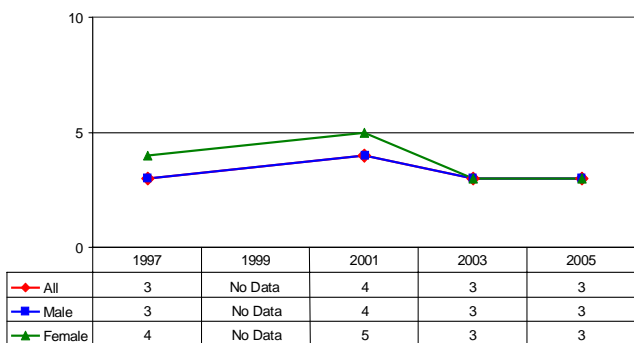
Percentage of RI high school students who actually attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months - YRBS



Percentage of RI high school students who actually attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months - 2005 YRBS



Percentage of RI high school students whose suicide attempt during the past 12 months resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse - YRBS



Percentage of RI high school students whose suicide attempt during the past 12 months resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse - 2005 YRBS

