

## OTHER INJURY-RELATED ISSUES

### Harassment, Abuse, and Injury to Self

#### HARASSMENT

##### ***U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES***

- 7.4c Reduce to less than 3.0 per 1,000 children the rising incidence of emotional abuse of children younger than age 18
- 7.6 Reduce assault injuries among people aged 12 and older to no more than 8.7 per 1,000

The next four questions measure harassment at school, types of harassment, and student's feelings of safety.

The survey defines harassment as threatening, bullying, name calling or obscenities; offensive notes or graffiti; exclusion from groups; unwanted attention or unwanted touching; and physical assault. Harassment creates an atmosphere that contributes to other forms of violence,<sup>1</sup> and has been shown to contribute to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease.<sup>2</sup> This hostile environment also affects a student's readiness and capacity for learning. Common coping behaviors of harassed students include skipping school and avoiding class participation.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly 80 percent of adolescents experience sexual harassment from their peers.<sup>4</sup> Adolescent women who experience repeat sexual harassment are more likely attempt suicide.<sup>5</sup> Harassed sexual minority youth (gay, lesbian or bisexual) are at high risk for drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, prostitution, homelessness, and poor academic performance.<sup>6</sup>

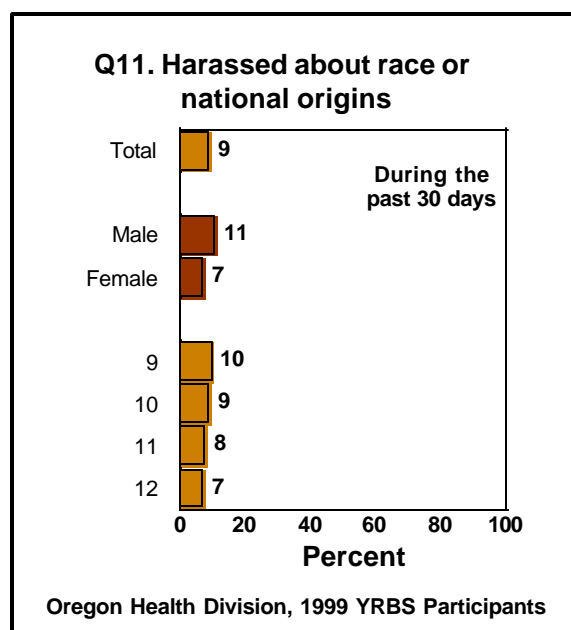
#### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

##### ***Q11. During the past 30 days, have you been harassed at school (or on the way to or from school) because of your race or ethnic origin?***

Nine percent of the Oregon students responding to the 1999 YRBS survey had been harassed about their race or national origin in the past month.

Eighteen percent of the Oregon YRBS participants identified themselves as Hispanic or non-white. More non-white students than white students, (21 vs. 6 percent) than white students were harassed about race in the past month.

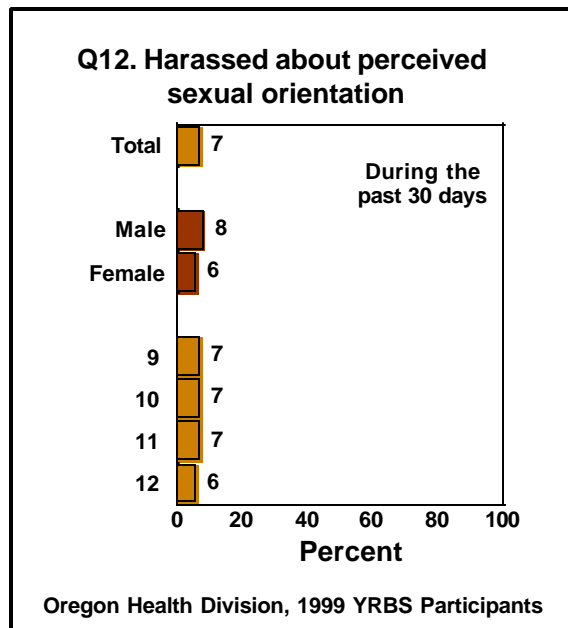
More males than females (11 vs. 7 percent) were harassed due to race or ethnic origin. This proportion decreased as grade level increased.



**Q12. During the past 30 days, have you been harassed at school (or on the way to or from school) because someone thought you were gay, lesbian or bisexual?**

Seven percent of the Oregon 1999 YRBS participants stated they had been harassed during the past 30 days because someone thought they were gay, lesbian or bisexual.

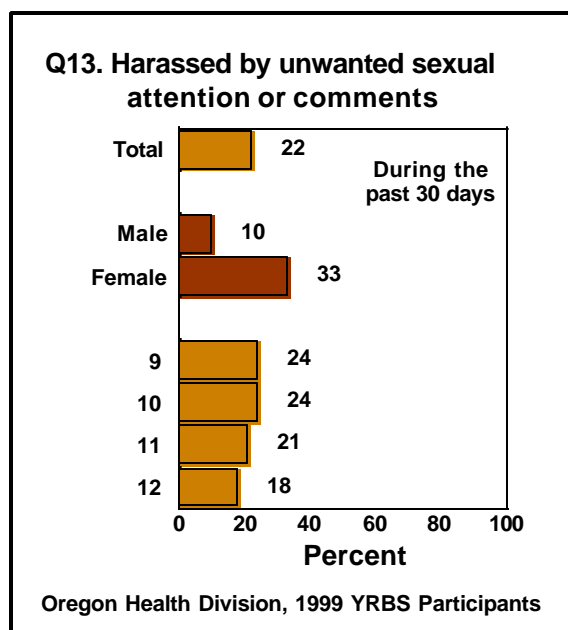
Fewer females than males (6 vs. 8 percent) were harassed regarding perceived sexual minority status.



**Q13. During the past 30 days, have you received any unwanted sexual comments or attention at school (or on the way to or from school)?**

Twenty-two percent of the Oregon survey participants stated they had received unwanted sexual attention or comments in the past 30 days.

Three times more females than males reported that they had been sexually harassed. As with other types of harassment, the data for sexual harassment show a decreasing proportion by grade. However, the 25 percent overall decrease from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades is due to a 32 percent decrease in harassment of female students only. There was no decrease by grade for male students.

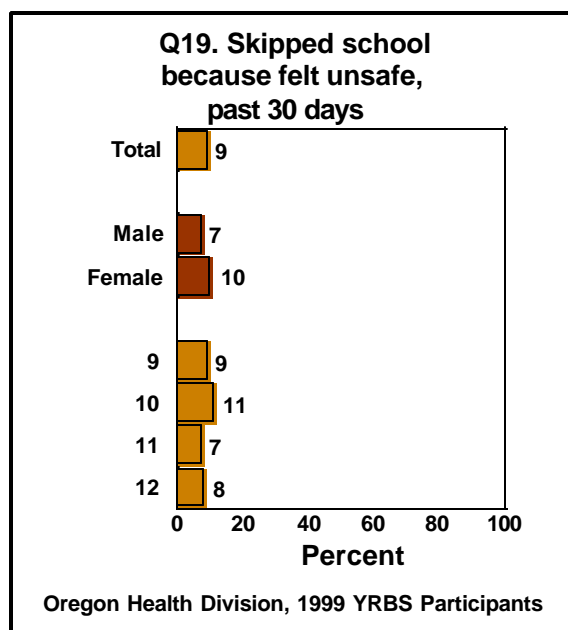


Comparison with earlier data requires combining the three specific harassment questions for 1999. In total, 29 percent of the students experienced some form of harassment in the past month by peers or others, compared to 31 percent reporting harassment at school by another student in the 1997 Oregon YRBS. Of those students who reported harassment in 1997, unwanted sexual attention was listed as the most upsetting or offensive reason by 38 percent of the female students.<sup>7</sup>

**Q19. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to or from school?**

During the 30 days prior to the survey, nine percent of Oregon YRBS participants did not go to school because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.

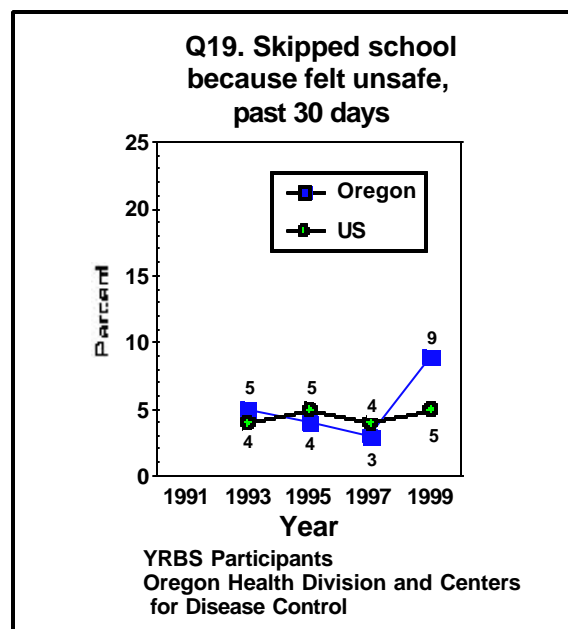
More females and 10<sup>th</sup> graders stayed away from school because they felt unsafe.



**Q19. DATA TRENDS**

The Oregon and national data show similar proportions for this behavior until 1999. However, there are not enough years of data to test significance.

In May 1998, Oregon experienced a school shooting incident in Springfield that resulted in the death of two students, which may have influenced the increased proportion in 1999. Also, more students reported skipping school because they felt unsafe when they took the survey after April 20, 1999 – the date of a widely publicized and fatal school shooting in Columbine, Colorado.



Skipped School	Timing Unknown	Before April 20	After April 20
No	89.8%	97.5%	88.1%
Yes	10.2%	3.5%	11.9%

## **WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE**

“Question #12 asks about ASSUMED sexual orientation and questions #4 asks for race, but nowhere does this survey ask about REAL orientation, which is just as important as race.”

“I think schools today are becoming a battle ground and not a place for education. Violence between students and harassment continue to get worse!”

“Hazing and picking on by other students is a problem.”

“We need tighter laws on harassment pertaining to sexuality. I’m tired of people getting away with calling others ‘Fag’.”

“I don’t like how people tease me about being gay.”

“I think there needs to be a tighter hold on kids being sexually and physically harassed at school. It tears the school apart every time.”

“I’m big chested. Many guys make sexual comments about my body -- with the guys’ comments, it makes me feel uncomfortable.”

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

### U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES

- 7.4a Reverse to less than 4.9 per 1,000 children the rising incidence of maltreatment of children younger than 18
- 7.5 Reduce physical abuse directed at women by male partners to no more than 27 per 1,000 couples

### OREGON BENCHMARKS YEAR 2000 GOALS

54. Reduce 15 percent the percentage of abused or neglected children under the age of 18

The next two questions measure the occurrence of physical abuse among Oregon high school students. The 1997 physical abuse question has been expanded into two, more detailed physical abuse questions.

The prevalence of dating violence among teenagers is estimated to range from 9 to 60 percent and has been shown to cross all socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic groups.<sup>8</sup> The abuse includes verbal, physical, and sexual violence.<sup>9</sup> Adolescents with alcohol abuse or dependence are six to 12 times more likely to have experienced physical abuse.<sup>10</sup> Young women are more likely to experience physical abuse than men. Both young men and young women are the victims and perpetrators. Young females inflict more minor physical injuries as the perpetrator, but young women receive more physical injuries with serious health consequences.<sup>9</sup>

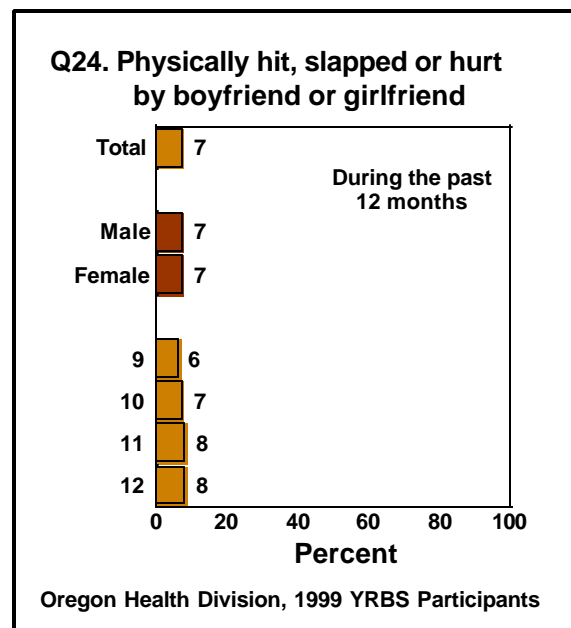
## WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

### ***Q24. During the past 12 months, did your boyfriend or girlfriend ever hit, slap, or physically hurt you on purpose?***

Seven percent of all Oregon 1999 YRBS respondents stated they had been physically abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year.

There was no difference between genders. The slight increase by grade level may be due to the fact that as grade level increases, more students have boyfriends or girlfriends.

Among those students who reported that they had boyfriends or girlfriends, 10 percent of participants were physically abused by their partners. There were no differences among grades or between genders when only respondents with partners were analyzed.

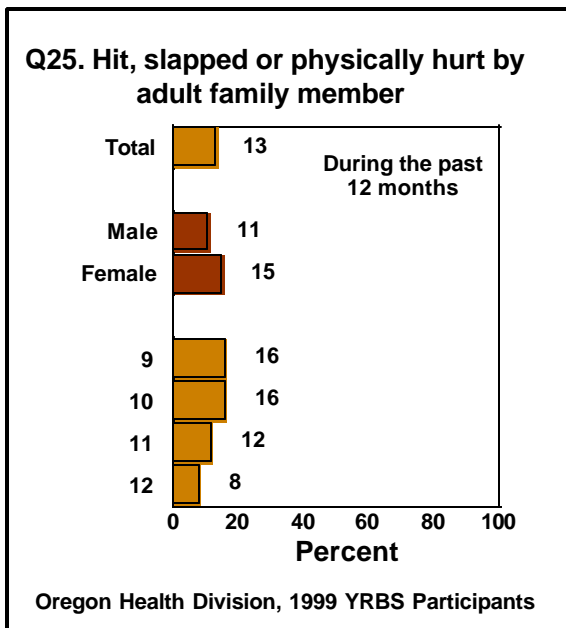


**Q25. During the past 12 months, did any adult family member ever hit, slap or physically hurt you on purpose?**

Thirteen percent of the Oregon survey participants reported being intentionally hit, slapped or physically hurt by an adult family member in the past year.

More females than males (15 vs. 11 percent) were hit, slapped or physically hurt by adult family members. As grade level increased, the proportion of students reporting this abuse decreased by 50 percent.

In order to compare with earlier data, data from the partner abuse and adult family member abuse were combined. Fifteen percent of 1997 YRBS participants reported physical abuse occurring in past year.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, 18 percent of participants experienced familial and or intimate partner violence in the past year.



Abuse	Male	Female	Total
None	83.7	80.4	82.0
Dual	2.1	2.6	2.3
Partner	5.3	4.4	4.8
Family	8.9	12.7	10.8

**WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE**

“I think more schools should be required to have some sort of group in the school for people who are beat, sexually abused, etc. I think that would help a lot. (Like a Women’s Resource Center).”

“I was in a two year relationship with a guy who would grab and push me. We aren’t together anymore, and I am glad because I had a really low self-esteem. I wish there would have been a way to get away from him sooner.”

## UNWANTED SEXUAL CONTACT

### U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES

7.7a Reduce rape and attempted rape to no more than 225 per 100,000 women aged 12 to 34

The next two questions measure the frequency of forced sexual intercourse and unwanted sexual touching among Oregon high school students. The 1997 question has been expanded into two specific questions. The survey questions do not ask about the relationship of the youth to the perpetrator of forced sexual intercourse and unwanted sexual touching.

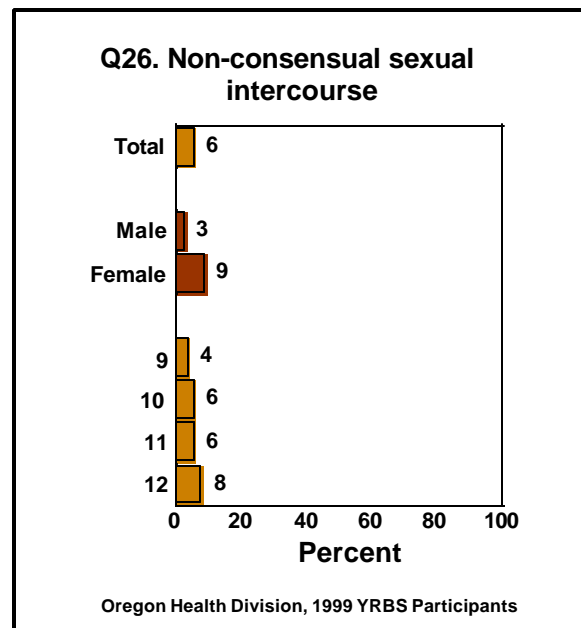
The National Center for Education Statistics reported 4,170 incidents of rape or sexual battery on public school property during the 1996/1997 school year.<sup>11</sup> Young women are twice as likely to be sexually abused as young men.<sup>9</sup> Students who have been forced into sexual intercourse are more likely to be assaultive<sup>12</sup>, attempt suicide<sup>13</sup>, use alcohol or other drugs<sup>14</sup>, and are at increased risk of chronic diseases and somatic symptoms (unexplainable physical complaints).<sup>15</sup>

### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

#### ***Q26. Have you ever been forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?***

Six percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported ever having forced sexual intercourse.

Three times more female than male students (9 vs. 3 percent) had been forced to have sexual intercourse. As grade level increased, the number of students reporting forced sexual intercourse also increased.

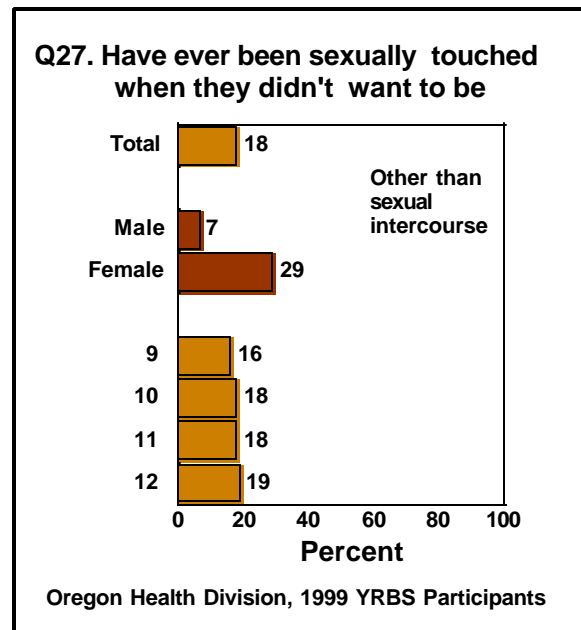


**Q27. Other than forced sexual intercourse, have you ever been touched sexually when you did not want to be touched?**

Eighteen percent of Oregon YRBS participants were touched sexually without consent within the preceding year.

Over four times more female than male students (29 vs. 7 percent) experienced unwanted sexual touching. As grade level increased, unwanted sexual touching also increased.

Comparison with earlier data requires combining the more specific questions (question 26 and question 27) of the 1999 survey. In the 1997 YRBS survey, 15 percent of the participants reported forced sexual abuse of any sort,<sup>7</sup> versus 19 percent of the 1999 participants who had experienced forced sexual intercourse and/or unwanted sexual touching.



### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE

"I have been raped. I did not indicate that on the survey. I also have never told anybody, my mom, my fiancé, nobody. I guess I'm embarrassed about it. I wish it never happened. I wanted to wait until I was married and save my virginity for my husband. Now that's ruined."

"Guys around here force girls to do things they don't want to do. And especially when they're on drugs or alcohol. Rape is a big deal, and we need to have a class on it."

"The one time I had sex I was date raped."

"Some kids, like me, have been raped by family or friends. Maybe there should be a question about that."

"Some of your sexual behavior questions did not apply to me, but I was also raped. So some of them were hard to answer because it wasn't my choice to have sexual intercourse."



## DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

### U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES

- 7.2a Reduce suicides to no more than 8.2 per 100,000 youth aged 15 to 19  
7.8 Reduce to 1.8 percent the incidence of injurious suicide attempts among youth aged 14 to 17

The next five questions measure persistent sadness and hopelessness that interferes with daily activities, suicidal ideation, the occurrence of suicide attempts, the seriousness of those attempts among Oregon high school students, and the number of caring adults available to the students.

The Oregon suicide rate increased over the past 35 years due mainly to a five fold increase among Oregon teenagers. For every suicide death there are numerous attempts and an even greater number of youth expressing suicidal thoughts.<sup>16</sup> Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Oregon youth aged 10-19.<sup>17</sup> During 1995-1997, Oregon's suicide rate for 15- to 19-year olds was 29 percent higher than the national rate.<sup>18</sup> In 1998, 761 Oregon youth aged 17 or younger were treated in a hospital for a suicide attempt.<sup>19</sup> There were approximately 47 attempts documented for every fatality among youth less than 18.

In 1998, males aged 17 or younger were three times more likely to die by suicide than females in the same age group (6.1 per 100,000 population for males compared to 2.2 per 100,000 for females). Females were three times more likely than males to be treated in an hospital emergency room for a suicide attempt.<sup>19</sup>

Although it can be precipitated by a single factor, suicide is associated with multiple risks and conflicts, including previous attempts, depression or other mental health conditions, harassment and oppression due to ethnic, racial, gender or sexual orientation minority status, response to loss, drug and alcohol abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.<sup>17</sup>

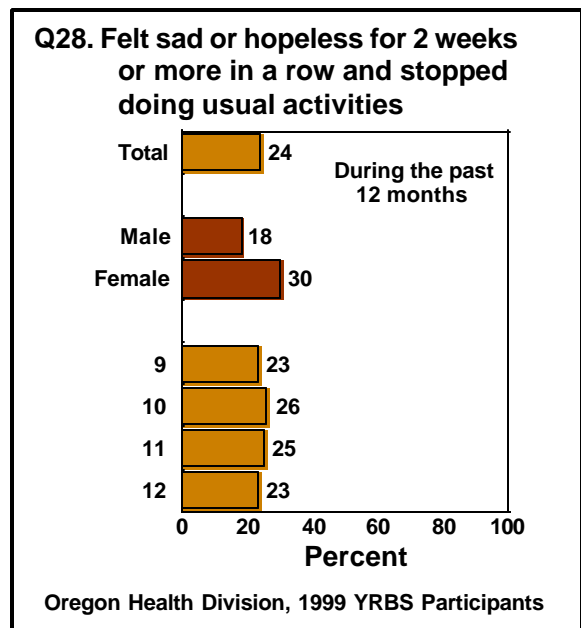
### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

**Q28. During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?**

Twenty-four percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS high school students felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more that they stopped regular activities.

More females than males (30 vs. 18 percent) reported prolonged sadness or hopelessness that interfered with normal activities.

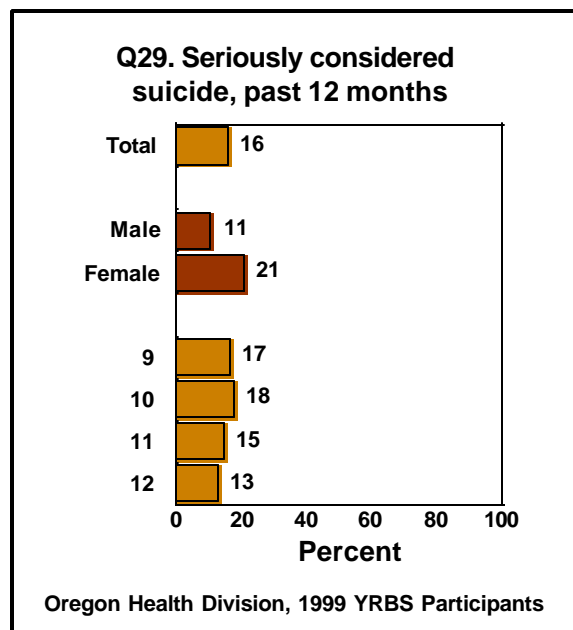
Since this question was added to the survey in 1999, no data trends are available for reporting.



**Q29. During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?**

Sixteen percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants seriously considered attempting suicide during the year preceding the YRBS.

More females than males (21 vs. 11 percent) seriously considered suicide. Fewer students in the higher grades reported ever seriously considering suicide. However, suicide death rates increase with age among youth.<sup>19</sup>

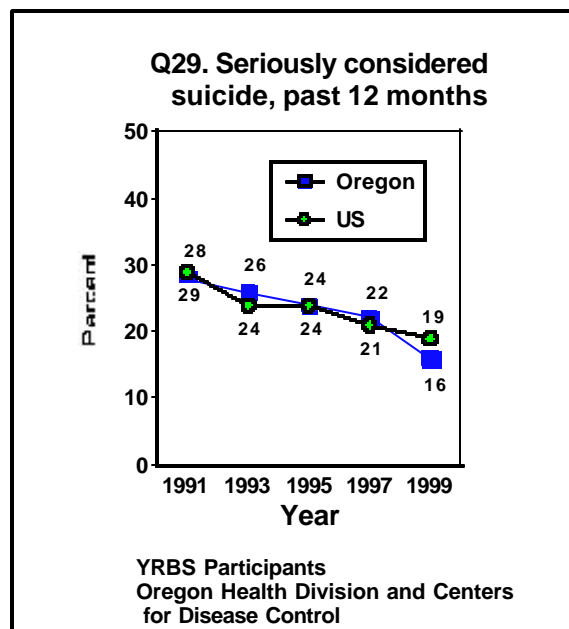


**Q29. DATA TRENDS**

The Oregon and national data are similar in percents and trends.

The proportion of Oregon's high school students reporting suicidal thoughts has been decreasing steadily from 1991 through 1997, and a larger (27 percent) decrease occurring between 1997 and 1999.

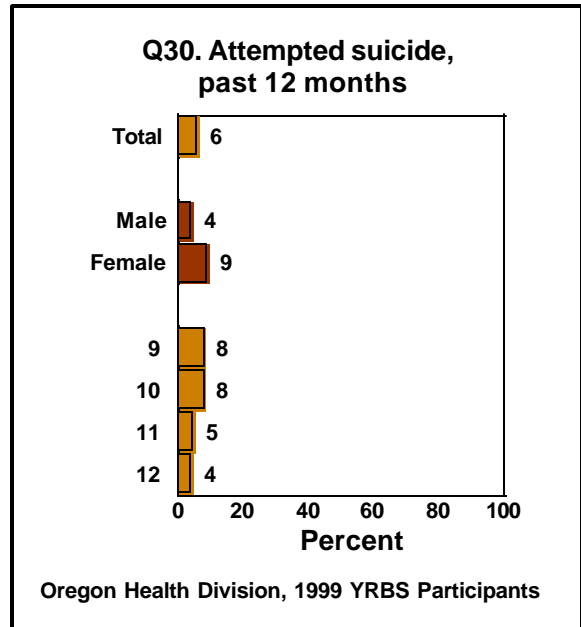
In addition to the suicide question, the 1999 Oregon survey included another question to estimate prevalence of feelings such as hopelessness and sadness among youth. The larger decrease shown between 1997 and 1999 may therefore result from the specificity of the 1999 survey, rather than an actual change in suicidal ideation among youth. In addition, definitions used to edit the data may also be a factor. However, the general downward trend reflected in previous years is also likely to be a factor.



**Q30. During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?**

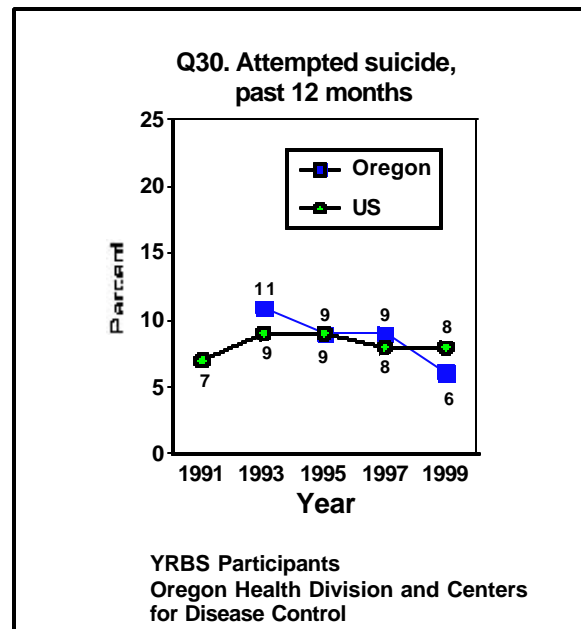
Six percent of Oregon YRBS participants attempted suicide one or more times during the 12 months prior to completing the 1999 survey.

Female students were more than twice as likely to report attempted suicide (9 vs. 4 percent). The prevalence of suicide attempts, or those reported, declined by half from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade. The decrease by grade may be associated with drop-out rates, rather than an overall decrease in attempted suicides. Risk factors such as homelessness and incarceration are strongly associated with prior suicide attempts<sup>20</sup>, and homeless youth and those in juvenile detention are under-represented in this survey.



**Q30. DATA TRENDS**

Although Oregon's proportion of surveyed students reporting a suicide attempt is higher than the nation, there appears to be a downward trend in the prevalence of attempted suicide among Oregon participants. However, it is unknown whether the decline represents a significant change or not. There are not enough years of data to test significance.

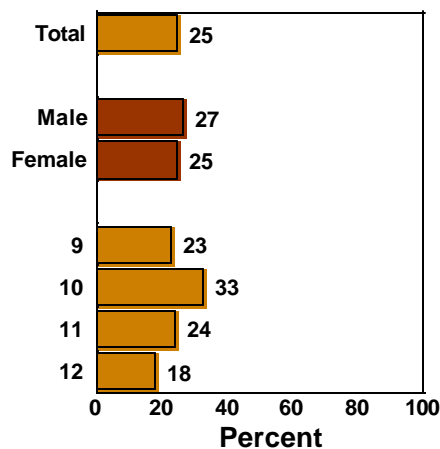


**Q31. If you attempted suicide during the past 12 months, did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?(Of YRBS participants who attempted suicide.)**

During the year preceding the survey, 25 percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants who attempted suicide had a resultant injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse.

In regards to these injuries due to suicide attempts, there was no particular difference in reporting between genders. However, more 10<sup>th</sup> graders and fewer 12<sup>th</sup> graders (33 vs. 18) reported suicide attempts that required medical treatment.

**Q31. Suicide attempt had to be treated by a doctor or nurse, past 12 months**



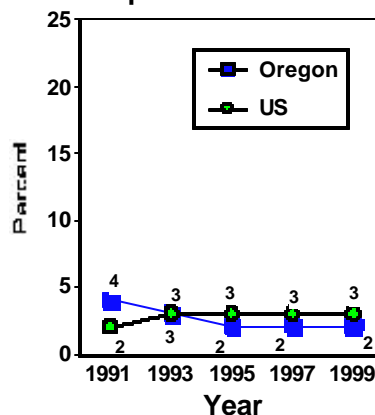
Oregon Health Division, 1999 YRBS Participants

**Q31. DATA TRENDS**

In 1998, two percent of all Oregon students participating in the Oregon 1999 YRBS survey reported a suicide attempt serious enough to be treated by a medical provider. According to survey data, Oregon's proportion of students reporting injuries due to suicide attempts severe enough to require medical attention is comparable to that reported for the rest of the nation.

Note: This graph differs from the preceding graph because the denominator is all students instead of students who had attempted suicide.

**Q31. Suicide attempt had to be treated by doctor or nurse, past 12 months**



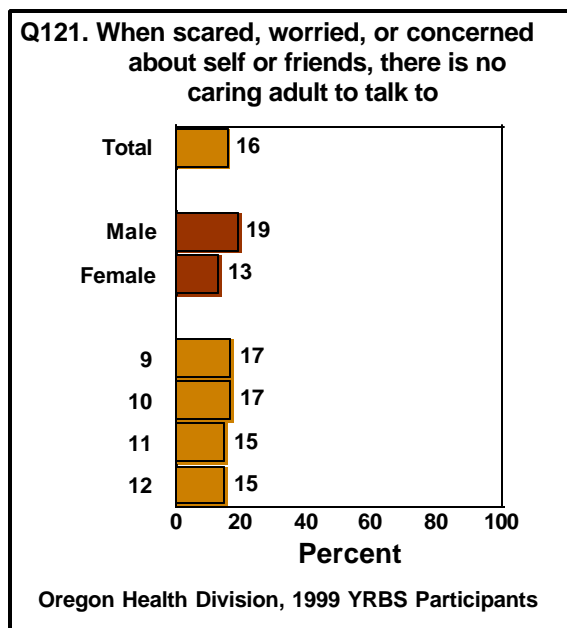
YRBS Participants  
Oregon Health Division and Centers for Disease Control

**Q121. When you are scared, worried, or concerned about yourself or your friends, is there a caring adult you can talk to?**

Sixteen percent of the Oregon 1999 YRBS participants have no caring adult with whom they could talk about concerns and fears.

More male students than female students (19 vs. 13 percent) reported not having any caring adult with whom they could talk. As grade increased, fewer students reported having access to a caring adult for support.

The 1997 YRBS survey analysis also showed 16 percent of high school teenagers did not have access to a caring adult with whom they could discuss concerns and fears.



## WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE

“I really don’t want people to know about my mental health or my suicidal tendencies.”

“I talk to people of my church and my counselor who helps me.”

“The one really unhealthy habit of mine is wanting to die. My friends know about it but not my teachers or parents. I am getting over my suicide trip with the help of my boyfriend and my best friends. They all are very supporting and caring.”

“I feel that we should have someone come talk about suicide here. It’s very important.”

“Help with suicide—like if you have a friend who wants to commit suicide. Where do you go to talk and not get them into more problems.”

“...You cannot always count on a student to tell an adult if they have problems. Sometimes it’s more useful for an adult to ask a student how they are doing. More than just knowing there’s someone to talk to when you need it, it’s nice to know that someone cares.”

“I believe there should be more than four counselors at our school, because, if I have an important problem, most of them are so busy I can’t talk to anyone.”

“We need more peer counselors and programs to stay focused on our futures. Many people have give up on school already or have young children now. Help us.”

“I believe friends have the biggest impact on teenagers and how they act, along with what history the teenagers have concerning family and religion to form morals....Counselors and people available to listen to teenagers helps coping but not forming beliefs. I think the greatest help for teens is to feel they are valued and cared about.”

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