

# Risky Teen Behaviors Have Improved, but Mental Health Has Declined

American teenagers are generally engaging in less risky behaviors than a decade ago, but are more likely to be sad, depressed, or suicidal, according to the latest Youth Behavior Surveillance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

*Data compare differences between 2007 and 2017*

## TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

Ever tried cigarette smoking	29%	↓ 21
Current cigarette use	9%	↓ 11
Ever drank alcohol	60%	↓ 15
Current alcohol use	30%	↓ 15
Ever used marijuana	36%	↓ 2
Ever used cocaine	5%	↓ 2
Ever used meth	4%	↓ 1

## SEX

Ever had sexual intercourse	40%	↓ 8
Currently sexually active	29%	↓ 6
Use condoms	54%	↓ 8

## DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR

Bullied at school	19%	↓ 1
Physical fight at school	9%	↓ 3
Carried weapon	16%	↓ 2
Rarely or never use a seat belt	6%	↓ 5

**ⓘ But 39% say they’ve texted or emailed while driving**

## MENTAL HEALTH

Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	32%	↑ 3
Seriously considered suicide	17%	↑ 2
Attempted suicide	7%	Unchanged

The report found that teens who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or were unsure of their sexual identity were at higher risk of being bullied, fearing for their safety, and feeling sad and hopeless.

“In the areas that are under their control, [teens] are making better decisions, but the things that are happening to them, both in terms of violence victimization and the mental health and suicide implications for that, are really concerning,” Kathleen Ethier, director of CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health, told BuzzFeed News. “The fact that a third of our high school students are feeling persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness is incredibly concerning.”

