

The Other Side of the Crisis: The Experience of African-American Girls

Behaviors

Physical fights

- **31.5% of students** reported being in a **fight 1 or more time** in last 12 months.
 - **33.9% of Black girls** reported being in a fight 1 or more times in the last 12 months, more than white males (36%), Latina girls (28.5%), and white girls (18.2%).
 - **Black girls report highest rate of injury** from physical fight (4.4%)
 - **48.3% of Black males** report being in a fight

Carried a Weapon

- Nationwide, **17.5% of students carried a weapon** (i.e. gun, knife, or club) on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey.
 - **Black girls report second highest rate among girls of carrying a weapon to school** (7.8%) just below Latina girls (7.9%) and above white girls (6.5%)
 - **21% of Black males** report carrying a weapon to school, **less than** white males (29.3%) and Latino males (26.5%)

Gender-Specific Violence

- Approximately **10% of students report experiencing dating violence** (i.e. being hit, slapped or hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend).
 - **Black girls report the highest rates of dating violence** (14.3%), higher than Latina girls (11.5%) and white girls (7.2%)
 - **Black girls report the highest rates of sexual violence** (i.e. forced to have sexual intercourse) (12%), slightly higher than Latina girls (11.2%) and white girls (10%)

Depression and Suicide

- Generally, reports of depression (i.e. feeling sad or hopeless) and seriously considering suicide are higher among girls (33.9%) than boys (19.1%).
 - **Black girls have the second highest rate of feeling sad or hopeless** (37.5%), slightly below Latina girls (39.7%) and higher than white girls (31.1%)
 - **Black girls have the second highest rate of seriously considering suicide** (37.5%), slightly below Latina girls (39.7%) and higher than white girls (16.1%)
 - The **prevalence of depression among black males was 17.9%** and **7.8% of black males reported seriously considering suicide.**

Sexual Activity and STDs

- **34.2% of students are currently sexually active** (i.e. sexual intercourse with at least one person within last three months).
 - **Black girls have the highest rates of reported sexual activity (45%)**, higher than white girls (35.4%) and Latina girls (34%)
 - Slightly more than **half of Black girls** report **using a condom** during last sexual intercourse (51.8%)
 - **18% of Black girls** report **using** the birth control pill or Depo-Provera as a form of **birth control during last sexual intercourse (18.2%)**
 - **Less than 6% report using both birth control and a condom** during last sexual intercourse (5.6%)
- Nationwide, **12.7% of students are tested for HIV**
 - **14.7% of girls and 10.9% of boys tested positive** for HIV
 - **Black girls have the highest prevalence rate for HIV (25.1%)**, nearly double the rate for white girls (13.2%) and higher than the rate for black males (17.6%)

Institutional Responses

*Zero-Tolerance and Middle-School Suspension***

- **Blacks are over three times more likely than Whites to be suspended**
 - **Black children experienced a 9-point increase in suspension rates**, from 6% in 1973 to 15% in 2006 while the white suspension rate grew less than 2 percentage points.
 - **The Black/White gap has grown** from 3 percentage points in the '70s to **over 10 percentage points in the 2000s.**
 - **28.3% of middle-school black boys and 18% of middle-school black girls** were suspended
- **Increase in suspensions was greatest for Black girls** (5.3 percentage points), followed by Black males (1.7 percentage points).
- **School suspension not reserved for serious or dangerous behavior: the crime does not fit the punishment**
 - Fights or physical aggression among most common reasons for suspension
 - After fighting, abusive language, attendance issues, **“disobedience and disrespect,”** and **general classroom disruption** are most common reasons used to suspend children
 - **Suspension can have negative effects** on student outcomes and learning climate (APA 2008)

Sources: *CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries June 4, 2010/Vol. 59/No. SS-5 www.cdc.gov/mmwr <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm> (last accessed 9/09/10); **
Suspended Education: Urban Middle Schools in Crisis. Authors: Daniel J. Losen, J.D, and Russel Skiba, Ph.D. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/suspended-education> Report analyzes suspension rates derived from the CRDC in middle schools within each of the following 18 urban school districts: Los Angeles, CA; Denver, CO; Hartford, CT; Miami-Dade, FL; Palm Beach, FL; Atlanta, GA; Indianapolis, IN; Des Moines, IA; Springfield, MA; Baltimore, MD; Jackson, MS; Charlotte, NC; Providence, RI; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; and Milwaukee, WI.

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