

The Survey of Risk and Protective Factors and Victoria's young people

The Victorian Government wants to understand young people better. It wants to improve young people's lives, especially for those who have problems.

To do this, the government wants to focus on **prevention**, which means tackling issues before they become problems. It also wants to help those young people who already have problems.

Research tells us that the more 'risk' factors there are in a young person's life, the more problems that person will have to deal with.

On the other hand, if a young person has some 'protective' factors in his/her life, these problems are easier to deal with.

The ideas of risk and protective factors come from research done in the United States that has looked at the things which most influence young people.

To see how these risk and protective factors apply in Victoria, 9,000 of Victoria's young people from 194 metropolitan and country schools participated in the **Survey of Risk and Protective Factors**.¹

The Survey looked at the most important areas in a young person's life: your family, your school, your community (where you live) and your friends. It then looked at what Victoria's young people told us they are doing.

We now have a large amount of important information that the Government and communities can use to help young people.

What's a risk factor?

A risk factor is something negative in a young person's environment that increases the chance of things turning into a problem or, if there already is a problem, making that problem worse.

What's a protective factor?

A protective factor is something positive in a young person's environment that helps a person to deal with problems better.

¹ Original title of the survey was Adolescent Health and Well Being Survey

What the Victorian Government plans to do for young people

The Victorian Government plans to take the information from the **Survey of Risk and Protective Factors** and look at the best ways it can be used.

Because the Survey gives us lots of information about the particular area you live in, decisions can be made for programmes and services that are best for each area.

For example, if a lot of the kids in your area feel that there is nothing to do or nowhere to go to hang out with friends, the Government and others will look at sport, recreation and leisure activities and at promoting events that young people are interested in.

Or, if kids in your area fight a lot with their parents, services that help families to get along better and that teach parents how to understand their kids better will be set up.

By looking at the things which affect your area directly, changes can be made that will directly help you.

For more information

More information about the Survey and its findings is available on the web at:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/commcare or you can find the published survey, entitled *Improving the Lives of Young Victorians: A Survey of Risk and Protective Factors in municipal libraries*.

Thank you

Around 9,000 of Victoria's young people took part in the **Survey of Risk and Protective Factors**. This survey looked at what Victoria's young people are doing, like how much you drink alcohol, whether you smoke and use drugs, if you are bullied or get into fights and other important issues like youth suicide and sex.

The Survey has told us a lot about Victoria's young people and gives us a good idea about what is really happening out there.

For those of you who participated in the Survey, we thank-you for your valuable responses.

What we have now learnt will help the Victorian Government and communities throughout Victoria make life better for young people.



STATE GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA

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Improving the Lives of Young Victorians in Our Community

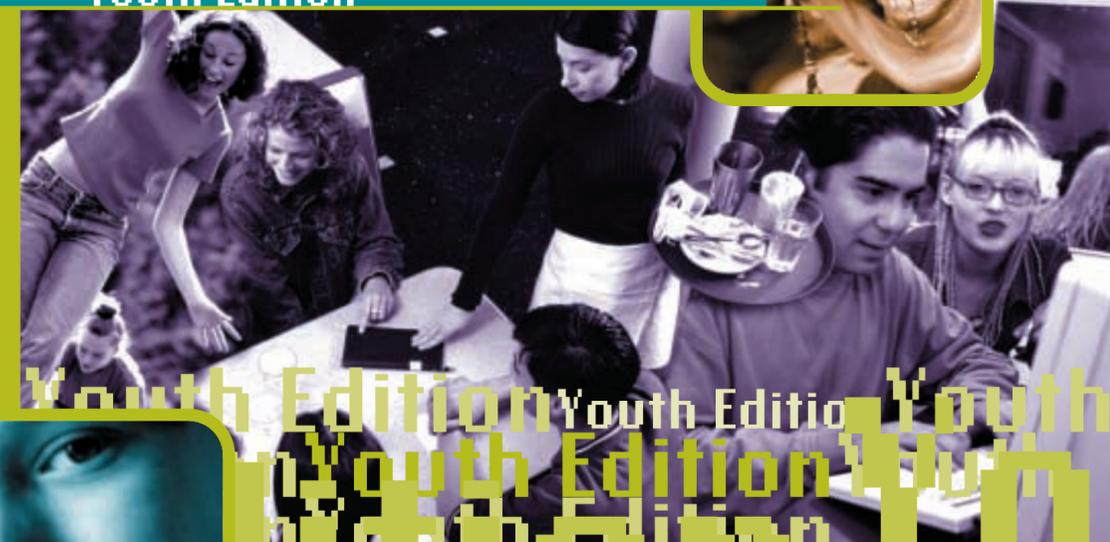
Human Services



Peoplefirst



Youth Edition



What we looked at

The Survey of Risk and Protective Factors looked at what Victoria's young people are doing and how this is influenced by risk and protective factors in young people's lives. These are listed in the following charts:

Victoria's young people and their behaviour

Problem behaviours	Substance use	Anti-Social behaviour	Mental health	Social factors
	consumption of: alcohol cigarettes marijuana solvents illicit drugs painkillers (for non-medical use)	violent behaviour theft problems with school (ie. truancy)	depressive symptoms or anxiety deliberate self-harm	risk of homelessness sexual activity having unprotected sex being bullied

Risk and Protective factors in young people's communities, schools, families and peer/individual groups

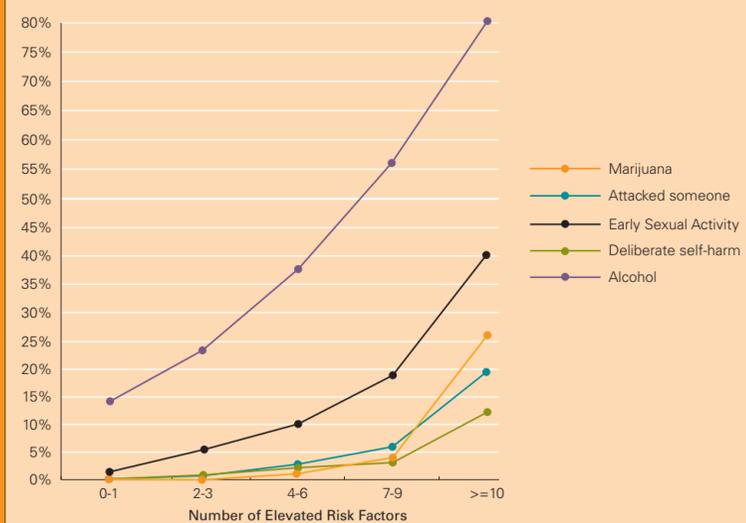
Risk factors	Community	School	Family	Peer – Individual
	Low neighbourhood attachment Community disorganisation Personal transitions & mobility Laws & norms favourable to drug use Perceived availability of drugs	Academic failure Low commitment to school	Poor family management Poor discipline Family conflict Family history of anti-social behaviour Parental attitudes favourable toward drug use Parental attitudes favourable to anti-social behaviour	Rebelliousness Early initiation of problem behaviour Impulsiveness Anti-social behaviour Favourable attitudes toward anti-social behaviour Favourable attitudes toward drug use Interaction with anti-social peers Friends use of drugs Sensation seeking Rewards for anti-social involvement
Protective factors	Community	School	Family	Peer – Individual
	Opportunities for pro-social involvement Rewards for pro-social involvement	Opportunities for pro-social involvement Rewards for pro-social involvement	Attachment Opportunities for pro-social involvement Rewards for pro-social involvement	Religiosity Social skills Belief in moral order

What we Found

The most important finding to come out of the Survey of Risk and Protective Factors is that:

There is a strong link between the number of risk and protective factors in a young person's life and the things they do and problems they face.

Link between risk factors and problem behaviours

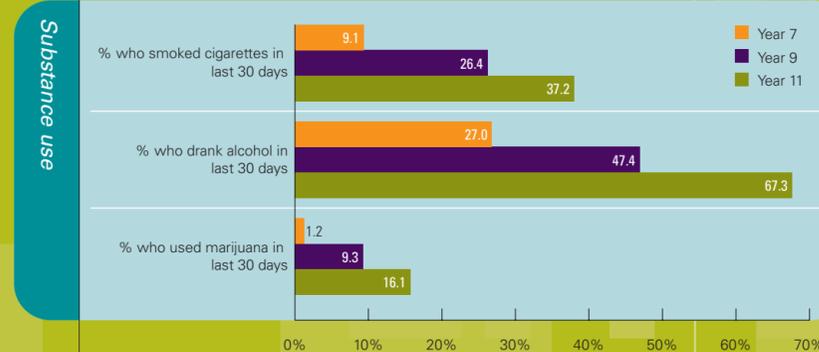


We also found that:

- Alcohol and tobacco are the most common substances used by Victoria's young people
- More of Victoria's females (26%) than males (21%) are smoking
- By the age of 16, about one third of young people have had sex
- Less than 50% of those who are sexually active use safe sex practices
- One in five young people say they have emotional problems and females are twice as likely as males to report these problems
- More females than males are at risk of homelessness
- Young people in metropolitan Melbourne have similar patterns of behaviour to young people in rural Victoria

Improving the Lives of Young Victorians in Our Communities

Young people's substance use in Victoria



Young people's anti-social behaviour in Victoria

