

Adolescents Who Feel Sad or Hopeless

Headline

In 2003, over one-quarter (29 percent) of all students in grades 9 through 12 reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for an extended period (two or more weeks in a row) in the last year. ([See Figure 1](#))

Importance

Persisting sadness and hopelessness are criteria for and predictors of clinical depression, though by themselves they are not sufficient for a diagnosis of depression.^{1,2} Youth who are depressed are at a higher risk for being depressed as adults.³ In addition, depression in youth is linked with increases in suicidal behavior,⁴ reductions in academic achievement,⁵ and deficits in social functioning.

Trends

In 2003, 29 percent of students in grades 9 through 12 reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in the previous year. This percentage did not change significantly between 1999 and 2003. ([See Figure 1](#) and [Table 1](#))

Differences by Gender

Females are more likely than males to report being sad or hopeless. In 2003, over one-third of females report having been sad or hopeless while approximately one-fifth of males report having felt the same way. ([See Figure 2](#))

Differences by Race and Ethnicity

Hispanic youth are more likely than non-Hispanic white youth and non-Hispanic black youth to report feeling sad or hopeless for extended periods of time (35 percent for Hispanics versus 26 percent for both non-Hispanic whites and blacks in 2003). ([See Figure 1](#)) Rates are highest among Hispanic female students (45 percent). ([See Figure 2](#))

State and Local Estimates

2003 estimates are available for high school students for selected states and cities from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm#tab17>

International Estimates

International estimates are available at:

<http://www.ruhbc.ed.ac.uk/hbhc/download/hbhc.pdf> (See Figure 3.1)

National Goals

Though there are no national goals specifically focused on feelings of sadness and hopelessness, *Healthy People 2010* has adopted a developmental goal to increase the proportion of children with mental health problems who receive treatment. Its designation as a “developmental” goal indicates that there are presently no adequate data sources that can be used to set baselines and track progress.

For additional information:

http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/document/HTML/Volume2/18Mental.htm#_Toc486932699 (See Goal 18-7)

Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health: A National Action Agenda lays out a number of national goals related to improving children's mental health. One goal, for example, is to improve the assessment and recognition of mental health needs in children.

For additional information:

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/cmh/childreport.htm>

Definition

Survey participants were asked to respond to the following question:
“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?”

Data Source

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*:

Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 12.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4905a1.htm#tab12>

Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 12.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab12>

Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No. SS-2): Table 16.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm#tab16>

Raw Data Source

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm>

Approximate Date of Next Update

Summer 2006

¹ Harter, S. & Whitesell, N.R. (1996). "Multiple Pathways to Self-Reported Depression and Psychological Adjustment Among Adolescents." Development and Psychopathology, 8, 761-777; Joiner, T.E. & Wagner, K.D. (1995). "Attribution Style and Depression in Children and Adolescents: A Meta-Analytic Review." Clinical Psychology Review, 15, 777-798; Young, M.A., Fogg, L.F., Scheftner, W., Fawcett, J., Akiskal, H., & Maser, J. (1996). "Stable Trait Components of Hopelessness: Baseline and Sensitivity to Depression." Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 105, 155-165.

² Surgeon General. (1999) "Children and Mental Health," Chapter 3 in Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Washington, D.C.: U.S.GPO. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/>

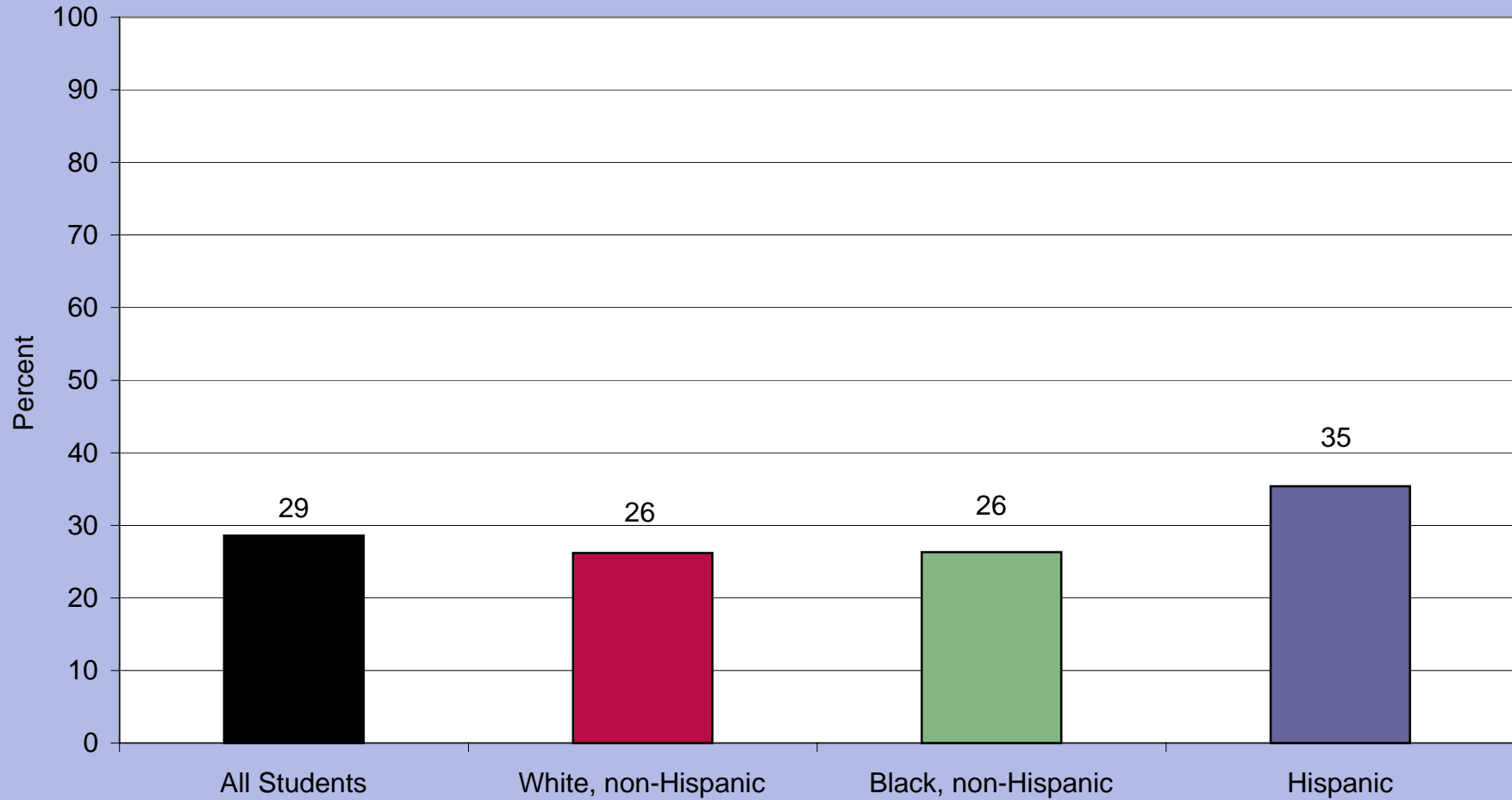
³ Bardone, A.M., Moffitt, T., Caspi, A., & Dickson, N. (1996). "Adult Mental Health and Social Outcomes of Adolescent Girls with Depression and Conduct Disorder." Development and Psychopathology, 8, 811-829; Harrington, R.C. (1996). "Adult Outcomes of Childhood and Adolescent Depression: Influences on the Risk for Adult Depression." Psychiatric Annals, 26, 320-325.

⁴ Harrington, R., Bredenkamp, D., Groothues, C., & Rutter, M. (1994). "Adult Outcomes of Childhood and Adolescent Depression: III. Links with Suicidal Behavior." Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines, 35, 1309-1319; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/chapter3/sec5.html>

⁵ Haines, M.E., Norris, M.P., & Kashy, D.A. (1996). "The Effects of Depressed Mood on Academic Performance in College Students." Journal of College Student Development, 37, 519-526.

Figure 1

Percentage of Students in Grades 9 to 12 Who Felt Sad or Hopeless,¹ by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2003

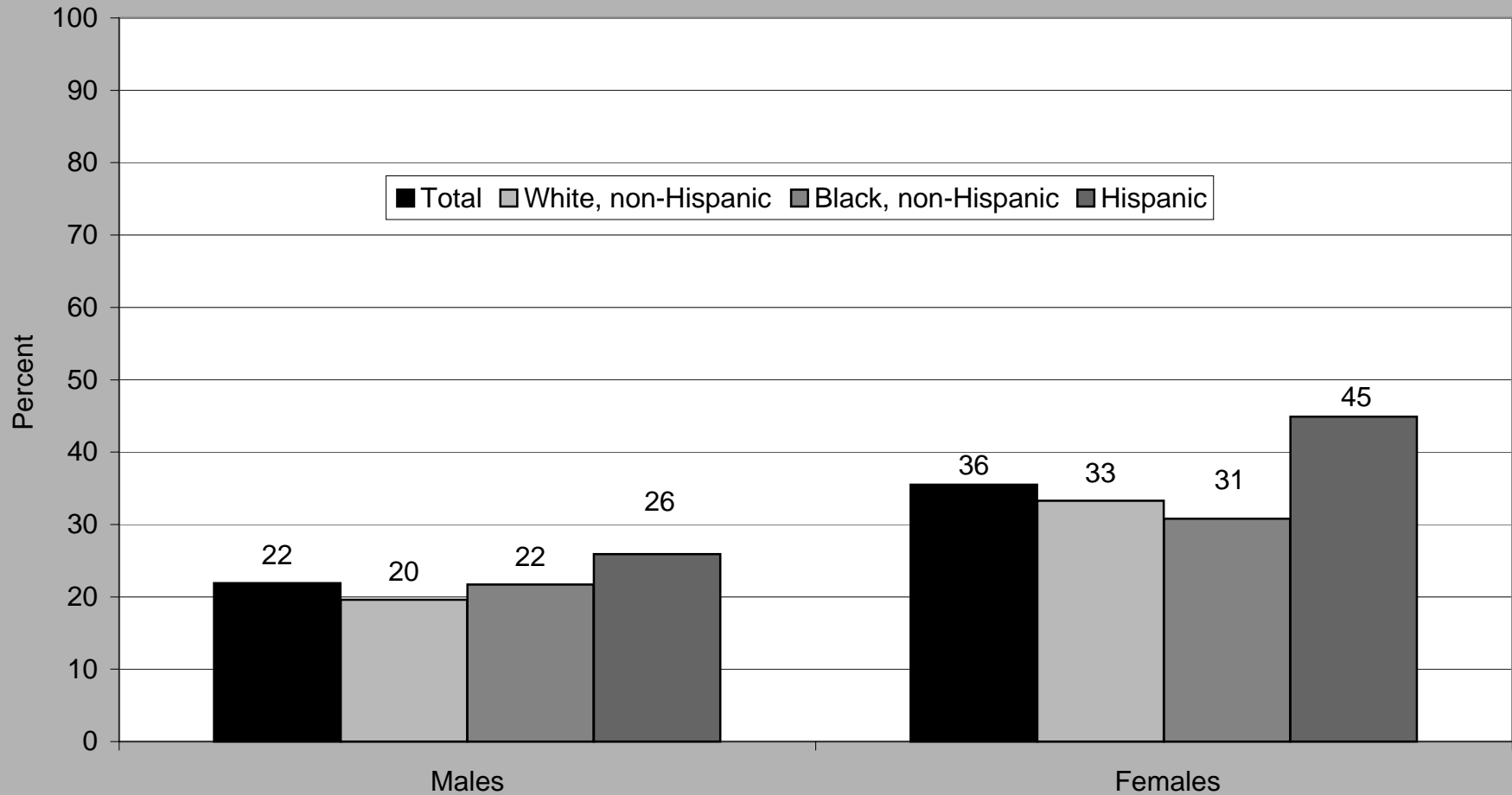


¹ Almost every day for two or more weeks in a row

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Surveillance Summaries, May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No. SS-2): Table 16.

Figure 2

Percentage of Students in Grades 9 to 12 Who Felt Sad or Hopeless,¹ by Gender, Race, and Hispanic Origin, 2003



¹ Almost every day for two or more weeks in a row

Table 1

Percentage of High School Students Who Felt Sad or Hopeless,¹
Selected Years 1999-2003

	1999	2001	2003
All Students	28.3	28.3	28.5
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	24.9	26.5	26.2
Black, non-Hispanic	28.9	28.8	26.3
Hispanic	37.0	34.0	35.4
Grade			
9	27.4	29.4	28.0
10	29.3	27.2	29.7
11	27.1	28.7	28.9
12	29.4	27.0	27.4
Male	21.0	21.6	21.9
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	19.0	20.5	19.5
Black, non-Hispanic	19.6	20.9	21.7
Hispanic	27.7	25.4	25.9
Grade			
9	20.6	22.4	21.0
10	20.1	19.7	22.7
11	19.3	23.4	22.1
12	24.6	20.5	22.0
Female	35.7	34.5	35.5
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	31.3	32.3	33.3
Black, non-Hispanic	37.7	36.3	30.3
Hispanic	46.1	42.3	44.9
Grade			
9	34.3	35.7	35.7
10	38.4	34.6	36.9
11	35.3	33.9	35.9
12	34.3	33.2	32.5

¹ Felt so sad almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Surveillance Summaries June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 12. Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 12. Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No. SS-2): Table 16.