

Adolescent and Young Adult Health in the United States in the Past Decade: Little Improvement and Young Adults Remain Worse Off Than Adolescents

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Overview

Adolescence and young adulthood are unique developmental periods that present opportunities and challenges for improving health. Health at this age can affect health throughout the lifespan. This review has two aims:

- To examine trends in key indicators in outcomes, behaviors, and health care over the past decade for U.S. adolescents and young adults
- To compare U.S. adolescents and young adults on these indicators.

Methods

- 21** Nationally representative data sources were located
- 8** Categories of variables were identified
- 53** Indicators were selected which illustrated trends in adolescent and young adult health
- 42** Indicators were selected which illustrated the current status of adolescent and young adult health

Findings: Trends

Overall Health, Function and Mortality

General measures of overall health and function changed little. Mortality trends were mixed.



Injury

Injury trends improved in some areas and were flat in others.



Violence

Violence trends were somewhat encouraging, while others changed little.



Mental Health

Mental health indicators changed little except for a decrease in unhealthy methods of weight loss.



Substance Use

Most measures of substance use changed little with the exception of decreased cigarette use in both age groups.



Sexual and Reproductive Health

Among adolescents, most trends were encouraging or flat. Young adult trends were mostly flat or unhealthy.



Chronic Conditions and Related Behaviors

Findings for chronic conditions and related behaviors included healthy, unhealthy, and flat trends for both age groups.



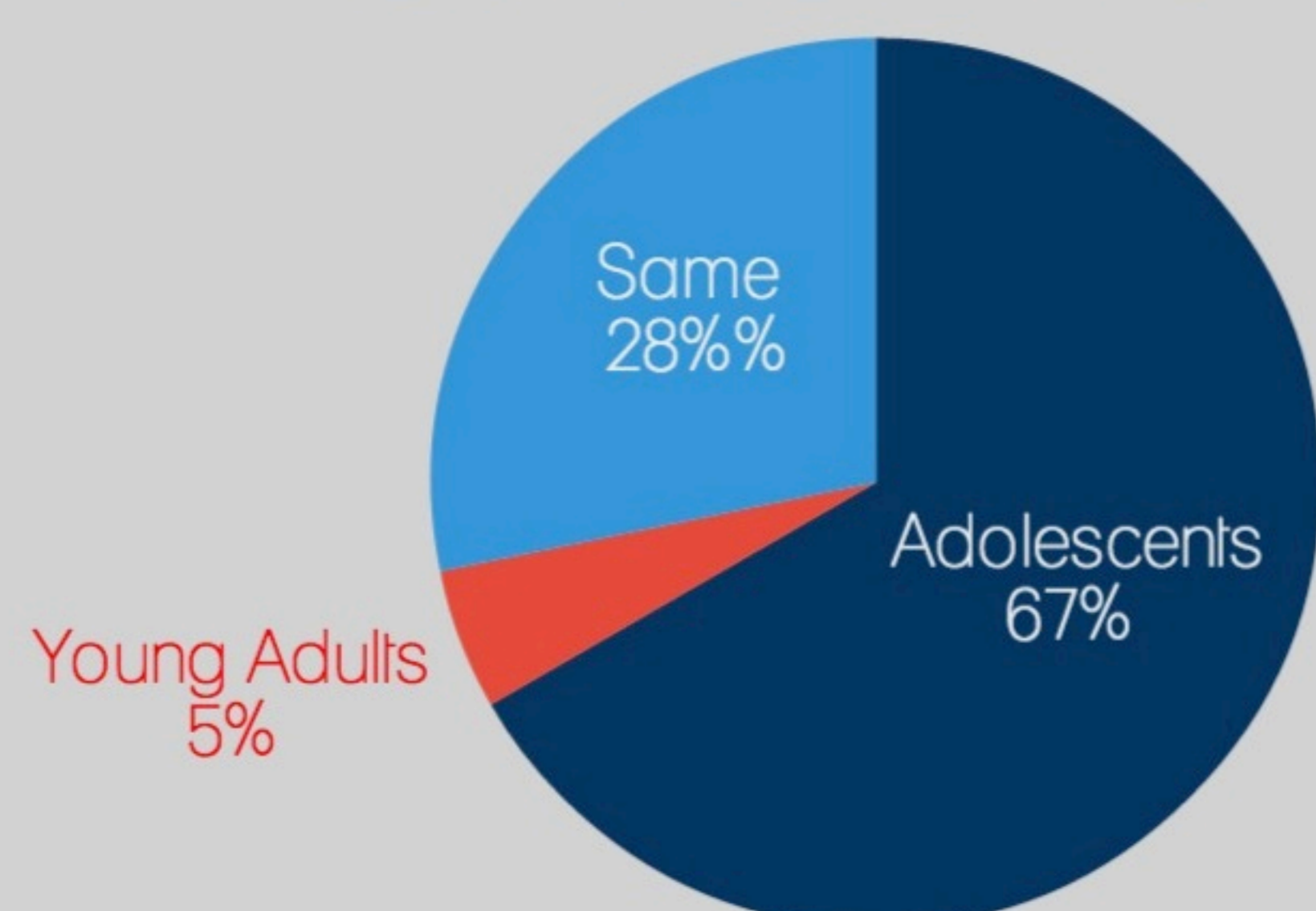
Health Care Access

Most measures in health care access and utilization changed little for both age groups with a few encouraging exceptions.



Findings: Current Status

Who Fares Better on Current Health Measures?



Implications

The finding of some encouraging trends suggests that sustained policy and societal commitment can improve health. However, the findings of mixed, flat, or discouraging trends in most areas suggest a case for strengthening research, programs, and policy to improve health for these pivotal age groups.

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