

## Highlights from the 2005 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey

The New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (NM YRRS) is a survey of risk behaviors and protective factors among New Mexico public high school students (grades 9 – 12). The survey is conducted in the fall semester of odd numbered years. The NM YRRS is part of the Youth Risk and Behavior Survey (YRBS), coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The YRBS provides results for the nation and 40 participating states. Topics covered in the NM YRRS are risk behaviors (behaviors contributing to unintentional injury, suicidal ideation, tobacco use, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, nutrition, physical activity, body weight control), and protective factors (relationships with family, school, adults in the community, peers; involvement in the community; constructive use of time; life skills). Questions about risk behaviors were developed by the CDC and were included in the national and other state surveys. Protective factor items were included only in the New Mexico survey. This report highlights risk behavior data from the survey.

The NM YRRS is the product of collaboration between the New Mexico Public Education Department and the Department of Health. Data are collected with the participation of the University of New Mexico Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

### Methodology

Each of New Mexico's 89 school districts was invited to participate in the survey. Within each participating school district, schools were selected with probability of selection proportional to the size of the school. From within each selected school, second period classes were systematically selected to participate. Each student in a selected classroom was asked to complete a questionnaire. Completed answer sheets were electronically scanned, and an electronic dataset was supplied to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC weighted the dataset for ethnicity, gender, and grade level. Data analysis of the weighted dataset was conducted by the NM DOH Epidemiology and Response Division.

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The final sample included 5,634 respondents. Respondents came from each region of the state. The response rate was 60%.

For the purpose of this report, when results are noted to be similar, this means there is no statistically significant difference between the results. When a difference is noted, this represents a statistically significant difference. Statistical significance was determined using 95% confidence intervals.

### Results

*Unintentional Injury* - Statewide, 8.4% of students had rarely or never worn a seatbelt when riding in a car driven by someone else. Boys were similar to girls in rarely or never wearing a seatbelt (10.2% and 6.4%, respectively).

During the 30 days preceding the survey, 31.5% of students had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. Riding with a drinking driver was more prevalent among Hispanics (34.2%) than among White Non-Hispanics (24.9%). The prevalence of drinking and driving within the 30 days preceding the survey was 12.0%. Male students were similar to female students in the percentage reporting drinking and driving (13.5% and 9.9%, respectively). The prevalence of drinking and driving increased with grade level (8.3% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 9.6% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders; 15.0% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders; 17.0% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders). For each of the three behaviors that contribute to unintentional injury, the New Mexico rate is similar to the national rate (Table 1).

*Feelings of Sadness and Hopelessness and Suicide Attempts* - Persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness (i.e., almost every day for >2 weeks in a row so that respondents stopped doing some usual activities) were reported by 28.7% of students. This was similar to the na-

tional prevalence of 28.5%. New Mexico girls (36.2%) were more likely to report feeling sad and hopeless than boys (21.0%).

Within the 12 months before the survey, a suicide attempt was reported by 12.5% of students. The New Mexico prevalence of attempted suicide was the third highest among the states participating in the YRBS<sup>1</sup>, and was 1.5 times the national rate of 8.4%. The prevalence of attempted suicide among girls was similar to that among boys (14.7% vs. 10.0%).

Of states participating in the YRBS, the prevalence of suicide attempts that resulted in an injury that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse was higher in New Mexico than any other state. The New Mexico prevalence was more than twice that of the national rate (5.1% vs. 2.3%). There was no significant difference between boys and girls for suicide attempts resulting in an injury. Students who report persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness were much more likely than other students to report suicide attempts (28.7% vs. 5.3%).

*Violence* - Statewide, 36.7% of students had been involved in a physical fight in the 30 days preceding the survey. While this was similar to the national prevalence of 35.9%, it was the highest among all YRBS states. The prevalence of fighting among girls (29.4%) was lower than among boys (43.4%). The prevalence of fighting was higher among Hispanics (39.9%) than among White Non-Hispanics (29.9%).

In the 30 days prior to the survey, 8.6% of respondents had skipped at least one day of school because they felt unsafe either at school or on their way to or from school. The New Mexico prevalence was the second highest among the states participating in the survey, although it was not statistically different from the national rate of 6.0%.

The lifetime prevalence of having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse was 8.4%, which was similar to the national rate of 9.0%. The prevalence of forced sexual intercourse among New Mexico girls (11.1%), was two times greater than the prevalence among boys (5.4%).

*Alcohol Use* - Current alcohol use (i.e., within the 30 days preceding the survey) was reported by 42.3% of New Mexico respondents and 43.3% of respondents nationally. The prevalence of current drinking among New Mexico girls (41.9%) was similar to that of boys (42.4%). This was a behavior that increased in prevalence with grade level (9<sup>th</sup> - 34.9%; 10<sup>th</sup> - 39.6%; 11<sup>th</sup> - 48.9%;

12<sup>th</sup> - 50.7%).

The New Mexico prevalence of binge drinking (i.e., five or more drinks in a row, or within a couple of hours, in the 30 days preceding the survey) was 28.6%, which was not statistically different from the national rate of 25.5%. New Mexico girls and boys had similar binge drinking rates (27.2% and 29.5%, respectively). As with current drinking, binge drinking was also more prevalent with increasing grade levels (9<sup>th</sup> - 22.0%; 10<sup>th</sup> - 25.9%; 11<sup>th</sup> - 33.4%; 12<sup>th</sup> - 37.2%).

Early initiation of alcohol use (i.e., drinking alcohol before the age of 13) was reported by 30.0% of New Mexico youth and 25.6% of U.S. youth. While there was not a statistically significant difference between the New Mexico and the U.S. prevalence, the New Mexico rate was the 5<sup>th</sup> highest of all the states participating in the YRBS.

*Drug Use* - Current marijuana use (i.e., within the 30 days prior to the survey) was more prevalent in New Mexico (26.2%) than in the rest of the nation (20.2%), and was higher than in any other state. Current marijuana use was more common among Hispanic students (28.0%) and American Indian students (35.5%) than among White Non-Hispanic students (19.7%).

Marijuana use before the age of 13 was reported by 20.7% of New Mexico students, more than twice the national percentage of 8.7%.

Within the 30 days prior to the survey, 7.9% of students had used cocaine. This was more than two times the national prevalence of 3.4%, and was a higher rate than that of any other YRBS state. The prevalence of current cocaine use was higher among New Mexico boys (10.2%) than girls (5.1%).

Statewide, 4.3% of students had ever injected an illegal drug, more than twice the national prevalence of 2.1%. Boys (5.5%) had a higher prevalence of having injected drugs than girls (2.9%).

In the 12 months preceding the survey, 4.6% of students used heroin. The prevalence among boys was 6.8%, more than 3 times the rate among girls (1.8%). The prevalence among American Indians was 7.4%, approximately twice the prevalence of 3.3% among White Non-Hispanics. While not directly comparable to national data, the past 12-month prevalence of heroin use among New Mexico students (4.6%) was higher than the lifetime prevalence among U.S. students (2.4%).

Methamphetamine use within the 12 months prior to the

survey was reported by 7.5% of New Mexico students. While there was not a directly comparable question in the national survey, the New Mexico 12-month prevalence of methamphetamine use was similar to that of the U.S. prevalence of lifetime methamphetamine use (6.2%).

*Cigarette Smoking* - Statewide, the prevalence of current smoking (i.e., smoking a cigarette within the 30 days preceding the survey) was 25.7% in New Mexico, which was similar to the U.S. prevalence of 23.0%. The prevalence of smoking among females (23.8%) was not statistically different from the prevalence among males (27.4%). The prevalence of current smoking increased with age (9<sup>th</sup> - 21.8%; 10<sup>th</sup> - 24.6%; 11<sup>th</sup> - 25.6%; 12<sup>th</sup> - 32.7%).

The prevalence of early initiation of smoking (i.e., having smoked a cigarette before the age of 13) was 20.0% among New Mexico students. This was not statistically different from the national percentage of 16.0%.

*Sexual Activity* - In New Mexico, 32.8% of students were currently sexually active (i.e., had sexual intercourse within 3 months of the survey). This was similar to the national prevalence of 33.9%. There was no statistically significant difference in the prevalence of being currently sexually active between New Mexico girls and boys (35.5% and 30.2%, respectively). The prevalence among Hispanics (39.5%) was higher than the prevalence among White Non-Hispanics (23.3%). As grade level increased, so did the prevalence of current sexual activity (9<sup>th</sup> - 19.1%; 10<sup>th</sup> - 29.4%; 11<sup>th</sup> - 37.8%; 12<sup>th</sup> - 52.2%).

Among the 32.8% of sexually active students, 42.7% did not use a condom the last time they engaged in sexual intercourse. There was not a statistically significant difference between the New Mexico prevalence and the national prevalence of 37.2%. Sexually active females were more likely than males to report having sex without a condom (50.5% vs. 33.2%).

*Overweight* - In New Mexico, 12.0% of students were overweight, which was similar to the 13.1% of U.S. students who were overweight. Among New Mexico boys, the prevalence of overweight was 17.3%, which was nearly three times the 6.5% of girls who were overweight. Both Hispanic students (14.0%) and American Indian students (18.5%) had a higher prevalence of overweight than White Non-Hispanic students (6.3%).

*Physical Activity* - In New Mexico, 39% of students did not meet the minimum recommended amounts of either vigorous or moderate physical activity (i.e., did not get at least 20 minutes of physical activity that made them

sweat and breathe hard on >3 of the 7 days preceding the survey and/or at least 30 minutes of physical activity that did not make them sweat and breathe hard on >5 of the 7 days preceding the survey). This was higher than the national prevalence of 31.3%, and was the third highest among YRBS states.

*Trends* - Between 2003 and 2005, a reduction in the prevalence of risk behaviors was noted for current alcohol use (from 50.7% to 42.3%), binge drinking (from 35.4% to 28.6%), past 30-day (current) methamphetamine use (from 7.3% to 4.6%), and having been offered drugs at school (from 41.2% to 33.5%) (Table 2). No statistically significant increases in risk behaviors were noted.

### **Conclusions**

While few statistically significant changes were noted in the prevalence of risk behaviors between 2003 and 2005, there were some important reductions in risk behaviors in the areas of alcohol and drug use.

At the same time, results of the 2005 NM YRRS draw attention to several areas of concern for New Mexico. New Mexico youth had extremely high rates of drug use (marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and injecting drugs) when compared to the rest of the nation. The prevalence of marijuana and heroin use were particularly high among American Indian students. The New Mexico prevalence of attempted suicide (12.5%) was higher than the national prevalence (8.4%). The prevalence of physical fighting and of skipping school because of safety concerns were among the highest of any state participating in the YRBS. New Mexico students were less likely to engage in adequate amounts of physical activity than students in the rest of the nation.

While several New Mexico risk behavior rates were similar to the rest of the nation, these behaviors nevertheless expose a large proportion of New Mexico youth to a high risk of injury, disease, and premature death. More than a quarter of New Mexico students were current cigarette smokers, close to 30% were binge drinkers, 12% drove when they had been drinking alcohol, and more than 40% of sexually active students had sex without a condom. In all of these areas, the design and implementation of effective interventions remains necessary in order to protect the future health of New Mexico's youth.

<sup>1</sup> *Source for national data and comparison to other states:* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005. Surveillance Summaries, June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006;55 (No. SS-5).

**Table 1. 2005 NM YRRS Rates for Selected Indicators compared to National Rates and State Ranking**

Indicator	New Mexico (95% CI)	National (95% CI)	New Mexico's Rate is ... *	New Mexico Rank **
Rarely or never wore a seatbelt	8.4%	10.2%	Similar	28
Rode with a drinking driver †	31.5%	28.5%	Similar	8
Drove after drinking †	12.0%	9.9%	Similar	14
Persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness	28.7%	28.5%	Similar	9
Attempted suicide (in previous 12 months)	12.5%	8.4%	Higher	3
Physical fight †	36.7%	35.9%	Similar	1
Skipped school because felt unsafe †	8.6%	6.0%	Similar	2
Ever forced to have sexual inter- course	8.4%	9.0%	Similar	16
Current alcohol use †	42.3%	43.3%	Similar	23
Binge drinking ††	28.6%	25.5%	Similar	14
Used alcohol before age 13	30.0%	25.6%	Similar	5
Current marijuana use †	26.2%	20.2%	Higher	1
Used marijuana before age 13	20.7%	8.7%	Higher	1
Current cocaine use †	7.9%	3.4%	Higher	1
Ever injected illegal drugs	4.3%	2.1%	Higher	1
Current smoker †	25.7%	23.0%	Similar	6
Smoked a cigarette before age 13	20.0%	16.0%	Similar	7
Sexually active †††	32.8%	33.9%	Similar	21
First sexual intercourse before age 13	8.3%	6.2%	Similar	7
No condom use (among youth who were sexually active) †††	42.7%	37.2%	Similar	5
Overweight ¶¶	12.0%	13.1%	Similar	20
Did not eat five servings of fruits or vegetables per day	82.2%	79.9%	Similar	18
Did not meet recommended levels of physical activity ¶¶¶	39.0%	31.3%	Higher	3

\* Denotes whether the New Mexico rate is statistically higher than or statistically similar to the national rate, based on 95% confidence intervals.

\*\* New Mexico's rank in comparison to 40 participating states (1 = highest rate; 40 = lowest rate).

† Engaged in the behavior within the 30 days preceding the survey.

†† Five or more drinks in a row, or within a couple of hours, in the 30 days preceding the survey.

††† Had sexual intercourse within the 30 days preceding the survey.

¶ Greater than the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex, based on reference data.

¶¶ Participated in at least 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity (i.e., physical activity that made them sweat and breathe hard) on >3 of the 7 days preceding the survey and/or at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (i.e., physical activity that did not make them sweat and breathe hard) on >5 of the 7 days preceding the survey.

**Table 2. Comparison of 2003 and 2005 NM YRRS Rates for Selected Indicators**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>
Rarely or never wore a seatbelt	11.5%	8.4%
Persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness	31.9%	28.7%
Attempted suicide (in previous 12 months)	14.5%	12.5%
Physical fight	38.9%	36.7%
Skipped school because felt unsafe	8.2%	8.6%
Overweight	10.2%	12.0%
Did not eat five servings of fruits or vegetables per day	82.6%	82.2%
No physical activity	11.0%	12.1%
Did not meet recommended levels of physical activity	39.4%	39.0%
Sexually active	32.6%	32.8%
Smoked a cigarette before age 13	24.7%	20.0%
Current smoker	30.2%	25.7%
Current alcohol use *	50.7%	42.3%
Binge drinking *	35.4%	28.6%
Used alcohol before age 13	35.8%	30.0%
Offered drugs at school (in previous 12 months) *	41.2%	33.5%
Current inhalant use	6.8%	7.5%
Used marijuana before age 13	21.1%	20.7%
Current marijuana use	29.0%	26.2%
Current cocaine use	8.9%	7.9%
Ecstasy use in previous 12 months	7.8%	6.4%
Methamphetamine use in previous 12 months	8.2%	7.5%
Current methamphetamine use *	7.3%	4.6%
Heroin use in past 12 months	5.2%	4.6%
Ever injected illegal drugs	3.7%	4.3%

\* Denotes statistically significant decrease from 2003 to 2005 (year comparisons in which 95% confidence intervals do not overlap)

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## Selected Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Behaviors Grades 9 - 12, New Mexico and United States, 2005

