

2007

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

High School Students



SPECIAL REPORT: Racial and Ethnic Disparities

A collaborative report supported by:
Charlotte Mecklenburg School System

and

Mecklenburg County Health Department
Epidemiology Program

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Racial/Ethnic Disparities Among Charlotte-Mecklenburg Teens



MECKLENBURG COUNTY

WHAT ARE HEALTH DISPARITIES?

Health disparities are differences in health status or risk behaviors. These differences may occur by gender, race and ethnicity, education level, income level, disability, and/or geographic location.

THE CAUSES OF HEALTH DISPARITIES

There is no single reason why health disparities exist. The health of an individual or population is influenced by many factors. While health disparities are readily demonstrated through data, the causes and means of prevention are not well understood. Research suggests that the most powerful factors shaping both health and health disparities are social and economic determinants.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HEALTH STATUS OR RISK TAKING BEHAVIORS

- Income and Social Status
- Education
- Individual biology and behavior
- Physical Environment
- Gender
- Health policies and Interventions
- Social Support Network
- Access to quality health care

Source: World Health Organization (WHO): Determinants of Health

UNDERSTANDING THE REPORT

This fact sheet compares health risk factors among local high-school students of different racial and ethnic groups as reported in the 2005 and 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Racial and ethnic groups included in the report are: African American (non-Hispanic), White (non-Hispanic) and Hispanic/Latino. Data on other racial/ethnic groups were unavailable due to small sample sizes.

Disparities are measured through the use of a disparity ratio. This ratio is calculated by dividing the rate of racial/ethnic groups with the least favorable reports by the group with the most favorable report.

For example, Hispanic/Latino and African-American teens were more likely to report watching three or more hours per day of TV compared to White teens. Since White teens have the more favorable rate, they are considered the reference group. It should be noted that having a more favorable rate does not imply that no further improvement is called for.

HOW ARE DISPARITIES MEASURED?

The disparity ratio is calculated as such:

$$\frac{\text{Reports among Comparison Group}}{\text{Reports among Reference Group}} =$$

Hispanic/Latino Reports of TV Watching (28.6%)

White Reports of TV Watching (20.5%)

$$28.6\% / 20.5\% = 1.4$$

This ratio indicates that the Hispanic/Latino teens were 1.4 times more likely to watch three or more hours of TV per day in comparison to White teens.

A ratio of 1.0 indicates no disparity between the groups.



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ASSETS

In 2007 the Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS included several new questions to measure developmental assets of children and youth. Developmental assets are the experiences and opportunities that all young people need to grow into healthy, responsible adults. These assets include both external experiences which provide young people with support, empowerment and boundaries and the internal values, strengths and commitments that they need in order to thrive.

Research show that youth with a large number of developmental assets have a more positive and successful development. The fewer the number of assets present, the greater the possibility youth will engage in risky behaviors such as drug use, unsafe sex, and violence.

The following table provides a summary of selected questions with the largest racial and ethnic disparities with regards to assets. Additional data on Developmental Asset can be found in the detailed 2007 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS report.

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- In comparison to their White peers, Hispanic/Latino teens were 2.5 times more likely to report that their parents never or rarely asked where they were going or with whom they will be.
- Hispanic/Latino and African American teens were 2 times more likely to report that their parents never or rarely talked with them about what they were doing in school.

Assest for Healthy Youth Development	2005		2007	
	Results	Ratio to Whites	Results	Ratio to Whites
Parents or other adults in their family never or rarely ask where they are going or with whom they will be				
All	N/A	N/A	10.7%	
White	N/A	N/A	6.7%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	13.0%	1.9
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	16.6%	2.5
Parents or other adults in their family never or rarely talk with them about what they are doing in school				
All	N/A	N/A	15.5%	
White	N/A	N/A	9.8%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	18.2%	1.9
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	20.6%	2.1
Received grades of mostly D's and F's in school during the past 12 months				
All	10.4%		6.6%	
White	5.9%	1.0	4.6%	1.0
African-American	14.6%	2.5	7.0%	1.5
Hispanic/Latino	11.5%	1.9	13.8%	3.0

*White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.



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BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The National Association of School Psychologist estimates that 15% to 30% of students nationwide are either bullies or victims. Bullying is often defined as the repeated and targeted harassment and attacks on others perpetrated by individuals or groups. It encompasses a wide spectrum of aggressive behaviors, including: physical violence, verbal taunts, name-calling and putdowns, threats and intimidation, extortion or stealing of money and possessions and/or exclusion from peer groups. Current research links bullying among high school and middle school students with other troubling issues such as: suicide, substance abuse, increased absenteeism, and academic failure.

Between 15% to 30% of students nationwide are either bullies or victims.

**National Association of School Psychologist: "Bullying Prevention and Intervention"
Available online at:
www.nasponline.org*

In Mecklenburg County 21.2% of teens reported being teased because of their weight, size or physical appearance in the last month (2007 YRBS results). The following table provides a summary of selected questions with the largest racial and ethnic disparities with regards to bullying/harassment. Additional data can be found in the detailed 2007 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS report.

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- Between 2005 and 2007 overall reports of teasing and name calling because of physical appearance increased slightly, from 20.6% to 21.2%. African American teens were most likely to report being teased because of their weight, size or physical appearance in the past 30 days.
- Reports of bullying/harassment due to race or ethnicity were similar for both African American and White teens (11.4% and 11% respectively).
- In comparison to Whites, Hispanic/Latino teens were 3 times more likely to report having being the victim of teasing because of their race or ethnicity during the past 30 days.

Bullying and Harassment	2005		2007	
	Results	Ratio to Whites	Results	Ratio to Whites
Have been the victim of teasing or name calling because of their weight, size, or physical appearance during the past 30 days				
All	20.6%		21.2%	
White	16.2%	1.0	18.7%	1.0
African-American	24.3%	1.5	25.2%	1.3
Hispanic/Latino	17.0%	1.0	15.4%	1.5
Have been the victim of teasing or name calling because of their race or ethnic background during the past 30 days				
All	N/A	N/A	13.7%	
White	N/A	N/A	11.0%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	11.4%	1
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	33.7%	3.1

**White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.
N/A: Question was not included in survey during this year.*



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Racial/Ethnic Disparities Among Charlotte-Mecklenburg Teens

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Adolescents today face tremendous life pressures that put them at increased risk for mental illness and self-destructive behaviors. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that one in ten children in the United States suffer from a mental disorder severe enough to cause some level of impairment. Teens without proper support networks often have an inability to cope with stress placing them at increase risk for suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 . However, completed suicides are only part of the picture. The National Association of School Psychologists estimates that for every youth who dies by suicide, 100–200 youth attempt it.

During 2007, nearly 13% of teens in Mecklenburg County reported actually attempting suicide.

**Source: 2007 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS, "attempts of suicide one or more times in the past 12 months."*

In 2007 nearly 13% of Mecklenburg teens reported actually attempting suicide one or more times in the past twelve months. This was a slight increase over the 12.1% of teens who reported suicide attempts in the 2005 survey. The following table provides a summary of racial and ethnic disparities with regards to suicide attempts. Additional data on suicide, mental health and other psychological health issues can be found in the detailed 2007 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS report.

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- Reports of suicide attempts in the past 12 months were similar for African American and White teens in both the 2005 and 2007 survey.
- However, suicide attempts among Hispanic/Latino teens increased from 14.8% in 2005 to 17.5% in 2007. Hispanic/Latino teens were 1.5 times more likely to report attempting suicide than White teens.

Psychological Health	2005		2007	
	Results	Ratio to Whites	Results	Ratio to Whites
Actually attempted suicide one or more times in the past 12 months				
All	12.1%		12.7%	
White	11.4%	1.0	11.6%	1.0
African-American	11.5%	1.0	11.6%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	14.8%	1.3	17.5%	1.5

**White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.*



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PERSONAL SAFETY

Overall reports of fighting and carrying weapons among Mecklenburg teens have declined. Fighting on school property decreased from 10.4% in 2005 to 8.8% in 2007. Reports of carrying a weapon on school property decreased from 4.9% in 2005 to 4% in 2007.

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- The proportion of White and African American teens carrying weapons on school property was similar in 2005, 4.4% and 4.6% respectively. In 2007, however, African American teens were nearly twice as likely to report carrying a weapon.
- In 2007, Hispanic/Latino teens were 5 times more likely to report being a member of gang in comparison to White teens.

Reports of fighting and carrying weapons on school property among Mecklenburg teens have decreased.

**Data from the 2005 and 2007 YRBS and includes all participants regardless of race or ethnicity.*

Personal Safety	2005 Results	Ratio to Whites	2007 Results	Ratio to Whites
Carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, club on school property on one or more days in the past 30 days				
All	4.9%		4.0%	
White	4.4%	1.0	2.9%	1.0
African-American	4.6%	1.0	5.2%	1.8
Hispanic/Latino	6.5%	1.5	3.6%	1.1
Carried a gun on school property on one or more of the past 30 days				
All	N/A	N/A	2.6%	
White	N/A	N/A	1.2%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	3.0%	2.5
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	4.9%	4.1
Was in a physical fight one or more times in the past 12 months				
All	31.0%		29.6%	
White	25.0%	1.0	23.8%	1.0
African-American	36.0%	1.4	33.1%	1.4
Hispanic/Latino	32.0%	1.3	32.9%	1.4
Was in a physical fight on school property one or more times in the past 12 months				
All	10.4%		8.8%	
White	7.2%	1.0	5.3%	1.0
African-American	12.9%	1.8	9.6%	1.8
Hispanic/Latino	12.2%	1.7	16.4%	3.1
Have been a member of a gang during the past 12 months				
All	N/A	N/A	9.5%	
White	N/A	N/A	4.0%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	11.8%	3.0
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	19.9%	5.0

**White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.
N/A: Question was not included in survey during this year.*



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SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Overall reports of substance abuse declined between 2005 and 2007. With a few exceptions, declines were seen for all racial/ethnic groups. In general, African-American teens were least likely to report behaviors linked with substance abuse.

Overall reports of substance abuse declined between 2005 and 2007.

**Data from the 2005 and 2007 YRBS and includes all participants regardless of race or ethnicity.*

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- In 2007, White teens were 9 times more likely to report smoking a cigarette on 20 or more days in the past month in comparison to African American teens.
- White teens were 5 times more likely and Hispanic/Latino teens were 4 times more likely to report binge drinking in comparison to African Americans.

Substance Abuse	2005 Results	Ratio to African-Americans	2007 Results	Ratio to African-Americans
Smoked cigarettes on one or more days in the past 30 days				
All	19.7%		15.3%	
White	26.6%	2.1	23.8%	3.1
African-American	12.6%	1.0	7.8%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	20.6%	1.6	15.9%	2.0
Smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days in the past 30 days				
All	7.2%		5.8%	
White	11.6%	3.6	11.1%	9.3
African-American	3.2%	1.0	1.2%	1
Hispanic/Latino	5.9%	1.8	5.4%	4.5
Had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days in the past 30 days				
All	39.0%		33.8%	
White	50.9%	1.8	43.5%	1.7
African-American	28.5%	1.0	26.1%	1
Hispanic/Latino	34.8%	1.2	35.4%	1.4
Had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours, on one or more days in the past 30 days (Binge Drinking)				
All	19.6%		15.8%	
White	31.8%	4.1	26.7%	5.0
African-American	7.8%	1.0	5.3%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	19.3%	4.0	21.3%	4.0
Used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase one or more times				
All	6.8%		7.4%	
White	9.6%	2.9	10.6%	3.4
African-American	3.3%	1.0	3.1%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	2.5	11.6%	3.7

**White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.*



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SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Sexual intercourse that is unprotected and multiple sex partners place adolescents at risk for HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and pregnancy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 12 million Americans, 3 million of whom are teenagers, are infected with STDs each year. The proportion of Mecklenburg teens reporting ever having sexual intercourse has declined from 50.9% in 2005 to 47.3% in 2007. However, response rates vary by race and ethnicity.

The proportion of Mecklenburg teens reporting ever having sex has declined over time.

**Data from the 2005 and 2007 YRBS and includes all participants regardless of race or ethnicity.*

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- The proportion of African American teens reporting ever had sex decreased from 66% in 2005 to 56% in 2007. Despite this decline African American teens remain 1.6 times more likely to have had sex in comparison to Whites (based upon 2007 YRBS results).
- In 2007, Hispanic/Latino and African American teens were approximately 5 times more likely to have had sex before age 13 years in comparison to White teens.

Sexual Behavior	2005		2007	
	Results	Ratio to Whites	Results	Ratio to Whites
Ever had sexual intercourse				
All	50.9%		47.3%	
White	38.4%	1.0	34.9%	1.0
African-American	66.0%	1.7	56.3%	1.6
Hispanic/Latino	45.8%	1.2	59.2%	1.7
Had sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13 years				
All	10.6%		9.0%	
White	2.5%	1.0	2.7%	1.0
African-American	19.2%	7.7	14.1%	5.2
Hispanic/Latino	11.2%	4.5	12.7%	4.7
Had sexual intercourse with four or more people during their life				
All	19.5%		15.7%	
White	9.6%	1.0	8.3%	1.0
African-American	30.7%	3.2	20.4%	2.5
Hispanic/Latino	15.4%	1.6	20.4%	2.5
Had sexual intercourse with one or more people in the past three months				
All	37.4%		32.7%	
White	27.1%	1.0	24.6%	1.0
African-American	50.6%	1.9	37.6%	1.5
Hispanic/Latino	29.4%	1.1	41.2%	1.7

* White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.



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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity in childhood and adolescence improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem, and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Positive experiences with physical activity at a young age helps lay the basis for being regularly active throughout life.

Reports of being physically active for a total of 60 minutes or more per day on five or more of the past seven days increased among Charlotte-Mecklenburg teens from 39% in 2005 to 43% in 2007.

The following table provides a summary of selected questions with the largest racial and ethnic disparities with regards to physical inactivity.

Additional data on physical activity can be found in the detailed 2007 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS report.

Overall reports of Physically Activity* in Mecklenburg teens have increased over time.

**Physical activity for 60 minutes or more on five or more a days in the past seven days.*

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- In general, between 2005 and 2007 Mecklenburg teens reported declines in watching TV for three or more hours per day. However racial/ethnic disparity existed.
- African American teens were 2.7 times more likely and Hispanic/Latino teens were 1.8 times more likely to report watching TV for three or more hours per day on an average school day.

Physical Inactivity	2005		2007	
	Results	Ratio to Whites	Results	Ratio to Whites
Watched three or more hours per day of TV on an average school day				
All	40.6%		37.2%	
White	20.6%	1.0	20.5%	1.0
African-American	60.3%	2.9	55.4%	2.7
Hispanic/Latino	41.1%	2.0	28.6%	1.8
Watched three or more hours of TV on an average weekend day				
All	51.9%		49.5%	
White	38.3%	1.0	35.8%	1.0
African-American	64.7%	1.7	64.1%	1.8
Hispanic/Latino	55.4%	1.4	45.6%	1.3

* White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.



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WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AND NUTRITION

Obesity among young people has more than tripled since 1980. Obesity presents numerous problems for children and youth including, but not limited to: increasing the risk of coronary heart disease, increasing stress on the weight-bearing joints, lowering self-esteem, and negatively affecting relationships with peers. Childhood obesity has multiple causes and most likely results from an interaction of nutritional, psychological, familial, and physiological factors. Reports of overweight among Mecklenburg teens decreased from 10.6% in 2005 to 9.8% in 2007. Responses varied by race and ethnicity.

Nearly 10% of Mecklenburg teens reported being overweight.

**Data from the 2007 YRBS and includes all participants regardless of race or ethnicity.*

Racial/Ethnic Disparity Highlights

- While reports of overweight was documented for all racial/ethnic groups, African American and Hispanic/Latino teens were about 2 times more likely to be overweight in comparison to Whites.
- Hispanic/Latino and African American teens were more likely to report buying food or drinks from vending machines that were Whites. Vending machines are often filled with candy, cookies, chips, soft drinks and other sugary beverages, and very few fruits or healthy snacks
- In comparison to White teens, Hispanic/Latino teens were more than 3 times as likely to report being hungry most or all of the time because there was not enough food in their home during the past 30 days.

Weight Management and Nutrition	2005		2007	
	Results	Ratio to Whites	Results	Ratio to Whites
Are overweight (at or above the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex)				
All	10.6%		9.8%	
White	5.5%	1.0	5.8%	1.0
African-American	15.6%	2.8	13.2%	2.3
Hispanic/Latino	11.6%	2.1	11.6%	2.0
Bought food and/or drinks from vending machines at school one or more times during the past seven days				
All	50.0%		40.7%	
White	37.8%	1.0	27.0%	1.0
African-American	61.6%	1.6	50.3%	1.9
Hispanic/Latino	57.0%	1.5	55.1%	2
Most of the time or always went hungry because there was not enough food in their home during the past 30 days				
All	N/A	N/A	3.0%	
White	N/A	N/A	1.9%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	3.2%	1.7
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	6.4%	3.4

**White and African American teens were Non-Hispanic.
N/A: Question was not included in survey during this year.*