

2009 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*

Charlotte- Mecklenburg High School Students Racial and Ethnic Disparities Report



A special report assessing health disparities among
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Teens

A collaborative report supported by:
Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
and
Mecklenburg County Health Department
Epidemiology Program



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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.

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, 2007 and 2009 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.

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*

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 for Healthy Youth Development

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.

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2007 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2009 Percentage	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%		11.8%	
White	N/A	N/A	6.7%	1.0	7.9%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	13.0%	1.9	12.7%	1.6
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	16.6%	2.5	16.0%	2.0
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%		N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	9.8%	1.0	N/A	N/A
African-American	N/A	N/A	18.2%	1.9	N/A	N/A
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	20.6%	2.1	N/A	N/A
Are alone after school without a parent or trusted adult three or more hours per day on an average school day						
All	N/A	N/A	33.1%		32.7%	
White	N/A	N/A	29.2%	1.0	32.6%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	38.5%	1.3	34.7%	1.1
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	28.8%	1.0	26.3%	0.8
Agree or strongly agree that in their community they feel like they matter to people						
All	N/A	N/A	46.1%		41.8%	
White	N/A	N/A	52.4%	1.0	52.8%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	44.1%	0.8	37.0%	0.7
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	34.8%	0.7	28.4%	0.5

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



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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 27% of high school students reported being teased because of their weight, size or physical appearance in the past month (2009 YRBS results). The following table provides a summary of selected questions with the largest racial and ethnic disparities with regards to bullying/harassment.

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to African- Americans	2007 Percentage	Ratio to African- Americans	2009 Percentage	Ratio to African- Americans
Have been harassed or bullied on school property on or more times during the past 12 months						
All	21.2%		19.9%		16.4%	
White	22.8%	1.2	24.0%	1.6	20.5%	1.7
African-American	19.2%	1.0	15.1%	1.0	12.2%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	20.0%	1.0	25.7%	1.7	19.2%	1.6
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%		17.9%	
White	N/A	N/A	11.0%	1.0	13.0%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	11.4%	1.0	13.7%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	33.7%	3.0	38.6%	2.8
Have ever been electronically bullied						
All	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.9%	
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.9%	1.9
African-American	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.4%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.1%	1.3

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



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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 2009, nearly 14% of teens in Mecklenburg County reported actually attempting suicide.

**Source: 2009 Charlotte-Mecklenburg YRBS, "attempts of suicide one or more times in the past 12 months."*

In 2009 nearly 14% of Mecklenburg teens reported actually attempting suicide one or more times in the past twelve months. This was a slight increase over the 13% of teens who reported suicide attempts in the 2007 survey. The following table provides a summary of racial and ethnic disparities with regards to suicide attempts.

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2007 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2009 Percentage	Ratio to Whites
Felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities in the past 12 months						
All	27.0%		27.6%		28.2%	
White	25.6%	1.0	24.9%	1.0	23.1%	1.0
African-American	27.4%	1.1	29.0%	1.2	30.4%	1.3
Hispanic/Latino	28.2%	1.1	29.5%	1.2	30.8%	1.3
Actually attempted suicide one or more times in the past 12 months						
All	12.1%		12.7%		13.5%	
White	11.4%	1.0	11.6%	1.0	11.2%	1.0
African-American	11.5%	1.0	11.6%	1.0	14.0%	1.3
Hispanic/Latino	14.8%	1.3	17.5%	1.5	15.3%	1.4

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



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PERSONAL SAFETY

Overall reports of fighting and carrying weapons among Mecklenburg high school students have remained stable between 2007 and 2009 (4%). Teens reporting being a member of gang in the past month decreased from 10% in 2007 to 6% in 2009.

However, gang activity continues to pose challenges and obstacles for Charlotte-Mecklenburg teens. 59% of Charlotte-Mecklenburg teens reported being aware of some sort of gang activity in their schools.

Reports of being a member of gang among Mecklenburg teens have decreased.

**Data from the 2007 and 2009 YRBS and includes all participants regardless of race or ethnicity.*

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2007 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2009 Percentage	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%		3.5%	
White	4.4%	1.0	2.9%	1.0	3.9%	1.0
African-American	4.6%	1.0	5.2%	1.8	1.9%	0.5
Hispanic/Latino	6.5%	1.5	3.6%	1.1	6.5%	1.7
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school one or more times in the past 30 days						
All	7.4%		5.4%		5.0%	
White	5.7%	1.0	2.5%	1.0	2.5%	1.0
African-American	7.3%	1.3	5.9%	2.4	4.5%	1.8
Hispanic/Latino	14.6%	2.6	9.2%	3.7	11.5%	4.6
Have been a member of a gang during the past 12 months						
All	N/A	N/A	9.5%		6.1%	
White	N/A	N/A	4.0%	1.0	2.9%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	11.8%	3.0	8.2%	2.8
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	19.9%	5.0	6.7%	2.3
Whose school is gang activity						
All	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	58.6%	
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	51.6%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	66.0%	1.3
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	54.5%	1.1

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



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High School Students*

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In generally overall reports of substance abuse declined between 2005 and 2009. 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.

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to African- Americans	2007 Percentage	Ratio to African- Americans	2009 Percentage	Ratio to African- Americans
Smoked cigarettes on one or more days in the past 30 days						
All	19.7%		15.3%		13.0%	
White	26.6%	2.1	23.8%	3.1	18.6%	2.7
African-American	12.6%	1.0	7.8%	1.0	7.0%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	20.6%	1.6	15.9%	2.0	16.6%	2.4
Smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days in the past 30 days						
All	7.2%		5.8%		4.2%	
White	11.6%	3.6	11.1%	9.3	6.2%	2.4
African-American	3.2%	1.0	1.2%	1.0	2.6%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	5.9%	1.8	5.4%	4.5	3.5%	1.3
Had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days in the past 30 days						
All	39.0%		33.8%		33.4%	
White	50.9%	1.8	43.5%	1.7	41.2%	1.6
African-American	28.5%	1.0	26.1%	1.0	26.5%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	34.8%	1.2	35.4%	1.4	36.6%	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						
All	19.6%		15.8%		14.3%	
White	31.8%	4.1	26.7%	5.0	22.2%	3.4
African-American	7.8%	1.0	5.3%	1.0	6.6%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	19.3%	4.0	21.3%	4.0	17.9%	2.7
Used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase one or more times						
All	6.8%		7.4%		3.9%	
White	9.6%	2.9	10.6%	3.4	4.5%	3.0
African-American	3.3%	1.0	3.1%	1.0	1.5%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	2.5	11.6%	3.7	9.3%	6.2
Sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high one or more times during their life						
All	9.7%		11.7%		10.8%	
White	13.8%	2.8	13.1%	1.5	11.5%	1.3
African-American	5.0%	1.0	8.9%	1.0	8.9%	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	8.7%	1.7	14.7%	1.7	13.9%	1.6

**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 having sexual intercourse before age 13 years has declined from 10.6% in 2005 to 7.6% in 2009. However, response rates vary by race and ethnicity.

The proportion of Mecklenburg teens having sex before age 13 has declined over time.

**Data from the 2005, 2007 and 2009 YRBS.*

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2007 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2009 Percentage	Ratio to Whites
Ever had sexual intercourse						
All	50.9%		47.3%		49.6%	
White	38.4%	1.0	34.9%	1.0	35.4%	1.0
African-American	66.0%	1.7	56.3%	1.6	59.9%	1.7
Hispanic/Latino	45.8%	1.2	59.2%	1.7	50.2%	1.4
Had sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13 years						
All	10.6%		9.0%		7.6%	
White	2.5%	1.0	2.7%	1.0	2.2%	1.0
African-American	19.2%	7.7	14.1%	5.2	11.7%	5.3
Hispanic/Latino	11.2%	4.5	12.7%	4.7	6.6%	3.0
Had sexual intercourse with four or more people during their life						
All	19.5%		15.7%		16.6%	
White	9.6%	1.0	8.3%	1.0	8.7%	1.0
African-American	30.7%	3.2	20.4%	2.5	23.5%	2.7
Hispanic/Latino	15.4%	1.6	20.4%	2.5	14.7%	1.7
Had sexual intercourse with one or more people in the past three months						
All	37.4%		32.7%		35.1%	
White	27.1%	1.0	24.6%	1.0	26.6%	1.0
African-American	50.6%	1.9	37.6%	1.5	40.4%	1.5
Hispanic/Latino	29.4%	1.1	41.2%	1.7	34.8%	1.3

** 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.

Overall reports of physical activity (being 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 2009.

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

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

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

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2007 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2009 Percentage	Ratio to Whites
Watched three or more hours per day of TV on an average school day						
All	40.6%		37.2%		42.4%	
White	20.6%	1.0	20.5%	1.0	23.5%	1.0
African-American	60.3%	2.9	55.4%	2.7	60.2%	2.6
Hispanic/Latino	41.1%	2.0	28.6%	1.4	37.5%	1.6
Spend three or more hours per day playing video games or using a computer for something that is not school work on an average day						
All	20.8%		20.2%		26.1%	
White	20.1%	1.0	19.0%	1.0	19.3%	1.0
African-American	20.4%	1.0	21.4%	1.1	29.0%	1.5
Hispanic/Latino	22.1%	1.1	20.0%	1.1	34.1%	1.8

* 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.

In 2009, nearly 17% of high school students in Mecklenburg reported being overweight and 12% were obese. Responses varied by race and ethnicity.

Nearly 17% of Mecklenburg teens reported being overweight.

**Data from the 2009 YRBS and includes all participants regardless of race or ethnicity.*

	2005 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2007 Percentage	Ratio to Whites	2009 Percentage	Ratio to Whites
Are overweight (at or above the 85th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex)						
All	14.6%		16.5%		16.5%	
White	10.2%	1.0	13.2%	1.0	12.5%	1.0
African-American	20.3%	2.0	19.0%	1.4	19.1%	1.5
Hispanic/Latino	9.6%	0.9	20.4%	1.5	18.5%	1.5
Are obese (at or above the 95th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex)						
All	10.6%		9.8%		11.5%	
White	5.5%	1.0	5.8%	1.0	6.0%	1.0
African-American	15.6%	2.8	13.2%	2.3	15.3%	2.6
Hispanic/Latino	11.6%	2.1	11.6%	2.0	12.7%	2.1
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%		2.7%	
White	N/A	N/A	1.9%	1.0	1.2%	1.0
African-American	N/A	N/A	3.2%	1.7	3.6%	3.0
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	6.4%	3.4	3.4%	2.8

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