

***NEW JERSEY***  

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***2001***  

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***YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY***

**Summary of Findings in 2001 and  
Changes Since 1995**



## BACKGROUND

This brochure summarizes the findings of the 2001 New Jersey Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school students. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has conducted this survey every other year since 1993 with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The findings help parents, schools and youth-serving agencies to maintain awareness of current trends among teens and provide feedback on the impact of large-scale programs to influence teen behavior. The results are made available through printed and web-based reports. This brochure and the full report can be downloaded at [www.state.nj.us/njded/students/safety/health/reporting.shtml](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/students/safety/health/reporting.shtml). More information about the CDC survey and tools for comparing results from various locations can be found at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs).

In 2001, the survey was conducted collaboratively between the NJDOE and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services. The survey, developed by CDC, asked students to answer questions about their health-related behavior in six areas that are highly related to preventable illness and injury among young people – unintentional injuries (safety) and violence; use of tobacco; use of alcohol and drugs; sexual behaviors; dietary behaviors; and physical activity.

## REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

The survey was completed by 2,142 students in 20 New Jersey public high schools in the spring of 2001. Survey procedures were designed to protect the privacy of all students by allowing for anonymous and voluntary participation. Local school district parental permission procedures were followed before the survey was administered. Overall, 78% of all sampled students participated (2,142 out of 2,738) and 77% of all sampled schools (20 out of 26), yielding an overall response rate of 60% (77% x 78%=60%), the minimum required for survey weighting by CDC. The weighted results represent all regular public school students in grades 9 through 12 in New Jersey and permit comparison of findings across points in time and different locations. The weighted demographic characteristics of the sample are included in Table 1. The last time a weightable sample was obtained in New Jersey was in 1995. Therefore, the 2001 results in this brochure are contrasted with the results from 1995.

## Profile of Students in the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

| Sex    |       | Grade |       | Ethnicity                     |       | Age                    |       |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| Female | 50.2% | 9th   | 27.7% | Black/<br>African<br>American | 16.5% | 13 Years<br>or younger | 0.3%  |
| Male   | 49.8% | 10th  | 25.4% | Hispanic/<br>Latino           | 14.1% | 14 Years               | 8.8%  |
|        |       | 11th  | 24.3% | White                         | 63.6% | 15 Years               | 23.7% |
|        |       | 12th  | 22.5% | All other<br>races            | 5.8%  | 16 Years               | 27.1% |
|        |       |       |       |                               |       | 17 Years               | 24.0% |
|        |       |       |       |                               |       | 18 or older            | 16.1% |

## USE OF COMPARISON STATISTICS

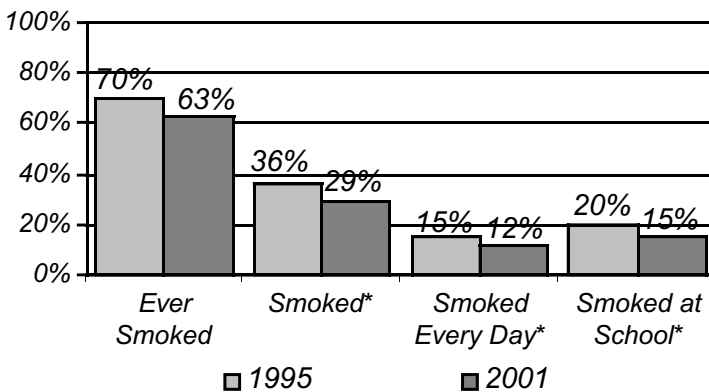
In presenting the results, this report makes comparisons between percentages (of students) answering the same question in 1995 and 2001, the two years when the results of the sample can be "weighted," or generalized to, the population of all high school students in the state. Neither statistical significance nor practical significance is stated or implied in these comparisons.

Percentages for the population of high school students cited for both years are, of course, estimates based upon the sample statistics. The statements in the report are intended to juxtapose the percentages for two years and characterize their relationship to one another. The presentation does not apply tests of statistical significance in order to compare the data from the two years. Due to the large sample sizes (2,799 in 1995 and 2,142 in 2001), small differences (such as two to three percent) could be statistically significant but, because they are small, may lack practical significance. In a similar vein, failing to characterize a difference (e.g., as an increase or decrease) because it failed to reach a level indicating statistical significance would eliminate a description intended to provide the reader with bearings to the data. Since two large samples may yield statistical significance with small percentage differences, the use of the term "statistical significance" throughout the report would lead some in the audience to interpret these small changes in behavior as major behavioral changes and thereby draw conclusions that may not be justified. This approach, therefore, has not been followed. With or without indicators of statistical significance, it is incumbent upon the reader to exercise judgment as to the real or practical significance of any differences cited.

## TOBACCO USE

The number of New Jersey high school students who indicated they ever tried cigarettes has declined from 70% in 1995 to 63% in 2001. About 3-in-10 (29%) of all New Jersey high school students smoked at least part of one cigarette on one or more days in the past month, a substantial decrease from the 36% who had smoked in the last month in 1995. In the past 30 days, the number of students who reported they smoked every day declined from 15% in 1995 to 12% in 2001. Smoking on school grounds also declined from about 20% of high school students who reported doing so in 1995 to 15% in 2001. A similar decline is also evident regarding use of other tobacco products. About 7% of 2001 students reported chewing tobacco during the prior month, compared to 9% who chewed tobacco in 1995.

### Smoking Cigarettes



\* in past 30 days

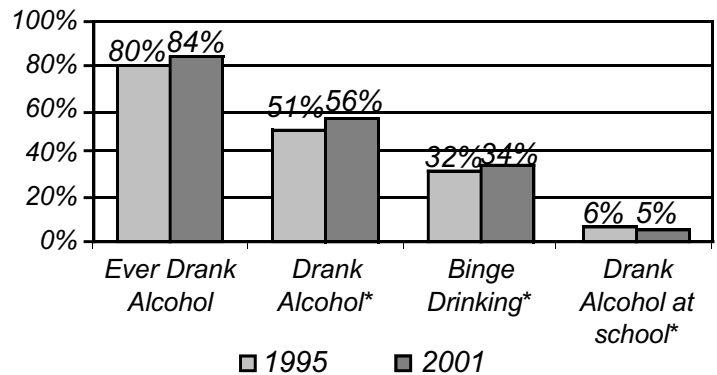
Of students who smoked, nearly half (46%) bought their cigarettes in a store or at a gas station, while 24% borrowed them from someone and 14% gave money to someone to buy them. The remainder either got cigarettes from someone over 18 (6%), stole them from a store or family member (3%), used a vending machine (1%), or got them in some other way (6%). When purchasing cigarettes at a store, 36% of students say they were asked to provide an ID or some proof of age, up only slightly from 34% in 1995.

## ALCOHOL

In 2001, 84% of New Jersey high school students had used alcohol sometime in their lives and 56% consumed alcohol in the past month, both increased from 80% who used in their lifetime and 51% who used alcohol in the past month in 1995. Likewise, students who engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days - having 5 or more drinks on the same occasion - increased from 32% in 1995 to 34%

in 2001. The proportion using alcohol on school property changed from 6% in 1995 to 5% in 2001.

### Alcohol Use

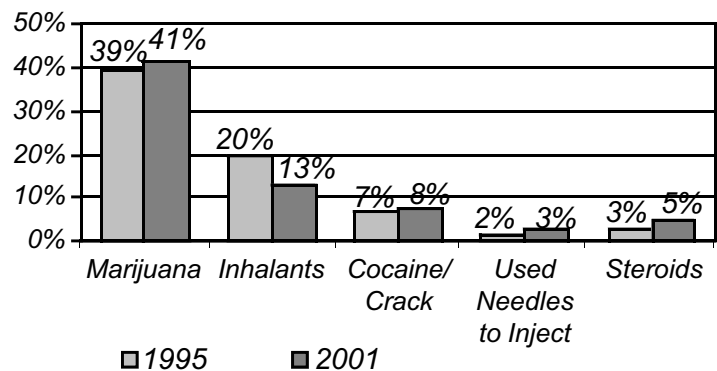


\* in past 30 days

## DRUGS

Regarding lifetime usage, 41 percent of New Jersey high school students reported the use of marijuana in their lifetime in 2001, up from 39% in 1995. Likewise, there was a slight increase in the lifetime use of cocaine/crack (8% in 2001 compared to 7% in 1995), the use of steroids without a prescription (5% in 2001 and 3% in 1995) and the use of needles to inject drugs (3% in 2001 versus 2% in 1995). In contrast, the use of inhalants, defined as sniffing glue, breathing contents of aerosol spray cans or inhaling any paints or sprays for the purpose of getting high, declined from 20% in 1995 to 13% in 2001.

### Drug Use in Lifetime



In addition to these drugs, 8% of students reported ever using methamphetamines and 4% ever using heroin in 2001.

Regarding more recent drug use, 25% of students used marijuana in the past 30 days and 5% used marijuana on school property during that time. Also, 5% of students sniffed glue and 4% used cocaine in the past month.

About 3-in-10 students reported being offered drugs at school (29%) in 2001, similar to the percentage in 1995 (30%).

## DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Almost a third of high school students indicated signs of depression, as 31% reported that they felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for a period of at least two weeks that they stopped doing some usual activities.

The number of students who seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months was 17%, down from 22% who considered this in 1995. The number that actually made a suicide attempt declined much less; 8% in 2001 compared to 9% in 1995.

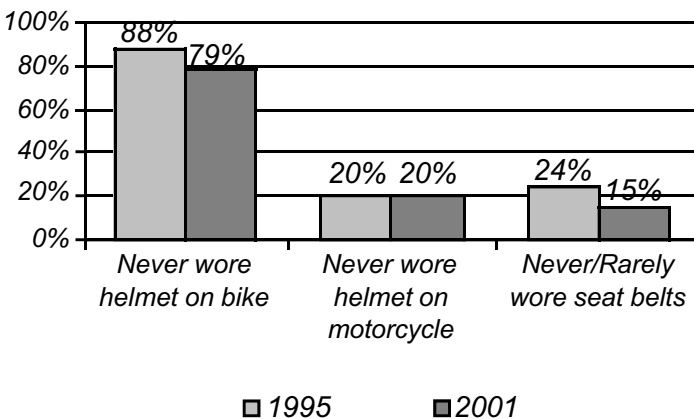
## SEAT BELTS

Fifteen percent (15%) of students reported that in the past 12 months they either never or rarely used their seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else, improved from 24% who indicated the same in 1995. Conversely, 39% reported they always wear a seat belt compared to 30% who did so in 1995.

## HELMET USE

In the past 12 months, nearly 8-in-10 students who rode a bicycle reported that they never wore a helmet when riding (79%), improved from 88% who never did so in 1995. Among students who rode a motorcycle, 20% indicated they never wore a helmet when riding, the same proportion who never did so in 1995.

### Seat Belt and Helmet Use in Past 12 Months



## DRINKING AND DRIVING

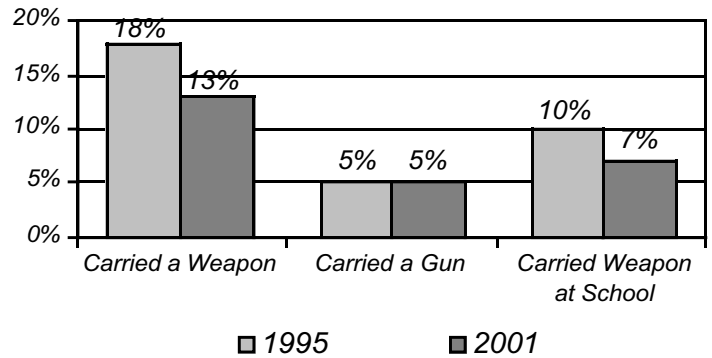
In the last 30 days, 13% of students reported that on at least one occasion they drove a car or other vehicle after

drinking alcohol, up slightly from 1995 (11%). Among twelfth grade students, almost one in five (19%) had done so during the past 30 days. During the same period, 30% of students indicated that on at least one occasion, they were a passenger in a car or other vehicle driven by someone else who had been drinking alcohol, a proportion unchanged since 1995.

## VIOLENCE

In the past 30 days, 13% of students reported that they carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club and 7% carried some type of weapon to school. Overall, this represents a decline from the 18% of students who, in 1995, carried a weapon in general and 10% who did so while at school. In both years, 5% of students indicated they had carried a gun.

### Carrying a Weapon in Last 30 Days

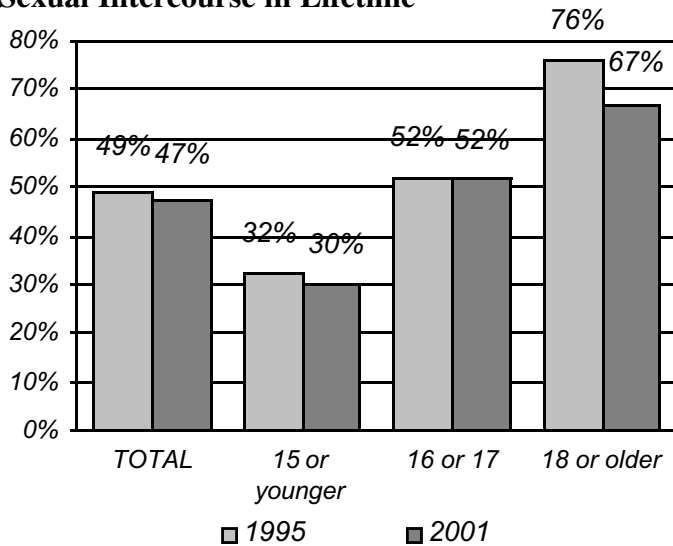


Almost 1-in-10 students (9%) missed at least one day of school in the past month because they felt they would be unsafe either at school or on their way to or from school. This is almost double the number who indicated this fear (5%) in 1995.

Despite this increased fear, students were no more likely to indicate that they encountered violence in general or at school. For instance, about the same number of students reported they were in a physical fight in the past year (35% in 2001 versus 36% in 1995) or in a severe fight that required the attention of a doctor or nurse (6% in 2001 versus 5% in 1995). Fewer students indicated they had been in a fight at school in 2001 (13%) than in 1995 (16%) while more students reported being threatened or injured by someone with a weapon while at school (11% in 2001 compared to 9% in 1995).

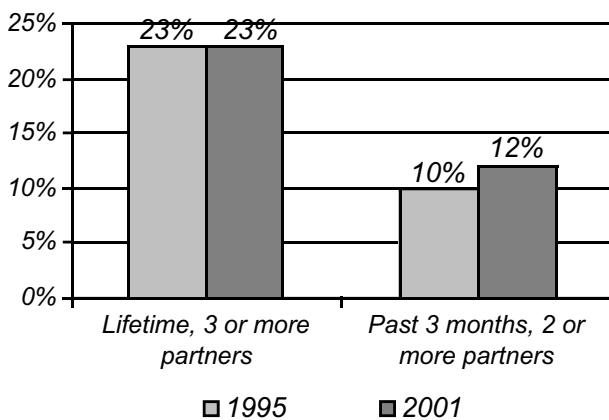
## SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

### Sexual Intercourse in Lifetime



Forty-seven percent (47%) of high school students reported ever having had sexual intercourse, down slightly from 1995 (49%). Boys (52%) were more likely than girls (42%) to have ever had sex; and those 18 and older (67%) were more likely than 16 and 17 year olds (52%) or those 15 and younger (30%) to have engaged in sex in their lifetime, very similar to the distribution in 1995. Twenty-three percent (23%) of students had sexual intercourse with 3 or more partners in their lifetime. This was unchanged from 1995.

### Number of Sexual Partners



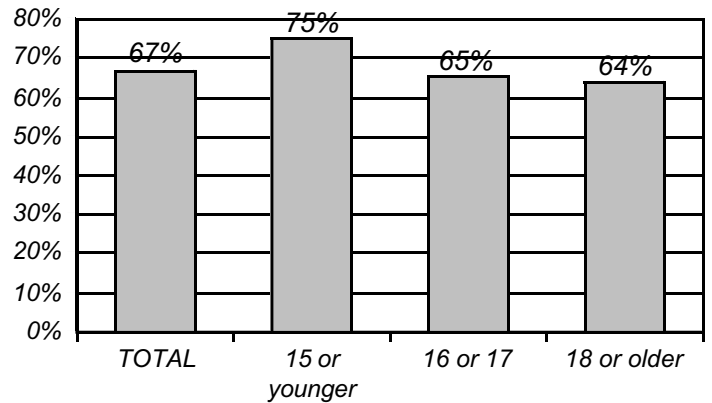
Thirty-six percent (36%) of students reported having sex in the prior 3 months, an increase from 34% in 1995. Twelve percent (12%) of students, or one third of those who were currently "sexually active", had sex with more than one person in the prior three months, an increase from 10% in 1995.

Twenty-seven percent (27%) of students who had sex in their lifetime indicated they used drugs or alcohol prior to their last sexual encounter, similar to 1995 (28%). Boys

(34%) were more likely than girls (18%) to have done so, while younger students – 16 and 17 year olds (29%) and 15 and younger (25%) – were slightly more likely than those 18 and over (22%) to indicate their last sexual encounter occurred after drinking alcohol or using drugs.

## CONDOMS AND CONTRACEPTIVES

### Condom Use Among Students Who Ever Had Sex\*



\* last time

This section focuses on the sexual behaviors of high school students who reported having ever had sexual intercourse in the past. Two-thirds of students having ever had sex reported that they or their partner used a condom the last time they had sex (67%), the exact same percentage reported in 1995. Younger students (75%) age 15 or younger were more likely than those age 16 or 17 (65%) or those age 18 and over (64%) to have used a condom during sex the last time. More students who identified themselves as White (70%) or Black/African American (67%) than Hispanic (58%) reported having used condoms.

Students were asked to identify the method they or their partner used to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sexual intercourse. When given a choice of which contraceptive was used in their last sexual encounter, 58% of students indicated a condom was used and 11% used a birth control pill. This represents a reduction in reported use of condoms, from 62%, but an increase in use of birth control pills, from 8%. More than a quarter of students used either no birth control (15%) or depended on withdrawal (12%) to prevent pregnancy. About 5% used some other method (2%) or did not recall (2%) what was used when last having sex. The overall proportion of sexually active students who used barrier (condoms) or hormonal methods of pregnancy prevention (birth control pills or Depo-Provera) the last time they had sex was unchanged from 1995 to 2001.

## ► PREGNANCY

Six percent (6%) of students have been, or have gotten someone pregnant in their lifetime at least once, almost the same as in 1995 (7%).

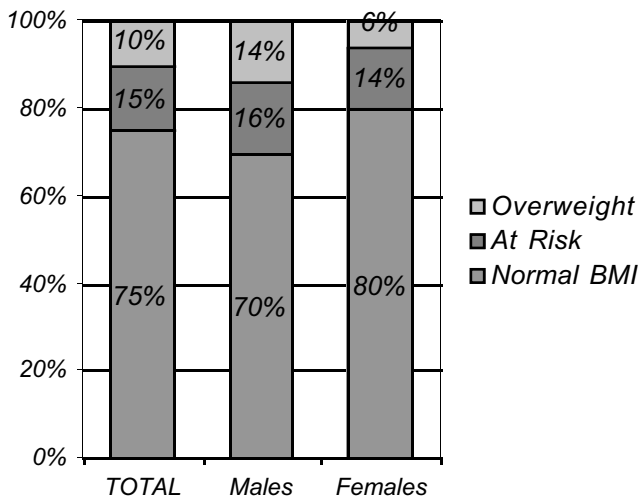
## ► HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

More than 9-in-10 high school students reported being taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school (91%), slightly less than 1995 (94%). Therefore, roughly 9% of students reported they were either not taught about HIV/AIDS or were not sure whether they had such instruction. White students (93%) were more likely than Black students (88%) or Hispanic students (87%) to have said they were instructed in HIV/AIDS.

## ► WEIGHT AND BODY IMAGE

Data on student self-reported height and weight was used to calculate a body mass index (BMI). BMI is calculated as weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. A child's BMI that is greater than the 95th percentile of the index population for gender and age is considered "overweight" while a child in the 85th to 95th percentile is considered "at risk" for being overweight. All others who are at the 85th percentile or below are considered "normal". In the New Jersey student population, 75% of students were of normal weight for their height and gender, while 15% were "at risk" for being overweight and 10% were clearly overweight by the BMI calculation. More boys (14%) than girls (6%) were clearly overweight. Questions concerning student height and weight were not asked in 1995.

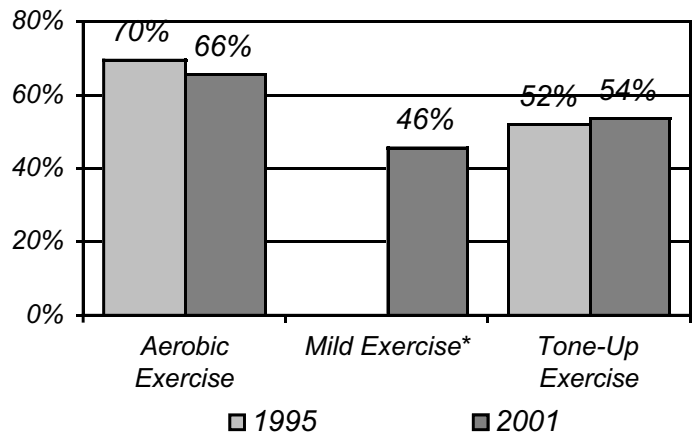
### Body Mass Index Showing Overweight



Regarding self-perception of weight, 29% of students described themselves as overweight and 17% as underweight. This is almost identical to figures in 1995. Girls (35%) were more likely than boys (23%) to have described themselves as overweight, while boys (21%) were more likely than girls (12%) to have described themselves as underweight.

Almost half of students (46%) indicated they were currently trying to lose weight – 65% of girls and 28% of boys. On the other hand, 18% were trying to gain weight – 29% of boys and 7% of girls. Only 36% of students (28% of girls and 44% of boys) reported that they were trying to do nothing about their weight or working to stay at the same weight. In 1995, slightly fewer students (43%) were trying to lose weight and slightly more were trying to gain weight (21%).

## ► PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

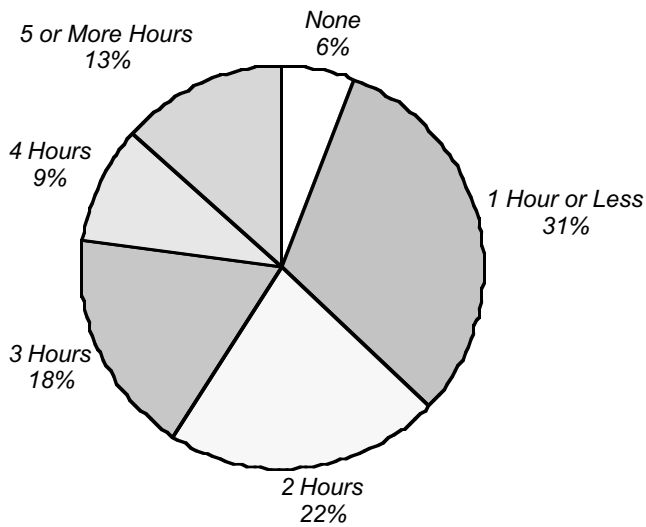


\* not asked in 1995

When asked about their physical activity in the past week, 66% of high school students reported engaging in aerobic exercise that made them sweat and breathe hard for more than 20 minutes on three or more days. The same proportion (66%) participated in daily physical education at school during that week. Just under half (46%) of high school students spent 3 or more days engaged in mild physical activity for at least 30 minutes which did not make them sweat or breathe hard while just over half (54%) spent 3 or more days doing exercises to strengthen or tone their muscles. At the other end of the spectrum, 16% of students reported getting no aerobic exercise; 28% no mild exercise and 26% no toning exercise during the week. While there was a small decrease in the proportion of students who engaged in recommended aerobic activity levels at three times weekly (from 70% in 1995 to 66% in 2001), there was a small increase in the proportion of students reporting toning exercise.

## WATCHING TELEVISION

### Hours of Television on Average School Day, 2001



On an average school day, more than a third of students either watched no television at all (6%) or limited themselves to 1 hour or less of television time (31%). On the other hand, 49% watched between 2 and 4 hours and another 13% watched 5 or more hours of television on an average school day. A greater proportion of Black/African American students (33%) and Hispanic students (21%) than White students (7%) watched 5 or more hours of television on school days. Students were not asked about television viewing in 1995.

## DIETARY BEHAVIORS

Students were asked about eating a variety of foods over the prior week. During the past 7 days, students reported the following dietary behaviors:

- 15% had no servings of fruit
- 27% never ate a green salad
- 19% had no servings of milk

Because the questions were asked differently in 1995, comparison to 2001 is not possible.

Funding for the survey was provided by the New Jersey Department of Education through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention #U87/CCU209030, the U.S. Department of Education under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (Title IV-A) of the No Child Left Behind Act and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, from the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and the Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program.

The survey was administered by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services through a contract with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, School of Public Health. The findings were analyzed and reports prepared through a contract with Rutgers, The State University, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Center for Public Interest Polling.

The summary brochure and detailed report can be downloaded from the website of the New Jersey Department of Education and reproduced without restriction.

Comments concerning the survey and this report may be directed to the New Jersey Department of Education through the contact us button at the bottom of every page on the NJDOE website.

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