



## Christie Administration Announces Results of Biennial Student Health Survey Showing Positive Trends in Student Health

**For Immediate Release**

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**Trenton, NJ** – The New Jersey Department of Education today announced the results of the 2013 New Jersey Student Health Survey (NJSHS) showing generally positive trends in student health-related behaviors.

The NJSHS report found that, over the past decade, the use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs has declined significantly among New Jersey high school students. In addition, fewer students have engaged in sexual intercourse, and reports of school violence are also declining.

Among the less positive trends, high school students' reports of bullying have not changed greatly since 2009. Many driving-age students continue to text or talk on a cell phone while driving.

"The results of this study are encouraging as we work with schools and communities to reduce risky behaviors among New Jersey's adolescents," said Acting Education Commissioner David Hespe. "They show where we have made progress, but also indicate where work still needs to be done."

The survey was completed by 1,701 ninth through twelfth grade students in 31 high schools across the state between March and June 2013. It provides information that can help school staff, community members and policy makers focus their efforts to address harmful adolescent behaviors and trends. The NJSHS comprises 95 questions that address a wide variety of behaviors such as physical activity and nutrition, emotional health, sexual behavior, violence, and use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

The recent study is conducted with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the New Jersey Department of Health, and the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Although the study has been administered biennially in New Jersey since 1993, the current report analyzes trends since 2001, when the state began to more consistently achieve response rates high enough for the CDC to weight data and to consider the sample representative of the New Jersey student population.

### Key Findings, 2001-2013

Unless otherwise noted, the trends among New Jersey's public high school students described below are statistically significant, according to an analysis by the CDC, and trends compare 2001 to 2013.

#### *Alcohol use has declined.*

- 39% of students had at least one drink of alcohol in the last 30 days, down from 56% in 2001.
- Binge drinking rates have also declined, from 33% in 2001 to 23% in 2013.
- 15% of students reported early initiation (before age 13) of alcohol use, down from 33% in 2001.

#### *Cigarette use has declined.*

- In 2013, 13% had smoked at least one cigarette in the past 30 days, down from 29% in 2001.
- 6% of students had smoked a cigarette before age 13, down from 22% in 2001.

#### *Drug use has decreased overall, although marijuana use is unchanged.*

- Since 2001 there has not been a notable change in use of marijuana. In 2013, 39% of students had used marijuana one or more times, and 21% had used it within the past 30 days. However, 5% of students reported early initiation (before age 13) of marijuana use, down from 9% in 2001.
- About 3 in 10 students were offered, sold, or given drugs at school during the previous 12 months.
- Use of most other illicit drugs is not nearly as common as marijuana. Use of cocaine, methamphetamines and heroin, has declined over the years. In 2013, 5% of the high school population reported ever using cocaine, 3% had used methamphetamines, and 2% reported ever using heroin. Use of ecstasy increased slightly, from 5% in 2005 to 7% in 2013.

#### *Violence is down, and bullying and suicide attempts have not changed greatly.*

- The number of students reporting that they had been in a fight declined from 35% in 2001 to 22% in 2013.
- The percentage of students who were threatened or injured at school dropped from 11% to 6% from 2001-2013.
- Past 30-day indicators of violence fell between 2001 and 2013, with reports of carrying a weapon dropping from 13% to 10%, and missing school due to safety concerns falling from an overall high of 9% in 2001 to 6% in 2013.
- Reports of bullying at school(21%) did not change from 2009, when bullying questions were first asked. The decline from 17% to 15% of students reporting being electronically bullied is not considered statistically significant.
- Between 2001 and 2013, the number of students considering suicide has declined from 17% to 14%, while the rate of students attempting suicide has increased from 8% to 10%. (These differences could not be tested for statistical significance).

*Students are safer behind the wheel, although a high percentage still talk and text on cell phones while driving.*

- The percentage of students riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol dropped to 20% in 2013, from 30% in 2001. The percentage who said they never or rarely wore a seatbelt fell from 15% to 10%.
- From 2011 to 2013, rates fell for talking on a cell phone while driving (46% to 38%) and texting or emailing (48% to 36%). The decrease in talking on a cell phone while driving was not considered statistically significant, likely due to the small number of students who reported driving.

*Fewer students have engaged in sexual intercourse.*

- In 2013, 39% of students had ever engaged in sexual intercourse, down from 47% in 2001; 29% of students reported intercourse within the past three months, down from 36% in 2001.
- In 2013, 41% of students who had recent intercourse did not use a condom during their last intercourse; the overall trend from 2001 to 2013 shows no change.
- HIV and STD testing has decreased since 2009.

*Students are exercising more, but eating less healthy foods. Obesity rates see no significant change.*

- The number of students reporting being physically active for 60 or more minutes a day on five or more days increased sharply between 2005 (34%) and 2013 (49%).
- Daily consumption of fruits and vegetables (5 or more) and milk (3 or more glasses)has consistently declined, falling to rates of 19% (from 26% in 2001) and 7% (from 12% in 2001) respectively in 2013.
- The percentage of students whose BMI classifies them as overweight or obese in 2013 (23%) has not changed significantly since 2001.
- In 2013, rates of going to the dentist (77%), getting eight or more hours of sleep on an average school night (27%), and students describing their overall health as either excellent or very good (60%) did not change significantly from prior years.

To read the complete NJSHS report, visit [www.nj.gov/education/students/yrbs/](http://www.nj.gov/education/students/yrbs/).