

# Reference Group Executive Summary

Spring 2003

American College Health Association  
National College Health Assessment



ACHA-NCHA

# **Reference Group**

## **Executive Summary**

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National College Health Assessment



ACHA-NCHA

The ACHA-NCHA supports the health of the campus community by fulfilling the academic mission, supporting short- and long-term healthy behaviors, and gaining a current profile of health trends within the campus community.

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## **Introduction**

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Interest in a healthy environment in higher education has grown over the last decade. Administrators, practitioners, faculty, and students are becoming increasingly concerned about the health and health-related costs that affect the quality of student and academic life within the campus community.

In 1998 the American College Health Association initiated a survey to address a broad range of health, risk, and protective behaviors, consequences of behavior, and perceptions among students. The survey also assesses illness and effects of selected health conditions on academic performance.

Additional information about survey development, design, and methods can be obtained by calling the ACHA Research Director at (410) 859-1500, ext. 239.

This Executive Summary highlights results of the ACHA-NCHA survey for Spring 2003 for Reference Group, consisting of  
19,497 respondents.

## Possible Uses of the ACHA-NCHA

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The following are possible uses of the ACHA-NCHA findings:

- o Determine priority health issues among student populations.
- o Provide prevalence rates and formulate baseline data for tracking trends.
- o Measure progress and effectiveness of intervention strategies.
- o Support institutional policies and local laws that affect the health of a campus
- o Create individual reports, information campaigns, research projects to educate both campus and community partners.
- o Distribute risk factor information about the student population through summary reports that focus on specific health topics or problem areas.
- o Monitor prevalence and care for specific chronic disease groups.
- o Monitor acute illness and prevention efforts.
- o Provide group or cohort-specific estimates.
- o Assess the correlation between one characteristic or behavior and another in a given population.
- o Identify students' level of self-knowledge about health protection practices and
- o Identify students' perceptions about peer behavior.
- o Assess the impact of health and behavior factors on academic performance.
- o Track the progress of selected objectives in Healthy Campus 2000 and Healthy Campus 2010 for ongoing and future tracking.

### *Note on use of data:*

Missing values have been excluded from analysis. Students responding "not applicable" were excluded from several analyses, which are specifically noted throughout this document. All response categories were included, including "don't know" or "0" unless otherwise noted.

# Findings

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## A. General Health of College Students

62.7% of students surveyed ( 66.4 % male and 61.2 % female) described their health as very good or excellent.

Within the last school year, college students reported experiencing:

Allergy problems:	45.7 %	Repetitive stress injury:	8.6 %
Anorexia:	1.9 %	Seasonal affective disorder:	6.5 %
Anxiety disorder:	11.5 %	Substance abuse problem:	3.5 %
Asthma:	11.0 %	Back pain:	44.2 %
Bulimia:	2.4 %	Broken bone/fracture:	4.7 %
Chronic fatigue syndrome:	3.3 %	Bronchitis:	7.8 %
Depression:	18.8 %	Chlamydia:	1.4 %
Diabetes:	0.9 %	Ear infection:	8.9 %
Endometriosis:	1.0 %	Gonorrhea:	0.3 %
Genital herpes:	0.8 %	Mononucleosis:	2.0 %
Genital warts/HPV:	1.6 %	Pelvic inflammatory disease:	0.6 %
Hepatitis B or C:	0.3 %	Sinus infection:	26.9 %
High blood pressure:	3.3 %	Strep throat:	12.6 %
High cholesterol:	3.3 %	Tuberculosis:	0.6 %
HIV infection:	0.1 %		

79.3 % of college students ( 75.1 % male, 82.8 % female) experienced one or more of the above conditions within the last school year.

## **B. Preventive Health**

Preventive health practices among college students:

- 69.5 % reported being vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- 44.0 % reported being vaccinated against meningococcal disease.
- 47.0 % reported being vaccinated against varicella (chicken pox).
- 86.4 % reported being vaccinated with measles, mumps, rubella (2 shots).
- 23.3 % reported being vaccinated against the flu in the last year.
- 80.2 % reported having a dental exam and cleaning in the last year.
- 39.6 % of males students reported that they performed testicular self exam in the last month.
- 41.8 % of female students reported that they performed breast self exam in the last month.
- 62.1 % of females reported having a routine gynecological exam in the last year.
- 90.6 % reported having their blood pressure checked in the last 2 years.
- 44.7 % reported having cholesterol checked in the last 5 years.
- 16.0 % reported using sunscreen daily.

College students reported the following behaviors within the last school year:

<b>Percent (%)</b>	N/A, didn't drive, ride, or skate within the last school year	Never	Rarely or sometimes	Mostly or always	Mostly or always (N/A responses not included)*
Wore a seatbelt	0.3	0.7	7.0	91.9	92.3
Wore a helmet when riding a bicycle	54.0	27.0	8.5	10.5	22.9
Wore a helmet when riding a motorcycle	85.1	2.4	1.6	11.0	73.6
Wore a helmet when inline skating	76.2	18.7	2.8	2.4	10.1

\* Students responding "N/A, didn't drive, ride, or skate within the last school year" were excluded from this analysis.

### **C. Academic Impacts**

Within the last school year students reported the following factors affecting their individual academic performance, i.e. received an incomplete, dropped a course, received a lower grade in a class, on an exam, or on an important project (listed alphabetically):

Alcohol use:	7.8 %	Eating disorder/problem:	1.4 %
Allergies:	4.3 %	HIV infection:	0.1 %
Assault (physical):	0.5 %	Injury:	3.5 %
Assault (sexual):	0.7 %	Internet use/computer games:	12.2 %
Attention deficit disorder:	4.5 %	Learning disability:	2.6 %
Cold/flu/sore throat:	25.2 %	Mononucleosis:	1.4 %
Concern for a troubled friend or family member:	18.4 %	Pregnancy (yours or partner's)	1.0 %
Chronic illness:	2.2 %	Relationship difficulty:	15.8 %
Chronic pain:	2.7 %	Sexually transmitted disease:	0.4 %
Death of a friend/family member:	8.8 %	Sinus infection/ear infection/ bronchitis/strep throat:	9.0 %
Depression/anxiety disorder/seasonal affective disorder:	14.6 %	Sleep difficulties:	24.1 %
Drug use:	2.7 %	Stress:	32.0 %

### **D. Violence**

Within the last school year, college students reported experiencing:

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
A physical fight		13.2	3.3	6.7
Being physically assaulted (non-sexually)		4.8	2.9	3.7
Verbal threats for sex against their will		2.3	4.2	3.7
Sexual touching against their		5.7	11.9	9.9
Attempted sexual penetration against their will		1.2	4.2	3.2
Sexual penetration against their will		0.8	2.2	1.8
An emotionally abusive relationship		10.0	15.1	13.4
A physically abusive relationship		1.7	2.2	2.0
A sexually abusive relationship		1.1	1.8	1.6



### E. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

Thirty day prevalence - substance use reported by college students (male, female, total):

#### Alcohol

	Percent (%)	Male	Female	Total
Never used		16.6	17.7	17.5
Used, but not in the last 30 days		10.7	15.2	13.8
Used 1-9 days		50.0	53.8	52.3
Used 10-29 days		21.7	13.0	15.9
Used all 30 days		1.0	0.3	0.5

#### Cigarette

	Percent (%)	Male	Female	Total
Never used		61.3	62.2	61.8
Used, but not in the last 30 days		16.0	17.7	17.1
Used 1-9 days		10.9	10.0	10.3
Used 10-29 days		5.7	5.2	5.4
Used all 30 days		6.1	5.0	5.4

#### Marijuana

	Percent (%)	Male	Female	Total
Never used		60.2	65.3	63.7
Used, but not in the last 30 days		19.0	20.3	19.8
Used 1-9 days		12.5	10.4	11.0
Used 10-29 days		5.9	3.3	4.2
Used all 30 days		2.3	0.8	1.4

Reported use versus perceived use - reported use for all students within the past 30 days compared with how often students perceived the typical student on campus used substances within the same time period:

Percent (%)	Never		Used one or more days		Used daily	
	Reported Use (total)	Perception of Typical Use	Reported Use (total)	Perception of Typical Use	Reported Use (total)	Perception of Typical Use
Alcohol	17.5	1.8	68.2	62.6	0.5	35.6
Cigarettes	61.8	7.4	15.7	52.4	5.4	40.2
Marijuana	63.7	15.5	15.2	64.2	1.4	20.3

■ 7.7 % of college students reported driving after having 5 or more drinks in the last 30 days.\*

\*Students responding "N/A, don't drive" were excluded from this analysis.

*Findings continued*

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Estimated BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) of college students: This is an estimated figure based on the reported number of drinks consumed during the last time all students (including non-drinkers) "partied" or socialized, their approximate time of consumption, sex, and the average rate of ethanol metabolism.

<b>Estimated BAC</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
< .08		60.6	59.3	59.8
< .10		68.3	67.6	67.8
Mean		0.08	0.08	0.08
Median		0.06	0.06	0.06
Std Dev		0.09	0.09	0.09

Reported number of drinks consumed the last time students "partied" or socialized:

<b>Number of drinks</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<= 4		45.0	64.0	57.8
<= 5		52.8	75.0	67.6
<= 6		60.2	83.1	75.4
Mean		6.09	3.72	4.51
Median		5.00	3.00	4.00
Std Dev		5.72	3.46	4.53

Reported number of times college students consumed five or more drinks in a sitting within the last two weeks:

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
None		49.0	66.7	60.9
1-2 times		25.6	21.7	22.9
3-5 times		18.5	9.4	12.4
6 or more times		6.9	2.2	3.8

*Findings continued*

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College students reported doing the following when they "partied" or socialized during the last school year:\*

<b>When at a party or when going out....</b>	<b>usually or always Percent (%)</b>
alternate non-alcoholic with alcoholic beverages:	25.0
determine in advance not to exceed a set number of drinks:	33.7
choose not to drink alcohol:	26.7
use a designated driver:	77.1
eat before and/or during drinking:	75.9
have a friend let you know when you have had enough:	31.0
keep track of how many drinks being consumed:	63.8
pace drinks to one or fewer an hour:	26.4
avoid drinking games:	40.2
drink an alcoholic look-alike:	6.1

\*Students responding "N/A, don't drink" were excluded from this analysis.

■ 96.0 % of college students reported usually doing or always doing one or more of the above behaviors when drinking alcohol during the last school year.\*

\*Students responding "N/A, don't drink" were excluded from this analysis.

College students who drank alcohol reported the following consequences occurring in the last school year as a result of their own drinking:\*

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Being physically injured	21.4	18.1	19.3	
Physically injured another person	8.1	2.9	4.8	
Being involved in a fight	11.4	4.0	6.6	
Doing something they later regretted	41.7	36.6	38.5	
Forgetting where they were or what they had done	36.3	29.0	31.4	
Having someone use force or threat of force to have sex with them	1.1	2.4	2.0	
Having unprotected sex	19.1	14.1	15.8	

\*Students responding "N/A, don't drink" were excluded from this analysis.

## **F. Sexual Behavior**

College students reported the following within the last school year:

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Having had no sexual partner		28.2	28.4	28.3
Having had 1 sexual partner		42.6	48.4	46.5
Having had 2 sexual partners		11.1	10.8	11.0
Having had 3 sexual partners		7.4	5.6	6.2
Having had 4 or more sexual partners		10.7	6.8	8.1

Number of partners among students reporting to have at least one sexual partner within the last school year:\*

Mean	2.39	1.77	1.99
Median	1.00	1.00	1.00
Std Dev	4.55	2.13	3.25

*\*Only students reporting to have at least one sexual partner are included in these*

<b>Oral sex within the past 30 days</b>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never did this sexual		23.9	26.7	25.7
Have not done this during the last 30		29.0	26.6	27.4
Did this 1 or more times		47.0	46.7	46.9

<b>Vaginal sex within the past 30 days</b>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never did this sexual		31.9	31.8	31.5
Have not done this during the last 30		22.6	17.7	19.4
Did this 1 or more times		45.5	50.4	49.1

<b>Anal sex within the past 30 days</b>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never did this sexual		75.2	80.2	78.4
Have not done this during the last 30		19.5	16.5	17.5
Did this 1 or more times		5.3	3.4	4.1

*Findings continued*

<b>Type of sexual behavior</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Oral</b>	<b>Vaginal</b>	<b>Anal</b>
<i>Sexually active students reported...</i>				
Using a condom within the last 30 days (mostly or always)*		2.8	47.2	22.4
Using a condom the last time they had sex**		3.3	48.6	23.0

\*Students responding "Never did this sexual activity" or "Have not done this during the last thirty days" were excluded from the analysis.

\*\*Students responding "Never did this sexual activity" were excluded from the analysis.

Reported means of birth control used among sexually active college students or their partners to prevent pregnancy the last time they had vaginal intercourse:

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Birth control pills		38.2	40.5	39.5
Depo Provera (shots)		2.2	2.7	2.5
Norplant (implant)		0.2	0.1	0.1
Condoms		39.1	33.7	35.3
Diaphragm, cervical cap, sponge		0.4	0.3	0.3
Spermicide		4.1	3.3	3.6
Fertility awareness		2.5	2.8	2.7
Withdrawal		13.8	15.2	14.8
Other method		2.5	3.3	3.1
Nothing		4.0	3.4	3.6

■ 9.7 % of sexually active college students reported using (or reported their partner used) emergency contraception ("morning after pill") within the last school year (male: 8.7 %; female: 10.1 %).\*

\*Students responding "Not sexually active" were excluded from the analysis.

■ 2.4 % of college students who had vaginal intercourse within the last school year reported experiencing an unintentional pregnancy or got someone pregnant within the last school year. (male: 2.0 %; female: 2.6 %).\*\*

\*\*Students responding "Have not had vaginal intercourse within the last school year" were excluded from the analysis.

## G. Nutrition and Exercise

Within the last 30 days, college students reported:

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Exercising to lose weight		43.1	62.5	55.6
Dieting to lose weight		20.8	40.5	33.7
Vomiting or taking laxatives to lose weight		0.4	3.6	2.5
Taking diet pills to lose weight		3.1	7.1	5.8
Doing none of the above		50.7	30.1	36.6

College students reported usually eating the following number of servings of fruits and vegetables:

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Don't eat fruits and vegetables		5.5	2.9	3.7
1 or 2 per day		64.2	56.8	59.4
3-4 per day		24.6	32.6	30.0
5 or more per day		5.6	7.7	6.9

College students reported the following behaviors within the past 7 days

### **Participated in vigorous exercise for 20 minutes (or 30 minutes moderate exercise)**

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
0 days		22.1	26.1	24.9
1-2 days		30.6	31.2	30.9
3-5 days		37.1	34.6	35.4
6+ days		10.1	8.2	8.8

<b>Exercising to strengthen muscles</b>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
0 days		32.4	36.0	34.9
1-2 days		25.8	30.0	28.6
3-5 days		34.8	28.9	30.7
6+ days		7.0	5.1	5.8

### **Getting enough sleep to feel rested in the morning**

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
0 days		9.0	11.1	10.4
1-2 days		28.5	30.1	29.5
3-5 days		48.5	44.9	46.1
6+ days		14.0	14.0	14.0

*Findings continued*

Estimated average Body Mass Index (BMI): This figure incorporates reported sex, height, and weight to form a general indicator of physical health.

<b>BMI</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
< 18.5 Underweight		2.3	6.2	4.9
18.5-24.9 Healthy Weight		58.2	68.9	65.3
25-29.9 Overweight		28.7	17.0	20.9
30-34.9 Class I Obesity		8.2	5.1	6.2
35-39.9 Class II Obesity		2.0	1.7	1.8
>= 40 Class III Obesity		0.7	1.0	1.0
Mean		24.71	23.36	23.82
Median		23.80	22.36	22.91
Std Dev		4.41	4.75	4.69

## H. Depression

Students reported experiencing the following within the last school year:

### Feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	10.8	2.6	5.4
1-10 times	68.8	64.5	65.8
11+ times	20.4	32.9	28.8

### Feeling exhausted (not from physical activity)

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	13.0	4.8	7.6
1-10 times	65.5	65.3	65.3
11+ times	21.5	29.9	27.0

### Feeling very sad

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	27.0	13.2	18.0
1-10 times	61.9	70.6	67.5
11+ times	11.1	16.2	14.5

### Feeling things were hopeless

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	44.4	32.2	36.2
1-10 times	47.1	56.8	53.6
11+ times	8.5	11.1	10.2

### Feeling so depressed it was difficult to function

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	60.6	52.6	55.2
1-10 times	33.3	39.8	37.7
11+ times	6.1	7.6	7.1

### Seriously considering attempting suicide

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	90.8	89.1	89.7
1-10 times	8.2	10.0	9.4
11+ times	1.0	0.8	0.9

### Attempting suicide

<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never	98.6	98.7	98.6
1-10 times	1.2	1.2	1.3
11+ times	0.3	0.1	0.1

*Findings continued*

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	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
College students reported diagnosed with depression		8.5	15.7	13.4
<i>Of those students reporting ever having been diagnosed with depression in the item above...</i>				
Diagnosed with depression in the last school year		38.1	39.4	39.1
Currently in therapy for depression		24.7	28.3	27.5
Currently taking medication for depression		34.5	42.3	40.4



# Demographics and Student Characteristics

## ■ Age:

Average age:	21.51 years
Median:	20.00 years
Std Dev:	5.14 years

18 - 20 years:	55.1 %
21 - 24 years:	33.7 %
25 - 29 years:	5.7 %
30+ years:	5.5 %

## ■ Sex

Female:	67.3 %
Male:	32.7 %

## ■ Student status:

1st year undergraduate:	28.4 %
2nd year undergraduate:	21.2 %
3rd year undergraduate:	19.2 %
4th year undergraduate:	17.6 %
5th year or more undergraduate:	6.4 %
Graduate or professional:	6.6 %
Adult special or other:	0.6 %

Full-time student:	95.7 %
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## ■ Relationship status:

Single:	55.2 %
Married/domestic partner:	7.0 %
Engaged or committed dating relationship:	36.8 %
Separated:	0.3 %
Divorced:	0.6 %
Widowed:	0.1 %

## ■ Students describe themselves as:

White:	77.0 %
Black – not Hispanic:	4.6 %
Hispanic or Latino:	6.5 %
Asian or Pacific	8.7 %
American Indian or Alaskan Native:	0.9 %
Other:	3.6 %

## ■ Students describe themselves as:

Heterosexual:	94.6 %
Gay/Lesbian:	1.7 %
Bisexual:	2.4 %
Transgendered	0.1 %
Unsure:	1.2 %

## ■ Housing:

Campus residence	41.2 %
Fraternity or sorority	2.5 %
Other university	3.1 %
Off-campus	38.0 %
Parent/guardian's	11.2 %
Other:	4.0 %

## ■ Hours of paid work per week:

0 hours:	37.9 %
1-9 hours:	17.2 %
10-19 hours:	21.0 %
20-29 hours:	14.4 %
30-39 hours:	4.9 %
40 hours:	2.5 %
More than 40 hours:	2.2 %

## ■ Hours of volunteer work per week:

0 hours:	63.5 %
1-9 hours:	32.4 %
10-19 hours:	2.8 %
20-29	0.9 %
30-39	0.2 %
40 hours:	0.1 %
More than 40	0.1 %

## ■ Have any kind of health insurance (including prepaid plans, such as HMOs):

Yes:	85.6 %
Unsure:	5.5 %

## National College Health Assessment Spring 2003: Demographics of Participating Colleges and Universities

Thirty seven US postsecondary institutions self-selected to participate in the Spring 2003 National College Health Assessment and 20,724 surveys were completed by students on these campuses. For the purpose of this study, only those institutions that used a random sampling technique will be included in the analysis, yielding a final data set consisting of 19,497 students on 33 campuses. Demographic characteristics of the 33 campuses follow:

Public	20
Private	13

4-year	32
2-year	1

ACHA Member Institution	33
Non-member Institution	0

Carnegie Classification	
Doctoral/Research Universities Extensive	11
Doctoral /Research Universities Intensive	4
Masters Colleges and Universities I and II	10
Baccalaureate	8
Associate Colleges	0

Geographical Location	
Northeast (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	6
Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)	12
South (AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV)	5
West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)	10

Campus Setting	
Urban > 1,000,000	5
Urban 100,000 – 1,000,000	13
Suburban	4
Rural	11
Other	0

Campus Size	
< 2,500	5
2,500 – 4,999	2
5,000 – 9,999	9
10,000 – 19,999	5
> = 20,000	12

## **2001 ACHA-NCHA Advisory Committee (Authors)**

### *Co-chairs*

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