New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency 2015 Survey Results Report: Students with Physical Disabilities

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Students with Physical Disabilities

Students with disabilities experience numerous challenges and risks, including from bullying and other forms of violence, lower overall physical activity and difficulties stemming from accessibility issues. They are also more prone to a sedentary lifestyle, which can lead to chronic health issues. Students with physical disabilities are more likely to engage in risky behaviors than students without disabilities, and also demonstrate decreased protective factors.

In 2015, 11.3% of New Mexico high school students had a physical disability or long-term illness.

**NM-YRRS 2015 Physical Disabilities Question:**

| Do you have any physical disabilities or long-term health problems? (Long-term means 6 months or more) |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Not sure |

The 2015 High School YRRS survey included one question pertaining to physical disability. This question is not included on the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), so there is no comparison to other states or to the nation for this measure.
Physical Disabilities and Student Characteristics

Sex and Grade

Male and female students were equally likely to have a physical disability or long-term health problem.

![Figure 2](image)

Physical disabilities by sex and grade level
Grades 9–12, NM 2015

Race/Ethnicity

White, Asian/Pacific Islander and African American students were significantly more likely to have a physical disability or long-term health problem than Hispanic or American Indian students.

![Figure 3](image)

Physical disabilities by race/ethnicity
Grades 9–12, NM 2015
Physical Disabilities and Student Characteristics

Housing Status

Students in unstable housing (those who usually slept somewhere other than their parent/guardians’ home in the past 30 days) were more than twice as likely to have a physical disability or long-term health problem as students in stable housing.

![Figure 4](image-url)  
*Physical disabilities by sex and grade level  
Grades 9–12, NM 2015*

Sexual Minority Status

Students who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) and those who were unsure of their sexual identity were more likely than straight students to have a physical disability or long-term health problem.

![Figure 5](image-url)  
*Physical disabilities by sexual minority status  
Grades 9–12, NM 2015*

Other Demographic Characteristics

- Disability rates did not differ significantly by country of birth.
- Disability rates did not differ significantly by urban/rural status.
Physical Disabilities and Risk Behaviors

Body Weight, Physical Activity, and Nutrition

Students with disabilities and long-term health problems face barriers to participation in physical education classes, after-school recreation and sports. This leads to more time spent in sedentary behaviors, which can increase obesity and overweight later in life. Compared to students without physical disabilities or long-term health problems, students with physical disabilities were more likely to be physically inactive (physically active for at least 60 minutes on none of the past 7 days), skip eating breakfast, and drink three or more servings of soda per day.

Among New Mexico high school students, there were no statistically significant differences by physical disability status for:

- Physical education in school
- Excessive screen time (TV viewing, video or computer gaming, or using a computer for reasons other than school or work for 3 or more hours per day)
- Eating five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables
- Being overweight or obese

![Figure 6](Physical activity behaviors associated with body weight, activity, and nutrition by disability status. Grades 9–12, NM 2015)
Physical Disabilities and Risk Behaviors

Alcohol Use

Students with physical disabilities or long-term health problems were more likely than other students to engage in all alcohol-related behaviors. Compared to students without disabilities, they were:

- 22% more likely to be current drinkers
- 40% more likely to drink alcohol before age 13
- 30% more likely to binge drink
- 1.7 times more likely to drink and drive
- 2.0 times more likely to drink on school property

*in the past 30 days

Figure 7
Alcohol use by physical disability status
Grades 9–12, NM 2015
Students with physical disabilities or long-term health problems had higher rates of all tobacco use measures than students without disabilities. Among students who smoked cigarettes, those with physical disabilities smoked more cigarettes, and smoked them more frequently, than those without disabilities.

Among all NM high school students, students with physical disabilities were:

- 30% more likely to use e-cigarettes
- 1.5 times more likely to smoke cigarettes or use a hookah
- 1.7 times more likely to smoke cigars or use spit tobacco

Among current smokers, students with physical disabilities were:

- Two times more likely to be heavy smokers (smoke 11 or more cigarettes per day)
- Equally likely to be frequent smokers (smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days in the past 30 days)
- Less likely to have made an attempt to quit smoking
Students with disabilities had much higher rates of drug use than students without disabilities. Students with physical disabilities were:

- 25% more likely to use marijuana
- Twice as likely to use synthetic marijuana or cocaine
- More than twice as likely to use methamphetamines, heroin, or painkillers to get high

*in the past 30 days

### Other Drug Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Type</th>
<th>Physical Disability or Long-term Health Problem</th>
<th>No Physical Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painkillers to get high</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthetic marijuana</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methamphetamine</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9*

Current drug use by physical disability status
Grades 9–12, NM
2015
Physical Disabilities and Risk Behaviors

Adolescents and adults with disabilities are disproportionately affected by physical and sexual violence over their lifetimes. The consequences for this exposure are often compounded by social attitudes toward disability. Compared to students without physical disabilities or long-term health problems, students with disabilities were:

- 1.8 times more likely to be bullied at school
- Almost two times more likely to be electronically bullied
- Almost two times more likely to experience sexual dating violence (forced to do sexual things they didn't want to do, such as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse, in the past 12 months by a person they were dating)
- 2.5 times more likely to experience physical dating violence (physically hurt on purpose in the past 12 months by a person they were dating)
- 2.3 times more likely to have ever been forced to have sexual intercourse
- Almost twice as likely to skip school because of safety concerns
- 2.3 times more likely to carry a weapon on school property

Figure 11
Behaviors associated with violence by physical disability status
Grades 9–12, NM 2015
Students with Physical Disabilities

Physical Disabilities and Risk Behaviors

Students with disabilities or long-term health problems were at higher risk for suicidal behaviors, non-suicidal self-injury, and feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Compared to students without physical disabilities or long-term health problems, students with physical disabilities were:

- 1.5 times more likely to feel so sad or hopeless for at least two weeks that they stopped doing usual activities
- 1.8 times more likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury (doing something to purposely hurt themselves without the intent to die)
- More than two times as likely to make a suicide plan
- More than two times as likely to attempt suicide
- More than twice as likely to be injured in a suicide attempt (made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning or overdose that had to be treated by a health care provider)

![Figure 12: Mental health indicators by physical disability status, Grades 9–12, NM 2015](image)
Physical Disabilities and Risk Behaviors

Sexual Behaviors

Risky sexual behaviors, such as early sexual initiation, multiple sex partners, and having sex without using condoms or reliable birth control methods, can place adolescents at risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy. Compared to students without physical disabilities or long-term health problems, during the past 12 months students with such disabilities were:

- 21.6% more likely to have ever had sexual intercourse
- More likely to be currently sexually active (had sexual intercourse in the past 30 days)
- Almost 50% more likely to have had four or more sexual partners in their lifetime
- 2.7 times more likely to have had sex before age 13

Among sexually active students, there were no statistically significant differences by physical disabilities for:

- Use of alcohol or drugs before sexual intercourse
- Condom use
- Effective birth control use (birth control pills, IUD or implant, or birth control shot, patch, or ring)

![Figure 13](image-url)
The NM-YRRS asks a number of questions about resiliency and protective factors, including student relationships with parents or other adults in the family, adults at school, adults in the community, and friends. Adolescents with physical disabilities and other mobility impairment factors typically experience reduced protective factors as well as being more isolated from their peers due to real or perceived challenges in their ability to participate in many activities.

**Resiliency/Protective Factors**

How to read this chart:
Each colored bar represents the rate of agreement that the statement was “pretty much true” or “very much true.”

For example: Among students with a physical disability, 69.1% agreed that they have a friend who helps them when they’re having a hard time, (light blue), compared to 79.6% of students without disabilities (dark blue).
Notes


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