

University of New Mexico
UNM Digital Repository

Reports & Documents

Publications & Reports

2017

New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency 2015 Survey Results Report: Housing Instability and Health

C FitzGerald

T Bannerman

D Green

L Penaloza

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/prc-reports-documents>

Recommended Citation

FitzGerald, C; T Bannerman; D Green; and L Penaloza. "New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency 2015 Survey Results Report: Housing Instability and Health." (2017). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/prc-reports-documents/27>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Publications & Reports at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reports & Documents by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Housing Instability and Student Health

In 2015, for the first time, the NM-YRRS questionnaire included a question on homelessness, or housing status. The question mirrored the homelessness definition of the McKinney-Vento Act, which is used by the New Mexico Public Education Department to identify homeless students.

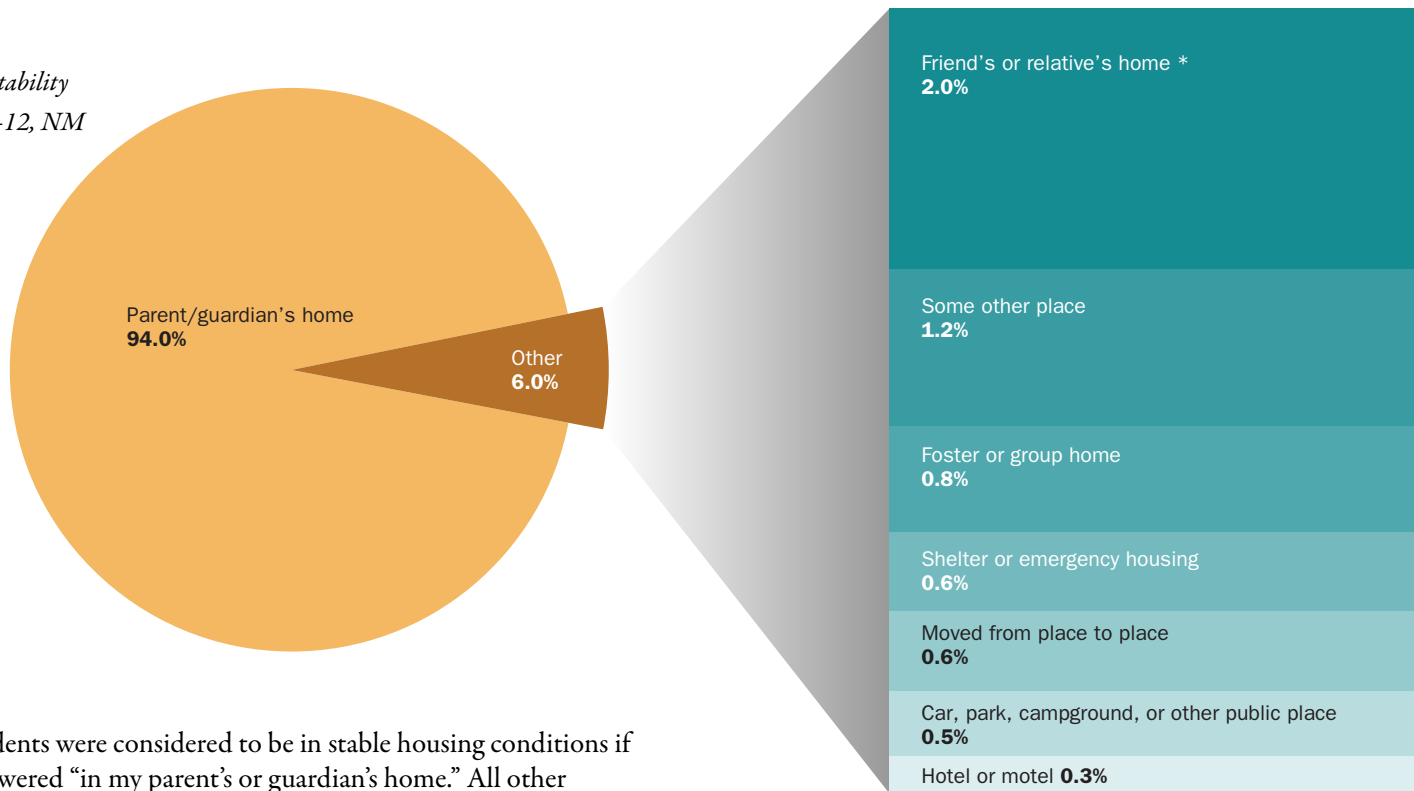
For the purposes of this report, students identified as homeless will be referred to as students in unstable housing. Students living in unstable housing were at significantly increased risk for facing violence, using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, suicidal behaviors and other mental health issues and other serious challenges.

2015 NM-YRRS Housing Stability Question:

During the past 30 days, where did you usually sleep at night?

- in my parent's or guardian's home
- in a foster home or group facility
- in a car, park, campground, or other public place
- in a friend's or relative's home
- in a shelter or emergency housing
- I moved from place to place
- in a hotel or motel
- somewhere else

Figure 1
Housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
 2015



Respondents were considered to be in stable housing conditions if they answered “in my parent’s or guardian’s home.” All other responses were considered unstable housing conditions, or homelessness. 94.0% of students slept in the home of their parents or guardians, and 6.0% were in unstable housing. This 6.0% represented over 6,000 public high school students in unstable housing. This is most likely an underestimate, because students in unstable housing were less likely to attend school regularly than students in stable housing and were therefore more likely to be absent from school on the day of the survey. Students in unstable housing were almost four times as likely to skip school one or more times per week without permission than other students (45.4% vs. 12.5%).

* Although some students who live with friends and relatives have relatively stable living conditions, this situation was considered to be unstable housing as this group shares an elevated level of risk with other students in unstable housing.

Housing Instability and Student Characteristics

Housing Instability by Race/Ethnicity

White students had a lower rate of housing instability than any other racial/ethnic group.

African American students were nearly twice as likely

as Hispanic students and more than twice as likely as White students to be in unstable housing.

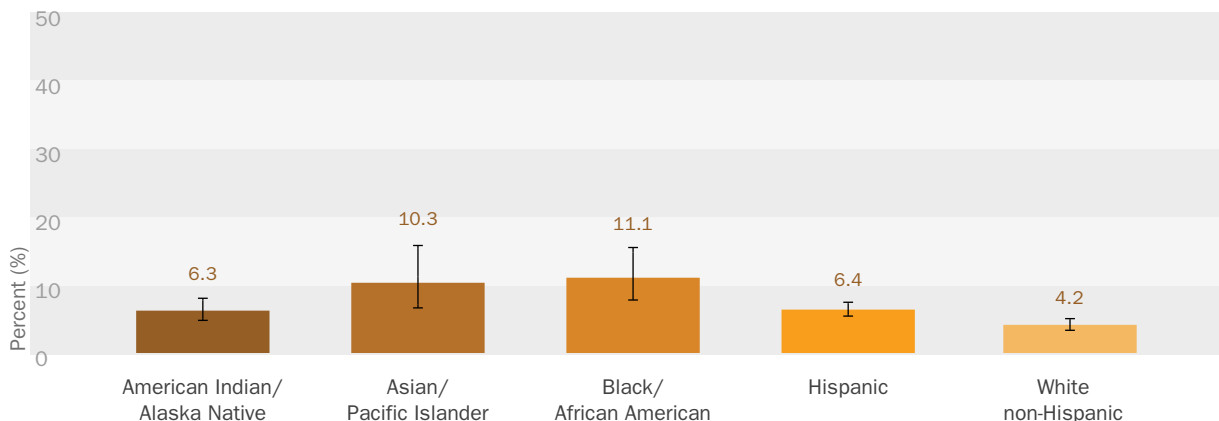


Figure 2
Housing instability by race/ethnicity
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability by Sex

Boys were almost twice as likely to be in unstable housing as girls.

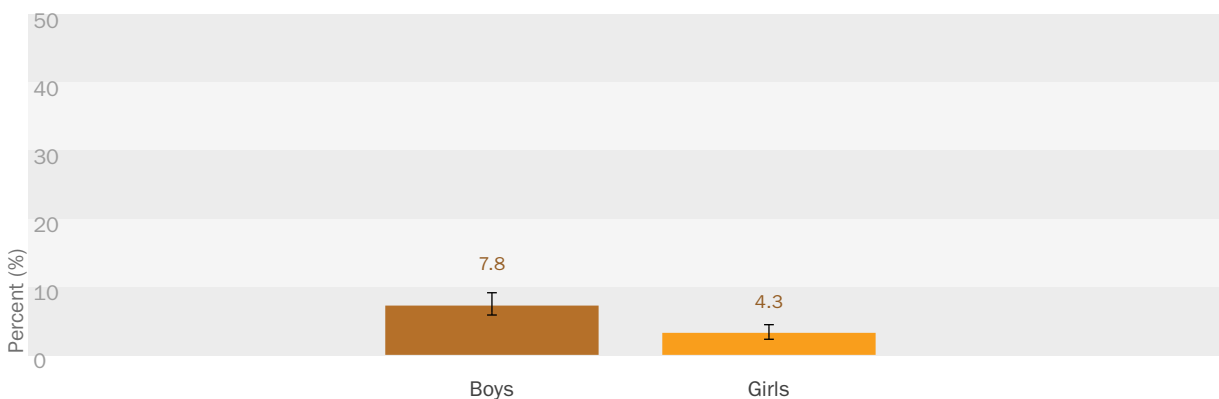


Figure 3
Housing instability by sex
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability by Grade Level

Housing instability increased with grade level.

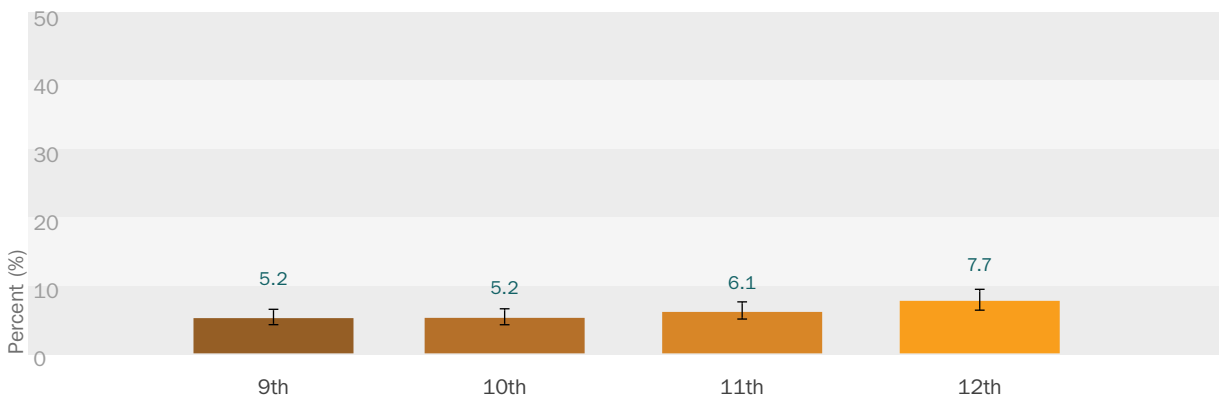


Figure 4
Housing instability by grade level
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability and Student Characteristics

Housing Instability by Sexual Minority Status

Among straight students, only 4.6% were in unstable housing. The rate was almost three times higher among lesbian, gay, or bisexual students (LGB) and

four times higher among students who were unsure of their sexual identity.

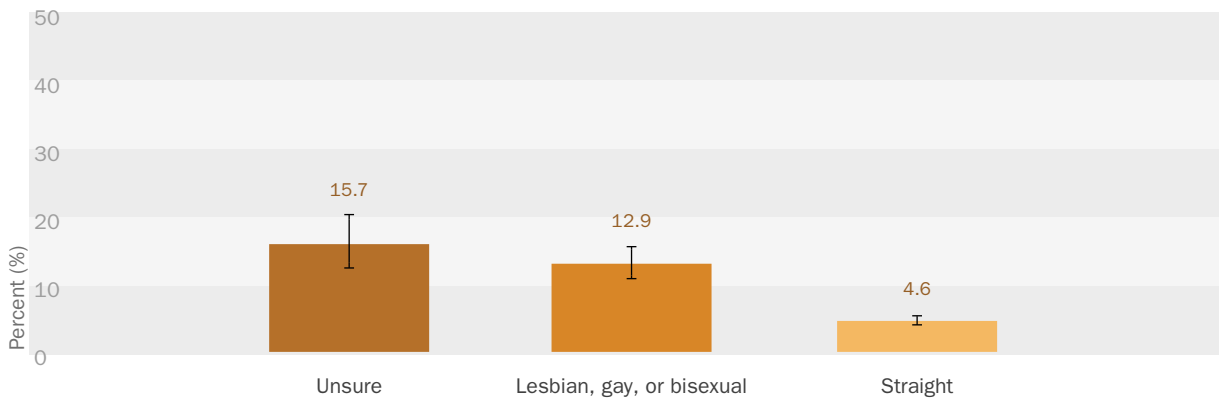


Figure 5
Housing instability by sexual identity
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

LGB students were disproportionately represented among students in unstable housing in New Mexico. While 10.5% of students in stable housing were LGB, almost a quarter (25.4%) of students in

unstable housing were LGB. While 3.5% of students in stable housing were not sure of their sexual identity, 12.0% of students in unstable housing were unsure of their sexual identity.

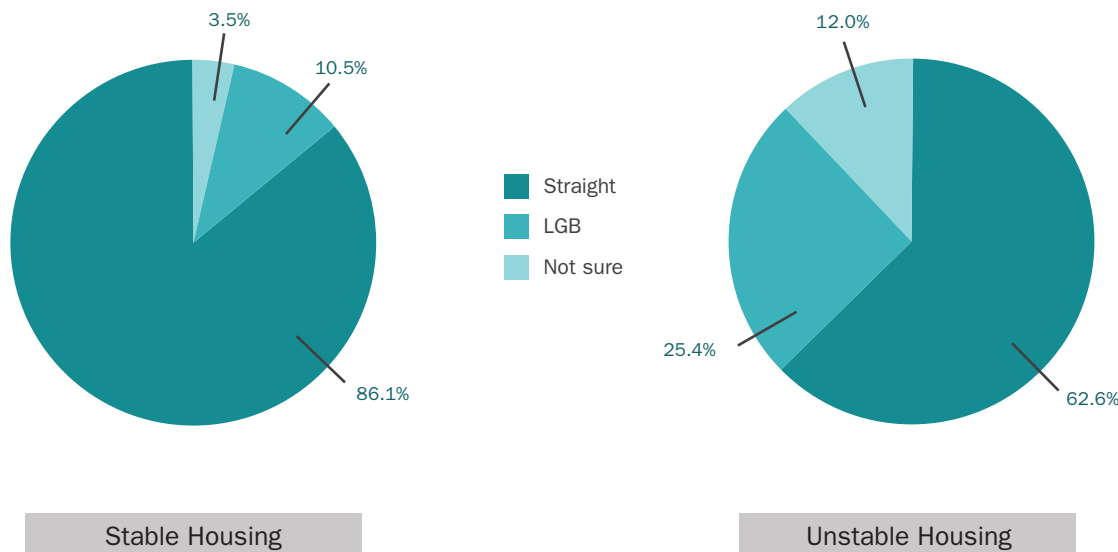


Figure 6
Sexual minority status among students in unstable housing and students in stable housing
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability and Student Characteristics

Housing Instability by Parent Education

Students whose parents had less than a high school education were nearly twice as likely to be in unstable housing as students whose parents had a high school diploma or GED, and three times as likely as those

whose parents had at least some college education. Parent education is a common marker for socioeconomic status.

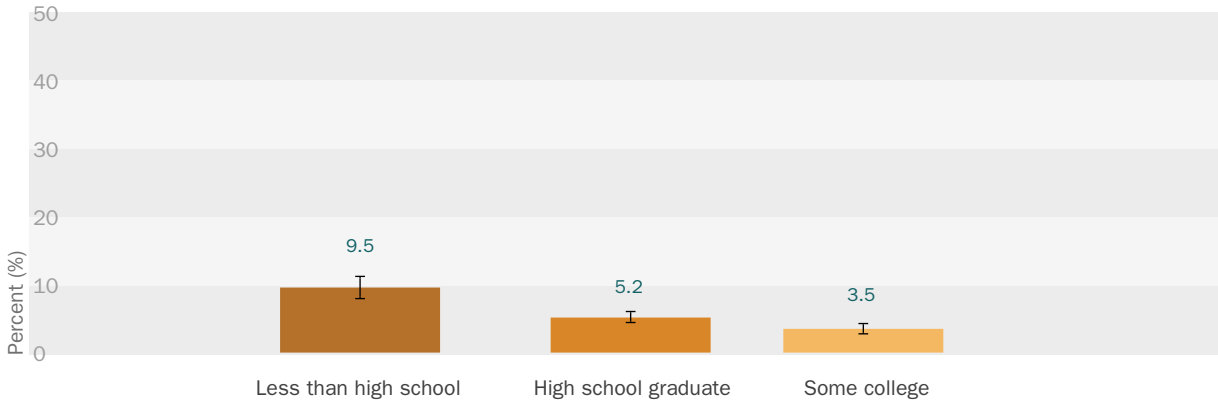


Figure 7
Housing instability by level of parent education
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability by Country of Birth

Foreign-born students were nearly five times more likely to be in unstable housing than students who were born in the U.S.

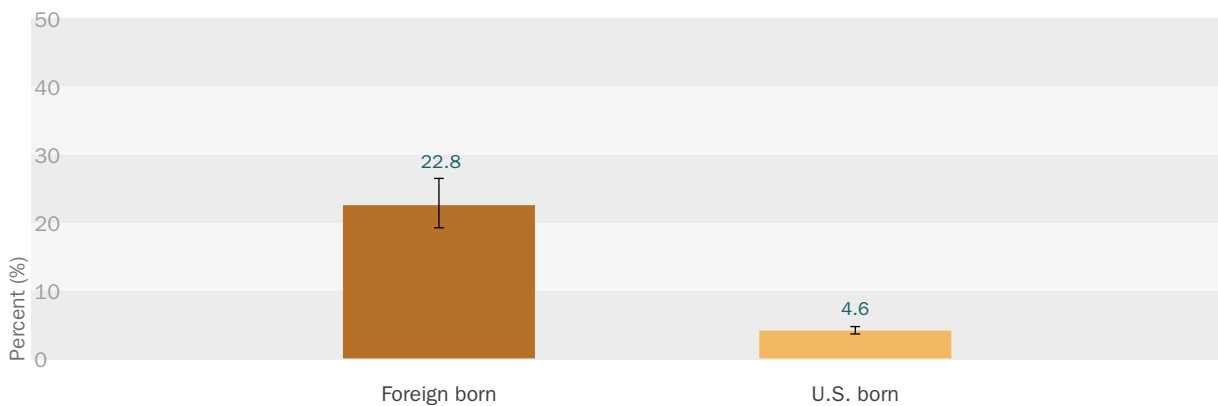


Figure 8
Housing instability by country of birth
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Summary of student characteristics and housing instability

- Boys were more likely than girls to be in unstable housing (7.8% vs 4.3%).
- Students whose parents had less than a high school education were more likely to be in unstable housing than students whose parents had at least some college (9.5% vs 3.5%).
- Students born outside the U.S. were five times as likely as those born in the US to be in unstable housing (22.8% vs. 4.6%).
- Students who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (12.9%) or not sure of their sexual identity (15.7%) were more likely to be in unstable housing than straight students (4.6%).
- Black or African American students (11.1%) were more likely to be in unstable housing than Hispanic (6.4%) or White (4.2%) students.

Housing Instability and Risk Behaviors

Housing Instability and Violence

Students in unstable housing were exposed to and engaged in violence at higher rates than those in stable housing. These students were 1.7 times more likely to report being bullied on school property, 2.1 times as likely to be electronically bullied, and 4.3 times more likely to have been in a physical fight on school property. They were 4.9 times more likely to

skip school due to safety concerns, 2.9 times more likely to experience sexual dating violence (being forced to do something sexual that they didn't want to do by someone they were dating), and 4.4 times more likely to experience physical dating violence (being hit or physically hurt by someone they were dating).

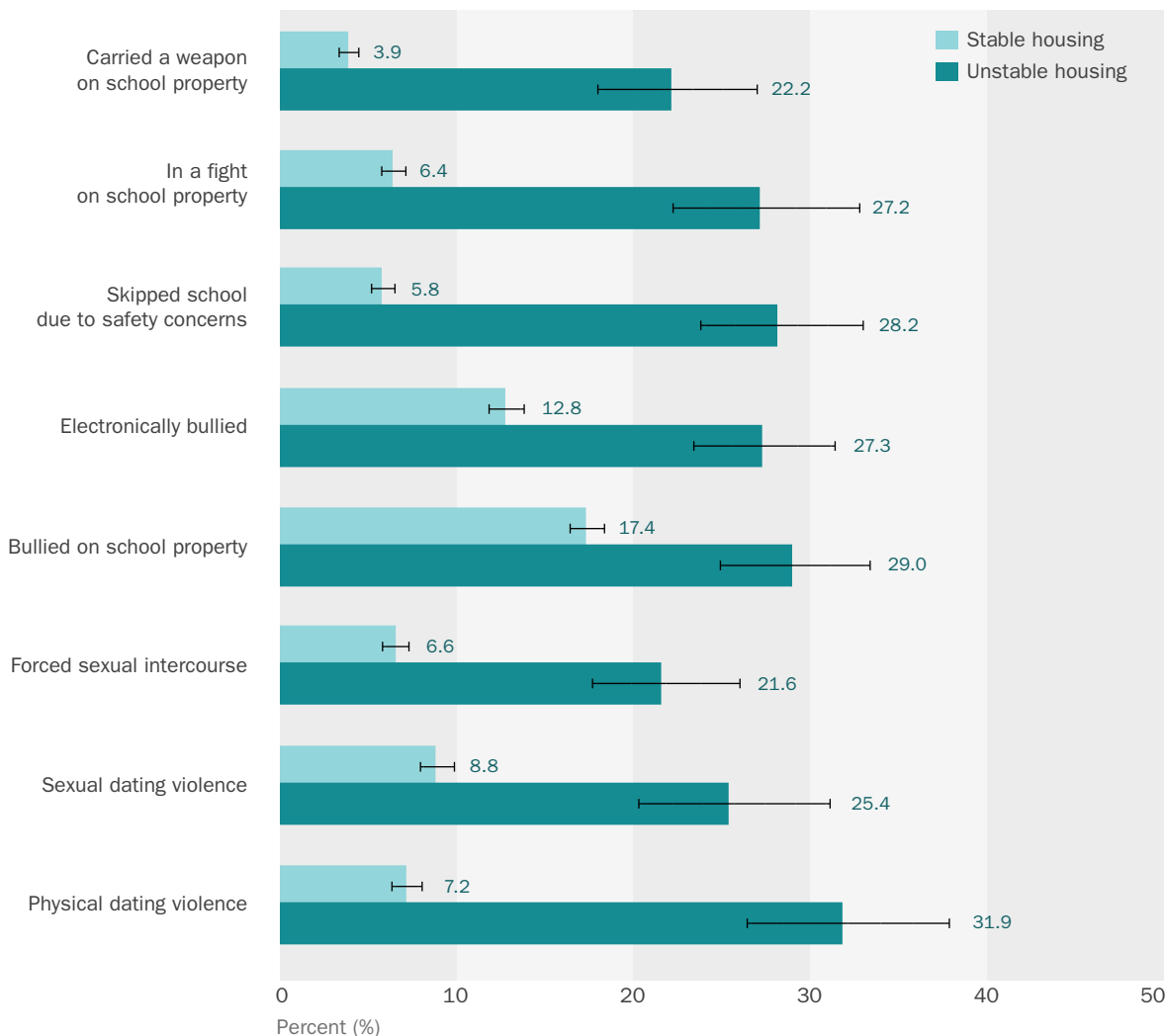


Figure 9
Behaviors associated with violence by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability and Risk Behaviors

Housing Instability and Mental Health

Students in unstable housing were more than twice as likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury—that is, engaging in self-harming behaviors without the intent to die—than students in stable housing. Students in unstable housing were more likely to

experience feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and were far more likely than other students to engage in suicidal behaviors. They were more than six times as likely to attempt suicide than students in stable housing.

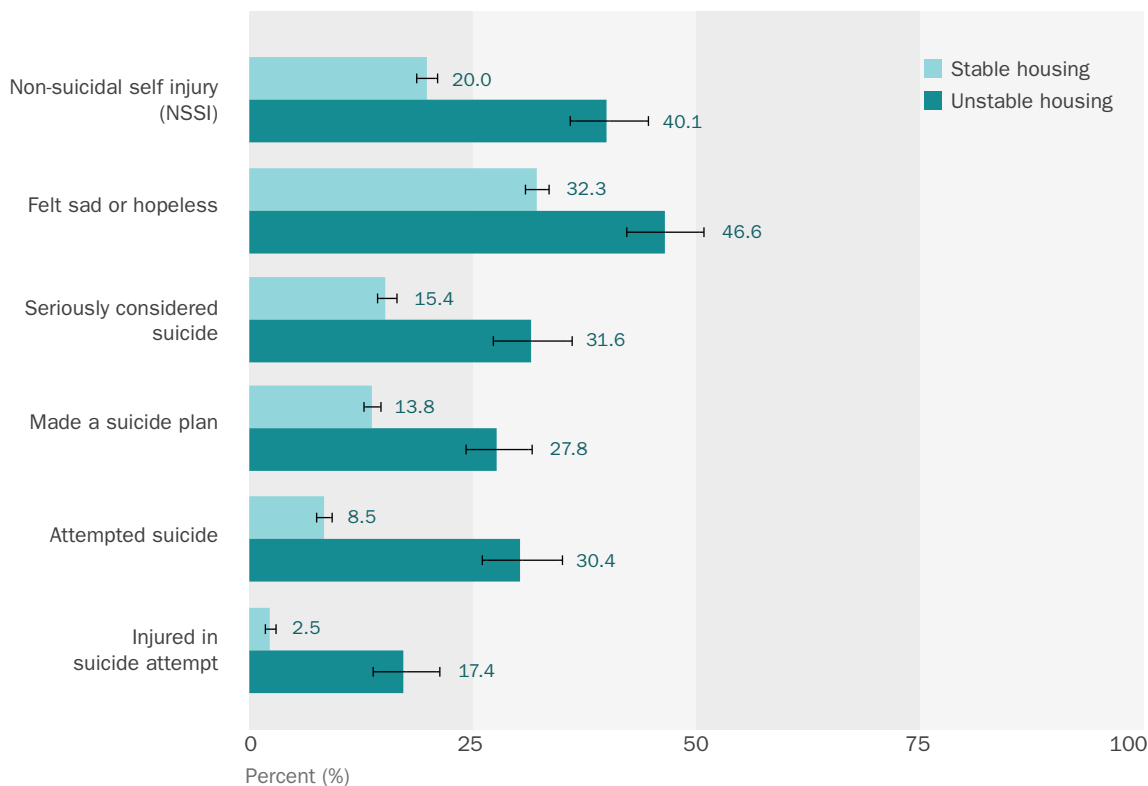


Figure 10
Behaviors associated with mental health by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability and Risk Behaviors

Housing Instability and Tobacco Use

Students in unstable housing were more likely to use tobacco products than students in stable housing. Nearly half (42.0%) of students in unstable housing were current cigarette smokers, compared to only 9.1% of students in stable housing. Students in

unstable housing were twice as likely as students in stable housing to use e-cigarettes (48.8% vs. 21.4%), nearly five times as likely to use spit tobacco (32.9% vs. 6.1%), and five times as likely to smoke cigars (41.2% vs. 7.9%) in the past 30 days.

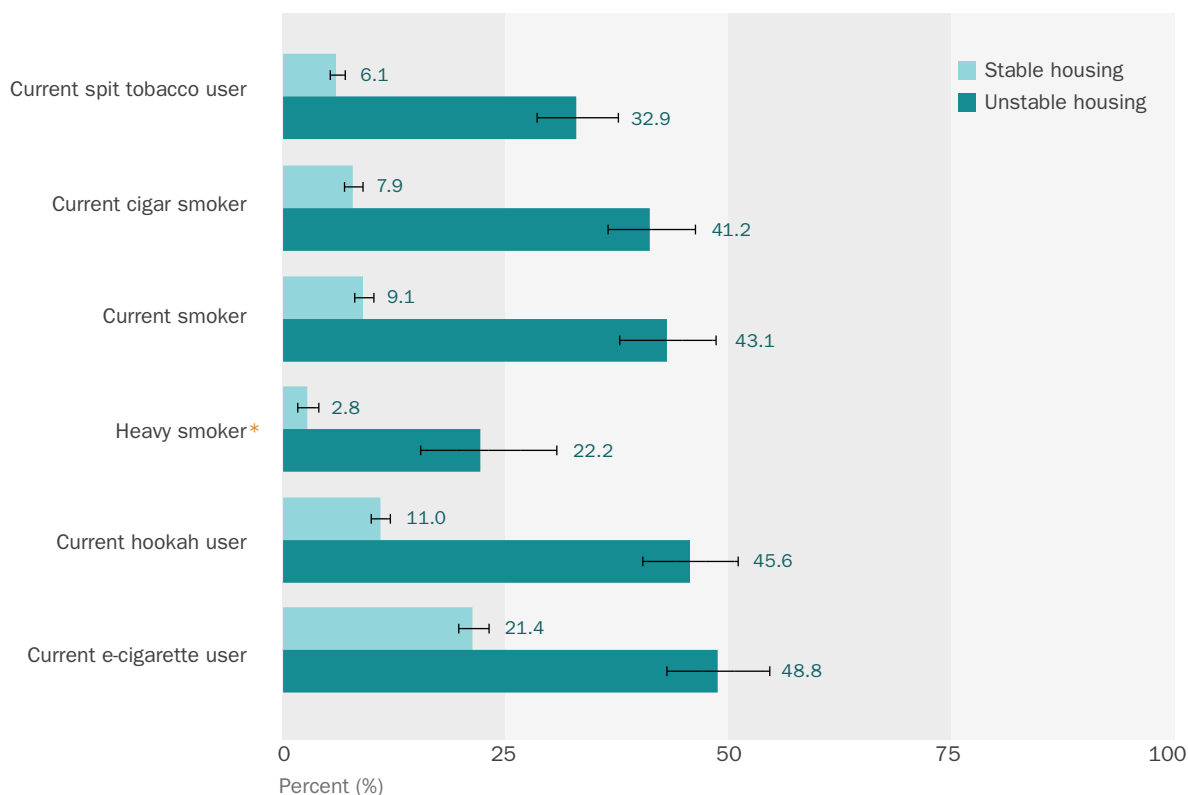


Figure 11
Tobacco use by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

* smoked 11 or more cigarettes per day on the days they smoked a cigarette

Housing Instability and Risk Behaviors

Housing Instability and Alcohol Use

Students in unstable housing were more likely to engage in all alcohol use behaviors than students in stable housing. They were 2.5 times more likely to currently use alcohol, 3.5 times more likely to binge

drink, 8.9 times more likely to drink alcohol on school property, 2.5 times as likely to have had their first drink of alcohol before age 13, and 5.5 times more likely to drive while drinking alcohol.

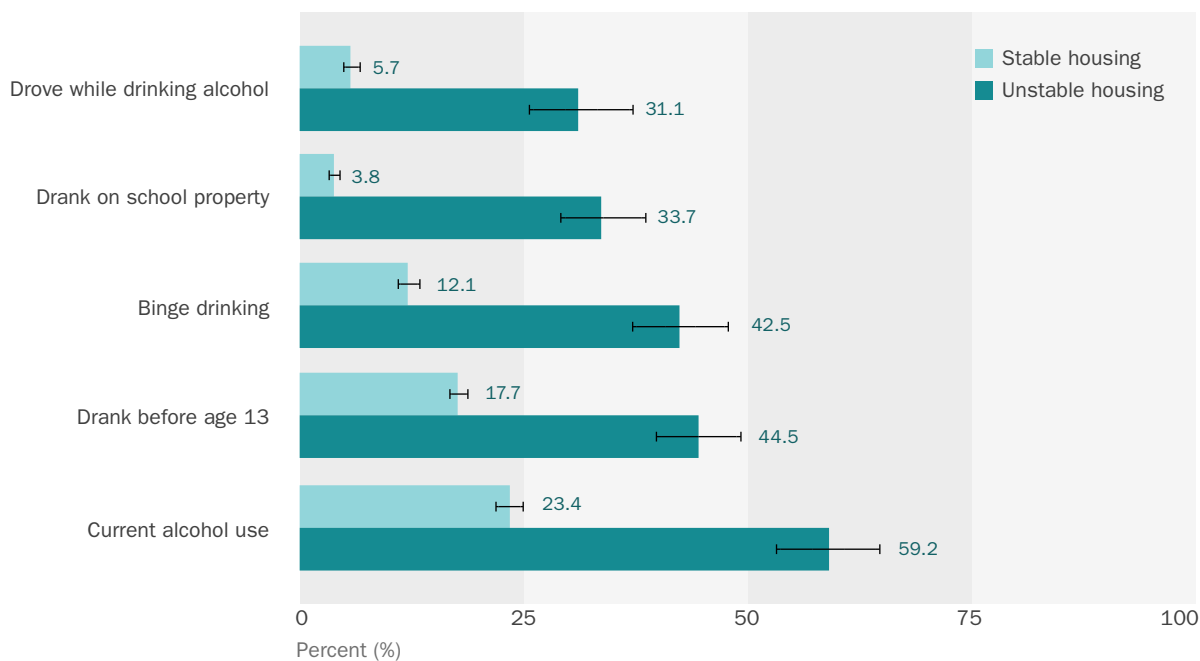


Figure 12
Alcohol use by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability and Risk Behaviors

Housing Instability and Drug Use

The disparities between students in unstable and stable housing were higher for drug use than for any other group of risk behaviors. Students in unstable housing were more than twice as likely to use

marijuana, 10 times more likely to use inhalants, 18 times more likely to use painkillers and almost 30 times more likely to use heroin than students in stable housing.

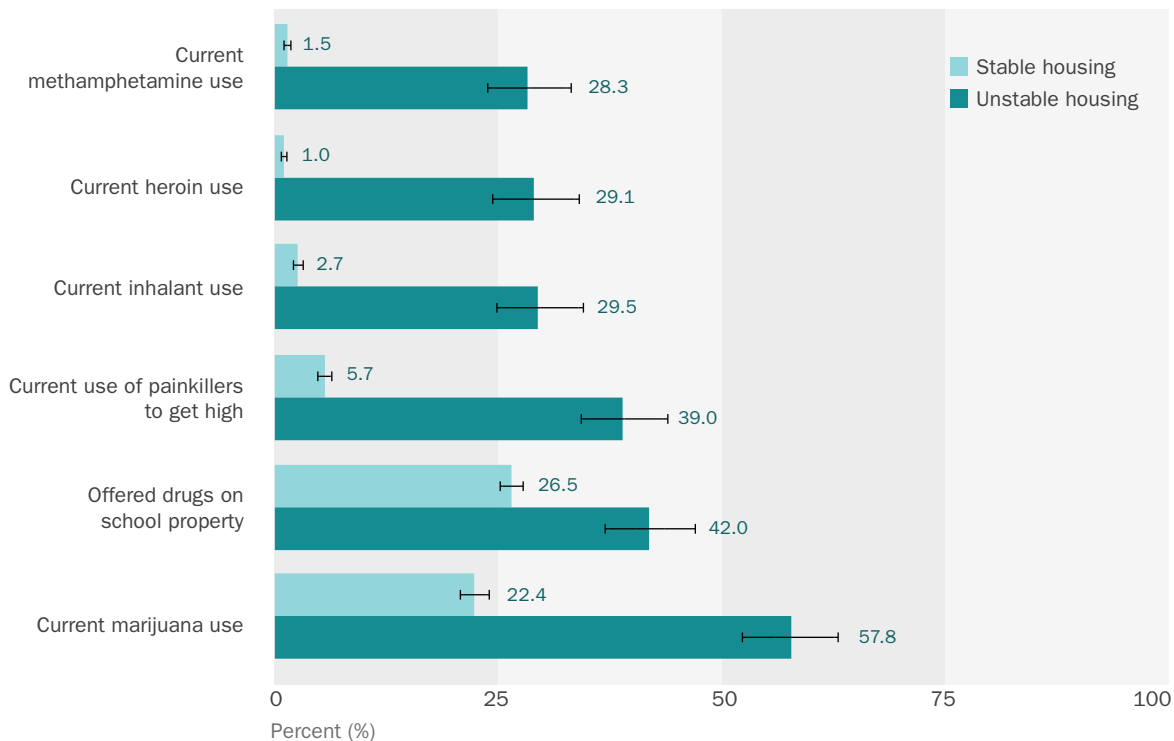


Figure 13
Drug use by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Housing Instability and Risk Behaviors

Housing Instability and Sexual Behaviors

Unsafe sexual behaviors are associated with increased risk of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy. Students in unstable housing were more likely to be currently sexually active (past 30 days) and to have sexual intercourse

before age 13. Among sexually active students, those in unstable housing were more likely to engage in unsafe sexual practices such as having multiple lifetime sexual partners and failing to use effective birth control or condoms during sexual intercourse.

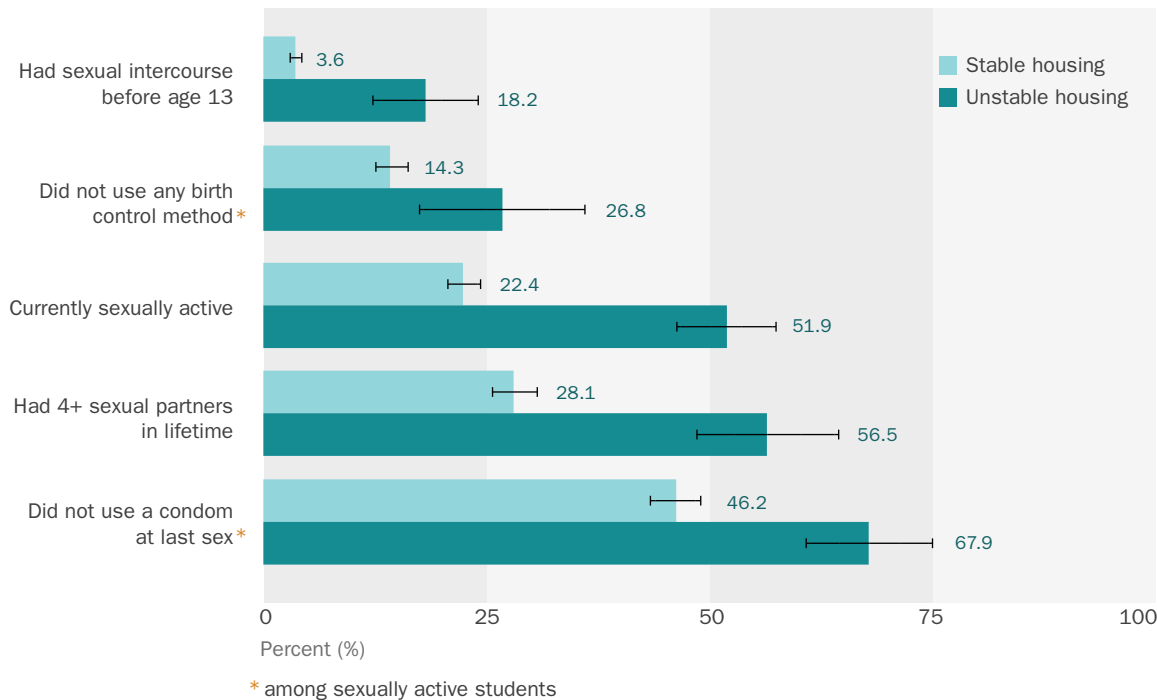


Figure 14
Sexual behaviors by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Summary of risk behaviors and housing instability

Compared to students in stable housing, New Mexico students living in unstable housing were:

- Nearly five times more likely to skip school because of safety concerns (28.2 vs 5.8%).
- Nearly twice as likely to be bullied on school property (29.0% vs. 17.4%).
- More than three times more likely to have been physically forced to have sexual intercourse (21.6% vs. 6.6%).
- Nearly four times as likely to attempt suicide (30.4% vs. 8.5%).
- Over three times as likely to binge drink (42.5% vs. 12.2%).
- Nearly 20 times more likely to use methamphetamines (28.3% vs. 1.5%).
- Nearly 30 times more likely to use heroin (29.1% vs. 1.0%).

Housing Instability and Other Health Indicators

When compared to students in stable housing, those in unstable housing were less likely to have seen a dentist in the past 12 months (42.3% of housing unstable students vs. 75.8%) and less likely to have usually gotten eight or more hours of sleep (22.0% vs. 31.9%). They were also more than twice as likely to have a physical disability or long-term

health problem (21.7% vs. 10.6%). Students in unstable housing were 66% less likely than students in stable housing to eat breakfast every day. Students in unstable housing were also 3.2 times more likely than those in stable housing to have ever been tested for HIV.

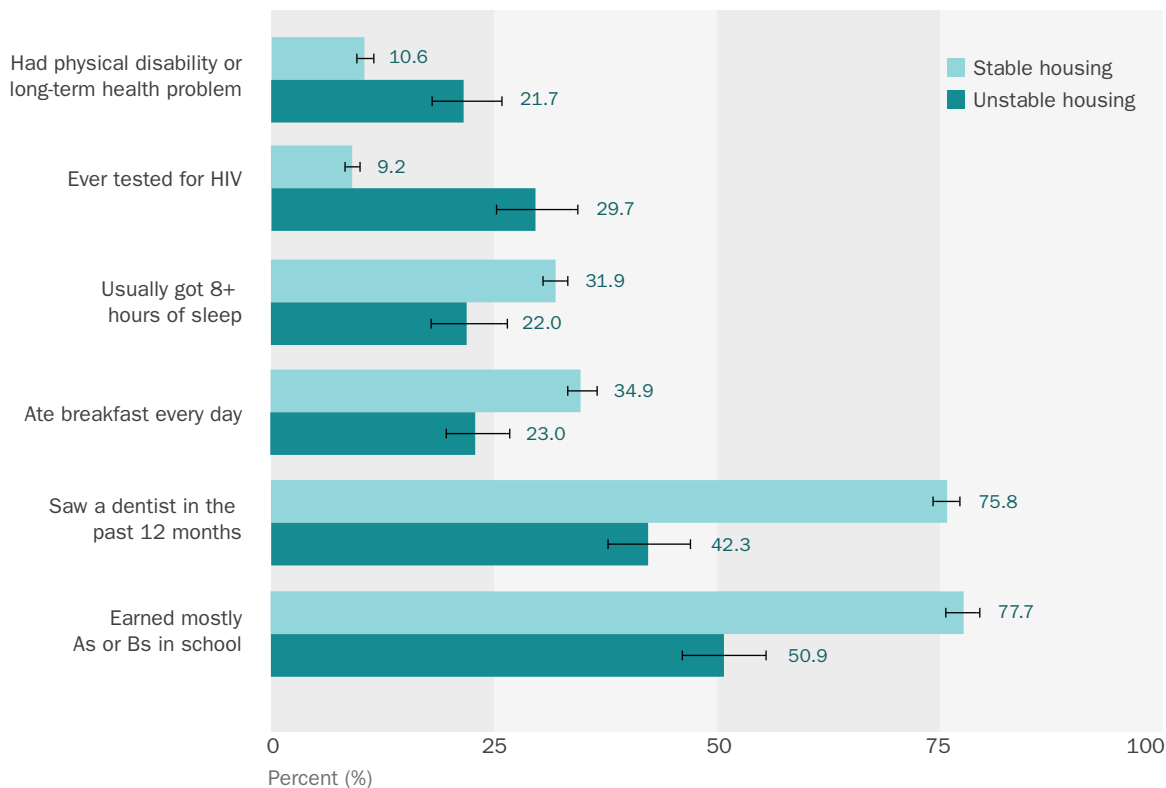


Figure 14
Other health indicators
by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Resiliency Factors

Resiliency, or protective factors, are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, schools, and communities that can mitigate risk. Examples include positive relationships with caring adults, supportive environments, and social support from family, friends, and others. The NM-YRRS asks questions about the presence of a caring friend,

a caring adult, a parent interested in school work, clear rules at school, whether the student's parents know their whereabouts, and whether a student is involved in community activities. In every case, students in stable housing were far more likely to experience a higher level of protective factors than students in unstable housing.

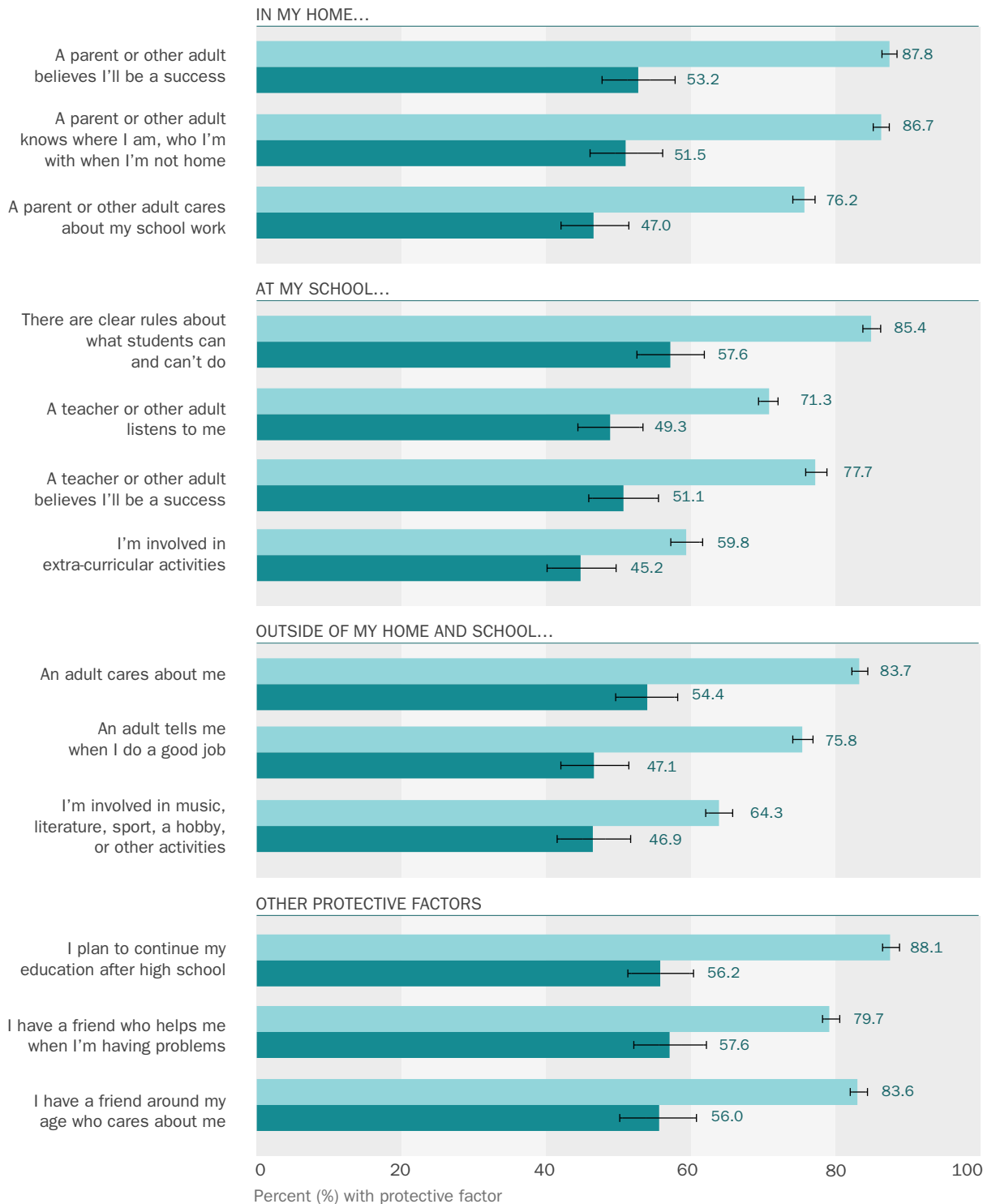


Figure 15
Resiliency factors by housing stability
Grades 9–12, NM
2015

Stable housing
Unstable housing

How to read this chart:

Bars represent the percentage of students who said “pretty much” or “very much” true in response to each statement.

For example: Among students in stable housing, 83.6% said it was pretty much or very much true that they have a friend who cares about them, compared to only 56.0% of students in unstable housing.

Discussion of housing instability and student health

Male students, sexual minority students, students born outside the United States, and students whose parents have less than a high school education are at increased risk for housing instability in New Mexico. Risk of housing instability increases with student age.

While students in unstable housing comprise only 6.0% of the high school population in New Mexico, this group faces extreme health risks. They are at high risk of school violence, sexual violence, bullying, suicidal behaviors, alcohol and drug use, tobacco use, and self-injury.

The percentage of students in unstable housing described in this report (6.0%) may be underestimated, as students in unstable housing are more likely to miss school than their peers in stable housing, and therefore are less likely to be represented in these data.

Traditional means of prevention outreach are unlikely to reach this population, as most prevention programs typically focus on youth who are in homes and attend school regularly. However, any meaningful response to these issues must address the homeless population. For instance, with the disparity for heroin

use approaching a factor of 30 times greater among students in unstable housing than those in stable housing, it is difficult to imagine that any intervention could be effective if it fails to address homelessness.

Designing interventions to reach students in unstable housing will not be enough to solve issues associated with housing instability. Public health and education communities in New Mexico should address homelessness itself as a public health issue. Providing housing through rent support to families of students in unstable housing, basic needs assistance, or other interventions, would bring previously unreachable youth into the sphere of traditional interventions. Stable housing would provide students with a regular place to sleep, eat, do their homework, and engage in other activities necessary for academic success, and could help protect students from victimization.

Homelessness and associated health and behavioral issues are important public health concerns in New Mexico, and should be a priority of all interventions in the realms of public health and education.

This report was produced by the NM Department of Health, the NM Public Education Department, and the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center. The NM-YRRS receives support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in cooperation with the NM PED through Grant number 1U87PS004195-01. For more information about the YRRS, see www.youthrisk.org or www.nmhealth.org/go/youth.

Want to cite this report? We suggest you use this citation:

FitzGerald C, Bannerman T., Green D., and Peñaloza L. 2017. New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency 2015 Survey Results Report: Housing Instability and Health. Epidemiology and Response Division, New Mexico Department of Health, School and Family Support Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department, and the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center.