

# Reference Group Executive Summary

Fall 2001

American College Health Association  
National College Health Assessment



ACHA-NCHA

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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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Suggested citation for this document: American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment: Reference Group Executive Summary Fall 2001. Baltimore: American College Health Association; 2002.

## Introduction

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Health issues and health-related costs can have a major impact upon the quality of student and academic life at institutions of higher education. The ACHA-National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NCHA) is a national research survey organized by the American College Health Association (ACHA) to assist college health service providers, health educators, counselors, and administrators in collecting data about their students' habits, behaviors, and perceptions on the most prevalent health topics.

ACHA initiated the survey in 1998; the survey now provides the largest known comprehensive data set on the health of college students, providing the college health and higher education fields with a vast spectrum of research on student health.

For additional information about the survey's development, design, and methodology, email E. Victor Leino, PhD (vleino@acha.org).

ACHA, the nation's principal advocate and leadership organization for college and university health, represents a diverse membership that provides and supports the delivery of health care and prevention and wellness services for the nation's 16 million college students. For more information about the association's programs and services, visit [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).

This Executive Summary highlights results of the ACHA-NCHA Fall 2001 survey for a Reference Group consisting of  
4,717 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 community.
- 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 illnesses.
- 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

60.0 % of students surveyed ( 62.9 % male and 58.3 % female) described their health as very good or excellent.

Within the last 12 months, college students reported experiencing:

Allergy problems:	52.1 %	Repetitive stress injury:	5.5 %
Anorexia:	1.6 %	Seasonal affective disorder:	3.4 %
Anxiety disorder:	9.9 %	Substance abuse problem:	3.4 %
Asthma:	9.9 %	Back pain:	44.4 %
Bulimia:	2.0 %	Broken bone/fracture:	7.5 %
Chronic fatigue syndrome:	3.3 %	Bronchitis:	9.9 %
Depression:	18.4 %	Chlamydia:	0.7 %
Diabetes:	1.0 %	Ear infection:	13.3 %
Endometriosis:	1.0 %	Gonorrhea:	0.3 %
Genital herpes:	0.7 %	Mononucleosis:	2.3 %
Genital warts/HPV:	1.0 %	Pelvic inflammatory disease:	0.6 %
Hepatitis B or C:	0.3 %	Sinus infection:	39.7 %
High blood pressure:	4.8 %	Strep throat:	18.0 %
High cholesterol:	3.0 %	Tuberculosis:	0.3 %
HIV infection:	0.1 %		

80.8 % of college students ( 75.9 % male, 85.7 % female) experienced one or more of the above conditions within the last 12 months.

## **B. Preventive Health**

Preventive health practices among college students:

- 68.6 % reported being vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- 40.0 % reported being vaccinated against meningococcal disease.
- 52.6 % reported being vaccinated against varicella (chicken pox).
- 87.7 % reported being vaccinated with measles, mumps, rubella (2 shots).
- 26.4 % reported being vaccinated against the flu in the last year.
- 81.2 % reported having a dental exam and cleaning in the last year.
- 38.6 % of males students reported that they performed testicular self exam in the last month.
- 45.8 % of female students reported that they performed breast self exam in the last month.
- 59.0 % of females reported having a routine gynecological exam in the last year.
- 92.3 % reported having their blood pressure checked in the last 2 years.
- 52.7 % reported having cholesterol checked in the last 5 years.
- 13.5 % reported using sunscreen daily.

College students reported the following behaviors within the last 12 months:

<b>Percent (%)</b>	N/A, didn't drive, ride, or skate within the last 12 months	Never	Rarely or sometimes	Mostly or always	Mostly or always (N/A responses not included)*
Wore a seatbelt	0.3	1.2	10.6	88.0	88.2
Wore a helmet when riding a bicycle	57.9	25.0	7.2	9.8	23.3
Wore a helmet when riding a motorcycle	81.3	3.5	1.8	13.4	71.5
Wore a helmet when inline skating	81.0	13.9	2.3	2.7	14.3

\* Students responding "N/A, didn't drive, ride, or skate within the last 12 months" were excluded from this analysis.

### **C. Academic Impacts**

Within the last 12 months 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:	7.6 %	Eating disorder/problem:	1.5 %
Allergies:	5.2 %	HIV infection:	0.3 %
Assault (physical):	0.5 %	Injury:	3.7 %
Assault (sexual):	0.6 %	Internet use/computer games:	7.5 %
Attention deficit disorder:	4.6 %	Learning disability:	3.1 %
Cold/flu/sore throat:	18.8 %	Mononucleosis:	1.7 %
Concern for a troubled friend or family member:	15.9 %	Pregnancy (yours or partner's):	1.3 %
Chronic illness:	2.2 %	Relationship difficulty:	13.3 %
Chronic pain:	2.3 %	Sexually transmitted disease:	0.6 %
Death of a friend/family member:	9.3 %	Sinus infection/ear infection/bronchitis/strep throat:	8.8 %
Depression/anxiety disorder/seasonal affective disorder:	10.0 %	Sleep difficulties:	19.3 %
Drug use:	2.7 %	Stress:	26.9 %

### **D. Violence**

Within the last 12 months, college students reported experiencing:

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
A physical fight		19.2	4.9	10.6
Being physically assaulted (non-sexually)		6.2	3.3	4.7
Verbal threats for sex against their will		2.1	3.3	3.1
Sexual touching against their will		3.9	9.3	7.3
Attempted sexual penetration against their will		1.4	3.3	2.5
Sexual penetration against their will		1.3	1.7	1.5
An emotionally abusive relationship		11.9	17.2	15.7
A physically abusive relationship		2.3	2.3	2.4
A sexually abusive relationship		1.8	1.6	1.7



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

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

#### Alcohol

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never used		21.7	23.5	22.9
Used, but not in the last 30 days		12.1	19.0	16.2
Used 1-9 days		42.7	44.5	43.9
Used 10-29 days		22.0	12.4	16.1
Used all 30 days		1.4	0.6	0.9

#### Cigarette

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never used		59.6	58.9	59.0
Used, but not in the last 30 days		12.3	15.0	13.8
Used 1-9 days		10.1	9.1	9.4
Used 10-29 days		8.0	7.3	7.4
Used all 30 days		10.0	9.7	10.4

#### Marijuana

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never used		60.6	70.2	66.4
Used, but not in the last 30 days		16.4	17.4	16.8
Used 1-9 days		12.1	8.7	10.1
Used 10-29 days		7.9	2.9	5.1
Used all 30 days		3.0	0.7	1.6

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:

<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Never</b>		<b>Used one or more days</b>		<b>Used daily</b>	
	Reported Use (total)	Perception of Typical Use	Reported Use (total)	Perception of Typical Use	Reported Use (total)	Perception of Typical Use
Alcohol	22.9	1.3	60.0	55.6	0.9	43.1
Cigarettes	59.0	3.7	16.8	39.6	10.4	56.7
Marijuana	66.4	16.0	15.1	62.2	1.6	21.8

- 8.7 % 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		59.9	62.6	61.5
< .10		66.4	69.3	68.2
Mean		0.08	0.08	0.08
Median		0.05	0.05	0.05
Std Dev		0.11	0.10	0.10

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		47.7	67.6	60.0
<= 5		53.0	76.4	67.3
<= 6		59.9	84.1	74.7
Mean		6.10	3.40	4.45
Median		5.00	3.00	3.00
Std Dev		6.53	3.90	5.25

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		54.2	72.6	65.3
1-2 times		20.2	17.5	18.8
3-5 times		16.4	7.9	11.1
6 or more times		9.2	2.1	4.9

*Findings continued*

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College students reported doing the following when they "partied" or socialized during the last 12 months:\*

<b>When at a party or when going out....</b>	<b>usually or always Percent (%)</b>
alternate non-alcoholic with alcoholic beverages:	25.3
determine in advance not to exceed a set number of drinks:	35.5
choose not to drink alcohol:	31.7
use a designated driver:	76.7
eat before and/or during drinking:	72.2
have a friend let you know when you have had enough:	36.4
keep track of how many drinks being consumed:	63.5
pace drinks to one or fewer an hour:	26.4
avoid drinking games:	46.0
drink an alcoholic look-alike:	7.4

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

■ 95.1 % of college students reported usually doing or always doing one or more of the above behaviors when drinking alcohol during the last 12 months.\*

\*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 12 months as a result of their own drinking:\*

	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Being physically injured		18.3	14.2	15.6
Physically injured another person		8.1	3.0	4.9
Being involved in a fight		12.3	4.4	7.4
Doing something they later regretted		37.5	33.8	35.6
Forgetting where they were or what they had done		32.2	24.2	27.2
Having someone use force or threat of force to have sex with them		1.5	2.4	2.1
Having unprotected sex		23.3	15.7	18.8

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

## F. Sexual Behavior

College students reported the following within the last 12 months:

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Having had no sexual partner		27.0	29.9	28.7
Having had 1 sexual partner		39.4	46.4	43.6
Having had 2 sexual partners		11.5	11.4	11.3
Having had 3 sexual partners		7.4	5.9	6.6
Having had 4 or more sexual partners		14.7	6.5	9.8

Number of partners among students reporting to have at least one sexual partner within the last 12 months:\*

Mean	2.72	1.82	2.19
Median	1.00	1.00	1.00
Std Dev	3.58	2.23	2.86

\*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		24.0	30.0	27.9
Have not done this during the last 30		24.1	25.4	24.9
Did this 1 or more times		52.0	44.6	47.2

<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		31.2	32.8	32.0
Have not done this during the last 30		19.7	17.2	18.2
Did this 1 or more times		49.1	50.0	49.9

<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		78.8	82.7	81.2
Have not done this during the last 30		14.9	14.1	14.6
Did this 1 or more times		6.3	3.2	4.3

*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)*		3.4	44.5	17.6
Using a condom the last time they had sex**		3.1	44.3	16.8

\*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 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		31.8	34.3	32.9
Depo Provera (shots)		2.2	4.0	3.1
Norplant (implant)		0.1	0.2	0.1
Condoms		36.3	28.8	31.4
Diaphragm, cervical cap, sponge		0.2	0.3	0.3
Spermicide		4.9	3.0	3.9
Fertility awareness		2.2	2.5	2.4
Withdrawal		17.8	18.4	18.2
Other method		2.7	3.6	3.3
Nothing		6.1	4.6	5.3

- 5.6 % of sexually active college students reported using (or reported their partner used) emergency contraception ("morning after pill") within the last 12 months (male: 6.1 %; female: 5.1 %).\*

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

- 2.7 % of college students who had vaginal intercourse within the last 12 months reported experiencing an unintentional pregnancy or got someone pregnant within the last 12 months. (male: 2.9 %; female: 2.3 %).\*\*

\*\*Students responding "Have not had vaginal intercourse within the last 12 months" 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		37.2	56.6	48.2
Dieting to lose weight		15.2	36.3	27.9
Vomiting or taking laxatives to lose weight		0.4	3.4	2.2
Taking diet pills to lose weight		2.7	10.0	7.2
Doing none of the above		54.3	34.3	41.5

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		5.8	2.9	4.1
1 or 2 per day		66.1	64.6	64.9
3-4 per day		23.4	28.1	26.3
5 or more per day		4.6	4.3	4.7

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		23.6	33.3	29.6
1-2 days		32.7	35.0	33.8
3-5 days		34.7	26.1	29.8
6+ days		9.0	5.6	6.9

<b>Exercising to strengthen muscles</b>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
0 days		33.9	46.8	41.7
1-2 days		26.5	29.4	28.2
3-5 days		32.4	20.2	25.1
6+ days		7.3	3.5	5.0

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

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
0 days		13.3	15.8	14.9
1-2 days		29.4	31.7	30.9
3-5 days		44.3	41.2	42.5
6+ days		13.0	11.3	11.8

*Findings continued*

Estimated average Body Mass Index (BMI): This figure incorporates reported 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		3.2	8.2	6.2
18.5-24.9 Healthy Weight		59.3	66.0	63.1
25-29.9 Overweight		26.4	16.1	20.3
30-34.9 Class I Obesity		8.0	6.0	6.8
35-39.9 Class II Obesity		2.3	2.3	2.3
>= 40 Class III Obesity		0.9	1.5	1.3
<b>Mean</b>		24.59	23.39	23.88
<b>Median</b>		23.76	22.09	22.76
<b>Std Dev</b>		4.53	5.07	4.94

## H. Depression

Students reported experiencing the following within the last 12 months:

### Feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		16.6	4.9	9.4
1-10 times		63.2	62.5	62.8
11+ times		20.2	32.6	27.8

### Feeling exhausted (not from physical activity)

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		19.9	7.6	12.5
1-10 times		61.0	65.8	63.6
11+ times		19.0	26.7	23.9

### Feeling very sad

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		30.2	16.7	22.0
1-10 times		58.0	67.6	63.9
11+ times		11.8	15.6	14.1

### Feeling things were hopeless

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		49.7	36.2	41.4
1-10 times		42.5	53.8	49.5
11+ times		7.8	10.1	9.1

### Feeling so depressed it was difficult to function

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		64.8	56.6	59.4
1-10 times		29.1	36.0	33.7
11+ times		6.2	7.4	6.9

### Seriously considering attempting suicide

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		91.3	89.1	90.0
1-10 times		7.3	9.6	8.7
11+ times		1.4	1.3	1.3

### Attempting suicide

	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Never		98.4	98.3	98.3
1-10 times		1.3	1.6	1.5
11+ times		0.4	0.1	0.2

*Findings continued*

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	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
College students reported diagnosed with depression		7.2	13.9	11.3

*Of those students reporting ever having been diagnosed with depression in the item above...*

Diagnosed with depression in the last 12 months		41.8	44.8	44.8
Currently in therapy for depression		13.5	27.0	23.8
Currently taking medication for depression		40.2	46.9	45.3



# Demographics and Student Characteristics

## ■ Age:

Average age:	21.59 years
Median:	19.00 years
Std Dev:	6.64 years

18 - 20 years:	63.3 %
21 - 24 years:	23.6 %
25 - 29 years:	5.0 %
30+ years:	8.1 %

## ■ Sex\*

Female:	55.8 %
Male:	34.0 %

## ■ Student status:

1st year undergraduate:	43.6 %
2nd year undergraduate:	19.5 %
3rd year undergraduate:	14.5 %
4th year undergraduate:	13.3 %
5th year or more undergraduate:	6.1 %
Graduate or professional:	1.3 %
Adult special or other:	1.7 %

Full-time student:	94.4 %
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## ■ Relationship status:

Single:	56.6 %
Married/domestic partner:	9.0 %
Engaged or committed dating relationship:	32.8 %
Separated:	0.3 %
Divorced:	1.2 %
Widowed:	0.1 %

## ■ Students describe themselves as:

White:	80.4 %
Black – not Hispanic:	10.5 %
Hispanic or Latino:	1.8 %
Asian or Pacific Islander:	2.5 %
American Indian or Alaskan Native:	0.8 %
Other:	2.4 %

## ■ Students describe themselves as:

Heterosexual:	96.6 %
Gay/Lesbian:	0.9 %
Bisexual:	1.5 %
Transgendered:	0.1 %
Unsure:	0.9 %

## ■ Housing:

Campus residence:	48.9 %
Fraternity or sorority:	0.9 %
Other university:	1.9 %
Off-campus:	28.1 %
Parent/guardian's:	12.6 %
Other:	7.6 %

## ■ Hours of paid work per week:

0 hours:	47.2 %
1-9 hours:	10.7 %
10-19 hours:	15.7 %
20-29 hours:	14.1 %
30-39 hours:	6.3 %
40 hours:	3.2 %
More than 40 hours:	2.8 %

## ■ Hours of volunteer work per week:

0 hours:	65.9 %
1-9 hours:	30.0 %
10-19 hours:	3.0 %
20-29 hours:	0.6 %
30-39 hours:	0.2 %
40 hours:	0.2 %
More than 40 hours:	0.2 %

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

Yes:	82.5 %
Unsure:	8.0 %

\* Cases where sex is missing are included in the calculation of percentages for this variable

# Demographics of Participating Colleges/Universities

Ten US postsecondary institutions self-selected to participate in the Fall 2001 National College Health Assessment and 5,416 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 4,717 students on 8 campuses. Demographic characteristics of the 8 campuses follow:

Public	6
Private	2

4-year	7
2-year	1
Other	0

ACHA Member Institution	8
Non-member Institution	0

Carnegie Classification	
Doctoral Research University – Extensive	3
Doctoral Research University – Intensive	1
Masters College Univ I	2
BA College Standard	1
Associates College	1

Geographical Location	
Northeast (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	1
Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)	2
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)	0

Campus Setting	
Urban > 1,000,000	1
Urban 100,000 – 1,000,000	2
Suburban	4
Rural	1

Campus Size	
< 2,500	2
2,500 – 4,999	1
5,000 – 9,999	2
10,000 – 19,999	3
> = 20,000	0

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ACHA-NCHA Executive Summary designed by 2001 ACHA-NCHA Advisory Committee



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