

The Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of a national school-based survey that monitors the health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and young adults including:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries, violence and personal safety,
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections,
- Alcohol, tobacco and other drug use,
- Behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity, and
- Protective factors.

The Vermont high school YRBS has been conducted every other spring since 1993, a middle school survey was added in 2011. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2021 YRBS was delayed from the spring semester (January – April 2021) and administered during the fall semester (September – December 2021). Learn more about the YRBS program at HealthVermont.gov/YRBS.

Vermont 2021 YRBS: At-A-Glance

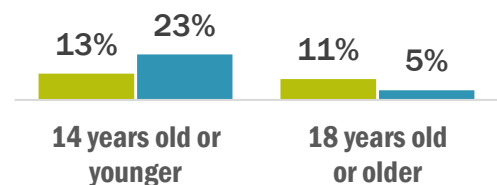
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| 59 of the 60 | invited high schools participated |
| 17,412 | students in grades 9–12 completed the survey |
| 72% | overall high school response rate |
| 110 | high school questions |

Special Considerations: COVID-19 Pandemic and Delayed Administration

Prevalence estimates for the 2021 VT YRBS were likely impacted by some significant factors unique to 2021, including the **COVID-19 pandemic** including remote learning, lack of social interactions and extracurricular activities, and the **delay of the survey administration period** resulting in a younger population completing the survey.

As a result, **no trend data is included in the 2021 report** and caution should be used when interpreting and comparing the 2021 results to other years. More information on these special considerations is available in [Understanding the 2021 Results](#) and the [full report](#).

Differences in Age Among High School Students: 2019-2021



Why Are These Data Important?

The YRBS is used to determine the prevalence of health behaviors. It can detect changes in risk behaviors over time and identify differences among subpopulations of students. With this data, school and community organizations can focus prevention efforts and determine whether school policies and community programs are having the intended effect on student behaviors. Think of the YRBS as a tool for starting discussions, educating the community, and planning or evaluating programs.

What are Some of the Findings from the 2021 Report?

YRBS results are weighted by sex, grade and race/ethnicity to compensate for absenteeism and incomplete surveys. The weighting allows the results to be fully representative of middle school students in grades six through eight (middle school survey) and high school students grades nine through 12 (high school survey). To ensure confidentiality, estimates must include a numerator of at least five students and denominator of 50 or more students. The [2021 YRBS Report](#) shows the overall prevalence rate and differences by sex, grade, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation and gender identity. Additional Populations in Focus reports and data briefs on special topics are available www.healthvermont.gov/yrbs.

New Response Options and Questions Related to Sexual Orientation and Disability Status Were Added to the 2021 High School Survey.

- In 2021, the CDC changed answer options around sexual orientation to provide more inclusive options for students to describe their sexual identity. “I am not sure about my sexual identity (questioning), I describe my sexual identity in some other way, and I do not know what this question is asking” were added to the question, “Which of the following best describes you?” Vermont students answered: 72% heterosexual (straight), 4% gay or lesbian, 13% bisexual, 5% I describe my sexual identity some other way, and 5% I am not sure about my sexual identity (questioning)
- The 2021 High School YRBS also included new two questions around disability.
 - One in six high school students (16%) currently receive special education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan; 8% have received special education services in the past but do not currently have an IEP or 504 plan.
 - Overall, 7% of students have a disability or long-term health problem that keeps them from doing everyday activities such as bathing, getting dressed, doing schoolwork, playing sports or being with friends; an additional 7% were not sure.

Many High School Students Are Experiencing Poor Mental Health, Anxiety, Sadness and Suicide Risk.

- More than a third of high school students (35%) reported that they experienced poor mental health most of the time or always during the past month.
- Three in 10 high school students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks during the past 12 months that they stopped doing some usual activities. Nearly four in 10 (36%) said they felt nervous, anxious or on edge at least most of the time during the past 12 months.
- More than one in 10 high school students (22%) reported hurting themselves without wanting to die, such as by cutting or burning on purpose, in the past 12 months; about one in seven (14%) made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months.
- When feeling sad, angry, hopeless or anxious, a third of high school students (33%) said they could always or at least most of the time get the kind of help they need. Nearly two in 10 (19%) never got the help they needed.

2021 High School YRBS Executive Summary

LGBTQ+ students and female students experience significantly higher levels of poor mental health, anxiety and sadness compared to their peers.

- Among high school students, LGBTQ+ (59%) and female students (49%) are twice as likely to experience poor mental health, including stress, anxiety and depression, at least most of the time during the past 30 days compared to heterosexual cisgender (26%) and male students (21%).
- Nearly two-thirds of high school LGBTQ+ students (62%) and more than half of female students in high school (52%) reported being nervous, anxious, or on edge at least most of the time during the past 12 months, roughly 2.5 times higher than heterosexual cisgender (27%) and male students (21%).
- More than half of high school LGBTQ+ students (52%) reported feeling sad or hopeless during the past year, a rate that is 2.5 times higher than their heterosexual cisgender peers (21%). High school female students are also two times more likely than male students to report feeling sad or hopeless (41% vs 19%).

LGBTQ+ high school students are four times more likely to report self-harm, make a plan to kill themselves and attempt to kill themselves during the past year compared to heterosexual cisgender students. Female high school students are two times more likely than male students to report self-harm, make a plan to kill themselves, and attempt to kill themselves during the past year.

- During the past year, 46% of high school LGBTQ+ students hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 29% made a suicide plan and 14% attempted suicide. Among heterosexual cisgender students 13% hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 8% made a suicide plan and 4% attempted suicide.
- Among female students, 32% hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 18% made a suicide plan and 9% attempted suicide during the past year. Twelve percent of male students hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 9% made a suicide plan and 5% attempted suicide.

BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Students are Significantly More Likely to Be Treated Unfairly and Experience Violence Compared to Their Peers.

- More than a third of BIPOC (34%) and LGBTQ+ students (37%) were treated unfairly because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation gender identity or age compared to 16% of white, non-Hispanic and 12% of heterosexual cisgender students.
- One in five LGBTQ+ students (20%) and 23% of BIPOC students have seen someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed or shot in their neighborhood compared to 14% of heterosexual cisgender and 14% of white, non-Hispanic students – a significant difference.
- During the past year, BIPOC students (10%) and LGBTQ+ students (10%) were threatened with a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property – significantly more than white, non-Hispanic students (6%) and heterosexual cisgender students (6%).

2021 High School YRBS Executive Summary

- LGBTQ+ students are twice as likely as heterosexual cisgender students to skip school because they felt unsafe at or on their way to or from school (14% vs 7%). BIPOC students (12%) are also significantly more likely than white, non-Hispanic students (8%) to skip school due to safety concerns.
- LGBTQ+ students are twice as likely as heterosexual cisgender students to experience bullying in the past 30 days (26% vs 13%).
- LGBTQ+ students are nearly three times more likely than heterosexual cisgender students to have ever experienced unwanted sexual contact (40% vs 15%).
- Among students who dated or went out with someone, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students are significantly more likely to be in an abusive relationship compared to white, non-Hispanic and heterosexual cisgender students.
 - 43% of LGBTQ+ students were in a controlling or emotionally abusive relationship and 13% went out with someone who physically hurt them on purpose compared to 25% of heterosexual cisgender students who experienced emotional abuse and 6% who experienced physical violence.
 - 34% of BIPOC students were in a controlling or emotionally abusive relationship and 14% went out with someone who physically hurt them on purpose, this is significantly higher than white, non-Hispanic students (28% and 7%, respectively).

EVP, Alcohol and Marijuana Use Among High School Students Continues to be a Concern.

- During the last 30 days, 16% of high school students reported using electronic vapor products (EVP). Of those who vaped, 30% used it every day.
 - Among high school students who used EVPs during the past 30 days, 61% primarily got them from a friend or family member. Nearly half (48%) used a disposable electronic cigarette or vaping device. About one in ten (9%) were not sure of the type of device used.
 - In 2021, new response options around the primary reason for using EVPs were added to the survey. Among high school students who used EVP during the past 30 days, about three in ten students used an EVP because they wanted to get high or a buzz (32%) or were feeling anxious or stressed (30%). About one in eight (13%) used them because they were curious about them.
- A quarter of high school students (25%) drank alcohol during the past 30 days. One in eight binge drank (12%).
- One in five high school students (20%) used marijuana during the past 30 days.
 - Among high school students who used marijuana during the past 30 days, 76% primarily smoked it, 10% primarily vaped it, 9% primarily ate or drank it.
 - Among high school students who used marijuana during the past 30 days, 42% used it 10 or more times, a third (34%) used it once or twice.

Many High School Students Report the Presence of Protective Factors.

- Nearly nine in 10 high school students (88%) report that their parents or other adults in their family know where they are going or with whom they will be with at least most of the time.
- About three quarters of high school students (74%) ate dinner at home with at least one of their parents or guardians on at least four days during the previous week.
- Seven in 10 high school students (70%) have at least one teacher or adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem. About half (55%) believe (agree or strongly agree) their school has clear rules and consequences for behaviors at school.
- Most high school students participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, band, drama or clubs run by the school or the community. During an average week, 25% of high school students spend 10 hours or more participating in extracurricular activities, 24% participate in one to four hours each week.
- After high school, nearly seven in ten high school students (69%) believe they most likely will attend a 4-year college or university, a community college or a technical school. Seventy six percent of students in 12th grade believe they will likely attend a college or university, a community college or a technical school.
- Just over half of all high school students (52%) agree or strongly agree that in their community they matter to people.
 - Female, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students are significantly less likely to feel they matter to people in their community compared to their peers (47% female vs 57% male; 46% BIPOC vs 53% white, non-Hispanic; 36% LGBTQ+ vs 58% heterosexual cisgender).



More Information and Contact

Additional information about the Vermont YRBS, including the full [2021 YRBS report](#), other executive summaries and reports, population in focus reports, and topic specific data briefs, is available at HealthVermont.gov/YRBS.

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