

# 2011 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

## Data Brief, February 2013: Heart Health

### Heart Health and Youth

While Cardiovascular Disease is often considered a condition that primarily affects adults, there are many behaviors that can help all individuals, including youth, prevent heart disease and related illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention list these behaviors as: reducing exposure to tobacco and alcohol, maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular physical activity, and consuming a healthy diet.<sup>1</sup> Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to be overweight and obese as adults, and are therefore more at risk for heart disease, type II diabetes, stroke, some forms of cancer and osteoarthritis.<sup>2</sup> This data brief reviews risk factors for poor heart health using the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

### Tobacco and Alcohol Exposure

In 2011, 13 percent of adolescents (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) indicated they had used tobacco in the past month. About one-third of adolescents had used alcohol in the past month and one-fifth reported binge drinking.

Most of these risk behaviors have significantly declined in recent years; however, the proportion of youth who engage in these risk factors continues to be a concern.

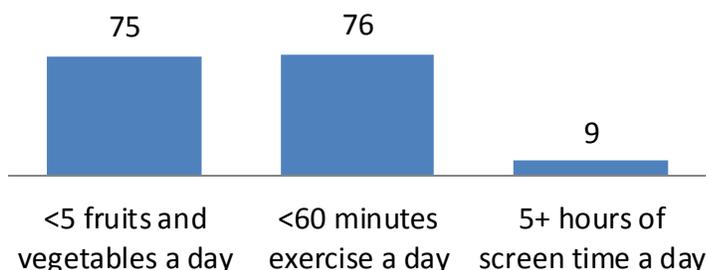
In addition to use of substances, youth are also exposed to second hand smoke: In 2011, 41 percent of students reported that, in the past seven days, they were in the same room as someone who was smoking, and 31 percent reported being in the same car with someone smoking.

For most of these risk factors, older adolescents (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders) were more likely to engage in or be exposed to a specific risk.

**Figure 1: Percent of students reporting substance use in past 30 days, 2011**



**Figure 2. Percent of students not getting recommended nutrition and physical activity in last week, 2011**



### Nutrition and Physical Activity

Three-quarters of students did not eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day or exercise the recommended 60 minutes every day (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines). About one in ten adolescents spent five or more hours per day watching TV, on a computer, or playing video games.

<sup>1</sup> CDC Heart Disease - <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/behavior.htm>

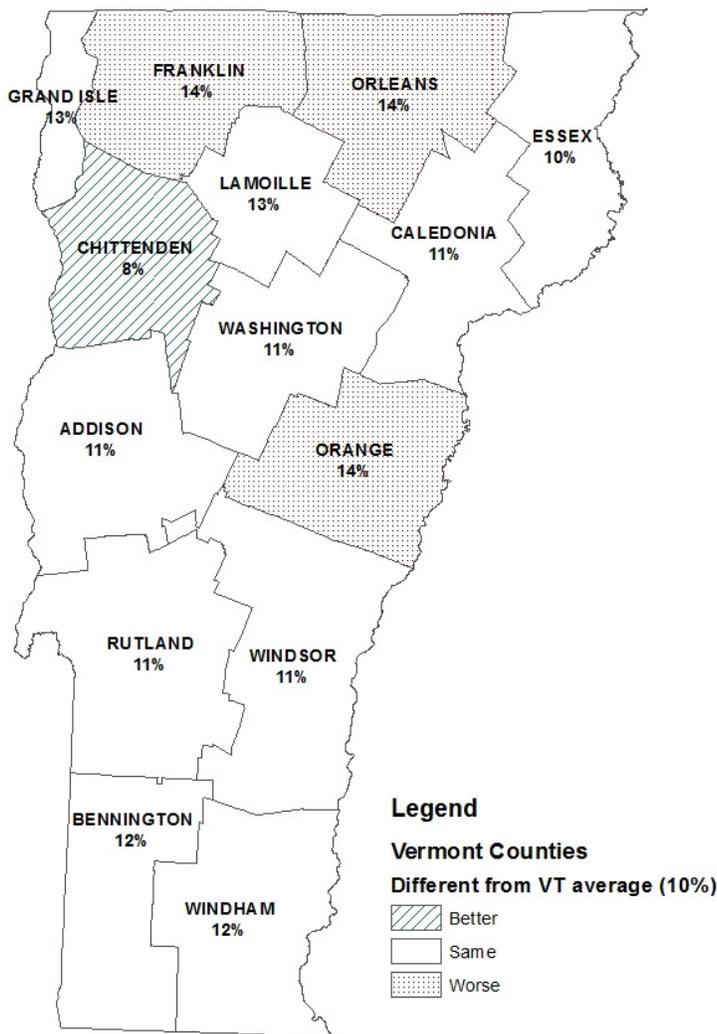
<sup>2</sup> CDC Adolescent and School Health - <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

## Obesity

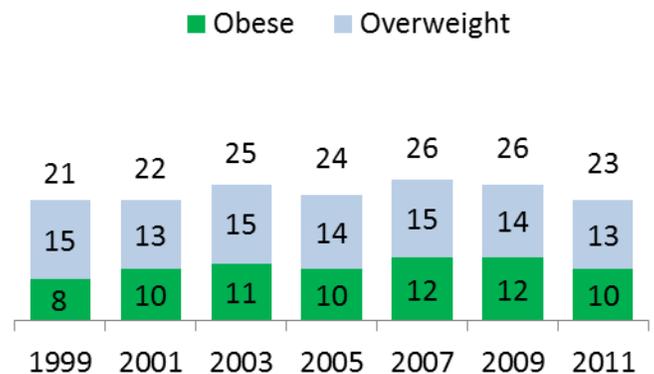
In 2011, 10 percent of Vermont students in grades 9-12 were obese and 13 percent were overweight.<sup>3</sup> Six percent of female students and 13 percent of male students reported a BMI that is considered obese.

Students who met fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity guidelines were as likely as those who did not to be overweight or obese. Interestingly, students who reported five or more hours of screen time were much more likely to be overweight or obese than those with less screen time (36 percent compared to 22 percent).

**Figure 3. Percent of students reporting weight and height classifying them as obese, by county, 2011**



**Figure 4. Percent of students in grades 9-12 classified as overweight or obese, 1999-2011**



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<sup>3</sup>Student reported height and weight are used to calculate their Body Mass Index (BMI). Obese students have a BMI  $\geq$  95th percentile for age and sex. Overweight students have a BMI  $\geq$  85th percentile but  $<$  95th percentile.