

Division of Maternal & Child Health

BRIEF: Adolescents Who Feel They Matter

The vision of the Division of Maternal and Child Health is that the health and wellness of Vermont's women, children, and families is a foundation for the health of all Vermonters. We work to achieve this vision through strategies that are family centered, evidence-based, and data driven.

Priority area

Youth choose healthy behaviors and thrive

Performance Measure

Percent of adolescents who feel they matter to people in their community

Strategy Measure

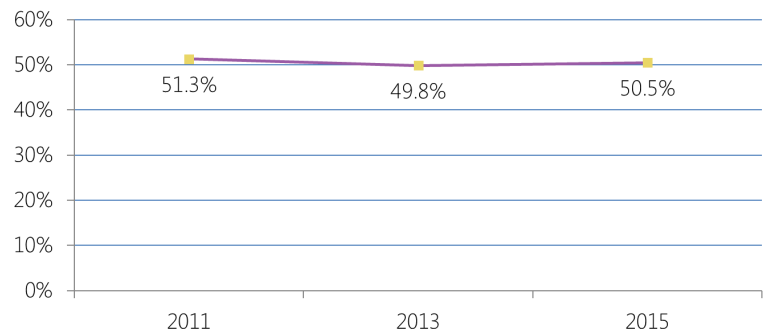
Percent of Vermont's public middle schools who have participated in the Getting to 'Y' student-led data analysis and reporting project in the previous three school years.

Introduction & Results.

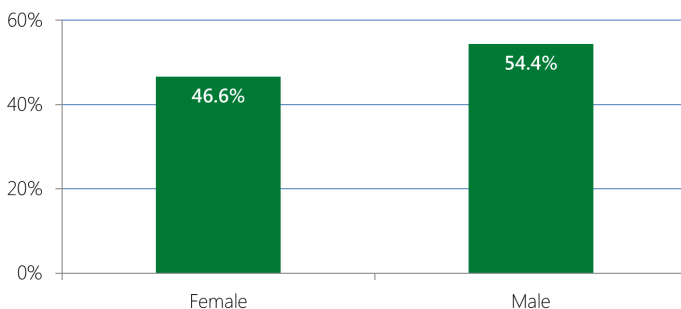
Adolescence is one of the most dynamic stages of human development. While generally characterized by good health, adolescence is also a time of dramatic physical, cognitive, social, and emotional change. Because of the rapid development occurring during this period, many physical and mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and health risk behaviors first emerge during adolescence. (CMS, 2014)

Vermont aims to promote healthy behaviors among youth through an empowerment and engagement model—a process where young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. Youth empowerment aims to improve health and quality of life. Youth engagement is the result when young people are involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive change. This means involving youth in planning and in making decisions that affect themselves and others. Research demonstrates that youth who feel empowered and feel they matter to people in their community are engaged in their own health and well-being in a way that promotes healthy behaviors (nutrition and physical exercise) and decreases harmful ones (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, impaired driving, and risky sexual activity). This leads to long term positive health outcomes: improved mental health, reduced teen suicide, reduced teen pregnancy and STI transmission, reduced obesity and other chronic health conditions, and fewer motor vehicle accidents, to name a few.

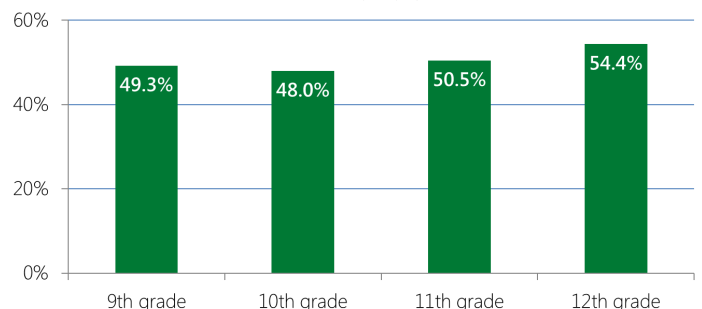
adolescents grades 9-12 who feel they matter to people in their community, 2011-2015



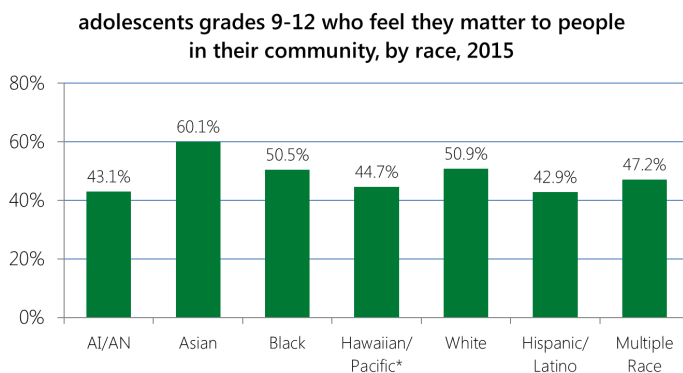
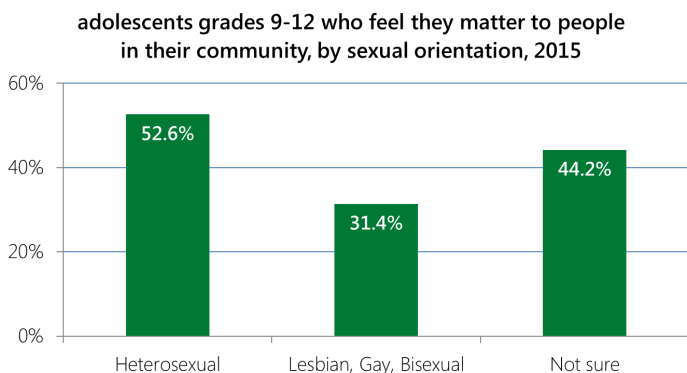
adolescents grades 9-12 who feel they matter to people in their community, by gender, 2015



adolescents grades 9-12 who feel they matter to people in their community, by grade, 2015



Female students are significantly less likely to feel they matter than male students. Students in 9th grade are more likely to feel they matter than students in 10th grade. Students in 12th grade are most likely to feel they matter to the community.



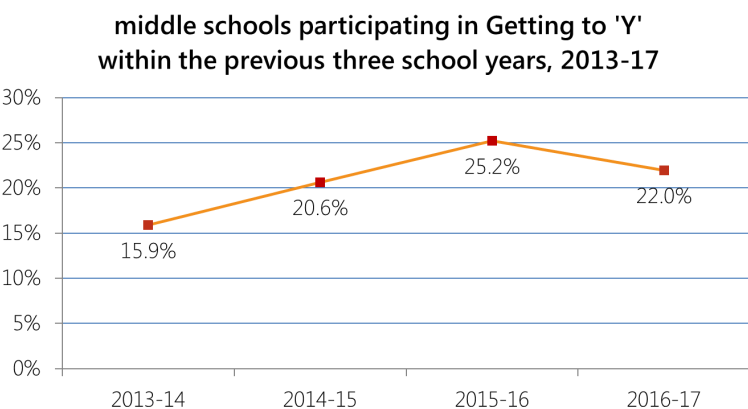
Students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are much less likely to feel they matter to their community than those who identify as heterosexual. Those who are unsure of their orientation report a rate lower than heterosexual students and higher than LGB students.

Asian students are most likely to feel they matter to their community. A similar percentage of white and black students feel they matter to their community. Native American and Hispanic/Latino students are less likely than white students to feel they matter to their community.

Vermont Strategies.

■ Getting to 'Y': Youth Bring Meaning to Their Youth Risk Behavior Survey a program by *Up for Learning*

Vermont public schools that complete the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and participate in this program have an opportunity to send a team of students with an adult advisor to a training where they learn how to organize their own retreat to analyze data and produce a Student Executive Summary. This summary includes three strengths, three areas of concern, and a preliminary plan of action, based on an exploration of root causes. They also learn how to host a community dialogue event to share their executive summary with the school and community and lead multi-generational discussions. Each school group receives ongoing coaching as they combine all they have learned to frame the next action steps, which the group then implements and assesses.



■ Continue to promote another program offered by *Up for Learning* called M3. This program provides training to school-based youth-adult teams on concrete tools to dispel the common myth that intelligence is fixed and how the brain processes information (M3: Mindset, Metacognition and Motivation); schools receive ongoing coaching and support as they implement these training activities

■ Vermont Raise Awareness for Youth Services (VT RAYS) is a diverse group of adolescents and young adults (ages 16-26) committed to improving adolescent health and wellbeing. The council aims to voice the views of young adults in accessing health care in VT, and will meet once a month to discuss project activities. VT RAYS seeks to make adolescent and young adult involvement in improving adolescent health care fun and interesting.

Data Sources & Issues.

[Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (YRBS) (state-specific question, no US comparison data)

* Indicator has an unweighted denominator between 30 and 59 or a confidence interval width >20% and should be interpreted with caution.

Contact.

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For more information, visit: healthvermont.gov/family/adolescents