

Alcohol Use Among Vermont High School Students

September 2025

Understanding the association between alcohol use and risky behaviors is important for planning substance use prevention activities and identifying at-risk students in need of support. The [2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (YRBS) shows that high school students who drink alcohol are more likely to use other substances and experience poor mental health than peers who do not drink alcohol. This brief examines past 30-day alcohol use among Vermont high school students and provides examples of current programs, activities and recommendations to prevent underage alcohol use and promote the health of youth in Vermont.

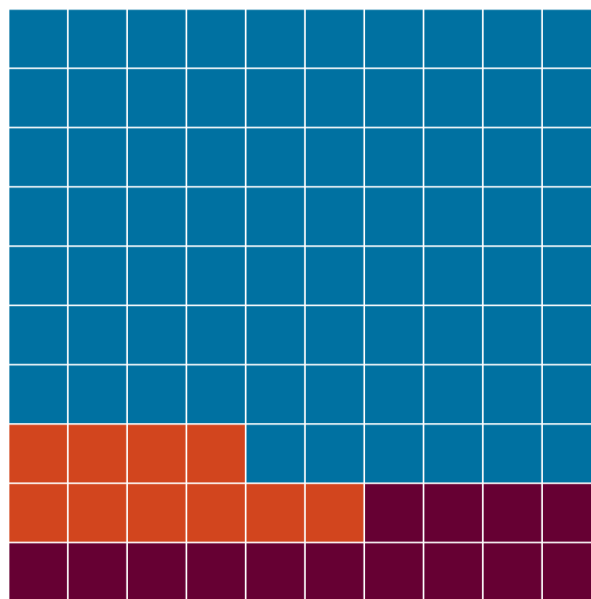
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Most high school students report that they do not drink any alcohol.

76% report that they do not drink.

10% report some drinking.

14% report binge drinking.



Some drinking

Is defined as having at least one drink of alcohol on at least one day in the past 30 days, but do not drink at the level of binge drinking.

Binge drinking

Is defined as having four or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours, if you are female, and five or more drinks in a row if you are male, in the past 30 days.



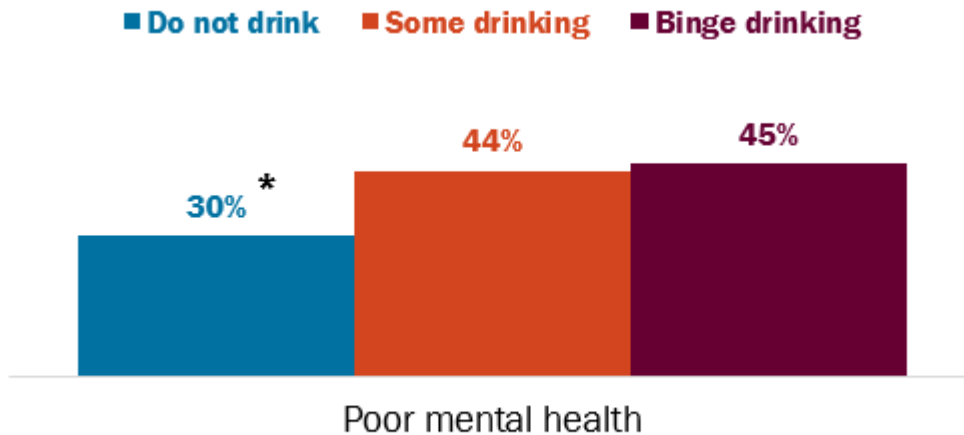
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Alcohol Use and Mental Health

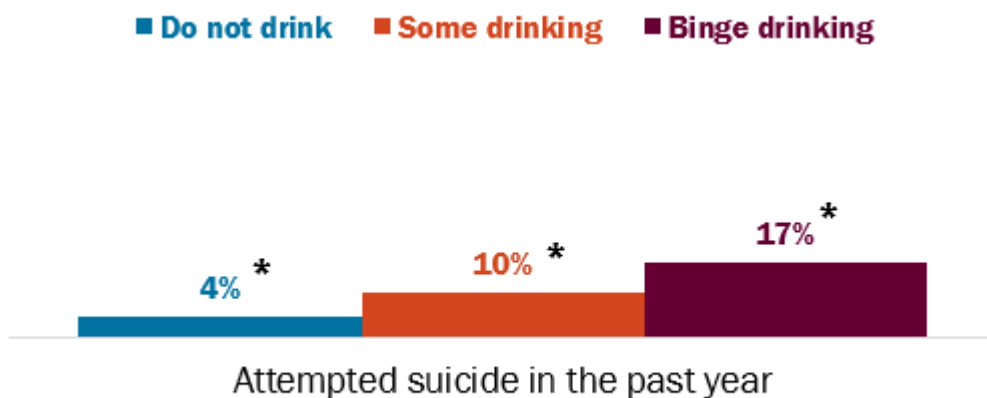
High school students who drink alcohol are more likely to have poor mental health or to have attempted suicide in the past year compared to those who don't drink. Poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression. The data does not show that one causes another, but that there is an association between them.

Poor mental health is higher among high school students who report drinking any alcohol.



*Statistical difference between no drinking and any level of drinking.

High school students who drink alcohol are more likely to report that they attempted suicide in the past year than those who do not drink.



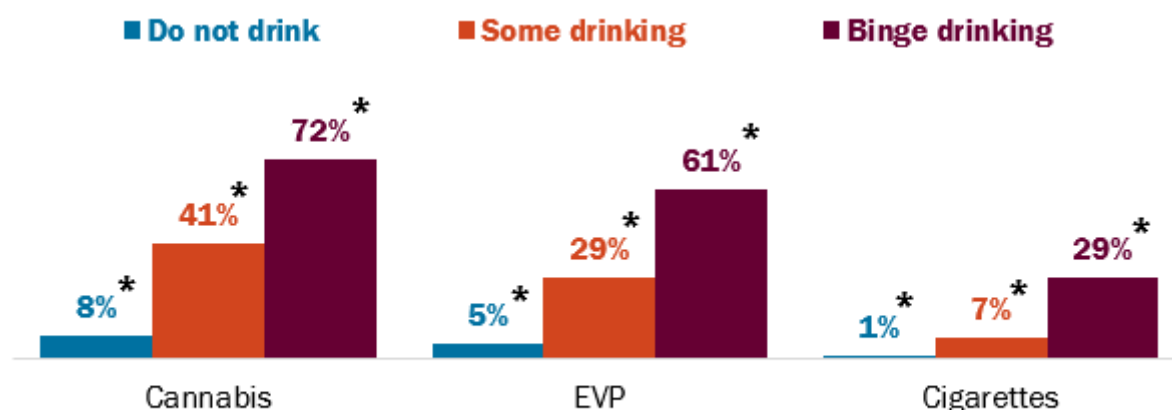
*All differences by level of drinking are statistically significant.

Use of Alcohol and Other Substances

Current Substance Use

One in seven students report binge drinking. Students who binge drink are significantly more likely to report using other substances in the past 30 days, such as cannabis or electronic vapor products (EVP). Of the high school students who report binge drinking, 72% of these students also report using cannabis, 61% report using EVPs, and 29% using cigarettes.

High school students who report binge drinking are significantly more likely to also report using cannabis, cigarettes or electronic vapor products than those who report a lower amount of drinking or do not drink.



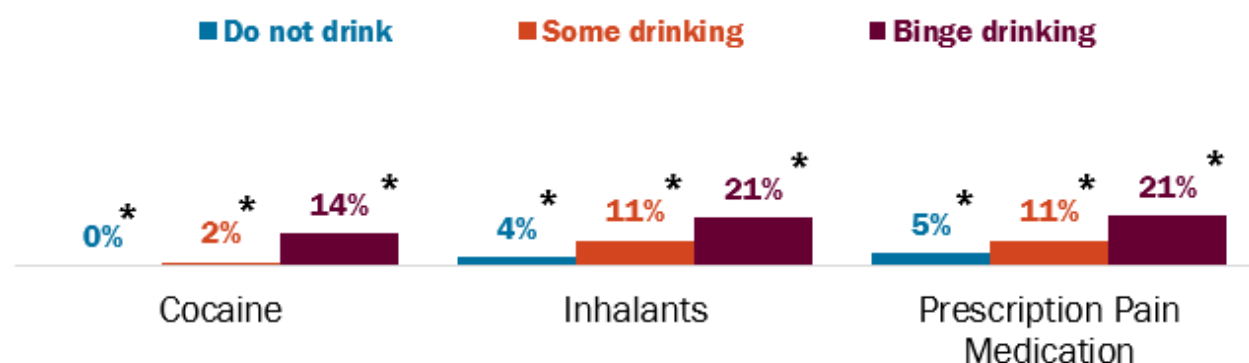
*All differences by level of drinking are statistically significant.

Lifetime Illicit Substance Use and Prescription Misuse

The percentage of high school students who have ever used cocaine, inhalants, or prescription pain medications (such as codeine, OxyContin, or Percocet) in a way that was not prescribed is also significantly higher with each increasing level of drinking. Use of inhalants includes sniffing glue, breathing the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaling paints or sprays to get high.

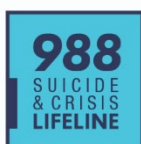
Of the high school students who report binge drinking, 14% also report ever using cocaine, 21% report ever using inhalants, and 21% report ever misusing prescription pain medication. Students who report binge drinking are four times more likely to report ever misusing prescription pain medication than students who report no drinking in the past 30 days.

Students who report **binge drinking** are significantly more likely to report ever using cocaine or inhalants than students who report **drinking lower amounts** or **do not drink alcohol**.



*All differences by level of drinking are statistically significant.

Get Help Right Now For...



- **A Mental Health Crisis:** [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#): If someone is experiencing a mental health and/or substance use crisis, the person, or someone who is concerned about them, can call, text, or [chat](#) 988 for free and confidential support 24-hours a day, seven days a week.



- **Substance Use support:** Whether someone is seeking help for themselves or someone they care about, VT Helplink can connect them to the services they need. VT Helplink is a free resource for Vermonters, providing confidential, non-judgmental support and referrals to treatment, recovery, and other services. Helplink Specialists can help navigate Vermont's treatment and recovery system, whether or not someone has insurance. Visit VTHelplink.org.
- **For More Substance Use and Mental Health Support**, review [this collection of Vermont resources](#) to support youth, a supplement to this data brief.

Recommendations

Whether you are a parent, community member, or part of a school, there are ways to support youth, reduce risks, and increase protective factors.

Reinforce positive social norms.



Most students are not using alcohol. Students often believe more of their peers are using substances than the data show. Parents, schools, and communities can promote and normalize that most students choose to refrain from substance use.

Consider both substance use and mental health.



A student using a substance is also more likely to be experiencing poor mental health. When a student screens positively in either area, consider what additional supports the student may need. The student's pediatrician, school nurse, school counselor, or other trusted health professional can help with these concerns and the most appropriate next steps.