The Use of Multiple Substances Among Youth and Young Adults in Vermont

May 2026

An increasing number of youth and young adults are using multiple substances. Almost one in five (19%) high school students report currently using two or more substances, and 32% of adults ages 18-25 use two or more substances.[1,2]

Most data sources ask only about a few different substances and do not measure the full impact of using multiple substances or the variety of products (e.g. cigarettes, nicotine pouches, hookah) used to take a substance (e.g. tobacco/nicotine). The Vermont Policy and Communication Evaluation (PACE) Wave 10 Survey asked 132 youth (ages 12-17) and 255 young adults (ages 18-25) about their current use of 23 different substances or products. This is more comprehensive than any other data source and better illuminates what young Vermonters are using.

In this data brief, the term "product" is used to include each substance and product.

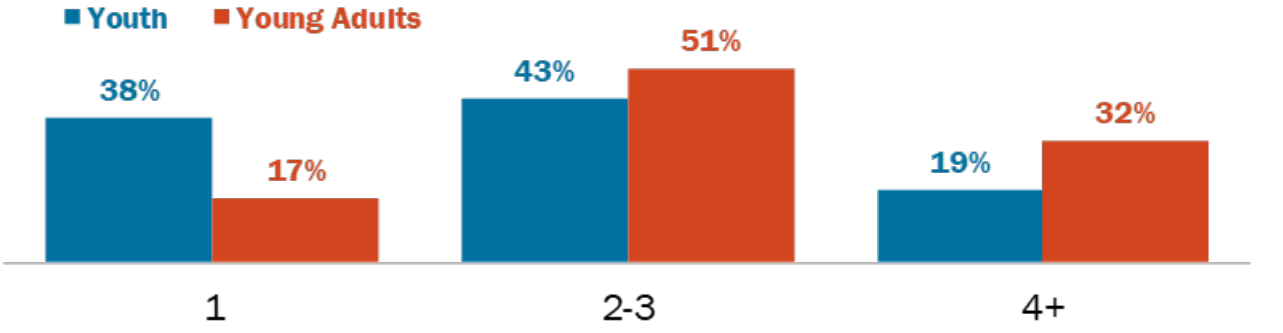
If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact AHS.VDHOverdoseDataVT@vermont.gov or AHS.VDHHPDPAnalytics@vermont.gov.

Total Number of Products Used

- PACE asks about the following 23 different products: cigarettes, electronic nicotine products (ENPs), cigars, smokeless tobacco, hookah, nicotine pouches, wellness vapes, alcohol, cannabis, prescription pain medication, heroin, fentanyl, prescription stimulants, cocaine, methamphetamine, inhalants, hallucinogens, LSD, MDMA (ecstasy or molly), ketamine, tranquilizers, kratom, and xylazine.† Current use is defined as having used a product in the past 30 days.

Almost two out of three youth who use substances use multiple products.
More than 80% of young adults who use substances use multiple products.

Number of Products Used by Youth and Young Adults Who Use Any Substances



Combinations of Products Used

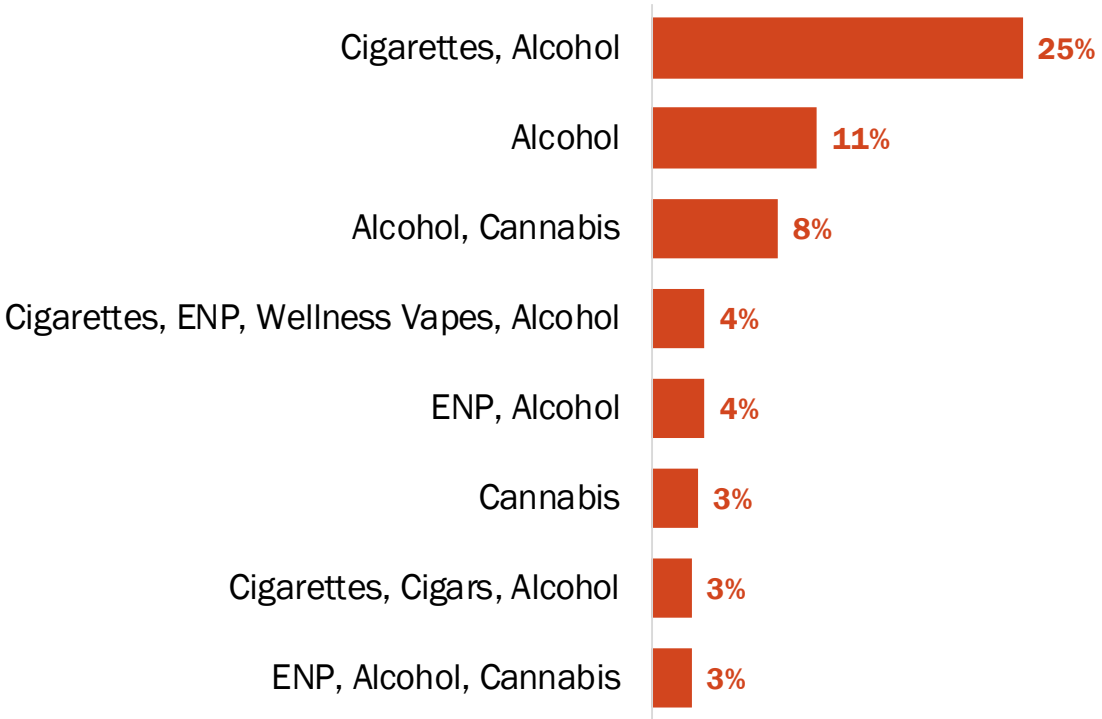
- Some PACE survey participants use only one product. If a youth participant uses only one product, it is most likely to be alcohol. If a young adult participant uses only one product, it is likely to be alcohol or cannabis.
- Many of the combinations include multiple types of tobacco/nicotine product use, such as cigarettes and ENPs.

More than a quarter of youth who use substances use alcohol, ENPs and hookahs.

Product Combinations Among Youth Who Use Substances

A quarter of young adults who use substances use both cigarettes and alcohol.

Product Combinations Among Young Adults Who Use Substances



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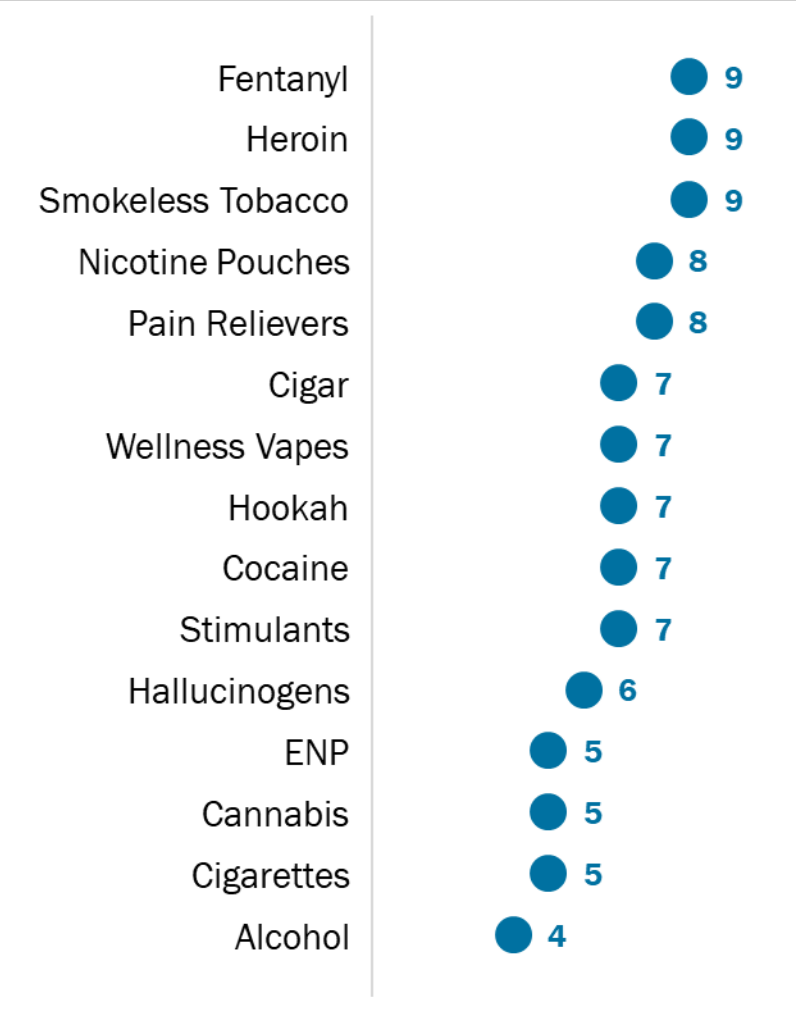
Youth and young adults who use certain products like fentanyl, heroin and smokeless tobacco on average report using more kinds of products than those who use products like alcohol, cigarettes and cannabis.

Average Number of Products Youth and Young Adults Use By One Product Used

- For example, survey participants who reported using fentanyl, heroin or smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days reported using a total of 9 different products on average. This means these participants used an additional eight other products.
- Products such as xylazine and methamphetamines are not included here since the number of participants who report using them is too small.

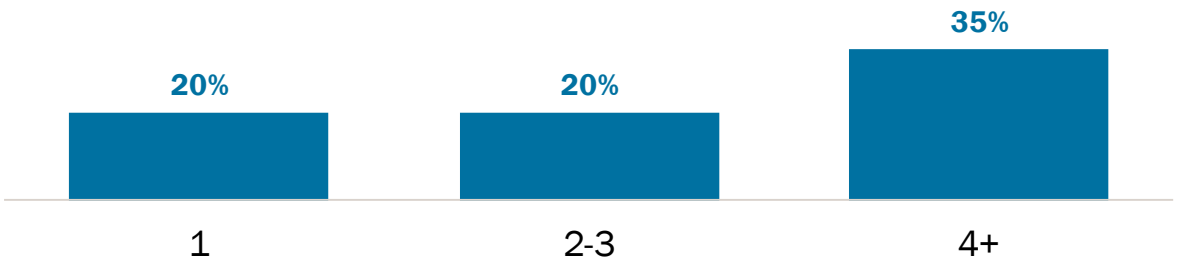


- Among participants who use any substance, alcohol (87%) and cigarettes (51%) were the most common products used. Smokeless tobacco (12%), heroin (5%) and fentanyl (4%) were less frequently reported (data not shown).
- However, youth and young adults who drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes on average use a lower total number of different products compared to those who report using other products.

Depression and Substance Use

Youth and young adults who report using four or more products have a higher prevalence of experiencing depressive symptoms than those who use one or two to three.

Prevalence of Depressive Symptoms by Number of Products Used Among Youth and Young Adults Who Use Any Substances

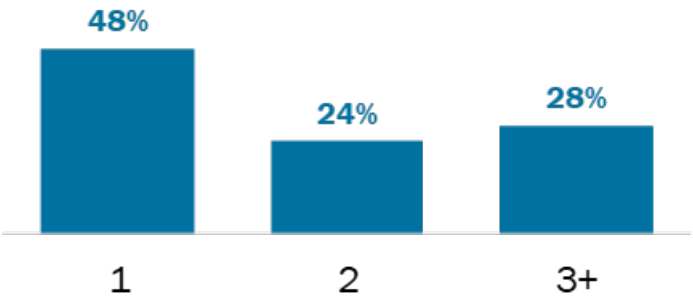


Use of Multiple Tobacco/Nicotine Products

- Of participants who reported any current substance use, most (73%) use at least one type of tobacco/nicotine product. Tobacco/nicotine products include cigarette, ENP, nicotine pouch, smokeless tobacco, hookah and/or cigar use.
- Among those who only use **one** tobacco/nicotine product, cigarettes are the most common.
- Among those who use **two** tobacco/nicotine products, cigarettes and ENPs are the most common combination.
- Among those who use **three** tobacco/nicotine products, cigarettes, ENPs and hookah are the most common combination.

Among youth and young adults who use any tobacco/nicotine, more than one in four use 3+ types of products.

Number of Tobacco/Nicotine Products Used



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Resources

Substance Use and Mental Health Support

- 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
- Review this collection of Vermont resources, or visit Get Help Now to find support.

Notes

†Select product definitions: Electronic nicotine products (ENPs) include e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods. The cigar category includes cigars, cigarillos, filtered cigars, or little cigars. Smokeless tobacco includes chewing tobacco, moist snuff, dip, or snus. Wellness vapes include ingredients like vitamins, caffeine, melatonin, and/or various essential oils. Instructions for prescription pain medication, prescription stimulants, any form of cocaine, inhalants, heroin, methamphetamines, LSD, hallucinogens other than LSD, MDMA, ketamine or other sedatives, tranquilizers, kratom, fentanyl, and xylazine asked participants to only select products taken *without* a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it.

All PACE Vermont data included in this brief were collected by Rutgers University in the Wave 10 Survey (Winter 2025). The Vermont Department of Health would like to acknowledge Rutgers University and Dr. Andrea Villanti for their leadership of the PACE Vermont Study. The PACE Vermont Study was funded by the Vermont Department of Health.

PACE Vermont is an online convenience sample of Vermont youth and young adults. The results are not generalizable to the population overall.

The Health Department recognizes that many social, economic and environmental inequities made worse by structural oppression, marginalization and racism influence the data we collect and report. We continuously work to better collect and share data that reflect the lived experiences of all Vermonters. If you have questions or concerns, please check our Data Encyclopedia for more information, including who to contact to find out more.

References

[1] 2023 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Two or more products includes use of cigarettes, electronic vapor products, smokeless tobacco, cigars (or little cigar or cigarillos), marijuana, and alcohol.

[2] 2024 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey. Two or more products includes use of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol.