

Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health Among Vermont High School Students

August 2025

Reports of poor mental health are increasing among adolescents nationwide and in Vermont.^{1,2,3} Over the past decade, researchers have found links between increasing social media use and worse mental health, such as this [advisory on social media for youth mental health](#).⁴ In particular, female students in Vermont report both worse mental health and higher social media usage than male students.⁵

The data in this report are from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which provides point-in-time estimates on various indicators, including mental health and social media use. The YRBS can be used to understand associations in data, but cannot be used to determine causation, such as whether increased social media use directly leads to worse mental health or vice versa.

The association between high social media use and negative mental health indicators is significant.

Key Points

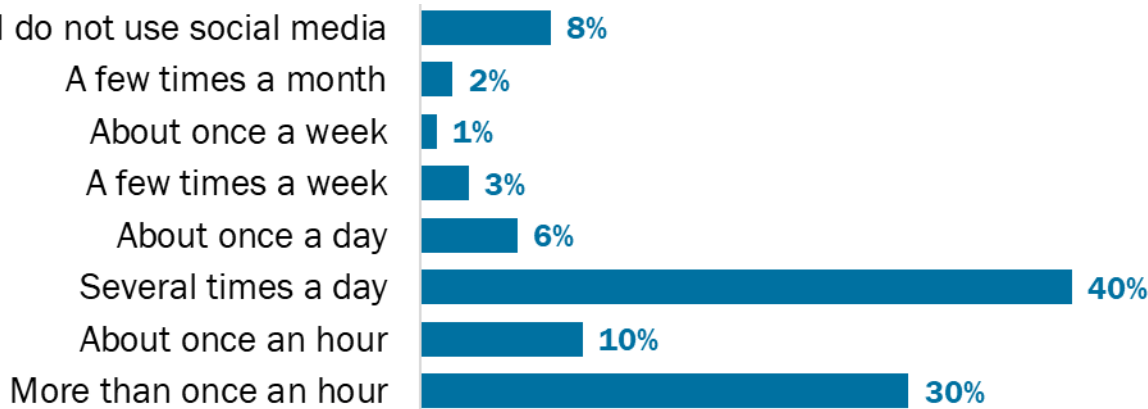
- **Students with high social media use report significantly worse mental health than students with low social media use.**
- **Female students use social media more frequently and have worse mental health outcomes than male students.**

Frequency of Social Media Use Among all High School Students

Most Vermont high school students use social media several times a day or more. Almost one-third use social media more than once an hour.

80 percent of Vermont high school students report using social media several times a day or more.

Frequency of social media use:



Source: YRBS, 2023



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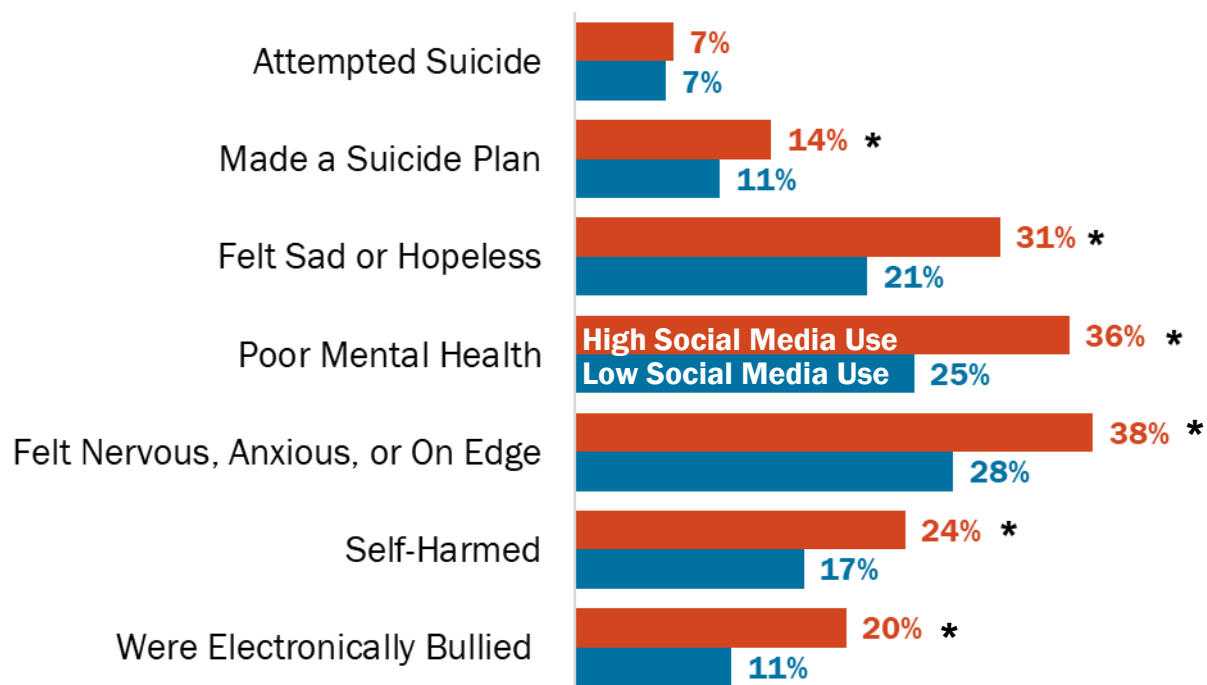


Mental Health Among Students With High Social Media Use

Students with high social media use (using or checking social media several times a day or more) report significantly higher rates of poor mental health indicators: making a suicide plan, feeling sad or hopeless, having poor mental health, feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge, self-harming, or being electronically bullied

Students with high social media use have significantly worse mental health than students who use social media less frequently[^].

Percent of students who:



Source: YRBS, 2023

*Statistical difference between high and low social media use

[^]Students who use social media less frequently is defined by using or checking social media about once a day or less.

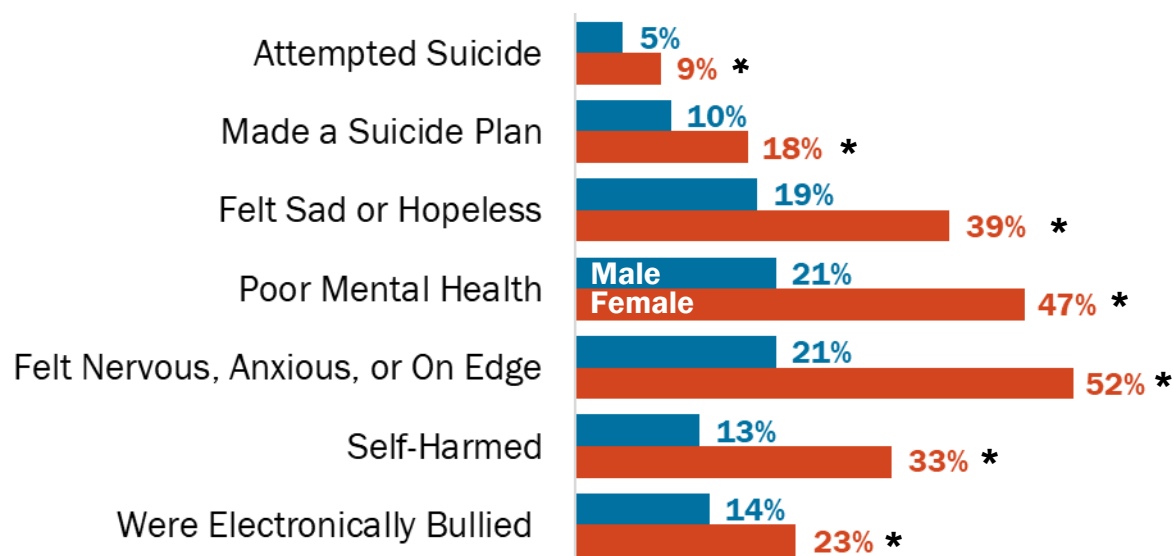
Female High School Students Use Social Media at Higher Rates and Have Worse Mental Health than Male Students

Mental Health by Sex

Female high school students have significantly worse mental health outcomes than male high school students across all mental health indicators.

Female students have significantly worse mental health than male students.

Percent of students who:



Source: YRBS, 2023

*Statistical difference between male and female students

Social Media Use by Sex

Female high school students not only report worse mental health than male high school students, but they also use social media more frequently than male students.

Female students report high social media use 10% more than male students.

Percent of students with high social media use:



Source: YRBS, 2023

*Statistical difference between male and female students

Mental Health by Social Media Use and Sex

When mental health indicators are broken down by both social media use frequency and sex, there are more prominent differences in the mental health of female students based on use levels. Female students with high social media use have significantly worse mental health across six of the seven indicators compared to female students who use social media less frequently. Among the male students, those with high social media use only have significantly worse mental health in two of the seven indicators.

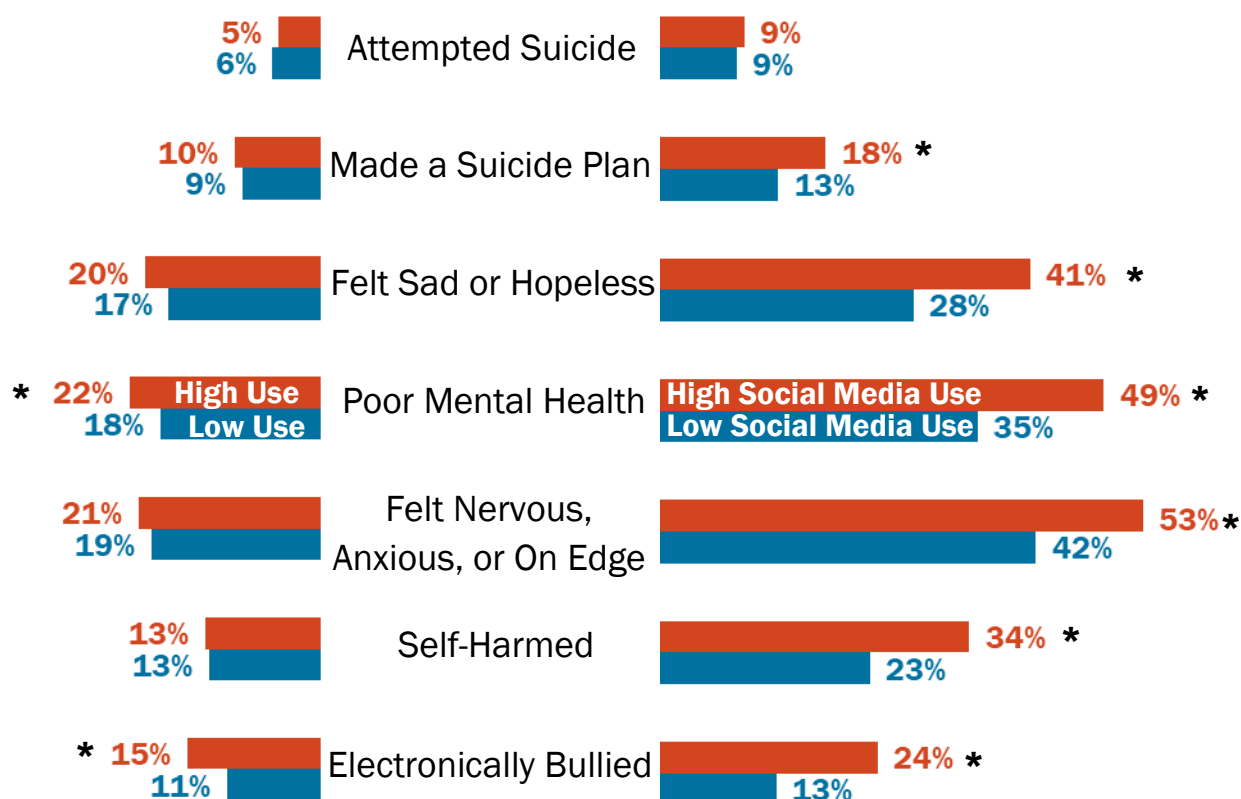
These data show that social media may impact female students differently than males, especially if female students are using social media a lot.

Students with high social media use have worse mental health. This is especially true for female students.

Percent of students who:

Male Students:

Female Students:



Source: YRBS, 2023

*Statistical difference between high and low social media use

Key Takeaways

- Students with high social media use have worse mental health than students with low social media use.
- Female high school students have worse mental health and use social media more frequently than male high school students.
- By better understanding the relationship between social media use and mental health, communities should better support adolescents and their families in maintaining balanced and healthy lifestyles.

Resources to Get Help

1. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide or experiencing a mental health crisis call or text 988 or chat the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#).
2. For more information about social media and youth mental health or for resources on how to start conversations with youth about their media use, visit the [American Academy of Pediatrics Center of Excellence for Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#).
3. For more information about getting support, helping others who may be at risk for suicide, and getting more involved in suicide prevention in Vermont, go to [FacingSuicideVT.com](#).

References:

1. [Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health, CDC, 2025](#)
2. [Worsening Mental Health for Children and Youth in Vermont, Kids Count Report, Vermont 211, 2022](#)
3. [Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide, CDC, 2024](#)
4. [Social Media and Youth Mental Health, the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 2023](#)
5. [Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey Statewide Report, 2023](#)

Data Notes: YRBS Indicators Information

1. **Social Media Use:** Report how often they use social media, such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter.
2. **Suicide Attempt:** One or more suicide attempts in the past 12 months.
3. **Suicide Plan:** Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide in the past 12 months.
4. **Sad or Hopeless:** Report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row.
5. **Poor Mental Health:** Report their mental health was not good always or most of the time during the past 30 days.
6. **Anxious, Nervous, or on Edge:** Report being bothered by feeling anxious, nervous, or on edge always or most of the time during the past 12 months.
7. **Self-Harm:** Doing something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning themselves on purpose one or more times during the past 12 months.
8. **Electronic Bullying:** Report being electronically bullied (counting being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media) in the last 12 months.

The data in this brief only includes Vermont high school students and does not include data from middle school students.

For more information about YRBS, visit [Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey website](https://www.vermont.gov/health/youth-risk-behavior-survey).

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact ahs.vdh-suicidedata@vermont.gov.