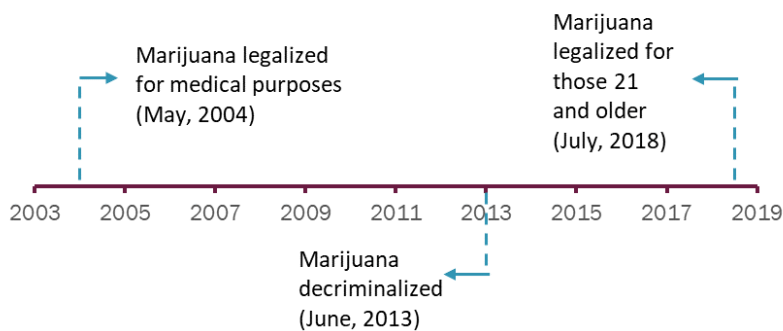


Marijuana’s legal status in Vermont has changed significantly over the past two decades. In 2004, the Vermont legislature voted to legalize the use of marijuana for medical purposes and in 2013 penalties for possession of one ounce or less were reduced to a fine. In July 2018, legislation went into effect legalizing possession, private consumption, and limited cultivation among persons aged 21 years and older. Marijuana remains illegal at the federal level.

Timeline of Marijuana-Related Legislation in Vermont



KEY POINTS

- **Use among youth and adults is increasing.**
- **Vaping as a primary method of use among high school students increased eight-fold between 2017 and 2019.**
- **Among high school students, peer and perceived parental disapproval of marijuana use have decreased over the past decade.**
- **Over the past five years, two-thirds of operators involved in fatal crashes suspected of driving under the influence of drugs had THC in their systems.**

Marijuana Use Among Vermont High Schoolersⁱ

In 2019, 40% of Vermont high school students (grades 9-12) reported that they had used marijuana at least once in their lives.

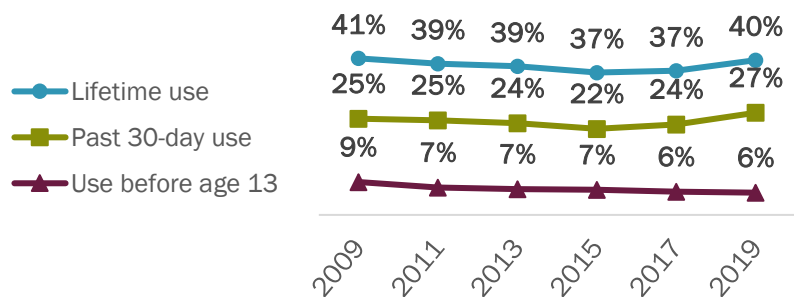
Lifetime use is statistically similar to 2009 (41%) but has significantly increased since 2017 (37%).

Although lifetime use has recently increased, **marijuana use before the age of 13** has steadily decreased over the past decade. Six percent of high schoolers reported using before they were 13 years old in 2019 – a significantly lower percentage than in 2009 (9%). This decrease is particularly important due to the association between early marijuana use and adverse health outcomes related to brain development, neurocognitive functioning and mental health.ⁱⁱ

Past 30-day marijuana use in youth

has significantly increased in recent years. In 2019, 27% of high school students reported using marijuana. This is significantly higher than past 30-day use in 2015 (22%) and 2017 (24%), but similar to 2009 (25%).

Marijuana Use Among High Schoolers in Vermont (2009 - 2019)

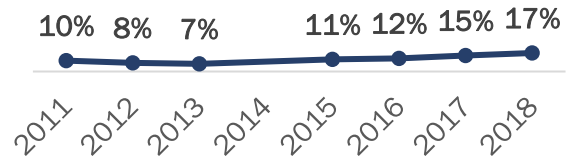


High school students who report using marijuana before age 13 are more likely to report past 30-day use than those who were older when they first used.

Marijuana Use Among Vermont Adultsⁱⁱⁱ

Seventeen percent of Vermont adults (18+) reported using marijuana at least once in the past 30 days in 2018. Past 30-day use has steadily increased since 2013, when 7% of adults reported using. Although use in 2018 was statistically similar to 2017, it was significantly higher than in 2016.

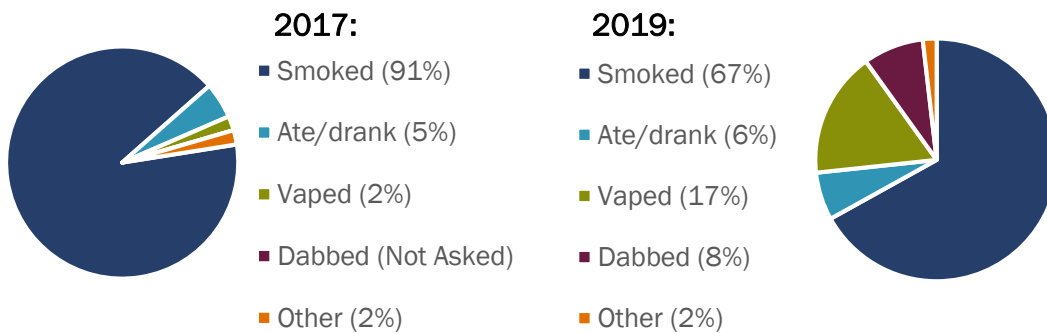
Current Marijuana Use Among Vermont Adults (2011-2018)



Methods and Frequency of Use Among Those Who Used in the Past 30 Days

While most high school students who used marijuana in the last 30 days primarily smoked it, the proportion smoking it significantly decreased between 2017 (91%) and 2019 (67%). Students reported **vaping (17%)** and **dabbing (8%)** as the other most common primary methods of use in 2019. The proportion of students vaping increased eight-fold (17%) compared to 2017 (2%). Of note, dabbing was first added as a response option in 2019 and is the third-most reported method of use. Dabbing is a method of marijuana consumption where concentrated THC (sometimes called “shatter” or “budder”) is placed on a hot surface, aerosolized, and inhaled. This is typically done with a dab rig, which has a similar form to a traditional bong, or dab pen, which is similar to a vape pen.^{iv}

Primary Method Used to Consume Marijuana, Among High School Students Using in Past 30 Days



In 2018, 80% of Vermont adults using marijuana reported that they usually smoke it. Another 10% reported vaping, 8% consumed it in a food or drink, and the remaining 2% dabbed as the primary method of consumption. These rates are all statistically similar to those reported in 2017.

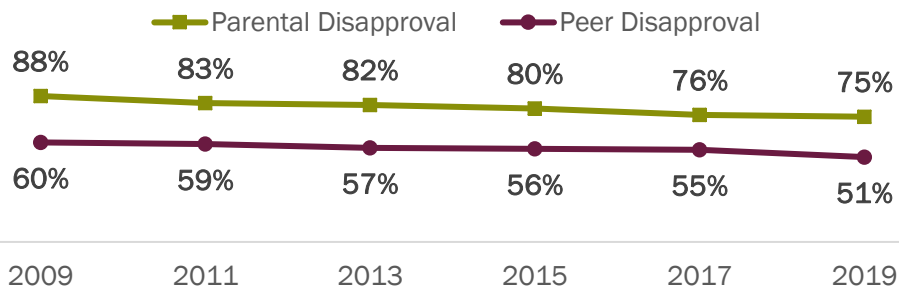
Frequent marijuana use was common among high school students and adults who reported using marijuana in the past 30 days. Forty-three percent of high schoolers who used marijuana used it ten or more times in the past month, while 59% of adults used marijuana on ten or more days out of the past month.

Attitudes and Perceptions About Marijuana Use Among Vermont High Schoolers

Perceived parental disapproval of marijuana use has decreased significantly over the past decade. In 2019, 75% of students believed their parents would think it was wrong or very wrong for them to use marijuana, a significantly lower proportion than in 2009 (88%).

Similarly, peer disapproval of marijuana use has decreased significantly over the past decade. In 2019, half of all students (51%) believed it was wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use marijuana, a significantly lower proportion than in 2009 (60%).

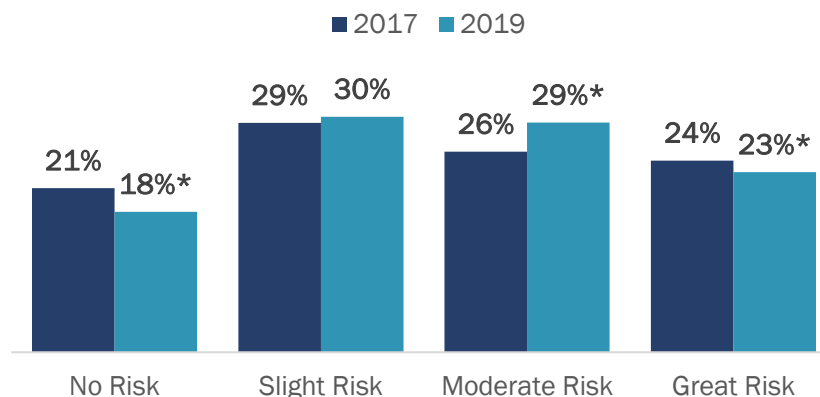
Perceived parental disapproval and peer disapproval have been decreasing over the past decade.



In 2019, more than half (52%) of students believed using marijuana regularly would lead to a moderate or great risk of harm (physically or in other ways). The proportion of students who believed regular use would lead to moderate risk significantly increased between 2017 (26%) and 2019 (29%), while the proportion who saw a great risk in regular use significantly decreased from 24% to 23%.

Although more students believed there would be at least a slight risk of harm from regular marijuana use compared with 2017, nearly one-fifth of students perceived no risk from using marijuana regularly in 2019 (18%).

Perceived risk of harm from regular marijuana use among Vermont high school students

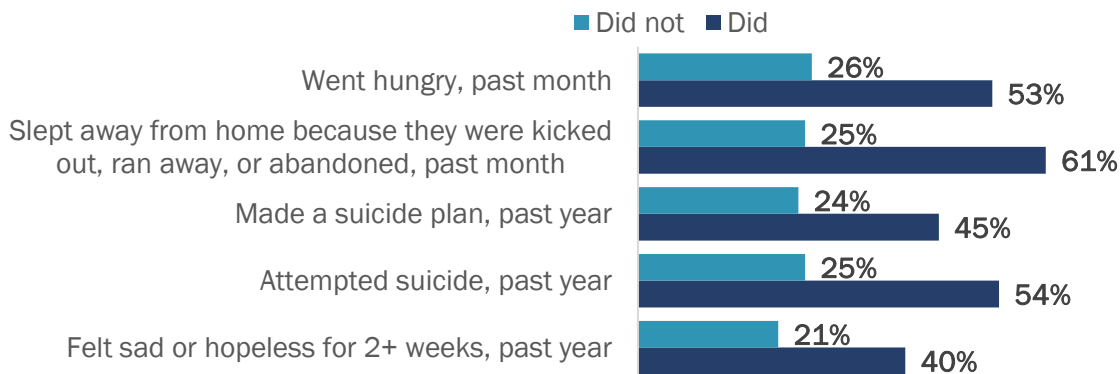


*Indicates a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

Marijuana Use Among Youth and Adults by Mental Health and Life Circumstances¹

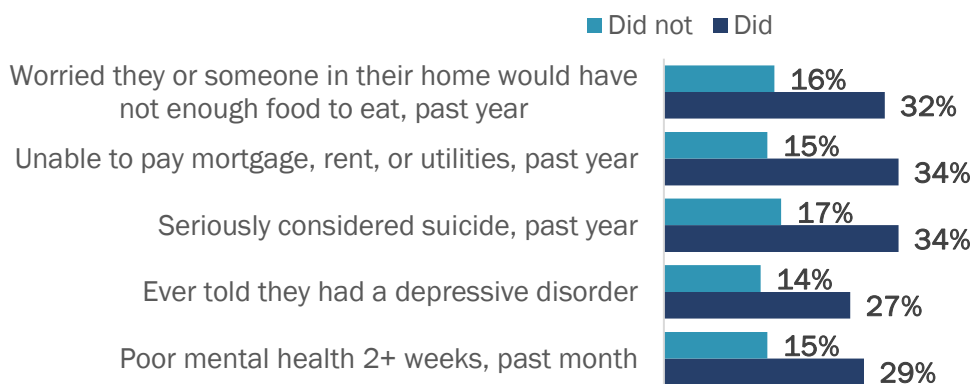
Marijuana use differs significantly by a number of indicators related to mental health and individual life circumstances for youth and adults alike. Among high school students in 2019, those who reported feeling sad or hopeless for at least two weeks, making a suicide plan, or attempting suicide in the past year were twice as likely to report past 30-day marijuana use as students who did not report these. Students who experienced food or housing insecurity in the past month were also twice as likely to report marijuana use than students who were food or housing secure.

Past 30-day marijuana use is twice as high among students who experienced poor mental health or adverse life circumstances compared to those who did not.



Similarly, in 2018, adults who had a depressive disorder, had seriously considered suicide in the past year, or reported poor mental health for at least two weeks during the past month were twice as likely to report past 30-day marijuana use than those who did not experience depression, suicide, or poor mental health. Adults reporting food or housing insecurity in the past year were also twice as likely to report marijuana use than adults who were food or housing secure.

Past 30-day marijuana use is twice as high among adults who experienced poor mental health or adverse life circumstances compared to those who did not.



¹ YRBS and BRFSS provide point in time estimates. Therefore, we cannot say that poor mental health or adverse life circumstances lead to marijuana use or vice versa, only that there is an association.

Marijuana and Traffic Safety

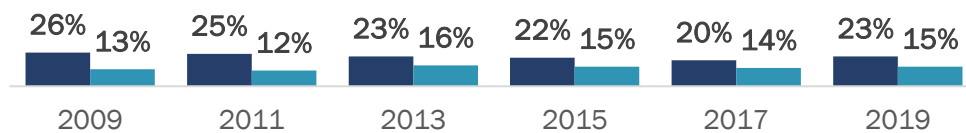
In 2019, there were 44 total fatal crashes resulting in 47 total fatalities in Vermont. Drug involvement was suspected in 17 operators, out of which, THC – the psychoactive compound found in marijuana – was confirmed in 10. Each of these totals has decreased since 2017. Over the past five years, two-thirds of operators involved in fatal crashes who were suspected of driving under the influence of drugs had THC in their systems. ^v

In 2019, **15% of students who drove reported that they had done so after using marijuana** at least once in the past 30 days. This rate is statistically similar to 2017 (14%).

Nearly a quarter (**23%**) of students rode with someone who had been using marijuana in 2019. Although this is a significant decrease compared to 2009 (26%), it is a significant increase compared to 2017 (20%).

Risk Behaviors Associated with Marijuana Use Among High Schoolers (2009-2019)

- Rode with someone who had been using marijuana in past 30 days
- Drove after using marijuana in past 30 days



In 2018, 23% of Vermont adults who reported using marijuana in the past month said that they had driven at least once within three hours of using it in the past month. Although driving after using marijuana has decreased since 2016 (31%), the change is not statistically significant.

Key Takeaways

Marijuana use has increased among youth and adults while perceptions about parental and peer disapproval of use have decreased in recent years. As attitudes and perceptions, mechanisms of use, and the regulatory framework shift at the state and national levels, continued surveillance of marijuana use and any associated outcomes, is necessary. Of particular interest is the recent increase in vaping among high school students, which saw an eightfold increase between 2017 and 2019.

Vermont ranks among the highest of all states for past 30-day marijuana use among 12-17 and 18-25 year olds.^{iv}

Marijuana Use

For data questions: Jeffrey Trites, Jeffrey.Trites@vermont.gov

For more information on marijuana/cannabis: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/alcohol-drugs/lets-talk-cannabis>

For more information about marijuana use by demographic groups:

2019 YRBS High School Report:

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR_YRBS_2019_HSRReport.pdf

2018 BRFSS Data Summary Report:

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR_2018_BRFSSReport.pdf

References and Data Sources:

i Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS): <https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/population-health-surveys-data/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs>

ii Marijuana Regulation in Vermont: 2017 Literature Review Update:

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017/02/ADAP_HIA%20Update.pdf

iii Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS):

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/population-health-surveys-data/brfss>

iv CDC E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Products Visual Dictionary:

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/pdfs/ecigarette-or-vaping-products-visual-dictionary-508.pdf

v Vermont State Highway Office – Behavioral Safety Unit:

<https://ghsp.vermont.gov/sites/ghsp/files/documents/Fatal%20Crashes%20%20December%2031%2C%202019%20%20E2%80%93%20January%206%2C%202020.pdf>

vi 2017/2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH):

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2017-2018-nsduh-state-prevalence-estimates>