

2017 VERMONT YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a national school-based survey that monitors the health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and young adults. The YRBS is conducted every two years during the spring semester. In Vermont, the Department of Health works with the Agency of Education and the CDC to conduct two separate surveys: a high school survey of students in grades 9 through 12, and a middle school survey of middle school students in grades 6 through 8.

Overall, 13,887 Vermont middle school students completed the 72-item 2017 YRBS, representing students from 122 middle schools. An additional 20,653 high school students completed the 109-item 2017 YRBS, representing students from 69 schools. The overall response rate for the 2017 middle school survey was 83%, while it was 76% for high schools.

Below are select 2017 YRBS results including short-term changes and results from new measures. Changes from one year to the next do not necessarily reflect a changing trend in a behavior but are indicators to watch. Also included are select data for new measures or measures that were revised in 2017.

Copies of the 2017 Vermont [high school](#) and [middle school](#) surveys as well as previous surveys can be found online at: www.healthvermont.gov/YRBS.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YRBS RESULTS

Personal Safety & Violence

In 2017, middle school students experienced less bullying compared with 2015.

- Students were **significantly LESS likely to:** have ever been bullied at school (45% vs 47%) or electronically bullied (24% vs 26%); bullied in past 30 days (22% vs 24%); or have bullied someone else in the past 30 days (8% vs 10%).
- However, middle school students were **significantly MORE likely to have** skipped school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school during the past 30 days (8% vs 7%).

Most middle school students use personal safety devices at least most of the time. In 2017, middle school students were **significantly LESS likely to:**

- Never or rarely wear a seatbelt when riding in a car (2% vs 3%).
- Never or rarely wear a helmet when riding a bike, among those who ride (31% vs 34%).

Less than one in ten (7%) never or rarely wore a helmet when snowboarding or skiing (new question).

Mental Health

Compared to 2015, suicidality and feelings of sadness or hopelessness among middle school students did not change.

In 2017:

- 19% of middle school students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities, during the past 12 months.
- 18% of middle school students have seriously thought about killing themselves; 12% have ever made a plan about how they would kill themselves; and 6% have ever tried to kill themselves.

Substance Use

Current use of cigarettes (2%), alcohol (7%), and marijuana (4%) did not significantly change from 2015.

In 2017, middle school students were:

- **Significantly MORE likely** to have ever tried an electronic vapor product (EVP) (9% vs 7%) and to have used them in the past 30 days (4% vs 3%).
- **Significantly LESS likely** to have ever sniffed glue or inhaled spray cans or paint to get high (4% vs 5%).

Several perceptions around use of and access to substances changed statistically in 2017:

- Middle school students were **significantly MORE likely to believe**:
 - It is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to drink alcohol (89% vs 88%) or smoke cigarettes (95% vs 94%).
 - It would be sort of easy or very easy to access alcohol (38% vs 36%).
- Middle school students were **significantly LESS likely to believe**:
 - Their parents feel it is wrong or very wrong for them to drink alcohol (85% vs 91%), use marijuana (92% vs 94%), or smoke cigarettes (95% vs 96%).
 - It would be sort of easy or very easy to access cigarettes (22% vs 27%).

In 2017 there were also significant changes in some other measures related to substance use:

- Middle school students were **significantly MORE likely to**:
 - Be asked about smoking by a doctor, nurse, or dentist in the past year (30% vs 27%).
 - Ride with someone who was under the influence of alcohol (22% vs 20%).
- Middle school students were **significantly LESS likely to**:
 - See tobacco advertisements in gas stations, supermarkets or convenience stores, at least most of the time (50% vs 52%).
 - Be exposed to secondhand smoke in a car (19% vs 25%) or room (26% vs 33%) in the past week.
- Less than 10% of students have ever ridden in a car driven by someone who had been using marijuana. One in seven students (14%) were not sure if someone they had ridden with had been using marijuana (new question).

Physical Activity & Nutrition

Changes in physical activity and nutrition were generally positive as students were **significantly LESS likely** to go hungry at least most of the time because there was not enough food at home (2% vs 3%), and **significantly MORE likely to**:

- Engage in physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day during the previous week (34% vs 31%) and on at least five days (60% vs 58%).
- Have at least one physical activity break during the week (75% vs 72%).

Three quarters of middle school students never walked or rode a bike to school during an average week with good weather. A quarter of students (23%) walked or rode at least once a week, while one in ten walked or rode every day (new question).

Social Determinants, Protective Factors, & Other Youth Assets

New or revised questions on social determinants, as well as family and school engagement included:

- *Social Determinants*: More than one in twenty (6%) middle school students were born outside the United States; the majority who were born outside the U.S. have lived in the U.S. for more than six years.
- *Family engagement*: Most students ate dinner with a parent at least four times in the last week (88%).
- *School engagement*: Three quarters of middle school students had at least one teacher or other adult in their school that they could talk to if they have a problem. One in seven (14%) were not sure if they did. Seven in ten middle school students (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school has clear rules and consequences for behavior. One in eight (13%) did not believe (strongly disagreed or disagreed) it does.

In 2017, middle school students were:

- **Significantly MORE likely** to feel connected to their community. Two-thirds (64%) of middle school students agreed or strongly agreed that in their community they matter to people.

HIGH SCHOOL YRBS RESULTS

Safety & Violence

In 2017, **students experienced less violence** compared with 2015. Students were **significantly LESS likely** to:

- Be electronically bullied (16% vs 17%) in the past year, be bullied (16% vs 18%) or bully someone else (9% vs 11%) in the past 30 days.
- Carry a weapon (7% vs 8%) or be threatened/injured with a weapon (5% vs 5%) on school property, past 30 days.
- Skip school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (5% vs 6%) during the past 30 days.

Mental Health

Compared with 2015, students were **significantly LESS likely** to report self-harm and suicidality; however, rates are higher than a decade ago:

- Hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, such as by cutting or burning during the past 12 months (16% vs 17%).
- Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (11% vs 12%) or attempted suicide (5% vs 6%).

During the same time period, students **were significantly MORE likely** to:

- Feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks during the past 12 months that they stopped doing some usual activities (25% vs 24%).

Substance Use – Tobacco (Includes: cigarettes, cigars, smokeless, flavored tobacco products, electronic vapor products)

In 2017, 24% of high school students had ever tried a cigarette, even one or two puffs (revised question); 9% smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days.

- **Over the past decade there has been a 50% decrease in the percent of students who smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days from 18% in 2007. Current cigarette smoking further decreased between 2015 (11%) and 2017 (9%), dropping below the HV2020 Goal of 10%.**
- In 2017, the percent of students who have ever tried a tobacco product flavored to taste like menthol (mint), clove, spice, alcohol (wine or cognac), candy, fruit, chocolate, or other sweets (21% vs 24%) also decreased.

Use of electronic vapor products (EVP) is an increasing focus within the tobacco use section of the YRBS.

- Students who have ever tried an EVP increased in 2017 (34% vs 30%); current use decreased (12% vs 15%).
- Reason for EVP use: About a third of current EVP users did so because their friends or family used them (35%). Less than ten percent used EVPs because they were trying to quit, thought they were easier to get than other tobacco products, or because they cost less (new question).
- Source of EVPs: Half of current users under age 18 borrowed or got EVPs from someone who was over age 18 (49%); 10% of current users under age 18 bought them online; 8% purchased them in a store (new question).

Substance Use - Alcohol

Binge drinking during the past 30 days (17%) was revised to be sex-specific and occurring when males consume five or more drinks and drinking when females consume four or more drinks in one sitting. Other measures of alcohol use among high school students increased. **Students were significantly MORE likely to:**

- Ever drink alcohol (58% vs 56%), drink before age 13 (14% vs 12%), and drink during the past 30 days (33% vs 30%).

Substance Use – Marijuana

Ever using marijuana (37%) has remained relatively stable over the past decade and did not statistically change between 2015 and 2017. However, **current marijuana use showed a slight, yet significant, increase from 22% to 24%.**

Substance Use - Other Substance Use, Risk Behaviors, Perceptions, and Attitudes

Thirteen percent of students attended school under the influence of alcohol or other drugs such as marijuana or cocaine during the past year (new question).

- Students were **significantly MORE likely** to always or almost always see tobacco advertisements in gas stations, supermarkets or convenience stores (55% vs 52%).

HIGH SCHOOL RESULTS (cont.)

Substance Use - Other Substance Use, Risk Behaviors, Perceptions, and Attitudes (cont.)

- Ever using methamphetamines (2% vs 3%), cocaine (4% vs 5%), and heroin (2% vs 2%) among high school students all **decreased significantly**. Additionally, **students were significantly LESS likely to:**
 - Report being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the past 12 months (15% vs 18%).
 - Ride with someone who was under the influence of alcohol (18% vs 20%) or marijuana (20% vs 22%) in the past 30 days.
- Several perceptions around use of and access to substances changed statistically in 2017:
 - **Students were significantly LESS likely to believe:**
 - Alcohol (68% vs 69%), marijuana (58% vs 62%), and cigarettes (55% vs 61%) are easy or very easy to get.
 - Their parents would think it was wrong for them to use alcohol (66% vs 72%), or marijuana (76% vs 80%).
 - **Students were significantly MORE likely to believe** it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to smoke cigarettes (84% vs 78%) or drink alcohol (54% vs 53%).
 - A third of students (36%) believed people would greatly risk harm by binge drinking regularly. A quarter (24%) believed using marijuana regularly, and two-thirds (68%) believed smoking a pack or more of cigarettes would cause a great risk of harm. (revised question).

Physical Activity & Nutrition

In 2017, changes in physical activity were generally positive as students were:

- **Significantly MORE likely** to engage in physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day (25% vs 23%) or on five or more days during the past week (49% vs 46%), and
- **Significantly LESS likely** to *NOT* participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on any day during the past week (13% vs 14%).

Soda and sugar-sweetened beverage consumption continued to decline. Students were **significantly LESS likely to:**

- Drink at least one soda every day during the past week (11% vs 15%).
- Drink at least one sugar-sweetened beverage every day during the past week (12% vs 15%).

However, students were **significantly LESS likely** to eat two or more fruits per day during the past week (33% vs 34%).

Sexual Behaviors

The proportion of students ever having sex was statistically unchanged in 2017 (40%). However, students were **significantly LESS likely** to have had sexual intercourse with four or more people during their lifetime (9%), continuing the long-term trend.

Among students who had sex in the last three months (currently sexually active, 31%) **use of prescription birth control continued to increase while condom use continued to decrease**. The last time they had intercourse:

- Students were **significantly MORE likely to** use moderate or most effective forms of prescription birth control to prevent pregnancy (50% vs 47%). Use of most effective forms of birth control (IUDs / Implants, 13%) has more than tripled since 2013 (3%) and doubled since 2015 (6%).
- Students were **significantly LESS likely to** use a condom (56% vs 58%).

Social Determinants, Protective Factors, & Other Youth Assets

In 2017, students felt more connected to their community: 61% agreed or strongly agreed that in their community they matter to people, a significant increase over the past decade and since 2015 (50%).

New or revised questions on social determinants, as well as family and school engagement included:

- *Social Determinants:* During the past 30 days, nearly all students (96%) usually slept at their parent's home. 75% of students never went hungry because there was not enough food at home (past 30 days); about one in ten students sometimes (7%) or most of the time/always went hungry (3%).
- *Family engagement:* In the past week, 77% ate dinner at home with at least one parent on four or more days.
- *School engagement:* 80% of students had at least one teacher or adult in their school that they could talk to if they had a problem; 65% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their school has clear rules and consequences for behavior; one in five were not sure if their school's rules and consequences were clear.