

Hispanic/Latino youth¹ are at significant risk for experiencing distress and chronic mental health challenges² and less likely to have access to high quality programming that promotes healthy environments, behaviors, and positive mental health.³ This data brief focuses on the prevalence of protective factors, risk factors, and mental health outcomes among Hispanic/Latino youth in Vermont.

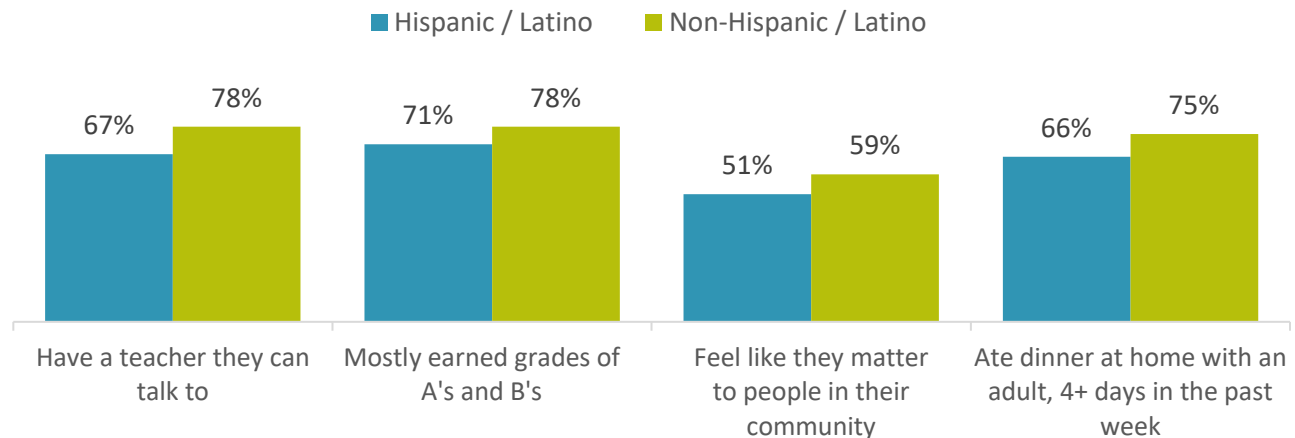
Protective Factors

Protective factors are individual or environmental conditions, behaviors, or characteristics that reduce the effects of stressful life events, tragedy, or trauma.⁴ Increasing protective factors can help build overall resiliency when contending with stressful situations or adversity. In Vermont, Hispanic/Latino students experience significantly fewer protective factors than their peers.

KEY POINTS

- **5% of Vermont High School students self- identify as Hispanic or Latino.**
- **Hispanic/Latino students experience significantly fewer protective factors and more risk factors than their peers.**
- **Hispanic/Latino students are significantly more likely to experience mental health challenges compared to their peers.**
- **Culturally competent programming in schools can reduce youth mental health disparities.**

Family, School, and Community Support



Source: Vermont Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 2019

All protective factors are statistically different for Hispanic/Latino youth compared to non- Hispanic/Latino youth

¹ Language around ethnic identity is not fixed and person and context dependent. This data brief aligns with the language used in the ethnicity survey question developed by the CDC and used in the YRBS. "Hispanic/ Latino" refers to any student who self-identified as "Hispanic or Latino," regardless of race. Hispanic generally refers to language and those with ancestry connected to Spain or Spanish speaking countries. Latino generally refers to geography, and specifically to those with ancestry connected to Latin America, including the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

² American Psychiatric Association: Division of Diversity & Health Equity. 2017. "[Mental Health Disparities: Hispanics and Latinos.](#)" *Mental Health Disparities: Diverse Populations.*

³ America Psychological Association. 2018. [Promoting Positive Mental Health Among Racial/Ethnic Minority Children: Ensuring and Enhancing Services, Programs, and Resources.](#)

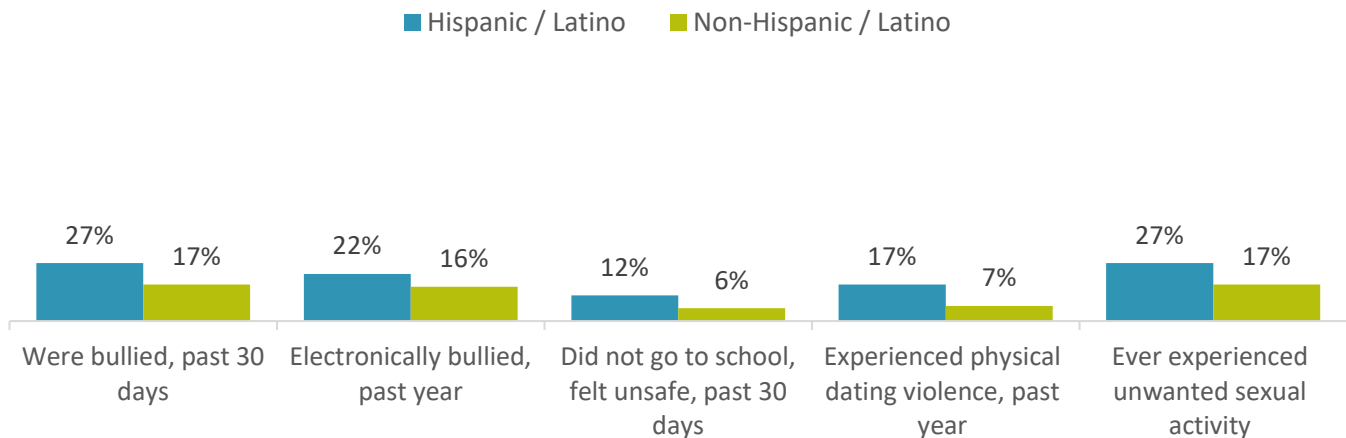
⁴ CDC. 2021. "[Mental Health.](#)" *Adolescent and School Health.*

Risk Factors

Hispanic/Latino students experience significantly more risk factors than their non-Hispanic/Latino peers. For example, Hispanic/Latino youth report experiencing significantly higher rates of physical and dating violence and unwanted sexual activity than their non-Hispanic/Latino peers. Hispanic/Latino youth were also twice as likely as non-Hispanic/Latino youth to report not going to school because they felt unsafe.

Hispanic/Latino students are also significantly more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as electronically sending or receiving sexually explicit images or engaging in substance use, compared to non-Hispanic/Latino students. More than half of Hispanic/Latino students reported currently using any substance* and one in four Hispanic or Latino students report coming to school under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the past year.

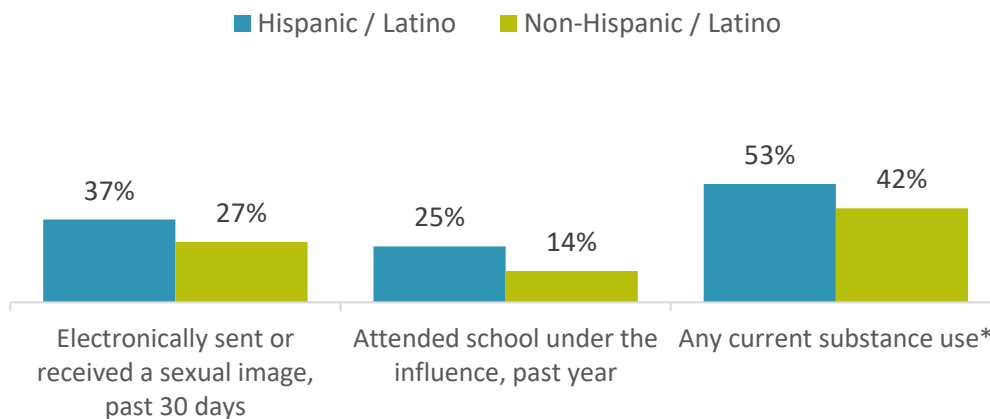
Threats to Safety, Physical and Sexual Violence



Source: Vermont Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 2019

All risk factors are statistically different for Hispanic/Latino youth compared to non-Hispanic/Latino youth

Other Risky Behaviors and Substance Use



Source: Vermont Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 2019

All risk factors are statistically different for Hispanic/Latino youth compared to non-Hispanic/Latino youth

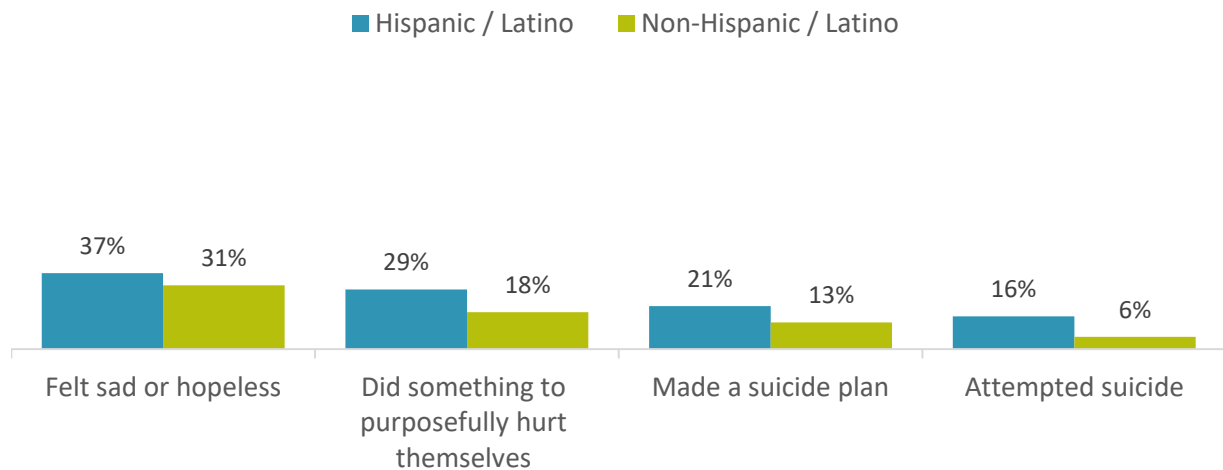
* Any substance is defined as current use of marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, or prescription medication without a doctor's permission or not as prescribed.

Mental Health Outcomes

During the previous year, 16% of Hispanic/Latino students attempted suicide, nearly three times the rate among non-Hispanic/Latino students. Hispanic/Latino students were also significantly more likely to report feeling sad or hopeless, hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, or make a suicide plan in the past year, compared to non-Hispanic/Latino students.

**More than 1 in 5
Hispanic/Latino students
made a suicide plan
during the past year.**

Mental Health and Suicidality Experiences in the Past Year



Vermont Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 2019

All mental health indicators are statistically different for Hispanic/Latino youth compared to non-Hispanic/Latino youth

What Can We Do?

Overall, Hispanic/Latino high school students experience higher rates of negative mental health symptoms, including suicidality, while having more risk factors and fewer protective factors.

Research shows culturally competent programming can increase protective factors for Hispanic/Latino youth while also addressing long-standing systemic barriers to care. Programs that intentionally consider cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs, can increase social integration and belonging.² By tailoring programs to meet diverse cultural needs, schools can help to reduce racial and ethnic youth mental health disparities.

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