

Measures of Resilience Among Vermont Middle School Students

Data Summary: 2017 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

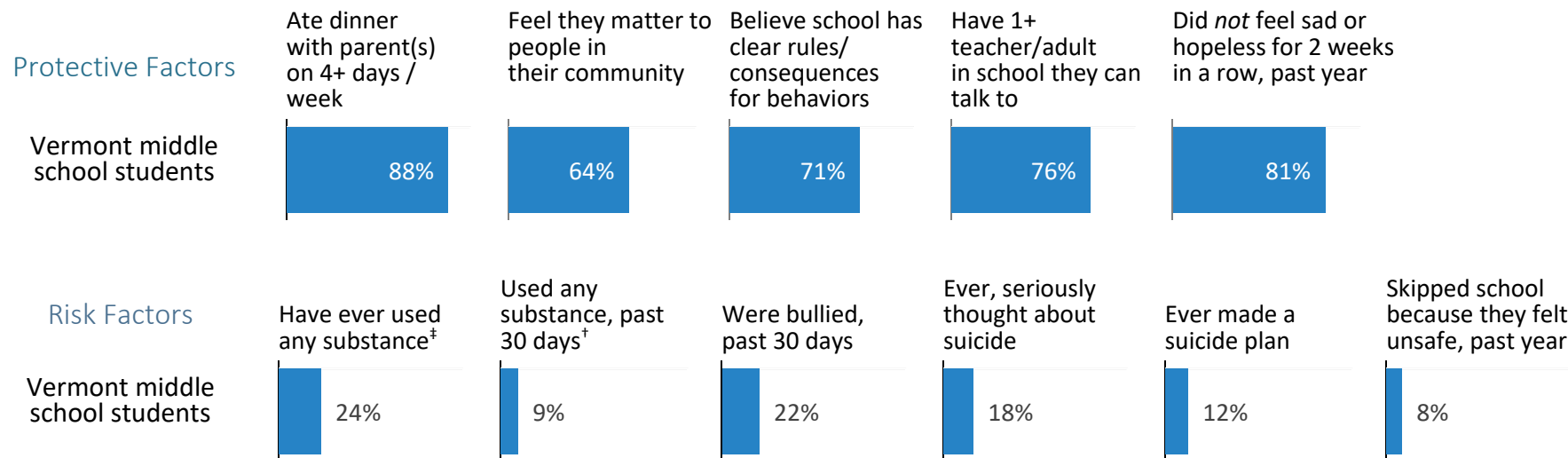
Resiliency helps individuals bounce back from adversity and support positive health outcomes.

Prevention and youth development efforts have typically addressed reducing specific health risk behaviors, such as *not* using alcohol or doing drugs, *not* engaging in unsafe sexual behaviors, or *not* engaging in violent activities. However, research suggests that a greater health impact might be achieved by also enhancing protective factors or helping youth become resilient. This in turn influences one's ability to overcome adversity and reduce or avoid multiple behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes.

Protective factors are individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events. These factors promote social and emotional competence and can include things such as family support and monitoring; caring adults; positive peer groups; strong sense of self, self-esteem, and future aspirations; and engagement in school and community activities.^{1,2}

While developing resiliency starts early in life, supportive relationships and protective factors in our environment help build resilience at all ages.³ This brief presents data that demonstrate how the presence of protective factors correlate with health risk factors and behaviors among middle school youth in Vermont.

Percent of middle school students who report risk and protective factors



[†]Any substance includes prescription drug misuse, alcohol, marijuana, cigarette, electronic vapor product, flavored tobacco products, or inhalant use. [†]Past 30 day or current substance use includes: any tobacco products, alcohol, or marijuana use.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Protective Factors*. Updated August 7, 2018. Retrieved from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

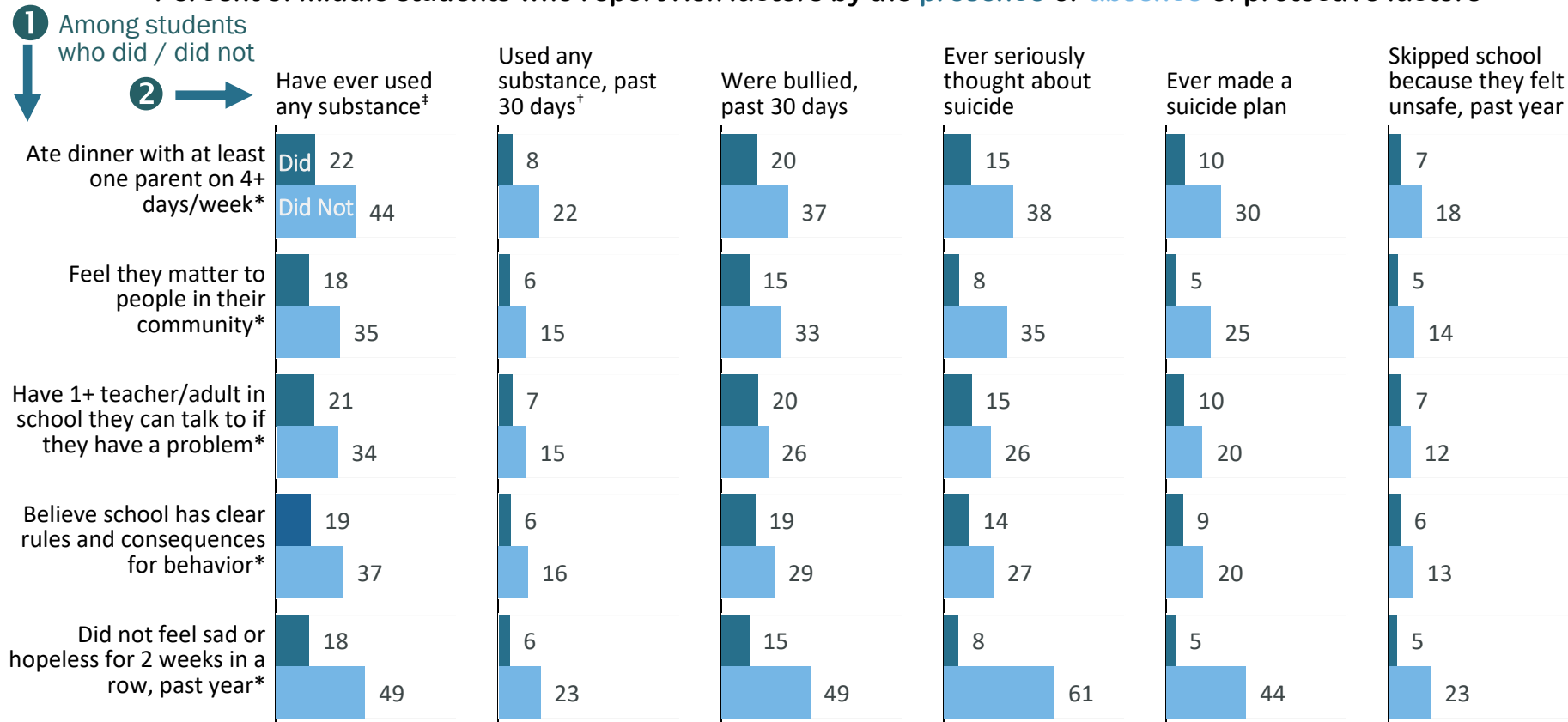
² Lerner, R.M. (2005) *Promoting Positive Youth Development: Theoretical and Empirical Bases*. Retrieved from <https://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/documents/pubPromotingPositive.pdf>

³ Center on the Developing Child (2015). *The Science of Resilience* (In Brief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

Overall, youth in grades 6-8 who have supportive family, school and community relationships are less likely to: use substances, experience bullying, have serious thoughts about or make a plan on killing themselves, or skip school because they felt unsafe on their way to or at school than students who do not report having these relationships.

Data below show how the **presence of protective factors** correlates with fewer students reporting risk factors when compared to students **without protective factors**. The table should be read: Among students who (protective factor) x% (risk factor). For example: Among middle school students who ate dinner with at least one of their parents on 4 or more days during the previous week 22% ever used a substance, significantly less than the 44% who did not eat dinner with at least one parent on 4 or more days during the previous week.

Percent of middle students who report risk factors by the presence or absence of protective factors*



* All results were statistically significant among those who experienced a protective factor compared to those who did not.

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Additional information about the YRBS, including statewide reports and data briefs are available on the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior webpage at www.healthvermont.gov/yrbs. Questions or comments about the YRBS, please contact Kristen Murray at kristen.murray@vermont.gov.