

# The 2009 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report Highlights

Vermont Department of Health

*The Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) measures the prevalence of self-reported behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disease and injury. Approximately 29,000 students in grades 8-12 participate in this biennial survey that allows us to monitor trends, and to plan, evaluate and improve community and school programs that promote healthy behaviors.*

## **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Marijuana**

- Since 1995, students' reported use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana in the past 30 days had been decreasing. However, since 2005, trends have been flat. In 2009:
  - 16% of students reported smoking in the past 30 days
  - 36% said they consumed alcohol and 20% said they binged on alcohol (5 or more drinks within a few hours) in the past 30 days
  - 22% reported smoking marijuana in the past 30 days
- Peer disapproval of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use is flat, or decreasing. Peer disapproval of substance abuse is inversely related to adolescents' reports of use.
  - 73% of students think that it is wrong or very wrong for kids their age to smoke, down from a high of 78% in 2005
  - 49% disapprove of alcohol use by peers, unchanged from when tracking started in 1999
  - 64% disapprove of their peers using marijuana, after peaking at 67% in 2007
- Perceived risk of harm from using alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana is also flat or decreasing. Research has shown that as perception of harm decreases, there is a tendency for use to increase.
  - 67% of students perceive great risk in harm from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day, compared to 72% in 2007
  - 25% perceive great risk from having 1-2 alcoholic beverages per day, unchanged since the question was first asked in 1999
  - 42% perceive great risk from regular marijuana use, after peaking at 51% in 2007
- Perceived availability of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana also remains unchanged. Increased use is associated with the perception that substances are readily available, whether or not the perception is accurate. In 2009:
  - 67% of students perceive that alcohol or cigarettes are easy to obtain
  - 57% perceive that marijuana is easy to obtain
  - 56% knew an adult who used illegal drugs in the past year
  - 33% knew an adult who sold drugs
  - All of these percentages are unchanged since tracking began in 1999

## **Other Drug Use**

- This year, the Vermont YRBS asked students if they had ever taken prescription pain relievers without a prescription or if they had they ever taken prescription stimulants without a prescription.
  - 14% reported taking a prescription pain reliever not prescribed for them
  - 7% reported taking a prescription stimulant not prescribed for them
  - 16% reported ever taking a prescription pain reliever or stimulant without a prescription, the same percent as in 2007
- Use of certain drugs has steadily declined since tracking began.
  - 10% reported ever using inhalants, down from 27% in 1995
  - 4% reported ever using methamphetamines, compared to 10% in 1999
  - 9% reported ever using hallucinogens, down from 20% in 1999
- Other trends are flat.
  - 4% of students reported using cocaine in the past 30 days, unchanged since 1995
  - 3% reported ever using heroin, unchanged since 1999

### **Vehicle Safety – Driving Under the Influence**

- Driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana and riding in a car with a driver who had been using alcohol or marijuana remains unchanged since 2001.
  - 7% reported driving after alcohol use and 12% reported driving after marijuana use
  - 23% reported riding in a car with a driver who had been drinking and 24% reported riding in a car with a driver who had been using marijuana

### **Personal Safety**

- Use of safety belts while riding in a car has increased; 83% of students reported always or almost always wore a safety belt when riding in a car, up from 77% in 1999.
- However, not wearing bicycle helmets has also increased; 63% of bicycle riders said they rarely or never wore a helmet, compared to 52% in 2001.

### **Violence, Bullying, and Self-Harm**

- This year, the Vermont YRBS asked students about electronic bullying, such as through chat rooms, instant messaging, Web sites, or text messaging. Overall, 15% of students reported being electronically bullied in the past 12 months.
- Physical fighting and abusive behavior remains unchanged since 1999.
  - 27% of students said they were in a physical fight in the past 12 months
  - 6% of students said they were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property
  - 7% of students said they were physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Suicide plans and attempts remain unchanged since peaking in 1995.
  - 9% of students reported making a suicide plan and 4% reported actually attempting suicide
- 15% of students reported purposefully harming themselves, the same as 2007

### **Sex**

- 40% of students reported having had sex, unchanged since 1997
- 10% of all students said they have ever been tested for HIV. This question is new in 2009.
- 65% of students who are sexually active reported using a condom during their most recent sexual experience, compared to a low of 55% in 1995
- 20% of students who are sexually active said they used alcohol or other drugs before sex, down from a peak of 31% in 1999
- 90% of females and 95% of males identify as heterosexual

### **Body Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity**

- 26% of students were overweight or obese based on the Body Mass Index (BMI) for age and sex, compared to 23% in 1999 when tracking began
- 24% of students reported participating in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day per the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines
  - 12% reported zero days with at least 60 minutes of physical activity in the past week
  - 48% of students said they had PE at least once a week, down from a high of 61% in 1993
- 23% of students reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, down from a high of 40% in 1997
- 57% of students said they had at least one glass of milk daily and 22% had at least one soda daily
- 38% of students reported spending three or more hours per school day watching TV, playing video games, or using the computer for fun, similar to 35% in 2003

### **Youth Assets**

- 72% reported eating a meal with their family at least three times during the past week
- 77% of students said their parents talked with them about school at least once a week
- 42% reported spending one or more hours per week volunteering their time in community service
- 89% said they have an adult in their life that they can turn to for help and advice

This year's and previous years' reports are available at:  
<http://healthvermont.gov/research/yrbs.aspx>



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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