

Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Data Brief

Bullying

Since 2005, the YRBS has included questions about whether students experienced bullying or were bullies themselves in the past 30 days. Bullying is defined in the survey as follows: “Bullying occurs when, on many occasions, a student or group of students say or do unpleasant things to another student to make fun of, tease, embarrass, or scare him/her; or purposefully exclude him/her. Bullying can occur before, during, or after the school day, on school property, a school bus or at a school-sponsored activity. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength and power argue or fight or when teasing is done in a friendly way.”

Bullying has remained constant since 2005. In 2009, 17% of students reported that they were victims of bullying in the past 30 days and 20% reported bullying someone else. Females were significantly more likely than males to report being bullied and significantly less likely to report bullying someone else. Younger students were significantly more likely to report being bullied and bullying someone else than older students.

	All		Grade					Gender	
	2007	2009	8	9	10	11	12	F	M
Were bullied on one or more of the past 30 days	17%	17%	24%	21%	17%	13%	10%	20%	15%
Bullied someone on one or more of the past 30 days	21%	20%	24%	21%	20%	17%	15%	17%	22%

Bully-Victims

Research indicates those who report being a bully and being a victim of bullying — a “bully-victim” — may be at greater risk for emotional, behavioral, and physical health problems.

In 2009, 9% of students reported being a bully and a victim, 11% reported being a bully only, and 8% reported being a victim only. These rates vary by grade. Reports of being a bully-victim or a victim of bullying decrease with age; reports of being a bully do not. These differences are consistent since 2005. Males and females were equally likely to report being bully-victims. Females were less likely than males to report being only bullies and were more likely to report being only victims.

	All	Grade					Gender	
	2009	8	9	10	11	12	Female	Male
Bully-Victim	9%	12%	11%	9%	7%	4%	9%	8%
Bully only	11%	11%	10%	11%	10%	11%	7%	14%
Victim only	8%	12%	10%	8%	6%	5%	10%	6%
None	72%	64%	68%	72%	76%	80%	73%	71%

We reviewed measures of personal safety, substance use, and youth assets, and compared the 95% confidence intervals between the four groups. Numbers marked with a superscript “a” indicates those groups were significantly different from the other two groups on this measure but not from each other. A superscript “b” indicates that the group marked was significantly different from the other three groups.

On measures of personal safety, bully-victims and victims reported similar levels of psychological distress while bully-victims and bullies reported similar levels of aggression. Bully-victims were significantly more likely to report making a suicide plan than the other three groups.

	Bully-Victim %	Bully %	Victim %	None %
Missed school because felt unsafe past 30 days	17 ^a	7	13 ^a	2
Sad for 2 weeks or more in the past 12 months	42 ^a	25	38 ^a	16
Made a suicide plan, past 12 months	25 ^b	11	19	6
Physical fight past 12 months	55 ^a	55 ^a	31	19
Carried a weapon at school past 30 days	17 ^a	21 ^a	7	6
Physical fight at school past 12 months	33 ^a	27 ^a	12	7

Bullies and bully-victims reported similar patterns of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use. Their patterns were different from victims and those who reported neither victimization nor perpetration. Bullies were more likely to report using marijuana in the past 30 days than the other three groups.

	Bully-Victim %	Bully %	Victim %	None %
Smoked first whole cigarette before age 13	22 ^a	25 ^a	12	8
Drank alcohol before age 13	34 ^a	37 ^a	18	14
Used marijuana before age 13	14 ^a	19 ^a	6	6
Smoked past 30 days	27 ^a	32 ^a	15	12
Drank alcohol past 30 days	50 ^a	56 ^a	30	31
Binged on alcohol past 30 days	29 ^a	38 ^a	17	17
Used marijuana past 30 days	31	42 ^b	18	18

Those who reported neither victimization nor perpetration were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they matter to people in their community or that they get mostly get As or Bs. Other comparisons were not significantly different.

	Bully-Victim %	Bully %	Victim %	None %
You matter people in your community	37	41	38	49 ^b
Get mostly As and Bs	70	64	74	82 ^b
Parents talk to you about school at least weekly	71	70	75	79
Students help decide what goes on at school	47	44	52	51
Volunteer 1+ hour in the past week	44	39	49	42
Participate in clubs 1+ hour in the past week	29	23	32	27

For more information on the YRBS, contact Erika Edwards, Ph.D., M.P.H. (erika.edwards@ahs.state.vt.us; 802-863-7246). For the YRBS Data Brief archive, visit: http://www.healthvermont.gov/research/yrbs/data_briefs.aspx

^a Significantly different from remaining two groups
^b Significantly different from remaining three groups