

2011 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Data Brief, December 2012: Mental Health and Alcohol Use

Mental Health and Alcohol Use

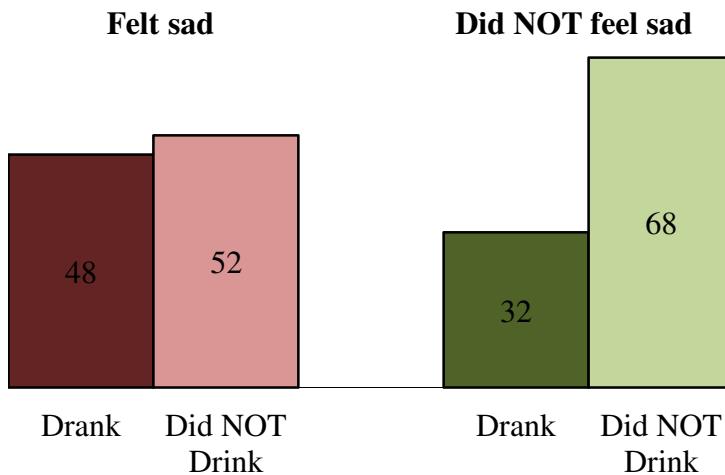
According to a 2011 report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, approximately 21 percent of U.S. children and adolescents have a “diagnosable mental health or addictive disorder that affects their ability to function.”¹ The report goes on to explain that mental health problems increase the risk of substance use and suicide.¹ **In Vermont, students reporting any of three mental health indicators – feeling sad, making a suicide attempt or engaging in self-harm – have higher prevalence of past 30 day alcohol use than their peers.**

In 2011, the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) asked students in grades 9-12 about past 30-day alcohol use. In 2011, **34 percent of female** students and **37 percent of male** students (which was approximately 35 percent of students overall) responded that they had used alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students reporting feeling sad:

In 2011, the Vermont YRBS asked students in grades 9-12: “During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?” In 2011, **25 percent of female** students and **14 percent of male** students reported feeling sad. Students who reported feeling sad were more likely to also report alcohol use in the past 30 days than students who did not report being sad (no difference by gender).

Figure 1: Percent of students who drank alcohol among those who reported feeling sad.



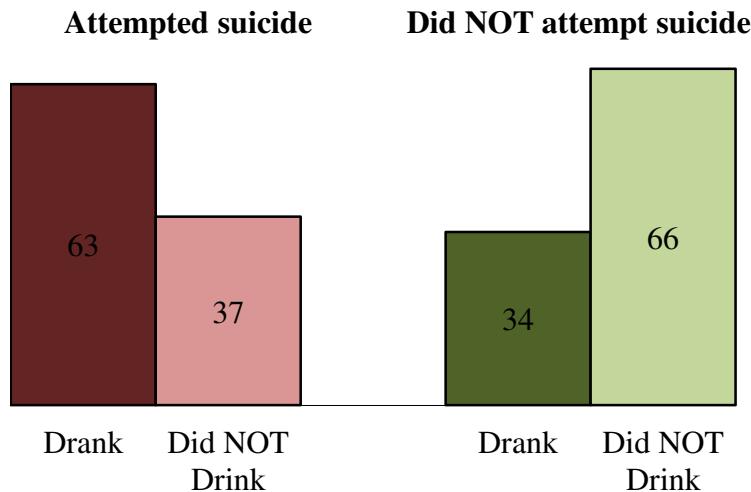
¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2011). *Identifying mental health and substance use problems of children and adolescents: A guide for child-serving organizations* (HHS Publication No. SMA 12-4670). Rockville, MD. Accessed at: http://www.samhsa.gov/children/508compliant_Identifying_MH_and_SU_Problems_1-30-2012.pdf

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Students reporting suicide attempts:

The YRBS asked students in grades 9-12: "During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?" In 2011, **5 percent of female** students and **3 percent of male** students reported attempting suicide at least once within the past year. Out of the students reporting a suicide attempt, 78 percent also reported being sad within the past year. Students who reported attempting suicide one or more times in the past year were more likely to also report alcohol use in the past 30 days than students who did not attempt suicide in the past year.

Figure 2: Percent of students who drank alcohol among those who reported a suicide attempt.



Students reporting they hurt themselves:

The YRBS asked students in grades 9-12: "During the past 12 months, how many times did you do something to purposely hurt yourself without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning yourself on purpose?" In 2011, **18 percent of female** students and **8 percent of male** students responded that they had purposefully hurt themselves one or more times in the past year. Student who hurt themselves on purpose were more likely to report alcohol use in the past 30 days than students who did not hurt themselves.

Figure 3: Percent of students who drank among those reported self-harm.

