

The 2019 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of a national school-based survey that monitors the health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and young adults including:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries, violence, and personal safety,
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections,
- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use,
- Behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity, and
- Protective factors.

The YRBS is conducted every two years during the spring semester. In Vermont, the Department of Health works with the Agency of Education and the CDC to conduct two separate surveys: a high school survey of students in grades 9 through 12, and a middle school survey of middle school students in grades 6 through 8.

Data from the YRBS is used to track 15 HV2020 indicators and more than 30 other program indicators. In 2019 three high school HV2020 indicators met or exceeded the 2020 goals. These included:

- 56% of students used most or moderately effective birth control to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sexual intercourse (Goal 55%),
- 15% of students binge drank during the past 30 days (Goal 15%), and
- 7% of students smoked a cigarette during the past 30 days (Goal 10%).

Vermont 2019 YRBS: At-A-Glance

66 of the 67	invited high schools participated
18,613	students in grades 9–12 completed the survey
73%	overall high school response rate
109	questions
All 123	invited middle schools participated
13,998	students in grades 6–8 completed the survey
85%	overall middle school response rate
73	questions



MANY YOUTH REPORT THE PRESENCE OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS.

Factors such as academic achievement, school-connectedness, family engagement, and feeling like you matter to people in the community have been shown to reduce risk behaviors.

- A quarter of high school students participate in 10+ hours of extracurricular activities a week (24%).
- Three out of five high school students (58%) and middle school students (59%) agree or strongly agree that they matter to people in their community.
- Three quarters of high school students (75%) and 85% of middle school students ate dinner at home with at least one of their parents on at least four days during the previous week.
- About three-quarters of high school (78%) and middle school (72%) said they have a teacher or other adult in their school they could talk to if they had a problem.
- Just over half of high school students (56%) and two-thirds of middle school students (64%) agree or strongly agree that their school has clear rules and consequences for behavior. About one in five high school and middle school students are not sure (20% and 18%, respectively).



SOME RISK BEHAVIORS SHOW SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS.

Since 2017, significant improvements have been observed in many health-related behaviors among middle and high school students.

Personal Safety

- More middle school students walked or rode a bike to school at least once a week when weather permits (23% vs 26%).
- Fewer high school students never or rarely wore a helmet while skiing or snowboarding during the past year (14% vs 11%).
- Carrying a weapon on school property decreased from 7% to 5% in 2019.
- Driving a car under the influence of alcohol decreased from 7% to 6%. Riding with a driver who had been drinking decreased among middle school students from 22% to 20%.

Sexual Health

- Use of most effective forms of prescription birth control among sexually active high school students has increased since 2013 (3%) and between 2017 (13%) and 2019 (19%).

Substance Use

- Among high school students, alcohol use during the past 30 days decreased from 33% in 2017 to 31% in 2019.
- Among students who saw a medical provider, being asked about smoking increased among high school (61% vs 54%) and middle school students (33% vs 30%).



SOME IMPORTANT RISK BEHAVIORS AND HEALTH-RELATED FACTORS REMAIN STATISTICALLY UNCHANGED FROM 2017 AND 2019.

Indicators related to bullying, substance use, sexual activity, and nutrition have seen small fluctuations but no significant changes.

Personal Safety

- A quarter of middle school students have ever been electronically bullied (24%); 45% have been bullied on school property.
- During the past year, 16% of high school students were electronically bullied.
- During the past 30 days, 35% of high school students who drive, texted while driving, 15% drove after using marijuana.

Mental Health

- Among middle school students 18% had serious thoughts about suicide, 12% made a plan and 6% attempted to kill themselves.

Nutrition and Weight

- One in ten high school students did not eat breakfast during the previous week (11%).
- The prevalence of obese (13%) and overweight (14%) high school students has remained stable over the past decade.

Substance Use

- Among middle school students, 7% have ever tried a cigarette; 2% tried one during the past 30 days.
- Seven percent of middle school students have ever tried marijuana; 5% used it during the past 30 days.
- During the past 30 days, 7% of middle school student used alcohol.
- During the past 30 days, 5% of high school students misused a prescription medicine.
- Three quarters of high school students (75%) and more than nine in ten (92%) of middle school students believe their parents would think it was wrong for them to use marijuana.

Sexual Health

- Three in ten high school students have had sexual intercourse in the past three months (31%). Of sexually active students, 54% used a condom the last time they had sex.



MANY RISK BEHAVIORS AND HEALTH-RELATED FACTORS HAVE WORSENEDED.

Indicators related to mental health and suicidality, electronic vapor products (EVP), marijuana use, and physical activity and nutrition significantly worsened between 2017 and 2019.

Personal Safety

- Being bullied during the past 30 days increased among middle school students from 22% in 2017 to 24%.
- Skipping school because they felt unsafe at or on their way to or from school increased among high school students from 5% to 6%.
- More high school students were threatened with a weapon at school in the past year (5% vs 7%).
- Riding with someone recently using marijuana increased among high school (20% vs 23%) and middle school students (9% vs 10%).

Mental Health

- Feeling sad or hopeless increased among high school students from 25% to 31% and among middle school students from 19% to 23%.
- More high school students hurt themselves without wanting to die (16% vs 19%), made a suicide plan (11% vs 13%), and attempted suicide (5% vs 7%).

Physical Activity

- Fewer students were physically active for at least 60 minutes every day during the previous week (high school- 25% vs 22%; middle school- 34% vs 30%).

Substance Use

- One in five middle school students have tried alcohol (20%), an increase from 19% in 2017.

- Current and lifetime EVP use increased among high school and middle school students, with current use doubling between 2017 and 2019.
 - In 2019, half of all high school and 16% of middle school students ever tried an EVP.
 - More than a quarter of high school students (26%) and 8% of middle school students currently use an EVP.
- Ever using a flavored tobacco product increased among high school students (21% to 27%) and among middle school students (5% to 8%).
 - High school students were more likely to report using one before age 13 (10% vs 15%).
- Current marijuana use among high school students increased from 24% to 27%.
 - Primarily vaping when using marijuana increased among users from 2% to 17%.
- Fewer middle school students believe people risk harming themselves if they binge drink weekly (48% vs 45%) or regularly use marijuana (59% vs 45%).
- More middle school students think it would be easy to access alcohol (37% vs 40%) and marijuana (15% vs 19%).
- Giving, receiving or selling illegal substances on school property (19%) and attending school under the influence among high school students (15%) increased (15% and 13%, respectively).

Health is shaped by where we live, learn, work and play. Some Vermonters have more opportunities than others to enjoy good health and quality of life. Disparities were most notable between heterosexual / cisgender students and LGBT students including:

- LGBT youth are more likely than heterosexual and cisgender students to experience:
 - Bullying and safety concerns at or on their way to school,
 - Mental health issues including self-harm and suicidality
 - Substance use,
 - Food and housing insecurity, and
 - Physical disabilities, long-term health or emotional problems, or learning disabilities.
- LGBT youth are less likely to have protective factors such feeling connected to their school and community, being engaged after school, or having post-graduation plans.





IT IS CRUCIAL TO STAY AWARE OF NEW AND CHANGING BEHAVIORS.

New questions on the 2019 YRBS included items about sexual behaviors including sexting, unwanted sexual contact, social determinants of health, physical activity, mental health, and EVP.

Substance Use

- Eight in ten high school students who currently used an EVP used JUUL or pod type devices.
- In 2019 questions about perceptions of tobacco use were changed from cigarettes to EVP.
 - 56% of high school students and 84% of middle school students believe their peers would think it is wrong for someone their age to use an EVP.
 - Most middle and high school students (92% and 84%, respectively) believe their parents would feel it is wrong to use EVP.
 - 9% of high school students and 5% of middle school students believe people do not risk harming themselves from using EVP regularly.
- Six percent of middle school students have ever misused a prescription drug.

Physical Activity

- Among high school students, 62% participate in activity breaks during class at least once a week.
- Seven in ten middle school students participated on at least one sports team (72%). Three in ten (31%) played on three or more teams.
- During the past year, 73% of high school and 66% of middle school students had a sunburn.

Sexual Health

- Among high school students, 18% have had someone do sexual things to them that they did not want; 10% of middle school students have also experienced unwanted sexual contact.
- During the past 30 days, 27% of high school students sent or received a revealing or sexual photo of someone.
- Nearly three in ten of high school students (28%) who dated during the past year went out with someone who tried to control them or hurt them emotionally.
- During the past 12 months, 11% of high school students were tested for a sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- Among middle school students who have ever had sexual intercourse, 58% used a condom.

Social Determinants of Health

- Six percent of middle school students live with someone who speaks another language at home at least most of the time.
- During the past 30 days, 4% of high school students slept away from home because they ran away, were abandoned, or their parents kicked them out.
- Most high school students believe that their family's social status is similar to others in American society; 3% believe their family is worse off.
- One in seven high school students have a physical disability or long-term health problems (14%); 23% have long-term emotional problems or learning disabilities.

Additional information about the Vermont YRBS, including the full 2019 YRBS report and additional topic specific data briefs, is available at: www.healthvermont.gov/yrbs.

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