

Measures of Resilience Among Bennington County High School Students

Data Summary: 2017 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

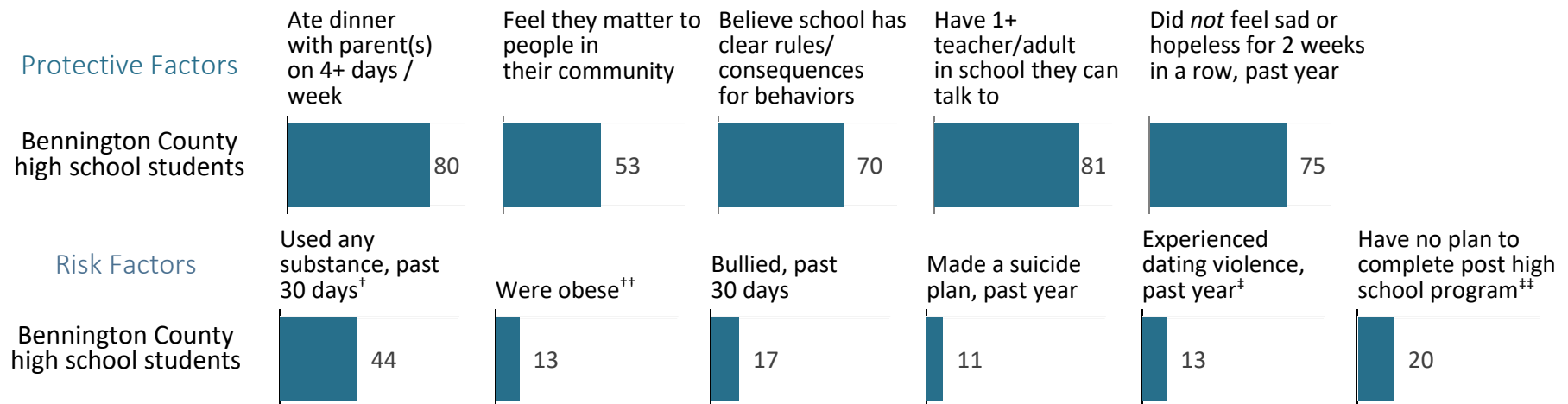
Resiliency helps individuals bounce back from adversity and support positive health outcomes.

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 **Bennington County** high school youth in Vermont. A summary of resiliency among all Vermont students is also available online.

Percent of Bennington County high school students who report risk and protective factors



[†]Any substance includes alcohol use, marijuana use, any tobacco use, or prescription drug misuse. ^{††}Obesity is having a BMI above 95th percentile for one's sex-and age.

[‡]Experienced dating violence includes any physical or sexual violence among students who dated in the past year. ^{††}No plan to complete post high school programs include definitely and probably will not, and not sure.

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

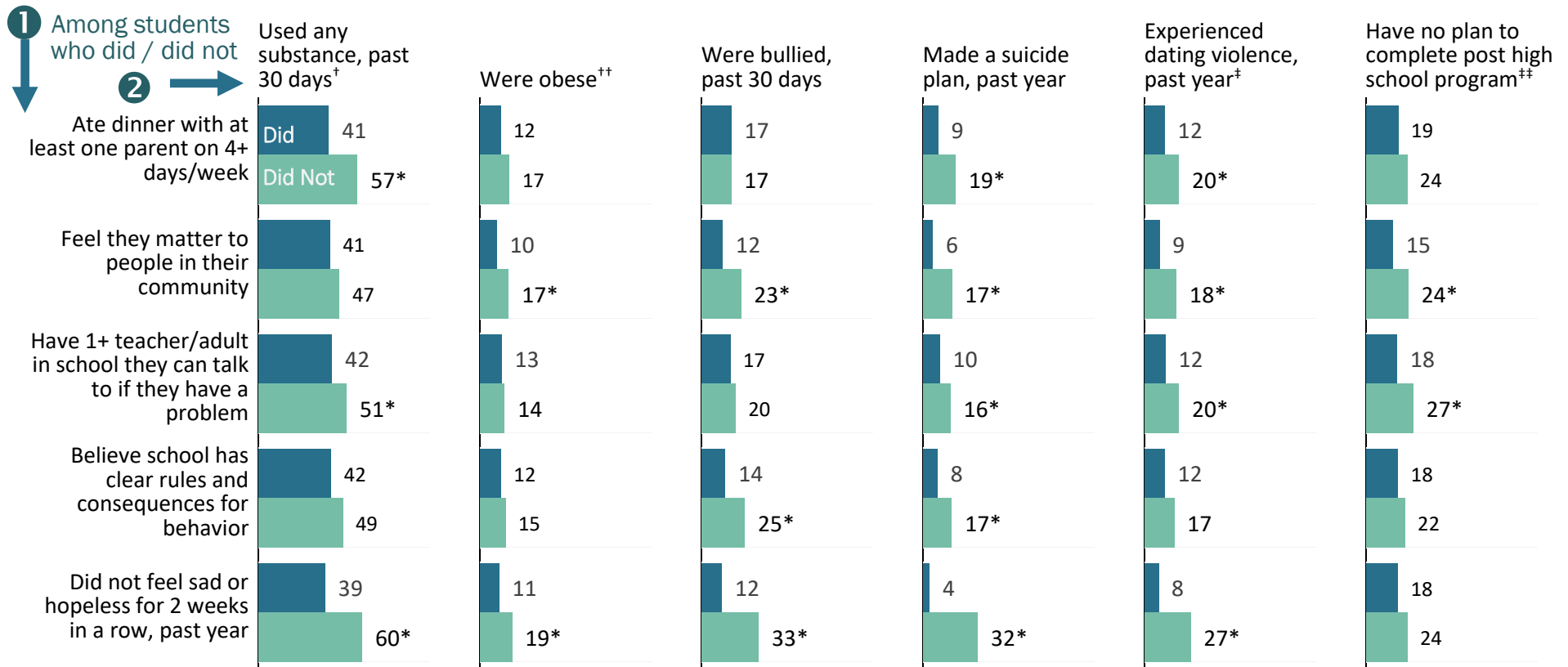
² Lerner, R.M. (2005) *Promoting Positive Youth Development: Theoretical and Empirical Bases*. Retrieved from <https://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/documents/pubPromotingPositive.pdf>

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

Overall, Vermont students in grades 9-12 who have supportive family, school and community relationships are less likely to: use substances, be obese, be bullied, make a suicide plan, experience dating violence, or have no post-graduation plans 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 **Bennington County** high school students who ate dinner with at least one of their parents on 4 or more days during the previous week 41% used any substance in the past 30 days, statistically less than the 57% of students who used any substance among those did not eat dinner with a parent 4 or more days/week.

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



* In Bennington County, results were statistically better among those who experienced a protective factor compared to those who did not.

For more information about the YRBS, including the full YRBS report and additional data briefs visit the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior webpage at www.healthvermont.gov/YRBS. For questions or comments about the YRBS, please contact Kristen Murray at Kristen.murray@vermont.gov.