

The 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 Vermont high school YRBS has been conducted every other spring since 1993, a middle school survey was added in 2011. Schools ending in sixth grade are not eligible to participate. Copies of the 2023 Vermont [high school](#) and [middle school](#) surveys as well as previous surveys can be found online at [Healthvermont.gov/YRBS](https://Healthvermont.gov/YRBS).

### Why Are These Data Important?

The YRBS is used to determine health behaviors and trends. It can detect changes in risk behaviors over time and identify differences among subpopulations of students. With this data, school and community organizations can focus prevention efforts and determine whether school policies and community programs are having the intended effect on student behaviors. Think of the YRBS as a tool for starting discussions, educating the community, and planning or evaluating programs.

### About the Report

The [2023 YRBS Report](#) shows the overall prevalence rate and statistical differences by demographic subgroups including sex, grade, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity. New in 2023, the high school report also includes differences among students with an IEP or 504 Plan. In addition to showing students' behaviors and experiences in 2023, this report also highlights changes from 2021 to 2023 and how the data has changed over the past ten years.

YRBS results are weighted by sex, grade and race/ethnicity to compensate for absenteeism and incomplete surveys. The weighting allows the results to be fully representative of middle school students in grades six through eight (middle school survey) and high school students grades nine through 12 (high school survey). To ensure confidentiality, estimates must include a numerator of at least five students and denominator of 50 or more students.

Learn more about the YRBS program or view additional reports and data briefs on special topics at [HealthVermont.gov/YRBS](https://HealthVermont.gov/YRBS).

#### Vermont 2023 YRBS: At-A-Glance

<b>57</b> of the <b>60</b>	invited high schools participated
<b>15,606</b>	students in grades 9–12 completed the survey
<b>66%</b>	overall high school response rate
<b>110</b>	high school questions

## What are some of the findings from the 2023 report?

### Many high school students are experiencing poor mental health, anxiety, sadness and suicide risk.

- More than a third of high school students (34%) reported that they experienced poor mental health most of the time or always during the past month.
- Three in ten high school students (29%) felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks during the past 12 months that they stopped doing some usual activities. Nearly four in ten (36%) said they felt nervous, anxious or on edge at least most of the time during the past 12 months.
- More than one in five high school students (23%) report hurting themselves without wanting to die, such as by cutting or burning on purpose, in the past 12 months. About one in seven (14%) made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months.
- When feeling sad, empty, angry, hopeless or anxious, three in ten high school students (31%) say they can most of the time or always get the kind of help they need. Nearly one in five (19%) never get the help they need.
- One in four students (39%) say they are most likely to talk to a friend when they are feeling sad, anxious, empty, angry, or hopeless. About three in ten would talk with a trusted adult such as parent or other adult family member (23%), adult at school (4%), or an adult outside of school (3%). Nearly one in five (19%) do not know who they would talk to. This was a new question in 2023.

### LGBTQ+ students, female students, and students with an IEP or 504 Plan experience significantly higher levels of poor mental health, anxiety, and sadness compared to their peers.

- LGBTQ+ (54%) and female students (47%) are twice as likely to experience poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression, at least most of the time during the past 30 days compared to heterosexual cisgender (26%) and male students (21%).
- More than half of LGBTQ+ (59%) and female students (52%) report being nervous, anxious, or on edge at least most of the time during the past 12 months. These rates are double the rates of heterosexual cisgender (27%) and male students (21%). Nearly half (47%) of students with an IEP or 504 Plan report being nervous, anxious, or on edge compared to a third (33%) of students without an IEP or 504 plan.
- About half of high school LGBTQ+ students (49%) report feeling sad or hopeless in the past year, a rate that is more than two times higher than their heterosexual cisgender peers (22%). High school females are also two times more likely than male students to report feeling sad or hopeless (39% vs 19%). Four in ten students with an IEP or 504 Plan (40%) report feeling sad or hopeless in the past year compared to 27% of students without an IEP or 504 plan.

## 2023 High School YRBS Executive Summary

**Compared to heterosexual cisgender students, LGBTQ+ high school students are three times more likely to report self-harm, make a plan to kill themselves and attempt to kill themselves during the past year. Female high school students are 2.5 times more likely than male students to report self-harm and nearly two times as likely to make a suicide plan and attempt to kill themselves during the past year.**

- During the past year, 43% of high school LGBTQ+ students hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 27% made a suicide plan and 14% attempted suicide. Among heterosexual cisgender students 15% hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 9% made a suicide plan and 5% attempted suicide.
- Among female students, 33% hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 18% made a suicide plan and 9% attempted suicide during the past year. Thirteen percent of male students hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die, 10% made a suicide plan and 5% attempted suicide.

**Over the past 10 years feeling sad and hopeless, self-harm, and suicidality has gotten worse. However, compared to 2021, mental health concerns remain statistically similar.**

- Compared to 2013, students are statistically more likely to report feeling sad or hopeless (21% vs 29%), hurt themselves on purpose (16% vs. 23%), make a suicide plan (11% vs 14%), and attempt suicide (5% vs 7%).

**BIPOC students are significantly more likely to be treated unfairly at school and are less likely to have a trusted adult at school compared to their peers.**

- More than half of all BIPOC students (56%) are treated unfairly at school because of their race or ethnicity compared to 14% of white non-Hispanic students.
- Just over six in ten (62%) BIPOC students report having teacher or other adult at school they can talk to if they have a problem compared to 70% of white non-Hispanic students.

**Female students, BIPOC students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with an IEP or 504 Plan are significantly more likely to experience violence compared to their peers.**

- During the past year, BIPOC students (14%), LGBTQ+ students (11%), and 12% of students with an IEP or 504 Plan were threatened with a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property, significantly more than white, non-Hispanic students (8%), heterosexual cisgender students (7%), and students without an IEP or 504 Plan (7%).
- Nearly three in ten LGBTQ+ students (29%) and students with an IEP or 504 Plan (27%) were bullied during the past 30 days. Less than one in five heterosexual cisgender students (17%) and students without an IEP or 504 Plan (19%) were bullied during the past 30 days.
- Female students, BIPOC students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with an IEP or 504 Plan are nearly two times as likely to skip school because they feel unsafe at or on their way to or from school compared to male students (13% vs 7%), heterosexual cisgender students (16% vs 7%), white, non-Hispanic students (15% vs 9%), and students without an IEP or 504 Plan (14% vs 8%).

## 2023 High School YRBS Executive Summary

- Female students are three times more likely than male students to report unwanted sexual experiences (36% vs 12%). LGBTQ+ students are nearly 2.5 times more likely than heterosexual cisgender students to report unwanted sexual experiences (41% vs 17%).
- Among students who dated or went out with someone, female students, LGBTQ+ students, and BIPOC students are significantly more likely to be in an abusive relationship compared to their peers.
  - Female students are four times more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviors by someone they are dating or going out with compared to male students (22% vs 6%).
  - A quarter of LGBTQ+ students (25%) experience unwanted sexual behaviors by someone they are dating or going out with.
  - LGBTQ+ students, BIPOC students, and students with an IEP or 504 Plan are two times more likely to experience physical dating violence compared to heterosexual cisgender students (14% vs 7%), white non-Hispanic students (15% vs 8%), and students without an IEP or 504 Plan (14% vs 7%).

### Fewer students are using condoms during sexual intercourse.

- Among sexually active students, condom use statistically decreased from 62% in 2013 to 49% in 2023.
- About half of all sexually active students (52%) report using birth control pills, IUD or implant, a shot, patch, or birth control ring during the last time they had sexual intercourse with an opposite-sex partner.

### Alcohol, electronic vapor products, and marijuana use remains a concern.

- Nearly three in ten high school students (27%) report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days. One in eight report binge drinking (13%).
- During the last 30 days, one in six high school students (16%) report using electronic vapor products (EVP). Of those who vaped, 37% use it every day.
  - Among high school students who use EVPs, nearly six in ten students (59%) get them from someone else such as a friend or family member. Others purchase them at a vape or tobacco shop (4%), the mall, gas station or other store (5%), or on the Internet from a product website, online vape store or other website such as Facebook Marketplace (4%).
  - Among high school students who report using EVP in the past 30 days, a quarter (25%) use them because they are curious about them. About one in five use them to get high or buzzed (22%).
- Just over one in five high school students (22%) report using marijuana during the past 30 days. Among students who used marijuana in the past 30 days:
  - Two thirds (67%) report smoking it in a joint, bong, pipe, or blunt as the primary method used. Others primarily vaped it (15%), ate or drank it (11%), dabbed it (4%), or used it in some other way (3%).

## 2023 High School YRBS Executive Summary

- Regardless of their primary method, two thirds (65%) used an electronic vapor product to vape it at least one time during the past month. This was a new question in 2023.
- More than four in ten students (43%) primarily get marijuana from a friend or family member. About three in ten students (27%) primarily buy marijuana from a friend or family member, store or dispensary, or someone else.
- Compared to 2013, alcohol and marijuana use statistically decreased (33% vs 27% and 24% vs 22%, respectively). However, alcohol and marijuana use is statistically higher than in 2021 (25% vs 27% and 20% vs 22%, respectively).
- Use of electronic vapor products during the previous 30 days did not statistically change since first asked in 2015 and between 2021 and 2023 (15% vs 16% vs 16%).

### Perceptions around electronic vapor product use are heading in the right direction.

- Since 2019 and between [2021\\*](#) and 2023, the percent of students who believe it is wrong for someone their age to use electronic vapor products statistically increased (56% vs 67% vs 70%).
- Since 2019 and between [2021\\*](#) and 2023, the percent of students who believe using electronic vapor products regularly will cause harm statistically increased (29% vs 39% vs 42%).
- Compared to 2019, the percent of students who said their parents think using electronic vapor products is wrong statistically increased from 84% to 89% but statistically decreased since 2021 (90%).

### Many high school students report the presence of protective factors, but disparities exist.

- More than seven in ten high school students (72%) report eating dinner at home with a parent or other adult family member at least four times during the previous week.
- Compared to 2017, having a trusted adult has statistically decreased from 80% to 69% in 2023.
- Believing their school has clear rules and consequences for behaviors has statistically decreased from 65% in 2017 to 48%.
- Most students (79%) report they are never treated badly or unfairly in school because of their race or ethnicity. However, among BIPOC students, more than half (56%) feel like they have been treated badly or unfairly at school. This was a new question in 2023.
- Many high school students participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, band, drama or clubs run by the school or community. During an average week, 24% of high school students spend 10 hours or more participating in extracurricular activities. Nearly four in ten high school students (37%) do not participate in after school activities.





# 2023 High School YRBS Executive Summary

- Most high school students have a post high school plan. About seven in ten (69%) plan to attend a 4-year college or university, community college, or technical school after graduating from high school. About one in five (19%) are not sure what they will do after high school.
  - Seventy-six percent of students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade believe they will likely attend a college or university, a community college or a technical school.
- Just over half of all high school students (54%) agree or strongly agree that they matter to people in their community.
  - Only about four in ten LGBTQ+ students (42%) believe they matter to people in their community.

## Additional New Findings

- While the percentage of students trying to lose weight statistically decreased from 43% in 2013 to 39% in 2023, more than one in five high school students (22%) report trying to lose weight or keep from gaining weight in unhealthy ways (not eating for 24+ hours, taking diet pills, powders, or liquids, vomiting or taking laxatives, smoking cigarettes, or skipping meals).
- Nearly three in ten high school students (27%) have lived with a parent or guardian who has a problem with alcohol or drug use.
- Less than one in ten high school students (8%) report they don't use social media. About one in 15 only use it a few times a week (3%), once a week (1%), or monthly (2%). Three in ten (30%) use it multiple times an hour.
- Roughly one in five high school students (21%) report they have been treated badly or unfairly at school because of their race or ethnicity. Four percent say they are always or most of the time treated badly or unfairly because of their race or ethnicity.
- More than half of all BIPOC students (56%) feel like they are treated badly or unfairly in school because of their race or ethnicity.

## More Information and Contact

Additional information about the Vermont YRBS, including the full [2023 YRBS Report](#), other executive summaries and reports, population in focus reports, and topic specific data briefs, is available at [HealthVermont.gov/YRBS](https://www.healthvermont.gov/YRBS).

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