

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.

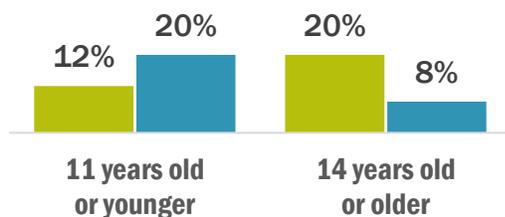
The Vermont high school YRBS has been conducted every other spring since 1993, a middle school survey was added in 2011. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2021 YRBS was delayed from the spring semester (January – April 2021) and administered during the fall semester (September – December 2021). Learn more about the YRBS program at HealthVermont.gov/YRBS.

Vermont 2021 Middle School YRBS: At-A-Glance

106 of the 116	invited middle schools participated
12,210	students in grades 6–8 completed the survey
76%	overall middle school response rate
74	middle school questions

Special Considerations: COVID-19 Pandemic and Delayed Administration

Differences in Age Among Middle School Students: 2019-2021



Prevalence estimates and trends for the 2021 VT YRBS were likely impacted by some significant factors unique to 2021, including the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the **delay of the survey administration period resulting in a younger population completing the survey**.

As a result, **no trend data is included in the 2021 report** and caution should be used when interpreting and comparing the 2021 results to other years. More information on these special considerations is available in [Understanding the 2021 Results](#) and the [full report](#).

Why Are These Data Important?

The YRBS is used to determine the prevalence of health behaviors. 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.

What are Some of the Findings from the 2021 Report?

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. The [2021 YRBS Report](#) shows the overall prevalence rate and differences by sex, grade, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation and gender identity. Additional Populations in Focus reports and data briefs on special topics are available www.healthvermont.gov/yrbs.

Many Middle School Students Are Experiencing Poor Mental Health, Anxiety, Sadness and Suicide Risk.

- During the past 30 days, more than two in 10 middle school students (22%) said their mental health was not good most of the time or always. Roughly a quarter (26%) sometimes experienced poor mental health.
- Nearly a quarter of middle school students (24%) were bothered by feeling nervous, anxious or on edge always or most of the time during the past 12 months. A third (32%) sometimes felt nervous, anxious or on edge.
- During the past 12 months, 22% of middle school students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks that they stopped doing some usual activities.
- During their lifetime:
 - 18% have done something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die such as cutting or burning themselves on purpose.
 - 18% of students have seriously thought about killing themselves.
 - 13% have ever made a plan about how they would kill themselves.
 - 6% have tried to kill themselves.

LGBTQ+ students and female students are experiencing significantly higher levels of poor mental health, anxiety and sadness compared to their peers. They are two to three times more likely to ever hurt themselves on purpose and ever think about, plan or attempt to kill themselves.

- LGBTQ+ students are nearly three times as likely to experience poor mental health, including stress, anxiety and depression, most of the time or always during the past year compared to heterosexual cisgender students (42% vs 15%). Compared to male students, female students are more than two times as likely to experience poor mental health (31% vs 13%).
- LGBTQ+ and female students are nearly three times as likely as heterosexual cisgender (46% vs 16%) and male students (35% vs 13%) to report feeling nervous, anxious or on edge at least most of the time during the past year. LGBTQ+ (40%) and female students (29%) are more than two times as likely to report feeling so sad or hopeless for at least two weeks during the past year that they stopped doing some usual activities compared to their peers.

2021 Middle School YRBS Executive Summary

- LGBTQ+ students are more than three times as likely as heterosexual cisgender students to have ever hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die (37% vs 11%), have serious thoughts about killing themselves (35% vs 11%), ever make a plan about how they would kill themselves (27% vs 8%) and ever try to kill themselves (13% vs 4%).
- Female students are twice as likely as male students to have ever hurt themselves on purpose without wanting to die (25% vs 11%), have serious thoughts about killing themselves (23% vs 12%), ever make a plan about how they would kill themselves (17% vs 8%) and ever try to kill themselves (8% vs 4%).

Female, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC Students Experience Bullying and Violence More Than Their Peers

- Four in ten middle school students (41%) have ever been bullied at school. About a quarter (24%) were bullied during the past 30 days.
 - More than half of LGBTQ+ students (54%) have ever been bullied. LGBTQ+ students are more than two times as likely to experience bullying during the past 30 days compared to heterosexual cisgender students (37% vs 18%).
 - Female students are 1.5 times as likely as male students to report bullying in the past 30 days compared to male students (29% vs 18%).
- During the past 30 days, one in ten middle school students (10%) skipped school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Five percent of students skipped school more than one time.
 - Female (12%), BIPOC (15%), and LGBTQ+ (16%) students are 1.5 to 2 times more likely than their peers to skip school due to safety concerns.

Electronic Vapor Products (EVP): Perception and Use

- Most middle school students believe it would be very hard (64%) or sort of hard (18%) to access EVPs if they wanted one.
- One in 20 middle school students (5%) used an electronic vapor product during the past 30 days. About one in ten (9%) have ever tried one.
- Among middle school students who used an EVP during the past 30 days, 40% used one because they were feeling anxious, stressed, or depressed. About one in six used them because they were curious (17%) or because their friends or family used them (16%). More than one in ten (12%) used them to get a high or buzz.
- Three in ten middle school students who used an EVP in the past 30 days, used a disposable electronic cigarette or a disposable vape. About two in 10 used a JUUL or rechargeable device with pods (19%), vape pen or rechargeable e-cigarette (18%). Seventeen percent were not sure what type of device they used.
- Nearly all middle school students (94%) believe their parents feel it is wrong or very wrong for them to use EVPs. About nine in 10 middle school students (89%) believe it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use EVPs.

Many Middle School Students Report the Presence of Protective Factors, but Female, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Students Tend to Experience Protective Factors at Lower Rates Than Their Peers.

- About six in 10 middle school students (59%) feel they can talk to a caring adult or an adult in their family about their feelings at least most of the time. Nearly a quarter rarely (13%) or never (10%) feel like they have someone they can talk to about their feelings.
 - Female (54%), BIPOC (51%) and LGBTQ+ (42%) students are significantly less likely to have a caring adult or family member they can talk to at least most of the time.
- Two-thirds of middle school students (67%) have at least one teacher or other adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem. One in five (20%) are not sure if there is someone at their school they can talk to.
- Two-thirds of middle school students (67%) agree or strongly agree that their school has clear rules and consequences for behavior. Agreeing or strongly agreeing that their school has clear rules and consequences significantly decreases with each grade level from 75% in 6th grade to 69% in 7th grade and 60% in 8th grade.
- Just over half of all middle school students (55%) agree or strongly agree that they matter to people in their community; 31% were not sure.
 - Heterosexual cisgender students are nearly two times more likely as LGBTQ+ students to feel like they matter to people in their community (63% vs 35%).
 - Female (49%) and BIPOC students (50%) are significantly less likely than male (61%) and white, non-Hispanic students (55%) to feel like they matter to people in their community.



More Information and Contact

Additional information about the Vermont YRBS, including the full [2021 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).

For more information about the YRBS contact: Kristen Murray, PhD, YRBS Coordinator: kristen.murray@vermont.gov