

# Risk Behaviors and Suicidality in Vermont High School Students

March 2025

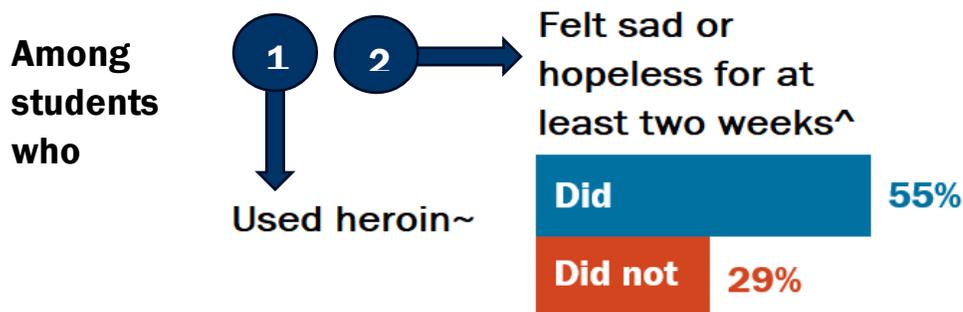
Risk behaviors such as substance use, bullying, and fighting are associated with an increased risk for suicide.<sup>1</sup>

This report shows the percent of students who report any of the four measures associated with suicidality (1. feeling sad or hopeless for 2+ weeks, 2. self-harm, 3. making a suicide plan, and 4. attempting suicide) among those who did and did not engage in certain risk behaviors. Examples of risk behaviors in this report include substance use, bullying, and bringing a weapon to school. Although some risk behaviors are more common than others, all represent groups of students who can benefit from suicide prevention efforts like promoting resiliency, supportive relationships, and community-based or after-school programs.<sup>2</sup>

All data below are from [Vermont's 2023 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#). These data do not say that risk behaviors lead to or cause suicidality, only that there is some relationship or connection between them.

## Understanding the Data

The data on the next page show that students who **did engage in risk behaviors** are more likely to report suicidality than students who **did not engage in risk behaviors**. The table should read: Among students who (risk behavior), x% (suicidality measure). For example, the graph below shows that **among high school students who had ever used heroin, 55% felt sad or hopeless** for at least two weeks during the past year, which is statistically more than the **29% of students who had not used heroin**.



If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact [AHS.VDHSuicideData@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHSuicideData@vermont.gov).



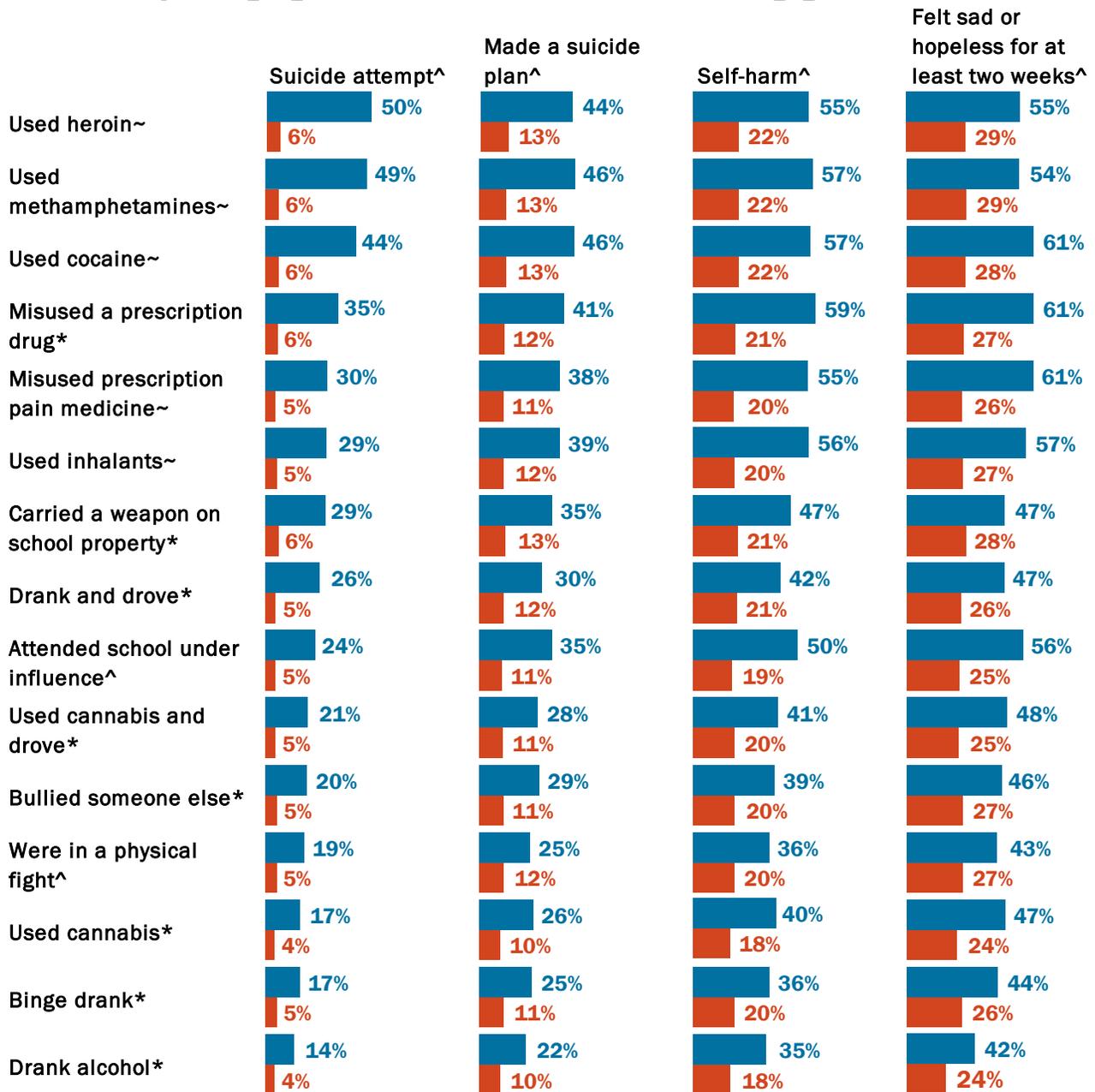
**HealthVermont.gov**  
802-863-7200



## Risk Behaviors and Suicidality

High school students who report engaging in risk behaviors are more likely to report feeling sad or hopeless, engage in self-harm, make a suicide plan, and attempt suicide. All differences in suicidality between **students who engaged in risk behaviors** and **those who did not** are statistically significant.

### Suicidality among high school students who **did** or **did not** engage in risk behaviors.



\* In the past 30 days

<sup>^</sup> During the last year

<sup>~</sup> Ever

## Key Takeaways

- Suicidality is more frequent among students who engage in risk behaviors than those who do not.
- Half of students who report using heroin, methamphetamines, or cocaine at some point in their lives had attempted suicide in the past year.
- Overall, differences in suicidality are larger for students who used substances compared to other risk behaviors.

## Resources

If you or someone you know is thinking about or planning to take their own life, there is help 24/7:

- **Call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988**, or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)
- **Text the Crisis Text Line** – text “HOME” to 741741 anywhere in the U.S. about any type of crisis
- **Trevor Lifeline - LGBTQ Crisis Lifeline: 1-866-488-7368**
- [FacingSuicideVT.org](https://FacingSuicideVT.org)

## References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/risk-factors/index.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/prevention/index.html>

For more information: [AHS.VDHSuicideData@Vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHSuicideData@Vermont.gov)