

The Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of a national school-based survey that monitors health-risk behaviors contributing to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and young adults. Together with the Agency of Education, the Vermont Department of Health conducts and reports two separate surveys every two years: one for high school students and one for middle school students. Due to COVID-19, the 2021 YRBS was delayed from the Spring semester (January – April 2021) and administered during the Fall semester (September – December 2021) per the CDC’s guidance. Learn more about the YRBS program at HealthVermont.gov/YRBS.

Fast Facts

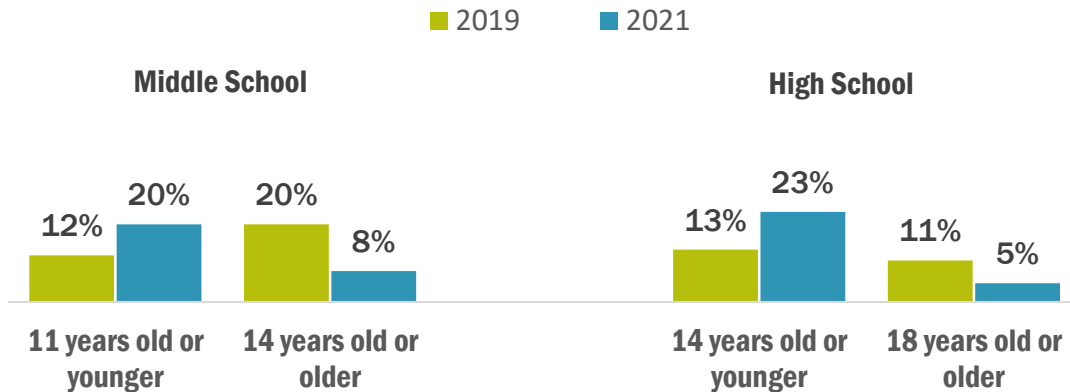
- For the first time, students completed the 2021 YRBS during the fall semester.
- 17,412 students from 59 high schools and 12,136 students from 106 middle schools completed the 2021 VT YRBS.
- The 2021 Statewide Report includes overall prevalence rates and breakdowns by demographic subgroups for all questions asked.

Special Considerations: COVID-19 Pandemic and Delayed Administration

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**.

Students who participated in the 2021 YRBS may have had a different educational and social experience compared to previous participants. Disruptions, including remote learning, lack of social interactions and extracurricular activities, are likely reflected in the survey results.

Differences in Age: 2019-2021



Because students took the survey in the fall semester instead of the spring semester, the average age of survey participants was younger than in past years. Some risk behavior prevalence estimates may have changed, because of the lower age of students.

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.

New and Modified Questions

Each iteration, some questions are added, deleted or modified to reflect new recommendations, rising areas of concerns or societal changes.

In 2021, questions were added to both questionnaires related to sexual orientation, poor mental health, anxiety, housing insecurity, exposure to community violence and screen time. Additional questions were added to the middle school survey about being able to talk to an adult about their feelings and the high school survey about being treated unfairly, having a physical disability or long-term health problem, and having an IEP or 504 Plan.

Updated Question Wording

Which of the following best describes you?

- A. Heterosexual (straight)
- B. Gay or lesbian
- C. Bisexual
- D. I describe my sexual identity some other way
- E. I am not sure about my sexual identity (questioning)
- F. I do not know what this question is asking

Understanding the Results

The [2021 YRBS Report](#) shows the overall prevalence rate and differences by sex, grade, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation and gender identity. The results are weighted by gender, grade, and race/ethnicity in order to compensate for absenteeism and incomplete surveys. The weighting also 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 5 students and denominator of 50 or more students.

No trend data is included in the 2021 report and caution should be used when interpreting and comparing the 2021 results to other years. Statistical differences between demographic subgroups are noted in the text. While this report notes statistical differences among subgroups, you should also consider *meaningful differences*: does the disparity merit a targeted intervention or mean something important to the community (statistics aside).

Why Are These Data Important?

The YRBS is used to determine the prevalence of health behaviors. The results can be used to identify differences among subpopulations of students. See the [2021 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey Statewide Report](#) for additional ways the data is used.

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.

For More Information and To Read the Full Report:

Full Report: [2021 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey Statewide Report](#)

Visit: www.HealthVermont.gov/yrbs

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