



VERMONT **YOUTH** PROJECT  
positive youth development in Vermont communities

# STATEWIDE DATA SUMMARY OCTOBER 2022



# What is the Vermont Youth Project?

---

The Vermont Youth Project (VYP) is a statewide initiative supporting communities with creating a built environment that embraces positive youth development. As the state developer and manager of VYP, Vermont Afterschool helps participating communities with establishing local coalitions centered around positive youth development, creating localized plans to address risk and protective factors of youth, supporting youth voice and engagement, and building cross-sector partnerships and collaboration. Communities that participate in VYP commit to empowering youth and creating healthy accessible spaces for youth to be themselves, engage with peers, learn new skills, and connect with caring adults.

The Vermont Youth Project takes inspiration from Finland's efforts on youth voice as well as the Planet Youth data tool and the Icelandic Model of Prevention. However, ultimately this is a Vermont model designed to support the great efforts already happening in your community. Communities participating in this project have a support system that helps with amplifying, connecting, and refocusing the great programming and efforts already happening in your community as well as identifying new opportunities to provide healthy environments for youth.

Participating communities will each have specific and localized plans that start with access to real-time key data findings so they know what's going on with their youth right now. With these findings, the communities implement local strategies with support and facilitation from VYP staff and consultants.

## Contacts:



Brianne Smith  
Youth Engagement Coordinator  
[brianne@vermontafterschool.org](mailto:brianne@vermontafterschool.org)  
(802) 448-3464

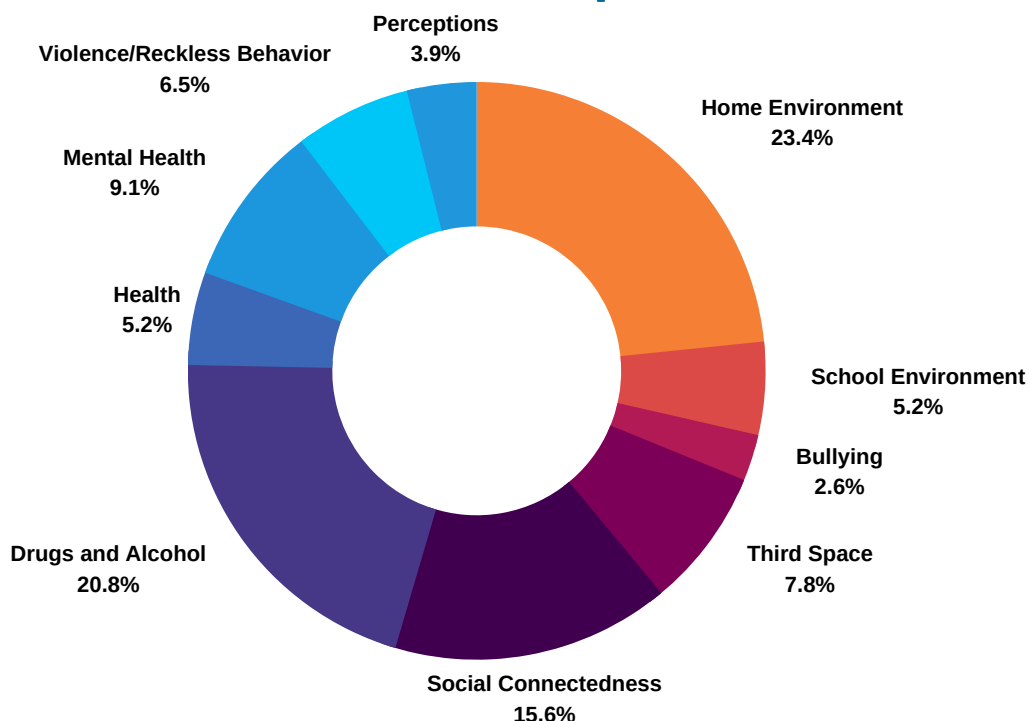
# Vermont Youth Project Survey

The Vermont Youth Project uses the Planet Youth data tool, designed and analyzed by researchers at the Icelandic Center for Social Research and Analysis. The survey is used to understand current risk and protective factors in addition to perceptions of substance use. The presence or absence and various combinations of protective and risk factors contribute to the overall health and well-being of youth. Identifying protective and risk factors can help to guide our local prevention and intervention strategies.

## What to Know About the Survey

- Taken every year in the fall with data released within 8 weeks
- Two different surveys for middle and high school students
- 71 multiple-choice questions over five major domains:
  - Family
  - Peer group
  - School
  - Out-of-school time or third space
  - Substance use
- COVID-19 and mental health questions added in 2020
- Participation is voluntary

## Distribution of Topics Covered





# What are youth in Vermont saying?

**17%**

9th and 10th grade students report staying out past midnight once or more a week



**22%**

Vermont high school students often felt they cried easily or wanted to cry in the past week

**33%**

11th and 12th grade students have tried e-cigarettes

**25%**

Middle school students have tried alcohol by the age of 13.



**19%**

9th and 10th grade students hang out at a friend's home with no adult present once a week or more



**15%**

11th and 12th grade students report they have become drunk in the last 30 days

**27%**

11th and 12th grade students report they have used marijuana and 15% report it increases peer respect



**49%**

Would like to live in the same community in the future and 75% of high school students feel safe in their community



**86%**

High school students report it's easy to receive caring and warmth from parents

**11%**

Vermont high school students believe their parents would not care if they used cannabis

**20%**

Middle school students report feeling lonely often in the past week



**69%**

9th and 10th grade students report spending time with their parents on the weekend



**23%**

Vermont high school students report they felt difficulties were piling up so high they could not overcome them in the past week.

**72%**

Middle school students report their parents know the parents of their friends



# FAMILY TIME

The Planet Youth survey had some really positive findings related to family life and the relationships that our teens have with their parents and caregivers. 93% of our middle schoolers and 86% of high schoolers report that it's easy to receive caring and warmth from their parents. Teens report spending a lot of time with their parents and 91% of Vermont high school students stated that their parents know where they are in the evenings.

Having shared interests, regular family mealtimes, and family activities creates enjoyable time and space to chat with and listen to our teenagers. As they get older, it is important to maintain good quality communication with them and to stay connected, interested, and engaged in what's happening in their daily lives.

As parents, we are the most important role models for our teens so it is important that we set a good example with our own behaviors.

**93%**

**Vermont middle school students report that it is easy to get caring and warmth from their parents.**





# THIRD SPACE

What happens when youth aren't at home or at school—also known as the third space—really matters in a teen's life. This can be a significant amount of time when you take into account school vacation weeks and summer break.

It is important that young people are encouraged to engage in quality activities during the out-of-school time. Whether it's volunteering in the community, learning new skills, practicing for a performance, or hanging out with friends in a safe place, these programs allow teens to further develop their social skills and build emotional resilience.

Participation in consistent, high-quality third space programs are also a known protective factor against substance use and risky behaviors. In sum, third space programs are an effective primary prevention strategy.

**62%**

**Vermont students report  
there is a great deal of  
social opportunities  
available  
in their community.**



# SUBSTANCE USE

**ALCOHOL** | The survey showed us that 52% of 11th and 12th grade students have tried alcohol, and 16% of 9th and 10th graders have used alcohol in the last 30 days. 28% of high school students report that they drank alcohol for the first time at 13 years or younger.

**CANNABIS** | According to the survey, 5% of 7th and 8th grade students and 15% of 9th and 10th grade students have tried marijuana. 8% of high school students report they used cannabis for the first time at 13 years or younger.

**VAPING** | 11% of 7th and 8th grade students, 24% of 9th and 10th grade students, and 33% of 11th and 12th grade students report having tried e-cigarettes. 5% of 7th and 8th grade students, 13% of 9th and 10th grade students, and 23% of 11th and 12th grade students report using daily.

**CIGARETTES** | 6% of high school students and 6% of middle school students smoked a cigarette for the first time at 13 years or younger.

**12%**

**Vermont high school  
students report  
they consume alcohol at the  
home of others.**



# MENTAL HEALTH

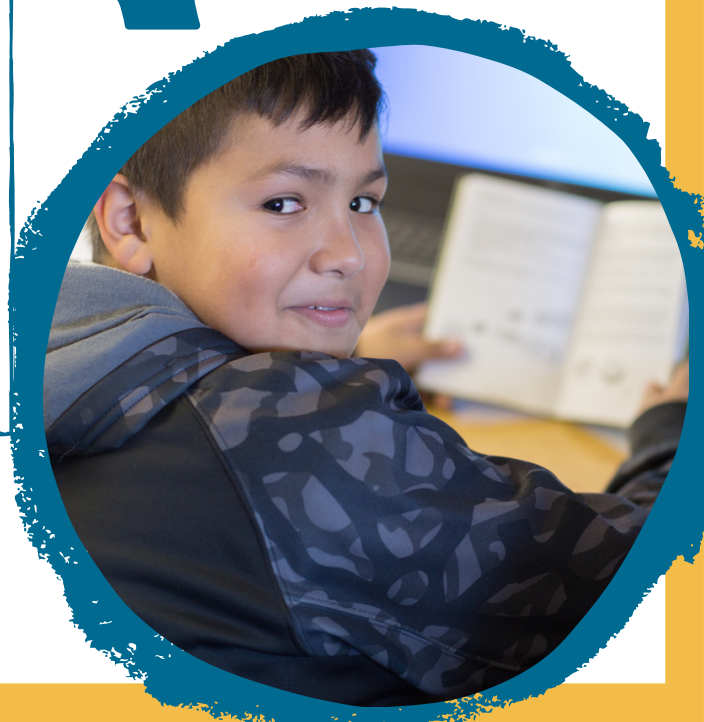
Mental health includes emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. It can include the ability to develop fulfilling relationships, adapting to changes, realizing their potential, having their needs met, life skill development, and using appropriate coping mechanisms. It is normal for youth to experience various types of emotional distress throughout adolescence and it's especially important that young people are supported during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shown to impact youth mental health (source: youth.gov).

18% of Vermont middle school students report often feeling sad or blue in the past week. Additionally, 24% of high school students report they felt sad or had little interest in doing things often in the past week. 27% of high school students were often nervous in the past week and 25% had sleeping problems.

In the past week, 31% of Vermont high school students felt confident in their abilities to handle their personal problems and 25% felt they were unable to control the important things in their life. There are gender disparities in the mental health data as well. 26% of high school girls often felt lonely in the past week; whereas, only 17% of high school boys responded the same way.

**23%**

**Vermont high school students report they felt difficulties were piling up so high they could not overcome them very or fairly often in the past week.**





# COVID-19

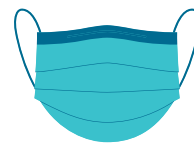
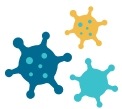
Many adolescents report their social, emotional, and mental well-being have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges such as changes in routine, school closures and remote learning, missed life events, and loss of security and safety can have a long-term impact on youth. Helping adolescents stay socially connected, recognizing and addressing their fears and stress, following COVID-19 precautions and guidance, and teaching youth the importance of taking care of their health can all support youth well-being during this time (source: CDC).

COVID-19 | Currently, 11% of 7th and 8th grade students, 12% of 9th and 10th grade students, and 17% of 11th and 12th grade students feel the COVID-19 pandemic is adding a medium or a lot of stress, anxiety, and/or depression to their life.

HEALTH | COVID-19 have largely impacted the health and mental health of youth in Vermont. The survey data show how youth are feeling about their mental and physical health, post COVID-19. 68% of high school students and 77% of middle school students rated their physical health as good or very good. However, the data show a gender disparity in youth mental health. 72% of middle school boys rate their mental health as good or very good, but only 46% of middle school girls rate their mental health the same way. The same is true for high school students with 54% of boys and 34% of girls rating their mental health as good or very good.

**23%**

**Vermont high school youth  
are often worried or  
stressed about the mental  
health of others around  
them.**



# How to Take Action

---

**How can we make our community be the best place for a young person to grow up?**

Let's come together as neighbors, colleagues, parents, caregivers, advocates, and citizens to:

Explore the data

Share our ideas

Make a plan

**To make Vermont not just the place where we live but a home where we all THRIVE!**

**To learn more and take action, please visit the Vermont Youth Project website: [www.vermontafterschool.org/vyp/](http://www.vermontafterschool.org/vyp/)**



The Vermont Youth Project is supported by Vermont Afterschool, a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that children and youth in every Vermont community have access to high-quality out-of-school time programs.

[www.vermontafterschool.org](http://www.vermontafterschool.org)