Introduction

Adolescent mental disorders have become a public health concern due to their prevalence and impact on children, families and communities. According to the CDC, mental health disorders among adolescents are described as a severe alteration in the child’s ability to achieve social, emotional, cognitive, and academic milestones and to function in daily settings. Despite the evidence of increasing expenditure on care for overall child health, mental health treatment utilization among children is relatively low. Untreated adolescents are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, illicit substance use, and other delinquent behaviors. For example, nearly 4 in 10 (38.1%) Virginia students who never or rarely got the kind of help they needed when they were in emotional distress, purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die.

Figure 1: Percentage of Students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more, VYS, 2011-2019

![Graph showing percentage of students feeling sad or hopeless]

Figure 2: Percentage of Students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more by sex and race/ethnicity, VYS, 2019

![Bar chart showing percentage of students by sex and race/ethnicity]

*Non-Hispanic (NH)
Other = Asian, Multiple Races, All other Races
**Figure 3:** Percentage of Students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more and reported current illicit drug use, VYS, 2019

**Figure 4:** Percentage of Students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more by Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity, VYS, 2019

**Figure 5:** Percentage of Students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more by experienced sexual victimizations, VYS, 2019

**Figure 6:** Percentage of Students who never or rarely got the kind of help they need when they were in emotional distress, VYS, 2019

**Table 1:** Prevalence and Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% Confidence Interval) of students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more by selected risk indicators, VYS, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Adjusted OR a (95% CIs) b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First tried cigarette smoking before age 13 c</td>
<td>12.4%*</td>
<td>3.2 (2.5 – 4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First drink of alcohol before age 13 years d</td>
<td>25.8%*</td>
<td>3.3 (2.7 – 4.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank alcohol or used drugs before sex e</td>
<td>22.3%*</td>
<td>1.8 (1.1 – 2.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge Drinking f</td>
<td>18.7%*</td>
<td>2.1 (1.6 – 2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidality f</td>
<td>44.2%*</td>
<td>10.7 (8.8 – 13.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die h</td>
<td>36.2%*</td>
<td>9.0 (6.8 – 11.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Adult to Talk To i</td>
<td>42.2%*</td>
<td>2.2 (2.0 – 2.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant

a = adjusted for race/ethnicity, sex and grade

b = Please interpret confidence interval with caution: estimates that have a 95% confidence interval width exceeding 2 points or 1.2 times, indicate that this estimate has low precision.

c = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who did not have their first cigarette smoking before age 13

d = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who did not have their first drink of alcohol before age 13

e = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who did not drink alcohol or used drugs before sexual intercourse

f = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who did not binge drink alcohol

g = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who did not experience any form of suicidality

h = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who did not purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die

i = significantly different (p<0.05) than students who reported at least one teacher or other adult that they can talk to if they have a problem

**Example interpretation of Table 1:** Forty-four percent of high school students who reported mental health issues, experienced any form of suicidality.
DEFINITIONS

- **Current Illicit Drug Use**: high school student who currently used marijuana, took prescription pain medicine without a doctor’s prescription, differently than how a doctor told them to use it, used any form of cocaine or heroin, methamphetamines or ecstasy.

- **Heterosexual**: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT)**:
  - **Lesbian**: Usually, a woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender.
  - **Gay**: A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender.
  - **Bisexual**: A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender.
  - **Transgender**: Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one’s internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth.

- **Mental Health**: high school student who reported ever feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities.

- **Sexual Victimization**: high school students who were ever physically forced to have sexual intercourse and experienced sexual violence (being forced by anyone to do sexual things [counting such things as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse] that they did not want to).

- **Suicidality**: high school students who reported considering suicide or made a suicide plans or attempting suicide, or an injurious suicide attempt.

REFERENCES


FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit [https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/virginia-youth-survey/](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/virginia-youth-survey/) or contact VYSrequest@vdh.virginia.gov