



## STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Survey results highlight areas of concern for Rhode Island youth**

**(May 19, 2023)** — About one in 10 Rhode Island middle and high school students surveyed last year reported using marijuana within the past 30 days, and about 9 percent reported using alcohol, according to the latest Rhode Island Student Survey.

Those numbers were down slightly from the previous survey, as were the numbers for use of electronic tobacco products (9 percent reporting use within the past 30 days) and tobacco products (3 percent reporting use within the past 30 days), but not all the trends in the latest survey were positive.

Use of inhalants was up, with about 3 percent reporting use within the past 30 days, and the use of other substances within the past 30 days remained about the same, with 2 percent reporting heroin, 2 percent reporting prescription drugs and 1 percent reporting tranquilizers.

Administered every other year, the Rhode Island Student Survey asks middle and high school students about a host of topics, including substance use, bullying, depression, violence, and thoughts of suicide. The goal is to identify areas of need, as well as successful prevention efforts that can be built upon.

“These results are an important reminder of the need for adults to be involved and to be mindful of the circumstances and challenges facing our youth,” said Richard Charest, Director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH).

“Substance use by youth is always a concern, which is why prevention efforts are so important. We also need to be aware of the overall mental and emotional wellbeing of young people and the factors that can affect their behavioral health.”

The latest survey also revealed an increase in the number of middle school students who had ever considered attempting suicide (up from 13 percent in 2018 to 16 percent in 2022), as well as increases in the number of students reporting that they had been very sad within the past 30 days and the number who felt hopeless about the future.

“We know, from a big-picture perspective, what the challenges facing our youth are, but the survey helps us to focus our efforts as we work with our regional prevention coalitions and others to address any needs they see on the front line,” said Thomas Martin, Director of BHDDH’s Division of Behavioral Health. “The results also help us to align our message of prevention with current trends and respond in a way that will help.”

The latest survey was taken by 20,411 Rhode Island middle and high school students from 23 school districts. It was the fourth survey of its kind, following those administered in 2020, 2018, and 2016.

The survey results can be viewed [here](#). Additional data on youth and young adult substance use and behavioral health-related trends can be found on the Rhode Island State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup website [here](#).

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