**Vermont Young Adult Survey 2018**

Methods and Overview of Summary Tables

Prepared by:

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Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

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*Questions regarding the survey or any of the data tables and reports based on the survey data should be directed to Amy Livingston at 802-652-4111, or* *alivingston@pire.org**.*

**Background**

The 2018 Vermont Young Adult Survey (YAS) was conducted by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) to support the statewide evaluation of Vermont’s Regional Prevention Partnerships (RPP) project. Surveys using similar methods were conducted by PIRE in 2014 and 2016. Because these surveys provide useful epidemiologic data for purposes other than the evaluation, PIRE provides statewide summary data from the survey to VDH. This document describes the methods used to conduct the survey and provides an overview of the detailed tables available on the Vermont RPP evaluation website: [www.vt-rpp-evaluation.org](http://www.vt-rpp-evaluation.org) .

**Methods**

For each of the three years 2014, 2016, and 2018, Vermont residents ages 18 to 25 were recruited through Facebook ads to participate in an online survey. The surveys were conducted in the spring of each year, for between eight and ten weeks during the months of March through May. The ads were designed to catch the attention of a broad range of young adults and highlighted the chance for a randomly drawn respondent to win a weekly cash prize. The number of usable surveys obtained was 3200 in 2014[[1]](#footnote-1), 3062 in 2016, and 2365 in 2018.

The online survey was designed to be taken using a variety of internet-connected devices, and to require about 10 to 15 minutes. Survey items include background demographics and questions about substance use and perceptions related to substance use such as the ease of obtaining them and the level of risk they pose to users. Survey content varied slightly from year to year. For example, the 2018 survey contained several questions regarding use of tobacco products and vaping devices. Copies of the survey are available on the RPP evaluation website.

Although Facebook is widely used by the vast majority of young adults in the U.S., the use of this medium for recruiting survey respondents combined with the self-selection by respondents to participate yields a “convenience sample” rather than a truly representative sample of all young adults in Vermont. To enhance the representativeness of the samples, the data from all three years were weighted to reflect the young adult population of Vermont in 2010 with respect to age group, sex, and county of residence. The weighted state estimates for a set of key substance use measures match closely with those obtained from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse for the same years and age group, thus supporting the usefulness of the sample for reflecting statewide rates, patterns, and trends regarding substance use behaviors.

**Summary Tables**

The findings from the 2018 survey have been summarized in a series of tables available on the RPP evaluation website. For comparison purposes, some tables also include findings from the 2016 and 2014 surveys. Available tables include:

* Statewide Rates for All Survey Items: 2014, 2016, and 2018
* Statewide Rates for All Survey Items By Age Group and Sex
* Full-time College Student Tables

All items in these tables are summarized as the percent of respondents reporting a particular behavior or perception (i.e., the “prevalence rate”). This approach produces a very compact report and allows for easier comparisons across many different survey items. Using this approach required “cut-points” to be identified for items with multiple response options. For example, the prevalence rate for the perceived risk of harm from using substances was defined as the percent of respondents who perceived the risk of harm to be either no risk or slight risk. For some such items, additional prevalence rates were defined using different cut-points (e.g., no risk only) if the initial cut-point resulted in a prevalence rate that was close to the 100% ceiling (e.g., greater than about 75%). The response options used to define each of these prevalence rates are indicated in the tables.

Each set of tables provides prevalence rates for all the items in the 2018 survey except those intended for internal use only by ADAP. For 2018 items not included in the 2014 or 2016 surveys, the table cells for those items and years are shaded gray. Some items, or sets of items, are applicable only to respondents who provided a positive response to a previous question. These items are indented and apply only to the subset of respondents who answered affirmatively to the item directly preceding the indented items.

In all three sets of tables, statistically significant differences for prevalence rates between years or between subgroups being compared are noted as such with asterisks in table cells reserved for this purpose. In these tables, differences at the p<.10 level have been identified in addition to the more standard p<.05 and p<.01 levels. Although this is helpful for identifying underlying patterns in the data, any such differences should be interpreted with extra caution and are sometimes referred to as being “marginally” significant. Significance tests for subgroup or cross-year differences are provided in the appropriate cells whenever possible[[2]](#footnote-2) for all survey items reported in each table except those pertaining to demographic characteristics.

**Other Formats for Survey Findings**

In addition to the summary data tables described above, some findings from the YAS are also packaged in other ways, such as brief narrative reports and PowerPoint presentations. For example, a two-page summary highlighting key findings from the 2018 survey is titled:

*Vermont Young Adult Survey 2018: Overview of Methods and Findings*

and is available on the RPP evaluation website. PowerPoint files with key findings from the 2018 survey (presented to the State Epidemiologic Outcomes Workgroup) and findings focused on college students (presented at the 2018 Vermont College Symposium) are also available on the RPP evaluation website. The website also posts reports and presentations based on the 2014 and 2016 surveys, and copies of the survey items for all three years.

1. For the 2014 survey, 333 respondents were recruited through an alternative mechanism not used for the 2016 and 2018 surveys. Data from these respondents have not been included in any tables or reports involving comparisons with later years, thereby reducing the sample size for the 2014 survey to 2867 respondents. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cells for which a significance test is not applicable are designated with a double dash (--). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)