

The Mental Health Needs of Norwalk Youth

Findings from the June 2021 Youth Survey



Margaret Watt, Prevention Director, Positive Directions-The Center for Prevention & Counseling
Denique Weidema-Lewis, Manager of Implementation & Collaborative Action, Norwalk ACTS

Welcome! We're so glad you're here!

Please add your name, gender pronouns,
and any affiliation/organization you're
representing in the chat.

Menti Poll 1

Instructions:

1. Use your phone (or web browser)
2. Go to www.menti.com

3. Enter this code: **1587 1483**

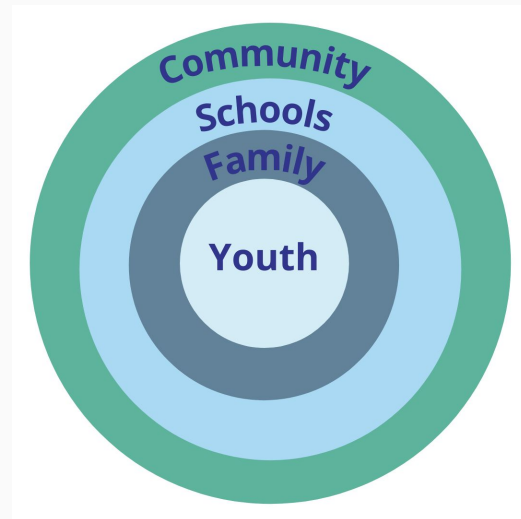
4. Answer Prompt:

What part of the community are you representing?



Goals for this meeting:

- Share the current state of Norwalk youth mental health based on data collection done by The Norwalk Partnership
- Identify current and potential community-based mental health partnerships
- Work towards building an action plan with community partner input to address identified needs and align objectives and work through:
 - information & education (e.g., infographics, postcards, newsletter)
 - skills trainings (e.g., suicide prevention workshops)
 - youth supports (e.g., peer supports, youth leadership opportunities)
 - environmental (e.g., suicide postvention planning, curriculum modification, physical signage)
- Identify gaps and creative strategies to work together



About the 2021 Youth Survey

- Intended to identify current needs & behaviors, hear youth voice, inform community planning and awareness, support schools, meet grant requirements
- An initiative of **The Norwalk Partnership (TNP)**, the local substance use prevention coalition
- Coordinated & funded by Positive Directions-The Center for Prevention & Counseling, through the federal Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant
- Used Developmental Relationships™ Survey by the Search Institute
- Conducted June 2021

TNP Leadership Team organizations:



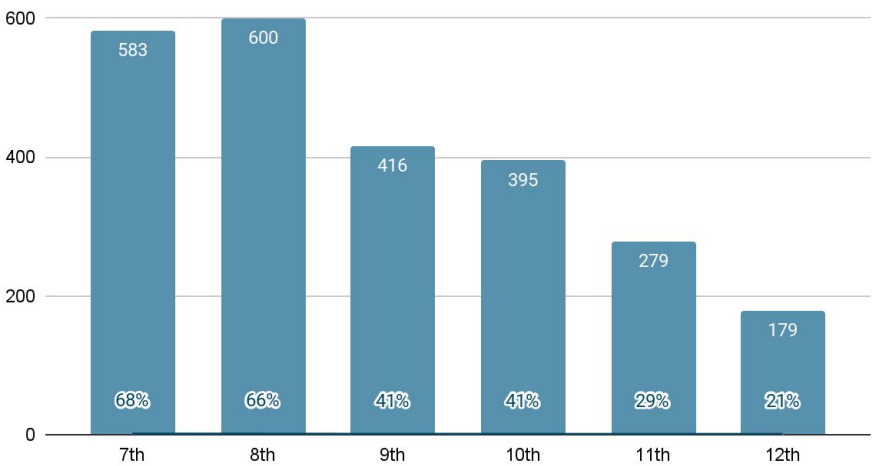
Demographics

Who Was Surveyed?

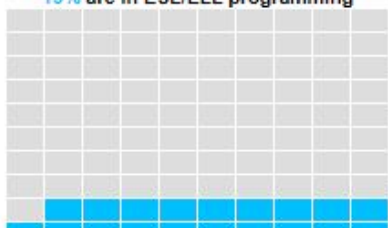
2542 Norwalk PS students took the survey in June 2021

- 67% of middle school students in 7th and 8th grades
- 33% of high school students
- 44% of all students in grades 7-12

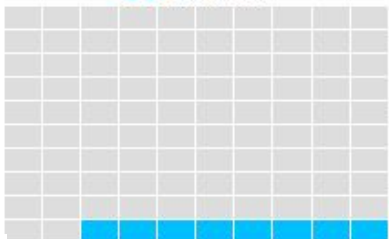
Students by Grade



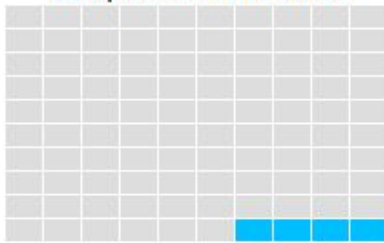
19% are in ESL/ELL programming



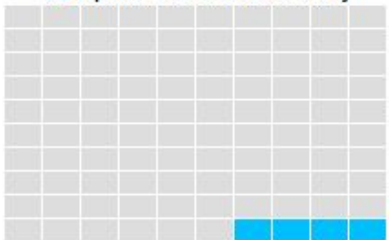
8% have an IEP



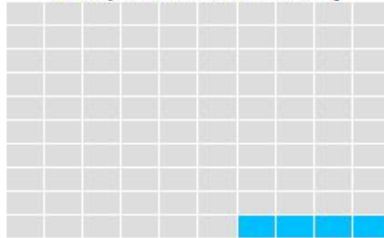
4% experienced financial strain



4% experienced shelter insecurity

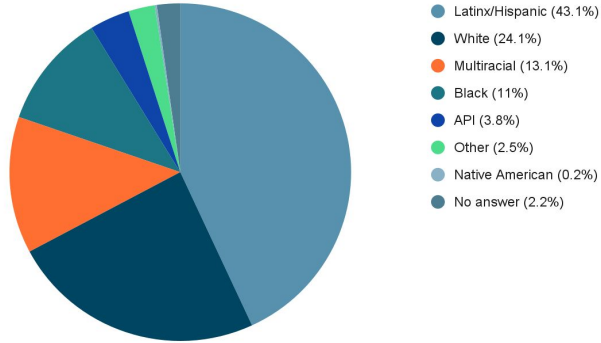


4% experienced food insecurity

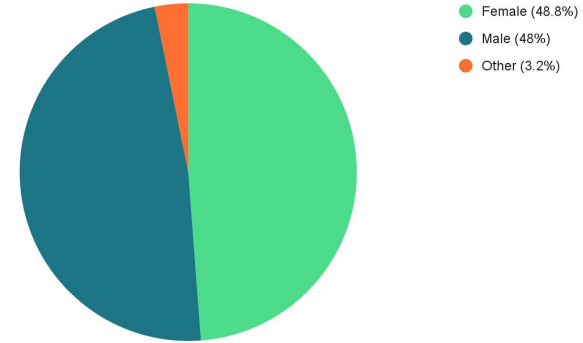


How Did Norwalk Students Identify?

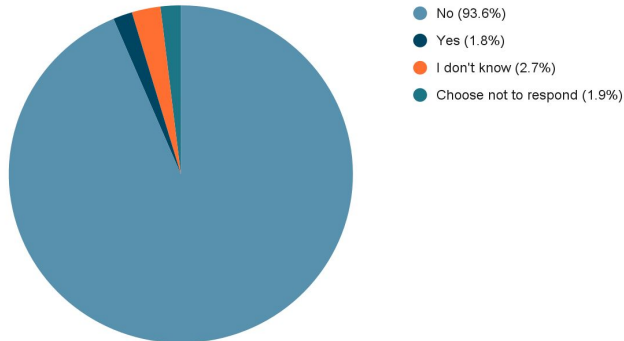
Racial Identity



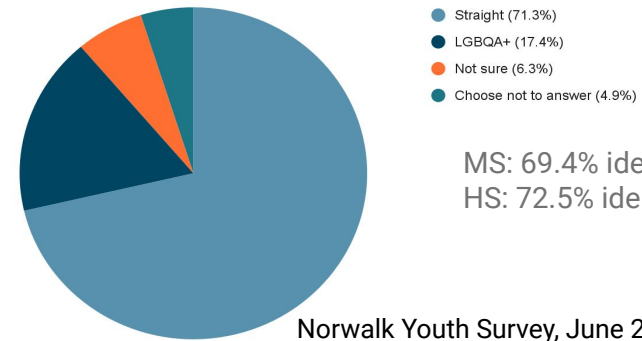
Gender Identity



Do you identify as Transgender?



Which of these best describes you? (Sexual identity)



MS: 69.4% identify as straight
HS: 72.5% identify as straight

Coping with COVID Stress

(grades 9-12 only)

Key Points - Stress & Relationships

Need for:

- Community building embedded in all school activities -- and outside school!
- Skills building: problem solving, self-awareness, relationship, self-esteem
- Opportunities and encouragement to reach out to others

Menti Poll 2- Coping with COVID Stress

Instructions:

1. Use your phone (or web browser)
2. Go to www.menti.com

3. Enter this code: **1587 1483**
4. Answer Prompt:

Think back to March-June 2021. How stressful was the pandemic for you?

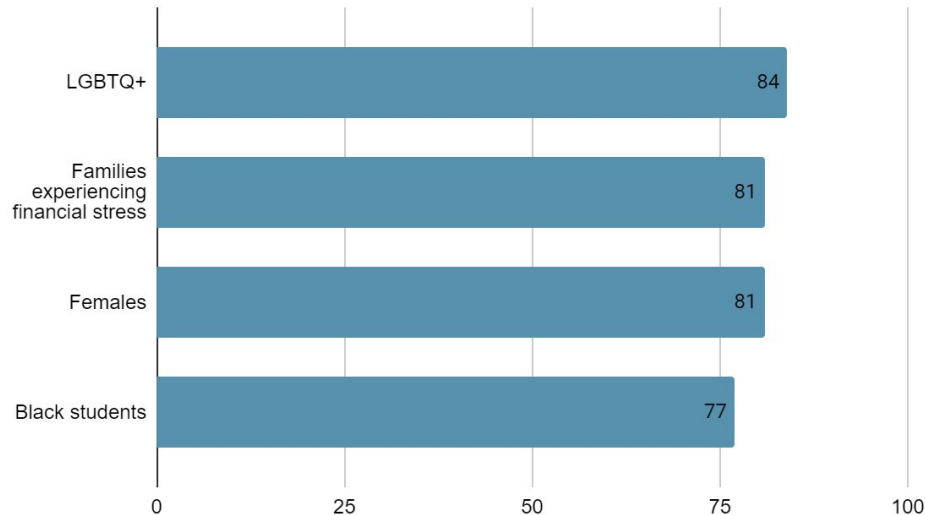


How Stressful Has the Pandemic Been?

Overall, **73%** of students reported pandemic was Somewhat or Very Stressful for them:



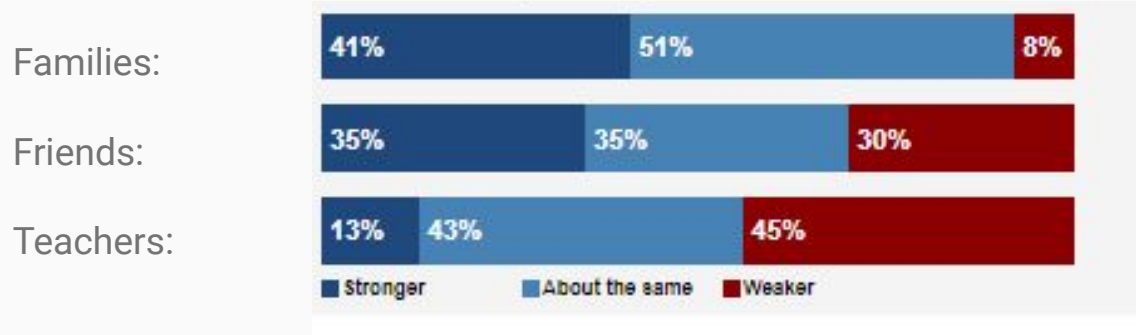
Groups reporting higher rates of stress



Only **30%** reached out to others about how they were feeling

How Did COVID Affect Students' Relationships?

Quality of relationships since the pandemic:



Connections to people at school:

- **39%** feel connected to other students at school
- Majority (**83%**) feel connected to friends
- Just over half of students (56%) feel connected to staff in school

What Role did Teachers Play in Providing Support during COVID?

Emotional Support from Teachers during COVID (grades 9-12):

My relationship with my Teachers has helped make things feel more normal during the pandemic.



My Teachers have helped me understand, or make sense of, my feelings related to the pandemic.



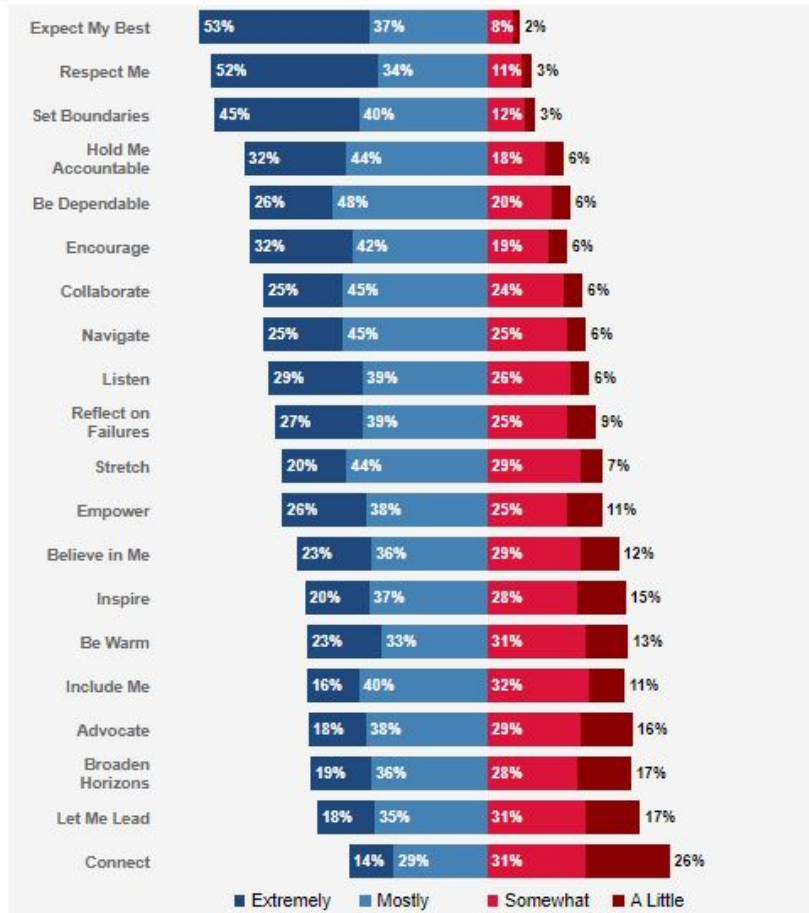
My Teachers provide a safe space where I can share my feelings and experiences related to the pandemic.



Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Developmental Relationships With Teachers (grades 7-12)

To What Extent Do Students Feel Supported by Their Teachers' Actions?



- For **19** of the 20 actions measured, **more than half of students feel “extremely” or “moderately” supported** by teachers.
- On **5** of the 20 actions, **15%-26% of students feel only “a little” supported.**

Groups reporting **lower** than average scores related to relationships with teachers: LGB+, Girls, Whites, Blacks.

How Do Students View their Own Social-Emotional Skills?

Overall, Norwalk teens report having **good social-emotional skills**:



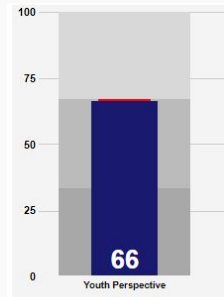
Groups reporting **lower** than average social-emotional skills: families experiencing financial strain, LGB+, Latino, students with IEPs, ELLs.

Youth who experienced stronger levels of Developmental Relationships had stronger Social Emotional Competence skills.

Do Students Find the NPS Environment to be Culturally Responsive?

Overall, youth scores indicate that the **NPS environment is moderately culturally responsive**:

“There are adults who have similar racial or ethnic backgrounds to mine and who I consider good role models”:

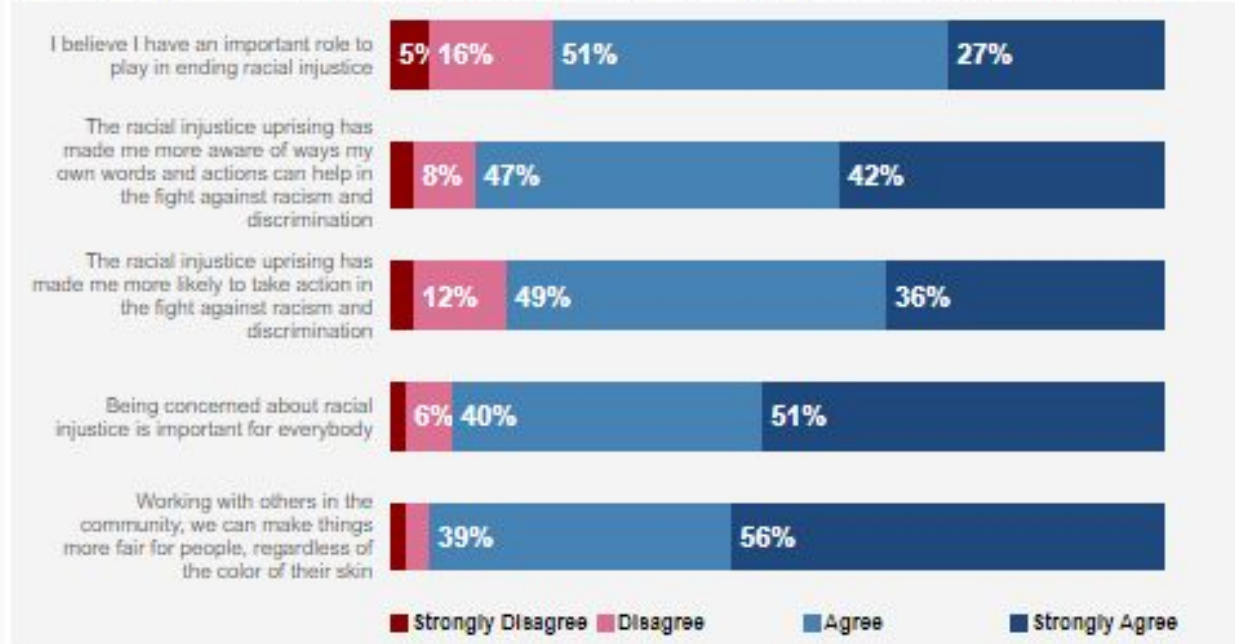


Groups reporting **lower** than average scores for cultural responsiveness: families experiencing financial strain, Black students, LGB+.

Youth who reported a more Culturally Responsive environment had stronger Social Emotional Competence skills.

Has the Racial Injustice Movement Empowered Our Teens? (9th-12th grades only)

Following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (and many other people of color), there has been increased attention and unrest around the issue of racial injustice. In the questions below, we refer to this as the “racial injustice uprising”.



“I have an important role to play”: 88% of girls agree vs 68% of boys

“We can make things more fair for people”: 95%-100% of most subgroups agree, vs 85% of those experiencing financial strain

What support do you wish you were getting from your school focused on building strong relationships during COVID-19 pandemic that you are not getting right now?



Mental Health

Key Points - Mental Health

Need for:

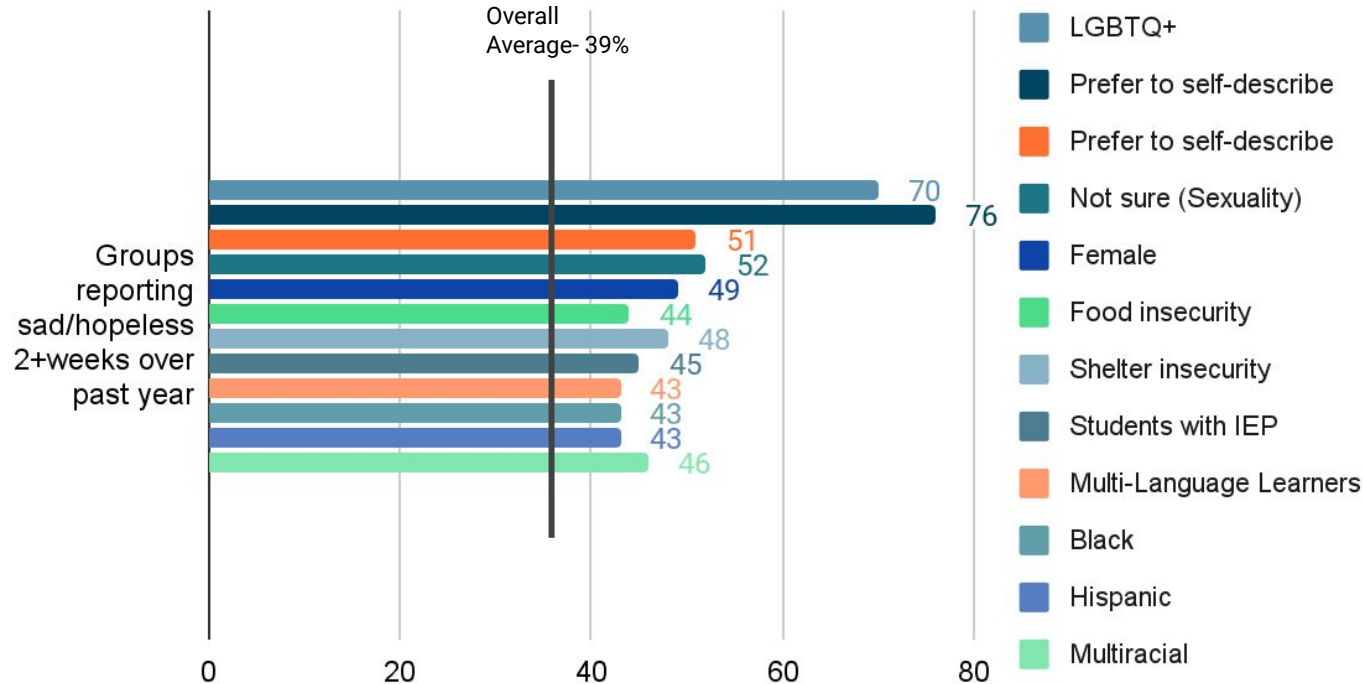
- Social-emotional supports
- Coping skills
- Visible supports for different subgroups
- Suicide awareness & prevention training for youth, staff, parents
- LGBTQ training for school & agency staff, parents, coaches

To What Extent are Norwalk Students Struggling with Depression?

During the past 12 months...		Grade	%
did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?	YES	7-8	32
		9-12	46
		7-12	39
did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?	YES	7-8	12
		9-12	13
		7-12	13
7-8, n=1183; 9-12, n=1269; 7-12, n=2542			

Disproportionality: Sad/Depressed over 2+ week period within 12 months

Groups reporting rates of depression higher than the overall average of 39%:

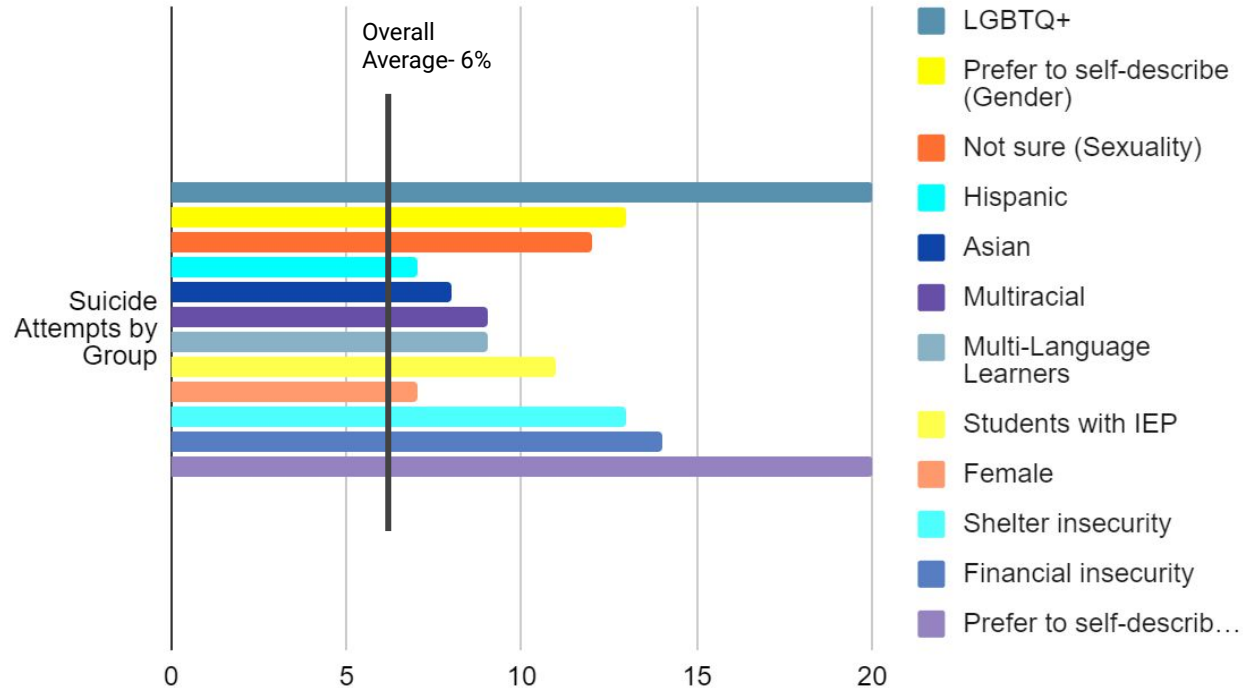


What about Suicide?

In the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?	7-8 %	9-12 %	7-12 %
0 times	93	94	94
1 time	4	3	4
2 or 3 times	2	2	2
4 or more times	1	1	1
7-8, n=1183; 9-12, n=1269; 7-12, n=2542			

Disproportionality: Suicide ideation and Attempts

Suicide Attempts

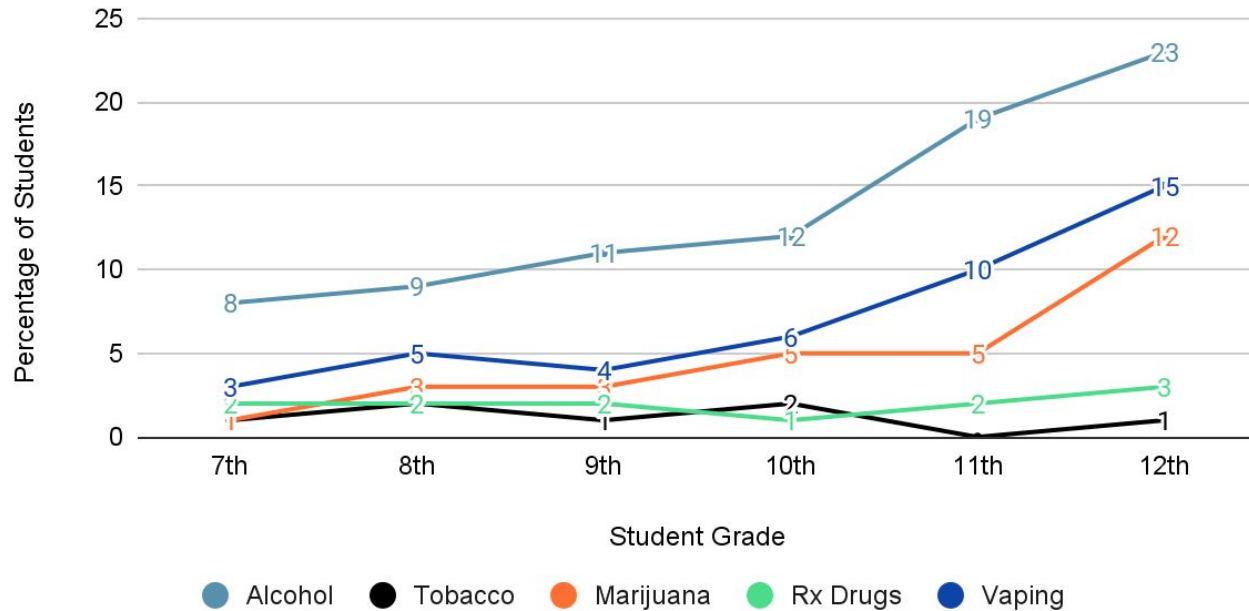


Substance Use

To What Extent are Norwalk Students Currently Using Substances?

Past 30 Day Use of Substances, NPS

June 2021



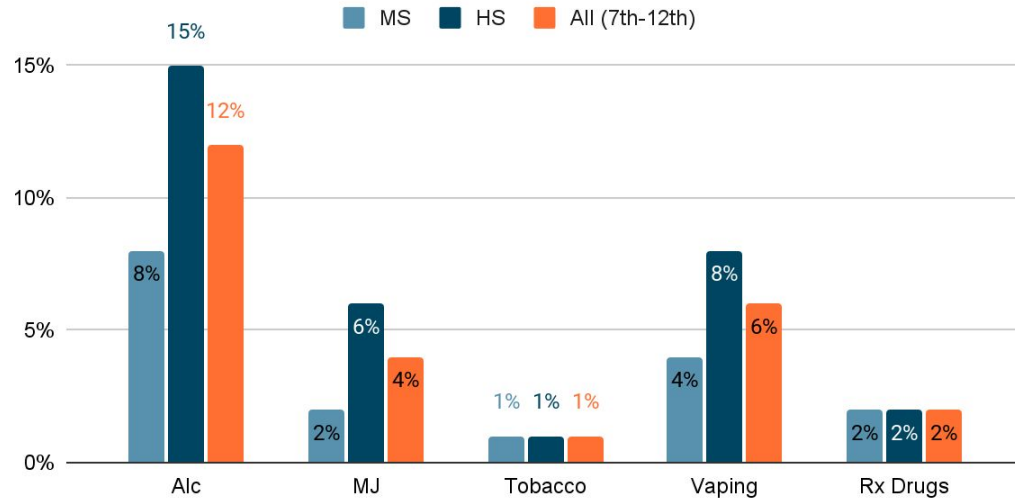
Among students who use alcohol:

- 32% vape
- 21% use marijuana
- 10% use Rx drugs
- 9% use cigarettes

What are the Substance Use Rates for Middle School, High School, and Overall?

Substance Use Rates by School Level & Overall

Norwalk, CT, June 2021



Disparities:

- **Girls** use vapes, alcohol & marijuana more than boys.
- Whites use alcohol more (17%); Blacks use marijuana more (7%); multiracial vape more (7%); Blacks use Rx drugs more (5%).

Groups using substances at **1.5+ times the average rate:**

- Depression (*3x higher for those with suicidal ideation*)
- LGBTQ+ (*4x higher for those who self-describe*)
- Students with IEP (*up to 2.5x higher*)
- Financial strain (*2x higher*)

Are Students Aware of the Health Risks from Substance Use?

- 86% think misusing prescription drugs is harmful
- 85% think smoking is harmful
- 78% think vaping is harmful
- 77% think drinking 5+ drinks at a time, 1-2 times per week, is harmful.
- 65% think using marijuana 1-2 times per week is harmful.
 - In 7th grade, only 77% students think marijuana is harmful, dropping to 52% of 12th graders.

Higher-risk groups where perception of harm is ~7-10 points lower than the average:

- Students experiencing financial strain (all drugs)
- Students with IEPs (all drugs)
- ELLs (all drugs except marijuana)

How Does Parent & Peer Disapproval of Substances Affect Student Use?

- Students who believe their **parents** do not disapprove have **higher rates** of substance use:
 - **40%** use alcohol (vs 12% overall)
 - **25%** use marijuana (vs 4% overall)
- Students who believe their **peers** do not disapprove have **higher rates** of substance use:
 - **27%** use alcohol (vs 12% overall)
 - **15%** use marijuana (vs 4% overall)
- Peer disapproval is highest for prescription drug use (**89%**) and lowest for marijuana (**77%**)
 - **More than half of seniors** do not perceive peer disapproval of marijuana.

Key Points - Substance Use

Need for:

- Prevention & health education
- Parental awareness
- Visibility of peers who are substance free

Action steps:

- Host Freshman Forum for teens & parents organized by TNP; require attendance for school activities or health class.
- Review K-12 health substance use curriculum.
- Provide training and resources to health educators, in collaboration with TNP.
- Promote sober pro-social activities in collaboration with community partners.
- Implement Preventure program.
- Environmental scan.
- Signage, lighting, bag checks, patrols.
- School policies / community ordinances.

NPS:

- Review data with school community (with TNP):
 - administrators & staff
 - health teachers & coaches
 - counseling staff
 - students
- Recommend / plan for possible curriculum & advisory changes, student programs, PD for health/PE & coaches
- Work with TNP and community partners to offer trainings and resources



Discussion/ Q+A

Potential Ideas for Action

Information & Education

- Host Freshman Forum for teens & parents organized by The Norwalk Partnership; require attendance for school activities or health class.
- Work with community groups to offer Fresh Check Day.
- Disseminate community partner bulletin to parents to promote awareness, educational opportunities.

Skills Training

- Provide training and resources to health educators, in collaboration with The Norwalk Partnership.
- Implement Preventure programming at the middle and high school levels.
- Use community resources for MH and suicide trainings for staff, students.
- Provide LGBTQ awareness training.
- Use community providers for skills workshops.
- Train teachers, community providers, parents on Developmental Relationships model.

Youth Supports

- Promote sober pro-social activities in collaboration with community partners.
- Consider building wellness breaks into each class period.
- Provide peer-led support, drop-in spaces.

Environmental

- Environmental scan.
- Signage, lighting, bag checks, patrols.
- School policies / community ordinances.
- Review K-12 health curriculum for substance use, coping skills, prevention and wellness content.
- Continue development of suicide postvention plans with community partners.
- Ensure classrooms and activities are culturally affirming and safe spaces.
- Consider creating safe spaces, peer supports, and mentors that are culturally specific.

Next Steps: What to expect over next few months

October

- Youth Data Presented
- Service Providers complete survey

Identified strategy category:

- Information and Education
- Skills training
- Youth Supports
- Environmental

November

- SEH Initiative Co-chairs will review survey findings

-Committee structure becomes formalized

December

- Goal planning and strategy development begins within Committee structure

1st meeting for Committees

January-June 2022

- Strategy Implementation

Monthly meeting cadence for Committees

For more information on the data:

Contact:

Margaret Watt, Prevention Director

Positive Directions-The Center for Prevention & Counseling

mwatt@positivedirections.org

For more information on The Norwalk Partnership,

www.thenorwalkpartnership.org