

Tri-Town Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

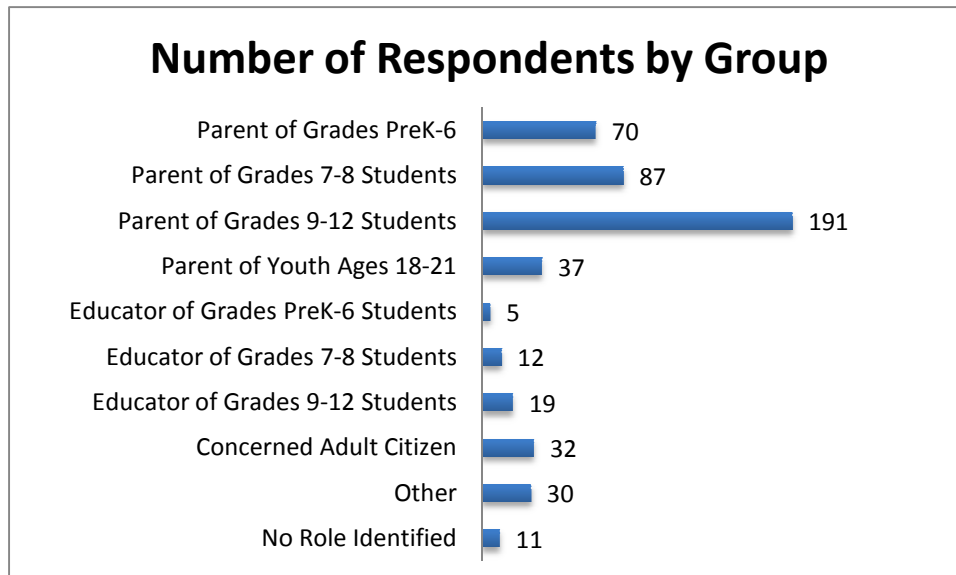
2011 Adult Perception Survey Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

In May 2011, Tri-Town parents, educators, and concerned adults were asked to participate in a survey about alcohol and drug use among local youth. The **Tri-Town Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition** requested this feedback so adults had the opportunity to share their perceptions. The survey results serve as a “snap shot” and add yet another dimension to our understanding of substance abuse issues and concerns. These results will also open the door for further discussion and challenge our thinking. Augmenting information from other sources we continue to create a “data collage” that will guide our collaborative efforts to enhance the safety and well-being of all Tri-Town youth.

PARTICIPATION

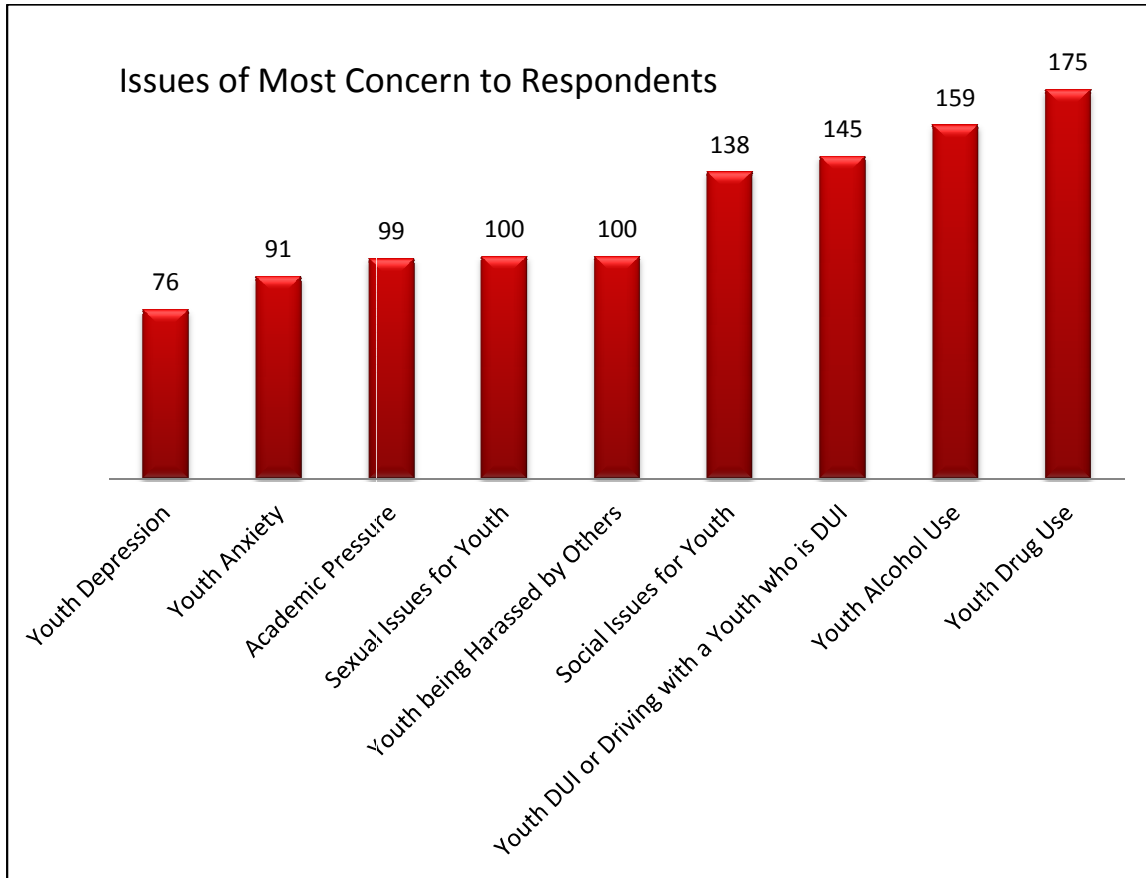
There were **494 respondents** to the *Adult Perception Survey*. Respondents represented all three of our communities in approximate ratio to the population of the towns: 38% from Boxford, 33% from Middleton and 24% from Topsfield. Of the respondents, 83% were female, and 83% were between the ages of 35-54. The bar graph below identifies the different respondent groups.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Common Concerns

Adults in our communities identified similar concerns regarding Tri-Town youth. **The top concerns included: drug and alcohol use, youth driving under the influence or with a youth who is driving under the influence, social issues, being harassed by others, sexual issues, and academic pressure.**



There were variances among respondent groups. For example, **parents of elementary students, and educators of 7-8th and 9-12th grade students were more concerned about social issues and harassment** than were other respondent groups. Also, the **underlying issues of academic pressure, anxiety and depression were among the top concerns of 7-12th grade educators**. These issues were not identified as top concerns by parents and other adults in the community. It is important to note that many respondents commented that the issues are inter-related and selecting top three concerns was difficult.

Risk of Harm

A majority of respondents identified the following behaviors as **posing a moderate or great risk of harm** to middle and high school youth:

- Smoking cigarettes daily
- Sniffing glue or other inhalants
- Taking one or two drinks nearly every week
- Taking one or two drinks nearly every day
- Trying marijuana one or twice (slightly fewer perceived as moderate or great risk)

- Smoking marijuana regularly
- Taking over the counter medicines such as cough medicine in order to get high
- Taking prescription drugs (without doctor’s orders) to get high nearly every week

Perceptions of Youth Substance Use

Adults perceived that higher percentages of Middle and High School youth were smoking, drinking and using marijuana than students reported on the 2010 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* administered at Masconomet Middle and High School. The following chart shows these discrepancies:

Grade Levels	Perceptions of Adults: Student Use in last 30 days	Students’ Responses: Use in last 30 days
Gr. 7-8: alcohol	45% of respondents thought 15-44% of students used alcohol	3% of middle school students self-reported alcohol use
Gr. 7-8: cigarettes	37% of respondents thought 15-44% of student used cigarettes	1% of middle school students self-reported cigarette use
Gr. 7-8: marijuana	40% of respondents thought 15-44% of students used marijuana	2% of middle school students self-reported marijuana use
HS: alcohol	38% of respondents thought 15-44% of students used alcohol 53% of respondents thought 45-75+% of students used alcohol	35% of HS students self-reported alcohol use
HS: cigarettes	57% of respondents thought 15-44% of students used cigarettes	14% of HS students self-reported cigarette use
HS: marijuana	52% of respondents thought 15-44% of students used marijuana 36% of respondents thought 45-75+% of students used marijuana	23% of HS students self-reported marijuana use

Middle School students’ use of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana is **much less frequent** than perceived by adults. Adult respondents believe that there is an increase in the number of students using substances as the students proceed through High School. This increase is validated by students’ self-reporting on the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. However, among the High School students in our three communities the use of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana **does not appear to be the norm of behavior**.

Alcohol Access and Use

The primary source of alcohol was identified by both adults and students as **“home access”**. **61%** of adults said drinking by youth under the age of 21 is never a good thing. However, **23%** of adults have the opinion that it is OK for youth under the age of 21 to drink at home, but only if it is your own. **Only 62.5%** of the adult respondents said they **know about and understand the Massachusetts Social Host Liability Law**.

Talking with Middle and High School Students

Approximately 90% of parents have talked with their children about:	Less than 50% of parents have talked with their children about:
alcohol use; tobacco use; driving with persons who are intoxicated or under the influence; marijuana use	sniffing or inhaling chemicals to get high; binge drinking; using prescription drugs without a prescription; using over the counter drugs to get high; using ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, meth, crystal meth, crank, LSD, peyote, PCP

Conclusion

The results of the *Adult Perception Survey* identified issues of common concern to our three communities. The rich comments provided by parents, educators and other adults demonstrated a keen awareness of the pressures on young people. The findings suggest strategic opportunities to:

- encourage more dialogue
- increase understanding

The survey results also point to the need for ongoing collaboration to:

- promote healthy attitudes and behaviors among all preK-12 students
- assess and enhance current substance use prevention programs and community supports
- spread the heartening news that the majority of our youth are making substance-free choices

As our “data collage” grows it will continue to inform our efforts to reduce risk factors, address the underlying mental health issues, and strengthen the resiliency assets of all our children.