



## **The Coalition 2019 Adult Perception Survey Report *Executive Summary***

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Coalition, a program of the Tri-Town Council, conducted its fifth bi-annual online Adult Perception Survey during the summer of 2019. The survey was open for responses from June through October. The purpose of the survey was to provide an opportunity for Tri-Town parents/primary caregivers, educators and concerned adults to share their attitudes, perceptions and concerns of middle and high school youth regarding substance use and abuse and other health issues. The results of this survey provide information to expand understanding of parent and community concerns and beliefs, to assess parent, educator and community perceptions of normative behaviors of Tri-Town youth, and to support and inform continued discussions to strengthen the well-being of youth in the Tri-Town community.

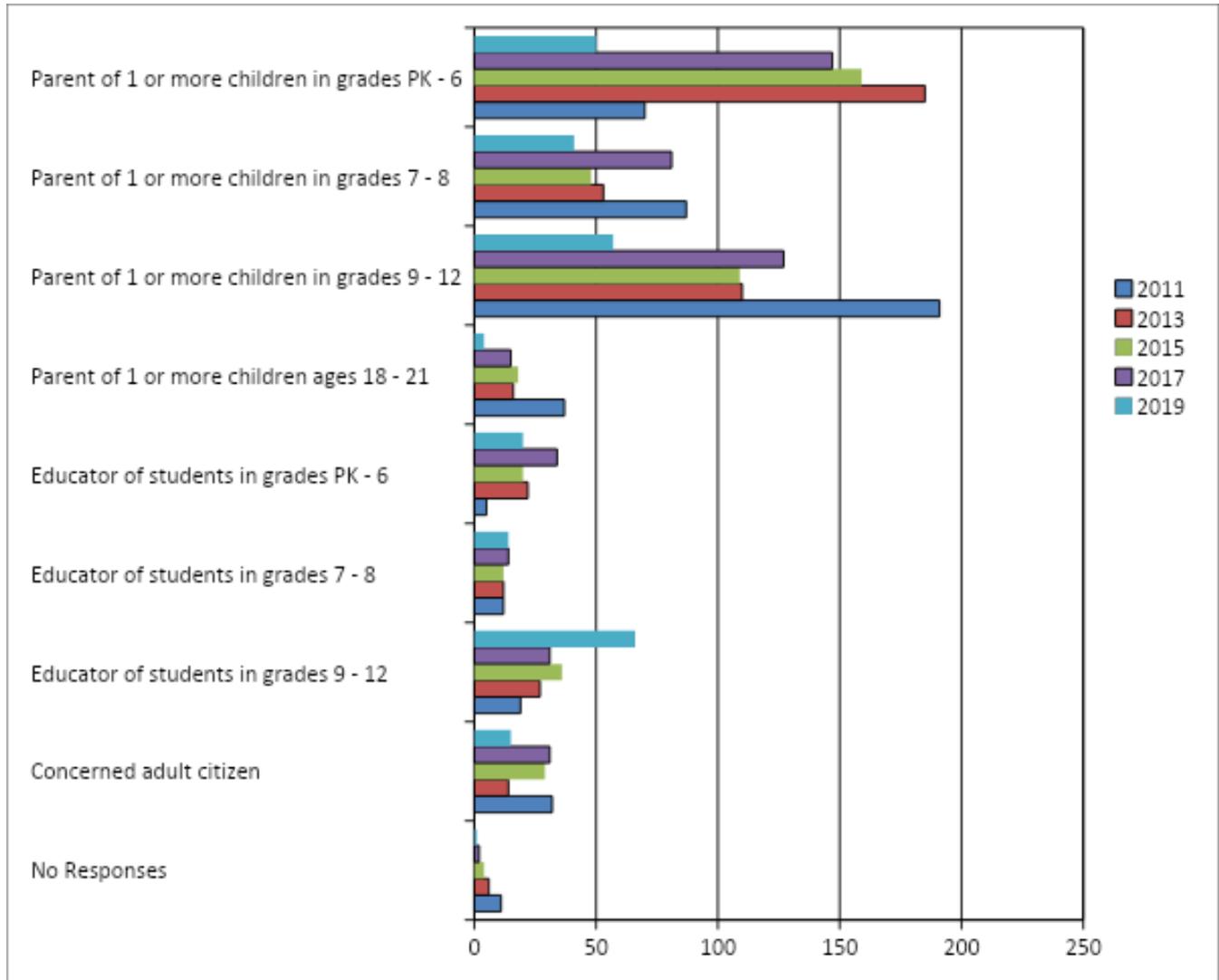
### **PARTICIPATION**

The Coalition received 268 responses to the 2019 Adult Perception Survey, a marked decline from the 482 respondents in the 2017 APS. Of the total respondents, 25% were from Boxford (31.5% in 2017); 27.2% from Topsfield (25.3% in 2017), and 20.1% from Middleton (30.7% in 2017), which is a shift in the population distribution across the 3 towns and represents an increase in participation from Topsfield and a decrease in Middleton and Boxford compared with 2017. The timing of the survey launch, communication methods with the community about the survey and its importance for informing programming and resource allocation of Tri-Town Council should be examined so that improved participation can be achieved in the next survey cycle. The greatest number and percentage of respondents (N=66, 24.6%) were Masconomet High School educators, which is a dramatic increase this cycle when compared with the 2017 administration (N=31.) (Thank you to the high school for promoting this survey in a manner that dramatically increased respondents; the value attributed to the perspective of educators cannot be overstated.) Middle school educators had the same number of respondents as in 2017 and 2015, N=14. Elementary educators had a decline in participation from 2017 to 2019, N=20 in 2019 and N=34 in 2017, a return to the 2015 level of N=20.

All parents represented 54.4% of the respondents, which is a decline from the 76.6% respondents in 2017 and 80% of respondents in 2015. Participants identifying as concerned adult citizen declined from 31 in 2017 to 15 in this cycle, shifting from 6.7% to 5.5% of responses. Slightly more than 79% of respondents were female, slightly more than in the past two cycles of APS, and 90.8% were between the

ages of 35-54. The table below identifies and compares the number of respondents by role identified for 2019, 2017, 2015, 2013, and 2011 survey cycles.

**Number of Respondents by Role:**



**KEY FINDINGS**

**Common Concerns**

The adults who participated in the survey identified similar concerns for Tri-Town youth. The top concerns were: **MENTAL HEALTH, universally the #1 concern** (185 respondents ranked this area of concern as #1, 2, or 3), **TECHNOLOGY, SCREEN TIME & SOCIAL MEDIA USE** (134 respondents ranked this as #1, 2, or 3), **SOCIAL ISSUES** (120 respondents ranked this as #1, 2, or 3), **ACADEMIC PRESSURE** (102 respondents ranked this as #1, 2, or 3), and **SUBSTANCE ABUSE, (98 respondents ranked this area as #1, 2, or 3).**

In examining the respondents' rankings, this analyst added the number of times a respondent in each constituent group ranked an item as either their #1, 2, or 3 area of concern to reach a combined tally in order to report out on the top areas of concern. For example, *Youth Mental Health* was the concern area every constituent group ranked as #1, and when you also added in the number of times it was chosen as the #2 and #3 area of concern, it continued as the #1 area of concern. Couple the number of respondents ranking this as the #1, 2, or 3 concern with the 16 respondents who took the time to add comments to reiterate their concern about *Youth Mental Health*, one can be confident this is the primary area of concern. When applying the same formula to all other areas of concern (adding the # of respondents who ranked an area as #1, 2, or 3) the second most prominent area of concern is *Technology, Screen time and Social Media Use*. The third area of concern for all constituents combined is *Social Issues* and the fourth is *Academic Pressure*, with *Substance Abuse* as the 5<sup>th</sup> most concerning area for adults. We will examine how each constituent group responded and compare the groups' perceptions with one another; there are some differences in perception based upon one's role.

Some respondents noted in the comments section that it was difficult to rank order their top concerns as they were either viewed as equally important, or so interconnected that it was difficult to single out just one area to rank ahead of others. For example, some respondents noted that *Social Issues* and *Technology/Social Media Use* were enmeshed for youth, and that these variables also impacted youth mental health, feelings of anxiety, depression, and diminished self-worth when 'comparing' themselves to the lives of others posted on social media. A few respondents noted concerns about *Bullying* and exclusion which contribute to *Social Issues*. Some comments went on to speculate that these *Social Issues* can lead to feelings of isolation and with the adolescent developmental period being so emotionally vulnerable and yearning for social acceptance and belonging with peers, that these negative feelings perhaps contributed to *Substance Abuse*.

A few of the top 4 concerns have shifted in their importance ranking from those identified in the 2017, 2015 and 2013 APS survey results. *Mental Health* is now the number 1 top concern for every respondent role. *Social Issues* is either the # 2 or #3 concern for every group, except for parents of youth in grades 9-12, where it is the # 5 concern area. In 2017 *Substance Abuse* was either the #2 or #3 concern for many respondent roles, except for educators in grades PK-6 and 7-8, where it was not ranked within the top 4 areas of concern; it appeared 6 times in the 2017 rankings across constituent groups. In 2019, *Substance Abuse* still appears 6 times, but has moved down to the 4<sup>th</sup> area of concern for parents in all age groups and educators of middle and high school youth; educators of PK-6 did not rank *Substance Abuse* within their top 4 areas of concern. *Academic Pressure* is less apparent as a concern within the top 4 but *Technology, Screen time and Social Media Use* has been identified more consistently within the top #2 or #3 areas of concern, appearing 7 times in 2019 compared with 4 times in the 2017 top rankings. *Academic pressure* is less prevalent within the top areas of concern as it appeared 8 times in the top 4 spots in 2017 and 4 times in the 2019 constituent group rankings. Perhaps homework policy revisions have helped alleviate the pressure students experience? Or one could examine the supportive services available to help youth keep up with work assignments, understanding challenging content, etc. to determine if there is any correlation between new or revised programming and course offerings and the decrease of academic pressure as a top concern.

## 2019 Top Concerns

Parents gr PK-6 (N=50)	Mental Health	Technology, Screens & Social Media Use	Social Issues	Bullying	Substance abuse
Parents gr 7-8 (N=41)	Mental Health	Social Issues	Technology, Screens, & Social Media Use		Substance abuse
Parents gr 9-12 (N=57)	Mental Health	Technology, Screens & Social Media Use	Academic Pressure		Substance abuse
Educators PK-6 (N=20)	Mental health	Social issues	Technology, Screens & Social Media Use		Academic pressure
Educators 7-8 (N=14)	Mental Health	Technology, Screens, Social Media	Academic Pressure	Social Issues	Substance abuse
Educators 9-12 (N=66)	Mental health	Technology, Screens & Social Media Use	Social Issues		Substance abuse
Concerned Adults (N=15)	Mental health	Substance abuse	Social Issues	Academic Pressure	Bullying
<b>ALL RESPONDENTS (N=268)</b>	<b>Mental health</b>	<b>Technology, Screens &amp; Social Media Use</b>	<b>Social Issues</b>		<b>Academic Pressure</b>
Parents of youth aged 18 - 21	Results are not	a reliable representation	due to low respondent #		N=4

Parents of high school youth ranked their top 3 areas of concern within 1 point of each other, further supported by the comments noting how difficult it can be to choose as several areas are of equal importance. Parents of high school youth were also the only constituent group not to include *Social Issues* within their top 4 areas of concern, ranking it as the 5<sup>th</sup> most concerning area. It is interesting to note that parents of high school youth include Academic Pressure as their 3<sup>rd</sup> area of concern, and that educators of high school youth rank this area in the 5<sup>th</sup> area. As high school students are required to complete much more work at an independent level with increasingly challenging curriculum, it is developmentally expected that there will be an increase in rigor as they progress through high school. High school students are also more focused upon meeting high standards in order to improve their options to pursue a post-high school education, a common goal for youth residing in the tri-town communities. Parents are often the adults in high school youth lives prompting them to complete various tasks necessary to complete or enhance their college applicant attractiveness, so it is not surprising that parents experience the stress of academic pressure more acutely than educators of the same youth.

*Technology, Screen Time and Social Media Use* was not within the top areas of concern for parents of students in grades PK-6 in 2017 but it is now the #2 area of concern. For this age group, parents are the ones supplying the personal phones, tablets, and computers at home, but the pressure children feel and convey to their parents about 'needing' a phone can be persistent. Has the possession of a phone

become a necessary tool to stay connected with friends, to be able to be involved and included with friends planning for social events? Or is the common use of devices in school and to complete schoolwork or projects at home a factor in parents of these youth identifying this as an area of concern? Parents of middle school youth are not as concerned about *Academic Pressure* as its ranking moved to the #5 spot. Concerns about *Substance Abuse* in 2019 has also moved to #4 in its ranking of concern as compared with #2 in 2017.

In 2019 Educators across all grade levels now rank either *Social Issues* or *Technology, Screen Time and Social Media Use* as their #2 or #3 area of concern where these concerns were not as prevalent in 2017. Given these two issues are noted by all Educator groups and all Parent groups, along with *Youth Mental Health*, continued focus and education around how to support youth and families in these matters is critical.

### 2017 Top Concerns

Parents grades PreK-6	Mental Health	Social issues		Substance abuse	Bullying	Academic Pressure
Parents grades 7-8	Mental Health	Substance abuse	Social issues	Technology & Social Media Use		Academic Pressure
Parents grades 9-12	Mental Health	Academic Pressure		Substance abuse		Social Issues
Parents of youth aged 18 - 21	Academic Pressure	Mental health		Substance abuse		Social Issues
Educators PreK-6	Mental health	Social issues		Technology & Social Media Use		Academic pressure
Educators 7-8	Mental Health	Technology & Social Media Use		Bullying		Academic pressure
Educators 9-12	Mental health	Substance abuse		Academic pressure		Technology & Social Media Use
Concerned Adults	Mental health	Bullying		Substance abuse		Academic pressure

The 28 open response comments related to this one question about the top concerns of adults echoed the themes of *Mental Health, Social Issues, Technology, Screen Time and Social Media Use* impacts youth socially including fueling social anxiety. *Academic Pressure* and homework were also noted in some comments. A few comments also indicate that there are concerns about bullying and unkind behavior, including how some children are excluded as a form of bullying. Perhaps consider educating parents and educators about the subtle forms of bullying and provide resources to parents and educators to help guide productive conversations on this topic. How well have we educated our younger families about anti-bullying curricula, programs, and strategies used in school to help children recognize and report unkind or bullying behaviors?

## Risk of Harm Perceptions

Most respondents reported they believe that use of the following substances poses a moderate or great risk of harm for youth in grades 9 -12, as they did in prior years. As in prior years, respondents perceived that youth in grades 9-12 are at greater risk of harm from use than youth in grades 7-8. It is important to note that the perception of harm for both middle school and high school youth to use electronic smoking devices, vaping, is now much more alarming to adults than in 2017, now ranked by 88% and 96% of the adult respondents to create a moderate or great risk to middle and high school youth, respectively. Smoking cigarettes for middle school youth is also rated at a significantly higher level of harm in 2019 than in 2017. Other areas are rated by adult respondents as comparably risky to youth health in 2017 and 2019.

2019 RESULTS	Middle School Youth		High School Youth	
	NO/Slight Risk	Moderate/ Great Risk	NO/Slight Risk	Moderate/ Great Risk
Smoke cigarettes daily	32%	78%	25%	75%
Use Electronic smoking devices	12%	88%	4%	96%
Sniff glue...to get high weekly	30%	70%	26%	74%
1-2 drinks of Alcohol 1-2x weekly	33%	67%	N/A	N/A
1-2 drinks of Alcohol nearly daily	39%	61%	22%	78%
Have 5+ drinks in a row 2x weekly	N/A	N/A	15%	85%
Smoke Marijuana 1-2x weekly	30%	71%	8%	92%
Smoke Marijuana nearly daily	39%	62%	17%	83%
Take OTC Medicines to get high weekly	35%	65%	23%	78%
Take Rx drugs to get high weekly	36%	64%	21%	79%

2017 RESULTS	Middle School Youth		High School Youth	
	NO/Slight Risk	Moderate/ Great Risk	NO/Slight Risk	Moderate/ Great Risk
Smoke cigarettes daily	35%	65%	22%	78%
Use Electronic smoking devices	26%	75%	11%	78%
Sniff glue...to get high weekly	31%	69%	23%	77%
1-2 drinks of Alcohol 1-2x weekly	29%	70%	N/A	N/A
1-2 drinks of Alcohol nearly daily	37%	63%	21%	79%
Have 5+ drinks in a row 2x weekly	N/A	N/A	15%	86%
Smoke Marijuana 1-2x weekly	26%	74%	10%	90%
Smoke Marijuana nearly daily	34%	65%	17%	82%
Take OTC Medicines to get high weekly	32%	68%	20%	79%
Take Rx drugs to get high weekly	33%	68%	18%	81%

## Perceptions of Youth Substance Use

As was shown in the prior surveys, adults continue to perceive that more middle and high school youth smoked tobacco, used e-cigarette products or vaped, drank alcohol and used marijuana at higher rates in the past 30 days than youth actually reported in the corresponding years' Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted at the Masconomet Middle and High Schools.<sup>1</sup> Adult perception and youth reported usage rates are shown in the table below.

NOTE: **Highlighted text** represents the percent of adult perceptions that aligned with actual reported youth use.

		APS (2019)	YRBS (2018)
7-8	<b>Alcohol:</b> <i>How many MS youth had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days?</i>	<b>35%</b> of adults thought between 0 – 10% use (this is an increase from 30% alignment in the 2017 APS) <b>43%</b> of adults thought between 11 - 30% <b>14%</b> of adults thought between 31 – 50% <b>8%</b> of adults thought between 51 – 80% <1% of adults thought > 81% use	<b>2.9 %</b> of middle school youth self-reported alcohol use  (MS use rate was 2.0% in 2016 and 0.7% in 2014)
	<b>Vaping, e-smoking devices:</b> <i>How many MS youth used e-smoking devices, vaped, hookah pens?</i>	<b>18%</b> of adults thought between 0 – 10% use <b>44%</b> of adults thought between 11 - 30% <b>21%</b> of adults thought between 31 – 50% <b>14%</b> of adults thought between 51 – 80% <b>3%</b> of adults thought 81%+ use	<b>2.4 %</b> of middle school youth self-reported vaping, e-cigarette use
	<b>Cigarettes:</b> <i>How many MS youths have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days?</i>	<b>52%</b> of adults thought between 0%-10% use <b>36%</b> of adults thought between 11-30% <b>12%</b> of adults thought between 31-50% <b>5%</b> of adults thought between 51–80% < 1% of adults thought 81%+ use	<b>0%</b> of middle school youth self-reported cigarette use  (MS use rate was 1.1% in 2016 and 0.2% in 2014)
	<b>Marijuana:</b> <i>How many MS youths have used marijuana in the past 30 days?</i>	<b>31%</b> of adults thought between 0 - 10% use <b>46%</b> of adults thought between 11-30% <b>14%</b> of adults thought between 31-50% <b>7%</b> of adults thought between 51-80% <b>2%</b> of adults thought 81%+ use	<b>0.6%</b> of middle school youth self-reported marijuana use  (this is a decrease from 1.3% in 2016 and slight increase from 0.4% in 2014)

<sup>1</sup> See the YRBS Executive Summary reports on the TTC website: <https://www.tritowncouncil.org/coalition>

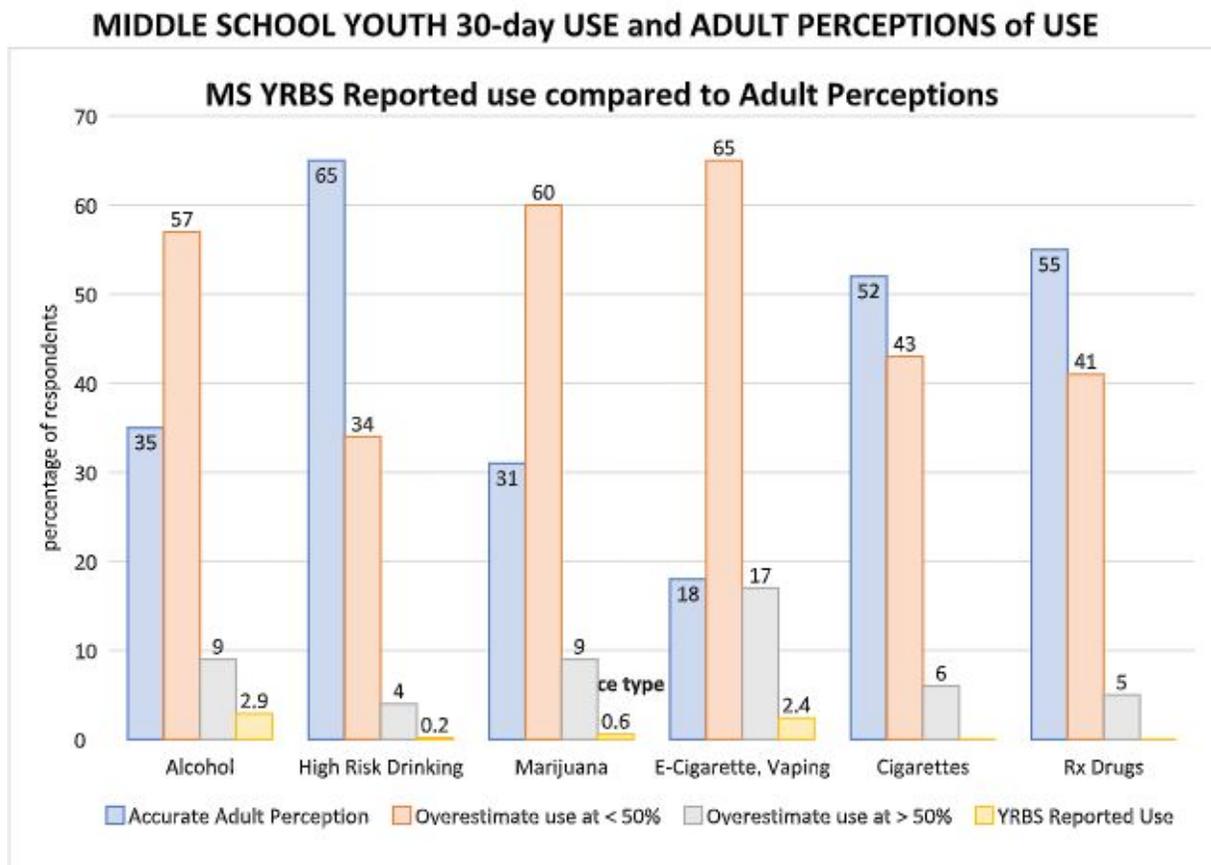
<b>9-12</b>	<p><b>Alcohol:</b> <i>How many HS youth had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days?</i></p>	<p>3% of adults thought between 0 - 10% use  <b>34% of adults thought 11-30% of youth use</b>  30% of adults thought between 31-50%  24% of adults thought between 51-80%  8% of adults thought between 81%+</p>	<p><b>23.4%</b> of high school youth self-reported alcohol use   (this is a decrease from 32% in 2016 and 30% in 2014)</p>
	<p><b>Cigarettes:</b> <i>How many HS youth have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days?</i></p>	<p><b>27% of adults thought 0-10% of youth use</b>  49% of adults thought between 11-30%  13% of adults thought between 31-50%  8% of adults thought between 51-80%  2% of adults thought &gt; 81%+ use</p>	<p><b>3%</b> of high school youth self-reported cigarette use   (this is a decrease from 7% in 2016 and from 6% in 2014)</p>
	<p><b>Vaping, e-smoking devices:</b> <i>How many HS youth used e-smoking devices, vaped, hookah pens?</i></p>	<p>1% of adults thought 0-10% of youth use  <b>14% of adults thought between 11-30% use</b>  32% of adults thought between 31-50%  36% of adults thought between 51-80%  8% of adults thought &gt; 81%+ use</p>	<p><b>27%</b> of HS youth self-reported e-smoking, vaping   (This is a slight decrease from 28% in 2016 and 29% in 2014)</p>
	<p><b>Marijuana:</b> <i>How many HS youth have used marijuana in the past 30 days?</i></p>	<p>2% of adults thought between 0 – 10%  <b>18% of adults thought between 11-20% use</b>  50% of adults thought between 21-50%  26% of adults thought between 51-80%  3% of adults thought &gt; 81%+ use</p>	<p><b>16%</b> of high school youth self-reported marijuana use   (this is a decrease from 20% in 2016 and 22% in 2014)</p>

With the exception of middle school youth cigarette use, youth in grades 7-8 and 9--12 use alcohol, cigarettes, including e-cigarette/vaping products and marijuana **at much lower rates** than is perceived by most adult respondents. While the table shows a number of adult respondents accurately perceive middle and high school youth use rates of alcohol (35% of adults-MS, 34% of adults-HS), cigarettes (52%-MS, 27%-HS), e-cigarette and vaping products (18%-MS, 14%-HS of adults), and marijuana, (31%-MS, 18%-HS), **the majority** of adults perceive that youth are using at higher rates than the 2018 YRBS data indicate. For middle school youth, 65% of adults overestimate use of alcohol, 48% overestimate use of cigarettes, 82% overestimate use of e-cigarettes/vaping products and 69% overestimate marijuana use. For high school youth 62% of adults overestimate use of alcohol, and 3% underestimate alcohol use, 73% overestimate use of cigarettes, 76% overestimate use of e-cigarettes/vaping products and 80% overestimate marijuana use and 2% underestimate marijuana use by high school youth.

Adults accurately reported that youth substance use increases from middle to high school, as validated by the usage rates students reported in the 2018 YRBS. And, according to the YRBS reports, youth use of substances also increases by age and progress through the high school grades. While we certainly want to evaluate the impact of all our collective efforts across our communities in educating youth and families regarding the dangers of substance use, particularly during the highly vulnerable teenage years, we also want to recognize that, according to the results of the YRBS, **MOST** Masconomet middle and

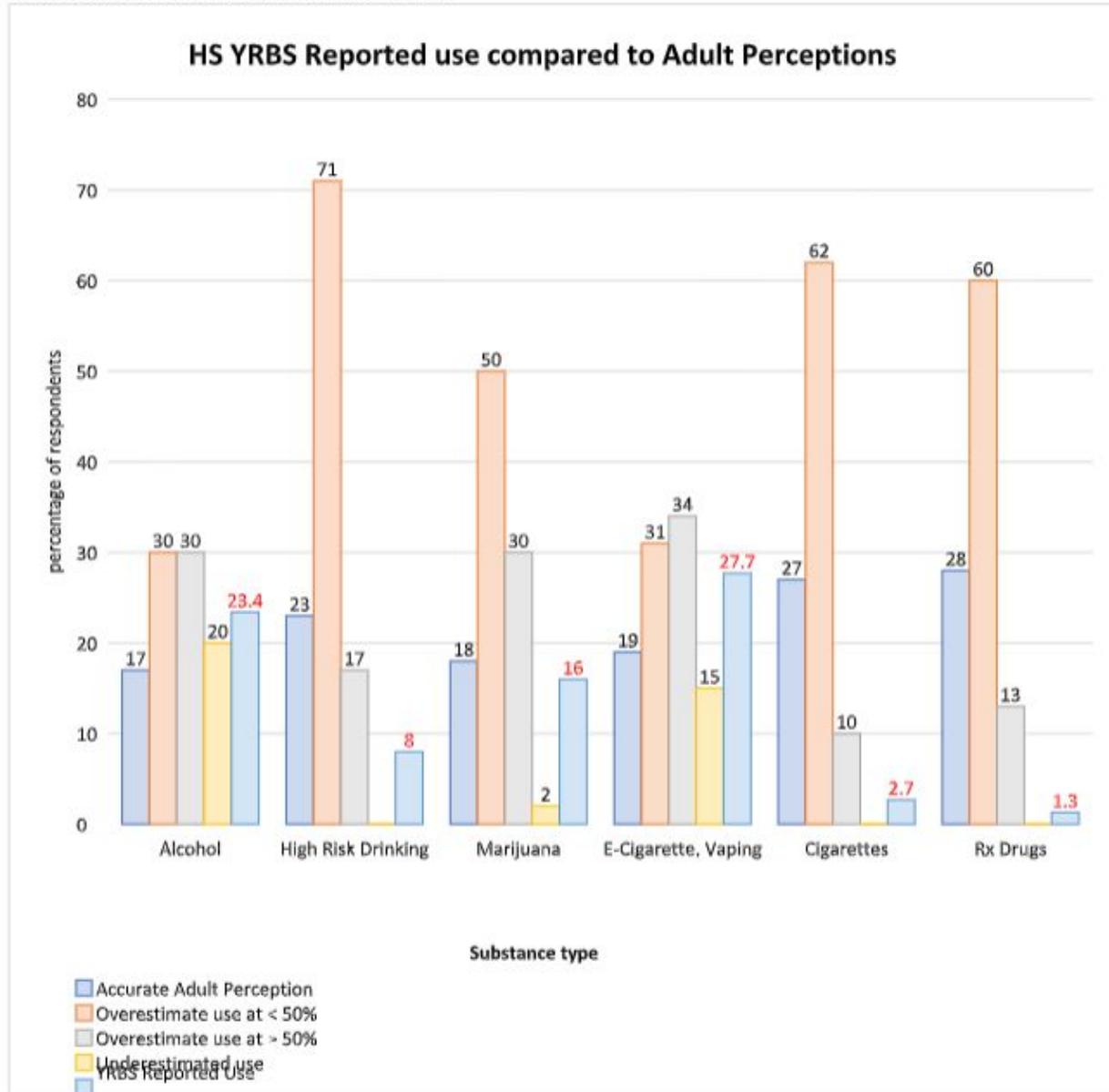
high school youth **are not using substances**. In fact, **very few** middle school youth choose to use, less than 3% for any substance; and less than 28% of the high school youth choose to use. Alcohol, cigarette, e-cigarette, vaping and marijuana use among tri-town youth is **not the normative behavior** based on the survey results. **Overestimating actual use rates among youth can be a risk factor and can unintentionally promote risky behaviors by perpetuating the inaccurate perception that “everyone else is doing it”**. Therefore, it is important to determine adult perceptions regarding youth use rate, which can inform educational and informational programs and work towards greater alignment of perception and actual reported use. Whenever the ‘perception gap’ is greater than 50 percentage points from actual reported use, there is increased risk of harm in perpetuating the falsehood. Adults in our community can help correct misperceptions of others with the data that is readily available in this report and other resources easily located on the Tri-Town Council’s website. By confronting misperceptions with the facts and data we have available, we can lessen the gap between reported use and perceptions which further reduces risk of our youth engaging in harmful behaviors.

Below are graphic displays of 2018 YRBS reported use and adult perceptions of use:



## HIGH SCHOOL 30- day USE RATES and ADULT PERCEPTIONS

### Adult Attitudes towards Substance Use



### Adult Attitudes towards Substance Use

#### Parental Attitudes about Youth Substance Use

Parents of middle and high school youth shared similar attitudes of disapproval of 7-12 graders use of substances.

- Nearly 100% of parents of children (N=41) in grades 7-8 reported that it would be 'very wrong' for their child to use cigarettes, e-cigarettes/vaping, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana or other substances to get high, with 1 individual classifying alcohol and e-cigarettes/vaping

use as 'wrong'. This is fairly consistent with results from the last cycle which had a larger number of respondents, so despite the respondent numbers decreasing, the attitudes are similar.

- 95% - 100% of parents of children in grades 9-12 reported it was 'very wrong' or 'wrong' for their child to use cigarettes, e-cigarettes/vaping, alcohol, inhalants or other substances to get high. (The 95% very wrong/wrong attitude was towards regular alcohol use and the other 5% viewed this as a little bit wrong and was only 2 respondents.)
- NOTE: Aggregating the "very wrong" and "wrong" categories leads to comparable results for MS and HS parents, however; when looking at the response rate differences between the "wrong" and "very wrong" selections, it was noted there was a greater difference between the 2 categories for HS parents. For example: 87% of HS parents feel smoking cigarettes is 'very wrong' compared with 100% of MS parents; 82% of HS parents feel drinking alcohol is 'very wrong' compared with 95% of MS parents; 85% of HS parents feel smoking marijuana is 'very wrong' compared with 100% of MS parents.

### **Alcohol Access and Use**

Adults identified the primary source of alcohol for middle school youth was from their own home, the same as in prior years. From friends and at parties were the second and third sources identified by survey participants. Note: 33.4% of respondents (accurately) selected "I think most youth in grades 7 – 8 do not use alcohol", similar to last year. Per the 2018 YRBS, middle school youth who reported obtaining alcohol in the past 12 months primarily took it from home (80%), and those that reported alcohol use stated they primarily drank at home (60%) and at family events (30%).

For high school youth, adults identified the top four most likely sources of obtaining alcohol as: home (82%), parties (64%), friends (61%), and older siblings (52%). Per the 2018 YRBS, of high school youth who obtained alcohol in the past 12 months obtained it through friends (24%), parties (20%), and home (14%) which was very similar to prior YRBS results. In terms of where the alcohol consumption takes place, high school youth reported that they are most likely to drink at friends' homes, 25.9%, at weekend parties, 23.3%, and at home, 12%.

Additionally, 58% of high school youth and 33% of middle school youth reported it is 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to obtain alcohol. Middle school students noted a marked increase in ease of obtaining alcohol in 8<sup>th</sup> grade versus 7<sup>th</sup> and by age; fourteen year olds were more likely than 12 year olds (21.5% vs 9.1%) to respond "very easy" while 12 year olds were more likely than 14 year olds (18.3% vs 3.8%) to respond "impossible". Over half the HS youth reported that it is fairly or very easy to obtain alcohol (55.8%). Older youth were more likely than younger youth and boys were more likely than girls to say it would be "very easy" to obtain alcohol. Three methods for obtaining alcohol account for the majority of responses—friends (17.1%), parties (15.8%), and home (13.1%) and they correlate with responses to the question of where youth drank alcohol in the past year—weekend parties (16.4%), friend's house (24.6%), family events (16.6%) and at home (14.0%). Girls were more likely than boys to report drinking at family events (20.3% vs 12.8%).

Adults were varied in their opinions about permitting youth under age 21 to drink at home.

- 57.8% of all survey participants felt it was never OK to allow youth under 21 to drink at home, virtually the same as 2017 results.
- 29.1% felt it was permissible to allow their own children under 21 to drink at home, virtually the same as 2017 results.
- 3 participants believed it was OK to have youth drink at a home if an adult took their car keys, and 10 (3.7 %) thought it was OK to allow youth to drink in their home if supervised.
- When breaking out results by age of children (i.e.: grades PK – 6; 7 – 8, etc.) most survey participants responses to “it is never OK to all youth under 21 to drink at home” were within +/- 3% of the aggregate 57.8%, except for the middle school parents, however this respondent group was low in number this year, only 23. There were 49 elementary parents who responded and 57 high school parents.
- There was little variance between parents of all age groups when asked to respond to “it is ok to allow youth under 21 to drink at home only if it’s your own child”. 26.3% of parents of HS youth, 31.7% of parents of MS youth, and 30.0% of parents of elementary age youth agreed with this statement, all within 5 %age points of one another. (Note: as there were only 4 parents of youth ages 18-21 who participated in the survey their results have not been reported as this is too small a sample to draw conclusions as representative of this group of adults.)
- 23 parents of middle school youth responded to the questions whether they would allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior, 18 declined to respond. Out of the 23 who responded, 82.6% (19) would not allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior and 17.4% (4) would allow their child to drink at home.
- 39 parents of high school youth responded to the question whether they would allow their own child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior, 18 declined to respond. Out of the 39 who responded, 82.1% (32) would not allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior, 17.9% (7) agreed they would allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior.
- 39 parents of high school youth responded to the question whether they would allow their child’s friends to drink at their home to prevent dangerous behavior, 18 declined to respond. Out of the 39 who responded, 92.3% (36) would not allow their child’s friends to drink at their home to prevent dangerous behavior, 7.7% (3) agreed they would allow their child’s friends to drink at their home to prevent dangerous behavior.

Parents of youth in grades 7 – 8 and parents of youth in grade 9 – 12 were also asked about their own attitudes toward underage drinking, the attitude of their child, the attitude of their child’s peers, and the attitude of child’s peers’ parents.

Results are illustrated in the next two tables:

<b><i>Which statement best represents the attitude(s) of...</i></b>	<b><i>You</i></b>		<b><i>Your child</i></b>		<b><i>Your child's peers</i></b>		<b><i>Your child's peers' parents/guardians</i></b>	
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2017</b>
Drinking is never a good thing for youth under 21	<b>46.3% (N=19)</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>43.9% (18)</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>26.8% (11)</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>26.8% (11)</b>	<b>61%</b>
Drinking is alright for youth under age 21, but they should not get drunk	<b>4.8% (N=2)</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4.8% (2)</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>17% (7)</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>12.1% (5)</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
Drinking is alright for older teenagers if it is in a private home with a parent present, and no one drives	<b>4.8% (N=2)</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>4.8% (2)</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>7.3% (3)</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>14.6% (6)</b>	<b>31 %</b>
Getting drunk occasionally is okay for youth under 21 as long as it does not interfere with daily activities	<b>0%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>2.4% (1)</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4.8% (2)</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>2.4% (1)</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
Getting drunk regularly is okay if that is what the youth under 21 chooses to do	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>

*\*Note the low sample number of 23, therefore interpretation and comparison with prior years should be done with caution.*

2018 YRBS results show that 92.4% of middle school youth believe their parents would view them consuming alcohol as “very wrong/wrong”, slightly more than the 88.9% reported in 2018 and slightly less than the 94.4% reported in the 2016 YRBS. When asked how their peers would feel about them drinking alcohol, 88.8% of youth selected “very wrong/wrong”, more than the 71.6% of the 2018 YRBS and about the same as the 2016 YRBS results of 88.6%. There was a slight decline, from 82.4% in 2016 to 76.6% in 2018 of the middle school youth report that drinking one or more alcoholic drinks a day puts people at “great risk/moderate risk” of harming themselves.

Despite the fact that the questions on the YRBS and Adult Perception Survey are slightly different and measure opinions, attitudes, and perception of risk of underage drinking, some comparisons may be gleaned. Analysis of the data table above and the YRBS results show that most middle school youth report knowing their parents disapprove of underage drinking, ( 92.4%), at higher rates than middle school parent respondents (51.2%). Additionally, most middle school youth understand that underage drinking is a risky behavior, 76.6% identified risk of harm as “great risk/moderate risk”.

The survey data shows most middle school parent survey respondents disapprove of underage drinking (and would not allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior), perceive their child shares a similar attitude, yet perceive child’s peers and other parents disapprove at much lower rates than they themselves, nearly 20 percentage points lower.

<b>Which statement best represents the attitude(s) of...</b>	<b>You</b>		<b>Your child</b>		<b>Your child's peers</b>		<b>Your child's peers' parents/guardians</b>	
	<b>2019</b>	2017	<b>2019</b>	2017	<b>2019</b>	2017	<b>2019</b>	2017
Drinking is never a good thing for youth under 21	<b>57.8% (33)</b>	66%	<b>31.5% (18)</b>	50%	<b>15.7% (9)</b>	19%	<b>26.3% (15)</b>	39%
Drinking is alright for youth under age 21, but they should not get drunk	<b>&lt;2% (1)</b>	13%	<b>12.2% (7)</b>	23%	<b>14.0% (8)</b>	30%	<b>7% (4)</b>	16%
Drinking is alright for older teenagers if it is in a private home with a parent present, and no one drives	<b>8.7% (5)</b>	21%	<b>17.5% (10)</b>	19%	<b>15.7% (9)</b>	24%	<b>31.5% (18)</b>	43%
Getting drunk occasionally is okay for youth under 21 as long as it does not interfere with daily activities	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>7% (4)</b>	9%	<b>19.2% (11)</b>	26%	<b>3.5% (2)</b>	3%
Getting drunk regularly is okay if that is what the youth under 21 chooses to do	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>3.5% (2)</b>	1%	<b>0%</b>	0

2018 YRBS results show that 76.2% of high school youth believe their parents would view them consuming alcohol as “very wrong/wrong”. When asked how their peers would feel about them drinking alcohol, 47% of youth selected “very wrong/wrong”. When asked about the risk of harm from smoking marijuana, just more than half (51.5%) of high school youth selected the risk of harm as “great risk/moderate risk”, and with 55.2% peer disapproval and 90.2% parent disapproval of marijuana use. When asked about the use of electronic tobacco products/devices, nearly two-thirds (66.8%) viewed this as harmful, a significant increase from the 2016 report of 45%. Peer disapproval remained about the same at 47% and 94% parent disapproval ratings, again about the same as 2016. The use of e-tobacco products/devices has declined 1 percentage point each of the past 3 YRBS cycles, with 27% in 2018, 28% in 2016 and 29% in 2014 of high school youth reporting use in the past 30 days.

As with the middle school parent respondent data, high school parents perceive child’s peers (15.7%) and other parents (26.3%) disapprove of underage drinking at much lower rates than they themselves, (57.8%). There was a change in the percentage of parents whose opinion is that ‘*drinking is alright for older teenagers as long as it is in a private home with a parent present, and no one drives;*’ the rate of 8.7% (5 respondents) is less than the 18% of 2017, but about the same as two cycles ago of 10% in 2015. Additionally, nearly all high school parents who chose to answer this question (N=39), 92.3% would NOT allow their child’s friends to drink in their home to prevent dangerous behavior, with 3 responding they would allow this behavior.

## Parent Conversations with Middle and High School Youth

All parents of youth in grades 7-12 have discussed various topics related to health, safety and risk behaviors. There are some differences between parents of middle schoolers (N=23) and parents of high school age youth (N=39), and for both age groups, there is a decline in the number of conversations within the past 30 days versus ever. **See table below for details on each topic.**

ALL parents of youth in grades 7-8 and 9-12 report having talked with their child(ren) about e-cigarettes/vaping and alcohol use. 56.5% of middle school parents have talked about these topics within the past 30 days and 71.7% and 69.2% of HS parents have talked about e-cigarette products and alcohol use, respectively. All middle school parents and 92.3% of high school parents have talked with their child(ren) about tobacco use, but for both groups these conversations drop to near half within the past 30 days. Conversations about marijuana use is 95.6% for middle school parents and 87.1% for high school parents, but both groups drop closer to half within the past 30 days. There is a marked decline in topic conversation between the ‘ever had’ and the ‘past 30 days’ for both MS and HS parents on topics of binge drinking, using prescription drugs without a prescription, ‘hard drugs’, OTC drugs and sniffing inhalants. This raises the question as to whether these conversation topics are had only once or twice in a teen’s middle and high school years, and if so, why?

Parents conversations about other health and safety topics also show a decline when comparing the ‘ever had’ with the ‘past 30 days’ topics of conversations. It is interesting that parents report technology, screen time, and social media use as one of the top areas of concern, and that is the topic most parents have discussed with their child, but the ‘past 30 days’ percentage drops from nearly all to just about half of HS parents and a small dip for MS parents.

TOPIC	MS PARENTS (EVER HAD A CONVERSATION)	MS PARENTS (PAST 30 DAYS CONVERSATION)	HS PARENTS (EVER HAD A CONVERSATION)	HS PARENTS (PAST 30 DAYS CONVERSATION)
Tobacco Use	100%	56.5%	92.3%	43.5%
E-Cigarette, vaping use	100%	56.5%	100%	71.7%
Alcohol use	100%	56.5%	100%	69.2%
Binge drinking (5+ in a row)	43.4%	8.6%	53.8%	30.7%
Marijuana use	95.6%	52.1%	53.8%	53.8%
Using Rx drugs w/out script	56.5%	30.4%	58.9%	15.3%
Ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, meth, LSD*	65.5%	26.0%	53.8% *	15.3% *
Using OTC drugs to get high	34.7%	21.7%	46.1%	10.2%
Sniffing inhalants to get high	56.5%	17.3%	35.8	12.8%
Driving with persons who are OUI	78.2%	21.7%	82.0%	51.2%
Sexual health and safety	69.5%	43.4%	89.7%	38.4%
Healthy ways to manage stress	78.2%	73.9%	82.0%	43.5%
Technology use, online safety & appropriate behavior	100.0%	91.3%	94.8%	53.8%

\* The use of ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, meth, LSD was asked as separate questions on the HS parents’ survey and was combined as one question on the MS parents’ survey; the percentage reported here reflects the highest percentage of HS parents talking about any one of those drugs in the separate questions, both the ‘ever had’ and the ‘past 30 days’ percentage reported for HS

parents was on the topic of heroin use, with ecstasy use being the least frequent topic for both the 'ever had' (15.3%) and 'past 30 days' (5.1%).

When middle school youth were asked if they had spoken with an adult family member about various topics, about 4 in 10 said they had not (39.2%), while 45.7% had discussed electronic vapor products (a significant increase from 2016 – 31.7%); 39.4%, alcohol; 33.5%, marijuana; 32.5%, tobacco; 26.0%, sexual activity. About 21% had talked about use of prescription drugs without a prescription. In all topics, a lower percentage of middle school youth report having had a conversation than their parents report; one could conclude that either the conversation was not impactful enough or was long ago enough that the youth has forgotten the content.

When high school youth were asked if they had spoken with an adult family member about various topics, about 1/4 said they had not, while 62.9% had discussed electronic vapor products (a significant increase from 2016 – 33.5%); 58.5% had discussed alcohol; 51.0%, marijuana; 40.1%, riding with someone who was under the influence; 35.4%, sexual activity; and, 26.1%, tobacco. The remaining topics were named by under 20%. In all topics, a lower percentage of high school youth report having had a conversation than their parents report, but in most topics other than tobacco use, the youth report was within 10 percentage points of the parents 30-days reporting rate.

Perhaps these conversations have occurred more frequently over time as the youth move through the grades, and while most youth do not use substances, there is data to support increased substance use and other risky behaviors during high school, thus there are more opportunities for parents to engage in these important conversations.

## **Protective Factors**

Having a trusted adult with whom one can confide as a youth is very important for the youth's emotional growth and health. Being able to discuss ideas, thoughts, dilemmas and concerns with older (and wiser, more mature) adults without fear of judgement or reprimand helps expand the youth's perspectives and problem-solving skills.

Most parents of middle and high school aged youth report a parent or other adult family member their child(ren) can talk with about important things, 56.4% of middle school parents and 65.2% of high school parents. In addition, parents of middle school and high school report non-family members (other than teachers) their children can talk with, 20.5% and 30.4% respectively.

About 2/3 of the middle school youth reported having at least one teacher or other school adult they could talk with about important things (67.1%). Outside of school only 3.1% said they did not have an adult to turn to about things important to them, while more than half mentioned a parent or other adult family member (55.7%) and more than 1/3 mentioned both family and non-family adults (36.9%). Girls were more likely to have both family and non-family adults to talk to (43.5% vs 31.1%). Mention of the "both family and non-family" category was higher in 2018 than in 2016 (36.9% vs 27.9%).

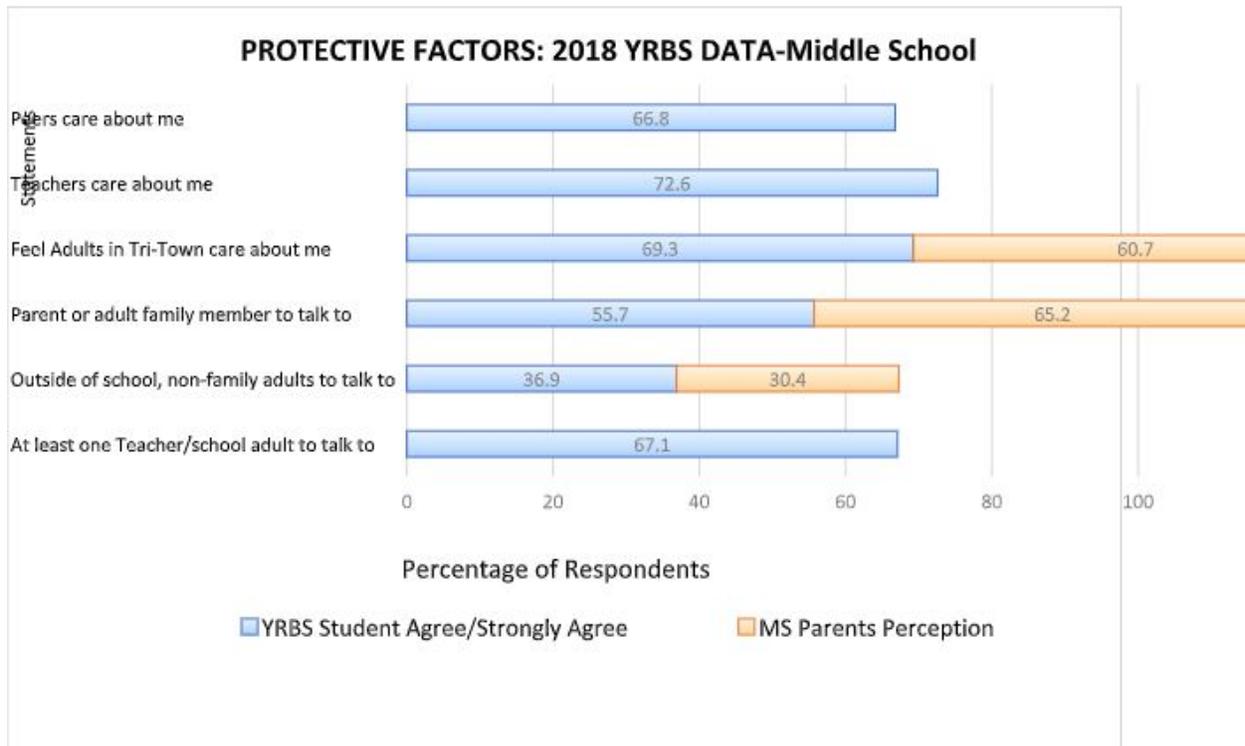
When asked whether middle school youth feel valued and cared about by adults in the tri-town community, 60.7% of parent respondents of middle school youth strongly agreed/agreed, while 34.7% chose “neutral”. This reflects both a decline from the 2017 APS in the middle school parents’ agreement (76%) and an increase in the percentage of parents choosing neutral (21%) to this statement. Interestingly, the 2018 YRBS data shows the middle school youth strongly agreed/agreed that the tri-town community cares about them as young people at a higher rate (69.3%) than their parents perceive and shows an increase from 59% in 2016 and 66% in 2014.

Youth reports also indicate feeling cared about at school by adults and peers with between 2/3 and 3/4 of the youth strongly agreed or agreed with each of these statements:

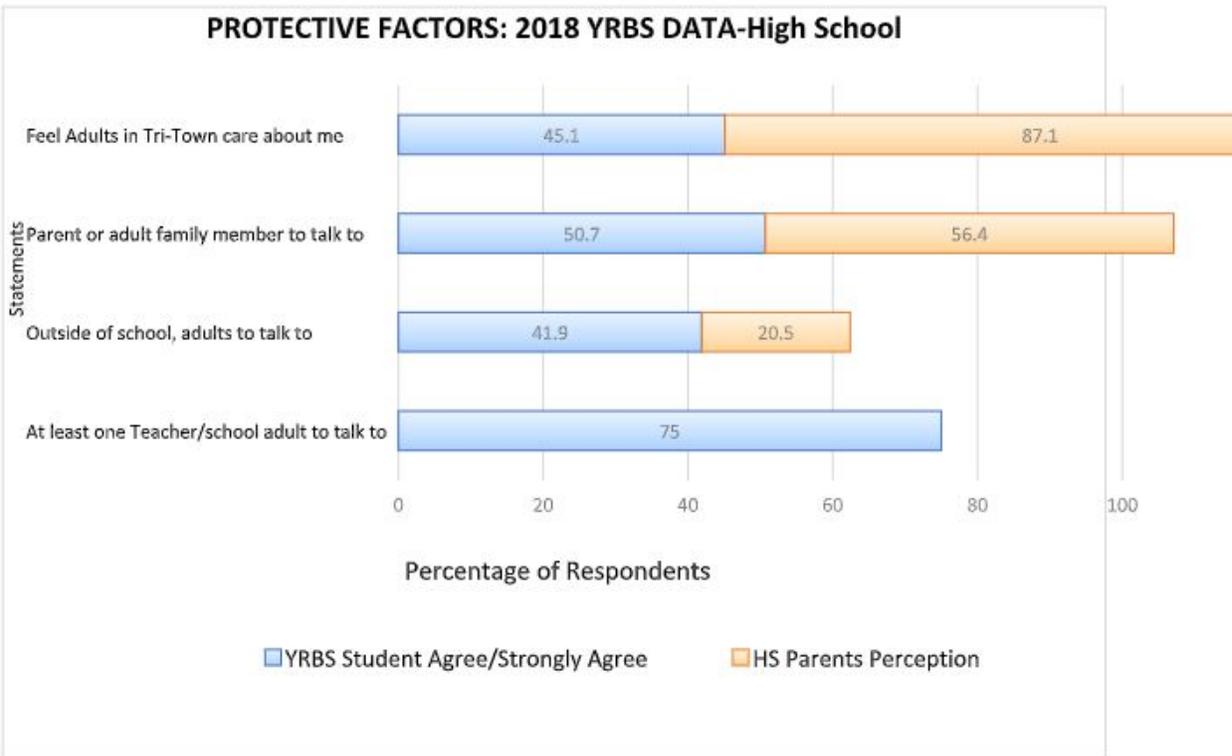
- I feel my teachers care about me and give me encouragement and support. (72.6%)
- I feel my peers at this school care about me as a person. (66.8%)

Encouragingly, the middle school youth report a higher degree of agreement with several protective factors than their parents perceive.

See graphs below and on following page:



**Note:** The APS did not ask all the same questions as the YRBS, thus there is no adult perception data for a few of the protective factors.



**NOTE:** In the prior graph, for the line reporting the percentage of HS youth who 'had a trusted adult at school to talk with' was summarized in YRBS report as 'more than ¾', so the actual percentage value is uncertain; a comparable question was not asked on the APS, thus there is no APS data to report on that statement.

In comparing the HS youth self-report with their parents' perceptions regarding several protective factors, the youth and parents are similar in their perception of youth access to a parent or another adult family member with whom they may confide. There is a far higher percentage of youth reporting they have someone outside of the home to talk with than their parents perceive, and over 75% of the youth also report having a trusted adult at school with whom they can talk; this is encouraging. However, the youth do not perceive that adults in the community care about them at the same level as parents perceive this care from the community; 56.8% of HS youth agree their teachers care about and give them encouragement and support.

**STRESS and STRESS MANAGEMENT:**

There are a variety of stressors impacting the tri-town youth, but there are differences between the 2019 APS survey reports from parents and the 2018 YRBS self-reports for both middle and high school youth as to the degree of impact each stressor has on the youth as a group.

In the HS YRBS, the youth reporting about stress in their lives was similar in numbers of youth replied "Not a problem at all/Almost never a problem" (17.8%) and "Always a problem" (22.6%) with the remaining split about evenly between "Sometimes" and "Often". Girls were more likely than boys to

respond “Always” (30.5% vs 11.4%), while boys were more likely to respond “Not at all” or “Almost Never” (30.5% vs 6.4%).

The most frequently mentioned sources of stress were:

<u>YRBS</u>		<u>APS/Parents of HS youth</u>
- School work	(90.8%)	64.1% Homework also reported by 74.3%
- My expectations of myself	(61.0%)	56.4%
- Parents' expectations of me	(43.6%)	38.4%
- Extra-curricular activities	(43.7%)	30.7%
- Friendships	(42.0%)	61.5%
- Getting into college	(40.6%)	48.7%
- Family relationships	(32.6%)	7.6%

In 2018 compared to 2016, all but one topic exceeded 40%. Girls were more likely than boys to report feeling stressed about all topics. The same pattern was true last year.

Most youth employed some type of positive stress management technique with the most popular being:

<u>YRBS reports</u>		<u>APS/Parents of HS youth</u>
-Talking to friends	(53.7%)	46.1%
- Journal/draw/listen to music/spend time alone	(42.2%)	35.8%
- Talk to parent or family member	(36.2%)	89.7%
- Exercise/yoga	(29.3%)	58.9%
- About 1 in 10 each said they used drugs or alcohol to manage stress (7.5%) or they had no way to manage stress (10.3%).		

In examining the differences between parent suggestions for stress reduction and management and what the youth report they actually use, they are more likely to talk with friends than with a parent or adult family member, and to use a journal, draw or listen to music more frequently than their parent may suggest.

When the YRBS asked middle school youth how much of a problem stress was 29.4% replied “Not a problem at all/Almost never a problem” while 9.5% replied “Always a problem”. Girls were more likely than boys to respond “Often” or “Always” (34.4% vs 25.9%), while boys were more likely to respond “Not at all” (10.8% vs 3.6%) and 8th graders were more likely than 7th graders to respond “Always” (13.30% vs 5.7%). There was no difference across time.

The most frequently mentioned sources of stress were:

<u>YRBS MS Youth report</u>		<u>APS parents of MS report</u>
- School work	(80.2%)	65.2%, and 82.6% also reported Homework
- My expectations of myself	(40.1%)	73.9%
- Parents' expectations of me	(27.9%)	56.5%
- Friendships	(28.9%)	65.2%
- Extra-curricular activities	(28.7%)	30.4%

Most youth employed some type of positive stress management technique with the most popular being YRBS reports APS/Parents of MS youth

- Journal/draw/listen to music/spend time alone (? Not reported)		65.2%
- Talk to parent or family member	(32.4%)	100.0%
- Talk to friends	(29.6%)	52.1%
- Exercise/yoga	(17.6%)	60.8%

More than 1 in 7 said they had no way to manage stress (15.1%) and less than 1% used drugs or alcohol to manage stress.

One marked contrast between high school youth and middle school stress reduction choices, middle school youth are slightly more likely to talk with a parent than a friend. This is developmentally appropriate as high school age youth are deeper into the adolescent norm of separating one's self from her/his parents. High school youth are also more likely to use exercise, yoga, or some form of meditation to reduce stress; this could be related to greater freedom in being able to drive oneself to a health and fitness studio or gym.

## HOPE, CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITY:

### **Common Concerns:**

- **Mental health** of youth remains a dominant concern for all respondent groups. In addition to the survey questions, many of the open-ended comments reiterated concerns about mental health and speculated that other factors/areas of concern are likely contributing to the increase in youth anxiety, depression, and social issues. What variables have contributed to this sustained concern; is it the number of students with mental health issues? The types and intensity of behaviors displayed by these youth, even if the number of students hasn't increased? Fear and worry due to continued mass shootings, including at schools by youth, across our nation? What changes have been made within the schools' staffing patterns and programs, supports to address the mental health needs of youth? Is there sufficient information easily accessible to help families navigate and access services? Have there been changes in access to private mental health providers and/or insurance coverage rules for such needs?
- **Substance abuse** does not appear as a #1 concern for any respondent group and has decreased from appearing 4 times as a #1 or #2 area of concern in 2015 to appearing 2 times as a #2 area of concern in 2017 (Educators of grades 9-12 and Parents of grades 7-8), and now appears as a #2 area of concern only for the 15 concerned adults that participated in the survey. However, Substance Abuse does remain as the #4 area of concern for all other constituent groups except educators of elementary youth. Therefore, substance abuse should continue as a focus area and receive ongoing attention and resources. Any family struggling with this issue needs understanding, compassion and help.
- **Academic pressure** is less dominant within the top 3 areas of concern than it was in 2017 and 2015, appearing only twice in 2019 compared with 7 times in 2015. However, it is the 4<sup>th</sup> area of concern for 2 respondent groups, so remains an area in need of attention. What variables might

*have influenced the level of concern for Academic pressure? Are there revisions to homework policies? Are there additional support programs available for students to help with the pressures? Has there been an increase in the number of students and/or frequency with which students access the after-school help programs at Masconomet?*

- **Social issues** appears as the top #2 or #3 concern for most respondent groups with many comments noting how social issues are impacted by technology, social media use, which further impacts youth's self-esteem, thus impacting their overall mental health.
- **Technology & Social Media use** appears in the top #2 or #3 concern for nearly all respondent groups, whereas this area did not appear even one time in 2015 in the top 3 concern areas. Educators at the HS and MS identified this as their #2 concern area; what are the educators seeing in terms of frequency of use? How the technology is being used? Do they believe this may be contributing to weaker social skill development and/or detracting from academic focus while in school? How has the increased use of devices across the curriculum impacted this as a concern?
- **Bullying** remains a concern to PK-6 parents (#3) and is ranked as a #4 concern for concerned citizens. What might be contributing to the continued concern for parents of PK-6 but it is not a top 4 area of concern for those same educators? Are educators more savvy in classifying unkind behavior versus bullying, or are students not reporting instances to their teachers? Do we need to provide more information to both parents and students about anti-bullying programs and efforts?

*Many of the top concerns identified across respondent groups are believed to be “root causes” that may lead to substance abuse. (Mental health, social issues, technology/social media use, academic pressure).*

*What resources do parents/primary caregivers, teachers and citizens have to address their top concerns for youth and how are these resources made available and accessed? In what ways are these concerns addressed in schools and in the community? Are there any consistent ‘messaging campaigns’ that would be helpful for all constituents to consider? To what degree have some of the positive programs impacted youth development and helped parents in the challenges of raising strong and resilient youth?*

#### **Perceptions of Youth Substance Abuse:**

- *While most adults misperceive middle school and high school youth use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, the percentage of adults who misperceive at rates of 50% or higher is relatively small. (Clinically significant misperception is defined as a difference of 50%+ in perception vs. actual use rates and this can unintentionally increase youth use.)*
- *No adults underestimate substance use by middle school youth and a larger percentage of adults accurately perceive middle school youth use of all substances than they do of high school use rates.*
- *Adults underestimate high school youth use of several substances, but far less than 2017:*
  - *3% of adults underestimate HS use of Alcohol compared with 35% in 2017*
  - *1% of adults underestimate HS use of E-smoking/vaping products compared with 33% in 2017*

- o 2% of adults underestimate HS youth use of marijuana compared with 3% in 2107
- *The Positive Community Norms campaign - where tri-town youth's positive normative behaviors are promoted school and community wide – will help to address these misperceptions.*

**Adult Attitudes towards Substance Use:**

- *While all parent respondents strongly disapprove of substance use, it was noted that 100% of middle school parents disapprove of substances as “very wrong or wrong” and that 95% of high school parents disapprove of substances as “very wrong or wrong”; how might this subtle shift impact young people’s perceptions and actions?*
- *Primary source of alcohol is perceived to be the home among adults and is consistent w/ middle school YRBS data. Continue to educate parents/primary caregivers of the importance of securing alcohol kept in the home.*
- *Most high school youth report weekend parties and friends’ homes as the location of drinking; continue to educate parents about the ways in which alcohol can be concealed, consumed;*
- *Provide information about ‘social host liability’ and offer presentations such as “Hidden in Plain Sight” to educate adults in the community.*
- *While most parent respondents disapprove of underage drinking, survey shows they misperceive the attitudes of their child’s peers and other parents/guardians. Parents of both middle and high school youth believe their children’s friends’ parents disapprove at a lower level; what impact might those misperceptions have on themselves, their children, and the community? As part of the Positive Community Norms campaign, develop messaging for parents/primary caregivers that communicates parental disapproval of underage drinking is a **normative belief** among parents of middle and high school aged youth.*
  - o *It’s possible as youth enter middle/high school and become part of broader social circles, parents may not know their child’s friends/families well and may be hesitant to talk to other parents due to the risk of isolating their child from his/her peer group. To address this concern:*
    - *Encourage parents/primary caregivers to talk with each other about substance use*
    - *Provide parents/primary caregivers resources for how to have these difficult or sensitive conversations with each other; perhaps have easy to locate ‘fact sheets’ with key YRBS and APS data that can be conversation starters*

**Parent Conversations with Middle and High School Youth:**

- *All parents have talked with the children about the use of substances; the percentage varies with age and type of substance*
  - o *A slightly higher percentage of middle school parents report ever talking with their children about marijuana, cigarettes, sniffing inhalants, and ‘hard drugs’ more frequently than high school parents, however, there was a smaller respondent rate for MS (23) than HS (39), so the higher percentage may actually reflect a smaller overall number.*

- *A higher percentage of high school than middle school parents report ever talking with their children about binge drinking, taking prescription drugs without a prescription, and the use of OTC drugs.*
- *A significant decrease in parents of both middle and high school students is reported when asked about these conversation topics within the past 30 days. Frequent and repeated conversations about substance use are necessary – especially since use rates increase with age AND all students report believing their parents have a high rate of disapproval of their use of substances. They do listen...they just may not look like they are ‘taking in the message’ at the time of the conversation.*
- *Remind parents/primary caregivers of the importance of frequent conversations; revisiting prior topics will help to deepen youth’s knowledge, understanding, and comfort level in being able to discuss sensitive topics with adults*
- *Provide “ages and stages” resources for talking with children about substance use as they grow; include pertinent facts about both state and tri-town reported use rates and the potential dangers of misperceptions by adults.*
- *While many parents report that Technology, screen time, and social media use is a top concern, and nearly all report having talked with their child(ren) about technology use, online safety, and appropriate behavior, only 53.8% of HS parents have talked about this topic in the past 30 days. What resources can we provide to help parents keep this topic as one of their ‘frequently discussed topics’? Does the topic become a common ‘argument’ starter, so it becomes a topic to avoid? Do parents feel helpless and that it is ‘not worth it’ to argue about the inevitable and every-day use of devices?*

**Protective Factors:**

- *Most parents perceive their children have people outside of school they can talk to and this perception is supported, and in some cases, exceeded by the 2018 YRBS data.*
- *Most parents perceive that youth are valued and cared about by the adults in the tri-town; however, a significant percentage are “neutral”, which was also reflected in the 2017 and 2015 YRBS.*
- *The 40 Developmental Assets Framework can provide the information, support, and tools adults may need to communicate how they value and care about young people. This work may impact those who feel neutral.*
- *School leaders may be able to include ways in which their educators demonstrated caring for youth in newsletters, blogs, school committee reports, etc., so that the varied and valiant efforts of educators are publicly communicated and recognized.*
- *Continue to look for opportunities in the community to communicate The 40 Developmental Assets framework information.*
- *Continue to provide opportunities for youth to contribute in a meaningful and authentic way to the community.*

**Adult Perception of YRBS validity:**

- *70.6% of the MS parents strongly agree/agree that the YRBS is reliable and valid*

- 17.0% of the MS parents slightly agree and 16.9% disagree with varying degrees of certainty that the YRBS is reliable or valid, and 12.1% are neutral
- 61.3% of HS parents strongly agree/agree that the YRBS is reliable and valid
- 21.0% of HS parents slightly agree and 13.9% disagree with varying degrees of certainty that the YRBS is reliable and valid, and 3.5% are neutral
- 52.9% of Educators of HS youth strongly agree/agree that the YRBS is reliable and valid
- 27.2% of HS educators slightly agree and 16.5% disagree with varying degrees of certainty, and 3.0% are neutral
- 71.4% of MS educators strongly agree/agree that the YRBS is reliable and valid
- 21.4% of MS educators slightly agree and 7.1% slightly disagree and 0 are neutral
- Most of the comment opportunities taken in this section of the survey reiterate the skepticism regarding the reliability and validity due to the youth's report and comments made to parents or educators, as well as educators observing some students racing through the survey and randomly selecting answers

*While most adults believe the YRBS results to be reliable and valid, the 'luke warm' agreement and disagreement can breed skepticism and doubt, despite correlation of Masconomet/Tri-Town youth data over multiple administrations with state and national use and trends. This is another opportunity to explore to ensure our communication with all constituents of our communities understand the research behind the YRBS.*

**The Tri-Town Council's 'Coalition' would like to thank all the adults who took the time to complete the APS in the summer of 2019; we understand how very busy and complicated lives have become, and your time and effort are deeply appreciated! There is no greater resource nor population more important than our youth!**

**NOTE:** It should be stated that the Adult Perception Survey was developed and edited over time by the 'data team' of the Coalition and is intended to gather information from various adult groups in the Tri-Town to help compare adult perceptions with actual substance use rates, as well as the understanding and importance of social norming conceptions. There are other bodies of research that support the notion that when perceptions exceed 50% of actual use rates, there can be an unintended consequence of increased use. As an 'opinion survey', it is not scientific and exact in its measurements, however, it is very useful when comparing data across years in gauging the impact of various programs established by various youth-oriented agencies and groups in the Tri-Town communities. As this is the fifth cycle of administration of the APS, the data is gaining in its consistency and value to interested groups.

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