

# What Our Kids Are Saying: Inside the Darien Youth Survey

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**Thriving Youth  
Darien**

Convened by The Community Fund of Darien

# Overview

- **Survey Results Overview**

- Survey Background
- Protective Factors
- Risk Factors
- Technology Use
- Mental Health
- Substance Use

- **Skill-Building Workshop ft. Amanda Craig, PhD, LMFT & Rebecca Campbell, LCSW**

# Introduction to Thriving Youth Darien

Thriving Youth Darien is a volunteer coalition that convenes local community organizations to promote & empower positive youth development, with the goal of reducing teen substance use.

- Founded in 2008
- Coalition members include 35+ leaders from organizations and individuals serving youth in Darien
- Awarded a 5-year DFC grant in 2021; \$125,000/year
- The Community Fund of Darien acts as fiscal agent for state/federal grants supporting prevention work



# Darien Youth Survey

- First completed in 2008. Now administered every 2 years in Jan/Feb
  - 7th iteration
- Partnership with Darien Public Schools; given to 6th -12th grades
- Anonymous
- Parent opt-out option



# Protective Factors

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# Trusted Adults: 2023 to 2025

School Counselor:  
↑ from 46% to 55%

Teacher:  
↑ from 36% to 43%

School administrator:  
↑ from 7% to 14%

School nurse:  
↑ from 6% to 9%



70% are engaged in  
productive activities

INDIVIDUAL  
PROTECTIVE  
FACTORS



76% know where to get  
help if they're struggling  
with a mental health  
issue and 63% know  
where to go for help for  
substance misuse



88% are developing  
a sense of purpose  
in their life



87% have  
connection to a  
trusted adult



**93%** report high levels of love, support and acceptance from family

## COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE FACTORS



**78%** report their peers in school care about them



**46%** feel very or extremely connected to adults.



**91%** feel safe in the community



**88%** feel safe at school

# Risk Factors

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# RISK FACTORS



**13%** bullied on school property



**35%** report irregular eating or exercise habits



**23%** engaged in gambling activities



Technology



Substance Use



Mental Health Concerns

# Teen Technology Use

**Thriving Youth  
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**34%** felt left out or excluded due to social media



**31%** felt worse about themselves due to social media

**26%** didn't get enough sleep and **25%** didn't complete homework due to gaming

**SOCIAL MEDIA & GAMING**

# Consequences of Smartphone Use:

- **48%** felt more productive when they limited use
- **34%** have tried to reduce use over the past 12 months
- **23%** feel phone use impacts their sleep



**56%** used smartphone for studying.



**53%** feel the amount of time spent on the phone is "about right" and **45%** feel it's "too much"



**27%** feel anxious when they don't have their smartphone and **21%** feel lonely.



**82%** feel happy when they don't have their smartphone and **78%** feel peaceful.

# Teen Mental Health

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## Changes from 2023 to 2025:

### Decrease in stress:

- Academics: 62% to 52%
- Expectations of future: 46% to 43%
- Sports achievement: 27% to 24%

### Very little change:

- College/Post HS: 39% to 40%



Academics  
52%



Future Expectations 43%

TOP 4 SOURCES  
OF STRESS FOR  
GRADES 9 - 12



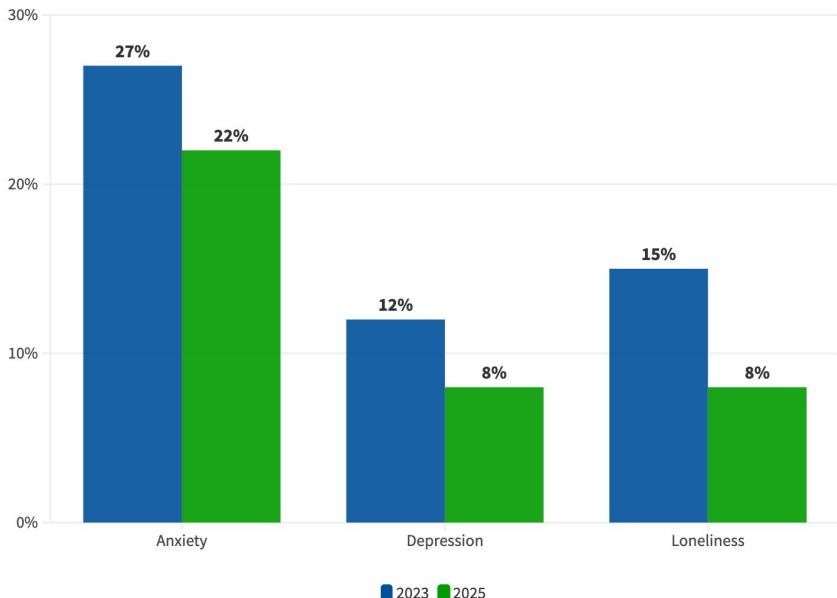
College &  
Post HS  
40%



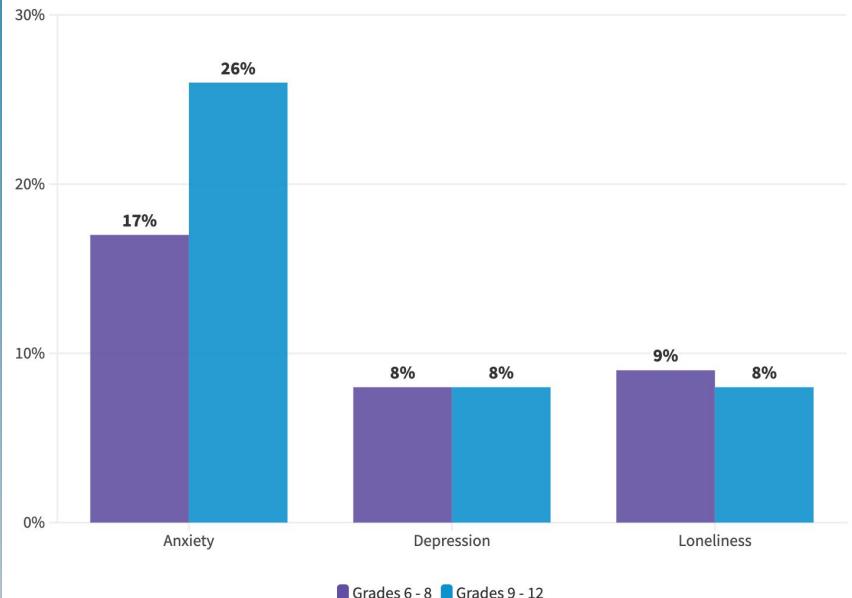
Sports Achievement 24%

# Youth who feel frequently anxious, depressed & lonely in the past month has improved from 2023 to 2025.

Frequent Feelings of Anxiety, Depression & Loneliness in 2023 & 2025

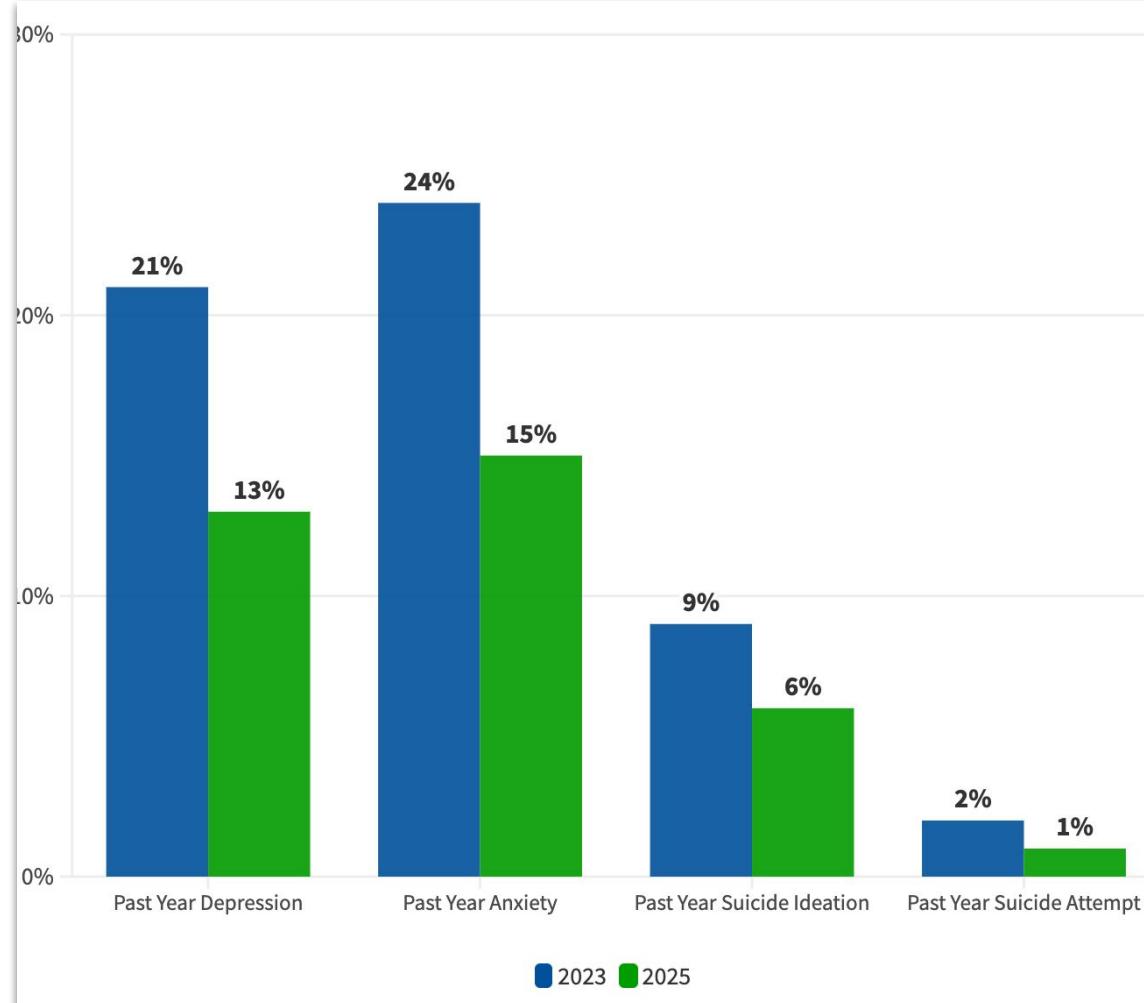


Frequent Feelings of Anxiety, Depression & Loneliness in the Past Month



# Past Year Anxiety, Depression and Suicide

Rates of anxiety, depression & suicide have decreased from 2023 to 2025.



Middle school  
& high school  
rates  
are identical or  
nearly identical!



**268 respondents (15%)**

reported feeling so anxious almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities



**104 respondents (6%)**

reported seriously considering attempting suicide

## DEPRESSION & SUICIDE

PAST 12 MONTHS  
GRADE 6 - 12



**69 respondents (4%)**

reported making a plan about how they would attempt suicide



**231 respondents (13%)**

reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities



**22 respondents (1%)**

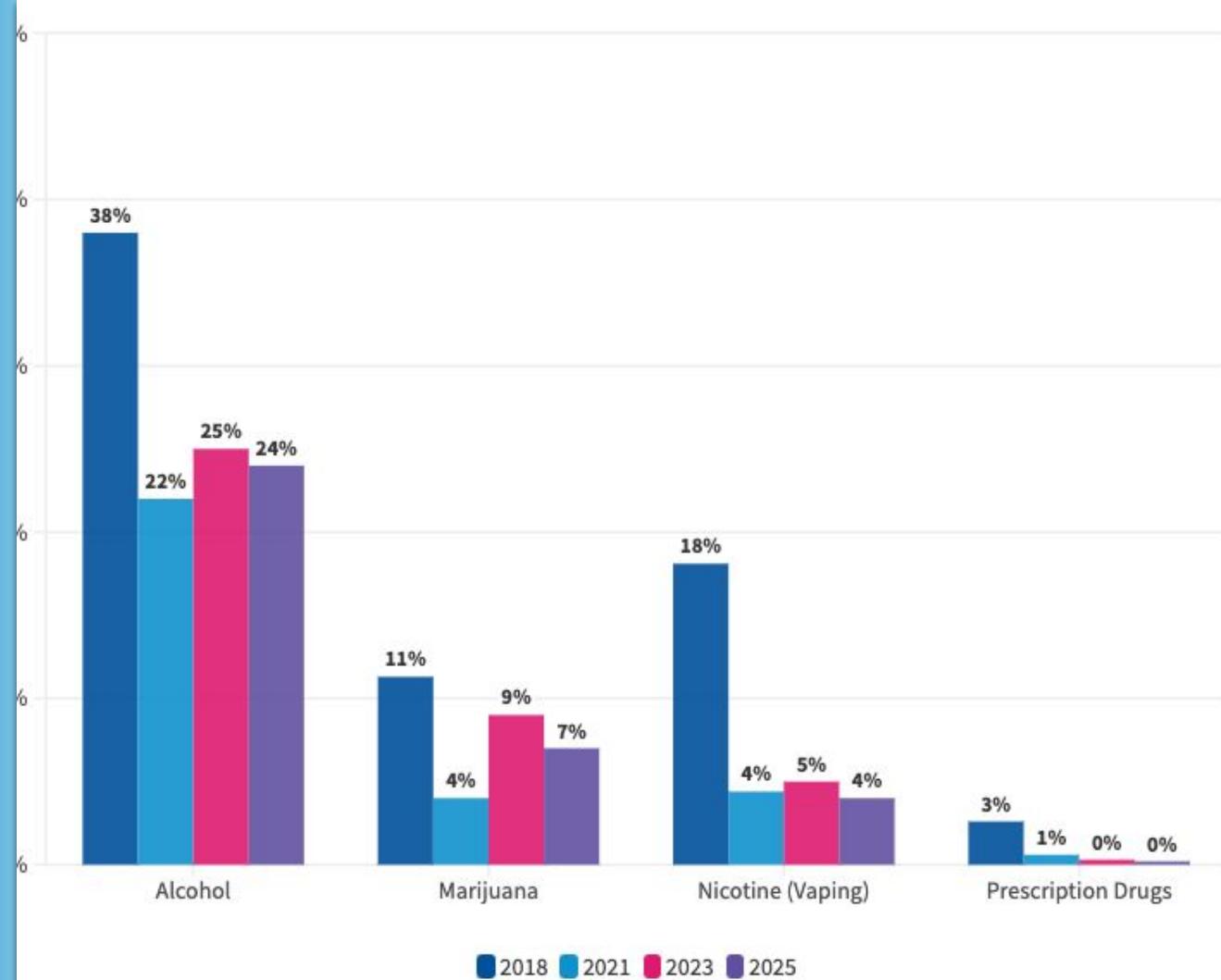
reported that they attempted suicide

# Teen Substance Use

**Thriving Youth  
Darien**

# Past 30 Day Use Rates (9th-12th Grade)

Rates have decreased since 2023 & there has been significant improvement since 2018.



# Past 30-day Marijuana Use by Grade

## Where are they getting it?

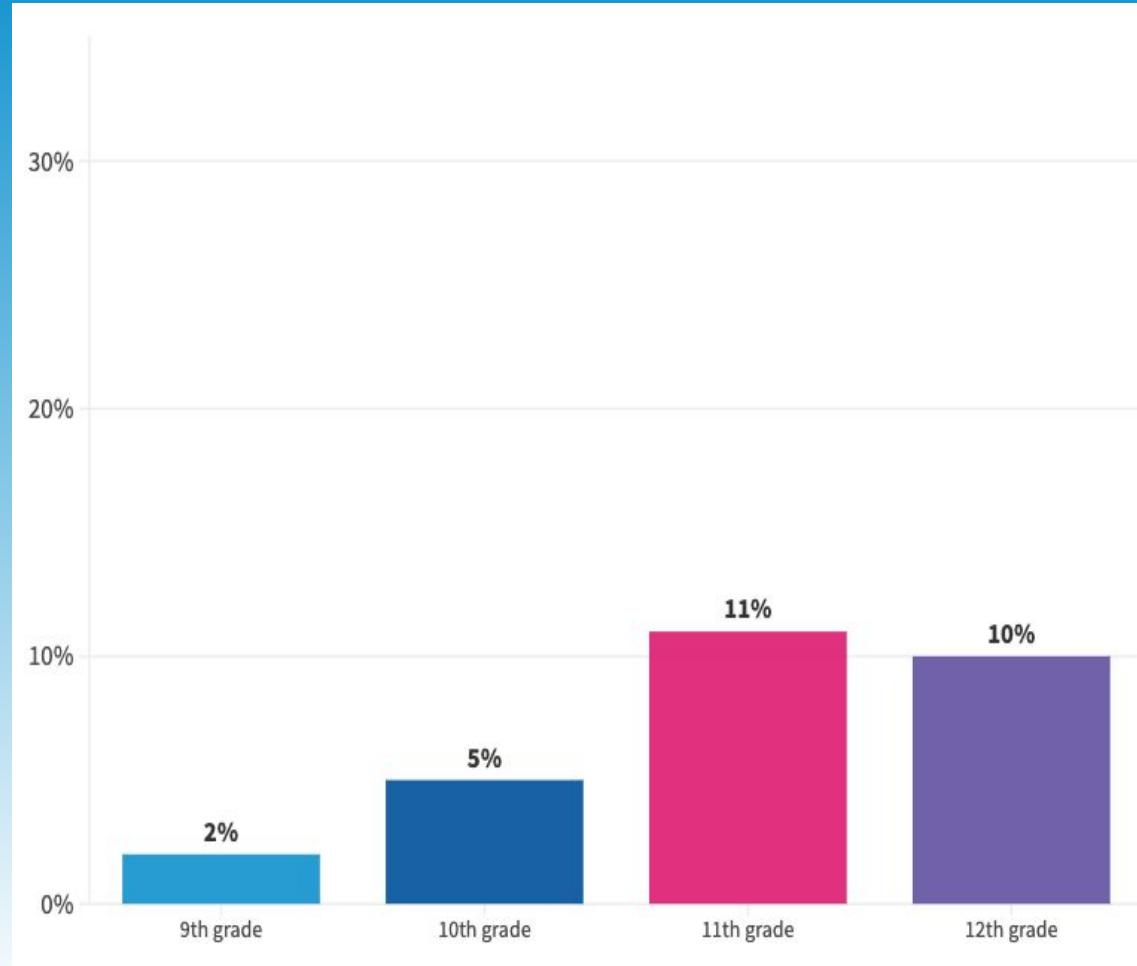
Most common sources are:

- A friend or peer gave it to me
- Bought it from someone else

## Where are they using it?

Most common locations are:

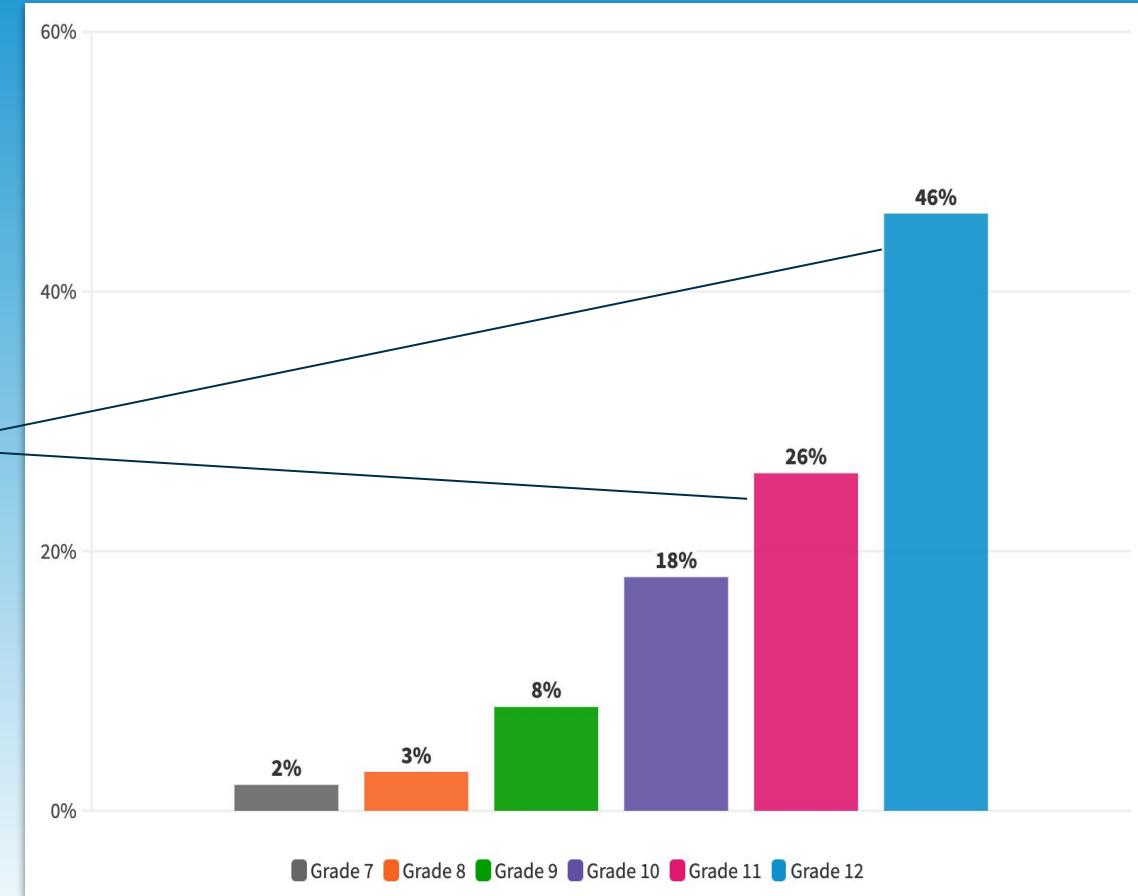
- With friends at my home or my friends' home
- At a party
- At home, alone



# 2025 Teen Alcohol Misuse - Past 30 Days

Looking at only 11th & 12th graders,  
in the past year:

- 31% drank 4+ drinks in less than 2 hours (binge drinking)
- 15% rode with a driver who had been drinking or using drugs
- 14% reported being drunk or high at school or at a school event 1 or more times



# Where do Darien teens get and consume alcohol?



## Where are they getting it?

Most common sources are:

- A friend or peer gave it to me
- Bought it from someone else
- Bought it myself at a store outside of Darien
- A parent or guardian with permission



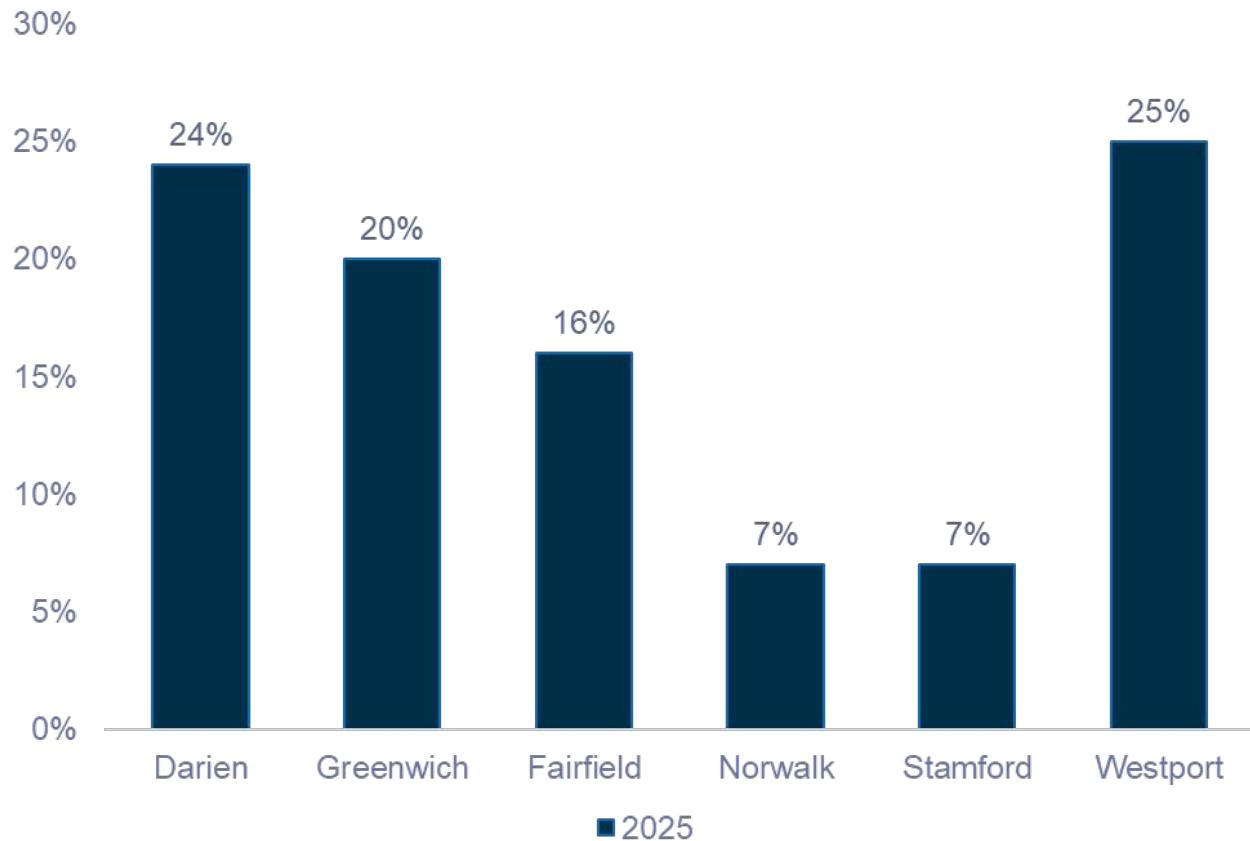
## Where are they using it?

Most common locations are:

- With friends at my home or my friends' home
- At a party

**Underage  
drinking  
rates are  
highest in  
Darien.**

## **Past 30 days alcohol use in high school:**



# Why Teens DO & DO NOT Drink

## Top reasons why teens DO NOT drink:

6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders:

- Too young to drink: 66%
- Don't want to: 60%
- It's against the law: 58%

9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders:

- Don't want to: 58%
- Play sports/involved with club: 37%
- Parents are strict: 36%

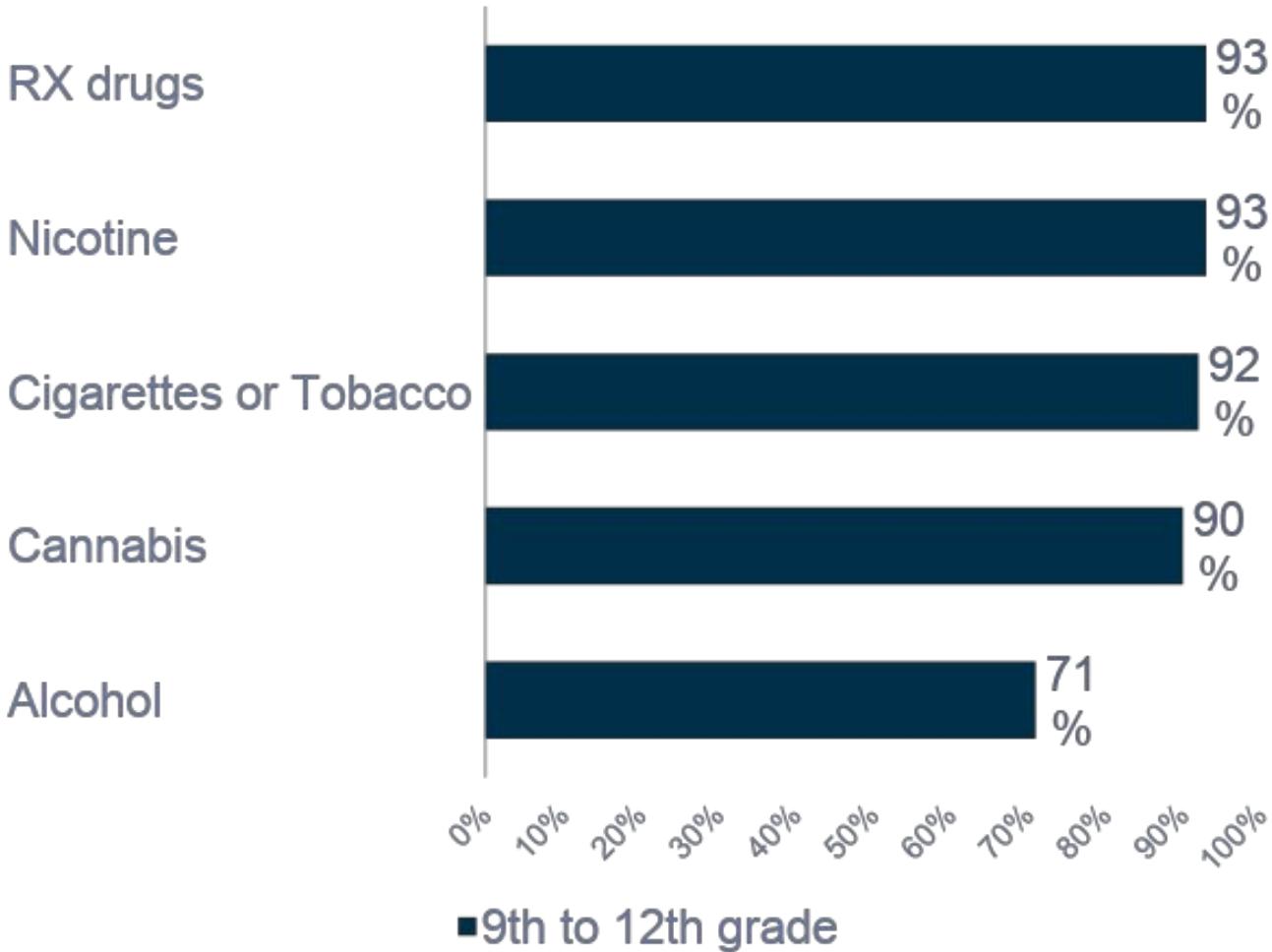
## TOP REASONS THEY ARE DRINKING, GRADES 6 - 8



## TOP REASONS THEY ARE DRINKING, GRADES 9 - 12



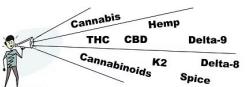
My parent  
has clear  
rules  
discouraging  
me from  
using the  
following  
substances



# Community Education Programs Informed by Thriving Youth Survey Data

## Substance Misuse/Prevention

### Marijuana and Related Products



Are you looking to learn more about these products? Join our upcoming webinar to learn:

- What are these products and what do they look like?



- CT laws and regulations around cannabis products
- Addressing sales of unlicensed products, sales to minors
- What can you do?

ALL ARE WELCOME!  
Thursday, Sept 5th 7-8pm  
[Click here to register](#)

**CONNECTICUT**  
Consumer Protection

**NEW CANAAN CARES**  
Thrive Youth Darien  
Greenwich Together  
MATCH Partnership

**THE DEPOT** **Thrive Youth Darien** **ywca**

### The Dangerous Truth About Today's Marijuana and Teen Mental Health

October 24th 7:00-8:30 PM

**WEBINAR**  
With Laura Stack  
Founder & CEO of Johnny's Ambassadors

THRIVING YOUTH DARIEN PRESENTS:

### ONE PILL CAN KILL

WHAT EVERY FAMILY NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT FENTANYL



BRIDGET LATTIMER  
SONG FOR CHARLIE

YOUTH SESSION  
WEDNESDAY  
APRIL 9TH  
7PM  
THE DARIEN DEPOT  
25 HEIGHTS ROAD

PARENT SESSION  
THURSDAY  
APRIL 10TH  
12PM  
THE DARIEN DEPOT  
25 HEIGHTS ROAD



**IF TEENS CAN'T BUY IT, DON'T SUPPLY IT.**



Know the CT Social Host Law.  
Underage drinking on your property can result in a \$2,000 fine or jail time.

Thrive Youth Darien



## Substance-Free Social Alternatives



**Friday Night Lights AT THE DEPOT**

FREE FOOD? YUP! IT'S FREE.  
PLUS MUSIC, POOL, PING PONG, AND TIME TO CHILL WITH FRIENDS.  
HIGH SCHOOLERS: COME OVER AFTER THE HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME.  
FOOD IS LIMITED AND AVAILABLE WHILE IT LASTS, SO DON'T MISS OUT!

**SPONSORED BY:**

**THE DEPOT** **Thrive Youth Darien** **DHS** **Blue Wave Beach**

OCTOBER 18 @ 9:30PM

**WAVE STRONG** **DOOC** **Thrive Youth Darien** **DHSPA**

### March 26th @ 7pm - Darien High School Auditorium



**PREVENTION STARTS WITH ALL**  
THE CHRIS HERREN STORY



**MPA** **the YMCA** **BLUE WAVE BEACH** **Darien Library** **YWCA** **THE DEPOT**

**CALLING ALL DHS SENIORS!**  
**DEPOT YOUTH CENTER PRE-PROM PARTY**

**MAY 2 @ WEED BEACH**  
**5:00-6:30PM**

**PRESENTED BY** **WAVE STRONG**

Event includes professional photographers, light bites & lemonade, and transportation to prom!

**BLUE WAVE BEACH** **DHS** **DARIEN PARKS & REC**

# Community Education Programs Informed by Thriving Youth Survey Data

**SURVIVING THE PRESSURE COOKER: HOW TO HELP TEENS MANAGE THE NEED TO SUCCEED**



Wednesday, May 15th  
7pm  
Zoom Webinar

Join family therapist Dr. Amanda Craig in conversation with Sasco River Center's Rebecca Campbell about managing the stress that comes with living in a high-achievement environment & empowering teens to maintain a healthy balance between their goals and their mental health.

Teens and parents welcome!

Register at [www.communityfundarien.org/ty-programs-and-events](http://www.communityfundarien.org/ty-programs-and-events)

**Thrive DEPOT**  
**Thrive Youth Darien**  
**YWCA**

## Stress & Anxiety

**teen talk**  
A PROGRAM OF KIDS IN CRISIS

### The Social Scene: Coaching Your Teen/Tween to Make Positive Decisions



GUEST SPEAKERS

**Joyce Sixsmith**  
Connections Counselor  
Darien High School

**John Hamilton**  
President & CEO  
Liberation Programs

Thursday, February 8th at 7pm

Join us for an interactive Zoom webinar about helping kids navigate the social/party scene.

Liberation  
Programs

Thrive Youth  
Darien

YWCA  
PARENT AWARENESS

Thrive Youth  
Darien

## Gambling, Sports Betting & Gaming

**RAISING THE STAKES:  
A PARENT'S GUIDE TO YOUTH GAMBLING, SPORTS BETTING AND GAMING**



Learn how gambling impacts today's youth, how to spot the warning signs, and how you can support your child. In this webinar, you will be provided with local, regional, and statewide resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery.

January 30, 2025  
At 12pm via Zoom

**JOIN US**

## Social Media & Smartphones

### SMARTPHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND YOUR KIDS

Virtual Q&A  
KATEY MCPHERSON



Film Screening  
CHILDHOOD 2.0



April 23, 2024

6-9 PM

Darien Library

Community Room

REGISTER NOW

[darienlibrary.org](http://darienlibrary.org)

OK To Delay Darien  
The Depot  
Darien Library  
Thrive Youth Darien

Hear Dr. Heitner speak  
in person about  
helping kids navigate  
boundaries, privacy and  
their reputation  
on social media!

DEBORAH HEITNER, PhD  
author of Screenwise

### Growing Up in Public

COMING OF AGE  
IN A DIGITAL WORLD

"Parents are worried. Stop worrying about what you can't control and focus on what you can do. Focus on helping them figure out who they really are." -JESSICA LAKES, NEW YORK #1 bestselling author of THE GIFT OF FAILURE

Tuesday, October 24th  
7pm

Middlesex Auditorium  
[www.communityfundarien.org/ty-programs-and-events](http://www.communityfundarien.org/ty-programs-and-events)

Event sponsored by:

THE DEPOT  
FAMILY CENTERS  
kids in crisis  
Thrive Youth  
Darien  
YWCA  
PARENT AWARENESS  
the Y

# Youth Presentation

**Monday, Jan 26th  
7pm**

**St Luke's - Anderson  
Youth & Community  
Center**

Thriving Youth  
Darien

## **REAL TALK**

**INSIDE THE DARIEN YOUTH SURVEY**

**Youth Presentation  
January 26th, 2026 7-8:30pm**

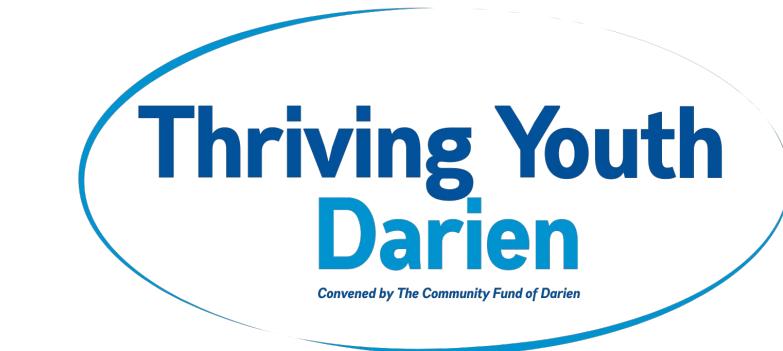
St. Luke's Parish - Anderson Youth & Community Center  
1864 Post Road, Darien CT 06820

High school students – your voice matters!  
Please join us for an interactive youth presentation featuring  
key takeaways from the 2025 Darien Youth Survey.  
Come learn what the data says, share your thoughts, and ask  
questions in a supportive space.

**Program is open to 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders.**

Learn more about our  
survey findings,  
access parent resources &  
watch past program recordings  
on our  
Thriving Youth Darien website.

Follow us  
@ThrivingYouthDarien  
on Instagram &  
Facebook!



[www.communityfunddarien.org/thriving-youth-darien](http://www.communityfunddarien.org/thriving-youth-darien)



# What Our Kids Are Saying: Skill Building Workshop

Amanda Craig, PhD, LMFT

Rebecca Campbell, LCSW

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