

Darien Youth Survey Findings: Mental Health & Substance Use Trends

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Child Guidance Center of Southern CT

**Thriving Youth
Darien**

Convened by The Community Fund of Darien

Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Introduction to Thriving Youth Darien**
- **History of the Darien Youth Survey**
- **Understanding Youth Substance Use and Mental Health Trends**
- **Panel Discussion**

Thank you

- Darien Public Schools
- MMS & DHS students and parents
- Nina Chanana, Local Evaluator
- Emily Larkin, Former Thriving Youth Program Director

SURVEY COMMITTEE:

Co-chairs: Amy Daniels & Georgette Harrison

- Leila Buckjune
- Rebecca Campbell*
- Nina Chanana
- Antoinette Cowles
- Kelly Dupont
- Jennifer Fallon
- Emily Kroenlein*
- Susannah Lewis
- Brandi Maniscalco
- Jennifer Morici
- Sarah Neumann
- Jackie Owens
- Christina Passaretti
- Ann Rodwell-Lawton

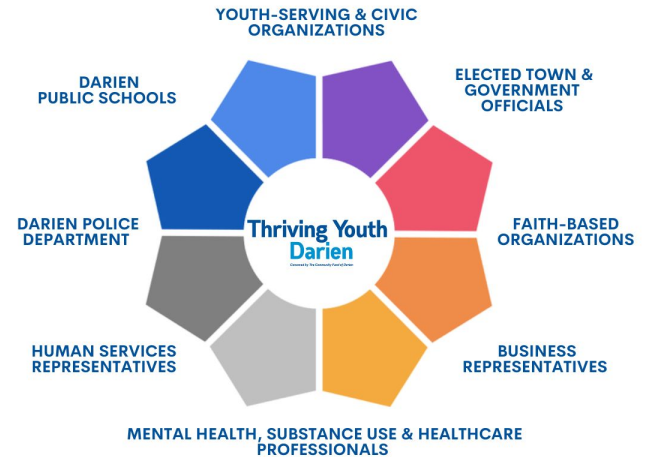
*incoming Co-Chairs



Introduction to Thriving Youth Darien

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

- Founded in 2008
- Coalition members include leaders from 35 organizations serving youth in Darien
- 9th year of grant funding focused on substance use reduction
- Awarded a 5-year DFC grant in 2021; \$125,000/year
- The Community Fund of Darien is the fiscal agent for any state or federal grants that support our prevention efforts



History of the Survey

- First completed in 2008. Now administered every two years in March.
 - 6th iteration
- Partnership with Darien Public Schools, 6th -12th grades
- Anonymous; parent opt-out option

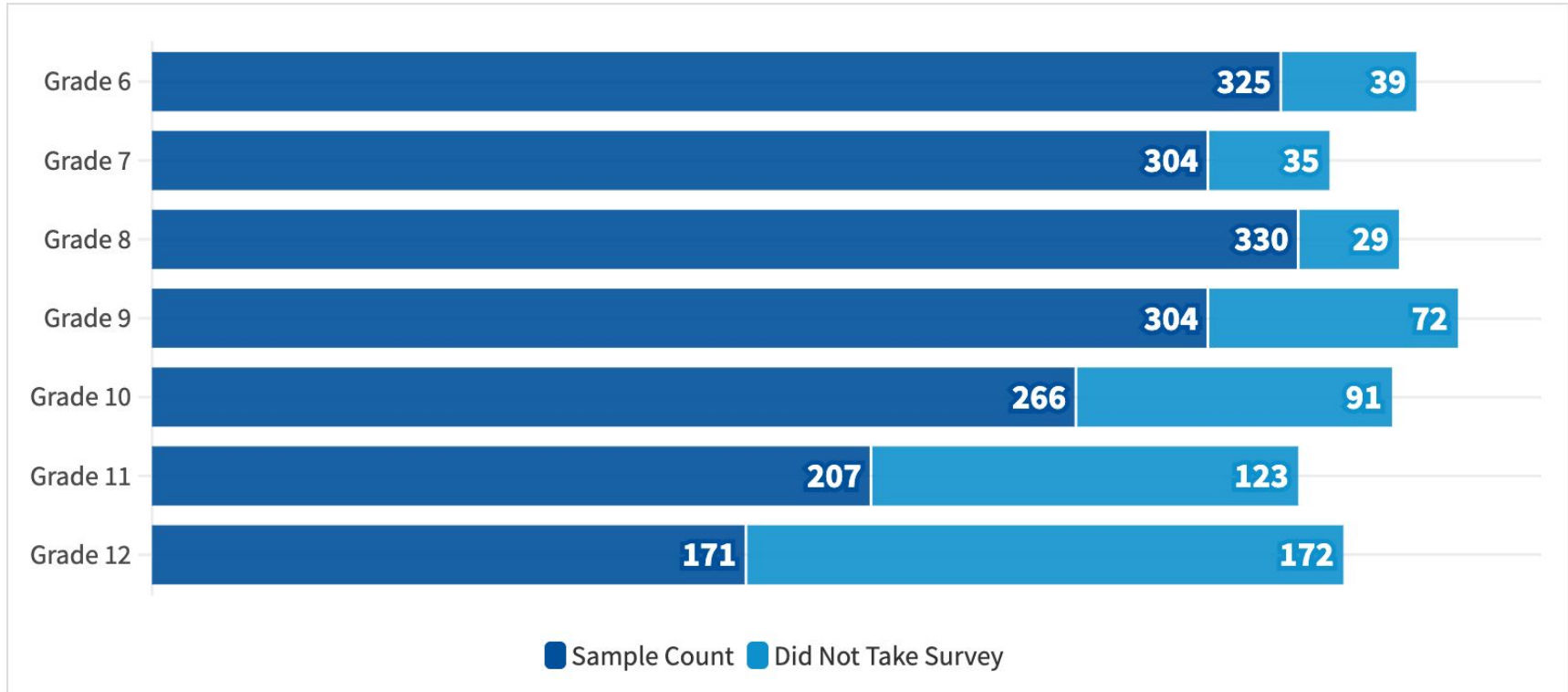


What's New This Year?

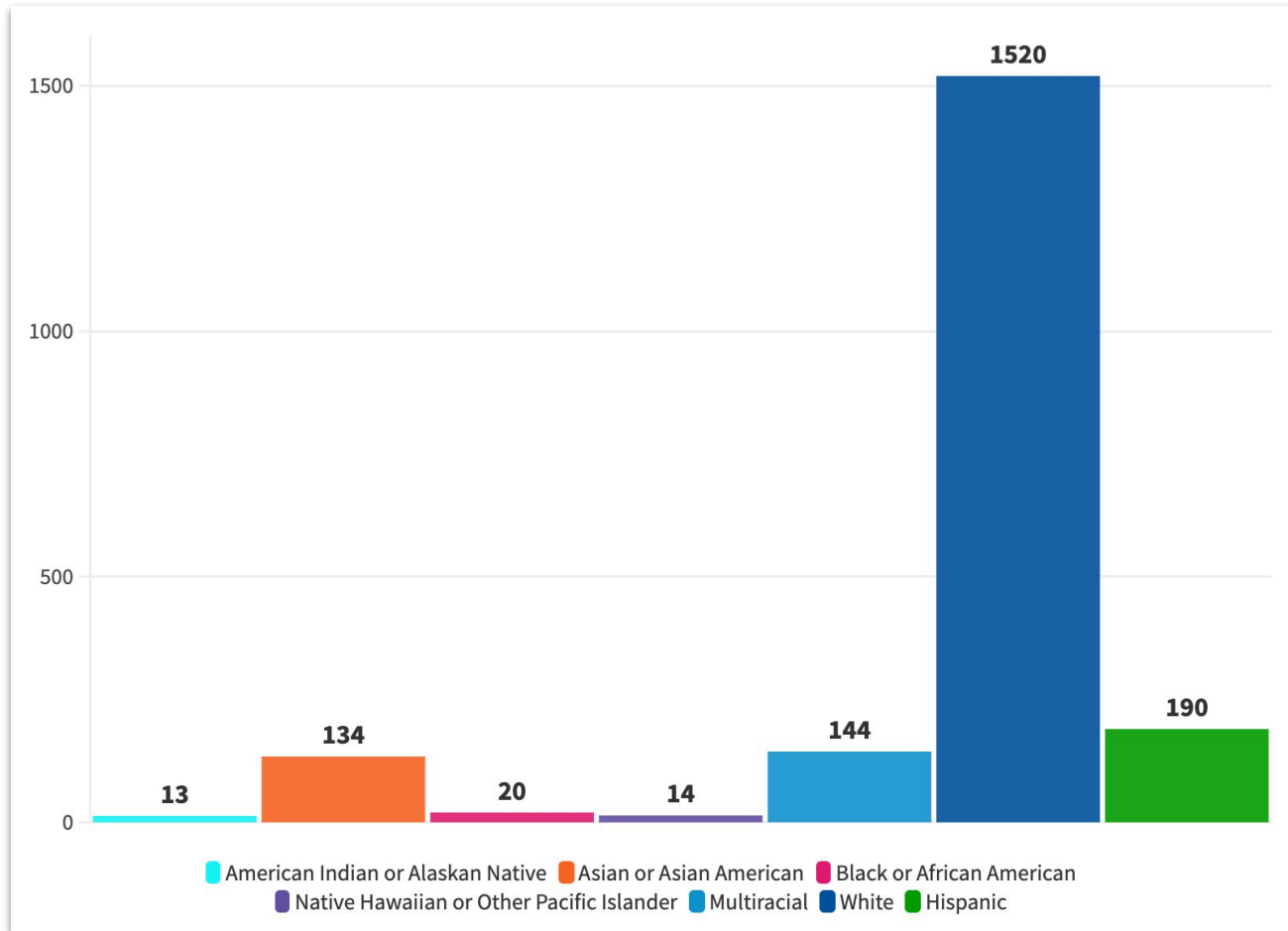
- **Questions selected from the Regional Youth Survey Question Data Bank**
 - Local and regional comparisons
- **Additional demographic information in accordance with US Census Bureau**
 - Best practice
 - Interpret data to inform how to support diverse array of youth
- **Additional protective factor questions**
 - Commitments to teams, groups, organizations, etc
 - Knowledge of mental health resources
 - Connectedness to others at home & community
- **Additional risk factor questions**
 - Consequences of gaming and social media use
 - Concerning behavior, such as disordered eating, suicidal ideation, self-harm



Response Rates by Grade

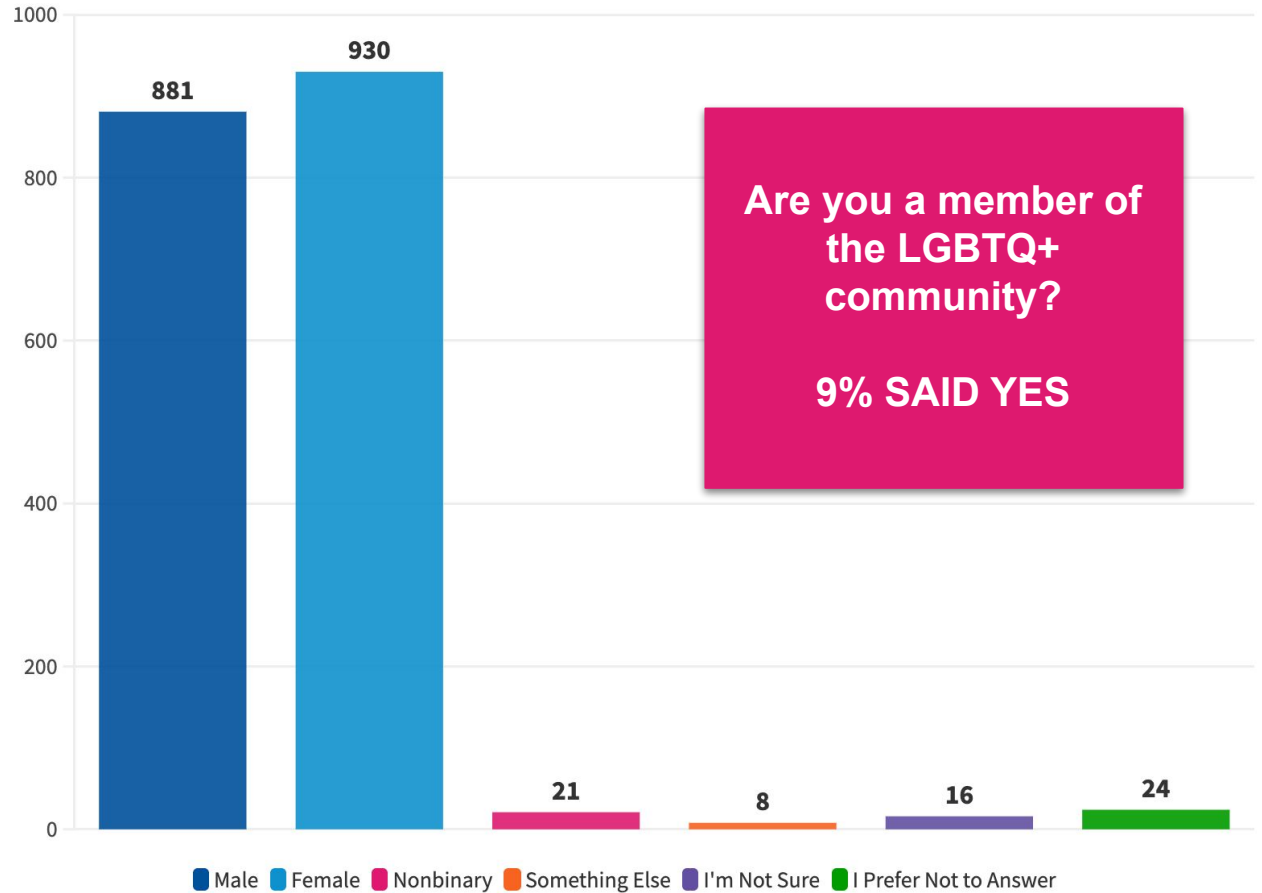


Race and Ethnicity

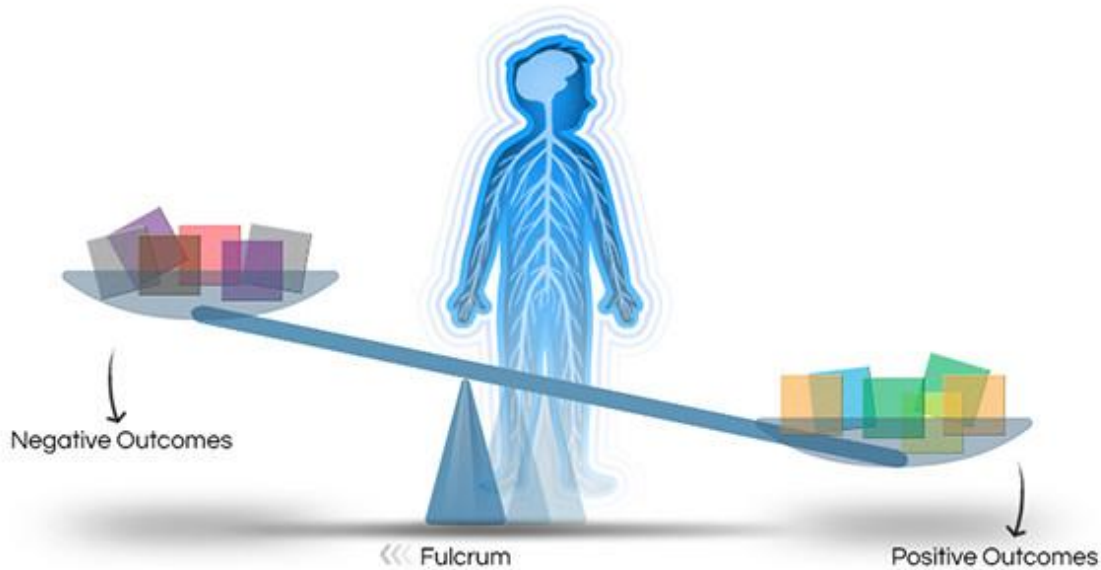


Gender Identity and LGBTQ+ community

Williams Institute:
9.5% of youth 13-17 nationwide identify as being part of LGBTQ+ community



Resilience





80% have connection to a trusted adult

INDIVIDUAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS



83% are developing a sense of purpose in their life



71% know where to get help if they're struggling with a mental health issue and **52%** know where to go for help for substance misuse



70% are engaged in productive activities



90% report high levels of love, support and acceptance from family

COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE FACTORS



87% feel safe in the community



84% feel safe at school



75% report their peers in school care about them



35% felt worse
about themselves
due to social media

RISK FACTORS



Substance Use



30% lost sleep
due to gaming



Mental Health
Concerns



22% engaged in
gambling activities

Teen Substance Use

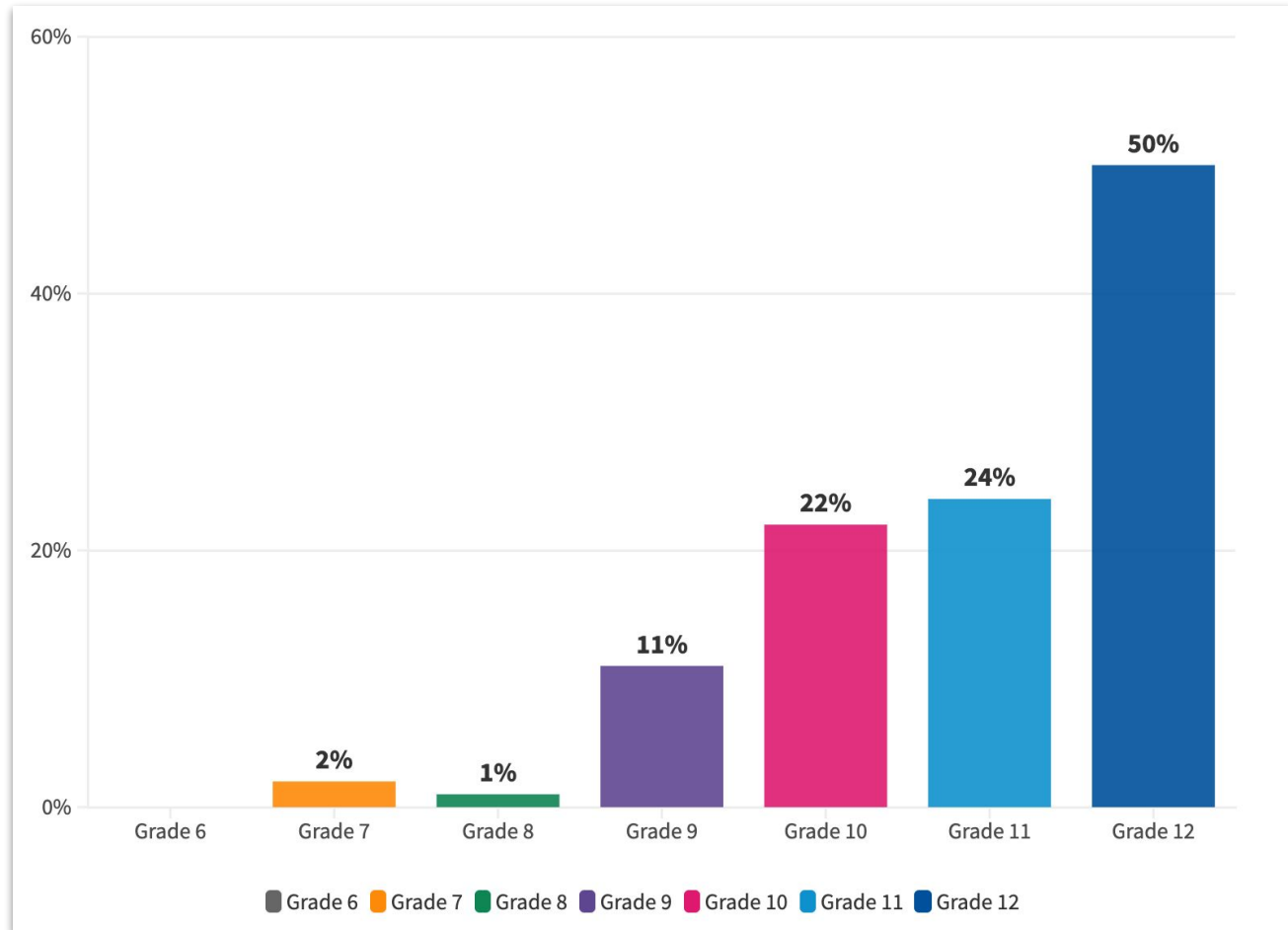
X Myth

Drinking is part of the teen experience, especially in high school. This is why teens in every town drink.

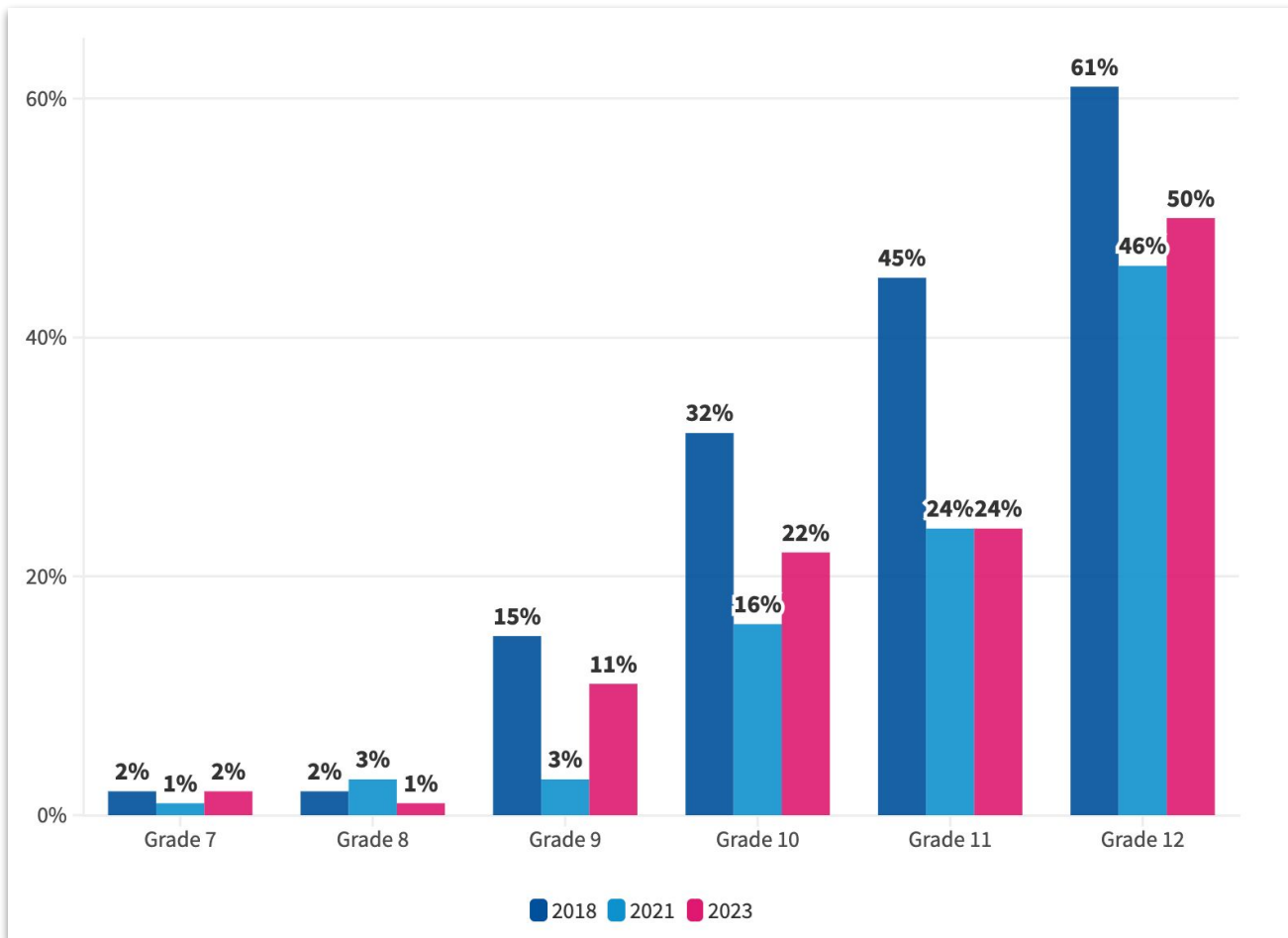
✓ Reality

Drinking does not need to be a part of the teen experience, even in high school. Every town has different norms around teen drinking.

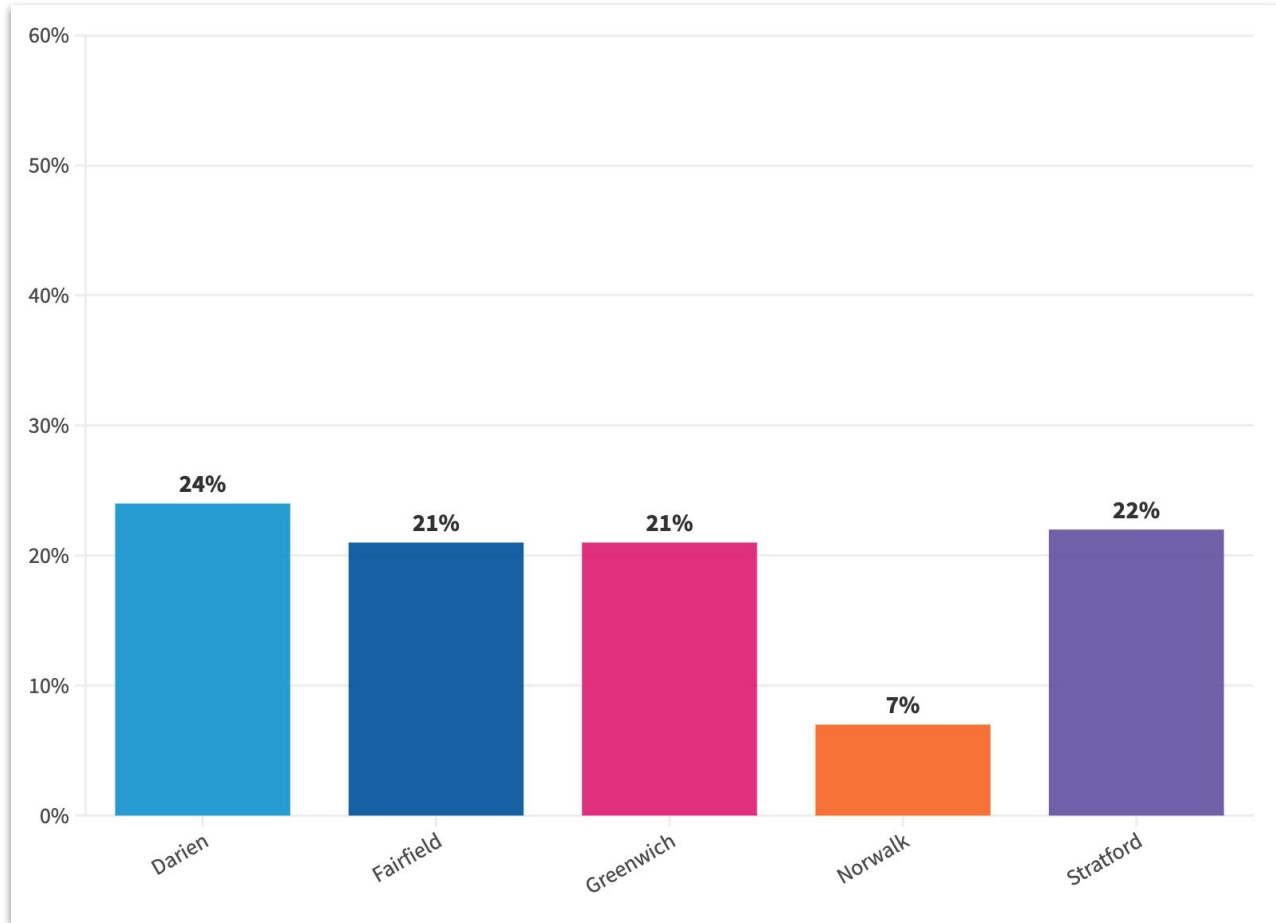
2023 Teen Alcohol Use - Past 30 Days



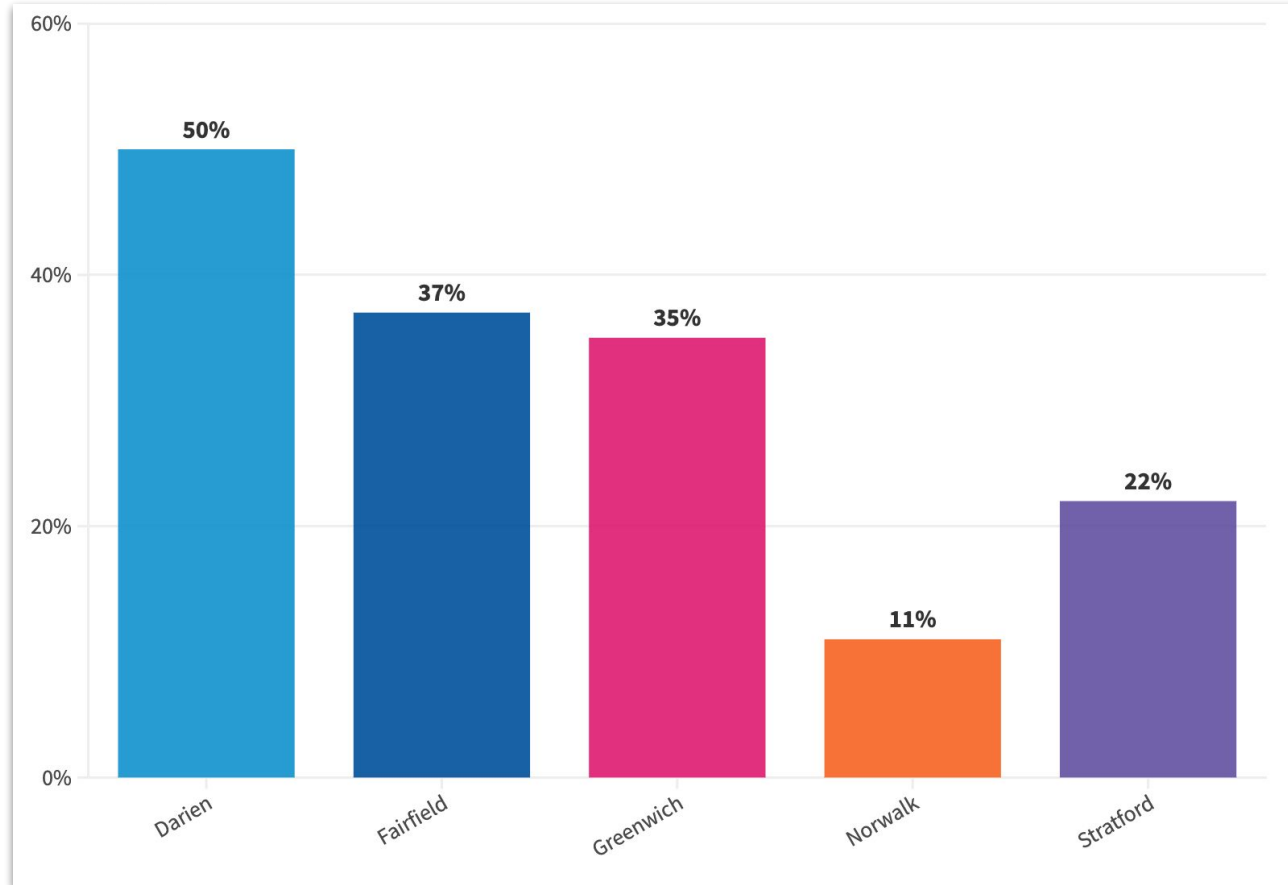
Past 30 Day Alcohol Use Over the Years



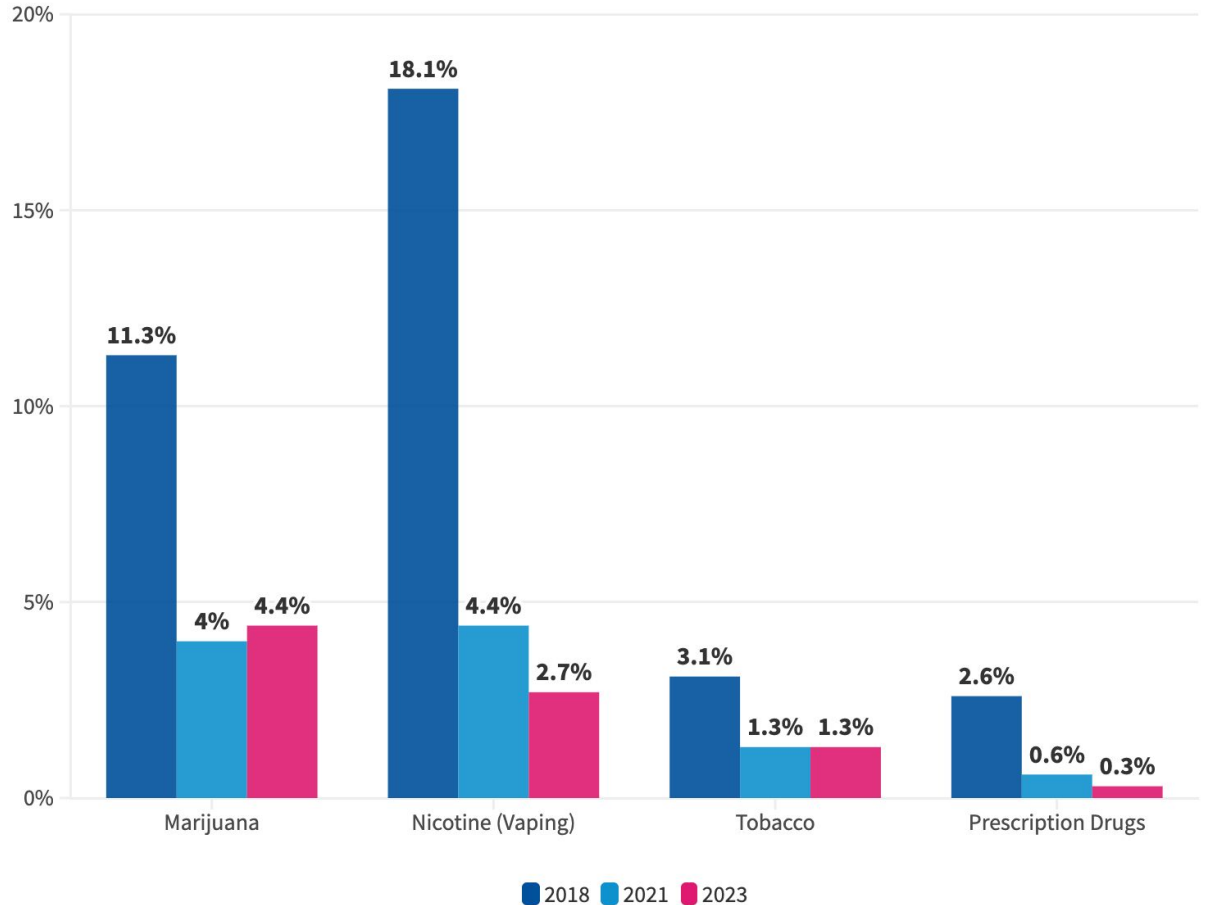
High School Past 30 Day Alcohol Use Rates in Our Region



12th Grade Past 30 Day Alcohol Use Rates in Our Region



High School Substance Use - Past 30 Days



Culture of Drinking in Darien

TOP 3 REASONS THEY ARE DRINKING

① To Have Fun **89%**



② Peer Pressure **45%**



③ Alcohol Readily Available **42%**



TOP 3 PLACES THEY ARE DRINKING

① A Party **57%**



② With friends at their home or my home **56%**



③ At home with parent present **23%**



EASY TO GET?



58%
SAY YES

Substance Use Findings

X Myth

There's nothing we can do about it. This is the culture here. They won't listen to us no matter what we say.

✓ Reality

Our data is clear. Parents can greatly reduce the likelihood their teen will use substances and are the most underutilized resource to prevent teen substance use.

Talk... They're Listening

TOP 3 REASONS THEY ARE NOT DRINKING (GRADES 6 - 8)

- ① Too Young **60%**
- ② Don't Want to **58%**
- ③ Against the Law **54%**



TOP 3 REASONS THEY ARE NOT DRINKING (GRADES 9 - 12)

- ① Don't Want to **53%**
- ② Friend Group Doesn't Drink **40%**
- ③ Parents Are Strict **37%**



9X

Teens in Darien are **9x more likely to drink on weekends** if they don't believe their parents disapprove of them drinking

Changing the Drinking Norms (2018-2023)

- Percentage of teens who thought underage drinking was ok has **decreased from 40% to 30%**
- Perception of peer disapproval has **increased significantly from 62% to 82%**
- Perception of parent disapproval has **increased from 86% to 92%**

Substance Use Findings

X Myth

It isn't a big deal if kids drink in high school. They need to learn to drink before they go to college or they'll go crazy in college.

✓ Reality

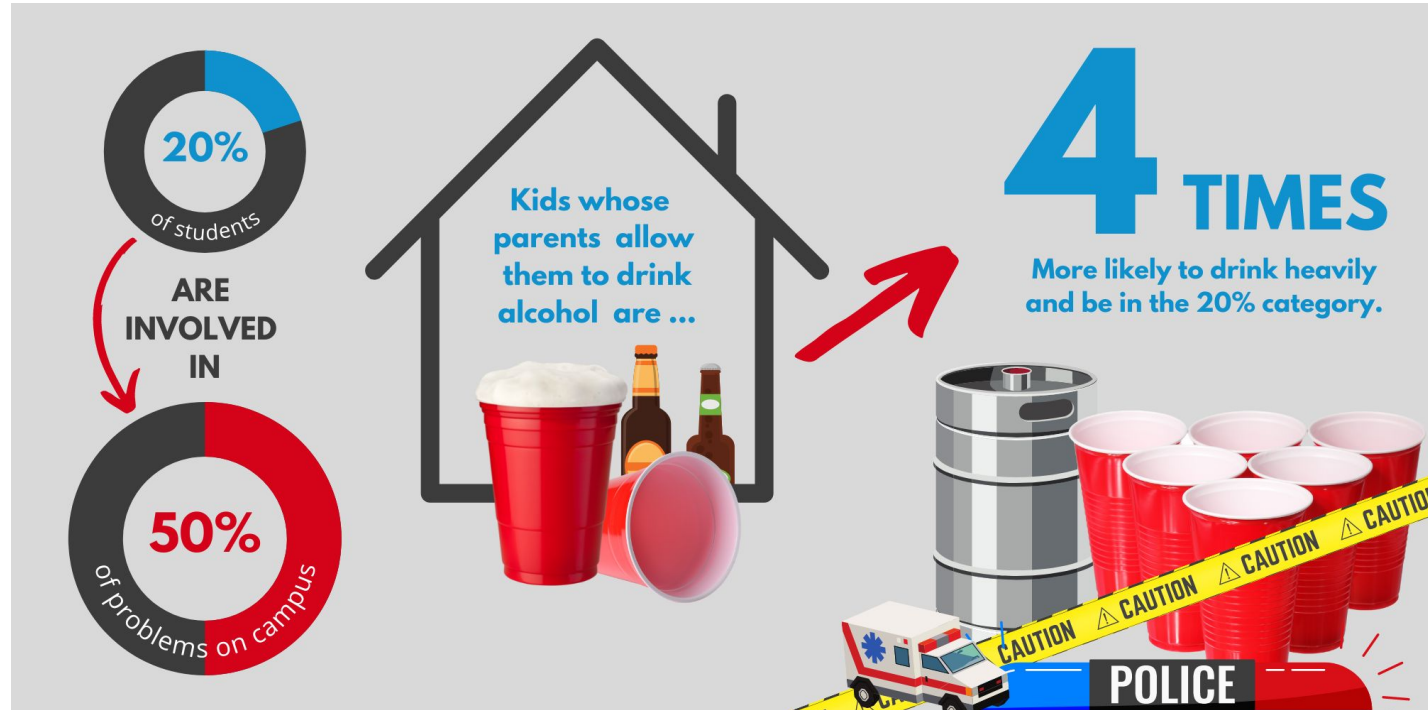
- 9 of 10 adults with a substance use disorder began using before age 18.
- Fewer alcohol-related problems develop for every year that students delay drinking.
- Alcohol use changes the structure and function of the still-developing teen brain.
- It is illegal

Robert Turrisi, PhD

Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University

“Allowing your kids to drink is not protective.”
- Dr. Robert Turrisi

Source: Turrisi, R., Mallett, K.,
Varvil-Weld, L., & Guttman, K. (2013).
Examining the role of parents in college
student alcohol etiology and
prevention.



Moving the Needle on the 3 Ps

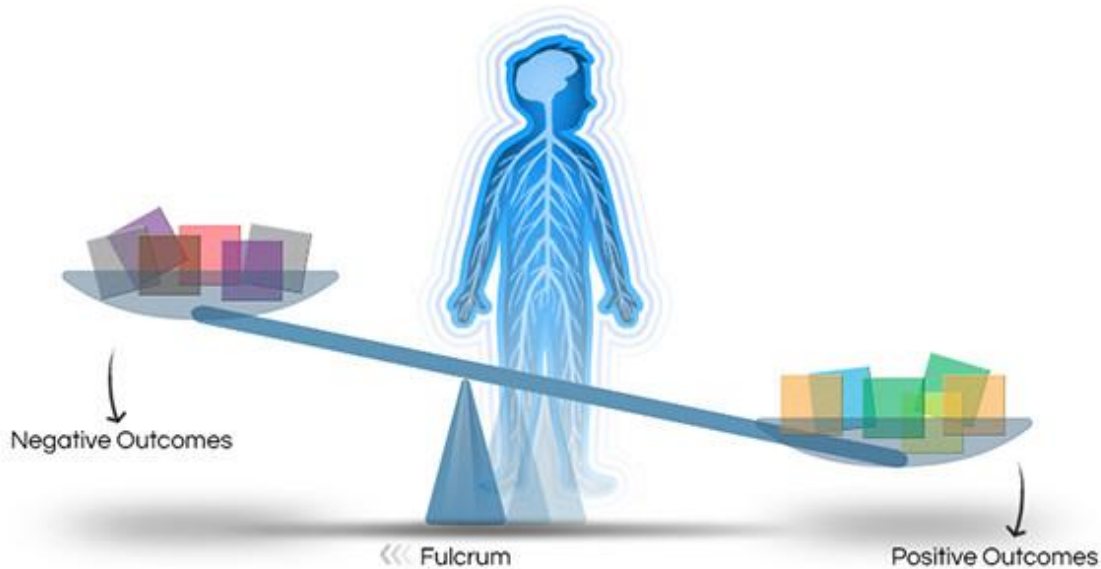
Perception, Peers and Parents

- The greater a teen's perception that substance use is harmful/risky, and that their peers and parents disapprove of use, the **less likely they are to engage in substance use**
- However, teen perception of parental disapproval of drinking declines rapidly between **11th and 12th grade**, where we see one of the **biggest spikes in alcohol use**
- **82% of middle schoolers** say that parents have clear rules discouraging alcohol use. Only **66% of high schoolers** report the same



How can you, as a parent, move the needle in the right direction?

The Interplay Between All Factors



X Myth

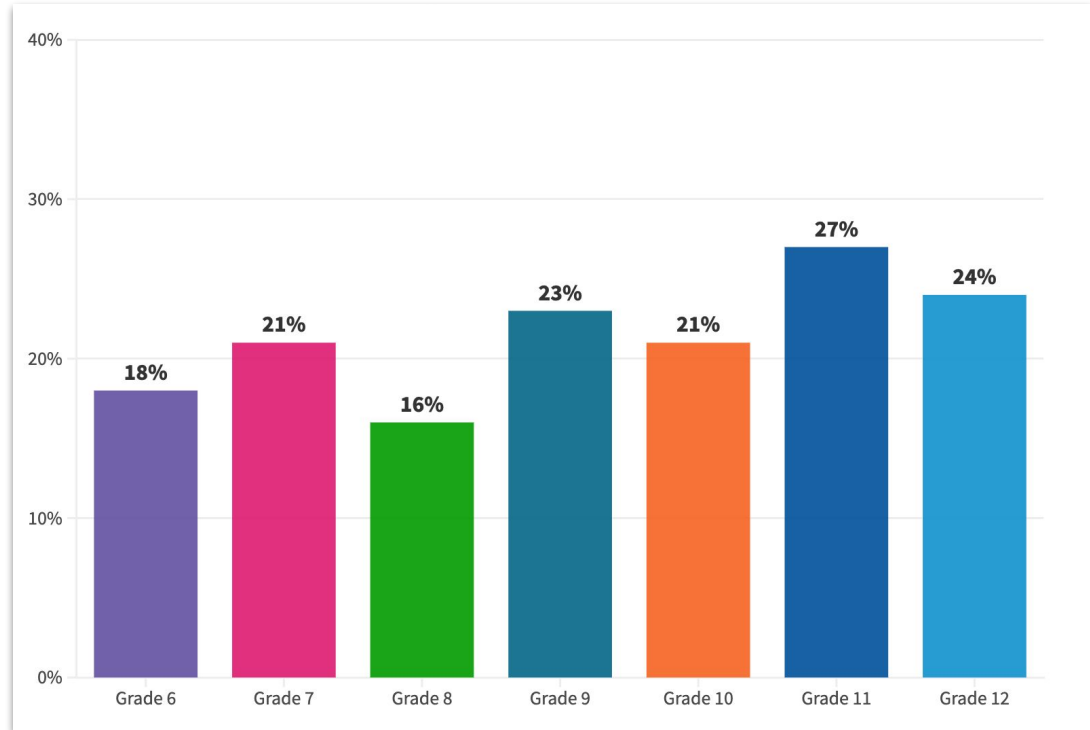
It's normal for teens to be stressed. There are only a handful of teens who are really struggling.

✓ Reality

Hundreds of Darien teens and tweens are struggling with mental health issues.

Self-Reported Rates of Depression

Approximately 1 in 4 high schoolers and 1 in 5 middle schoolers report persistent sadness and hopelessness in the past year.

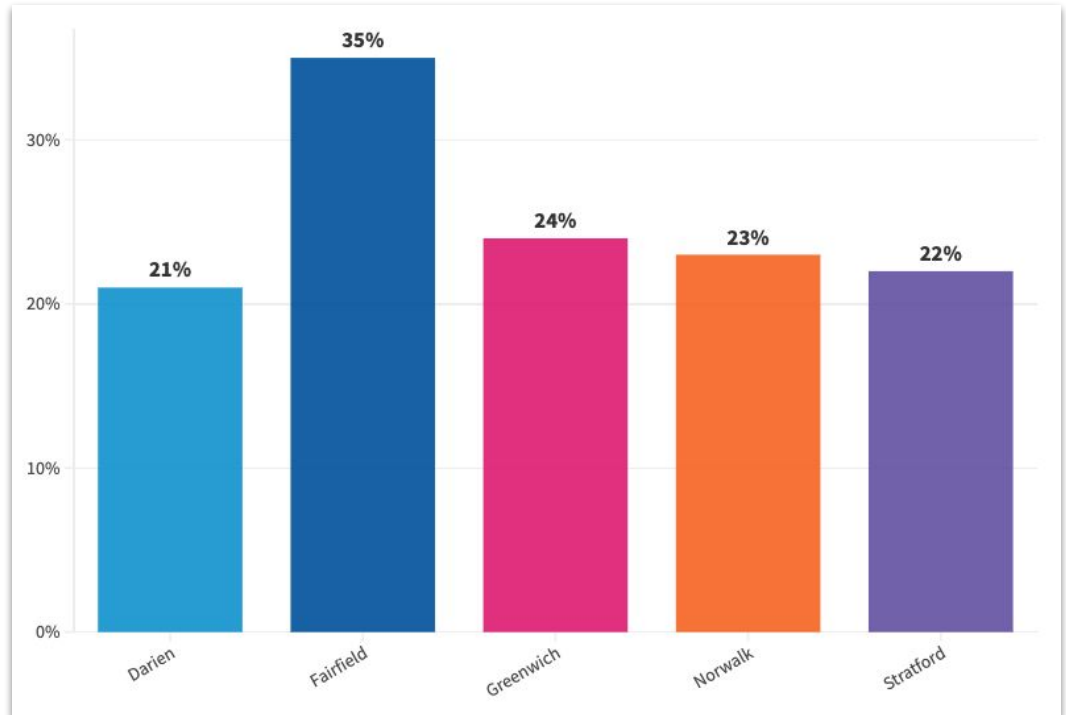


Self-Reported Depression Rates in Our Region

High School Depression Rates

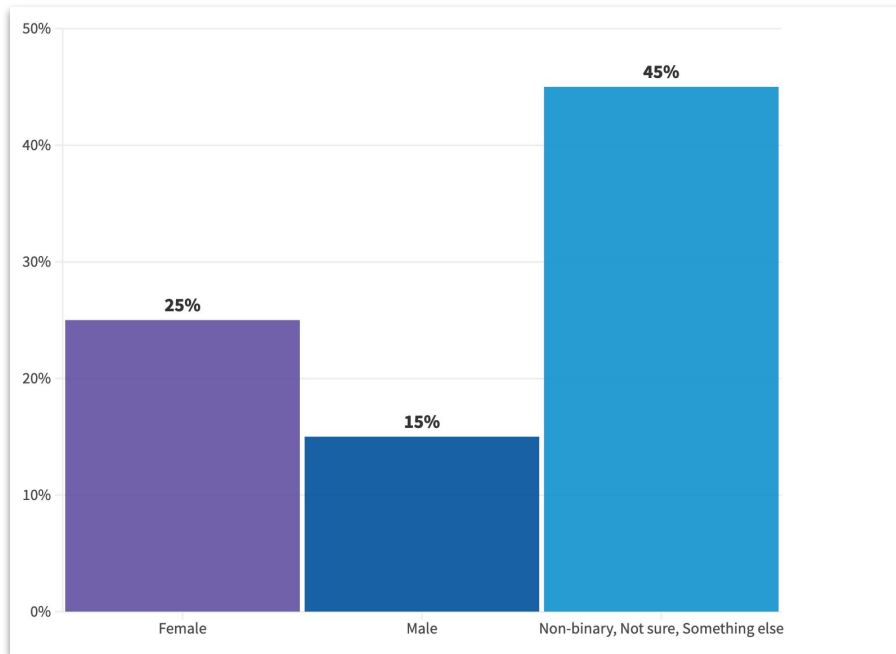
2021 YRBS
Connecticut - 36%
USA - 42%

2023 Youth Survey
Darien - 23%

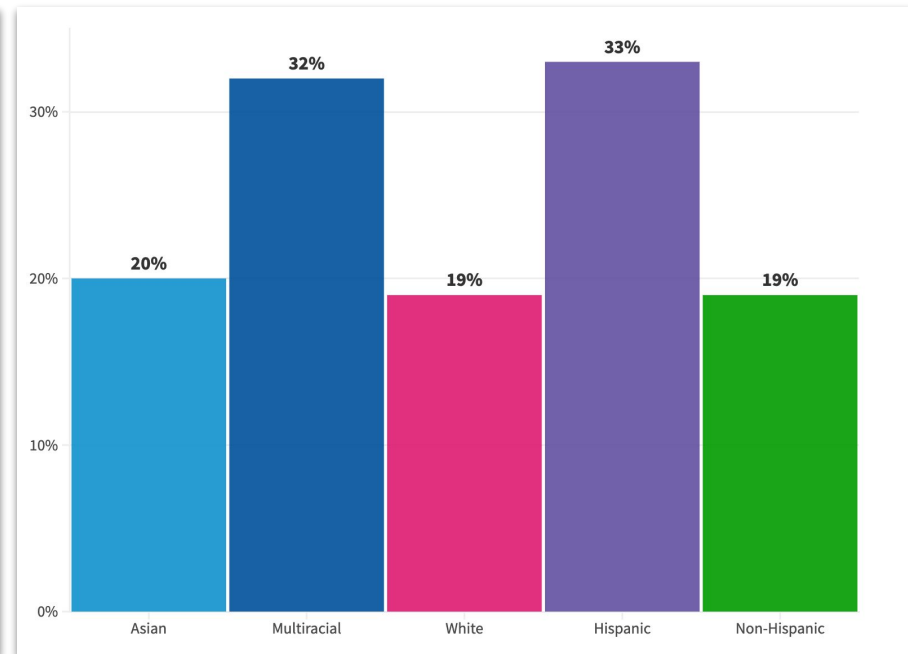


Self-Reported Rates of Depression Race and Ethnicity, Gender

Gender

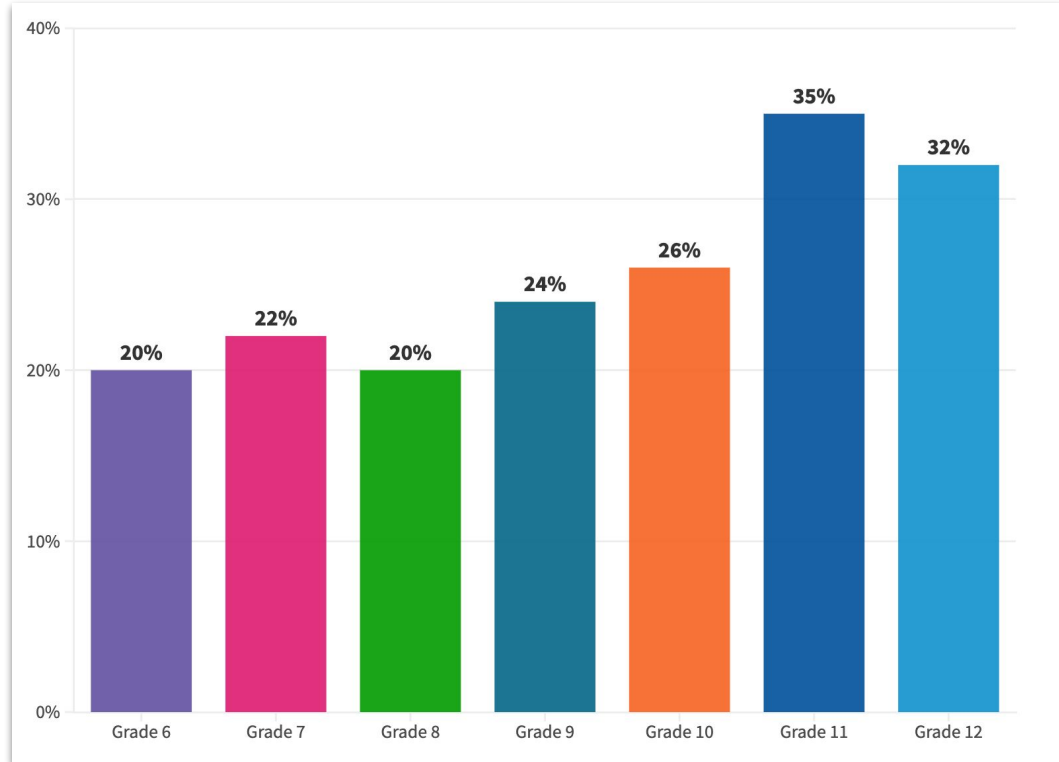


Race/Ethnicity



Self-Reported Rates of Anxiety

More than 1 in 4 high schoolers and 1 in 5 middle schoolers report persistent anxiety in the past year



Mental Health: Female Youth

- Higher levels of sadness, anxiety and loneliness across all grades, particularly in 10-12th grades
- Female students report more:
 - Restrictive eating
 - Self-harm, suicidal ideation
 - High levels of stress related to academics, post-HS planning, friends/peers, schedule, social scene, social media, sports achievement
 - Social media consequences (both positive and negative)
 - Commitments (clubs, community service, volunteering)



25% of females in grades 6-12 reported persistent sadness

Mental Health: Male Youth

Males report:

- Lower levels of sadness, anxiety and loneliness across all grades
- Higher levels of self-image
- More consequences of gaming (not enough sleep, didn't complete homework, heard/saw inappropriate things, choose games over time with friends)
- Higher rates of bullying someone



Non-LGBTQ+

Bullied - 14%
Connected to Peers - 66%
Safe at School - 87%
Valued & Appreciated - 86%



57% feel
valued and
appreciated



68% feel safe
at school

THE LGBTQ+
COMMUNITY
REPORTS MORE
RISK FACTORS



35% feel
connected to
peers



34% reported
bullying

High School Suicide Rates

2021 YRBS USA

Considered suicide - 22%
Attempted suicide - 10%

Connecticut

Considered suicide- 14%
Attempted suicide - 6%

2023 Youth Survey Darien

Considered suicide - 10%
Attempted suicide - 2%



388 respondents (21%)

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



163 respondents (9%)

reported seriously
considering attempting suicide

DEPRESSION & SUICIDE

PAST 12 MONTHS
GRADE 6 -12



115 respondents (6%)

reported making a plan
about how they would
attempt suicide



454 respondents (24%)

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



46 respondents (2%)

reported that they
attempted suicide

Pause & Reflect



Substance Use and Mental Health Key Takeaways



Darien is moving the needle in the right direction, but there is still work to do:

- Talk early, talk often with your tweens and teens about substance use. Talk, they hear you.
- Set clear family rules
- Continue these conversations as they get older

Darien has lots of strengths to build upon. However, there are many tweens and teens in distress:

- Female, LGBTQ+, Latinx and multiracial teens report higher rates of depression and anxiety, but they're not the only ones struggling
- Don't be afraid to ask if they're depressed if they want to talk to someone

**This is just a start.
We want to hear from you!**

Save the Date!

Tuesday, October 24th

7:00pm

Middlesex Middle School
Auditorium

“Growing Up in Public” with Devorah Heitner, PhD



Register at:

www.communityfunddarien.org/ty-programs-and-events



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



Tuesday, October 24th
7pm

Middlesex Auditorium

Register at

[www.communityfunddarien.org/
ty-programs-and-events](http://www.communityfunddarien.org/ty-programs-and-events)

Event sponsored by:



DEVORAH HEITNER, PhD
author of *Screenwise*

Growing Up in Public

COMING OF AGE
IN A DIGITAL WORLD

“Listen to Devorah: Stop agonizing about kids going viral for the
wrong reasons – focus on helping them figure out who they really are.”
—JESSICA LAHEY, NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *THE GIFT OF FAILURE*

How Darien Youth Survey Data Informs Community Education & Programming

THE DEPOT Free Friday Event Series

FREE FOOD? YUP! IT'S FREE.

PLUS MUSIC, POOL, PING PONG, KARAOKE, AND TIME TO CHILL WITH FRIENDS.

OPEN TO DARIEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLERS

NEXT UP:
CRUMBL & LA TACQUERIA
FRIDAY, OCT 13
8:00 PM TO 10:00 PM



CRUMBL COOKIES: OCT 13



LA TACQUERIA: OCT 13



FRYBORG TRUCK: NOV 17

Sponsored by:



LIGHTHOUSE AT DARIEN DEPOT

LGBTQ+ YOUTH GROUP!

LIGHTHOUSE IS A SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR LGBTQ+ TEENS AND ALLIES IN 6TH-12TH GRADE

FREE FOOD PROVIDED
NO SIGN UP NECESSARY
BRING YOUR FRIENDS!

5:15-6:30

WEDNESDAYS
@ THE DEPOT

FOR MORE INFO VISIT @KIC_LIGHTHOUSE ON INSTAGRAM

YOUTH FROM ANY TOWN WELCOME

LIGHTHOUSE A PROGRAM OF AIDS RECOVERY THE DEPOT A GUIDING PATH FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

FREE

Darien's Inaugural HOPE DAY

Join us as the Darien community gathers to smash the stigma around mental illness

SUNDAY, NOV 5TH
1:00 PM TO 4:00 PM
AT THE DEPOT
(25 HEIGHTS ROAD)

Sponsored by Darien's Mental Health Task Force



PIZZA

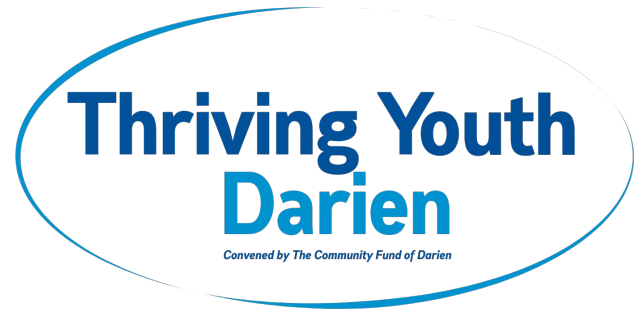
MUSIC & DANCE

ACTIVITY STATIONS



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

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Facebook!



www.communityfunddarien.org/thriving-youth-darien

