



Youth Needs Assessment 2025



Dr. Bhavana Pahwa
MA, MSSW, LCSW-R, PhD
Consultant, NYS- MWBE

PAHWA.IIC

10 City Place, #28F
White Plains, NY 10601
914-420-9959 | 914-227-2378
bpahwa@pahwallc.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of White Plains continues to demonstrate a strong and sustained commitment to youth development through significant public investment, cross-sector collaboration, and data-informed planning. This Youth Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive snapshot of the experiences, risks, and protective factors affecting middle and high school youth in White Plains in 2025, and compares key indicators with prior survey data from 2022.

Survey responses from 615 youth across 8th, 10th, and 12th grades indicate several positive trends. Rates of past 30-day substance use remain relatively low and, in many cases, are below national averages, particularly for alcohol use among high school youth. Youth report improvements in nutrition behaviors compared to 2022, including increased daily breakfast consumption and higher intake of fruits and vegetables. Overall parental monitoring remains fairly strong and continues to function as a key protective factor against risky behaviors.

At the same time, the findings highlight emerging and persistent areas of concern. Bullying—particularly electronic and online bullying—remains prevalent across grade levels, with notable increases among older youth. Youth perceptions of the risks associated with substance use, as well as perceived parental and peer disapproval, decline as youth progress through higher grades, suggesting growing vulnerability during adolescence. Access to substances such as alcohol and marijuana is widely perceived as easy, and youth report troubling levels of perceived access to harder drugs.

Mental health and stress indicators warrant particular attention. A substantial proportion of White Plains high school youth report experiencing stress “most of the time” or “always,” at rates higher than national benchmarks, although slightly improved from 2022. While persistent anxiety interfering with daily functioning is reported at lower levels, the overall stress burden underscores the importance of prevention, early intervention, and supportive services.

Youth arrest data provide important contextual insight. While total youth arrests have declined significantly since 2022, the distribution of offenses shows a concerning concentration of felony-level charges among older adolescents, particularly ages 15–17. This underscores the need for targeted prevention and diversion strategies during this critical developmental window.

Taken together, the findings affirm the value of White Plains' investments in youth while identifying priority areas for continued action, particularly around mental health supports, substance use prevention, positive youth engagement, and early intervention for justice-involved youth.

Key Findings

1. Relationships with Adults

Parents and guardians remain the primary trusted adults for youth across grade levels. Notably, youth report significantly lower comfort levels speaking with school teachers and counselors compared to the 2022 survey. This decline suggests potential gaps in school-based adult-youth connection and highlights the importance of strengthening relationships beyond the family.

Implication: Adult mentorship and trusted adult relationships outside the home require renewed focus, particularly within schools and community programs.

2. Bullying and Peer Climate

Bullying remains a concern, with patterns shifting toward increased electronic and online bullying, especially among high school youth. Middle school youth report higher rates of in-school bullying, while 12th graders report the highest rates of online harassment.

Implication: Prevention efforts must address both in-person and digital environments, with age-appropriate strategies emphasizing cyberbullying awareness and response.

3. Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity

Positive trends were observed in nutrition. More youth report eating breakfast daily and meeting recommended fruit and vegetable intake compared to 2022. However, physical activity remains a significant concern: fewer than half of youth meet CDC guidelines for 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

Body image findings are mixed. While middle school and 10th grade youth report modest improvements in feeling good about their weight, 12th graders show a decline. Implication: Nutrition education efforts appear effective, but physical activity promotion—especially for older youth—requires stronger emphasis through schools, afterschool programs, and community recreation.

4. Substance Use: 4 Core Measures

Overall, White Plains youth report low past 30-day substance use rates, with alcohol being the most commonly used substance. Alcohol use increases with grade level but

remains lower than national averages for 10th and 12th graders. However, 8th graders report slightly higher alcohol use than national peers.

Protective perceptions are weakening:

- Perception of harm from substances declines as youth age.
- Perceived peer and parental disapproval is relatively low and decreases significantly in higher grades.

Availability remains high:

- Approximately 68–74% of high school youth report alcohol is easy to obtain.
- Nearly two-thirds report marijuana is easy to access.
- Alarming, high school youth also report access to harder drugs at higher-than-expected rates.

Implication: While current use rates are low, declining risk perception and high availability indicate elevated future risk without sustained prevention efforts.

5. Parental Monitoring

Youth perceptions of parental monitoring in White Plains are slightly lower than national averages. Of particular concern, only 58% of 12th graders report that their parents have clear rules regarding alcohol and drug use.

Implication: Strengthening parent education around clear expectations, communication, and supervision—particularly related to substance use—is a critical prevention strategy.

6. Mental Health and Stress

Stress levels among White Plains high school youth exceed national benchmarks. Approximately one-third of 10th and 12th graders report feeling stressed most of the time or always. Although slightly improved from 2022, these levels remain concerning. Encouragingly, fewer youth report anxiety severe enough to interfere with daily functioning compared to national trends. Nonetheless, persistent stress linked to academic pressure, social expectations, and post-pandemic effects continues to impact youth well-being.

Implication: Preventive mental health programming, stress management skills, and early intervention remain essential, particularly within school and afterschool settings.

7. Afterschool Participation

Afterschool participation declines sharply with age:

- 52% of 8th graders participate
- 44% of 10th graders participate
- Only 29% of 12th graders participate

Given strong evidence that afterschool programs improve safety, academic performance, and social-emotional skills, this decline represents a missed protective opportunity for older youth.

Implication: Programming for high school youth must be redesigned to align with their interests, schedules, and workforce or college readiness needs.

Background

White Plains

The City of White Plains is the 11th largest city in New York and the 672nd largest city in the United States and sits in the heart of Westchester County. White Plains has a 2025 population of 63,303. White Plains is currently growing at a rate of 1.19% annually and its population has increased by 6.23% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 59,593 in 2020. White Plains is the hub of recreation and business for Westchester County with the population swelling to 150,000 during the day as workers, shoppers, and visitors arrive by car, rail, bus, and plane.

According to the US Census (2023 ACS report) the demographic composition of White Plains is: White 43.9%, Hispanic 32.9%, Black/ African American 11.4%, Asian 8.35%. and Other/Two or More Races 3.45%. Nearly one third of residents in White Plains identify as Hispanic or Latino. Of these residents, the following cultural/ethnic origins are represented: Mexican (7.7%), Dominican (4.8%), Peruvian (4.1%), Columbian (3.6%), Puerto Rican (3.6%). As of 2020, 7.5% of all White Plains residents identify as Asian or Pacific Islander alone. The number of Asian or Pacific Islanders in White Plains grew by 21% between 2010 and 2020. Approximately 30.42% are high school graduates or less, 20.07% have attained some college, and 49.51% have an undergraduate or higher college degree. The average household income in White Plains is \$164,273 with a poverty rate of 10.92%. This figure is lower than the state and national averages but slightly higher than the average for Westchester County overall with a wide range of 5.7% for Whites to 15% and 22% for African Americans and Hispanics respectively.

White Plains City School District comprises of 7 schools (1 High School, 1 Middle Schools (2 campuses), 5 Elementary Schools) and 6,784 youth. According to the demographic data on enrollment figures from the New York State Education Department as of October 2024, the district's minority enrollment is 80% and 32.8% of youth are economically disadvantaged. The student body at the schools served by White Plains City School District is 21.3% white, 11.1% Black, 3.9% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 58.9% Hispanic/Latino, 0.1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0% Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander. In addition, 4.7% of youth are two or more races, and 0% have not specified their race or ethnicity. Also, 49% of youth are female, and 51% of youth are male. In White Plains more than 57% of school age youth are on free and reduced lunch program.

The City of White Plains is a city that invests in youth. Approximately, eight percent (8%) of the city's budget serves White Plains youth. Along with funding youth services through the City's Parks & Recreation, Library, and Community Center, this budget also

supports a Youth Bureau. Community priority is also evidenced by the fact that the White Plains School District invests \$29,135 per student each year to provide quality education to all its youth. The City's voting public has adopted and passed the budget to support such investment by an overwhelming majority for the past ten years. Both the City and School District's commitment to youth is also demonstrated by the unique working relationship both entities have established to create and provide a seamless array of services and programs that give youth the opportunity to stay safe, learn and grow to become productive citizens of tomorrow. Youth priority is further evidenced by the establishment of new initiatives like, a) the Youth Court; b) the funding of a Community Education Facility with a cost of \$5,000,000; c) approval of a \$1.15 million capital project to create a dedicated teen center in the public library; and d) recognition as 100 Best Communities for Youth by the National League of Cities. White Plains is rich in service organizations, groups, and religious organizations which work collaboratively within and across sectors to ensure the well-being of its most vulnerable youth. Youth organizations in White Plains provide more than 250,000 hours of positive youth development programming during the year. Additionally, White Plains High School offers more than 40 clubs, literary publications and performing arts groups, and 58 athletic teams to keep youth positively engaged after school. The City's Parks & Recreation Department has a wide array of programming for youth of all ages serving more than 11,000 youth annually with 660 acres of dedicated parks and playground space. The White Plains Public Library provides workshops, tutoring, reading, and computer activities for youth of all ages and reaches out to the community to keep youth engaged. Youth in White Plains have several options available for safe spaces during after school hours.

White Plains Youth Bureau

The White Plains Youth Bureau (WPYB) was established 55 years ago and has played a critical role in coordinating and supporting youth development services across the City of White Plains. The Bureau focuses on prevention, early intervention, and positive youth development through partnerships with community-based organizations and targeted programming.

Along with funding youth services through the City's Parks & Recreation, Library, and Community Center, The City of White Plains budget also supports a Youth Bureau. The Youth Bureau was established 53 years ago by the City to provide programs and services for all youth in White Plains. Today the Youth Bureau boasts a highly trained cadre of 17 full time staff and more than 100 part-time staff that work together to offer a comprehensive array of youth development programs. Under the guidance of the Mayor, Common Council, and the Youth Bureau's Executive Director and staff, the Youth Bureau has become the one-stop-shop for youth services in White Plains.

Starting out as a small agency focused on providing young people with jobs to a vibrant organization that provides cutting edge programming, the Youth Bureau has become known for its consistent positive outcomes for youth. The Youth Bureau is determined to represent, support and advocate for the young people of White Plains. Today the Youth Bureau is open 6 days a week – Monday through Saturday – from 9:00am to 8:00pm and provides a seamless transition for youth from home to school to after-school and back home with more than 40+ programs. These programs are offered under 5 departments:

1. Alternatives
2. Afterschool Connection
3. Neighborhood Services
4. Institute for Health & Wellness
5. Youth Employment Services

A key component of the Bureau's programming is Grandpas United (GPU), an innovative initiative that provides mentoring and intergenerational activities for White Plains youth. GPU has tremendous upside, offering a broad range of engagement opportunities that support both prevention and intervention efforts. Through meaningful relationships with older adult mentors, youth benefit from guidance, social-emotional support, and exposure to positive role models. In addition, GPU creates pathways for diversion and career exploration, including vocational opportunities that help youth develop practical skills, workforce readiness, and long-term aspirations.

In addition to the above, the Youth Bureau also offers other programs for older youth, adults/ parents, ad community initiatives (<https://whiteplainsyouthbureau.org>).

Youth Needs Assessment:

The White Plains Youth Bureau Institute for Health & Wellness conducts a Youth Needs Assessment approximately once every 2 years to drive data informed decisions about programming. The White Plains Youth Bureau contracted Pahwa, LLC to develop the survey, analyze the results, and prepare the report. Pahwa, LLC is operated by Dr. Bhavana Pahwa, PhD, who retired as the Deputy Director of the Youth Bureau after 18 years of service. Dr. Pahwa has extensive experience in research and evaluation, has published articles in peer reviewed journals, presented at National, State, and local conferences, and was also the recipient of the SAMHSA Service to Science Award.

The needs assessment focuses on collecting data around the risk and protective factors impacting youth in White Plains. Youth survey items covered basic demographic information, health & wellness, ATAOD use and attitudes, and out of school time

activities. Youth survey data collected was then exported and analyzed using the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)* software. The survey was administered during school hours to youth in 8th Grade, 10th, 12th grades only. Administration of the survey for the grades facilitated data comparison with previously administered surveys.

After cleaning the data for unusable surveys, a total of 385 middle school and 230 high school surveys were used for the final report. Since the survey was voluntary, youth did not respond to all the questions in the survey. Data is reported as the percentage for the valid responses for that specific question. This needs assessment is not a scientific survey; therefore, interpretation of the results is for general guidance only. Generalizability of the results to the total youth population may not be always applicable.

RESULTS

Demographics: Total 615 youth responded to the survey. Of these, 385 were 8th Grade graders and 230 were high school youth in 10th (n=129) and 12th (n=101) grades respectively. The survey results are overrepresented by Hispanic youth with approximately 48% responding to the survey. There were more middle school youth who responded to the survey (385) as opposed to high school (230). The remaining results will therefore report separately for middle school and high school – Tables 1-3.

Table 1

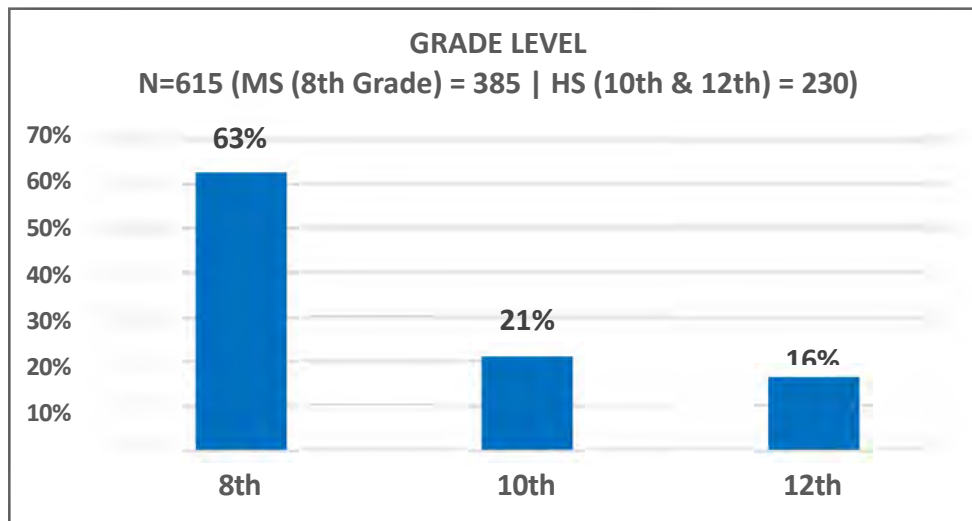


Table 2

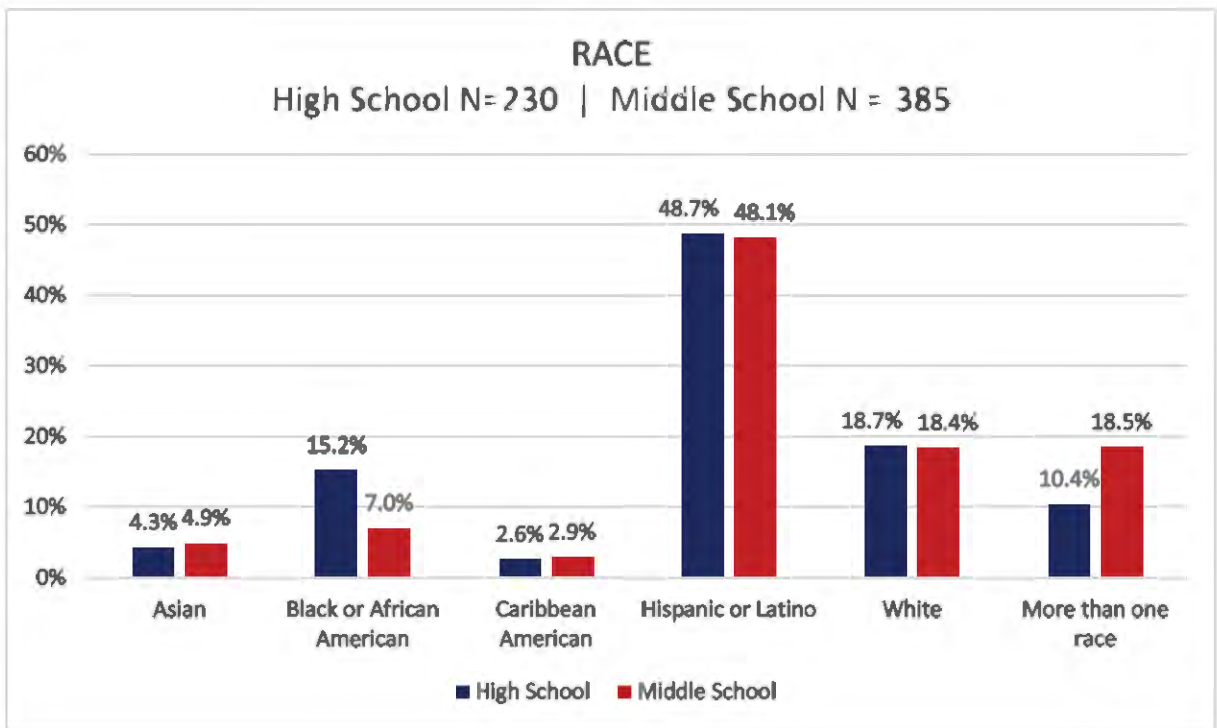
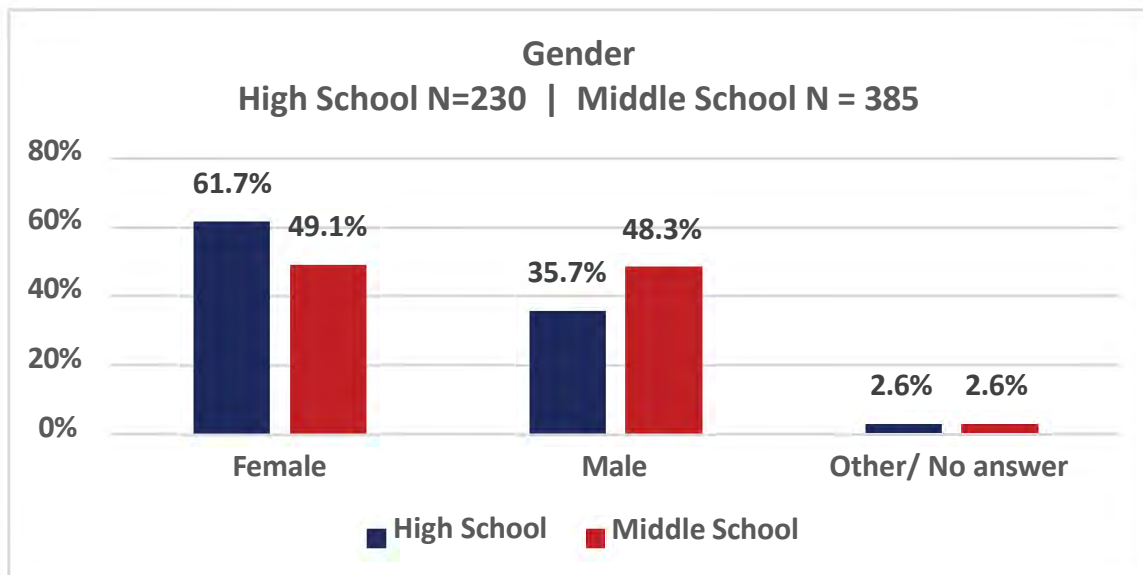


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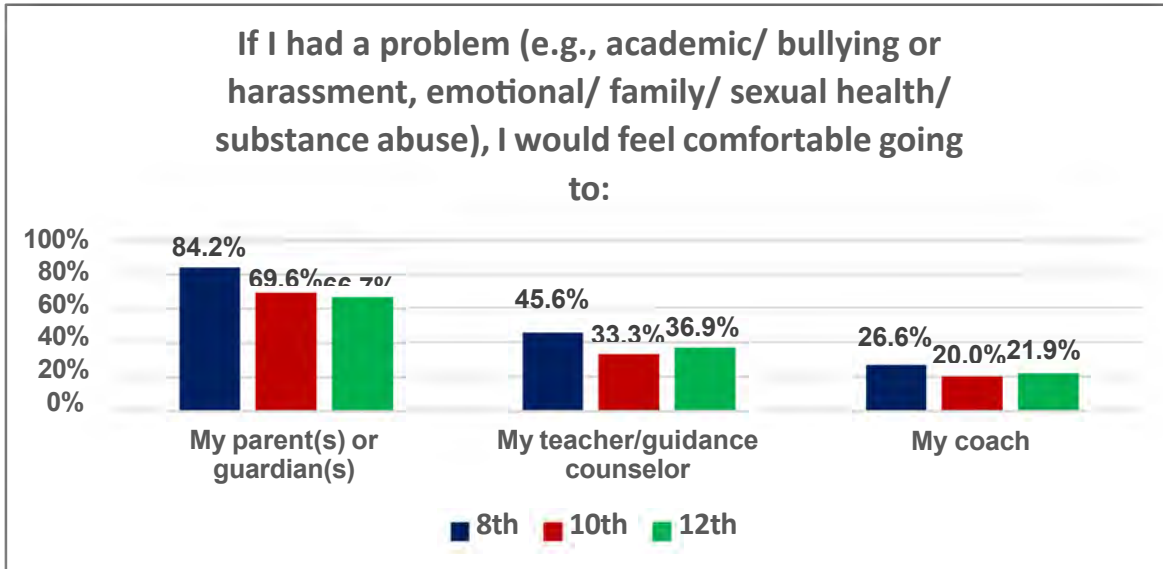


Relationship With Adults:

Majority of youth said they felt most comfortable talking to their parents / guardians if they had a problem. Youth in both middle school and high school reported feeling more comfortable talking to school teachers/ counselors compared to their school coaches. This trend is different when compared to the previous youth survey conducted in 2022,

where youth reported they felt most comfortable talking with a school teacher/ counselor (59% in 2022 compared to only approx. 39% in 2025) – Table 4.

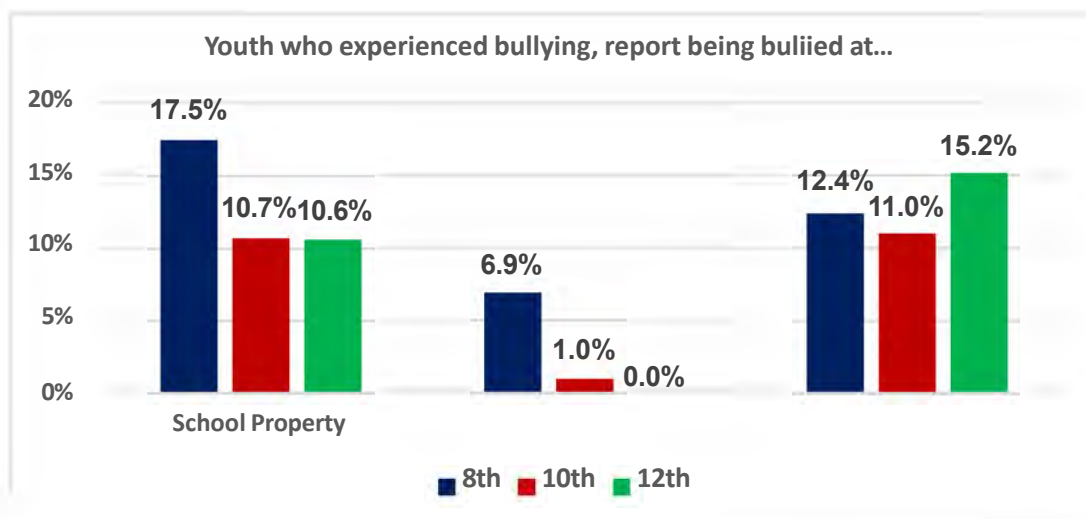
Table 4



Bullying:

The majority of 8th grade youth reported experiencing bullying in school (17.5%) followed by electronic/ online/ texting (12.4%). 12th grade youth reported being bullied electronically/ online/by text with the greatest frequency (15.2%) followed by on school property (10.6%). 10th graders reported bullying at approx. the same rate both on school property and online (10.7%-11%). This is somewhat different from the youth reports in 2022 where high school 12th graders reported being bullied on school property and online at about the same rate (13.4% and 12.4% respectively) – Table 5.

Table 5



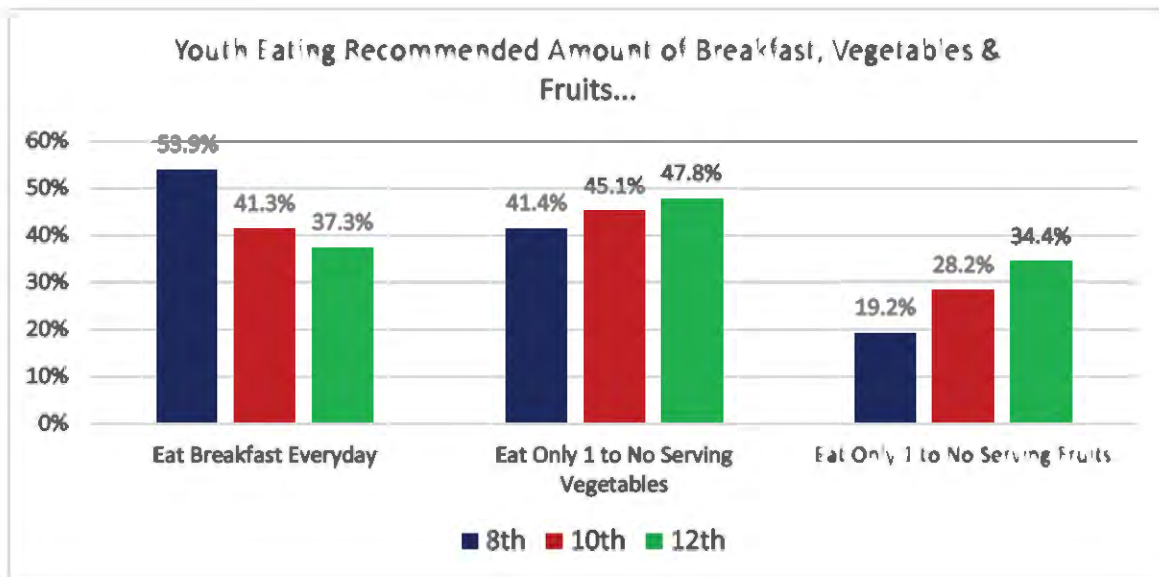
Health & Wellness:

The CDC recommends that children eat a nutritious breakfast every morning and consume the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables every day. The CDC also recommends all teens ages 13 yrs. – 18 yrs. eat at least 1-1/2 servings of fruits and at least 2-3 servings of vegetables every day.

Nearly 46% of 8th grade youth surveyed in 2022 said they ate breakfast every day. This has increased slightly in 2025 with approximately 54% of 8th graders saying they ate breakfast every day. For high school youth the rates have remained the same.

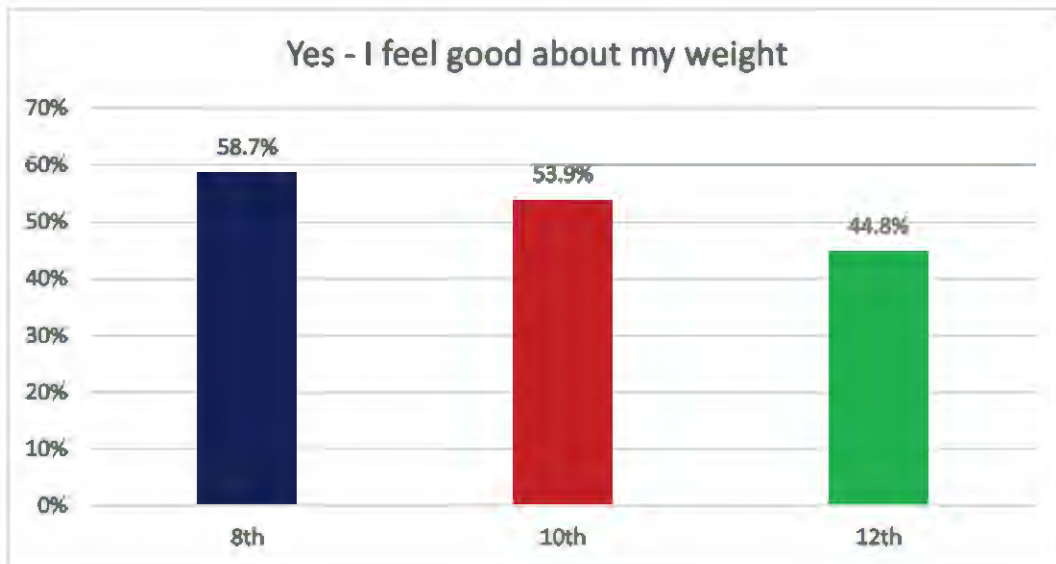
In 2022, nearly half of the youth surveyed reported eating the required servings of fruits every day and less than half got only 1 serving of vegetables each day. In 2025, this number had increased with more than 50% of 8th – 12th grade youth reporting getting 2 or more servings of vegetables and approx. 58% or more getting the required servings of fruits (Table 6).

Table 6



Slightly more middle school youth reported feeling good about their weight in 2025 compared to 2022 (59% in 2025 compared to 54% 2022). The same applied to 10th graders (50% in 2022 compared to 54% in 2025). Twelfth graders reported feeling good about their weight at a lower rate (45%) in 2025 compared to 12th graders in 2022 (53%). Since the number of youth responding to the survey was low, this data may not be generalizable to the population.

Table 7



The CDC also recommends that children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. In White Plains, Less than half of the youth meet these criteria (Table 8).

Table 8

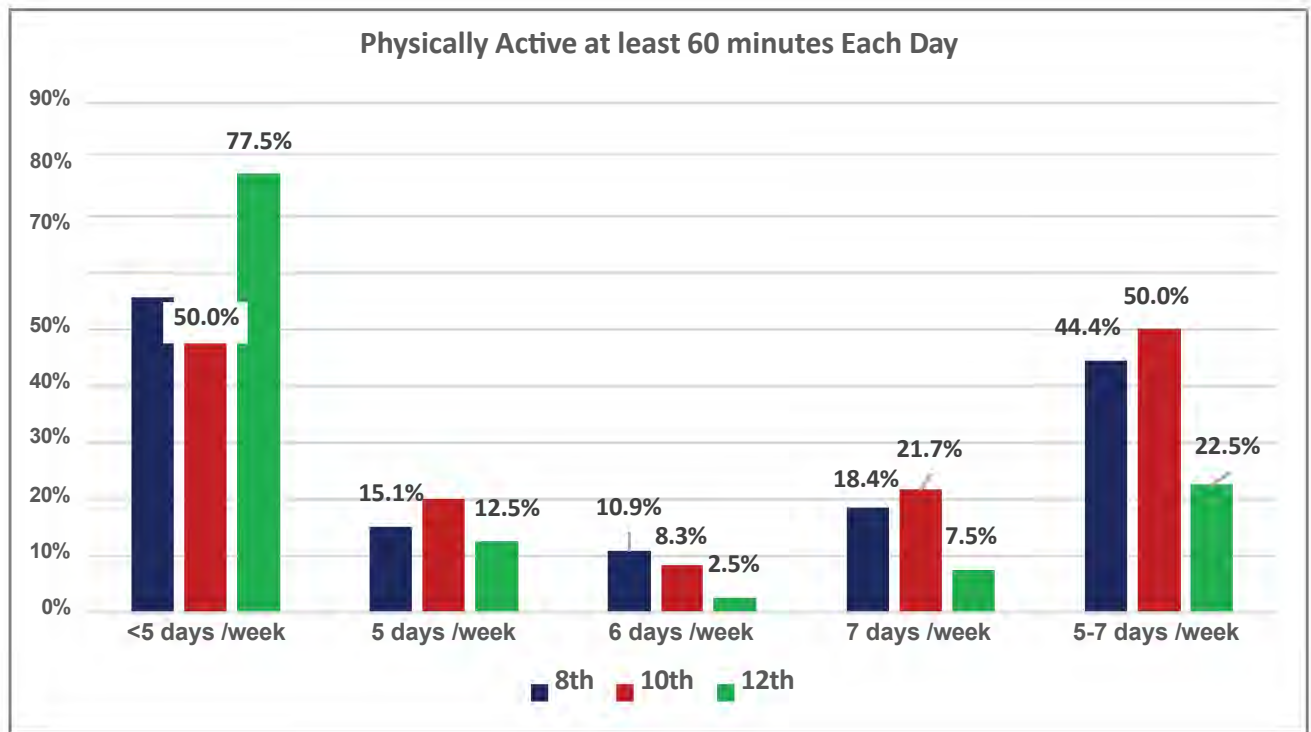


Table 9

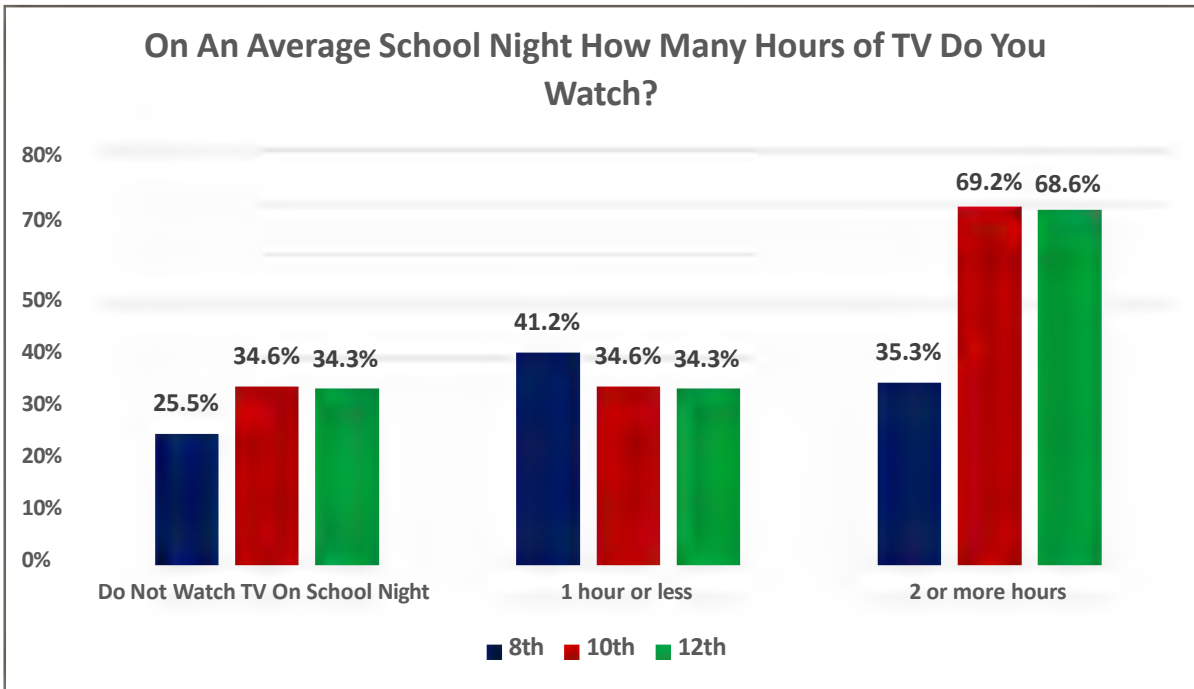


Table 10

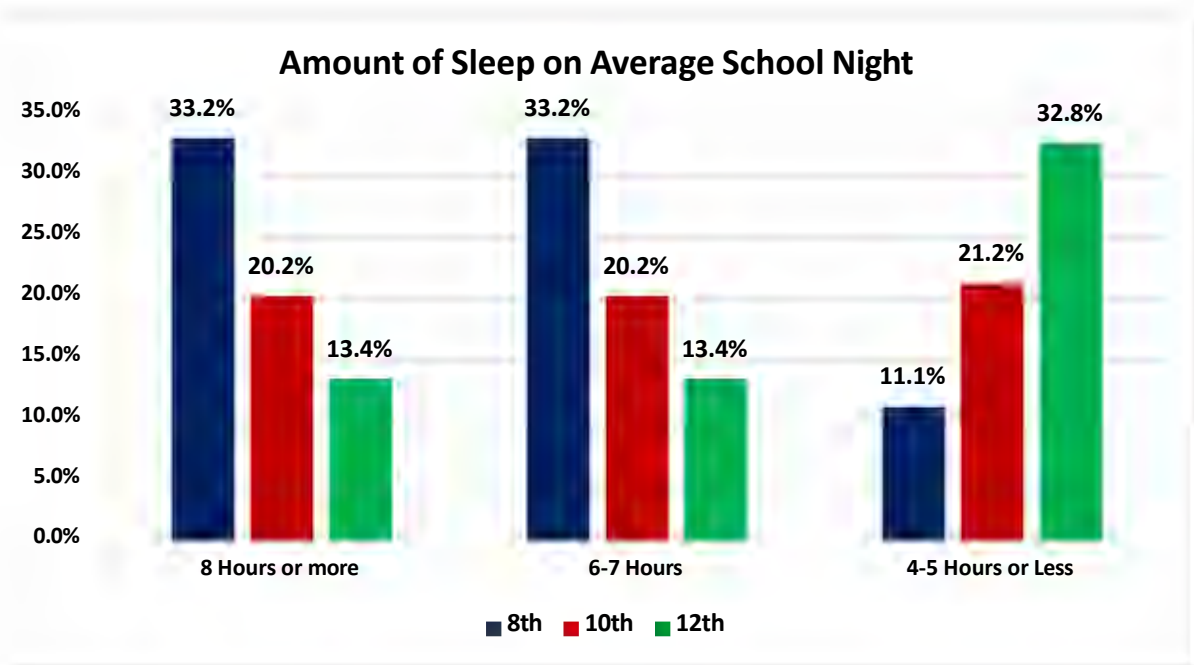
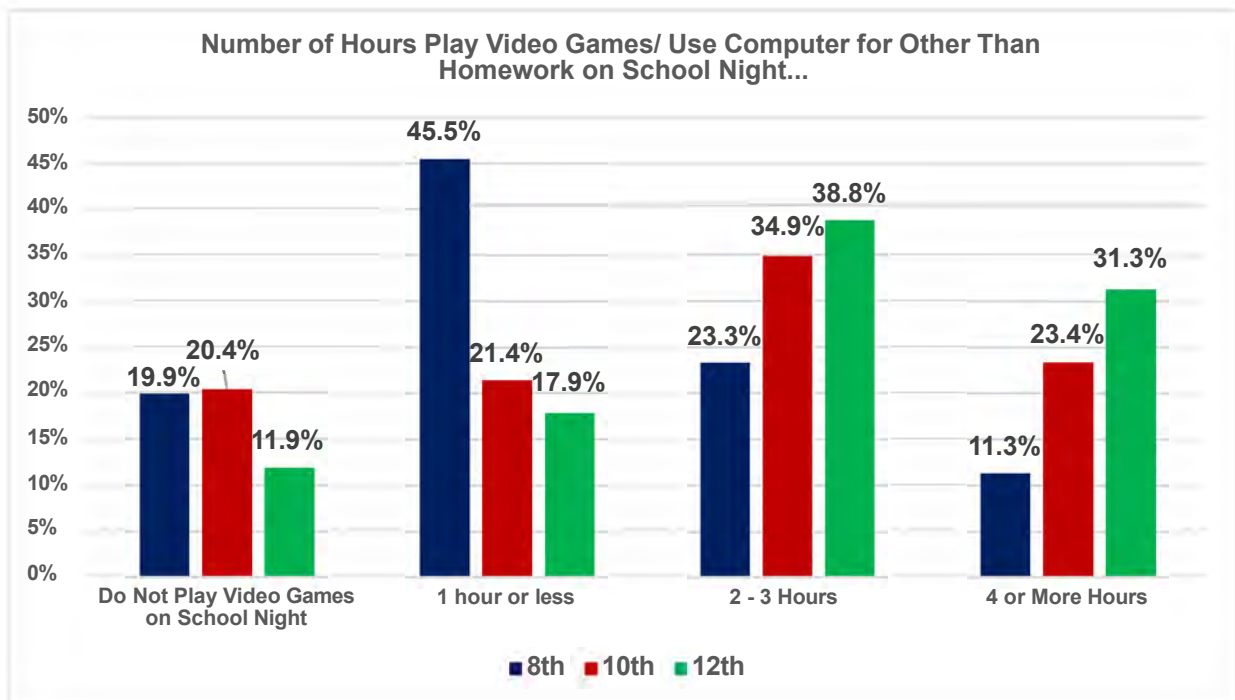


Table 11



Substance Abuse – 4 Core Measures:

For substance abuse, the "4 Core Measures" often refers to key outcome indicators used in prevention, focusing on youth substance use (past 30-day use), perception of risk, and perceptions of parental and peer disapproval. These are widely used to assess community-level prevention efforts for youth:

1. 30-Day Use: Percentage of youth using substances in the past month (e.g., alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs).
2. Perception of Risk: Youth's view on how risky substance use is.
3. Perception of Parental Disapproval: How much youth think their parents would disapprove of substance use.
4. Perception of Peer Disapproval: How much youth think their friends would disapprove of substance use.

The following tables provides response data for the current survey administration followed by trend comparison tables with previously administered survey in 2022.

Results indicate low rates of past 30-day use of substances. Alcohol does seem to have the most widespread use (although still low). Twelfth grade youth report the highest past 30-day use of alcohol with 14% saying they had consumed alcohol. Data indicates that as youth transition to higher grades, usage of illicit substances seem to increase.

However, there is lower past 30-day use of alcohol in 2025 compared to 2022 (table 12A). Past 30-day use for 10th and 12 graders of alcohol is lower in White Plains compared to national rates as reported by NIDA (<https://drugabusestatistics.org/teen-drug-use/#new-york>). According to NIDA reports 11.3% and 21.7% of 10th and 12th graders report using alcohol in the past month nationally compared to White Plains where 4.5% 10th graders and 13.8% 12th graders report using alcohol in the past month. In White Plains more 8th graders (6.6%) are reporting having used alcohol in the past month compared to nationally (4.9%).

Other important indicators for substance use are youth perception of how harmful substances are and also their perception of how disapproving their friends and parents would be if they were to use these illicit substances. Research has shown that kids under 21 years of age still consider their parents as the primary source for information about drugs and alcohol.

According to current survey results, perception of harm is fairly low (tables 13 and 13A-C). we also notice that as youth rise up in grade level, the reception of harm goes down. This is borne out by the past 30-day use which also increases as youth go from 8th to 12 grades.

Perception of peer and parental disapproval rates remain low with only 71% of 8th grade youth reporting that their peers would consider it “very wrong” to drink alcohol and only 85% of youth reporting a=that their parents would think it was “very wrong to drink alcohol. These percentages ae lower as the youth transition to higher grades (tables 14, 14A-C, 15, 15 A-C).

Table 12 – PAST 30-DAY NO USE

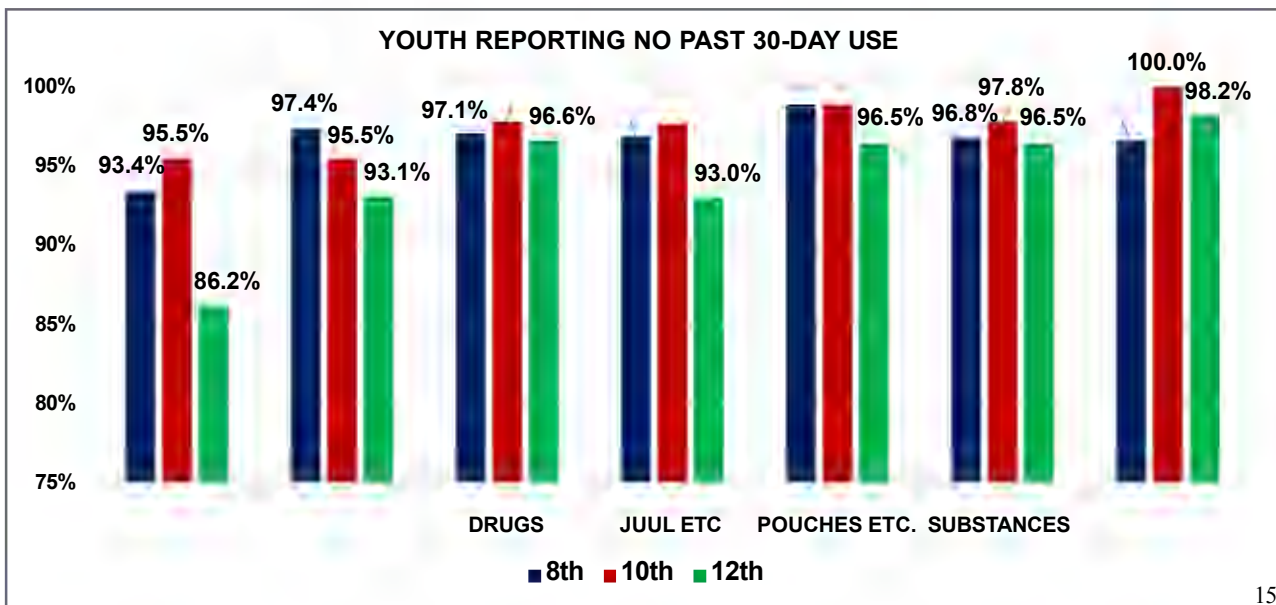
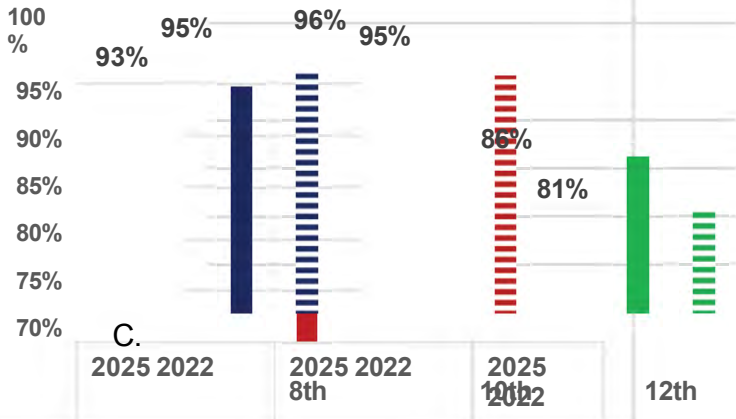


Table 12A – F – PAST 30 DAY – YOUTH REPORTING NO USE... – TREND 2025/ 2022

E.

ALCOHOL

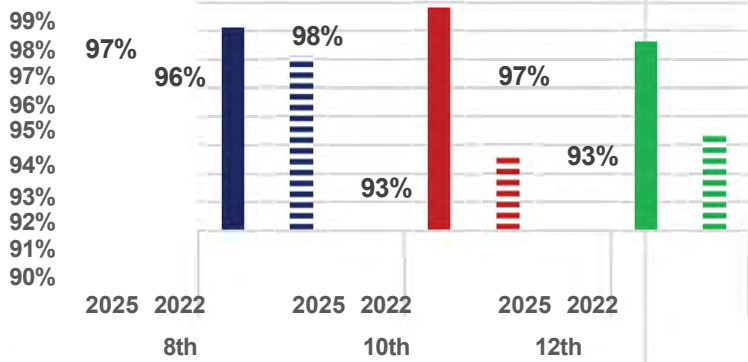


B.

D.

8th 10th 12th

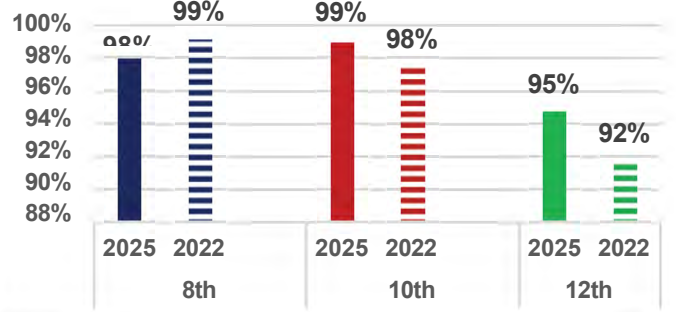
PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



E.

F.

Youth Reporting No Binge Drinking



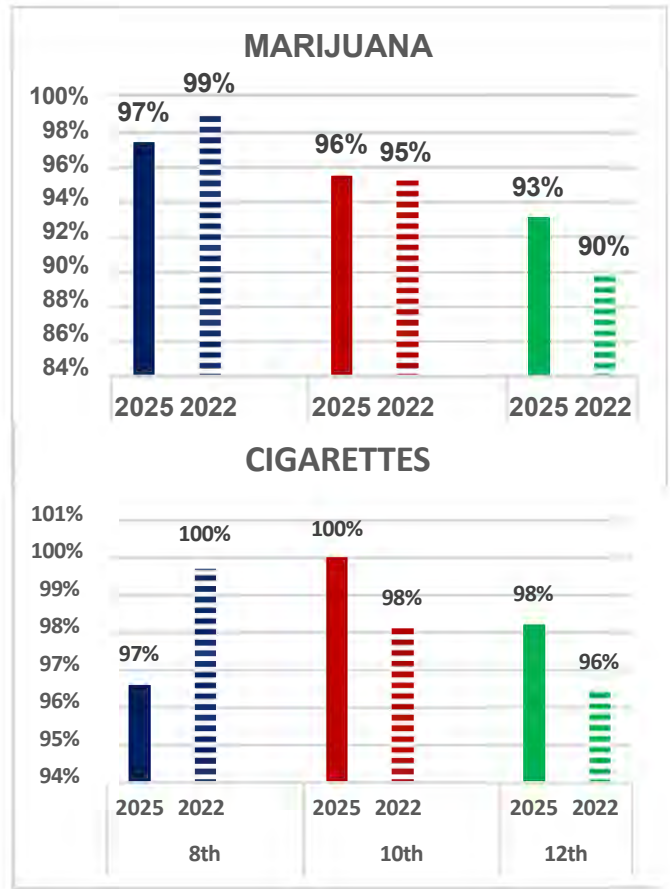
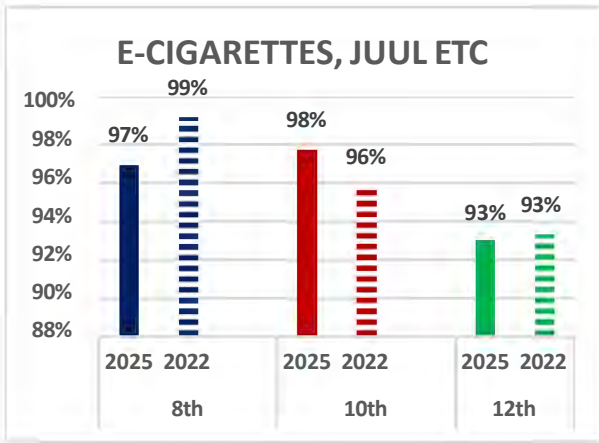


Table 13 – Perception of Harm - SELF

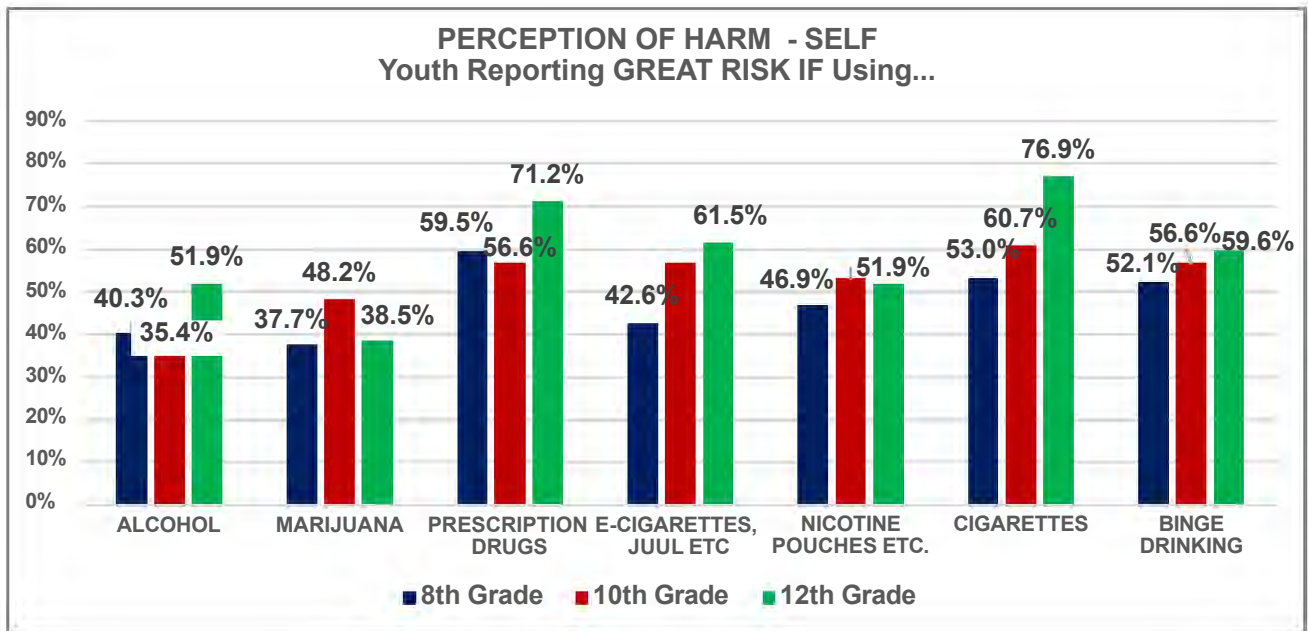


Table 13A - C – Perception of Harm – SELF – TREND 2025/2022 A.

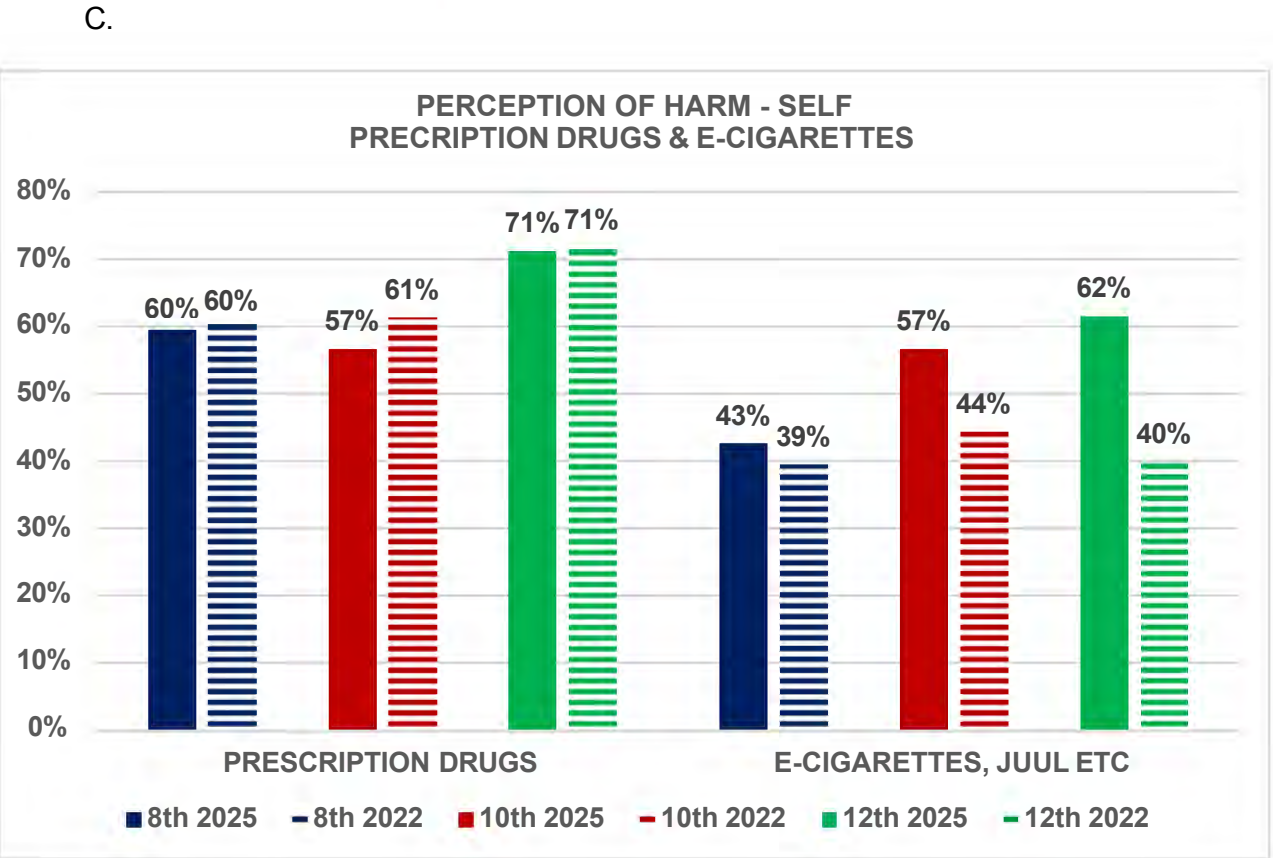
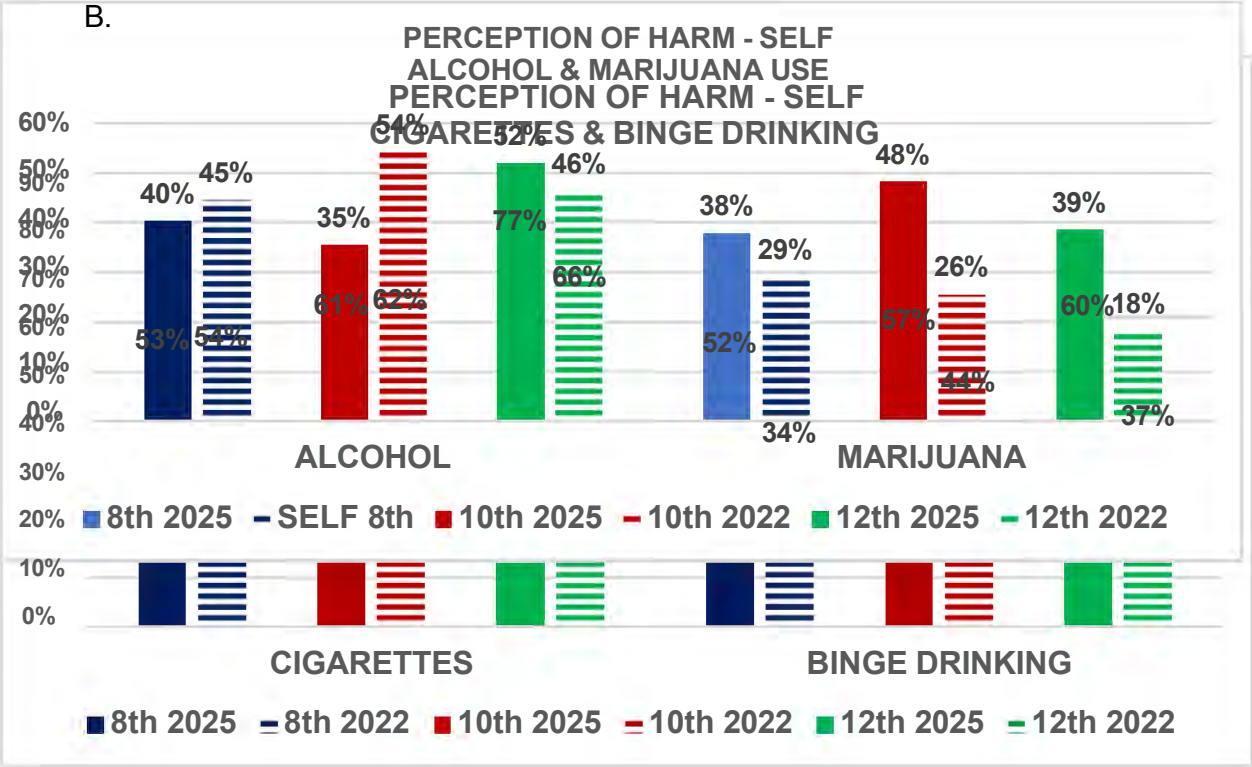
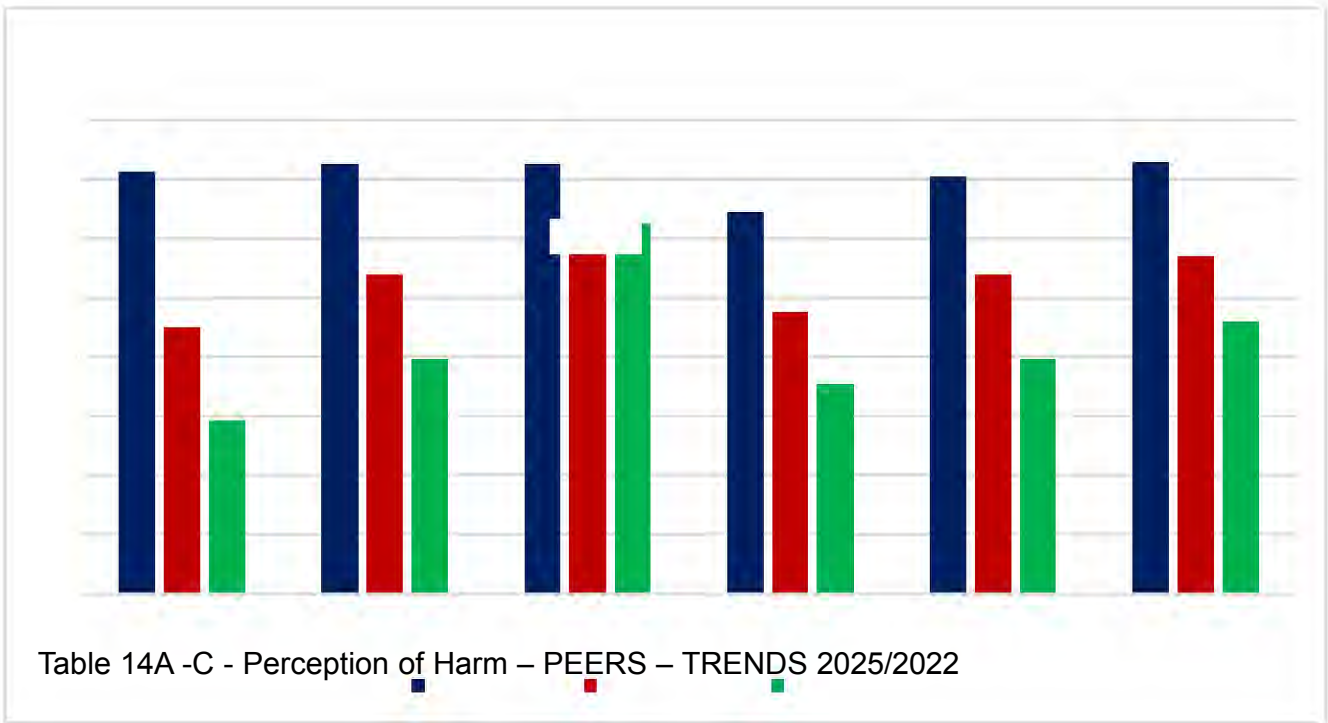
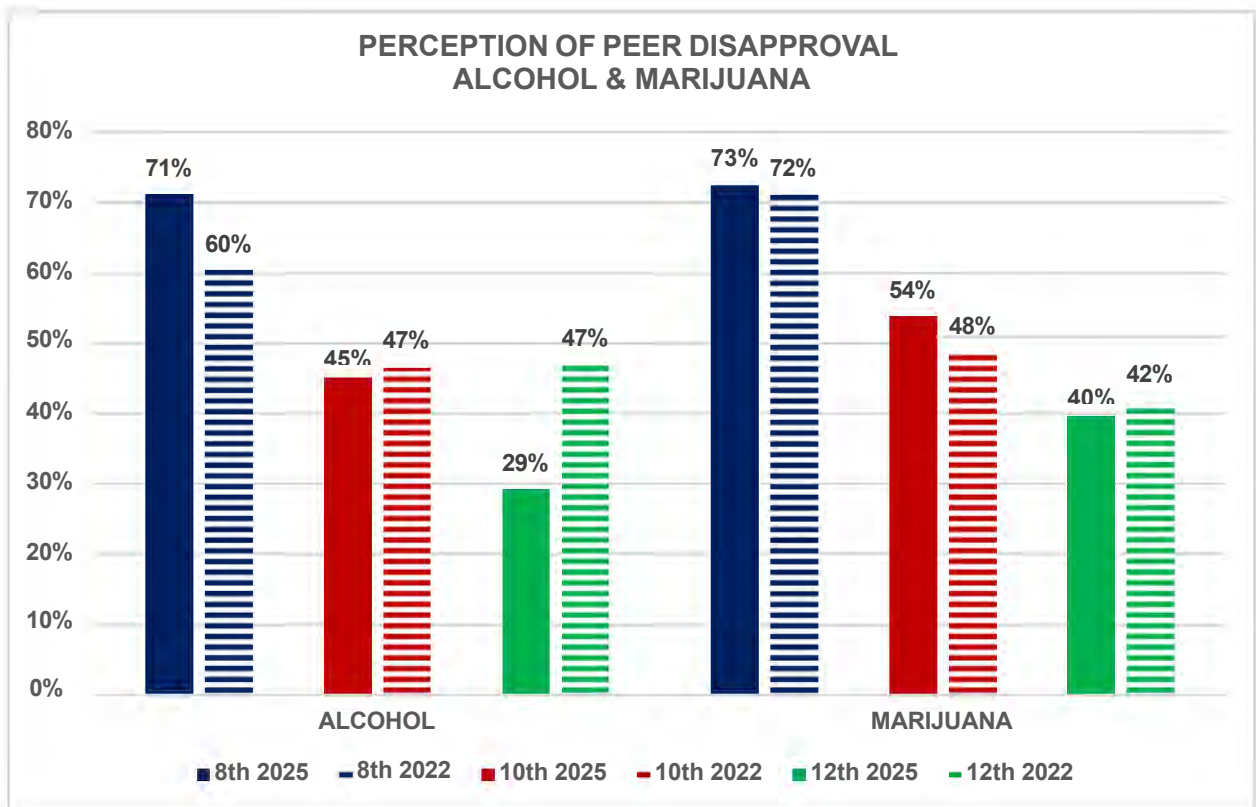


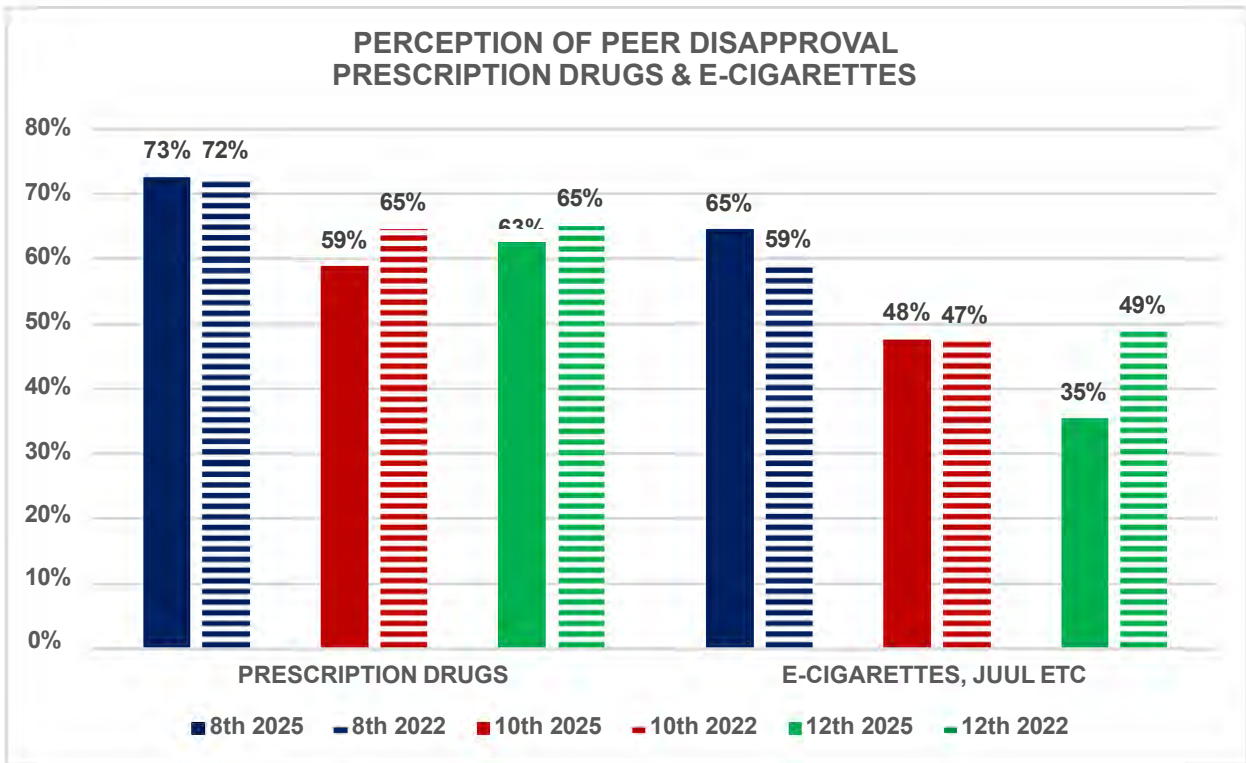
Table 14 - Perception of Harm – PEERS



A.



B.



C.

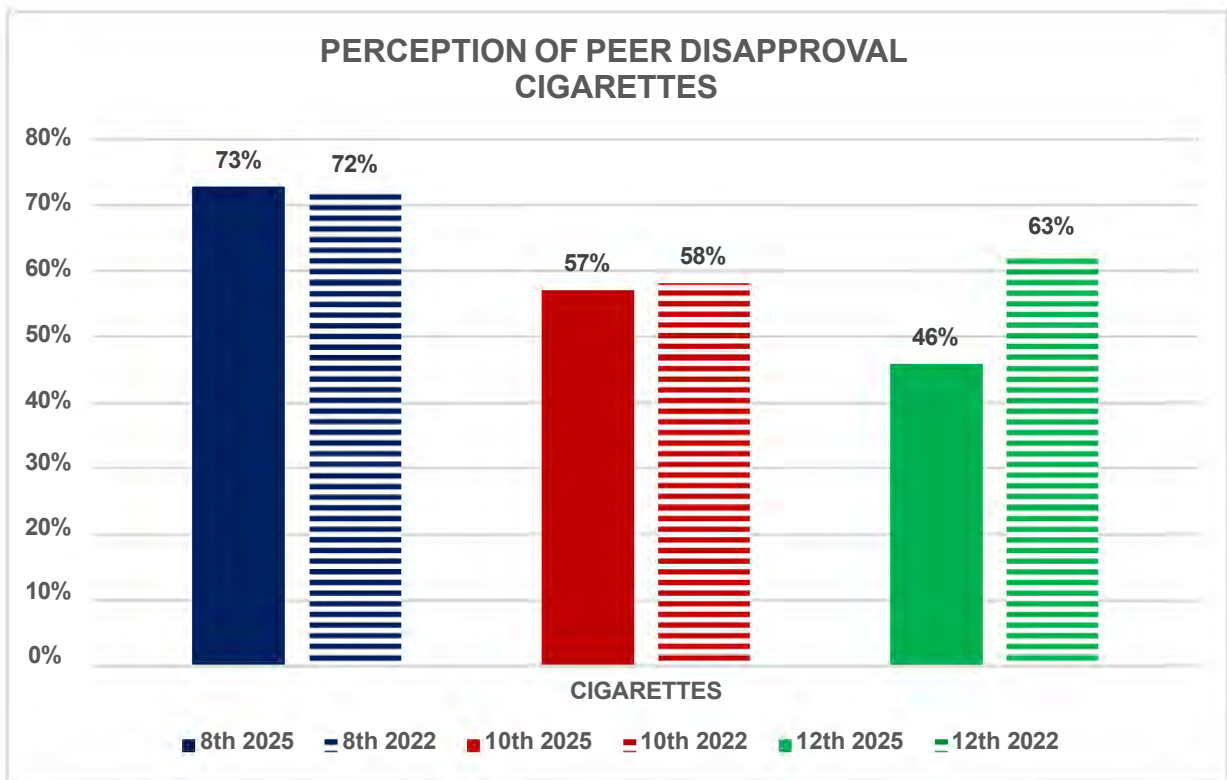
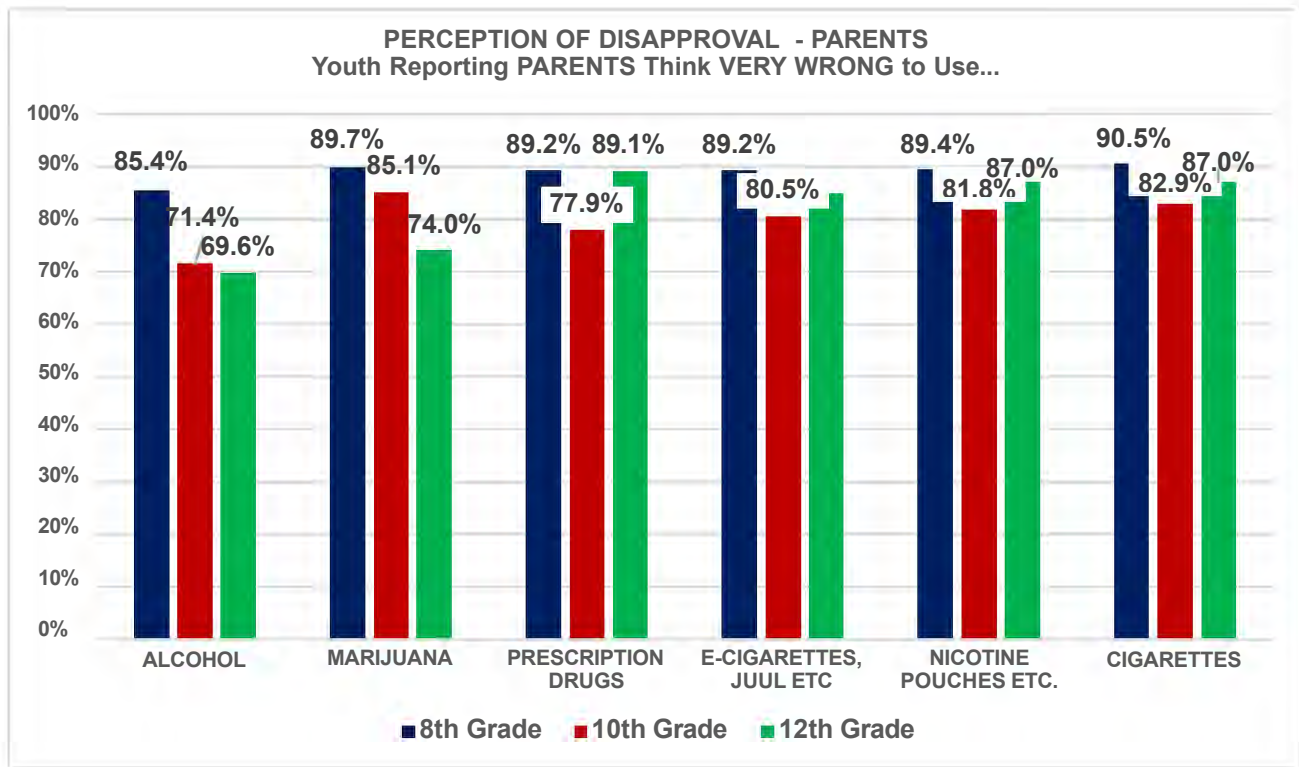
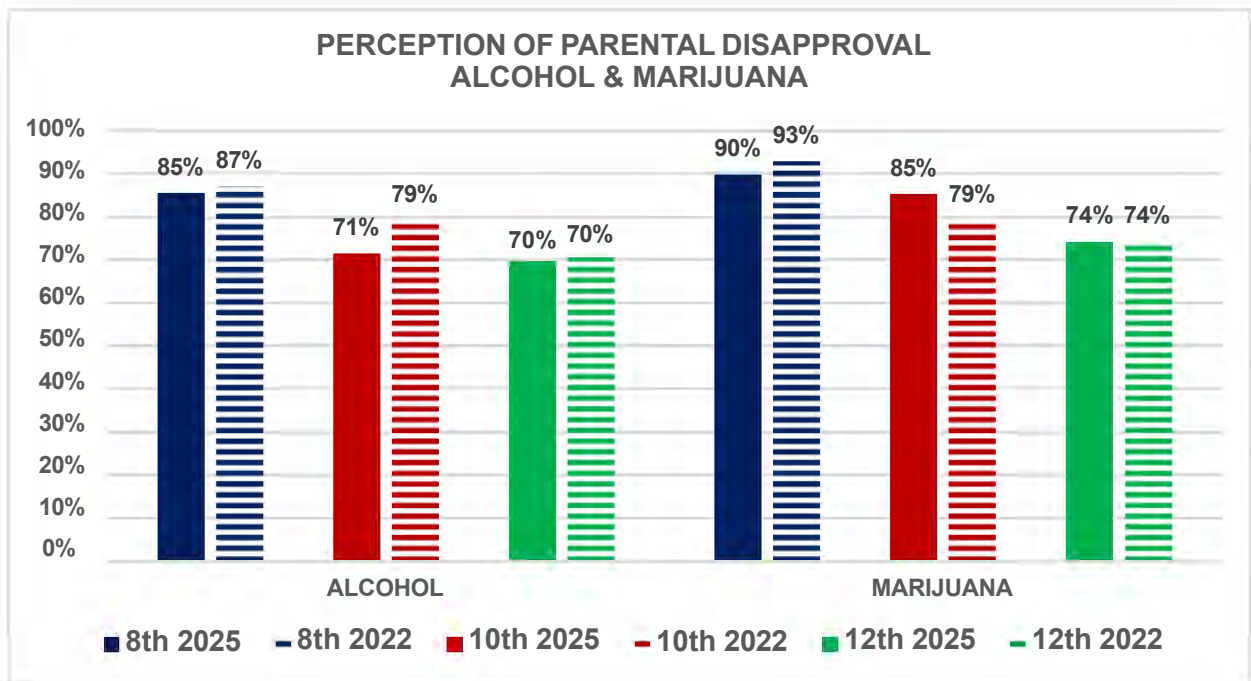


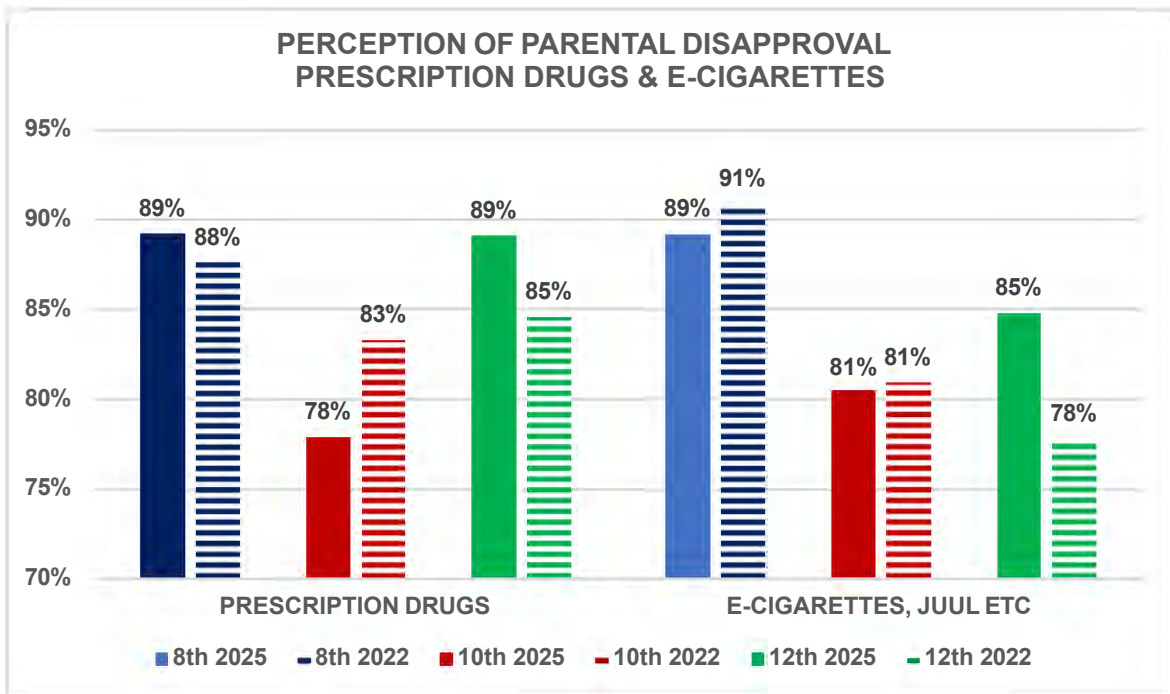
Table 15 - Perception of Disapproval - PARENTS



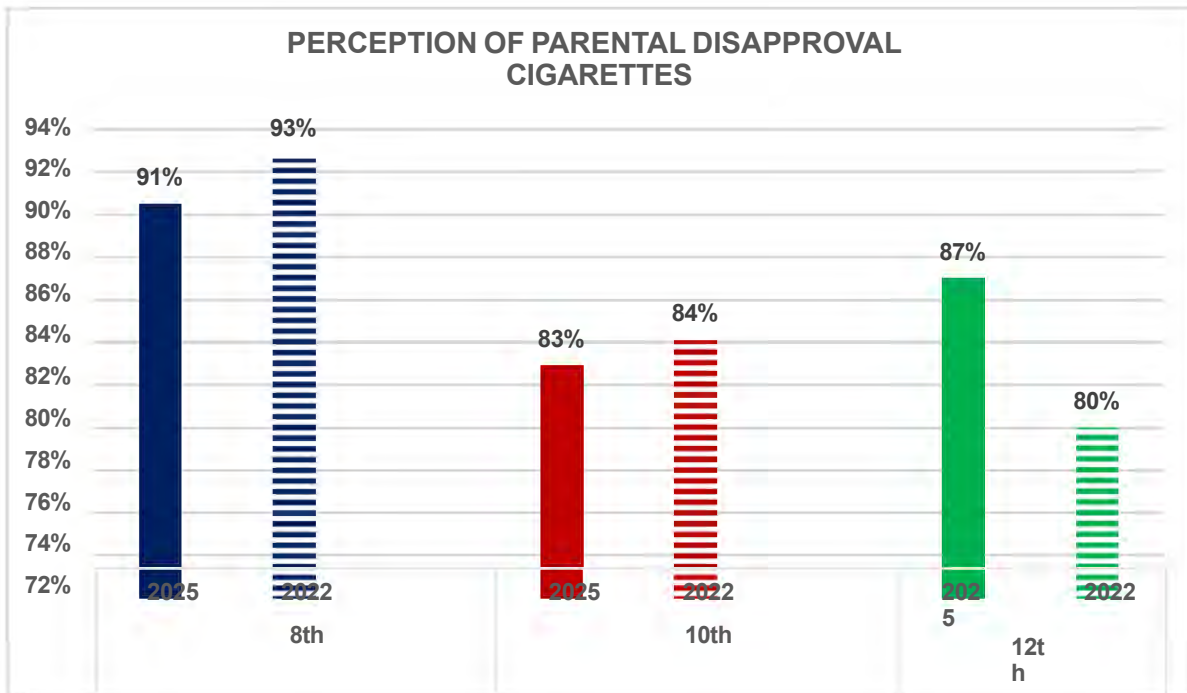
A.



B.



C.



Easy access to illicit substances is another risk factor that predict youth substance abuse. Data from the 2024 [Monitoring the Future study](#) provides insights into how easily adolescents believe they can obtain substances:

- Alcohol: Although alcohol use is at a record low, a substantial majority of older teens still perceive it as easy to get.
 - 74% of 12th graders reported it would be "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get alcohol.
 - 51% of 10th graders and 40% of 8th graders reported the same.
 - On a positive note, perceived ease of access to alcohol decreased significantly among 10th and 12th graders from 2023 to 2024.
- Marijuana: Marijuana is also widely considered accessible, especially among older high school youth.
 - 65% of 12th graders reported it would be "very easy" or "fairly easy" to get.
 - Other Illicit Drugs: Perceived availability for other harder drugs among 12th graders in 2024 was lower: Cocaine powder: 9%; Heroin: 9%; Crystal methamphetamine: 6%

In White Plains, the youth reports are similar to those reported in the national Monitoring the Future Study with 68% - 74% high school youth reporting it is easy to get alcohol, 64%-65% high school youth reporting it would be easy to get marijuana.

Mixed messages about the safety of marijuana use both for medicinal and recreational use has further muddied the waters for youth. Youth report being confused about who to believe when both recreational use and medicinal use of marijuana have been legalized for adults in NY and across many states in the USA. According to the NYS Comptroller's Office, White Plains has 4 cannabis dispensaries selling adult cannabis products for recreational use. White Plains revenue for 3 months (Sept. - Nov. 2024) from Cannabis sales was \$4.1 million.

It is alarming to note that high school youth also report much higher rates for being able to get harder drugs like heroin, crack etc. (Table 16B).

Table 16A – AVAILABILITY OF ILLICIT SUBSTANCES

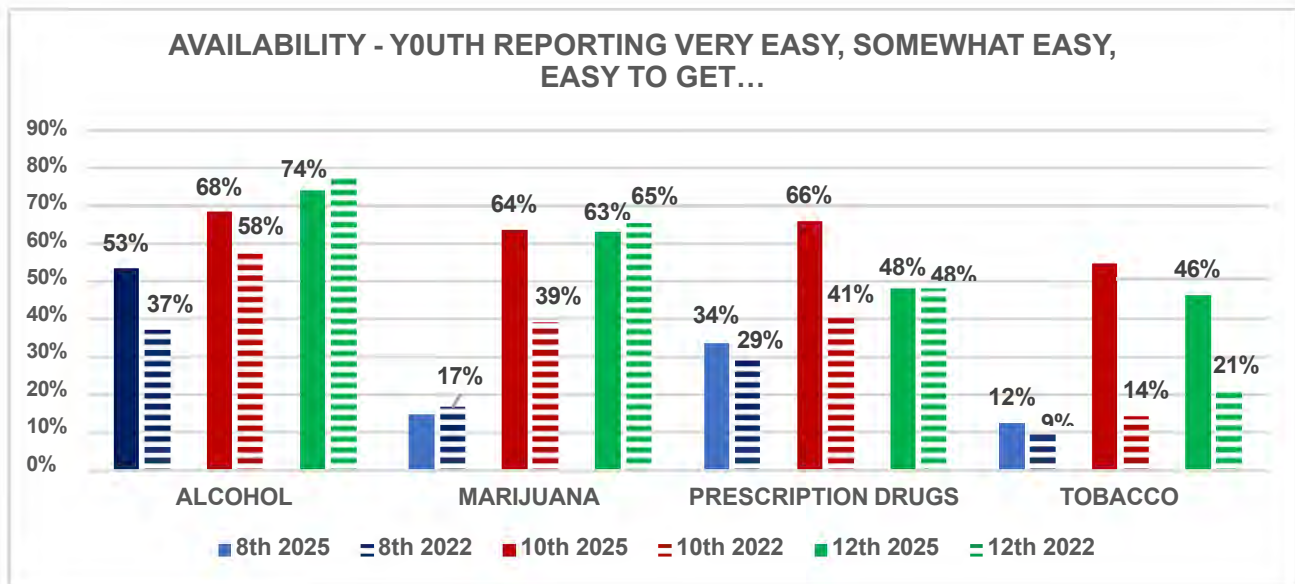
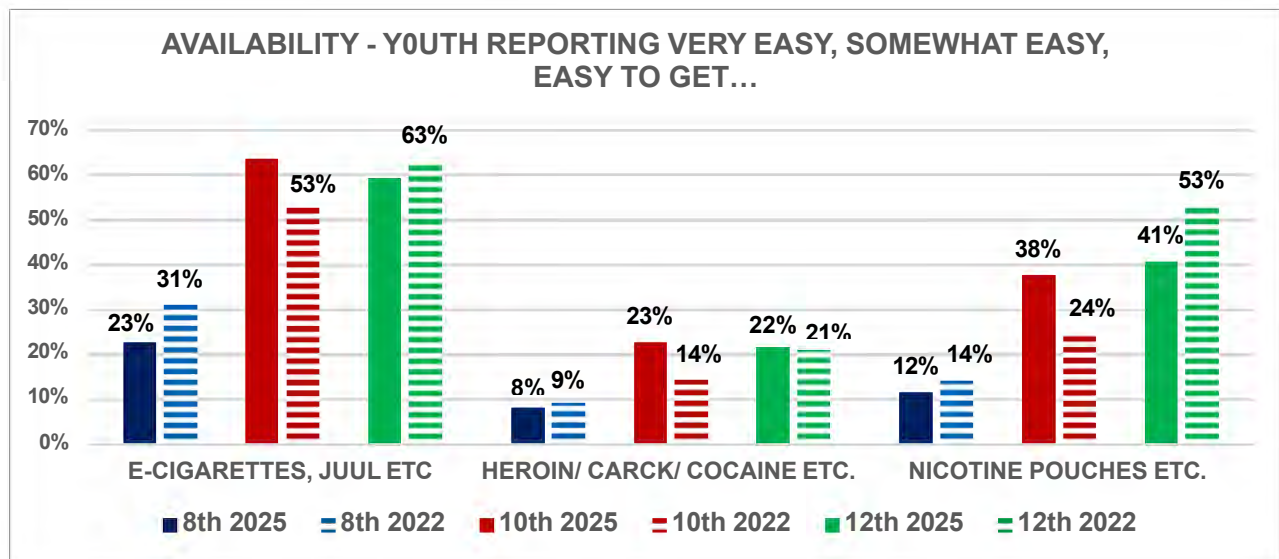


Table 16B – AVAILABILITY OF ILLICIT SUBSTANCES



Parental Monitoring: Effective parental monitoring acts as a significant protective factor against various health risks and negative behaviors in adolescents. Youth reports from 2024 and related studies show generally high parental monitoring (around 86% of teens say parents know who they're with), linked to *less* risky behavior (sex, substance use, driving), though gaps exist, especially online where increased digital risks require more parental skill and awareness. Effective monitoring goes beyond knowing locations; clear communication about expectations and disapproval of risky behavior significantly reduces teen engagement in those activities, say [CDC researchers](#).

- High Overall Monitoring ([CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#)): Around 86% of youth report their parents usually or always know their whereabouts and who they are with.
- Gender Differences: ([AAP News, 2023](#)) 89% of females and 84% of males reported high parental monitoring in a major study.
- Ethnic Differences: ([AAP News, 2023](#)) Asian teens showed the highest monitoring (91%), while Black teens reported lower rates (80%).
- Digital Supervision: A March 2024 ([Thorn \(2024 Data\)](#)) report noted a tension between teens' desire for independence and parental rights to supervise online, with ongoing strategies needed.
- Youth Online Risks ([Kantar/Google \(2024 Study\)](#)): A Thorn report found alarming online risks, with 33% of younger boys (9-12) reporting harmful online sexual interactions, and 59% feeling bullied online.

Table 17

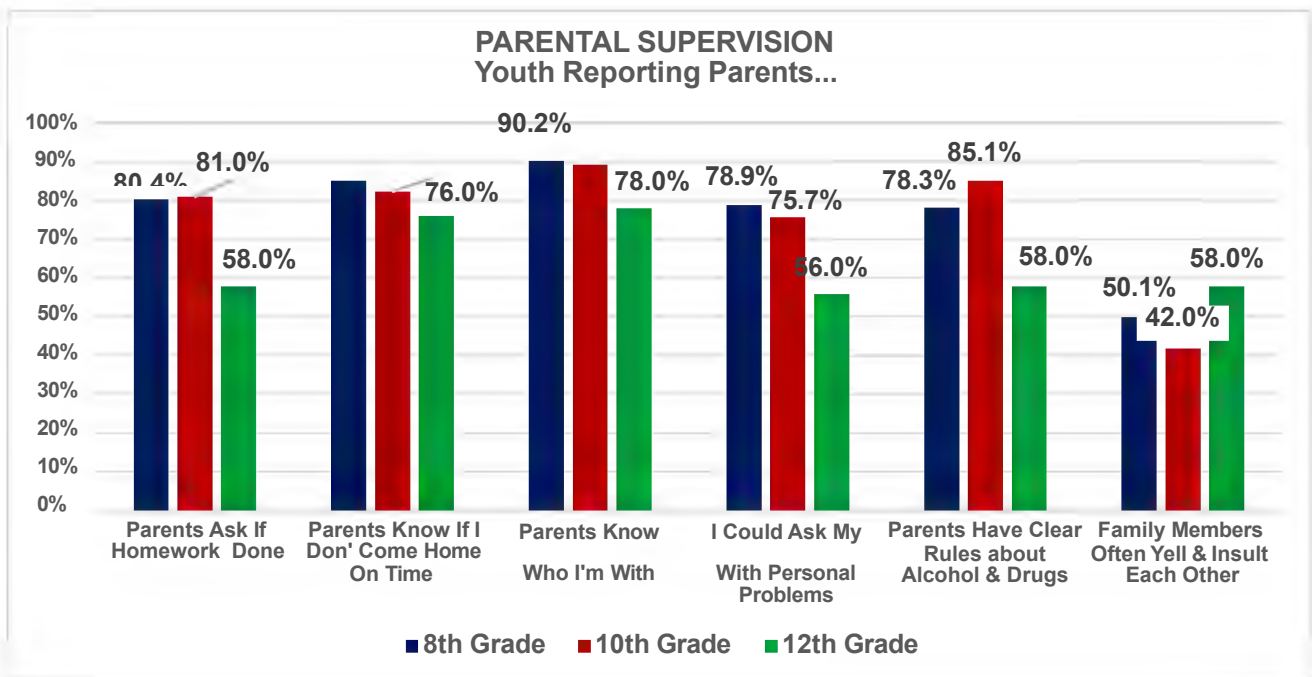


Table 17 shows youth perception of parental monitoring in White Plains. These reports are somewhat lower than national rates. Of significance is the low levels of clear rules regarding ATOAD use by parents (only 58% of 12th graders think their parents have clear rules about alcohol and drug use.)

Mental Health / Stress: Statistics show a significant portion of U.S. youth experience stress, with recent CDC data (2023) indicating nearly 1 in 3 high school youth (29%) reported poor mental health (including stress, anxiety, depression) in the past 30 days,

a figure consistent with 2021 data. Other findings show high rates of persistent sadness/hopelessness (40%), and disproportionately higher stress reported by female and LGBTQ+ youth, highlighting a widespread mental health challenge.

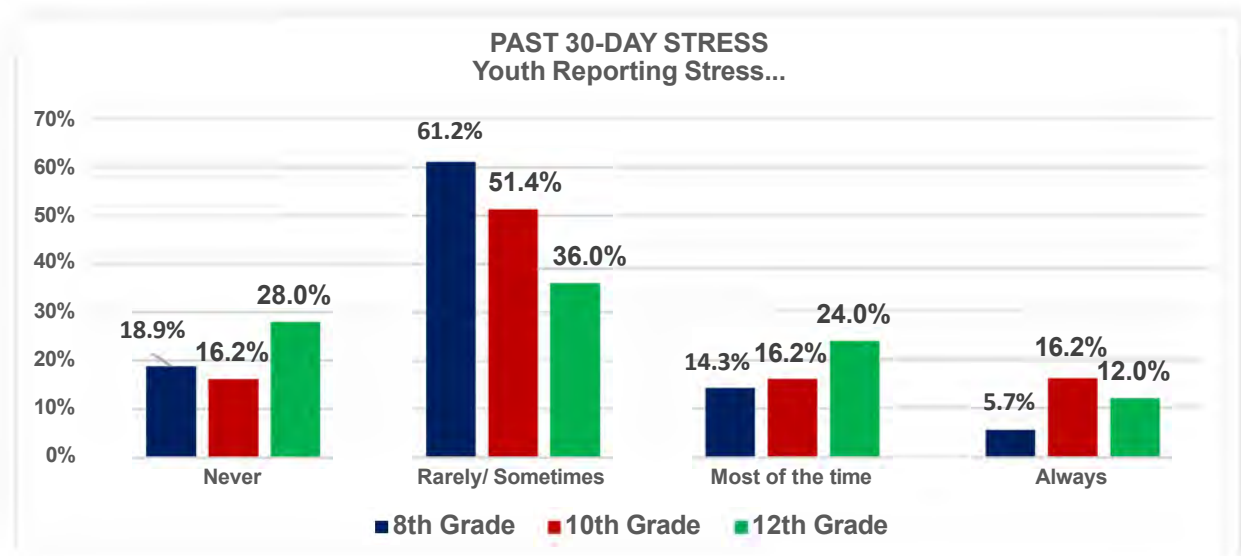
Key Statistics (Past 30 Days/Recent):

- Poor Mental Health: 29% of U.S. high school youth reported their mental health was not good most or all of the time in the past 30 days (2023).
- Sadness/Hopelessness: About 40% of youth experienced persistent sadness or hopelessness in the past year.
- Anxiety Symptoms: Around 20% of adolescents (ages 12-17) reported anxiety symptoms in the past two weeks (2022-2023).
- Environmental Stressors: 15% of teens reported neighborhood violence, and 8.7% missed school in a 30-day period due to gun violence concerns.

Disparities & High-Risk Groups:

- Gender: Female youth report significantly higher rates of poor mental health, sadness, and suicidal ideation compared to male youth.
- LGBTQ+ Youth: 53% of LGBTQ+ high schoolers experienced poor mental health in the past 30 days (2023), with high rates of sadness/hopelessness (65%).
- Socioeconomic: Teens in low-income households face higher risks for mental health issues.

Table 18



Common Stressors:

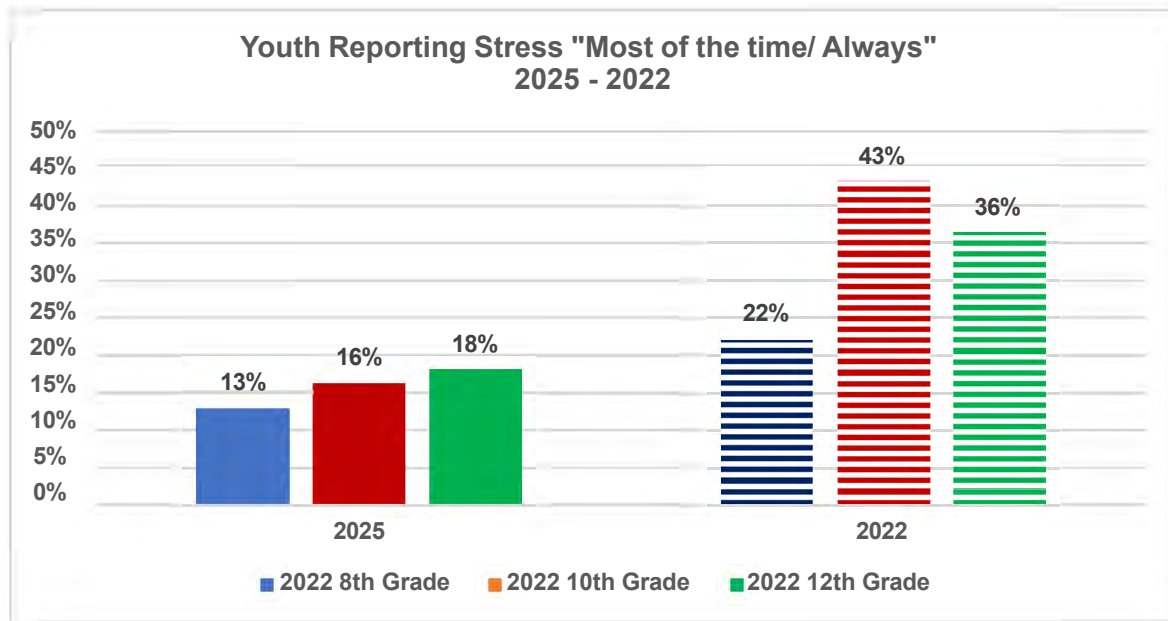
- Academic Pressure: 68% of teens feel pressure to get good grades.

- Social Pressure: 41% feel pressure to fit in, and teen girls report high pressure to look good.
- **Sleep Deprivation:** A significant number of teens lack sufficient sleep, which exacerbates stress.

These statistics from sources like the CDC, NAMI, and APA show that stress is a prevalent issue for today's youth, affecting nearly one in three high schoolers in recent times.

Approximately 32% - 36% (10th & 12th grade respectively) of White Plains high school youth report feeling stress “most of the time”- “always”. This is higher than national rates cited above. This a little lower than what was reported in 2022 (Table18A)

Table 18A



Youth experiencing stress and anxiety often show symptoms like poor concentration, irritability, social withdrawal, sleep problems, and academic decline, with significant percentages of teens (around 30%) having anxiety disorders that impair school, friendships, and daily functioning, a problem intensified post-pandemic, leading to avoidance, lower well-being, and increased unhealthy coping urges.

Common Signs of Anxiety Interfering with Daily Life:

- Cognitive: Trouble focusing, excessive worry, self-consciousness, perfectionism.
- Behavioral: Avoiding school/social events, seeking constant reassurance, irritability, procrastination, withdrawal from activities.
- Physical: Headaches, stomachaches, sleep issues (insomnia/oversleeping).

- Academic: Drop in grades, difficulty with homework, school refusal, poor memory.
- Social: Social anxiety, difficulty making/keeping friends, isolation.
- Emotional: Increased sadness, anger, fatigue, lower happiness.

Prevalence & Impact:

- About 1 in 3 adolescents (13-18) experience an anxiety disorder, affecting school, work, and relationships.
- Anxiety can reduce quality of life and lead to disability.
- High anxiety in teens correlates with less recreational activity, fewer conversations, and higher urges for smoking/eating.

When to Seek Help (Concerns arise when anxiety is):

- Frequent: Every day or most days.
- Intense: Severe and debilitating.
- Persistent: Lasts for an extended period (e.g., 6 months or more).

Factors & Trends:

- Schoolwork is a major stressor for many youth.
- Anxiety interfering with daily life has increased in youth since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In White Plains, youth report of persistent anxiety that interferes with school or daily activities is a lower level (tables 19 and 19A).

Table 19

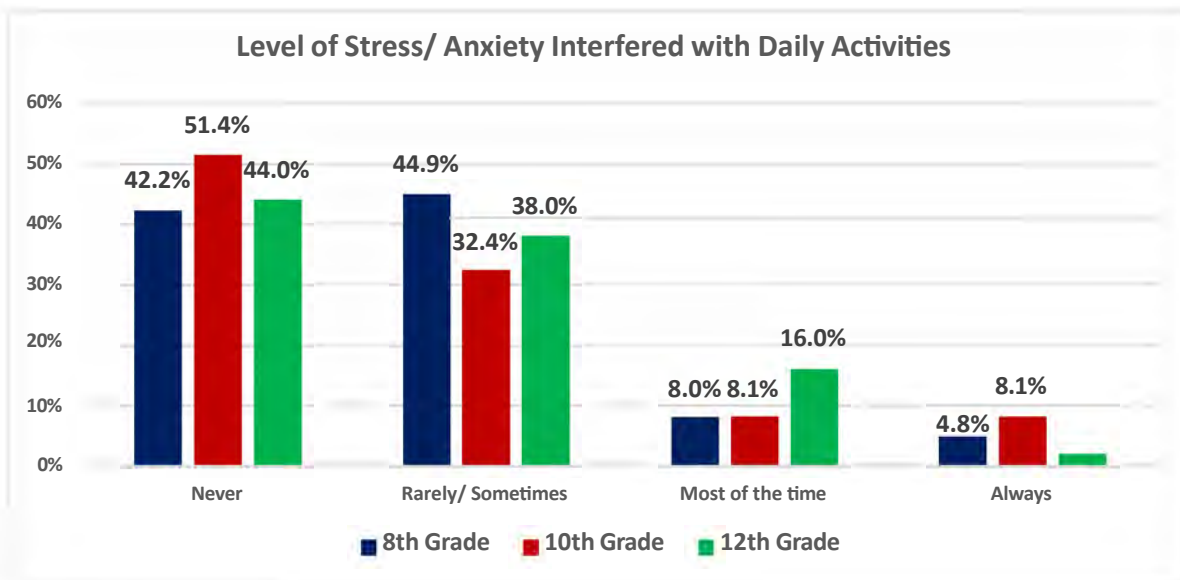
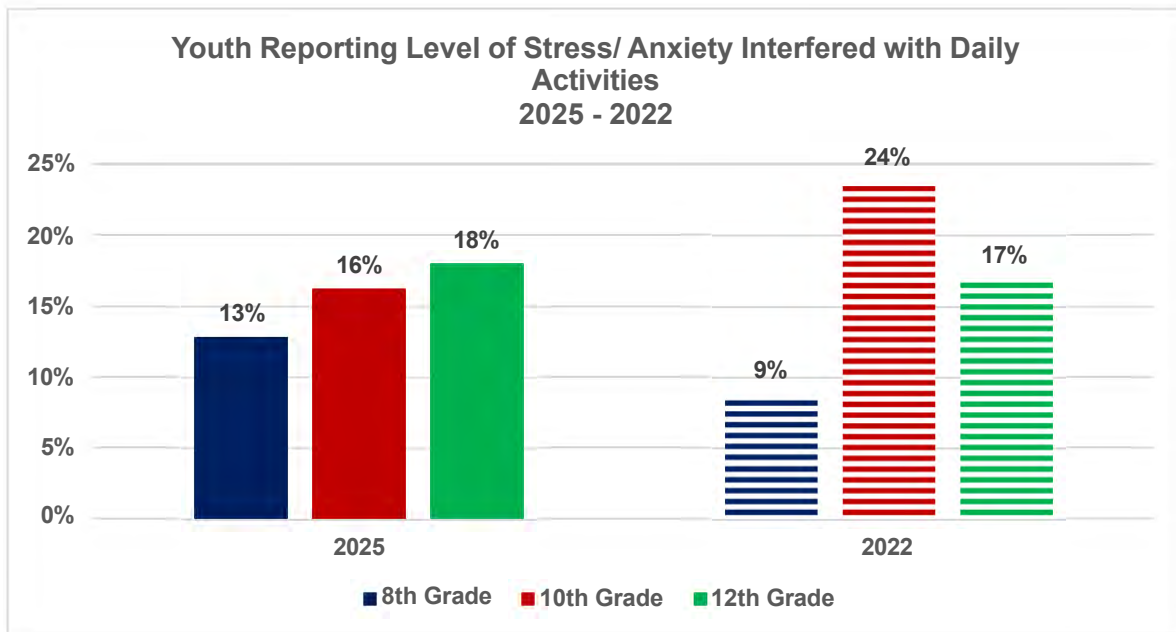


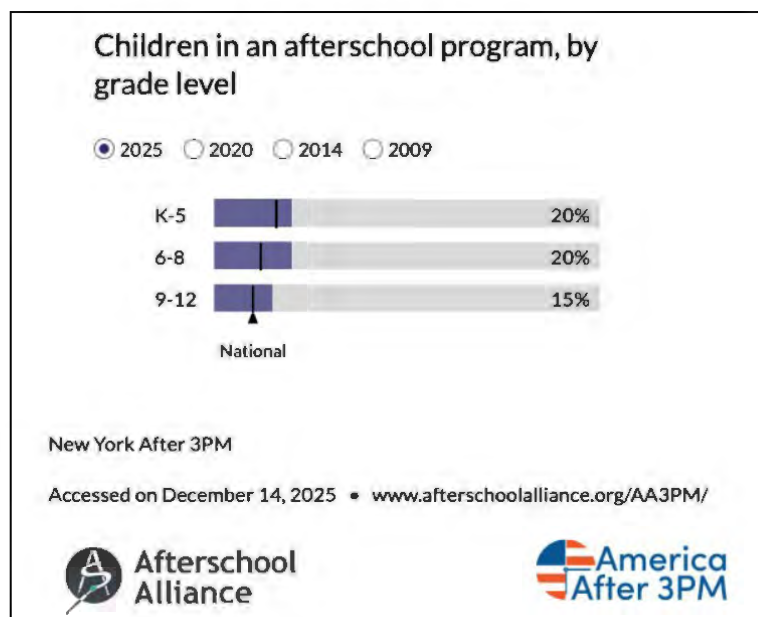
Table 19A



Afterschool Groups Participation

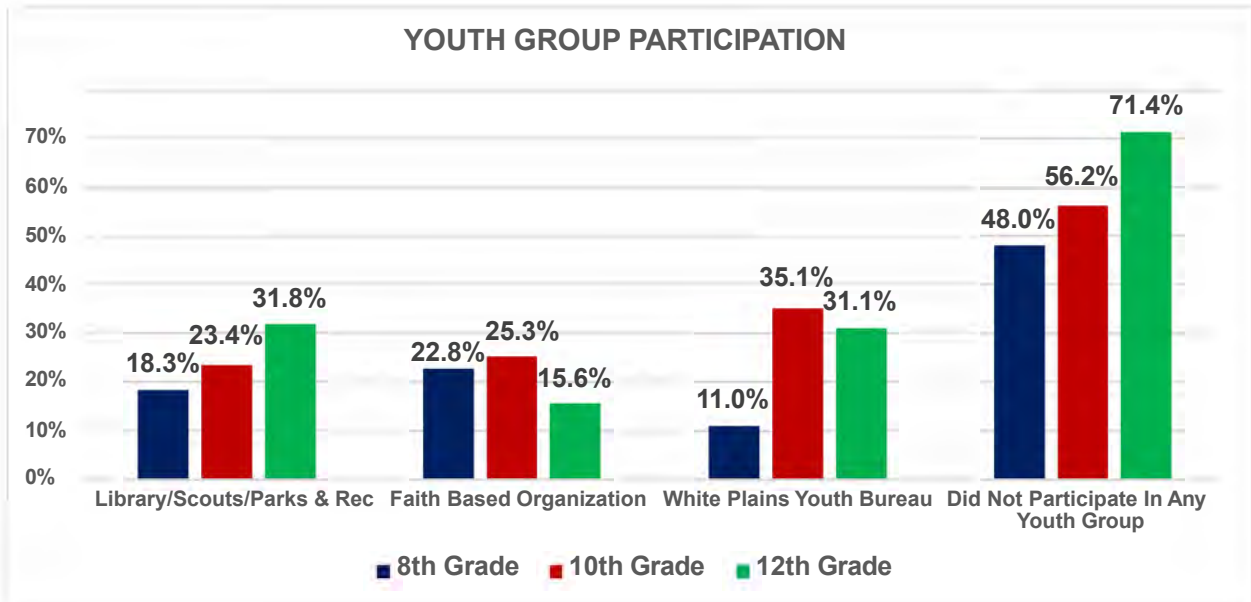
Research has consistently shown that afterschool programs work. They keep kids safe, improve academic performance, build essential life skills, and set young people on paths to long-term success. Afterschool activities provide valuable opportunities for children to explore their interests, develop skills and foster social connections outside of the traditional school setting.

In New York State approximately 19% of youth are participating in afterschool programs (After School Alliance, 2025).



In White Plains, only 29% of 12th graders, 44% of 10th graders and 52% of 8th graders report participating in afterschool programs (Table 20).

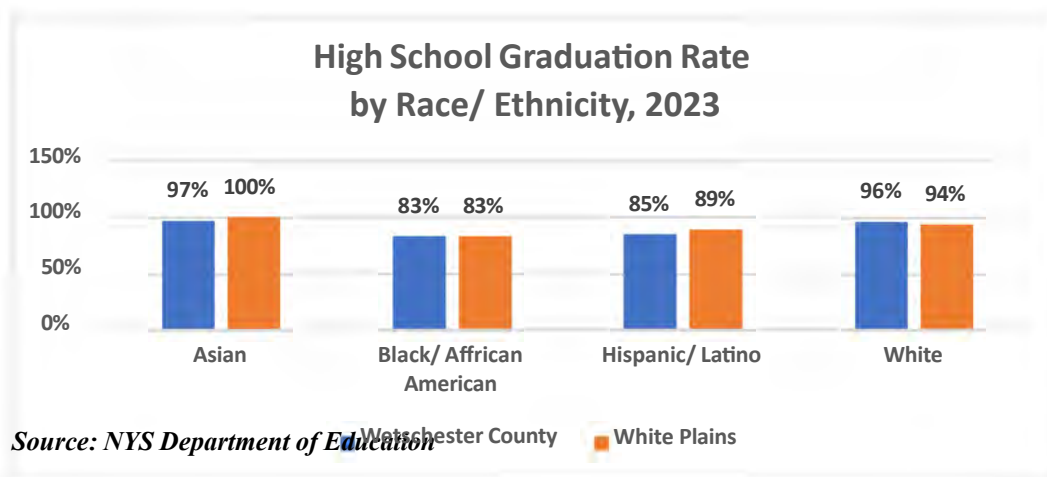
Table 20*



*Note: Percentages may not add to 100% since youth reported participating in more than one group.

Educational Outcomes Table

21



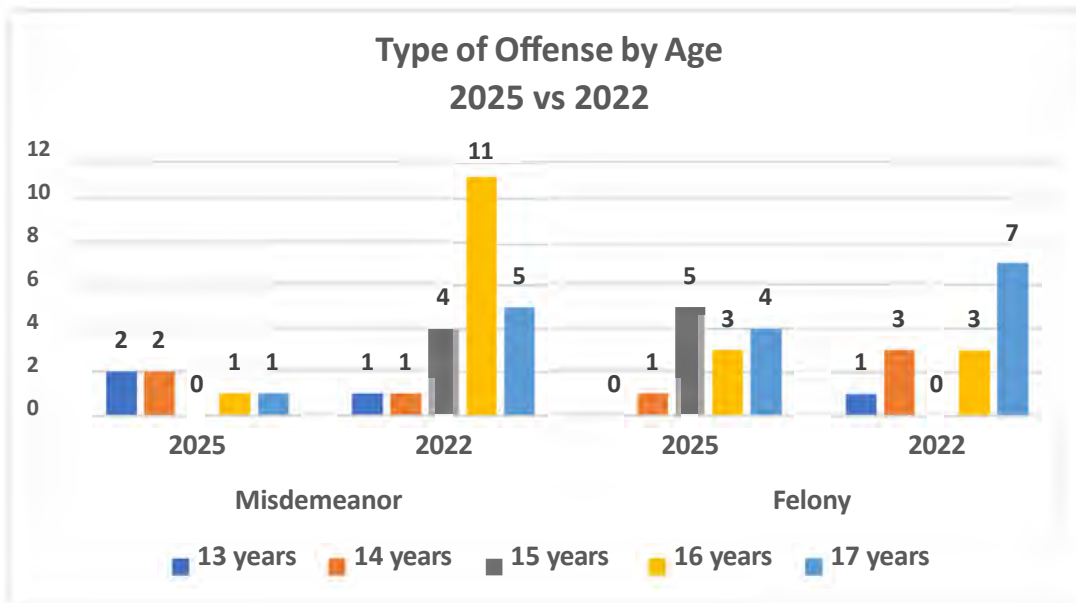
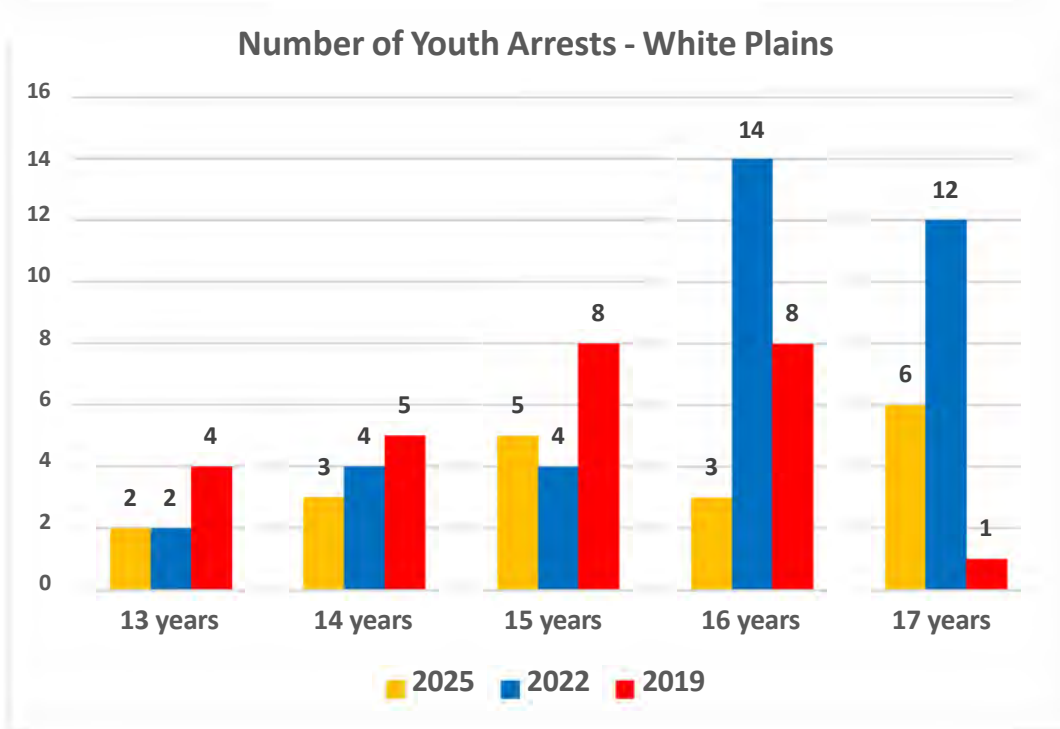
Source: NYS Department of Education

According to the 2025 US News & World Report, the college readiness score for the White Plains High School is reported as 40.3/100. White Plains school cohort graduation rate for Black and Hispanic youth continues to be lower than for Asian and White youth.

Youth Arrest Rates

Total number of youth arrests had spiked in 2022 (36 youth arrests) largely because 16- and 17-year-olds were then being arrested as youth offenders. Number of youth arrests have declined in 2025 to 19, which is even lower than 2019 when total arrests were 26.

Table 22



Implications

The results of this assessment carry several important implications for policy, programming, and resource allocation in White Plains.

First, the decline in youth arrests and relatively low substance use rates suggest that existing prevention, youth development, and diversion efforts are yielding positive outcomes. Continued investment in evidence-based youth programming—particularly through the Youth Bureau and its partner agencies—remains essential to sustaining these gains.

Second, the concentration of felony-level offenses among older adolescents highlights a critical intervention point between early adolescence and young adulthood. Targeted supports for youth ages 15–17, including mentoring, restorative justice approaches, trauma-informed services, and alternatives to arrest, may help prevent escalation into more serious system involvement.

Third, the data point to a growing need for enhanced mental health and stress-reduction supports within schools and community settings. Elevated stress levels among high school youth, combined with academic and social pressures, underscore the importance of accessible counseling, social-emotional learning, and wellness programming. Strengthening school-community partnerships can help expand the reach of these supports.

Fourth, declining perceptions of risk and parental disapproval related to substance use—particularly among older youth—suggest the need for renewed prevention messaging that is developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive. Parent engagement strategies that reinforce clear expectations around alcohol and drug use may further strengthen protective factors.

Finally, participation in afterschool and enrichment activities declines notably by 12th grade, despite strong evidence that such programs reduce risk behaviors and promote positive outcomes. Expanding appealing, age-appropriate opportunities for older youth—especially those focused on leadership development, career readiness, and peer connection—could help address both stress and disengagement during the later high school years.

Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of a comprehensive, coordinated youth strategy that balances prevention, early intervention, and positive youth development. By leveraging existing strengths and addressing identified gaps, White Plains is well

positioned to continue improving outcomes for its young people and ensuring their long-term well-being and success.

Strategic Recommendations for Future Youth Programs

1. Strengthen Prevention Messaging Early
 - Reinforce substance use prevention in middle school, focusing on alcohol risk perception and refusal skills.
 - Address mixed messages around marijuana through clear, developmentally appropriate education.
2. Rebuild Adult-Youth Connections
 - Expand mentorship, trusted adult initiatives, and youth-adult partnership models within schools and community programs.
 - Train staff and volunteers in trauma-informed and relationship-centered practices.
3. Expand Parent Engagement and Education
 - Offer culturally responsive parent workshops focused on monitoring, communication, and clear rules regarding substances and online behavior.
4. Address Mental Health and Stress Proactively
 - Integrate stress management, coping skills, and social-emotional learning into afterschool and Youth Bureau programming.
 - Strengthen referral pathways for youth needing higher levels of support.
5. Increase Physical Activity and Wellness Opportunities
 - Develop engaging, non-competitive physical activity options, particularly for high school youth.
 - Leverage parks, recreation facilities, and school partnerships.
6. Reimagine Afterschool for Older Youth
 - Expand workforce development, paid internships, leadership, and college/career readiness programs.
 - Align program schedules with high school demands to reduce participation barriers.
7. Maintain Data-Driven Decision Making
 - Continue biennial youth needs assessments.

Conclusion

The 2025 Youth Needs Assessment confirms that White Plains youth benefit from strong community investment and generally positive outcomes, particularly in low substance use rates and improved nutrition. However, declining protective perceptions, elevated

stress, reduced physical activity, and decreasing engagement among older youth present clear areas for strategic action.

By strengthening prevention, deepening adult and family engagement, addressing mental health and equity, and redesigning programs for older adolescents, White Plains can build on its strong foundation and ensure that all youth are supported to thrive, succeed, and transition into healthy, productive adulthood.