

STOUGHTON
YOUTH FOCUS
GROUPS
FEB 2025

Focus Groups

3 focus groups sessions

19 high school students, 7 middle school students

Completed both survey and open discussion questions

Sessions recorded by note taking software: Otter.ai

Themes

- Youth Alcohol use
 - Alcohol is often obtained from older friends or siblings, or from home (both provided by parents and stealing from home)
 - Most report that drinking is done at home, in small gatherings
 - Vaping is seen as an addiction, often starting in middle school, while alcohol use is more recreational.

Themes

- Youth Vaping (both tobacco and THC)
 - Devices are more likely purchased from stores, but still mainly obtained from older siblings or peers who are over 18
 - Most knew of Delta-8 (legal THC) but couldn't explain difference to Illegal THC
 - Many expressed that they feel that vaping starts as an attempted coping mechanism or as a cultural expectation/social media influence
 - "I know that people have more responsibilities now and so they want something to take the edge off, I think that's why they start using."
 - Most groups felt this was a larger issue compared to alcohol, because it affects them even if they aren't using (kids vaping in bathrooms)
 - "They go in the stalls, and sometimes there's four or five people in there, and then smoke will just puff off the top."

Themes

- **Prevention and Cessation Strategies**
 - Many discussed the need for a better understanding of the negative aspects of substance use, starting earlier in middle school
 - Students mentioned the need for more support, but also were unaware of some support that was available, leading to need for more education on support systems
 - Many of these discussions naturally morphed into the need for acceptance and cultural stigma of addiction, feeling okay to ask for help when you want to quit.

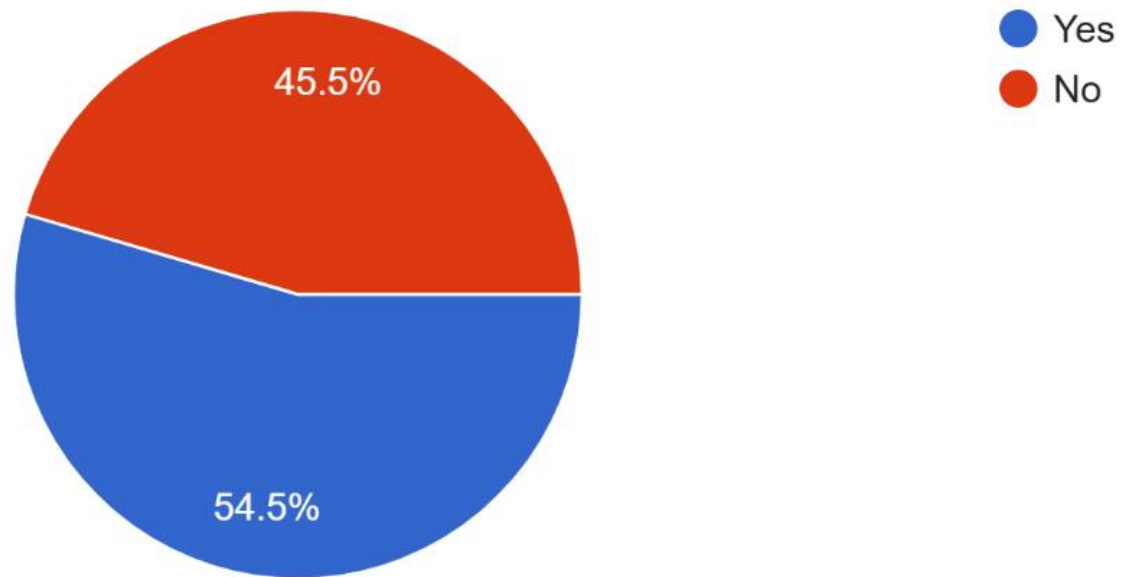
Themes

- Youth Mental Health
 - There were various answers to what are the causes of youth mental health issues, including pressure to perform (academics, extracurriculars, job, etc.), overstimulation from screens, COVID-19 (and isolation continuing due to that).
 - One group felt strongly about the need to develop coping skills and resiliency and having practical lessons on how to say no in difficult situations
 - All felt the need for mental health to be prioritized in schools, with more support from teachers and administration

Survey Questions

Do you know students/peers who drink alcohol regularly (more than once a week)?

22 responses



Survey Questions

If you could estimate a percentage of the student body who regularly consumes alcohol, what would that be? (0% = no one, 100% = everyone)

- High School: **Average: 33.9%**
- Middle School : **Average: 5.8%**

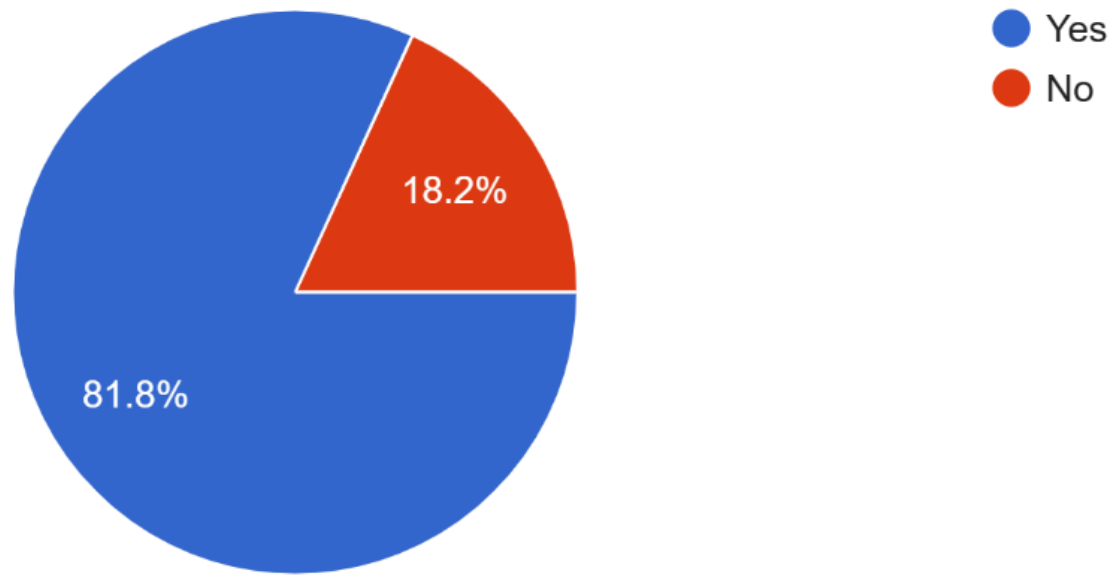
From the 2024 Dane County Youth Assessment:

- High School 30 day use: **11%**
- Middle School 30 day use: **4.7%**

Survey Questions

Do you know students/peers who use vapes regularly (more than once a week)?

22 responses



Survey Questions

If you could estimate a percentage of the student body who regularly vapes, what would that be? (0% = no one, 100% = everyone)

- High School: **Average: 42.3%**
- Middle School: **Average: 24.5%**

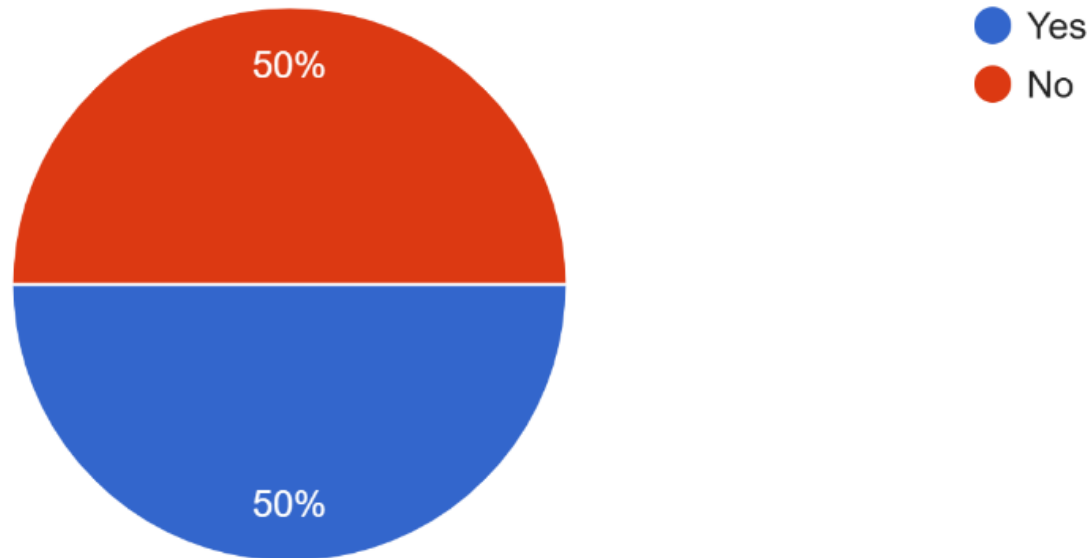
From the 2024 Dane County Youth Assessment:

- High School 30 day use: **8.2%**
- Middle School 30 day use: **3.3%**

Survey Questions

There are lots of different kinds and names for marijuana. Do you know the difference between the legal THC (like Delta 8 or Delta 10 that's sold in stor...arijuana) that is illegal to sell and purchase in WI?

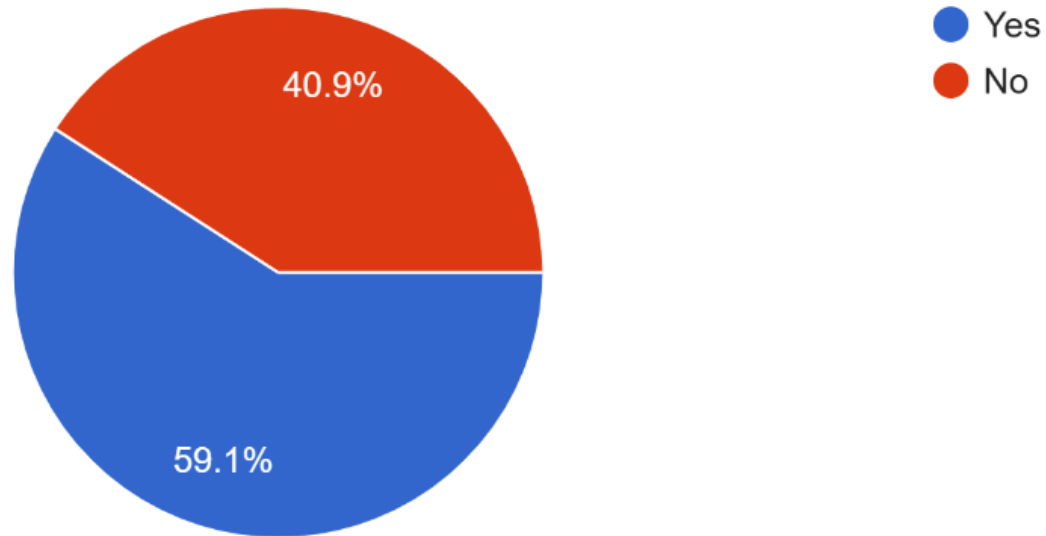
22 responses



Survey Questions

Do you know students/peers who use THC/marijuana regularly (more than once a week)? (in any form: legal THC like Delta 8 or Delta 10 that's sold i...arijuana) that is illegal to sell and purchase in WI)

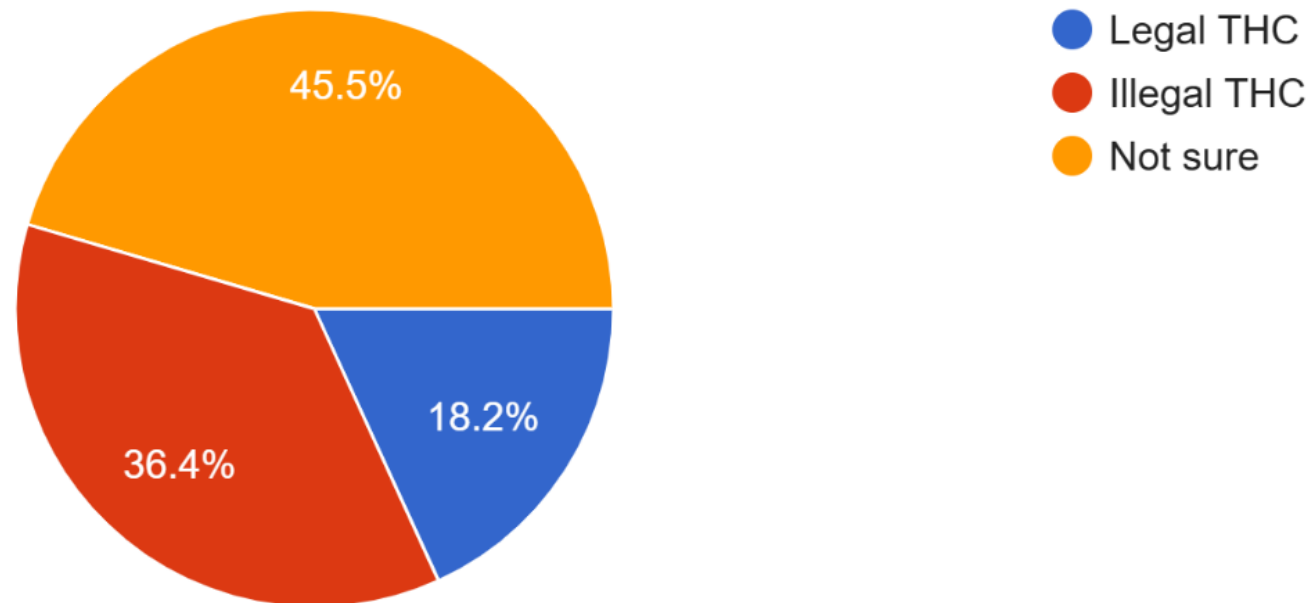
22 responses



Survey Questions

Which form of THC/marijuana do you think students are using most frequently?

22 responses



Survey Questions

If you could estimate a percentage of the student body who regularly used THC/marijuana (in any form), what would that be? (0% = no one, 100% = everyone)

- High School: **Average: 29.2%**
- Middle School: **Average: 9.1%**

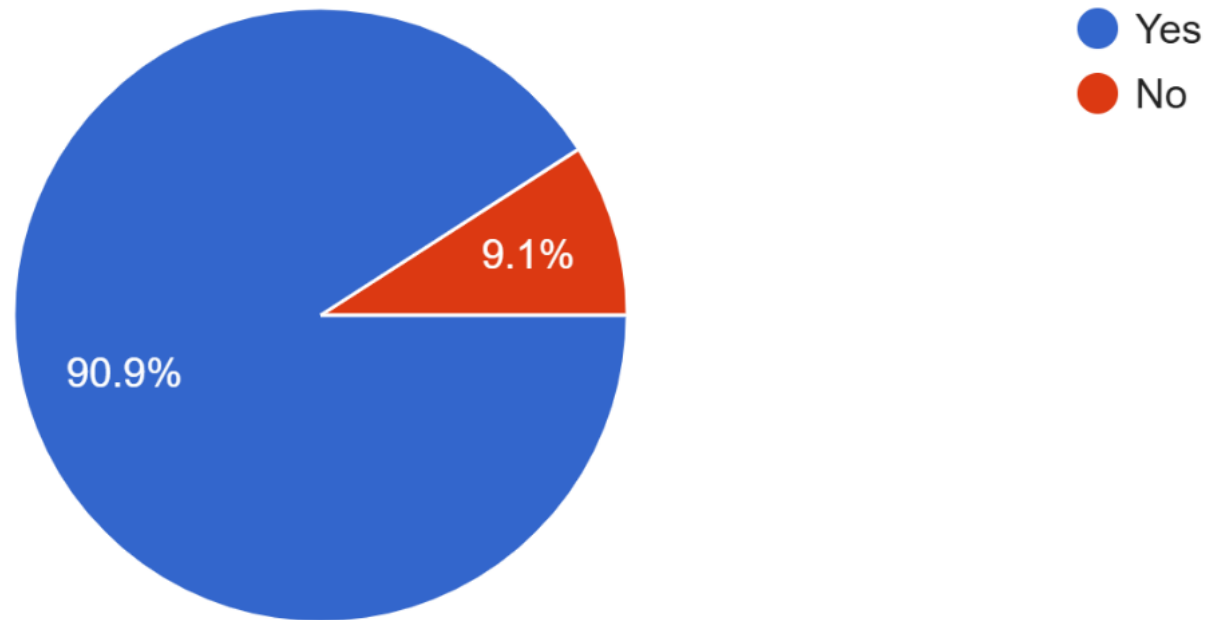
From the 2024 Dane County Youth Assessment:

- High School 30 day use: 7.6%
- Middle School 30 day use: 3.3%

Survey Questions

Do you know students who struggle with mental health?

22 responses



Survey Questions

What types of mental health issues are you aware of with students? (list all you can think of)

Response Category	Frequency
Depression	17
Anxiety	17
ADHD	6
Eating Disorders	4
OCD	2
Autism	3
Bipolar	1
PTSD	1
BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder)	2
Stress	3

Response Category	Frequency
Burnout	1
Self-Harm	2
Emotional Dysregulation	1
Addiction	1
Gender Dysphoria	1
Vaping, Drinking, Smoking	1
Sadness	1
Dyslexia	1
None	1

Survey Questions

Where do students typically go for support regarding substance use? (list the ones you know)

Support Source	Frequency
Counselors	10
Friends	6
Family	3
Help Hotlines	2
Therapists	1
Hospital	1
School Resource Officer	1
Peers	1
No Support / IDK	7
Vape / Alcohol	2