Vermont Young Adult Survey

Statewide Summary

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Executive Summary

Vermont residents aged 18 to 29 were surveyed in the fall of 2008 to provide baseline data for the evaluation of Vermont's Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG). This federally funded initiative is designed to reduce and prevent underage drinking, high risk drinking among persons under age 25, and marijuana use among persons under age 25, in communities throughout the state of Vermont. The Young Adult Survey Statewide Summary Report provides an overview of findings from the survey at the state level.

Survey respondents were recruited through a variety of venues, and invited to participate in the survey by either completing it online or by returning a paper copy through the mail. A total of 991 age-eligible Vermont residents from across the state responded. In addition to providing baseline data for the SPF-SIG evaluation, the survey data provide epidemiologic data regarding alcohol and marijuana use among young adults and perceptions about factors in their communities that may influence these behaviors. As such, the survey helps to fill an important gap in the availability of data on these health-related behaviors and perceptions in the 18 to 29-year age group. Key findings from the survey are summarized below.

Alcohol-Related Topics

Alcohol Use:

- Just over 75% of respondents consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.
- The majority of those who use alcohol (75% of users, and 56% of all respondents) reported "binge drinking" in the past 30 days (defined as having four or more drinks if female, and five or more drinks if male, on a single occasion at least once in the past 30 days).
- The percentages reporting both any alcohol use and binge drinking were lower among persons aged 18 to 20 as compared to persons over age 21.
- College Students aged 18 to 25 reported higher rates of binge drinking than respondents who were not in college.

Drinking and Driving:

- Overall, 5% of respondents reported having driven a motor vehicle in the past 30 days after having too much to drink. A much higher percentage (25%) reported riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking.
- Rates of both driving after drinking and riding in a car driven by someone who had been drinking were substantially lower for the 18- to 20-year age subgroup.

Availability of Alcohol:

- The vast majority of respondents (89%) believe it is easy for persons aged 18 to 20 to obtain alcohol from friends or family members. Much smaller percentages perceive this to be the case for purchasing alcohol in stores (30%) and in restaurants and bars (11%).
- The majority of respondents believe it is likely that an obviously intoxicated adult would be served or sold alcohol at a bar or restaurant (64%) and at a convenience store (60%).

Community Norms:

- Young adults getting drunk "now and then" was viewed as being fairly normal and acceptable in the communities where respondents live by 90% of the respondents.

Perceived Risk of Use:

- Just under 25% of respondents perceived no risk or only a slight risk to persons who have five or more drinks of alcohol once or twice a week.

Perceived Level of Enforcement of Alcohol laws:

- The majority of respondents believed that enforcement or sanctions would be implemented for various illegal behaviors involving alcohol. Still, 35% of respondents believed it would be unlikely for someone who was driving after drinking too much to be noticed and stopped by the police, and 40% believed it would be unlikely for police to find out about and disperse parties where underage drinking was going on.

Marijuana-Related Topics

Marijuana Use:

- Overall, 29% of respondents reported using marijuana in the past 30 days. There was little variation across age groups.
- Older college students (aged 21 to 25) had higher rates of marijuana use (42%) than both non-students and students who were younger.

Marijuana Use and Driving:

- Just over 11% of respondents reported having driven a motor vehicle in the past 30 days after using marijuana. Twice that many (22%) reported riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been using marijuana.
- Rates of driving after using marijuana did not differ substantially across age groups.

Availability of Marijuana:

- A majority of respondents (81%) believe it easy for persons their age to obtain marijuana.

Community Norms:

- Just over 74% of respondents perceived that in the communities where they live, young adults getting high on marijuana "now and then" is viewed as being fairly normal and acceptable.

Perceived Risk of Use:

- A slight majority of respondents (52%) perceived no risk or only a slight risk to persons who smoke marijuana once or twice per week.

Perceived Level of Enforcement of Marijuana laws:

- The likelihood of enforcement of marijuana laws was perceived as being high by most respondents. Only 8% thought it would be unlikely for someone caught with marijuana to be cited or arrested.

A. Introduction

In American society, it is the young adult population that exhibits the highest rates of many alcohol and illicit drug use behaviors. National and state-level data sources routinely indicate that young adults, often characterized as persons aged 18 through 25, are more likely to use alcohol, drink to excess (or "binge" drink), and use marijuana and many other illicit substances than any other age group. Consequently, Vermont's Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG) has identified high risk drinking among persons under age 25, and marijuana use among persons under age 25, as two of its three substance use priorities. The other substance use priority for the Vermont SPF-SIG is underage drinking (i.e., alcohol use by persons under age 21).

Data on alcohol and drug use among young adults for geographic areas smaller than the entire state, however, are difficult to obtain. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is an excellent source of community-specific data on adolescents still in high school, but it does not represent the young adult population. The Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) surveys persons age 18 and older, but the number of respondents in the young adult age range is so small that many years of data must be combined in order to provide usable estimates at the county level. Similarly, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) involves a relatively small sample of young adults and provides estimates only for four sub-state regions within Vermont, aggregated across three years of data.

Vermont's SPF-SIG has funded 23 specific communities across Vermont to address the statewide priorities identified above. In order to obtain baseline data for the evaluation of the SPF-SIG, the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) developed and implemented a survey of young adults Vermont residents, aged 18 through 29. The Vermont Young Adult Survey (YAS) was conducted between October 2008 and January 2009, and will be repeated in the fall of 2010 to obtain follow-up measures on Vermont's priority outcomes. County-level reports based on the survey have already been produced and made available to community-based organizations to help support their planning and community outreach activities. Those reports provide tables showing the distribution of responses to every item in the survey, both for each county and the remainder of the state.

In addition to the YAS, PIRE collaborated with 11 Vermont colleges and universities in conducting surveys in the fall of 2008 using the Core College Student Survey. A statewide report based on the aggregated data from those surveys is forthcoming.

Purpose of this Report

The primary purpose for the YAS is to provide baseline data needed to evaluate the effects of Vermont's SPF-SIG. But because the findings from the survey may also be of more general interest, this report has been prepared to provide an overview of key survey results at the statewide level. In particular, these findings expand knowledge of the patterns and correlates of alcohol and marijuana use among young adults in Vermont. They may be useful for general planning purposes and for focusing greater attention and resources on substance use issues in this population. Importantly, the survey included

questions not only about alcohol and marijuana use, but also about risky behaviors associated with use (e.g., drinking and driving) and about potentially modifiable factors believed to promote use.

As one example of a potentially useful finding, the estimated statewide prevalence of 30-day marijuana use among survey respondents aged 18 through 25 is remarkably similar to the relatively high estimate for Vermont provided by the NSDUH. This consistency supports the validity of the YAS and helps substantiate that the high rates of marijuana use among Vermont's young adults as observed in the NSDUH, relative to the nation as a whole, are real and warrant close attention. As another example, the survey data reveal notably lower rates of binge drinking and drinking after driving among persons aged 18 to 20 relative to older survey participants. This finding is consistent with other evidence suggesting that the current minimum legal drinking age helps to keep rates of risky alcohol use behaviors and negative consequences among underage persons from being any higher than they already are.

Survey Methods

Residents of Vermont aged 18 to 29 were recruited to participate through a variety of venues, including ads on Facebook, posters and postcards placed in prominent community locations, and other promotional efforts by community grantees. The survey was offered as both a web-based survey and as a paper survey for those who did not have convenient access to the internet. Incentives for respondents through a random drawing of 11 cash award winners were used to encourage participation.

A total of 991 completed surveys were obtained, 916 of which were completed via the web and 75 using the paper version. Survey respondents were widely distributed across the state, representing a total of 161 different towns, and including residents from both funded SPF-SIG communities and non-funded communities.

Representativeness of the Sample

Participants in the YAS constitute a "convenience" sample as opposed to a scientifically drawn representative sample. Due to the advertising venues used, and the strictly voluntary nature of the survey, those who participated may differ in some important respects from the overall population of young adults in Vermont. It is not known how well the survey participants represent all young adult residents of the state. The data have been weighted, however, according to gender and age group, and therefore the sample does reflect the age and gender distribution of the state's young adult population. It is also reassuring to note that YAS-based state-level findings for key survey variables are very similar to estimates for Vermont from the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (see Appendix A). The YAS estimates were not as close with those provided by the BRFSS (also found in Appendix A). The differences may be due at least in part to the somewhat restricted sampling frame used by the BRFSS, which only surveys persons living in households with land-based telephones and therefore may exclude many young adults, particularly students living in dormitories.

Organization of Findings

Based on the epidemiological priorities established for Vermont's SPF-SIG, the key behavior outcomes reported here include 30-day alcohol use, binge drinking, 30-day marijuana use, and several risky behaviors involving use of these substances while driving or riding in motor vehicles. The percentage of survey participants reporting each of these behaviors is provided for the entire sample, and then broken out separately by age category, by gender, and by student status. In addition, perceptions of availability, community norms, risk of use, and lack of enforcement are also reported. Data for selected response categories for these measures are provided for both the entire sample and by age group. The findings are presented in either graphical or tabular format.

Demographic and other background data, including sources through which participants learned about the survey, are provided in Section 4. Comments from survey participants are summarized in Section 5. The Appendices include a) comparisons of key statewide prevalence rates provided by the YAS with comparable rates from other sources – specifically the NSDUH and BRFSS, and b) the hardcopy version of the survey instrument.

The focus of this report is the general pattern of responses obtained for the various items included in the survey. Response distributions are provided for the total sample, and also broken down by age group and, for some measures, gender and student status. Descriptive statistics (i.e., reporting of prevalence rates for various subgroups) are provided, but these do not include tests of statistical significance for subgroup differences. When comparing rates among different subgroups, for example between the 18 to 20 year age group and the 21 to 25 year group, it is important to keep in mind that small differences of just a few percentage points are not particularly meaningful and are not likely to be statistically significant. In other words, any small observed differences across subgroups based on the survey participants could easily disappear if we actually had survey data from all young adults in the state rather than just a sample. As a general rule of thumb based on the sample size for the YAS, differences between subgroups (as defined by age group, gender, or student status) of seven or eight percentage points (or more) for most measures are likely to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, and therefore indicative of real differences in the young adult population. For behaviors or perceptions that are relatively rare (e.g., those that have prevalence rates of less than 10 percent, such as driving after drinking too much), differences of even four or five four percentage points are noteworthy and likely to be statistically significant.

Help is Available

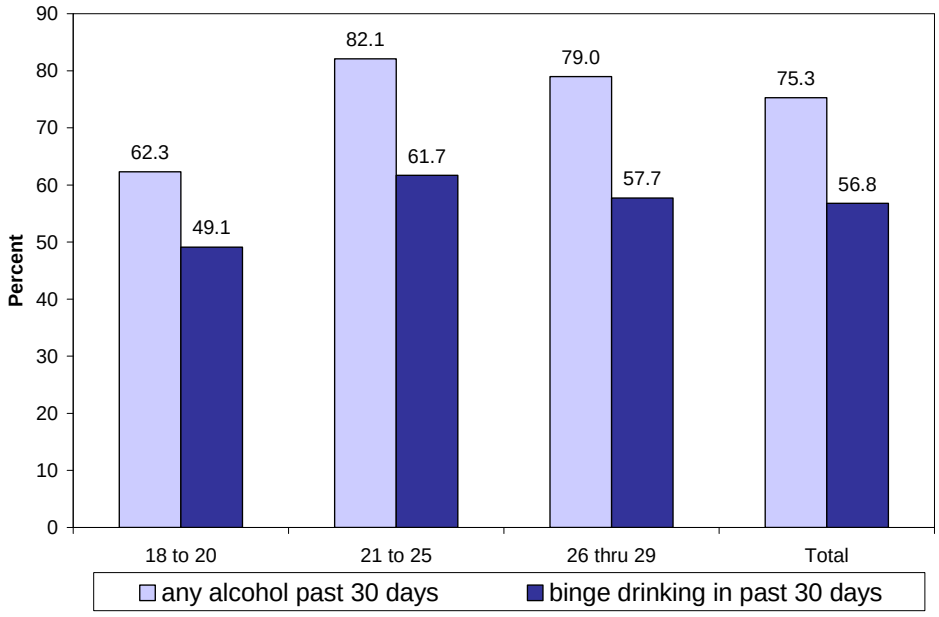
If you have questions regarding the source or interpretation of the data presented here, please contact Amy Livingston at 802-652-4111, or alivingston@vdh.state.vt.us.

B. Alcohol Use, Marijuana Use, and Associated Risky Behaviors

Any Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking

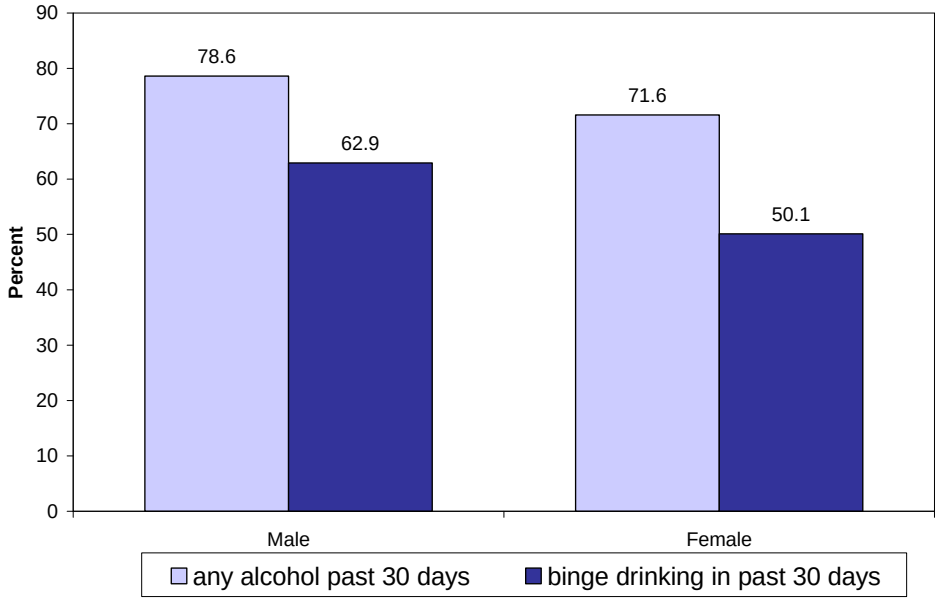
The percentages of young adults reporting any alcohol use and binge drinking (defined as having 5 or more drinks if male, and 4 or more if female, on a single occasion) sometime during the past 30 days, for each of three age groups, are provided in Figure 1. Overall, approximately 75 percent of the young adult respondents reported drinking alcohol in the past month, and about 57 percent reported binge drinking. Immediately apparent is the fact that the majority of young adults in all three age groups who consumed alcohol also binge drank, a pattern that has been consistently found across many other studies of youth and young adult drinking patterns. Also noteworthy is the relatively lower levels of both any alcohol use and binge drinking among the 18 to 20 year-old group in comparison to the other two age groups.

Figure 1. Any Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking, by Age



Similar information, this time by gender, is presented in Figure 2. The figure shows that males have somewhat higher rates of both any alcohol use and binge drinking than females. Even among young adult women, however, about 1 in 2 reported binge drinking in the past month.

Figure 2. Any Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking, by Gender



Examining student status differences in alcohol use and binge drinking is complicated by the fact that proportionately many more students than non-students fall into the 18- to 20-year age group, combined with the fact that both any alcohol use and binge drinking are less common among 18- to 20-year olds relative to the two older age groups. To minimize the effect of these complications, it is helpful to examine the differences across student status separately for each age group. Figure 3 presents the rates of any alcohol use according to student status and age group. As shown in the figure, the rate of any alcohol use in the past 30 days among 18-20 year olds is higher for full-time students than non-students (69.3 percent vs. 59.7 percent). The same is true to a lesser extent for 21- to 25-year olds (87.1 percent vs. 81.0 percent). Among the oldest age group, any alcohol use is more prevalent among non-students compared to students, although the small number of students in the 26-29 year age group makes this comparison less definitive.

Because the "other student" category is a mixture of various types of students who are not full-time, as well as the relatively small sample size for this category, interpretation of the patterns observed for this group is difficult. It is likely, however, that the relatively low prevalence of alcohol use among "other" students in the 18- to 20-year group reflects the fact that many of these respondents indicated that they are in high school or a GED program, and thus may be on the younger end of this age group. That is also expected to be the case for binge drinking (discussed below).

Binge drinking prevalence rates, broken out by student status and age group, are presented in Figure 4. The patterns are very similar to those observed for any alcohol use discussed above, except that the actual rates are all slightly lower.

Figure 3. Any Alcohol in Past 30 Days, by Student Status and Age

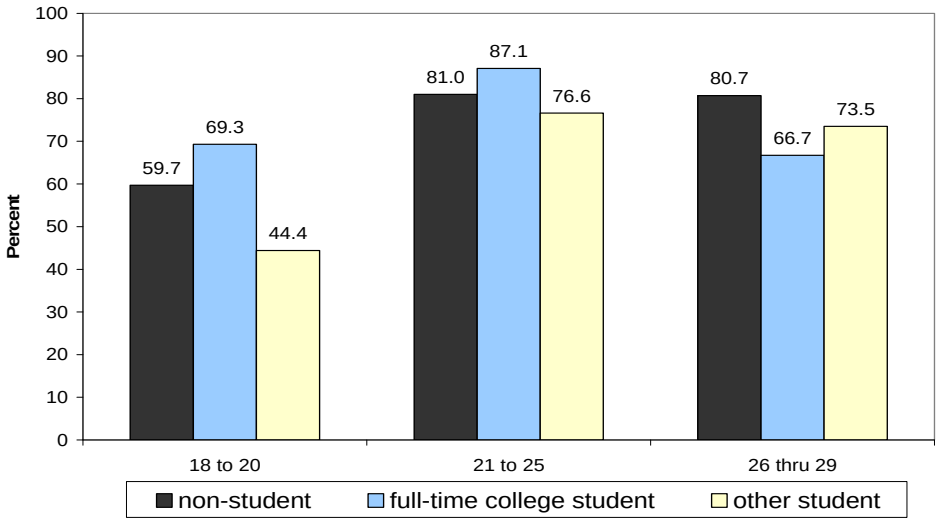
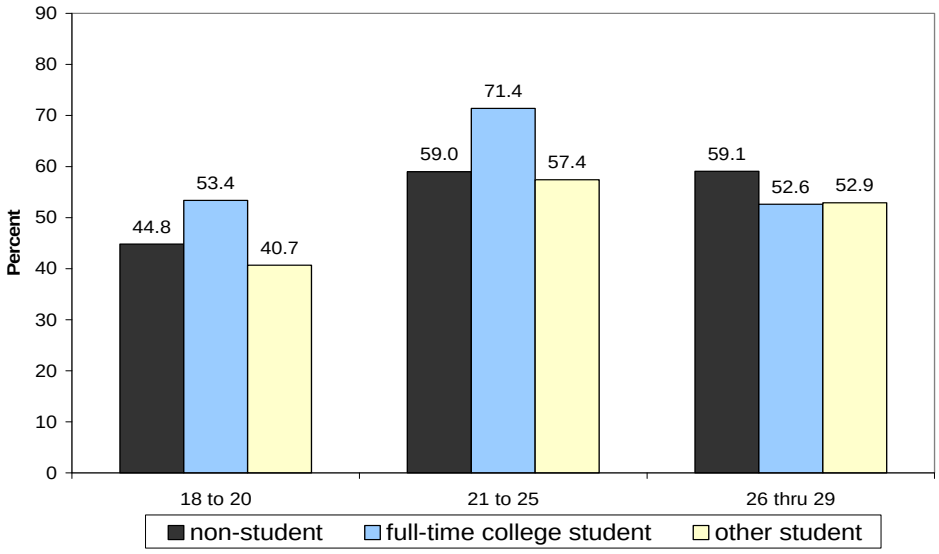


Figure 4. Binge Drinking, by Student Status and Age

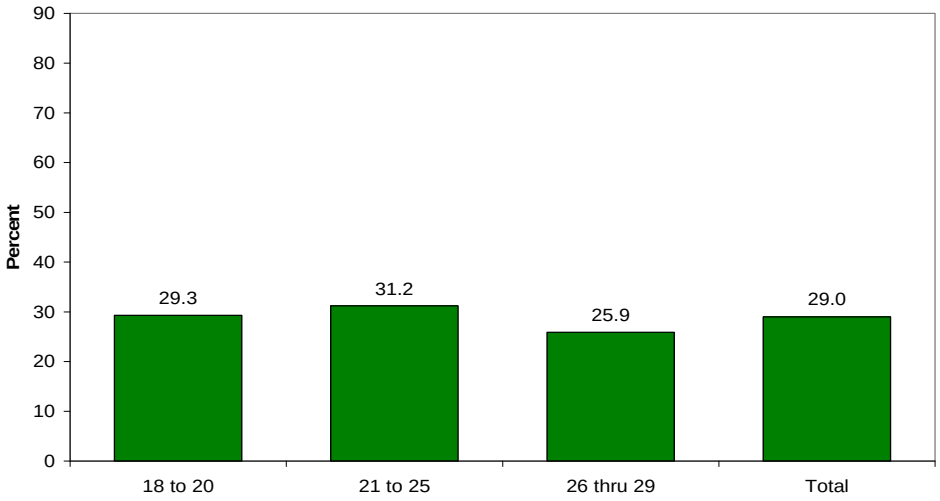


Marijuana Use

Rates of marijuana use in the past 30 days, shown in Figure 5, were fairly similar across the age groups, with only a slight reduction noticed in the oldest age group. More importantly, however, is the high percentage of young adults in general (almost 30 percent) who report using marijuana. These findings corroborate the estimates for marijuana use prevalence among young adults from the NSDUH, which during the past

10 years has consistently found Vermont to have among the highest marijuana use rates in the nation.

Figure 5. Marijuana Use in Past 30 Days, by Age



As with the three age categories, only slight differences according to gender were observed with respect to rates of marijuana use (Figure 6). Differences by student status were again examined separately for each age group (Figure 7). Differences here were also generally small. The one difference of note was the higher marijuana use rate (41.7 percent) among full-time students in the middle age group, relative to both the other two age groups of full-time students and the same age group of non-students.

Figure 6. Marijuana Use in Past 30 Days, by Gender

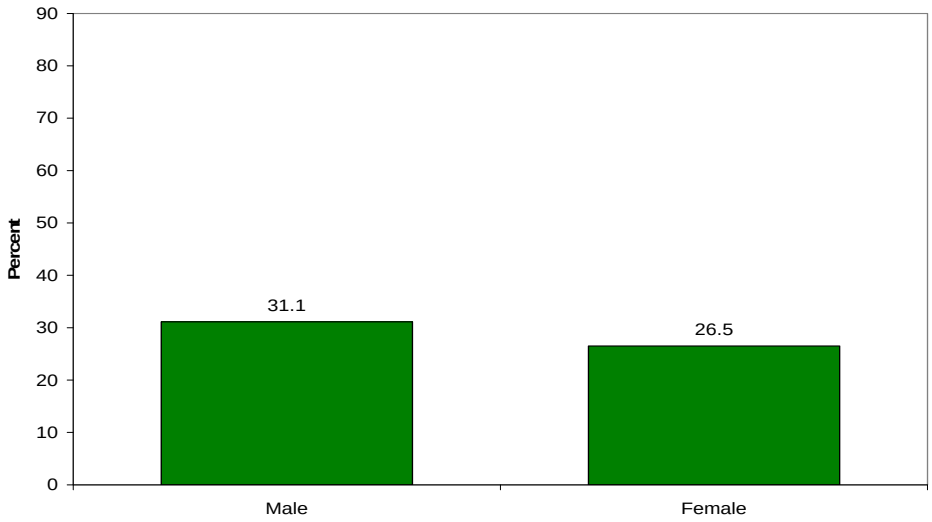
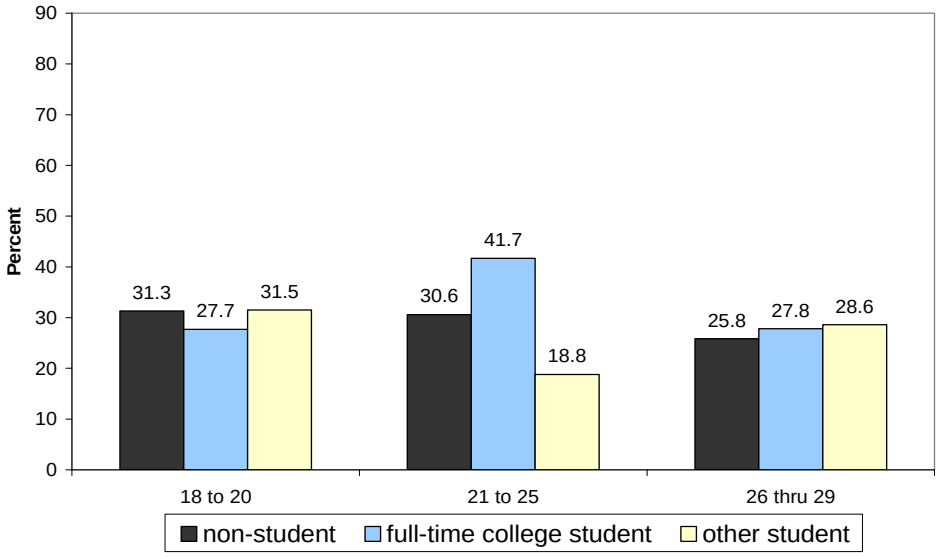


Figure 7. Marijuana Use in Past 30 Days, by Student Status and Age



These findings suggest that marijuana use is pervasive across different segments of the young adult population. The rate of marijuana use, are however, still substantially lower than both any alcohol use and binge drinking. Also, whereas alcohol use and binge drinking were lower for 18-20 year olds than young adults of legal age, the data show that 18-20 year olds use marijuana at rates similar those of the other two age groups.

Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Marijuana

Over 40 percent of motor vehicle fatalities in the U.S. are related to impairment due to alcohol or drugs. Driving under the influence of such substances and riding in vehicles driven by persons under the influence are particularly high risk behaviors. The percentages of respondents reporting four different types of such behavior, separately by age group, are presented in Table 1. Interestingly, more YAS respondents indicated driving after using marijuana than driving after having "too much to drink." The differences were especially pronounced for 18-20 year olds. It is likely, however, that the subjective interpretation of "too much" may have pushed the percentage of positive responses regarding drinking and driving lower than if the question had asked about drinking after having a specific number of drinks (e.g., 5 or more). This could also be a reflection of the public policy emphasis on reducing driving after drinking, while there has been much less effort devoted to increasing information and awareness regarding impaired driving after using other substances.

According to the findings, 18-to-20 year-olds report substantially less driving after drinking, and also riding in cars with a drinking driver, than the older age groups. The same is not true, however, for driving after using marijuana and riding in vehicles driven by someone who had been using marijuana. It is also the case that riding in a vehicle

driven by a person who had been using alcohol or marijuana is substantially more common than actually driving under the influence of either substance. This suggests the potential importance of focusing interventions designed to reduce alcohol and drug-related motor injuries and fatalities on passengers as well as drivers.

Table 1. Percent reporting risky driving in past 30 days, by age

	Age Group			
	18 to 20	21 to 25	26 to 29	All respondents
Driven after too much to drink	1.4	6.0	8.7	5.4
Driven after using marijuana	10.0	13.5	9.5	11.4
Rode in car driven by someone who was drinking	13.7	29.7	30.7	25.3
Rode in car driven by someone who used marijuana	26.7	23.6	16.7	22.4

As was observed for binge drinking and marijuana use, males were also somewhat more likely to report risky driving (and riding) behaviors than females, although in no case was the difference substantial (see Table 2). With respect to student status, comparisons are again best made within each category of age (see Table 3). Among 18- to 20-year olds, very few respondents reported driving after drinking too much or riding with a drinking driver, regardless of student status. Many more 18- to 20-year olds reported driving after using marijuana or riding with a marijuana user, with these rates being substantially higher for non-students. The higher rates of risky driving behaviors related to marijuana among non-students largely disappear, or are reversed, in the higher age groups. This pattern could be a reflection of the fact that many younger students do not own cars or drive less than non-students, but this changes as they get older and move off campus.

Table 2. Percent reporting risky driving in past 30 days, by gender

	Gender	
	Male	Female
Driven after too much to drink	6.0	4.7
Driven after using marijuana	12.9	9.4
Rode in car driven by someone who was drinking	27.4	23.1
Rode in car driven by someone who used marijuana	23.5	21.0

Table 3. Percent reporting risky driving in past 30 days, by age group and student status*

	18-20			21-25			26-29		
	NS	FT	Other	NS	FT	Other	NS	FT	Other
Driven after too much to drink	0	1.2	3.6	5.1	5.9	12.8	8.6	5.6	11.4
Driven after using marijuana	19.4	8.1	5.6	15.1	9.4	14.9	10.3	16.7	0
Rode in car driven by someone who was drinking	0	1.8	7.4	6.1	6.7	16.2	10.5	8.3	15.4
Rode in car driven by someone who used marijuana	34.3	23.9	26.4	24.1	24.4	20.0	15.8	26.3	17.1

*Categories are: Non-student (NS), Full-time college student (FT), and Other type of student (Other)

C. Causal Factors

During the initial steps of Vermont's SPF-SIG, several potentially modifiable community attributes believed to influence rates of high risk drinking behaviors and marijuana use among youth and young adults were identified. These attributes, also referred to as "causal factors" or "intervening variables," are viewed as appropriate focal points for preventive interventions. If communities are successful in addressing these intervening variables, they should see reductions in the risky behaviors to which they are causally linked.

Four such causal factors were assessed with the YAS:

- Availability (both retail and social access)
- Community norms that accept or support these risky behaviors
- Perceived risk of use
- Perceived lack of law enforcement

In this section summary data are provided for various items pertaining to these four causal factors, both for the total sample of respondents and separately by age category. To simplify the presentation of the findings, response categories for most items have been collapsed so they may be summarized with a single value (e.g., the percent of respondents reporting that they either strongly agree or agree with a particular statement).

Availability

Respondents were asked about how easy it is for persons aged 18 to 20 to obtain alcohol from various sources. Overall, about one third of respondents believed it would be very easy or somewhat easy for underage adults to purchase alcohol in stores (see Table 4). A smaller percentage (15.4 percent) indicated this was true for purchasing alcohol in bars and restaurants. In contrast, the vast majority of respondents believed that underage adults would find it easy to obtain alcohol from friends or family members. These finding underscore the fact that alcohol is readily available, from one source or another, to underage persons. Even adolescents in grades 8 through 12 generally report that alcohol is "sort of easy" or "very easy" to obtain (67 percent, according to the 2009 Vermont YRBS). The perceptions regarding alcohol availability were similar across the three age categories of YAS respondents.

Respondents were also asked how easy it is for persons their age to obtain marijuana. The percent of respondents indicating that it was very easy or somewhat easy was slightly over 80 percent, and did not meaningfully differ across the age categories. Clearly, difficulty in obtaining marijuana is not a significant impediment to those who wish to do so.

Table 4. Percent reporting it would be very easy or somewhat easy to obtain alcohol and marijuana from various sources.

	Age Group			
	18 to 20	21 to 25	26 to 29	All respondents
For persons aged 18 to 20 to purchase alcohol in stores.	33.6	32.6	24.5	30.6
For persons aged 18 to 20 to purchase alcohol in bars and restaurants.	11.4	18.1	15.6	15.4
For persons aged 18 to 20 to obtain alcohol from friends or family members.	86.6	90.1	90.4	89.3
For persons your age to obtain marijuana.	82.8	81.5	80.0	81.5

Another dimension of availability pertains to the likelihood that intoxicated persons can purchase alcohol from licensed retail establishments. In Vermont and almost all other states, retail sale of alcohol to obviously intoxicated persons is prohibited by law. Nevertheless, studies show that retailers often do not comply with this law, and the data from the YAS appear to support this observation. As shown in Table 5, the majority of respondents (64 percent) believe that it would be somewhat likely or very likely for an obviously intoxicated adult to be served alcohol in a local bar or restaurant. A similar percentage (60 percent) believed the same would be true regarding purchasing alcohol at a local convenience store. In either situation, the percentage of respondents that believe a purchase would be likely increases with age of the respondent. This may reflect a greater confidence that alcohol would be sold if the purchaser is clearly older than 21, even though intoxicated.

Table 5. Percent reporting it would be very likely or somewhat likely that intoxicated adults can access alcohol at retail outlets in their community.

	Age Group			
	18 to 20	21 to 25	26 thru 29	All respondents
An obviously intoxicated adult would be served in a local bar or restaurant.	51.9	67.6	70.6	63.9
An obviously intoxicated adult would be sold alcohol at a local convenience store.	55.0	59.1	66.3	60.0

Community Norms that Accept or Support Use

The term "norms" covers a range of perceptions and attitudes. Norms may assessed by asking about perceptions regarding how common a certain behavior is, and also how acceptable it is, both as perceived in the community and according to individual respondents' own viewpoint.

The YAS included two items regarding perceived community acceptability, one regarding "getting drunk now and then" and the other regarding "getting high on marijuana now and then," both by persons their age. As shown in Table 6, a very high percentage of YAS respondents (90 percent) agreed with the statement that getting drunk now and then is viewed in their community as being "fairly normal and acceptable." There was little variation in the percentages across age groups. A slightly lower percentage (74 percent) agreed that getting high now and then was seen in their community as being fairly normal and acceptable, again with very little variation across age groups. These findings suggest that there is a high tolerance for both over-consumption of alcohol (i.e., getting drunk) and marijuana use by young adults in Vermont communities.

Table 6. Percent reporting that they strongly agree or agree with the following statements about the norms around alcohol and marijuana use in their community.

	Age Group			
	18 to 20	21 to 25	26 thru 29	All respondents
Getting drunk now and then is fairly normal and acceptable among persons your age.	87.5	92.3	89.3	90.1
Getting high on marijuana now and then is fairly normal and acceptable among persons your age.	75.8	73.9	73.9	74.4

Table 7 presents the percentage of respondents who indicate whether they approved, neither approved or disapproved, disapproved, or strongly disapproved each of a variety of substance use behaviors. For these items, it appeared that collapsing across response categories, or reporting only a single category, could obscure potentially important differences among the four response options.

For all six behaviors, the percentage of respondents approving of such behaviors was well below 50 percent. Overall, just over 20 percent reported that they approved of persons aged 18 to 20 drinking alcohol and a similar percent approved of persons their age using marijuana. Approximately 17 percent approved of someone their age having one or two drinks nearly every day and also of persons their age having five or more drinks once or

twice a week. Smaller percentages approved of driving after having one or two drinks (10 percent) and driving after having five or more drinks (1.4 percent). There were some notable differences across age groups in these percentages for some items. For example, approval of having one or two drinks nearly every day was strongly related to age, whereas approval of binge drinking was unrelated to age. Not surprisingly, approval of underage persons drinking alcohol was highest among persons aged 18 to 20.

For several items, a sizeable percentage of respondents reported that they "neither approved nor disapproved" of the behavior in question – i.e., their viewpoint was neutral. Consequently, although those who approved of these behaviors were a distinct minority, the percent of respondents who did not disapprove of these behaviors was considerably larger. This is important, because a neutral view suggests acceptance, or at least no strong opposition regarding such behaviors. Overall, slightly over half the respondents (ranging between 52 and 60 percent) reported that they did not disapprove of these behaviors:

- persons their age drinking nearly every day
- persons their age having five or more drink once or twice a week
- persons their age using marijuana once or twice a week
- persons aged 18 to 20 drinking alcohol

Drinking and driving was clearly less acceptable than simply drinking, as a considerably smaller percentage (26 percent) did not disapprove of persons their age driving after having one or two drinks. Almost all respondents (over 95 percent) disapproved of driving after having five or more drinks.

Table 7. Percent reporting they approve of, are neutral about, disapprove of, and strongly disapprove of the following behaviors:

Behavior	Response	Age Group			
		18 to 20	21 to 25	26 thru 30	All respondents
Someone your age having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day.	Approve	9.4	18.5	23.1	17.2
	Neutral	28.5	42.9	39.5	37.6
	Disapprove	29.2	21.7	24.1	24.6
	Strongly disap.	32.3	15.7	11.9	19.4
Someone your age having five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage once or twice a week.	Approve	15.5	19.3	14.6	16.8
	Neutral	29.9	37.1	37.1	35.0
	Disapprove	23.4	24.1	27.2	24.8
	Strongly disap.	29.2	18.8	20.1	22.3
Someone your age driving after having one or two drinks.	Approve	3.8	11.6	15.1	10.3
	Neutral	9.0	18.9	16.8	15.3
	Disapprove	16.3	33.5	33.9	28.5
	Strongly disap.	69.9	35.0	33.2	44.8
Someone your age driving after having five or more drinks.	Approve	1.0	0.8	2.7	1.4
	Neutral	4.5	2.8	1.7	3.0
	Disapprove	2.8	5.8	6.1	5.0
	Strongly disap.	91.3	90.5	88.4	90.1
Someone your age using marijuana once or twice a week.	Approve	19.6	22.7	20.7	21.2
	Neutral	29.2	34.3	39.1	34.2
	Disapprove	22.0	19.9	16.3	19.5
	Strongly disap.	27.5	20.9	22.1	23.2
Underage persons between the ages of 18 and 20 drinking alcohol.	Approve	29.6	19.9	16.3	21.7
	Neutral	39.2	39.1	37.1	38.5
	Disapprove	18.2	22.1	26.9	22.4
	Strongly disap.	12.7	18.2	18.7	16.7

Perceived Risk of Use

The perception of low risk of harm (physically or in other ways) from using substances has consistently been found to be highly correlated with use. As shown in Table 8, about one fourth of respondents reported that having five or more drinks once or twice a week carried either no risk or only slight risk. There was very little variation across age groups in this perception. A substantially higher percentage of respondents – just over 50 percent – perceived no risk or only slight risk from smoking marijuana once or twice a week.

Table 8. Percent reporting they perceive no risk or only slight risk for the following behaviors:

	Age Group			
	18 to 20	21 to 25	26 thru 29	All respondents
Having five or more alcoholic beverages once or twice a week.	23.1	26.1	22.1	24.0
Smoking marijuana once or twice a week.	46.8	55.6	53.0	52.2

Perceived Lack of Enforcement

In addition to health risks, a high perceived risk of getting in trouble with the law is also believed to produce a deterrent to various substance use related behaviors. On the other hand, if the perceived risk of enforcement is low, any potential deterrent effect will be diminished. Table 9 displays the percentage of respondents who perceived that certain enforcement actions in response to alcohol and drug use related behaviors is not very likely or not at all likely. For three of these behaviors, a moderate percentage of respondents (between 30 and 40 percent) perceived that these specific enforcement actions were unlikely:

- being stopped by police when driving after drinking too much
- police breaking up parties with underage drinking
- police arresting an adult who provided alcohol for underage party

Three other specific enforcement actions were seen as much more certain, with less than 10 percent of respondents reporting that they would not be very likely or not at all likely:

- having driver's license revoked or suspended if determined to be DUI
- being cited or arrested if caught using or possessing marijuana
- being arrested if caught selling marijuana

In general, there were only slight differences across age groups in these perceptions.

Table 9: Percent reporting it would be not very likely or not at all likely that law enforcement will take certain actions to curtail illegal alcohol and marijuana use in their community.

	Age Group			
	18 to 20	21 to 25	26 thru 29	All respondents
Someone would be noticed and stopped by police if driving after too much to drink.	29.2	37.6	38.0	35.3
Someone to have license revoked or suspended if stopped and found to be driving under the influence.	6.4	7.5	10.1	8.0
Police to find out about and break up parties with underage drinking.	43.3	41.1	33.9	39.6
Police to arrest an adult who provided the alcohol for a party with underage drinking.	37.7	30.2	27.7	31.7
Someone who is caught using or possessing marijuana will be cited or arrested.	10.0	9.6	5.5	8.5
Someone who is caught selling marijuana will be arrested.	5.3	3.1	2.4	3.5

D. Respondent Demographics

This section provides background information on characteristics of the survey respondents, including demographic variables, county of residence, and also where they learned of the survey. For the four demographic variables (Tables 10 through 13), the actual sample sizes are provided for each demographic category. Also shown is the relative percentage of the sample that each age group comprises, first based on unweighted data and then again based on data that have been weighted to reflect the age group and gender composition of the state population. For the other variables covered in this section, only the sample sizes and percentages based on the unweighted data are displayed.

Age Group and Gender

Sample sizes and percentages for age categories and gender are displayed in Tables 10 and 11, respectively. The very similar values for the weighted and unweighted percentages across age categories indicate that the age distribution of the sample closely resembles the age distribution in the Vermont population of young adults. That was not the case for gender, however, as Table 11 shows that many more females than males participated in the survey. After weighting the data, however, the distribution reflects the nearly equal ratio of females to males in the population.

Table 10. Age of Respondents

Age Category	N*	Unweighted Percent	Weighted Percent
18-20	300	30.3	29.6
21-25	404	40.8	40.6
25-30	285	28.8	29.8
Total	989	100.0	100.0

*Number of respondents who did not report age = 2.

Table 11. Gender of Respondents

Gender	N*	Unweighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Male	294	29.8	51.0
Female	691	70.2	49.0
Total	985	100.0	100.0

*Number of respondents who did not report gender = 6.

Student and Employment Status

Survey participation was open to all age-eligible residents of Vermont, regardless of whether they were college students or not. Because many colleges were conducting the Core college student survey at the same time as the YAS, however, community grantees were encouraged to focus their advertising efforts for the YAS on off-campus community locations. Even so, a significant number of full-time college students (29 percent of the respondents) participated in the survey. The breakdown of participants according to five student status categories is provided in Table 12. Similar information for employment status is provided in Table 13, which shows that although the majority of respondents were employed, a sizeable number (17.4 percent) reported that they were unemployed and looking for work.

Table 12. Student status of respondents

Student Status	N*	Unweighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Non-student	563	56.9	57.5
Full-time college/voc school	287	29.0	27.9
Part-time college/voc school	64	6.5	6.4
High school or GED program	47	4.8	5.2
Other student	28	2.8	3.0
Total	989	100.0	100.0

*Number of respondents who did not report student status = 2.

Table 13. Employment status of respondents

Employment Status	N*	Unweighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Employed for wages	667	67.7	67.4
Self-employed	46	4.7	5.2
Not employed and looking for work	171	17.4	17.1
Not employed and not looking for work	101	10.3	10.3
Total	985	100.0	100.0

*Number of respondents who did not report employment status = 6.

County of Residence

The number of respondents from each county is reported in Table 14, along with the percent of the total sample contributed by each county. These numbers are highly related to the underlying size of the age 18 to 29 population in each county, as based on the 2007 Census estimates for this age group.

Table 14. Number of respondents by county

County	Number of Respondents	Unweighted Percent	Estimated Number of Residents Ages18-29
Addison	77	7.8	6,942
Bennington	54	5.4	4,979
Caledonia	37	3.7	5,148
Chittenden	319	32.2	27,911
Essex	1	.1	876
Franklin	74	7.5	6,765
Grand Isle	8	.8	1,071
Lamoille	26	2.6	3,981
Orange	25	2.5	4,464
Orleans	21	2.1	4,095
Rutland	40	4.0	9,250
Washington	124	12.5	8,906
Windham	96	9.7	5,804
Windsor	89	9.0	7,033
Total	991	100.0	97,225

Where first learned about Survey

Based on where the participants said the first learned about the survey (see Table 15), it appears that about 80 percent learned of the survey, either directly or indirectly, through the advertising efforts of the SPF-SIG community grantees (and the two DFC grantees that also advertised the survey). Only about 20 percent of participants statewide reported that they learned of the survey via the internet ads we placed on Facebook. Although worksites were one source of information about the survey, they were less prominent than

other community locations in which posters were placed and postcards were distributed. Follow-up discussions with the community grantees have identified additional locations that might be considered for advertising the survey, and these suggestions will be revisited prior to conducting the survey again in 2010. Approaches for using Facebook more productively will also be explored, along with the use of radio and newspaper ads.

Table 15. Where respondents found out about survey

Where found out about survey	N*	Unweighted Percent
Poster at work	89	9.4
Poster other than work	299	31.7
Someone at work	70	7.4
Someone not at work	240	25.4
Internet ad	186	19.7
Ad or article in newspaper	39	4.1
Other	21	2.2
Total	944	100.0

*Number of respondents who did not report how they heard about the survey = 47.

E. Respondent Comments

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to enter any comments they would like to share about the survey or issues that were raised in the survey. As displayed in Table 16, the specific comments entered were classified into 16 more generic categories plus a "miscellaneous category" composed of a heterogeneous mix of viewpoints, anecdotes and observations that did not fall into any of the other categories.

The majority of participants (78 percent) chose not to provide any comments. Of those who did, a diverse set of viewpoints was articulated, with no particular view being dominant. For example the number of participants who commented that marijuana was not a big problem and/or should be legalized was similar to the number who mentioned that marijuana use was a widespread problem. Some 24 participants suggested that the drinking age should be lowered, while 17 commented that there was a need for enhanced enforcement of alcohol and drug laws or harsher punishment (although not necessarily in regards to underage drinking). Reassuringly, there were only 14 participants who said that they disliked the survey or found some of the questions to be confusing.

Table 16. Respondent comments

Comment	N	Percent
None/blank	770	77.7
Miscellaneous	55	5.5
Alcohol use is widespread/is a problem	29	2.9
Marijuana should be legalized/is not harmful or a big problem	27	2.7
Marijuana use is widespread/is a problem	26	2.6
Drinking age should be lowered	24	2.4
Need enhanced enforcement and/or harsher punishment	17	1.7
Disliked the survey or some of the questions or found them to be confusing	14	1.4
Liked the survey/thanks for doing this research	12	1.2
Should focus on drugs other than alcohol and marijuana	11	1.1
Alcohol is more of a problem than marijuana	10	1.0
Need to teach youth to drink responsibly	9	0.9
Youth are bored/need more alternative activities	6	0.6
Drinking and driving is a problem	4	0.4
In recovery	4	0.4
Parents need to be more involved	3	0.3
Youth need more prevention education	3	0.3
Norm is to drink and/or use drugs	3	0.3
Total*	----	----

* Because some respondent's comments were counted under more than one category, percentages sum to more than 100.

Appendix A

Comparisons between YAS and Other Vermont Statewide Surveys

Table A1. Statewide prevalence rate comparisons with data from other sources (based on persons aged 18-25)

	2008 Vermont Young Adult Survey (N=991)	2006-2007 Vermont NSDUH (N=617)	2003-2008 Vermont BRFSS (N=1819)
Any alcohol	73.8	71.4	67.0
Binge drinking	56.4	54.0	36.0
Marijuana use	30.4	29.4	22.5*
Driving after alcohol use	4.0	Not available	6.8
Driving after marijuana use	12.1	Not available	9.9*

*These questions were asked in 2007 and 2008 only (N=522).

Appendix B

Vermont Young Adult Survey Instrument

Vermont Young Adult Survey

Thank you for your willingness to compete the following survey. This survey is available on the internet as well as in paper form. If you have already completed either the internet or the paper version of this survey this year, DO NOT complete it again. Only one entry per person in the cash prize drawing will be allowed. Documentation of age and place of residence will be required from all prize winners.

Before you begin, please review the following information:

- The survey will ask questions about your perceptions and use of alcohol and other drugs.
- The information will be used to help inform and improve prevention programs.
- This survey is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or not to answer any specific questions. You may skip any question you are not comfortable answering.
- *Do not take this survey if you are currently under the age of 18 or (as of Sept 1) over the age of 29.*
- The survey is completely anonymous. There is no way your name or other identifying information can be linked to your responses.
- **Please return the survey in the enclosed pre-stamped envelope**.
- You will be eligible to enter your name and mailing address into a drawing for ten $100 cash prizes and one $250 cash prize after completing the survey. **To enter, please complete the enclosed pre-stamped postcard and drop it in the mail. DO NOT return the postcard in the envelope that contains the completed survey.**
- The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- The results of this study may be published. However, your responses will be combined with data from many others who also completed the survey. The published results will not include any information that could personally identify you.
- The survey is being sponsored by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), which is a non-profit research organization contracted by the Vermont Department of Health. No one from the Vermont Department of Health will have access to your data.
- If you have any questions about this survey, or would like to know where you can obtain more information regarding alcohol and other drug issues, please contact Amy Livingston at PIRE, via phone at (802) 652-4111, or email at **alivingston@pire.org**.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Elysia Oudemans, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, (301) 755-2757 or toll free: 1-866-747-3674 ext. 2757.

Demographics

1. Are you:

1. ☐ Male
2. ☐ Female

[To indicate your response, please place an "X" in the appropriate box].

2. What is your age?

1. ☐ Under 18
2. ☐ 18 through 20
3. ☐ 21 through 25
4. ☐ 26 through 30
5. ☐ Over 30

3. What is your employment status?

1. ☐ Employed for wages (full- or part-time)
2. ☐ Self-employed
3. ☐ Not employed and looking for work
4. ☐ Not employed and not looking for work

4. Are you a student?

1. ☐ No
2. ☐ Yes, in college or vocational school, full-time
3. ☐ Yes, in college or vocational school, part-time
4. ☐ Yes, in high school or a GED program
5. ☐ Yes, in some other type of school

5. What is your town or city where you live (for most of the year)?

Town: _____

State:_____

6. How long have you lived in this town?

1. ☐ Less than 1 year
2. ☐ 1 to 5 years
3. ☐ over 5 years

7. Not including the town where you live, in what other town or city do you spend the greatest amount of time (for example, where you work or attend school)?

Town: _____

State:_____

8. How many days of the year do you spend some time in this other town or city?

1. ☐ less than 10
2. ☐ 10 to 29
3. ☐ 30 to 60
4. ☐ Over 60

9. What is the reason for spending time in this other town or city? (check all that apply)

1. ☐ attending school
2. ☐ working
3. ☐ shopping
4. ☐ dining or entertainment
5. ☐ seeing friends or family members
6. ☐ other

Perceptions about Ease of Access to Alcohol and Marijuana

How easy do you think it is for…	1 Very easy	2 Somewhat easy	3 Somewhat difficult	4 Very difficult	5 Don't know
10. persons aged 18 to 20 in your community (that is, the community where you live for most of the year) to purchase alcohol in stores?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. persons aged 18 to 20 in your community to purchase alcohol in bars and restaurants?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. persons aged 18 to 20 in your community to obtain alcohol from friends or family members?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. persons your age in your community to obtain marijuana (from any source)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Attitudes and Norms

To what extent do you agree with the following statements…	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly disagree	5 Don't know
14a. In the community where you live, getting drunk now and then is fairly normal and acceptable among persons your age.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14b. In the community where you live, getting high on marijuana now and then is fairly normal and acceptable among persons your age.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In general, how do you feel about each of the following behaviors… [Note: For these questions and throughout the survey, a "drink" refers to the alcohol content of one 12 ounce beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine, or a shot (1.25 ounces) of hard liquor].	1 I approve	2 I neither approve or disapprove	3 I somewhat disapprove	4 I strongly disapprove	5 I don't know
15. Someone your age having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Someone your age having five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage once or twice a week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Someone your age driving after having one or two drinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Someone your age driving after having five or more drinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Someone your age using marijuana once or twice a week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Underage persons between the ages of 18 and 20 drinking alcohol	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Perceived Risk of Harm

Please rate the level of risk for each of the following…	1 No Risk	2 Slight Risk	3 Moderate Risk	4 Great Risk	5 Don't Know
21a. How much do people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways when they have five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage once or twice a week?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21b. How much do people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways when they smoke marijuana once or twice a week?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Perceptions Regarding Law Enforcement

Please rate the likelihood of each of the following…	1 Very Likely	2 Somewhat Likely	3 Not Very Likely	4 Not at all Likely	5 Don't Know
22. If someone your age was driving through your community one evening after having too much to drink, how likely is it that they would be noticed and stopped by the police?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. And if they were stopped by the police and determined by the officer to be driving under the influence of alcohol, how likely is it that they would end up having their driver's license revoked or suspended?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. How likely is it that an obviously intoxicated adult, with proper age identification, would be served a drink if they asked for one in a local bar or restaurant?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. How likely is it that an obviously intoxicated adult, with proper age identification, would be sold an alcoholic beverage if they tried to buy it in a local convenience store?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. How likely are police in your community to find out about and break up parties where underage persons are drinking?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. How likely are police in your community to arrest an adult who is believed to have provided the alcohol for a party where underage persons are drinking?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. If someone your age is caught by the police using or possessing marijuana, how likely is it that they will be cited or arrested?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. If someone your age is caught by the police selling marijuana, how likely is it that they will be arrested?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Behaviors

The Next Set of Questions Asks About Your Own Behaviors and Experiences With Alcohol and Marijuana

30. During the past 30 days, have you had at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, a malt beverage, or liquor?

    1. ☐ Yes
    2. ☐ No If you answered No, skip to Question #35

31. During the past 30 days, have you driven a car or other vehicle after having perhaps too much to drink?

    1. ☐ Yes
    2. ☐ No
    3. ☐ Don't know

32. Considering all types of alcoholic beverages, how many days (if any) during the past 30 days did you have 5 or more drinks (if male) or 4 or more drinks (if female) on a single occasion?

_____ Days in past 30 days (0-30)

☐ Don't know or not sure

33. If you bought or tried to buy alcohol in a store during the past 30 days, were you always asked to show proof of age even though you may be over 21?

1. ☐ I did not try to buy alcohol in a store during the past 30 days
2. ☐ Yes, I was always asked to show proof of age
3. ☐ No, one or more times I was not asked to show proof of age

If you are 21 years of age or older, skip to Question #35

34. During the past 30 days, how did you get your alcohol? (Check all that apply)

1. ☐ I bought it at a store, such as a liquor store, convenience store, or grocery store
2. ☐ I bought it at a restaurant, bar or public place
3. ☐ My parent or guardian gave it to me or bought it for me
4. ☐ Another adult family member (age 21 or older) gave it to me or bought it for me
5. ☐ An adult (age 21 or older) who I know but who is not related to me gave it to me or bought it for me
6. ☐ Someone who I know under age 21 gave it to me or bought it for me
7. ☐ Someone I don't know gave it to me or bought it for me
8. ☐ It was available at a social gathering(such as a party or wedding)
9. ☐ I took it from my parents' home or someone else's home
10. ☐ I took it from a store without paying for it
11. ☐ I got it in Canada
12. ☐ I got it some other way

35. During the past 30 days, have you used marijuana or hashish?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No If you answered No, skip to Question #37

36. During the past 30 days, have you driven a car or other vehicle when you had been using marijuana or hashish?

☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐ Don't know or not sure (3)

37. During the past 30 days, did you ever ride in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Don't know or not sure

38. During the past 30 days, did you ever ride in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been using marijuana or hashish?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Don't know or not sure

Wrap-up Questions

39. Where did you first find out about this survey?

1. ☐ From a poster or display where I work
2. ☐ From a poster or display I saw somewhere else other than work
3. ☐ Someone at work told me about it
4. ☐ Someone else (not at work) told me about it
5. ☐ I saw an ad on the internet
6. ☐ I saw an ad or article in the newspaper
7. ☐ Other (please describe: _____)

40. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us or add regarding the issues we have asked about today?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you!

Thank you so much for your time. Your thoughts are very important to us. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey and would like to speak with someone about it, please contact:

Amy Livingston (802-652-4111) or Bob Flewelling (919-265-2621)

This survey was approved by the Vermont Department of Health