

# Rise Above Colorado Youth Survey

Behavioral Health & Substance Use

September 2022

# BACKGROUND & **METHODOLOGY**



This study has been conducted in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Data collection the 2022 survey occurred between March 9 and May 22, 2022.

- 316 interviews were gathered from online panels (44%) and 402 (56%) through social media recruitment (Instagram).



To qualify for the survey, teenagers had to meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Must reside in the state of Colorado
- ✓ Must be between 12 and 17 years of age
- ✓ Must be enrolled in grades seven through twelve, or have dropped out of school

# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographically, teens who participated in the 2022 survey resemble those from prior years. The greatest difference this year is having fewer 12-year-old participants (4% in 2022 versus 7-8% in prior years), largely because this youngest age group cannot be directly outreached to via social media. It is also interesting to see that 3% of participants identified as gender non-binary /gender fluid, the first time this option was included when asking gender (only 21 respondents identified as gender non-binary/gender fluid, making this group too small to break out in subsequent analyses) . Fewer participants chose *not* to answer the question on sexual identity, at just 1% this year compared to 4-7% in prior years. An increase in Black respondents is also seen from prior years, and more respondents selected multiple races/ethnicities this year than in the past (9% choosing more than one race in 2022 versus 6% in 2020 and only 2% in 2018 and 2016).

|                        | 2022  | 2020 | 2018 | 2016 |
|------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Base                   | 718   | 653  | 604  | 607  |
| Age 12                 | 4% ↓  | 7%   | 8%   | 8%   |
| Age 13                 | 17%   | 17%  | 17%  | 17%  |
| Age 14                 | 18%   | 16%  | 15%  | 15%  |
| Age 15                 | 19%   | 17%  | 17%  | 17%  |
| Age 16                 | 24%   | 22%  | 22%  | 22%  |
| Age 17                 | 19%   | 21%  | 21%  | 21%  |
| Female                 | 50%   | 48%  | 51%  | 48%  |
| Male                   | 47% ↓ | 52%  | 49%  | 52%  |
| Nonbinary/Gender Fluid | 3% ↑  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  |
| Heterosexual           | 82%   | 78%  | 82%  | 85%  |
| LGBQ                   | 17%   | 15%  | 14%  | 8%   |
| Prefer not to answer   | 1% ↓  | 7%   | 4%   | 7%   |

|                        | 2022 | 2020 | 2018 | 2016 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Caucasian              | 71%  | 67%  | 68%  | 73%  |
| Hispanic               | 20%  | 22%  | 24%  | 20%  |
| Black/African American | 8% ↑ | 5%   | 4%   | 4%   |
| Asian                  | 4%   | 4%   | 3%   | 3%   |
| Native American        | 3%   | 2%   | 2%   | 1%   |
| Other/Refused          | 3% ↓ | 6%   | 1%   | 1%   |
| Denver/Boulder MSA     | 52%  | 55%  | 55%  | 55%  |
| Central                | 15%  | 16%  | 16%  | 16%  |
| Northeast              | 17%  | 14%  | 13%  | 13%  |
| Northwest              | 6%   | 7%   | 7%   | 7%   |
| Southeast              | 6%   | 5%   | 6%   | 6%   |
| Southwest              | 4%   | 4%   | 4%   | 4%   |

# THE HEADLINES

# Most Colorado teens are **NOT** using drugs

*Use in the  
past 30 days*

**Alcohol**

**Marijuana**

**Vaping products**

**Prescription Stimulants\***

## *Middle school-aged youth*

**88% did not use**

12% used

**93% did not use**

7% used

**90% did not use**

10% used

**95% did not use**

5% used

## *High school-aged youth*

**76% did not use**

24% used

**83% did not use**

17% used

**79% did not use**

21% used

**94% did not use**

6% used

\*not prescribed to you

# Household use is up significantly

## Four out of ten teens live with someone misusing substances

**41% of teens** report they are living with someone who has a substance use disorder or is addicted to alcohol or drugs (**up from 25% in 2020**)

## Female teens are more impacted

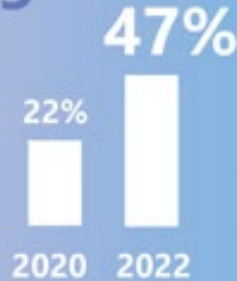
**47%**, more than twice the rate reported in 2020 (**up from 22%**)

## Teen use is more likely when living with an adult with a substance use disorder

Teens living in these situations are **at least 2x as likely** to have misused substances in the past 30 days



## Life at home is likely more challenging



Reported living with someone with a substance use disorder or addiction, more than twice pre-pandemic levels.

2x

Female youth living in these situations are at least twice as likely to have misused substances in the past 30 days.

# Attitudes towards drug use have relaxed

Female teens are **more likely to agree** that...

**32%** "Experimenting with drugs is part of being a teen"  
+13 since 2020

**32%** "Drugs can help teens manage stress"  
+9

**22%** "Using prescription drugs (stimulants) is safe"  
+8

**22%** "Prescription pain relievers are not addictive"  
+15





## Fortunately, most teens understand there are risks associated with taking unknown pills

**90%** See at least a "moderate amount" of risk associated with taking pills purchased online or off the street

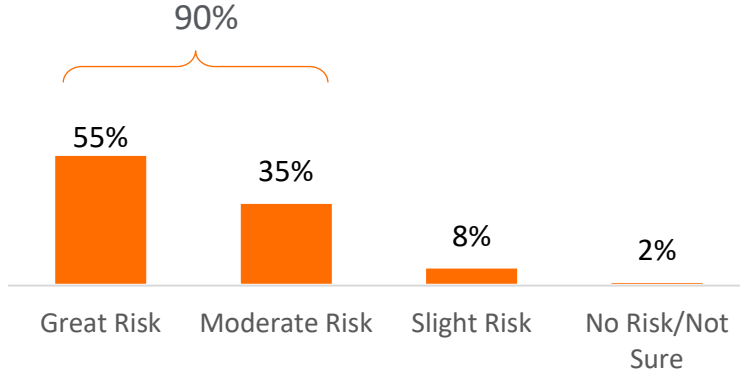
**91%** Are at least a "somewhat concerned" that a pill might be contaminated with other substances

**And 45% have had conversations with parents about Fentanyl**

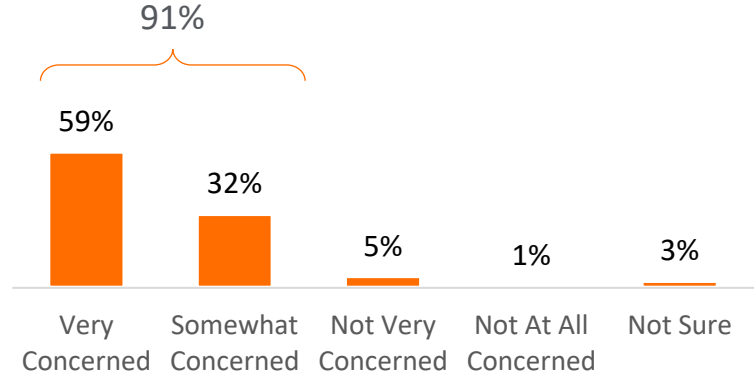


# PERCEIVED RISK OF COUNTERFEIT PILLS

“How much risk do you think someone is taking when they use pills that someone got online or on the street?”



“If someone offered you a pill that was not prescribed to you, how concerned would you be that it might be fake or “counterfeit,” and could contain other substances (like fentanyl) that could cause an overdose?”

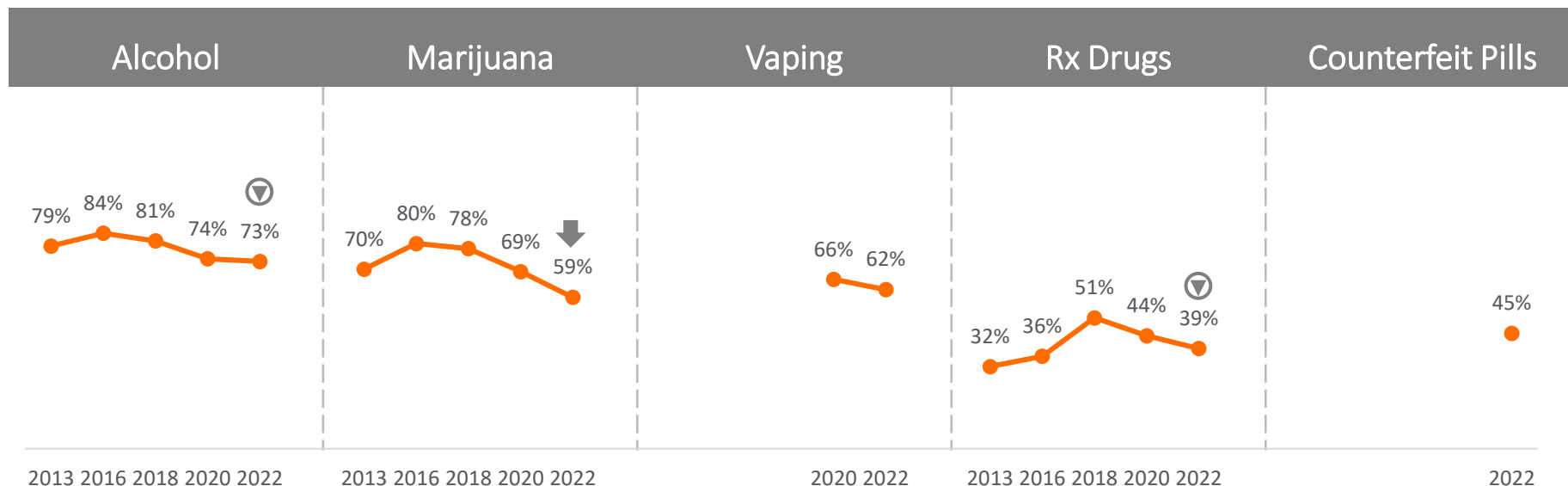


# FACTORS IMPACTING SUBSTANCE USE

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

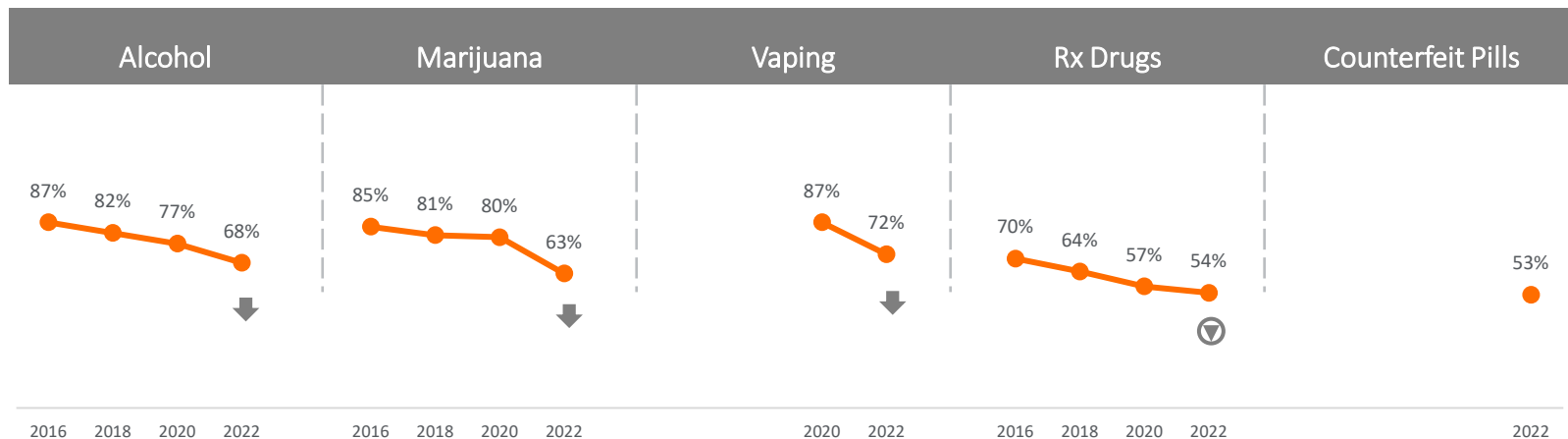
# FAMILY DISCUSSIONS

“Have you ever talked to your parents about [substance]?”



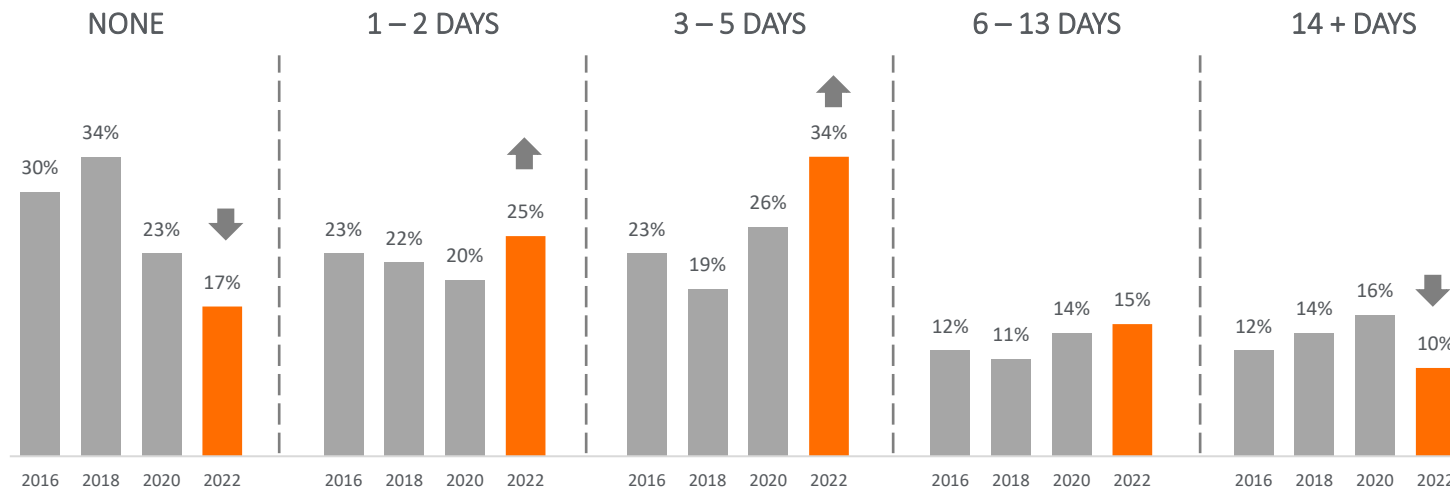
# EDUCATION AT SCHOOL & COMMUNITY

“Have you seen any information at your school or community talking about the risk of using [substance]?”



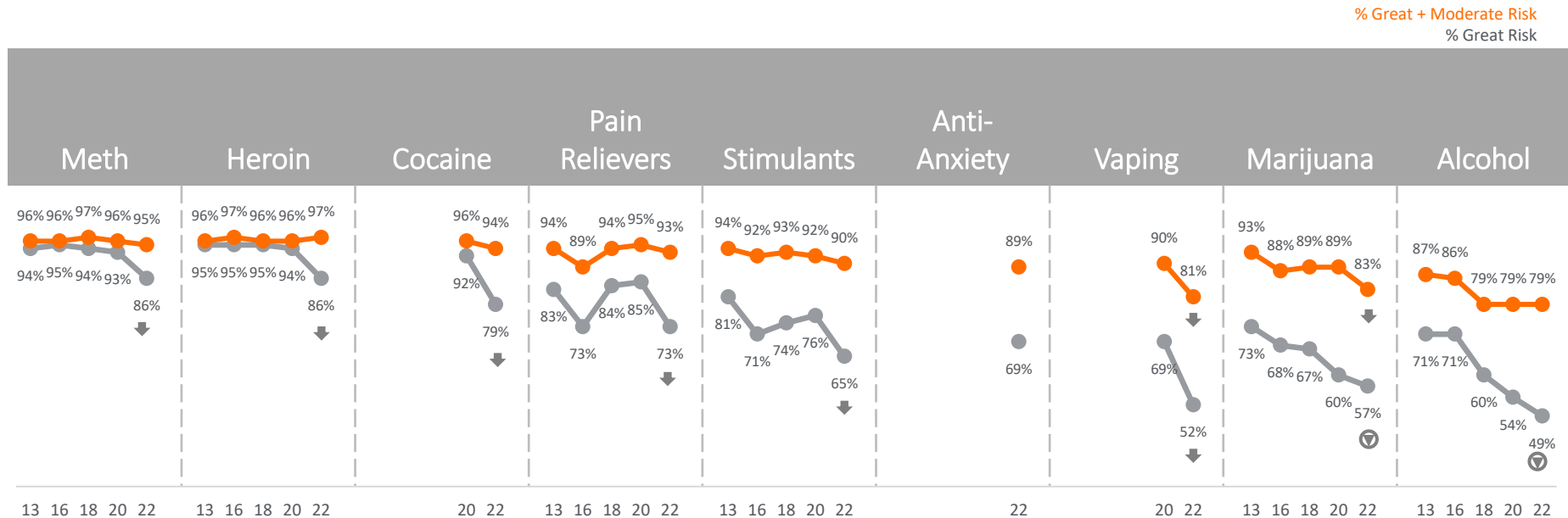
Recall is down for most groups except 12-13 YO teens who were more likely to see information about Rx drugs.

“During the past 30 days, how many days would you say your mental health was not good? Poor mental health includes anxiety, stress, depression, and problems with emotions.”



# PERCEIVED RISK OF REGULAR USE

“How much risk, if any, do you think there is in using [substance] on a regular basis?”



# RISK OF **REGULAR USE**



View Regular Use  
Less Risky

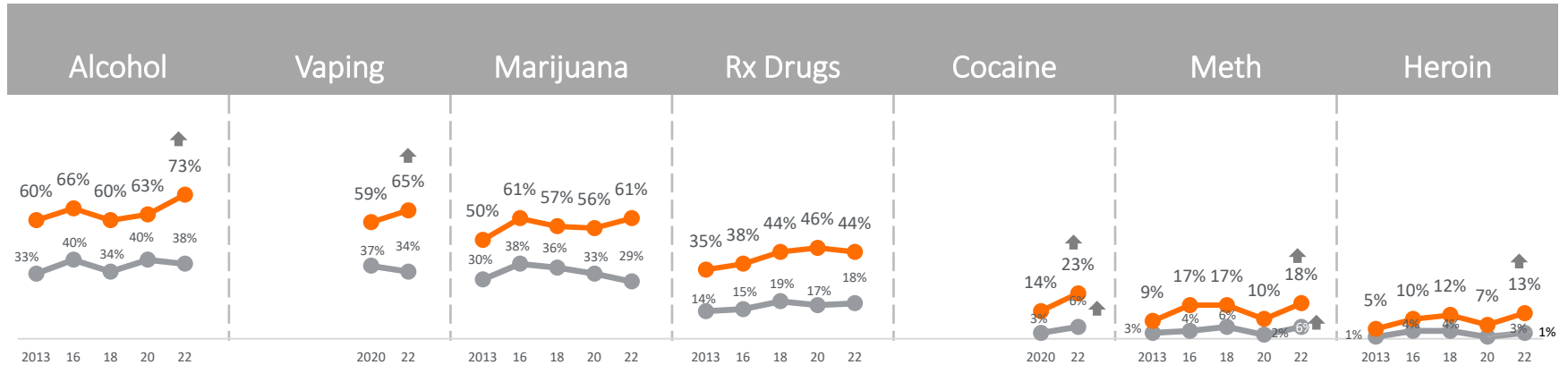
- Younger teens (12-13)
  - Marijuana, vaping, stimulants
- Middle-aged teens (14-15)
  - Alcohol and vaping
- Heterosexual
  - Nearly all substances



# EASE OF ACCESS

“How difficult, or easy, do you think it would be for you to get [substance]?”

% Very + Somewhat Easy  
% Very Easy



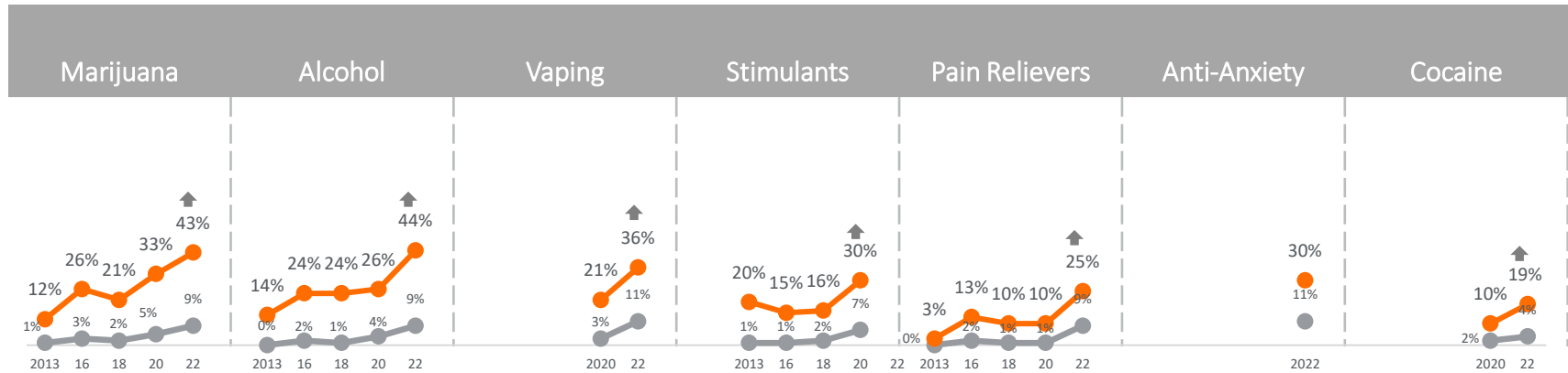
Ease of access increased across nearly all demographic groups, especially teens 12-13 years of age

# CURIOSITY TO TRY SUBSTANCES

“How curious would you be to try [substance] if someone were to give it to you?”

*(Asked of those who have heard of, but never used, each of the following substances)*

% Very + Somewhat Curious  
% Very Curious

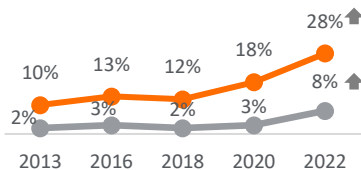


# RISK FACTORS

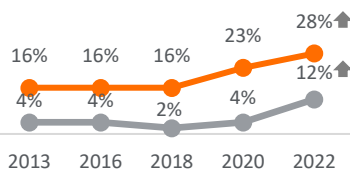
% Strongly + Somewhat Agree

% Strongly Agree

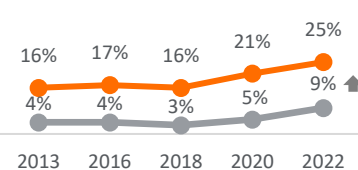
Experimenting with drugs is  
not that big of a deal



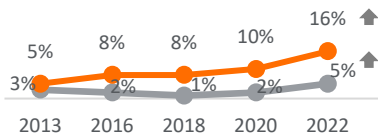
Drugs can help teens  
manage the stress



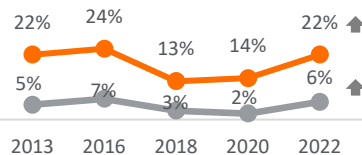
My parents would be fine  
with me drinking beer



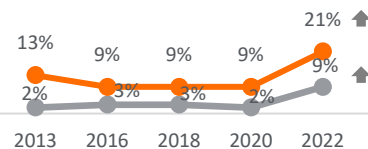
My parents would be fine with  
me smoking marijuana



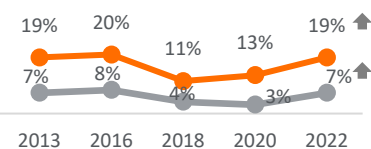
Prescription drugs are safer  
than illegal drugs



Stimulants are safe even if  
the script wasn't for you



Prescription pain relievers are  
not addictive



# RISK FACTORS



Reduced concern surrounding drug/substance use is found mostly among younger teens (whose attitudes now look much more like those 16-17 years of age)

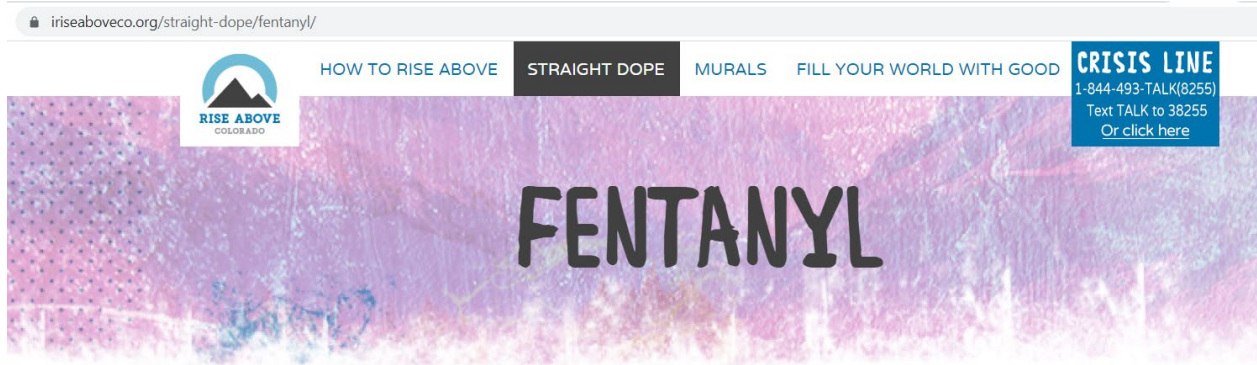


Girls' attitudes toward risks have also declined, now looking more like boys.



Increases in drug/substance acceptability are seen across all income categories except for \$100k+ where only parental approval of marijuana is seen as more acceptable today.

# New Youth Fentanyl Prevention Resources



## DANGER OF FENTANYL IN CO?



45%

of CO teens reported discussing the risks of counterfeit pills with their parent or guardian.<sup>1</sup>

Colorado fentanyl related overdose death data:

2019: 222

2020: 540

2021: 912+

# New Youth Fentanyl Prevention Resources



## Chapters in this Lesson

Click on a chapter to jump to that section of the lesson.

