

Rise Above Colorado Youth Survey

Behavioral Health & Substance Use

October 2024



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment



Data were gathered between March 4th and May 31, 2024. **885 participants**

- ▶ Data collection employed online research panels and social media outreach.
- ▶ The survey consisted of 120 questions and took an average of 10 minutes to complete.

To qualify, teenagers had to meet the following criteria :

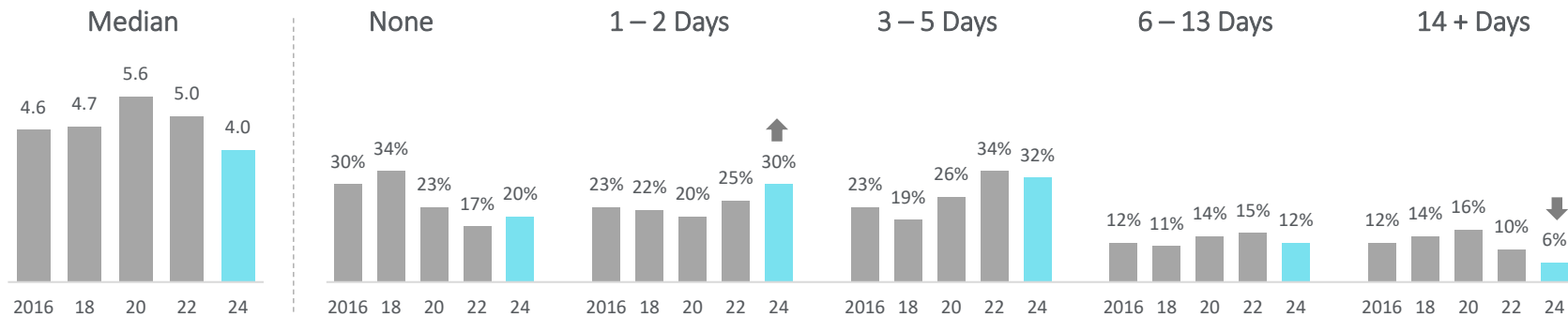
- ▶ Must reside in the state of Colorado
- ▶ Must be between 12 and 17 years of age
- ▶ Must be enrolled in grades seven through twelve, or have dropped out of school

The maximum margin of sampling error on a sample size of 885 interviews is +/- 3.6 percentage points.

Methodologically, this study is substantially different from the Healthy Kids survey.

MENTAL HEALTH

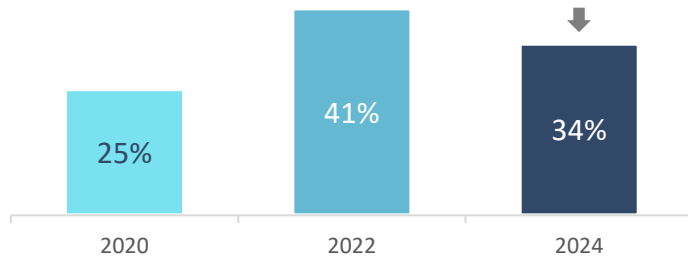
Q: “During the past 30 days, how many days would you say your mental health was not good? Poor mental health includes anxiety, stress, depression, and problems with emotions.”



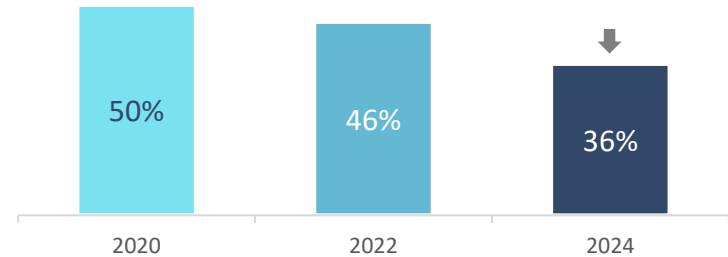
- ▶ Fewer poor mental health days among females
- ▶ Those identifying as LGBQ report the highest number of poor mental health days
- ▶ Teens living in rural parts of the state report fewer poor mental health days than those along the Front Range

PERSONAL SAFETY

“Have you lived with someone with a substance use disorder or addiction (alcohol or other drugs)?”



“Do you have a member of your household who has been depressed or has other mental health problems?”

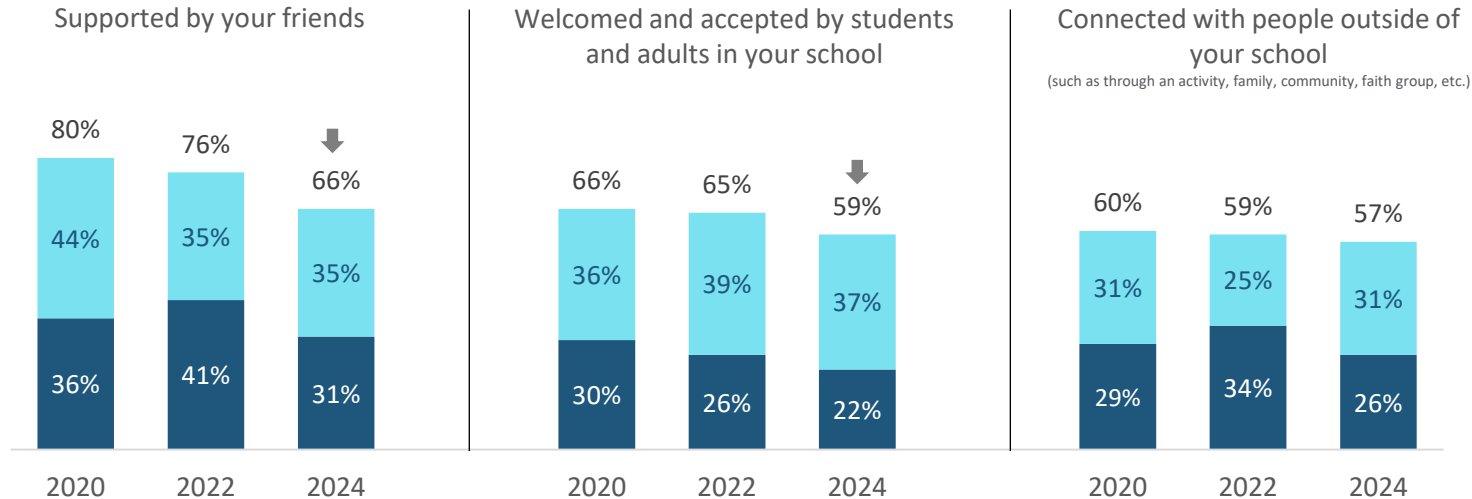


- ▶ No significant increases among any of the demographic breakouts
- ▶ Significant improvements on both personal safety measures among females and those who identify as heterosexual

SENSE OF BELONGING

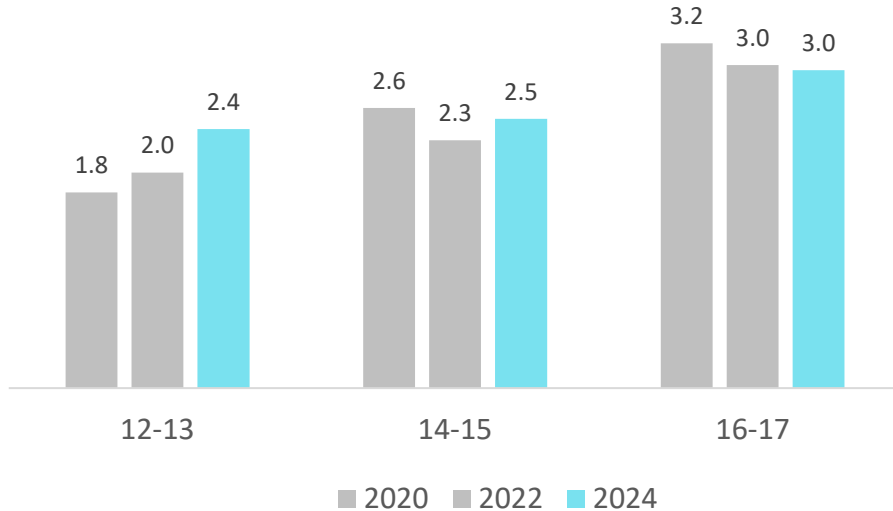
Q: "To what extent do you feel that you are...?"

% Mostly | % Completely



- ▶ Feeling supported by friends declined across nearly all demographic breakouts
- ▶ Teens in Southern Colorado saw the fewest declines on these measures

Median Hours/Day on Social Media



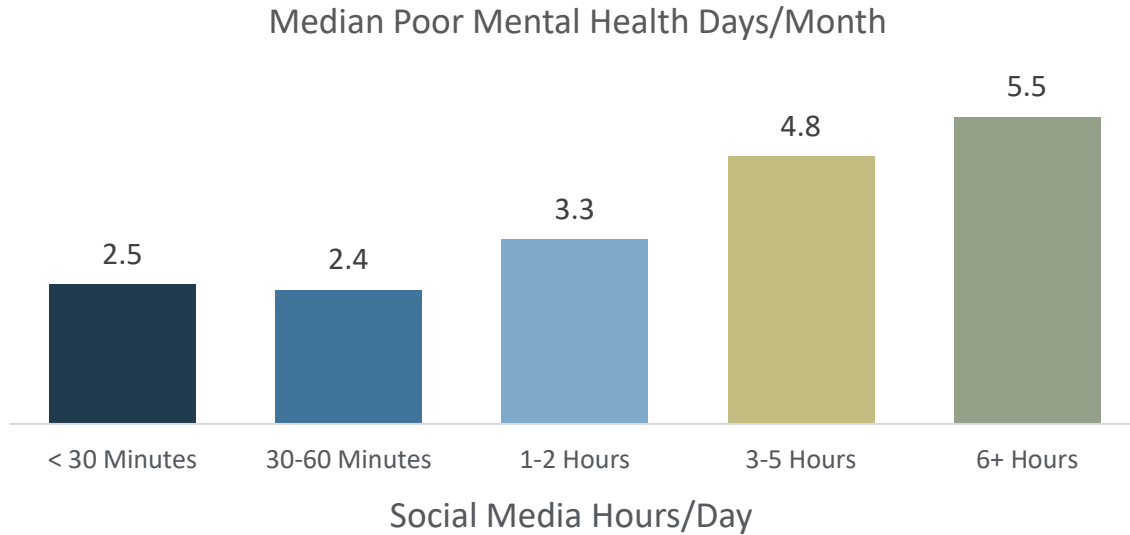
> “The biggest challenge we face today is social media overexposure”
– 14-year-old female, Northeastern Colorado

> “Mental stress, feeling anxious and uneasy because of social media and media influencers”
– 17-year-old male, Northwest Colorado

> “Navigating social media and its impact on self-esteem”
– 13-year-old male, Denver/Boulder

> “Dealing with social media and comparing myself to others” – 16-year-old male, Denver/Boulder

MENTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL MEDIA

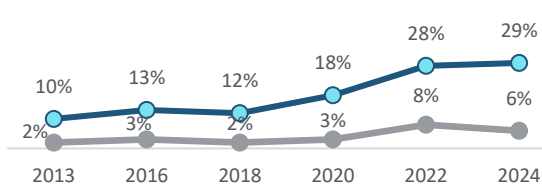


“I think the biggest challenge we face now is trying to live our lives while simultaneously being surrounded by social media and all of its influences. It feels like we're being controlled by the media, and that brings out the worst.”

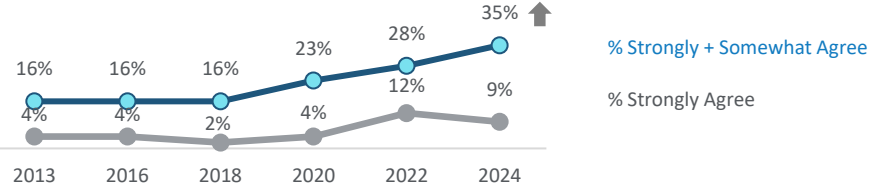
– 16-year-old female D/B

RISK FACTORS

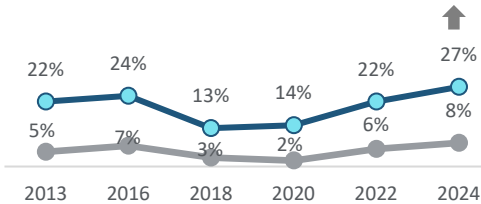
Experimenting with drugs is not that big of a deal



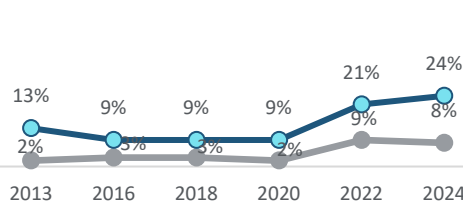
Drugs can help teens manage stress



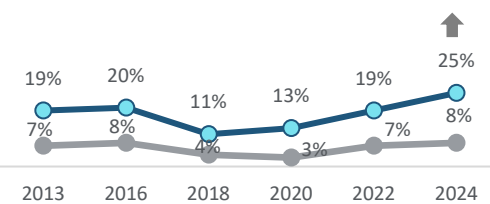
Prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs



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

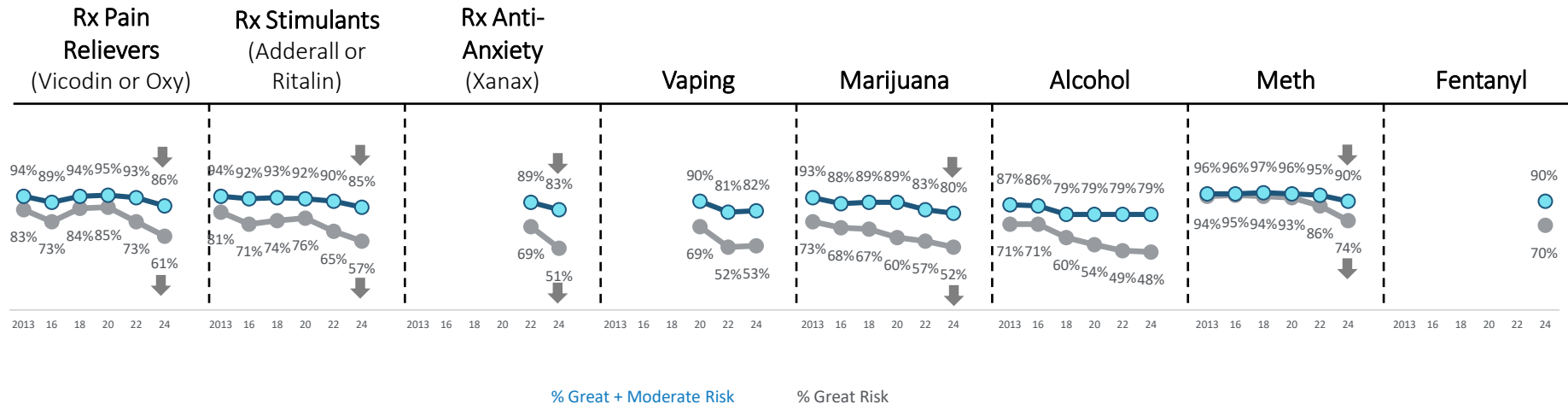


Prescription pain relievers are not addictive



PERCEIVED RISK OF REGULAR USE

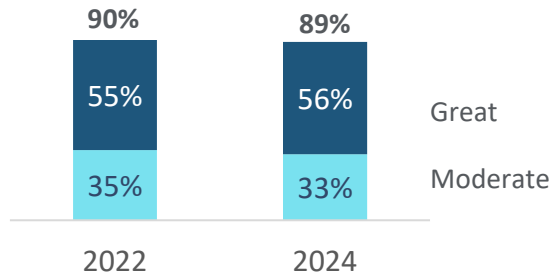
Q: "How much risk, if any, do you think there is in using [substance] on a REGULAR BASIS?"



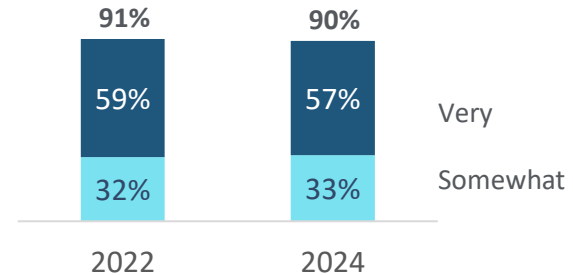
- ▶ Similar declines in regular substance use risk are seen among older teens (16-17), those living along the Front Range, males, those identifying as LGBTQ and Hispanic teens.

PERCEIVED RISK OF COUNTERFEIT PILLS

“How risky do you think it is to take 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?”

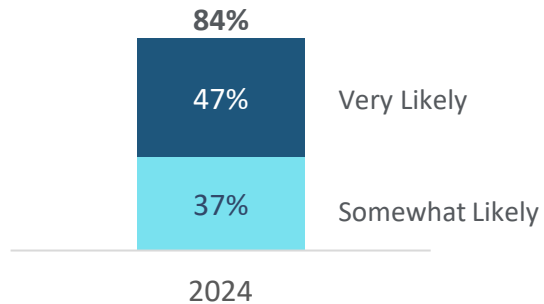


“The blue pills that are fentanyl are all over my school. I know of 2 kids my age that have overdosed on them. Some of my friends actually have tried them before”

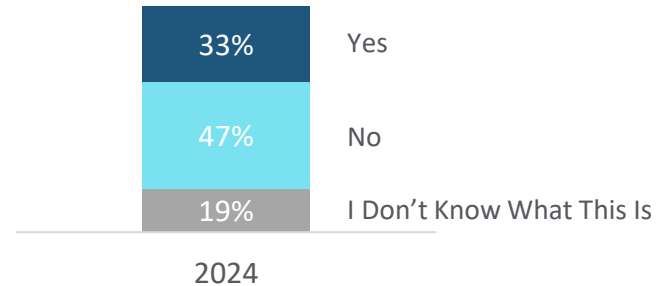
– 16-year-old female, Central Colorado

PREVENTING OVERDOSES

“How likely would you be to try to stop a friend from taking a drug or pill because it might be laced with fentanyl?”

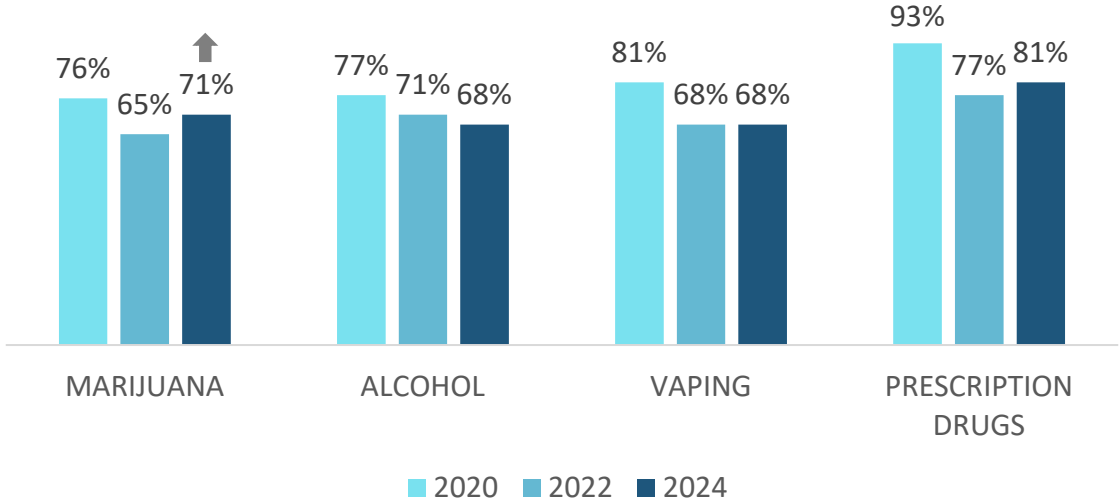


“Have you thought about carrying naloxone or Narcan with you in case someone around you overdoses?”



DISCOURAGING FRIENDS

Q: "Would you encourage a friend to stop if you knew they were using [substance]?"



MENTAL HEALTH & **SUBSTANCE USE**

Number of Poor Mental Health Days

% Have Used (Ever)	None	One to Two	Three to Five	Six or more
Meth	2%	1% ↓	5%	4%
Marijuana	11% ↓	26%	33%	39% ↑
Pain Reliever	3% ↓	6%	9%	12% ↑
Stimulant	3% ↓	7%	15%	16%
Anti-Anxiety	2% ↓	6%	13%	13%
Alcohol	26% ↓	49%	61% ↑	59% ↑
Vaping	11% ↓	30%	52% ↑	44% ↑

BELONGING & SUBSTANCES

BELONG "COMPLETELY" TO AT
LEAST ONE GROUP

DON'T BELONG TO ANY GROUP
"COMPLETELY"

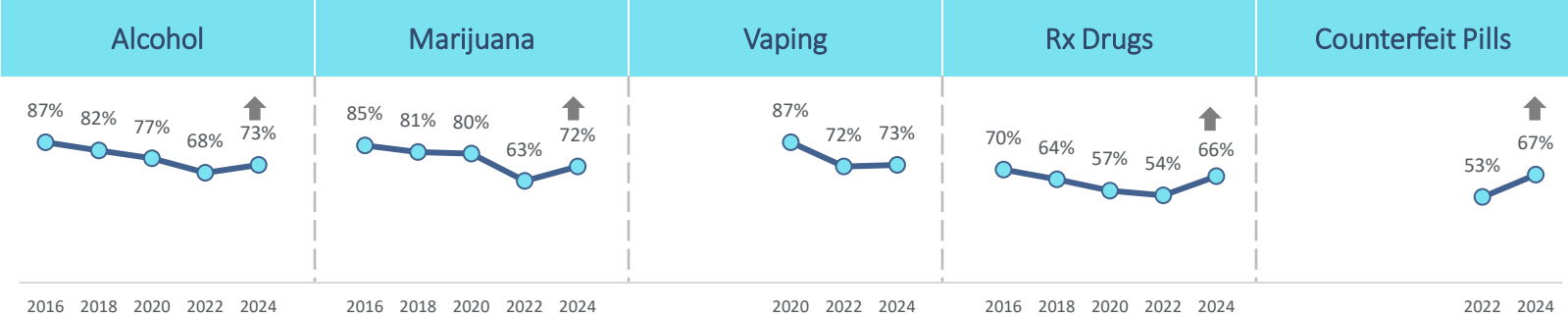
19%	Used marijuana	30%
39%	Consumed Alcohol	53%
19%	Vaped	41%
4%	Taken pain relievers	8%
6%	Taken stimulants	12%
2%	Taken anti-anxiety drugs	10%
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23%	Curious to try pain relievers	39%
25%	Curious to try anxiety drugs	36%
32%	Curious to try marijuana	47%

SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER

SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER

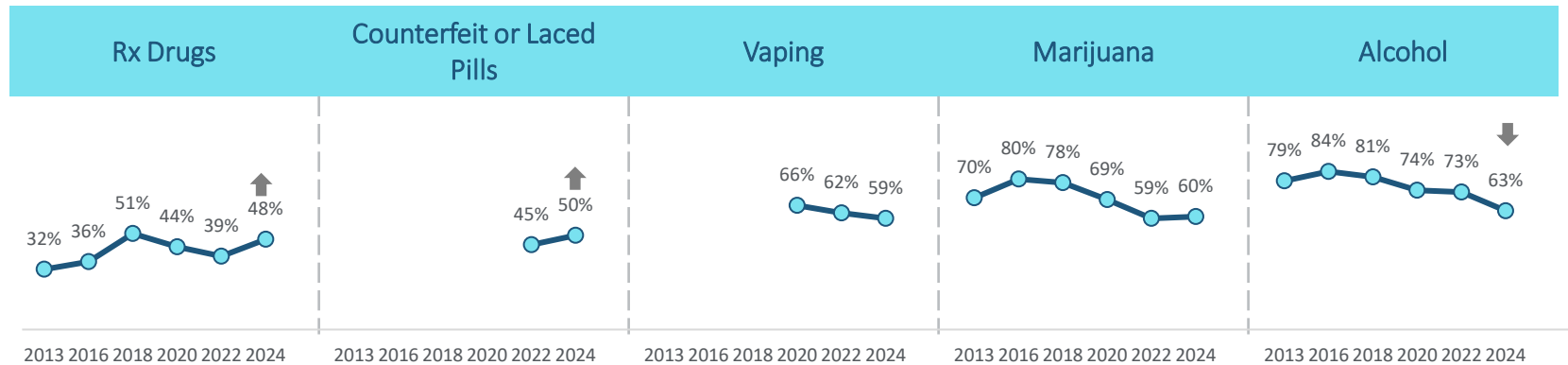
EDUCATION AT SCHOOL & COMMUNITY

Q: "Have you seen any information at your school or community talking about the risks of using [substance]?"



FAMILY DISCUSSIONS

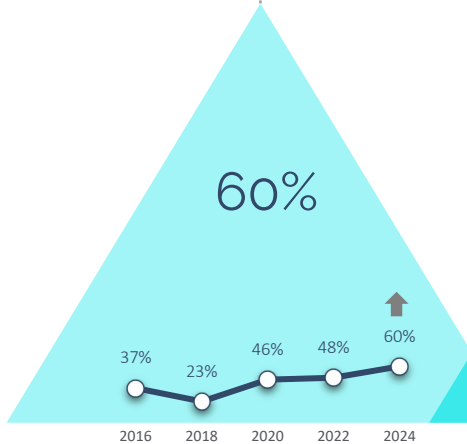
Q: "Have you EVER talked to your parents about [substance]?"



CAMPAIGN AWARENESS

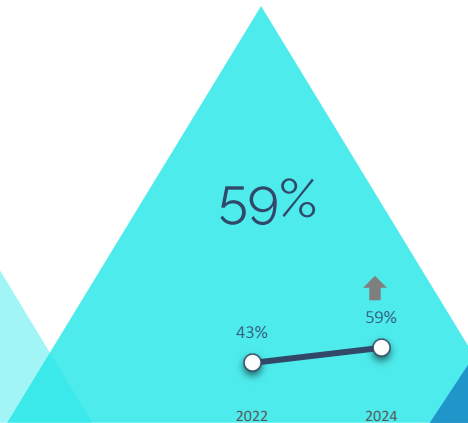
Rise Above Colorado

Rise Above Colorado, #RiseAbove or "Fill Your World With Good," about healthy activities and data that most youth aren't using drugs and alcohol



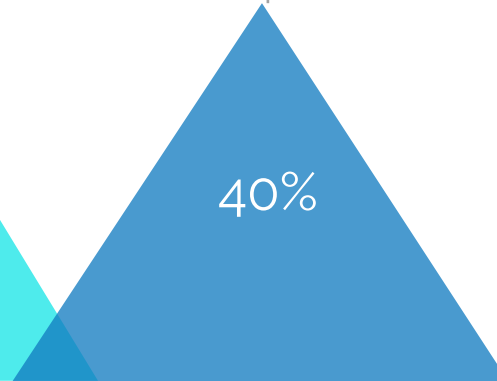
I Matter Colorado

"I Matter" Colorado, encouraging youth to take advantage of free therapy sessions if they feel sad or are struggling



Connect Effect

"The Connect Effect," highlighting that most teens aren't using pills not prescribed to them, that most would try and stop a friend from taking a pill that could contain fentanyl, and that most teens aren't using substances to cope with negative feelings or stress.



KEY TAKE AWAYS

Attitudes toward substance use shifted since the pandemic.

The pandemic (2020) changed many things for youth – it is not just about COVID-19.

- ▶ It is a different world for kids than it was four years ago.



- ▶ Attitudes today look largely like 2022.
 - ▶ Shifts typically reflect lower perceived risk of substance use and/or greater curiosity to try.
 - ▶ This may reflect other aspects of life feeling more risky.

- ▶ Younger teens are responding to the survey in ways which look more similar to older teens, which appears to be linked to increased social media use.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

However, mental health has improved, especially among females, which appears to be related to being less likely to live with someone with substance use or mental health problems (also a likely post-pandemic shift).



- ▶ But youth are feeling less supported by their friends and family, and instead focusing on controlling what they can control: finding meaning in their schoolwork.
- ▶ This feels a bit like GRIT (growth, resilience, integrity, and tenacity) which is designed to strengthen ourselves and develop resilience to bounce back from adversity.
- ▶ If the way kids are thinking about themselves is changing, our messaging will need to adapt to resonate.



Rise Above Colorado
Youth Survey

THANK YOU!



COLORADO
Office of Behavioral Health
Department of Human Services

