

Chapter 12. Teens and Community

Community resources are important to an adolescent's development. Communities provide parks, libraries and community centers for leisure activities. Also provided are school-sponsored programs, national youth serving organizations and religious or volunteer organizations. Youth need to have these opportunities to be able to participate in groups and be able to contribute, which provide youth with responsibilities and challenges.¹ Community involvement creates unity, high self esteem and a sense of feeling connected to the community.² The benefits from volunteering are endless ranging from developing new social skills to learning about themselves and giving youth a more clear direction in life.³

Exposure to multiple positive resources such as family, school and community has a positive impact on risk behaviors such as violence, drugs and sex. Community involvement also provides access to other adults in the community outside of one's family. If youth do not seek out healthy opportunities they are more likely to find other ways to fill in their time which may lead to unwanted risky behaviors.^{2,3}

This Chapter highlights how teens in Southwest Wisconsin perceive their community:

- Do teens feel that their community cares about them?
- Do teens in Southwest Wisconsin care about their friends and neighbors?
- Do teens in Southwest Wisconsin feel they are given a lot of opportunities to make their town, city or community a better place to live?

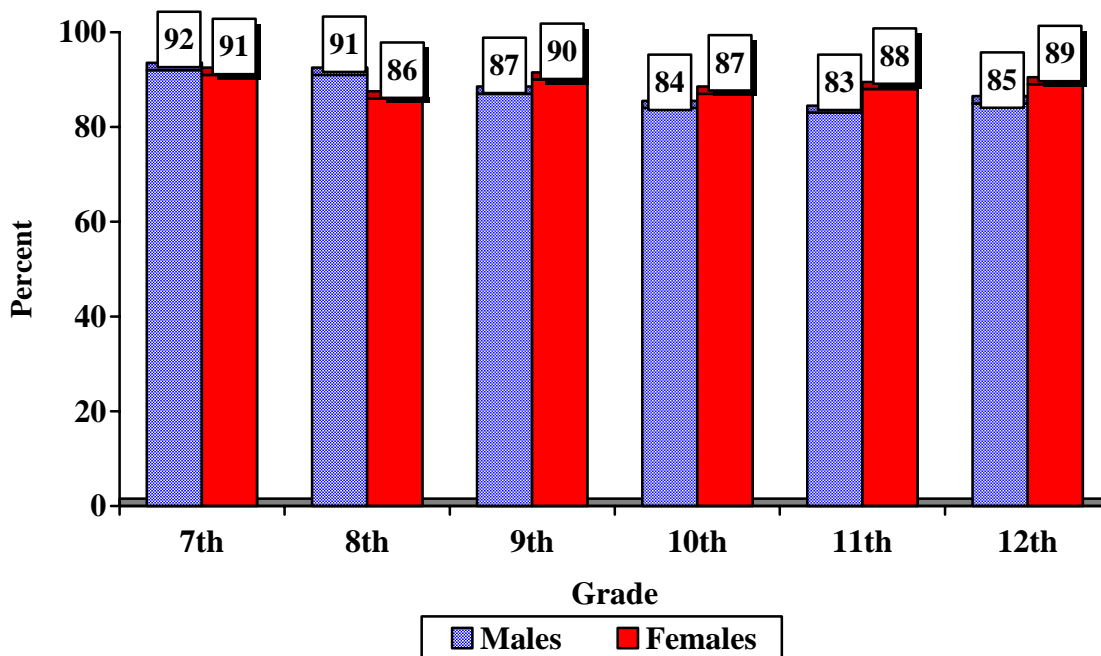
¹ Morrissey, Kathleen M (2005). The Relationship between Out-of-School Activities and Positive Youth Development: An Investigation of the Influences of Communities. *Adolescence* 40(157), 67-85.

² Teenagers and Community Service: A Guide to the Issues. (2005) *Adolescence* 40(160) 867-68.

³ Mueller, Allison (2005). Antidote to Learned Helplessness: Empowering Youth Through Service. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, 14(1), 16-19.

TEENS WHO FEEL SAFE AT HOME, AT SCHOOL AND IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I feel safe at home, at school and in my community”:



Key Findings:

At least 83% of teens at every grade level “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I feel safe at home, in school and in my community”.

A higher percentage (92%) of 7th grade males “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement than any other grade or gender group.

Other Notable Findings:

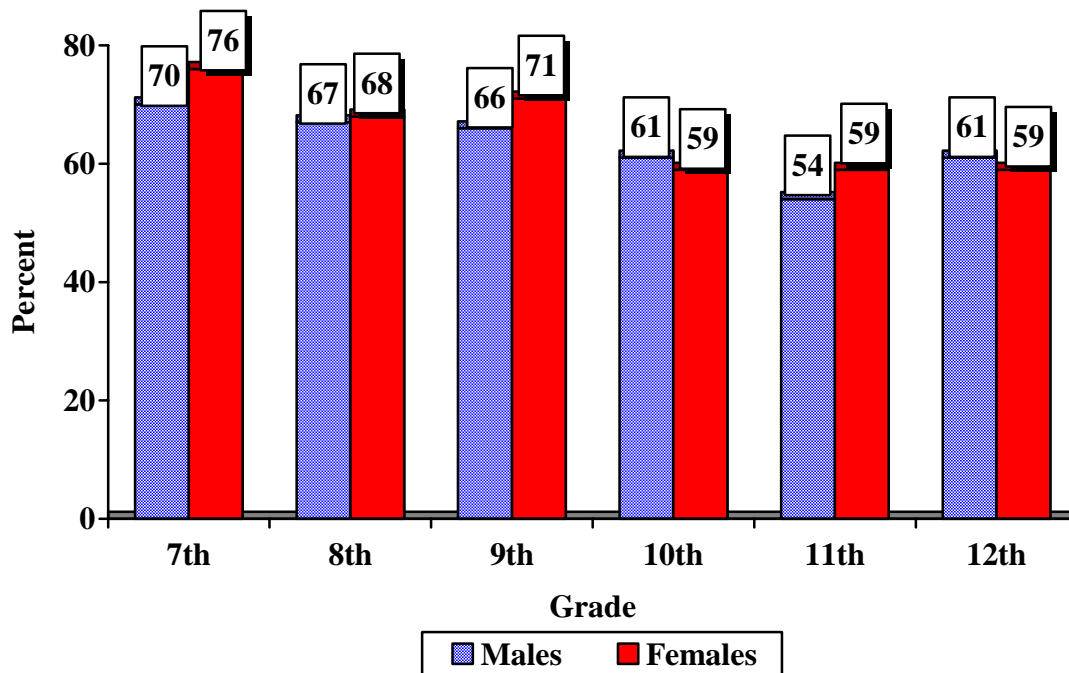
Overall, 88% of teens agree with the statement, “I feel safe at home, at school and in my community”, but they are split as to the extent they agree: 42% of the teens “strongly agree” and 46% “agree” with the statement.

The percentage of teens who “strongly agree” with the statement gradually declines from 56% for 7th grade males and females to about 36% in 10th grade, and remains at that level for 11th and 12th grade.

Only 9% of teens disagree with the statement.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I’m given a lot of opportunities to make my town, city or community a better place to live.”:



Key Findings:

Seventy-six percent (76%) of 7th grade females and 70% of 7th grade males “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I’m given a lot of opportunities to make my town, city or community a better place to live.”

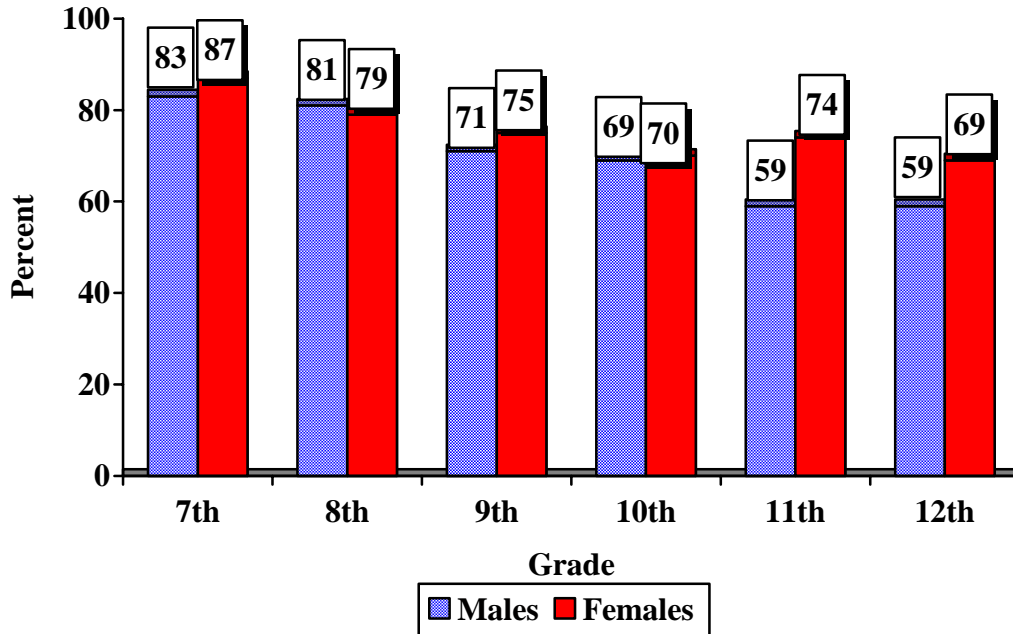
Sixty-one percent (61%) of 12 grade males and 59% of 12th grade females “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement.

Other Notable Finding:

A third (35%) of teens in Southwest Wisconsin feel they are not given the opportunity to make their community a better place.

COMMUNITY LAW ENFORCEMENT

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I can count on the police if I am having a problem or need help, etc.”:



Key Findings:

In general, 7th and 8th grade students report seeing the police as a resource most often.

The percentage of males who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I can count on the police if I am having a problem or need help, etc.” drops to 59% by 11th & 12th grade.

Other Notable Findings:

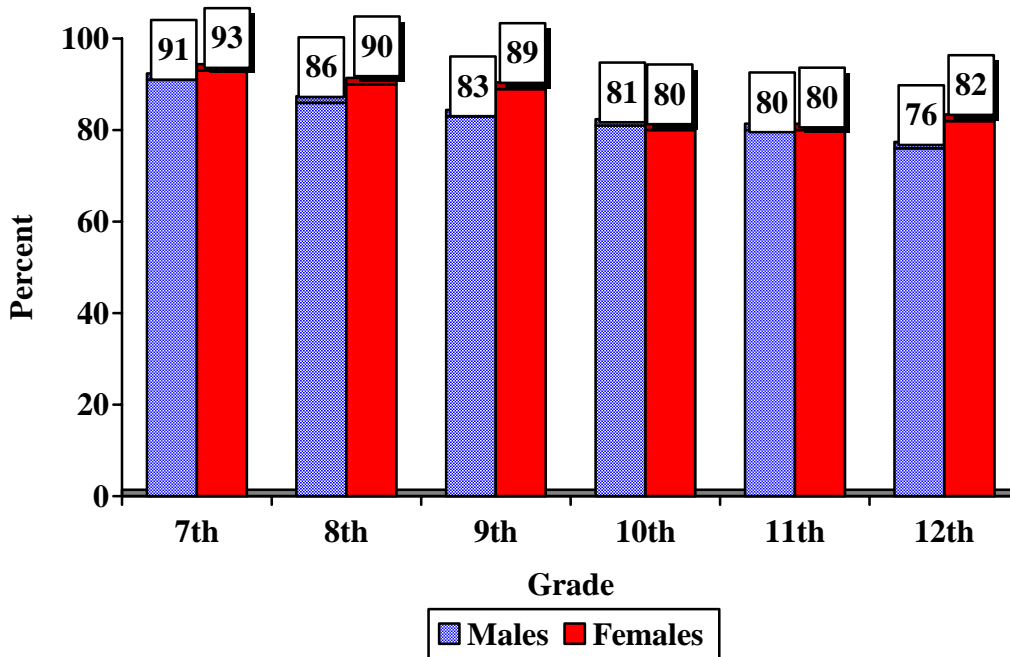
7th and 8th grade students were nearly three times more likely to “strongly agree” with the statement “I can count on the police if I am having a problem or need help, etc.” than were 12th graders.

About three out of four students (73%) agreed with the statement “I can count on the police if I am having a problem or need help, etc.” and girls were slightly more likely to see the police as a resource in a time of need.

The percentage of males who “strongly disagree” with the statement increased significantly from 6% in 7th grade to 16% in 12th grade.

NEIGHBORHOOD MONITORING

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “If an adult in my town saw me drinking alcohol, smoking, vandalizing property, or doing drugs they would probably tell my parent(s)/guardian(s) or call the police”:



Key Findings:

More females than males “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “If an adult in my town saw me drinking alcohol, smoking, vandalizing property, or doing drugs they would probably tell my parent(s)/guardian(s), or call the police.”

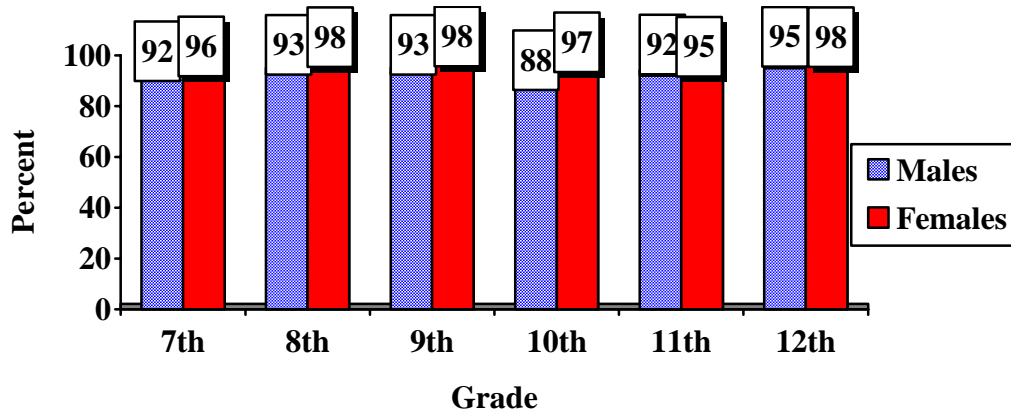
Younger teens (grades 7 – 9) are more likely than older teens (grades 10 – 12) to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “If an adult in my town saw me drinking alcohol, smoking, vandalizing property, or doing drugs they would probably tell my parent(s)/guardian(s), or call the police.”

Other Notable Finding:

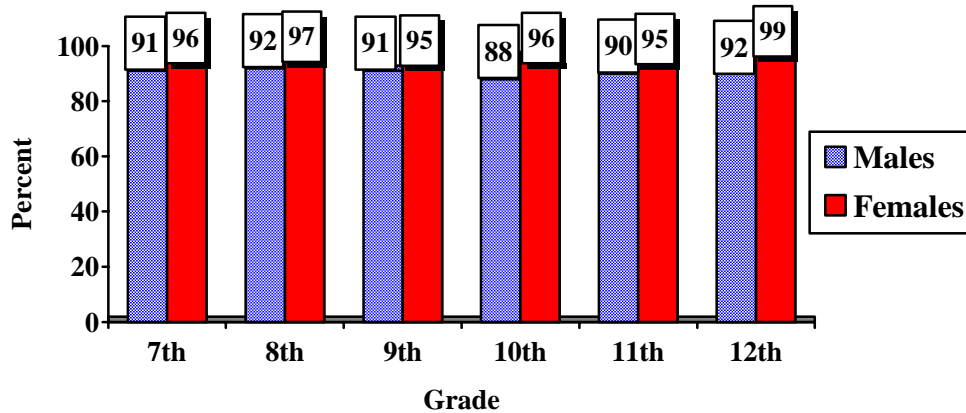
Overall, 84% of all students believed that if an adult in their town saw them drinking alcohol, smoking, vandalizing property, or doing drugs, they would probably tell their parents or call the police.

CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I feel it is important to help other people”:



Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I care about other people’s feelings”:



Key Finding:

Nearly all teens report that it is important to help other people and indicate they also care about other people’s feelings. These numbers were consistent across the grade levels and gender lines.

Other Notable Findings:

Overall 61% of females and 43% of males “strongly agree” it is important to help others.

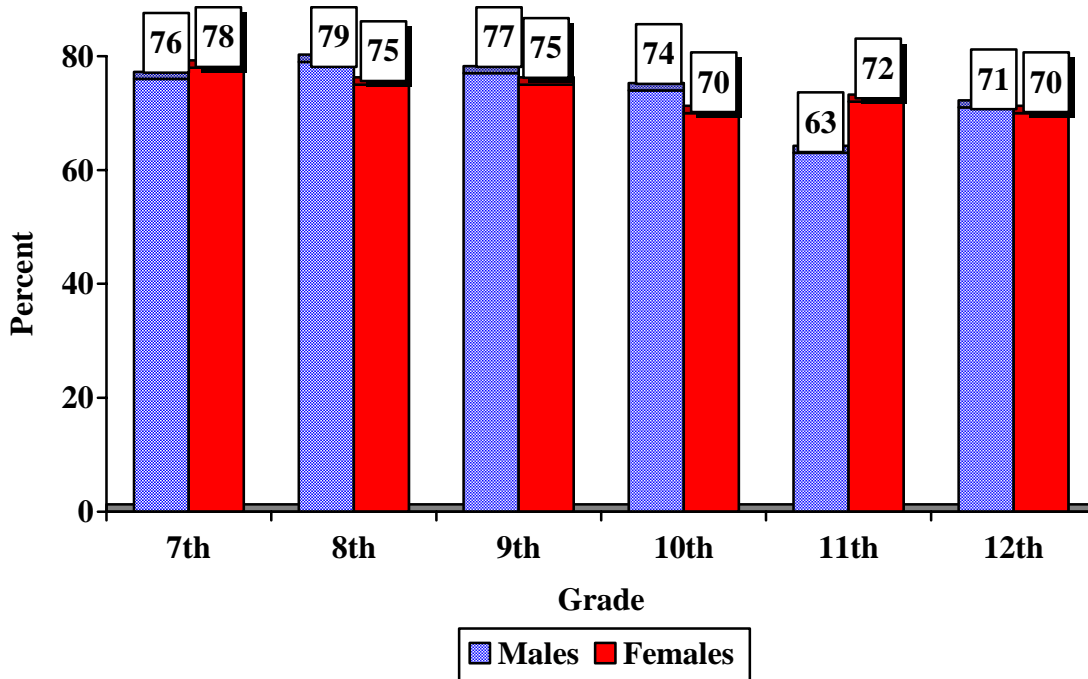
Overall 53% of females and 32% of males “strongly agree” with the statement, “I care about other people’s feelings”.

Of the teens that “strongly agree” with the statement “I feel it’s important to help others”, 77% have moderately high or high self-esteem.

Of the teens that “strongly disagree” with the statement “I feel it’s important to help others”, 66% have moderately low or low self-esteem.

COMMUNITY RESPECT

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “Adults in my community respect and listen to me (e.g., my opinions, values, etc.)”:



Key Finding:

Females are slightly more confident that adults are listening to them with a range of 70% of the 10th and 12th grade girls to 78% of 7th grade girls. About 63% of the 11th grade boys report adults respect and listen to them while 77% of 9th grade boys report the same.

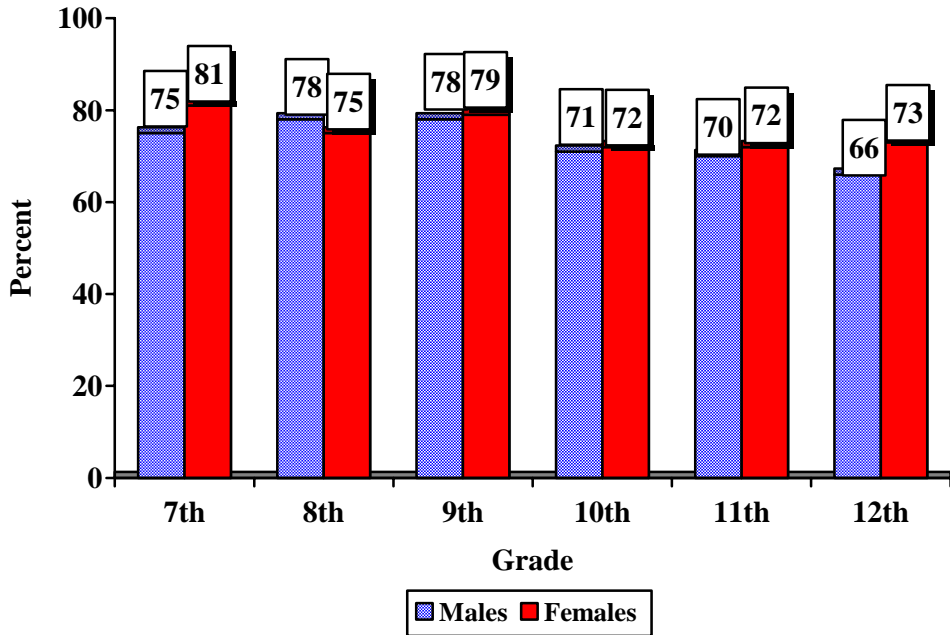
Other Notable Findings:

Seventy-one percent (71%) of males and 73% of females “agree” or “strongly agree” that adults in their communities respect and listen to their opinions, values and ideas.

Almost three-fourths of females (72%) “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “If I were having a serious personal problem, there are at least three adults who are not my parents whom I would feel okay talking to.” A similar percent of males (71%) “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERN

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “In my neighborhood, there are a lot of people who care about me.”



Key Finding:

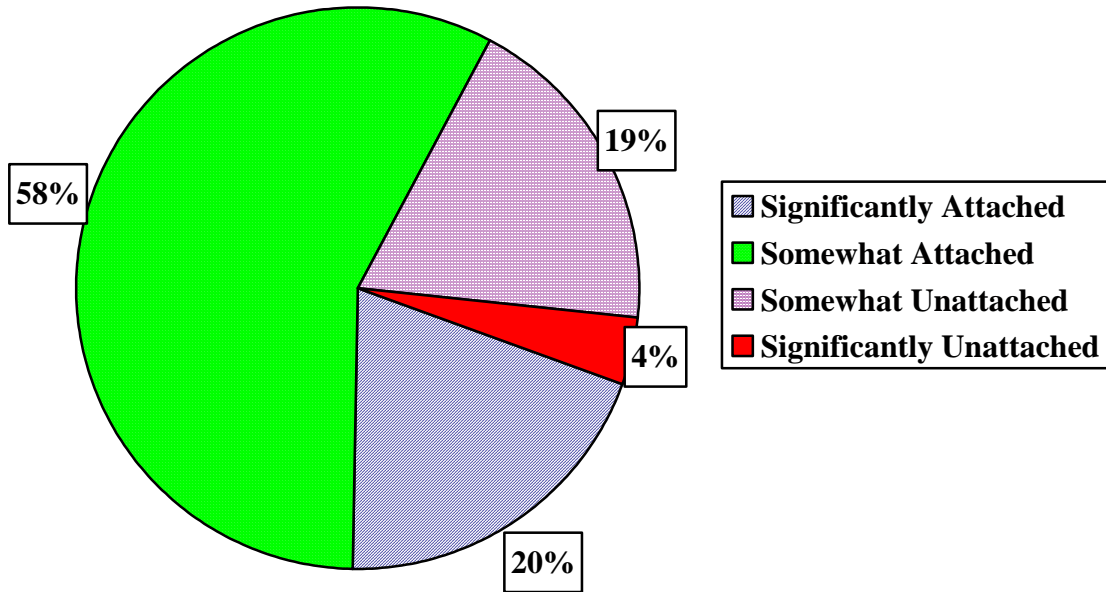
The percent of teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “In my neighborhood, there are a lot of people who care about me” drops from 75% in 7th grade to 66% in 12th grade for males, and drops from 81% in 7th grade to 73% in 12th grade for females.

Other Notable Finding:

About three-fourths of males (73%) and females (75%) feel that there are a lot of people who care for them in their neighborhood.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Community attachment was determined by student responses to a series of questions regarding local law enforcement, neighborhood monitoring, community safety, adult attentiveness, and community activities.



Key Finding:

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of teens are significantly attached or somewhat attached to their communities. Twenty-three percent (23%) are unattached to their community.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the teens who are significantly attached to their communities, 85% reported having moderately high or high self-esteem. Of the teens who are significantly unattached to their communities, 70% reported having moderately low or low self-esteem.

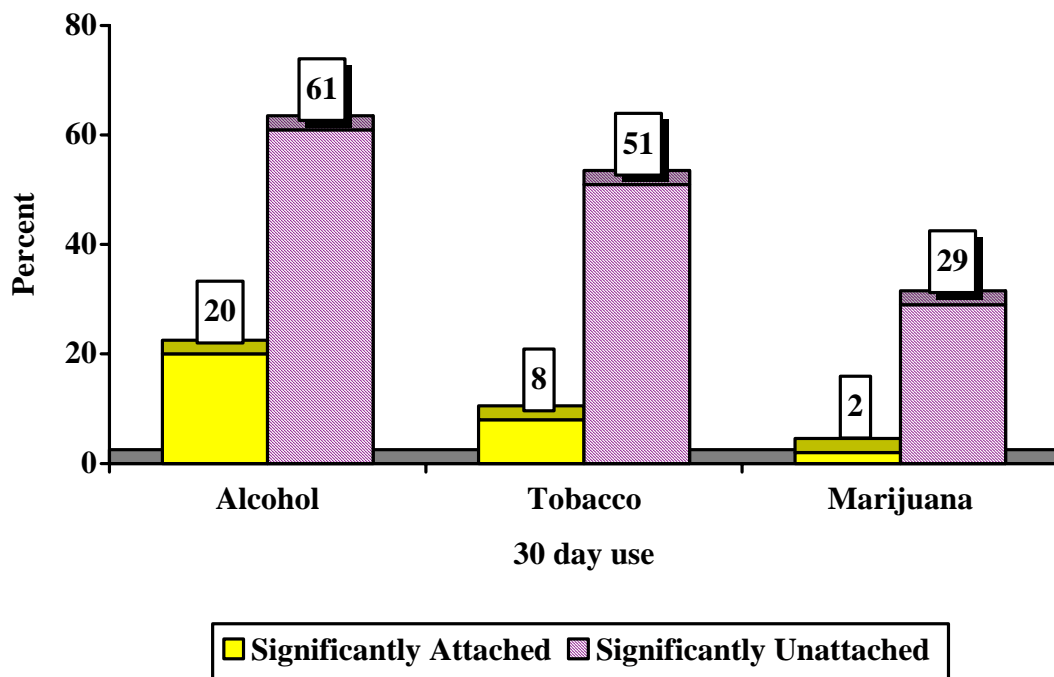
Ninety-four percent (94%) of teens who feel safe at home and in their community are also attached or significantly attached to their community.

Fifty-three percent (53%) of the teens who report being significantly attached to their community report having occasional or many conversations with their mothers, while only 19% of teens who are significantly unattached report this level of conversation with their mother.

One out of ten (11%) teens who are significantly attached to their community has had sexual intercourse. Four out of ten (42%) teens who are significantly unattached to their community have had sexual intercourse.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT AND ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND MARIJUANA USE

Thirty- day (30) use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana compared to levels of community attachment.



Key Finding:

Teens who are significantly attached to their community are far less likely to report using alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana in the past 30 days.

Other Notable Findings:

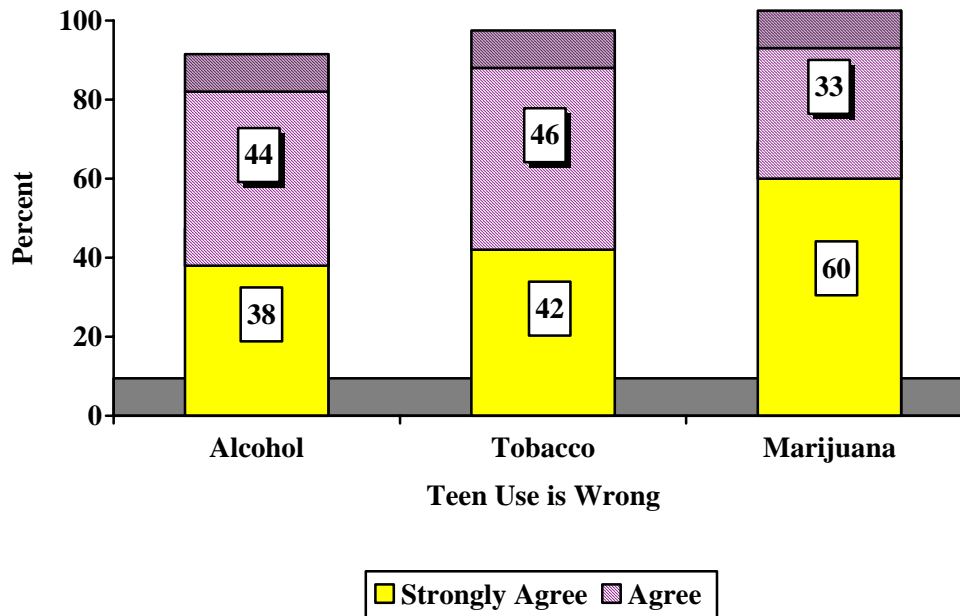
Seven percent (7%) of the teens who report being somewhat attached to the community used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Fifteen percent (15%) of the teens who report being somewhat attached to the community smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the teens who report being somewhat attached to the community drank alcohol in the past 30 days.

COMMUNITY DISAPPROVAL OF TEEN ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND MARIJUANA USE

Teens who respond “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” to the statements “*adults in my community think it is wrong for teens my age to....drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or use marijuana*”.



Key Finding:

The vast majority of teens report that adults think it is wrong for them to use alcohol, tobacco or marijuana.

Other Notable Findings:

Only 6% of students who “*strongly agree*” with the statement “*adults in my community think it is wrong for teens my age to use marijuana*” used marijuana in the past 30 days, while 28% of those who didn’t agree with the statement used marijuana in the past 30 days.

One out of ten (11%) students who “*strongly agree*” with the statement “*adults in my community think it is wrong for teens my age to smoke cigarettes*” smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days, while 28% of those who didn’t agree with the statement smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days.

One out of four (26%) students who “*strongly agree*” with the statement “*adults in my community think it is wrong for teens my age to drink alcohol*” drank in the past 30 days, while 48% of those who didn’t agree with the statement drank alcohol in the past 30 days.

