WHITE COUNTY YOUTH SUMMIT

SHARE YOUR VOICE

2023 Report

United Council on Opioids

United Way

White County United Way

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In partnership with IU Health, the Prevention Committee of the United Council on Opioids (UCO) hosted White County's second annual Youth Summit: Share Your Voice in a collaborative effort with community organizations. This year's summit was informed by the generous examples modeled by the Tippecanoe Resilience & Recovery Network. Through the mentorship of this organization and its members, our second summit in White County had the benefit of three prior years of experience through others. The UCO is grateful for the partnership, guidance, support, and encouragement of our regional leaders.

For this second year, White County community advocates and leaders met at the White County United Way Community Life Building on March 7, 2023. These leaders dedicated their mornings to a vital task: surveying the needs of the area youth. In a summit-like environment, these student ambassadors were the guests of honor, and our leadership team eagerly awaited their personal anecdotes and observations.

Student ambassadors from all four White County high schools attended the Youth Summit to share their voice in discussing issues facing youth, what works well in their communities, and what our communities and schools can do to help. In roundtable discussions and small groups, 49 students contributed their thoughts and observations about topics such as stressors, mental health, coping strategies, effects of the pandemic, substance use, community issues, and barriers to asking for help. Ambassadors traveled from table to table, with a new facilitator, notetakers, and topic at each discussion site.

Discussion facilitators and supporters included leaders from local community organizations: Valley Oaks, White County Community Foundation, Phoenix QRT, City Government, Boys and Girls Club, Mental Health America, NIPSCO, Bauer Family Resources, IU Health, and Purdue University School of Nursing students and professors. Special thanks to our school counselors, administrators, and drivers, UCO Sponsor: IU Health, our collaborators and producers at Indiana Youth Institute, and our partner presenter Aaron Robles . Thank you to our student ambassadors from the 2023 participating schools: Frontier High School, Twin Lakes High School, North White High School, and Tri-County High School.

METHODOLOGY

In our second year, we commend the faith and patience that our schools' staff graciously afforded to the process. Summit coordinators asked school counselors to select students who best represented the diversity of their schools and would be willing to discuss the questions at the Youth Summit. The letter requested that the students be balanced by grade level and by gender identity, and represent a variety of concerns, passions, and future goals.

Students were randomly divided into groups designated by color in an effort to randomize the ages, schools, and friend groups each student represented. Once categorized, and after brief introductory instructions, students found the area that matched their selected color and began the first of eight group interviews. The first discussion was the longest in order to give ambassadors and facilitators a chance to warm up and become familiar with the process.

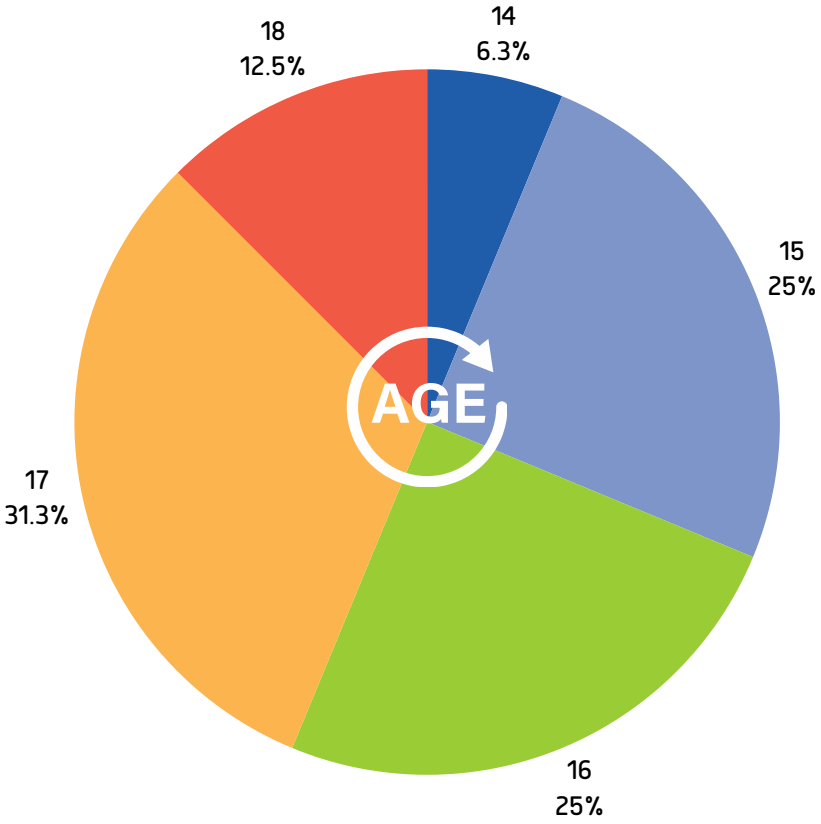
Two or three Purdue seniors in the School of Nursing joined one community leader facilitator to moderate one of the eight discussion questions. Students had approximately 10 minutes to discuss the question at each table and then move to the next table for the following question(s). Because there were multiple scribes at each table, data is represented as an aggregate rate of student response rather than a pure response count.

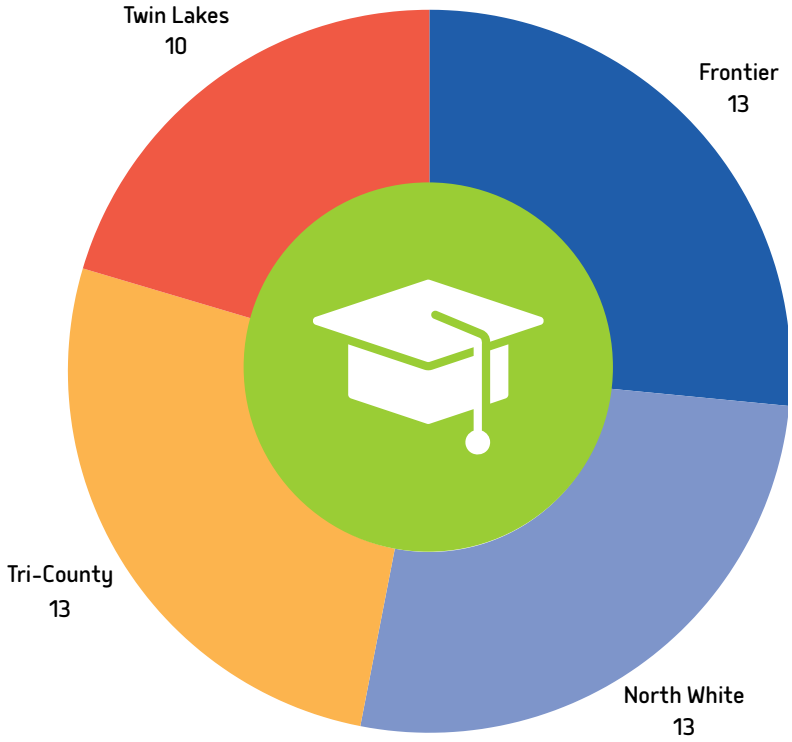
To avoid bias, leading the student responses, or inconsistency in questioning, facilitators engaged in training before the summit and asked the same question throughout the day. For the same reason, note-takers received the data instrument in advance of the summit, and scripting instructions were provided both in writing and relayed through their instructor's direct teachings. Note-takers scripted student responses into a Google form during the summit and analyzed and counted the data in the month following.

All results are presented in aggregate ratio to illustrate both the unique student response and the relative frequency of that response among all summit ambassadors.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

49 Total Participants





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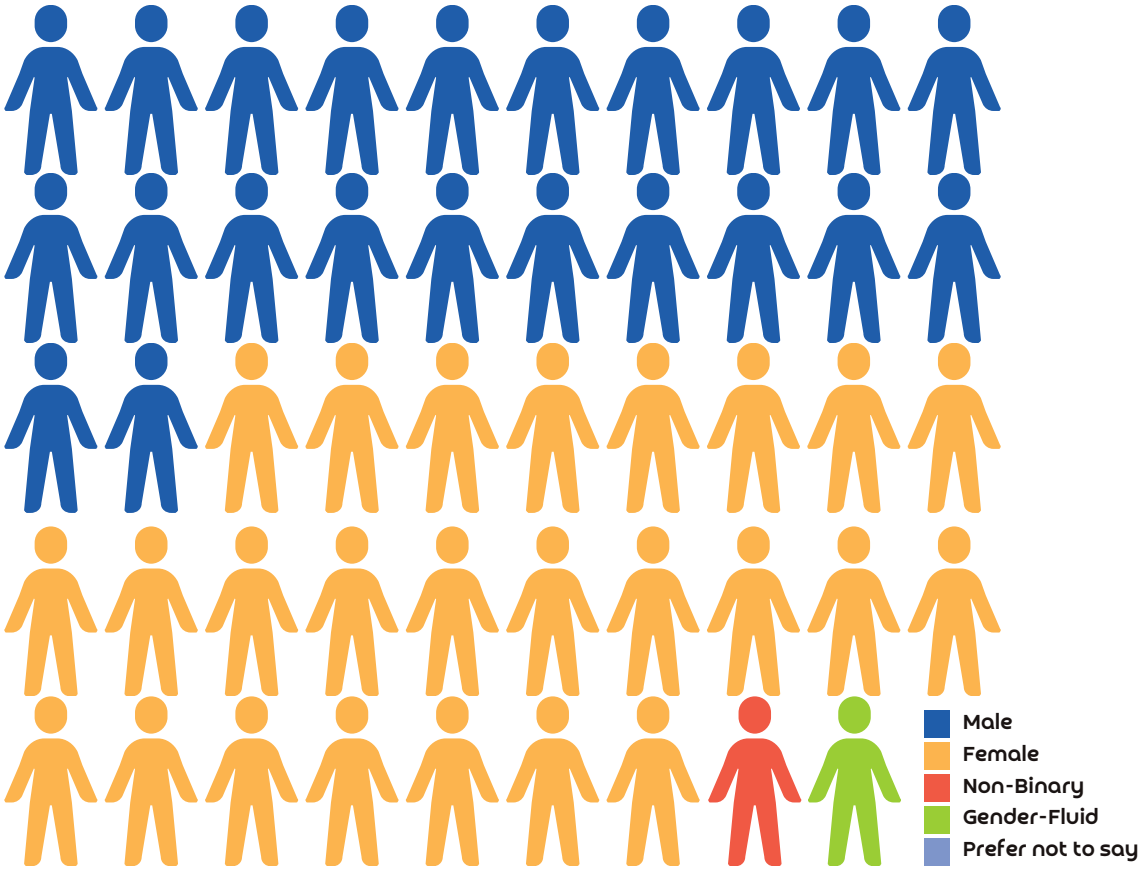
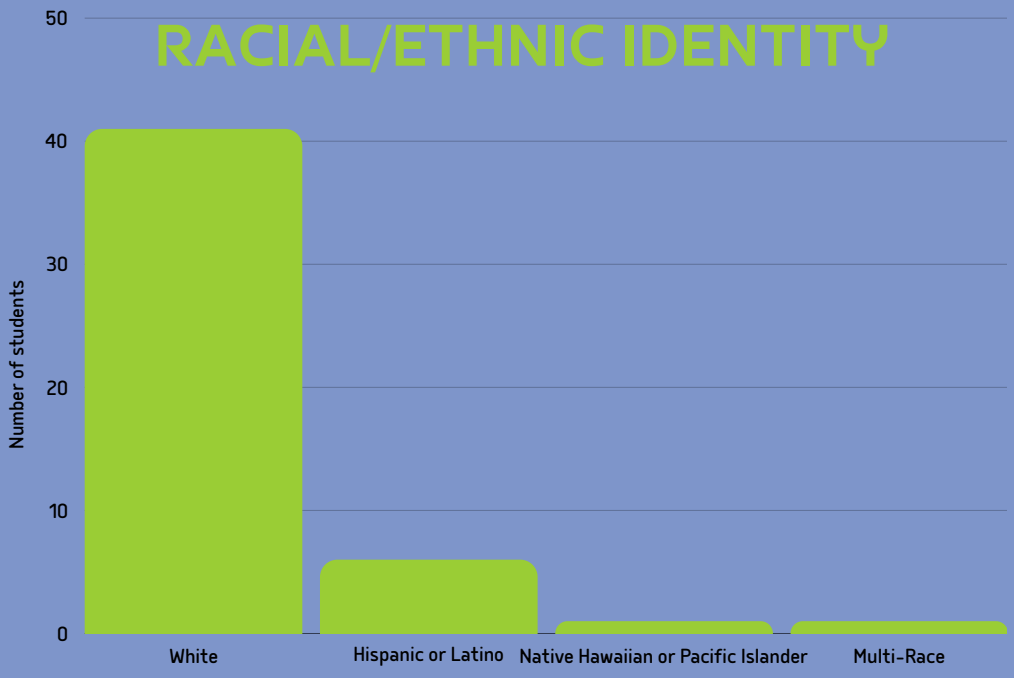


RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY



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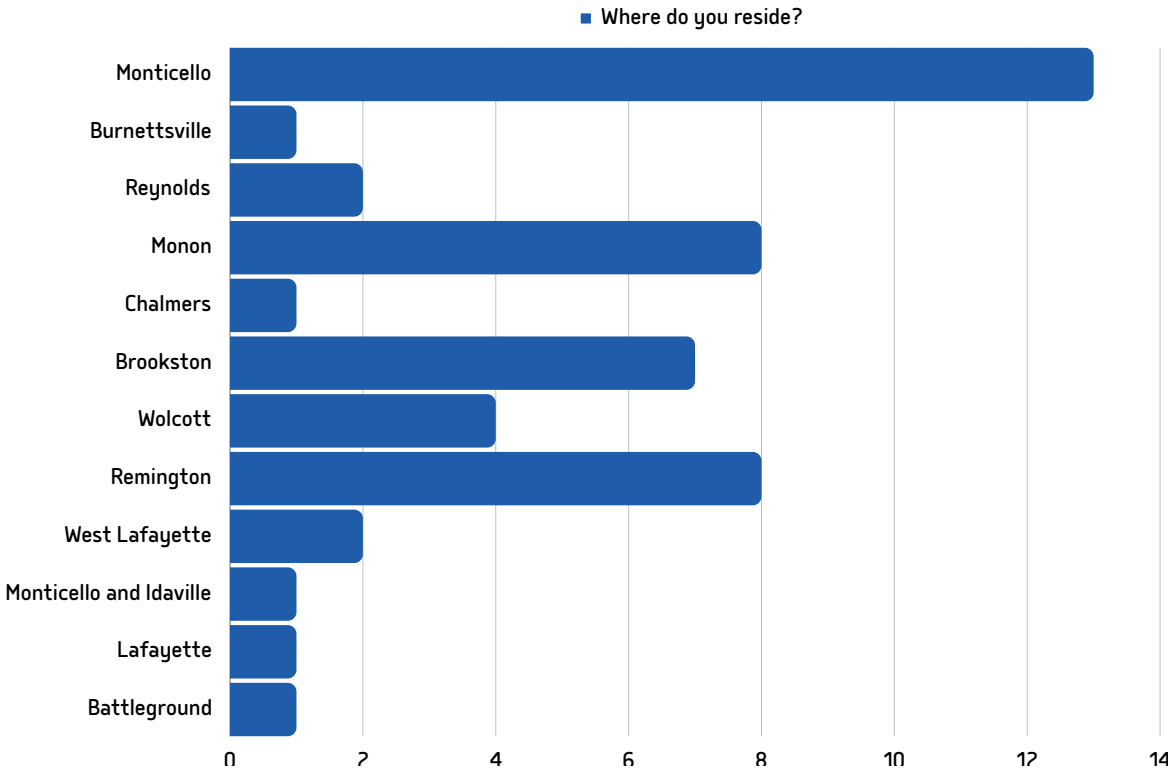
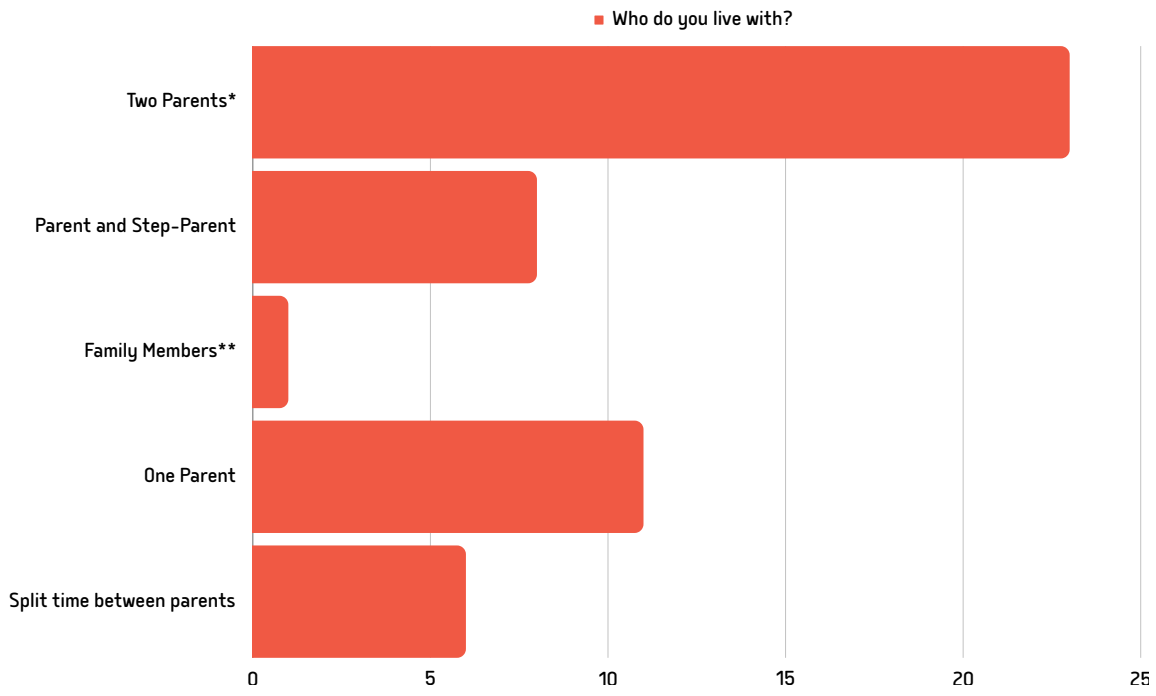


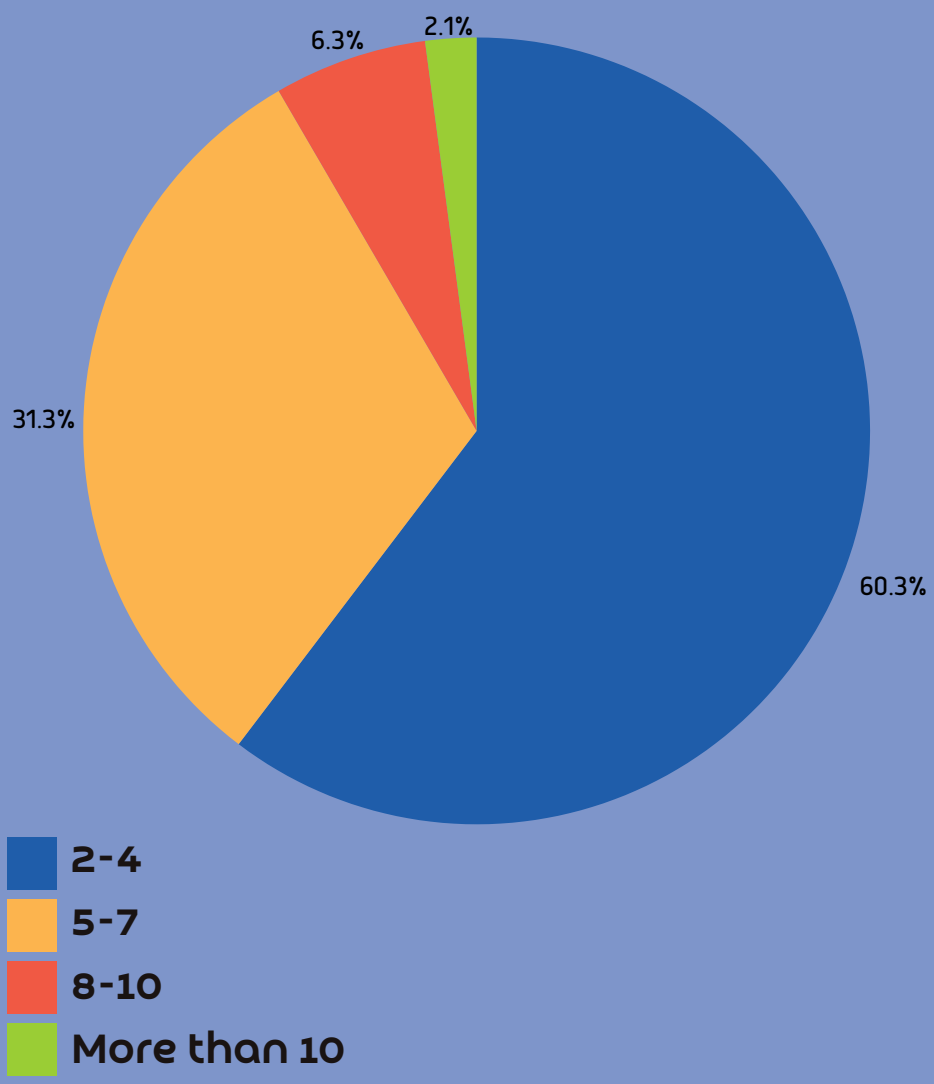


*Two Parents (mom & dad, mom & mom, dad & dad, etc.)

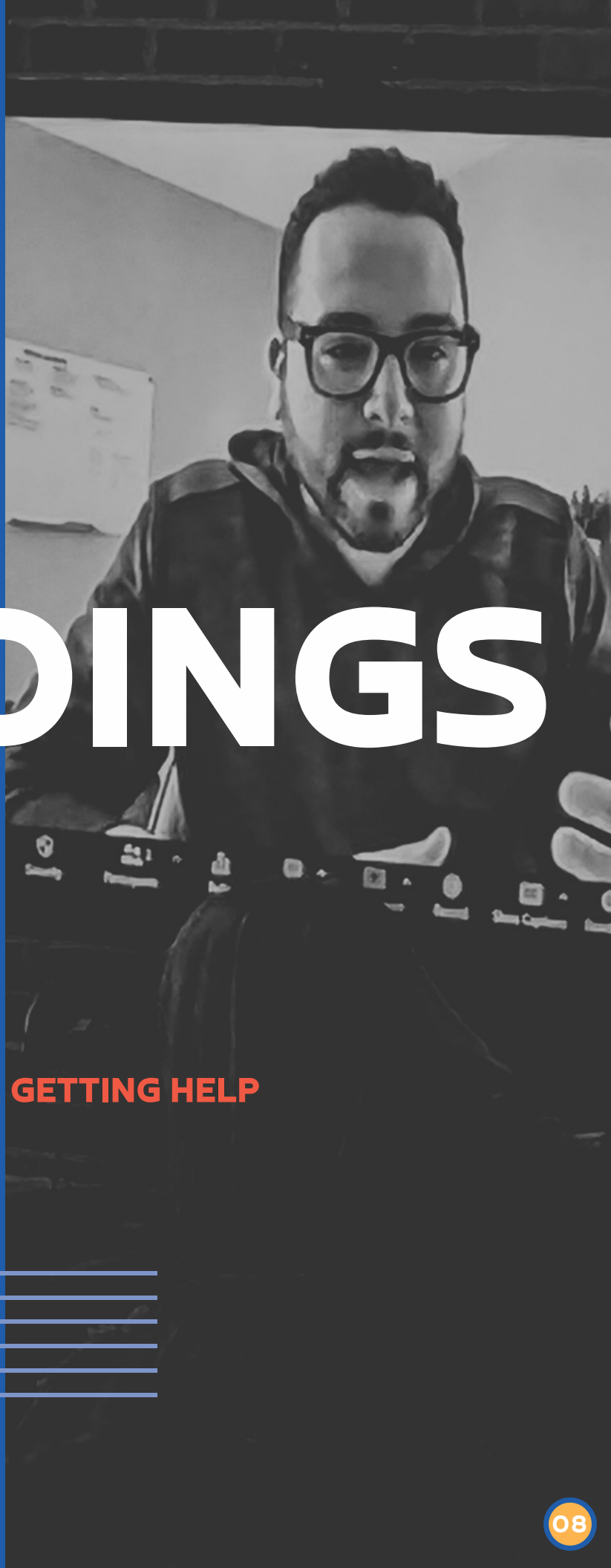
**Family Members (grandparents, aunt/uncle, cousins, etc.)

DEMOGRAPHIC INFO

Including yourself, how many people live in your household?



FINDINGS



PANDEMIC & STRESS

SUBSTANCE USE

SCHOOL ISSUES

MENTAL WELLNESS & GETTING HELP

COMMUNITY

PANDEMIC & STRESS

When thinking about the different areas in your life, what are some long-term effects from the pandemic era, and why? These can be either positive or negative.

Pandemic Era (COVID): quarantine, isolation, hybrid meetings (E-Learning)

Areas of Life (Ex.): home, socializing, school performance, physical/mental health, hobbies, etc.

What circumstances cause you/your peers/your friends stress?

What ways do you see you or your peers using to cope with stress?

SHARE YOUR VOICE

"I didn't have drive to do anything anymore..."

"A lot of kids in my class aren't graduating with me"

"It became a lot easier to curl up into yourself"

"A lot of people are not mentally okay"

"Teachers didn't care if (a) student's grades dropped"

"Kids didn't care about their grades anymore"

FINDINGS: PANDEMIC & STRESS

By eliminating common words like student, numbers and descriptors (one/two/another), and other stop words (the, and, etc.) we found these were the most referenced topics in this discussion.

ANXIETY

don't know how to communicate

DEPRESSION

CHAOTIC

anxiety

MENTAL HEALTH

NO DRIVE

E-LEARNING (CHEATING)

i feel nothing anymore

anxiety

LOSS

EDUCATION

survival mode

GRADES

SCHOOL (SUFFERED)

anxiety

FELT ISOLATED

NOTES ABOUT PANDEMIC ERA

Participants shared stories about how their lives have changed since the pandemic began. For many of the students, this disruption caused unwelcome change to their daily routines, to the point that they are still reeling from those effects today. Prolonged isolation and virtual schooling had a negative impact on their communication abilities, educational opportunities, and social batteries.

Notedly, there was a surprising emphasis on ***quality of education***, and the learning opportunities participants felt they missed out on/still miss out on as a result of Covid. Some students pointed out that e-Learning made it incredibly easy to cheat, and, therefore, made them less motivated to learn the material on their own. When it came time to transition back to in-person learning, those same students struggled with their work and their grades suffered.

There was some disagreement with these generalizations, and a few students claimed that the time away made them more motivated to learn things on their own. One student felt they were more prepared for online college classes because the virtual experiences were similar. Many students agreed that they were forced to become more independent in this period, and that was one of the few things they felt changed for the better during this time.

One student was super grateful to have their freshman year in person, and another student agreed that they were less likely to take in-person experiences for granted after all this.

WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

We collected fewer responses to this question than the question about the pandemic era. They were more interested in talking about their coping mechanisms than their stressors, but we were able to discover some common topics among the different participants that caused them some kind of stress.

SHARE YOUR VOICE

"...trying to make everyone happy at the same time while keeping yourself happy"

"(people) stress about classes; I used to stress with food insecurity and home insecurity"

"Being judged"

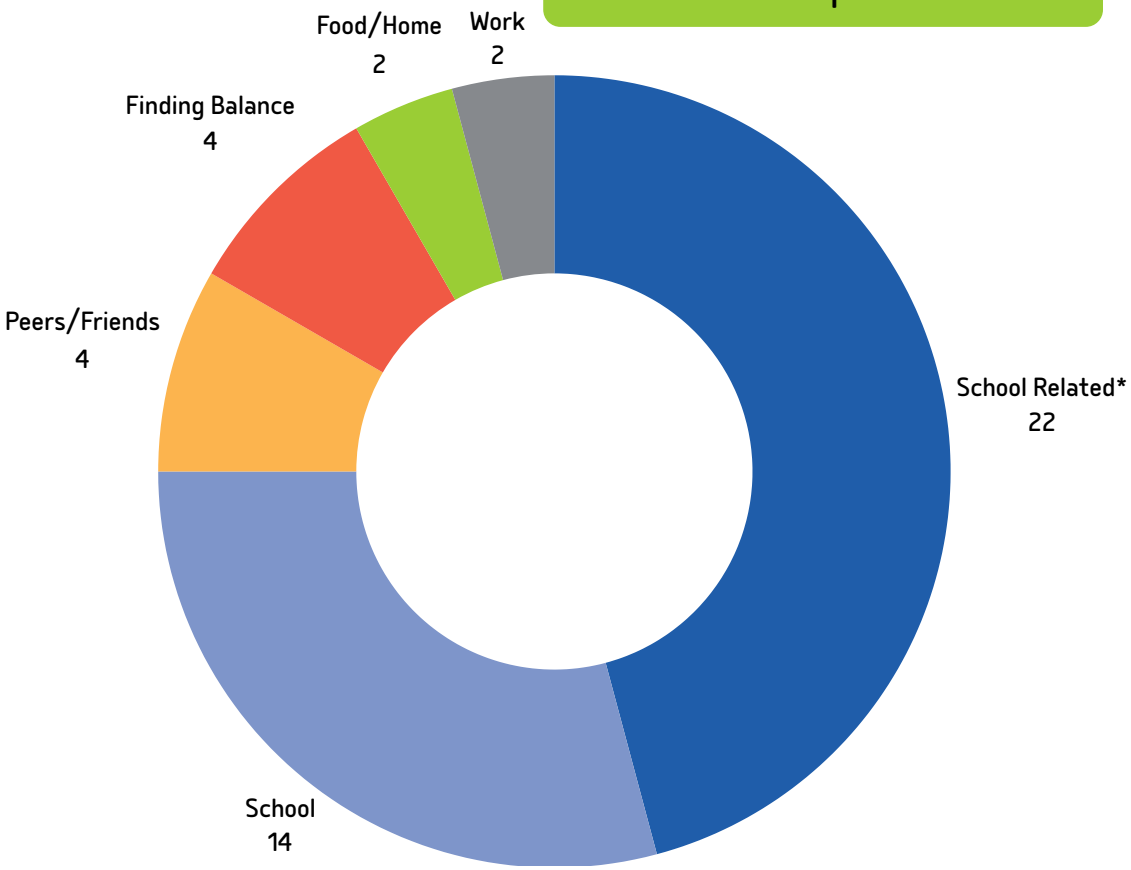
"Having too much going on...balancing school work, extracurriculars, hanging out with friends..."

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED STRESSORS

-Several participants made comments in passing (while discussing common stressors) that unreasonable or high expectations to maintain X,Y, & Z also caused stress

-There were a few students that claimed they weren't stressed at all, or, at least, not directly impacted by stressors

Each category shows how many students mentioned that specific stressor.



*School related: (NOT school specifically) homework, presentations, classes, extracurriculars, teachers, college prep, etc.

COPING MECHANISMS

Positive

When dealing with stressors, most of the participants said they used positive or adaptive behaviors to de-stress themselves.

Negative

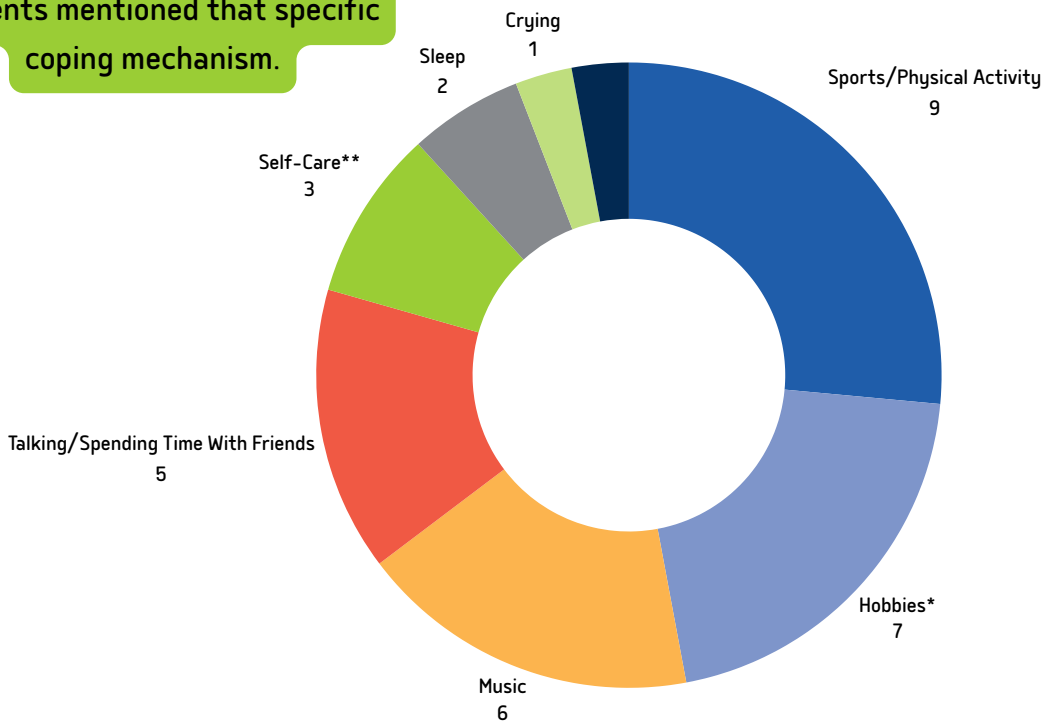
There were a few participants that identified negative or maladaptive behaviors they used when they were stressed out.

It should be noted that many of the students claimed they use emotion-focused coping skills (which change the way a person reacts to a stressor) rather than problem-focused (which targets the source of the stress directly).

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED POSITIVE COPING MECHANISMS

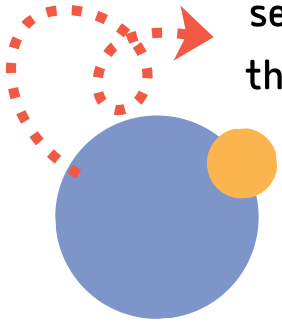
A few students mentioned doing mindless activities (like watching TikTok or TV) to take their minds off of their stress. On the opposite end, one or two participants mentioned doing something "productive" when they are stressed out. Several mentioned going into "Reset Rooms" or a different room to cool off. One student actually talked about dealing with the stressor directly, and getting it off their "to-do" list.

Each category shows how many students mentioned that specific coping mechanism.



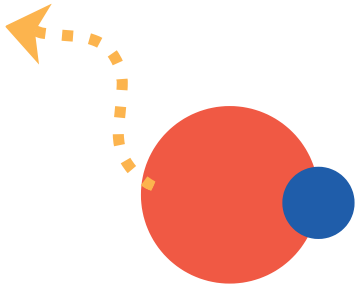
*Hobbies include playing video games (Minecraft), drawing, crocheting, etc.
**Self-Care includes taking a hot bath, spending time by yourself (alone time), etc.

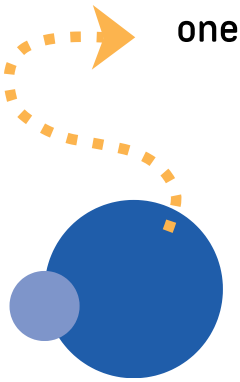
NEGATIVE COPING MECHANISMS



several students mentioned that they bottle up or shut down their feelings

one student mentioned that they know people who use drugs to deal with short-term issues (which then becomes a long-term drug problem)

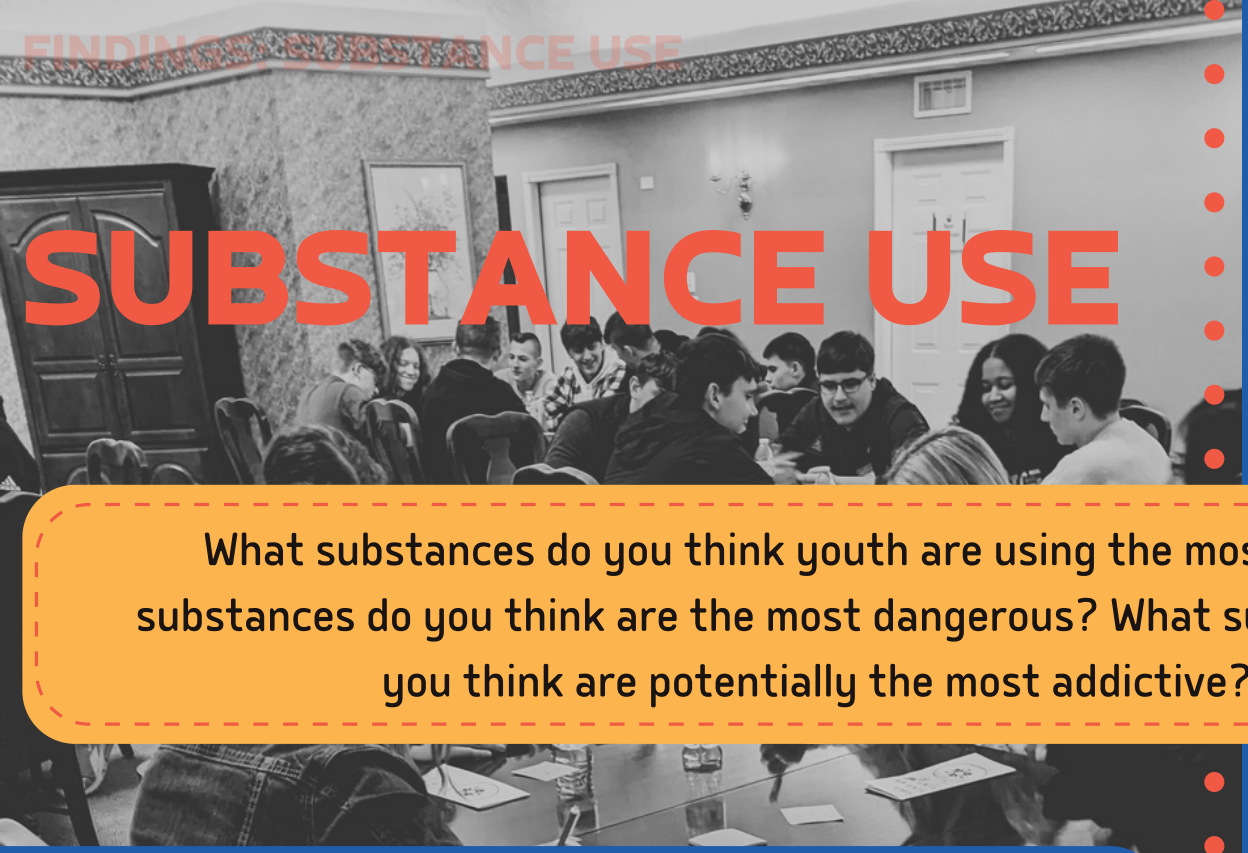




one student talked about how their mom's response to stress influenced how they responded to stressors

SHARE YOUR VOICE

"I, as a male, get called a sissy when I cry. Being in a rural community, many people have a blue collar dad that says to suck it up."



SUBSTANCE USE

What substances do you think youth are using the most? Which substances do you think are the most dangerous? What substances do you think are potentially the most addictive?

ESTABLISHING "SUBSTANCES" AND BASELINE

Substances include (but aren't strictly limited to): alcohol, prescription medicines, caffeine, cannabis, heroin, cocaine, tobacco, inhalants, "party" drugs, etc.

We are specifically asking about substances used outside of their legal or intended purposes.

ORGANIC ANECDOTES

At this point in the summit, the students had loosened up a bit and seemed to be more comfortable participating in the group discussions. It appeared that they were significantly more forthcoming with information when it was generalized and not specifically about the participants. The conversations about substance use provided some vitally important data about how the students and their peers perceive substance use in the community.

SHARE YOUR VOICE

“The bathroom is a common place to use because it is the easiest”

“Nicotine is scary because there is heavy metal and can be laced”

"Weed isn't as bad because it is getting legalized in a lot of states."

"Weed isn't harming anyone."

"Parents will get vapes for their kids."

"When you snitch and turn someone in they don't do anything about it usually, and now you're in the spotlight because everyone knows who snitched”

Every student said they knew at least someone who uses illegal substances.

MOST COMMONLY USED SUBSTANCES IN WHITE COUNTY^

Legal

Vapes

Alcohol

Nicotine

Tobacco

Caffeine

Amphetamines*

Illegal

Weed

"Shrooms"

Amphetamines*

Crack

Cocaine "Coke"

Acid

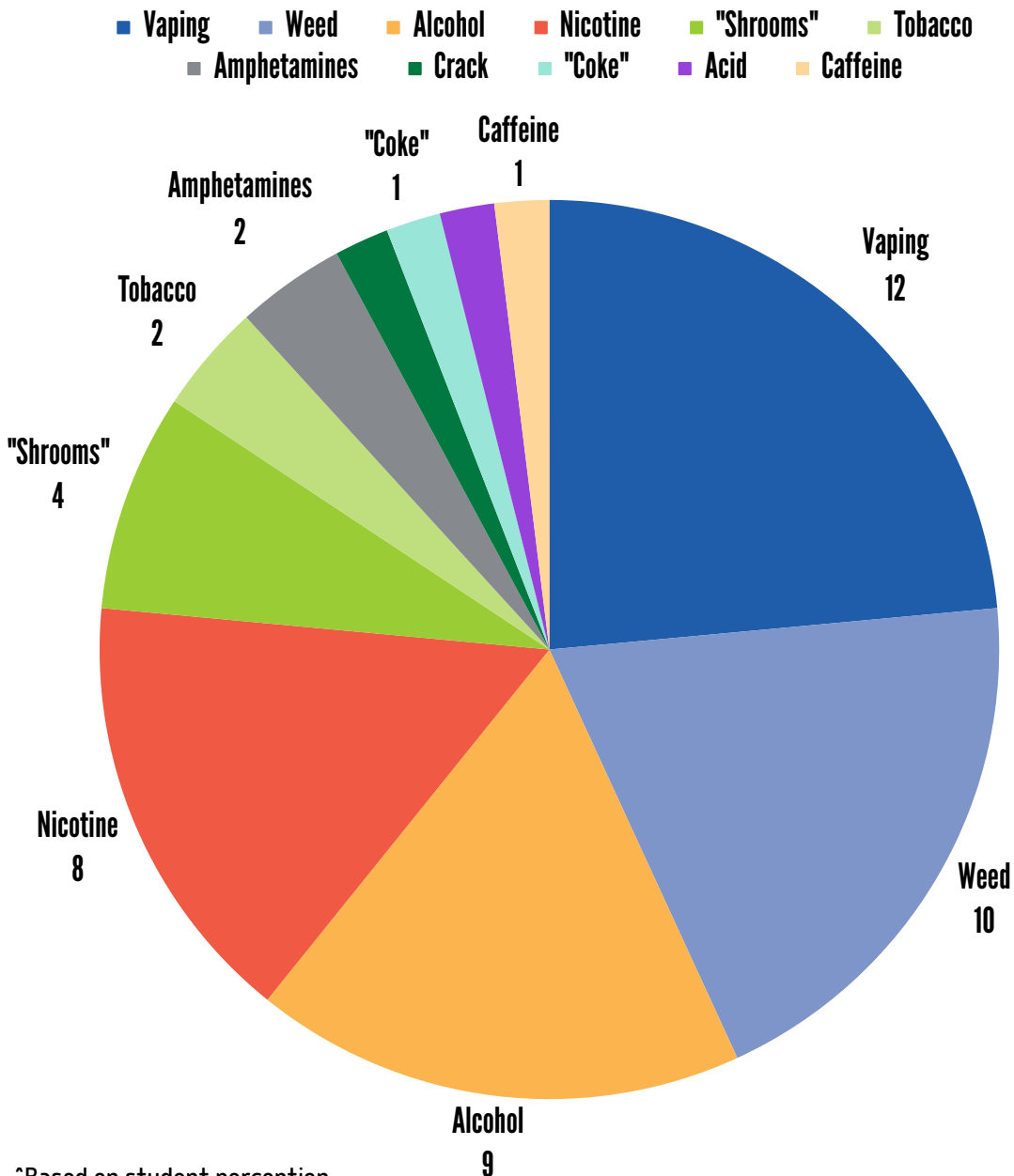
^Based on student perception

*Amphetamines can be legal or illegal. They are legal when they are prescribed by a doctor and used to treat specific health problems. Amphetamines are illegal when they are used without a prescription for purposes other than medically intended.

MOST COMMONLY USED SUBSTANCES IN WHITE COUNTY^

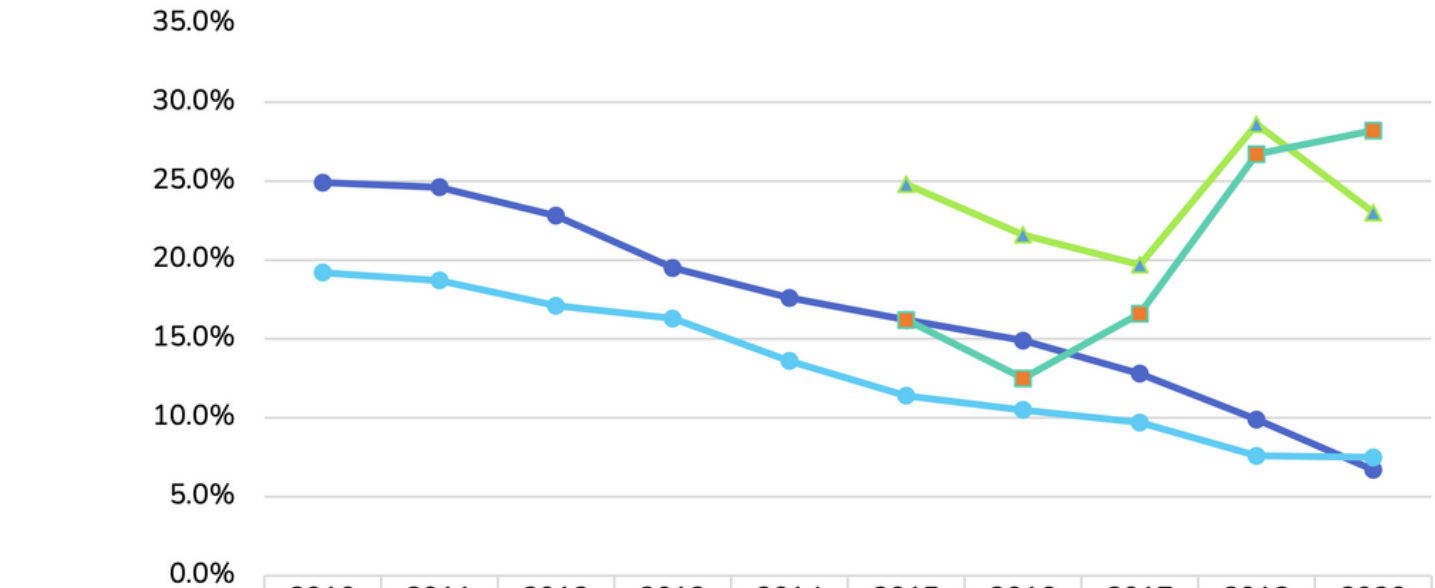
Substances that were mentioned once

Crack Acid Painkillers Cocaine
Nicotine Fentanyl Social Media



^Based on student perception

VAPING STATISTICS FOR INDIANA*

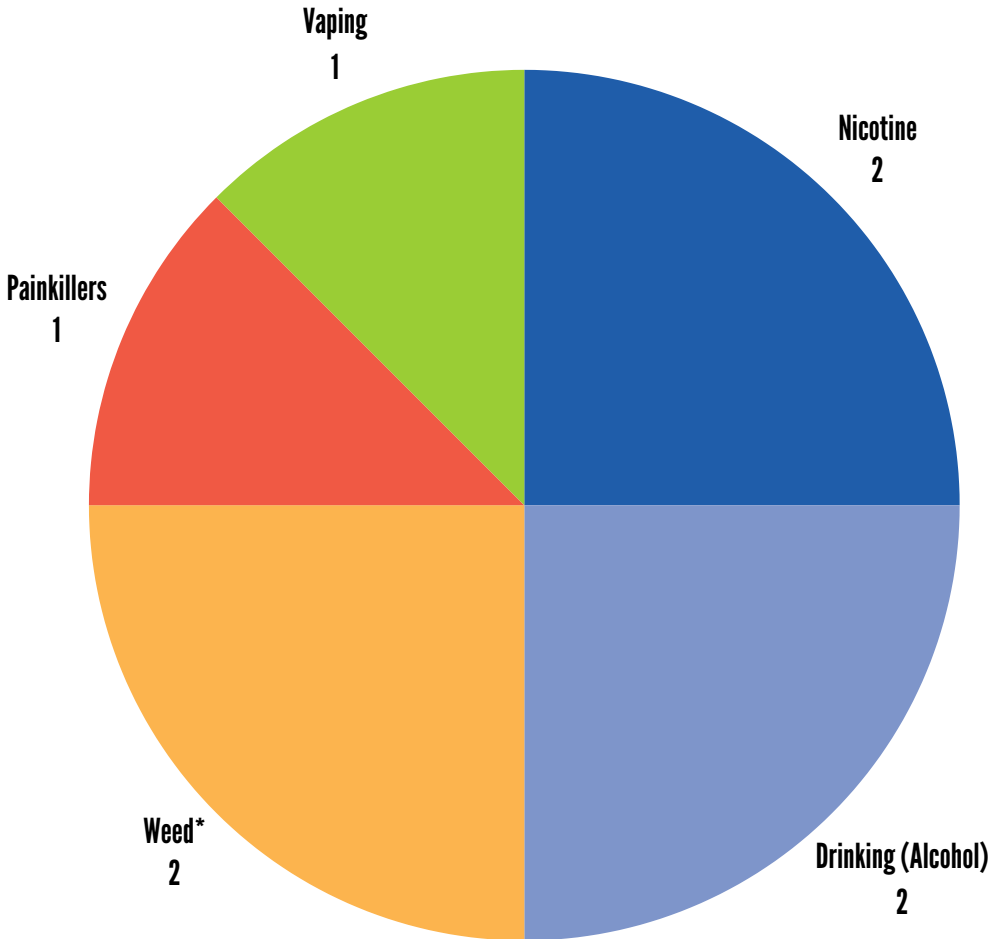


	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020
IN Cigarettes	24.9%	24.6%	22.8%	19.5%	17.6%	16.2%	14.9%	12.8%	9.9%	6.7%
US Cigarettes	19.2%	18.7%	17.1%	16.3%	13.6%	11.4%	10.5%	9.7%	7.6%	7.5%
IN Vaping						24.8%	21.6%	19.7%	28.6%	23.0%
US Vaping						16.2%	12.5%	16.6%	26.7%	28.2%

Source: *Gassman et al., 2020; Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2020*

*Taken from the Indiana State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup, 2021-2022 report

MOST ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCES USED IN WHITE COUNTY^



^Based on student perception

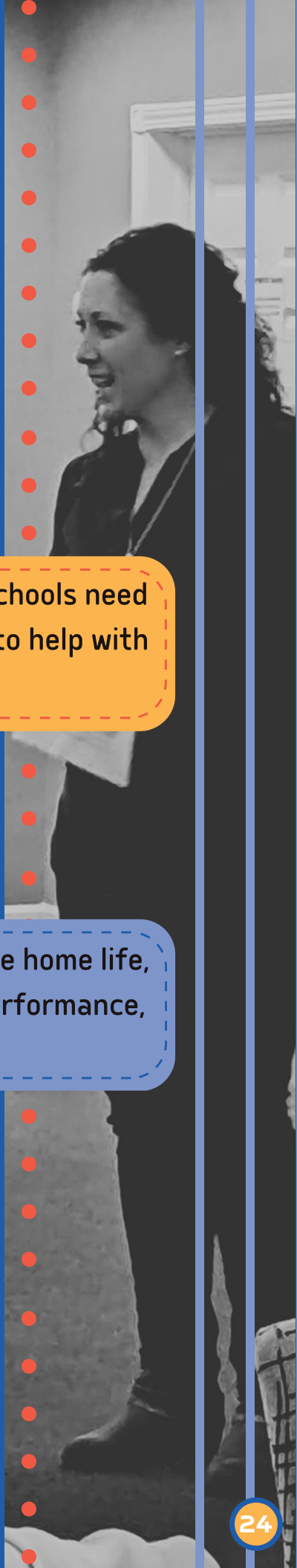
-While vaping was listed as one of the less addictive substances used in White County, several of the students mentioned how common it is to see their peers vaping in the school bathrooms

-Two participants stated the most dangerous drug in White County is weed laced with another substance

SCHOOL ISSUES

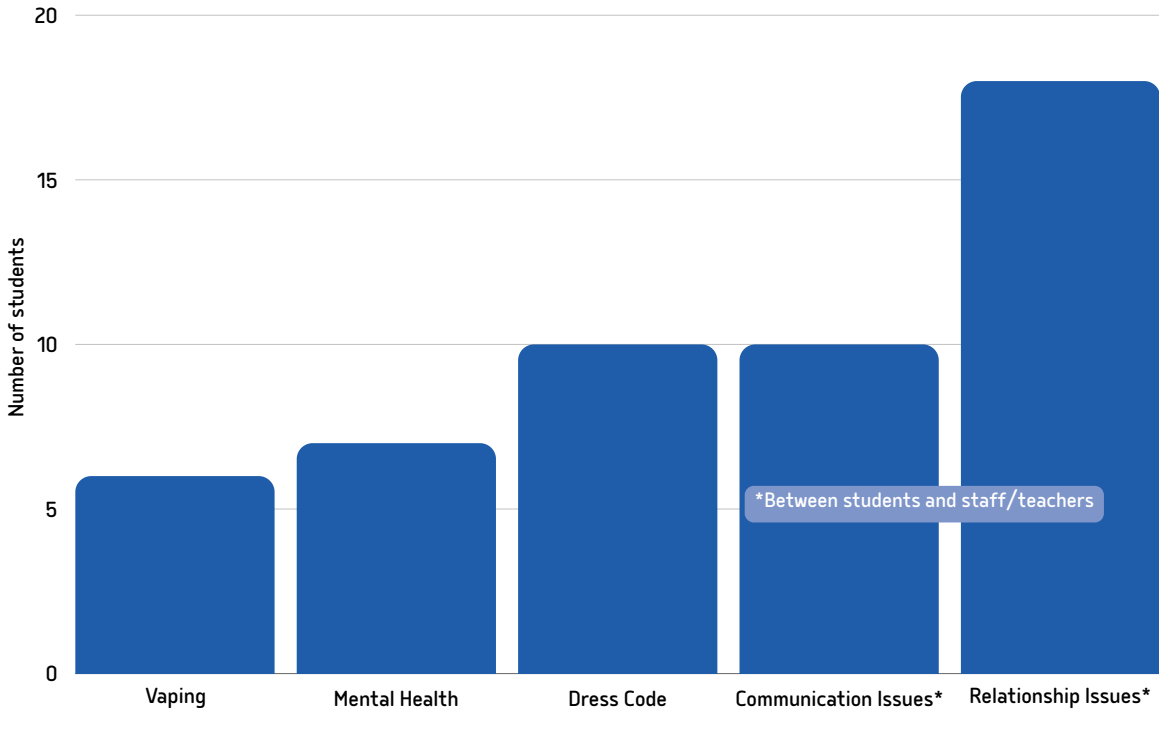
What issues are you, or your friends dealing with that you think schools need to be paying more attention to? What specifically can schools do to help with those issues?

What do you think schools are doing well to help students manage home life, social life, work life, mental well-being, physical health, school performance, or anything else?



ACKNOWLEDGING ISSUES

Lack of relationships/relatability betwen students and staff/teachers: 18
Communication issues with students and staff/teachers: 10
Dress code: 10
Mental Health: 7
Vaping (selling or using): 6
Lack of privacy/closed bathroom issues: 5
Teachers unware or don't care about what's going on: 5
Schools don't do anything about your concerns: 5
Emphasis on trades/non-college careers: 4
Overloaded schedules: 4
SUDs: 4
Lack of real life issues not being taught: 3
Unequal treatment from adults: 3
Home life: 3
Lack of support for ENL students: 2
Financial issues: 2
Stress: 2
Guidance Counselors are not helpful: 2
Blocking Wi-Fi on phones: 2
Suicide: 2
Bullying: 2
Need better lunch: 1
Romantic relationships: 1
Classes not meeting their needs (not educational or engaging): 1
Racism: 1



SHARE YOUR VOICE

"The work that they give us is not permanent to our lives as adults"

"Schools put a lot of emphasis on college and push students to go. (It feels like) if you don't you won't be successful."

"I don't feel I can relate to any of my teachers"

" (I) would like to see more frequent check-ins with all students and their counselors"

"Teachers care more about dress code than actually teaching"

"I feel like the teachers have no idea what is going on, even though it is right in front of them"

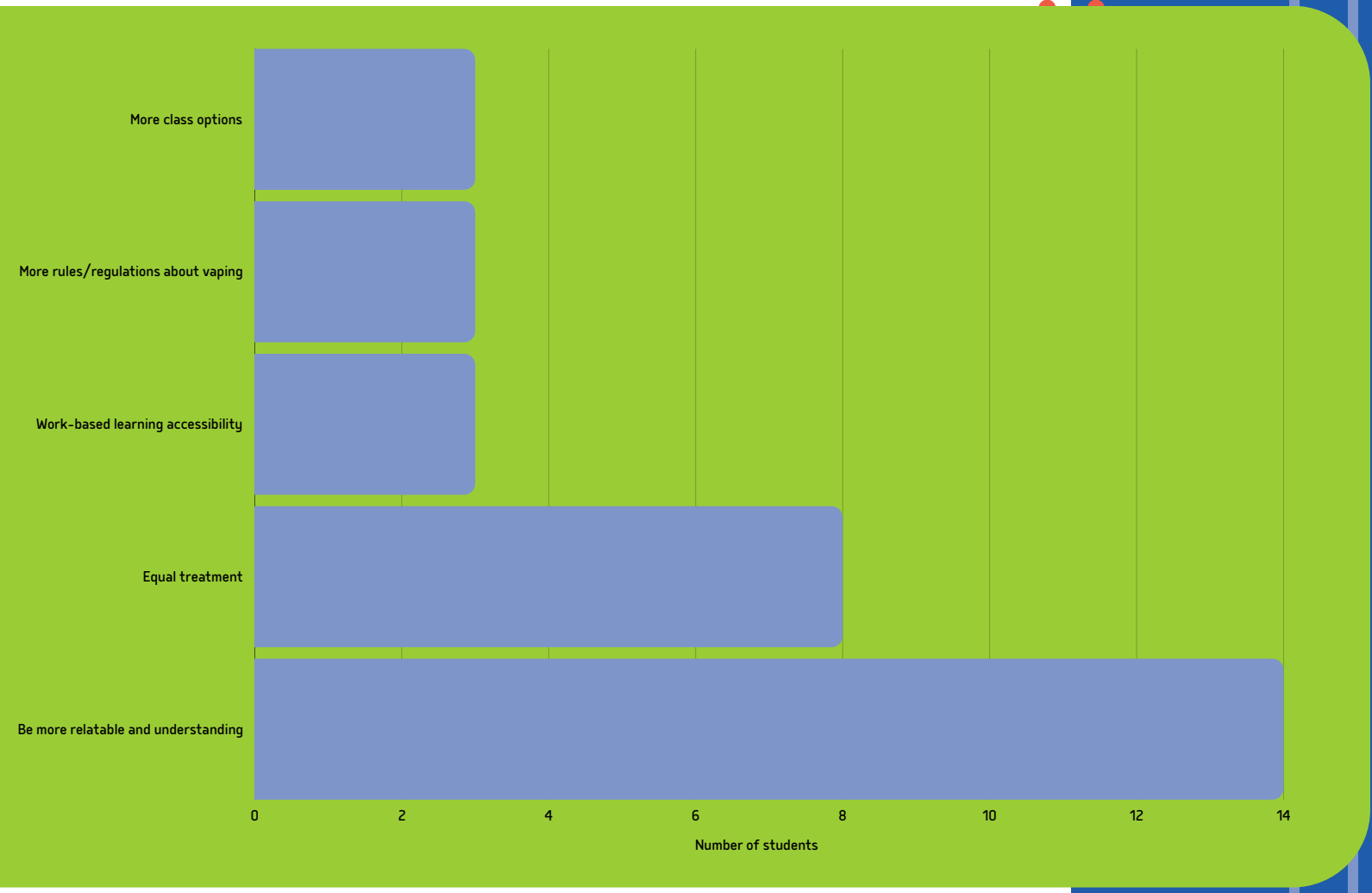
NOTES ABOUT SCHOOL ISSUES

Before beginning this multi-part discussion, facilitators assured students of confidentiality while reminding them of mandatory reporting guidelines. Facilitators discussed mandatory reporting and Indiana state mandates in their training and related that guideline to students. Identifiable details have been removed to protect student privacy. Specific concerns will be shared with school counseling departments as appropriate.

The students were incredibly interested in their interpersonal relationships with staff and teachers, and voiced concerns about the perceived miscommunication that happens to them when they can't relate to their teachers. Many students said they wished they could better communicate with the adults at their school in order to get a certain level of respect back from the teachers and staff. One participant mentioned the barrier that exists between students and teachers. They acknowledged that it's necessary from a professional standpoint, but it makes it difficult to want to go to staff if students have an issue.

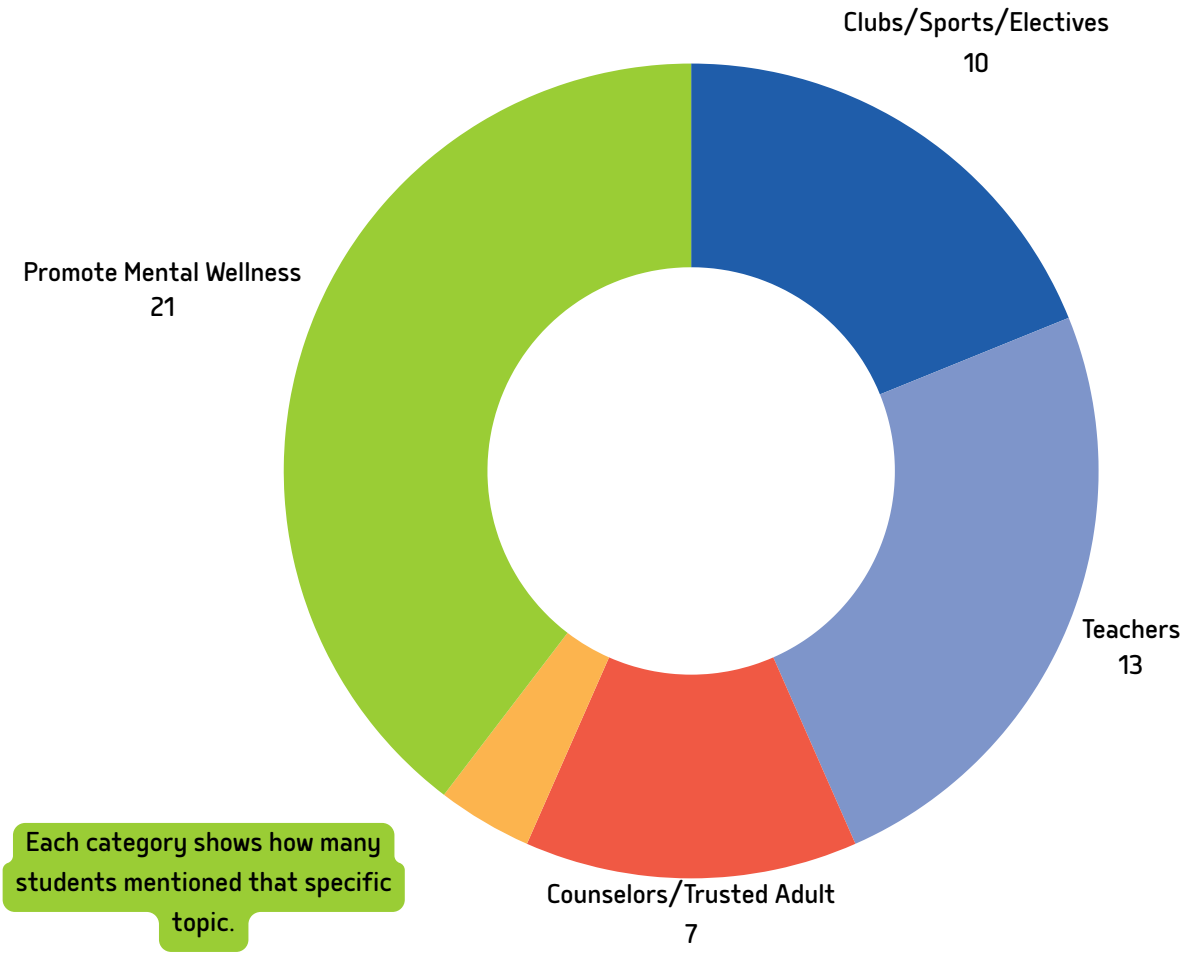
Issues with the dress code were in the top 5 most discussed problems, as well as mental health and vaping. Three issues in particular were edged out of the top 5 by one point, but they tied for the amount of times they were brought up in conversation. Participants were equally concerned about the lack of privacy/closed bathroom issues, their teachers being unaware or not caring about what's going on in the school, and the school itself not doing anything about the concerns of the students.

WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL DO?



The students said the best way for their schools to address the issues they are dealing with is for teachers and staff to be more relatable/understanding. Many of the participants mentioned that they would be more willing to getting help if they felt they could talk openly with people in the school. Additionally, they want to see more equal treatment between students and teachers/staff. Specifically, they want to see less favoritism towards "certain" students, and more fairness across the board.

WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING WELL?



Each category shows how many students mentioned that specific topic.

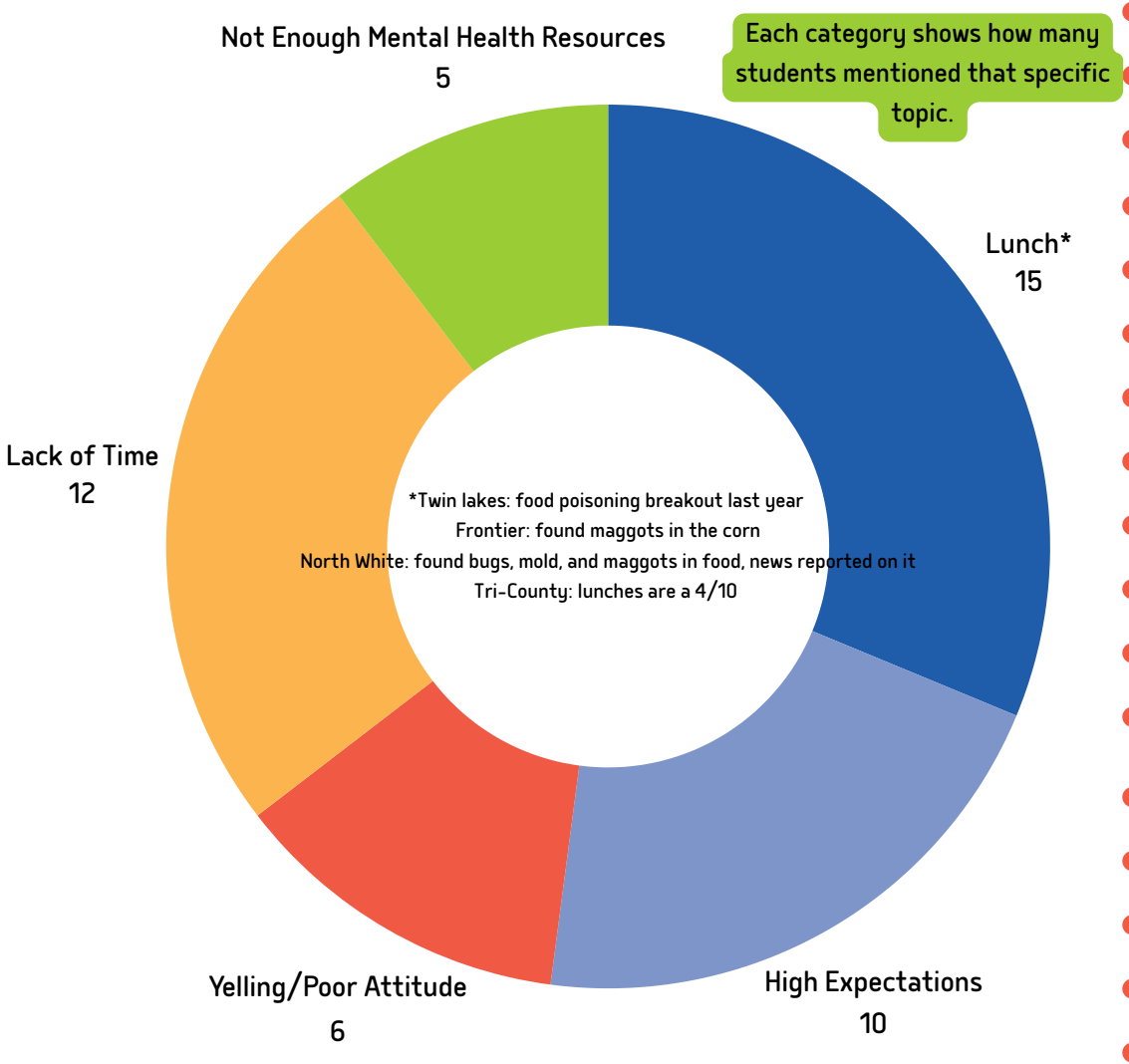
SHARE YOUR VOICE

"Schools address mental health way more since the pandemic"

"Tri-County has a reset room with some amenities inside for relaxation when stressed"

"They like when teachers see you as a person instead of just another one of their students"

WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS IMPROVE?



SHARE YOUR VOICE

"Passing periods are 5 minutes and can sometimes make you stressed and feel rushed"

"Food is always lacking quality and quantitiy"

"Some students are held to higher standards and teachers are stricter on them"

MENTAL WELLNESS & GETTING HELP

What are characteristics of an individual with strong mental health/wellness? What are characteristics of an individual struggling with mental health/wellness?

Who do you go to for help? What does getting help look like to you? What type of barriers stop teenagers from asking for help for themselves or someone they know?

CHARACTERISTICS
OF STRONG MENTAL HEALTH

Students consistently characterized the following attributes as representations of strong mental health:

-Outgoing

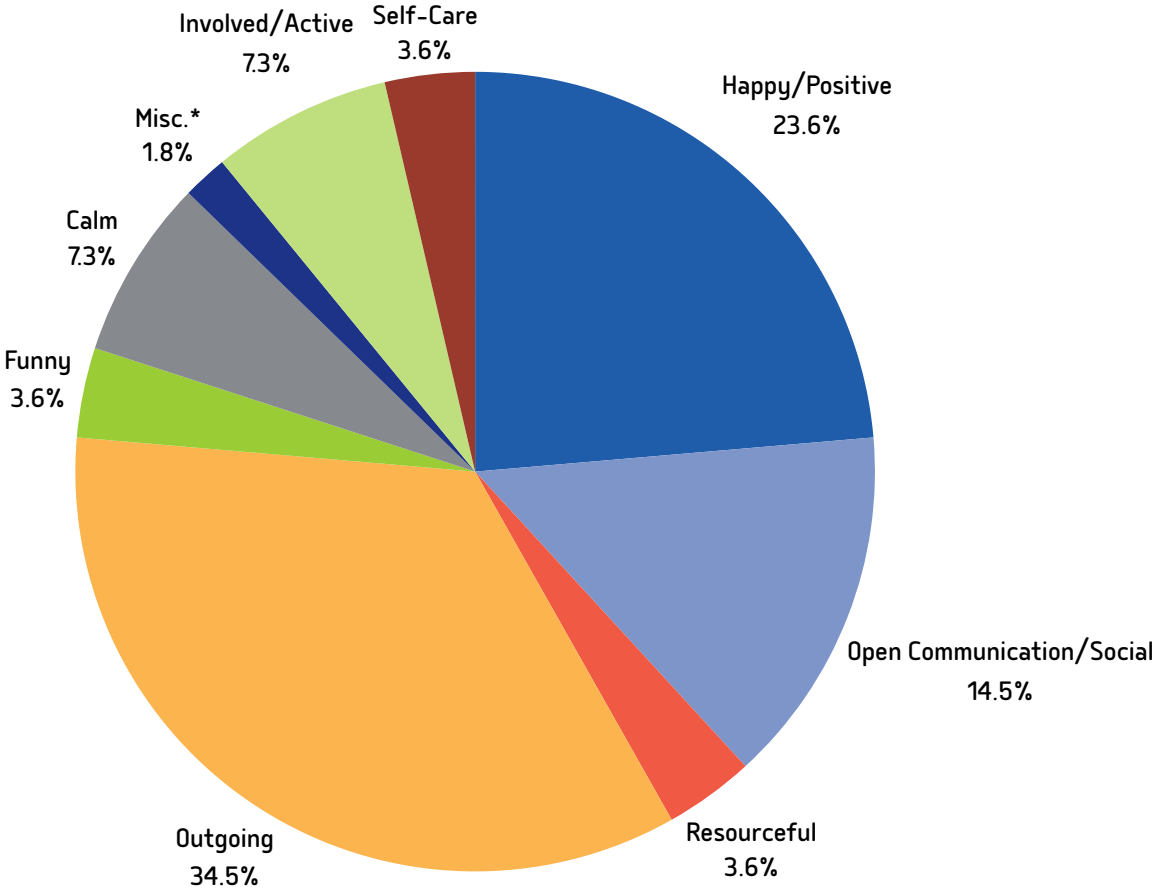
-Social

-Easily communicates with others about their emotions

-Able to admit when they are not doing well

-Appears happy or generally positive

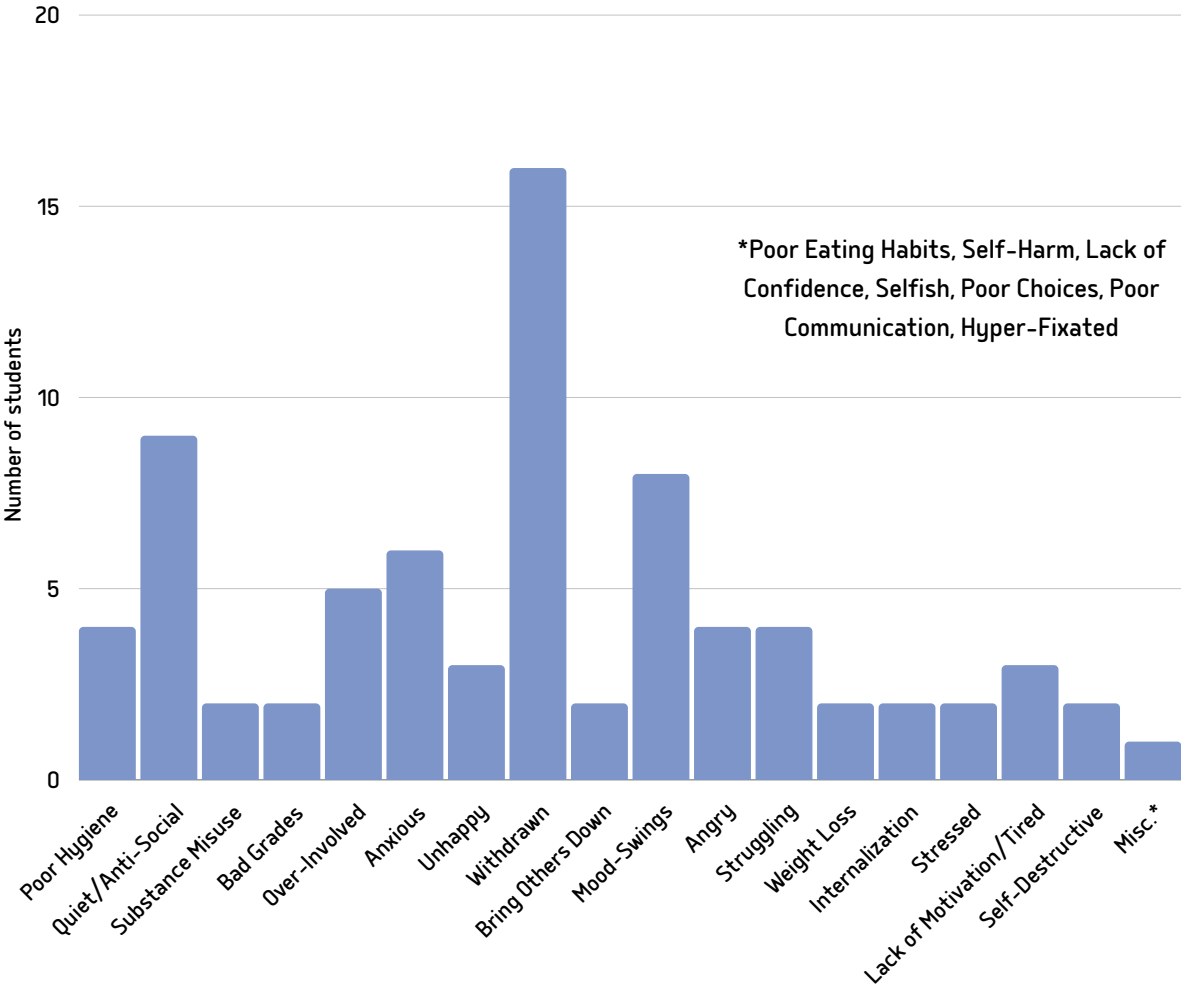
-May be egotistical or have a "big head"



*Egotistical, Determined, Has Support System, Nice, Organized, Supportive, Work Ethic, Good Grades

CHARACTERISTICS

OF SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH



SHARE YOUR VOICE

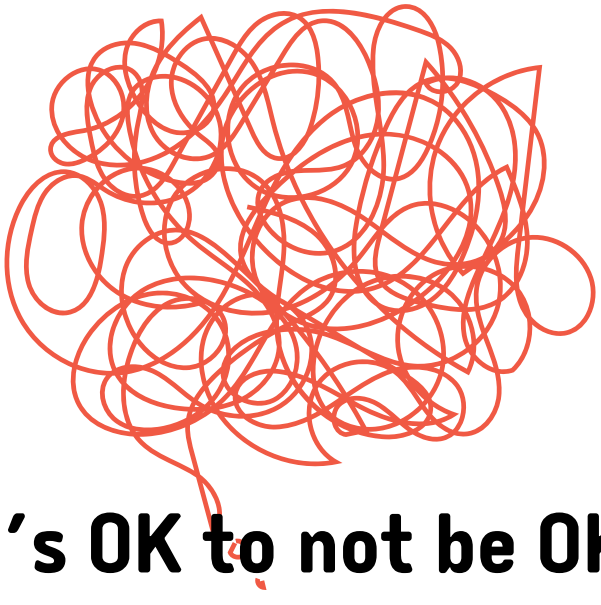
"It is easier to find negative traits because there is so much more (noticeable) negative going on than positive"

SHARE YOUR VOICE

"People may seem like they have good mental health attributes until you get to know them and then you realize they are struggling with the same things you are"

"There are no hard set rules for characteristics that make your mental health/wellness good or bad, it depends on the individual"

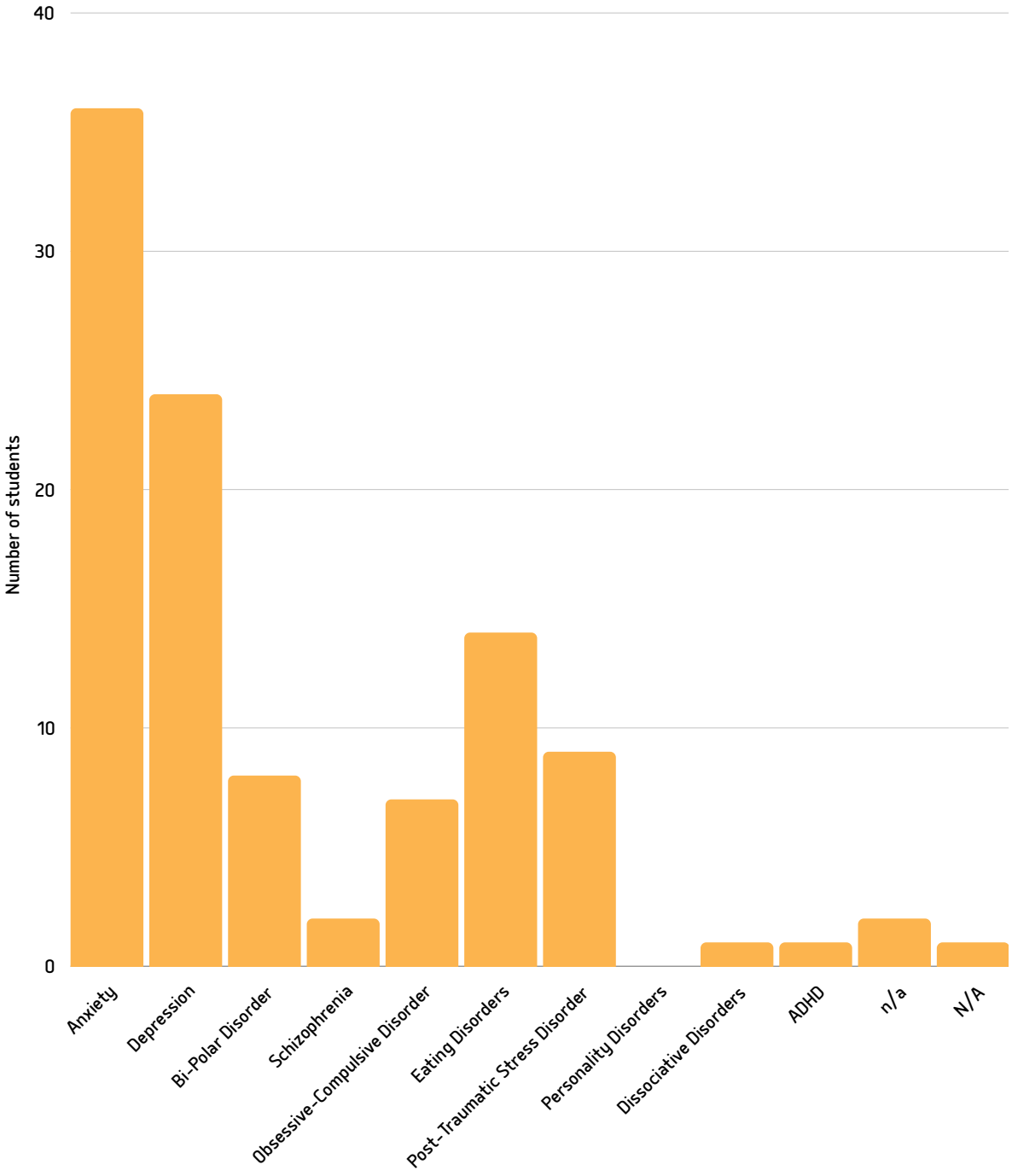
"Can't assume someone's mental state because people are good at hiding it"



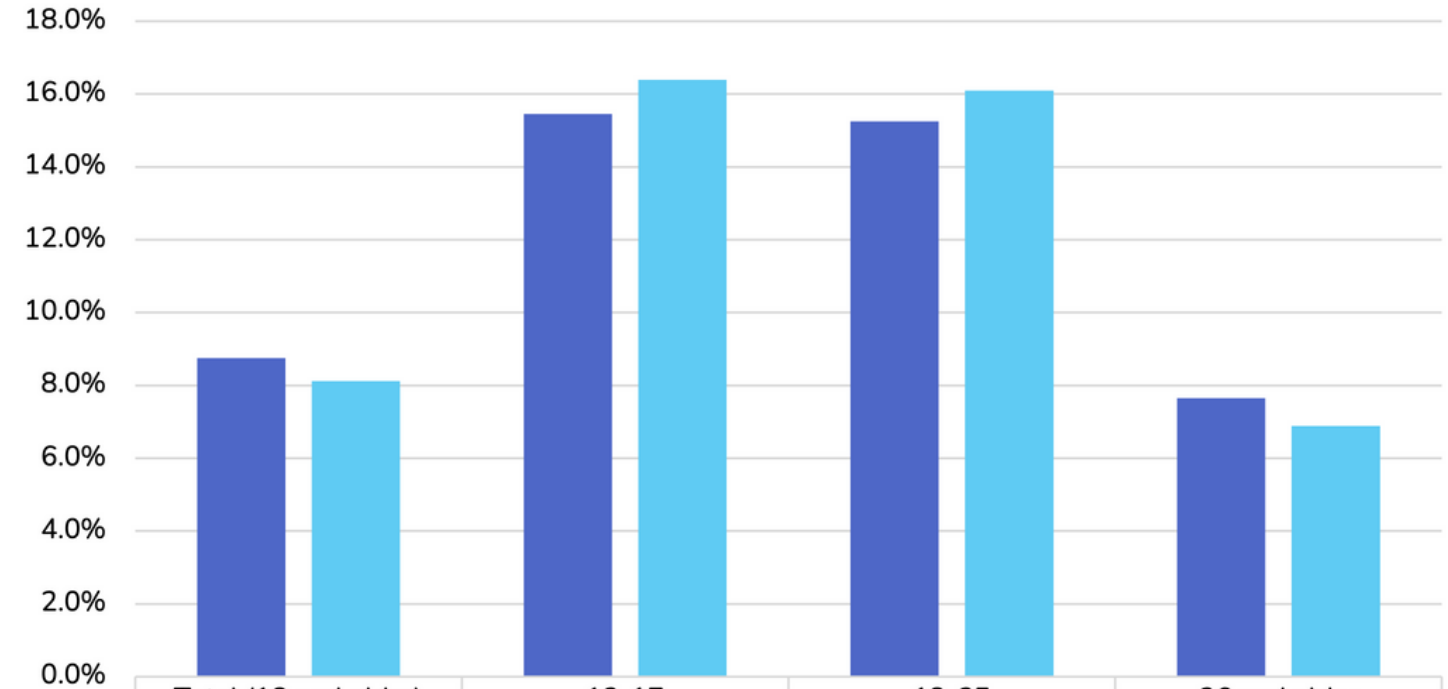
"It's OK to not be OK"

MENTAL WELLNESS

All 49 participants filled out a survey before the summit began, and they identified which mental health challenges they've encountered in their daily lives.



PERCENTAGE OF INDIANA AND U.S. POPULATION REPORTING AT LEAST ONE MAJOR DEPRESSIVE EPISODE IN THE PAST YEAR BY AGE GROUP*



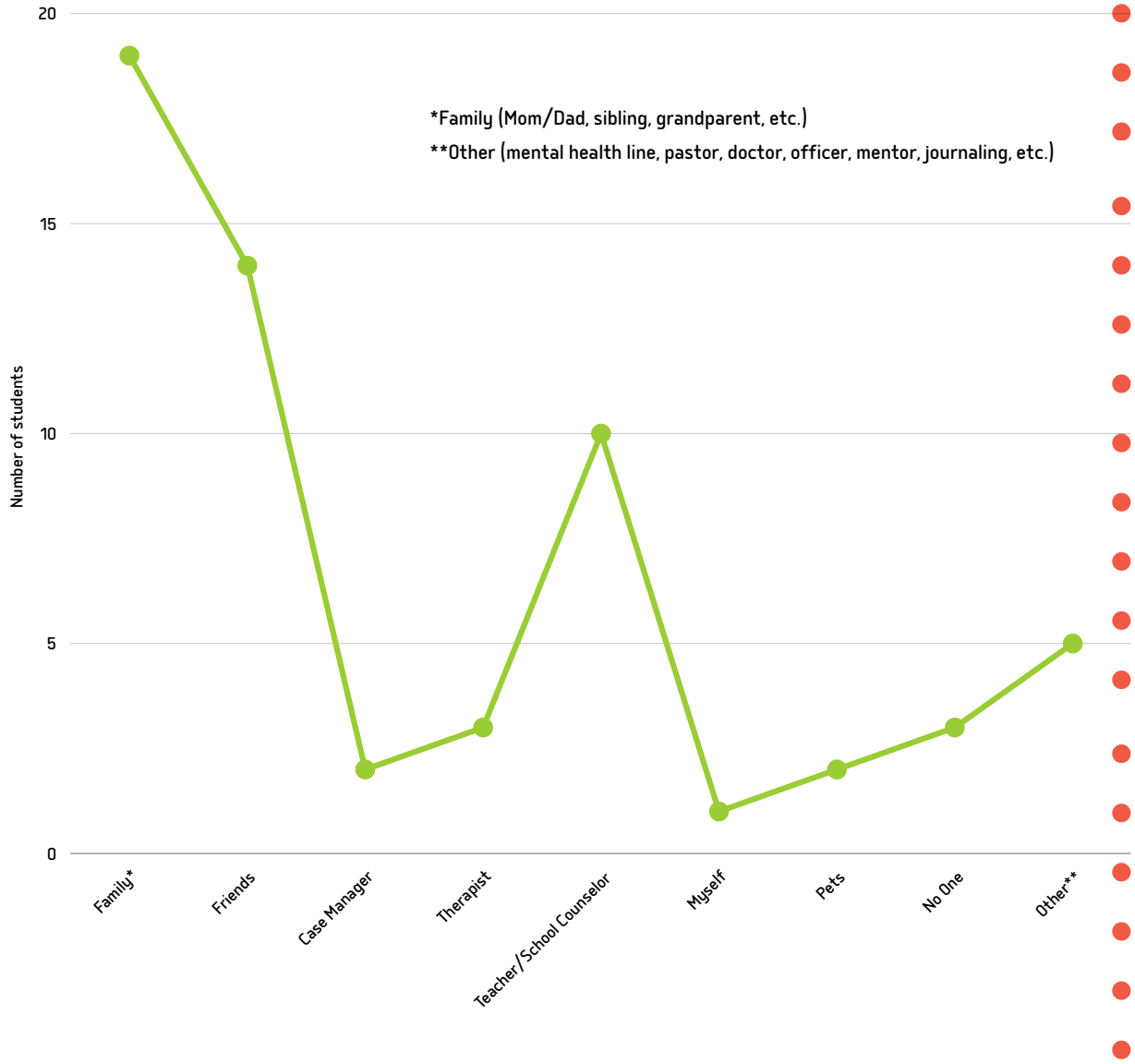
	Total (18 and older)	12-17	18-25	26 and older
Indiana	8.8%	15.5%	15.3%	7.7%
U.S.	8.1%	16.4%	16.1%	6.9%

Source: *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2021). National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).*

*Taken from the Indiana State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup, 2021-2022 report

WHO DO YOU GO TO FOR HELP?

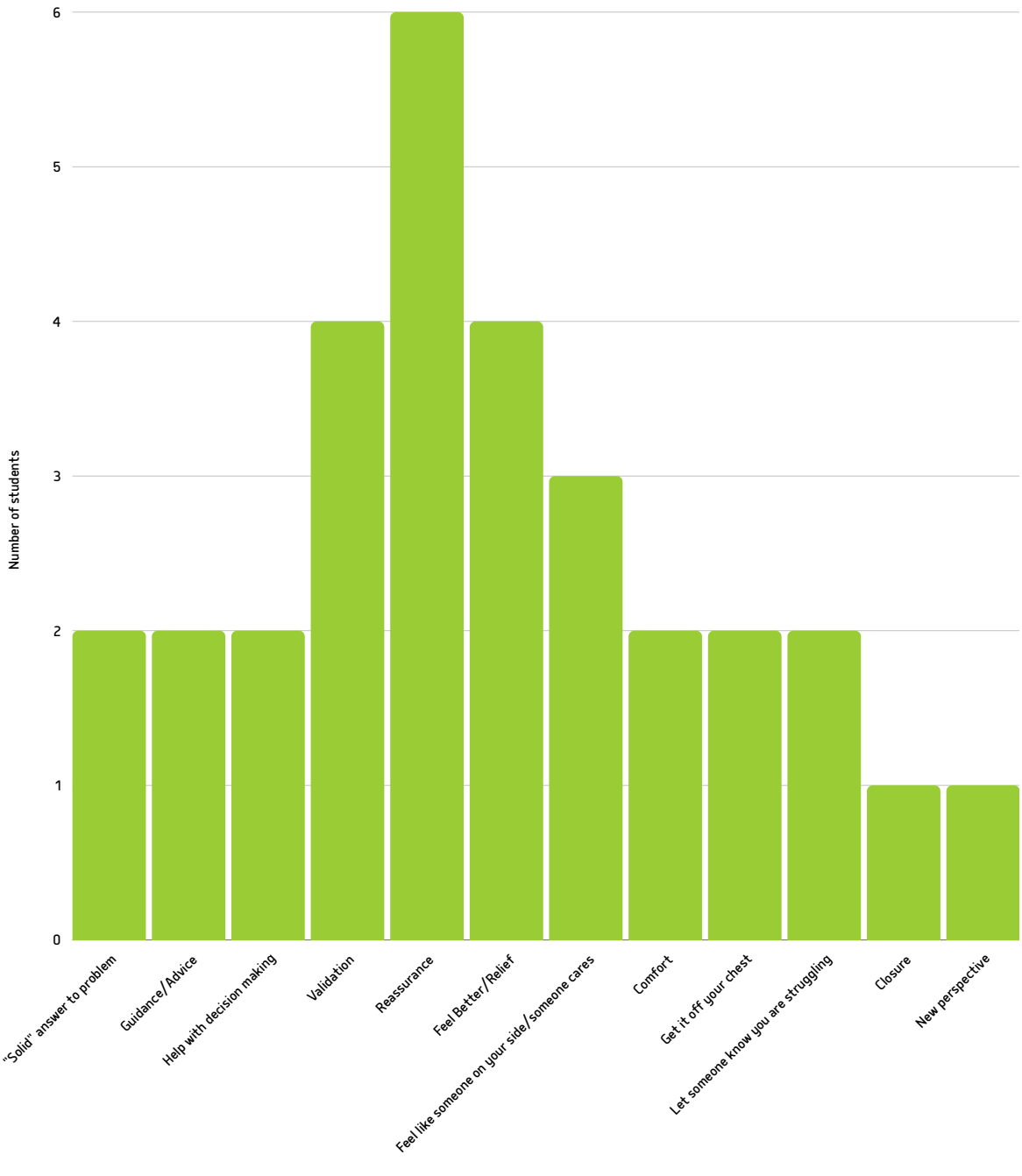
The students consistently chose to go to people they trusted when it came to asking for help. Additionally, they looked for people that had similar life experiences, and could understand the specific situation they needed help with.



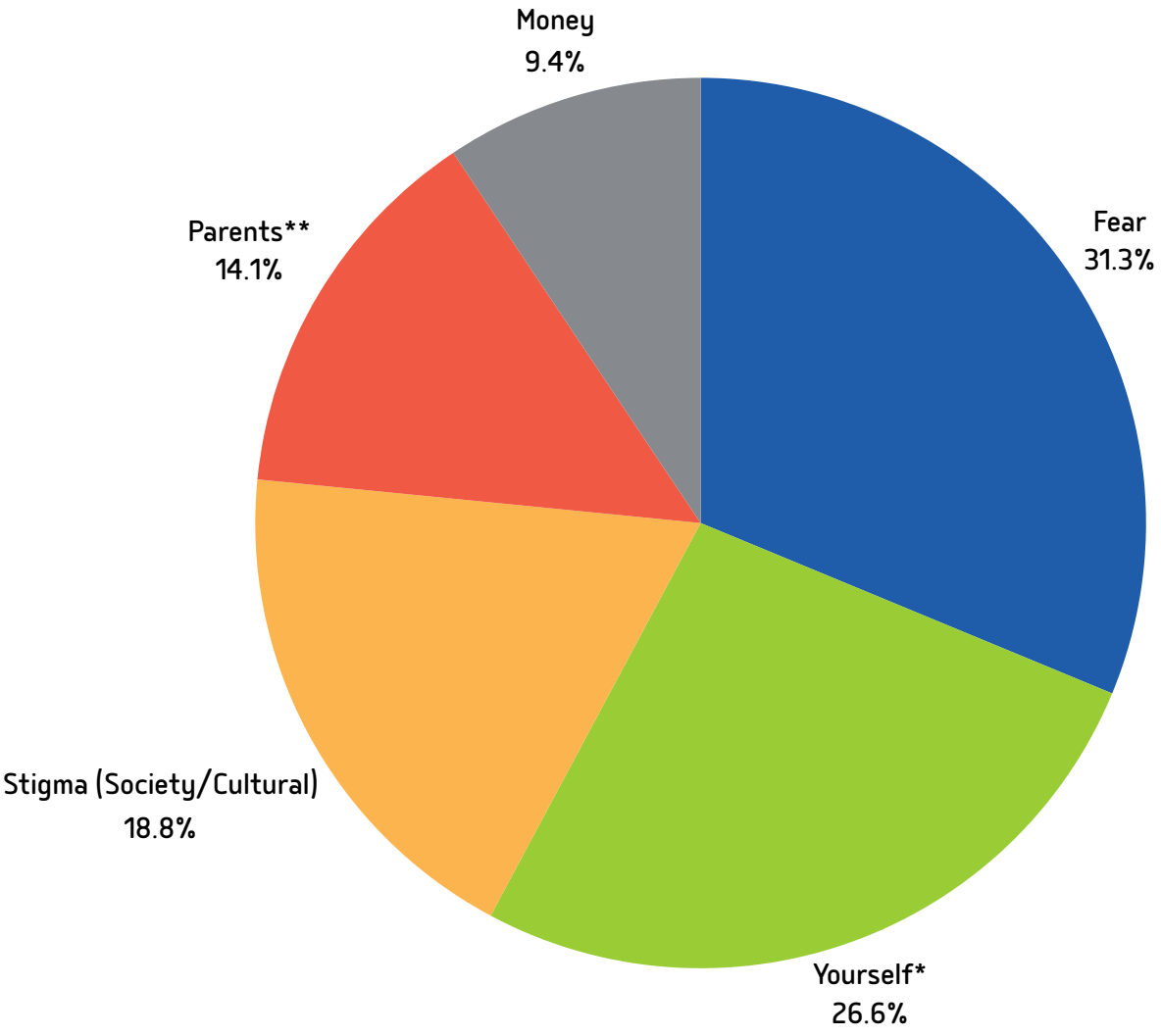
WHAT DOES GETTING HELP LOOK LIKE?

By eliminating common words like student, numbers and descriptors (one/two/another), and other stop words (the, and, etc.) we found these were the most referenced topics in this discussion.

WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO GAIN FROM SEEKING HELP?



WHAT BARRIERS STOP YOU OR YOUR FRIENDS FROM GETTING HELP?



*Not wanting to admit you need help, don't want to listen to people giving you advice, justifying not getting help, don't want to feel like a burden to others

**Need parent permission for therapy if you are a minor, parents might not "believe" in getting help themselves/raised to not talk about things, parents don't think you need help so you don't get it, etc.

WHAT BARRIERS STOP YOU OR YOUR FRIENDS FROM GETTING HELP?

Other barriers mentioned:

Pride

Embarrassment

Judgement

Lack of awareness (of services and resources that are available)

Anxiety

Past experiences/trauma

Medication

Transportation

Language barrier

Lack of time

Religious barrier

SHARE YOUR VOICE

What is the worst thing that could happen when you ask for help?

"Being gaslit"

"Someone not even believing you in the first place"

"Admitting that you need help"

"Mental health stigma in society. Just because you have bad mental health doesn't mean there's something wrong with you..."

"They tell you that you're overreacting"

"They use it against you and break your trust"

"Embarrassment"

COMMUNITY

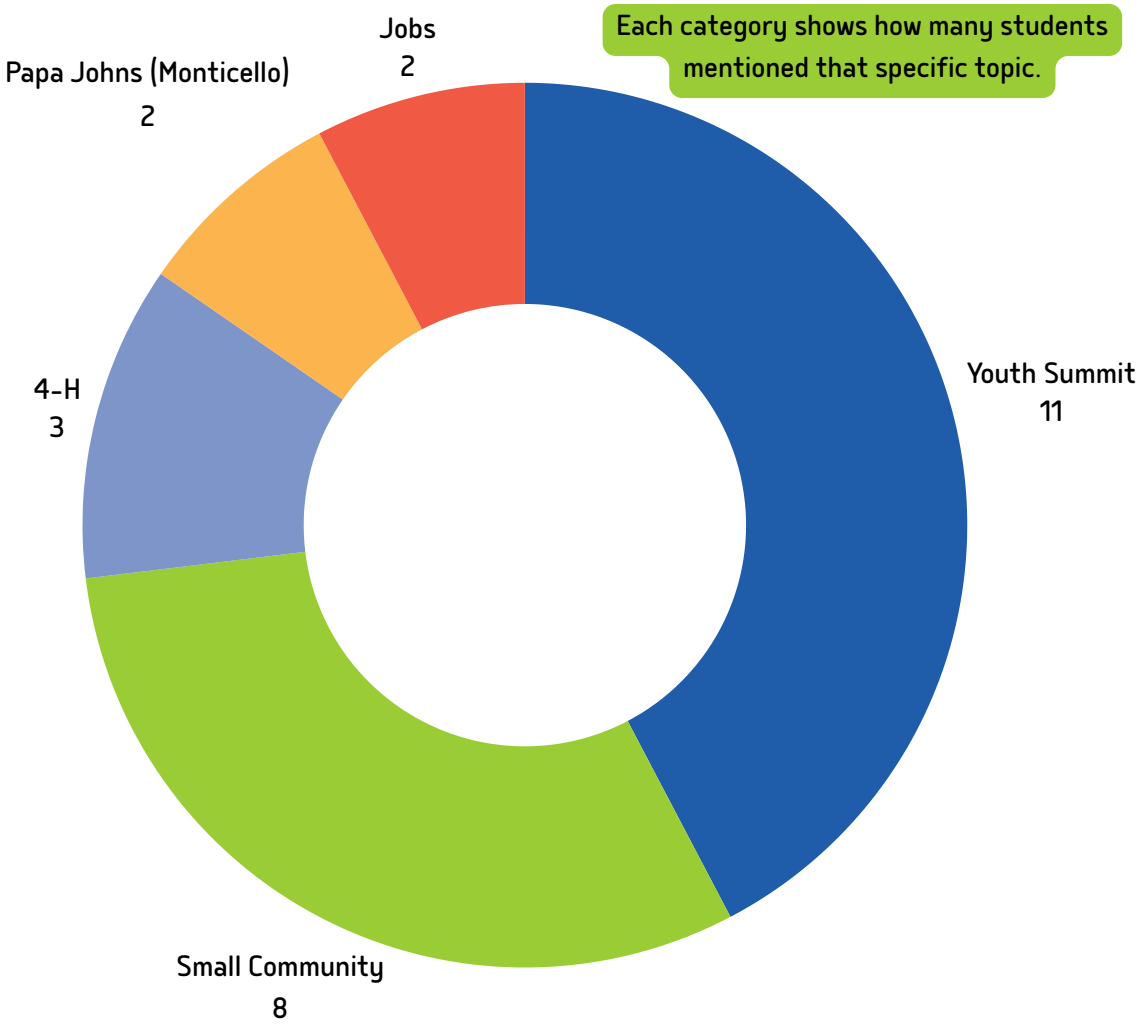
Community Highlights

If you had a chance to sit down with the mayor or community leader, what would you tell them that you appreciate the most about our community and its opportunities for youth?

Community Improvements

What would you explain needs to be done more for youth outside of school?

WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE MOST ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY?



*Mentioned one time: CT Program, police, Brookston parks, Indiana Beach, Apple Popcorn Festival, lights on Main (Monticello), mayor helping out, teacher, library

SHARE YOUR VOICE

"This (Youth Summit) is fun, and I hope I get to do it next year."

"My cousin had a house fire, and started a GoFundMe. Everyone helped out, and they are back on their feet now."

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR YOUTH OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

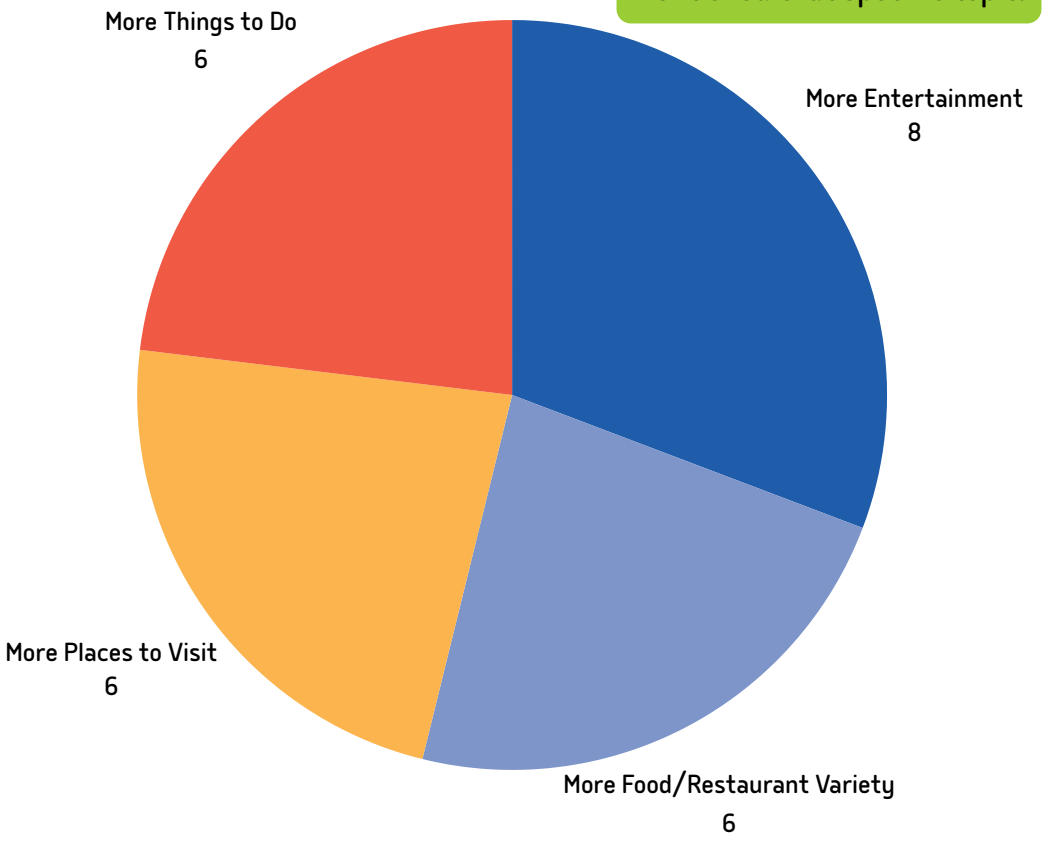
SHARE YOUR VOICE

"Every community should have a designated space where you can learn helpful skills like sign language"

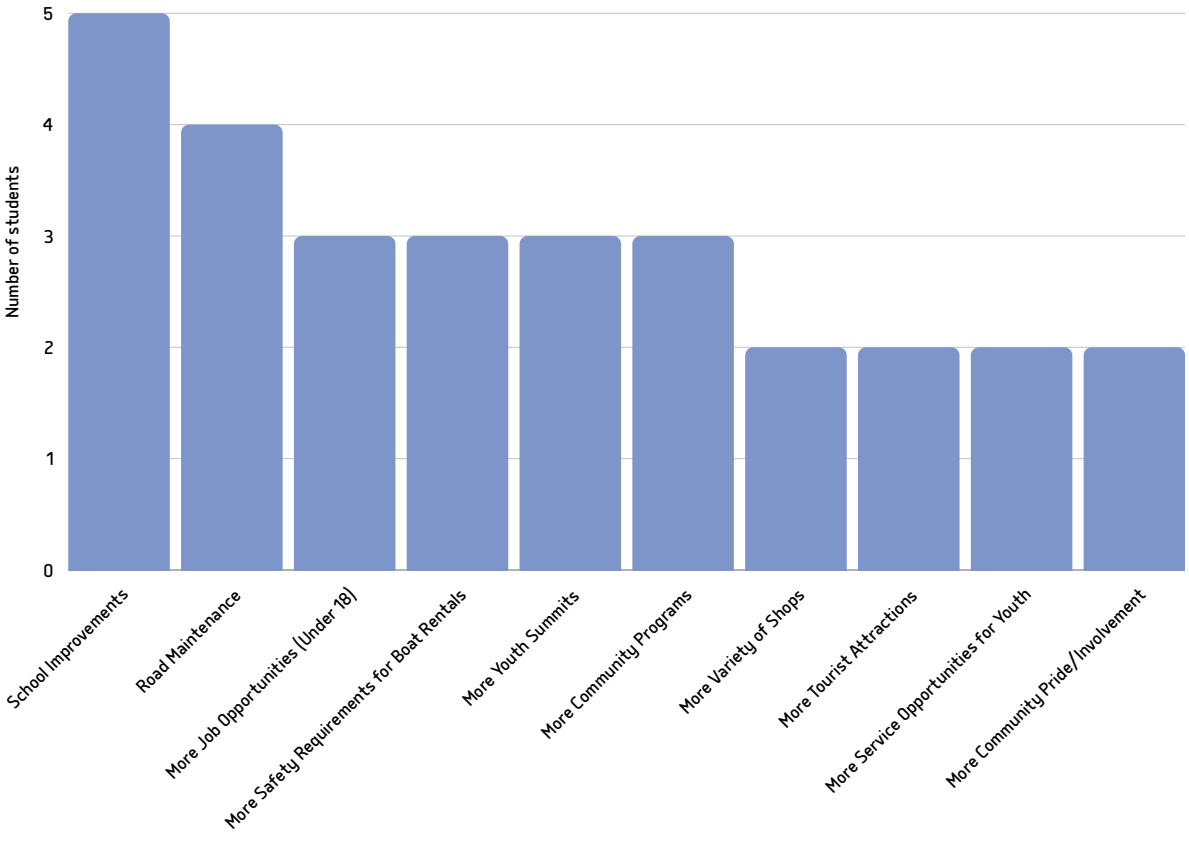
"Excluding fast food there are only 1 or 2 places to eat that I can think of"

"They do not let us know at school of activities outside of school"

Each category shows how many students mentioned that specific topic.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITY?



SHARE YOUR VOICE

"I do not think I have a voice they want to listen to"

"It is a small enough area that it is pointless to try and do anything..."

"(The) population isn't big enough to support big changes"

SPECIFIC CONCERNS/SUGGESTIONS

Youth Summit

The students were excited about the Youth Summit, and spoke very highly of the event itself. They said they found it to be a more interactive way to engage with their community, and that they would like to do more than one Summit a year. They strongly felt it should happen at least once a semester, and that more people should be invited to participate.

Miscellaneous Mentions

School lunches were brought up in this question, with a heavy emphasis on better quality food for the students.

One student brought up the environmental impact of solar/wind farms, and stated that it made the ground unusable for agriculture.

Several participants made requests for specific restaurants to be brought to their towns, including, but not limited to, Wendy's (Wolcott), Chick-fil-A (Monticello), Dairy Queen (unknown), and Starbucks (unknown).

RECOMMENDATIONS
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REFLECTIONS

The second annual White County Youth Summit was an exciting adventure that captured the insights of the youth of our community. This event allowed students to speak up and share their thoughts on current societal issues. We are grateful for their voices, and thankful they shared them with us.

Upon reflection, we identified a key takeaway point that was brought up several times across multiple questions.

Like last year, we see the need to provide more opportunities to "call-in" our youth to community groups, events, and projects. They desperately want their voices to be heard, and they want to have more of a direct impact in the community. They asked for more events like the summit, and it is our recommendation that each agency develop a youth engagement strategy for immediate implementation.

1. Our United Council on Opioids subcommittees are charged with continued data analysis and additional reporting, if needed. Task forces will create recommendations for specific community sectors by the next summit.
2. The Youth Summit workgroup will analyze data from this year and evaluate the PUN feedback. Work on the third annual youth summit process will begin in January of 2024 to ensure better data tracking and recording to produce reliable data for our community partners.
3. Our UCO representatives will begin meeting with regional leaders to collaborate on a standard Youth Summit model to ensure best practices and strong data throughout the state.

COMMUNITY

YOUTH

PARENTS

SCHOOLS

BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT