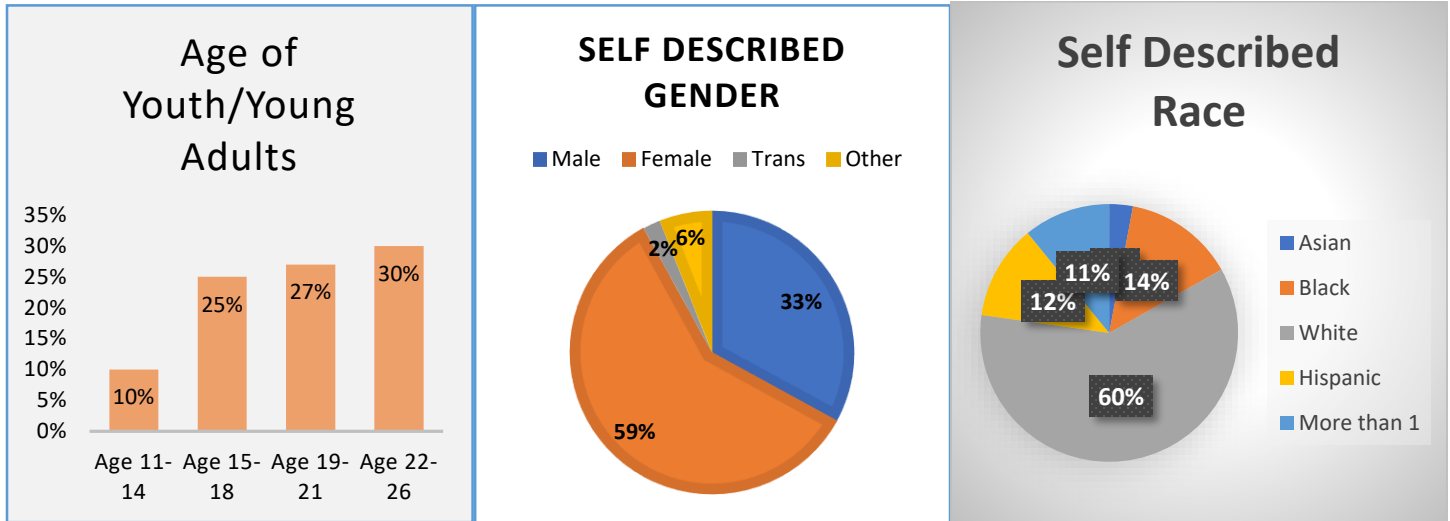


Talk It Out: What Youth and Young Adults Say About Getting Mental Health and Substance Use Information

Overview: In 2018, Youth MOVE Massachusetts (YMM), a youth-led group, working with Parent/Parent Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) surveyed 140 youth and young adults. The young people ranged in age from 11 to 26, lived in small towns and big cities and were culturally diverse.

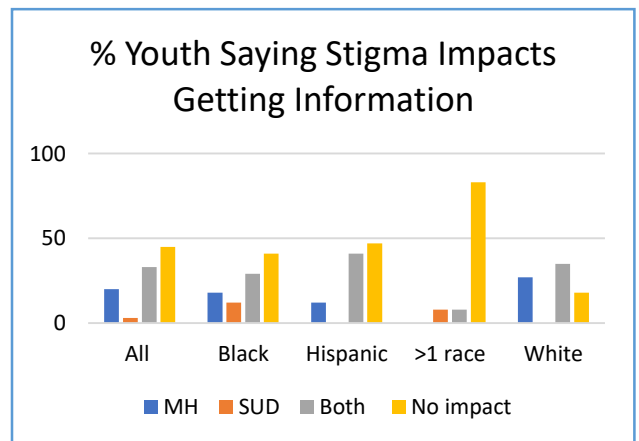


Most had received a behavioral health diagnosis (such as anxiety or depression or substance use disorder) and 60% had accessed some form of therapy or counseling in the last 12 months. The majority lived in a town/suburb (45%) or city (49%) and knew how to find the resources they needed.

Key Findings:

Finding 1: Young people felt stigma affected them more when they were accessing mental health information (20%) than substance use information (3%). African American youth/young adults felt most stigmatized accessing substance use information and Hispanic young people reported feeling the most stigma around accessing information about *both* mental health and substance use. Some young people said stigma had little impact on them.

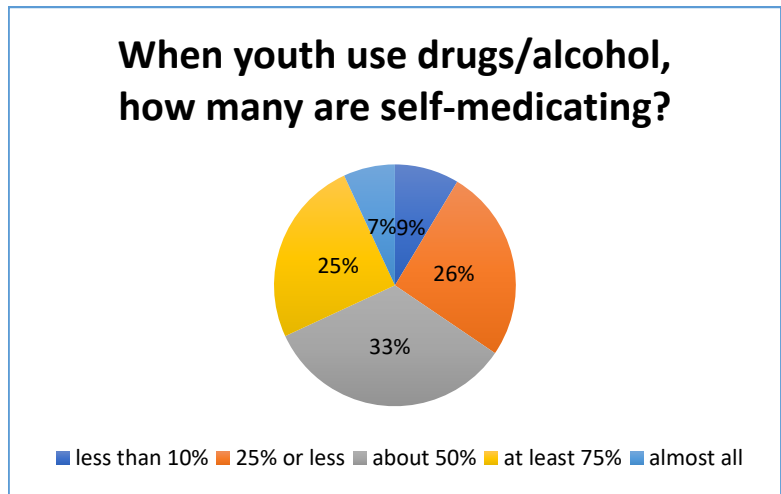
Finding 2: Youth and young adults reported that schools offered more information about substance use than mental health. 71% said they had classes to learn about alcohol and drugs while only 33% reported they received information about mental health, including suicide risk. Only 14% rated the information received at school as excellent or very good while 60% said the effectiveness of that information was either fair or poor.



Finding 3: When asked how they decided if a resource or person was a reliable and trustworthy source of information, most (80%) said they based it on past experience. Almost 1 out of 3 (30%) said they went with their feelings to decide reliability while only 30% said they were swayed by someone's training or educational background. The majority said they looked online when they wanted to get information about mental health issues (54%) or substance use (51%). While many youth and young adults reported that they began with trusted web sites such as Mayo Clinic, the majority simply used search engines, browsing and following links that looked interesting.

Finding 4: The majority of youth and young adults (65%) believe that young people are using drugs and alcohol primarily to self-medicate, not simply for recreational use. The largest group (34%) estimated that about 50% of young people using drugs or alcohol are doing so to self-medicate. One-fourth said that they believe about 75% of young people are self-medicating. Another 26% said that one-fourth of young people use to self-medicate.

Finding 5: Young people thought that legalizing marijuana had had a clear and positive impact. 62% said people worry less about being arrested/fined, more than half said there is more acceptance/lack of judgement of its use among both adults (54%) and youth (52%) and 30% said information is easier to find. One youth commented that a lot has “changed since marijuana has been decriminalized and legalized. A lot of people have gotten some serious help since then.”



Finding 6: Young people identified the **top 3** actions for preventing risky behavior in youth and young adults. They are:

1. Prevention and education
2. Better communication between young people and their parents
3. Mental health counseling services

Youth MOVE Massachusetts, offers free, youth and young adult driven, non-clinical community support for young people with all kinds of “lived experience”. Some have mental health or behavioral health needs, others have juvenile justice involvement, some have trouble in school, others are looking for a place to fit in. Everyone works to support one another and change their lives, homes, and communities for the better.

This project was done in collaboration with the Children’s Mental Health Campaign

