



# **2022 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey**

## **Summary of Profile Report**

**for:**

**Niskayuna, NY**

**Sponsored By:**



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This report presents a brief summary of the Niskayuna Profile Report compiled from the 2022 administration of the Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA). Readers are strongly encouraged to examine the full Profile Report for more information and a better understanding of the data.

## **Participants**

The Niskayuna PNA included a survey of students in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. A total of 1,122 surveys were found to be valid and honest. The male students totaled 52.8% of those surveyed and 47.2% were female. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade students contributed 28.4% of the utilized surveys, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade was responsible for 25.9% of responses, 10<sup>th</sup> graders represented 25.9% of responses, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders added 19.7%. Students who identified themselves as White contributed 61.5% of the surveys, Asian had 15.5%, African American students contributed 5.4%, Hispanic students were represented by 3.0% of responses, Native American students gave 1.7% of the surveys collected, and those who identified as Pacific Islander had 0.3%. Multi-racial students comprised 12.5% of those surveyed. The survey overall had good participation rates, with 1,122 completed forms out of a sample of 1,438 for a participation rate of 78.0%. Rates of 60.0% or higher mean the report is a good indicator of the levels of substance abuse, risk, protection, and antisocial behavior in this population.

## **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use**

### **Alcohol - Lifetime and 30-day Use:**

Experimentation with alcohol increases steadily as students get older from 7.7% in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, to 9.8% in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 31.6% in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and 52.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting having tried alcohol at least once in their lives. Lifetime alcohol use is viewed to be a measure of experimental use and past-month use is viewed to be a measure of more regular use. Scores for Niskayuna students were significantly lower than those of Monitoring the Future (MTF) – a national survey of youth in the United States in grades 8, 10 and 12. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade's score was only 1.7 points lower than MTF, but the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was 2.1 points below, and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade was 11.9 points lower than the national rate of 21.7% for that grade. Overall, the region has only a fraction of the lifetime alcohol use rates of students nationwide with a lifetime score of 23.5% - 12.8 points below MTF – and rates of lifetime alcohol use dropped by 14.8% from 2020.

Results for 30-day use showed mostly lower regular alcohol consumption among teens in Niskayuna than in years previous by as much as 50.8% in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (2.8%, 2.9 points lower than 2020). Sixth grade students were the only group to show an increase when compared to the 2020 study with a score of 4.6%, more than double that of the previous survey administration. Overall, Niskayuna was down 3.9 points from 2020, and remained 2.2 points lower than the national average.

### **Alcohol - Binge Drinking:**

In 2022, Niskayuna high school students exhibited binge drinking at rates that exceeded those in other parts of the country. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade's rate of 8.5% was 2.6 points above the BH Norm, and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade was 6.0 points higher than their peers at 17.8%. The 6<sup>th</sup>

and 10<sup>th</sup> grades saw increases (6<sup>th</sup> 1.4%, up 1.0 point from 2020; 10<sup>th</sup> 8.5%, up 3.7 points from 2020), while the 8<sup>th</sup> (0.4%) and 12<sup>th</sup> (17.8%) grades experienced a drop in the behavior. Overall, just fewer than half the number of students overall who drank regularly (12.9%) also admitting to binge drinking behavior (6.2%). The degree to which grades participated in binge drinking may be due to students' attitudes about the riskiness of using alcohol to excess. When asked how much someone risks harming themselves by drinking 5 or more drinks in a row once or twice each weekend (e.g., binge drinking at parties), only about half or fewer (49.7% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 51.8% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 41.9% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 32.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders) of students in the district thought it put them at "Great risk." Making students aware of and getting them to internalize the dangers associated with binge drinking can be an effective way to combat this behavior.

### **Cigarettes:**

Regular cigarette use in Niskayuna is virtually nonexistent, with the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades reporting 0.0% 30-day cigarette use, and the others reaching their highest mark at only 1.4% in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Overall, the rate of smoking cigarettes during the past month (0.4%) was below one percent and the lowest it has been in the past 5 years. When it comes to students trying smoking, all grades were roughly the same or in a decline (6<sup>th</sup> grade, 0.3% up 0.3 points; 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 1.0% down 1.3 points; 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 2.8% down 0.8 points; and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 7.6% down 2.0 points). Overall, Niskayuna was just over a fifth of the MTF rate of 11.4% with a lifetime cigarette use of just 2.6%; down 0.8 points from 2020. Low numbers of students trying cigarettes or using them regularly is a positive outcome, but as will be discussed in the next section, it may be that many students have simply moved instead to e-cigarettes or vaping.

### **E-Cigarettes:**

E-cigarettes and vaping have outpaced cigarettes, but they are not as prevalent among young people in Niskayuna as they are for others across the nation. Nevertheless, vaping is the third-most popular ATOD in both experimentation and regular use for students in the region. Experimentation with vaping dropped by as much as 47.5% among 8<sup>th</sup> graders (3.2%, down from 6.1% in 2020) and by 13.3% overall from 27.1% in 2020 to 9.9% in 2022. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade showed the highest rates of experimentation with these types of smoking devices at 26.5% and was also the highest for 30-day use at 17.6%. The overall measures for both lifetime and 30-day vaping were just a fraction of MTF (Lifetime 10.4%, MTF 28.9%; 30-day 6.4%, MTF 15.9%). For teens in this region, rates of regular vaping make up for low cigarette use, with more than sixteen times as many young people saying they used e-cigarettes than those who reported using cigarettes in the past month.

### **Marijuana:**

Experimentation with marijuana dropped slightly in Niskayuna, but the regular use of marijuana remained unchanged overall at just over half the rate of students nationwide (7.1%, MTF 11.0%). Lifetime use of the drug is down overall by 2.4 points; the only single grade decrease was a 13.8% drop in the percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> graders trying marijuana. For more regular use, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade experienced an increase to 9.6% - the highest rate of 30-day marijuana use for that grade in the past three survey administrations. Of the high school students who try marijuana, a majority continue to use regularly. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade's 30-day use rate of 9.6% represents 68.0% of those students who admitted to trying marijuana. Similarly, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade's 30-day use rate was 20.9%, more than half (65.7%)

the 31.8% of students in that grade who had tried it at least once. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade was also the only grade to exceed the BH Norm in 30-day use (1.4 points higher). For high school students, the higher rates of marijuana use may be due in part to their friends' behaviors and attitudes. When asked how many of their four best friends used marijuana, 27.9% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 52.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders had at least one close friend who did. They also had much higher percentages of students than the younger grades surveyed that believed there was at least some chance that they would "be seen as cool" if they used the drug (26.0% 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 44.3% 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Inhalants:**

When other illicit substances are hard to come by, students – especially younger ones – look for easier ways to get high. This is especially apparent with inhalant use, as items may be readily available in the garage or kitchen cabinets. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade scored the highest for inhalant use both in lifetime (4.9%) and 30-day (1.8%) measures, but inhalants were the second-most popular substance among 6<sup>th</sup> graders (2.8% lifetime, 0.7% 30-day). They are not favored by older students; regular inhalant use was 0.0% among 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in Niskayuna and was just 0.9% overall. The popularity of trying inhalants increased slightly among 6<sup>th</sup> graders from 1.7% in 2020 to 2.8% in 2022.

### **Prescription Drugs:**

Another set of ATODs that are often procured from home medicine cabinets or handbags are prescription drugs – amphetamines, sedatives, and tranquilizers. These substances saw a rise in lifetime use - especially among 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Niskayuna. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest rates of experimentation with Sedatives (1.8%) and Tranquilizers (2.8%), while the 12<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest percentage of students trying Amphetamines (4.3%). All three lifetime measures for all grades combined represented remained virtually unchanged from 2020; the same held true for 30-day measures.

### **Other Drugs:**

In Niskayuna, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade experienced the greatest number of top scores in lifetime use of other substances with higher rates of use of Hallucinogens (3.3%), Cocaine (0.9%), and Synthetic Marijuana (3.0%). On a positive note, all lifetime and 30-day use scores for the district fell below MTF levels. The low use of these substances is a positive outcome and allows prevention efforts to more closely focus on the other substances that present a greater challenge among Niskayuna youth.

### **Energy Drinks:**

Energy drinks reach their peak popularity in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Niskayuna, where 33.3% of students say they consume them regularly (Lifetime use for energy drinks is not measured.) They are only slightly less popular among other students from 29.9% in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, to 23.4% in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 20.4% in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. All of these rates represent an increase over 2020 data. These beverages are mostly unregulated and contain high amounts of caffeine and other stimulants. It is worthwhile to examine their use among youth, who according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, should not consume energy drinks because they are linked to harmful effects in children's developing neurological and cardiovascular systems. Warnings on the labels for these beverages themselves describe them as "not for children."

## **Antisocial Behavior**

All measured antisocial behaviors in Niskayuna were reported at rates at or below the Bach-Harrison Norm (BH Norm) - an aggregate, weighted measure from eight statewide survey and five large regional surveys representing youth across the United States. Overall, negative behaviors were exhibited at rates below the national average, the largest differences being in “Been Suspended from School” (2.3%, 7.5 points below BH Norm) and “Carried a Handgun” (3.4%, 5.4 points below BH Norm). The 10<sup>th</sup> grade showed improvement at curbing antisocial behavior in several areas with drops in five of the eight categories measured.

### **Being Drunk or High at School**

This antisocial behavior remained roughly the same in 2022, with students returning to in-person instruction. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest percentage of students admit to being drunk or high while attending class at 12.6%, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was second at 7.0%, and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade was third on the list at 1.4%. Overall, this behavior remained virtually unchanged from 5.0% in 2020 to 4.7% in 2022 – 4.1 points below the national average.

### **Suspended from School**

School suspensions were down somewhat in grades 8 and 10; in fact, their respective suspension rates of 2.1% and 3.1% were the lowest in the past five years. Students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade saw suspensions increase slightly from 0.9% in 2020 to 1.4%, and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade’s suspension rate of 2.3% was down from 3.0% in the previous study. Overall, this consequence of negative behavior was unchanged (differences of less than 1.0 percentage point are usually viewed as not statistically significant) in Niskayuna yet fell 7.5 points below other students nationwide.

### **Selling Illegal Drugs**

Reported rates for the selling of illegal drugs in Niskayuna continued to decrease overall from the two previous survey administrations to less than 1.0% in 2022. The numbers for high school (10<sup>th</sup> grade 1.7%, down 1.0 point; 12<sup>th</sup> grade 0.5%, down 3.7 points) have dropped significantly from 2020 and fell well below the BH Norm. No students in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade reported the behavior. When students were asked to share whether any of their best friends sold drugs, just 2.6% overall said at least one of their four closest friends were involved in that activity. Preventing use also means preventing supply and maintaining efforts to reduce the sale and distribution of drugs among peers can be a powerful aid in stopping the spread of ATODs.

### **Attacking Others**

Violence scores for this population were far below the national average, the largest disparities being in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade (2.8%, 5.3 below the BH Norm) and 8<sup>th</sup> grade (4.2%, 5.2 below the BH Norm). While the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was the furthest below the national average, it nevertheless was the only age group to experience an increase in this behavior, up 1.0 point from 2020. When asked, 24.0% of Niskayuna students said it was only “A Little Bit Wrong” or “Not Wrong at All” to pick a fight; for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, that number was 27.0%. Changing attitudes with groups of students who don’t feel fighting is wrong may play a part in lessening violent incidents in school and in neighborhoods.

## **Gambling**

Instances of gambling in Niskayuna were relatively low with reported instances of gambling in the past year representing a fraction of the BH Norm, and many much lower. The overall percentage of students who gambled in any form during the past year was 26.4%, a 2.3-point increase from 2020. Students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade reported the highest rate of gambling at 32.2%, but fell 8.1 points lower than the national average. The three most popular forms of gambling were betting on sports (11.2%), playing the lottery (10.3%), and betting on cards at 9.1%.

## **Risk Factors**

This administration of the PNA Survey showed a marked increase in the number of students exhibiting risk across a variety of grades and domains, most especially in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Overall in Niskayuna, seven scales outpaced the national average. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest percentage of youth scoring as at-risk in 10 of the 20 scales measured. The widest differences exceeding the BH Norm when compared to Niskayuna youth overall were in “Depressive Symptoms” in the Peer-Individual Domain at 52.0% (13.3 points above BH Norm) and “Attitudes Favorable to Antisocial Behavior” in the Peer-Individual Domain at 41.9% (7.8 points above BH Norm).

### **Community Domain:**

Both scales in this domain deal with attitudes toward drug use. “Laws and Norms Favor Drug Use” scored highest among 12<sup>th</sup> graders (43.3%) and three of the four grades’ scores represented an increase from 2020. The scores for “Perceived Availability of Drugs” were mostly the lower of the two scales among Niskayuna students, except for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade’s score of 36.2% which was the highest out of all grades surveyed. No grade’s score was above the BH Norm. Three grades experienced drops in their risk scores in this scale – the largest being a 29.3% decrease in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade from 29.0% scoring as at risk in 2020 to 20.5% in 2022. A closer examination of which substances young people find particularly difficult to obtain shows that certain ATODs are helping to keep this score low while others are viewed as more readily available. For example, when asked “If you wanted to get \_\_\_\_\_, how easy would it be for you to get some?” 72.9% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders said it would be “Sort of easy” or “Very easy” for them to get alcohol and 60.0% said the same for marijuana. Contrast this with rates of 15.1% for prescription drugs and 9.9% for other hard drugs like cocaine or amphetamines for this same age group.

### **Family Domain:**

Conflict in the home, a lack of clear rules governing substance abuse and antisocial behavior, and older siblings or relatives setting less-than-positive examples can all contribute to a teen’s participating in negative behaviors. Family Conflict was among the top two highest scoring scales in every grade surveyed and was at its highest in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at 48.0%. Home environments that are fraught with conflict often have a way of bleeding into other aspects of young people’s lives. When asked, more than a third (40.8%) of Niskayuna students said that their families had serious arguments, 42.1% said that those arguments were something that happened repeatedly, and 34.3% said

that those arguments often devolved into insulting or yelling at each other. Helping families discover more positive ways of communicating and dealing with difficulties respectfully in ways that resolve problems could help to decrease these risk scores. The scale with the highest percentage of students at risk overall was Parent Attitudes Favor Antisocial behavior at 53.0%. For grades 8, 10, and 12, it was the only scale where a majority of students were at risk, the highest being 61.1% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders. There are three behaviors that students are asked to assess their parents' level of approval for: stealing, vandalism, and fighting. Of the three, fighting seems to be the driving factor for the high scores; 10.7% of students felt their parents thought it was "Not wrong at all" or only "A little bit wrong for them to start a fight with someone. Compare this with 6.0% responding the same for stealing and 5.2% for doing graffiti.

### **School Domain:**

Data in the 2021 Niskayuna study show lower risk scores for "Academic Failure" than "Low Commitment to School" – the only two scales in this domain – with the second measure having the third-highest overall risk score (52.4%) out of all scales and domains. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest score for "Low Commitment to School" (62.9%), 15.9 points higher than their peers nationwide. The other grades were more in line with the BH Norm, with none surpassing 50.0%. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade's score of 38.2% for "Academic Failure" put it as the grade most at risk in this scale and 8.6 points over the BH Norm. Scores for this scale were at an all time high overall, up 5.3 points from 2020 to 32.1%.

"Low Commitment to School" measures things like how important students feel their schoolwork is, whether they find class time interesting and whether they enjoy being in school in general. Only 6.5% of students said they thought their school courses were "Very interesting and stimulating," and 26.0% said they "Often" or "Almost Always" hated being in school. When students are engaged in their academic life and see it benefitting them later on, they are less likely to take part in behaviors that might jeopardize the payoff for all that hard work. Prevention efforts might look for ways to help students see the value in an education and the path it provides to a successful future.

### **Peer-Individual Domain:**

The Peer-Individual domain uses 10 separate scales to construct a picture of how student introduction to delinquency and association with friends who use drugs and engage in problem behaviors puts them at risk of engaging in those same types of actions themselves. When looking at this picture, it is hard to miss the scale that scored the highest: "Perceived Risk of Drug Use" (57.0%). This scale was the highest in every grade, presenting a strong pattern of being at risk no matter what the age group.

When students don't believe they will suffer any physical harm or consequences if they take ATODs, then they are much more likely to do so. "Perceived Risk of Drug Use" deals with students' beliefs on how likely they are to harm themselves physically, or in other ways, if they use drugs and alcohol. Scores for this scale start at just under half of all students (48.9%) at risk in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and continue to rise in the other grades – 6<sup>th</sup> (55.3%), 10<sup>th</sup> (60.7%), and 12<sup>th</sup> (65.4%). Three of the four grades surpassed the BH Norm, the largest excess being the 12<sup>th</sup> grade at 6.8 points higher than the national average.

Not all substances are viewed as equally dangerous by Niskayuna youth. According to the crosstab results, 63.2% of students said there was "Great Risk" from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day, but only 43.0% said smoking marijuana regularly put them

at a similarly high level of risk, and that number diminishes to 18.4% of students believing that trying marijuana once or twice has the same adverse effects.

Students found alcohol to be almost as dangerous than marijuana, with 40.4% of kids believing regular alcohol use (1-2 drinks nearly every day) put them at “Great Risk” of negative outcomes or health problems; and slightly more agreed for binge drinking (5 or more drinks once or twice each weekend) with a score of 44.8%. Altering students’ perception that ATODs, particularly marijuana, are safe and consequence-free might be necessary in any attempt to persuade young people in Niskayuna to avoid their use.

The second-highest scores in the Peer/Individual Domain for most grades were in the “Depressive Symptoms” scale. The highest scores were among high school students with the 10<sup>th</sup> grade (54.2%) and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (56.9%) showing the majority of students scoring as at-risk, but all grades were above the 45.0% mark. These scale scores all represent the highest number of students at risk in this category since 2018, and Niskayuna’s overall score of 52.0% outpaced the national average by 13.3 points. This is a relatively new development and has been echoed in many other parts of the country in their PNA results. It’s difficult to ignore the difficulties students have faced over the past few years with measures imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and limited exposure to friends and activities they enjoy.

Where we see positive trends in this domain are in other areas like “Friends Use of Drugs” (11.9%, down 1.0 point from 2020), “Rewards for Antisocial Behavior” (29.8%, down 4.0 points from 2020) and “Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior” (11.2%, down 1.1 points from 2020). In these cases, limited exposure to peers also means limited exposure to negative influences as well.

### **Protective Factors**

When it came to protective factors, Niskayuna experienced a decrease across nine of the eleven scales measured, and the remaining two were virtually unchanged. Overall, there were six scales whose scores fell below the BH Norm, the largest gaps being in “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” in the School Domain (54.7%, 18.4 points below BH Norm) and “Belief in the Moral Order” in the Peer-Individual Domain (50.6%, 12.9 points below BH Norm). Students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade received the most protection in five of the Protective Factor scales - the highest for any grade – with three scales showing improvement over the 2020 study and five scores coming in higher than the national average.

#### **Community Domain:**

In the sole scale for this domain, “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement,” the 8<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest score at 46.4% and the lowest score belonged to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at 34.2%. Compared with other students, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades’ scores were above the BH Norm (6<sup>th</sup> 43.5% 1.7 points over BH Norm, 8<sup>th</sup> 46.4% 1.3 points over BH Norm), while the 10<sup>th</sup> grade (34.2%) was 5.5 below the national average. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade’s score of 39.1% represented an increase from 2020 but was on par with the BH Norm. Overall, Niskayuna’s protection rate was 40.9%. The community domain is a measure of how connected young people feel to their neighborhood, and this scale specifically asks them to reflect on whether their neighbors notice when they are doing well and care about their problems and well-being. Prevention is a community effort, and expanding beyond students to those they interact with may help to raise this score.



**Family Domain:**

With nearly all scale scores showing a majority of students in each grade receiving protection, the Family Domain remains a strong area in which to foster prevention in Niskayuna. Family Attachment was the scale with the highest overall score (64.8%), led by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at 71.8%. In fact, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade led in two out of the three protection scale scores and increased in each over 2020. One scale that was consistently below the BH Norm was “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement”. This scale asks students to reflect on whether they enjoy spending time with their parents and if they receive positive reinforcement from their parents when they do something well. Niskayuna teens overwhelmingly enjoy having a good time with both their mother (94.6%) and father (88.9%), but only 59.6% said that their parents let them know “Often” or “All the time” when they are doing a good job, or when they’re proud of them. Working with parents to be sure they let their children know they are noticing and appreciating the good things they do can be one way to use the strong protection students receive from family to bolster prevention efforts and counteract negative influences outside the home.

**School Domain:**

A majority of students in Niskayuna view school as a place with a variety of fun activities where they receive praise and positive reinforcement. When this is the case, it can provide motivation for teens to become good citizens of their school rather than engage in antisocial behaviors. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade was the highest on the “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” scale with 73.9%, and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade’s score of 62.8% in “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” put it on top for that scale. Both overall scores were above 50.0%, and “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” surpassed the BH Norm by 18.4 points. Almost all students (96.4%) were happy with the number of activities outside of class that were available to them, 91.8% said they were able to be part of class discussions and activities, and 66.9% said that their teachers noticed and let them know when they are doing well. An opportunity exists to reinforce school accomplishments at home because less than a third of students surveyed (32.2%) said that the school passed on news of academic or behavioral accomplishments to their parents.

**Peer-Individual Domain:**

The Peer-Individual Domain exhibited some noticeable drops in the rate of protection for students in most grades with just two scales in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade being the only exception. Only “Prosocial Involvement” (50.6%) and “Belief in the Moral Order” (66.7%) had a majority of students receiving protection overall, and Niskayuna came in below the national average on four out of five scales.

Prosocial Involvement was one scale in which every grade experienced a decrease in its score; this scale looks at the amount of time students spend participating in extracurricular activities, volunteer work, and service opportunities both in and out of school. However, a majority of Niskayuna students in each grade received protection in this area. Overall, 75.1% of teens said they participated in school clubs and organizations at least once or twice in the past year, 80.0% of students had done extra schoolwork on their own and 54.4% had done some type of service in their communities.

An opportunity exists to counter the downward trend in this scale by changing students’ perception about participation in constructive activities. Another scale in this domain “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” asks students to reflect on whether they’ll improve their social standing by engaging the positive activities measured by “Prosocial

Involvement.” As it stands now, only 48.4% of students are receiving protection in this scale, with scores as low as 39.6% in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Only 11.8% of students felt that there was a “Very good chance” they would be “seen as cool” if they worked hard at school, and only 8.4% thought the same if it were known they regularly volunteered to do community service. This is despite that fact that a fair amount of their peers already participate in these activities, as discussed above. Letting students see that people they know at school are taking part in these types of activities may help them to recognize the benefit they bring to both themselves and others.

### **Sources and Places of Student Alcohol Use**

To prevent underage drinking, it is important to understand how kids are getting their alcohol and where they are using it. Two different sources emerge from the data as the most likely places teens obtain alcohol depending on their age: “I got it at a party” topped the list at 29.2% overall and was among the most popular sources among Niskayuna high school students (10<sup>th</sup> – 43.5%, 12<sup>th</sup> – 56.4%). “I got it from home with my parents’ permission” was the second specific source at 25.5%, although “I got it another way” was given as a source by 39.0% of respondents, encompassing a variety of other possible sources.

It’s interesting to note that for high school students, two popular places to drink were “At home with my parents’ permission” (10<sup>th</sup> – 50.5%, 12<sup>th</sup> – 48.1%) and “At my home or someone else’s home without any parent permission” (10<sup>th</sup> – 45.3%, 12<sup>th</sup> – 54.6%). Working with parents and educating them on the dangers of establishing a permissive attitude towards alcohol consumption in the home and keeping alcohol at home controlled and away from kids, even if they believe their children are safer when supervised, can be effective steps in prevention efforts.

A majority of Niskayuna students (54.2%) had had a talk with either of their parents about the dangers of underage drinking – but keeping those lines of communications open and making sure parents follow up on those discussions with clear expectations can be an important first step.

### **Consequences and Perceived Risk of Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking**

When young people drink, it can be difficult for them to do so responsibly, and as might be expected, some students experienced the negative effects of using alcohol to excess. High school students especially reported the most occurrences of physical problems due to their use of alcohol. The most common negative result of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders’ alcohol use was feeling hung over. (22.3% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 10.0% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders who used alcohol had this happen at least once, 5.3% 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 2.5% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders had it happen five or more times) or feeling sick to one’s stomach or throwing up after drinking (16.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 4.3% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders). Most other measures of negative consequences from alcohol were quite low, but one troubling result of older students getting drunk is 3.2% of juniors and 8.7% of seniors found themselves getting into sexual situations they later regretted due in part to alcohol use. Helping students to realize that there are real, and sometimes serious, consequences to drinking that could affect both their health and their relationships may help give them pause before using alcohol heavily.

## **Disapproval of Alcohol and Substance Use**

An opportunity exists to combat the influences of peer pressure to engage in substance abuse by asking students to consider how they might appear to the rest of their friends if they start using drugs or alcohol regularly - particularly if they start experiencing the physical and social problems reported by some students when doing so discussed earlier in this report. When asked to estimate how their friends would react to their having one or two drinks of alcohol nearly every day, a great many – as high as 97.0% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders, and 81.9% overall – students in Niskayuna thought their friends would feel it was “Wrong” or “Very wrong” to do so. No grade’s response was below 80.0%, indicating that most students felt this was a behavior their friends would look down upon. Although numbers were lower – especially among older students (12<sup>th</sup> grade 49.5%) – when asked about marijuana (81.9% overall), they were nevertheless significant. Posing the question to students, “How will you look to your friends?” could be a powerful influencer judging by their responses in this portion of the data.

## **Perception of Use vs. Actual Use**

While the approach of asking young people to consider how they will appear to their friends is useful when they believe a majority of their peers disapprove of drug or alcohol use, it can have the opposite effect to those students who hold the misconception that everyone they know is taking part. What repeated surveying has shown is that many young people overestimate how much substance abuse is actually taking place among their classmates.

If we look at the three most commonly abused substances: alcohol, marijuana, and e-cigarettes, we see this borne out, especially among older teens. Students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade had a strong grasp on whether or not kids their age were using ATODs with most assuming correctly that very few of their peers were involved in that behavior. One area where their perceptions were not as accurate, though, was with e-cigarette use. Only 0.7% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders vaped regularly, but 22.2% of students in that grade thought that at least a few of their peers were. Each progressive grade had a more difficult time discerning how many of their classmates were using alcohol, marijuana, and vaping often. Recall that the rate of 12<sup>th</sup> grade alcohol use in the past month was 33.0%, but 33.6% of students in that grade thought the majority of their peers drank. While only 9.6% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders had used marijuana regularly, 16.6% thought it must more common than not among their classmates. Both the 10<sup>th</sup> (8.2%) and 12<sup>th</sup> grades (17.6%) had fairly low rates of vaping in the month prior to taking the survey, but 31.5% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 44.7% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade of them believed the majority of their classmates used e-cigarettes regularly. Making young people aware of how low the actual rate of use is for these substances can help to dispel the myth that “everyone is doing it,” and make declining to do so that much easier.

*Reference: Niskayuna, NY Prevention Needs Assessment Profile Report, 2022. Bach Harrison, LLC.*

## Table 1. Risk & Protective Factor Scale Definitions

<b>Community Domain Risk Factors</b>	
<b>Community Disorganization</b>	Research has shown that neighborhoods with high population density, lack of natural surveillance of public places, physical deterioration, and high rates of adult crime also have higher rates of juvenile crime and drug selling.
<b>Low Neighborhood Attachment</b>	A low level of bonding to the neighborhood is related to higher levels of juvenile crime and drug selling.
<b>Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use</b>	Research has shown that legal restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, such as raising the legal drinking age, restricting smoking in public places, and increased taxation have been followed by decreases in consumption. Moreover, national surveys of high school seniors have shown that shifts in normative attitudes toward drug use have preceded changes in prevalence of use.
<b>Perceived Availability of Drugs</b>	The availability of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs has been related to the use of these substances by adolescents.
<b>Community Domain Protective Factors</b>	
<b>Opportunities for Positive Involvement</b>	When opportunities are available in a community for positive participation, children are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.
<b>Rewards for Positive Involvement</b>	Rewards for positive participation in activities helps children bond to the community, thus lowering their risk for substance use.
<b>Family Domain Risk Factors</b>	
<b>Exposure to Adult Antisocial Behavior</b>	When children are raised in a family or are around adults with a history of problem behaviors (e.g., violence or ATOD use), the children are more likely to engage in these behaviors.
<b>Sibling Drug Use</b>	Youth who are raised in a family where their siblings use drugs are more likely to use drugs themselves.
<b>Family Conflict</b>	Children raised in families high in conflict, whether or not the child is directly involved in the conflict, appear at risk for both delinquency and drug use.
<b>Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior &amp; Drugs</b>	In families where parents use illegal drugs, are heavy users of alcohol, or are tolerant of children's use, children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence. The risk is further increased if parents involve children in their own drug (or alcohol) using behavior, for example, asking the child to light the parent's cigarette or get the parent a beer from the refrigerator.
<b>Poor Family Management</b>	Parents' use of inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishment with their children places them at higher risk for substance use and other problem behaviors. Also, parents' failure to provide clear expectations and to monitor their children's behavior makes it more likely that they will engage in drug abuse whether or not there are family drug problems
<b>Family Domain Protective Factors</b>	
<b>Family Attachment</b>	Young people who feel that they are a valued part of their family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.
<b>Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement</b>	Young people who are exposed to more opportunities to participate meaningfully in the responsibilities and activities of the family are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.
<b>Rewards for Prosocial Involvement</b>	When parents, siblings, and other family members praise, encourage, and attend to things done well by their child, children are less likely to engage in substance use and problem behaviors.
<b>School Domain Risk Factors</b>	
<b>Academic Failure</b>	Beginning in the late elementary grades (grades 4-6) academic failure increases the risk of both drug abuse and delinquency. It appears that the experience of failure itself, for whatever reasons, increases the risk of problem behaviors.

<b><i>Low Commitment to School</i></b>	Surveys of high school seniors have shown that the use of hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, and sedatives or non-medically prescribed tranquilizers is significantly lower among students who expect to attend college than among those who do not. Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving the coursework as relevant are also negatively related to drug use.
<b><i>School Domain Protective Factors</i></b>	
<b><i>Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement</i></b>	When young people are given more opportunities to participate meaningfully in important activities at school, they are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.
<b><i>Rewards for Prosocial Involvement</i></b>	When young people are recognized and rewarded for their contributions at school, they are less likely to be involved in substance use and other problem behaviors
<b><i>Peer-Individual Risk Factors</i></b>	
<b><i>Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use</i></b>	Early onset of drug use predicts misuse of drugs. The earlier the onset of any drug use, the greater the involvement in other drug use and the greater frequency of use. Onset of drug use prior to the age of 15 is a consistent predictor of drug abuse, and a later age of onset of drug use has been shown to predict lower drug involvement and a greater probability of discontinuation of use.
<b><i>Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use</i></b>	During the elementary school years, most children express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes and have difficulty imagining why people use drugs or engage in antisocial behaviors. However, in middle school, as more youth are exposed to others who use drugs and engage in antisocial behavior, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. Youth who express positive attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behavior are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors, including drug use.
<b><i>Friends' Use of Drugs</i></b>	Young people who associate with peers who engage in alcohol or substance abuse are much more likely to engage in the same behavior. Peer drug use has consistently been found to be among the strongest predictors of substance use among youth. Even when young people come from well-managed families and do not experience other risk factors, spending time with friends who use drugs greatly increases the risk of that problem developing.
<b><i>Interaction with Antisocial Peers</i></b>	Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors are at higher risk for engaging in antisocial behavior themselves.
<b><i>Perceived Risk of Drug Use</i></b>	Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.
<b><i>Rewards for Antisocial Behavior</i></b>	Young people who receive rewards for their antisocial behavior are at higher risk for engaging further in antisocial behavior and substance use.
<b><i>Rebelliousness</i></b>	Young people who do not feel part of society, are not bound by rules, don't believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society, are at higher risk of abusing drugs. In addition, high tolerance for deviance, a strong need for independence and normlessness have all been linked with drug use.
<b><i>Depressive Symptoms</i></b>	Young people who are depressed are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to use drugs. Survey research and other studies have shown a link between depression and other youth problem behaviors.
<b><i>Gang Involvement</i></b>	Youth who belong to gangs are more at risk for antisocial behavior and drug use.
<b><i>Peer-Individual Protective Factors</i></b>	
<b><i>Religiosity</i></b>	Young people who regularly attend religious services are less likely to engage in problem behaviors.
<b><i>Social Skills</i></b>	Young people who are socially competent and engage in positive interpersonal relations with their peers are less likely to use drugs and engage in other problem behaviors.
<b><i>Belief in the Moral Order</i></b>	Young people who have a belief in what is "right" or "wrong" are less likely to use drugs.
<b><i>Prosocial Involvement</i></b>	Participation in positive school and community activities helps provide protection for youth.
<b><i>Rewards for Prosocial</i></b>	Young people who view working hard in school and the community as rewarding are less likely to engage in problem behavior.