

Methods
 Survey Demographics
 Health and Wellness.....2

Substance Abuse
 Mental Health
 Home Life
 Sports & Physical Activity3

Education & Job Attainment4

Respect Levels
 Bullying.....5

Violence & Safety
 Conclusion.....6

References7

Youth Master Plan Survey Findings

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WHO
 LIVE, LEARN, WORK, PLAY AND WORSHIP IN
 THE GREATER PASADENA AREA

December 2013

Introduction

In spring 2013, a multi-disciplinary group from various local organizations and schools gathered together to create a survey that would begin to form the development of the City of Pasadena's Youth Master Plan. The Youth Master Plan Survey (YMPS) provides valuable information from the area's youth to address protective and risk factors, identify gaps in city services, and obstacles for future interventions in regards to quality of life, attainment of well-being, and the successful transition of youth into adulthood. The responses from the survey are presented in this document.



Background

Early life experiences affect an individual's future health and development. A key concept in the Life Course Perspective states that throughout the lifespan, an individual will encounter both protective factors that contribute to healthy development as well as risk factors that can adversely affect development.¹ The Social-Ecological Model indicates that individuals are affected by multidimensional factors including interpersonal relationships, their community, and societal factors.²

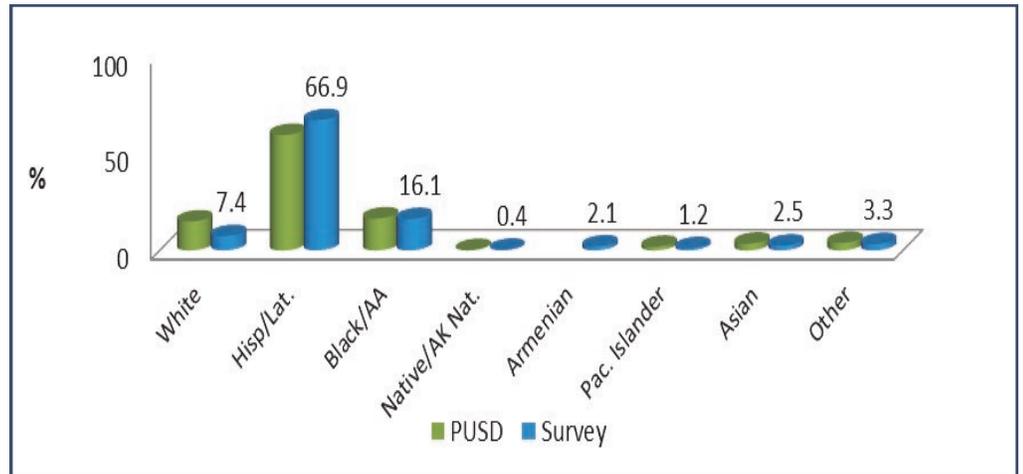
Protective and risk factors include an individual's behavior patterns, ability to access and receive healthcare and social services, family history, and social policy. Examples of protective factors include access to nutrition rich food, safe neighborhoods, strong and nurturing support systems, and access to high quality schools and education. Unsafe neighborhoods, domestic violence, and inadequate educational opportunities are examples of risk factors.³ The complex interplay of these factors determines the health of the individual and the population.⁴

It is essential for community and professional services to increase collaborative efforts to enhance a multidimensional approach to the health of youth. Moving forward, the city of Pasadena can ensure the adequate transition of youth into adulthood by including and improving resources and community services available to youth.





Graph 1: Ethnicity of Survey Respondents Compared to PUSD Student Body



Methods

The Youth Master Plan Survey (YMPS) was developed and conducted by local area youth volunteers in the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) service area. Eligible students ages 11 to 18, living or going to school in the cities of Pasadena, Altadena, Sierra Madre and parts of La Cañada Flintridge were selected to voluntarily respond to the survey. A broad representation of schools, both public and private, genders, ethnicities and zip codes were part of this sample. In all, 283 surveys were collected and used for analysis.

Survey Demographics

According to the 2010 US Census Data the populations for the surveyed cities were: Pasadena (137,122), Altadena (42,777), and Sierra Madre (10,917).^{5,6,7} The surveyed cities population under the age of 18 years were: Pasadena (26,507), Altadena (9,507), and Sierra Madre (1,205) in 2010.^{5,6,7} It is estimated that persons between the ages of 10 to 19 years represent 27% of the Pasadena/Altadena population.⁸

In the 2011-2012 school year, a total of 18,652 students were enrolled in PUSD. Of these students 60.6% were Hispanic, 16.9% African American, 13.7% White, and 3.2% Asian.⁹ The survey respondents are representative of the distribution of race/ethnicity of youth attending PUSD (see Graph 1) with a slight underrepresentation of White students. According to the California Department of Education, in 2012 there were over 50 private schools operating in the PUSD service area and roughly 30% of Pasadena children attended private school.^{10,11} The national average of children attending private school is 10%.¹²

The average age of the students who responded to the YMPS was 15 years (sd=1.72). 52% were male, 47% were female, and 2% did not make a selection. Additionally, 87% of the students spoke English with 11% indicating that they

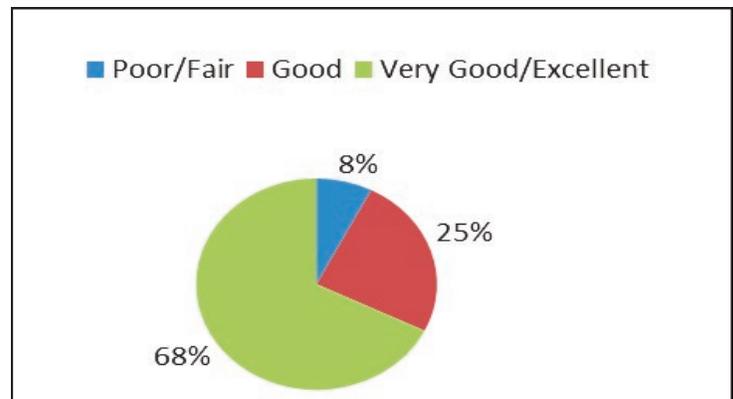
mostly spoke Spanish. Only around 2% said they primarily spoke another language.

Health and Wellness

Youth establish patterns of behavior and make lifestyle choices that affect their current and future quality of life. The survey found students reported overall 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' health (68%) (see Graph 2).

Some youth adopt behaviors to decrease chances of adverse health outcomes such as eating fruits and vegetables, and not engaging in alcohol and/or substance use. 62.7% of YMPS respondents reported eating fruit at least twice daily compared to 34% of their national counterparts.¹³ 43% of survey respondents reported eating fast food at least daily. In a similar survey, the parents were asked how often their children ate fast food, and around 47% of the parents said at least once a week.¹⁴ What was found is youth are eating fast food more often than was previously thought.

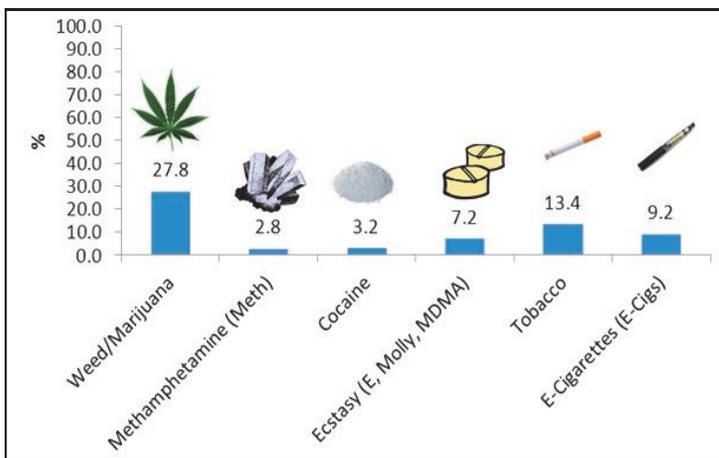
Graph 2: Self-Reported Overall Health



Substance Abuse

According to the survey results, as youth get older the chances of trying drugs or alcohol for the first time increases. Among the survey respondents, 27.8% reported that they tried marijuana. 2.8% of respondents have tried methamphetamine, 3.2% tried cocaine, and 7.2% have tried ecstasy (see Graph 3). In addition to drug usage, the survey found that 45.6% of YMPS respondents reported that it is easy to get drugs. Accessibility and availability of drugs and alcohol have been found to increased use in youth.¹⁵ Adolescents establish patterns of behavior and make lifestyle choices that affect their current and future health.¹⁶

Graph 3: Survey Respondents that Have Tried Drugs



Mental Health

Youth can experience depression and other mental health disorders just like their adult counterparts. Youth with mental health disorders can encounter challenges in their homes, school, and community. Depressed youth may complain of feeling sick, be difficult to interact with, refuse to go to school, get into trouble at school, be negative or grouchy, moody, or feel misunderstood.¹⁷ For most youth, mental health distress is not permanent, and most youth can overcome challenges with support from friends and family, professional and community services, treatment, or a combination of services.³

The YMPS found that 12% of the area youth displayed signs of depression. This finding is consistent with The National Comorbidity Survey-Adolescent Supplement, which found about 11% of the nation's adolescents have a depressive disorder by age 18.¹⁷ As youth experience various life stages, their behaviors vary, making it difficult to tell whether the mental distress is simply a "phase" or the individual is suffering from a mental health disorder.¹⁷

Home Life

Pasadena youth were asked to respond to questions regarding their home lives. Survey data revealed that 44.5% of students said their parents are currently separated or divorced. Additionally, 89.1% of the surveyed students said they felt their family was supportive.

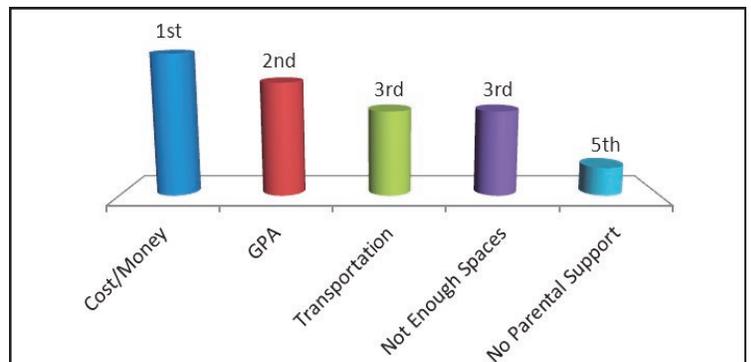
The survey also was designed to assess the percentage of students living in overcrowded housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines overcrowding as a maximum of 2 people per bedroom.¹⁸ Based on that standard, it is estimated that 24.6% of the surveyed youth live in overcrowded housing.

Participation in Sports and Physical Activity

Childhood obesity in America continues to be of great concern. Nearly one in three children in the United States are classified as overweight or obese as reported by *Let's Move!*, a national campaign that encourages kids to be more active.¹⁹ The rate is even higher in African American and Hispanic children, where nearly 40% are overweight or obese.¹⁹ It is estimated that one in three children will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives.¹⁹

Important to reducing this risk of obesity is engaging in physical activity. Survey respondents stated the top three barriers that prevented them from participating in school sports were the cost of the sport, having a low grade point average, and transportation issues (see Graph 4).

Graph 4: Rank of Barriers to Participating in Sports



Healthy People 2020, a nationwide effort to set priorities for healthy development and promote health equity, has established an objective to increase access to physical activity space for students outside of regular school hours including before and after school, weekends, and during school vacations.²⁰

Education & Job Attainment

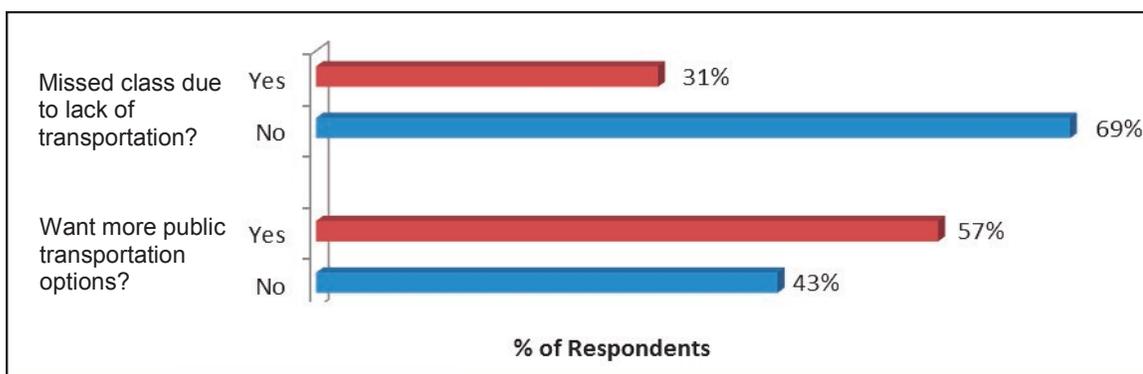
The California high school dropout rate was 13.2% in 2012.²¹ The *Pasadena/Altadena 2012 Quality of Life Index* reported that during the academic years of 2009-2010 the Pasadena dropout rate was 5.5%.¹¹ It is estimated that the unemployment rate for high school dropouts in 2009 was 15.4%, compared to 9.4% for high school graduates and 4.7% for those holding a Bachelor's degree or higher. An estimated \$335 billion is expected to be lost by the dropouts from the class of 2009 over the course of their lifetimes.²²

High school dropout prevention measures include local policies that address educational and economic inequities.²³ 31% of survey respondents reported missing class due to lack of transportation (see Graph 5), and 57% responded that they would like more public transportation options. It is estimated that close to 55% of students across the nation rely on public transportation to get to school.²⁴

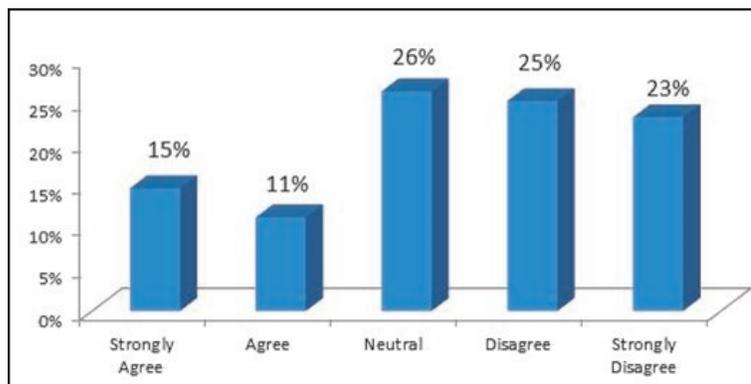
Pasadena's youth were asked to respond to relating career achievement to doing well in high school. Most of the students stated that school was important to achieving their career goals (48%), while almost 26% felt they could achieve their goals without doing well in school (see Graph 6). National objectives for a healthy nation, laid out by *Healthy People 2020*, currently seek to increase the proportion of students who graduate with a traditional, 4-year high school diploma.²⁵ In 2007-2008, 74.9% of high school students achieved this goal (the target goal is 82.4%).²⁵

When asked if the surveyed youth had a job, 33% responded that they were employed, while 12% of students did not have a job but were looking (see Graph 7). Survey responses to education and job attainment are critical to understanding perceptions and attitudes towards higher education and attainment of future careers. Consistent messages around school completion, access to quality education, and the impact on the local community are essential for promoting higher education to local youth.

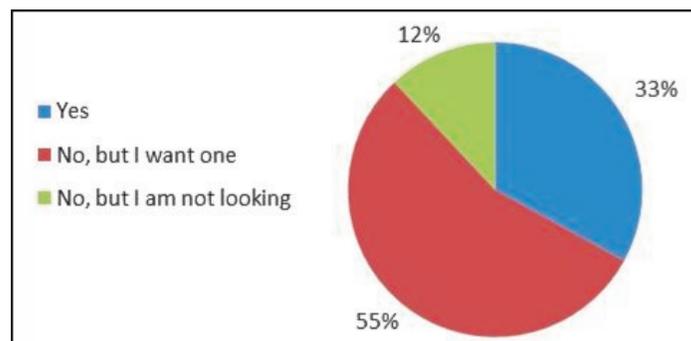
Graph 5: Survey Responses to Questions About Transportation



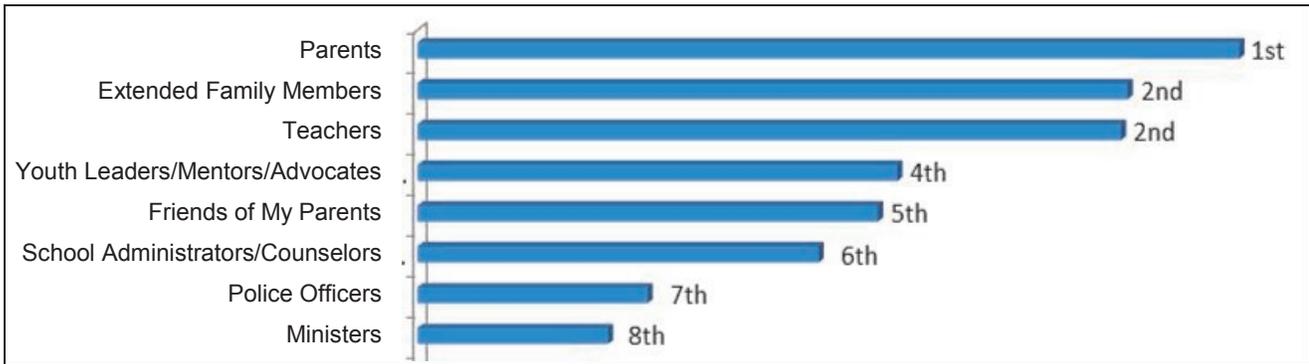
Graph 6: Survey Responses to "I can achieve my career goals without doing well in high school."



Graph 7: Survey Responses to "Do you have a job?"



Graph 8: Rank of Adult Authority Figures Respondents Felt Comfortable Getting Advice From



Respect Levels

Surveyed youth were asked if adults showed respect to them. The majority, 47%, said that adults showed respect sometimes and 33% of youth said they were always shown respect. A combined 21% responded that they were rarely or never shown respect from a school adult. Students were also asked about their respect levels towards adults. A majority, 58%, said that they always show adults respect. 32% responded that they sometimes show respect and 10% made up rarely and never showing respect to adults (see Appendix).

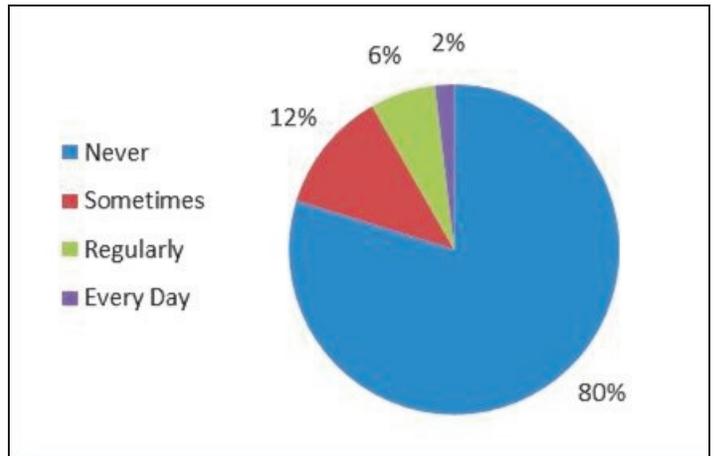
Healthy People 2020 supports working to increase the proportion of youth who connect to a parent or other positive adult caregiver.²⁵ Parents, extended family members, and teachers were the top three adult authority figures that survey respondents felt comfortable getting advice from (see Graph 8). 66% responded that there was a counselor or teacher they could turn to for help at school (see Appendix).

Bullying

Bullying is defined as a form of mistreatment and is characterized by an individual’s repeated exposure to physical and/or emotional aggression including teasing, name calling, threats, harassment, and social exclusion.²⁶ According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) bullying can cause someone to be depressed, lonely, anxious; have low self-esteem; experience headaches, stomachaches, tiredness, poor eating; be absent from school, dislike school, have poor school performance; and think about suicide or try to commit suicide.²⁷

During the survey design, students were given the opportunity to help construct the way in which the survey asked questions regarding bullying. According to the survey results, 20% of participants reported being victims of bullying sometimes, regularly, or every day (see Graph 9).

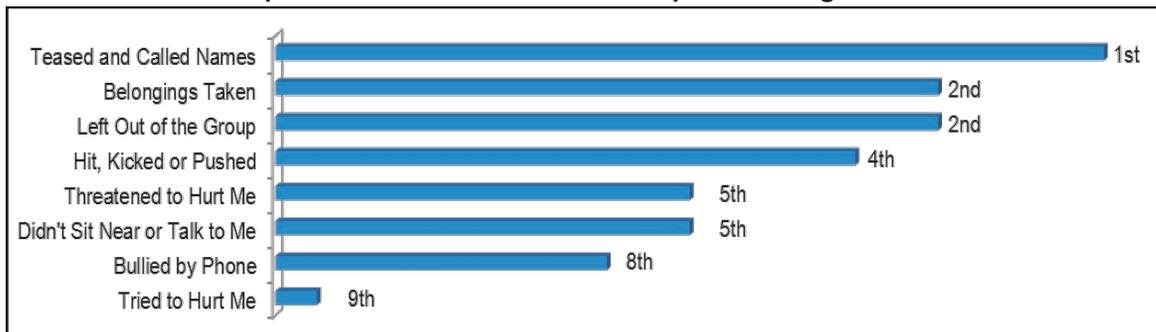
Graph 9: Survey Response to “During this school year how often have you been bullied at school?”



The primary type of bullying reported was being teased and called names (see Graph 10). National estimates show 20% of students in grades 9 through 12 experienced bullying, with a higher percentage among females than males.¹³

The most often cited reason for conflict was race/ethnicity differences and conflict at school. Gang affiliation and differences in sexual orientation were the second and third leading causes of conflict, respectively.

Graph 10: Rank of How Students Reported Being Bullied



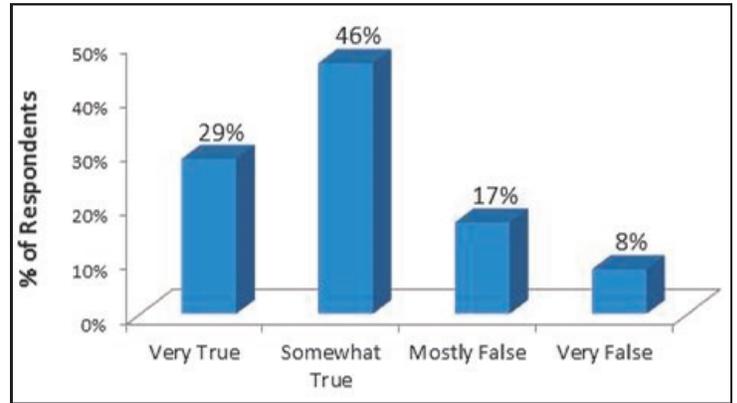
Violence & Safety

According to the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, nationwide 5.9% of students had not gone to school on at least one day during the thirty days before that survey because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.¹³ The prevalence of having not gone to school because of safety concerns was higher among Black (6.7%) and Hispanic (9.1%) than White (4.4%) students.¹³ School absences impact education and can affect high school graduation success among youth.

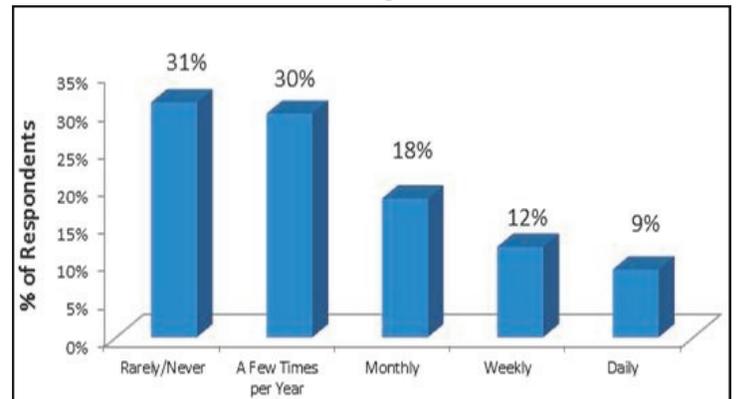
The data collected from the YMPS showed that students were concerned about their safety. 75% percent stated that there are parts of Pasadena and Altadena that they would consider unsafe (see Graph 11).

40% of survey respondents reported being witnesses of fights monthly, weekly, or daily (see Graph 12). Increased efforts to address violence in the community is a necessity to preventing or reducing the likelihood of adverse life experiences in regards to youth's physical and mental health.

Graph 11: Survey Responses to There Are Unsafe Places in Pasadena/Altadena



Graph 12: Survey Responses to "How often do you witness fights?"



Conclusion

The health and well-being of youth often reflects their life experiences and exposures to risk and protective factors in the communities where they live. Responses to the Youth Master Plan Survey will provide the area residents, community agencies, and others with insight on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of youth in the Greater Pasadena Area. It is hoped that the findings from the survey will help to develop effective planning for the area's youth. The Youth Master Plan Survey will serve as a resource to creating the City of Pasadena's Youth Master Plan, which will address protective and risk factors, and identify gaps in services in the city to target future interventions that will allow successful transition of youth into adulthood.

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Appendix Online at www.cityofpasadena.net/publichealth



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