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Cooperative Extension

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Assessing Youth Development Program Needs in Nye and Esmeralda Counties

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The purpose of this needs assessment was to assess the effectiveness of existing youth development programs, opportunities for improvement, and the perceptions of youth and parents as to what the youth are learning from their participation in youth programs.

Introduction

Nye County is located in the central area of Nevada. It is 18,181 square miles with a population of 42,963 (Census 2012). The unincorporated towns of Nye County include Beatty, Gabbs and Pahrump and Tonopah as the county seat. The median household income in 2011 for Nye County was \$39,740 (compared to \$55,553 statewide) with 20.5 percent living below the poverty level.

Esmeralda County is located west of Nye County, bordering California. Esmeralda County is 3,581 square miles in area with a population of 775 (Census 2012). The unincorporated towns of Esmeralda County include Dyer and Silver Peak, and Goldfield as the county seat. The median household income in 2011 for Esmeralda County was \$29,438, with 21.5 percent living below the poverty level.

As of July 2013, Nevada had the highest unemployment rate in the country at 9.5 percent. In October 2013, the unemployment rate for Nye County was 11.2 percent, which represented the fourth highest in the state. Esmeralda County had 3.1 percent unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Approximately 5,600 students were enrolled in Nye County schools (2012-13), with 69 students enrolled in Esmeralda County schools (Nevada Education Data Book, 2013).

In 2013, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension partnered with NyE Communities Coalition (Nye, Esmeralda and Lincoln Counties Communities Coalition), based in Tonopah and Pahrump, to conduct a needs assessment of existing youth programs in Nye and Esmeralda Counties. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of existing youth development programs, identify opportunities for improvement, examine perceptions of youth and parents as to what the youth are learning from their participation in youth programs and to assess youth at risk behaviors in regards to substance abuse.

Methods and Analysis

A 63-item survey was developed and implemented online to assess the perceptions of middle school aged youth and older who currently participate in youth development programs in Nye and Esmeralda Counties. Parents of the youth participants were surveyed to assess their perceptions regarding what their children were learning as a result of participating in the current youth programs offered.

The survey questions were tested in an online survey in another rural Nevada county to assess current youth program impacts and needs. The survey instrument performed well in this trial. Additionally, the survey instrument was reviewed by a panel of university faculty who specialize in survey design; Cooperative Extension needs assessments, and human and family development. Minor changes were made to the questions based on these reviews.

The survey included nine demographic questions, 13 questions regarding youth development program, 28 Likert-type scale questions and 16 questions regarding at-risk behaviors. The Likert-type scale featured a five-point equal weighting with 1 being “learned very little” and 5 being “learned very much.” In addition, each item included the choice, “Don’t Know.” The at risk behavior questions included information regarding the perceived risk of harm to themselves if the youth were to use substances such as tobacco, alcohol, marijuana or prescription drugs.

The data were analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 19.0) for Windows 7. Cronbach's coefficient alpha (CCA) was used to estimate internal consistency of the 28 Likert-type scale items for both the youth and parent survey groups (Cronbach, 1951). The Cronbach score for the 28 items was high for both groups (youth respondents, $r = .906$; adult respondents, $r = .957$). These scores indicate that, regardless of the survey population, there was high internal consistency among variables (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

The mean (M), or average, score was calculated and ranked in order of highest to lowest in regards to what the respondents perceived as the most important skills they gained from their participation in youth programs. These results are listed in Table 1, along with the number of respondents per question.

Survey participants, ages 12 and older and enrolled in Cooperative Extension 4-H programs or NyE Communities Coalition programs based in Pahrump or Tonopah were recruited for the survey with an email invitation letter. Two weeks after the invitation letter was emailed, a follow-up letter was sent, along with a link to participate in the survey. During the six weeks in the summer of 2013 in which the survey link was active, the participants received two additional letters that either reminded them of the invitation to complete the survey or thanked them for their participation. This research protocol was approved by the University of Nevada, Reno Office of Human Research Protection Internal Review Board.

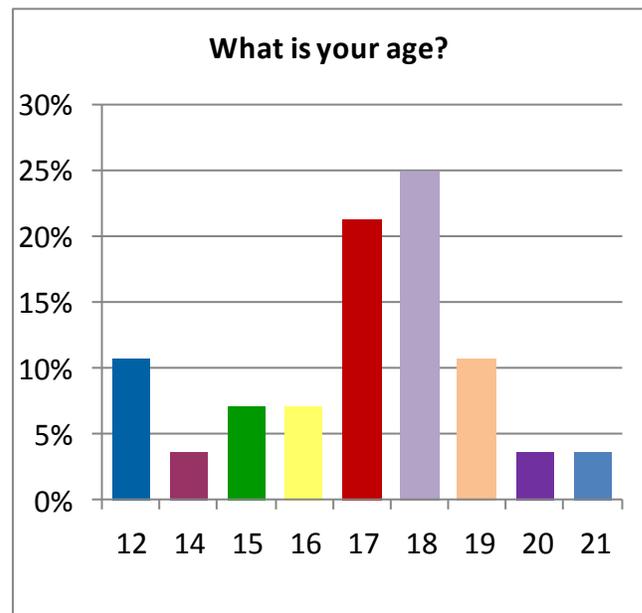
Results and Discussion

A total of 37 youth and 28 parents completed the survey. Due to time constraints related to funding, the survey had to be implemented during the summer months, when response rates tend to be lowest. It must be additionally noted that both counties have small populations and an Internet survey had not been implemented previously. Youth who participated in the survey ranged in age from 12 to 21, with the largest group of participants (46.4 percent) between 17 to 18 years of age and 28.5 percent of youth participants between the ages of 12 to 16 (See Figure D-1).

The numbers of respondents who completed this survey was low due to several factors. Launching the survey during the summer is the least effective time to conduct a survey (Dillman, 2000). In addition, because this was the first Internet assessment conducted in these counties, some of the participants' email addresses were either not current or not accessible to allow distribution of the survey directly to them (Dillman, 2009). In one program, participants interested in taking the survey who did not have current email addresses, had to be directed to the survey link by staff and or volunteers, rather than receiving the survey directly to their email addresses.

The survey also included 16 at risk questions to gather information about what the youth's perceived risk was of using substances such as tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Questions also included their

Figure D-1



frequency of use in the 30 days prior to participating in the survey. Youth were asked to assess how wrong their parents would feel it was if they would use any the substances, and how wrong their friends would feel if they would use any of the substances. Overall, the youth indicated that their parents would feel their use of any of substances would be “very wrong” and/or “wrong,” and at a much higher percentage of wrong over what they perceived their friends would feel about their use of substances. The majority of youth perceived both alcohol and tobacco (69 percent) as substances that posed a great risk of harm to them, and 77 percent of youth perceived as a great risk use of prescription drugs without a doctor’s orders to feel good or to get high. Only 39 percent of youth indicated marijuana as a great risk of harm to themselves, and 27 percent of youth indicated that marijuana use was perceived as no risk of harm.

The majority of youth respondents (77 percent) who completed this survey (n=28) reside in Pahrump and 23 percent reside in Tonopah. Respondents were evenly distributed by gender, with 50 percent being female and 50 percent being male. The majority of the respondents were white (92.6 percent), 3.7 percent indicated they were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 3.7 percent indicated they were African American. These demographics are a reasonable representation of county demographics as a whole.

In looking closer at youth programming preferences, the majority of youth indicated they preferred small group instruction, along with opportunities for independent learning, over assigned teams and one-on-one learning. Regarding program structure, the majority of youth prefer programs that provide both structure and flexibility. Also, the majority of youth indicated that they feel safe at the program. Programs that the majority of youth perceived they would most benefit from include personal development and leadership programs. Programs that include homework help and study skills were their second-highest priority, with science and technology as their third-highest priority.

In assessing whose responsibility it is for youth to get the most out of their youth development program, 50 percent of the youth indicated that they felt responsible, with nearly 20 percent indicating that “other” was responsible, and 15 percent indicating parents were responsible. In contrast, 30 percent of parent respondents indicated they were responsible for their children getting the most out of the program. Thirty percent of parents indicated “other” was responsible, while 23 percent of parents indicated that program staff was responsible, and 13 percent of adults shared that they felt their children were responsible for getting the most out of their youth program experience.

The majority of the youth attended either a Cooperative Extension sponsored program or a NyE Communities Coalition sponsored program. Frequency of attendance was assessed, with the majority of youth attending a youth program one to three times a week or attending one to four times per month. The majority of youth also indicated they attended a program year- round, with summer attendance rated as the second-most popular time to be involved, and the school year as the third-most popular time to be involved.

In terms of how much youth enjoy their participation in youth development programs, the majority of the youth indicated that they “very much” or “much” enjoyed their experience. The majority of the parents (57 percent) indicated that if the youth development programs ended, their children would not learn the life skills needed to become productive adults, whereas 23 percent of parents indicated that if the programs ended, their children

would be more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors. Thirteen percent of parents felt that their children would be more likely to develop problems socially if the programs were to end.

In regards to program staff’s ability to promote positive youth development, the majority of the youth rated the staff as “very high” and “high.” The majority of youth rated as neutral as to whether program staff could benefit from professional development trainings

The majority of parents (40 percent) indicated that they would pay \$5 to \$10 for their children to attend a youth development program (before and after school), while 13 percent would pay \$11 to \$20 for their children to attend, and 17 percent of parents would be unwilling to pay any amount. In addition, 17 percent of parents indicated that they would be unable to pay any amount.

The majority of parent respondents (36.7 percent) indicated a family income of between \$50,000 and \$74,999, while 23.3 percent of adults indicated a family income of between \$100,000 and \$149,000, and 20 percent indicated a family income of between \$15,000 and \$34,999.

Regarding marital status and amount of education parents obtained, 89 percent of adult respondents were married, 7 percent were single, and 4 percent were divorced. The highest level of education attained by parents includes: 29.6 percent completed high school; 37 percent obtained a technical assistant or associate degree; 22.2 percent have a four-year college degree; and 11.1 percent have a post-college degree.

Overall, an interesting finding revealed that parents’ perception of their children learning life skills was at a higher level than what their children perceived they were learning in youth development programs. However, both adult and youth respondents ranked two items similarly. Both groups ranked *relationship building* in sixth place and learning of the *consequences of sexual activity* in last place.

Figure Y-1 illustrates programs that youth respondents participate in currently. Programs sponsored by the NyE Communities Coalition were attended by 46.2 percent of youth, Nye and Esmeralda Counties’ 4-H programs were

Figure Y-1

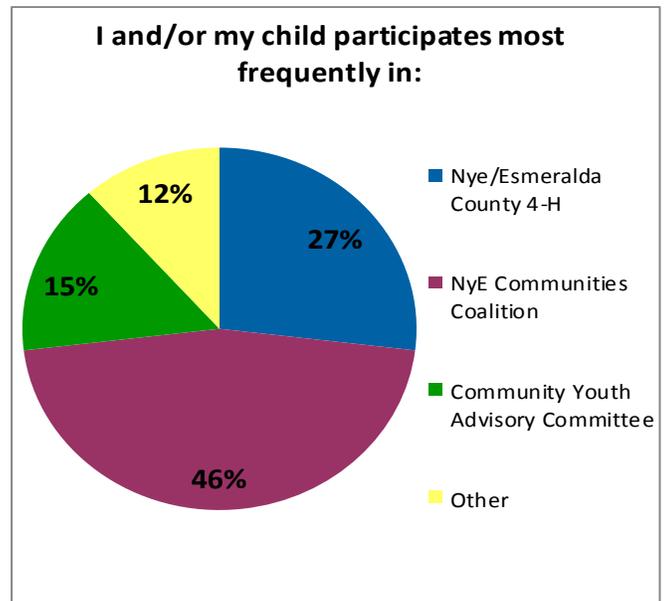
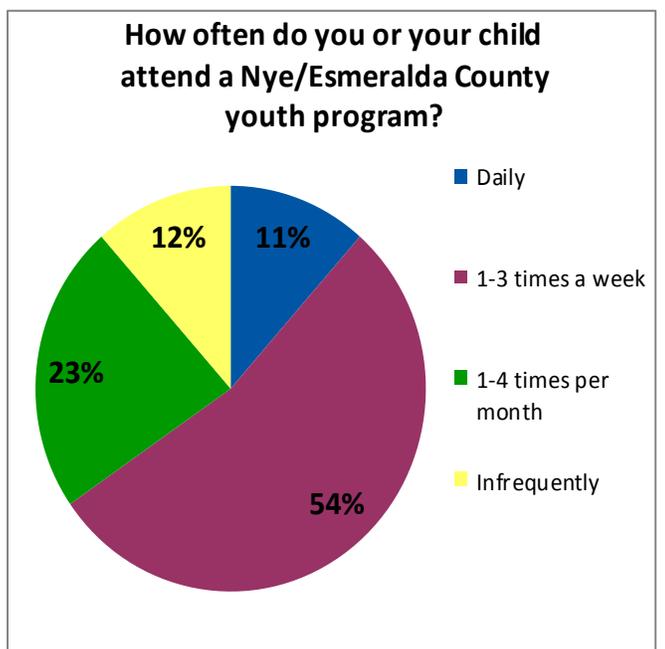


Figure Y-2

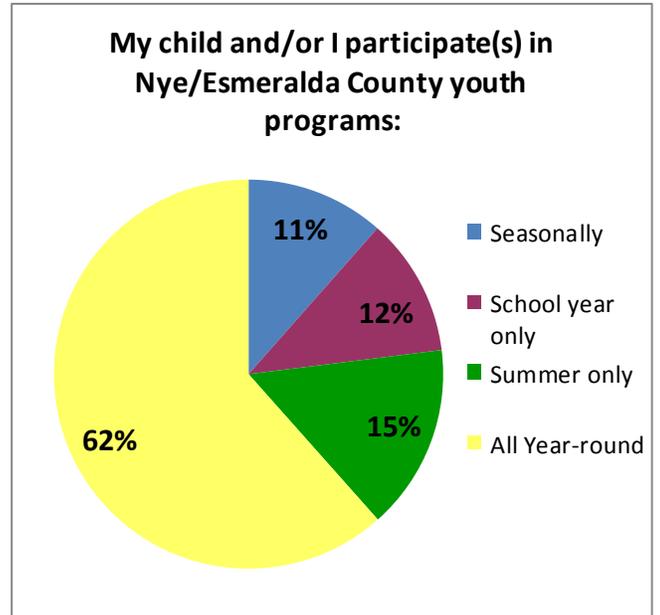


attended by 42 percent of youth, and 12 percent of youth indicating “other” as their program of choice.

Frequency of attendance includes the majority of youth who attended their youth program one to three times per week (54 percent), and youth who attended programs one to four times per month (23 percent), while 11 percent attended a youth program daily, and 12 percent indicated that they attended infrequently. (See Figure Y-2)

Looking at Figure Y-3, 62 percent of youth respondents reported that they attend youth programs year-round, while 15 percent of youth attend during the summer only. Youth who attend during the school year only represent 12 percent of the youth, and 11 percent indicated they attend programs seasonally.

Figure Y-3



Nearly 70 percent of youth rated their level of program enjoyment as either “much” or “very much” whereas 19 percent rated their enjoyment level as “neither little nor much” and approximately 11 percent of youth indicated “not much or “not very much”. (See Figure Y-4)

Fifty percent of youth indicated it was their responsibility to get the most out of attending youth programs while 15.4 percent of youth respondents indicated the responsibility was their parents’, and 11.5 percent indicated it was the program staff’s responsibility. (See Figure Y-5)

Figure Y-4

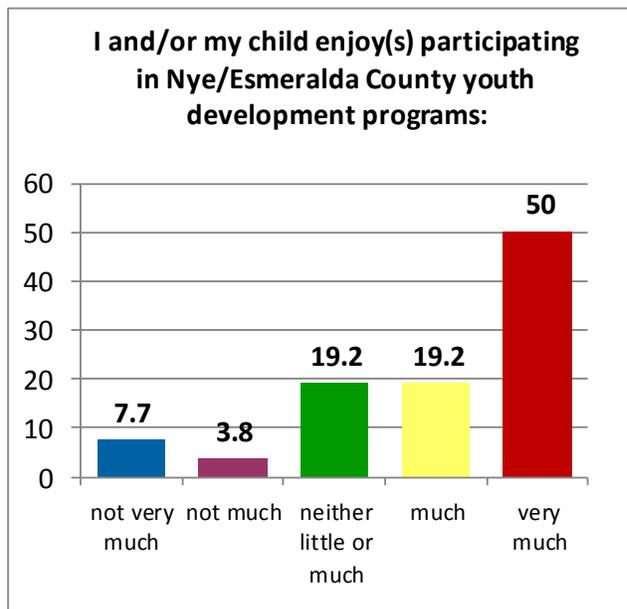


Figure Y-5

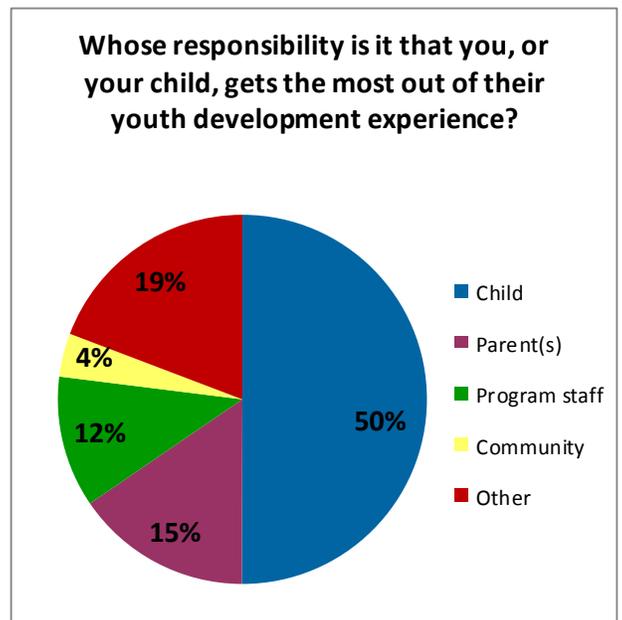


Figure Y-6 illustrates that 42 percent of youth perceived they benefit most from programs that emphasize small group instruction, while 35 percent of youth preferred independent learning, 19 percent prefer a one on one instructional format, and 4 percent benefit most from programs that include assigned teams.

Youth respondents indicated a neutral response (46.2 percent) concerning program staff benefiting from professional training, while 19.2 percent agree that staff could benefit from training, and 15.4 percent strongly disagreed. (See Figure Y-7)

Figure Y-6

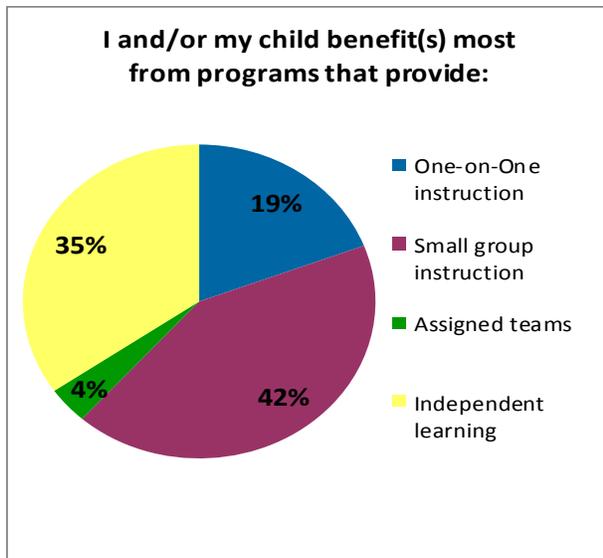


Figure Y-7

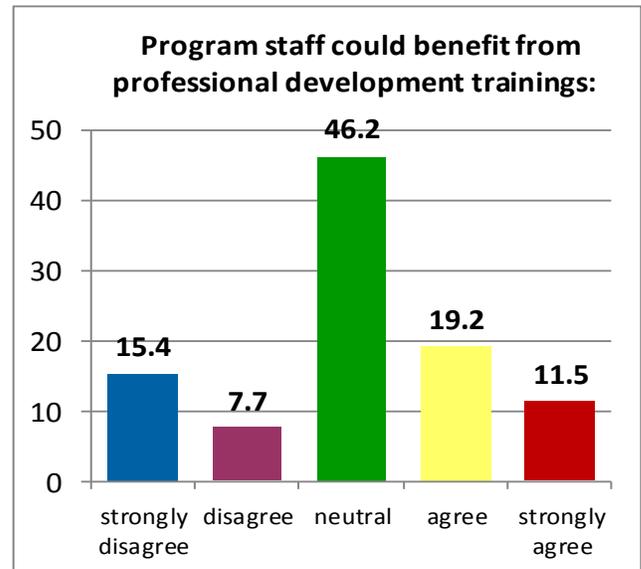


Figure Y-8 illustrates that the majority of youth (46.2 percent) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they feel safe at their program, whereas 15.4 percent feel neutral, and 3.8 percent disagreed with the statement that they feel safe at the program.

Figure Y-9 illustrates that the majority of youth (61.5 percent) perceive their program is structured but flexible, 15.4 percent perceive their program as “somewhat structured” and 11.5 percent perceive their program as flexible.

Figure Y-8

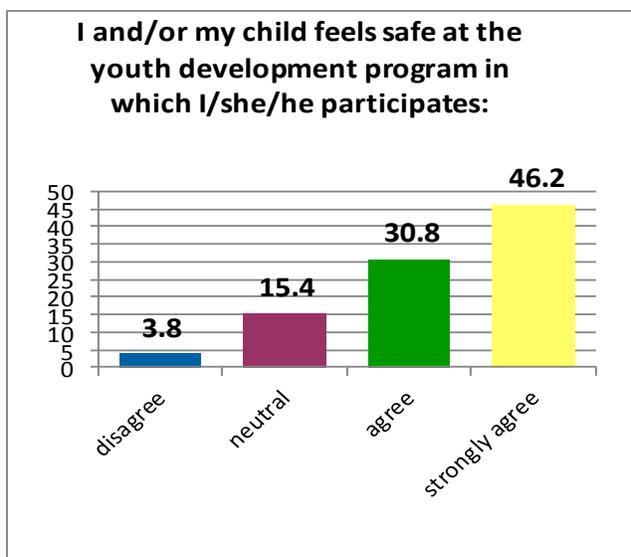
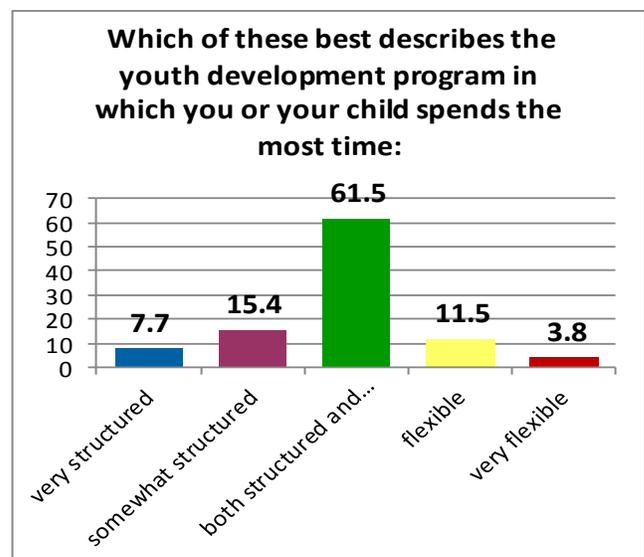


Figure Y-9



The majority of youth respondents (80.8 percent) perceived as “high” or “very high” the skill level of program staff to promote positive development in youth, while 15.4 percent rated staff skill level as neutral, and 3.8 percent rated the staff level as “very low”. (See Figure Y-10)

Youth indicated that they would benefit most from programs that include personal development and leadership (30.8 percent), while 19.2 percent of youth respondents indicated help with homework and study skills would be beneficial, and 15.4 percent of youth indicated science and technology would be most beneficial to them. (See Figure Y-11)

Figure Y-10

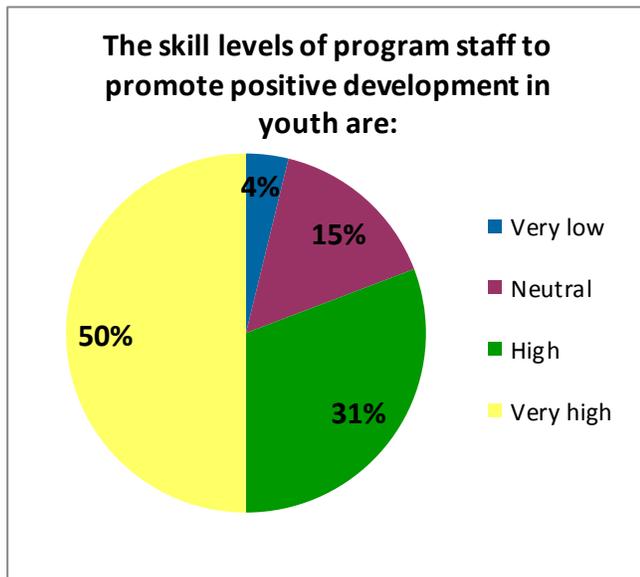
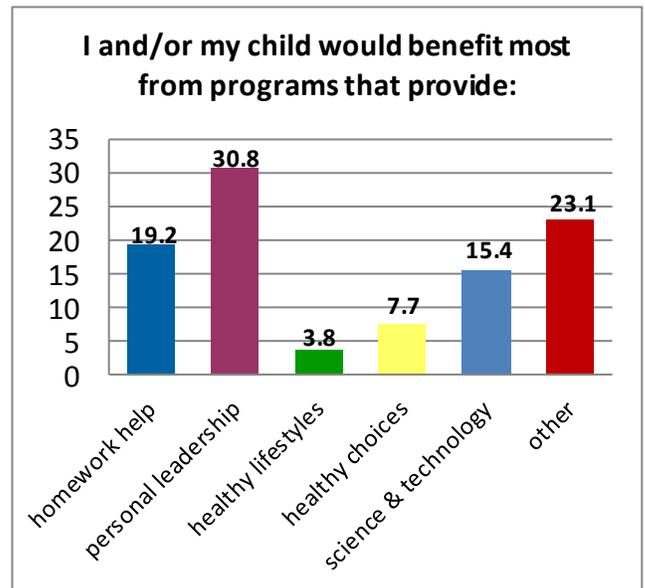
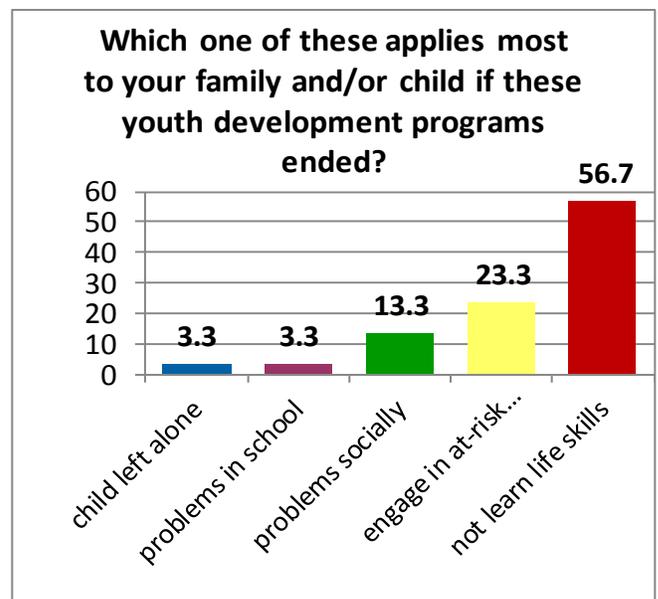


Figure Y-11



According to the majority of adult respondents (56 percent), if the youth development programs were not available to their children they “would not learn the life skills needed to become productive adults”; 23.3 percent of adults felt that their children “would be more likely to engage in risk behaviors”; and 13.3 percent of adults felt that their children “would be more likely to develop problems socially.” (See Figure Y-12)

Figure Y-12



When adults were asked what they were willing to pay for their children to attend (before and after school) a Nye/Esmeralda County youth development program, 40 percent were willing to pay \$5 to \$10 per week, while 13.7 percent were willing to pay \$11 to \$20 per week, and 10 percent were willing to pay \$21 to \$25 per week. (See Figure Y-13)

Concerning perceptions of learning outcomes, survey respondents were asked to rate the extent of their learning using a scale of 1 being “very little” to 5 being “very much.” Table 1 illustrates a comparison between the two survey populations of ranked mean scores for the 28 question items. Ranked means are presented for the youth respondents from highest to lowest, with the mean score for the adults for that same item listed alongside for comparative purposes.

These results indicate that many items youth perceive they are learning differ from what adults perceive their children are learning. It is interesting to note that the adult respondents rated all 28 items at a higher scale of learning than did the youth.

Looking at Table 1, youth respondents ranked as their top life skills learned: *to tolerate and respect differences; to work well with others; self-responsibility (accountability for his/her actions); to achieve greater self-confidence around others; to value community service; improved leadership skills; and improved decision-making skills.* Similarly, adult respondents ranked the top skills they perceived their children were learning, including: *to work well with others; to acquire greater self-esteem; to value community service; self-responsibility (accountable for his/her actions); to tolerate and respect differences, and to achieve greater self-confidence around others.* Interestingly, both groups ranked *relationship building* as their sixth item.

In contrast, the youth ranked *to acquire greater self-esteem* 11th, whereas the adult respondents ranked this item second. Additionally, the youth respondents ranked their learning *about the consequences of underage drinking* 17th, and the adult respondents ranked this item 10th. Interestingly, youth respondents ranked both *improved decision-making skills* and *improved leadership skills* fifth as skills learned, whereas adults ranked these items 8th and 12th respectively.

The five items that the youth respondents believed they were learning the least about in youth programs include: *future career choices and training required; consequences of underage drinking; to manage stress; improved public-speaking skills and about the consequences of sexual activity.*

In regards to at-risk behaviors, youth ranked learning *about consequences of underage drinking* as item 17th, while adults ranked this item 10th. Youth ranked learning *about consequences of illegal drug use* 14th, whereas adults ranked this item 11th. The item *about the consequences of sexual activity* was ranked 21st by youth and 20th by adults, which represents the lowest learning item for both groups.

Figure Y-13

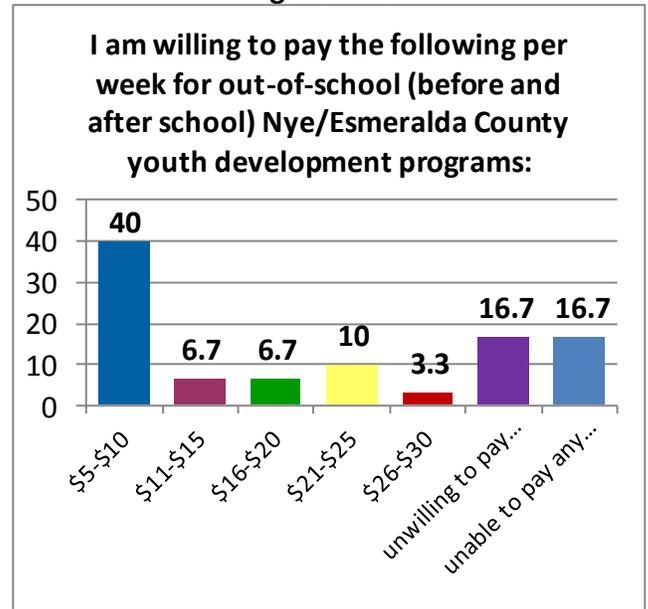


Table 1: Perceived Impact of Youth Development Programs in Nye/Esmeralda Counties: Ranked Mean Scores for Youth Participants Compared With Parents and Caregivers

As a result of participation in Nye/Esmeralda County youth development programs, you think your child is learning or you think you are learning:	Youth			Adult		
	Rank	Mean	N	Rank	Mean	N
To tolerate and respect differences	1	4.38	26	5	4.36	33
To work well with others	2	4.35	26	1	4.48	33
Self-responsibility (accountable for his/her actions)	3	4.21	28	4	4.38	32
To achieve greater self-confidence around others	3	4.21	28	5	4.36	33
To value community service	4	4.19	26	3	4.41	32
Improved leadership skills	5	4.18	28	8	4.31	32
Improved decision-making skills	5	4.18	28	12	4.21	33
Improved communication skills	6	4.11	28	10	4.24	33
Relationship-building skills	6	4.11	28	6	4.35	34
To follow instructions	7	4.08	26	6	4.35	34
Skills needed to become effective employees	8	4.04	25	11	4.23	31
To trust others and be trustworthy	8	4.04	26	17	4.06	34
Skills needed to do well in school	9	4.00	25	7	4.33	30
To set and reach goals	9	4.00	26	13	4.18	33
To make positive, healthy choices	10	3.96	26	9	4.27	33
To acquire greater self-esteem	11	3.93	28	2	4.45	33
Skills useful in dealing with conflicts	11	3.93	28	12	4.21	33
Improved organizational skills	12	3.88	26	16	4.07	30
To recognize and deal with peer pressure	13	3.84	25	9	4.27	33
About the consequences of illegal drug use	14	3.76	25	11	4.23	30
How to choose and apply to colleges	15	3.75	24	21	3.77	30
Record-keeping skills	16	3.68	25	18	3.91	33
About future career choices and training required	16	3.68	25	19	3.90	30
About the consequences of underage drinking	17	3.65	26	10	4.24	29
To manage stress	18	3.62	26	15	4.09	33
About additional educational topics	19	3.58	26	14	4.17	29
Improved public-speaking skills	20	3.50	28	10	4.24	34
About the consequences of sexual activity	21	3.22	23	20	3.81	26

Substance Use and Perceptions

With regards to at-risk behaviors, Figures R-1 through R-16 illustrate youth respondents' perceived risk of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. Approximately 88 percent of the youth were tobacco free for the past 30 days at the time of participating in the survey; 8 percent used tobacco every day during the past 30 days; and 4 percent of the youth only used tobacco during the last three to five days. (See Figure R-1)

The majority of youth respondents (69 percent) agree that using tobacco everyday would be perceived as a great risk to one's health, 27 percent of youth respondents indicate that using tobacco on a daily basis would be perceived as a moderate risk, and 4 percent of youth see the daily use of tobacco as no risk to one's health. (See Figure R-2)

Figure R-1

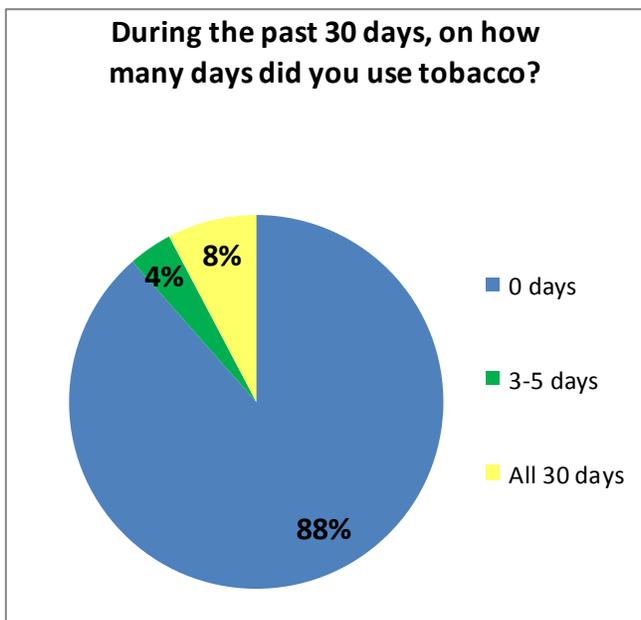


Figure R-2

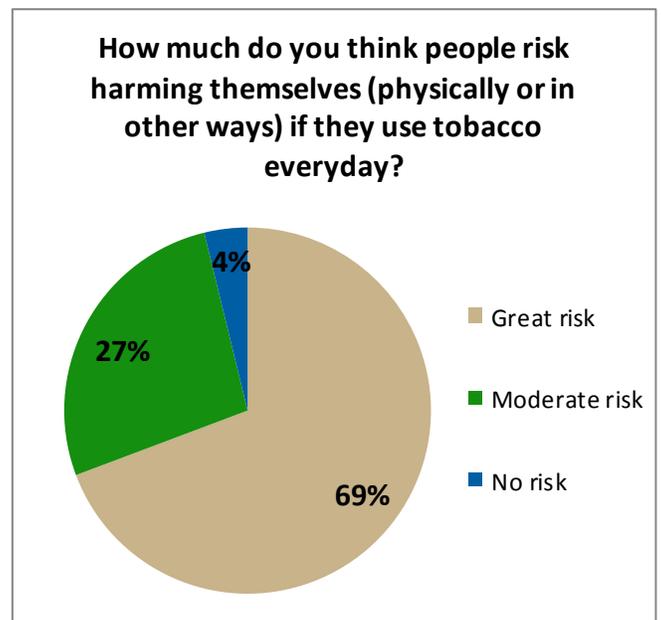


Figure R-3

The majority of youth (62 percent) perceive their parents would feel that it would be very wrong for them to use tobacco; 19 percent of youth perceive their parents would feel that their use of tobacco is wrong; 11 percent of youth felt their parents would see their use of tobacco is not wrong at all; and 8 percent of youth felt their parents would see their use of tobacco is a little bit wrong. (See Figure R-3)

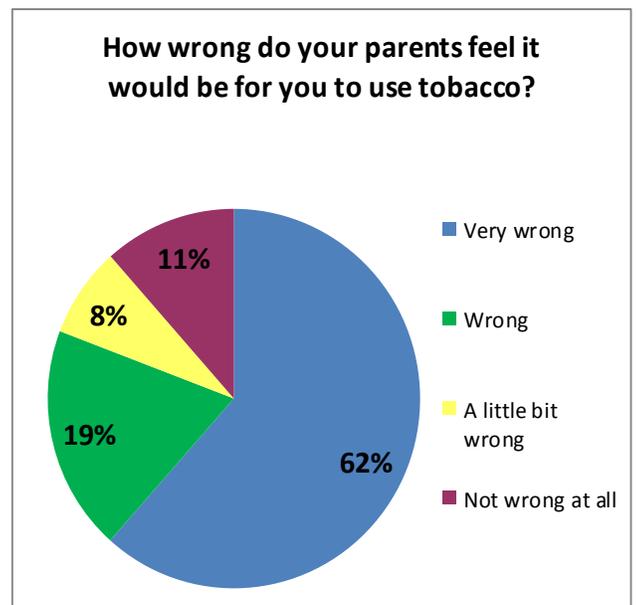


Figure R-4 illustrates how youth perceive their friends would feel regarding their tobacco use, with a majority of youth (39 percent) indicating that their friends would view their tobacco use as very wrong; 23 percent of

youth perceive that their friends would see their tobacco use was a little bit wrong; 19 percent of youth perceive that their friends would see their tobacco use was wrong; and 19 percent of youth would perceive that their friends would see their tobacco use was not wrong at all.

The majority of youth respondents (92 percent) indicated that during the last 30 days they did not have at least one alcoholic drink; while 8 percent of youth indicated that they did have at least one drink of alcohol on one to two days within the last 30 days. (See Figure R-5)

Figure R-4

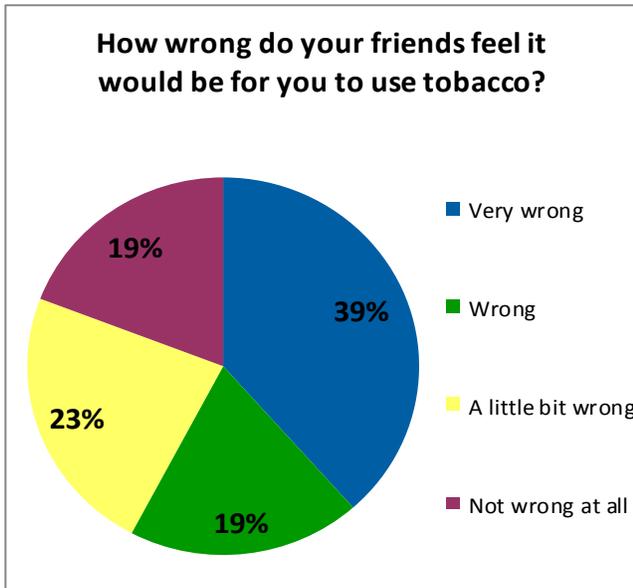
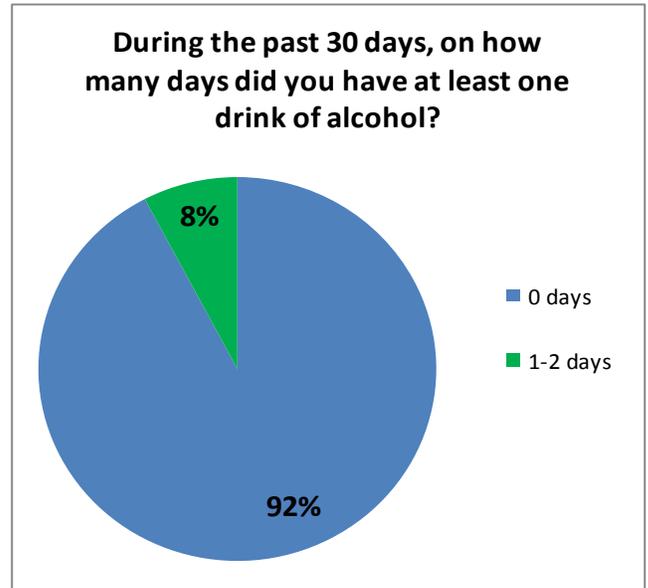


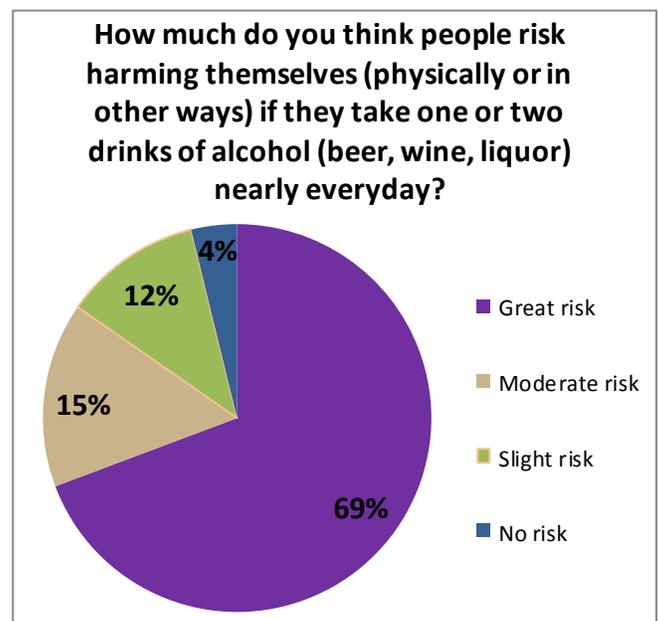
Figure R-5



In Figure R-6, the majority of youth (69 percent) perceived that taking one or two drinks of alcohol nearly every day is seen as a great risk; 15 percent of youth perceived this behavior as a moderate risk; 12 percent of youth perceived this behavior as a slight risk; and 4 percent of youth see this behavior as no risk.

In Figure R-7, the majority of youth respondents (58 percent) perceived their parents would feel that their regular use of beer, wine or hard liquor would be considered very wrong; 19 percent of youth felt that their parents would feel that this behavior would be wrong; 15 percent of youth felt that their parents would feel this behavior was a little bit wrong; and 8 percent of youth felt their parents would feel this behavior was not wrong at all.

Figure R-6



In Figure R-8, the majority of youth respondents (39 percent) felt that their friends would feel that their regular use of beer, wine or hard liquor on a regular basis was very wrong; 27 percent of youth respondents felt their friends would see this behavior was not wrong at all; 19 percent of youth felt their friends would see this behavior was a little bit wrong; and 15 percent of youth felt their friends would see this behavior was wrong.

Figure R-7

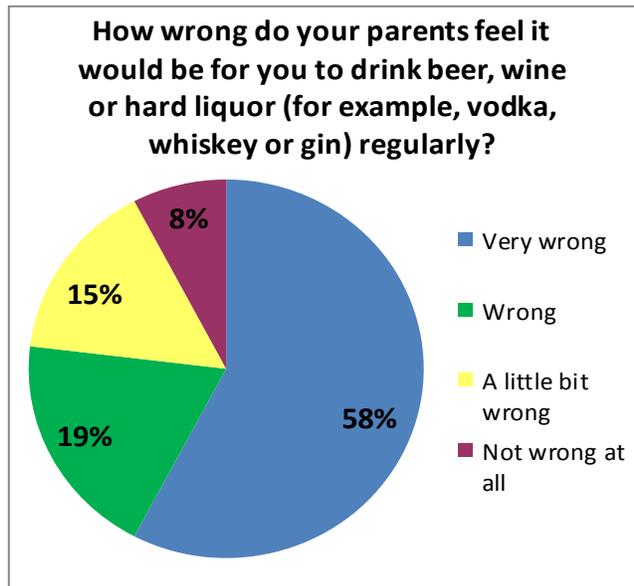
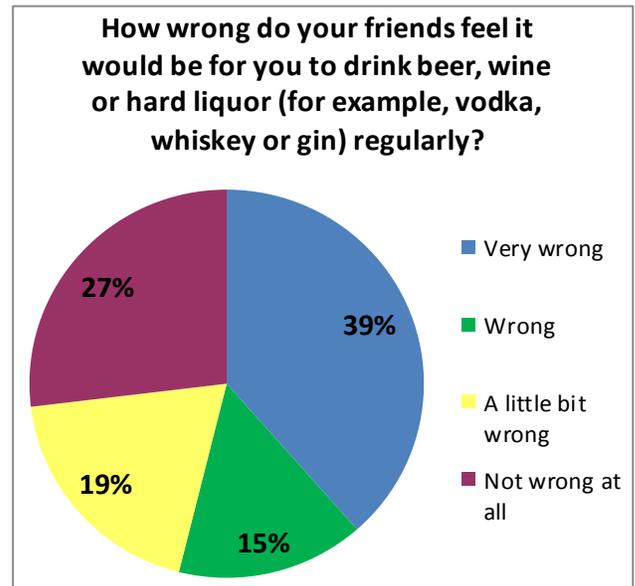


Figure R-8



In Figure R-9, the majority of youth respondents (98 percent) reported that during the past 30 days they had not used marijuana; 4 percent of youth reported that they had used marijuana in the last three to five days, and 4 percent of youth had used marijuana in the last 20 to 29 days.

In Figure R-10, the majority of youth (39 percent) perceived that the risk of harming themselves if they smoked marijuana to be a great risk; 27 percent of youth perceived the risk of this behavior as no risk; 19 percent of youth see this behavior as a slight risk; and 15 percent of youth view this behavior as a moderate risk.

Figure R-9

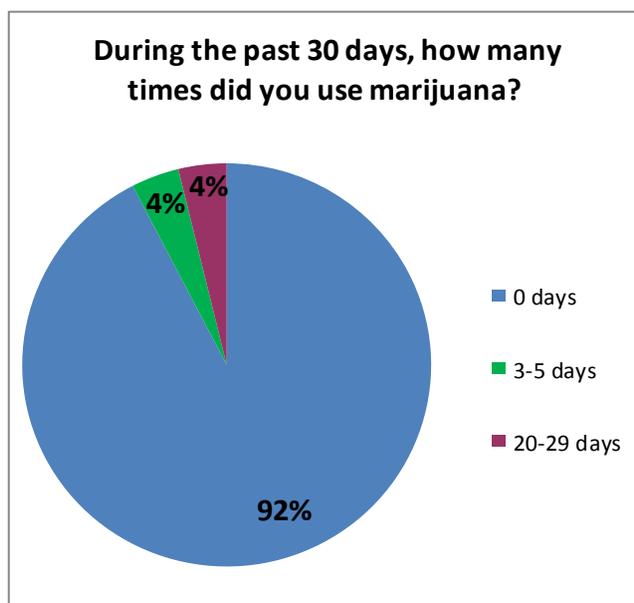
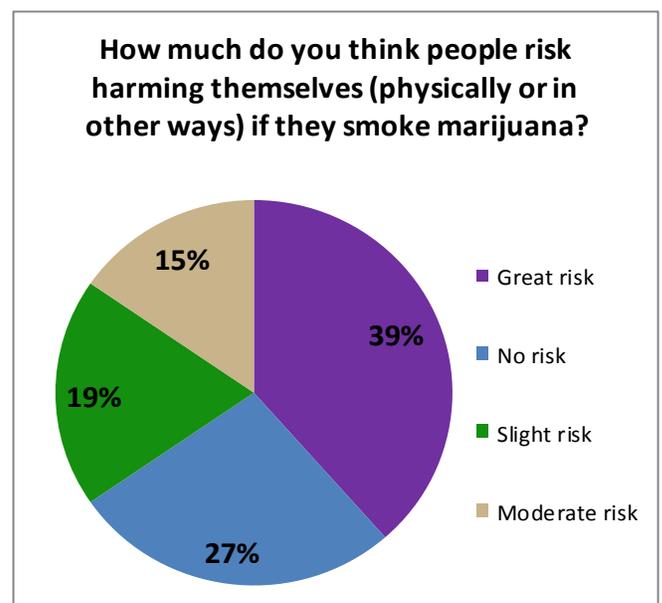


Figure R-10



In Figure R-11, the majority of youth respondents (65 percent) felt that their parents would feel that their use of marijuana would be considered very wrong; 15 percent of youth indicated that their parents would feel that their use of marijuana would be considered not wrong at all; 12 percent of youth felt that their parents would see their use of marijuana as wrong; and 8 percent of youth felt their parents would see their use of marijuana as a little bit wrong.

Figure R-11

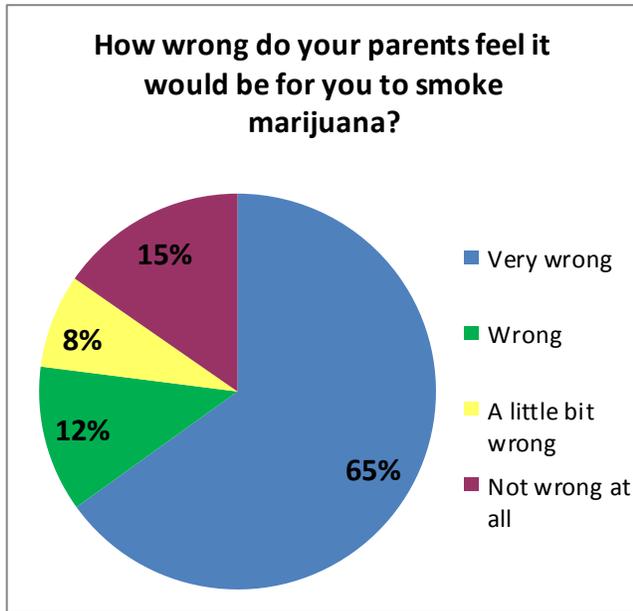
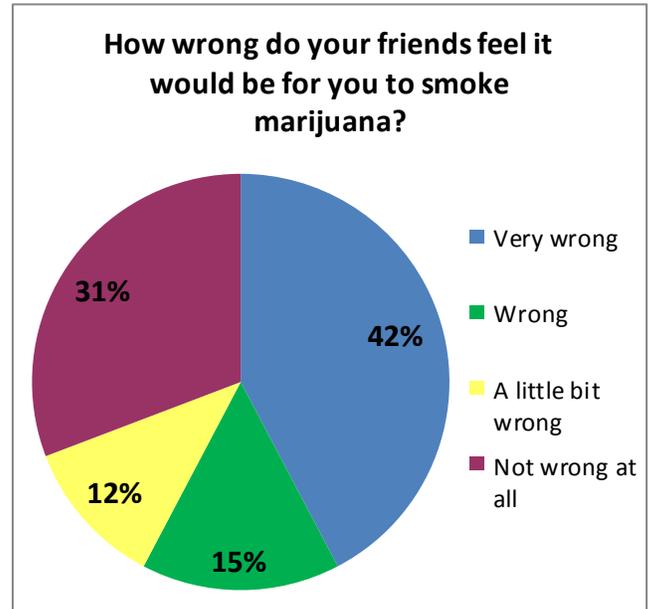
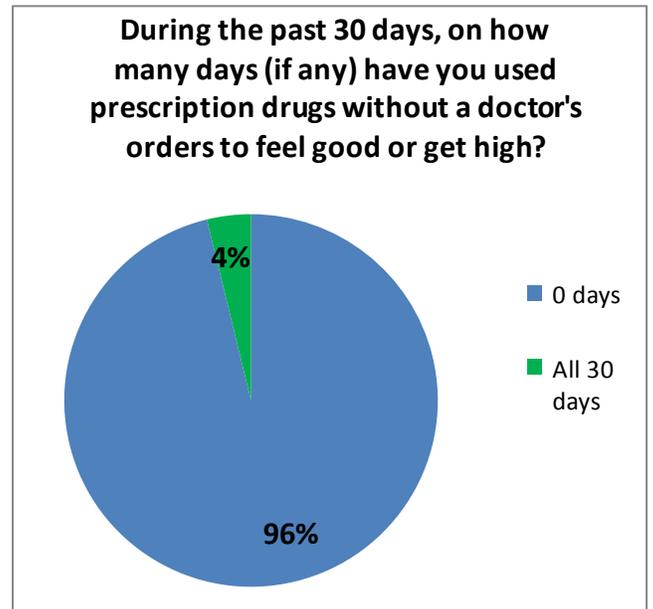


Figure R-12



In Figure R-12, the majority of youth respondents (38 percent) reported that their friends would feel that their use of marijuana would be considered very wrong; 31 percent of youth felt that their friends would view their use of marijuana as not wrong at all; 15 percent of youth felt that their friends would view their use of marijuana as wrong; and 12 percent of youth felt that their friends would view their use as a little bit wrong.

Figure R-13



In Figure R-13, the majority of youth respondents (96 percent) reported that in the last 30 days, they had not used prescription drugs without a doctor's orders to feel good or get high; whereas 4 percent of youth in the last 30 days had used prescription drugs without a doctor's order to get high on all 30 days.

In Figure R-14, the majority of youth respondents (77 percent) perceived the risk of harming themselves by the use of prescription drugs to get high as a great risk; 15 percent of youth perceived the risk of using prescription drugs as a moderate risk; and 8 percent of youth perceived the risk of prescription drugs to get high as no risk.

In Figure R-15, the majority of youth (81 percent) perceived that their parents would feel that their use of prescription drugs to get high was very wrong; 8 percent of youth perceived that their parents would feel this behavior would be considered a little bit wrong; 7 percent of youth perceived their parents would feel this behavior was wrong; and 4 percent of youth perceived their parents would feel this behavior was not wrong at all.

Figure R-14

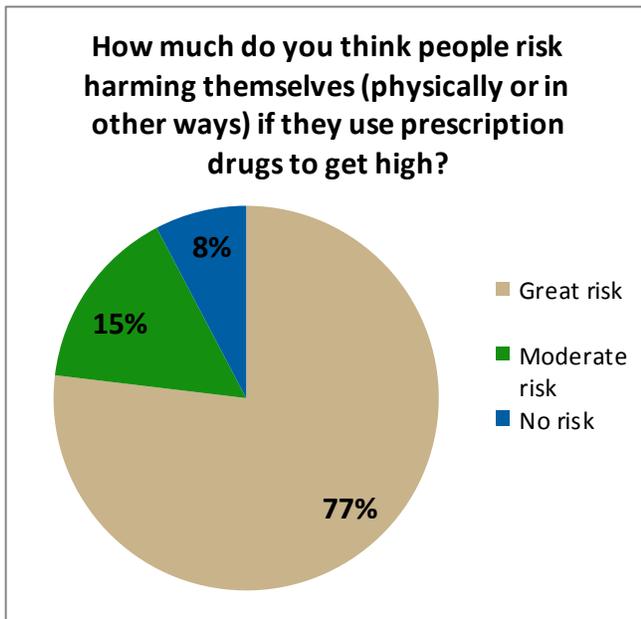


Figure R-15

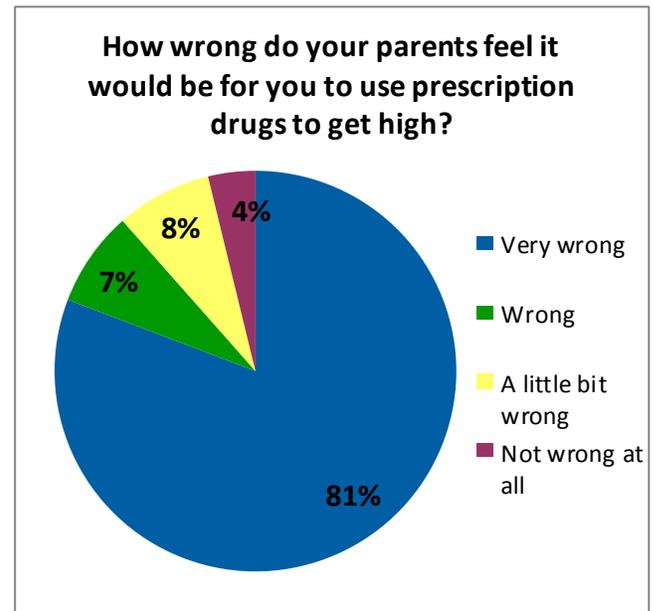
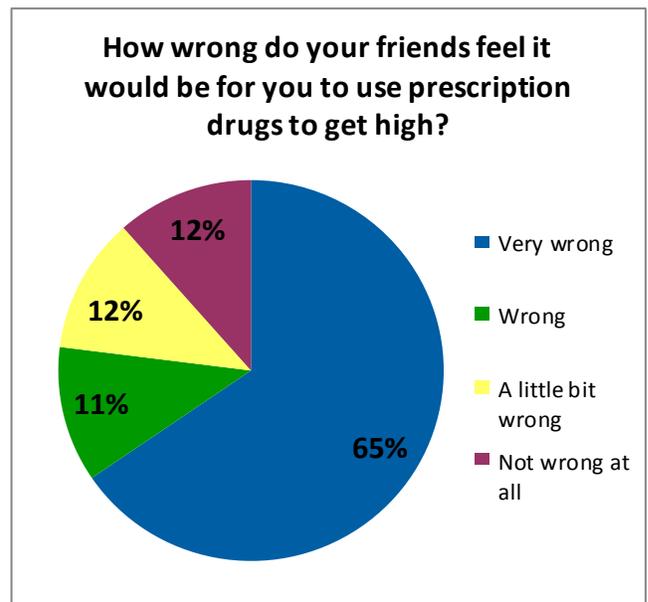


Figure R-16

In Figure R-16, the majority of youth (65 percent) perceived that their friends would feel that their use of prescription drugs to get high would be considered very wrong; 12 percent of youth perceived their friends would consider this behavior was not wrong at all; 12 percent of youth perceived their friends would consider this behavior was a little bit wrong; and 11 percent of youth perceived their friends would consider this behavior was wrong.



Limitations

Beyond the low response rate, there are additional limitations to be mentioned regarding this needs assessment. The results from the Tonopah and Pahrump communities were combined, and the findings may not apply to both communities. The largest number of youth respondents (46.4 percent) was between the ages of 17 to 18, with the next largest group (28.5 percent) participating between the ages of 12 to 16. The older age range is engaged in workforce readiness and higher education, which does not represent the age group or the focus of youth groups with the highest involvement.

In addition, there were technology issues in which only one survey per IP address could be accessed, which severely limited the participation from two highly attended program sites. Another limitation was lack of access to Internet and participants' email addresses. One program provider relied on adult volunteers to encourage youth to access its program website to participate in the survey. Some youth didn't have access to the Internet, and those who did have access did not have a current email address.

Conclusions

The value of this survey was to assess the perceived learning youth are gaining as a result of their involvement in youth development programs, as well as what areas of youth development can be strengthened. This assessment provided insight into perceived learning by both youth and parents in Nye/Esmeralda County's youth programs. In addition, the assessment provided information as to what type of structure and format youth most benefit from; youth's level of safety felt in programs; staff's ability to promote positive youth development; assessment of responsibility for youth to gain the most from their experience; frequency of participation; level of enjoyment; parents' ability to pay for programs if needed; and perceived risk of harm among youth regarding use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs.

In regards to program structure and safety, youth enjoy participating in programs with structure and flexibility that include time for small group instruction and independent learning. Youth indicated they would most benefit from programs that include personal development, leadership, homework assistance and study skills. Science and technology was also an interest. The majority of youth (77 percent) feel safe at their youth programs, with 3.8 percent of youth indicating they don't feel safe.

The majority of the youth (46 percent) indicated a neutral response when asked if program staff could benefit from professional development trainings. Nearly 20 percent indicated that staff could benefit from training.

Half of the youth respondents indicated that they saw it as their personal responsibility to get as much as possible out of the youth program experience. A smaller percentage of youth saw that it was the parents' responsibility (15 percent) and 12 percent of the youth viewed it as the staff's responsibility.

Regarding frequency of participation and level of enjoyment, youth indicated that year-around participation was the most frequent way they participate, with summer participation being the next most frequent way. Nearly 70 percent of youth indicated that they enjoy their participation in youth programs, with 20 percent indicating a neutral response.

When asked if parents were willing to pay for youth programs, the majority of parents (40 percent) indicated that they would be willing to pay \$5-10 per week. Nearly 20 percent indicated that they were unwilling or unable to pay any amount for programs.

The survey provided valuable information about what the youth perceive as their top learning outcomes from their youth programs, as well as what skills they ranked lower. Perceived top five skills include: *learning to tolerate and respect differences; to work well with others; self-responsibility; achieving greater self-confidence around others; and value community service*. The lowest five skills include: *consequences of underage drinking; stress management; about additional educational topics; improved public-speaking skills; and about consequences of sexual activity*.

The data gathered is helpful in knowing the youth's perceived risk of substance abuse, as well as their parents and peers. Interestingly, 27 percent of the youth perceived no risk of harm in regards to marijuana use and 31 percent of youth indicated that their friends would view their use of marijuana as not wrong at all. In summary, youth (77 percent) perceived the risk of people harming themselves with prescription drugs; 69 percent of youth indicated perceived risk of people harming themselves by drinking alcohol one or two drinks nearly every day; 69 percent of youth also indicated the perceived risk of harm with daily tobacco use; and 39 percent of youth indicated perceived risk of people harming themselves by marijuana use.

Overall, in all the risk behavior questions youth perceived their parents view of their use of substances as very wrong, and their friends' perceived risk of using substances as not as wrong as their parents'. The following example illustrates this, as the majority of youth (65 percent) felt that their parents would feel that their use of marijuana would be considered very wrong, whereas the youth (31 percent) indicated that their friends would view their marijuana use as not wrong at all.

Future Research

Based on the survey results and low number of respondents, more research is needed to capture gaps that occurred in this survey. This could include a follow up focus group study to include youth who: do not attend university- or coalition- sponsored programs; do not have Internet access; live below the poverty level; and live in towns that did not have representation. Focus groups can provide intimate understanding of clientele and stakeholder priorities essential to youth programs and their relevance within a county (Arnold, 2008). With focus groups, questions could probe ways in which programs can be structured and content improved to increase the rating of life skills learned that survey respondents rated very low.

Other future research areas to explore include taking a closer look at the quality of youth-adult relationships within youth programs and the impact quality relationships have on building the life skills of youth. The quality of interactions between youth and adults has been noted as fundamental to successful youth programs (Dubois, 2002). In addition, the amount of training volunteers receive in positive youth development must be examined to better understand how volunteers are trained and how this impacts the development of quality relationships and the building of life skills in youth.

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