

# Youth Web Survey

Gunn High School ♦ Palo Alto, California

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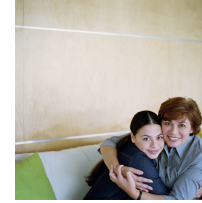
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## Background

The MOST of Us Youth Web Survey was administered at Gunn High School in February, 2006. This was the third consecutive year that the school was surveyed. The survey was anonymous, confidential and voluntary. Out of 1743 students, 1438 were surveyed and 1317 of these surveys were valid. The valid surveys represent 76% of the student body. Further analysis would be required to determine whether this is a representative sample of the school population.

The Youth Web Survey collects information on student behavior, perceptions, and attitudes about topics including alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The resulting data reveal the often vast differences between the students' reported behavior and their perceptions of the behavior of their peers. This disparity between perception and behavior can be used to determine the most effective focus for a social norms intervention.

Throughout this report, behavioral and perceptual data are reported together in pairs. For example, in the section on tobacco, it is reported that 80% of Gunn High School students report that they never use tobacco. However, only 24% of students accurately perceive this non-use norm. This data comes from two survey questions: When students were asked how often they use tobacco, 80% said "never." But when they were asked how often they think *most students in their school* use tobacco (or, in other words, what they think the norm is for tobacco use among their peers) only 24% said "never." This disparity shows that Gunn High School students think that tobacco use is far more prevalent among their peers than it actually is -- more than three times more prevalent, to be precise.

In addition, the survey collected information on attitudinal or "injunctive norms" by asking the students about their approval or disapproval of various behaviors. Injunctive norms can have a strong influence on behavior, since people tend to do what is socially approved of and accepted by their peers.



## Patterns and Trends

### **MOST GUNN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OVERESTIMATE UNHEALTHY BEHAVIOR AMONG THEIR PEERS**

Most Gunn High School students do not accurately perceive the behavior of their schoolmates. While the majority of students report refraining from regular tobacco use, drinking at dances, and using marijuana and other drugs, they nevertheless believe that their peers are engaging in these activities with much greater frequency.



## Tobacco Use

### **BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS**

The majority of students at Gunn High School are tobacco free.

**80%** of Gunn High School students report that they never use tobacco (including cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and snuff). However, only **24%** of students accurately perceive this non-use norm.

### **ATTITUDES AND APPROVAL**

When asked about their attitude toward tobacco use, **80%** of Gunn High School students agree that it is “never a good thing to do.” Only **49%** of students accurately perceive this norm.

When asked how they would feel about their friends smoking cigarettes, **78%** of students report that they would disapprove or strongly disapprove. However, when students were asked how they would feel about their friends smoking cigarettes at a party or while drinking, the disapproval rate dropped to **75%**.

### **SUGGESTED TOBACCO MESSAGES:**

*80% of Gunn High School students never use tobacco*

*80% of Gunn High School students agree that using tobacco is never a good thing to do*

*78% of Gunn High School students disapprove of their friends smoking cigarettes*



## Alcohol Use

### **BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS**

**44%** of Gunn High School students never drink alcohol. While this is shy of a majority, this issue still has significant misperceptions attached to it. Only **8%** of Gunn students think that their peers never use alcohol.

**74%** of Gunn High School students do not drink alcohol in the typical month. Only **53%** of students accurately perceived that refraining from regular alcohol use is the norm among their peers.

**56%** of Gunn High School students have not consumed alcohol at a party or social occasion with other students in the past year. **74%** of students have done so only once or twice in the past year.

**68%** of Gunn High School students have not been drunk in the past year. **89%** of Gunn students do not get drunk in the typical month.

### **ATTITUDES AND APPROVAL**

**51%** of Gunn High School students agree that drinking alcohol is never a good thing for anyone their age to do. While this is a small majority, many more students share this attitude than was predicted by their peers. Only **34%** of students thought their peers would agree with this statement.

**64%** of Gunn High School students agree that getting drunk is never a good thing for anyone their age to do. Once again, even this small majority is much greater than the students predicted: only **48%** of students thought their peers would agree with this statement.

When students were asked about drinking and socializing, **69%** reported that they would rather not drink alcohol when they hang out with their friends; **11%** reported that they prefer to drink when they are with their friends, and **20%** claimed that they are unsure.

While only **36%** of Gunn High School students disapprove or strongly disapprove of their friends drinking any amount of alcohol, **57%** disapprove of their friends getting drunk.

### **SUGGESTED ALCOHOL MESSAGES**

*69% of Gunn High School students would rather not drink alcohol when they hang out with their friends*

*74% of Gunn High School students do not drink alcohol in the typical month*

89% of Gunn High School students do not get drunk in the typical month



## Drinking at Dances

### BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS

74% of Gunn High School students attended at least one school dance in the past year.

90% of the students who attend dances do not drink before or during a typical event. The students' perception, however, is that only 74% of their peers do not drink before or during school dances.

82% of students who go to dances reported that they have not used alcohol before or during a school dance in the past 12 months.

### ATTITUDES AND APPROVAL

65% of students agree that drinking alcohol at school dances is never a good thing to do. Only 44% of students accurately perceive that this attitude is the norm among their peers.

### SUGGESTED DANCE MESSAGES

*90% of Gunn High School students do not drink before or during a typical dance*

*82% of the Gunn High School students who go to dances have not used alcohol before or during a school dance in the past 12 months*

*65% of Gunn High School students agree that drinking alcohol at school dances is never a good thing to do*



## Impaired Driving

### BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS

Most Gunn High School students don't drink and drive, and strongly disapprove of others drinking and driving.

In the past year, 78% of Gunn High School students have not ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. Only 29% of students accurately perceive that not riding with drinking drivers is the norm.

In the past year, 90% of Gunn High School students have not driven a car after or while drinking alcohol.

Only 38% of students accurately perceive that it is the norm not to drink and drive.

### ATTITUDES AND APPROVAL

Most Gunn High School students disapprove of drinking and driving: 91% would disapprove of their friends driving a vehicle while impaired, and 90% would disapprove of their friends riding in a vehicle with an impaired driver.

### SUGGESTED IMPAIRED DRIVING MESSAGES

*90% of Gunn High School students do not drink and drive*

*91% of Gunn High School students disapprove of their friends driving after drinking*

*90% of Gunn High School students disapprove of their friends riding with a driver who has been drinking*



## Occupant Protection

### BEHAVIORS

79% of Gunn High School students "almost always" wear their seat belt when they ride as a passenger in a vehicle.

89% of Gunn High School students "almost always" wear their seat belt when they drive a vehicle.

81% "almost always" wear their seat belt when they ride with parents or family members, and 78% "almost always" buckle up when they ride with friends.

### SUGGESTED OCCUPANT PROTECTION MESSAGES

*79% of Gunn High School students "almost always" wear their seat belt when they ride in a car*

*89% of Gunn High School students "almost always" wear their seat belt when they drive a car*

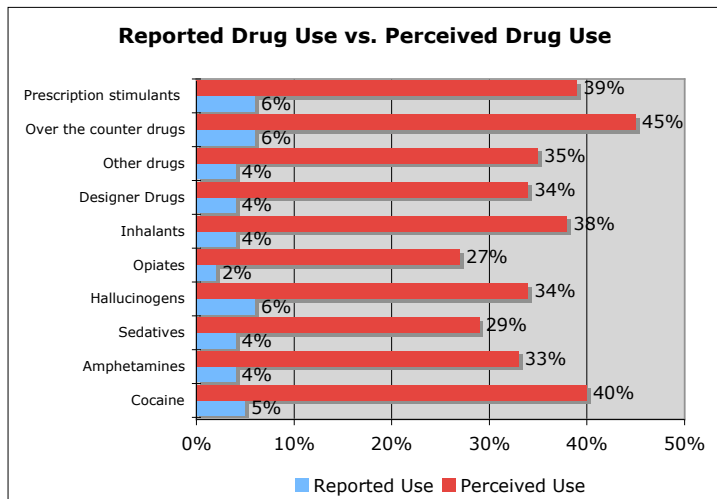


## Marijuana and Other Drug Use

### BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS

76% of Gunn High School students never use marijuana. Only 24% of students accurately perceive that most students in their school abstain from marijuana use.

Gunn High School students' perceptions of the frequency with which their peers use drugs other than marijuana are off by an enormous margin. They overestimate these rates of drug use by almost 10 times. The degree of their misperceptions are illustrated in the chart below. Note that, in this chart, "use" includes everything from a single trial to daily usage.



**ATTITUDES AND APPROVAL**

58% of Gunn High School Students agree that using marijuana is never a good thing to do. Only 25% of Gunn students thought their peers would agree with this statement.

When students were asked how they would feel about their friends trying marijuana once or twice, 50% said they would disapprove or strongly disapprove. When asked how they would feel about their friends smoking marijuana frequently, however, their disapproval rate went way up: 73% of Gunn High School students would disapprove of their friends smoking marijuana frequently.

79% of Gunn High School students agree that using illegal drugs other than marijuana is never a good thing to do. Only 48% of students accurately perceive this strong injunctive norm.

73% of Gunn High School students would disapprove of their friends trying drugs other than marijuana, and 86% would disapprove of their friends using drugs other than marijuana frequently.

**SUGGESTED DRUG USE MESSAGES**

76% of Gunn High School students never use marijuana

73% of Gunn High School students disapprove of their friends smoking marijuana frequently

73% of Gunn High School students disapprove of their friends trying drugs other than marijuana



## The Role of Parents

**ATTITUDES AND APPROVAL**

Gunn High School students believe that parents play an important role in preventing student substance use. And the students have relatively accurate perceptions about the strength of this attitude among their peers.

77% of Gunn High School students agree that parents should set clear rules and expectations about avoiding harmful behavior; 60% of students accurately perceive that this attitude is the norm among their peers.

75% of Gunn High School students agree that adults should clearly communicate with their children about not using alcohol and other drugs; 61% of students accurately perceive that this attitude is the norm.

**ACCESS TO ALCOHOL**

89% of Gunn High School students report that their parents do not allow them and their friends to drink alcohol at home. While only 11% of parents allow their children to drink at home, the students estimated that almost twice as many parents -- 20% -- do so.

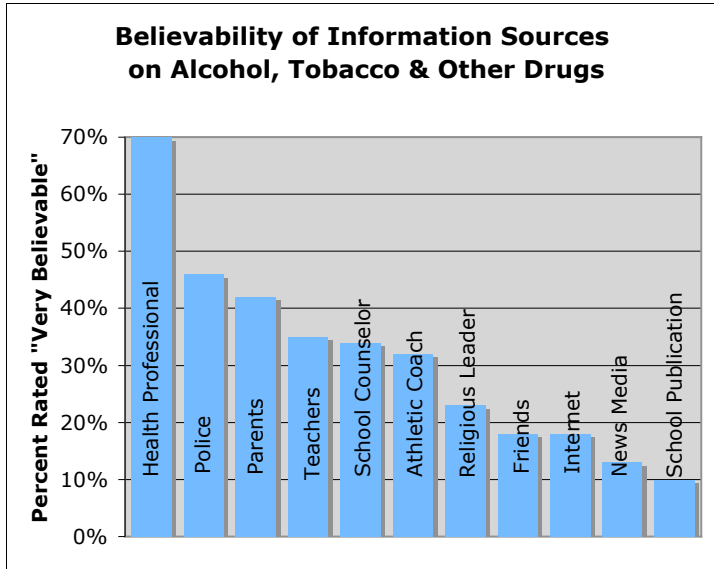
60% of Gunn High School students agree that parents should not let their teens or their teens' friends drink alcohol at home; 45% of students accurately perceive that this attitude is the norm.

**FAMILY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ALCOHOL**

47% of students reported that their parents had discussed their family rules about alcohol and other drugs in the past 12 months. The students estimated that 41% of other students' parents had discussed their family rules about alcohol and other drugs in the past year.

Parental discussions about family rules are very powerful, since Gunn High School students rate their parents as one of the most believable sources of information about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. 42% of Gunn High School students consider their parents a "very believable" source of information. They consider their parents to be second only to a doctor, nurse or other health professional or the police in terms of believability. In contrast, only 18% of students found their friends to be very believable sources of information about these

substances. These findings are summarized in the following chart.



**SUGGESTED PARENT INVOLVEMENT MESSAGES**

*77% of Gunn High School students agree that parents should set clear rules and expectations about avoiding harmful behavior*

*89% of Gunn High School parents do not allow their children and their children's friends to drink alcohol at home*

*47% of Gunn High School parents have discussed their family rules about alcohol and other drugs with their children in the past 12 months\*\**

\*\*Although this message does not represent a norm, it could be used as a motivator to encourage parents to "raise the percentage" and have this important discussion with their kids.



## Body Image

Many more students at Gunn High School are satisfied with their body shape and size -- and fewer are dissatisfied -- than their peers perceive.

**69%** of male students reported that they are satisfied with their current body shape and size. Only **31%** of students accurately perceive that this is the norm among male students.

**43%** of female students report being satisfied with their current body shape and size. The students' perception, however, is that only **17%** of female students are satis-

fied with their bodies.

**17%** of male students are not satisfied with their current body shape and size. The overall student perception is that **34%** of male students are dissatisfied with their bodies.

**36%** of female students are not satisfied with their current body shape and size. The overall student perception is that **50%** of female students are dissatisfied with their bodies.



## Student Honesty

**99%** of Gunn High School students reported that they were "very honest" or "honest most of the time" in filling out this survey.

*If you have any questions about the contents of this report, please contact Valerie Roche, Program Manager at MOST of Us at (406) 994-7772 or [vroche@montana.edu](mailto:vroche@montana.edu).*