

UNITED WAY COMMUNITY YOUTH ASSESSMENT 2022



Dear Community Partners,

Since 1954 when United Way began serving Montcalm and Ionia Counties, we have been committed to improving the lives of all our children, youth, and families right here in our local community. The COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on two critical issues facing our youth – access to services and housing instability. At the same time, teen pregnancy rates in Montcalm County are increasing at alarming rates, reports of youth bullying have been increasing, and youth drug usage reported by adults is on the rise.

While providing food support during the pandemic in 2020, community organizations noticed that many of our youths were helping navigate the services available to help meet their family’s most basic needs – food and housing. At the same time, our community homeless rates were increasing along with reports of increased numbers of youth that were couch surfing. Yet there was no actual data that supported any of these trends. Through collaboration with our school systems, health and human service partners, and our Homeless Network we determined that we needed to hear from your youth and give them the voice to address these issues. Through this, the Community Youth Assessment was born.

The goal of this assessment was to be informal and to give a voice to Middle School, High School, and young adults ages 18-24. The needs assessment was conducted using an online survey that was an option for them to complete. The needs assessment is intended to assist decision-makers in developing those services and programs that are essential to improving the well-being of our youth. The pages that follow highlight the voices of our youth and illustrate what they identify as successes, needs, and challenges.

I would like to thank all the students that participated, the school districts that worked with us, McKinney Vento liaisons, and the community leaders who assisted with this process through financial support or collection for this endeavor.

Together we can deepen our community partnerships and maximize our ability to align resources in a way that allows everyone in our community to thrive. Every action adds up. We look forward to our next steps in addressing these needs.

Sincerely,



Terri Legg
Executive Director

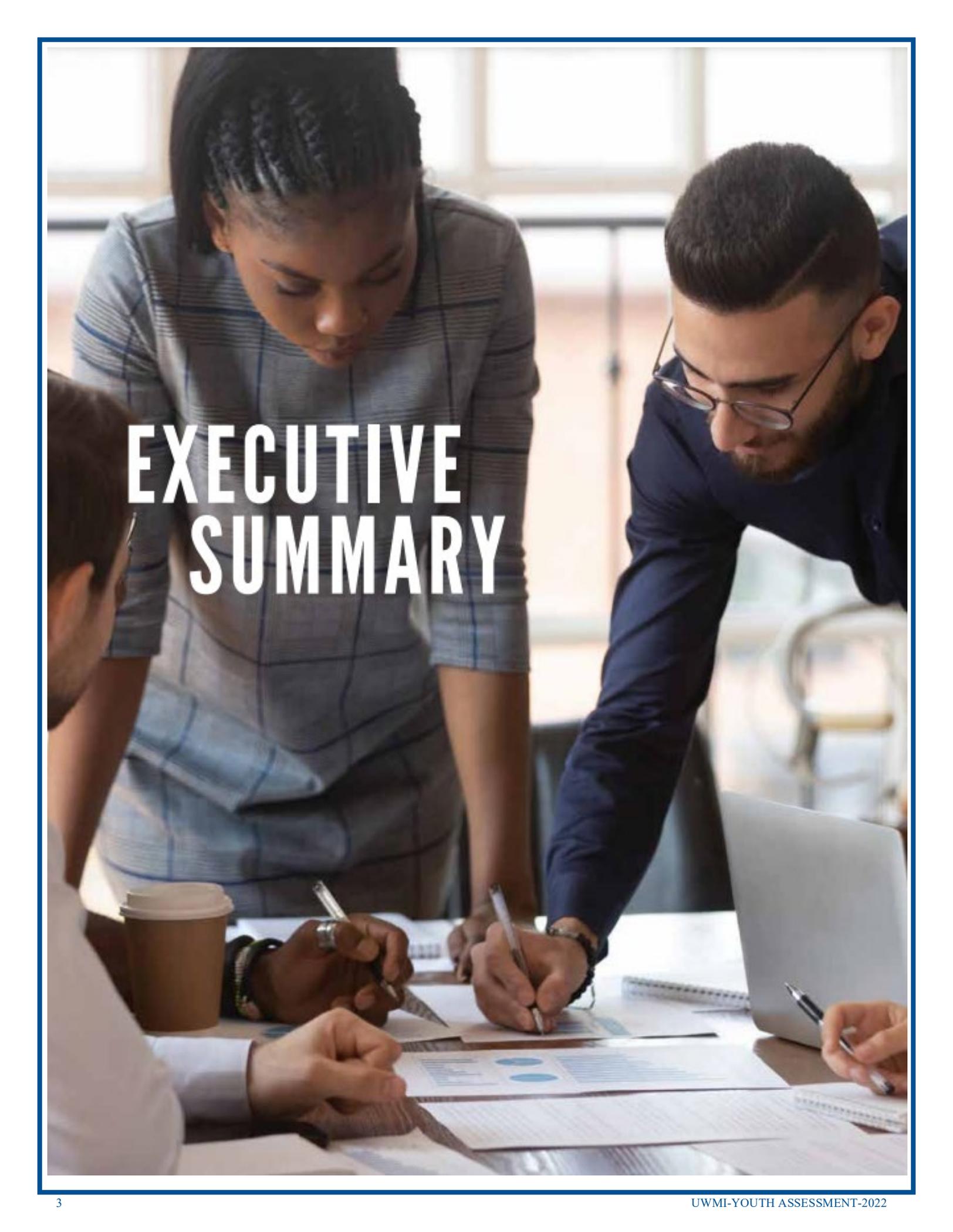
UNDERSTANDING ALICE

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – it’s a complex term for a population we know all too well. ALICE is the person who works hard to make a living but still can’t seem to make ends meet. ALICE has an income above the Federal Poverty Level but struggles to afford basic household necessities.

ALICE is a mother, struggling to raise her children while also caring for an aging parent; a college student, attending classes by day and waiting tables by night; a senior citizen, choosing between prescription medications and groceries.

ALICE represents the men and women of all ages and races who get up each day to go to work, but who face tough financial choices. ALICE is not an individual, but a conceptual blending of all those in our community who bring home a paycheck that doesn’t stretch to cover household needs. ALICE is glad to have a job, proud of their work, and happy to contribute to the community. ALICE has no cushion. ALICE has no fall back, their assets are limited, and their income constrained. ALICE is one crisis away from poverty. A rent hike, a family illness, the need for new car tires, things that the rest of us see as an inconvenience, are a crisis for ALICE across our nation.

Together we have an opportunity to raise awareness, stimulate conversation and create solutions that offer our communities a better future. Hopefully this assessment will leave you better informed and newly inspired by the potential that we have when we work together to improve the financial stability of this demographic.

A group of business professionals are gathered around a table in a meeting. A woman in a grey patterned dress is leaning over, looking at documents. A man in a dark blue shirt and glasses is also leaning over, looking at the documents. Another person's hand is visible in the foreground, holding a pen. There is a laptop on the table and a coffee cup. The background is a bright office space with windows.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



UNITED FOR YOUTH SUCCESS

The Youth Community Survey was an anonymous survey deployed in 2021 to youths in Montcalm and Ionia Counties. Needs Assessments help obtain a true picture of what is really happening with a voice of those that are being most impacted. Youth ages 10-24 years of age are one of the most underserved populations in our community. The 1,866 survey respondents (461 middle school, 1,311 high school, and 94 older youth) helped provide insight to the need.

As the pandemic continues, youth needs are not being met. Mental health is the top indicated concern by local youths. Whether it was identified as a top health concern or based on different stressors experienced this data is shown across all age groups. Even though the conversation of growing awareness and access to mental health resources is on the rise, but fewer than 40% of those with a mental illness receive treatment. A majority of the respondents reported that they do not know what is available or how to access local resources such as mental health organizations and other supportive programs.



Toxic Stress is defined as living in chronically stressful situations such as having food, housing, or other basic survival insecurities. Adverse situations can impede on a person's ability to perform well in school, work, and daily life.

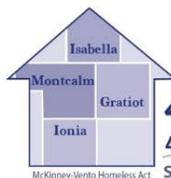


Living in substandard housing can pose health risks to both children and adults, in-turn raising health care costs and continuing the cycle of poverty.



Economically disadvantaged students perform lower on test scores and have high school graduation rates below the national average, this leads to less community engagement and being unable to lift themselves out of poverty.

This data illustrates the need of local youth, through the lens of their own voices. With identified areas of concern, the community is able to build shared understanding, and create widespread support towards solutions to address the unmet needs.



4-Sure

4 STUDENT'S UNDERGOING RELOCATION EFFORTS
SAFETY | STABILITY | SUPPORT | SUCCESS



Montcalm - Ionia Counties

1,866 YOUTH RESPONDENTS AGES 10-24 IN MONTCALM AND IONIA COUNTIES

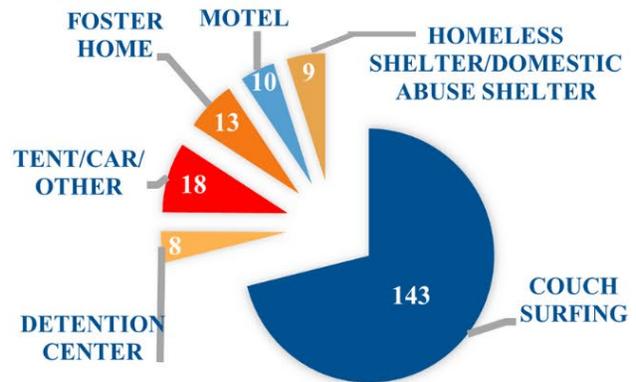
WHO DO YOU LIVE WITH?

75% 2 PARENT HOUSEHOLD
15% SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD
10% NO PARENT IN HOUSEHOLD

DO YOU HELP CARE FOR ANYONE AT HOME?

638 ONE INDIVIDUAL
150 TWO OR MORE INDIVIDUALS

ONE THIRD
OF OUR YOUTH
RESPONDENTS LIVE IN
INSECURE HOUSING



WHAT CAN ADULTS DO TO MAKE YOU FEEL MORE SUPPORTED?



“I regularly feel invisible, and I wish my teachers saw me.”
 -Greenville Student, 16

“Be accepting and supportive of all students, teachers are my only role models.”
 -Central Montcalm Student, 15

“Understand that there is a lot going at home, and I can’t always focus.”
 -Ionia Student, 16

“Encourage me to be my best self.”
 -Vestaburg Student, 11

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YOUTH HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a light on many different health aspects in our community, especially surrounding mental health. Understanding different concerns and risk behaviors that youth experience allows for awareness, communication, and advocacy for the needs of youth.

WHAT IS A MAJOR PROBLEM YOUTH EXPERIENCE IN YOUR SCHOOL?

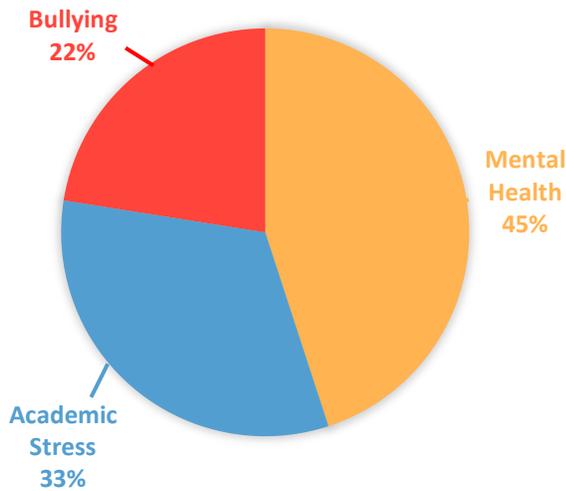


INSIGHTS

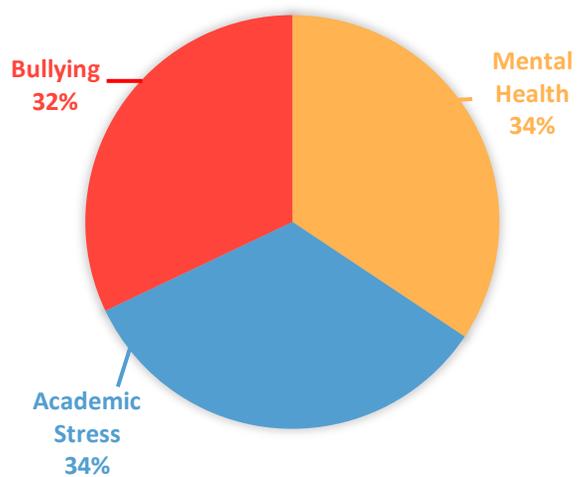
Mental Health, Academic Stress, and Bullying are the three major problems indicated by students. Chronic stress can impede a person’s ability to perform well in school, work, and daily life. This is especially true for youths: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are known risk factors for poor health outcomes including depression, risky behaviors, and suicide, and are associated with lower life satisfaction (Kwok et al., 2022).

MONTCALM COUNTY

HIGH SCHOOL

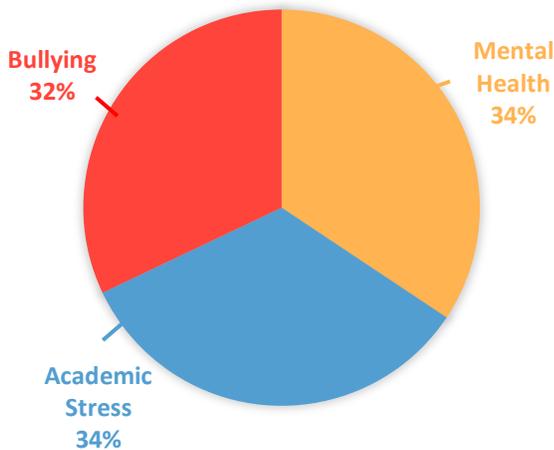


MIDDLE SCHOOL

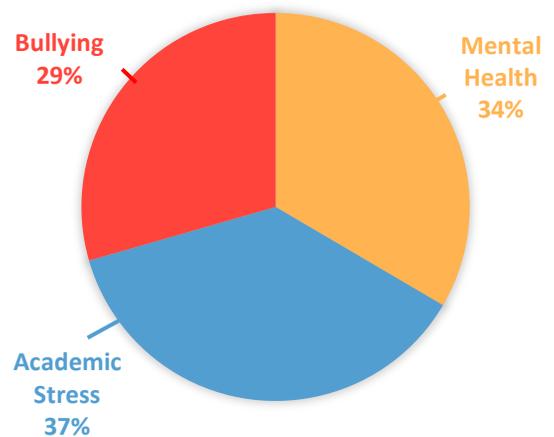


IONIA COUNTY

HIGH SCHOOL



MIDDLE SCHOOL



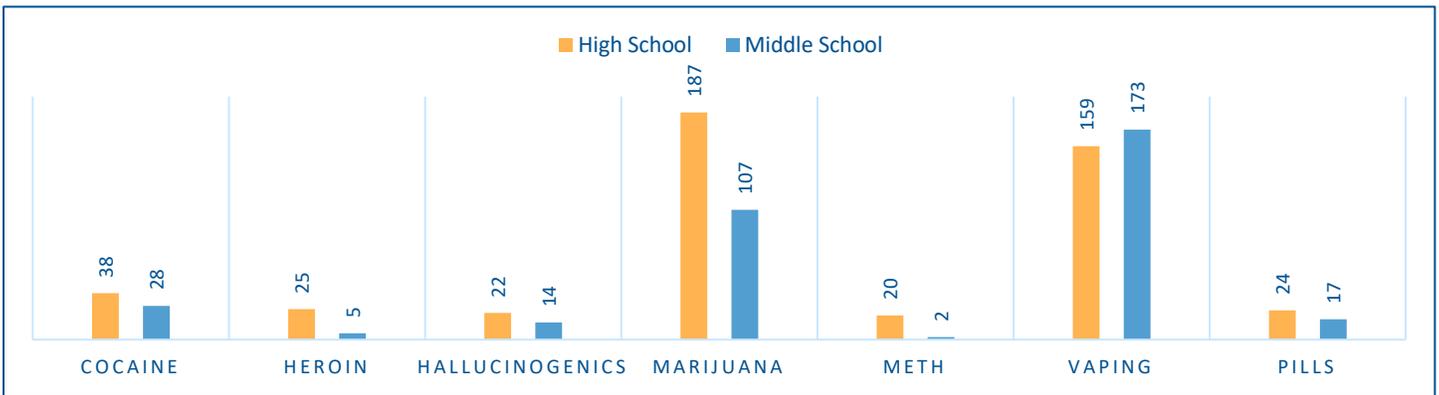
WHAT IS THE MOST USED DRUG IN YOUR SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, PEER GROUP?



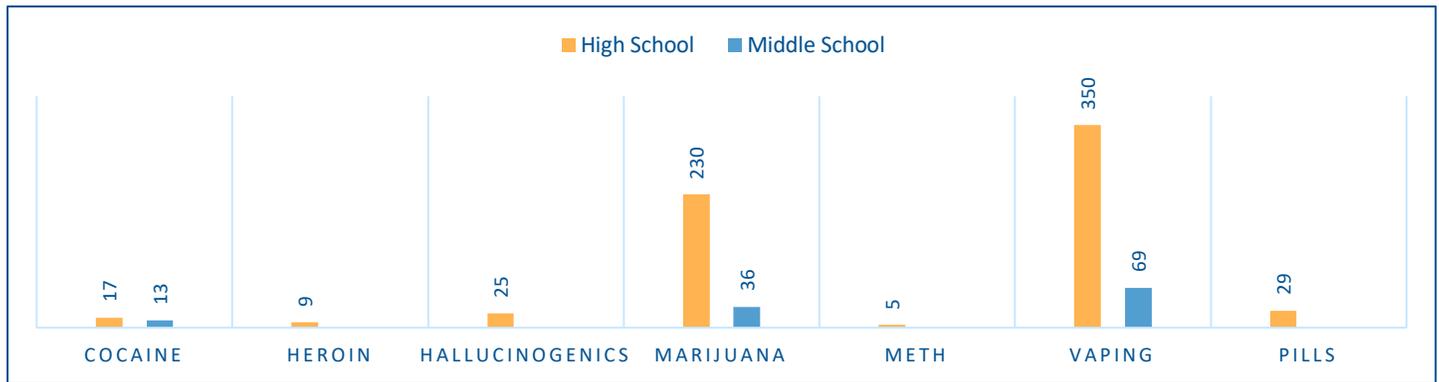
INSIGHTS

The use of illicit substances can lead to long term adverse effects in a child’s development. If children continue these habits into adulthood their household could see a decline in its financial position, keeping households in an ALICE state. In addition to the financial burden faced by substance abuse, long-term health complications or even an unexpected death will keep a household from becoming financially secure.

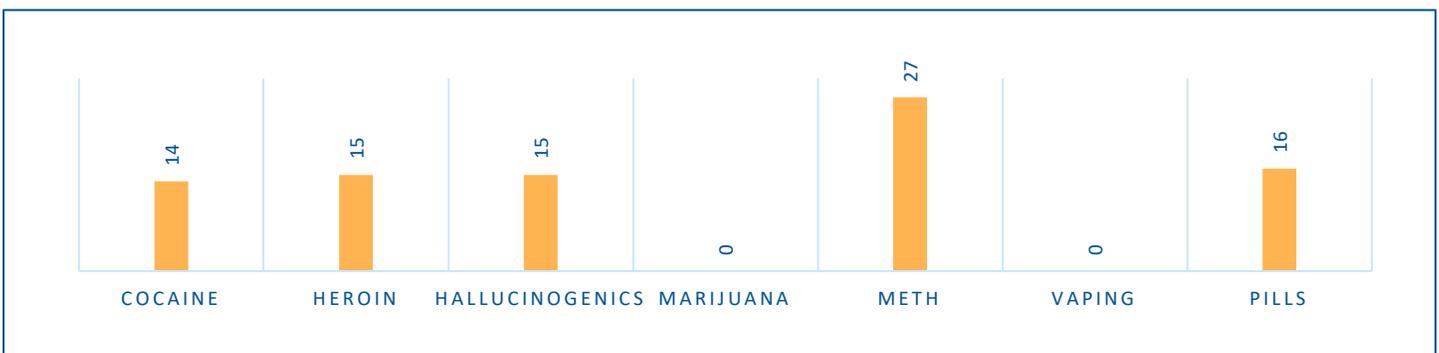
MONTCALM COUNTY



IONIA COUNTY



OLDER YOUTH 18–24 YEAR OLD’S



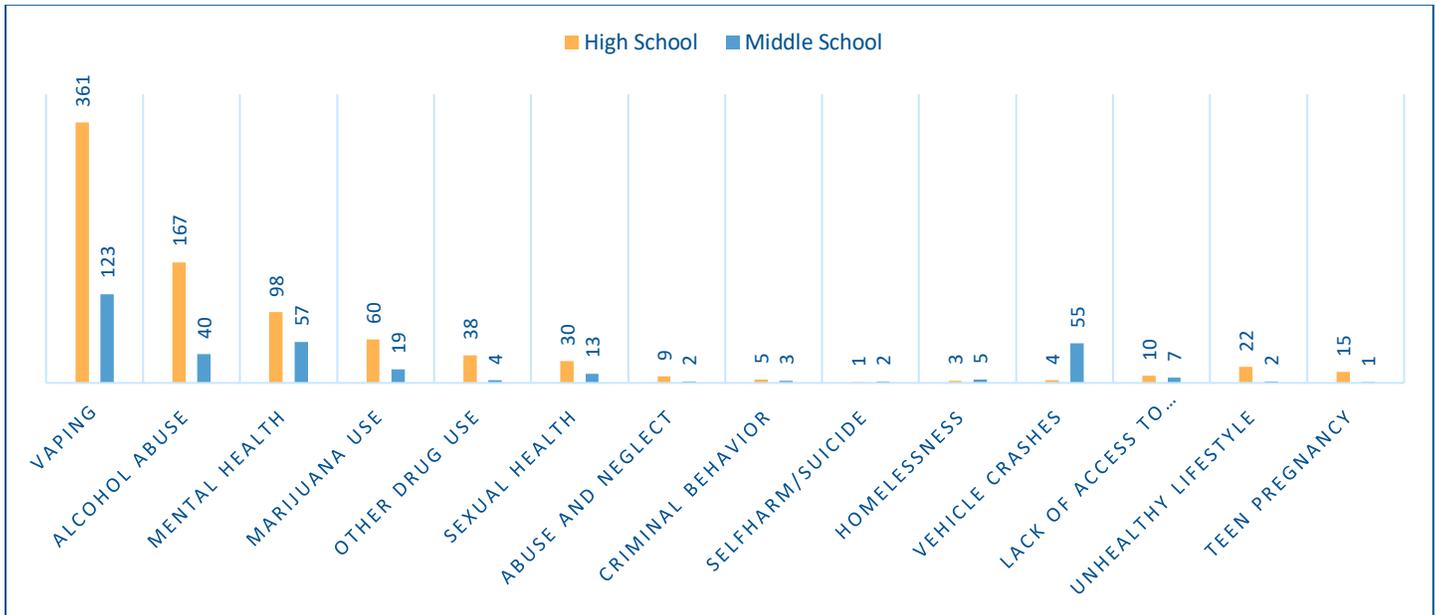
WHAT ARE THE TOP TWO HEALTH RISKS YOUTH ARE FACING?



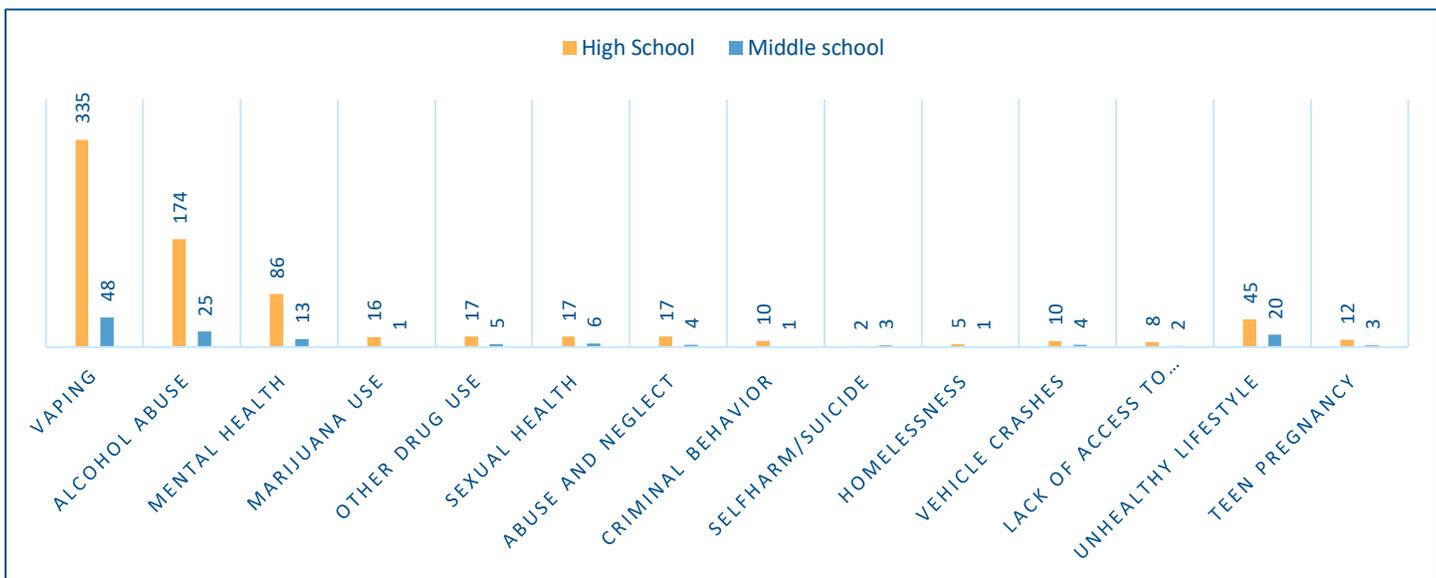
INSIGHTS

The top health concerns for all age groups includes **Vaping**, **Mental Health**, and **Substance Abuse** whether it be alcohol or drugs. These risk factors especially those related to substance use can lead to financial instability. Creating these habits at a young age can cause a youth to become an ALICE Household, long term substance abuse and untreated mental health can accrue pricy health care costs.

MONTCALM COUNTY

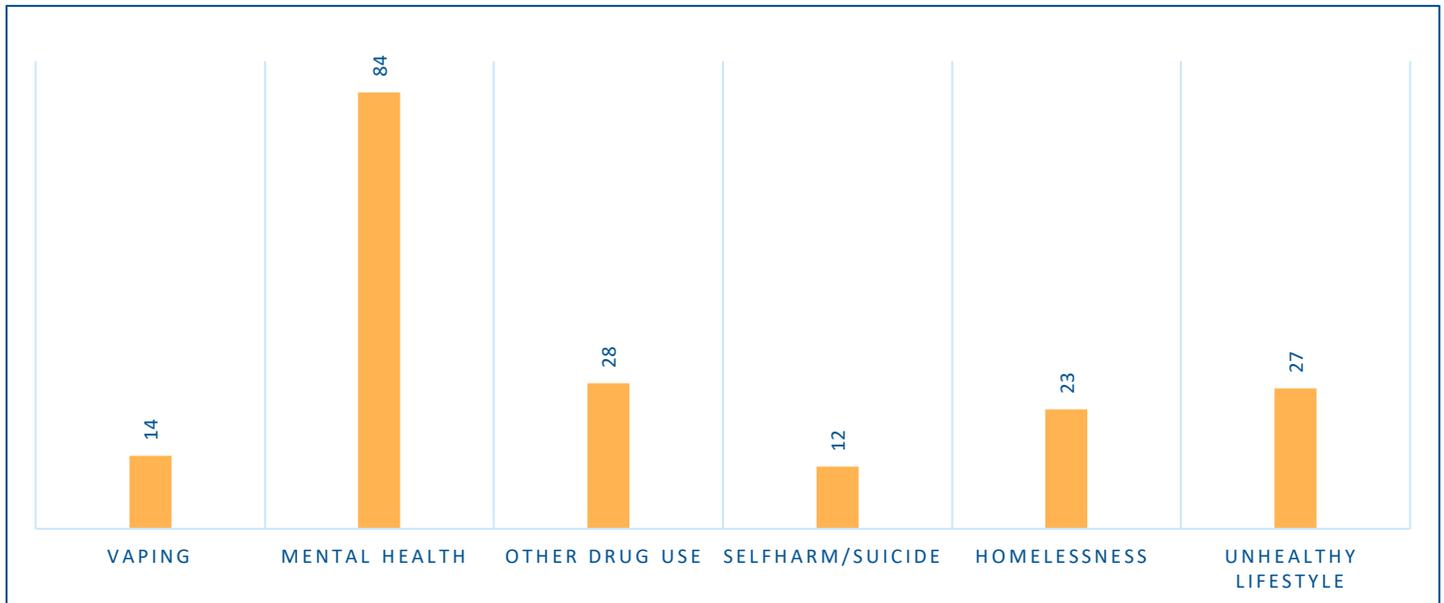


IONIA COUNTY



TOP HEALTH RISKS COUNTINUED

OLDER YOUTH 18–24 YEAR OLD’S

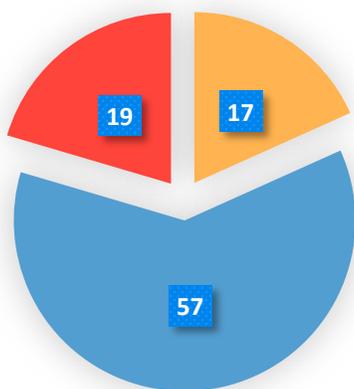


HOW HAS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH BEEN IN THE LAST 30 DAYS?

18-24 Mental Health Check



INSIGHTS



Great! Living life like normal

Okay - Mild anxiety and/or depression

Not Good - Significant anxiety and/or depression cannot complete daily tasks

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the number of individuals experiencing a mental health issue, predominantly with depression and anxiety. This data is reflected in our community across all age groups. Sixty-one percent of older youth respondents are experiencing anxiety and depression on a regular basis. These increased stressors could subside along with the COVID-19 pandemic as it continues to be more manageable, however with the journey back towards normalcy in other aspects of American life such as economic recovery, heightened anxiety and depression are likely to stay in our community.

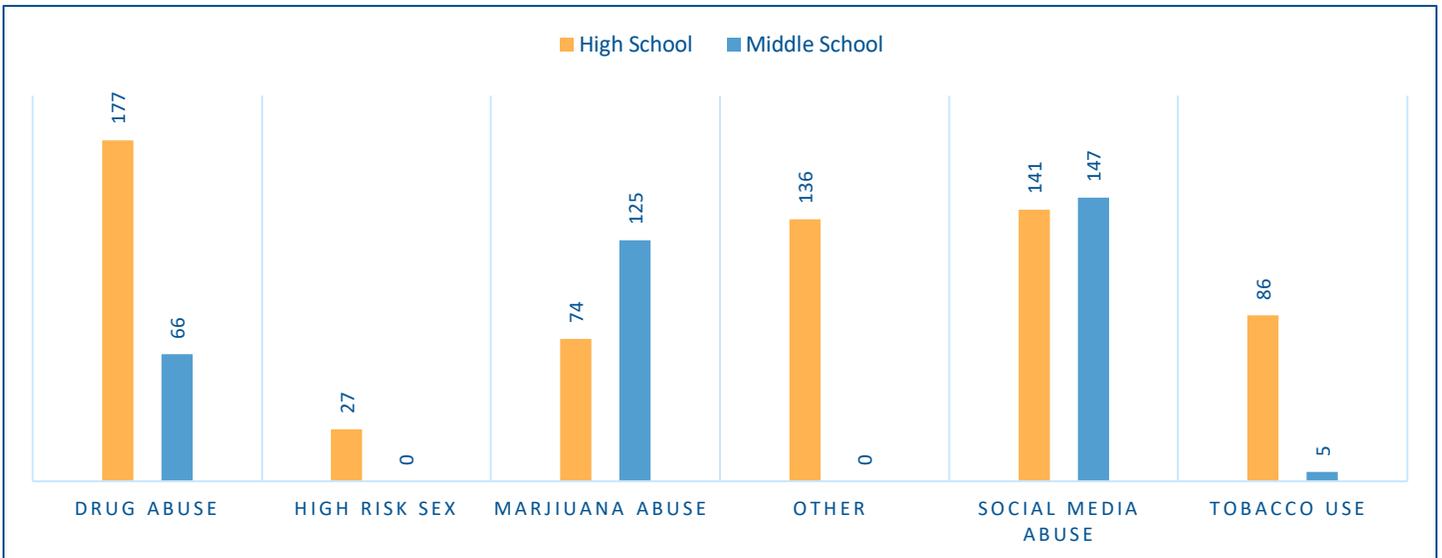
WHAT BEHAVIOR HAS THE WORST EFFECT ON THE YOUTH IN YOUR SCHOOL?



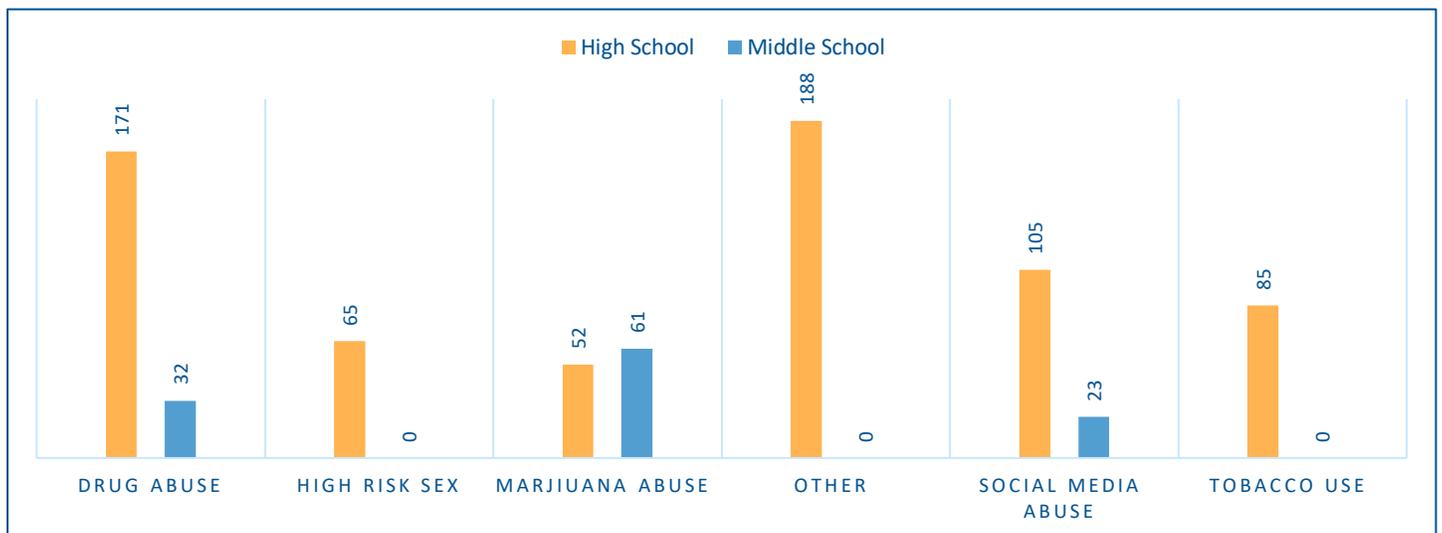
INSIGHTS

Both middle and high school students agreed that there are three main behaviors: **Vaping**, **Drug Abuse** including marijuana use, and **Social Media Abuse**. For the remaining students who are not represented here, other behaviors that were indicated include alcohol abuse, high risk sexual activity, and mental health concerns. Young adults who are facing at risk behaviors now are more likely to developed unhealthy habits which could develop financial insecurity issues in the future.

MONTCALM COUNTY



IONIA COUNTY





YOUTH AND RESOURCES

Children rarely access resources independently, and often will not until they reach adulthood. By this time, they may wait until in an extreme emergency to access help. Educating children on what is available and how to access resources ensures youth will be confident and prepared in any situation that might occur.

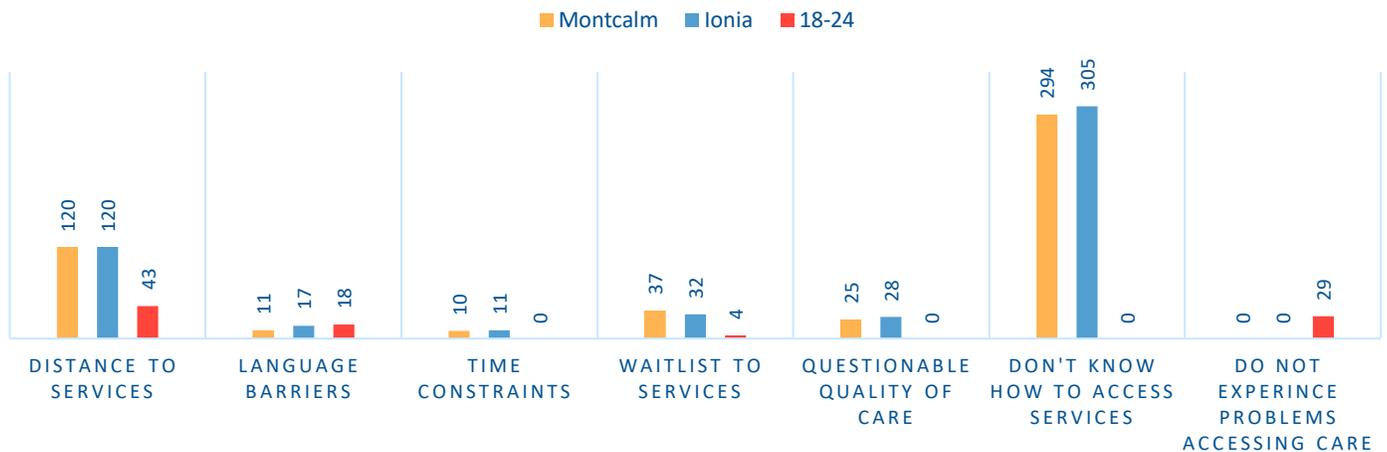
WHAT BARRIERS DO YOU THINK YOUTH ARE FACING WHEN ACCESSING HEALTH CARE AND RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA?



INSIGHTS

Young adults having the knowledge and ability to access appropriate resources is an important step towards their independence. These are the three top barriers indicated by youths **Lack of Knowledge on Accessibility and Resources, Cost and Affordability, and Time Constraints**. Understanding these barriers allows the community to work towards educating children on what is available to them and how to access local resources, providers, and services.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING COMMUNITY RESOURCES



DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE?

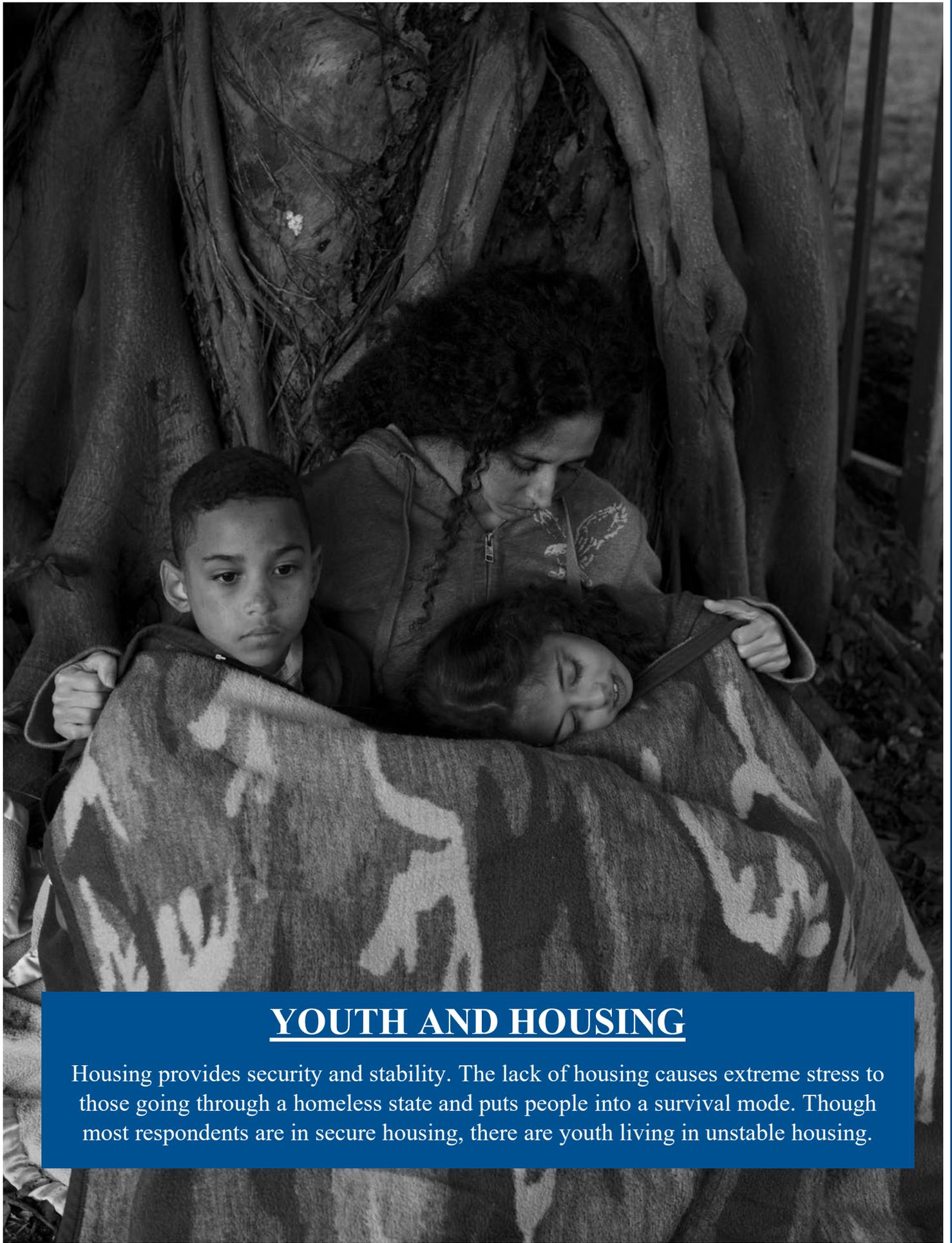


INSIGHTS

Fifty-one percent of youth ages 18-24 years old have gained insurance independently. For those who are trying to make ends meet, dropping health insurance from the monthly budget can look like major savings, due to this many young adults forgo health coverage because of their income. Without health insurance patients will wait until an illness is advanced before seeking care – at this point something that could have been easy to cure or preventable is now costly and can lead to increased financial insecurity.

18-24 YEAR OLD INSURANCE COVERAGE





YOUTH AND HOUSING

Housing provides security and stability. The lack of housing causes extreme stress to those going through a homeless state and puts people into a survival mode. Though most respondents are in secure housing, there are youth living in unstable housing.

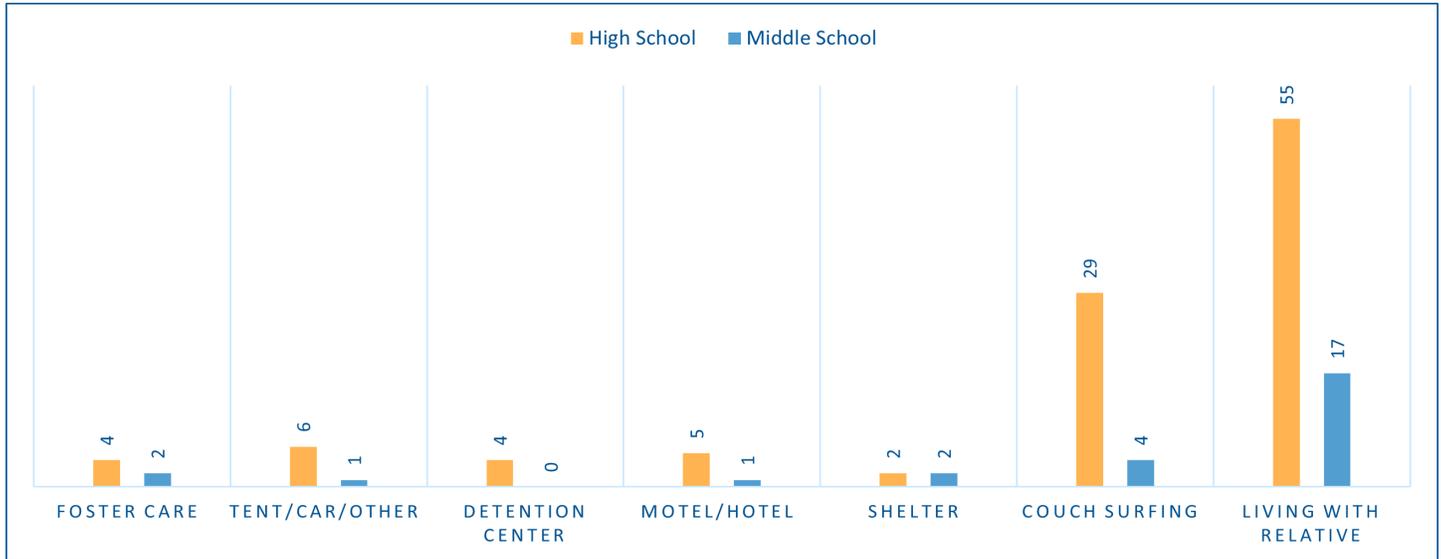
WHERE HAVE YOU SLEPT IN THE LAST 30 DAYS?



INSIGHTS

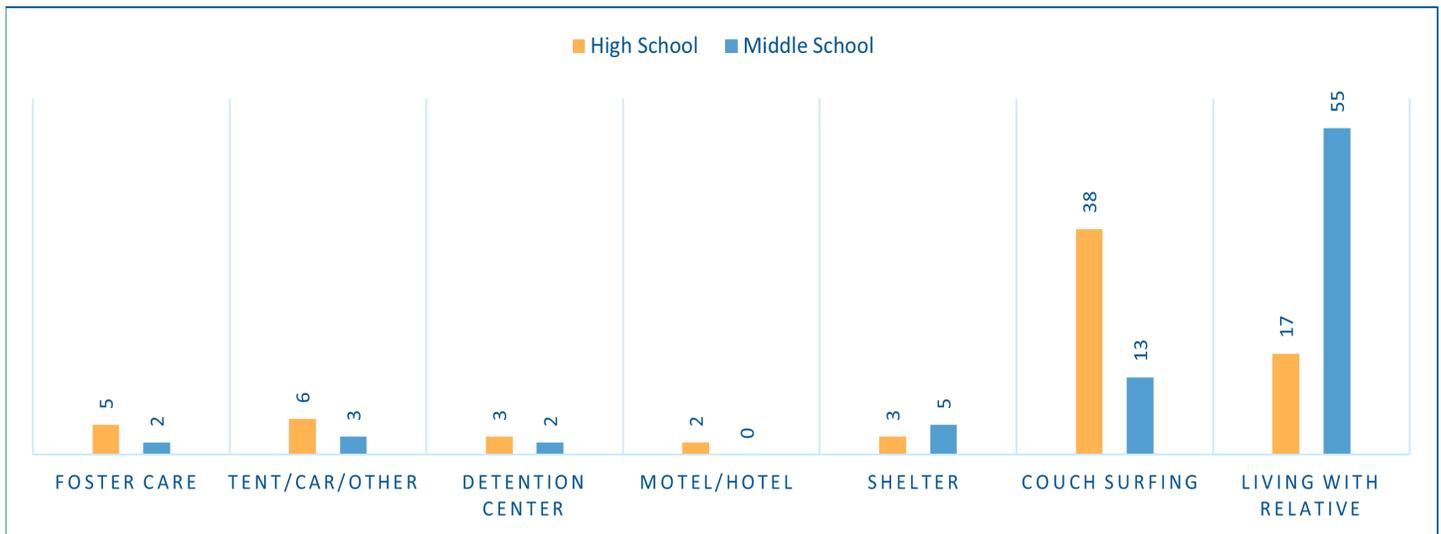
Having a home is the foundation of financial stability. The relatively high cost of renting or owning a home can be a financial burden for many households. With most of a household's income going towards housing, ALICE Households are often forced to make difficult choices or sacrifices in other areas of their lives. This can lead to numerous consequences beyond housing, for an example living in substandard housing can pose health risks to both children and adults and in turn raising costs on health care.

MONTCALM COUNTY



Out of 676 Montcalm County high school respondents **541** live in stable housing with their parents, additionally out of the 304 middle school respondents **281** live with their parents.

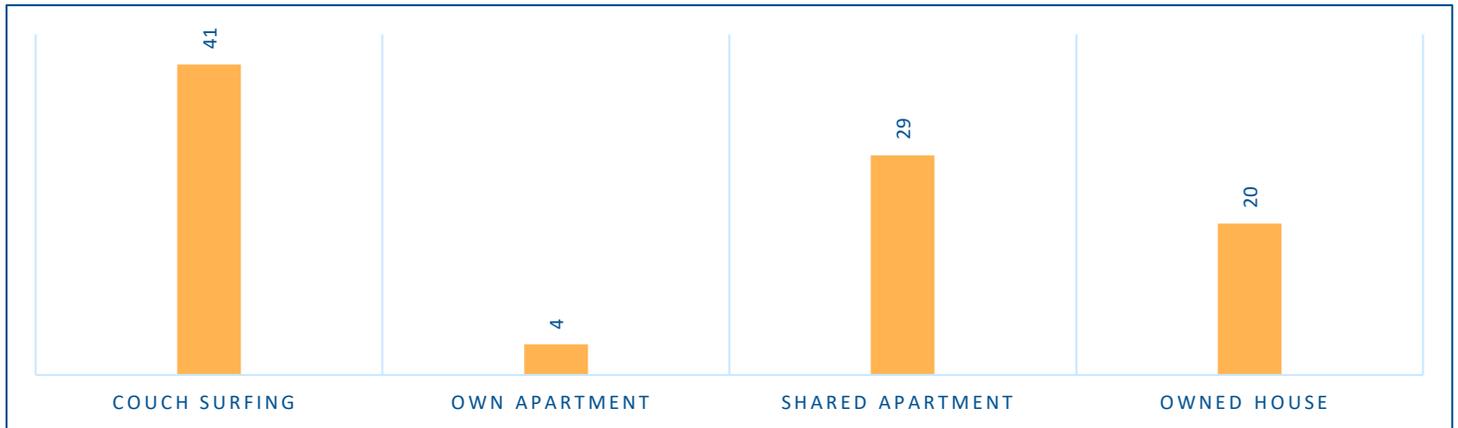
IONIA COUNTY



Out of 672 Montcalm County high school respondents **528** live in stable housing with their parents, additionally out of the 304 middle school respondents **38** live with their parents.

HOUSING CONTINUED

OLDER YOUTH 18–24 YEAR OLD’S



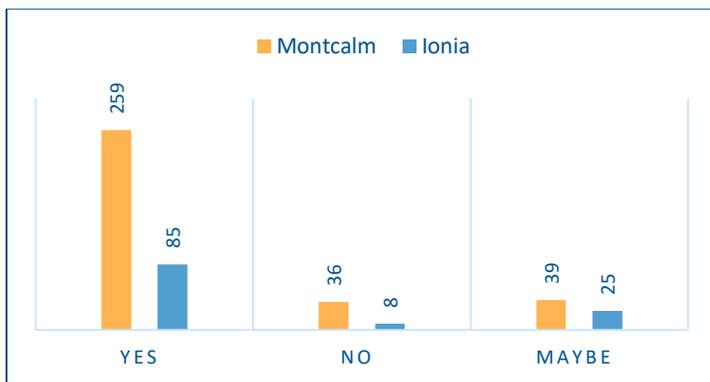
DO YOU FEEL ACCEPTED IN YOUR SEXUAL IDENTITY?



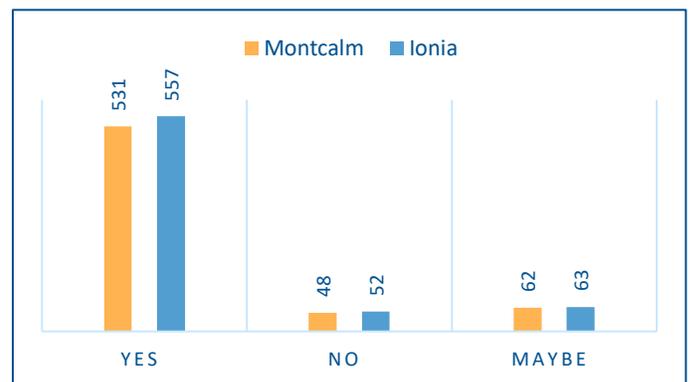
INSIGHTS

Young adults who are not supported in their sexual identity, such as youth identifying as LGBTQ+ have a 120% higher risk of experiencing some form of homelessness according to the National Network for Youth (Bardine, 2021). In addition to being at a higher rate for homelessness, unaccepted LGBTQ+ youth are at high risk for family rejection, physical assaults, and sexual exploitation in shelters and on the streets.

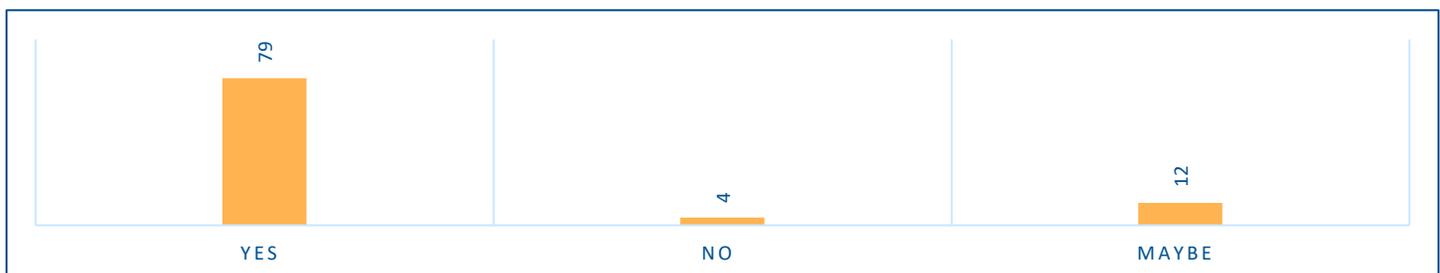
MIDDLE SCHOOL



HIGH SCHOOL



OLDER YOUTH 18-24-YEAR-OLD





YOUTH HOMELIFE

Children have numerous responsibilities outside of obtaining their education. An awareness to the additional stressors in their lives help bridge the gap of understanding of how much a young person is independently going through outside of a classroom.

WHO LIVES WITH YOU?



INSIGHTS

The family structure is changing, the number of married couples has declined and the number of single parent families has increased. Coupled with the economic inflation a single parent income often is not sustainable and is most likely to be an ALICE Household. Single parent households often rely heavily on local and government resources to ensure that they can make ends meet.

MONTCALM COUNTY

LIVING WITH	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
Siblings	7	10
Nonrelated Adult	3	6
Other Relatives	9	15
Parent + Stepparent + Sibling	85	84
Parent + Stepparent	5	56
Parents + Siblings	234	369
Parents	45	60
Single Parent + Siblings	35	74
Single Parent	34	48

IONIA COUNTY

LIVING WITH	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
Siblings	3	15
Nonrelated Adult	6	8
Other Relatives	6	24
Parent + Stepparent + Sibling	36	111
Parent + Stepparent	17	28
Parents + Siblings	192	376
Parents	24	44
Single Parent + Siblings	52	72
Single Parent	9	40

DO YOU HELP TAKE CARE OF ANYONE AT HOME?



INSIGHTS

With more than sixty-five percent of children under age six living in families where all available parents are working, having access to quality, affordable childcare is essential. This responsibility of additional childcare often falls on the shoulders of older siblings. In addition to childcare, as aging in place continues to become the norm for older populations, those living with families most likely fall into an ALICE Household.

MONTCALM COUNTY

Who Youth Take Care Of	Middle School	High School
Siblings	96	176
Parent	10	15
Grandparent	7	10
My Child	1	5
Other Relative	3	17
Nonrelated Individual	4	5
More Than One Individual	33	55
Does Not Take Care of Anyone	187	376

IONIA COUNTY

Who Youth Take Care Of	Middle School	High School
Siblings	28	183
Parent	5	28
Grandparent	2	7
My Child	0	2
Other Relative	4	7
Nonrelated Individual	0	10
More Than One Individual	14	68
Does Not Take Care of Anyone	65	368

OLDER YOUTH 18–24 YEAR OLD'S

Who Youth Take Care Of	18-24 Year Old's
Siblings	12
Parent	6
Grandparent	4
My Child	31
Other Relative	6
More Than One Individual	2
Does Not Take Care of Anyone	34

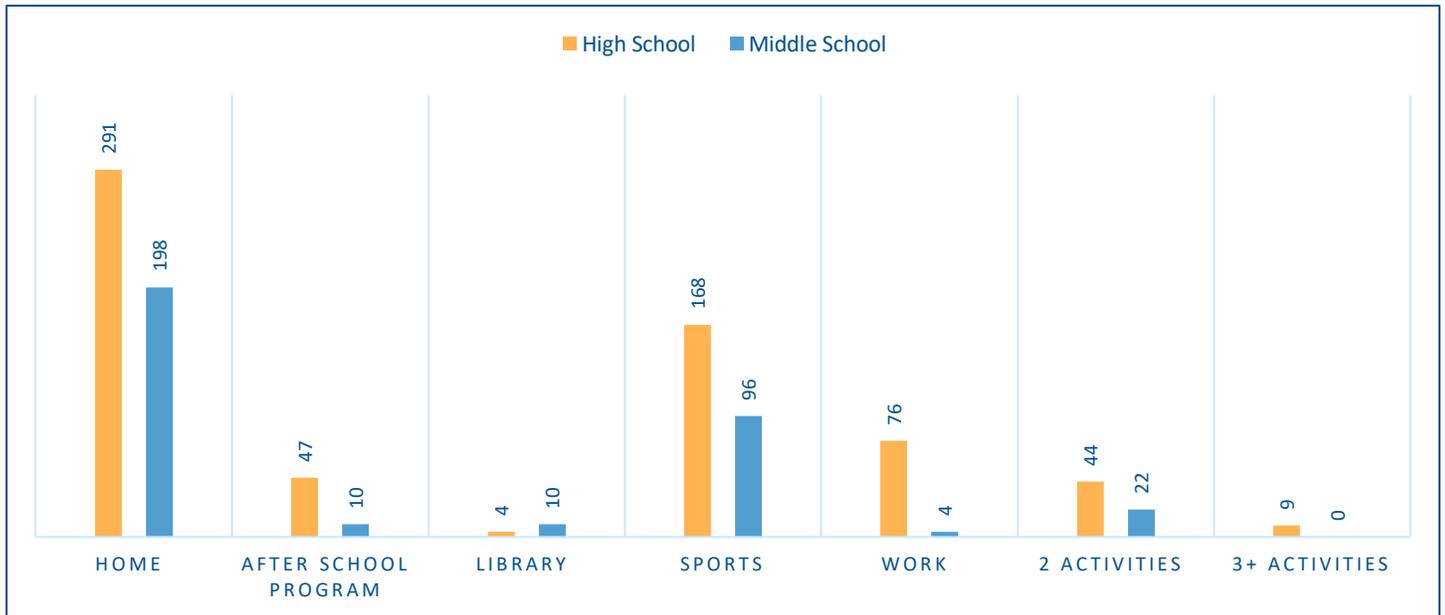
WHERE DO YOU GO AFTER SCHOOL?



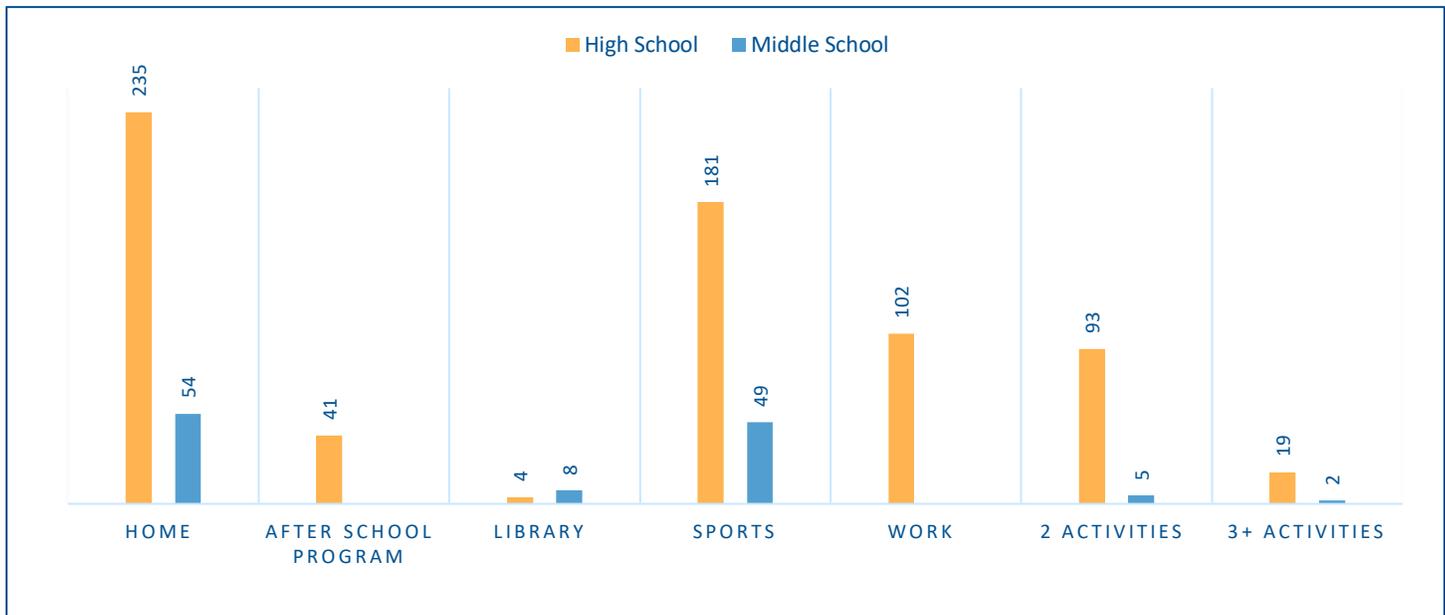
INSIGHTS

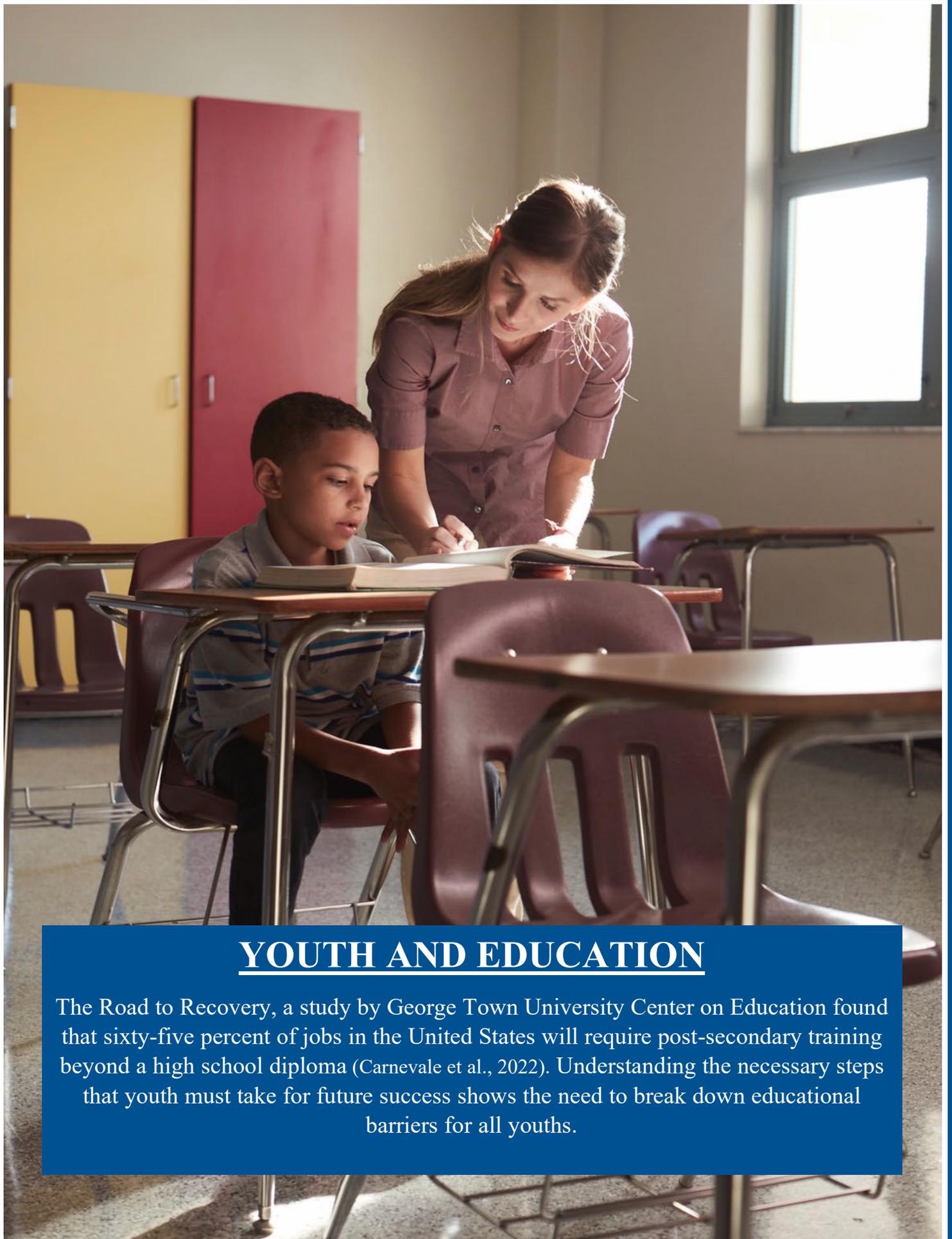
Transportation challenges are far-reaching as they can lead to tardiness or absenteeism, missed appointments, limited childcare and support. ALICE Households are regularly limited to one vehicle. With limited options for public transportation, especially in rural areas, youths can miss out on opportunities within the community.

MONTCALM COUNTY



IONIA COUNTY





YOUTH AND EDUCATION

The Road to Recovery, a study by George Town University Center on Education found that sixty-five percent of jobs in the United States will require post-secondary training beyond a high school diploma (Carnevale et al., 2022). Understanding the necessary steps that youth must take for future success shows the need to break down educational barriers for all youths.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

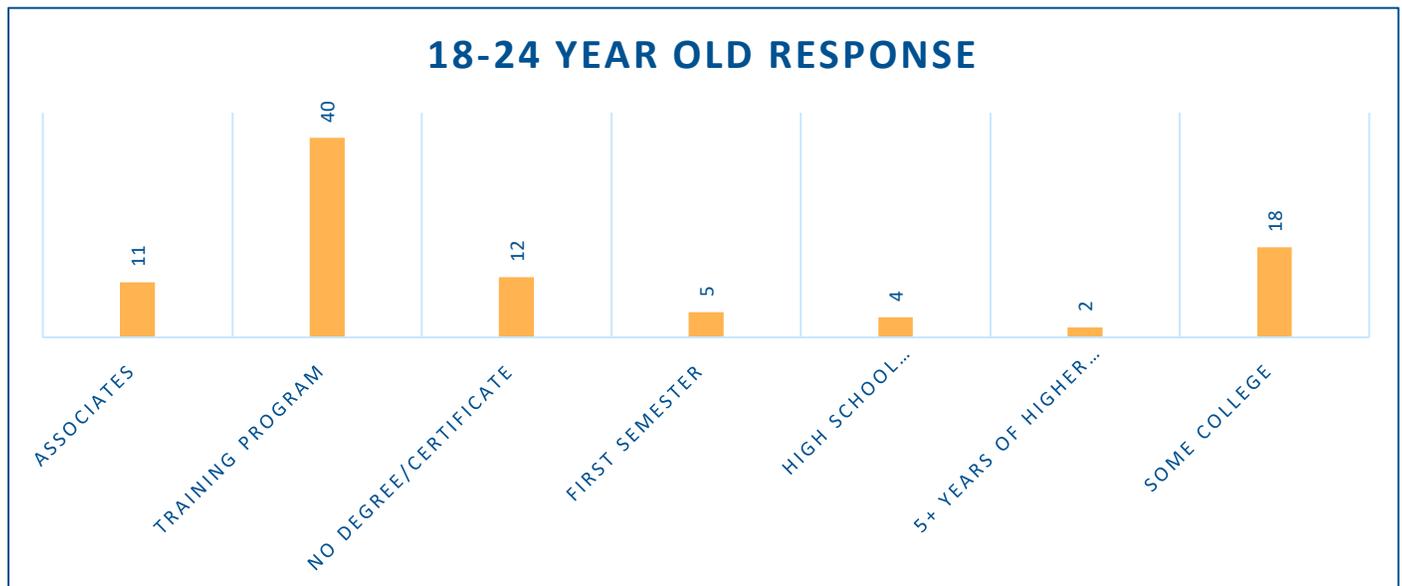


INSIGHTS

Recent studies have shown that post-secondary education can be a determining factor in a person's life. The ALICE: The Consequences of Insufficient Household Income shares that twenty-two percent of 25–32-year old's with only a high school degree were in poverty compared to only six percent of those who are college educated.

Post-Secondary Interest	Montcalm County	Ionia County
4 Year College/University	245	263
Community College	51	44
Emergency Services	22	14
Joining the Workforce	18	18
Military	29	38
Stay at Home Parent	9	8
Trade Program	78	77
Undecided	190	209

WHAT IS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION YOU HAVE RECEIVED?



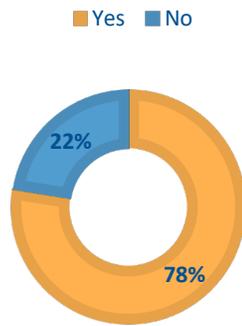
DO YOU FEEL PREPARED FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?



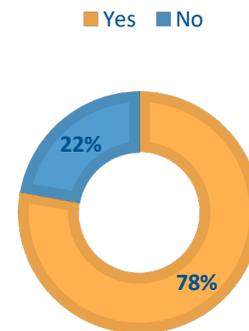
INSIGHTS

According to the 2019 National Student Clearing House report one-third of individuals who enter post-secondary education do not complete their degree. This means that those who attended college but did not finish are stuck paying for loans without the benefits of the degree. The additional expense of paying back college loans can put a family within the ALICE Threshold.

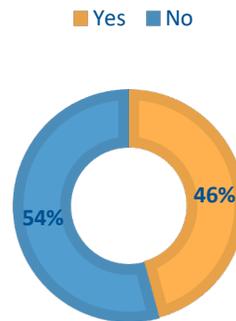
MONTCALM COUNTY



IONIA COUNTY



OLDER YOUTH



Why do you feel unprepared for life after high school?

“I didn’t know how to be financially independent.”—Anonymous, 20

“I couldn’t take a personal finance class in high school. I am currently enrolled at MCC, and I have no idea how the world works- how to purchase a car or a house, get a loan, negotiate for a raise at a job, or anything.” -Montcalm Community College Student, 19

“Being taught how to do everyday essentials like taxes, cooking, bills, mortgages.”
—Central Montcalm Student, 17

“Classes on things you need to know, like getting a job, getting a house, making a resume, some things that would be beneficial, how to change a tire, etc.”
—Saranac Student, 16



MIDDLE SCHOOL VOICES

IF YOU HAD A MILLION DOLLARS, WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO BETTER THE LIFE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

“Donate to school to get better supplies and better teaching opportunities. Donate to hospitals and other businesses that help our community.” -Greenville, 12

“Donate a portion to homeless or people in poverty, send money to support teen mothers and fathers working to keep their baby safe through these times, and use some money for my physical/mental health.” -Carson City-Crystal, 13

“I would probably pay teachers more so they would be more enthusiastic about wanting to go to work and teach kids the right things.” -Greenville, 13

“I would donate and fund sport activities because young people struggle with obesity. This will help them lead healthier and happy lives in the futures.”
-Vestaburg, 12

“I would make sure that they all have a safe place to go to, and safe rides.” -Saranac, 12

“I would put a mental health room in schools for students who need it.” -
Greenville, 13

“A better accommodation for students with extreme mental health issues; Not just an extension on some work, more care to make sure we understand things going on. School is supposed to feel like a safe space where many kids go to get away from home and feel okay for a while.” -Greenville, 13

“Build up community services and safe places for kids to go that is free.”
-Vestaburg, 11

“I would make sure that all kids have a safe place to live.” -Greenville, 14

WHAT CAN ADULTS DO TO MAKE YOU FEEL SUPPORTED?

“They can be more understanding with students.” -Vestaburg, 13

“I feel most supported when my teacher and I have Google Meets.” -Saranac, 13

“Support you in what you want to be, help stop the bullying, just try, and help.”
- Vestaburg, 12

“I would love for students to have better access to professional counseling, such as school counselors, and that mental health was taken into consideration.” -Saranac, 12

“Give us one-on-one conversations and supports.” -Greenville, 11

“Give encouragement to the students by saying good luck before a test.” -Greenville, 11

“Checking on us from time to time and ask us how our day is going.” -Saranac, 13

“Check in more with every kid.”
-Greenville, 14

“Bring awareness/assembly and/or classroom discussions on problems we experience.”
-Carson City – Crystal, 13

“To make me and my peers feel more supported, adults could check in with students more often and be gentler with assignments.”
– Greenville, 13

HIGH SCHOOL VOICES

What needs to happen in the next 10 years for you to be thriving and living the life of your dreams?

"I need a stable income to secure housing, this will provide me roots to happiness."
- Greenville, 16

"Get accepted into college and find a satisfying career." – Lakewood, 15

"Living in a secure and safe house would be a major life improvement."
-Carson-City Crystal, 15

"To be successful in my life I need stable housing and a good paying job."
-Vestaburg, 17

"Being able to live independently is success to me." -Ionia, 16

"To be successful in my life I need stable housing and a good paying job."
-Vestaburg, 17

"I need a stable income to secure housing, this will provide me roots to happiness."
– Greenville, 16

"A house that is mine would lead me to feeling successful." -Greenville, 15

"Success looks like stable housing and working." -Ionia, 18

"I need a place to live to provide me stability for my next steps." – Ionia, 17

"Living in a stable home would create a foundation of success"
-Carson-City Crystal, 15

"Having a place to live." -Carson-City Crystal, 17

"Having the cost of housing go down, so that I can build my life" -Greenville, 18

"Working hard and having money for school, car loans, etc." -Central Montcalm, 14

"We need to improve the drug and alcohol prevention programs. These kids need to have the knowledge and be able to be aware of the risks behind vaping, smoking, drinking, and other forms of drug use." -Ionia, 17

"Trying the best that I can to reach my goals and stay focused." -Lakewood, 17

"To have more experience of just living live and basic life skills teens aren't taught in schools." -Ionia, 16

"To have money to do the things I want to do. Buy a house. Start a family. Get a job." -Central Montcalm, 15

"To be graduated and being financially stable." -Greenville, 14

"The students in the school need to be happier mentally and physically and to have the right to change their future for the best." -Vestaburg, 15

"Taking better care of myself and taking the time to study."
–Carson City – Crystal, 16

How can adults make you feel more supported?

“Give us the option to take our high school career in our own hands” -Ionia, 16

“Take deep breaths with me.” -Greenville, 14

“Support and help with our life decisions and being more supportive and upbeat.”
-Central Montcalm, 16

“Understand how I'm feeling and/or what I'm going through at the moment.” -Lakewood, 18

“Encouragement” -Carson-City Crystal, 17

“Show support wherever they can and let me know that they're doing good.” -Vestaburg, 14

“Listen to the kids more, not try to tell kids that they will get better eventually.”
-Carson-City Crystal, 17

“Respect our sexual identities.” -Greenville, 17

“Be more aware of their surroundings, be more involved in the lives of their kids to understand what's going on based on our point of view. It wouldn't hurt to be stricter.” -Ionia, 17

“Tell kids that it is okay to speak with someone and that it is not weird.”
-Lakewood, 14

“Listen to our problems and cut a little slack (on some occasions).” -Lakewood, 16

“Talk us through problems.” -Ionia, 15

“Better communication” Vestaburg, 15

“Ask about my pronouns.” -Greenville 15

“Support students more and understand they have life outside of school.”
-Portland, 17

What would make you feel more prepared for life after high school?

“I'm not really sure how everything works and it's kind of scary to think about life outside of school.” -Greenville, 15

“I want to know how to apply for college, I want to be able to explore my career options and take classes on my interests as well as learn taxes.” -Greenville, 17

“I don't really know how to do finances and basically live as an adult and be independent”
-Ionia, 16

“You guys teach things that we aren't going to remember at all. It would be more helpful if we knew how to change tires, do taxes, or take care of ourselves.” -Ionia, 16

“More support for my mental health and less homework because I have such a busy life as is and I feel so exhausted by the end of every single day because I don't get a break anytime between 5am-9pm because I have to do so much for school, and I have a lot of responsibilities at home.” -Central Montcalm, 17

“Finding the resources to graduate and know how to live independently and not to know the quadratic equation.” -
Lakewood, 15

“More classes based on life skills, instead of skills that won't be used much.”
-Greenville, 16

OLDER YOUTH VOICES

Is there anything you would like to share regarding your mental health, when considering the high stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?

“Motivation not where it used to be. Developed some depression during the pandemic.” -Anonymous 24

“I have many more panic and anxiety attacks when I would usually have none mostly about having to live with my parents but also feeling alone.” – Anonymous 18

“My depression become at an all-time high and I still haven’t managed to get back to where I was pre-COVID.”-Anonymous 20

“I have nowhere to live currently. Been living out of my car while sleeping in my parent’s kitchen on a cot. Makes me want to quit school so I can work more hours and get a place. Everywhere is so expensive to rent.”
– Anonymous 22

“I truly do thrive better when at home doing complete online work however, I think it is good I am getting out of the house.”
– Anonymous 19

What is one major problem individuals between the ages of 18-24 are facing?

“Financial difficulties.” -MCC Student, 24

“Cost of living while trying to attend school” -MCC Student, 24

“Financial crisis.” -MCC Student, 19

“Not having flexible schedules to work and go to school full time.”
-MCC Student, 20

“Affordable living wages. Can’t afford bills/rent/insurance with the wages I make.”-MCC Student, 23

“Debt especially an increasing debt with school and childcare.” -MCC Student, 20

“Low wages and high prices (for housing, college, essentials, etc.)” -
MCC Student, 19

“Figuring out how to take the next steps into adulthood” – Anonymous 18

“Not being paid a livable wage, no cost-of-living increases, the expensive housing market.” – Anonymous, 23

What can be done to make you feel more supported by your community?

“Better options for single mothers and childcare” -MCC Student, 23

“Anything would help. Love the food source, very handy. More help like that would be appreciated.” -MCC Student, 20

“Have more activities related to our age group.” -Anonymous. 19

“Just having someone to talk to.”
-Anonymous, 23

“More evening classes available to accommodate my full-time work schedule.”
-MCC Student, 22

“Having more certificates like lineman work and project management closer to the area.”
– Anonymous, 23

“More opportunities for college financial assistance.” -MCC Student, 22

“Have professors understand that mental health can prevent students from turning in assignments, participating actively in class, or wanting to speak in front of the class.”
-MCC Student, 18

“Having a mental health professional regularly available on campus would benefit lots of students.” -MCC Student, 20

Why did you not feel prepared for life after high school?

“Not enough resources and money.”
-MCC Student, 18

“When I graduated high school, I was not financially stable enough to attend college nor did I have support.” -Anonymous 23

“Was not sure what to expect, and unaware of how to be a good student after high school” -MCC Student, 21

“I wasn’t prepared for the stress of adult life.” -Anonymous, 24

“College is so expensive... I didn’t know.”
-MCC Student, 23

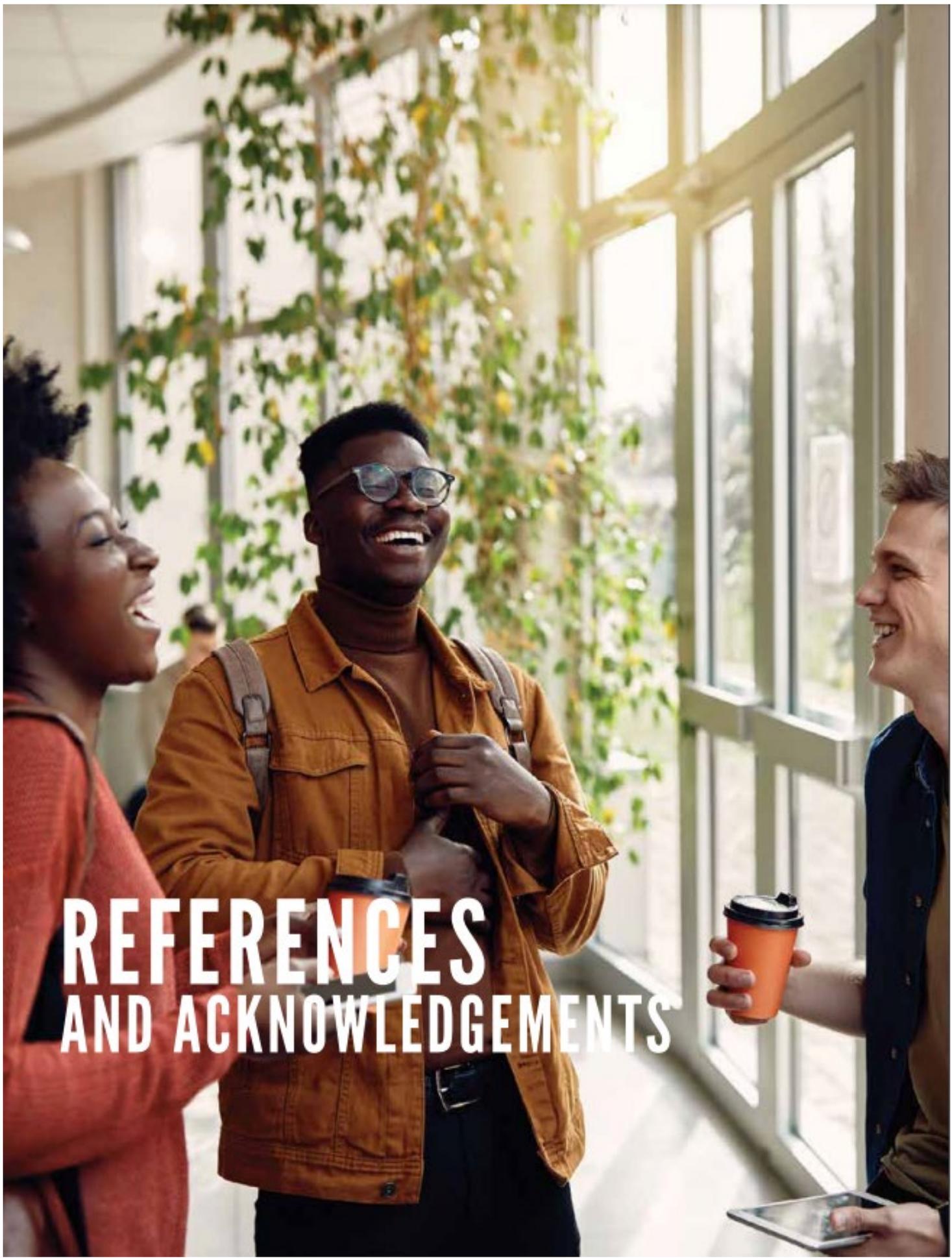
“No talked to me about what the road looked like after.” -MCC Student, 22

“There was not adequate support, and a clear path provided to attend college debt free.” - MCC Student, 22

“No one supported my dreams, and I didn’t think I could be successful.”
-Anonymous, 24

“The debt of school.” -MCC Student, 24

“Was unsure of what to expect in adulthood.” -MCC Student 21



REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SURVEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

MIDDLE SCHOOL QUESTIONS

1. What school do you go to?
2. How old are you?
3. What major problem do students face in your school?
4. What can adults do to make you feel more supported?
5. Do you feel accepted by your peers in your sexual identity?
6. Which of the following best represents your racial identity?
7. Where have you slept in the last 30 days?
8. Who lives with you?
9. What do you think is the MOST important health issue in your school?
10. What is the most common drug being used in your school?
11. Where do you go after school?
12. Do you help take care of anyone in your family after school or at home?
13. What are the top 2 health risks students are facing in your school?
14. If you had a million dollars, what would you do to better the future of young people in your community?

HIGH SCHOOL QUESTIONS

1. What school do you go to?
2. How old are you?
3. What major problem do students face in your school?
4. What can adults do to make you feel more supported?
5. Do you feel ready to begin life after graduating high school? If "no", what would make you feel more prepared?
6. If you answered No above, please provide your answer for 'what would make you feel more prepared' here
7. Do you feel accepted by your peers in your sexual identity?
8. Which of the following best represents your racial identity?
9. Where have you slept in the last 30 days?
10. Who lives with you?
11. What behavior has the worst effect on the health of teens in your school?
12. What is the most common drug being used in your school?
13. Where do you go after school?
14. Do you help take care of anyone in your family after school or at home?
15. What are your plans after graduating high school?
16. What are the top 2 health risks students are facing in your school?
17. What barriers do you think youth might or are facing in accessing health care and community services in your area?
18. What needs to happen in the next 10 years for you to be living the life of your dreams?

18-24-YEAR-OLD QUESTIONS

1. How old are you?
2. What is the highest level of education you have received?
3. Do you currently or have you attended Montcalm Community College?
4. What do you believe is one major problem individuals between the ages of 18-24 are facing?
5. What can be done to make you feel more supported by college staff and/or your community?
6. Did you feel prepared to begin attending college or post-secondary training after graduating high school?
7. If you answered 'no' to the previous questions, please explain why
8. What is a barrier you experience within your college campus or your community?
9. Do you feel accepted by your peers in your sexual identity?
10. Which of the following best represents your racial identity?
11. Where have you slept in the last 30 days
12. What are the 2 most important health issues in your social circle (friends and family)?
13. What is the most common drug being used by your classmates, friends, or family members?
14. Do you help take care of anyone in your family when not in class or working?
15. What barriers do you, your friends, and family face in accessing health care and community services in your area?
16. Do you have access to health insurance?
17. How has your mental health been in the last 30 days?
18. Is there anything you would like to share regarding your mental health, when considering the high stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?



END NOTES

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