



aurora
substance abuse
prevention coalition

Youth Substance Abuse Profile

Funding

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COLORADO
Office of Behavioral Health
Department of Human Services



AURORA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

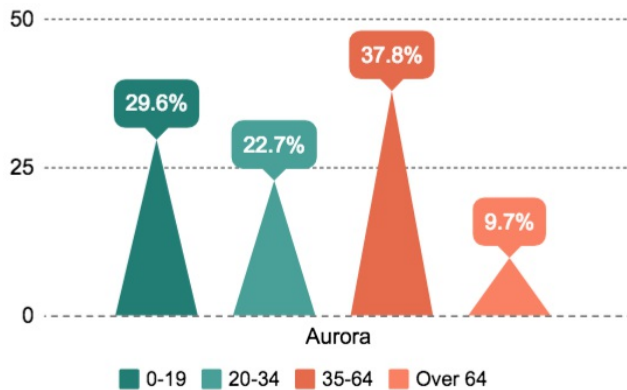
Focus

The Strategic Prevention Framework - Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) discretionary grant was designed to address three basic issues: 1) underage drinking among persons aged 12 to 20; 2) prescription drug misuse and abuse among persons aged 12 to 25; 3) and underage marijuana use among persons aged 12-20. The grant asks that grantees design a community level or environmental prevention approach grounded in the five steps of the strategic prevention framework and guided by a community coalition. The use of environmental strategies to achieve population-based outcomes is based on the premise that changes at the community level will, over time, lead to measurable changes at the state level.

As a precursor to creating an appropriate environmental strategy, this profile is focused on investigating levels of use regarding alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs among young residents who live in the catchment area of Aurora Public Schools within Arapahoe County, as well as relevant risk and protective factors.

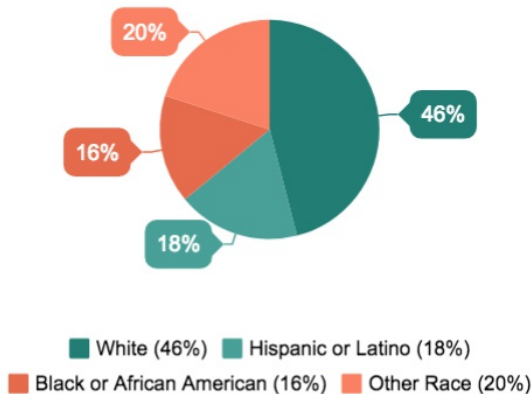
Demographics

Age

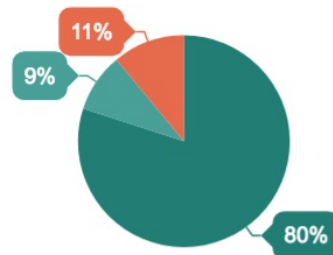


Youth make up 30% of Aurora's residents. Youth make up a slightly higher percentage of Aurora's population than other metro area cities.

Ethnicity and Origin



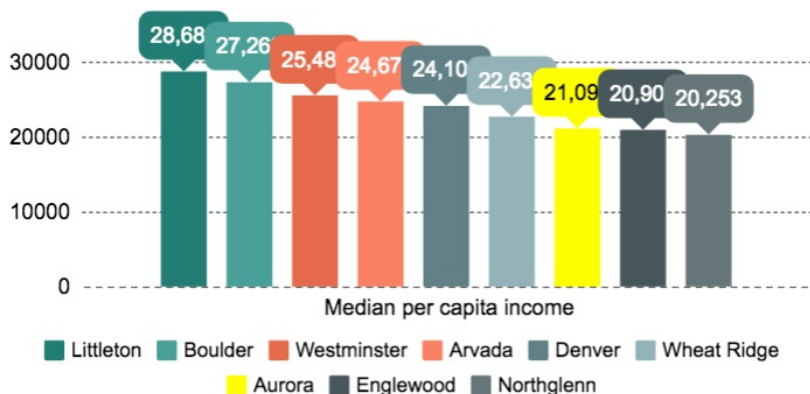
Aurora is a majority minority city.



Aurora has a large percentage of foreign born residents, particularly from Mexico.

Born in US (80%)
Born in Mexico (9%)
Born in another country (11%)

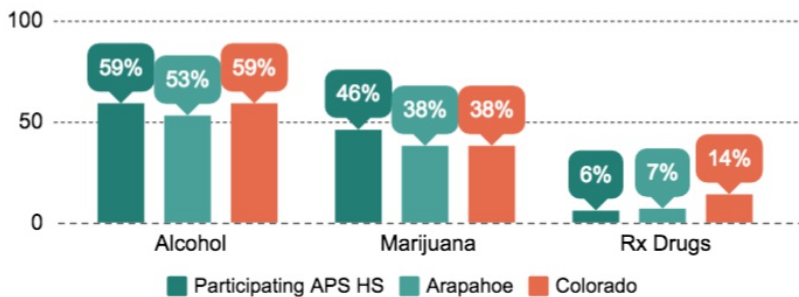
Income



Residents of Aurora earn less than residents in other metro area cities. This is considerably less than the average income across the state (\$30,151) and the country (\$27,334).

Consumption

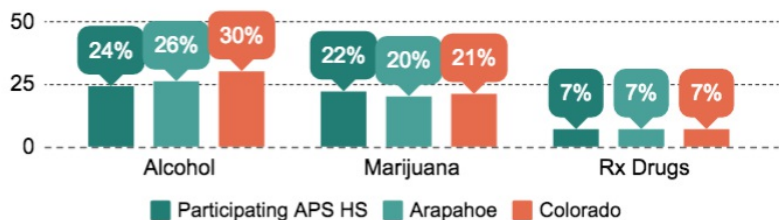
Lifetime use



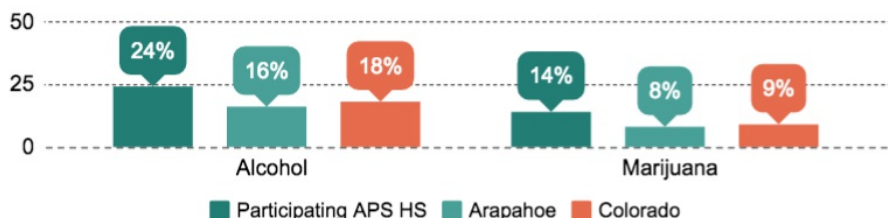
Youth generally use alcohol more than marijuana and use marijuana more than using prescription drugs without a prescription. Students in Aurora may be using alcohol at rates similar to state averages, but more Aurora students appear to be using marijuana and less appear to be misusing prescription drugs when compared to state averages.

Past 30 day use

More students reported recently using alcohol and marijuana than using prescription drugs without a prescription.



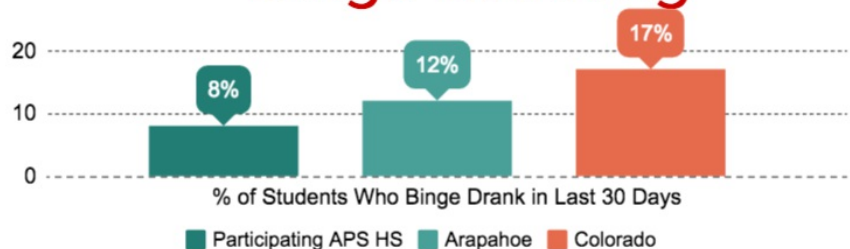
Used before 13



A higher percentage of students at the participating APS high school reported first using alcohol and marijuana before the age of 13 than students across the county and across the state.

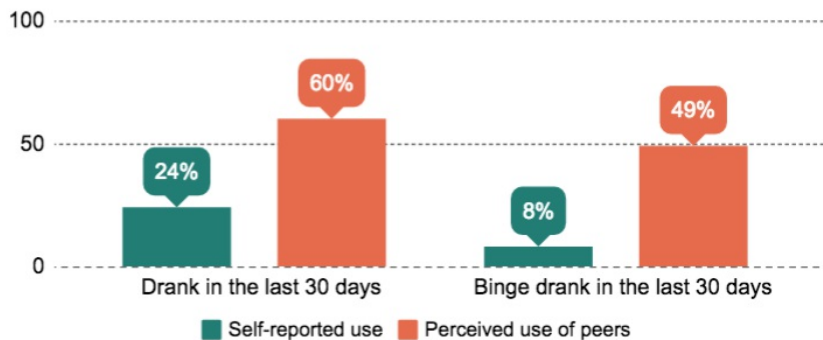
Binge drinking is less common in Aurora than in Arapahoe County or the rest of Colorado.

Binge Drinking



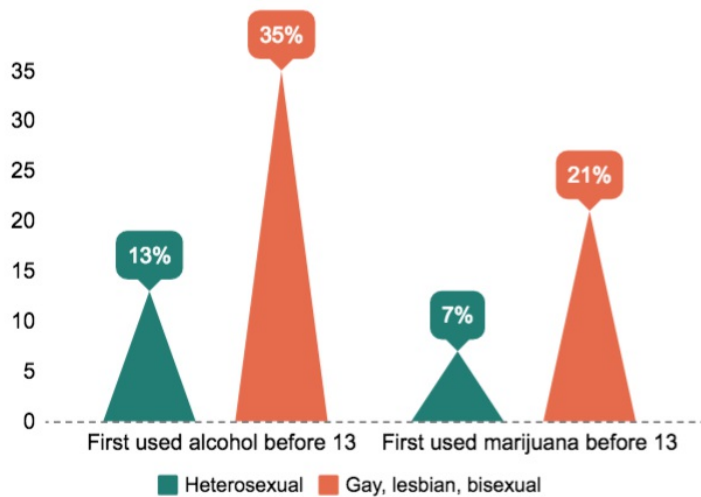
Consumption

Reported Use vs. Perceived Use



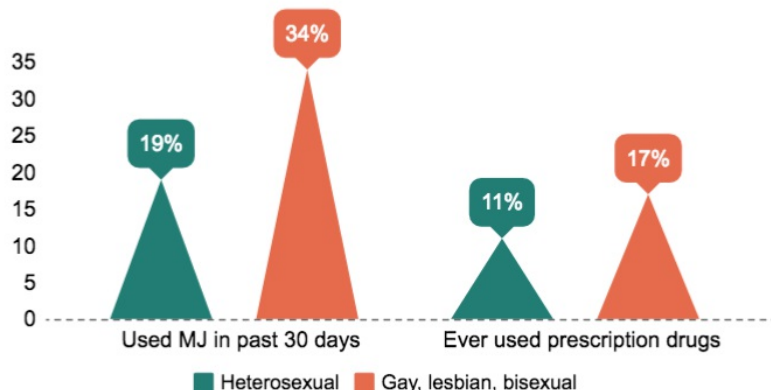
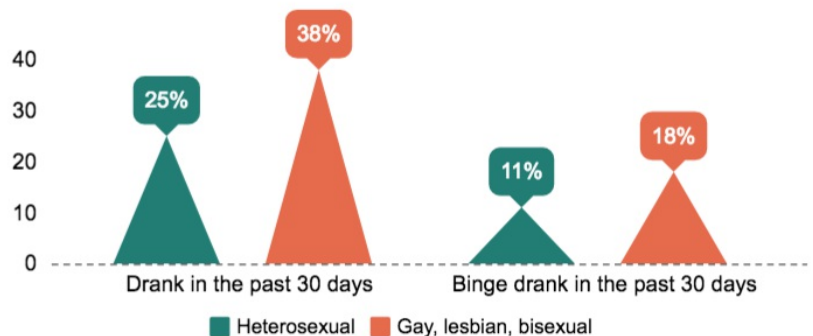
Within the participating APS high school there was a large difference in the percentage of students that reported drinking and the percentage of students that felt a "typical student" drank in the past 30 days.

by Sexual Orientation



There were wide consumption disparities among gay and straight youth in Arapahoe County. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth were more likely to use alcohol and marijuana before turning 13.

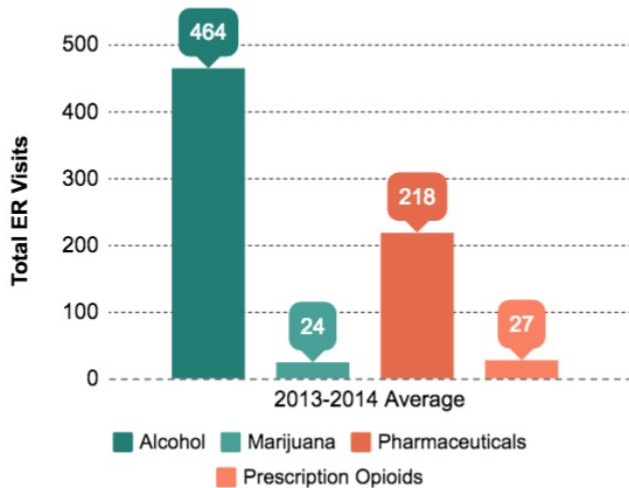
Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth were more likely to have drank in the past 30 days and more likely to have binge drank as well.



Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth were more likely to use marijuana and to misuse prescription drugs than their straight peers.

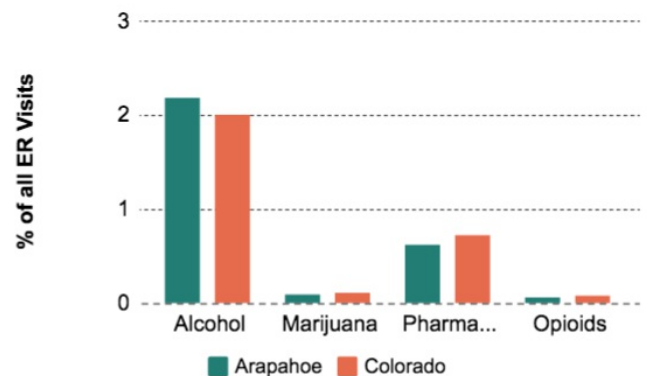
Consequences

ER Visits

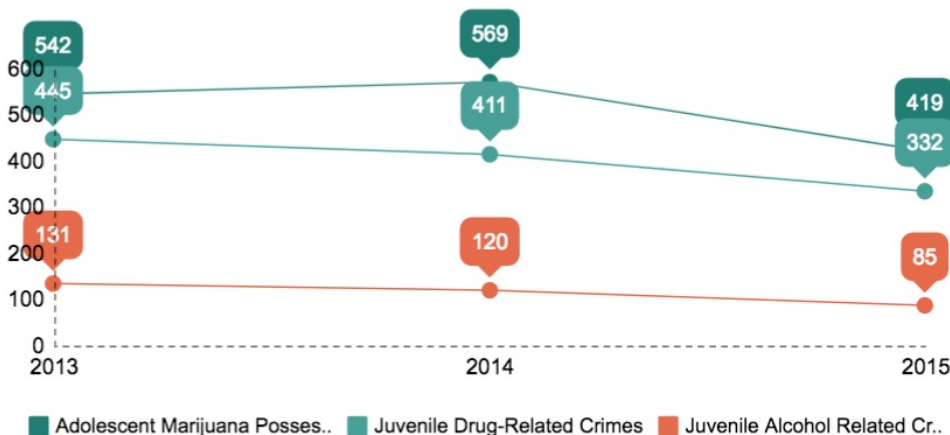


Most substance related ER visits are due to alcohol and pharmaceuticals.

The percentage of drug related ER visits among youth in Arapahoe County is similar to the state average.



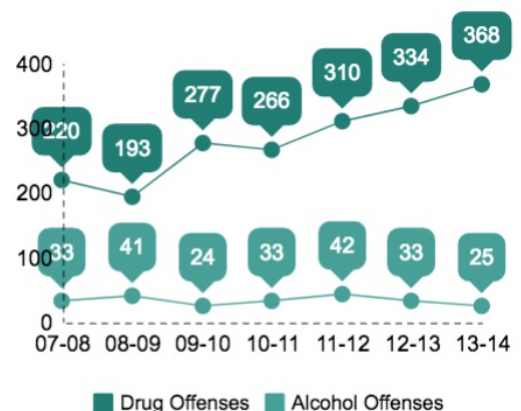
Crime



Marijuana related crime is more common than alcohol related crime. Crime rates have fallen in recent years.

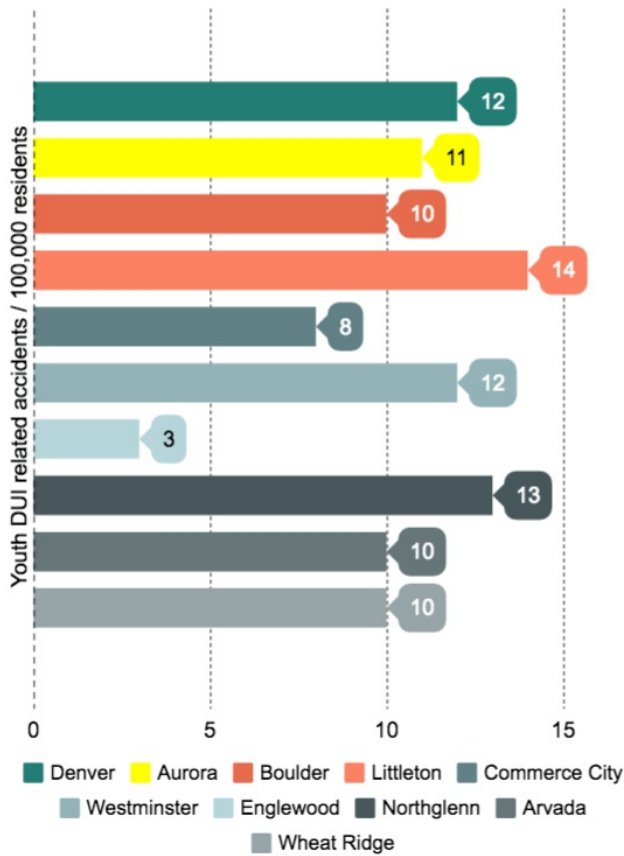
APS Discipline

Drug offenses are more common than alcohol offenses in Aurora Public Schools. Drug offenses have become more common in recent years, while the number of alcohol offenses has stayed the same.



Consequences

DUI Related Car Accidents

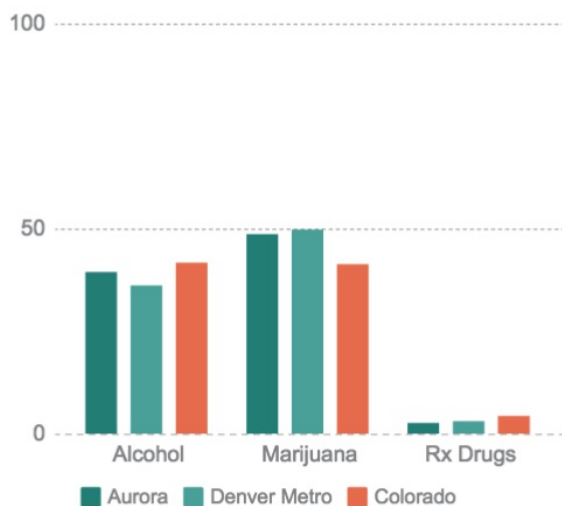


In 2014 Aurora had an average number of DUI related accidents involving individuals under 21, compared to the rest of the Denver metro area. The vast majority of these accidents involved alcohol.

Consequences

Drug and Alcohol Treatment

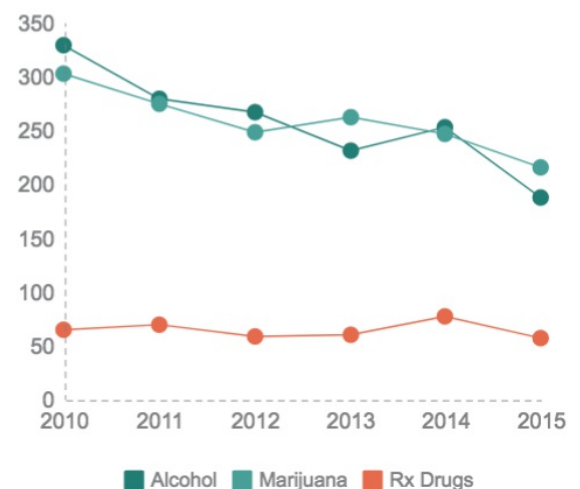
Primary Substances Leading to Treatment



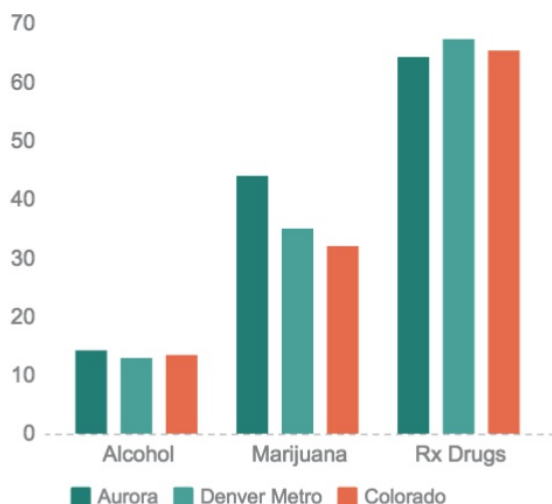
Alcohol and marijuana are the primary substance that youth seek treatment for. Marijuana is related to an even higher percentage of treatment cases in Aurora and the metro region.

The number of youth seeking treatment has fallen over recent years. This is particularly true of cases involving alcohol and marijuana. This trend is similar to state-wide trends.

Primary Substances Over Time in Aurora



Level of Dependence at Admission



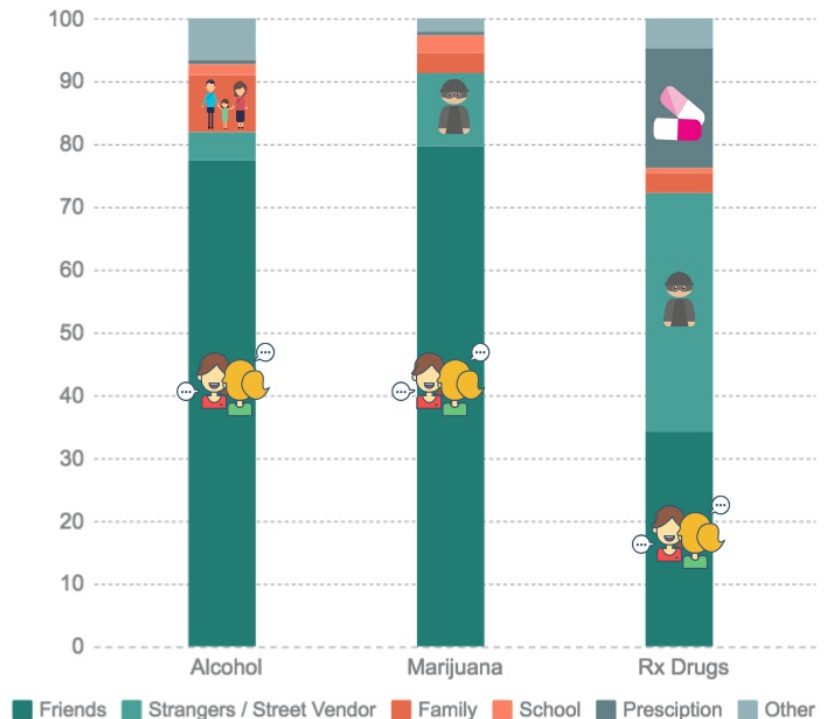
Youth entering treatment for prescription drugs are described as being much more dependent than those entering treatment for marijuana and alcohol. Youth from Aurora entering treatment for marijuana are more dependent than those in other parts of Colorado.

Consequences

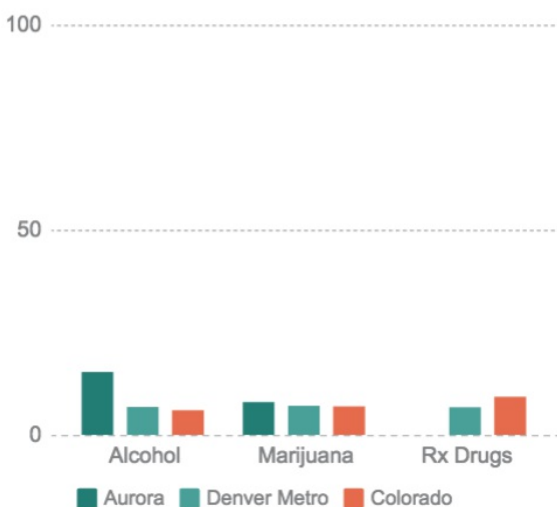
Drug and Alcohol Treatment

Source of Substance

Most youth report acquiring alcohol and marijuana from friends. Family is the next largest source of alcohol, and strangers or street vendors are the next largest source of marijuana. The two largest sources of prescription drugs are strangers and friends, while roughly one in five youth going into treatment get their prescription drugs from a personal prescription.



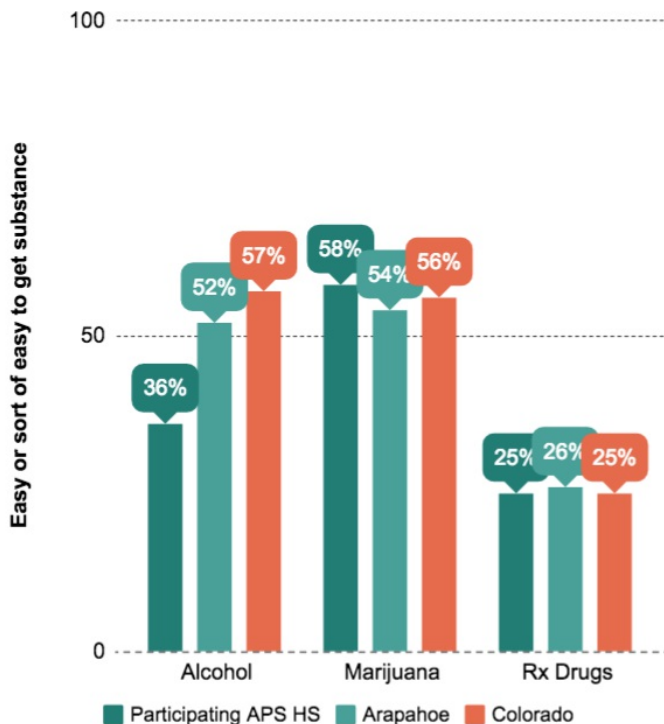
LGBTQ Status



Of youth going into treatment 6-10% identify as LGBTQ. Of Aurora youth going into treatment for alcohol and marijuana, a larger percentage identify as LGBTQ. The difference is particularly extreme among those going in for alcohol treatment.

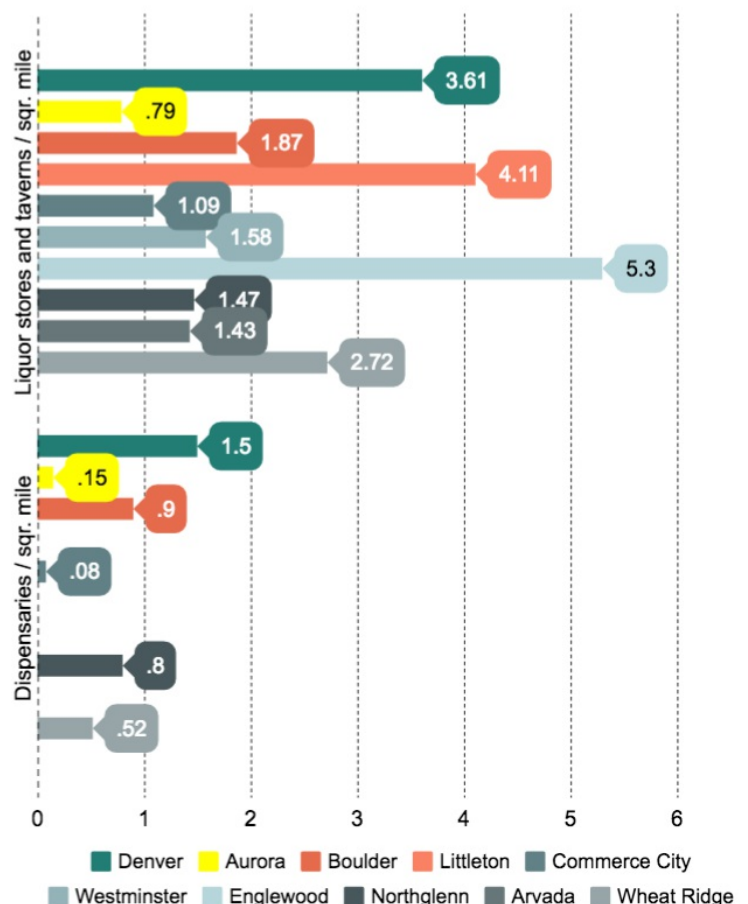
Risk Factors

Availability



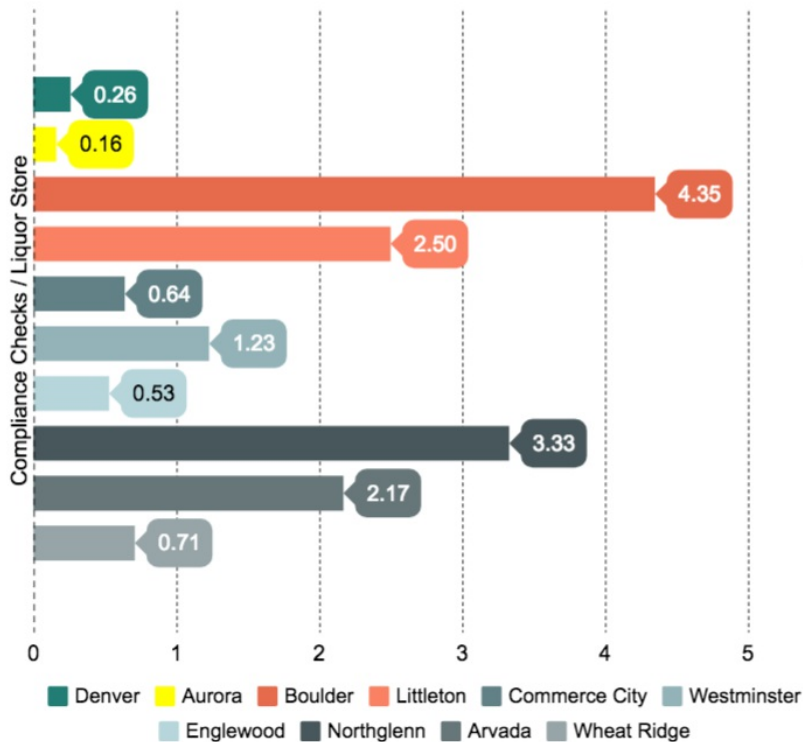
Students reported that alcohol and marijuana are much more available than prescription drugs. The availability of marijuana and prescription drugs in Aurora and Arapahoe County is similar to state averages, while alcohol may be somewhat less available to students in Aurora than other students in Colorado.

Liquor stores and taverns are more common than marijuana dispensaries. Aurora has a relatively small number of liquor stores, taverns, and marijuana dispensaries per square mile compared to other metro area cities.



Risk Factors

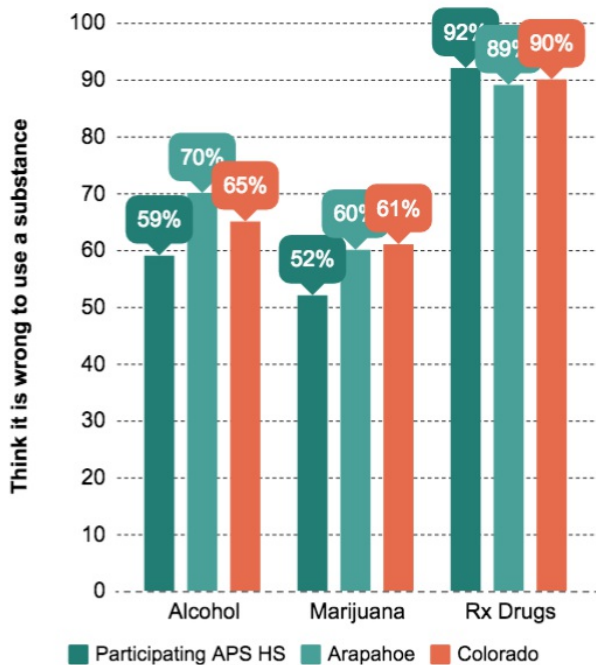
Compliance Checks



Over a two year period, Aurora had the lowest rate of compliance checks per liquor store of any metro area city. Between 2015 and 2016, only one establishment in Aurora failed their compliance check.

Risk Factors

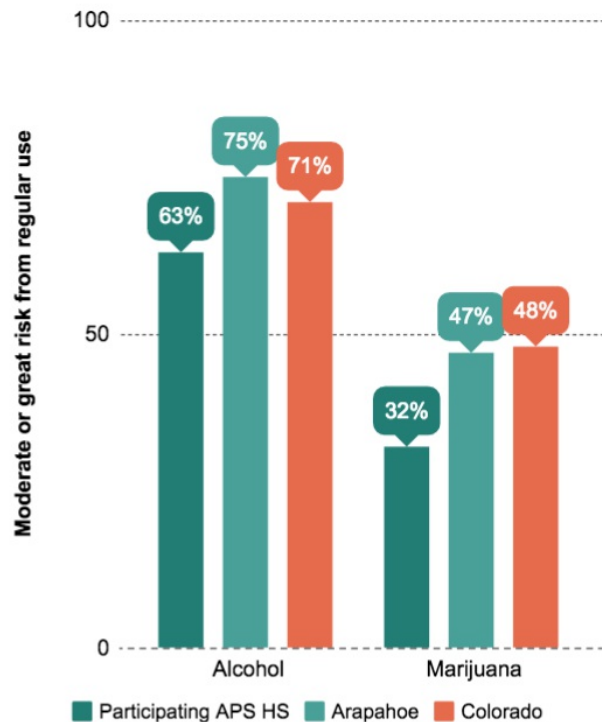
Vice



More students feel that using prescription drugs without a prescription is wrong when compared to alcohol or marijuana. Students feel that marijuana is less wrong than alcohol. Fewer students in Aurora may feel that using alcohol and marijuana is wrong compared to their peers in Arapahoe County and the rest of Colorado.

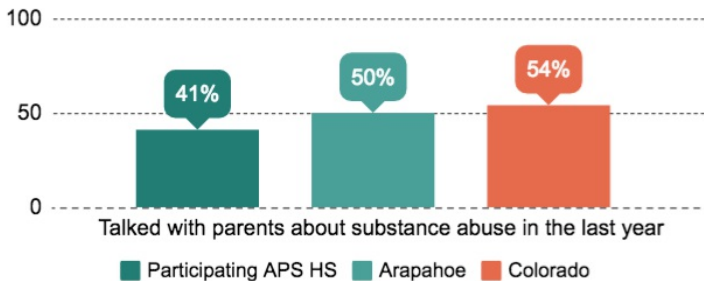
Perception of Harm

Students feel that using alcohol regularly is riskier than using marijuana regularly. Students in Aurora may feel that both substances pose less of a risk to them than their peers in Arapahoe County and across the state.



Protective Factors

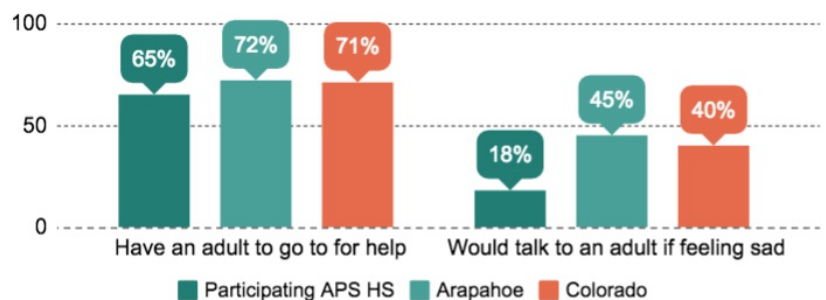
Family Support



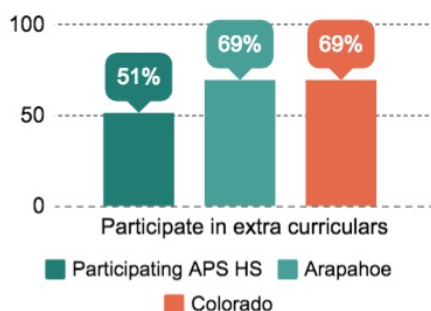
Roughly half of students talked to their parents about substance abuse in the last year. Rates were lower among participating APS students.

Community Support

Measures of community support were lower for participating APS students. A particularly small percentage of APS students reported that they would talk to an adult if they were feeling sad.



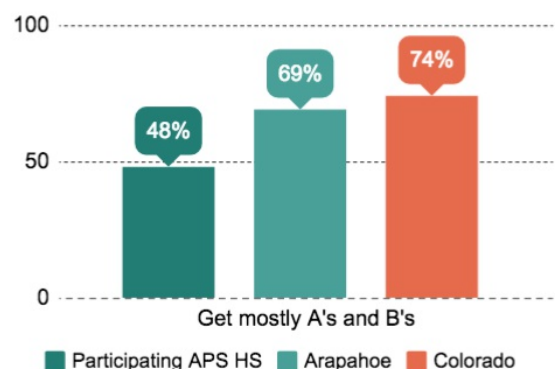
Extra Curricular Opportunities



Across the state roughly 70% of students participate in extra curricular activities at school. Rates were much lower among participating APS students.

Academic Success

In Arapahoe County and across the state roughly 70% of students report that they get mostly A's and B's in school. A much smaller percentage of participating APS students reported earning mostly A's and B's.



Summary

The results suggest that alcohol and marijuana pose a larger risk to youth than the misuse of prescription drugs. Students indicated that they were more likely to use alcohol and marijuana than to use prescription drugs without a prescription. Alcohol led to more ER visits than other substances, and marijuana and alcohol were the primary substances that led to substance abuse treatment. Likewise, the results suggest that alcohol and marijuana were more available to young people than prescription drugs, and more students felt that misusing prescription drugs was wrong compared to marijuana and alcohol. Additionally, students appeared to believe that other students were drinking far more than was actually reported.

The results suggest that drugs and alcohol pose a particularly large risk for LGBTQ youth. LGBTQ youth reported much higher rates of drinking, binge drinking, marijuana use, and prescription drug misuse.

The results suggest that students in Aurora generally face many of the same risk factors as their peers around the state. Students in Aurora and students around the state reported that alcohol and marijuana were more available than prescription drugs. Using prescription drugs without a prescription was perceived by both groups to be more wrong than using alcohol and marijuana. And alcohol was perceived to be more harmful than marijuana.

However, though the results were often similar, they suggest that the youth in Aurora face slightly different risk factors than their peers. While all groups reported feeling that alcohol and marijuana were less wrong and less harmful than misusing prescription drugs, students in Aurora tended to see alcohol and marijuana as even more benign than their peers around the state, and these results might even understate the issue, as the Aurora students that participated in the HKCS survey tended to be younger than county and state averages. Moreover, participating APS students reported less community support, less family support, lower rates of participation in extra-curricular activities, and less academic success than their peers in Arapahoe County and across the state. All of the above likely puts students in Aurora at greater risk of using alcohol and drugs. Evidence of this can be seen in the results, as a larger percentage of APS students reported using alcohol and marijuana before turning 13 than their peers across the state.

The data suggested that most youth acquired substances through social connections. Of Aurora youth going into treatment, the vast majority reported acquiring alcohol and marijuana from friends. Some youth reported getting alcohol from family and some youth reported getting marijuana from the street, but this was a relatively small percentage when compared to those getting substances from friends. At the same time, the results suggested that alcohol and marijuana might be less available to the youth in Aurora. Students at the APS high school that participated in the HKCS survey indicated that alcohol was somewhat less available to them than their peers around the state, and Aurora has a relatively low number of liquor stores, taverns, and marijuana dispensaries when compared to surrounding cities, particularly Denver. Of course, Denver is a very short distance away from the densest parts of Aurora, so the low density of establishments in Aurora might not capture the true availability of substances. Additionally, the Aurora students tended to be younger than county and state averages, so the reported difficulty in acquiring substances may be due to differences in age instead of availability.

Key Terms

Environmental Strategy

This grant is focused on creating an environmental strategy to address certain types of substance abuse problems in young people. An environmental strategy is a form of addressing public health problems by attacking issues at the community level. It is thought that many interventions in the past have failed because they have only focused on the individual, creating situations where individuals are expected to make healthy prevention choices in an environment that may encourage alcohol and drug abuse. The focus of an environmental strategies may include changing the norms or attitudes of the people in the community, limiting the availability of substances within the environment, and increasing the laws and policies that reinforce positive community norms.

Risk Factors

Risk factors are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes. Examples include easy access to substances, family members that use, detachment from one's neighborhood, limited social activities, and poor grades. Any intervention may attempt to shrink community risk factors.

Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events. Examples include laws limiting access, a strong connection to one's neighborhood, strong personal relationships, and success in school. Any intervention may focus on increasing protective factors.

Coalition

This grant will use a coalition to guide the decision making process. A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose or to engage in joint activity. It can and should include social service providers, representatives from government departments, and community members.

Prevention

Any intervention implemented using this grant will focus on prevention, as opposed to treatment. Prevention efforts are typically proactive and focus on creating conditions that foster healthy lifestyles before alcohol and drug use become major, life altering problems.

1. Demographic data came from the American Community Survey via the Who is Aurora Report. The report notes that statistics are five year averages from 2010 to 2014.
2. Consumption data and all risk and protective factors, aside from the density of liquor stores, taverns, and marijuana dispensaries were taken from the 2015 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey.
3. ER visits included 2013 and 2014. Alcohol related ER visits included only 12-20 year olds, while other drug related ER visits include 12-25 year olds. The data came from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment in collaboration with the CO Hospital Association.
4. Crime data was provided by the Aurora Police Department.
5. Discipline data was provided by Aurora Public Schools.
6. DUI accident data included 2014. This data was provided by the Colorado Department of Transportation. Aurora includes both Adams and Arapahoe County.
7. Treatment data came from the Drug/Alcohol Coordinated Data System (DACODS) and was provided by the Office of Behavioral Health. Alcohol and marijuana results included 12-20 year olds. Prescription drug data included 12-25 year olds. Regions were all mutually exclusive.
8. The list of liquor stores, taverns, and dispensaries in Aurora was provided by the Colorado Department of Revenue Enforcement Division. The list of compliance checks was also provided by the Colorado Department of Revenue.