



UPPER CLUTHA YOUTH VOICE SURVEY 2023

Prepared for Path Wānaka | Ara ki Wānaka (formerly the Wānaka Alcohol Group)

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July 2023

Acknowledgments

The team at Path Wānaka | Ara ki Wānaka (formerly the Wānaka Alcohol Group) wants to thank the principal, staff, and students of Te Kura o Tititea | Mount Aspiring College for supporting this survey. Without this support, the survey would not have been possible.

The researcher would like to thank the steering group from Path Wānaka | Ara ki Wānaka that provided guidance and input into the survey design and implementation, specifically Niamh Shaw for her leadership and direction. The steering group's knowledge of the community and passion for supporting the youth supported this research greatly.

Summary

Since 2016 Path Wānaka | Ara ki Wānaka (formerly the Wānaka Alcohol Group) has been researching and tracking the attitudes towards, and engagement with, harmful substances and the activities of youth living in the Upper Clutha. Surveys have previously been conducted in 2016, 2018 and 2020. This research has been invaluable in guiding the work of Path Wānaka | Ara ki Wānaka (Path Wānaka) to respond to the needs of the youth in the community.

This survey is a follow-up from those surveys and aims to understand current substance use and provide the Upper Clutha community and Path Wānaka with information to support strategic activities for the next five years. The survey design was updated with questions from the Youth19 survey. A steering group of Path Wānaka members provided valuable input into the local context and guided the choice of questions and focus.

The context has changed significantly in the intervening years since 2020. The COVID pandemic has dramatically impacted youth nationally, and locally, with increased stress and mental health challenges. Other developments since the last survey are the increase in the use of social media, and the introduction of vaping and other drugs into the area. Therefore, this version of the survey also includes questions about these issues, as well as looking at the positive risk-taking activities such as sports, music and drama, and volunteering.

This 2023 survey was conducted in May and June and invited students from Te Kura o Tititea Mount Aspiring College to participate. The age range was expanded compared with previous studies to cover 11–24-year-olds. Parental consent was sought for those under 14 years old. Of the surveys submitted 181 were analysed.

Positive risk-taking is an important part of growing up. It helps young people develop their identities and learn from success or failure. It builds good self-esteem. Activities such as playing sports, trying a new activity such as art or playing a musical instrument, and volunteering are positive risk-taking behaviours. As expected in the environment of the Upper Clutha there was a very high percentage (89%) of students participating in some form of outdoor sports. Volunteering had 54% and the arts had 50% of students participating.

Negative risk-taking activities are the activities that concern parents and the community. As far as substance use is concerned, alcohol remains the most tried substance with vaping the next highest. Binge drinking is high with 33% of total respondents saying they binge drink when they drink, 6% are binge drinking weekly, and 31% monthly or more. Parents are the main source of alcohol supply with 74% of those drinking being given the alcohol by their parents. Friends are the next source of supply.

Vaping was listed by the students as the biggest concern for youth today. Vapes are the second highest consumed product with 43% having used and of those that have used 25% report that they are using daily or most days. Additionally, the majority of the vapes used contain nicotine. Friends are the main source of supply.

The impact of social media is a concern with over 50% of students being exposed to images that they consider nasty or disturbing. There was some interest expressed in learning more about keeping safe online. Social media was cited as the second biggest challenge for youth today.

This information will help inform Path Wānaka's strategic direction and activities in the community. The use of vapes is a concern for youth in the Upper Clutha and gives Path Wānaka a potential area of focus for their work. Opportunities to educate students, especially younger students, and parents on the risks and potential harm of both vaping and alcohol use is a potential focus, as is advocacy around access to vapes.

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Introduction

This research was conducted on behalf of Path Wānaka | Ara Wānaka (Path Wānaka). The organisation has been researching and tracking the attitudes towards, and engagement with, harmful substances and the activities of youth living in the Upper Clutha since 2016. A survey was conducted of 11-24-year-olds, primarily students at Te Kura o Tititea Mount Aspiring College (the College) in May and June 2023.

This survey was conducted as a follow-up to the 2016 survey called “Harming Me, Harming You: A community perspective of alcohol use in Wānaka” conducted by Dr. Vanessa Hammond and Rachel Cassaidy, the 2018 survey by Dr. Vanessa Hammond called “Harming Me, Harming You: Student Health & Wellbeing Survey Update 2018”, and the 2020 report “Harming Me, Harming You: Student Health & Wellbeing Survey Update 2020” by Research First. A survey of parents was also conducted in 2018 by Brittani Beavis.

Path Wānaka empowers parents and whānau to support their young people dealing with adult-sized problems. Through education, research, advocacy, collaborative dialogue and supporting positive initiatives, it addresses risk areas such as harmful substances, mental wellbeing, digital harm and relationships.

Path Wānaka is a collaboration of community agencies including: Police, Community Networks/LINK, Te Kura o Tititea Mt Aspiring College, Kahu Youth Trust, Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), ADL, Whānau Resilience, Students Against Dangerous Driving, Public Health South, WellSouth and Te Hau Toka.

The purpose of the survey was to:

1. Understand positive and negative risk-taking behaviours amongst the Upper Clutha youth.
2. Provide information to help guide and inform Path Wānaka’s activities for the next five years.
3. Provide information to Path Wānaka’s member organisations that facilitates an understanding of youth need in the community.
4. Provide information that helps the broader community understand the risks facing our young people.
5. Provide youth with an opportunity to express their concerns and needs.

Methods

The survey was designed in consultation with a steering group consisting of members from Path Wānaka, namely, Niamh Shaw, Nicola Jacobsen (Te Kura o Tititea Mount Aspiring College), Fiona Brown (ADL), Randal Dobbs (Kahu Youth Trust) and Anna Sutherland (Kahu Youth Trust). The survey was tested by two young people and feedback was positive with no edits needed. Another three testers had been planned but due to the timing falling during the school holidays, this did not eventuate.

Substance use questions used were sourced from the Youth19 survey with some adapted for the Upper Clutha context (specifically types of other drugs used). Additional questions on positive risk-taking activities and online habits were added, along with general questions about hopes for the

future. Three additional qualitative questions were included at the end to finish the survey on a positive note and seek input from the youth that will guide Path Wānaka's activities in the future.

Questions focussed on the areas of interest for Path Wānaka. Feedback was given by one of the testers that questions on mental health would be useful. The College had recently completed the New Zealand Council for Education Research survey which covers wellbeing, therefore was not a focus of this survey.

Consent was sought from parents of students aged under 14 years. The consent form process was administered by Leafcutter. This proved to be a time-consuming and complicated process but was important for ethical reasons.

An email was sent to those students whose parents had consented and those above 14 by the principal. Whānau time was set aside to complete it.

Input from students not at Mount Aspiring College was sought however no connection with any homeschoolers was found. The Southern Health School was supportive and distributed it to their students, some of whom are also enrolled at Mount Aspiring College.

Individual student consent was by completion of the survey. Throughout the survey, students were reminded that they could skip any questions they wanted to, or they could stop the survey at any time. Surveys were anonymous and could not be tracked to an individual. Raw data was stored securely by the researcher and not shared with anyone else. It will be deleted after five years. Given the small community, any identifying comments were kept confidential.

Data Analysis

The survey went to 560 students with 232 surveys submitted. Ten of these were disqualified for being underage or over the age limit. A small number of these contained unrealistic or offensive comments, these surveys were deleted. A large number had the demographic data inputted and no further responses given so these were also deleted as they provided no useful information. The resulting number of surveys that have been analysed was 181¹.

For these surveys, there was a 73% completion rate with an average time of 13 minutes to complete the survey.

¹ The 2023 roll according to the Education Review Office is 1234 therefore this is a 15% response rate. Responses from Year 11, 12 and 13 were the highest which indicates that the survey may be more relevant to this age group.

Results

Demographics

In total, 181 responses were analysed (57% female, 39% male, 4% gender diverse or preferred not to say).

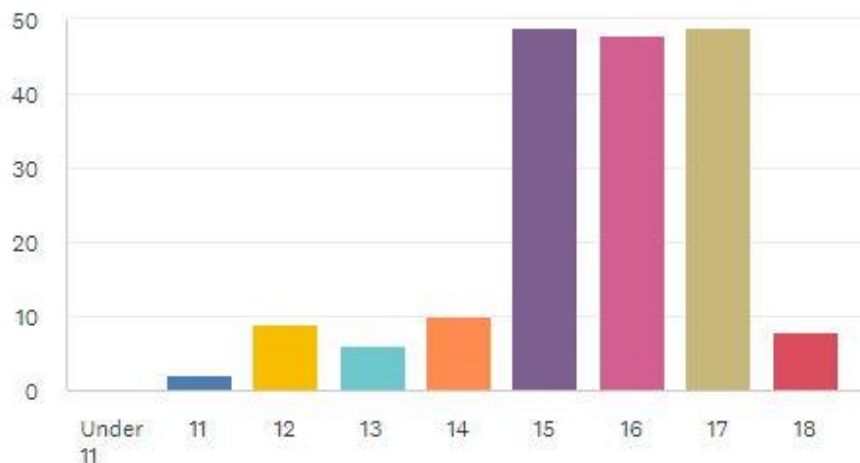


Figure 1: Age of respondents (number of students)

Respondents came from:

Place of birth	Number
New Zealand	140
Australia	15
United Kingdom	9
Asia	8
North America	4
South America	2
Europe	2
Africa	1

Ethnicity was stated as:

Ethnicity	Number
New Zealand European	126
Pākehā	11
British/European	11
Mixed	11
Australia	7
Māori	6
Asian	4
North America	2
South America	1
Pasifika	1
African	1

Age of arrival in Upper Clutha varied with 46% (between 0 and 4 years), 23% (between 5 and 9 years), 20% (between 10 and 14 years) and 11% (between 15 and 20 years).

All students attend Te Kura o Tititea Mount Aspiring College.

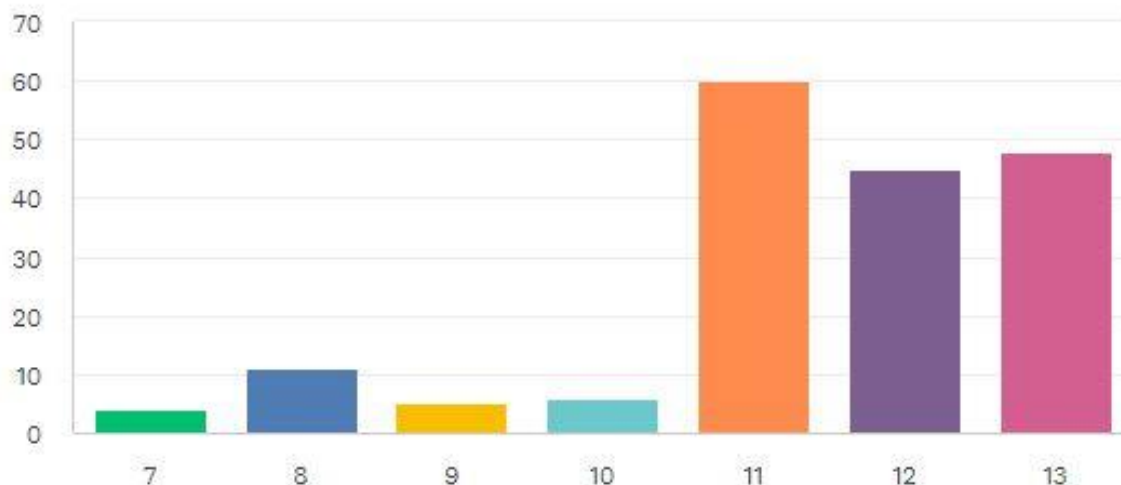


Figure 2: School year of respondents (number of students)

Social Activities

This section asked about positive risk-taking activities such as outdoor activities, arts and music, and volunteering². Positive risk-taking is an important part of growing up. It involves learning new skills and having different experiences. It helps young people develop their identities and learn from success or failure. It builds good self-esteem.

A wide range of outdoor activities were experienced by most respondents (90%) as shown in Figure 3.

² <https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issues/risk-taking-and-teenagers> and <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/TAG/about-TAG/risks-protective-factors>.

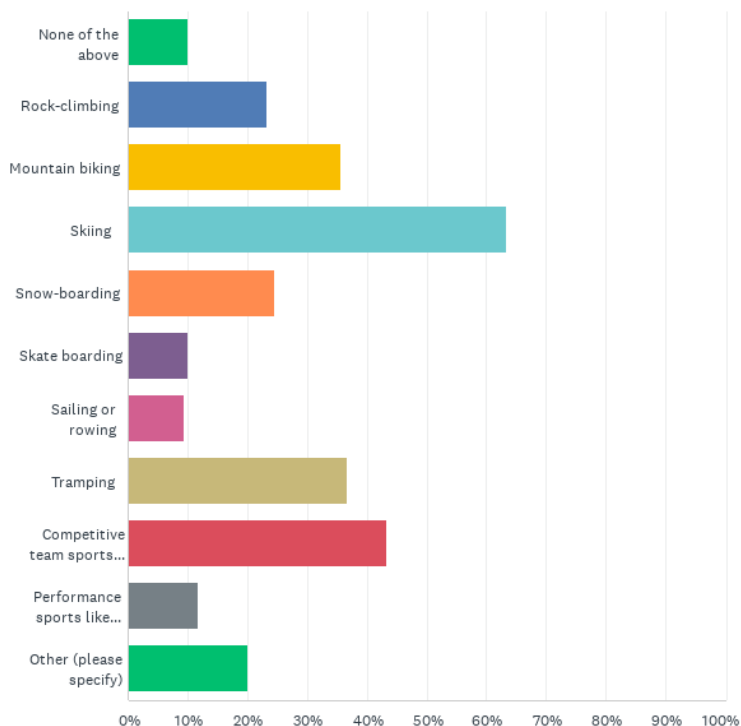


Figure 3: Percent of participation in outdoor activities³

The activities given as options in this question focussed on those that required some level of risk. Some students provided some other options including horse riding (n=7), kayaking (n=2), and hunting (n=1). Other activities were also mentioned including martial arts, swimming, tennis, and squash.

Taking part in the arts such as drama and dance can also involve some level of risk as it requires learning a new skill and potentially feelings of uncertainty and fear. These options were not as popular with 50% responding to this question. Music was the most popular with 32% (n=51), drama 15% (n=23) and dance 13% (n=20). Other options given were art and photography.

Similarly, volunteering involves learning a new skill or finding oneself in an unfamiliar situation and is considered a positive risk-taking behaviour. Of 179 respondents 54% (n=97) had volunteered in the last 12 months, 7% (n=13) previously but not in the last year and 39% hadn't or were unsure (n=69). This result could be slightly skewed due to the volunteering in the community programme run by the school.

³ Note: Competitive team sports like basketball or football and Performance sports like dance or gymnastics.

Online Activities

When asked about exposure to worrying and nasty content 22% (n=40) had seen heaps or a lot, 38% (n=69) some, 29% a little (n=53) and 11% (n=19) never.

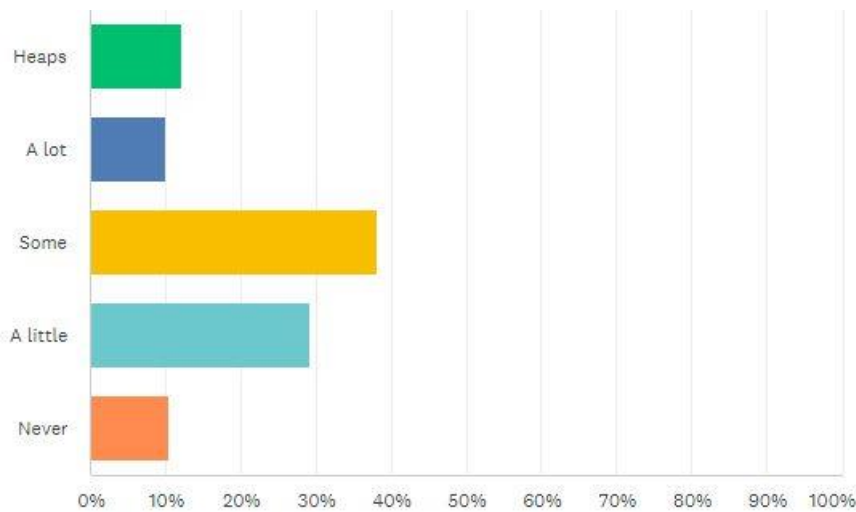


Figure 4: Percent of exposure to worrying or nasty content

Regarding sharing images or information that they later regretted the majority had not 49% (n=88), 38% (n=68) a little, 10% (n=18) some, with 1% (n=2) a lot and 2% heaps (n=4).

“Seeing things online that we really don’t need to see and how social media can really affect our mental health.”

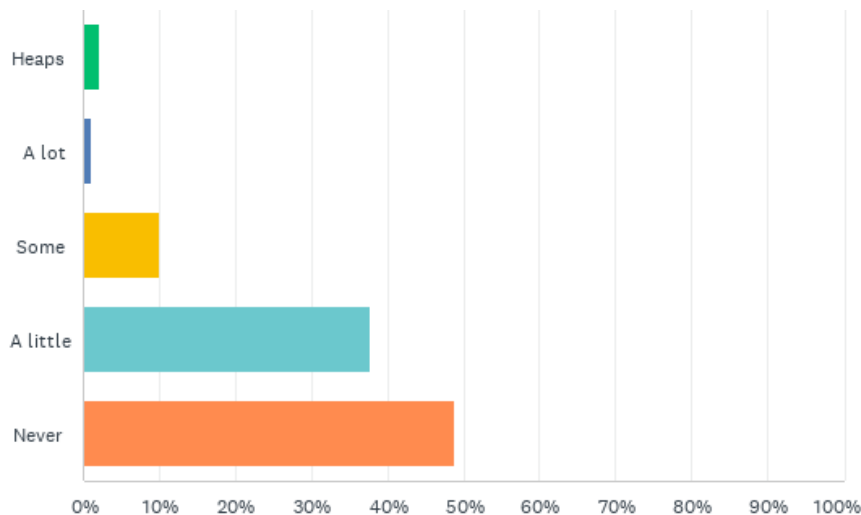


Figure 5: Percent that had shared images or information they later regretted

More had received images or information that they didn’t want with those that hadn’t at 32% (n=58), a little at 32% (n=57), some at 21% (n=37), a lot at 12% (n=21), and heaps at 3% (n=6).

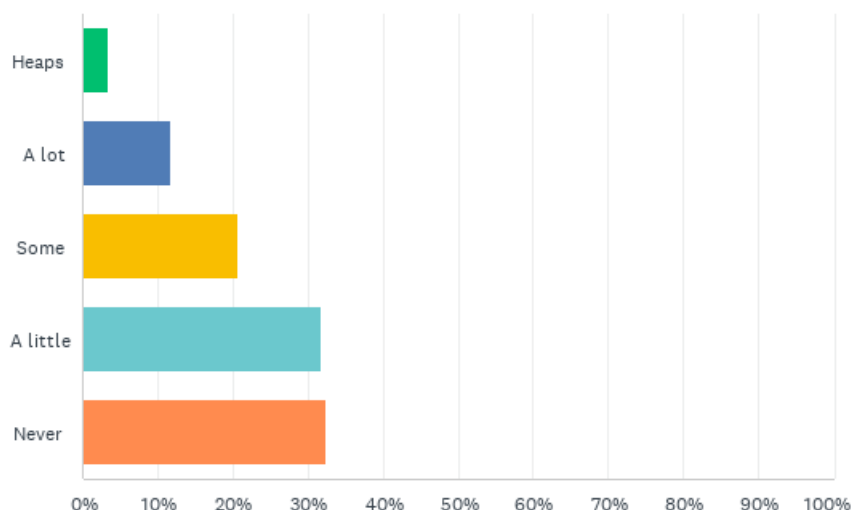


Figure 6: Percent receiving images or information they didn't want

Regarding bullying online by someone local, 67% (n=122) had never been, 21% (n=38) had a little, 7% (n=13) had some, 2% (n=4) had a lot and 2% (n=4) heaps.

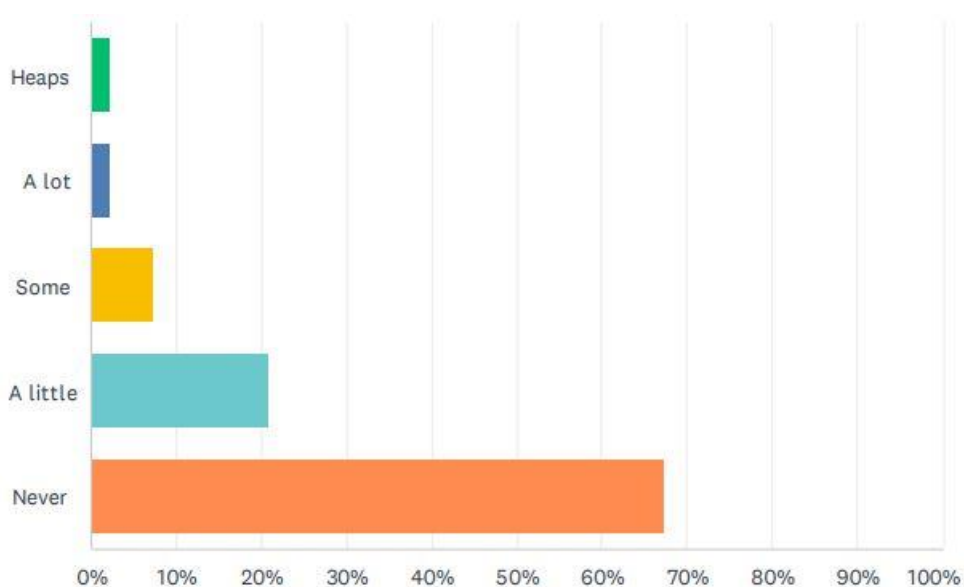


Figure 7: Percent experiencing bullying online by someone local

A similar but slightly reduced pattern exists for those being bullied by someone not local with 76% (n=136) never, 17% (n=30) a little, 6% (n=10) some, one person a lot, and two people answering heaps.

Students were asked if they had formed any intimate⁴ relationships with people they have met only online, 78% (n=140) had never, 12% (n=22) had a little, 8% (n=14) had some, two people had a lot and two people had heaps.

⁴ Interpretation of the word 'intimate' was left up to the students. This question was intended to ascertain whether any of the students were potentially being groomed or making risky decisions online.

Of those that responded (n=178) to learning more about how to keep safe online 19% (n=34) said they would like to know more.

Substance use

In summary, from those who responded to the survey those who have tried or consumed any type of risky substance are:

Substance	Yes	No
Smoked a whole cigarette	22 (12%)	159 (88%)
Vape	77 (43%)	102 (57%)
Alcohol	118 (67%)	57 (33%)
Marijuana	40 (25%)	123 (75%)
Other drugs	12 (7%)	149 (93%)
Gambling	66 (43%)	89 (57%)

Note: Of the gambling questions, 89 answered 'none of the above' which means they could be gambling in a form different from the options that were given (26 skipped the question).

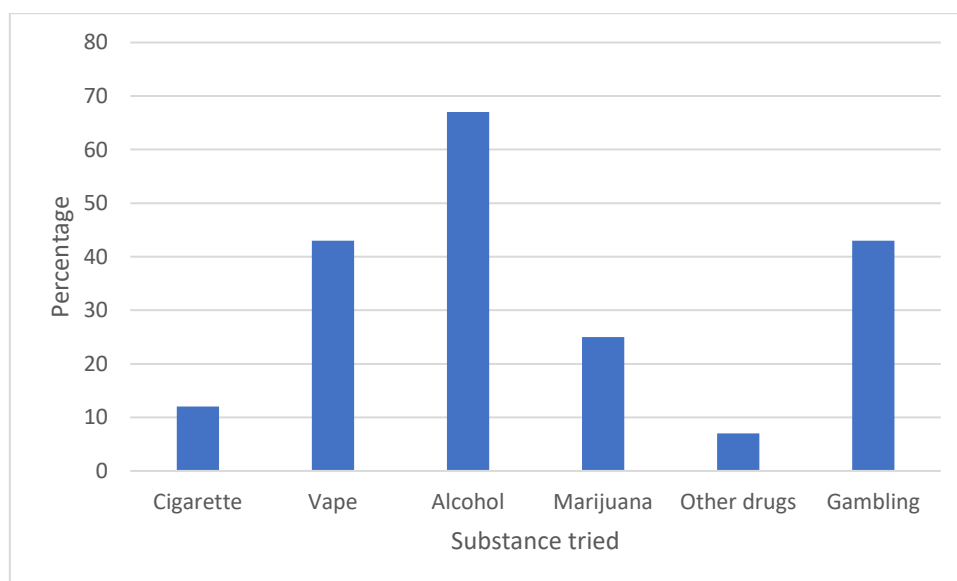


Figure 8: Percent who have tried the different substances

Alcohol

Alcohol remains the highest substance consumed by the youth with 67% (n=118) having consumed a drink. All of these were Year 10 and older.

At least 59 students are binge drinking when they drink

Binge drinking is defined as more than 5 alcoholic drinks in four hours. Of the total survey respondents 33% (n=59) say they binge drink when they drink and 6% are bingeing weekly and 31% monthly or more.

For those that responded to this question (n=109), 54% (n=59) are binge drinking when they drink (Figure 8).

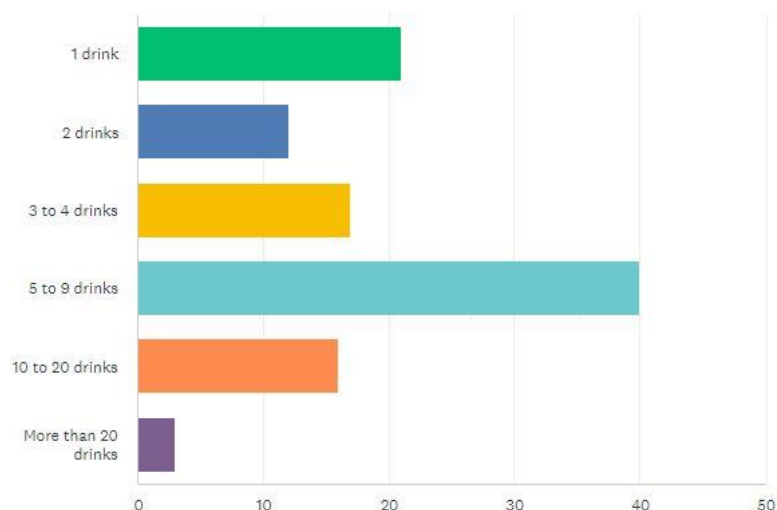


Figure 9: Number of drinks consumed usually in one session – within about 4 hours (number of students)

Figure 9 shows that 9% (n=10) of those who responded are binge drinking weekly with 51% (n=56) monthly or more than monthly. Of those that binge drink, the most were Year 13 students (n=23), with Year 11 the next highest (n=18). Of those who are binge drinking, there are slightly more females (54%) than males (46%).

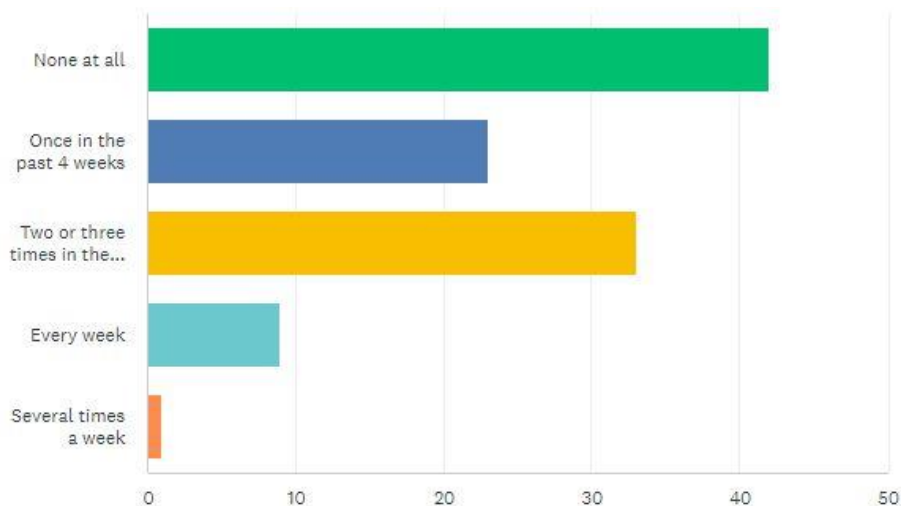


Figure 10: Number of sessions in the last 4 weeks (number of students)

The top three sources of supply are:

- Parents 74% (n=80)
- Friends 31% (n=33)
- Someone else buys on behalf of the student 20% (n=22)

Consumption at home was noted by 165 students with 15% (n=25) students reporting others in their house drank a great deal or a lot, 47% (n=78) saying a moderate amount, and 33% (n=54) a little.

Combinations

Of the 108 students that answered this question, those that drank consumed other products as well, with the most popular combination being vapes (most of the time or every time 24% (n=26) and sometimes 20% (n=22)), and then with marijuana (most of the time or every time 9% (n=9)).

Concern

Concern has been raised over drinking by friends or family for 14 students and 20 had got into trouble or done something they regretted due to drinking.

Vapes

Vapes are the second highest consumed product with 43% (n=77) having used. Of those that have used, 25% (n=20) report that they are using daily or most days. Those that reported trying were Year 10 and above with the majority in Year 13 (n=31). Most of those now vaping had not smoked cigarettes when they started vaping 94% (n=72). Additionally, the majority of the vapes used contain nicotine 79% (n=60).

94% of respondents who vape had not smoked cigarettes before they started vaping

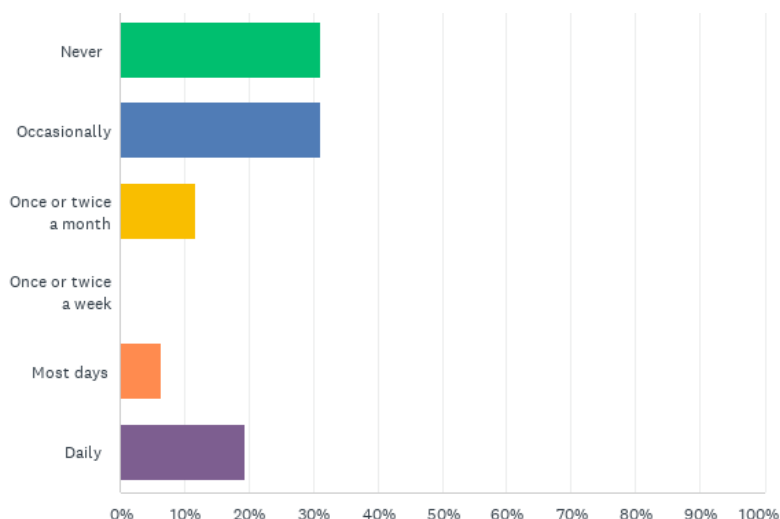


Figure 11: Percent of regularity of vaping amongst respondents who vape

The top source of supply for vapes is friends or someone else purchasing on their behalf 58% (n=43). For those that reported none 25% (n=19) of the options given in the survey, there must be another source of supply other than those options given.⁵

“Remove vapes from all the stores and shut down online vape stores.”

Consumption at home was noted with 9% (n=16) students reporting others in their house vaped or smoked a great deal or a lot, 6% (n=11) saying a moderate amount, and 12% (n=21) a little. For the majority, 73% (n=128), no vaping or smoking was done by others in the household.

⁵ Supply options included: I buy them myself from a shop, I buy them online, friends give them to me, my brother or sister give them to me, my parents give them to me, I get them from home without my parent's permission, another adult I know gives them to me, I get someone else to buy them for me, and I take or steal them from somewhere else (not home). These options apply to all supply questions.

Gambling

Gambling was the second equal most experienced risky behaviour reported with bets with friends and family as the most popular form at 37% (n=57). The next most popular was Instant Kiwi and Lotto. The majority reported spending less than \$10 a week 89% (n=62). Three people did report spending more than \$50 a week on bets or gambling.

Marijuana

Marijuana had been smoked by 40 of the respondents. Use in the last four weeks was low to not at all for the majority, 83% (n=33). Seven students did record using daily to weekly. Supply was from friends or getting someone else to buy it for them 82% (n=23). Six students did report stealing from home or elsewhere.

When asked if they were purchasing marijuana instead of alcohol, 18 students said they purchased both, and three were purchasing marijuana instead of alcohol most of the time. Four students (2%) said other people in their house smoked marijuana a lot or a great deal, 4% (n=6) a moderate amount, and 15% (n=25) a little.

Concern

Concern has been raised over marijuana use by friends or family for five respondents and six had got into trouble or done something they regretted due to marijuana use.

Cigarettes

Thirteen students responded that they smoke cigarettes from occasionally (n=7) to daily (n=1). Supply was mainly from friends (n=4) or stealing them from outside the home (n=3).

Other drugs

Twelve students reported using other drugs such as MDMA, P or methamphetamine, LSD (Acid), mushrooms, huffing, synthetics, or something similar.

Table 1: Consumption of other drugs (number of students)

Drug	Never	Once	2 or 3 times	4 or more times
Huffing of used glue/gas or paint to get high	7	1	2	1
MDMA	7	1	1	2
P or methamphetamine	9	0	1	1
LSD (Acid)	4	5	1	1
Synthetics/synthetic cannabinoids	7	2	0	1
Any other drugs (e.g. mushrooms, E, prescription drugs, etc.)	4	4	1	2

The top sources of supply are:

- Friends 36% (n=4)
- Someone else buys on behalf of the student 27% (n=3)

Low consumption at home was noted with one student reporting others in their house using a great deal, 3% (n=5) saying a moderate amount and 16% (n=16) a little.

Concern

Concern has been raised over the use of drugs by friends or family for four students and three had got into trouble or done something they regretted due to taking drugs.

Reasons for taking risky substances

When asked why they do these things the most popular response was 'it makes me feel good' 64% (n=46). Others said they were bored 32% (n=23), it was fun or they enjoyed it 19% (n=14), or they were stressed 17% (n=12) or didn't want to deal with stuff in their life 15% (n=11). Seven students said they worried some or a lot about their substance use. Twelve said they would like to cut down and twelve said their family were aware they were struggling with taking substances or gambling. There were 22 students who had tried to cut down or give up (which is more than said they would like to).

"I'm scared of my parents and telling them so I don't get grounded but I think I need help."

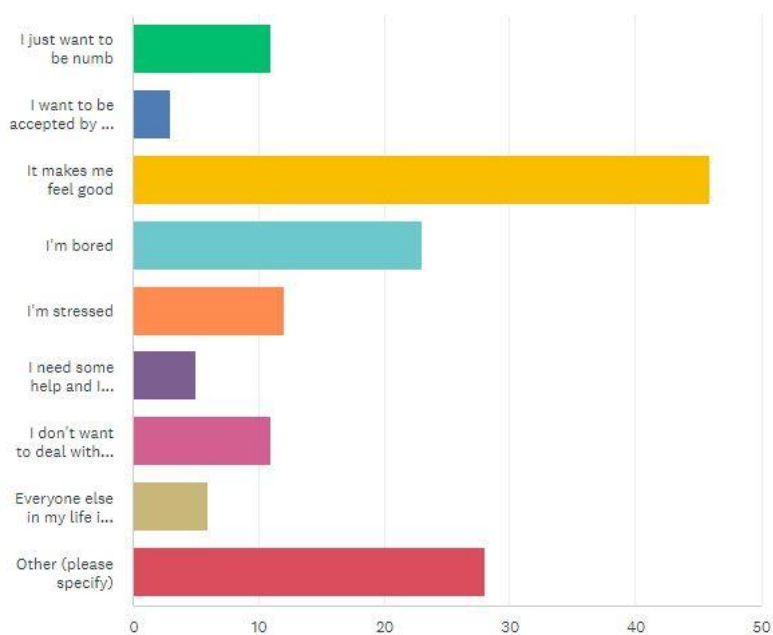


Figure 12: Reasons for consuming (number of students)⁶

Hopes for the future

The next set of questions was asked to get a sense of how the students were feeling about life in general. Overall, there was a positive sense of the future, 82% (n=110) think about or make plans for their future with 68% (n=90) seeing a future in New Zealand.

⁶ Options for this question included: I just want to be numb, I want to be accepted by my friends, it makes me feel good, I'm bored, I'm stressed, I need some help and don't know how to ask (or no one is listening), I don't want to deal with stuff going on in my life, and everyone else in my life is taking stuff.

The majority felt they had opportunities to show their talent and skills 72% (n=96) and 65% (n=87) feel they will get the support they need to achieve their plans.

	Strongly agree (number)	Agree (number)	Neutral (number)	Disagree (number)	Strongly disagree (number)
I think about or make plans for my future	57	53	16	5	3
I don't feel that I will get the support I need to achieve my plans for the future	9	11	27	55	32
I get opportunities to show my talents and skills	38	58	26	9	3
I can see a positive future for me in New Zealand	34	56	25	14	4

The final three questions of the survey were asked to get some feedback that could be useful for Path Wānaka, or its member organisations, in the future. It was also an opportunity for the youth to voice their views on issues that impact them, with a national and local perspective. Answers will have been influenced by previous questions in the survey. Answers were thematically analysed.

The questions were:

- What do you think is the biggest problem for young people today?

From those that responded (n=102), the biggest problems for youth today were noted as:

- Vaping (n=16)
- Social Media (n=11)
- Peer pressure (n=10)
- Mental Health (n=9)

Nine respondents replied, 'I don't know'.

Some pertinent quotes are:

"How relatively easy drugs are to attain and how young people get sexualised."

"Not thinking they can stand up to the bully when they have every right to stand up to the meanie."

"I could name a lot: violence, drugs, racism, depression, stress but I would emphasise stress and depression essentially because of school. NCEA is extremely stressful and if you miss just a couple of days of school you feel like you miss a week which can lead to depression and self harm and taking drugs."

"We are all trying not to stand out so we change something or do something different so that we fit in with the people around us."

- What do you think should be changed to support young people in New Zealand better?

The majority of those who responded (n=96) to this question did not have an answer (n=25). Support at school was the biggest issue (n=12), as well as a better mental health system (n=7), and the banning of vapes (n=6). Six responses mentioned having more rules or banning some activities such as TikTok, and the use of drugs and alcohol.

Some interesting quotes are:

"When a child is going through their schoolteachers or students' peers need to sit down with kids and find their interests, and what things they are good at."

"I feel like parents should be more aware of what their kids are doing and try to take action to stop them."

"Talk more to kids about what can happen and what they can do to help it."

"Make it more acceptable to talk about their feelings and any problems they may have."

"More education about alcohol."

"Maybe ads or requirements and lessons at school about how bad self-image problems are and how they can completely ruin your life."

"Teach younger kids about this stuff and why it is bad. Use examples of what has happened to people who have smoked or vaped or any of the others. This should help enforce young people not to do this from a young age."

"Remove disposable vapes, create as many problems as they solve."

- What do you think should be changed to support young people in Wānaka/Upper Clutha better?

As above the majority that responded to this question (n=83) did not have an answer (n=31) and there was no significant response from those that did.

Some quotes that can support Path Wānaka's future planning are:

"Stop kids as young as 11 becoming nicotine addicts."

"Encourage more people to seek help."

"Be more aware of young kids doing drugs."

"More support through school."

"We need more support for the youth to get involved in activities such as sports, the arts, or even community groups."

We need coaches, parents, and group leaders to provide more encouragement to get more people involved in their community."

"Everyone should be recognised for their skills. Not just the 'top achievers'."

“I think for students at least a wider range of after school activities, like social or academic clubs, e.g. science clubs or book clubs, places where people can meet because of a common interest”

“Teach younger kids about this stuff and why it is bad. Use examples of what has happened to people that have smoked or vaped or any of the others. This should help enforce young people not to do this from a young age. If we can find someone locally willing to talk to young kids that would be a bonus.”

Discussion

The Youth Voice Upper Clutha 2023 survey is an excellent opportunity to hear from the youth living in Upper Clutha. This survey continues the valuable tradition of regular research on youth in the community. The information provided will guide the development of activities and supports for them and their families/ whānau. This information will help inform Path Wānaka's strategic direction and activities in the community. It can also be used to guide the activities of the member organisations of Path Wānaka.

It is very encouraging to hear how many young people are involved in positive risk-taking activities including outdoor sports, the arts, and volunteering in the community. These activities can continue to be supported and encouraged by the school. The establishment of a wider range of activities can also be considered as one student suggested book clubs or science clubs.

As far as negative risk-taking is concerned the students expressed most concern about vaping and the potential harm it has. The number of students who were taking up vaping that hadn't previously smoked is a concern. Education on the health implications of vaping would be beneficial. Another potential area of activity is advocacy preventing access to vapes in the community.

Social media, peer pressure, and mental health were the other top concerns of students, and these are areas that can be addressed.

When considering the numbers in this report it is important to note that a relatively small number of students participated. It is possible to assume that the amount of consumption is higher than recorded. Whilst the students expressed the most concern about vaping there was still a significant number of students who when drinking are binge drinking. This has health implications for them in the future and is an area to address, as is the parental supply of alcohol to these students.

A key expressed desire was to have more education on the negative effects of taking harmful substances and the need to prevent younger students from getting involved in consuming them. This is a positive approach and one that Path Wānaka be involved in.

"More education on drugs and alcohol (what certain drugs do to you, what to do if you think you've been spiked, what drugs are more addictive than others)."
