

Youth Perspectives on Marijuana Use

Themes from Youth Listening Sessions

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Overview

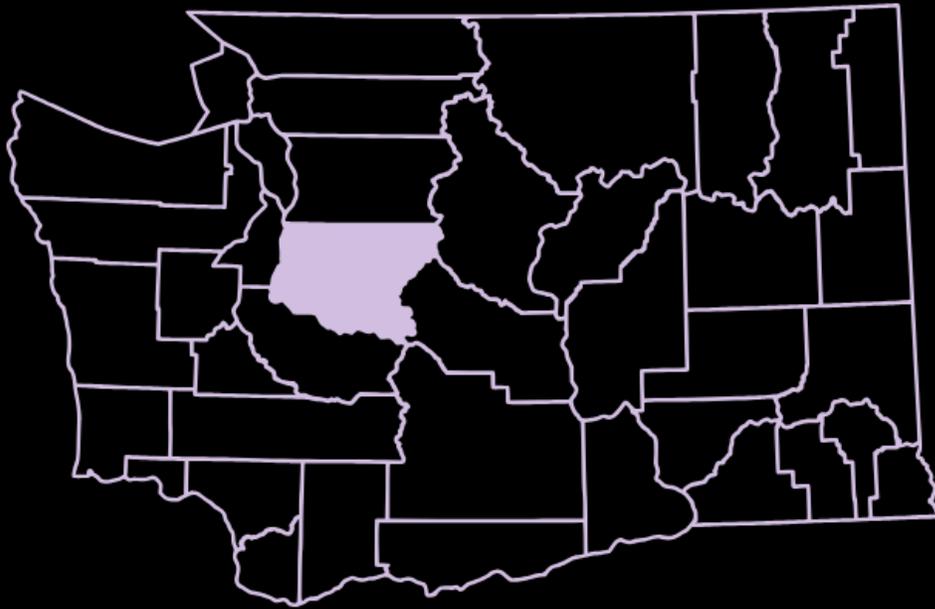
1. Context
2. Youth listening sessions
3. Themes from youth
4. Opportunities for prevention
5. Next steps for KC-YMPEP



Context



King County, WA



2+ million residents
600,000 children & youth

Legalization of retail MJ: 2012

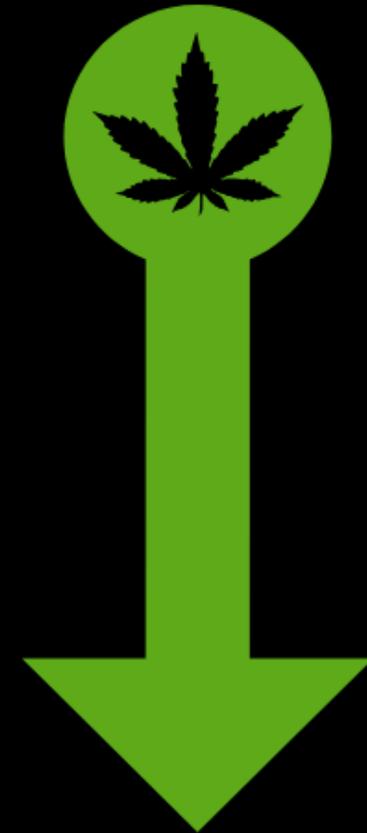


Youth marijuana use in King County

Average youth use rate: 15%

10th & 12th grade use is declining

Fewer youth perceive regular use as risky



Marijuana use can have long term effects on the developing brain.

Other risks include:



Poorer school performance;
negative impacts on memory,
attention



Addiction (1 in 6 people who
begin using prior to age 18)



Mental health issues (depression,
anxiety, psychosis)



Crash risk (particularly when
combined with alcohol)



Referrals to criminal justice system



KC-YMPEP



Public Health – Seattle & King County
King County Department of Community & Human Services

Funding: Washington DOH dedicated marijuana account

Reduce underage
marijuana initiation & use



5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

SPRING 2018



Input from community partners



Healthy Youth Survey data



Information from youth listening sessions



Youth listening sessions



Purpose

Hear youth perceptions of use, beliefs, and attitudes about marijuana

Gain insights on what information youth want and how to deliver it



*Youth were asked to not disclose their personal use or the personal details of other youth who may use marijuana.



Implementation

18 partners

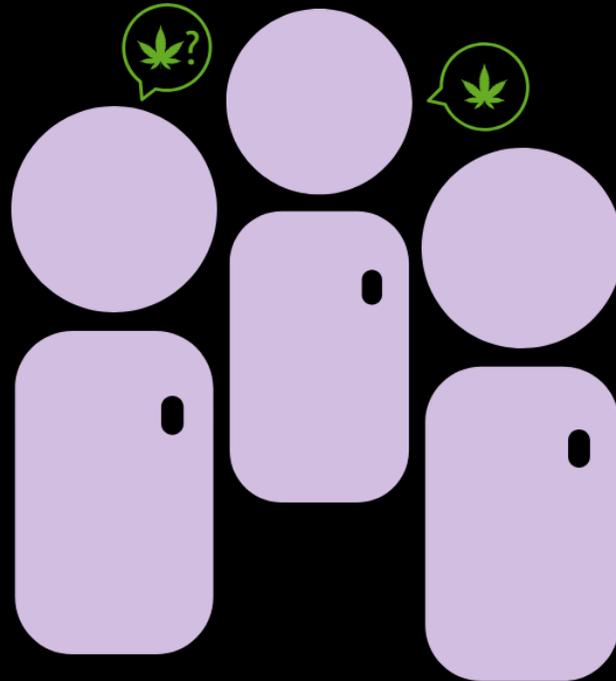
26 listening sessions

- KC-YMPEP: funding, training, & technical assistance
- Partners: session recruitment, facilitation, & transcription
- Focused on key demographics or priority populations
- Coding and analysis conducted through NVIVO
- 2 additional sessions with young adults; similar findings



Participant snapshot

202 youth participants
8 average # youth/group



15.2 average age (years)
9.6 average grade



Themes from youth

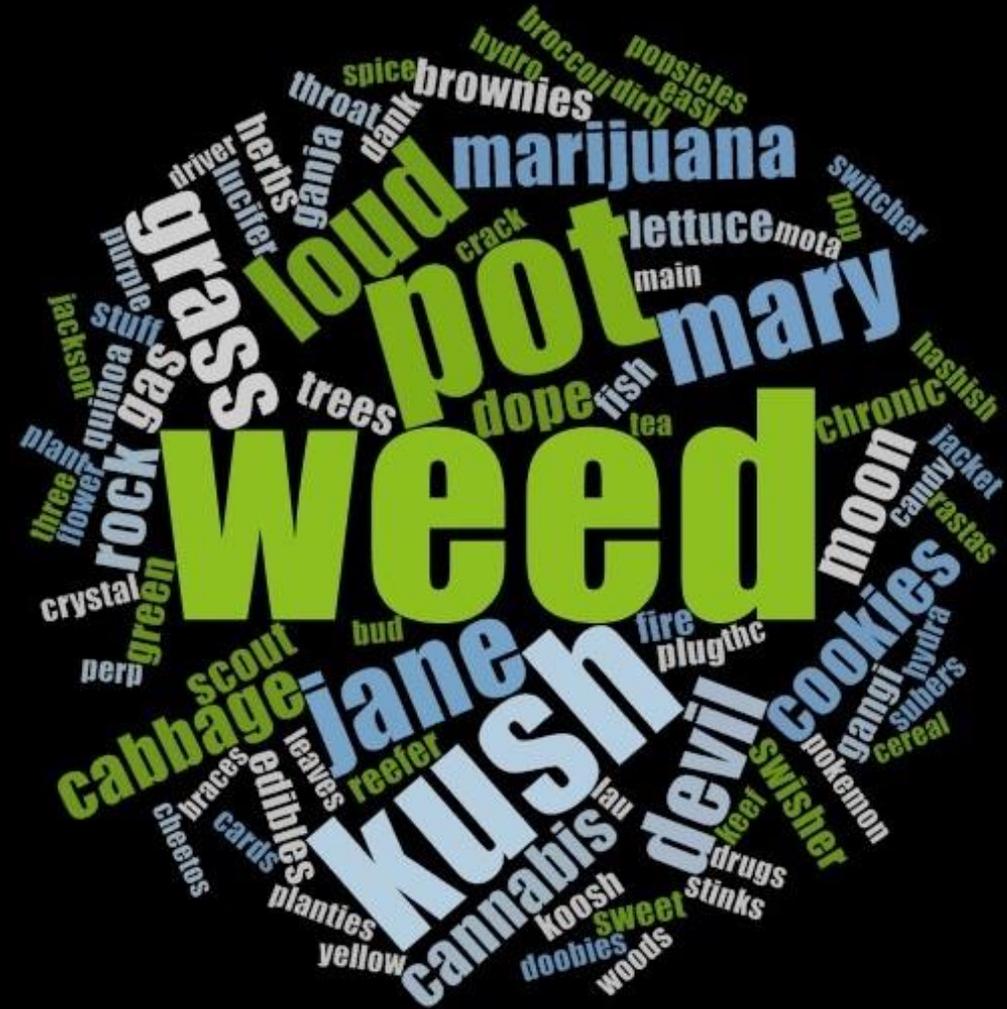


Disclaimer

These sessions were meant to be an initial exploration of youth perspectives with the goal of informing further inquiry.

They were not meant to be evidence-based or produce scientifically-sound findings.

Instead, they will serve as a starting point for future KC-YMPEP activities around understanding youth perspectives.



Attitudes toward use



Most youth do not think marijuana use is a problem & have little concern for its risks.

- Less concerned with the risks of marijuana use, more influenced by perceived popularity
- Marijuana is normalized
- Marijuana is not as bad as other substances, & has some benefits



Perceptions of use

Youth believe that many of their peers use marijuana.

- Peer use rates estimated between 80 & 100% -- far above the HYS King County average of 15%
- Social media makes use seem common
- Rates of use are different for social versus regular users



Access

Youth think that marijuana is easy to get.

- From personal connections: peers, siblings, person who sells
- Social media facilitates access
- Occasional access through parents



“ I think it’s just so popular nowadays, especially with our age group. So, even if you’re not close with anybody, you can just ask around and one out of three people are gonna have it.”



Motivations for use

Youth use marijuana to follow social norms
& to self-medicate.

Other motivations: easy access, lack of
protective factors, rebellion



Motivations for use, continued

Social norms:

- Peer pressure, curiosity, everyone else is doing it
- Social media & pop culture

Self-medication:

- Escape
- Forget
- Relieve pain
- Deal with anger

“ [Youth] smoke marijuana for 2 reasons: either ‘cause others are doing it so they want to be cool and fit in. Or to relieve pain. There’s people going through struggles.”



Motivations for avoiding use

Personal values & protective factors may help prevent marijuana use.



- Personal values: family, religious beliefs, sports, school, future goals
- Protective factors: engaged parents, non-using friends, involvement in activities, knowledge of risks
- Desire to avoid potential discipline & addiction



Sources of information



Youth mostly rely on media, peers, school, & parents for information on marijuana.

- Common sources: Internet searches, social media, articles, advertisements, music
- Concerns of distrust and bias in all messages, especially those from:
 - Marijuana industry
 - Health educators
 - People who have never used marijuana

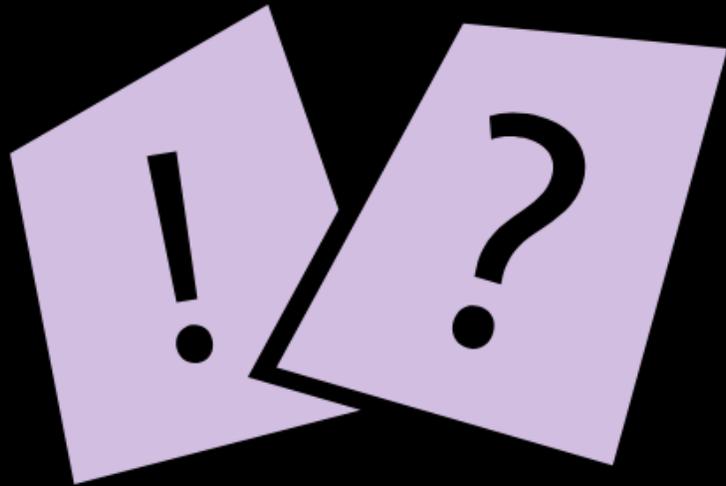


Opportunities for prevention



Information youth want

Youth want more unbiased information about marijuana.



- How does marijuana work?
 - Long-term personal effects
 - Short-term effects
- Research & evidence about marijuana risks & benefits

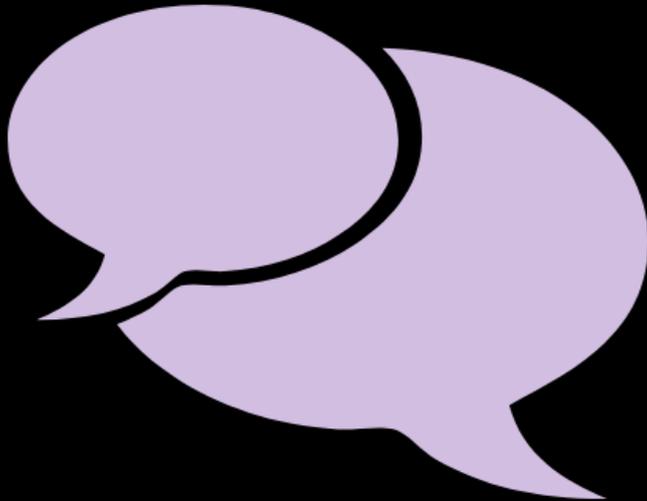


- ✿ Does it really help with stress?
- ✿ How long does it stay in my body?
- ✿ What are the before and after effects?
- ✿ What does it do to my body and brain?
- ✿ How does it make you feel?
- ✿ Why is it so addictive?
- ✿ Is cancer a side effect?
- ✿ What will it do to my lungs?



How to share risk messages

Youth want risk messages about marijuana shared in non-lecture formats.



- Give unbiased information so that youth can decide
- Engage youth in open discussions
- Provide personal testimonies from former users
- Present messages where youth will see them (magazines, social media)
- Do not impose shame or rely on fear tactics

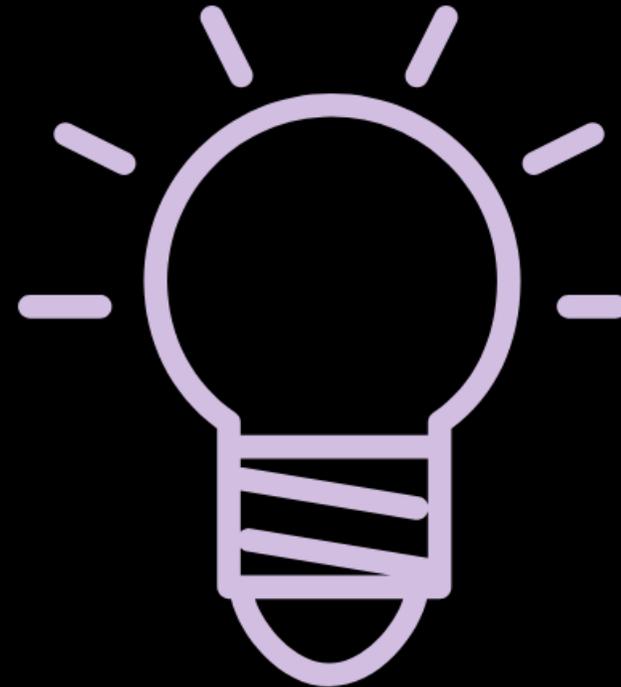


“ Adults have kind of exaggerated effects of marijuana to the point where teens want to exaggerate it in the other direction and say it’s harmless... which isn’t entirely true either. There aren’t a lot of people who are very realistic about what it can and can’t do.”



Youth proposed strategies

- Invest in youth who self-medicate: provide opportunities & help developing goals
- Broaden consequences beyond youth:
 - Penalize adults who sell
 - Increase prices and restrictions on marijuana advertisements



Limitations & Next Steps



Limitations

- Themes are not generalizable due to flexible recruitment process
- Results were analyzed as a whole, not by specific demographic groups
- Varying facilitation styles & abilities
- Social desirability among youth participants



Questions?



Participant Demographics

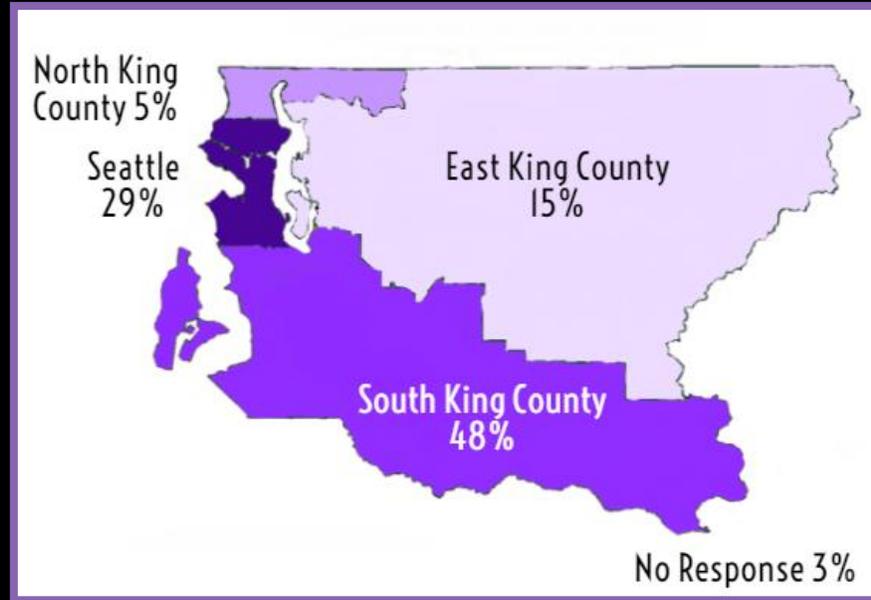


Contact information

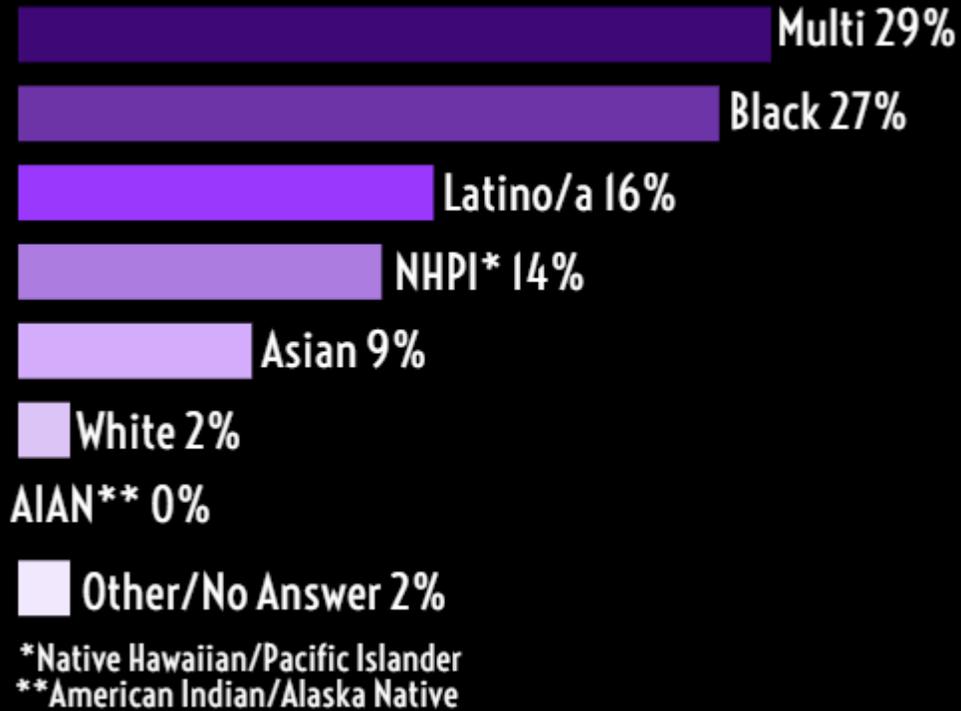
Lindsey Greto



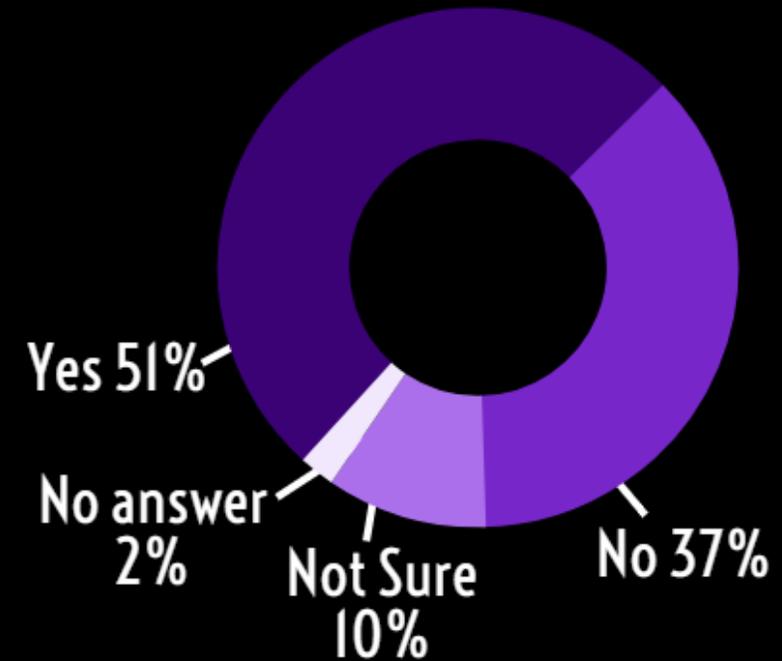
Geographic region



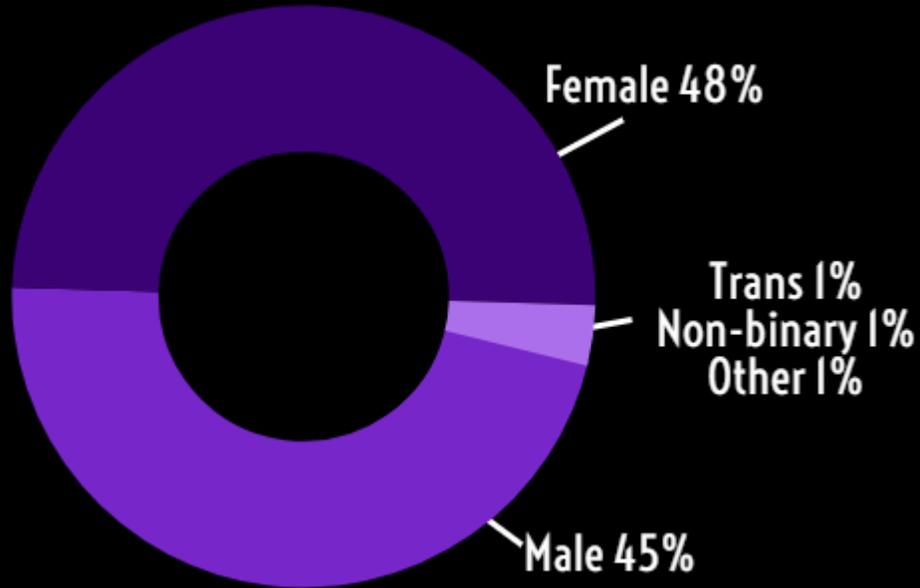
Race/ethnicity



Free/reduced lunch



Gender



Sexual orientation



The listening sessions were one step towards understand and taking action on youth perception of marijuana.



- Follow up with communities to confirm findings
- Test messages around marijuana prevention & education
- Determine what is needed for regional education efforts

Learn more & follow KC-YMPEP's work at www.kingcounty.gov/health/marijuana

