

IMPACT MONTEREY COUNTY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT: YOUTH EXPERIENCES & ASPIRATIONS

SURVEY OF 11th GRADERS IN MONTEREY COUNTY

United Way Monterey County

Impact Monterey County

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¹ Individuals who participated on these committees throughout this study are listed in the Appendices

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report on Monterey County youth surveyed in early 2015, is part of a nearly 2-year endeavor to collect and analyze data on the experiences and aspirations of residents of Monterey County. Researchers from California State University Monterey Bay's (CSUMB) Institute for Community Collaborative Studies (ICCS) worked with Impact Monterey County's (IMC) Data, Analysis & Research Team (DRAT) members to develop and then implement an Aspirations Survey of Monterey County residents as part of the Community Assessment of Monterey County (CAMC). The 86 question survey which was collected on 4,202 adults, was designed to collect information about the concerns and aspirations of Monterey County residents in the areas of education, economic self-sufficiency, and health in an effort to understand the most effective ways to improve the quality of life in the county. Likewise, and using the adult survey as a model, a survey aimed at youth was developed to tap into the perspectives and aspirations of this important subpopulation.

A total of 2,905 surveys were collected from January to March 2015 using online and paper survey instruments in English. Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents are female, which matches the percent in the population; 93% were aged 16 and 17 years; geographically, 56% (pop:44%) were from Salinas; 8% (Pop:12%) were from Peninsula/Big Sur, 9% (Pop:13.5%) were from Seaside/Marina, 22% (Pop:18.2%) were from south County, and 5% (11.3%) were residents of north County. These small differences between the survey group of mostly 16-17 year olds and the population figures for 15-19 year olds did not warrant the application of weighting the survey responses geographically. Indeed, none of the demographic distributions differed from population to a degree that weighting was necessary or desirable.

The majority (78%) of survey respondents reported they have lived in Monterey County for at least 10 years (same percentage as that of the adult residents surveyed). Racial/ethnic identification² showed that 51% consider themselves Hispanic, 23.6% identified themselves as white (not Hispanic), 3% as Black, 3.2% as Asian, 5.7% as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.1% as American Indian or Alaskan, and 8.2% reported that they were multi-racial.

Findings: Education aspirations

Nearly all of the youth (93%) indicated they would like to attain some level of college education/schooling after high school, with a majority of those reporting a goal of Master's Degree. Interestingly, this goal also ranked highest among the adult respondents. The main obstacles to pursuing further education are the perceived *cost of education* (58.3%) and *having to work* (44%). It is important to note that 25% said transportation is an obstacle to their pursuing higher education.

² Race and ethnicity answers were combined when it was discovered that a large number of Hispanic students considered their Hispanic ethnicity a race category and answered the race question with "other". While this does not match the Census figures for race, it is a more authentic presentation of the way students perceive themselves.

The main motivations for seeking higher education were *personal satisfaction* (60%), *better job opportunities* (58%) and *higher pay* (67%). These percentages are also in line with those the adults reported, with slightly more emphasis of youth on higher pay.

Forty nine (49) respondents said they are parents. Of these, only 7% said their child was cared for by licensed child care; 21% said they had no child care or relied only on themselves; 21% relied on friends, and 66% said they relied on family for child care.³ Though a small group, the teen parents in the survey represent the expected rate of teen pregnancy and parenthood in our county; further study of their aspirations could be valuable to determining ways to prevent and intervene in this important area. The top ranked themes when these students responded to “What Support Do Teen Parents Need?” were *financial support* (49%), *love, comfort and advice* (10%), and *child care* (10%)⁴.

Looking at the top ranked ways for improving educational opportunities, it was found that students suggested *scholarships, financial aid, and support for students* (15% mentioned this first); *more and varied classes, including smaller class size and one-on-one* (12%); *programs and clubs (including tutoring)* (10%); *better trained and dedicated teachers* (9%), *community resources and connections to community (including transportation)* (6%); *activities, fields trips, fun events, music, art*, (6%); *more guidance and information on education and career* (5%); *“hands-on, real life classes and internships* (4%), *better social climate at school* (4%); *more money to schools* (3%); *everything is OK* (3%); and *better books, supplies, physical surroundings* (3%)⁵. Other themes that emerged (all less than 2% of responders), were *easier classes, special schools, alternative learning strategies, increased access to technology, and flexible schedules*.

Findings: Economic aspirations

When asked what their career goals are, the top 8 occupations mentioned were at the professional level (requiring 4 to 12 years education post-high school). 60% of the youth mentioned one of these 8 goals. Overall, the top four goals are *doctor, criminal justice professional, nurse, and engineer*. Young men placed engineer in 1st place (12%), young women reported doctor as their top ranking goal, 15% reporting this as their career goal.

The survey also revealed that 14% of the youth are currently working, most of them in *food service/restaurant, retail/cashier, agriculture work, child care or tutoring, labor/construction, non-profit work, lifeguarding, working on cars, cleaning/maintenance, and general office work*. Also, thirty-six percent (36%) report that they volunteer in some capacity, with the most commonly reported venues being *church, sports/recreation, tutoring children, community events (i.e. Air*

³ Thirty-eight of the 49 teen parents answered the question regarding child care.

⁴ It is likely that the teen parents were less likely to cite child care as a need due to the proportion of them living with family.

⁵ These top 12 themes accounted for 80% of the answers from 1760 students who answered the open ended question with valid information.

Show), community organizations (i.e. Scouts), hospitals, general community service, outdoor cleanups, school clubs/ROTC, helping teachers and school staff, helping the homeless or elderly, and assisting a non-profit organization. An interesting perspective on aspirations might be gained by further analysis of the youth who are working and volunteering crossed by their career goals, and educational obstacles.

Findings: Health aspirations

Youth survey responses about the most *serious health concerns facing their generation*⁶ include the following (shown in rank order): **Obesity/overweight** (23%), **Pregnancy/STDs** (21%), **Drug and Alcohol Use and Abuse** (14%), **Cancer** (11%), **Diabetes** (8%), **Infectious Diseases** (7%), **Mental Health** (i.e. anxiety, depression) (4%), **Lack of exercise, fast food, unhealthy food** (3%), **Heart, stroke, high blood pressure** (1.5%), and **unhealthy effects of technology** (1%). These 10 themes account for over 90% of the answers of the youth.⁷ As indicated in bold, in comparing these to the answers of the adults, it is seen that 4 of these themes also reside in the top 6 themes of the adults; also it is important to note that the adults included violence and bullying in their top themes, while they are absent in this category for the youth. This may be due to different wording and structure of the “Most serious problem” questions on the Adult and Youth surveys. It is likely that youth did not categorize violence as a *health* problem but do see violence as a major problem; indeed, they voiced their concern in answer to the question “What are the most *serious problems* in your community?” with a majority of them mentioning gangs and violence.

Pregnancy and STDs were cited as the second most serious health concern for their generation by youth surveyed. When asked what could be done to help teens delay pregnancy, “first” answers showed that 22.3% suggested *contraceptives, free and easily available*, as their number one priority, followed by *educate and inform (including health classes, etc.)* (18.4%). Seven percent (7%) thought nothing could be done, but other suggestions in the top 8 themes were: *talk to someone, abstain, community programs (clinics/Planned Parenthood), more positive, fun, future-focused activities, and getting parents involved*.

Healthy eating and clean water are key to preventing overweight and obesity, the top health concerns cited by youth. When asked whether they had access to free drinking water at school, the majority said yes (75%). However it is suggested that further examination of these data inspect the 25% who reported “no” or preferred not to answer. Regarding access to healthy food, 11th graders reported it as available at home (87%), grocery store (68%) and school (30%) with smaller percentages citing restaurants (26%), family members’ homes (23%), and friends’ homes (20%).

⁶ It is interesting to note that the adult question tapped these concerns within the *community*, while the youth question’s context was more of a “future” view within the context of *generation*.

⁷ It is important to remind the reader that while slightly different methods of content analysis were employed in tallying themes for the adult surveys and youth surveys, the processes produce equivalent results, in terms of ranking of top themes.

Youth were asked how safe they felt in their communities, i.e., firstly, had they or any member of their family been *threatened or harmed physically* and secondly, been *treated unfairly by someone in their community in the past 12 months*. **About one in seven** respondents reported that *they or someone in their family had been threatened or harmed*, and **about one in three** reported being treated unfairly because of *race/ethnicity* (63%), somewhat fewer because of *language* (42%) and others because of *income* (34%) and *age* (31%). These indicators of feeling safe were stronger in the youth survey group than the adults, perhaps reflective of the levels of violence and gang activity among the younger segments of the population in our county. Feeling safe and not harassed at school are important to daily life for youth. The survey asked them *In the past 12 months, have you or any of your friends been physically threatened, harmed, or bullied by someone at school?* The definition of ‘bullying’ was intentionally left out of this question. 26% or **about 1 in four** said yes, a percentage considerably higher than the 15% who reported harm in the community, indicating that the addition of ‘bullying’ broadened this perception of harm.

In terms of their physical health, interestingly, a majority (70%) of respondents indicated that the most important factor that *helps (or would help) them to exercise regularly* is their desire to *stay healthy*, followed by nearly that percentage who said they were motivated by their *body image*, and about half who said the motivating factor is *exercising with family and friends*. Having enough time was checked by 42%, followed by *having access and ability to afford gym facilities and classes* (40%). Differing in value to the adults (58%), 28% of youth said that *having a safe neighborhood is a factor*. The responses to this item may be blurred by the real risk youth perceive and have experienced, which is higher than adults. Perhaps more adults perceive that they have a safe neighborhood. The aspect of whether they “would” be motivated cannot be pulled apart from the aspect of whether they DO feel safe. This is an important area for further investigation.

Responses to questions about sources of health information are interesting. Youth report that *physician* (51%), *internet* (37%), and *family or friends* (35%) are their top sources for information. It is important to note that, although *education/information* is the #2 means suggested for preventing teen pregnancy, only 2% of youth said that is where they usually get health information, perhaps indicating that these sources are currently lacking in what is needed, or that the education and information efforts required need to be broadened.

Findings: Overall community experiences and aspirations of youth

Five open-ended questions concluded the survey. Youth were asked to express in their own words their views on *What are the most serious problems facing your community* and *What could be done to make your community a safer place?* In addition, more youth-focused questions tapped *What can be done to make school a safer place to be?*, *What can be done to give teens a voice in the community?*, and *What can be done to support teens?* (the latter two elicited some of the same themes).

Most serious problems were related by 90% of the respondents as *Gangs, Gang Violence, Shootings, Homicides* (58%), *Drugs and Alcohol* (7%), *no problems* (7%), *Crime, Robberies, Car*

accidents (6%), drought, weather, water (5%), lack of community resources (places for teens, public services), poverty, high cost of living (3%), and poor education (3%). Because of the presence of *No problems* in the top 8 themes of the overall group, and because we know these answers reflect a wide range of communities in our county, it would be useful to disaggregate these data by geographic area in order to target interventions or efforts where most needed.

This is also the case when examining the themes which emerged from *What can be done to make your community a safer place?* The presence of *nothing can be done* and *safe enough now* compel us to want to dig deeper in order to take action in the “right” places”. Looking at youth responses to this latter question, top themes are: *more police and suppression, getting people involved, community action, programs, activities, neighborhood watch; prevention and suppression of gangs specifically; nothing can be done; more security equipment; improved physical environment in neighborhoods, reduced exposure to drugs; and safe enough now.* When these themes are examined in the subgroup of youth who reported being harmed in the past 12 months, a slightly different picture emerges—the theme *safe enough now* drops out and their top themes include *better qualified police who respond to community better and enforcing curfew.*

Answers to making school a safer place held similar themes, though all connected in some way to the school environment. Overall themes (in rank order) were: *Anti-bullying programs, teamwork and unity at school level; already safe; more and better school supervisors; enforce rules better and impose consequences; nothing can be done; more cops and security guards; more security equipment; teachers who listen and care (and don’t have favorites), people acting “nicer, friendlier, more respectful”; and removing violators from school setting.* When these themes are examined in the subgroup of youth who reported being harmed or bullied at school in the past 12 months, again, a slightly different picture emerges—the themes *safe enough now* and *removing violators* drop out and their top themes include *activities, speakers, clubs and counseling and support,* lending support to a more positive, ‘school climate’ approach to solving the problem.

Hearing the voices of youth, who comprise not only an important segment of our population currently, but also speak to our future as a community, is key to the kind of community assessment and action inherent in IMC. Two questions in the youth survey sought to provide our effort with teen perspectives and thoughts on how teens can be given a voice in the community and how they can best be supported. Two themes emerged in the responses to both of these questions: *“listen to us, show respect, treat us as equals”; and “teach us how to lead and give us decision making experiences”.* Emerging from the “voice” question was the important theme of *use media to create and distribute teen ideas.* From the ‘support’ question, the top themes are *improve, create and increase programs, activities and services for teens, (including clubs and sports); always be there to provide support guidance and caring; and give teens opportunities in education and jobs.*

As also seen in the adult survey, youth said they like their community because of:

- *People – family, friends, “friendly”, “kind”;*
- *Nature – “beach”, ‘beauty’, ‘weather’, ‘open space’;*

In addition the following themes emerged:

- *it's safe, peaceful, quiet, calm.*
- *(there is nothing I like)*
- *Places to go are nearby – parks, shops, restaurants, libraries*
- *It feels like a small town---everyone knows everyone*
- *School, sports, community activities and support, “ways to be active”*
- *It just feels good – “nice”, “comfortable”, “I love it”*
- *Agriculture is here – “rural”, “fresh food”*

In order to look at these assets and concerns in a more useful way, examining these themes by geographic region would be worthwhile.

Methods

In general, methods applied to the Youth Survey mirror those used for the Adult survey collection of primary data. A statistical package (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS) was used to clean, edit, and label variables and generate frequencies of all items. Data transformations and recoding was conducted in SPSS. The full primary data analysis report provides an overview of responses to both the closed ended survey questions and the themes derived from content analysis of the open-ended items.

Questionnaire design, selection of participants, and data collection

The Youth Survey was based on the Adult Survey which had come into being under the oversight and leadership of the IMC DRAT Committee. To create a survey more appropriate to youthful respondents, IMC created a Youth Engagement Committee to oversee and modify the survey questions. With the assistance of MCOE and the superintendents of school districts in Monterey County, it was arranged that administration of the surveys would take place in the 11th grade classrooms of all districts between January and February of 2015. This time frame was extended to March, and the result was a collection of 2,905 surveys, a remarkable data collection success. All surveys were completed in English and were input to Survey Monkey. United Way staff converted the responses to Excel, which provided input to SPSS for analysis.

Recommendations

Neighborhoods and communities vary throughout our county, and most of daily life takes place at this local level. As mentioned in each section above, there are valuable trends in both experiences and aspirations that may emerge through further analysis of these data by area of residence. It may also be instructive to examine results by ethnicity, given the importance of cultural sensitivity to Education, Income, and Health, IMC's areas of focus.

Furthermore, these data are rich in information that has not yet been examined in a multivariate fashion. Because of the “overlapping” nature of education, health, and income -- that they are not mutually-exclusive -- and because the purpose of the next steps for IMC are aimed at collective impact, it would be useful to look at sub groups of youth across these three areas.

It should be noted that the response rate to open-ended questions was quite high for a survey of this type. It is recommended that this momentum be sustained and that feedback be provided to youth (and adults) in a widespread, timely, and accurate way.

FULL REPORT

SECTION 1 ~ Introduction

Background

In the summer 2013, the United Way of Monterey County (UWMC) invited proposals from evaluators to conduct a Community Assessment of Monterey County (CAMC). This assessment would gather information about Monterey County residents from existing population studies and survey the views of a cross-section of county residents about their current quality of life and their opinions about how to improve life in our county.

To this end, faculty researchers from California State University Monterey Bay's (CSUMB) Institute for Community Collaborative Studies (ICCS) were selected to work directly with Impact Monterey County's (IMC) Data, Research and Analysis Team (DRAT) to (a) compile and analyze existing data from local community reports and state and national population studies, and (b) conduct a survey of Monterey County residents to determine their aspirations for improving the quality of life in our region.

Subsequent to the primary data collection on adults, a similar endeavor took place for youth, carried out by IMC and a specially formed Youth Committee. With similar aims, this data collection took place from January to March 2015.

Results from the adult survey, youth survey, and the Community Conversations will be compiled into an overall Community Assessment, which will lay the basis for a community-wide strategic action plan.

Purpose

This research project, and its subsequent phases was envisioned by the Impact Monterey County (IMC) Steering Committee (SC) to provide relevant information – including their experiences and future aspirations – about county residents for a Community Assessment. Results from the adult survey, youth survey, and the Community Conversations will be compiled into an overall Community Assessment, which will lay the basis for a county-wide multi-sectorial collaborative group of community leaders to create a common agenda and action plan regarding the most important areas to focus on to improve education, economic self-sufficiency and health over the next decade.

Impact Monterey County

CORE VALUES - I C A R E

INCLUSIVENESS: Reflect the residents of Monterey County in terms of the demographic, geographic, and socio-economic makeup of the study's participants

COURAGE: Ensure that the results of the study will lead to collective action

ACCEPTANCE: Accept and be open to all ideas that are expressed and uncovered during the study

RESPECT: Honor each participant's perspective and treat all with dignity

EVIDENCE: Be unbiased and thorough in the interpretation and dissemination of study data and results

GOALS

ASSESS: To assess and measure important community needs

COLLABORATE: To identify other community assessments and use existing data to ensure efficiencies and to streamline CAMC

ALIGN: To align stakeholders toward common goals and measurements that improve conditions for all

IMPLEMENT/TAKE ACTION: To establish a common agenda for addressing specific issues impacting communities throughout Monterey County and to take actionable steps toward accomplishing said agenda

MEASURE/SUSTAIN: To establish a plan to measure progress made toward common agenda and to continue the assessment process at regular intervals going forward

SECTION 2 ~ Methods

Overview

To successfully collect the required information, the Data Research and Analysis Team was formed, comprised of community leaders and partnering agency employees with expertise in research and evaluation and one or more of the three areas being addressed. Institute researchers collaborated with IMC Data, Research and Analysis Team (DRAT) members to respond to the following questions, "What are the experiences of Monterey County residents in the areas under study?" and "What are the aspirations of Monterey County residents in terms of improving living conditions in Monterey County related to the areas under study?" Institute researchers worked closely with the DRAT to examine data from a variety of sources and then to develop and implement the survey with input from the IMC Steering and Engagement Committees. As mentioned earlier, the collection of data on youth in Monterey County took place a few months after the primary data collection on adults.

Youth Survey Primary data analysis methodology

Questionnaire design, selection of participants, and data collection

The Youth Survey was designed based on desired scope from the adult survey, with special attention being given to crafting and rewording items, as appropriate, for a teen group of respondents.

The selection of participants for the survey followed a convenience sampling approach, with the added advantage of targeting one grade of students within the County system, thereby achieving a sample that is the universe of 11th graders in our County.

The survey included closed-ended questions that provided respondents with answer options for a specific question ("*pick the option that best describes your opinion*" or "*select all the options that apply for the list below*") and open-ended questions that included a comment box in which respondents could write unlimited responses in their own words.

In the analysis, closed-ended item (quantitative) responses are expressed in percentages. All quantitative analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0.

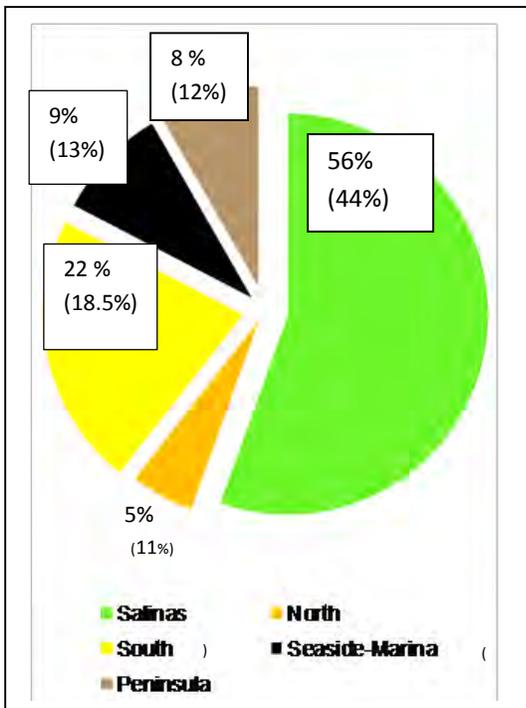
Open-ended item (qualitative) responses were analyzed first using NVIVO version 10, to get an initial 'snapshot' of word frequencies from Word Clouds. Following this step, standard content analysis was conducted on all of the answers to open-ended questions, deriving the highest frequency themes evident in what was written. Often, a respondent would write things that comprised more than one theme. All themes were noted and tallied. In order to retain the theme information by respondent in the analyzable dataset, new variables for each open-ended question

were created to hold a value for the “first theme” mentioned.⁸ In this way, frequency distributions by theme could be generated. Although, on one hand, this reduces the data to one theme per person, it also allows for this valuable information to be examined by different subgroups, particularly by geographic region.

Survey Responses

A total of 2893 questionnaires were completed and converted for analysis. Of the total number of surveys completed, 2831 were identified as having valid Monterey County zip codes. This set of 2831 surveys was the basis for the analysis of responses to closed and open-ended questions.

Figure 1 shows the distribution by region of residence of the surveyed youth compared to the population of 15-19 year olds (in parentheses) in Monterey County (U.S. Census 2010).

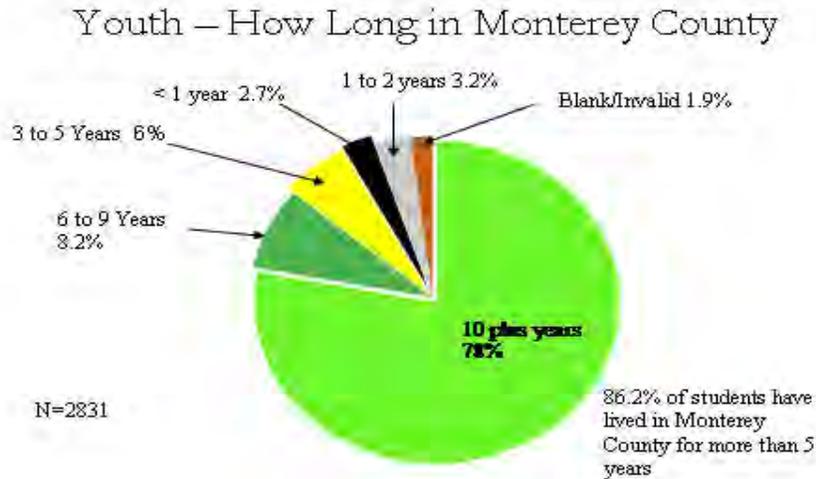


The proportion of survey responses from each of the 5 defined regions of residence were similar enough to the population figures that weighting was not warranted.

Respondent Demographics

Ninety percent of the youth are 16 or 17 years of age; 100% are 11th graders in a Monterey County school district school. Respondents’ gender and ethnicity proportions while not strictly matching those of the population data, were adequate for analyses to proceed without weighting – 48% are female; 51% identify themselves as Hispanic; 23.6% are White; 8.2% identify themselves as multi-racial; followed by nearly 6% as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3.2% as Asian, 3.0% as Black or African American, and 2.1% as American Indian/Alaskan. The majority (78%) of survey respondents reported they have lived in Monterey County for at least 10 years. (See figure below).

⁸ This process is based on the assumption that the first thing (theme) written in response to the open-ended question is the most important to the respondent.



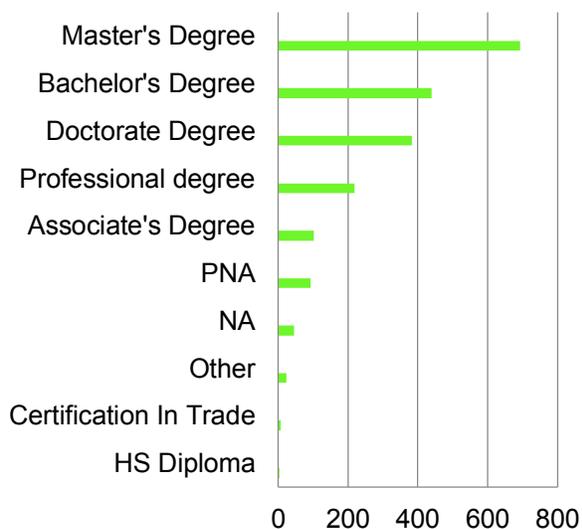
SECTION 3 ~ Findings

Aspirations and Experiences Related to Education

Educational aspirations

Respondents were first asked about the highest level of education they would like to achieve. A clear majority (90.3%) responded that they are currently planning to continue their education after high school. Of these, most (29%) would like a Master’s degree, followed by 18% who would like a Bachelor’s degree and 16% who aspire to a Doctoral degree. A professional degree, which includes seeking an M.D., is the goal of 9%, and 4 % indicated wanting and Associate’s degree (2 years). These intentions are ambitious ones, and are in line with the career goals reported.

Highest level of education you seek (in rank order)



What is your career goal? (Top 8)

- Doctor – 10%
- Criminal Justice Professional – 9%
- Nurse – 9%
- Engineer – 7%
- Business, Finance – 5%
- Social Worker/Psychologist – 5%
- Computer Science – 5%
- Teacher – 4%

The main obstacles to pursuing further education are the *cost of education* (58.3%) and *having to work* (44%). Ranking third in importance, 25% (one in four) of the youth reported that transportation is an obstacle to their pursuing higher education.

Career Goals by Gender

Inspired by Youth Engagement Committee interest, the rankings of career goals were broken down by gender, resulting in the following ‘top 12’ for each gender.

♀ Nurse – 15%
 Doctor – 13%
 Criminal Justice Professional – 10%
 Social Worker/Psychologist – 8%
 Teacher – 6%
 Artist, Designer – 4%
 Business, Finance – 4%
 Health Technician, Assistant – 4%
 Veterinarian – 4%
 Media (Journalism, Broadcast) – 3%
 Physical Therapist – 3%
 Lawyer – 3%

♂ Engineer – 12%
 Criminal Justice Professional – 10%
 Computer Science – 8%
 Auto Mechanic – 8%
 Professional Athlete – 7%
 Business, Finance – 7%
 Doctor – 6%
 Military – 4%
 Music – 4%
 Artist, Designer – 3%
 Agriculture – 3%
 Media (Journalism, Broadcast) – 3%

While they are ranked differently by young men and women, it is important for IMC, especially the educators, employers, and community organizations in our County, to notice the professions that are in the top 12 career goals of both sexes (in black above): *Doctor; Criminal Justice Professional; Business, Finance; Artist, Designer; and Media.*

Feeling Safe at School

Youth were asked if, in the last 12 months, they or a friend had been threatened, harmed or bullied at school.⁹ Overall, 26.2% reported that they had. Clearly, feeling safe in one’s learning environment, is an important factor to educational engagement and success. The Youth Engagement Committee felt it was important to include this question, which has been an established item on the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) for some time. Probing for this information and asking open-ended questions about possible solutions afforded in-depth information on youth perceptions and experiences concerning this important influence on their daily life in school.

Following content analysis resulting in all of the themes residing in the responses to *What can be done to make your school a safe place to be* and running frequency distributions on these, it was suggested by the Youth Committee that these data would be more useful if the ranking of themes of *the students who had been hurt in the past year* were the ones that were examined. In short, what are the *aspirations* for a safer school environment of those who have *experienced* harm?

⁹ The term “bullied” was not defined in the survey; responses reflect individual perceptions of what bullying means.

This analysis produced the following list, in rank order, of the priorities of these students (N=378).

Please tell us what can be done to make your school a safer place to be.

Themed responses of those who had been harmed in past year.

Top 10 Themes in Rank Order

1. “Anti-bullying” programs, teamwork and unity at school (15.3%)
2. Nothing can be done (5th on overall list) (14.6%)
3. Enforce rules better and impose consequences (8.7%)
4. More and better school supervisors (8.2%)
5. Teachers who listen and care and don’t have favorites (8th on overall list) (7.1%)
6. Individuals act “nicer”, “friendlier”, more respectful (9th on overall list) (6.3%)
7. More cops, guards (5.8%)
8. Activities, speakers, clubs (5.3%)
9. More security – cameras, etc. (4.5%)
10. Counseling and support (4.5%)

Clearly, the context of one’s particular community is an important influence on how safe a *school* environment is perceived and experienced. The themes above gives a snapshot of the common threads regarding school safety from students across the county who have experienced harm. Further examination of these themes by residence area might provide valuable additional information to educators, community leaders, and people working with youth in the diverse areas of the county.

Throughout the County, students feel that anti-bullying type programs and greater teamwork and unity at school (in short, a better school climate) are efforts that could make a difference. An important future analysis might be to cross-tabulate survey information for the students who feel “nothing can be done” in order to better understand this apparent hopelessness about their school environments.



What Can Be Done to Improve Educational Opportunities in your community?

The aspirations apparent in the themes that emerged from this open-ended question touch on the reality of the costs of education, its connection to the community, the competence of the teachers

and staff, the variety of the experiences young people have within their schools, and its relevance to their future lives.

The top ten themes reflect the answers of 82% of the youth who answered this question with interpretable¹⁰ information (Valid answers were given by nearly 70% of the youths surveyed). In light of the discussion concerning feeling safe at school and what can be done about it, it may be important to note the placement of “better social climate” in 8th place of educational themes. Themes not shown contained less than 2 % each of the respondents’ answers.

Scholarships, Financial Aid and support to <i>students</i> – 15%
Classes – more, varied, ‘hands-on’, electives, smaller – 15%
Clubs and programs (including tutoring) – 10%
Teachers – better trained and dedicated – 9%
Community resources and connections, including transportation – 6%
Activities, field trips, fun, creative events – 6%
Guidance and information on education and career – 4%
Better social climate at school – 3%
More money to <i>schools</i> – 3%
(Everything is OK – 3%)
Physical surroundings and supplies need improvement - 2%

The content analysis method used for the youth responses to improving education provided more themes than were isolated on the adult survey. However, it is valuable to examine the overlap of the themes that emerged on both. The main adult themes were *providing more and better classes and programs, supporting existing teachers and recruiting new good teachers, and supporting, guiding and motivating students or children*. All three of the adult themes reside among the more specific themes that were suggested by the youth.

Summary of aspirations in the area of education

The findings show that youth place a high value on education. With over 90% of the youth setting their sights on higher education and one in four of this number seeking a Master’s degree (6 years schooling post-high school), it can be seen that there are potential scholars and professionals in our school system. At the same time, there are youth who want their education to be more “hands-on”, provide them with life and work skills in high school and who have set their sights on less post-high school education. For all, there are realities of cost, work obligations, family obligations, and transportation needs that affect their future goals.

¹⁰ On this, as well as all open-ended question responses, answers which were clearly not relevant to the question and those that were illegible, unclear, or offensive were deleted from the analysis. Researchers took care to research words that were not familiar to them before removing a response from analysis.

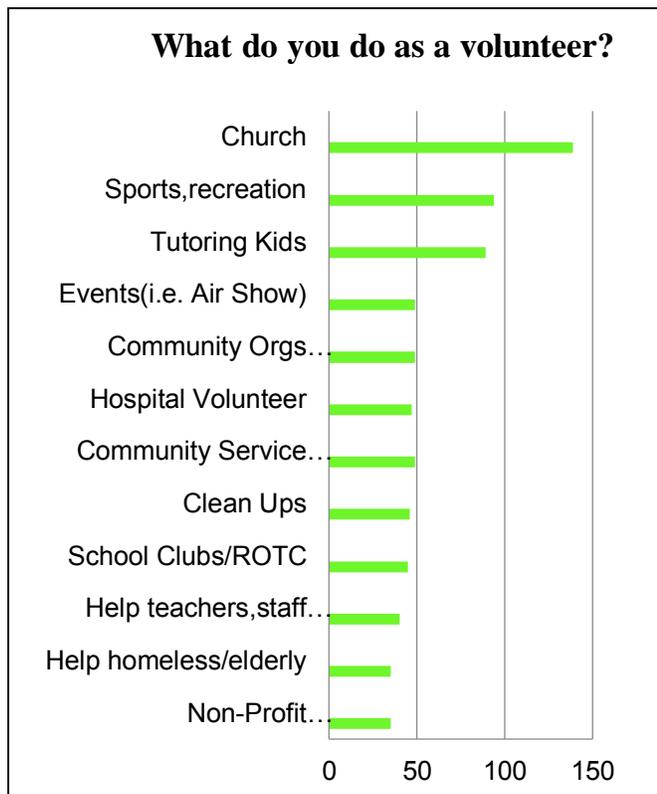
The motivations for pursuing a higher level of education are reflected in the responses to six factors on a close-ended question. Nearly 70% reported that they were motivated by the prospect of a *higher income* (this was a higher percentage than in the adult survey group). Next was *personal satisfaction* (60%), *job opportunities* (59%), *family expectations* (44%), and *more independence* (42%). It is interesting to acknowledge the aspiration of adults for their children’s education and see it reflected in the perceptions of the youth with regard to their family’s expectations. More than 70% of adult respondents with children would like their children to get a bachelor’s degree or higher, 65% of 11th graders told us that is also their goal and 44% of the youth cite family expectations as an important motivator.

Aspirations and experiences related to Income/Economic Self-Sufficiency

The information gathered on youth experiences and aspirations regarding income was, naturally, less abundant than that gathered from adults. However, it is important to examine some of current experiences of youth that may affect their financial success/self-sufficiency in the future and also to restate in this section some of the findings already presented.

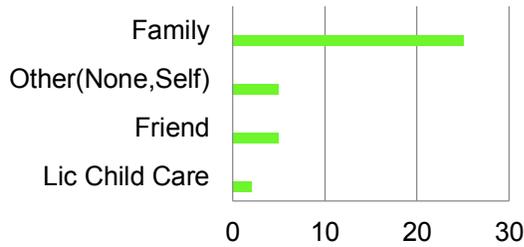
Do you currently have a paid job?	
405 students of 2849 valid responses (14.2%) reported having paid	
Top 10 Job Categories in Rank Order	
1.	Food Service/Restaurant/Hostess
2.	Retail/Cashier
3.	Agriculture Related
4.	Child Care/Teaching
5.	Labor/Construction
6.	Work for Non-Profit
7.	Lifeguard
8.	Cars/Mechanic
9.	Cleaning/Maintenance
10.	General Office

About 15% of the youth are currently working in some capacity; over a third volunteer in some way, either through church, school, community organization, club, or independently.

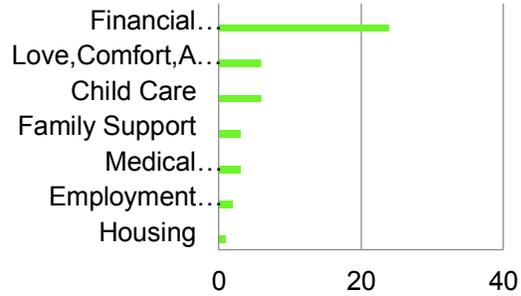


Forty nine students, or nearly 2%, are teen parents, and have the additional responsibilities of parenthood. Financial support was expressed as a serious need by these youth.

Who provides child care to teen parents?



What kind of support do teen parents need?



This group of youth expressed the most compelling needs for financial and personal support. Though a small group, the fact that they are responsible for care of young children, makes their situation especially important. Two-thirds of them expressed needs for financial support, including food stamps and other income-assistance, followed by wanting “love, comfort, and advice” (16%) and child care (16%). Most of the teen parents rely on family (66%) and themselves (or have none) (13%) for child care. The lower ranking of need for child care under support needed probably reflects that most teen parents are residing with family.

Aspirations for future income are reflected in the answers youth gave to what motivates them to pursue higher education. As mentioned earlier, nearly 70% reported that higher income is a motivation. Job opportunities was indicated as a motivator by 60%.

Aspirations and experiences related to Health

Youth were asked to respond to the open-ended question *what do you think are the most serious health concerns facing your generation?* Adults had been asked a similar question, with the context of “community” rather than generation and were given a checklist of concerns, with an option to provide more information in an “Other” category. Despite the differences in data collection, there is consensus between youth and adults on important health issues in our population. (Note: Items in red are common to both youth and adults.)

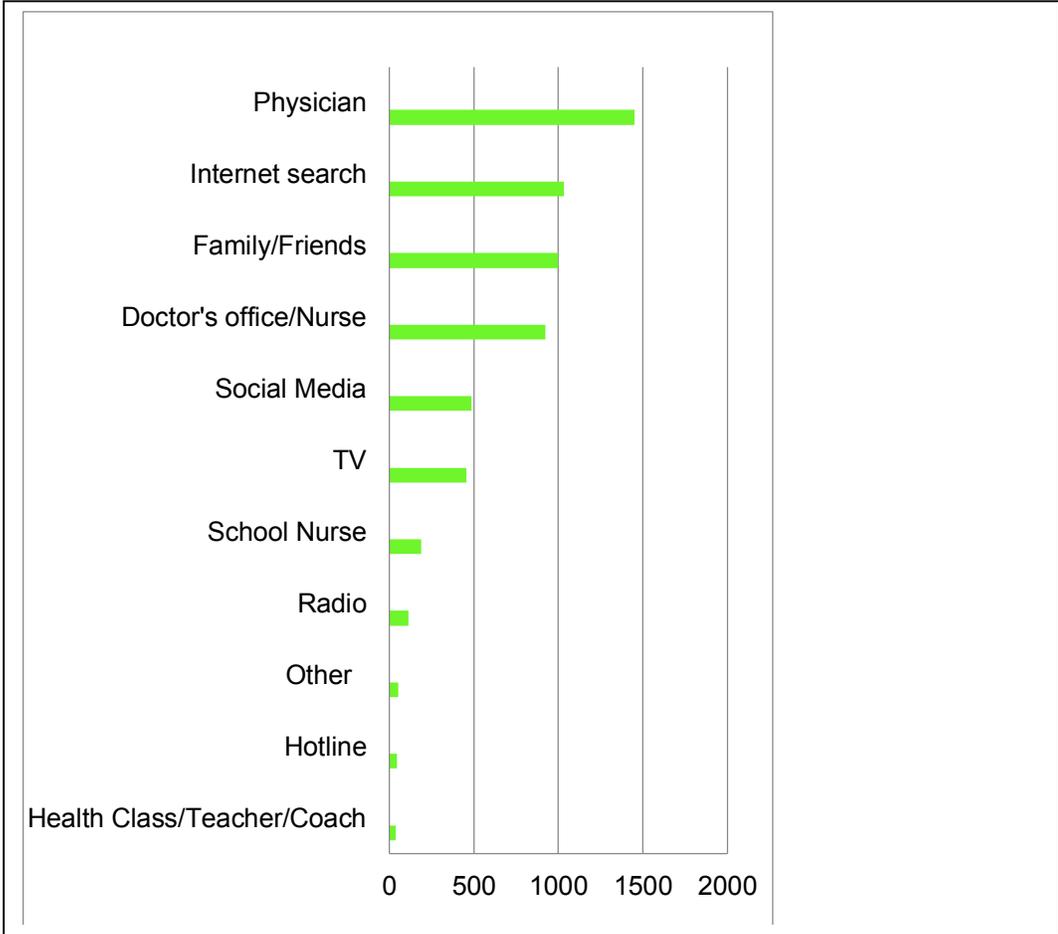
Top 8 Themes of Youth in Rank Order

1. **Overweight/Obesity – 23%**
2. **Pregnancy/STDs (STD,STI,AIDS) - 21%**
3. **Drug Abuse – Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco – 14%**
4. **Cancer – 11.4%**
5. **Diabetes – 8.2%**
6. **Infectious Disease (i.e. Ebola, measles)- 6.9%**
7. **Mental Health – Depression, Anxiety – 4%**
8. **Lack of Exercise, Unhealthy Food, Fast Food – 3.2%**

What Adults Said: (Top 6)

1. **Street or gang violence**
2. **Overweight/Obesity**
3. **Lack of Exercise**
4. **Alcohol Abuse (esp. Underage)**
5. **Drug Abuse**
6. **Bullying among children/teens**

The top three sources for getting health information reported by youth are physician (51%), internet search (37%) and family or friends (35%). It is interesting that while youth indicated the importance of education and information to preventing teen pregnancy, the rank of *health class/teacher/coach* was lowest as a source of health information.

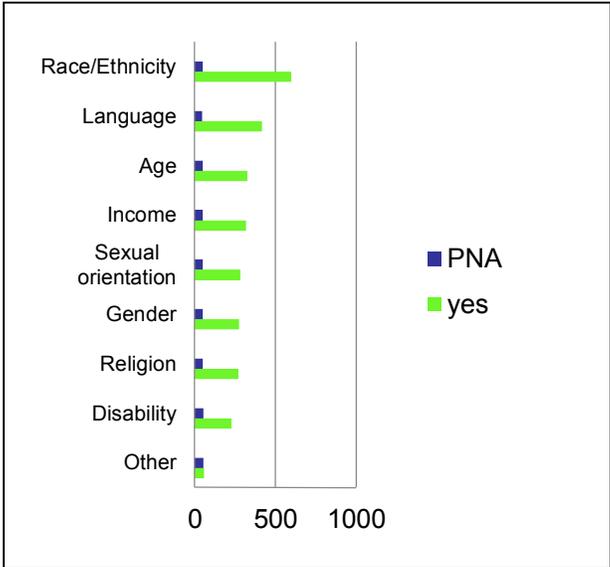


As mentioned earlier, *pregnancy and STDs* was reported as a serious health concern by youth (2nd place). When asked what could be done to help teens delay pregnancy, the most frequent “first response” was *contraceptives- free, easily available*. Nearly as frequent was *educate and inform*, including mention of building more awareness, having presentations by teen parents themselves, and having health classes that approach this more effectively.

What Could be Done to Prevent Teen Pregnancy?

- Top 8 Themes of Youth in Rank Order
1. Contraception/Safe Sex (Free condoms, Easy and anonymous access) (22.3%)
 2. Educate and Inform (Show us, Tell us, Awareness) (18.4%)
Sex Ed and health classes, teen parent presentations, access to information
 3. Nothing Can be done - "personal choice" – (7.3%)
 4. Talk to someone (7.1%)
 5. Abstain-wait until later – (6.5%)
 6. Community programs (i.e. Planned parenthood and Postpone, clinics, programs and workshops) (5.3%)
 7. Activities and focus on future (3.3%)
 8. Get parents involved (3.2%)

Youth were asked whether they or any member of their family (living in Monterey County) had been *treated unfairly by someone in their community in the past 12 months*, based on a set of identified demographic characteristics. 955 (34%) of those surveyed answered 'yes' to experiencing unfair treatment due to one or more of these characteristics. Over two thirds of these reported being treated unfairly due to race/ethnicity (63%) and slightly more than half reported that language was the factor. Income and age were indicated as a factors in being treated unfairly by 34% of those citing unfair treatment.



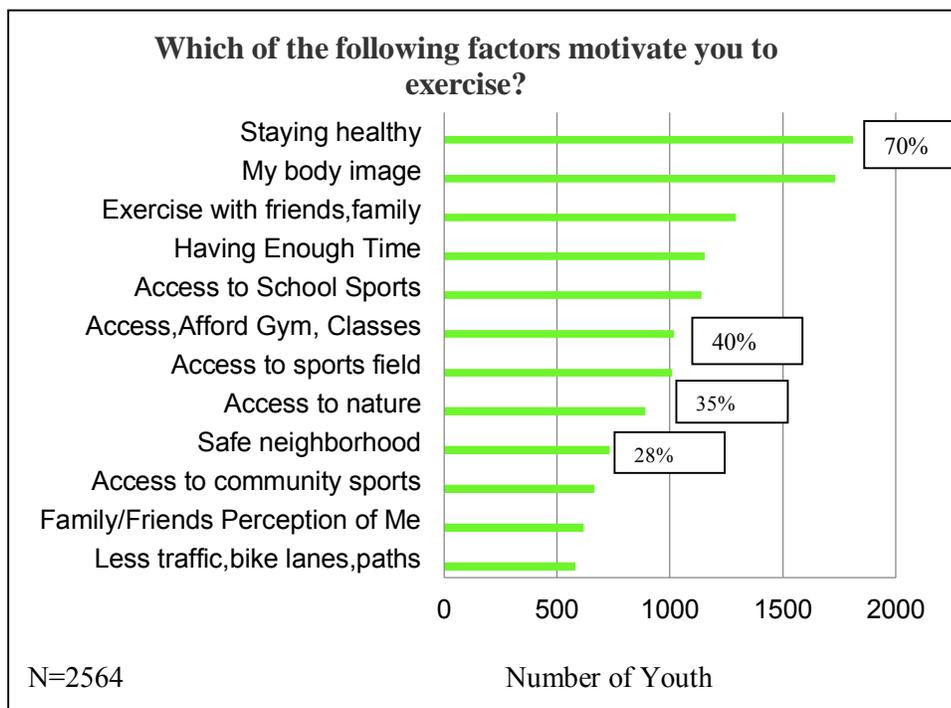
(PNA = Preferred not to answer)

Feeling Safe - - Living in a safe community is an important factor contributing to promoting health. To determine how safe youth felt in their communities and at school, the survey asked if they or any member of their family (living in Monterey County) had been *threatened or harmed physically* by someone in their community in the past 12 months. About one in seven youth reported that they or someone in their family had been threatened or harmed by someone in their community.

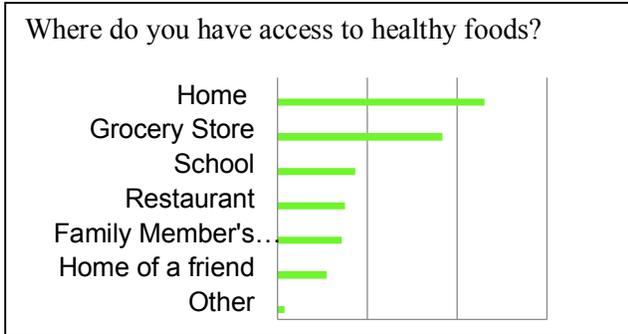
Risk of and perceived risk of physical harm is an important factor in health. As mentioned earlier, 15% of youth said they had been threatened or physically harmed in their community in the past 12 months. When asked what could be done to make the community safer, top themes emerged: *more police and suppression; getting people involved, community action, programs, activities, neighborhood watch; prevention and suppression of gangs specifically; nothing can be done; more security equipment; improved physical environment in neighborhoods and reduced exposure to drugs; and safe enough now*. When these themes are examined in the subgroup of youth who reported being harmed in the past 12 months, a slightly different picture emerges— the theme ‘safe enough now’ drops out and their top themes include *better qualified police who respond to community better and enforcing curfew*. Because the communities in our County vary a great deal on levels of violence and how safe residents feel, it behooves us to look deeper at the experiences and aspirations present in the survey data by area of residence.

Exercise and Healthy Eating

To find out what youth do to work towards a healthy lifestyle, respondents were asked to indicate *what helps (or would help) you to exercise regularly?* Interestingly, the most important factor reported is wanting to *stay healthy* (70%), followed by *body image* (67%) and about half who said a motivating factor is *exercising with family or friends* (50%). *Having enough time* was checked by 42% followed by *having access and being able to afford gym facilities and classes* (40%) While 58% of the adults had checked *safe neighborhoods*, just 28% of the youth indicated this as a factor. The responses to this item may be blurred by the real risk, evident in other responses that youth perceive and have experienced. This is an area that should be examined crossed by other youth characteristics and responses to gain further understanding.



It is interesting that both adults (44%) and youth (35%) had an appreciation for *access to nature* (44%) as a motivating factor, especially given the responses to what they like about living here, to be presented later.



Overall, youth feel that they have access to healthy foods *at home* (87%), *at the grocery store* (68%) and *at school* (30%). The much lower percentage attached to access at school may indicate an area for further examination.

Another critical aspect of healthy eating is the availability of free drinking water. When asked if free drinking water were available at school, 75% reported “yes”. It is important, however, to look at the 20% (one in five) who said “no” and the nearly 5% who preferred not to answer.

Challenges, Assets and Aspirations

The responses to two open-ended questions from the youth survey are discussed in this section as they allow for showing a comparison of what are seen as problems or challenges and what are seen as the good things about the community. Youth were asked what they saw as the most serious problems facing their community. It is not surprising that *Gangs, gang violence, shootings, homicide* was the theme with the most responses, given the tragic levels of violence in some of our communities.

It is interesting, though, also to note that *No problems* emerged as a theme in 3rd place in this analysis of student responses, showing us that 7% (137 students) have a 180 degree difference in their view of their community from those with the serious problem of violence. This causes reflection on the question of how community is defined by the youth answering these questions and this, of course, varies by individual. Analysis of these important qualitative data by area of residence and other characteristics of youth can be very helpful to the next steps of strategic planning and action.

What are the most serious problems?

Top 8 Themes in Rank Order

1. Gangs, Gang Violence, Shootings, Homicides (57.8%)
2. Drugs and Alcohol (7.0%)
3. No problems (6.6%)
4. Crime, Robberies, General Lack of Safety, Car Accidents (6.1%)
5. Drought, weather, water (5.1%)
6. Lack of community resources -services for physical environment, lack of places, activities for teens (4.1%)
7. Poverty, High Cost of Living, Unemployment (3.1%)
8. Poor education and value of education (2.6%)

What do you like most?

Top 9 Themes in Rank Order

1. People – Friends, family, neighbors “nice”, “friendly”, “kind” – 20%
2. Nature – “beach”, “beauty”, “weather”, “open space”, “mountains” – 18.5%
3. Safe, Peaceful, Calm, Quiet – 15.3%
4. There is nothing I like – 11.4%
5. Places to go are nearby– parks, shops, libraries, restaurants – 9.0%
6. “Small Town” – everyone knows everyone, “grew up here” – 8.0%
7. School, Sports, Community activities and support, community offers “ways to be active” – 7.0%
8. It just feels good– nice, comfortable, I love it – 4.4%
9. Agriculture, “rural”, “good food”, “fresh food” – 3.1%

Over 90% of the responses are accounted for in each of these ranked lists. There were 1958 (70%) valid responses on the “problems” question and 2071 (73%) on the “like” question.

These findings suggest something important about the young people of our communities. Despite the seriousness of gang violence in some of our communities, they recognize that most people are not behaving like gangs. In fact, to the contrary, the biggest asset mentioned is the “people” of the community. – not only does community hold friends and family that are valued but people are “neighborly, “nice”, “friendly”, “kind”. This perception comes from experience, not opinion. Another interesting thread is that, despite the problem of gangs, there are enough communities in our county that are so “safe, quiet, calm and peaceful” that youth mention it as a top reason they like it here.

Nature and weather, as might be expected, present residents with both benefits and problems. It is also interesting to note that community resources and activities appears as both a problem and as an assets, showing the variation of our communities on these assets and the importance of these resources to community life. Again further analysis of these themes by residence area would be instructive.

Teens in the larger community

At the end of the survey, two open-ended questions tapped youth perceptions of *how can teens be given a voice in the community*, and *how the community best support teens can*. Apparently, these two questions were viewed as somewhat redundant by youth, as the themes that emerged overlap. However, there are also some interesting differences.

Important threads that show in these two lists are *listening (on the part of adults)*, *decision-making (on the part of youth)*, and *a positive image for teens*. These threads suggest that there are likely to be some practical approaches to improving support and advocacy for youth in our communities.

One last note of importance is that youth were forthcoming to state *administer surveys like this one and take action*, a theme that captures the purpose of the entire Community Assessment effort of IMC.

How Best Support Teens

Top 9 Themes in Rank Order

1. Improve, create and increase programs, activities and services for teens – “programs”, “clubs”, “sports” (25.8%)
2. Teens want adult support, guidance and caring – “Always be there”, “by helping us pursue our dreams” (20.6%)
3. Give teens opportunities in education and jobs – “better education”, “opening businesses to give teens job opportunities” (14.7%)
4. “Listen to us”- show respect and that you “value us as equals” (12.2%)
5. Create a safer community – “make it safe day or night” (10.0%)
6. Let us have decision-making opportunities at school and in community-”giving us a role in community” (4.9%)
7. Do Nothing More (4.3%)
8. Talk to us and about us in a positive way (3.6%)

Giving Teens A Voice

Top 7 Themes in Rank Order

1. Listen when we talk, respect us (24.1%)
2. Teach us how to lead and make decisions (21.0%)
3. Let us and help us join in decision making at school and in community (16.5%)
4. Treat us as equals and appreciate teens so other adults will see us positively (12.8%)
5. There is nothing more to be done (6.8%)
6. Use media to create and distribute teen ideas (including social media, internet) (6.0%)
7. **Administer surveys like this one and take action on them** (3.4%)

SECTION 4 ~ Recommendations

Neighborhoods and communities vary throughout our county, and most of daily life takes place at this local level. As mentioned in each section above, there are valuable trends in both experiences and aspirations that may emerge through further analysis of these data by area of residence. It may also be instructive to examine results by ethnicity, given the importance of cultural sensitivity to Education, Income, and Health, IMC's areas of focus.

Furthermore, these data are rich in information that has not yet been examined in a multivariate fashion. Because of the "overlapping" nature of education, health, and income --- that they are not mutually exclusive -- and because the purpose of the next steps for IMC are aimed at collective impact, it would be useful to look at subgroups of youth across these three areas. For example, it might be helpful to look at the suggestions for improving education voiced by students who are working currently, who have high aspirations for higher education and who reported obstacles to education.

It should be noted that the response rate to open-ended questions was quite high for a survey of this type. It appears that the 11th graders were not only cooperative, but enthusiastic to speak their minds and be heard. In fact, many said that they hoped surveys would be repeated and that there would be action taken based on them. It is recommended that this momentum be sustained and that feedback be provided to youth (and adults) in a widespread, timely, and accurate way.

Lastly, there are a few questions in the survey that the Youth Engagement Team felt should be improved/modified before it is used again in a next cycle. It is recommended that the notes from these meetings be compiled and applied to a revision of the survey sometime in 2015 as a means of preparing for future data collection.

Appendices

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