

# Let Them Do it: The Power of Youth Led Advocacy

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# Why Youth?

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- Youth voices have an important role in prevention. The gaps you have in reaching certain target audiences like teens, and uninterested parents, having youth leaders can easily make up that gap and expand your reach of audience.
  - Having youth leaders can also expedite the time it takes to build community relationships, which can afford you access to more resources and helping hands to accomplish your mission.
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# Turning Negatives into Positives

- In 2022, our prevention department struggled to find meaningful data for Orangeburg county after the Orangeburg County School District denied further participation in the CTC Survey.
- This prompted FIRE Squad to begin surveying community members ages 11 and up.



## Progression

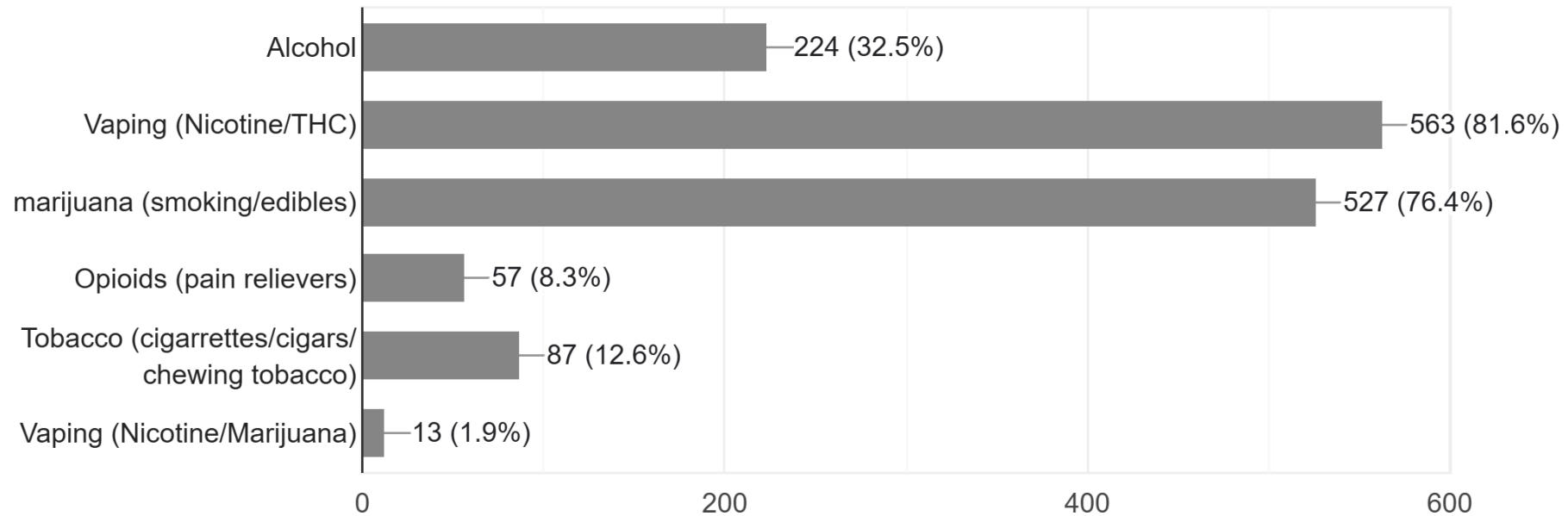
- As the FIRE Squad grew and increased in community visibility, surveying became a regular part of the routine.



# Using the results

What two drugs do you think are most used in your community amongst kids/adolescents?

690 responses

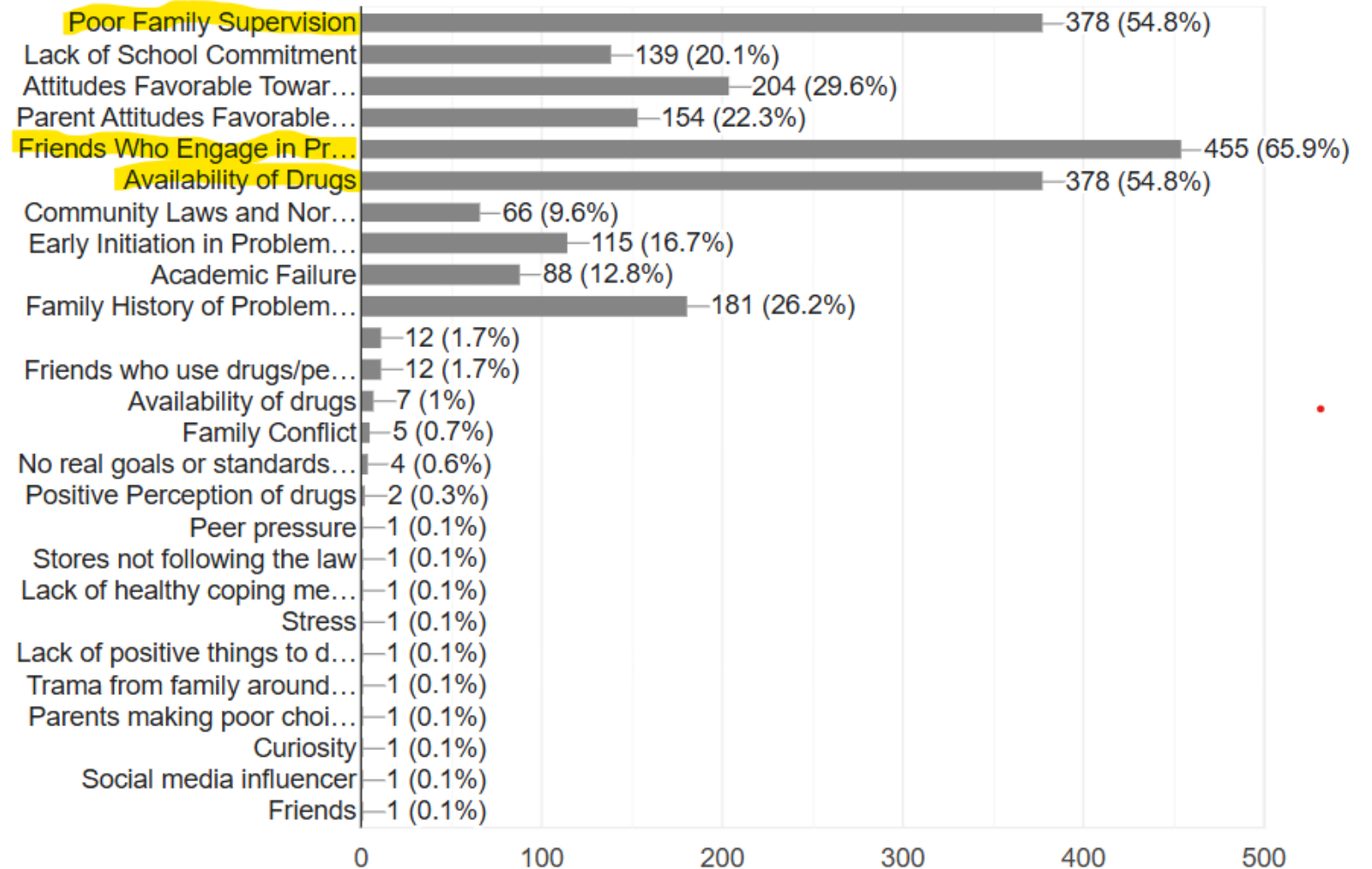


## Using the results

What are **three** risk factors in your county that are causing kids to use drugs?

[Copy chart](#)

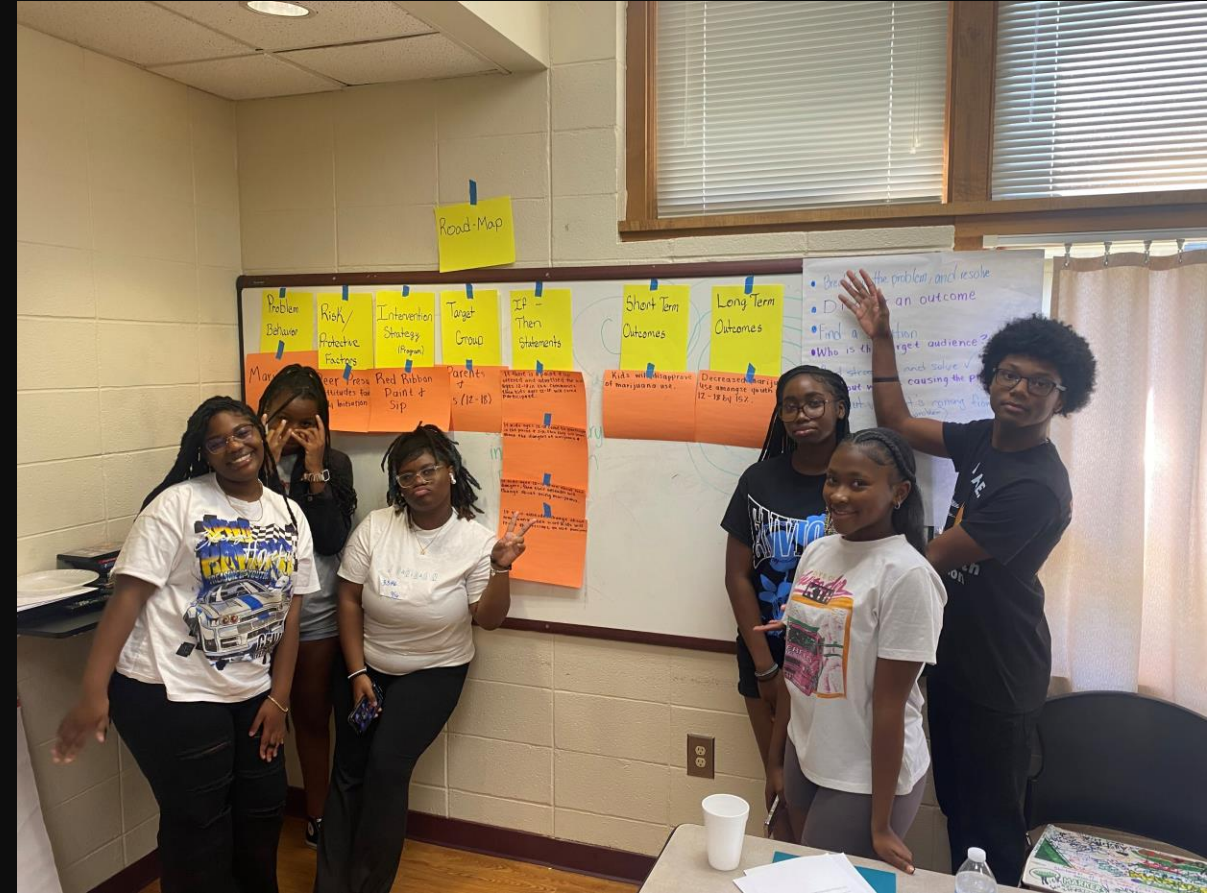
690 responses



# Planning events

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- Meetings throughout the year became more purposeful because now members accurately justify why they were planning an event, the risk factors they were aiming to address, and the audiences that needed to be targeted.
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# The fruit of those results

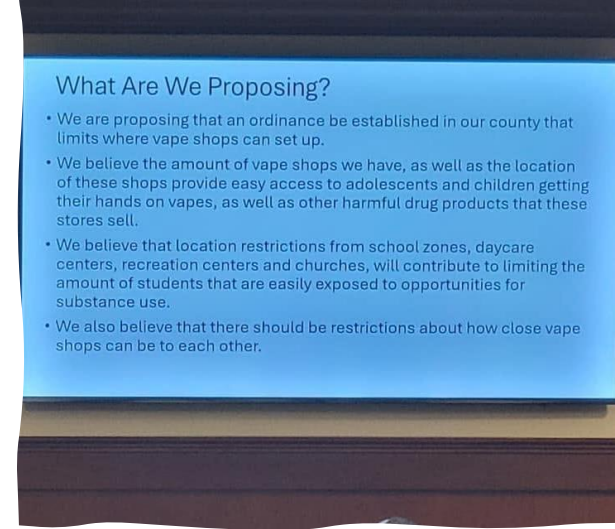
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# City and County Council

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- In 2024, the Squad gathered enough data to where they believed they could influence policy.
- Smoke Free SC provided monumental data from Counter tools that the kids were able to combine with their survey data to present their case to City and County Council, the about ease of access due to proximity and density of smoke shops.



## City Council Passes Ordinance

- On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2025, the Orangeburg City Council passed a zoning ordinance restricting new smoke vapes from setting up near school zones, childcare centers, recreation centers, and churches.



# The work Doesn't Stop

- In 2025, the FIRE Squad continued growing in their advocacy skills through collaborating with organizations like Breathe Easy SC building on their social capital, to continue making connections advocating, and surveying in their community.





# Recognition

- As of result of their advocacy work and consistent involvement in the community, the FIRE Squad has been recognized by Smoke Free SC, the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids and the SC State House.
- Allowing teens to lead allows them to connects the dots of how to improve their community and gives them a sense of ownership in their own leadership development