



# **Marathon County Medication Assessment Survey, 2013**

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Staff and students working for the Survey Research Center at UW-River Falls were instrumental in the completion of this study. We would like to thank Denise Parks, Shelly Hadley, Erin Inqli, Caleb Riedeman, and Rosie Krum. We gratefully acknowledge their hard work and dedication.

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The survey used for this study was originally designed by the Strategic Research Institute at St. Norbert College and used with the permission of the author.

Finally, we would like to thank the Wausau area residents who took the time to complete their questionnaires.

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather information from Wausau area residents with respect to prevalence and perceptions about the use of prescription medications.

In August 2013, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls mailed surveys to 1,516 randomly selected households in Wausau, Rib Mountain, Rothschild, Schofield, and Weston. The project replicated the medication assessment survey conducted by telephone in 2011 for the Marathon County Health Department by the Strategic Research Institute at St. Norbert College. The SRC received 402 surveys. The returned surveys included fewer women and young adults than would have been expected, and the SRC weighted the results according to their respective percentages in the overall population. The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 4.9 percent with 95 percent confidence, which is within the desirable range.

Wausau area residents are generally quite satisfied with the quality of life in the region. On a 10 point scale, 66% of respondents rated the quality of life as an 8 or higher. With respect to change in the past two years, the largest proportion said the quality of life has remained unchanged (44%).

Over half of respondents rated their current health as good (57%) and 27% rated their health as excellent.

Illegal drug use and obesity are rated as very serious problems in the Wausau area by half of the survey respondents. More than four in ten rated alcohol abuse/misuse as a serious problem. Abuse and misuse of prescription medication was viewed as a serious problem by a third of respondents; however, 22% said they were not sure about the seriousness of prescription medication misuse/abuse.

About 62% of respondents currently take a medication prescribed by their doctor. Half of respondents currently take a prescription medication on a regular basis for a chronic condition, while 35% take prescription medications occasionally for temporary health conditions.

A very large majority of respondents have never used a prescription medication that was *not prescribed for them* (87%). Similarly, large majorities exceeding 90% said they have not used a prescription medication for *other than its prescribed use* either during the last 30 days or during the last 12 months. A nearly identical number said they had *never* used a prescription for other than its prescribed purpose.

Half of respondents said they are not sure how easy it is to obtain prescription medications from a medical provider to get high. A slightly smaller proportion (44%) said they not sure how easy it is to get prescription medications from friends or family to get high.

Among all respondents, theft from family, friends or others is perceived as the most frequent source of obtaining prescription medications for non-prescribed uses (48%).

Nearly half (48%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that prescription medications to get high are readily available in the Wausau area. About four in ten are not sure.

Three-fourths (73%) of respondents are concerned about misuse/abuse of prescription medications in the Wausau area, with 24% saying they are very concerned and 49% saying they are somewhat concerned.

Getting high on prescription medications is not seen as safer than using street drugs. Only 4% of respondents think prescription medications are safer.

Respondents were nearly unanimous in their belief that it is not OK to take more than the recommended dosage of prescription medications.

Eight in ten respondents think there is great risk or some risk associated with using medications in a manner different than prescribed.

Less than half of households (41%) currently have expired prescription medications. Over half (64%) are aware of community disposal sites. When disposing of medications, community disposal sites are the most frequent method, followed by throwing away in the trash.

About 40% of respondents are aware of the Marathon County AOD partnership, and only 21% are aware of the Pushback Against Drug Abuse initiative.

A comparison of the 2013 results to the 2011 survey data found statistically significant differences on 20 of the 24 identically worded questions. Statistically significant changes in community behaviors and beliefs include the following:

- The average overall quality of life rating in the Wausau area decreased from 8.0 to 7.6 on a 10 point scale.
- In 2013, 30% said the quality of life has decreased in past 2 years compared to 20% in 2011.
- The percentage who said alcohol abuse is a very serious problem increased from 35% to 44%
- The percentage who said obesity is a very serious problem increased from 35% to 49%
- The percentage who said prescription medication abuse is a very serious problem increased from 12% to 31%.
- The percentage who said illegal drug use is a very serious problem increased from 24% to 52%.
- Current use of prescribed medications has increased from 55% to 62%.
- The percentage who use prescription medications occasionally increased from 28% to 35%.
- During the past 12 months, 92% of respondents had not used a prescription not as prescribed compared to 82% in 2011.
- 90% have not used a prescription drug in the past 30 in ways not prescribed compared to 51% in 2011.
- The percentage who said they are not sure about the difficulty in obtaining prescription medications from a medical provider to get high increased from 21% to 50%.
- Similarly, the percentage who said they are not sure about the difficulty in obtaining prescription medications from friends/family to get high increased from 18% to 43%.
- 48% said taking from family/friends was the primary source of obtaining prescription medications not prescribed for them compared to 41% in 2011.
- The percentage who said they are not sure if prescription medications to get high are

readily available in the Wausau increased from 13% to 41%

- The percentage who said they are somewhat concerned or very concerned about prescription medication abuse increased from 64% to 73%.
- The percentage who strongly disagree that it is safer to get high on prescription medications than street drugs increased from 28% to 45%.
- The percentage who strongly disagree that it is OK to take more than the recommended dosage of prescription medications increased from 44% to 58%.
- The percentage who said there is great risk in taking prescription medications not as prescribed increased from 46% to 49% and the percentage who said it depends increased from 13% to 17%.
- 41% have expired medications at home compared to 29% in 2011.
- The percentage of respondents who do not have unwanted prescription medications has increased from 20% to 32%.

The pattern of the statistically significant differences suggests an increased awareness of misuse/abuse of prescription medications as a health issue and the potential problems and health risks associated with abuse and misuse of prescription medications. However, it is unclear whether these statistically significant differences represent a shift among the Wausau area adult population or whether respondents' answers were influenced by the survey method (telephone vs. mail).

## Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather information from Wausau area residents with respect to prevalence of medication misuse, perception of risk and availability of medication misuse, as well as the local medication diversion and disposal efforts medication in the study area. The Marathon County Health Department chose to work with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin–River Falls to collect these data and analyze the results.

The questionnaire replicated a telephone survey conducted for the Marathon County Health Department in 2011 that was conducted for Marathon County by the Strategic Research Institute at St. Norbert College.

## Survey Methods

In August 2013, the SRC mailed surveys to 1,516 randomly selected households in Wausau, Rib Mountain, Rothschild, Schofield, and Weston. The mailing contained a cover letter describing the purpose of the survey, a questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. The SRC processed 368 returns from the first mailing and 34 returns from the second mailing for a total of 402 usable surveys. The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 4.9 percent with 95 percent confidence.

Based upon a standard statistical analysis that is described in **Appendix A**, the Survey Research Center concludes that non-response bias is not a significant concern for this survey.

In addition to numeric data, respondents provided additional written answers. **Appendix B** contains the written responses.

**Appendix C** contains a copy of the survey questionnaire with a complete quantitative summary of responses by question.

## Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the sample. The SRC utilized the 2010 Census and the 2007-2011 five-year estimates from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) to compare the demographic profile of respondents to the overall profile of adults in the study area. Table 1 also contains the demographic data from the 2011 survey. Percentages in Table 1 are based on the raw unweighted data.

<b>Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents – Marathon County Medication Surveys 2011 and 2013 (unweighted percentages)</b>							
<b>Residence (Age 18+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Wausau</b>	<b>Schofield</b>	<b>Rothsch.</b>	<b>Weston</b>	<b>Rib Mtn</b>	<b>Other</b>
Sample (2013)	401	57%	4%	6%	18%	9%	5%
Sample (2011)	400	55%	5%	10%	18%	12%	0%
Census (2010)	59,099	59%	2%	8%	21%	10%	
<b>Gender (Age 18+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>				
Sample (2013)	397	55%	45%				
Sample (2011)	400	41%	60%				
Census (2010)	59,099	49%	51%				
<b>Age 18+</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>18 – 24</b>	<b>25 – 34</b>	<b>35 – 44</b>	<b>45 – 54</b>	<b>55 – 64</b>	<b>65+</b>
Sample (2013)	395	6%	8%	10%	17%	23%	35%
Sample (2011)	399	6%	11%	11%	21%	21%	30%
Census (2010)	59,099	12%	18%	16%	19%	16%	19%
<b>Employment Status<sup>1</sup> (Age 16+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part Time</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Unemp.</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>Home-maker and Other</b>
Sample (2013)	398	43%	7%	7%	3%	35%	4%
ACS (2007-2011 est.)	64,556	45%		3%	5%	30%	
<b>Highest Level of Education (Age 25+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Less than High Sch.</b>	<b>High Sch. Diploma</b>	<b>Some College/ Tech</b>	<b>Tech/ College Grad.</b>	<b>Bachelor Degree</b>	<b>Graduate/ Profess. Degree</b>
Sample (2013)	400	3%	21%	23%	32%		21%
Sample (2011)	400	4%	25%	32%	23%		16%
ACS (2007-2011 est.)	52,327	11%	35%	19%	11%	16%	8%
<b>Race/Ethnic Group (Age 18+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>African-American</b>	<b>Native Am.</b>	<b>Asian Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Hispanic Latino</b>	<b>Multi</b>
Sample (2013)	399	97%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Sample (2011)	400	94%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Census (2010)	59,099	86%	1%	1%	8%	2%	2%
<b>Length of Residence</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>&lt;1 yr.</b>	<b>1 – 5 yrs.</b>	<b>6 – 10 yrs.</b>	<b>11 – 20 yrs.</b>	<b>&gt;20 yrs.</b>	
Sample <sup>2</sup> (2013)	401	1%	7%	11%	13%	67%	
Sample (2011)	400	3%	9%	12%	14%	62%	

<sup>1</sup> Not asked in the 2011 survey

<sup>2</sup> Census does not include length of residence

Household Income	Count	Less than \$25,000	\$25,000 – \$34,999	\$35,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000+
Sample (2013)	322	16%	15%	19%	20%	13%	17%
Sample (2011)	326	16%	37%		20%	14%	14%
ACS (2007-2011 est.)	34,407	22%	12%	17%	18%	15%	16%

Compared to the 2010 Census and 2007-2011 American Community Survey:

- The geographic distribution of the responses aligned with the distribution of the Wausau area population.
- The responses included more men than would have been expected.
- With respect to age, the sample had fewer young adults, particularly between 18 and 34 years of age, and a higher proportion of older adults age 55 and above. The SRC experience is that younger residents are less likely to participate in surveys.
- There were slightly more retirees and others who are not in the workforce compared to the overall population of the Wausau area. This is not unexpected given the higher than average percentage of respondents age 65 plus.
- Educational attainment in the sample is much higher than the overall adult population of the Wausau area.
- There were fewer non-white respondents among the respondents than in the overall population of the study area.
- Two-thirds of the response sample said they have lived in the area for over 20 years.
- The distribution of annual household income also aligns well with the Census estimates, except that there were fewer low income households (less than \$25,000) among the respondents.

Comparison of 2013 Demographics to 2011 Demographics

- With the exception of gender, the demographic profiles of the respondents in 2013 align with the profile of the respondents in 2011.

Weighting by Age and Gender

An analysis revealed 8 questions with statistically significant differences between the responses of men and women. The analysis also revealed 17 questions with statistically significant differences among the age groups. In order to compensate for the underrepresentation of women and young adults in the sample, the SRC weighted the results according to their respective percentages of the overall area population. Authors of the 2011 report also weighted the results based on gender and age. Percentages reported in the charts and tables of this report reflect the weighed percentages. The SRC performed statistical tests to compare the weighted responses based on the demographic groups. The report will identify those instances where there were meaningful differences in the response pattern among particular demographic groups.

## Comparison to 2011 Survey Results

The Marathon County Health Department sponsored the Medication Assessment Survey in 2011 conducted by the Strategic Research Institute at St. Norbert College and asked the SRC to compare the results of the 2013 survey to the 2011 survey. With the exception of two questions added to the 2013 survey, the survey questions were identical. However, the survey method was different. As described above, the SRC utilized a mailout process, and the 2011 survey was conducted by telephone.

The SRC used tests of statistical significance to compare the results of the two surveys. The statistical tests identified questions in which there were differences between the 2011 survey and the 2013 survey data. The tests indicate statistically significant differences on 20 of the 24 variables tested. Table 2 (next page) indicates the questions with significant differences. In statistics, a result is called **statistically significant** if it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. A statistically significant difference simply means there is statistical evidence that the difference is true; it does not mean the difference is necessarily large, important, or significant in the common meaning of the word.

Statistical significance is expressed as a probability that the difference is *not* true. A commonly used probability standard is .05 (5%). Statistical significance at the .05 level indicates a 5 in 100 probability that the difference is not true. Probabilities for the 20 variables in this study with statistically significant differences at the .05 level are shown in the right column of Table 2.

The following summarize the statistically significant differences between the 2013 results and the 2011 results.

- Respondents in 2013 said the overall quality of life of the area is lower than 2 years ago.
- Respondents in 2013 said illegal drug use, obesity, alcohol abuse, and prescription medication misuse/abuse are more serious issues than in 2011
- Fewer respondents in 2013 said they have used a prescription medication not as prescribed during the last year or during the last month.
- A larger percentage of respondents in 2013 said they are “not sure” about the following: ease of obtaining prescription medication from a medical provider to get high, ease of obtaining prescription medication from family or friends to get high, the most frequent source of prescription medication to get high, and the degree to which prescription medications are easily obtained in the community to get high. The increase in the responses in not sure category is associated with a decrease in the proportion of respondents in 2011 who had said they disagreed or strongly disagreed about the ease of obtaining prescription drugs to get high.
- Respondents increased their intensity of disagreement that it is safer to get to get high on prescription medications than street drugs and increased their intensity of disagreement that it is OK to take more than the recommended dosage of prescription medications.

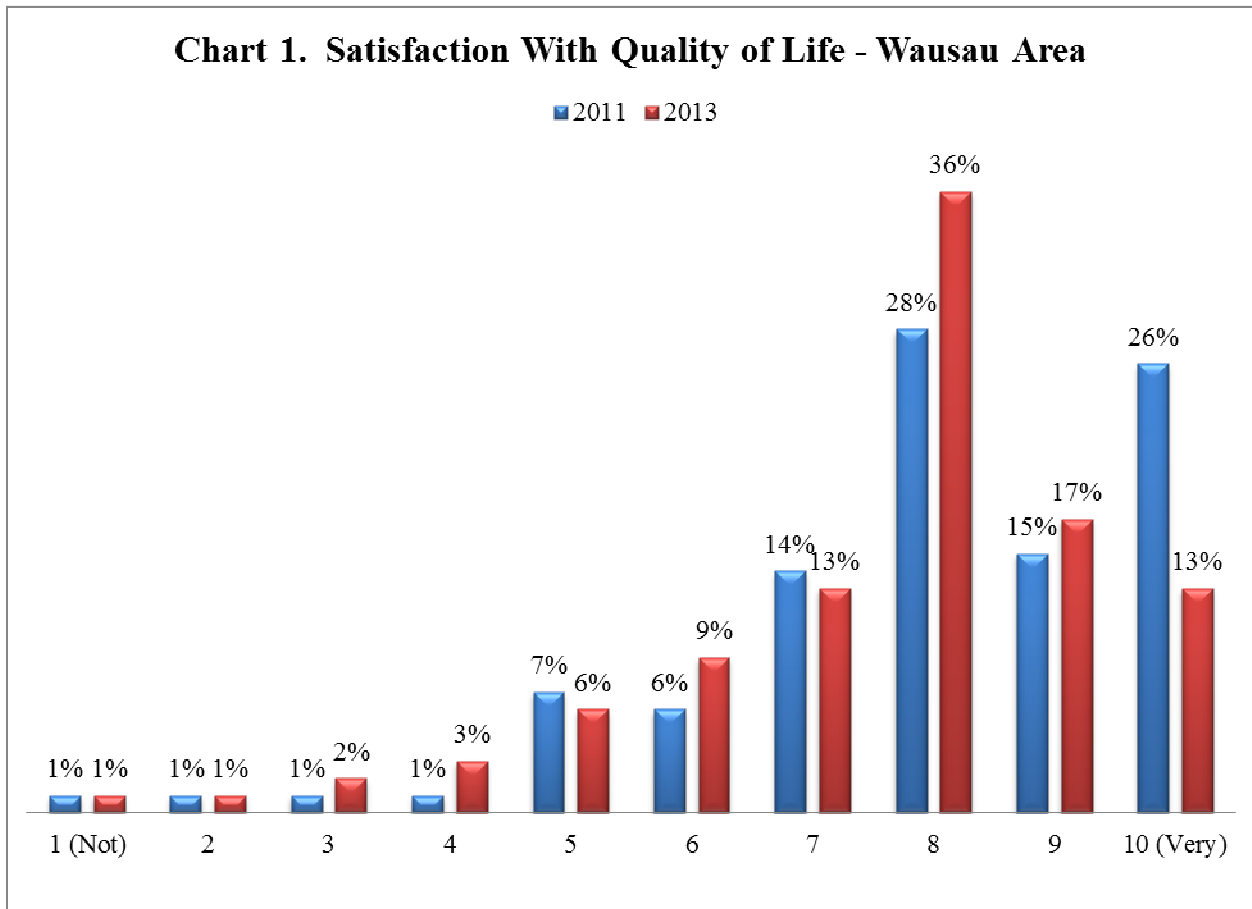
These findings suggest that Wausau area residents are more aware of misuse/abuse of prescription medications and the potential problems and health risks associated with abuse and misuse of prescription medications. However, it is unclear whether these statistically significant differences represent an opinion shift among the Wausau area adult population or if respondents' answers were influenced by the survey method (telephone vs. mail).

<b>Table 2. Questions with Statistically Significant Differences – 2011 to 2013</b>	
Question	Statistical Significance
Q3. Satisfaction with quality of life in Wausau metro area	<.001
Q4. Change in quality of life in past two years	<.001
Q6b. Abuse or misuse of alcohol – seriousness	.027
Q6c. Obesity – Seriousness	<.001
Q6d. Abuse or misuse of prescription medications – seriousness	<.001
Q6e. Use of illegal drugs – seriousness	<.001
Q10. Used medication not exactly as prescribed in past 12 months	<.001
Q11. Use of medication not exactly as prescribed in past 30 days	<.001
Q12. Ease of obtaining prescription medication from medical provider to get high	<.001
Q13. Ease of obtaining prescription medication from family/friend to get high	<.001
Q14. Most frequent source of medications without a prescription	<.001
Q15. Prescription medications readily available to get high	<.001
Q16. Concern about abuse or misuse of prescription medications in community	.016
Q17. Safer to get high on prescription drugs than street drugs	<.001
Q18. OK to take more than recommended dosage of prescription	<.001
Q19. Risk in using medications not as prescribed	.013
Q20. Have expired medication in home	.001
Q21. Aware of community sites for disposal of medication	.046
Q22. Current disposal method of unused/unwanted medications	<.001
Q23. Type of use of prescription medications: occasional, regular, non-use	.002

Charts and tables are utilized throughout the report to compare the 2011 results and 2013 results.

## Quality of Life in the Wausau Area

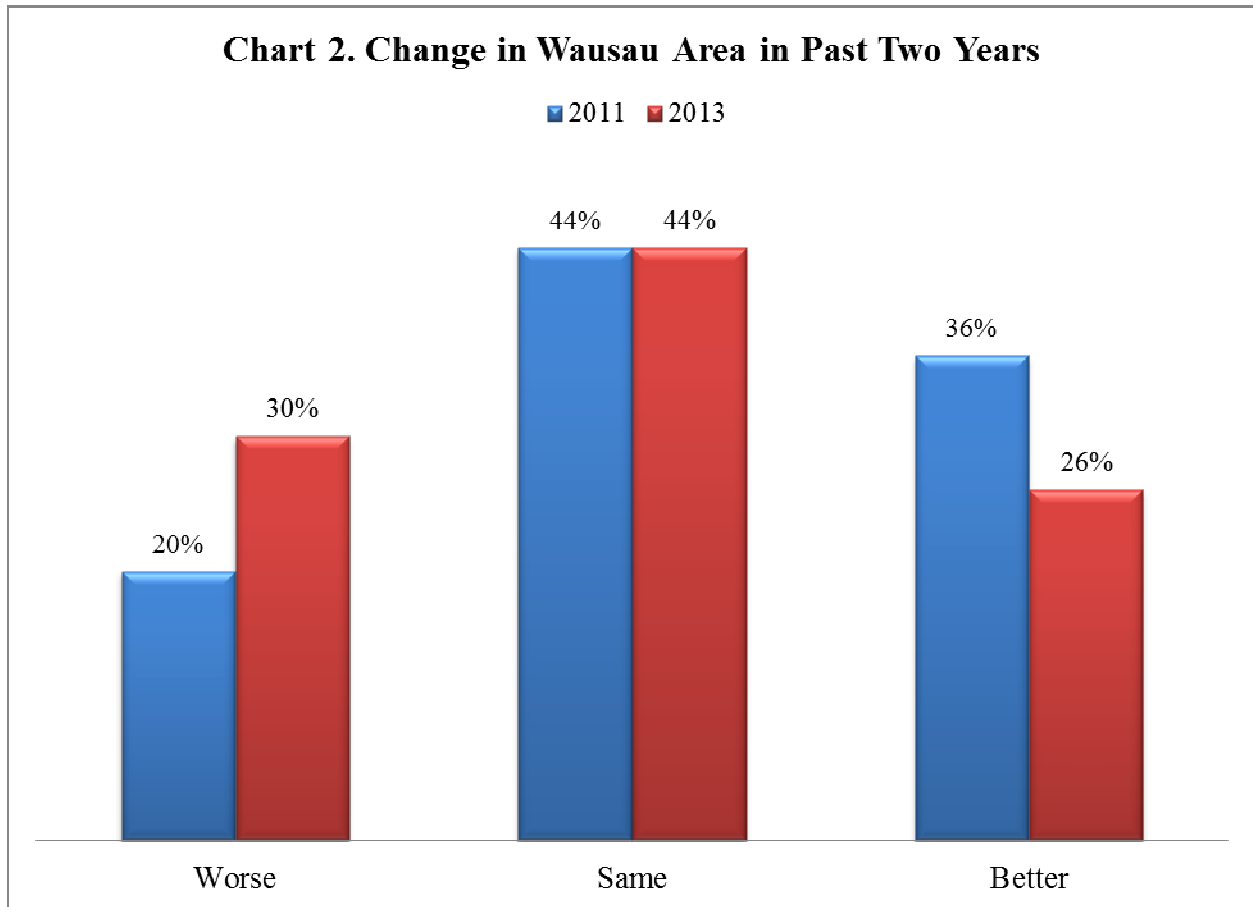
Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the quality of life in the Wausau area on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The results are shown in Chart 1 and indicate that area residents are generally quite satisfied with the quality of life in the Wausau area. Two-thirds of respondents rated the quality of life as an 8 or higher. However, compared to the 2011 results (left column), residents gave slightly lower ratings in 2013 (right column). Particularly noticeable is the smaller percentage of residents in 2013 who rated the quality of life as a 10. The mean rating dropped from 8.0 in 2010 to 7.6 in 2013. This difference is statistically significant.



Demographic comparisons. White respondents are significantly more satisfied with the area's quality of life and gave a higher mean rating (7.7) than did non-white respondents (6.7).

In a companion question, respondents were asked if the quality of life in the Wausau area had changed in the past two years. Chart 2 indicates that the largest percentage believe the quality of life has remained unchanged (44%). However, among respondents who believe there has been a change in the area in the past two years, more said it has become worse than better.

Compared to the 2011 survey results, equal percentages said the quality of life has remained the same, but more respondents to the 2013 survey said the change had been negative in the previous two years. These differences are statistically significant. This finding is consistent with the change in Chart 1 between 2011 and 2013.

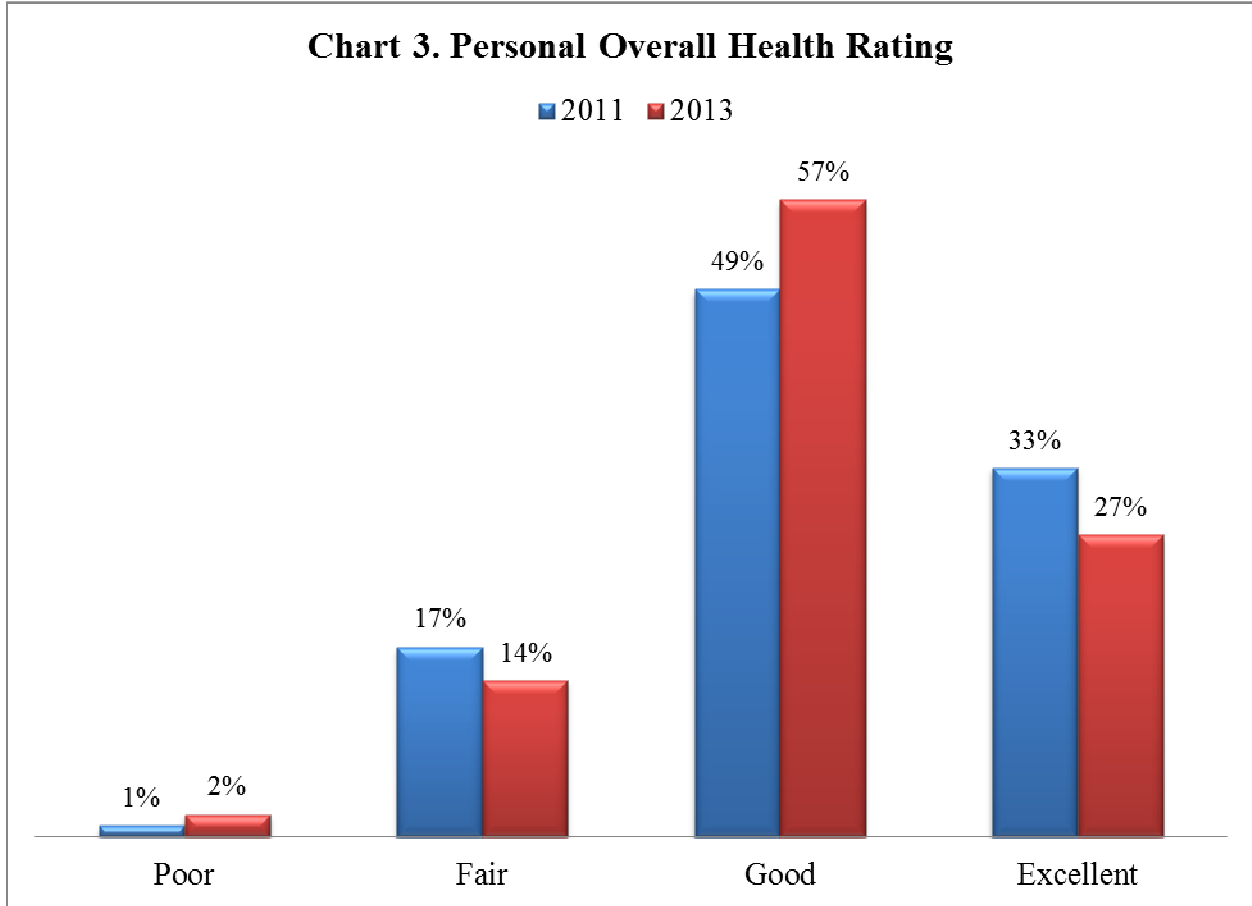


Demographic comparisons. Respondents who have completed a post-secondary education program were more likely to say that the Wausau area has improved (32%) in the past two years, compared to respondents with less formal education (17%).

## Personal Overall Health Rating

Respondents were asked for a self-assessment rating of their personal health. As shown in Chart 3, a large majority gave a positive rating to their health; 27% rated their health as excellent, and 57% rated their health as good.

Compared to 2011, respondents in 2013 gave similar self-assessments, and the differences in Chart 3 are not statistically significant.



### Demographic comparisons.

Not surprisingly, a larger percentage of younger adults age 18-34 said their health is excellent (40%).

A larger percentage of non-white respondents rated their health as poor (14%) compared to white respondents.

Respondents who have completed a post-secondary educational program were more likely to rate their health as excellent (32%) compared to respondents who have not completed a post-secondary program (20%).

Respondents with household incomes above \$50,000 rated their health higher (31% excellent) compared to respondents from households with less than \$50,000 income (24% excellent).

## Seriousness of Health Issues in Wausau Area

Chart 4 summarizes respondents' opinions with respect to the seriousness of five health issues in the Wausau area: smoking, alcohol abuse/misuse, obesity, prescription drug abuse/misuse, and illegal drug use. Answer choices were very serious, moderately serious, somewhat serious, not serious, and not sure. Abuse and misuse of prescription drugs was viewed as a less serious health problem than illegal drugs, obesity, and alcohol. About a third of respondents said prescription drug misuse/abuse is a serious problem. In contrast, about half of respondents viewed illegal drug use and obesity as very serious problems, and 44 percent said alcohol abuse is a very serious problem.

Interestingly, among the five issues listed, prescription drug abuse/misuse had the highest percentage of respondents who said they are not sure about the seriousness of the issue (22%). This may suggest the need for continuing public awareness programming, data collection and community assessments.

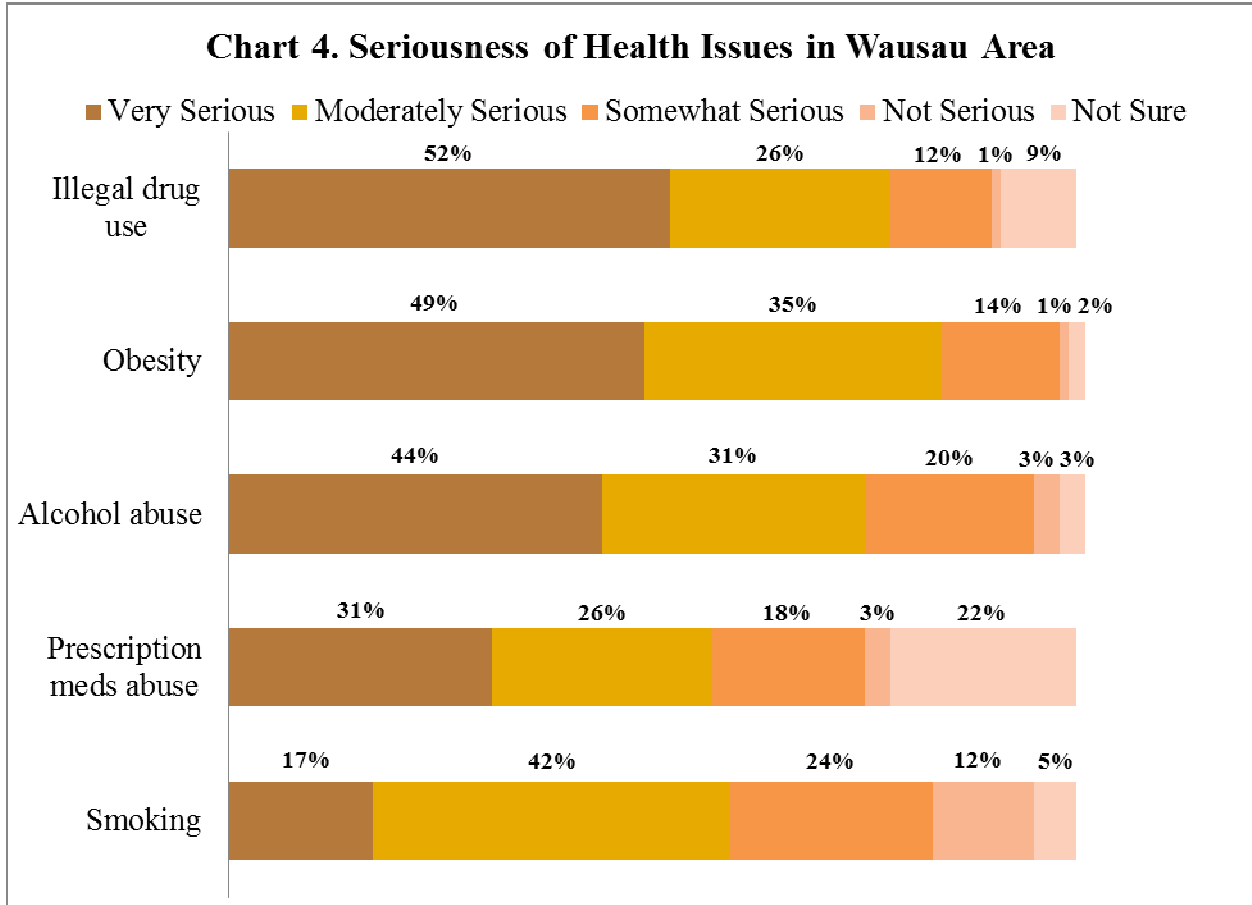
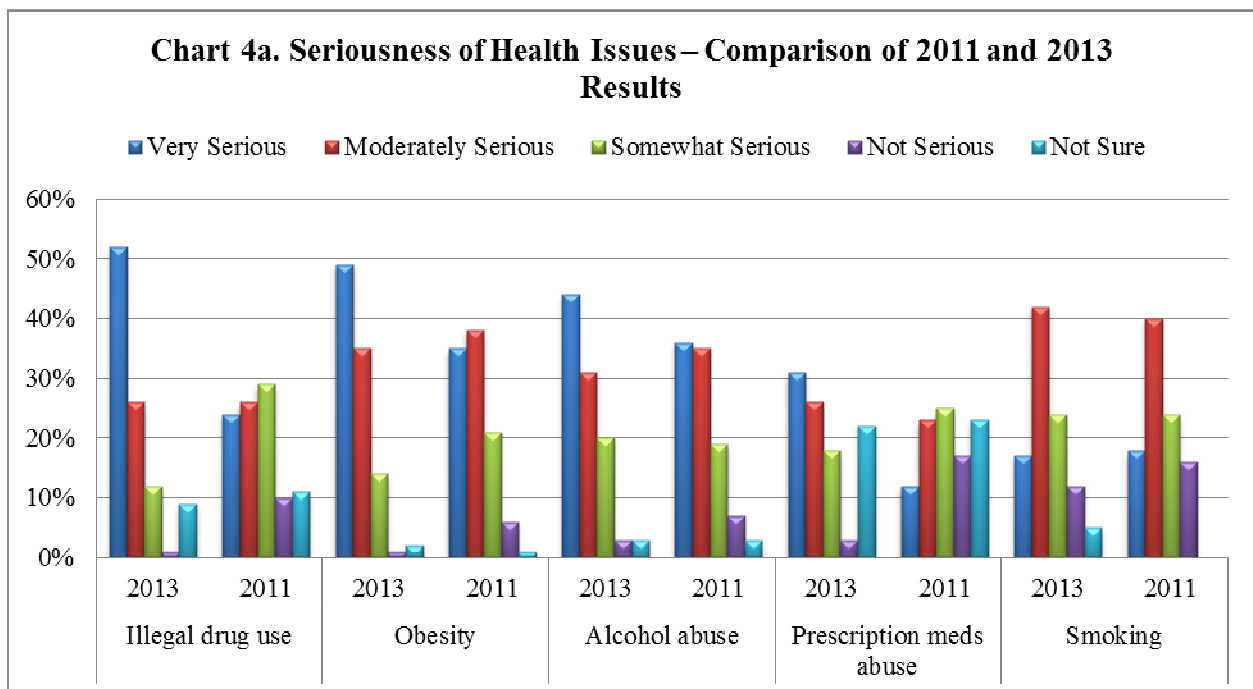


Chart 4a compares the 2011 and 2013 results and indicates increasing levels of concern about illegal drugs, obesity, alcohol, and prescription medication abuse/misuse. These differences are statistically significant. Opinions about the seriousness of smoking remained the same and the small differences are not statistically significant.

With respect to prescription drug abuse/misuse, compared to 2011 there was a large increase in the percentage of respondents who said it is a very serious problem. Also noteworthy is the increase in the percentage of respondents who said illegal drug use as a very serious problem in 2013 compared to 2011. The percentage of those who said it is a very serious problem doubled. Because the 2011 study used a phone survey in which the respondent was speaking directly to a person, the survey method may have influenced their answers. In addition, any recent drug-related incidents, media coverage and coalition initiatives in the study region might help account for this very significant increase in concern.



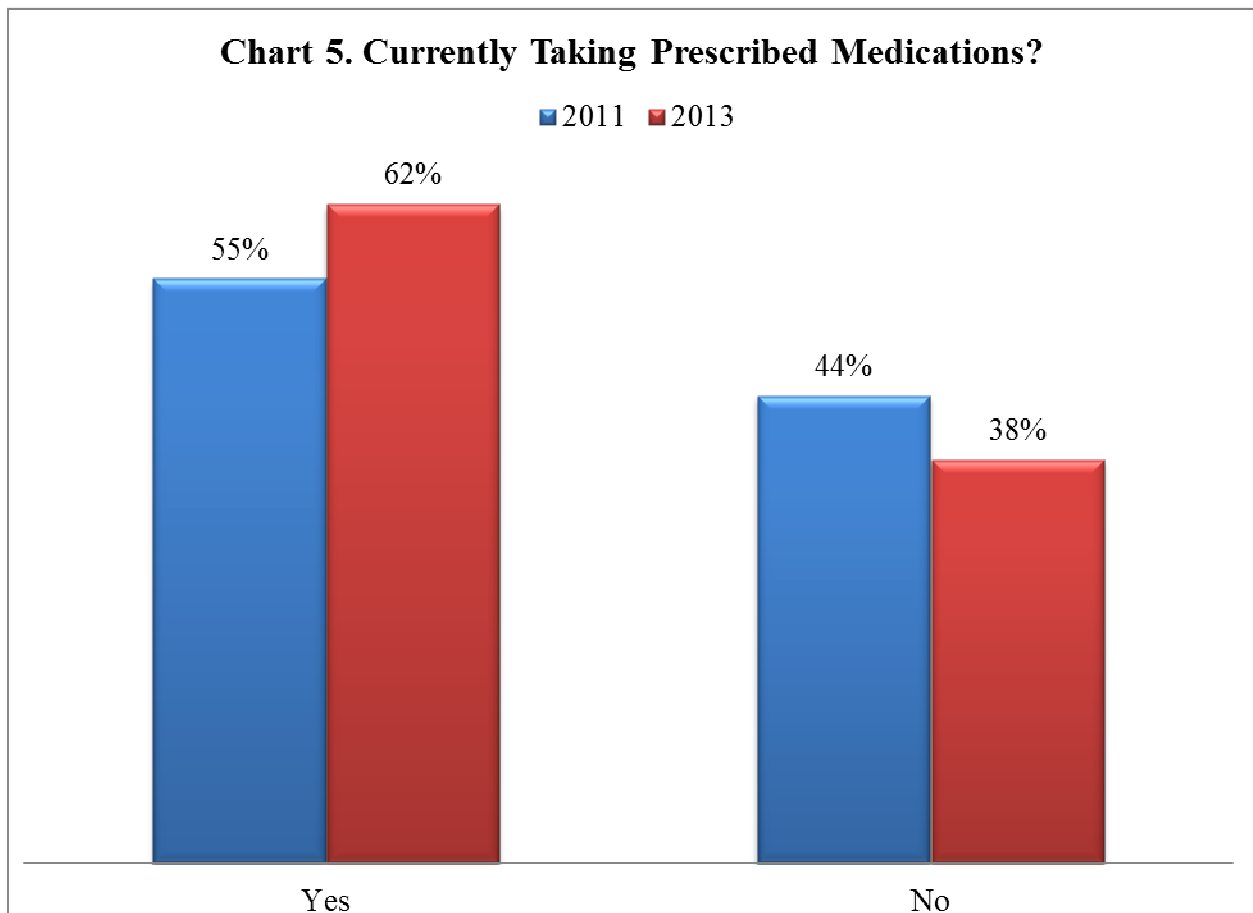
**Demographic Comparisons.** Compared to other age groups, a higher percentage of adults age 25 to 44 said that alcohol abuse is a somewhat serious problem (31%) rather than a moderately serious problem or very serious problem. A larger percentage of women respondents said alcohol abuse/misuse is a very serious problem (49%) compared to men (38%). Women were also more likely to view prescription medication abuse/misuse as a somewhat serious problem (37%) than men (23%).

Non-white respondents were more likely to rate obesity as a very serious problem (64%) compared to white respondents (48%). In addition, a greater percentage of non-white respondents rated abuse/misuse of prescription drugs as a very serious problem (46%), while 30% of white respondents rated it as a very serious problem. Non-white respondents were more likely to say they are not sure about the seriousness of illegal drug use (21%) compared to 9% of white respondents.

## Current Use of Prescribed Medication

Chart 5 indicates that about six in ten respondents currently use a prescription medication, which is slightly higher than the 2007-2010 national average of 48.5% as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>3</sup>

Compared to 2011, the percentage of respondents taking a prescription medication in 2013 increased slightly, but the difference is not significantly significant.



### Demographic comparisons.

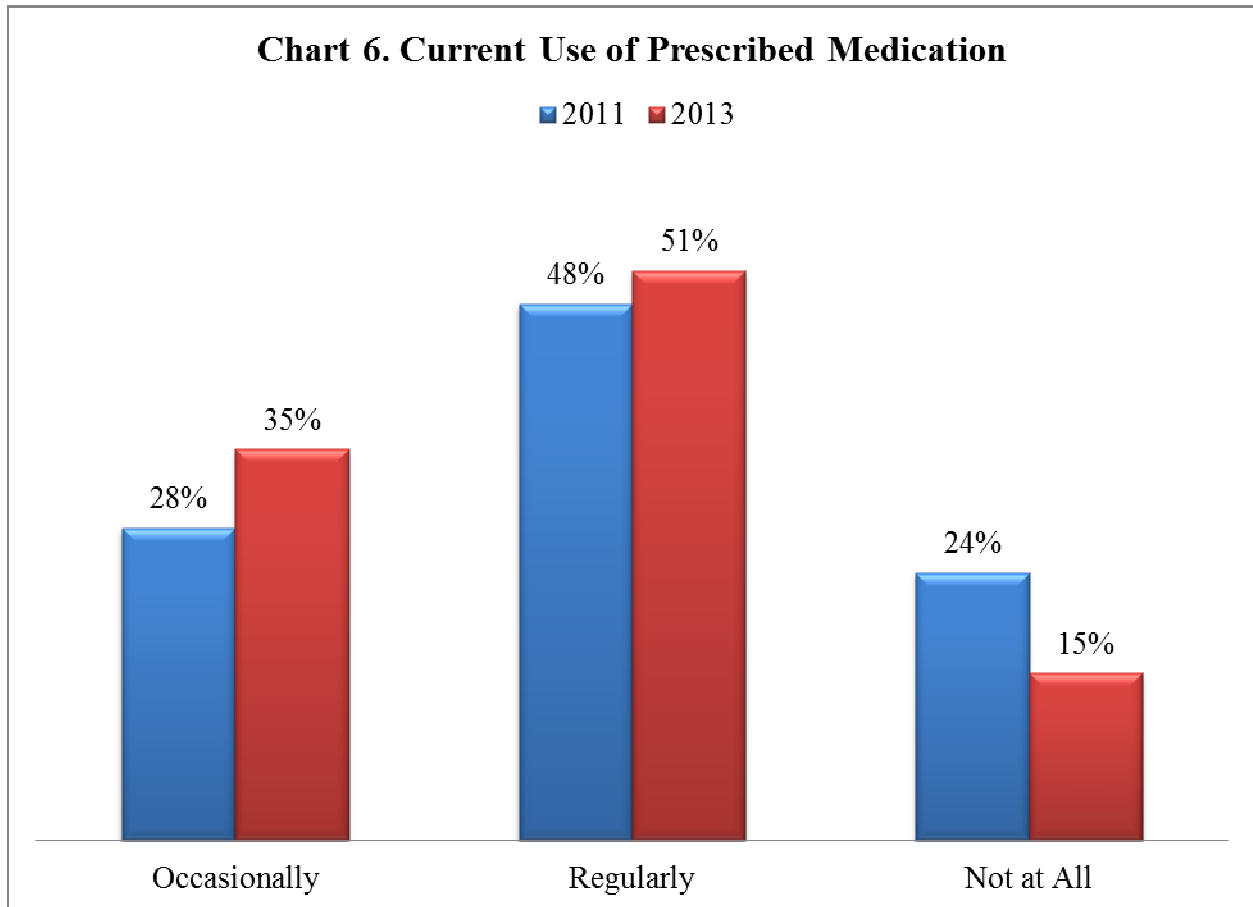
Younger adults age 18-24 (30%) and 25-34 (46%) are less likely to be taking a prescribed medication.

Prescription medication use is higher among respondents from households with at least \$50,000 annual income (68%) compared to respondents with household incomes with less than \$50,000 income (55%).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus12.pdf#091>

About half of respondents indicate that they take prescription medications regularly for a chronic condition (Chart 6), while 35% take prescriptions occasionally for a temporary health condition, and 15% are not taking prescription medications at all.

The differences in Chart 6 between 2011 and 2013 are statistically significant.



Demographic comparisons. Not surprisingly, regular use of prescription medications for chronic issues increases with age. About 13% of respondents age 18-24 take a prescription medication on a regular basis compared to 84% of respondents age 65 plus.

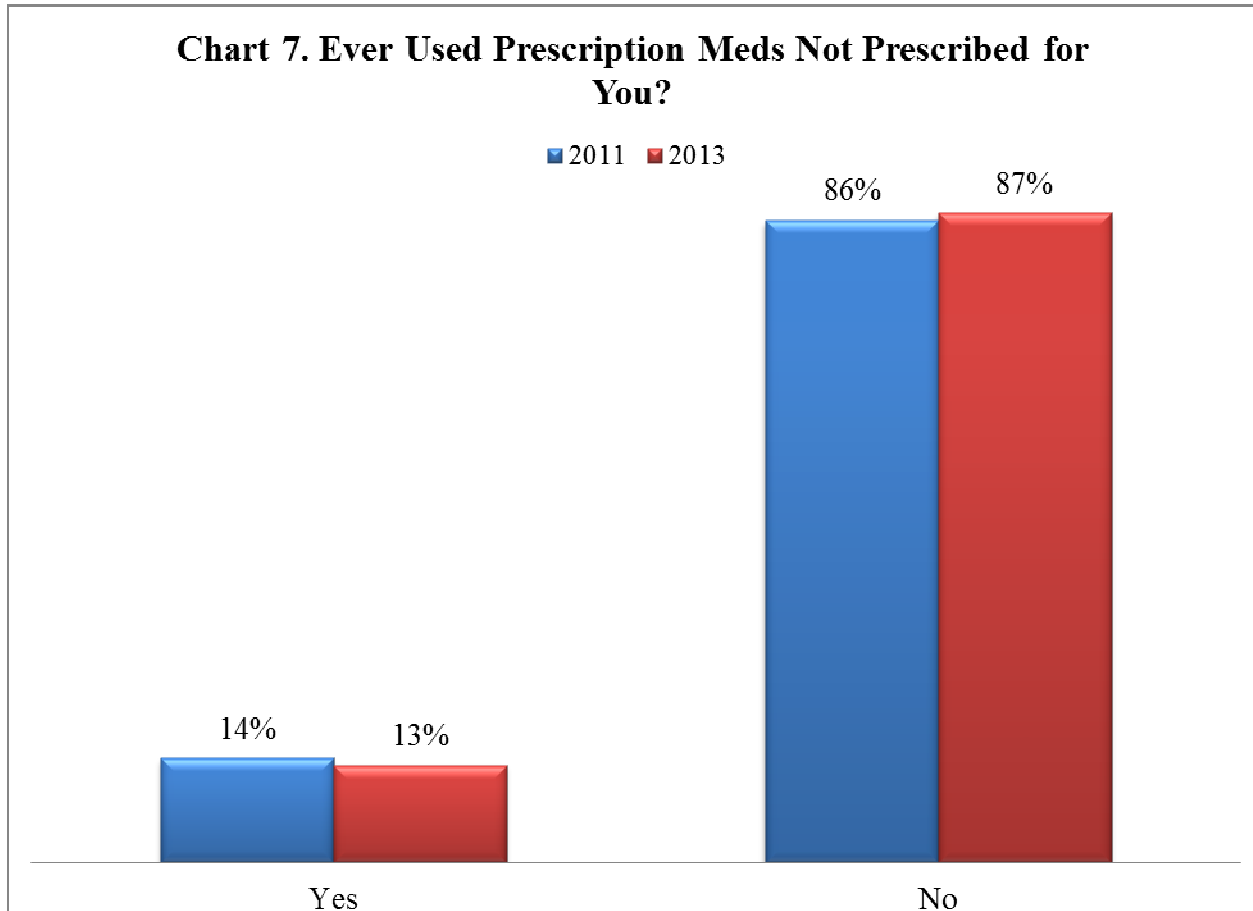
19% of men said they are not taking prescription medications compared to only 11% of women.

More non-white respondents reported that they are not taking any prescription medications (38%) compared to 13% of white respondents.

Respondents from households with at least \$50,000 annual income were more likely to be taking prescription medications for temporary health issues and less likely to be taking medications for a chronic health condition.

## Prevalence of Misuse

As shown in Chart 7, nearly 9 in 10 respondents said they have never used a prescription medication not prescribed for them. There was no difference between 2011 and 2013.



Demographic comparisons.

There are statistically significant differences across age groups in the use of medications not prescribed for them. Chart 7a shows that in both 2011 and 2013, younger age groups are more likely to have said they have used a prescription medication not intended for them. A quarter of respondents age 18-24 said they have done so, compared to 5% who are age 65 or older.

The pattern across age groups was much the same in 2011 and 2013 and the differences between the two years are not statistically significant.

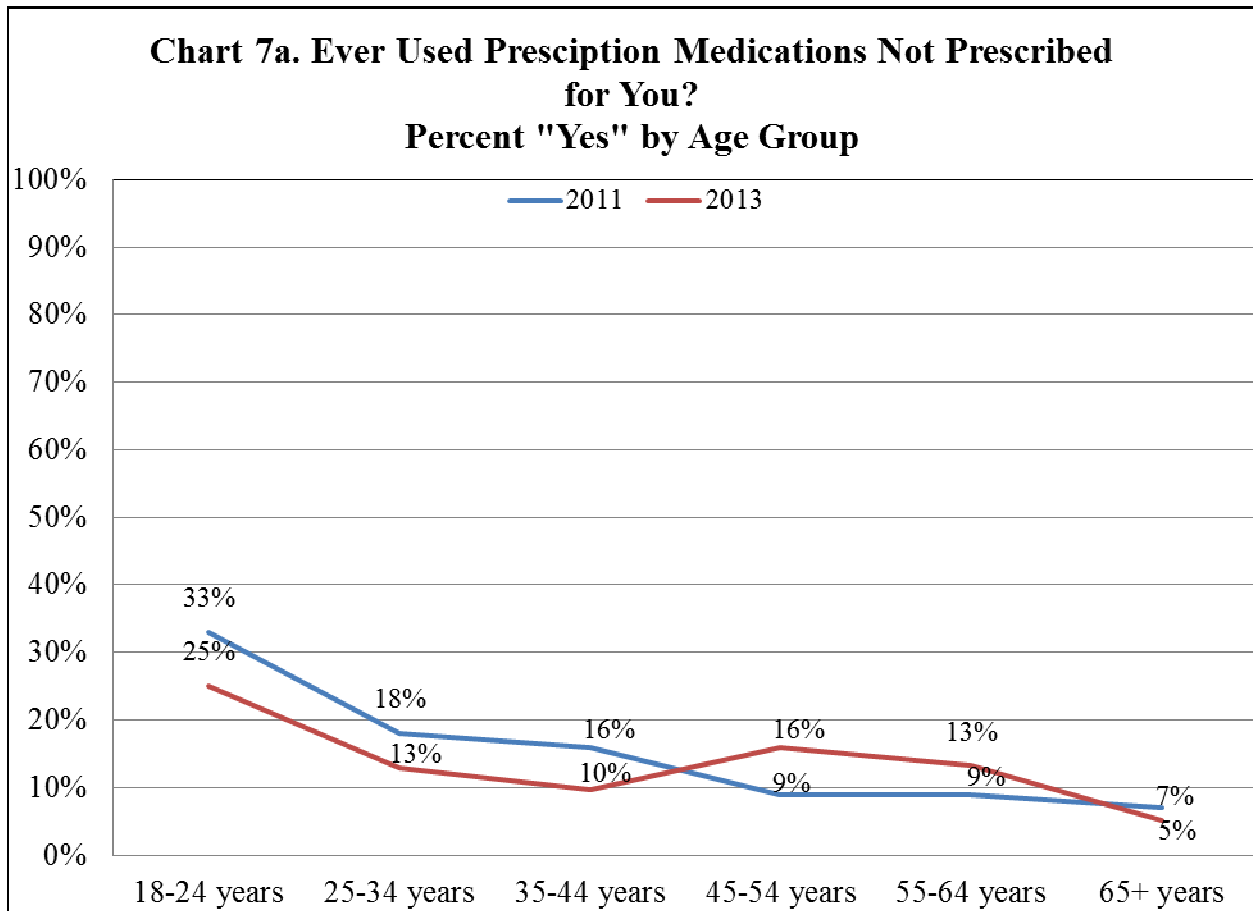
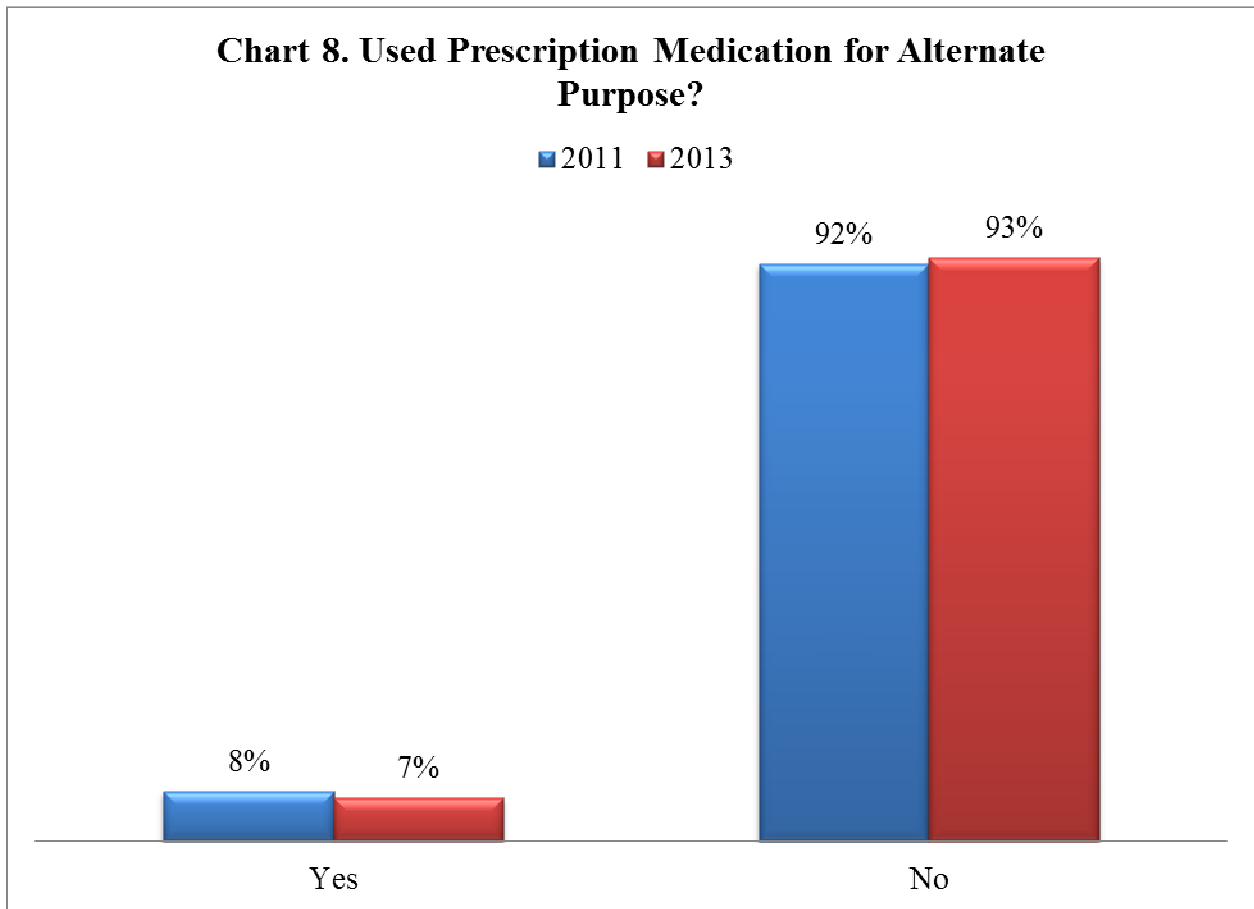


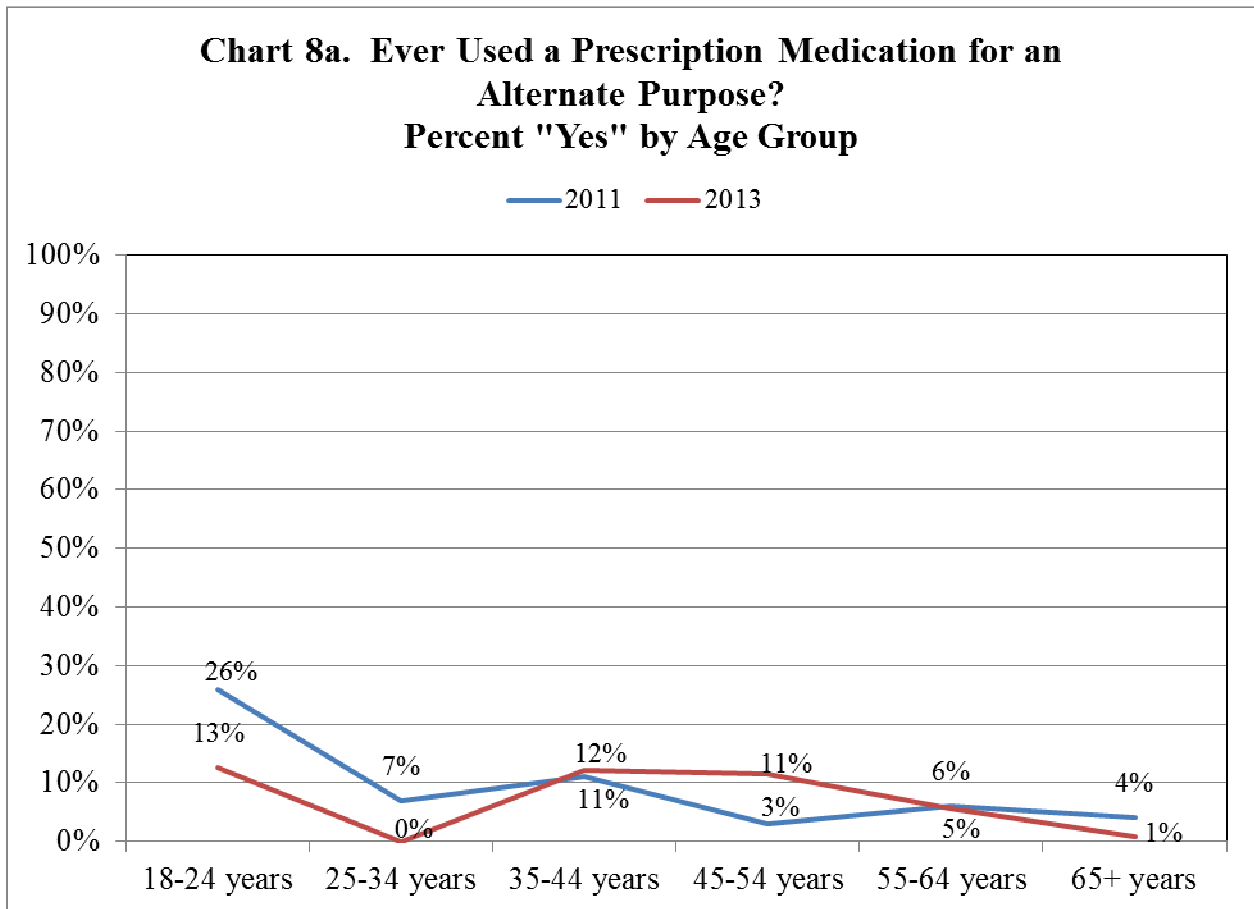
Chart 8 indicates that 9 in 10 respondents said they have never used a prescription medication for a reason other than originally prescribed. There was no difference between 2011 and 2013.

By comparison, the National Institute of Drug Abuse estimates that 80 % of US residents age 12 years and older have never used a prescription medicine for a non-medical use.<sup>4</sup>

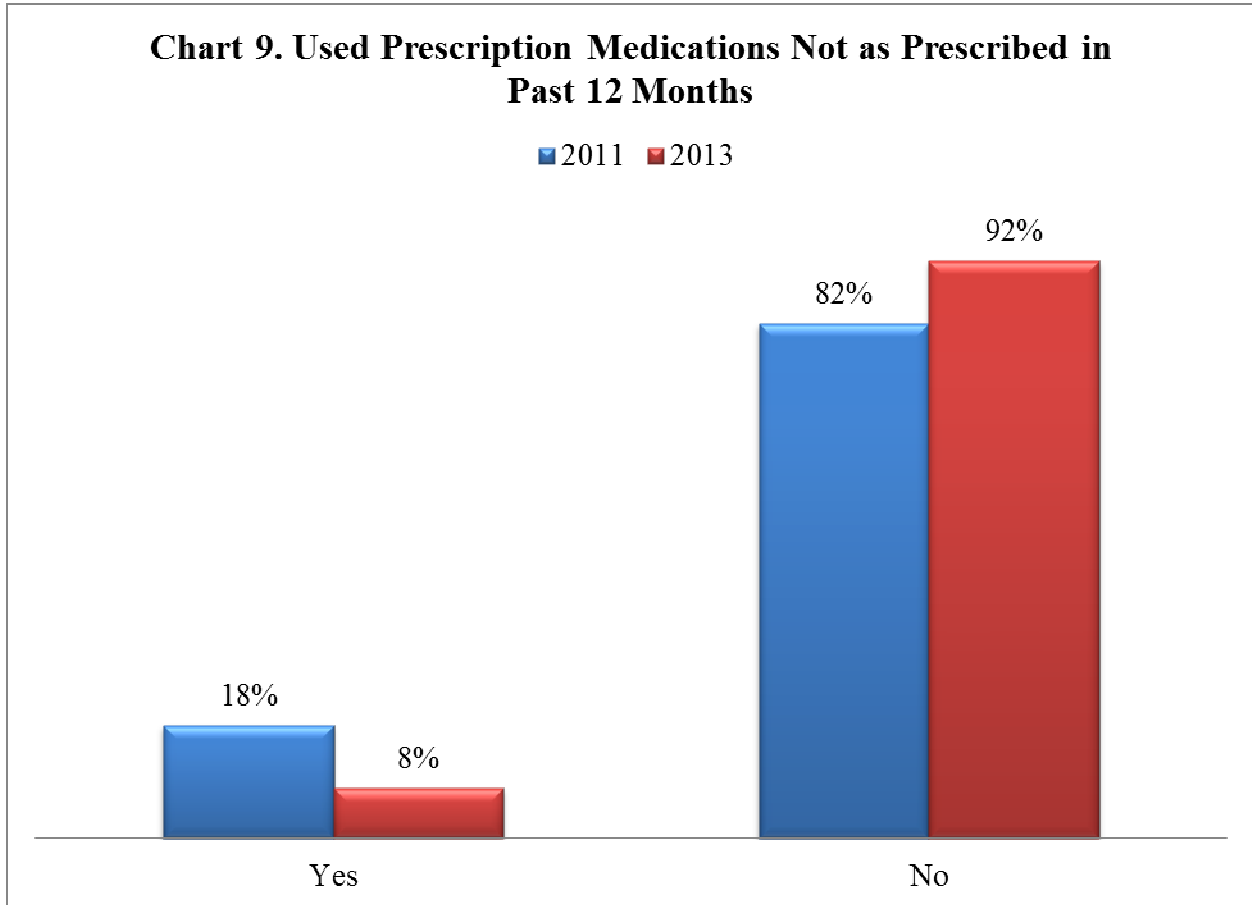


<sup>4</sup> <http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/rrprescription.pdf>

Demographic Comparisons. There are statistically significant differences across age groups in the use of prescription medications for other purposes. Chart 8a shows that respondents age 55 or older were less likely to do so. Interestingly, alternate uses among those age 18 to 24, 35 to 44, and 45 to 54 were about the same (11% to 13%), while no respondents in the 25-34 age group reported using prescription medications for an alternate purpose. The differences between 2011 and 2013 were not statistically significant.



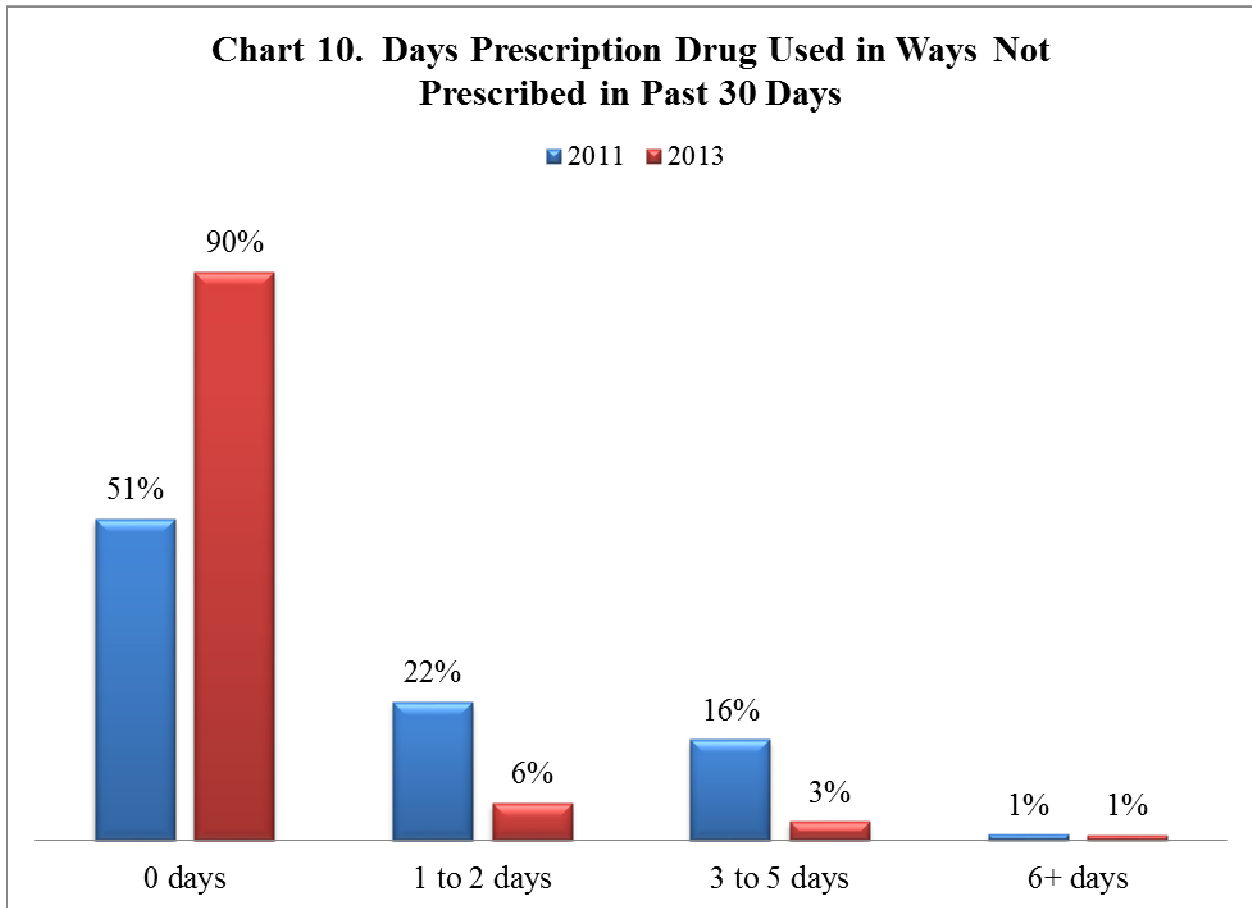
When asked if they had ever used a prescription medication for a reason other than the prescribed intent, again 9 in 10 respondents said they had not. This represents an increase compared to 2011, when 8 in 10 said they had not used a medication as prescribed. The difference is statistically significant.



Demographic comparisons. There were no meaningful differences among the demographic groups.

Respondents were asked if they had used a prescription medication in the past 30 days in ways not directed by the prescribing medical provider. As shown in Chart 10, among the 62% of respondents who are currently taking a prescription medication (Chart 5), nine in ten said they have used it exactly as prescribed during the last 30 days.

The 2013 data are different than the results reported in the 2011 survey, which indicated that only 51% of respondents using prescription medications were using their medications exactly as prescribed in the past 30 days. The difference is statistically significant.

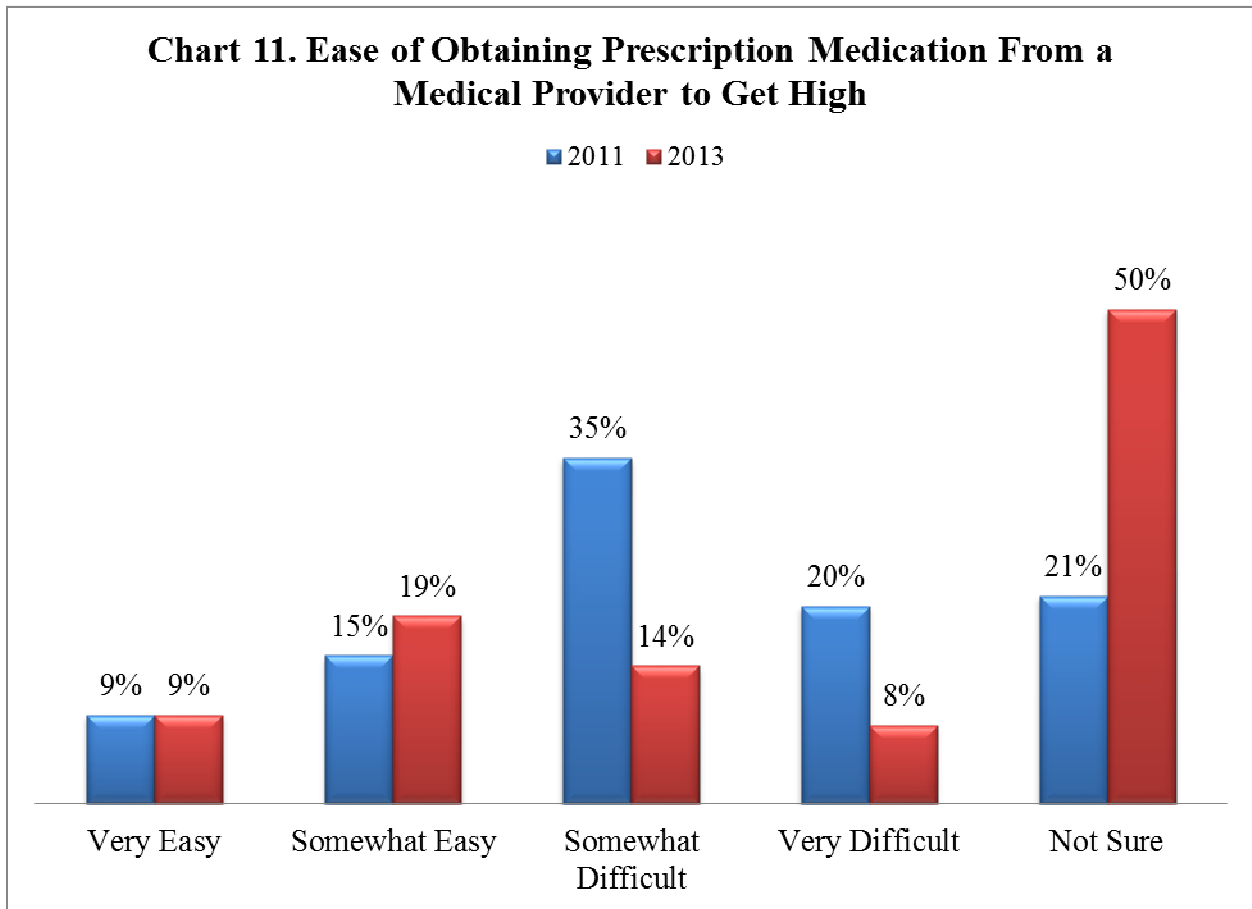


Demographic comparisons. There were no statistically significant differences among the demographic groups.

## Perception of Availability

When asked how easy it is to obtain prescription medication from a medical provider to get high, Chart 11 shows that half of respondents said they were not sure. About 14% of respondents said it is somewhat difficult, and an additional 8% said it is very difficult. The remaining respondents said it is somewhat easy (19%) or very easy (9%).

Compared to the 2011 results, fewer respondents said it is somewhat difficult or very difficult. However, rather than shifting to the somewhat easy or very easy categories, opinions mostly shifted to the not sure category.



Demographic comparisons. Respondents in the youngest age group (18-24) were more likely to say they are not sure about the ease of obtaining prescription medication from a medical provider to get high (69%).

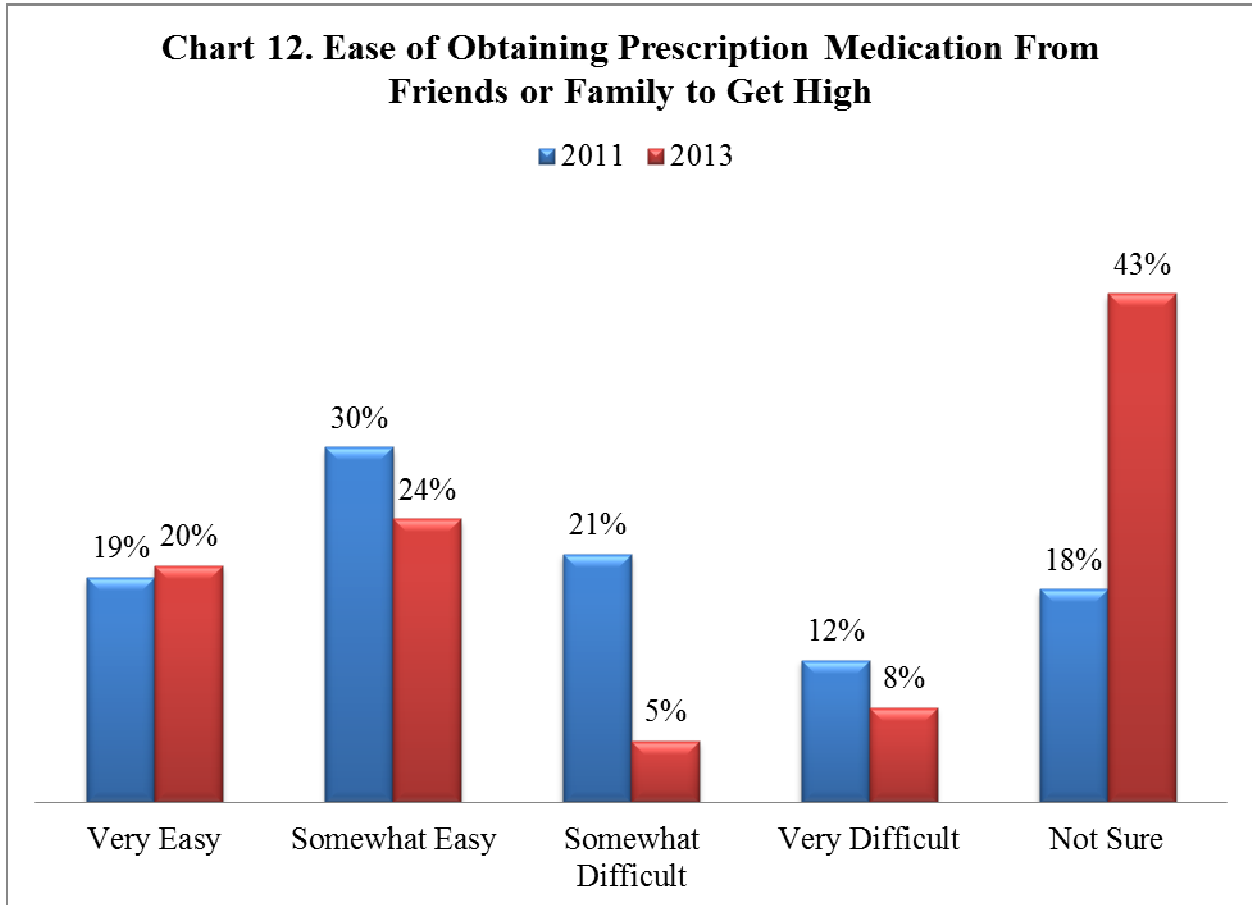
A larger percentage of men said they are not sure (56%) compared to women respondents (44%).

Non-white respondents were more likely to say it is difficult (25%) very difficult (13%) to obtain prescription medications from a medical provider to get high.

36% of respondents who have completed a formal post-secondary educational program said it is very easy or somewhat easy compared to 18% of respondents with lower educational attainment.

A similar question asked respondents about the ease of obtaining prescription medications from friends or family members to get high (Chart 12). Although the largest percentage (43%) again said they are not sure, more respondents said it is somewhat easy (24%) or very easy (20%) compared to the previous question (from medical providers).

Compared to the 2011 survey results, many more respondents said they are not sure and fewer respondents said it is somewhat difficult to get prescription medications from friends or family to get high. The differences are statistically significant.



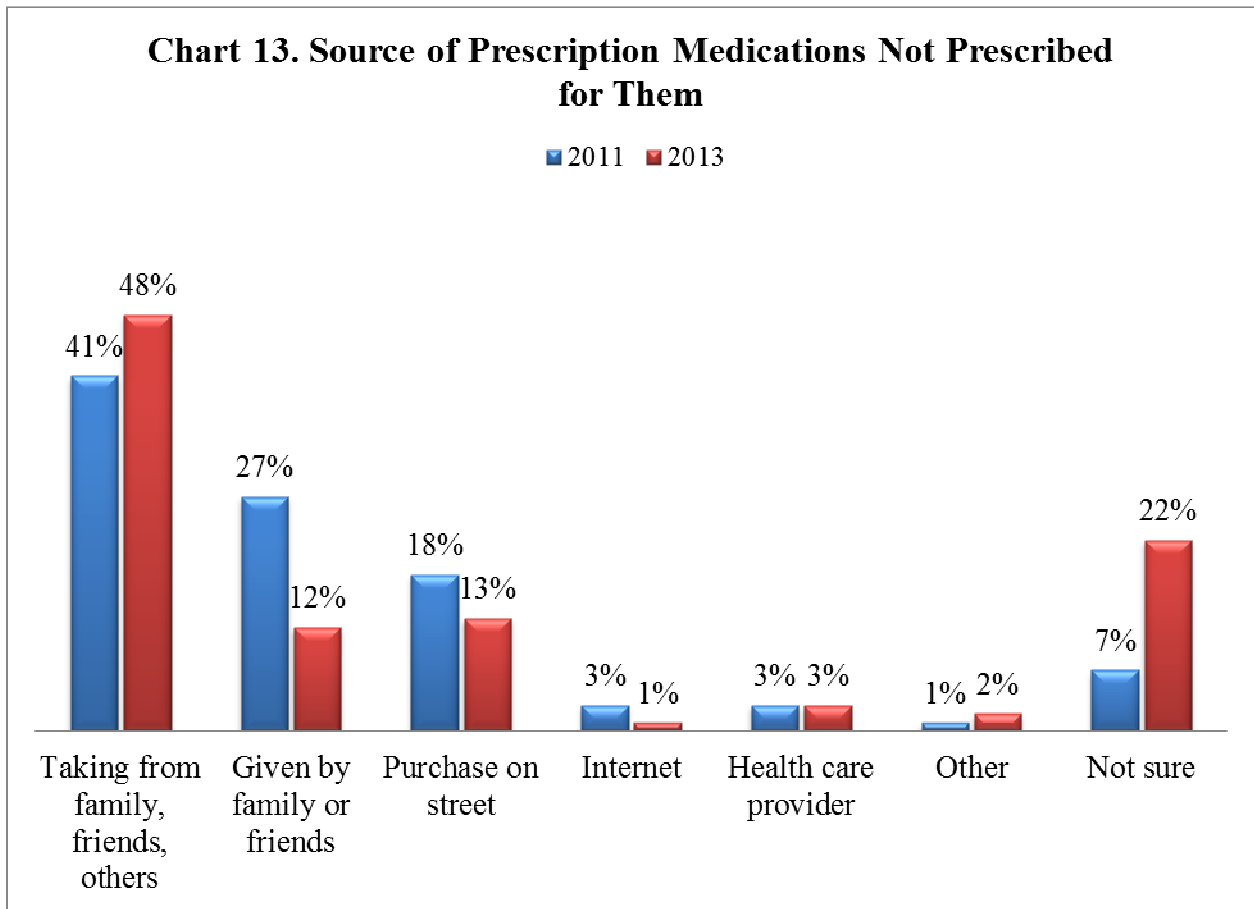
Demographic comparisons.

Respondents age 18-24 were much more likely to believe that it is somewhat easy (42%) to obtain prescription drugs from friends or family to get high compared to other age groups.

A larger percentage of men said they are not sure (53%) compared to women respondents (36%).

When asked where they think people most often obtain prescription medications not prescribed for them, Chart 13 indicates that half of respondents believe that taking the medications from family or friends or stealing from another source is the primary method. However, 22% said they are not sure. Among the remaining choices, 13% said purchases on the street and 12% said given by family or friends. Few said the Internet or a health care provider was the most frequent source.

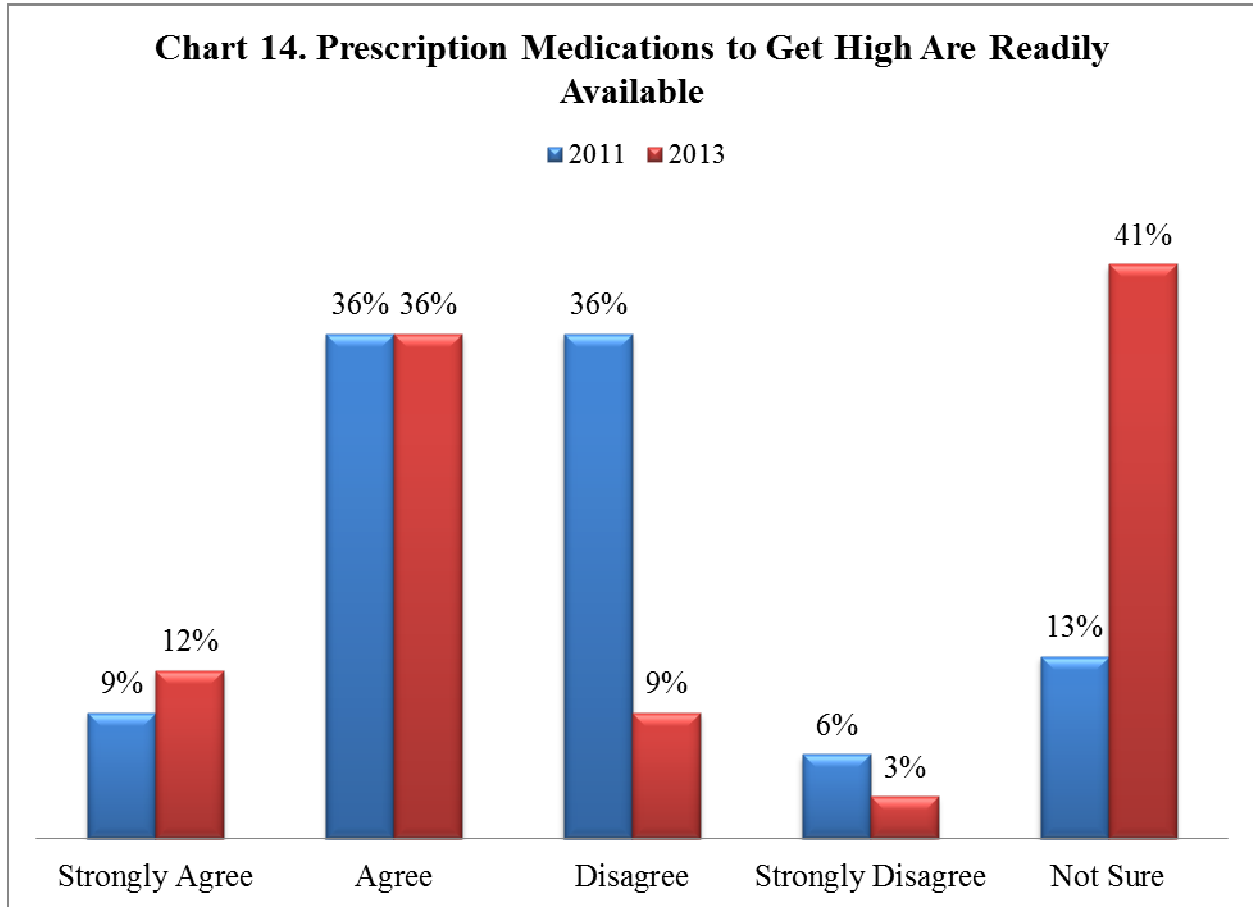
In 2011 respondents also believed that taking/stealing the medications from family, friends, or another source was the primary method to obtain prescription medications not intended for them (41%). Fewer respondents thought that being given the medications by family or friends was the most frequent source in 2013 (12%) compared to 2011 (27%). The percentage of respondents who were not sure increased from 7% in 2011 to 22% in 2013. The differences are statistically significant.



Demographic comparisons. The percentage of not sure responses spiked among senior citizens age 65 plus (40%).

Approximately half of respondents agree (36%) or strongly agree (12%) that prescription medications to get high are readily available in the Wausau area (Chart 14). Relatively few disagree (9%) or strongly disagree (2%), but over 40% said they are not sure.

As seen in previous questions, the percentage of respondents who said they are not sure about availability of prescription medications to get high has increased significantly in the 2013 survey compared to the 2011 results, and the difference is statistically significant. The percentage of those who agree or strongly agree that prescription medications are readily available to those wanting to get high has remained about the same.

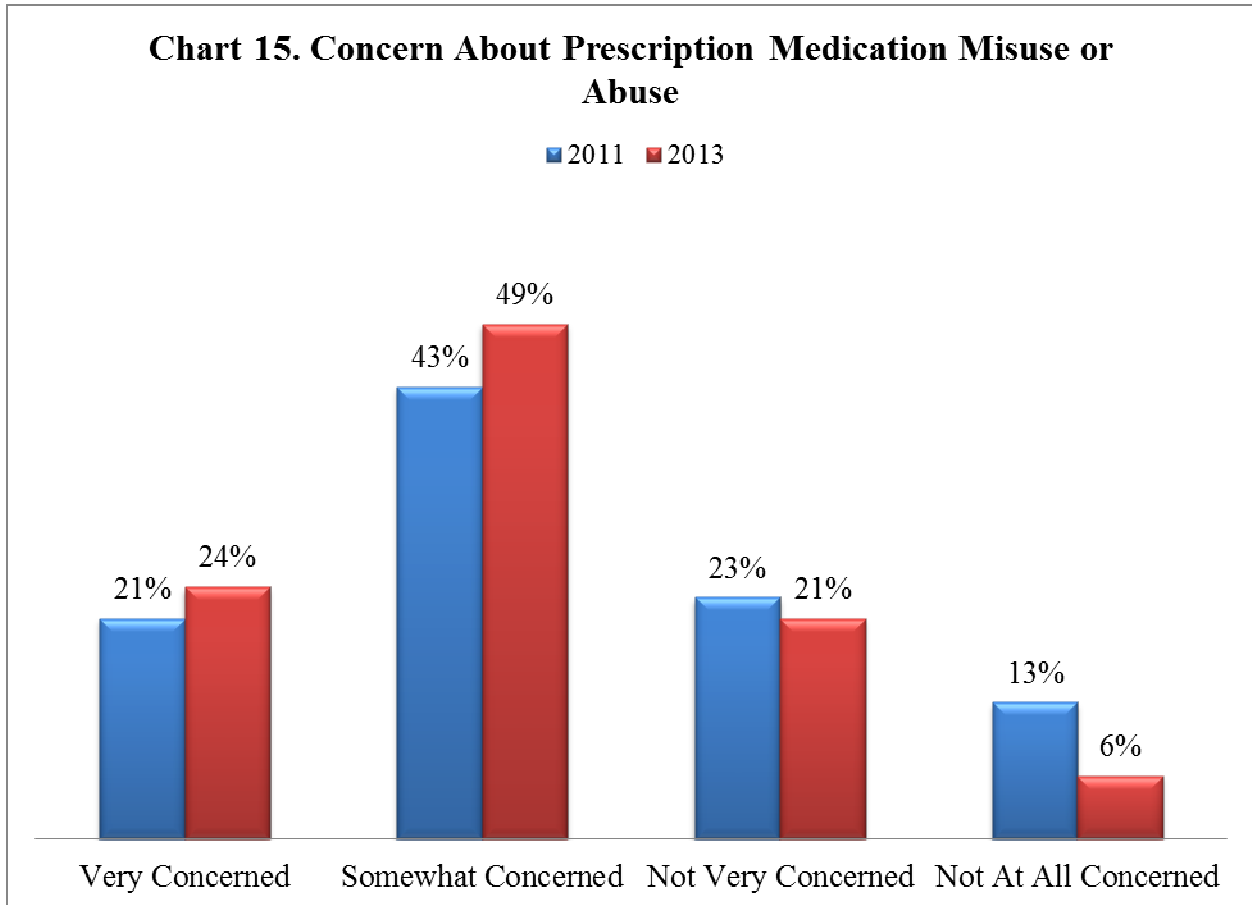


Demographic comparisons. There were no statistically significant differences among the demographic groups.

## Perception of Harm

Chart 15 shows the level of concern about the abuse or misuse of prescription drugs in the Wausau area. About three-fourths of respondents are very concerned (24%) or somewhat concerned (49%) about this issue compared to those who are not very concerned (21%) or not at all concerned (6%)

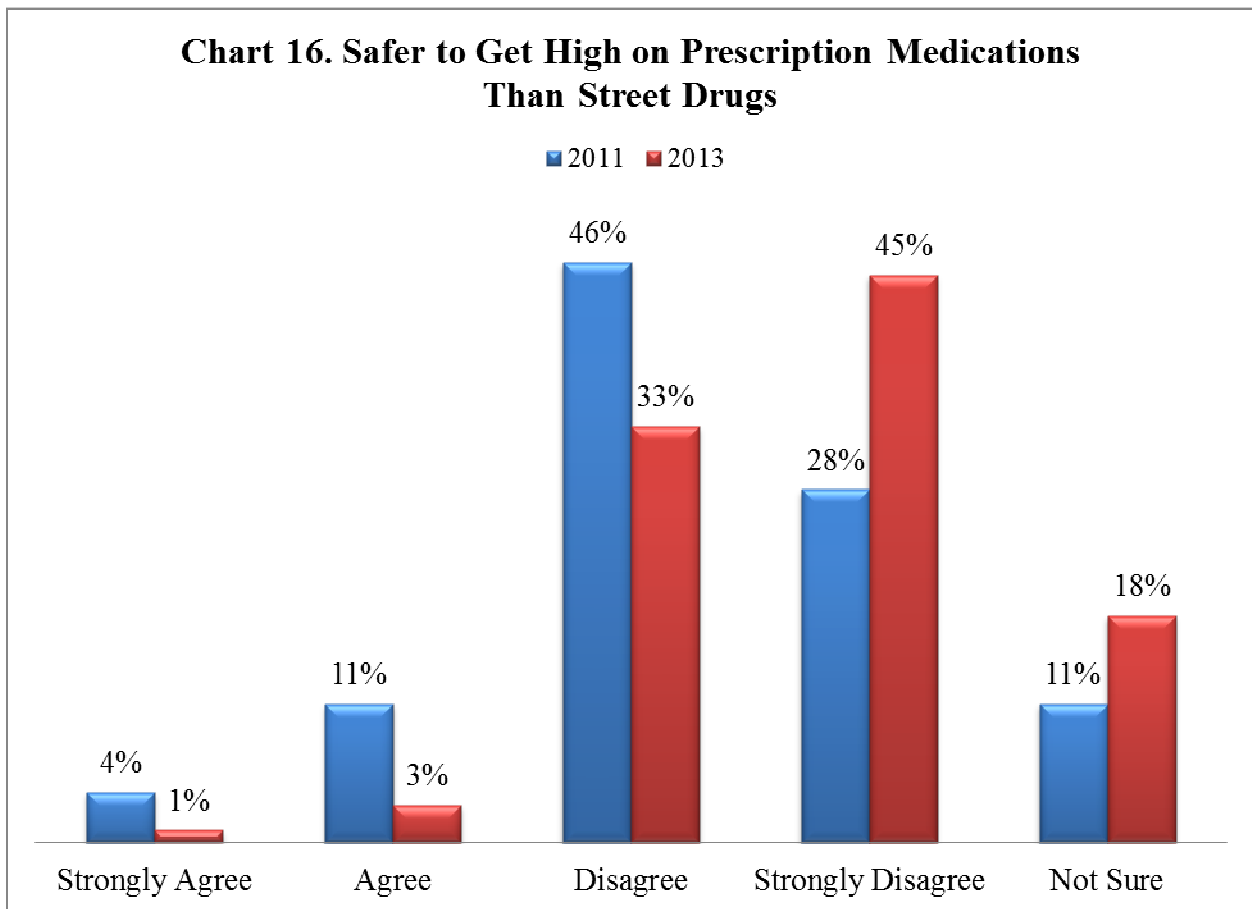
The level of concern has increased slightly since 2011, and the difference is statistically significant.



Demographic comparisons. 33% of non-white respondents said they are somewhat concerned, and 49% of white respondents said they are somewhat concerned.

As shown in Chart 16, only a small fraction of respondents believe that it is safer to get high on prescription medications than street drugs. About three-fourths disagree (33%) or strongly disagree (45%) that prescription medications are safer. A significant minority of 18% are not sure.

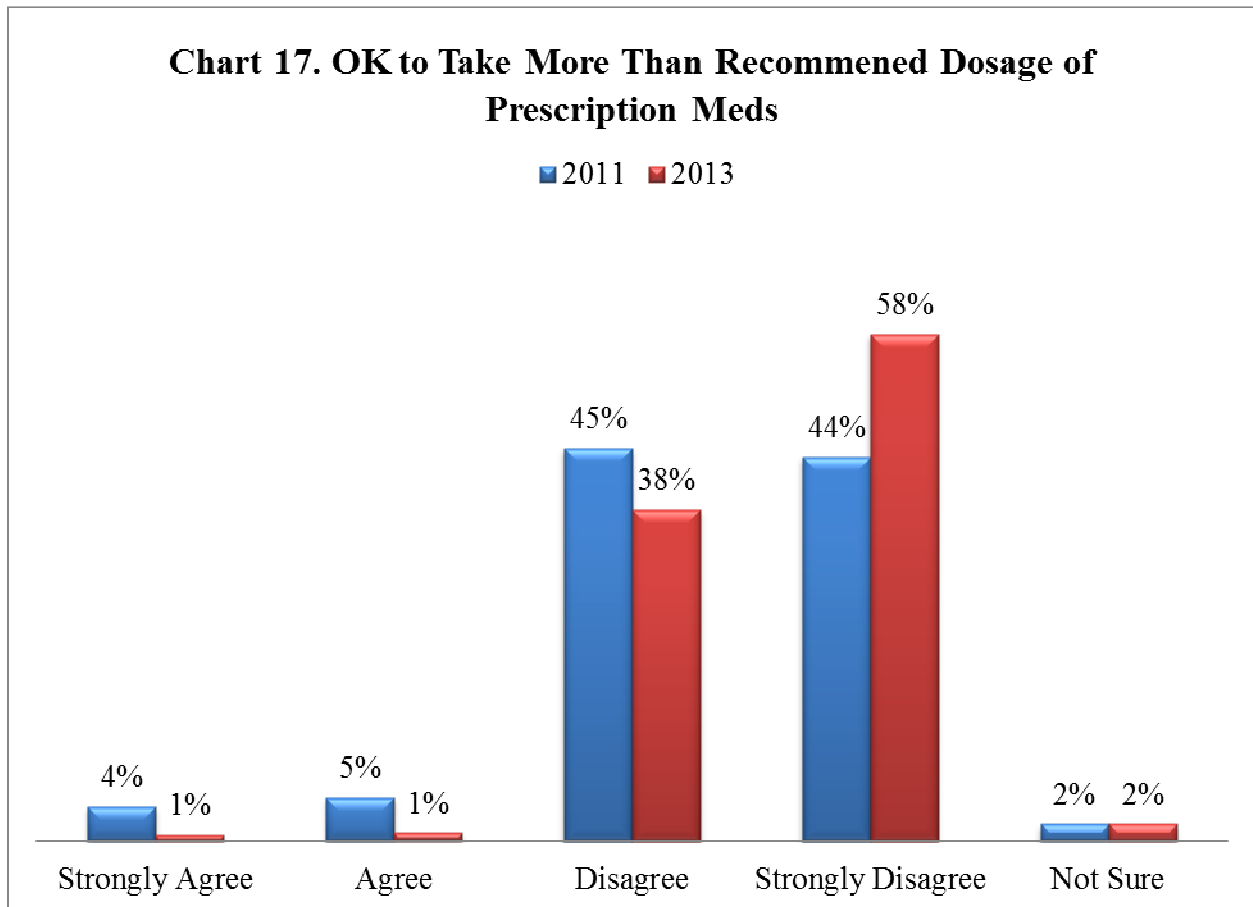
Compared to the 2011 survey, fewer respondents agree or strongly agree that highs from prescription drugs are safer than street drug highs. The intensity of those who disagree has shifted and more respondents now strongly disagree compared to those who disagree. Additionally the percentage of those who are not sure has increased. The differences are statistically significant.



Demographic Comparisons. Although few respondents within any age group agreed or strongly agreed that it is safer to get high on prescription medications than street drugs, the percentage of those who are not sure increased with age. Only 8% of those aged 18-24 were not sure compared to 35% of seniors age 65 plus.

Chart 17 shows that nearly all respondents disagree (38%) or strongly disagree (58%) that it is OK to take more than the recommended dosage of prescription medications.

Although the overall pattern of responses in 2013 was roughly the same as in 2011, the intensity of disagreement has increased, with those who strongly disagree increasing from 44% to 58%. The differences are statistically significant.

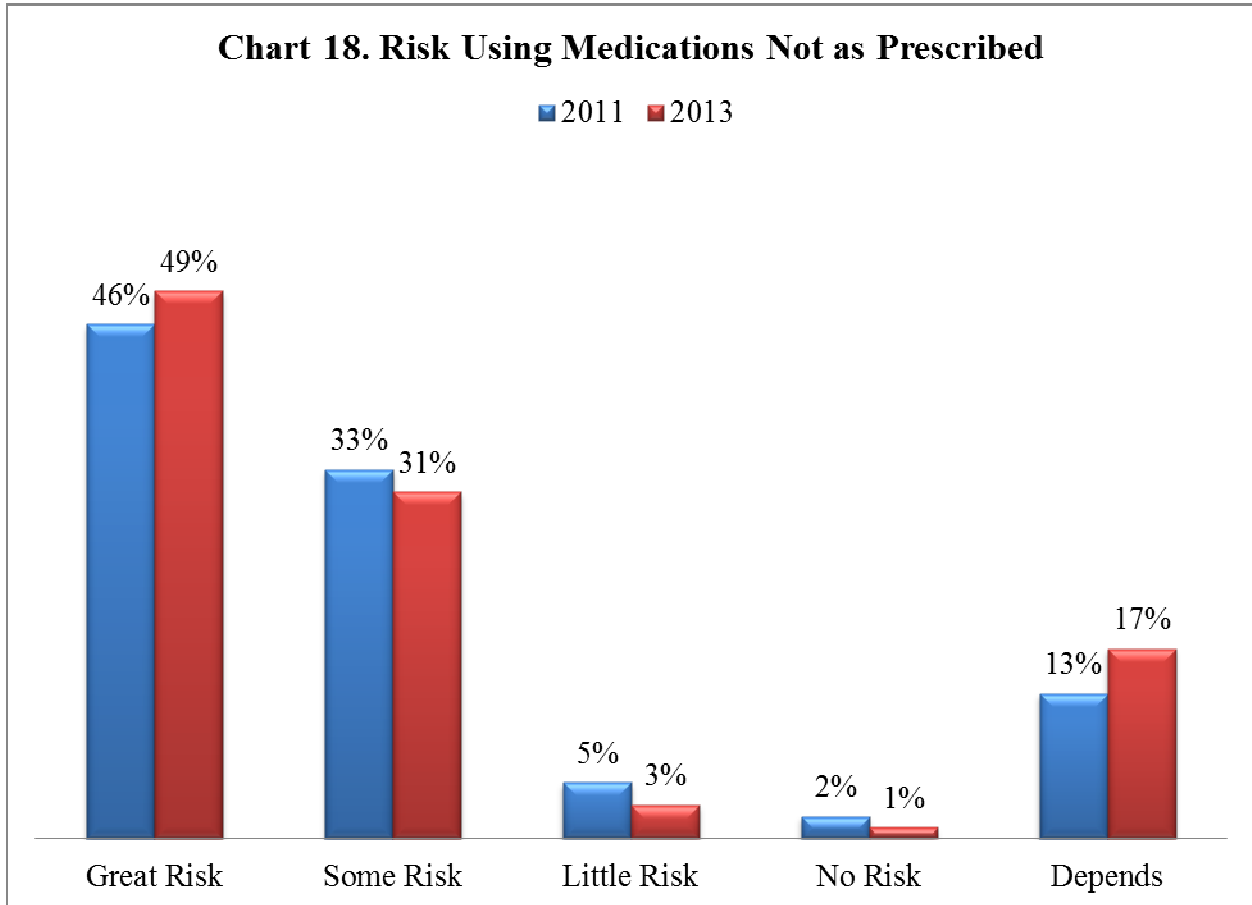


Demographic Comparisons. A larger majority of women respondents strongly disagreed (61%) compared to men (54%).

Non-white respondents were more likely to say they are not sure (13%) compared to 1% of white respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about the level of risk associated with using medications not exactly as prescribed by their doctor or health care provider. The results are shown in Chart 18 and indicate that half of respondents think there is great risk in doing so. An additional 31% think there is some risk. Only 4% think there is little or no risk. However, one in eight respondents think the level of risk depends on the medication.

A comparison to the 2011 results indicates a slight increase among those who said there is a great risk and a slight increase among those who said it depends. The difference is statistically significant.

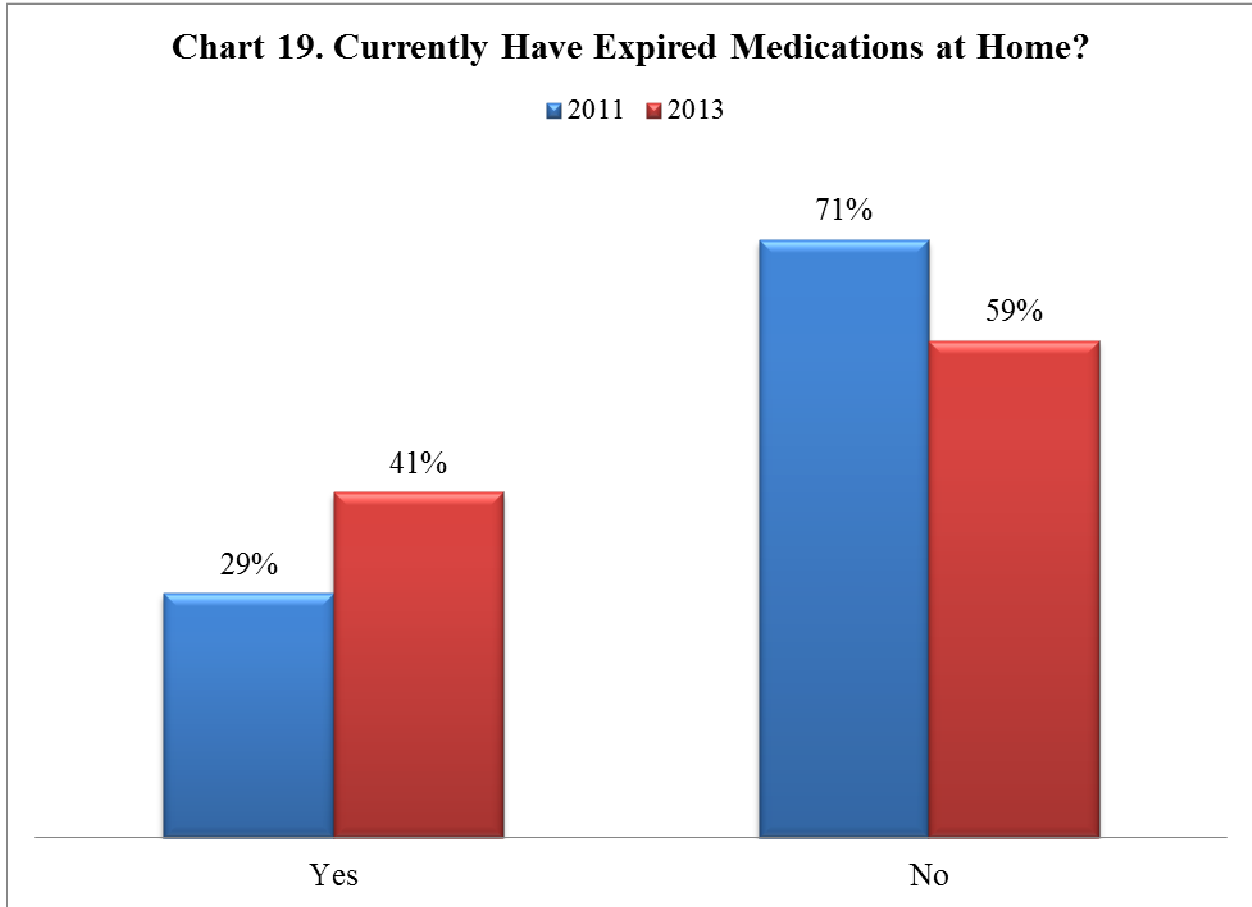


Demographic Comparisons. Women were more likely to say that there is great risk (52%) compared to the men (44%).

## Diversion & Disposal Efforts

About four in ten respondents said they have expired medications in their homes.

Compared to 2011, this is an increase of 11% and the difference is statistically significant.



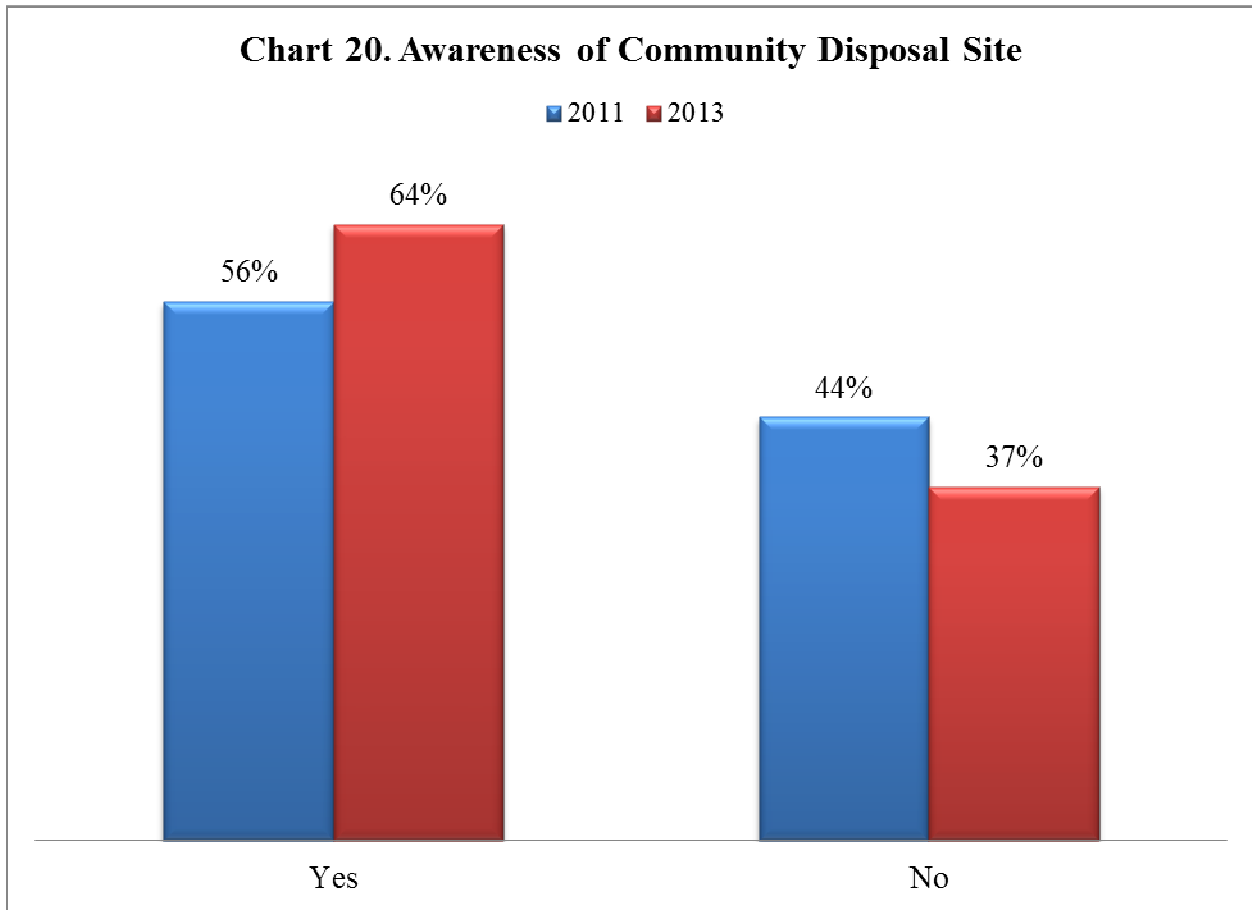
Demographic Comparisons. Respondents age 25-34 were more likely to have expired medications at home (58%), while respondents age 65 plus were less likely than other age groups (28%). In the 2011 survey, respondents age 18-24 were more likely to have expired medications.

Non-white respondents were more likely to have expired prescription medications (67%) compared to 40% of white respondents.

A higher percentage of respondents from households with at least \$50,000 said they have expired prescription medications (48%) compared to respondents from households with less than \$50,000 income (36%). This is consistent with the results to an earlier question about current use of prescription medications (Chart 5) that indicated use of prescription medications is more frequent among households with at least \$50,000 annual income.

Chart 20 shows the percentage of respondents who are aware of collection sites in their communities for expired and unwanted prescription medications. Although a majority (64%) of respondents said they are aware of collection sites, the fact that 44% are not may indicate an opportunity for additional promotion and publicity to increase awareness.

The awareness level has increased in the past two years from 56% to 64%. The difference is statistically significant.

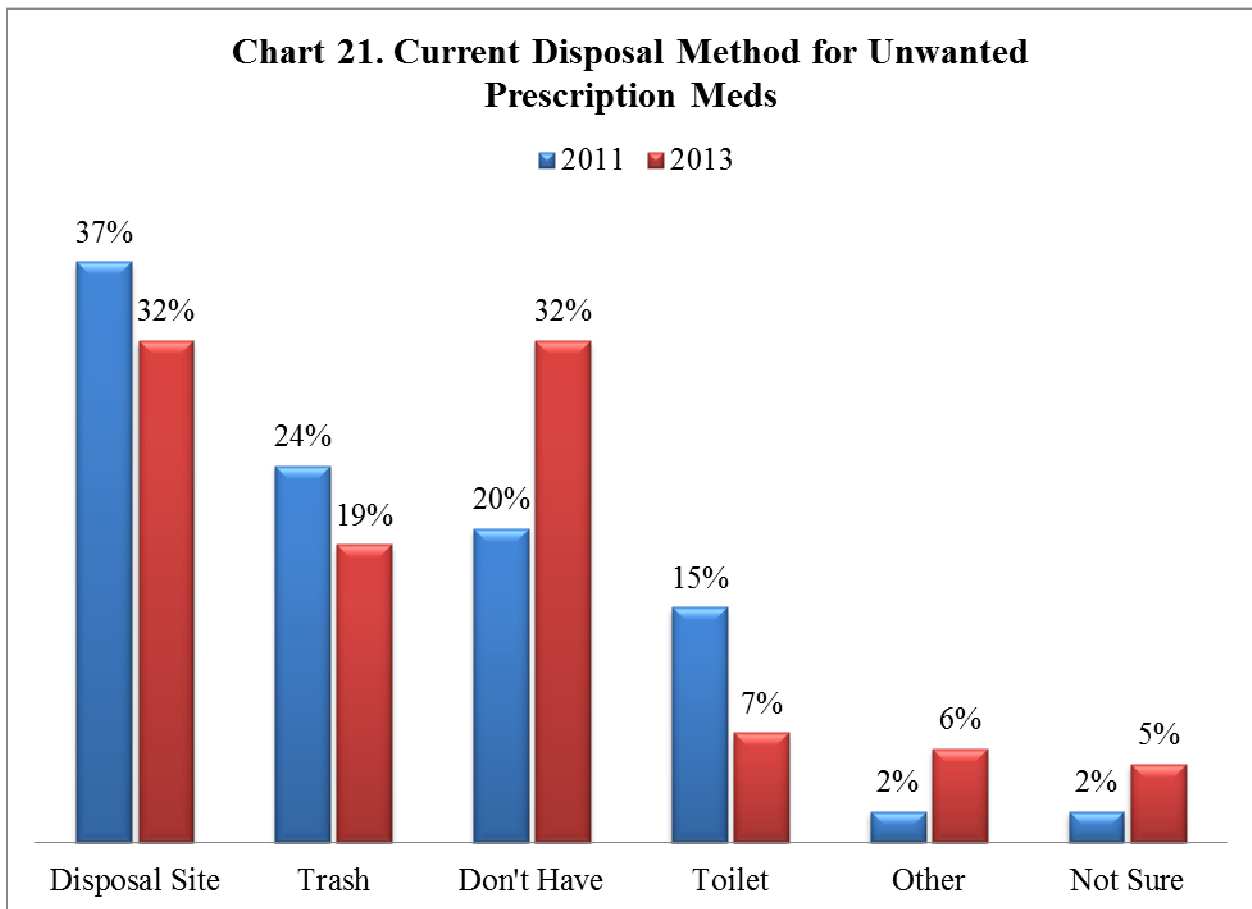


Demographic comparisons. Only 27% of respondents age 18-24 are aware of community disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications. In the 2011 survey, young adults were also least likely to be aware of community disposal sites.

A higher percentage of white respondents are aware of community disposal sites (65%) compared to 31% of non-white respondents. Marathon County officials may wish to consider targeted information and education outreach programming to non-White population groups, including translation of materials, to address this disparity in awareness.

Respondents were asked to indicate how they currently dispose of unused or unwanted prescription medications. The results are summarized in Chart 21. The most common reported disposal method is to utilize a collection site (32%), followed by placing medications in the trash (19%), or flushing down the toilet (7%). A third of respondents said they do not have unused or unwanted prescription medications.

Compared to the 2011 responses, the percentage of respondents with no unused or unwanted prescription medications has risen from 20% to 32%. These differences are statistically significant. The rank order of most often used disposal methods remained the same between 2011 and 2013: disposal sites, trash, and toilet in that order.

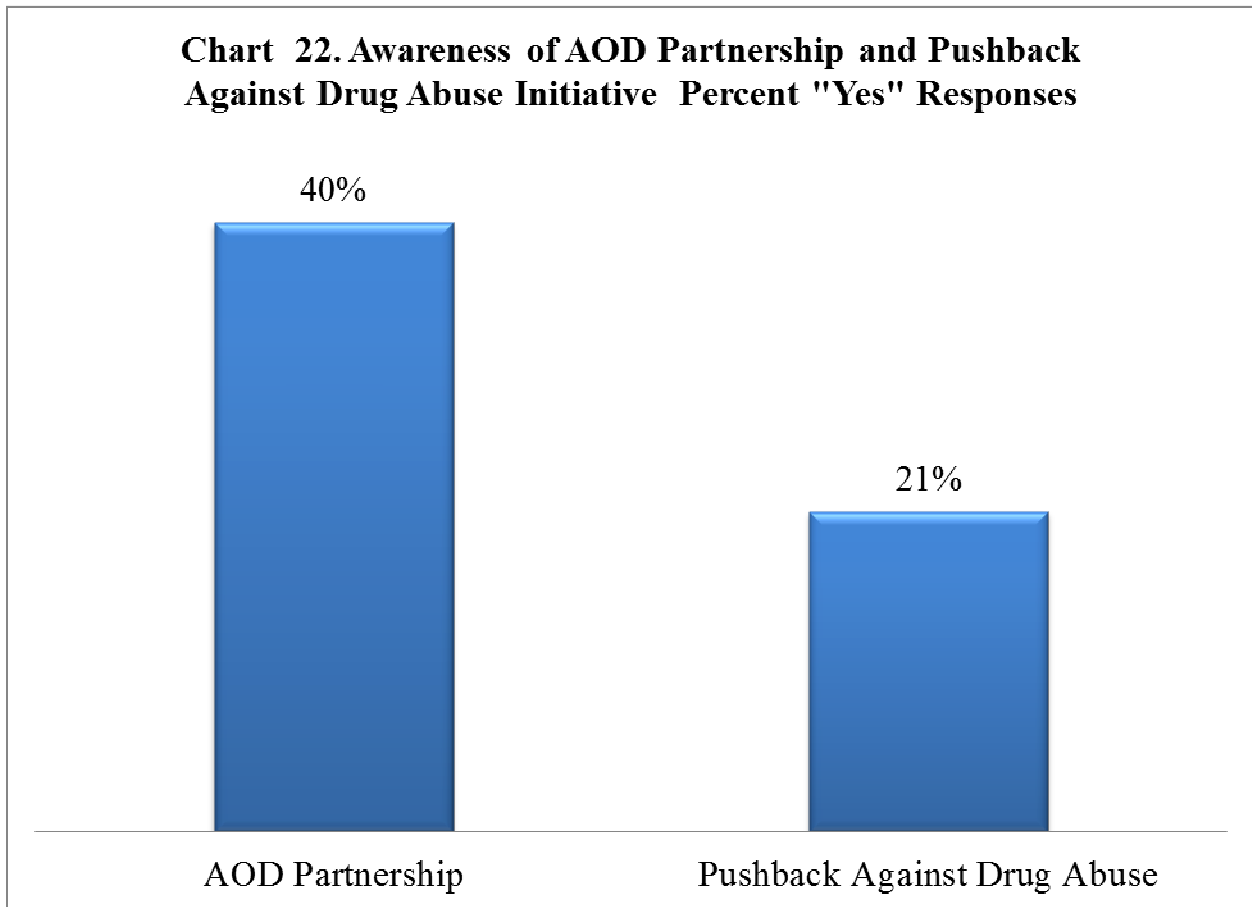


Demographic comparisons. The most frequent disposal method among younger respondents age 18-34 is to place unwanted prescription medications in the trash. Respondents age 35 to 44 are equally split between using collection sites or placing the medications in their trash. Respondents in all age groups 45 years and older prefer to use collection sites.

## Awareness of Local Prevention Initiatives

Respondents were asked if they are aware of the Marathon County Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Partnership (a local substance abuse coalition) and the Pushback Against Drug Abuse initiative (launched in May 2013). Results are shown in Chart 22. Forty percent of respondents said they are aware of the AOD Partnership, and only 21% said they are aware of the Pushback Against Drug Abuse initiative.

These questions were not asked in the 2011 survey. Thus, comparisons are not possible.



Demographic comparisons. Respondents age 35 to 44 are slightly less likely to be aware of the AOD partnership (28%). Respondents 25 to 34 are slightly less likely to be aware of the Pushback Against Drug Abuse campaign (10%). Women are more likely to be aware of the AOD partnership (45%) compared to men (33%).

## Conclusions

Prescription medication misuse and abuse are perceived as less serious community health issues than illegal drug use, obesity, and alcohol abuse. However, the percent who view prescription medication misuse or abuse as a very serious issue has changed substantially since 2011, rising from 12% to 31%. This difference is statistically significant. About a quarter of respondents in both 2011 and 2013 are not sure if this is a serious issue or not. In addition about a quarter of respondents say they are not very concerned or not at all concerned about misuse or abuse of prescription medications in the community. Taken together, this suggests the need for continuing public education about this issue.

Large majorities (87% or more) of respondents said they have never taken a prescription medication that was not prescribed for their use. However, this behavior increases among young adults, particularly those age 18 to 24 years. Equally large majorities say they have not used a prescribed medication for other than the purpose for which it was prescribed.

Relatively large percentages (43% to 50%) of respondents are not sure how easy it is to obtain prescriptions medications from medical providers or family/friends to get high. Similarly, 41% are not sure of the overall availability of prescription medications in the Wausau area to get high. These relatively high percentages of respondents who are not sure is an understandable result since few have taken a prescription medication that was not intended for their own use and, thus, lack direct personal experience. Again, this suggests the importance of outreach efforts to educate the public about this issue.

Since about 40% of households have expired prescriptions, safe disposal is a key issue to address.

An analysis of the 2013 survey results to the 2011 survey results indicates a pattern of increased awareness of misuse/abuse of prescription medications as an issue and the potential problems and health risks associated with abuse and misuse of prescription medications.

## Appendix A. Non-response Bias Tests

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. For example, one of the questions in the survey asked about the overall quality of life in the Wausau area. If those who failed to return their survey were more dissatisfied with the overall quality of life, the estimates included in this report will overstate the satisfaction of residents.

The standard way to test for non-response bias is to compare the responses of those who return the first mailing of a questionnaire to those who return the second mailing. Those who return the second questionnaire are, in effect, a sample of non-respondents (to the first mailing), and we assume that they are representative of that group.

There were five of 26 variables tested with statistically significant differences between the mean responses of these two groups of respondents out of 26 tested.

- Q3. Satisfaction with quality of life in Wausau. Mail 1: mean rating: 7.7. Mail 2 mean rating: 6.9
- Q6a. Seriousness of smoking. Mail 1: 16% Very Serious. Mail 2: 26% Very Serious
- Q12. Mail 1: Ease to obtain prescription medications from medical provider to get high. 9% Very Easy. Mail 2: 20% Very Easy
- Q13. Ease to obtain prescription medications from family/friends to get high. Mail 1: 45% Easy or Very Easy. Mail 2: 33% Easy or Very Easy
- Q20. Have expired prescription medications in home. Mail 1: 43% Yes. Mail 2: 14% Yes.

**Based on the small number of variables (5) with statistically significant differences, the Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

## Appendix B “Other” Responses

1. In which of the following Wausau Metro are communities do you live? (19 “Other” responses)
  - Town of Maine (5x)
  - Town of Wausau (5x)
  - Town of Stettin (4x)
  - Town of Hewitt (2x)
  - Town of Texas (2x)
  - Township of Berlin
  
14. Where do you think people most often get prescription medications that have not been prescribed for them? (5 “Other” responses)
  - Burglary
  - By doctor
  - Given or sold by family/friends
  - Optom R/X
  - Theft
  
22. Currently how do your dispose of your unused or unwanted prescription medications? (24 “Other” responses)
  - Keep them (2x)
  - Bag in water. Toss in trash
  - Hold on to them for disposal
  - I take them to the hospital where I work and dispose them in the appropriate way
  - I use them all
  - Just hold onto them
  - Just keep them
  - Keep in a box
  - Keep in a plastic bag
  - Keep them around forever
  - Keep them in drawer
  - Kitchen garbage disposal
  - Left on shelf
  - Melt in cat litter
  - Put in a drawer
  - Sharps container at work
  - Sit in the home
  - Smash them and then put in trash so they are a powder
  - Take to area
  - Take to pharmacy
  - They are just sitting around. (not dangerous ones)
  - Use until gone
  - Wait until I need them

## Appendix C. Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question (unweighted raw responses)

### 2013 Marathon County Medication Assessment Questionnaire

#### 1. In which of the following Wausau Metro area communities do you live? (choose one)

City of Wausau (54401, 54403)	Schofield (54476)	Rothschild (54474)	Weston (54476, 54474)	Rib Mountain (54401)	Other, Specify: (See Appendix B)	NA
61%	6%	18%	9%	5%	0%	0%

#### 2. How long have you lived in the Wausau Metro area?

Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	Over 20 years
1%	7%	11%	13%	67%

#### 3. On a ONE to TEN scale where 1 = Not Satisfied and 10 = Very Satisfied, overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of life in the Wausau Metro area?

Not Satisfied		Average						Very Satisfied		NA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1%	1%	2%	3%	7%	9%	13%	32%	19%	15%	0%

#### 4. During the past TWO years how would you say the Wausau Metro area has changed? Would you say...

The Wausau Metro area has become a worse place to live	The Wausau Metro area has stayed about the same	The Wausau Metro area has become a better place to live	Not Sure
29%	42%	23%	7%

#### 5. How would you rate your overall health today? Would you say you are in...

Poor Health	Fair Health	Good Health	Excellent Health	Not Sure
22%	58%	17%	2%	1%

*In this study when we use the term “prescription medications” we are talking about medications that your doctor or health care provider prescribes specifically for you. We are not talking about medications that you can buy over the counter nor are we talking about drugs that are illegal such as marijuana or cocaine.*

#### 6. Below is a list of some health related issues that exist in many communities. For each one please indicate how serious you think this problem is in the Wausau Metro area.

	Not Serious	Somewhat Serious	Moderately Serious	Very Serious	Not Sure
a. Smoking	4%	17%	31%	46%	3%
b. Abuse or misuse of alcohol	4%	17%	31%	46%	3%
c. Obesity	1%	13%	36%	47%	3%
d. Abuse or misuse of prescription medications	4%	17%	28%	27%	24%
e. Use of illegal drugs	1%	11%	25%	53%	9%

	Yes	No	NA/Don't Care to Answer		
<b>7. Are you currently taking any medications that have been prescribed by your doctor?</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>0%</b>		
<b><u>PREVALENCE</u></b>					
<b>8. Have you ever, even once, used a prescription that was not prescribed for you?</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>0%</b>		
<b>9. Have you ever, even once, used a prescription medication for a reason other than what it was prescribed?</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>0%</b>		
<b>10. In the past 12 months, have you used prescription medications but not used them exactly as the doctor prescribed?</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>0%</b>		
<b>11. During the last 30 days, how many times have you used prescription medications, but not exactly as your doctor prescribed?</b>	0	1-2	3-5	6 or more	NA/Don't Care to Answer
	<b>90%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**PERCEPTION OF AVAILABILITY**

Some people use prescription medications to get high or for the feeling the drug gives them. The next few questions are about the use and availability of medications that people might use to get high.

	Very Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Somewhat Easy	Very Easy	Not Sure	NA/Don't Care to Answer
<b>12. In your opinion, how easy is it in your community to obtain prescription medications from a physician, dentist, or other medical provider to get high?</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>13. In your opinion, how easy is it in your community to obtain prescription medications from a family member or friend to get high?</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>14. Where do you think people <u>most often</u> get prescription medications that have not been prescribed to them? (choose one)</b>						
<b>1%</b>	Over the Internet	<b>9%</b>	Given to them by a family member or friend Other, Specify: (See Appendix B)			
<b>3%</b>	From a health care provider	<b>1%</b>				
<b>45%</b>	By taking from family, friends, or stealing from another source	<b>26%</b>	Not Sure			
<b>13%</b>	Purchase them on the street	<b>1%</b>	NA/Don't care to answer			

Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	NA
15. "In the Wausau Metro area prescription medications are readily available to individuals who want to use them to get high".	10%	34%	8%	4%	43%	1%

**PERCEPTION OF HARM**

	Very	Some-what	Not Very	Not at all	Not Sure	NA
16. How concerned are you about prescribed medication misuse or abuse in your community?	25%	45%	18%	5%	7%	0%

Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	NA
17. "It is safer to get high on prescription medications than street drugs (marijuana, cocaine)."	1%	5%	30%	39%	23%	2%
18. "It is OK to take more than the recommended dosage of a prescribed medication."	1%	2%	35%	58%	2%	1%

**19. How much risk do you believe there is with using medications, but not using them exactly as prescribed by your doctor or health care provider?**

Great Risk	Some Risk	Little Risk	No Risk	Depends on the Medication (VOL)	Not Sure	NA/Don't Care to Answer
46%	32%	2%	0%	15%	5%	0%

**DISPOSAL ISSUES**

	Yes	No	Not Sure	NA
20. Do you currently have expired prescription medications in your home?	33%	59%	7%	1%

	Yes	No	NA
21. Are you aware of any sites in your community at which you can dispose of prescription medications that have expired or that you are no longer taking?	65%	31%	4%

**22. Currently how do you dispose of your unused or unwanted prescription medications?**

Put them in the trash	Flush them down the toilet	Take them to a disposal site	Other, Specify: (See Appendix B)	I don't have unused or unwanted medications	Not Sure	NA/Don't Care to Answer
14%	7%	36%	6%	32%	5%	2%

**23. Regarding prescription medication, which of the following best describes you?**

I take prescription medication occasionally when prescribed by a doctor for temporary illnesses	I take prescription medication prescribed by a doctor regularly because of a chronic condition	I do not take any prescription medications
26%	62%	12%

**LOCAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS MEDICATION ABUSE**

	Yes	No	Not Sure
24. Have you heard about the Marathon County Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Partnership, a local substance abuse coalition?	41%	53%	6%



25. Have you heard about the Pushback Against Drug Abuse campaign?	24%	69%	7%
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Finally, just a few questions about yourself.

	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and over	Don't Care to Answer
26. What age range do you fall into?	6%	8%	10%	17%	23%	34%	1%

	Less than a high school diploma	Graduated from high school or GED	Some college or tech. school	Graduated from college or tech school	Graduate or Professional degree	Not Sure	NA
27. What is the highest level of education you have completed?	3%	21%	23%	32%	21%	0%	1%

28. What is your primary racial/ethnic group? (Choose One)

Caucasian or White	African American or Black	Native American	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic or Latino	Multi-racial	Other, specify:
97%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%

29. What is your combined TOTAL FAMILY INCOME before taxes?

Under \$25,000	\$25,000 to \$30,000	\$30,001 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$40,000	\$40,001 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$74,999	\$75,000 to \$99,999	\$100,00+	Don't Care to Answer
13%	8%	4%	5%	9%	16%	10%	14%	20%

	Self-Employed	Employed Full-Time	Employed Part-Time	Home-maker	Unemployed	Retired	Other, specify:
30. What is your current employment status?	7%	43%	7%	2%	3%	35%	7%

	Male	Female
31. Your Gender	55%	45%

Thank you for participating in this survey.  
Your participation is important to helping us better understand the views people hold regarding prescription drugs in Marathon County.

Please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by **September 6, 2013** to:

Survey Research Center, University of Wisconsin – River Falls  
124 Regional Development Institute  
410 S. Third Street  
River Falls, WI 54022-5001