
Town of Belmont Health Department Opioid Settlement Needs Assessment Survey 2024 Report

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Summary of Results

This survey was developed by a cross functional team of public health professionals, including health directors and an epidemiologist, to better understand community needs related to opioid use and misuse in Belmont. The survey was accessible to all residents through a comprehensive outreach strategy, including social media, town websites, and community and school newsletters. Every Belmont household and business received a postcard with a QR code linking directly to the survey, available in English, Portuguese, Spanish or Chinese. In addition, paper copies of the survey were available at the Health Department and the Beech Street Center (where the library is also being temporarily housed).

Belmont has 10,358 households* and with 574 survey responses, approximately 5.5% of households participated. While this response rate is relatively low, the validity of the findings is supported by similar results from Winchester, a neighboring town with comparable demographics. This suggests that the survey results reflect broader community trends, lending reliability to the data.

Key Findings:

1. Substances of Concern:

- The substance of greatest concern for misuse in Belmont was illegal opioids (40%), followed by prescription opioids (19%) and alcohol (14%) and Marijuana/Cannabis (13.1%) were almost the same.
- Tobacco/Nicotine was a significantly greater concern in those who identified as LGBTQ+ (17% versus 7% of overall respondents).

2. Narcan Awareness:

- 91% of respondents were aware of Narcan (Naloxone), but only 41% knew it was available through the Belmont Health Department. Awareness was notably lower among Asian residents (53%) and non-existent among the 7 respondents who completed the survey in Chinese.
- Overall, 59% of respondents were unaware that Narcan is available through the Health Department. Among Asian respondents, 81% were unaware, along with 86% of Black/African American respondents and 74% of multi-racial respondents.

3. Prescription Drug Drop-Off:

- 51% of respondents were unaware of the prescription drug drop-off box at the Belmont Police Department. In comments, residents suggested that 24/7 needle disposal at the police station would also be valuable, as current disposal options are only available during Health Department hours. None of the respondents who completed the survey in Chinese were aware of the drop-off box

4. Informed by Prescribers of Opioid Risks:

- Among the 27% of respondents prescribed opioids for pain management in the past five years, 41% reported not being adequately informed about the risks of opioid use by their prescribers.

5. Top Challenges for Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD):

- Limited availability of mental health services
- Lack of access to affordable treatment options
- Negative attitudes and unfair treatment toward individuals and families affected by OUD

6. Top 3 Programs/Services Needed for Opioid Impacted Belmont Residents

- Prevention
- Mental Health Counseling
- Connection to Care

Moving Forward

These findings emphasize the need for public education and acceptance of harm reduction tools, promoting available resources, offering support to connect individuals to care, and focusing on targeted outreach and prevention strategies to those impacted by opioids and at-risk populations. By doing so, Belmont can foster a more resilient and supportive community in addressing opioid use and misuse.

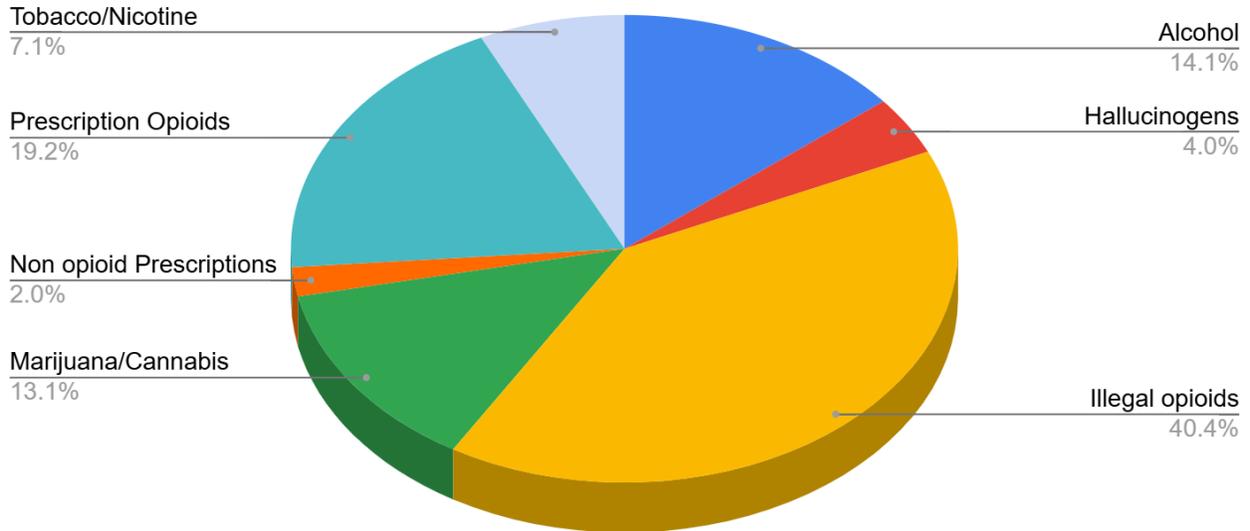
Resident Survey Demographics

Demographics of the Survey Respondents in Belmont	
Categories	Frequency (%)
Age	
18-24	15 (3%)
25-29	8 (1%)
30-39	51 (9%)
40-49	144 (25%)
50-59	153 (27%)
60-69	98 (17%)
70+	78 (14%)
Prefer to not answer	27 (5%)
Gender	
Woman	361 (63%)
Man	187 (33%)
Gender Non-Binary	4 (1%)
Trans Female	2 (0.3%)
Trans Male	0 (%)
Prefer not to answer	17 (3%)
Other	3 (1%)
LGBTQ+ Identity	
Yes	35 (6%)
No	539 (94%)
Race/Ethnicity	
White	435 (76%)
Black/African American	7 (1%)
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	8 (1%)
Asian	47 (8%)
Multi-racial	23 (4%)
Other	7 (1%)
Prefer not to answer	47 (8%)
Characteristics of Location	
I live in Belmont	538 responses
I work in Belmont	77 responses
I do not live or work in Belmont but I am involved in the community	4 responses

Substance Use Awareness and Concerns

Figure 1. Which substance are you most concerned about being used/misused in Belmont?

Top Concerns: Substance Use and Misuse in the Community



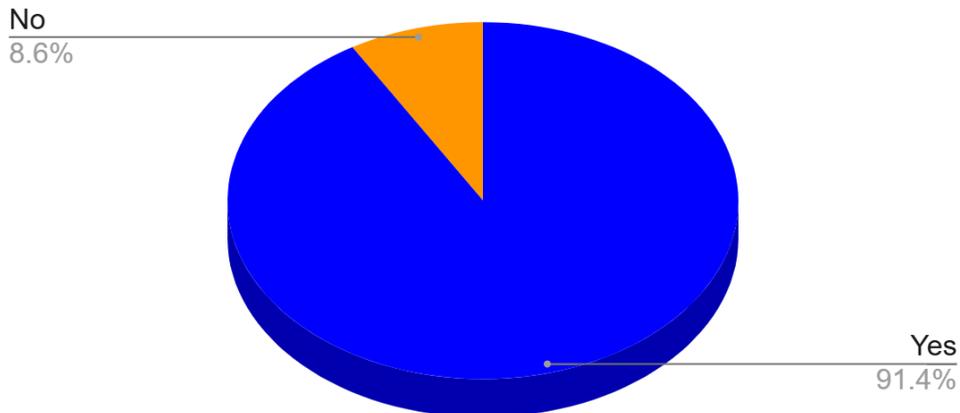
Top concern was illegal opioids (40%), followed by prescription opioids (19%) and alcohol (14%) and Marijuana/Cannabis (13.1%) were almost the same. Illegal opioids were a significantly greater concern about being used/misused in Belmont than prescription opioids.

Note:

- Prescription opioids defined as including morphine, oxycodone and hydrocodone (i.e., Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin)
- Illegal opioids defined as including heroin and fentanyl compounds

Figure 2. Do you know what Naloxone (Narcan) is?

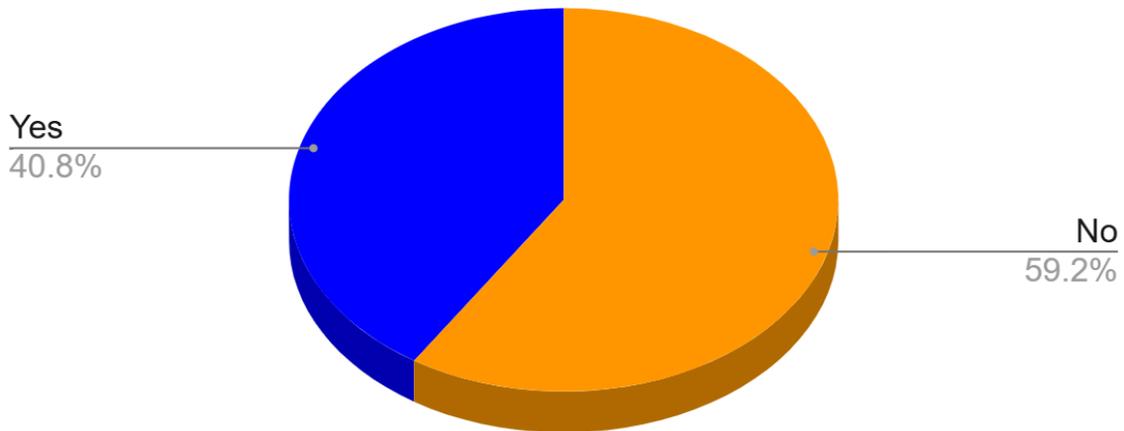
Awareness of Naloxone (Narcan)



Belmont Residents had an extremely high awareness of Naloxone.

Figure 3. Are you aware that Naloxone (Narcan) is available through the Belmont Health Department?

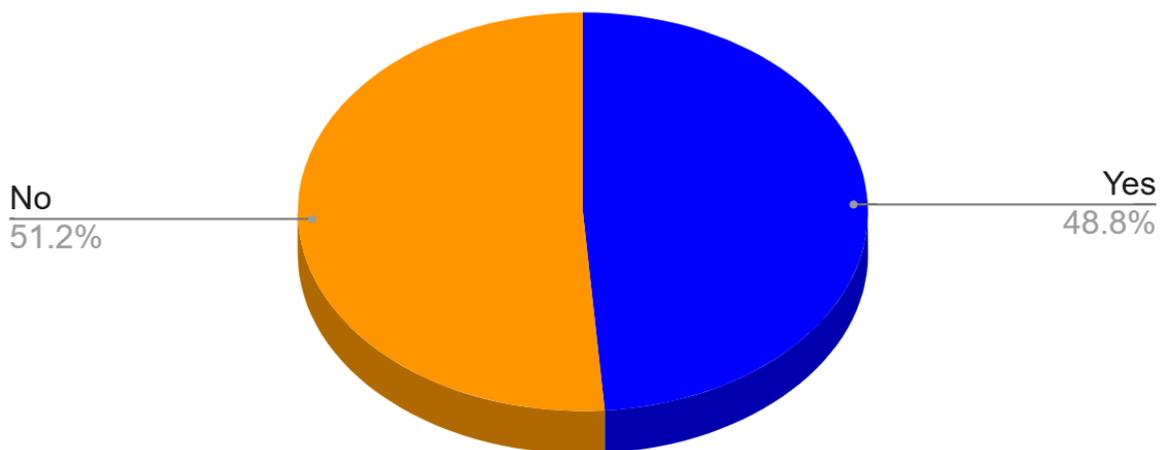
Awareness of Free Naloxone Availability Through the Belmont Health Department



While respondents had an extremely high awareness of Naloxone, the majority did not know it was available for free through the Belmont Health Department.

Figure 4. Are you aware that there is a prescription drug drop off at the Belmont Police Department? (This box can be accessed 24/7 and offers a safe way to dispose of any unused prescriptions)

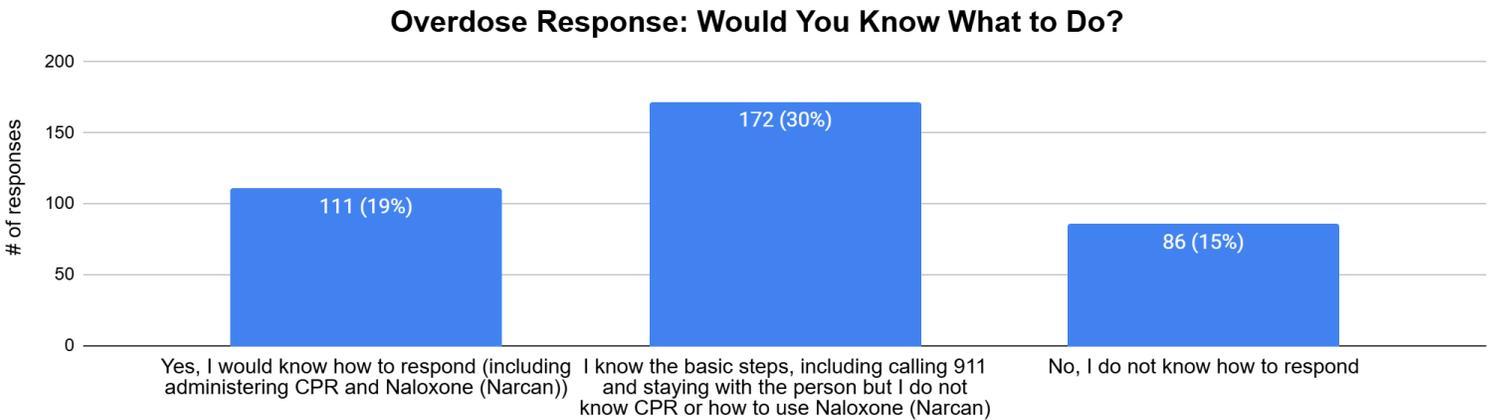
Awareness of a prescription drug drop off at the Belmont Police Department



A little more than half of the respondents did not know about the prescription drug drop off at the Belmont Police Department.

Overdose Response and Prescription Usage

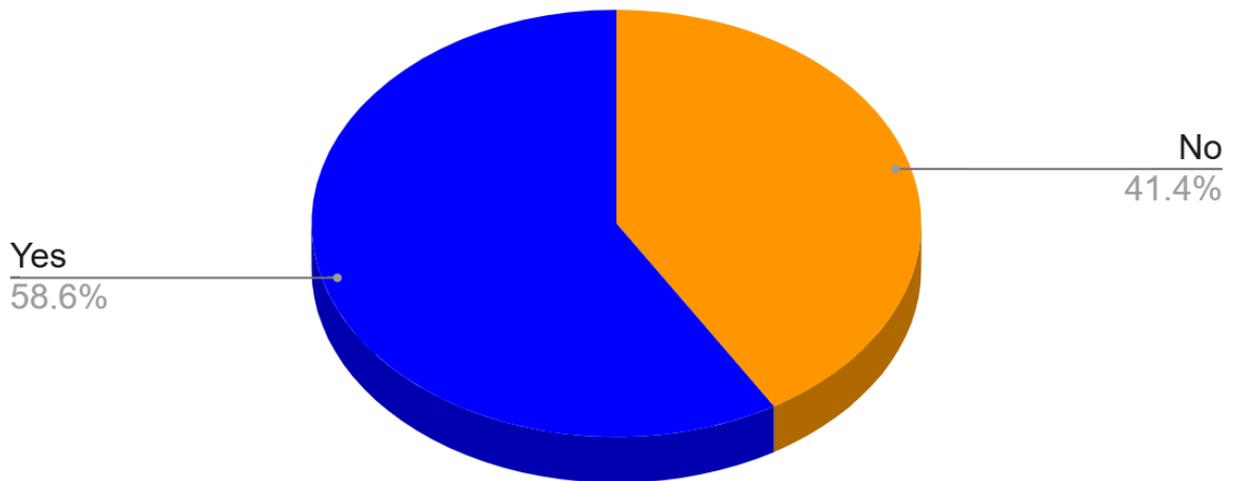
Figure 5. If you witnessed someone who appeared to have overdosed, would you know how to respond?



While the majority of respondents know the basic steps to respond to an overdose, 81% of respondents do not know how to administer both CPR and Narcan. A higher percentage of those who identified as LGBTQ+ compared to the overall respondents knew how to administer CPR and Narcan.

Figure 6. Adequately informed about potential risks associated with opioid use.

Awareness of Opioid Risks Among Those Prescribed in the Past 5 Years



Among the 27% of respondents prescribed opioids for pain management in the past five years, 41% did not feel they were adequately informed about the potential risks associated with opioid use.

Impact of Opioid Use

Table 1. Have you been impacted by opioid use? Select all that apply.

	Impact by Opioid Use (N)
I am a professional who works with individuals and families impacted by Opioid Use Disorder	53
I had a family member die from Opioid Use Disorder/overdose	42
I have a family member who has Opioid Use Disorder	39
I have been impacted by Opioid Use Disorder but prefer not to say how	35
I have a family member in recovery for Opioid Use Disorder	32
I have a co-worker who has Opioid Use Disorder	9
I am in recovery for Opioid Use Disorder	5
I use opioids recreationally	0
I am actively seeking support for my Opioid Use Disorder	0

These results illustrate the prevalence of residents that have been impacted by opioids. Of note are the 42 respondents who had a family member die from Opioid Use Disorder/overuse and 39 respondents who currently have a family member with Opioid Use Disorder.

Table 2. Based on your experience, what do you see as the biggest challenge individuals with Opioid Use Disorder face in Belmont?

	Biggest Challenge faced in Belmont (N)
Limited availability of mental health services	96
Lack of access to affordable treatment options	79
Negative attitudes and unfair treatment towards people and families struggling with Opioid Use Disorder	50
Lack of support networks (e.g., family, community)	27
Difficulty finding stable housing	11
Not having access and training to Naloxone (Narcan) - medication used to reverse the effects of opioid overdose	10
Difficulty re-entering the workforce after recovery	9
Other	20
I do not have any experience to base this on	272

Limited availability of mental health services and lack of access to affordable treatment options (which go hand in hand) were by far seen as the greatest challenge to Belmont residents with Opioid Use Disorder. Negative attitudes and unfair treatment towards people and families struggling with Opioid Use Disorder was significantly higher for those who identified as LGBTQ+ and was their #1 concern

Programs, Services and Support Needs

Table 3. Based on your experience, what programs or services are the greatest needs for Belmont residents impacted by opioids (select up to 3)

	Programs or services that are greatest need for Belmont resident (N)
Prevention	208
Mental Health Counseling	201
Connection to Care	168
Opioid Use Disorder Treatment	168
Families/Caregivers of people with Opioid Use Disorder	117
Support people with opioid use disorder	105
Harm Reduction	91
Anti-stigma Campaigns	40
I do not have any experience to base this on	136

Prevention and Mental Health Counseling were by far seen as the services of greatest need for Belmont residents impacted Opioid Use Disorder.

Comfort with Seeking Support and Communication Preferences

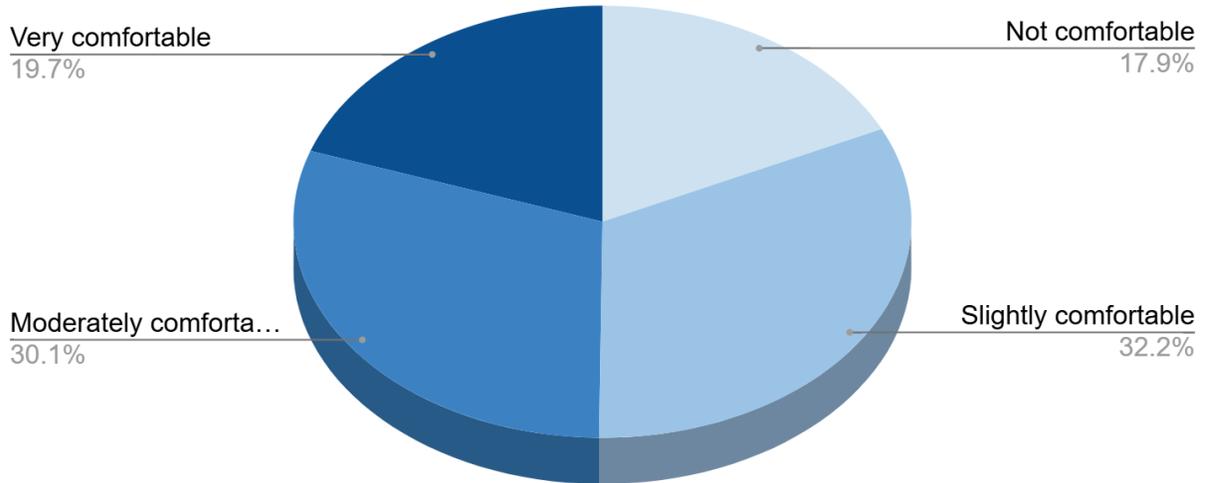
Table 4. Would you or someone in your family be interested in attending confidential group support sessions for family members of those impacted by substance use?

	Interest in Attending Confidential Group Support Sessions (N)
No	157
Yes (please provide your contact information at the end of survey)	8
Other	11
I do not have a family member who has a need right now	397

While only 8 people said they or someone in their family would be interested in attending confidential support sessions, we have already been able to directly outreach to them and will engage them in support session opportunities.

Figure 7. How comfortable would you be seeking in person support services within Belmont for yourself or someone in your family for opioid use?

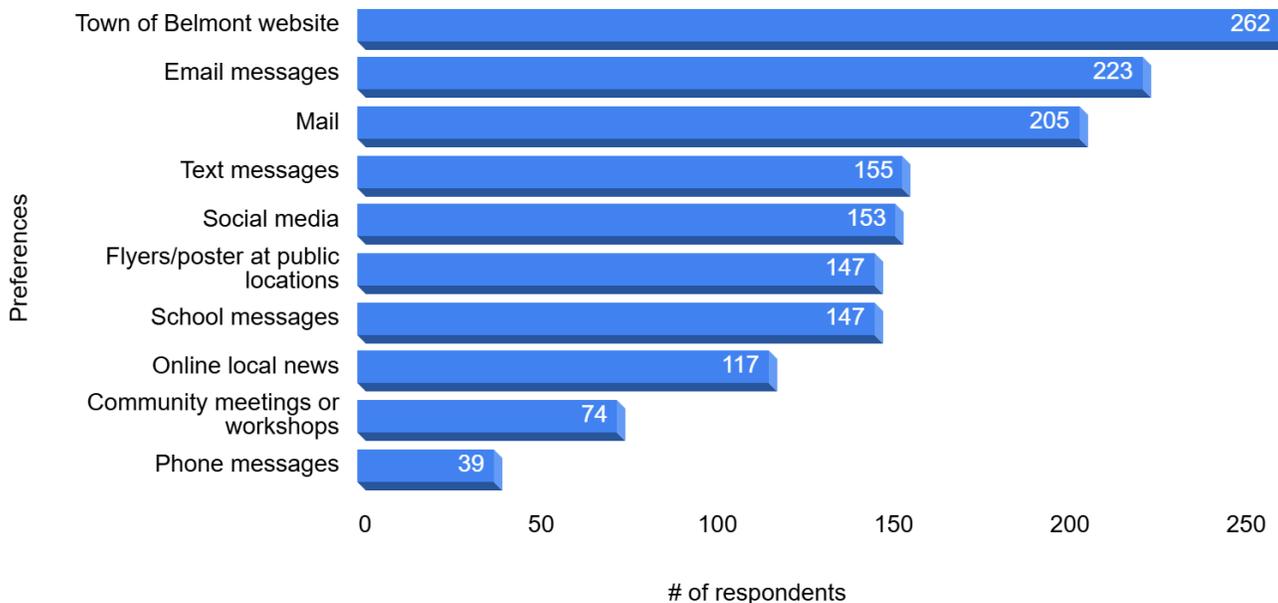
Comfort in Seeking Services within Belmont



Results for this were mixed, with about half of residents being moderately comfortable or very comfortable seeking support services within Belmont for themselves or someone in their family.

Figure 8. How would you prefer to receive non-urgent public health information in the Town of Belmont? (Please select all that apply)

Preference of Non-Urgent Public Health Information in Belmont



The Town of Belmont website was the most preferred way to receive non-urgent public health information.

Stratification by Age

Table 5. Concern with used/misused in the community

Age	Which substance are you most concerned about being used/misused in the community:						
	Substances						
	Alcohol	Hallucinogens	Illegal Opioids	Marijuana/ Cannabis	Non opioid Prescription	Prescription Opioids	Tobacco/Nicotine
18-24	20%	7%	20%			33%	20%
25-29	13%	13%	38%	13%		13%	13%
30-39	6%	2%	53%	10%	4%	20%	6%
40-49	12%	1%	39%	14%	1%	25%	7%
50-59	15%	3%	36%	21%		15%	9%
60-69	20%	4%	42%	5%	5%	19%	4%
70+	14%	10%	47%	8%		18%	3%
Prefer not to answer	15%	4%	38%	15%		15%	12%
Grand Total	14.46%	4%	41%	13%	2%	20%	7%

18-24 years olds was the age group that was most concerned about prescription opioids, followed by the 40-49 year olds.

Table 6. Awareness of Naloxone (Narcan)

Age	Do you know what Naloxone (Narcan) is?	
	Yes	No
18-24	93%	7%
25-29	100%	
30-39	90%	10%
40-49	85%	15%
50-59	92%	8%
60-69	99%	1%
70+	94%	6%
Prefer not to answer	93%	7%

Age did not greatly impact Awareness of Naloxone, however, the 40-49 year olds were the least informed respondents.

Table 7. Overdose Response: Would You Know What to Do?

Age	<i>If you witnessed someone who appeared to have overdosed, would you know how to respond?</i>		
	Yes, I would know how to respond (including administering CPR and Naloxone (Narcan))	I know the basic steps, including calling 911 and staying with the person but I do not know CPR or how to use Naloxone (Narcan)	No, I do not know how to respond
18-24	45%	45%	9%
25-29	67%	33%	
30-39	38%	49%	13%
40-49	32%	44%	24%
50-59	34%	47%	19%
60-69	25%	51%	24%
70+	16%	41%	43%
Prefer not to answer	26%	52%	22%
Grand Total	30%	47%	23%

70 plus year olds were the least prepared to respond to overdose (43% did not know how) whereas 25-29 year olds were the most prepared with 67% knowing both CPR and how to administer Narcan.

Table 8. Comfort in Seeking Services

Age	<i>How comfortable would you be seeking in person support services within Belmont for yourself or someone in your family for substance use?</i>			
	Not comfortable	Slightly comfortable	Moderately comfortable	Very comfortable
18-24	13%	67%	13%	7%
25-29	13%	50%	25%	13%
30-39	12%	41%	25%	22%
40-49	18%	28%	33%	21%
50-59	19%	30%	29%	22%
60-69	17%	36%	28%	19%
70+	17%	27%	38%	18%
Prefer not to answer	33%	30%	22%	15%
Grand Total	18%	32%	30%	20%

18-29 year olds are the lowest % of respondents that would be “very comfortable” getting services in person in Belmont.

Table 9. Awareness of Naloxone (Narcan) availability at the Belmont Health Department

<i>Are you aware that Naloxone (Narcan) is available through the Belmont Health Department? (It is free to residents and can be picked up anonymously outside of the Health Department)</i>		
<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
18-24	40%	60%
25-29	50%	50%
30-39	35%	65%
40-49	37%	63%
50-59	39%	61%
60-69	41%	59%
70+	54%	46%
Prefer not to answer	44%	56%
Grand Total	41%	59%

59% of the survey respondents are unaware that Naloxone (Narcan) is available through the Belmont Health Department, while 41% are aware, with age not having a significant impact.

Table 10. Awareness of Prescription Drop Off at the Belmont Police Department

<i>Are you aware that there is a prescription drug drop off at the Belmont Police Department? (This box can be accessed 24/7 and offers a safe way to dispose of any unused prescriptions)</i>		
<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
18-24	27%	73%
25-29	38%	63%
30-39	29%	71%
40-49	39%	61%
50-59	46%	54%
60-69	56%	44%
70+	72%	28%
Prefer not to answer	74%	26%
Grand Total	51%	49%

51% of the survey respondents are aware of the prescription drug drop off at the Belmont Police Department, while 49% are unaware, with the 18-49 year olds being the least aware.

Stratification by Race/Ethnicity

Table 11. Concern with used/misused in the community

Race/Ethnicity	Which substance are you most concerned about being used/misused in the community:						
	Substances						
	Alcohol	Hallucinogens	Illegal opioids	Marijuana/Cannabis	Non opioid Prescriptions	Prescription Opioids	Tobacco/Nicotine
White	16%	3%	41%	10%	2%	21%	7%
Black/African American	29%		29%	14%		14%	14%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	13%	13%	38%			13%	25%
Asian	4%	6%	43%	38%		9%	
Multi-racial	4%	4%	30%	13%		30%	17%
Other	29%		43%	14%			14%
Prefer not to answer	11%	6%	40%	17%	2%	13%	11%
Grand Total	14%	4%	40%	13%	2%	19%	7%

Illegal opioids were of greatest concern regardless of race (with the exception of those who identified as Black/African American) where it was equal to alcohol. People who identify as Asian also showed significant concern around Marijuana/Cannabis compared to all other races/ethnicities.

Table 12. Awareness of Naloxone (Narcan)

Race/Ethnicity	Do you know what Naloxone (Narcan) is?	
	Yes	No
White	96%	4%
Black/African American	100%	
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	75%	25%
Asian	53%	47%
Multi-racial	87%	13%
Other	100%	
Prefer not to answer	89%	11%
Grand Total	91%	9%

Respondents who identified as Asian were significantly less aware about Naloxone than other races/ethnicities.

Table 13. Overdose Response: Would You Know What to Do?

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>If you witnessed someone who appeared to have overdosed, would you know how to respond?</i>		
	<i>Yes, I would know how to respond (including administering CPR and Naloxone (Narcan))</i>	<i>I know the basic steps, including calling 911 and staying with the person but I do not know CPR or how to use Naloxone (Narcan)</i>	<i>No, I do not know how to respond</i>
White	32%	48%	21%
Black/African American		100%	
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	25%	50%	25%
Asian	19%	34%	47%
Multi-racial	27%	60%	13%
Other	20%	40%	40%
Prefer not to answer	31%	43%	26%
Grand Total	30%	47%	23%

Respondents who identified as Asian and Other were significantly less aware/trained on how to respond to an overdose.

Table 14. Comfort in Seeking Services

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>How comfortable would you be seeking in person support services within Belmont for yourself or someone in your family for substance use?</i>			
	<i>Not comfortable</i>	<i>Slightly comfortable</i>	<i>Moderately comfortable</i>	<i>Very comfortable</i>
White	17%	34%	30%	18%
Black/African American	43%	29%	14%	14%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	13%	13%	38%	38%
Asian	15%	19%	38%	28%
Multi-racial	9%	43%	17%	30%
Other	29%	14%	14%	43%
Prefer not to answer	28%	26%	32%	15%
Grand Total	18%	32%	30%	20%

Respondents who identified as Black/African American were the least likely to feel comfortable seeking in person support services.

Table 15. Awareness of Naloxone (Narcan) availability at the Belmont Health Department

<i>Are you aware that Naloxone (Narcan) is available through the Belmont Health Department? (It is free to residents and can be picked up anonymously outside of the Health Department)</i>		
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
White	43%	57%
Black/African American	14%	86%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	63%	38%
Asian	19%	81%
Multi-racial	26%	74%
Other	43%	57%
Prefer not to answer	55%	45%
Grand Total	41%	59%

Respondents who identified as Black/African American, Asian and multi-racial were the least aware of Naloxone being available at the Belmont Health Department.

Table 16. Awareness of Prescription Drop Off at the Belmont Police Department

<i>Are you aware that there is a prescription drug drop off at the Belmont Police Department? (This box can be accessed 24/7 and offers a safe way to dispose of any unused prescriptions)</i>		
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
White	51%	49%
Black/African American	14%	86%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	50%	50%
Asian	15%	85%
Multi-racial	35%	65%
Other	71%	29%
Prefer not to answer	74%	26%
Grand Total	49%	51%

Respondents who identified as Black/African American and Asian were the least aware of the prescription drop off at the Belmont Police Department.

Qualitative Data (additional comments)

Please share any additional thoughts around substance use/misuse in Belmont

*The comments are grouped into four main categories: **Harm Reduction, Connections to Care, Family Support, and Prevention**. A summary of each category is provided along with a selection of representative comments. Additionally, an "Other" category is included for selected comments to review that didn't fit into any of the main categories.*

Harm Reduction The greatest number of comments were around Harm Reduction with the majority highlighting the importance of Narcan. Several comments emphasized that Narcan needs to be consistently available and the community needs to be informed about how to access it.

- "We need safe needle disposal in Belmont..not only for those who inject drugs but for people who use insulin, obesity meds, anti coag and more."
- "Please have additional drug drop offs at our fire stations. Both fire stations are by CVSs & many people try to bring old drugs to CVS (they don't take them). CVS told me the police station has a drop off but it was inconvenient. I brought the drugs back home and never made it to the police station - mainly because I never go there. Drug drop offs need to be easy Not inconvenient."
- "We need things like a needle drop off location. Narcan at more places around town that is accessible. Accessible transportation for if someone wants to go to treatment. Pre made readiness kits for family in case of an overdose. There is enough education out there but we don't have actual resources to provide to families immediately."
- "The Belmont Fire Department provides a free CPR class to the community. This class includes narcan administration among other important subjects. We are trying to spread awareness of this class, and encourage everyone to learn these valuable lifesaving skills"

Connections to Care: People noted the difficulty in accessing quality mental health services and the need to have more guidance and support in connecting with all different types of care that coexist with addiction. At risk populations like LGBTQ+ youth who are among the most vulnerable should be considered.

- "Speaking from experience, spouses and children of someone with an opioid addiction desperately need support and access to resources as early as possible (mental health counseling, legal advice, financial advice about protecting finances, finding a safe place to keep valuables, and day to day help with things like school drop off/pick up, maintaining out of school activities)."
- "This fall we have, for the first time ever, noticed a handful of folks along Trapelo Rd between Cushing and Waverly who seem to be struggling - perhaps homeless, perhaps fighting a drug addiction or other mental health challenges. It seems to me that work helping folks overcome addiction needs to be well-integrated with other kinds of help - with housing/food and with mental health treatment, if needed. I hope that efforts in Belmont will work toward this kind of integration. I do not know how best to help the people I have seen along Trapelo road and am worried about them."
- "Provide more causal opportunities to really listen to kids/adults who may need support -- mental health, food security, domestic violence, alcohol abuse in a home. Deemphasize helping only the extreme outcomes and focus on building root sources of health."

Family Support: Comments from family members noted the harsh impact and toll opioid use disorder had on them and their families.

- “As people’s OUD gets worse they often leave communities like Belmont—so lifting up family support may be especially important, esp for those who want to come home.”
- “I have a few family members with substance misuse, they do not live in Belmont. So for me family support / services would be helpful.”
- Support for survivors of opioid overdose deaths. Mental health grants, educational grants, support groups”
- “I lost a stepson to addiction in 2006, when there was virtually no communication or support to families impacted by this horrific, heartbreaking, life altering experience.”

Prevention: Two main themes of prevention were around community building and education.

Community

- “Do more community building instead of just focusing on specific problems, at which point it may be too late. People need to do nice things with each other to learn to care again. Downtown businesses are not the only ones who should be tasked with elevating the culture”
- “Community is key. Loneliness drags people further downward. Continue to invest in places/programs in town that build community.”
- “A “One Book One Belmont” town wide reading of a book like “EMPIRE OF PAIN” would be an immense public service.”

Education

- “Need creative, non standard ways to teach those at risk (children and teenagers) about the risks and consequences of even trying these drugs a single time. Normalization of alcohol abuse is also a problem.”
- “Opioids used/abused by teenagers/young adults are often acquired by access to a family members prescribed medication. Opioids are also often prescribed for youth sports injuries. My children often reported friends that were involved in sports injuries that had been prescribed opioids were prescribed flippantly, not informed adequately of the risks, and would sometimes share with friends. Some funds should be used for more robust education around opioid prescription usage in youth sports programs.”
- “Education is key to prevention, we need to target education in schools for students and parents early on and ideally led by the police and fire department to increase awareness on all current drug misuse and problems related to it.”

Other

- “We should use the money in creating a safe place to talk to the youth in our town, programs to keep them busy, using their creativity and energy, now that we are having a new library maybe a youth center to connect”
- “We are seeing substance use coincide with other mental health issues including suicidal ideation in the schools. I would like to see the town cooperate with the school department by providing funding for the 4 social workers and 1.6 nurse positions that we’ll see lost with the expiration of ARPA funding”
- “Funding for SEL programming in middle and high school to prevent drug use and build healthy coping strategies for teens would be important. A lot of SEL work isn’t as emphasized as students get older, but they need strategies to manage emotions/stress.”

Conclusion

This report highlights key insights into the state of opioid awareness, concerns, and support needs in Belmont, as well as gaps in services and education. The findings indicate a significant concern among residents about the misuse of illegal and prescription opioids, with a need for greater awareness of harm-reduction tools like Narcan and prescription drop-off programs. Demographic disparities, such as lower awareness of Narcan availability among Asian and Black/African American populations, further emphasize the need for targeted educational campaigns.

The top 3 challenges Belmont residents indicated that people with opioid use disorder in the community face are: limited availability of mental health services, lack of access to affordable treatment options and negative attitudes and unfair treatment towards people and families struggling with Opioid Use Disorder. Addressing these should be prioritized in the recommendations for how to best allocate opioid settlement funds. Negative attitudes and unfair treatment towards people and families struggling with Opioid Use Disorder was significantly higher for those who identified as LGBTQ+ and it was their number one concern, illustrating the need to take more vulnerable populations into consideration in the recommendations.

As an ancillary benefit of the survey, public awareness was raised around the opioid settlements. In addition, the postcard that was sent to every Belmont household and business included information about prescription drop off, which 49% of survey respondents were not aware of. In addition, it included a local 24 hour crisis support line available to all residents.

Limitations: Although all Belmont residents were given the opportunity to complete the survey and were notified through various channels, there remains the potential for self-selection bias. This means that those who chose to participate may not represent the full range of the community, as individuals with stronger opinions or personal experiences related to opioids may be more likely to respond, potentially skewing the results. In addition, not being fully representative of the entire Belmont population, small number of responses from specific racial and ethnic groups may limit generalizability of findings.

Next Steps: This survey is part of a broader initiative to determine the most effective way to allocate opioid settlement funds in Belmont. The survey findings will be combined with interview data, state and local statistics, and focus group input to guide recommendations.