

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: National Survey on Youth Drug Use and Attitudes

For the second year in a row, the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey of drug use and attitudes indicates a rapid rise in vaping among the nation's adolescents enrolled in 8th, 10th and 12th grades.

The MTF survey is administered by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and serves as a valuable indicator of substance use trends in the segment of the population most vulnerable to the short- and long-term effects of drug exposure. It is also the most "real-time" survey of drug use patterns: Every January, 42,531 students in 396 public and private schools across the nation complete the MTF questionnaire. The results are tabulated and analyzed by the end of that same year giving the NIDA-funded researchers at the University of Michigan an unprecedented ability to track substance use in real time.

What became evident in 2018 was that vaping devices, which have exploded in popularity over the past several years, are now exposing a new generation to nicotine. Those trends continued in 2019, but with the additional concern of a rapid rise in the vaping of marijuana, as well as increases in daily marijuana use in 10th graders.

More than one fifth of high school seniors (20.8 %) reported having vaped marijuana in the past year, as did nearly that same proportion of 10th graders (19.4 %). From 2018 to 2019, the percentage of seniors vaping marijuana in the past month increased from 7.5 percent to 14 percent—the second largest one-year increase in any drug use that has ever been recorded in the 45-year history of the MTF survey. (The first largest

increase was nicotine vaping from 2017 to 2018 reported last year.) Among 10th graders, past-month use was 12.6 percent.

Overall, marijuana use has held relatively steady over the past several years despite wider availability and diminished perception of the drug's harms by this age group (and by the U.S. population more generally). But the increases in vaping of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, are alarming for a number of reasons. For one thing, researchers have yet to confirm if THC's effects differ when vaped versus when smoked in a traditional fashion or whether the amount of THC that youth are being exposed to differs with these methods. Also, the students took the survey in January of this year, which was before the alarming news about serious lung illness and a number of deaths in people using vaping devices. Most of the illnesses occurred in people who had vaped THC. It is not known whether the cause may have been contamination in certain black market vape fluids, or some other factor. Vitamin E acetate has been identified as a chemical of concern in vape fluids, but it is too soon to rule out other chemicals or device attributes that may also contribute to the illnesses.

Daily marijuana use has remained steady among 12th graders, at 6.4 percent, but this number conceals a very significant gender difference. Eight percent of male seniors report using marijuana daily, whereas 4.6 percent of females do. This suggests that a disproportionate percentage of male students may not be performing to their potential because of daily impairment by that drug. Increased daily marijuana use by younger teens is another worrying trend in this year's survey results. This year, 4.8 percent of 10th graders reported daily marijuana use, as did 1.3 percent of 8th graders. The brain is very much a work in progress throughout adolescence, and this is especially true at younger ages, so there is increased risk of long-term harms as well as addiction when 8th and 10th graders use any substance, including marijuana.

The number of 12th graders who vape because they say they are "hooked" more than doubled between 2018 and 2019, from 3.6 percent to 8.1 percent. Addiction to nicotine could lead some users to switch to conventional cigarettes—a trajectory already found in some studies. Another noteworthy statistic in the MTF findings is that teens' second most cited reason for vaping was liking the taste. This has made the strong argument in favor of limiting the flavorings in vape products as a way of limiting these products' tremendous appeal as demonstrated by the FDA who recently banned all e-cigarette and pod flavors except tobacco and menthol and Governor Cuomo's ban on the sale of most flavored vaping products also adopted by the County of Nassau.

Apart from the real concerns linked to marijuana and nicotine vaping, the general picture painted by the MTF survey continues to be largely encouraging, however. Most illicit drug use continues to decline or hold steady at low levels.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a United States federal-government research institute whose mission is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction". For more information please visit www.drugabuse.gov. To see all of the MTF findings on vaping and other drug categories please visit <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future>.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about vaping and seeks to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how it's detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.