

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Drug Use Decreased Significantly in 2021 as the COVID-19 Pandemic Endured

According to The Monitoring the Future survey, conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, the percentage of adolescents reporting substance use decreased significantly in 2021, according to the latest results from the Monitoring the Future survey of substance use behaviors and related attitudes among eighth, 10th, and 12th graders in the United States. In line with continued long-term declines in the use of many illicit substances among adolescents previously reported by the Monitoring the Future survey, these findings represent the largest one-year decrease in overall illicit drug use reported since the survey began in 1975.

The 2021 survey reported significant decreases in use across many substances, including those most commonly used in adolescence – alcohol, marijuana, and vaped nicotine. The 2021 decrease in vaping for both marijuana and tobacco follows sharp increases in use between 2017 and 2019, which then leveled off in 2020. This year, the study surveyed students on their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that students across all age-groups reported moderate increases in feelings of boredom, anxiety, depression, loneliness, worry, difficulty sleeping, and other negative mental health indicators since the beginning of the pandemic.

The Monitoring the Future survey is given annually to students in eighth, 10th, and 12th grades who self-report their substance use behaviors over various time periods, such as past 30 days, past 12 months, and lifetime. The survey also documents students' perception of harm, disapproval of use, and perceived availability of drugs. The survey results are released the same year the data are collected. From February through June 2021, the Monitoring the Future investigators collected 32,260 surveys from students enrolled across 319 public and private schools in the United States.

While the completed survey from 2021 represents about 75% of the sample size of a typical year's data collection, the results were gathered from a broad geographic and representative sample, so the data were statistically weighted to provide national numbers. This year, 11.3% of the students who took the survey identified as African American, 16.7% as Hispanic, 5.0% as Asian, 0.9% as American Indian or

Alaska Native, 13.8% as multiple, and 51.2% as white. All participating students took the survey via a web-based survey – either on tablets or on a computer – with 40% of respondents taking the survey in-person in school, and 60% taking the survey from home while they underwent virtual schooling.

This difference in location between survey respondents is a limitation of the survey, as students who took the survey at home may not have had the same privacy or may not have felt as comfortable truthfully reporting substance use as they would at school, when they are away from their parents. In addition, students with less engagement in school – a known risk factor for drug use – may have been less likely to participate in the survey, whether in-person or online. The Monitoring the Future investigators did see a slight drop in response rate across all age groups, indicating that a small segment of typical respondents may have been absent this year.

To address these limitations, the Monitoring the Future investigators conducted additional statistical analyses to confirm that the location differences for the survey, whether taken in-person in a classroom or at home, had little to no influence on the results.

The 2021 Monitoring the Future data tables highlighting the survey results are available online from the University of Michigan. Reported declines in the use of substances among teens include Alcohol, Marijuana, Vaping Nicotine, and Any Illicit Drug Other Than Marijuana.

- Alcohol: The percentage of students who reported using alcohol within the past year decreased significantly for 10th and 12th grade students and remained stable for eighth graders.
- Marijuana: The percentage of students who reported using marijuana (in all forms, including smoking and vaping) within the past year decreased significantly for eighth, 10th, and 12th grade students.
- Vaping nicotine: Vaping continues to be the predominant method of nicotine consumption among young people, though the percentage of students who reported vaping nicotine within the past year decreased significantly for eighth, 10th, and 12th grade students.
- Any illicit drug, other than marijuana: The percentage of students who reported using any illicit drug (other than marijuana) within the past year decreased significantly for eighth, 10th, and 12th grade students.

Significant declines in use were also reported across a wide range of drugs for many of the age cohorts, including for cocaine, hallucinogens, and nonmedical use of amphetamines, tranquilizers, and prescription opioids.

In addition to looking at these significant one-year declines in substance use among young people, the real benefit of the Monitoring the Future survey is our unique ability to track changes over time. This year's data illuminates how the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted substance use among young people, and in the coming years, researchers will determine whether those impacts are long-lasting as we continue tracking the drug use patterns of these unique cohorts of adolescents.

In addition, a follow-up survey of 12th graders who participated in the 2020 Monitoring the Future study found that adolescent marijuana use and binge drinking did not significantly change during the first six

months of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite record decreases in the substances' perceived availability. This survey was conducted between mid-July and mid-August 2020. It also found that nicotine vaping in high school seniors declined during the pandemic, along with declines in perceived availability of vaping devices at this time. These results challenge the idea that reducing adolescent use of drugs can be achieved solely by limiting their supply.

The [2021 Monitoring the Future data tables](#) highlighting the survey results are available online from the University of Michigan.

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SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention agency in Glen Cove. It's Coalition seeks to educate youth and adults about the negative consequences of alcohol and substance use. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about alcohol, tobacco/vaping, marijuana and opioid use.