

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: NIDA- New Data Show Relatively Low Use of Illicit Substances, Yet Overdoses Among Teens Have Risen**

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the percentage of adolescents reporting they used any illicit substances in 2023 continued to hold steady below the pre-pandemic levels reported in 2020, with 10.9% of eighth graders, 19.8% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 31.2% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting any illicit drug use in the past year, according to the latest results from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. Reported use for almost all substances decreased dramatically between 2020 and 2021, after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and related changes like school closures and social distancing. In 2022, most reported substance use among adolescents held steady at these lowered levels, and these latest data show that this trend has continued into 2023. The MTF survey is 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 2023 data continue to document stable or declining trends in the use of illicit drugs among young people over many years. However, importantly, other research has reported a dramatic rise in overdose deaths among teens between 2010 to 2021, which remained elevated well into 2022 according to a NIDA analysis of CDC and Census data. This increase is largely attributed to illicit fentanyl, a potent synthetic drug, contaminating the supply of counterfeit pills made to resemble prescription medications. Taken together, these data suggest that while drug use is not becoming more common among young people, it is becoming more dangerous.

According to NIDA, research has shown that delaying the start of substance use among young people, even by one year, can decrease substance use for the rest of their lives. This trend is reassuring. Though, researchers maintain the crucial importance of continuing to educate young people about the risks and harms of substance use in an open and honest way, emphasizing that illicit pills and other substances may contain deadly fentanyl.

The MTF survey is given annually to students in eighth, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> 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' perceptions 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 2023, MTF investigators collected 22,318 surveys from students enrolled across 235 public and private schools in the United States.

When breaking down the data by specific drugs, the survey found that adolescents most commonly reported use of alcohol, nicotine vaping, and cannabis in the past year, and levels generally declined from or held steady with the lowered use reported in 2022. Compared to levels reported in 2022, data reported in 2023 show:

- **Alcohol use** remained stable for eighth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, with 15.1% and 30.6% reporting use in the past year respectively, and declined for 12<sup>th</sup> graders, with 45.7% reporting use in the past year (compared to 51.9% in the previous year).
- **Nicotine vaping** remained stable for eighth graders, with 11.4% reporting vaping nicotine in the past year. It declined in the older grades, from 20.5% to 17.6% in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and from 27.3% to 23.2% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- **Cannabis** use remained stable for all three grades surveyed, with 8.3% of eighth graders, 17.8% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 29.0% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting cannabis use in the past year. Of note, 6.5% of eighth graders, 13.1% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 19.6% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported **vaping cannabis** within the past year, reflecting a stable trend among all three grades.
- **Delta-8-THC** (a psychoactive substance found in the Cannabis sativa plant, of which marijuana and hemp are two varieties) use was measured for the first time in 2023, with 11.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting use in the past year. Beginning in 2024, eighth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders will also be asked about Delta-8 use.
- **Any illicit drug use other than marijuana** also remained stable for all three grades surveyed, with 4.6% of eighth graders, 5.1% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 7.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting any illicit drug use other than marijuana in the past year. These data build on long-term trends documenting low and fairly steady use of illicit substances reported among teenagers – including past-year use of cocaine, heroin, and misuse of prescription drugs, generally.
- **Use of narcotics other than heroin (including Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, etc.)** decreased among 12<sup>th</sup> graders, with 1.0% reporting use within the past year (matching the all-time low reported in 2021 and down from a high of 9.5% in 2004).
- **Abstaining**, or not using, marijuana, alcohol, and nicotine increased for 12<sup>th</sup> graders, with 62.6% reporting abstaining from any use of these substances over the past month. This percentage remained stable for eighth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, with 87.0% and 76.9% reporting abstaining from any use of marijuana, alcohol, and nicotine over the past month.

MTF survey has closely monitored shifts in substance use trends among young people, helping to identify and track emerging trends with public health relevance. This year's addition of a measure to assess use of delta-8 is one example of this, and researchers were surprised to see use levels this high among 12<sup>th</sup> graders and this trend will continue to be monitored.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug use and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy, improve practice, and advance addiction science. For more information about NIDA and its programs, visit [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov).

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).