

Press Release

February 9, 2026

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: 51st Monitoring The Future Survey on Drug and Alcohol Youth and Adult Trends

According to researchers whose studies are supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), substance use is a leading cause of preventable death. It is in large part why, among 17 high-income nations, individuals in the United States have the highest probability of dying by age 50. Substance use is also an important contributor to many social problems including domestic violence, violence more generally, criminal behavior, suicide, and more—and it is typically initiated during adolescence. It is an investigator-initiated study that originated with, and is conducted by, teams of researchers at the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research.

Monitoring the Future (MTF) is designed to provide scientifically reliable information on trends, drivers, and consequences of substance use, providing the nation with a vital window into the important but often hidden problem behaviors of use of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs used nonmedically. It has also provided policymakers, government agencies, public health professionals, and non-governmental organizations in the field some practical approaches for intervening largely because substance misuse is one of the largest and yet most preventable causes of morbidity and mortality during and after adolescence.

A widespread epidemic of illicit drug use emerged in the 1960s among U.S. youth, and since then dramatic changes have occurred in the use of nearly all types of illicit drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco. These changes include the emergence of new policies such as the legalization of recreational cannabis use, the Master Tobacco Settlement of 1998, and the Tobacco 21 laws. Many new substances have emerged over the life of the survey, including hemp-derived psychoactive drugs such as Delta-8, flavored cannabis solutions for vaping, tobacco pouches (e.g., “Zyn”), and drugs taken for performance enhancement. New devices and methods for taking drugs, such as vaporizers, provide novel ways to use substances and use them in new combinations. Unfortunately, the number of new substances added to the list over the years substantially outnumbers the number removed because so many substances remain in active use. Throughout these many changes, substance use among the nation’s youth has remained a major concern for parents, educators, health professionals, law enforcement, and policymakers.

Many of the largest one-year declines ever recorded by MTF took place across a wide variety of substances during the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2021. The survey results divide neatly into the time periods before and after the onset of the pandemic. All surveys in 2020 were

completed before March 15, when national social distancing policies were enacted and data collection was halted due to pandemic concerns. Consequently, results from 2020 and previous years are pre-pandemic, while results from 2021 and afterwards took place after the onset of the pandemic and the associated national response.

Historic declines took place for the three most used substances. Cannabis use in the past 12 months experienced its largest recorded decline in each of the three grades, with tracking since 1975 for 12th grade and tracking since 1991 for 8th and 10th grades. Nicotine vaping in the past 12 months also saw its largest recorded decline in all three grades, with tracking beginning in 2017. Similarly, alcohol use experienced its largest recorded decline in 12th grade (tracked since 1975) and in 10th grade (tracked since 1991) for past 12-month use.

There are five waves of data collected since the pandemic onset, providing an opportunity to assess whether these declines have persisted or rebounded. Data show that the declines have persisted for almost all drugs; in fact, most have continued to decline further. Alcohol, cannabis, and nicotine vaping all decreased for past 12 month use from 2024 to 2025 in all grades (although these one-year declines were not statistically significant).

Delays in drug use initiation could work to prevent young people from joining drug-using peer groups and/or disrupt biological processes that foster addiction. Additionally, the pandemic may have disrupted peer groups that encourage drug use, as well as the processes by which these groups recruit new members and perpetuate themselves. Conversely, drug use may have rebounded, either partially or in full, as the pandemic receded and social distancing restrictions were lifted.

MTF data underscores the importance of future research to identify the intervening mechanisms that account both for these declines as well as for their persistence, with the goal to inform future policies or interventions that can substantially reduce or even eliminate youth drug use.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): 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.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting alcohol, tobacco and other drug use prevention awareness campaigns entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," to educate and update the community regarding alcohol, prescription and illicit drug use and its consequences. 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 at www.safeglencove.org.