

Reported Use of Most Drugs Among Adolescents Remained Low in 2024

New NIH-funded research shows lower use of alcohol, cannabis and most substances continues following the COVID-19 pandemic.

December 19, 2024 By National Institutes of Health

After declining significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, substance use among adolescents has continued to hold steady at lowered levels for the fourth year in a row, according to the latest results from the Monitoring the Future Survey, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). These recent data continue to document stable and declining trends in the use of most drugs among young people.

“This trend in the reduction of substance use among teenagers is unprecedented,” said Nora D. Volkow, MD, director of NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). “We must continue to investigate factors that have contributed to this lowered risk of substance use to tailor interventions to support the continuation of this trend.”

Reported use for almost all measured 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 and 2023, most reported substance use among adolescents held steady at these lowered levels, with similar trends and some decreases in use in 2024.

The Monitoring the Future survey is conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and funded by NIDA. The 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’ 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 2024, the Monitoring the Future investigators collected 24,257 surveys from students enrolled across 272 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 12 months prior to the survey, and levels generally declined from or held steady with the lowered use reported over the past few years. Compared to levels reported in 2023, data reported in 2024 show:

- Alcohol use remained stable for eighth graders, with 12.9% reporting use in the past 12 months. Alcohol use declined among the other two grades surveyed, with 26.1% of 10th graders reporting alcohol use in the past 12 months (compared to 30.6% in 2023), and 41.7% of 12th graders reporting alcohol use in the past 12 months (compared to 45.7% in 2023).
- Nicotine vaping remained stable for eighth and 12th graders, with 9.6% of eighth graders and 21.0% of 12th graders reporting vaping nicotine in the past 12 months. It declined among 10th graders, with 15.4% reporting nicotine vaping in the past 12 months (compared to 17.6% in 2023).
- Nicotine pouch use remained stable for eighth graders, with 0.6% reporting use within the past 12 months. It increased among the two older grades with 3.4% of 10th graders reporting nicotine pouch use in the past 12 months (compared to 1.9% in 2023) and 5.9% of 12th graders reporting nicotine pouch use in the past 12 months (compared to 2.9% in 2023).
- Cannabis use remained stable for the younger grades, with 7.2% of eighth graders and 15.9% of 10th graders reporting cannabis use in the past 12 months. Cannabis use declined among 12th graders, with 25.8% reporting cannabis use in the past 12 months (compared to 29.0% in 2023). Of note, 5.6% of eighth graders, 11.6% of 10th graders, and 17.6% of 12th graders reported vaping cannabis within the past 12 months, reflecting a stable trend among all three grades.
- [Delta-8-THC](#) (a psychoactive substance found in the Cannabis sativa plant) use was measured for the first time among eighth and 10th graders in 2024, with 2.9% of eighth graders and 7.9% of 10th graders reporting use within the past 12 months. Reported use of Delta-8-THC among 12th graders remained stable with 12.3% reporting use within the past 12 months.
- Any illicit drug use other than marijuana declined among eighth graders, with 3.4% reporting use in the past 12 months (compared to 4.6% in 2023). It remained stable for the other two grades surveyed, with 4.4% of 10th graders and 6.5% of 12th graders reporting any illicit drug use other than marijuana in the past 12 months. These data build on long-term trends documenting low and declining 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.) are only reported among 12th graders, and decreased in 2024, with 0.6% reporting use within the past 12 months (reflecting an all-time low, down from a high of 9.5% in 2004).
- Abstaining, or not using, marijuana, alcohol, and nicotine in the past 30 days, remained stable for eighth graders, with 89.5% reporting abstaining from use of these drugs in the past 30 days prior to the survey. It increased for the two older grades, with 80.2% of 10th graders reporting abstaining from any use of marijuana, alcohol, and nicotine over the past 30 days (compared to 76.9% in 2023) and 67.1% of 12th graders reporting abstaining from use of these drugs in the past 30 days (compared to 62.6% in 2023).

“Kids who were in eighth grade at the start of the pandemic will be graduating from high school this year, and this unique cohort has ushered in the lowest rates of substance use we’ve seen in decades,” said Richard A. Miech, PhD, team lead of the Monitoring the Future survey at the University of Michigan. “Even as the drugs, culture, and landscape continue to evolve in future years, the Monitoring the Future survey will continue to nimbly adapt to measure and report on these trends – just as it has done for the past 50 years.”

The results were gathered from a nationally representative sample, and the data were statistically weighted to provide national numbers. This year, 35% of students who took the survey identified as Hispanic. Of those who did not identify as Hispanic, 14% identified as Black or African American, 1% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 4% as Asian, 1% as Middle Eastern, 37% as white, and 7% as more than one of the preceding non-Hispanic categories. The survey also asks respondents to identify as male, female, other, or prefer not to answer. For the 2024 survey, 47% of students identified as male, 49% identified as female, 1% identified as other, and 3% selected the “prefer not to answer” option.

All participating students took the survey via the web – either on tablets or on a computer – with 99% of respondents taking the survey in-person in school in 2024.

The [2024 Monitoring the Future data tables](#) highlighting the survey results are available online from the University of Michigan.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text [988](#) or chat at [988lifeline.org](#). To learn how to get support for mental health, drug or alcohol conditions, visit [FindSupport.gov](#). If you are ready to locate a treatment facility or provider, you can go directly to [FindTreatment.gov](#) or call [800-662-HELP \(4357\)](#).

This [news release](#) was published by the National Institutes of Health on December 17, 2024.

