



Upcoming Events:

- Black History Month
- National Children's Dental Health Month
- Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month
- Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day — Feb. 1
- Ground Hog Day — Feb. 2
- World Cancer Day — Feb. 4
- Boy Scout Day — Feb. 8
- Clean Out Your Computer Day — Feb. 10
- Make a Friend Day — Feb. 11
- Valentine's Day — Feb. 14
- Eating Disorders Awareness and Screening Week — Feb. 23-29

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Teens Vape Marijuana Over Other Habits

Drinking, cigarette smoking and hard drugs all declined, according to a new federal survey of high school and middle school students.

Teenagers are drinking less alcohol, smoking fewer cigarettes and trying fewer hard drugs. But these public health gains have been offset by a sharp increase in vaping of marijuana and nicotine.

These diverging trend lines, are among the findings in the Monitoring the Future survey — a closely watched annual study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, or NIDA, of eighth, 10th and 12th graders. The survey shows that youth drug use and experimentation continue to undergo significant evolution.

Most troubling to public health experts in this year's report were sharp increases in marijuana vaping. Of 12th graders surveyed, 14 percent said they had vaped marijuana in the last month, nearly double the 7.5 percent reported a year ago.

The percentage of teenagers who said they had vaped marijuana once or more over the last year essentially doubled during the past two years as well, rising to 7 percent for eighth graders, 19.4 percent for 10th graders and 20.8 percent for 12th graders.

The survey found that 3.5 percent of 12th graders and 3 percent of 10th graders report daily use, the first year the researchers had asked that question.

Though vaping of marijuana is on the rise, the overall rates of using the drug in all forms — smoking, vaping, edibles — were mixed. The rate of overall marijuana use held steady for high school students who reported using it once or more over the past year, but there was an uptick in daily use.

The Monitoring the Future survey this year did give public health experts a number of reasons to feel encouraged, as high school students reported declining use of many substances, including alcohol and tobacco, continuing a long-term trend.

Roughly 52 percent of high school seniors said they had used alcohol in the last year, along with 37.7 percent of 10th graders. Those figures have been dropping for years; in 2000, 73.2 percent of 12th graders

said they had used alcohol in the last year as did 65.3 percent of 10th graders.

Cigarette use continued to drop, too. The portion of seniors who reported smoking in the last month fell to 5.7 percent, down from 13.6 percent five years ago.

Public health experts said that those declines — along with drops in the use of prescription painkillers like OxyContin and Vicodin — are the result of a multifaceted effort in the United States to discourage drug use, including stricter school penalties, smoking bans and general public awareness campaigns.

"There has been a whole lot of effort at the community level," said Dr. Sion Kim Harris, a pediatrician and a co-director for the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research at Boston Children's Hospital. "There are some encouraging trends."

On the flip side, she said, when it comes to vaping, young people may have gotten the wrong message: that it is not harmful. Silvia Martins, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, noted that marijuana is increasingly marketed in states where it is legal to suggest the drug may have widespread health benefits, claims that are not backed up by science. The rise of marijuana vaping among young people, she said, "could be related to the fact it is seen as less harmful and less risky."

More broadly, Dr. Martins and other experts said that the changes in teenage drug use may have a curious influence: technology.

The rise in vaping, they said, stems partly from the allure of the sleek electronic devices that deliver nicotine and marijuana, glamorized on social media and streaming videos; the gadgets are also relatively easy to conceal because they are designed to reduce smell and smoke. The popular Juul device, for instance, is often referred to as the iPhone of e-cigarettes.

"One of the reasons they are embracing these devices is because they are new technology. It resonates," said Dr. Volkow of NIDA, the federal drug abuse institute.

But technology may also be partly responsible for the decline in the use of some other drugs, Dr. Martins and Dr. Volkow, among others, have hypothesized. The theory is that some teenagers are partying less because they are spending time stimulated by their devices, and communicating with one another over social media, rather than in gatherings where they might have encountered alcohol or drugs. Dr. Martins is in the middle of research to test that hypothesis.

Now Dr. Volkow said she hopes that teenagers will awaken to the fact that using marijuana regularly can be dangerous. "Less and less do kids feel it is harmful to smoke marijuana regularly," she said, adding that she regrets that these teens are being misled by what she called "the freedom of misinformation."

Teens Helping Teens

What is Teen Line?

Teen Line is a confidential hotline for teenagers open from 6:00pm-10:00pm PST. Teen Line also offers resources and information. The Teen Line volunteers who answer the calls, emails and texts are Southern California teenagers who have received specialized training. They won't judge you or give advice – their job is to listen to your feelings and help you to clarify your concerns, define the options available to you, and help you make positive decisions.

No problem is too small, too large, or too shocking for the volunteers. Issues that teenagers are dealing with include abuse, depression, divorce, bullying, anxiety, gangs, gender identity, homelessness, pregnancy, relationships, sexuality, violence, substance abuse, self harm, and suicide.

Call - Do you need help working something out? Do you want to talk to someone who understands, like another teen? We're here to help! Call (310) 855-HOPE or (800) TLC-TEEN (nationwide toll-free) from 6pm to 10pm PST.

Text - Text "TEEN" to 839863 between 6:00pm-9:00pm PST to speak with us (Text STOP to opt out. Standard msg and data rates may apply).

Email - TEEN LINE answers emails every evening. You can send us a question, and we will answer you as ASAP.

Message Board - Ask other teens questions on our message boards. Read through the discussions and login or register to join the conversation.

NEW - Try the free **TEEN TALK APP** to vent, share and get support from a trained teen.

teenlineonline.org



Top 10 Social Issues Teens Struggle With Today

Technology Has Changed or Amplified the Struggles Young People Face

Advances in technology mean today's teens are facing issues that no previous generation has ever seen. While some issues are not exactly new, electronic media has changed or amplified some of the struggles young people face. For instance, teens today struggle more with their interpersonal relationships than any previous generation and a lot of this dysfunction can be linked to overuse of technology.

In fact, the average teen spends over nine *hours each day using their electronic devices*. Consequently, their social media habits and media consumption are changing the way they communicate, date, learn, sleep, exercise, and more. Here are the top 10 social problems teens struggle with every day.

Depression- 3.2 million adolescents in the United States had at least one major depressive episode in 2017. That means about 13 percent of teenagers may experience depression before reaching adulthood.

Bullying- 25% of teens in the U.S. experienced bullying. One reason is the rise of social media use, which has made bullying much more public and more pervasive. In fact, cyberbullying has replaced bullying as the type of harassment that teens experience.

Drug Use- Marijuana use exceeds cigarette use in teens now. Many teens believe marijuana is less harmful now than in years past. This new perception may be due to the changing laws surrounding marijuana. Meanwhile, other illicit drug use has is at its lowest levels. Many teens do not recognize the dangers of taking a friend's prescription or popping a few pills that are not prescribed to them. Unfortunately, teens often underestimate how easy it is to develop an addiction. And they don't understand the risks associated with overdosing.

Alcohol Use- Alcohol use showed a significant decline. Despite the decline, 33.2% of high school seniors still report drinking alcohol within the past month.

Sexual Activity- 39.5% of high school students reported being sexually active. That means sexual activity had declined slightly over the past decade. Fortunately, the teen birth rate has declined as well. The decline in pregnancy doesn't necessarily mean teens are using protection, however. Of the 20 million new sexually transmitted diseases each year, more than half were among young people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Obesity- 19% are obese. Hispanic and African American teens are more likely to be overweight. Overweight children are often targeted by bullies, obese kids also are at a much greater risk of lifelong health problems, such as diabetes, arthritis, cancer, and heart disease. They also may struggle with body image issues or develop eating disorders as unhealthy way of changing their appearance.

Academic Problems- About 6% of students drop out of high school each year in the US.

Peer Pressure- Social media brings it to a whole new level. Sexting, is a major cause for concern as many teens do not understand the lifelong consequences that sharing explicit photos can have on their lives. But sharing inappropriate photos are not the only things kids are being pressured into doing. For instance, more and more kids are being pressured into having sex, doing drugs, and even bullying other kids.

Social Media- Social media can expose your teen to cyberbullying, slut shaming, and so much more. And, while there are some benefits to social media, there are a lot of risks as well. Social media can have a negative impact on friendships and is changing the way teens date. It can even impact their mental health.

On-Screen Violence- Many of today's violent video games portray gory scenes and disturbing acts of aggression. Over the past couple of decades, a multitude of studies linked watching violence to a lack of empathy. Studies show the number one factor in how kids relate to media is how their parents think and act. The more violence parents watch, the more likely they are to think it's OK for their kids to view. Pay attention to your teen's media use.

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