

## Youth Substance Use Rates and Trends

To better understand patterns of substance use among Texas youth, Texans For Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) continues to monitor use rates and trends using a variety of data sources. This report compiles the most recent statewide data from the Texas School Survey of Substance Use Among Students (TSS) and the Texas College Drug and Alcohol Survey (CDAS), along with other relevant sources.

### ALCOHOL USE

Alcohol remains the most commonly used substance among Texas youth. According to the most recent Texas School Survey:

- 38.6% of all students reported ever using alcohol, increasing from 31.8% in 7th grade to 47.5% in 12th grade.
- 23.1% of all students reported alcohol use in the past school year, increasing from 14.7% in 7th grade to 33.5% in 12th grade.
- 20.0% of all students reported past month alcohol use, increasing from 12.6% in 7th grade to 29.3% in 12th grade.

Among college students, alcohol use rates are higher:

- 72.4% of college respondents reported lifetime alcohol use
- 64.3% reported past-year use
- 48.7% reported past-month use

*Figure 1.*

*Alcohol use increases steadily from middle school through high school and college.*

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Lifetime Use</i>	<i>Past-Year Use</i>	<i>Past-Month Use</i>
<i>7th Grade</i>	<i>31.8%</i>	<i>14.7%</i>	<i>12.6%</i>
<i>12th Grade</i>	<i>47.5%</i>	<i>33.5%</i>	<i>29.3%</i>
<i>College</i>	<i>72.4%</i>	<i>64.3%</i>	<i>48.7%</i>

Sources: Texas School Survey (TSS), Texas College Drug and Alcohol Survey (CDAS)

Binge drinking (consuming 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row) remains a significant concern:

- 29% of male college students and 31% of female college students reported binge drinking in the past 30 days.
- 22% of college students abstained from alcohol, 56% were light drinkers, 19% moderate drinkers, 2% heavy drinkers, and 0.5% problem drinkers.

The impact of alcohol use on academic performance is notable:

- 8% of light drinkers, 22% of moderate drinkers, and 49% of heavy/problem drinkers missed class due to drinking.
- 9% of light drinkers, 26% of moderate drinkers, and 47% of heavy/problem drinkers fell behind on schoolwork due to drinking.

Alcohol-related traffic incidents remain a serious public health concern. In 2023, there were 1,090 people killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes where a driver was under the influence of alcohol. This represents 25.45% of the total number of people killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes.

**TOBACCO AND ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS (ENDS)**

Recent survey data show that Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) such as e-cigarettes continue to be more commonly used by youth than traditional cigarettes.

According to the most recent Texas School Survey:

- 15.8% of all students reported ever using electronic vapor products, increasing from 10.1% in 7th grade to 23.2% in 12th grade.
- 8.1% of all students reported use of electronic vapor products in the past school year, increasing from 3.9% in 7th grade to 14.6% in 12th grade.
- 5.8% of all students reported past month use of electronic vapor products, increasing from 2.3% in 7th grade to 12.3% in 12th grade.

For overall tobacco use (including ENDS):

- 18.3% of all students reported ever using any tobacco product, increasing from 12.1% in 7th grade to 26.9% in 12th grade.
- 10.1% of all students reported tobacco use in the past school year, increasing from 5.5% in 7th grade to 17.0% in 12th grade.
- 8.1% of all students reported past month use of any tobacco product, increasing from 4.1% in 7th grade to 15.2% in 12th grade.

Among college students:

- 36.8% reported lifetime tobacco use
- 25.7% reported past-year use
- 16.7% reported past-month use

*Figure 2. Electronic vapor products are more commonly used than traditional cigarettes among youth.*

	<i>Lifetime Use</i>	<i>Past-Year Use</i>	<i>Past-Month Use</i>
<i>Electronic Vapor</i>	15.8%	8.1%	5.8%
<i>All Tobacco</i>	18.3%	10.1%	8.1%
<i>College Tobacco</i>	36.8%	25.7%	16.7%

Sources: Texas School Survey (TSS), Texas College Drug and Alcohol Survey (CDAS)

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**MARIJUANA USE**

Marijuana use continues to be prevalent among Texas youth, with usage rates increasing with age:

According to the most recent Texas School Survey:

- 13.3% of all students reported ever using marijuana, increasing from 4.4% in 7th grade to 25.7% in 12th grade.
- 9.3% of all students reported marijuana use in the past school year, increasing from 3.1% in 7th grade to 16.2% in 12th grade.
- 7.8% of all students reported past month marijuana use, increasing from 2.6% in 7th grade to 12.6% in 12th grade.

Among college students:

- 32.9% reported lifetime marijuana use (down from 37.7% in 2021)
- 23.4% reported past-year use (down from 25.7% in 2021)
- 12.9% reported past-month use

Figure 3.

Marijuana use increases significantly from middle school through high school and college.

Grade Level	Lifetime Use	Past-Year Use	Past-Month Use
7th Grade	4.4%	3.1%	2.6%
12th Grade	25.7%	16.2%	12.6%
College	32.9%	23.4%	12.9%

Sources: Texas School Survey (TSS), Texas College Drug and Alcohol Survey (CDAS)

\*\*It's worth noting that college students' perceived risk of marijuana has decreased, with 47% of students perceiving marijuana as somewhat or very dangerous, down from previous surveys.\*\*

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**PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE**

The misuse of prescription drugs not prescribed to the user remains a concern among Texas youth:

According to the most recent Texas School Survey:

- 11.1% of all students reported ever using prescription drugs not prescribed to them, decreasing from 12.6% in 7th grade to 10.6% in 12th grade.

- 6.2% of all students reported prescription drug use in the past school year, decreasing from 7.1% in 7th grade to 5.3% in 12th grade.
- 4.3% of all students reported past month use of any prescription drug not prescribed to them, decreasing from 5.1% in 7th grade to 2.8% in 12th grade.

Among college students:

- 14% reported lifetime misuse of prescription drugs to get high (down from 18% in 2021)
- 8% misused stimulants like Ritalin (down from 10% in 2021)
- 6% misused painkillers like Vicodin (down from 8% in 2021)
- 5% misused benzodiazepines (down from 7% in 2021)

*Figure 4.*

*Prescription drug misuse among Texas youth by type.*

*College Students*

*Stimulants (e.g., Ritalin)*    8%

*Painkillers (e.g., Vicodin)*    6%

*Benzodiazepines*                5%

Source: Texas College Drug and Alcohol Survey (CDAS)

Unlike other substances, prescription drug misuse tends to decrease with age among middle and high school students but increases again in college. The good news is that misuse rates among college students have declined since 2021.

The data in this report provides a snapshot of current substance use trends among youth across Texas, from middle school to college. Alcohol remains the most widely used substance, with usage increasing with age. Vaping continues to outpace traditional cigarette smoking, while marijuana use shows a steady rise through adolescence, with some recent declines among college-aged youth. Prescription drug misuse presents a less linear trend, dipping in high school but increasing again in college. Despite some positive shifts substance use remains a key concern especially as alcohol-related traffic fatalities accounted for more than a quarter of all traffic deaths in Texas in 2023.