



Most Washington teens reject alcohol and other drugs

Healthy Youth Survey explores attitudes and behaviors of middle and high school students

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March 15, 2017

OLYMPIA—Results for the 2016 Washington Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) show that teen rates of substance use in our state have remained mostly unchanged since the last survey was taken in 2014, and that most teens avoid alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and other drugs.

“The health, safety and economic impacts of substance use disorders affect many individuals, families and communities in our state, and a wide range of organizations at all levels are partnering to prevent them,” said Governor Jay Inslee. “A big thank you goes out to all of the students who took time out of their busy school days to take the Healthy Youth Survey. This survey provides crucial information on adolescent health, behaviors and perceptions. It helps us in making the right decisions to ensure that the next generation is the [Healthiest Next Generation](#).”

The HYS is taken every two years by students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12, who voluntarily answer a wide variety of questions about their health behaviors. In the fall of 2016, over 230,000 students in over 1,000 schools from 236 school districts in all 39 counties took part. The survey provides state and community organizations with needed information about which teen health issues to focus on.

One of the concerning changes since the last survey is that the percentage of 8th graders who believe there is great risk in using marijuana has declined from 53 to 48 percent. Since marijuana is now more visible in communities with advertising and retail stores, state and community organizations and schools have increased education and prevention efforts to discourage underage use. These efforts may be helping to prevent an increase in use, with 17 percent of 10th graders reporting use in the past month, which has not changed since 2014.

Preventing underage drinking has long been a statewide priority, and alcohol use by 10th graders has dropped by 12 percentage points since 2006. However, the number of students who use alcohol has not changed since 2014. In 2016, one out of five 10th graders (a total of about 16,737 students) drank alcohol in the past month. Alcohol plays a significant role in all three leading causes of death among youth: injuries, suicides and homicides.

The number of teens who said they drove a car after using alcohol or marijuana is cause for alarm. More than half (51 percent) of the 12th graders who reported marijuana use in the past 30 days said they had driven within three hours of using marijuana.

E-cigarette/vapor product use significantly dropped from 2014 to 2016, but remains a concern because of its prevalence and association with other tobacco and substance use. E-cigarette use in the past month among 10th graders dropped from 18 percent in 2014 to 13 percent in 2016. Over twice as many 10th graders reported vaping (13 percent) as smoking cigarettes (6 percent), and 65 percent of 10th graders who vaped reported using marijuana.

“Growing up is difficult. The issues facing our youth today are big and have serious life consequences. Parents, teachers and agencies all help guide youth when facing these challenges” said Pat Lashway, Acting Secretary for DSHS. “This information will help the ‘helpers’ drive home the true impact of drugs on the young developing brains before it’s too late.”

Because the teen brain is still developing, alcohol and other drug use can cause more severe and permanent damage compared to those who start using at age 21 and older. National data identifies the risks such as poor grades and not graduating, due to problems with memory and concentration; serious injuries and death from driving under the influence; unwanted and/or unplanned sexual activity; addiction; depression and anxiety with long-term use.

Parents and guardians are the number one influence on children’s decisions about alcohol and other drugs. All adults can help teens avoid the negative consequences of substance use by talking with them early and often about the risks, locking up any alcohol, marijuana or prescription drugs in the home, reminding them that most of their peers are making healthy choices, and having clear rules and consequences to discourage use. Visit StartTalkingNow.org for proven tips on how to talk, monitor and bond with teens. For more information about the survey, including other results and fact sheets, visit the [HYS website](#).

Washington state is recognized nationally as a leader in supporting evidence-based prevention practices and collaborating with community-based prevention organizations. Survey results for mental health, nutrition, physical activity and school engagement will be analyzed and released over the next few months.

The survey is a collaborative effort between DSHS and the Department of [Health](#) (DOH), the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) (OSPI) and the [Liquor and Cannabis Board](#) (LCB). The results provide state and local organizations with needed information to plan, implement and evaluate publicly funded programs.



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