

Forum:	United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Issue:	Mitigating the use of illicit drugs by children and adolescents
Student Officer:	Konstantina Alexandrou
Position:	President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates of the United Nations on Drugs and Crime,

My name is Konstantina Alexandrou and I have the utmost honor of serving as the President of the United Nations on Drugs and Crime in this year's PSMUN conference. I am sixteen years old and currently an 11th grader in the German School of Athens. My MUN journey started in the 9th grade and by the time the PSMUN conference takes place, I will have participated in a total of eleven conferences as a delegate, judge, advocate, and student officer. MUN can mean many things to participants. To me personally, MUN is an opportunity to meet people from all around the globe, exchange opinions on important global issues or even create life-lasting friendships.

It is important to outline the connection between the theme of "Pacifism and Injustice" and the topic at hand. The use of illicit drugs impacts not only users, but the society as a whole. Drug abuse, especially when used by children or adolescents, inevitably disrupts social peace. It, therefore, upsets pacifist conditions within societies and creates chaos amongst both the abusers and the ones assisting their recovery. On the other hand, drug addiction is often a result of injustice within communities and their socioeconomic layers. Since citizens from primarily lower social groups are the victims of substance abuse, addiction can enhance social injustice by disabling them from breaking the poverty cycle.

Tackling the issue at hand will not only aid in combating social injustice, but give children and teenagers a chance to a better life, where drug abuse is not included. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to find effective solutions.

The given study guide will aid you in obtaining a deeper insight of the topic at hand. Therefore, I suggest you read it thoroughly, so that you are well-prepared when the time of the conference comes. Apart from that, you are highly encouraged to conduct research on your own. The bibliography at the end of the guide can be really helpful with that.

If you encounter any questions during your preparation, do not hesitate to contact me via email at: konstantinaalexandrou06@gmail.com I am really looking forward to meeting all of you in the upcoming PSMUN conference!

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Despite a global trend of declining teenage substance use, evidence suggests that excessive substance use by young people in various regions across the world, both in socioeconomically wealthy and lower income locations remain an issue. Despite recognizing its prevalence, the international community has failed to effectively eliminate it, thus it is imperative for proactive measures to be implemented.

Generally, usage of alcohol and illegal drugs is a catastrophic phenomenon with multidimensional consequences. On an individual level, it can negatively impact both short- and long-term health. Moreover, illegal drug use is a serious public health issue that results in significant societal expenses as well as severe mental issues. Early onset substance use is particularly dangerous since it increases the chance of long-term negative impacts such as addiction and mental health problems by rendering the growing brain more susceptible to the effects of alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, it can result in short-term consequences, such as intoxication, accidents, academic failure, and involvement with the law, which further highlight the need for effective substance use prevention in adolescents and young people. These precautionary measures may be all-inclusive and directed at the broader population, or they may be selective. Selective prevention can be applied both directly to the group that needs it and, in a setting designed for universal prevention, such as a hospital or school.

The use of substances can be influenced by many individual, social, and environmental elements. An individual may be led down the path of drug use due to their knowledge, skills, and beliefs all the way to the impact of their family, friends, and society. Psychologists and sociologists have previously identified a number of reasons why people use illegal drugs, including their need for exhilaration and the enhancement of their activities. It has also been discovered that the facilitation of tasks, such as to focus, work or study, physical impacts, for example losing weight, and coping with the effects of other substances urged children and adolescents to use illicit drugs. However, this is a profound matter, and these are only a few prevalent reasons given for taking psychoactive substances and the true dimensions of the issue remain a complex social and health investigation.

The study of prevention, as far as drug addiction is concerned, has advanced significantly in recent years. In order to evaluate preventative strategies more efficiently, many of them are being tested in "real-world" environments. Researchers are looking at a wider range of populations and subjects. They have discovered how to successfully intervene with younger populations to stop risky behaviors before drug abuse happens. Researchers are also looking into how to prevent older kids who are currently abusing drugs from becoming addicted to them. Cost-benefit evaluations and other practical concerns are being examined to put an end to the issue. These are some important efforts which need to be taken into consideration when drafting solutions.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Adolescent

A young person who is developing into an adult¹.

Illicit

The word illicit has two meanings: either a not legally permitted or authorized; unlicensed action, or a disapproved of or not permitted for moral or ethical reasons action.²

Illicit drugs

Illicit drugs refer to highly addictive and illegal substances such as Heroin, Marijuana, and Meth. While the decision to use one of these drugs for the first time is usually a voluntary one, an unexpected addiction can make the decision to quit later significantly harder.³

Emotional abuse

The act of controlling someone else emotionally by criticizing, humiliating, shaming, blaming, or otherwise manipulating them is known as emotional abuse. Mental or emotional abuse can happen in any connection, including those with friends, family, and coworkers, despite being more often in dating and married partnerships.⁴

Prevention

The act of stopping something from happening or of stopping someone from doing something.⁵

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is the excessive, maladaptive, or addicted use of drugs for purposes other than those prescribed by a doctor, even if this usage may lead to social, psychological, and physical issues.⁶

Addiction

Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences⁷.

¹ Adolescent." Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/adolescent.

² "Illicit." Wwww.dictionary.com, www.dictionary.com/browse/illicit.

³ "Illicit Drug Addiction And Abuse." Addiction Center, 28 Feb. 2022, www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/illicit-drugs/.

⁴ "How to Identify and Cope With Emotional Abuse." Verywell Mind, 28 Dec. 2017, www.verywellmind.com/identify-and-cope-with-emotional-abuse-4156673.

⁵ "Prevention." Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/prevention

⁶ "Drug Abuse." Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/science/drug-abuse.

⁷ "What is the Definition of Addiction?" Default, www.asam.org/quality-care/definition-of-addiction.

Peer Pressure

The term peer pressure describes the feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group in order to be liked or respected by them.⁸

Mitigation

Mitigation means reducing risk of loss from the occurrence of any undesirable event.⁹

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Factors Leading to Substance Abuse

Peer Pressure

It has been demonstrated that peer pressure and perceived popularity are linked to a higher likelihood of adolescent substance use. This means that adolescents are more prone to engage in substance usage if they feel that doing so will increase their popularity and likeability among peers. In such cases, drug usage acts as a defense mechanism to prevent social isolation and fit in with a specific circle. Adolescents who self-identify as popular have a higher rate of substance use compared to their peers who do not. This is indicated by a research conducted by scientists Tucker JS, Green HD, Zhou AJ, Miles JNV, Shih RA, D'Amico EJ, in which they examined the substance use among middle school students in associations with self-rated and peer-nominated popularity.¹⁰ The results of the research portrayed that there is a clear connection between drug use and popularity as also shown in Figure 1 below where probability of drug abuse lies on the vertical axis and popularity, labeled as standardized indegree, lies on the horizontal axis.

Additionally, the type of popularity one wishes to achieve can impact their drug use. For example, it's possible that substance abuse and self-perceived popularity are more closely correlated than substance abuse and peer pressure. Although there is little research on specific social motivations, one study found that adolescents who want to lead their peers or stand out from the crowd are more likely to smoke cigarettes, which is seen as a sign of maturity, while those who want to fit in are more likely to drink alcohol or use drugs, which is seen as a social activity.¹¹

⁸ "Definition of PEER PRESSURE." Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peer%20pressure.

⁹ "What is Mitigation? Definition of Mitigation, Mitigation Meaning." The Economic Times, economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/mitigation.

¹⁰ "Substance Use Among Middle School Students: Associations with Self-Rated and Peer-Nominated Popularity." PubMed Central (PMC), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2950876/.

¹¹ "Interpersonal Goals and Susceptibility to Peer Influence: Risk Factors for Intentions to Initiate Substance Use During Early Adolescence." PubMed Central (PMC), Aug. 1, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3157938/.

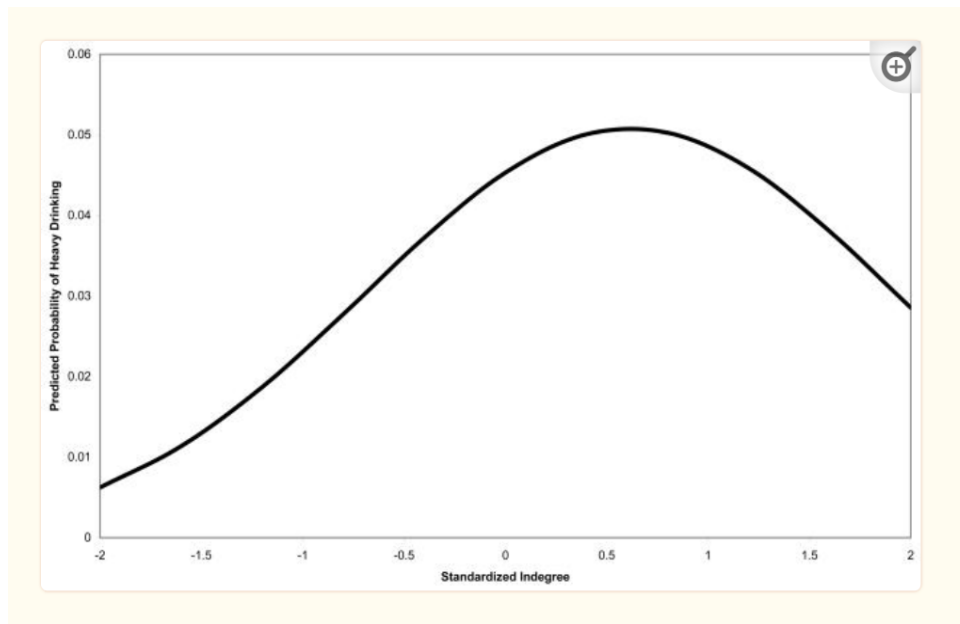


Figure 1: The findings of the research on substance use associated with popularity

Positive portrayal of drugs by social media platforms

Forty-five percent of teens agree with the statement: “The music that teens listen to makes marijuana seem cool.” And another forty-five percent of teens agree with the statement “Movies and TV shows make drugs seem like an acceptable thing to do.”¹² Celebrities' positive portrayals of drug use and misuse in motion pictures, television shows, and music videos are another source of strong negative impact. Good messaging in advertisements about alcohol and tobacco use encourage pro-substance attitudes, expectations, and perceptions of drug usage, which can lead to a rise in youth drinking and smoking rates. Early on, media representations of substance use have an impact on impressionable children's attitudes toward it. The development of positive associations at a young age may, hence, be a risk factor for early substance use and an accompanying rise in problematic usage.

Escape and self-medication

Teenagers who are dissatisfied and lack a reliable confidant or a healthy outlet for their aggravation may resort to drugs for comfort. Depending on the chemical they're using, people might experience blissful ignorance, euphoria, or a surge of energy and confidence. When kids are given the chance to consume substances to feel better, many fail to refuse due to the impact of emotional drainage and depression which appear inescapable. For instance, some teenagers misuse prescription drugs to control their actions or handle stress. Moreover, when they are studying or taking examinations, individuals may take prescription stimulants, which are used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, to give them more energy and focus.

¹² "Top 8 Reasons Teens Try Alcohol and Drugs." Partnership to End Addiction, 6 May 2022, drugfree.org/article/top-8-reasons-teens-try-alcohol-drugs/.

Sexual and physical abuse

Researchers have studied how physical and sexual abuse affects adolescents' drug usage patterns. They have discovered a statistically significant connection between physical or sexual abuse and teen marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco usage. A research conducted by scientists Moran PB, Vuchinich S, Hall NK titled "Associations between types of maltreatment and substance use during adolescence" proved this connection. An anonymous survey asked students in grades 10 through 12 at six public high schools in a rural Oregon county about their experiences with emotional, sexual, and physical abuse as well as their usage of various drugs. Following the survey, the types of maltreatment experienced were divided into five categories: (1) no sort of maltreatment, (2) emotional abuse, (3) physical abuse, (4) sexual abuse, and (5) sexual and physical abuse. The findings demonstrated a correlation between higher levels of all three categories of substance use and all four types of maltreatment. The magnitude of the effects of various forms of maltreatment on substance use were compared statistically, and the results showed a linear trend, with the effects of emotional abuse being significantly less severe than those of physical or sexual abuse and the effects of physical and sexual abuse combined being significantly more severe than the other types.¹³

There is some evidence to suggest that abusing others physically and/or sexually is associated with using illegal substances more frequently, such as cocaine, heroin, and barbiturates. If an adolescent is subjected to physical or sexual violence, their probability of using drugs rises by two to four times due to their need to escape from trauma.¹⁴ The particular form of abuse that makes the biggest impact has, however, been the subject of conflicting research. Some studies have found a higher likelihood of sexual abuse, while others have found a higher likelihood of physical abuse.¹⁵ The effects of stress on the brain, and more specifically the amygdala, may be the cause of the link between childhood sexual or physical abuse and adolescent substance use. When responding to stressful conditions, the amygdala is in charge of sending emotional information to the body based on memories. However, when the prefrontal cortex's function is suppressed when stress emerges, such as that brought on by abuse, the amygdala is overstimulated and produces excessive amounts of dopamine. Limited attentional and cognitive abilities may result from this chain of events. The propensity for paranoia has also been connected to PTSD. Increases in dopamine levels, as previously mentioned, also contribute to drug addiction to substances like opioids, nicotine, and ethanol.

¹³ Moran PB, Vuchinich S, Hall NK. "Associations Between Types of Maltreatment and Substance Use During Adolescence." PubMed,

¹⁴ Wall AE, Kohl PL. "Substance Use in Maltreated Youth: Findings from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being." PubMed,

¹⁵ Moran PB, Vuchinich S, Hall NK. "Associations Between Types of Maltreatment and Substance Use During Adolescence." PubMed,

Emotional Abuse

Research has demonstrated that emotional abuse can increase teenage substance use, even if it does not have the same negative effects as physical or sexual abuse. The Journal of the American Medical Association reports state that, about 50% of those suffering from severe mental illnesses are also afflicted by substance misuse. One or more major mental illnesses are present in 37% of drinkers and 53% of drug users, whereas 29 percent of those with mental illness who abuse alcohol or drugs.¹⁶

Additionally, it has been found that being exposed to violence can raise a teen's risk of becoming addicted to alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, or other hard substances by up to three times.¹⁷ This is most likely a result of how distressing it is to witness violence, especially when young. As a result, misusing alcohol or drugs turns into a coping mechanism. As violent acts may take place in the setting of a delinquent peer group where substance use is common, it has also been hypothesized that, in some instances, substance use may come before seeing violence. However, research on emotional abuse, which includes witnessing violence, and its links to teenage substance use and abuse is somewhat underrepresented in the literature.

Highest risk period

According to research, the most dangerous drug misuse risk times for children are when their lives are going through significant changes.¹⁸ These transitions include significant shifts in a child's physical growth, such as puberty, or social circumstances, such as relocation or a parents' divorce, which increase a child's sensitivity to problematic behaviors.

Children's first significant transition occurs when they leave the safety of the home and start school. They frequently encounter new academic and social challenges as they move on from elementary school to middle or junior high school, such as having to get along with a larger number of peers and facing higher expectations for academic success. Early adolescence is the time when children are most likely to experience substance usage for the first time.

Young individuals encounter new social, psychological, and academic problems when they attend high school. At the same time, they might be exposed to more drug users, drug abusers, and drug-related social interactions. These difficulties together with their growing, impressionable brains may render them more prone to abuse alcohol, cigarettes, and other drugs.

¹⁶ "Dual Diagnosis: Substance Abuse and Mental Health." HelpGuide.org, www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/substance-abuse-and-mental-health.htm.

¹⁷ Simantov E, Schoen C, Klein JD. "Health-compromising Behaviors: Why Do Adolescents Smoke or Drink?: Identifying Underlying Risk and Protective Factors." PubMed,

¹⁸ "Adolescent Brain Development and Drugs." PubMed Central (PMC), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3399589/.

Moving away from home for the first time unsupervised in late adolescence, maybe to attend college or other studies, can be a very difficult scenario. Alcohol consumption, in particular, continues to be a serious public health concern for college populations.

Young people face additional obstacles and stress factors when they start working or getting married, which increases their likelihood of abusing alcohol and other drugs in their adult lives. However, the same adult activities which act as barriers for some, give some young people the chance to develop and follow their future objectives and interests.

The four stages of illicit drug use

Experimentation

The voluntary use of drugs without suffering any unfavorable social or legal repercussions is referred to as experimentation. Many people engage in experimentation occasionally as a method to "have fun" or even to aid problem-solving. Many people experiment with drugs even when they have no desire to keep doing so. Even if it is sporadic, it can have life-threatening consequences due to the possibility of overdose, especially when a user is not familiar with drugs. However, when it enters the final stage of addiction, regular use, is usually when it starts to cause serious complications.

Regular use

Some individuals will be able to transition into the stage of consistent use without becoming dependent or addicted. These individuals will have the ability to stop using drugs on their own. Regular use, meaning being past the experimentation stage and starting to use illicit drugs on a weekly basis, considerably raises the risk of substance dependence. Additionally, it increases dangerous behaviors including drunk driving, unexplainable aggressiveness, and depressive and anxious symptoms.

Abuse

Although the distinction between safe use and dangerous use/abuse is highly blurry, it is typically understood as drug use that is persisted despite negative social and legal repercussions. What may have started off as a momentary means of escape can easily develop into more severe issues. At this point, addiction warning signals such as yearning, obsession with the substance, and signs of depression, irritability, and exhaustion if the drug is not used will start to manifest.

Drug addiction and dependency

Addiction and physical reliance on a drug are frequently linked and consist of the final stages of illicit drug use. Withdrawal symptoms and compulsive drug use despite severe negative effects on one's relationships, physical and mental health, personal finances, job security, and criminal record are traits of dependency and drug addiction.

Consequences of illicit drug use

Physical Health

The health impacts of teen substance usage include injuries, such as car accidents, physical illnesses and impairments, as well as heightened risk of probable overdoses. Youth who use alcohol and other drugs in disproportionately high numbers run a higher risk of death by suicide, homicide, accident, and disease. Addicts frequently have one or more comorbid medical disorders, such as lung or heart disease, stroke, cancer, or mental health issues. For instance, it is now widely accepted that methamphetamine use can result in serious dental issues known as "meth mouth," and that opioid usage can result in overdose and death. Additionally, some medicines, including inhalants, can harm or kill nerve cells in the brain as well as the peripheral nervous system (the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord). These consequences of chronic drug usage can easily be detected through blood tests, chest X-rays, and imaging scans.

Mental health

Adolescent substance misuse is typically associated with mental health issues such as depression, developmental delays, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions. Youth who abuse substances are more likely than non-users to experience depression, conduct issues, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, and suicide than non-users. Also, possible influences on motivation and psychosexual/emotional development are equally frequent and important. However, the brain can be impacted by all medicines that are overused, even if they are not typically considered dangerous. They cause the brain to experience a "high" by flooding it with a lot of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps control our emotions, motivation, and pleasure experiences. Therefore, drug usage must be faced from every angle as it can eventually alter how the brain functions and affect a person's capacity for decision-making, resulting in strong cravings and compulsive drug use. This conduct has the potential to develop into a drug addiction over time.

Academics

Adolescent substance misuse is linked to issues like declining grades, absence from school and other activities, and a higher likelihood of dropping out of school. Alcohol and drug-using teenagers may face cognitive and behavioral issues that affect their academic performance as well as their classmates' ability to learn. The brain uses substances known as neurotransmitters to transfer messages from one area of the brain to another, claims NIH.¹⁹ Every neurotransmitter binds to a certain type of receptor, much as a key fits into a lock. This enables information to move through the brain in the proper direction. When you use drugs, it disrupts the neurotransmitters' regular traffic patterns. Drugs have chemical structures that can mimic and trick receptors, bind to them, and change nerve cell function. The way your brain should

¹⁹ "Drugs and the Brain." National Institute on Drug Abuse, 22 Mar. 2022, nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain.

act or react may be reset as a result of this "alteration," causing messages to go in the wrong direction. In the end, this has an impact on how a brain retains and processes information which may hinder academic undertakings.

Use of drugs during the pandemic²⁰

The population's health and financial situation have been significantly impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. During this decline, the influence on alcohol and illegal drug consumption as well as potential psychological underpinnings have also been impacted. In fact, illicit drug use amongst adolescents reported an unprecedented decrease which can be partially contributed to the restrictive measures taken to stop the spread of the pandemic.

According to the most recent findings from the Monitoring the Future survey of substance use behaviors and related attitudes among eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students in the United States, the proportion of adolescents reporting substance use

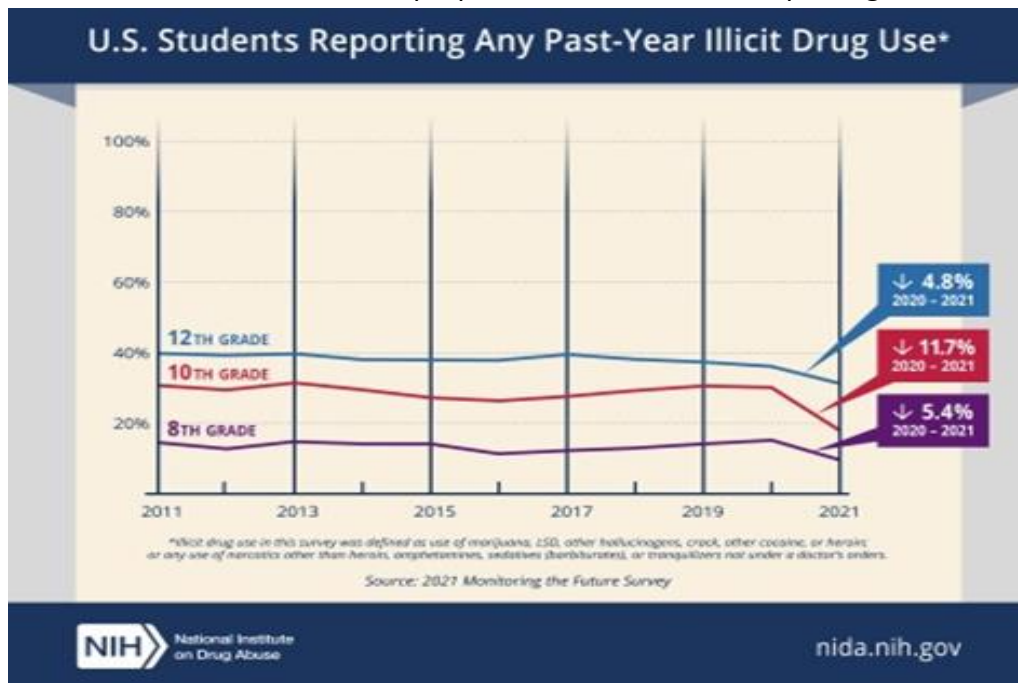


Figure 2: "Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Drug Use Decreased Significantly in 2021 As the COVID-19 Pandemic Ended"

declined dramatically in 2021.²¹ These results indicate the highest one-year fall in overall illegal drug use documented since the survey's inception in 1975, and they are consistent with long-term declines in the use of several illicit substances among adolescents previously reported by the Monitoring the Future survey. The most widely

²⁰ "Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Drug Use Decreased Significantly in 2021 As the COVID-19 Pandemic Ended." National Institutes of Health (NIH), 15 Dec. 2021, www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/percentage-adolescents-reporting-drug-use-decreased-significantly-2021-covid-19-pandemic-ended.

²¹ Benson, Darian. "Teen Drug Use Decreased in 2021, According to a New National Survey." WFYI Public Media, 22 Dec. 2021, www.wfyi.org/news/articles/teen-drug-use-2021-national-survey.

used substances in adolescence—alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine vape—all had significant drops in consumption according to the 2021 study.

Findings²²

Alcohol

For students in the 10th and 12th grades, the proportion of pupils reporting recent alcohol use fell dramatically, while it was steady for 8th graders. Namely 17.2% of 8th graders reported using alcohol in 2021 compared to 20.5% in 2020, which indicates a not statistically significant decrease in comparison to 10th and 12th graders. To be from 40.7% in 2020, only 28.5% of 10th graders reported using alcohol in 2021. Moreover, 46.5% of 12th graders reported using alcohol in 2021, a statistically significant decrease from 55.3% in 2020.

Marijuana

The percentage of marijuana use amongst students also declined within the past year for eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students. 7.1% of 8th graders reported using marijuana in 2021, compared to 11.4% in 2020. 17.3% of 10th graders reported using marijuana in 2021, compared to 28.0% in 2020. Finally, 30.5% of 12th graders reported using marijuana in 2021, compared to 35.2% in 2020.

Hard drugs

The percentage of illicit drug use other than marijuana amongst students also declined. 4.6% of 8th graders reported using any illicit drug in 2021, compared to 7.7% in 2020. Secondly, 5.1% of 10th graders reported using any illicit drug in 2021, compared to 8.6% in 2020, while 7.2% of 12th graders reported using any illicit drug in 2021, compared to 11.4% in 2020.

Conclusion

According to Richard Miech, principal investigator of the study and research professor at the Institute for Social Research, these declines are an unintended consequence of the pandemic. Among the many disruptions adolescents have experienced as a result of the pandemic, are disruptions in their ability to get drugs, use drugs outside of parental supervision, and encourage drug use in peer groups.²³

During the self-isolation period in the COVID-19 pandemic many risk factors for the illicit drug use by adolescents were “silenced”. For instance, one of the most prominent risk factors, peer pressure, was no longer playing a major role in “pushing” teenagers towards drug use, since rarely were they given the opportunity to socialize during the quarantine. Apart from that, gathering were prohibited meaning that possible drug

²² "Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Drug Use Decreased Significantly in 2021 As the COVID-19 Pandemic Endured." National Institutes of Health (NIH), 15 Dec. 2021, www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/percentage-adolescents-reporting-drug-use-decreased-significantly-2021-covid-19-pandemic-endured.

²³ "Teen Use of Illicit Drugs Decreased in 2021, As the COVID-19 Pandemic Continued." University of Michigan News, 20 Dec. 2021, news.umich.edu/teen-use-of-illicit-drugs-decreased-in-2021-as-the-covid-19-pandemic-continued/.

sources were eliminated for teenagers, such as parties. Since drug use is linked to socialization, taking into account that the world was on strict lockdown and forced to stay in their houses for days, drug use naturally decreased.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Iceland

Iceland currently tops the list of Europe's youth that lead the cleanest lives. From 42% in 1998 to 5% in 2016, the proportion of 15 and 16-year-olds who had consumed alcohol in the previous month fell precipitously.²⁴ An entirely new national plan, named Youth, was implemented to reach these numbers. Through this plan, parental organizations, which are required by law to be founded in every school, and school councils with parent representatives helped to develop ties between parents and the school. For example, discussions with kids about their life, their friend groups, and their activities were encouraged for parents to attend. Parental agreements were also introduced by Home and School, the national umbrella organization for parental organizations. Although the content of these agreements varies depending on the age group, for kids older than 13 parents can, for instance, refuse to allow their children to host unsupervised parties. To give adolescents alternatives to using alcohol and drugs as a way to feel a part of a group and to feel good, the state further expanded funding for organized sport, music, art, dance, and other organizations. Children from low-income households also received assistance to participate.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, illicit drug use is a serious public health issue that has an impact on both large-scale and localized aspects of society. Illicit drug trade is a multibillion-dollar industry that continues to be very alluring to drug gangs and suppliers, who are always repositioning themselves and making adjustments to the market conditions. Although there are tight laws and regulations governing the possession and distribution of illegal drugs, the UK is thought to have the biggest and most open market in all of Europe for legal highs according to the 2013 UNODC World Drug Report.²⁵ The University College London study also revealed that more than half of 17-year-olds admitted to binge drinking alcohol and that almost a third of them had tried cannabis.²⁶ Comparable percentages of alcohol use were discovered in a similar study that polled youths who were British citizens born in the late 1980s. The implementation of a new strategy was, therefore, introduced, in order to tackle the

²⁴ Young, Emma. "How Iceland Got Teens to Say No to Drugs." The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 19 Jan. 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/01/teens-drugs-iceland/513668/>.

²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "World Drug Report 2013." UN ILibrary, United Nations, 5 June 2013, www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210561686.

²⁶ Barnes, Oliver. "One in 10 Teens in UK Has Tried Hard Drugs." BBC News, BBC, 10 Feb. 2021, www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-56001234.

high rate of illicit drug use by adolescents.²⁷ The new approach addresses the dangers of drug use and lays out new steps to safeguard those who are most at risk, such as the homeless, domestic violence victims, and people with mental health issues. The comprehensive new strategy unites local partners, the police, and the health sector to assist individuals who are most in danger. The plan calls for actions which will lower demand by implementing deterrent measures such as expanding the Alcohol and Drug Youth Information Service for Education and Prevention and restrict supply by taking a vigorous legal action and destroying trafficking networks.

United States

Particularly in relation to drug use, the United States has a long and interesting history, even going so far as to wage a "War on Drugs." Marijuana, inhalants, LSD, and other hallucinogens are the illicit drugs that U.S. students in grades 8, 10, and 12 use the most frequently. Around 23% of these students admitted to using marijuana at some point in their lives as of 2021, compared to only 1.4 % of those who had used cocaine. However, over the past two decades, there has been a dramatic decline in the lifetime prevalence of any illicit drug use among teenagers. Compared to 41% in 2001, only 27% of students in grades 8, 10, and 12 reported consuming an illicit drug throughout their lifetime in 2021.²⁸

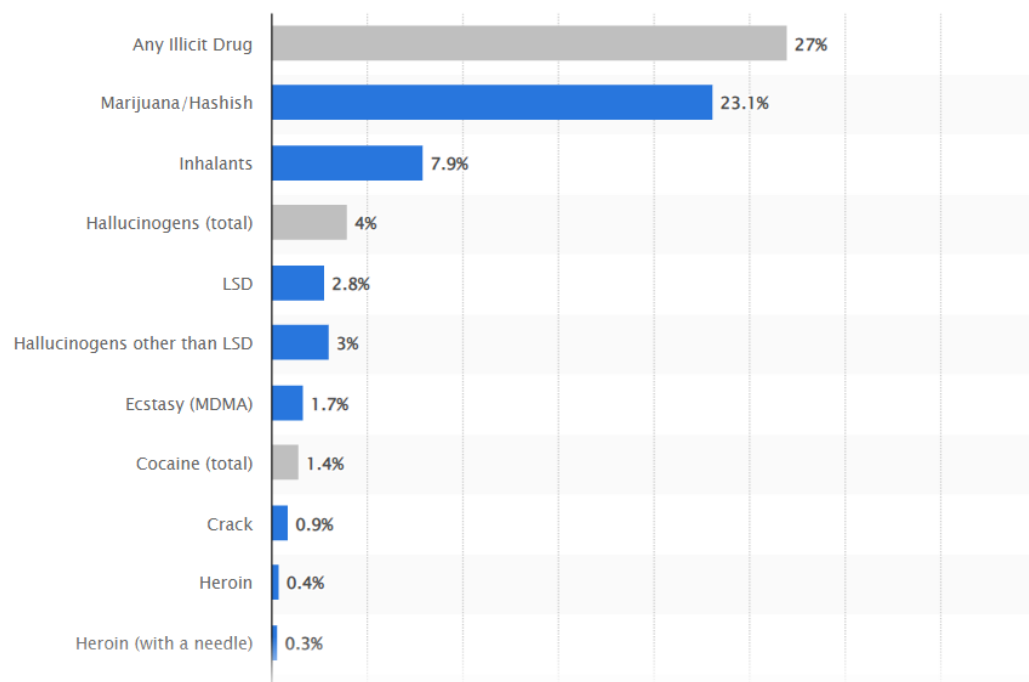


Figure 3: Statistics on most used drugs by teenagers in the US

²⁷ 2017 Drug Strategy - GOV.UK.

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628148/Drug_strategy_2017.PDF.

²⁸ Elflein, John. "Topic: Adolescent Drug Use in the U.S." Statista, www.statista.com/topics/3907/adolescent-drug-use-in-the-us/.

Germany

According to data from the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents (KiGGS), 9.2% of the boys and 6.2% of the girls who participated in the study had used marijuana or hashish during the year before the survey. Since the use of psychoactive substances increases significantly as children become older, 16- and 17-year-olds are the age group where it is most prevalent.²⁹ In order to mitigate the illicit drug use by adolescents, the Federal Cabinet of Germany enacted the National Plan on Drug and Addiction Policy in 2012, a continuous strategy without a set end date. The method tries to assist people in avoiding or reducing their consumption of legal and illegal drugs, as well as addictive behaviors like pathological gambling, as well as illicit substances like alcohol, cigarettes, and psychiatric medications. The comprehensive plan is built on four pillars: (i) prevention; (ii) counseling, treatment, and assistance with addiction; (iii) harm reduction strategies; and (iv) supply reduction. It addresses six different topics: alcohol, tobacco, prescription drug misuse and addiction, pathological gambling, web and media addiction, and illicit drugs.³⁰

World Federation against drugs

The World Federation Against Drugs (WFAD) is a multinational association of individuals and non-governmental organizations. WFAD was established in 2009 with the mission of promoting a drug-free society.³¹ The members of WFAD are united in their concern that the use of illegal drugs threatens the survival of stable families, communities, and governmental institutions all over the world. The foundation of WFAD's activity is based on the values of democratic and basic human rights as well as worldwide friendship. They think that pursuing drug prohibition will advance freedom, democracy, tolerance, equality, and other positive aspects of human progress. The WFAD acknowledges the civil society's right to information on the dangers and harms associated with drugs. Drug users have the right to expect a life free from drugs and the chance to lead fulfilling careers. Everyone has the right to be safeguarded from the harms caused by drug use. The biannual World Forum Against Drugs is one of WFAD's aims. The World Forum Against Drugs is an international conference that serves as a gathering place for individuals from all continents who are engaged in grassroots, voluntary, paid, or policy-making efforts to combat drug usage.

International Network for People who Use Drugs³²

The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) is an international, peer-based organization dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of drug users.

²⁹ M.; Lampert T;Thamm. "[Consumption of Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs among Adolescents in Germany. Results of the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents (Kiggs)]." Bundesgesundheitsblatt, Gesundheitsforschung, Gesundheitsschutz, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17514444/.

³⁰ Germany - Europa. www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/11334/germany-cdr-2019_0.pdf.

³¹ "Home." World Federation Against Drugs, 29 Apr. 2021, wfad.se/.

³² Home, 13 Dec. 2022, inpud.net/.

INPUD aims to raise awareness and fight against the negative effects of drug use on the community's rights and health. They aim to accomplish this goal by supporting empowerment and advocacy efforts at the local, national, and regional levels while promoting such efforts at the international level. INPUD is a group of current and former drug users who back the Vancouver Declaration. The Vancouver Declaration outlines the demands of drug users, emphasizing the need to uphold their human rights and prioritize their health and wellbeing. INPUD is an international network that tries to represent drug users before international organizations including the United Nations and others working on international development. They think that those who use drugs ought to have a meaningful voice in any decisions that have an impact on their life. INPUD is dedicated to showing how drug users may positively contribute to the creation and provision of services for our community at the national level.

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The FDA is a federal agency of the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America. By ensuring the security, efficacy, and safety of pharmaceuticals for humans and animals, biological products, and medical devices, as well as the security of our country's food supply, cosmetics, and radiation-emitting goods, the Food and Drug Administration is in charge of safeguarding the public's health. FDA is also in charge of regulating the production, promotion, and distribution of tobacco products. The FDA's role in advancing public health involves speeding up developments that make medical products more efficient, secure, and affordable as well as assisting the public in obtaining the precise, science-based information they require to appropriately use medical products to maintain and enhance their health.

UNODC Youth Initiative

The UNODC Youth Initiative, created in 2012, connects young people from all over the world and gives them the tools they need to get involved in their communities, schools, and youth organizations to prevent substance use and promote health.³³ It offers a forum for young people to express their thoughts, creative ideas, and experiences while also receiving support for developing their own substance use prevention and health promotion initiatives. The initiative is dedicated to empowering young people and ensuring their involvement at all levels. It offers young people the chance to actively participate in a group of peers who are dedicated to promoting health and wellbeing in the context of substance use prevention.

³³ "Youth Initiative." United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime, www.unodc.org/unodc/prevention/youth-initiative.html.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
Early 2000s	Prescription painkiller overdose and death reports, particularly those involving OxyContin, start to increase significantly.
January 2001	Inter-agency cooperation to enhance public education around prescription drug abuse is promoted.
January 2002	OxyContin's Patient Package Insert (PPI) is authorized, explaining to patients how to take the medication safely.
September 2006	The second TIRF product, Fentora (fentanyl buccal tablets), is approved but did not have a limited distribution.
September 2007	As a result of reports of medication errors leading to severe events and fatalities, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issues a Public Health Advisory for Fentora.
2 March 2009	The General Assembly's high-level session of its fifty-second session approves the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Toward an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.
27- 28 May 2009	Over a hundred people speak at a huge public hearing hosted by the FDA about their experiences with opioid medications.
November 2009	The Safe Use Initiative is initiated by the FDA with the intention of fostering public and commercial partnerships within the medical industry and reducing medication-related avoidable damage.
4 December 2009	The Industry Working Group (IWG), consisting of representatives from 22 pharmaceutical firms is invited to assist in creating a successful opioid REMS program for a planned class-wide opioid REMS, had a stakeholder meeting with FDA.
23 June 2010	UNODC releases the 2010 World Drug Report, indicating a shift in drug use toward new medications and new markets.
2013	Uruguay becomes the first nation in the world to adopt national legislation governing cannabis usage for purposes other than medical purposes.
2017	The availability of synthetic opioids like fentanyl causes an even more alarming surge in opioid overdose fatalities, noting record highs.
2017	The opioid epidemic is formally deemed a "public health emergency".
17 October 2018	Canada legalizes cannabis for recreational use, making it the second nation in the world and the first G7 nation to do so.
24 June 2022	UN human rights experts urge Member States to halt the alleged "war on drugs" and advance drug control measures that are firmly based on human rights.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

With the help of 143 researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and representatives of non-governmental and international organizations from 47 countries, UNODC and the World Health Organization (WHO) developed and released the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention.³⁴ Since every Member State had been invited to participate in the process, most of the experts in that group were proposed by those States. Additionally, due to their work and other initiatives in drug prevention, some members of that group had been identified by UNODC. All group members offer suggestions in any language regarding the process of revising the International Standards and studies that would be of interest. Additionally, a subset of the most engaged experts in the organization convened in Vienna in June 2017 to decide on the modification process for the International Standards. The protocol for the overview of systematic reviews on treatments to prevent drug use for the second, updated edition of the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention was subsequently finalized jointly by UNODC and WHO. Finding systematic reviews of the evidence examining the efficacy or effectiveness of programs and/or policies aimed at reducing substance use was the goal of the overview.

EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025

The European Union's drugs strategy for the years 2021 to 2025 is outlined in the EU Drugs Strategy 2021–2025, hence referred to as "the Strategy".³⁵ The EU Action Plan on Drugs from 2021 to 2025 will be built on the framework, purpose, and goals of this Strategy. The Strategy strives to provide a high degree of security and well-being for the general population, to safeguard and promote public health, to improve individual and societal well-being, and to raise health literacy. The Strategy approaches the drug phenomena on national, European, and worldwide levels from a data-based, holistic, balanced, and multidisciplinary perspective. A perspective on health equity and gender equality is also included. By 2025, important facets of the drug situation in the EU should have been significantly impacted by the priorities and initiatives in the illicit drug space that were coordinated through the Strategy. Coherent, effective, and efficient implementation of actions should guarantee a high degree of protection for human health, social stability, and security, as well as help spread awareness. Human rights and sustainable development should be supported while any unforeseen negative effects related with the implementation of the activities should be minimized.

World Drug Report

The World Drug Report offers an annual summary of the significant changes that have occurred in the markets for various drug types, from manufacture through trafficking, including the creation of new routes and modalities, as well as consumption. The Joint

³⁴ International Standards on Drug Use Prevention - United Nations Office ...
www.unodc.org/documents/prevention/UNODC-WHO_2018_prevention_standards_E.pdf.

³⁵ Europa. www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49194/eu-drugs-strategy-booklet.pdf.

United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) stated on its website "The use of illicit drugs needs to be understood as a social and health condition requiring sustained prevention, treatment, and care". This is one of the major conclusions emerging from the 2015 World Drug Report, published on 26 June by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.³⁶

REMS

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) mandates a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) in order to make sure that a drug's advantages outweigh its dangers. A REMS is a program to control known or prospective major risks associated with a drug product. A REMS is needed for opioid analgesics, according to the FDA.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Teaching prevention in schools

As teachers and administrators are frequently the first to notice warning indications of potential drug issues, such as decreased attendance at school or diminishing academic performance, schools can play a significant role in prevention. By fostering personal and social skills including decision-making, stress management, communication, social interaction, dispute resolution, and assertiveness, effective school programs help young people learn to resist drugs. These workouts can also improve awareness and resisting abilities. Students discover that most of their classmates do not take drugs, and they discover the influence of peers and society on drug usage. As pressure to drink, smoke, and use other drugs increases significantly during adolescence, prevention efforts should start early and continue throughout. Programs that are supplemented with "booster sessions," activities that continue after the original program, assist in delaying or preventing the onset of drinking, smoking, and other drug use. Delayed start is advantageous because it gives kids time to practise social skills and resistance. Efforts at school prevention should also focus on lowering disruptive behavior in schools and enhancing student attitudes. Active participation in school appears to help shield young people from a variety of harmful behaviors, including substance abuse. A good environment encourages students to stay in school, gives them a sense of identity, and lessens their likelihood of dropping out or engaging in delinquent behavior, two things that can raise their risk for developing substance abuse issues in the future.

Media Intervention

When effectively conducted, media efforts, can aid the fight against drug abuse. There are several instances of futile campaigns, therefore, caution is necessary. A strong theoretical foundation, specific group targeting, enough exposure, rigorous message

³⁶ "2015 UNODC World Drug Report: Drug Use Must Be Addressed As a Pressing Public Health Issue." UNAIDS, 26 June 2015, www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2015/june/20150626_wdr.

testing while they are being developed, campaign evaluation, and, in many cases, collaboration with other evidence-based prevention efforts are all necessary for effective media use. Changing the norms and culture surrounding substance use, providing specific advice for avoiding dangerous behaviors, informing individuals of the negative effects of substance use, or instructing parents on how to better support their children are all possible goals of the content. All media campaigns should include testing the created messages thoroughly with the target population during formative research. In the context of media and online contexts, restrictions should also be imposed to redirect teens into productive content and ban excessive mentions of drugs.

Establishing trust between parents and children – Preventive Programs

By educating parents in better family communication, developmentally appropriate punishment methods, firm and consistent rule enforcement, and other family management techniques, prevention programs can strengthen protective factors in early children. Additionally, parents can learn how to provide their children with more emotional, social, cognitive, and material support by, for instance, taking care of their children's health care and academic needs. Research supports the importance of parents playing a more active role in their children's lives by having honest conversations with them about drugs, keeping an eye on their behavior, getting to know their friends, understanding their issues, setting clear boundaries, and participating in their education and learning. Through puberty and beyond, the parent-child bond remains important.

Public awareness campaigns

The target audience is encouraged to emulate the behavior of positive role models who reject substance misuse using mass media. These strategies are effective ways to reach a large and diverse audience with health promotion messages using media including television, the internet, mobile phones, newspapers, and entertainment techniques like billboards on the side of the road. Drug-advocacy advertisements may influence drug use patterns and drug use intentions, as well as mediating factors including drug awareness, knowledge, and attitudes. The professionals have been working hard to keep the public informed in India through print and electronic media. People can be effectively informed about drug usage issues and its effects using electronic media, including the internet and other kinds of electronic media.

Healthy activities and community-based programs

Providing alternative activities such as sports, clubs, and volunteer opportunities can help keep teens busy and prevent boredom, which can be a risk factor for drug use. By encouraging healthy activities and hobbies, teenagers are provided with a sense of purpose and fulfillment, which will discourage them from illicit drug use. Apart from schools, law enforcement and local organizations can help create a supportive community environment that will bring people together, by fostering a sense of community and belonging. In that way, adolescents are given alternatives to drug use and are redirected towards stress-relieving exercises which will give them the

opportunity to socialize, engage with other people and amuse themselves without having to consume illegal substances.

Improving medical drug distribution systems

As mentioned above, drug abuse especially among children and adolescents can stem from medically prescribed drugs instead of conventionally illicit substances. Due to mismanagement of prescriptions and the administration of excessive doses, youth may exploit drugs and engage in misuse. In order to prevent this issue from its source, stricter legislation and monitoring could be implemented in pharmacies and other organizations that distribute drugs to ensure that appropriate doses are purchased and by their rightful users. For example, direct contact with the doctor prescribing the drug should be kept, health records should be regularly checked, and forms of identification should be requested.

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