

YOUTH SURVEY

FAIRFAX COUNTY

TEENAGE DRUG USE in Fairfax County

Self-reported by 8th, 10th and 12th grade students
on the Fairfax County Youth Survey

10% report using marijuana



9% report vaping marijuana



3% of teens report using painkillers and other prescription drugs for non-medical reasons



Fewer than 2% report using these drugs

- LSD or other hallucinogens
- Over-the-counter drugs for non-medical reasons
- Cocaine or crack
- Ecstasy
- Methamphetamines
- Heroin
- Steroids
- Inhalants

What You Need to Know

Three quarters (75%) of Fairfax County youth have not used any alcohol, tobacco or other drugs in the past 30 days.

Alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are the most commonly used drugs among youth in Fairfax County. Although alcohol and tobacco are drugs, they are the focus of separate fact sheets. Overall, 10% of youth report smoking marijuana in the last 30 days, but that number greatly increases with age.

Three percent of 8th graders report smoking marijuana, while 10% of 10th graders and 17% of 12th graders report current use. Nine percent report vaping marijuana.

Inhalant use decreases as students age. Among 8th graders, 3% use inhalants, compared to 1% or less of 10th and 12th graders.

Use of drugs commonly referred to as “street drugs” such as LSD, cocaine,

methamphetamines, ecstasy or heroin is very low in Fairfax County. Less than 2% of youth report using these drugs, and in the case of heroin, 0.3% reported use.

However, the use of painkillers (which can be dangerous themselves) can lead to opioid addiction and heroin use. Three percent of teens report using painkillers to get high in the last month. Three percent report the non-medical use of other prescription drugs.

What Can You Do?

IF YOUR TEEN EXHIBITS THESE SIGNS

- ▶ Change in relationships with family members or friends.
- ▶ Mood changes or emotional instability.
- ▶ Unusually tired.
- ▶ Decreased motivation.
- ▶ Messy, careless appearance.
- ▶ Red, flushed cheeks or face.
- ▶ Runny nose, not caused by allergies or a cold.
- ▶ Sores, spots around mouth.
- ▶ Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain.
- ▶ Disappearance of money or valuables.
- ▶ Disappearance of prescription or over-the-counter pills.
- ▶ Heavy use of over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening (eye drops), nasal irritation, or bad breath (breath mints or gum).
- ▶ Cash flow problems.
- ▶ Locked bedroom doors.
- ▶ Loss of interest in school, hobbies, sports or other activities.
- ▶ Drop in grades.

CONSIDER THIS

- ▶ Drug use has serious consequences on the teenage brain because it is still developing at this age.
- ▶ More Americans die from drug overdoses than in car crashes, and this increasing trend is driven by the use of prescription painkillers.
- ▶ Drug use lowers one’s inhibitions, leading to actions that teenagers will later regret.
- ▶ Nine out of 10 people who met medical criteria for drug or alcohol abuse or dependence started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before the age of 18. Inhalant users, on average, initiate use of other drugs at younger ages and display a higher lifetime prevalence of substance use disorders, including abuse of prescription drugs, when compared with substance abusers without a history of inhalant use.
- ▶ Teens who get treatment and ongoing recovery support for their substance abuse problems are more likely to maintain recovery past the five year mark than those who don’t.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED

- ▶ Set clear expectations for their behavior and apply appropriate and consistent consequences.
- ▶ Talk to your teens. Listen and try to understand the pressures of their life. Avoid criticism.
- ▶ Let your child know that he or she can always count on you and come to you for support.
- ▶ Keep track of where your teens are and what they are doing. Get to know who their friends are.
- ▶ Store prescription and over-the-counter medicines in a secure place. Immediately and securely dispose of expired or unused medicines.
- ▶ Talk to your teen’s school counselor, psychologist or social worker.
- ▶ Be a positive role model. Don’t misuse alcohol or use illegal drugs. Don’t drink and drive.

Adapted from www.drugabuse.gov and www.drugfree.org.

Who Can Help?

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB)
<https://bit.ly/FairfaxCSB>
Entry & Referral 703-383-8500, TTY 711
24-Hour Emergency Services 703-573-5679, TTY 711

Fairfax County Public Schools
<https://bit.ly/FCPSspecialsvcs>
Intervention & Prevention Services 571-423-4020
Student Safety & Wellness 571-423-4270

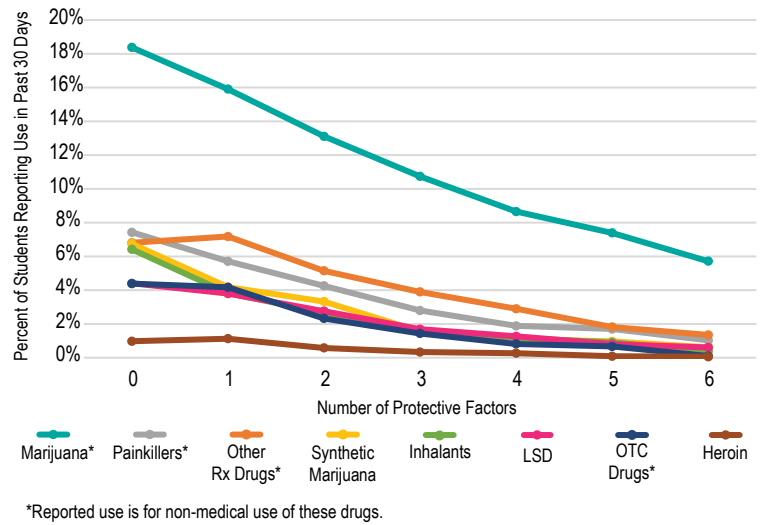
Partnership for Drug-Free Kids Helpline
www.drugfree.org/get-help/helpline
855-378-4373

3 THREE to SUCCEED

The Factors That Matter

Data from the Youth Survey reinforces decades of research that shows that when youth have protective factors (also known as assets) in their lives, they do better in lots of different areas. **Having just three protective factors dramatically reduces the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors.** The Youth Survey shows that every protective factor makes a difference.

Young people in Fairfax County report positive influences from the people and opportunities in their lives. Take action to be an asset in a young person's life and help to build a stronger, more positive community that benefits ALL children and youth.



Past 30-Day Drug Use

	OVERALL		8TH GRADE		10TH GRADE		12TH GRADE	
	FAIRFAX	US**	FAIRFAX	US**	FAIRFAX	US**	FAIRFAX	US**
MARIJUANA	9.7%	15.6%	2.5%	6.6%	9.9%	18.4%	17.0%	22.3%
SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA	1.7%	N/A	1.1%	N/A	2.1%	N/A	1.9%	N/A
INHALANTS	1.5%	1.4%	2.8%	2.1%	1.0%	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%
PAINKILLERS*	2.6%	N/A	2.6%	N/A	2.5%	N/A	2.6%	N/A
OTHER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS*	3.3%	N/A	2.7%	N/A	3.2%	N/A	4.1%	N/A
HEROIN	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%

*Reported use is for non-medical use of these drugs.
 **National comparisons are from the 2019 Monitoring the Future Survey.

WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Fairfax County Youth Survey
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/youthsurvey

Fairfax County Prevention System
<https://bit.ly/FairfaxPrevention>

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America
www.drugfree.org

NIDA for Teens
teens.drugabuse.gov

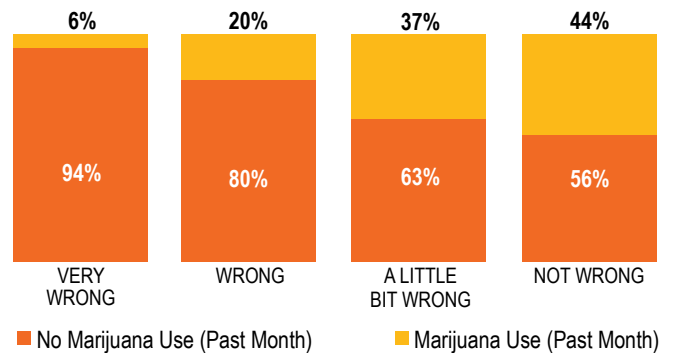
Protective Factors

- Accepting responsibility for one's actions
- Having community adults to talk to
- Performing community service
- Participating in extracurricular activities
- Having teachers recognize good work
- Having parents available for help

Past 30-Day Marijuana Use

94% of students who thought their parents disapproved of them smoking marijuana (Very Wrong) didn't use marijuana.

Among students who thought their parents were fine with them using (Not Wrong), only 56% didn't.



Related Factors

Fairfax County youth who have used drugs or alcohol in the past 30 days are more likely to:

- Have bullied or cyberbullied others.
- Have carried a weapon.
- Have experienced symptoms of depression or considered suicide.
- Have had sexual intercourse.

The Fairfax County Youth Survey was administered in the fall of 2019.



Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For information, call 703-324-4600, TTY 711.



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