

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: 2024 Survey Says Boredom, Relaxation and Experimentation are among Top Reasons Teens Vape

Monitoring The Future (MTF) is an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of Americans from adolescence through adulthood. Each year, more than 25,000 8th, 10th and 12th grade students are surveyed as part of the MTF Main study (12th graders from 1975, and 8th and 10th graders since 1991) and approximately 20,000 adults ages 19 to 65 are surveyed as part of the MTF Panel study. The MTF study conducts annual follow up surveys with a subsample of each graduating class, who complete a follow up every two years from ages 19–30 and every five years from age 35 onward and has been funded under the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a part of the National Institutes of Health.

Nicotine vapes are sometimes marketed as aids for cigarette smoking cessation. However, teens do not typically turn to electronic nicotine vapes to curb smoking habits, according to MTF researchers who examined data from in-school surveys of U.S. students in eighth, 10th and 12th grades, revealing a mix of curiosity, boredom and stress relief as key drivers.

Vaping has become the primary way that adolescents use nicotine. Understanding why adolescents vape is important for figuring out how to reduce and prevent nicotine use among teenagers.

Of the 5,082 respondents, data showed relaxation was the most common reason cited, no matter the grade or frequency of vaping. Boredom landed in the top three reasons across frequency groups as well.

Among 12th graders who reported vaping near-daily, a third said they vaped to feel good or because it is more convenient than cigarettes. Less than 10% of that same group said vaping helped them quit smoking cigarettes.

Near-daily vaping in the past 30 days was reported by 1.7% of eighth graders, 4.2% of 10th graders and 7.8% of 12th graders. “Relaxation” emerged as the top reason for vaping, cited by nearly half of adolescents who vaped in the past year and over 70% of near-daily vapers.

The data stresses the importance of understanding the diverse reasons behind teen vaping, particularly the significant role of stress relief. Given that a large proportion of near-daily vapers use vaping to relax, incorporating mental health support into prevention programs researchers

suggest is crucial. These findings illustrate a shift over the past decade in the reasons adolescents vape, moving from experimentation to stress relief and relaxation, highlighting key areas for prevention, intervention and education.

Other frequently mentioned reasons include “experimentation” and “boredom,” with “taste” also ranking high. Among near-daily vapers, significant numbers noted they vaped to “feel good” or because it is “more convenient than cigarettes,” with a smaller percentage aiming to “help quit cigarettes.”

Among the adolescents who vape near-daily, 43% report that they vape because they are hooked or must have it. The fact that so many adolescents feel addicted to nicotine is concerning. Another reason, reported by almost 1 in 5 near-daily vapers, was to manage their weight. Additional research is needed on this, but parents and health care professionals should be aware that many adolescents are vaping to try to lose weight or control their weight.

Researchers suggest that screening for stress and anxiety should be conducted alongside nicotine screenings to provide early intervention. These experts also noted a shift in why adolescents are vaping, as 2015 data listed relaxation as only the fifth most common reason.

Further research is needed to understand those adolescents vaping for weight management—reported by nearly a fifth of 12th graders who vaped near-daily.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world’s research on the health aspects of drug use and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy, improve practice, and advance addiction science. For more information about NIDA and its programs, visit www.nida.nih.gov.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove whose mission is to eliminate alcohol and substance use in Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use in youth and is conducting a prevention awareness campaigns entitled “Keeping Glen Cove SAFE” to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE’s Vaping Facts and Myths page at www.safeglencove.org.