

Substance Use among Minnesota Students: Highlights of Findings from the 2019 MN Student Survey (MSS)

This report highlights the major findings on substance use reported by students in Minnesota from the 2019 MSS. Full list of frequency distribution for each question in the survey can be found in the [MSS Statewide Tables](#). More detailed reports on substance use among students will be available online at SUMN.org

Use of Tobacco Products

While cigarette smoking reached an all-time low the use of e-cig spiked making it the most prevalent substance used by MN students

The percentage of students who reported smoking cigarettes reached an all-time low for all grade levels: 2% of 8th graders, 3% of 9th graders and 5% of 11th graders smoked cigarettes at least one day in the past 30 days.

Percentage of students who reported smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days

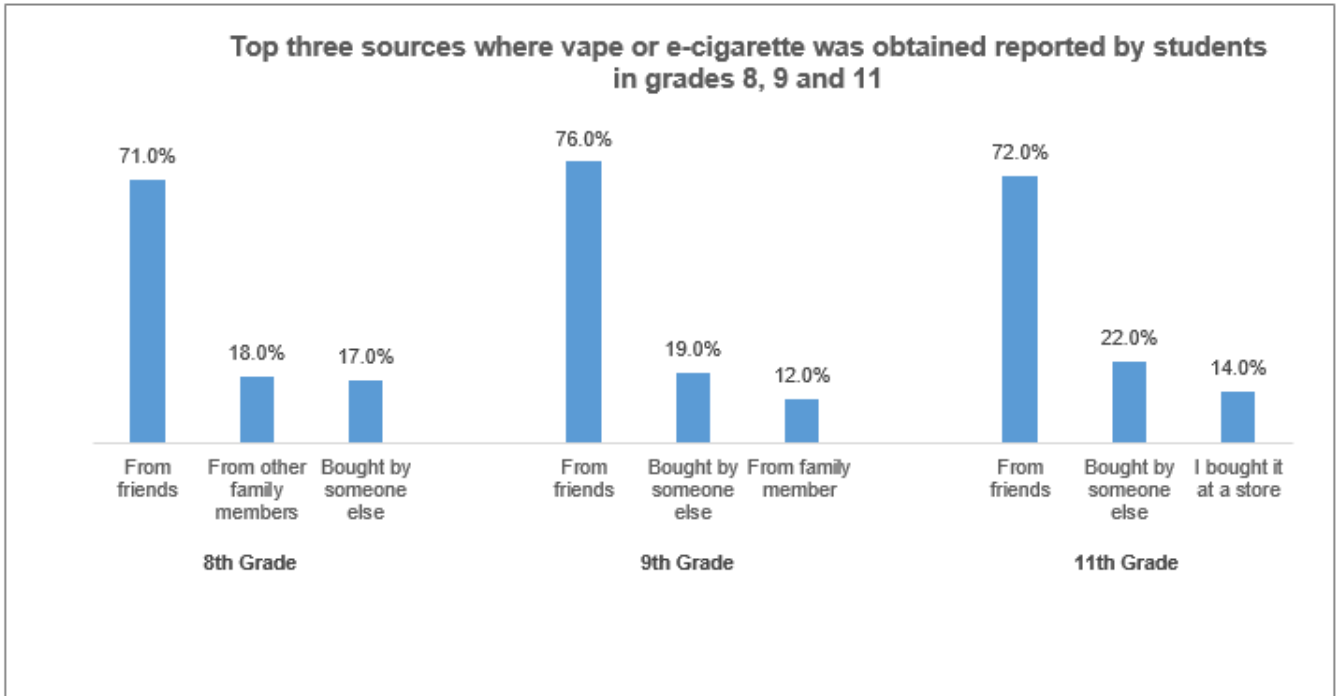
	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	4%	3%	2%
Grade 9	8%	4%	3%
Grade 11	12%	8%	5%

The prevalence of e-cigarette use, however, had increased across all grades: More than one in four 11th graders (26%), 16% of 9th graders and 11% of 8th graders reported vaping in the past 30 days. This is up from 17%, 9% and 6%, respectively reported in 2016 when the MSS began to monitor e-cig use.

Percentage of students who reported vaping in the past 30 days

	2016	2019
Grade 8	6%	11%
Grade 9	9%	16%
Grade 11	17%	26%

The 2019 MSS included a question asking the students who vaped in the past 30 days about how they obtained e-cigs. A list of 13 possible sources was provided and students were allowed to select multiple options. The chart below shows the top three sources selected by students in each grade. Students' primary source for e-cigs across all grades was friends: More than 70% of students in grades 8, 9 and 11 who vaped in the past 30 days reported that they got e-cigs from their friends.



While cigarette smoking by students reached an all-time low, secondhand smoking among young students raises some concern. While the rate went down slightly from the previous years, in 2019, more than one in four 5th graders (26%) were exposed to secondhand smoking by being in the same room or in a car with someone who was smoking in the past 7 days.

Percentage of 5th graders who were exposed to secondhand smoking

	2013	2016	2019
exposed to secondhand smoking in the past 7 days	28%	28%	26%

Alcohol Use

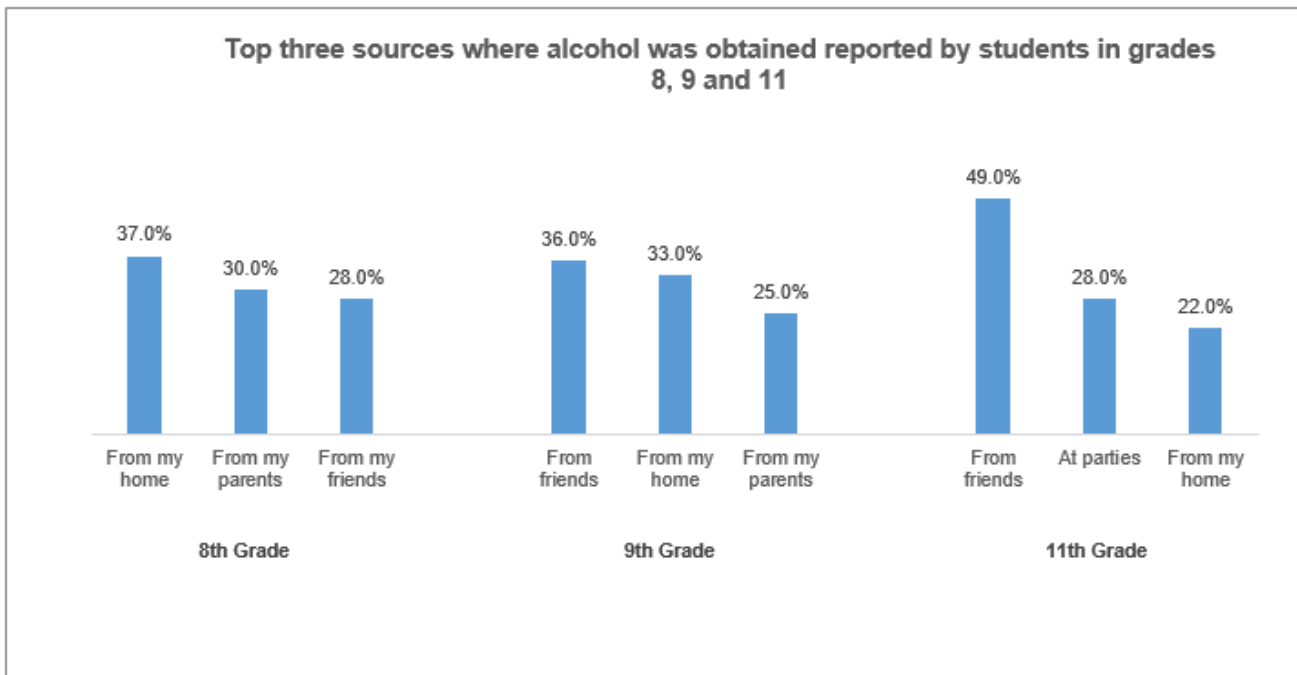
22% of 11th graders reported alcohol use in the past 30 days; Students' own home was one of the main sources of alcohol they used.

Over the years, alcohol has been the most prevalent substance students reported using. While vaping took the lead this year, prevalence of drinking among students warrants continued prevention efforts: 22% of 11th graders, 12% of 9th graders and 8% of 8th graders reported alcohol use in the past 30 days before the survey.

Percentage of students who reported drinking in the past 30 days

	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	9%	8%	8%
Grade 9	15%	11%	12%
Grade 11	28%	25%	22%

Many students who drank during the past 30 days got the alcohol from their own home¹. The primary source for alcohol was their own home for 8th graders with 37% of those who drank in the past 30 days reporting they got it from their own home. For students in grades 9 and 11, the primary source for alcohol was their friends, but their own home was also reported by 33% of the 9th graders and 28% of the 11th graders.



¹ Similar to e-cig, a list of 13 ways of obtaining alcohol was provided and students could select multiple options.

Marijuana and Other Illicit Drug Use

Marijuana use remained steady over the years but the decreasing trend in perceived risk of marijuana use deserves more attention: 58% of 11th graders perceived no risk or only slight risk in using marijuana once or twice a week.

The prevalence of marijuana use has been steady over the years with 4% of 8th graders, 8% of 9th graders and 16% of 11th graders reporting its use in the past 30 days.

Percentage of students who reported using marijuana in the past 30 days

	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	5%	5%	4%
Grade 9	9%	7%	8%
Grade 11	17%	16%	16%

However, the lack of risk perception² for marijuana use reported by students deserves more attention. About 30% of 11th graders perceived “no risk” in using marijuana once or twice a week and the percentage goes up to 58% if we also include those who perceived “slight risk.”

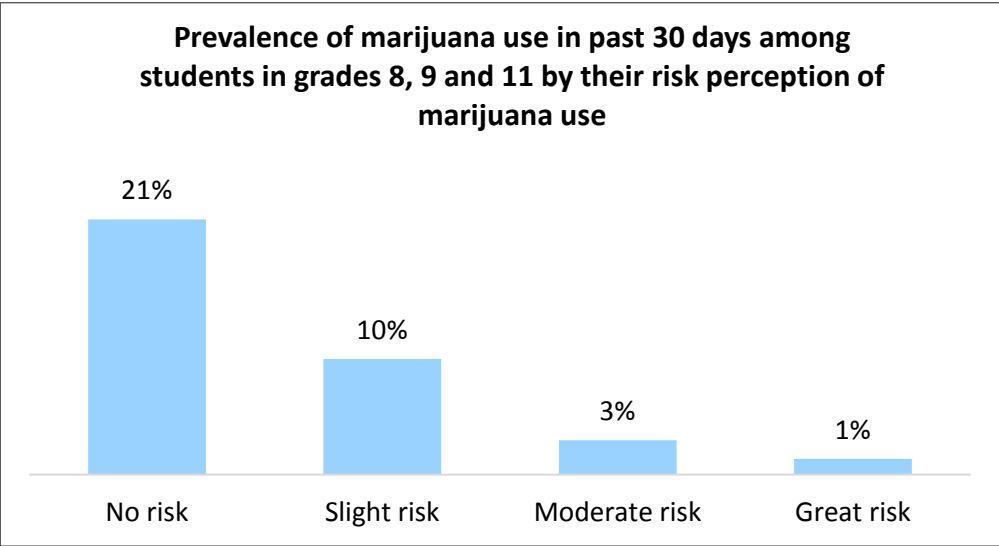
The table below shows the steady decline in the percentage of students who perceived “great risk” in using marijuana once or twice a week. The declining pattern is observed across all three grades. In 2013, 48% of 8th graders, 44% of 9th graders and 33% of 11th graders perceived great risk in using marijuana once or twice a week. In 2016, the percentage went down to 36%, 29% and 21%, respectively.

Percentage of students who think people are at great risk of harming themselves if they use marijuana once or twice a week

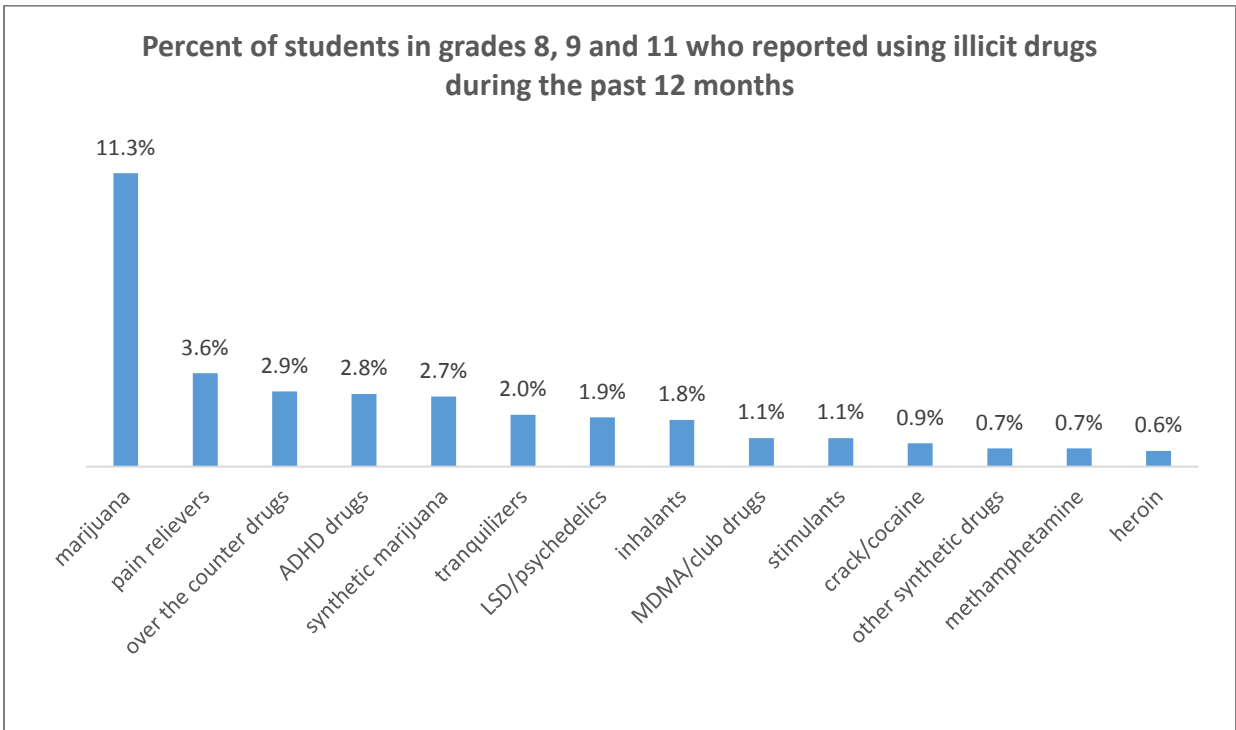
	2013	2016	2019
Grade 8	48%	43%	36%
Grade 9	44%	38%	29%
Grade 11	33%	27%	21%

² The question asked “How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways if they do any of the following: Use marijuana once or twice per week?” The answering options were no risk; slight risk; moderate risk and great risk.

The figure below clearly shows the correlation between the risk levels students perceive and the actual use of marijuana by students: Students who believe there is no or only slight risk in using marijuana are more likely to use marijuana. Monitoring the trend in risk perception in addition to the prevalence of use is important for prevention of substance use.



MSS asks students in grades 8, 9 and 11 about using various illicit drugs during the past year. Outside of alcohol and tobacco products, marijuana was the most prevalent illicit drug used with 11% of students in grades 8, 9 and 11 reporting its use during the past year. Illicit use of pain relievers was a distant second with 3.6% of the students reporting it, followed by the illicit use of over-the-counter drugs, ADHD/ADD drugs and synthetic marijuana, each used by just under 3% of students during the past year.



Comparison across Race/Ethnicity³ and Gender Identity

American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) students are smoking cigarettes at a rate almost three times the statewide average and using marijuana more than two times the statewide average.

In 2019, the statewide rate of cigarette smoking among students reached an all-time low, but American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) students lag behind in this trend, with 11% of AIAN students in grades 8, 9 and 11 reporting cigarette smoking in the past 30 days. This was almost three times the statewide rate of 4%. Marijuana use during the past 30 days was reported by 21% of AIAN students in grades 8, 9 and 11, which was more than two times the statewide rate of 9%. In addition, across all racial/ethnic subgroups, AIAN students marked the highest prevalence of past-month use of e-cigs and alcohol.

Prevalence of substance use in past 30 days across racial/ethnic subgroups* of students in grade 8, 9 and 11

	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Statewide Total (grade 8, 9 & 11)
cigarette	11%	1%	3%	4%	3%	4%
e-cig	25%	8%	12%	17%	18%	17%
alcohol	18%	7%	6%	13%	14%	13%
marijuana	21%	4%	9%	10%	8%	9%

*Two subgroups (Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islanders and those selected more than one category) are not reported separately in the table but they were included in the total column.

³ In 2019, there was one combined race/ethnicity question with 6 categories (American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Asian American; Black, African or African American; Hispanic or Latino/Latina; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; White). Students were allowed to mark more than one category.

Transgender or LGBPQ students report smoking, drinking, vaping and using marijuana at a higher rate than the statewide average

In the 2019 MSS, students in grade 9 and 11 were asked about their gender identity, and 9.4% reported that they were lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual or queer (LGBPQ). In a separate question asking “Are you transgender, genderqueer, or genderfluid?” 1.4% of 9th and 11th graders answered “yes.”

The table below shows the prevalence of use of cigarettes, e-cigs, alcohol and marijuana during the past 30 days reported by LGBPQ and transgender students in grades 9 and 11 compared to the statewide rates. LGBPQ or transgender students in grades 9 and 11 smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days at a rate more than twice the statewide average (9% and 10%, respectively compared to 4%). In addition, they reported vaping, drinking and using marijuana during the past 30 days at a higher rate than the statewide average among students in grades 9 and 11.

Prevalence of substance use in past 30 days reported by LGBPQ and transgender students in grade 9 and 11

	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual or Queer	Transgender, Genderqueer or Genderfluid	Statewide Total (grade 9 & 11)
cigarette	9%	10%	4%
e-cig	28%	23%	21%
alcohol	23%	22%	17%
marijuana	18%	15%	11%