

Substance use down early in pandemic for youth, young adults

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Substance use substantially decreased across nearly all substance

categories in the early part of the pandemic among youths and young adults, according to a study published online Jan. 31 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Wilson M. Compton, M.D., from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, and colleagues examined whether substance use prevalence in the early part of the pandemic (2020) differed from the prepandemic period. The analysis included data from 7,129 youths (13 to 17 years of age), 3,628 [young adults](#) (18 to 20 years of age), and 8,874 adults (21 years of age or older) participating in the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health Study (2016 to 2019 and 2020).

The researchers found that among youths, the prevalence of all substances used declined (e.g., [cannabis use](#) for ages 16 to 17 years declined from 14.9 to 7.6 percent). Prevalence of all substances other than any alcohol decreased significantly in young adults (e.g., tobacco use declined from 37.8 to 22.8 percent). For adults ages 21 to 24 years, any tobacco use declined from 39.0 to 30.9 percent, while alcohol use increased from 60.2 to 65.2 percent. Similarly, among adults aged 25 years and older, any tobacco use declined from 39.0 to 30.9 percent, cannabis use increased from 11.3 to 12.4 percent, and other substance use declined from 5.8 to 3.7 percent. Consistent changes were not seen in [older adults](#).

"Despite significant stressors during 2020, substance use declined in youths; reductions in youths but not adults during this period of social isolation may reflect, in part, youth-specific sensitivity to peer influences on [substance use](#)," the authors write.

One author disclosed financial ties to General Electric, 3M Companies, and Pfizer.

More information: Wilson M. Compton et al, Tobacco, Alcohol,

Cannabis, and Other Drug Use in the US Before and During the Early Phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). DOI: [10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.54566](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.54566)

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