

## Youth Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use in California

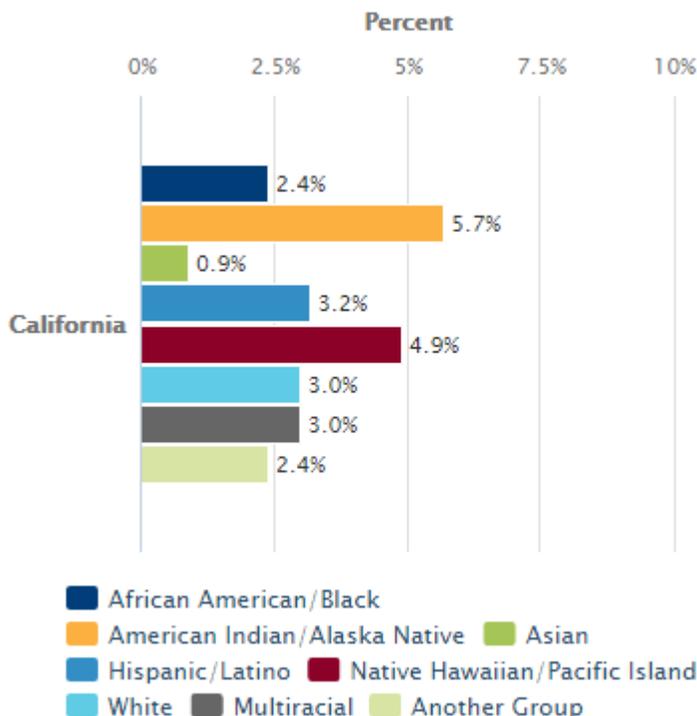
### Students Who Used Alcohol or Drugs in the Previous Month, by Gender and Grade Level: 2017-2019

California	Percent	
	Female	Male
Grade Level	Some	Some
Grade 7	7.3%	6.2%
Grade 9	17.4%	12.7%
Grade 11	24.0%	23.2%
Non-Traditional	36.6%	27.6%

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have used alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco) in the previous 30 days, by gender and grade level (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 17.4% of female 9th graders in California had used alcohol or drugs in the previous month).

**Data Source:** WestEd, *California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)* & *Biennial State CHKS*. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

### Students Who Have Driven When They Had Been Using Alcohol or Drugs, or Ridden with a Driver Who Had Been Using, on Seven or More Occasions in Their Lifetimes, by Race/Ethnicity: 2017-2019



**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have ever driven a car when they had been using alcohol or drugs, or ridden in a car driven by someone who had been using, by race/ethnicity and number of occasions (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 3.2% of Hispanic/Latino students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had either driven when they had been using alcohol or drugs, or ridden with a driver who had been using, on seven or more occasions in their lifetimes).

**Data Source:** WestEd, *California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)* & *Biennial State CHKS*. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

### What It Is

On kidsdata.org, indicators of youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use come from:

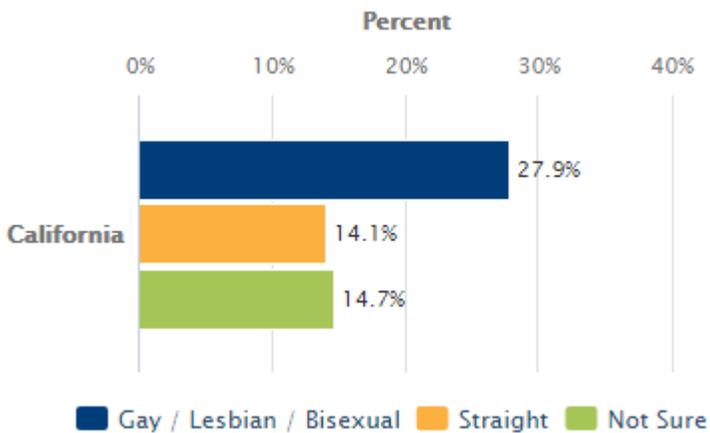
- Student reports of alcohol or drug use (excluding tobacco) in the previous month overall and on school property
- Student reports of the number of days they used alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and marijuana in the previous month
- Student reports of the number of days they binge drank in the previous month
- Student reports of the number times they have used alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and marijuana in their lifetimes
- Student reports of the number times they have driven when they had been using alcohol or drugs or ridden with a driver who had been using in their lifetimes
- Staff reports of the extent to which, at their school, student alcohol and drug use is a problem, substance abuse prevention is an important goal, and substance use prevention education is provided

### Why This Topic Is Important

Youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use is a significant public health concern linked to a wide range of academic, social, and health problems. Alcohol is the most widely used substance among the nation's young people and initiation peaks in the years between Grades 7 and 11. Underage drinking is associated with risky health behaviors (e.g., unsafe sexual practices), injuries, motor vehicle accidents, impaired cognitive functioning, poor academic performance, physical violence, and suicide attempt. Binge drinking places youth and those around them at even higher risk for negative outcomes. Drinking during adolescence increases the likelihood of alcohol dependence in adulthood, and excessive alcohol consumption can have long-term health consequences, including liver disease, cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

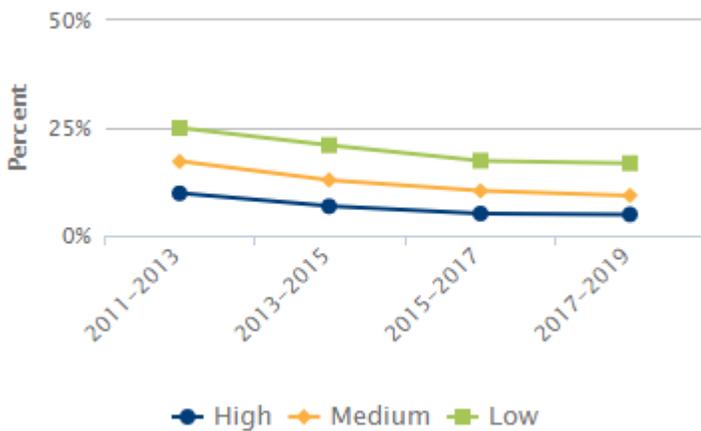
Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable and premature death in the U.S., resulting in more than 480,000 deaths annually. Smoking causes cumulative, irreversible harm, and most long-term smokers

### Students Who Used Alcohol or Drugs in the Previous Month, by Sexual Orientation: 2017-2019



**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have used alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco) in the previous 30 days, by sexual orientation (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 27.9% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had used alcohol or drugs in the previous month).  
**Data Source:** WestEd, *California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)* & *Biennial State CHKS*. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

### Students Who Have Used Marijuana on Seven or More Occasions in Their Lifetimes, by Level of School Connectedness California



**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have ever used marijuana, by level of school connectedness and number of occasions (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 16.8% of California students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs with low levels of school connectedness had used marijuana on seven or more occasions in their lifetimes).  
**Data Source:** WestEd, *California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)* & *Biennial State CHKS*. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

start when they are teens or young adults. Tobacco use or smoking in any form—including e-cigarettes—is unsafe. Marijuana use, too, is linked to adverse effects such as respiratory problems, anxiety attacks, cognitive difficulties, and coordination loss, as well as aggressive behavior and poor academic performance among youth.

### How Children Are Faring

According to a 2017-2019 survey of California public school students, 7% of 7th graders, 15% of 9th graders, 23% of 11th graders, and 29% of students in non-traditional programs had used alcohol or drugs in the previous 30 days. An estimated 8% of 11th graders had binge drunk (consumed five or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours) at least once in the previous month, and 13% had either driven when they had been using alcohol or drugs, or had ridden with a driver who had been using, at least once in their lifetimes. E-cigarette use typically was more common than cigarette smoking: 26% of 11th graders had used e-cigarettes at least once in their lifetimes, compared with 8% who had smoked cigarettes. Lifetime marijuana use among California 11th graders was 29% in 2017-2019, down from 41% in 2011-2013, with percentages ranging from 17% to 56% across counties with data.

Across grade levels, the estimated proportion of students who have ever used alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and marijuana has fallen in recent years. In general, students with low levels of school connectedness, those whose parents did not finish high school, and gay, lesbian, and bisexual students more frequently report substance use than their peers in other groups.

High school staff reports from 2017-2019 show that more than half (52%) considered alcohol and drug use among students at their school a moderate or severe problem. More than three-quarters (77%) agreed that substance abuse prevention was an important goal at their school, and more than two-thirds (67%) reported that their school provided at least some substance use prevention education.

*View references for this text and additional research on this topic:*

<https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/28/youth-alcohol-tobacco-and-other-drug-use/summary>



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