



Overdose and Substance Use Among U.S. Youth

Office of Data and Research

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Key Highlights

Drug overdose deaths among adolescents aged 12-17 increased 156% from 2019 to its height in the year 2022 (282 to 721 deaths). Since its peak, drug overdose deaths among adolescents have declined by 56.6% through 2025 (313 deaths).^{*1}

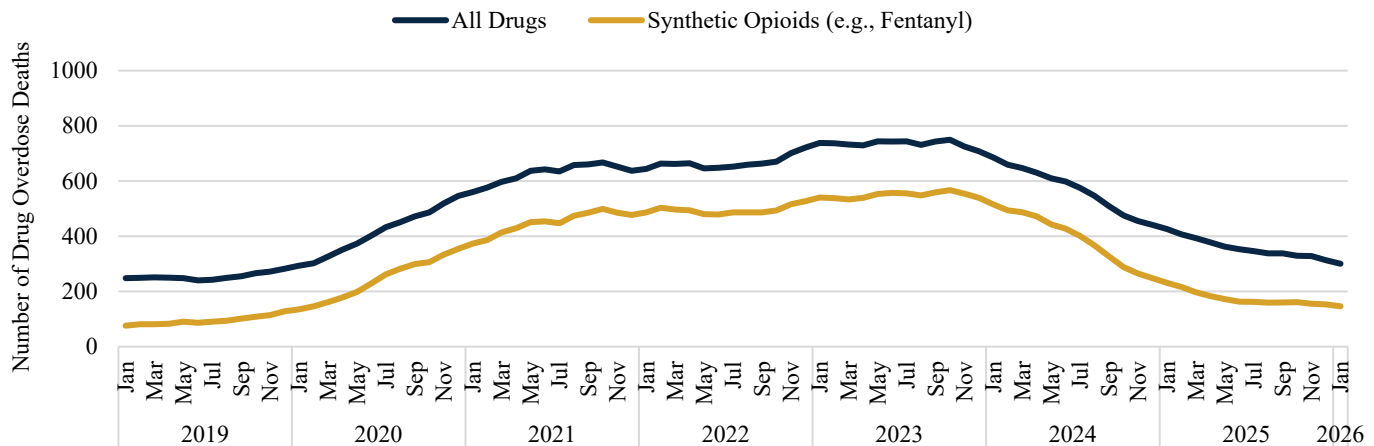
According to provisional data for the 12-month period ending in January 2026, drug overdose was the sixth leading cause of death for adolescents aged 12-17, and 48.7% of drug overdose deaths involved a synthetic opioid, such as fentanyl (146 drug overdose deaths).¹

The percentage of students who reported past-year illicit drug use in 2025 was 21.1%, a near-record low (lowest was 19.7% in 1992). Steep declines in drug use started in 2021 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; these low levels continued in 2025.²

Fatal Drug Overdose

The most recent provisional data for the 12-month period ending in January 2026 estimate 300 drug overdose deaths among adolescents aged 12-17, which represents a 29.6% decline from the same time period a year prior (426 drug overdose deaths). However, approximately one young person every day is still dying a preventable death in the United States.¹

Rolling 12-month number of drug overdose deaths among adolescents aged 12-17, United States, January 2019 - January 2026



In the 12-month period ending in January 2026, provisional estimates of adolescents aged 12-17 who died of fatal drug overdoses involving any drug were highest in the South (106) and the West (106). The adolescent overdose death rate (per 100,000 people) involving any drug was highest for the West (1.72), followed by the Midwest (1.23), the South (1.02), and the Northeast (0.51). The states with the highest number of fatal overdoses among adolescents were Texas (31), California (31), and Washington (21), whereas the highest rates of fatal adolescent overdoses were in Washington (3.61), Colorado (3.22), and Arizona (2.09).

^{*} CDC produces three types of fatal overdose statistics: **Actual Provisional** (reflect ongoing receipt of death certificates); **Predicted Provisional** (adjusted statistics to account for delays in overdose death certification and reporting), and **Final Statistics** (death counts that are fully processed, verified, and considered complete).

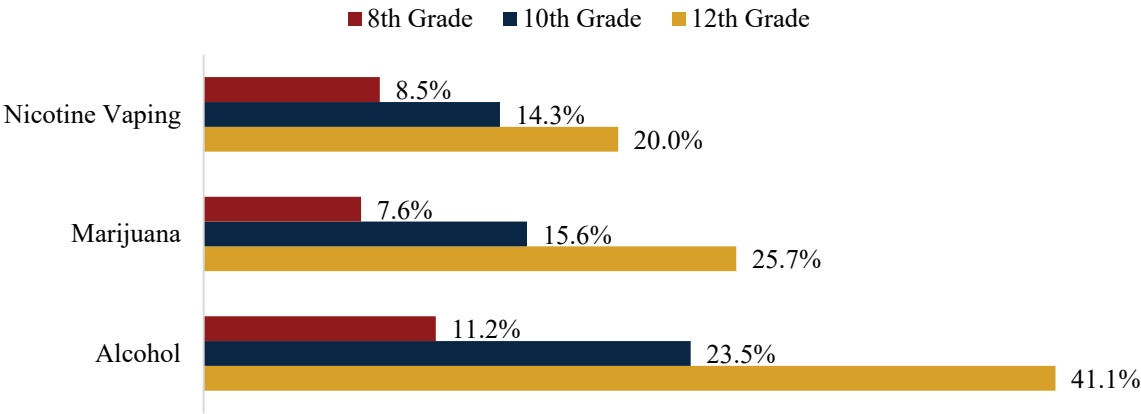
The West had the highest number of fatal overdoses involving synthetic opioids (e.g., fentanyl) at 59, followed by the South (46), the Midwest (29), and the Northeast (12). The West also had the highest adolescent fatal overdose rate (per 100,000 people) at 0.96, followed by the Midwest (0.53), the South (0.44), and the Northeast (0.29). There were 22 fatal overdoses involving psychostimulants (e.g., methamphetamine) among adolescents in the West and 11 in the South, representing rates of 0.36 and 0.11 per 100,000 people, respectively.^{†1}

Unintentional or undetermined intent represented 68% (205) of youth fatal overdoses in the 12-month period ending January 2026, compared to 93% of all ages. The other 32% (95) of youth fatal overdoses were suicides. Over double the number of girls committed suicide by drug overdose compared to boys (66 vs. 29, respectively).

Substance Use

In 2025, alcohol was the most common substance used by 8th (11.2%), 10th (23.5%), and 12th (41.1%) grade students in the past 12 months, followed by marijuana and nicotine vaping.²

Percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders who reported past 12-month use of nicotine vaping, marijuana, and alcohol, United States, 2025



In 2025, among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students, past 12-month use of prescription drugs, such as Adderall, OxyContin, Ritalin, and Vicodin, was 2.5% or less, and use of illicit drugs, such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin, was less than 1.5%.²

In 2025, 34,000 adolescents aged 12-17 reported using illegally-made fentanyl in the past 12 months.³

Nonfatal Drug Overdose

For the 12-month period ending September 13, 2026, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel encountered 23,678 suspected nonfatal overdoses among youth aged 1-14 and 77,705 suspected nonfatal overdoses among people aged 15-24.⁴

For the 12-month period ending September 13, 2026, EMS personnel encountered 2,048 suspected nonfatal overdoses among youth aged 1-14 and 13,109 suspected nonfatal overdoses among people aged 15-24.⁴

References

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[†] Census Regions & States: **South** (AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV), **West** (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY),