

Young Adults Statewide Survey

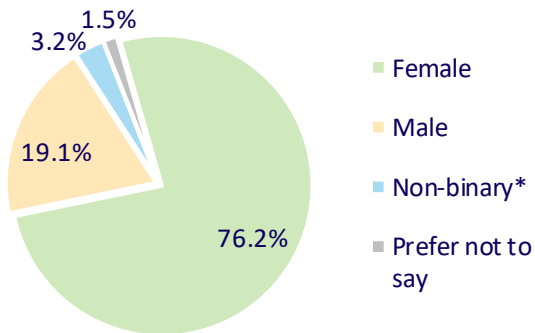
A behavioral health survey of Connecticut young adults 18-25



Introduction & Demographics

The **Young Adults Statewide Survey (YASS)** was a two phase, social marketing driven behavioral health survey of young adults (18-25). Phase 1 (June 2019 – September 2019) was promoted through the SPEAK YOUR MIND social marketing campaign, developed in collaboration with Odonnell Company, and garnered **179** responses covering **59** of 169 towns (35%). Phase 2 (November 2019 – June 2020) took a more direct approach, via promoted Facebook advertising requesting participation with a link to the survey. This approach yielded **1257** respondents representing **149** of 169 towns (88%). In this response sample, males are underrepresented, as well as Black/African American and Hispanic young adults. The YASS instrument was modified in April 2020 to include questions assessing the behavioral health impact of COVID-19 on young adults (n=185).

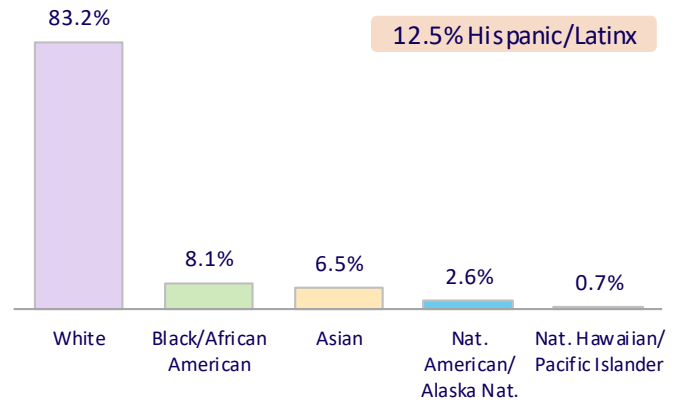
Gender



*includes agender, gender fluid, gender-queer, queer, trans-masculine, trans-feminine

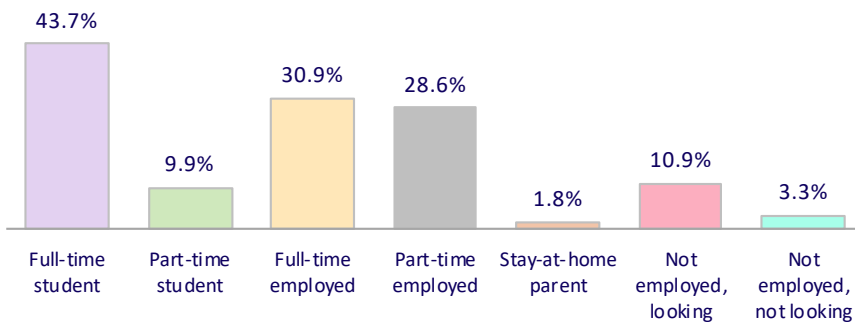
Race and Hispanic Ethnicity

*categories are not mutually exclusive

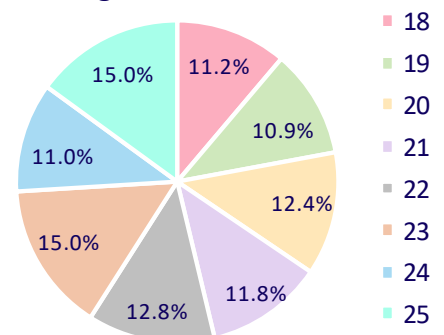


School & Employment Status

*categories are not mutually exclusive



Age



385 young adults responded to a open-ended question asking them to speak their minds.

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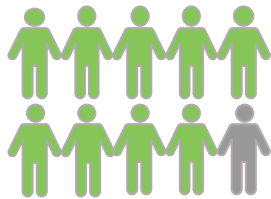
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Mental Health

Anxiety

n=959



Nearly 9 in 10 young adults reported feeling very anxious, nervous, tense, scared, panicked, or like something bad was going to happen.

65%

Reported that **anxiety** greatly affected their work, life, or relationships

Depression

n=1088

47%

Reported feeling **sad or hopeless almost every day** for 2 weeks in a row, so that it interfered with work, life, or relationships

"I didn't have the terminology to label myself as depressed. I just thought I was weird. If someone told me that I had depression and allowed me to talk about it without fear of consequences, I think I could have saved myself a lot of heart break."



Suicide

n=1089

19%

Reported making a suicide plan

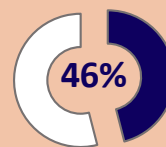
"I can easily say none of us were informed on the signs of suicide. If we had been, it would have been prevented."

13%

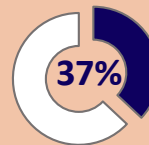
Reported attempting suicide



In the past year...



46% reported receiving mental health help/support



37% reported taking medications prescribed for mental health issues



"I feel like there is a mental health crisis, but it's not caused by video games or drugs. Often people use those things as coping mechanisms, but they're not the source."
"Mental health needs to be integrated into the school systems starting in elementary school."
"EVERYONE should be getting help no matter what."

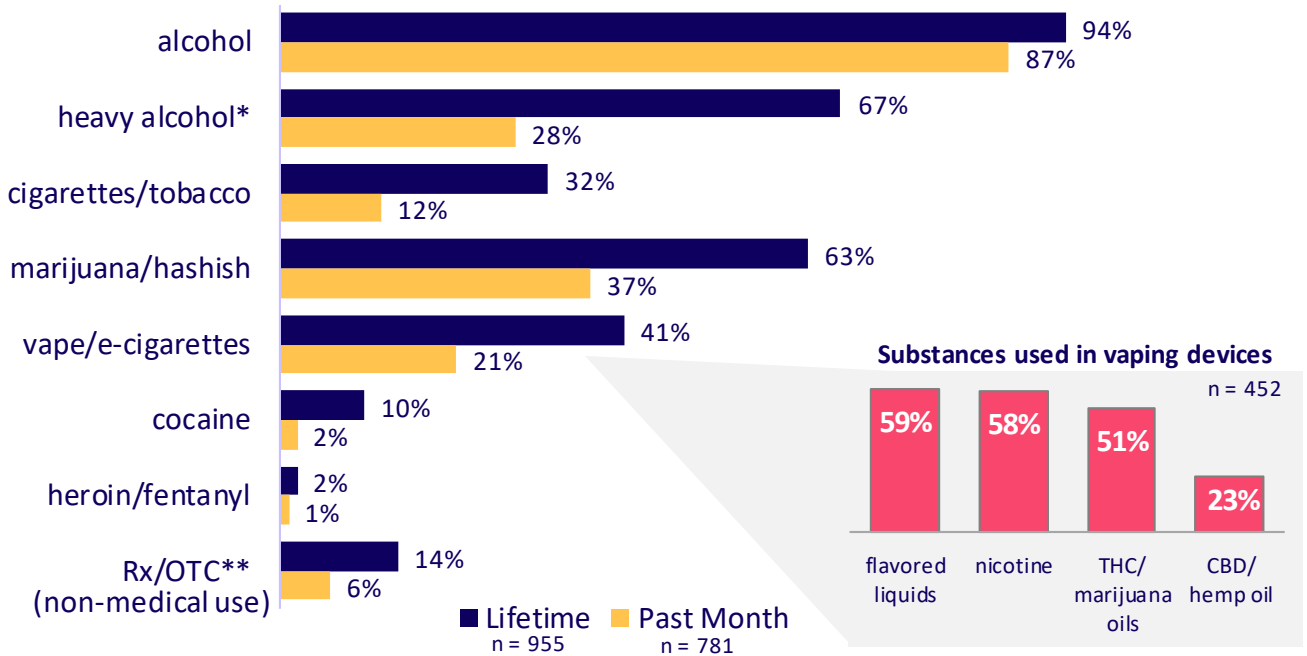
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Substance Use

Lifetime and Past Month Substance Use



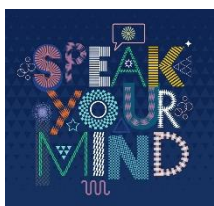
*heavy alcohol use: 5 or more drinks on one occasion

** OTC= over-the-counter

In the past year...

7% of young adults reported receiving help/support for substance use.

16% of young adults reported driving under the influence of either alcohol, marijuana or another drug.



"Alcohol abuse is a HUGE issue in my age group but people don't realize it is abuse."

"I can't believe that e-cigs have become so popular among people my age. When I was younger, I was convinced that we were going to be the generation that would end smoking and tobacco use, but I can't believe young people are naive enough to fall for it."

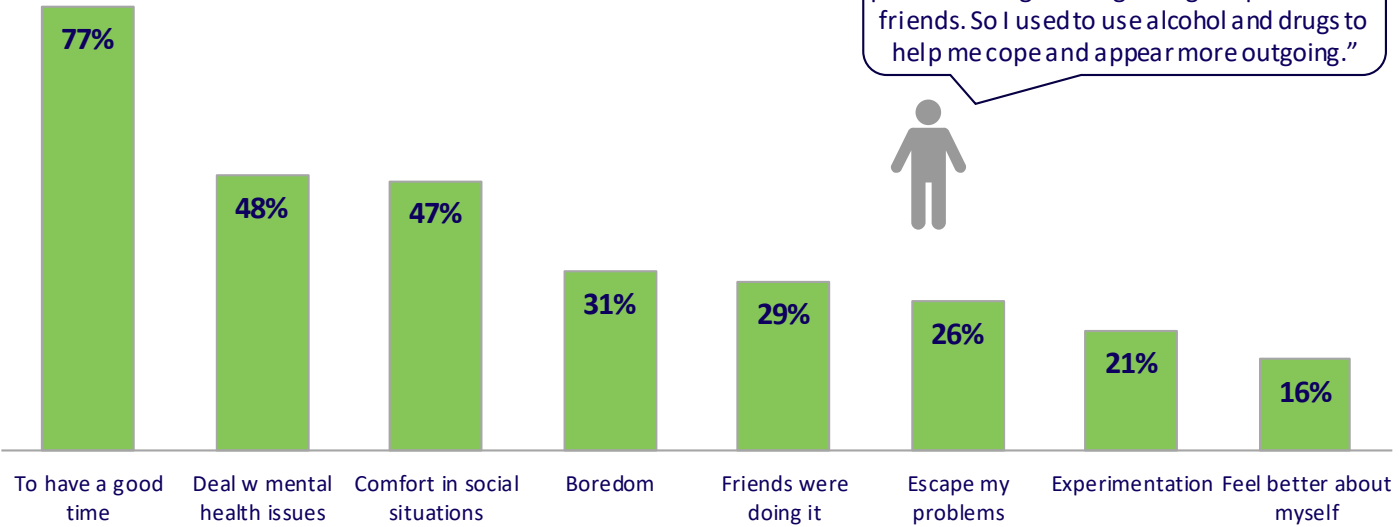
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Substance Use

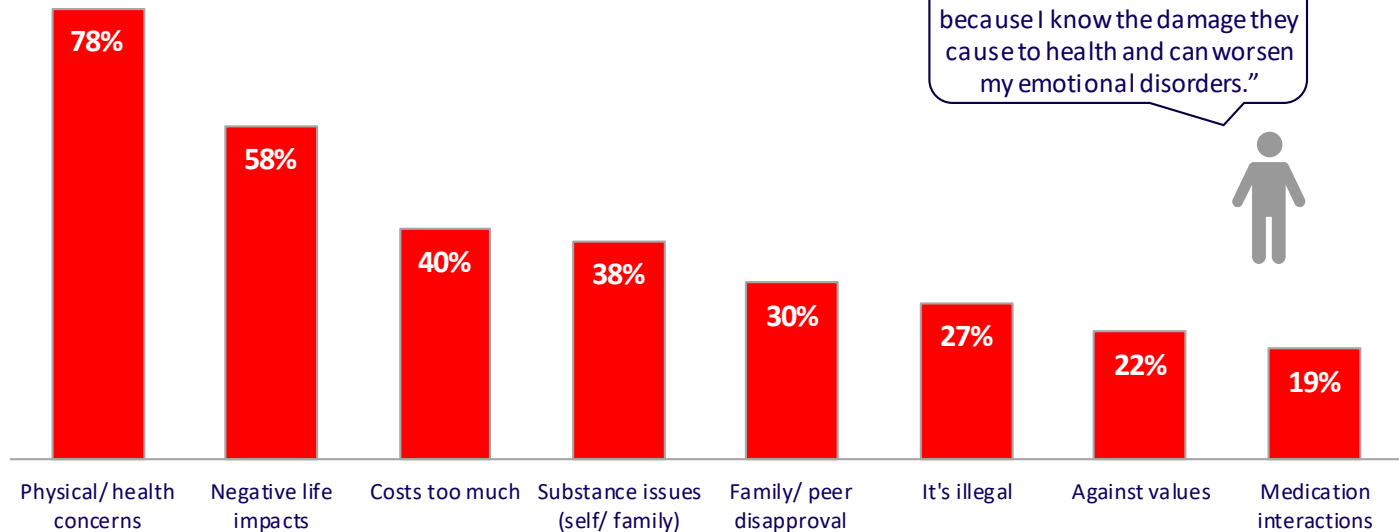
Reasons for Past Year Substance Use n = 883



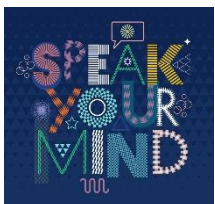
"I have social anxiety, but I still wanted to be part of social gatherings and go to parties with friends. So I used to use alcohol and drugs to help me cope and appear more outgoing."



Reasons for Limiting Substance Use n = 948



"I do not abuse substances because I know the damage they cause to health and can worsen my emotional disorders."



"Addiction is an illness and those affected need treatment not punishment. Social acceptance of seeking help will encourage more people to seek help and save lives."

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Gaming & Gambling

Gaming

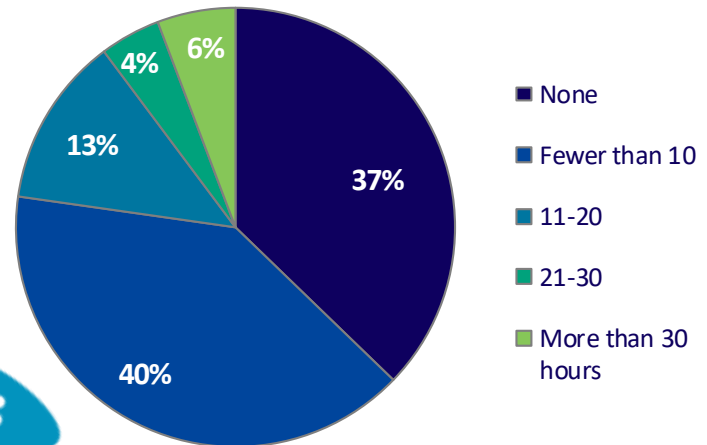
- Among those who play video games, **37.5%** of females and **47.3%** of males reported playing to escape or forget about real life problems.
- Of the females who answered the survey, **3.4%** played >30 hours per week, compared to **12.2%** of males.

These differences were statistically significant.

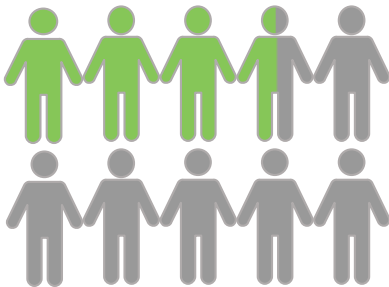


HOURS GAMING PER WEEK

n = 1025



Gambling



35% of young adults reported gambling in the past year.

n = 1071

Of those who reported gambling in the past year:

- **3%** lied about how much they gamble, an indicator of possible problem gambling.
- **9%** felt the need to bet more and more money.

Differences by gender were not significant.



"Video games are one of the most important parts of my life because it's the way I stay socially connected to all of my hometown friends and people I know across the country."

"Addiction to predatory micro transactions (loot boxes) in video games needs to be taken far more seriously as a legitimate issue akin to gambling addiction. It is a largely unregulated market that disproportionately affects young people and there are not many resources available for help or even recognizing it."

"Gambling is probably something that should be less available."

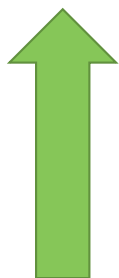
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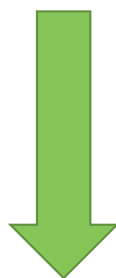
COVID-19

In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your health and behaviors?



Percent Reporting an Increase

- Boredom (85.8%)
- Anxiety (83.2%)
- Sense of isolation (80.8%)
- Depression (75.7%)
- Interpersonal/family conflict (42.1%)
- Alcohol and/or drug use (39.3%)
- Gaming/gambling (21.9%)



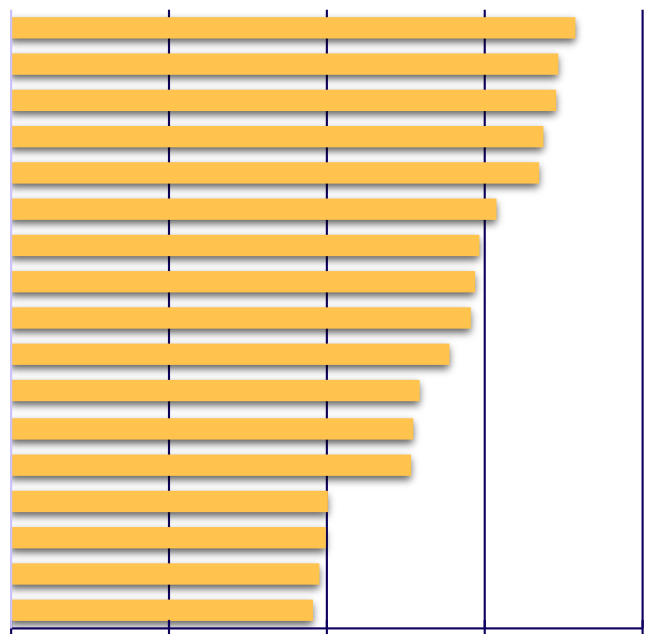
Percent Reporting a Decrease

- Social connectedness (75.8%)
- Emotional well-being (73.6%)
- Motivation to get things done (72.6%)
- Mental focus/concentration (64.6%)
- Physical activity (57.4%)
- Financial security (52.5%)
- Physical health (45.1%)
- Access to food/supplies (43.1%)
- Access to healthcare (34.9%)

How important have the following been for you in coping with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?



- Limiting in-person contact
- Focusing on work or school
- Telecommuting/distance learning
- Cooking/eating
- Using social media
- Connecting with family/friends electronically
- Creating a daily routine to establish a "new normal"
- Exercising
- Pursuing creative interests
- Cleaning/home improvement
- Using telehealth resources
- Limiting social media or news exposure
- Monitoring the news
- Meditating
- Participating in online support groups/chat rooms
- Stockpiling supplies
- Drinking or using drugs



Not important Slightly important Moderately important Very important Extremely important



"Work Life Balance: Large Decrease. Stress related to work: Large Increase."
 "Trying to get a degree in a pandemic feels like trying to dig yourself out of quicksand with a spoon."
"I feel like I'm suffocating in my house."
 "...working from home has greatly decreased my stress. Even without being able to go out I feel I have more freedom now... I am realizing how unnecessary a 40 hour workweek is."