The 2023 Delaware Epidemiological Profile

Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues:

Tobacco and E-Cigarettes (Vaping)
The Delaware 2023 Epidemiological Profile: Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues

is prepared for

Director Joanna Champney and the
Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
&
The Delaware State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup

The annual Delaware State Epidemiological Profile is a valuable data resource for strategic planning, decision-making, and evaluation. The report includes modules that highlight indicators of mental health and wellbeing, patterns of substance use and its consequences, and risk and protective factors for people in Delaware. The report also highlights crosscutting issues that warrant attention as well as populations that may experience disproportionate risk for these concerns.

This module is part of a series of materials. To review the Annual Epidemiological Profile Companion Guide (which includes data notes), modules on additional topics, downloadable slides, and infographics, please visit the UD Center for Drug and Health Studies Delaware Epidemiological Reports page. Links to presentations referenced in the annual profile are available from the Presentations webpage.

The SEOW is facilitated by a team at the Center for Drug and Health Studies at the University of Delaware that convenes a network of more than 100 representatives from approximately 55 state and nonprofit agencies, community organizations, advocacy groups, and other entities. The SEOW’s mission is to bring data on behavioral health and associated issues to the forefront of prevention and treatment efforts in Delaware. To learn more, please visit the What is the SEOW? webpage.

The annual Delaware Epidemiological Profile is a publication of the Delaware State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) project. Funding for the SEOW has been provided by the Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health through funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Please address all inquiries to M.J. Scales, MPH, CPS, University of Delaware Center for Drug and Health Studies, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice: mjscales@udel.edu.
Tobacco and Electronic Cigarettes (Vaping)

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Tobacco and Electronic Cigarettes (Vaping)

Over the decades, increased knowledge about the risks of smoking has greatly reduced tobacco use. However, despite significant declines, more than 16 million Americans have at least one disease caused by smoking, which costs the U.S. billions of dollars annually (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.). Yearly, almost one in five deaths in the U.S. are linked to tobacco, and these deaths are entirely preventable (CDC, 2020). More recently, “vaping” or the use of electronic cigarettes, has become a national concern, particularly among young people.

Just as rates of smoking have declined in the U.S., rates of smoking have also declined in Delaware since the 1990s. But those who continue to smoke and vape continue to experience associated health risks. According to the CDC, approximately 1,400 adults in the state die each year due to causes related to smoking. The CDC provided $1 million in fiscal year 2022 to Delaware for tobacco prevention and control activities (CDC, n.d.).

This module presents an overview of smoking behaviors in Delaware. The first part highlights tobacco use and the second part highlights rates of vaping. Data sources include:

- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)
- Delaware School Survey (DSS)
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
Cigarettes and Tobacco

National Survey on Drug Use and Health
The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) annually provides a report with U.S. estimates and state comparisons for major substance use and mental health indicators. Despite declining rates of tobacco use, according to the 2021 NSDUH, nearly one in five Delawareans aged 12 and older reported using a tobacco product during the past month and approximately 17% reported past month cigarette use. The rate was lowest among the youngest respondents, with less than 3% of those aged 12 to 17 reporting past month tobacco use. Rates were highest among those aged 26 and older, at nearly 22%. Overall, nearly 72% perceived a great risk of smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Total 12 or Older</th>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AGE GROUP</td>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>18-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past month tobacco product use</td>
<td>19.63</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>16.42</td>
<td>21.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past month cigarette use</td>
<td>17.14</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>13.14</td>
<td>19.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived great risk of smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day</td>
<td>71.55</td>
<td>61.62</td>
<td>69.82</td>
<td>72.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Tobacco/cigarette use and perceptions of risk in Delaware by age group, NSDUH 2021

Due to changes in the survey methodology made during the COVID-19 pandemic, NSDUH guidance advises against comparing data collected in 2020 or later with data collected in 2019 or earlier. As a result, the NSDUH estimates presented here are based on only one year of data (2021) rather than the typical combined two-year estimates and are considered preliminary. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): “Because 2021 state estimates are based on a single year of data, there is greater variance around the estimates than for the usual two-year estimates, particularly in small states and for uncommon outcomes.” Users of this data can visit the NSDUH State Data Tables for more documentation on methodology.

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1 Source: “2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Model-Based Prevalence Estimates (50 States and the District of Columbia).” Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

2 Estimates are based on a survey-weighted hierarchical Bayes estimation approach and generated by Markov Chain Monte Carlo techniques.

3 Tobacco products include cigarettes, smokeless tobacco (i.e., snuff, dip, chewing tobacco, or snus), cigars, or pipe tobacco.
The Delaware Department of Public Health participates in the annual Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a survey funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor trends in adult health behaviors. The following figures highlight BRFSS rates of cigarette smoking among adults in Delaware. (Additional health behavior data is available through the CDC’s interactive data portal.)

In 2021, approximately 13.4% of adults reported that they were current smokers (defined as smoking a cigarette at least once in the last 30 days). Current smoking was more prevalent among males (15.9%) than females (11.1%). When looking at prevalence by race and ethnicity, multiracial non-Hispanic adults reported the highest rates (20%) and Hispanic adults reported the lowest rates (8.5%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Current Smoking Rate (in percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Adults who are current smokers by sex and race/ethnicity, BRFSS 2021

When comparing rates by age, smoking was most prevalent among the 35 to 44 year age group (21.2%). Smoking was least prevalent among those 65 and older.

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5 The prevalence estimate for current smoking among Asian non-Hispanic adults was not available because either the unweighted sample size for the denominator was less than 50 or the Relative Standard Error was >.03.

6 The prevalence estimate for current smoking among adults aged 18-24 was not available because either the unweighted sample size for the denominator was less than 50 or the Relative Standard Error was >.03.
There also appear to be associations between rates of smoking and levels of educational attainment. In general, adults who completed higher levels of education were less likely to report smoking. Approximately one in 20 college graduates in Delaware reported past month smoking in 2021, compared to one in five adults with less than a high school education.

It is important to note that while there is a statistical association between these factors, this does not necessarily mean that there is a causal relationship between them; in other words, we cannot say that one factor causes the other, and there may be other conditions that also influence the association. This holds true for all of the associations discussed in this report.
Delaware School Survey (DSS)\(^8\)

The Delaware School Surveys (DSS) are state-funded annual surveys administered to 5\(^{th}\), 8\(^{th}\), and 11\(^{th}\) grade public school students throughout Delaware. There are two versions of the survey, one for 5\(^{th}\) grade students and a secondary version for 8\(^{th}\) and 11\(^{th}\) graders. The DSS are designed to provide estimates of youth substance use and related factors including smoking and vaping. DSS data are used for National Outcomes Measures as well as state and local program planning and evaluation. The charts in this section highlight select data from the 2022 DSS. (For more information or to review the survey questionnaires and earlier reports, visit the DSS page of the University of Delaware Center for Drug and Health Studies website. Due to the data gap in 2020 as well as the changes in the methodology for the 2021-2022 administration related to the COVID-19 pandemic, results of the 2022 DSS should be compared with caution to previous survey results.\(^9\))

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![Cigarette Use by Grade, DSS 2022 (in percentages)](chart.png)

Figure 5: Cigarette use by grade, DSS 2022

According to the 2022 DSS, relatively few students report using cigarettes. One percent of 11\(^{th}\) grade students indicated they had smoked in the past month. Past year rates were slightly higher, with 3% of 11\(^{th}\) graders and 1% of 8\(^{th}\) graders reporting they had smoked cigarettes in the past twelve months. Two percent of 5\(^{th}\) grade students reported that they had smoked at least once in their lifetime.\(^{10}\)

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\(^9\) For more information regarding pandemic impacts on school survey data collected by CDHS, readers can refer to the Companion Guide accompanying this report.

\(^{10}\) The numbers of 5\(^{th}\) grade students who reported past year use and past month use, and the number of 8\(^{th}\) grade students who reported past month use are below our threshold for data reporting (less than 30 students) and as a result those statistics are not included in the graph (Figure 5).
Due to the low numbers of students reporting cigarette use, it is not possible to report differences by gender for the younger students or the rates of use among students who describe themselves as nonbinary.\textsuperscript{11} There were no differences by gender in the rate of past year cigarette use for 11\textsuperscript{th} grade students.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{cigarette_use_gender.png}
\caption{Cigarette use by gender, 11\textsuperscript{th} grade, DSS 2022 (in percentages)}
\end{figure}

Both the 5\textsuperscript{th} and Secondary versions of the DSS ask students about their perceptions of risk from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes daily. Across all grades, half or less than half of students perceive this as a great risk. Only 38\% of 8\textsuperscript{th} graders perceive this as a great risk, compared to 50\% of all 5\textsuperscript{th} grade and 54\% of all 11\textsuperscript{th} grade students. In general, girls and nonbinary students had slightly higher perceptions of risk.

\textsuperscript{11} In the 2022 DSS Secondary survey, students are asked to identify their gender as boy, girl, nonbinary, or to self-describe their gender. Data reported from the DSS by gender here reflects three primary categories (boy, girl, and nonbinary/self-describe) and students’ responses are reported by their self-identified gender. As a result, the categories of “boy” and “girl” may include both cisgender and transgender students. For more detailed information about nonbinary and transgender students in the DSS, please visit the module on Gender and Sexuality.

\textsuperscript{12} Cigarette use by gender is not reported for 5\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} grade students because the numbers of students who report smoking in these grades are too few to break down further by gender. Similarly, the number of 11\textsuperscript{th} grade students of all genders who report past month cigarette use, and nonbinary students who report past year and lifetime cigarette use, are also below the threshold for reporting (less than 30 students). For more information, please see the \textit{Companion Guide} that accompanies this report.
Perceived "A Lot of Risk" From Smoking One or More Packs of Cigarettes Daily, 5th Grade, DSS 2022 (in percentages)

Figure 7: Perception of risk from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes daily, 5th grade, DSS 2022

Perceived "Great Risk" From Smoking One or More Packs of Cigarettes Daily, 8th and 11th Grade, DSS 2022 (in percentages)

Figure 8: Perceptions of risk from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes daily, 8th and 11th grade, DSS 2022
Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)\textsuperscript{13}

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a CDC-funded questionnaire that is administered in odd-numbered years to both national and state samples of students. The survey monitors various topics of health risk behaviors, including cigarette use and vaping. Delaware has participated in these surveys for over 20 years. Here we report findings from the 2021 Delaware YRBS among middle and high school students.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{High school students who tried cigarette smoking before age 13 years, YRBS 2021 (in percentages)}
\end{figure}

According to the 2021 YRBS, one in 20 high school students had tried cigarette smoking before age 13.

High school students also reported a 3\% rate of past month smoking, which was similar to the rate reported by 11\textsuperscript{th} grade students on the 2022 Delaware School Survey. Females were more likely to report smoking than males (4\% and 2\%, respectively), and the rates increased from 1\% among 10\textsuperscript{th} graders to 5\% among seniors.

In 2021, overall, 4\% of middle school students reported that they had ever tried cigarettes. Less than 1\% of middle school students reported smoking in the past month on the 2021 YRBS.


\textsuperscript{14} Until the 2023 YRBS data is analyzed, comparisons of the 2021 data to previous data should be avoided, as findings from the 2021 data may be an exception to ongoing trends. For a more detailed description of pandemic impacts on data collection as it pertains to the YRBS, please refer to the Companion Guide to the Epidemiological reports.
Figure 10: High school students who currently smoked cigarettes, YRBS 2021

Figure 11: Middle school students who ever tried cigarettes, YRBS 2021

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Current smoking is defined by the YRBS as at least one day during the 30 days before the survey.
Electronic Cigarettes and Vaping

While the decline in cigarette use in Delaware is positive, there has been troubling concern over the past decade regarding the use of e-cigarettes or vaping devices for both youth and adults. A preference for vaping over cigarettes may be due to the perception of these products as safer alternatives to cigarettes. Vaping prevention has been a focus of a number of state and community-based initiatives which may have contributed to reported declines in use in recent years (Center for Drug & Health Studies at the University of Delaware, 2022). It will be important to continue to monitor vaping as well as all forms of tobacco use in the future.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)\textsuperscript{16}

The following figures highlight the Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) findings regarding adult vaping and electronic cigarette use. (Additional health behavior data is available through the CDC’s interactive data portal.)

In 2021, approximately 6.1\% of adults reported that they were current e-cigarette users\textsuperscript{17}. Current e-cigarette use or other electronic vaping was slightly more prevalent among males (6.9\%) than females (5.4\%). When looking at the prevalence by race and ethnicity, 7.1\% of white non-Hispanic adults reported current e-cigarette use.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Current e-cigarette use is defined as using e-cigarettes or other electronic vaping products every day or some days.
\item The prevalence estimates among all other racial and ethnic groups are not available because either the unweighted sample size for the denominator was less than 50 or the Relative Standard Error was >0.3.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
When comparing rates by age group, vaping was most prevalent among 18 to 24 year-old adults (13.6%) and declined among older groups. Use was least prevalent among the 65 and older age group (1.4%).

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19 The prevalence estimate for current use among adults aged 45 to 54 was not available because either the unweighted sample size for the denominator was less than 50 or the Relative Standard Error was >0.3.
Similar to cigarette use, there also appear to be associations between rates of vaping and levels of educational attainment. In general, adults who have attained higher levels of education are less likely to report vaping. In 2021, approximately 3.6% of college graduates in Delaware report currently using e-cigarettes compared to 9.4% of adults with less than a high school education.

![Adults who are current e-cigarette users by educational attainment, Delaware 2021 BRFSS](image)

**Figure 14:** Adults who currently use e-cigarettes by educational attainment, Delaware 2021 BRFSS

*in percentages*
The Delaware School Survey (DSS)\textsuperscript{20} also includes questions regarding e-cigarette use and vaping in both the 5th and Secondary versions.

According to the 2022 DSS, vaping is more prevalent than traditional cigarette use among Delaware youth at all grade levels. Nearly one in four 11th grade students report that they used an e-cigarette or vaping device at some point in their lifetime, and 10\% reported current or past month use. One in 20 8th graders also reported vaping in the past month and 9\% reported vaping in the past year. Four percent of 5th graders had vaped at least once in their lifetime, with 2\% reporting past year use.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure15.png}
\caption{Electronic cigarette and vaping device use by grade, DSS 2022}
\end{figure}

Among 8th grade students, girls were more likely to report vaping in the past month (7\%) or past year (3\%) than boys. However, one in five students who identified as nonbinary reported lifetime use, the highest of all gender groups in 8th grade.

\textsuperscript{20} Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2022). \textit{Delaware School Surveys}, University of Delaware. (Due to the data gap in 2020 as well as the changes in the methodology for the 2021-2022 administration related to the COVID-19 pandemic, results of the 2022 DSS should be compared with caution to previous DSS survey results.)

\textsuperscript{21} The number of 5th grade students who reported past month vaping does not meet the threshold for data reporting (less than 30 students) and therefore is not included in Figure 15.
Eleventh grade girls were also more likely to report past month, past year, and lifetime vaping compared to other students.\textsuperscript{23}

According to the 2022 DSS findings, a majority of both 8\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} grade students do not believe that vaping poses a great risk. Only one in five 8\textsuperscript{th} graders and fewer than one in three 11\textsuperscript{th} graders reported that they perceive great risk associated with use of e-cigarettes or other vaping devices. Eleventh grade

\textsuperscript{22} In the 2022 DSS Secondary survey, students are asked to identify their gender as boy, girl, nonbinary, or to self-describe their gender. Data reported from the DSS by gender here reflects three primary categories (boy, girl, and nonbinary/self-describe) and students’ responses are reported by their self-identified gender. As a result, the categories of “boy” and “girl” may include both cisgender and transgender students. For more detailed information about nonbinary and transgender students in the DSS, please visit the module on Gender and Sexuality.

\textsuperscript{23} The numbers of students who identify as nonbinary in the 8\textsuperscript{th} grade who reported past month and past year vaping as well as those in 11\textsuperscript{th} grade who reported past month, past year, and lifetime vaping do not meet the threshold for data reporting (30 or more) and are not included in Figures 16 and 17.
girls were more likely to perceive such risk (36%) compared to boys (26%) and nonbinary students (27%), which is interesting given that they were also more likely to report vaping.

Figure 18: Perceptions of risk from electronic cigarette/vaping device use, 8th and 11th grade, DSS 2022 (in percentages)

Figure 18: Perceptions of risk from electronic cigarette/vaping device use, 8th and 11th grade, DSS 2022
Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)$^{24}$

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is another measure that gathers data on e-cigarette use among Delaware high school and middle school students. The following figures highlight findings from the 2021 survey.$^{25}$

In all, one-third of Delaware high school students reported that they had used an electronic vapor product at least once in their lifetime. The rates increased with age, with 26% of 9th graders and 44% of 12th graders reporting lifetime use. Similar to findings in the 2021 Delaware School Survey, females were more likely to report vaping (39%) compared to males (28%). Eighteen percent of high school respondents indicated that they had vaped within the past month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total  | 33         |

Figure 19: High school students who ever used electronic vapor products$^{26}$, YRBS 2021

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$^{25}$ Until the 2023 data is analyzed, comparisons of the 2021 data to previous years’ data should be avoided, as findings from the 2021 data may be an exception to ongoing trends. For a more detailed description of pandemic impacts on data collection as it pertains to the YRBS, please refer to the Companion Guide to the Epidemiological reports.

$^{26}$ Electronic vapor products are defined in the YRBS as including e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods, such as JUUL, SMOK, Suorin, Vuse, and blu.
Nearly one in ten middle school students reported that they had used an e-cigarette or other vape product at least once in their lifetime, and 4% reported that they had vaped in the past month. Similar to high school findings, rates were higher among females and increased with grade levels.

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27 Current use is defined by the YRBS as at least one day during the 30 days before the survey.
Policy Update

In September 2023, the Governor signed into law HB 118 which is intended to reduce health risks related to secondhand smoke. The bill “…adds Smoking Restrictions within vehicles if a person under the age of eighteen (18) is in the vehicle….” The law became effective on September 20th, 2023.

Figure 22: Middle school students who currently used electronic vapor products, YRBS 2021

Middle School Students Who Currently Used Electronic Vapor Products, YRBS 2021 (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</table>
References and Data Sources


Delaware General Assembly. (n.d.) Retrieved from https://legis.delaware.gov/AllLegislation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2023). “2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Model-Based Prevalence Estimates (50 States and the District of Columbia).”