

Nebraska Youth Substance Data

The state data provided in this article was derived from the 2021 Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey (NRPFS).

The Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey (NRPFS) collects data from participating schools throughout Nebraska. One main goal of NRPFS is to collect school district and community level data to help local communities and their school districts understand and address substance use/abuse issues within their communities and schools. The NRPFS overall state data helps create a broader picture and awareness into the levels of substance use, risk, protective factors, and delinquent behavior among students throughout Nebraska.

With that being said, it should be noted that the 2021 surveyed student rate for Nebraska was much lower than the level recommended for representing students statewide; therefore, the state-level results should be viewed with that in mind.

The tables in this article are not a complete compilation of all the substances and behavioral health trends/concerns surveyed. For a more detailed and full report of NRPFS, you can go to <https://bosr.unl.edu/nrpfss-state-level-data>.

The table below represents the percentage break-outs by grade, as well as State/NE and National percentages of lifetime and current/past 30 day reported use of alcohol, tobacco and electronic vaping devices.

State/Ne & Nation Percentages	Lifetime Alcohol Use	Current Alcohol Use	Lifetime Tobacco Use	Current Tobacco Use	Lifetime Electronic Vapor Use	Current Electronic Vapor Use
State/Ne 8 th Grade (2021)	28.3%	9.2%	7.9%	2.2%	14.1 %	6.9%
Nation 8 th Grade (2021)	21.7%	7.3%	Not Provided	Not Provided	17.5%	8.9%
State/Ne 8 th Grade (2018)	28.4%	9.8%	8.9%	3.7%	17.7%	10.4%
State/Ne 10 th Grade (2021)	42.6%	18.2%	12.5%	3.5%	25.4%	14.3%
Nation 10 th Grade (2021)	34.7%	13.1%	Not Provided	Not Provided	29.7%	15.6%
State/Ne 10 th Grade (2018)	44.3%	20.1%	17.5%	8.0%	37.6%	24.7%
State/Ne 12 th Grade (2021)	58.3%	31.9%	19.5%	6.5%	38.7%	21.0%
Nation 12 th Grade (2021)	54.1%	25.8%	Not Provided	Not Provided	38.7%	24.0%
State/Ne 12 th Grade (2018)	62.0%	34.2%	30.7%	15.3%	52.3%	37.3%

Even though there is no data provided on the National percent of youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade for tobacco use, we can see that the use of tobacco among Nebraska youth continues to decline. And while vaping remains a concern and is considered problematic within our schools, the table also shows a decline in use of electronic vaping devices from 2018 to 2021, and Nebraska youth report use below the National average for each of the grade levels.

Furthermore, the data collected and shown in this table reveals the reported use of alcohol has also declined from 2018 to 2021 among our youth. However, it is as equally important to note that

Nebraska youth continue to report higher percent usage among each grade level than the National average.

The table below represents the percentage break-outs by grade, as well as State/NE and National percentages of lifetime and current/past 30 day reported use of marijuana, prescription misuse and inhalant use.

State/Ne & Nation Percentages	Lifetime Marijuana Use	Current Marijuana Use	Lifetime Prescription Misuse	Current Prescription Misuse	Lifetime Inhalant Use	Current Inhalant Use
State/Ne 8 th Grade (2021)	4.8%	2.2%	4.1%	1.7%	5.1 %	Not Provided
Nation 8 th Grade (2021)	10.2%	4.1%	Not Provided	Not Provided	11.3%	Not Provided
State/Ne 8 th Grade (2018)	6.0%	3.0%	2.3%	1.0%	4.6%	Not Provided
State/Ne 10 th Grade (2021)	15.2%	7.6%	5.5%	1.6%	4.1%	Not Provided
Nation 10 th Grade (2021)	22.0%	10.1%	Not Provided	Not Provided	7.2%	Not Provided
State/Ne 10 th Grade (2018)	16.7%	7.3%	4.3%	1.4%	3.6%	Not Provided
State/Ne 12 th Grade (2021)	27.0%	12.5%	5.1%	1.7%	3.1%	Not Provided
Nation 12 th Grade (2021)	38.6%	19.5%	8.8%	2.1%	5.0%	Not Provided
State/Ne 12 th Grade (2018)	29.9%	13.9%	8.1%	4.2%	4.4%	Not Provided

Nebraska 8th graders report lower use of marijuana but higher misuse of prescription drugs and lifetime use of inhalants from 2018 to 2021. However, 10th graders almost across the board reflect a completely different picture as their reported use from 2018 to 2021 showed increases in all areas except lifetime use of marijuana. There are many factors to consider why this has occurred, one being the impact of the pandemic and how it may have caused a more difficult transition from middle school to high school for students. For 12th graders, lower use was reported for all areas from 2018 to 2021.

Of course, it is worth noting that while Nebraska 10th graders report increases from 2018 to 2021, they still remain below the national average.

The table below shows the percent of students who in 2021 reported driving and/or riding with someone in the last 30 days who had been drinking.

Grade Level	Drove Vehicle when had Been Drinking	Rode in Vehicle Driven by Someone who had Been Drinking
8 th Grade	1.0%	17.6%
10 th Grade	1.8%	14.3%
12 th Grade	5.9%	13.5%

While the percent of students who reported that they had driven while they had been drinking alcohol is relatively low, we should acknowledge that almost all 8th graders and many of the 10th graders were not legally able to drive. However, when we look at the percent of students who report riding with someone had been drinking, those numbers are exponentially higher.

It is important to recognize 32 people die from alcohol-impaired driving accidents every day. That equates to about every 45 minutes, someone dies in the United States as a result of alcohol-impaired

driving. And it should also be noted that the risk of being involved in a crash is greater for young people than for older people.

The table below shows the percent of students who reported driving and/or riding with someone in the last 30 days who had used marijuana.

Grade Level	Drove Vehicle when had used Marijuana	Rode in Vehicle Driven by Someone who had used Marijuana
8 th Grade	0.9%	4.9%
10 th Grade	3.0%	8.9%
12 th Grade	6.8%	10.4%

It is often been believed by youth that it is safer to use marijuana and drive than it is to use alcohol and to drive and this table appears to support that misconception as more students who are of age to drive in 10th and 12th grade report driving after they used marijuana.

The table below shows the percentage of students in 2021 who reported they believe it is wrong or very wrong to use the listed substances:

Grade Level	Smoke Cigarettes	Drink Alcohol Once or Twice a Month Alcohol	Use Marijuana	Misuse Prescription Drugs	Use Other illegal Drugs
8 th Grade	94.4%	85.8%	93.1%	94.4%	98.6%
10 th Grade	88.9%	69.3%	77.6%	92.1%	96.4%
12 Grade	80.5%	53.5%	64.3%	91.9%	95.4%

Note. *Percentage who reported how wrong they think different substance use/behaviors are based on the following scale: Very wrong, Wrong, A little bit wrong, Not wrong at all.

While at times it seems like our messages to youth about alcohol and other drugs falls on deaf ears, the table above reveals a very different truth. Youth not only hear the messages about drug use but they believe those messages.

The table below represents the Perceived* & Actual Current/Past 30-Day substance use in 2021 of students surveyed:

Grade Level	Perceived Smoked Cigarettes	Actual Smoked Cigarettes	Perceived Used/Drank Alcohol	Actual Used/Drank Alcohol	Perceived Used Marijuana	Actual Used Marijuana
8 th Grade	11.6%	1.2%	13.7%	9.2%	8.7%	2.2%
10 th Grade	17.2%	1.8%	30.4%	18.2%	21.2%	7.6%
12 Grade	17.3%	3.8%	37.6%	31.9%	26.3%	12.5%

*Perception based on following question: "Now thinking about all the students in your grade at your school. How many of them do you think: <insert substance use behavior> during the past 30 days?"

The table above appears to dispel the "common belief" by youth that everybody or almost everybody (students) in their school use/drink alcohol and smoke marijuana.

And while the perceived use reported is higher than the actual use reported, the perceived use is still far below a majority percentage. This also strongly suggests that most youth don't truly believe that most youth are drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana.

<https://bosr.unl.edu/nrpfss-state-level-data>
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunken-driving>