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

- **Female** 83.2%
- **Male** 19.1%
- **Non-binary*** 1.5%
- **Prefer not to say** 3.2%

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

### Race and Hispanic Ethnicity

*categories are not mutually exclusive

- **White** 83.2%
- **Black/African American** 8.1%
- **Asian** 6.5%
- **Nat. American/Alaska Nat.** 2.6%
- **Nat. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander** 0.7%
- **12.5% Hispanic/Latinx**

### School & Employment Status

*categories are not mutually exclusive

- **Full-time student** 43.7%
- **Part-time student** 9.9%
- **Full-time employed** 30.9%
- **Part-time employed** 28.6%
- **Stay-at-home parent** 1.8%
- **Not employed, looking** 10.9%
- **Not employed, not looking** 3.3%

### Age

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

- **11.2%**
- **12.4%**
- **15.0%**
- **10.9%**
- **15.0%**
- **10.9%**
- **11.8%**
- **12.8%**

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

For more information about the Young Adults Statewide Survey, contact: sussman@uchc.edu
Young Adults Statewide Survey
A behavioral health survey of Connecticut young adults 18-25

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

65%

Depression
n=1088

“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.”

47%
reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks in a row, so that it interfered with work, life, or relationships

47%

Suicide
n=1089

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

19%
reported making a suicide plan

19%

37%
reported attempting suicide

37%

46%
reported receiving mental health help/support

46%

In the past year...

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

“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Lifetime</th>
<th>Past Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy alcohol*</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes/tobacco</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana/hashish</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vape/e-cigarettes</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin/fentanyl</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rx/OTC**</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**O TC= over-the-counter

#### Substances used in vaping devices

- Flavored liquids: 59%
- Nicotine: 58%
- THC/marijuana oils: 51%
- CBD/hemp oil: 23%

(n = 452)

#### 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have a good time</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal w/ mental health issues</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort in social situations</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends were doing it</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape my problems</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimentation</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel better about myself</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for Limiting Substance Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical/ health concerns</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative life impacts</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs too much</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance issues (self/family)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/ peer disapproval</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's illegal</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against values</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication interactions</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

“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 are statistically significant.

**Gambling**

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

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 are 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."
Young Adults Statewide Survey
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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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Slightly important</th>
<th>Moderately important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limiting in-person contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focusing on work or school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telecommuting/distance learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooking/eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using social media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecting with family/friends electronically</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a daily routine to establish a &quot;new normal&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pursuing creative interests</td>
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<td>Cleaning/home improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using telehealth resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limiting social media or news exposure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring the news</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meditating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in online support groups/chat rooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stockpiling supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drinking or using drugs</td>
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</table>

"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."

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