



Deep Dive Into

Substance Use Disorder and Health Coaching



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Executive Summary

Substance use disorder is a growing epidemic in the U.S. As of 2021, an estimated 46.3 million people (or 16.5% of the population) meet the criteria for having a substance use disorder (SUD), which is defined as the compulsive and harmful use of substances, despite negative consequences.

SUD is complex, and encompasses issues with both legal substances—like alcohol and tobacco—as well as illegal substances like heroin, cocaine and even newer, synthetic compounds. This report explores alarming statistics around substance use in the US, exploring statistics around alcohol, tobacco, and legal and illegal opioid substance use disorders and their rapidly growing rates across the country.

In addition to presenting important data, this report emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing SUD, which includes prevention, early intervention, treatment, and ongoing support. Health coaches can and do play an important role in this process by working with individuals who are at risk for or have developed SUD, helping them pioneer positive lifestyle changes, manage symptoms, and access necessary care. Moreover, health coaches can work alongside patient care teams or in collaboration with other healthcare professionals to help clients enact critical health improvements on a day-to-day and long-term basis.

Studies strongly suggest that health & wellness coaching can be an effective tool in lowering levels of substance dependence, reducing alcohol and nicotine consumption, improving medical adherence, achieving behavior changes such as increased physical activity and improved nutrition, decreasing anxiety and depressive symptoms, and improving self-acceptance and overall well-being.

What Is a Substance Use Disorder?

When discussing substance use disorder, a “substance” is defined as any psychoactive compound that has the potential to cause health and social problems, including addiction. Substances are both legal, like alcohol and tobacco, or illegal which may include heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and more, with new, synthetic substances cropping up regularly.

Substances can be arranged into seven classes depending on their pharmacological and behavioral effects. These include:



Nicotine



Alcohol



Cannabinoids



Opioids



Depressants



Stimulants



Hallucinogens

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) redefined substance use disorder for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). What was once commonly referred to as substance abuse and substance dependence, separately, now fall under the larger umbrella of substance use disorder.

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a complex medical condition that occurs when the use of a substance becomes uncontrolled and continues despite harmful negative consequences. This could be anything from missing work or school to physical health issues, destruction of personal relationships, and more.

According to the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, a person must exhibit at least two signs in the symptom section for over 12 months to be diagnosed with substance use disorder. Four or more signs indicate a moderate or severe substance use disorder.

What Is a Substance Use Disorder?

The symptoms of SUD vary depending on the substance used, but some common signs and symptoms include:

- Cravings or strong urges to use a given substance
- Tolerance, which is needing more of a substance to achieve the same effect
- Withdrawal symptoms when not using the substance
- Using larger amounts or for a longer period than intended
- Difficulty cutting down or stopping substance use
- Spending a lot of time obtaining, using, or recovering from the effects of the substance
- Continued substance use despite negative consequences on health, work, relationships, or other areas of life
- Giving up important activities or interests in favor of substance use
- Using the substance in hazardous situations, such as while driving
- Developing a physical dependence on the substance.

In substance use disorder, substance use persists even when an individual knows it's causing them—or their loved ones—harm now or in the future. This makes substance use disorder a highly complex health condition, with profound physical, mental and emotional health effects and often long, complex journeys to recovery.

The State of Substance Use Disorder in the U.S.

■ Data:

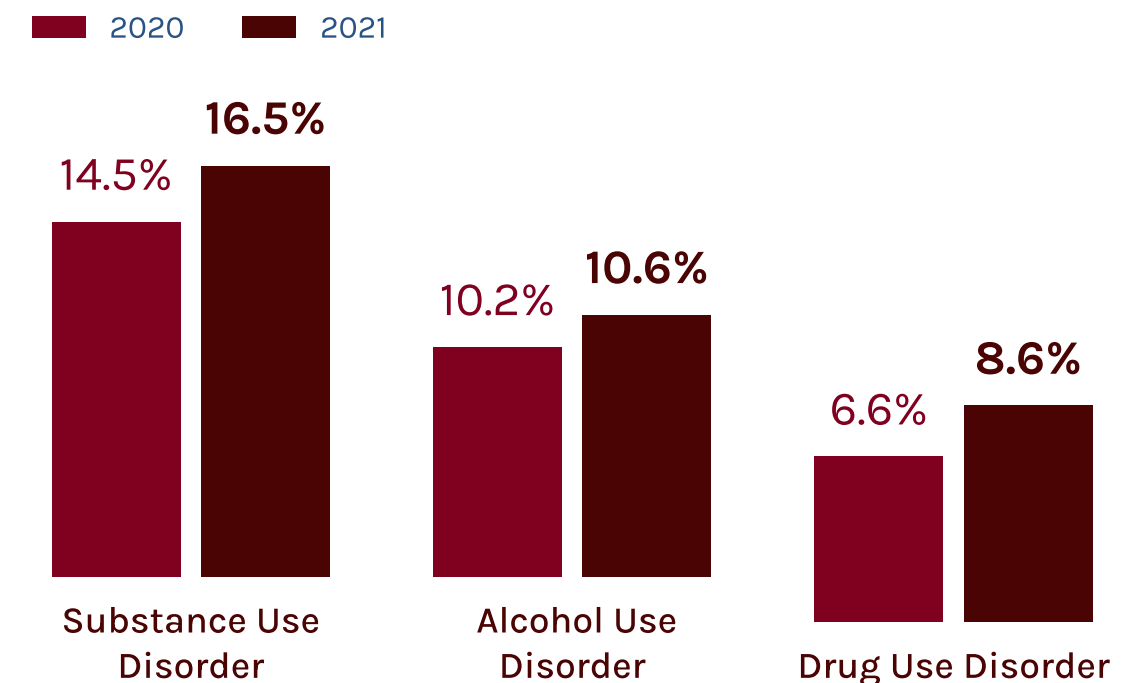


Nearly 1 in 5 American adults struggles with substance use disorder.

According to a [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#) conducted by [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#), 46.3 million people aged 12 or older (or 16.5% of the population) met the criteria for having a substance use disorder. This data includes 29.5 million people who were classified as having an alcohol use disorder and 24 million people who were classified as having a drug use disorder.

These numbers are only increasing year over year—potentially exacerbated by post-pandemic pressures and stressors. The percentage of people who were classified as having a substance use disorder and drug use disorder is significantly higher compared with 2020 data.

Substance Use Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorder, and Drug Use Disorder in 2020 vs 2021: Among People Aged 12 or Older



Source: [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) and [2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

The State of Substance Use Disorder in the U.S.

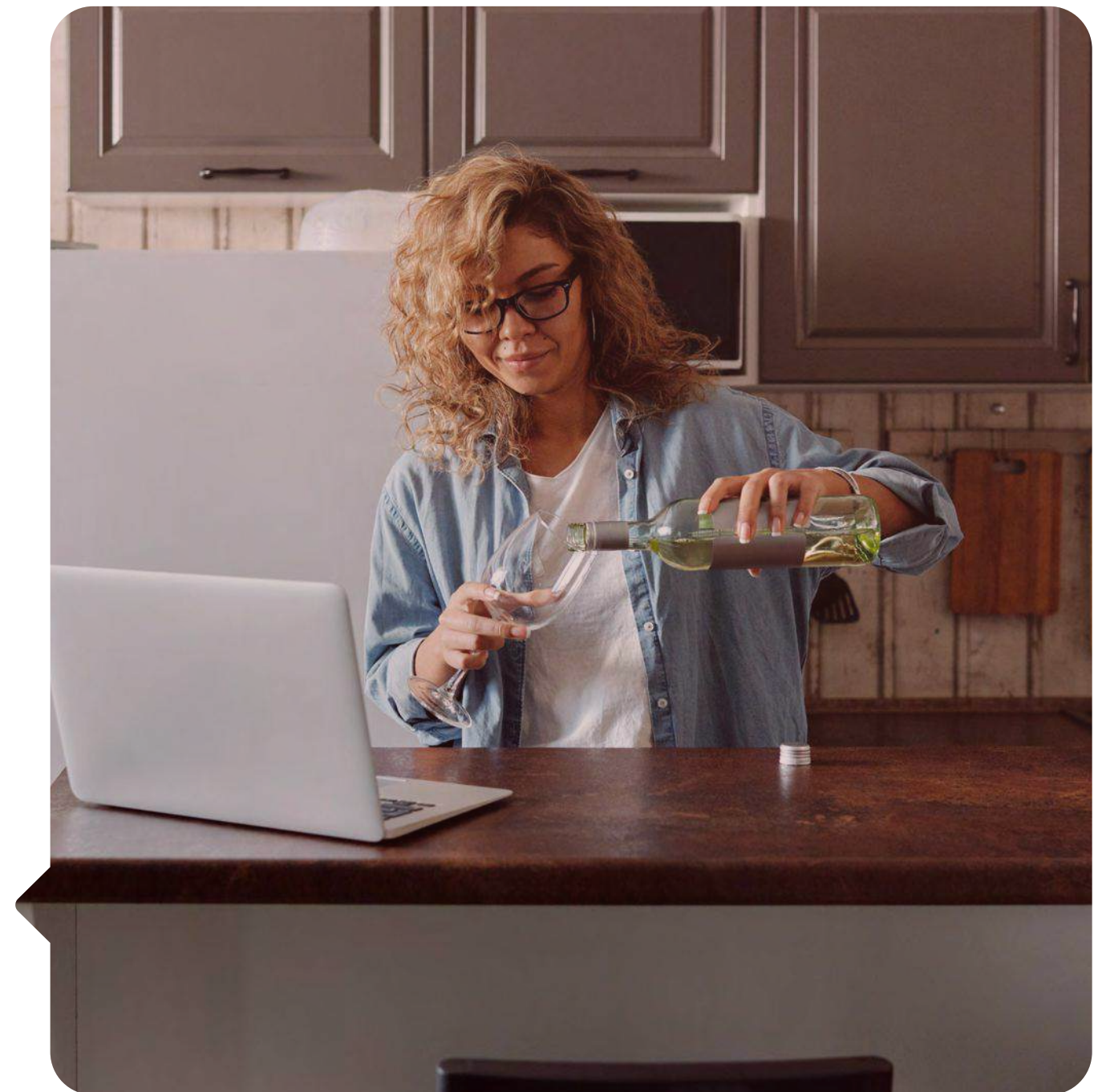
Unsurprisingly, research shows young adults are the most vulnerable group. The percentage of people who were classified as having a substance use disorder in the past year, including alcohol use and/or drug use disorder, was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 compared to those under 18 and adults 26 and older.

■ Data:

Substance use disorder costs the U.S.

\$400 billion

annually due to productivity losses in the workplace, health care expenses, law enforcement, and other criminal justice costs, according to the [Connecticut report](#).

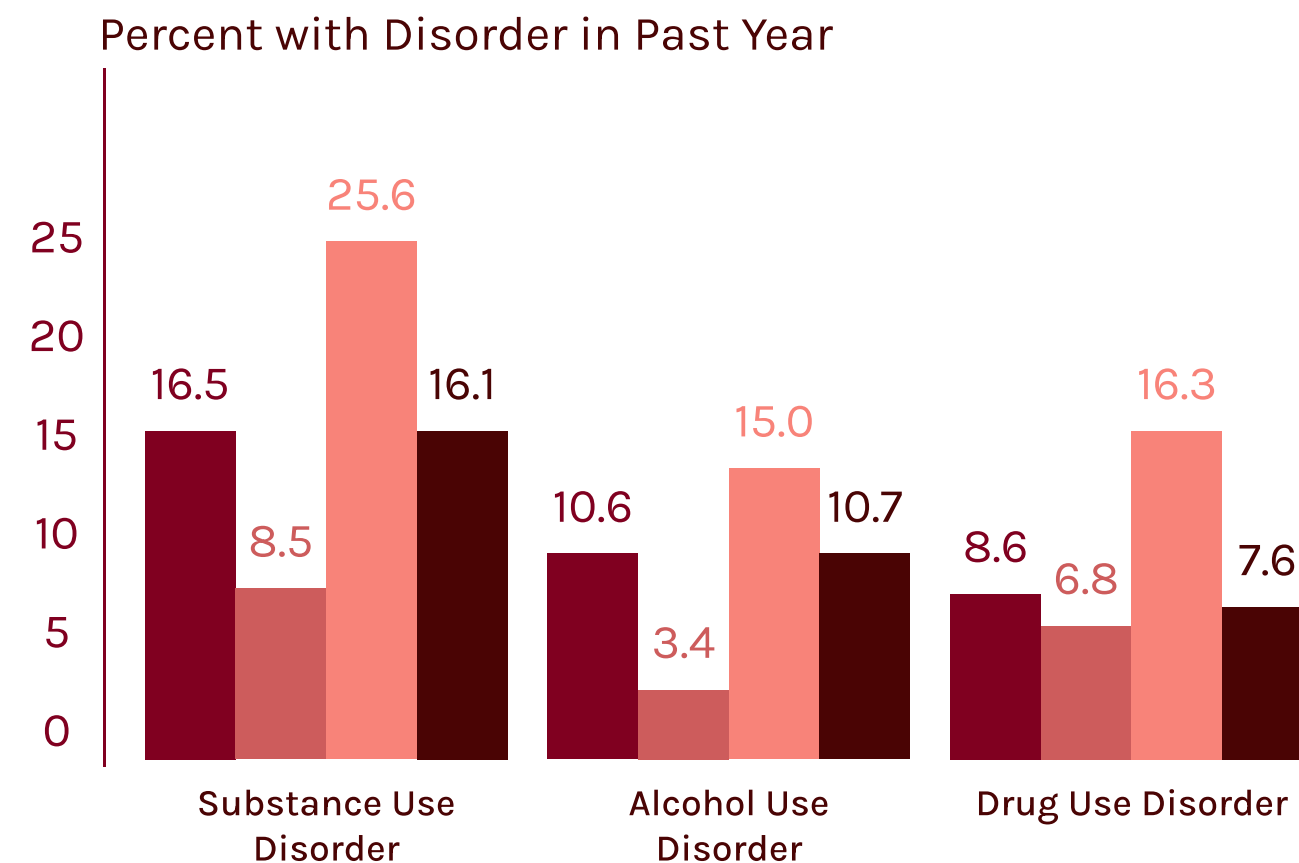


The State of Substance Use Disorder in the U.S.

Substance Use Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorder, and Drug Use Disorder Age Groups Comparison

2021 Survey results

Age Category: 12 or Older 12 to 17 18 to 25 26 or Older



Source: [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health1](#) - Includes data from all past year users of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, methamphetamine, and prescription psychotherapeutic drugs (i.e., pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, or sedatives)

Substance misuse and substance use disorders are estimated to cost Americans at large billions of dollars each year in healthcare and criminal justice costs, as well as productivity losses across workplaces.

Furthermore, studies suggest that treatment interventions can produce massive savings. These studies show that every dollar spent on substance use disorder treatment saves \$4 in health care costs and \$7 in criminal justice costs, while helping individuals reach recovery.

The Effect of Substance Use Disorder On Health

Taking various drugs may cause:

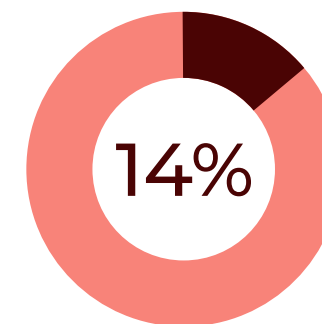
- 1 | Changes in coordination
- 2 | Blood pressure and heart rate changes
- 3 | Feelings of being more awake or sleepy
- 4 | Changes in appetite
- 5 | Changes in the appearance of a person's body

Substance use disorder (SUD) can have a significant impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing. The effects vary heavily based on the type of substance used, the duration of use, the frequency of use and the individual's overall health.

Physical health effects of SUD can include:

- 1 | Damage to organs such as the liver, heart, and lungs
- 2 | Increased risk of infections and diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C
- 3 | Chronic pain and inflammation
- 4 | Nutritional deficiencies and malnourishment
- 5 | Increased risk of accidents and injuries

■ Data:

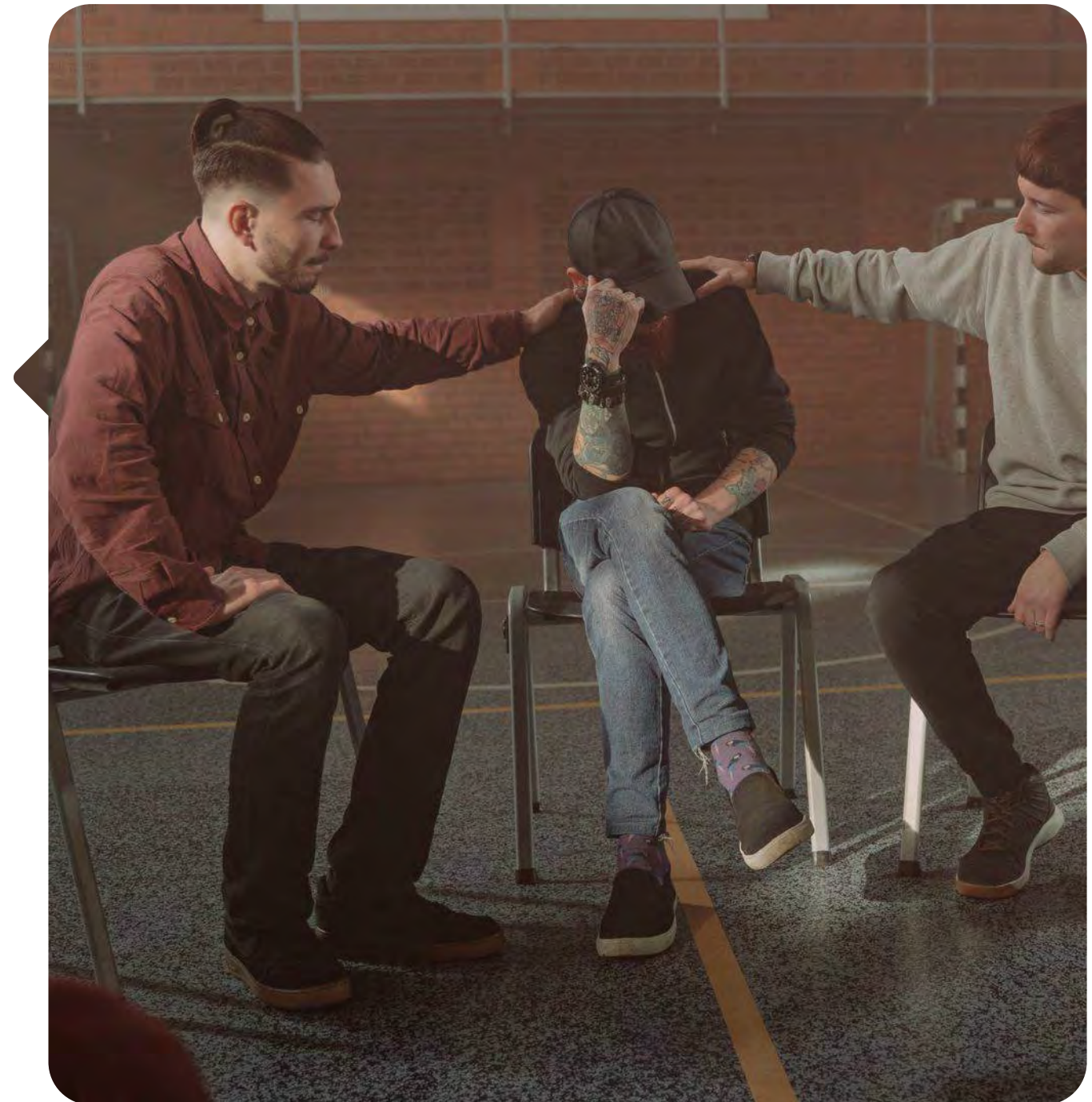


of young adults aged 18 to 25 had both a substance use disorder and a mental illness in the year prior to 2021 survey.

The Effect of Substance Use Disorder On Health

Substance use disorder is a [treatable](#) medical condition, and recovery is possible with treatment and support. A family doctor, psychiatrist, or qualified mental health professional can help diagnose substance use disorder and recommend the right treatment plan.

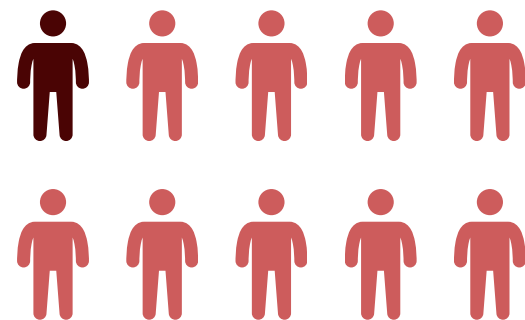
There are a variety of [treatment options](#) available for substance use disorders, including medication, behavior therapy, support groups, and inpatient and outpatient treatment. Successful treatment for SUD often involves a combination of approaches, tailored to an individual's specific needs and circumstances. Detoxification (if needed, based on the substance) and long-term follow-up management or recovery-oriented systems of care are important fixtures of successful treatment.



Alcohol Use Disorder And Its Prevalence in the U.S.

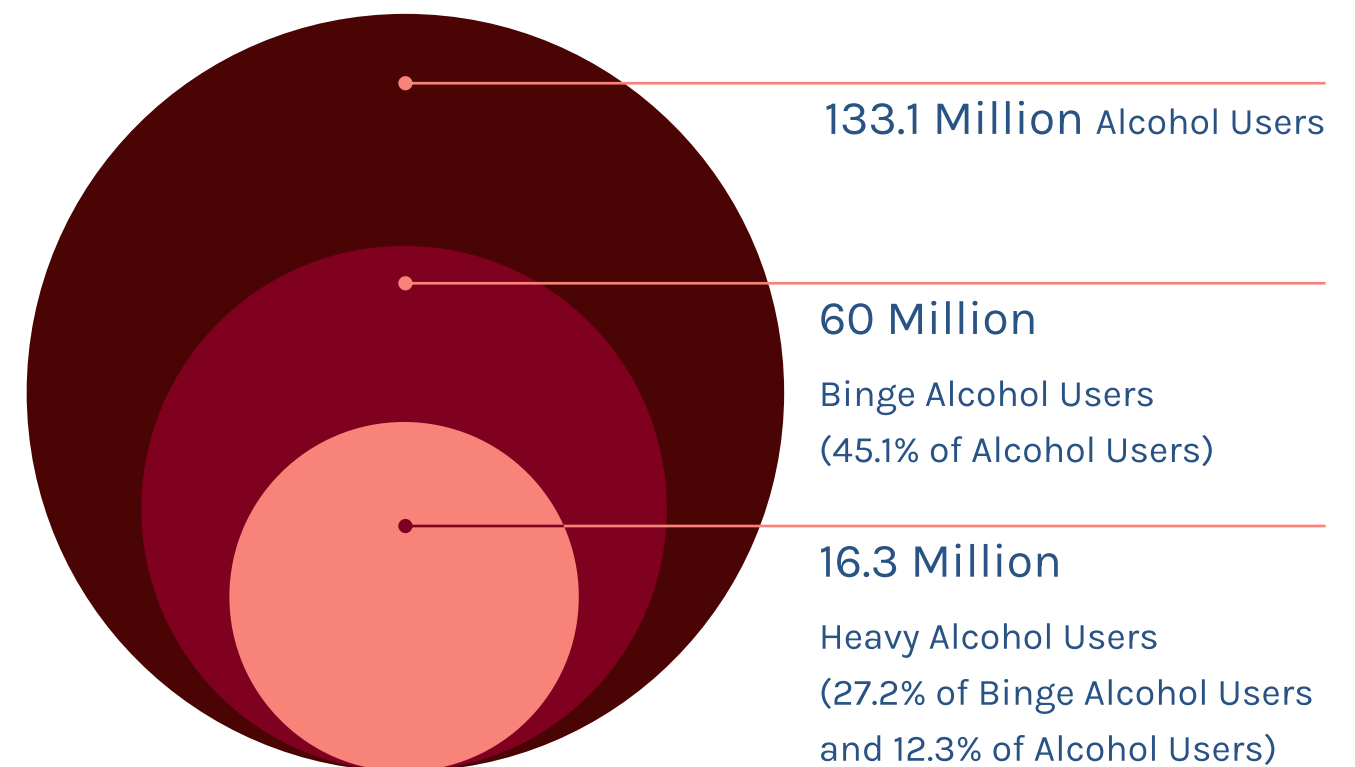
Alcohol is one of the most commonly used (and misused) substances in the US. In 2021, 84% of people aged 18 and older report that they've consumed alcohol at least once in their lives.

Data:



One in 10 American adults has an alcohol use disorder.

In the United States, binge drinking is the most common and costly pattern of excessive alcohol use. Among 133 million people who drank alcohol in the month prior to the 2021 survey, almost half (45%) meet the criteria of binge or heavy alcohol users. Research finds that binge drinking is more common among men than women and among younger adults, aged 18-25.



Source: [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

Insight: Binge drinking is defined as having at least 5 drinks for men or 4 drinks for women in around 2 hours, while heavy drinking is defined as binge drinking on 5 or more days in a given month.

Alcohol Use Disorder And Its Prevalence in the U.S.

Unsurprisingly, research shows young adults are the most vulnerable group. The percentage of people who were classified as having a past year substance use disorder, including alcohol use and/or drug use disorder, was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 compared to those under 18 and adults 26 and older.

■ Data:

Excessive alcohol use costs the US

\$249 billion

annually or \$2.05 per drink

Alcohol abuse, alcoholism, and alcohol use disorder (AUD) kill more than 140,000 people in the US each year. Each day, 385 Americans die as a result of excessive alcohol use.

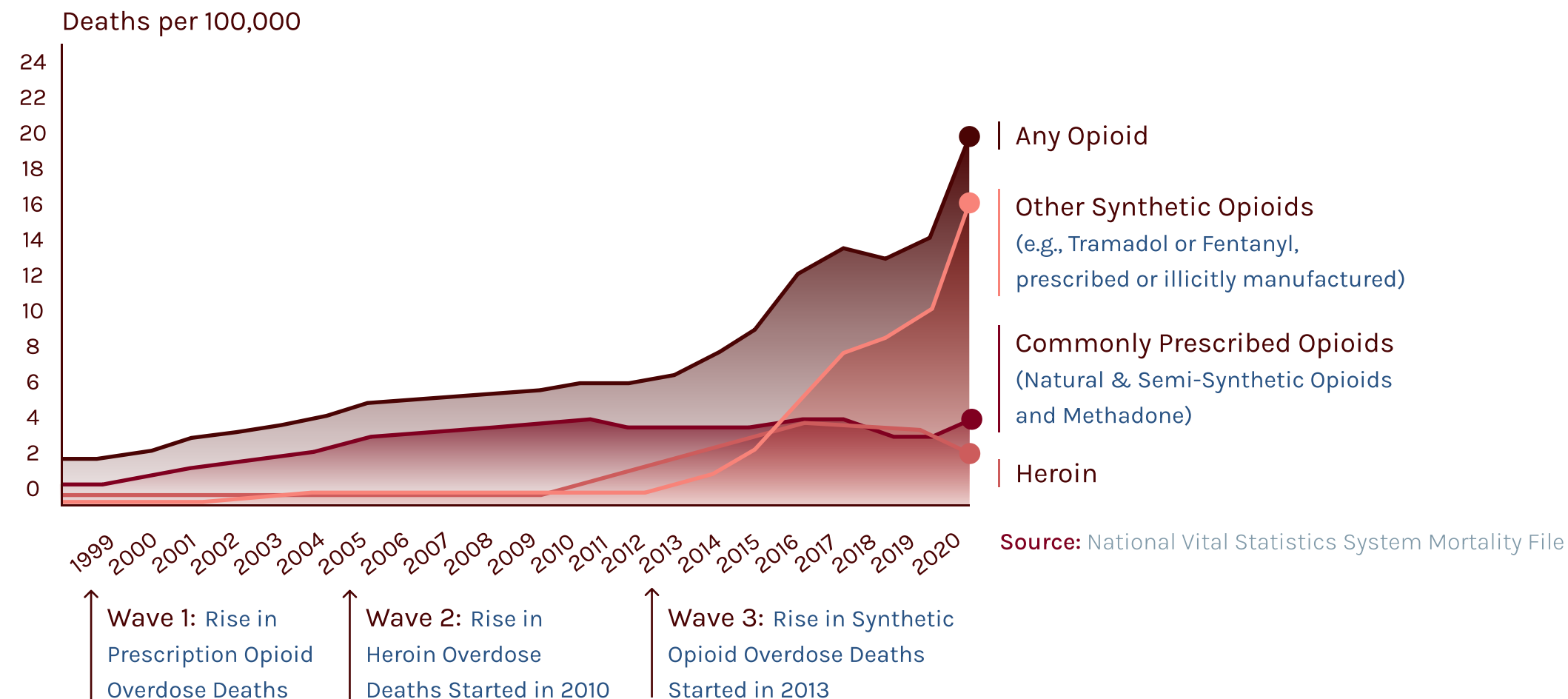
Excessive alcohol use is associated with an increased risk of injuries, chronic diseases such as liver disease and heart disease, cancers, increased anxiety, depression, and poor pregnancy outcomes. Even small amounts of alcohol can reportedly have serious effects on physical and mental health. A recent study found that even low drinking levels slightly increase the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease, and the risk increases dramatically for people who drink excessively.

Insight: An analysis of data from more than 36,000 adults, conducted in March 2022, found that going from one to two drinks a day was associated with changes in the brain equivalent to the effect of aging 2 years. Heavier drinking was linked with an even greater toll.

Opioid Crisis and Drug Use Disorder in the U.S.

As of today, the United States is experiencing one of its worst-ever drug crises, which hasn't shown signs of slowing down. The crisis began in the late 1990s when pharmaceutical companies began aggressively marketing prescription opioids to doctors, leading to a widespread increase in opioid prescriptions. This catalyzed a surge in addiction and overdose-related deaths, particularly among low-income and rural communities.

Three Waves of Opioid Overdose Deaths

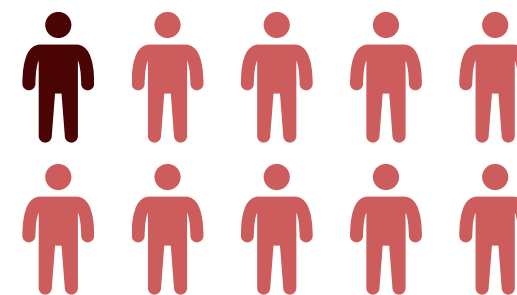


Opioid Crisis and Drug Use Disorder in the U.S.

The third wave of this crisis, which began in 2013, is associated with significant increases in overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids, particularly illegally-manufactured fentanyl. These synthesized opioids are created in a lab to mimic the effects of natural opiates such as morphine and are developed to be stronger and more potent than natural opiates.

Prescription opioids are meant to be used to treat acute pain (that might follow surgery or injury recovery), chronic pain, active-phase cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care. Many people rely on prescription opioids to help manage conditions under the care of a physician. However, opiates and opioids are narcotics, and misuse can easily lead to opioid use disorder and/or addiction.

■ Data:



Nearly 1 in every 10 adult Americans has a drug use disorder.

Not everyone who takes prescription drugs develops a use disorder, especially when taken on a short-term basis. However, this particular drug is highly addictive - a person is at risk of developing an addiction to opioids after just 5 days of taking a pain reliever, which causes a sharp increase in the likelihood that a person will use the drug long term.

Opioid use disorder is a pattern of opioid use that causes clinically significant distress or impairment. Opioid use disorder may involve physical and psychological dependence, where a person finds it difficult to adjust or eliminate their use despite social and professional consequences.

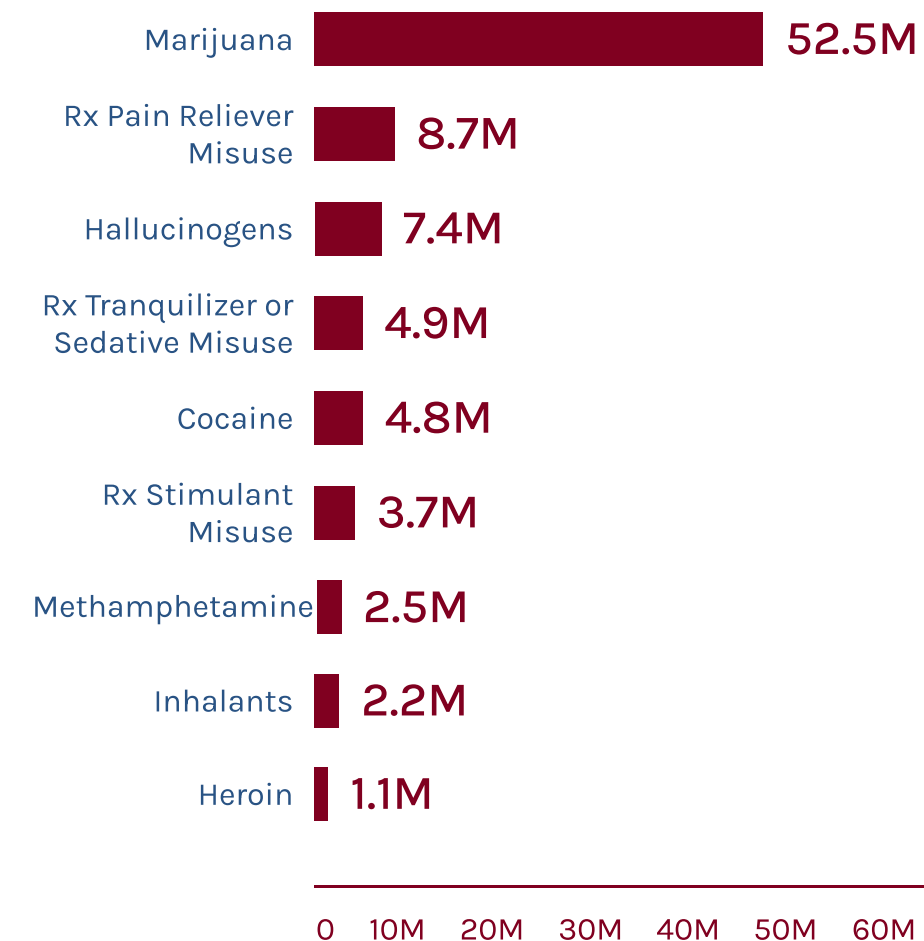
Opioid Crisis and Drug Use Disorder in the U.S.

Millions of people in the U.S. are living with opioid use disorder (OUD). According to the [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#), 24 million people in the U.S., or 8.6% of the population were classified as having a drug use disorder.

22% of adults reported using illicit drugs in the past year, including marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, methamphetamine, and prescription psychotherapeutic drugs (i.e., pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, or sedatives).



The Number Of Past Year Users Of Illicit Drugs Among People Aged 12 or Older



Source: [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

Opioid Crisis and Drug Use Disorder in the U.S.

Overdosing is a leading injury-related cause of death in the United States and appears to have accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Opioids are responsible for more than 106,000 deaths in the U.S. last year.

Drug use disorder can have a profound impact on an individual's life, causing not only physical and psychological harm but also affecting their relationships, career prospects, and overall well-being, and can often require professional treatment to overcome.

■ Data:

Illicit drug use costs the U.S. economy

\$193 billion

annually due to productivity losses, health care expenditures, criminal justice costs, and other expenses.

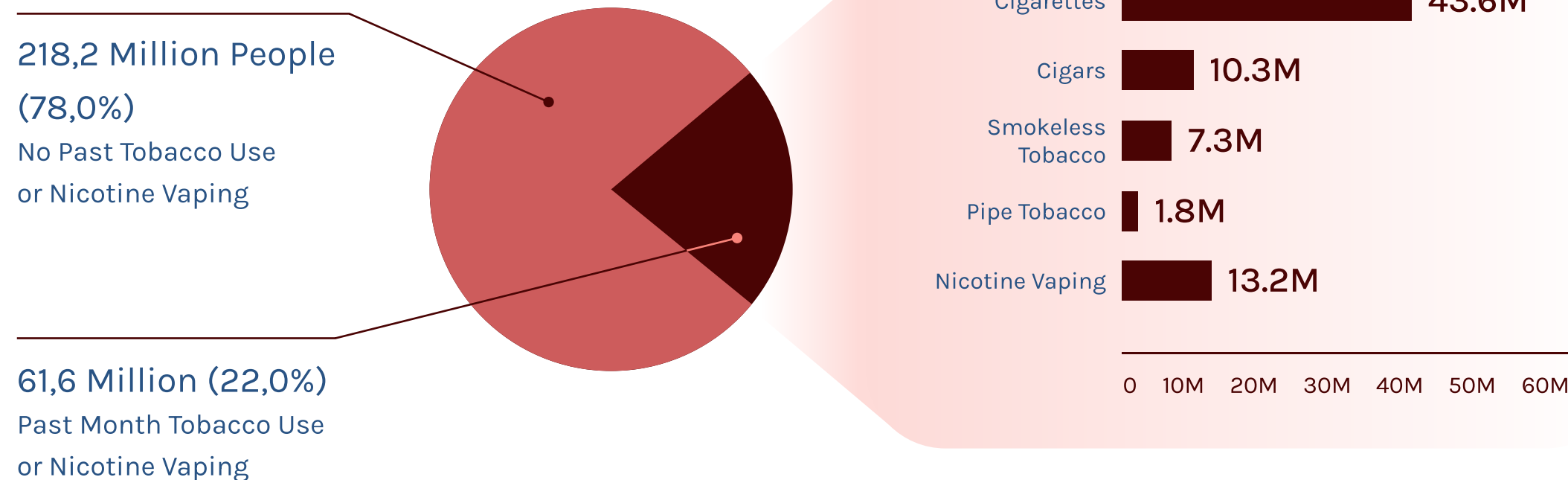


Tobacco Use Disorder And The Vaping Epidemic

Tobacco use and misuse are significant public health concerns in the United States, and have been for decades. Tobacco use is a pervasive public health problem and the leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality, responsible for nearly 480,000 deaths annually in the United States.

Tobacco misuse encompasses a range of behaviors, including smoking cigarettes or using other tobacco products, such as chewing tobacco or nicotine vaping. In 2021, 61.6 million or 22% of US adults aged 12 years or older reported tobacco or nicotine vaping use 12 months prior to the study.

Tobacco Use and Nicotine Vaping Among American Adults Aged 12 or Older



Source: [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

Tobacco Use Disorder And The Vaping Epidemic

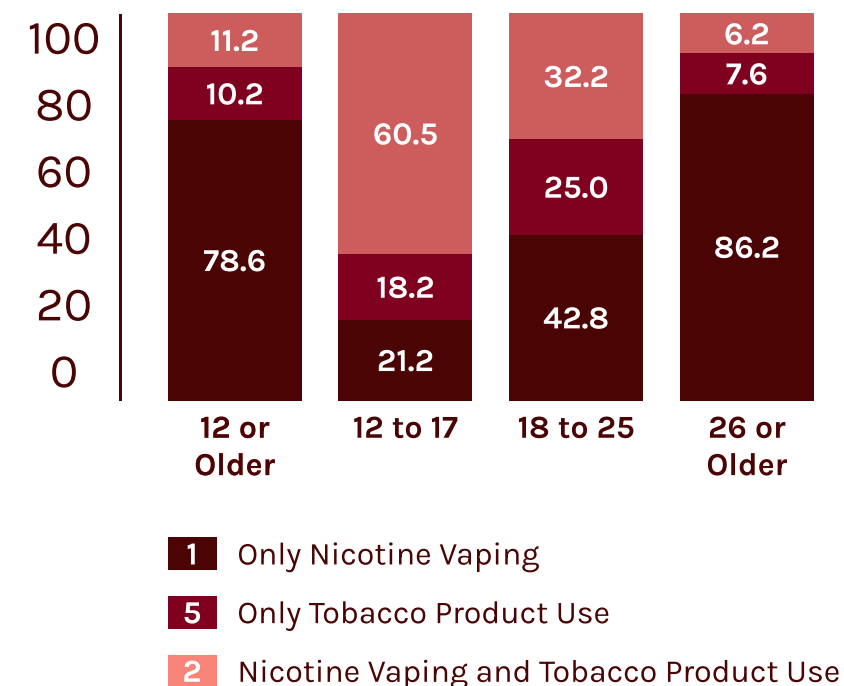
The United States is seeing an explosive rise in nicotine vaping and the renormalization of smoking, especially among adolescents. The consumption of vaping products became so popular among adolescent populations, that the last near-decade has become known as “the vaping epidemic”.

Data shows that e-cigarettes are now the most frequently used tobacco product among younger generations. The percentage of people who vape nicotine is the highest among young adults aged 18 to 25, followed by adolescents aged 12 to 17.

Studies show an obvious and crucial fact: almost all (88%) adult smokers who start before the age of 18 have difficulty quitting successfully.

Type of Past Month Tobacco Use and Nicotine Vaping Among Nicotine Product Users Aged 12 or Older

Percent Using in Past Month



Source: [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

Tobacco Use Disorder And The Vaping Epidemic

Alarming, one in ten adolescents use e-cigarettes within five minutes of waking up, a recent [study](#) has found. Sustainable tobacco abuse can lead to tobacco use disorder, which is characterized by the compulsive and harmful use of tobacco products, such as cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and nicotine vaping. It occurs when an individual continues to use tobacco despite its negative impact on their physical health, social life, and emotional well-being.

■ Data:

Smoking-related illnesses [cost](#) the United States

\$600 billion

annually.

The effects of tobacco use disorder can [include](#):

- 1 | Nicotine addiction
- 2 | Increased risks of chronic diseases, ex. [heart attack](#) or lung cancer
- 3 | Reduced [life expectancy](#) and quality of life
- 4 | Respiratory problems, such as asthma and bronchitis
- 5 | Nausea
- 6 | Weight loss
- 7 | Fertility problems
- 8 | Hearing and vision loss
- 9 | Dental problems
- 10 | Diminished social life and social isolation
- 11 | Increased rates of anxiety and depression

How Health Coaches Can and Do Help

Health coaching uses an evidence-based approach that can be leveraged to manage, prevent or improve ongoing health conditions and support overall health and wellbeing. At the heart of health coaching is a holistic approach, which considers the person as a whole, rather than focusing on an individual illness or health concern.

Health coaches maintain a client-centered approach, wherein the client is the expert and chooses their goals, engages in self-discovery or active learning processes, and self-monitors behaviors to increase accountability, all with the support and help of the health coach, until the desired outcome is achieved. Instead of telling clients what they should or shouldn't do, coaches help clients discover their own power and path to change using science-backed techniques and methodologies.

Although health coaches **can and do work alongside patient care teams or in collaboration with other health care professionals** to help clients enact health change day-to-day, it's important to understand their scope of practice.



A Health Coach is **NOT** ...

✗ A health coach is NOT a Nutritionist or Dietitian

Health coaches can help clients establish action plans for generalized healthy eating behaviors, whereas nutritionists and dietitians can prescribe meal plans and give specific nutritional advice to clients according to their medical needs or goals.

✗ A health coach is NOT a Doctor

Health coaches can not diagnose or prescribe. Health coaches are integral members of the health and care team and work with patients in helping them reach their health & wellness goals and adhere to a plan prescribed by their doctor.

✗ A health coach is NOT a Personal Trainer

While health coaches encourage physical activity, they focus on many other aspects of a person's wellbeing including emotional and mental wellness. They do not typically create fitness regimens in the same way that personal trainers do. However, some health coaches do hold fitness certifications and can help those who are seeking both a health coach and a personal trainer.

✗ A health coach is NOT a Therapist

Health coaches don't need to be therapists or psychologists, and great coaches don't try to mimic what a mental healthcare professional does. These professionals can complement one another and often work together.

A Health Coach **is** ...

- ✓ A highly skilled and certified professional
- ✓ Knowledgeable in human behavior, motivational techniques and health outcomes
- ✓ A change agent helping clients set and achieve health goals and build new habits
- ✓ Trained in helping a client maintain a positive and healthy mindset while working towards health and wellness goals by focusing on their strengths



How Health Coaches Can Help:

Setting goals

Health coaches can help clients set realistic goals for lifestyle changes, such as improving diet, increasing physical activity, quitting smoking, and reducing drinking. They can work with clients to develop a plan for achieving these goals, and provide motivation and support throughout the process.

Coordinating care

Proficient in asking the right questions, coaches can guide individuals to the right resources within the health and care team which includes physicians, therapists, nurses, social workers and others.

Overcoming stress and anxiety

Health coaches can work with clients to identify triggers that may contribute to stress and anxiety, and help individuals develop strategies to manage or avoid these triggers. They can also help individuals build healthy coping mechanisms and resilience to overcome setbacks.

Offering education and resources

Health coaches can provide information on addiction, recovery, and resources available to individuals with substance use disorders. This can include information on support groups, treatment options, and other community resources that can aid in recovery.

Providing emotional support

Health coaches can serve as a listening ear for individuals struggling with addiction, offering empathy, support, and guidance through challenging times. They can also assist individuals in developing a support network, such as family, friends, or support groups, to provide ongoing support and encouragement.

Encouraging accountability

Health coaches can help individuals in recovery to stay accountable to their goals by providing regular check-ins, setting goals, and tracking progress. This can help individuals stay motivated and committed to their recovery.

The Science of Health Coaching

The latest studies on health & wellness coaching support just how valuable health coaching can be in improving smoking cessation successes, positive nutrition and exercise behaviors, medication adherence, and overall mental well-being and also reducing alcohol consumption and nicotine dependence and lowering anxiety levels.

Prevention & Reducing Consumption of Alcohol Use

A systematic review of peer recovery support services showed that those who struggle with alcohol abuse experienced reduced substance use, better recovery outcomes, and lower relapse rates when working with a health coach.

A pre-post study on the acceptance and effectiveness of a digital health coaching program for adolescents found that the proportion of students who engaged in binge drinking was significantly reduced from 33% at baseline to 24% at follow-up. Furthermore, the maximum number of alcoholic drinks consumed on an occasion and the mean number of standard drinks consumed per month were decreased after 10 weeks of online health coaching.

A recent pilot study on health coaching effectiveness for patients with alcohol use disorder reported a decrease between 50% and 60% in self-reported weekly alcohol use among coaching participants. The results were confirmed by clinical evidence from biomarkers: patients' blood was tested at the beginning and the end of the study on alcohol use.

The Science of Health Coaching

Nicotine & Tobacco Cessation

According to [a compendium of health & wellness coaching literature](#), half of the studies on smoking cessation reported positive changes for coaching participants. One study revealed that those who worked with a health & wellness coach showed a higher quit rate than those receiving health education alone.

[A fundamental study](#) on tobacco cessation and the impact of health coaching showed that participation in health coaching programs brought the success rate to 73% with the highest quit rate (77%) after 6 months of participation.

A recent [randomized controlled trial](#), published in March 2023, found that those who participated in health coaching interventions reduced their cigarette smoking by at least 50% more than the control group.

Another [pilot study](#) showed that Nicotine Dependence Index scores (a measure of nicotine use) of participants who received wellness coaching decreased significantly compared to the control group, indicating a lower level of nicotine dependence.

A behavioral health intervention program [Adolescent Counseling Technology \(ACT\)](#) delivered via a virtual health educator for youth showed a 34% decrease in the use of nicotine products after 1 month of participation, and 44% reduction after 3 months.



US Market Map: SUD Solutions

Below is just a small sampling that has been compiled by our friends at HealthXL of digital health, virtual care and digital therapeutic companies delivering solutions related to substance use disorders

OPIOID USE DISORDER







SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER









ALCOHOL USE DISORDER













SMOKING CESSATION







Global Expertise in Digital Health
Join the HealthXL global digital health community. Understand trends, get deep market intel, and build better business models with experts by your side.

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About YourCoach

[YourCoach.Health](#) is the only operating system for behavior change, powered by health coaches. Our industry partners entrust us to stand up or augment their health coaching operations utilizing our APIs, widgets and tech-augmented army of validated and credentialed health coaches to surround their existing product or service. We're the premier virtual home for health and wellness coaching, an ecosystem built to empower health coaches while expanding access to their services through our industry partnerships. Join us on the Health Coaching Revolution as we strive to deliver the power of health coaching to the 8.5 billion global population by 2030.



Our mission

By the year 2030 our mission is for the projected 8.5 billion people in the world to have access to Health Coaches, creating even more Happy and Healthy Humans.

Health Coaching
Industry Report V2.0



We are here for you!

We stand up, scale and operate best-in-class health coaching services for the health and care industry via our easily and seamlessly embedded technology, powered by the largest army of validated health and wellness coaches. If you are a health and care company looking to integrate or scale health coaching around your product or service, we are here for you!

