

OBSERVATIONS ON YOUTH SMOKING AND DRUG USE TRENDS (2020 – 2024)

GENERAL TRENDS AND METRICS

1. **Mental Health Trends (2020–2024):** A decline in average mental health scores was observed from 2020 (5.54) to 2022 (5.40), followed by a recovery peaking at 5.52 in 2023. However, it slightly dipped again to 5.47 in 2024. This indicates fluctuating mental health trends among youth over the years.

2. **Smoking Prevalence by Age Group:** Smoking is most prevalent in the **25–29 age group (28.7%)**, with notable decreases in prevalence among younger and older age groups. Youth aged 20–24 (27.8%) also show high smoking rates.

3. **Drug Experimentation by Age Group:** Experimentation is consistent across most age groups, with **youth aged 15–24** showing higher engagement compared to older age groups.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

4. **Media Influence by Age Group:** Media has the highest influence on the **15–19 age group**, decreasing with older age groups. This suggests that targeted media campaigns may disproportionately impact younger demographics.

5. **Peer Influence by Gender:** Peer influence is **higher among females (19K)** compared to males (18K), though the difference is marginal.

6. **Parental Supervision by Gender:** Supervision is **balanced**, with males receiving slightly higher supervision (35.7%) compared to females (34.2%).

7. **Access to Counseling by Age Group:** Counseling access increases progressively with age, peaking in the **25–29 age group (1K)**. Youth in younger age groups (15–19) may require increased focus on counseling opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MENTAL HEALTH TRENDS (2020–2024)

1. **Increased Mental Health Services:**

- Implement school-based mental health programs targeting early detection of mental health issues.
- Provide subsidized or free counseling services for vulnerable youth groups.

2. **Community Awareness Campaigns:**

- Organize workshops on mental health literacy to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behavior.
- Partner with media outlets to run awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of mental wellness.

3. **Crisis Support Systems:**

- Expand access to 24/7 hotlines and online mental health resources.

- Develop peer support networks to create safe spaces for discussing mental health challenges.

SMOKING PREVALENCE BY AGE GROUP

- 1. Age-Specific Campaigns:**
 - For **20–29 age groups**, run digital and social media campaigns focusing on the health risks of smoking and the benefits of quitting.
 - Emphasize real-life stories of recovery to motivate behavior change.
- 2. Accessible Quit Programs:**
 - Provide free or low-cost access to smoking cessation programs tailored for young adults.
 - Offer nicotine replacement therapies and virtual support groups.
- 3. Policy Interventions:**
 - Enforce stricter regulations on tobacco advertising targeting young adults.
 - Increase tobacco taxes to discourage purchases among economically active youth.

DRUG EXPERIMENTATION BY AGE GROUP

- 1. Education Programs:**
 - Integrate drug awareness into school curricula, focusing on the risks of drug use and long-term consequences.
 - Use interactive methods (e.g., role-plays and simulations) to strengthen the impact.
- 2. Community Engagement:**
 - Establish youth clubs or recreational centers offering healthy alternatives to drug experimentation.
 - Engage community leaders and influencers to spread anti-drug messages.
- 3. Early Intervention:**
 - Deploy screening tools in schools to identify at-risk individuals and provide early support.
 - Partner with local NGOs to ensure access to rehabilitation programs for youth experimenting with drugs.

MEDIA INFLUENCE BY AGE GROUP

- 1. Regulate Harmful Media Content:**
 - Work with regulatory bodies to limit depictions of smoking and drug use in TV shows, movies, and online platforms.
 - Increase positive content focusing on health, sports, and community building.
- 2. Leverage Media for Good:**
 - Create youth-focused social media campaigns to promote healthy habits and discourage risky behaviors.
 - Collaborate with influencers and content creators to spread anti-smoking and anti-drug messages.

PEER INFLUENCE BY GENDER

- 1. Peer Mentorship Programs:**
 - Train youth leaders to serve as positive role models and mentors for their peers, particularly among female groups.

2. Build Peer Support Networks:

- Encourage peer-led discussions about the dangers of smoking and drug use in schools and community groups.

3. Targeted Interventions:

- Tailor gender-specific campaigns that address how peer pressure influences risky behaviors differently for males and females.

PARENTAL SUPERVISION BY GENDER

1. Parental Engagement Workshops:

- Train parents to actively communicate with their children about the risks of smoking and drug use.
- Encourage balanced supervision for both genders, emphasizing the importance of being involved in a child's social and academic life.

2. Family-Based Interventions:

- Provide family counseling to improve relationships and reduce risks associated with unsupervised activities.

ACCESS TO COUNSELING BY AGE GROUP

1. Expand Counseling for Younger Age Groups:

- Place school counselors in high schools to ensure accessibility for adolescents.
- Create online counseling platforms targeting younger users with anonymous help options.

2. Awareness Campaigns:

- Promote counseling as a resource for coping with peer pressure and mental health challenges.

3. Incentives for Schools:

- Provide grants to schools that integrate robust counseling services into their support systems.

KEY AVERAGES (COMMUNITY SUPPORT, PEER INFLUENCE, ETC.)

1. Strengthen Community Programs:

- Enhance community-based initiatives such as mentorships, youth clubs, and awareness drives.
- Collaborate with local organizations to provide consistent support for youth.

2. Increase Peer Awareness Campaigns:

- Encourage positive peer behaviors by showcasing the benefits of rejecting smoking and drug use.

3. Incentivize Parental Involvement:

- Provide resources (e.g., workshops, guides) for parents to foster healthier relationships with their children.