



NEWSLETTER

MONITORING THE FUTURE - THE SENIOR CLASS OF 2021
DECEMBER 2021

We are sending this newsletter to give you a brief report on the Monitoring the Future study in which you took part last spring at school. As you may recall, the study is being conducted by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center.

This important study is designed to look at changing behaviors, attitudes and preferences of American youth. We believe that studying the way young people are like today will tell us a lot about the way the whole nation will be tomorrow.



THANK YOU!

Beginning with the class of 1975, about 17,000 seniors in over 125 high schools have participated in the Monitoring the Future study each year. Since 1991, the annual survey has included the views of about 17,000 8th graders and 17,000 10th graders. In addition, several thousand graduates continue to participate in the study each spring by filling out follow-up surveys.

The results of the study are used by policymakers at all levels of government to monitor progress toward some of the nation's health and education goals. Counselors, educators, other researchers, and the media also use the data from this study.

As you may recall, we collect the names and addresses of participants in 12th grade so that we can send newsletters about the study results and, in some cases, follow-up surveys. However, all identifying information is kept completely separate from the answers that each individual has provided. A special Grant of Confidentiality from the U.S. government guarantees our ability to keep all data completely confidential.



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Important Subject Areas Being Studied

Your responses to the Monitoring the Future questionnaires, along with those of your classmates, have provided us with helpful information on a great variety of topics, including:

- tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs
- health and happiness
- work and leisure
- education
- the environment
- politics
- social problems and social change
- major social institutions
- the military
- race relations

In order to keep the questionnaires short enough to complete in a class period, and yet cover a wide range of topics, six different questionnaire forms are used. You may see some topics in this newsletter that are not familiar to you, because they were not included in the questionnaire form you filled out.

Looking at Change

By sampling each high school class, and by following up a part of each sample after graduation, we can analyze four different kinds of change.

- 1) Change that happens from **one high school class year to another**. For example, we can learn how the most recent high school class is different from previous classes across a 30-year period.
- 2) Change that occurs **at the same time for all age groups**. For example, we can see whether a specific event, such as an energy crisis, affects everybody's opinions.
- 3) Change that occurs **as a result of growing older**. For example, we can learn whether people's attitudes change consistently during the years after high school.
- 4) Change that happens **as a result of different experiences that people have**—like getting married, working at a job, joining the military, or going to college or trade school.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illegal Drugs

While **alcohol** is the most widely used drugs among students of all grade levels, its use has been in a long term decline. In 2021 students in all grades reported the lowest ever levels of use over the life of the study.

Cigarette smoking has also been in a long term decline over the past two decades, and in 2021 the level of cigarette use in the past 30 days reached a historic low.

Vaping Nicotine has increased dramatically over the past few years, although it decreased in 2021. For two years in a row nicotine vaping had the highest annual increases ever recorded for any substance in 45 years of this study. In 2021 levels of any past year nicotine vaping decreased significantly. Even so, more adolescents vape nicotine than use any other tobacco product, in every grade we surveyed (8th, 10th, and 12th). Further, we followed up 12th grade e-cigarette users and found that they were about four times more likely to initiate smoking one year after high school than their schoolmates who had not used e-cigarettes.

Any lifetime vaping of the JUUL brand of e-cigarettes decreased in 2021, similar to the other vaping reports. The percent of 10th and 12th grade students vaping JUUL in the past year slightly increased. Over the past two years, JUUL was replaced by new brands that offered favorite flavors such as mint and fruits. JUUL voluntarily removed such flavors in 2020, in part as a response to MTF findings that these flavors were very attractive to youth.

Marijuana use among teens by any mode (e.g. smoking, vaping, eating, etc.) decreased in 2021 after remaining fairly stable since 2004. **Vaping marijuana** increased dramatically from 2017 to 2019. However 2021 saw a decrease in vaping marijuana in all three grades surveyed.

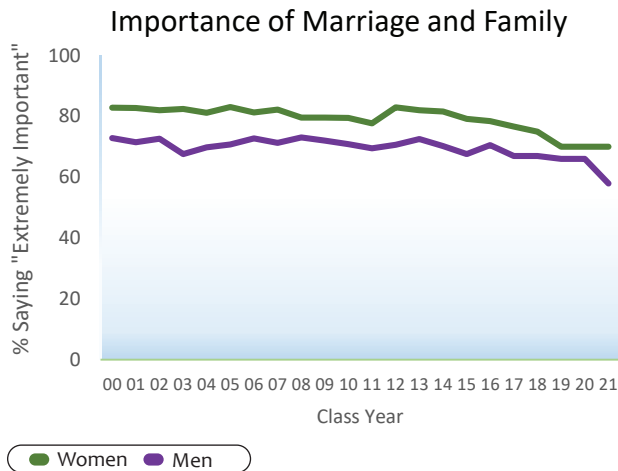
Since the mid-1990's most **illegal drug use** by 8th, 10th, and 12th graders had declined to low use and remained stable since 2018. In 2021 we have found that the percentage reporting any illicit drug for lifetime decreased significantly in all grades we surveyed.

Ecstasy use gained popularity with teens and young adults toward the end of the 1990s. After 2001, use of ecstasy fell appreciably as more people came to see its use as dangerous. In the last few years Ecstasy use is the lowest ever measured in the Monitoring the Future study.

Your Future Hopes

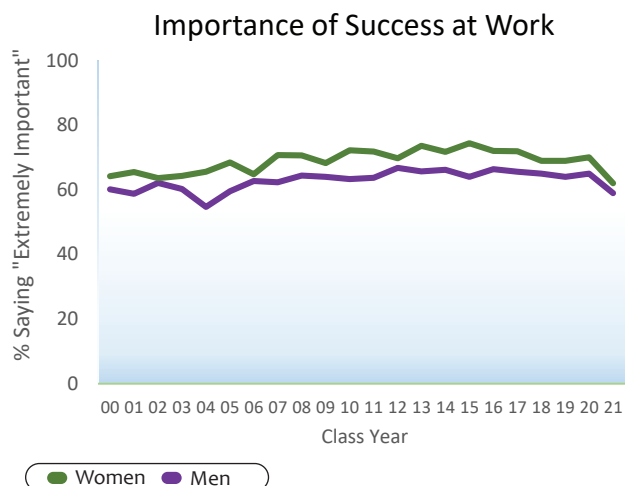
Marriage and family life, successful careers, large paychecks, recreational free time? Monitoring the Future asks high school seniors to rate the importance of these factors in their hopes and plans for the future.

The importance of a good marriage and family life remains high but has decreased some over the last few



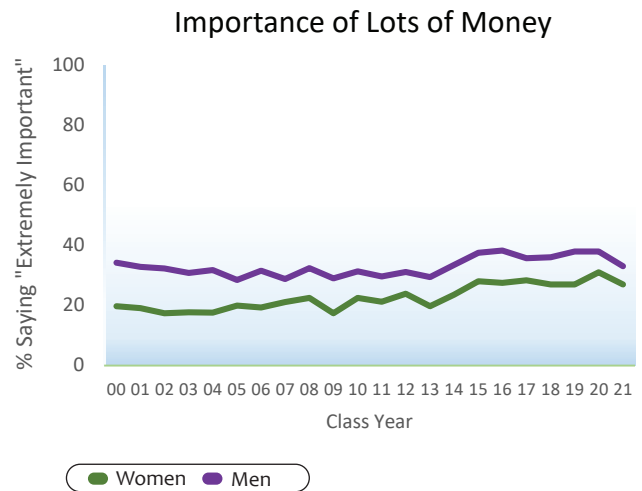
years. **Men** now rate the importance of marriage and family life equal to success at work, while **women** rate marriage and family life as more important than any of the other items.

The percentage of seniors who say that success at work is extremely important has also declined slightly over the past several years and is now a bit lower than it was two decades ago. **Women** and **men** rate job success



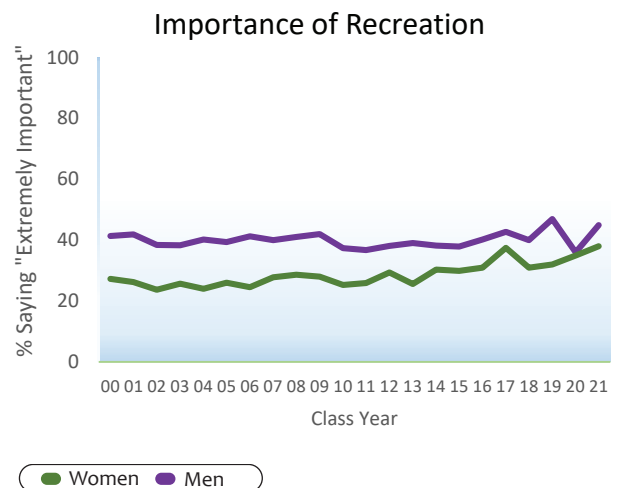
almost equally important. Interestingly, career success is much more important than financial success for both **men** and **women**. It seems that seniors want to do well in their occupations but are less concerned with becoming wealthy.

Recent graduates are more concerned with financial success than earlier graduates. Note that these levels run more parallel for **men** and **women** than the levels for other hopes and dreams. It would be interesting to

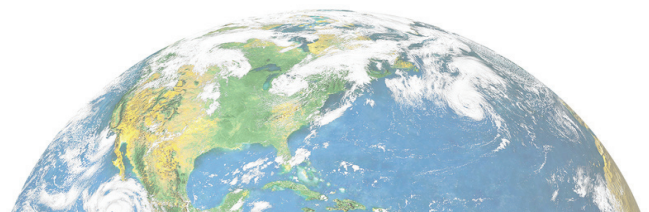


know what drives these similar ups and downs over the years. More **men** than **women** rate financial success as extremely important but both decreased this year.

Time for recreation has not been extremely important for most seniors. Over the last two decades the rates of recreation being extremely important of have varied from year to year but remained within 5 percentage points among **men** and 11 percentage points among **women**. Throughout the study, **men** have been more likely to



place importance on recreation than have **women**, whereas more **women** have tended to rate marriage and family, and job success highly.



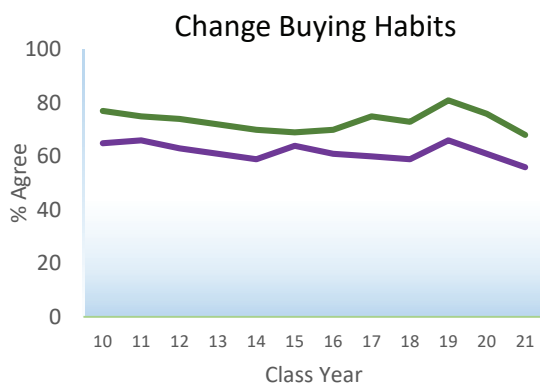
Environmental Issues - What Would You Do?

Monitoring the Future asked high school seniors about environmental problems and what steps they would be willing to take to help solve such problems. We asked how much participants agreed with these statements:

- “People will have to change their buying habits and way of life to correct our environmental problems.”
- “Government should place higher taxes on products which cause pollution in their manufacture or disposal, so that companies will be encouraged to find better ways to produce them.”
- “I would probably be willing to use a bicycle or mass transit (if available) rather than a car to get to work.”
- “I would be willing to eat less meat and more vegetables, if it would help provide food for starving people.”

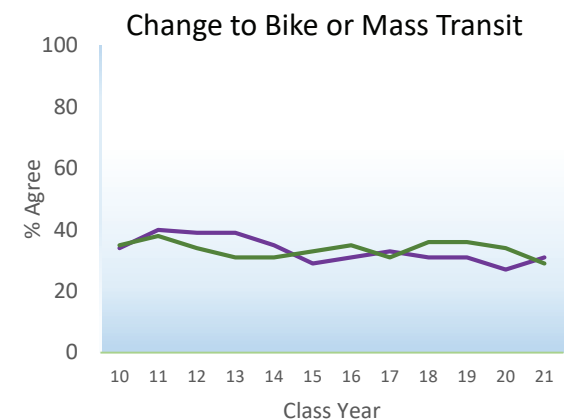
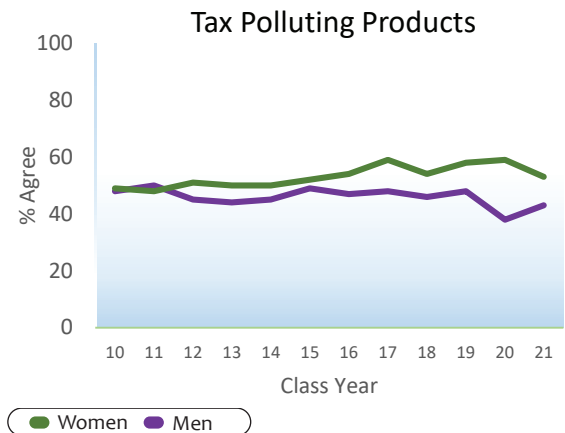
Everyone makes personal choices that affect the environment. We wondered how willing people would be to take specific actions. For some, of course, riding a bike or taking public transportation is actually more convenient than using a car to get to work. But for many people, it would be an inconvenience.

While the majority of seniors still say they would change their lifestyle to help solve environmental problems, the percentage decreased slightly this year

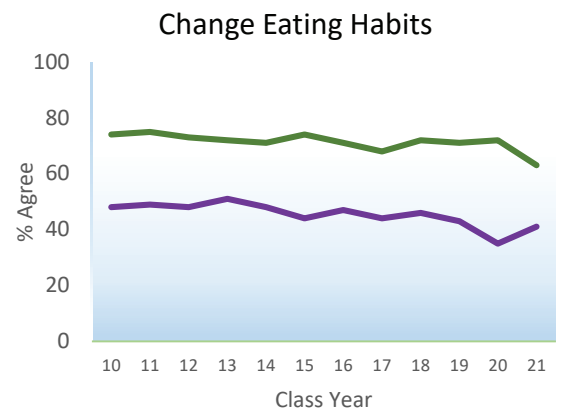


Women Men

in all of the four categories for women, but increased in three categories for men. Only changing buying habits decreased for both women and men. As of 2021, men are becoming a little more willing to change and may be more convinced that these changes are necessary or would be beneficial to the environment.



Women Men



Women Men

What is presented here is a very small sampling of the study findings. The reports from the study are of interest to many people including educators, political leaders, and the general public. We will continue to inform these audiences about the results from the study in the years to come. Thank you again for being part of this study and helping to bring about a better understanding of teen perspectives and realities.