



**Assessment of AANHPI Youth  
Perceptions, Knowledge and Attitudes  
toward Marijuana and E-Cigarettes/Vape**

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## Introduction

Asian Pacific Islander Coalition Advocating Together for Healthy Communities (APICAT) conducted an assessment with 36 Asian American Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander youth, ages 13 – 18, on their perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward marijuana and e-cigarette/vape devices. APICAT recruited youth from three community groups, which also included 3 Black or Black and Caucasian youth. Their responses are included in this assessment. APICAT staff facilitated three group discussions before distributing surveys to all youth. This assessment will provide information to assist in developing the most effective and culturally appropriate prevention and education strategies.

## Discussion and Surveys

APICAT staff visited community youth programs to facilitate group discussions, which were about 60 to 90 minutes. The following guide was used:

1. Are e-cigarettes different than regular cigarettes? What are some ways they are different?
2. What are e-cigarettes used for?
3. Some recent data has shown an increase in high school use of e-cigarettes over the past two years. Why do you think youth are using these products?
4. Are you aware of the harm in using e-cigarettes?
5. What are the biggest problems that affect teens in your community?
6. Do you know the word cannabis? Definition?
7. What terms do you recognize and what do they mean?
  - a. Probe – dab, chiefin, dro, wax, butter, blunt, vape, e-cig, pot, weed, edibles
  - b. Probe – are there terms that you are aware of to describe marijuana?
  - c. Probe – what do your friends call it?
8. Are you aware of the harm in using marijuana or other drugs?
9. Is marijuana a gateway drug to more dangerous drugs?
10. Have you ever seen a friend or family member use cannabis/marijuana or e-ciggs?
  - a. Probe – how did they change after use? Did they make good decisions, bad decisions or no change?
11. What do you think about the legalization of cannabis?
  - a. Should it be legal for persons under 18?
  - b. Should it be legal for persons over the age of 18, 21, or 25?
12. Do you think cannabis should be legal?
13. How easy is it for youth to purchase or access: e-ciggs, vape products, marijuana, other drugs?
14. Are there clear rules in your household regarding the use of: e-ciggs, vape products, marijuana, other drugs?

Questions about e-cigarettes were asked first, so that students were more comfortable and open to express their opinions by the time questions about marijuana were asked.

After group discussions, surveys were distributed. The survey questions are as follows:

1. What do you think about the legalization of Cannabis?
2. Should it be legal for persons under the age of 18?
3. Should it be legal for persons over the age of 18, 21, or 25?
4. How would you prevent children under 18 from using Cannabis or vape/E-cigs?
5. What would you say? How would you say it?
6. If you could create a billboard to prevent a person from using for the first time, what would be the message?
7. What would the billboard say?
8. If you could create one 15 second video message to prevent use and abuse of cannabis, what would be your message?
9. Since the legalization of marijuana in this State, what support, resources, information, or activities would help support youth marijuana education and prevention in your community?
10. Do you think Cannabis should be legal??
  - a. If yes, why?
  - b. If not, why?
11. Do you think Cannabis, weed, or marijuana is a gateway drug to other drugs? If so, what types of drugs?
12. What do you think are the biggest problems that affect teens in your community?
13. How easy is it for youth to purchase or access:
  - a. E-Cigarettes
  - b. Vape Products
  - c. Marijuana
  - d. Other drugs
14. Are there clear rules in your household regarding the use of:
  - a. E-Cigarettes
  - b. Vapes
  - c. Marijuana
  - d. Other drugs

### Participant Recruitment and Characteristics

Youth were recruited from three community programs.

The first program was the Wilderness Inner-City leadership Development (WILD) in the International District of Seattle. WILD educates youth in environmental justice and encourages civic involvement through building leadership qualities and team building skills. Youth in this program are primarily from Asian American or Pacific Islander immigrant or refugee households. Many families may also be low-income. There were 14 youth participants, comprised of 8 Chinese, 2 Vietnamese, and 3 multiracial youth. The multiracial youth are Vietnamese and Chinese, Black and Caucasian, and Chinese and Korean.

The second program is the Loving Kindness Meditation Center in Tacoma, which also serves as a Buddhist temple and center for Vietnamese communities. They teach Buddhist values

and the spoken and written Vietnamese language to the Vietnamese youth. There were 8 youth participants, all of Vietnamese descent.

The third program is the Asia Pacific Cultural Center (APCC) in downtown Tacoma. APCC provides an after-school and weekend program to support youth with homework and/or college applications, to promote culture through dance performances and volunteering at cultural events, and to create a safe space for youth to express personal challenges. It is a free program for youth to build friendships and spend time together. APCC youth are mainly Pacific Islanders and from low-income families. There were 17 participants, comprised of 15 Samoans and 2 multiracial youth. The multiracial youth are Black and Caucasian, and Samoan and Filipina.

Preferred participants are ages 14 – 18 and self-identify as Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. However, three youth are not AANHPI, and one was 13 years of age. Their responses are still included in this assessment.

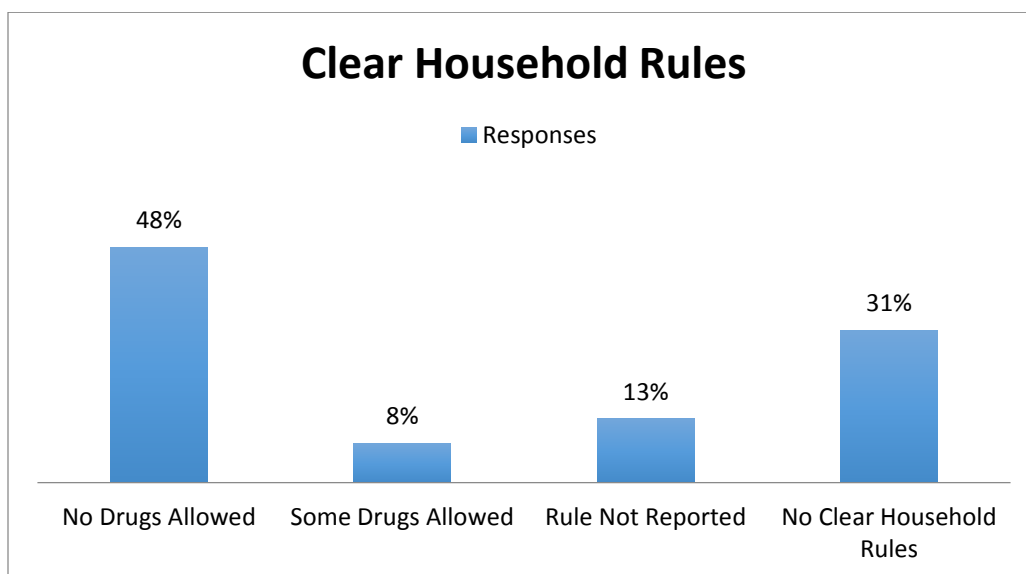
Below is a table of the participants' characteristics.

<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>Age Range (average)</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Chinese	8	15 – 17 (16.3)	4 (50%)	4 (50%)
Vietnamese	10	13 – 18 (15.2)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
Samoan	15	15 – 18 (16.7)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
Multiracial	5	15 – 17 (16.2)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)
African American	1	16	1 (100%)	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>13 – 18 (16.1)</b>	<b>22 (56%)</b>	<b>17 (44%)</b>

### **Family Environment**

Youth were asked if they have clear household rules regarding the use of marijuana, other drugs, e-cigarettes or vape products. In total, 19 youth have clear household rules that drugs are not allowed. Another 5 also have household rules, but do not report what those rules are. Three

have clear household rules that allow for use of some or all drugs. Twelve youth do not have clear household rules.



### Challenges AANHPI Teens Face in their Communities

The youth were asked what they believe to be the hardest challenges that teenagers encounter in their communities. Forty-six percent (46%) of youth say that drug use, drug abuse and other drug-related incidents is a challenge in their communities. The table below lists the challenges that are cited more than once, from the most cited to the least cited.

Challenges	Number of times cited
Drug use/drug abuse/other drug-related incidents	18
Peer Pressure	8
Depression/loneliness/stress	6
Gang violence/other neighborhood dangers	5
Poverty, which leads to family problems	4
Not caring about school/skipping school/dropping out of school	4
Underage drinking	2

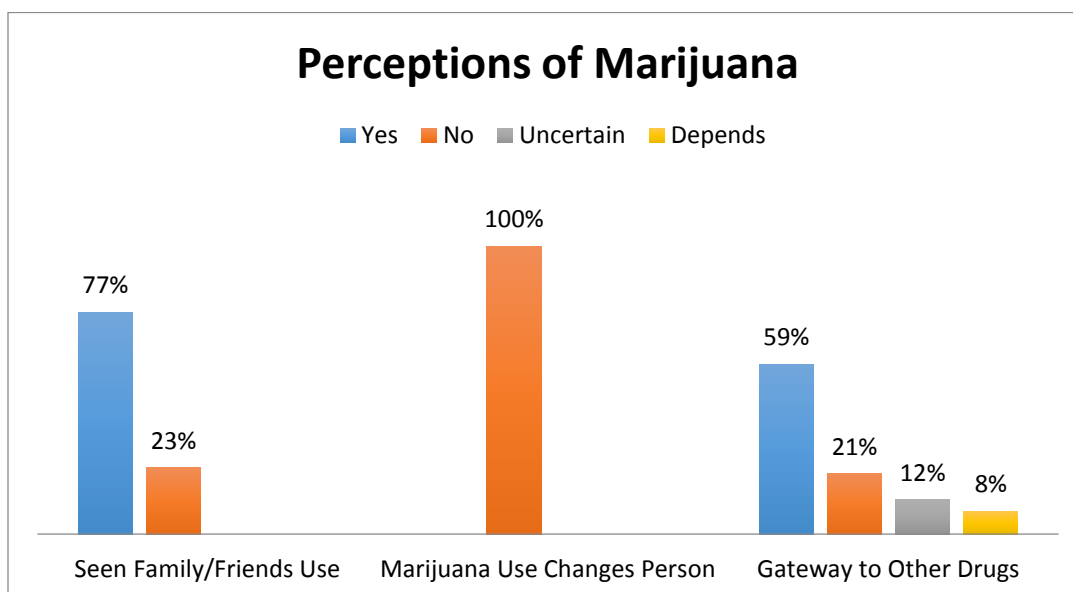
## Summary of Results

### Perceptions

#### **Marijuana:**

During group discussions, youth were asked if they have seen a family member or friend use marijuana. If so, they were further asked if they have observed marijuana use changing the users’ personalities or leading to bad decision-making. Thirty of the youth have witnessed family members or friends use marijuana, while 9 have not. All 30 comment that they have not witnessed any negative change in a person from using marijuana. Youth from Loving Kindness Meditation Center stated that users usually sit calmly and quietly. One commented, “Effects of cannabis seem random. They seem to affect some but not others. So marijuana must not be that bad; it just depends on the user.” Others agreed. Youth from APCC began discussing their perception of marijuana’s level of harm. Thus, when asked to rate how harmful they thought marijuana was from 1 to 10, 1 being no harm and 10 being absolutely harmful, the average was 3, or little harm.

Youth were asked whether marijuana is a gateway drug to more dangerous drugs. Twenty-three of the youth agreed that using marijuana can lead to other drugs, listing cocaine, heroin, or ecstasy as examples. Eight do not agree, 5 do not know, and 3 wrote that it depends on the person’s personal situation and current mood.



## **E-cigarettes:**

During discussion, the youth were told that there has been an increase in high school use of e-cigarettes over the past two years. In order to explain this trend, they were also asked to explain the difference between e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes. Responses are summarized below:

- E-cigarettes are safer for the user, environmentally friendlier, less expensive and easier to access than traditional cigarettes
  - A few youth did comment, however, that even if e-cigarettes are safer than traditional cigarettes, they are still not safe.
- E-juices do not contain nicotine.
- They are “cool” because various flavors are available, and they taste and smell better.
- They look more attractive.
- E-cigarettes are used as a fun activity, as a cessation device, or to cope with depression.
- Some youth experience peer pressure.
- Youth are constantly exposed to e-cigarette advertisements and use.

## **Knowledge**

### **Marijuana**

During discussion groups, youth were asked whether they know the harmful effects of using marijuana. Twenty-seven youth responded that they are aware. One youth reported learning about the effects as young as 7<sup>th</sup> grade. However, when asked to name the effects, a summary of responses from 17 youth are hunger and damaged brain cells, and that marijuana serves as a depressant. One youth commented, “[Marijuana] doesn’t affect too much physically. It has less risk relative to other drugs. Alcohol is more dangerous.” Twelve youth do not know the effects of marijuana.

### **E-Cigarettes**

When asked whether they are aware of the harmful effects of using e-cigarettes, a majority of the youth did not know. A few guessed that it might have similar effects as



traditional cigarettes – containing nicotine, rotting teeth, and lung cancer. Additionally, vape pens can be combustible. Others listed purple lips and “holes in the neck”.

**Accessibility to Purchasing Drugs:**

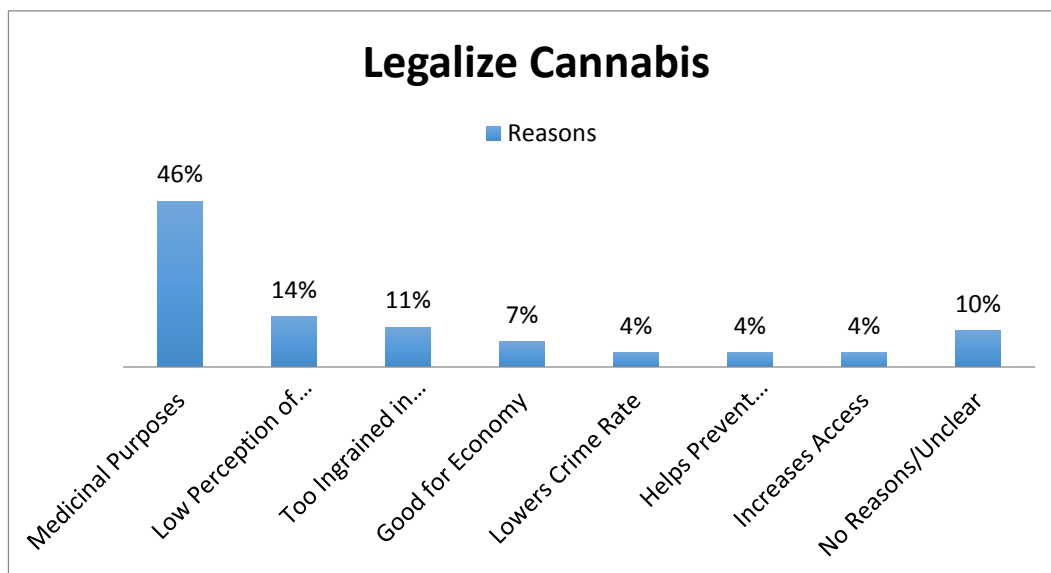
When asked how accessible it is to purchase marijuana, other drugs, e-cigarettes, and other vape products, twenty-four (62%) youth wrote that all are easy to access. A few write that they can easily obtain drugs from online, friends, or even family. Six youth wrote that some drugs are easy to access (mainly e-cigarettes and vape products), while others are difficult (mainly marijuana and other drugs). Three write that all are difficult to access. Another three are uncertain, and three more youth did not provide responses.

**Attitudes:**

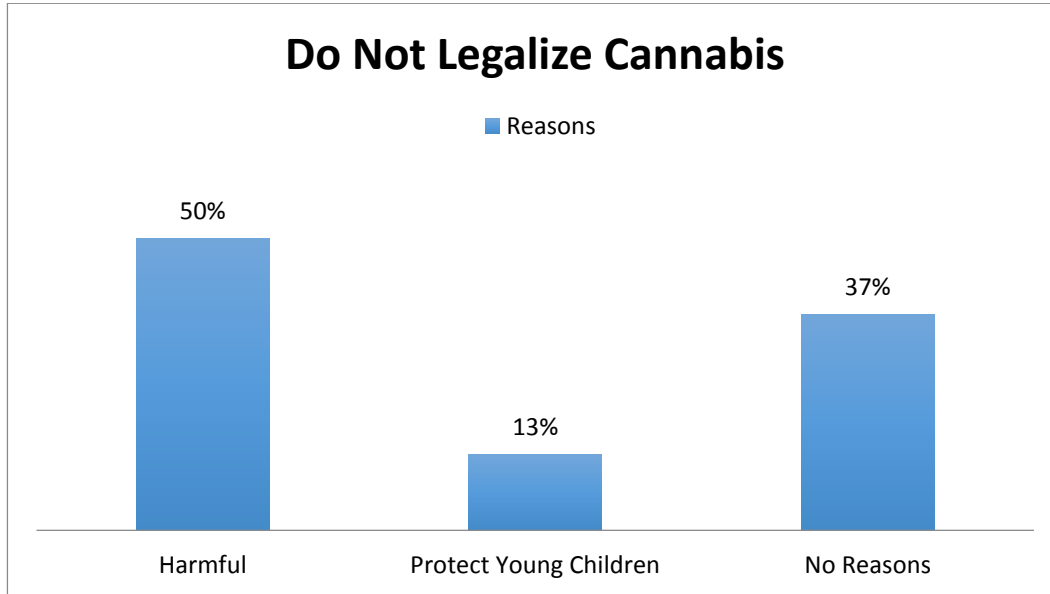
**Should Cannabis be Legal?**

When asked whether cannabis should be legal or not, 28 youth support the legalization of cannabis, and 8 do not. Three are impartial.

Of the twenty-eight youth supporting the legalization of cannabis, 13 condition that it should only be legal for medicinal purposes to treat health conditions, whether physical or mental. The least cited reasons are that legalizing cannabis will help to lower the crime rate, prevent suicide, and make drugs even more accessible.

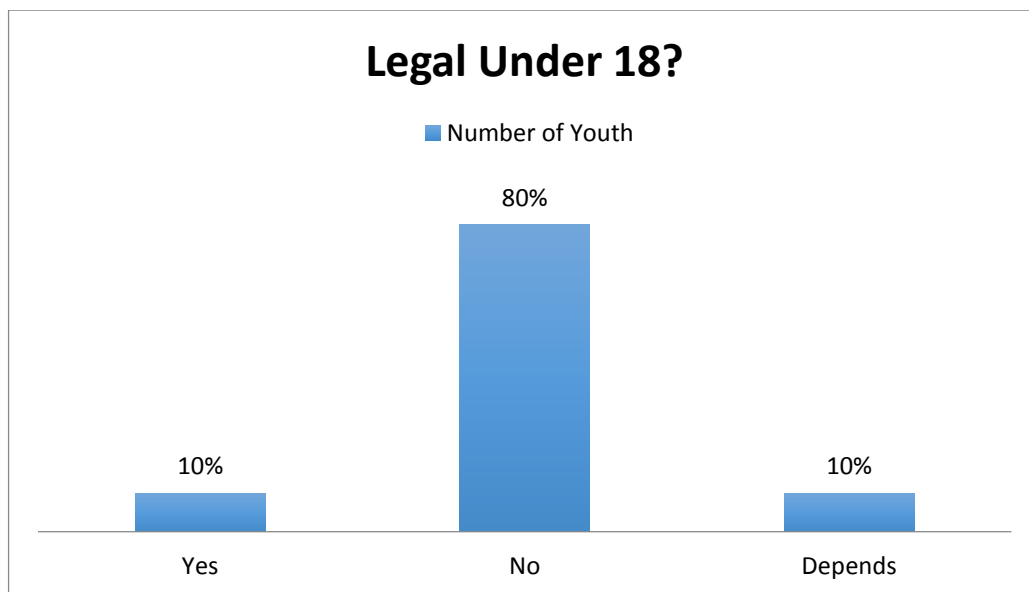


Of the eight youth not supporting the legalization of cannabis, 4 believe that using marijuana is harmful. Another wants to prevent her younger siblings and other young children from using.

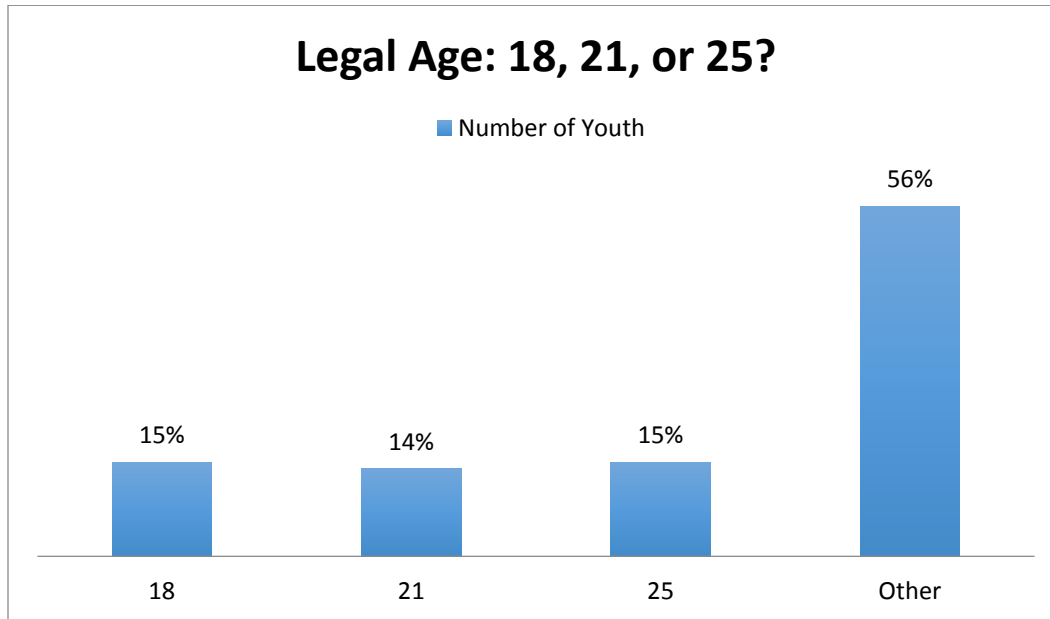


Legal Age

When asked whether cannabis should be legalized for persons under the age of 18, thirty-one youth do not support this, and 4 youth do. Another 4 youth state that it depends on whether or not the person is a responsible user.



When asked whether the legal age of cannabis use should 18, 21 or 25, six youth wrote 18 years, 5 wrote 21 years, and 6 wrote 25 years. Twenty-one students replied in non-numerical responses, and 1 stated that there should not be any legal age.



### Youth Suggestions for Prevention

When asked what support, resources, information, or activities would help support youth marijuana education and prevention in their communities, the youth provided the following suggestions:

- Extensive education on effects of marijuana from family members, schools' health classes, friends who are role models, and other mentors. Children need to be taught as young as 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Effects should be advertised on social media, posters in popular stores, emails, and community newspapers, such as, Seattle Chinese News
- Have former drug users share their stories with youth
- Offer more alternatives for free after-school and summer workshops or programs
- Portions of revenue from marijuana and e-cigarette/vape sales should be used for preventative measures in communities
- Improve neighborhood safety and infrastructure
- Provide more jobs and career-building opportunities for high school youth

- Community collaboration between environmentalist programs, the fire department, senior programs, and community centers
- Enforcement of no-smoking near schools
- More security at marijuana shops so that I.D. regulations are better enforced
- Fine storeowners who sell to youth
- Youth caught smoking should be imprisoned for a month