

PARTY CULTURE



The Aragon Outlook conducted an anonymous survey of 96 students regarding their experiences with parties. Here were the results:

% of survey respondents who claim to personally attend parties...

- for fun/entertainment — 51%
- to spend time with friends — 52.1%
- to meet new people — 25%
- out of peer pressure — 5.2%
- for drugs/alcohol — 13.5%
- to vape/smoke — 9.4%
- for sex/hookups — 6.3%



% of survey respondents who claim to have seen these substances at a party before...

- marijuana — 35.4%
- nicotine — 40.6%
- codeine — 7.3%
- psychedelic mushrooms — 9.4%
- MDMA — 4.2%
- Xanax — 7.3%
- LSD — 7.3%
- cocaine - 6.3%



THE SCENE

Party culture, while broad across social groups, primarily revolves around students socializing and having fun.

“People chill and socialize because a lot of parties are open invite so you have something from 80 to 100 people at parties,” said senior Arthur*. “People drink a lot but most people also smoke so those are the [three] things of choice: drink, smoke, socialize.”

While 35.4% of Aragon students report having seen marijuana and 40.6% report having seen nicotine at unsupervised parties involving Aragon students, students also make an effort to prioritize the safety of themselves and others.

“Getting a safe ride home is super important, so generally people come in groups and have a designated driver,” Arthur said. “Uber is also kind of common. We really try to make sure that no one drives drunk. Safety is a priority.”

Students can most likely find a party to go to every weekend, from bonfires in Half Moon Bay to house parties with friends.

“Some people do go to [parties] every weekend,” Arthur said. “I got ... college apps [so] I can’t be doing all [of] that.”

However, parties are not exclusive to only Aragon students. Many often have people from different high schools such as Woodside and Carlmont.

“It’s just people hanging out, just typical friends. It’s not extreme. It’s sitting and talking. Other stuff. Loud music. Just people in a lot of different rooms. Co-mingling. Basically just that with more people,” said junior Monica*. “A lot of yelling. A lot of fighting. You know when friends fight for no reason? It’s just a ton of that on a larger scale.”

PARENTS

Although teenage parties sometimes take place without parental consent and supervision, they are more often planned with approval in advance.

“Much to our chagrin, parents do know about parties,” Monica said. “[They] went through it too. They know we’re going to party. It’s just implied.”

“People’s parents do know,” Arthur said. “A lot of times, people’s parents are home while they host, they’re just like upstairs or something. They don’t [care].”

In a 2011 study published in The National Center for Biotechnology Information, 72% of California students surveyed stated that their guardian knew about their last party, and more than half answered that a guardian was home at the time. Because parties are almost always held at someone’s house, it is best if the host communicates with their parents beforehand so they expect guests and can adjust their schedules accordingly. Monica believes this will help prevent trouble.

“I feel like a lot of it is that parents aren’t home for a weekend [but they] are smarter than that,” Monica said. “Typically it ends badly [when] ... the situation [is that] you have to clean [up] and make sure you don’t get caught.”

However, parents may not be actively involved in the planning or hosting of the event.

“A lot of times, people’s parents are home while they host,” Arthur said “They’re just upstairs or something.”

Monica believes that parents are not always aware of the scope of these gatherings, such as its size or activities. When parties are over and students need a safe ride home, some even opt to call their parents if Uber and carpools are not available options, according to Arthur.

SUBSTANCES

Media and popular culture often stereotype parties as places where people abuse hard drugs, including cocaine, MDMA and other drugs. However, many parties involving high school students are free from hard drug use. While some high school students do use hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD or psychedelic mushrooms in private or small groups of close friends, these drugs are hardly ever used at large parties due to their effects, which include visual and auditory hallucinations. While marijuana and nicotine are frequently used at parties, they are not the main reason people go to parties. People attend parties mainly to socialize. They may bring their own vape or blunt and share it with a couple close friends, but they don’t go specifically to smoke.

On the contrary, drinking is quite common at parties. In fact, a study by the National Institute of Health found that approximately one quarter of parties hosted by minors between the ages of 15-17 had alcohol present. People drink seltzers such as White Claws, beer and stronger alcohol such as vodka, which is often mixed into beverages.

“Alcohol is really not hard to come by. Six handles [of liquor], Trulys, beer,” Arthur said. “There was a keg [once]. A ton of alcohol.”

COVID-19

The rules and regulations aiming to combat the spread of COVID-19 have remained relatively unchanged since May of 2021. While establishments have reopened and stay-at-home orders have been lifted, recommendations continue to emphasize the importance of wearing facial coverings and gathering outside when possible. While house parties do not fall under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s defined category of large gatherings, which would require stricter safety measures, parties nonetheless pose a unique question: Depending on how many people are present, how are safety and public health prioritized?

Although some large-scale, for-profit events such as concerts, music festivals and theatre productions may require proof of vaccination upon entry, personal events are under no such legal obligation to have this requirement. The CDC simply states that personal gatherings should be held outside, with masks if physical distancing is not maintained.

“I think we’re all vaxxed,” Monica said. “In the beginning, when COVID-19 was a lot worse and a lot more jarring to us and our families ... we mainly would go outside to the beach or the park.”

Many may picture indoor gatherings when they hear the word “party,” but the definition has grown to include outdoor events as well.

“We try to make the most use of our outside space as we can,” Monica said. “It’s also just the people I see at school every day, the people I’m close to at school, the people I hang out with outside of school. We’re all germed up together.”

Outdoor parties may look physically different from the classic portrayals of house parties in pop culture, but they offer a new experience to those who partake.

“It’s a little bit more classy, we all dress up for it a little bit, we wear something a little bit nicer,” Monica said. “If I know something’s going to be outside, I’m going to wear something that’ll look good outside. I won’t just be sitting inside. [I] want to look good.”

*Students’ names have been changed to protect their privacy.

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