

2012 Drug Trends

• Survey: Almost One- Fourth of 12th Graders Have Smoked Marijuana in Past Month



Compiled from the [MTF DATA](#)- 12-19-12

The Data Are Below

Almost one-quarter of the nation's high school seniors say they have smoked marijuana in the past month, and just over 36 percent admit to using the drug in the past year, according to the [2012 Monitoring the Future Survey](#). Researchers at the University of Michigan who conducted the annual

survey found 6.5 percent of high school seniors smoked marijuana daily. Among 10th graders, 3.5 percent say they use marijuana daily, while 17 percent report using the drug in the past month, and 28 percent in the past year. "We are increasingly concerned that regular or daily use of

marijuana is robbing too many young people of their potential to achieve and excel in school or other aspects of life," National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow says.

A Bigger Picture

"THC, a key ingredient in marijuana, alters the connectivity of the hippocampus a brain area related to learning and memory. In addition, we know from recent research that marijuana use that begins during adolescence can lower IQ and contribute to reduced cognitive abilities during adulthood." The survey of approximately 45,000 eighth, 10th and 12th graders found fewer students perceive marijuana as harmful, compared with previous

years reports. Researchers found 41.7 percent of eighth graders view occasional use of marijuana as dangerous, and 66.9 percent view regular use as harmful. These rates are the lowest since the survey began asking this age group about their perceptions of marijuana in 1991. Among 12th graders, 20.6 percent view occasional marijuana use as risky, the lowest rate since 1983. Among this age group, 44.1 percent view regular use as harmful, the lowest rate since 1979.

"Yet another year of increases in childhood marijuana use is deeply disturbing as these can spell real trouble for young kids later on," Steve President and CEO of The Partnership at Drugfree.org said in a [statement](#). "Heavy use of marijuana – particularly beginning in adolescence – brings the risk of serious problems and our own data have shown it can lead to involvement with alcohol and other drugs as well. Kids who begin using drugs or alcohol as teenagers are more likely to struggle with substance use disorders when compared to those who start using later in life.

K-2 Spice



Synthetic marijuana (sold as K-2, Spice, etc.) has been of increasing concern both because of its adverse effects and its high rates of use, first documented by this study last year. Use held level among 12th graders in 2012—the second year of measurement—at 11.3% annual prevalence. “The fact that use of this dangerous drug has

leveled is encouraging, but the fact that its prevalence rate has remained this high despite federal and state efforts to reduce its use is troublesome,” Johnston said. Synthetic marijuana use was measured for the first time this year in 8th and 10th grades—their annual prevalence rates were 4.4% and 8.8%,

respectively. Aside from alcohol and tobacco, this is the second most widely used drug among 10th and 12th graders after marijuana, and the third most widely used among 8th graders after marijuana and inhalants.

Ecstasy – Thizz – Molly



Ecstasy.

The annual prevalence of Ecstasy declined significantly this year in all three grades.

Over the past dozen years, the use of Ecstasy has changed quite a bit, with rates being high in the

early 2000s, decreasing through the mid-2000s, and then increasing since then, so this decline

between 2011 and 2012 is welcome news. The 2012 annual prevalence rates are 1.1%, 3.0%, and

3.8% in grades 8, 10, and 12—less than half the peak rates observed in 2001.

Heroin & Narcotics

Heroin. Use of *heroin without a needle* declined significantly in 8th and 12th grades and remained unchanged (but at lower than recent peak levels) in 10th grade. Annual prevalence rates are very low at 0.3% in grade 8 and 0.4% in grades 10 and 12. Use of *heroin with a needle* declined (not significantly) to 0.4% annual prevalence in all three grades. Both forms of heroin

use are substantially below their recent peak levels, which generally occurred in the mid- to late-1990s.

Other Narcotics. The use of narcotic drugs other than heroin (most of which are prescription analgesics) has increased sharply in recent years, as have emergency room admissions involving these drugs, making this class of drugs of

particular concern. Use in 12th grade—the only grade for which use of this drug is reported—showed some decline (but not a significant one) in 2012, as was true for the two major components of that class—*Vicodin* and *OxyContin*. For the three grades *combined*, however, both Vicodin and OxyContin declined significantly in 2012, a function of the greater precision gained with the larger combined sample.

Adderall

Adderall. One drug class that showed some sign of increasing use this year was Adderall, but only among 12th graders and not significantly. While the misuse (use outside of medical supervision) of Adderall may still be rising at grade 12, use is down from peak levels in grades 8 and 10 where it held steady this year.

Salvia



Salvia divinorum is an herb in the mint family that can induce relatively short-acting hallucinogenic effects when smoked or eaten. Salvia, first measured in 2009, had significant declines in 10th and 12th grade this year, and a non-significant decline

in 8th grade. The annual prevalence rates in 2012 for salvia are 1.4%, 2.5%, and 4.4% in grades 8, 10, and 12.

Other Data:

Use of Any Prescription Drug without Medical Supervision. The proportion of 12th graders indicating that they have used any prescription drug outside of medical supervision has remained relatively stable since 2008. (This is based on their answers to questions about use without a doctor's orders of amphetamines, tranquilizers, sedatives, and narcotics.) In 2012, 21.2% indicated use without a doctor's orders of at least one prescription drug in their lifetime, while 14.8% indicated such use in the past year. (In 2008 these rates were 21.5% and 15.4%, respectively.)

The sources of such prescription drugs remain primarily informal networks of friends and, to a lesser extent, relatives. In the years 2009–2012 combined, among past-year users of

amphetamines the most prevalent sources were “given by a friend” (55%), “bought from a friend” (44%), and “bought from a drug dealer or stranger” (20%). Among past-year users of **tranquilizers**, the same three sources topped the list at 56%, 42%, and 25%, respectively. Among past-year users of **narcotics other than heroin**, these three sources were endorsed by 52%, 34%, and 17%, respectively—however, the response “from a prescription I had” ranked second at 36%. It thus appears that for narcotics other than heroin, having leftover pills from an earlier prescription is a significant source for non-medically-supervised use. (See Table 5.)

Other Drugs Holding Steady. The use of a number of other drugs held steady this year. These include **cocaine powder, crack, methamphetamine, crystal methamphetamine, Rohypnol,**

GHB, Ketamine, steroids, and over-the-counter cough and cold medicines taken to get high. Alcohol. Use of alcohol declined on all measures in 2011, bringing rates down to historic lows

during the life of the study. For 8th graders, these significant declines continued into 2012 for 30-day prevalence of drinking and 2-week prevalence of having five or more drinks in a row (binge drinking). For 10th and 12th graders, however, the declines in alcohol use halted in 2012.

In fact there is some evidence to suggest a turn-around. In particular, binge drinking among 12th graders increased significantly in 2012 by 2.0 percentage points to 24%. In other words, about a quarter of the seniors reported that they engaged in binge drinking in just the two weeks prior to taking the survey.

“This possible turnaround in alcohol consumption among the older teens is somewhat unexpected,” stated Johnston, “and certainly not a welcome development.” There was no decline in perceived risk or disapproval of binge drinking, nor any increase in perceived availability of alcohol, that might have helped to explain the change in use. (Availability of alcohol to 8th graders did continue its sharp decline this year.)

“Despite the modest increases in alcohol use this year among the older teens, it still is important to put them into perspective,” notes Johnston. “The percent of 8th, 10th and 12th graders who report binge drinking in the prior two weeks is 5%, 16%, and 24% in 2012; however, these rates, reflect proportional declines of 62%, 36%, and 25%, respectively, since the peak years of use in the mid-1990s.”

Tobacco. This year’s findings on cigarette use and the use of other tobacco products are presented in a separate, companion press release to this one.

http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pressreleases/12cigpr_complete.pdf

Summary. The overall story this year is that the use of most illicit drugs among the nation's teenagers are either holding steady from last year or showing some modest declines. In particular, marijuana use has stopped trending upward and synthetic marijuana did not show a rise this year, although it remains at high levels and is *not* declining despite DEA attempts to schedule many of the most common ingredients of synthetic marijuana. Another exception to this generally positive story is the appearance of a turnaround in alcohol use among the older teens.

“The nation’s teenage drug problems are far from disappearing,” concluded Johnston. “We continue to see a number of new drugs coming onto the scene, like synthetic marijuana and ‘bath salts.’ Synthetic drugs like these are particularly dangerous, because they have unknown, untested, and ever-changing ingredients that can be unusually powerful, leading to severe consequences. Users really don’t know what they are getting and, as the thousands of calls to the nation’s poison control centers relating to these drugs indicate, they may be in for a very unpleasant surprise.”

One important question for the future will be whether the continuing decline in the risk teens associate with marijuana use will lead to increases in their use in the future, as generally has occurred in previous historical periods. Another is what will be the impact on teen attitudes and beliefs nationally of legalizing the use of marijuana in states like Colorado and Washington.

NOTE: Tables associated with this release may be accessed at:

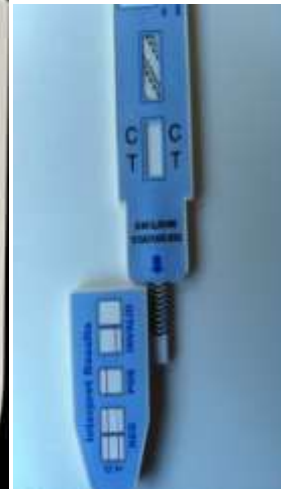
<http://monitoringthefuture.org/data/data.html>



Resources for Parents and Professionals

[916-276-0626](tel:916-276-0626)

www.recoveryhappens.com



[9 – panel drug test only \\$10](#) [5 – panel test only \\$5](#) [Breathalyzer \\$15](#) [K-2 Spice \\$10](#)

Books:

