

DRUG WAR FACTS

Adolescents

1. The Monitoring the Future survey reports that from 1996 through 2005 more than half of the students in the United States tried an illegal drug before they graduated from high school. In 2006, that figure dropped to 48.2% lifetime prevalence.

Source: Johnston, L. D., P.M. O'Malley, J.G. Bachman & J.E. Schulenberg, Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings 2006, (Washington, DC: NIDA, April 2007), Table 1, p. 47.

2. In 2006, 5.0 percent of 12th graders reported daily use of marijuana, unchanged from the previous year. This compares with 6.0% in 1999 and 4.9% in 1996. Also in 2006, 25.4% of twelfth graders reported having had 5 or more drinks in a row in the last two weeks, compared with 27.1% the previous year. This compares with 30.8% in 1999 and 30.2% in 1996. And finally in 2006, 5.9% of twelfth graders reported smoking 1/2 pack or more of cigarettes daily, compared with 6.9% in 2005. This compares with 13.2% in 1999 and 13.0% in 1996.

Source: Source: Johnston, L. D., P.M. O'Malley, J.G. Bachman & J.E. Schulenberg, Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings 2006, (Washington, DC: NIDA, April 2007), Table 4, p. 59.

3. "Since the study began in 1975, between 83% and 90% of every senior class have said that they could get marijuana fairly easily or very easily if they wanted some; therefore, it seems clear that this has remained a highly accessible drug. Since 1991, when data were also available for 8th and 10th graders, we have seen that marijuana is considerably less accessible to younger adolescents. Still, in 2006 two fifths of 8th graders (40%) and almost three quarters of all 10th graders (71%) reported it as being accessible. This compares to 85% for seniors."

Source: Source: Johnston, L. D., P.M. O'Malley, J.G. Bachman & J.E. Schulenberg, Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings 2006, (Washington, DC: NIDA, April 2007), p. 13.

4. "Marijuana appears to be readily available to almost all 12th graders; in 2005 86% reported that they think it would be 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' for them to get it -- almost twice the number who reported ever having used it (45%).
"After marijuana, 12th-grade students indicated that amphetamines are among the easiest drugs to obtain (51%)."

Source: Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. 06-5883) (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse), August 2006, p. 401.

5. "What is most noteworthy, however, is how little change has occurred in the proportion of 12th graders who say that marijuana is 'fairly' or 'very' easy to get. By this measure, marijuana has been almost universally available to American 12th graders (from 83% to 90%) over at least the past 31 years."

Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. 06-5883) (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse), August 2006, p. 402.

6. "Overall, it is important to note that supply reduction -- that is, reducing the availability of drugs -- does not appear to have played as major a role as many had assumed in three of the most important downturns in illicit drug use that have occurred to date, namely, those for marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy (see Figures 8-4, 8-5, and 8-6). In the case of cocaine, perceived availability actually rose during much of the period of the downturn in use. (These data are corroborated by data from the Drug Enforcement Administration on trends in the price and purity of cocaine on the streets.) In the case of marijuana, perceived availability has remained very high for 12th graders over the past 31 years, while use dropped substantially from 1979 through 1992. Perceived availability for ecstasy did increase in association with its increasing use in the 1990s, but the decline phase for use appears to have been driven much more by changing beliefs about the dangers of ecstasy than by any sharp downturn in availability. Similarly, amphetamine use declined appreciably from 1981 to 1992, with only a modest corresponding change in perceived availability. Finally, until 1995, heroin use had not risen among 12th graders even though availability had increased substantially."

Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. 06-5883) (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse), August 2006, p. 407.

7. "As shown in Table 8-8, three of every ten (30%) 12th graders in the Class of 2005 believed that marijuana use should be treated as a crime. Similar proportions thought it should be entirely legal (28%), and another 28% felt it should be treated as a minor violation -- like a parking ticket -- but not as a crime. (The remaining 15% said they 'don't know.')
- "Asked whether they thought it should be legal to sell marijuana if it were legal to use it, just over half (54%) said 'yes.' However, about four fifths of those answering 'yes' (43% of all respondents) would permit the sale only to adults. A small minority (11%) favored the sale to anyone, regardless of age, while 32% said that sale should not be legal even if use were made legal, and 14% said they 'don't know.'"

Source: Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. 06-5883) (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse), August 2006, p. 354.

8. "Most 12th graders felt that they would be little affected personally by the legalization of either the sale or the use of marijuana. Three fifths (60%) of the respondents said that they would not use the drug even if it were legal to buy and use, and another 17% indicated they would use it about as often as they do now or less often. Only 6.1% said they would use it more often than they do at present while another 8.9% thought they would try it. (Eight percent said they did not know how their behavior would be affected if marijuana were legalized.) Still, this amounts to 15% who state that their use would increase if marijuana were legalized."

Source: Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. 06-5883) (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse), August 2006, p. 354.

9. "A study of the effects of decriminalization by several states during the late 1970s found no evidence of any impact on the use of marijuana among young people, nor on attitudes and beliefs concerning its use. However, it should be noted that decriminalization falls well short of the full legalization posited in the questions here. Moreover, the situation today is very different than it was in the late 1970s, with much more peer disapproval and more rigorous enforcement of drug laws. More recent studies suggest that there may be an impact of decriminalization, such that 'youths living in decriminalized states are significantly more likely to report currently using marijuana.'"

Source: Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, Secondary school students (NIH Publication No. 06-5883) (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse), August 2006, pp. 354-5.

10. "Marijuana continues to be easier for teens to purchase than beer: 21 percent of teens ranked marijuana

easiest to buy, compared to 14 percent for beer. As we have observed in the past, more teens rank cigarettes easiest to buy (28 percent) than the other substances. Eleven percent of teens say prescription drugs are easiest to buy."

Source: QEV Analytics, "National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents" (New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, August 2006), p. 14.

11. "Most teens who use alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana do so before they are 14. Among teens who have tried alcohol, tobacco or marijuana, the average age of first use is a little more than 12 for alcohol, 12½ for cigarettes, and 13 years 11 months for marijuana."

Source: QEV Analytics, "National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VIII: Teens and Parents" (New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, August 2003), p. 2.

12. "The US has higher rates of illicit drug use by young people than European nations, as noted by the Monitoring The Future survey: "The MTF study found that in 1999 41% of tenth grade students in the United States had used marijuana or cannabis at least once in their lifetimes. All the participating European countries had a considerably lower rate of lifetime use, averaging 17%. This proportion varied among European countries from 1% in Romania to a high of 35% in France, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic. The US also had one of the lowest proportions of students seeing marijuana use as carrying a risk of harm to the user, and one of the lowest proportions saying that they personally disapprove of marijuana use (pp. 345 and 348)... The US also had the highest rates of use of most of the other illicit drugs studied, as well as marijuana, with the important exception of heroin. These included amphetamines, hallucinogens, cocaine, crack, and ecstasy."

Source: Johnston, Lloyd D., PhD, Patrick M. O'Malley, PhD, and Jerald G. Bachman, PhD, "Monitoring The Future: National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975-2000, Volume 1: Secondary School Students" (Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse, August 2001), p. 363.

13. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention estimated that in 2004 there were 193,900 arrests of juveniles for drug abuse violations out of a total 2,202,000 juvenile arrests. By comparison, there were 91,100 violent crime index offense arrests and 452,300 property crime index offense arrests of juveniles that year.

Source: Snyder, Howard N., "Juvenile Arrests 2004" (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, March 2006), p. 3.

14. "In 1980, there were an estimated 1,476 arrests of persons ages 10–12 for every 100,000 persons in this age group in the U.S. population. By 2003, this arrest rate had fallen to 1,296, a decline of 12%. In 1980, 9.5% of all juvenile arrests were arrests of persons under age 13; in 2003, this percentage had decreased to 8.5% -- with the majority of the decrease occurring during the mid-1990s."

Source: Snyder, Howard N., and Sickmund, Melissa, "Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, March 2006), p. 130.

15. "In contrast to the 1980–1993 period, the overall juvenile drug arrest rate increased by 77% in the short period between 1993 and 1997. Large increases were also seen in the rates of juvenile subgroups: male (72%), female (119%), white (109%), American Indian (160%), and Asian (105%). The black juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse violations, which had increased dramatically in the earlier period, increased an additional 25% between 1993 and 1997. Between 1997 and 2003, the juvenile drug arrest rate fell marginally (22%), with most of the overall decline attributable to a drop in arrests of blacks (41%) and males (24%)."

Source: Snyder, Howard N., and Sickmund, Melissa, "Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, March 2006), p. 144.

16. "Under the UCR Program, the FBI requires law enforcement agencies to classify an arrest by the most serious offense charged in that arrest. For example, the arrest of a youth charged with aggravated assault and possession of a controlled substance would be reported to the FBI as an arrest for aggravated assault. Therefore, when arrest statistics show that law enforcement agencies made an estimated 193,900 arrests of young people for drug abuse violations in 2004, it means that a drug abuse violation was the most serious charge in these 193,900 arrests. An unknown number of additional arrests in 2004 included a drug charge as a lesser offense."

Source: Snyder, Howard N., "Juvenile Arrests 2004" (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, March 2006), p. 2.

17. "Juveniles using drugs or alcohol committed 1 in 10 of the nonfatal violent victimizations against older teens. This was 2-1/2 times higher than the percentage of victimizations against younger teens perceived to be committed by a juvenile who was using drugs or alcohol.
"Younger teens were more likely than older teens to report that their juvenile offender was not using drugs or alcohol. In about 4 in 10 victimizations against younger and older teens committed by juveniles, the victim could not ascertain whether or not the offender was using drugs or alcohol."

Source: Baum, Katrina, PhD, "Juvenile Victimization and Offending, 1993-2003" (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Aug. 2005), p. 8.

18. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that in general, the heavier the alcohol use, the more likely an adolescent will be involved with criminal behaviors.

Source: Greenblatt, Janet C., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Patterns of Alcohol Use Among Adolescents and Associations with Emotional and Behavioral Problems (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, March 2000), p. 6.

19. Even after controlling for other factors (e.g., age, gender, family structure, income, past month marijuana use, etc.), there is "a relationship between past month alcohol use and emotional and behavioral problems. The relationships were particularly strong among heavy and binge alcohol use and delinquent, aggressive, and criminal behaviors."

Source: Greenblatt, Janet C., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Patterns of Alcohol Use Among Adolescents and Associations with Emotional and Behavioral Problems (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, March 2000), p. 9.

20. "Of the Nation's 72.3 million minor children in 1999, 2.1% had a parent in State or Federal prison. Black children (7.0%) were nearly 9 times more likely to have a parent in prison than white children (0.8%). Hispanic children (2.6%) were 3 times as likely as white children to have an inmate parent."

Source: Mumola, Christopher J., US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, Incarcerated Parents and Their Children (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, August 2000), p. 2.

21. "A majority of parents in both State (62%) and Federal (84%) prison were held more than 100 miles from their last place of residence."

Source: Mumola, Christopher J., US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, Incarcerated Parents and Their Children (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, August 2000), p. 5.

22. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that 2.8% of all children under age 18 have at least one parent in a local jail or a State or Federal prison - a total of 1,941,796 kids. One in 40 have an incarcerated father, and 1 in 359 have an incarcerated mother.

Source: Greenfield, Lawrence A., and Snell, Tracy L., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Women Offenders (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, December 1999), p. 8,

Table 18.

23. "The number of offenders under age 18 admitted to prison for drug offenses increased twelvefold (from 70 to 840) between 1985 to 1997. By 1997 drug offenders made up 11% of admissions among persons under 18 compared to 2% in 1985."

Source: Strom, Kevin J., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Profile of State Prisoners Under Age 18, 1985-1997 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, February 2000), p. 4.

24. "During 1985, an estimated 20 white males and 30 black males under age 18 were admitted to State prison for drug offenses. In 1997 black males under age 18 outnumbered white males of the same age by more than 5 to 1 (640 to 120 admissions for drug offenses)."

Source: Strom, Kevin J., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Profile of State Prisoners Under Age 18, 1985-1997 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, February 2000), p. 5.

25. "Fifty-eight percent of offenders admitted under 18 in 1997 were black and 25% were white, representing a gradual change from 1990, when blacks comprised 61% of admissions and whites 21% (table 6). The racial characteristics of persons admitted under 18 had shifted more dramatically between 1985 and 1990. During this period the percentage of black admissions increased from 53% to 62%, and the percentage of whites fell from 32% to 21%. Hispanic admissions, as a proportion of all persons under age 18 entering State prison, have remained stable from 1985 to 1997."

Source: Strom, Kevin J., US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Profile of State Prisoners Under Age 18, 1985-1997 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, February 2000), p. 6.

26. A federal report by the U.S. Center on Substance Abuse Prevention noted that "adolescence is a period in which youth reject conventionality and traditional authority figures in an effort to establish their own independence. For a significant number of adolescents, this rejection consists of engaging in a number of 'risky' behaviors, including drug and alcohol use. Within the past few years, researchers and practitioners have begun to focus on this tendency, suggesting that drug use may be a 'default' activity engaged in when youth have few or no opportunities to assert their independence in a constructive manner."

Source: Maria Carmona and Kathryn Stewart, A Review of Alternative Activities and Alternatives Programs in Youth-Oriented Prevention (National Center for the Advancement of Prevention, under contract for the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1996), p. 5.

27. The World Health Organization noted that, while some studies indicate that adolescents who use marijuana might be more likely to drop out of high school and experience job instability in young adulthood, "the apparent strength of these cross-sectional studies ... has been exaggerated because those adolescents who are most likely to use cannabis have lower academic aspirations and poorer high school performance prior to using cannabis, than their peers who do not."

Source: Hall, W., Room, R., & Bondy, S., WHO Project on Health Implications of Cannabis Use: A Comparative Appraisal of the Health and Psychological Consequences of Alcohol, Cannabis, Nicotine and Opiate Use August 28, 1995 (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 1998).

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