

CPYU Trend Alert: High Times? by Doug West

Each December the National Institute on Drug Abuse releases the results of its Monitoring the Future survey concerning drug use, attitudes and behaviors. The 2006 survey was conducted on 48,460 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students (17,026, 16,620, and 14,814, respectively) from 410 schools nationwide by the University of Michigan. CPYU reports on a portion of the survey results, highlighting some of the broader trends about the annual prevalence of drug use among middle/high school aged students (excluding prescription drug use which CPYU recently reported). This information and analysis is invaluable to those who desire to know, love, and lead teenagers to a healthy and mature adulthood, even as they begin to be introduced to and informed about drugs, and make decisions to indulge in or abstain from the use of drugs.

Alcohol: While not classified as an illicit drug, alcohol remains illegal for teens. Yet for all the imposed prohibitions and restrictions on its distribution and consumption, teens continue to access and consume alcohol at disturbingly alarming rates. Despite a downward trend over the past decade of these self-reported statistics, still 33.6% of 8th graders, 55.8% of 10th graders, and 66.5% of 12th graders reported consuming alcohol in the past year; 13.9%, 34.9% and 47.9%, respectively, said they had been drunk. Also, 26.8% of 8th graders, 48.8% of 10th graders, and 54.7% of 12th graders reported consuming so-called alcopops or maltalternatives in the past year.

Marijuana: Marijuana is by far the most widely used illicit drug among teens, with 11.7% of 8th graders, 25.2% of 10th graders, and 31.5% of 12th graders reporting past year use. The percentages have declined marginally since the peaks in the mid-to-late 1990's. Despite efforts to educate teens about the dangers of marijuana use through wide-running media campaigns, teens are simultaneously being educated by the countervailing force of prominent pop culture celebrities who routinely flaunt their use of marijuana (Snoop Dogg, Sean Paul, etc).

Cocaine: Perhaps marginalized due to the recent attention drawn to the upsurge of prescription drug use, cocaine use persists at nominally high levels, despite a marginal downward trend since the late 1990's, with 2.0% of 8th graders, 3.2% of 10th graders, and 5.7% of 12th graders reporting past year use.

Inhalants: Often referred to as the "gateway" drug of choice, given its easy access, and exhibiting usage patterns inversely related to age, inhalants remain a constant and menacing presence with 9.1% of 8th graders, 6.5% of 10th graders, and 4.5% of 12th graders reporting past year use.

Steroids: With all the media attention focused on steroids, particularly at the outset of the current baseball season, only 0.9% of 8th graders, 1.2% of 10th graders, and 1.8% of 12th graders reported using steroids in the past year.

Suggested Resources:

Check out the full results of the Monitoring the Future survey at www.monitoringthefuture.org. Compare these findings with the results of a drug use survey released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k5state/toc.cfm>. Explore the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's informative website <http://theantidrug.com>.

**For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the
Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at
www.cpyu.org.**