



National Institute  
on Drug Abuse

# Drug Facts

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

## High School and Youth Trends

2014's Monitoring the Future survey of drug use and attitudes among American 8th, 10th, and 12th graders continued to show encouraging news about youth drug use, including decreasing use of alcohol, cigarettes, and prescription pain relievers; no increase in use of marijuana; decreasing use of inhalants and synthetic drugs, including K2/Spice and bath salts; and a general decline over the last two decades in the use of illicit drugs. However, the survey highlighted growing concerns over the high rate of e-cigarette use and softening of attitudes around some types of drug use, particularly decreases in perceived harm and disapproval of marijuana use.

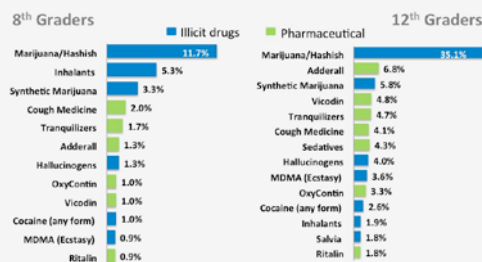
alcohol, which was significantly lower than in 2009, when rates were 14.9 percent, 30.4 percent, and 43.5 percent, respectively. There was also a significant five-year drop in binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row in the previous 2 weeks) by seniors: 19.4 percent reported binge drinking in 2014, whereas 31.5 percent had reported the practice at its peak in 1998.

### Tobacco and e-Cigarettes

Cigarette smoking by youth continues to drop and is currently at its lowest rate in the survey's history. Only 1.4 percent of 8th graders reported smoking every day in 2014, compared to 2.7 percent in 2009; 3.2 percent of 10th graders reported smoking daily, compared to 4.4 percent in 2013 and 6.3 percent in 2009; and 6.7 percent of high school seniors reported smoking daily in 2014, down from 8.5 percent in 2013 and 11.2 percent in 2009. In 1997, at its peak, nearly a quarter of seniors were daily smokers.

However, other forms of tobacco remain popular. In 2014, past-year hookah use continued to increase among 12th graders to 22.9 percent—the highest rate since 2010, when the survey started capturing this type of tobacco use.

Top Drugs among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Graders,  
Past Year Use



\* Only 12<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed about sedatives use  
Source: University of Michigan, 2014 Monitoring the Future Study

### Alcohol

The 2014 survey showed continued declines in alcohol use by all grades. Nine percent of 8th graders, 23.5 percent of 10th graders, and 37.4 percent of 12th graders reported past-month use of

Also popular among teens is the use of e-cigarettes, which was measured for the first time in 2014. Use of e-cigarettes in the past 30 days was reported by 8.7 percent of 8th graders, 16.2 percent of 10th graders, and 17.1 percent of 12th graders. Only 14.2 percent of 12th graders view regular e-cigarette use as harmful. The nicotine in e-cigarettes is vaporized and inhaled (not smoked), but the health impact of e-cigarette use is not yet clear, nor do we know if e-cigarette use makes it more likely for people to use conventional cigarettes or other tobacco products. Survey findings show that while most e-cigarette users have also smoked conventional tobacco products, approximately 2.9 percent of 8th graders, 4.5 percent of 10th graders, and 3.8 percent of 12th graders who report past month use of e-cigarettes deny ever using tobacco cigarettes or smokeless tobacco.

### Illicit Drugs

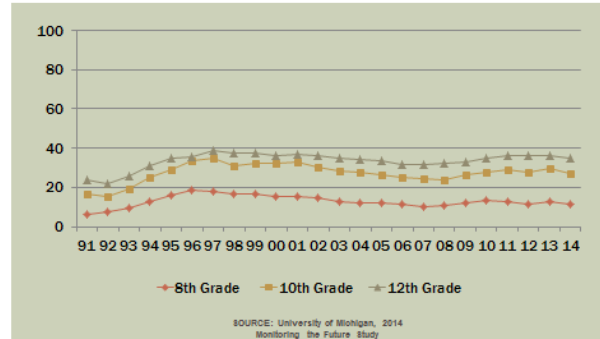
Use of any illicit drug has generally declined over the past two decades. Past-year use of illicit drugs for all grades combined was 27.2 percent in 2014, down from its peak at 34.1 percent in 1997. The MTF survey also shows a decline in the perceived availability of most substance over the past few years, including alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, powder cocaine, crystal methamphetamine, and prescription painkillers.

### Marijuana

Marijuana use remained stable in 2014, even though the percentage of youth perceiving the drug as harmful went down. Past-month use of marijuana remained steady among 8th graders at 6.5 percent, among 10th graders at 16.6 percent, and among 12th graders at 21.2 percent. Close to 6 percent of 12th graders report daily use of marijuana (similar to 2013), and 81 percent of them said the drug is easy to get. Among

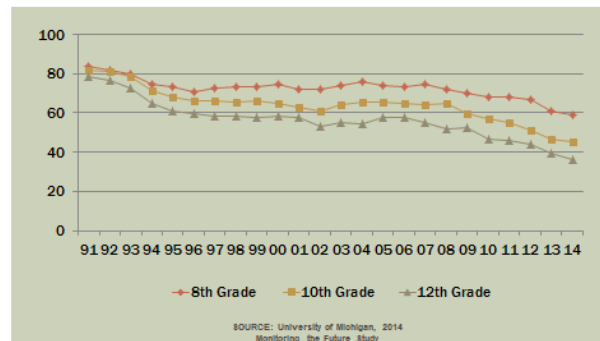
8th graders, there was a drop in perceived availability in 2014, with 36.9 percent saying it is easy to get marijuana, compared to 39.1 percent in 2013.

PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING USE OF MARIJUANA IN PAST YEAR



Although marijuana use has remained relatively stable over the past few years, there continues to be a shifting of teens' attitudes about its perceived risks. The majority of high school seniors do not think occasional marijuana smoking is harmful, with only 36.1 percent saying that regular use puts the user at great risk, compared to 39.5 percent in 2013 and 52.4 percent in 2009. However, 56.7 percent of seniors say they disapprove of adults who smoke it occasionally, and 73.4 percent say they disapprove of adults smoking marijuana regularly.

PERCENT PERCEIVING GREAT RISK OF SMOKING MARIJUANA REGULARLY



Marijuana use continues to exceed cigarette use in all three grade levels. In 2014, 21.2 percent of high school seniors had used marijuana in the past 30 days, whereas only 13.6 percent had smoked cigarettes.

### **Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs**

Misuse and abuse (or “non-medical use”) of prescription and over-the-counter drugs continues to decline among the nation’s youth. Past-year use of the opioid pain reliever Vicodin has dropped significantly over the past 5 years; 4.8 percent of 12th graders used Vicodin for non-medical reasons in 2014, compared to 9.7 percent in 2009. Past-year use of narcotics other than heroin (which includes all opioid pain relievers) among high school seniors dropped from 7.1 percent in 2013 to 6.1 percent in 2014; 9.5 percent of seniors had reported past-year use of these drugs in 2004.

Past-year non-medical use of the stimulants Adderall and Ritalin (often prescribed for ADHD) remained relatively steady in 2014, at 6.8 percent and 1.8 percent respectively for high school seniors. The survey continues to show that most teens get these medicines from friends or relatives; a smaller percentage misuse or abuse pills that had been prescribed for them for a medical problem. Although teens did not misuse or abuse prescription stimulants at higher rates than in past years, there has been a decline in teens’ perceptions the risks of doing so. In 2014, 55.1 percent of seniors saw regularly taking prescription amphetamines as harmful, down from 69.0 percent in 2009.

In 2014, there was also a significant drop in the past-year use of cough/cold medicines containing dextromethorphan (DXM) among 8th graders, with only 2.0 percent using them for non-medical

reasons, down from 2.9 percent in 2013 and 3.8 percent in 2009.

### **Other Illicit Drugs**

Past-year use of MDMA (also known as ecstasy or “Molly”) saw a significant decline among 10th graders to 2.3 percent in 2014, from 3.6 percent in 2013 and 6.2 percent in 2001, when it peaked. Past-year use of heroin remained very low in all three grades despite increased use among adults over 26 years of age in 2013.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a considerable decline in past-year use of synthetic cannabinoids (“K2/Spice,” sometimes misleadingly called “synthetic marijuana”) in the two years the survey has been tracking their use. Only 5.8 percent of 12th graders reported using K2/Spice in 2014, compared to 7.9 percent in 2013 and 11.3 percent in 2012. This was associated with an increase in the perceived risk of taking synthetic marijuana once or twice among 12th graders. Use of the hallucinogen salvia also dropped significantly among 12th graders in 2014 to 1.8 percent, from 3.4 percent in 2013.

Another harmful synthetic drug, bath salts (synthetic stimulants), was added to the survey in 2012; past-year use of bath salts remained low in 2014, and dropped considerably among 8th graders, to 0.5 percent, compared to 1 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of national findings. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; 2014. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4887. NSDUH Series H-49.

## Inhalants

Current, past-year, and lifetime use of inhalants among 10th and 12th graders is at its lowest levels in the history of the survey. Rates of inhalant use are traditionally highest among the youngest adolescents (unlike most other drugs); in 2014, 5.3 percent of 8th graders reported using inhalants in the past year, down from 8.1 percent in 2009 and 12.8 percent in 1995, when use peaked.

## Learn More

Complete MTF survey results are available at [www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org).

For more information on the survey and its findings, also visit [www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future](http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future).

### About the Survey

Since 1975, the MTF survey has measured drug, alcohol, and cigarette use and related attitudes among 12th graders, nationwide. In 1991, 8th and 10th graders were added to the survey. Survey participants report their drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and past month. Overall, 41,551 students from 377 public and private schools in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades participated in the 2014 survey.

The survey is funded by NIDA and conducted by the University of Michigan. Results from the survey are released each December.

Other sources of information on drug use trends among youth are available:

The annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health, conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, gathers detailed data on drug, alcohol, and tobacco use by all age groups. It is a comprehensive source of information on substance use and dependence among Americans aged 12 and older. Data and reports can be found at [www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh](http://www.samhsa.gov/data/population-data-nsduh).

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey is a school-based survey conducted every other year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It gathers data on a wide variety of health-related risk behaviors, including drug abuse, from students in grades 9 through 12. More information is available at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm).