

Alcohol, Drug and Cigarette Use by Teens

DEFINITION

Alcohol, drug and cigarette use by teens is the percentage of middle school and high school students who report having used alcohol, cigarettes or illegal drugs (such as marijuana, uppers, or downers) at least once in the 30 days prior to taking the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Student Survey during the 2006-2007 school year.

SIGNIFICANCE

The use and/or abuse of substances by children and youth poses health and safety risks to them, their families, their schools and their communities.¹ The number of adolescents using alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs has been declining steadily both in the U.S. and in Rhode Island for the past decade.^{2,3}

Research shows that the key risk periods for alcohol, cigarette and other drug abuse are during major transitions in children's lives. These include the transition to middle school, which presents new academic and social situations and the transition to high school, which presents additional social and emotional challenges. There is greater availability of drugs, more peers who abuse substances, and more social activities involving drugs and alcohol at the high school level.⁴

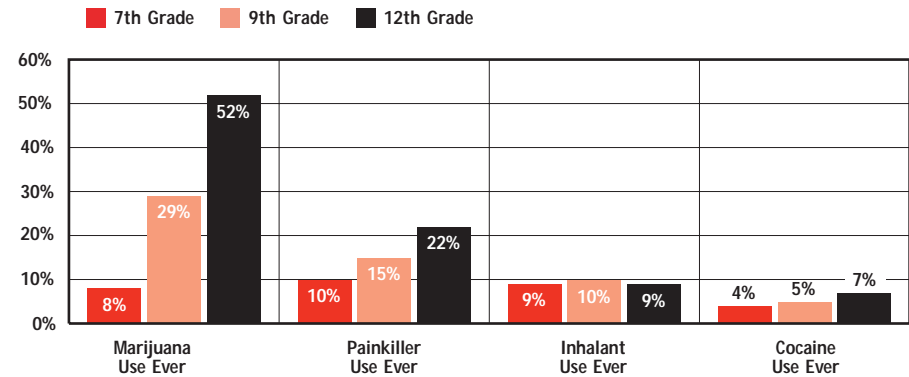
The risk for becoming a substance user involves the relationship between risk factors and protective factors, which

vary in their effects by age, gender and race/ethnicity. Risk factors include early aggressive behavior, lack of parental supervision, peer substance abuse, academic failure and poverty. Protective factors include a strong parent-child bond, parental involvement and consistent discipline, academic competence and a strong neighborhood attachment.⁵

Early intervention to prevent risk factors and build protective factors has a greater impact than interventions that occur later in a child's life. Family intervention can strengthen protective factors among young children by teaching parents better communication skills and appropriate discipline. School programs can begin to prevent substance abuse as early as pre-school by addressing risk factors such as aggressive behavior, poor social skills and academic difficulties.⁶ Adolescents who participate in after-school activities are less likely to use substances than those who are not involved in any school-based, community-based, faith-based or other after-school activities.⁷

Approximately 6% of youth ages 12-17 in the U.S. meet standard diagnostic criteria indicating the need for treatment for alcohol use and 5% need treatment for illicit drug use. Fewer than 1 in 10 of these youth receive treatment (7% receive specialty alcohol treatment and 9% receive illicit drug use treatment).⁸

Illicit Drug Use among Rhode Island Students, by Grade, 2007



Source: 2007 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey; Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis.

- ◆ Use of marijuana almost doubles between 9th grade (29%) and 12th grade (52%).
- ◆ Among high school students in Rhode Island in 2007, 40% reported ever having used marijuana, while 23% reported having used it in the past month. Nearly one in five (18%) Rhode Island high school students reported using painkillers, such as OxyContin, Codeine, Percocet or Tylenol III without a doctor's prescription at least once in their lifetime.⁹
- ◆ One in ten (10%) high school students reported ever using inhalants (sniffing glue, breathing the contents of an aerosol spray can and/or inhaling paints or sprays), 6% reported ever using any form of cocaine and 7% report ever using ecstasy.¹⁰

Tobacco Use

- ◆ The percentage of Rhode Island high school students who have smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days in the past month has decreased significantly over the past decade, from 19% in 1997 to 6% in 2007. Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) high school smokers have tried to quit in the past year. After a low of 4% in 2001, the percentage of Rhode Island high school students who report using chewing tobacco in the past month has increased to 7% in 2007.¹¹

Alcohol, Drug and Cigarette Use by Teens

Table 23.

Student Reports of Alcohol, Drug and Cigarette Use
by Student Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2006-2007

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALCOHOL USE		DRUG USE		CIGARETTE USE	
	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
Barrington	11%	37%	4%	22%	5%	21%
Bristol-Warren	18%	47%	6%	31%	8%	27%
Burrillville	28%	45%	15%	26%	14%	27%
Central Falls	20%	37%	7%	15%	6%	16%
Charlho	15%	51%	9%	37%	10%	28%
Coventry	14%	47%	7%	34%	7%	29%
Cranston	18%	38%	8%	22%	8%	20%
Cumberland	12%	43%	7%	29%	6%	25%
East Greenwich	14%	36%	5%	20%	7%	13%
East Providence	23%	42%	11%	31%	10%	25%
Exeter-West Greenwich	18%	43%	10%	29%	7%	18%
Foster-Glocester	22%	49%	12%	36%	13%	34%
Jamestown	13%	NA	4%	NA	6%	NA
Johnston	19%	43%	8%	23%	10%	19%
Lincoln	15%	47%	7%	29%	7%	25%
Little Compton	8%	NA	3%	NA	5%	NA
Middletown	9%	40%	4%	30%	5%	25%
Narragansett	11%	40%	7%	24%	6%	13%
New Shoreham	NA	62%	NA	47%	NA	19%
Newport	16%	44%	7%	38%	6%	24%
North Kingstown	12%	50%	5%	37%	4%	26%
North Providence	15%	46%	4%	32%	5%	27%
North Smithfield	15%	42%	8%	18%	10%	24%
Pawtucket	21%	35%	10%	20%	9%	15%
Portsmouth	10%	49%	5%	30%	4%	24%
Providence	22%	36%	11%	20%	9%	16%
Scituate	14%	42%	6%	28%	8%	22%
Smithfield	17%	46%	9%	33%	8%	28%
South Kingstown	10%	47%	6%	30%	4%	22%
Tiverton	15%	50%	7%	38%	7%	29%
Warwick	22%	40%	9%	25%	8%	23%
West Warwick	16%	39%	6%	24%	7%	20%
Westerly	17%	51%	6%	32%	7%	28%
Woonsocket	21%	39%	9%	26%	10%	22%
Core Cities	21%	37%	10%	22%	9%	18%
Remainder of State	16%	44%	7%	29%	7%	24%
Rhode Island	17%	42%	8%	27%	8%	22%

NA = Community has no middle school or no high school.

Data are for students reporting any use in the 30 days prior to the date the SALT Survey was administered.

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Felner, R. (2007). *Rhode Island SALT Survey reports, student reports of health risk practices by grade level, 2006-2007 school year*. Retrieved from Information Works at www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu. Data are for students who reported substance use in the past 30 days. Core city, remainder of state and Rhode Island totals were calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using data provided by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Rhode Island state totals include the following charter schools (Compass School, CVS Highlander Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, and BEACON Charter School) and the following state-operated schools (William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School and Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center), as well as the Urban Collaborative (UCAP). These schools are not included in the core city and remainder of state calculations.

The School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Student Survey is administered during one 60-minute class period each school year. All students in grades 4-12 in Rhode Island complete the survey, with the exception of students who have been excused by their parents and students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) who are unable to take the survey. Grades included in middle and high school vary by district. For the Rhode Island percentage, middle school includes grades 5-8 and high school includes grades 9-12.

References

^{1,4,5,6} *Preventing drug use among children and adolescents: A research-based guide for parents, educators, and community leaders, second edition.* (2003). Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse.

² National Adolescent Health Information Center. (2007). *2007 fact sheet on substance use: Adolescent and young adults*. San Francisco, CA: University of California, San Francisco.

^{3,11} *Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, trend analysis report.* (2007). Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis.

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