

Alcohol, Drug, and Cigarette Use by Teens

DEFINITION

Alcohol, drug and cigarette use by teens is the percentage of 7th-grade, 9th-grade, and 12th-grade students who have used alcohol or marijuana in the past month or are current smokers according to the 2003 Rhode Island Youth Tobacco Survey.

SIGNIFICANCE

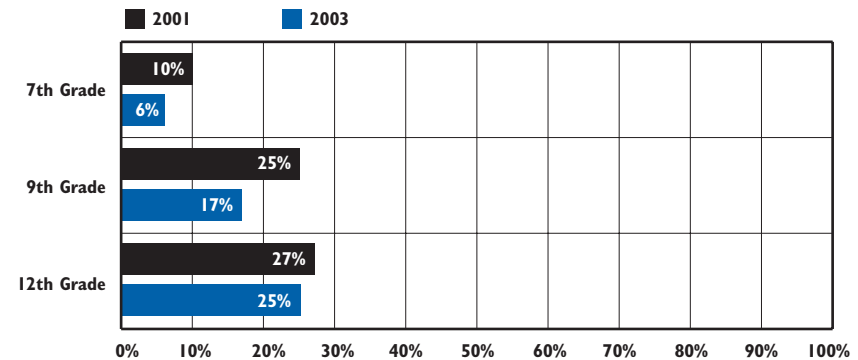
The use of substances threatens the health and safety of children, families, and communities. The number of adolescents using marijuana and tobacco is slowly decreasing both in Rhode Island and nationwide, and the age at first use has been increasing.^{1,2,3} The age when young people first start using alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs is a predictor of later alcohol and drug problems, especially if use begins before age 15.⁴

Research shows that the key risk periods for alcohol, drug and cigarette 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 as well as greater exposure to drugs, substance abusers, and social activities involving drugs and alcohol.⁵

The risk for becoming a substance abuser 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.⁶

Early intervention with risk 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 as early as pre-school by addressing risk factors such as aggressive behavior, poor social skills, and academic difficulties.⁷

Use of Cigarettes by Student Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2001 and 2003

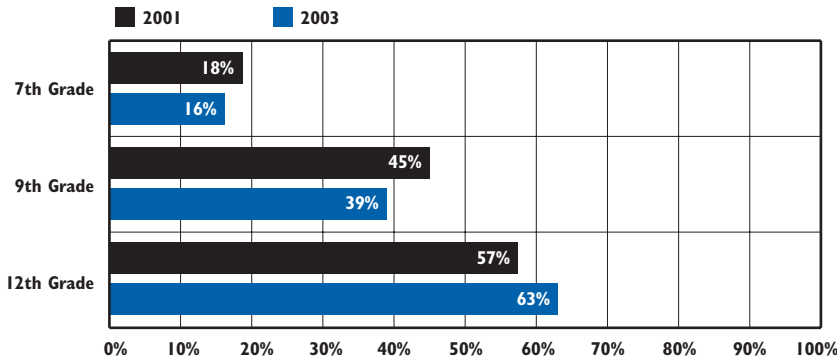


Source: 2003 Rhode Island Youth Tobacco Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Health Statistics. Data are for students who smoked cigarettes in the past month.

- ◆ Almost one in five (17%) 9th graders and one in four (25%) 12th graders has smoked cigarettes in the past month according to the 2003 Rhode Island Youth Tobacco Survey.
- ◆ Of Rhode Island students who had ever smoked, 12% of high school students and 23% of middle school students smoked their first cigarette before age 11.⁸
- ◆ Nearly half (45%) of Rhode Island high school students who smoke feel like they need a cigarette every day. Among high school students in Rhode Island, 58% of current smokers want to stop smoking and 58% had tried to quit during the past year.⁹
- ◆ Among Rhode Island high school students who are current smokers, 67% discussed the dangers of tobacco use with a parent during the past twelve months; 83% think that people can get addicted to using tobacco just like getting addicted to cocaine or heroin; and 35% think it is safe to smoke for a year or two as long as you quit after that.¹⁰

Alcohol, Drug, and Cigarette Use by Teens

Use of Alcohol by Student Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2001 and 2003

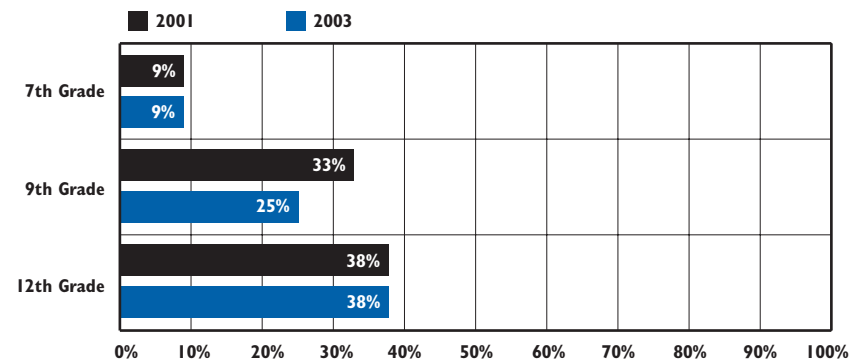


Source: 2003 Rhode Island Youth Tobacco Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Health Statistics. Data are for students who used alcohol in the past month.

◆ In Rhode Island, 16% of 7th grade students, 39% of 9th grade students and 63% of 12th grade students used alcohol in the past month. Nearly 30% of middle school students reported that it would be easy for them to get alcoholic beverages.¹¹

◆ Research indicates that 40% of those who start drinking at age 14 or younger will develop alcohol dependence, compared to 10% of those who begin drinking at age 20 or older.¹²

Use of Marijuana by Student Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2001 and 2003



Source: 2003 Rhode Island Youth Tobacco Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Health Statistics. Data are for students who used marijuana in the past month.

◆ The likelihood that Rhode Island students used marijuana during the past month nearly tripled between 7th grade and 9th grade, increasing from 9% to 25%.¹³ Nationally, thirteen-year-olds are three times as likely to know how to obtain marijuana or to know someone who uses illicit drugs than twelve-year-olds.¹⁴

References for Indicator

¹ Johnston, L. D., et al. (2003). *Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings, 2002*. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

² *Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1997-2003*. Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Health Statistics.

³ *National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health, 1990-1998*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

^{4,12,14} *Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem*. (2001). Princeton, NJ: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

^{5,6,7} *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents, Second Edition*. (2003). Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse.

^{8,9,10,11,13} 2003 Rhode Island Youth Tobacco Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Health Statistics.