

High School and Youth Trends

Since 1975, the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey has been administered annually to study the extent of and beliefs about drug use among 12th-graders. The survey was expanded in 1991 to include 8th- and 10th-graders. It is funded by NIDA and is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The goal of the survey is to collect data on daily, past-month, past-year, and lifetime¹ drug use among students in these grade levels. The 34th annual study was conducted during 2008.²

Decreases or stability in abuse patterns were noted for most drugs from 2007 to 2008. Below are the key findings, based on data from the 2008 MTF survey. For individual drugs, a decrease or increase is noted only if statistically significant; other trends are considered stable and are not highlighted in the sections below.

Positive Findings—————

From 2007 to 2008, the percentage of 10th-graders reporting lifetime, past-year, and past-month use of **any illicit drug other than marijuana** declined significantly. Lifetime use decreased from 18.2 to 15.9 percent, past-year use declined from 13.1 to 11.3 percent, and past-month use decreased from 6.9 to 5.3 percent.

Cigarette smoking continues to fall to the lowest rate in the survey's history. Between

2007 and 2008, declines were observed in lifetime, past-month, and daily cigarette use among 10th-graders. Although there were no declines for 8th- and 12th-graders over the past year, all grades surveyed have continued a longer term trend of declining cigarette use. These findings are particularly noteworthy since tobacco addiction is one of the leading preventable contributors to many of our Nation's health problems.

Overall, the use of **stimulants** declined. Lifetime, past-year, and past-month **amphetamine** use declined among 10th-graders. **Crystal methamphetamine ("ice") use continues to decline**—past-year use fell among 12th-graders, from 1.6 to 1.1 percent. Also, past-year **crack cocaine** use declined from 2007 to 2008 among 12th-graders, from 1.9 to 1.6 percent.

The use of **alcohol** in all prevalence periods measured among 10th-graders decreased. For example, past-year alcohol use by 10th-graders declined from 56.3 percent in 2007 to 52.5 percent in 2008.³

Areas of Concern—————

Marijuana use across the three grades surveyed has shown a consistent decline since the mid-1990s, but it appears to have leveled off. Past-year use was reported by 10.9 percent of 8th-graders, 23.9 percent of 10th-graders, and 32.4 percent of 12th-graders.

In 2008, 15.4 percent of 12th-graders reported using a **prescription drug** nonmedically within the past year. This category includes amphetamines, sedatives/barbiturates, tranquilizers, and opiates other than heroin. **Vicodin** continues to be abused at unacceptably high levels. Many of the drugs used by 12th-graders are prescription drugs or, in the case of cough medicine, are available over the counter.⁴

Attitudes toward substance abuse, often seen as harbingers of change in rates of use, were mostly stable.⁵ However, among 12th-graders, **perceived risk of harm associated with LSD continues to decrease**. Additionally, **perceived harmfulness and disapproval of marijuana and inhalant use softened** among 8th-graders this year.

(1) "Lifetime" refers to use at least once during a respondent's lifetime. "Past year" refers to use at least once during the year preceding an individual's response to the survey. "Past month" refers to use at least once during the 30 days preceding an individual's response to the survey. "Daily" refers to an individual's drug use 20 or more times in the 30 days prior to the survey, except for cigarettes, where the definition is one or more cigarettes per day in the 30 days prior to the survey.

(2) For the 2008 MTF, 46,348 students in a nationally representative sample of 386 public and private schools were surveyed about lifetime, past-year, past-month, and daily use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. The latest data are online at www.drugabuse.gov.

(3) For information on the health effects of alcohol, visit the Web site of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at www.niaaa.nih.gov.

(4) For more information on the misuse or nonmedical use of pain medications or other prescription drugs, please visit www.drugabuse.gov and click on "Prescription Medications" under "Drugs of Abuse."

(5) In addition to studying drug use among 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders, MTF collects information on three attitudinal indicators related to their drug use. These indicators are perceived risk of harm in taking a drug, disapproval of others who take a drug, and perceived availability of a drug.

Monitoring the Future Study: Trends in Prevalence of Various Drugs for 8th-Graders, 10th-Graders, and 12th-Graders, 2005–2008 (In percent)*

	8th-Graders				10th-Graders				12th-Graders			
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
Any Illicit Drug Use												
Lifetime	21.4	20.9	[19.0]	19.6	38.2	36.1	35.6	34.1	50.4	48.2	46.8	47.4
Past Year	15.5	14.8	[13.2]	14.1	29.8	28.7	28.1	26.9	38.4	36.5	35.9	36.6
Past Month	8.5	8.1	7.4	7.6	17.3	16.8	16.9	15.8	23.1	21.5	21.9	22.3
Marijuana/Hashish												
Lifetime	16.5	15.7	14.2	14.6	34.1	31.8	31.0	29.9	44.8	42.3	41.8	42.6
Past Year	12.2	11.7	[10.3]	10.9	26.6	25.2	24.6	23.9	33.6	31.5	31.7	32.4
Past Month	6.6	6.5	5.7	5.8	15.2	14.2	14.2	13.8	19.8	18.3	18.8	19.4
Daily	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.9	3.1	2.8	2.8	2.7	5.0	5.0	5.1	5.4
Inhalants												
Lifetime	17.1	16.1	15.6	15.7	13.1	13.3	13.6	12.8	11.4	11.1	10.5	9.9
Past Year	9.5	9.1	8.3	8.9	6.0	6.5	6.6	5.9	5.0	4.5	3.7	3.8
Past Month	4.2	4.1	3.9	4.1	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.4
Hallucinogens												
Lifetime	3.8	3.4	3.1	3.3	5.8	6.1	6.4	5.5	8.8	8.3	8.4	8.7
Past Year	2.4	2.1	1.9	2.1	4.0	4.1	4.4	3.9	5.5	4.9	5.4	5.9
Past Month	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.3	1.9	1.5	1.7	[2.2]
LSD												
Lifetime	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.9	2.5	2.7	3.0	2.6	3.5	3.3	3.4	4.0
Past Year	1.2	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.7
Past Month	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	[1.1]
Cocaine												
Lifetime	3.7	3.4	3.1	3.0	5.2	4.8	5.3	4.5	8.0	8.5	7.8	7.2
Past Year	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.8	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.0	5.1	5.7	5.2	4.4
Past Month	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	2.3	2.5	[2.0]	1.9
Crack Cocaine												
Lifetime	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.0	3.5	3.5	3.2	2.8
Past Year	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.7	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.9	2.1	1.9	[1.6]
Past Month	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.7	[0.5]	0.5	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8
Heroin												
Lifetime	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	[1.2]	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.3
Past Year	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7
Past Month	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
Tranquilizers												
Lifetime	4.1	4.3	3.9	3.9	7.1	7.2	7.4	6.8	9.9	10.3	9.5	8.9
Past Year	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4	4.8	5.2	5.3	4.6	6.8	6.6	6.2	6.2
Past Month	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	[1.9]	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6
Alcohol												
Lifetime	41.0	40.5	38.9	38.9	63.2	61.5	61.7	[58.3]	75.1	72.7	72.2	71.9
Past Year	33.9	33.6	31.8	32.1	56.7	55.8	56.3	[52.5]	68.6	66.5	66.4	65.5
Past Month	17.1	17.2	15.9	15.9	33.2	33.8	33.4	[28.8]	47.0	45.3	44.4	43.1
Daily	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	1.3	1.4	1.4	[1.0]	3.1	3.0	3.1	2.8

(Cont'd)

	8th-Graders				10th-Graders				12th-Graders			
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
Cigarettes (any use)												
Lifetime	25.9	24.6	[22.1]	20.5	38.9	36.1	34.6	[31.7]	50.0	47.1	46.2	44.7
Past Month	9.3	8.7	[7.1]	6.8	14.9	14.5	14.0	[12.3]	23.2	21.6	21.6	20.4
Daily	4.0	4.0	[3.0]	3.1	7.5	7.6	7.2	[5.9]	13.6	12.2	12.3	11.4
1/2 pack+/day	1.7	1.5	1.1	1.2	3.1	3.3	2.7	[2.0]	6.9	5.9	5.7	5.4
Smokeless Tobacco												
Lifetime	10.1	10.2	9.1	9.8	14.5	15.0	15.1	[12.2]	17.5	15.2	15.1	15.6
Past Month	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.5	5.6	5.7	6.1	5.0	7.6	6.1	6.6	6.5
Daily	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.4	2.5	2.2	2.8	2.7
Steroids												
Lifetime	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.4	2.6	2.7	2.2	2.2
Past Year	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.9	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.5
Past Month	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.0
MDMA												
Lifetime	2.8	2.5	2.3	2.4	4.0	4.5	5.2	4.3	5.4	6.5	6.5	6.2
Past Year	1.7	1.4	1.5	1.7	2.6	2.8	3.5	2.9	3.0	4.1	4.5	4.3
Past Month	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.6	1.8
Methamphetamine												
Lifetime	3.1	2.7	[1.8]	2.3	4.1	3.2	2.8	2.4	4.5	4.4	[3.0]	2.8
Past Year	1.8	1.8	[1.1]	1.2	2.9	1.8	1.6	1.5	2.5	2.5	[1.7]	1.2
Past Month	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.1	0.7	0.4	[0.7]	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.6
Vicodin												
Past Year	2.6	3.0	2.7	2.9	5.9	7.0	7.2	6.7	9.5	9.7	9.6	9.7
OxyContin												
Past Year	1.8	2.6	1.8	2.1	3.2	3.8	3.9	3.6	5.5	4.3	5.2	4.7
Cough Medicine (nonprescription)**												
Past Year	-	4.2	4.0	3.6	-	5.3	5.4	5.3	-	6.9	5.8	5.5

*Data in brackets indicate statistically significant change from the previous year.

**A question on the past-year abuse of nonprescription cough medicine was added in 2006.