



FACT SHEET

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Executive Office of the President

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2012 Monitoring the Future Study *HIGHLIGHTS*

The Obama Administration's approach to the drug problem is borne out of the recognition that drug use is a major public health threat, and that drug addiction is a preventable and treatable disease. Young people in particular deserve every opportunity to live up to their full potential, and exposure to effective drug prevention programs improves their chances. Research shows preventing drug use before it begins is the most cost-effective, common-sense approach to promoting safe and healthy communities.

The following are highlights from the 2012 Monitoring the Future (MTF) study, an annual survey of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in the United States. The study is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse with a grant to the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research.

Overview

Findings from this year's MTF survey indicate that overall drug use (as measured by past month use of any illicit drugs) in each of the three grades was unchanged from last year (i.e., no statistically significant changes). As in past years, any illicit drug use is driven by marijuana use, which also was unchanged from last year. Over the 6-year period from 2007 to 2012, however, several increases in youth use were noted:

- Past month use of any illicit drug increased among 12th graders (from 21.9% to 25.2%).
- Past month use of marijuana increased among 10th graders (from 14.2% to 17.0%) and 12th graders (from 18.8% to 22.9%).

Declines in Youth Drug Use

Despite some increases in drug use over the past several years, over the long term, rates of drug use among young people today are far lower than they were in the late 1970s. This year's MTF survey also shows several declines between 2011 and 2012, and rates for some of these drugs in some grades are at their lowest levels since the peaks of the mid- to late 1990s. These include the following one-year declines:

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- Among 8th graders:
 - Past month use of an illicit drug other than marijuana (3.4% to 2.6%).
 - Past month use of amphetamines (1.8% to 1.3%).
 - Past month use of cocaine (0.8% to 0.5%).
 - Lifetime (1.5% to 1.0%), past year (0.9% to 0.6%), and past month (0.5% to 0.3%) use of crack.
 - Lifetime use of heroin (1.2% to 0.8%) and past year use of heroin without a needle (0.4% to 0.3%).
 - Past month use of inhalants (3.2% to 2.7%).
 - Past year use of hallucinogens (2.2% to 1.6%), particularly hallucinogens other than LSD (1.8% to 1.3%).
 - Past month use of hallucinogens (1.0% to 0.6%) and hallucinogens other than LSD (0.7% to 0.5%).
- Among 12th graders:
 - Lifetime (1.3% to 0.8%), past year (0.7% to 0.4%), and past month (0.4% to 0.2%) use of heroin without a needle.
 - Past month use of narcotics other than heroin (3.6% to 3.0%).
- Ecstasy use in the past year among 8th graders (1.7% to 1.1%), 10th graders (4.5% to 3.0%), and 12th graders (5.3% to 3.8%). In addition, lifetime (6.6% to 5.0%) and past month (1.6% to 1.0%) use among 10th graders.

Youth Attitudes Toward Substance Use

President Obama has made clear that we must educate young people about the risks associated with drug use—just as we’ve educated them about the harms of tobacco and the danger of driving under the influence. The MTF survey reports several instances of weakening in attitudes (perceived risk in using or disapproval of people who use) toward substance use, and a few instances of improvement of attitudes. Among the changes from the previous year of such attitudes were the following:

- The percentage of 8th graders reporting great risk in trying marijuana once or twice declined from 2011 (28.2%) to 2012 (26.0%).
- Among 10th graders, the percentage reporting great risk also declined in one year for trying marijuana once or twice (19.3% vs. 17.2%), smoking marijuana occasionally (30.1% vs. 26.8%), and smoking marijuana regularly (55.2% to 50.9%).
- Among 12th graders, the percentage reporting great risk declined for trying Adderall once or twice (31.2% to 27.2%) and trying Adderall occasionally (40.8% to 35.3%).
- Among 8th graders, the percentage who disapprove of people using various substances declined for taking LSD once or twice (55.4% to 51.8%), taking LSD regularly (57.6% to 54.1%), trying ecstasy (MDMA) once or twice (64.2% to 60.2%), and taking ecstasy occasionally (67.5% to 63.2%).
- The only improvements in disapproval were found among 12th graders, with disapproval of trying ecstasy once or twice increasing (83.9% to 87.1%), as did trying heroin without a needle once or twice (92.6% to 95.2%) and occasionally (94.1% to 95.9%).

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Prescription Drugs

Over the past decade, high rates of prescription drug abuse and misuse have had devastating consequences for public health and safety, including young people.

According to MTF:

- While there were no changes in the rates of past year use of Oxycontin or Vicoden between 2011 and 2012 for any grade, the rates in 2012 for all three grades are at their lowest since 2002.
- From 2007 to 2012 the rate of lifetime, past year, and past month use of sedatives among seniors has each declined by about 25 percent.
- Among all three grades, lifetime, past year, and past month use of tranquilizers had declined from 2007 to 2012 with the exception of lifetime and past year use among 12th graders.

Synthetic Drugs

Synthetic cannabinoids (often known as “K2” or “Spice”) and bath salts products are often sold in legal retail outlets as “herbal incense” and “plant food,” respectively, and labeled “not for human consumption” to mask their intended purpose and avoid FDA regulatory oversight of the manufacturing process. Poison Control Centers operating across the nation have also reported a high number of calls nationwide related to synthetic drugs. According to the 2012 MTF survey:

- 4.4 percent, 8.8 percent, and 11.3 percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, respectively, reported using synthetic cannabinoids in the past year. For 8th graders, this is the third most frequently used illicit drug (after marijuana and inhalants); for 10th and 12th graders, it is the second most frequently used illicit drug, after marijuana.
- In 2012, students were asked for the first time whether they had used synthetic stimulants (“bath salts”) in the past year. MTF reports 0.8 percent, 0.6 percent, and 1.3 percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, respectively, reporting using the drug in the past month.

Gender and Race/Ethnicity

- Typically, boys tend to have higher rates of illicit drug use than girls except in the 8th grade, where boys and girls tend to use at similar rates. Gender differences tend to grow larger with age. Rates of annual marijuana use among senior boys, for example, are nearly 10 percentage points higher than girls (40.8% vs. 31.3%).
- Hispanic 8th graders have higher rates of annual use of any illicit drug than either white or African American 8th graders (19.3% vs. 12.% and 13.5%). By the time they are seniors, all three race/ethnicities have similar rates of past year use of any illicit drug.
- Race/ethnicity differences are perhaps most stark with respect to the abuse of prescription drugs. White seniors (17.5%) are far more likely to have used these drugs non-medically in the past year than are Hispanic seniors (10.9%), who, in turn, are more likely to use them than are African American seniors (6.5%).



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