

# HANDS-ON Health

Health Wave Newsletter, January 2008

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## Current Trends in Teen Drug Use/Abuse: 2007 MONITORING THE FUTURE SURVEY RESULTS

The Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey has studied annually the extent of drug use among 12th-graders since 1975 and, since 1991, it was expanded to include 8th- and 10th-graders. It is funded by The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The researchers' goal is to collect data on *past month*, *past year*, and *lifetime* drug use among students in these grade levels.

MTF, now in its 33rd year, tracks smoking, drinking, and illicit drug use among the nation's secondary school students, surveying about 50,000 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in more than 400 secondary schools every year.

The following results are a summary of this year's Monitoring the Future\*\* survey.

\*\* Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G. & Schulenberg, J. E. (December 11, 2007). "Overall, illicit drug use by American teens continues gradual decline in 2007." University of Michigan News Service: Ann Arbor, MI. [Online]. Available: [www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org); accessed 12/15/07.

### Teen Smoking

There has been a significant decline in recent years of teen smoking, particularly among those in their early teens. These declines can be seen in their lifetime, 30-day, and daily smoking rates; the rate of smoking in the prior 30 days is now down by two thirds among 8th graders to 7 percent from the peak level reached in 1996 of 21 percent. "That should eventually translate into many fewer illnesses and pre-



### Positive Trends in 2007 Survey:

#### CIGARETTE SMOKING CONTINUES TO FALL TO THE LOWEST RATE IN THE SURVEY'S HISTORY!!

- Between 2006 and 2007, declines were observed in lifetime, past month, and daily cigarette use among 8th graders.
- Although there were no 1-year declines for 10th and 12th graders, all grades have continued a longer term trend of declining cigarette use.

#### MARIJUANA USE

- Past year use by 8th graders declined from 11.7% in 2006 to 10.3% in 2007.
- Between 2001 and 2007, past month use declined by nearly 25% for 8th, 10th, and 12th graders combined.

#### OTHER ILLICIT DRUG USE

- The percentage of 8th graders reporting *lifetime use* declined from 20.9% in 2006 to 19.0% in 2007.
- Reported past year use among 8th graders declined from 14.8% to 13.2%.
- Among 8th graders, past year prevalence has fallen by 44% since the peak year of 1996.
- Among 10th and 12th graders, past year prevalence has fallen 27% and 15% respectively since the peak year of 1997.

mature deaths for this generation of young people,” said University of Michigan Distinguished Research Scientist Lloyd Johnston, the study’s principal investigator.

Another very promising sign is the reported risk associated with daily smoking. In grades 8, 10, and 12, respectively, 61 percent, 68 percent, and 77 percent of the 2007 respondents say that they see “great risk” of harm in being a pack-a-day smoker.

The great majority of teens today also say that they “prefer to date people who don’t smoke”: 81 percent, 80 percent, and 77 percent in grades 8, 10, and 12. Nearly two thirds think that “becoming a smoker reflects poor judgment.”

These attitudes became more widespread after the mid-1990s, but have not grown much over the past

## Negative Trends in 2007 Survey:

### PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

- In 2007, 15.4% of 12th graders reported using a prescription drug nonmedically within the past year (i.e., at least one in every twenty high school seniors has tried the powerful narcotic drug OxyContin in the past year). Annual prevalence rates of Vicotin in 2007 are even higher than for OxyContin.

### MDMA (ECSTASY) AND LSD

- Among 8th graders, perceived risk of harm associated with MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-methylamphetamine), most commonly known today by the street name ecstasy, decreased for the third year in a row. Attitudes towards using LSD also softened among 10th graders this year.
- Between 2005 and 2007, past year abuse of MDMA increased among 10th and 12th graders.

few years. Johnston added, “Despite what cigarette ads have implied for decades, smoking makes you less attractive to the great majority of the opposite sex, not more; and young people need to know that.”

### CIGARETTE USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Lifetime</b>																	
8th Grade	44.0	45.2	45.3	46.1	46.4	49.2	47.3	45.7	44.1	40.5	36.6	31.4	28.4	27.9	25.9	24.6	22.1
10th Grade	55.1	53.5	56.3	56.9	57.6	61.2	60.2	57.7	57.6	55.1	52.8	47.4	43.0	40.7	38.9	36.1	34.6
12th Grade	63.1	61.8	61.9	62.0	64.2	63.5	65.4	65.3	64.6	62.5	61.0	57.2	53.7	52.8	50.0	47.1	46.2
<b>30-day use</b>																	
8th Grade	14.3	15.5	16.7	18.6	19.1	21.0	19.4	19.1	17.5	14.6	12.2	10.7	10.2	9.2	9.3	8.7	7.1
10th Grade	20.8	21.5	24.7	25.4	27.9	30.4	29.8	27.6	25.7	23.9	21.3	17.7	16.7	16.0	14.9	14.5	14.0
12th Grade	28.3	27.8	29.9	31.2	33.5	34.0	36.5	35.1	34.6	31.4	29.5	26.7	24.4	25.0	23.2	21.6	21.6
<b>Daily use</b>																	
8th Grade	7.2	7.0	8.3	8.8	9.3	10.4	9.0	8.8	8.1	7.4	5.5	5.1	4.5	4.4	4.0	4.0	3.0
10th Grade	12.6	12.3	14.2	14.6	16.3	18.3	18.0	15.8	15.9	14.0	12.2	10.1	8.9	8.3	7.5	7.6	7.2
12th Grade	18.5	17.2	19.0	19.4	21.6	22.2	24.6	22.4	23.1	20.6	19.0	16.9	15.8	15.6	13.6	12.2	12.3

### Alcohol Use

The use of alcohol by teens, like their use of many of the illicit drugs, has declined since the mid-1990s.

The 30-day prevalence of alcohol use (reporting drinking an alcoholic beverage at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey) has fallen by 40 percent among 8th graders since their peak level in 1996. However, the proportional declines since recent peak rates are smaller for the older stu-

dents: about a one-fifth decline for 10th graders and about one sixth for 12th graders. All three grades showed small declines in use this year—none reaching statistical significance. Thirty-day prevalence of alcohol use now stands at 16 percent, 33 percent, and 44 percent for grades 8, 10, and 12.

Self-reports of being drunk continued a long slow decline into 2007. Again,

the long-term decline was most pronounced among 8th graders—the youngest teens being surveyed.

The proportions saying that they got drunk in the prior 30 days was 5.5 percent in the 2007 survey, down by more than four tenths from what it was in 1996 (9.6 percent). The propor-

tional declines are much smaller for the older students, with 18 percent of the 10th graders admitting to drunkenness within the month, down almost one quarter from their recent peak rate, and 29 percent of 12th graders admitting drunkenness, down only about one sixth from their peak rate in 1997.

### ALCOHOL USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>30-day use</b>																	
8th Grade	25.1	26.1	24.3	25.5	24.6	26.2	24.5	23.0	24.0	22.4	21.5	19.6	19.7	18.6	17.1	17.2	15.9
10th Grade	42.8	39.9	38.2	39.2	38.8	40.4	40.1	38.8	40.0	41.0	39.0	35.4	35.4	35.2	33.2	33.8	33.4
12th Grade	54.0	51.3	48.6	50.1	51.3	50.8	52.7	52.0	51.0	50.0	49.8	48.6	47.5	48.0	47.0	45.3	44.4
<b>Been Drunk in last 30 days</b>																	
8th Grade	7.6	7.5	7.8	8.7	8.3	9.6	8.2	8.4	9.4	8.3	7.7	6.7	6.7	6.2	6.0	6.2	5.5
10th Grade	20.5	18.1	19.8	20.3	20.8	21.3	22.4	21.1	22.5	23.5	21.9	18.3	18.2	18.5	17.6	18.8	18.1
12th Grade	31.6	29.9	28.9	30.8	33.2	31.3	34.2	32.9	32.9	32.3	32.7	30.3	30.9	32.5	30.2	30.0	28.7

### Anabolic Steroids

Monitoring the Future tracked a fairly sharp increase in the use of anabolic steroids by male teens in the late 1990s, with peak levels reached in 1999 among 8th-grade males, in 2000 among 10th-grade males, and in 2001 and 2002 among 12th-grade males.

Since those peak years, the annual prevalence rate has dropped by more than half among the 8th and 10th grader males (to 1.1 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively), and by 40 percent among 12th-grade males (to 2.3 percent annual prevalence in 2007).

Over the past four-year interval, there

has been an increase in the proportion of 12th-grade males—the only grade asked the question—who see great risk in trying anabolic steroids, which may help to account for the decline in use.

Use among females is considerably lower than among males, and has also been declining since 2002 in the lower grades, and since 2004 in grade 12. In 2007 the annual prevalence of anabolic steroid use for girls ranges from 0.4 percent in 8th and 10th grades to 0.6 percent in 12th. These rates are down by about two-thirds from their recent peak levels.

### STERIOD USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Annual</b>																	
8th Grade	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.1	1.1	0.9	0.8
10th Grade	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.7	2.2	2.1	2.2	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1
12th Grade	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.4	2.5	2.1	2.5	1.5	1.8	1.4

## Other Drugs Showing a Decline in Use

The drugs most responsible for this year's modest decline in illicit drug use are **marijuana** and various stimulant drugs, including **amphetamines**, **Ritalin** (a specific amphetamine), **methamphetamine**, and **crystal methamphetamine**.

**Marijuana** still remains the most widely used of all the illicit drugs. The decline in 2007 in the annual prevalence of marijuana use among 8th graders was statistically significant, falling from 11.7 percent in 2006 to 10.3 percent in 2007. Tenth graders

showed a modest continuing decline in marijuana use, which was not significant, while 12th graders showed no further change this year after a significant decline in 2006. Since the recent peak years of use reached in the mid-1990s, annual prevalence has fallen by over 40 percent among 8th graders, 30 percent among 10th graders, and nearly 20 percent among 12th graders. The prevalence rates for marijuana use in the prior year now stand at 10 percent, 25 percent, and 32 percent for grades, 8, 10, and 12, respectively.

### MARIJUANA USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Annual</b>																	
<b>8th Grade</b>	6.2	7.2	9.2	13.0	15.8	18.3	17.7	16.9	16.5	15.6	15.4	14.6	12.8	11.8	12.2	11.7	10.3
<b>10th Grade</b>	16.5	15.2	19.2	25.2	28.7	33.6	34.8	31.1	32.1	32.2	32.7	30.3	28.2	27.5	26.6	25.2	24.6
<b>12th Grade</b>	23.9	21.9	26.0	30.7	34.7	35.8	38.5	37.5	37.8	36.5	37.0	36.2	34.9	34.3	33.6	31.5	31.7

**Amphetamine** use reached its recent peak in the mid-1990s among 8th and 10th graders. Since then, annual prevalence has fallen by more than one half among 8th graders to 4 percent and by one third among 10th graders to 8 percent in 2007. Amphetamine use peaked somewhat later among 12th graders, and has fallen by about one third to 8 percent in 2007. The one-year declines in amphetamine use were not large enough to reach statistical significance, but because they are generally consistent with an ongoing descending pattern, the investigators conclude that the decline is continuing. The same is true for **crystal methamphetamine**, which reached its lowest point this year since 1992. Its use is measured only among 12th graders, and their annual prevalence this year is 1.6 percent, down by about half from the peak year of 2002.

Annual prevalence for the three grades combined did fall significantly this year for both **Ritalin** and **methamphetamine**. **Ritalin** is a prescription



amphetamine drug used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Its use outside of medical supervision was first measured in the study in 2001; it has been falling since then, with total declines of between 25 percent and 42 percent at each grade level. Today, 2–4 percent of students in these grades have abused Ritalin at least once in the prior 12 months.

**Methamphetamine** (“meth”) use has been in decline since it was first measured in 1999. Annual prevalence is now down by about two-thirds in all three grades from what it was in 1999. “Because this drug has such great potential for abuse and dependence, we are encouraged to see its popularity wane among teenagers,” Johnston said. (Annual prevalence rates now range between 1.1 percent in 8th grade and 1.7 percent in 12th grade.)

### Drugs Holding Steady

A number of illicit drugs showed little change this year. Many of them are at rates well below their recent peak levels of use, however. These include **cocaine, crack cocaine, LSD, hallucinogens other than LSD, heroin,** and most of the prescription-type psychoactive drugs used outside of medical supervision, including **sedatives, tranquilizers, narcotics other than heroin, OxyContin** specifically, and **Vicodin** specifically. (Both OxyContin and Vicodin are narcotic drugs).

The one stimulant drug that did not show a decline this year was **cocaine**. Cocaine use reached a recent peak among teens in the late 1990s, declined for a year or two, and has held relatively level in recent years. Today, annual prevalence ranges between 2 percent and 5 percent in grades 8, 10, and 12.

**Crack** use previously declined some in all three grades, but showed no further decline this year. Annual prevalence now ranges between 1.3 percent and 1.9 percent across the three grades; these rates are down by between a quarter and one half from what they were at their recent peaks.

**LSD**, once a widely used drug, had a very sharp decline in use from about 2001 to 2005. There has not been much change since then, and annual prevalence now ranges between 1.1 percent and 2.1 percent in the three grades. These rates are down from recent peak levels by about 75 percent.

### Hallucinogens other than LSD

taken as a class, show much less decline in recent years than LSD; but they are still somewhat below their recent peak levels. (Psilocybin, also known as “shrooms” or “magic mushrooms,” is the most widely used of these drugs today.) There was little change in their use this year. Annual prevalence ranges from 1.6 percent in 8th grade to 4.8 percent in 12th grade.

**Narcotic drugs other than heroin** are also reported only for 12th graders. An annual prevalence in 2007 of 9.2 percent is just barely below that reached in the recent peak year of 2004 (9.5 percent). Two specific drugs in this class, OxyContin and Vicodin, also did not show much change this year.

**OxyContin** use was first measured in 2002. The 2007 figures for all three grades are slightly higher than they were in 2002, but the trend lines have been somewhat erratic. For the three grades combined, there was no change in annual prevalence in the past year. Annual prevalence rates in 2007 for OxyContin use are 1.8 percent, 3.9 percent, and 5.3 percent. In other words, at least one in every twenty high school seniors has at least tried this powerful narcotic drug in the past year.

### OXYCONTIN USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Annual</b>																	
<b>8th Grade</b>												1.3	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.6	1.8
<b>10th Grade</b>												6.9	7.2	6.2	5.9	7.0	7.2
<b>12th Grade</b>												9.6	10.5	9.3	9.5	9.7	9.6

**Vicodin** similarly shows no systematic change in use this year, and the observed rates remain close to recent peak levels. Annual prevalence rates

in 2007 are even higher than for OxyContin: 2.7 percent, 7.2 percent, and 9.6 percent in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, respectively.

### VICODIN USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Annual</b>																	
8th Grade												2.5	2.8	2.5	2.6	3.0	2.7
10th Grade												6.9	7.2	6.2	5.9	7.0	7.2
12th Grade												9.6	10.5	9.3	9.5	9.7	9.6

### Drugs Increasing in Use

The only drug showing signs of an increase in use is **MDMA (ecstasy)**. Ecstasy use among teens plummeted in the early 2000s, as concern about the consequences of use grew. However, the proportion of students seeing great risk in using this drug has been in decline for the past two or three years at all three grade levels, and use has begun to increase, at least in the upper grades.

Among 10th graders, annual prevalence has risen from a recent low of 2.4 percent in 2004 to 3.5 percent in 2007, while in 12th grade it has risen from a recent low of 3 percent in 2005 to 4.5 percent in 2007.

While none of the one-year increases were statistically significant for 2007, a clear pattern of gradually rising use is discernable in the upper grades; and their cumulative increases over

the past couple of years are statistically significant.

“These prevalence rates are not very high yet but there is evidence here of this drug beginning to make a comeback,” Johnston said. **“Young people are coming to see its use as less dangerous than did their predecessors as recently as 2004, and that is a warning signal that the increase in use may continue.”**

Students’ disapproval of using ecstasy has also been slipping in recent years, particularly among 8th graders. *The fact that 8th graders are showing the sharpest erosion in perceived risk and disapproval suggests that there may be what the investigators call a “generational forgetting” of the hazards of this drug as new cohorts of students enter adolescence and replace those who knew more about the consequences of use.*

**Health Wave Publishing Company**  
 39 Davenport Street  
 Stamford, CT 06902  
 Tel: 203-975-7810 or  
 800-374-7953  
 Fax: 203-975-7946  
 e-mail: hpwinfo@healthwaveinc.com



### MDMA (Ecstasy) USE

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Annual</b>																	
8th Grade						2.3	2.3	1.8	1.7	3.1	3.5	2.9	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.5
10th Grade						4.6	3.9	3.3	4.4	5.4	6.2	4.9	3.0	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.5
12th Grade						4.6	4.0	3.6	5.6	8.2	9.2	7.4	4.5	4.0	3.0	4.1	4.5