



YOUTH DRUG USE

Overview

Surveys administered across the state in 2007 resulted in a comprehensive report on alcohol, drug and tobacco use in middle and high schools. Of note is increased alcohol and drug use by middle school students, while tobacco use has declined in high schools. The most recent surveys were conducted in 2009 and results will be available shortly.

Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2007: The Report

- **Geography:** State
- **Date:** May, 2008
- **Website:** <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs/>

Key Findings:

Note: The survey is administered in randomly selected public high schools in every odd-numbered year. The 2009 survey results are expected to be published sometime in September, 2010.

Alcohol Use

- **High School Students**
 - The percentage of students who reported ever having at least one drink of alcohol during their lives (lifetime use) has decreased from 81% in 2001 to 73% in 2007. The percentage of students who report having their first alcoholic drink, other than a few sips, before the age of 13 years has decreased during this time from 28% to 20%.
 - A significantly larger percentage of males reported having their first drink of alcohol before the age of 13 compared to females (23% vs. 16%).
 - Forty-six percent (46%) of students reported having an alcoholic beverage in the previous 30 days (current use). Slightly more than one quarter (28%) of high school students reported binge drinking (having five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours) in the previous 30 days.
 - Five percent (5%) of students reported having had at least one drink of alcohol on school property on one or more of the past 30 days.
- **Middle School Students**
 - All alcohol use indicators increase among middle school students by grade level. The percentage of middle school students who reported lifetime use of alcohol more than doubles between 6th grade (15%) and 8th grade (34%). The largest increase occurs from 7th grade to 8th grade.
 - Similarly, the largest increase in current drinking is found from 7th grade (8%) to 8th grade (17%). In 2007, fewer than one in ten 6th grade students reported currently drinking.
 - Binge drinking was not common among 6th and 7th graders, with only 3% from each grade reporting having done so in the previous 30 days. Again, an increase is found among 8th graders, with 7% reporting this behavior.
 - Among middle school students above the age of 13 who drank, the largest proportion reported having their first drink between the ages of 13 and 14 years.

Tobacco Use

- **High School Students**
 - All indicators of cigarette smoking have significantly declined among Massachusetts high school students since 2001.

- In 2001, approximately one in four high school students (26%) reported smoking on one or more of the past 30 days (current smoking). In 2007, approximately one in five (18%) reported this behavior.
 - Fifteen percent (15%) of high school students reported smoking cigars, cigarillos, or little cigars during the previous 30 days. A significantly greater proportion of males (21%) reported this behavior than females (8%).
 - Overall, 7% of high school students reported smokeless tobacco use (chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip) in the past 30 days. Males were five times more likely to report this behavior than females (11% vs. 2%).
 - Seven percent (7%) of students reported smoking cigarettes on school property on one or more of the past 30 days, a significant decrease from 12% reported in 2001.
- **Middle School Students**
 - Among Massachusetts middle school students, the percentage of students who report ever trying a cigarette, even one puff (lifetime use), and the percentage who currently smoke increased with grade level.
 - For both these indicators, the largest jump occurred from 7th grade to 8th grade. Lifetime use and current use increased from 14% to 23% and 4% to 8%, respectively.
 - Middle school students were not likely to smoke daily or use smokeless tobacco in the previous 30 days, with approximately 1% reporting each behavior.
 - Three percent (3%) of middle school students reported smoking cigars, cigarillos, or little cigars in the previous 30 days. Males (2%) were more likely to report this behavior than females (1%).

Marijuana Use

- **High School Students**
 - Since 2001, marijuana use has declined significantly among high school students. The percentage of students who reported having ever used marijuana has dropped from 50% to 41%. In 2007, marijuana use in the past 30 days (current use) was 25%, down from 31% in 2001.
 - Five percent (5%) of students reported using marijuana on school property in the past 30 days.
 - Almost half (49%) of high school students stated that they believe smoking marijuana occasionally would be a serious threat to their health.
- **Middle School Students**
 - A total of 8% of middle school students reported having used marijuana at least once in their lives. Among students who had used marijuana, 12 years old was the mean age of first use. Current use of marijuana was 5%.
 - Both current and lifetime marijuana use among middle school students increased by grade level.
 - In regards to perception of risk, the MYHS found that 83% of the middle school students thought smoking marijuana occasionally would be a serious risk to their health.

Other Drug Use

- **High School Students**
 - Since 2001, there have been significant decreases in the percentage of students who reported ecstasy use, methamphetamine use and being offered, sold, or given drugs at school.
 - Twenty-seven percent (27%) of high school students reported being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug by someone on school property during the previous 12 months. A significantly larger percentage of males reported this than females (31% and 23%, respectively).
 - In 2007, 18% of high school students reported ever taking a prescription drug that was not their own. Six percent (6%) reported taking it during the previous 30 days. (MYHS 2007)

- Ninety-two percent (92%) of students thought that sniffing or huffing inhalants would be a serious risk to their health. Similarly, 91% thought that occasionally using OxyContin that was not prescribed to them would be a threat to health.
- **Middle School Students**
 - While 6% of middle school students reported ever having taken drugs from prescriptions that were not their own, only 3% had done so in the past 30 days. A greater proportion of females than males reported ever taking prescription drugs that were not their own (8% vs. 4%).
 - Overall, 10% of middle school students reported some use of illegal drugs other than marijuana in their lifetime. The other drug category included inhalants, heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamines, and ecstasy. Half as many (5%) students reported using these drugs in the past 30 days.
 - Sniffing or huffing inhalants and occasionally using OxyContin that was not prescribed to them were thought to be serious risks to their health by 89% and 90%, respectively.