



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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New survey shows youth are smoking, drinking less, in most cases

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- A new report by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University Bloomington presents promising findings on adolescent use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Most of Indiana's adolescents continue to make the healthy decision to avoid drug use, but some of the findings signal a need for increasing prevention efforts statewide.

Here are some of the findings from the 14th annual survey of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by Indiana children and adolescents:

- Cigarette use in all grades showed a steady decline
- Fewer adolescents chose to use marijuana
- Ninth- through 12th-graders did less binge drinking
- Smokeless tobacco use increased in all grades except 12th
- Older adolescents reported more use of club drugs than younger cohorts
- Inhalant use among sixth- through 11th-graders increased

The 2004 results, which can be found at <http://www.drugs.indiana.edu/survey/atod/index.html>, are based on surveys completed by 91,577 students in grades six through 12, attending 297 schools in Indiana. The purpose of the survey is to help state and local entities coordinate prevention programs by providing them with current information regarding adolescent use of these unhealthy and in some cases illegal substances. The annual survey is funded by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Mental Health and Addiction.

For the most part, illicit drug use by Hoosier adolescents is continuing a slow decline that began five to six years ago. E. Lisako Jones-McKyer, survey director for IPRC and assistant professor in IUB's Department of Applied Health Science, which is part of the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, said that state and local entities have made improving adolescent health their top priority and that these trends mirror their efforts. The "Afternoons R.O.C.K. in Indiana" program is an example of this collaboration.

Coupled with these positive trends is the need to increase prevention efforts among lower grades for all categories, Jones-McKyer said. She noted that inhalant use increased in all grades except 12th. Among younger adolescents, she said, the rates have risen to levels reported in the late 1990s.

"It is my belief that youth's knowledge of products that can be used as inhalants has expanded exponentially in recent years," Jones-McKyer said. "Results in this year's survey suggest a need to address prevention efforts in this realm."

She said another significant finding is the decreased use of cigarettes but increased use of smokeless tobacco.

"This finding suggests the need to broaden prevention efforts beyond

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cigarettes to include all tobacco products," she said.

Mohammad R. Torabi, Chancellor's Professor and chairperson in the Department of Applied Health Science as well as IPRC's interim director, said the successes identified in this year's report should be celebrated but more work lies ahead.

"While Indiana has made great progress in the past 10 years, we still have a long way to go," Torabi said. "Knowing that children and adolescents are the most important asset of our state, it is imperative that we continue to monitor drug use among this group and continue comprehensive drug education, along with enforcement of policies for ultimately eliminating these problems."

The following is a summary of the survey results broken down by substance. From the early to mid-1990s, Indiana saw a dramatic increase in drug use among its youth. This usage peaked in 1996, followed by a slow and steady decline among youth in most age groups.

Tobacco use a mixed bag

Cigarette smoking rates continued to decline, albeit slightly, but the survey found an increase in the use of smokeless tobacco. The use of smokeless tobacco increased in every grade except 12th. The monthly usage reported ranged from 1.3 percent of sixth-graders to 8.7 percent of high school seniors.

The continued decline in cigarette smoking pleases public health experts because cigarettes are considered a "gateway drug," which can lead to the use of other drugs. Smoking rates are the best statistical predictor of other types of drug use by children and adolescents. The percentage of students who reported smoking at least one cigarette in the last month ranged from 5.4 percent of sixth-graders to 27.4 percent of seniors. The percentage of seniors smoking at least once a month decreased 1.4 percent from the previous year.

Drug use down

Indiana prevalence rates for marijuana and most other illicit substances are still higher than the rates reported in 1991 and 1992. However, the data from the past five to six years indicate that in general, illicit use of most drugs by youth is slowly yet steadily declining. Monthly marijuana use ranged from 2.5 percent of sixth-graders to 18.3 percent of seniors.

Alcohol use rate continues to decline

Monthly use of alcohol declined more than 4 percentage points among 12th graders and for the second consecutive year is more than 5 percentage points below the national rate. Binge drinking rates among ninth- through 12th-graders showed signs of decline and finally dropped below the national rates. Monthly alcohol use rates ranged from 9.8 percent for sixth-graders to 42.2 percent for 12th-graders.

Similar to findings in the 2003 report, however, alcohol use among sixth- to eighth-grade students does not show signs of decreasing. Rates of binge drinking among sixth- and seventh-graders increased, though they are still much lower than two years ago.

"Club drugs" potential trends

This is the third year in which students were asked about usage of the "club drugs" ecstasy (MDMA, 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine), GHB (gamma hydroxy butyrate) and Rohypnol (flunitrazepam). Since 2000, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of police encounters with the club drugs. The 2004 survey found that rates of club drug use in all grades have either stabilized or declined. Older students are still more likely to use the drugs, indicating that use of these substances is still age-dependent and associated with accessibility. As suggested in reports from the past three years, club drug rates should be closely monitored in order to ensure timely prevention efforts.

Inhalant use increases

For the third year, inhalant use increased among all grades except 12th. Among younger adolescents, the rates have reached levels reported in the

late 1990s. The percentage of students who reported using inhalants at least once in the last month ranged from 1.8 percent of 12th-graders to 4.7 percent of eighth-graders. On average, 3.5 percent of the students reported using an inhalant in the last month, compared to 5.1 percent who reported a monthly usage in 1996.

For more information, contact JoBeth McCarthy-Jean, IPRC; Mark Pogue, IPRC deputy director; or E. Lisako Jones-McKyer, IPRC survey director. They can be reached at 812-855-1237.

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