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Survey shows a shift in drug use among Indiana adolescents



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Smokeless tobacco, injection drugs on the rise; links to school activities and performance also shown

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- Results from the 16th Annual Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents, conducted by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University Bloomington, suggest that shifts are taking place in the types of drugs used by some youth and the manner in which these drugs are used, with increases seen in smokeless tobacco and injection drugs. The survey results also offer insight into the consequences of drug use for adolescents, links between drug use and school performance, and the preventive potential of after-school activities.



Ruth Gassman is director of the Indiana Prevention Resource Center

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The 2006 results were obtained from analyses of data collected from 131,017 students in grades six through 12 in both public and private schools in Indiana. The purpose of the survey is to measure alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, along with other related behaviors, on a statewide and local basis for planning and evaluation of prevention programs.

The full report will be available online on Monday (July 31) at <http://www.drugs.indiana.edu>. The following are major points from the survey results:

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Gateway drugs. "Research has shown that the majority of individuals' illicit drug use occurs only after they use cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana, so they are known as the 'gateway drugs,'" said Ruth Gassman, executive director of the IPRC. Survey results from the past 13 years demonstrate that first use follows a consistent pattern: first cigarettes, then alcohol, followed by marijuana, with initial use occurring most often between the ages of 12 and 14.

- **Shift from cigarettes towards smokeless and pipe tobacco --** Reported use of cigarettes in grades nine through 12 remained unchanged from the drop seen in 2005, while use of smokeless tobacco increased in those grades and pipe smoking increased in grades 10 through 12. "This is noteworthy because it suggests a shift may be occurring in the manner in which tobacco is used," Gassman said.
- **Fewer try alcohol, but more 12th-graders binge drink --** Reported annual and lifetime use of alcohol declined among students in grades 10 and 12, adding to several years of steady decline. Students in 12th grade, however, reported an increase in binge drinking for the first time since 1998. In addition, ninth-graders reported an increase in monthly use of alcohol.
- **Marijuana use continues to fall --** Rates of marijuana use declined or held steady for all grades compared with the previous year, continuing a decade-long trend of decline. Reported use during the past month is now at roughly half of 1996 rates for grades six through nine.
- **Gateway drugs down in grades six through eight --** Use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana decreased or held steady for grades six, seven and eight. "These are favorable results because less gateway drug use indicates a decreased likelihood of other illicit drug use," Gassman said.

Other drugs.

- **Use of "hard" drugs up among older students, down for younger students --** Reported use of MDMA (ecstasy) during the past month increased among students in grades 11 and 12. Compared to last year, students in 12th grade were also more likely to report having used heroin and psychedelics during the past month and to have used Rohypnol during the past year. However, reported use of inhalants decreased in grades six and eight, as did use of cocaine.
- **Injection drugs at all-time high for grade 12 --** Survey results indicated an increase and all-time high in monthly and lifetime practice of injecting drugs among youth in grade 12. Analysis of the data indicates that the most commonly injected drugs for this group were heroin, methamphetamine and steroids. "This finding is most alarming as injection drug use is strongly correlated with transmission of secondary infections such as HIV," Gassman said.
- **Methamphetamine use down compared to last year --** Compared to last year, the first in which data on methamphetamine use were collected,

reported prevalence of methamphetamine use declined or held steady for all grade levels. Methamphetamine use among 12th-graders, however, remained above the national average.

School activities and performance.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use-Related Consequences (percentages)							
Consequences of Use	Grade						
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Had a hangover	5.1	10.2	18.7	26.0	31.4	35.5	39.6
Performed poorly on a test or project	7.9	10.0	13.0	13.7	13.6	12.2	12.2
Been in trouble with the police	4.4	5.7	8.5	8.9	8.7	8.2	9.1
Been in trouble with your parents	10.2	12.1	16.8	18.9	20.2	20.4	19.6
Damaged property, pulled fire alarms, etc.	2.9	4.7	7.2	7.7	7.5	5.9	5.8
Got into a fight or argument	10.8	12.9	18.2	19.8	20.8	20.4	20.0
Got nauseated or vomited	6.3	9.8	15.2	20.6	25.6	28.9	33.1
Driven a car while under the influence	2.1	2.8	4.4	5.5	9.9	15.6	20.2
Ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol	12.2	14.3	19.3	21.0	23.6	23.9	26.1
Missed school	8.0	8.5	10.7	10.7	11.5	11.1	11.4
Had a memory loss	4.5	7.2	11.1	15.4	18.7	20.4	21.7

Table showing reported consequences of drinking and other drug use, based on IPRC 2006 ATOD survey data.

Missing school, performing poorly consequences of drug use.

Students were asked about the consequences they experienced as a result of using alcohol and other drugs (see table). More than one in ten students in grades eight through 12 reported having missed school as a consequence of drug use, and an even greater percentage of students in grades seven through 12 reported having performed poorly on a test or project as a result of drug use.

- **After-school activities linked to lower rates of gateway drug use --** Students involved in activities such as playing on a sports team, participating in arts, music or drama programs, supervised activities at youth centers or after-school classes were less likely to use cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. The results indicate an inverse relationship between the frequency of participation in after-school activities and the rate of gateway drug use. "These finding support the value of after-school programming as a strategy to prevent or reduce illegal substance use among adolescents," Gassman said.

Related behaviors.

- **Gambling down compared to last year --** Compared to last year, the first in which data on gambling were collected, the reported prevalence of gambling decreased or remained the same across all grade levels. The youngest students were least likely to have gambled (35.4 percent of sixth-graders) and the oldest students were most likely to have gambled (55 percent of 12th-graders).
- **Drunk driving, fighting consequences of drug use --** Students were asked about the consequences they experienced as a result of using alcohol

and other drugs (see table). Riding in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol was reported by more than one in five respondents in grades nine through 12, with 26.1 percent of 12th graders reporting having been driven by someone who had been drinking. Students of driving age also reported having driven while under the influence, with 15.6 percent of 11th-graders and 20.2 percent of 12th-graders reporting having driven while drunk. Approximately one in five respondents in grades nine through 12 also reported getting into a fight or argument as a result of drinking.

- **Violent behaviors associated with drug use** -- Both violent behavior and weapon carrying were associated with use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana among Indiana youth. Students were asked about experiences with physical fights or strong arguments involving shouting and about carrying a gun or other weapon to school. The strongest correlation was between alcohol use and violent interactions. It is important to note that this link does not establish causation but rather a relationship between the measures.

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