



2008 YOUTH DRUG SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Since 1972, Substance Abuse Prevention Services (formerly The Drug Education Center) has implemented a countywide youth drug survey every two - three years. These data are collected to determine the current level of incidence and prevalence of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use among school age youth. Due to the longitudinal nature of the research, changes in local patterns and trends can be observed. During November/December 2008, Substance Abuse Prevention Services (SAPS) in collaboration with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and with the support from volunteers from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition and the 108th Division Dept of Defense Regional Reserve Command administered the self-report survey instrument to 4273 youth ages 12-18.

Sampling Procedure

The sample selection was a proportionate stratified random sample of all students in grades 6 through 12 from all Charlotte-Mecklenburg public schools. The surveys were monitored to provide anonymity for the students. A total of 4,330 surveys were completed and, after deleting those surveys where students answered that they had used a fabricated drug or otherwise showed internal inconsistency (3.0%), the number of usable surveys was 4,199. With a sample of this size one can have 95% confidence that the actual findings for the results are within $\pm 1.5\%$.

Substance Use in 2008

Students reported using a variety of drugs. Students most commonly report using the substances that have been traditionally referred to as "gateway drugs," i.e., alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. As usual, alcohol ranks first as the drug most used by the student population followed by cigarettes and marijuana use.

1. Current Use (Used within the last 30 days)

- **Cigarette/tobacco use is down**
- 12.8% indicated they used some type of tobacco product in the last 30 days (16.7% in 2006)
 - 5.3% in Middle School; 19.0% in High School (7.8% MS; 23.2% HS in 2006)
- 9.9% of all students indicate that they smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days (12.7% in 2006)
 - 4.4% Middle School; 14.4% High School (5.2% MS; 18.1% HS in 2006)
- **30 day use of alcohol is down in both middle and high schools**

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- 14.0% indicate they drank alcohol in the last 30 days
(17.2% in 2006 and 14.9% in 2004)
 - 4.7% Middle School (6.2% in 2006; 5.9% in 2004)
 - 21.7% High School (25.3% in 2006; 24.3% in 2004)

➤ **Binge drinking² is down for the general student population**

- 5.6% indicate they had five or more drinks in a couple of hours (binge drinking).
(6.0% in 2006; 6.1 in 2004)
 - 1.2% Middle School (1.2% in 2006; 1.4% in 2004)
 - 8.9% High School (9.5% in 2006; 11.9% in 2004)

➤ **Binge drinking as a proportion of students who admit drinking in the last 30 days has significantly increased for both middle and high school drinkers.**

- 38.0% of those who drank alcohol in the last 30 days say they binge drank. This compares with 32.5% in 2006 and 47.7% in 2004.
 - **30.6%** Middle School (**12.7% in 2006; 22.7% in 2004**)
 - 49.1% High School (36.0% in 2006; 55.5% in 2004)

➤ **Overall 30 day use of marijuana is slightly down, but there are significant sub-populations that show major increases**

- 10.0% of all students admit using marijuana in the past 30 days
(10.8% in 2006 and 7.3% in 2004)
 - 2.9% of Middle School students (3.1% in 2006 and 2.7% in 2004)
 - 15.8% of High School students (16.6% in 2006 and 12.3% in 2004)
- **Marijuana use is UP for 9th and 11th grade students**
- **Marijuana use is UP for Asian and Native American students**

2. Lifetime use

➤ **Lifetime use of cigarettes is DOWN**

- 20.6% of all students admit to having smoked cigarettes (26.7% in 2006 and 24.9% in 2004)
 - 10.0% of Middle School students have smoked (12.7% in 2006 and 15.4% in 2004)
 - 29.2% of High School students they have smoked (37.0% in 2006 and 35.1% in 2004)

² Binge Drinking (5 or more drinks at one time in a short period of time)

➤ **Lifetime use of alcohol is DOWN**

- 34.7% of students admit to having ever used alcohol. (40.1% in 2006 and 34.8% in 2004)
 - 16.1% of Middle School students admit to ever using (18.8% in 2006 and 18.1% in 2004)
 - 49.8% of High School students admit to ever using. (55.6% in 2006 and 52.7% in 2004)

➤ **Lifetime use of marijuana is DOWN - EXCEPT – There’s an INCREASE by middle school students**

- 20.6% of all students admit using marijuana (22.8% in 2006 and 17.1% in 2004)
 - 7.6% of Middle School students (6.4% in 2006 and 6.5% in 2004)
 - 31.3% of High School students (34.7% in 2006 and 28.6% in 2004)

➤ **General lifetime trends by gender**

• **Decrease in lifetime use by males:**

Cigarettes	Alcohol	Marijuana	Uppers	Downers
	Hallucinogens	Ecstasy	Pain pills	

• **Decrease in lifetime use by females:**

Cigarettes	Alcohol	Marijuana	Uppers	Downers
	Hallucinogens	Pain pills	Prescription drugs	

• **Increase in lifetime use by males:**

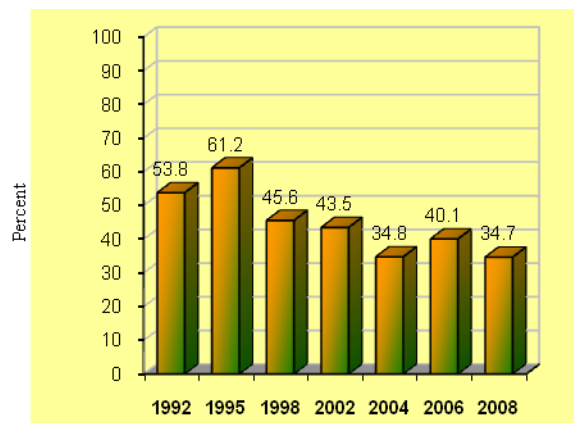
Binge drinking	Benzodiazepines	Prescription drugs	Triple C
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• **Increase in lifetime use by females:**

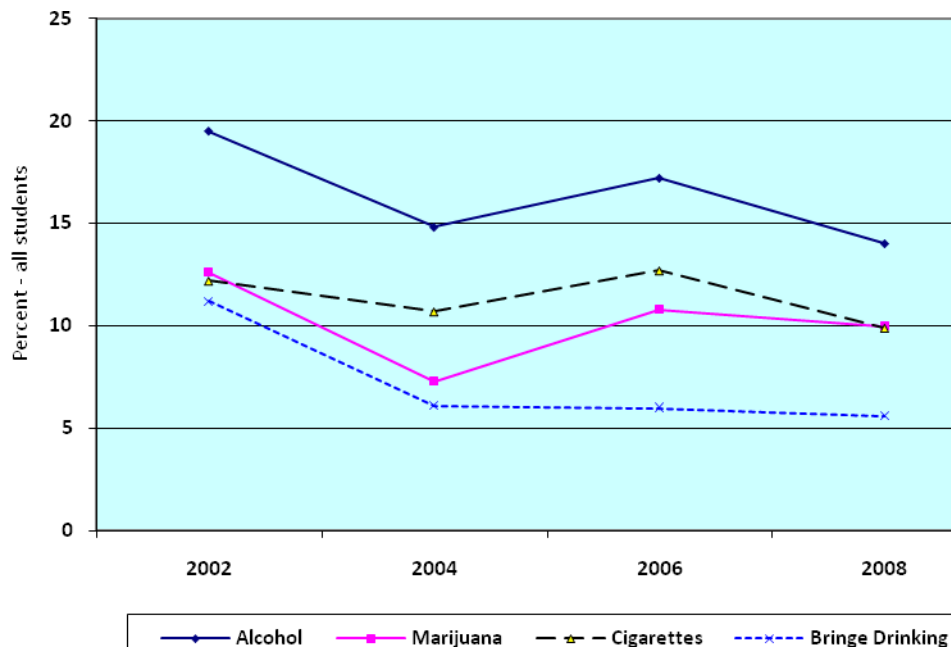
Binge drinking	Benzodiazepines	Ecstasy	Triple C
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3. Longitudinal Observations

➤ **Lifetime use of alcohol is DOWN from 2006 and slightly lower than the level it was in 2004.**



➤ **The percent of students admitting 30 day use of each core substance, cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana has decreased since 2002 levels.**



4. State/National comparisons

- Charlotte data show lower alcohol, smokeless tobacco, and cocaine use in the last 30 days in all comparable grades than reported by national data in 2008.
- Proportionately more 8th and 12th grade students in Charlotte admit using cigarettes and marijuana in the last 30 days than students report nationally.

	8 th Grade		10 th Grade		12 th Grade	
	CLT	NIDA	CLT	NIDA	CLT	NIDA
Alcohol	7.9	15.9	17.6	28.8	34.8	43.1
Cigarettes	7.9	6.8	11.9	12.3	18.8	11.4
Smokeless	1.2	3.5	2.3	5.0	4.8	6.5
Marijuana	6.1	5.8	11.6	13.8	21.4	19.4
Cocaine	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.2	0.7	1.9

*NIDA Monitoring the Future, 2008, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/infofacts/HSYouthTrends.htm> |

- Marijuana use in the last 30 days in Charlotte is HIGHER than in North Carolina for:
 - 18 year old male students and 16-17 year old female students
 - Male students in grades 11 and 12

5. Age at first use

- The average age of first use for each substance has increased slightly since 2004

	2008		2004	
Cigarettes	12.7 years of age	Never used: 78.7%	12.2 years	
Alcohol	12.7 years of age	Never used: 56.9%	12.0 years	
Binge drink	14.3 years of age	Never: 86.0%	14.0 years	
Marijuana	13.7 years of age	Never used: 77.3%	13.4 years	

6. Percent of 30 day use by gender

- Use is **DOWN** for all substances by gender
 - Proportionately more male students than female have used all of the substances EXCEPT alcohol – slightly more females have used alcohol in the last 30 days than males.

Substance	Male		Female	
	2006	2008	2006	2008
Cigarettes last 30 days	13.6	11.0	11.7	8.7
Alcohol last 30 days	17.0	14.0	17.5	14.3
Binge drink last 30 days	6.2	6.1	6.0	5.5
Marijuana last 30 days	12.2	11.0	10.7	9.0

7. Percent of 30 day use by race/ethnicity

- For cigarettes and alcohol: There has been a decrease in 30 day use by all races, except Native Americans.
- Native American students increased their use of the core drugs: cigarettes, alcohol, binge drinking, and marijuana.
- Asian students have reported an increase in the 30 day use of binge drinking and marijuana.
- All races report a 30 day increase in downers, hallucinogens, and triple C.

8. Student Perception of Risk

- Progress is being made in the proportion of students who feel that the use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and other drugs is risky behavior.

In 2006 the data showed that at least 10% of students “didn’t know” whether there is any risk to using any of the substances. The percent of “don’t know” had increased since 2004. However, between 2006 and 2008 the proportion of “don’t know” has increased.

- 81.1% of students consider smoking to be risky – an increase from 78.5% in 2006.
- 66.3% consider occasional marijuana smoking as risky – an increase from 63.2% in 2006.
- 53.8% consider occasional alcohol drinking as risky behavior – an increase from 46.3% in 2006.

NOTE: The percent of student who consider occasional alcohol drinking as risky is still only around 50%.

- The perception of significant risk is lowest for occasional drinking (31.7%) and occasional marijuana use (40.4%).

9. Student Perception of Peer Approval

- The perception of peer disapproval for all substance use has **increased**.
 - Smoking a pack of cigarettes –disapproval increased from 75.7% to 80.2%
 - Binge drinking - disapproval has increased from 71.6% to 76.5%
 - Occasional marijuana – disapproval increased from 64.5% to 68.1%
 - Occasional alcohol – disapproval increased from 52.3% to 56.4%

10. Student Perception of Parental Approval

- Over 90% of students feel their parents would disapprove of any use of the substances except occasional alcohol where 84.2% feel their parents would disapprove.
- The proportion of perceived parental disapproval has increased since 2004.

11. Student Perception of Use

- On average, youth surveyed think that 45% of students in their schools drink alcohol; down from 46% in 2006 but still higher than 40% in 2004.
 - If students drink, they think, on average, that 68% drink but the most frequent response by students who drink is 80%. Non-drinkers think that 41% drink – down from 42% in 2006.
- On average, youth surveyed think that 46% (down from 48% in 2006 yet up from 44% in 2004) of students use some kind of drug.
 - Middle School students think that 26% of students use some kind of drug (The same as in 2006)
 - High School students think that 61% of students use drugs – down from 65% in 2006.

12. Energy Drinks

For the first time, we asked about the consumption of energy drinks.

- Overall, 32.5% of all students say they consumed energy drinks in the last 30 days
 - 25.1% Middle School students used
 - 38.6% High School students used
- 39.2% of male students drank energy drinks in the last 30 days
 - 32.0% of Middle School males
 - 45.1% of High School males
- 26.9% of female students drank energy drinks in the last 30 days
 - 18.9% of middle school females
 - 33.0% of high school females

13. Ease

- 23% of Middle School students say that **alcohol** is fairly easy or very easy to get. **–down from 24.2%** in 2006.
- 11.9% say **marijuana** is either fairly or very easy to get – **up from 10.9%** in 2006.

14. Source

- The primary source for all substances, for those admitting use, is from friends.

Cigarettes: Overall 9.9% of students smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days; of those who did:

53.6% got their last cigarette from friends (49.8% in 2006 and 47.3% in 2004)
19.5% had someone buy them (18.6% in 2006 and 25.9% in 2004)
10.5% bought them themselves (14.6% in 2006 and 14.9% in 2004)
4.0% took them from home or a friend's home (14% in 2006 and 10.1% in 2004)
2.9% got them from parents (1.8% in 2006 and 1.4% in 2004)

Alcohol: Overall 14.0% indicate they drank alcohol in the last 30 days; of those who did:

34.8% got their alcohol from friends (35.4% in 2006 and 35% in 2004)
20.3% were given alcohol by parents (24.5% in 2006 and 15.8% in 2004)
18.5% took it from home (14.3% in 2006 and 14.0% in 2004)
4.0% took it from a friend's home (2.9% in 2006 and 4.7% in 2004)
17.4% had someone else buy alcohol for them (19.2% in 2006 and 26.9% in 2004)
2.6% bought the alcohol themselves (3.7% in 2006 and 3.6% in 2004)

15. Where students drink

- Of students who drank alcohol in the last 30 days, 12.4% did so at home with parents. There is no way to determine the circumstances but the wording of the question said “more than a sip.”
- The largest proportions (49.1%) drink their alcohol at a friend's house (24.1%) and at parties at friends' houses (25.0%). Another 4% drink at parties in their own homes and 3.4% drink at parties at strangers' houses. **10.5% drink at home alone.**
 - Middle School: 24.3% last had a drink given them by parents
20.3% drank home alone
17.6% drank at parties – theirs or a friend's home
 - High School: 37.4% last drank alcohol with friends at the friend's house or their own home
35.1% last drink of alcohol at parties, 4.3% of the time at their own home.

- Of those students who drank alcohol in the last 30 days

- 37.9% have had **alcohol** at concerts or festival events
 - 21.2% of Middle School students and 40.7% of High School students
- 16.4% have had **alcohol** at sports events
 - 11.8% of Middle School students and 17.1% of High School students

- Students from homes where parents have rules about the use of alcohol and drugs are significantly less likely to have consumed alcohol or binge drank in the last 30 days than students from homes without clear rules.

Alcohol Last 30 Days		Parents have clear rules about alcohol/drug use		Total
		No	Yes	
No	Count	339	2663	3002
	Percent	75.0%	87.2%	85.6%
Yes	Count	113	392	505
	Percent	25.0%	12.8%	14.4%
Total	Count	452	3055	3507
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Binge Drinking Last 30 Days		Parents have clear rules about alcohol/drug use		Total
		No	Yes	
No	Count	402	2903	3305
	Percent	88.9%	94.9%	94.1%
Yes	Count	50	157	207
	Percent	11.1%	5.1%	5.9%
Total	Count	452	3060	3512
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

16. Perception of why kids use drugs

- The most frequently agreed upon reason kids use drugs in Charlotte is “to look cool.” 77.5% of Charlotte-Mecklenburg 7th- 12th grade students agreed with this statement; 65% nationally.
- The second most frequent reason agreed upon was “to deal with the pressures and stress of school.” This was the number one reason in the national sample. 75.8% in Charlotte and 73% nationally.

Comparing students who admitted drinking alcohol in the last 30 days, admitted any drug use the last 30 days and non-users of any drug or alcohol:

- Both the reason “looking cool” and “dealing with school pressures and stress” are agreed upon by all students, but 88% of alcohol users and 84% of drug users agreed with stress as the reason compared with 74% of non-users.
- Less than half of non- users believe that the use of marijuana helps one relax compared with 82% of alcohol users and 74% of drug users.
- Significantly more male students agree with the statements relating to relaxation and parties as reasons for kids using drugs than female students:

- Marijuana helps you relax, being high feels good, drugs help relax you socially, and parties are more fun with drugs.
- Female students are proportionately more likely than male students to see problem solving reasons as why kids use drugs:
 - Stress at school, to feel better about themselves, to forget troubles, and to deal with problems at home. They are also more likely to agree with appearance reasons: that drugs are used to look cool and to lose weight.

17. Conclusions/trends

Positive findings:

- The data show substantial reduction in the use of cigarettes, alcohol, binge drinking, and marijuana.
- There has been an increase in the age at first use for all substances.
- There is an increase in the perception of risk in the use of all substances.
- There is an increase in the perception of both parent and peer disapproval of the use of substances.

Negative findings:

- More Charlotte 8th and 12th grade students smoked **cigarettes and marijuana** in the last 30 days than 8th and 12th grade nationally.
- More 11th and 12th grade Charlotte students used **marijuana** in the last 30 days than in 11th and 12th grades in the North Carolina survey.
- More 9th grade students drank **alcohol** in the last 30 days than did in 2006.
- An increase in **binge drinking** since 2006 in 8th 11th and 12th grades.
- An increase in 30 day use of **marijuana** in 9th and 11th grades
- An increase in the use of all substances by Native American students.
- An increase in binge drinking and marijuana use by Asian students.
- A decrease in the proportion of students who “can’t get” alcohol and marijuana
- 10.5% of all students and 20% of Middle School Students who drank in the last 30 days say they **last drank at home and alone**.
- 1/3 of all students who last drank alcohol consumed it at parties – both at friends’ homes and at their own homes.