

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In 2009, 10.0 percent of adolescents aged 12–17 years reported using illicit drugs in the past month, representing a significant increase since the previous year. Illicit drug use varied by age, with 3.6 percent of youth aged 12–13 years reporting drug use in the past month, compared to 9.0 percent of youth aged 14–15 years and 16.7 percent of youth aged 16–17 years. There was also variation by race/ethnicity, with rates ranging from 5.5 percent among non-Hispanic Asian youth to 14.6 percent among non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native youth. Rates for non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic youth were 9.6 percent, 10.8 percent, and 11.4 percent, respectively (data not shown).

Marijuana is consistently the most commonly used illicit drug among adolescents, with 7.3 percent reporting past-month use in 2009. This was followed by nonmedical use of prescription-type psychotherapeutics, such as pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives (3.1 percent). Marijuana was the most commonly used drug among adolescents aged 14–15 and 16–17 years (6.3 percent and 14.0 percent, respectively) compared to less than 1 percent among adolescents aged 12–13 years (data not shown).

Illicit drug use is associated with other health risk behaviors. In 2009, 52.8 percent of adolescents who reported cigarette use in the past month also reported illicit drug use, compared to

only 5.9 percent of adolescents who did not report smoking. Adolescents who reported alcohol use in the past month were also more likely to use illicit drugs than adolescents who did not report alcohol use: 70 percent of heavy drinkers (i.e., adolescents who consumed five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days), also used illicit drugs (data not shown).

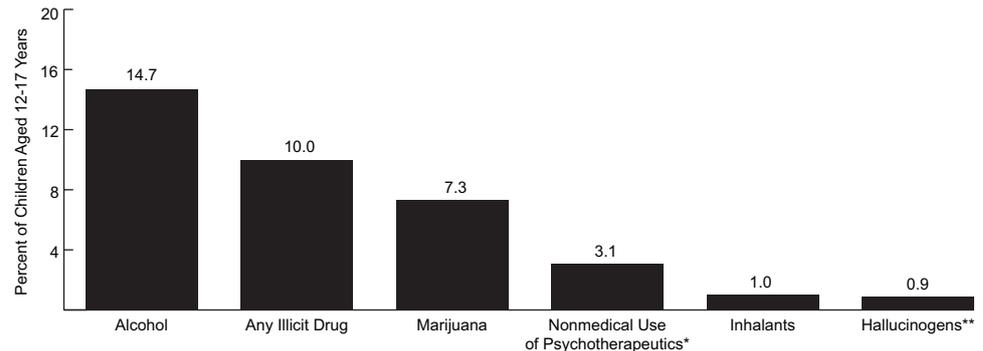
Alcohol continues to be the most commonly used drug among adolescents, with 14.7 percent reporting past-month use in 2009. Rates of past month alcohol use varied by race/ethnicity, with rates ranging from 6.5 percent among non-Hispanic Asian youth to 16.1 percent non-Hispanic White youth (data not shown).

In 2009, 30.7 percent of adolescents perceived smoking marijuana once a month to be a great risk, while 49.5 percent perceived the same risk regarding cocaine use. Smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day was considered a great risk by 65.8 percent of adolescents. Drinking five or more drinks once or twice per week was considered a great risk by 39.9 percent of adolescents (data not shown).

While 14.3 percent of adolescents were approached by someone selling drugs in the past month, nearly 50 percent reported that marijuana would be fairly or very easy to obtain; 22.1 percent reported the same for crack, 20.9 percent for cocaine, 13.5 percent for LSD, and 12.9 percent for heroin (data not shown).

Past Month Drug Use Among Adolescents Aged 12-17 Years, by Drug Type, 2009

Source (II.13): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, National Survey of Drug Use and Health



*Includes non-medical use of pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants, and tranquilizers; does not include over-the-counter substances.

**Includes LSD, PCP, and Ecstasy.