

HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Teen Illegal Drug Use

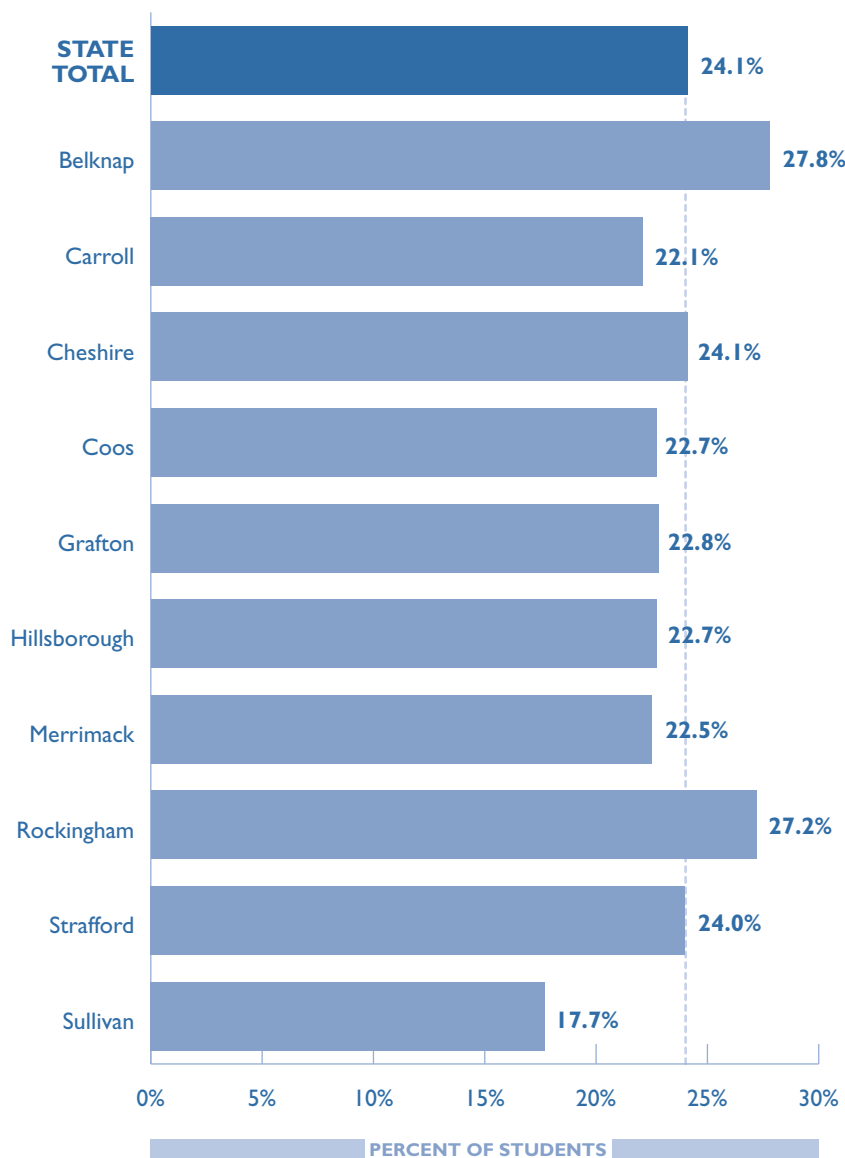
DEFINITION

This indicator reports the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who say they have used marijuana at least once in the last 30 days.

CONTEXT

Although alcohol is the most commonly used drug among young persons in the United States, alcohol use by teens is declining, and marijuana use is rising. A 2010 University of Michigan survey of teens across the U.S. found 34.8 percent of high school seniors reported using marijuana at least once in the last year, an increase from 32.8 percent in 2009. The proportion of students who report using any illicit drug other than marijuana has been gradually declining for several years, but that decline halted in 2010. In 2010, 17 percent of high school seniors reported using some illicit drug other than marijuana over the last year (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman and Schulenberg, 2010).

Teen Marijuana Use In the Last 30 Days By County, 2009



NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

In 2009, 24 percent of New Hampshire high school students reported using marijuana at least once in the last 30 days. This rate is about the same as it was in 2001 (New Hampshire Office of the Governor 2010, 1).

The rate of marijuana use varies across the state, with the lowest reported rate of 17.7 percent in Sullivan County and the highest reported rate of 27.8 percent in Belknap County. (see chart on previous page)

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey asks teens whether they have ever used certain drugs. In 2009 the following percentage of New Hampshire high school students reported drug consumption over the years:

- 40.5 percent used marijuana one or more times;
- 20.4 percent used a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription (such as OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, Adderall, Ritalin or Xanax);
- 6.5 percent used some form of cocaine;
- 11.9 percent sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans or inhaled paints or sprays;
- 3 percent used heroin;
- 4.7 percent used methamphetamines;
- 6.8 percent used ecstasy; and
- 2.1 percent took steroid shots or pills without a doctor's prescription (New Hampshire Department of Education 2009a).

Perhaps most alarming was the report that 22.1 percent of high school students were offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property during the last year.

The fastest growing type of illegal drug use is the abuse of prescription drugs. Over the last decade, the illegal use of prescription drugs has tripled.

According to the New Hampshire Chief Medical Examiner's Office, in 2009 more New Hampshire citizens died from drug overdoses (164) than from car accidents (110) (Drugfreeh.org.)

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). 2011. Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services, Division of Community Based Care Services.

In the spring of 2009, 1,493 students in 53 New Hampshire public high schools completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The school response rate was 78 percent and the student rate 83 percent. Some students are not in school on the day of the survey and because those students may have a different risk profile than the general school population, this may bias results slightly. Also, students may not respond truthfully or carefully to surveys or may be influenced by peer pressure in their survey responses (Oyster River 2007, ii).

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services provided survey results by high school. The following methodology was used to estimate usage rates by county. First, each school that participated in the survey was identified by county. County-level rates were computed using a weighted average of school-level rates based on enrollment. Special estimates were computed for schools with students from more than one county (see methodology in Appendix).

REFERENCES

www.drugfreeh.org. *Prescription Drugs: Get the Facts!*

Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G., and Schulenberg, J.E. (2010). *Marijuana Use is Rising; Ecstasy Use is Beginning to Rise; and Alcohol Use is Declining Among U.S. Teens*. University of Michigan News Service: Ann Arbor, Michigan. Retrieved April 19, 2011. www.monitoringthefuture.org.

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2009a. *2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results*.

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Oyster River: New Hampshire Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Community Level Report, 2007. www.ci.durham.nh.us/generalpdfs/YRBS.pdf.