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DRUG IMPACT INDEX

Second Edition
Portland, Oregon
June, 1991

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Reprinting of this Index in whole or in part is permitted with acknowledgement of the source. The Drug Impact Index was developed by the Regional Drug Initiative and the Western Regional Center for Drug Free Schools and Communities and first published in Portland, Oregon in June, 1990. This June 1991 version is the second edition.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Drug Impact Index is to document and illustrate the extent of the local drug problem. It relies solely on data that already exist through established surveys or standard reporting systems. It is intended to be used by the public for a general assessment of the problem, not as a technical measurement or evaluation device.

No single measure can provide an adequate picture of the impact of drugs on a local community. However, a number of indicators can provide good representations of important aspects of the problem. Indicators were selected for this Index using four major criteria: first, that the indicator is reliable—that it can be measured consistently from year to year; second, that the indicator is valid—that it measures what it intends to measure; third, that it is practical to collect; and fourth, that it provides an accurate representation of a major aspect of the community drug problem.

The RDI Drug Impact Index is an effort to walk the fine line between the too simple and the too complex. It was not designed to provide precise quantitative measurement, but is intended to provide the reader with a sense of the severity and breadth of the local drug problem. It is also intended to reflect any important trends, such as major increases or decreases in illegal drug use. It is anticipated that additional indicators will be added to future versions of this Index.

This is the second edition of the Drug Impact Index, first published in 1990. A companion volume, *Developing a Community Profile: A Handbook for Using Pre-existing Data in Prevention Planning*, describes the process used to develop this Index and provides guidance for communities wishing to develop similar community assessment tools.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

For purposes of this Index, "drugs" are considered to be those substances for which use is categorically illegal—either because all use is illegal (e.g. cocaine) or because of age restrictions (e.g. alcohol use by minors). Abuse of legal substances is not addressed.

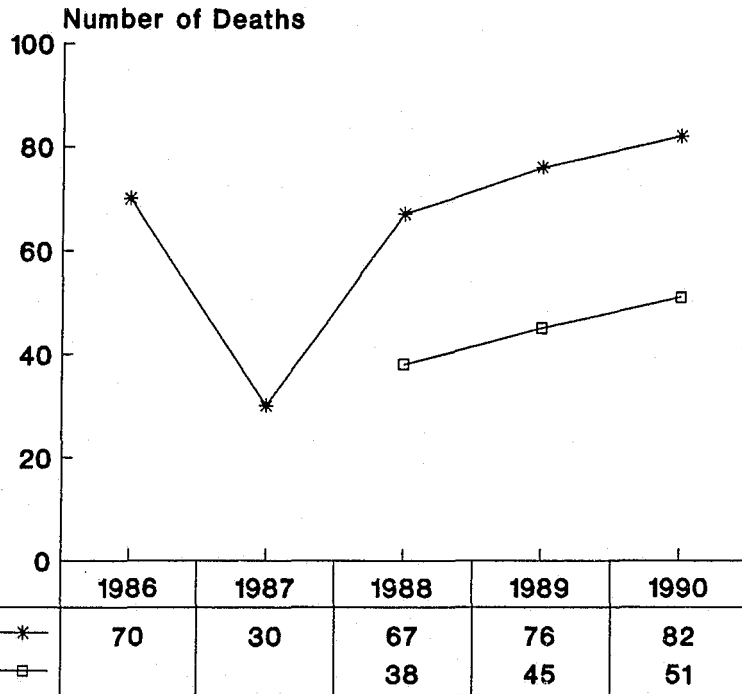
INDICATOR #1

Annual number of deaths from drug overdoses as reported by the State Medical Examiner's Office.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

These data reflect the number of deaths resulting from use of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, or a combination of those drugs. They do not include deaths resulting from overdoses of prescription drugs.

Annual Deaths from Drug Overdose



Source: State Medical Examiner

REMARKS:

Deaths due to drug overdoses continue to increase each year, both locally and throughout the state. Variations in drug overdose deaths may be due to the introduction of new drugs, for example Mexican tar heroin in 1986 and crack cocaine in 1988. In 1990, 59 of the 82 deaths statewide were from heroin overdoses.

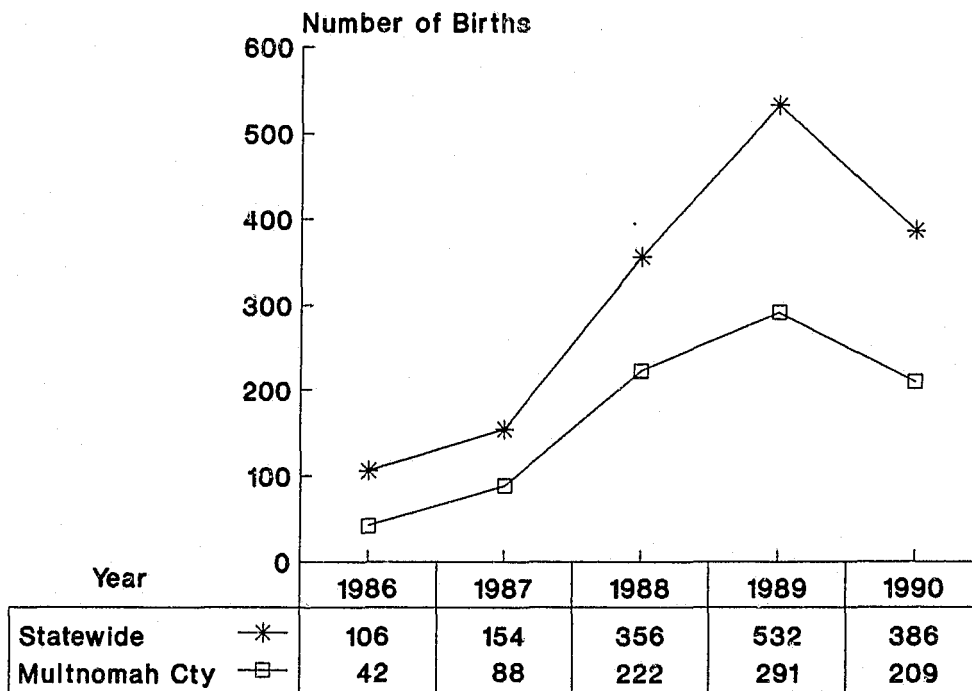
INDICATOR #2

Annual number of births of drug-affected babies as reported to the State Children's Services Division.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

The numbers for all years are probably artificially depressed due to underreporting. Underreporting may result from the absence of consistent testing or reporting procedures.

Drug-Affected Babies: Annual Births



Source: Children's Services Division

REMARKS:

The number of births of drug-affected babies, which was increasing at an alarming rate, is showing the first signs of decrease during 1990. This may reflect the general tendency that drug use has peaked and is now in somewhat of a decline.

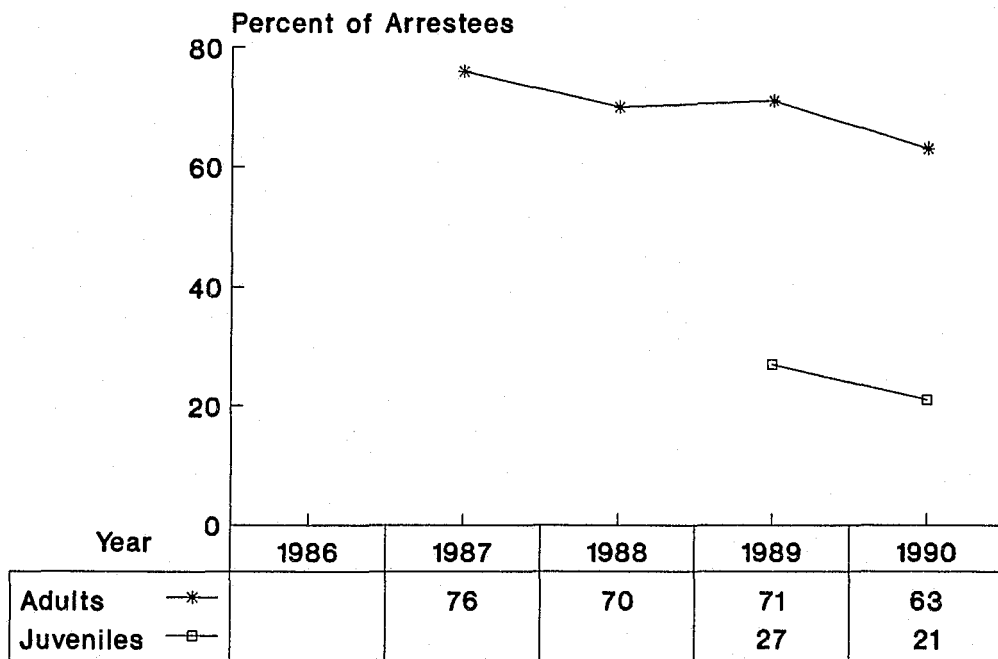
INDICATOR #3

Percent of arrestees testing positive for one or more illegal substances as reported by the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) Project of the National Institute of Justice.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

These data are based on results of voluntarily obtained urine samples and anonymous interviews of male and female arrestees booked into the Multnomah County Detention Center for nondrug offenses. Data from 1987, the first year of the DUF Project, do not include female arrestees, though years 1988 and later do. Starting in 1989, juvenile detainees were tested under these same conditions. The figures used for this indicator reflect the percent of those testing positive for one or more illegal drugs. No statewide data are available. Multnomah County is one of several sites nationwide selected by the National Institute of Justice to participate in the DUF Project.

Arrestees Testing Positive for Drugs Multnomah County



Source: Oregon TASC/DUF

REMARKS:

The high percentage of adult arrestees testing positive for one or more illegal drugs verifies the widely held belief in high rates of drug use by the criminal defendant population. For both groups, there is an encouraging decrease in 1990 levels compared to earlier years. Subsequent interviews of the juvenile detainees found 62% reporting tobacco use and, coincidentally, 62% reporting alcohol use in the 30 days prior to the interview. This supports the belief that tobacco and alcohol are the drugs of choice for juveniles.

INDICATOR #4

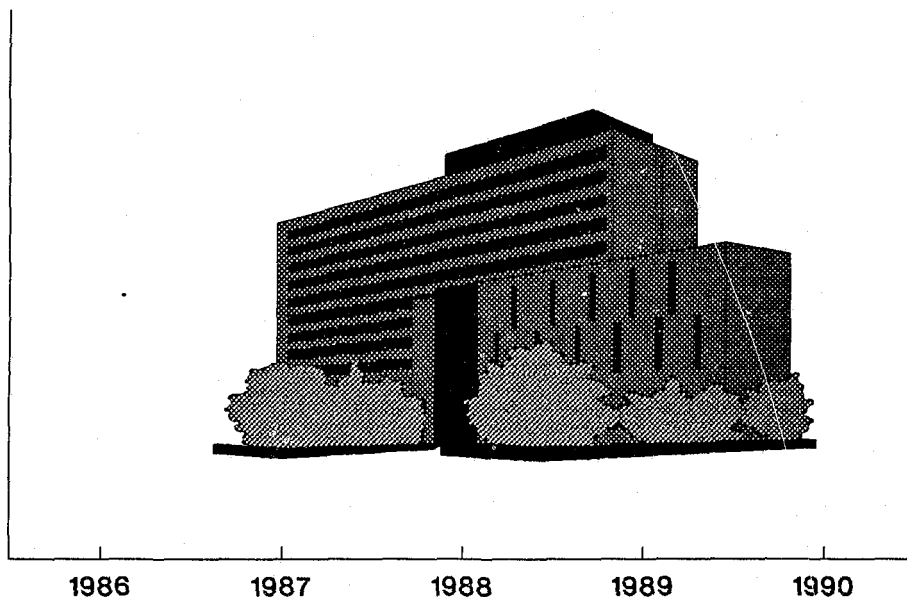
Annual number of hospital emergency room visits for drug or alcohol related causes.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

The Oregon State Board of Medical Examiners and Oregon Foundation for Medical Excellence are currently working to implement a program for collecting information on alcohol and drug related hospital emergency room visits. Research has shown this to be a critical indicator, and the Regional Drug Initiative is working to support the implementation effort.

Hospital Emergency Room Visits Alcohol or Drug-Related

Number of Visits



Source: Oregon Emergency Data Network

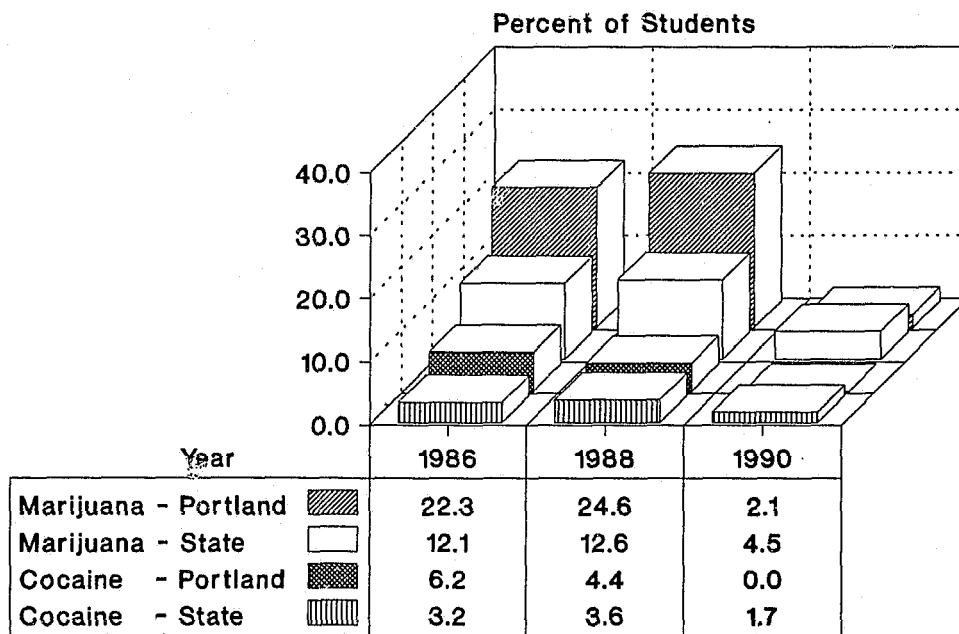
REMARKS:

Currently, no local or statewide data are available.

INDICATOR #5

Prevalence of drug use in the last 30 days among public school students in grades 8 and 11.*

Student Drug Use in Last 30 Days Grade 8

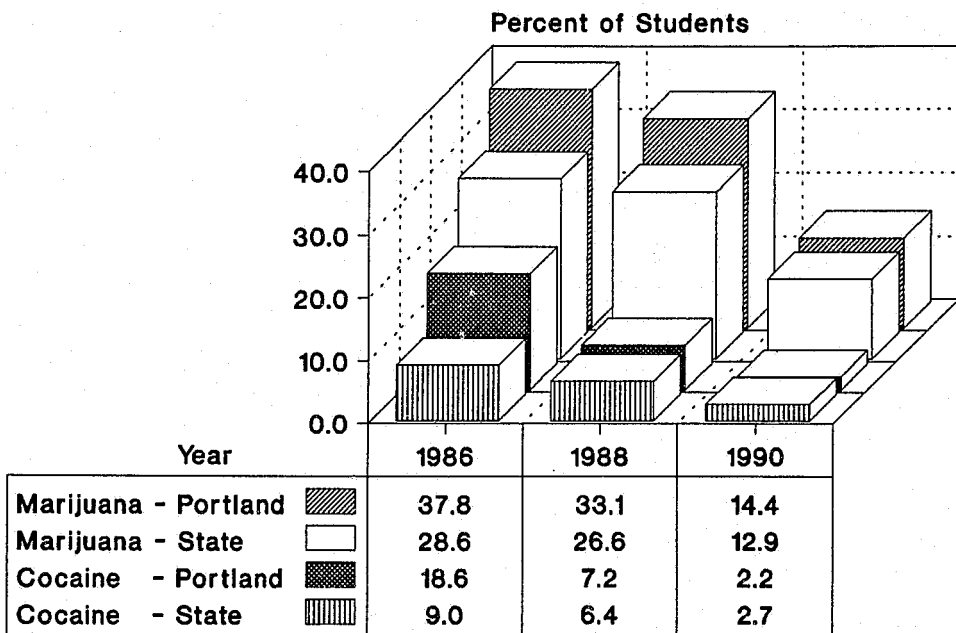


Source: "Drug Use by Oregon Public School Students"

TECHNICAL NOTE:

This is a self-reporting survey conducted throughout the state of Oregon in even-numbered years. The indicator is prevalence of use in the 30 days prior to the survey because it is thought to be one of the most consistently reliable data elements. It also corresponds to a data element in the national survey published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Marijuana and cocaine are the two most commonly used illicit drugs.

Student Drug Use in Last 30 Days Grade 11



Source: "Drug Use by Oregon Public School Students"

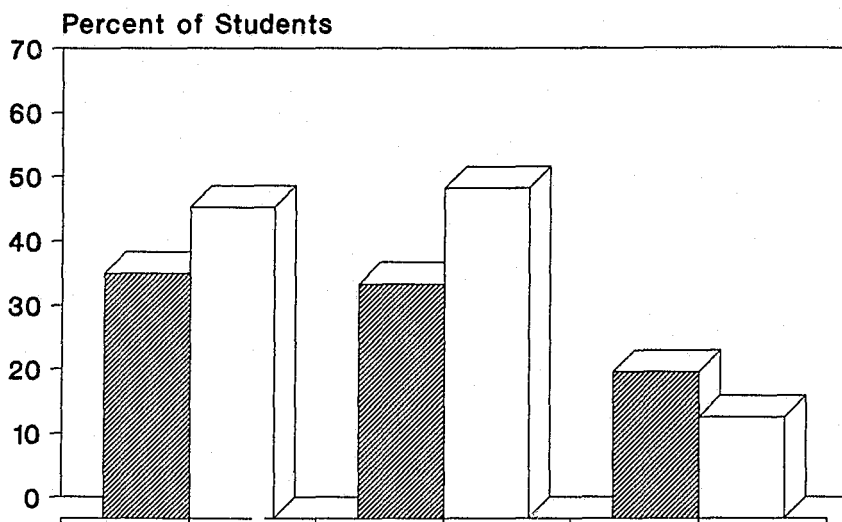
REMARKS:

Lower 1990 levels reflect a general pattern of reduced drug use noted both locally and statewide. The decreases observed are more extreme than would be expected and may be more fully understood after analyzing data from future years.

INDICATOR #6

Prevalence of alcohol use in the last 30 days among public school students in grades 8 and 11.

Student Alcohol Use in Last 30 Days Grade 8



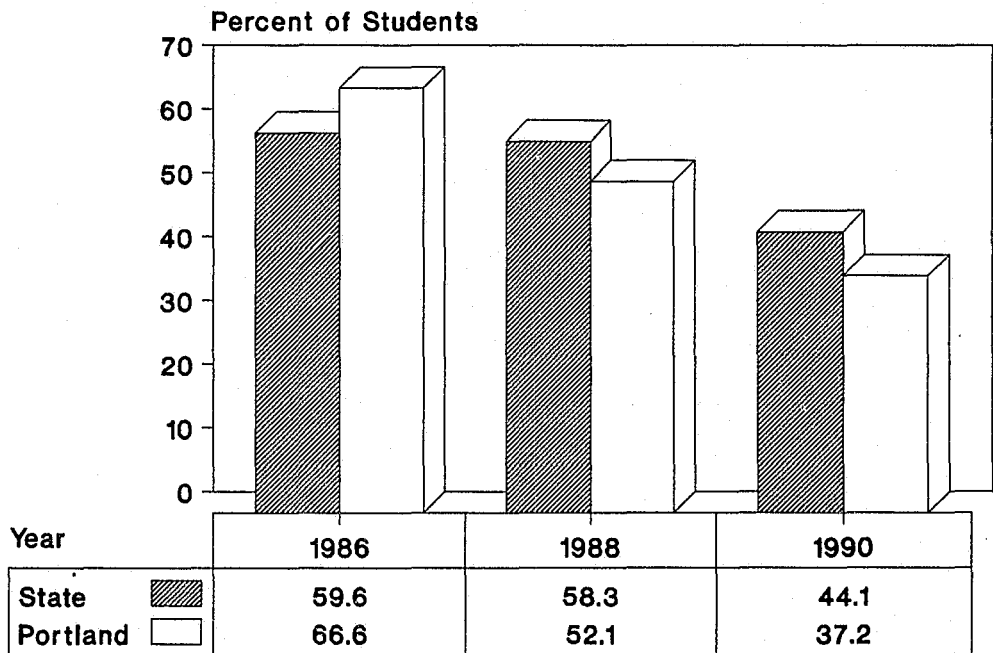
Year	1986	1988	1990
State	38.3	36.6	22.8
Portland	48.5	51.4	15.8

Source: "Drug Use by Oregon Public School Students"

TECHNICAL NOTE:

Because alcohol is an illegal drug for juveniles, its use is included as an indicator. Use in the last 30 days was selected for the same reasons mentioned for Indicator #5.

Student Alcohol Use in Last 30 Days Grade 11



Source: "Drug Use by Oregon Public School Students"

REMARKS:

Lower 1990 levels reflect a general pattern of reduced drug use noted both locally and statewide. Portland's student use levels have dropped below state levels.

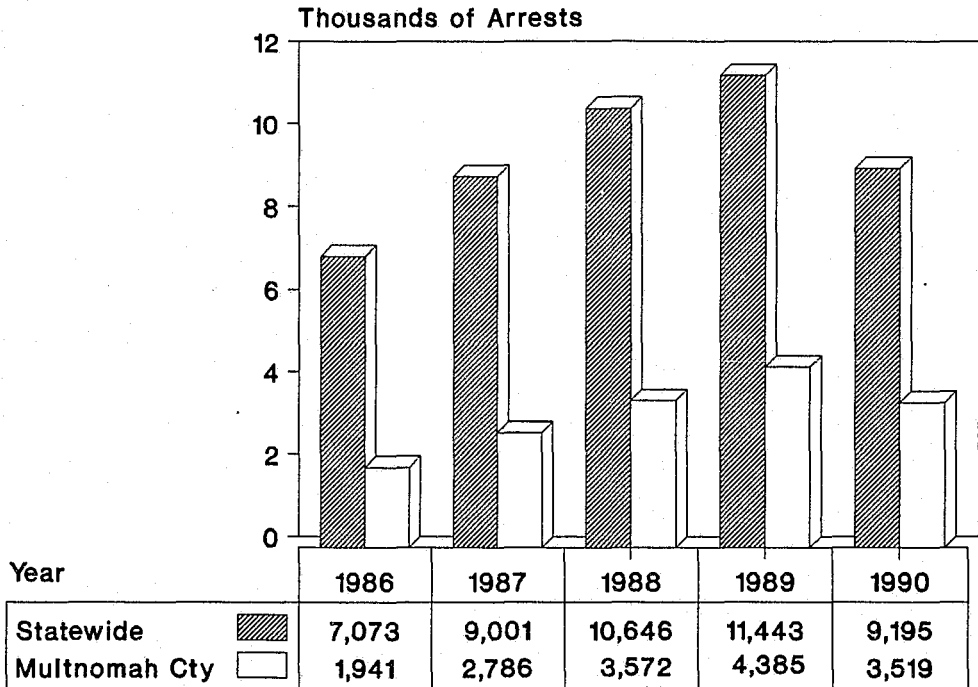
INDICATOR #7

Number of adult arrests for drug offenses from the Uniform Crime Report.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

This indicator is consistently collected on a local, state, and national level and is available for all states.

Adult Arrests for Drug Offenses



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System

REMARKS:

Adult arrests for drug offenses at the local level follow the same pattern as those throughout the state. Lower rates are seen for the first time in 1990.

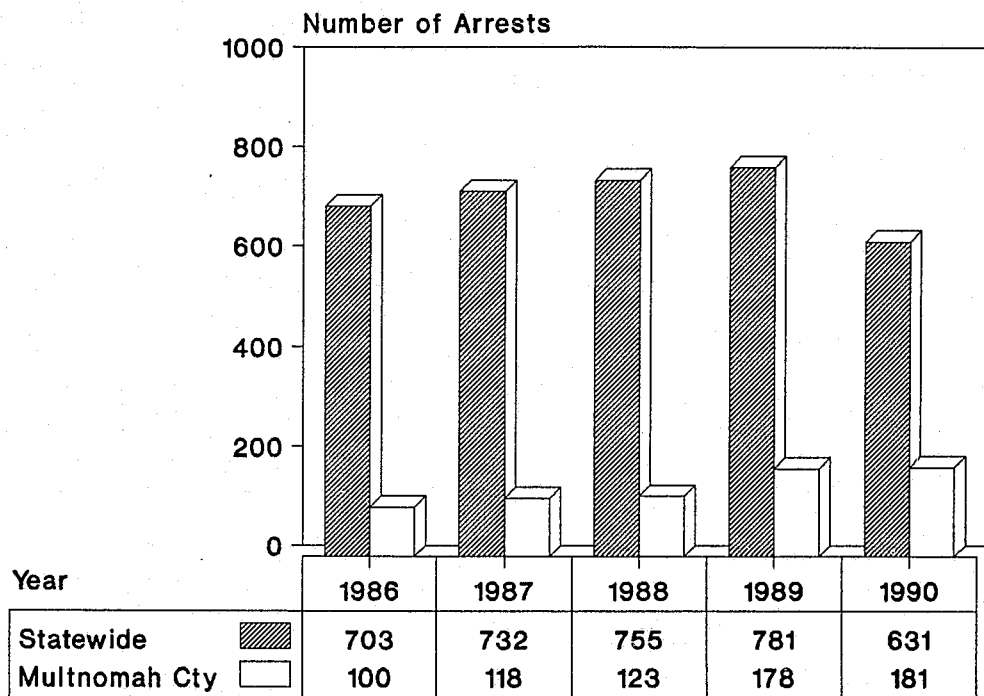
INDICATOR #8:

Number of juvenile arrests for drug offenses from the Uniform Crime Report.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

This indicator is consistently collected on a local, state, and national level and is available in all states. Juvenile arrests also reflect the amount of law enforcement resources devoted to juvenile crime and may vary widely from community to community.

Juvenile Arrests for Drug Offenses



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System

REMARKS:

The substantial decrease in 1990 drug-related juvenile arrest rates throughout the state parallels the decline in many other indicators of drug use. Although local rates did not decrease in 1990, there was no substantial increase as in previous years.

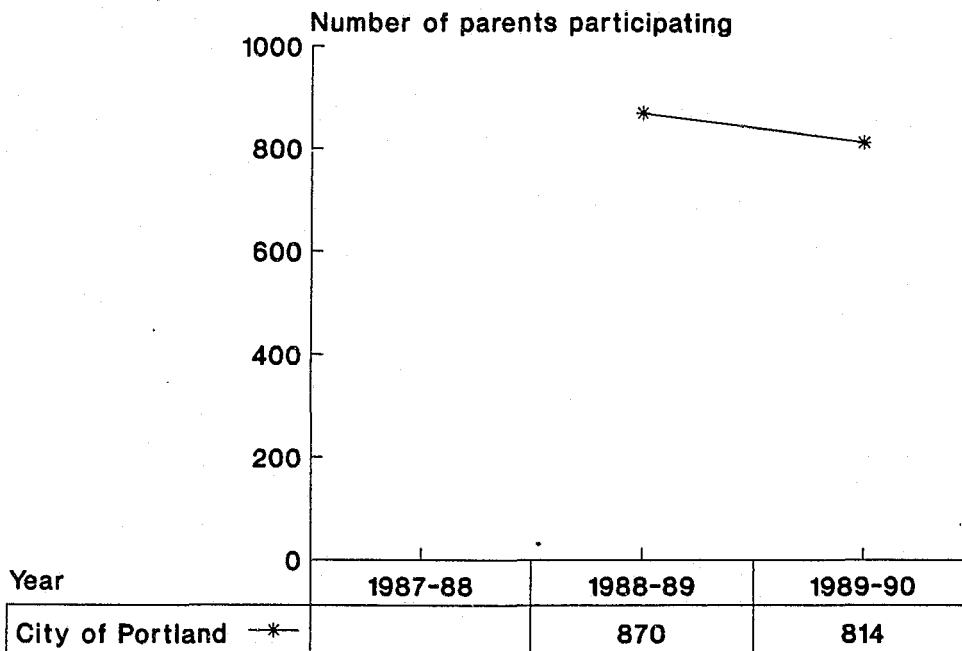
INDICATOR #9:

Number of parents trained in "Preparing for the Drug (Free) Years" in the Portland metropolitan area as reported by Portland Public Schools.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

In the 1988-1989 school year, in collaboration with the Oregon Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs, Portland Public Schools began a special prevention program for parents of children in 4th through 7th grades. This represents one indicator of parental involvement in drug prevention activities.

Number Participating in Parent Training "Preparing for the Drug (Free) Years"



Source: Portland Public Schools

REMARKS:

In the first year of operation, 870 parents participated in "Preparing for the Drug (Free) Years." During the second year, 814 parents participated. The Regional Drug Initiative will be working to increase future participation in this training, which consists of five sessions which aim at increasing parental skills in supporting drug prevention in the home.

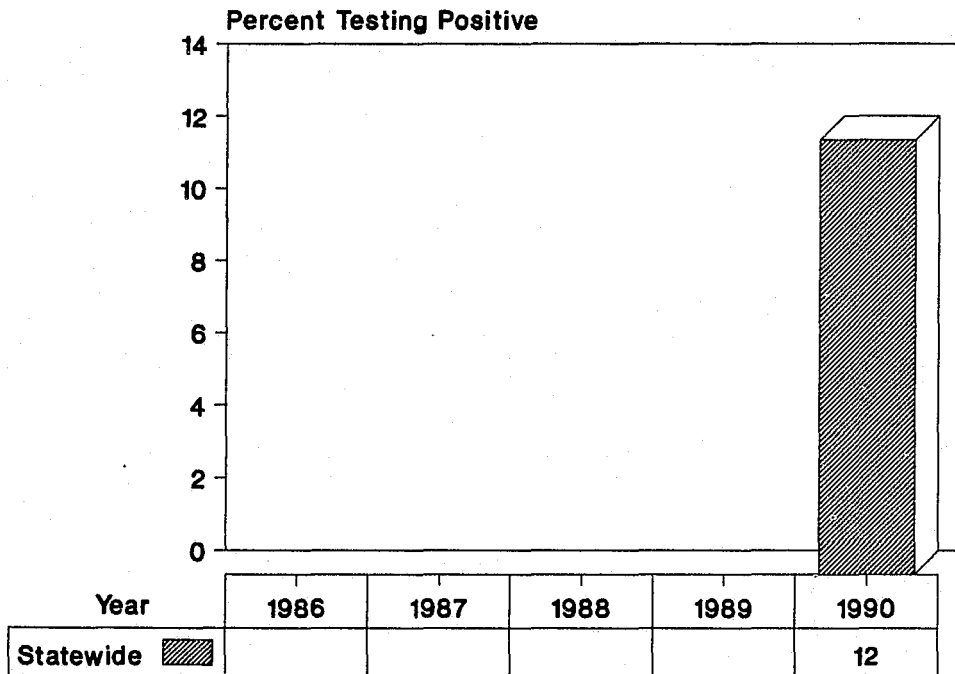
INDICATOR #10

Percent of positives in pre-employment drug tests as reported by Oregon Medical Laboratories.

TECHNICAL NOTE:

Percent of pre-employment tests reading positive was chosen as the most representative available measure of workforce drug use. Currently, this indicator is based on all Oregon pre-employment tests analyzed by Oregon Medical Laboratories (OML). OML was certified by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in January, 1991 and is currently the only Oregon laboratory so certified. It is anticipated that data from other laboratories will be included in future years, as they become NIDA certified.

Positives in Pre-Employment Drug Testing



Source: Oregon Medical Laboratories

REMARKS:

Percentages noted are similar to those occurring nationally. They are smaller than actual use levels (for example, random testing of employees) because drug users can choose to delay pre-employment tests until they feel they will test negative. This 1990 data point represents testing of approximately 24,000 job applicants.

REFERENCES

- Indicator #1 *Oregon Drug Related Death Totals 1986-1990 and Multnomah County Drug Related Death Totals 1988-1990*, Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office, 301 N.E. Knott St., Portland, OR 97212.
- Indicator #2 *Number of Drug Affected Infants*, prepared by Tracey L. Krieger, Budget & Planning Section, DHR/Children's Services Division, March 8, 1991.
- Indicator #3 Data presented are averages of quarterly "Drug Use Forecasting" (DUF) data from TASC of Oregon, Inc., 1727 N.E. 13th, Room 202, Portland, OR 97212. Data for 1990 are based on "Data Collection Summary" tables.
- Indicator #4 No data are available at this time. An Oregon Emergency Data Network to provide these data is in the planning stages.
- Indicator #5 *Drug Use by Oregon Public School Students*, by Douglas M. Egan, Ph.D., Lewis and Clark College, for Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs, Department of Human Resources, 1178 Chemeketa St. NE, Salem, OR 97310.
- Indicator #6 See reference for Indicator #5.
- Indicator #7 *Report of Criminal Offenses and Arrests* (annual), Law Enforcement Data System, 155 Cottage St. NE, Salem, OR 97310.
- Indicator #8 See reference for Indicator #7.
- Indicator #9 *Portland Public Schools Alcohol and Drug Program Annual Report 1989-1990*, Portland Public Schools, Portland, Oregon.
- Indicator #10 Personal communication, Oregon Medical Laboratories, Eugene, Oregon.

For general information on assembling existing data from sources such as these, see *Developing a Community Profile: A Handbook for Using Pre-existing Data in Prevention Planning*, which can be ordered from either address on the back cover.

Additional copies of this *Drug Impact Index* document can also be ordered from either address on the back cover.

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