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A GENERATION AT RISK

**ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND
PENNSYLVANIA'S YOUTH**

THE 1993 SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governor's Drug Policy Council

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Governor

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNOR'S DRUG POLICY COUNCIL

CAROL A. WILLIAMS
Executive Director

Dear Colleague:

In the Spring of 1993, the Governor's Drug Policy Council conducted its third statewide survey of alcohol and drug use and abuse among Pennsylvania's students. Concerned about increasing reports of weapons and violence in Commonwealth schools, additional questions were added to the 1993 Survey to establish a baseline of objective data for future surveys.

The Survey provides a snapshot of an ordinary day in the life of a school in the Spring of 1993. It also allows comparisons with "snapshots" taken in 1989 and 1991, enabling us to see progress among our students and to identify areas of concern. There are some hopeful signs. Alcohol abuse is declining among school-aged youth. Student attitudes about school, their teachers and subjects have steadily improved since 1989. And, the majority of students do not abuse alcohol or other drugs.

Some trends, however, emerging from the Survey are troubling. The willingness to use and the actual abuse of tobacco, marijuana, inhalants, cocaine, hallucinogens, stimulants and steroids increased between 1991 and 1993. Equally disturbing are the reports of carrying weapons and fighting by students who are also abusing drugs. This lethal combination of drugs with weapons seriously undermines the mission and safety of our schools. It underscores the growing concern about youth violence, and highlights the linkages between substance abuse and violence.

The Survey also clearly shows that no school or community in the Commonwealth is immune from drug and alcohol abuse. The data cited represent statewide averages based on a stratified random sample of 41,632 public and nonpublic school students for grades 6, 7, 9 and 12. Drug and alcohol abuse problems recognize neither geographic nor racial boundaries.

Our schools are vital in educating our youth about the dangers of alcohol, drugs and weapons and in preparing them for the responsibilities of adulthood. However, the schools cannot succeed on their own. They need the support of parents and communities; all of us must work together to assure our children hope and dignity so that they can lead meaningful lives free from the fear of drugs and violence.

Drug and alcohol abuse and its accompanying violence are threatening to envelope our communities and tear apart our families. Armed with the information contained in the Survey, together we can prepare to meet the challenge facing our families, our schools, our communities, our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Williams

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The report that follows builds upon a baseline of data established in 1989 from the first statistically valid and reliable statewide survey of alcohol and drug abuse among school-age Pennsylvanians. A comparable survey of public and nonpublic school students in grades 6, 7, 9, and 12 was accomplished during the spring of 1991 and 1989 creating an opportunity to measure changes in youthful attitudes and behaviors since 1989.

This project is a success owing to the cooperation, talent and energy of many:

- The young people across this Commonwealth who willingly and candidly completed the questionnaire:
- The school administrators, teachers, counselors and drug abuse prevention professionals who administered the questionnaires:
- Ms. Joan Ruse, Dr. John Swisher, Ms. Joyce White, Dr. Paul Weiner and staff of Data Base of State College, Pennsylvania who designed the basic questionnaire, processed the data and prepared several drafts of this report under contract to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- The U.S. Department of Education whose financial support under the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act makes possible this accomplishment.

Special Thanks to:

Ms. Lou Ann Guilles, Mr. Dan Hackenberger, Ms. Janice Teal, Mr. Eric Meyer, and Ms. Lynn McQuown,
Pennsylvania Department of General Services

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ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND PENNSYLVANIA'S YOUTH A GENERATION AT RISK THE 1993 SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION	iv
SUBSTANCE USE	1
Alcohol	1
Tobacco	2
Marijuana	3
Inhalants	3
Cocaine	4
Crack	4
Heroin	4
Stimulants	4
Steroids	4
Over-the-Counter Medications	4
Illegal Drugs	4
YOUTH RISK BEHAVIORS	4
Driver Risks	4
Weapons	4
Physical Fights	5
SCHOOL CLIMATE	6
Plans and Goals	6
Attitudes About School	6
LOCATIONS OF USE, SOURCES FOR SUBSTANCES	7
Locations of Use	7
Sources for Substances	7
NEGATIVE/DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS	7
INTERVENTION RESOURCE PERSONS	8
DECISION-MAKING FACTORS	8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND PENNSYLVANIA'S YOUTH A GENERATION AT RISK THE 1993 SURVEY

In 1989 and again in 1991, the Governor's Drug Policy Council conducted a comprehensive statewide survey of alcohol and drug use and abuse among Pennsylvania's students with funding assistance from the federal Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. In Spring of 1993 the Council conducted the third statewide survey, which added new questions about school violence and weapons.

This executive summary profiles the 41,632 Pennsylvania students in grades 6, 7, 9 and 12 who completed the survey. Their responses are representative of students in those grades across the state.

The survey instrument, Primary Prevention Awareness, Attitude and Usage Scales (PPAAUS), has been used since 1979 by more than 1.5 million students and continues to maintain excellent reliability and validity. The most recent enrollment figures from the state Department of Education were used to construct a stratified (by intermediate unit and grade) random sample of public and nonpublic school students for grades 6, 7, 9 and 12.

Of the 41,632 students participating in the 1993 survey: 26 percent (N=10,783) were in sixth grade; 29.5 percent (N=12,267) in seventh grade; 23 percent (N=9,632) in ninth grade; and 21.5 percent (N=8,950) in 12th grade. In the sample, 51.0 percent were male and 49.0 percent female; 91.5 percent were public school students and 8.5 percent nonpublic school students. Eighty-eight (87.7) percent of the responding students identified themselves as Caucasian; 6.5 percent as African-American; 1.8 percent as Asian; 1.8 percent as Hispanic; 0.5 percent as Native American; and 1.7 percent as Other.

The survey included questions about students' willingness to use major substances (alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin and cigarettes) and frequency of use of those substances, as well as use of hallucinogens, "ice," designer drugs, prescription drugs and over-the-counter substances. Students also were asked about the factors that are important in their decision making, where they use those substances and the sources for obtaining them, the frequency of their participation in extracurricular and community activities, and to whom they would turn for help with a drug problem.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In this text, "intent to use" and "willingness to use" reflect a response of "would like to use it any chance I got," "would like to try or would like to use it," or "not sure whether or not ... would try it." The nebulous "not sure" category is included because doing so more closely reflects National Institute on Drug Abuse intent data and because it provides a better predictor of later actual use. "Regular Use" reflects a response of "about once a day," "once or twice a week," or "once or twice a month" to the PPAAUS matrix-format items; this combination is used because it closely reflects national patterns and definitions focusing on 30-day prevalence of use.

Willingness to use a substance is typically higher than self-reported use of that substance. For

gateway substances (alcohol and cigarettes), intent to use precedes actual use by approximately two to four years, depending on the substance. The difference between intent to use and self-reported use depends on the availability, legality and social acceptability of the substance. As the availability of a substance increases, the discrepancy between intent and actual use decreases. For example, by 12th grade, when most students are old enough to purchase their own cigarettes legally, the difference between intent and actual use is minimal. For alcohol and marijuana, which become more available as students get older, the difference between intent and use decreases proportionally; as they reach the upper grades, more of the students who express intent to use these substances are able to obtain them.

Alcohol

Almost one-half (47.9 percent) of seniors drink alcohol at least once a month; 19.8 percent drink at least once a week. Nearly one-third (30.7 percent) of ninth-graders drink some kind of alcohol monthly or more often; 12.0 percent drink at least once a week. Thirteen (13.2) percent of seventh-graders and 6.6 percent of sixth-graders drink alcohol regularly. Regular use of alcohol has not changed significantly since the first survey in 1989.

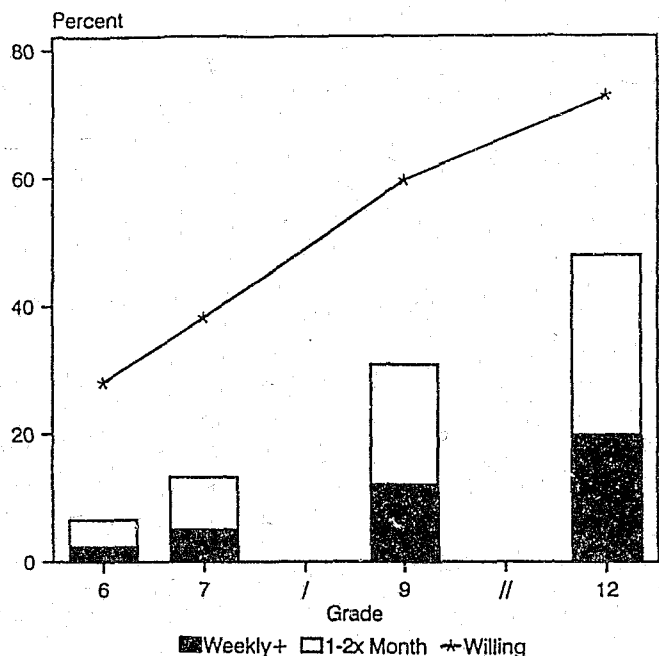


Figure 1 ALCOHOL — Willingness to Drink and Self-Reported Use: Weekly or More Often and Once/Twice a Month

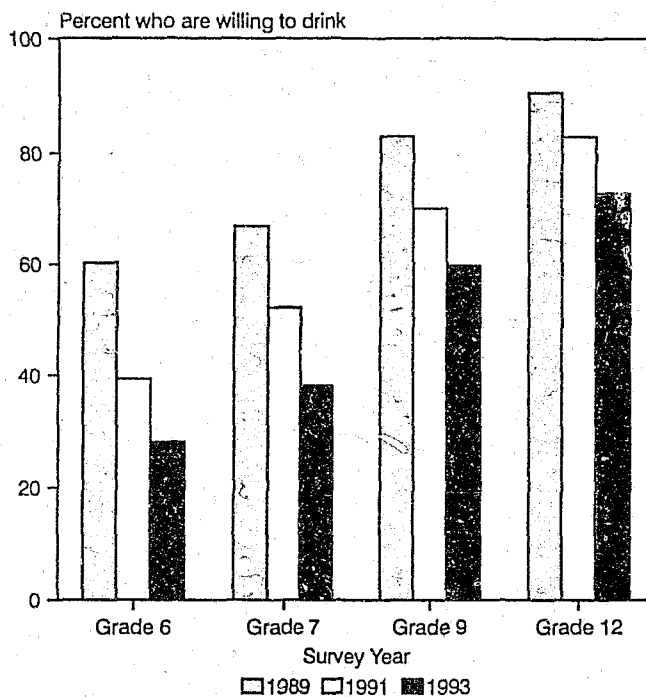


Figure 2 Trends in Intent to Drink Alcohol

Almost three-fourths (72.7 percent) of seniors expressed a willingness to drink alcohol; 59.6 percent of ninth-graders; 38.1 percent of seventh-graders; and 28.0 percent of sixth-graders. Since 1989, intent to drink alcohol has steadily declined in all grades surveyed. This is an encouraging trend, since intent to use precedes actual use by several years.

Beer is the type of alcohol most frequently used by students, followed by wine coolers, wine and liquor. A comparison of the percentage of stu-

dents who drink alcohol to the percentage who get drunk reveals that the proportion of ninth and 12th grade students who get drunk has been steadily decreasing since the first survey. However, that proportion has been increasing among seventh-graders.

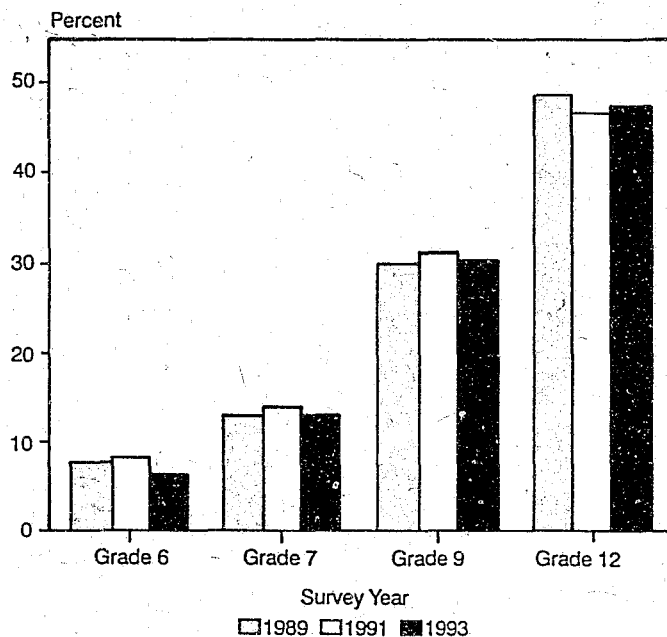


Figure 3 Trends in Regular (Monthly or More Often) Use of Alcohol

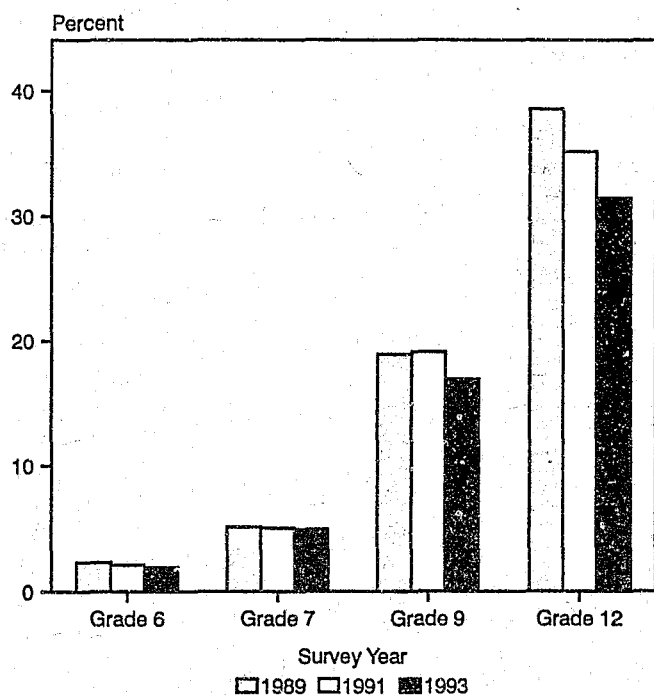


Figure 4 Trends in Regular (Monthly or More Often) Frequency of Getting Drunk

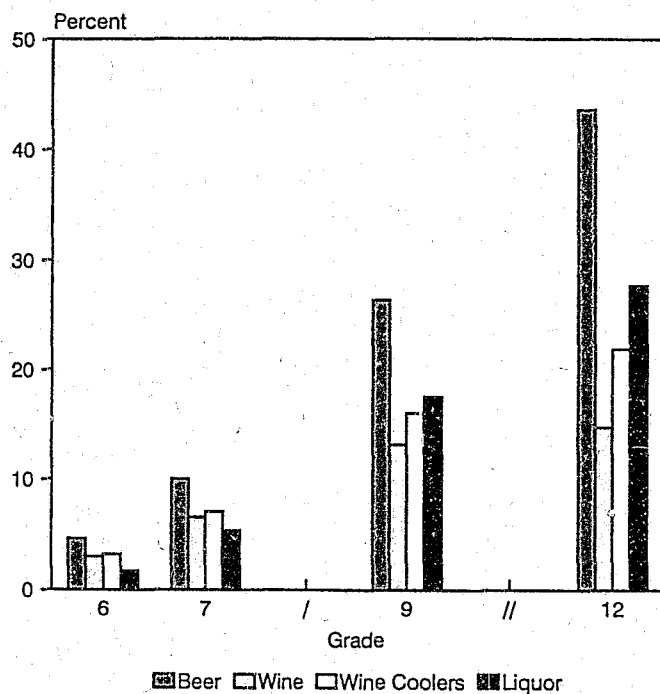


Figure 5 Regular (Monthly or More Often) use of Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers, and Liquor

Tobacco

In grades 7, 9 and 12, indicators point to slight increases in both intent to use and self-reported use of cigarettes since the 1989 survey. However, there has been a slight downward trend in regular use of smokeless tobacco in grades 6 and 7.

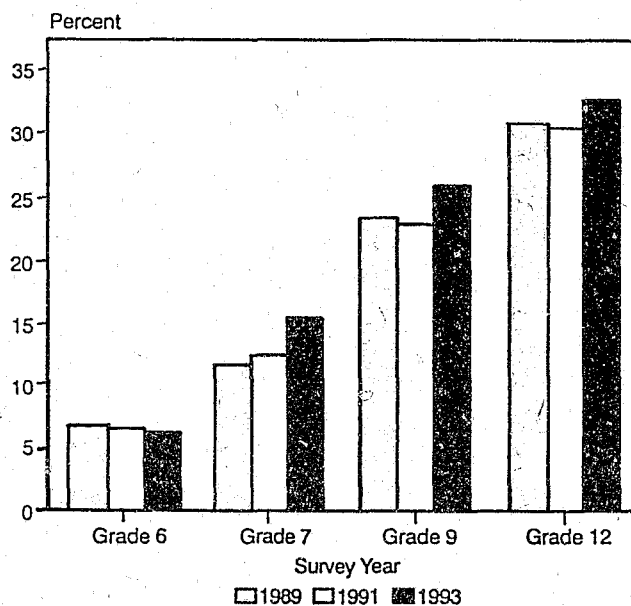


Figure 6 Trends in Regular (Monthly or More Often) Use of Cigarettes

Regular smokers more frequently ride with drinking drivers, have less positive attitudes about school, skip school, cheat on tests and shoplift more frequently, get into fights and carry weapons to school more frequently and turn to teachers, counselors, support groups or parents less frequently than their non-smoking peers at all grade levels. Smoking by elementary-age youth is an early warning sign for the increased likelihood of later drug abuse and other behavioral problems.

Marijuana

Fifteen (15.0) percent of seniors reported smoking marijuana at least once a month, more than one-half of whom (7.8 percent) smoke weekly or more often. Among ninth-graders, 4.7 percent smoke marijuana weekly or more often, and an additional 4.0 percent smoke once or twice a month. Two percent of the seventh-graders and 0.6 percent of sixth-graders report smoking marijuana regularly. An average of 78.4 percent of the students who smoke marijuana regularly report getting high regularly.

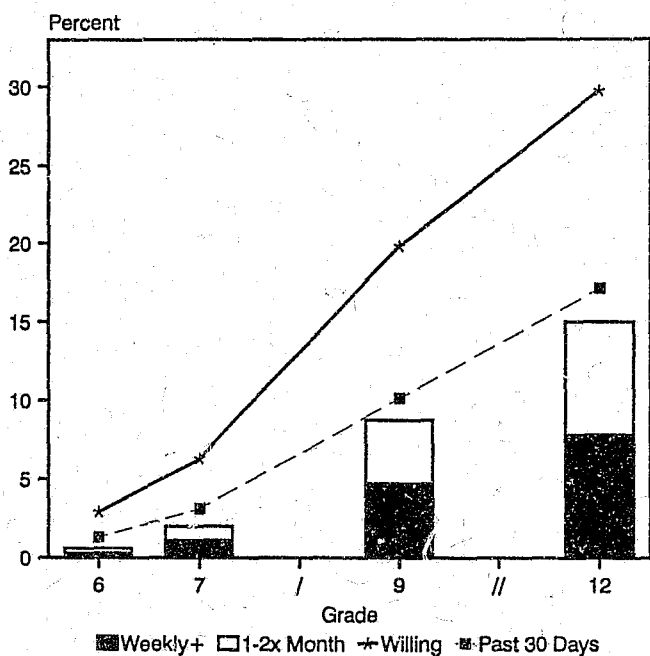


Figure 7 MARIJUANA — Willingness to use and Self-Reported Use: Weekly or More Often, Once/Twice and Month, Within the Past 30 days

Thirty (29.7) percent of seniors, 19.8 percent of ninth-graders, 6.3 percent of seventh-graders, and 2.9 percent of sixth-graders indicated an interest in smoking marijuana. In all grades surveyed, the intent to use marijuana and the self-reported use of marijuana declined from 1989 to 1991 but increased from 1991 to 1993. This increase reflects

patterns seen in national student drug and alcohol surveys.

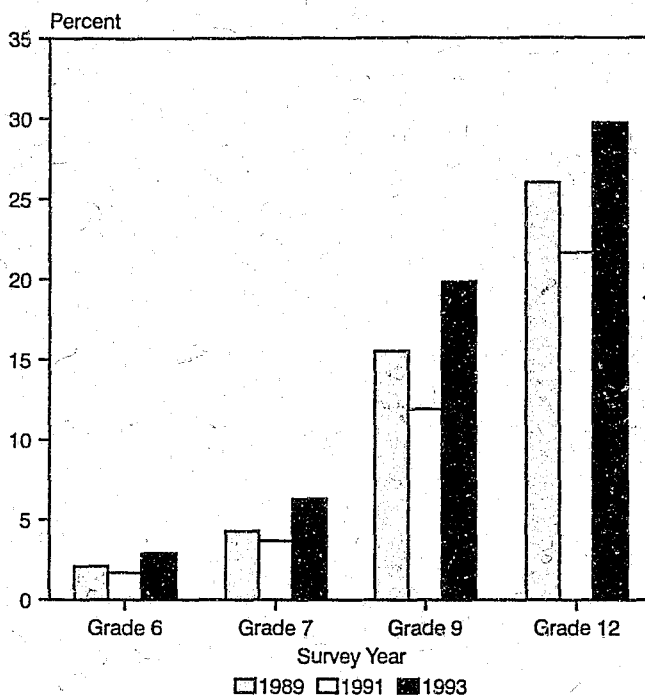


Figure 8 Trends in Intent to use Marijuana

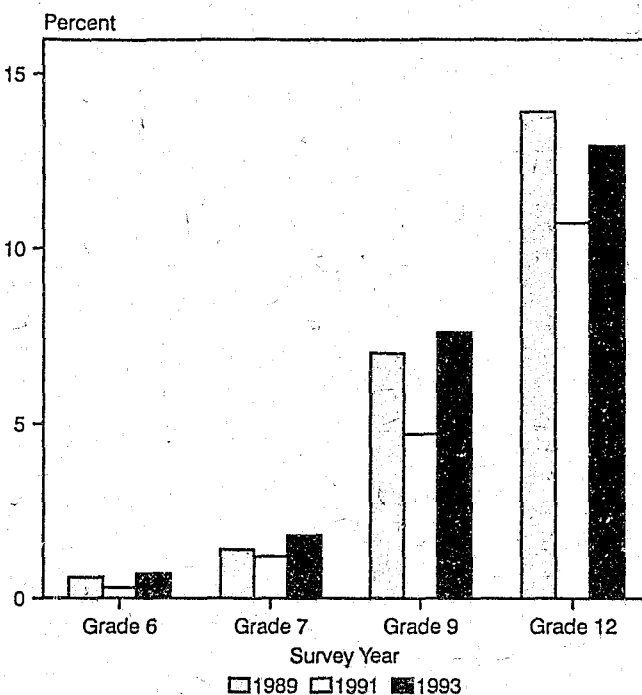


Figure 9 Trends in Regular (Monthly or More Often) use of Marijuana

Other Drugs

Inhalants - Almost three (2.7) percent of seniors, 3.2 percent of ninth-graders, 1.6 percent of seventh-graders, and 0.9 percent of sixth-graders report regular use of inhalants. Data from the three surveys indicate that regular use of inhalants among Pennsylvania students may be increasing.

Cocaine - Six (6.1) percent of seniors reported using cocaine at least once, as did 3.1 percent of ninth-graders, 1.7 percent of seventh-graders and 0.9 percent of sixth-graders. Regular use of cocaine appears to be declining among 12th-graders, unchanged among sixth-graders and increasing among seventh- and ninth-graders.

Crack - Monthly or more frequent use of crack increased among seventh-, ninth- and 12th-graders but was unchanged among sixth-graders. All grades surveyed reported an increased willingness to try crack.

Heroin - An average of 2.2 percent of students surveyed expressed an intent to use heroin. An average of 0.3 percent of the seventh-, ninth- and 12th graders reported using heroin at least once a month. While the intent to use heroin appears to be on the rise, no clear-cut trends in regular use can be seen.

Stimulants - Four (3.8) percent of seniors, 4.6 percent of ninth-graders, 2.4 percent of seventh-graders, and 0.9 percent of sixth-graders reported using stimulants at least once a month. Regular use of stimulants by sixth- and seventh-graders has increased incrementally since the 1989 survey. In grades 9 and 12, regular use decreased from 1989 to 1991, and then increased between 1991 and 1993.

Steroids - An average of 0.8 percent of students surveyed reported using anabolic steroids monthly or more often. An average of 3.4 percent of students reported having used steroids at least once before. From 1991, when steroids were first

included in the survey, to 1993, regular steroid use has increased among ninth-graders.

Over-the-Counter Medications (OTCs) - An average of 2.3 percent of ninth- and twelfth-graders and 1.6 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders report regularly abusing OTCs. Between 1991 and 1993, regular abuse increased among ninth- and 12th-graders.

Illegal Drugs - Patterned after a survey item used by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this item asks about lifetime use of LSD, PCP, Ecstasy, 'Shrooms, Speed, Ice, Heroin or Pills. At least once prior to the survey, 15.0 percent of seniors, 10.1 percent of ninth-graders, 4.5 percent of seventh-graders, and 2.5 percent of sixth-graders report having abused one of these substances.

New questions were added to the 1993 Survey which asked about the use of Crystal Methamphetamine ("Ice"), Designer Drugs and Injected Drugs. An average of 0.3 percent of students reported using crystal meth at least once in the month prior to the survey. An average of 0.6 percent of seventh-, ninth- and 12th-graders and 0.3 percent of sixth-graders reported abuse of designer drugs. An average of 1.7 percent of students reported that they had injected drugs.

"Hard" Drugs - An overall "Hard" Drug category was constructed from the seven PPAAUS matrix items about drugs other than alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, steroids and OTCs. An average of 7.4 percent of ninth- and 12th-graders, 4.1 percent of seventh-graders and 2.1 percent of sixth-graders reported regular abuse of at least one "hard" drug.

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIORS

Driver Risks

Eleven (10.6) percent of Pennsylvania seniors reported they drive after drinking alcohol, and 25.3 percent of those who do so report such behavior monthly or more often. Nearly 17 (16.9) percent of seniors reported having driven after drinking within the past 30 days.

Seven (7.2) percent of seniors reported they regularly drive after smoking marijuana; and of those who do so at least once a month, 55.7 percent reported driving after smoking marijuana monthly or more often.

An average of 13.5 percent of all students indicated they ride with a drinker at least once a month,

and 6.3 percent are regularly passengers of drivers smoking marijuana. In the 30 days prior to the survey, an average of 23.3 students reported having been a passenger of a drinking driver.

Weapons

An average of 79.8 percent of students surveyed did not carry a weapon in the 30 days prior to the survey. Of those who did, 8.3 percent reported they carried a weapon at least six times, 6.5 percent carried one two-to-five times, and 5.3 percent carried a weapon once in the past 30 days. Of those who carried a weapon, 55.5 percent most often used a knife, 11.2 percent a club, 9.8 percent a handgun and 5.6 percent a rifle or shotgun.

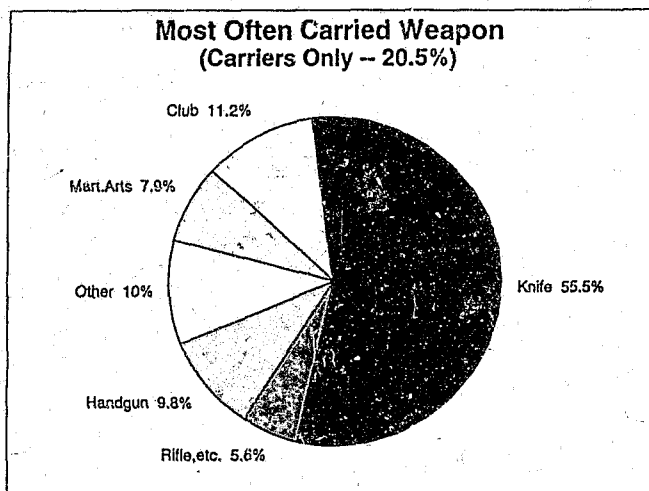


Figure 10 Most Often Carried Weapon of Those Students Who Carried a Weapon in the Past 30 Days (20.2% of All Students)

At least 11.3 percent of all students surveyed carried a knife at least once or more often in the past 30 days; at least 2.3 percent carried a club and at least 2.0 percent a handgun.

Carrying weapons to school was highest among 9th-graders - 23.8 percent followed by seventh-graders (21.5 percent). Nineteen (18.9) percent of twelfth-graders and 16.5 percent of sixth-graders carried a weapon to school in the past 30 days.

Physical Fights

In the 12 months prior to the survey, an average of 47.5 percent of sixth-, seventh- and ninth-graders and 29.9 percent of seniors were in a physical fight at least once. Eighteen (17.7) percent of sixth-graders, 16.9 percent of seventh-graders, 12.4

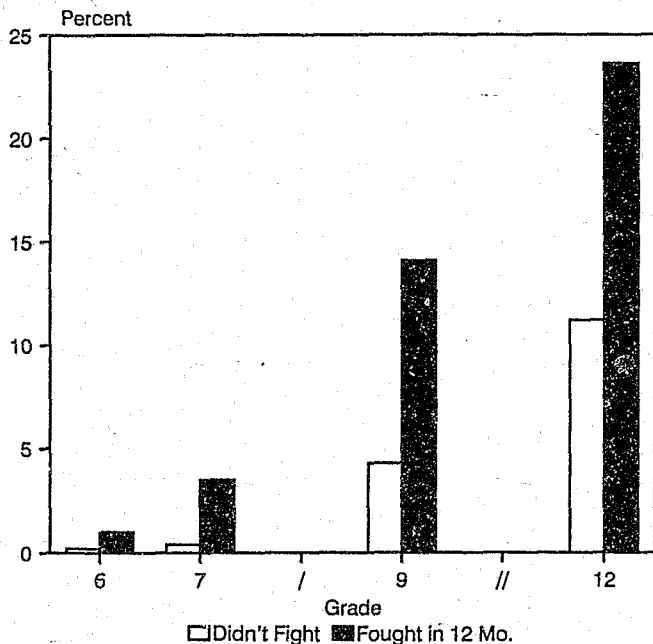


Figure 11 Fighting and Marijuana Use

percent of ninth-graders and 7.2 percent of seniors were in fights four or more times. Six (5.6) percent of students surveyed said that medical treatment was needed at least once in the past year for injuries sustained while fighting.

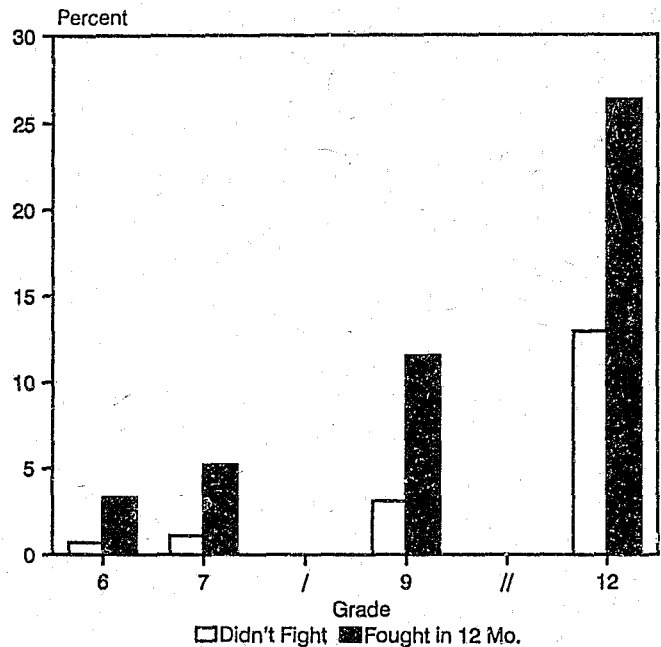


Figure 12 Fighting and Skipping School

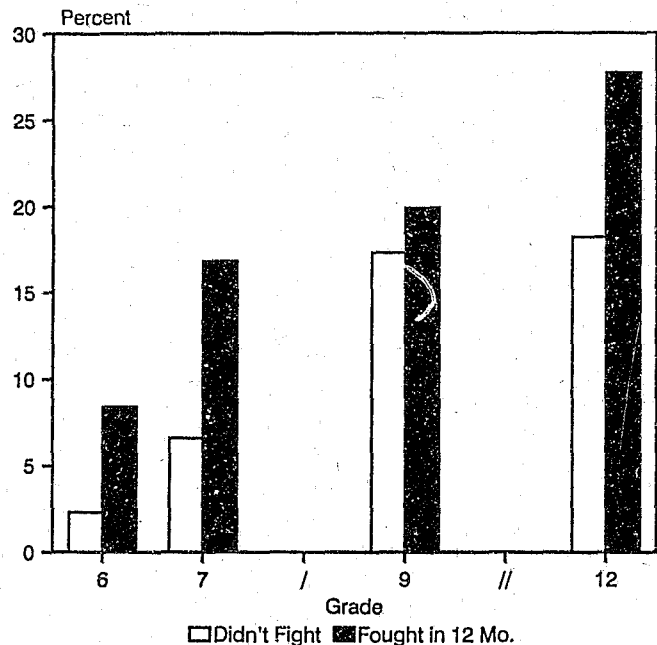


Figure 13 Fighting and Cheating

Several items on the survey were isolated and used to identify a direct relationship between fighting and: perceived grade average, self-reported use of alcohol, self-reported use of marijuana, frequency of skipping school, frequency of skipping school, frequency of cheating on tests, and possession of a weapon within the past 30 days. Students

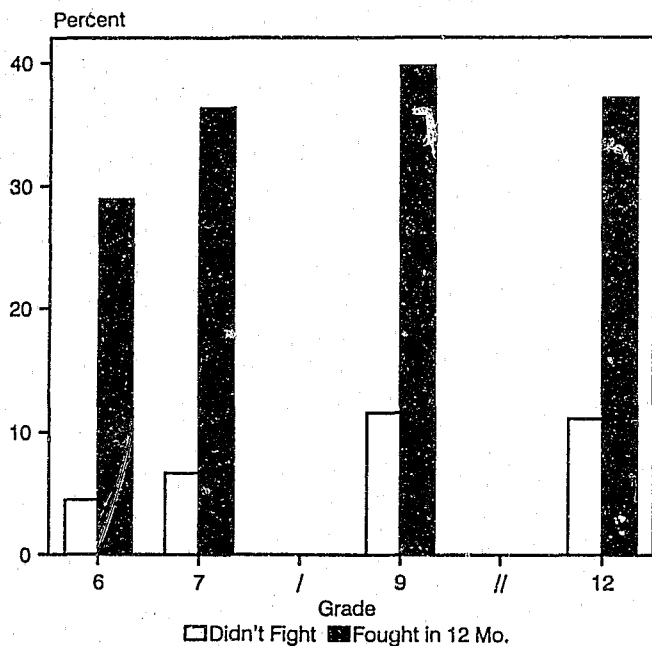


Figure 14 Fighting and Carrying Weapons

who did NOT fight: perceived higher grade averages; drank alcohol less and smoked marijuana less; skipped school less and cheated less; and were less likely to have carried a weapon in the past 30 days.

Of students surveyed, 42.7 percent indicate that they have never been in a physical fight. Of those students who reported being in at least one fight, 44.8 percent identified their most recent adversary as a friend, 21.8 percent as a family member, 8.5 percent as a stranger and 2.6 percent as a date. Eleven (10.8) percent said their last fight involved more than one person.

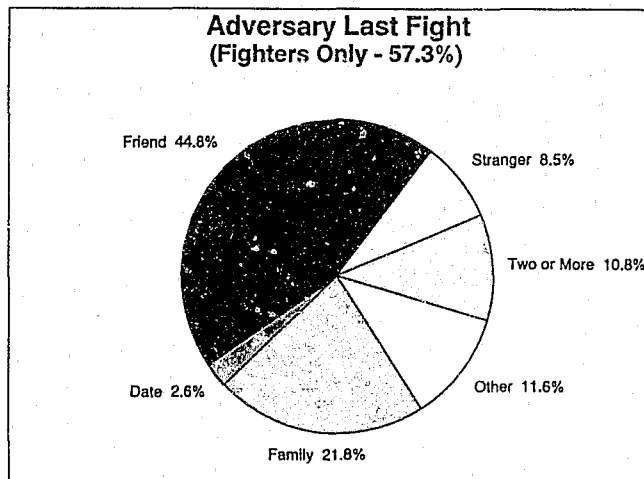


Figure 15 Most Recent Adversary in Physical Fight of Those Students Who Fought in the Past year (47.5% of All Students Surveyed)

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Plans and Goals

Of all students surveyed, 74.1 percent hope to attend college after they finish high school, while 3.3 percent (6.3 percent of seniors) would like to go to technical school. Eight (7.5) percent want to get a job after they graduate, 9.0 percent are undecided, 4.4 percent think they will join the military, and 1.3 percent want to get married. Only 0.6 percent feel they will drop out before they finish their senior year.

Attitudes About School

An average of 53.8 percent of students in grades 6, 7, 9 and 12 have positive attitudes about school, the most positive (58.0 percent) occurring among sixth-graders. An average of 64.4 percent of all students think their teachers are helpful, with sixth-graders the most positive, 76.7 percent. An average of 44.6 percent of students have a favorable attitude toward their subjects. More than three-fourths (77.4 percent) of students think their classmates are friendly.

In all grades surveyed, students' attitudes about school, teachers and subjects have improved

since the 1989 survey, while attitudes about their classmates have declined in every group except sixth-graders.

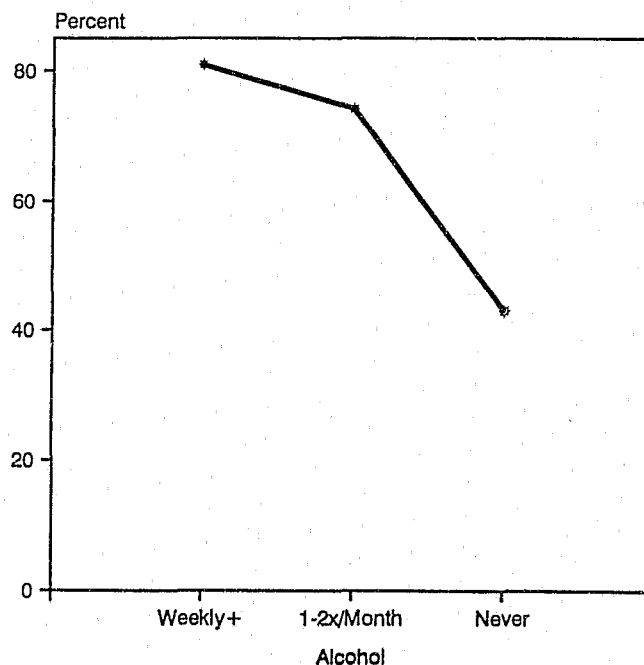


Figure 16 Relationship Between Frequency of Drinking Alcohol and Weekly or More Often participation in Social Activities

LOCATIONS OF USE AND SOURCES FOR SUBSTANCES

Almost three-fourths (73.1 percent) of seniors and 54.9 percent of ninth-graders indicated they use tobacco, alcohol and/or other drugs. More than one-third (36.1 percent) of seventh-graders and 26.7 percent of sixth-graders indicated they use substances.

The percentage of Pennsylvania students in grades 6 and 7 who perceive that they use substances has increased steadily through the surveys of 1989, 1991 and 1993. In grades 9 and 12, the percentage of perceived users dropped from 1989 to 1991, but increased from 1991 to 1993.

Locations of Use

Of those students reporting substance use:

- An average of 21.9 percent of ninth-graders and seniors and 7.7 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders use them at school. An average of 86.5 percent of ninth-graders and seniors and 54.4 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders use substances at parties.
- An average of 56.9 percent of students who report using substances say they use them at home. An average of 91.6 percent of ninth-graders and seniors and 59.7 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders use substances at friends' homes. Half (50.0 percent) of ninth-graders and seniors and 18.4 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders use them in a car; 60.4 percent of all students surveyed use them at hangouts, and 30.0 percent use them at public places.
- An average of 39.7 percent of ninth-graders and seniors and 21.1 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders use substances before or after school activities, and an average of 17.8 percent of the ninth-graders and seniors use them at work.

Sources of Substances

Of those students reporting substance use:

- An average of 87 percent of ninth-graders and seniors and 69.7 percent of sixth and seventh-graders obtain substances from friends. An average of 47.2 percent of ninth-

graders and seniors get them from students at school. Half (52.0 percent) of the ninth-graders and seniors and one-third (33.9 percent) of the sixth- and seventh-graders purchase substances at stores.

- An average of 14.8 percent of ninth-graders and seniors and 3.9 percent of sixth and seventh-graders get them from people at work; and 31.4 percent of ninth- and 12th-graders, and 9.6 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders get them from college students.
- An average of 33.1 percent of all students who smoke, drink or use drugs reported they obtain the substances from family, and 38.2 percent from adults.

Negative/Disruptive Behaviors

There is high correlation between negative/disruptive behaviors and the use of substances. The two strongest associations are with the frequency of getting drunk and the frequency of getting high. Two of the stronger relationships with drug use are frequency of unexcused skipping of school and frequency of staying out without a parent's permission.

In Pennsylvania, 16.9 percent of seniors, 6.8 percent of ninth-graders and an average of 3.2 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders skip school regularly. An average of 5.9 percent of the students surveyed shoplift at least once a month, and 5.0 percent regularly take money from an adult's wallet.

An average of 22.5 percent of ninth-graders and seniors, 11.8 percent of seventh-graders and 5.3 percent of sixth-graders reported they cheat on tests at least once a month.

Almost one-third (31.4 percent) of seniors reported getting drunk at least monthly and 13.9 percent at least weekly. Seventeen (16.9) percent of ninth-graders get drunk regularly and 7.1 percent at least once a week. Five (4.9) percent of seventh-graders and 1.9 percent of sixth-graders get drunk at least monthly.

Thirteen (12.9) percent of seniors and 7.6 percent of ninth-graders reported they get high at least once a month, while 7.2 percent of seniors and 4.3 percent of ninth-graders said it occurs weekly or more often. An average of 1.3 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders reported they get high monthly or more often.

The percentage of ninth-graders and seniors reporting they get drunk regularly is clearly decreasing since the first survey in 1989. Slight decreases through the years also occurred in grades 6 and 7.

As to getting high, the decrease reported from 1989 to 1991 has been offset by increases in 1993.

Over the three surveys, the percentage of seniors reporting to cheat regularly has gradually decreased. A slight decrease in cheating was noted among ninth-graders, and a slight increase among seventh-graders.

INTERVENTION RESOURCE PERSONS

When students want to talk with someone about problems concerning tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, 50.4 percent report they would choose a peer; 62.1 percent a parent; 39.1 percent an adult friend and 30.4 percent a relative other than a parent.

At school, 27.2 percent of sixth-graders and an average of 12.1 percent of seventh-graders, ninth-graders and seniors would trust a teacher and an average of 13.2 percent a coach. An average of 14.0 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders and 6.9 percent of ninth-graders and seniors would talk with a school nurse, and an average of 20.9 percent of students would talk with a student support group. An average of 30.0 percent of sixth- and seventh-graders and 15.7 percent of the ninth-graders and

seniors would trust a school counselor. Fifteen percent of sixth-graders and an average of 6.6 percent in the other three grades would talk with a principal or assistant principal.

In the community, an average of 40.0 percent of students would share such concerns with a counselor in a drug center, 24.1 percent with a physician, 20.8 percent with a church member and 8.9 percent with a police officer.

In general, the percentage of students expressing trust of any intervention resource has decreased over the past four years, the only exception being an increase from 1991 to 1993 among sixth- and seventh-graders who indicate they would take a drug concern to a parent.

DECISION-MAKING FACTORS

The most important decision-making factors among students are having close friends who accept them as they are, not disappointing family members and being self-confident. An average of 63.2 percent of students think that being accepted by friends has an impact on their decisions about drug use. Not disappointing family members is a consideration to an average of 56.4 percent, and an average of 54.7 percent think that self-confidence influences decision-making.

Least important to students in their decision-making processes are having a strict school policy, seeing adults "practice what they preach" and having academic efforts noticed. An average of 29.8 percent of students consider school policy when they make decisions about using drugs. An average of 37.2 percent feel that having appropriate adult role models impacts their decisions about substance abuse. Having academic efforts noticed affects deci-

sions about drugs for an average of 41.3 percent of students.

Other factors considered very important to students include: having family values opposed to substance use (47.6 percent); knowing that use is illegal (47.4 percent); knowing the physical and emotional effects of substances (46.4 percent); being able to be involved in interesting alternatives (45.2 percent); and knowing how to cope with social pressures (44.9 percent).

Being accepted "as is" by friends is becoming increasingly important with sixth- and seventh-graders and less important with ninth-graders and seniors. Over the years, a slightly lower percentage of students report that self confidence is important to decision making, and a slightly greater percentage of students report that involvement with interesting alternative activities is important.