

Marijuana Use

Headline

Between 1992 and 2002, the percentage of 8th and 10th graders who had used marijuana in the last month more than doubled. Among 12th grade students, use is up by three-quarters over the decade. ([See Figure 1](#))

Importance

Marijuana is used for the intoxication or high that it gives most users.¹ For most students, marijuana is not difficult to obtain.² Many think marijuana is not as harmful as other illicit drugs; however, marijuana has both short- and long-term health effects. The short-term effects of marijuana use include memory problems, loss of coordination, anxiety attacks, and increased heart rate.³ Possible long-term effects of marijuana use include respiratory problems, a weakened immune system, and cognitive deficits.⁴ Youth who use marijuana often have lower achievement, more delinquent behavior and aggression, and weaker relationships with parents than non-users.⁵

Trends

Marijuana use among 12th grade students has fluctuated a lot over the last several decades. In 1980, 34 percent had used marijuana in the previous month. By 1992, that proportion had decreased dramatically to 12 percent. The percentage then doubled to 24 percent by 1997, and is at 22 percent in 2002. ([See Figure 1](#))

In 2002, the percentages of 8th and 10th graders who have used marijuana in the last month were 8 percent and 18 percent, respectively, more than twice the proportions a decade earlier (data were not collected for these age groups prior to 1991). There was a small but significant drop between 2001 and 2002 for those in the 10th grade, from 20 percent to 18 percent. ([See Figure 1](#))

The percentage of students reporting any marijuana use in their lifetime is significantly higher for all age groups. Twice as many students report having used marijuana at some point in their lives than report use in the last month. In 2002, 19 percent of eighth graders, 39 percent of tenth graders, and 48 percent of twelfth graders reported having used marijuana at least once in their lifetime.⁶

Differences by Parental Education

In 2001, eighth grade students whose parents did not complete high school were three times as likely to have used marijuana in the past month than those whose parents completed college (16 percent vs. 5 percent, respectively). In the twelfth grade, students

are equally likely to use marijuana, regardless of their parents' education levels. ([See Table 1](#))

Differences by College Plans

Students who plan to complete four years of college are less likely to have used marijuana in the past month than those who do not have such plans. For example, in 2001 eighth graders who plan to complete four years of college were one-third as likely as others to have used marijuana in the past month. College plans are less likely to differentiate students at higher grades. ([See Figure 2](#))

Differences by Gender

Males are somewhat more likely than females to have used marijuana in the past month (26 percent vs. 19 percent, respectively, in the twelfth grade in 2001). ([See Table 1](#))

State and Local Estimates

Estimates of marijuana use among 12- to 17-year-olds are available for all 50 states for 2000 from the National Household Survey of Drug Abuse at:

http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/2kState/PDF/Vol1/OOSAERptVol1_W.pdf (See Table A.4.)

NOTE: Estimates of drug use from the National Household Survey of Drug Abuse (NHSDA), used to generate these state-level estimates, are generally lower than estimates generated by the Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF). Since the MTF was the source of the national estimates presented in this indicator, users should not make direct comparisons of estimates made from the two sources. For information on methodological differences in the surveys that may be causing these differences in estimates, see Harrison, L.D. (2001). "Understanding the differences in youth drug prevalence rates produced by the MTF, NHSDA, and YRBS studies." *Journal of Drug Issues*, 31(3), pp. 665-694.

<http://www2.criminology.fsu.edu/~jdi/journal/2001/harrison.htm>

2001 estimates of marijuana use among high school students are available for select states and cities from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab21>

International Estimates

International estimates of lifetime and 30-day marijuana use are available from the European School Survey on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) 1999 report, available at:

<http://www.ipdt.pt/investigacao/espada99/espadaumario99.pdf> (See Table 2c)

National Goals

Through its *Healthy People 2010* initiative, the federal government has set a national goal to decrease the "proportion of adolescents reporting use of marijuana in the last 30 days" from 8.3 percent in 1998 (for ages 12-17) to 0.7 percent by 2010.

More information is available at:

<http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/document/html/objectives/26-10.htm> (See 26-10b)

Definition

Marijuana use is defined as students who answered “one or more times” to the question “On how many occasions (if any) have you used marijuana during the last 30 days?”

Data Source

Data for 1976-2001 from original analysis by Child Trends of Monitoring the Future survey data.

Data for 2002: The Monitoring the Future Study, University of Michigan. In-School Surveys of 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade Students, "Table 2: Trends in Annual and 30-Day Prevalence of Use of Various Drugs for Eighth, Tenth, and Twelfth Graders." Online. Available at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/02data/pr02t2.pdf>

Raw Data Source

Bachman, Jerald G., Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley. *Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth* (8th, 10th, and 12th-Grade Surveys), 1976-2001 [Computer files]. Conducted by University of Michigan, Survey Research Center. ICPSR ed. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [producer and distributor].

ICPSR: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>

Monitoring the Future: <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

Approximate Date of Next Update

December 2003

¹ Martin, BR “Marijuana: What It Is and What It Does.” From the *National Conference on Marijuana Use: Prevention, Treatment, and Research, Conference Highlights*. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Online. Available at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/MJConf/MJTitlePage.html>

² *The NHSDA Report: Obtaining Marijuana Easy for Youths*. National Household Survey on Drug Abuse: August 2001. Available online at <http://www.drugabusestatistics.samhsa.gov/oas/2k2/youthMJ/youthMJ.cfm>

³ “Nida Infobox, Science Based Facts on Drug Abuse and Addiction: Marijuana.” National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes on Health. Available online at: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/Infobox/marijuana.html>

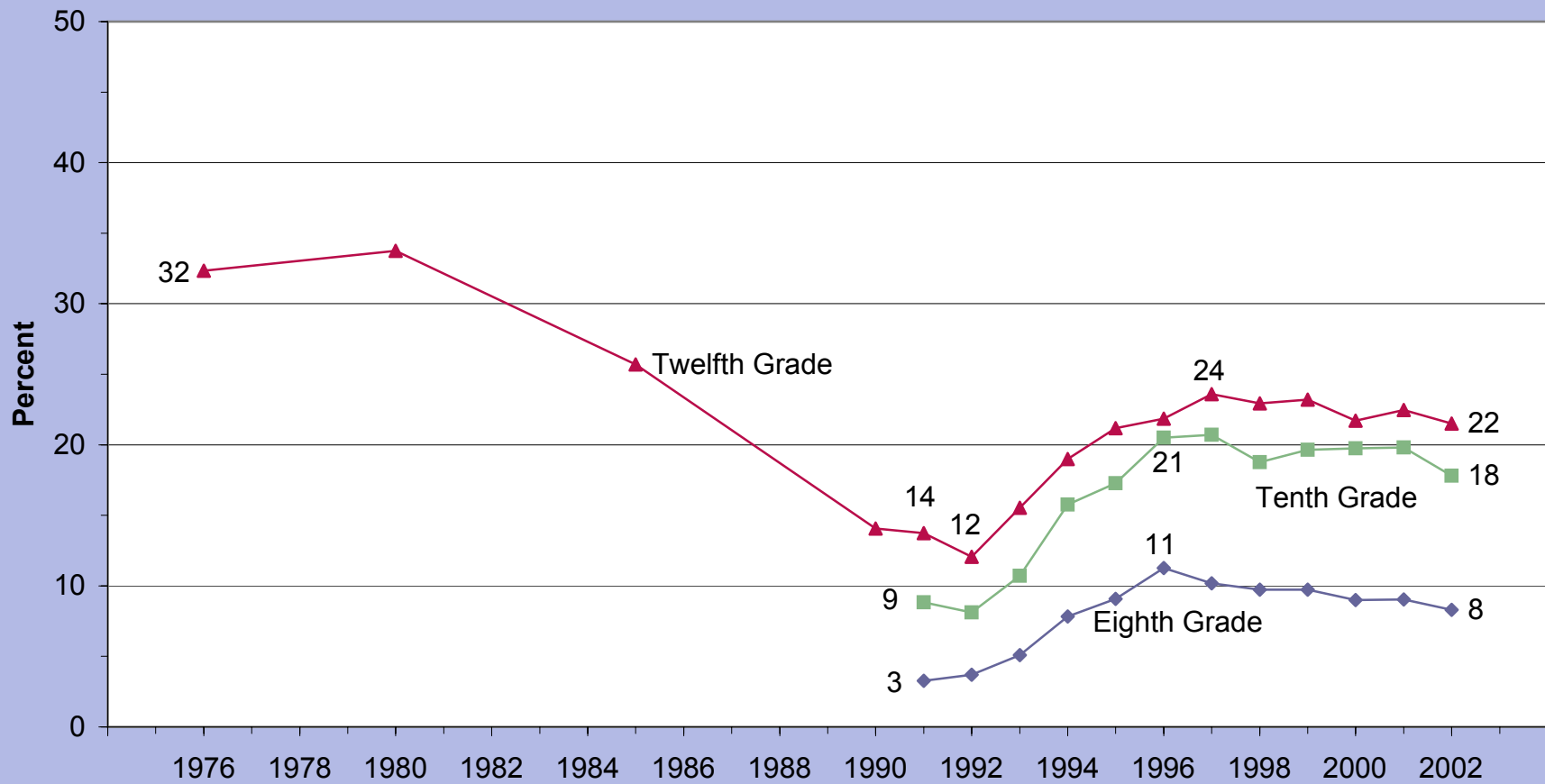
⁴ Hubbard JR, Franco SE, Onaivi ES. “Marijuana: Medical Implications.” *The American Academy of Family Physicians*: December 1999. Available at: <http://www.aafp.org/afp/991201ap/2583.html>

⁵ “Nida Infobox, Science Based Facts on Drug Abuse and Addiction: Marijuana.” National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes on Health. Available online at: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/Infobox/marijuana.html>

⁶ The Monitoring the Future Study, University of Michigan. “2002 Data From In-School Surveys of 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade Students, Table 1: Trends in Lifetime Prevalence of Use of Various Drugs for 8th, 10th, 12th Graders, 1991-2001” available online at:
<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/02data/pr02t1.pdf>

Figure 1

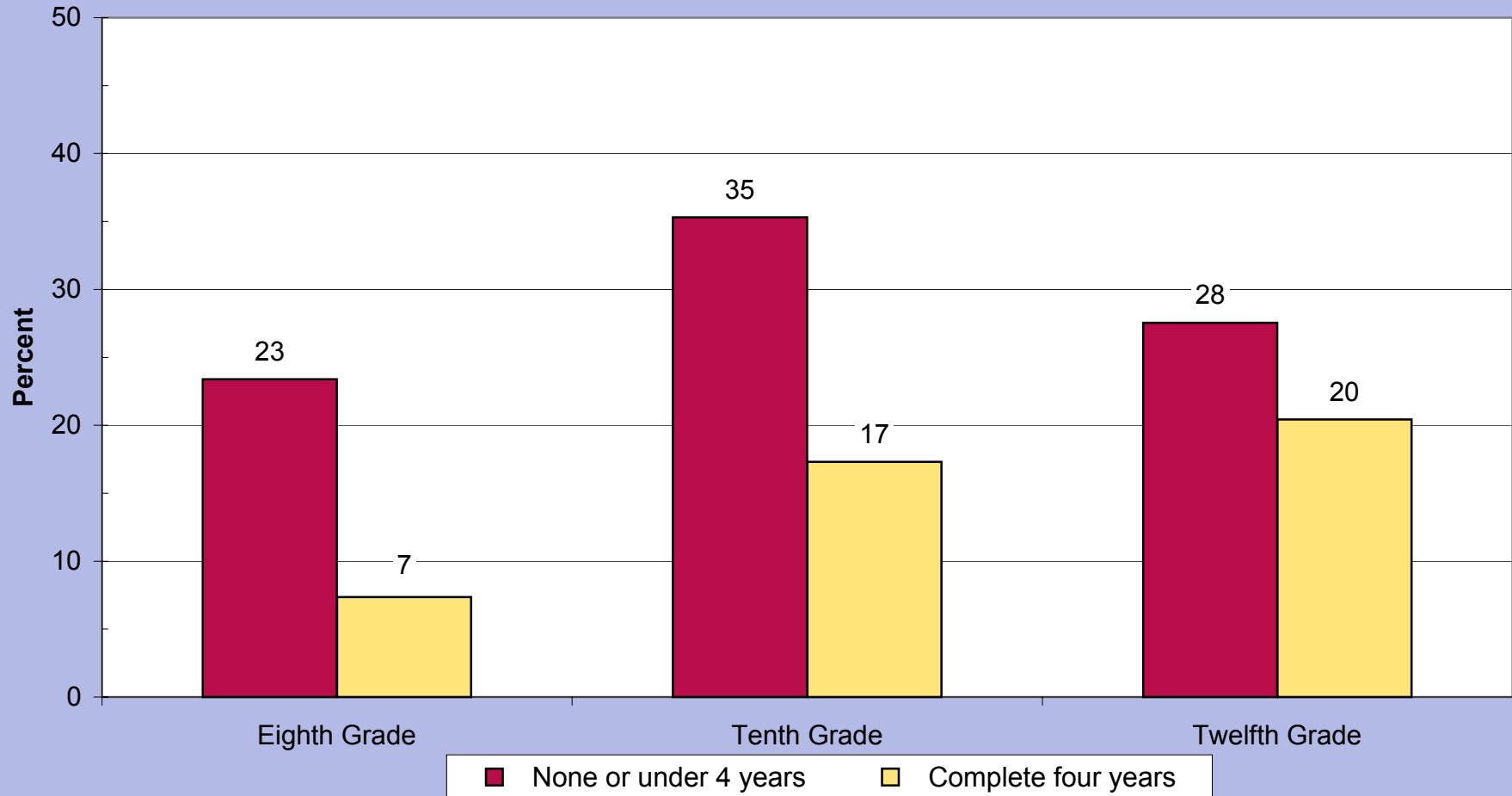
Marijuana Use: Percentage of Students in Grades 8, 10, and 12 Who Used Marijuana in the Past Thirty Days, Selected Years 1976-2002



Source: Data for 1976-2001 from original analysis by Child Trends of Monitoring the Future data, Selected Years 1976-2001; Data for 2002: The Monitoring the Future Study, University of Michigan. In-School Surveys of 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade Students, "Table 2: Trends in Annual and 30-Day Prevalence of Use of Various Drugs for Eighth, Tenth, and Twelfth Graders." Online. Available at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/02data/pr02t2.pdf>

Figure 2

Marijuana Use: Percentage of Students in Grades 8, 10, and 12 Who Used Marijuana in the Past Thirty Days, by College Plans, 2001



Source: Original analysis by Child Trends of Monitoring the Future data, 2001

Table 1

Marijuana Use Among 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade Students in the Past Thirty Days, Selected Years 1976-2002

	1976	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Eighth	-	-	-	-	3.3	3.7	5.1	7.8	9.1	11.3	10.2	9.7	9.7	9.0	9.0	8.3
Gender																
Male	-	-	-	-	3.9	3.7	6.2	9.5	9.8	12.1	11.4	10.3	10.6	10.1	10.8	-
Female	-	-	-	-	2.6	3.6	4.1	6.0	8.2	10.1	8.9	8.8	8.8	7.7	7.2	-
Race																
White	-	-	-	-	3.0	3.4	4.6	6.7	9.1	11.0	10.1	8.9	8.6	8.4	8.5	-
Black	-	-	-	-	2.3	1.9	3.7	6.3	7.0	9.3	8.8	9.5	10.1	8.4	7.7	-
Parental Education¹																
Less than high school	-	-	-	-	7.3	7.4	7.2	12.3	13.3	12.4	15.7	15.7	17.5	18.2	16.0	-
Completed high school	-	-	-	-	3.9	3.8	5.5	9.0	10.4	13.4	11.6	11.6	12.1	11.5	11.7	-
Some college	-	-	-	-	3.2	3.6	5.6	7.8	9.8	12.1	10.9	10.6	9.1	8.8	9.4	-
Completed college	-	-	-	-	1.8	2.8	4.2	6.1	7.2	9.2	8.9	7.1	6.8	5.3	6.4	-
Graduate school	-	-	-	-	2.2	2.3	4.2	5.8	7.5	9.2	6.7	7.2	7.4	6.1	5.2	-
College Plans																
None or under 4 years	-	-	-	-	9.9	11.4	13.4	19.5	20.4	24.7	23.7	24.7	25.8	23.2	23.4	-
Complete four years	-	-	-	-	2.2	2.5	3.9	6.1	7.5	9.1	8.4	7.8	7.7	7.4	7.4	-
Tenth	-	-	-	-	8.8	8.1	10.7	15.8	17.3	20.5	20.7	18.8	19.7	19.8	19.8	17.8
Gender																
Male	-	-	-	-	10.2	9.0	12.8	18.4	19.2	22.4	23.2	20.4	22.1	23.4	22.7	-
Female	-	-	-	-	7.3	7.1	8.5	12.9	15.2	18.7	18.1	17.2	17.1	16.2	16.9	-
Race																
White	-	-	-	-	9.6	8.5	10.7	15.7	17.8	21.3	21.3	19.4	20.4	20.0	20.4	-
Black	-	-	-	-	3.9	3.4	6.7	12.7	15.1	16.7	16.4	15.1	14.9	17.2	16.6	-
Parental Education¹																
Less than high school	-	-	-	-	11.6	11.1	13.6	15.8	20.7	21.6	21.3	20.5	25.2	23.7	20.6	-
Completed high school	-	-	-	-	9.5	8.1	11.0	16.2	19.4	23.0	22.0	22.2	22.2	21.1	22.9	-
Some college	-	-	-	-	8.3	8.4	10.7	15.8	18.1	22.3	22.6	18.4	19.4	21.1	20.9	-
Completed college	-	-	-	-	8.0	7.4	10.1	15.0	15.7	18.1	19.5	16.3	17.0	17.8	17.6	-
Graduate school	-	-	-	-	9.2	7.4	9.6	15.5	13.4	17.4	17.1	16.4	18.3	16.7	17.1	-
College Plans																
None or under 4 years	-	-	-	-	14.9	14.2	20.1	25.7	27.9	35.2	35.0	32.4	34.4	33.8	35.3	-
Complete four years	-	-	-	-	7.5	6.7	8.6	13.6	15.3	18.0	18.3	16.2	17.1	17.6	17.3	-
Twelfth	32.3	33.8	25.7	14.1	13.7	12.1	15.5	19.0	21.2	21.9	23.6	22.9	23.2	21.7	22.5	21.5
Gender																
Male	37.9	37.9	28.6	16.2	16.2	13.5	18.3	22.9	24.6	25.1	26.3	26.6	26.3	24.9	25.7	-
Female	26.2	29.0	22.5	11.5	11.0	10.3	12.5	15.1	17.3	18.2	20.3	18.9	19.8	18.4	19.1	-
Race																
White	32.5	34.1	26.5	15.7	15.0	13.2	16.7	20.1	21.5	22.5	24.6	24.3	23.5	22.1	24.0	-
Black	27.1	26.8	21.8	5.1	6.4	5.7	11.0	15.9	17.9	18.8	18.3	18.3	20.4	17.5	16.6	-
Parental Education¹																
Less than high school	29.3	29.9	23.4	11.4	11.9	10.0	12.1	13.8	18.5	18.4	19.8	19.8	22.1	21.8	21.0	-
Completed high school	33.7	34.5	26.1	14.4	12.8	12.4	14.4	18.5	19.6	20.6	23.5	22.1	23.7	21.0	21.8	-
Some college	32.5	33.3	26.5	13.5	13.8	12.2	16.7	19.5	21.7	23.0	23.5	24.1	22.9	21.6	23.5	-
Completed college	32.9	34.0	27.2	15.0	13.6	12.1	15.5	20.4	21.3	21.5	24.6	22.8	22.6	21.6	22.3	-
Graduate school	32.9	36.5	20.1	15.2	17.3	11.6	16.2	19.9	22.9	22.4	22.9	22.8	23.8	21.1	20.5	-
College Plans																
None or under 4 years	34.6	37.5	29.1	17.8	15.7	15.4	17.9	21.7	23.7	26.3	29.3	28.5	26.6	26.3	27.6	-
Complete four years	28.5	29.5	22.6	12.0	12.5	10.5	14.3	17.7	19.7	19.9	21.4	20.5	21.9	19.6	20.4	-

¹Parental education is calculated by the Institute of Social Research as the average of the mother's and father's education. Child Trends has relabeled these results to reflect the education level of the most educated parent. In those circumstances where the gap between mothers' and fathers' education is more than one level, this result is an underestimate of the most educated parent's education level.

Note: The 1976-2000 estimates may differ slightly from published estimates due to small differences between the publicly available sample weights and those used by Monitoring the Future staff.

Source: Data for 1976-2001 from original analysis by Child Trends of Monitoring the Future data, Selected Years 1976-2001; Data for 2002: The Monitoring the Future Study, University of Michigan. In-School Surveys of 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade Students, "Table 2: Trends in Annual and 30-Day Prevalence of Use of Various Drugs for Eighth, Tenth, and Twelfth Graders." Online. Available at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/02data/pr02t2.pdf>

