

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 1997 STATEWIDE SURVEY OF STUDENT DRUG USE

Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
and the Governor's Policy Office

Since 1989, Pennsylvania has conducted a bi-annual statewide survey of students regarding their use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs. The "Generation at Risk" survey is administered to approximately 60,000 6th, 7th, 9th and 12th graders. The target schools and students are selected to form a representative statewide sample. Both public and private schools are included. All students' responses are completely anonymous and confidential. The most recent survey was conducted in the Spring of 1997.

The Generation at Risk surveys represent an important tool for professionals and policy makers who deal with substance abuse and related issues. The survey results provide an important benchmark of alcohol, tobacco and drug use among young Pennsylvanians, and help indicate whether prevention and treatment programs are achieving their intended results. The survey has been expanded over the years to include questions on a range of issues such as physical fighting, carrying weapons, gangs, drinking and driving, and attitudes about school.

Some highlights from the 1997 survey are listed below. The accompanying table contains data from all five years in which the survey was administered. For more information, contact the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency at (717) 787-5152, extension 3032.

CIGARETTES

- Fewer 6th, 7th and 9th graders reported regular (at least monthly) use of cigarettes in 1997, compared to 1995. This represents the first downturn in smoking rates among these grades since 1991.
- Regular smoking rates among high school seniors were higher in 1997 than in 1995.
- 40% of Pennsylvania seniors smoke regularly, compared to 34% of high school seniors nationally.

SMOKELESS TOBACCO

- Use of smokeless tobacco fell substantially among all grades surveyed.
- The 1997 levels of smokeless tobacco use are the lowest ever recorded in the student survey.
- 11% of Pennsylvania seniors use smokeless tobacco regularly, compared to 10% of seniors nationally.

ALCOHOL

- Use of all types of alcohol fell among 6th and 7th graders from 1995 to 1997.
- Alcohol use remained level or rose slightly among 9th and 12th graders from 1995 to 1997.
- 51% of Pennsylvania seniors drink alcohol regularly, compared to 51% of high school seniors nationally.

MARIJUANA

- Marijuana use is leveling off, after rising sharply from 1989 to 1995 among all grades surveyed.
- 1997 levels of marijuana use are more than twice as high as in 1991.
- 22% of Pennsylvania seniors use marijuana regularly, compared to 22% of high school seniors nationally.

OTHER DRUGS

- Regular use of inhalants and hallucinogens was rare in 1997, never exceeding 2% among 6th and 7th graders or 5% among 9th and 12th graders. Use of both these types of drugs fell from 1995 to 1997.
- Regular use of crack and heroin was very rare, at less than 1% of any grade surveyed.
- The use of depressants, while still low in absolute terms, increased sharply from 1995 to 1997 among all grades surveyed, reaching levels higher than in any previous survey going back to 1989.
- Regular stimulant use among 9th and 12th graders rose to 7%, higher than in any previous survey year. Nationally, 4% of high school seniors report regular stimulant use.
- Cocaine use rose slightly among most grades from 1995 to 1997. Three percent of Pennsylvania seniors report regular use of cocaine, compared to 2% of high school seniors nationally.

FIGHTING, WEAPONS AND GANGS

- 45% of students were involved in at least one fight during the past 12 months; 24% fought at school.
- 8% of students carried a weapon to school, and 1% carried a firearm to school, during the past year.
- 29% of students said there were gangs at their school; 7% have been threatened by a gang.
- 11% of students are or have been members of a gang.

OTHER PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

- 16% of all students and 23% of 9th and 12th graders reported that they regularly cheated on a class test.
- 12% of seniors regularly drove after drinking, 12% drove after smoking marijuana, and 7% drove after both drinking and smoking.
- 22% of seniors and 15% of 9th graders regularly ride with a driver who has been drinking, and similar percentages report riding with a driver who has been smoking marijuana.

1989 - 1997 STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS Regular (monthly or more often) use of:		GRADE			
		6th	7th	9th	12th
BEER	1997	4.3%	10.6%	29.7%	46.1%
	1995	5.6	12.8	31.0	44.4
	1993	4.6	10.0	26.3	43.5
	1991	6.1	10.7	27.0	43.0
	1989	6.0	10.5	26.3	44.9
LIQUOR	1997	1.9	6.4	21.9	33.0
	1995	2.3	7.0	20.4	28.3
	1993	1.7	5.3	17.5	27.6
	1991	2.3	5.3	16.0	25.0
	1989	1.9	4.5	15.7	26.1
WINE COOLERS	1997	3.3	8.6	18.6	22.2
	1995	4.0	9.4	18.3	22.2
	1993	3.2	7.0	16.0	21.8
	1991	4.0	8.5	18.4	26.9
	1989	3.8	8.1	20.2	31.3
MARIJUANA	1997	1.5	5.1	16.9	21.8
	1995	1.6	4.9	16.2	21.1
	1993	0.6	2.0	8.7	15.0
	1991	0.4	1.1	4.8	10.9
	1989	0.6	1.4	7.1	13.9
STIMULANTS	1997	1.1	2.7	6.8	7.2
	1995	1.3	2.7	6.0	5.0
	1993	0.9	2.4	4.6	3.8
	1991	0.6	1.4	3.3	3.5
	1989	0.4	1.2	4.0	4.6
INAHALANTS	1997	1.1	1.9	3.2	3.7
	1995	1.0	2.6	4.0	4.3
	1993	0.9	1.6	3.2	2.7
	1991	0.5	1.0	1.3	1.5
	1989	0.8	0.8	2.0	2.1
DEPRESSANTS	1997	0.6	1.7	3.9	4.1
	1995	0.3	0.3	2.3	2.3
	1993	0.2	0.7	1.6	1.3
	1991	0.2	0.5	1.0	1.3
	1989	0.1	0.6	1.5	1.3
HALLUCINOGENS	1997	0.4	1.0	4.0	5.0
	1995	0.3	1.1	4.3	5.4
	1993	0.1	0.5	2.1	2.5
	1991	0.2	0.5	1.2	1.9
	1989	0.1	0.3	1.1	1.4
COCAINE	1997	0.4	0.6	1.5	2.6
	1995	0.3	0.7	1.2	2.0
	1993	0.2	0.5	0.7	1.1
	1991	0.2	0.3	0.4	1.2
	1989	0.2	0.3	0.6	2.4
CRACK	1997	0.2	0.4	0.8	.07
	1995	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.6
	1993	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.5
	1991	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3
HEROIN	1997	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.6
	1995	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.5
	1993	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.2
	1991	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3
	1989	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.1