

Drug Facts among Texas Youth 2014

In 2014, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in conjunction with the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University, conducted its fourteenth biennial *Texas School Survey of Substance Use*. The Texas School Survey of Substance Abuse was first implemented in 1988.

About 33,463 students in grades 7-12 from 93 school districts across the State were asked to report on their use of alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, illicit drugs, and over-the-counter and prescription drugs, as well as, their attitudes, extracurricular involvement, sources of information, and other related behaviors. Students were randomly selected from Texas school districts using a multi-stage probability design.

Two changes to data collection were implemented in 2014. First, sampling methods were adjusted due to decreasing participation rates among Texas school districts. In order to provide a reliable sample with statistical confidence on the substance-use behavior of youth, Texas public schools were used as the primary sampling units rather than school districts. Sampling by schools is the preferred strategy for many national and statewide surveys such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and will yield more precise estimates. Second, the survey instrument was revised to reduce survey length, specifically respondent fatigue, and to increase the accuracy of responses. A pilot test of the revised survey instrument was conducted in 2014, revealing no significant differences between responses to the most recently offered survey instrument (from 2012) and the revised survey instrument. The survey still investigates the use of licit and illicit substances, including the use of prescription drugs for nonmedical purposes and binge drinking.

Secondary School Survey Findings (Grades 7-12)

From 2012 to 2014, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs among Texas youth decreased. Nonmedical use of prescription drugs (such as oxycodone and hydrocodone) has remained relatively constant with the exception of Xanax and codeine cough syrup use, which slightly increased in 2014.

Use of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Inhalants:

- **Alcohol** remains the most commonly used substance among Texas students. In 2014, 50.5 percent of students reported that they had used alcohol at some point in their lives. This rate significantly decreased from 57.5 percent in 2012. Past-month alcohol use also decreased from 25.1 percent in 2012 to 21.2 percent in 2014.
- **Binge drinking**, defined as having five or more drinks at one time in the past month, was reported by 13.8 percent of students, down from 18.0 percent in 2012.
- **Tobacco** use among students continued to decline. Lifetime use of tobacco decreased from 27.7 percent in 2012 to 22.4 percent in 2014. Past-month use of tobacco was 8.4 percent in 2014 down from 11.0 percent in 2012.
- Lifetime **inhalant** use decreased from 15.7 percent in 2012 to 12.3 percent in 2014. In 2012, about 4.8 percent of students reported having used inhalants in the past month. In 2014, only 3.9 percent of students reported having used inhalants in the past month. The most popular inhalants used to get high among secondary school students were helium, butane, propane, whippets, and Freon.

Use of Illicit Drugs:

- **Marijuana** remains the most widely used illicit drug among Texas youth. However, lifetime marijuana use decreased from about 26.2 percent of students in 2012 to 23.2 percent of students in 2014. In

2012, past-month use of marijuana was reported by 11.1 percent of students, as compared to 9.1 percent of students in 2014.

- Use of cocaine or crack decreased from 2012 to 2014. In 2014, about 2.2 percent of students reported that they had ever tried **cocaine or crack**, and less than one percent reported using these substances in the month before the survey. In 2012, about 4.6 percent of students reported they had *ever tried* cocaine or crack, and 1.3 percent reported using these substances in the month before the survey.
- **Ecstasy** use revealed a considerable decrease from 2014 to 2012 both in lifetime use (from 5.7 to 2.7 percent) and in past-month use (from 1.7 to 0.8 percent). The extensive decrease of this club drug was most apparent among younger students.
- Lifetime use of **hallucinogens** among this age group also decreased from 4.1 percent in 2012 to 2.6 percent in 2014. Past-month use also decreased from 1.3 percent in 2012 to 0.8 percent in 2014.
- In 2014, less than one percent of students reported lifetime use of **methamphetamine** (speed, crystal meth, ice, or crank). This represents a decrease from about 2.5 percent in 2012. Past-month use of methamphetamine has remained less than one percent for students since 2008.
- Use of **Rohypnol, heroin, and steroids** continued to decrease from 2012 to 2014 with prevalence rates less than one percent.

Use of Over-the-Counter Drugs:

- In 2014, 3.5 percent of students said they had ever taken **DXM** (dextromethorphan), **Triple C's**, **Skittles**, or **Coricidin** nonmedically in their lifetime and 1.6 percent of students reported nonmedical use in the past month. These rates represent a decrease from 2012 when 4.6 percent of students reported that they had ever taken **DXM**, **Triple C's**, **Skittles**, or **Coricidin** in their lifetime and 1.7 percent reported nonmedical use in the past month.

Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs:

- About 10.8 percent of students reported using **codeine cough syrup** nonmedically at some point in their lives, and 5.1 percent reported that they used in the past month. In 2012, 10.8 of students also reported using codeine cough syrup nonmedically at some point in their lives but only 4.0 percent had reported using in the past month. These prevalence rates suggest that use of codeine cough syrup remains stable in regard to lifetime use but there was a slight increase in reports of use in the past month.
- Two commonly abused narcotic prescription drugs: **oxycodone** products (OxyContin, Percodan, Percocet) and **hydrocodone** products (Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet) were first asked in the 2008 school survey. About 2.5 percent of students in 2014 reported using oxycodone products nonmedically in their lifetime and 5.2 percent reported using hydrocodone products nonmedically in their lifetime. Both prevalence rates were lower than those reported in 2012.
- Two popularly prescribed anti-anxiety drugs, **Valium (or Diazepam)** and **Xanax (or Alprazolam)**, were first asked in the 2008 school survey. About 1.0 percent of students in 2014 reported nonmedical use of Valium in their lifetime and 3.1 percent reported lifetime nonmedical use of Xanax. About 0.6 percent of the students in 2014 reported nonmedical use of Valium in the past month and 1.6 percent reported use of Xanax in the past month. Since 2008, these rates have been decreasing with the exception of reported use of Xanax in the past month in 2014, where there was a slight increase (1.5 percent reported in 2012 and 1.6 percent reported in 2014).