



Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
at Case Western Reserve University

2017 Cuyahoga County Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Illegal and Prescription Drug Use

Introduction

The Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) at Case Western Reserve University has administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in school districts throughout Cuyahoga County since 2000. The YRBS is a cross-sectional tool developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to track adolescent risk behavior over time. In spring of 2017, the PRCHN conducted the YRBS among 9th through 12th grade students in Cuyahoga County high schools. A more detailed description of the methodology is available at our website, www.prchn.org/YRBSDataCollectionAnalysis.aspx.

This brief report presents results from the 2017 Cuyahoga County High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, with a particular focus on Illegal and Prescription Drug Use. In this brief report, we present:

- [Overall Prevalence](#)
- [Regional Prevalence](#)
- [Demographic Prevalence](#)
- [Trend Report](#)

Data for similar behaviors can be found at our website, www.prchn.org/yrbs_home.aspx.

Illegal and Prescription Drug Use

Illegal drug use can lead to unhealthy behaviors and negative consequences. Drug abuse may contribute to depression and suicide, unintended pregnancy, school failure, violent behavior, delinquency, and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.ⁱ

Marijuana is used for the intoxication or high that it gives users. For most youth, marijuana is not difficult to obtain.ⁱⁱ Many think marijuana is not as harmful as other illicit drugs; however, it has both short- and long-term health effects. The short-term effects include memory problems, loss of coordination, anxiety attacks, and increased heart rate.ⁱⁱⁱ Possible long-term effects include respiratory problems, a weakened immune system, and cognitive deficits.^{iv} While causation is complex, teens that use marijuana, are also more likely to have lower achievement, more delinquent behavior and aggression, and weaker relationships with parents.ⁱⁱⁱ

Nationally, nine percent (9.1%) of teens aged 12-17 misused prescription drugs in 2005. In 2006, there were as many new abusers of prescription drugs as there were new users of marijuana.^v Prescription and over the counter medications are widely available, free or inexpensive, and falsely believed to be safer than illicit drugs. In 2006, 2.1 million teens abused prescription drugs and an additional 2.1 million had misused over the counter cough and cold medications at least once in their lifetime.^{vi}

Overall Prevalence

The following table summarizes illegal and prescription drug use among the 13,907 high school students who completed the 2017 Cuyahoga County YRBS. Prevalence estimates and 95% confidence intervals were computed for all dichotomous variables.

Risk Behavior	% (95% Confidence Interval)
Ever used marijuana (Used marijuana 1 or more times during their life.)	40.3 (38.9-41.8)
Tried marijuana before age 13 years	8.5 (7.7-9.3)
Current marijuana use (Used marijuana 1 or more times during the 30 days before the survey.)	24.7 (23.6-25.9)
Usually smoked marijuana in a blunt (Among students who used marijuana during the 30 days before the survey.)	59.6 (57.8-61.4)
Ever used prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor prescribed (Including all or some of the following: codeine, Vicodin, OxyContin, Hydrocodone, and Percocet; one or more times during their life.)	13.6 (12.7-14.6)
Ever used synthetic drugs (Including all or some of the following: "designer drugs" such as synthetic marijuana, K2, Spice, fake weed, King Kong, Yucatan Fire, Skunk, Moon Rocks, herbal incense, or bath salts; one or more times during their life.)	7.3 (6.6-8.1)
Ever used an illicit drug (Including all or some of the following: any form of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, ketamine, speed, LSD, or ecstasy; one or more times during their life.)	6.9 (6.2-7.7)
Offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property (One or more times during the 12 months before the survey.)	17.6 (16.7-18.5)

Regional Prevalence

The overall response rate for inner and outer ring east (57% and 52%, respectively) **did not** reach the standard of 60%, which allows for the data to be considered representative of all students, even those that did not complete the survey. Since the overall response rate was close to the standard of 60%, we have included weighted estimates for these regions. A weight was applied to each record to adjust for student non response and the distribution of students by grade, gender, race/ethnicity, and geographic region within Cuyahoga County. The stability of the data should be considered, given the lower than required overall response rate, and results should be interpreted with caution. In addition, the overall response rate for outer ring west was insufficient for analysis.

Risk Behavior	CMSD-East % (95% CI)	CMSD- West % (95% CI)	Inner Ring-East % (95% CI)	Inner Ring-West % (95% CI)	Outer Ring-East % (95% CI)	Outer Ring-West % (95% CI)
Ever used marijuana (Used marijuana 1 or more times during their life.)	47.2 (44.2-50.3)	44.3 (41.4-47.2)	47.0 (43.5-50.5)	39.4 (34.6-44.4)	36.0 (33.4-38.8)	n/a
Tried marijuana before age 13 years	14.7 (13.0-16.6)	15.5 (13.2-18.1)	10.6 (8.4-13.4)	5.7 (4.5-7.3)	5.0 (4.0-6.2)	n/a
Current marijuana use (Used marijuana 1 or more times during the 30 days before the survey.)	28.1 (25.4-31.0)	25.6 (23.1-28.3)	30.1 (27.2-33.2)	24.7 (21.2-28.6)	22.7 (20.5-25.1)	n/a
Usually smoked marijuana in a blunt (Among students who used marijuana during the 30 days before the survey.)	83.2 (79.3-86.5)	71.0 (66.5-75.0)	73.3 (70.0-76.4)	53.5 (48.8-58.1)	34.8 (30.8-52.1)	n/a
Ever used prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor prescribed (Including all or some of the following: codeine, Vicodin, OxyContin, Hydrocodone, or Percocet; one or more times during their life.)	16.8 (15.1-18.7)	19.5 (17.3-21.8)	15.6 (13.2-18.4)	14.3 (11.6-17.4)	7.6 (6.2-9.4)	n/a
Ever used synthetic drugs (Including all or some of the following: "designer drugs" such as synthetic marijuana, K2, Spice, fake weed, King Kong, Yucatan Fire, Skunk, Moon Rocks, herbal incense,	8.9 (7.3-10.7)	11.6 (9.8-13.8)	8.6 (6.7-11.0)	6.5 (5.1-8.3)	5.1 (3.1-8.3)	n/a

Risk Behavior	CMSD-East % (95% CI)	CMSD- West % (95% CI)	Inner Ring-East % (95% CI)	Inner Ring-West % (95% CI)	Outer Ring-East % (95% CI)	Outer Ring-West % (95% CI)
or bath salts; one or more times during their life.)						
Ever used an illicit drug (Including all or some of the following: any form of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, ketamine, speed, LSD, or ecstasy; one or more times during their life.)	7.2 (5.7-9.1)	9.4 (7.8-11.4)	7.0 (5.6-8.8)	7.8 (6.3-9.7)	4.0 (2.0-7.9)	n/a
Offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property (One or more times during the 12 months before the survey.)	17.8 (16.1-19.6)	19.0 (17.1-21.0)	22.7 (20.4-25.2)	16.6 (14.5-18.8)	17.5 (14.8-20.6)	n/a

Demographic Prevalence

The tables below allow for further comparisons of illegal and prescription drug use between demographic groups. Data are presented by gender, race/ethnicity, and grade level. A statistically significant difference exists between groups if the 95% confidence intervals do not overlap.

Ever used marijuana			
Category	%	CI	
Gender			
Female	42.4	40.5	44.3
Male	38.3	36.6	40.1
Race/Ethnicity			
White	35.4	33.5	37.3
Black	47.5	45.3	49.6
Hispanic	42.9	39.5	46.5
Other/Multiple	32.2	28.1	36.5
Grade			
9th	27.0	24.9	29.3
10th	37.7	35.6	39.8
11th	47.1	44.8	49.4
12th	52.5	49.4	55.7
Total	40.3	38.9	41.8

Tried marijuana before age 13 years			
Category	%	CI	
Gender			
Female	6.5	5.7	7.3
Male	10.3	9.2	11.5
Race/Ethnicity			
White	4.7	4.1	5.4
Black	12.7	11.3	14.4
Hispanic	13.3	11.2	15.6
Other/Multiple	7.8	5.9	10.1
Grade			
9th	9.2	8.0	10.6
10th	8.2	6.9	9.8
11th	8.9	7.5	10.5
12th	7.0	5.6	8.7
Total	8.5	7.7	9.3

Current marijuana use			
Category	%	CI	
Gender			
Female	26.7	25.2	- 28.3
Male	22.8	21.4	- 24.2
Race/Ethnicity			
White	21.4	19.9	- 23.0
Black	29.6	27.8	- 31.5
Hispanic	24.3	21.7	- 27.1
Other/Multiple	20.5	17.4	- 24.0
Grade			
9th	17.2	15.7	- 18.8
10th	22.7	20.6	- 25.0
11th	29.3	26.9	- 31.9
12th	31.6	28.9	- 34.4
Total	24.7	23.6	- 25.9

Usually smoked marijuana in a blunt			
Category	%	CI	
Gender			
Female	63.5	60.5	- 66.5
Male	55.2	52.0	- 58.4
Race/Ethnicity			
White	39.1	36.4	- 41.9
Black	77.3	74.5	- 79.9
Hispanic	64.8	58.6	- 70.5
Other/Multiple	55.0	46.2	- 63.5
Grade			
9th	66.0	61.8	- 70.0
10th	59.1	54.2	- 63.8
11th	58.8	53.4	- 64.0
12th	57.5	52.8	- 62.0
Total	59.6	57.8	- 61.4

Ever used prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor prescribed		
Category	%	CI
Gender		
Female	14.1	12.9 - 15.4
Male	13.0	11.8 - 14.3
Race/Ethnicity		
White	11.2	10.0 - 12.5
Black	15.5	13.9 - 17.2
Hispanic	20.4	17.8 - 23.2
Other/Multiple	17.5	14.6 - 20.8
Grade		
9th	11.5	9.9 - 13.2
10th	12.7	11.1 - 14.4
11th	14.2	12.4 - 16.2
12th	15.8	13.3 - 18.6
Total	13.6	12.7 - 14.6

Ever used synthetic drugs		
Category	%	CI
Gender		
Female	6.5	5.6 - 7.5
Male	7.9	6.8 - 9.1
Race/Ethnicity		
White	5.3	4.5 - 6.2
Black	9.0	7.7 - 10.5
Hispanic	11.4	9.6 - 13.4
Other/Multiple	10.4	8.1 - 13.2
Grade		
9th	5.4	4.6 - 6.3
10th	6.5	5.5 - 7.7
11th	8.5	6.6 - 10.9
12th	8.4	6.6 - 10.6
Total	7.3	6.6 - 8.1

Ever used an illicit drug		
Category	%	CI
Gender		
Female	5.0	4.3 - 5.9
Male	8.5	7.3 - 9.8
Race/Ethnicity		
White	6.3	5.4 - 7.3
Black	7.0	5.9 - 8.2
Hispanic	9.8	8.1 - 11.8
Other/Multiple	9.6	7.5 - 12.2
Grade		
9th	4.4	3.3 - 5.7
10th	5.4	4.3 - 6.7
11th	8.8	6.9 - 11.1
12th	9.3	7.8 - 11.0
Total	6.9	6.2 - 7.7

Offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property		
Category	%	CI
Gender		
Female	15.8	14.7 - 17.0
Male	19.2	17.9 - 20.7
Race/Ethnicity		
White	15.1	14.0 - 16.3
Black	20.1	18.6 - 21.8
Hispanic	20.3	18.1 - 22.8
Other/Multiple	21.3	17.9 - 25.3
Grade		
9th	16.0	14.5 - 17.7
10th	17.1	15.8 - 18.6
11th	19.5	17.2 - 22.1
12th	17.8	15.9 - 19.9
Total	17.6	16.7 - 18.5

Cuyahoga County Trend Data

The following table presents the prevalence of illegal and prescription drug use among Cuyahoga County high school students in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017. The prevalence for each year is given (when available), with 95% confidence intervals below.

Cuyahoga County, 2009	Cuyahoga County, 2011	Cuyahoga County, 2013	Cuyahoga County, 2015	Cuyahoga County, 2017
Ever used marijuana (Used marijuana 1 or more times during their life.)				
36.7 (34.7-38.7)	38.1 (36.3-39.9)	39.8 (38.2-41.5)	36.7 (34.5-38.9)	40.3 (38.9-41.8)
Tried marijuana before age 13 years				
7.6 (6.0-9.2)	6.9 (6.2-7.6)	6.6 (6.1-7.2)	7.6 (6.8-8.4)	8.5 (7.7-9.3)
Current marijuana use (Used marijuana 1 or more times during the 30 days before the survey.)				
20.5 (19.0-22.0)	22.0 (20.6-23.4)	22.9 (21.6-24.1)	20.6 (19.0-22.3)	24.7 (23.6-25.9)
Usually smoked marijuana in a blunt (Among students who used marijuana during the 30 days before the survey.)				
n/a	n/a	n/a	51.0 (48.0-53.9)	59.6 (57.8-61.4)
Current unauthorized prescription drug use (Including all or some of the following: OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, codeine, Adderall, Ritalin, or Xanax without a doctor's prescription; one or more times during the 30 days before the survey.)				
n/a	n/a	8.8 (8.1-9.5)	8.3 (7.3-9.3)	n/a
*Ever used prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription (Including all or some of the following: OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, Lortabs, Xanax, Valium, Ambien, Phenobarbital, or Ritalin without a doctor's prescription; one or more times during their life.)				
n/a	n/a	13.4 (12.4-14.4)	14.0 (12.9-15.1)	n/a
**Ever used prescription pain medication without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor prescribed (Including all or some of the following: codeine, Vicodin, OxyContin, Hydrocodone, or Percocet; one or more times during their life.)				
n/a	n/a	8.5 (7.8-9.3)	n/a	13.6 (12.7-14.6)
Ever used synthetic drugs (Including all or some of the following: "designer drugs" such as synthetic marijuana, K2, Spice, fake weed, King Kong, Yucatan Fire, Skunk, Moon Rocks, herbal incense, or bath salts; one or more times during their life.)				
n/a	n/a	n/a	7.0 (6.2-7.8)	7.3 (6.6-8.1)

†Ever used an illicit drug (Including all or some of the following: any form of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, ketamine, speed, LSD, or ecstasy; one or more times during their life.)				
7.7 (6.3-9.5)	5.8 (5.2-6.4)	6.8 (6.1-7.5)	5.6 (4.9-6.3)	6.9 (6.2-7.7)
Offered, sold, or given illegal drugs on school property (One or more times during the 12 months before the survey.)				
25.0 (23.2-26.8)	26.2 (25.1-27.3)	16.9 (16.0-17.8)	n/a	17.6 (16.7-18.5)

*In 2011 and 2013, “ever used prescription drugs without a doctor’s prescription” was calculated using separate items.

**“Ever used prescription pain medication without a doctor’s prescription or differently than how a doctor prescribed” was calculated as an individual item in 2011 and using separate items in 2013.

† In 2009, “ever used an illicit drug” was calculated using four separate items.

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