

Drug Facts among Texas Youth 2016

Introduction

In 2016, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in conjunction with the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University, conducted its fifteenth biennial Texas School Survey of Drug and Alcohol Use (TSS). The TSS was first implemented in 1988.

About 49,069 students in grades 7-12 from 99 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.

In 2016, two changes may have increased reported prevalence. Both changes were implemented to create a more accurate representation of student substance use. The first change was methodological and involved updating student responses to reflect students' most recent substance usage for certain cases, as outlined in the methodology APPENDIX (see the TSS website for this document: <http://www.texasschoolsurvey.org/Report>).

The second change was the addition of electronic vapor products as a form of tobacco on the survey instrument. In recent years, vaping has become a popular activity among youth. TSS results from 2016 confirm increased tobacco use prevalence as compared to results from previous years where vaping was excluded. Cumulatively, these two changes contribute a more accurate representation of student substance use. These changes should be noted when comparing findings across years.

School Survey Findings (Grades 7-12)

Overview: Alcohol remains the drug of choice among Texas youth and the most widely used substance among surveyed students. The use of illicit drugs remained relatively constant from 2014-2016. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among students. Nonmedical use of prescription drugs slightly increased between 2014 and 2016, particularly for Xanax and Valium. The use of tobacco significantly increased due to the introduction of vaping as a measure of tobacco use, as described above. For prevalence tables and more detailed results, please see: <http://www.texasschoolsurvey.org>.

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. In 2016, 52.7 percent of students reported that they had used alcohol at some point in their lives. Past-month alcohol use also increased from 21.2 percent in 2014 to 28.6 percent in 2016.
- **Binge drinking**, defined as having five or more drinks at one time in the past month, was reported by 11.5 percent of students in 2016, down from 13.8 percent of students in 2014.
- **Tobacco** use among students increased. Lifetime use of any tobacco product increased from 22.4 percent in 2014 to 30.4 percent in 2016. Past-month use of tobacco was 8.4 percent in 2014 and 14.5 percent in 2016.
- **Vaping**, as a new measure of tobacco use, revealed significant use among students. In 2016, 24.9 percent of all students reported that they had vaped at some point in their lives. Nearly 40 percent of 11th and 12th graders reported vaping (35.7 percent and 38.7 percent respectively) in their lifetime. In terms of past month use, 8.9 percent of all students reported that they vaped in the last month.
- Lifetime **inhalant** use decreased from 12.3 percent in 2014 to 11.6 percent in 2016. In 2014, only 3.9 percent of students reported having used inhalants in the past month. In 2016, 4.3 percent of students reported having used inhalants in the past month. The most popular inhalants used to get high among secondary school students in both 2014 and 2016 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 23.2 percent of students in 2014 to 20.8 percent of students in 2016. In 2014 past-month use of marijuana was reported by 9.1 percent of students, as compared to 12.2 percent of students in 2016.
- Use of **cocaine or crack** slightly increased from 2014 to 2016. 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 2016, about 3.0 percent of students reported they had *ever tried* cocaine or crack, and 1.5 percent reported using these substances in the month before the survey.
- **Ecstasy** use revealed a slight decrease from 2016 to 2014 both in lifetime use (from 2.7 to 2.5 percent) and in past-month use (from 0.8 to 0.7 percent).
- Lifetime use of **hallucinogens** among students slightly increased from 2.6 percent in 2014 to 3.1 percent in 2016. Past-month use also increased from 0.8 percent in 2014 to 0.9 percent in 2016.
- In 2014, less than one percent of students reported lifetime use of **methamphetamine** (speed, crystal meth, ice, or crank). In 2016, there was a slight increase with 1.2 percent of students reporting lifetime use. Past-month use of methamphetamine has remained less than one percent for students since 2008.
- Use of **heroin** continues to be extremely low. Less than one percent of all students reported ever using heroin in 2016. Heroin use has been less than 1.0 percent since 2008.
- Student reports of **steroid uses** slightly increased from 1.0 percent in 2014 to 1.4 percent in 2016.

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 have remained constant in 2016 with 3.6 percent of students reported that they had ever taken **DXM**, **Triple C's**, **Skittles**, or **Coricidin** in their lifetime and 1.6 percent reported nonmedical use in the past month.

Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs:

- In 2014, 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. These prevalence rates increased in 2016 with 12.8 percent of students reporting having ever used codeine cough syrup and 6.0 percent of students reported 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. In 2016, these narcotics were combined into one question. In 2016, 5.0 percent of students reported using these products nonmedically in their lifetime and 2.4 percent of students reported using these products in the last month. These reports do not represent a significant increase from past years.
- Two popularly prescribed anti-anxiety drugs, **Valium (or Diazepam)** and **Xanax (or Alprazolam)**, were first asked in the 2008 school survey. In 2016, these narcotics were combined into one question. About 4.0 percent of students reported non-medical use of these narcotics in their lifetime and 1.9 percent reported use in the last month. These combined reports represent an increase from reported use of Valium (1.0 percent reported lifetime use) and Xanax (3.1 percent reported lifetime use) in 2014.
- In 2016, a new question was added to capture the use of: Adderall, Ritalin, Dexedrine, Concerta, or Focalin. These drugs are stimulants commonly prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) but also abused by student seeking to improve their academic performance. In 2016, 4.0% of students reported using these substances in their lifetime and 1.8 percent reported using them in the past month.