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# National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens

August 2012

Conducted by:  
QEV Analytics, Ltd.

## Chapter II

### America's "High" Schools

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#### Students Smoking, Drinking, Using Drugs During the School Day

Nearly nine in 10 high school students (86 percent) say some classmates drink, use drugs or smoke during the school day; they say nearly one in five (the average estimate was 17 percent) of their classmates smoke, drink or use drugs during the school day.

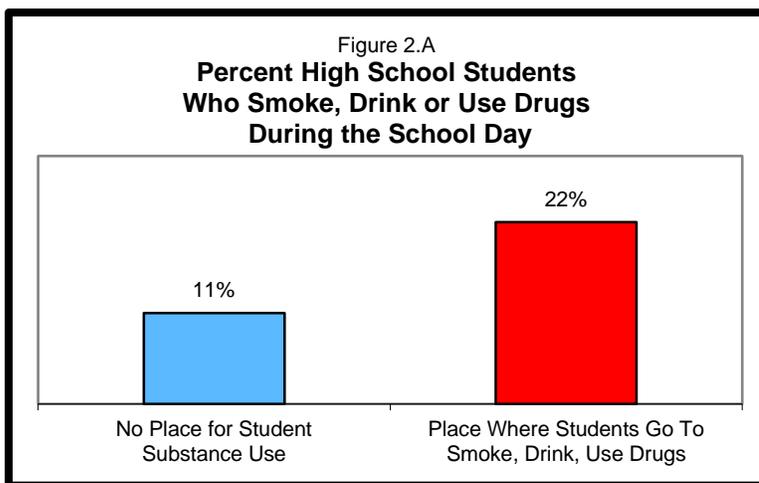
Most teens say that a student who was caught smoking (88 percent), drinking (95 percent) or using marijuana (96 percent) at their school would receive serious punishment. Eighty-one percent believe that if a student had a problem with using alcohol or drugs, their school would offer the student help (such as offer counseling or treatment).

#### Schools, a Safe Haven for Student Substance Use

More than half of high school students (52 percent) report that there is a place on school grounds or near the school where students go to drink, use drugs or smoke during the school day.

Compared to high school students who say there is no place on or near school grounds where students go to use substances, those who say there is such a place say that nearly twice as many of their classmates drink, use drugs or smoke during the school day (22 percent vs. 11 percent). (Figure 2.A)

More than a third (36 percent) of high school students say that it is very easy or fairly easy for students to drink, use drugs or smoke during the school day without getting caught.

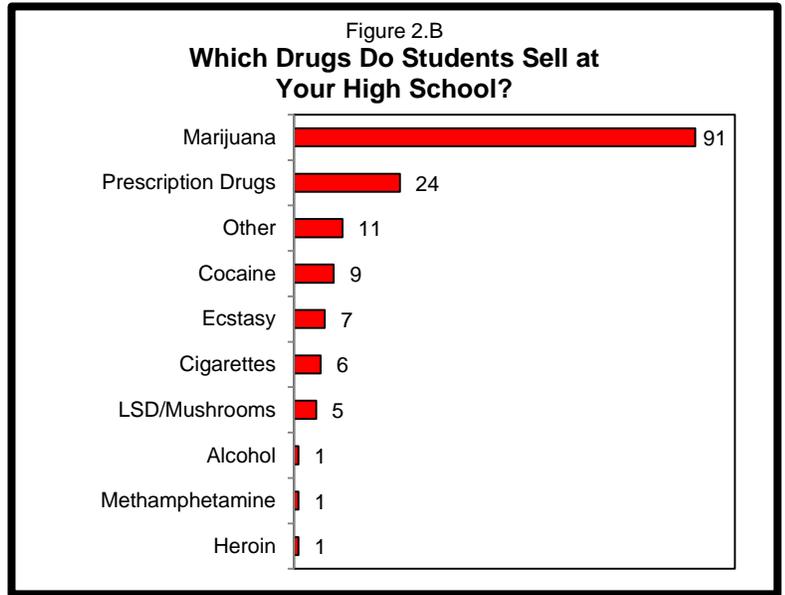


## Marijuana, Prescription Drugs, Cocaine, Ecstasy, Other Drugs Sold at School

Almost half of high school students (44 percent) know of a student who sells drugs (including marijuana and prescription drugs) at their school. We asked these students to list the kinds of drugs (up to three) that are sold. Nearly all of these high school students (91 percent) say marijuana, one-quarter (24 percent) say prescription drugs, nine percent say cocaine, and seven percent say ecstasy. Cigarettes, LSD/mushrooms, alcohol, heroin and methamphetamine were also mentioned. (Figure 2.B)

Compared to high school students who do not know of a student drug dealer at school, those who do are:

- More than twice as likely to have used marijuana (35 percent vs. 16 percent);
- One and a half times likelier to have used alcohol (55 percent vs. 32 percent); and
- Nearly twice as likely to have used tobacco (21 percent vs. 11 percent).



## Tobacco, Alcohol, Marijuana Use Common among Classmates

Ninety-three percent of high school students say that some classmates drink alcohol, 93 percent say some use drugs (including marijuana and controlled prescription drugs) and 93 percent say some smoke.

We asked teens what percent of their classmates drink, use drugs and smoke. They say (on average) that:

- 47 percent drink alcohol;
- 40 percent use drugs; and
- 30 percent smoke cigarettes.

## More than a Quarter of High School Students Say Most Classmates Use Drugs

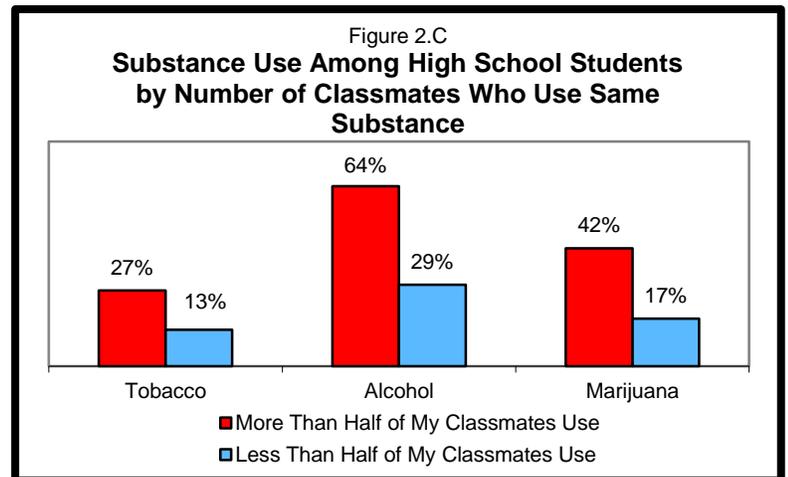
One in five 12- to 17- year olds (22 percent) say that most (more than half) of their classmates drink alcohol and 18 percent say that most of their classmates use drugs.

Among high school students:

- 28 percent say more than half of their classmates use drugs (including marijuana and controlled prescription drugs); and
- 37 percent say more than half of their classmates drink alcohol.

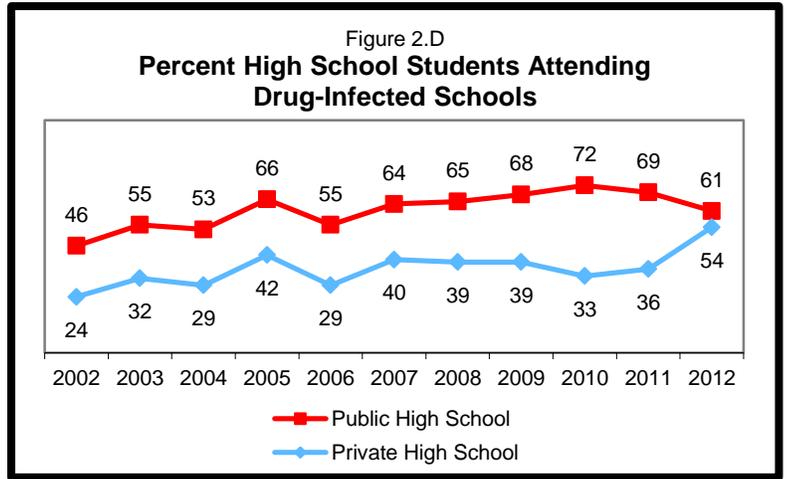
Students who say that more than half of their classmates smoke, drink or use drugs are more likely to have used these substances themselves: (Figure 2.C)

- Compared to high school students who say that less than half of their classmates use drugs, those who say that more than half of their classmates use drugs are two and a half times likelier to have used marijuana (42 percent vs. 17 percent);
- Compared to high school students who say that less than half of their classmates drink, those who say that more than half of their classmates drink are more than twice as likely to have used alcohol (64 percent vs. 29 percent); and
- Compared to high school students who report that less than half of their classmates smoke, those who estimate that more than half of their classmates smoke are twice as likely to have used tobacco (27 percent vs. 13 percent).



## Increase in Drug-Infected Private High Schools

For the first time, this year more than half of private high school students (54 percent) and 61 percent of public high school students say that students keep, use or sell drugs at the schools they attend. We call these schools drug infected. Over the past decade, the percent of students who say they attend a drug-infected private high school has increased significantly. (Figure 2.D)



## Chapter III

### Social Networking: Digital Peer Pressure

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#### **Pictures on Social Networking Sites Encourage Teen Substance Use**

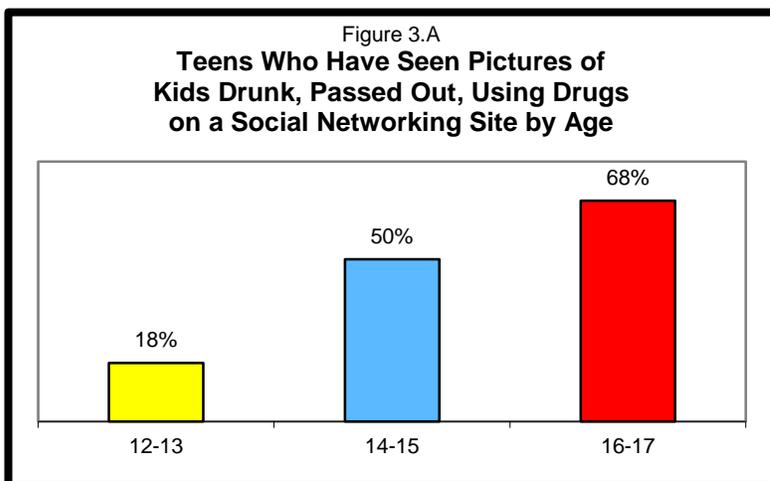
Seventy-five percent of teens say that seeing pictures on social networking sites of kids partying with alcohol or marijuana encourages other teens to want to party like that. Seventy-nine percent of 16- to 17-year olds think that seeing such pictures encourages other teens to want to do the same, compared with 76 percent of 14- to 15-year olds and 71 percent of 12- to 13-year olds.

- 63 percent of teens say that seeing pictures of teens drinking on social networking sites encourages other teens to want to drink; and
- 62 percent of teens say that seeing pictures of teens using marijuana on social networking sites encourages other teens to want to use marijuana.

#### **Social Networking Exposes Teens to Pictures of Other Teens Getting Drunk, Passed Out or Using Drugs**

Nearly half of teens (45 percent) have seen pictures on Facebook, MySpace or another social networking site of kids getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs, including (Figure 3.A):

- 18 percent of 12- to 13-year olds;
- 50 percent of 14- to 15-year olds; and
- 68 percent of 16- to 17-year olds.



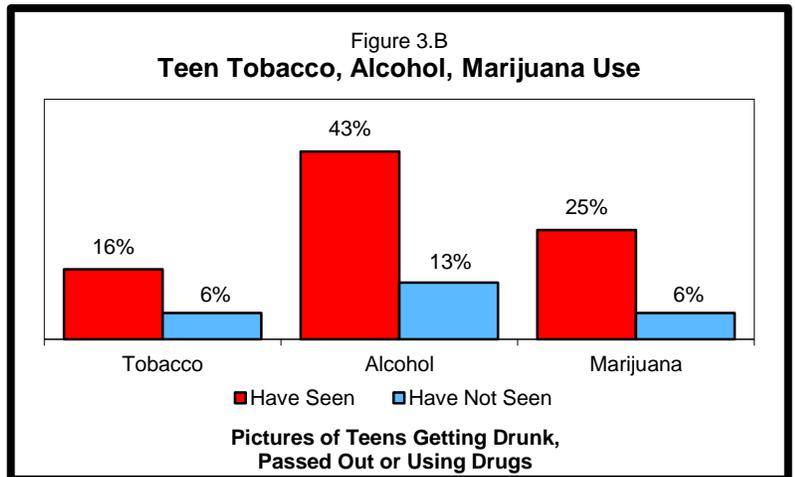
Among teens who have seen such pictures, 47 percent say that it generally seems like the teens in the picture are having a good time. Older teens (ages 16 to 17) are more likely than younger teens (ages 12 to 15) to think it generally looks like the teens in the picture are having a good time (55 percent vs. 39 percent).

### Viewing Pictures of Other Teens Getting Drunk, Passed Out or Using Drugs

This year’s survey confirms last year’s finding of an association between seeing pictures on social networking sites of kids getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs and teen substance use.

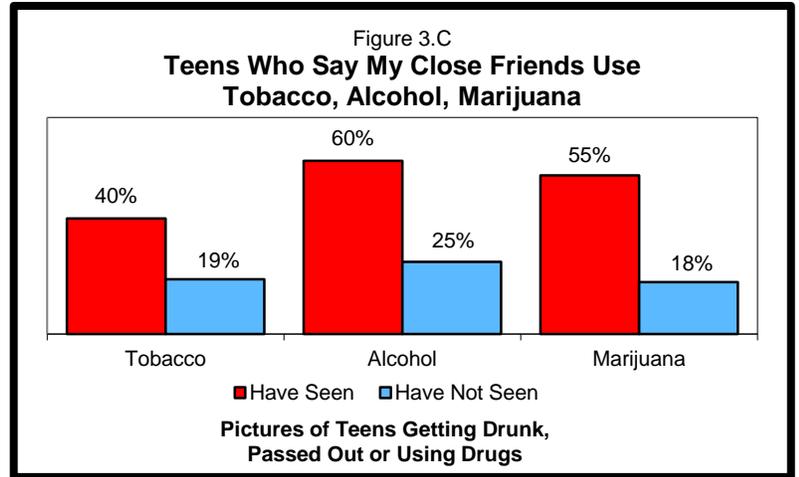
Compared to teens who have never seen pictures on Facebook, MySpace or another social networking site of kids getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs, teens who have seen such pictures are (Figure 3.B):

- Four times likelier to have used marijuana (25 percent vs. 6 percent);
- More than three times likelier to have used alcohol (43 percent vs. 13 percent); and
- Almost three times likelier to have used tobacco (16 percent vs. 6 percent).



Compared to teens who have never seen pictures on Facebook, MySpace or another social networking site of kids getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs, teens who have seen such pictures are (Figure 3.C):

- Three times likelier to have close friends who currently use marijuana (55 percent vs. 18 percent);
- More than twice as likely to have close friends who drink alcohol regularly, like most weekends (60 percent vs. 25 percent); and
- Twice as likely to have close friends who regularly smoke cigarettes (40 percent vs. 19 percent).



# Chapter IV

## Parental Monitoring

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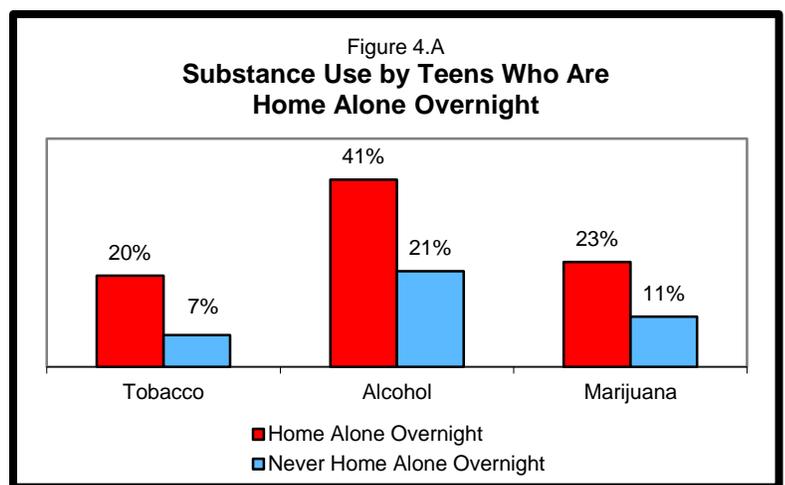
### Home Alone Overnight

For the first time, this year we asked 12- to 17-year olds about being home alone. Nearly one-third (29 percent) of teens report that they have been left home alone overnight (meaning without adult supervision), including:

- 17 percent of 12- to 13-year olds;
- 27 percent of 14- to 15-year olds; and
- 42 percent of 16- to 17-year olds.

Teens who report being home alone overnight are more likely to have used tobacco, alcohol or marijuana. Compared to teens who are never home alone overnight, those who report being home alone overnight are (Figure 4.A):

- Twice as likely to have used marijuana (23 percent vs. 11 percent);
- Nearly twice as likely to have used alcohol (41 percent vs. 21 percent); and
- Almost three times likelier to have used tobacco (20 percent vs. 7 percent).



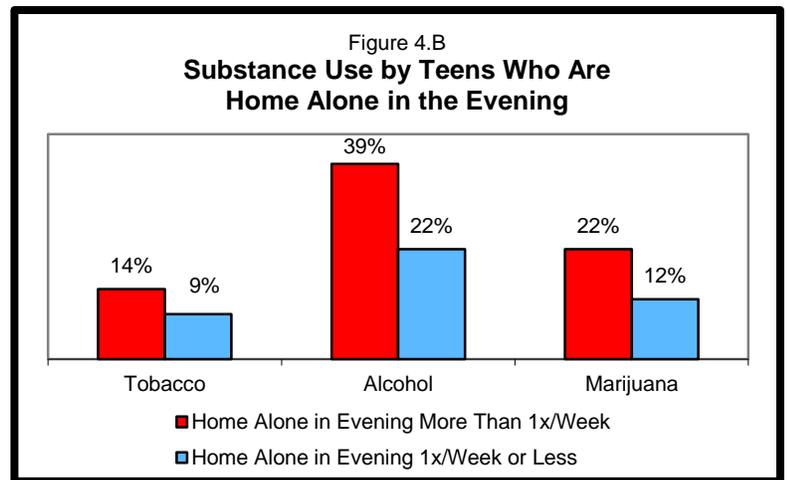
## Home Alone in the Evening

We also asked teens, “How often are you home alone in the evening (meaning, without adult supervision)?” A quarter of teens (26 percent) report being left home alone in the evening more than once a week, including:

- 16 percent of 12- to 13-year olds;
- 28 percent of 14- to 15-year olds; and
- 33 percent of 16- to 17-year olds.

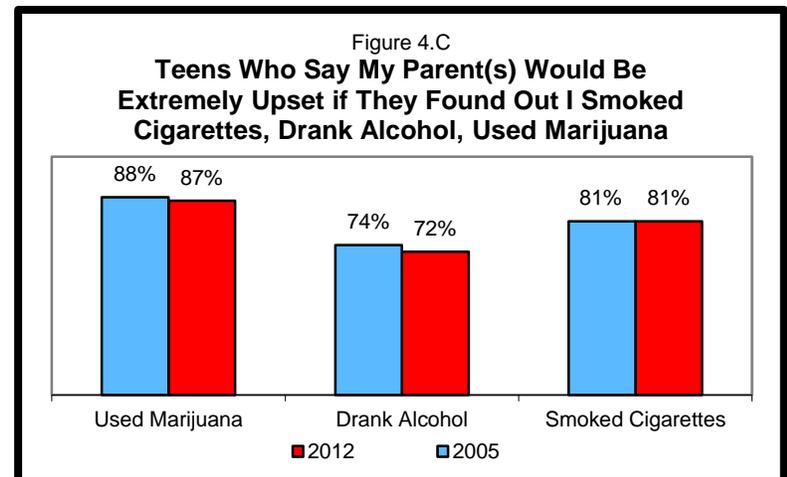
Compared to teens who report being home alone once a week or less often, teens who report that they are home alone in the evening more than once a week are (Figure 4.B):

- Nearly twice as likely to have used marijuana (22 percent vs. 12 percent);
- More than one and a half times likelier to have used alcohol (39 percent vs. 22 percent); and
- One and a half times likelier to have used tobacco (14 percent vs. 9 percent).



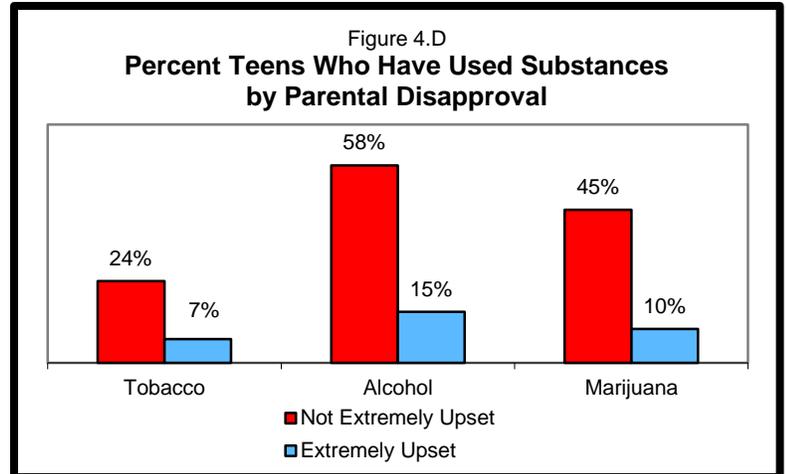
## Parental Disapproval

We asked teens how upset their parents would be to learn that their teen smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol or smoked marijuana. More teens said their parents would be extremely upset to learn that they had used marijuana (87 percent) compared to tobacco (81 percent) or alcohol (72 percent). These responses are similar to the responses we received in 2005 when we last asked this question. (Figure 4.C)



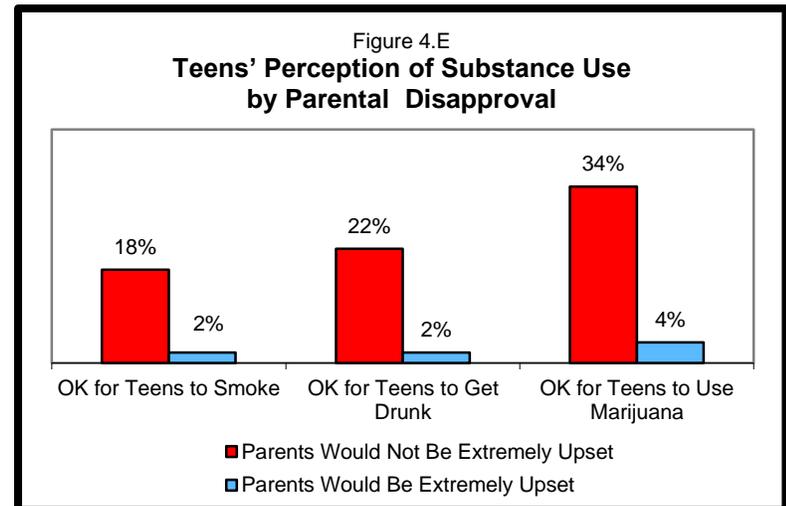
Parental disapproval of teen substance use is linked to teen use and teen perception that use is okay. Compared to teens who say their parents would be extremely upset (Figure 4.D):

- Teens who say their parents would not be extremely upset if they found out they smoked marijuana are four and a half times likelier to have used the drug (45 percent vs. 10 percent);
- Teens who say their parents would not be extremely upset if they found out they drank alcohol are almost four times likelier to have drunk alcohol (58 percent vs. 15 percent); and
- Teens who say their parents would not be extremely upset if they found out they smoked cigarettes are more than three times likelier to have used tobacco (24 percent vs. 7 percent).



Compared to teens who say their parents would be extremely upset if their parents found out they smoke, drink or use marijuana, teens whose parents would not be extremely upset are (Figure 4.E):

- Eight and a half times likelier to say it's okay for teens their age to use marijuana (34 percent vs. 4 percent);
- Ten times likelier to say it's okay for teens their age to get drunk (22 percent vs. 2 percent); and
- Nine times likelier to say it's okay for teens their age to smoke cigarettes (18 percent vs. 2 percent).



# Chapter V

## Stress, Drugs and Academic Performance

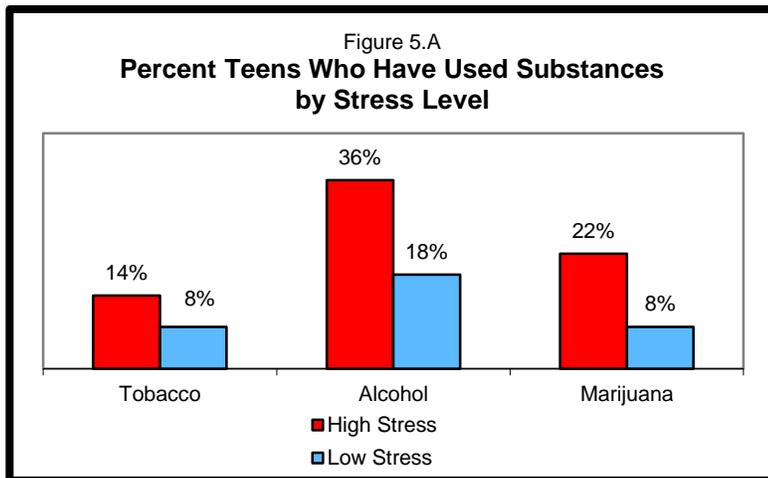
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### High Levels of Stress among Teens

We asked teens to rate the level of stress in their lives on a scale of one to 10. Nearly half of teens (46 percent) report that they experience high stress (six or higher), with 15 percent reporting their stress level is an eight or above. When we last asked this question in 2003, fewer teens (39 percent) reported experiencing high stress (six or higher).

Compared to teens who report a low stress level (five or less), teens who report high stress (six or higher) are (Figure 5.A):

- Nearly three times likelier to have used marijuana (22 percent vs. 8 percent);
- Twice as likely to have used alcohol (36 percent vs. 18 percent); and
- Almost twice as likely to have used tobacco (14 percent vs. 8 percent).



## Source of Stress

For the first time this year, we asked teens to name the number one source of their stress. The most common source of stress identified by teens is academic pressure (56 percent), which includes the pressures to do well in school and to get into college, followed by problems with family or at home (13 percent), drama with friends (4 percent), bullying (2 percent), and popularity/fitting in (2 percent).

Our analysis did not reveal a statistically significant association between the source of a teen's stress and a teen's likelihood of having used tobacco, alcohol or marijuana.

## Academic Performance

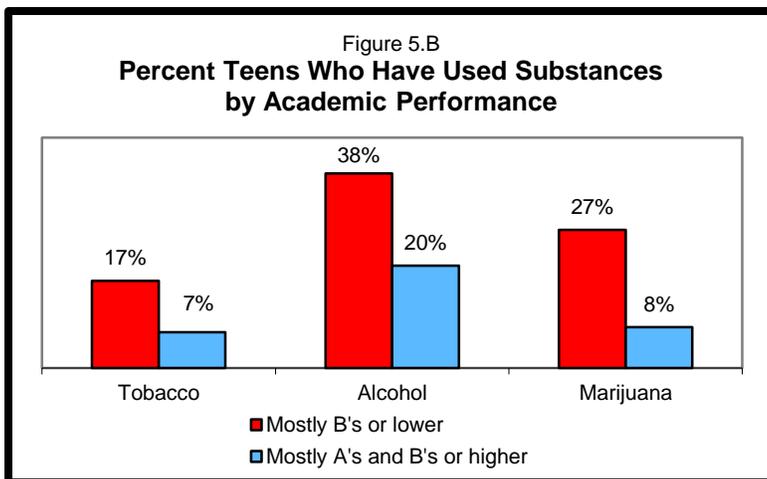
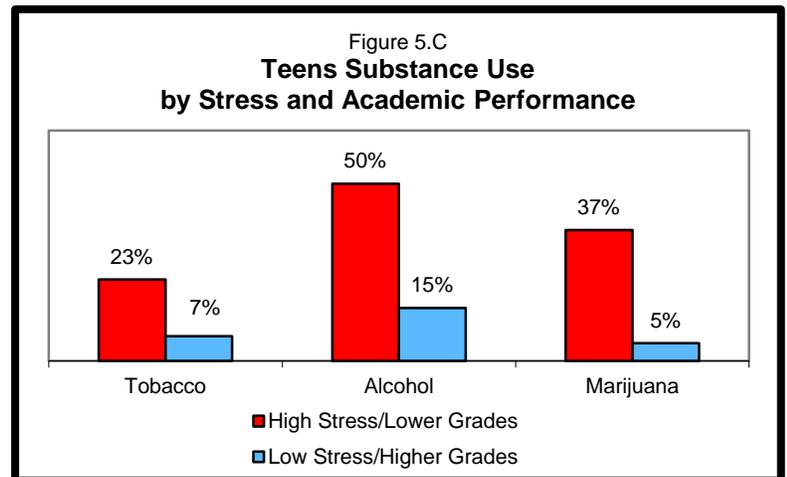
Thirty-six percent of teens report receiving average grades of mostly B's or lower. Compared to the 64 percent of teens who report that their average grades are all A's or mostly A's and B's, teens with lower grades are (Figure 5.B):

- More than three times likelier to have used marijuana (27 percent vs. 8 percent);
- Nearly twice as likely to have used alcohol (38 percent vs. 20 percent); and
- Two and a half times likelier to have used tobacco (17 percent vs. 7 percent).

## Academic Performance and Stress

The relationship between academic performance and substance use is exacerbated by high levels of stress. Compared to low stress teens who receive grades of all A's or mostly A's and B's (higher grades), teens with high stress levels and lower grades are (Figure 5.C):

- Seven times likelier to have used marijuana (37 percent vs. 5 percent);
- More than three times likelier to have used alcohol (50 percent vs. 15 percent); and
- More than three times likelier to have used tobacco (23 percent vs. 7 percent).



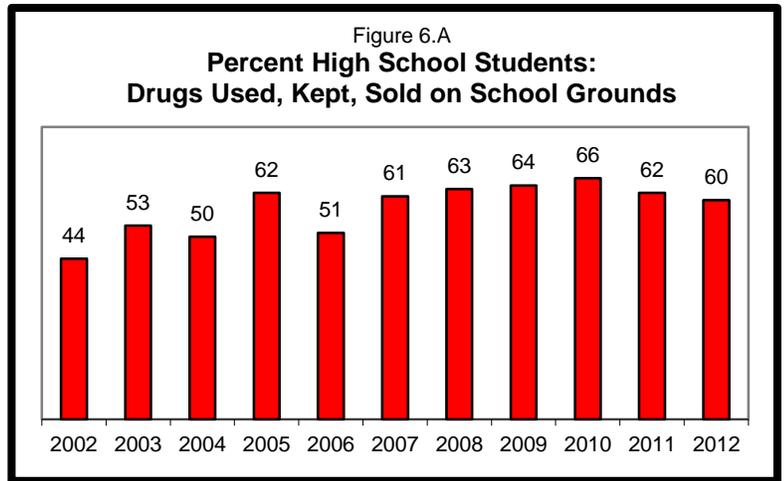
# Chapter VI

## Drug-Infected Schools

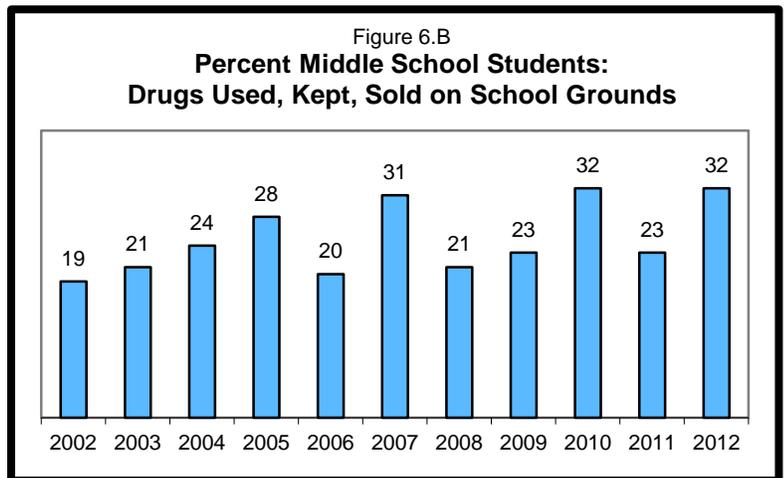
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### Six in 10 High Schools and One in Three Middle Schools Drug Infected

For seven of the past eight years, at least 60 percent of high school students have said that drugs are used, kept or sold on their school's grounds (their school is drug infected). (Figure 6.A)

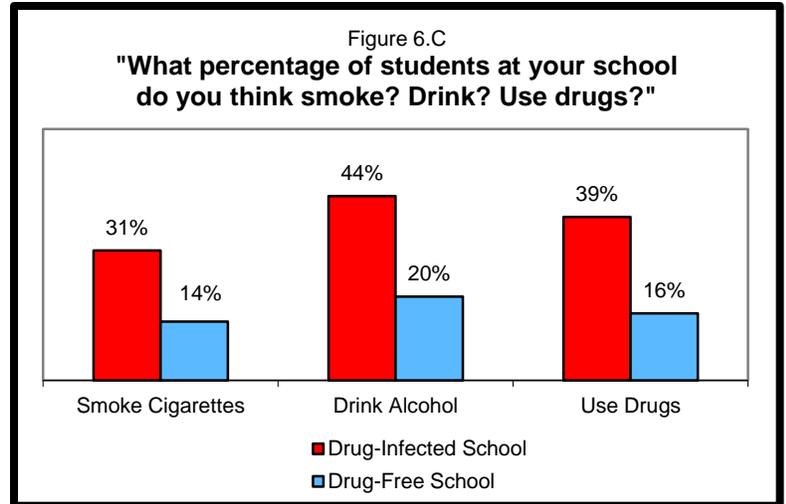


This year, 32 percent of middle school students say their school is drug infected. (Figure 6.B)



## Higher Percent of Classmates Smoke, Drink, Use Drugs at Drug-Infected Schools

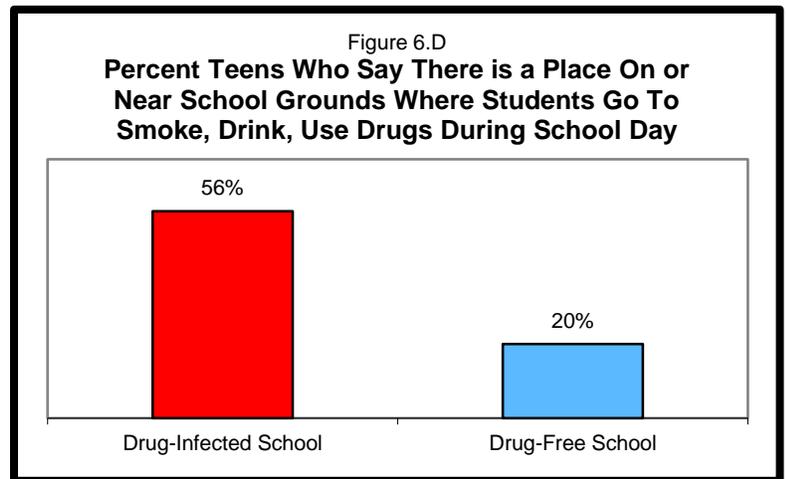
Students who say their school is drug infected estimate that twice as many of their classmates drink (44 percent vs. 20 percent), use drugs (39 percent vs. 16 percent) and smoke (31 percent vs. 14 percent), and that almost three times as many drink, use drugs or smoke during the school day (15 percent vs. 6 percent), compared to teens who say their school is drug free. (Figure 6.C)



## Drug-Infected Schools More Likely Safe Haven for Student Substance Use

Compared to teens at drug-free schools, teens who say their school is drug infected are:

- Two times likelier to say that it is very or fairly easy for students to smoke, drink or use drugs during the school day without getting caught (39 percent vs. 19 percent); and
- Nearly three times as likely to say that there is a place on or near school grounds where students go to drink, use drugs or smoke during the school day (56 percent vs. 20 percent). (Figure 6.D)



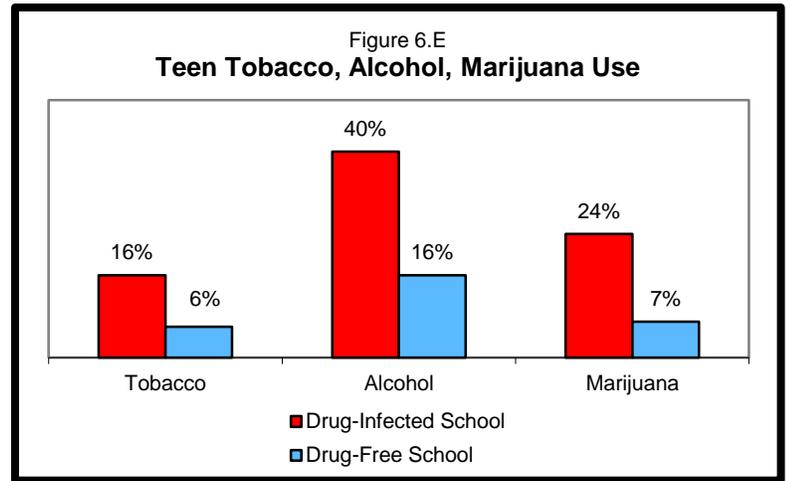
## Teens at Drug-Infected Schools More Likely to See Pictures of Teens Getting Drunk, Passed Out or Using Drugs on Social Networking Sites

Students who say that drugs are used, kept or sold at their school are almost twice as likely to see pictures on Facebook, MySpace or another social networking site of kids getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs than students at drug-free schools (61 percent vs. 33 percent).

## Students at Drug-Infected Schools More Likely to Smoke, Drink, Use Drugs

Teens who say that drugs are kept, used or sold on school grounds are more likely to have used tobacco, alcohol or marijuana. Compared to teens who say their school is drug free, those who say their school is drug infected are (Figure 6.E):

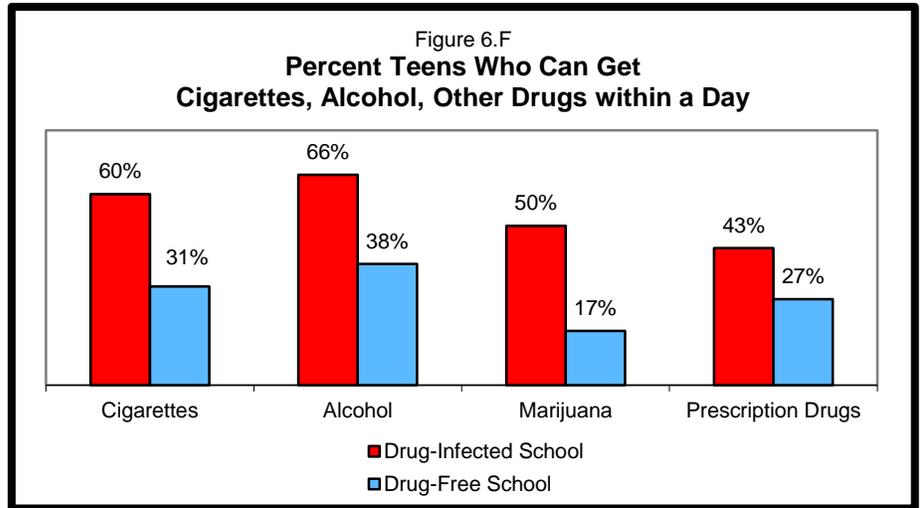
- Three times likelier to have used marijuana (24 percent vs. 7 percent);
- Two and a half times likelier to have used alcohol (40 percent vs. 16 percent); and
- Nearly three times likelier to have used tobacco (16 percent vs. 6 percent).



## Students at Drug-Infected Schools Have Faster Access to Cigarettes, Alcohol, Drugs

Teens who say they attend drug-infected schools have readier access to addictive substances. Compared to teens at drug-free schools, those who attend drug-infected schools are (Figure 6.F):

- Nearly three times likelier to be able to get marijuana within a day (50 percent vs. 17 percent);
- One and half times likelier to be able to get prescription drugs within a day (43 percent vs. 27 percent);
- One and a half times likelier to be able to get alcohol within a day (66 percent vs. 38 percent); and
- Almost twice as likely to be able to get cigarettes within a day (60 percent vs. 31 percent).



Half of teens (50 percent) at drug-infected schools say they know of a student who sells illegal drugs at their school.

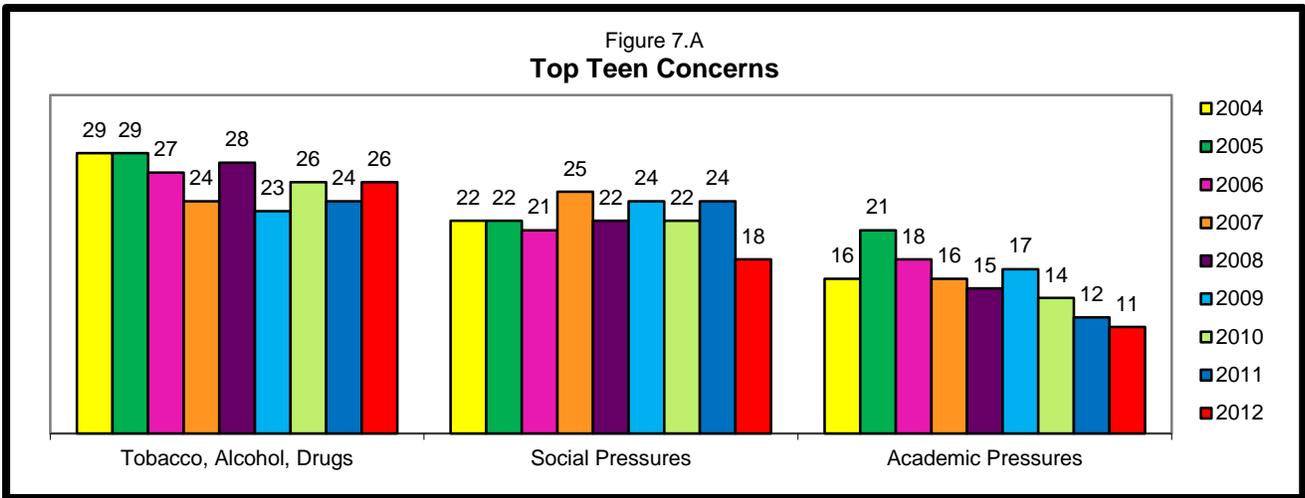
# Chapter VII

## Other Notable Findings

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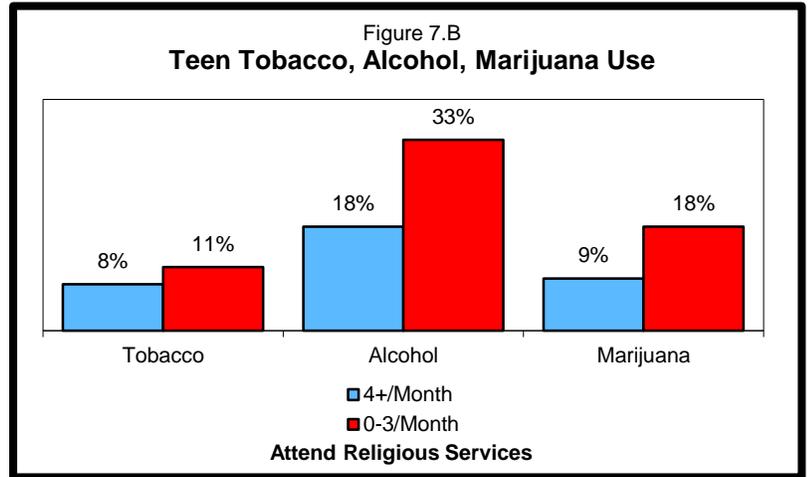
### Drugs Are Most Important Problem Facing Teens

Every year teens tell us that tobacco, alcohol and other drugs are the biggest problem facing teens their age. This year, 26 percent of teens surveyed say that alcohol, drugs and tobacco are the most important issue teens face, followed by social pressures and academic pressures. (Figure 7.A)



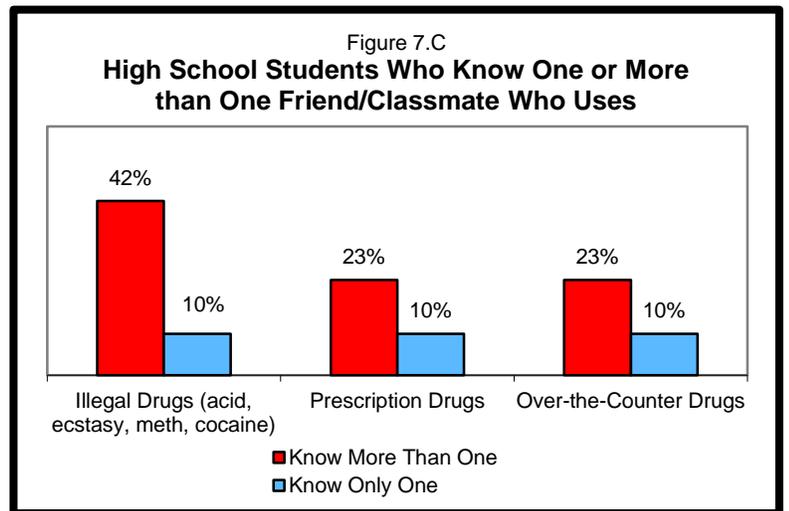
## Attending Religious Services

Teens who attend religious services at least four times a month are less likely to have used marijuana, alcohol or tobacco. (Figure 7.B)



## Illegal Drug Use More Common than Abuse of Prescription or Over-the-Counter Drugs

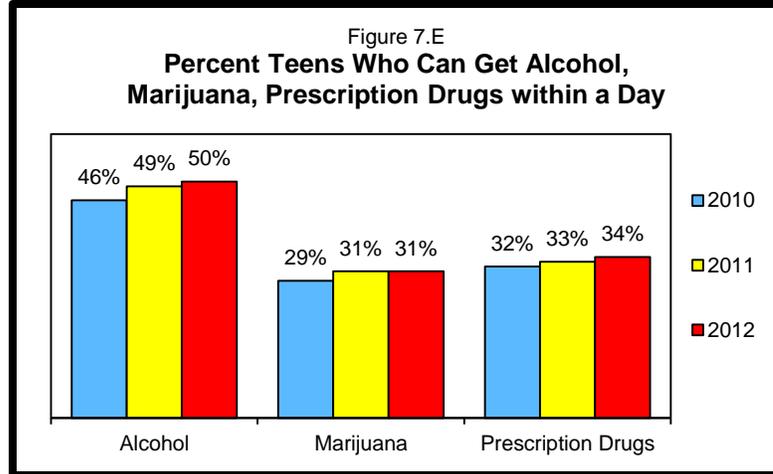
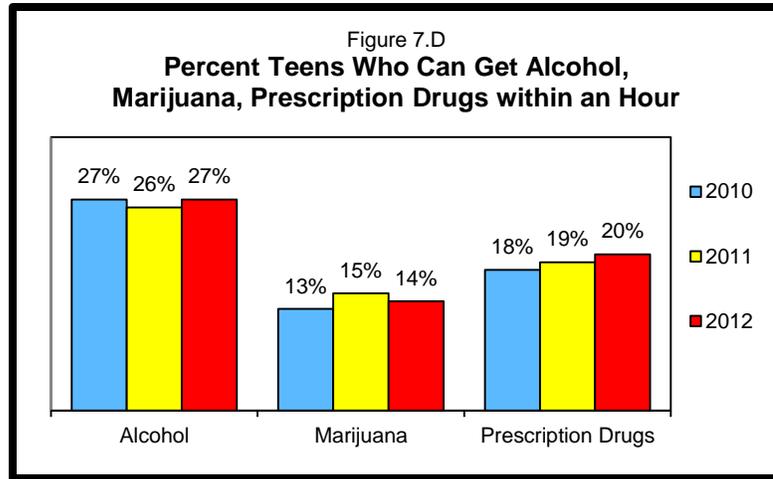
More high school students know at least one (or more than one) friend or classmate who uses illegal drugs than know at least one who abuses prescription or over-the-counter drugs. Thirty-three percent of high school students know one or more friends or classmates who abuse prescription or over-the-counter medicines--such as Robitussin, Sudafed, Nyquil, or cough and cold medicines--to get high, while more than half (52 percent) know one or more friends or classmates who have used illegal drugs like acid, ecstasy, meth, cocaine, or heroin.\* (Figure 7.C)



\* The question asked about “illegal drugs like acid, ecstasy, meth, cocaine, or heroin” and did not mention marijuana, but some teens may have included friends who use marijuana when answering the question.

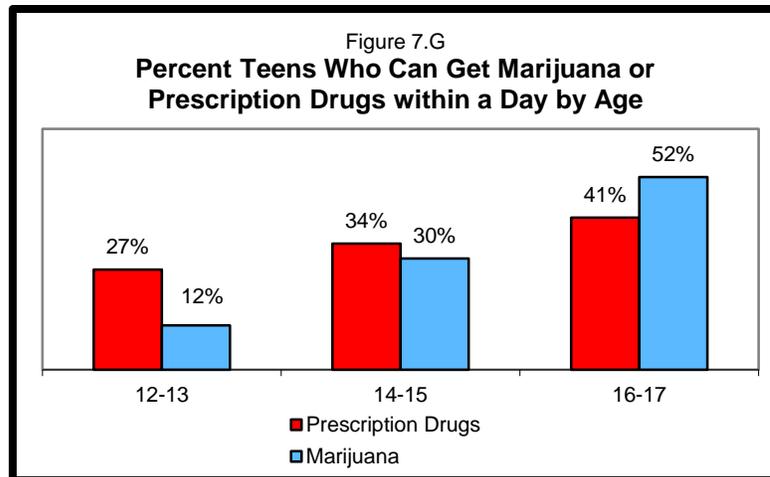
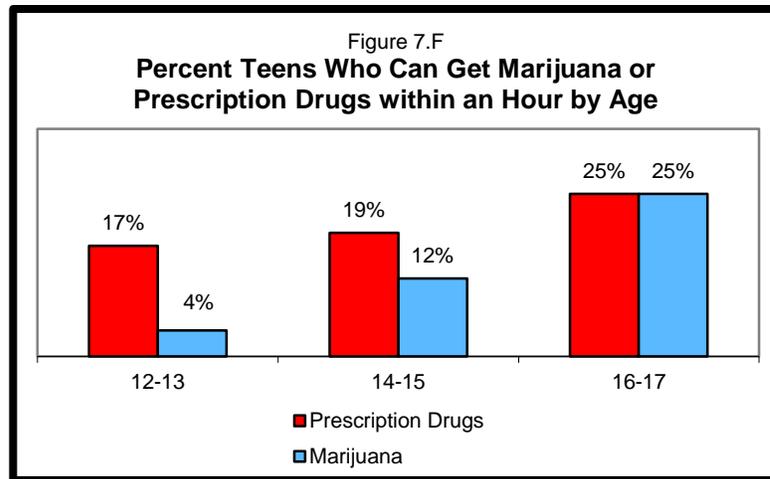
## Teen Access to Alcohol, Prescription Drugs and Marijuana

Teens have readier access to alcohol than prescription drugs or marijuana within an hour and within a day. (Figures 7.D, 7E)



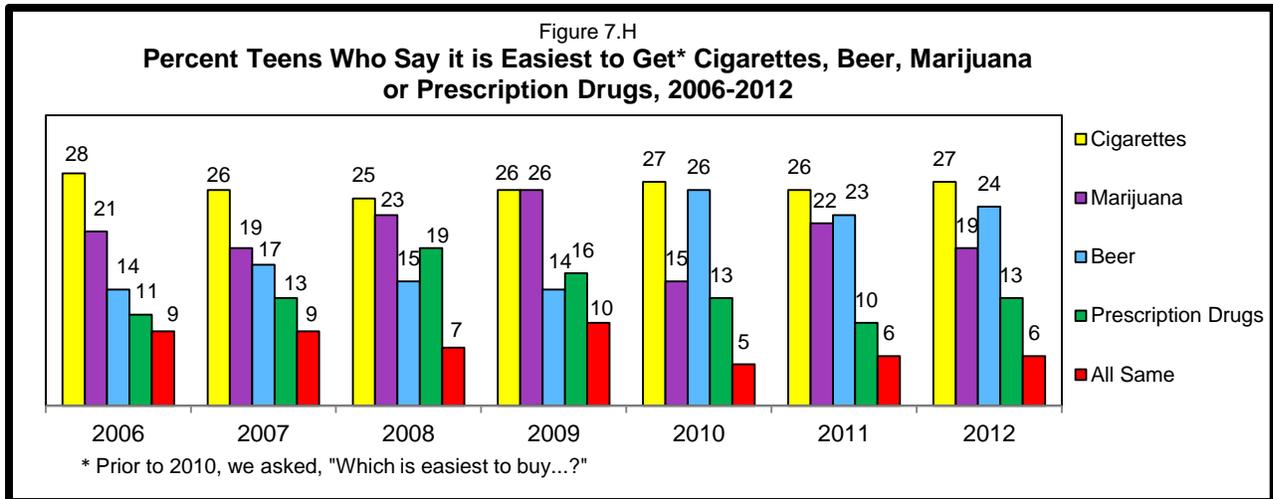
## Younger Teens Have Readier Access to Prescription Drugs than Marijuana

Younger teens (ages 12 to 13 and 14 to 15) are more likely to say that they can get prescription drugs in an hour, and within a day, compared to marijuana, while older teens (16- to 17) are more likely to be able to get to marijuana within a day. (Figures 7.F, 7.G)



## Beer and Cigarettes Are Easiest To Get

This year we asked teens, “Which is easiest to *get*: cigarettes, marijuana, beer or prescription drugs?” (prior to 2010, we asked, “Which is easiest to *buy*?”) Cigarettes remain at the top of the list, with 27 percent of teens saying cigarettes are easier to *get* than other drugs. Beer closely followed cigarettes as the easiest drug for teens to *get*. Marijuana is third, with 19 percent of teens reporting that it is easiest to *get* this year, compared to 22 percent last year. Compared to 2011, slightly more teens this year say prescription drugs are easier to *get* than other drugs (13 percent in 2012 vs. 10 percent in 2011). (Figure 7.H)



## Drinking to Have Fun

Teens say that the reasons teens drink are to have fun (41 percent), to fit in (29 percent), and to relieve stress or because they feel depressed, sad or lonely (22 percent).

## Drugs More Popular than Cigarettes among High School Students

High school students are more likely to use marijuana than to smoke cigarettes. High school students are (Figure 7.1):

- More likely to have tried marijuana than tobacco (24 percent vs. 15 percent); and
- More likely to say their close friends use marijuana than smoke cigarettes (51 percent vs. 39 percent).

