



Substance Abuse among Children and Youth in Johnson County

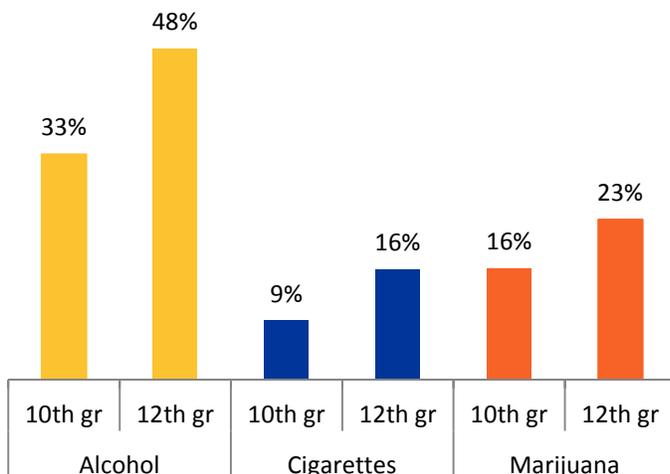
Nationally and locally, levels of illicit drug use among 8th, 10th and 12th grade students have generally remained stable or been declining for several years. Johnson County students differ from Kansas students in some critical ways though – such as in their use of marijuana. Additionally, while local students initiate abuse of many substances later than the state average, by 10th or 12th grade they have often met or surpassed the state average in their likelihood of both reported lifetime use and past 30 day use.

In the 2011-2012 school year, four of five eligible students participated in the Communities That Care (CTC) survey, which asks 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders about behaviors and attitudes that are correlated with their risk for substance abuse. All six Johnson County public school districts have conducted the survey with their students for the past five years.

Drugs of Choice among Children and Youth in Johnson County in 2012

- Alcohol is still the most likely substance to be abused by children and youth, with 39% of 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders reporting that they had used alcohol at least once in their lifetime; almost one in four (24%) reported having used in the past 30 days. This increases to one in three among 10th graders and one in two 12th graders using in the past 30 days.
- Almost one in five 12th graders and one in eight 10th graders reported having been drunk or high at school at least once in the past year. More than one in eleven 12th graders reported selling illegal drugs in the past year.
- Binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks in a row. Overall, 12% of 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders reported binge drinking within the past two weeks – while 29% of 12th graders reported having done so. Eleven percent of 12th graders reported binge drinking three or more times in the past two weeks.
- Older high school age students in Johnson County continue to report both greater lifetime usage and use within the past 30 days of marijuana than the state average, with 23% of 12th graders (KS 12th grade average = 19%) reporting that they had used marijuana in the past 30 days. One in 11 reported using it 10 or more times in that same time period. While 24% of 12th graders think it is “not wrong at all” for someone their age to use marijuana (almost twice that of 10th graders), 84% indicated that they believe smoking marijuana on a regular basis is harmful.
- Since 2009, use of marijuana among Johnson County students has exceeded that of tobacco use. Almost one in five 6th to 12th grade students reported having used marijuana at least once in the past 30 days while one in six had used tobacco in 2012.

Reported Use in Past 30 Days, 10th and 12th grade students

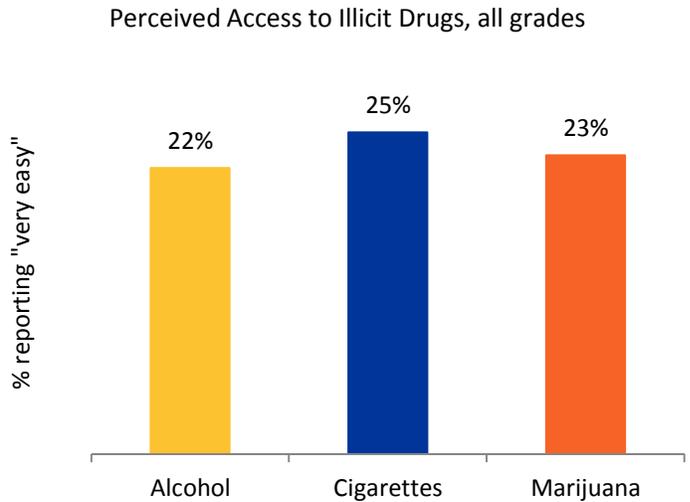


- One in six 12th graders and more than one in nine 10th graders reported using prescription pain relievers such as Vicodin and Oxycontin not prescribed to them in their lifetime. Similarly, almost one in six 12th graders and one in eleven 10th graders reported using stimulants such as Ritalin or Adderall not prescribed to them.
- The 2011-2012 CTC survey was the third year to include questions about the non-prescribed use of prescription pain relievers, stimulants and heroin. Prescription drug abuse concerns treatment professionals and law enforcement because of the drugs’ addictive qualities and the increased likelihood of subsequently using unregulated drugs. CTC levels of use have remained steady in the past three years.



Factors Contributing to Risk: Perceptions of availability and repercussions for substance abuse

- About one in four Johnson County students reported that they thought it was very easy to get access to many illicit substances, including alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. In 2012, slightly more students reported that it would be very easy to access marijuana than alcohol.
- When Johnson County students were asked if they would get caught by police if they drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes, three of five answered “No.” Half of students reported that they would also not be caught by police if they used marijuana.
- Students’ reported level of access to substances and confidence that they would not be caught by police or parents escalated with grade level.

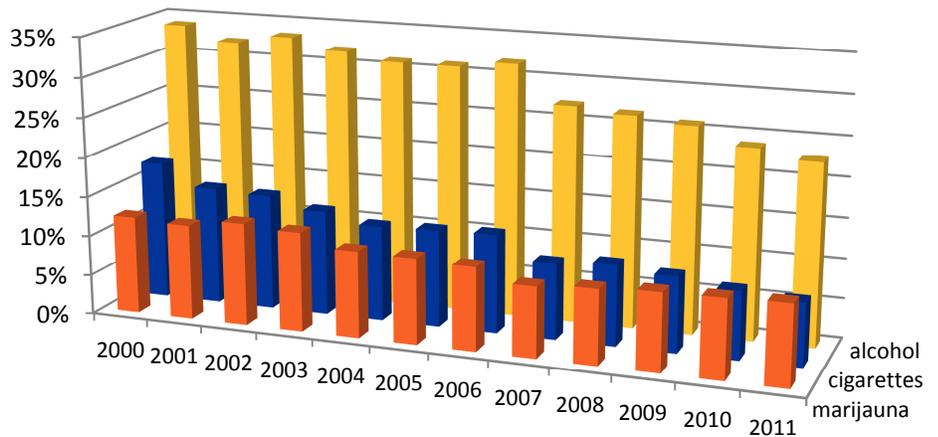


According to the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an annual survey of U.S. civilians ages 12 and older, 85% of underage drinkers reported that their last use of alcohol in the past month occurred either in someone else’s home or their own. NSDUH also found that underage drinkers were almost four times more likely to use illicit drugs within two hours of alcohol use than persons who were 21 or older.

Trends in Substance Abuse among Youth in Johnson County – 2000-2012

While current levels of substance abuse are of significant concern because of the potential impact on the health and safety of children and youth, over the past decade or so, reported levels of 30 day alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use among Johnson County students have decreased. This is consistent with national trends. Alcohol use in the past 30 days dropped 33% and cigarette use dropped to less than half of 2000 levels. Marijuana use dropped the least over time (18%) and Johnson County students are now more likely to report smoking marijuana than smoking tobacco.

Reported Use of Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Marijuana in Past 30 Days, all grades, 2000-2011



Additionally, the age of initiation – the age when those who report having used a substance first used it – has slowly been rising. Tobacco use has seen the greatest rise, with students who report smoking in 2011 saying that they started on average at age 13 years 6 months, a full year later than those reporting when they first smoked in 2000. Alcohol and marijuana initiation were both delayed about 6 months in the same time span, with age initiation in 2011 for alcohol at 13 years 4 months and marijuana, 14 years 4 months. Later initiation is significant as research suggests that the later the age of initiation, the less likely a person is to abuse the substance or become addicted.