

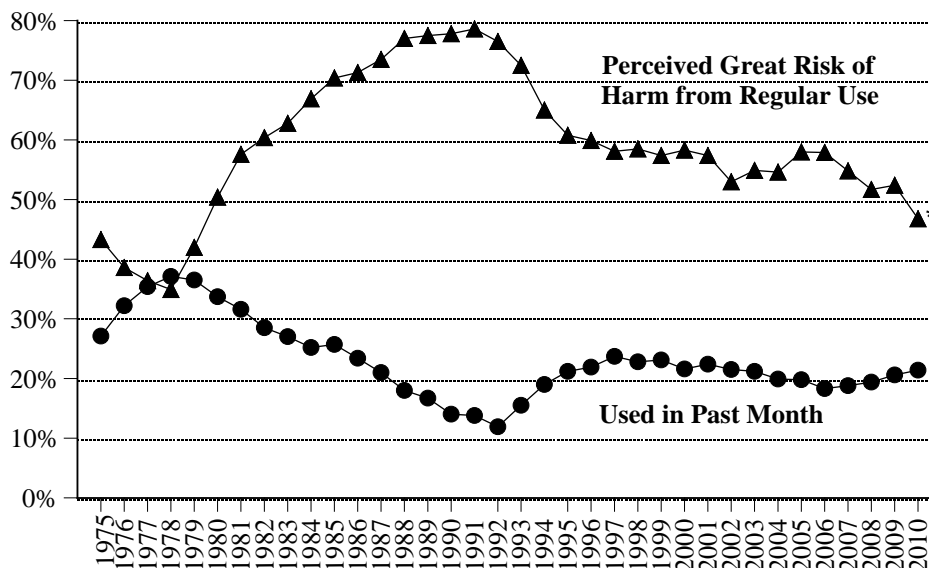
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Marijuana Use Continues to Increase as Perceived Risk of Use Decreases Among U.S. High School Seniors

The percentage of U.S. high school seniors reporting past month marijuana use continues to slowly increase, according to data from the 2010 Monitoring the Future (MTF) study. In 2010, 21.4% of 12th graders reported using marijuana in the past month, continuing a trend of slight increases that have occurred each year since 2007 (see figure below). While the current prevalence of marijuana use is far below the peak of 37.1% in 1978, it has returned to a level not seen since 2002. According to Lloyd Johnston, the principal investigator of the study, while “this upward shift is not yet very large, its duration and pervasiveness leave no doubt in our minds that it is real” (p 2). One possible explanation for this increase in marijuana use may be that the perceived risk of harm from marijuana use has decreased in recent years. The percentage of high school seniors who thought there was a great risk of harm from using marijuana decreased from 52.4% to 46.8%* in 2010—the lowest level since 1979.

**Percentage of U.S. Twelfth Grade Students Reporting Past Month
Marijuana Use and a Perceived Great Risk of Harm from Regular Marijuana Use, 1975-2010**



NOTES: Similar trends in marijuana use have occurred among 8th and 10th grade students. Marijuana use among 8th graders increased from 5.8% in 2008, to 6.5% in 2009, to 8.0%* in 2010. Marijuana use among 10th graders increased from 13.8% in 2008 to 15.9% in 2009 to 16.7% in 2010.

*Difference between 2009 and 2010 is statistically significant ($p \leq .01$).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from University of Michigan, “Marijuana Use if Rising; Ecstasy Use Is Beginning to Rise; and Alcohol Use is Declining Among U.S. Teens,” Monitoring the Future press release, December 14, 2010. Available online at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/10data.html#2010data-drugs>.