

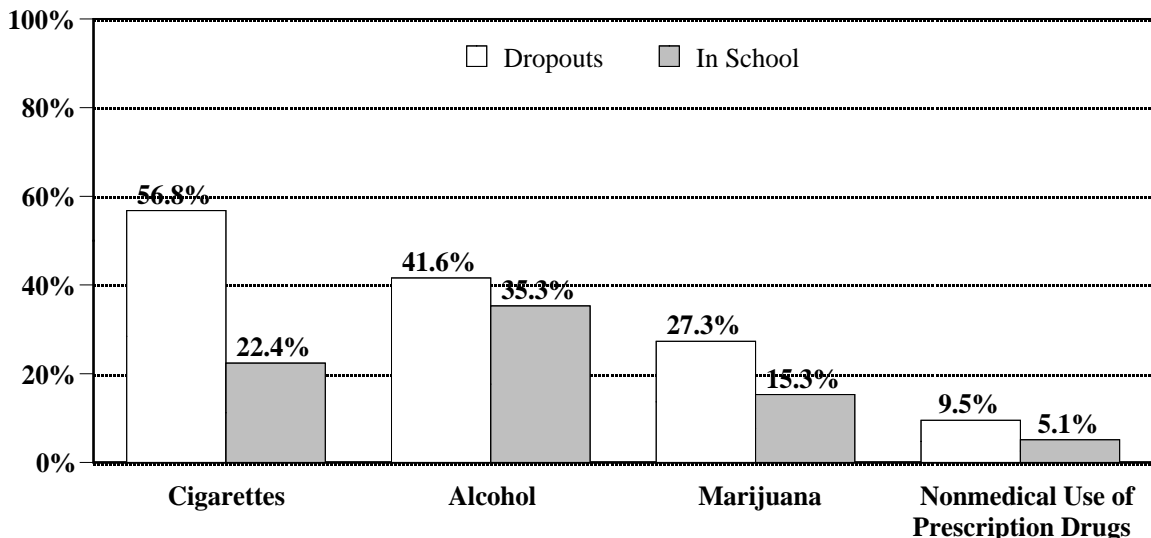
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

High School Dropouts Report Higher Rates of Substance Use Than Those Who Remain in School

High school dropouts report higher rates of substance use than those who remain in school, according to the data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Twelfth grade aged youth who dropped out of school were more likely than 12th grade students to report past month use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs for non-medical purposes (see figure below). The greatest difference was for cigarette use—dropouts were more than twice as likely to report smoking a cigarette in the past month (56.8% compared to 22.4%). The authors suggest that “prevention efforts targeted to adolescents generally and to those at risk of dropping out of high school more specifically might improve the educational, employment and financial, and health outcomes of many youths” (p. 4).

Percentage of 12th Grade Aged Youths Reporting Past Month Substance Use, by Drop Out Status*
(2002-2010 data combined)



*Difference between 12th grade students and 12th grade aged youth who had dropped out of school is significant at the .05 level for all listed substances.

NOTE: According to the NSDUH data, approximately 13% of 12th grade aged youth in the U.S. had dropped out of school. This includes youths aged 16-18 who had not completed high school or a GED, were not currently attending school, and were considered 12th grade aged based on the last grade they had completed and their age when they stopped attending school.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (SAMHSA) “Substance Use Among 12th Grade Aged Youths by Dropout Status,” *The NSDUH Report*, February 12, 2013. Available online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k13/NSDUH036/SR036SubstanceUseDropouts.pdf>