

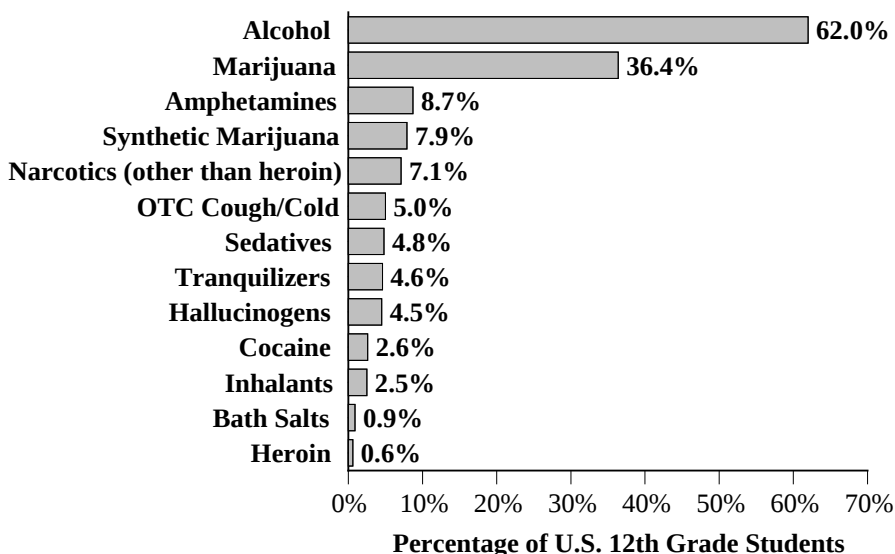
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Alcohol and Marijuana Most Prevalent Drugs Used by U.S. 12th Graders; Use of Bath Salts and Heroin Extremely Rare

Alcohol and marijuana are the most prevalent drugs used by 12th graders in the past year, according to data from the 2013 national Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. Nearly two-thirds (62.0%) of high school seniors reported using alcohol in the past year and slightly more than one-third (36.4%) reported using marijuana. Approximately one in twelve (8.7%) reported using amphetamines, 7.9% reported synthetic marijuana use, and 7.1% reported using narcotics other than heroin. All other drugs were used by 5% or less of 12th grade students, including bath salts (0.9%) and heroin (0.6%)—both of which have received recent media attention. Only three drugs had statistically significant changes from the previous year, and all were decreases—synthetic marijuana (from 11.3% in 2012 to 7.9% in 2013), Vicodin® (from 7.5% to 5.3%), and salvia (from 4.4% to 3.4%) (data not shown). While the decrease in synthetic marijuana use is encouraging, it remains the fourth most prevalent drug used by high school seniors in the past year. According to the study's principal investigator, "synthetic drugs are particularly dangerous because their ingredients are unknown, they have not been tested for safety, and their ever-changing ingredients can be unusually powerful. Users really don't know what they are getting . . ." (p. 7).

Percentage of U.S. 12th Grade Students Reporting Past Year Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs* (Excluding Tobacco), 2013



*Amphetamines, Sedatives, Tranquilizers, and Narcotics (other than heroin) include only use “. . . on your own—that is, without a doctor telling you to take them.” OTC Cough/Cold refers to use for the explicit purpose of getting high. Amphetamines include Adderall® (7.4%), Ritalin® (2.3%), crystal methamphetamine (1.1%), and methamphetamine (0.9%). Narcotics (other than heroin) include Vicodin® (5.3%) and Oxycontin® (3.6%). Hallucinogens include ecstasy (4.0%), salvia (3.4%), LSD (2.2%), and PCP (0.7%). Drugs not listed above with less than 2% prevalence were steroids (1.5%), ketamine (1.4%), GHB (1.0%), and Rohypnol® (0.9%).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from University of Michigan, “American Teens More Cautious About Using Synthetic Drugs,” *Monitoring the Future Press Release*, December 18, 2013. Available online at www.monitoringthefuture.org.