



# HISPANIC TEENS & DRUGS

••• A SPECIAL REPORT •••

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup> graders have a higher rate of illicit drug use than their African American and White counterparts.
- Hispanic teens use marijuana more than any other drug.
- Hispanic youth cite “upsetting their parents” as the main reason not to do drugs.
- Hispanic parents place a great focus on education, but drug use is a barrier to educational achievement.
- Adoption of American culture and lifestyle (acculturation) increases the risk of drug use by Hispanics. Acculturated Hispanics are nearly 13 times as likely to report using illegal drugs as non-acculturated Hispanics.

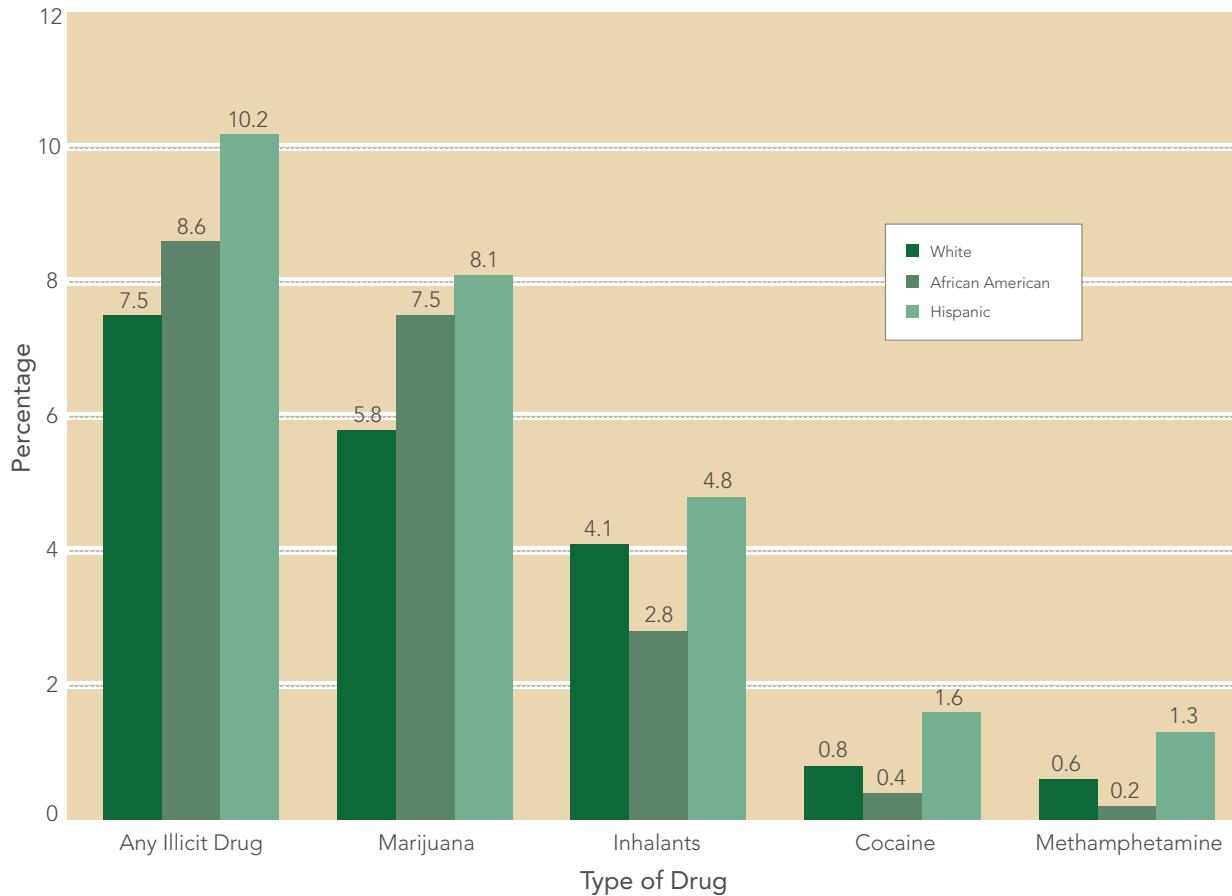
Across the Nation, teen drug use is down 23 percent since 2001 among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, reflecting reductions in the use of nearly every drug.<sup>1</sup> However, data from 2005 and 2006 indicate that there are still some areas of concern for Hispanic youth.<sup>2</sup>

Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup> graders have a higher rate of illicit drug use than other teens in the same grade level. Hispanics have the highest rates of illicit drug use compared to their White and African American counterparts. More than 10 percent of Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported current illicit drug use compared to White (8%) and African American (9%) 8<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>3</sup>

Hispanic teens in all grades use marijuana more than any other drug. In addition, Hispanic teens’ use of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine currently outpaces other students.

For Hispanic parents, educational attainment is of great importance, but youth drug use can be a barrier to educational achievement. Unique factors, such as acculturation, can impact Hispanic drug use. Yet, because of the critical role parents and family play in decision making by teens, there are steps that parents and family can take to prevent drug use.

## CURRENT DRUG USE RATES FOR WHITE, AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND HISPANIC 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS



SOURCE: The Monitoring the Future Study, Unpublished Special Report on Racial/Ethnic Comparisons, the University of Michigan, Based on 2005 and 2006 data combined.

### ••• ILLEGAL DRUG USE •••

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among Hispanic teens.

- Nearly one in 10 Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup> graders (8%) reported current use of marijuana.
- The rates for current marijuana use among Hispanic 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders are 14 percent and 16 percent, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Hispanic teens are turning to cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine more than White or African American teens. Hispanic youth in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade outpace their African American and White counterparts in terms of current, annual, and lifetime\* use of these drugs.

- Use of cocaine and heroin is higher among Hispanic students in all grades, compared to that of other students.<sup>5</sup>
- Eighth grade lifetime methamphetamine use is 5 percent, compared to 3 percent for White students and 1 percent for African American students.<sup>6</sup>

\*Current use is any use during the month before the survey was conducted. Annual use is within the past year. Lifetime use is ever used.

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## PRESCRIPTION DRUGS & INHALANTS

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Youth prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse is an emerging threat. Teens are using these medications to get high, and Hispanic teens are also at risk.

- More than one in five (21 percent) Hispanic teens reported abusing prescription drugs to get high.<sup>7</sup>
- Fifty-one percent of Hispanic teens say a reason why teens abuse prescription drugs is because “they are not illegal drugs.”<sup>8</sup>
- Current, annual, and lifetime use of stimulants for Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders is lower than use by White counterparts, but double that of African American students.<sup>9</sup>

Higher percentages of Hispanic students reported lifetime inhalant use by the time they reached 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with the opposite for White and African American students who report less inhalant use by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>10</sup>

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## PROTECTIVE FACTORS: KEEPING TEENS DRUG-FREE

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Parents, educators, and the entire community play a critical role in keeping teens drug free.

Nearly two-thirds of Hispanic youth age 13 to 17 say that upsetting their parents or losing the respect of family and friends is one of the main reasons they don’t smoke marijuana.<sup>11</sup>

While most parents today place great value on higher education, Hispanic parents are even more likely to endorse its importance, and drug use can negatively impact educational achievement.<sup>12</sup>

- Students who drink or use drugs are up to five times more likely than their peers to drop out of high school.<sup>13</sup>
- Hispanic parents see college as an absolute necessity. Compared to the general public, more than twice as many Hispanic parents (65 percent) say that it is virtually impossible to make it in today’s world without a college education.<sup>14</sup>

More than half (56 percent) of Hispanic youth age 12 to 17 participated in team sports during the past year.<sup>15</sup> Team sports participants were more likely than non-participants to disapprove of peers’ use of cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana.<sup>16</sup>

While this report does not take into account the effects of acculturation, new data indicate that adoption of American culture and lifestyle increases the risk of drug use by Hispanics.

- Acculturated Hispanics are nearly 13 times as likely to report using illegal drugs as non-acculturated Hispanics.<sup>17</sup>
- One study found that seven percent of acculturated Hispanics reported using illegal drugs within the previous month, compared to less than one percent of non-acculturated Hispanics and six percent of Whites.<sup>18</sup>

(ENDNOTES)

- <sup>1</sup> University of Michigan's 2006 *Monitoring the Future*. Tables 1-4. <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/06data.html#2006data-drugs>
- <sup>2</sup> The Monitoring the Future Study, the University of Michigan. Trends in Annual Prevalence.
- <sup>3</sup> The Monitoring the Future Study, Unpublished Special Report on Racial/Ethnic Comparisons, the University of Michigan, based on 2005 and 2006 data combined.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Key Findings of Hispanic Teen Drug Trends (PATS 2005), Partnership for a Drug Free America. [http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/Research/Teens\\_2005/Key\\_Findings\\_of\\_PATS\\_Spanish](http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/Research/Teens_2005/Key_Findings_of_PATS_Spanish)
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> The Monitoring the Future Study, Unpublished Special Report on Racial/Ethnic Comparisons, the University of Michigan, based on 2005 and 2006 data combined.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Partnership Attitude Tracking Study 2003 Teens Study: Survey of Teens' Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Marijuana. [http://www.mediacampaign.org/hispnc\\_yth/substance\\_use.html](http://www.mediacampaign.org/hispnc_yth/substance_use.html)
- <sup>12</sup> Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents — White, African American and Hispanic — View Higher Education. Public Agenda, December 1999. <http://www.publicagenda.org/specials/highered/highered1.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). Malignant neglect: substance abuse and America's schools. New York: Columbia University, 2001. [http://www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/articlefiles/379-malignant\\_neglect.pdf](http://www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/articlefiles/379-malignant_neglect.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002. <http://www.highereducation.org/reports/hispanic/intro.shtml>
- <sup>15</sup> The NHSDA Report, "Team Sports Participation and Substance Use Among Youths," February 8, 2002. [http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k2/athletes/athletes\\_DrugUse.htm](http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k2/athletes/athletes_DrugUse.htm)
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Akins S, Mosher C. and Smith C. Study of 6,713 adults in Washington state. Findings to be published in the Journal of Drug Issues, March 2008.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.

THIS SPECIAL REPORT WAS COMPILED BY  
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