

SUBSTANCE USE AMONG VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

RESULTS FROM THE VIRGINIA YOUTH SURVEY – 2015

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse most often begins in adolescence and young adulthood, when youth begin trying alcohol, tobacco, and illegal and prescription drugs.¹

Adolescents most frequently abuse alcohol, followed by marijuana and tobacco.² Repeated substance use can result in school failure, poor mental health, impaired memory, problems with family relationships and friendships, and increased overall risky behavior.¹

RESPONDENTS

A total of 5195 Virginia high school students took the survey, most of whom (74%) were between the ages of 15 and 17 years old. Males (52%) and females (48%), as well as student grade levels, were evenly distributed.

SUMMARY

For all substances students reported their use during the past 30 days (current use).

Prescription Drug and Heroin Use

- Eight percent of students had currently used a prescription drug without a doctor’s prescription.
- Two percent of students had currently used heroin.

Tobacco, Alcohol, & Marijuana Use

Alcohol was the most common currently used substance (23%), followed by e-cigarettes (17%) (fig.1).

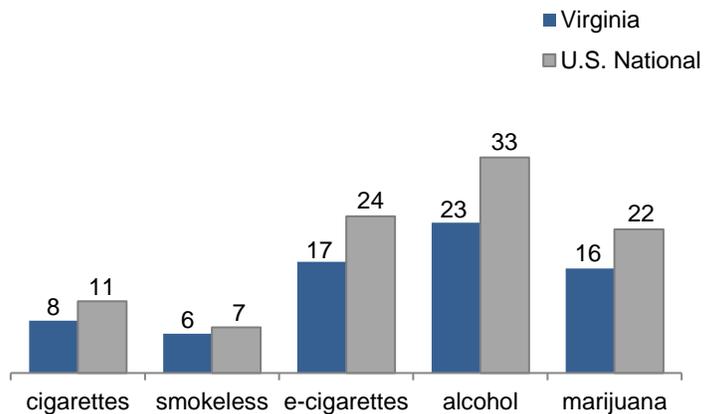


Figure 1: Percentage of students using a substance in the past 30 days.

Behaviors Related to Alcohol Use

- Of students who reported driving in the past 30 days, less than 1 in every 10 (7%) drove while drinking.
- Over 1 in every 10 students (11%) drank 5 or more drinks in a row in the past 30 days.
- Of the students who reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, 45% reported that someone gave them the alcohol.

Grades & Substance Use

Students were more likely to receive As and Bs in school if they had not currently consumed alcohol, used marijuana, used prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription, or used heroin (fig. 2).

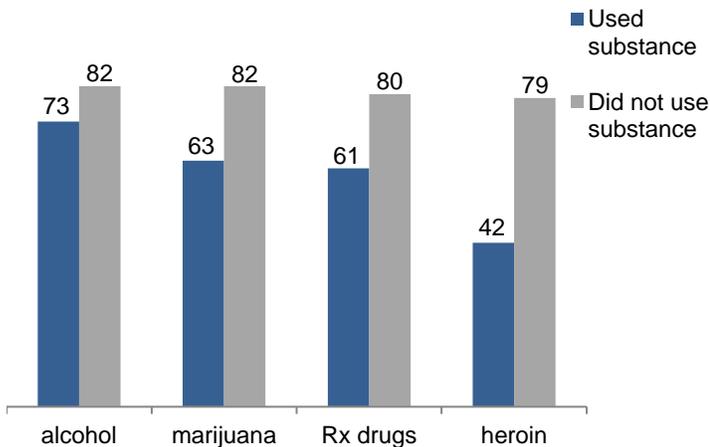


Figure 2: Percentage of students receiving mostly As and Bs by substance use.

Sad or Hopeless & Substance Use

Students were more likely to have felt sad or hopeless every day for 2 or more weeks in a row if they had currently consumed alcohol (2.5 times as likely), used marijuana (1.9 times as likely), used prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription (nearly 2.5 times as likely), or used heroin (2.8 times as likely) (fig. 3).

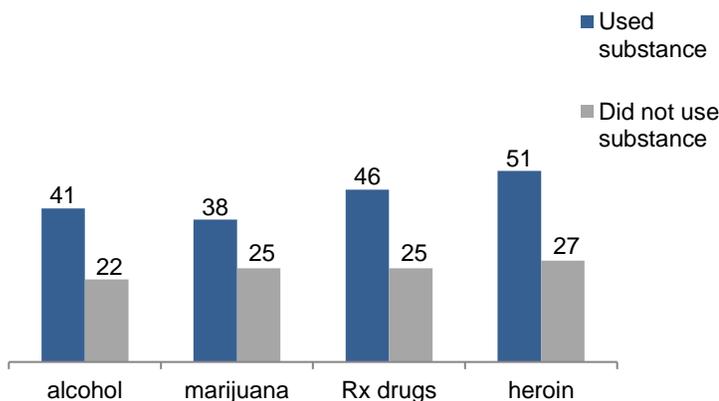


Figure 3: Percentage of students feeling sad or hopeless every day for 2 or more weeks in a row by substance use.

Skipping School & Substance Use

Students were more likely to skip school if they had currently consumed alcohol (4.5 times as likely), used marijuana (5.5 times as likely), used prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription (6.6 times as likely), or used heroin (16.9 times as likely) (fig. 4).

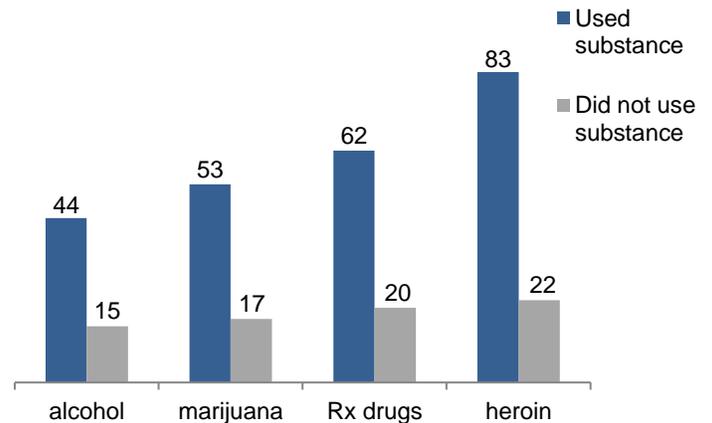


Figure 4: Percentage of students skipping school by substance use.

MORE INFORMATION

1. Principles of Adolescent Substance Use Disorder Treatment: A Research-Based Guide. (2014, January). Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-adolescent-substance-use-disorder-treatment-research-based-guide/introduction>
2. Substance Abuse. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/substance-abuse/home.htm>

For more information, please visit <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/virginia-youth-survey/> or contact VYSrequest@vdh.virginia.gov