



Marijuana Use on the Rise, Despite Reports

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This past week, the annual HHS National Survey on Drug Use and Health was released. This report asks people in households about their drug use. It focuses on the age group of 12 and over, and breaks down categories among people ages 12-to-17, 18-to-25 and 26 and older.

The *Washington Post* and other sources reported that “drug use is down” because of the observed trend that the same proportion of 12 to 17 year-olds were using marijuana (around 7.1%).

But journalists and others who claim a leveling or decrease of the numbers appear to have read only the report’s headlines and high-level summaries. If they had read the data, they would have seen that from 2012 and 2013, when age groups were broken down further, a more accurate statement would be this: **among 12 to 15 year-olds, marijuana use appears steady, but among 16 to 25 year-olds, marijuana use is going up.**

NSDUH also found that *daily* marijuana use is going up among both kids and adults. And it found that among all people in the United States, people who started using marijuana for the first time went up. This information is not anything for our country to cheer or otherwise pat itself on the back about.

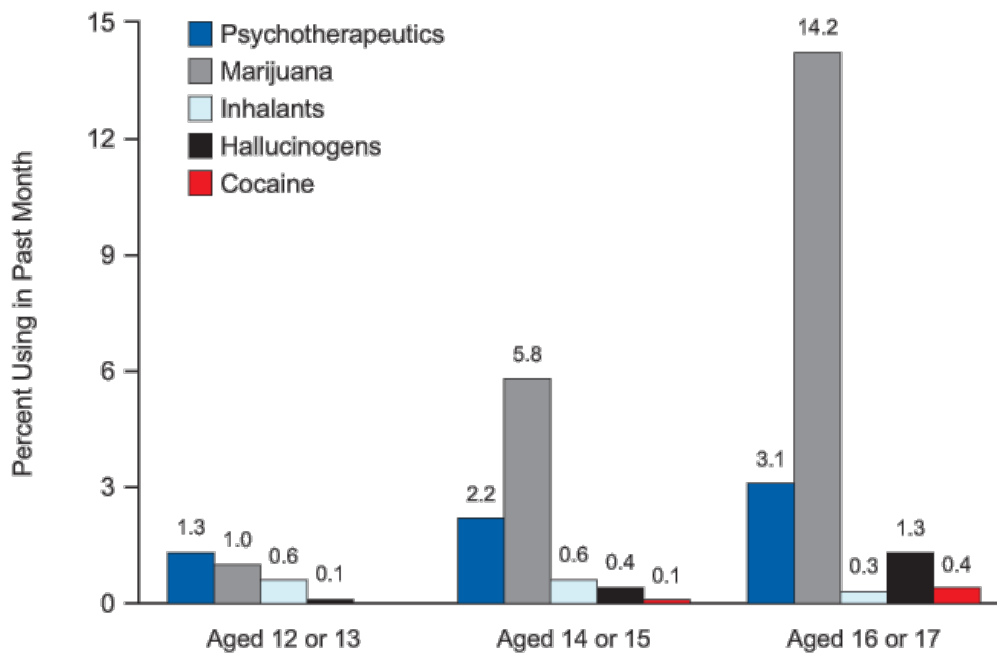
Past-Year Initiates of Marijuana and Any Illicit Drug among Persons Aged 12 or Older, Aged 26 or Older, or Aged 26 to 49: Numbers in Thousands, 2002-2013

| Drug/Age Group | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Marijuana, Aged 12 or Older | 2,196 ^a | 1,973 ^b | 2,142 ^a | 2,114 ^a | 2,061 ^b | 2,089 ^b | 2,224 | 2,379 | 2,439 | 2,617 | 2,398 | 2,427 |
| Marijuana, Aged 26 or Older | 90 ^a | 88 ^a | 176 | 252 | 126 | 134 | 159 | 49 ^b | 247 | 182 | 177 | 210 |

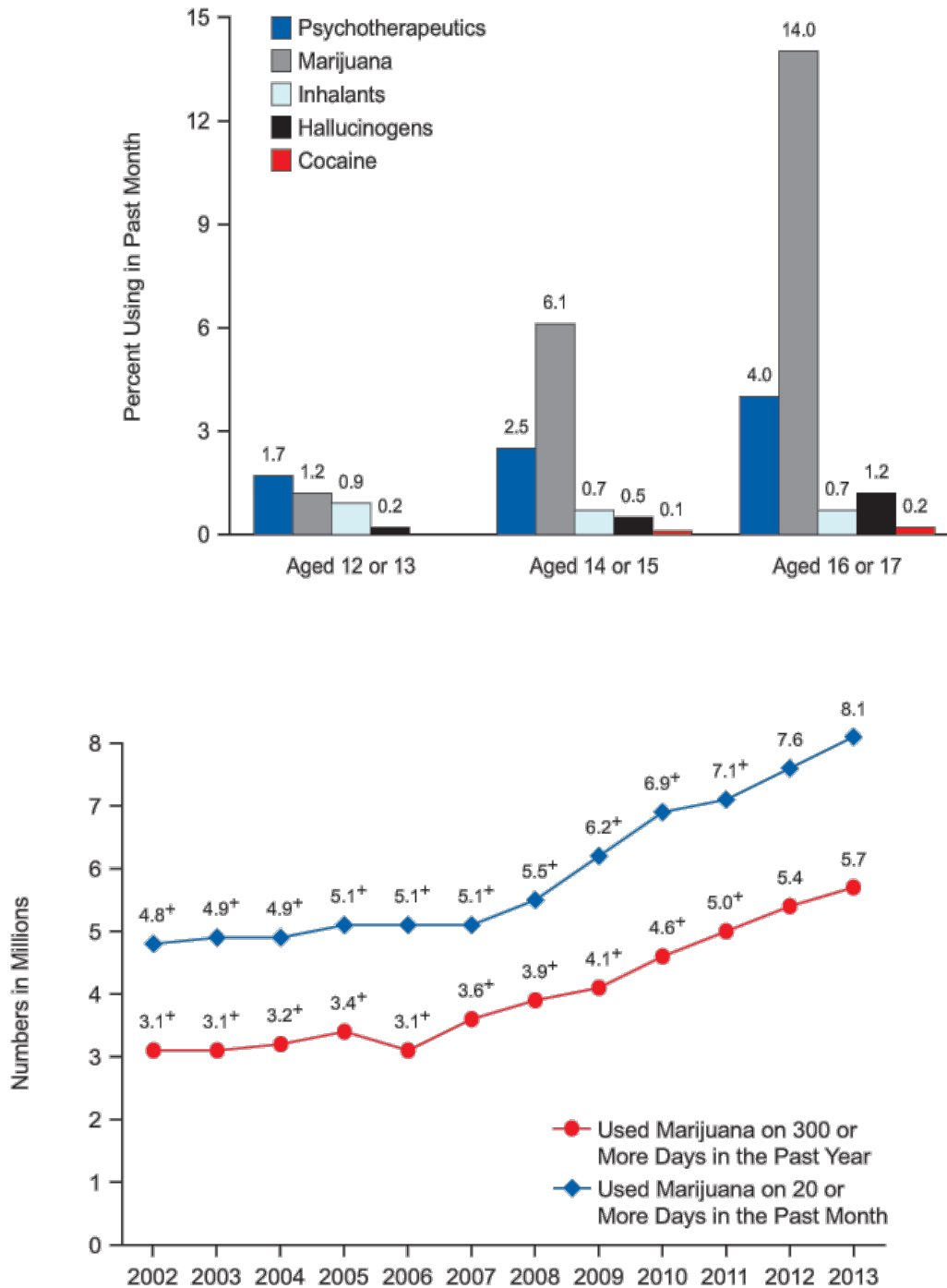
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|------------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Marijuana, Aged 26 to 49 | 90 | 56 ^b | 127 | 122 | 126 | 121 | 155 | 49 ^b | 210 | 138 | 139 | 178 |
| Any Illicit Drug, Aged 12 or Older | 2,656 | 2,627 | 2,784 | 2,908 | 2,785 | 2,672 | 2,905 | 3,136 | 2,982 | 3,083 | 2,883 | 2,848 |
| Any Illicit Drug, Aged 26 or Older | 268 | 324 | 479 | 579 | 415 | 326 | 419 | 433 | 457 | 368 | 339 | 389 |
| Any Illicit Drug, Aged 26 to 49 | 251 | 209 | 333 | 379 | 405 | 250 | 350 | 205 | 366 | 270 | 280 | 325 |

Past-Month Use of Selected Illicit Drugs among Youths Aged 12 to 17: 2013



Past-Month Use of Selected Illicit Drugs among Youths Aged 12 to 17: 2012



Further complicating the issue is that another survey – which was completely ignored in *The Washington Post's* NSDUH coverage – shows that 8th and 10th grade use is going up – as is college-age use.

The Monitoring the Future survey, conducted by the University of Michigan, which surveys 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, finds something very different from the “drug use is down” mantra. 2013 MTF data reported: “Annual marijuana use among college students and young adults has been rising steadily since 2010. In 2013, increases in marijuana use occurred in all of the populations measured except 12th graders, who remained unchanged.” So over the recent past – and even compared to 2012 in all but 12th graders – marijuana use is going up. Here are some more stats:

Daily marijuana use among college students is at a record high: College student and young adult rates of daily use have increased very gradually since 2007, from 3.5% to 5.1% in 2013 among college students and from 5.0% to 6.2% over that same interval among young adults

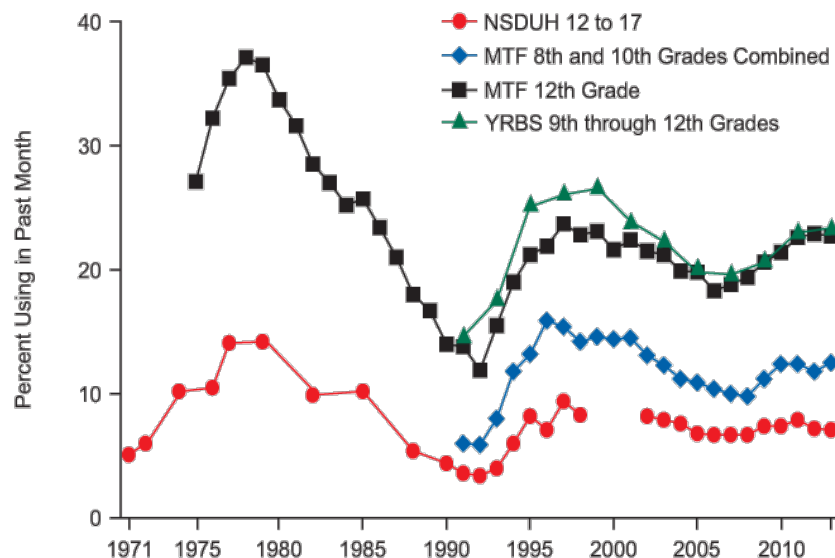
Daily marijuana use among high school students is high – and among 10th graders it has peaked. 4% of 10th graders – up from X in 2012 and X in 2000 – use marijuana daily, and 6.5% - or 1 in 15 – high school seniors use it daily.

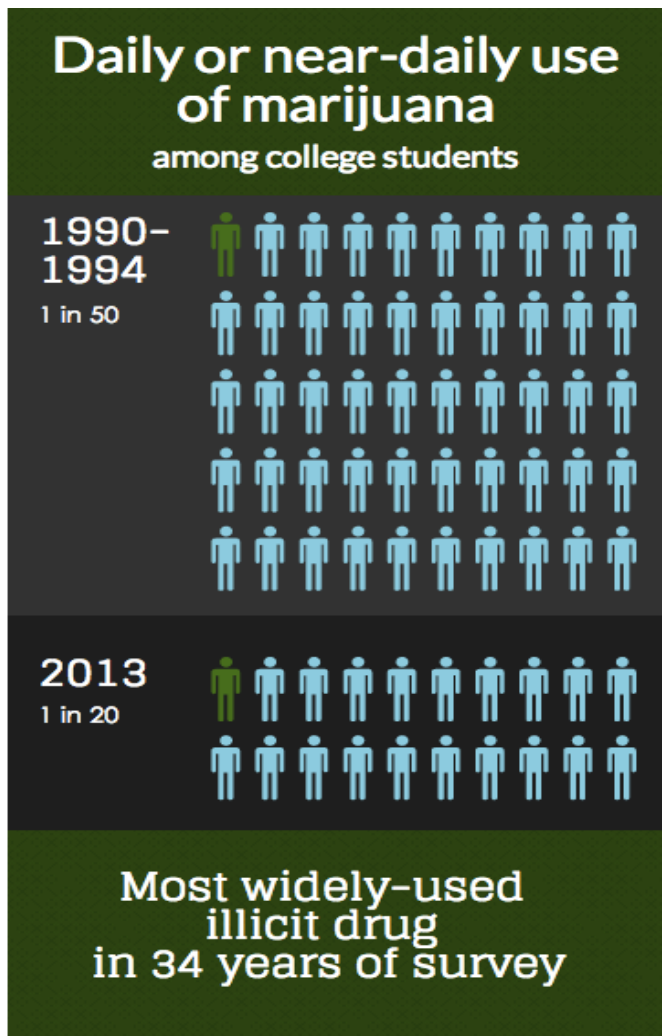
Regular, 30-day marijuana use is up among 8th and 10th graders – from 6.5% to 7% and from 17% to 18%, respectively, from 2012 to 2013.

So what do we know? We know that 8th and 10th graders using marijuana in the past year has increased since 2012 (from 11.7% to 12.4% among 8th graders and from 28.0% to 29.8% among 10th graders). We know daily marijuana use among college students has peaked.

And when we look at all surveys, it is really difficult to say marijuana use is going down.

Past Month Marijuana Use among Youths in NSDUH, MTF, and YRBS: 1971-2013





The University of Michigan says it best: “The role of the many debates on legalizing marijuana for medical use, the actual legalization for recreational use in some states, and the experiences those states have with the new laws likely will have an impact on present and future secular trends in use.”