



Monday, February 14, 2005

Extensive new study details states' drug, alcohol use

Binge drinking is big problem

By Donna Leinwand
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Alaska has the nation's highest rate of illegal drug use; binge drinking is particularly prevalent in the upper Midwest; and Utah's reputation as a clean-living state is well-deserved, according to a landmark federal study.

The study, to be released today by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, combines data from 136,000 interviews conducted in 2002 and 2003. The large number of interviews and the depth of the surveys provide extraordinary detail about the roles that drugs, alcohol and tobacco play in Americans' daily lives.

Health officials will use the

information to help shape anti-drug campaigns and rehabilitation programs. Among the study's findings:

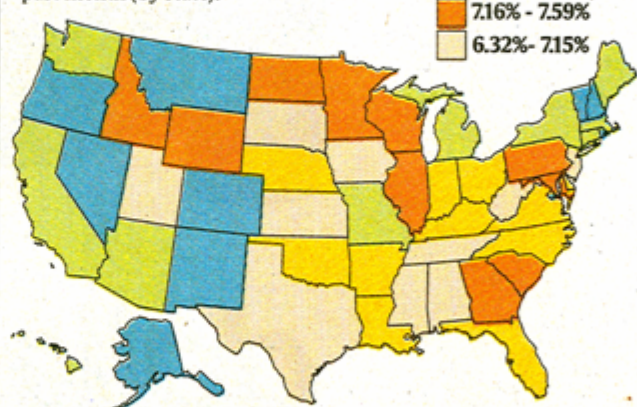
► The states with the highest percentage of people who said they had used illicit drugs during the previous month, in addition to Alaska, were Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and the District of Columbia.

► Binge drinking was a problem across the nation, but particularly in North Dakota, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Northern cold-weather states typically had the highest percentages of binge drinkers — those who said they had had five or more drinks in one sitting during the previous month. Nationally, almost 23% of Americans had binged on alcohol within the past 30 days. Six

Drug use by state

Percentage of people 12 or older who reported using any illicit drug in the past month (by state):



Sources: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2002 and 2003 average

By Marcy E. Mullins, USA TODAY

Northeastern states had the highest rates of alcohol use, led by New Hampshire at 59.8%. North Dakota had the highest rates of binge drinking and al-

cohol abuse and dependence.

► Utah had the nation's lowest rates for drug use, alcohol use and binge drinking. More than 70% of the state's 2.3 mil-

Levels of abuse

■ Breakdown of study, 4A

lion residents belong to the Mormon Church, which opposes drugs or alcohol.

► Most of the states where residents use alcohol the least were in the South. But Southerners were among the biggest users of another vice: tobacco.

The study is one of the broadest yet on the USA's drug problems and will become the baseline to which other studies will compare data.

Charles Curie, the substance abuse agency's administrator, said the numbers reflect that fewer youths are using illegal drugs, but alcohol is as popular as ever. "We're seeing illicit drug use among youth go down, but we're seeing binge drinking remain stubbornly at the same levels," he said. "That whole range, in every state, is just way too high."



Friday, September 8, 2006

Drug use rises in 50s, dips among teens

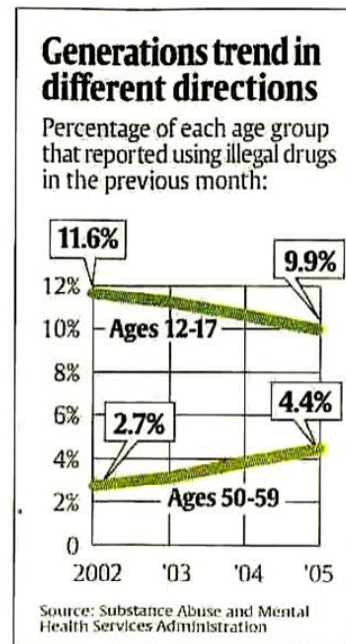
Boomers, young adults push up overall rates

By Donna Leinwand
USA TODAY

Baby boomers' use of marijuana and other drugs is increasing usage rates among older adults, while teens' drug use is declining, according to a national survey released Thursday.

Overall, illicit drug use among Americans rose slightly from 2004 to 2005, driven in part by small increases in cocaine and prescription drug abuse by young adults 18-25 and by rising drug use – mostly marijuana – among adults 50-59, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health said. The survey said 8.1% of Americans 12 and older were illicit drug users in 2005, up from 7.9% in 2004 but down from 8.3% in 2002.

The use of illicit drugs among baby boomers 50-59 rose 63% from 2002 to 2005, according to the survey, which was sponsored by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The survey questioned 68,308 people 12 and older about their substance abuse, smoking and drinking habits.



By Dave Merrill, USA TODAY

In 2005, 4.4% of adults in their 50s said they had used an illicit drug in the previous month, up from 2.7% in 2002. Drug use among youths 12-17, however, fell slightly for the third straight year, with 9.9% reporting illicit drug use during the previous month in 2005 compared with 10.6% in 2004.

Federal anti-drug officials say the survey indicates that while some baby boomers who were in their teens and 20s when drug use rates peaked in the 1970s are taking their drug habits well into middle age, today's youths aren't embracing drugs as enthusiastically.

The Census Bureau says there are 78.2 million baby boomers, the generation born from 1946 to 1964. This year, the oldest of them are turning 60. When they were young, "substance abuse became seen as part of coming of age," says John Walters, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Some "have carried (it) on throughout their lifetimes."

Marijuana is the most popular illicit drug. About 6% of those surveyed reported using it in the previous month. Stimulants and prescription drugs were the second-most-used illicit drugs; 2.6% reported using them illicitly in the prior month.