

## Substance Use Among New York City Youth

Although alcohol and drug use among adolescents is illegal, many teens experiment with illicit substances. Substance use can have both health and social consequences. In 2005, alcohol and other drug use was responsible for 544 hospitalizations and 16 deaths among New Yorkers ages 13–20. Long-term consequences of substance use include impaired judgment, violent behavior, risky sex, serious injuries, alcohol poisoning and drug overdose.

Teen substance use is also important because teens who drink or use drugs are more likely than those who don't to become addicted as adults and suffer the accompanying health, social and financial risks. Long-term consequences of substance use

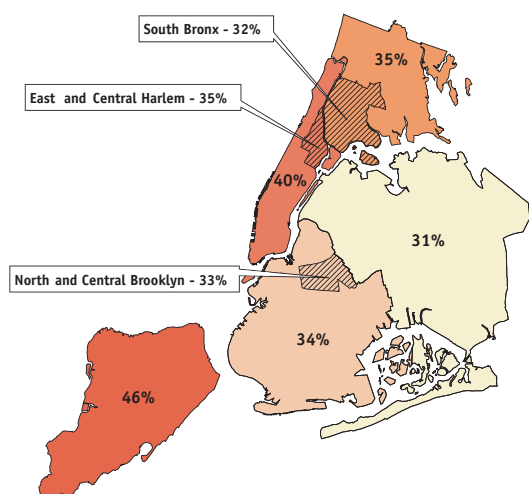
include liver, heart and lung problems, damage to the developing brain, psychosis, aggression, and financial loss.

While lower than the national average, the prevalence of current alcohol and drug use (use in the past 30 days) among New York City youth warrants concern. For example in 2005, an estimated 93,000 of the 280,000 public high school students in New York City used alcohol in the previous month and more than 30,000 smoked marijuana.

This report offers new information about alcohol and other drug use among New York City youth and provides important, evidence-based recommendations for prevention.

### Alcohol consumption varies by borough

Current drinking by borough, 2005



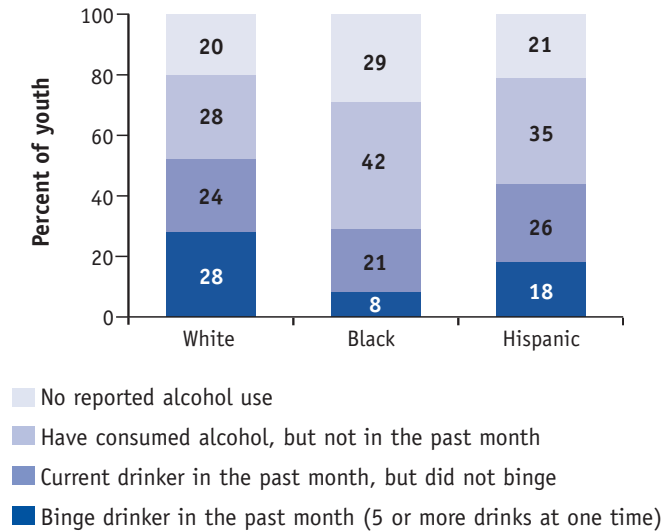
- Overall, 35% of NYC youth report using alcohol in the past month, compared to 43% of youth nationwide.
- Staten Island has the largest proportion of current drinkers (46%), compared with Manhattan (40%), the Bronx (35%), Brooklyn (34%), and Queens (31%).
- Staten Island also has the highest proportion of youth who currently smoke (23%), use marijuana (20%), and use cocaine (4%), compared with other boroughs.
- In the three areas of the City with the most premature illness and death (South Bronx, North and Central Brooklyn, and East and Central Harlem), youth drinking was no more common than in NYC as a whole.

This report is based on results of the 2005 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire adapted for New York City from protocols developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey has been conducted every other year since 1997 by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Department of Education. This sample, taken from New York City public high schools, provides prevalence data for the city as a whole, each borough, and the three NYC DOHMH District Public Health Office (DPHO) target areas (South Bronx, North and Central Brooklyn, and East and Central Harlem). For full details, see "My Community's Health" at [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health).

## Drinking behavior varies by race/ethnicity

- Overall, 72% of New York City youth have consumed alcohol at least once, which is no different from youth nationwide. However, binge drinking (5 or more drinks on one occasion) is reported less often among New York City youth (14%) than youth nationwide (26%).
- White youth are more likely to report binge drinking in the past month (28%) than black (8%) or Hispanic (18%) youth.
- Like youth nationwide, more than one quarter of all New York City youth tried drinking alcohol for the first time before age 13.

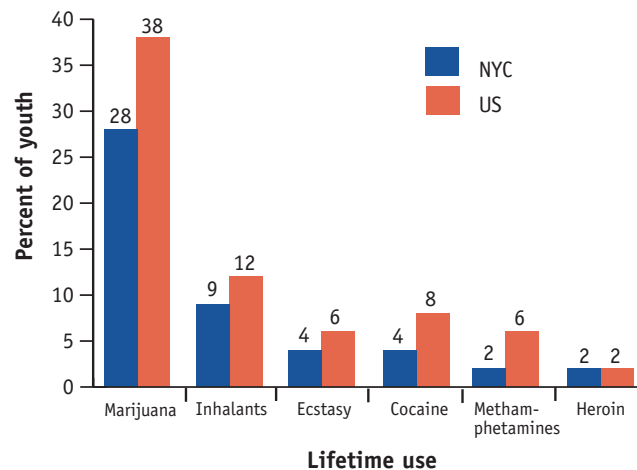
Drinking status among youth by race/ethnicity, NYC 2005



## Illegal drug use among youth in New York City

- One in three youth in NYC (33%) reports trying marijuana, inhalants, ecstasy, cocaine, methamphetamines, or heroin at least once.
- Youth in NYC are less likely than youth nationwide to report ever using marijuana (28% vs. 38%), inhalants (9% vs. 12%), ecstasy (4% vs. 6%), cocaine (4% vs. 8%), or methamphetamines (2% vs. 6%).
- In NYC, boys are more likely than girls to have used heroin (3% vs. <1%), methamphetamines (4% vs. 1%), or ecstasy (5% vs. 2%).
- In NYC, white youth are more likely to have tried illegal substances (43%) than blacks (37%) or Hispanics (34%).

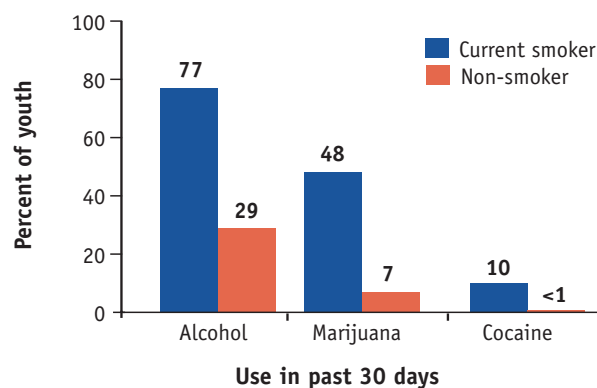
Percent of youth in NYC and US who have ever tried illegal drugs, NYC 2005



## Substance use varies by smoking status

- Compared with non-smokers, current smokers are more than twice as likely to report using alcohol, seven times as likely to report using marijuana, and ten times as likely to report using cocaine in the last month.
- Compared to non-drinkers, current drinkers are more likely to smoke marijuana (26% vs. 5%) and use cocaine (4% vs. <1%).
- More than half (54%) of youth who are both current smokers and current drinkers report recently using marijuana as well.

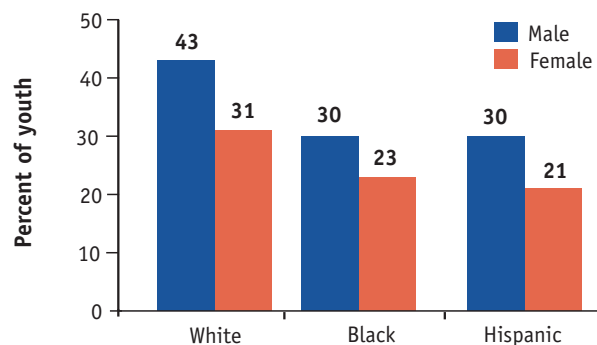
Current substance use by smoking status among youth, NYC 2005



## Drug access varies by race

- One in 4 students in New York City and nationwide reports being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property.
- White youth are more likely to be offered drugs at school (38%) than black (26%) or Hispanic youth (25%).
- Boys are more likely than girls to be offered drugs at school (30% vs. 22%). White males are most likely to be offered drugs (43%).
- More than half (51%) of current marijuana users have been offered drugs at school.

Percent of youth offered drugs at school by sex and race/ethnicity, NYC 2005



# Recommendations

## Parents can make a difference

- Take an active, healthy interest in your children! Know where they are, what they are doing, and whom they are with.
- Without lecturing, talk honestly about the downside of substance use: car crashes and injuries; legal problems; money problems; bad grades; losing out on sports, jobs, and college; feeling bad; and looking bad.
- Set clear house rules against alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. A "zero-tolerance" policy is easiest to enforce.
- Set a good example: Establish a smoke-free home, drink alcohol only in moderation, and don't use drugs even if you think your kids don't know (they usually do).
- Help children find ways to avoid or get out of situations where they feel pushed to drink or use drugs.

## Schools, community groups, and faith-based organizations can play an important role

- Provide evidence-based substance abuse prevention programs.
- Offer after-school, weekend, and summer programs for healthy, drug-free social activities.
- Establish linkages with mental health providers (e.g., mental health clinics, psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, nurse practitioners) and refer high-risk students to these resources.

For help with substance abuse or mental health problems call 311 or 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3683). **CALL 911 in any medical emergency.**

For more information on youth and substance use, visit [www.nyc.gov/health](http://www.nyc.gov/health) or call the New York City Youthline: 1-800-246-4646.

Other resources: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)  
National Institute on Drug Abuse: [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

A report from the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey



# NYC Vital Signs

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