

Drug Policy Alliance
www.drugpolicy.org

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National Institute on Drug Abuse Releases 2011 Teen Drug Use Survey

Monitoring the Future Survey Finds Cigarette and Alcohol Use at Historic Lows, with Marijuana Use Holding Steady

DPA Statement: Exclusionary Focus on Use Rates Misses Forest For Trees

The federal government's National Institute on Drug Abuse released its annual Monitoring the Future survey today. Cigarette and alcohol use continued their long-term decline, reaching their lowest point since the survey began polling teenagers in 1975. Another notable finding is the inclusion of synthetic marijuana in the survey for the first time. While past-year marijuana use rates held steady at 36.4 percent among 12th graders, 11.4 percent of 12th-graders reported past-year use of synthetic marijuana.

Below is a statement from Jag Davies, publications manager of the Drug Policy Alliance:

“The decline in cigarette smoking is great news – not just because it’s the most deadly drug but also because it reveals that legal regulation and honest education are more effective than prohibition and criminalization. It’s absurd, though, that the survey doesn’t also include the fiscal, health and human costs of arresting more than 1.6 million Americans each year on drug charges, including more than 750,000 for marijuana possession alone. Rather than measuring success based on slight fluctuations in drug use, the primary measure of the effectiveness of our nation’s drug policies should be the reduction of drug-related harm. A rational drug policy would prioritize reducing the problems associated with drug misuse itself – such as overdose, addiction and disease transmission – and the problems associated with drug prohibition, such as mass incarceration, erosion of civil liberties, and egregious racial disparities in enforcement, prosecution and sentencing. Looking at use rates in a vacuum is missing the forest for the trees.”