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Special points of interest:

- Over 17% of youth have used marijuana at least once in their lives
- Most youth first tried marijuana between 12 and 16 years of age
- The use of other drugs such as cocaine, meth, ecstasy and heroin was very low
- Most youth see drug use as a small problem in their schools

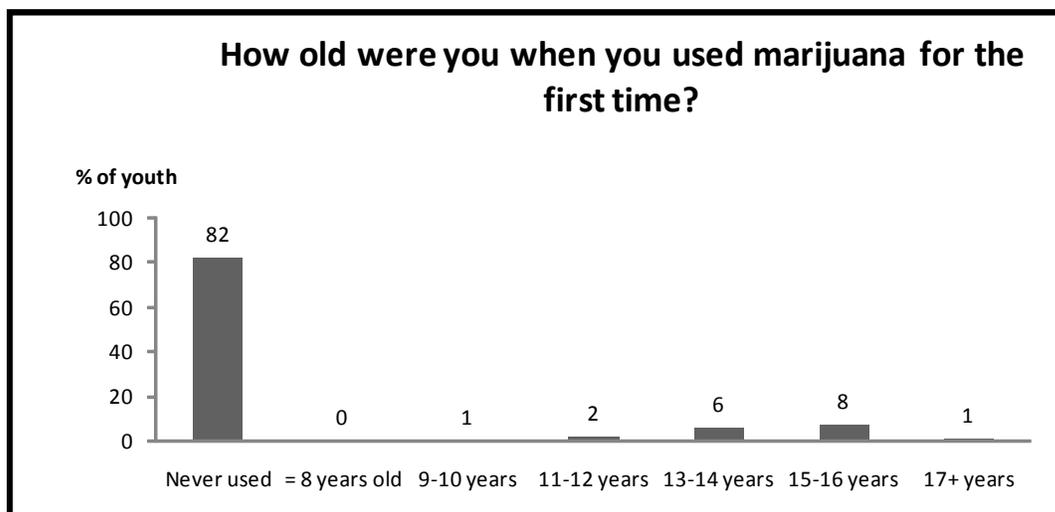
Illegal Drug Use

The most commonly used illegal drug among rural youth in this study is alcohol, which is discussed in fact sheet #6. The Rural Youth Healthy Lifestyles and Risk Behavior Study asked youth about their use of marijuana, methamphetamines, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and inhalants. Of this group, the most commonly used drug by far is marijuana, followed by inhalants. Lifetime use of inhalants was less than 5%, use of cocaine and ecstasy were less than 2% and use of methamphetamines and heroin were less than 1%.

In comparison to a recent study of Ontario youth conducted during the same year as this study, reported rates of drug use among Saskatchewan rural youth are lower than those among Ontario youth although the youth in our focus groups told us that they thought the proportion of youth reporting using marijuana was low.

Youth reported that marijuana is also the easiest drug for youth to get. Almost 2/3 of youth thought drug use was at least a small problem in their schools.

Over 17% of youth reported using marijuana at least once in their life



When asked about marijuana use, over 17% of youth across all age groups said that they had tried smoking marijuana at least once in their life.

The majority of youth who used marijuana first tried it when they were between 13 and 16 years of age. Only one percent of youth first tried marijuana when they

were ten years or younger. There is no difference between males and females and the age that they reported first trying marijuana.

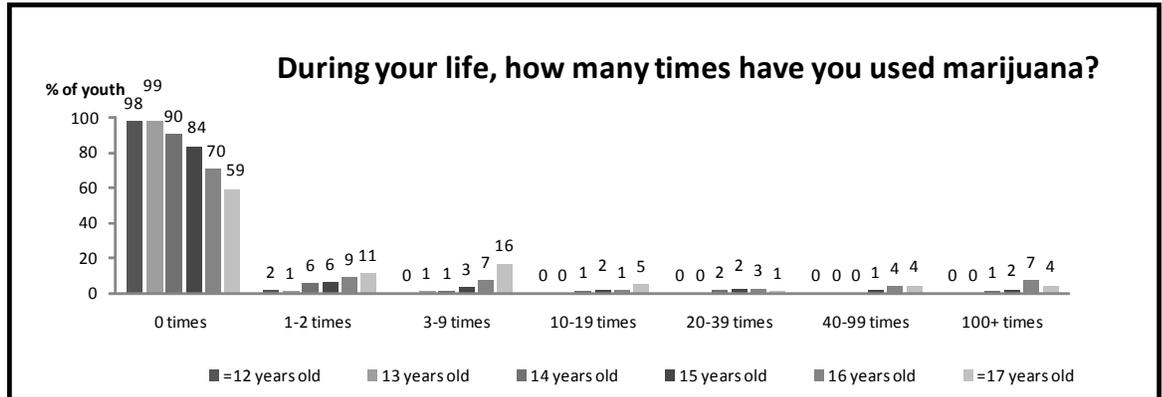
Youth in the focus groups commented that they thought the percentage of youth who had used marijuana should be higher.

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Marijuana use increases with age

“We also have to realize, I know kids in grade 6 and grade 7 who are drinking, they’re smoking marijuana.... It just depends how you’re brought up and what your values are and everything.” - Youth Focus Group Participant



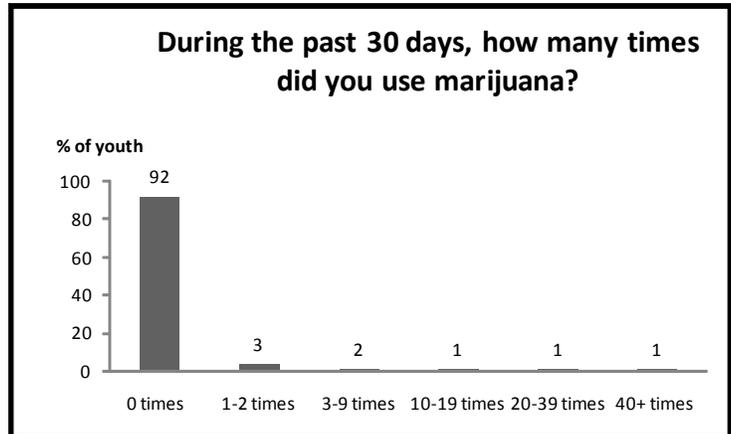
Most youth who have tried marijuana used it between one and nine times in their lives. A very small number of youth have used marijuana more than 100 times in their lives, and these youth tended to be older (16 years or more). There is a

significant relationship between age and use. As youth get older, the percentage who reported they have tried marijuana increases from 1.7% of youth 12 years and younger to about 40% of youth 17 years and older. About 30% of youth 17 years or

older smoked marijuana three or more times in their life. There were no significant differences between males and females and the number of times they smoked marijuana in their lives.

Fewer than 10% of youth said they used marijuana in the previous month

Approximately 92% of youth reported they did not use marijuana in the past month. For those that did, 3.4% of youth used it one or two times while 5.0% used it more than 3 times. Generally, as the age of youth increases, so does the frequency of use. There is no significant relationship between the sex of youth and the frequency of marijuana use.



“[In rural areas] we minimize the use—it’s OK it’s only alcohol. It’s an attitude. There are some who say it’s only marijuana at least it’s not the hard stuff.” - Key Informant

Marijuana use linked to use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances

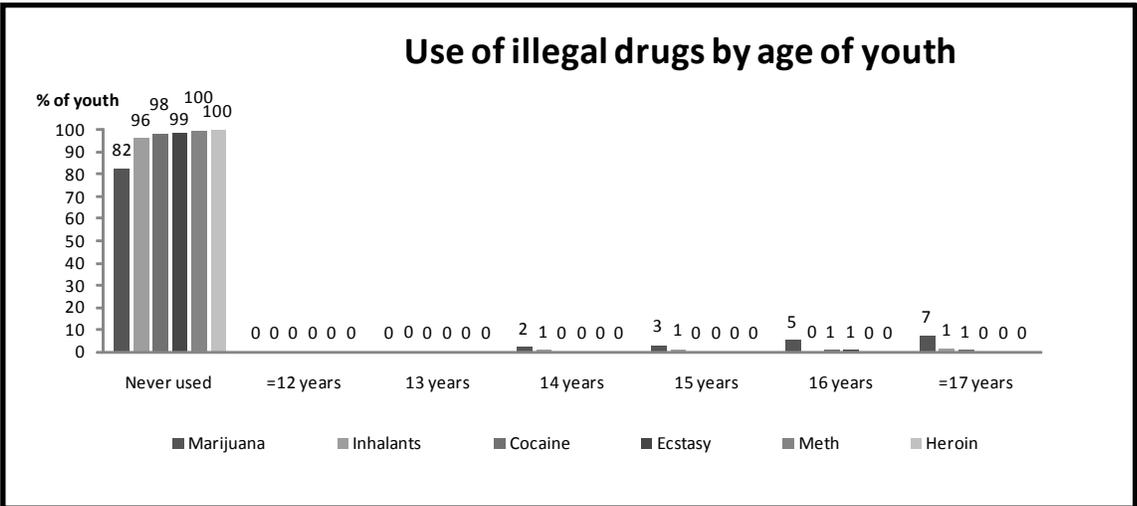
Among youth 15 years and older, the amount of alcohol consumed in a month is positively linked to marijuana use. Marijuana use is also highly related to smoking, and youth who have smoked more cigarettes in their lives are more likely to smoke marijuana.

The use of marijuana is also linked to increased use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, glue and other inhalants, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines. The majority of youth who reported using these other substances were also more likely to have used marijuana, and used it more frequently.

“It’s a small town, it’s like rural areas. Everyone knows everyone. And if you older sister or sibling does it you’re likely to try it too.” - Youth Focus Group Participant

Use of Cocaine, Heroin, Crystal Meth, Ecstasy, Inhalants among youth is low

“Cocaine and heroin really aren’t...you really don’t have a steady supply out here. It would be really scary if it was big out here, because we are so small, the town.” - Youth Focus Group Participant



Very few youth reported using drugs other than marijuana in the study. Less than two percent of youth across all age groups used drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, and ecstasy in their lives. However, about 4% of youth said that they have used inha-

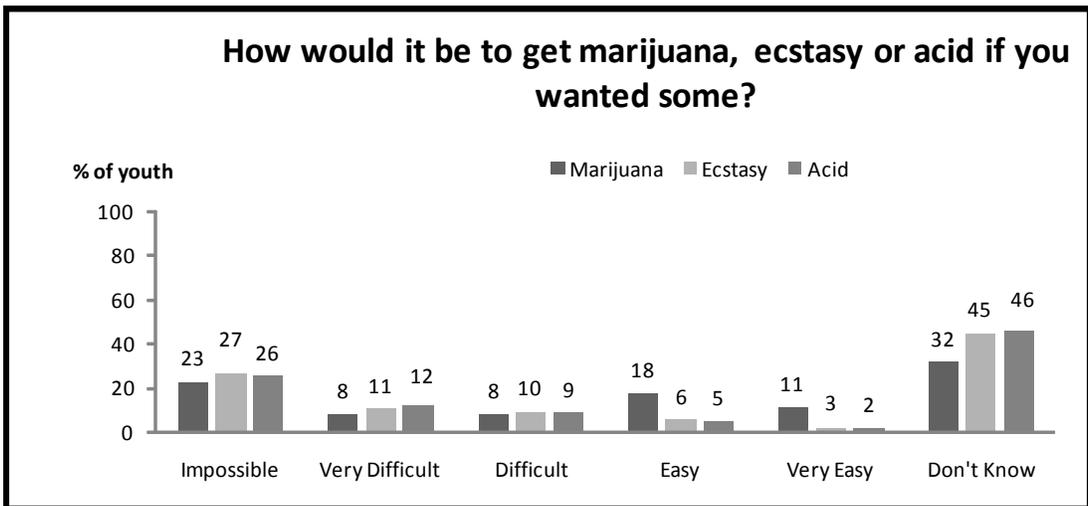
lants (sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high), at least once in their life.

Older youth were generally the ones who were reporting trying these other drugs (15 years or

older). The use of inhalants is the exception to this though, as younger youth were more likely to try inhalants than other drugs. There were no significant differences between boys and girls and whether or not they are using these drugs.

Ease of getting drugs

“I also don’t think it’s as wrong for a guy to do it. Not saying that, I don’t think people look down on a guy that does marijuana as they would at a girl. Like if you see a girl that has weed, it’s kind of weird, for a guy it’s kind of more publicly accepted I guess.” - Youth Focus Group Participant



When asked how easy it would be to get marijuana, ecstasy or acid, youth thought it would be easier to get marijuana than the other two drugs. While over 28% of youth said it would be very easy or easy to get marijuana, 8.2% and 6.8% of youth said the same for ecstasy and acid, respectively. There was a

strong difference between the ages of youth and how easy they thought it would be to get these drugs. As youth got older, they tended to say it was less difficult to get marijuana, ecstasy or acid. Younger youth in the study generally said it was impossible or that they didn’t know how easy it would be to get these drugs.

“Marijuana is second to alcohol in its level of acceptability and is not really believed by most people to be the gateway drug that it is.” - Key Informant

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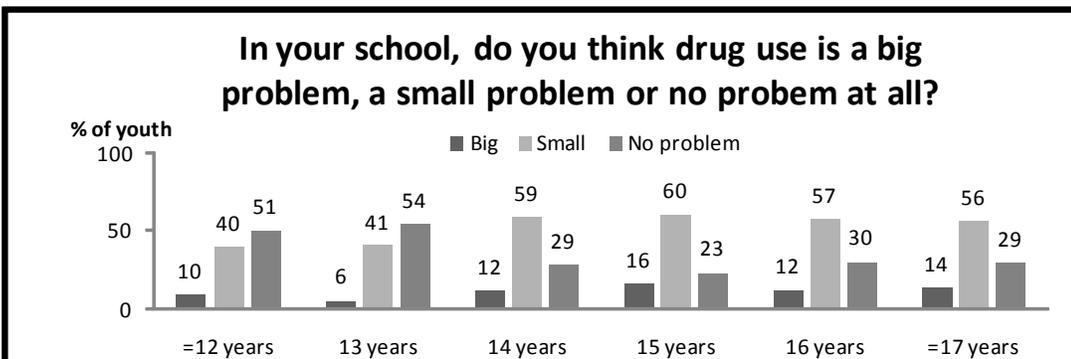
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Is Drug Use a Problem in Your School?



When asked if drug use was a problem in their school, most youth (53.5%) saw drug use to be a small problem in their school. Approximately 35% of youth thought that there was no problem at all.

There was a significant difference between the different age groups and their perception of drugs in their schools. As youth make the

transition to high school, they were more likely to perceive drug use as a big problem. For instance, 14 and 15 year olds were most likely than younger or older students to report that drug use was a small or a big problem in their schools. On the other hand, 50.5% of youth 12 years and younger, and 29.4% of youth 17 years and older, saw drug use to be no problem at all in their

schools.

There is also a large difference between males and females and the perception of the problem. More females than males saw drug use to be a big problem in their schools (13.7% and 9.7% respectively), and 40.3% of males saw drug use to be no problem at all.