

Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey 2014 Executive Summary

In comparison to national data of past 30 day use by 12th grade students, overall, Fairfield County students follow national data trends but are well below national levels for all substances monitored. Nationwide, alcohol has been trending downward since 1996; tobacco downward since 1997 and marijuana use consistently on the rise since 2007 until a period of stabilization in 2013.

Preventing teen drug and alcohol use takes a full community effort. The Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey is one of the key elements used by local community-based organizations and partners in identifying underlying root causes of youth substance abuse and a tool to create systems-level change. The survey is one source of information that can assist in setting the stage for that change.

The results of the biennial survey help to plan focused prevention and intervention, target school-based programs, evaluate progress toward reducing youth alcohol and substance abuse, and identify trends and emerging issues. In addition, the access to current data assists in obtaining funding to support needed services.

The 2014 Fairfield County biennial Youth Behavior Survey was implemented in all public schools and one parochial school in May 2014. A total of 2,925 students in grades 10 and 12 from ten (10) schools participated in the 2014 survey. The results of the surveys provide a benchmark for alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use as well as an indication of negative and problematic behavior among our youth. These behaviors are self-reported. Concurrently, the survey also assesses the risk factors that are related to these behaviors and protective factors that guard against them.*

Key Findings of 2014 Youth Behavior Survey

Results of the study suggest that after a period of declining use reported in 2008 and a slight tick upward in 2010 that began to reverse itself in 2012, frequent drug use among Fairfield County twelfth graders is down for all surveyed substances.

- The study shows that frequent alcohol use (30 day) among twelfth graders has decreased from a low of 21.1% in 2012 to 19.6% in 2014.
- Frequent marijuana use has also decreased in 2014, down to 14.29% from 16.4% in 2012.
- Frequent use of all tobacco products has decreased to an all-time low of 9.9%.
- Frequent illegal use of prescription drugs continued to decline in 2014 to a new low of .4% from a high of 9.3% in 2004. The 2004 data was Fairfield County's red flag to the epidemic of prescription drug use among our youth.

Frequent Use (30 day use) of - Selected Substances	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
	%					
Alcohol	37.9	34.9	31.2	34.7	21.1	19.6
Tobacco	24	23.0	23.5	22.5	14.1	9.9
Marijuana	18.8	14.4	15.8	20.3	16.4	14.2
Other People's Prescriptions	9.3	8.5	7.2	5.7	2.4	.4

Age of Onset

The 2014 data also revealed positive findings in the area of *age of onset*. The age at which Fairfield County youth are initiating the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs continue an increase that began in 2012. This trend is important to monitor because the longer use is delayed, the less likely the individual is to become harmfully involved with substances as they grow older. Youth who start drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21 years.ⁱ The ages of onset for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs are at their oldest since the Fairfield County study began in 2004.

Average age of first use	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Alcohol	14.31	14.41	14.58	14.05	14.94	14.96
Tobacco	13.78	13.94	14.34	14.01	14.57	14.81
Marijuana	14.63	14.60	14.89	14.65	14.99	15.15
Illegal Prescription (Rx) Drugs	14.85	14.59	15.60	14.84	15.08	15.54

Ease of Access

The 2014 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey disclosed that access to alcohol and prescription drugs has either decreased or stayed essentially the same, respectively.

Ease of Access Very Easy and Somewhat Easy - % Seniors	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Alcohol	85	84.2	84.2	83.3	79.1	76.7
Tobacco	85.5	84.7	75.3	84.3	79.6	75.2
Marijuana	69	67.3	66.2	73.1	68.1	68.3
Illegal Prescription (Rx) drugs	49	49	45.3	45.7	35.7	31.8
Heroin	15.6	16.2	15.9	30.4	30.3	25.5

The issues of binge drinking and attendance at parties where parents have allowed alcohol continue to be monitored. Results of the 2014 survey indicated that 43.1% of seniors reported that they have been to a party where parents have allowed alcohol. In regard to binge drinking, of the high school seniors who report drinking, 37.5% reported that they had consumed 5 or more glasses of any alcoholic beverage within a few hours. Both of these indicators either decreased or remained the same in 2014 as compared to the 2012 survey.

Risk and Protective Factors

Just as there are both risk factors and protective factors associated with many human diseases, there are factors that can help protect youth from, or put them at risk for, drug use and other problem behaviors. A youth’s behavior is influenced by a complexity of experiences and influences. The 2014 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey measures a variety of protective and risk factors. Protective factors, also called assets, are conditions that buffer children and youth from exposure to risk either by reducing the impact of risks or changing the way that young people respond to risks. These are characteristics that are known to decrease the likelihood that a student will engage in problem behaviors.

Behavioral Issues

In addition to alcohol, drug and tobacco use behavior, the 2014 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey also measures other problem behaviors.

Behavior - % Seniors	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Engaging in sexual activity - Ever	71	69.7	71.3	72	68.1	65.2
Forced to engage in sexual activity - Ever	13	9	12	9.7	7	7.7
Thoughts of killing themselves in past month	12	11.3	10.4	9.5	8.2	8.6
Tried to kill themselves - Lifetime	5.3	4.3	13	15	11	11.7
Self-mutilate - Lifetime	20	20.6	20.6	20.4	16.9	18.3

In 2012 and 2014 the study analyzed the effect of protective factors on the use rates of youth, as well as other behavioral health issues. In both studies the positive impact of parents and adults in a youth’s life were illustrated. Those children whose parents set clear rules, talk about the harmful effects of substances, are involved in school have lower use rates than those children who do not. In addition school and community activities such as involvement in school/community activities and school sports were illustrated as protective factors resulting in lower use rates.

Key Points

- ☒ The perception of risk and peer attitude toward marijuana is concerning. Only 43.3% of Fairfield County seniors perceive marijuana as harmful compared to 89.1% who view prescription drugs as harmful. Similarly, 72.2% perceive alcohol as harmful. Youth perceive it is riskier to drink alcohol, binge drink or take prescription drugs than to smoke pot.
- ☒ Continuing a trend from 2012, the thirty day use of marijuana surpasses the thirty day use of tobacco and is only 5% below the thirty day use of alcohol. It is encouraging however to see that the age of first use of marijuana is increasing as with other surveyed substances.

Progress

- ☒ Lifetime and thirty day use of all surveyed substances remained essentially the same or decreased since the last survey period in 2012.
- ☒ Ease of access for alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs and heroin remained essentially the same or decreased since the last survey period in 2012.
- ☒ Parents and adults are becoming more effective in impacting whether or not their children use drugs and alcohol.
- ☒ Substances continue to become less accessible.
- ☒ The age of onset is increasing. Youth are beginning to use at a later age.
- ☒ Synthetic drug use has decreased dramatically. Increased education, policy development and enforcement may have contributed to the reduction in use. Lifetime use of synthetics for seniors decreased to 6.1% in 2014 from a high of 11.4% in 2012.

Concerns

- ☒ Underage drinking remains a strong concern.
- ☒ The perception of marijuana as a lower risk activity is troubling.
- ☒ The impact of bullying on youth continues as a critical issue.
- ☒ Protective strategies that are effective with females may not be as effective with males.

The 2014 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey illustrates that a collaborative approach to prevention works and is needed now more than ever. No one sector of the community can single-handedly address adolescent drug and alcohol use or problem behaviors. The reality is parents, schools, businesses, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, human services and other sectors working together can and do have a significant, long term impact in preventing adolescent substance abuse and related behaviors.

- *Data Cleaning: Original 2,925 surveys in original file. Eliminated 265 surveys (missing or inconsistent and/or suspicious responses resulting in final analysis of 2,560 surveys).
- The analysis of the 2014 survey was conducted by the Ohio University Voinovich Center in partnership with the Fairfield County Family, Adult and Children First Council and Prevention Works for a Drug Free Fairfield County. The same statistical software program (SPSS), methodology, frequencies and crosstabs were utilized as in prior years.
- All materials related to the Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey from 2004 through 2014 can be located and downloaded at the FAFAC Council website www.facf.org.

ⁱ Office of Applied Studies. The NSDUH Report: Alcohol Dependence or Abuse and Age at First Use. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, October 2004. Available at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k4/ageDependence/ageDependence.htm>.