

Perceptions of the risk of harm in 2007 APNA and MTF surveys

In 2007, 66.5% of Arkansas youth identified smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day as placing people at great risk of harm. With one noticeable exception, this rate was consistent across all grades and with MTF rates: Arkansas 12th graders were significantly less likely than MTF 12th graders to view heavy smoking as risky behavior. This perception is consistent with the higher smoking rates of Arkansas youth compared to MTF youth.

Regarding heavy use of alcohol, Arkansas students perceived consuming one or two beverages per day as less harmful than binge drinking, defined as consuming five or more beverages once or twice a weekend. Younger students were more likely than older students to view heavy drinking as risky behavior with the perception of risk consistently decreasing as grade level increased. One potentially disturbing response was the significantly lower rate at which

Arkansas youth, compared to MTF youth, viewed binge drinking as risky behavior. This was particularly pronounced for the 10th grade where 8.6% fewer Arkansas youth, compared to MTF youth, perceived binge drinking as risky.

For all grades, more Arkansas youth than MTF youth perceived trying marijuana *once* or *twice* as risky behavior. The difference is significant, ranging from 5.3% more Arkansas 12th graders to 6.7% more Arkansas 10th graders perceiving this behavior as risky. However, for all grades, Arkansas youth perceived *less* risk than MTF youth in *regularly* smoking marijuana. While the differences are much smaller, e.g., 2.2% fewer Arkansas 10th graders than MTF 10th graders, it is an interesting reversal of perception and has been consistent in all APNA and MTF surveys conducted since 2002. As with alcohol and cigarette use, perception of risk associated with

Youth perception of ATODs

Data have consistently shown that youth perception of the harmfulness of Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs (ATODs) is associated with use of ATODs.

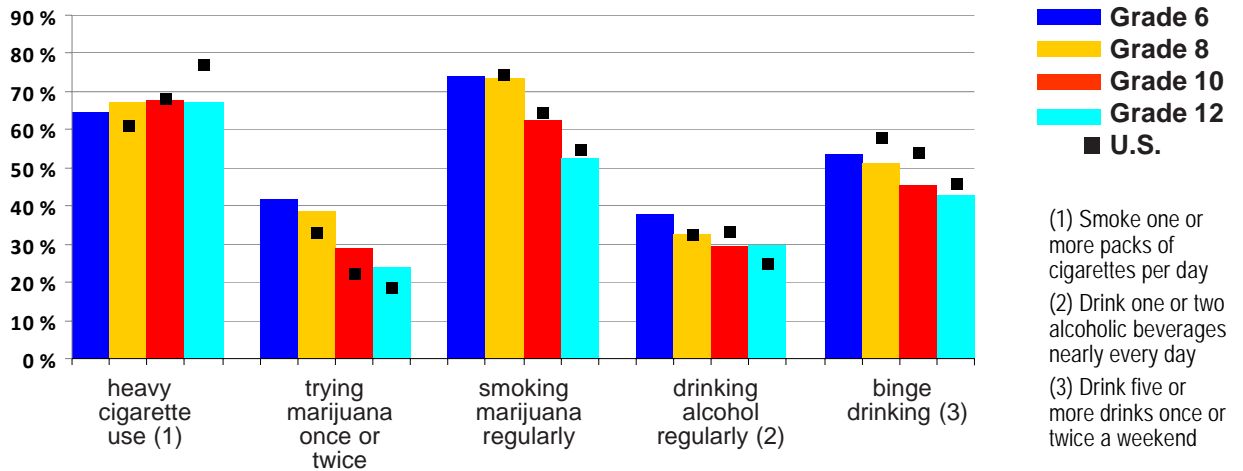
When youth perceive that a substance is harmful, they are less likely to use it, according to data. This relationship is the basis for many substance use education interventions.

The 2007 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA) surveyed Arkansas student perceptions of the risk of harm for several ATODs. Monitoring the Future (MTF) collects the same data on the national level.

marijuana use decreased as grade level increased.

Where data indicate that Arkansas youth perceive less harm than MTF youth, interventions targeting sub-populations may be indicated in order to reduce initiation and substance use continuation.

Perceptions of Harm From:



Source of data: 2007 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA) Survey: <http://www.arkansas.pridesurveys.com/>; 2007 Monitoring the Future (MTF): <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

Coming next month:
Perceptions of Availability and Parental/Peer Attitudes