

## Drug Use

Among youth in the United States, illicit drug use is associated with heavy alcohol and tobacco use,<sup>(1)</sup> violence, delinquency, and suicide.<sup>(3)</sup> All school districts prohibit illegal drug possession or use by students on school property.<sup>(2)</sup> Among high school students nationwide in 2021, 2.5% had used any form of cocaine, 1.3% had used heroin, 1.8% had used methamphetamines, 2.9% had used ecstasy one or more times during their life, and 12.2% had misused prescription opioids.<sup>(4)</sup>



### 2023 Results








In addition to prior reporting on alcohol and marijuana use, students were asked whether they used any of nine other substances at any point at least once in their lifetime. The prevalence of lifetime use for these substances, from highest to lowest, was as follows:

- 6% of students reported use of **prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription** (including such drugs as Oxycontin, Adderall, Xanax, etc.). Only 2% of students used prescription drugs without a prescription in the past 30 days.
- 5% of students used **Inhalants** (such as sniffing glue or aerosol spray).
- 3% of students used **over-the-counter drugs** for the purpose of getting high.
- 2% of students used **ecstasy**.
- 2% of students used **steroids** shots or pills without a doctor's prescription.
- 1% of students used **heroin** or **cocaine**.
- Less than 0.5% of students used **methamphetamines** or **injected an illegal drug**.

### Trend Summary

The general 10-year trend for substance use among New Jersey youth is positive. The percentage of students who reported ever having used eight of the nine substances has declined about half or more since 2013, including prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription (from 12% to 6%), use of inhalants (from 10% to 5%), use of over-the-counter drugs to get high (from 7% to 3%), ecstasy (from 7% to 2%), cocaine (from 5% to 1%), methamphetamines (from 3% to <0.5%), heroin (from 2% to 1%), as well as the injection of any illegal drug (from 2% to <0.5%). The use of steroids (from just over 2% to just under 2%) also declined in this period but not as significantly.

Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
<b>Ever used Prescription Drugs</b> <i>have ever taken prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription (such as Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin, codeine, Adderall, Ritalin, or Xanax) one or more times during their lifetime.</i>	12%	7%	7%	6%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Current Prescription Drug Use</b> <i>took a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription (such as OxyContin,</i>	–	3%	4%	2%	No change in behavior 

Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
<i>Percocet, Vicodin, codeine, Adderall, Ritalin, or Xanax, one or more times during the past 30 days)</i>					
<b>Ever used Inhalants</b> <i>have ever used inhalants (sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high, one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	10%	5%	4%	5%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Ever used over-the-counter drugs to get high</b> <i>have taken over-the-counter drugs to get high (one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	7%	4%	4%	3%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Ever used Steroids</b> <i>have ever taken steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription (one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	2%	2%	1%	2%	No change in behavior 
<b>Ever used Ecstasy</b> <i>have ever used ecstasy (also called "MDMA" or "Molly," one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	7%	2%	2%	2%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Ever used Cocaine</b> <i>have ever used cocaine (any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase, one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	5%	2%	1%	1%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Ever used Heroin</b> <i>have ever used heroin (also called "smack," "junk," or "China White," one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	2%	1%	1%	1%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Ever used Methamphetamines</b> <i>have ever used methamphetamines (also called "speed," "crystal meth," "crank," "ice," or "meth," one or more times during their lifetime)</i>	3%	1%	1%	<0.5%	Decrease in negative behavior 
<b>Ever injected an illegal drug</b> <i>have ever injected any illegal drug (used a</i>	2%	1%	1%	<0.5%	Decrease in negative behavior

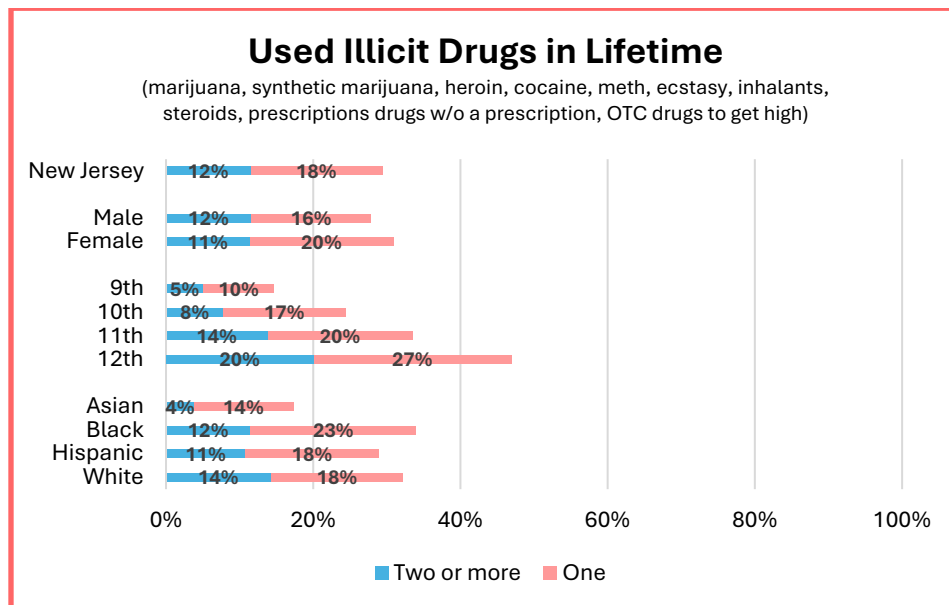
Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
needle to inject any illegal drug into their body, one or more times during their lifetime)					↓

**Note:** Trend analysis was performed by the CDC on data from 2013 to 2023 to determine which differences across years were statistically significant. For questions not asked in all survey years, the trend analysis was performed from 2021 back to the last consecutive year in which the question was asked.

### Demographic Breakdown

The NJ YRBSS asked students to report on use of ten substances – marijuana, synthetic marijuana, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, ecstasy, inhalants, steroids, prescription drugs without a prescription, and over-the-counter drugs to get high – at any point in their lives. Overall, 70% of students have not used any substances, 18% used one substance only, and 12% used multiple substances.

- **Gender** – Females (31%) were slightly more likely than males (28%) to have used one or more of these 10 substances in their life.
- **Grade** – Those in 12<sup>th</sup> grade were much more likely to have used any of the 10 substances (42%) than those in 11<sup>th</sup> (34%), 10<sup>th</sup> (25%) or 9<sup>th</sup> (15%) grades. Multiple substance use was also more prevalent at the higher grades – from 20%, 14%, 8% and 5% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade respectively.
- **Race/Ethnicity** – Black students (35%) were more likely than White (32%) or Hispanic (29%) students to use at least one substance, and much more likely than Asian students (18%) to do so. White students (14%) were most likely to use multiple substances (14%) than Black (12%), Hispanic (11%) or Asian (4%) students.



## Resources

- ReachNJ -- Facing Addiction Taskforce: 1-844-ReachNJ (New Jersey's 24/7 Addiction Helpline), <https://nj.gov/humanservices/reachnj/>
- New Jersey Prevention Network: <https://www.njpn.org>
- Parent-To-Parent: <http://www.parent2parentnj.org/index.php>
- Rutgers -- SECD Lab: <https://www.secdlab.org/>
- Partnership for Drug-Free Kids: <https://drugfree.org/>