

Risk Perceptions




2023 Results








The following are findings related to risk perceptions among NJ students for 2023:

- About half of students perceived great risk in people harming themselves if they take prescription drugs without a prescription (49%); while only a quarter or fewer saw great risk in having 5+ drinks of alcohol 1 or 2 times a week (25%); or saw great risk in using marijuana 1 or 2 times a week (20%).
- When students were asked about their friends' attitudes about substance use, over 4-in-5 students thought their friends believe it is wrong/very wrong to take prescription drugs without a prescription (83%), while about two-thirds indicated their friends considered it was wrong/very wrong for kids to smoke (70%) or to drink daily (66%); and about half of students believed their friends thought it was wrong/very wrong for students to use marijuana (52%).
- Students were also asked about their parents' attitudes regarding substance use. Here, about 9-in-10 students indicated their parents felt it was wrong/very wrong to take prescription drugs without a prescription (95%), to smoke cigarettes (94%), to drink alcohol daily (86%), and to use marijuana (84%).

Trend Summary

The general 10-year trend for the risk perception questions among New Jersey youth is fairly stable, and for any item that has changed, the results are mixed. Fewer students now see great risk in having 5+ drinks 1-2 times a week (25% in 2023 compared to 39% in 2019); and friends thinking it is wrong/very wrong for students smoking has declined from 77% in 2019 to 70% in 2023. Conversely, more students indicated that their friends think it is wrong/very wrong for other kids to use marijuana – up from 41% in 2019 to 52% in 2023; and more students noted their parents think it is wrong for students to smoke cigarettes – up from 91% in 2019 to 94% in 2023. All other items showed no statistical change when asked in prior years.

Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
Risk of 5+ drinks 1-2 times a week <i>student perceives great risk in people harming themselves if they have 5+ drinks of alcohol 1 or 2 times a week</i>	--	39%	38%	25%	Decrease in a positive behavior 
Risk if use marijuana 1-2 times a week <i>student perceives great risk in people harming themselves if they use marijuana 1 or 2 times a week</i>	--	20%	21%	20%	No change in behavior 
Risk to use RX drugs not prescribed <i>student perceives great risk in people harming themselves if they take prescription drugs without a prescription</i>	--	--	--	49%	--
Friends attitude towards kid smoking <i>student thinks their friends feel it's wrong or very wrong for them to smoke cigarettes</i>	--	77%	71%	70%	Decrease in a positive behavior 

Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
Friends attitude towards kid drinking alcohol daily <i>student thinks their friends feel it's wrong or very wrong for them to drink alcohol nearly every day</i>	--	60%	63%	66%	No change in behavior 
Friends attitudes towards kid marijuana use <i>student thinks their friends feel it's wrong or very wrong for them to use marijuana</i>	--	41%	47%	52%	Increase in positive behavior 
Friends attitude towards kid taking Rx drug w/o RX <i>student thinks their friends feel it's wrong or very wrong for them to take a prescription drug without a prescription</i>	--	83%	83%	83%	No change in behavior 
Parental attitude towards kid smoking <i>student thinks their parent feels it's wrong or very wrong for them to smoke cigarettes</i>	91%	95%	94%	94%	Increase in positive behavior 
Parental attitude towards kid daily alcohol drinking <i>student thinks their parent feels it's wrong or very wrong for them to drink alcohol nearly every day</i>	--	85%	88%	86%	No change in behavior 
Parental attitude towards kid marijuana use <i>student thinks their parent feels it's wrong or very wrong for them to use marijuana</i>	--	84%	82%	84%	No change in behavior 
Parental attitude towards kid taking Rx drug w/o prescription <i>student thinks their parent feels it's wrong or very wrong for them to take a prescription drug without a prescription</i>	--	94%	95%	95%	No change in behavior 

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 figure below combines the 11 risk perception questions into three groups related to whether (1) students feel their friends think is wrong/very wrong for other students to use alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana or prescription drugs without a prescription; (2) students see a great/moderate risk in using alcohol, marijuana or prescription drugs without a prescription; and (3) students think their parents feel it is wrong/very wrong to use each of the four substances. The condition for all group items have to be met in order for the student risk perception to be considered positive. In other words, for the first group of items related to whether students feel their friends think it is wrong/very wrong to use alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, or prescription drugs, each of the 4 items has to have a response of wrong/very wrong for the item to be considered as having a positive risk perception.

From the figure below, it is clear that students feel their parents are much more likely to think using the four substances is wrong/very wrong (72%) than what students feel about their friends use of such substances (41%). At the same time, student self-perception of the risk of using 3 of the substances (37%) is not as great as parental concern on the items.

- **Gender** – Females were more likely than males to feel other students see it as wrong to use substances than males (43% vs 34%) and to think their parents are more likely to view substance use as wrong (75% vs 69%).
- **Grade** – Students in lower grades are much more likely than those in higher grades to perceive risk in substance use and to think their parents and friends think is wrong to use substances.
- **Race/Ethnicity** – Asian students are much more likely than White, Black and Hispanic students to perceive risk in substance use and to think their parents and friends think is wrong to use substances.

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