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24th annual survey of Indiana children and teens shows 21-year decline in alcohol use

Fewer Hoosier students depressed than national average, finds survey by the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington's Indiana Prevention Resource Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- The 24th Annual Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents, conducted by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University's School of Public Health-Bloomington, highlights a 21-year decline in the lifetime and monthly use of alcohol across all grade levels (6-12).

"We are extremely pleased to see fewer youth using alcohol," Indiana Prevention Resource Center executive director Ruth Gassman said. "Prevention education and efforts to reduce access to alcohol in homes and stores are having a positive effect. We're also seeing success in community groups working to change the view that alcohol consumption by youth is harmless."

- In 1993, more than 80 percent of high school seniors had tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime. By 2014, fewer than 60 percent of seniors had done so.
- In 1993, more than 50 percent of high school seniors were drinking alcohol at least once a month. By 2014, only about 30 percent of seniors were drinking alcohol every month.

Indiana students reported in 2014 that their most common means of acquiring alcohol was not through stores or restaurants (0.2 percent and 0.5 percent for 12th-graders) but from having another person purchase it for them or give it to them, or from a family member. Store and restaurant sales are regulated, and stricter enforcement of sales and server laws reduce the chances of youth making purchases or being served.

The 2014 survey results are based on responses from 119,147 students in Grades 6 through 12 at 429 public and private schools in Indiana. The [findings, available online](#), address the following issues:

- [Alcohol use](#)
- [Mental health](#)
- [Parental incarceration](#)
- [Tobacco use](#)
- [Marijuana use](#)
- [Methamphetamine use](#)
- [Prescription drug abuse](#)
- [Gambling](#)

Mental health

Gassman said a close relationship exists between depression in adolescents, substance abuse and suicidal behavior, particularly heavy episodic or "binge" drinking. The survey asked a number of questions about feeling sad or hopeless almost every day, and whether students had considered or attempted suicide. These mental health questions are the same as those used by the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Overall, ninth- through 12th-grade students reported being less depressed than the national survey (for example, 23.5 percent of 11th-graders in Indiana versus 31.7 percent nationally). Indiana students also reported having contemplated suicide at lower rates than the nation (20.9 percent for Indiana 12th-graders versus 29.1 percent nationally). [Top](#)

Parental incarceration

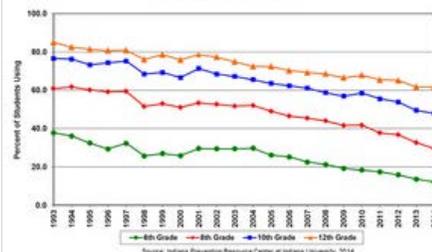
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IPRC executive director Ruth Gassman | Photo by Indiana University

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Trends lifetime Alcohol Use Among Indiana Students: 1993 - 2014



Lifetime alcohol use by Indiana 6th-12th graders

Lifetime alcohol use by Indiana students in Grades 6 to 12 | Photo by Indiana University

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A significant number of Indiana students reported that they had parents who had served time in jail or prison. Parental incarceration places youth at an increased risk for substance abuse and mental health problems.

Children with incarcerated parents are likely to have homes with disrupted family relationships and financial instability. These children may have been exposed to drug and alcohol abuse in the home, particularly if their family member was arrested for drug crimes. They have a greater chance of being in foster care. And they endure the stigma of having a parent in jail and may have suffered the trauma of seeing a parent arrested.

Twelfth-graders reported the lowest figure, 17.9 percent, of having had a parent serve time in jail or prison, and eighth-graders the highest rate, at 23.9 percent. In 2012, more than 28,000 men and women were serving time in prisons or jails in Indiana. [Top](#)

Tobacco use

As is the case with alcohol, cigarette smoking by youth has trended downward since 1993. The monthly prevalence rate of Indiana youth smoking cigarettes is lower than the national average (13.2 percent versus 15.7 percent) and smoking cigars is at 6.8 percent versus 12.6 percent nationally. Smokeless tobacco use is also lower than the national rate at 6.9 percent, with a national rate of 12.6 percent. Use of pipes for smoking by seventh- and eighth-graders has increased slightly since 2013. [Top](#)

Marijuana use lower than national rate

Lifetime marijuana use by 12th-graders increased in 2014 while decreasing among high school freshmen. High school seniors' prevalence rate still was lower, at 37.4 percent, than the national rate of 45.5 percent.

This year was the second time students were asked about use of synthetic marijuana, such as herbal alternatives, synthetic cannabinoids, K2 or spice. A smaller portion of high school seniors (13.9 percent) said they had tried synthetic marijuana than had tried plant-sourced marijuana (Cannabis). Plant-sourced marijuana is preferred over synthetic marijuana by students in all grades. On a monthly basis, 17.6 percent of seniors chose marijuana over synthetic marijuana at 2.2 percent. [Top](#)

Methamphetamine use

There were no significant changes in prevalence rates for methamphetamine use between last year and this year. Lifetime prevalence rates for youth in Grades 8 and 10 are lower than the national prevalence rates, while the lifetime rate for youth in Grade 12 is higher than the national rate (2.1 percent versus 1.5 percent). This rate shows a downward trend since a high rate of 5.5 percent in 2005 when the question was first asked. [Top](#)

Prescription drug abuse

The 2013 and 2014 surveys asked the same questions about use of prescription drugs used for recreational purposes. Lifetime prevalence rates decreased this year for youth in Grades 6, 8, 9 and 10. In addition, monthly prevalence rates decreased for youth in Grades 11 and 12. High school seniors used prescription drugs (13.5 percent) at a much lower rate than the national figure of 21.5 percent. [Top](#)

Youth gambling behavior

As state-sponsored gambling options expand, as well as illegal online options, monitoring the prevalence of gambling activities among youth is increasingly important for planning prevention efforts. The legal gambling age in Indiana varies depending on the type of gambling. Lottery, scratch cards and bingo are legal at 18. Land-based casino and slot machine games are legal at 21.

The survey included questions about the following forms of gambling: playing cards, betting on games, betting on sports, buying lottery tickets, gambling in a casino and playing online for money. The survey also asked students whether they felt bad about the amount they bet and whether they would like to stop betting. Compared to 2013, the number of students who reported gambling increased for Grade 9 (32.7 percent from 31.6 percent) but decreased for seniors (from 41.5 percent to 40.0 percent).

The **Indiana Problem Gambling Awareness Program** -- housed within the Indiana Prevention Resource Center and funded by a contract with the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Mental Health and Addiction, with funds through the Indiana Problem Gamblers' Assistance Fund -- provides information and technical assistance to Indiana organizations seeking to prevent problem gambling by children, adolescents and young adults. [Top](#)

Survey participants

The 2014 annual youth survey was coordinated by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center and funded by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction. The IPRC provides substance abuse and gambling prevention, treatment and recovery resources for those working with youth in schools and communities throughout Indiana.

For general questions, contact Carole Nowicke at 812-855-1237 or cnowicke@indiana.edu. IPRC executive director Ruth Gassman can be reached at 812-855-1237 or rgassman@indiana.edu. For youth gambling information, contact Mary Lay at maholtsc@indiana.edu or 812-855-1237. For more information on participating in

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the school survey or interpretation of statistical results, contact Mikyoung Jun at mkjun@indiana.edu or Susan Samuel at samuels@indiana.edu or 812-855-1237.

About the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington

The **IU School of Public Health-Bloomington** is reimagining public health through a comprehensive approach that enhances and expands disease prevention and reshapes how parks, tourism, sports, leisure activities, physical activity and nutrition impact and enhance wellness. Unique in the nation, the school's multidisciplinary approach, history of community engagement and emerging strengths in epidemiology, biostatistics and environmental health bring new vigor and energy to the traditional concept of a school of public health.

With nearly 3,000 students in an array of undergraduate and advanced degree programs and more than 130 faculty in five academic departments, faculty and students conduct research, learn, teach and engage with communities across a broad spectrum of health, wellness and disease-prevention topics. In addition to its academic departments, the school administers Campus Recreational Sports, which serves roughly 80 percent of the IU Bloomington student body through various intramural, club and individual fitness opportunities.

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