



## Student Drug Use

October 2002

### Purpose

This survey addressed student drug use – *not including alcohol*. One purpose was to determine if the drug use profile of Penn State students was consistent with national data. A second goal was to verify student understanding of risks associated with drug use in preparation for refining health education programs.

*It is important to review the survey findings with caution since many students may have been hesitant to disclose their own drug use. Many also indicated they 'didn't know' about other students' drug use. However, the large number of responses, the representativeness of the respondents to the undergraduate profile, and the fit with national data suggest that the feedback is valid.*

### Implications/Highlights

The student perception is that almost all other students use drugs while not many report they actually do. Of those who do use drugs, one quarter report having done poorly on a test and having attended classes under the influence of a drug while nearly a third said they did something they later regretted or blacked out because of drug use. Ten percent reported that they used drugs more often since coming to college.

### Participation Rate

Total Survey Response: N = 1401

Phone: N = 885 of 1703 contacted (52%)

Web: N = 516 of 2000 contacted (26%)

### Findings

A majority (62%) of respondents said they did not use any drugs; 12% said their drug use had decreased while 10% said their drug use had increased since coming to college.

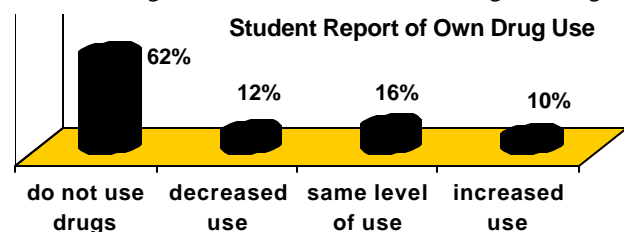


Figure 1. A majority of students said they did not use drugs

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Fewer women,\* minority students \* and those with higher grades \* reported using drugs. Those who were members of social fraternities and sororities \* and those who responded through the online vs. the phone survey \* were more likely to report seeing an increase in their drug usage since coming to college.

A number of students indicated they had encountered problems as a result of their own drug use (*other than alcohol*).

### Problems Because of Own Drug Use

	once	more than once	never
had memory loss or black out	15%	17%	68%
did something later regretted	16%	17%	68%
attended class under influence of drugs	13%	13%	74%
performed poorly on test or assignment	13%	13%	75%
had unprotected sex with someone	7%	6%	87%
been in trouble with police	10%	2%	88%
suffered physical injury	7%	3%	90%
been in trouble with residence hall staff	6%	2%	92%
experienced unwanted sex	3%	2%	95%
took advantage of someone sexually	3%	1%	96%
sought medical treatment	2%	<1%	97%

Some survey respondents (4%) said they were given drugs without their knowledge since starting college.

### Given Drugs Without Their Knowledge

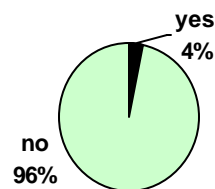


Figure 2. Some students report they were given drugs without their knowledge

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U.Ed. STA 03-129

Division of Student Affairs

There was a wide discrepancy between how often students thought others were using specific drugs and their own use of those same drugs. *Note that in some cases a considerable number of students indicated that they "did not know" how often other students in general used specific drugs.*

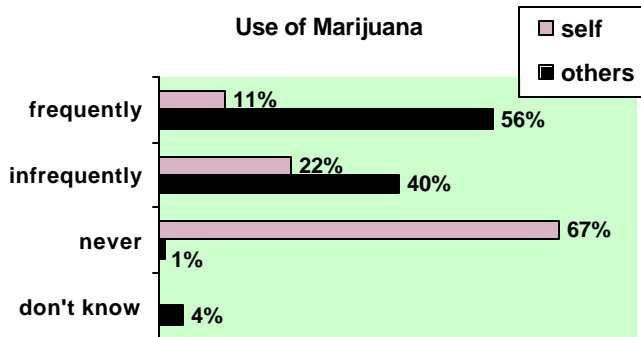


Figure 3. Students think others use marijuana (including pot, hash, and hash oil) more frequently than they actually do themselves

	Steroids		Sedatives <sup>^</sup>	
	self	others	self	others
don't know	-	17%	-	17%
never	99%	10%	97%	10%
infrequently	-	44%	3%	51%
frequently	1%	30%	<1%	22%

<sup>^</sup> Sedatives including downers and ludes

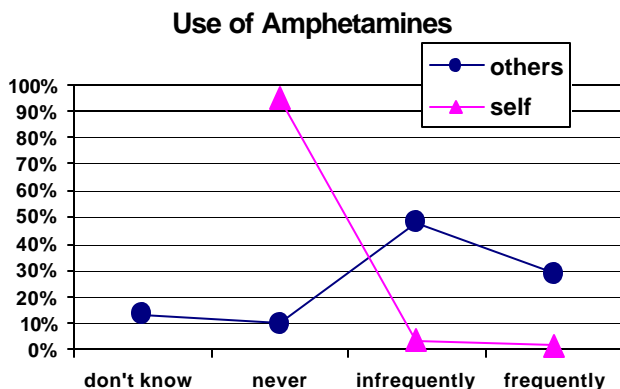


Figure 4. Students think others use amphetamines (including diet pills and speed) more often than they actually do themselves

	Cocaine <sup>^</sup>		Opiates <sup>#</sup>	
	self	others	self	others
don't know	-	15%	-	18%
never	97%	18%	98%	19%
infrequently	3%	54%	2%	53%
frequently	<1%	12%	<1%	10%

<sup>^</sup>Cocaine including crack, rock, and freebase  
<sup>#</sup>Opiates including heroin, smack and horse

### Use of Club/Designer Drugs

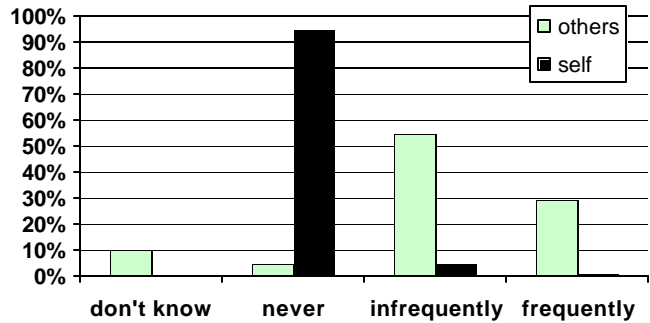


Figure 5. Students think others use club/designer drugs (including GHB, ecstasy, MDMA, Rohypnol and Ketamine) more often than they actually do themselves

	Inhalants <sup>^</sup>		Hallucinogens <sup>#</sup>	
	self	others	self	others
don't know	-	17%	-	11%
never	98%	18%	92%	10%
infrequently	2%	51%	7%	62%
frequently	<1%	13%	<1%	17%

<sup>^</sup>Inhalants including glue, solvents and gas

<sup>#</sup>Hallucinogens including LSD, PCP and mushrooms

Few students report using prescription drugs.

### Use of Prescription Drugs

- 4% anti-depressants like Prozac or Zoloft
- <1% Ritalin
- <1% pain killers like Oxycontin

There were *no* significant differences between athletes and non-athletes in self-reported use of the drugs specified in this survey.

Those who were members of a social fraternity or sorority were more likely to report they used marijuana,\* hallucinogens,\* or club or designer drugs.\*

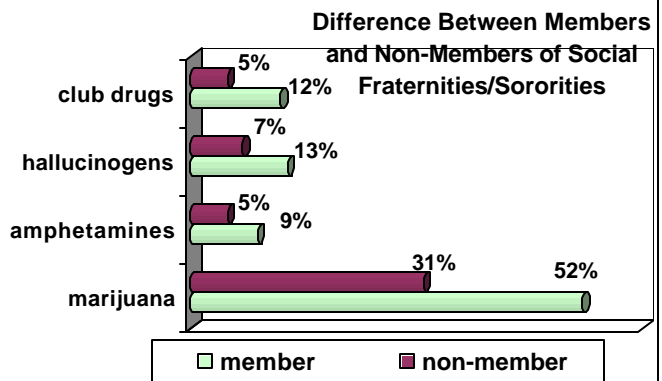


Figure 6. Members of social fraternities and sororities reported higher use of certain drugs

Students with higher grades (those whose GPA were equal to or greater than 3.30) were:

- less likely to report using drugs \*
- less likely to report increased use of drugs since coming to college \*

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

There were significant differences between those who responded to the phone survey and those who responded online to the Web survey in reports of own use of drugs.

### Differences Between Phone and Web Respondents

Drug	Phone	Web
Marijuana*	25%	49%
Cocaine*	1%	7%
Amphetamines*	2%	11%
Sedatives*	2%	5%
Hallucinogens*	5%	13%
Club/Designer Drugs*	3%	10%
<b>Reported Some Use of Drugs</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>51%</b>

A majority of students (57%) did not feel the social atmosphere on campus promotes drug use.

### Social Atmosphere Promotes Drug Use

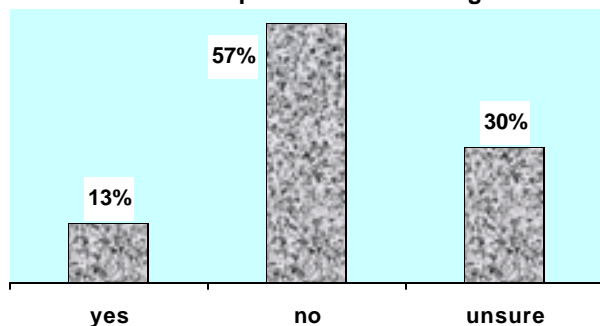


Figure 7. Few students felt the social atmosphere on campus promotes drug use

Students reported that – within the past 30 days – they had refused an offer of drugs (32%), left a social gathering because guests were using drugs (8%), decided not to attend a party because there would be drugs (15%), and avoided friends because they knew they were using drugs (13%).

Additional aspects of their lives affected by use of drugs by other students included their sense of safety (30%), enjoying activities (26%) and having to take care of others (29%).

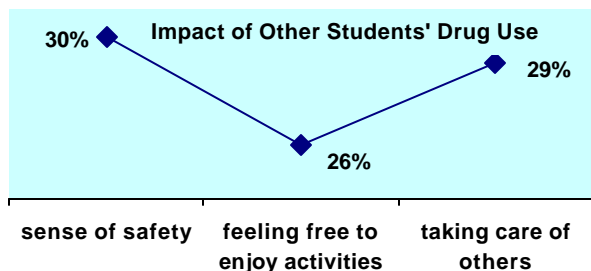


Figure 8. Other students' drug use impacted respondents

### Comments on impact of other students' drug use:

“My ex-boyfriend used drugs daily and this greatly negatively affected, and eventually ended, our relationship.”

“I find it harder to continue trusting in some people knowing they use drugs.”

“I don't drink or do drugs, but I do not mind when others drink in front of me because it doesn't get me drunk. However, I do mind being in the same room as someone smoking pot because that can affect me. So, I feel like it often gets in the way because I am the minority and I am the one that has to leave the situation.”

A significant number (61%) reported that it was *not* difficult to obtain drugs at Penn State.

### Difficulty of Obtaining Drugs at PSU

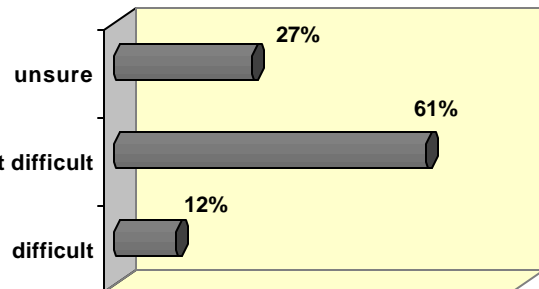


Figure 9. Most students felt it was *not difficult* to obtain drugs at Penn State

Of those who said they did use drugs (38%), most used them in their private living residence hall or apartment room setting.

### Location Where Drugs Were Used

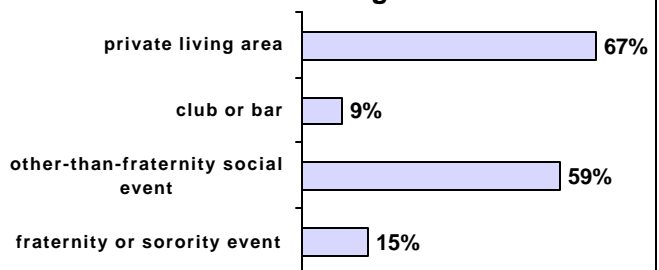


Figure 10. Those who used drugs mostly did so in their private living areas

### Risks of Using Marijuana or Club Drugs

	not risky	unsure	risky
use marijuana occasionally	59%	23%	18%
use marijuana regularly	26%	24%	50%
use club drugs <sup>^</sup> occasionally	8%	19%	74%
use club drugs regularly	3%	4%	93%

<sup>^</sup> Club drugs including ecstasy, MDMA, GHB, Rohypnol and Ketamine

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.