

2005 STUDENT LIFE AND CULTURE SURVEY SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS Fall, 2005

Community Coalition for Healthy Youth

coordinated by the Tompkins County Youth Services Department
supported by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Drug Free Communities Support Program # 1H79 SP11382-01

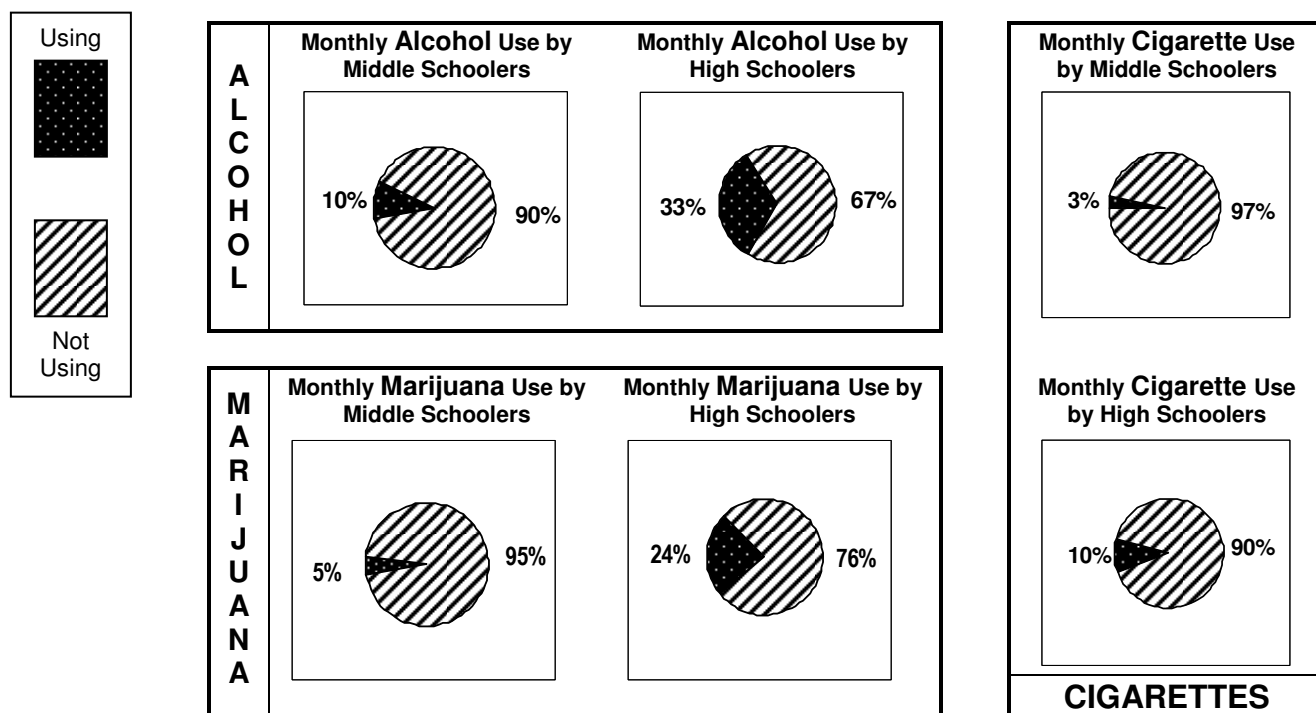
The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth (CCHY, formerly known as the Community Alcohol and Drug Coalition) and the Ithaca City School District (ICSD) collaborated to examine student activities, substance use, and experiences with school climate and safety. The original survey, which was locally designed and administered in 2003, was updated and posted on a secure website. The 2005 *Student Life and Culture Survey* was administered in school computer labs to ICSD students in grades 6-12 in April, 2005. 2,417 valid responses represent an 80.3% response rate of all enrolled students. Results were compared to the 2003 survey, to the *American Drug and Alcohol Survey*, given to ICSD students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 from 1999-2002 and to

responses from the 2004 *Monitoring the Future* survey given nationally. The results will be used to guide school and community efforts to prevent and reduce the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs and to improve school safety. The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth is coordinated by the Tompkins County Youth Services Dept.

The Final Public Report lists every question and the combined responses of all students. The school superintendent, secondary principals and County Youth Services Dept. have copies of the Final Public Report. This summary is also available at www.ithacaparents.org or www.tompkins-co.org/youth or upon request.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED to the USE of ALCOHOL, TOBACCO & OTHER DRUGS

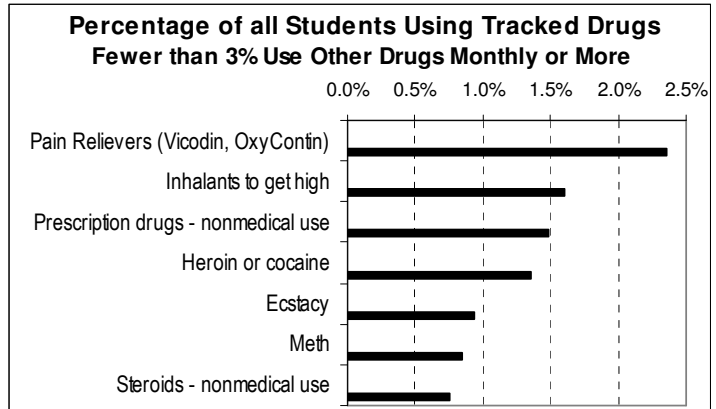
Overall, most Ithaca students are making healthy choices as indicated in the charts below.



Alcohol is the most widely used drug among ICSD students. 36% of all students in grades 6-12 used alcohol in the last 30 days before taking the 2005 survey vs. 20% using marijuana or 13% using cigarettes.

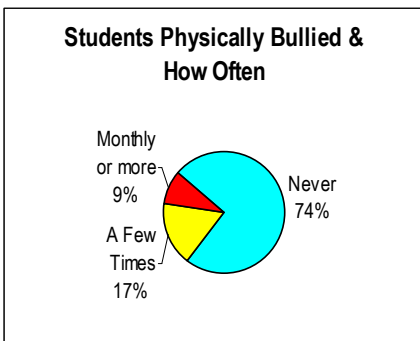
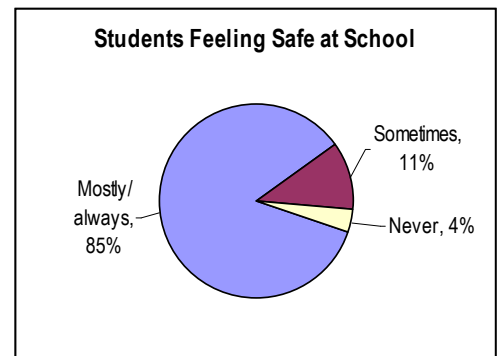
- Cigarette use has decreased in all grades since 1999. By 2005, 12th grade use dropped to 22% from 32%.
- ICSD lifetime cigarette use by 12th graders was 30% less than their national peers (37% vs. 53%).
- Ithaca students' lifetime use of alcohol and marijuana was somewhat greater than the national sample. 52% of 8th graders reported alcohol use at least once in their lifetime as compared with 44% of 8th graders in the 2004 national *Monitoring the Future* survey. 19% of 8th graders used marijuana vs. 16% nationally.
- In 2005, students viewed regular marijuana use as less harmful than regular alcohol or cigarette use.
- A lower percentage of students of color (20%) than white students (25%) use alcohol regularly.
- More students of color than white students have never had an alcoholic drink (43% vs. 38%) or tried marijuana (72% vs. 67%).

The Coalition is tracking the local use of selected substances whose use is increasing nationally. Fewer than 3% of all students surveyed used the drugs listed in the chart to the right.



KEY FINDINGS RELATED to SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Most students reported feeling safe, welcomed, and appreciated at school most of the time in 2005.
 - 85% of all students in grades 6-12 felt safe in school most of the time or always.
 - 76% felt welcomed and appreciated at school most of the time or always.
- 20% of students in grades 6-12 reported they do not have a trusted adult in school; 28% were not sure.
- 78% agreed they were taught to respect individual, cultural, and ethnic differences at school.
- 71% of all students reported feeling respected by others different from themselves at school. More middle schoolers (74%) than high schoolers (68%) felt respected by others who are different from themselves at school.
- 72% of students of color and white students alike said that school work is very important to them and both groups spend comparable amounts of time doing homework.
- On a monthly basis, 83% of students reported witnessing name calling and putdowns at school as compared to the 31% who said they experienced these hurtful behaviors monthly or more. (*Note: Many students can witness the same incident while fewer actually are the target of name calling or other hurtful behavior.*)

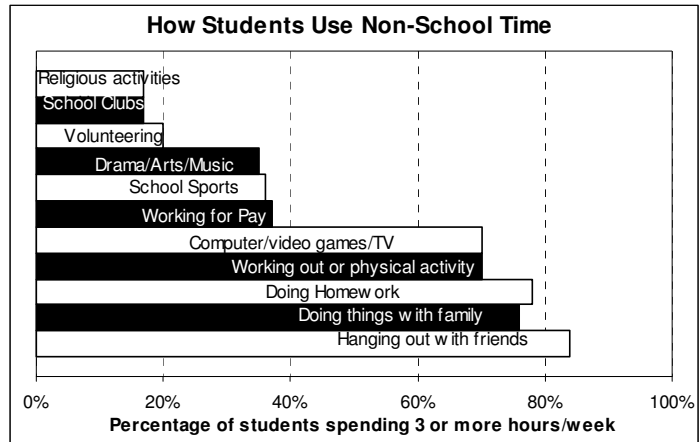


- 68% of students witnessed exclusionary behavior monthly or more. 18% reported being excluded monthly or more.
- 9% reported experiencing physical bullying monthly or more.
- 3% (71 students grades in 6-12) reported being physically bullied every day.
- 28% witness violence directed at another student monthly or more.
- Hurtful behaviors at school occur most commonly in the hallways (79%) and cafeteria (67%).
- 57% of students said school staff are usually or always available to deal with bullying.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED to STUDENT LIFE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

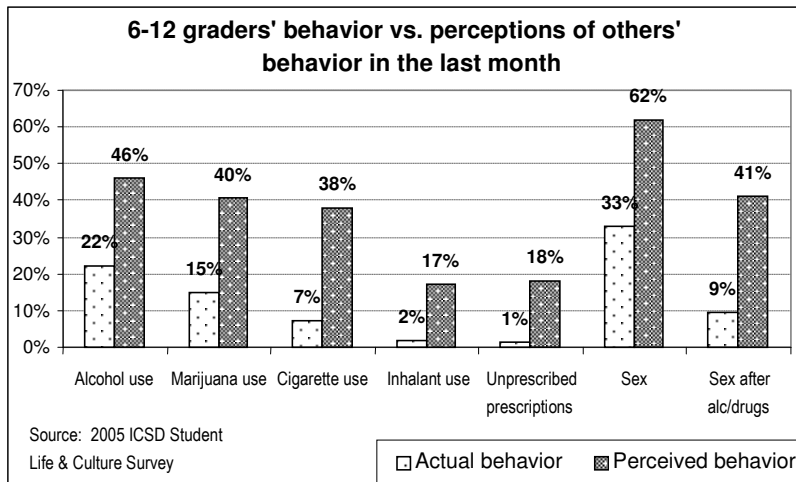
- 9% of students do not have a trusted adult outside of school who could help them; an additional 9% were not sure.
- 75% felt respected by others different from them in the community.
- 16% have ridden as a passenger in a car driven by a friend who had been drinking.
- 24% have prevented someone who had been drinking from driving.

How do students spend their non-school hours? They spent 3 or more hours/week on activities listed in the chart to the right.



STUDENT PERCEPTIONS and THEIR EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOR

Social Norms Research has shown that we are influenced by what we *think* others are doing, rather than by what others are actually doing. Kids think that their peers drink more alcohol, use more drugs and are more sexually active than they really are. This misperception of friends and peers occurs in virtually every community, in every ethnic group, and at every age, including adults. What is the effect of this misperception? A student who thinks that *most* students are drinking alcohol feels more pressure to drink in order to fit in with the perceived norm and is more likely to drink. The chart shows the percentage of students who reported engaging in a behavior in the last month as compared with their belief of what other students in their school are doing.



By using the information from our survey, we can correct misperceptions and reduce risky behaviors, including alcohol and drug use. By documenting and advertising the "true" norm, healthy attitudes and behaviors can be reinforced and pressure to conform to a "false" norm can be reduced. (Dr. Alan Berkowitz)

Only 22% of students in grades 6-12 drink alcohol monthly. 46% believe that most of their peers drink monthly.

Increasing students' beliefs that regular use of alcohol and drugs is harmful also has the effect of reducing use. Many ICSD students believe that regular use of alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana is risky. We noticed two trends, however. As middle school students age, they perceive less risk of harm from regular alcohol or cigarette use. For example, 75% of 6th graders perceive moderate or great risk of harm from regular alcohol use as compared with 68% of 8th graders. Perception of risk drops again with each high school grade. In addition, the perception of risk of harm from regular marijuana use drops as students age. (See Appendix, Table 5, for perception of risk of harm by grade & substance use data.)

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS AMONG ICSD STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-12

- Only 7% of students report using cigarettes regularly but 38% *think* most students in their school use cigarettes regularly.
- Although only 22% of students reported using alcohol at least monthly, 46% *believe* that most of the students in their school are using alcohol monthly.
- Although 72% of students personally consider school to be very important, only 26% believe that other students in their school think that school is very important.
- 27% of students reported they try to end hurtful behavior when they notice it but only 7% think most other students try to do so.
- Although 33% of students engaged in some type of sexual behavior in the last month, 62% thought that most other students in their school had engaged in sexual behavior.

WHERE ICSD STUDENTS GET & USE ALCOHOL, CIGARETTES, AND MARIJUANA

To help reduce the harmful use of substances, the Coalition asked students who reported alcohol and drug use where they got and used alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Over 70% of ICSD high schoolers said it would be easy to obtain alcohol, cigarettes or marijuana. The rate is lower for middle schoolers with 45% saying it would be easy to get alcohol, 33% for cigarettes, and 24% for marijuana. While 45% thought it would be easy to get alcohol, only 38% did get it.

WHERE STUDENTS* GET ALCOHOL			WHERE STUDENTS* DRINK ALCOHOL		
	M.S.	H.S.		M.S.	H.S.
Friends	176 (16%)	663 (52%)	At night with friends	125 (12%)	465 (37%)
Home w/o parents' knowledge	170 (16%)	337 (27%)	Weekend parties	103 (10%)	442 (35%)
Home with parents' knowledge	107 (10%)	181 (14%)	At home (parents didn't know)	90 (8%)	209 (17%)
Older sibling	89 (8%)	231 (18%)	Before/after school hours	86 (8%)	221 (17%)
In community	55 (5%)	199 (16%)	With older sibling	63 (6%)	141 (11%)
At school	42 (4%)	141 (11%)	College party	41(4%)	228 (18%)
Trade favors to get	61 (6%)	132 (10%)	During school hrs. at school	30 (3%)	95 (8%)

**420 out of 1,069 ICSD middle schoolers and 907 out of 1,266 high schoolers reported ever using alcohol. These students were asked where they obtained and used alcohol in the previous month. Percentages shown are of all surveyed students.*

When those who had ever used a substance were asked where they obtained it, the most common response for all substances was “from friends” (63% for alcohol, 59% for cigarettes, 83% for marijuana). During the previous month, 5% of all students reported they had used alcohol at school during school hours and 8% reported having used drugs during the school day at school.

HOW WILL the SURVEY DATA BE USED?

- DeWitt Middle School and Ithaca High School will use data on actual and perceived use in their Social Norms campaigns to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.
- Several schools will use data to enhance the teaching of health, mathematics, and other subjects.
- Schools will use the data to target and evaluate their efforts to reduce hurtful behaviors and bullying.
- The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth will use the data on alcohol availability to engage schools, parents, police and others to reduce underage access to alcohol.

For more information, contact the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth
 c/o Tompkins County Youth Services Department, (607) 274-5310 or at www.ithacaparents.org

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of U.S. SAMHSA or the Drug Free Communities Support Program

APPENDIX – Ithaca City School District Student Survey Responses

Note: The wording of some questions has changed over time to meet federal reporting requirements and to clarify misleading wording. This can make comparisons between years difficult. In the tables below showing our core data, the question that was used is included, along with variations used in previous years. Please note that different years are used for comparison in tables 2 – 5. All questions related to alcohol use specified “...more than a few sips or for religious purposes.”

Table 1 Question: How often have you used . . .

Answer choices: Never, a few times but not in the last year, a few times in the last year, every month, every week, every day
Table 1 shows the sum of all students reporting use every month, every week or every day.

Table 1	ICSD Students Using Substances at Least Monthly in 2005 by Grade							
	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Avg. Use Gr. 6-12
Cigarettes	<1%	5%	5%	5%	11%	13%	14%	7%
Alcohol	4%	9%	16%	24%	31%	37%	47%	22%
Marijuana	<1%	5%	9%	19%	22%	30%	27%	15%
Smokeless tobacco	0%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%	3%	4%
Inhalants	<1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Meth	<1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%
Pain Relievers	0%	<1%	2%	2%	4%	6%	3%	2%
Steroids (non-med)	0%	<1%	1%	<1%	0%	2%	1%	<1%

Table 2 Question: On how many occasions in the last 30 days have you . . . (2005)

How often in the last month have you . . . (1999, 2002)

Answer choices: 0, 1 to 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 9, 10 to 19, 20 to 39, 40 or more (2005)
None, 1 – 2 times, 3 – 9 times, 10 – 19 times, 20 – 49 times, 50 or more times (1999, 2002)

Table 2 shows all students reporting any use.

Table 2	ICSD Students' Use of Substances in the Last 30 Days								
	Alcohol			Cigarettes			Marijuana		
	2005	2002	1999	2005	2002	1999	2005	2002	1999
All students	36%	n/a	n/a	13%	n/a	n/a	20%	n/a	n/a
Grade 6	11%	9%	8%	2%	3%	4%	<1%	<1%	1%
Grade 8	33%	22%	22%	10%	11%	16%	16%	9%	7%
Grade 10	44%	40%	46%	18%	10%	21%	31%	22%	19%
Grade 12	57%	53%	58%	22%	24%	32%	32%	31%	27%

Table 3 Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to . . . (2005)

How much would your friends try to stop you from . . . (2000, 2002)

Answer choices: Very wrong, wrong, a little bit wrong, not wrong at all (2005)

A lot, some, not much, not at all (2000, 2002)

Table 3 shows all students who responded “wrong” or “very wrong” (2005); “a lot” or “some” (2000, 2002).

Table 3	ICSD Students' Perception of Peer Disapproval of Substance Use								
	Alcohol			Cigarettes			Marijuana		
	2005	2002	2000	2005	2002	2000	2005	2002	2000
All students	72%	n/a	n/a	76%	not asked		67%	n/a	n/a
Grade 6	95%	67%	66%	96%			94%	84%	82%
Grade 8	74%	45%	48%	76%			58%	59%	66%
Grade 10	61%	21%	24%	66%			51%	29%	33%
Grade 12	58%	10%	13%	62%			44%	17%	24%

Table 4 Question: How old were you the first time you . . .

Answer choices: Never, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 (2005)
 Never, 7 or younger, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 or older (2003)

Table 4 shows the average of the ages of all students who gave an answer other than “never.”

Table 4	Average Age (in years) of First Use of Substances					
	Alcohol		Cigarettes		Marijuana	
	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003
All students	11.75	12.08	11.77	11.93	13.23	13.22
Grade 6	7.73	9.87	7.53	9.41	none	10.21
Grade 8	10.95	10.83	10.85	10.59	11.69	11.68
Grade 10	12.88	12.77	12.06	12.13	13.54	13.41
Grade 12	13.67	13.40	13.29	13.18	14.47	14.40

Table 5 Question: How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they . . . (2005)

(“Regular” use of substances was defined within each question, using the appropriate definition for each substance as listed below in “Definitions and Abbreviations”. Example: “How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they drink alcohol regularly (4 or more alcoholic drinks nearly every day or 5+ drinks twice/week)”)

How much do you think people harm themselves (physically or otherwise) if they . . . (2003)

(“Regular” use was not defined, each student made his/her own judgment about what “regular” meant. Example: “How much do you think people harm themselves (physically or otherwise) if they use alcohol regularly.”)

Answer choices: No risk, slight risk, moderate risk, great risk (2005)
 No harm, very little harm, some harm, a lot of harm (2003)

Table 5 shows the responses of students who replied “moderate risk” or “great risk” (2005); “some harm” or “a lot of harm” (2003).

Table 5	ICSD Students’ Perception of Moderate/Great Risk of Harm from Regular Substance Use					
	Alcohol		Cigarettes		Marijuana	
	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003
All students	71%	75%	78%	91%	58%	82%
Grade 6	75%	76%	78%	88%	75%	88%
Grade 8	67%	81%	75%	91%	57%	87%
Grade 10	72%	79%	81%	93%	53%	80%
Grade 12	78%	67%	86%	90%	50%	72%

Definitions and abbreviations used in this report:

"Regular" use of substances - cigarettes – ½ pack or more per day; marijuana – more than once/week; alcohol - 4 or more drinks nearly every day or 5 or more drinks twice/week

"Sexual behavior" is "however you define it" (not limited to sexual intercourse)

"Middle school" - All students at Boynton and DeWitt and students in grades 6-8 at LACS

"High school" - All students at IHS and students in grades 9-12 at LACS

"Students of Color" students - 34% of students identified themselves as either Black, American Indian/ Alaska Native, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Bi-Racial, Multi-Racial or Other.

For more information, contact the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth
 c/o Tompkins County Youth Services Department, (607) 274-5310 or at www.ithacaparents.org

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of U.S. SAMHSA or the Drug Free Communities Support Program.