

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

and Academic Achievement

What is the relationship between alcohol and other drug use and academic achievement?

Data presented below, from the 2003 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), show a negative association between alcohol and other drug use and academic achievement after controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade level. This means that students with higher grades are less likely to engage in alcohol and other drug use behaviors than their classmates with lower grades, and students who do not engage in alcohol and other drug use behaviors receive higher grades than their classmates who do engage in alcohol and other drug use behaviors. These associations do not prove causation. Further research is needed to determine whether low grades lead to alcohol and other drug use, alcohol and other drug use leads to low grades, or some other factors lead to both of these problems.

Students with higher grades are significantly less likely to have engaged in behaviors such as:

- + **Lifetime alcohol use** (Had at least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during their life).
- + **Episodic heavy drinking** (Had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey).
- + **Drank alcohol for the first time before age 13 years** (Other than a few sips).
- + **Drank alcohol on school property** (At least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey).
- + **Used marijuana on school property** (One or more times during the 30 days before the survey).
- + **Lifetime ecstasy use** (Used ecstasy [also called MDMA] one or more times during their life).

Percentage of U.S. high school students who engaged in alcohol and other drug use, by type of grades earned (mostly A's, B's, C's, or D/F's) – National YRBS, 2003.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use	Percentage of U.S. high school students who engaged in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned			
	A's	B's	C's	D/F's
<i>Alcohol Use</i>				
Lifetime alcohol use (Had at least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during their life) ¹	65	76	82	87
Current alcohol use (Had at least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	34	44	54	66
Episodic heavy drinking (Had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	19	27	35	48
Drank alcohol for the first time before age 13 years (Other than a few sips) ¹	18	26	34	49
Drank alcohol on school property (At least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	2	4	7	16
<i>Marijuana Use</i>				
Lifetime marijuana use (Used marijuana one or more times during their life) ¹	25	38	53	68
Current marijuana use (Used marijuana one or more times during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	10	20	32	47
Tried marijuana for the first time before age 13 years ¹	5	7	14	28
Used marijuana on school property (One or more times during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	2	3	9	21
<i>Other Drug Use</i>				
Lifetime cocaine use (Used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase one or more times during their life) ¹	4	7	11	22
Current cocaine use (Used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase one or more times during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	2	3	5	11
Lifetime illegal injection-drug use (Used a needle to inject any illegal drug into their body one or more times during their life) ¹	2	2	4	8
Lifetime inhalant use (Sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high one or more times during their life) ¹	8	11	14	24
Current inhalant use (Sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high one or more times during the 30 days before the survey) ¹	2	3	5	12
Lifetime illegal steroid use (Took steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription one or more times during their life) ¹	3	5	8	15
Lifetime hallucinogenic drug use (Used hallucinogenic drugs, including LSD, acid, PCP, angel dust, mescaline, or mushrooms, one or more times during their life) ¹	7	8	13	25
Lifetime heroin use (Used heroin [also called smack, junk, or China White] one or more times during their life) ¹	2	2	3	10
Lifetime methamphetamine use (Used methamphetamines [also called speed, crystal, crank, or ice] one or more times during their life) ¹	4	6	9	21
Lifetime ecstasy use (Used ecstasy [also called MDMA] one or more times during their life) ¹	7	9	14	24
Offered, sold, or given an illegal drug by someone on school property (During the 12 months before the survey) ¹	20	28	34	49

¹p<.0001 based on logistic regression analysis controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade level.

Figure 1. Percentage of U.S. high school students who currently used alcohol, drank alcohol before age 13 years, drank alcohol on school property, and had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (episodic heavy drinking), by type of grades earned (mostly A's, B's, C's, or D/F's) – National YRBS, 2003.

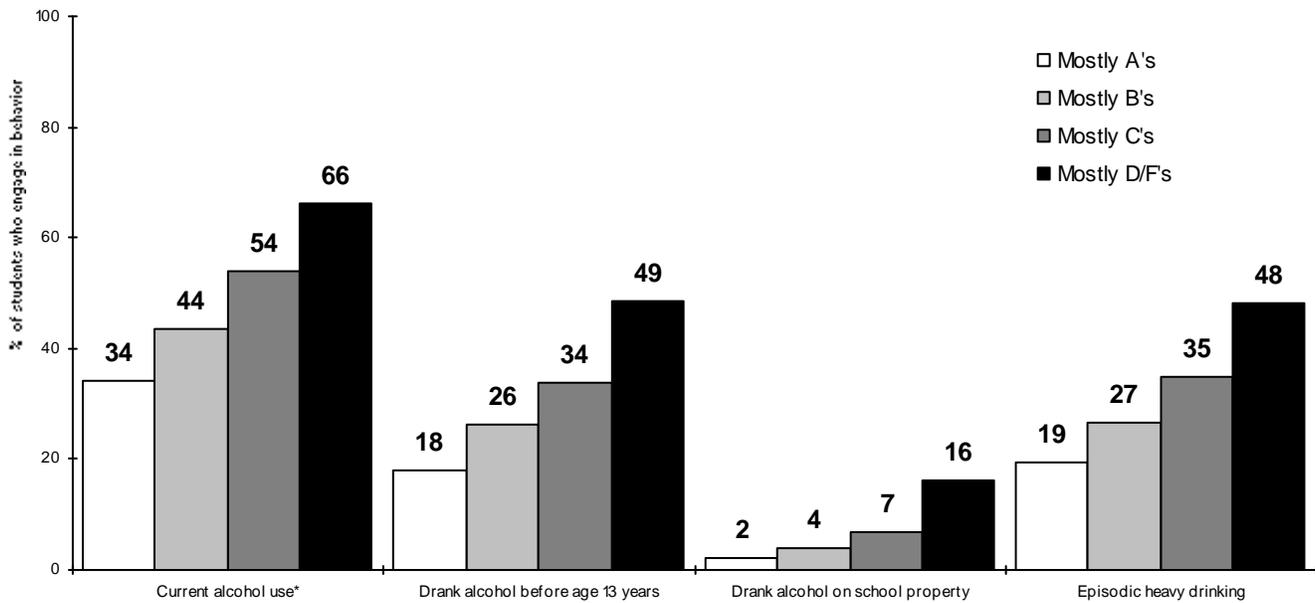
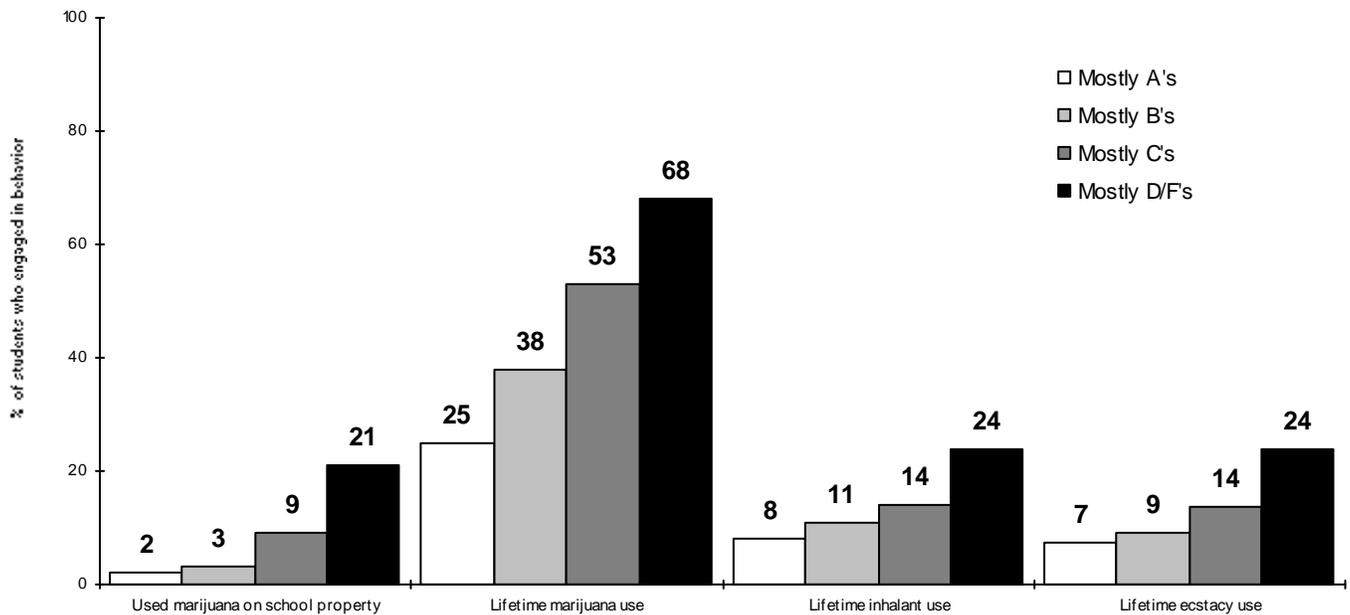


Figure 2. Percentage of U.S. high school students who used marijuana on school property and used marijuana, inhalants, and ecstasy during their lifetime, by type of grades earned (mostly A's, B's, C's, or D/F's) – National YRBS, 2003.



*This means that 34% of students with mostly A's currently used alcohol and 66% of students with mostly D's or F's currently used alcohol.

The national YRBS monitors priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the U.S. It is conducted every two years during the spring and provides data representative of 9th through 12th grade students in public and private schools throughout the U.S. In 2003, students completing the YRBS were asked, "During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?" and given 7 response options (Mostly A's, Mostly B's, Mostly C's, Mostly D's, Mostly F's, None of these grades, Not sure). In 2003, 27% of students received mostly A's, 38% received mostly B's, 23% received mostly C's, 6% received mostly D's or F's, and 5% reported receiving none of these grades or not sure..

For more information visit http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/ or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).



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