

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

The use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs causes problems that are pervasive and touch every area of our lives, including the social and economic fabric of our culture. Alcohol and other drug abuse can lead to injuries, unplanned pregnancies, poor birth outcomes, sexually transmitted diseases, poor child and adolescent development, mental health problems, violence, infectious disease and death. In addition, chemical abuse affects all races, genders, socioeconomic groups, ages, geographic areas, and religions.

Alcohol is used by more people and causes more problems than all other illegal drugs combined. The consequences of acute and binge drinking are more short term, such as vehicle crashes, assaults, and fights. The consequences of chronic drinking include cirrhosis of the liver, cancer, and heart disease.

Tobacco also continues to be a serious threat to the health of youth and adults in Washington County. Tobacco use, including cigarettes, cigars and smokeless tobacco is the single leading preventable cause of death in the U.S. Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined.

Adolescent Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol is a key factor in the four leading causes of death among young people in America: traffic crashes, homicides, injuries, and suicides.² Younger drinkers are more likely to be the victims or perpetrators of violence, to drive drunk or ride with a drinking driver, to drop out of school, to have unplanned and/or unprotected sex, and to sustain alcohol-related injuries. The physical consequences of underage alcohol use range from medical problems to death by alcohol poisoning.³ According to the 2005 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, Minnesota ranks 9th for alcohol use by 12-17 year-olds and 8th for binge drinking. Young people aged 12 to 20 consumed approximately 11% of the alcoholic drinks consumed in the U.S. in the past month. Research shows that underage drinkers tend to consume more alcohol per occasion than those over the legal minimum drinking age of 21.⁴ Data on alcohol use by Washington County students can be found in Figures 3 and 4.



"Too many Americans consider underage drinking a rite of passage to adulthood. Research shows that young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related problems later in life. New research also indicates that alcohol may harm the developing adolescent brain."

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Emerging research makes it clear that an adolescent's decision to use alcohol is influenced by multiple factors. These factors include normal maturational changes that all adolescents experience; genetic, psychological, and social factors specific to each adolescent; and the various social and cultural environments that surround adolescents, including their families, schools, and communities. These factors - some of which protect adolescents from alcohol use and some of which put them at risk - change during the course of adolescence. Because environmental factors play such a significant role, responsibility for the prevention and reduction of underage drinking extends beyond the parents of adolescents, their schools, and communities. It is the collective responsibility of the nation as a whole and of each individual.³

The Washington County results of the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey provide baseline data to assist us in evaluating the need and direction for effective prevention programs in Washington County. The following are key highlights of the Washington County results of the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey:

Marijuana use is up in the county, with use more prevalent among male students in all grades and years. Use among 12th graders is increasing and county marijuana use was higher than the state rate, as seen in Figure 6. *Prescription drug* use is also on the rise and is the 3rd most abused drug (see Figure 3). Sixty percent of 9th and 73% of 12th graders agreed or strongly agreed that student use of alcohol or drugs is a problem at school.

Smoking showed a continued strong downward trend with the lowest rates ever reported in the history of the Minnesota Student Survey. However, the average age for first tobacco use was 15-17. Youth are accessing tobacco primarily from friends, by getting others to buy it for them, and by buying it from gas stations or convenient stores.

Alcohol continues to be the most widely used substance, as indicated in Figure 3. *Binge drinking* remains high and has experienced slight increases since 1992 (refer to Figure 4). Driving after using alcohol or drugs has seen a steady decrease over time. However, over 25% of county 12th graders reported drinking and driving.

More than 40% of the nation's estimated 10.8 million underage current drinkers (persons aged 12 to 20 who drank in the past 30 days) were provided free alcohol by adults aged 21 or older.⁵ Compliance checks of retailers in Washington County indicate that there was a 92% compliance rate for alcohol and an 89% compliance rate for tobacco in 2007.⁶ According to Washington County results of the Minnesota Student Survey 2007, the top sources of alcohol for 9th and 12th grade were friends, parties, getting someone to buy it for them or taking it from home. The top sources of tobacco were friends, getting someone else to buy it or buying it at gas stations or convenience stores.

Adult Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol: The percent of adults who report chronic drinking (an average of more than two drinks per day for males and one or more drinks per day for females) declined in Washington County from 5.6% in 2002 to 4.0% in 2006. Binge drinking (five or more drinks on an occasion, one or more times in the month prior to the survey) among adults has gradually decreased in the county and state while remaining the same in the nation. The binge drinking rate for Washington County is 18.2% of adults, as compared to the state rate of 17.6% and the national rate of 19.6%.⁷ Based on the total population in the county, it is estimated that 30,877 adults are binge drinkers. Excessive alcohol use is the third leading behavior-related cause of death in the U.S. and accounts for approximately 75,000 deaths annually. See Figure 1 for Adult Acute Drinking data.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Marijuana and Prescription Drugs: Marijuana is the most abused drug by adults in Minnesota. It continues to account for more admissions to addiction treatment programs than any other illicit drug. In 2007, there were 3,067 admissions for marijuana treatment, representing 16.1% of total treatment admissions statewide.⁹ Marijuana use is most prevalent among 18-25 year olds, with almost 17% reporting use in the past month. Misuse of prescription drugs is second only to marijuana as the nation's most prevalent drug problem. The annual average number of people using pain relievers nonmedically for the first time in the past 12 months has exceeded the number of new marijuana users since 2002. Accordingly, misuse of prescription pain relievers has been cited as a growing public health problem.¹⁰ Non-medical use of pain relievers was highest among 18-25 year olds, with 10.6% reporting doing so.¹¹

Methamphetamine: Meth abuse and addiction showed continuous signs of decline in 2007, in the wake of rising indicators from 2000 through 2005. Only 7% of admissions to Twin Cities' area addiction treatment programs were for methamphetamine in 2007, compared with nearly 12% in 2005. Methamphetamine-related accidental deaths, use among high school students and meth labs declined, as well.⁹

Smoking: Currently, 18% of adults in Minnesota and 19% of adults in Washington County smoke cigarettes. The 18-24 year age group has the highest smoking rate of any adult age group at 32%.¹⁵ Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and half of all long-term smokers die prematurely from smoking-related disease.¹⁷ Refer also to the section on Chronic Disease.

Exposure to *second-hand smoke* is also a health risk. Though smoking rates have declined over the last several years, there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco. This includes exposure through smoking and breathing secondhand smoke. Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) or secondhand smoke contains thousands of chemicals, including more than 50 known cancer-causing agents and 200 known poisons, such as benzene, cadmium, and carbon monoxide. Almost 90% of Americans regularly inhale secondhand smoke. Children regularly exposed to secondhand smoke, mainly in their homes, have an increased risk of ear infections, pneumonia, bronchitis and tonsillitis.

Smoking during pregnancy is also a health risk. Exposure to secondhand smoke can be detected in unborn fetuses. It is estimated that slightly more than 5% of mothers in Washington County smoked during pregnancy, compared to 9% for the state.⁷

Impaired Driving

The National Safety Council estimated that alcohol-related crashes in Minnesota cost the state \$278 million in 2006. There were over 41,000 impaired-driving incidents on record in the state, with youth under 21 accounting for 10%, and 21-34 year olds committing 53% of those incidents. The percentage of alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Minnesota has steadily decreased in the past half century to 33% per year, compared with 60% in the 1960's. Males made up 69% of the DWI offenders in 2006, but the number of female arrests is increasing, accounting for 22% of the incidents.

Washington County ranked 9th out of 87 counties with the highest number of alcohol-related traffic crashes and deaths in 2006.¹² Washington County's DWI rate of 69.4 is lower than the state rate of 75.4 per 10,000⁷. The cost of alcohol-related traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries in Washington County in 2006 was \$4,590,800.¹³

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Additional data for Washington County for 2006 indicates:

- ◆ Over 20% of fatal and very serious injury crashes involved an impaired driver.¹³
- ◆ 27% of 12th graders drove a vehicle after using alcohol or other drugs.¹⁴
- ◆ 37% of 12th graders ride with friends who had be using alcohol or other drugs.¹⁴
- ◆ There were 2 deaths and 93 injuries from alcohol-related crashes.¹³
- ◆ There were over 2,600 DWI incidents on record for 15-19 year olds.¹³
- ◆ There has been a gradual increase in the number of DWI convictions in Washington County, with 1,844 convictions in 2006. This was up from 1,389 convictions in 2002.¹²
- ◆ There were 2,757 crashes in Washington County in 2006. Of those, 13.3% were alcohol-related. The county rate is lower than the state rate of 34.2%.⁷

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Community Feedback

A community assessment was conducted by the Chemical Health Action Collaborative (CHAC) in the fall of 2007. CHAC is a 21 member volunteer board representing each school district in the county, community agencies, county departments, treatment providers and citizens. The assessment included key informant interviews, community dialogues and an electronic survey with over 900 parents, youth and professionals. As a result of the survey analysis and discussions with partners, the following environmental needs related to chemical health were identified:

- ◆ Early intervention to identify youth and family chemical health issues and to help families find local resources and services
- ◆ Consistent enforcement of policies and laws related to youth substance use
- ◆ A comprehensive plan for addressing permissive community norms which accept and tolerate underage use
- ◆ Consistent messages regarding the dangers of underage drinking and the need for positive adult role models for youth
- ◆ The need for education, awareness and early intervention for students impacted by chemical health issues, especially at the elementary and junior high levels

Results of the 2008 Community Health Assessment on-line survey related to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs indicated the following:

- ◆ 42% of respondents had a major concern about youth alcohol use
- ◆ 52% of respondents had a major concern about illegal drug use by youth
- ◆ 41% of respondents had a major concern about tobacco use among youth

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

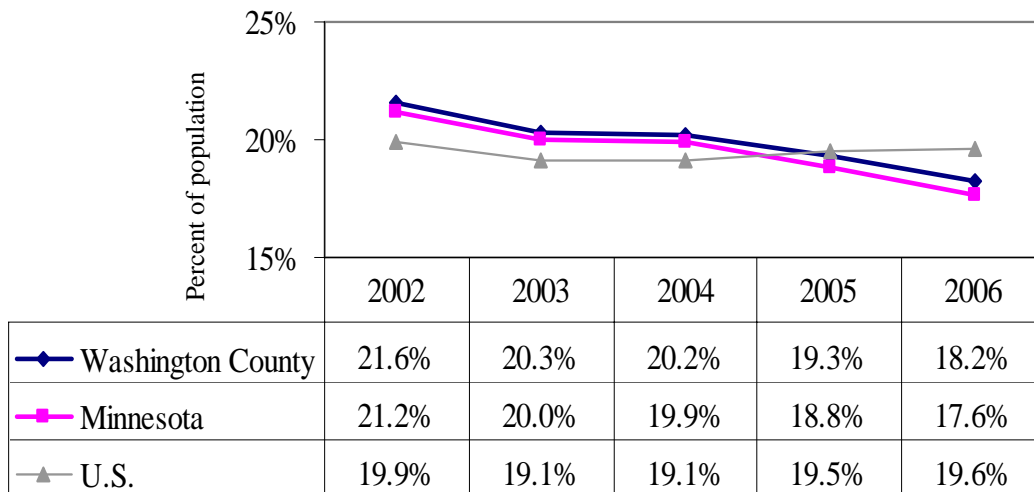
Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Key Data

Figure 1.

**Acute Drinking, Adults, U.S., Minnesota, Washington County
2002-2006**

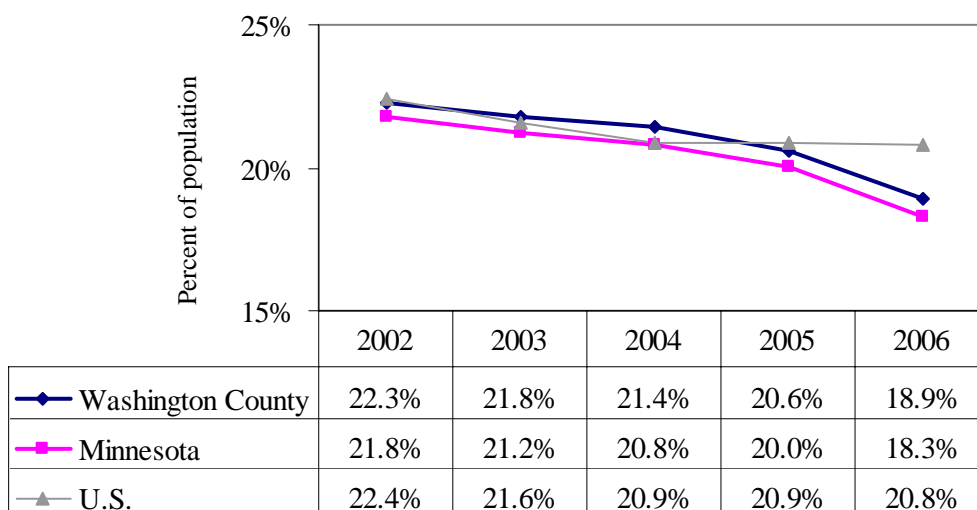


Acute drinking: Respondents age 18 or over who report they have consumed five or more drinks on an occasion, one or more times in the month prior to the survey. National data: Respondents reporting 5 or more drinks on an occasion in the past year.

Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota County Health Tables, Behavioral Risk Surveillance System, Based on National Health Interview Survey, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. County synthetic estimates.

Figure 2.

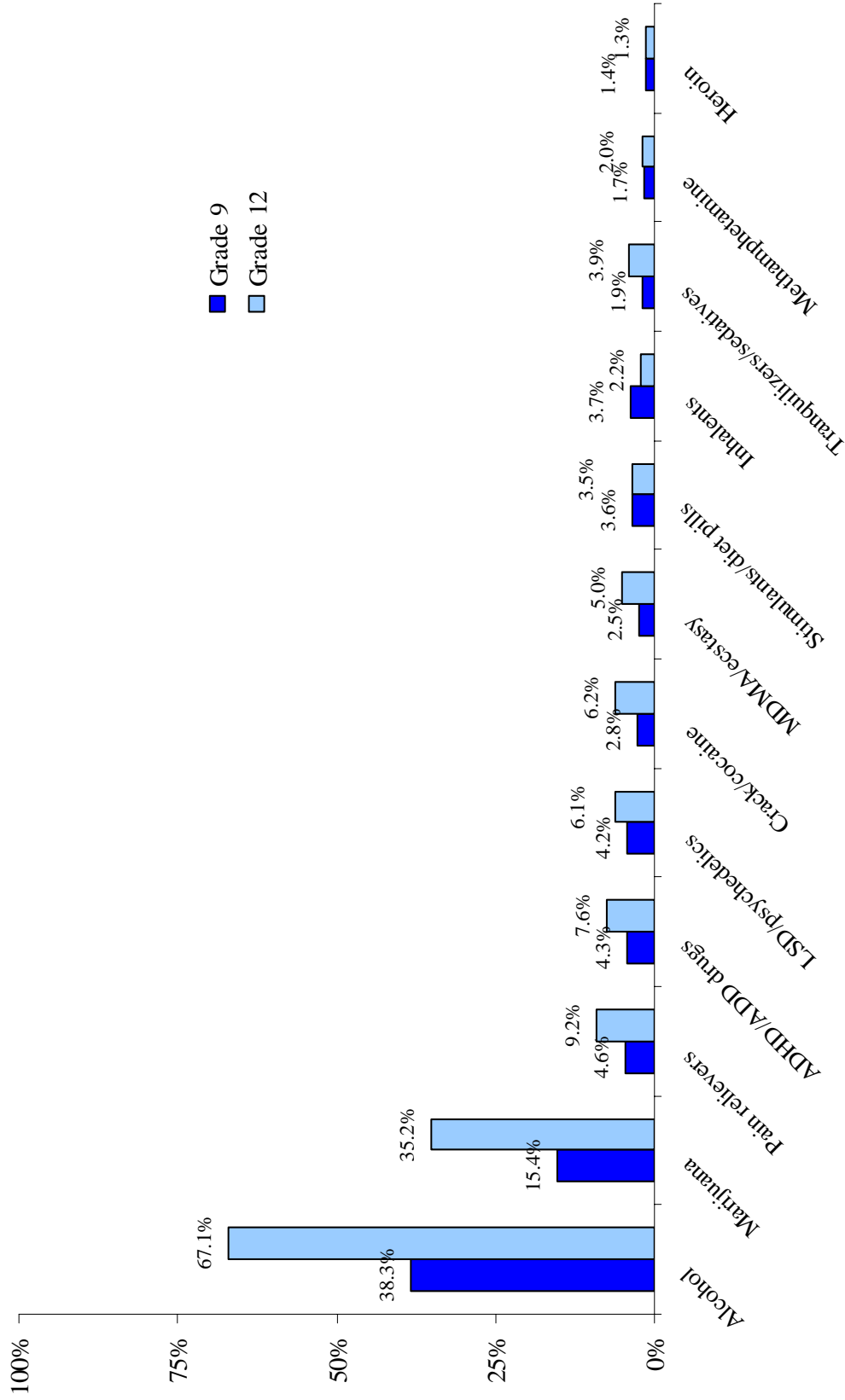
**Cigarette Smoking Prevalence, Adults, U.S., Minnesota,
Washington County, 2002-2006**



Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota County Health Tables, Behavioral Risk Surveillance System, Based on National Health Interview Survey, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. County synthetic estimates.

Key Data

Figure 3. Percent of students using chemical substances one or more times in the past year
Washington County, 2007



Source: Washington County Minnesota Student Survey trends Report: 1992-2007, Washington County department of Public Health and Environment

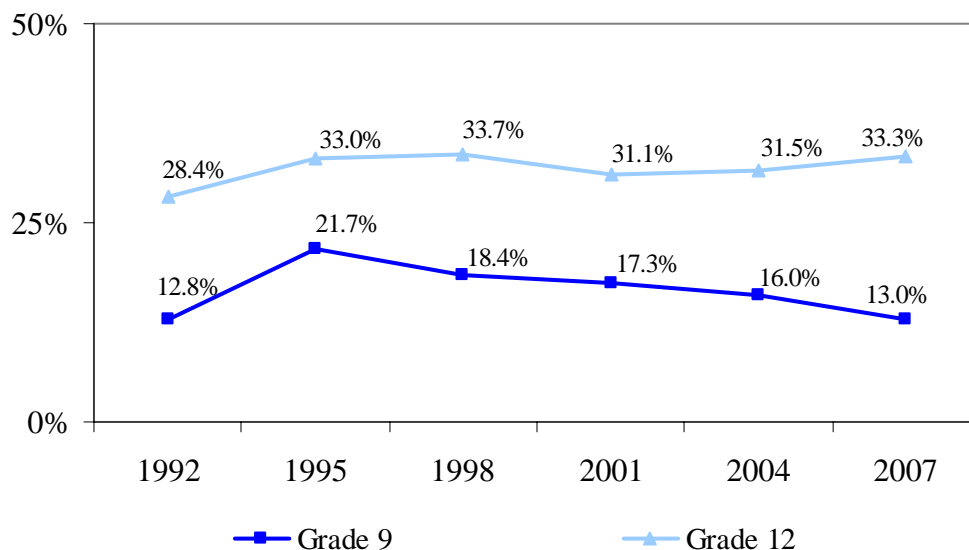
Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Key Data

Figure 4. **Binge Drinking* in the Past Two Weeks, Grades 9 and 12, Washington County, 1992-2007**

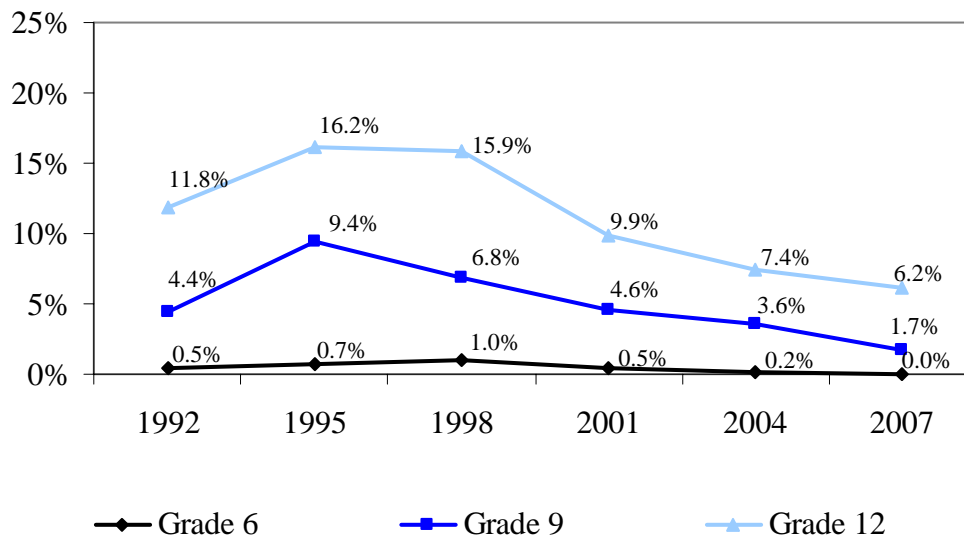


* Binge drinking: Five or more drinks on one occasion in the past 2 weeks.

Source: Minnesota Student Survey, 2007

Figure 5.

Smoked half a pack or more per day during the previous 30 days, Grades 6, 9 and 12, Washington County, 1992-2007



Source: Minnesota Student Survey, 2007

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

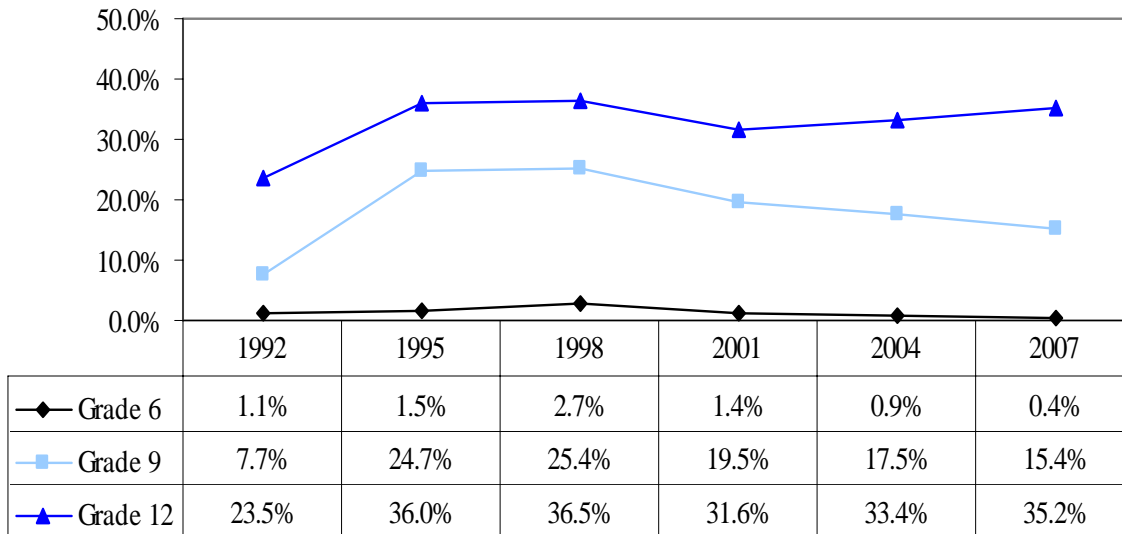
Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Key Data

Figure 6.

**Used marijuana one or more times in the past year, Grades 6, 9 and 12
Washington County, 1992-2007**



Source: Minnesota Student Survey, 2007

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Community Assets

There are numerous community coalitions and agencies focusing on chemical use, adolescent risk taking and related issues in the county. Through this network, a comprehensive system has been created to effectively mobilize each of the communities in the county:

- ◆ Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation through Americans for Non-Smokers Rights
- ◆ Smoke-Free Washington County through the Ramsey Washington Medical Society
- ◆ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Regional Network (FASD-RN) focuses on education to professionals, community and teachers and support to families with FASD.
- ◆ Safe Communities Coalition focuses on drinking and driving and seatbelt use by youth.
- ◆ Promoting Positive Parenting provides parents and professionals with education and resources through all 5 community education departments.
- ◆ Compliance Check Officers work together on community supports for underage drinking.
- ◆ Washington County School Districts provide support and faculty leadership for Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) at the local high schools.
- ◆ Community Coalitions
- ◆ A partnership with the Hazelden Foundation has contributed funding from the Andersen Corporate and Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen foundations for chemical health education, materials and training.
- ◆ Chemical health treatment agencies
- ◆ Mental health providers
- ◆ Medical clinics and hospitals
- ◆ School Districts/Community Education/Alternative Learning Programs in the following districts
- ◆ Faith communities
- ◆ Law enforcement
- ◆ Library services
- ◆ Recreation/YMCA/Teen Centers including the Forest Lake Teen Center
- ◆ Suicide awareness programs including
- ◆ Youth Service Groups/4H/Peer Leader programs
- ◆ Shoulder to Shoulder metro coalition and web site to support parents of teens

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Community Gaps and Risks

- ◆ Permissive community norms which accept and tolerate underage use and overuse of alcohol and tobacco by youth and adults
- ◆ Inconsistent messages regarding the dangers of underage drinking and smoking and the need for positive adult role models for youth
- ◆ Limited education, awareness and early intervention for students impacted by chemical health issues, especially at the elementary and junior high levels
- ◆ Decreased availability of chemical health prevention services in the schools for early intervention of youth with chemical health issues
- ◆ Continued ability of youth to access tobacco and alcohol from consenting adults
- ◆ Need for vendors to send clear messages that underage smoking and drinking is unsafe and illegal
- ◆ Youth access ordinances differ greatly between cities and are inconsistently enforced. Community celebrations continue to encourage adult drinking without addressing underage access to alcohol.
- ◆ Need to focus on environmental conditions that deter adolescents from using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and support healthy choices
- ◆ Parents need information on setting limits and the facts of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drug use by youth.
- ◆ Limited awareness of mental health and chemical health resources in the community
- ◆ Prevention efforts have been fragmented and sporadic due to an expansive service area, multiple jurisdictions (police, school, city and county government), and a large population base.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Summary

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs cause problems that are pervasive and touch every area of our lives, including the social and economic fabric of our culture. For adults, alcohol is used by more people and causes more problems than all other illegal drugs combined. Binge drinking accounts for more than half of all deaths due to excessive alcohol consumption. Misuse of prescription drugs is second only to marijuana as the nation's most prevalent drug problem.

For youth, tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs continue to be the most commonly abused drugs in the county. Despite declining rates of use, tobacco continues to be a serious threat to the health of youth and adults in Washington County. Exposure to tobacco smoke is the leading risk factor for many chronic diseases and serious illnesses including lung cancer, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, asthma, low birth weight and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Permissive community norms which accept and tolerate underage use and inconsistent enforcement of policies and laws related to youth substance use contribute to the issue. There is a need for consistent messages regarding the dangers of underage drinking and smoking, as well as a need for positive adult role models for youth.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Problem:

Illegal use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

Sources

- ¹ Minnesota Department of Health, *Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs*, November 1998
- ² Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility, (2004) by the National Research Council Institute of Medicine
- ³ U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 2007
- ⁴ Quantity and Frequency of Alcohol Use Among Underage Drinkers, National Survey on Drug Use and Health March 31, 2008
- ⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), June 26, 2008
- ⁶ Washington County Department of Public Health & Environment, 2007
- ⁷ Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota County Health Tables
- ⁸ Why do Binge Drinkers Drink: Implications for Alcohol Control Policy, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, September 2007
- ⁹ Source: Drug Abuse Trends in Minneapolis/St Paul, June 2008, Carol Falkowski
- ¹⁰ National Survey on Drug Use and Health, June 19, 2008, <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/pain/substate.pdf>
- ¹¹ SAMHSA , Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2005, <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/statechanges/3trends.doc>
- ¹² Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, 2007 Minnesota Impaired Driving Fact Sheet
- ¹³ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety
- ¹⁴ Minnesota Student Survey, 2007
- ¹⁵ Minnesota Department of Health
- ¹⁶ Mokdad, A., Marks, J., Stroup, D., Gerberding, J. (2008). Actual Causes of Death in the United States, 2000. JAMA, March 10, 2004-Vol 291, No. 10.)
- ¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 2007

Glossary

Acute drinking: Consuming five or more drinks on an occasion, one or more times in the month prior to the survey. National data: Respondents reporting 5 or more drinks on an occasion in the past year.

Binge drinking: Consuming five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past two weeks.

Chronic drinking: An average consumption of more than two drinks per day for males or more than one drink per day for females.