

Marijuana: 2013 Barrington Youth Data (July 2013)

Student surveys are administered to all 6th through 12th grade students in the Barrington School District every other year in the spring since 2009. This nationally developed survey assesses the risk and protective factors associated with underage substance use. The data is used by the BAY Team to monitor trends and direct future strategies. The full report may be viewed on our website at www.thebayteam.org. Further information may be obtained from Kristen Westmoreland, Program Manager of The BAY Team kwestmoreland@barrington.ri.gov.

Marijuana Findings at a glance:

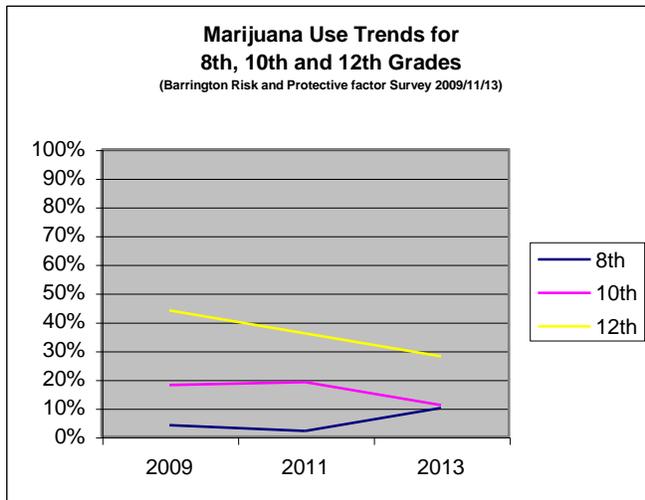
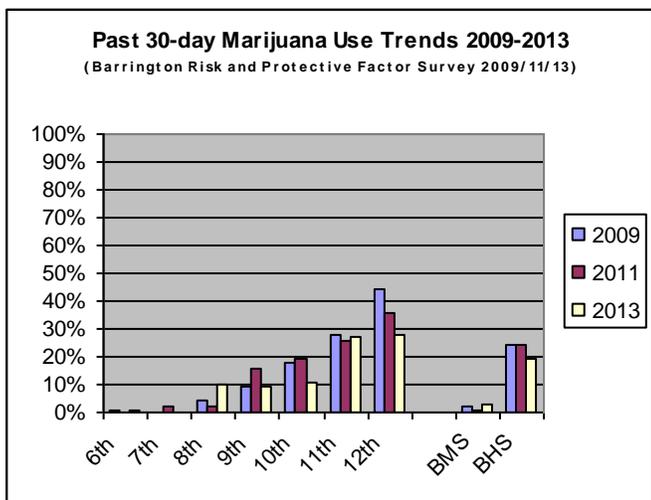
Student marijuana use, in general, is declining in Barrington. However, these results should be interpreted with caution as the Class of 2017 shows increased use when compared with their 8th grade peers in previous years. In addition, the perceptions of harm and parental disapproval for marijuana use are declining unlike the perceptions for alcohol and other drugs. Generally, a decline in these perceptions signals a future increase in use. Furthermore, youth marijuana use in Barrington and in Rhode Island remains higher than the national average making its prevention a high priority for The BAY Team.

According to a March 2012 RI Data Brief from the RI Department of Health, RI students who used marijuana had significantly higher health risks in 2011 compared with students who did not use the drug. Marijuana users were more likely to have poor grades, to be male, Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual, and to have a physical or emotional disability. Violence was much more prevalent among students that used marijuana as were mental health problems, violence, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, sexual activity, and injuries.

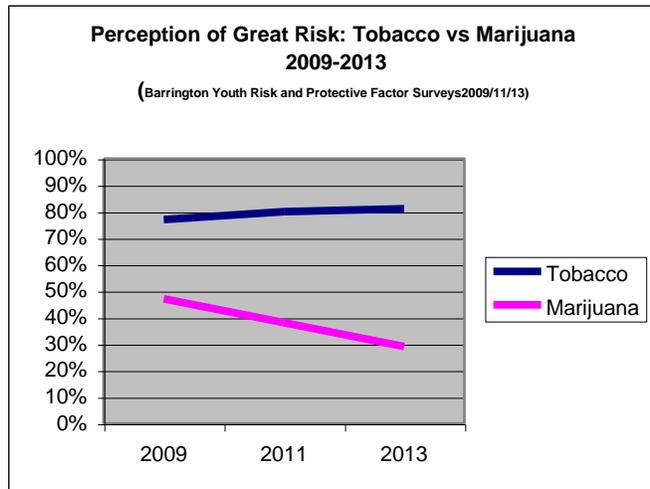
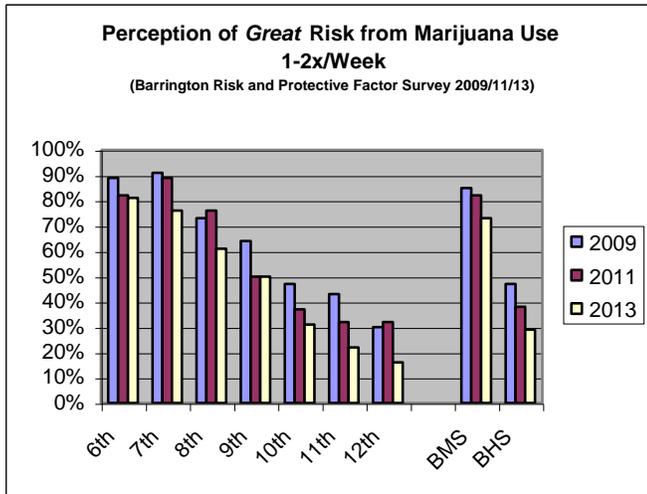
- Past 30-day use of marijuana: 24% of BHS students and declining or neutral from 2009-2013 for all grades except 8th, which increased during that period from 4% to 10%
- Fewer students perceive great risk of harm from weekly marijuana smoking from 2009-2013
- Fewer students perceive strong parental disapproval of youth marijuana use from 2009-2013
- Compared with other substances, fewer students believe their peers would find marijuana use wrong
- Ease of access: 92% of student marijuana users find it easy to obtain marijuana
- Riding with drivers who have smoked marijuana: 42% of seniors have taken this risk

Expanded results:

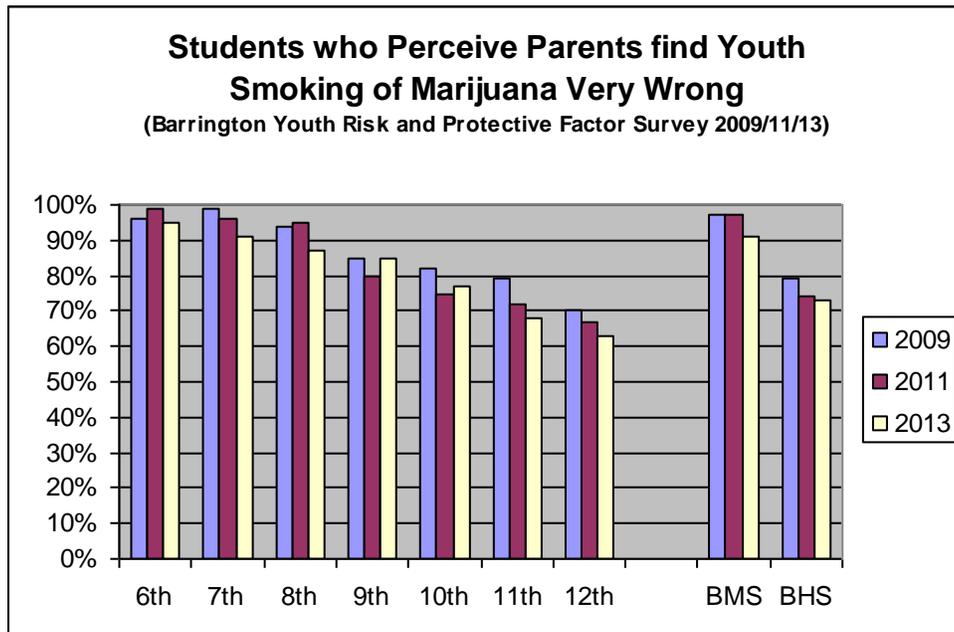
The good news is that, overall, marijuana use is down except for the Class of 2017. However, usage is higher than national rates for 8th (10% vs 7%) and 12th (28% vs 23%) grades and lower for 10th (11% vs 17%) grade according to 2012 Monitoring the Future data. The substantial increase in eighth grade use from 2% in 2011 to 10% in 2013 is concerning as this likely represents a connected group of students rather than a few isolated individuals. Given that peers become more influential in the high school years, this group of students could adversely affect future marijuana use.



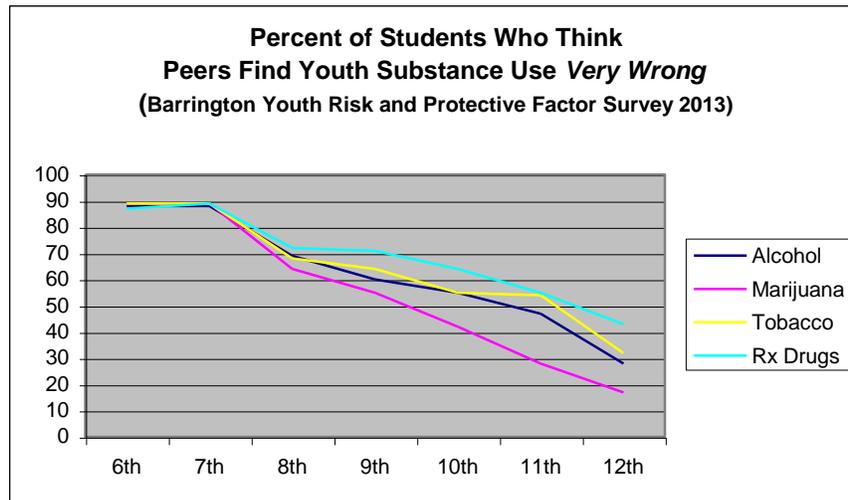
Of concern, across all grades and schools, fewer students perceive great risk of harm from weekly smoking of marijuana in 2013 than in 2009. This likely corresponds to the changing practices and legislation regarding marijuana statewide and nationally but, unfortunately, does not reflect the increasing scientific evidence of marijuana’s harmful effects on youth. Students are more likely to use marijuana when they perceive it to be less harmful. Interestingly, the perceived harm of tobacco remains high while that of marijuana is declining.



The messages students believe their parents to be communicating to them about youth marijuana use are very influential on youth behavior. More students now perceive a softening of parental disapproval of youth marijuana use than in previous years studied. The national data is clear that when parents communicate clear and explicit disapproval of youth marijuana use, youth will be less likely to use marijuana (National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Use 2012, Columbia University).



When asked how wrong they believe their peers think it is for youth to smoke marijuana, 83% of BMS students think their peers would find marijuana smoking *very wrong*. This perception declines significantly throughout high school where only 59% believe this. Students who think their peers would approve of a behavior are more likely to initiate that behavior. It is also concerning that the perception of peer disapproval falls more rapidly for marijuana than other substances. In addition, 24% of BHS students and 7% of BMS students believe (erroneously) that *most or nearly all* high school students use marijuana. This misperception is also a risk factor for marijuana use.



Although the majority of students would find it difficult to get marijuana if they wanted it, this is not the case amongst those who use, 68% of whom find it *very easy* to get and another 24% of whom find it *sort of easy* to obtain marijuana. There are many potential new sources of marijuana given the rapidly expanding industry of “medical marijuana”. In fact, 74% of youth in treatment for substance abuse obtained their marijuana from someone else’s medical marijuana (Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology 2012).

Also, concerning is the forty-two percent of high school seniors who report riding with a driver who has been smoking marijuana. Driving under the influence of marijuana increases the chances of accident, injury and death. Even in states that have decriminalized or legalized marijuana, driving under the influence of marijuana remains illegal due to the unequivocal evidence of its dangers.

