

Teen-age smoking, drug use rising

University of Michigan report blames lack of publicity for increase

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Smoking and drug use among American teen-agers is increasing after a decade of decline, a study showed Monday, and its author warned that "the stage is set for a potential resurgence of cocaine and crack use."

University of Michigan researchers said they noticed a relaxing of attitudes about the dangers of drugs among eighth-, 10th- and 12th-graders in a yearly survey.

"These attitudes and beliefs, specifically the dangers believed to be associated with the use of these drugs ... play a critical role in deterring use," said Lloyd Johnston, who directed the study. "When they begin to soften, as they did last year, an increase in use can be expected."

He said the issue of drug use "fell off the radar screen," during the previous decade

and "we may have been lulled into a false sense of security."

The study found a three or four percentage-point rise in the last year or two among students who reported any use of marijuana in the previous 12 months.

In 1993, nine percent of eighth-graders smoked marijuana, 19 percent of 10th-graders and 26 percent of 12th-graders.

There has been a rise in cigarette smoking, too, after 10 years of fairly steady decline.

After falling from favor in the last 15 years, LSD use has been increasing gradually and there has been a rise in the use of inhalants like glues, solvents and aerosols.

"With more young people smoking cigarettes and using marijuana, and with the psychological and social constraints on use declining, the stage is set for a potential resurgence of cocaine and crack use in this population," Johnston told a news conference.

He said that in general, black students reported the lowest rates of use for virtually all the drugs and that this was true for all three grade levels.

The Michigan researchers surveyed 51,000 high school and eighth-grade youths in more than 400 schools.

Eight percent of the eighth-graders, 14

percent of 10th-graders and 19 percent of the 12th-graders said they smoked cigarettes daily — up by one to two percentage points.

Johnston said that in the past two years, the proportion of eighth-graders using marijuana has increased by half; among high schoolers, the proportion has increased by one-fifth or more.

In 1979, 60 percent of 12-graders had tried marijuana, compared with 35 percent of the class of 1993.

Among other findings:

- Sixty-seven percent of eighth-graders, 81 percent of 10th-graders and 87 percent of 12th-graders have tried alcohol.

- Fourteen percent of eighth-graders, 23 percent of 10th-graders and 28 percent of 12th-graders admitted to binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) in the previous two weeks.

- Only 53 percent of eighth-graders see a great risk in smoking a pack or more of cigarettes a day. But 70 percent of seniors saw that as a great risk.

- Only 36 percent of the eighth-graders, 30 percent of the 10th-graders and 22 percent of the 12th-graders perceive great risk in trying marijuana once or twice.

'Smooth talker' arrested after hustling girlfriends

The Associated Press

MCKINNEY — A man police are trying to link to romantic relationships with almost a dozen North Texas women who claim he bilked them out of thousands of dollars remained jailed today.

Maynard Fillers III, 24, whom police described as a "smooth talker" who met women through personal ads and country-western clubs, said he regrets returning a call to an undercover police officer.

It was at a suburban shopping mall where Fillers was arrested after he invited the undercover officer to go to the Super Bowl in Atlanta, a trip he'd already pledged to another woman. Fillers, who uses the alias Austin Rickers, was charged with using a false name and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle for failing to return a truck belonging to an ex-lover's brother.

A subsequent background

check found numerous arrest warrants accusing him of passing bad checks, misdemeanor theft and failing to pay traffic violations.

He is being held in lieu of \$16,491 bail in the Collin County Jail, a spokeswoman said.

Police Chief Phillip Robertson, of Celina, said his department's probe has located almost a dozen women claiming past ties to Fillers.

Two women said he went home with them from a Fort Worth nightclub and stayed through the Christmas holidays. They estimate the experience cost them \$2,500.

Another woman said a shopping spree cost her \$3,600.

Fillers told the Dallas Morning News that he was sorry if he'd hurt anyone and said reports of using the women's money are exaggerated.

A divorce and missing his young son, he said, led him from one bad liaison to the next.

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