Drugs- Teens

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Teens

Report Says Teen Drug Use Is Down

By Laura Meckler
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WASHINGTON (AP) -- Teen drug use fell last year, with about one in 10 teen-agers using marijuana and other drugs, the government reported today. Officials say it's solid evidence that the nation has turned a corner after rising drug use through the mid-1990s.

Overall, drug use among Americans of all ages remained level, but use among young adults continued its steady rise, according to the annual household survey of 25,500 people ages 12 and up.

All told, 78 million Americans had tried illegal drugs at some point in their lives. Marijuana remained far and away the most popular drug, but 41.3 million Americans also had tried another heroin, cocaine or some other illegal drug, the survey said.

Of them, 13.6 million were current users, about half what it was at its 1979 peak.

The survey results were released today by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala and Barry McCaffrey, President Clinton's drug policy adviser.

``While these results give us reason to be optimistic, we cannot let up on our efforts," a statement from Clinton said today.

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse also measured cigarette smoking and found it down to 27.7 percent overall, the lowest rate recorded. But smoking remained steady among teens and continued to rise among young adults. Cigar use edged up.

The survey is most carefully watched as a gauge of teen drug use.

It found 9.9 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds had used some sort of drugs within the past month, down from 11.4 percent in 1997. A second government survey, which uses a different method to measure teen drug use, has found that drug use was stable over the past two years after years on the rise.

``In the battle against illicit drugs we've turned the corner," Shalala said today. But she added a cautionary note: ``We have a long way to go. We have a long way to go because more than a million young people are dependent on drugs. As far as we're concerned, that's a million too many."

Earlier reports signaling a leveling off of teen drug use have been greeted with cautious optimism, but researchers are now confident that a real decline is under way.

The portion of teens saying they had ever used drugs was also down, from 18.8 percent in 1997 to 16.4 percent last year.

The declines were driven by older teens -- those ages 16 and 17 -- with the percentage having used drugs in the past year falling from 30.7 percent to 26.8 percent.

Marijuana -- the most popular drug -- tends to fuel the overall rate, though its usage has fluctuated over the past few years. Last year it fell to 8.3 percent among teens, back to its 1995 level and still significantly higher than the 3.4 percent recorded in 1992.

Overall, teen drug use rose through much of the 1990s and is still much higher than it was in 1991 and 1992. Researchers attribute the rise to a relaxing of the intense prevention efforts of the 1980s.

Today's news was not as good for young adults aged 18 to 25. The survey found 16.1 percent of them were ``current users," meaning they had used drugs in the past month. That rate has been gradually rising, up from 13.3 percent in 1994.

In particular, cocaine use was up, from 1.2 percent in 1997 to 2 percent in 1998.

Officials suspect that the rising statistics relate to this particular group of people -- the same people who were more likely to use drugs when they were teen-agers, who have now become young adults.

Overall, drug use among all ages remained level in 1998, with 13.6 million current users. That's 6.2 percent of the population, statistically unchanged from 6.4 percent in 1997.

But over time, the rates have increased among minority groups. The percent of blacks currently using drugs has jumped from 5.8 percent in 1993 to 8.2 percent last year. Hispanics saw a similar rise, from 4.4 percent to 6.1 percent over those five years.

Teen and adult drug use is driven largely by use of marijuana, which attracts nearly twice as many users as cocaine, heroin, LSD and other drugs combined.

Overall use of marijuana was steady in 1998, with about 11 million Americans smoking it in the month preceding the survey.

Other findings from the survey:

--Heroin: A total of 130,000 people were currently using heroin, double the number in 1993. And the age of users was dropping. In 1997, the typical heroin user was 17.6 years old the first time they tried it, down from 18.3 percent in 1996.

--Cocaine: The number of users was stable in 1998, with about 1.75 million, though there were increases among teens and young adults.

--Cigarettes: Some 60 million Americans age 12 and up said they were current smokers, down from 29.6 percent in 1997. Among young adults, the percentage has steadily increased from 34.6 percent in 1994 to 41.6 percent last year.

--Cigars: Use increased to 6.9 percent last year from 5.9 percent in 1997.

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yellowpages

Tobacco
Question and Answer
August 18, 1999

Q: The National Household Survey shows that while overall cigarette use is down, teen use of cigarettes is still high. What is the Administration doing to combat this problem?

Every day, 3,000 children become smokers – and 1,000 have theirs lives shortened because of it. This is unacceptable. To end this crisis, we must have a focused public health effort to reduce youth smoking. The 1998 State tobacco settlement was an important step in the right direction, but more must be done to protect our children and hold the tobacco industry accountable. We are continuing our fight to increase the price of cigarettes so fewer young people will smoke; affirm the Food and Drug Administration's authority to halt advertising aimed at kids; continue our ongoing prevention and research activities; and recover from the tobacco companies the billions of dollars in direct health costs incurred by the federal government as a result of smoking.

In addition, we will continue to call for states to use tobacco settlement funds to reduce youth smoking and promote public health. Today's report confirms that an estimated 18.2 percent of youths age 12-17, or 4.1 million young people, were current cigarette smokers in 1998. It is time for the states to invest in education and treatment programs to educate young people about the danger of tobacco products.

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Q: The National Household Survey shows that while overall cigarette use is down, it is rising among teens. What is the Administration doing to combat this problem?

Every day, 3,000 children become smokers – and 1,000 have theirs lives shortened because of it. To end this crisis, we must have a focused public health effort to reduce youth smoking. The 1998 State tobacco settlement was an important step in the right direction, but more must be done to protect our children and hold the tobacco industry accountable. The Administration believes additional steps must be taken at the national level to reduce youth smoking:

Raise the price of cigarettes so fewer young people start to smoke: Public health experts agree that the single most effective way to cut youth smoking is to raise the price of cigarettes. The President last year called for an increase of $1.10 per pack (in constant dollars) to help cut youth smoking in half within five years. This year, thanks to increases already agreed to between the tobacco companies and the States and those already legislated by Congress, we can reach the target with a legislated increase of half this amount.

- *Reaffirm the FDA's full authority to keep cigarettes out of the hands of children:* The Administration supports legislation that confirms the FDA's authority to regulate tobacco products in order to halt advertising targeted at children, and to curb minors' access to tobacco products. While the State settlement limits tobacco advertising, it still allows certain marketing practices targeted at children, including newspaper and magazine advertising and retail signs near schools. Only by affirming FDA's authority can Congress ensure that America's children are protected from the next generation of tobacco industry marketing.

- *Support critical public health efforts to prevent youth smoking:* To help support tobacco prevention programs in States and local communities, the Administration's budget doubled the funding for FDA's tobacco budget to $68 million and increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control's tobacco control efforts by one-third, from $74 to $101 million.

DRAFT
STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT

Today's 1998 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse reveals that we have turned an important corner on youth drug use. Last year, youth drug use declined significantly and fewer young people tried marijuana for the first time. This encouraging news shows more young people are getting the message that drugs are wrong, illegal, and can kill you. And today's report contains even more good news: current cigarette use dropped to the lowest rate ever recorded by the Survey.

While these results give us reason to be optimistic, we cannot let up our efforts. We must continue our unprecedented media campaign to reach our children with powerful anti-drug messages, not cut it back just as it is making such an impact. [We must expand our partnerships with community anti-drug coalitions, and work to enact our long-term drug strategy.] Together, we can steer our kids away from drugs and toward a brighter future.

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Text of FY 2000 Budget Language on Tobacco

***Stopping Youth Smoking*:** Every day, 3,000 children become smokers -- 1,000 have theirs lives shortened because of it. Almost 90 percent of adult smokers began smoking by age 18 and today, 4.5 million children aged 12 to 17 -- 37 percent of all high school students -- smoke cigarettes. Tobacco is linked to over 400,000 deaths a year from cancer, respiratory illness, heart disease and other problems. To end this public health crisis, we must have a focused public health effort to reduce youth smoking. The 1998 State tobacco settlement was an important step in the right direction, but more must be done to protect our children and hold the tobacco industry accountable. The Administration believes additional steps must be taken at the national level to reduce youth smoking:

- *Raise the price of cigarettes so fewer young people start to smoke*: Public health experts agree that the single most effective way to cut youth smoking is to raise the price of cigarettes. Last year, the President called for an increase of $1.10 per pack (in constant dollars) to help cut youth smoking in half within five years. This year, we build on increases already agreed to between the tobacco companies and the States and those already legislated by the Congress. As a result, we can reach the target with a legislated increase of half this amount.

  The funds that result from this policy will offset tobacco-related Federal health care costs. Each year, the Federal Government spends billions of dollars treating tobacco-related diseases for our Armed Forces, veterans, and Federal employees. It is fitting that the tobacco industry reimburse U.S. taxpayers for these costs, just as it has already agreed to do for the states.

- *Reaffirm the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) full authority to keep cigarettes out of the hands of children:* The Administration will again support legislation that confirms the FDA's authority to regulate tobacco products in order to halt advertising targeted at children, and to curb minors access to tobacco products. While the State settlement limits tobacco advertising, it still allows certain marketing practices targeted at children, including newspaper and magazine advertising and retail signs near schools. Moreover, only by affirming FDA's authority can Congress ensure that America's children are protected from the next generation of tobacco industry marketing. We should take this matter out of the courts and ensure that the FDA -- the nation's leading health consumer protection agency, providing oversight for food, drugs, and medical devices -- has full authority to protect our children from tobacco.

- *Support critical public health efforts to prevent youth smoking:* To help support tobacco prevention programs in States and local communities, the Administration's budget will double the funding for FDA's tobacco budget to $68 million and increase funding for the Centers for Disease Control's tobacco control efforts by one-third, from $74 to $101 million. In addition, the Administration will continue to support measures that hold the tobacco industry accountable for reducing youth smoking.

- *Protect farmers and farming communities:* The Administration remains committed to protecting farmers and their communities, and is monitoring closely on-going efforts by State, farmer, and industry representatives to provide funding and purchase commitments to tobacco farmers. The Administration will work with all parties, as needed, to ensure the financial well-being of tobacco farmers, their families, and communities.

Since U.S. taxpayers paid a substantial portion of the Medicaid costs that were the basis for much of the State settlement with the tobacco companies, Federal law requires that the Federal Government recoup its share. However, the Administration will work with the States and the Congress to enact tobacco legislation that, among other things, resolves these Federal claims in exchange for a commitment by the States to use tobacco money to support shared national and state priorities which reduce youth smoking, promote public health and children's program, and assist affected rural communities.

In addition to these Medicaid costs, tobacco-related health problems have cost Medicare and other Federal programs billions of dollars each year. To recover these losses, the U.S. Department of Justice intends to bring suit against the tobacco industry, and the Budget contains $20 million to pay for necessary legal costs. The Administration will propose that recoveries will be used to enhance the security of Medicare for future generations.