

Perceived Health Risk and Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol and Marijuana: An Update from the 2015 Young Adult Health Survey

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The Young Adult Health Survey (YAHS) is an annual online survey that measures marijuana and other substance use, risk factors, and perceptions of risk and consequences among young adults age 18 to 25 residing in Washington State.

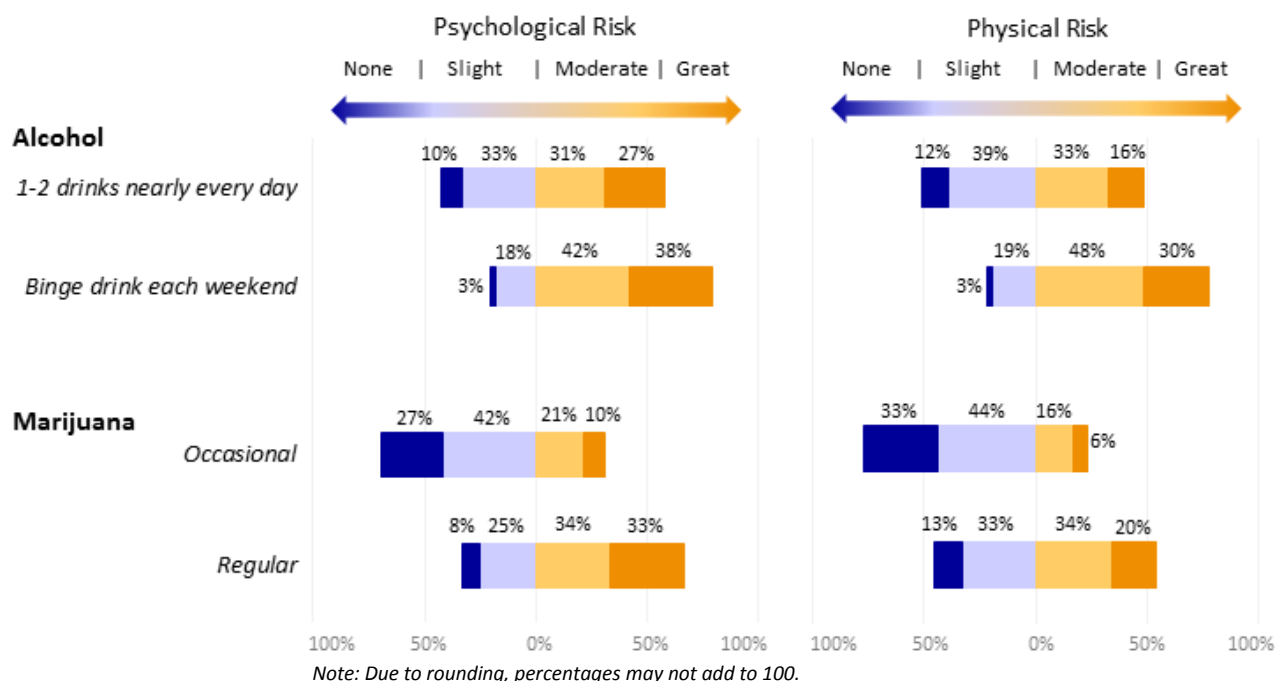
Key Findings

- Nearly 4 in 5 perceived binge drinking each weekend to carry moderate or great psychological (79%) or physical (78%) risk.
- A lower percentage – but still a majority – perceived regular marijuana use to have moderate or great psychological (67%) or physical (54%) risk.
- Perception of risk from using marijuana slightly decreased between 2014 and 2015.
- Almost half (45%) of those who used marijuana reported driving within three hours of use at least once during the past month.
- About 24% of current alcohol users reported driving after drinking at least once in the past month.

Perceived Psychological & Physical Risk

Nearly 4 in 5 of the young adults surveyed perceived weekly binge drinking to carry at least moderate psychological and physical risk, while about half reported the same for having 1-2 drinks nearly daily. About 67% perceived at least moderate psychological risk and about 54% at least moderate physical risk from regular marijuana use. Perceived risk of regular (psychological and physical risk) and occasional (psychological risk) marijuana use decreased between 2014 (not shown) and 2015 (Figure 1). This is concerning because research shows lower risk perception is often followed by higher use rates.

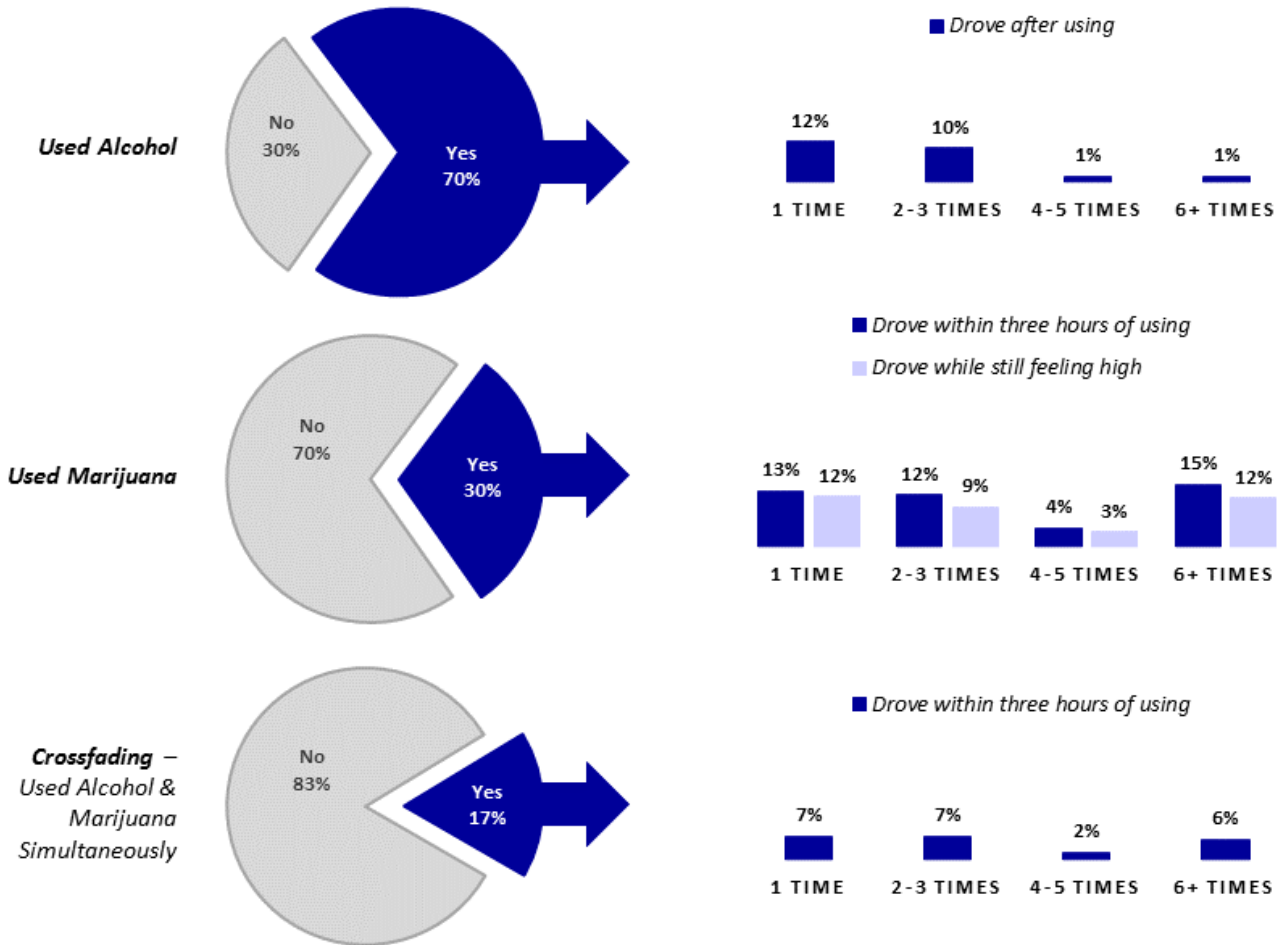
Figure 1: Perceived Psychological and Physical Risk of Using Alcohol and Marijuana



Driving Under the Influence

The majority of young adults reporting current (past 30-day) alcohol or marijuana use indicated they had not driven under the influence of these substances in the past 30 days. However, a substantial portion report doing so. About 24% of those who used alcohol reported driving after drinking on at least one occasion in the past 30 days. A considerably higher percentage of those who used marijuana indicated they had driven at least once while still feeling high from (36%) or within three hours of (45%) using marijuana. About 22% of those using both substances at the same time – also known as crossfading – reported driving after use on one or more occasions. Despite increased availability of recreational marijuana, there was not a substantial change in reported frequency of driving under the influence between 2014 (not shown) and 2015 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Substance use and Driving under the Influence in the Past 30 Days



About the Young Adult Health Survey (YAHS)

Following the passage of Initiative 502 in 2012, the first wave of the survey began in 2014 before the recreational marijuana stores opened; a non-random sample of 2,101 eligible young adults from all racial/ethnic groups and from 36 of WA's 39 counties participated in Cohort 1. The survey was fielded again in spring/summer 2015, with a new sample of 1,675 young adults comprising Cohort 2. While other available data on substance use among 18-25 year olds is largely limited to college students, the YAHS was designed to learn about marijuana use among a broader population. The results presented here are weighted to reflect the demographic and geographic characteristics of Washington's young adult population, and the results are largely similar to estimates from surveys using other methodological approaches. While the YAHS survey relies on a nonrandom sample, the online survey strategy is likely to better reach marginalized groups, who tend to have higher rates of substance use, than telephone- or address-based sampling strategies.