

Substance Abuse

In 2009, there were 7,441 **drug and alcohol arrests**, for an arrest rate of 9.1 per 1,000 juveniles age 10-17 in Washington State. The rate of arrests decreased slightly over the rate of arrests in 2008 (10.4). The following table displays the juvenile drug/alcohol arrests and rates per 1,000 juveniles from 2005 – 2009.

Juvenile Arrests for Drug and Alcohol Offenses 2005 -2009

	2009	2008	2007	2005	2006	2005
Arrests	6,505	7,441	8,216	7,802	7,063	7,464
Rate per 1,000	9.1	10.4	11.4	10.9	9.9	10.5

Males accounted for 71.1% of the 2009 drug and alcohol arrests; females, 28.9%.

In 2009, 12.8 percent of the total juvenile arrests in 2009 were for alcohol offenses. Approximately 42.4 percent of the drug and alcohol juvenile arrests in 2009 were for **drug offenses**, and 57.6 percent were for **alcohol offenses**.

Substance abuse by juveniles is clearly linked to juvenile violence. According to Hawkins and Catalano,⁷ most of the risk factors for substance abuse are the same risk factors as those of juvenile violence and delinquency. Hawkins and Catalano indicate that the more risk factors a child or youth experiences, the more likely the child/youth will experience substance abuse and related problems in adolescence or young adulthood. Risk factors for violence are defined and categorized in four domains:

- **Individual/Peer** (friends who engage in problem behavior, early initiation of the problem behavior)
- **School** (Early and persistent anti-social behavior, academic failure beginning in elementary school)
- **Community** (community laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms,

and crime; media portrayals of violence; extreme economic deprivation)

- **Family** (Family management problems and conflict, favorable parental attitudes and involvement in the problem behavior)

Youth who engage in substance abuse often demonstrate problem behaviors within their family, school and community. These youth often associate with peers engaged in problem behaviors, and have a family history of problem behavior, family management problems or conflict.

The 2006 “Levels of Risk, Protection and Drug Use in Schools Predict Students’ WASL Scores” study conducted by the Social Development Research Group of the University of Washington found that seventh and tenth grade students in schools with higher rates of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use are less likely to meet the standards on the mathematics, reading, and writing sections of the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) tests. Further the report presented implications for policy and practice suggesting “reducing the prevalence of drug use in school populations will increase students’ academic success.”

According to the “Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Trends in Washington State” 2010 Report from the Division of Alcohol & Substance Abuse (DASA), Department of Social & Health Services, the **use of alcohol** in the past 30 days and binge drinking by Washington State 8th, 10th and 12th graders has leveled off.⁸ The report found that youth who start drinking at age 14 or younger are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent in their lifetimes than those who start drinking at age 20 or older. Other Washington State findings from the Healthy Youth Survey include:

- More than a quarter of High School Seniors have engaged in recent binge drinking,
- One-fifth of Washington 12th graders reported being drunk or high in school in the past year.

⁷ Hawkins, J.D. and R.F. Catalano, *Risk-Focused Prevention: Using the Social Development Strategy*, 1995.

- More than 40% of Washington high school seniors report using alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Almost a third of Washington 6th graders have tried alcohol.
- Marijuana use among 8th and 12th graders has increased. By 12th grade over 40% of Washington students have tried marijuana.
- By the 12th grade, over 40% of students have tried marijuana,
- The percentage of 12th graders who reported they had tried methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime dropped by 21% between 2006 and 2008.
- Two-thirds of youth entering State Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration facilities in SFY 2009 and screened, had substance abuse related problems,
- In state fiscal year 2009, 509 youth received treatment under the chemical dependency disposition alternative.

Youth Gangs

Since the mid-20th century, gang violence in this country has become widespread—all 50 states and the District of Columbia report gang problems, and reports have increased for 5 of the past 7 years. Despite the steady growth in the number and size of gangs across the United States and the criminal behavior and violence they spawn, little is known about the dynamics that drive gangs and how to best combat their growth. For instance, no consensus exists on how gangs form, and few gang prevention programs have been rigorously evaluated.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) published a bulletin in December of 2010 entitled **Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs**. Some of the key findings from that include:

Youth join gangs for protection, enjoyment, respect, money, or because a friend is in a gang.

Youth are at higher risk of joining a gang if they engage in delinquent behaviors, are aggressive or violent, experience multiple care-taker transitions, have many problems at school, associate with other gang-involved youth, or live in communities where they feel unsafe and where many youth are in trouble.

To prevent youth from joining gangs, communities must strengthen families and schools, improve county supervision, train teachers and parents to manage disruptive youth, and teach students interpersonal skills.

When starting a program for delinquency and gang prevention, a community should conduct a gang-problem assessment to identify elevated risk factors that lead to child delinquency and gang involvement. Communities must define youth gangs, locate them, and identify and target the youth who are at greatest risk of joining. OJJDP has a Comprehensive Gang Model to help communities develop a continuum of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs and strategies.

In a cooperative effort between the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) and the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) to examine the threat posed to the United States by criminal gangs, The “National Gang Threat Assessment 2009” was published. The report can be found on-line in its entirety at <http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs32/32146/index.htm#National>. The assessment is based on federal, state, and local law enforcement information and is supplemented by information retrieved from open sources. Information and data used for the report were collected through September 2008.

The following key findings were developed by analysis of available federal, state, and local law enforcement information; 2008 National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) data; and verified open source information:

- Approximately 1 million gang members belonging to more than 20,000 gangs were

criminally active within all 50 states and the District of Columbia as of September 2008.

- Local street gangs, or neighborhood-based street gangs, remain a significant threat because they continue to account for the largest number of gangs nationwide. Most engage in violence in conjunction with a variety of crimes, including retail-level drug distribution.
- According to NDTs data, 58 percent of state and local law enforcement agencies reported that criminal gangs were active in their jurisdictions in 2008 compared with 45 percent of state and local agencies in 2004.
- Gang members are migrating from urban areas to suburban and rural communities, expanding the gangs' influence in most regions; they are doing so for a variety of reasons, including expanding drug distribution territories, increasing illicit revenue, recruiting new members, hiding from law enforcement, and escaping other gangs. Many suburban and rural communities are experiencing increasing gang-related crime and violence because of expanding gang influence.
- Criminal gangs commit as much as 80 percent of the crime in many communities, according to law enforcement officials throughout the nation. Typical gang-related crimes include alien smuggling, armed robbery, assault, auto theft, drug trafficking, extortion, fraud, home invasions, identity theft, murder, and weapons trafficking.
- Gang members are the primary retail-level distributors of most illicit drugs. They also are increasingly distributing wholesale-level quantities of marijuana and cocaine in most urban and suburban communities.
- Some gangs traffic illicit drugs at the regional

and national levels; several are capable of competing with U.S.-based Mexican DTOs.

- U.S.-based gang members illegally cross the U.S.-Mexico border for the express purpose of smuggling illicit drugs and illegal aliens from Mexico into the United States.
- Many gangs actively use the Internet to recruit new members and to communicate with members in other areas of the United States and in foreign countries.
- Street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs pose a growing threat to law enforcement along the U.S.-Canada border. They frequently associate with Canada-based gangs and criminal organizations to facilitate various criminal activities, including drug smuggling into the United States.

Youth gang membership

There is no consensus on the definition of a youth gang. However, research describes a set of broad characteristics in identifying gangs:

- Formal or semi-formal organizational structure,
- Clearly identified leadership,
- A specific territory,
- Patterns of interaction, and
- Engagement of a group in serious or violent behavior.¹³

Gang membership may often be less of a long-term commitment than is commonly believed. Studies in Denver and Rochester¹⁴ report that half of the male youth gang members belonged to a gang for less than one year. The studies also found that gang members are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime.

Many researchers have found that youth gangs have low levels of organizational sophistication and are typically loose in structure.

⁹ Excerpt from *OJJDP Gang Prevention, Model Program Guide: "Membership in Youth Gangs and Involvement in Serious and Violent Offending."* Thornberry, 1998; p. 157, Sage Publications.

¹⁰ *Early Precursors of Gang Membership: A Study of Seattle Youth*; Hill, Lui, and Hawkins