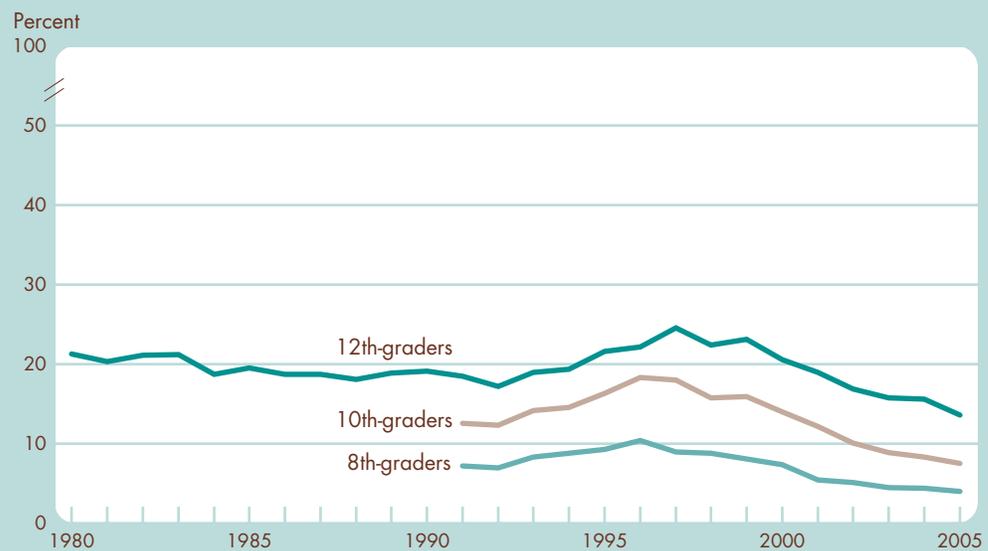


Behavior and Social Environment Indicators

Young people's participation in illegal or high-risk behaviors, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using illicit drugs, and engaging in violent crimes, has severe long-term consequences for our youth and our society.

The prevention of cigarette smoking among adolescents is a national public health priority. In 2005, 4 percent of 8th-graders, 8 percent of 10th-graders, and 14 percent of 12th-graders reported that they had smoked cigarettes daily in the past 30 days (Figure 7). These were the lowest rates since the data were first collected.¹⁵

Figure 7 Percentage of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students who reported smoking cigarettes daily in the previous 30 days by grade, 1980–2005



SOURCE: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Monitoring the Future Survey.

Cigarette smoking sharply declined among American teenagers since the mid-1990s, following a period of rapid increase in their smoking rates in the first half of the 1990s. Between the peak years in the mid-1990s and 2005, daily cigarette smoking declined from 10 to 4 percent among 8th-graders, from 18 to 8 percent among 10th-graders, and from 25 to 14 percent among 12th-graders. One possible reason for the sharp declines in daily smoking since the mid-1990s is that the proportions of students' ever initiating smoking have been falling sharply since 1996 among 8th- and 10th-graders and since 1997 for 12th-graders.

For 8th-graders, male and female students continued to have similar rates of daily smoking (4 percent) in 2005. White 8th-graders (5 percent) continued to smoke at a higher rate than either their Black or Hispanic peers (2 percent and 3 percent, respectively).¹⁶

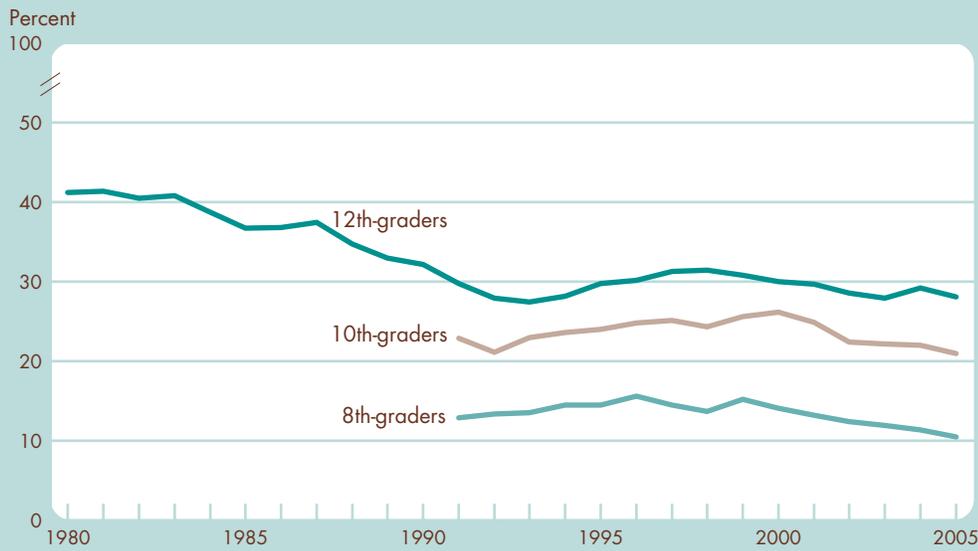
¹⁵ Data were first collected in 1975 for 12th-graders and in 1991 for 8th- and 10th-graders.

¹⁶ In this survey, respondents were asked to choose one ethnic or racial category. Racial and ethnic subgroup data from the Monitoring the Future Study are presented as 2-year averages; data for the specified year and the previous year have been combined to increase sample size and thus provide more stable estimates.

Illicit drug use over the past 30 days among 8th-graders dropped from 12 percent in 2001 to 9 percent in 2005; among 10th-graders, it dropped from 23 percent in 2001 to 17 percent in 2005; and among 12th-graders, it dropped from 26 percent in 2001 to 23 percent in 2005.

In 2005, 11 percent of 8th-graders, 21 percent of 10th-graders, and 28 percent of 12th graders reported having five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past 2 weeks (Figure 8). Patterns of heavy drinking by race and ethnicity remained stable: in all three grades, heavy drinking was more prevalent among White and Hispanic students than among their Black counterparts.

Figure 8 Percentage of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students who reported having five or more alcoholic beverages in a row in the past 2 weeks by grade, 1980–2005



SOURCE: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Monitoring the Future Survey.

The rates of serious violent crime—that is, homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery—involving juvenile victims have fluctuated in recent years. The victimization rate of serious violent crimes against juveniles ages 12–17 decreased from 18 per 1,000 juveniles in 2003 to 11 per 1,000 in 2004. However, the rate in 2004 was not different from the rate in 2002. Overall, victimization rates have declined from their 1993 peak of 44 victims per 1,000 juveniles. The rate of serious violent offending in 2004, 14 crimes per 1,000 youth, remained unchanged from the rate in 2003, but was lower than the peak of 52 crimes per 1,000 youth in 1993.