

Alcohol and Other Drug-Related Behaviors and Academic Achievement



Montana Office of Public Instruction • Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent • www.opi.mt.gov

What is the relationship between alcohol and other drug-related behaviors and academic achievement?

Data presented below from the 2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show a negative association between alcohol and other drug-related behaviors and academic achievement. This means that students with higher grades are less likely to engage in alcohol and other drug-related behaviors than their classmates with lower grades, and students who do not engage in alcohol and other drug-related behaviors receive higher grades than their classmates who do engage in alcohol and other drug-related behaviors. These associations do not prove causation. Further research is needed to determine whether low grades lead to behaviors related to alcohol and other drug use, behaviors related to alcohol and other drug use lead to low grades, or some other factors lead to both of these problems.

Percentage of high school students who engaged in alcohol and other drug-related behaviors, by type of grades earned – Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019.

Alcohol and Other Drug-Related Behaviors	Percentage of Montana high school students who engaged in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned				Significant Association*
	A's	B's	C's	D's/F's	
Alcohol					
Drank alcohol before age 13 years	11	18	28	37	Yes
Drank alcohol during the past 30 days	27	39	41	48	Yes
Drank four or more drinks (female), five or more drinks (male), of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours, during the past 30 days	13	20	25	28	Yes
Had 10 or more drinks in a row during the past 30 days	2	7	11	13	Yes
Obtained alcohol by someone giving it to them (among current drinkers)	44	40	34	29	No
Other drugs					
Used marijuana in their lifetime	27	47	56	70	Yes
Tried marijuana before age 13 years	3	7	14	27	Yes
Used marijuana during the past 30 days	14	22	30	45	Yes
Used synthetic marijuana (e.g., K2, Spice, fake weed, King Kong, Yucatan Fire, Skunk, or Moon Rocks) during their lifetime	4	6	10	16	Yes
Ever took prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription	9	14	15	28	Yes
Used any form of cocaine (i.e., powder, crack, or freebase) in their lifetime	2	5	5	11	Yes
Used inhalants (sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled paints or sprays to get high) during their lifetime	5	9	10	21	Yes
Used heroin (e.g., smack, junk, or China white,) during their lifetime	1	2	2	4	No
Used methamphetamines (e.g., speed, crystal, crank, or ice,) during their lifetime	1	2	3	7	Yes
Used ecstasy (e.g., MDMA) during their lifetime	2	5	6	11	Yes
Ever took steroids without a doctor's prescription	1	2	1	4	No
Injected any illegal drug into their body during their lifetime	1	1	1	3	No
Were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the past 12 months	20	24	25	28	Yes

*Based on logistic regression analysis controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade in school, $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Percentage of high school students, by alcohol-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2019.

Alcohol-related behaviors

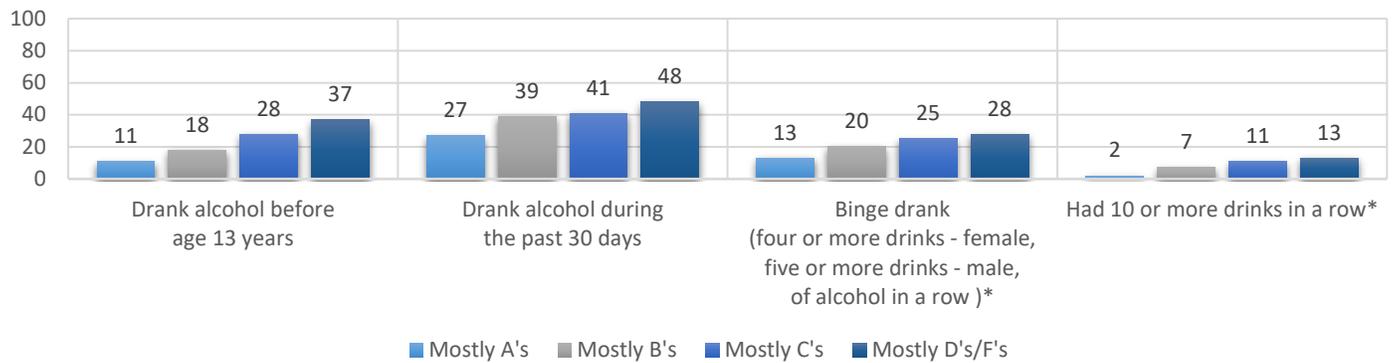
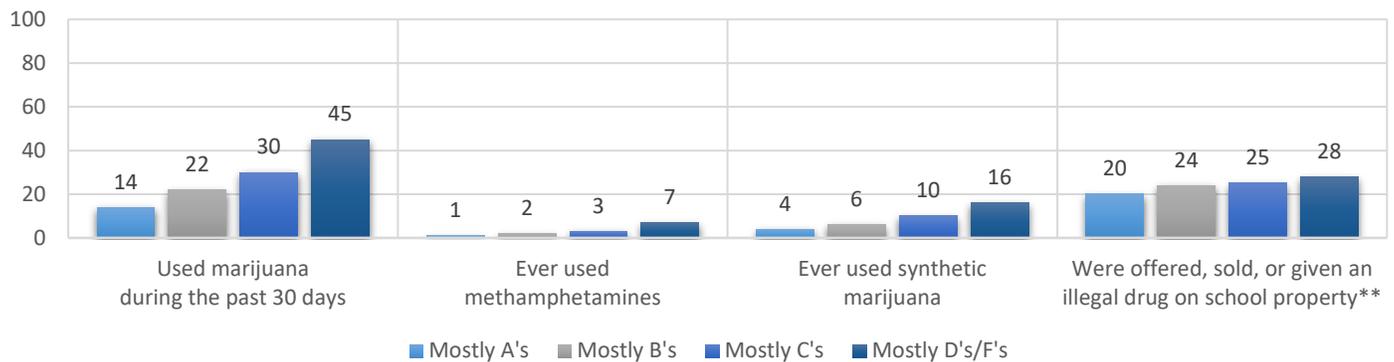


Figure 2. Percentage of high school students, by other drug-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2019.

Other drug-related behaviors



* During the past 30 days.

** During the past 12 months.

The Montana YRBS monitors priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. It is conducted every 2 years during late winter and provides data representative of high school students in Montana. In 2019, students completing the YRBS were asked, “During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?” and given seven response options (Mostly A’s, Mostly B’s, Mostly C’s, Mostly D’s, Mostly F’s, None of these grades, Not sure). In 2019, 46% of students received mostly A’s, 31% received mostly B’s, 15% received mostly C’s, 5% received mostly D’s or F’s, and 4% reported receiving none of these grades or not sure. The YRBS has been administered by the Office of Public Instruction in collaboration with Montana schools since 1991. For more information on the YRBS please visit www.opi.mt.gov/yrebs.

Montana High School Students - Grades Earned

