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U-M study indicates cocaine use remains high on American college campuses, while other drug frequency is down. Students report cocaine is readily available, see little risk.

EDITORS: Further information may be obtained from Lloyd Johnston at the U-M's Institute for Social Research (313) 763-5043.

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ANN ARBOR---Cocaine use remains high among American college students, even though the use of most other drugs on campus has fallen substantially since 1980.

Researchers at The University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR) found that cocaine is readily available on college campuses and that a great majority of students see little risk in experimenting with it.

Reporting on their national survey of drug use among college students, social psychologists Lloyd Johnston, Jerald Bachman and Patrick O'Malley indicated that cocaine use also remains at peak levels among high school students and young adults generally. Nearly 40 percent of all high school graduates have tried it by age 26 or 27.

By the end of their fourth year of college, roughly 30 percent of all students will have tried cocaine, the U-M survey revealed. About one in every six (17 percent) used it in the year prior to the 1985 survey; one in 14 (7 percent) in the previous month---figures virtually unchanged since 1980.

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"In light of what is now known about the addictive potential and other medical dangers of cocaine, these levels of use are both surprising and unsettling," the researchers said.

For other drugs covered in the survey, a different picture emerges:

The proportion of college students using marijuana in the year before the survey fell from 51 percent in 1980 to 41 percent in 1984. The 1985 figure remained the same. More important, daily marijuana use fell by more than half, from 7.2 percent in 1980 to 3.1 percent in 1985.

Large drops were also recorded in annual use of methaqualone (Quaaludes), from 7.2 percent in 1980 to 1.4 percent in 1985; of barbiturates, from 2.9 percent to 1.3 percent; and of tranquilizers, from 6.9 percent to 3.5 percent.

Use of other drugs began to drop more recently: amphetamines, from a high of 21 percent in 1982 to 12 percent in 1985; and LSD, from a high of 6.3 percent in 1982 to 2.2 percent in 1985.

The U-M study found these declines typical for all high school graduates of the same age, not just for those going to college.

College students are as likely as their overall age group to be using any illicit drug.

"The drug epidemic largely originated on the nation's campuses in the late 1960s," Johnston noted, "so it is significant to see it recede on those same campuses. The real fly in the ointment, however, in addition to the fact that the decline lost momentum in 1985, is that cocaine use remains at peak levels in this population. This is true among high school students and young adults generally---not just college students."

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The study found that among all high school graduates, the number of those who try cocaine appears to rise steadily to at least age 27 (the oldest group interviewed), by which point nearly 40 percent have tried it. Active use rises steadily to about age 22, where it plateaus, at least through age 27. College students show an increase in use through their four years of enrollment, at levels typical for their age group.

Availability and an underestimation of the risks of cocaine appear to contribute to the widespread use of it on campus, Johnston said.

More than half (57 percent) of students surveyed stated that cocaine would be fairly or very easy to obtain, and about half (49 percent) have some friends who use it.

Only about one-third see much risk associated with trying cocaine. This figure has remained unchanged since 1980 despite the adverse publicity cocaine has received.

"Actually, disapproval of cocaine use remains strong among the majority of college students," Johnston reported. "Three out of every four students (76 percent) say they disapprove of even trying it, but obviously an appreciable minority are willing to take the chance of using it.

"We think this is because so few see experimenting with cocaine as dangerous. Because some users can have a long 'honeymoon' period before really getting into trouble with cocaine, they, and others observing them, can develop a false sense of security with it."

However, college students are a little less likely than their overall age group to use LSD or any of the prescription drugs (stimulants, sedatives, tranquilizers or narcotics other than heroin) without medical supervision. They are also less likely than their age peers to be smoking marijuana daily.

Some of the most important differences between college students and their non-college age peers occur in the use of two legal drugs included in the study---alcohol and cigarettes.

College students are more likely than their age peers not in college to report occasions of heavy drinking (five or more drinks at least once in the two weeks prior to the survey). Some 57 percent of male college students and 34 percent of females reported such drinking bouts, which appear to be increasing among the college men.

Cigarette smoking, on the other hand, is much lower among college students (14 percent) than among their non-college peers (31 percent).

"This is a difference that preceded going to college," Johnston explained, "since the smoking habit tends to start at an early age, particularly among the less academically able."

College women are more likely to be smokers than are college men. In 1985 daily smoking was found among 18 percent of college women versus only 10 percent of college men.

"It appears that the tobacco industry's lavish effort to associate smoking with liberation and success among women has paid off---at least for the industry," Johnston concluded. "The payoff for the young women who bought the message is quite another matter."

The ISR study, titled "Monitoring the Future," is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and is best known for its annual national surveys of high school seniors.

Each year since 1975 roughly 17,000 seniors in 135 high schools have been surveyed, followed by mail surveys of a representative sample of the participants from each graduating class.

Those follow-up respondents who are one to four years past high school and actively enrolled in college provide a good cross-section of American college students, according to the U-M researchers.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A single copy of the report may be obtained free of charge from the National Clearinghouse on Drug Information, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857. The report should be identified as "Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., and Bachman, J.G. Drug Use Among American High School Students, College Students, and Other Young Adults: National Trends Through 1985. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse, Publication No. (ADM) 86-1450, 1986, 237 pp."

RADIO NEWS DEPARTMENTS: Recorded comments by Lloyd Johnston will be available on the U-M News Briefs telephone audio service, 313-763-1300 beginning noon, July 7.

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(ISR; Johnston; Bachman; O'Malley) (R1-3; ISR; Ed1-3; X1a, 2a, 9; RTsp) [5871]

**Trends in Annual Prevalence of Twelve Types of Drugs
Among College Students 1-4 Years Beyond High School**

	Percent who used in past 12 months						'84-'85 change
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	
Approx. Wtd. N =	(1040)	(1130)	(1150)	(1170)	(1110)	(1080)	
Marijuana	51.2	51.3	44.7	45.2	40.7	41.7	+1.0
LSD	6.1	4.6	6.3	4.2	3.7	2.2	-1.5s
Cocaine	16.9	15.9	17.2	17.2	16.4	17.3	+0.9
Heroin	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	+0.1
Other Opiates ^a	5.1	4.4	3.8	3.8	3.8	2.4	-1.4
Stimulants ^a	22.4	22.2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Stimulants, Adjusted ^{a,b}	NA	NA	21.1	17.3	15.8	11.9	-3.9ss
Sedatives ^a	8.3	7.9	8.0	4.5	3.4	2.5	-0.9
Barbiturates ^a	2.9	2.8	3.2	2.2	1.9	1.3	-0.6
Methaqualone ^a	7.2	6.5	6.6	3.1	2.5	1.4	-1.1
Tranquilizers ^a	6.9	4.8	4.7	4.6	3.5	3.5	0.0
Alcohol	90.5	92.5	92.2	91.6	90.0	92.0	+2.0
Cigarettes	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NOTES: Level of significance of difference between the two most recent years:
s = .05, ss = .01, sss = .001.
NA indicates data not available.

^aOnly drug use which was not under a doctor's orders is included here.

^bAdjusted for the inappropriate reporting of non-prescription stimulants.