

Data Story:

Substance Use at Barrington Middle and High



Essential Question: How prevalent is substance use among students at Barrington Middle and High Schools?

Description:

This story examines the results of the BAY Team's bi-annual Youth Survey. It focuses on the starting age and frequency of drug use by Barrington students both between grades and over time.

Data Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education

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The BAY Team

The Barrington Adult Youth (BAY) Team is the town of Barrington's substance abuse task force. A recipient of a federal Drug-Free Communities Support Program (DFC) grant, the team works to reduce the use and acceptance of alcohol and other drugs among youths and the community.

Every two years, the BAY Team surveys Barrington middle and high school students (approximately 2,000 students) on their alcohol and drug use. The results of these surveys are examined in this story.

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Introduction

The use of alcohol and illicit drugs among middle and high school students, in particular marijuana, has been increasing in Rhode Island and [throughout the nation](#). Furthermore, this increase has been accompanied by a decrease in the perceived risks of drug use, despite [studies showing](#) that drug use can lead to addiction, mood disorders, and reduced long-term cognitive function.

This story compares student use of alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, and other substances in Barrington public schools by grade. Substance use is examined in three different ways:

- Age of first use
- Frequency of use over the last 30 days
- Frequency of use over the student's lifetime

For frequency measures, tobacco products are reported separately to accommodate the difference in how their use is measured (for example: 10 cigarettes, half a pack/per day).

NOTE: All figures are self-reported estimates of substance use.

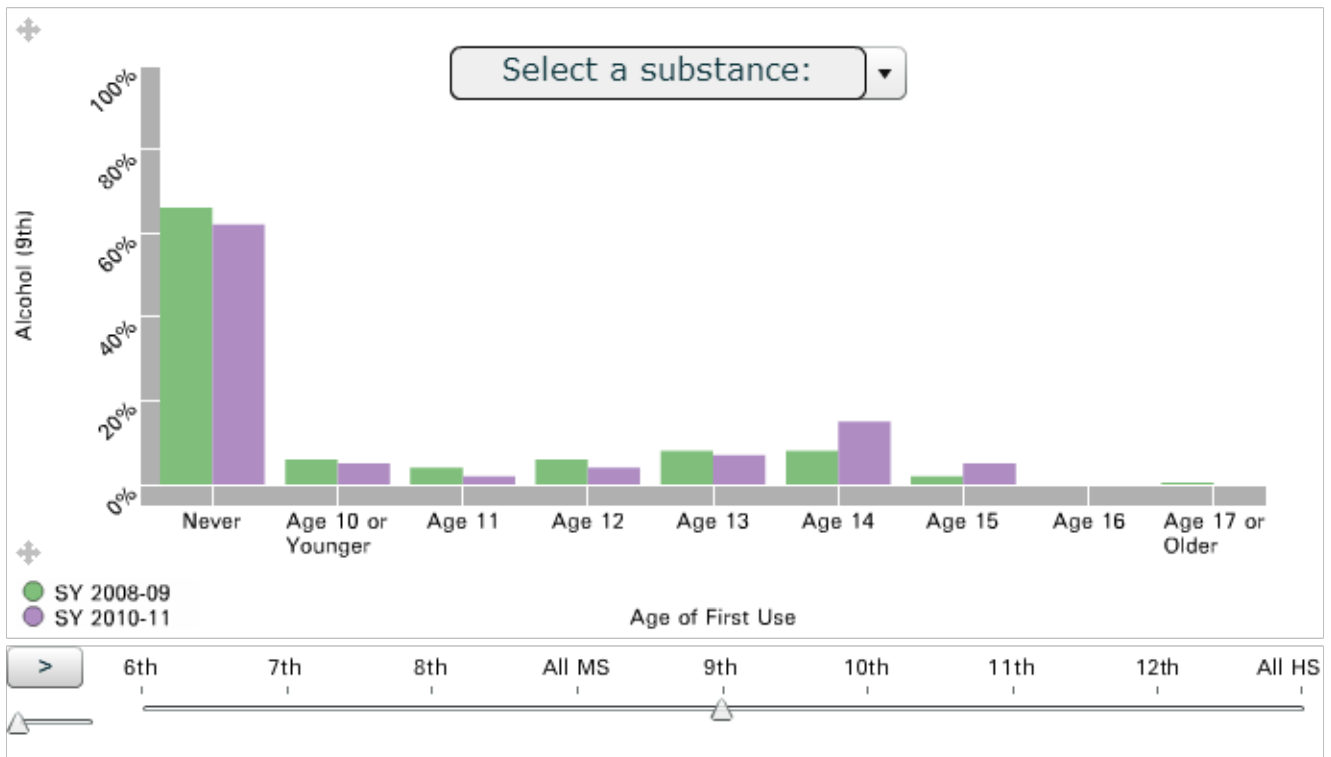
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Age of First Use



Overall, students in Barrington reported trying alcohol at a younger age than marijuana or cigarettes.

- Alcohol, marijuana, and cigarette use is more prevalent among high school students than middle school students. In the SY 2010-11 survey, 92% of 6th graders reported they had never tried alcohol compared to only 24% of 12th graders.

In comparing the SY 2008-09 and SY 2010-11 surveys:

- The percentage of middle school students who reported never having tried alcohol showed an increase from 86% in 2009 to 90% in 2011. This increase was determined to be statistically significant at the $p=0.05$ level. 8th graders in particular showed significantly lower rates of alcohol consumption during the 2010-11 school year.
- The percentage of 9th graders who reported never having tried marijuana *decreased*: 87% in 2009 as opposed to 76% in 2011. This decrease is statistically significant at the $p=0.05$ level.

**"All MS" represents all Barrington Middle School students surveyed. "All HS" represents all Barrington High School students surveyed.*

NOTE: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

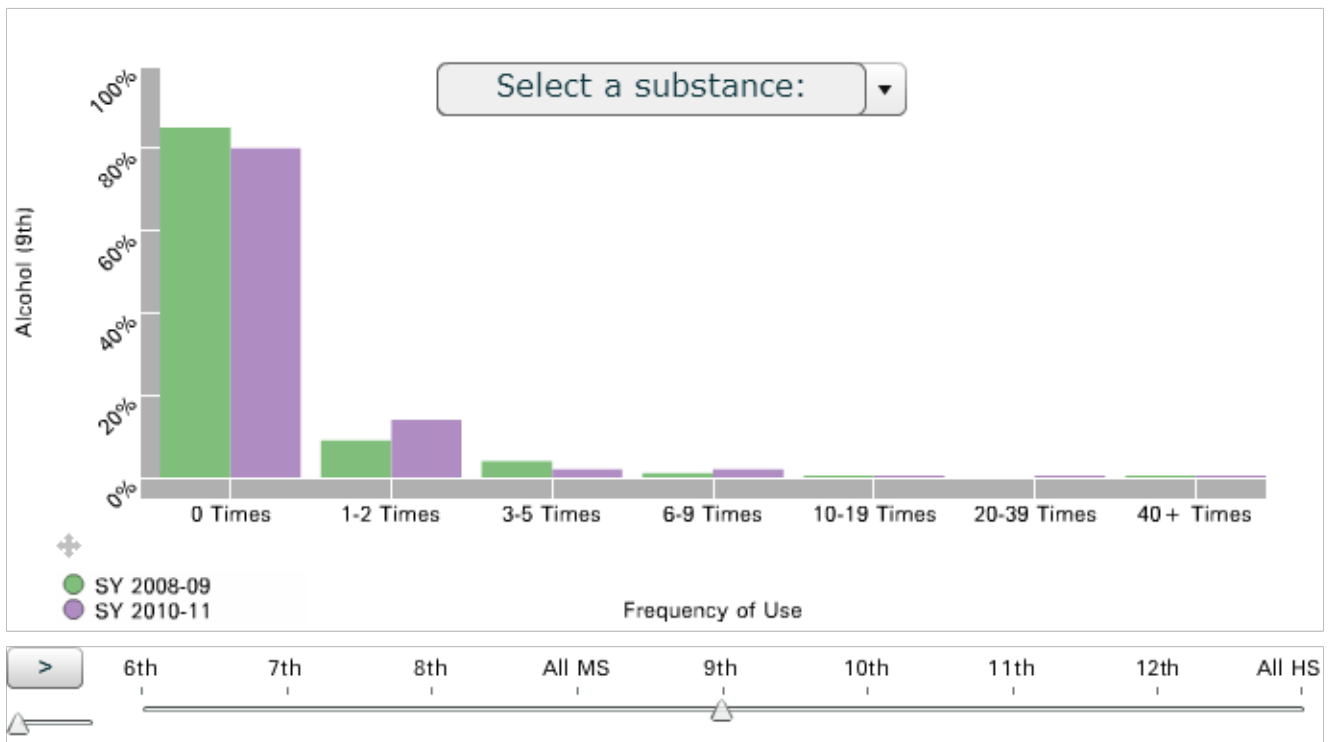
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Substance Use LAST 30 DAYS - Alcohol & Illicit Drugs



Alcohol was the most commonly reported substance used in the last 30 days for both middle and high school students.

- In the SY 2010-11 survey, alcohol usage was highest among Barrington 12th graders, of which 52% reported using alcohol in the last 30 days.
- Substance usage (of alcohol and illicit drugs) among Barrington middle school students was much less pronounced. In the SY 2010-11 survey, only 3% of middle schoolers reported using alcohol at least once in the last 30 days. However, 3% of middle schoolers also reported using prescription drugs in the last 30 days as well.

In comparing the SY 2008-09 and SY 2010-11 surveys:

- The percentage of all high schoolers who reported having tried alcohol 1-2 times increased from 14% in 2009 to 19% in 2011. This increase is statistically significant at the $p=0.05$ level.
- The percentage of 9th graders who reported that they did not smoke marijuana in the last 30 days *decreased* from 91% in 2009 to 84% in 2011.

NOTE: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

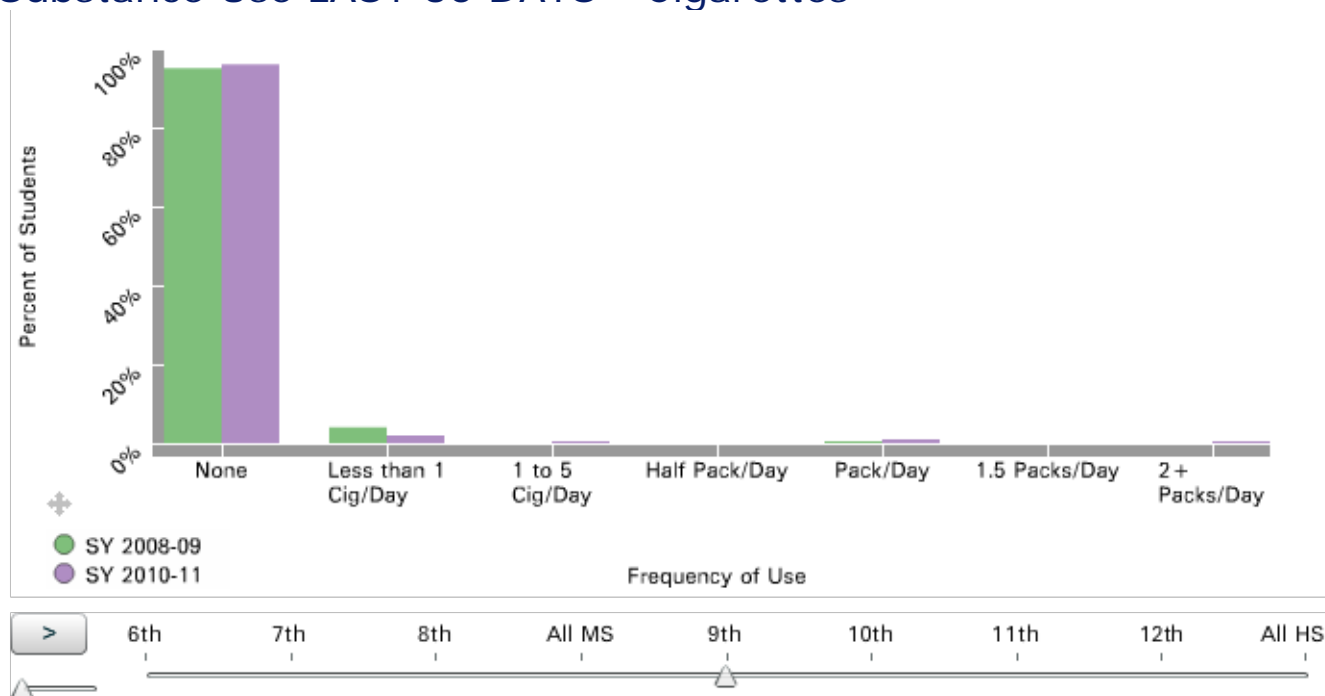
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Substance Use LAST 30 DAYS - Cigarettes



In the SY 2010-11 survey, 12% of Barrington high schoolers reported smoking cigarettes in the last 30 days compared to only 1% of middle schoolers.

- In the SY 2010-11 survey, 2% of 8th graders reported smoking cigarettes at least once in the last 30 days, as opposed to 21% of 12th graders. 4% of 12th graders also reported smoking at least a pack per day in the past 30 days.
- In comparing the SY 2008-09 and SY 2010-11 surveys, the percentage of 10th graders who reported not having smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days increased from 85% in 2009 to 92% in 2011.

NOTES: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

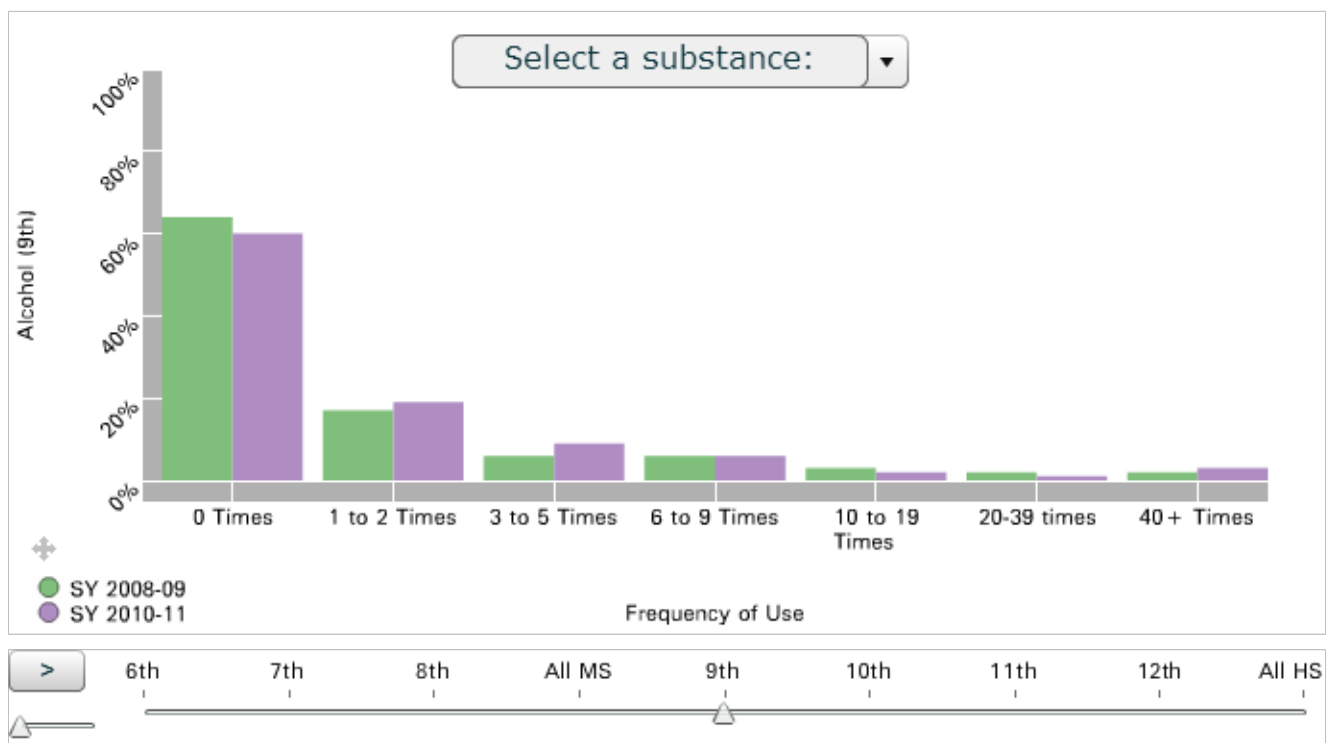
The frequency categories "1.5 Packs/Day" and "2+ Packs/Day" were added to the BAY Team survey in the 2010-11 school year. The SY 2010-11 survey also included estimates of smokeless tobacco use; these estimates are not included in this story.

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LIFETIME Substance Use - Alcohol & Illicit Drugs



Marijuana, while relatively uncommon among middle schoolers, is the second most commonly used substance among Barrington high schoolers.

- In the SY 2010-11 survey, 33% of Barrington high school students reported using marijuana at least once.
- By 12th grade, over three-fourths of students report having tried alcohol at least once. In the SY 2010-11 survey, 77% of 12th graders reported having tried alcohol at least once; 14% reported using alcohol at least 40 times in their lives.

In comparing the SY 2008-09 and SY 2010-11 surveys:

- The percentage of middle schoolers who reported never having drunk alcohol increased from 83% in 2009 to 89% in 2011. This increase is statistically significant at the $p=0.05$ level.
- Both middle schoolers and high schoolers showed an increase in the percentage of students who reported never having used prescription drugs: 91% in 2009 to 95% in 2011 for middle school, 81% in 2009 to 84% in 2011 for high school. These increases are statistically significant at the $p=0.05$ level.
- The percentage of high schoolers who reported never having used ecstasy *decreased* from 97% in 2009 to 94% in 2011.

NOTE: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

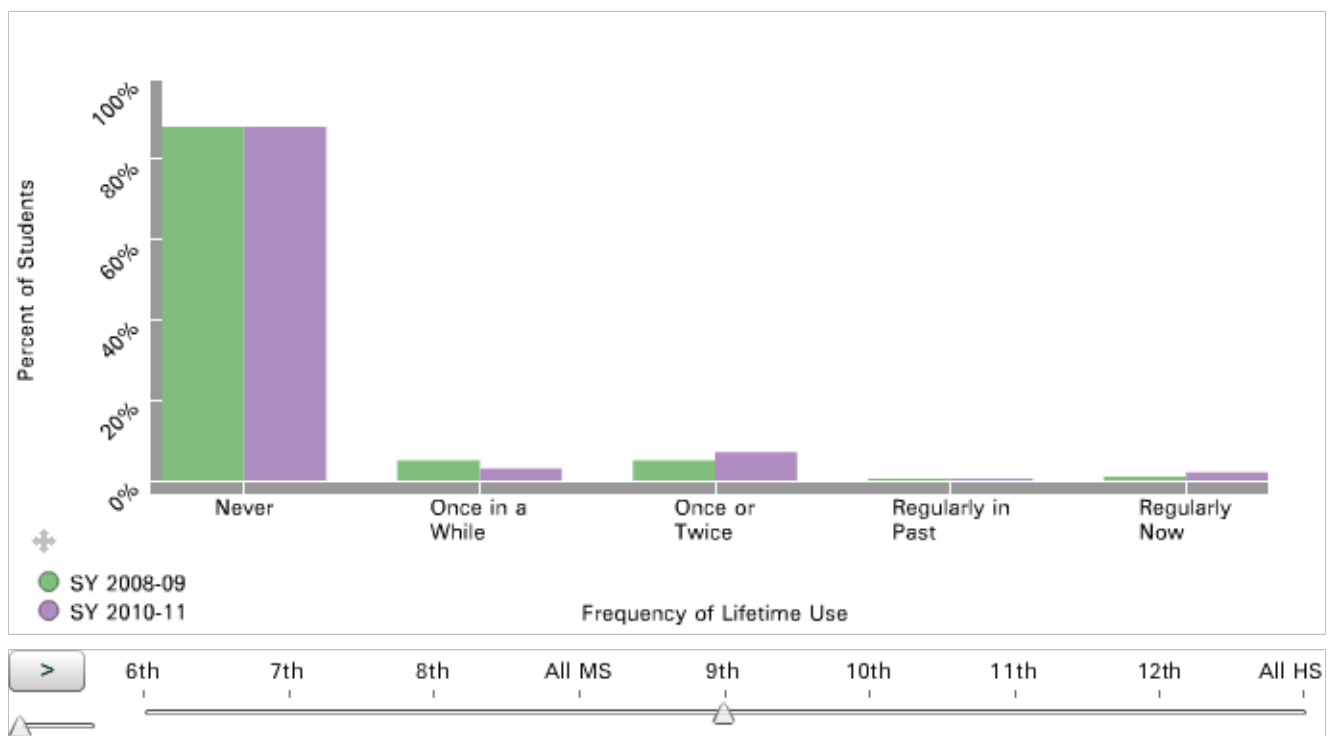
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LIFETIME Substance Use - Cigarettes



In the SY 2010-11 survey, 26% of Barrington high schoolers reported smoking cigarettes at least once in their lives compared to only 3% of middle schoolers.

- 7% of 12th graders reported that they currently smoking cigarettes regularly.
- In comparing the SY 2008-09 and SY 2010-11 surveys, the percentage of 10th graders who reported never having smoked cigarettes increased from 73% in 2009 to 82% in 2011. This increase was determined to be significant at the $p=0.05$ level.

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Conclusion

Comparing the results of the 2008-09 and 2010-11 surveys highlight both successes and areas of concern:

SUCCESS. The percent of middle school students **abstaining** from drug use *increased* for every substance with the exception of ecstasy and cocaine.

CONCERN. Drug use continues to increase with grade advancement, with higher graders reporting higher levels of use. Furthermore, for all substances, lifetime drug use remains higher than past 30 day use, suggesting some level of habitual use.

Data from the upcoming 2012-13 survey will be crucial in determining the statistical significance of these trends and the degree to which they persist over time.

Click [here](#) to view the full version of the 2010-11 BAY Team Youth Survey Report.

For more information on substance abuse prevention in the state, a full listing of local task forces can be found [here](#).

APPENDIX

Substance Use at Barrington Middle and High

story link: <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/substance-use-at-barrington-middle-and-high>

Data Sources



Rhode Island Department of Education
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/>

Related Terms

- **KEYWORDS**
 - Education, Health
- **Tags**
 - Justice, Barrington, Drug Use