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PRESS RELEASE

84% of youth in juvenile facilities reported ever using drugs

WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Justice Statistics is announcing the release of *Drug and Alcohol Use Reported by Youth in Juvenile Facilities, 2008–2018 – Statistical Tables*. An estimated 84% of youth in juvenile facilities reported ever using drugs and 76% reported ever using alcohol, based on aggregated data collected in 2008–09, 2012, and 2018. More youth in juvenile facilities reported never using drugs or alcohol in their lifetime in 2018 (15%) than in 2008–09 (9%).

An estimated 60% of youth in juvenile facilities met the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* criteria for substance use disorder in the 12 months before entering custody, while more than a third (36%) met the criteria for alcohol use disorder at that time.

“Although there have been decreases in substance use over time, it remains the case that over 50% of youth in juvenile facilities meet the criteria for substance use disorder,” noted BJS Director Dr. Alexis Piquero.

From 2008 to 2018, an estimated 81% of youth reported ever using marijuana. For 9 of the 13 types of drugs examined by the survey, female youth were more likely than male youth to report having ever used them. Heterosexual youth (85%) were more likely to report ever using drugs than youth who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or some other sexual orientation (77%).

“These data also show important demographic differences, with female youth reporting more substance use—with many more different types of substances—than male youth. And almost 90% of American Indian or Alaska Native youth met the criteria for substance use disorder,” said Dr. Piquero.

From 2008 to 2018, female youth were more likely to have met the criteria for substance use disorder (72%) or alcohol use disorder (48%) than male youth (59% substance and 34% alcohol). From 2008 to 2018, more than 6 in 10 (63%) of American Indian and Alaska Native youth met the criteria for severe substance use disorder.

Findings are from a questionnaire given to 10% of youth in BJS’s National Survey of Youth in Custody in 2008–09, 2012 and 2018. Analyses in the report are generally based on data aggregated across the three surveys. The survey is part of BJS’s National Prison Rape Statistics Program, which collects data on sexual victimization as required by the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003.

[Drug and Alcohol Use Reported by Youth in Juvenile Facilities, 2008–2018 – Statistical Tables](#), written by BJS Statisticians Michael B. Field, Elizabeth J. Davis and Amy D. Lauger; related documents; and additional information about BJS’s statistical publications and programs are available on the BJS website at bjs.ojp.gov.

About the Bureau of Justice Statistics

The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs is the principal federal agency responsible for collecting, analyzing and disseminating reliable statistics on crime and criminal justice in the United States. Alexis R. Piquero, PhD, is the director. More information about BJS and criminal justice statistics can be found at bjs.ojp.gov.

About the Office of Justice Programs

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime; advance racial equity in the administration of justice; assist victims; and enhance the rule of law. More information about OJP can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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