



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DRUG FREE MARION COUNTY RELEASES SECOND EDITION OF
LOCAL REPORT ON UNDERAGE AND BINGE DRINKING**

**MARION COUNTY ALCOHOL USE AMONG
6TH TO 10TH GRADE STUDENTS OUTPACES STATE, REGION;
MARIJUANA USE AMONG ALL GRADES ALSO PRONOUNCED**

The second edition of a comprehensive report by Drug Free Marion County on underage and binge drinking shows that alcohol-consumption patterns among Marion County youth in sixth, eighth and tenth grades continue to outpace regional and state averages. Marijuana use among Marion County students also is especially pronounced.

The Local Report on Underage and Binge Drinking shows that more Marion County youth in grades six, eight and 10 have used alcohol than have the same student groups in the state and central region. Use within 30 days -- statistics that potentially demonstrate a pattern of regular use -- is higher in grades six and eight. Sixth and eighth graders also lead state and regional students in reported binge drinking within the last two weeks.

And Marion County youth at all grade levels outpaced those in the state and region for marijuana use within the past 30 days.

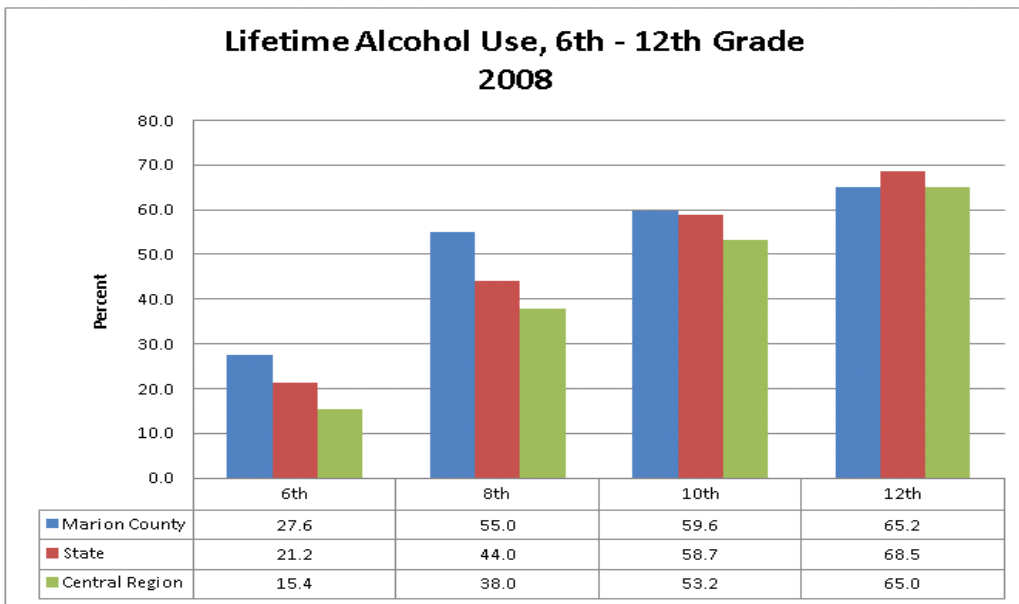
Overall, by the time students reach the 12th grade, nearly half have used tobacco and marijuana, and more than 65 percent have used alcohol.

“These numbers – and especially the percentages involving sixth and eighth graders -- show a definite need to focus more attention on younger adolescents when it comes to preventing substance use,” says Nancy Beals, project coordinator for Drug Free Marion County. However, she cautions against neglecting efforts on prevention aimed at upper-level students.

Local Report results are based on in-school surveys provided by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center. “Knowing that alcohol use in adolescence negatively affects school performance, and that Marion County schools have a significant dropout rate, we have concerns about whether the 12th grade statistics accurately reflect use rates in that age group,” Beals adds.

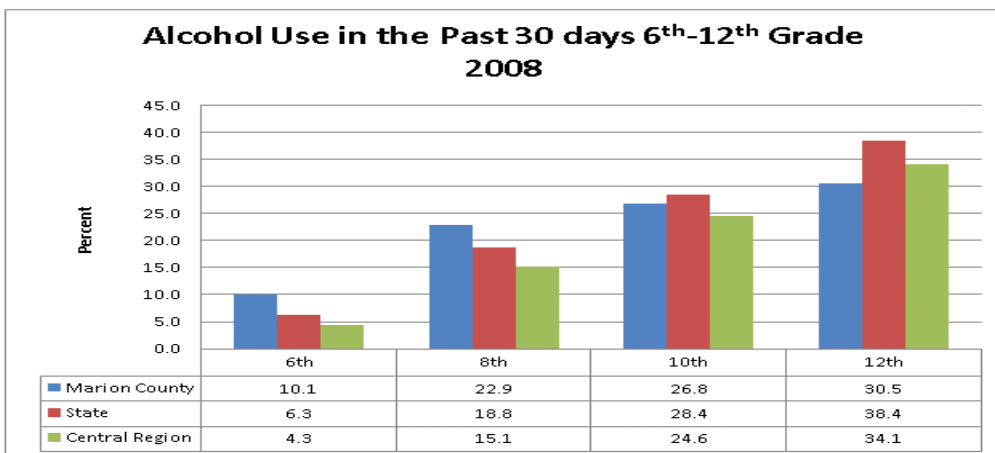
Report Details

The Local Report on Underage and Binge Drinking indicates that 27.6 percent of sixth grade students have used alcohol. By eighth grade the rate more than doubles, to 55.0 percent. In 10th grade, the number increases to 59.6 percent. And 65.2 percent of 12 graders report having used alcohol.



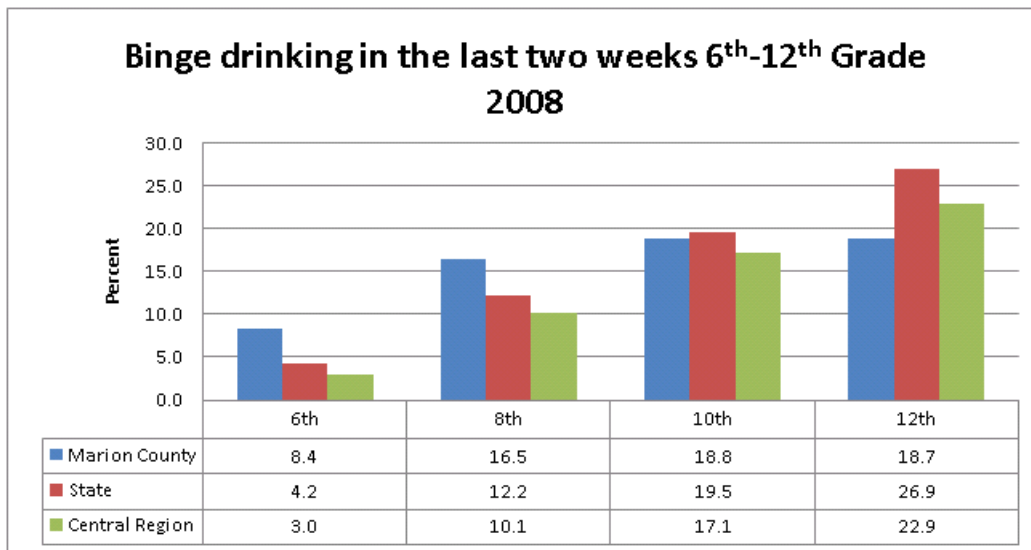
Alcohol-use rates for Marion County youth within the past 30 days also outpace state and regional rates in the sixth and eighth grades. On average, 10.1 percent of sixth graders have used alcohol in the past 30 days, while 22.9 percent of eighth graders have done so.

Marion County tenth graders outpace regional youth in their age group for alcohol use in the last 30 days (26.8 versus 24.6 percent), but lag slightly behind state youth in this category.



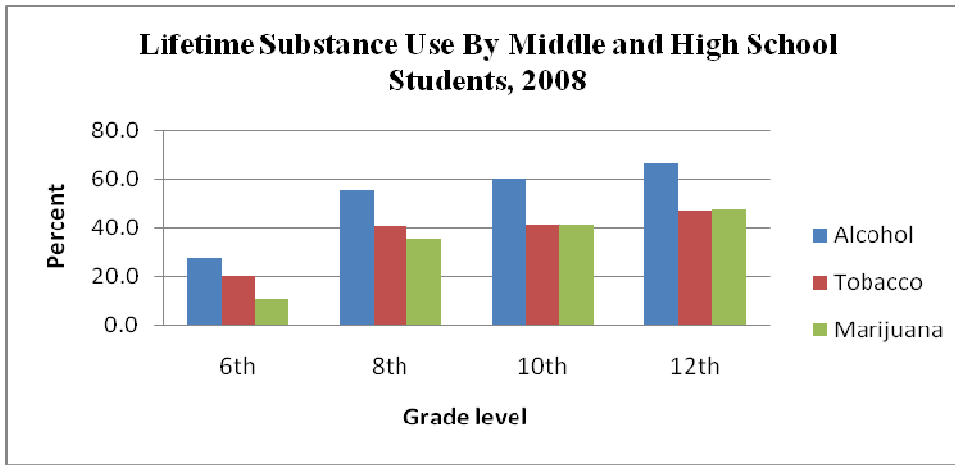
Binge-drinking statistics also show reason for concern. By 10th grade, almost one in five students (18.8 percent) reported binge drinking in the last two weeks, a number that holds steady (18.7) among twelfth graders.

When compared with state and central region averages, a greater percentage of Marion County sixth (8.4 percent) and eighth (16.5 percent) graders reported binge drinking within the last two weeks.



Says Beals, “Alcohol use during adolescence negatively impacts youth in both the short- and long-term. In the short term, alcohol use is associated with other high-risk behaviors, including other drug use, unprotected sexual encounters, dropping out of school, accidents, assaults and violence. It also negatively affects academic achievement. In the long-term, a person who begins drinking heavily as a young teen is nearly five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood to use alcohol – 46 percent versus nine percent.”

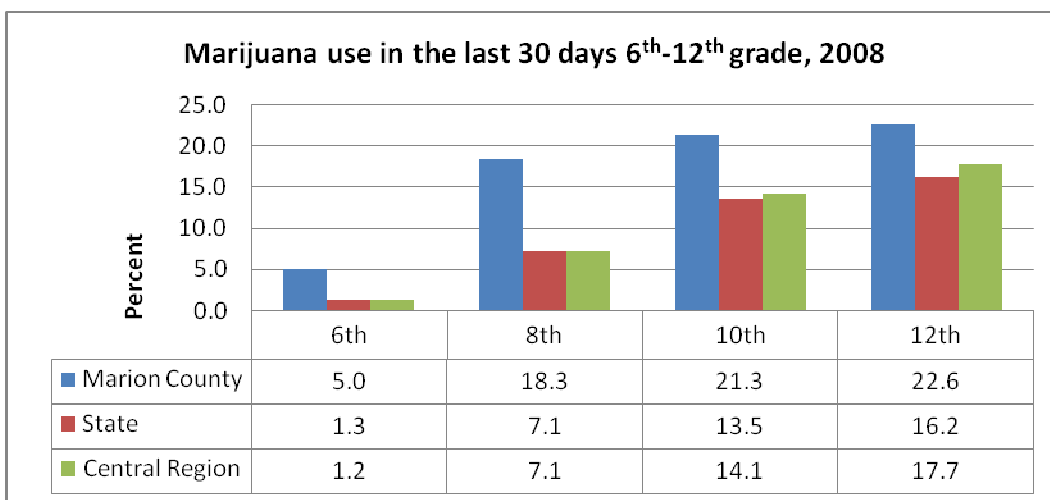
Tobacco and marijuana use also remain significant among Marion County youths. About one in 10 (10.6 percent) of sixth grade Marion County students reported using marijuana and one in 5 (20.3 percent) have used tobacco. By senior year, nearly half of students have used marijuana (47.5 percent) and tobacco (47 percent).



“When nearly half of our students have used tobacco and marijuana by the 12th grade, and more than 65 percent have used alcohol at that point, there is a crucial need to address the community risk factors contributing to these statistics,” Beals says. “We must look at such areas as parental and community attitudes toward youth use, alcohol-outlet density in neighborhoods, availability of alcohol through hours and days of sale, alcohol and tobacco violations by retailers and servers, product taxes and other key systems impacting the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana among our County’s young people.”

Other environmental risk factors, according to Beals, are living in poverty, children with both parents/guardians in the workforce and children living in single-parent households (both increase the possibility of more unsupervised time) and school systems with high dropout rates (again, allowing the student more unsupervised time).

In another key finding, marijuana use within the last 30 days by Marion County youth outpaces that in the state and central region. Among sixth graders, 5.0 percent have used within the last 30 days; those numbers rise to 18.3 percent (eighth), 21.3 percent (tenth) and 22.6 percent (twelfth).



“These findings further amplify the need for substance abuse prevention in the earlier grades as well as through high-school,” Beals says. “And it’s more important than ever for parents and guardians to talk to their children early and often about avoiding alcohol, drug and tobacco use.”

The complete second edition of the Local Report on Underage and Binge Drinking can be found on Drug Free Marion County’s Web site, <http://drugfreemc.org>. The report is divided into three sections: consumption patterns and prevalence of use; consequence data; and community risk factors that increase the likelihood of underage or binge drinking.

Drug Free Marion County – a not-for-profit organization – plans, promotes, implements and coordinates community efforts to prevent and reduce the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.