

elements of change

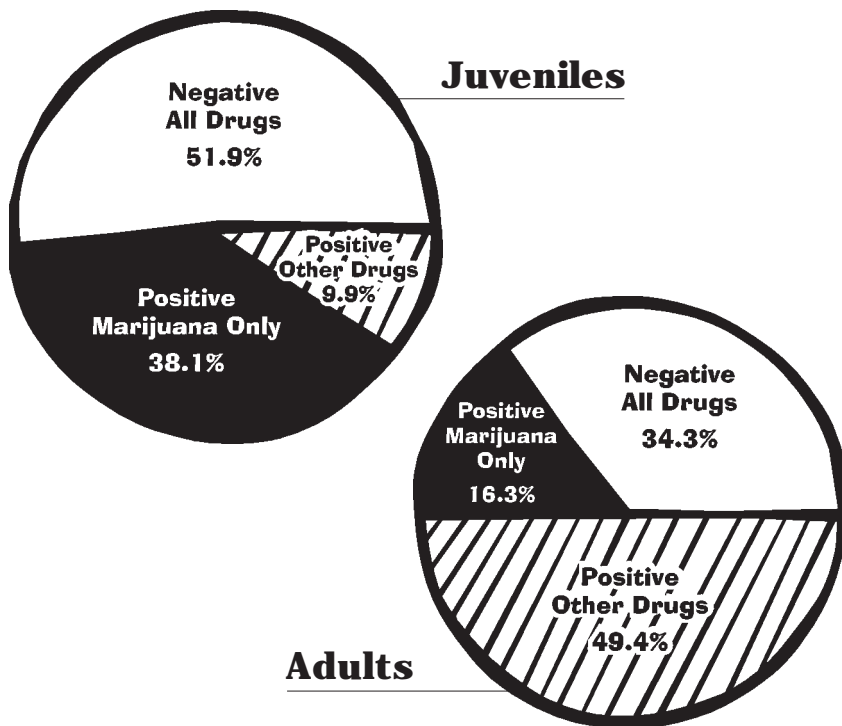
highlighting trends and issues in the criminal justice system

VOL. 3 / NO. 4

Half of Juvenile Detainees Tested Positive for Drugs, Primarily Marijuana

According to urinalysis tests, about half (48%) of the juveniles surveyed at Gilliam Youth Detention Center from 1992-1996 tested positive for recent drug use, not including alcohol and LSD, which are excluded from the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) urinalysis. The youth primarily tested positive for marijuana (38%). About 10% tested positive for other drugs, most often cocaine, sometimes heroin.

RESULTS OF DRUG TESTS OF DETAINED JUVENILES COMPARED TO ADULTS (1992-96)



In general, marijuana is the most widely abused illicit drug among adolescents. It is associated with poorer grades, dropping out of school, depression, delinquency and use of other illegal drugs. (Source: Gallup Organization, Inc. (1989). *The Waste Management, Inc. survey of parent-child dialogue on drug abuse. Oak Brook, IL: Waste Management, Inc.*)

In sharp contrast, two-thirds of adult offenders in the sample (66%) tested positive for drugs. Half of those adults tested positive for drugs other than marijuana, most often cocaine.



Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Research Special Report #2

Alcohol and Other Drug Use by Youth in Juvenile Detention

In 1997, The Piton Foundation and the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice embarked on the Juvenile Violence Prevention Research Project to try to better understand juvenile delinquency. What factors in young people's lives might contribute to juvenile crime or might help protect them from such behavior? Are there indicators to tell us when or where intervention might be effective?

In July 1997, we released the first in a series of special reports on our research. (See Elements of Change, Vol. 2/No. 3). The report included basic information on juveniles in detention, such as the reason the youth were arrested, their gender, age, race/ethnicity, family composition and school status.

The findings are based on a quarterly sample of youth interviewed at the Gilliam Youth Detention Center (which serves Denver County) from 1992 through 1996. The youth were surveyed as part of the National Institute of Justice's Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) Study. (This study was recently renamed the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring [ADAM] Program.)

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Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Research Special Report #2

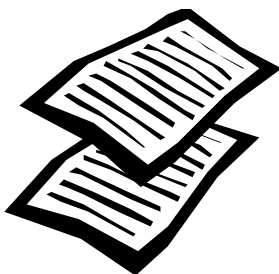
Alcohol and Other Drug Use by Youth in Juvenile Detention

(continued from p. 1)

Within 48 hours of admission to Gilliam, youth from the sample group (made up of juveniles arrested and detained but not convicted of a crime) were tested for recent drug use and, in one-on-one interviews, were asked a series of questions regarding alcohol and other drug use, family composition, school status, as well as other demographic information.

Beginning in 1997, the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice began using an addendum to the DUF survey instrument to ask additional questions regarding community and environmental factors such as the juveniles' relationships with family, peers, school and community. Collecting and analyzing this information presents a remarkable opportunity to augment and improve public thinking and dialogue, as well as to construct more effective policy and programs regarding juvenile crime prevention and intervention.

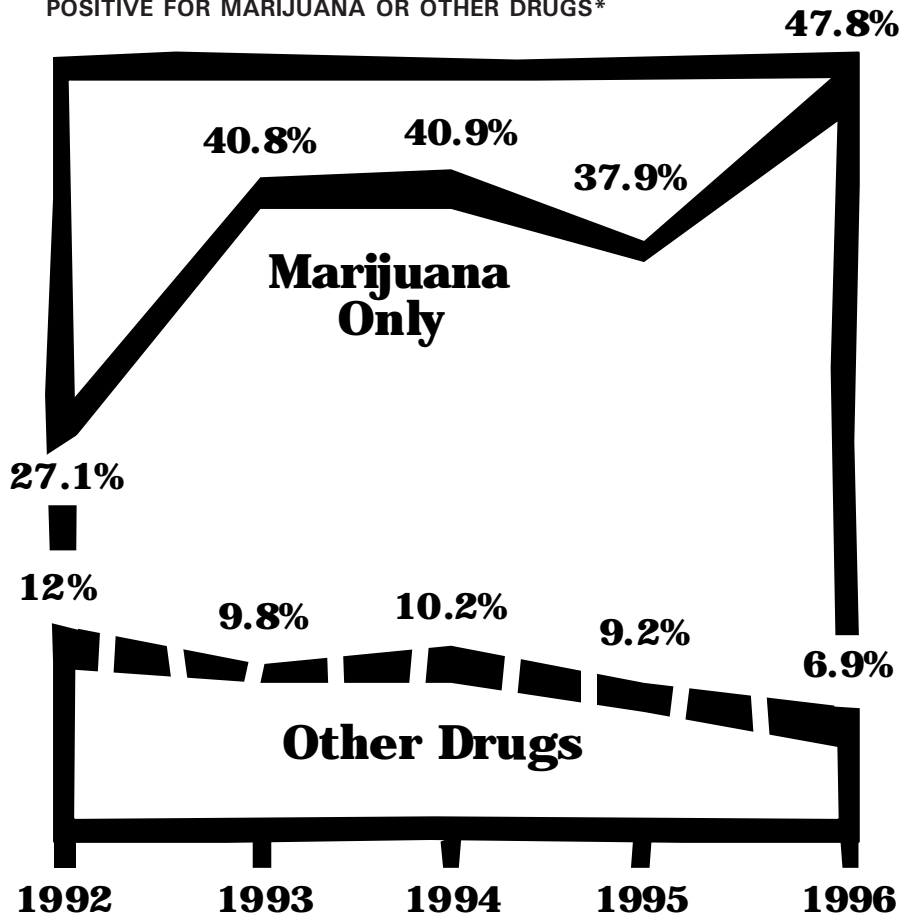
In this issue we are reporting our findings on alcohol and other drug use by juvenile detainees at Gilliam Youth Detention Center. (Substance use determined by both urinalysis and self-report.)



Marijuana Use Increased Substantially Over 5-Year Period; Other Drug Use Down

Juvenile detainees testing positive for marijuana use increased from 27% when the data began being collected in 1992 to 48% in 1996. This is consistent with other national and local research that shows marijuana use up sharply among juveniles. Other drug use declined by almost half, from 12% in 1992 to just under 7% in 1996.

RESULTS OF DRUG TESTS OF DETAINED JUVENILES OVER 5-YEAR PERIOD (1992-96): PERCENT JUVENILE DETAINEES TESTING POSITIVE FOR MARIJUANA OR OTHER DRUGS*



* Most frequently used "other drug" was cocaine. Among self-reported use, LSD was reported frequently but was not tested for by urinalysis. Self-report data of drug use compared to urinalysis test data revealed self-report data to be generally under-reported. "Other drugs" included cocaine, opiates, PCP, amphetamines, methadone, methaqualone, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, & propoxyphene. These drugs, plus marijuana, were the substances tested for in the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) Study. (This study was recently renamed the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring [ADAM] Program. See column to the left, beginning on p. 1, for more detail on DUF/ADAM.)

PROFILING

GILLIAM JUVENILE DETAINEES FOR DRUG USE

Juveniles who were suspended or expelled tested positive for drugs somewhat more frequently (56%) than juveniles who had dropped out (54%), had graduated or received their GED (49%), or were in school (46%).

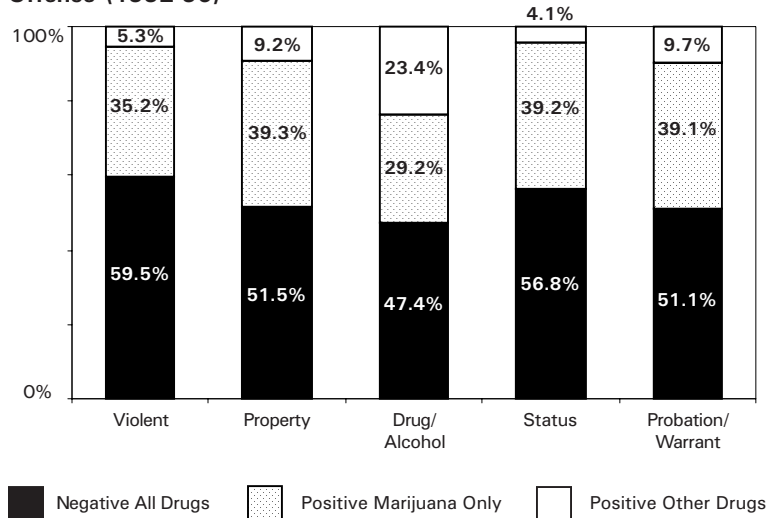
High school graduates or juveniles who had attained their GED more frequently tested positive for the use of other drugs besides marijuana (18%) than juveniles who had dropped out (14%), been expelled or suspended (9%) or were in school (8%).

Results of Drug Tests of Detained Juveniles by School Enrollment/Completion (1992-96)

	Negative All Drugs	Positive Marijuana Only	Positive Other Drugs
In-School	54.5%	37.0%	8.4%
Graduated/GED	51.0%	30.6%	18.4%
Expelled/Suspended	44.5%	46.2%	9.2%
Dropped Out	46.5%	39.4%	14.1%
Other	53.8%	37.2%	9.0%

Juveniles detained for violent offenses more frequently tested negative for drug use (60%) than juveniles detained for other offenses.

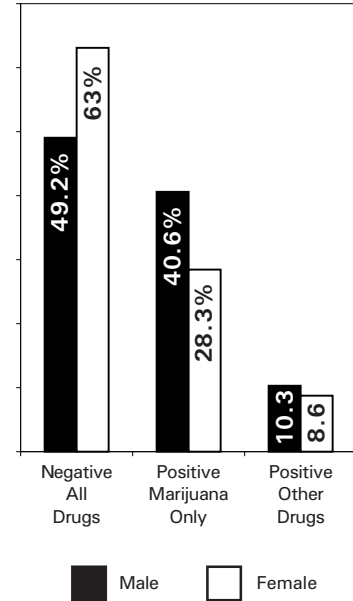
Results of Drug Tests of Detained Juveniles by Type of Charged Offense (1992-96)



Violent: Assault, homicide, robbery, rape
Property: Burglary, larceny/theft, stolen vehicle
Drug/alcohol: DWI, drug possession, drug sale, under influence
Status: Curfew, failed placement, runaway, truancy, violation of home supervision
Prob/warrant: Flight/escape/bench warrant, probation/parole

More male detainees tested positive for drugs (51%) than females (37%).

Results of Drug Tests of Detained Juveniles by Gender (1992-96)



Marijuana use was more frequent by Latino detainees (42%) than African American (36%) or white detainees (33%).

Use of drugs other than marijuana was more frequent by African American detainees (14%) than white (9%) or Latino detainees (8%).


Results of Drug Tests of Detained Juveniles by Race and Ethnicity (1992-96)

	Negative All Drugs	Positive Marijuana Only	Positive Other Drugs
African American	50.5%	35.6%	13.9%
Latino	50.2%	42.0%	7.8%
Anglo/White	57.9%	33.3%	8.7%

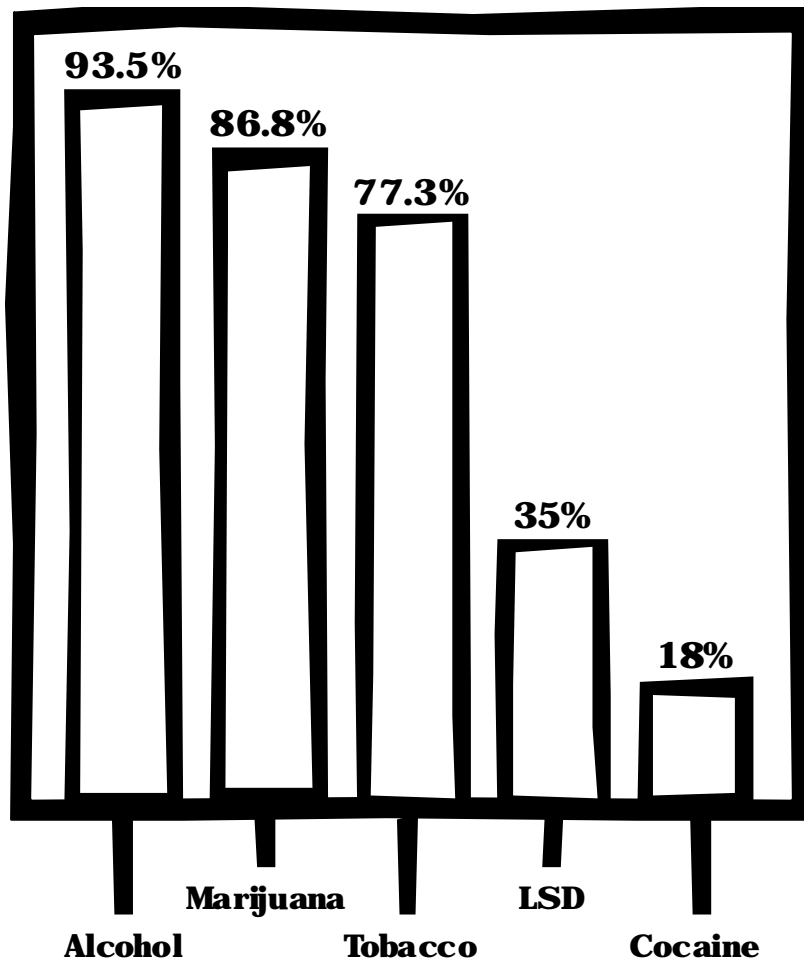
Note: Numbers of juvenile American Indian and Asian detainees too small to include in this table.

Detainees Report High, Frequent and Early Use of Tobacco, Alcohol and Marijuana

In addition to being tested for recent drug use, juvenile detainees in the sample group were asked questions regarding their tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. *It is important to note that all survey data are self-reported.* According to data from the surveys conducted between 1992 and 1996...

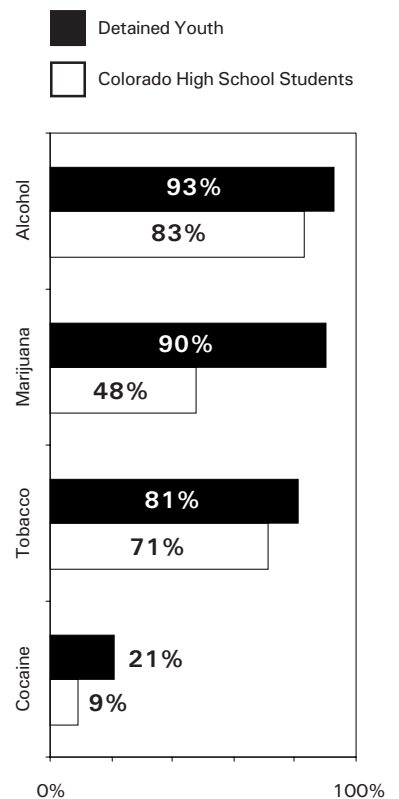
- 94% of juvenile detainees reported ever drinking alcohol, 87% reported ever smoking marijuana, 77% reported ever using tobacco, 35% reported ever taking LSD and 18% reported ever using cocaine.  ↓

PERCENT OF DETAINED JUVENILES WHO REPORTED EVER USING DRUGS IN THEIR LIFETIME (1992-96)





1995: Percent of Detained Youth Compared to Percent of Colorado High School Students* Reporting Ever Using Drugs

The chart below compares reports of alcohol and other drug use by juvenile detainees surveyed in 1995 with youth in grades 9-12 surveyed as part of the 1995 Colorado Youth Risk Behavior Survey. While tobacco and alcohol use don't differ significantly between the two populations, there is a significantly greater use of marijuana by juvenile detainees (90% vs. 48%), and cocaine (21% vs. 9%).

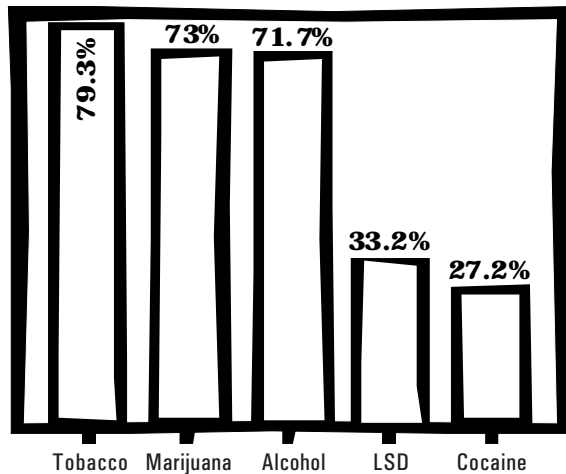



* Colorado Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Spring 1995). Colorado Department of Education Prevention Initiatives, HIV/AIDS Education Program. Note: LSD is not broken out as a separate drug in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

■ On average, juvenile detainees reported their first use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana before the age of 13. This was the same for students surveyed as part of the 1995 Colorado Youth Risk Behavior Survey. On average, juvenile detainees reported first using cocaine and LSD before 15 years of age.  →

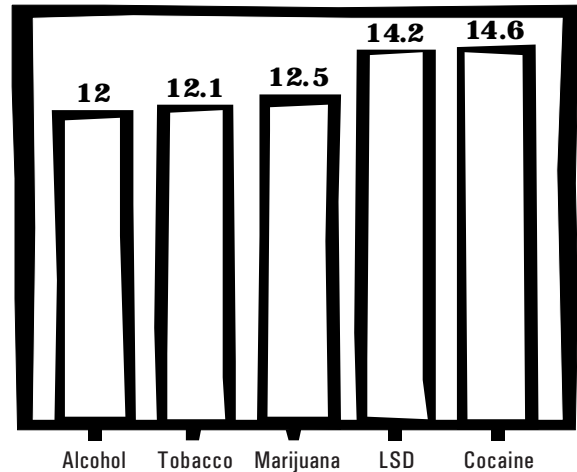
■ About three-quarters of juvenile detainees who reported ever using alcohol, tobacco or marijuana reported using it within the past 30 days. One-third of the youth who reported ever using LSD reported using it in the last 30 days. Just over one-quarter (27%) of youth who reported ever using cocaine, reported using it within the last 30 days.  ↓

PERCENT OF DETAINED JUVENILES WHO USED DRUG IN PAST 30 DAYS (AS A PERCENT OF THOSE WHO REPORTED EVER USING SAME DRUG) (1992-96)



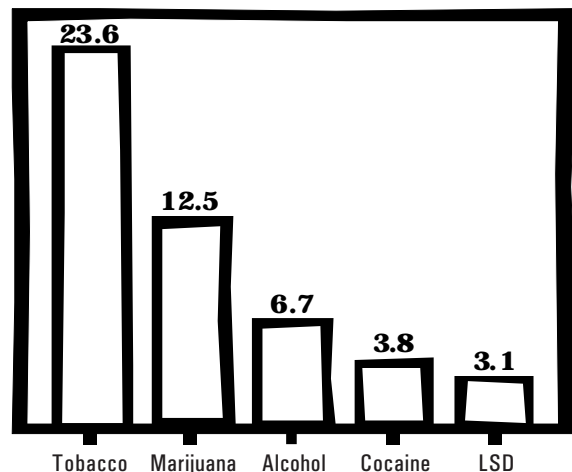
■ Of the youth who reported using a drug within the last 30 days, tobacco was used more frequently (24 days) than marijuana (13 days), alcohol (7 days), cocaine (4 days) or LSD (3 days). According to the U.S. Public Health Service, adolescents aged 12 to 17 who smoke cigarettes daily are 100 times more likely to use marijuana and 32 times more likely to use cocaine than adolescents who have never smoked. (Source: U.S. Public Health Service, Office for Substance Abuse Prevention. *Youth and Drugs: Society's Mixed Messages*. Department of Health and Human Services. 1990).  →

AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST USE OF DRUG AMONG JUVENILE DETAINEES WHO REPORTED EVER USING SAME DRUG (1992-96)



■ The proportion of juvenile detainees reporting increased recent drug use (within the past 30 days) rose steadily between 1992 and 1996 for tobacco (77% to 91%) and marijuana (65% to 83%). The Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that the number of students who reported using marijuana in a 30-day period almost doubled from 1990 to 1995, to about 29%.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS DRUG USED IN PAST 30 DAYS (OF DETAINED JUVENILES WHO REPORTED USING DRUG IN PAST 30 DAYS) (1992-96)





Juvenile Delinquency Prevention
research project

Still Ahead...

This cooperative study between the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice and The Piton Foundation provides a unique view into the lives of juveniles and a chance to better address critical questions, such as:

- *What can we learn from these youth about their drug and alcohol use, family composition, education and charged crimes?*
- *Are differences based on gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic factors?*
- *How do particular neighborhood and community factors affect these youth?*
- *What factors or patterns emerge that will help us better understand these youth and help prevent other kids from engaging in delinquent or violent behavior?*

In 1999, a final report on this research will be released.

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