

**SCHOOLS PROVIDE A SHELTERING PLACE FOR TODAY'S ADOLESCENTS;  
DRUGS AND GUNS ARE MORE COMMON OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL BUILDING**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 5 – Despite lingering images of horrified children fleeing a shooting rampage by their classmates, school time is the safest and most drug free part of the day for American youth.

- According to the 1999-2000 Pride Survey, 2.7 percent of students in grades 6-12 reported they took a gun to school, but three and a half times as many (9.5 percent) carried a gun outside of school.
- Nearly four times as many students used drugs on weekends as during school hours (15.9 percent versus 4.2 percent). Twice as many students use drugs in their own home as at school (10.1 percent vs. 4.2 percent).
- Gang involvement was cited by 9.2 percent of students, but 82.3 percent of students reported they took part in protective school-sponsored activities such as sports teams, band, and clubs.

Students were more likely to join school groups than non-school initiatives such as scouting, recreation teams, and youth clubs (82.3 percent versus 66.4 percent).

Drug use for students who frequently participate in school activities was almost half the rate for students who never participate in school activities (18.3 percent versus 32.5 percent).

“Despite the indelible scenes on TV, schools provide a sheltering place for young people,” said Dr. Thomas J. Gleaton, president of Pride Surveys and author of the survey of 114,318 students released today.

**Teachers as vigilant as parents**

The survey found that teachers are as likely as parents to warn youth about the problems of alcohol and drugs. One third of students (32.7 percent) said their teachers talk with them “often” or “a lot” about drugs, compared with 33.5 percent who said the same about their parents.

**More**

“Schools are often blamed for problems students bring to the classroom,” Gleaton said.

When asked when they use alcohol and drugs – before school, during school, after school, weeknights, and weekends – during school was the least mentioned choice.

A quarter of students (25.5 percent) drank alcohol at home. One in ten (10.1 percent) said they used drugs at home.

For older students, the home is an even more common place to use drugs and drink. Among 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 40.2 percent say they drink at home, and 17.1 percent use drugs there.

“Year in and year out, we find that most alcohol and drug use occurs at night and on weekends when schools are closed,” said Gleaton.

Students were twice as likely to use alcohol and drugs on weekends as during weeknights or after school.

Although much public attention is given to “latch key” kids who misbehave after school while parents are at work, there was no significant distinction between use after school and on weeknights.

While today’s schools are often described as unruly, only 6.9 percent of students reported that they frequently get in trouble at school.

On the other hand, two-thirds of students (66.4 percent) said they often make good grades. Those who make good grades were more than four times less likely to use drugs (14.3 percent drug use among students who make good grades “a lot” versus 62.6 percent drug use among students who “never” make good grades).

“Of course schools have problems, but this study demonstrates that most teen problems are societal and actually least common at school,” said Gleaton.

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### **The Pride Survey**

The Atlanta-based Pride Survey queries students about their use of eight types of illegal drugs – marijuana, cocaine, uppers, downers, inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin and steroids – plus alcohol and tobacco. Since 1993-94 it has also asked questions about student behaviors such as carrying a gun to school, making and receiving threats, physical abuse, and joining gangs.

The responses of 114,318 students were contained in the 145-page report.

The Pride Survey is designated by federal law as an official measure of effectiveness of the White House drug policy (H.R. 4328 Div. C Title VII Sec. 706 (a)(4)(B), Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 1998).