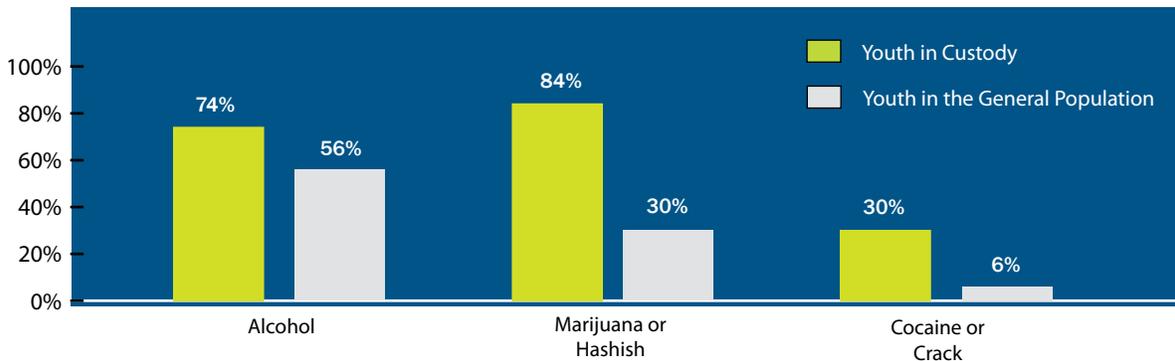




Prevalence of Substance Use Higher Among Incarcerated Youth

Youth in custody in the juvenile justice system report higher rates of substance use than their peers in the general population, according to data from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.¹ Nearly 3 in 4 youth (74%) in custody report having tried alcohol in their lifetime compared to 5 in 9 youth (56%) in the general population. This disparity holds true for a variety of illegal drugs: 84% of youth in custody report experimenting with marijuana or hashish compared to 30% in the general population, and 30% of youth in custody report experimenting with cocaine or crack compared to 6% in the general population. Over half of youth in custody report that they were “drunk or high on drugs” at least several times a week during the months before being taken into custody. In spite of these significantly elevated rates of problem substance use, 19% of incarcerated youth are in facilities that do not provide any screenings for it and 36% are in facilities that screen some but not all youth. Less than two-thirds of youth (64%) are in facilities that develop individualized treatment plans.

Lifetime Use of Selected Substances Among Youth in Custody vs. Youth in the General Population, 2003



Source:

Sedlak, A. J. and McPherson, K. S. (2010). “Youth’s Needs and Services: Findings from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.” *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Washington, D.C.

Notes:

¹ The Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP), designed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, gathers data anonymously from youth in juvenile justice system custody and draws from a nationally representative sample in state and local facilities.

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to build, enhance, and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, trainings, and technical assistance in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.

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