

A new study by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*) has quantified just how frequently references to drugs, alcohol and tobacco turn up in popular music. A team led by Dr. Brian Primack analyzed the lyrics of the top 279 songs of 2005. Their findings? Nearly 80% of rap songs contained references to illicit drugs, alcohol or tobacco—followed by country (37%), R&B (20%), rock (14%) and pop (9%). When these genres were combined, 42% of all songs had some reference to substance abuse. Significantly, about two-thirds of the references portrayed these substances in a positive way by associating them with sex, partying and/or humor. Just four songs mentioned any kind of anti-substance abuse message. The researchers calculated that Americans ages 15 to 18 listen to 2.4 hours of music each day, which translates to 84 references to substance abuse daily and about 30,000 annually. Commenting on how parents might respond, Primack said, "It's not going to be feasible or even desirable to censor these messages. Probably a more empowering approach is to teach kids to analyze and evaluate the messages for themselves." [Reuters, 2/4/08; timesonline.co.uk, 2/3/08; nytimes.com 2/6/08 stats]

According to the a government report from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, about 3.1 million people between the ages of 12 and 25 have gotten high using cough and cold medicine—about the same amount who have used LSD and far more than have used methamphetamines. And that's not the only common substance being used improperly. Mouthwash, which can be nearly 27% alcohol, has become such a popular "beverage" in Alaska that some supermarkets have moved Listerine and Scope behind the counter. "Especially this summer, you'd see a lot more empty mouthwash bottles laying around on the ground than you would actual liquor bottles," said David Path, who volunteers at an Anchorage homeless shelter. [AP, 1/10-14/08 stats]

Yet another a survey of 48,025 students conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, finds that illicit drug use among teens overall is decreasing, though abuse of prescription painkillers in particular has increased slightly. Marijuana was the most widely used drug in 2007, with 10% of 8th graders, 25% of 10th graders and nearly one in three students in 12th grade using it in the last year. These three groups of students combined also abused the prescription painkiller OxyContin slightly more frequently in 2007 than in 2006, 5.2% vs. 4.3%, respectively. [usatoday.com 12/11/07; time.com, 12/11/07; news.yahoo.com, 12/11/07 stats]