

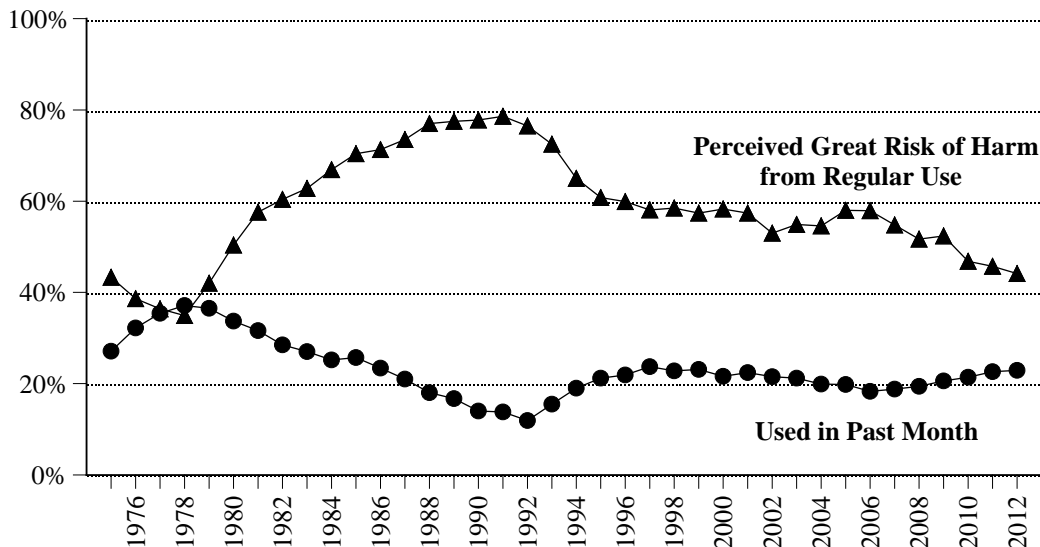
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Marijuana Use Continues to Increase as Perceived Risk of Use Decreases Among U.S. High School Seniors

The percentage of U.S. high school seniors reporting past month marijuana use continues to gradually increase, according to the most recent data from the national Monitoring the Future (MTF) study. In 2012, 22.9% of 12th graders reported using marijuana in the past month, a 25% increase since the most recent low of 18.3% in 2006 (see figure below). While the current prevalence of marijuana use is far below the peak of 37.1% in 1978, it has returned to a level not seen since the late 1990s. According to the study's principal investigator, "one important variable that has been a lead indicator of use—namely the amount of risk teenagers perceived to be associated with marijuana use—continued its sharp decline in 2012 among teens, which would suggest further increases in use in the future" (University of Michigan, 2012). The percentage of high school seniors who thought there was a great risk of harm from regular marijuana use decreased from 57.9% in 2006 to 44.1% in 2012—the lowest level since 1979. Dr. Robert DuPont, the first Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), suggests that "the recent legalization of marijuana use . . . in Colorado and Washington State, and the legalization of 'medical' marijuana in 18 states and the District of Columbia will lead to further decreases in youth perception of risk from harm" (IBH, 2012).

**Percentage of U.S. Twelfth Grade Students Reporting Past Month
Marijuana Use and a Perceived Great Risk of Harm from Regular Marijuana Use, 1975-2012**



SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from University of Michigan, "The Rise in Teen Marijuana Use Stalls, Synthetic Marijuana Use Levels, and Use of 'Bath Salts' Is Very Low," *Monitoring the Future Drug and Alcohol Press Release: Text, Figures, & Tables*, December 19, 2012. Available online at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/12data.html#2012data-drugs>; and Institute for Behavior and Health (IBH), "National Youth Survey Shows Five-Year Increases in Marijuana Use," *IBH Commentary*, December 28, 2012. Available online at <http://www.ibhinc.org/pdfs/IBHCommentaryonMTFYouthMarijuanaUse122812.pdf>.