

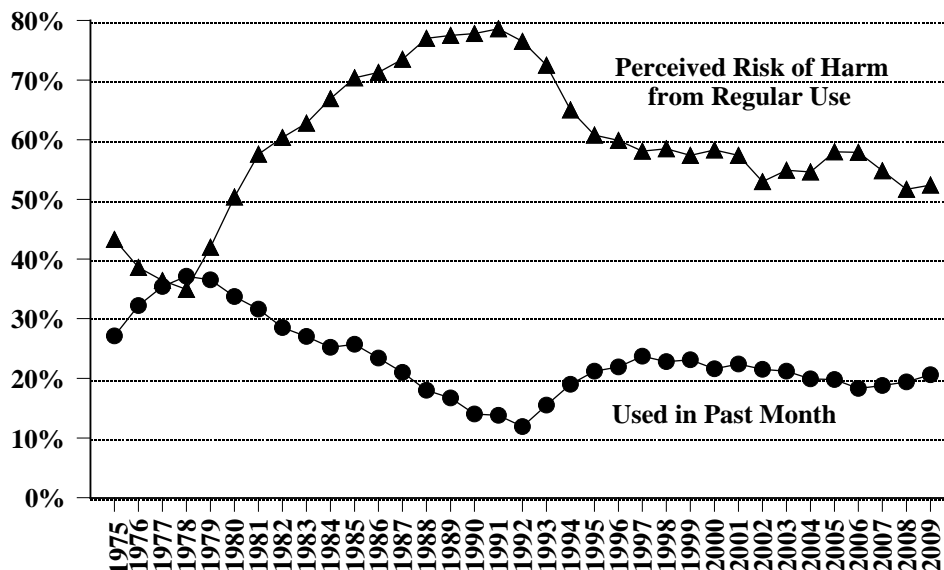
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

U.S. High School Seniors' Perception of Harm from Regular Marijuana Use Decreasing

Twelfth graders' perceived risk of harm from regular marijuana use has declined in recent years, according to data from the national Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. In 2008 and 2009, 52% of U.S. high school seniors thought that there was a great risk of harm from smoking marijuana regularly, down from 58% in 2006. Previous MTF data show that as perceived risk decreases, use increases (see figure below). While the percentage of 12th graders reporting that they used marijuana in the past month has increased only slightly (from 18% in 2006 to 21% in 2009), MTF researcher Lloyd Johnston notes that "the upward trending of the past two or three years stands in stark contrast to the steady decline that preceded it for nearly a decade" (p. 1). Similar decreases in perceived harm from marijuana use have been seen among 8th and 10th grade students. These findings illustrate the importance of continuing to present realistic information about the risks and consequences of marijuana use to youth.

Percentage of U.S. Twelfth Grade Students Reporting Past Month Marijuana Use and Perceived Risk of Harm from Regular Marijuana Use, 1975-2009



SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from University of Michigan, "Teen Marijuana Use Tilts Up, While Some Drugs Decline in Use," Press Release, 12/14/09. Available online at <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/09data.html#2009data-drugs>.