



HOLD FOR RELEASE
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Young Americans Say Alcohol, Marijuana, Cigarettes, and Lottery Tickets are Easily Accessible

Drinking, Smoking, Drug Use and Gambling are More Associated with the Popular Kids than the Unpopular Ones

One in three (33 percent) high-school aged young people say they have engaged in one of the following risky behaviors in the last 30 days: smoked cigarettes, used marijuana, drunk alcohol or gambled for money. Although purchase of cigarettes, alcohol, and lottery tickets by those under 18 is illegal, and purchase of marijuana by those of any age violates the law, most high-school aged youths (ages 14-17) believe they can purchase cigarettes (70 percent), alcohol (64 percent) and lottery tickets (59 percent) within five blocks of their homes and one third (36 percent) believe they can purchase marijuana within that distance, according to analyses released today at the Adolescent Risk Conference being held by the Institute for Adolescent Risk Communications at The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. (See Table 1 for breakdown of laws, and Tables 2a-d for accessibility.)

Young people (ages 14-22) also are more likely to associate drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes or pot, or gambling with their 'popular' peers than their 'unpopular' ones. By contrast, owning a gun or using inhalants is more strongly associated with unpopular than popular peers (See Chart 3 for perceptions of popularity).

"Young people believe that cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol are easily accessible and many also believe that the popular kids drink and smoke cigarettes or marijuana," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center "Since popular kids shape the norms that influence the attitudes and behaviors of those their age, this combination of popularity and accessibility is a dangerous mix."

Almost three out of four young people (ages 14-22) believe that their popular peers are more likely to engage in at least one of the following risky behaviors: smoking cigarettes, using marijuana, drinking alcohol or gambling for money. Half believe their popular peers engage in at least two of the behaviors.

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Perception of risk associated with the behavior has little impact on the perception of popularity of those thought to engage in the behavior. For example: Of those who think cigarette smoking is *very* risky to health, 39 percent think their popular peers are more likely to smoke than their unpopular peers, while almost the same percentage of those who think it is only a little or not at all risky (40 percent) also believe their popular peers are more likely to do it. Similar percentages of those who think marijuana use is *very* risky (41 percent) and those who think it is not risky at all (39 percent) believe popular peers are likely to engage in the behavior.

“Understanding that something poses a risk to health does little to deter young peoples’ perception that the popular kids are engaged in the activity,” said Dan Romer, Director of the Institute for Adolescent Risk Communications at the Annenberg Public Policy Center. “Campaigns that focus on raising young people’s awareness of the dangers of smoking and drinking may do little to diminish their core belief that engaging in these activities is associated with popularity.”

With a few key exceptions, male and female youth have similar perceptions of the popularity associated with risky behaviors. Female youth (44 percent) are more likely than males (35 percent) to associate smoking with popularity, and male youth (36.9 percent) are more likely than females (25.4 percent) to associate gambling with popularity.

Findings are from a national survey of youth ages 14 to 22 and are based on 900 respondents. The margin of error is +/- 3.3 percent for the entire sample. The margin of error for breakdowns by age is +/-4.8% and for gender is +/- 4.7%

Copies of the full analysis are available by calling Lorie Slass at 202-879-6701.

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The Institute for Adolescent Risk Communication

The Annenberg Public Policy Center’s Institute for Adolescent Risk Communication was established in January 2002 with a \$25 million gift from the Annenberg Foundation. The Institute will identify effective interventions and policy initiatives to improve the health and development of young people in the US. The Institute emphasizes the development of cross-disciplinary approaches to reducing adolescent tobacco use, drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, suicidal behavior, and problem gambling.

Table 1: The Law and Tobacco, Alcohol and the Lottery

	State Laws	Federal Law
Tobacco	All states prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors. In most states minors are considered to be children under the age of 18. Alabama, Alaska and Utah consider minors to be individuals under the age of 19. Pennsylvania prohibits the sale of cigarettes and cigarette papers to anyone under the age of 21, but it only enforces the law for those sales under the age of 18.	Federal law prohibits sales to minors.
Alcohol	The states restrict the purchase of alcohol to persons 21 years of age and over.	
Lottery Tickets	The majority of states allow anyone 18 years of age and older to play the lottery. Nebraska's age limit is 19. The age limit in Louisiana and Iowa is 21. New York prohibits individuals under the age of 21 from playing "Quick Draw," a game that is usually located in venues off limits to minors. Otherwise, the age limit in NY is 18.	There are no federal laws regulating the sale of lottery tickets to adolescents

Table 2: Distance From Home to Purchase Cigarettes, Marijuana, Alcohol, Lottery Ticket

Table 2A. Distance from home to purchase cigarettes by age of respondent.

Distance in Blocks to Purchase	Age			
	14 to 17 %	18 to 20 %	21 to 22 %	Total %
1-5	69.9	78.7	76.2	74.1
1-2	49.5	59.9	53.1	53.8
3-5	20.4	18.8	23.1	20.3
5-10	12.0	10.2	10.6	11.1
10 or more	15.7	10.5	11.9	13.2
Don't Know	2.3	0.6	1.3	1.6

Table 2B. Distance from home to purchase illegal drug such as marijuana by age of respondent.

Distance in Blocks to Purchase	Age			
	14 to 17 %	18 to 20 %	21 to 22 %	Total %
1-5	35.9	41.8	32.6	37.3
1-2	24.2	32.2	23.8	26.9
3-5	11.7	9.6	8.8	10.4
5-10	12.7	11.5	7.5	11.3
10 or more	33.6	23.6	28.8	29.2
Don't Know	17.8	23.2	31.2	22.1

Table 2C. Distance from home to purchase alcohol by age of respondent.

Distance in Blocks to Purchase	Age			
	14 to 17 %	18 to 20 %	21 to 22 %	Total %
1-5	63.8	72.0	69.4	67.5
1-2	42.5	53.8	46.3	47.1
3-5	21.1	18.2	23.1	20.4
5-10	14.3	11.5	13.1	13.1
10 or more	19.0	15.6	16.3	17.3
Don't Know	3.1	1.0	1.3	2.0

Table 2D. Distance from home to purchase lottery ticket by age of respondent.

Distance in Blocks to Purchase	Age			
	14 to 17 %	18 to 20 %	21 to 22 %	Total %
1-5	59.4	68.5	62.6	63.1
1-2	39.2	51.0	41.3	43.7
3-5	20.2	17.5	21.3	19.4
5-10	12.9	10.5	10.6	11.7
10 or more	23.9	19.7	23.1	22.3
Don't Know	3.8	1.3	3.8	2.9

Chart 3: Percentage of Young Americans Who Link Certain Behaviors to Perceptions of Popularity

