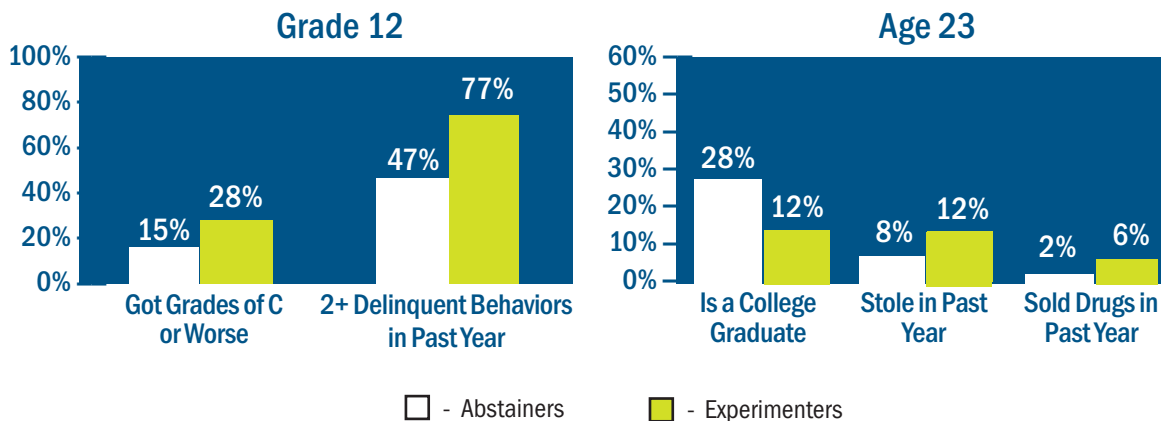




Youth Who Steer Clear of Marijuana Are Better Adjusted Than Those Who Experiment

Contrary to the findings of a classic 1990 study¹ that suggested experimentation with marijuana was a normal youthful behavior, and that youth who experimented were better adjusted than those who did not, new research by the RAND Corporation² finds that youth who never used marijuana or any other illicit drug (“abstainers”) were more successful in school and exhibited less deviant behaviors than youth who experimented³ with it (“experimenters”). Examining a larger and more diverse pool of users than the original study, the RAND researchers’ finding was true both at initial survey (twelfth grade) and in follow-up surveys (age 23). For example, fewer grade-12 abstainers than experimenters received poor grades or exhibited delinquent behaviors in the previous two years. Likewise, more age-23 abstainers than experimenters graduated from college, and fewer had stolen something or sold drugs in the past year.

Academics and Behavior of Marijuana Experimenters & Abstainers



Source: RAND Health. (2007). “New Perspectives on Marijuana and Youth. Abstainers Are Not Maladjusted, but Lone Users Face Difficulties.” *Research Highlights*. RAND Health. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/2007/RAND_RB9265.pdf.

¹ Shedler, J. and Block, J. (1990). “Adolescent Drug Use and Psychological Health: A Longitudinal Inquiry.” *American Psychologist*, Vol. 45, No. 5, May 1990, pp. 612-630.

² Tucker, J. S., et. al. (2006). “Are Drug Experimenters Better Adjusted Than Abstainers and Users?: A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Marijuana Use,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 488-494.

³ Used marijuana fewer than 10 times in the previous year and three times in the previous month, and used one or no other drug in their lifetime.

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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