

The Drug Issue in Campaign '96

Editor's Note: Two reports on use of illicit drugs, especially by teenagers, that were released this summer have helped push the issue more centrally into the presidential campaign. One of these studies is the annual "Household Survey on Drug Abuse (HSDA)," sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) did the fieldwork for this study. It was the 1995 survey results that were just released. The other report was based on a national survey of teenagers and a parallel survey of their parents, conducted in June of 1996 by Luntz Research Companies for the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (NCASA), Columbia University.

The findings of surveys of teens' experience with drugs need to be approached with significant skepticism. This is especially so when it's the individuals' own use of illicit drugs that's being explored. Recognizing this, the Columbia University survey asks teens only about what they see around them, not whether they personally have used drugs.

Nonetheless, these two new studies document that Americans' experience with illicit drugs remains all too extensive and that drug abuse is recognized as a very serious problem. The Household Survey on Drug Abuse suggests that teens' use of marijuana and other illicit drugs has been increasing over the past several years.

**Reported Current Use of Illicit Drugs
12-17 year olds**

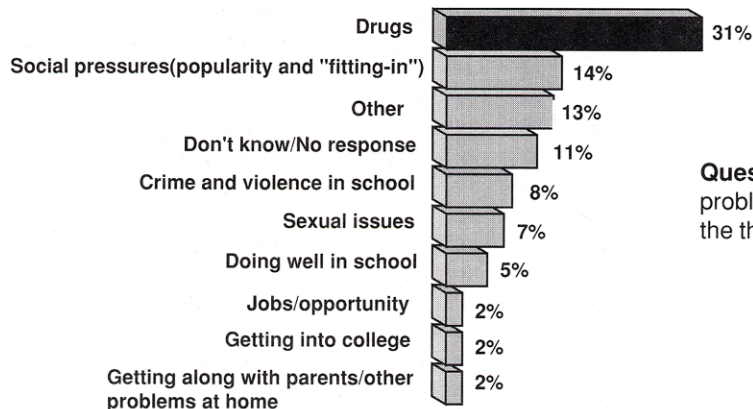
	1979	1985	1990	1992	1993	1994	1995
Any Illicit Drugs	16%	13%	7%	5%	6%	8%	11%
Marijuana only	17%	12%	4%*	4%	5%	6%	8%

Source: HSDA Survey

*1991

Both Teens and Their Parents Rank Drug Problems of Greatest Concern

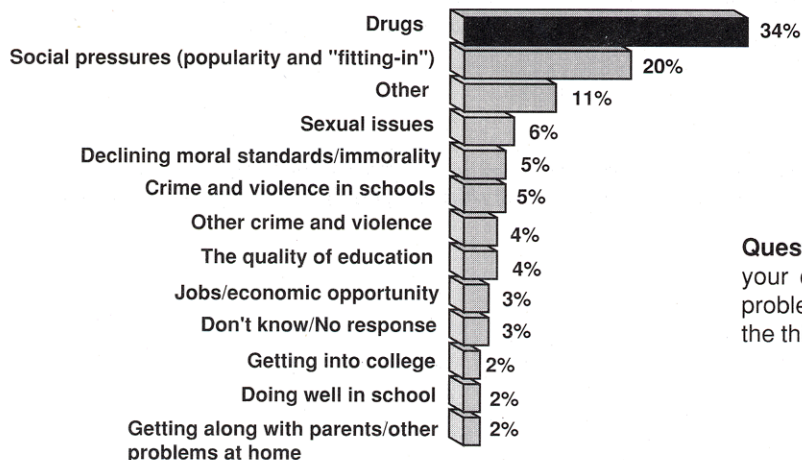
1996



Teens

Question: What is the most important problem facing people your age—that is, the thing which concerns you the most?

Source: NCASA Survey



Parents

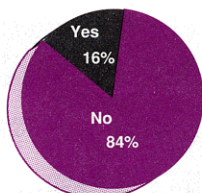
Question: Thinking of teenagers like your own, what is the most important problem facing people their age—that is the thing which concerns you the most?

Teens Report High Levels of Encounters With Drugs; Parents See Drug Problems Worsening

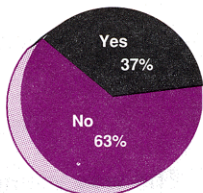
Responses of Teens:

Page source: NCASA Survey

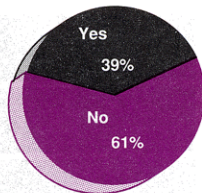
Question: Have you ever felt pressured by someone to use marijuana or another illegal drug?



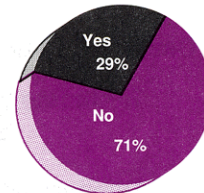
Question: Has anyone ever offered to sell or share marijuana with you?



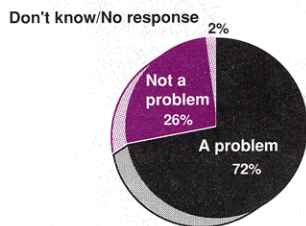
Question: Do you know a friend or classmate who has used harder drugs like acid, cocaine, or heroin?...



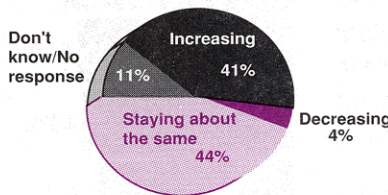
Question: Do you know anyone who sells illegal drugs?



Responses of Parents:

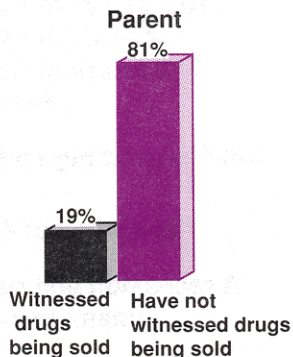
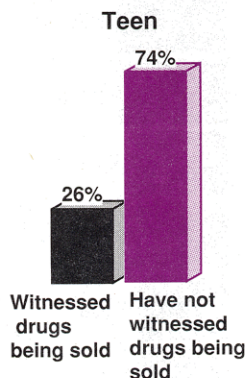


Question: Is the use of illegal drugs—LSD, heroin, cocaine, and marijuana—a problem you see in your own immediate community, or is it a problem in other places but not in your community?

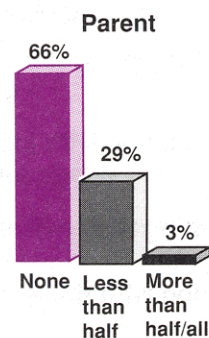
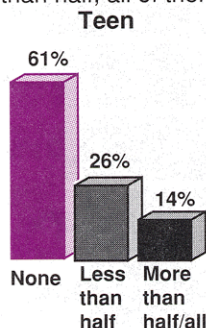


Question: Does it seem to you that the use of illegal drugs like marijuana, cocaine, heroin, or LSD by teenagers in your community is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?

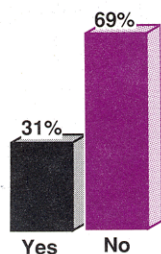
Question: Have you ever personally witnessed the sale of illegal drugs in your own neighborhood, or not?



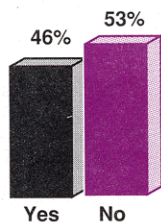
Question: Thinking now about your own close circle of friends, how many of them do you think currently use marijuana—none, less than half, all of them?



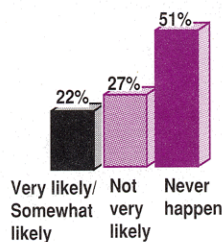
Question: Do you personally know someone—a friend or classmate—who has a serious problem with the use of illegal drugs? Do you have more than one?



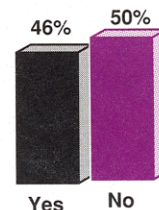
Question: Do you know someone—a friend, neighbor, family member, someone at work—who currently uses illegal drugs?



Question: How likely do you think it is that at some point in the future you will try an illegal drug; is it very likely, somewhat likely, or will it absolutely never happen?



Question: If you had to guess, do you think your teenager will ever try to use illegal drugs?



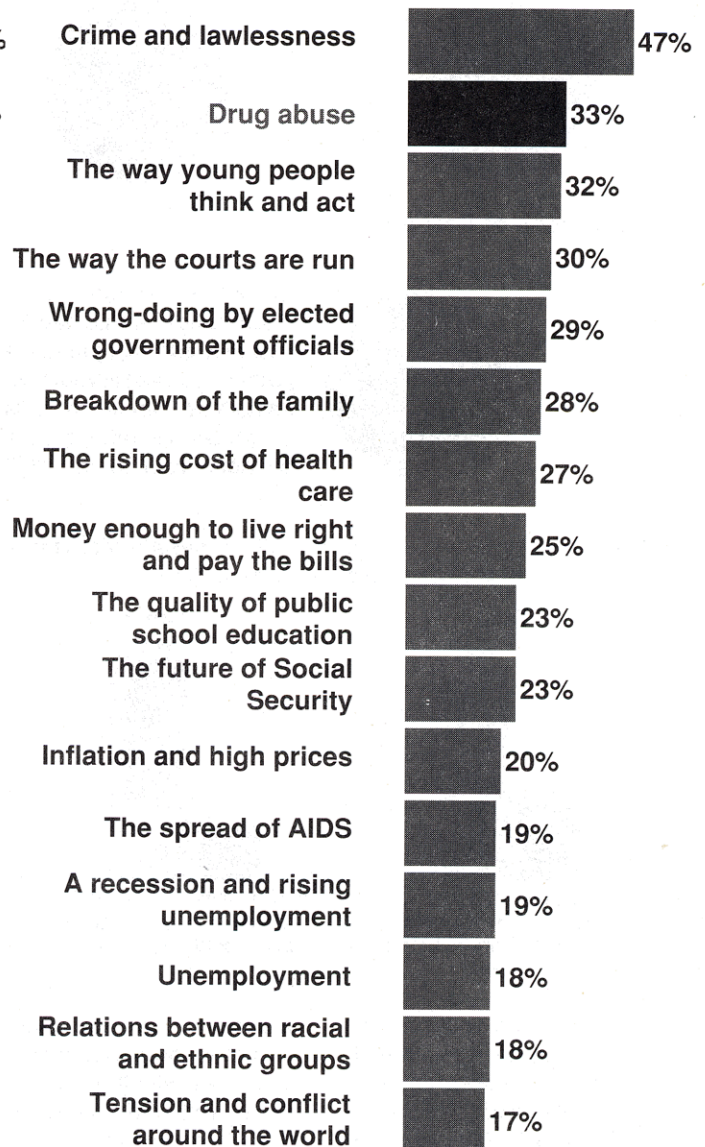
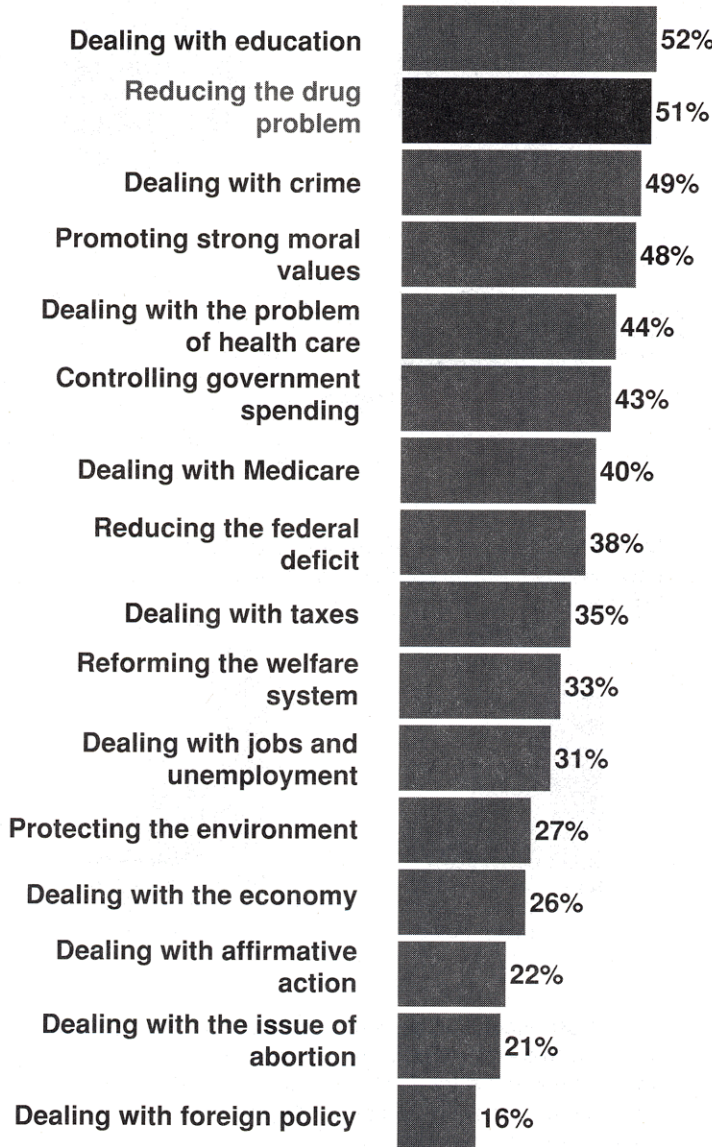
The Public At Large Ranks Drug Abuse Among Most Serious Problems

Question: ...[O]n a scale of one to ten, how important [will] each one be to you in deciding your vote for president in 1996? If you feel an item is one of your top voting issues and it is extremely important to you, rate it as an 8, 9, or 10]...

Question: Here is a list of things people have told us they are concerned about today. Would you...tell me which 2 or 3 you personally are most concerned about today?

percent rating issue a "10"

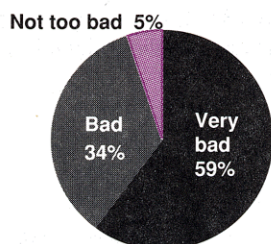
percent mentioning as a top issue



Source: Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, June 20-25, 1996.

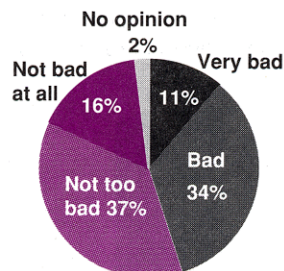
Source: Survey by Roper Starch Worldwide, January 6-12, 1996.

Question: How would you rate the drug problem in this country—would you say it's very bad, bad, not too bad or not bad at all?



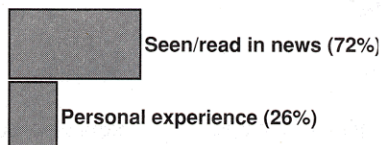
Note: "Not bad at all" and "No opinion" responses were less than .5%.
Source: Survey by ABC News, April 30-May 6, 1996.

Question: How would you rate the drug problem in your own community where you live—would you say it's very bad, bad, not too bad or not bad at all?



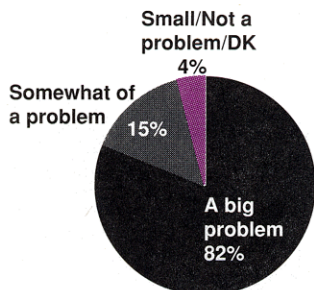
Source: Survey by ABC News, April 30-May 6, 1996.

Question: When you say the drug problem in this country is bad, is that based on what you've seen or read in the news, or is it based on your own personal experience?



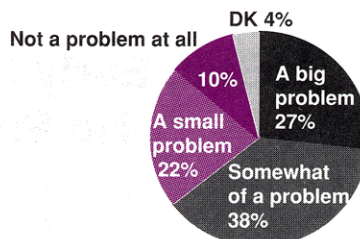
Source: Survey by ABC News, April 30-May 6, 1996.

Question: ...How big a problem is...drug abuse...in our society today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, a small problem, or not a problem at all?



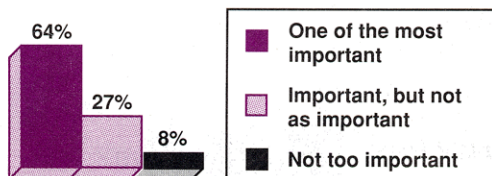
Source: Survey by the *Washington Post*, July 3-7, 1996.

Question: ...How big a problem is...drug abuse...in your community? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, a small problem, or not a problem at all?

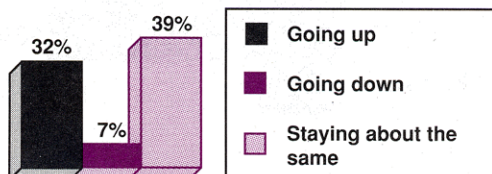


Source: Survey by the *Washington Post*, July 3-7, 1996.

Question: ...[H]ow important...[is] the drug problem...[this election year]?

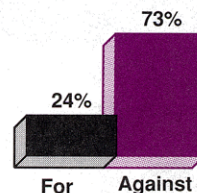


Question: From what you know or have heard about your community, is heroin use going up, going down, or staying about the same?



Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for *Newsweek*, August 15-16, 1996.

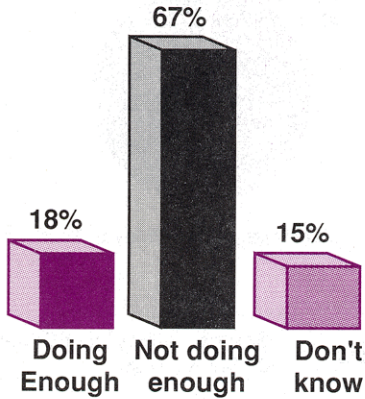
Question: Suppose that on election day this year you could vote on key issues as well as candidates...[W]ould you vote for or against...The legalization of marijuana?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 23-25, 1996.

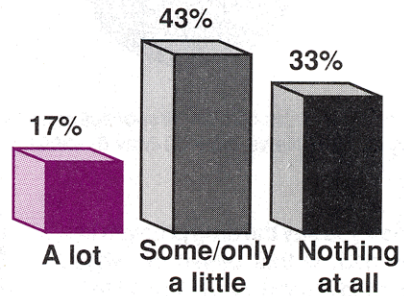
Current Governmental Record on Drug Problems is Faulted

Question: Keeping in mind that the federal government must deal with many different national problems, do you think the government is doing enough to reduce heroin use, or not?



Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for *Newsweek*, August 15-16, 1996.

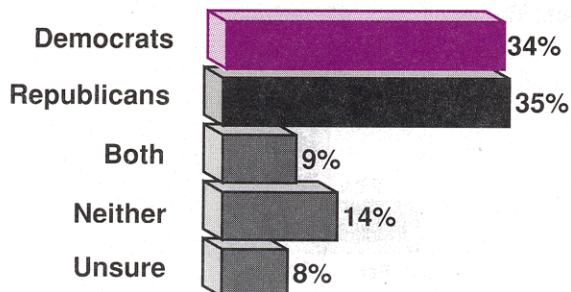
Question: As I read the following list of issues, please tell me if you feel President (Bill) Clinton has accomplished a lot, only a little, or nothing at all in dealing with this issue. How about... the drug problem?



Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for *Newsweek*, August 28-29, 1996.

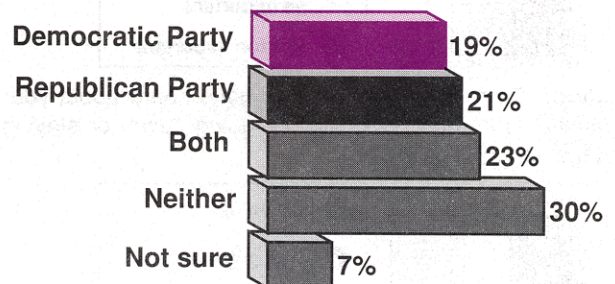
Still, Early Poll Soundings Showed No Partisan Advantage

Question: ...Please tell me...whether you have more confidence in the Democratic Party, or the Republican Party—to deal with...fighting crime and drugs.



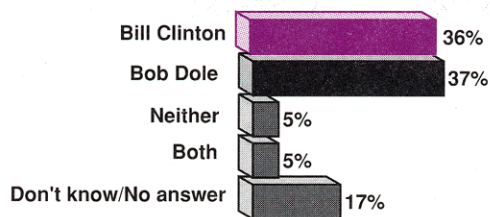
Source: Survey by *US News and World Report*, January 27-29, 1996.

Question: When it comes to ...reducing the drug problem... which party do you think would do a better job—the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, both about the same, or neither?



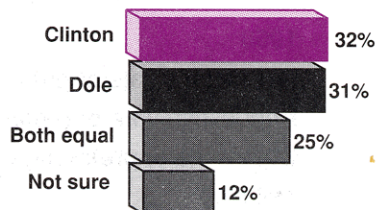
Source: Survey by *NBC News/Wall Street Journal*, May 10-14, 1996.

Question: Who do you think would do a better job fighting illegal drugs, Bill Clinton or Bob Dole?



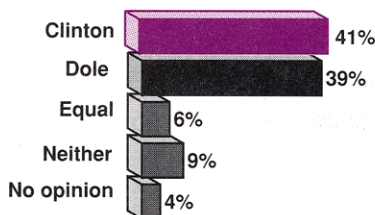
Source: Survey by CBS News/*New York Times*, May 31-June 3, 1996.

Question: ...Reducing the drug problem...who do you think would do a better job—Bill Clinton or Bob Dole?



Source: Survey by NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, June 20-25, 1996.

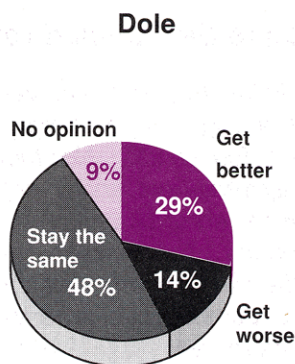
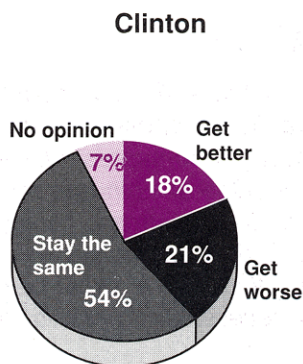
Question: ...Reducing the use of illegal drugs...who do you trust to do a better job handling that issue...(Bill) Clinton or (Bob) Dole?



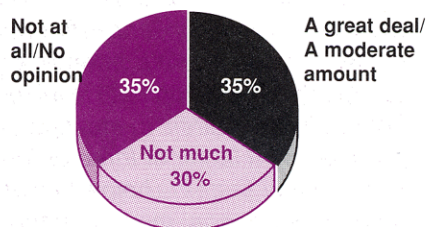
Source: Survey by ABC News/*Washington Post*, September 3-4, 1996.

Late September Gallup Polling Suggests, However, That Republicans May Be Gaining An Edge on the Issue

Question: If (Bill Clinton) were elected president/(Bob Dole) were elected president, what do you think would happen to the drug problem during his administration—would it get better, get worse, or stay the same?



Question: As you may know, a federal survey released earlier this year indicates that illegal drug use is rising among teenagers in the United States. Thinking just about this specific problem, how much do you blame the Clinton Administration for the increase in drug use among teens?



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, September 23-25, 1996.