

# CRACK COCAINE: THE U.S. RESPONSE TO AN EPIDEMIC

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# What is Crack?

- ◎ Smokable form of cocaine
- ◎ Add cocaine to water and baking soda, and heat mixture. Forms small “rocks.”



# What is Crack?

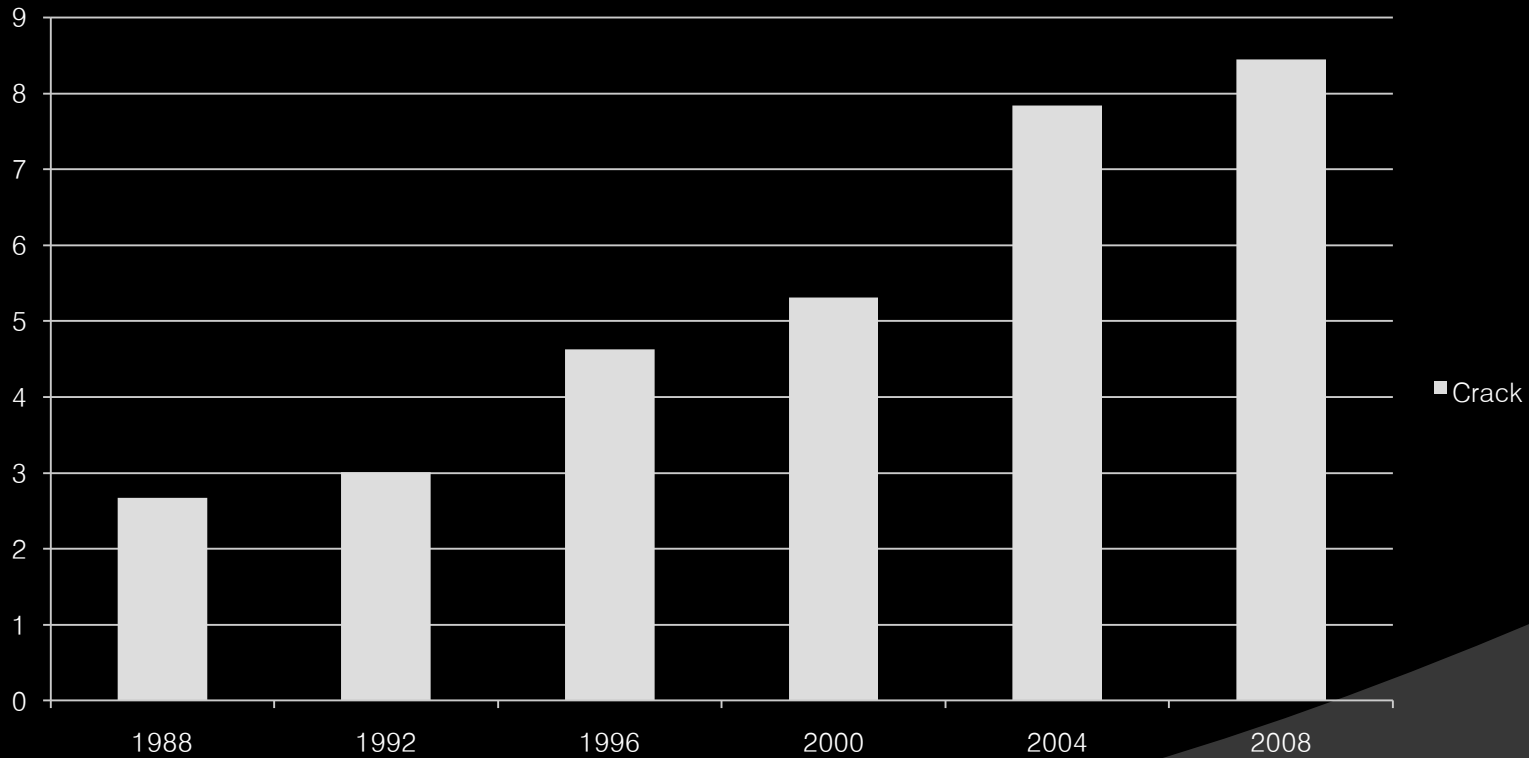
- ⦿ Low price makes it accessible to many more people than regular cocaine, particularly among the poor
- ⦿ Intense high that lasts only fifteen minutes
- ⦿ High addictive quality and cheap price make crack extremely popular



# Crack

National Household Survey of Drug Use and Health 1988-2008

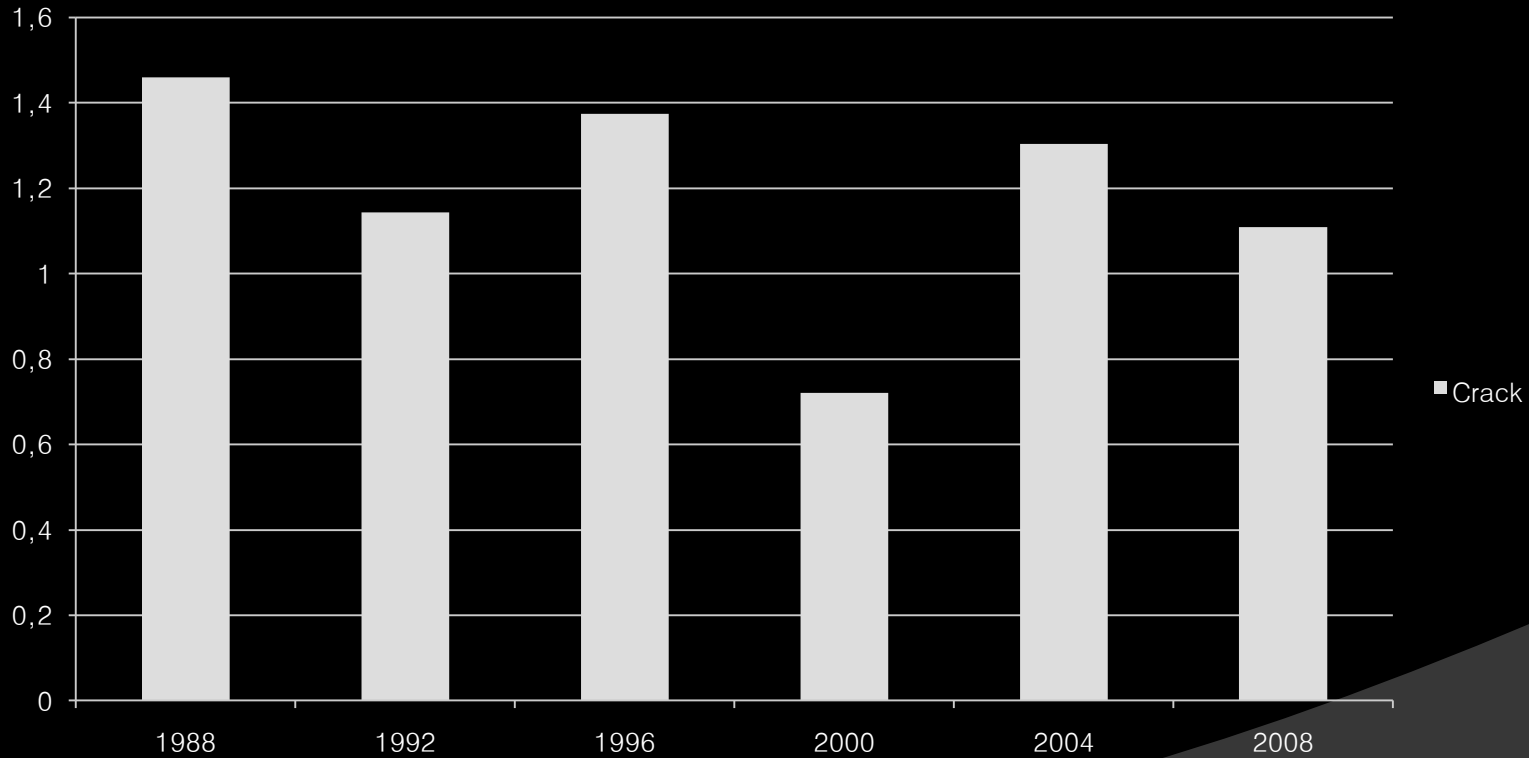
Lifetime Use (Ever tried)  
number in millions



# Crack

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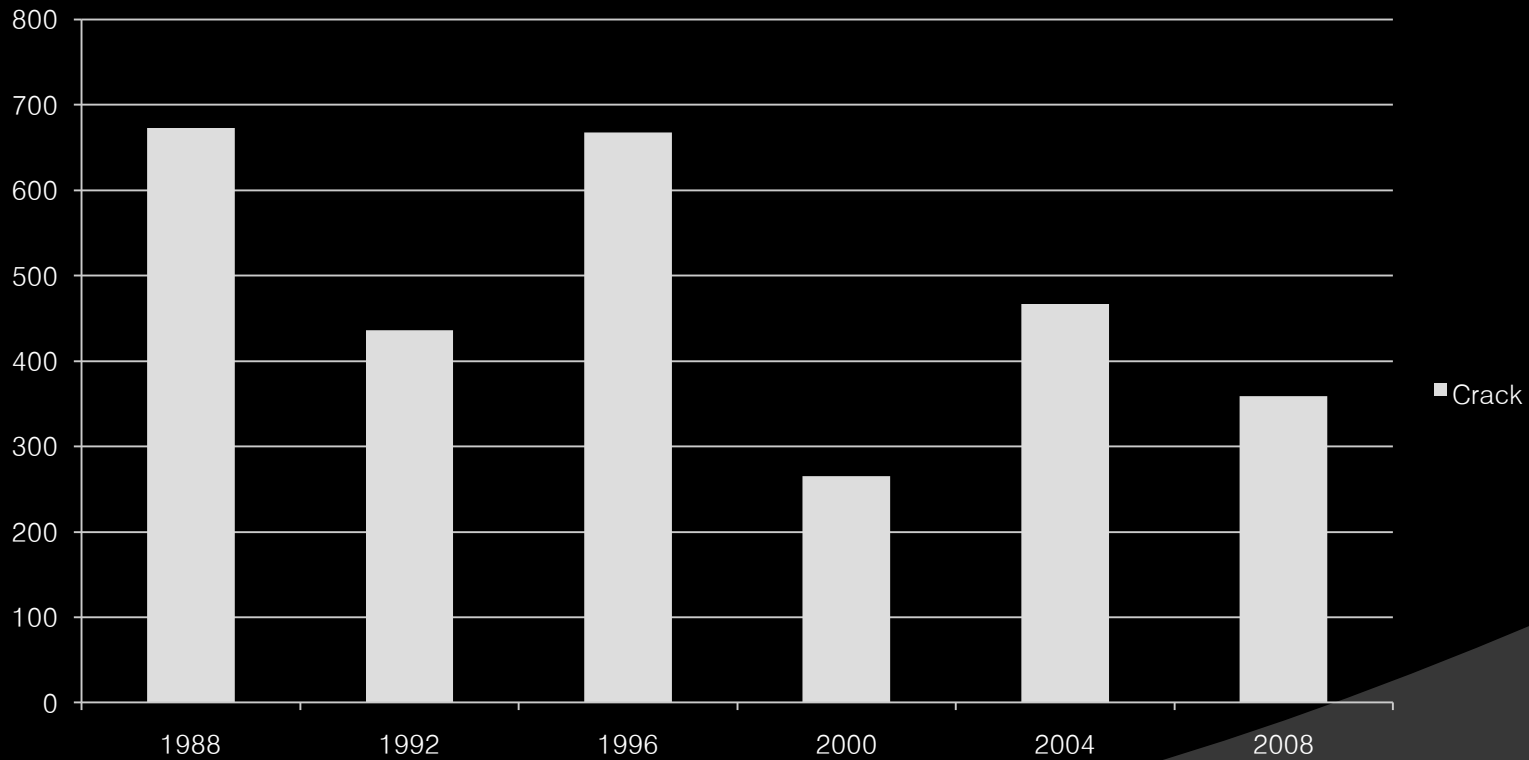
Past Year Use  
number in millions



# Crack

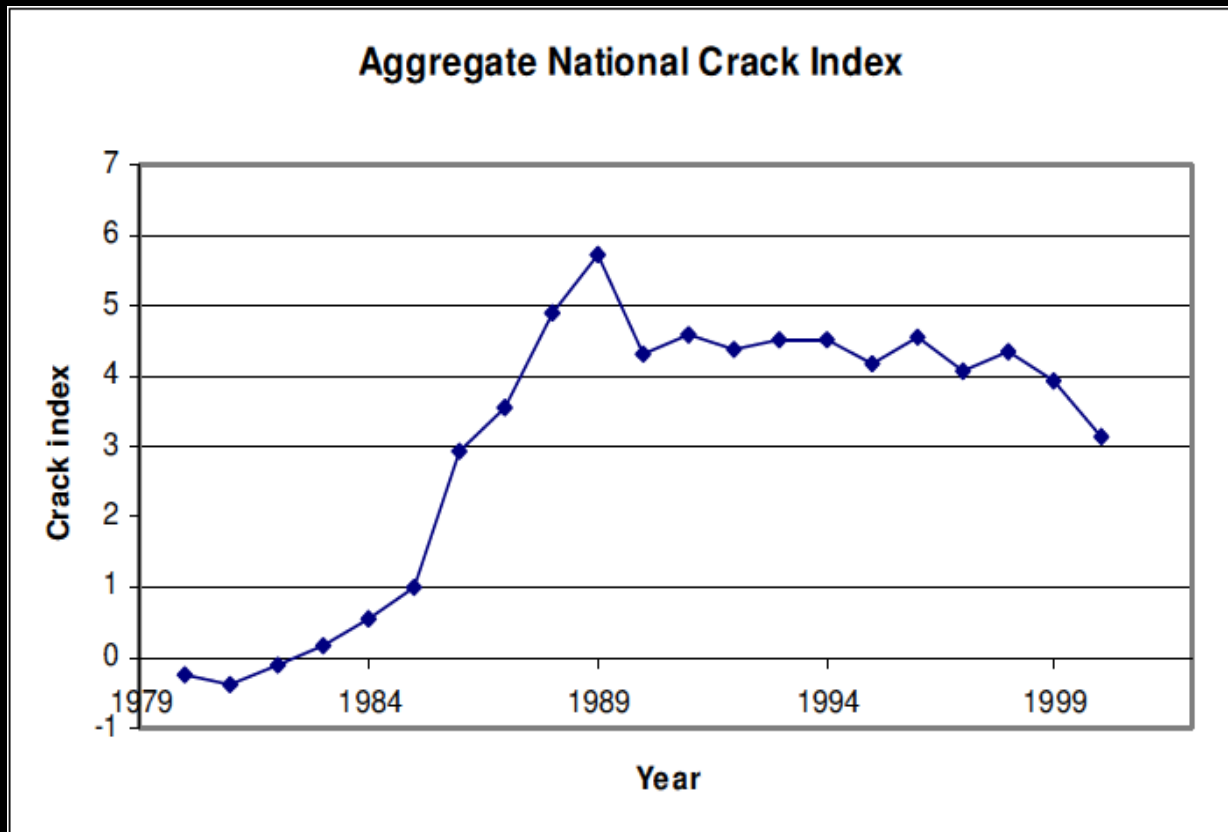
National Household Survey of Drug Use and Health 1988-2008

Past Month Use  
number in thousands



# Crack Index

Cocaine arrests, cocaine-related ER visits, crack mentions in newspapers, cocaine-related drug deaths, DEA drug seizures  
Roland G. Fryer, Paul S. Heaton, Steven D. Levitt, Kevin M. Murphy, Measuring the Impact of Crack Cocaine, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 11318, Issued in May 2005



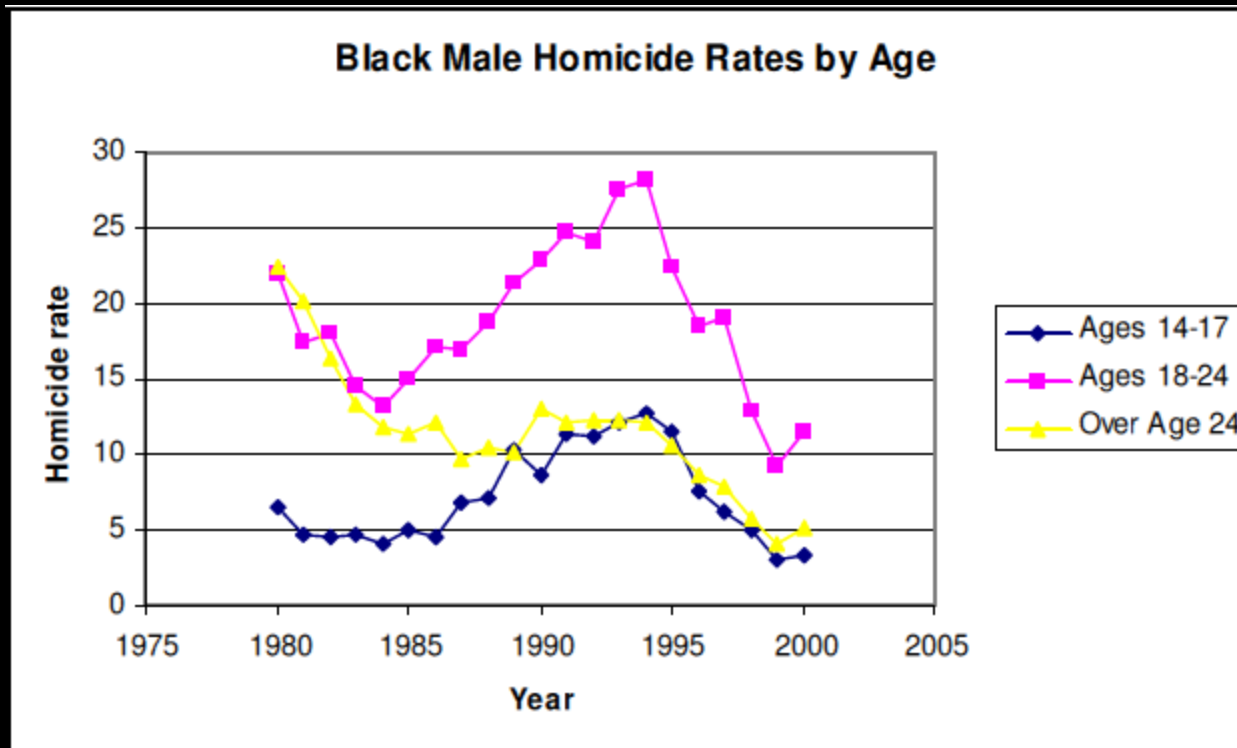
# Social Costs of Crack Cocaine

- ◎ Black youth homicides
- ◎ Fetal Death
- ◎ Low-birth weight babies
- ◎ Un-wed births
- ◎ Dysfunctional home environments
- ◎ Violent crimes
- ◎ Property crime (theft, vandalism)

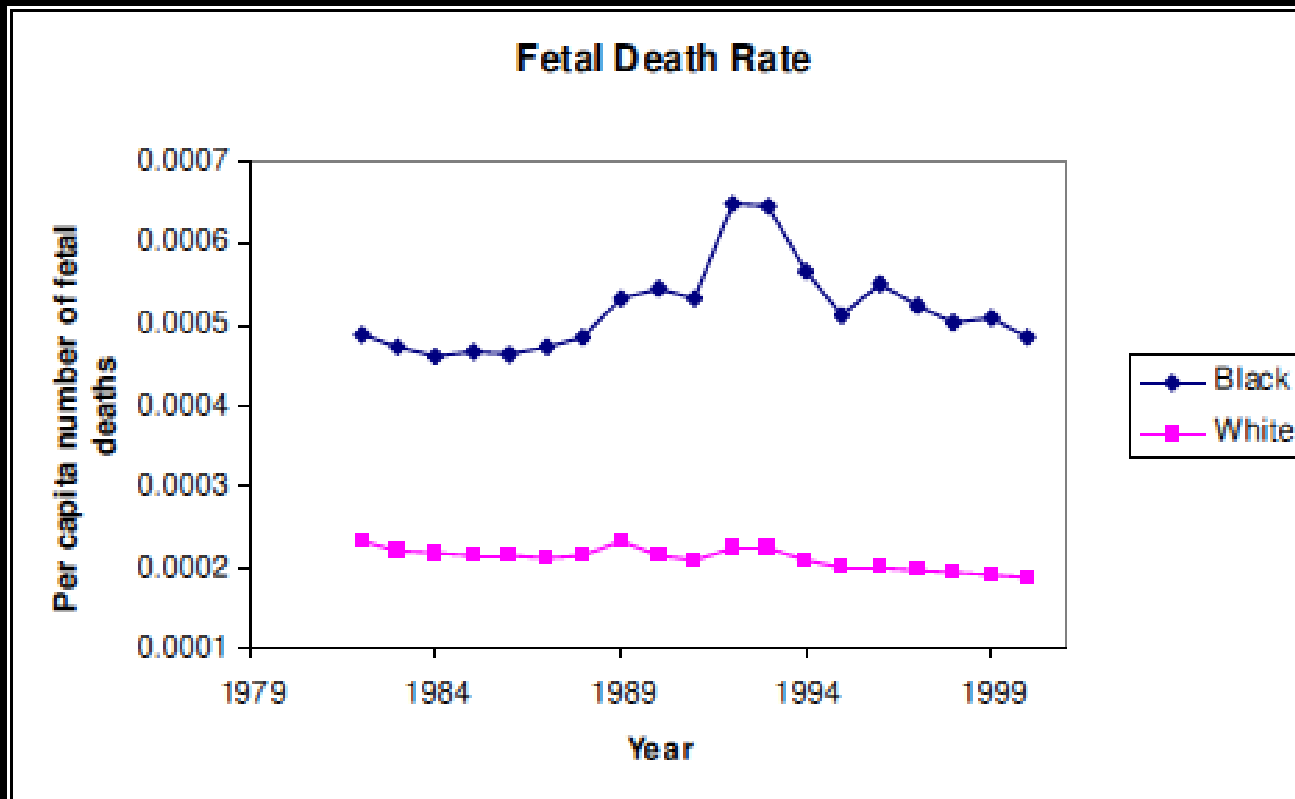


# Black Youth Homicides (per 100,000 city residents)

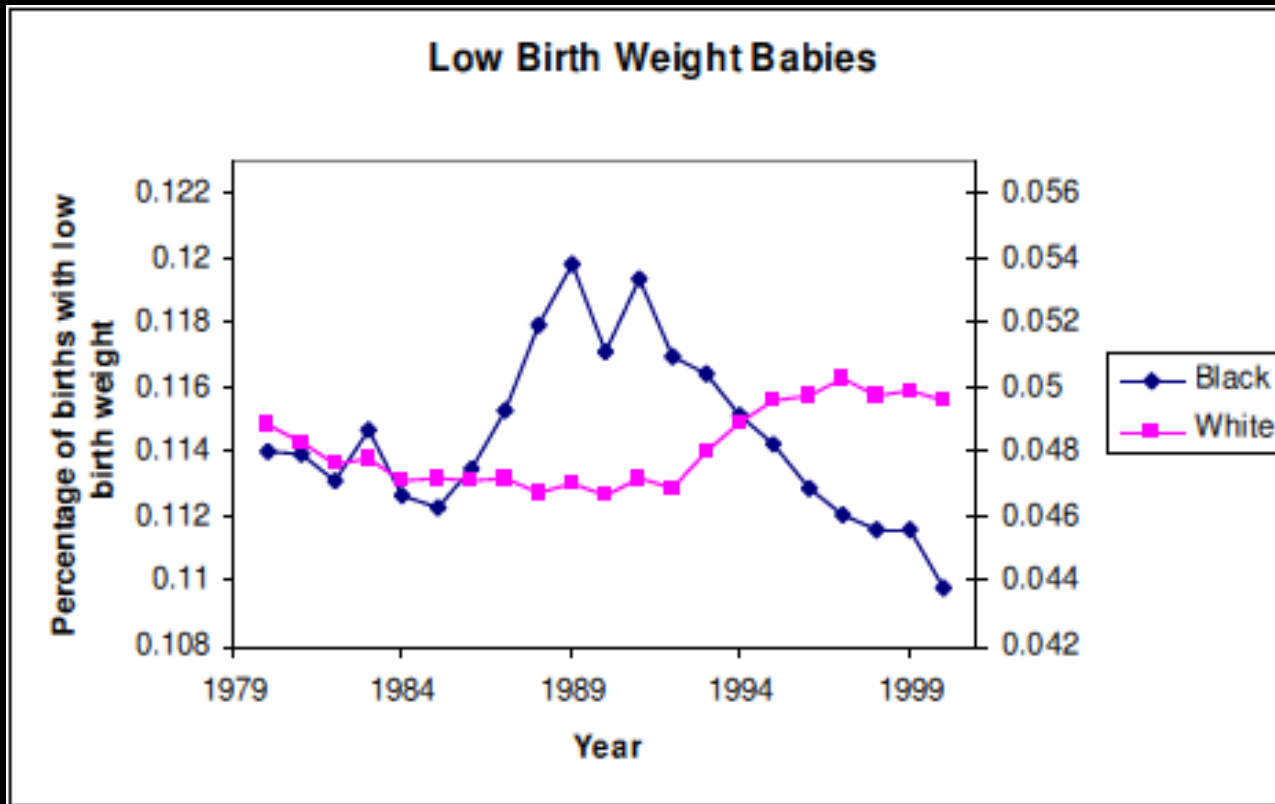
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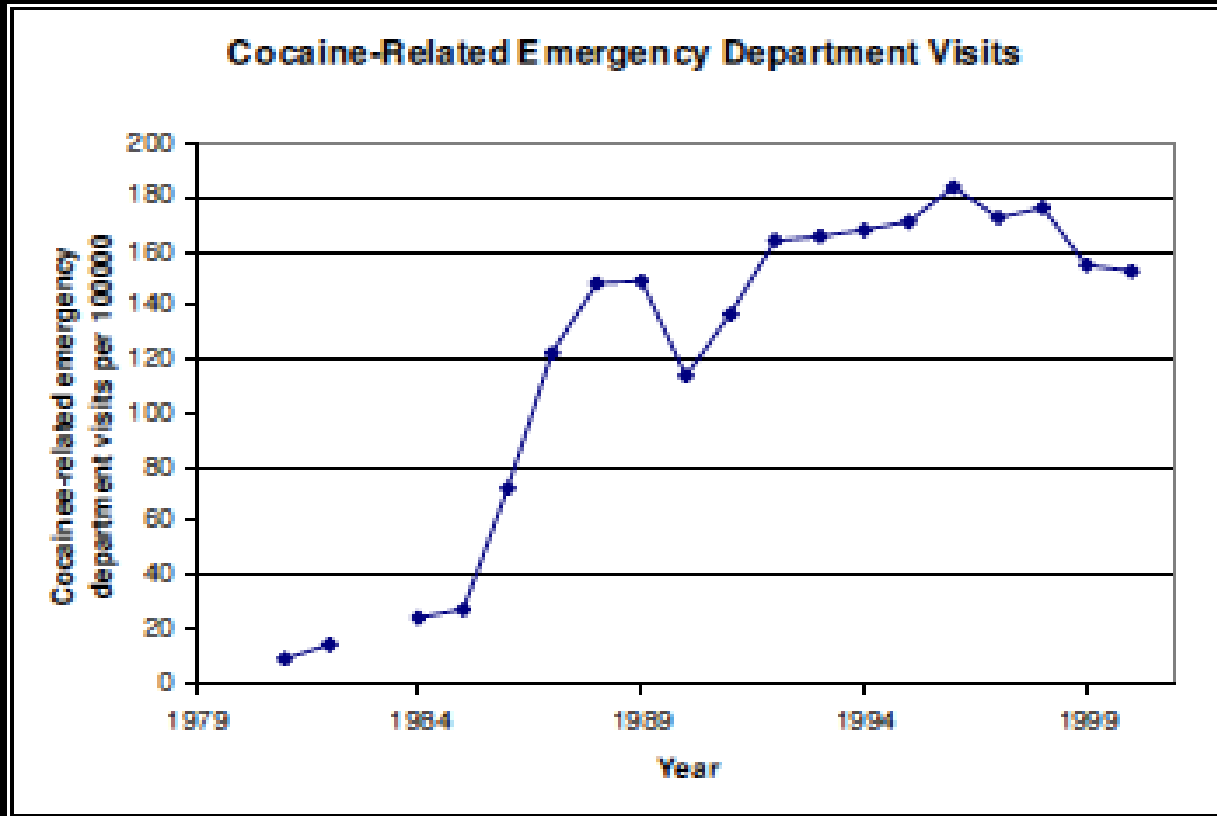
# Fetal Death Rate



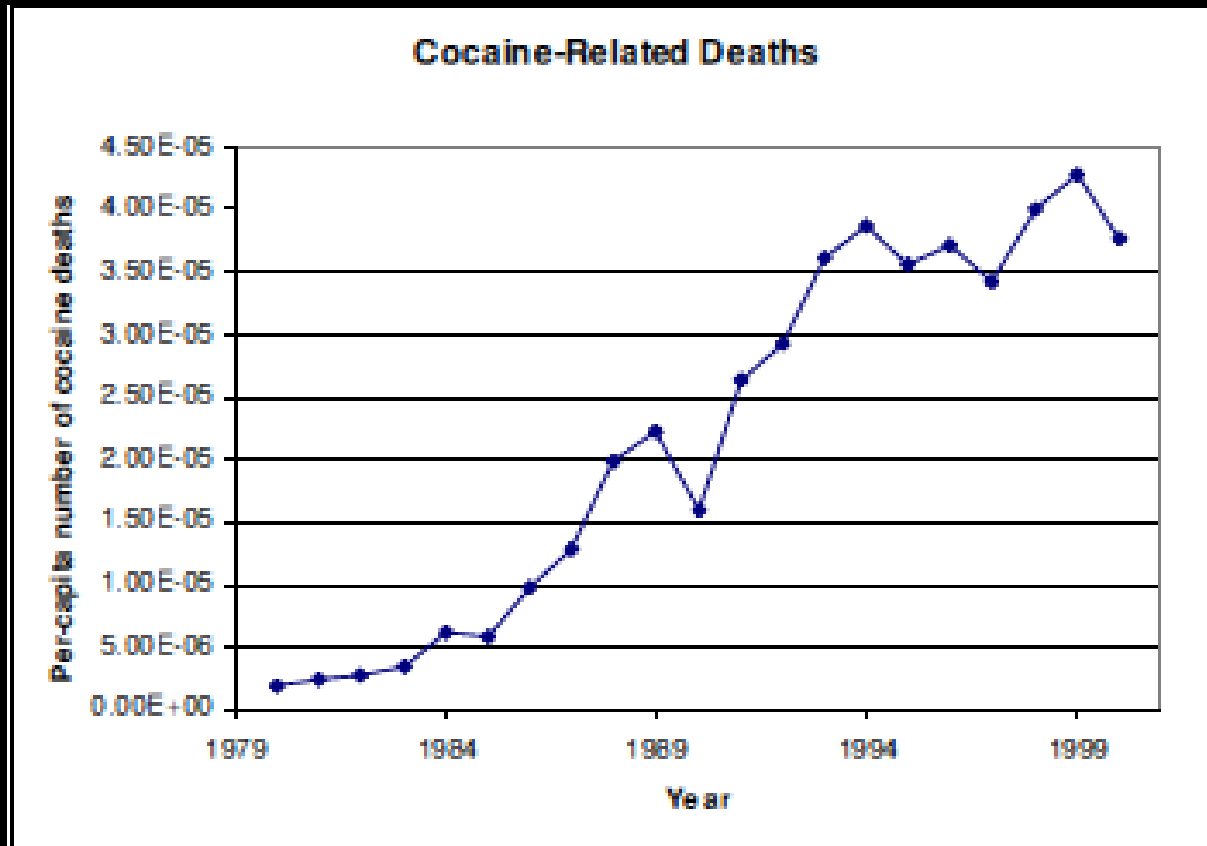
# Low Birth Weight Babies



# Cocaine-Related ER Visits

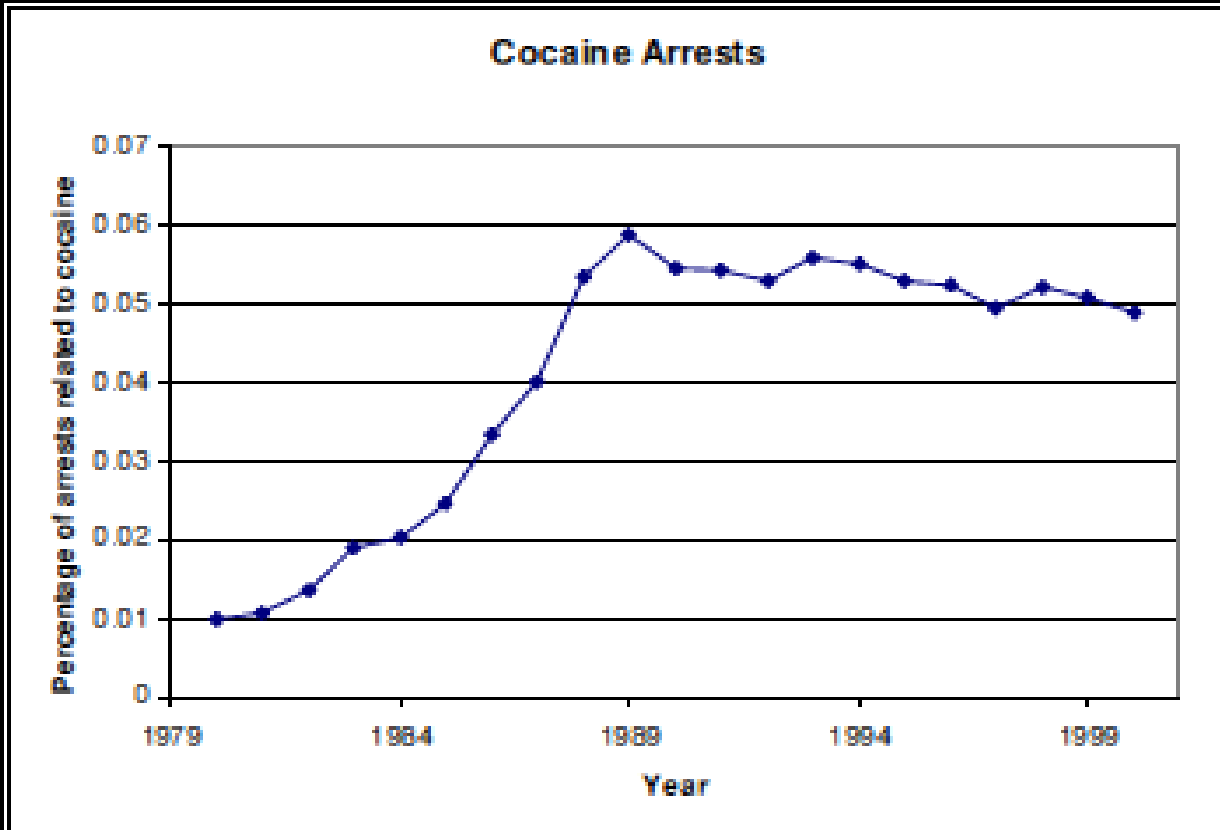


# Cocaine-Related Deaths



# Cocaine Arrests

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# U.S. Response

## Anti-Drug Abuse Act

- ◎ Passed in 1986
- ◎ Allowed the US to impose tariffs on countries that did not cooperate with anti-drug trafficking efforts.
- ◎ Created laws against money laundering – more drug sellers could be arrested.
- ◎ Instituted mandatory minimum prison terms for possession of large quantities of drugs. Especially harsh for crack dealers.

# U.S. Response

## Anti-Drug Abuse Act

- ◎ 10 years in prison
  - 5 kg cocaine
  - 50 g crack (500 rocks)
  
- ◎ 5 years in prison
  - 500 g cocaine
  - 5 g crack (50 rocks)



# Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

- ◉ Established in 1988 by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act
- ◉ Formerly a cabinet level office reporting directly to the President of the United States
- ◉ Mission is to establish policies, priorities, and objectives to eradicate illicit drug use, manufacturing, and trafficking, drug-related crime and violence, and drug-related health consequences in the U.S.

# Drug Courts

## ◎ Drug Courts

- For drug-related non-violent offenses
- 1989 – First drug court in Miami
- Enormously successful
- 30,000 clients per year
- Currently 2140 drug courts, with another 284 being planned

# Drug Courts

- ⦿ Integration of judicial system with drug and alcohol treatment system
- ⦿ Convicted offenders can choose drug treatment instead of prison time
- ⦿ Treats the drug addiction that drives criminal activity
- ⦿ Prevents the growth of a marginalized criminal community

Defining *Drug Courts: The Key Components*, National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 1997.

# Drug Courts

- ◎ Highly cost-effective
  - Recidivism rate between 4% to 29%, compared to 48% for those not diverted to drug courts.<sup>1</sup>
  - Cost savings ranged from \$3000 to \$12,000 per client.<sup>2</sup>
  - Over \$1 billion in annual savings
  - Drug court produces \$2.21 in benefit for every \$1 in cost.<sup>3</sup>
  - Successful and inexpensive

1. "Recidivism Rates for Drug Court Graduates: National Based Estimates," Urban Institute and Caliber Associates, 2003.
2. Aos S, Miller M, Drake E. (2006). Evidence-based public policy options to reduce future prison construction, criminal justice costs, and crime rates. Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
3. Bhati AS, Roman JK, Chalfin A. (2008, April). To treat or not to treat: Evidence on the prospects of expanding treatment to drug-involved offenders. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

# Prevention

## ◎ Focus on Youth

- Many drug users are youth and young adults
- Early intervention to prevent adult drug use
- Drug effects of developing young brains

## ◎ National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

- Major focus on marijuana
  - Popular
  - “Gateway” drug leading to heavier drug use

# Above the Influence



# Above the Influence







# Above the Influence

## I Do Me

# Above the Influence

## Ordinary Day

# Above the Influence Dog

# Responses

# Dog - Responses

- ◎ hahaha. are there any other □stoners laughing there asses off watching this video?
- ◎ i want what shit she's smoking. LEGALIZE IT!!!!
- ◎ think about it, that's what □ we teach kids with all the shows that star talking animals teaching about morals and shit
- ◎ yea its bullshit □



# Ordinary Day – Responses

- is it just me, or does them listening to music and spinning around on that thing seem like it would be SO MUCH BETTER stoned?
- i thought they were stoned the whole commercial until the end ☐
- This commercial says: HEY YOU GUYS, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A GIRLFRIEND, YOU CAN FUCK OFF AND DIE FOR ALL WE CARE. ONLY PRETTY PEOPLE ARE ALLOWED TO BE DRUG-FREE! IF YOU AREN'T SPENDING TIME WITH SOMEBODY ELSE JUST OVERDOSE ON HEROIN AND BARBITURATES.
- I choose to remain above the ☐ influence of Above the Influence



# I Do Me - Responses

- ◎ I dont understand □ what this has to do with refusing drugs?
- ◎ dont let all this propaganda influence □ you, look into the facts yourself. try weed.
- ◎ The message behind this video? Be □ as closed minded as possible



# Viewer Responses

- ◉ Viewers OVERWHELMINGLY DO NOT LIKE THE ADS
- ◉ Responses are sarcastic and rebellious
- ◉ Responses are critical of adults and the adult establishment (government, businesses, media)
- ◉ In general, there is a mistrust of the establishment
- ◉ Viewers feel adults are criticizing them and do not understand them – “The message behind this video – be as closed minded as possible.”
- ◉ Marginalized viewers who are often more likely to use drugs feel attacked – “If you don’t have a girlfriend, you can fuck off and die.” “Being drug-free is only for pretty people.”



# Under the Influence

# Anti-Drug Dog

# Criticisms

- ◎ Ads fail to resonate with teens in general
- ◎ Ads seem like disapproving parents reprimanding children
- ◎ Ads directly criticize drug users and alienate teenagers who are rebellious

# 2002 Study

Zeller, Shawn, "Ads, Drugs & Money" (<http://www.govexec.com/features/0903/0903s3.htm>), *Government Executive Magazine*, September 10, 2003.

- ◎ Teens exposed to ads not less likely to use drugs
- ◎ Some young girls said they were more likely to give drugs a try
- ◎ Study looks at opinions but not the direct outcome of drug use

# Successful Ads

# Body Bags

The American Legacy Foundation

# Shards o' Glass Spheres

# Public Relations





# Responses

# Public Relations - Responses

- ◎ that was funny when they were staring at each other. and that dumb tobacco exec didn't have anything to say about killing people.
- ◎ this is for kids who don't smoke yet. Not for losers who already fell for the "you're cool if you smoke" shit.
- ◎ best commercial

What is Different?

# Advertising Strategy

- ◎ Sarcastic
- ◎ Young rebellious people demonstrating
- ◎ Critical of the adult establishment
- ◎ Message – “Don’t trust the adult establishment”
- ◎ Equates teens with adults – does not look down on teens

# Tobacco Parodies/Copies

# Successful Ads

- ◎ Anti-smoking teens increased from 6% to 26% in the first 10 months of advertising.
- ◎ 29% decrease in smoking rate among teens exposed to the ad.

*American Journal of Public Health, June 2002.*

# Above the Influence - New

# Viewer Responses

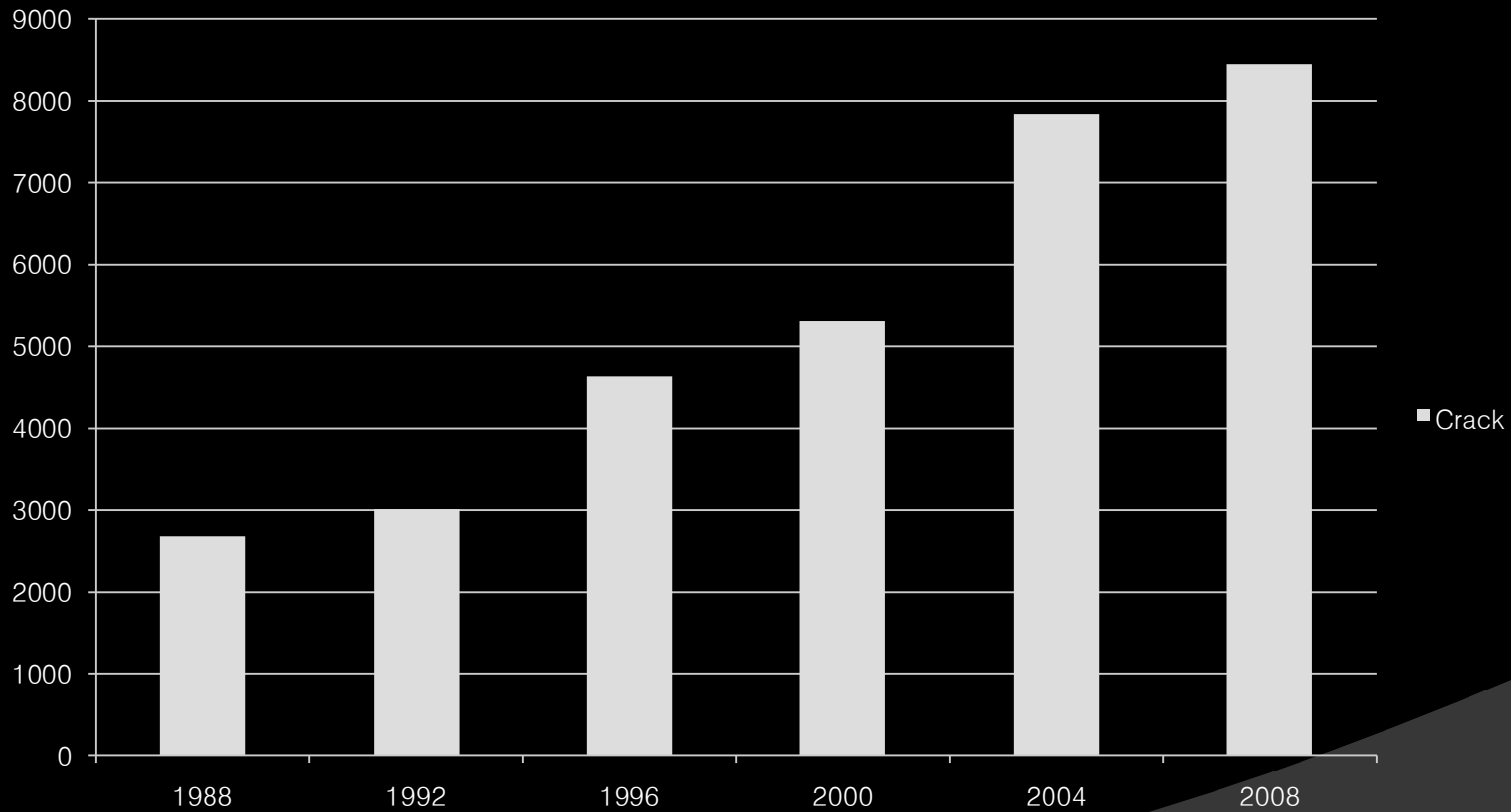
- ⦿ lol wow weed doesn't make you do any of that shit
- ⦿ what has weed given me? a HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA, a great job and a great family....i think the were smokin crystal meth
- ⦿ you don't know crap about drugs and weed and true meaning of it.
- ⦿ typical government propaganda



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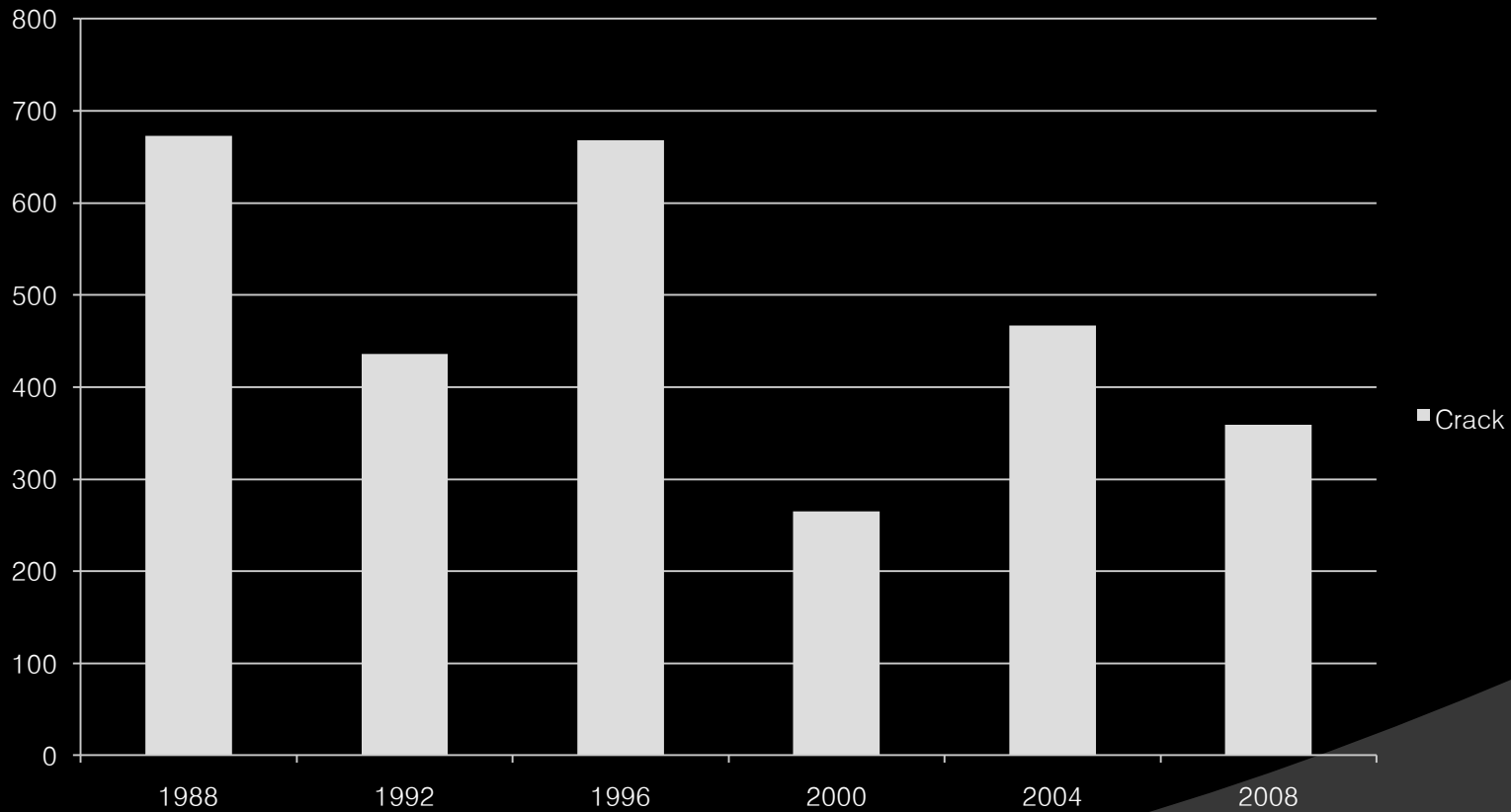
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# Crack

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Past Month Use (number in thousands)



# Is it worth it?

Billions of dollars

Unclear benefit ???

# Problems with the U.S. Strategy

- ◎ Focused on marijuana
- ◎ Problems are not so severe
- ◎ Teens do not take the message seriously
- ◎ US government loses credibility

# Recommendations

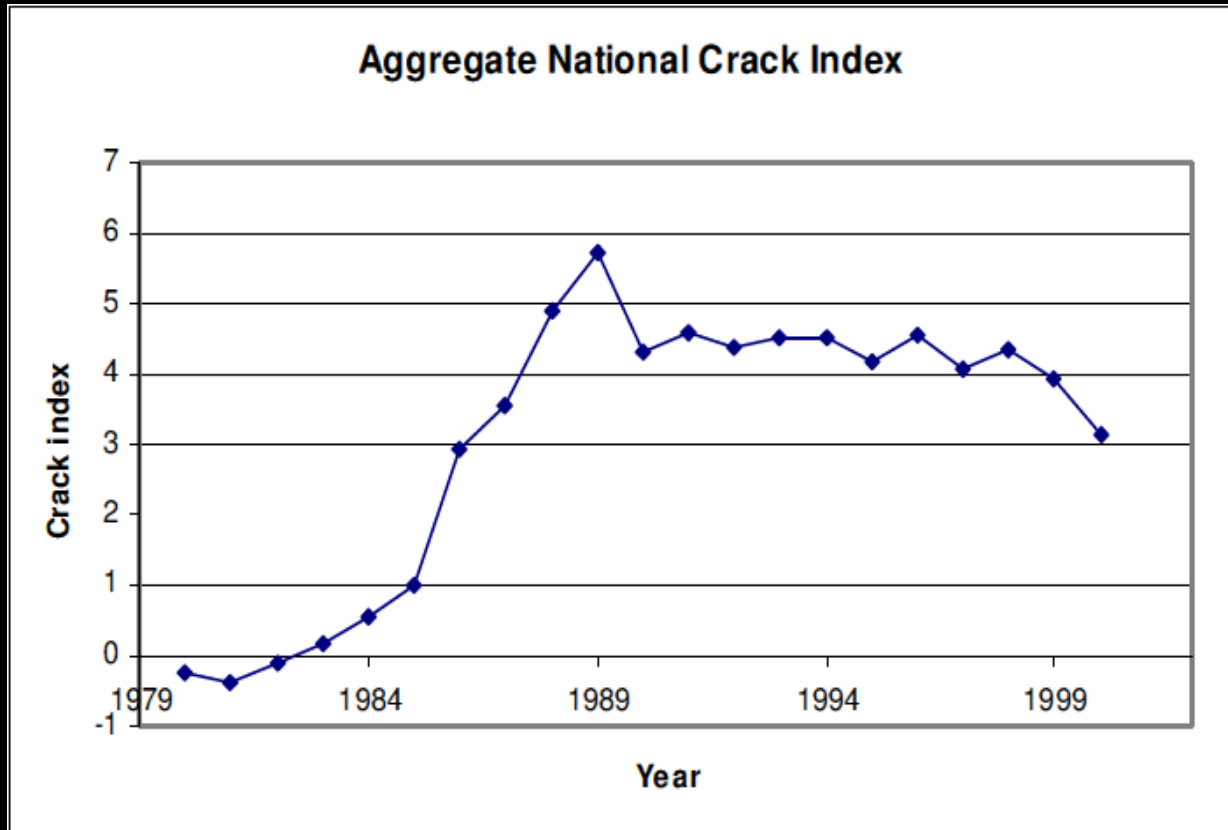
- ◎ Ads should be from the youth perspective – not from the adults' ideal of what youth should be
- ◎ Ads should be respectful of youth, not patronizing
- ◎ Ads should target real consequences of serious drugs so they will be taken seriously – crack, methamphetamine, heroin.

# Changes in Social Costs

# Crack Index

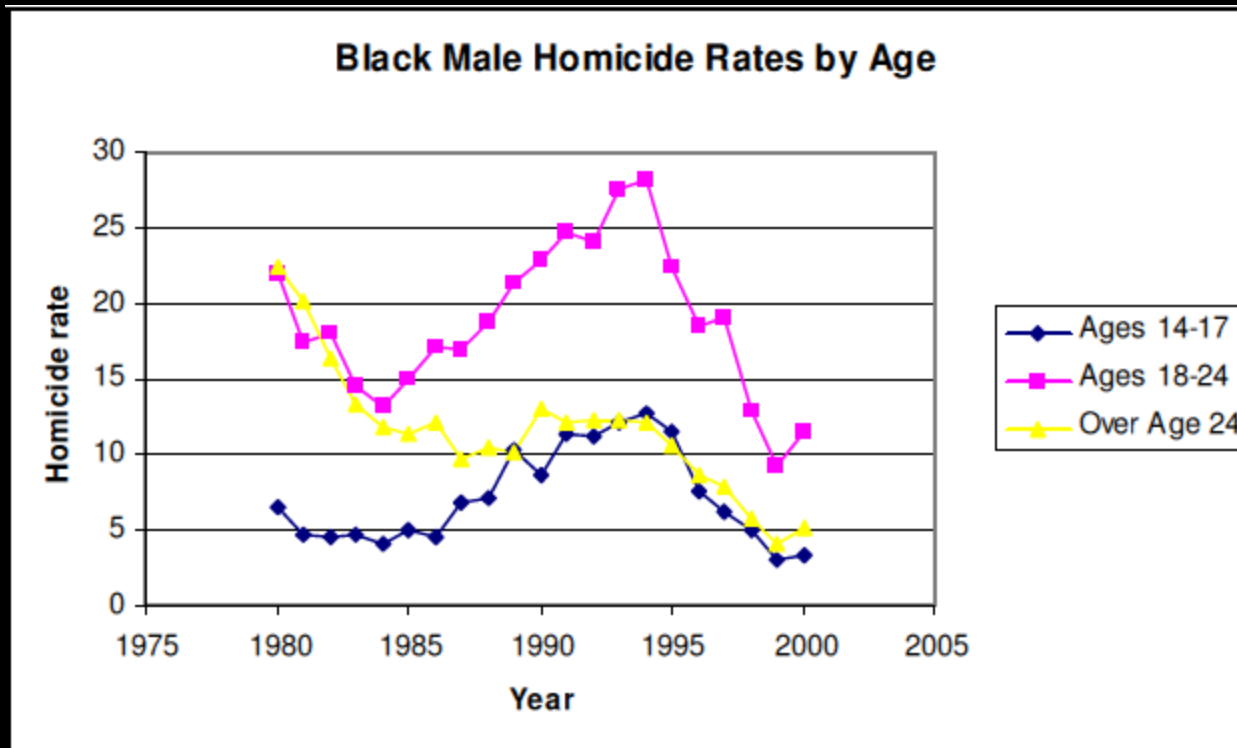
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# Change in Demographics of Crack Users

- ◎ Fewer teens and young adults using crack – group most associated with crack-related crimes
- ◎ Fewer female crack users who were pregnant

# What caused the change?

- ◎ Government media campaigns?
- ◎ Growing direct visibility of crack's effect on community
  - Crime
  - Health
  - Death
  - Other social problems

# Changes in Gang Territories

- ◎ Early crack epidemic – gangs fought to establish territories
- ◎ Gang fighting decreased after territories were established

# Strict Prison Sentences

- ◎ Harsh penalties for drug traffickers, especially crack cocaine
- ◎ Discouraged new initiates/gangs from selling

# Drug Courts

- ◎ Drug courts rehabilitate crack addicts before they became antisocial criminals.

# Conclusions

- Crack use has decreased but has not disappeared
- Societal costs have decreased much more dramatically than crack use
- Many changes were a gradual adjustment after the initial appearance crack
  - Harsh penalties for drug trafficking
  - Gang territories more firmly established
  - Problems of crack became well-known – decreased popularity
  - Drop in crack prices decreased crack trade and crime
- Drug courts had a strong impact on dissociating crack use and crime
- Unclear impact of government media campaigns on crack use