

The State of Drug Use in America

Key Findings from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

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The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is the largest indicator of drug use trends in the United States and provides yearly national and State level estimates of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drug, and non-medical prescription drug use. Each year, the NSDUH surveys approximately 67,500 people, including residents of households, non-institutionalized group quarters, and civilians living on military bases.

According to the 2007 NSDUH, an estimated 19.9 million (8.3%) Americans aged 12 and older are current users of an illicit drug. Although there are still too many people using drugs, current drug use is roughly half of what it was at its peak in 1979 (14%). Below are some highlights from the 2007 NSDUH report:

Sustained Declines in Youth Drug Use

From 2002 to 2007 there were declines in the rate of current drug use in nearly every category, including the following:

- Any illicit drug: down 18 percent (from 11.6% to 9.5%)
- Marijuana: down 18 percent (from 8.2% to 6.7%)
- Cocaine: down 33 percent (from 0.6% to 0.4%)
- Methamphetamine: down 67 percent (from 0.3% to 0.1%)
- Prescription drugs overall: down 18 percent (from 4.0% to 3.3%)
- Pain relievers: down 16 percent (from 3.2% to 2.7%)
- Stimulants: down 38 percent (from 0.8% to 0.5%)
- Ecstasy: down 40 percent (from 0.5% to 0.3%)
- Hallucinogens: down 30 percent (from 1.0% to 0.7%)
- LSD: down 50 percent (from 0.2% to 0.1%)

Cocaine, Meth Use Down Significantly Among Young Adults

There were some substantial one-year changes in the rate of past month use of illicit drugs among young adults, including the following:

- Past month cocaine use dropped 23 percent; from 2.2 percent to 1.7 percent between 2006 and 2007.
- Past month use of methamphetamine dropped 33 percent from 0.6% to 0.4% between 2006 and 2007.

Prescription Drug Abuse Increases

- The number of past-month abusers (non-medical use) of prescription drugs overall increased 13 percent between 2004 and 2007, from 6.1 million to 6.9 million.
- Between 2006 and 2007, the past-month abuse of pain relievers among young adults (18-25) increased 12 percent (from 4.1% to 4.6%)
- As a class of drugs, the non-medical use of prescription drugs continues to have more past year initiates than any other class; in 2007, there were 2.5 million past year initiates of this class of drug compared to 2.1 million initiates of marijuana, the next most initiated drug in 2007.
- The proportion of all individuals classified with the abuse or dependence by pain relievers was 25 percent in 2007, compared to 19 percent in 2004

Abuse and Dependence and Receipt of Specialty Treatment

- In 2007, there were an estimated 6.9 million people 12 or older categorized with abuse of or dependence on illicit drugs; (this estimate is unchanged over the six-year period 2002 to 2007)
- The number of people abusive of or dependent on marijuana has dropped 12 percent in recent years, from 4.5 million in 2004 to 3.9 million in 2007