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Drug Use Trends

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Information Clearinghouse has prepared this fact sheet to summarize drug use trends in the United States. Populations covered in this fact sheet include the general household populations, students, active military personnel, and criminal offenders, as surveyed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Some individuals, such as homeless people, are difficult to reach using standard survey techniques, so little is known about their

drug use. For information on survey methodologies, please refer to the Sources section on page 5. The data used to prepare figures are presented at the end of the report.

General Population

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of HHS have sponsored several national surveys to track drug use trends. One of the most widely known is the National Household Survey

Table 1. Trends in the percentage of persons reporting any illicit drug use: 1979 to 2001										
Age of respondent and recency of drug use	1979	1985	1988	1990	1993	1996	1998	1999	2000	2001
12–17										
Ever	31.8%	27.4%	22.8%	20.9%	16.4%	22.1%	21.3%	27.6%	26.9%	28.49
Past year	24.3	20.7	14.9	14.1	11.9	16.7	16.4	19.8	18.6	20.8
Past 30 days	16.3	13.2	8.1	7.1	5.7	9.0	9.9	9.8	9.7	10.8
18-25										
Ever	69.0%	62.9%	58.1%	54.9%	50.2%	48.0%	48.1%	52.6%	51.2%	55.69
Past year	45.5	37.4	29.1	26.1	24.2	26.8	27.4	29.1	27.9	31.9
Past 30 days	38.0	25.3	17.9	15.0	13.6	15.6	16.1	₹ 16.4	15.9	18.8
26-34								Preak Break		
Ever	49.0%	59.5%	61.2%	59.8%	58.2%	53.1%	50.6%	53.2%	50.9%	53.3
Past year	23.0	26.2	19.1	18.4	14.6	14.6	12.7	53.2% 13.5	13.4	16.1
Past 30 days	20.8	23.1	14.7	10.9	9.5	8.4	7.0	6.8	7.8	8.8
35 and older										
Ever	11.8%	18.1%	20.0%	22.5%	26.1%	29.0%	31.8%	35.7%	35.5%	38.4
Past year	3.9	5.5	5.1	5.2	5.5	5.3	5.5	5.9	5.5	6.3
Past 30 days	2.8	3.9	2.3	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.5
All (ages 12 and older)										
Ever	31.3%	34.4%	34.0%	34.2%	34.2%	34.8%	35.8%	39.7%	38.9%	41.79
Past year	17.5	16.3	12.4	11.7	10.3	10.8	10.6	11.5	11.0	12.6
Past 30 days	14.1	12.1	7.7	6.7	5.9	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.3	7.1

Note: Any illicit drug use includes use of marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogens, inhalants, heroin, or nonmedical use of sedatives, tranquilizers, stimulants, or analgesics. Prior to 1979, data were not totaled for overall drug use and instead were published by specific drug type only.

Data Break: Changes made to the design and execution of NHSDA in 1999 make the 1999, 2000, and 2001 data incomparable to previous years. However, the 1999, 2000, and 2001 data are comparable to each other.

Source: National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.

on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), which interviews persons age 12 and older living in households about drug and alcohol use. In 1991, the survey was expanded to include civilians living on military installments, persons living in college dormitories, and persons living in homeless shelters. Since October 1, 1992, the survey has been sponsored by SAMHSA. Earlier surveys were sponsored by NIDA. In 1999, the survey methodology

Table 2. Past month use of cocaine, by age of respondents: 1979 to 2001

Year	12–17	18-25	26-34	35 and older
1979	1.5%	9.9%	3.0%	0.2%
1982	1.9	7.0	3.5	0.5
1985	1.5	8.1	6.3	0.5
1988	1.2	4.8	2.8	0.4
1990	0.6	2.3	1.9	0.2
1991	0.4	2.2	1.9	0.5
1992	0.3	2.0	1.5	0.2
1993	0.4	1.6	1.0	0.4
1994	0.3	1.2	1.3	0.4
1995	0.8	1.3	1.2	0.4
1996	0.6	2.0	1.5	0.4
1997	1.0	1.2	0.9	0.5
1998	0.8	2.0	1.2	0.5
		Data Break		
1999	0.5	1.7	1.2	0.4
2000	0.6	1.4	0.8	0.3
2001	0.4	1.9	1.1	0.5

Note: The survey was conducted in 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, and 1990-2001.

Data Break: Changes made to the design and execution of NHSDA in 1999 make the 1999, 2000, and 2001 data incomparable to previous years. However, the 1999, 2000, and 2001 data are comparable to each other.

Source: National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.

Table 3. Past month use of marijuana, by age of respondents: 1979 to 2001

			reporting us		
Year	12–17	18–25	26–34	35 and older	
1979	14.2%	35.6%	19.7%	2.9%	
1982	9.9	27.2	19.0	3.9	
1985	10.2	21.7	19.0	2.6	
1988	5.4	15.3	12.3	1.8	
1990	4.4	12.7	9.5	2.4	
1991	3.6	12.9	7.7	2.6	
1992	3.4	10.9	9.3	2.0	
1993	4.0	11.1	7.5	2.4	
1994	6.0	12.1	6.9	2.3	
1995	8.2	12.0	6.7	1.8	
1996	7.1	13.2	6.3	2.0	
1997	9.4	12.8	6.0	2.6	
1998	8.3	13.8	5.5	2.5	
		Data Break			
1999	7.2	14.2	5.4	2.2	
2000	7.2	13.6	5.9	2.3	
2001	8.0	16.0	6.8	2.4	

Note: The survey was conducted in 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, and 1990-2001.

Data Break: Changes made to the design and execution of NHSDA in 1999 make the 1999, 2000, and 2001 data incomparable to previous years. However, the 1999, 2000, and 2001 data are comparable to each other.

Source: National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.

changed, therefore making data from previous years incomparable. According to NHSDA (table 1), in 1979, 14.1% of the population age 12 and older reported using an illicit drug in the past 30 days. Between 1999 and 2001, past month illicit drug use for persons age 12 and older increased from 6.3% to 7.1%

In 2001, an estimated 0.7% of the population age 12 and older reported using cocaine, including crack, at least once in the past month. Such use peaked in 1979 for 18- to 25-year-olds at 9.9%; in 1982 for 12- to 17-year-olds at 1.9%; and in 1985 for 26- to 34-year-olds at 6.3% (table 2).

In 2001, the percentage of Americans reporting marijuana use at least once in the past month was 5.4% of the population age 12 and older. Reported use of marijuana in the past month peaked in 1979 for 12- to 17-year-olds at 14.2%; for 18- to 25-year-olds at 35.6%; and for 26- to 34-year-olds at 19.7% (table 3).

Youth

Another major national survey tracking illicit drug abuse trends is the Monitoring the Future Study. When this annual NIDA-sponsored survey began in 1975, 30.7% of high school seniors reported using an illicit drug in the previous month. This figure climbed to 38.9% in 1978 and 1979, but declined to 14.4% in 1992. Since 1992, this number has increased to 25.7% in 2001 (figure 1).

Figure 1. Past month drug use by high school seniors, by drug type: 1975 to 2001 Percentage reporting use 35 30 25 Cocaine 1999 2001 1978 1981 1984 1987 1990 1993 1996 Source: Monitoring the Future Study.

Figure 2. Past month drug use by 8th and 10th graders, by drug type: 1991 to 2001 Percentage reporting use Any drug Marijuana Marijuana Cocaine 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 2000 8th graders 8th graders 10th graders

In 1991, the Monitoring the Future Study began surveying 8th and 10th graders. Past month drug use increased from 6.8% in 1992 to 14.6% in 1996 for 8th graders and from 11% in 1992 to 23.2% in 1996 for 10th graders. In 2001, past month drug use among 8th graders decreased to 11.7% (figure 2).

10th graders

Source: Monitoring the Future Study.

10th graders

Increased use of marijuana has been especially pronounced. Between 1992 and 1997, past month use of marijuana increased from 11.9% to 23.7% among 12th graders; 8.1% to 20.5% among 10th graders; and 3.7% to 10.2% among 8th graders.

Reported use of marijuana by high school seniors during the past month peaked in 1978 at 37.1% and declined to its lowest level of 11.9% in 1992.

Since 1998, current estimates of past month use of marijuana have remained relatively unchanged. In 2001, past month marijuana use among 12th, 10th, and 8th graders was estimated at 22.4%, 19.8%, and 9.2%, respectively.

Reported use of cocaine by high school seniors within the past month increased from 1.9% to 5.8% between 1975 and 1981. The highest level of cocaine use by this group was reported in 1985 at 6.7% and declined to a low of 1.3% in 1992 and 1993. In 2001, past month cocaine use was 2.1% among high school seniors.

Researchers, noting the emergence of crack, included it in the survey in 1986 as a separate question. In 1987,

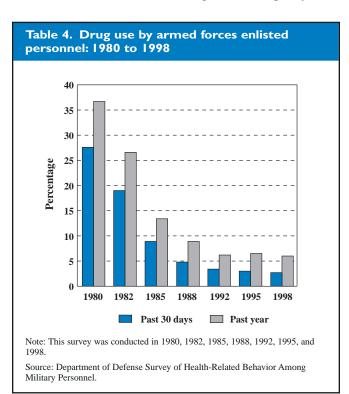
1.3% of high school seniors reported using crack at least once within the past month. This number decreased to 1.1% in 2001.

Between 1991 and 2001, the use of most major drug types increased among 8th and 10th graders. After 6 years of increases, 8th graders' past month marijuana use began to decrease in 1997, falling to 10.2%. This decline continued through 2001 to 9.2%. The use of inhalants declined after peaking in 1995. In 2001, 8th graders reported past month use of inhalants at 4%, a higher rate than the 2.4% reported by 10th graders and the 1.7% reported by 12th graders.

Military

The U.S. Department of Defense's Survey of Health-Related Behavior Among Military Personnel, which is conducted about every 3 years, examines the rates of drug use in the armed forces. In 1980, 27.6% of military respondents polled admitted using an illegal drug within the past 30 days. This proportion fell to 2.7% in 1998 (table 4). Of the drugs abused within the past 30 days, marijuana had the highest percentage of use at 1.4%.

In 1980, 36.7% of military respondents polled admitted to using an illicit drug within the past year. This number fell to 6.0% in 1998 (table 4). Male respondents (6.2%) were more likely than female respondents (4.6%) to have used an illicit drug within the past year.



Emergency Department Data

Since October 1, 1992, SAMHSA has sponsored the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN). Earlier surveys were sponsored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, DOJ, and then by NIDA. Although this indicator of drug abuse consequences began in the early 1970s, nationally representative data are currently available only for 1978 through 2001.

The number of drug-related emergency department episodes increased from 323,100 in 1978 to an alltime high of 638,484 in 2001. In 2001, cocaine-related episodes were at their highest level since the DAWN survey began in 1978; they constituted 30% (193,034) of all emergency department drug-related episodes (figure 3).

Between 1990 and 2001, marijuana/hashish-related episodes increased 604% (from 15,706 to 110,512). Between 1990 and 2000, the number of heroin-related episodes increased 180% (from 33,884 to 94,804). In 2001, heroin-related episodes decreased to 93,064. Methamphetamine/speed-related episodes were at their highest in 1994 (17,537) and 1997 (17,154). In 2001, there were 14,923 methamphetamine/speed-related episodes.

Criminal Offenders Population

The Bureau of Justice Statistics conducts surveys of State and Federal prison populations every 5 years. The Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities began

Table 5. Prior drug use by State prison inmates: 1986, 1991, and 1997

	Percer	tage of St	ate prison	inmates	who used	drugs
	be	In month efore offen	se	At time of offense		
Type of drug	1986	1991	1997	1986	1991	1997
Any drug	56%	50%	57%	36%	31%	33%
Marijuana	46	32	39	18	11	15
Cocaine/crack	20	25	25	10	15	15
Heroin/opiates	11	10	9	7	6	6
Hallucinogens	7	4	4	3	2	2

Note: The Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities was conducted in 1974, 1979, 1986, 1991, and 1997.

Source: Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991; Substance Abuse and Treatment of State and Federal Prisoners, 1997.

in 1974 and samples individual characteristics of State prison inmates including their prior drug and alcohol use. The Survey of Inmates in Federal Correctional Facilities, which began in 1991, collects the same information from inmates in Federal prisons.

Survey data showed that drug use by State prison inmates in the month before their offense declined from 56% in 1986 to 50% in 1991 (table 5). However, between 1991 and 1997 the percentage of State prisoners who reported using drugs in the month before their offense increased from 50% in 1991 to 57% in 1997. Drug use at the time of offense for State prison inmates declined from 36% in 1986 to 31% in 1991. This percentage increased from 31% in 1991 to 33% in 1997.

Figure 3. Numbers of emergency department drug mentions for selected drugs: 1978 to 2001

Drug mentions

200,000

160,000

Reroin/morphine

40,000

Marijuana/hashish

Meth/speed

1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001

Note: Totals include other drugs not specified above. More than one drug may be mentioned for each emergency department episode; therefore, the total number of drug mentions exceeds the total number of drug episodes. A drug mention refers to a substance that was recorded during a drug-related episode (an emergency department visit). Data from 1994 to 2000 were revised in the 2001 DAWN ED report; therefore, reports previous to 2001 may indicate differing numbers.

Source: Drug Abuse Warning Network.

Table 6. Prior drug use by Federal prison inmates: 1991 and 1997

	In m before		At time of offense		
Type of drug	1991	1997	1991	1997	
Any drug	32%	45%	17%	22%	
Marijuana	19	30	6	11	
Cocaine/crack	15	20	8	9	
Heroin/opiates	6	5	4	3	
Hallucinogens	1	2	0.5	0.8	

Note: The Survey of Inmates in Federal Correctional Facilities was conducted in 1991 and 1997.

Source: Substance Abuse and Treatment of State and Federal Prisoners, 1997.

Survey data showed an increase in the number of Federal prisoners reporting drug use in the month before their offense from 32% in 1991 to 45% in 1997. Drug use at the time of offense for Federal prison inmates increased from 17% in 1991 to 22% in 1997 (table 6).

The Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program was begun in 1987 to collect information on drug use among urban arrestees. In 1997, the National Institute of Justice expanded and reengineered the DUF study and renamed it the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program. ADAM is a network of 34 research sites in select U.S. cities.

In 1988, the percentage of adult male arrestees testing positive for any drug at the time of arrest ranged from 54% in Kansas City, Missouri, and Indianapolis to 83% in New York City. For adult females the range was from 44% in St. Louis to 81% in Detroit. By 1999, the percentage of adult males testing positive for any drug at the time of arrest ranged from 50% in San Antonio to 77% in Atlanta. For female arrestees, the range was from 22% in Laredo to 81% in New York City. During the first 9 months of 2001 (January to September), preliminary results for adult males testing positive for any drug at the time of arrest ranged from 51.8% in Dallas to 77.5% in New York City.

Trends in drug use among arrestees vary by drug type and across sites. Between 1988 and 1991, marijuana use declined in most DUF sites. After 1992, marijuana use increased at most sites. In 1999, positive results for male arrestees ranged from 28% in Las Vegas to 51% in Omaha; the range for female arrestees was from 9% in Laredo to 39% in Oklahoma City. During the first 9 months of 2001 (January to September), preliminary results for adult males testing positive for marijuana use at the time of arrest ranged from 27.2% in Laredo to 58% in Omaha.

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Data for figure 1. Past month drug use by high school seniors, by drug type: 1975 to 2001

Year	Marijuana	Cocaine	Any drug
1975	27.1%	1.9%	30.7%
1976	32.2	2.0	34.2
1977	35.4	2.9	37.6
1978	37.1	3.9	38.9
1979	36.5	5.7	38.9
1980	33.7	5.2	37.2
1981	31.6	5.8	36.9
1982	28.5	5.0	32.5
1983	27.0	4.9	30.5
1984	25.2	5.8	29.2
1985	25.7	6.7	29.7
1986	23.4	6.2	27.1
1987	21.0	4.3	24.7
1988	18.0	3.4	21.3
1989	16.7	2.8	19.7
1990	14.0	1.9	17.2
1991	13.8	1.4	16.4
1992	11.9	1.3	14.4
1993	15.5	1.3	18.3
1994	19.0	1.5	21.9
1995	21.2	1.8	23.8
1996	21.9	2.0	24.6
1997	23.7	2.3	26.2
1998	22.8	2.4	25.6
1999	23.1	2.6	25.9
2000	21.6	2.1	24.9
2001	22.4	2.1	25.7

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Data for figure 2. Past month drug use by 8th and 10th graders, by drug type: 1991 to 2001

Year	Any drug		Coc	aine	Marijuana		
	8th graders	10th graders	8th graders	10th graders	8th graders	10th graders	
1991	5.7%	11.6%	0.5%	0.7%	3.2%	8.7%	
1992	6.8	11.0	0.7	0.7	3.7	8.1	
1993	8.4	14.0	0.7	0.9	5.1	10.9	
1994	10.9	18.5	1.0	1.2	7.8	15.8	
1995	12.4	20.2	1.2	1.7	9.1	17.2	
1996	14.6	23.2	1.3	1.7	11.3	20.4	
1997	12.9	23.0	1.1	2.0	10.2	20.5	
1998	12.1	21.5	1.4	2.1	9.7	18.7	
1999	12.2	22.1	1.3	1.8	9.7	19.4	
2000	11.9	22.5	1.2	1.8	9.1	19.7	
2001	11.7	22.7	1.2	1.3	9.2	19.8	

Source: Monitoring the Future Study.

Data for figure 3. Emergency department drug mentions for selected drug groups, total drug mentions, and total drug episodes: 1978 to 2001

	Drug								
Year	Cocaine	Heroin/ morphine	Marijuana/ hashish	Meth/ speed	Total drug mentions	Total drug episodes			
1978	3,438	11,666	10,581	3,102	492,356	323,100			
1979	5,347	11,900	11,284	3,845	511,124	329,109			
1980	7,712	14,707	10,218	5,092	502,225	315,624			
1981	9,750	17,112	10,644	6,469	534,828	329,923			
1982	12,370	22,965	11,584	6,596	538,649	330,611			
1983	15,188	25,100	10,765	6,278	510,879	314,616			
1984	24,368	26,449	12,062	7,487	531,049	327,297			
1985	28,827	28,877	12,651	6,135	536,135	334,503			
1986	51,666	28,622	13,171	6,023	550,070	352,477			
1987	91,791	32,696	22,276	7,707	664,554	396,414			
1988	101,578	38,063	19,962	8,992	668,153	403,578			
1989	110,013	41,656	20,703	8,722	713,392	425,904			
1990	80,355	33,884	15,706	5,236	635,460	371,208			
1991	101,189	35,898	16,251	4,887	674,861	393,968			
1992	119,843	48,003	23,997	6,563	751,731	433,493			
1993	123,423	63,232	28,873	9,926	796,762	460,910			
1994	143,337	63,158	40,034	17,537	899,600	518,880			
1995	135,711	69,556	45,259	15,933	900,287	513,519			
1996	152,420	72,980	53,770	11,002	906,366	513,933			
1997	161,083	70,712	64,720	17,154	942,382	526,818			
1998	172,011	75,688	76,842	11,486	981,764	542,432			
1999	168,751	82,192	87,068	10,447	1,014,243	554,767			
2000	174,881	94,804	96,426	13,505	1,099,306	601,563			
2001	193,034	93,064	110,512	14,923	1,165,367	638,484			

Note: Totals include other drugs not specified above. More than one drug may be mentioned for each emergency department episode; therefore, the total number of drug mentions exceeds the total number of drug episodes. A drug mention refers to a substance that was recorded during a drug-related episode (an emergency department visit). Data from 1994 to 2000 were revised in the 2001 DAWN ED report; therefore, reports previous to 2001 may indicate differing numbers.

Source: Drug Abuse Warning Network.

Data for table 4. Drug use by armed forces enlisted personnel: 1980 to 1998

Year	Past 30 days	Past year	
1980	27.6%	36.7%	
1982	19.0	26.6	
1985	8.9	13.4	
1988	4.8	8.9	
1992	3.4	6.2	
1995	3.0	6.5	
1998	2.7	6.0	

Volume II. Technical Appendices and Selected Data

www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/2k1nhsda/PDF/vol2cover.pdf

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