

# The NHSDA Report

October 11, 2002

## Substance Abuse or Dependence

The NHSDA asks respondents aged 12 or older to report on their use of alcohol and illicit drugs, as well as their symptoms of substance abuse or dependence during the past year. Any illicit drug refers to marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. The NHSDA defines abuse and dependence using criteria in

the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV), which includes such symptoms as physical danger, trouble with the law due to substance use, increased tolerance, and interference in everyday life during the past year (Table 1).<sup>1</sup> The NHSDA also asks respondents about the highest level of school they completed.

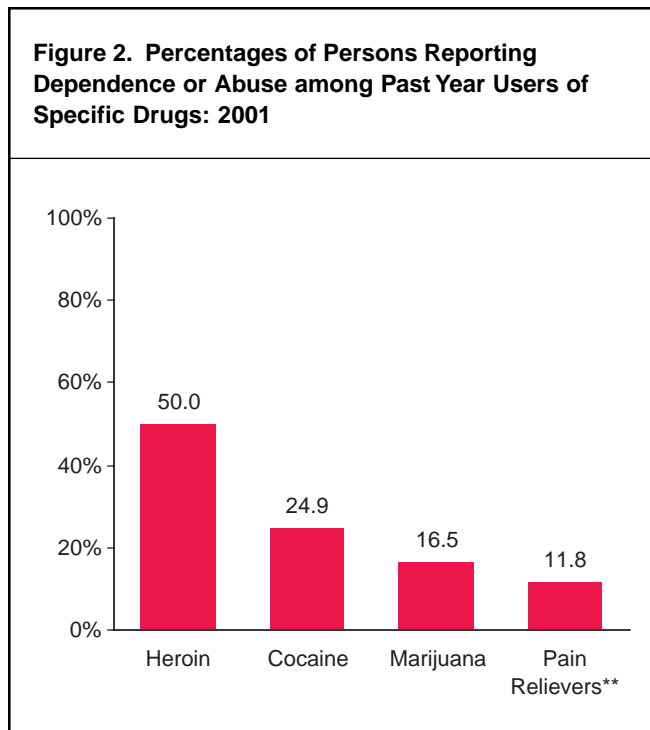
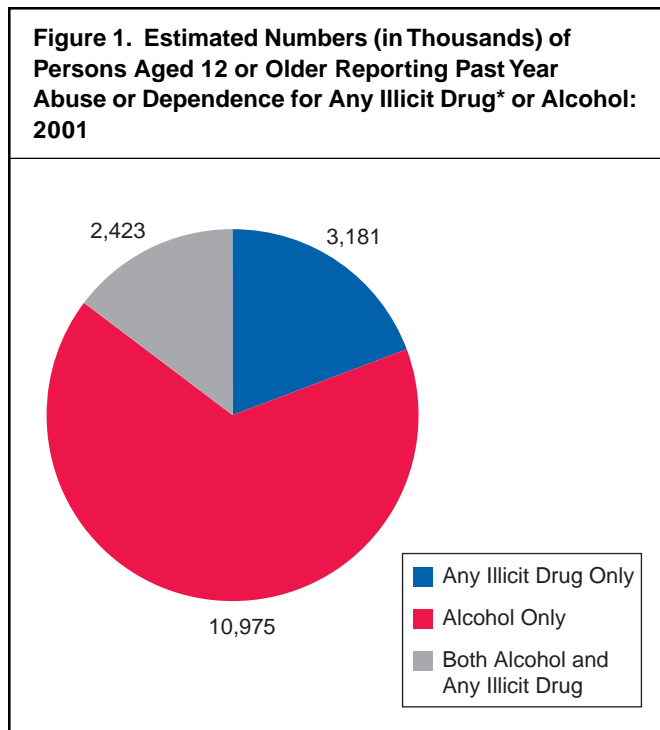
### In Brief

- In 2001, almost 17 million Americans aged 12 or older abused or were dependent on either alcohol or illicit drugs
- The highest rate of abuse or dependence on alcohol or illicit drugs was among 21 year olds
- Among past year heroin users, 50 percent abused or were dependent on heroin during the past year

### Prevalence of Substance Use, Abuse and/or Dependence

In 2001, an estimated 28 million persons aged 12 or older (13 percent) used an illicit drug during the past year. Of these, an estimated 450,000 (0.2 percent) had used heroin, 4 million (2 percent) had used cocaine, 8 million (4 percent) had used prescription-type pain relievers nonmedically, and 21 million (9 percent) had used marijuana.

Almost 17 million Americans aged 12 or older (7 percent) abused or were dependent on either alcohol or an illicit drug during the past year. Of these, approximately 11 million abused or were dependent on alcohol only, and more than 3 million abused or were dependent only on an illicit drug (Figure 1). Over 2 million persons abused or were dependent on both alcohol and an illicit drug.



### Types of Illicit Drugs

Among past year users of heroin, 50 percent (200,000 persons) abused or were dependent on heroin during the past year (Figure 2). About 25 percent of past year cocaine users (1 million persons) abused or were dependent on cocaine. Among past year marijuana users, about 17 percent (almost 4 million persons) abused or were dependent on marijuana, and 12 percent of prescription-type pain reliever (nonmedical) users (1 million persons) abused or were dependent on this substance.

### Demographic Characteristics

Rates of abuse of or dependence on alcohol or an illicit drug were highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 (18 percent), followed by youths aged 12 to 17 (8 percent) and adults aged 26 or older (5 percent). The highest rate of abuse of or

dependence on alcohol or an illicit drug was among 21-year olds (23 percent); prevalence generally decreased with each increasing year of age thereafter (Figure 3).

Males aged 12 or older were twice as likely as females to abuse or be dependent on alcohol or any illicit drug (10 percent versus 5 percent, respectively). Rates of abuse or dependence on alcohol or illicit drugs among persons aged 12 or older were highest among American Indians/Alaska Natives (14 percent), followed by Hispanics (8 percent), whites (8 percent), blacks (6 percent), and Asians (4 percent).

### Education and Substance Abuse or Dependence

In general, among adults aged 18 or older, rates of abuse of or dependence on alcohol or an illicit drug were higher among those who had not completed high school than those who completed high school or college (Figure 4). For instance, 8

percent of those who had not completed high school abused or were dependent on alcohol or illicit drugs during the past year compared with 6 percent of college graduates.

### End Note

- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

### Table and Figure Notes

Note: Abuse or dependence is based on the definition found in the 4th ed. of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV).

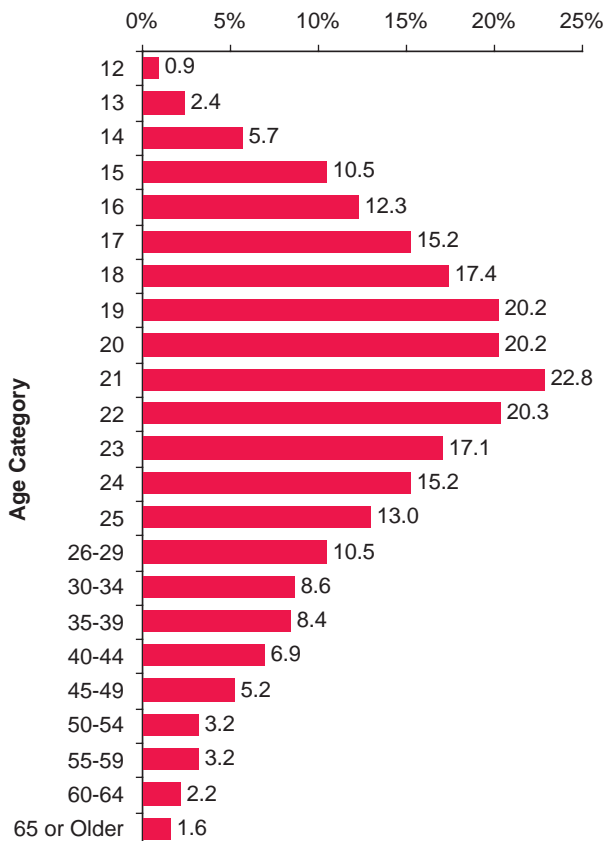
\*Any Illicit Drug refers to marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.

\*\*Prescription-type pain relievers used nonmedically.

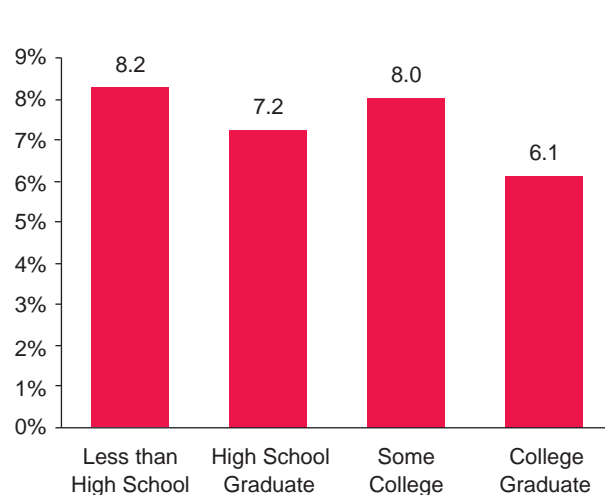
Source (all figures): SAMHSA 2001 NHSDA.

Source (Table 1): American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

**Figure 3. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 or Older Reporting Past Year Abuse or Dependence for Alcohol or Any Illicit Drug,\* by Detailed Age Categories: 2001**



**Figure 4. Percentages of Adults Aged 18 or Older Reporting Past Year Abuse or Dependence for Alcohol or Any Illicit Drug,\* by Highest Year of Education Completed: 2001**



**Table 1. DSM-IV Diagnosis of Substance Abuse or Dependence.**

**A person is defined with abuse of a substance if he or she is not dependent on that substance and reports one or more of the following symptoms in the past year.**

1. Recurrent use resulting in failure to fulfill major obligations at work, school, or home
2. Recurrent use in situations in which it is physically hazardous (e.g., driving an automobile)
3. Recurrent substance-related legal problems
4. Continued use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems

**A person is defined as being dependent on a substance if he or she reports three or more of the following symptoms in the past year.**

1. Tolerance—discovering less effect with same amount (needing more to become intoxicated)
2. Withdrawal (characteristic withdrawal associated with type of drug)
3. Using more or for longer periods than intended
4. Desire to or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
5. Considerable time spent in obtaining or using the substance or recovering from its effects
6. Important social, work, or recreational activities given up or reduced because of use
7. Continued use despite knowledge of problems caused by or aggravated by use

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2001 data are based on information obtained from 69,000 persons aged 12 or older. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

*The NHSDA Report* is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, and by RTI in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Information and data for this issue are based on the following publications and statistics:

Office of Applied Studies. (2002). *Results from the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Volume I. Summary of national findings* (NHSDA Series H-17, DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3758). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Epstein, J.F. (2002). *Substance dependence, abuse, and treatment: Findings from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (NHSDA Series: A-16, DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3642). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies.

Also available on-line at <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

Additional tables available upon request.

