

The NSDUH Report

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Substance Use among Past Year Ecstasy Users

In Brief

- According to 2003 NSDUH data, approximately 2.1 million persons aged 12 or older (0.9 percent) used Ecstasy during the past year
- The rate of past year Ecstasy use was significantly greater among 18 to 25 year olds (3.7 percent) than among 12 to 17 year olds (1.3 percent) or persons aged 26 or older (0.3 percent)
- Combined data for 2002 and 2003 show that more than 90 percent of past year Ecstasy users reported other illicit drug use during the past year compared with 13.8 percent of persons who did not use Ecstasy during the past year

Findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) show that past year Ecstasy (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine or MDMA) use among persons aged 12 or older declined from 3.2 million users in 2002 to 2.1 million users in 2003.¹ Data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) study indicate that the percentage of youths who perceive risks from using Ecstasy has increased in recent years.² For example, in 2004, 42.5 percent of eighth graders and 57.7 percent of twelfth graders believed there is “great risk” from using Ecstasy once or twice compared with 35.8 percent and 45.7 percent, respectively, in 2001.

Recent research indicates that Ecstasy users frequently use other illicit drugs. Studies from Norway and Australia have found that Ecstasy users are more likely to use other illicit drugs than persons who do not use Ecstasy.^{3,4} NSDUH asks respondents aged 12 or older to report their use of illicit drugs, including Ecstasy. This report focuses on the use of alcohol and illicit

drugs among past year Ecstasy users aged 12 or older. The prevalence estimates presented in this report are from 2003 NSDUH while statistics on other drugs used by Ecstasy users are annual averages based on combined data from the 2002 and 2003 NSDUH.

Past Year Ecstasy Use

According to 2003 NSDUH data, approximately 2.1 million persons aged 12 or older (0.9 percent) used Ecstasy during the past year (Table 1). Males were significantly more likely to report past year Ecstasy use than females (1.0 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively). In addition, the rate of past year Ecstasy use was significantly greater among 18 to 25 year olds (3.7 percent) than among 12 to 17 year olds (1.3 percent) or persons aged 26 or older (0.3 percent).

Past Year Use of Ecstasy and Other Illicit Drugs

According to 2002 and 2003 NSDUH data, past year Ecstasy users were more likely than persons who had not used Ecstasy during the past year to have also used alcohol and other illicit drugs⁵ during the past year (Table 2). Almost all (97.5 percent) past year Ecstasy users aged 12 or older reported past year use of alcohol compared with almost two thirds (65.2 percent) of persons who had not used Ecstasy during the past year. More than 90 percent of past year Ecstasy users reported other illicit drug use during the past year

Table 1. Estimated Numbers and Percentages of Past Year Ecstasy Use for Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Demographic Characteristics: 2003

Characteristic	Number (in 1,000s)	Percent	Standard Error
Total	2,119	0.9	0.04
Age			
12-17	329	1.3	0.09
18-25	1,164	3.7	0.16
26+	626	0.3	0.05
Gender			
Male	1,195	1.0	0.08
Female	924	0.8	0.04
Race/Ethnicity			
White	1,488	0.9	0.05
Black	200	0.7	0.17
Asian	93	0.9	0.28
Hispanic	279	0.9	0.11
Other*	60	1.4	0.39

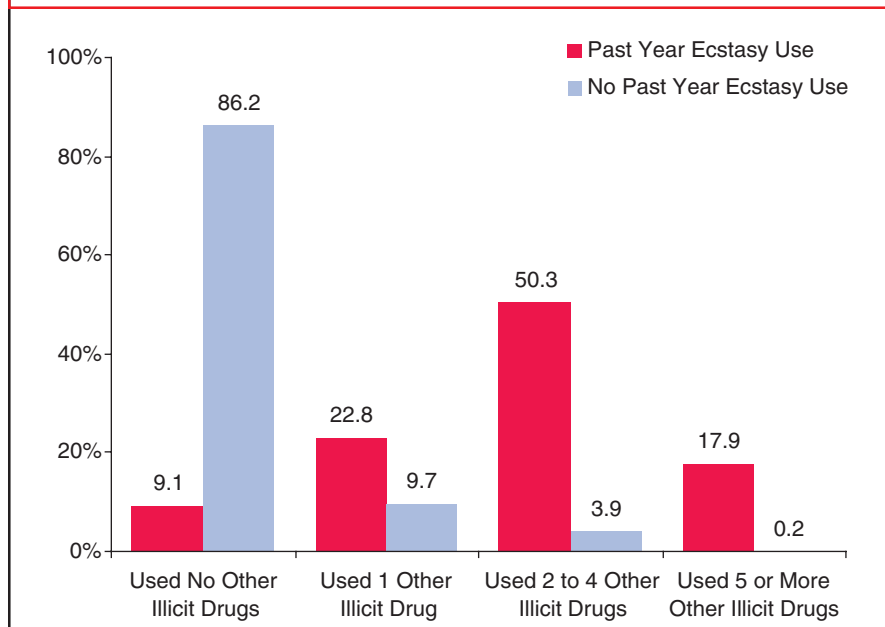
Table 2. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 or Older Who Reported Past Year Drug and Alcohol Use, by Past Year Ecstasy Use: 2002 and 2003**

	Past Year Ecstasy Use (Percent)	No Past Year Ecstasy Use (Percent)
No Other Illicit Drug Use During the Past Year	9.1	86.2
Past Year Use of:		
Alcohol	97.5	65.2
Any Illicit Drug (other than Ecstasy)	90.9	13.8
Marijuana	85.0	9.9
Inhalants	14.7	0.7
Cocaine	43.8	2.0
Heroin	3.2	0.1
LSD	16.8	0.1
PCP	5.2	0.0
Prescription Pain Relievers***	45.6	4.3
Prescription Tranquilizers***	28.7	1.8
Prescription Stimulants***	22.1	1.0
Prescription Sedatives***	3.6	0.3

compared with 13.8 percent of persons who did not use Ecstasy during the past year.

Almost one quarter of past year Ecstasy users (22.8 percent) used one other illicit drug during

Figure 1. Percentages of Past Year Illicit Drug Use* for Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Past Year Ecstasy Use: 2002 and 2003



the past year, while about one half of past year Ecstasy users (50.3 percent) used two to four other illicit drugs during the past year and 17.9 percent used five or more illicit drugs during the past year (Figure 1).⁶ Among persons who had not used Ecstasy during the past year, 9.7 percent used one illicit drug during the past year, 3.9 percent used two to four illicit drugs, and 0.2 percent used five or more illicit drugs.

End Notes

1. Office of Applied Studies. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964, NSDUH Series H-25). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
2. Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (December 21, 2004). *Overall teen drug use continues gradual decline; but use of inhalants rises*. University of Michigan News and Information Services: Ann Arbor, MI. Retrieved April 5, 2005, from www.monitoringthefuture.org
3. Pederson, W., & Skronidal, A. (1999). Ecstasy and new patterns of drug use: a normal population study. *Addiction, 94*, 1695-1706.

4. Degenhardt, L., Barker, B., & Topp, L. (2004). Patterns of Ecstasy use in Australia: Findings from a national household survey. *Addiction, 99*, 187-195.
5. In this report, illicit drug use is defined as the use of marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, heroin, LSD, PCP, or and the nonmedical use of any prescription-type pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative.
6. The number of illicit drugs used during the past year is based on self-reported use of marijuana, inhalants, cocaine, heroin, LSD, PCP, and the nonmedical use of any prescription-type pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative.

Table and Figure Notes

- * Race/ethnicity category of "other" includes Native American/Alaskan Native; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and persons classified as Two or More Races.
- ** Past year substance use measures, including no other illicit drug use and any illicit drug use, are based on the use of marijuana, inhalants, cocaine, heroin, LSD, PCP, and the nonmedical use of any pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative.
- ***NSDUH measures nonmedical use of prescription-type pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants, or tranquilizers. Nonmedical use is defined as use of prescription-type drugs not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used only for the experience or feeling they caused.
- + The number of drugs used during the past year is based on the use of marijuana, inhalants, cocaine, heroin, LSD, PCP, and the nonmedical use of any pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative.

Source: SAMHSA, 2002 and 2003 NSDUH.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2002 data are based on information obtained from 68,126 persons aged 12 or older. The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 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.

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Information and data for this issue are based on the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964, NSDUH Series H-25). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NSDUH Series H-22). Rockville, MD:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available online: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov>

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002 and 2003 surveys should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.

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