

**Results from the 2001
National Household Survey on Drug Abuse:
Volume I. Summary of National Findings**

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies

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Highlights

This report provides the first release of information from the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). This survey is a project of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Initiated in 1971, the NHSDA has become the primary source of information on the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco by the civilian, noninstitutionalized population in the United States. The NHSDA interviews approximately 70,000 people age 12 years or older, in every State, over a 12-month period. Because of the size of the survey, it is possible to make relatively precise estimates of many variables of major interest. In addition to extensive questions about the use of substances, the 2001 version of the survey included questions on mental health status and treatment. This initial report presents only national estimates; State estimates will be presented in future reports.

Illicit Drug Use

- In 2001, an estimated 15.9 million Americans age 12 years or older used an illicit drug during the month immediately prior to the survey interview. These people are identified as current drug users. This estimate represents 7.1 percent of the population 12 years or older. By comparison, in 2000 the survey found that 6.3 percent of this population were current users of illicit drugs. The survey also found statistically significant increases between 2000 and 2001 in the use of particular drugs or groups of illicit drugs, such as marijuana (from 4.8 to 5.4 percent) and cocaine (0.5 to 0.7 percent), and the nonmedical use of pain relievers (1.2 to 1.6 percent) and tranquilizers (0.4 to 0.6 percent).
- When the population is examined by age groups, the 2001 survey disclosed that 10.8 percent of youths 12 to 17 were current drug users compared with 9.7 percent in 2000. Similarly, among adults age 18 to 25 years, current drug use increased between 2000 and 2001 from 15.9 to 18.8 percent. There were no statistically significant changes in the rates of drug use among adults age 26 or older.
- The patterns of current use among major racial/ethnic groups in 2001 were similar to previous years. The rate among blacks was 7.4 percent, whites 7.2 percent, and Hispanics 6.4 percent. Current use was highest among American Indians and Alaska Natives (9.9 percent) and lowest among Asians (2.8 percent). The rate among persons reporting more than one race was 12.6 percent. These estimates obscure the considerable variation among Asian and Hispanic subgroups. These variations are described in the report.
- The rate of illicit drug use in metropolitan counties was higher than the rate in nonmetropolitan counties. Current drug use rates were 7.6 percent in large metropolitan counties, 7.1 percent in small metropolitan counties, 5.8 percent in nonmetropolitan counties, and 4.8 percent in completely rural, nonmetropolitan counties.

- The NHSDA also provides estimates of use of drugs of particular interest. The number of persons reporting they had ever tried Ecstasy (MDMA) increased from 6.5 million in 2000 to 8.1 million in 2001. The number of current users in 2001 was 786,000. The number of persons reporting use of Oxycontin for nonmedical purposes at least once in their lifetime increased fourfold from 1999 to 2001. The estimates were 221,000 in 1999; 399,000 in 2000; and 957,000 in 2001.
- Adults who used illicit drugs were twice as likely to have serious mental illness (SMI) as adults who did not use an illicit drug. Among adults who used an illicit drug in the past year, 16.6 percent had SMI during that period, while among adults who did not use an illicit drug the rate of SMI was 6.1 percent.

Alcohol Use

- The rate of alcohol use and the number of drinkers increased between 2000 and 2001. Almost half of all Americans age 12 or older, 48.3 percent or 109 million persons, were current drinkers in the 2001 survey. This estimate was roughly 5.0 million higher than 2000 when 46.6 percent of those 12 years or older reported current alcohol use. Comparing 2000 and 2001, no significant changes were found in heavy or binge drinking.
- About 10.1 million persons age 12 to 20 years reported current use of alcohol in 2001. This number represents 28.5 percent of this age group for whom alcohol is an illicit substance. Of this number, nearly 6.8 million or 19.0 percent were binge drinkers and 2.1 million or 6.0 percent were heavy drinkers.
- In 2001, more than 1 in 10 Americans or 25.1 million persons reported driving under the influence of alcohol at least once in the 12 months prior to the interview. The rate of driving under the influence of alcohol increased from 10.0 to 11.1 percent between 2000 and 2001. Among young adults age 18 to 25 years, 22.8 percent drove under the influence of alcohol.

Tobacco Use

- An estimated 66.5 million Americans 12 years or older reported current use of a tobacco product in 2001. This number represents 29.5 percent of the population. Of this number, 56.3 million smoked cigarettes, 12.1 million smoked cigars, 7.3 million used smokeless tobacco, and 2.3 million used pipes. Except for cigar use, which increased from 4.8 to 5.4 percent, there was no significant change.
- There were no significant changes in rates of the different forms of tobacco products among youths age 12 to 17 between 2000 and 2001. However, the rate of youth cigarette use in 2001 was slightly below the rate for 2000, continuing a downward trend observed between 1999 and 2000. Rates were 14.9 percent in 1999, 13.4 percent in 2000, and 13.0 percent in 2001.

Trends in Initiation of Substance Use (Incidence)

Because of the way trends in the new use of substances are estimated, estimates of first-time use are always a year behind estimates of current use.

- An estimated 2.4 million Americans used marijuana for the first time in 2000. The annual number of new marijuana users has varied considerably since 1965 when there were an estimated 0.6 million new users. The number of new marijuana users reached a peak in 1976 and 1977 at around 3.2 million. Between 1990 and 1996, the estimated number of new users increased from 1.4 million to 2.5 million and has remained at this level.
- In 2000, an estimated 1.9 million persons used Ecstasy (MDMA) for the first time compared with 0.7 million in 1998. This change represents a tripling in incidence in just 2 years. The annual number of new users of pain relievers nonmedically has also been increasing since the mid-1980s when there were roughly 400,000 initiates. In 2000, there were an estimated 2.0 million.
- Initiates of daily smoking increased from 1.4 million per year during the late 1980s to 1.9 million in 1997 and decreased back to 1.4 million in 2000. The annual number of new daily smokers age 12 to 17 decreased from 1.1 million in 1997 to 747,000 in 2000. This translates into a reduction from 3,000 to 2,000 in the number of new youth smokers per day.

Prevention-Related Measures

- The percentage of persons age 12 or older who indicated there was a great risk of smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day rose from 69.3 percent in 2000 to 71.0 percent in 2001. Perceived great risk of smoking marijuana once or twice a week decreased from 56.4 percent in 2000 to 53.3 percent in 2001.
- Among youths age 12 to 17, the percentage reporting great risk in cigarette use did not change between 2000 (64.1 percent) and 2001 (63.6 percent), but the percentage reporting great risk in marijuana use declined from 56.0 to 53.5 percent.
- In 2001, 82.8 percent of youths age 12 to 17 reported having seen or heard alcohol or drug prevention messages outside of school in the past year. This represents a slightly larger percentage than in 2000 (81.9 percent).

Substance Dependence or Abuse

The NHSDA includes a series of questions designed to measure substance dependence and abuse based on criteria specified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition (DSM-IV). These measures reflect more serious problems resulting from use of substances.

- Overall, an estimated 16.6 million persons age 12 or older were classified with dependence on or abuse of either alcohol or illicit drugs in 2001 (7.3 percent of the population). Of these, 2.4 million were classified with dependence or abuse of both alcohol and illicit drugs, 3.2 million were dependent or abused illicit drugs but not alcohol, and 11.0 million were dependent on or abused alcohol but not illicit drugs.
- The number of persons with substance dependence or abuse increased from 14.5 million (6.5 percent of the population) in 2000 to 16.6 million (7.3 percent) in 2001.

Treatment for Substance Abuse Problems

- In the 12 months preceding the NHSDA interview in 2001, an estimated 3.1 million persons age 12 or older (1.4 percent of the population) received some kind of treatment for a problem related to the use of alcohol or illicit drugs. Of this number, 1.6 million received treatment at a self-help group.
- Between 2000 and 2001, there was a significant increase in the estimated number of persons age 12 or older needing treatment for an illicit drug problem. This number increased from 4.7 million in 2000 to 6.1 million in 2001. During the same period, there was also an increase from 0.8 million to 1.1 million in the number of persons receiving treatment for this problem at a specialty facility. However, overall the number of persons needing but not receiving treatment increased from 3.9 million to 5.0 million.
- Of the 5.0 million people who needed but did not receive treatment in 2001, an estimated 377,000 reported that they felt they needed treatment for their drug problem. This includes an estimated 101,000 who reported that they made an effort but were unable to get treatment and 276,000 who reported making no effort to get treatment.

Serious Mental Illness among Adults and Mental Health Treatment

The 2001 survey included questions for adults that measure serious mental illness (SMI), defined as having a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder and functional impairment that interferes with major life activities. Both youths and adults were asked questions about mental health treatment in the past 12 months. For youths, treatment is defined as receiving treatment or counseling for problems with behaviors or emotions from mental health or other health professionals in school, home, outpatient, or inpatient settings. For adults, treatment is treatment or counseling for any problem with emotions, nerves, or mental health, including the use of prescription medication. Treatment for only a substance abuse problem is not included.

- In 2001, there were an estimated 14.8 million adults age 18 or older with SMI. This represents 7.3 percent of all adults. Of this group with SMI, 6.9 million received mental health treatment in the 12 months prior to the interview.
- Among adults with SMI in 2001, 20.3 percent were dependent on or abused alcohol or illicit drugs; the rate among adults without SMI was 6.3 percent. An estimated 3.0 million adults had both SMI and substance abuse or dependence problems during the year.
- The rates of SMI decreased with age; that is, 11.7 percent of persons 18 to 25; 7.9 percent of persons 26 to 49, and 4.9 percent of persons age 50 or older had an SMI in 2001. The likelihood of receiving treatment among those with SMI was just the opposite, increasing with age from 32.7 percent for those 18 to 25 to 53.3 percent for persons 50 years or older.
- SMI rates for women were higher than for men in all age groups. Females with SMI were more likely to have received mental health treatment in the past year (51.7 vs. 38.4 percent).
- The rate of SMI was highest among American Indians and Alaska Natives (14.4 percent) and lowest among Asians (4.4 percent).
- In 2001, an estimated 4.3 million youths age 12 to 17 received treatment or counseling for emotional or behavioral problems in the 12 months prior to the interview. This represents 18.4 percent of this population and is significantly higher than the 14.6 estimate for 2000.
- The reason cited most often by youths for the latest mental health treatment session was "felt depressed" (44.9 percent of youths receiving treatment), followed by "breaking rules or acting out" (22.4 percent), and "thought about or tried suicide" (16.6 percent).
- Females age 12 to 17 years were slightly more likely than males to have received mental health treatment or counseling in 2001 (19.7 vs. 17.0 percent).
- The rate of mental health treatment was higher among youths who used illicit drugs in the past year than among youths who did not use illicit drugs (26.2 vs. 16.3 percent).

