



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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New National Survey Reveals Drug Use Down Among Adolescents in U.S.— Successes in Substance Abuse Recovery Highlighted

But Officials Express Concern Over Rising Prescription Drug Abuse

Current illicit drug use has declined among the nation's adolescents, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced today, at the start of the 18th annual National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

The rate of adolescents ages 12 to 17 acknowledging drug use in the past month dropped from 11.6 percent in 2002 to 9.8 percent in 2006. This level is similar to the level in 2005 (9.9 percent).

This initial report from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) also indicates use of cigarettes decreased from 2002 to 2006 for people ages 18 to 25. However, the level of underage drinking, ages 12 to 20, remained unchanged since 2002, at 28.3 percent in 2006.

Among the most notable findings was that the level of current marijuana use among youth ages 12 to 17 declined significantly from 8.2 percent in 2002 to 6.7 percent in 2006. The decline in marijuana use was particularly pronounced in adolescent males.

"The trends in general are very encouraging. Parents and communities are doing a great job helping more and more children make the right choice when it comes to illicit drug use," said Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt. SAMHSA is an agency of HHS. "We also need to do more to help people who are already addicted by providing access to a wide array of effective treatment and recovery support programs."

"Drug use is a terrible drag on our society and our economy," said the White House's National Drug Control Policy Director John P. Walters. "Outdated notions casting drug use as a 'recreational' or 'lifestyle' choice have resulted in generations of persistent and ruinous drug use. But we know that this is a problem that can be made smaller. Fewer teens using drugs today means fewer Americans suffering destructive consequences tomorrow."

One area of concern highlighted by the survey was the growing role of misuse of prescription drugs. For example, nonmedical use of prescription drugs among young adults increased from 5.4 percent in 2002 to 6.4 percent in 2006, due largely to an increase in the nonmedical use of pain relievers.

"The abuse of prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons is of increasing concern," said SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline, Ph.D. "These are potent drugs that can have serious and life-threatening consequences if misused. Parents in particular need to be aware of this problem and take steps to prevent these medications from falling into the wrong hands."

The complete survey provides statistical breakdowns for many types of substances including marijuana, prescription drugs, cocaine, methamphetamines, and heroin.

In general, the 2006 survey reveals that an estimated 22.6 million persons (9.2 percent of the population ages 12 and older) may have had either substance abuse or dependency problems in the

past year. Of these, 3.2 million were dependent on or abused both alcohol and illicit drugs; 3.8 million were dependent on or abused illicit drugs but not alcohol; and 15.6 million were dependent on or abused alcohol but not illicit drugs.

The survey also showed that 2.5 million people received substance abuse treatment at specialty facilities in 2006.

The survey also shows that the problems of substance abuse and mental illness are often intertwined. For example, 34.6 percent of 12 to 17 year olds who had a major depressive episode in the past year had used illicit drugs – as opposed to 18.2 percent of youths who had not experienced a major depressive episode during this period. In 2006, 3.2 million youths ages 12 to 17 had at least one major depressive episode.

Overall, the survey indicated 30.4 million adults had at least one major depressive episode in their lifetime.

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month recognizes the accomplishments of people in recovery, the contributions of treatment providers, and advances in substance abuse treatment. This year's theme, "Saving Lives, Saving Dollars," highlights the enormous benefits recovery offers to individuals, loved ones and society in general.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is an annual survey of approximately 67,500 people including residents of households, non-institutionalized group quarters and civilians living on military bases. The complete survey findings are available on the web at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUHlatest.htm>. Electronic versions of *Recovery Month* materials are available at www.recoverymonth.gov.

SAMHSA, is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. SAMHSA promotes effective programs for substance abuse prevention; substance abuse and addiction treatment; and mental health services.