



Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings on Illicit Drug Use

In September 2011, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA–HHS) released a report, *Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings*. This survey has been the primary source of information on the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in the civilian, non-institutionalized population of the United States aged 12 years and older since 1971. The survey interviews appropriately 67,500 persons each year. Following is a summary of the survey's findings.

- In 2010, an estimated 22.6 million Americans aged 12 or older were **current (within the past 30 days) illicit drug users**. This estimate represents 8.9 percent of the U.S. population. Illicit drugs include: Marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack cocaine), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or prescription psychotherapeutics used for non-medical purposes. This percentage of illicit drug users was similar to the 2009 rate (8.7 percent) but higher than the 2008 rate (8.0 percent).
- **Marijuana** was the most commonly used illicit drug. In 2010, there were 17.4 million “past month users.” Between 2007 and 2010, the rate of marijuana use increased from 5.8 to 6.9 percent. The U.S. witnessed an increase in marijuana use from 14.4 million to 17.4 million persons.
- In 2010, there were 1.5 million current **cocaine** users, comprising 0.6 percent of the population. These estimates were similar to 2009 figures (0.7 percent or 1.6 million) but lower than the 2006 figures (1.0 percent or 2.4 million).
- **Hallucinogens** were used in the past month by an estimated 1.5 million persons (0.5 percent) in 2010, including 695,000 who had used **ecstasy**. These estimates are similar to the 2009 figures.
- In 2010, were 7.0 million (2.7 percent) persons used **legal prescription psychotherapeutic agents for nonmedical purposes**. These estimates are similar to the 2009 (7.0 million or 2.8 percent) and 2002 (6.3 million or 2.7 percent) figures.
- The number of recent **methamphetamine** users decreased between 2006 and 2010 from 731,000 (0.3 percent) to 353,000 (0.1 percent).
- Among **youths aged 12 to 17 years**, the current illicit drug use was similar in 2009 (10.0 percent) and 2010 (10.1 percent), but higher than the 2008 rate (9.3 percent). From 2002 to 2008, the rate declined from 11.6 to 9.3 percent.
- The rate of current **marijuana use among youths aged 12 to 17 years** decreased from 8.2 percent in 2002 to 6.7 percent in 2006, remained unchanged at 6.7 percent in 2007 and 2008, then increased to 7.3 percent in 2009 and 7.4 percent in 2010.
- In the same **12 to 17 year age group**, the **rate of nonmedical use of prescription-type medications** declined from 4.0 percent in 2002 to 3.0 percent in 2010.
- In contrast, the use of **ecstasy** declined from 0.5 percent in 2002 to 0.3 percent in 2004, remained at that level through 2007, and then increased to 0.5 percent in 2009 and 2010.
- The rate of current users of **illicit drugs among young adults aged 18 to 25 years** increased from 19.6 percent in 2008 to 21.1 percent in 2009 and 21.5 percent in 2010. This increase appears to be largely driven by a significant increase in marijuana use (from 16.5 percent 2008 to 18.1 percent in 2009 and 18.5 percent in 2010).
- Also among **young adults**, the rate of current use of **prescription type medications for nonmedical purposes** in 2010 remained relatively unchanged from years 2002 to 2009 at

5.9 percent. In addition, there were decreases from 2002 to 2010 in the use of cocaine (from 2.0 to 1.5 percent) and methamphetamine (from 0.6 to 0.2 percent)

- Among **adults aged 50 to 59 years**, the rate of recent illicit drug use increased from 2.7 percent in 2002 to 5.8 percent in 2010. This trend partially reflects the aging into this demographic group of baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964), whose lifetime rate of illicit drug use has been traditionally higher than those of older Americans.
- Among persons 12 years or older in 2009 to 2010 who used **pain relievers for nonmedical purposes** in the past 12 months, 55 percent obtained the drug from a friend or relative for free. Another 17.3 percent reported that they received a prescription from a single medical provider. Only 4.4 percent obtained pain relievers from a drug dealer or other stranger. A small percentage (0.4 percent) reportedly bought them on the Internet. Among those who reported obtaining the pain reliever from a friend or relative for free, 79.4 percent reported that the friend or relative had obtained the prescription from just one provider.
- Among **unemployed adults aged 18 or older** in 2010, 17.5 percent were current illicit drug users, which was significantly higher than the 8.4 percent rate seen in persons **employed full-time** or 11.2 percent in **part-time employees**. However, the majority of illicit drug users were employed. Of the 20.2 million current illicit drug users in the U.S. aged 18 or older in 2010, 13.3 million (65.9 percent) were employed either part- or full-time.
- Lastly, in 2010, 10.6 million **persons aged 12 or older** reported **driving under the influence of illicit drugs** during the past year. This corresponds to 4.2 percent of the population aged 12 or older, which was the same as the 2009 rate but lower than the 2002 rate (4.7 percent). Unsurprisingly, the rate was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 years (12.7 percent).

This is a snapshot of the type of comprehensive data provided in this SAMHSA–HHS report. In the section on illicit drug use, SAMHSA continues to expand its review with additional data on trends involving various age groups, gender differences, use in pregnancy, race/ethnicity, education, college students, employment status, geographic areas, etc. In addition to SAMHSA’s survey of illicit drug use, similar chapters contain survey data results on a number of pertinent issues, including: Current alcohol and tobacco use; initiation of substance use; youth prevention-related measures; substance dependence, abuse, and treatment; and a discussion of trends in substance use among youths and young adults.

References:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*, NSDUH Series H-41, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 11-4658. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2011, <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k10NSDUH/2k10Results.pdf>.