

# Results from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
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## **Highlights**

This report presents the first information from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The survey is the primary source of information on the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States aged 12 years old or older. Approximately 67,500 persons are interviewed in NSDUH each year. Unless otherwise noted, all comparisons in this report described using terms such as "increased," "decreased," or "more than" are statistically significant at the .05 level.

### **Illicit Drug Use**

- In 2011, an estimated 22.5 million Americans aged 12 or older were current (past month) illicit drug users, meaning they had used an illicit drug during the month prior to the survey interview. This estimate represents 8.7 percent of the population aged 12 or older. Illicit drugs include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or prescription-type psychotherapeutics (pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives) used nonmedically.
- The rate of current illicit drug use among persons aged 12 or older in 2011 (8.7 percent) was similar to the rate in 2010 (8.9 percent).
- Marijuana was the most commonly used illicit drug. In 2011, there were 18.1 million past month users. Between 2007 and 2011, the rate of use increased from 5.8 to 7.0 percent, and the number of users increased from 14.5 million to 18.1 million.
- In 2011, there were 1.4 million current cocaine users aged 12 or older, comprising 0.5 percent of the population. These estimates were similar to the number and rate in 2010 (1.5 million or 0.6 percent), but were lower than the estimates in 2006 (2.4 million or 1.0 percent).
- The number of persons who were past year heroin users in 2011 (620,000) was higher than the number in 2007 (373,000).
- Hallucinogens were used in the past month by 972,000 persons (0.4 percent) aged 12 or older in 2011. These estimates were lower than the estimates in 2010 (1.2 million or 0.5 percent).
- In 2011, there were 6.1 million persons (2.4 percent) aged 12 or older who used prescription-type psychotherapeutic drugs nonmedically in the past month. These estimates were lower than the estimates in 2010 (7.0 million or 2.7 percent).

- The number of past month methamphetamine users decreased between 2006 and 2011, from 731,000 (0.3 percent) to 439,000 (0.2 percent).
- Among youths aged 12 to 17, the current illicit drug use rate was similar in 2010 (10.1 percent) and 2011 (10.1 percent), but was higher than the rate in 2008 (9.3 percent). Between 2002 and 2008, the rate declined from 11.6 to 9.3 percent.
- The rate of current marijuana use among youths aged 12 to 17 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 7.4 percent in 2009. Rates in 2010 (7.4 percent) and 2011 (7.9 percent) were similar to the rate in 2009.
- Among youths aged 12 to 17, the rate of current nonmedical use of prescription-type drugs declined from 4.0 percent in 2002 to 2.8 percent in 2011. The rate of nonmedical pain reliever use declined during this period from 3.2 to 2.3 percent among youths.
- The rate of current use of illicit drugs among young adults aged 18 to 25 increased from 19.7 percent in 2008 to 21.4 percent in 2011, driven largely by an increase in marijuana use (from 16.6 percent in 2008 to 19.0 percent in 2011).
- Among young adults aged 18 to 25, the rate of current nonmedical use of prescription-type drugs in 2011 was 5.0 percent, which was lower than the rate in the years from 2003 to 2010. There was a decrease from 2005 to 2011 in the use of cocaine among young adults, from 2.6 to 1.4 percent.
- Among those aged 50 to 59, the rate of past month illicit drug use increased from 2.7 percent in 2002 to 6.3 percent in 2011. This trend partially reflects the aging into this age group of the baby boom cohort (i.e., persons born between 1946 and 1964), whose lifetime rate of illicit drug use has been higher than those of older cohorts.
- Among unemployed adults aged 18 or older in 2011, 17.2 percent were current illicit drug users, which was higher than the 8.0 percent of those employed full time and 11.6 percent of those employed part time. However, most illicit drug users were employed. Of the 19.9 million current illicit drug users aged 18 or older in 2011, 13.1 million (65.7 percent) were employed either full or part time.
- In 2011, 9.4 million persons aged 12 or older reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs during the past year. This corresponds to 3.7 percent of the population aged 12 or older, which was lower than the rate in 2010 (4.2 percent) and was lower than the rate in 2002 (4.7 percent). In 2011, the rate was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 (11.6 percent).
- Among persons aged 12 or older in 2010-2011 who used pain relievers nonmedically in the past 12 months, 54.2 percent got the drug they most recently used from a friend or relative for free. Another 18.1 percent reported they got the drug from one doctor. Only 3.9 percent got pain relievers from a drug dealer or other stranger, and 0.3 percent bought them on the Internet. Among those who reported getting the pain relievers from a friend or relative for free, 81.6 percent reported in a follow-up question that the friend or relative had obtained the drugs from just one doctor.

### **Alcohol Use**

- Slightly more than half (51.8 percent) of Americans aged 12 or older reported being current drinkers of alcohol in the 2011 survey, similar to the rate in 2010 (51.8 percent). This translates to an estimated 133.4 million current drinkers in 2011.

- In 2011, nearly one quarter (22.6 percent) of persons aged 12 or older participated in binge drinking. This translates to about 58.3 million people. The rate in 2011 was similar to the estimate in 2010 (23.1 percent). Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 1 day in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- In 2011, heavy drinking was reported by 6.2 percent of the population aged 12 or older, or 15.9 million people. This rate was lower than the rate of heavy drinking in 2010 (6.7 percent). Heavy drinking is defined as binge drinking on at least 5 days in the past 30 days.
- Among young adults aged 18 to 25 in 2011, the rate of binge drinking was 39.8 percent. The rate of heavy drinking was 12.1 percent, which was lower than the rate in 2010 (13.5 percent).
- The rate of current alcohol use among youths aged 12 to 17 was 13.3 percent in 2011. Youth binge and heavy drinking rates in 2011 were 7.4 and 1.5 percent, respectively. These rates were all similar to those reported in 2010 (13.6, 7.9, and 1.7 percent, respectively).
- In 2011, an estimated 11.1 percent of persons aged 12 or older drove under the influence of alcohol at least once in the past year. This percentage was lower than in 2002, when it was 14.2 percent. The rate of driving under the influence of alcohol was highest among persons aged 21 to 25 (21.9 percent).
- There were an estimated 9.7 million underage (aged 12 to 20) drinkers in 2011, including 6.1 million binge drinkers and 1.7 million heavy drinkers.
- Past month, binge, and heavy drinking rates among underage persons declined between 2002 and 2011. Past month alcohol use declined from 28.8 to 25.1 percent, while binge drinking declined from 19.3 to 15.8 percent, and heavy drinking declined from 6.2 to 4.4 percent.
- In 2011, 57.0 percent of current underage drinkers reported that their last use of alcohol occurred in someone else's home, and 28.2 percent reported that it had occurred in their own home. About one third (30.3 percent) paid for the alcohol the last time they drank, including 7.7 percent who purchased the alcohol themselves and 22.4 percent who gave money to someone else to purchase it. Among those who did not pay for the alcohol they last drank, 38.2 percent got it from an unrelated person aged 21 or older, 19.1 percent from another person younger than 21 years old, and 21.4 percent from a parent, guardian, or other adult family member.

### **Tobacco Use**

- In 2011, an estimated 68.2 million Americans aged 12 or older were current (past month) users of a tobacco product. This represents 26.5 percent of the population in that age range. Also, 56.8 million persons (22.1 percent of the population) were current cigarette smokers; 12.9 million (5.0 percent) smoked cigars; 8.2 million (3.2 percent) used smokeless tobacco; and 2.1 million (0.8 percent) smoked tobacco in pipes.
- Between 2002 and 2011, past month use of any tobacco product decreased from 30.4 to 26.5 percent, past month cigarette use declined from 26.0 to 22.1 percent, and past month cigar use declined from 5.4 to 5.0 percent. Rates of past month use of smokeless tobacco and pipe tobacco in 2011 were similar to corresponding rates in 2002.
- The rate of past month tobacco use among 12 to 17 year olds declined from 15.2 percent in 2002 to 10.0 percent in 2011, including a decline from 2010 (10.7 percent) to 2011. The rate of past month cigarette use among 12 to 17 year olds also declined between 2002 and 2011, from 13.0 to 7.8 percent, including a decline between 2009 (9.0 percent) and 2011.

- One in six pregnant women aged 15 to 44 smoked cigarettes in the past month during 2010-2011. The rate of current smoking among pregnant women did not change between 2002-2003 (18.0 percent) and 2010-2011 (17.6 percent), while among women aged 15 to 44 who were not pregnant, the rate declined from 30.7 to 25.4 percent.

### **Initiation of Substance Use (Incidence, or First-Time Use) within the Past 12 Months**

- In 2011, an estimated 3.1 million persons aged 12 or older used an illicit drug for the first time within the past 12 months. This averages to about 8,400 initiates per day and was similar to the estimate for 2010 (3.0 million). A majority of these past year illicit drug initiates reported that their first drug was marijuana (67.5 percent). More than one in five initiated with psychotherapeutics (22.0 percent, including 14.0 percent with pain relievers, 4.2 percent with tranquilizers, 2.6 percent with stimulants, and 1.2 percent with sedatives). In 2011, 7.5 percent of initiates reported inhalants as their first illicit drug, and 2.8 percent used hallucinogens as their first drug.
- In 2011, the illicit drug categories with the largest number of past year initiates among persons aged 12 or older were marijuana use (2.6 million) and nonmedical use of pain relievers (1.9 million). These estimates were not significantly different from the numbers in 2010. However, the number of marijuana initiates increased between 2008 (2.2 million) and 2011 (2.6 million).
- In 2011, the average age of marijuana initiates among persons aged 12 to 49 was 17.5 years, which was higher than the average age of marijuana initiates in 2002 (17.0 years).
- The number of past year initiates of methamphetamine among persons aged 12 or older was 133,000 in 2011. This estimate was lower than the estimates in 2002 to 2006, which ranged from 192,000 to 318,000.
- The number of past year initiates of Ecstasy aged 12 or older was similar in 2011 (922,000) and 2010 (949,000), but the number in 2011 increased from 2005 (615,000).
- The number of past year cocaine initiates aged 12 or older declined from 1.0 million in 2002 to 670,000 in 2011. The number of initiates of crack cocaine declined during this period from 337,000 to 76,000.
- In 2011, there were 178,000 persons aged 12 or older who used heroin for the first time within the past year, not significantly different from the estimates from 2009 and 2010. However, this was an increase from the annual numbers of initiates during 2005 to 2007 (between 90,000 and 108,000).
- Most (82.9 percent) of the 4.7 million past year alcohol initiates in 2011 were younger than 21 at the time of initiation.
- The number of persons aged 12 or older who smoked cigarettes for the first time within the past 12 months was 2.4 million in 2011, which was the same as the estimate in 2010 (2.4 million), but higher than the estimate for 2002 (1.9 million). Most new smokers in 2011 were younger than 18 when they first smoked cigarettes (55.7 percent or 1.3 million). The number of new smokers who began smoking at age 18 or older increased from 623,000 in 2002 to 1.1 million in 2011.
- The number of persons aged 12 or older who used smokeless tobacco for the first time within the past year was 1.3 million, similar to the estimates in 2005 to 2010.

### **Youth Prevention-Related Measures**

- The percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 perceiving great risk in smoking marijuana once or twice a week decreased from 54.6 percent in 2007 to 44.8 percent in 2011.
- Between 2002 and 2008, the percentage of youths who reported great risk in smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day increased from 63.1 to 69.5 percent, but the percentage dropped to 65.5 percent in 2009 and remained steady at 65.3 percent in 2010 and 66.2 percent in 2011.
- Almost half (47.7 percent) of youths aged 12 to 17 reported in 2011 that it would be "fairly easy" or "very easy" for them to obtain marijuana if they wanted some. More than one in six reported it would be easy to get cocaine (17.5 percent). About one in eight (12.2 percent) indicated that LSD would be easily available, and 10.7 percent reported easy availability for heroin. Between 2002 and 2011, there were declines in the perceived availability for all four drugs.
- A majority of youths aged 12 to 17 (89.3 percent) in 2011 reported that their parents would strongly disapprove of their trying marijuana once or twice. Current marijuana use was much less prevalent among youths who perceived strong parental disapproval for trying marijuana once or twice than for those who did not (5.0 vs. 31.5 percent).
- In 2011, 75.1 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 reported having seen or heard drug or alcohol prevention messages from sources outside of school, which was lower than in 2002 (83.2 percent). The percentage of school-enrolled youths reporting that they had seen or heard prevention messages at school also declined during this period, from 78.8 to 74.6 percent.

### **Substance Dependence, Abuse, and Treatment**

- In 2011, an estimated 20.6 million persons (8.0 percent of the population aged 12 or older) were classified with substance dependence or abuse in the past year based on criteria specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-IV). Of these, 2.6 million were classified with dependence or abuse of both alcohol and illicit drugs, 3.9 million had dependence or abuse of illicit drugs but not alcohol, and 14.1 million had dependence or abuse of alcohol but not illicit drugs.
- Between 2002 and 2010, the number of persons with substance dependence or abuse was stable, ranging from 21.6 million to 22.7 million. However, the number in 2011 (20.6 million) was lower than the number in 2010 (22.2 million).
- The specific illicit drugs that had the highest levels of past year dependence or abuse in 2011 were marijuana (4.2 million), pain relievers (1.8 million), and cocaine (0.8 million). The number of persons with marijuana dependence or abuse did not change between 2002 and 2011. Between 2004 and 2011, the number with pain reliever dependence or abuse increased from 1.4 million to 1.8 million, and between 2006 and 2011, the number with cocaine dependence or abuse declined from 1.7 million to 0.8 million.
- The number of persons with heroin dependence or abuse increased from 214,000 in 2007 to 426,000 in 2011.
- In 2011, adults aged 21 or older who had first used alcohol at age 14 or younger were more than 7 times as likely to be classified with alcohol dependence or abuse than adults who had their first drink at age 21 or older (13.8 vs. 1.8 percent).
- Between 2002 and 2011, the percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 with substance dependence or abuse declined from 8.9 to 6.9 percent.

- Treatment need is defined as having substance dependence or abuse or receiving treatment at a specialty facility (hospital inpatient, drug or alcohol rehabilitation, or mental health centers) within the past 12 months. In 2011, 21.6 million persons aged 12 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem (8.4 percent of persons aged 12 or older). Of these, 2.3 million (0.9 percent of persons aged 12 or older and 10.8 percent of those who needed treatment) received treatment at a specialty facility. Thus, 19.3 million persons (7.5 percent of the population aged 12 or older) needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem but did not receive treatment at a specialty facility in the past year.
- Of the 19.3 million persons aged 12 or older in 2011 who were classified as needing substance use treatment but did not receive treatment at a specialty facility in the past year, 912,000 persons (4.7 percent) reported that they felt they needed treatment for their illicit drug or alcohol use problem. Of these 912,000 persons who felt they needed treatment, 281,000 (30.8 percent) reported that they made an effort to get treatment, and 631,000 (69.2 percent) reported making no effort to get treatment.
- The number of people receiving specialty substance abuse treatment in the past year in 2011 (2.3 million) was similar to the number in 2002 (2.3 million). However, the number receiving specialty treatment for a problem with nonmedical pain reliever use increased during this period, from 199,000 to 438,000.

To read the complete survey results, go to:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/nsduhresults2011.pdf>