

# Drug Facts

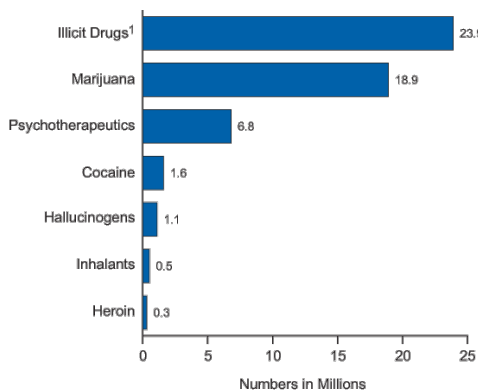
www.drugabuse.gov

## Nationwide Trends

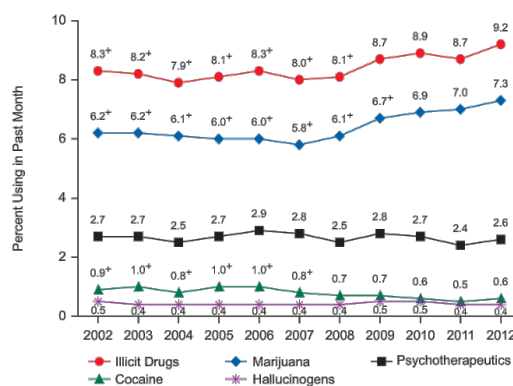
*A major source of information on substance use, abuse, and dependence among Americans aged 12 and older is the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Following are facts and statistics on substance use in America from 2012, the most recent year for which NSDUH survey data have been analyzed.*

### Illicit Drug Use

**Illicit drug use in America has been increasing.** In 2012, an estimated 23.9 million Americans aged 12 or older—or 9.2 percent of the population—had used an illicit drug or abused a psychotherapeutic medication (such as a pain reliever, stimulant, or tranquilizer) in the past month. This is up from 8.3 percent in 2002. The increase mostly reflects a recent rise in the use of marijuana, the most commonly used illicit drug.



**Marijuana use has increased since 2007.** In 2012, there were 18.9 million current (past-month) users—about 7.3 percent of people aged 12 or older—up from 14.4 million (5.8 percent) in 2007.



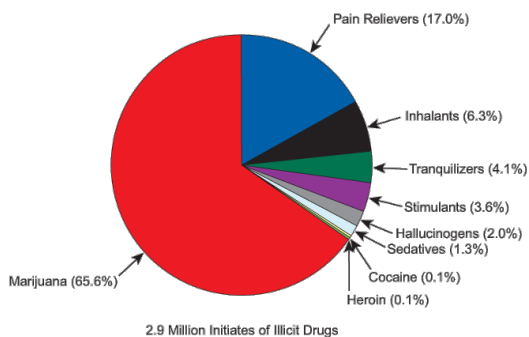
**Use of most drugs other than marijuana has not changed appreciably over the past decade or has declined.**

In 2012, 6.8 million Americans aged 12 or older (or 2.6 percent) had used psychotherapeutic prescription drugs nonmedically (without a prescription or in a manner or for a purpose not prescribed) in the past month. And 1.1 million Americans (0.4 percent) had used hallucinogens (a category that includes Ecstasy and LSD) in the past month.

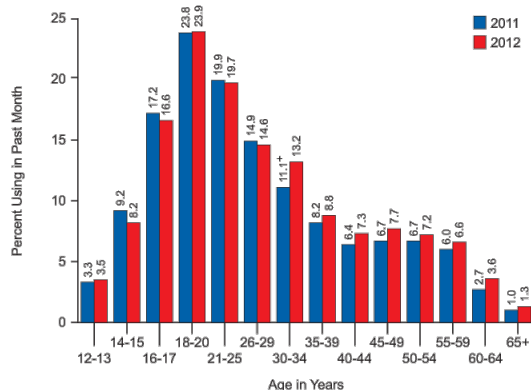
Cocaine use has gone down in the last few years; from 2007 to 2012, the number of current users aged 12 or older dropped from 2.1 million to 1.7 million. Methamphetamine use has remained steady, from 530,000 current users in 2007 to 440,000 in 2012.

**Most people use drugs for the first time when they are teenagers.** There were just over 2.8 million new users (initiates) of illicit drugs in 2012, or about 7,898 new users per day. Half (52 percent) were under 18.

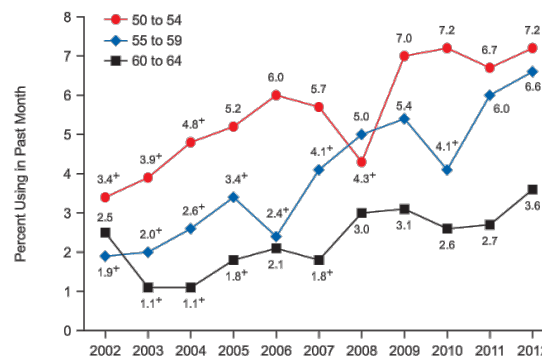
**More than half of new illicit drug users begin with marijuana.** Next most common are prescription pain relievers, followed by inhalants (which is most common among younger teens).



**Drug use is highest among people in their late teens and twenties.** In 2012, 23.9 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds reported using an illicit drug in the past month.



**Drug use is increasing among people in their fifties.** This is, at least in part, due to the aging of the baby boomers, whose rates of illicit drug use have historically been higher than those of previous cohorts.



## Alcohol

**Drinking by underage persons (ages 12–20) has declined.** Current alcohol use by this age group declined from 28.8 to 24.3 percent between 2002 and 2012, while binge drinking declined from 19.3 to 15.3 percent and the rate of heavy drinking went from 6.2 to 4.3 percent.

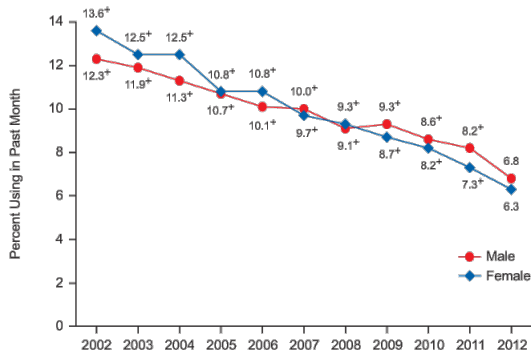
**Binge and heavy drinking are more prevalent among men than among women.** In 2012, 30.4 percent of men 12 and older and 16.0 percent of women reported binge drinking (five or more drinks on the same occasion) in the past month; and 9.9 percent of men and 3.4 percent of women reported heavy alcohol use (binge drinking on at least five separate days in the past month).

**Driving under the influence of alcohol has also declined slightly.** In 2012, an estimated 29.1 million people, or 11.2 percent of persons aged 12 or older, had driven under the influence of alcohol at least once in the past year, down from 14.2 percent in 2002. Although this decline is encouraging, any driving under the influence remains a cause for concern.

## Tobacco

**Fewer Americans are smoking.** In 2012, an estimated 57.5 million Americans aged 12 or older, or 22 percent of the population, were current (past month) cigarette smokers. This reflects a continual but slow downward trend from 2002, when the rate was 26 percent.

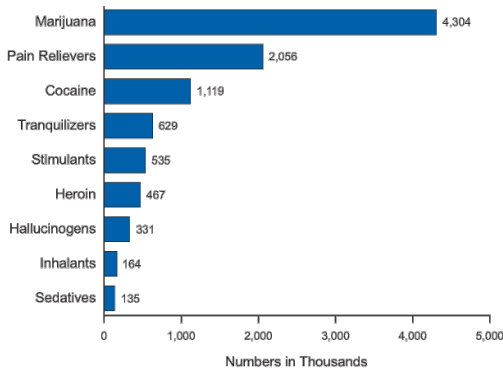
**Teen smoking is declining more rapidly.** The rate of past-month cigarette use among 12- to 17-year-olds went from 13 percent in 2002 to 6.6 percent in 2012.



### Substance Dependence/Abuse\* and Treatment

**Rates of alcohol dependence/abuse declined from 2002 to 2012.** In 2012, 17.7 million Americans (6.8 percent of the population) were dependent on alcohol or had problems related to their use of alcohol (abuse). This is a decline from 18.1 million (or 7.7 percent) in 2002.

**After alcohol, marijuana has the highest rate of dependence or abuse among all drugs.** In 2012, 4.3 million Americans met clinical criteria for dependence or abuse of marijuana in the past year—more than twice the number for dependence/abuse of prescription pain relievers (2.1 million) and four times the number for dependence/abuse of cocaine (1.1).



**There continues to be a large “treatment gap” in this country.** In 2012, an estimated 23.1 million Americans (8.9 percent) need treatment for a problem related to drugs

or alcohol, but only about 2.5 million people (1 percent) received treatment at a specialty facility.

\*Note that the terms *dependence* and *abuse* as used in the NSDUH are based on diagnostic categories used in the Fourth Edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV); in the newly published Fifth Edition (DSM-V), those categories have been replaced by a single *Substance Use Disorder* spectrum.

### Learn More

Complete NSDUH findings are available at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2012SummNatFindDetTables/NationalFindings/NSDUHresults2012.htm>

For more information on drug use among adolescents, see the [Drug Facts: High School and Youth Trends](#)

### About the Survey

The NSDUH is conducted every year by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Survey respondents report whether they have used specific substances ever in their lives (lifetime), over the past year, and over the past month. It is generally believed that *past year* and *past month* are the better indicators of actual use; past-month use is also referred to as “current use.” Approximately 68,300 people responded to the survey in 2012.