



CONSEQUENCES OF ILLICIT DRUG USE IN AMERICA

Drug Deaths

- 38,371 people died of drug-induced causes in 2007, the latest year for which data are available. The number of drug-induced deaths has grown from 19,128 in 1999, or from 6.8 deaths per 100,000 population to 12.6 in 2007.¹ (These include causes directly involving drugs, such as accidental poisoning or overdoses, but do not include accidents, homicides, AIDS, and other causes indirectly related to drugs.)
- There is a drug-induced death in the U.S. every 15 minutes.²
- Compared to other causes of preventable deaths, drug-induced causes exceeded the 31,224 deaths from injuries due to firearms and the 23,199 alcohol-induced deaths recorded in 2007. In the same year, 34,598 deaths were classified as suicides and 18,361 deaths as homicides.³

Drugged Driving

- From a national roadside survey in 2007, one in eight (12.4%) of weekend nighttime drivers tested positive for at least one illicit drug.⁴
- Based on a self-report survey in 2009, approximately 10.5 million Americans reported driving under the influence of an illicit drug during the past year.⁵
- In 2009, one in three drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes who were tested for drugs and the results known, tested positive for at least one medication or illicit drug.⁶
- Among high school seniors in 2008, one in 10 (10.4%) reported that in the two weeks prior to their interview, they had driven a vehicle after smoking marijuana.⁷

Children

- Annual averages for 2002 to 2007 indicate that over 8.3 million youth under 18 years of age, or almost one in eight youth (11.9%), lived with at least one parent who was dependent on alcohol or an illicit drug in the past year.⁸ Of these, About 2.1 million youth lived with a parent who was dependent on or abused illicit drugs, and almost 7.3 million lived with a parent who was dependent on or abused alcohol.⁹

School Performance

- Significantly fewer youth in school who are current marijuana users report an average grade of “A” (12.5%) compared to those who are not current marijuana users (30.5% report an average grade of “A”).¹⁰
- College students who use prescription stimulant medications nonmedically typically have lower grade point averages, are more likely to be heavy drinkers and users of other illicit drugs, and are more likely to meet diagnostic criteria for dependence on alcohol and marijuana, skip class more frequently, and spend less time studying.¹¹

Economic Costs

- The economic cost of drug abuse in the US was estimated at \$180.9 billion in 2002, the last available estimate. This value represents both the use of resources to address health and crime consequences as well as the loss of potential productivity from disability, premature death, and withdrawal from the legitimate workforce.¹²

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Addiction and Treatment Need

- In 2009, 23.5 million persons aged 12 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem (9.3 percent of persons in that age group). Of these, 7.1 million persons needed treatment for illicit drug problems, with or without alcohol.¹³
- Of the 23.5 million persons needing substance use treatment, 2.6 million received treatment at a specialty facility in the past year, and of the 7.1 million needing drug treatment, 1.5 million received specialty treatment.¹⁴

Acute Health Effects

- In 2008, an estimated 2 million visits to emergency departments in US hospitals were associated with drug misuse or abuse, including close to one million (993,379) visits involving an illicit drug. Nonmedical use of pharmaceuticals was involved in 971,914 visits.¹⁵ Cocaine was involved in 482,188 visits, marijuana was involved in 374,435 visits, heroin was involved in 200,666 visits, and stimulants (including amphetamines and methamphetamine) were involved in 91,939 visits.

Criminal Justice Involvement

- According to a 2009 study of arrestees in 10 major metropolitan areas across the country, drug use among the arrestee population is much higher than in the general U.S. population. The percentage of booked arrestees testing positive for at least one illicit drug ranged from 56 percent to 82 percent. The most common substances present during tests, in descending order, are marijuana, cocaine, opiates (primarily metabolites of heroin or morphine), and methamphetamine. Many arrestees tested positive for more than one illegal drug at the time of arrest.¹⁶
- According to a 2004 survey of inmates in correctional facilities, 32 percent of state inmates and 26 percent of federal prisoners reported that they used drugs at the time of the offense.¹⁷

Environmental Impact and Dangers

- There are significant environmental impacts from clandestine methamphetamine drug labs, including chemical toxicity, risk of fire and explosion, lingering effects of toxic waste, and potential injuries. The number of domestic meth lab incidents, which includes dumpsites, active labs, and chemical/glassware set-ups, dropped dramatically in response to the Combat Meth Epidemic Act, (CMEA) of 2005, from nearly 13,000 in 2005 to just over 6,000 in 2007. However, traffickers are devising methods to avoid the CMEA restrictions and domestic meth lab incidents are rising again, reaching 9,800 in 2009.¹⁸
- Coca and poppy cultivation in the Andean jungle is significantly damaging the environment in the region. The primary threats to the environment are deforestation caused by clearing the fields for cultivation, soil erosion, and chemical pollution from insecticides and fertilizers. Additionally, the lab process of converting coca and poppy into cocaine and heroin has adverse effects on the environment.¹⁹
- Mexican drug trafficking organizations have been operating on public lands in the U.S. to cultivate marijuana, with serious consequences for the environment and public safety. Propane tanks and other trash from illicit marijuana growers litter the remote areas of park lands from California to Tennessee. Growers often use a cocktail of pesticides and fertilizers many times stronger than what is used on residential lawns to cultivate their crop. These chemicals leach out quickly, killing native insects and other organisms directly. Fertilizer runoff contaminates local waterways and aids in the growth of algae and weeds. The aquatic vegetation in turn impedes water flows that are critical to maintaining biodiversity in wetlands and other sensitive environments.²⁰

¹ Xu, J; Kochanek, KD; Murphy, SL; and Tejada-Vera, B. Deaths: Final Data for 2007. *National Vital Statistics Reports* 58/9, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (May 2010).

² Calculated from Xu, et al. (2010).

³ Xu, et al. (2010).

⁴ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *2007 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use* (December 2009).

⁵ SAMHSA, *2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Detailed Tables* (September 2010).

⁶ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Drug Involvement of Fatally Injured Drivers* (November 2010).

⁷ University of Michigan, *2008 Monitoring the Future Study*. Unpublished special tabulations (December 2010).

⁸ SAMHSA, *Children Living with Substance-Dependent or Substance-Abusing Parents: 2002-2007* (April 2009).

⁹ SAMHSA, *Children Living with Substance-Dependent or Substance-Abusing Parents: 2002-2007* (April 2009).

¹⁰ SAMHSA, *2007 and 2008 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health*, unpublished special tabulations (September 2010).

¹¹ Arria AM; DuPont RL. Nonmedical Prescription Stimulant Use Among College Students: Why We Need to Do Something and What We Need to Do. *Journal of Addictive Diseases*. 29;4:417-426. 2010.

¹² Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The Economic Costs of Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992-2002* (December 2004).

¹³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], *2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (September 2010).

¹⁴ SAMHSA, *2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (September 2010).

¹⁵ SAMHSA, *Drug Abuse Warning network, 2009* (January 2010).

¹⁶ Office of National Drug Control Policy, *ADAM II 2009 Annual Report* (June 2010).

¹⁷ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Drug Use and Dependence, State and Federal Prisoners, 2004* (October 2006).

¹⁸ National Drug Intelligence Center [NDIC], *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010* (February 2010).

¹⁹ NDIC, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010* (February 2010).

²⁰ NDIC, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010* (February 2010).

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