

Prescription Drug Misuse Remains a Top Public Health Concern



Prescription drug misuse is second only to marijuana as the nation's most prevalent illicit drug problem, with approximately 22 million persons nationwide initiating nonmedical pain reliever use since 2002.

This revelation is based on a report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The report also shows variations in use by state, with combined 2010 and 2011 data indicating that rates of past year misuse among those aged 12 or older ranged from 3.6 percent in Iowa to 6.4 percent in Oregon.

"Addressing prescription drug misuse remains a top public health priority, as we've seen inconsistent progress in addressing the issue across the states," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde. "Data from this report helps us better understand geographic variations in use and should help with the development of more targeted and effective prevention and treatment programs. The key is educating the public on the serious health risks involved and ensuring that we are providing the necessary treatment to those who need it."

"Prescription drug abuse is a major problem throughout our nation," said Gil Kerlikowske, Director of National Drug Control Policy. "These data reaffirm how vital it is for the public health and public safety communities to work together to reduce the toll prescription drug abuse inflicts on our cities, towns and neighborhoods. As we continue to focus on this challenge at the federal level, we hope people will also endeavor to learn more about the harms associated with prescription drug abuse and take time to empty medicine cabinets of any excess, unneeded or expired prescription medications."

Seven of the 10 states with the highest rates of nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers were in the West (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington). Four of the 10 states with the lowest rates were in the Midwest (Illinois, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota), and four were in the South (Florida, Georgia, Maryland and North Carolina).

A comparison of the combined 2009 and 2010 data with combined 2010 and 2011 data revealed a

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decrease in prescription drug misuse among those aged 12 or older in 10 states (Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and West Virginia). None of the states saw an increase.

SAMHSA has a number of programs designed to address prescription drug misuse, including its Prevention of Prescription Abuse in the Workplace contract which provides technical assistance to help civilian and military workplaces in communities across America to reduce prescription drug abuse problems.

The NSDUH Report: State Estimates of Nonmedical Use of Prescription Pain Relievers: 2010-2011, is based on data from the SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). NSDUH is a scientifically conducted annual survey of approximately 67,500 people throughout the country, aged 12 and older. This NSDUH report is available [here](#).

The complete 2010-2011 NSDUH State report presenting estimates for 25 substance use and mental health measures is available [here](#).