

More Than Two-Thirds of U.S. Residents Who First Started Using Drugs in the Past Year Began with Marijuana



22% Started with Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs

An estimated 3.1 million persons ages 12 or older—an average of approximately 8,400 per day—used a drug other than alcohol for the first time in the past year, according to data from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

More than two-thirds (68%) of these new users reported that marijuana was the first drug they tried.

Slightly more than one-fifth (22%) reported that prescription drugs used non-medically were the first drug they tried, including 14% with pain relievers, 4% with tranquilizers, 3% with stimulants, and 1% with sedatives.

Less than 10% reported that their first use of drugs involved inhalants and hallucinogens, and very few initiates started using with cocaine or heroin.

These findings suggest that drug use prevention efforts might focus on marijuana and the nonmedical use of prescription drugs, as these are the drugs that are most often used first.

*SOURCE: Adapted
by CESAR from
Substance Abuse
and Mental Health
Services
Administration,
Results from the
2011 National
Survey on Drug
Use and Health:
Detailed Tables,
2012. Available
online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2011SummNatFindDetTables/Index.aspx>.*

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Prescription drugs are the third most commonly abused category of drugs, behind alcohol and marijuana and ahead of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. Some prescription drugs can become addictive, especially when used in a manner inconsistent with their labeling by someone other than the patient for whom they were prescribed, or when taken in a manner or dosage other than prescribed. To learn more about what NCADD has to say about prescription drugs, [click here](#).