

The NHSDA Report

March 21, 2003

Ecstasy Use

This report focuses on the use of 3-4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), commonly known as Ecstasy. The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) asks persons aged 12 or older to report their most recent use of Ecstasy, as well as their age at first use. Based on the responses to

these questions, the prevalence of lifetime and past year use and the annual numbers of new (i.e., first-time) users are estimated. Data were analyzed by geographic region and the type of county in which the respondents lived at the time of the interview.^{1,2}

In Brief

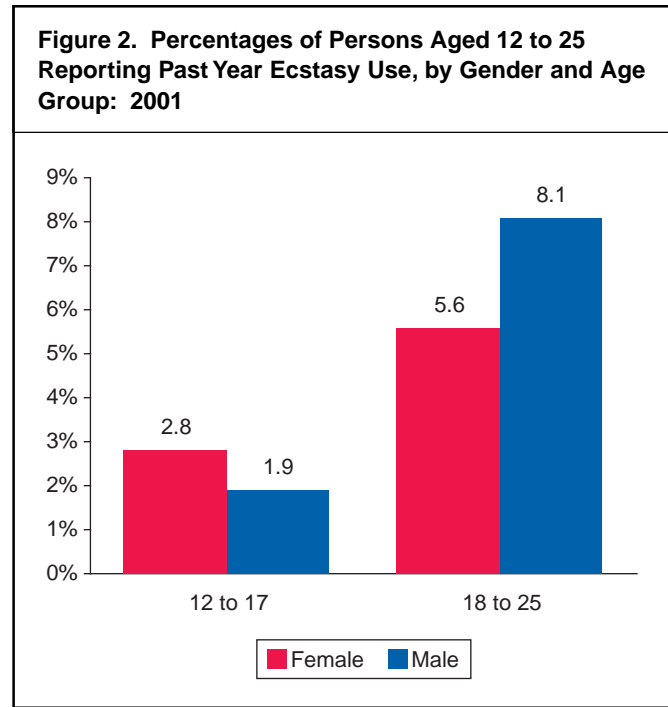
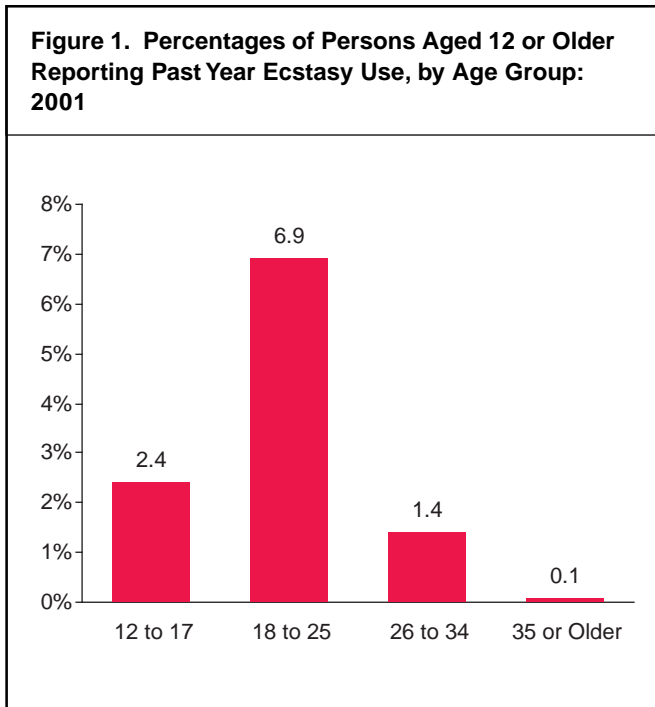
- In 2001, over 8 million persons aged 12 or older reported using Ecstasy at least once in their lifetime
- The majority of past year Ecstasy users were young adults aged 18 to 25
- Past year Ecstasy users aged 12 to 25 were more likely to have used other types of illicit drugs in the past year than those who did not use Ecstasy in the past year

Trends

Prior research from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) reported that emergency department visits involving Ecstasy increased nationwide from 253 in 1994 to 4,511 in 2000.³ According to the 2001 NHSDA, the number of persons aged 12 or older reporting their first use of Ecstasy increased from fewer than 80,000 in 1992 to almost 2 million in 2000.⁴ However, research released by the Monitoring the Future survey showed that from 2001 to 2002, rates of past year and past month Ecstasy use declined among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students, which suggests that for the first time in recent years Ecstasy use is declining among middle school and high school students.⁵

Demographic Differences in Ecstasy Use among Youths and Young Adults

In 2001, past year Ecstasy use was more prevalent among youths aged 12 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 25 than among adults aged 26



or older (Figure 1). The majority of past year Ecstasy users (2 million of the 3 million past year users) were between the ages of 18 and 25.

Among young adults aged 18 to 25, males were more likely to have used Ecstasy during the past year than females (Figure 2). However, among youths aged 12 to 17, females were more likely to have used Ecstasy during the past year than males. Among both youths and young adults, whites were more likely to have used Ecstasy in the past year than Hispanics, blacks, and American Indians/Alaska Natives (Figure 3).

Among youths, those living in the Midwest were less likely than those in the Northeast or the West to have used Ecstasy in the past year (Figure 4). Among young adults, those in the Northeast were more likely to have used Ecstasy in the past year compared with those in other regions. Persons aged 12 to 25 living in metropolitan areas were more likely to have used Ecstasy in the past year (youths: 3 percent, young adults: 8 percent) than those living in non-metropolitan areas (youths: 2 percent, young adults: 4 percent).

Use of Ecstasy and Other Illicit Drugs among Youths and Young Adults

Prior research has shown that youths and young adults who are current Ecstasy users are more likely than nonusers to use other illicit drugs.^{6,7} According to the 2001 NHSDA, past year Ecstasy users aged 12 to 25 were more likely than nonusers the same age to have used

other types of illicit drugs in the past year (Table 1). For example, 86 percent of past year Ecstasy users aged 12 to 25 also had used marijuana/hashish in the past year compared with 18 percent of persons aged 12 to 25 who had not used Ecstasy in the past year.

Among past year Ecstasy users, rates of past year use of marijuana/hashish, inhalants, or psychotherapeutics used nonmedically were similar among youths aged 12 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 25. However, Ecstasy users aged 12 to 17 were more likely to have used other hallucinogens (LSD: 44 percent, PCP: 15 percent) in the past year than Ecstasy users aged 18 to 25 (LSD: 32 percent, PCP: 4 percent). Past year Ecstasy users aged 18 to 25 were more likely to have used cocaine in the past year (40 percent) than past year Ecstasy users aged 12 to 17 (31 percent).

End Notes

1. Regions include the following groups of States:

Northeast Region: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania.

Midwest Region: Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri.

South Region: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana.

West Region: Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, Alaska.

2. Large metropolitan areas have a population of 1 million or more. Small metropolitan areas have a population of fewer than 1 million. Non-metropolitan areas are outside metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget.

Figure 3. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 to 25 Reporting Past Year Ecstasy Use, by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group: 2001

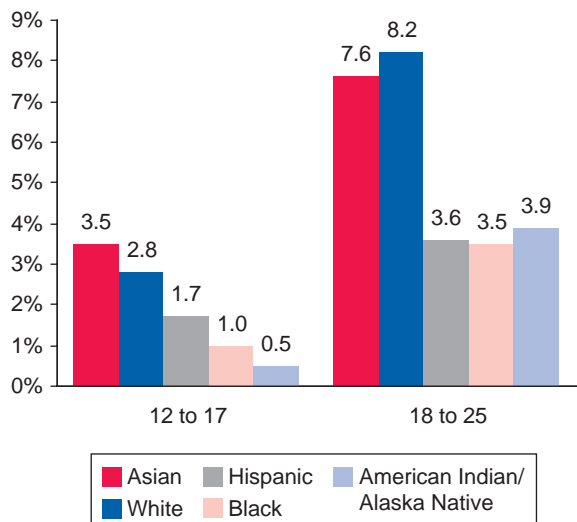


Figure 4. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 to 25 Reporting Past Year Ecstasy Use, by Region and Age Group: 2001

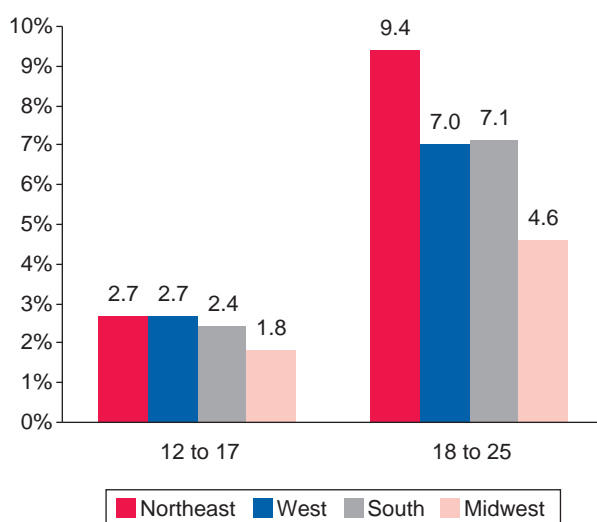


Table 1. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 to 25 Reporting Past Year Illicit Drug Use, by Past Year Ecstasy Use: 2001

Substance	Past Year Ecstasy		No Past Year Ecstasy	
	%	SE	%	SE
Marijuana/Hashish	85.9	1.00	18.3	0.27
Psychotherapeutics Used Nonmedically	54.0	1.45	8.0	0.17
Pain relievers	42.3	1.41	6.5	0.16
Tranquilizers	27.2	1.35	1.9	0.09
Stimulants	24.9	1.28	1.7	0.08
Methamphetamine	13.6	1.09	0.7	0.06
Sedatives	3.2	0.48	0.3	0.03
Cocaine (including crack)	38.3	1.52	2.1	0.09
LSD	34.3	1.27	1.1	0.06
Inhalants	19.0	1.17	2.1	0.09
PCP	6.4	0.72	0.1	0.02

SE = Standard error

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2001 data are based on information obtained from 69,000 persons aged 12 or older. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

The NHSDA Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, and by RTI in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

Information and data for this issue are based on the following publication and statistics:

Office of Applied Studies. (2002). *Results from the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse: Volume I. Summary of national findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3758, NHSDA Series H-17). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available on-line: <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

Additional tables available upon request.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
www.samhsa.gov

3. Office of Applied Studies. (2002, June 12). *The DAWN Report: Club drugs, with September 2001 update*. Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/DAWN/clubdrug.htm>

4. Because estimates of new use are based on retrospective reports, 2000 is the most current year for 2001 data.

5. Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., & Bachman, J.G. (In press). *Monitoring the Future national results on adolescent drug use: Overview of key findings, 2002* (NIH Publication No. [yet to be assigned]). Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

6. Smart, R.G., & Ogborne, A.C. (2000). Drug use and drinking among students in 36 countries. *Addictive Behaviors*, 25, 455-460.

7. National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2001, August 3). *Epidemiologic trends in drug abuse: Advance report, June 2001* (prepared by Community Epidemiology Work Group). Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://165.112.78.61/CEWG/AdvancedRep/601ADV/601adv.html>

Figure and Table Notes

Source (table and all figures): SAMHSA 2001 NHSDA.