FACT SHEET
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Consequences of Illicit Drug Use in America

Drug Deaths

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 40,393 people died of drug-induced causes in 2010, 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 12.9 in 2010.[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 13 minutes.[2]
- Compared to other causes of preventable deaths, drug-induced causes exceeded the 31,328 deaths from injuries due to firearms and the 25,692 alcohol-induced deaths recorded in 2010. In the same year, 38,364 deaths were classified as suicides and 16,259 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 2012, approximately 10.2 million Americans aged 16 or older reported driving under the influence of an illicit drug during the past year.[5]
- In 2012, more than one in three drivers (38%) 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 2013, one in 9 (11.7%) 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

- Among youth in school who reported an average grade of "D" or worse, one in four were current marijuana users, whereas fewer than one in ten (9.1%) of those who reported an average grade better than "D" were current marijuana users[10]
- College students who use prescription stimulant medications non-medically 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 $193 billion in 2007, 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]

Addiction and Treatment

- In 2012, 23.1 million persons aged 12 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem (8.9 percent of persons in that age group). Of these, 8.0 million persons (or 3.1 percent) needed treatment for illicit drug problems, with or without alcohol.[13]
- Of the 23.5 million persons needing substance use treatment, 2.5 million received treatment at a specialty facility in the past year, and of the 8.0 million needing drug treatment, 1.5 million received specialty treatment.[14]
- Over the past 10 years, there have been approximately one million drug treatment admissions recorded annually. Treatment admissions with opioids as the primary drug are the largest component. Treatment for heroin has been approximately 25% of drug treatment admissions annually over the past 10 years. Treatment admissions for non-heroin opioids such as prescription painkillers, has risen from under 5% in 2002 to over 15% by 2011.[15]

Acute Health Effects

- In 2011, an estimated 2.5 million visits to emergency departments in US hospitals were associated with drug misuse or abuse, including over 1.3 million (1,252,500) visits involving an illicit drug. Nonmedical use of pharmaceuticals was involved in over 1.4 million ED visits.[16] Cocaine was involved in 505,224 visits, marijuana was involved in 455,668 visits, heroin was involved in 258,482 visits, and stimulants (including amphetamines and methamphetamine) were involved in 159,840 visits.

Criminal Justice Involvement

- According to a 2013 study of arrestees in 5 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 63 percent to 83 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.[17] Similar results were found in earlier studies conducted in additional locations across the country.[18]
- 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.[19]

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 24,000 in 2005 to nearly 7,000 in 2007. However, traffickers are devising methods to avoid the CMEA restrictions and domestic meth lab incidents are rising again, reaching 912,700 in 2012.[20]
- 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.[21]
- 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.[22]

For more information on Obama Administration efforts to reduce drug use and its consequences, visit www.wh.gov/drugpolicyreform

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Notes

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (WONDER) online database, extracted May 22, 2013.

[2] Calculated from CDC WONDER online database, extracted May 22, 2013.

[3] CDC WONDER online database, extracted May 22, 2013.

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

[5] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ). *National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002-2012*. Unpublished special tabulations (September 2013).

[6] Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONCDP). Unpublished tabulation of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Fatality Analysis Reporting System* (February 2014).

[7] University of Michigan. *2013 Monitoring the Future Study*. Unpublished special tabulations (December 2013).

[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. *2012 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, Detailed Tables* (September 2013).

[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] National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC). *The Economic Costs of Illicit Drug Abuse in the United States* (April 2011).

[13] SAMHSA. *Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings* (September 2013).

[14] SAMHSA. *Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings* (September 2013).

[15] Unpublished ONDCP analysis of data for 2001 to 2011 from SAMHSA, Treatment Episode Data Set (February 2014).

[16]SAMHSA. *Highlights of the 2011 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) Findings on Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits* (February 2013).

[17] ONDCP. *ADAM II 2013 Annual Report* (Forthcoming).

[18] ONDCP. *ADAM II 2011 Annual Report* (May 2012) and earlier editions of this series.

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

[20] National Seizure System (NSS), El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), extracted 3/5/2014.

[21] NDIC. *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010* (February 2010).

[22] NDIC. *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010* (February 2010).