

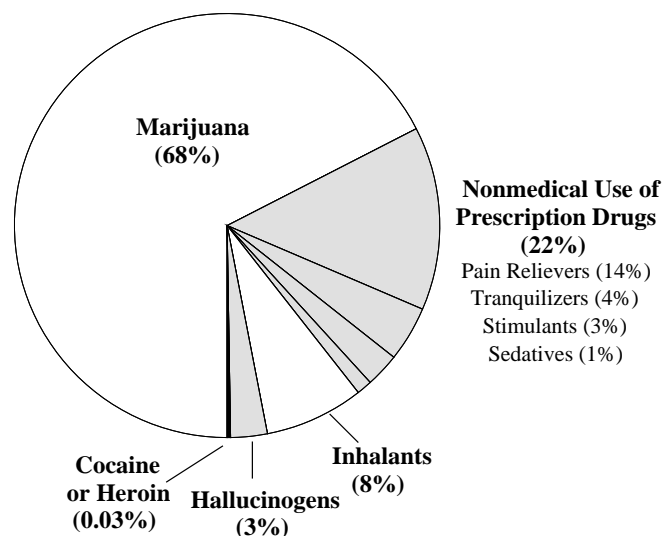
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

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 nonmedically 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.

Specific Drug Used When First Starting to Use Drugs, Among U.S. Residents Who First Started Using Drugs in the Past Year, 2011



*Nonmedical use of prescription drugs is defined as use of pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and/or sedatives without a prescription belonging to the respondent or use that occurred simply for the experience or feeling the drug caused. It does not include use of over-the-counter drugs.

NOTES: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding or because a small number of respondents initiated multiple drugs on the same day. In 2011, an estimated 3,083,000 residents initiated drug use in the past year, based on 70,109 completed interviews.

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>.