

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

New Report Summarizes Current Patterns of Club Drug Use in the U.S.

The drugs MDMA, GHB, ketamine, LSD, methamphetamine, and Rohypnol® are often referred to collectively as club drugs, due to their popularity at raves and dance parties. This distinction, however, fails to take into account that “each of these drugs has very different pharmacological, psychological, and physiological properties” and “that there are important differences in the characteristics of people who use each of these drugs and the patterns of their use” (p. 1), according to a recent report from the Center for Excellence in Drug Epidemiology. Using qualitative and quantitative information from five national substance abuse data sources,* the report provides a summary of current patterns of club drug use in the U.S. Following are highlights from the report, which is available online at <http://www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/gcattc/Trends/ClubDrug-2004-web.pdf>.

- **Ecstasy (MDMA):** While ecstasy use is now decreasing after a period of rapid increase, use is spreading from raves and the dance scene to other venues. Ecstasy users are among the youngest club drug users, and users cite the psychic effects and dependence as reasons for using the drug.
- **GHB:** While GHB use is decreasing, users “are the most likely of all club drug users to use other drugs at the same time, especially alcohol” (p. 4). GHB users are typically older than other club drug users and use the drug for its psychic effects.
- **Ketamine:** Levels of ketamine use have historically been low. Ketamine users are likely to use multiple drugs, including cocaine and heroin. The primary motive for using ketamine is the psychic effects of the drug.
- **LSD:** The highest number of new LSD users ever was reported in 2000, but then dropped in 2001, and is declining sharply in most areas today. LSD users are the youngest of all club drug users and report using the drug for the psychic effects and because of dependence.
- **Methamphetamine:** Methamphetamine use is one of the largest drug problems in the U.S. Initially popular on the west coast, use of methamphetamine is spreading eastward. While use in the urban party scene is most typical, it is also becoming popular in rural areas. Methamphetamine users are the oldest of all club drug users and the least likely to use multiple drugs. The primary reason for using methamphetamine is dependence, followed by psychic effects.
- **Rohypnol®:** Since becoming illegal to import into the U.S., use of this drug has declined. However it still remains popular among Hispanic populations on the Mexico border and in Miami (68% of Rohypnol® users are Hispanic), and is more likely than any other club drug to be used for its psychic effects.

*Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG), Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF), National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), and National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Maxwell, J. C., The Center for Excellence in Drug Epidemiology: The Gulf Coast Addition Technology Transfer Center, *Patterns of Club Drug Use in the U.S., 2004*, February 2004.

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