

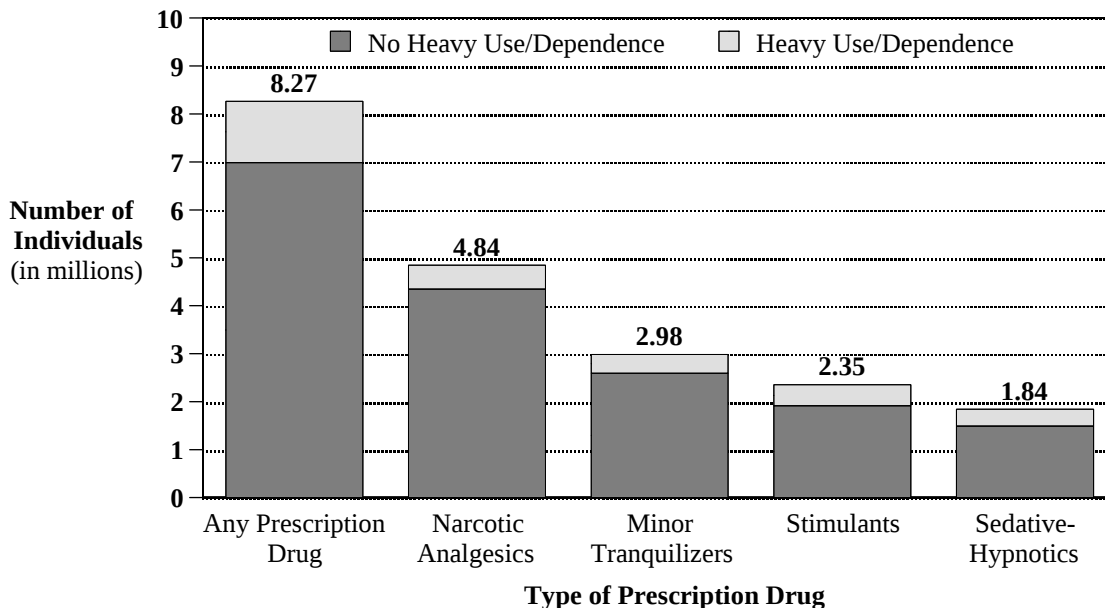
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

More than 8.2 Million U.S. Residents Abuse Prescription Drugs; 1.3 Million Report Heavy Use or Dependence

More than 8.2 million people—approximately 4% of the U.S. population—are estimated to have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons in the past year, according to data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Of these prescription drug abusers, 1.3 million individuals (15%) met the criteria for heavy use or dependence.* Narcotic analgesics were the most commonly abused prescription drug (by an estimated 4.8 million people per year), followed by tranquilizers (3.0 million). Abusers of these drugs, however, were less likely than abusers of prescription stimulants and sedative-hypnotics to report heavy use or dependence. Nearly one in five (19%) abusers of stimulants or sedative-hypnotics were heavy or dependent users, compared to 13% of minor tranquilizer users and 10% of narcotic analgesic abusers. Being female, of poor health, and drinking alcohol daily were found to be potential risk factors for heavy or dependent use of any prescription drug (data not shown).

Estimated Annual Number (in millions) of U.S. Household Residents Reporting Past-Year Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs, by Heavy Use/Dependence
(1991, 1992, and 1993 data combined)



*Heavy use is defined as daily nonmedical use of one or more prescription drugs for at least two weeks in the past year. Dependency is based on DSM-III-R criteria.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Simoni-Wastila, L. and Strickler, G. "Risk Factors Associated With Problem Use of Prescription Drugs," *American Journal of Public Health* 94(2):266-268, 2004. For more information, contact Linda Simoni-Wastila at lsimoniw@rx.umaryland.edu.

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