

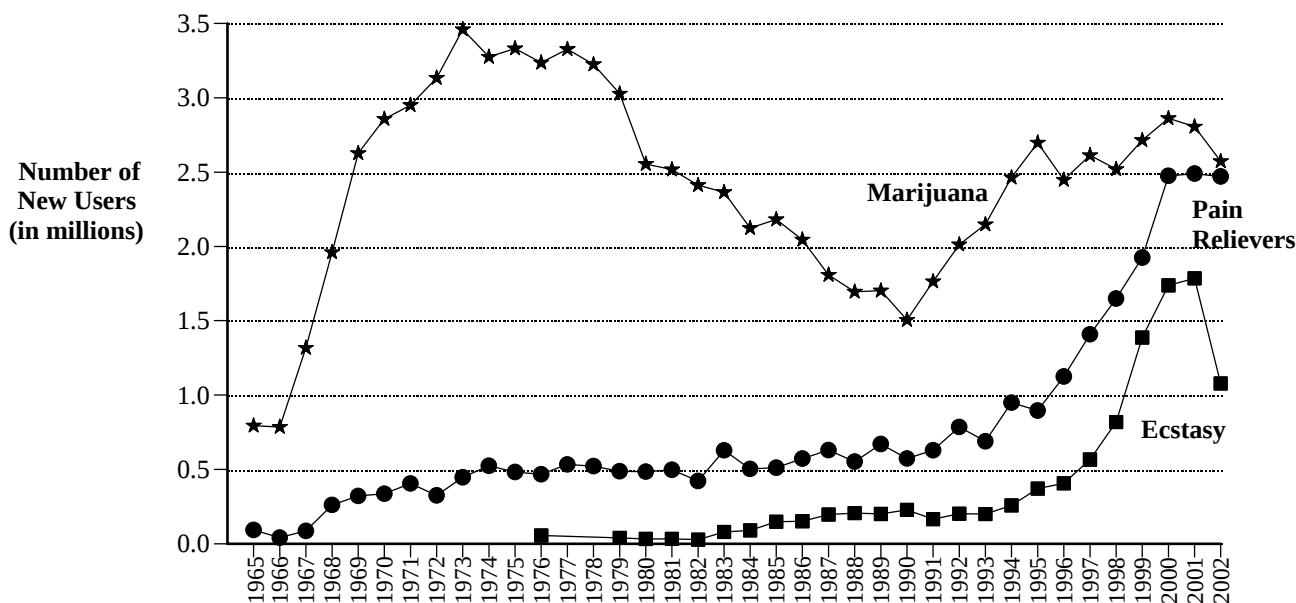
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Number of First Time Non-Medical Users of Prescription Pain Relievers Remains At Peak Level, Rivaling Marijuana; Number of New Ecstasy Users Declines

The number of people who used prescription pain relievers for non-medical purposes for the first time was nearly equal that of new marijuana users in 2002, according to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). From 2001 to 2002, the number of new marijuana users decreased to slightly less than 2.6 million. At the same time, the number of Americans who reported non-medical use of prescription pain relievers for the first time remained at a peak level of nearly 2.5 million users. Also noteworthy was the dramatic decrease in the number of new ecstasy users, from a peak of 1.8 million in 2001 to 1.1 million in 2002. These findings support other indicators of increased non-medical use of prescription pain relievers in the United States (see CESAR FAX, Volume 13, Issue 44).

Estimated Number of U.S. Residents (Age 12 and Older) Reporting First-Time Use of Ecstasy, Marijuana, and Prescription Pain Relievers per Year, 1965-2002



NOTES: The number of new users is estimated based on retrospective reports of age at first use. The most recent year available for these estimates is 2002. Nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers is defined as the use of a prescription pain reliever that was not prescribed for the user or that was used only for the experience or feeling it caused.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Overview of Findings From the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 2004. Available online (<http://oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda.htm#NHSDAinfo>).

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