

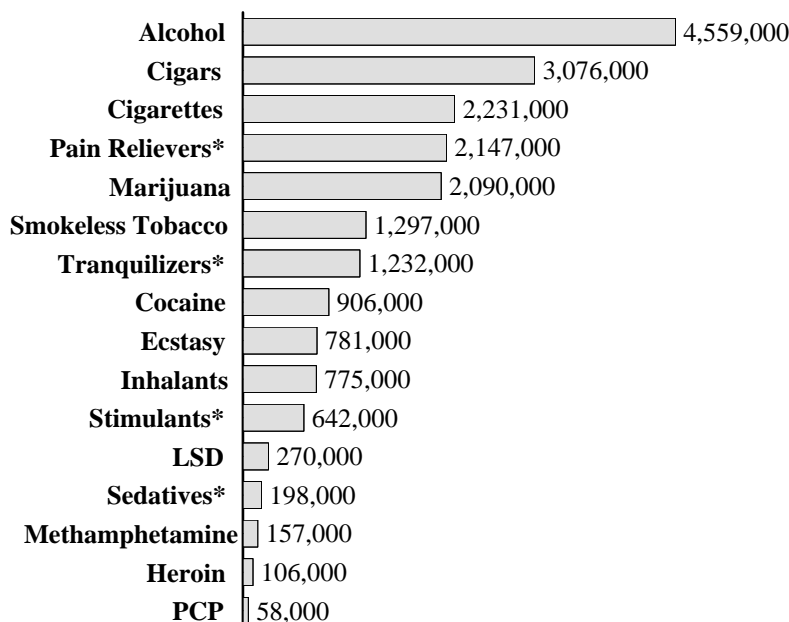
**A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research**

**University of Maryland, College Park**

***Alcohol and Tobacco Have Greatest Rates of Initiation;  
Number of First Time Misusers of Pain Relievers Surpasses That of Marijuana***

More people used alcohol, cigars, and cigarettes for the first time in the past year than any other substances, according to data from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). More than 4.5 million U.S. household residents ages 12 or older reported that they used alcohol for the first time in the past year and more than 3 million and 2.2 million reported initiating cigar and cigarette use, respectively. While the number of new misusers of pain relievers\* has been decreasing since 2003 (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 16, Issue 37), pain relievers continues to be the illicit drug category with the largest number of new initiates since surpassing marijuana in 2002. In 2007, there were nearly 2.2 million first time users of pain relievers,\* compared to slightly less than 2.1 million new users of marijuana. The first-time use of smokeless tobacco and tranquilizers\* also had relatively high rates of past year initiation (more than 1.2 million each). According to the authors, initiation rates “provide valuable information that can be used in the assessment of the effectiveness of current prevention programs and in focusing prevention efforts” (p. 49).

**Estimated Number of U.S. Household Residents (Age 12 or Older)  
Who Reported Using Substances for the First Time in the Past Year, 2007**



\*Refers to nonmedical use (using without a personal prescription or only for the experience or feeling it causes) of prescription-type drugs and does not include over-the-counter drugs.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *Results from the 2007 National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*, 2008. Available online at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduhLatest.htm>.