

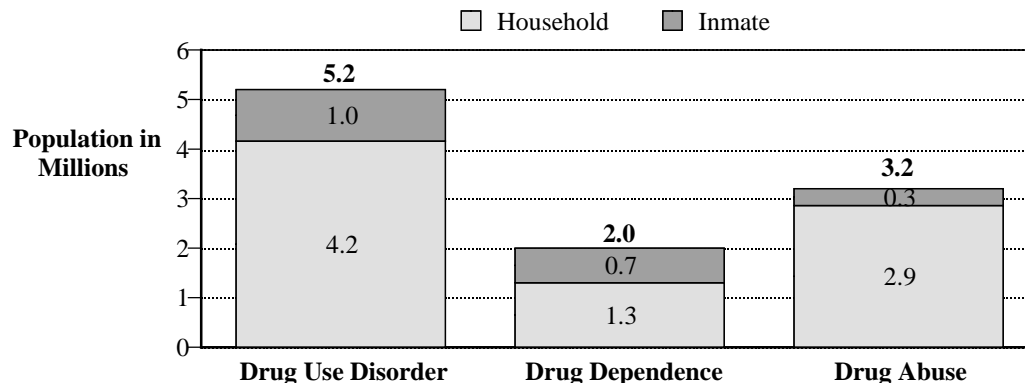
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

National Surveys Based Solely on Household Residents Underestimate the Prevalence of Adult Drug Use Disorders

“High rates of DSM-IV substance use disorders among inmates combined with a large inmate population mean that many persons with alcohol and drug use disorders are missed by major U.S. national general population surveys,” according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). National estimates of adult substance use disorders are typically based solely on household samples. Excluded from these estimates is the inmate population, which has past-year rates of drug use disorders ranging from 46% in federal prisons to 53% in state prisons and 54% in jails. NIDA and NIAAA researchers estimate that by including inmate populations, national estimates of past-year drug use disorders (drug abuse and/or dependence) increase by 25%, from 4.2 million to 5.2 million. Estimates of drug dependence increase by 54% (from 1.3 million to 2.0 million) while estimates of drug abuse increase by 12% (from 2.9 million to 3.2 million; see figure below). According to the authors, “these results likely would be accentuated for substances such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin, which are rare in the household population but common among inmates” (p. 474). For example, a study of urine tests yielded estimates of cocaine use in the arrestee population that far exceeded estimates from the household survey alone.*

Estimated Number (in millions) of U.S. Adult Household Residents and Inmates Reporting Past Year Drug Use Disorders



NOTES: U.S. household estimates are based on the 2001-2002 Wave 1 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (N=43,093). Inmate estimates are based on 2004 drug use disorder data for a sample of state prison inmates (N=14,499), 2004 drug use disorder data aggregated from separate estimates for federal prison inmates with and without mental disorders (N=3,686), and 2002 survey of jail inmates (N=6,982). All surveys used versions of the Alcohol Use Disorders and Associated Disabilities Interview Schedule-IV and in-person interview methods to derive DSM-IV diagnoses.

*Wish, E.D., “U.S. Drug Policy in the 1990s: Insights from New Data from Arrestees,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 25(s3):377-409, 1990.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Compton, W.M., Dawson, D., Duffy, S.Q., Grant, B. F. “The Effect of Inmate Populations on Estimates of DSM-IV Alcohol and Drug Use Disorders in the United States,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 167(4):473-475, 2010. For more information, contact Dr. Wilson Compton at wcompton@nida.nih.gov.