

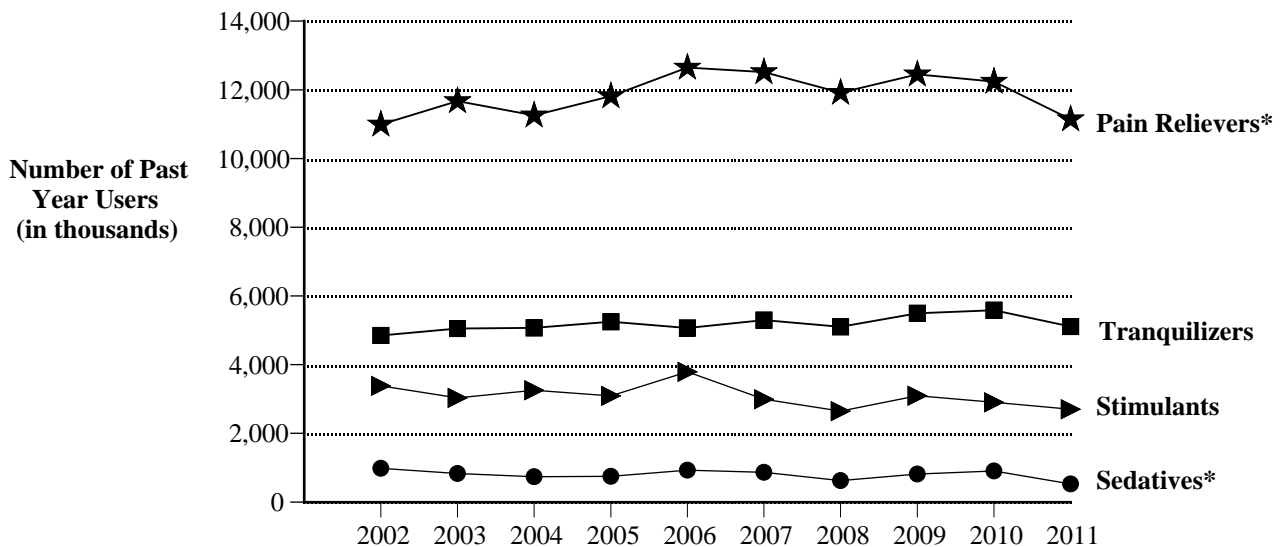
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Decrease in Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs Among U.S. Residents Fueled by Decrease in Pain Reliever Use

While the nonmedical use of prescription drugs continues to be the second most commonly used illicit drug among U.S. residents, the number of past year users recently declined for the first time since 2008 (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 21, Issue 40). According to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), the decline was driven by a decrease in the nonmedical use of pain relievers. In 2011, 11.1 million U.S. residents reported the nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers, down from the peak of 12.6 million in 2006. Decreases in nonmedical use of pain relievers occurred among youth (12 to 17 years old) as well as young adults (18 to 25), while use among adults ages 26 or older has remained relatively unchanged for the past ten years (data not shown). The only other prescription drug to decrease from 2010 to 2011 was the nonmedical use of sedatives, which decreased from 906,000 to 526,000—primarily due to a decrease in use by adults ages 26 or older.

Estimated Number (in thousands) of Past Year Users of Prescription Drugs Used Nonmedically, U.S. Residents Ages 12 and Older, 2002-2011



*The difference between the 2010 and 2011 estimate is statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$.

NOTES: While the NSDUH (previously named the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse) has been conducted since 1971, the survey underwent several methodological improvements in 2002 that affected prevalence estimates. As a result, the 2002 through 2010 estimates are not comparable with estimates before 2002.

Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs is defined as use of pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and/or sedatives without a prescription belonging to the respondent or use that occurred simply for the experience or feeling the drug caused. It does not include the use of over-the-counter drugs.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Results from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables*, 2012. Available online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2011SummNatFindDetTables/Index.aspx>.