

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

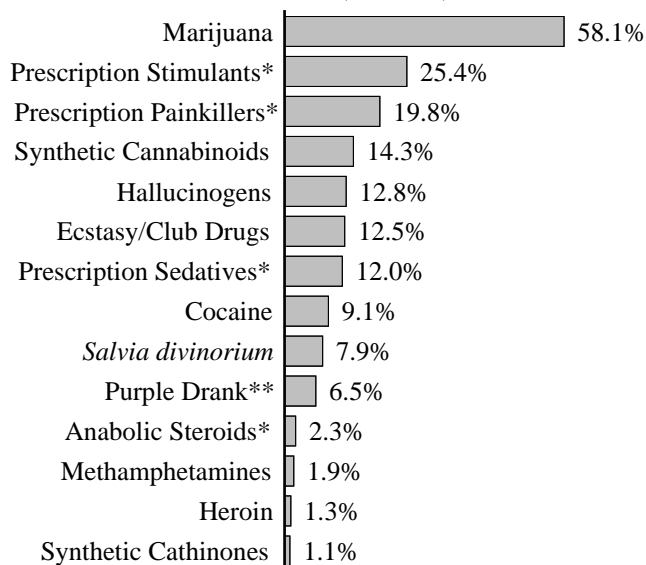
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Despite Intense Media Attention, Study Finds Bath Salts Rarely Used by College Students at a Large Southeastern University

“Despite extensive media coverage and the products continuing to be sold in local stores, use of synthetic cathinones was extremely rare in a random sample of young adults and was dwarfed by other novel drugs,” according to data from a survey of college students at a large southeastern university. Less than 1% of the students reported ever using synthetic cathinones, also known as bath salts—substantially less than those reporting lifetime use of other novel drugs, such as synthetic cannabinoids (14.3%), *Salvia divinorum* (7.9%), or purple drank (6.5%). The drugs most commonly used by college students were marijuana and prescription stimulants and painkillers used nonmedically (see figure below). In light of their findings, the authors suggest that “the media attention focusing on synthetic cathinone use as a growing epidemic may be largely misplaced.” Other national surveys of drug use in the past year[†] have found similarly low rates of bath salt use among high school students, college students, and young adults not in college.

Percentage of College Students At a Large Southeastern University Reporting Lifetime Use of Substances Other Than Alcohol and Tobacco, 2012

(N=2,349)



[†]See *CESAR FAX*, Volume 22, Issues 17, 28, and 33.

*Questions specified recreational use and excluded use for legitimate medical issues.

**Purple Drank typically refers to a mixture of codeine cough syrup, soda, and candy, with or without alcohol. Respondents were asked if they had “ever used ‘purple drank’ or mixed cough syrup with alcohol”.

NOTE: With the exception of heroin, lifetime use of each drug was reported by a significantly larger portion of the sample than was synthetic cathinones ($P < 0.01$).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Stogner, J.M. and Miller, B.L., “Investigating the ‘Bath Salt’ Panic: The Rarity of Synthetic Cathinone Use Among Students in the United States,” *Drug and Alcohol Review*, Early View, May 29, 2013. For more information, contact Dr. John Stogner at stogner@email.unc.edu.