

Drug Early Warning System



Working Together to Identify Emerging Drug Trends in Maryland

MARYLAND DRUG SCAN: Current Trends in Drug Use

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INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Drug Scan is a statewide, county-level drug use-monitoring project that is designed to obtain perceptions of local drug trends from substance abuse professionals. The goal of Drug Scan is to gather current information on substance use in Maryland and to provide that information in a timely manner to policymakers, researchers, program administrators, and community activists across the state. Drug Scan is one component of the Drug Early Warning System (DEWS), an initiative of the Cabinet Council on Criminal and Juvenile Justice in collaboration with the Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR).

Twice a year, DEWS staff interviews approximately 100 to 130 professionals about emerging drug trends in their counties. An annual report provides detailed profiles of substance abuse trends in each county. A mid-year report, such as this, provides short summaries, or "County Highlights," of any new drugs mentioned and any changes identified in each county.

In general, the persons interviewed in each county included knowledgeable people working in the areas of treatment, education, prevention, criminal justice, and emergency medicine. New participants are recruited continuously based on the following criteria:

- Has regular, direct contact with users;
- Possesses in-depth knowledge of drug issues;
- Has been exposed to drug-related problems for more than one year; and
- Is a highly credible source of information.

The qualitative information collected through Drug Scan is designed to supplement quantitative information gathered by surveys and administrative data collection systems, such as the Substance Abuse Indicators maintained by DEWS. The Drug Scan model complements these quantitative models by providing an up-to-date understanding of substance use. When the qualitative and quantitative information are combined, a more complete understanding of substance use trends becomes available.

The following "County Highlights" are based on drug scan interviews conducted between May and July 1999.

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS

ALLEGANY COUNTY

- There have been increased reports of ecstasy use among college-age individuals.
- The abuse of prescription pain medication appears to be increasing.
- Inhalant use continues to be a growing concern. Now, youths are continuing to use inhalants into their late teens and early twenties. In previous scans, it was a predominantly pre-teen phenomenon.
- Heroin use is particularly prevalent among high school-age individuals.
- Alcohol and marijuana continue to be the primary drugs of abuse. The price of marijuana has dropped in this county.

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

- There appears to be an increase in ecstasy use among adolescents and young adults.
- Methamphetamine use has increased slightly among adolescents, but overall reports of use are very low. It is typically smoked or injected and is known on the street as "glass." Users are believed to travel to Washington, D.C. to purchase the drug.
- Heroin use continues to increase.
- Primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, powder cocaine, and crack.

BALTIMORE CITY

- Substance use patterns have remained relatively stable.
- Heroin remains a primary drug of abuse. The heroin using population, while relatively stable, has shifted to a slightly lower age group.
- Other primary drugs of abuse in the city are alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine.

BALTIMORE COUNTY

- There has been an increase in mentions of ecstasy, ketamine, and LSD use among college-age (18 – 25) persons.
- The availability of PCP has increased slightly.
- Though reports of methamphetamine use are low, there appears to be increased interest in the drug among a sub-population of adolescents.
- Heroin use has remained relatively stable since the last round of interviews. The two areas that appear most affected by heroin are Dundalk and Essex.
- Primary drugs of abuse continue to be alcohol, marijuana and crack cocaine.
- There have been several isolated incidents of dextromethorphan (DXM) use.

CALVERT COUNTY

- GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid) has appeared in small amounts in the county.
- The misuse of ritalin and other prescription drugs is still an area of concern among pre-adolescent and adolescent youth.
- Methamphetamine use is low and stable.
- Heroin is still considered an emerging drug of abuse. There has been a subtle shift from snorting to injecting.
- Alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine are the county's primary drugs of abuse.

CAROLINE COUNTY

- Heroin is available in small amounts, but it is not considered to be an emerging drug of abuse.
- Primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana and crack cocaine.

CARROLL COUNTY

- Ecstasy is considered an emerging drug of abuse.
- The abuse of prescription drugs is of growing concern. Ritalin is being exchanged and sold among groups of pre-adolescents and adolescents. Abuse of benzodiazepines appears to be increasing among adults.
- Heroin is still considered a primary drug of abuse. However, there appears to be a leveling off of use among high school-age individuals.
- Other primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and crack cocaine.

CECIL COUNTY

- "Power drinking," or drinking to the point of unconsciousness, is a trend among high school students.
- Heroin use is still considered an emerging drug of abuse.
- The primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, crack cocaine, and powder cocaine.

CHARLES COUNTY

- "Club drugs," such as ecstasy, methamphetamine, and LSD, are popular among a sub-population of high school students.
- There has been an increase in the use of jimson weed – a hallucinogenic plant – among adolescents.
- Ritalin misuse by middle school students is another new area of concern.
- Heroin is still considered an emerging drug of abuse. However, heroin use remains relatively low.
- Alcohol and crack are considered the primary drugs of abuse in this county.

DORCHESTER COUNTY

- Heroin use is very low, and is not currently considered a drug problem. The population (ages 21 to 35) and method of use (snorting) have remained stable.
- Alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine continue to be the primary drugs of abuse in this county.

FREDERICK COUNTY

- Ritalin abuse has been detected among middle- and high school students. It is generally snorted or taken orally, though some injection use has been reported.
- LSD use by adolescents (ages 13 to 19) has increased over the past few months. Other rave drugs, such as ecstasy, ketamine, and mushrooms, are also being used by this population.
- Methamphetamine and dextromethorphan (DXM) use has remained low and stable among adolescents after increasing slightly in 1998.
- Heroin is still considered to be an emerging drug of abuse.
- Alcohol, marijuana and crack cocaine are the primary drugs of abuse in this county.

GARRETT COUNTY

- Club drugs are a growing concern to the individuals interviewed because cliques form around specific drugs. Ecstasy, LSD, and PCP use is up in adolescents. Inhalant use is increasing among both younger teens and young adults.
- Prescription drugs are being over-prescribed for the elderly and abused by adolescents in increasing numbers.
- Heroin is still considered an emerging drug of abuse.
- There has been a slight increase in cocaine use.
- Alcohol and marijuana are considered to be the primary drugs of abuse.

HARFORD COUNTY

- Methamphetamine is appearing in small amounts. Users tend to be in their late teens or early 20's. They often use methamphetamine in combination with club drugs such as GHB, LSD, and ecstasy.
- There has been a slight increase in the misuse of benzodiazepines by adolescents.
- Ritalin misuse is an issue of concern among middle- and high school students.
- Primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, powder cocaine, crack cocaine, and heroin.

HOWARD COUNTY

- Primary drugs of abuse in Howard County continue to be alcohol, marijuana, cocaine (powder and crack), and heroin.
- Baltimore City and Washington, D.C. remain the primary sources for heroin and cocaine.

KENT COUNTY

- Heroin use is low and is not considered to be a problem at this time.
- Primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

- Ketamine is popular within a sub-population of high school students and use has increased slightly.
- Ecstasy use appears to be on the rise among high school and college students.
- Opium use has been reported among high school students who sprinkle it on blunts. It is unclear, however, if the substance is, in fact, opium.
- Heroin use has remained low and stable since the last round of interviews. However, it is still an area of concern, particularly among individuals between ages 15 and 25.
- Primary drugs of abuse continue to be alcohol, marijuana, powder cocaine, and crack cocaine.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

- Ritalin is being exchanged and sold among a small sub-population of pre-adolescents and adolescents.
- While the county has historically had problems with PCP, its current use is fairly low.
- Heroin use continues to be low.
- The primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana which are purchased locally or in Washington, D.C.

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

- Heroin use is low and is not considered to be a problem at this time.
- Primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine.

SAINT MARY'S COUNTY

- Use of ecstasy, ketamine, LSD (in gel tab form), and other hallucinogens appears to be on the increase among teens 13 to 18.
- Interest in rohypnol has increased among a sub-population of adolescents, although overall use is low.
- Heroin is still not an emerging drug.
- Alcohol, crack, and marijuana continue to be the primary drugs of abuse.

SOMERSET COUNTY

- Heroin is still considered an emerging drug of abuse.
- The county's primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine.

TALBOT COUNTY

- Ritalin is being exchanged and sold among a small sub-population of pre-adolescents and adolescents.
- Abuse of other prescription medications - particularly pain medications - is believed to be emerging within the adult population.
- Opium pills were recently detected. It is still unclear who is using them, but they may be taken in combination with marijuana.
- Heroin is still considered an emerging drug of abuse, although it is not believed to be available for purchase within the county.
- Primary drugs of abuse in this county are alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

- Methamphetamine is available in very small amounts. It is usually snorted and called "crank".
- Ritalin abuse is an issue of concern among middle and high school students. It is most commonly snorted or taken orally.
- Heroin is still considered an emerging drug of abuse.
- Alcohol, marijuana, powder cocaine, and crack cocaine are considered the primary drugs of abuse.

WICOMICO COUNTY

- Heroin use continues to be on the increase, especially among younger users.
- Some limited use of ecstasy and mushrooms was reported.
- Alcohol, crack and powder cocaine, and marijuana are the primary drugs of abuse.

WORCESTER COUNTY

- Emerging drugs of abuse include ecstasy, ketamine, and LSD. However, these drugs are mostly a "summer phenomena."
- Heroin is still considered to be an emerging drug of abuse.
- Primary drugs of abuse are alcohol, marijuana, powder cocaine, and crack cocaine.