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Findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Florida 2020

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and provides estimates of substance use and mental illness in the U.S. civilian population. The latest findings for the state of Florida reveal estimates of substance use for children ages 12-17 and adults ages 18 and over. As shown in the table, the prevalence of substance use among children is relatively low, with marijuana being the most common (11.1%), followed by binge alcohol use (5 or more drinks in one sitting; 3.4%), and misuse of prescription pain relievers (1.6%). Among adults, binge alcohol use was the most frequently reported (24.4%), followed by marijuana (16.7%), and misuse of prescription pain relievers (3.6%). Any illicit drug use, excluding marijuana was reported by 2.2% of children and 3.2% of adults. In general, these estimates are similar to national rates.

Substance	Ages 12-17	Adults 18+
Binge alcohol ¹	3.4%	24.4%
Marijuana ¹	11.1%	16.7%
Cocaine ²	0.2%	1.8%
Heroin ²	0.02%	0.2%
Rx pain relievers ²	1.6%	3.6%
Methamphetamine ²	0.12%	0.6%
Illicit drugs, not marijuana ²	2.2%	3.2%

¹past month; ²past year

Findings from NSDUH also indicated a large increase in reports of Floridians that felt they needed treatment for substance use but did not receive it. As shown in the chart, 7.58% of adults reported the need for treatment in 2020, representing a more than 100% increase from the 3.05% reported in 2019. Children reporting the need for treatment was 3.87% in 2020, which was an increase over the 2.25% reported in 2019. Increased access to, and availability of, substance use treatment services will likely be needed.

Data also showed a growing trend of serious mental illness (SMI) among adults in the state. SMI includes any mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Prevalence of SMI has increased every year from 3.56% in 2016 to 5.15% in 2020. Putting these data into context, a survey conducted by Project Opioid among Floridians who reported past month substance use indicated limited access to mental health treatment during the pandemic. Thus, lack of treatment access likely had an impact on endorsements of SMI among Floridians in the NSDUH findings.

Sources: National Survey on Drug Use and Health <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/nsduh/state-reports-NSDUH-2020>; Project Opioid <https://projectopioid.org/data-and-briefings/>

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