



Press Releases

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New Jerseyans smoke, drink, do drugs less but use heroin more *State to tackle heroin problem with new Methadone expansion*

New Jersey residents in general tend to smoke, drink and use illicit drugs less than the national average; however the incidence of heroin abuse in New Jersey is higher than the rest of the country.

This finding is among the conclusions of the 2003 New Jersey Household Survey on Drug Use and Health commissioned by the Division of Addiction Services, a division of the Department of Human Services.

Specifically, the report found:

- Heroin represents the only drug reported used at a higher frequency by 18 to 25 year-old New Jersey residents than comparable Americans nationwide
- New Jersey residents are smoking more, but drinking less alcohol and using fewer illegal drugs than they did in the late 1990s.
- About one in five New Jersey residents aged 18 to 25 reported that they are dependent on, or abuse, drugs or alcohol.
- About one in three New Jersey residents said they experienced some symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome or depression following the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, and a small percentage said they began smoking

more cigarettes and/or increasing alcohol consumption as a result.

In response to the data on heroin use, the department announced today that it will fund two additional methadone sites to serve approximately 400 and 500 people.

This is the first expansion of methadone clinics subsidized by the state in more than a decade.

The state is also investigating other initiatives including expanding the use of buprenorphine, which is a doctor-prescribed medication that cuts the desire for opium drugs.

“The good news is we have made strides in decreasing the prevalence of drug and alcohol use, but that we need to continue to concentrate our efforts on young adults and we need to focus on the growing heroin problem” said Department of Human Services Commissioner James Davy.

The study, partially funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (CSAT, SAMHSA) and conducted by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers, surveyed 14,660 New Jersey adults between mid-September 2002 and February 2003.

The survey questioned New Jersey residents about a broad range of areas related to alcohol, drug and tobacco use. Additionally, because the survey was conducted on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, residents were questioned about the effect the attacks had on their lives.

Here are some other findings of the report:

Trends

- There was a slight increase in the use of cigarettes between 1998 and 2003, with the proportion smoking in the last year rising from 23% to 24%.
- Overall, alcohol use decreased slightly between 1998 and 2003. In 1998, 91% of New Jersey adults reported the use of alcohol in their lifetime, this dropped to 87% in 2003. The proportion reporting alcohol use in the past year dropped from 75 percent in 1998 to 73 percent in 2003.
- The proportion of residents reporting use of an illicit drug in the past year declined from 9% in 1998 to 6% in 2003.
- Heroin represents the only drug reported at a higher frequency by 18 to 25 year-old New Jersey residents than comparable Americans nationwide, with 5% of New Jersey residents and 2% of Americans nationwide reporting lifetime heroin use.

Drugs and Alcohol

- About one in five New Jersey residents age 18 to 25 reports they are dependent on, or abuse drugs or alcohol.
- Nearly 34 % of New Jersey residents age 21 to 24 reported smoking in the past 30 days while 28% of those age 18 to 20 reported smoking in the past 30 days.
- About 80 percent of drinkers reported that they were under the age of 21 the first time they used alcohol.
- Thirty-two percent of all residents reported having used one or more illicit drugs at some time in their lives. Six percent reported using one or more drugs in the last 12 months and only 3% said they had used an illicit drug in the last 30 days.
- The most prevalent drug used was marijuana, with 30% reporting lifetime use.
- Of the three prevalent substances reported, (marijuana, cocaine, and psychotherapeutics), marijuana was used at the earliest age, peaking in first use among residents when they were between the ages of 15 and 17.
- The younger the age at which one first used marijuana, the greater the likelihood of also using other drugs. Thus, 83% of those who first used marijuana at age 11 or younger reported using some other drug in their lifetimes.
- About 7.5% of the state adult population met the criteria for dependence on alcohol or illicit drugs at some time during their lives.
- In the last 12 months, 11% of the population either abused or were dependent on drugs and/or alcohol.
- Persons having a gambling problem at some time in their lives were significantly more likely than those with no

problem to have smoked in the last 30 days, drunk heavily in the last 30 days, used an illicit drug in the past year, or met the criteria for substance abuse or dependence in the last year.

National vs. NJ

- Younger New Jersey residents aged 18 to 25 were less likely to have drunk alcohol in the last 30 days than 18 to 25 year-old Americans nationally (56% vs. 61%). However, New Jersey residents 26 and older were somewhat more likely to be current drinkers than their national counterparts (59% vs. 54%).
- NJ residents in both age groups (18 to 25 and 26 and older) showed a lower prevalence of illicit drug use in the past year than Americans nationwide.
- Heroin represents the only drug reported at a higher frequency by 18 to 25 year-old New Jersey residents than comparable Americans nationwide, with 5% of New Jersey residents and 2% of Americans nationwide reporting lifetime heroin use.
- An identical proportion of both New Jerseyans and Americans aged 18 to 25 were found to exhibit symptoms of abuse or dependence on drugs and/or alcohol (21.9%).
- About one-third of New Jersey residents aged 18 to 25 smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days in 2003 compared to 41% nationally.

World Trade Center Attacks

- Nearly 28% of New Jersey residents reported knowing someone who was hurt or killed on 9/11.
- About 54 percent of New Jersey residents reported experiencing some psychological effect of the 2001 terrorist attacks. This includes 35% who reported experiencing some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and 33% who experienced at least one symptom of depression.
- Five percent of residents reported increasing their use of one or more substances as a result of the attacks, including 3% who smoked more cigarettes and 1% who increased their alcohol consumption.

Treatment

- Although New Jersey residents were equivalent to, or exceeded, the national average in terms of their need for substance abuse treatment, they were substantially less likely than their national counterparts to receive treatment.
- Among persons 26 or older who abused or were dependent on drugs, only 8.9% of New Jersey residents, compared to 26.9 % of all Americans, received treatment in the past year.
- Among people 18 to 25 with a drug problem, 7.7% in New Jersey , compared with 10.7% nationally, received treatment in the past year. Among persons in this age group with an alcohol problem, 4.1% in New Jersey and 4.8% nationally received treatment.

The survey is also available on the DHS website at the following address:

http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/das/das_reports.html

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