# Prescription Drug Misuse and Illicit Drug Use among New York City Youth

- In 2011, 9% of New York City youth reported misusing (use without a prescription) any prescription drug in the past year.[1]

- Seven percent reported misuse of opioid analgesics (prescription pain medication, such as oxycodone), and 5% reported misusing other prescription drugs (such as Xanax® or Adderall®).[1]

- Prescription drugs were the most commonly misused drug in the past year among youth in NYC (9%) and during lifetime among youth nationally (21%).[1,2]

- Nearly 18% of NYC youth reported using marijuana in the past month, compared with 23% of youth nationally.[1,2]

- NYC youth who misused prescription drugs had higher rates of drug and alcohol use and other health risk behaviors than youth who did not misuse prescription drugs.[1]

Patterns of drug use among youth[1,2]

Prescription drug, cocaine, heroin and ecstasy use among youth, New York City, 1999-2011
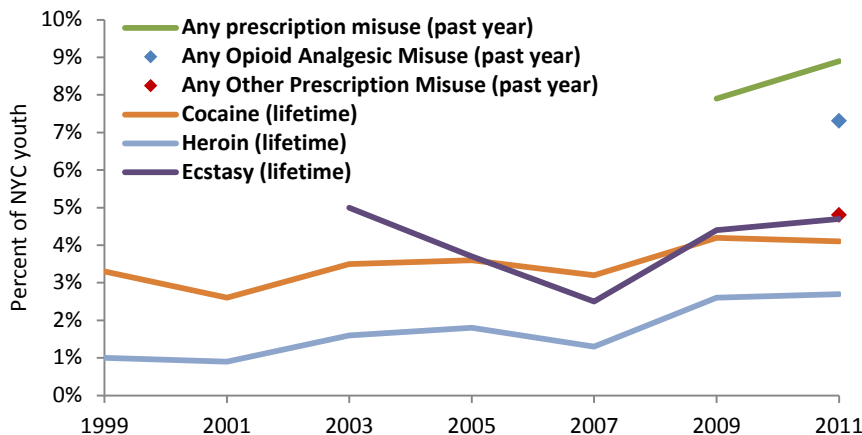
Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1999-2011

- From 1999 to 2011, NYC youth were less likely to use marijuana and cocaine than their peers nationwide, while heroin rates were similar in NYC and the nation in recent years.[1,2]

- Males were more likely to report misuse of all types of illicit and prescription drugs than females with the exception of opioid analgesics.[1]

- Nationally, lifetime cocaine use was reported by 7% of youth compared with 4% of NYC youth.[1,2]

- The prevalence of NYC and US youth reporting lifetime heroin use increased from 2007 to 2011 (1% to 3% and 2% to 3%) respectively.[1,2]

- Nationally, lifetime ecstasy use was reported by 8% of youth compared with 5% of NYC youth.[1,2]

Definitions

Youth: NYC public high school students in grades nine through 12.

Any prescription drugs:
   Opioid analgesics (prescription pain medication such as Oxycontin® or Vicodin®) and/or **other prescription drugs** (benzodiazepines such as Xanax® or stimulants such as Adderall®).

Current drinking: Consuming at least one alcoholic drink during the past 30 days.

Binge drinking: Consuming five or more alcoholic drinks in a row (within a couple of hours) at least once during the past 30 days.

Misuse: Use without a prescription in the past 12 months.

Lifetime use: Use of drug ever during lifetime.

Data Sources

[1] **NYC YRBS:** The NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted in collaboration by the Health Department and the Department of Education, is an anonymous, self-administered biennial study of NYC public high school students in grades 9 to 12; 2011 was the first year that opioid analgesic misuse and other prescription drug misuse were asked as separate questions.

[2] **National YRBSS:** Conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors health-risk behaviors which contribute to leading causes of death and disability. The YRBSS includes a national school-based survey of public and private school students in grades 9 to 12 in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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Prescription drug misuse among youth[1]

- White youth were more likely to misuse opioid analgesics than black youth (9% vs. 5%).

- Black youth (2%) were least likely, compared with white (6%) and Hispanic youth (3%), to misuse both opioid analgesics and other prescription drugs.

- Other prescription drug misuse in the past year was higher in Manhattan (7%) and Staten Island (7%) than in the other NYC boroughs (4%).

- More than four in ten (43%) opioid analgesic misusers also misused other prescription drugs, and 66% of other prescription drug misusers also misused opioid analgesics.
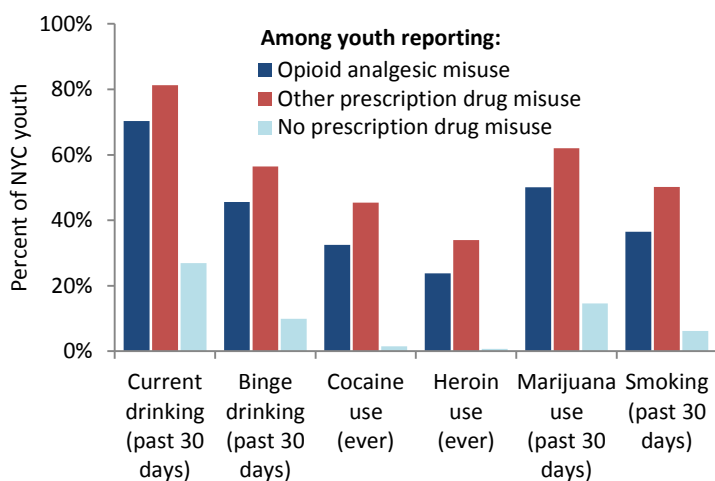
Prescription drug misuse among New York City youth by race/ethnicity, 2011
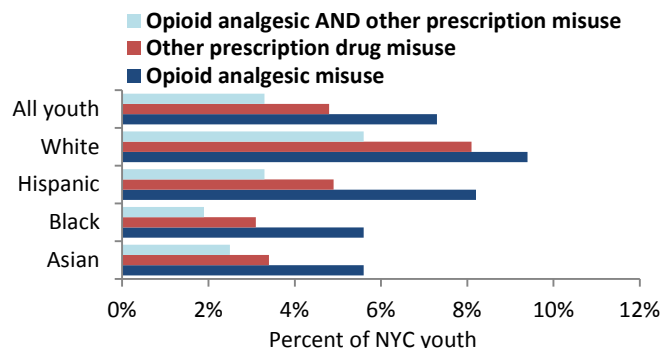
Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2011

Misuse of prescription drugs in combination with other substances[1]

Use of alcohol and other substances among New York City youth by prescription drug misuse

Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2011

- NYC youth who misused opioid analgesics or other prescription drugs were more likely to report use of alcohol, cocaine, heroin, marijuana and cigarettes than those with no prescription drug misuse.

- Current alcohol use was more than twice as common among those who misused opioid analgesics (70%) or other prescription drugs (81%), than among those who did not misuse prescription drugs (27%).

- Lifetime cocaine and heroin use were more than ten times higher among youth who misused opioid analgesics (32% and 24%, respectively) and those who used other prescription drugs (45% and 34%, respectively), than among those who did not misuse opioid analgesics or other prescription drugs (less than 2% for both).

- Current marijuana use was three times higher among youth misusing opioid analgesics (50%) and more than four times higher among youth misusing other prescription drugs (62%) than among those who did not misuse prescriptions (15%).

- More than one third of youth misusing opioid analgesics (36%) and half of those misusing other prescription drugs reported current cigarette smoking, compared with 6% of youth who did not misuse prescriptions.

MORE New York City Health Data and Publications

- For complete tables of data presented in this Brief, visit nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/datatable35.pdf
- For more information on prescription drug use, check out the following Health Bulletins:
  Is Your Child Abusing Prescription Drugs; Help to Stop Using; Vital Signs: Illicit Drug Use in New York City; and Opioid Analgesic Epi Data Brief
- Visit EpiQuery – the Health Department's online, interactive health data system at nyc.gov/health/EpiQuery

Data & Statistics at nyc.gov/health/data