The 2023 Delaware Epidemiological Profile

Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues:

Other Illegal Drugs
The Delaware 2023 Epidemiological Profile: Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues

is prepared for

Director Joanna Champney and the
Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
&
The Delaware State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup

The annual Delaware State Epidemiological Profile is a valuable data resource for strategic planning, decision-making, and evaluation. The report includes modules that highlight indicators of mental health and wellbeing, patterns of substance use and its consequences, and risk and protective factors for people in Delaware. The report also highlights crosscutting issues that warrant attention as well as populations that may experience disproportionate risk for these concerns.

This module is part of a series of materials. To review the Annual Epidemiological Profile Companion Guide (which includes data notes), modules on additional topics, downloadable slides, and infographics, please visit the UD Center for Drug and Health Studies Delaware Epidemiological Reports page. Links to presentations referenced in the annual profile are available from the Presentations webpage.

The SEOW is facilitated by a team at the Center for Drug and Health Studies at the University of Delaware that convenes a network of more than 100 representatives from approximately 55 state and nonprofit agencies, community organizations, advocacy groups, and other entities. The SEOW’s mission is to bring data on behavioral health and associated issues to the forefront of prevention and treatment efforts in Delaware. To learn more, please visit the What is the SEOW? webpage.
Other Illegal Drugs

Figure 1: Illicit drug use in Delaware by age group, 2021 NSDUH ................................................................. 5
Figure 2: Other illegal drug use by grade, 2022 DSS ....................................................................................... 6
Figure 3: Synthetic marijuana use by grade, 2022 DSS .................................................................................... 7
Figure 4: Over the counter drug misuse by grade, 2022 DSS .......................................................................... 7
Figure 5: High school students who ever used synthetic marijuana, 2021 YRBS .................................................... 8
Figure 6: Middle school students who ever used inhalants, 2021 YRBS ............................................................... 9
Figure 7: Admissions to publicly-funded treatment by primary substance use, DE, 2020 TEDS .......................... 10
Figure 8: Admissions by Age, 2020 TEDS .......................................................................................................... 11
Figure 9: Admissions by Gender, 2020 TEDS ....................................................................................................... 11
Figure 10: Admissions by Race, 2020 TEDS ......................................................................................................... 12
Other Illegal Drugs

The substance use rates reported in the Delaware Epidemiological Profile focus primarily on the four most commonly used substances today (tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and opioids). However, many other drugs are also misused, including depressants (benzodiazepines or barbiturates), stimulants (cocaine, methamphetamines, etc.), hallucinogens (LSD, “mushrooms, etc.), new psychoactive substances (such as synthetic cannabinoids) and others (steroids, ecstasy, inhalants, etc.). Although they are used less commonly, and consequently do not receive as much attention, use of these substances comes with steep risks, including the potential for: overdose; dependence; mixing with other dangerous products (such as fentanyl in cocaine); drug interactions; and serious mental impairment that may lead to the increased likelihood of victimization, physical altercations, dangerous accidents, and/or impulsive behavior.

This module provides an overview of the use of other illegal drugs in Delaware drawn from the following data sources:

- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)
- Delaware School Survey (DSS)
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
- Delaware Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS)
The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) annually provides a report with national estimates and state comparisons for major substance use and mental health indicators in the U.S. Findings from the 2021 NSDUH estimates that 3.54% of Delawareans aged 12 and older used an illicit drug other than marijuana in the past month. The highest rate was reported by the 18 to 25 age group (6.45%). Adults aged 26 and older reported a rate of 3.31%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Total 12 or Older</th>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>12-17</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26 or Older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past month illicit drug use</td>
<td>16.81</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>30.14</td>
<td>15.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past month illicit drug use other than marijuana</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Illicit drug use in Delaware by age group, 2021 NSDUH

Due to changes in the survey methodology made during the COVID-19 pandemic, NSDUH guidance advises against comparing data collected in 2020 or later with data collected in 2019 or earlier. As a result, the NSDUH estimates presented here are based on only one year of data (2021) rather than the typical combined two-year estimates and are considered preliminary. With the following data, SAMHSA cautions: “Because 2021 state estimates are based on a single year of data, there is greater variance around the estimates than for the usual two-year estimates, particularly in small states and for uncommon outcomes.” Users of this data can visit the NSDUH State Data Tables for more documentation on methodology.

---

1 Source: “2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Model-Based Prevalence Estimates (50 States and the District of Columbia),” Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
2 Estimates are based on a survey-weighted hierarchical Bayes estimation approach and generated by Markov Chain Monte Carlo techniques.
3 Illicit Drug Use includes the misuse of prescription psychotherapeutics or the use of marijuana (including vaping), cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or methamphetamine. Misuse of prescription psychotherapeutics is defined as use in any way not directed by a doctor, including use without a prescription of one’s own; use in greater amounts, more often, or longer than told; or use in any other way not directed by a doctor. Prescription psychotherapeutics do not include over-the-counter drugs.
4 Illicit Drugs Other Than Marijuana excludes respondents who used only marijuana but includes those who used marijuana in addition to other illicit drugs.
Delaware School Survey (DSS)\textsuperscript{5}

The Delaware School Surveys (DSS) are state-funded annual surveys administered to 5th, 8th, and 11th grade public school students throughout Delaware. There are two versions of the survey, one for 5th grade students and a secondary version for 8th and 11th graders. The DSS are designed to provide estimates of youth substance use and related factors. DSS data are used for National Outcomes Measures as well as state and local program planning and evaluation. (For more information or to review the survey questionnaires and earlier reports, visit the DSS page of the University of Delaware Center for Drug and Health Studies website. Due to the data gap in 2020 as well as the changes in the methodology for the 2021-2022 administration due to the COVID-19 pandemic, results of the 2022 DSS should be compared with caution to previous survey results.)

The charts in this section highlight select data from the 2022 DSS.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Other illegal drug\textsuperscript{6} use by grade, DSS 2022 (in percentages)}
\end{figure}

The above figure shows higher rates of lifetime (12%), past year (7%), and past month (4%) illegal drug use among 5th graders compared to 8th and 11th graders. This is due to higher reports by younger students of inhalant use (which is included in the category of other illegal drugs in the survey).

\textsuperscript{5} Sources: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2022). Delaware School Surveys, University of Delaware. (For more information on the pandemic impacts of data collection, please see the Companion Guide for this report.)

\textsuperscript{6} “Other illegal drugs” on the DSS includes ecstasy, hallucinogens, street uppers, inhalants, cocaine, crack, heroin, and synthetic marijuana used to get high.
In 2022, rates of synthetic marijuana use were relatively low, with only 1% of 8th and 2% of 11th graders reporting use in the past month.

Over the counter (OTC) drug misuse was also rare. One percent of 8th and 2% of 11th graders reported OTC misuse within the past month and 4% of students at both grade levels reported such misuse within the past year.

---

7 Data on synthetic marijuana use among 5th grade students is unavailable.
8 The number of 5th grade students who reported over the counter drug misuse did not meet the threshold for data reporting (less than 30 students) and as a result those statistics are not included in the graph.
Delaware Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)\(^9\)

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a CDC-funded survey administered in odd-numbered years to both national and state samples of students. The survey monitors various topics of health risk behaviors, including substance use. Delaware has participated in these surveys for over 20 years. Although aggregated data for all illicit drug use is not available from the 2021 YRBS, the rate of synthetic marijuana use among high school students and inhalant use among middle school students are available and reported in this section.\(^{10}\)

### Figure 5: High school students who ever used synthetic marijuana, 2021 (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ever Used Synthetic Marijuana (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, 4% of high school students reported that they had ever used synthetic marijuana. Rates were similar for female and male students (4% and 3%, respectively), and increased slightly across grade levels, ranging from 2% among freshman to 5% among seniors.

---


\(^{10}\) Until the 2023 YRBS data is analyzed, comparisons of the 2021 data to previous data should be avoided, as findings from the 2021 data may be an exception to ongoing trends. For a more detailed description of pandemic impacts on data collection as it pertains to the YRBS, please refer to the [Companion Guide](#) accompanying this report.
In 2021, 2% of middle school students reported that they had used an inhalant at some point in their lifetime. Rates were similar among female and male students and only slightly higher among 8th graders (3%) compared to younger students (2%).
Delaware Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS)\textsuperscript{11}

The Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) provides aggregated information on the admissions to publicly-funded treatment programs in the state. According to TEDS, cocaine (consumed by any route) was identified as a primary substance in 5% of admissions to public treatment programs in 2020. Amphetamines were identified as the primary substance in 1% of admissions and other drugs (tranquilizers, hallucinogens, etc.) were also identified in 1% of admissions.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{Admissions to publicly-funded treatment by primary substance use, DE, 2020 TEDS}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{11} Source: Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), (2020). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
The following figures provide additional data for all admissions to publicly-funded treatment in Delaware in 2020. To explore the data for more information, viewers can download public use files or access the TEDS Quick Statistics interactive feature online.

Figure 8: Admissions by Age, 2020 TEDS

Figure 9: Admissions by Gender, 2020 TEDS
Figure 10: Admissions by Race, 2020 TEDS

Admissions by Race
All Substances (in percentages)

- White: 67.4%
- Black or African-American: 3.3%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 26.8%
- Asian or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 2.1%
- Unknown: 0.5%
References and Data Sources


Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2023). “2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Model-Based Prevalence Estimates (50 States and the District of Columbia).”