

ILLICIT DRUG USE

Illicit drug use refers to use of illegal drugs, including marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens (including LSD and PCP), inhalants, or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic drug used without a prescription. Many people who are addicted to drugs are also diagnosed with mental health disorders, and vice versa. Compared to the general population, people who are addicted to drugs are roughly twice as likely to suffer from mood and anxiety disorders (and the reverse is also true).²

In 2013, an estimated 24.6 million Americans aged 12 or older, 9.4% of the population, used an illicit drug in the past month (Figure 1).¹ Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, followed by prescription pain relievers, and then cocaine. Drug use is highest among people in their late teens and twenties. In 2013, 22.6% of 18-20 year olds reported using an illicit drug in the past month.

In Santa Cruz County, a significantly larger percentage of adults (22.7%) reported needing help for emotional/mental health problems or use of alcohol or drugs, compared to the entire state (15.8%, Figure 2).² By gender, 26.9% of females reported needing help compared to 18.3% of males in Santa Cruz County. Also, persons without insurance were more likely to need help (34.9%) versus those currently insured (20.7%).

ADOLESCENT ILLICIT DRUG USE

Adolescents are especially at risk for the negative and often life-long impacts of drug abuse, because their brains are still maturing.¹ Specifically, the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that enables us to assess situations, make sound decisions, and keep our emotions and desires under control, is still developing. Thus, introducing drugs while the brain is still developing may have profound and long-lasting consequences.

The proportions of high school students in Santa Cruz County who have recently used illicit substances are similar to the statewide rates (Figure 3), except for marijuana, for which Santa Cruz County rates are notably higher, 25.3% versus 16.0%, respectively.³ U.S. rates were not comparable because they are assessed at a different age demographic and often different frequency of usage. In past years, the California Healthy Kids Survey included questions on other drugs, but those have been removed, and are no longer available.

Figure 1: Number of Persons (Age 12 and Older), in Millions, who Used an Illicit Drug in the Past Month, United States,¹ 2013

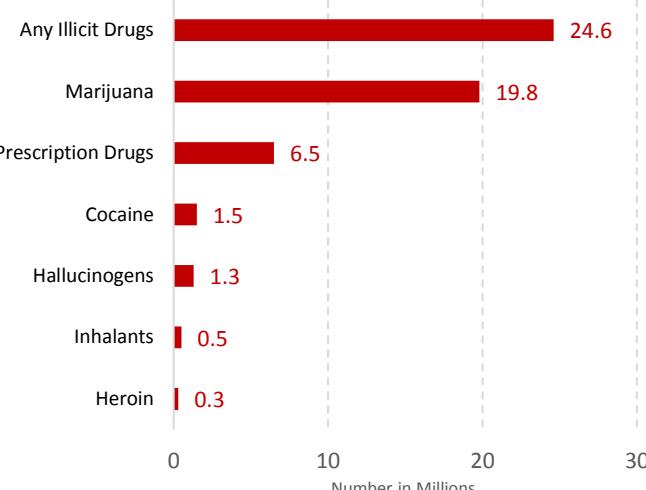


Figure 2: Percentage of Adults Needing Help for Emotional/Mental Health Problems or Use of Alcohol or Drugs, Santa Cruz County and California,² 2011/12

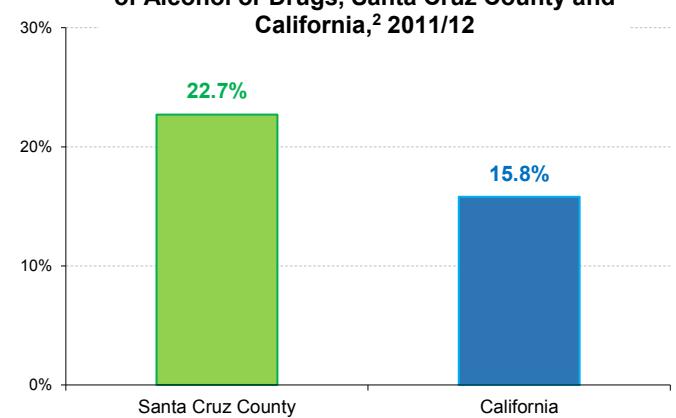
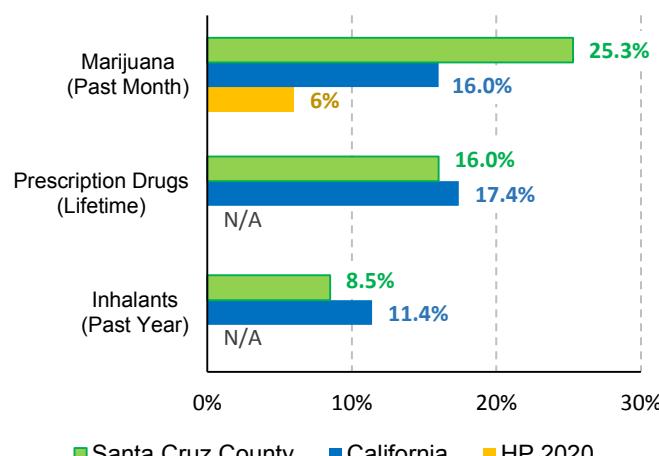


Figure 3: Percentage of High School Students Using Illicit Drugs, Santa Cruz County and California,³ 2011-2013



N/A = not available because no goals were set for these topics

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Sources	<p>(1) NIH. National Institute on Drug Abuse. "Drug Facts: Nationwide Trends" http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/nationwide-trends#asterisk</p> <p>(2) UCLA. California Health Inteveview Survey (CHIS). http://ask.chis.ucla.edu</p> <p>(3) California Department of Education. WestEd. California Healthy Kids Survey. http://chks.wested.org</p>
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