

KEY FINDINGS

- 13.9% of first-generation students reported stimulant misuse, compared to 15.8% of continuing-generation students.
- The majority of first-generation misusers said they obtained prescription drugs for non-medical use from a friend.
- About 18% of first-generation students reported that they perceived that over half of the students at their institution misused stimulants.

INTRODUCTION

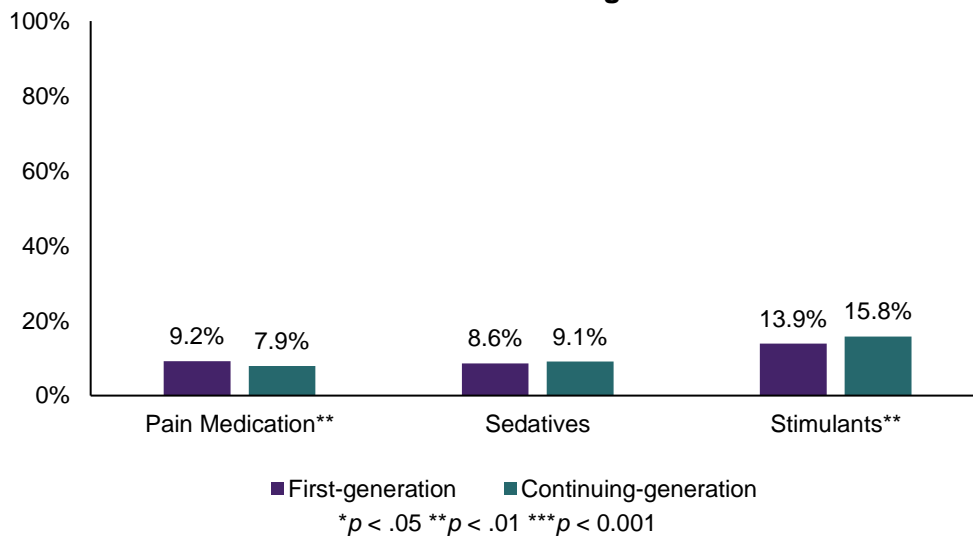
This report uses data from the 2018 administration of the College Prescription Drug Study (CPDS) to examine non-medical prescription drug use among college students. The CPDS surveyed students at 26 public and private, two- and four-year U.S. colleges and universities; 19,539 students completed the survey. Of those who completed the survey and responded to the parental education question, 5,882 (34.0%) students identified as first-generation college students, meaning their parent(s) did not have bachelor’s degree(s). This report summarizes various survey responses by first-generation student status.

FINDINGS

A comparison of misuse of prescription drugs

Among first-generation students, 9.2% reported that they had ever used pain medications for non-medical reasons, compared to 7.9% of continuing-generation students. In terms of sedative misuse, 8.6% of first-generation students reported ever using misusing, compared to 9.1% of continuing-generation students. Among first-generation students, 13.9% reported ever using stimulants for non-medical reasons, compared to 15.8% of continuing-generation students. The differences between first-generation students and their peers on pain medications and stimulants misuse were statistically significant.

Comparison of Prescription Drug Misuse Among First-Generation and Continuing-Generation Students



Reasons for use

The CPDS asked students why they used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons. Among first-generation student respondents who reported misuse in the CPDS, the top three most frequently reported reasons for misuse of pain medications were to relieve pain (46.1%), to get high (39.1%) and to relieve anxiety (31.8%). In terms of sedatives, 58.4% of first-generation students who reported ever misusing them said they use them to sleep. First-generation students also reported that they used sedatives to relieve anxiety (48.3%) and to get high (33.3%). Students who reported misusing stimulants said that they used them to help study or improve grades (79.1%), to see what it was like (24.2%) or to enhance social situations (22.3%). These findings do not differ from the analyses of all students in other research briefs.

Perceptions of use

First-generation students perceive prescription drug misuse at their institution to varying degrees. About half of first-generation students reported that they believed less than 10% of students at their institution used pain medications for non-medical reasons. About 18% of first-generation students reported that they believed over half of the students at their institution misused stimulants.

Where to obtain

When asked where students obtained prescriptions drugs for non-medical use, the majority of first-generation student stimulant misusers (74.5%), sedative misusers (54.2%) and pain medication misusers (47.6%) said they obtained them from a friend. Of the first-generation students who reported obtaining them from a friend, the majority said that the friend gave them the prescription drugs, rather than paying for them.

MORE INFORMATION

The College Prescription Drug Study (CPDS) is a multi-institutional survey of undergraduate, graduate and professional students. The purpose of the CPDS is to gain a more thorough understanding of the non-medical use of prescription drugs among college students. Results provide a better understanding of the current state of non-medical use of prescription drugs on college campuses, including information on the types of prescription drugs misused, attainment of drugs, reasons for use and consequences of use. During spring 2018, the CPDS was administered to random samples of students attending institutions across the United States via an online anonymous survey.

Suggested Citation

College Prescription Drug Study. (October 2018). *Key Findings: First Generation Students*. The Ohio State University, Center for the Study of Student Life, Columbus, Ohio.

If your institution is interested in participating in the next administration of the CPDS, please contact us at rxstudy@osu.edu or visit our website at www.cssl.osu.edu.