

COLLEGE
**PRESCRIPTION
DRUG
STUDY**



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER FOR ALCOHOL AND
DRUG MISUSE PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF STUDENT LIFE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College Prescription Drug Study (CPDS) is a multi-institutional survey of undergraduate, graduate and professional students. The CPDS examines the non-medical use of prescription drugs, including the reasons for and consequences of use, access to prescription drugs and perceptions of use among students. The purpose of the CPDS is to gain a more thorough understanding of the non-medical use of prescription drugs among college students. The CPDS was developed and administered as a collaboration between The Ohio State University's Center for the Study of Student Life and the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery.

During spring 2015, the CPDS was administered to random samples of students attending 8 four-year public and private institutions across the United States via an anonymous online survey. The survey was administered to 27,495 students; 3,918 responded for a response rate of 14.2 percent. More information on the study is available by contacting the CPDS team at rxstudy@osu.edu.

For more information or assistance with reducing prescription drug misuse on your campus, please contact the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery at hecaod@osu.edu or visit hecaod.osu.edu.

HIGHLIGHTS

Frequency of Use

- 10.2% of undergraduates report using pain medications for non-medical reasons, 8.9% report using sedatives and 18.6% report using stimulants. Respective figures for graduate and professional students are 6.1% for pain medications, 6.8% for sedatives and 11.8% for stimulants.

Access to Prescription Drugs

- 33.5% of undergraduates and 29.8% of graduate and professional students state it is easy or very easy to obtain prescription pain medications; respective figures for sedatives are 44.2% of undergraduates and 29.3% of graduate and professional students, and for stimulants are 71.0% of undergraduates and 48.6% of graduate and professional students.
- The majority of students who use prescription drugs for non-medical reasons report that they typically obtain prescription drugs from friends (60.9% for pain medications, 60.4% for sedatives and 82.6% for stimulants).

Reasons for Use

- The most common reasons students report using pain medications are to relieve pain (54.9%) and to get high (46.0%); sedatives are to get to sleep (56.1%) and to relieve anxiety (48.8%); and stimulants are to study or improve grades (84.9%).

Consequences of Use

- The most frequently reported effects of using prescription drugs for non-medical reasons include experiencing depression for pain medication users (18.6%), experiencing memory loss for sedative users (29.5%) and positive impacts on academics for stimulant users (62.8%).

Perceived Use of Other Students

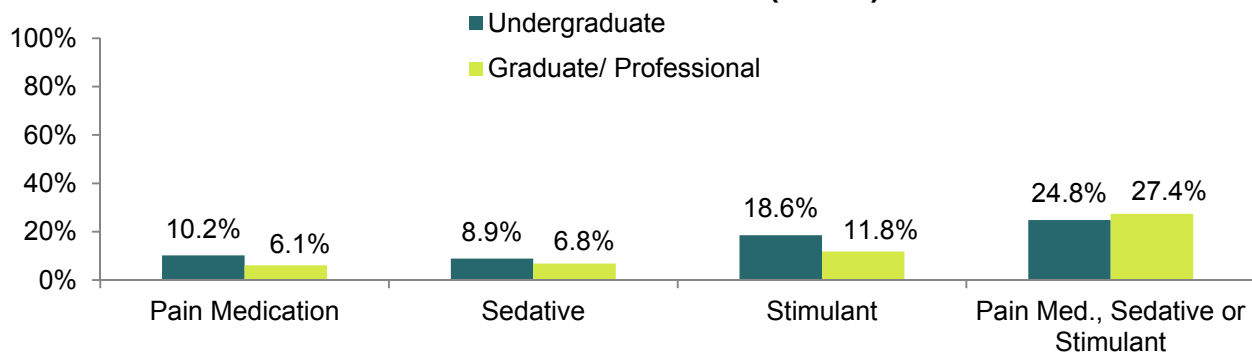
- Students overestimate the non-medical use of prescription drugs by other students at their institutions. Undergraduate students estimate that 15.8% of other students use pain medications, 17.4% use sedatives and 33.6% use stimulants. Graduate and professional students estimate 12.9% of other students use pain medications, 14.5% use sedatives and 24.2% use stimulants.



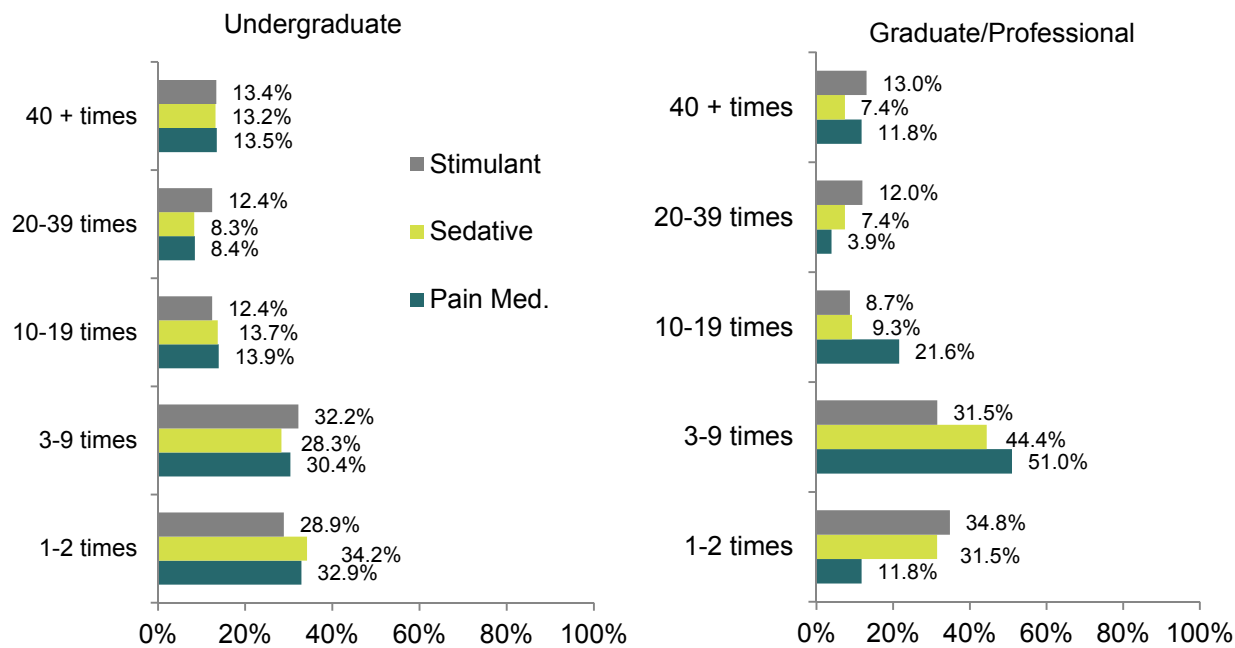
FREQUENCY OF USE

It is estimated that 15% of high school seniors have misused some type of prescription drug (Johnston et al., 2014). This means that many students are coming to college campuses with exposure to the misuse of prescription drugs. Prior research estimates that between 6 and 14% of college students have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons (SAMSHA, 2013; Zullig and Divin, 2012), which is the highest rate of misuse among 18-25 year olds (SAMSHA, 2010). In the CPDS, 10% of undergraduates have misused pain medications, 9% have misused sedatives and 19% have misused stimulants; 25% have ever used any of the three prescription drugs. The rates for graduate and professional students are lower.

Have you ever used the following prescription drugs for non-medical reasons? (% Yes)



Estimated lifetime use among those who have misused prescription drugs



Note: Self-reported estimate of lifetime use among students who indicated they had ever used a prescription drug for non-medical reasons; students who responded "prefer not to say" are not presented in charts but included in estimates.



ACCESS

In order to understand the misuse of prescription drugs, it is important to understand ease of access and where students access prescription drugs in order to educate students about misuse.

All students were asked how easy it is to obtain prescription drugs without a prescription; the percentage who responded **somewhat easy or very easy** are:

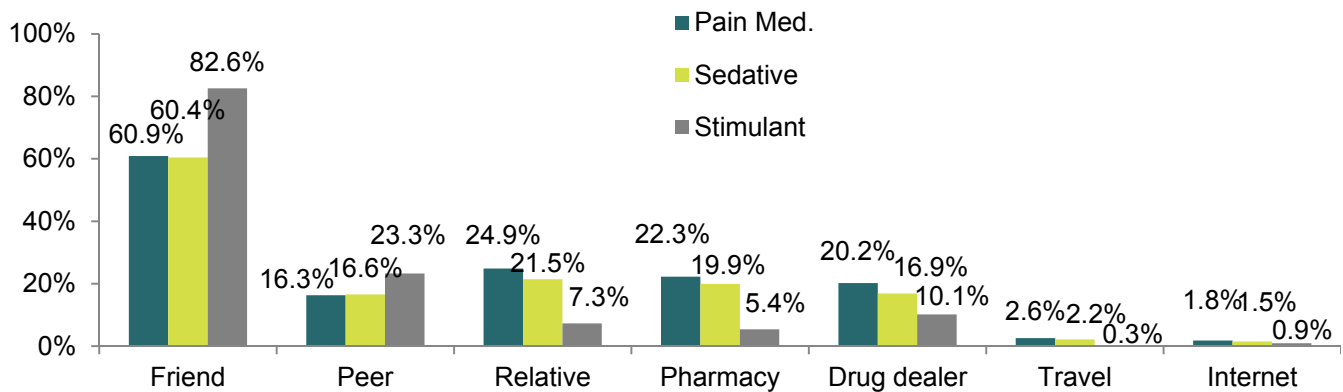
Undergraduate

- Pain medication – 33.5%
- Sedatives – 44.2%
- Stimulants – 71.0%

Graduate/Professional

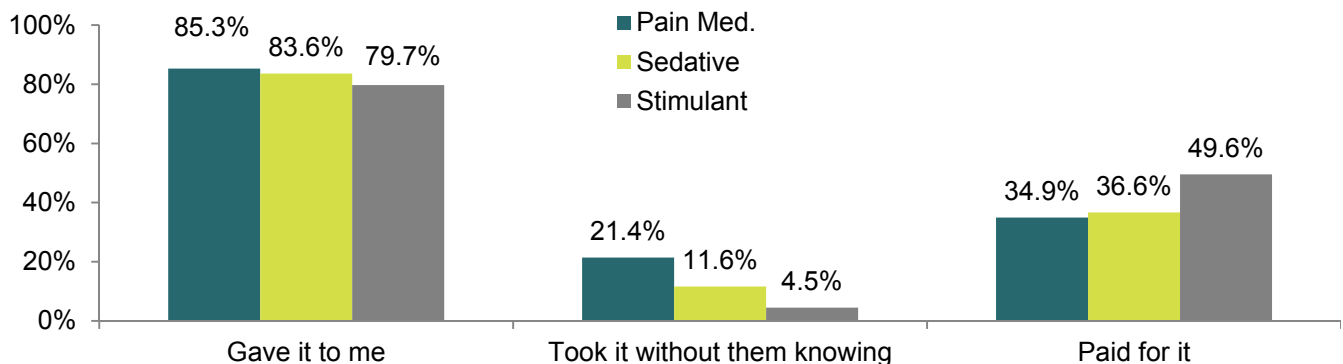
- Pain medication – 29.8%
- Sedatives – 29.3%
- Stimulants – 48.6%

Where do you typically obtain your prescription drugs that you use for non-medical reasons?



Note: Asked only to students who indicated they had ever used a prescription drug for non-medical reasons. Respondents could select more than one option.

How did you obtain your prescription drugs from your friend, relative or peer?



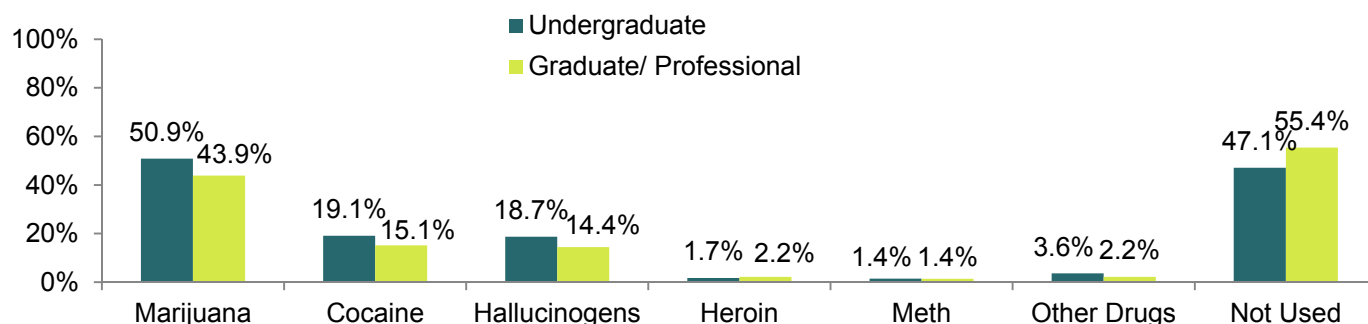
Note: Asked only to students who indicated they had ever used a prescription drug for non-medical reasons. Respondents could select more than one option. Please see Appendix Table 1 for information on where undergraduate and graduate students access prescription drugs.



ILLICIT DRUG USE IN PLACE OF PRESCRIPTIONS

The misuse of prescription drugs can lead to the use of illicit drugs. Students were asked if they have ever used illicit drugs in place of their non-medical use of prescription drugs.

Used the following in place of non-medical use of prescription drugs



Note: Asked only to students who indicated they had ever used a prescription drug for non-medical reasons. Respondents could select more than one option.

Reasons for illicit drug use in place of a prescription drug

- 49.6% - Easier to access
- 33.2% - Had a stronger effect
- 15.7% - It was cheaper

REASONS FOR USE

College students use prescription drugs for non-medical reasons due to several environmental and personal factors. Some research suggests that college students are at a higher risk of misuse because of academic strain, social norms and access (McCabe et al., 2006). Personal reasons for using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes vary; about 13% of college students reporting non-medical prescription drug use report using for recreational purposes, 39% report using for self-treatment and 48% report using for mixed reasons (McCabe et al., 2009). Additionally, non-medical prescription drug use is associated with feeling hopeless, sad, depressed and considering suicide (Zullig & Divin, 2012). Students were asked why they used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons. Among student respondents in the CDPS, the top five most frequently reported reasons for use of each type of medication are included below. For the full list, please see Appendix Table 2.

Top 5 Reasons for Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs

Pain Medications	Sedatives	Stimulants
To relieve pain (54.9%)	To get to sleep (56.1%)	To study or improve grades (84.9%)
To get high (46.0%)	To relieve anxiety (48.8%)	To see what it was like (25.9%)
To see what it was like (38.5%)	To get high (38.9%)	To enhance social situations (22.8%)
To get to sleep (35.6%)	To see what it was like (33.0%)	To get high (13.5%)
To relieve anxiety (35.1%)	To feel better (26.1%)	To relieve anxiety (9.3%)



CONSEQUENCES OF USE

There are many potential consequences of misusing prescription drugs. Students were asked to choose from a list of consequences and select which they experienced because of their non-medical use of prescription drugs. The most frequently reported consequences among student respondents in the CPDS are outlined below. A full list is available in Appendix Table 3.

Reported Consequences of Misuse

Pain Medications

19% Been depressed

17% Done things I wish I hadn't

17% Experienced memory loss

15% Positive impact on academics

14% Experienced withdrawal symptoms

Sedatives

30% Experienced memory loss

19% Done things I wish I hadn't

14% Been depressed

13% Positive impact on academics

12% Negative impact on academics

Stimulants

63% Positive impact on academics

9% Experienced emotional problems

9% Been depressed

8% Experienced withdrawal symptoms

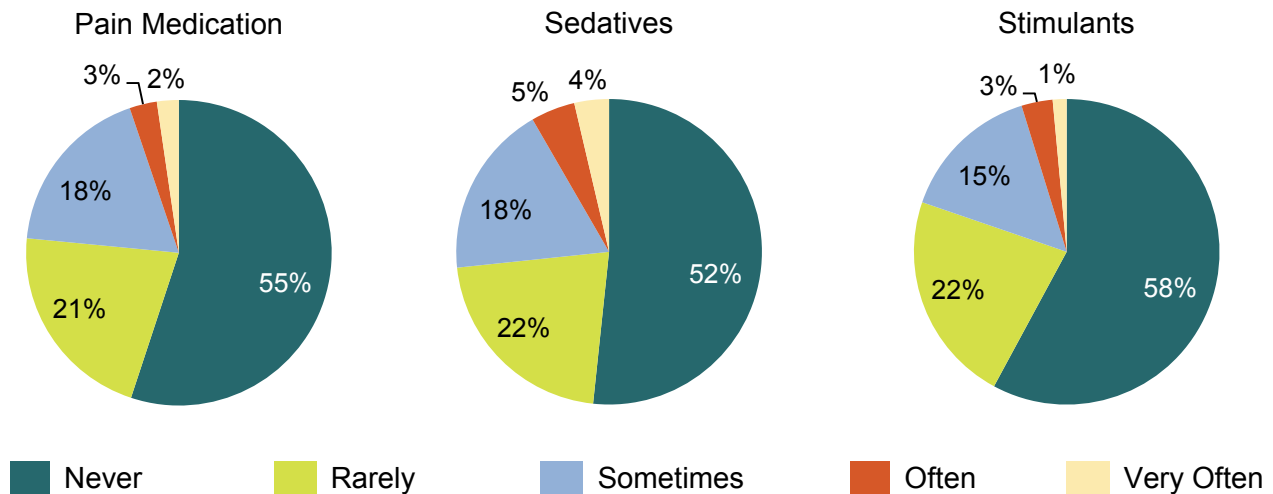
7% Done things I wish I hadn't



ALCOHOL AND MISUSE

The misuse of prescription drugs can be especially dangerous when combined with drinking alcohol. Students were asked if they used prescription medications while drinking alcohol. The majority of students reported that they never combined drinking alcohol with prescription drug use.

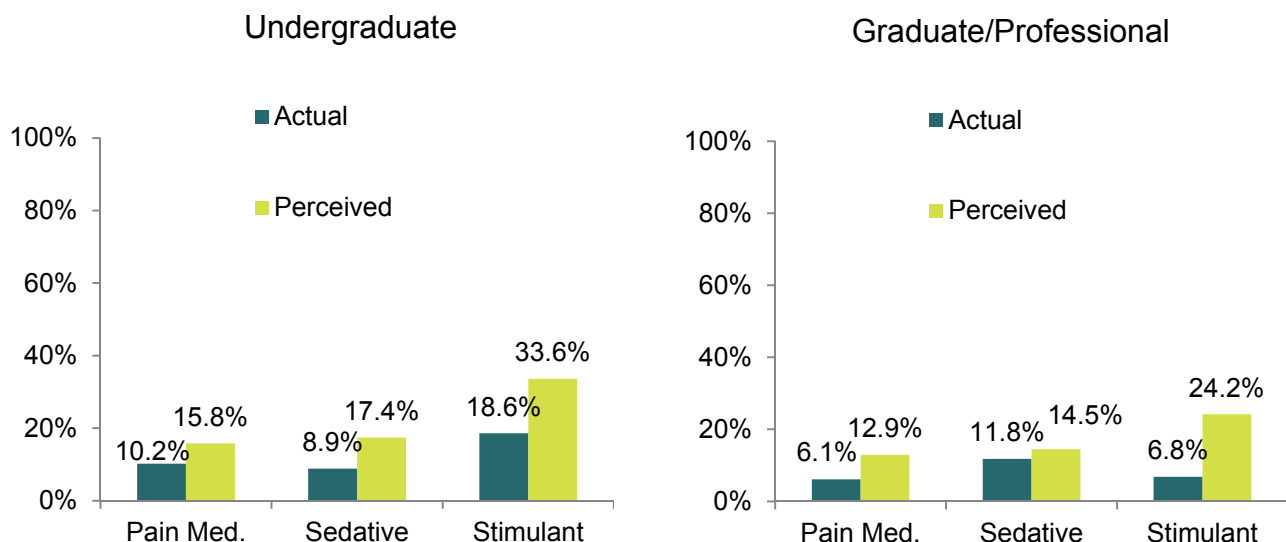
Do you use prescription drugs while drinking alcohol?



PERCEIVED USE OF OTHER STUDENTS

College students often overestimate the actual rate of substance use among their college-going peers (Presley et al., 1996). Recent research suggests that college students overestimate non-medical prescription drug use among their peers at a higher rate than they overestimate marijuana use among their peers (McCabe, 2008). Much of this research identifies the “false consensus effect” as the main reason for college students’ overestimation of peer substance use. That is, students who use drugs tend to overestimate the extent to which their peers use drugs (McCabe, 2008). In the CPDS, students overestimate how much other students are using prescription drugs for non-medical reasons.

Actual versus Perceived Use Among CPDS Student Respondents



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APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1: Where do you typically obtain prescription drugs you use for non-medical reasons? (Select all that apply)

	Pain Medications		Sedatives		Stimulants	
	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof
Friend	60.2%	52.9%	59.8%	57.9%	83.5%	83.5%
Peer who is not a friend	14.9%	7.8%	19.2%	5.3%	23.9%	16.5%
Relative	26.5%	33.3%	20.6%	26.3%	7.1%	6.2%
Pharmacy	23.7%	27.5%	22.9%	14.0%	4.9%	7.2%
Drug dealer	19.3%	9.8%	19.2%	3.5%	10.9%	6.2%
Travel	2.8%	3.9%	1.9%	1.8%	0.2%	1.0%
Internet	2.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.9%	1.0%
Other	9.6%	15.7%	2.8%	8.8%	3.1%	2.1%

How did you obtain prescription drugs from your friend, relative or peer?

They gave it to me	85.2%	94.1%	80.9%	97.7%	78.2%	84.3%
Took it without them knowing	17.6%	23.5%	10.5%	11.4%	4.7%	3.4%
Paid for it	34.1%	17.7%	42.6%	6.8%	51.6%	42.7%

Appendix Table 2: Reason for Use (Select all that apply)

	Pain Medications		Sedatives		Stimulants	
	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof
To relieve pain	57.3%	51.0%	17.9%	16.1%	2.0%	1.0%
To get to sleep	34.3%	33.3%	59.0%	51.8%	1.6%	1.0%
To relieve anxiety	35.1%	33.3%	48.6%	57.1%	8.9%	10.2%
To get high	43.5%	37.3%	43.4%	25.0%	14.3%	12.2%
To help study or improve grades	14.1%	11.8%	9.0%	3.6%	87.1%	81.6%
To counter the effects of other drugs	6.9%	0.0%	14.6%	8.9%	6.5%	8.2%
To enhance social interactions or situations	22.6%	7.8%	28.3%	10.7%	23.0%	19.4%
Because I felt dependent on it	6.5%	2.0%	4.2%	1.8%	2.7%	3.1%
To see what it was like	41.9%	25.5%	35.8%	26.8%	25.9%	25.5%
To feel better	33.5%	15.7%	29.2%	16.1%	6.7%	8.2%
To escape from reality	21.4%	9.8%	22.6%	12.5%	3.3%	6.1%
Because of a personal or emotional problem	18.1%	9.8%	23.1%	19.6%	2.5%	5.1%
Because they felt safer than street drugs	5.2%	0.0%	4.2%	3.6%	2.5%	4.1%
Because they are not felt to be as addictive as street drugs	2.8%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	1.8%	2.0%
I'd rather not say	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	1.0%
Other reason	3.2%	2.0%	0.0%	1.8%	5.4%	11.2%



Appendix Table 3: Please indicate whether you have ever experienced the following effects from your non-medical use of prescription drugs. (Select all that apply)

	Pain Medications		Sedatives		Stimulants	
	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof
Not been able to stop using when I wanted to	8.2%	5.9%	5.8%	10.5%	4.3%	6.3%
Had family members or friends express concern over use	10.7%	3.9%	11.7%	5.3%	4.8%	6.3%
Stayed away from family or friends because of use	9.5%	3.9%	8.7%	5.3%	3.2%	5.2%
Engaged in criminal activity in order to obtain	8.2%	5.9%	6.3%	5.3%	3.2%	3.1%
Experienced memory loss as a result of use	16.0%	23.5%	30.0%	22.8%	3.2%	5.2%
Experienced a negative impact on academics	10.7%	3.9%	12.7%	5.3%	3.2%	2.1%
Experienced a positive impact on academics	14.5%	13.7%	14.1%	12.3%	64.6%	60.4%
Experienced problems at work	3.7%	2.0%	4.9%	3.5%	1.4%	2.1%
Done things I wish I hadn't	18.1%	9.8%	20.4%	15.8%	7.1%	10.4%
Harmed another person	2.1%	0.0%	3.4%	1.8%	1.1%	1.0%
Been harmed by another person	4.9%	3.9%	3.9%	1.8%	0.9%	3.1%
Experienced withdrawal symptoms when stopped using	13.6%	2.0%	5.8%	1.8%	8.4%	4.2%
Experienced medical problems	6.2%	2.0%	4.4%	3.5%	3.2%	3.1%
Experienced emotional or psychological problems	13.2%	8.0%	10.2%	7.0%	9.4%	6.3%
Underwent medical treatment	2.5%	3.9%	2.4%	1.8%	1.4%	1.0%
Underwent emotional or psychological treatment	5.3%	2.0%	4.8%	5.3%	1.6%	1.0%
Experienced legal problems	2.1%	0.0%	2.4%	1.8%	0.7%	1.0%
Been depressed	19.8%	7.8%	15.0%	8.8%	9.4%	5.2%
Had suicidal thoughts	11.5%	0.0%	8.3%	5.3%	4.6%	2.1%



The data were collected and report was prepared by:

Dr. Anne McDaniel, Associate Director of Research and Data Management, Center for the Study of Student Life, The Ohio State University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their support, feedback and assistance on the study:

- Dr. Robert W. Aaron, Executive Director, Center for the Study of Student Life, The Ohio State University
- Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston, Vice President for Student Life, The Ohio State University
- Christina Athas, Senior Research Analyst, Center for the Study of Student Life, The Ohio State University
- Benjamin D. Andrews, Graduate Student Researcher, Center for the Study of Student Life, The Ohio State University
- Connie Boehm, Director, Student Life Student Wellness Center; Associate Director, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery, The Ohio State University
- Dr. John Clapp, Professor and Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, College of Social Work; Director, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery, The Ohio State University
- Kirstan Duckett, Social Science Research Specialist, Ohio Department of Aging
- Dr. Kenneth Hale, Clinical Professor, College of Pharmacy; Associate Director, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery, The Ohio State University
- Dr. Lance Kennedy-Phillips, Vice Provost for Planning and Assessment, Pennsylvania State University
- Dr. Nicole C. Kweik, Clinical Assistant Professor, College of Pharmacy, The Ohio State University
- Dr. Richard Shadick, Director, Counseling Center and Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Pace University
- Attendees of the 2014 Generation Rx Conference
- Colleagues in The Ohio State University's College of Pharmacy, Student Life Counseling and Consultation Service and Student Life Student Wellness Center

We would also like to thank the students who participated in the survey.

