



Increasing drug use is a global epidemic, as approximately 275 million people around the world used drugs illegally in 2016 alone.¹ This issue is a prevalent and deadly one. According to the World Health Organization, drugs killed 450,00 people in 2015.¹ Teens are more apt than ever to fall into a deadly world of drugs. With so many different ways of receiving drugs, it is hard to monitor and control the flow of drugs throughout the country. Sometimes teenagers turn to cheaper drugs, such as inhalants, to help them get through a traumatic time in their lives. Most times whatever drugs teenagers can afford are the ones they are using. Other times, drugs like cocaine, LSD, and methamphetamine are simply part of the teenage “party scene.”

² While the drugs used in these situations are different, the dangers are the same. Cannabis remains to be the most commonly used drug by teenagers. The frequent use of marijuana is dangerous with its many side effects, including a drop in IQ and decreased academic success. ³ Marijuana is also very addictive, and is a gateway drug to more dangerous drugs, making the usage of it even more unsafe and unpredictable. Often, young adults do not

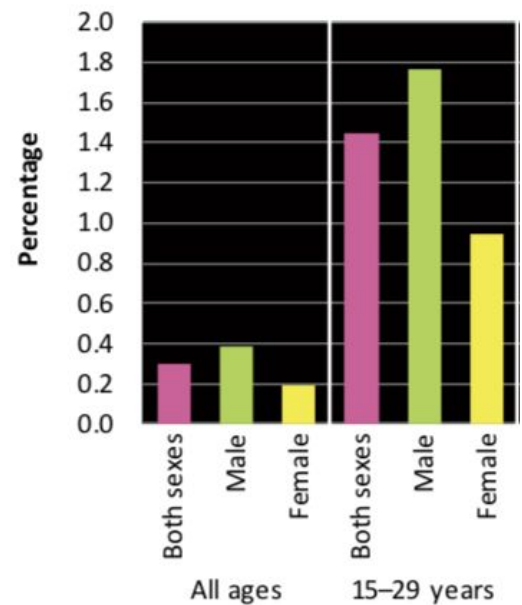


Figure 1 : Proportion of deaths resulting from drug use disorders among deaths from all causes, by age group worldwide (2015).

¹ <https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/en/exsum.html>

² https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/prelaunch/WDR18_Booklet_1_EXSUM.pdf

³ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/YouthStatssubstabceabuse.pdf>

have the resources or money available to receive help in their lives. The increasing youth usage of drugs has become a perilous international issue that will lead to more young lives lost if not properly addressed.

Surveys show that drug use is less common among older people and more common among young people.² In most countries, the highest amount of drug use is by youths. Data shows that the highest amount of drug use occurs between the ages of 18–25. A contributing factor of this issue is the fact that teens are being introduced to drugs at a younger age. Research in countries worldwide shows that early (12–14 years old) to late (15–17 years old) adolescence is a common time for the initiation of substance use.² Young people in countries worldwide tend to abuse substances to a greater extent and in a more risky way in comparison to older people. The inappropriate use of drugs can lead to significant short-term and long term problems such as cancer, HIV, addiction, changes in brain chemistry, strokes, heart attacks, and even neonatal health issues for pregnant women.⁴

Drug use among youth varies in each country and usually depends on the social and economic situation of the child. There are many reasons for teens to use drugs.⁵ While the actual influential factors differ from child to child, one can not pin down a single factor reasonable enough to cause the dangerous use of drugs. However, in order to stop the problem one must understand the problem, and acknowledge the personal, social, and environmental influences that can lead to substance abuse. An increasing amount of young people worldwide are being raised in an environment that is accepting of many different forms of drug use, for both medical and non-medical purposes. Youth may be greatly affected by their familiarity of substance use or

⁴ drugabuse.gov/related-topics/health-consequences-drug-misuse

⁵ https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/prelaunch/WDR18_Booklet_4_YOUTH.pdf

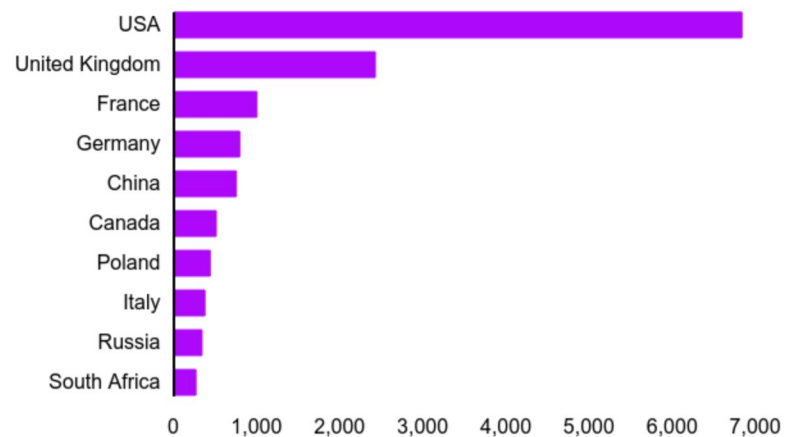
how regularly the people around them use drugs. For example, in Kenya the most frequently used drugs are cocaine and heroin because of the high availability of those drugs. These drugs have become the most common drugs in Kenya, so for youth it is seen as normal to use cocaine and heroin. Most often children use drugs to satisfy a craving or to take away pain. A drug may please one's physical body and mental state through a multitude of effects. Other contributing factors to youth drug use include relieving stress or making one feel happier, taking risks and satisfying curiosity as a child, showing independence, and evolving values that are different from parental or societal authority.⁶

New drugs have become a major concern for the health of young people worldwide. A prime example of a new drug is vaping. Vaping is when a person inhales liquid vapor that contains nicotine, flavorings, and chemicals into their lungs. This is usually done by an e-cigarette, but most commonly, people use a "Juul". Most products are targeted towards children because of the "fun" flavors and "healthy" benefits. In reality, the

presence of nicotine makes the drug addictive, and is in no way different than a normal cigarette. The inhaling of liquid vapor can cause serious lung damage in the future. It can also affect the

Top 10 markets for vape products

Market size for smokeless tobacco and vape products, 2018 (\$m)



Source: Euromonitor International

BBC

Figure 2: Market size for vape products and e-cigarettes (2018).

⁶ <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ch06.pdf>

way a person thinks, acts, and feels, but since it is a fairly new drug, many of the side effects are unknown.⁷ Recently, more people have been hospitalized for serious upper respiratory complications due to vaping.

Countries around the world are doing their best to stop the drug epidemic despite their methods being quite different from one another. One country with a more radical approach to stopping drug use is Portugal. In 2001, Portugal decriminalized all drugs. Instead of drug users being viewed as criminals, they are viewed as people who need help. People who possess and use drugs will not go to jail, but will learn about treatment options and rehabilitation from doctors, lawyers, and social workers.⁸ The positive effects have been astounding. Drug-related deaths in Portugal became five times lower than that of the European Union average. Drug use in teens, specifically those between the ages of 15 and 24, dropped, and by 2015, the rate of new HIV cases per million decreased greatly, from 104.2 to 4.2.⁸ Other countries, such as Nigeria, Kuwait, Cyprus, have very strict drug policies. In Nigeria, someone caught with drugs can be sentenced to 15-25 years in prison. In Kuwait and Cyprus, one can receive a life sentence for possessing drugs.⁹ Some countries even execute people for possession. According to drugabuse.com, which is controlled by American Addiction Centers, Iran executes hundreds of people for drug-related crimes, including juveniles, and will hit people with a three-foot whip for certain drugs, even if the quantity is very small.⁹ Despite this, 2.2 million people in Iran are still addicted to drugs.⁹ Many countries do employ strict tactics though to combat drug trafficking and deter people from ever getting involved in drugs. This method fights drug use at the source, as by

⁷ <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/e-cigarettes.html>

⁸ <https://time.com/longform/portugal-drug-use-decriminalization/>

⁹ <https://drugabuse.com/featured/drug-possession-penalties-around-the-world/>

working against drug trafficking, countries are breaking down the supply chain, preventing drugs from ever reaching the streets. It also can protect anyone vulnerable involved in trafficking. In places such as Singapore this approach has been a success, with the country having low rates of organized crime relating to drugs, low incarceration rates, and overall low drug use in comparison to other nations.¹⁰ Drug policy varies greatly around the world, with each and every nation implementing their own laws to help prevent the drug epidemic from continuing to plague their people.

According to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), 3.9% of the world uses cannabis, 0.37% uses cocaine, 0.70% uses opioids, 0.40% uses opiates, 0.70% uses amphetamines and prescription stimulants, and 0.42% uses ecstasy.¹¹ These are global estimates, so there is a lot of variance in these statistics per country, especially in teens. For example, it was found by the Afghanistan National Urban Drug Use Study in 2015 that 7% of the total population uses opioids. It was also found that of children under 14 in Afghanistan, about 9% of them tested positive for drugs, most of which being opioids. This study infers that many of these children are

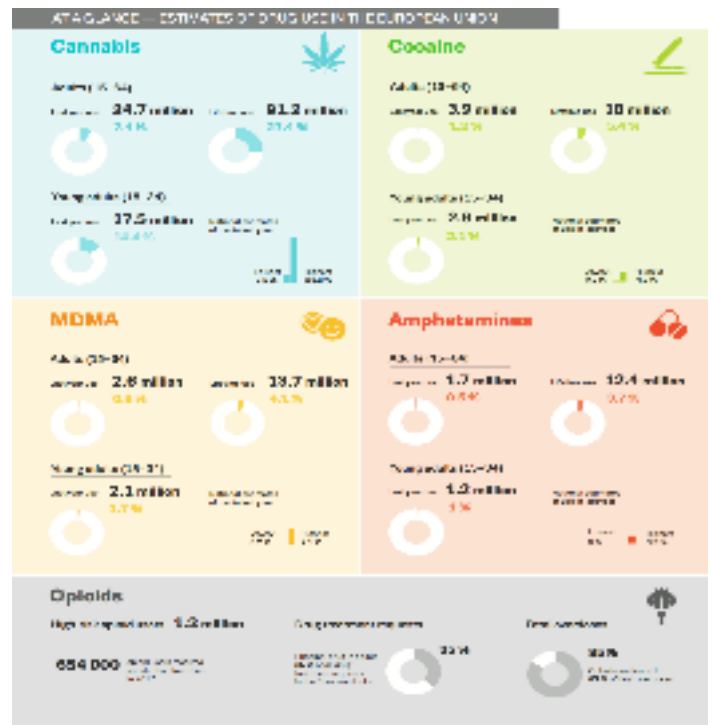


Figure 3: Statistics on drug use in the European Union broken down by drug and age group
Source: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/05/singapore-policy-drugs-bay>
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https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/prelaunch/1.1_Prevalence_of_drug_use_in_the_general_population_-_regional_and_global_estimates.xlsx

being given opioids by adults or are exposed to it and its products, such as second-hand smoke, in their homes.¹² Such exposure is a danger to these teens, as opioid use is therefore normalized and the risk of future use is increased. Cannabis though, is usually the teenage drug of choice and is most common.³ A survey conducted in 2015 of 35 European countries found that 18% of students aged 15-16 had used cannabis at least once, with countries like the Czech Republic reaching 37%.¹³ These numbers have just been growing, and despite laws and regulations, continue to grow. As shown in Figure 3, most drug use in Europe is conducted by teens, not adults, and this is true all over the world.

The UN has attempted to fix the problem of increasing drug use around the world. Yury Fedotov, the UNODC executive director, talks about how the UN must treat people with respect, and says they need to “look beyond the statistics and see not “the addict”, not “the drug user”, not “the patient,” but the human being who needs our help.”¹⁴ In order to help children throughout different countries with drug abuse, the UNODC created the “Children’s Program.” This program was created in response to the increasing number of children at risk from drugs and to help get treatment to the children who were exposed to drugs. Countries that have been reached this program include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Liberia, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.¹⁵ It provides assistance to local and national authorities and teach them how to address the needs of children through activities.

¹² <https://www.issup.net/knowledge-share/publications/2016-10/afghanistan-national-drug-use-survey-2015>

¹³ <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/4541/TDAT17001ENN.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treatment-and-care/index.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-prevention-and-treatment/children/unodc-role.html>

The world's teens and children are suffering from a deadly issue, and that issue is drug use and abuse. No one is immune or free from this issue, and it is of utmost importance that it is fixed. In this committee, your goal is to consider a variety of solutions, involving rehabilitation, law and drug policy, and prevention, and work to create one that has the potential to remedy this crisis.

Questions to Consider:

- To what extent are drug offenders punished in your country?
- How do teens in your country obtain and pay for drugs?
- What drugs are most commonly used by teens in your country?
- Has your country implemented any rehabilitation centers or tactics for helping teen drug users?

Helpful Links:

- http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/countries_en
- <https://dataunodc.un.org/drugs>
- https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/en/
- [YouthStatssubstabceabuse.pdf](#)