

Prescription Drug Misuse – Data Brief

2015 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

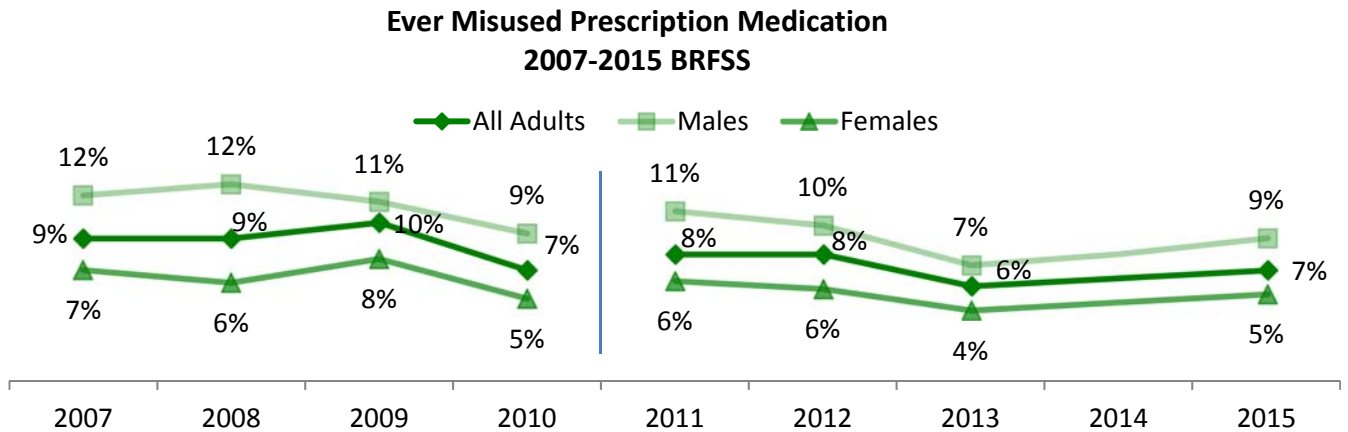
Background

Misuse of prescription medications can have serious consequences, such as addiction or unintentional poisoning. Prescription medication misuse is defined as the taking of medications in a manner or dose other than prescribed. It is not limited to taking medications to “get high”, but also includes the taking of medications for legitimate health complaints such as pain¹.

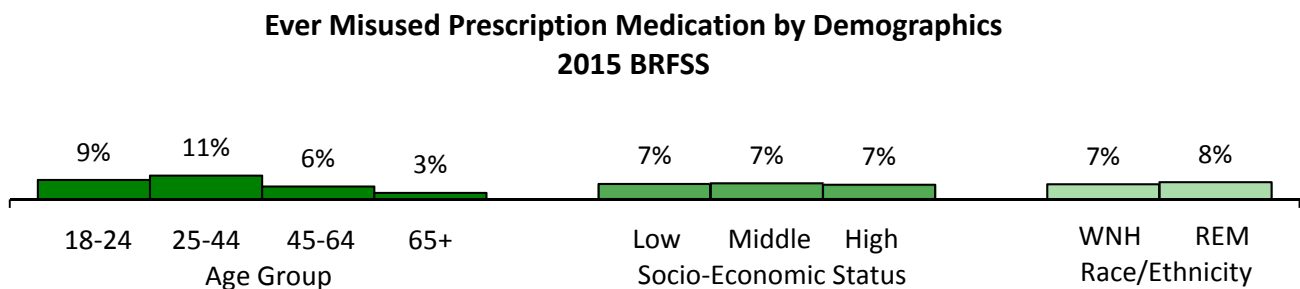
The Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) regularly includes questions on prescription drug misuse among Vermont adults. This allows us to look at misuse overtime and among sub-groups. *Note, however, that the BRFSS questions ask about prescription drug misuse in general, and does not specify the type of prescription drug misused. Thus, we cannot look at misuse of any specific drugs.*

Overall

In 2015, seven percent of Vermont adults said they had ever misused a prescription medication. Very few (1%) misused them in the last month. Male adults are consistently, and statistically, more likely than females to report misusing prescription medications.



Misuse of prescription medications is higher among younger age groups, 18-24 and 25-44 than those 45 and older. Adults 18-64 report significantly higher prescription drug misuse use than those 65 and older. Similarly, those 25-44 are also more likely than those 45-64 to report ever misusing prescription drugs (11% vs. 6%). There are no statistically significant differences in prescription drug misuse by socio-economic status or race/ethnicity.



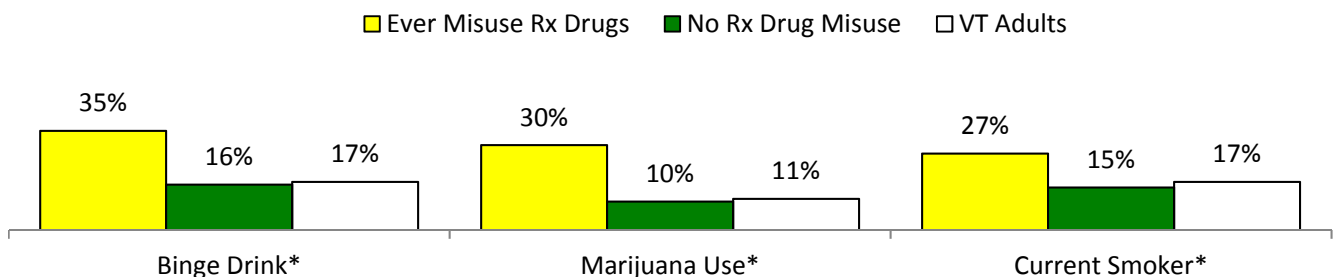
¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/misuse-prescription-drugs/summary>

Risk Behaviors

Use of other substances is associated with the misuse of prescription medications. Adults who have ever misused prescription drugs are significantly more likely than those who have not misused prescription medications to binge drink (35% vs. 16%), currently use marijuana (30% vs. 10%), and currently smoke (27% vs. 15%).

Younger adults are more likely to participate in risk behaviors including prescription drug misuse, binge drinking, cigarette smoking, and marijuana use. Therefore, the relationship between these behaviors and the misuse of prescription drugs is also likely influenced by age. However, even after accounting for age adults ever misusing prescription drugs are significantly more likely to binge drink, smoke, or use marijuana.

Prevalence of Risk Behaviors by Prescription Drug Misuse 2015 BRFSS



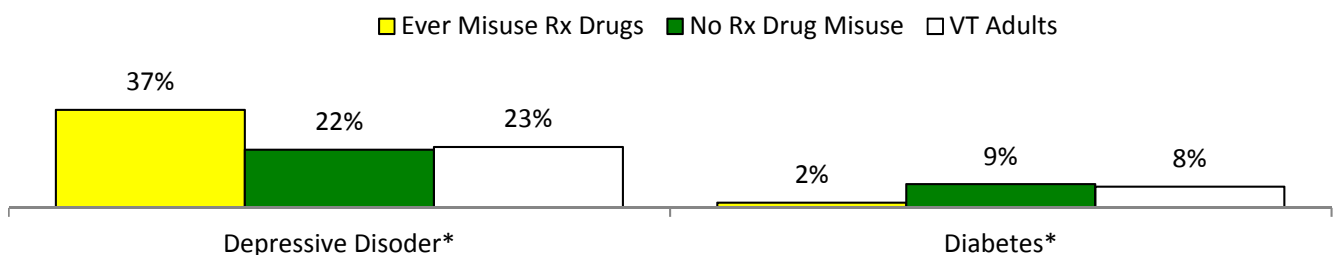
*Ever misused prescription medications significantly different from never misused.

Chronic Conditions

Vermont adults ever misusing prescription medications are as likely as those not to have at least one chronic condition (68% vs. 62%). However, when considering specific chronic conditions there are some statistical differences. Adults misusing prescription medications are significantly more likely than those not misusing prescription medications to have a depressive disorder (37% vs. 22%); they are less likely to have diabetes (2% vs. 9%). Since we do not know the specific drugs being misused, we cannot say whether the medications those with depressive disorders are reporting misuse of are related to their condition or for some other reason. The relationship between prescription drug misuse and depressive disorders and diabetes remains even after accounting for any influence of age.

Prevalence of other chronic conditions did not differ significantly by misuse of prescription medications.

Prevalence of Chronic Conditions by Prescription Drug Misuse 2015 BRFSS



*Ever misused prescription medications significantly different from never misused.

For more information on the BRFSS contact Jessie Hammond, M.P.H. (jessie.hammond@vermont.gov).