

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

IN SOUTH AFRICA: A REVIEW

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

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BACKGROUND

Given that middle income countries such as South Africa are at increasing risk for drug use and abuse, the need for hard data to accurately monitor drug abuse in South Africa is needed. This review synthesizes available epidemiological data on current drug use in South Africa, particularly among women and young people.

METHODS

Several databases were systematically searched for articles published in peer-reviewed journals at any time during the last century to end-2006. Data from several large epidemiology data sets were analyzed.

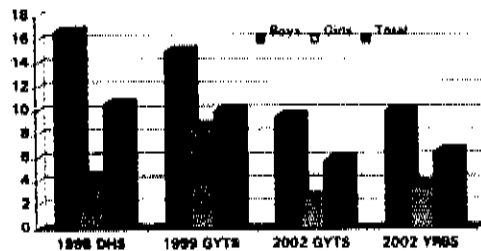
National or large surveys included in review

Author(s)	Year	Survey	Substance	Method	N	Age
Roche-Sheu et al. (1998)	1994	HSRC	Substance use	African Black National household survey, multi-stage stratified sampling	N = 1378	10-21 yrs
Neddy et al. (1996)	1995	HSRC	Tobacco	National household survey, multi-stage stratified sampling	N = 2238	16 yrs and above
Department of Health (1998)	1998	DHS	Tobacco, Alcohol	National household survey, multi-stage stratified sampling	N = 13826	16 yrs and above
Swart et al. (2008)	1999	GYTS	Tobacco	National school survey	N = 6045	13-17 yrs
Neddy & Swart (2003)	2002	GYTS	Tobacco	National school survey	N = 8935	13-18 yrs
Neddy et al. (2002)	2002	YRES	Substance use	National school survey	N = 10699	13-18 yrs
DAVE (2004)	2003	WHS	Alcohol, Tobacco	National household survey, multi-stage stratified sampling	235	18 years and above
Department of Health (2007)	2003	DHS	Tobacco	National household survey, multi-stage stratified sampling	N = 2118	16 yrs and above
Shwane et al. (2005)	2004	HSRC	Substance use	National educator survey	N = 26626	16 yrs and above
Shwane et al. (2005)	2005	SANSS AMH	Substance use	National household survey, multi-stage stratified sampling	N = 23236	16 yrs and above

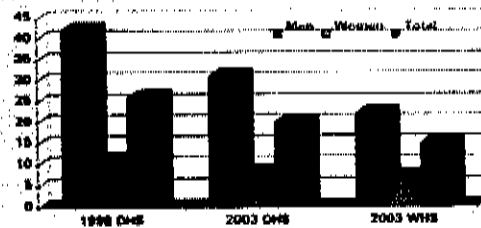
RESULTS

Comparisons revealed that the prevalence, and intensity (frequency and/or quantity) of most drugs (tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and other illicit drugs) used was higher among males, lower educated, and living in urban areas compared to females, higher educated, and living in rural areas. Certain racially classified social groups in South Africa were at increased risk for drug use. Tobacco use significantly decreased over the past 10 years to 31.2% among men and 8.4% among women in 2003.

Daily cigarette use among adolescents



Daily smoking among adults by sex

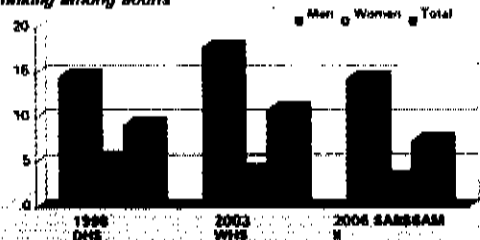


Alcohol use and risky drinking remained stable for adults (e.g. past month binge drinking among men 14.3% and women 3.2% in 2005); risky drinking increased for the youth over the past 10 years. Female current drinkers were proportionally higher risky drinkers than current drinking men. There was a significant increase in current alcohol use among pregnant women from 7% in 1998 to 12.6% in 2005.

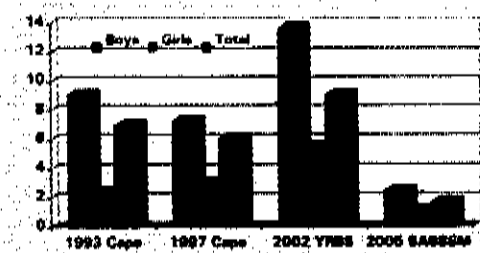
The most used illicit drugs include cannabis, inhalants, mandrax, club drugs

(ecstasy, methamphetamine). Cocaine and opiates appear to be on the increase. The onset of alcohol and illicit drug use seems to have decreased into the younger age groups.

Binge drinking among adults



Current cannabis use among adolescents



Other illicit drugs status by age and sex

Substance	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Heroin, etc.	12.1	9.8	0.4	0.21	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	11.1	11.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Marijuana, synthetic	7.0	4.8	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	4.9	4.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Ecstasy (MDA, etc.)	7.3	8.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	0.9	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Opiates, inhalants, amphetamines, etc.	11.8	11.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	1.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Club drugs (ecstasy, etc.)	7.6	4.4	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	2.0	6.8	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Prescription drugs (antidepressants, etc.)	1.9	14.8	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	15.5	14.8	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

While the prevalence of drug use in South Africa is relatively low compared to USA and Australia and some other developing countries, prevention and intervention policies should be designed to reduce these levels by targeting the more risky subpopulations identified from this review.

Comparisons of drug use epidemiology: South Africa, USA and Australia

Drug	South Africa (%)	USA (%)	Australia (%)
Daily smoking	31.24	15.5	12.4
Past month binge drinking (risky drinking)	14.3	15.2	15.5
Current cannabis use (past 12 months)	3.9	0.6	0.1
Marijuana, synthetic, amphetamines, etc.	0.2	0.0	0.7
Cocaine (crack, etc.)	0.4	0.2	1.3
Opiates, inhalants	0.2	0.0	0.7
Club drugs (ecstasy, etc.)	0.2	0.1	0.6
Heroin, etc.	0.2	0.1	0.4

*Smoking, 2003, Demographic & Health Survey (DHS); other drugs: SANSSM, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), National Drug Strategy Household Survey

RECOMMENDATIONS

A national household survey on drug use and health for persons 12 years and above is suggested every three years.

For example, a household survey in the US is conducted every year, and in Australia (called National drug strategy household survey) every three years for person 12 years and above. Current national data in South Africa is either outdated, use different measures or come from sources that only consider treatment demand or consists of small studies that cannot be linked to give a national prevalence perspective.

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