



ILLINOIS HIGHER
EDUCATION
C E N T E R

for alcohol, other drug
& violence prevention

INSIDE

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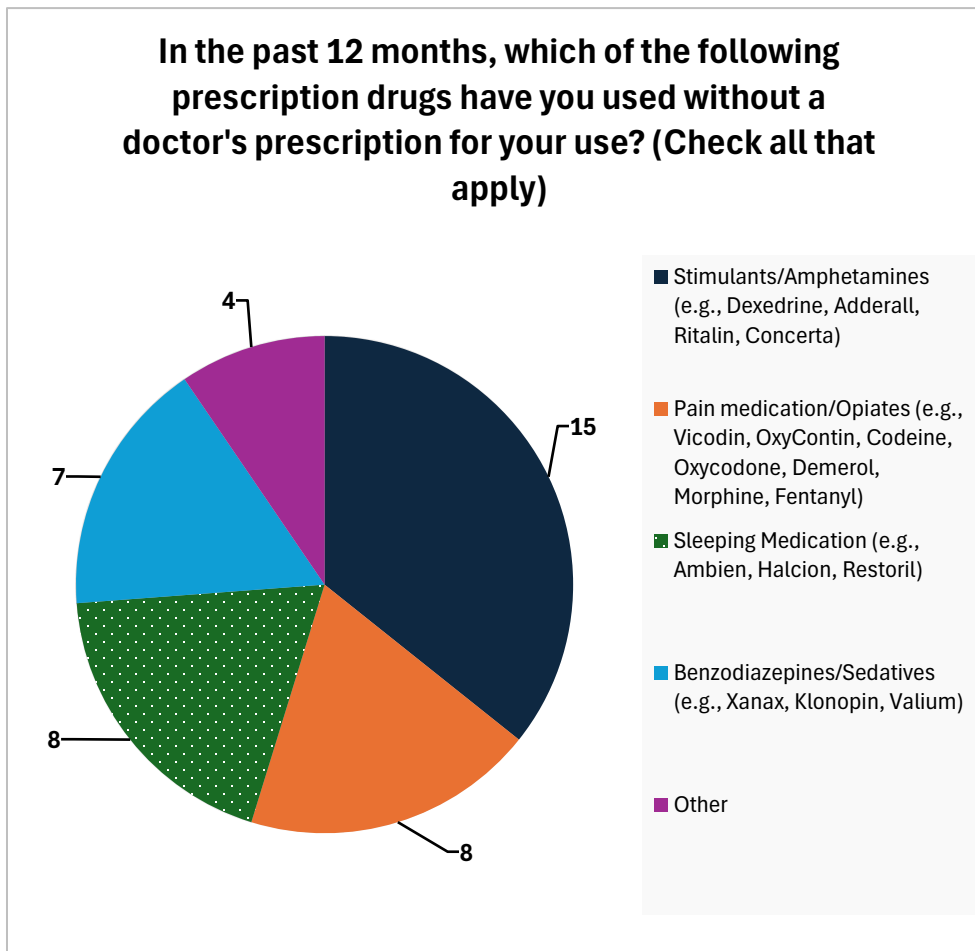
Summary and Resources (p.5)

2024 IACSUB Survey Findings on Prescription Drug Misuse in Higher Education

The Illinois Assessment of College Substance Use Behaviors (IACSUB) survey drew information from 705 participants spanning six colleges and universities across the State of Illinois. The purpose of the survey was to identify substance use behaviors among college students, such as frequency, location, and reasons for use. In this way stakeholders will be more able to identify substance use challenges in higher education and their related communities. Students were asked questions pertaining to alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco, as well as other drugs.

This brief will address prescription drug use among Illinois college students. Specifically, the findings of the IACSUB data pertained to frequency of prescription drug use with and without a doctor's prescription, how students obtained prescriptions drugs, who is giving prescription drugs to students and why they chose to use them.

Figure 4.1



Prescription drug (without a prescription) type of drug used during a 12-month period

Out of the 705 total participants in this survey, there were 640 that answered this question. Of these respondents 93.4% said they have not used prescription drugs without a prescription in the past year ($n=598$). There were 15 people who preferred not to respond. Figure 4.1 looks at the remaining 42 students who took prescription drugs and which they chose to use.

Prescription drug (with a prescription) type of drug used during a 12-month period

Out of the 633 students who responded to this question, 94.3% said they did not misuse prescription drugs in this time frame ($n=597$). There were 17 students who selected that they preferred not to respond. Figure 4.2 shows which prescription drugs were misused by the remaining 36 students.

Figure 4.2

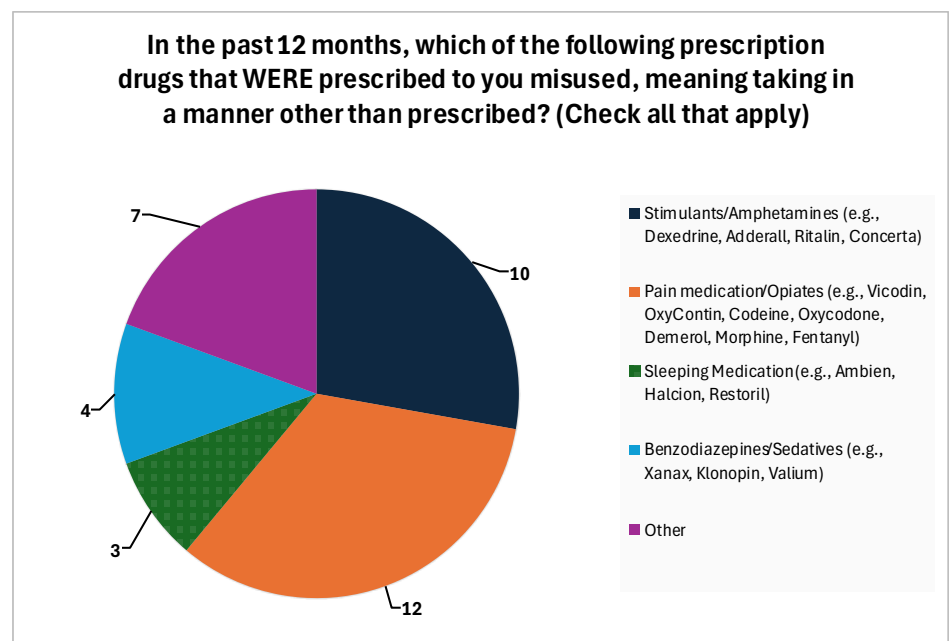
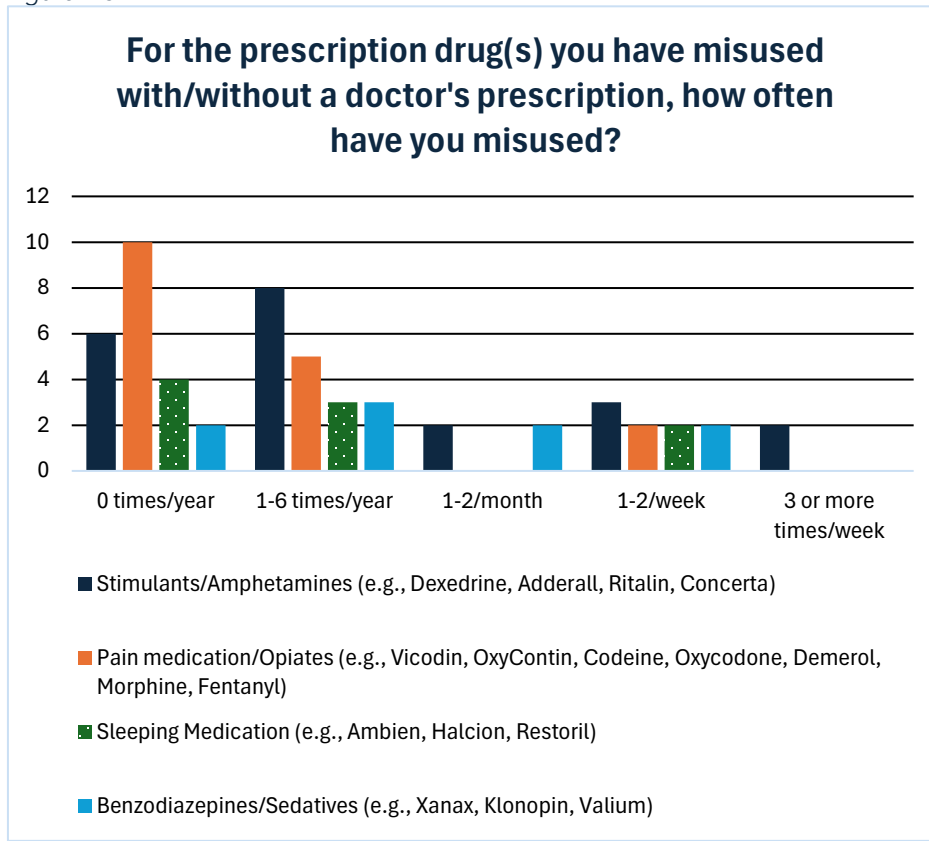


Figure 4.3



Frequency of student misuse of prescription drugs (with or without a doctor's prescription) within a year/month/week

Students were asked how frequently they had misused prescription drugs including stimulants/amphetamines, pain medications/opiates, sleeping medication, and benzodiazepines/sedatives. There was a total of 56 responses to this question. Student responses of 0 times/year represented 39.3% ($n=22$), and 1-6 times/year was 33.9% ($n=19$). Figure 4.3 breaks down what type of drug(s) students used and how often they used them.

How do students obtain prescription drugs without a prescription from a doctor?

When asked this question, 41% ($n=14$) of responses indicated that someone gave them the drugs and 23% of responses ($n=8$) indicated buying the drugs from other people.

Figure 4.4

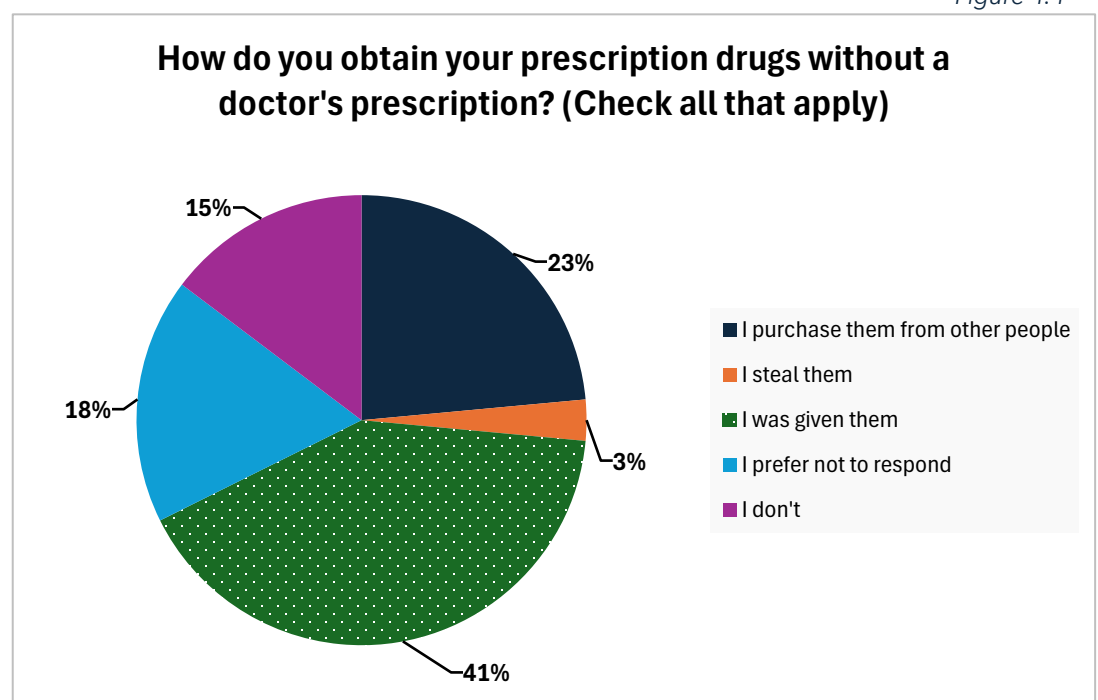
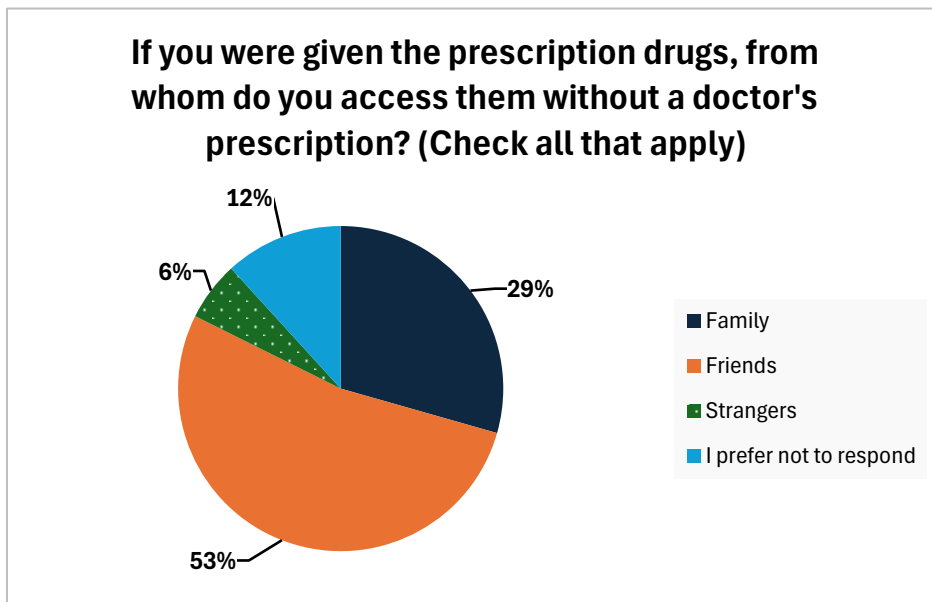


Figure 4.5



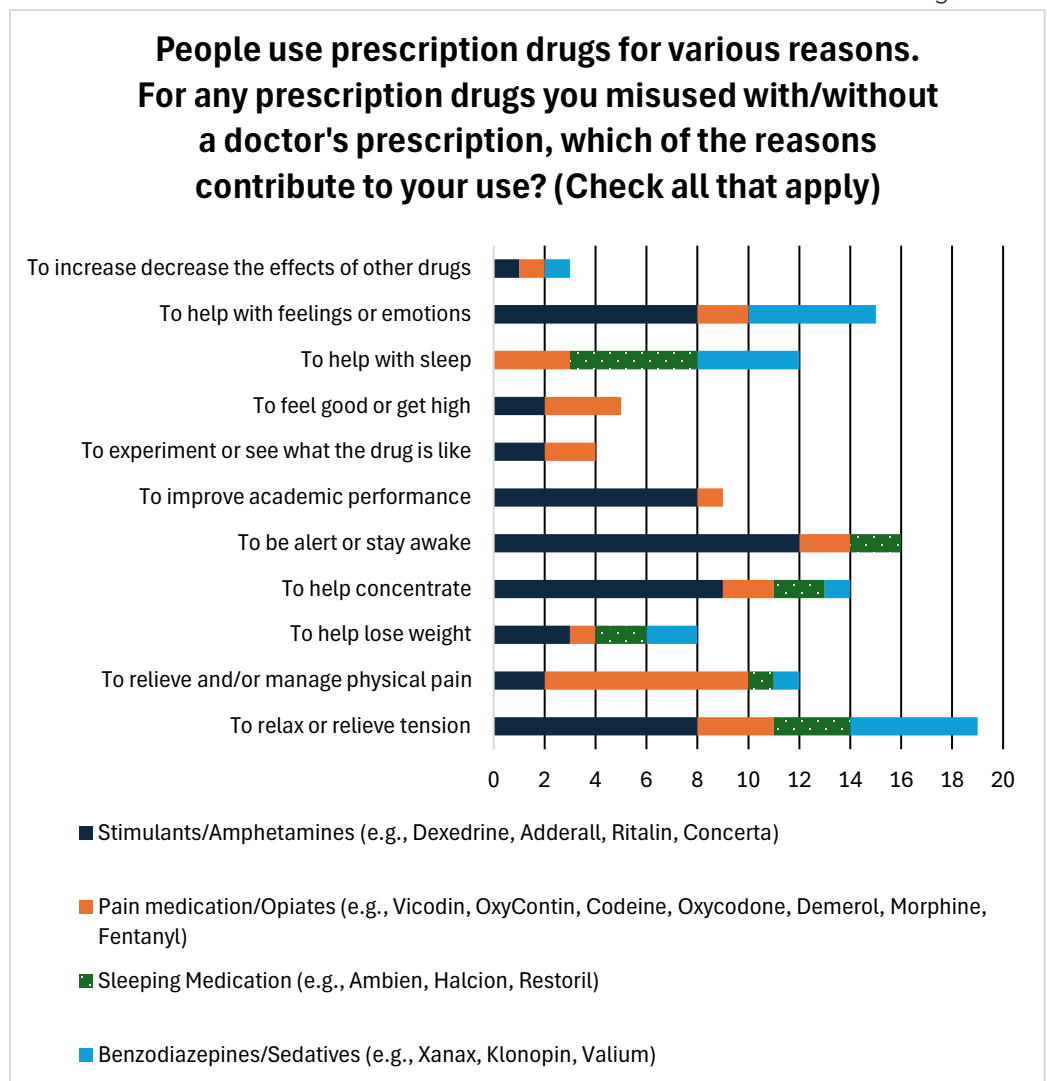
Who provides students with access to prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription?

Figure 4.5 shows that 53% of students who said that someone had given them prescription drugs said that they were given the drugs by friends.

Why are students using prescription drugs?

The top 3 reasons given by students for their misuse of prescription drugs were "to relax or relieve tension", "to be alert or stay awake", and "to help with feeling or emotions". These reasons were selected by 19, 16, and 15 students respectively as the cause for misusing the 4 types of prescription drugs listed. Of the 11 possible reasons for misusing prescriptions drugs, students misused pain medication for every reason and stimulants for every reason except "to help with sleep".

Figure 4.6



Summary

The data collected in the IACSUB survey indicates that 93.4% of students did not use prescription drugs not prescribed to them. Of the total students who had been prescribed prescription drugs 94.3% took them only as prescribed. Those who do misuse them tend to gravitate towards stimulants and pain medication. Students who obtained prescription drugs without a prescription from a doctor received them mainly from friends and some from family. Those who misuse prescription drugs credited the desire to relax or relieve tension as the main reason for doing so.

Resources

Illinois Higher Education Center (2024). Reprint of IACSUB Survey. *Statewide AOD Survey*, 1-78.

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