



Trends and factors associated with drug use in South Africa: findings from multiple national population-based household surveys

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Introduction

- I acknowledge and thank the South African general population who generously participated in the HIV surveys in which this research was made possible.
- The authors declare no conflict-of-interest.

Background

- Illicit drug use has substantial ongoing impact on health and wellbeing globally and in sub-Saharan Africa.
- There is little data on trends and predictors of illicit drug use in sub-Saharan Africa.
- We set out to:
 1. Describe population-level trends in illicit drug use and their predictors.
 2. Evaluate whether illicit drug use is associated with behavioral and health outcomes in South Africa.

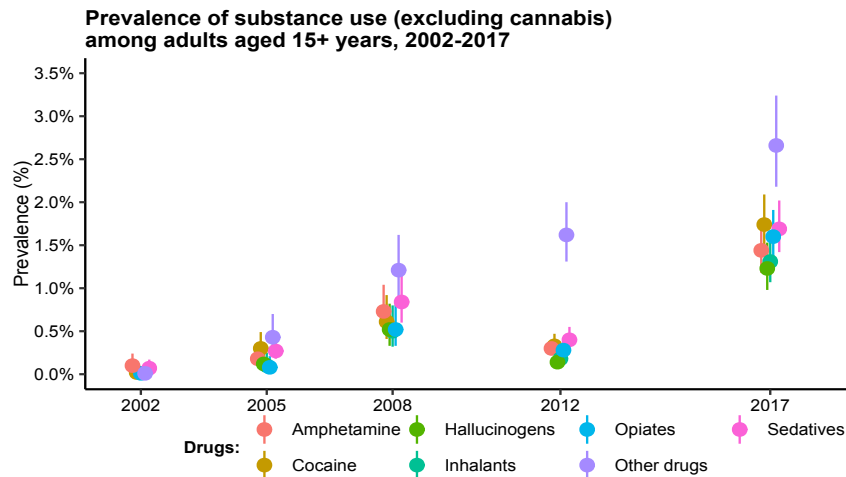
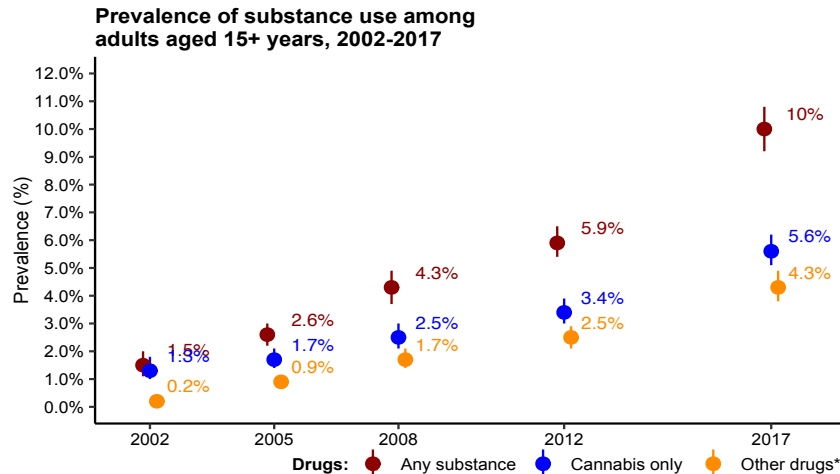
Methods

- We analysed data among adults aged 15+ years from 5 national households surveys conducted over 2002-2017 in South Africa.
- Multivariable logistic regression was used to:
 - Assess predictors of recent drug use – *defined as any past 3-months illicit drug use, excluding alcohol/tobacco.*
 - Evaluate whether recent drug use predicted behavioral and health outcomes – adjusted for age, sex, race, geographic area, province, education level, employment status, alcohol use and survey year.

Results

- There were 90,324 respondents aged 15+ years from the 5 pooled surveys.
- Drug use increased from 1.5% in 2002 to 10.0% in 2017.
 - Problematic drug use (*defined as any past 3-months use of cocaine, opiates or stimulants*) increased from 0.1%-2.5% from 2002-2017
 - About 1.7% and 1.4% reported using opiates and stimulants respectively in 2017
- The increasing trend in illicit drug use was significant across various socio-demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, etc.

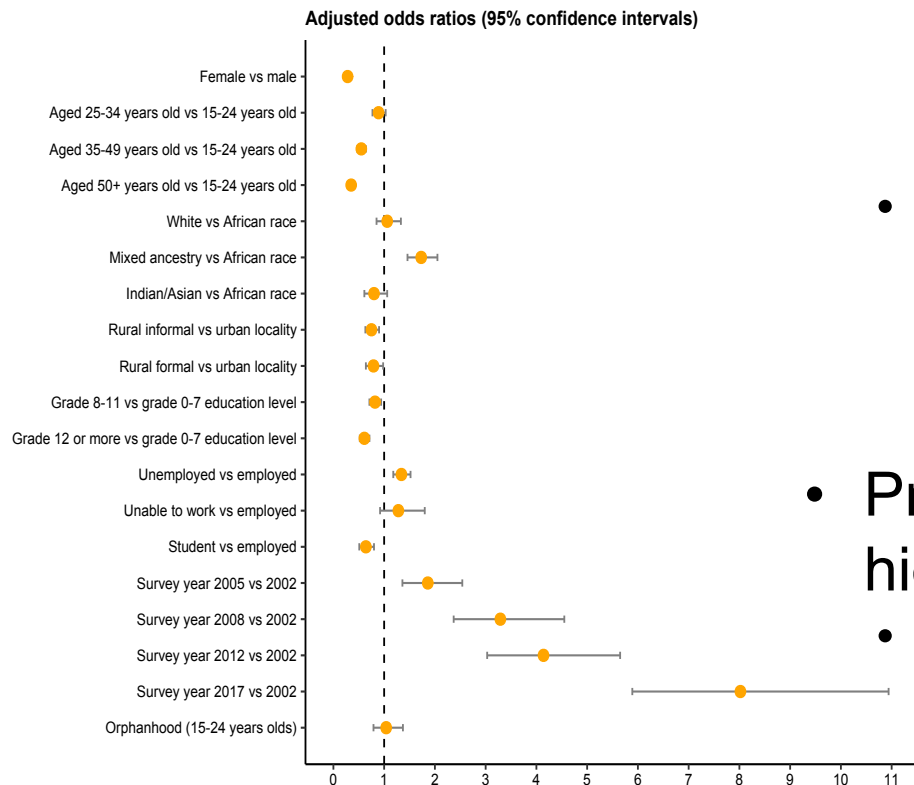
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*Others: Includes cocaine, amphetamine, inhalants, sedatives, hallucinogens, opiates, other drugs; and cannabis with any other drugs

Results

Factors associated with any recent illicit drug use

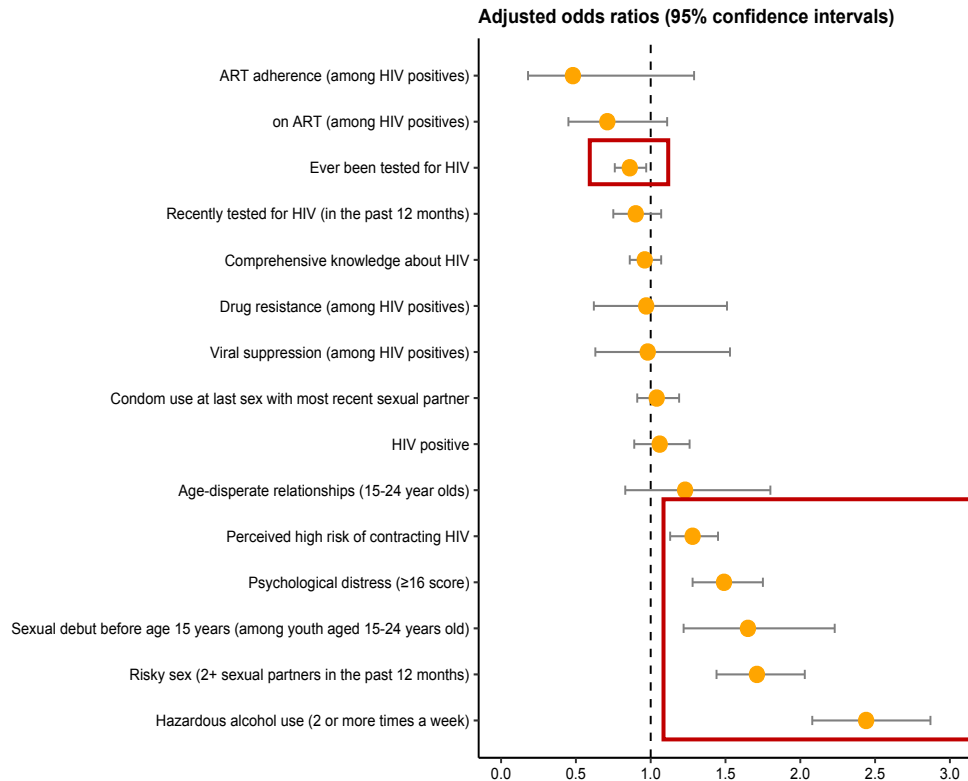


- Recent illicit drug use was:
 - Negatively associated with being female, older age, living in rural area, and higher education attainment.
 - Positively associated with being of mixed-ancestry race, and unemployment.
- Prevalence of illicit drug use was high in some groups
 - 16-33% (depending on race) among young male in urban areas.

Results

HIV outcomes among people who use drugs (PWUD) compared to non-PWUD

- Compared to non-PWUD, people who used drugs (PWUD) were:
 - More likely to have multiple sexual partners, high alcohol intake, earlier sexual debut, experienced psychosocial distress, and perceived high-risk of contracting HIV.
 - Less likely to have ever been tested for HIV.



Conclusions

- Illicit drug use has increased substantially in South Africa in the last 15 years.
- Evidence-based interventions focused on reducing unemployment, problematic alcohol-use, and high-risk sex, targeted by age, sex, race and geography are required to mitigate the impact of illicit drug use in South Africa.



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