

# Drug Abuse

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Most casual and all regular news consumers in the USA know about the sharp increase in drug overdose deaths occurring these recent few years. There were 64,000 in the USA in year 2016, a 22% increase over 2015. In just one small state, New Hampshire (*less than half of 1% of the USA's population*) these deaths have increased to ten times the year 2000 total.

Drug overdoses are about 50% more than suicides, almost double all traffic related deaths and more than four times the number of murders, which have just recently increased in the USA, after a decades long steady decline and simultaneous, correspondingly steady increase in firearms sales. Much of the murder increase is directly related to illegal drugs.

I don't know if other nations have suffered drug overdose death increases; I suspect yes.

I ask The Committee to address the subject.

*Q: The guns issue is always good for an argument but murders rarely involve legally owned guns or law abiding citizens. Is the murder rate, almost always gun related, part of the drug overdoses?*

C: Yes, a following effect. High profits in drugs attract competition, some of it willing to kill.

*Q: The gun ownership rate, difficult to measure precisely, didn't match the gun violence.*

C: It never does. The focus on guns is too easy an explanation. The solution is belonging.

*Q: The solution to gun violence or drug overdose?*

C: Both and most crime.

*Q: Why?*

C: Users and perpetrators see less loss from use or participation. The human who feels connected to and part of a group whose members accept, like, support and encourage their fellow members, such as in families, are much less willing to risk losing the group. Criminal gangs operate the same way, encouraging and supporting certain acts in return for acceptance and a sense of belonging.

*Q: Why do the drugs attract users?*

C: You should say, retain. Thrills attract, the remaining users continue because of the escape provided. This is likewise the attraction of any substance which alters the mental function. It allows an escape from many emotions.

It is too simple to suggest just escaping emotion, because there are so many and numerous factors which lead to them. Nevertheless, escaping them holds great appeal, the drug experience a seemingly pleasant substitute.

*Q: Why the increase in use and overdose deaths?*

C: The rate of drug users to overdose deaths remains steady however this illegal activity is concealed, so many users are unable to be counted. We will simply say, human drug overdose deaths are the effect, the very bad one which draws attention to the subject.

What has increased are numbers of people using and also as a percentage of the population and the consumption amounts per user.

This often leads to physical tolerance, and always in some substances such as opiates. Chasing the early stage effects of use with higher doses, leads to it. Impure drugs occur but are not a factor. A seller never wishes to harm a user, this eliminates a very profitable customer.

*Q: Economics drives a lot of this business.*

C: No, follows.

*Q: Drug dealers seem to be the lowest of the low; they have to know what's going on with the product they provide.*

C: They know a bad batch of drugs will eliminate customers much faster than new ones can be found to replace the dead.

*Q: Some people will do anything for money.*

C: Yes, but few are attracted solely by this, although they will protest and say differently.

*Q: So what really attracts a seller? In this group I'm lopping together growers, processors, transporters, distributors, retail sellers and everybody else in the supply chain. What is it, if not money?*

C: The same as any remunerated activity; it supplies a sense of purpose. Where great profits can be realized, a great sense of purpose ensues for some people. Money's main function after serving as a medium of exchange is to keep score. Humans treat wealth acquisition as a sport.

Drug business participants are attracted by the sport and sense of worth winning gives.

*Q: Do suppliers leave the business often? Obviously we do NOT hear about that!*

C: Yes. Fear of law enforcement is a factor although small. Fear of competition is much greater. In third place is the good, what humans call, conscience. Loss of supply, when not part of competition, sometimes causes departure from the trade.

*Q: Back to the sociology; why is there an increased need for escape? If not need, urge?*

C: These factors are several and they are social.

Humans have disconnected themselves in many ways new to mankind. As the Earth has shrunk with the rapid expansion of travel and communications during the most recent half century, social systems have not been adjusted to compensate. This manifests in several ways, drug abuse a symptom.

Out of wedlock births, single parent families, older average marriage ages, lower rates of marriage in general, increases in obesity and historically high rates of divorce, often multiple with multiple marriages are all related. Overeating is an example.

Increased work, travel for it, stress, pressure to always sell more, produce higher output and quality for lower prices can all become contributing factors. It is not fashionable to be thrifty or simple among humans, not anymore. It is socially preferred to have what is deemed better, even if the item or features are nearly unnecessary. Their possession and public knowledge of that possession, are the goal of many a human.

The pressures which result cause economic cycles to be more erratic, have higher peaks and lower troughs and to be more disturbing to many segments of the population. As these effects reverberate, social effects occur.

How many children would prefer dinner with their parents on a regular basis, when they do not now have it? How many rarely see both parents and never together? How many do not even know one of their parents?

Escape becomes more attractive in these circumstances.

*Q: What about the notion drug abuse, and this includes alcohol, is a disease?*

C: A social disease, yes.

*Q: It is not an individual disease?*

C: No. There are individuals with a higher propensity to become addicted to many things, however rarely is this the responsible cause. The continuance of drug abuse is because of the escape it supplies.

*Q: We need to lessen the social pressures and return to a simpler way of life?*

C: Yes. Work less hours. Travel less. Be with family more.

*Q: I can foresee the objections already; prices and costs won't drop off.*

C: Not today but they will. Money is an illusion also and can be manipulated just as many illusions can.

*Q: When did humans begin consumption of mind altering substances?*

C: As soon as they were located and ingested. Found you would say.

*Q: What about our popular drug, alcohol? Why have we made it so acceptable?*

C: Small amounts consumed do not create a mind altering effect.

*Q: I've read statistics which say ten percent of the US population abuses alcohol.*

C: More if you broaden the definition.

*Q: Is that ten percent of adults or ten percent of everybody?*

C: Adults and adolescents.

*Q: How about drugs?*

C: If you include caffeine, more than half the US population abuses drugs. If solely the illegal substances are included, approximately three percent of adults and adolescents.

*Q: There is that much need to escape?*

C: We hesitate to say need although many mental escapees will say yes. Desire fueled by motivation.

*Q: What about physical addiction and withdrawal symptoms?*

C: These feed a continuance of consumption, of course. The body struggles then adjusts to the effects. Reversal of the adjustment is equally challenging however awareness is much greater, absent the mental distortion. This is the greatest challenge, because the source of emotions often remains, when the escapee begins to emerge from the effects of drugs, causing a greater pressure to return to them.

*Q: What treatment do you recommend for addicts who wish to stop?*

C: Human society cannot materially reduce the attraction unless the gap in life is plugged, which both cures and prevents. As the question asks for cures, solutions to stop addiction yet allow freedom, we suggest belonging. The addicted person must discover a place where s/he is accepted and belongs. This is achieved well during what humans have called drug rehabilitation however once the former addict exits this process, does a sense of belonging remain or depart? This is the challenge, to find personal peace through acceptance. To feel accepted, then return acceptance to others who have felt outcast in some or several ways.

*Q: What about drug laws? Should they be changed?*

C: We recommend removal of most of them. Consumption would not increase if drugs now deemed illegal were commercially available to consumers. Crime would fall along with prices, and distribution related crime would evaporate.

*Q: Which drug laws should be retained?*

C: Restrictions on sale to minors.

*Q: What about the gazillion prescription required drugs already sold?*

C: These should become generally available along with now prohibited substances.

*Q: There would not be an increase in consumption or abuse?*

C: No, simple removal of prohibitions would lower use and abuse slightly. The greater reduction of substance abuse to the point where mental capacities are not affected, will occur when a generally improved sense of belonging and society flourish anew.

*Q: This is coming?*

C: And well inside the lives of nearly all of you reading these words.

*Q: Esteemed Committee, thank you.*

C: Welcome you are as grateful we feel at being asked, be well one and all.