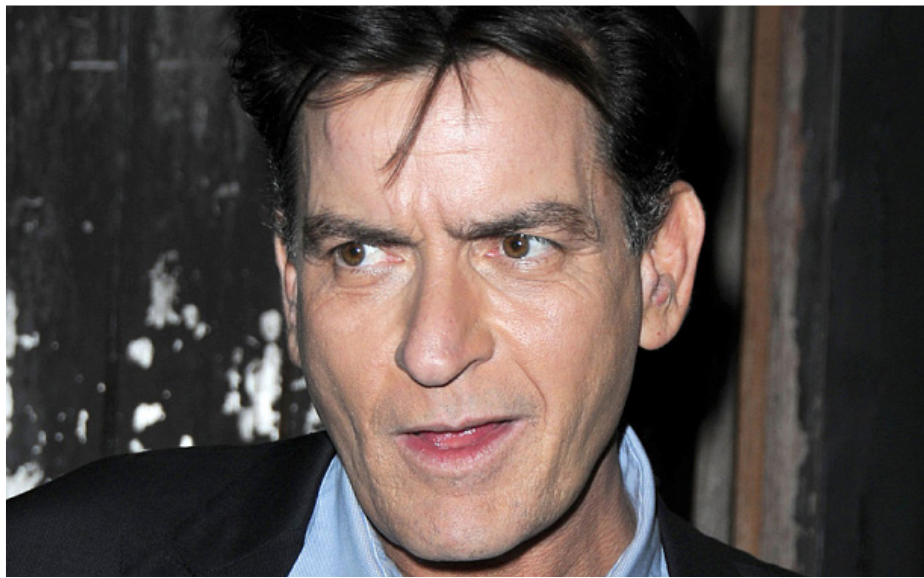


# Common Drug Users: The Realities and Misconceptions

# Cocaine

Cocaine appeals to individuals with obligations and careers because of its short-lasting effects compare to most other drugs. Much of the appeal comes from the social connotations of using cocaine; it is seen as luxurious and cool while also providing a rush and euphoric sensations. Cocaine also fits in with party culture and the rock 'n roll scene that began in the 80s. Heavy users have admitted to noticing impairments in their social lives, mainly as a result of friendly concern. If trying to be productive rather than energized, some of the same individuals opt to use amphetamines instead because they find it better for maintaining concentration.

## Misconception: Rich People and Celebrities



### Reality:

The misconception isn't as far off the mark as for other drugs. For the wealthy the use of cocaine is frequent and usually correlated with a disorganized personality or low conscientiousness. On the flip side, although cocaine is expensive it is also fairly common for those living below the poverty line to use it because of their stressful living conditions. Unlike with the rich however, cocaine use among the lower class is has no relation to personality.





# Marijuana

Marijuana has always had strong connections with immigrants in the United States, having been attributed to Mexicans after 'introducing it' to the United States during the twentieth century. Stoner culture is very prevalent across the United States and splits the polls politically. Today, medical professionals are studying the medical uses of cannabinoids found in marijuana, increasing the likelihood of federal legalization or decriminalization. Having said that, the media still portrays users of marijuana in a specific but not always accurate light.

## Misconception: Stoners and Jobless People



Marijuana has one of the most diverse demographics of any drug because of its appeal to people of all walks of life. All social classes are represented well among users, along with many ethnicities and both men & women. Especially today, age is also losing its significance as a factor among users since the perception around marijuana is changing.





# Crack



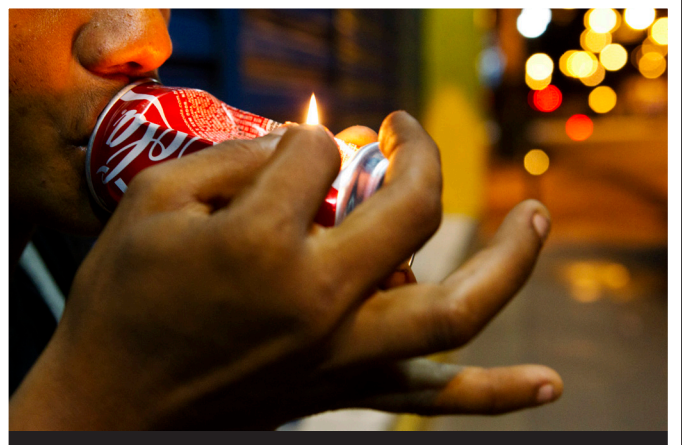
While crack use peaked in 1996, in a 2004 study there were about the same amount of users as there were in 1988. Contrary to popular belief, crack use is actually extremely low in the U.S. and is overshadowed by most other drugs. Much of the misconception comes from the prevalent use of cocaine. In the 2004 study, researchers found that of the 7.9% of Americans who were drug users, only 2.4% of them used crack. Even though 80% of those arrested for crack related crimes are black, whites make up 60% of crack users, suggesting institutionalized racism regarding criminalization. Crack carries a strong stigma as a 'hard drug', producing concern around their use and suggesting reservation for impoverished individuals with extreme addictions.

## Misconception: Crack Heads = Black Men



## Reality:

In the U.S. White people account for over 60% of crack users while Black people make up the second largest majority at 30%. Overall men constitute 70% of all crack users in the U.S.





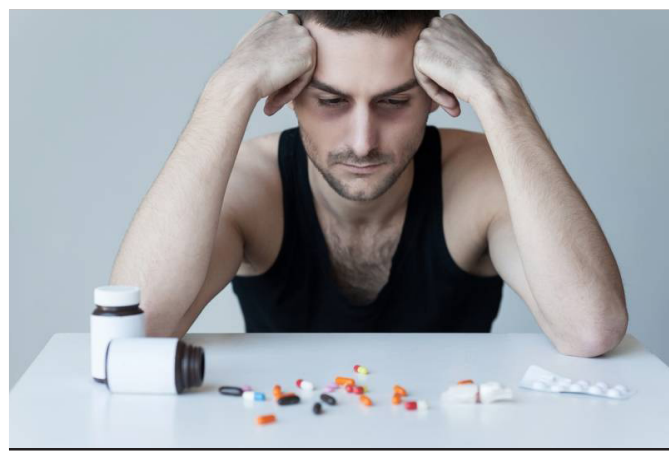
# Heroin

The misconception about Heroin addicts comes from the demographic of Heroin users in the 1960's and 1970's, comprised mainly of inner city minorities associated with the Jazz scene. Today however, the demographics of abusers have changed to include mostly white men and women in their late 20s living in suburban neighborhoods and rural areas, though it remains a problem for men in low-income urban environments. In the past heroin users were also predominantly male (80% in the 1960s), but today the gender distribution of users is practically equal. The average age of users has also increased from 16 during the 1960s to 23 in 2010. Many users today include people attempting to self-medicate for pain after becoming addicted to other prescription pain medications, opioids and amphetamines.

## Misconception: Junkies and Musicians



Men and women currently make up roughly the same proportion of heroin users, although the primary demographic is impoverished individuals from non-urban neighborhoods.





# Ecstasy

Even though MDMA has been associated historically with rave culture and young adults in homosexual communities, today the user profile is changing. Within the past decade the population has spread in urban locations beyond predominantly white adolescents to a vast range of ethnic groups tracing back to young adults in their 20's and 30's. The harmful longterm affects on users' brains are of a large concern to the population ad deters some drug users from taking MDMA.

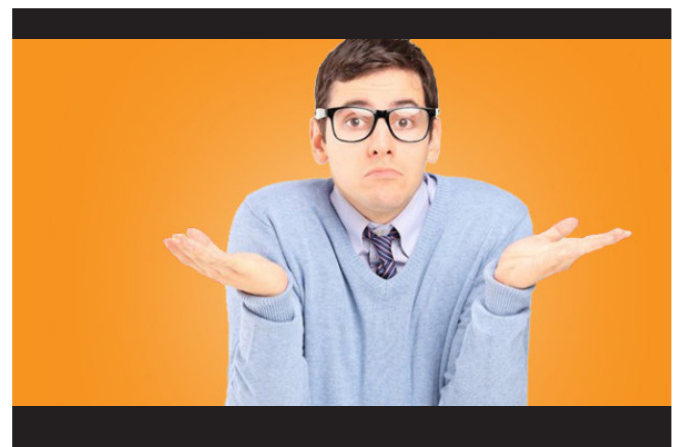
## Misconception: Teens and Gay Communities



## Reality:

While rave culture continues to support the use of MDMA, today people are more conscious of its harmful affects, although this did not affect a spike in users among teens during the late 2000s. MDMA is now used among a broad range of people from middle and upper class backgrounds.

One concern today is that users are not always sure whether or not their ecstasy has additional additives.





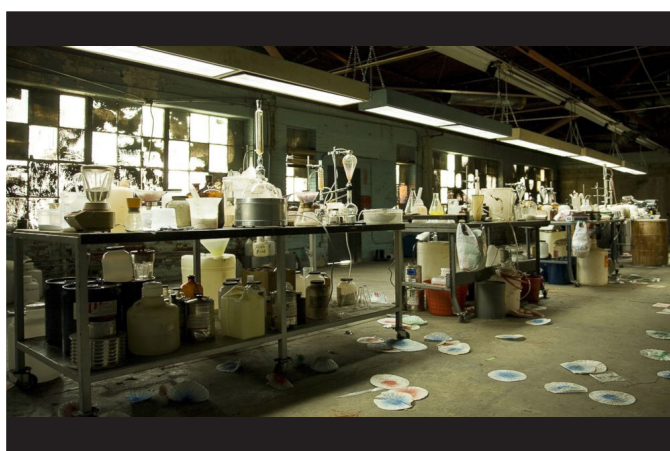
# Meth

Meth is almost always portrayed by the media as a harmful drug for both users and those around them. A survey from 2005 estimated that 10 and 12 million Americans have used meth at least once in their lifetime, representing nearly 5% of the population. Many users concede that they do Meth for the euphoric high, along with the feelings of power it comes along with. Others say they enjoy it for the sexual experience it provides or in order to overcome social anxiety, feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem.

## Misconception: Dangerous Poor People



Approximately 76% of meth users are Caucasian, compare to the 50% of the population they comprise for all other drug use in the U.S. females are also most more likely to use meth than any other drugs, making up 46% of users compare to comprising 25% of the population of users for all other drugs. Many meth users are also polydrug users of marijuana, cocaine and alcohol. In 2012 the average age of a Meth user was 19.7 years old although the average has risen slightly since then.



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