

Use of psychedelic drugs remains prevalent in the US

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An article published in F1000Research, and approved for indexing in PubMed and other major bibliographical databases, estimates that there were approximately 32 million users of psychedelic drugs in the United States in 2010.

In their article "Over 30 million psychedelic users in the United States", Teri S Krebs and Pål-Ørjan Johansen from the Department of Neuroscience at Norwegian University of Science and Technology, use data from a randomly-selected sample of over 57,000 individuals surveyed for the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), to estimate [lifetime prevalence](#) of psychedelic use. The authors estimate that approximately 32 million people have used LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), psilocybin ("magic mushrooms"), or mescaline (peyote and other cacti) in their lifetime. This includes 17% of US adults aged 21 to 64 years. The highest rate of psychedelic use was in the 30 to 34 age group, with an overall rate of 20%, or 26% of males and 15% of females.

"Lifetime use of psychedelics doesn't seem to have changed much since the sixties - psychedelics continue to be widely used in the US and worldwide," the researchers say.

The mechanisms of action, subjective effects, and risk profile of the classical serotonergic psychedelics, distinguish them from other drugs, the authors wrote.

"Psychedelics are different from other drugs, in that they are not known to be physically harmful or cause addiction or compulsive use. Experts agree that psychedelics are less harmful than alcohol and most other [recreational drugs](#), although psychedelics can elicit anxiety and confusion during the [drug](#) effects", the researchers say.

The authors estimated that [older adults](#) were more likely to have used LSD and mescaline, whereas younger adults were more likely to have used "magic mushrooms". In addition, the authors note that use of "[magic mushrooms](#)" is known to have increased since the 1970s.

"People often report mystical experiences as a major reason for using psychedelics. Archaeological evidence shows that psychedelic plants have been used in the Americas for over 5000 years, and currently around 300,000 people in the US enjoy a recognized religious freedom right to use psychedelics." Krebs and Johansen said.

More information: Over 30 million psychedelic users in the United States [v1; ref status: indexed, [f1000r.es/w8](#)] F1000Research 2013, 2:98 ([doi: 10.12688/f1000research.2-98.v1](#))

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