



# Fentanyl and the Drug Crisis

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Chief of Staff

**SAM** Smart Approaches to Marijuana  
preventing another big tobacco

Smart Approaches to Marijuana  
the Foundation for Drug Policy Solutions

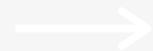
# What is SAM?

A 501(c)(3) non-profit, educational organization funded by volunteers and private organizations

## Our Mission:

**EDUCATE CITIZENS** on the science of marijuana

Promote **HEALTH-FIRST, SMART POLICIES** and attitudes that decrease marijuana use and its consequences



**SAM promotes  
an evidence-  
based  
approach to  
marijuana  
policy that  
prioritizes  
public health**

## **NON-PARTISAN BUT HIGH-PROFILE**

founded by former Democratic Congressman Patrick Kennedy and leading Republican pundit David Frum

## **SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD**

composed of more than 12 leading researchers, professors, and public health/legal experts

## **HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PRESS MENTIONS**

including major media outlets such as *The New York Times*, NBC News, Slate, BBC News, and FoxNews

# Vision



**A culture of prevention,  
a climate of recovery**

**We envision a world in which  
children and families thrive,  
substance use is prevented, and  
there is rapid access to quality  
treatment and meaningful pathways  
to recovery for individuals with  
substance use disorders.**

# Pillars



## Policy

Drive science-based policies throughout all levels of government

## Research

Incorporate research results from academic papers into legislation and involve scientists in policy formulation

## Education

Educate decision-makers and the public about the impacts of drugs on society

## Advocacy

Advocate for good policies centered around each of The Foundation's focus areas

# Pillars for the Blueprint for Effective Drug Policy

**Prevention**

**Intervention and Treatment**

**Equity & Social Determinations of Health**

**International Cooperation and Supply Reduction**

**Recovery Support**

**Criminal Justice**

# Drug Problems



Vary by drug



Vary by policy objective



Are not only a “public health” problem



Have no easy answers



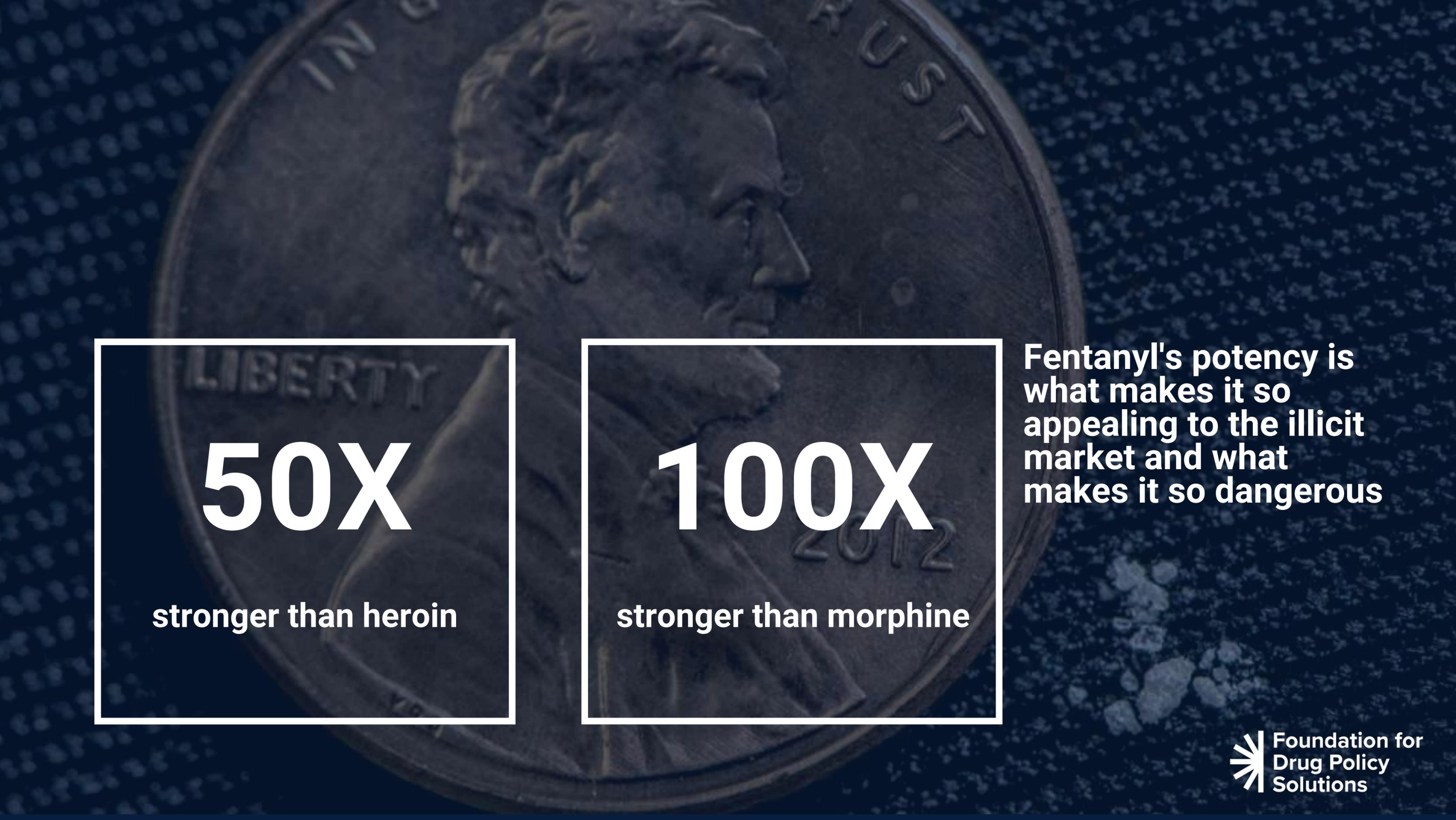
Aren't usually solved by the free market



Are not only a “law enforcement/ public safety” problem



# Fentanyl



**50X**

**stronger than heroin**

**100X**

**stronger than morphine**

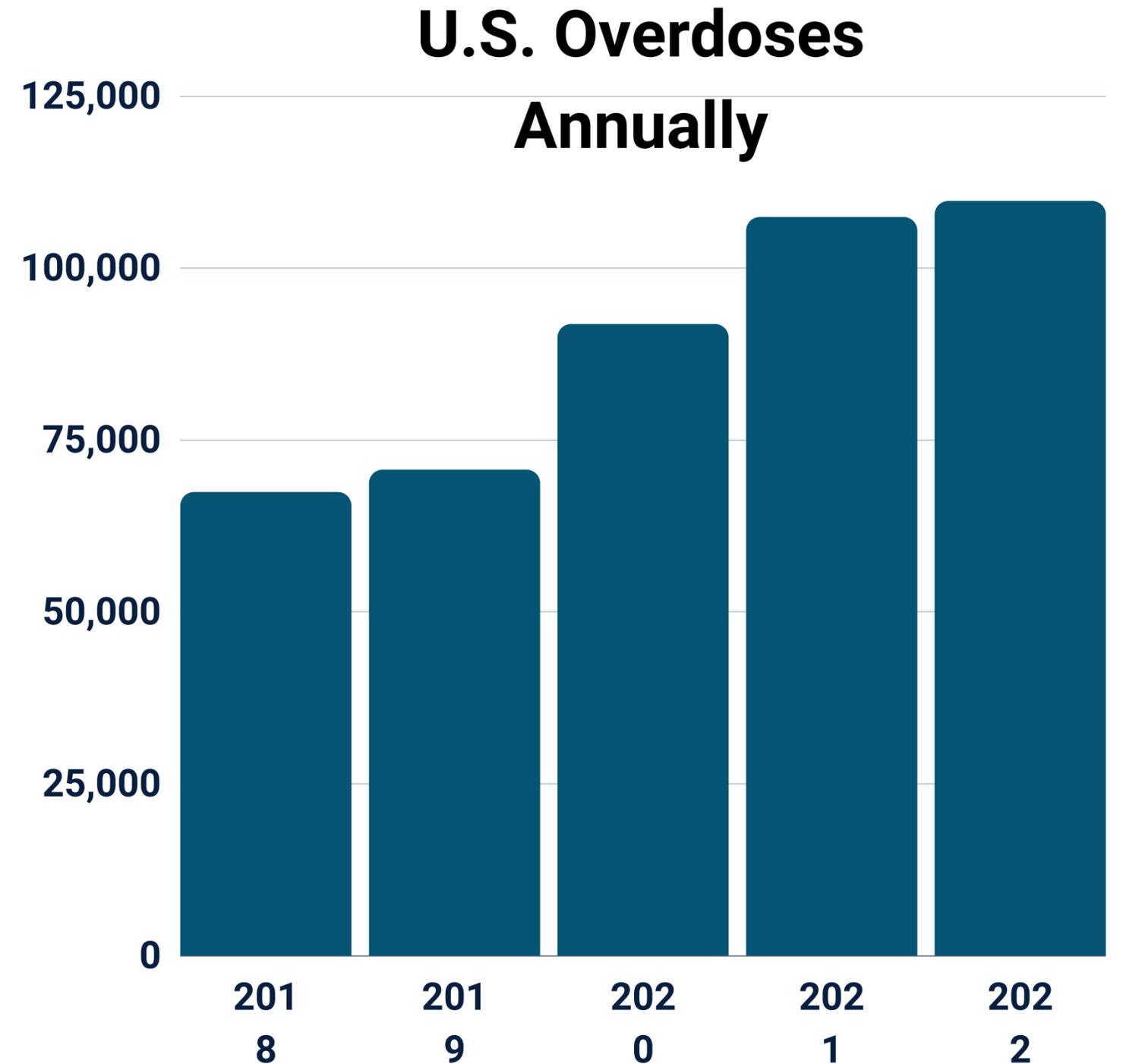
**Fentanyl's potency is what makes it so appealing to the illicit market and what makes it so dangerous**

**Overdose deaths reached a historic high in 2022, increasing more than 50% since 2019**

**109,680 overdose deaths in 2022, compared to 107,622 in 2021 and 93,655 in 2020**

**Overdoses deaths are continuing to rise but at a slower rate—may be leveling off**

**The emergence of new street drugs, like xylazine, threatens to further worsen the issue**



**Xylazine is increasingly being mixed with fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid**

**Because xylazine is not an opioid, naloxone (Narcan) cannot reverse overdoses**

**There is no FDA-approved medical use of xylazine for humans; currently not a scheduled drug**

**Has been found in 48/50 states**

**23% of fentanyl powder and 7% of fentanyl pills contained xylazine in 2022**

**DEA Administrator Anne Milgram stated, “Xylazine is making the deadliest drug threat our country has ever faced, fentanyl, even deadlier.”**

<https://www.dea.gov/alert/dea-reports-widespread-threat-fentanyl-mixed-xylazine>

**Public  
education  
and  
awareness  
on fentanyl  
is key**

**6 in 10**

**illicit pills have a  
lethal dose of  
fentanyl**

# Evidence-Based Prevention

**95%**

of people who do not  
initiate drug use by  
age 21 are unlikely  
ever do so

Especially for  
teens,  
substance  
use is related



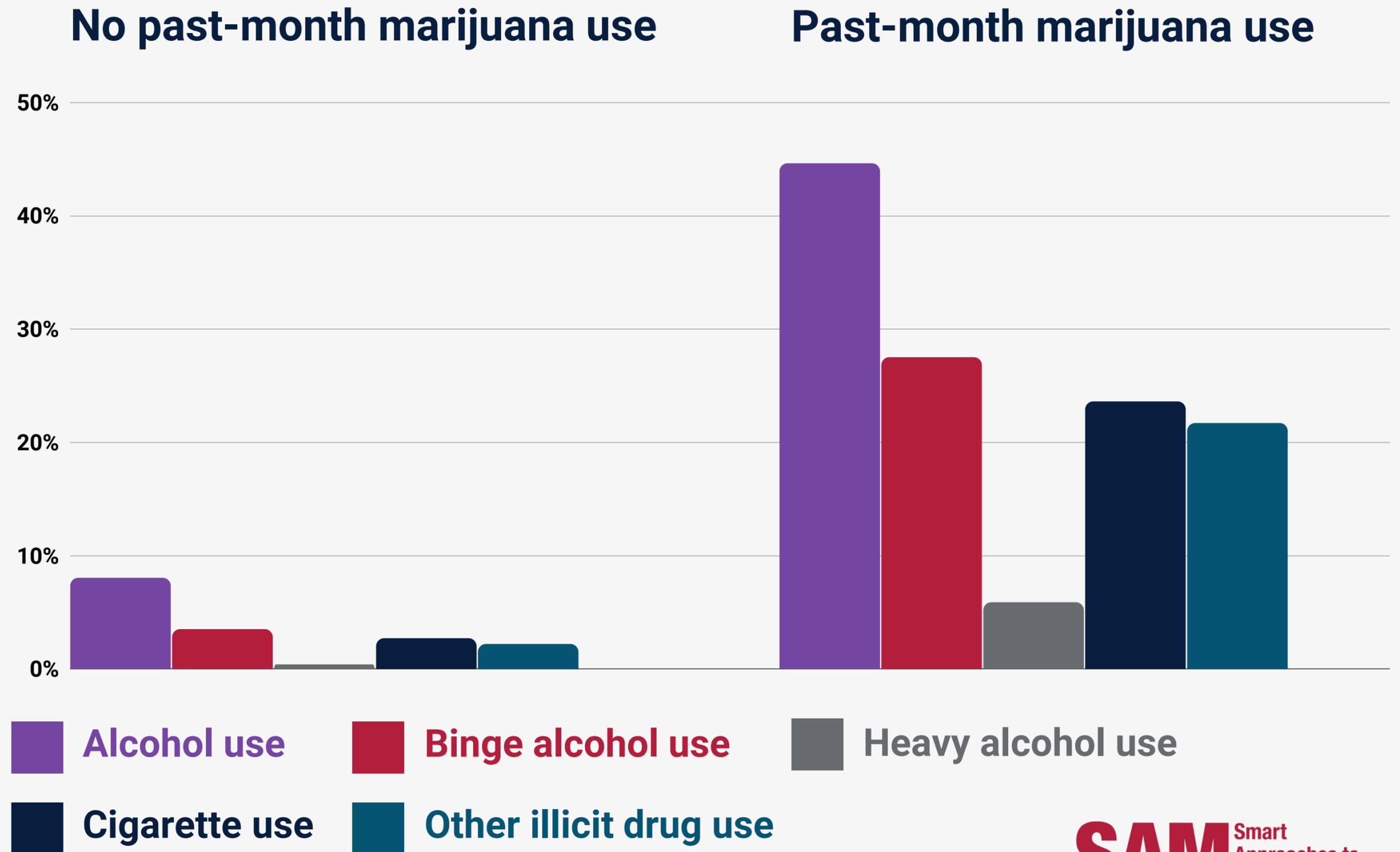
**There is a bidirectional relationship between the adolescent use of marijuana and tobacco and alcohol.**

**Those who initiate marijuana use at a young age are **more likely to use tobacco and alcohol.** And those who use tobacco or alcohol at a young age are also **more likely to later use marijuana.****

**90% of adults with a substance use disorder began smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before the age of 18.**

<https://onechoiceprevention.org/toolkit/#section-resources>

Teen marijuana use is associated with higher use of other drugs



Compared to their peers who did not use marijuana, youth aged 12-17 who used marijuana in the past month were:

**7.9X**

more likely to binge  
drink

**9.9X**

more likely to use other  
illegal drugs, including  
opioids

**8.9X**

more likely to smoke  
cigarettes



# 20X

Teens who vaped were 20 times more likely to use marijuana than teens who did not use nicotine products

# 40X

Teens who smoked and vaped were 40 times more likely to use marijuana than teens who did not use nicotine products

[HealthDay News](#)

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Compared with non-users, adolescents (12-17) who used marijuana but did not meet the criteria for Cannabis Use Disorder had:

**2-4X**

greater odds of adverse psychosocial events, including major depression, suicidal ideation, slower thoughts, difficulty concentrating, truancy, low grade point average, arrest, fighting, and aggression.

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2804450?>

# Daily users of marijuana have greater illicit drug use

**48X**

as likely to use cocaine in the last year

**25X**

as likely to use methamphetamine in the last year

**5X**

as likely to misuse opioids in the last year

**5X**

as likely to have heavy alcohol use in the last month

2020 [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#):

**Prevention,  
early  
intervention,  
and treatment  
for those who  
need it**

**We must strive to have a robust, revitalized prevention infrastructure**

**A key charge of the Blueprint Committees will be to reimagine the nation's drug prevention system ensuring it is effective, equitable, and efficient in its delivery.**

**We need all sectors of society to work towards stopping drug use before it starts—that means parents, family members, coaches, teachers, and the faith community**



**\$1**

**spent on  
treatment**

**\$12**

**saved in  
social costs**

**Enforcement's  
primary role  
should be to  
protect public  
safety**

**Can do this through keeping prices of  
illegal drugs high, not incentivizing drug  
use, and punishing bad actors**

**Utilize effective interventions along the  
full justice continuum**

**Utilize drug courts and community  
correction programs**

**Prioritize community-based services that  
address individual needs, risks, and  
responsibility**