



Illicit Drug Use Among Adjudicated Offenders: An Intersectional Analysis of Sex- and Race-Related Differences

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BACKGROUND

Substance abuse is widely reported among justice-involved youth. Epidemiological data reveal a strong correlation between substance use and (re)offending, with distinct patterns of drug and alcohol use varying by race/ethnicity and sex.

There is a lack of nationally representative, generalizable data. As a result, current research has yet to offer a comprehensive overview of the substance use characteristics of juvenile offenders.

This study addresses the gap in the substance abuse-offending literature. Findings illustrate the need for a drug-specific, intersectional approach to substance use prevention.

Objectives: (1) To determine the composition of illicit drug use among juvenile offenders, (2) to identify patterns of drug use among demographic subgroups, and (3) to estimate the prevalence of SUD and examine interaction effects between sex and race/ethnicity.

DATA & METHODS

Data Set:

National Survey of Youth in Custody, 2018 (NSYC-3)

- Self-report data collected as part of NSYC-3.

Sample: all adjudicated youths who participated in the NSYC-3-core survey and completed the drug use and drug abuse/dependence survey items (n = 5,024).

Methods:

- Multivariate cross-tabulations, providing descriptive characteristics for 16 drug types. Chi-square tests were used to evaluate sex- and race-related differences
- (3) *We plan to fit a series of Poisson regression models to estimate the individual and conjoined effects of sex and race/ethnicity on SUD severity.*

FINDINGS

Drug Use Composition:

Cannabis, prescription painkillers, anti-anxiety medications, and cough syrup were the most frequently reported substances used across all groups.

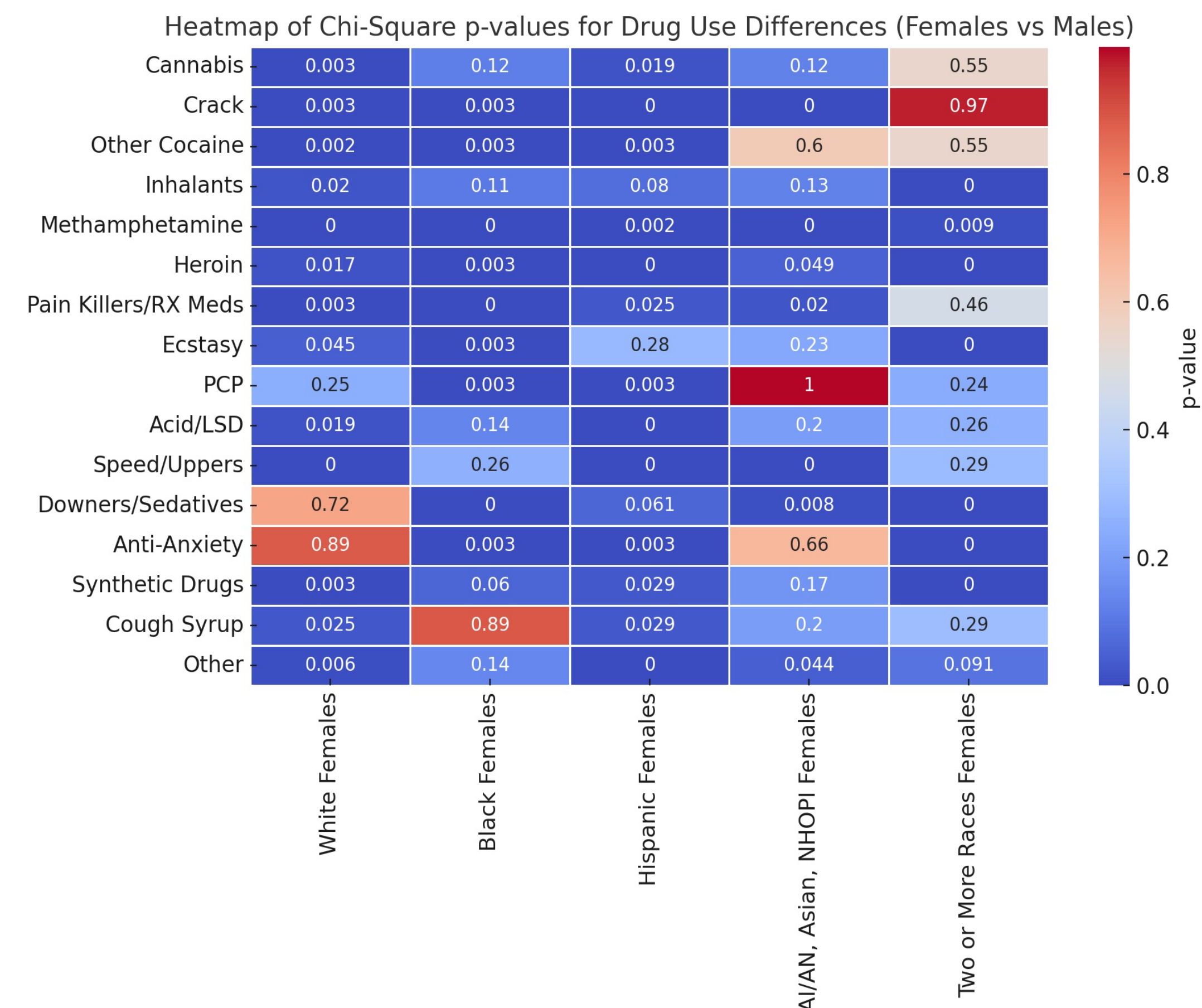
FINDINGS

Drug Use Patterns:

Race differences: White and Hispanic youth reported higher levels of drug use compared to other racial groups.

Sex differences: Females reported higher levels of drug use than males.

Sex-Race/Ethnicity differences: Hispanic females had the highest levels of drug use among all subgroups, while Black males and females reported the lowest levels.



CONCLUSIONS

Substance use disparities between males and females within racial/ethnic groups show that both the types and levels of drug use vary across demographic lines. However, these patterns are not generalizable to either sex, race, or ethnicity. For example, White and Hispanic females report higher levels of hard drug use (e.g., crack, cocaine, methamphetamine) compared to all other subgroups.

Implications:

Substance use prevention

Research has demonstrated that reductions in substance use lower the likelihood of reoffending (Chassin et al. 2016). Reliable data on drug use is essential for identifying the most effective methods of intervention and treatment for youths in custody.

References

1. Chassin, Mansion, Nichter, and Pandika. 2016. "Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders as Risk Factors for Juvenile Offending." <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/14643-013>
2. U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2022. *National Survey of Youth in Custody, 2018*. Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.