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## Substance Abuse in Georgia

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## Substance Abuse in Georgia

The Burruss Institute of Public Policy and Research  
Kennesaw State University

### *Introduction*

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In order to create a snapshot of substance use and abuse in Georgia, the Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research requested access to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted on behalf of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a unit of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). SAMHSA would not provide access to the raw data; instead, the Institute was given a series of tables with estimates of the average annual number of users of various substances among Georgians ages 12 and older between the years 2002 and 2008. SAMHSA also provided estimates of the percentages of members of various demographic subgroups who use each of the substances included in the survey.

### *Substance Abuse in Georgia*

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The substances examined include:

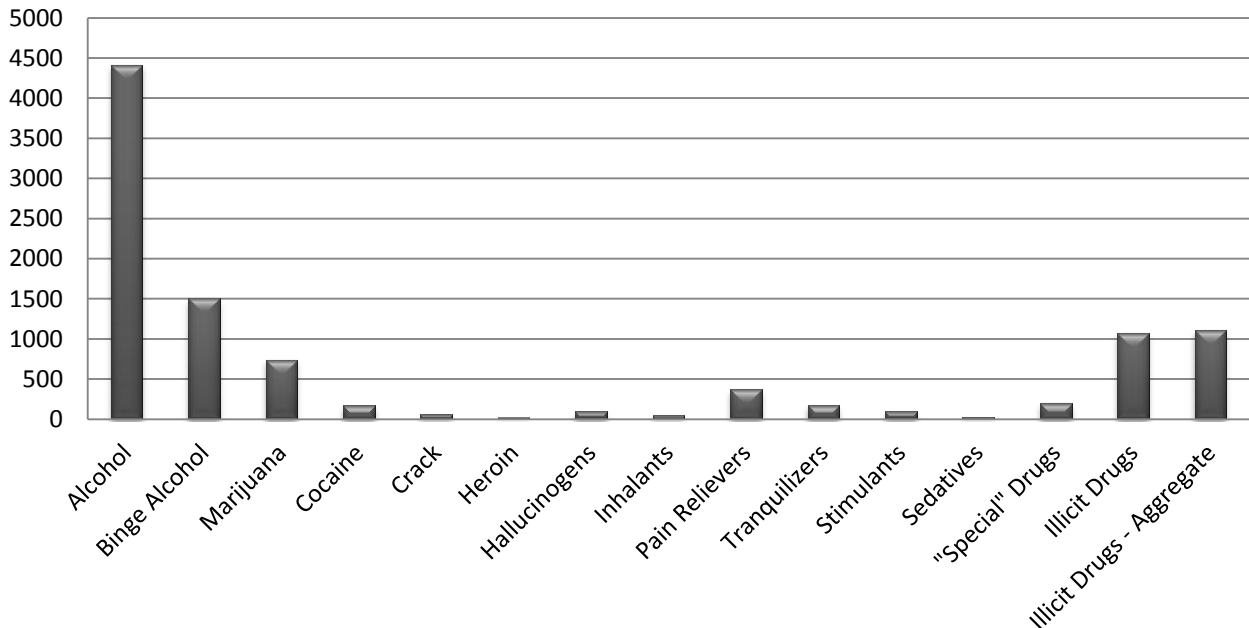
- Alcohol
- Binge drinking, defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 1 day out of the previous 30 days
- Marijuana
- Cocaine (all forms)
- Crack cocaine
- Heroin
- Hallucinogens
- Inhalants
- Pain Relievers
- Tranquilizers
- Stimulants
- Sedatives
- “Special drugs” including GBH, Adderall, Ambien, non-prescription cold and cough medicines, ketamine, DMT, AMT or Foxy, and Salvia divinorum
- “Illicit drugs,” including marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or prescription-type psychotherapeutics used non-medically
- “Illicit drugs” (aggregate) which includes the drugs listed in the previous item and those listed under “special drugs.” The data for this category is limited to 2006-2008

The following information is a summary of estimated use of these various substances by Georgians as a whole, and by specific demographic subgroups.

## Overall Substance Use in Georgia

**Figure 1** provides a visual summary of the estimated average number of Georgians ages 12 and older who used a particular substance in any given year during the study period (2002-2008).

**FIGURE 1**  
**Substance Abuse In Georgia**  
**Estimated Annual Average Number of Users, 2002- 2008**  
**(in thousands)**



- It is estimated that about 4.4 million Georgians consumed alcohol in any given year between 2002 and 2008
- An average of 1.5 million Georgians engaged in “binge drinking” each year
- 739,000 Georgians used marijuana each year
- Less than one-half million Georgians (374,000) abused pain relievers each year during this period
- 199,000 used “special drugs” during any given year covered by the study
- An average of 173,000 Georgians abused tranquilizers each year
- An average of 167,000 ingested cocaine in any given year
- Slightly over one million Georgians abused at least one of the “illicit drugs” annually, and, on average, 1.1 million abused illicit drugs, including “special drugs”
- Fewer than 100,000 Georgians abused each of the other substances in any given year

## *Substance Abuse by Age Group*

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SAMSHA provided rates of usage of these substances among three different age groups: youths 12-17, young adults ages 18 – 25, and adults ages 26 and older. **Figure 2** provides a summary of these results.

For youth ages 12 to 17, in any given year:

- Almost three out of every ten (29.5%) used alcohol
- Almost one-in-five (18.8%) used at least one of the illicit drugs; about the same number (19.1%) used illicit drugs, including the “special drugs”
- 12.1% used marijuana
- 7.9% engaged in “binge drinking”
- 6.6% abused pain relievers
- 3.9% abused inhalants (a significantly higher rate when compared to other age groups)

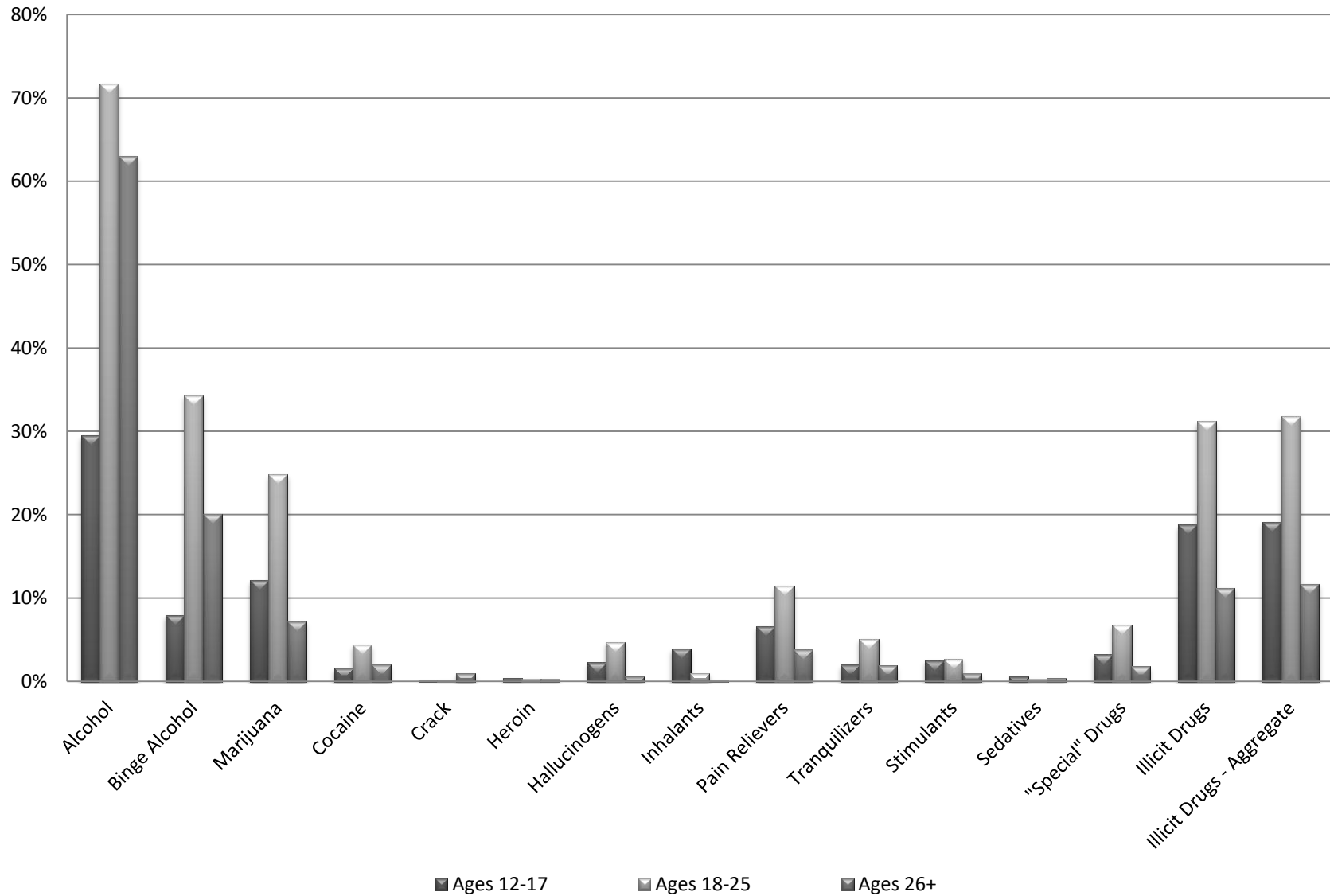
For young adults ages 18 to 25, in any given year:

- Almost three-fourths (71.7%) used alcohol and one-third (34.3%) engaged in “binge drinking”
- One-fourth (24.8%) experimented with marijuana
- Almost one-third (31.2%) abused at least one of the illicit drugs and/or the “special drugs” (31.8%)
- Slightly more than one in ten (11.4%) abused pain relievers
- About one in twenty used hallucinogens (4.7%) or cocaine (4.4%)

Among adults ages 26 or older, in any given year:

- Almost two-thirds (63%) used alcohol, and one-fifth (20%) engaged in “binge drinking”
- Approximately one-in-ten (11%) abused any of the illicit drugs
- 7% used marijuana, while 2% used cocaine

**FIGURE 2**  
**Substance Abuse in Georgia**  
**Estimated Average Annual Percentage of Users, 2002-2008**  
**By Age Group\***  
(\* Pct in each category who use given substance)



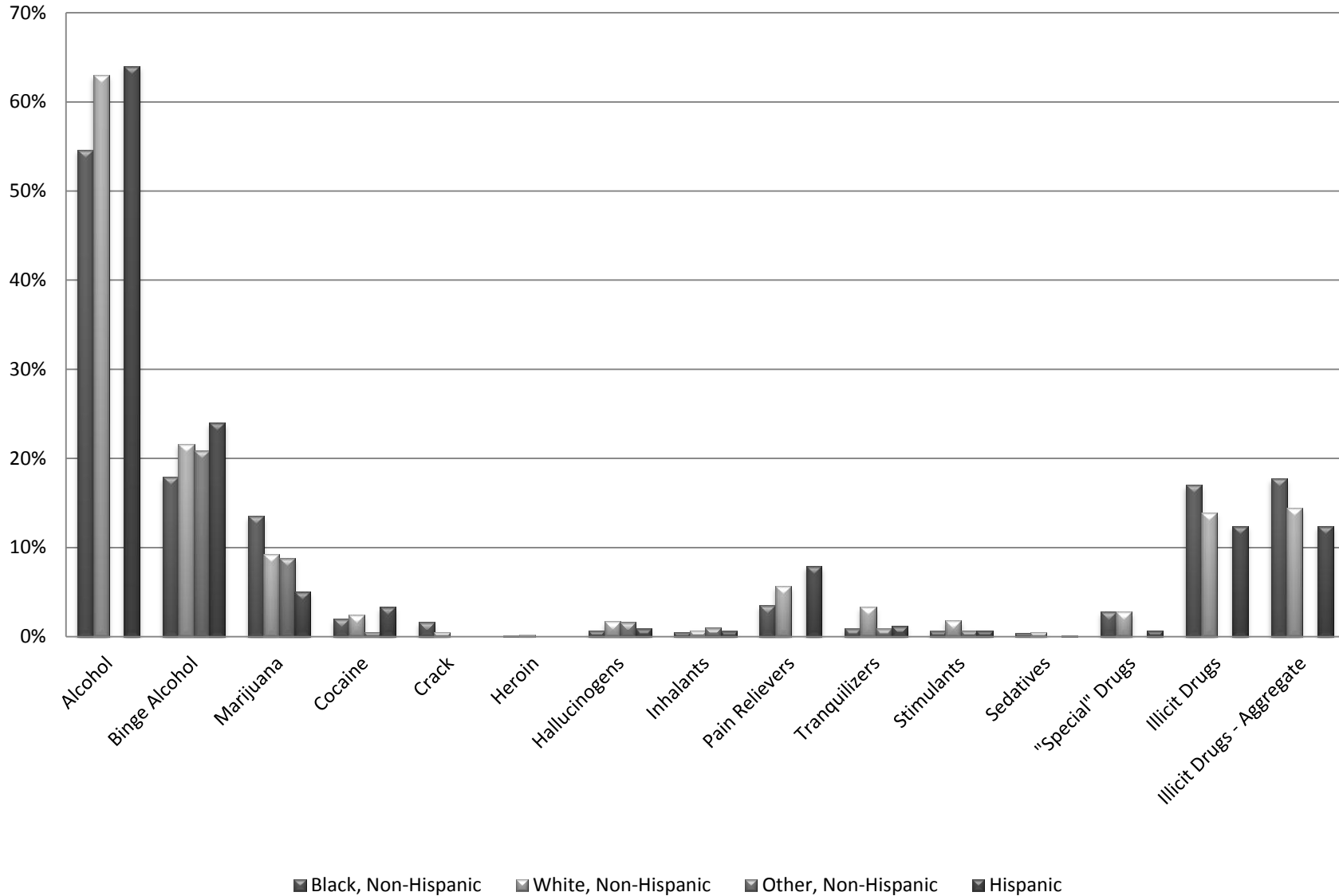
## ***Substance Abuse by Race/Ethnicity***

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SAMSHA provided rates of usage of these substances among four different race/ethnic groups: white non-Hispanics, black non-Hispanics, other non-Hispanics, and Hispanics. **Figure 3** provides a summary of these results.

- A majority of blacks (54.6%), whites (63%) and Hispanics (64%) drank alcohol in any given year during this period
- Approximately one-in-five Georgians engaged in “binge drinking” in any given year; Hispanics were slightly more likely to engage in this behavior than blacks (24% to 17.9%, respectively)
- Blacks (17%) were slightly more likely than whites (13.9%) or Hispanics (12.4%) to have used at least one of the illicit drugs
- In terms of specific drug use, blacks (13.5%) were more likely to have used marijuana than were whites (9.2%) or Hispanics (5%)
- Hispanics were significantly more likely than blacks to have abused pain relievers (7.9% to 3.5%, respectively)

**FIGURE 3**  
**Substance Abuse in Georgia**  
**Estimated Average Annual Percentage of Users, 2002 - 2008**  
**By Ethnicity\***  
 (\* Pct in each category who use given substance)



## *Substance Abuse by Income*

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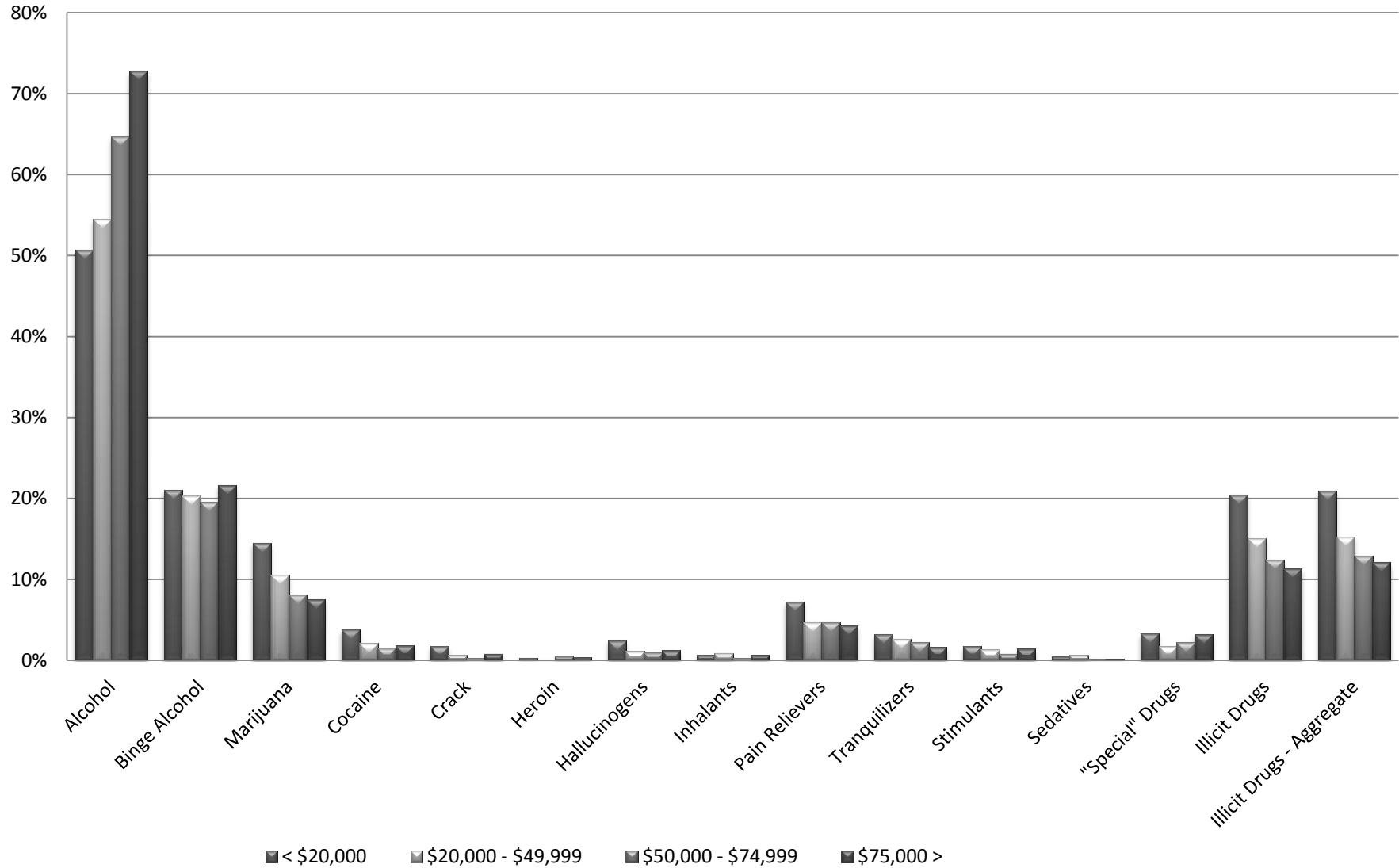
SAMSHA provided rates of usage of these substances several different income groups.

*Figure 4* provides a summary of these results.

- While it is estimated that a majority of Georgians in all four income groups drank alcohol in any given year during the period, the likelihood of consuming alcohol increased with a person's income. Almost three-fourths (72.8%) of all Georgians with incomes over \$75,000 drank alcohol in any given year compared to "just" 50.7% of those with incomes under \$20,000;
- The rate of "binge drinking" during this period was approximately 20% of all Georgians; the rates across different income levels were very similar to one another
- The data suggests that persons with incomes under \$20,000 were more likely to have abused illicit drugs, and that the likelihood of usage declines as income increases. One-fifth (20.4%) of Georgians with incomes under \$20,000 in any given year used at least one of the illicit drugs compared to 11.3% of those with incomes over \$75,000
- Twice as many Georgians with incomes under \$20,000 used marijuana (14.5%) compared to those with incomes over \$75,000 (7.5%)



**FIGURE 4**  
**Substance Abuse in Georgia**  
**Estimated Average Annual Percentage of Users, 2002-2008**  
**By Income Level\***  
 (\* Pct in each category who use given substance)



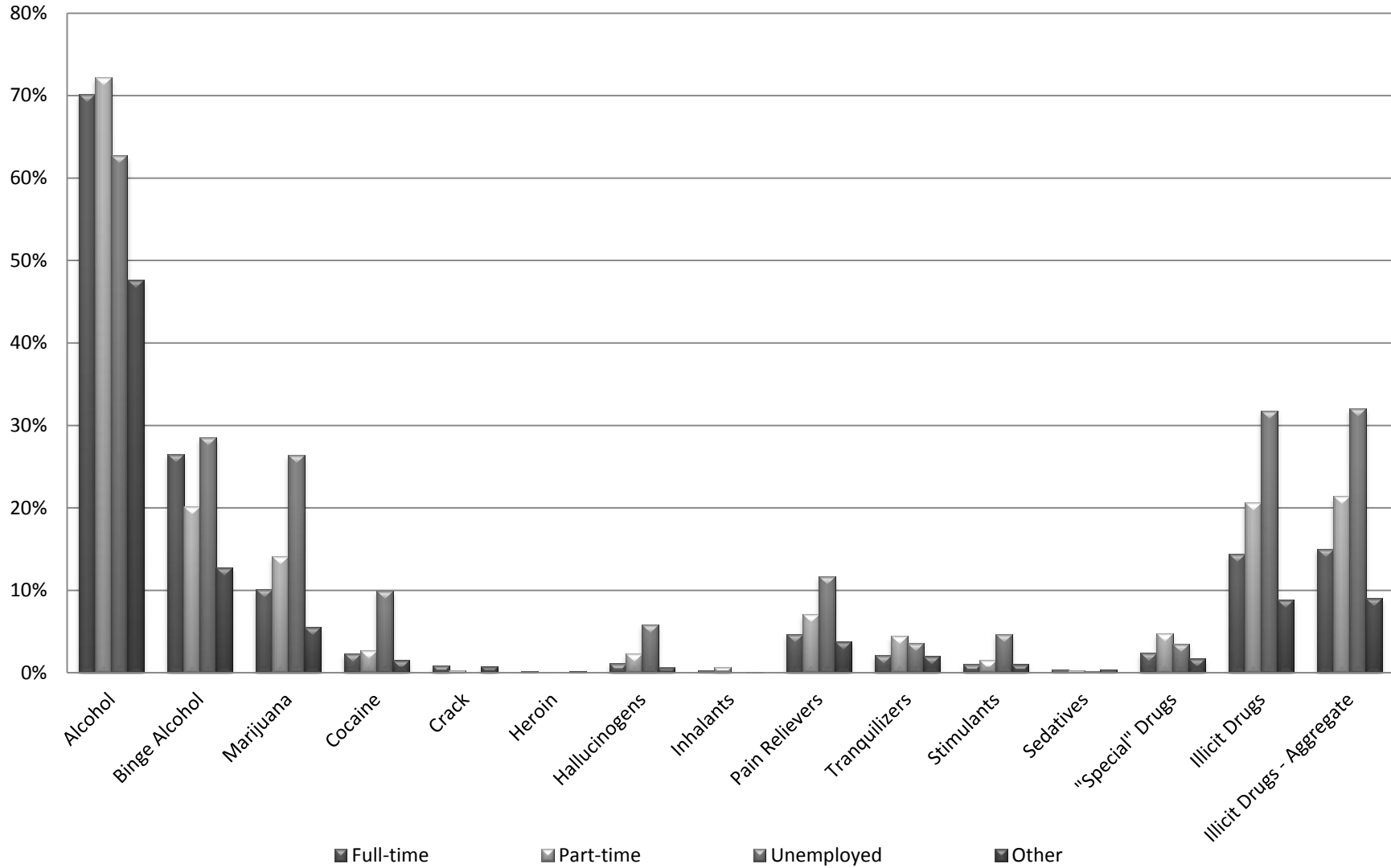
## *Substance Abuse by Employment Status*

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SAMSHA provided rates of usage of these substances for individuals depending on their employment status. *Figure 5* provides a summary of these results.

- In an average year - during 2002-2008 - almost three fourths of those who were employed full-time or part-time drank alcohol (70.2% and 72.2%, respectively). People who were unemployed or fell into the “other” category were somewhat less likely to have used alcohol (62.7% and 47.6%, respectively)
- Full-time workers (26.5%) and the unemployed (28.5%) were somewhat more likely to engage in “binge drinking” than were part-time workers (20.2%) or others (12.7%)
- The data suggests that unemployed Georgians were more likely to have abused at least one of the illicit drugs, including the “special” drugs. Almost one-third (31.7%) of the unemployed abused illicit drugs in any given year during this period, which is significantly high compared to 20.6% of the part-time workers, 14.4% of full-time workers and 8.8% of other Georgians.
- Specifically, unemployed workers were significantly more likely (26.4%) to have used marijuana during this period than were other Georgians. They also were more likely to abuse cocaine (9.9%), hallucinogens (5.8%), pain relievers (11.7%) and stimulants (4.7%) than were other Georgians

**FIGURE 5**  
**Substance Abuse in Georgia**  
**Estimated Average Annual Percentage of Users, 2002 - 2008**  
**By Employment Status\***  
 (\* Pct in each category who use given substance)



## ***Substance Abuse by Recipients of Public Assistance***

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SAMSHA provided rates of usage of these substances for individuals depending on whether or not they received public assistance. **Figure 6** provides a summary of these results.

- During this period, Georgians who received public assistance were significantly less likely to have used alcohol than were those who did not receive public assistance (62.4% to 49.8%, respectively). In contrast, those on public assistance were only slightly more likely to engage in “binge drinking” (21% to 18.6%)
- Georgians who received public assistance were slightly less likely to abuse illicit drugs (18.8% to 14.4%), marijuana (13.1% to 9.6%), cocaine (3.3% to 2.1%), crack (2.4% to 0.5%), and pain relievers (7.3% to 4.7%)

**FIGURE 6**  
**Substance Abuse in Georgia**  
**Estimated Average Annual Percentage of Users, 2002 - 2008**  
**By Whether or Not Person Receives Public Assistance\***  
**(\* Pct in each category who use given substance)**

