

Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications: New Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health

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Background

- **Study covers use of OTC cold and cough medications “to get high”, based on self-report**
- **Main concern is Dextromethorphan (DXM), which is found in over 140 products**
- **In large doses, DXM can produce hallucinations and dissociative “out-of-body” experiences**
- **We ask which products were used but cannot reliably identify those that contain DXM**
- **Large doses of any OTC C/C meds can be a health risk. DXM can cause heat stroke, and other ingredients can also cause adverse reactions**

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

- **Representative nationally and in each State**
- **Civilian, noninstitutional population, age 12+**
- **Face-to-face interview, 1 hour**
- **Computer-assisted, mainly self-administered**
- **67,500 respondents each year; 3,600 in 8 large states; 900 in other states**
- **Continuous data collection**

Study Methods Using NSDUH

- **Focus on ages 12 to 25 because misuse of OTC cold and cough meds is rare among adults 26 or older (0.3% in past year)**
- **NSDUH oversamples persons aged 12 to 25**
- **Study N=44,819, from the 2006 survey**
- **Illicit drug use = any use of illegal drugs or inhalants, or nonmedical use of prescription-type psychotherapeutic drugs; OTC drugs are not included**

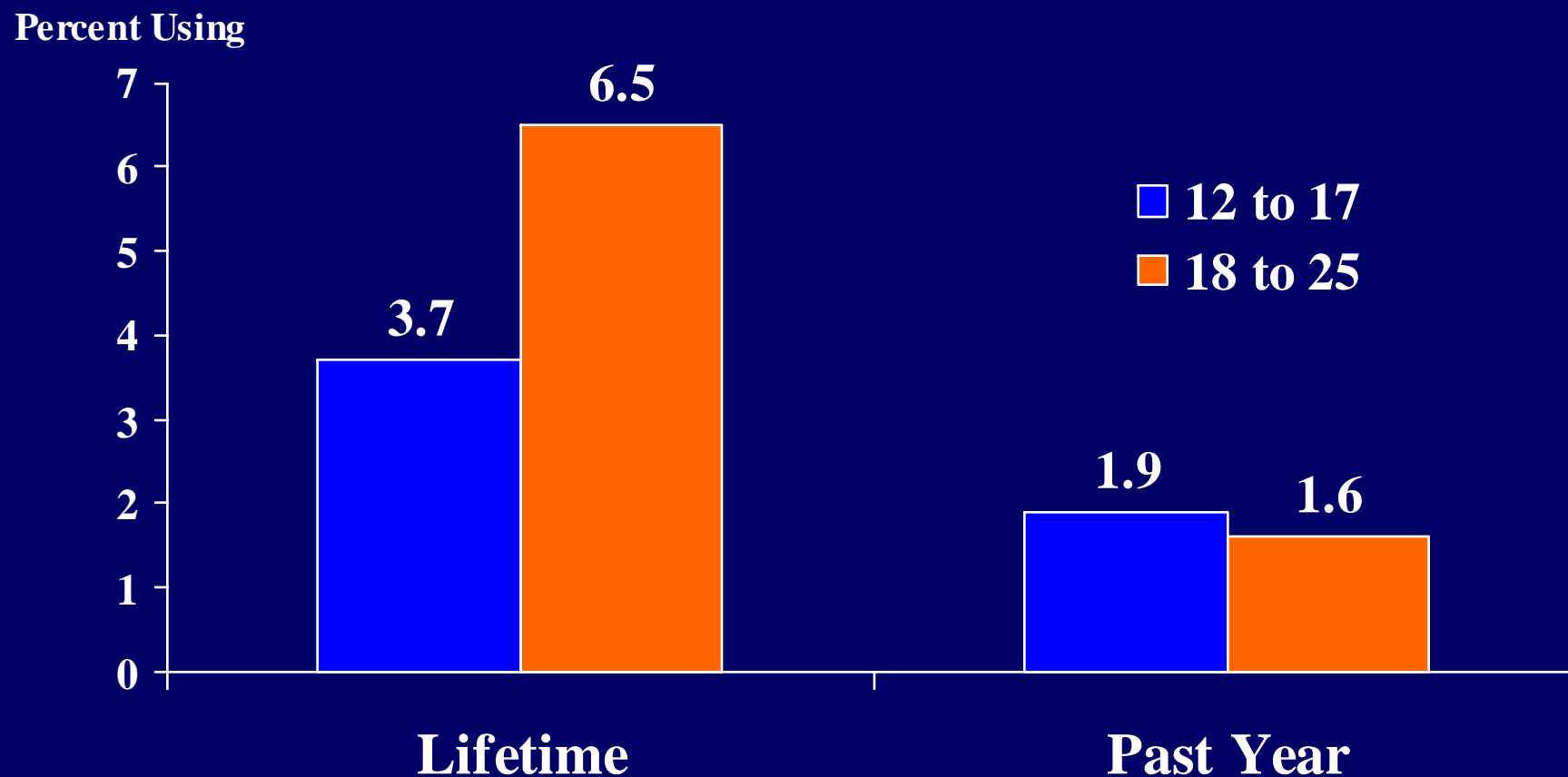
NSDUH Items on Misuse of OTC C/C Medications

- **Added questions on misuse of OTC cold and cough medications in 2006**
- **Mentions of these products in “other/specify” items on drug use had increased**
- **“Have you ever, even once, taken a non-prescription cough or cold medicine just to get high?”**
- **Follow-up items for recency and product**

Basic Prevalence of OTC C/C Med Misuse

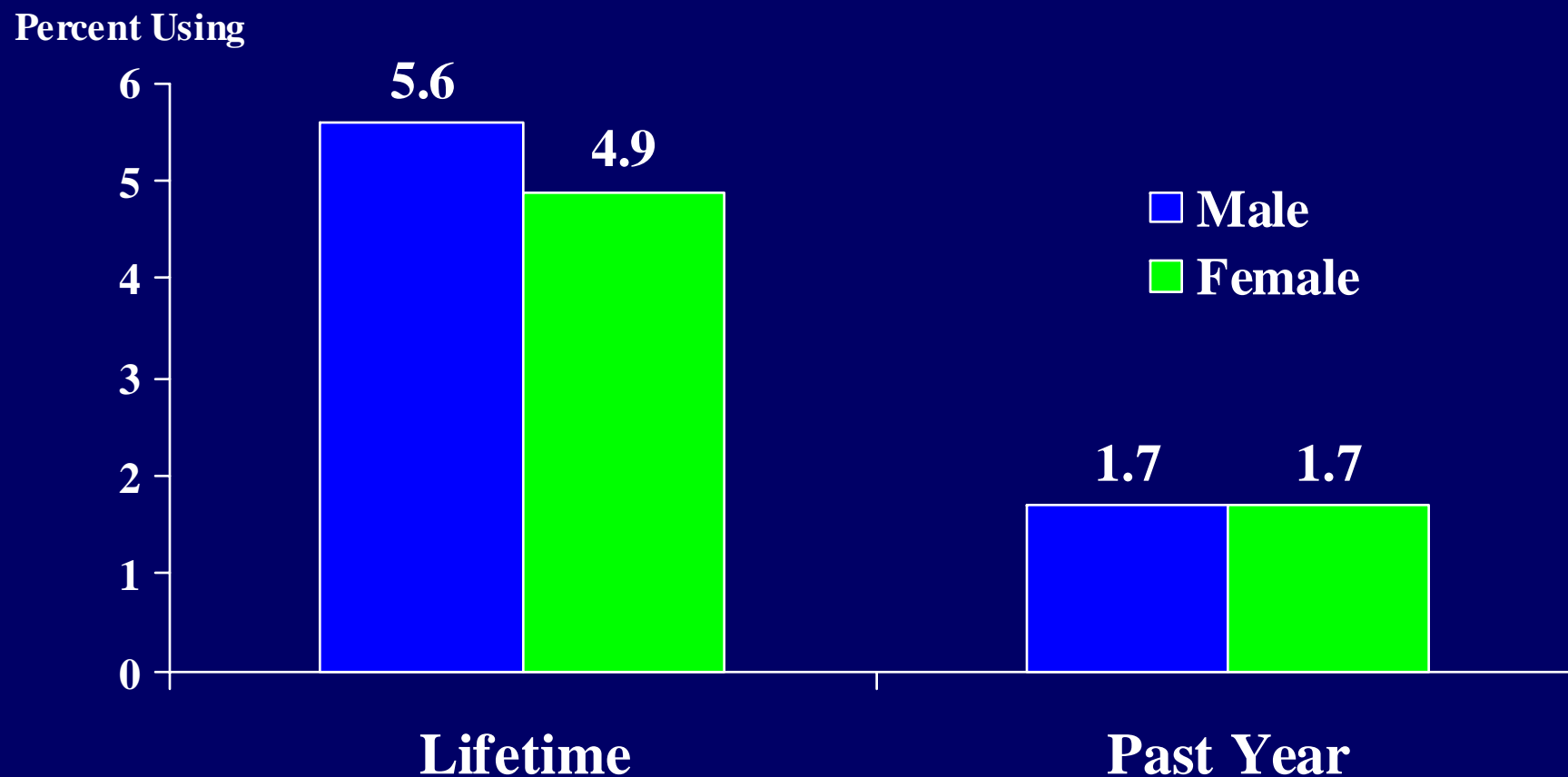
- **3.1 million lifetime users aged 12 to 25 (5.3%)**
- **1.0 million past year users aged 12 to 25 (1.7%)**

Lifetime and Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Age: 2006



Age diff.: Lifetime $p < 0.0000$; Past Year $p < 0.05$

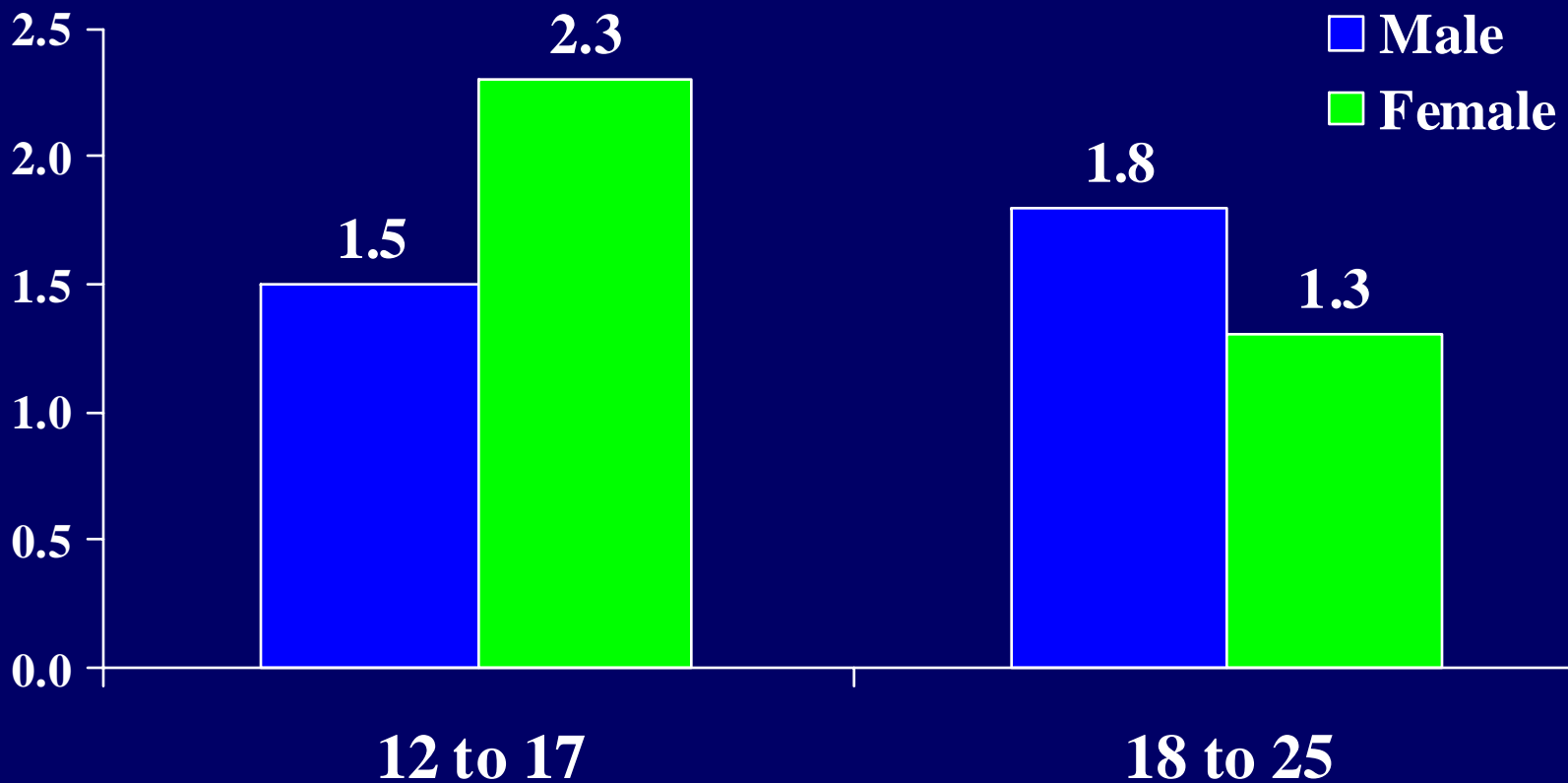
Lifetime and Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Gender: 2006



Gender diff.: Lifetime use $p < 0.05$; Past year NS.

Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Gender and Age: 2006

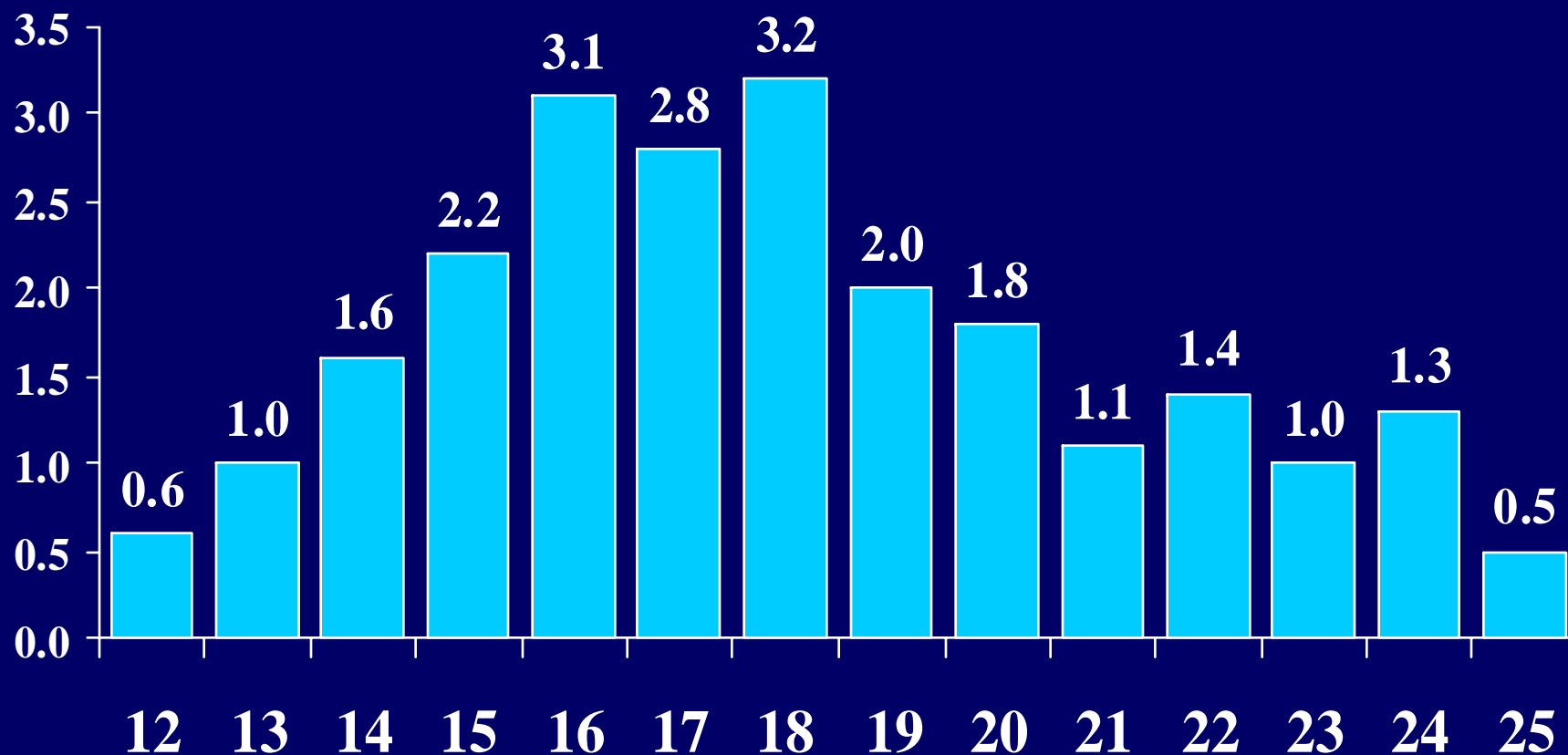
Percent Using in Past Year



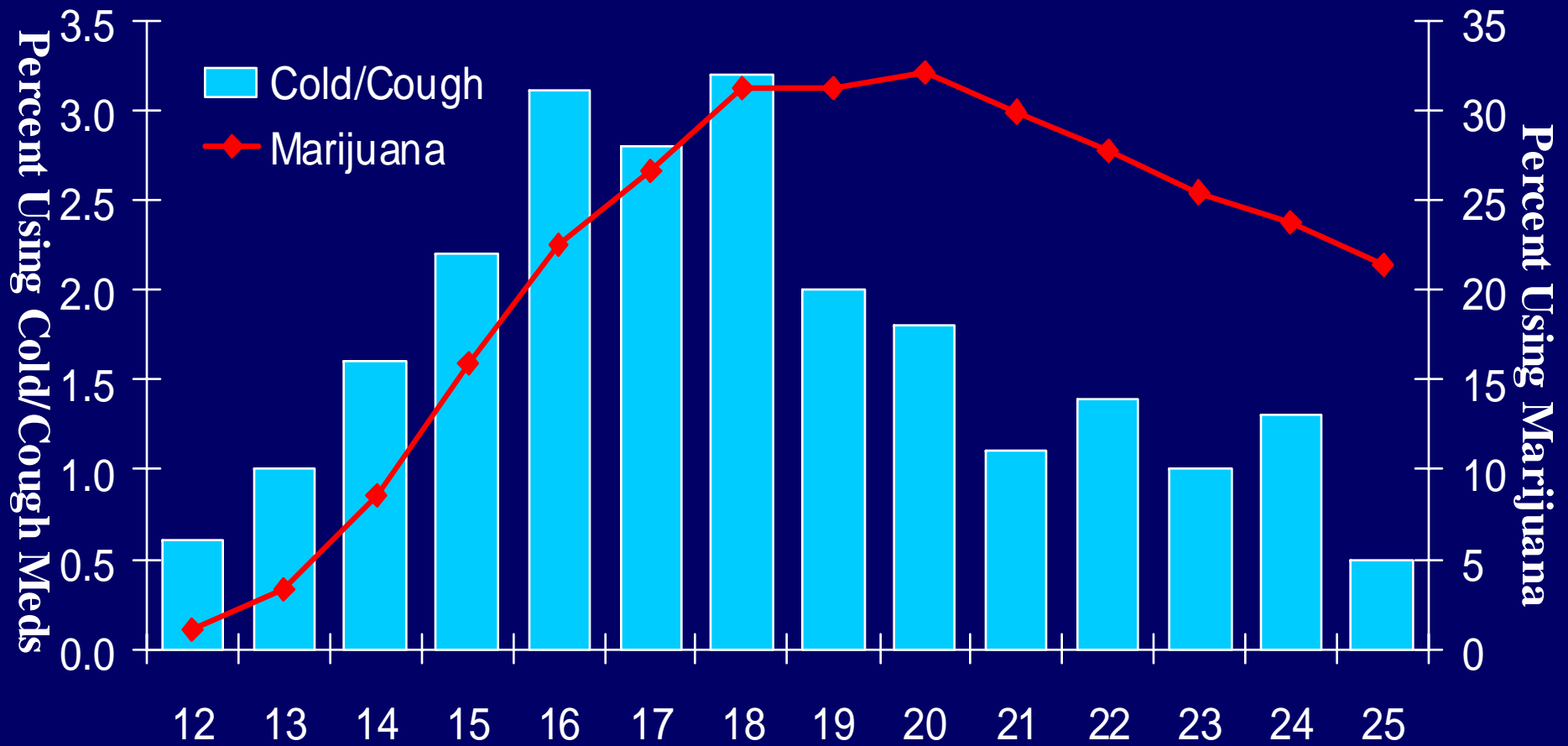
Gender diff.: Age 12-17 $p < 0.001$; Age 18-25 $p < 0.05$

Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Single Years of Age: 2006

Percent Using in Past Year

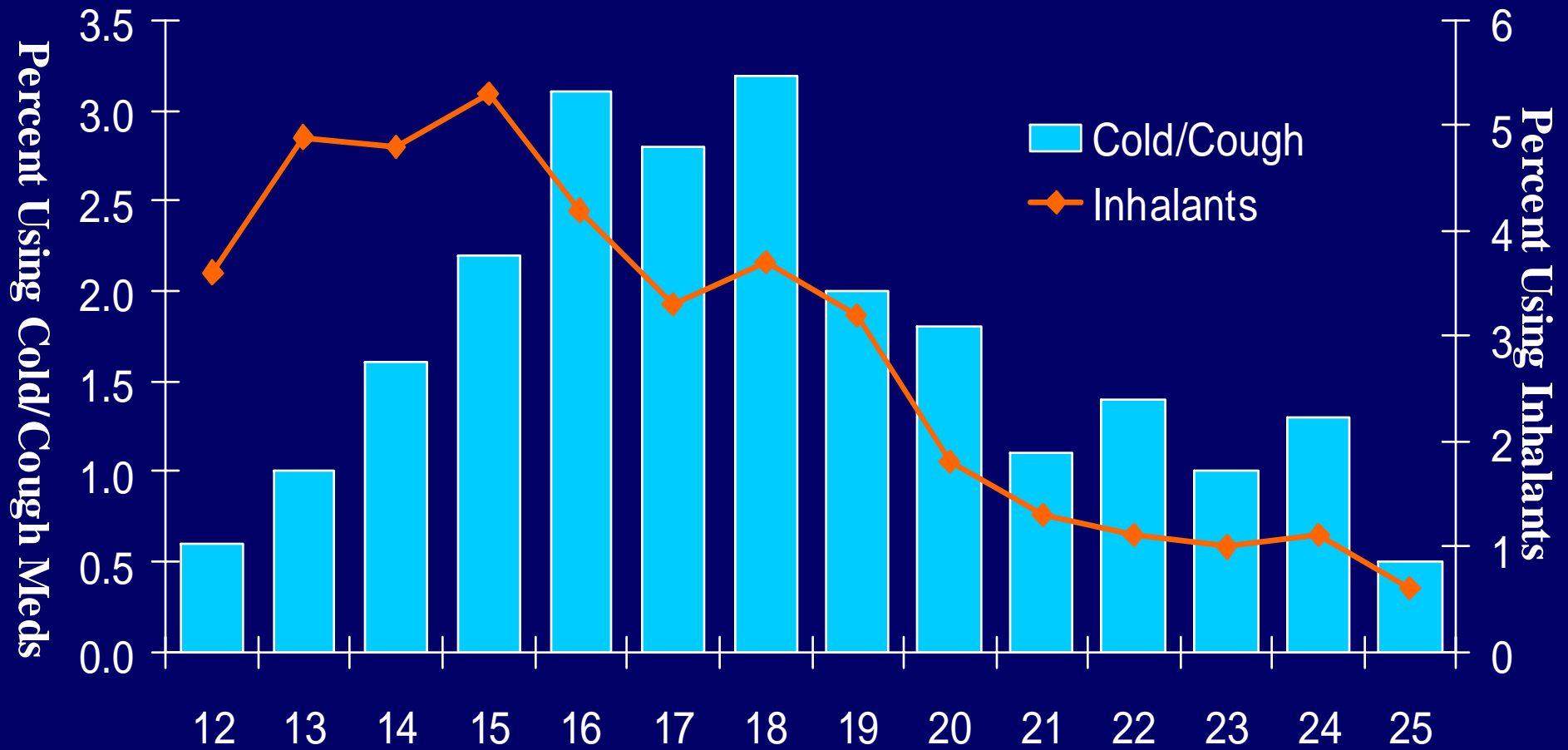


Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications* vs. Marijuana Use** among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Single Years of Age: 2006



*Left scale ** Right scale

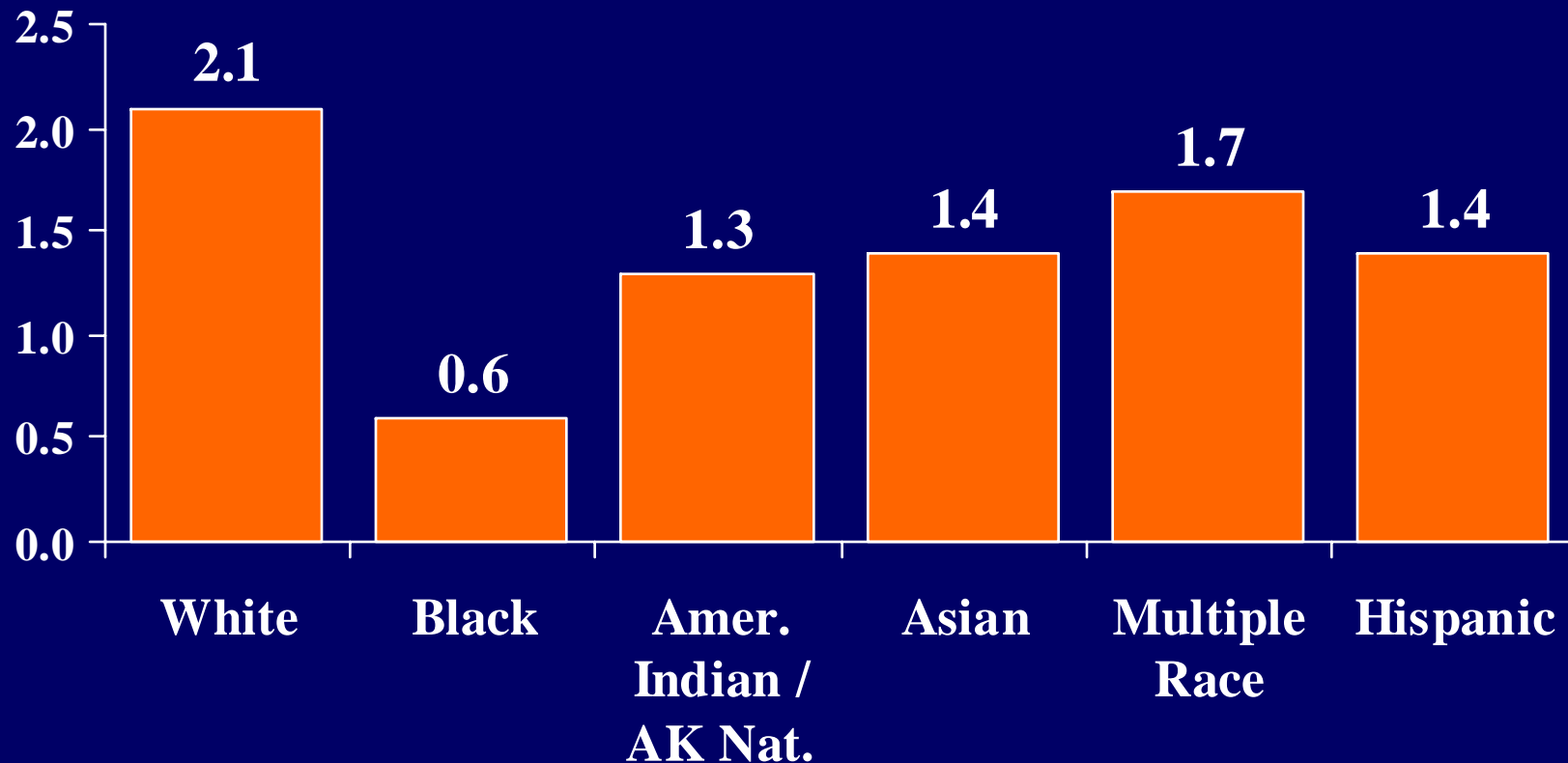
Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications* vs. Inhalant Use** among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Single Years of Age: 2006



*Left scale ** Right scale

Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Race/Ethnicity: 2006

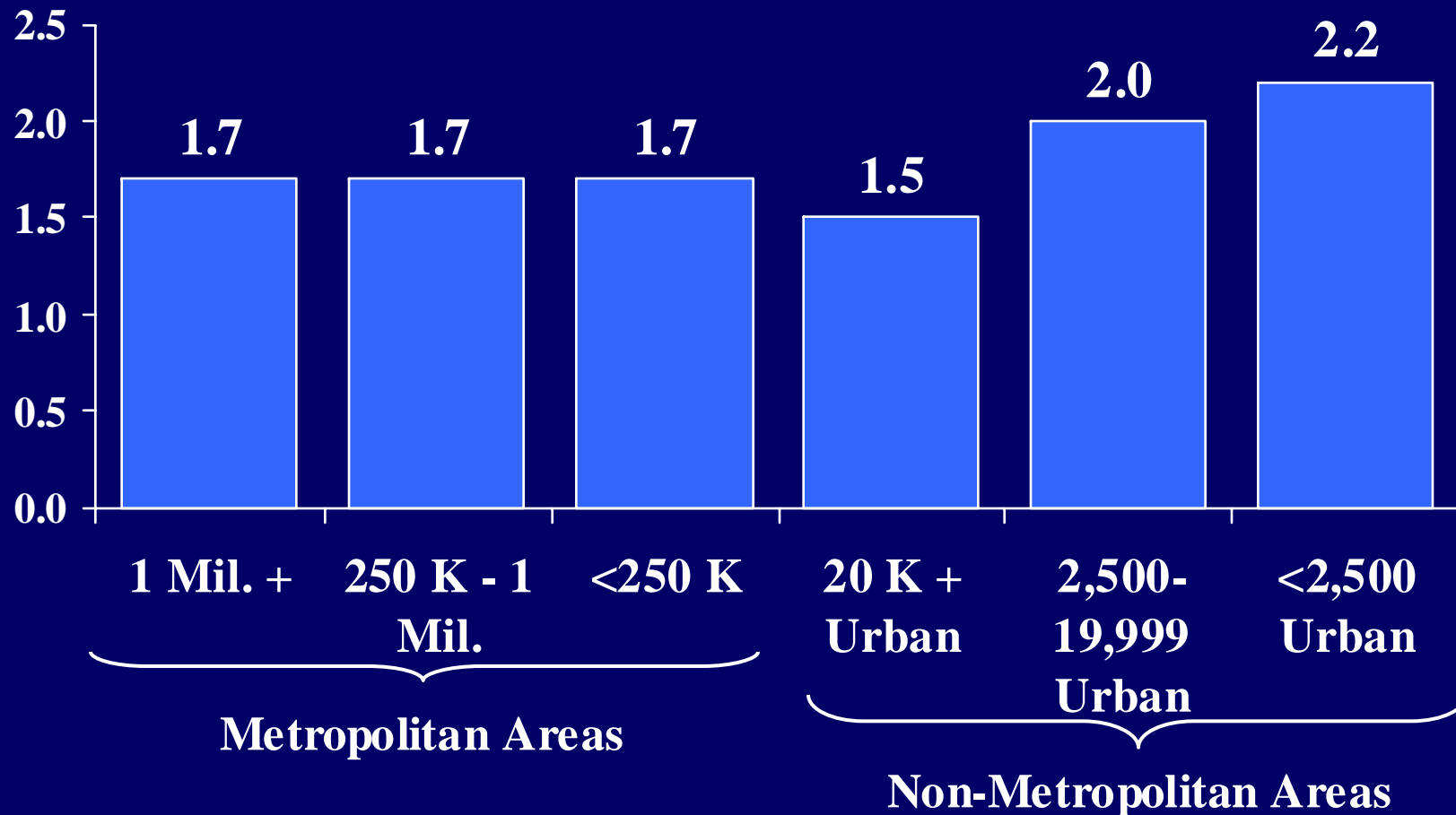
Percent Using in Past Year



Diff.: White vs. Black $p < 0.0001$; White vs. Hispanic $p < 0.01$; Black vs. Hispanic $p < 0.001$; Other diffs. NS

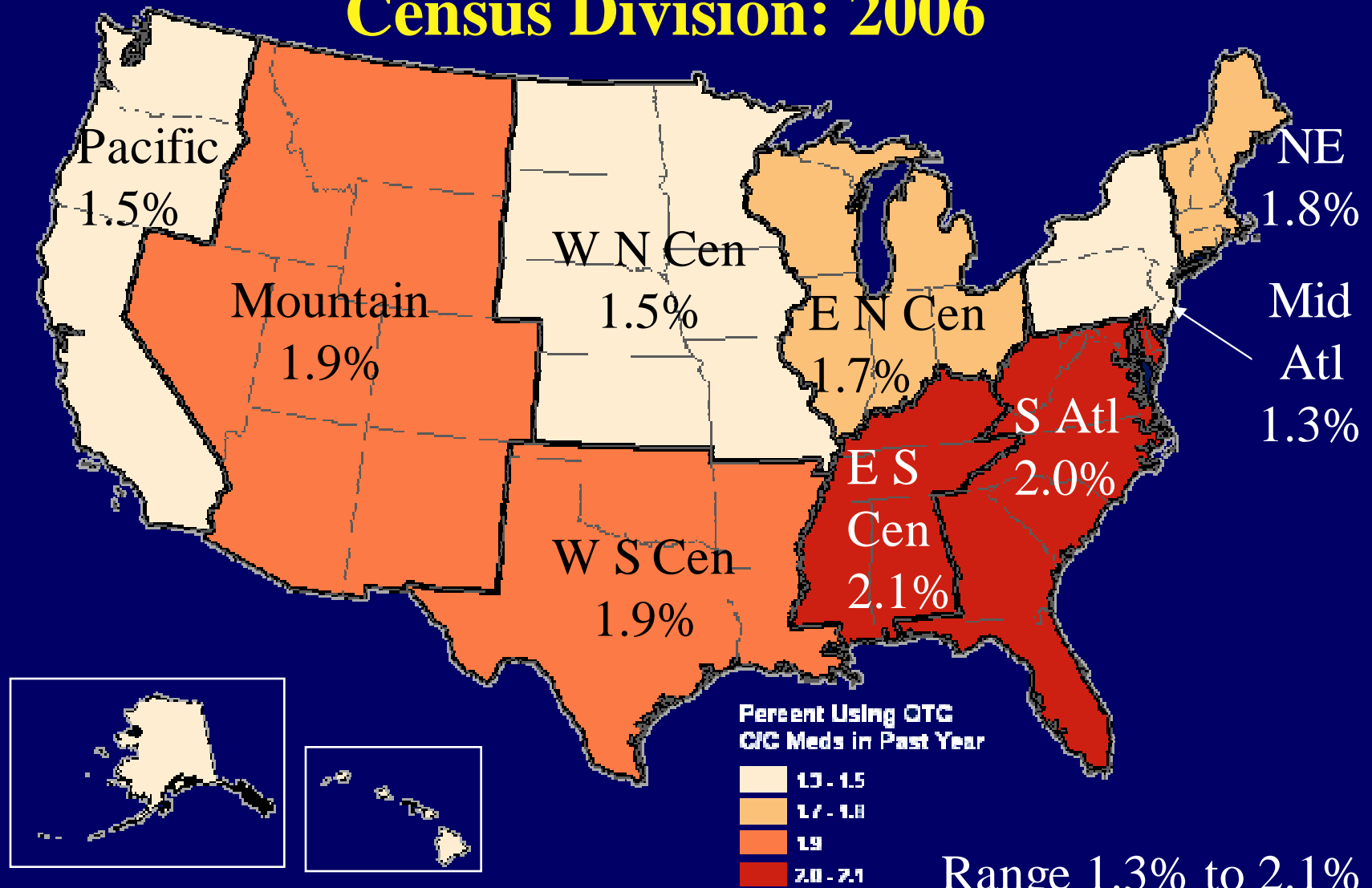
Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by County Type: 2006

Percent Using in Past Year



Diff.: No statistically significant differences.

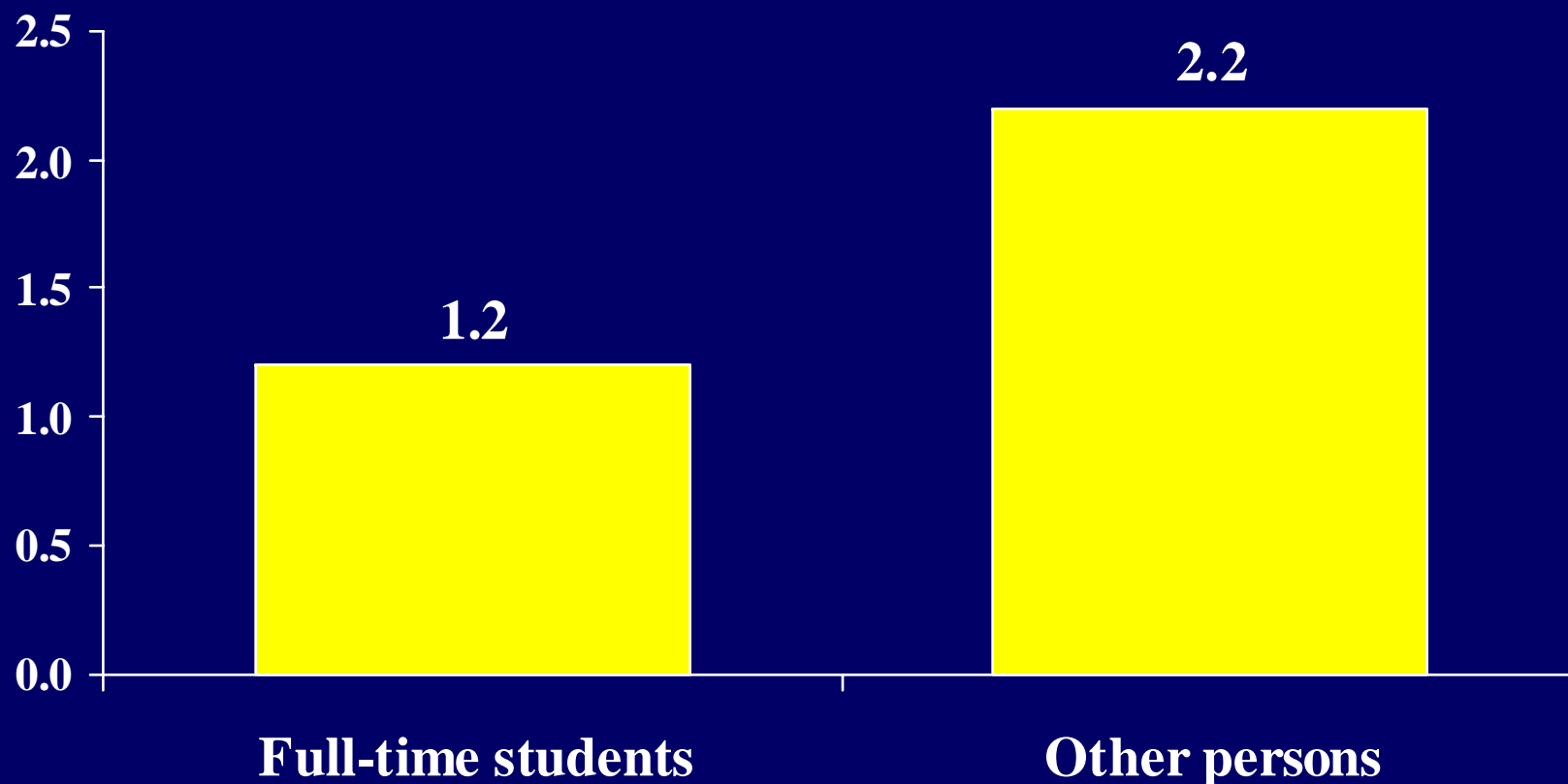
Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 12 to 25, by Census Division: 2006



Diff.: Mid-Atlantic vs. East South Central, $p < 0.05$; others NS.

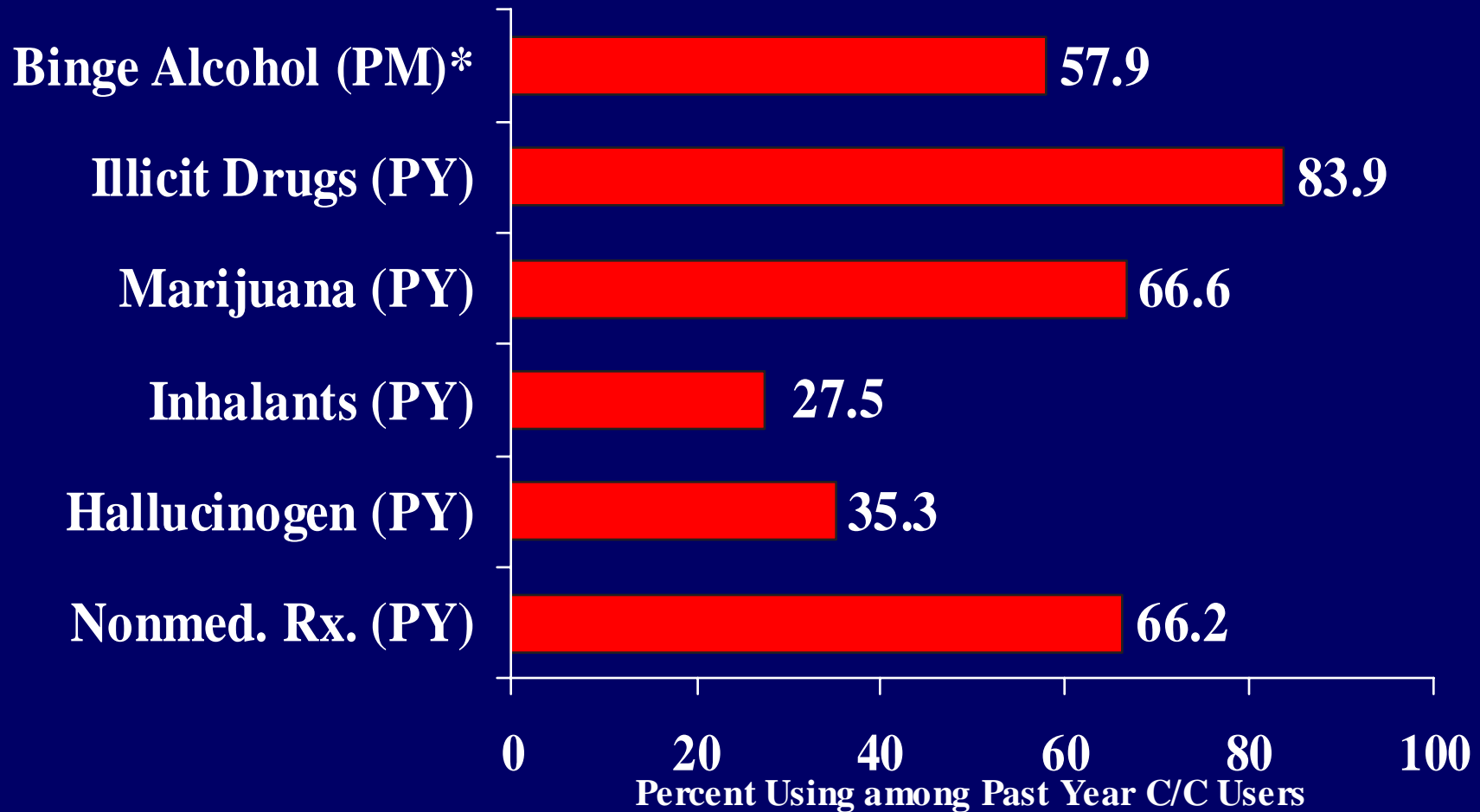
Past Year Misuse of OTC Cold and Cough Medications among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment: 2006

Percent Using in Past Year



Diff.: $p < 0.05$

Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs among Past Year Nonmedical Users of OTC Cold and Cough Medications Aged 12 to 25: 2006



* 5+ Drinks on a single occasion at least once in the past month.

PM=Past Month; PY=Past Year

Summary and Conclusions

- **5.3% of 12-25-year-olds used OTC cold and cough meds to get high in their lifetime and 1.7% in the past year**
- **Lifetime use is higher for those 18-25, but past year use is higher for those 12-17**
- **Past year use peaks at age 16-18; this is earlier than marijuana but later than inhalants**

Summary and Conclusions

- **Gender-by-age interaction like that with some other drugs (notably Rx drugs)**
- **No remarkable geographic patterns**
- **Persons who use OTC C/C meds to get high tend to use alcohol and illicit drugs as well**
- **We need data on age at first misuse of OTC C/C meds to compare onset to that of other drugs and better understand the etiology**

Questions?

