

In recent years, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, or NHANES, and the Canadian Health Measures Survey have collaborated to produce data on topics of concern to both countries. In 2015, the two countries produced a comparative analysis on the topic of obesity. This week, the US and Canada teamed up on a new report on prescription drug use, using data from the 2015-2016 NHANES and the 2016-2017 CHMS.

The new report shows that nearly 7 in 10 adults ages 40–79 used at least 1 prescription drug in the past 30 days in both the US and Canada.

Approximately 1 in 5 adults ages 40-79 in both countries used at least 5 prescription drugs in the past 30 days. In the younger range of that age group, 40-59 year-olds, the most common prescription drugs used in the U.S. were: antidepressants, lipid-lowering drugs, and ACE inhibitors. The most common drugs used among Canadians were: analgesics, antidepressants, and lipid-lowering drugs.

A second report from NCHS this week also used data from NHANES, and looked at secondhand tobacco smoke exposure among American youth. Secondhand tobacco smoke is measured by the levels of cotinine in the blood. Cotinine is a metabolite of nicotine. The new study found that over a third of all non-smoking American youth ages 3-17 have been exposed to secondhand smoke. Exposure rates are higher among younger children ages 3-11, and significantly higher among non-Hispanic black youth vs. white, Asian or Hispanic youth. Kids from lower income families are also at higher risk for secondhand smoke exposure than kids from higher income families.