

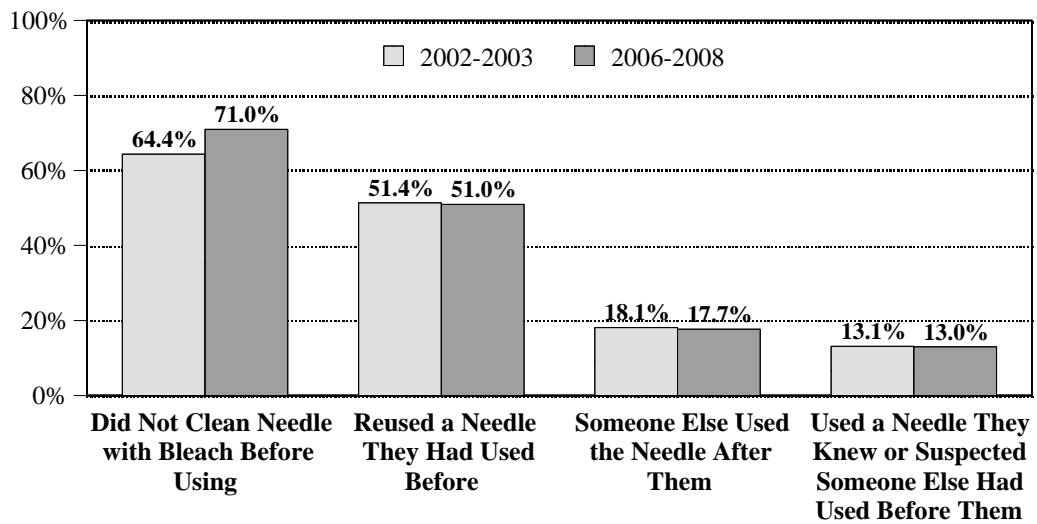
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Risky Needle Practices Persist Among U.S. Injection Drug Users

An estimated 425,000 U.S. residents aged 12 or older used a needle to inject heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, or other stimulants during the past year, according to combined data from the 2006, 2007, and 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Many of these injection drug users reported engaging in unsafe needle practices the last time they injected drugs. The majority (71.0%) did not clean their needle with bleach before using it. Approximately one-half (51.0%) reused a needle they had used before and 17.7% reported that someone else used their needle after them. More than one in ten (13.0%) reported using a needle they know or suspected someone else had used before them. Despite the fact that “HIV prevention and education programs targeted at out-of-treatment injection drug users have been in effect for nearly two decades,” these findings remain unchanged or have worsened from those reported in 2002-2003 (see figure below). Research has shown a strong association between injection drug use and the transmission of blood-borne infections (e.g. HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C), particularly when needles are reused, shared, or not cleaned with bleach after each use.

Percentage of Past Year Injection Drug Users Who Reported Engaging in Risk Behaviors the Last Time They Used a Needle to Inject Drugs, 2002-2003 and 2006-2008



NOTES: Estimates are based on responses from 135,910 persons ages 12 or older surveyed in the 2002 and 2003 NSDUH and on responses from 204,408 persons surveyed in the 2006, 2007, and 2008 NSDUH.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), “Injection Drug Use and Related Risk Behaviors,” *The NSDUH Report*, 2009. Available online at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/139/139IDU.cfm>.