

# Changes in Substance Use Behaviors Among Those Who Use Opioid Analgesics

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## Introduction

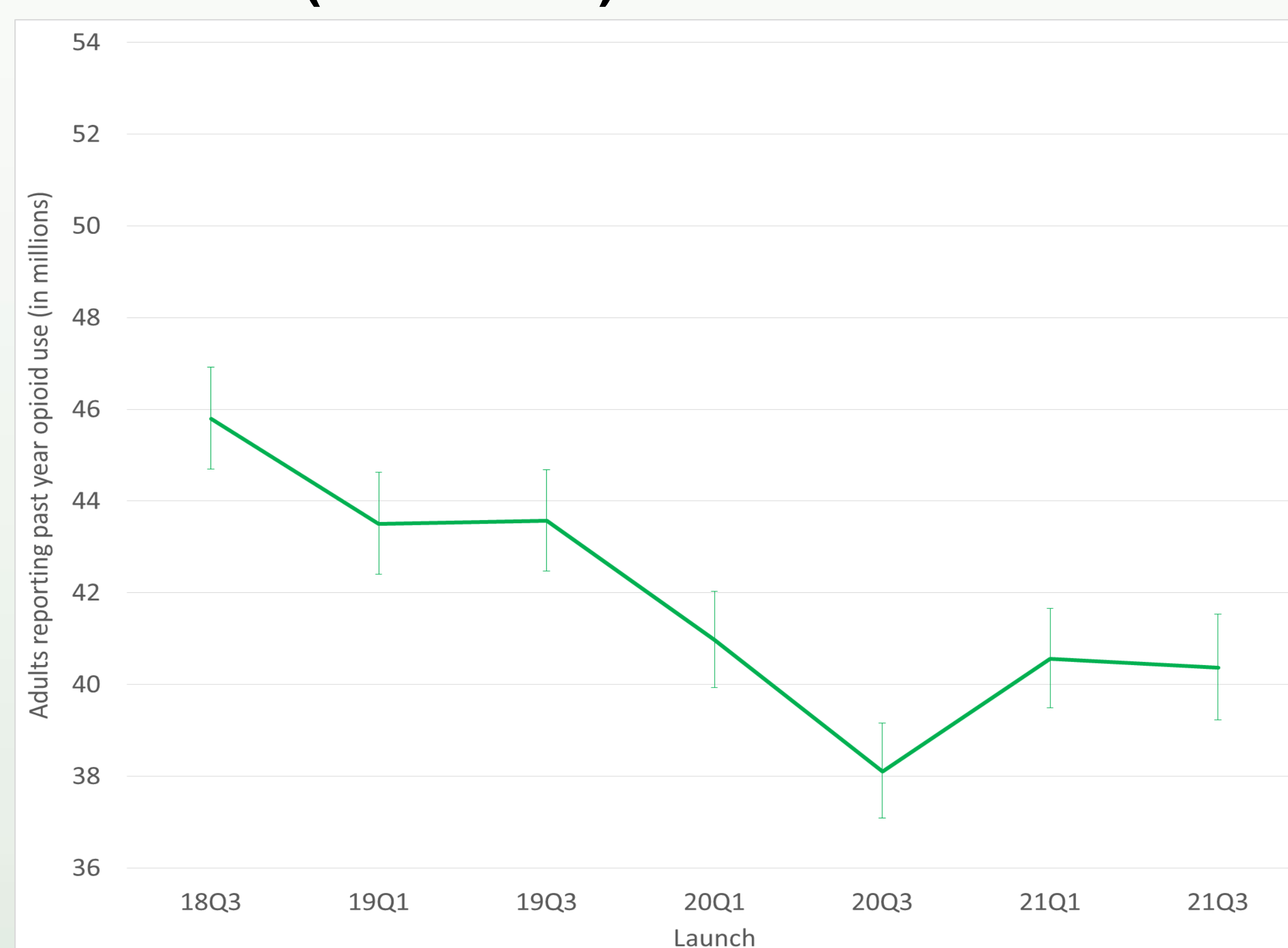
- Schedule II opioid analgesic prescriptions decreased 17% between 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2018 and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2021 (IQVIA™ US-Based Longitudinal Prescription Data)
- However, deaths involving natural or semisynthetic opioids have remained stable during this timeframe
- To examine reasons for this divergence, we analyzed substance use behaviors among adults reporting past year use of opioid analgesics

## Methods

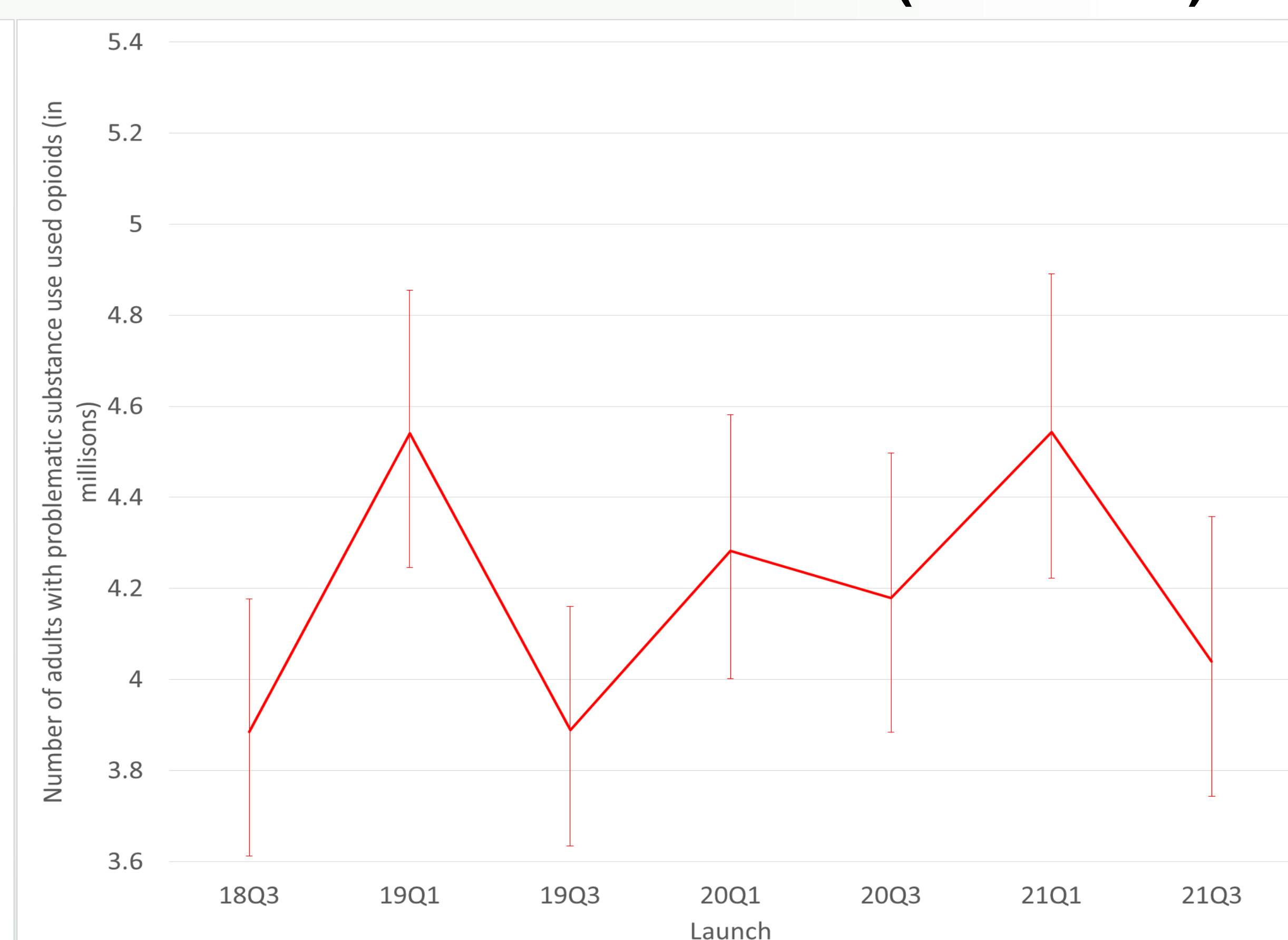
- The Researched Abuse, Diversion and Addiction-Related Surveillance (RADARS®) System Survey of Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs Program is a semiannual online panel-based general population survey of adults in the United States
- Each respondent completes a questionnaire asking about the use and misuse of prescription and illicit drugs
- Data from seven survey launches conducted between September 2018 through September 2021
- Complex survey design and non-response weighting used to create nationally representative estimates
- Problematic substance use was assessed using the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10) scores and nonprescription fentanyl (NPF) use among respondents who reported past year use of hydrocodone, hydromorphone, morphine, oxycodone, or oxymorphone
- Calibration weighting was used to create nationally representative estimates
- Generalized linear mixed models were used to estimate prevalence and changes across launches

## Results

**Figure 1: Estimated Number of Adults Who Used Schedule II Opioid Analgesics in the Past Year (in Millions)**



**Figure 2: Estimated Number of Adults Who Use Schedule II Opioid Analgesics with Problematic Substance Use in the Past Year (in Millions)**



## Results

- The number of adults who used prescription opioid analgesics in the past year decreased from 45.8 (95% CI: 44.7-46.9) million in September 2018 to 40.4 (95% CI: 39.2-41.5) million in September 2021 (Figure 1)
- The number who had problematic substance use in the past year (endorsed 4+ DAST-10 items) remained consistent, 3.9 (95% CI: 3.6-4.2) million in September 2018 and 4.0 (95% CI: 3.7-4.4) million in September 2021 (Figure 2)
- The percentage of adults who used opioids in the past year who had problematic substance use increased by 3.5% (p<0.001) per launch on average
- The number of prescription opioid using adults who also reported use of NPF in the past year increased 71% (0.5 million in September 2018 to 0.9 million in September 2021)
- In the September 2021 launch, most respondents (57%) who used NPF in the past year in the general population (1.5 million) also reported use of a prescription opioid analgesic in the past year (0.9 million)

## Conclusions

- Declines in the number of adults who reported use of prescription opioids in this nationally representative online survey corresponded with dispensing data obtained from retail pharmacies
- Reasons for the discrepancy between declines in prescribing but stable mortality involving prescription opioids could be:
  - The percentage of those who used prescription opioids and had problematic substance use increased
  - The number of adults who report use of NPF and prescription opioids is rising rapidly.

## Strengths

- Nationally representative sample of adults in the United States
- Weighting used to control for selection biases

## Limitations

- Cross-sectional
- Based on respondent self-report which may be affected by recall bias
- Limited to respondents 18 or older