

NFLIS-Drug Counts: Data Use & Caveats

DEA'S DATA USE STATEMENT

“Data recipients should be aware, prior to use, analysis, studies, or publication of NFLIS data, the information contained in NFLIS generated reports are complete and accurate as to what was provided by participating laboratories to NFLIS in accordance with reporting agreements. This information is susceptible to future updates and corrections, without notice, as new information is obtained. DEA assumes no liability for analysis, conclusions, or policy decisions of third parties based on internal interpretation of provided data.”

CAVEATS

- The geographic data presented in these data visualizations are actual reported data or counts rather than estimates. “[R]aw counts for each year of NFLIS-Drug data are affected by the number of reporting laboratories for that time frame. Because the number of NFLIS-Drug laboratories may vary each year, DEA does not recommend comparing year-to-year trends using raw counts from *NFLIS-Drug* published tables. The differences in counts or estimates may be more reflective of differences in laboratory reporting rather than changes in drug abuse or trafficking.”
- These data represent only those items that were submitted to and analyzed by forensic laboratories. “There are instances when laboratories are unable to transmit data to NFLIS-Drug by the established cutoff date (typically three months after the data collection period of interest). . . . Although past analyses have shown that approximately 95% of cases submitted during an annual period are analyzed within three months of the end of the annual period (not including the approximately 30% of cases that are never analyzed), there can be remaining cases from the data collection period of interest that participating laboratories did not analyze and/or submit.”
- Drug report counts are subject to change. “[T]he NFLIS-Drug database is dynamic—even across years—and queries of the data may result in updated drug counts for more recent years. Therefore, it is important to note the date on which the data were run because it underscores the reality that these tables reflect a snapshot in time and may not be comparable with data queries generated on a different date.”

To learn more about NFLIS, please refer to the *Overview & Limitations* and *Data Terms* documents or see DEA reference and guidance materials referenced below.

Source: DEA reference and guidance materials, accessed from the NFLIS Public Resource Library at: <https://www.nflis.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/Resources/NFLISPublicResourceLibrary.aspx>