

2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Veteran Adults

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

September 2020



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

- NSDUH is a comprehensive household interview survey of substance use, substance use disorders, mental health, and the receipt of treatment services for these disorders in the United States.
- NSDUH is collected face-to-face by field interviewers who read less sensitive questions to respondents and transition respondents to audio computer assisted self-interviewing for sensitive items.
- NSDUH covers the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, aged 12 or older:
 - Includes: Households, college dorms, homeless in shelters, civilians on military bases
 - Excludes: Active military, long-term hospital residents, prison populations, homeless not in shelters
- Sample includes all 50 states and DC
- Approximately 67,500 persons are interviewed annually
- Data collected from January to December

How Do We Use NSDUH?

- Provides a window into the state of substance use and mental health issues in the United States
- Helps to guide policy directions in addressing:
 - problem substances
 - prevalence of mental illness
 - intersection of substance use and mental health issues
 - provides insights that can be studied in the context of data from other agencies to help in decision-making about what types of resources are needed and where resources should be directed

Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders in America among Veterans (≥ 18 y.o.)

PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

Among Veterans with a substance use disorder:

- 1 IN 4 (26.9% or 343K)** struggled with illicit drugs
- 4 IN 5 (80.8% or 1.0M)** struggled with alcohol use
- 1 IN 13 (7.7% or 98K)** struggled with illicit drugs and alcohol

6.2%
(1.3 MILLION)
People aged 18
or older had a
substance use
disorder (SUD)

2.3%
(481,000)
People 18 or older
had BOTH an SUD
and a mental
illness

Among Veterans with a mental illness:

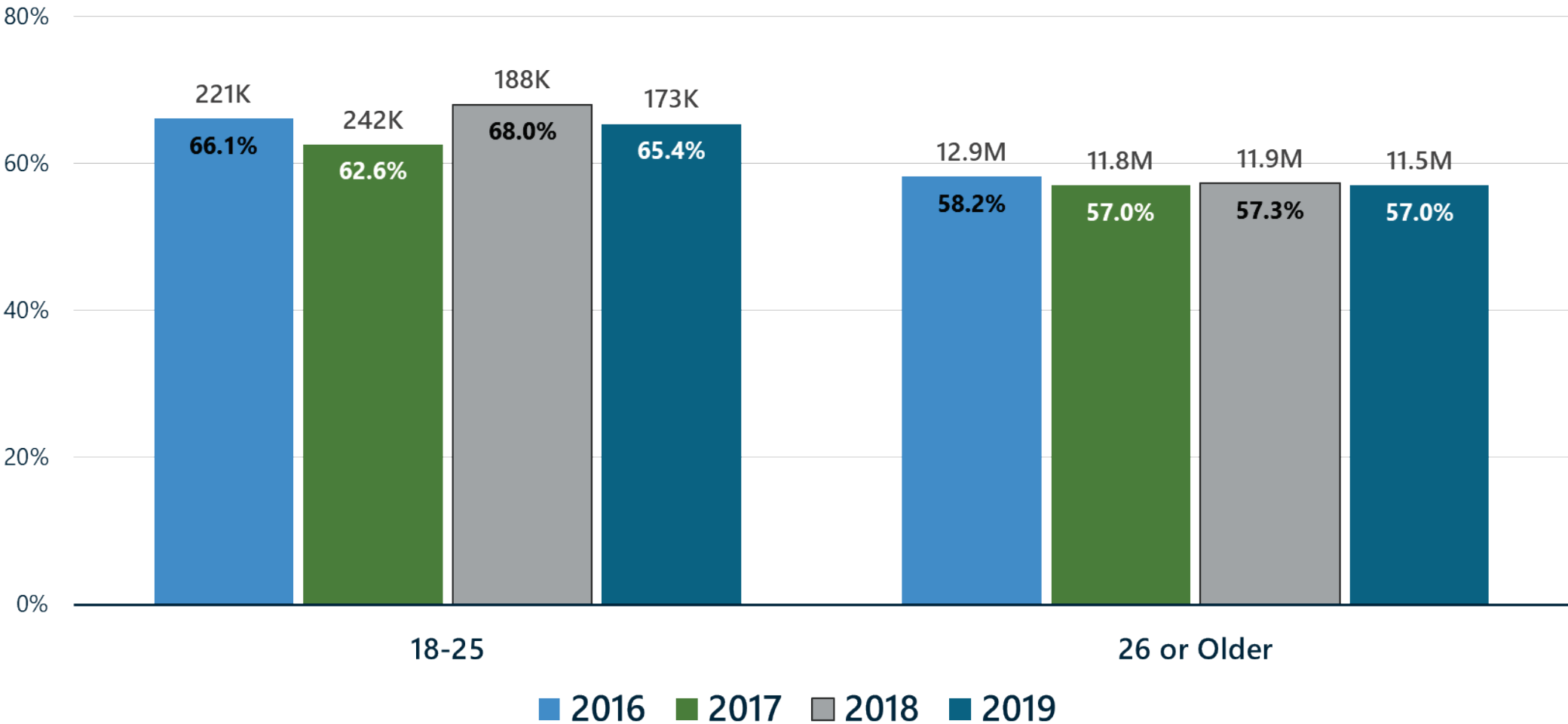
- 1 IN 4 (26.6% or 833K)** had a serious mental illness

15.3%
(3.1 MILLION)
People aged 18
or older had a
mental illness

In 2019, **3.9M** Veterans had a mental illness and/or substance use disorder-an increase of 6.5% over 2018 composed of increases in both SUD and mental illness.

Alcohol Use among Veterans

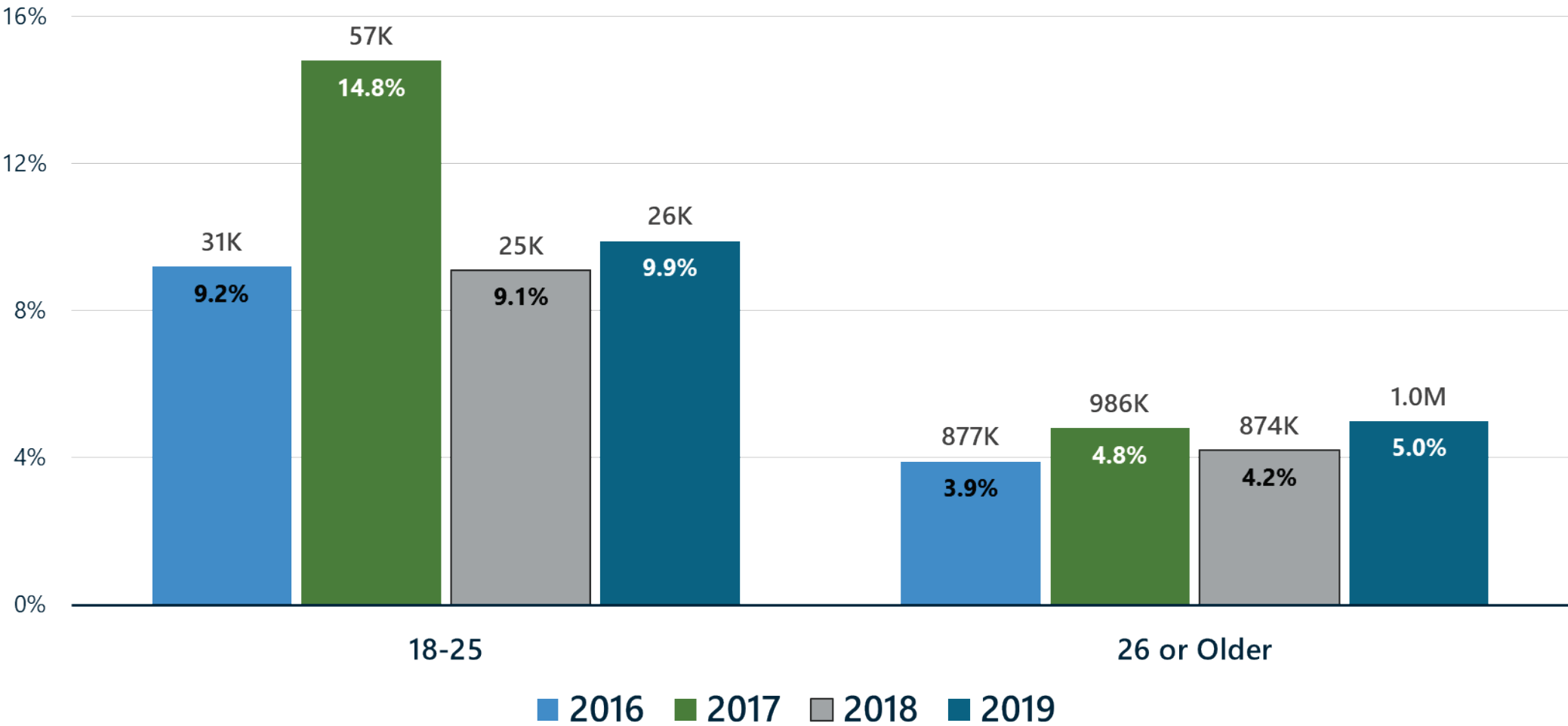
PAST MONTH, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Alcohol Use Disorder among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



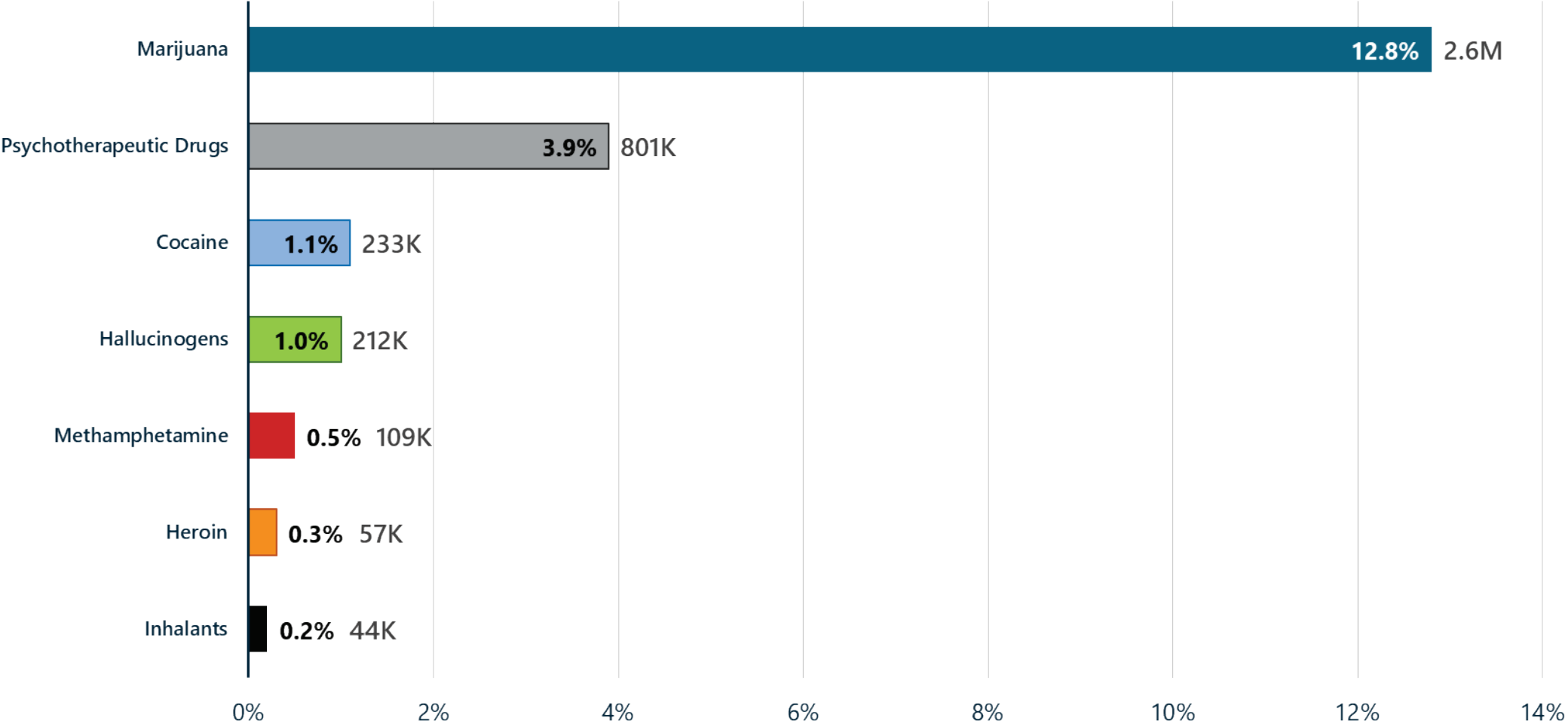
No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Summary: Alcohol Use in 2019

- Past month alcohol use and past year alcohol use disorder remained stable in veterans of all age groups during 2018-2019.
- While alcohol use among veterans declined slightly from 2018, alcohol use disorder increased slightly in 2019.
- SAMHSA will continue its prevention programs:
 - SAMHSA Prevention Technology Transfer Centers produce resources and materials related to alcohol misuse prevention
 - CSAP 'Talk They Hear You' focuses on underage drinking
 - CSAP requires Partnerships for Success grantees to emphasize underage drinking prevention
 - CSAT has promoted SBIRT for alcohol use in all programs including CJ, PPW, adolescent treatment, HIV and homeless programs
 - CSAT has funded SBIRT training in medical residencies and other healthcare practitioner programs which screen for hazardous alcohol use and use disorders

Illicit Drug Use among Veterans

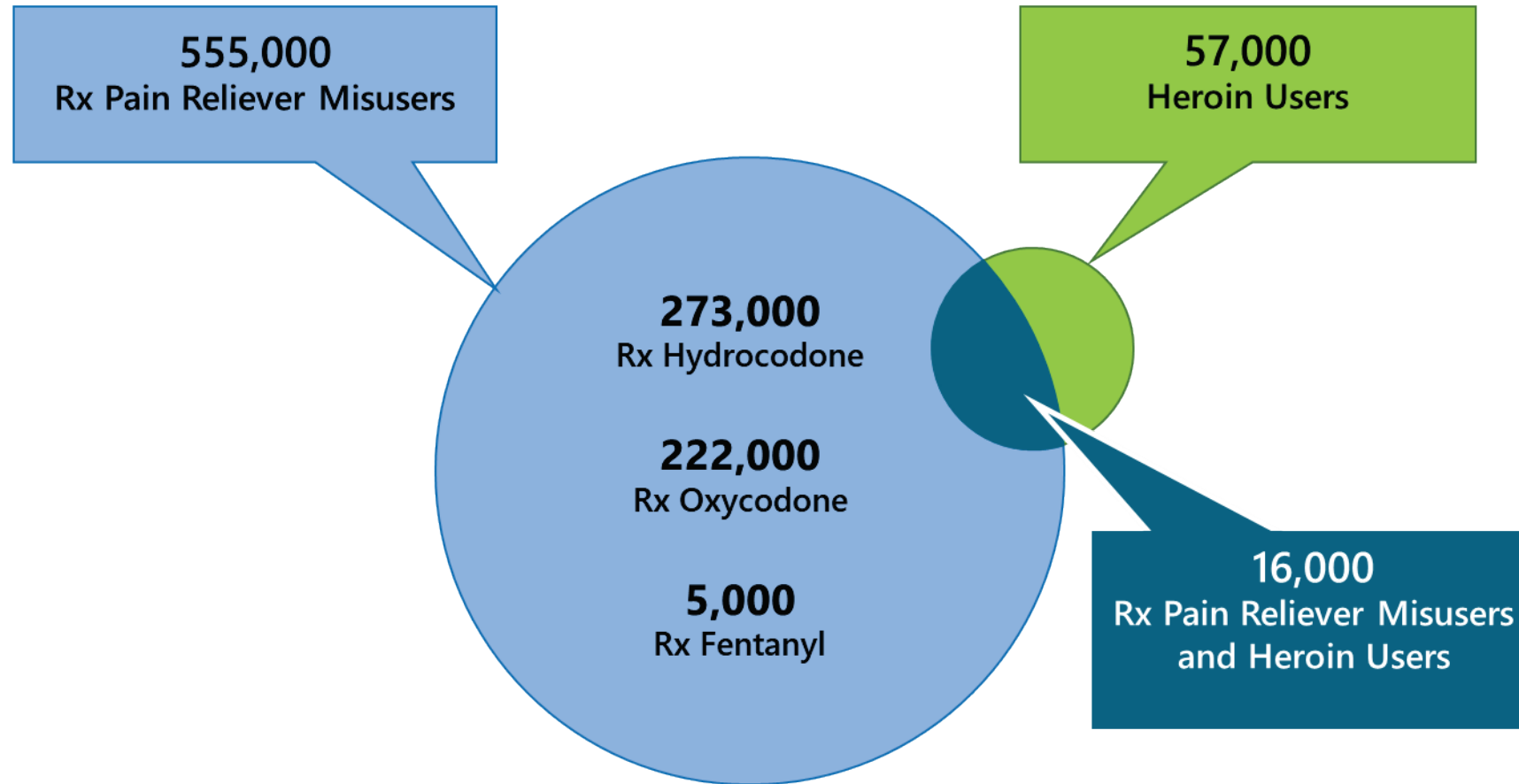
PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



Progress on the Opioid Epidemic: Prescription Pain Reliever Misuse among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

595,000 VETERANS WITH OPIOID MISUSE (2.9% OF TOTAL POPULATION)

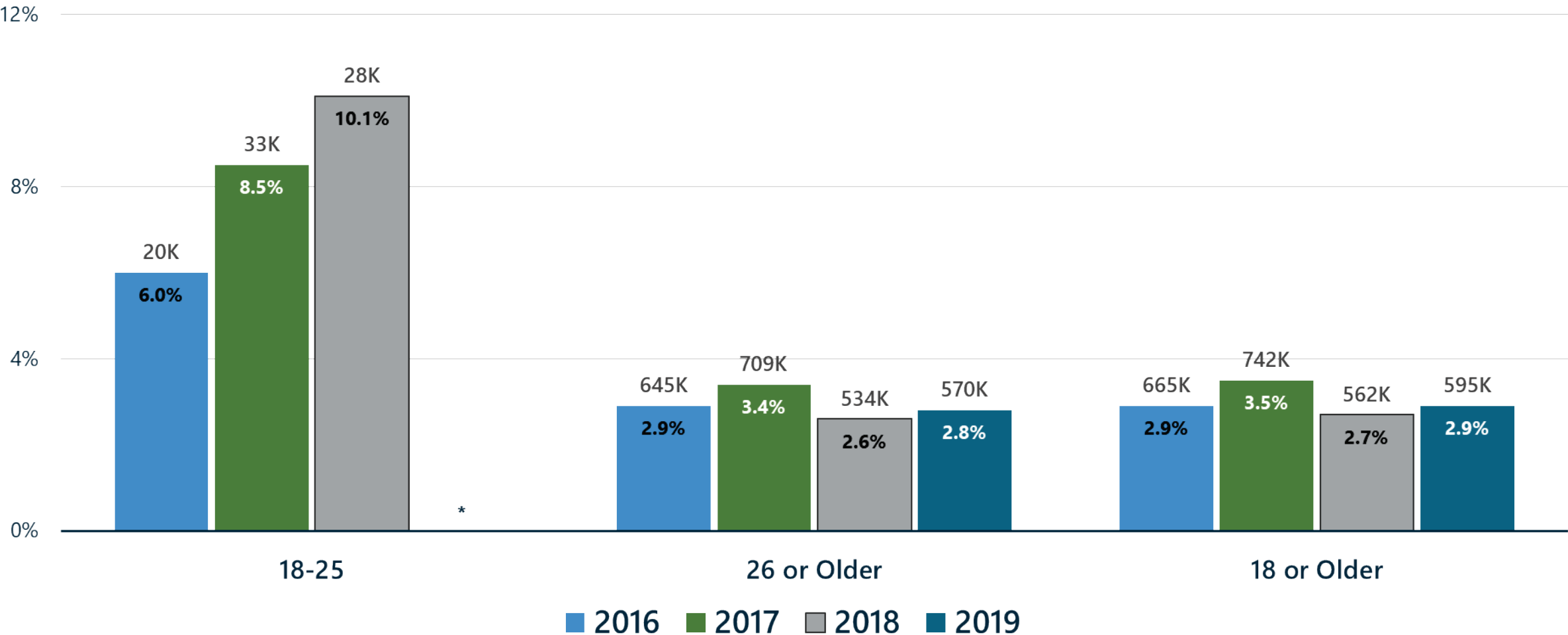


Rx = prescription.

Opioid misuse is defined as heroin use or prescription pain reliever misuse.

Opioid Misuse among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

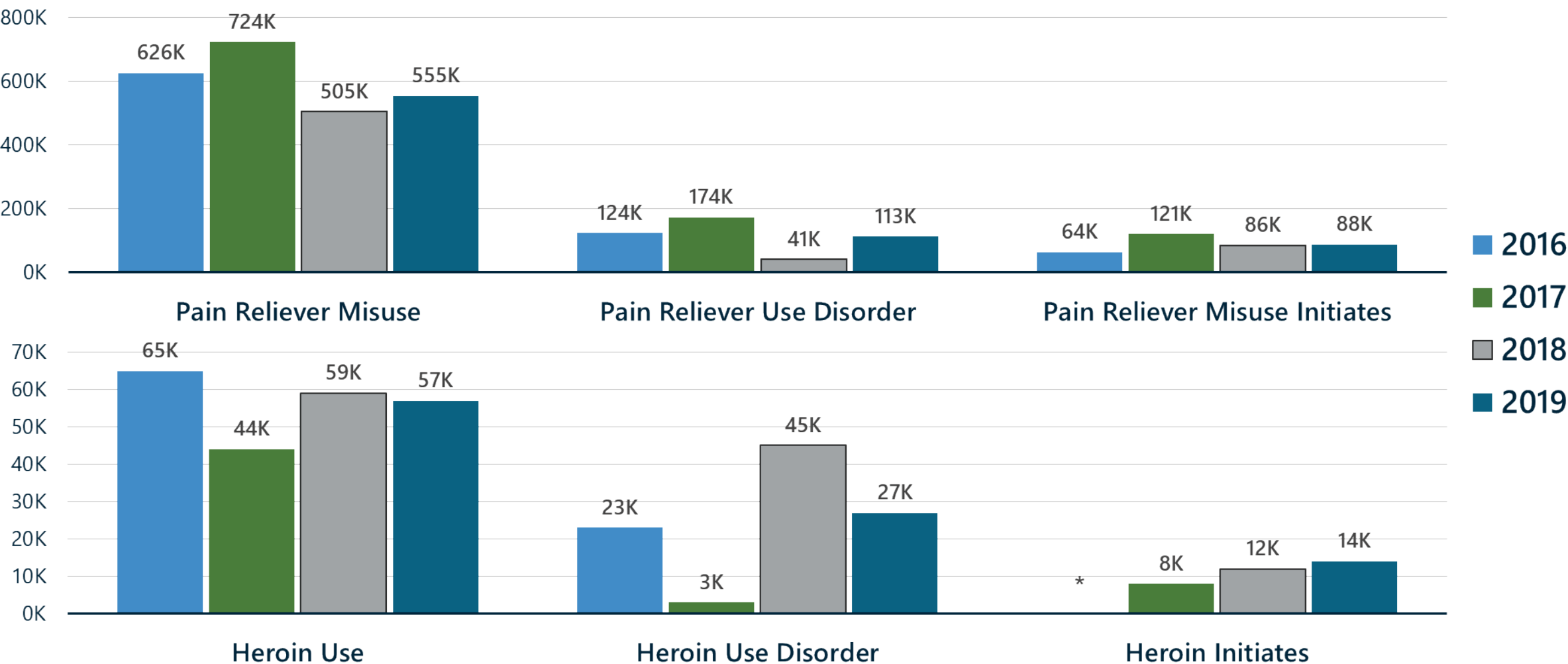


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Prescription Pain Reliever Misuse and Heroin Use among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

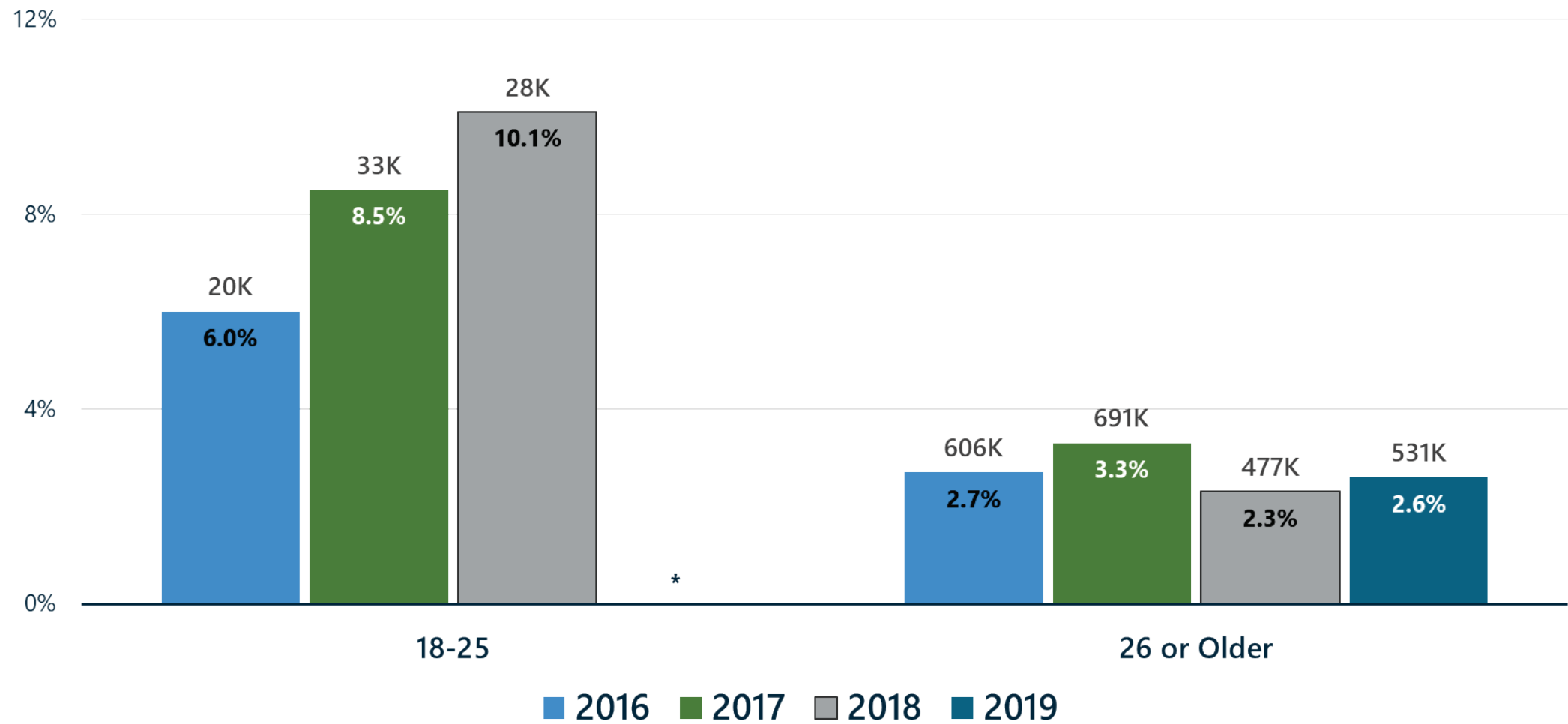


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Prescription Pain Reliever Misuse among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

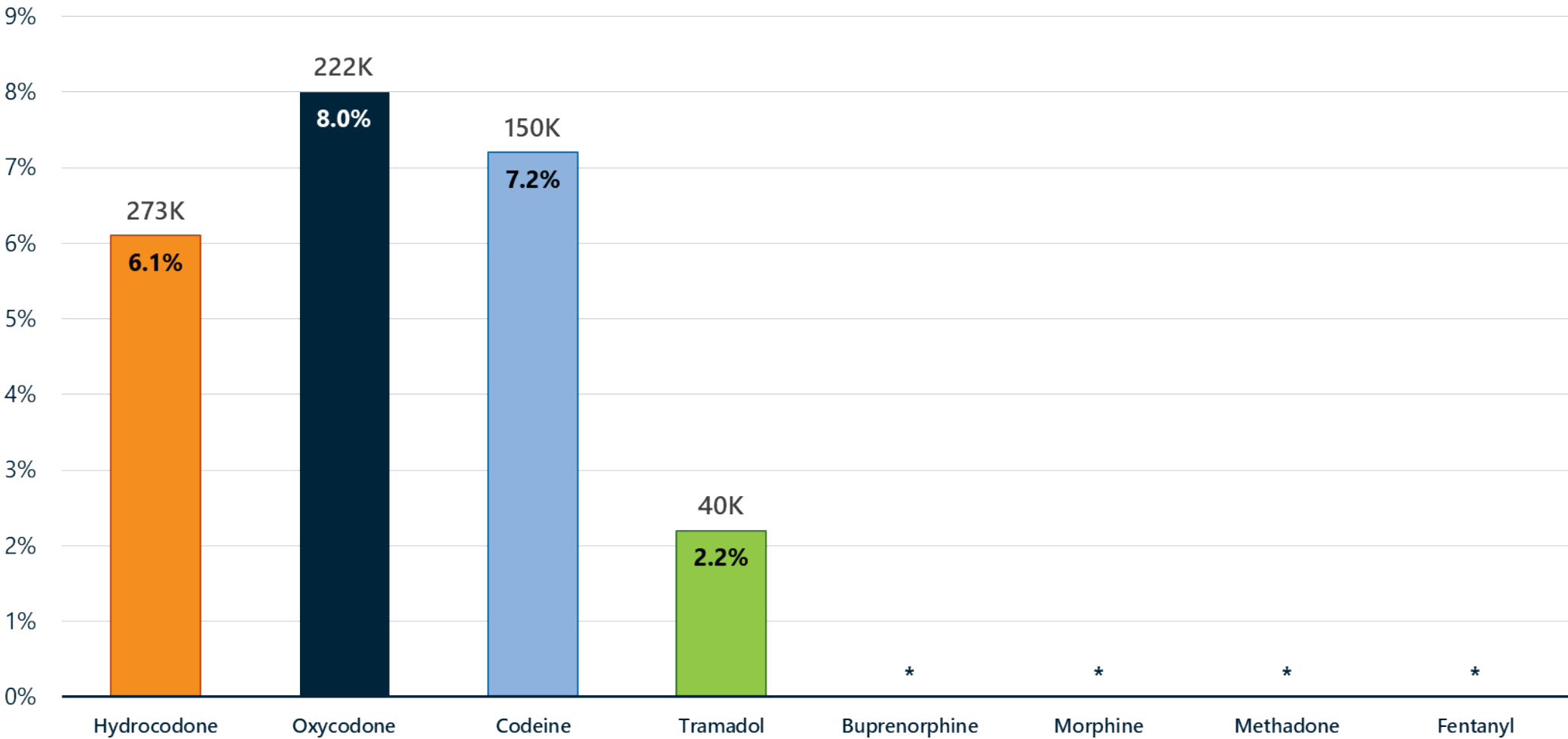


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Misuse of Prescription Opioid Subtypes among Veterans

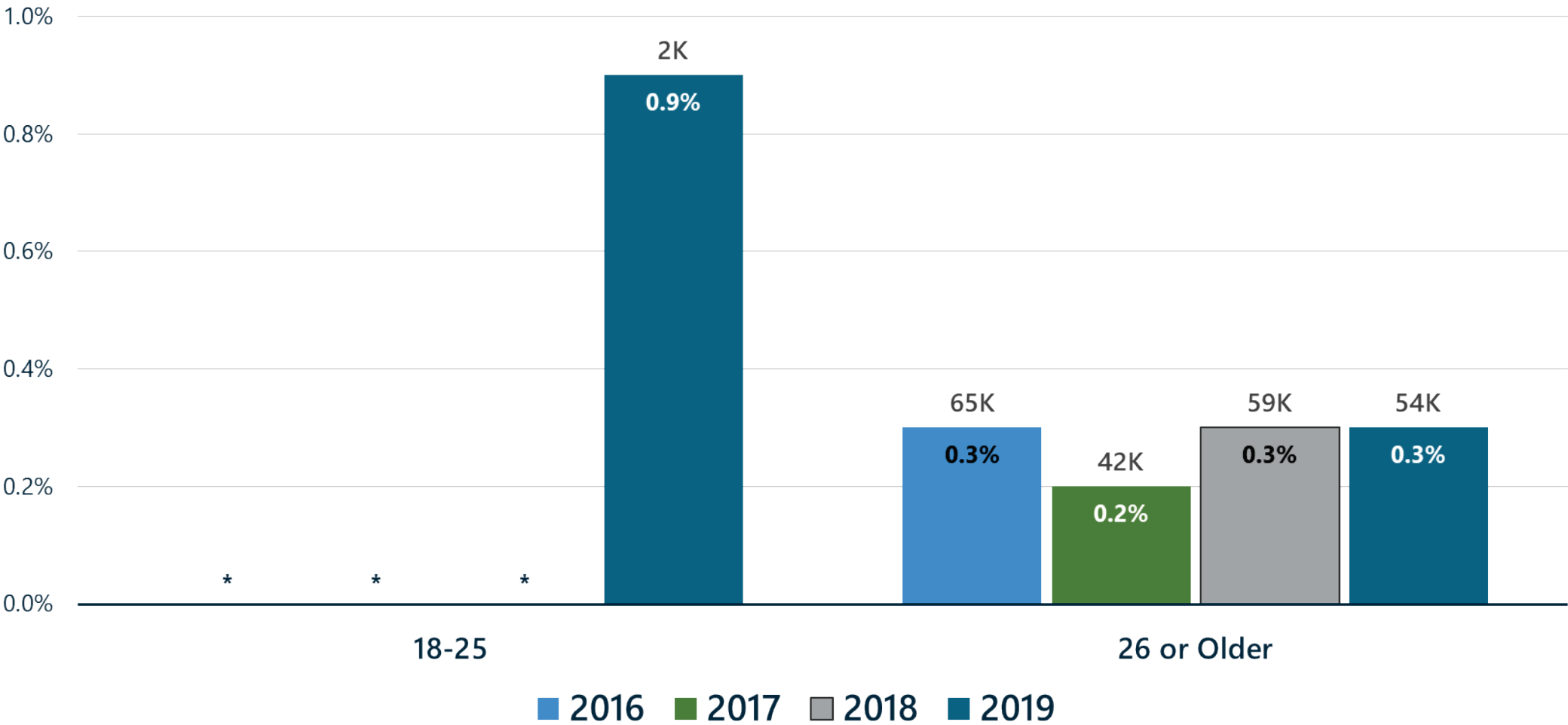
PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+ SUBTYPE USERS



* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

Heroin Use among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

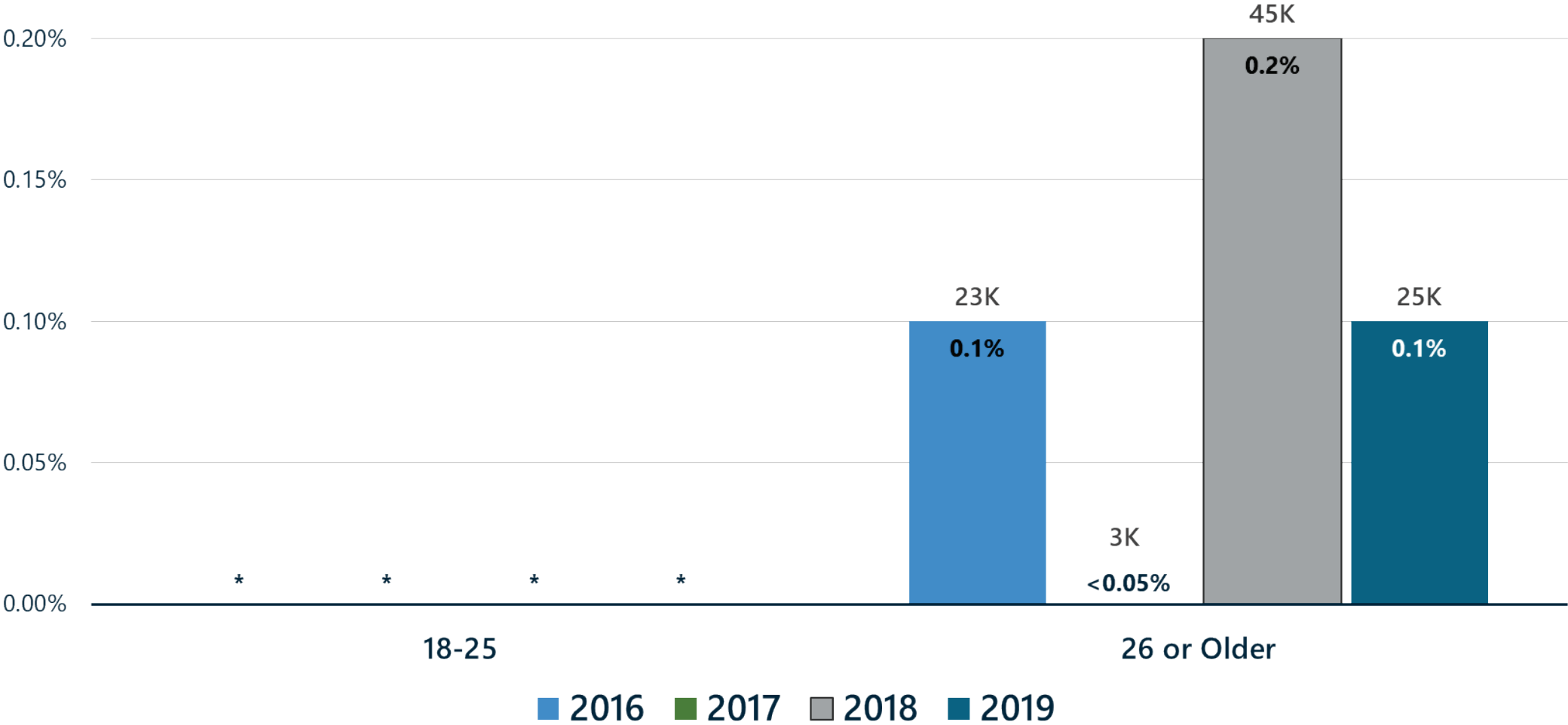


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Heroin-Related Opioid Use Disorder among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

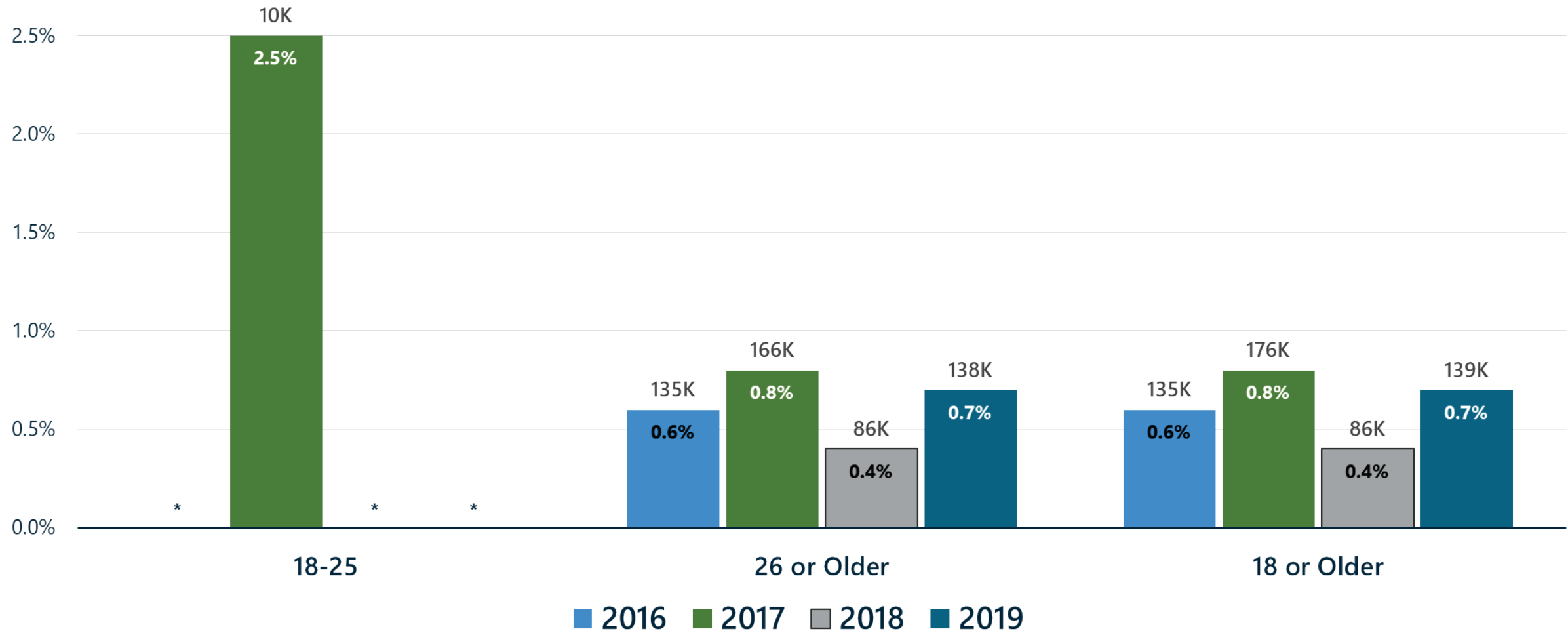


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Opioid Use Disorder among Veterans

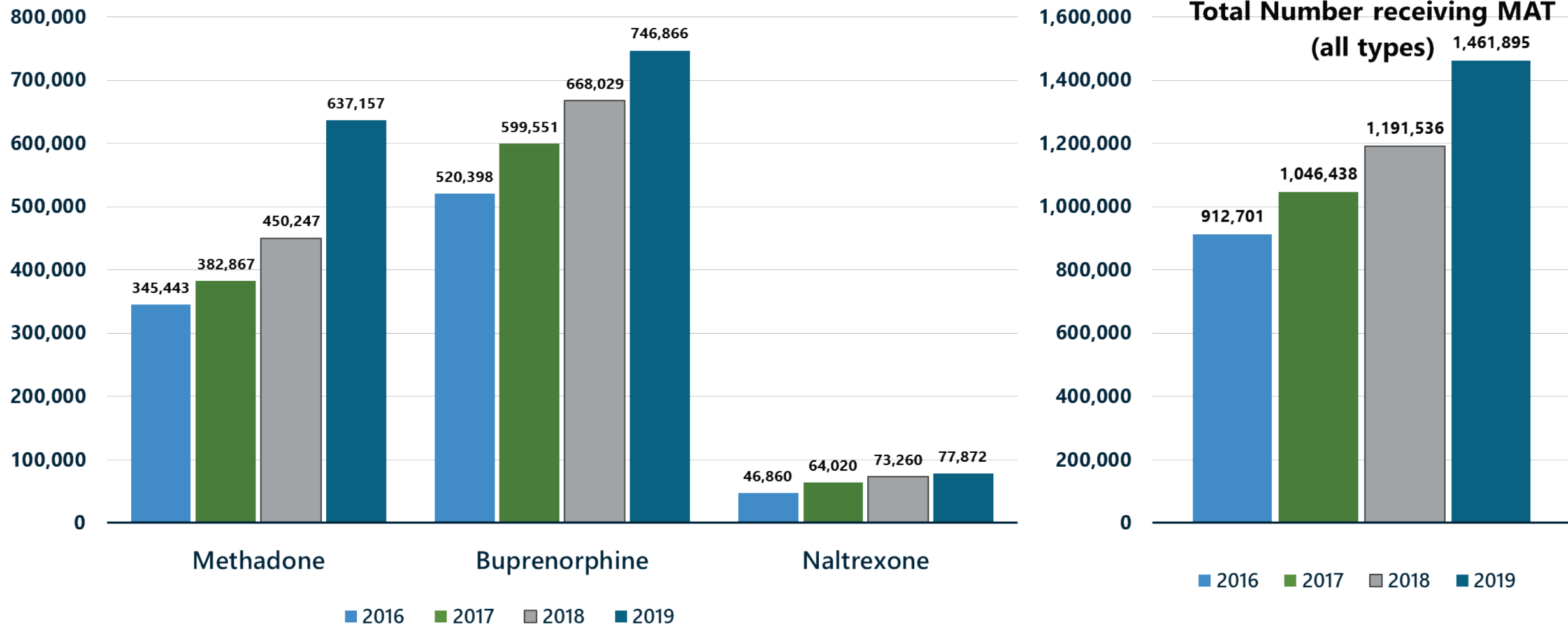
PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Treatment Gains: Number of Individuals Receiving Pharmacotherapy for Opioid Use Disorder (MAT)



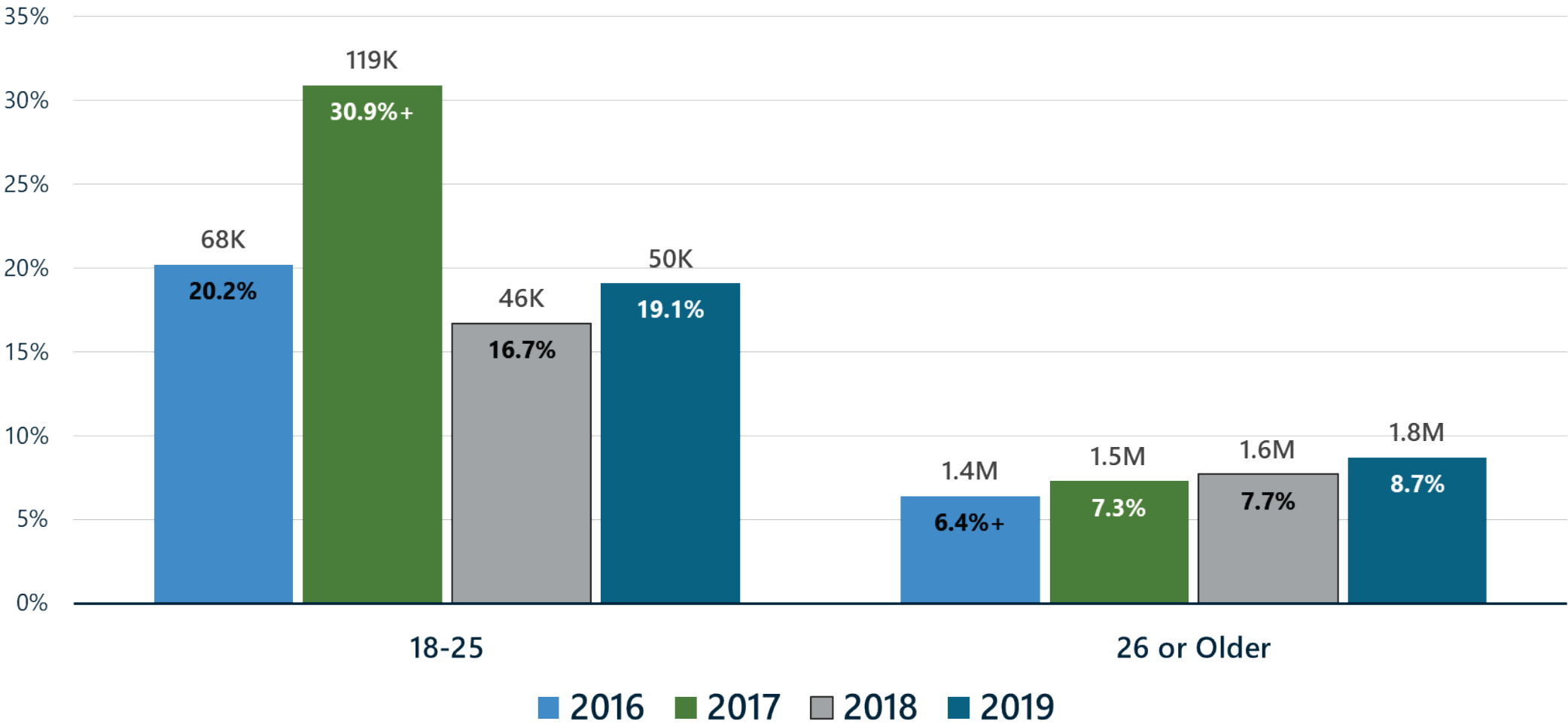
Summary: Opioid Misuse in the United States in 2019 Compared to 2018

- Oxycodone is the opioid with the highest percentage of veterans acknowledging misuse of the medication.
- Heroin use among veterans 26 years older and older remains stable.
- There were slight increases in opioid use disorder when compared to 2018.
- Heroin initiates among veterans also slightly increased.

Other Illicit Substances

Past Month Marijuana Use for All Age Groups among Veterans

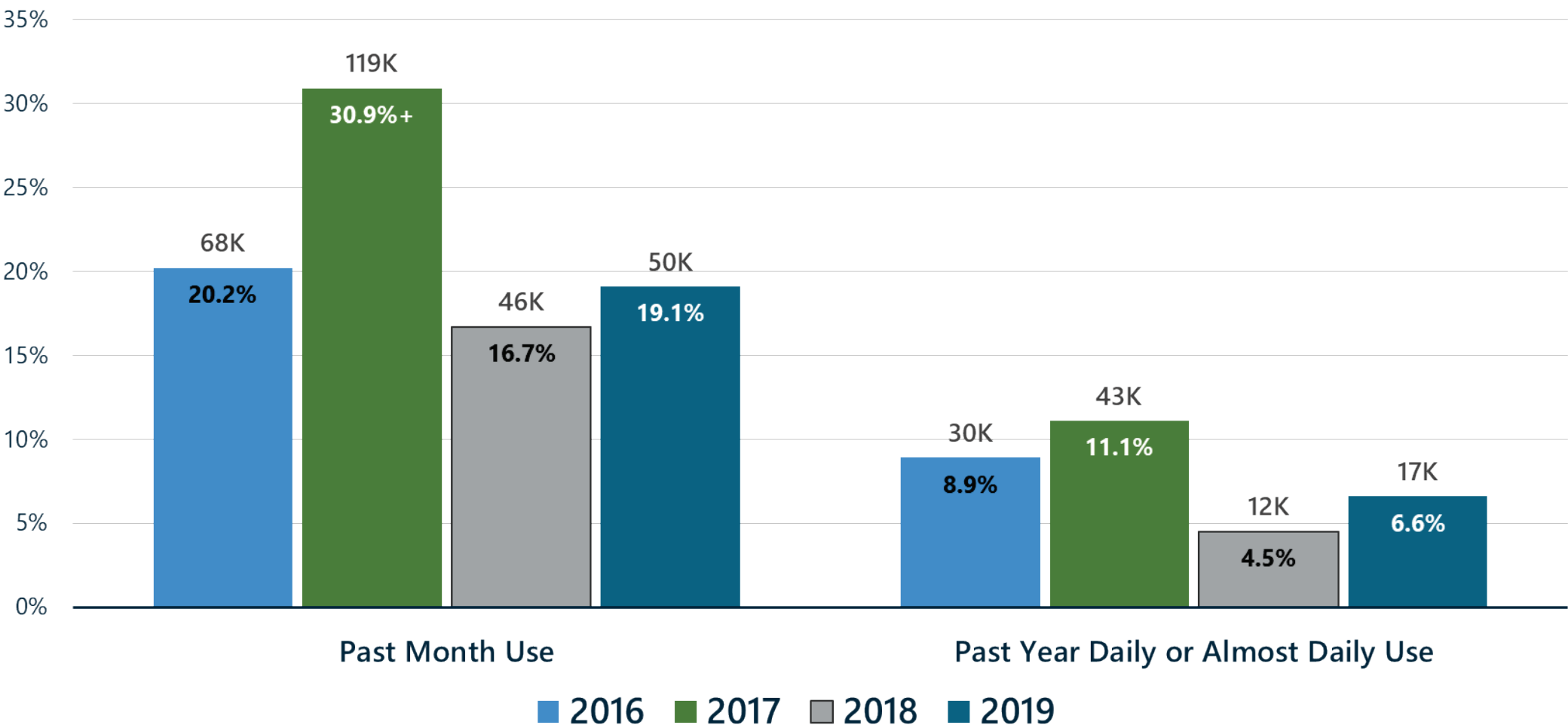
PAST MONTH, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



+ Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Marijuana Use among Veteran Young Adults (18-25 y.o.)

PAST MONTH/YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18-25

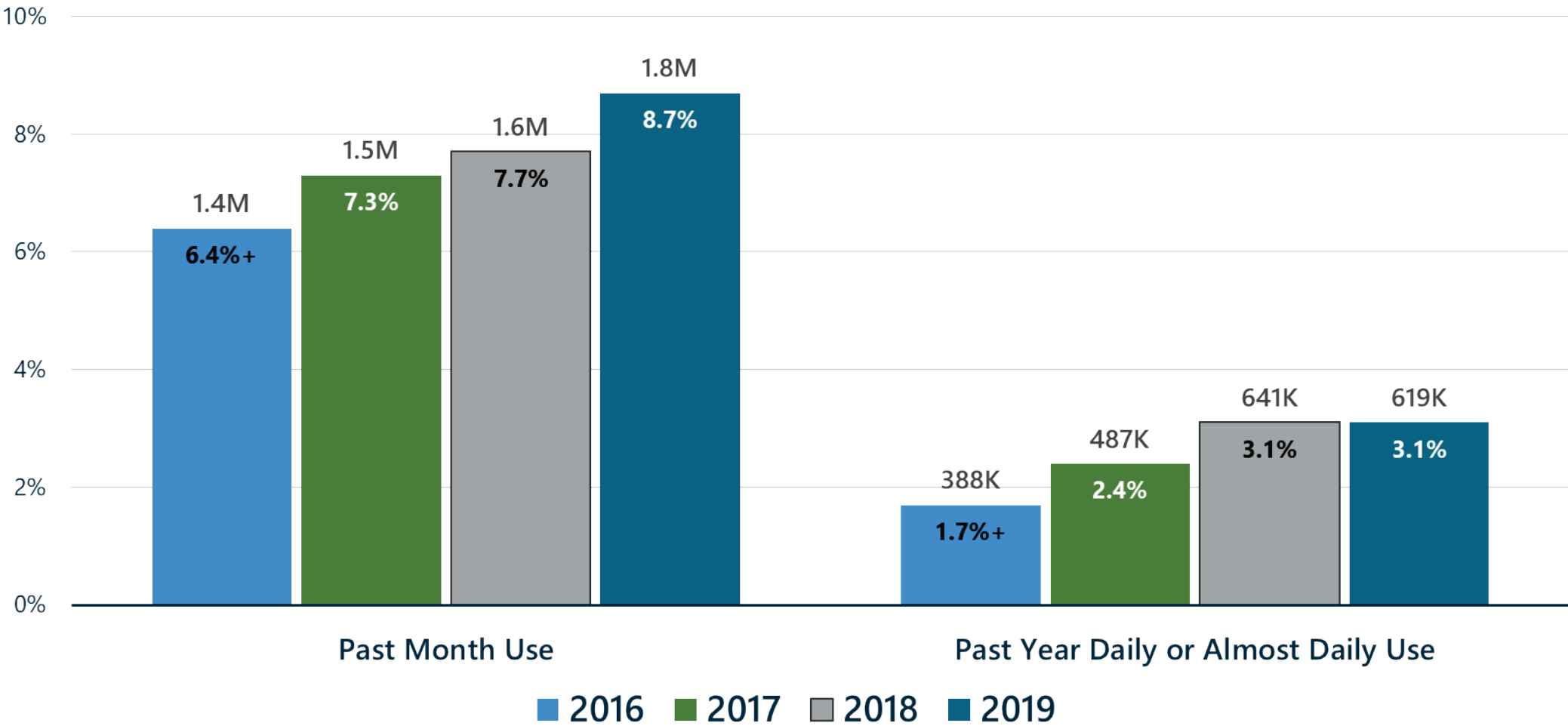


+ Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.



Marijuana Use among Veteran Adults 26+

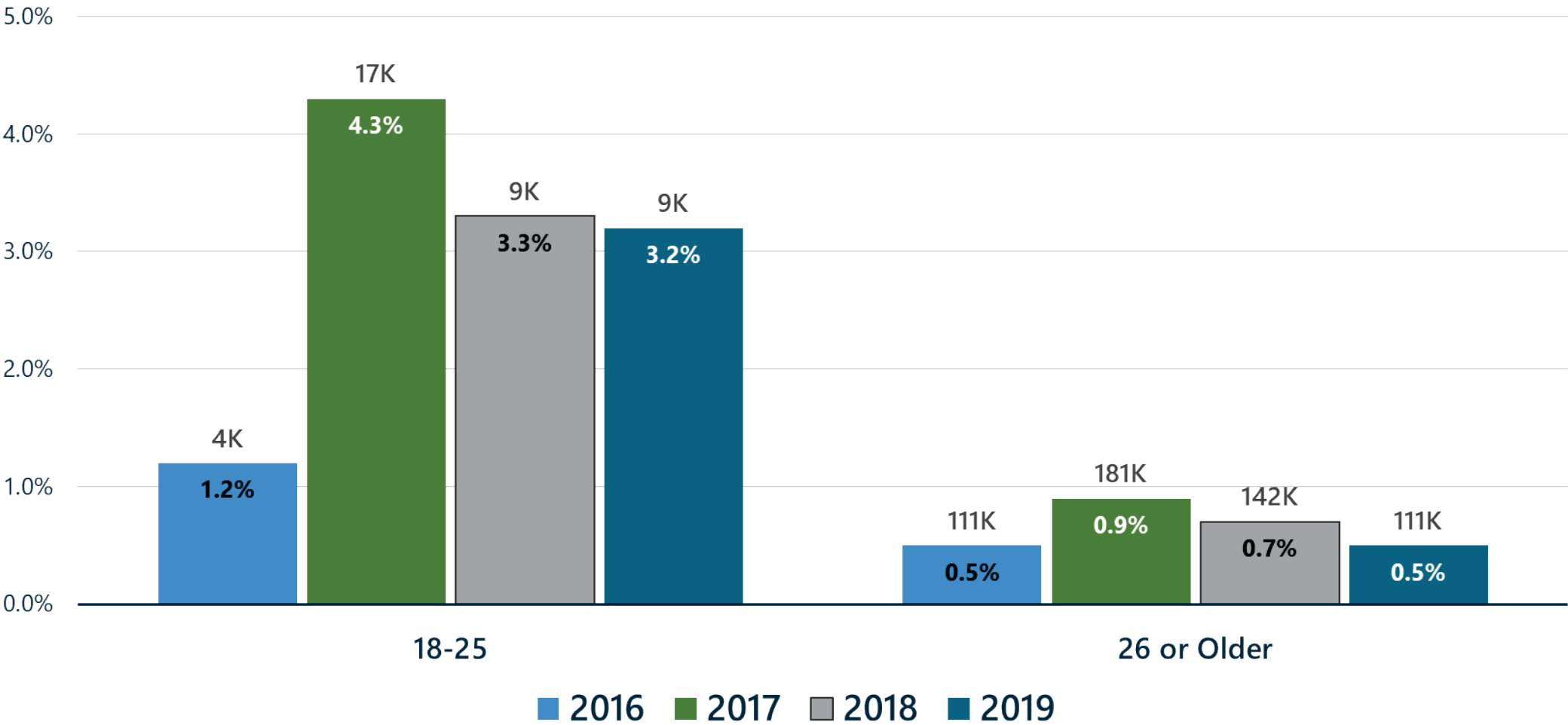
PAST MONTH/YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 26+



+ Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Marijuana Use Disorder among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



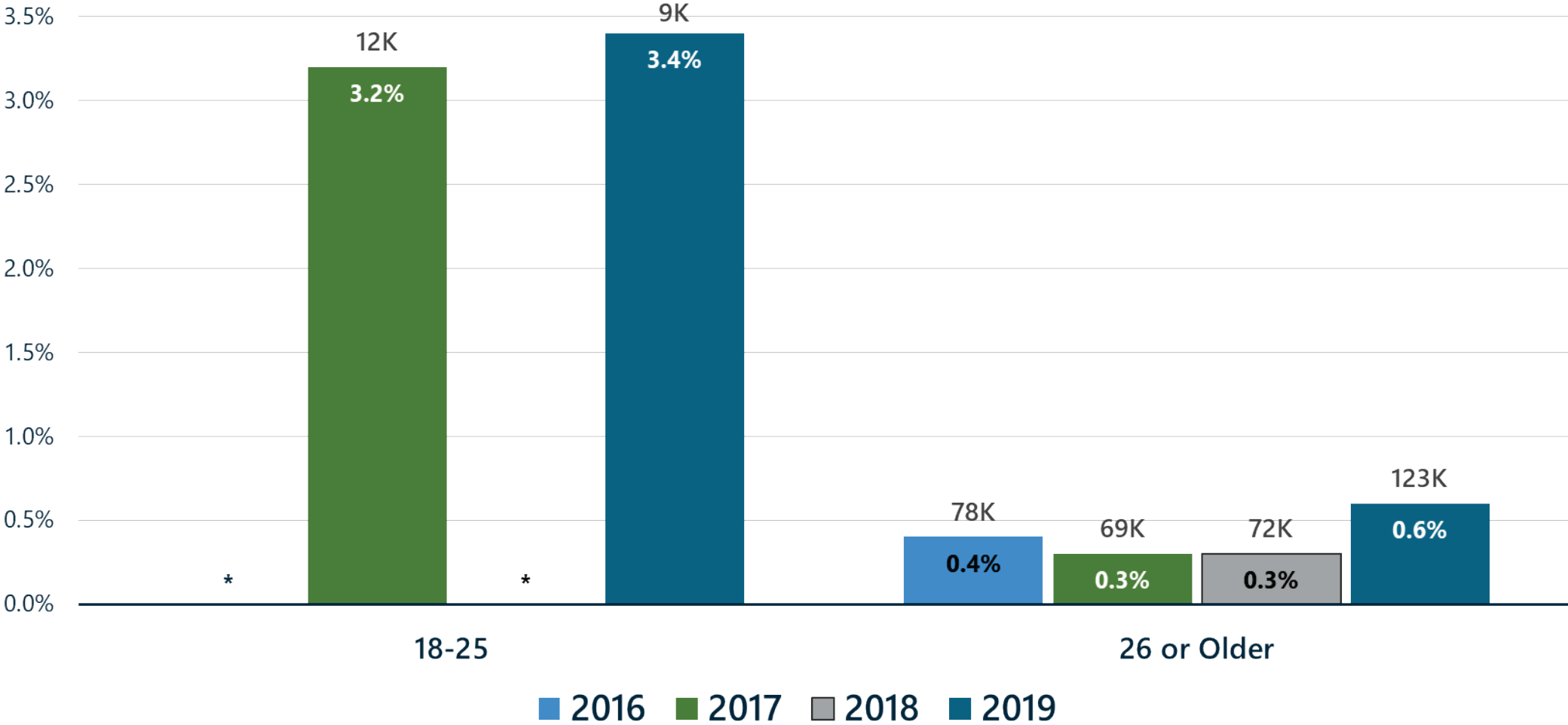
No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Marijuana Use: Health Concerns

- While past month marijuana significantly decreased for veterans ages 18-25 when compared to 2017, past month marijuana use for veterans ages 26 and older continues to increase.
- Past month marijuana use and past year daily or almost daily use of marijuana for veterans ages 26 and older has significantly increased as compared to 2016.
- Marijuana use disorder for veterans ages 26 and older continues to slightly decline.

Cocaine Use among Veterans

PAST MONTH, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

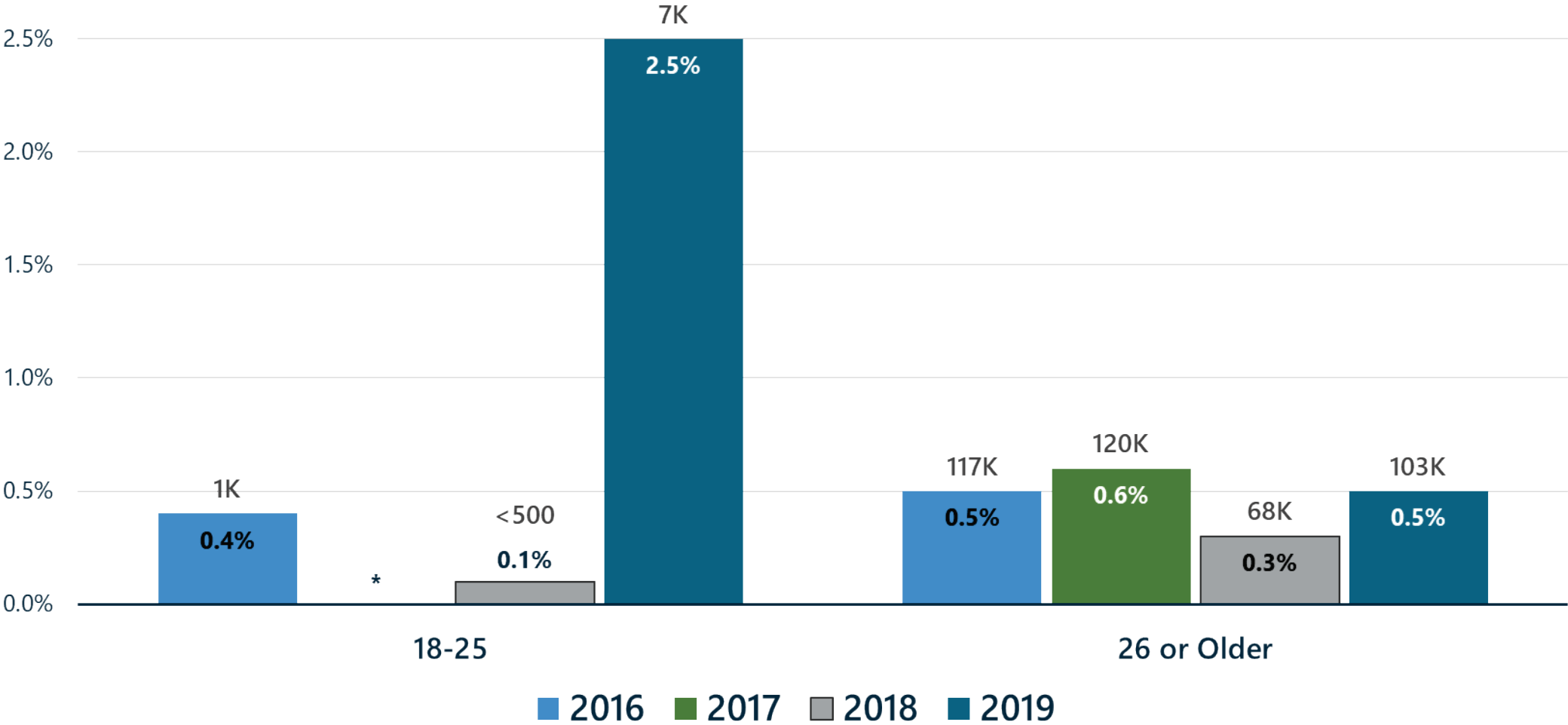


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Methamphetamine Use among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

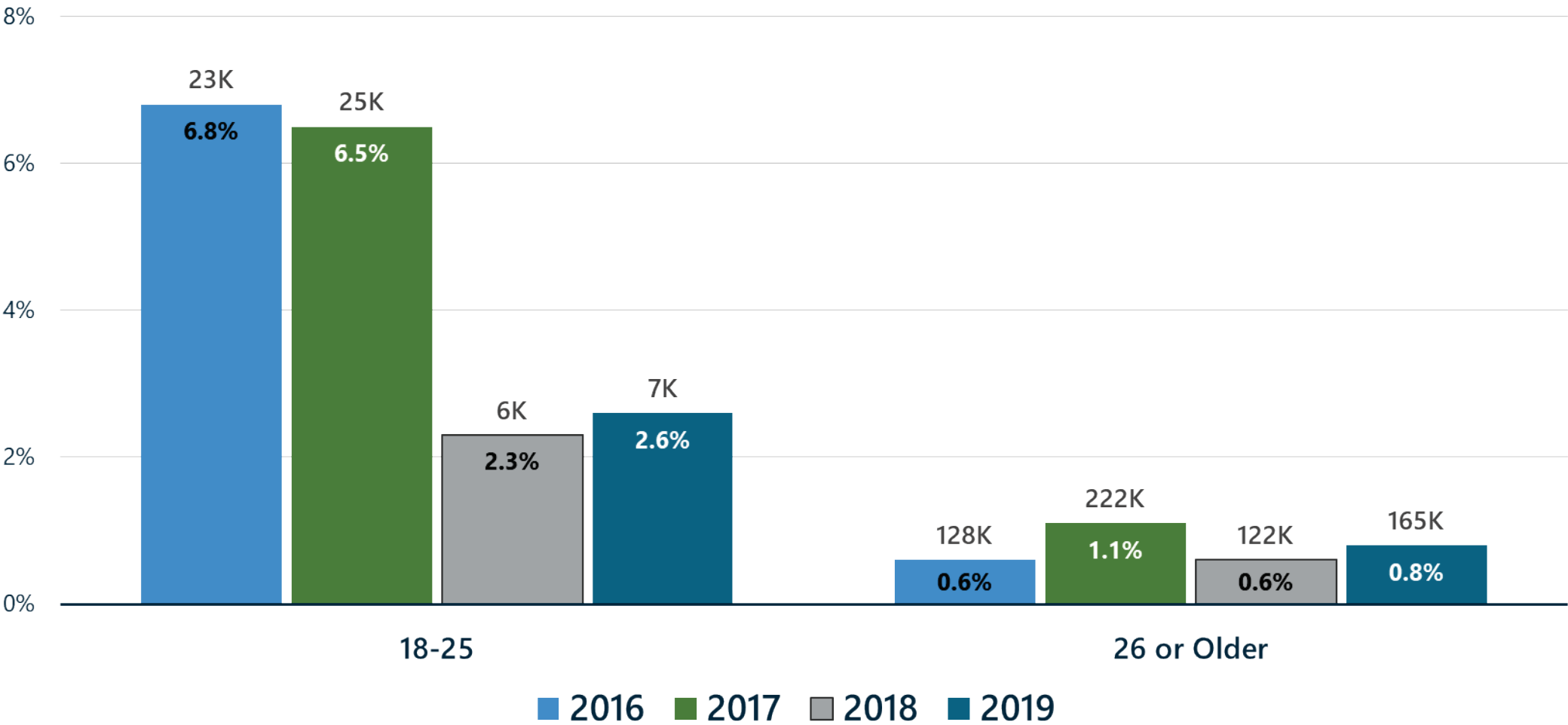


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Misuse of Prescription Stimulants among Veterans

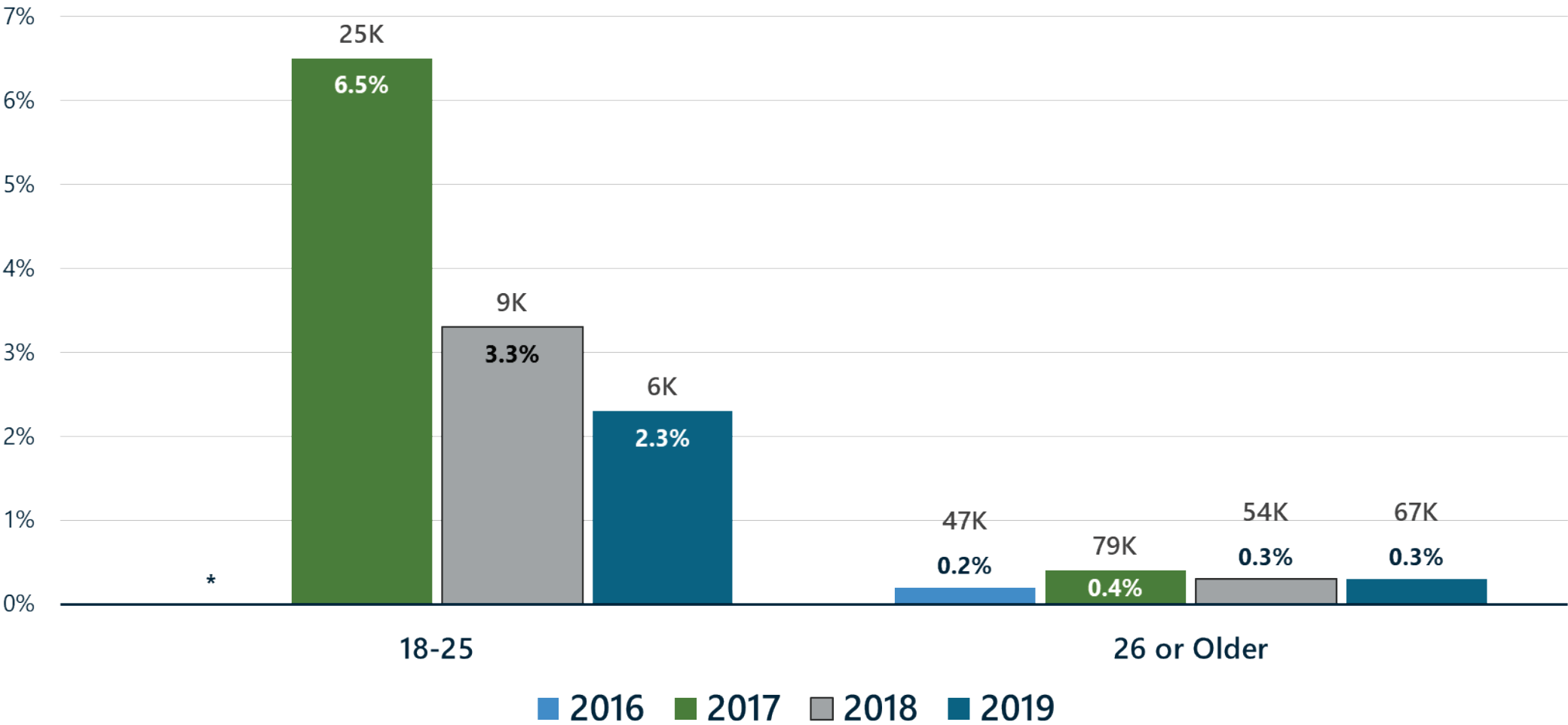
PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

LSD Use among Veterans for All Age Groups

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



* Estimate not shown due to low precision.
Estimates represent past year use of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide),
a type of hallucinogen.

No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019
estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

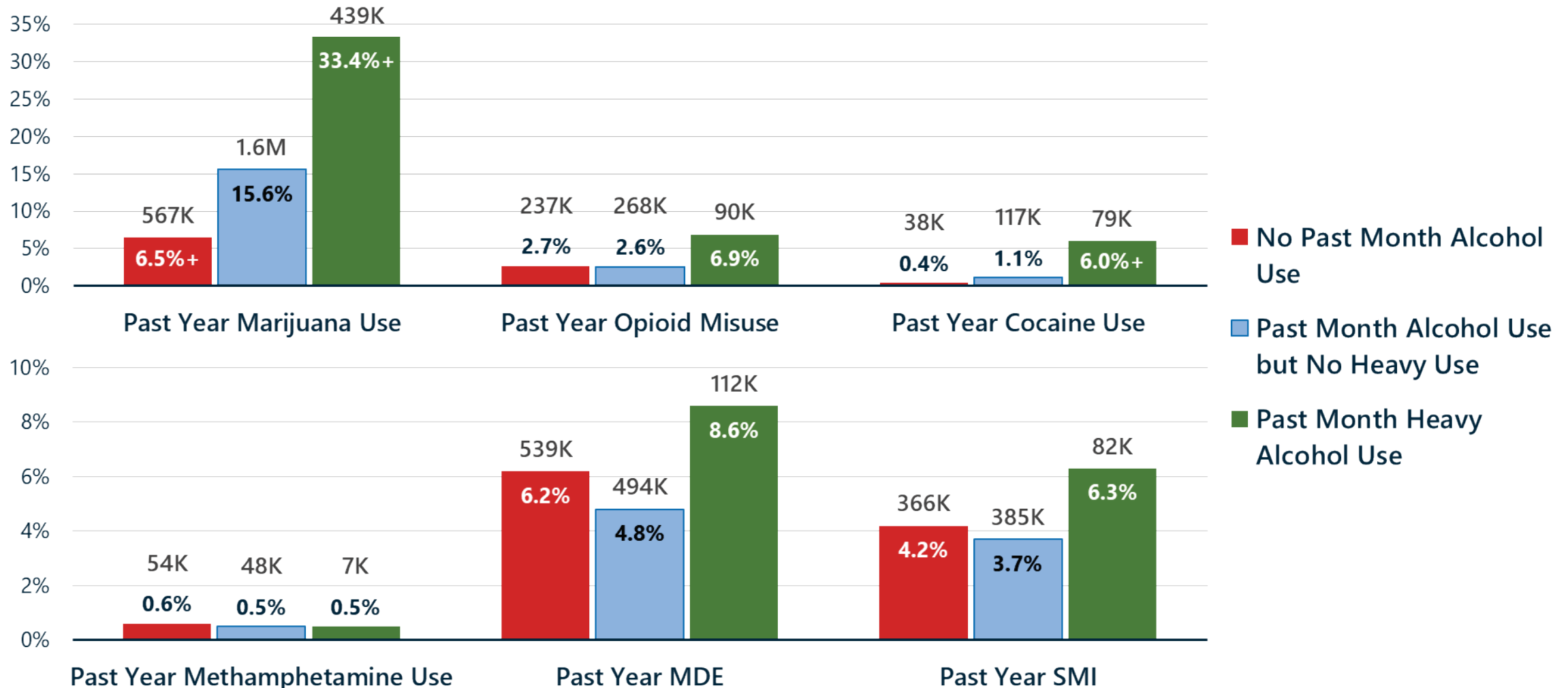
Summary: Other Substance Use in the United States in 2019 Compared to 2018

- Misuse of prescription stimulants among veterans of all ages has slightly increased when compared to 2018.
- Methamphetamine misuse and cocaine misuse among veterans has also slightly increased.
- LSD misuse has slightly decreased for veterans ages 18-25 and remained stable in veterans ages 26 and older.

Polysubstance Use and Mental Illness

Alcohol Use Related to Other Substance Use, MDE and SMI among Veterans

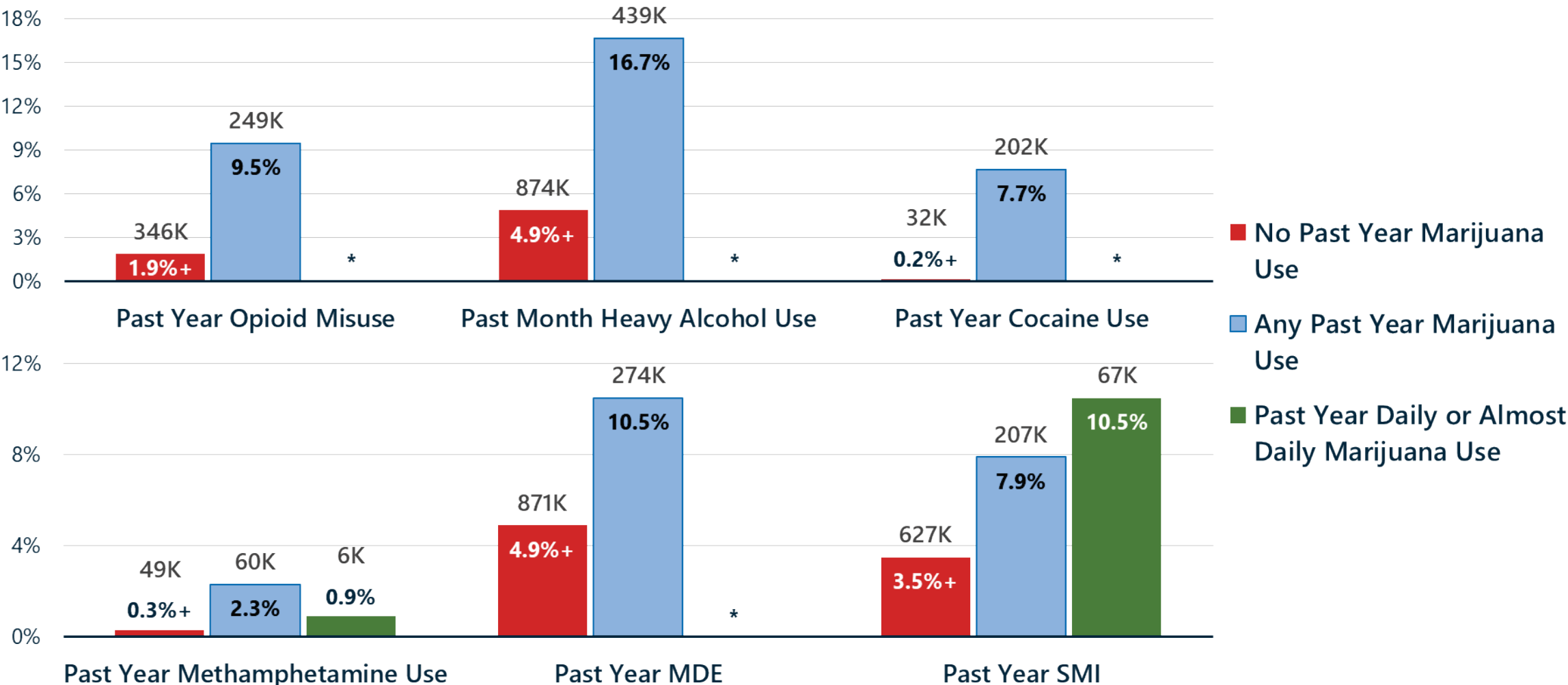
PAST YEAR/MONTH, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



+ Difference between this estimate and the estimate for people with past month use but not heavy alcohol use is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Marijuana Use Related to Other Substance Use, MDE and SMI among Veterans

PAST YEAR/MONTH, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

+ Difference between this estimate and the estimate for people with past year marijuana use is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Comparison of Rates of Mental/Substance Use Disorders Associated with Marijuana Use among Veterans: National vs. Colorado Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2019)

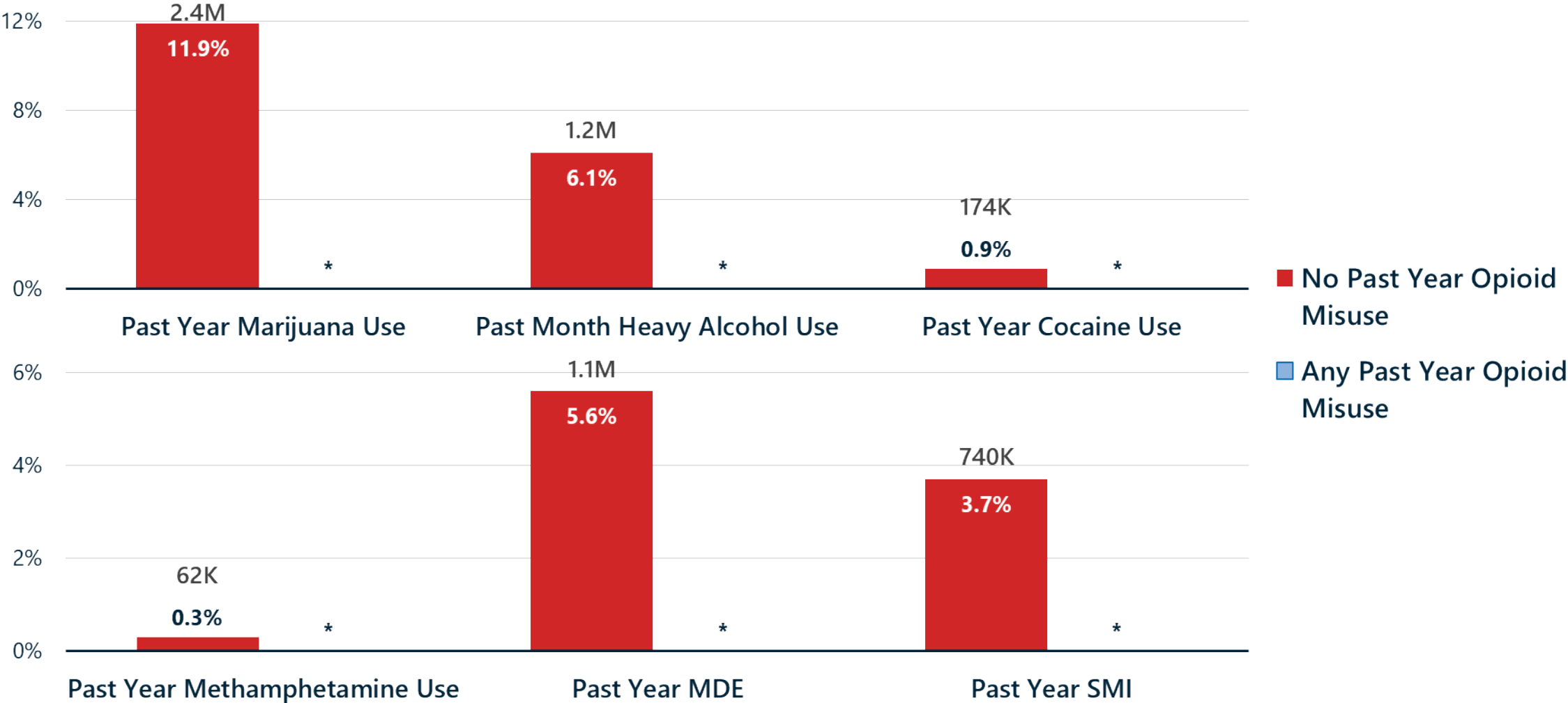
Measure/Age Group	National (%)	Colorado (%)	National vs. Colorado P-value
Past Month Marijuana Use (18-25 y)	19.1	*	*
Past Year Daily Marijuana Use (18-25y)	6.6	*	*
Past Month Marijuana Use (≥ 26y)	8.7	*	*
Substance Use Disorder (SUD) (18+)	6.2	*	*
Co-occurring SUD and SMI (18+)	0.8	*	*

* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

Estimates for Colorado are direct single-year estimates for 2019 and will differ from model-based estimates using data from 2018 and 2019.

Opioid Misuse Related to Other Substance Use, MDE and SMI among Veterans

PAST YEAR/MONTH, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

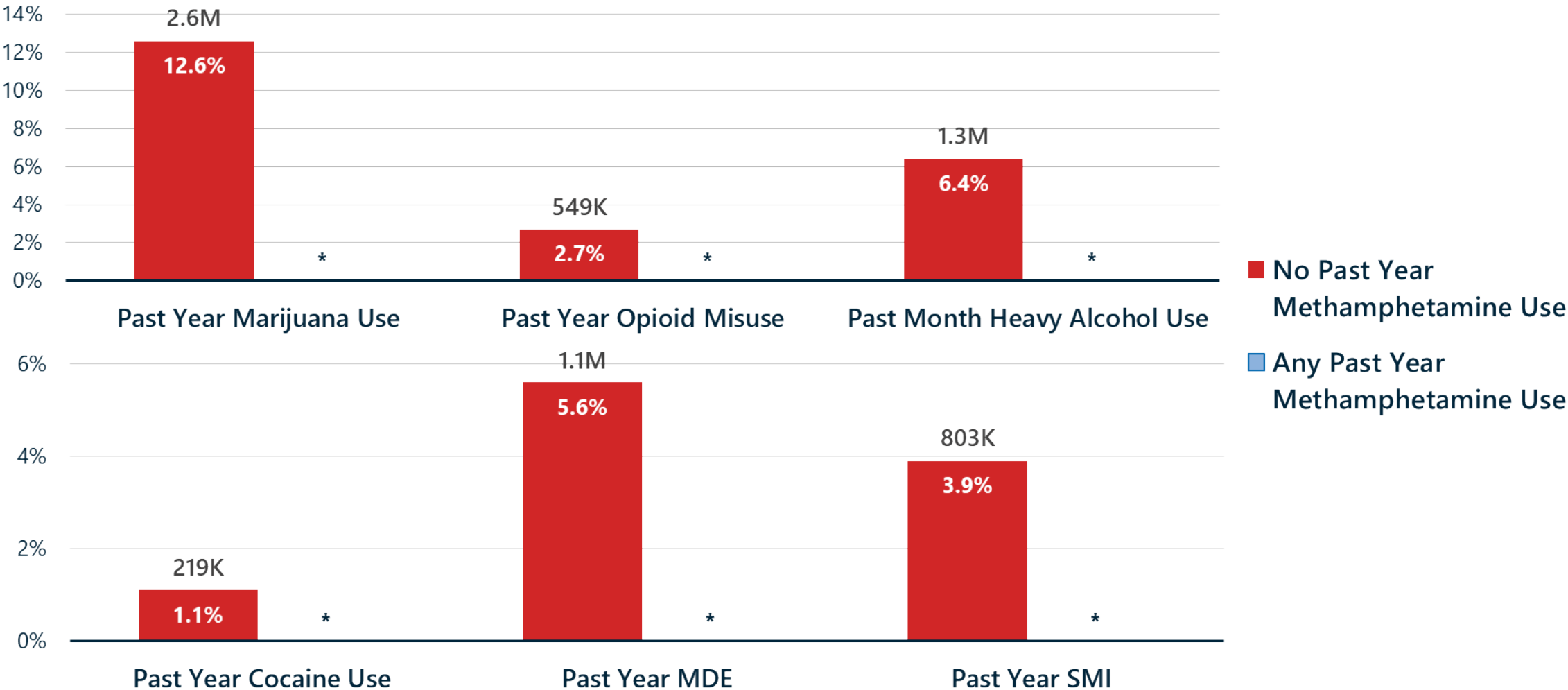


* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between estimate for people without past year opioid misuse and the estimate for people with past year opioid misuse are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Methamphetamine Use Related to Other Substance Use, MDE and SMI among Veterans

PAST YEAR/MONTH, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



* Estimate not shown due to low precision.

No differences between estimate for people without past year methamphetamine use and the estimate for people with past year opioid misuse are statistically significant at the .05 level.

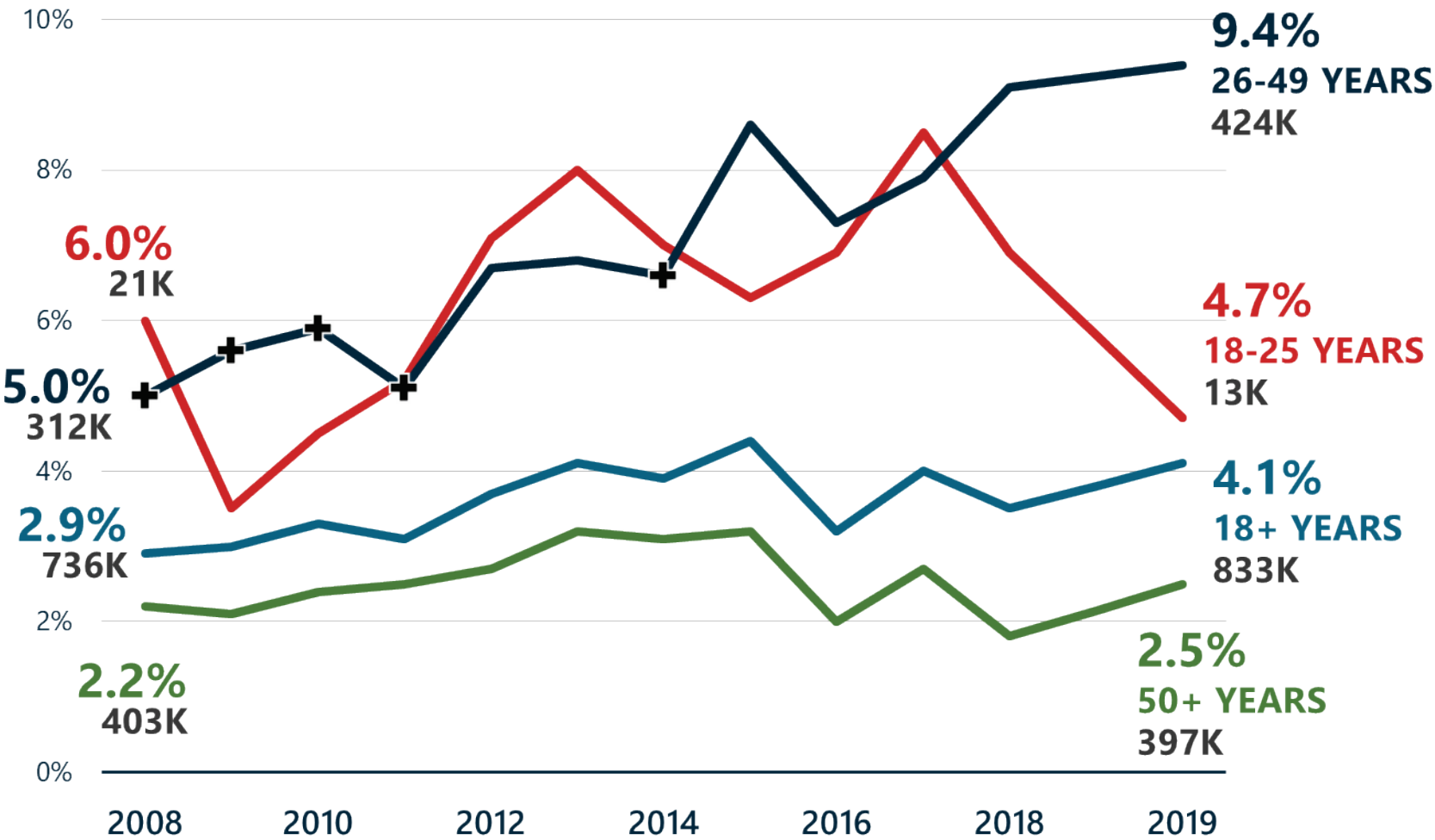
Summary

- Polysubstance use is common—if a person is having problems with one substance, they are likely using and may be having problems with other substances
- Treatment providers must screen for and treat all substance use disorders and problem substance use
- Association of substance misuse and mental illness is clear—we must all do a better job of helping Americans understand these relationships and risks

Mental Health

Serious Mental Illness (SMI) among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2008-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

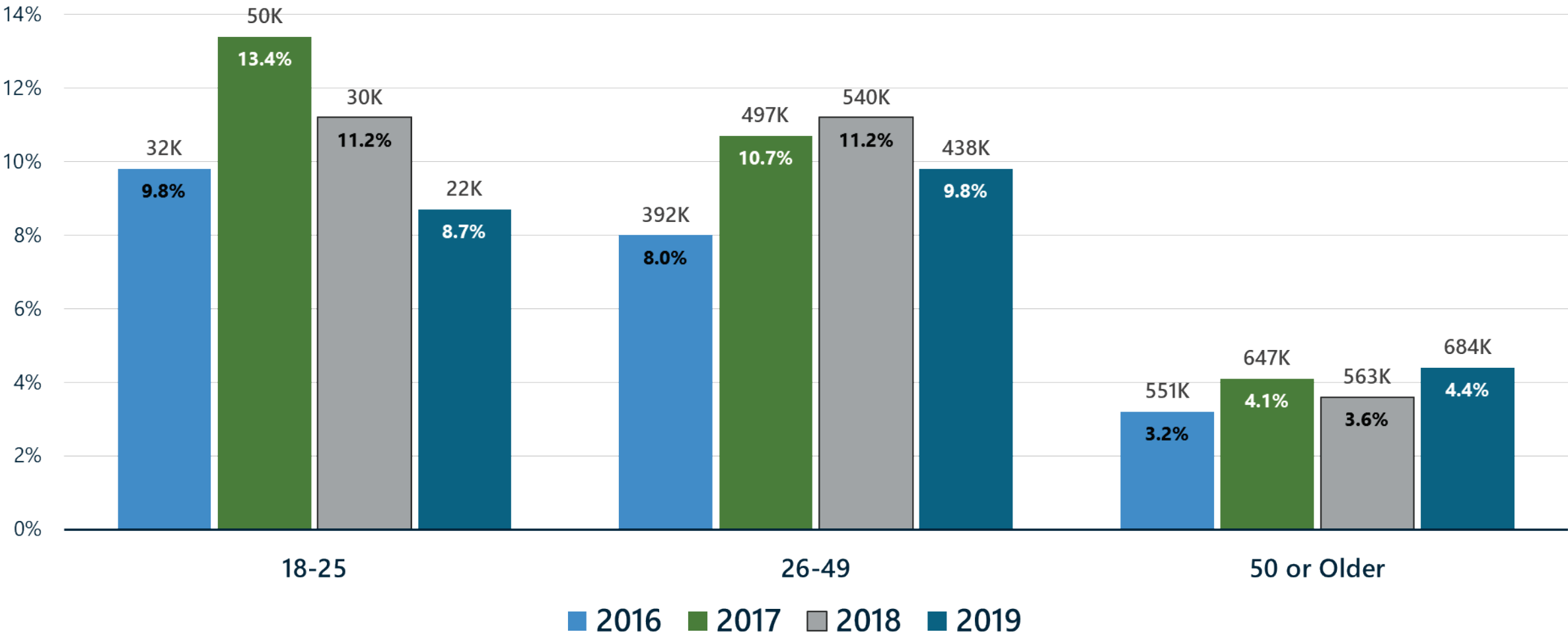


72.6%
308,000 VETERANS AGED 26-49 WITH SMI RECEIVED TREATMENT IN 2019
27.4% got NO treatment

+ Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Major Depressive Episodes among Veterans

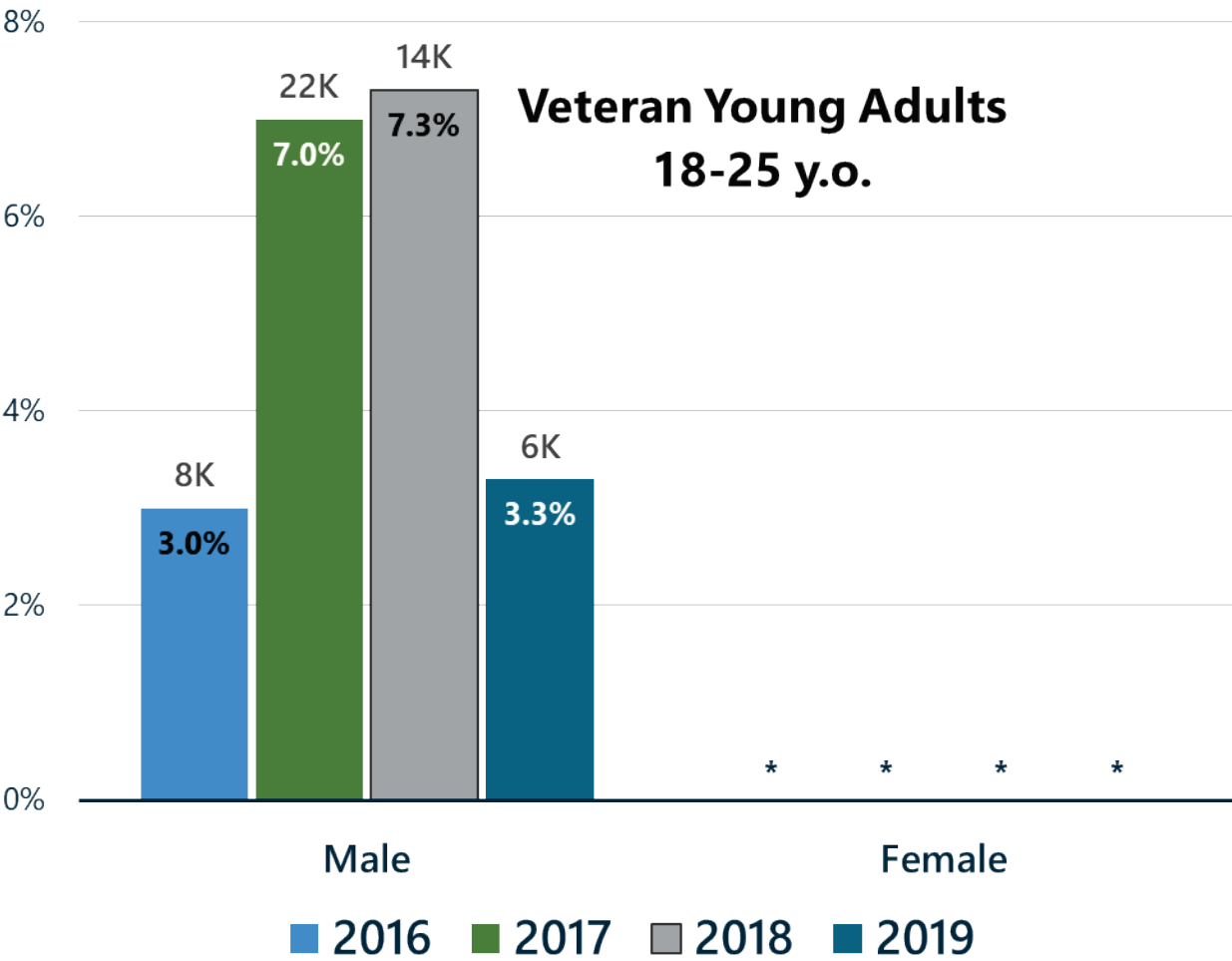
PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



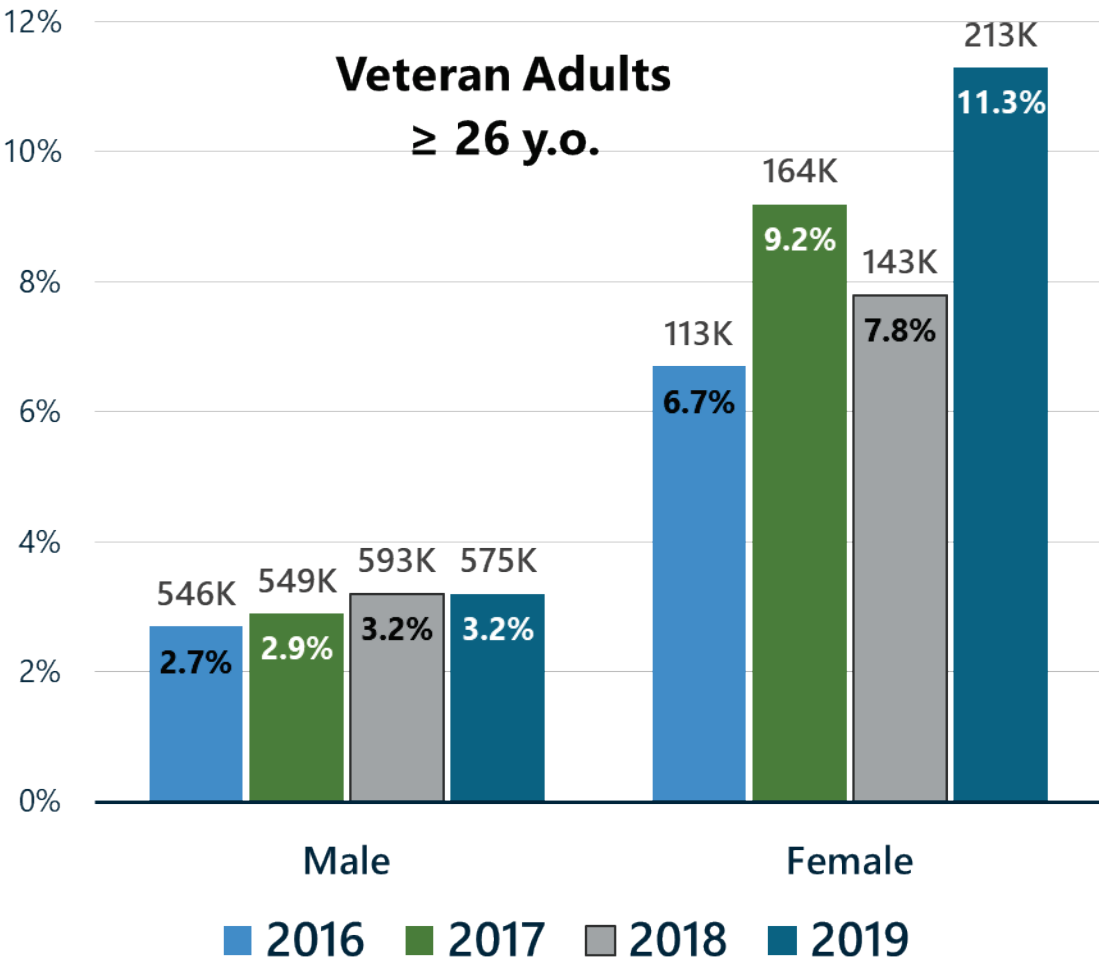
No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Major Depressive Episodes with Severe Impairment among Veteran Adults

PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



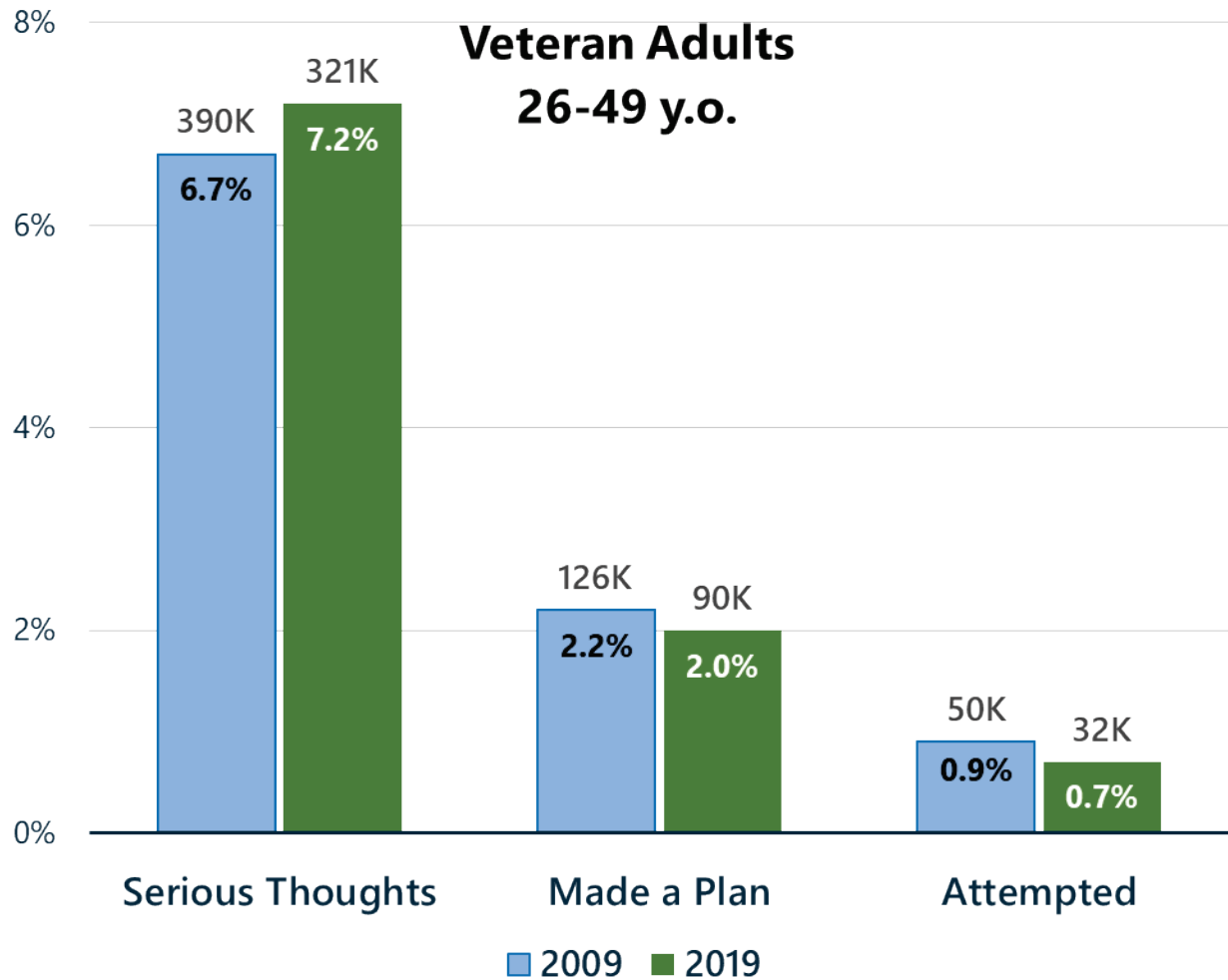
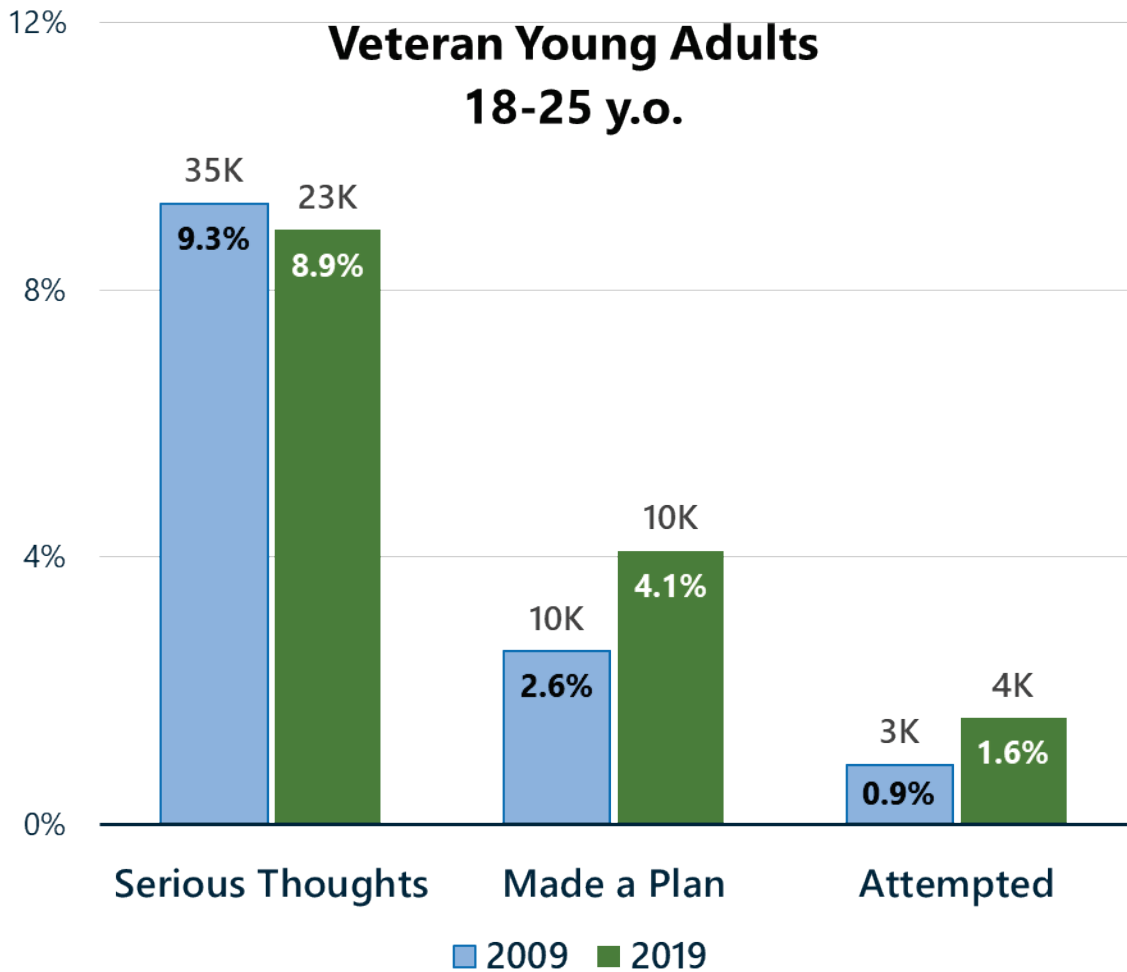
* Estimate not shown due to low precision.



No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Suicidal Thoughts, Plans, and Attempts among Veteran Young Adults (18-25 y.o.) and Veteran Adults (26-49 y.o.)

PAST YEAR, 2009 and 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18-49

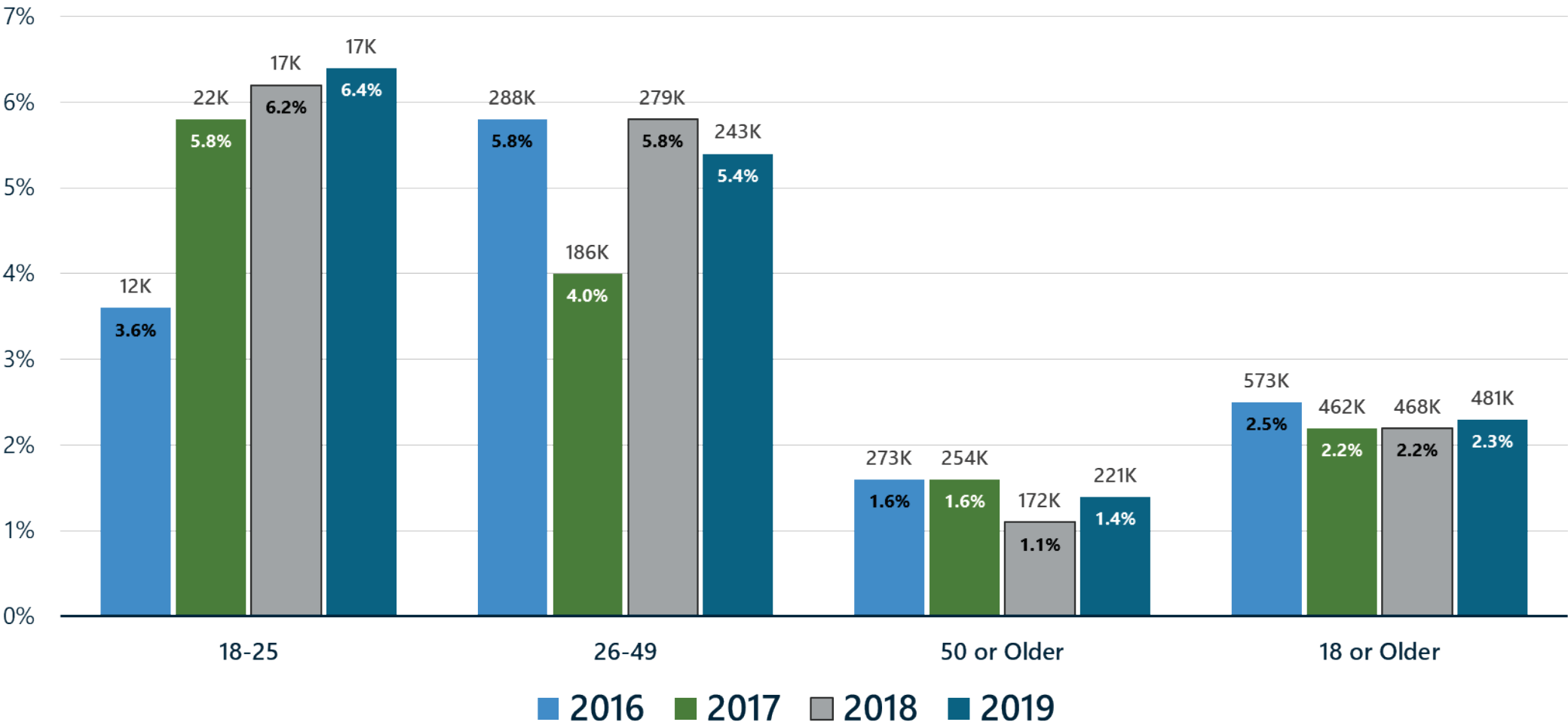


No differences between 2009 estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Co-Occurring Mental and Substance Use Disorders

Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorder and Any Mental Illness in Veteran Adults

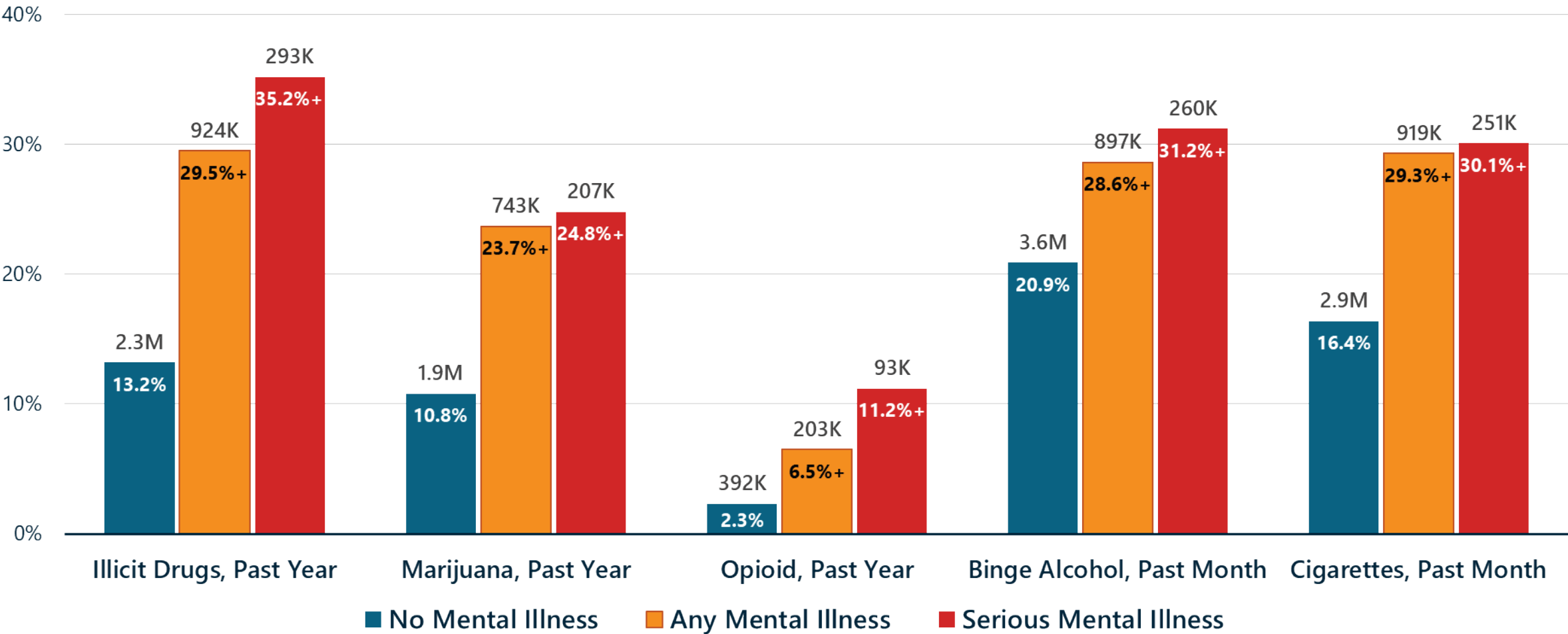
PAST YEAR, 2016-2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



No differences between prior year estimates and the 2019 estimates are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Co-Occurring Issues: Substance Use and Mental Illness among Veteran Adults

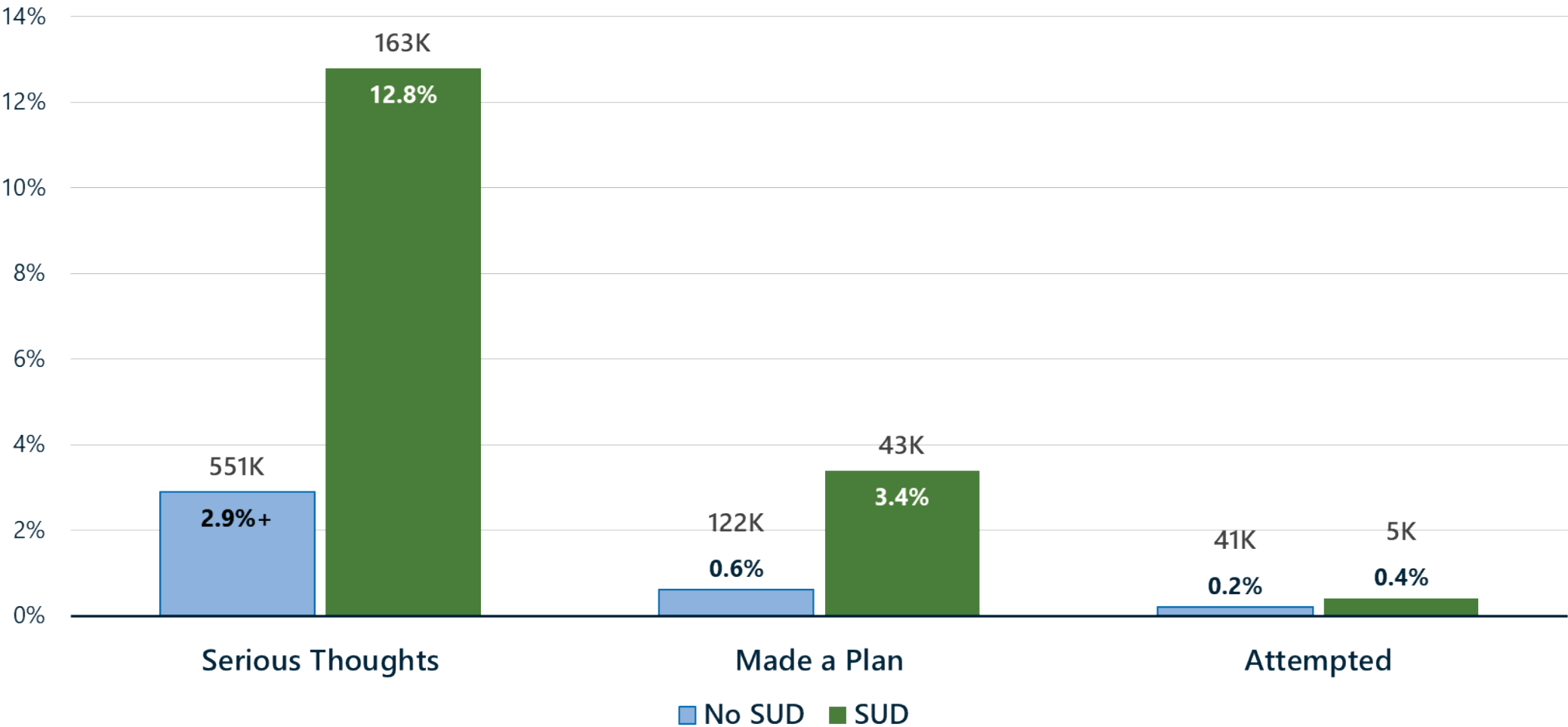
PAST YEAR/MONTH, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



+ Difference between this estimate and the estimate for adults without mental illness is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is Associated with Suicidal Thoughts, Plans, and Attempts among Veterans

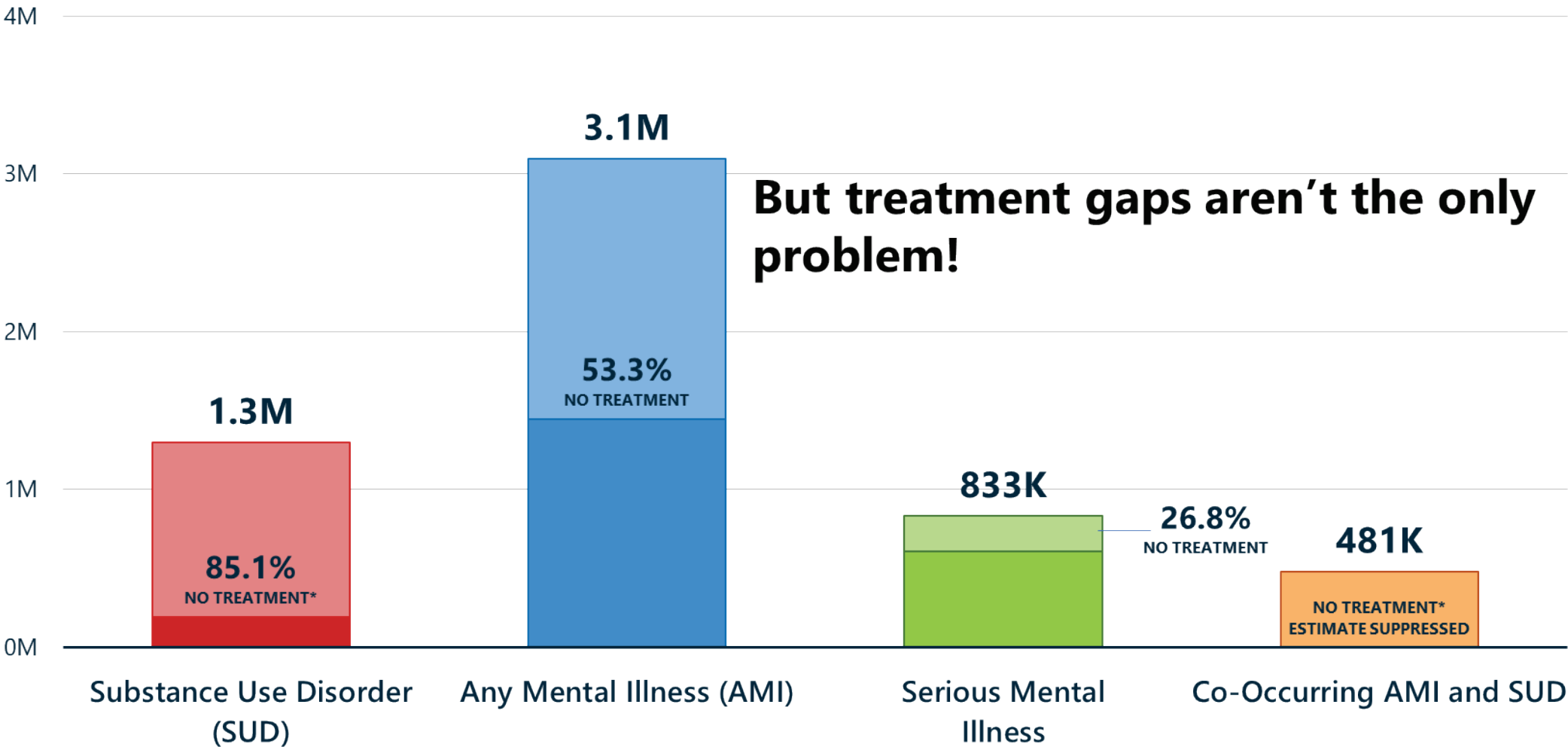
PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+



+ Difference between this estimate and the estimate for adults with SUD is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Mental and Substance Use Disorders among Veterans: High Prevalence/Huge Treatment Gaps

PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

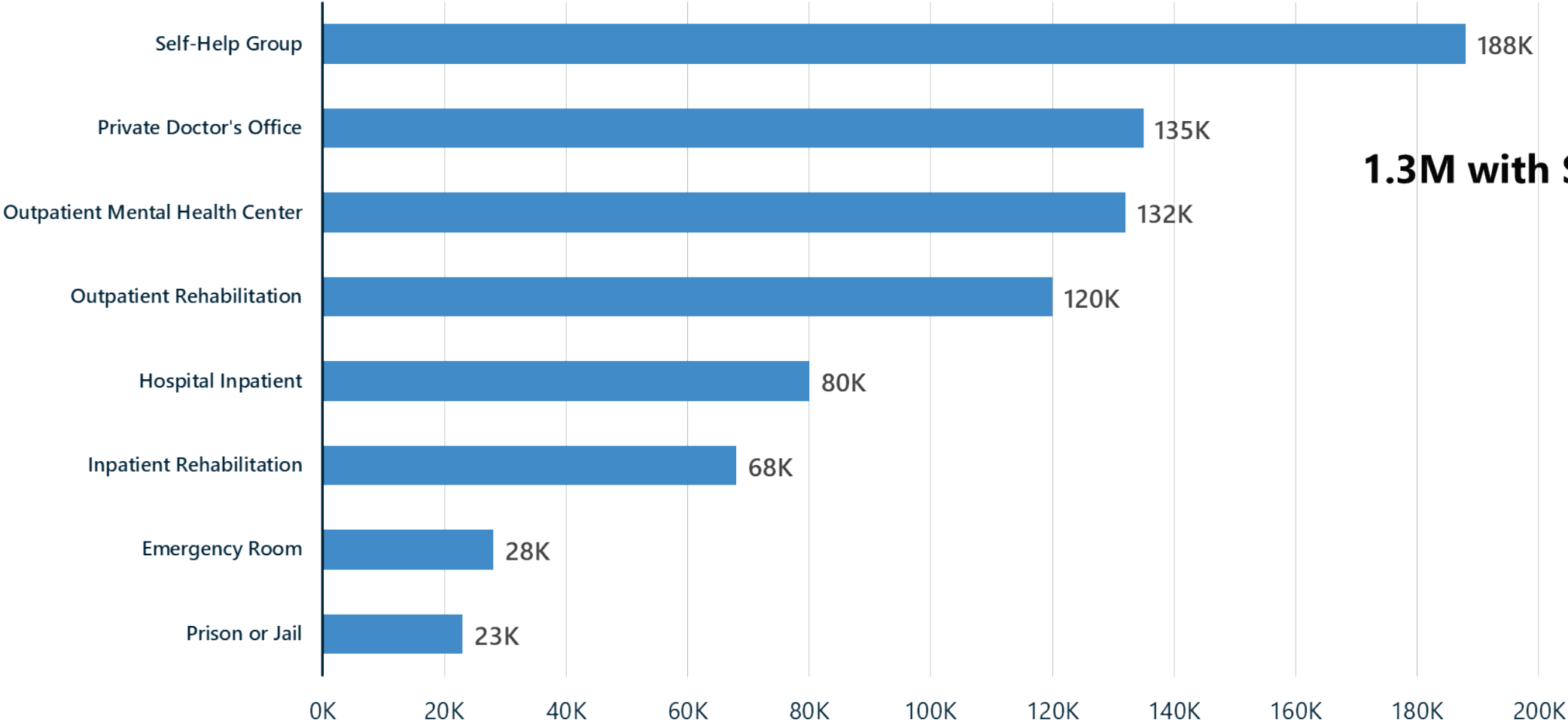


* No Treatment for SUD is defined as not receiving treatment at any location, such as a hospital (inpatient), rehabilitation facility (inpatient or outpatient), mental health center, emergency room, private doctor's office, self-help group, or prison/jail.

Locations Where Substance Use Treatment was Received among Veterans

PAST YEAR, 2019 NSDUH, Veteran 18+

1.3M with SUD



Locations where people received substance use treatment are not mutually exclusive because respondents could report that they received treatment in more than one location in the past year.

Summary: Mental Health/Co-Occurring Issues in the United States in 2019

- Serious mental illness among veterans ages 26-49 has increased when compared to 2014 but is decreasing among veterans ages 18 - 25.
- Suicidal thoughts and behaviors remain stable in veterans ages 18-49 between 2009 and 2019.
- Major depressive episodes with severe impairment is increasing for veterans ages 26 and older, especially for women.
- Substance use disorder significantly increased suicidality among veterans ages 18 and older.
- Self-help groups ranked higher than outpatient rehabilitation facilities for the locations where substance use treatment was received.

What Can We Do Now?

- SAMHSA must use its resources to benefit as many as possible:
- Community based treatment and recovery services
- Build on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic model
 - Crisis intervention services/suicide prevention resources
 - Integrated mental health, substance use, general medical services
 - Children's mental health services-linkages with schools
- Keep telemedicine/telehealth in place including use of telephone where audio/visual is not possible and pay for these services at same rate as face-to-face—no reduction in reimbursement because it is telemedicine
- Continue and expand as possible technical assistance and training to behavioral health providers—clinicians and peers

It's Up to Us Now

- Let's work as hard as we can to make decision-makers understand mental health and substance use needs in America—pre and post-COVID-19
- Let's keep the virus in mind in planning and implementing our services so that we can safely deliver care, but we cannot ignore the overall health needs of the American people—that is not an option
- Let's work to meet the mental health/substance use needs of our people:
 - Restore our systems—mental health and substance use disorder services are 'essential services'
 - Expand our treatment and community recovery support systems permanently
 - Every American life is precious and every American death—regardless of the cause is a terrible loss