

Zombie epidemic as stressed-out young women turn to prescription drugs in their millions

- Women prefer taking tranquillisers than illegal drugs



Pressures: More women are taking prescription pills to help them cope with every-day problems

Millions of stressed-out women are taking prescription tranquillisers to help them cope with day-to-day life, leaving them in a zombie-like state, it has emerged.

A study by the U.N. revealed that far more females than males are opting to swallow pills from the doctor, instead of taking illegal drugs like cannabis, to help them cope with life pressures, including childcare, work and money worries.

The World Drug Report said it was a 'growing health problem' for many countries - not just Britain.

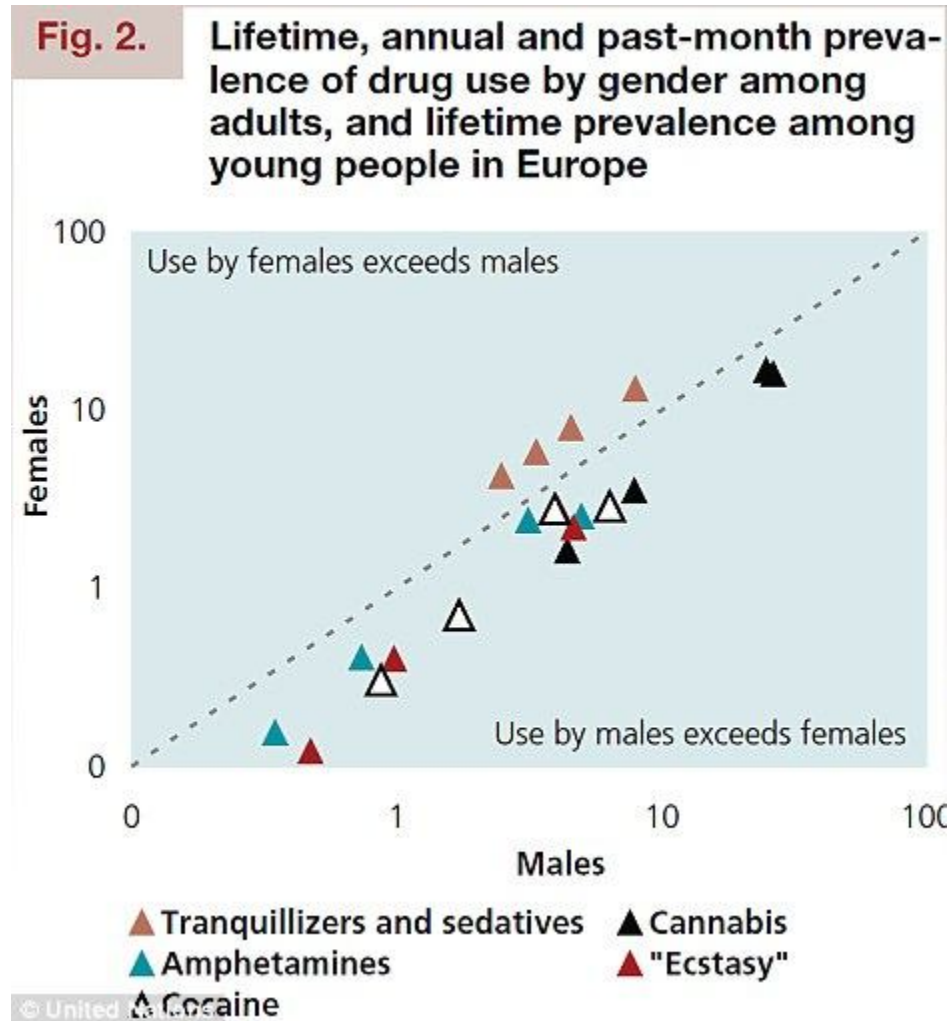
The report shows that 4.2 per cent of women in Europe abuse tranquillisers compared with 1.6 per cent who smoke cannabis.

It stated that: 'while illicit drug use among males in general greatly exceeds that among females, the non-medical use of tranquillizers and sedatives among females, in those countries where data are available (in South America, Central America and Europe), is a notable exception to the rule (and exceeds the use of cannabis).'

The tranquillisers and sedatives, which must be prescribed by a doctor, include the benzodiazepine family, diazepam, flunitrazepam or temazepam, methaqualone and barbiturates.

The report also states that in some cases these drugs are also increasingly being used in combination with other illegal substances to enhance their effect.

Cannabis is the world's most popular drug with 224 million users worldwide.



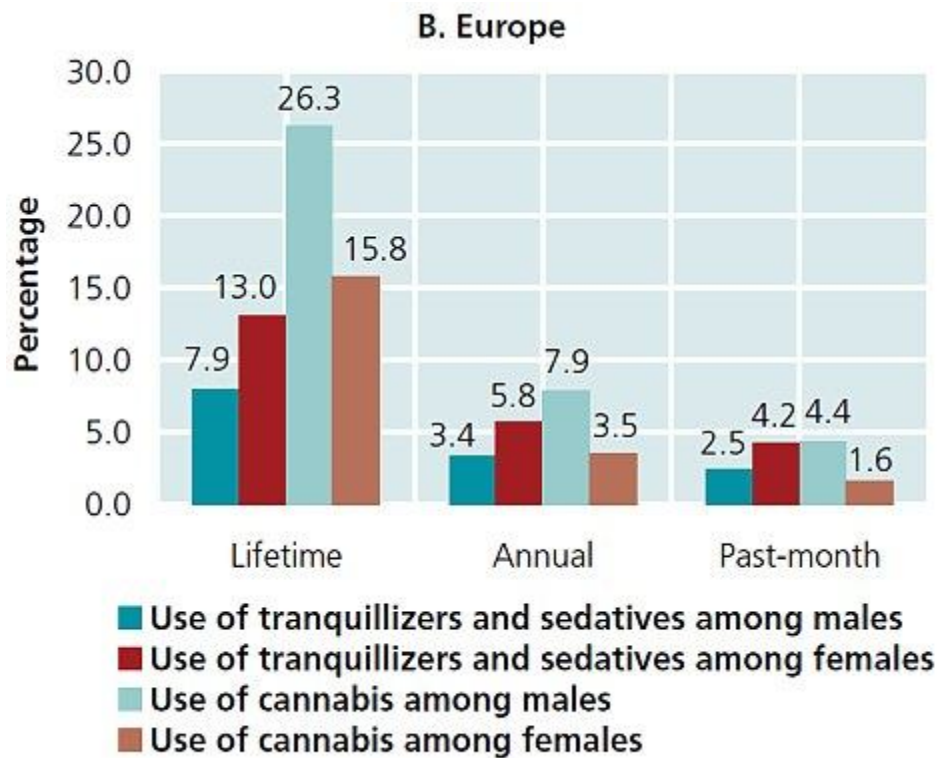
On the up: A graph showing how more women and than men are choosing tranquillisers and sedatives who tend to opt for illegal drugs

Family Doctor Association chairman Dr Peter Swinyard told the Metro: 'Some women just need something to help them get through the day and deal with all the stresses of life such as looking after children and work or the lack of it'.

He said women were generally better than seeing their doctor about a problem.

Last year, it emerged that prescriptions of highly addictive painkillers have increased six-fold over the past two decades.

GPs in Britain handed out 1.38 billion prescriptions for the drugs, known as opioid analgesics, in 2009 – compared with just 228 million in 1991.



Worrying: The graph shows that in Europe 4.2 per cent of women took tranquillisers and sedatives while cannabis use among females is much lower

Meanwhile, the UN's report concluded that although drug abuse across the world is stagnant, it still kills about 200,000 people a year.

It said that about 230million people - or five per cent of the world's population - used illegal drugs at least once in 2010.

It also said not enough money was being spent on helping drug users, saying fewer than one in five people needing help actually get it.