

The NSDUH Report

November 5, 2004

In Brief

- In 2003, 20.0 percent of females aged 12 to 17 (2.4 million) reported taking part in one or more serious fights at school or work during the past year, an increase over the percentage reporting this behavior in 2002 (16.2 percent)
- The proportion of female youths participating in group-on-group fights increased from 13.5 percent in 2002 to 16.8 percent in 2003
- Past year substance use was the most prevalent delinquent behavior among females aged 12 to 17, with 36.5 percent of females (4.5 million) reporting past year alcohol use and 21.9 percent of females (2.7 million) reporting past year illicit drug use

Female Youths and Delinquent Behaviors

The 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asked youths aged 12 to 17 to report how often they engaged in the following delinquent behaviors in the past year: (a) serious fighting at school or work, (b) taking part in a fight where a group of friends fought against another group, (c) attacking someone with the intent to seriously hurt them, (d) stealing or trying to steal something worth more than \$50, (e) selling illegal drugs, or (f) carrying a handgun.¹ Youths were also asked whether they had used cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, or other illicit drugs in the past year. Illicit drugs include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. Between 1989 and 1998, the number of arrests for index crimes involving juvenile females nationally increased 50 percent^{2,3} from 284,000 to 427,000 arrests; however, there has been a slight decline since 1998.⁴ In 2002, juvenile females continued to make up a notable proportion of the arrests for

Table 1. Percentages of Female Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Reported Participating in Delinquent Behaviors One or More Times in the Past Year, by Type of Behavior, Age, and Race/Ethnicity: 2003

	Serious Fight at School/Work	Group-on-Group Fight	Attacking with Intent to Hurt	Stealing Something \$50+	Selling Drugs	Carrying a Handgun
Total						
Females 12 to 17	20.0	16.8	6.2	3.0	2.1	1.2
Age (years)						
12 or 13	19.4	18.9	5.4	1.1	0.3	0.7
14 or 15	22.8	18.8	7.1	3.9	2.6	1.4
16 or 17	17.8	12.7	6.3	3.9	3.3	1.5
Race/Ethnicity*						
White	17.7	16.1	4.9	3.0	2.3	1.0
Black or African American	26.1	18.8	11.3	2.9	1.6	0.8
Hispanic or Latino	23.0	18.1	6.8	2.9	1.7	2.1
Asian	14.3	9.8	3.8	3.9	0.3	2.1

index crimes nationally: approximately 22 percent of all female arrests and 20 percent of all juvenile arrests (Table 40 of *2002 Uniform Crime Reports*).⁵

Prevalence of Fighting among Female Youths

In 2003, 20.0 percent of females aged 12 to 17 (2.4 million) reported taking part in one or more serious fights at school or work during the past year (Table 1). The percentage of 12- or 13-year-old females and 16- or 17-year-old females who participated in a serious fight at school or work was significantly lower than the percentage of 14- or 15-year-old females (19.4 and 17.8 percent vs. 22.8 percent).

A smaller percentage (16.8 percent) of female youths reported participating in a group-on-group fight in the past year. Both 12- or 13-year-old females and 14- or 15-year-old females were more likely than 16- or 17-year-old females to participate in a group-on-group fight in the past year (18.9 and 18.8 percent vs. 12.7 percent) (Table 1). Asian female youths were significantly less likely (9.8 percent) than white (16.1 percent), black (18.8 percent), or

Hispanic (18.1 percent) female youths to have participated in a group-on-group fight in the past year.

Attacking someone with the intent to hurt them was less frequent among female youths than other fighting behavior. About 6.2 percent of females aged 12 to 17 had attacked someone with the intent to hurt them in the past year; however, the proportion of black female youths who reported participating in this behavior was significantly higher (11.3 percent) than white (4.9 percent), Hispanic (6.8 percent), or Asian (3.8 percent) female youths.

Prevalence of Other Delinquent Behavior among Female Youths

An estimated 3.0 percent of females aged 12 to 17 reported stealing something worth more than \$50, 2.1 percent reported selling drugs on one or more occasions, and only 1.2 percent reported carrying a handgun in the past year (Table 1).

Stealing was more common among older female youths. Only 1.1 percent of females aged 12 or 13 reported

stealing or trying to steal something worth \$50 or more compared with females aged 14 or 15 and those aged 16 or 17 (both at 3.9 percent). Similarly, the percentage of female youths reporting that they had sold drugs on at least one occasion in the past year increased with age.

Past Year Substance Use

Past year substance use was the most prevalent delinquent behavior among females aged 12 to 17. An estimated 36.5 percent of females (4.5 million) reported using alcohol in the past year, 21.9 percent of females (2.7 million) reported using an illicit drug, and 19.5 percent of females (2.5 million) reported past year cigarette use (Figure 1). An estimated 14.6 percent of females aged 12 to 17 reported using marijuana in the past year, and 14.0 percent had used an illicit drug other than marijuana.⁶ Past year marijuana use and use of any illicit drugs other than marijuana were more prevalent among 16- or 17-year-old females than among 12- or 13-year-old females (Figure 2). Past year nonmedical pain

Figure 1. Percentages of Female Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Reported Having Used Selected Substances in the Past Year, by Substance: 2003

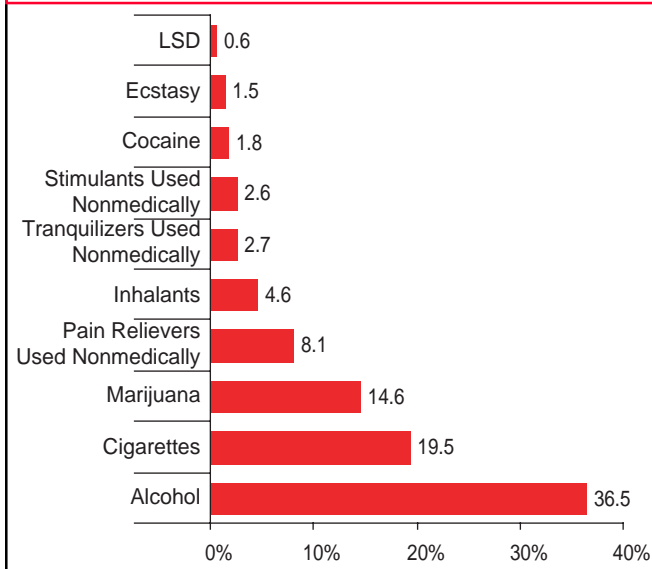
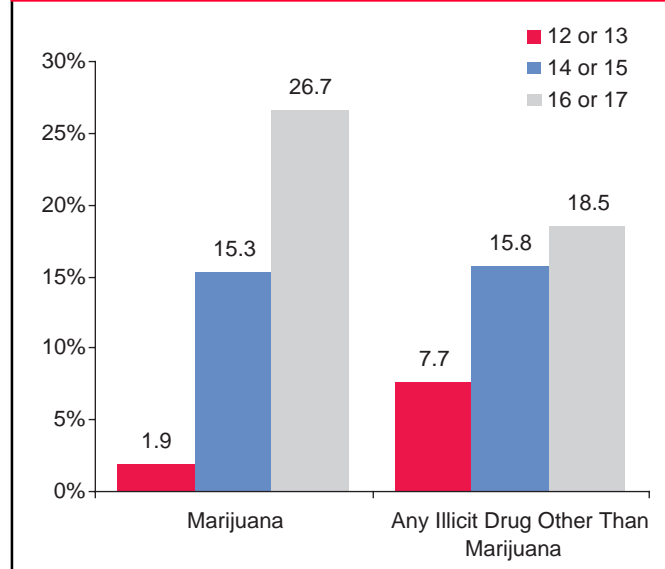


Figure 2. Percentages of Female Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Reported Having Used Marijuana or Any Illicit Drug Other Than Marijuana in the Past Year, by Age: 2003



reliever use (8.1 percent) and inhalant use (4.6 percent) also were prevalent among female youths (Figure 1).

Recent Trends in Delinquent Behaviors

The percentage of female youths participating in a serious fight at work or school increased from 16.2 percent in 2002 to 20.0 percent in 2003. Similarly, the proportion of female youths participating in group-on-group fights increased from 13.5 percent in 2002 to 16.8 percent in 2003. In comparison, the percentage of female youths selling drugs in 2003 (2.1 percent) declined from that in 2002 (2.6 percent).

Several past year substance use behaviors among female youths also declined between 2002 and 2003. The percentage of female youths reporting past year cigarette use declined from 21.0 percent in 2002 to 19.5 percent in 2003. In addition, the percentage of female youths reporting past year Ecstasy and LSD use declined between 2002 and 2003; Ecstasy use declined from 2.4 to 1.5 percent, and LSD use declined from 1.1 to 0.6 percent.

End Notes

1. Youths were asked how many times in the past year they had participated in each delinquent behavior. The response options were: (a) 0 times, (b) 1 or 2 times, (c) 3 to 5 times, (d) 6 to 9 times, and (e) 10 or more times in the past year. This report looks at youths who reported engaging in the behavior one or more times in the past year.
2. Index crimes include murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation. (1999). *Crime in the United States: 1998 Uniform Crime Reports*. Retrieved June 1, 2004, from <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/98cius.htm>
4. Between 1998 and 2002, the number of juvenile females arrested for index crimes declined to 375,000.
5. Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2003). *Crime in the United States: 2002 Uniform Crime Reports*. Retrieved April 17, 2004, from <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/02cius.htm>
6. Any illicit drug other than marijuana includes cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or any prescription-type drugs used nonmedically regardless of marijuana/hashish use; marijuana/hashish users who also have used any of the other drugs are included.

Figure and Table Notes

* Estimates for American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents are not shown due to small sample sizes.

Source: SAMHSA, 2003 NSDUH.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 persons aged 12 or older, of whom 11,028 were female youths aged 12 to 17. The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their place of residence.

The NSDUH Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, and by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.)

Information and data for this issue are based on the following publication and statistics:

Office of Applied Studies. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964, NSDUH Series H-25). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available online: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov>

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002 and 2003 surveys should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.

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