

The NSDUH Report

May 13, 2005

Mother's Serious Mental Illness and Substance Use among Youths

In Brief

- In 2002 and 2003, an annual average of 2 million (12 percent) mothers living with youths aged 12 to 17 had serious mental illness (SMI) during the past year
- Among youths aged 12 to 17, 3 million (12.1 percent) youths lived with a mother who had SMI
- Youths living with a mother who had SMI had an increased risk of past month alcohol or illicit drug use compared with youths living with a mother who did not have SMI

Although substance use and serious mental illness (SMI) tend to occur together among adults^{1,2} and parental substance use is associated with an increased risk of substance use in the offspring,^{3,4} research findings are not conclusive about whether substance use among youths is associated with parental mental illness.^{5,6} This report focuses on the association between mother's SMI and substance use among youths aged 12 to 17.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) includes a subsample of parents and children who live in the same household. This report examines data from females aged 18 or older who reported living with at least one biological, step, adoptive, or foster child aged 12 to 17; data from children aged 12 to 17 who lived with a biological, step, adoptive, or foster mother; and data from mother-child pairs sampled within the same household based on these age and relationship criteria.

NSDUH asks persons aged 18 or older questions to assess SMI during the 12 months

prior to the survey. Individuals are classified as having SMI if at some time during the past 12 months they had a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder that met *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) criteria for a disorder⁷ and resulted in a functional impairment that substantially interfered with or limited one or more major life activities. NSDUH measures SMI using the K6 distress questions.^{8,9} NSDUH also asks persons aged 12 or older to report their use of illicit drugs or alcohol, including binge alcohol use or heavy alcohol use.¹⁰ The findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2002 and 2003 NSDUH data.

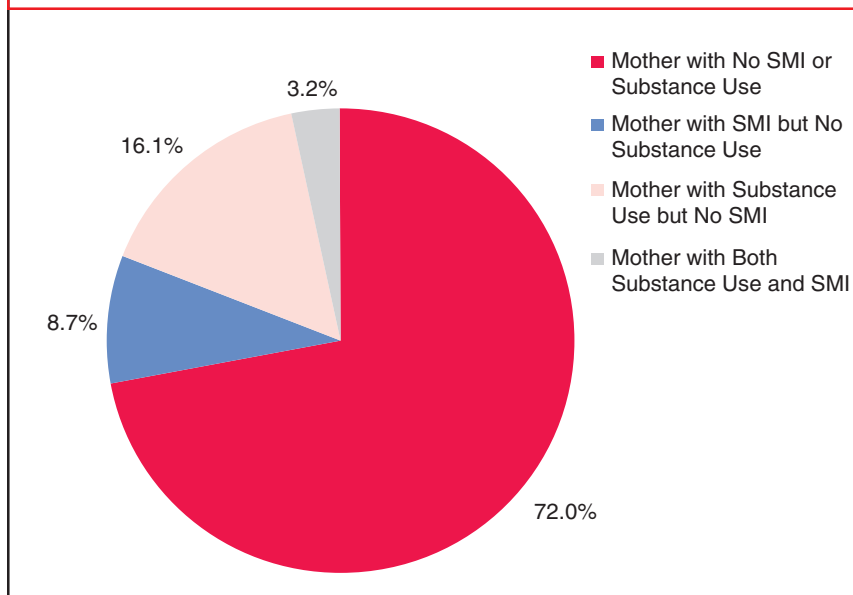
Serious Mental Illness and Substance Use among Mothers

In 2002 and 2003, an annual average of 18 million females aged 18 or older lived with a biological, foster, step, or adoptive child aged 12 to 17. About 11.9 percent of mothers living with youths aged 12 to 17 (2.1 million persons) were classified as having SMI during the past year. About 3.2 percent of mothers living with youths aged 12 to 17 had SMI during the past year and reported illicit drug use, binge alcohol use, or heavy alcohol use during the past month (Figure 1).

Youths Living with a Mother Who Had Serious Mental Illness and Substance Use

In 2002 and 2003, an annual average of 24 million youths aged

Figure 1. Percentages of SMI and Substance Use* among Mothers Living with a Biological, Step, Adoptive, or Foster Child Aged 12 to 17: 2002 and 2003



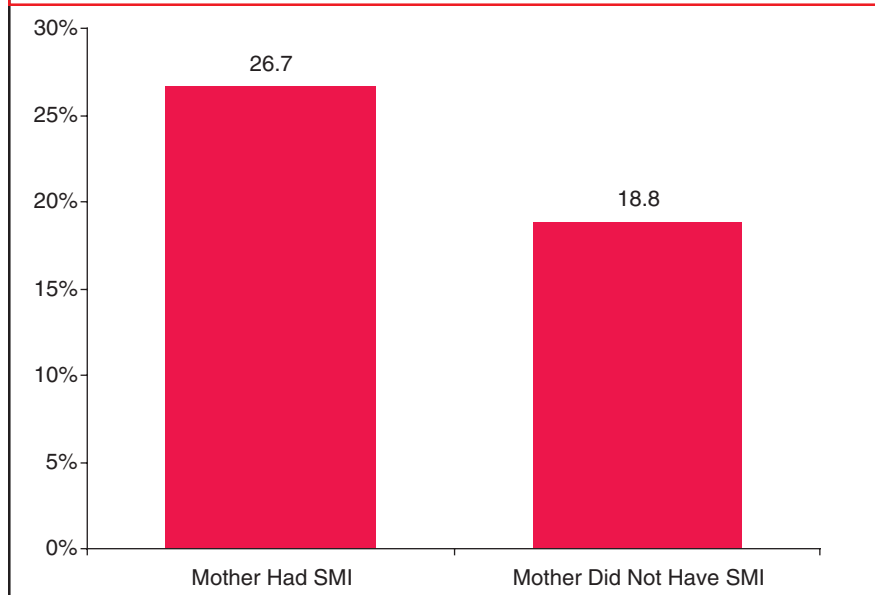
12 to 17 lived with a biological, foster, step, or adoptive mother. Among youths aged 12 to 17 living with a mother, 12.1 percent lived with a mother who had SMI. About 3.4 percent of youths lived with a mother who had SMI and was a binge alcohol user, heavy alcohol user, or past month illicit drug user.

Substance Use among Youths Living with a Mother Who Had Serious Mental Illness or Substance Use

Youths aged 12 to 17 living with a mother who had SMI were more likely to have used alcohol or an illicit drug during the past month (26.7 percent) than youths living with a mother who did not have SMI (18.8 percent) (Figure 2). Youths living with a mother who was a binge alcohol user, heavy alcohol user, or past month illicit

drug user were more likely to report alcohol or illicit drug use during the past month than youths living with a mother who did not use substances, regardless of the mother's SMI status. Considering the influence of both mother's SMI and mother's binge or heavy alcohol use and illicit drug use, the odds of substance use among youths increased 93 percent when the mother was a substance user, as contrasted with when the mother was not a substance user. The odds of substance use among youths increased 44 percent when the mother had SMI, as contrasted with when the mother did not have SMI.¹¹ Among youths living with a mother who had SMI, youths in two-parent households were less likely to have used alcohol or an illicit drug during the past month (23 percent) than youths in single-parent households (33 percent), although this difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 2. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 (Living with a Mother) Who Reported Past Month Alcohol or Illicit Drug Use, by Mother's SMI: 2002 and 2003



End Notes

1. Krishnan, K.R. (2005). Psychiatric and medical comorbidities of bipolar disorder. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 1, 1-8.
2. Grant, B.F., Stinson, F.S., Dawson, D.A., Chou, S.P., Dufour, M.C., Compton, W., Pickering R.P., & Kaplan, K. (2004). Prevalence and co-occurrence of substance use disorders and independent mood and anxiety disorders: Results from the National Epidemiology Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 8, 807-816.
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5. DelBello, M. P., & Geller, B. (2001). Review of studies of child and adolescent offspring of bipolar parents. *Bipolar Disorders*, 3, 325-334.
6. Costello, E. J., Erkanki, A., Federman, E., & Angold, A. (1999). Development of psychiatric comorbidity with substance abuse in adolescents: Effects of timing and sex. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 28, 298-311.
7. American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

8. Kessler, R.C., Barker, P.R., Colpe, L.J., Epstein, J.F., Gfroerer, J.C., Hiripi, E., Howes, M.J., Norman, S.L., Manderscheid, R.W., Walters, E.E., & Zaslavsky, A.M. (2003). Screening for serious mental illness in the general population. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 60, 184-189.
9. For a discussion of the methodology used to generate SMI estimates, see Section B.4.5 of Appendix B in the following document: 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.
10. NSDUH defines illicit drug use as use of marijuana or hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens (including LSD or PCP), heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. Binge alcohol use is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past 30 days. Heavy alcohol use is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days; all heavy alcohol users also are binge alcohol users.
11. A logistic regression model predicting substance use among youths as a function of mother's substance use and mother's SMI showed odds ratios of 1.93 ($p < .0001$) for mother's SMI and 1.44 ($p = .0211$) for mother's substance use.

Figure Notes

* Mother's substance use is defined as the use of any illicit drug in the past month or binge alcohol use or heavy alcohol use.

Source: SAMHSA, 2002 and 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 2002 data are based on information obtained from 68,126 persons aged 12 or older, including interviews with 2,302 youths aged 12 to 17 whose mothers were also interviewed. The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 persons aged 12 or older, including interviews with 2,432 youths whose mothers were also interviewed. 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 publications 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.

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health:*

National findings (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NSDUH Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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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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