

# The NSDUH Report

March 12, 2004

## How Youths Obtain Marijuana

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly known as the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), asked respondents to report their use of marijuana during the year prior to the interview. The 2002 survey also

asked past year marijuana users to report how they obtained marijuana the last time they used it, from whom they obtained it, and where they were when they obtained it.<sup>1,2,3</sup> This report focuses on youths aged 12 to 17, and responses were analyzed by gender and racial/ethnic groups for comparative purposes.<sup>4</sup>

### In Brief

- According to the 2002 NSDUH, almost 4 million youths aged 12 to 17 (16 percent) had used marijuana at least once in the past year
- In 2002, over 60 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 who had used marijuana in the past year obtained their most recently used marijuana for free or shared someone else's marijuana
- The majority of past year marijuana users aged 12 to 17 obtained their most recently used marijuana from a friend

### Prevalence of Marijuana Use among Youths

According to the 2002 NSDUH, almost 4 million youths aged 12 to 17 (16 percent of youths of this age) had used marijuana at least once in the past year (Table 1). The rate of past year marijuana use was similar among male and female youths. White youths were more likely than Hispanic or black youths to have used marijuana in the past year.

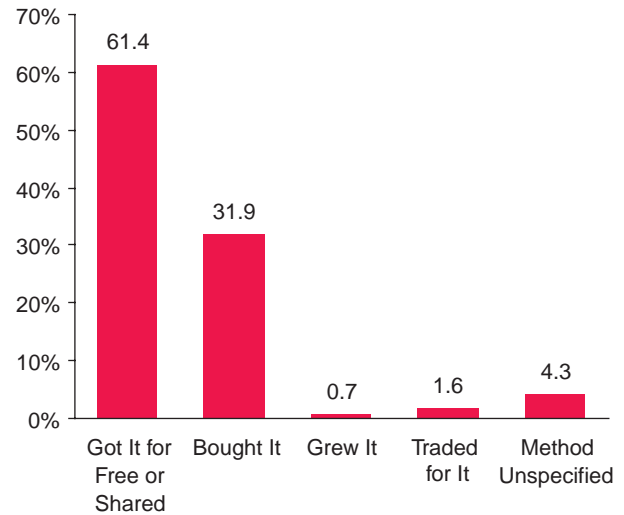
### Method of Obtaining Marijuana

In 2002, over 60 percent of past year marijuana users aged 12 to 17 obtained their most recently used marijuana for free or shared someone else's marijuana, and about one-third of youths had purchased their most recently used marijuana (Figure 1). Female youths (72 percent) were more likely than male youths (52 percent) to have obtained their most recently used marijuana for free or shared it. On the other hand, male youths (41 percent) were more likely than female

**Table 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Year Marijuana Use, by Demographic Characteristics: 2002**

Past Year Marijuana Use		
Characteristic	Percent	Standard Error
<b>Total</b>	15.8	0.32
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	16.3	0.43
Female	15.2	0.44
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	17.6	0.40
Black	12.0	0.74
Hispanic	14.1	0.91

**Figure 1. Percentages of Past Year Marijuana Users Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Method of Obtaining Their Most Recently Used Marijuana: 2002**



youths (22 percent) to have bought their most recently used marijuana. There were no differences between whites, blacks, and Hispanics in the method of obtaining marijuana.

### Source of Most Recently Used Marijuana

The majority of past year marijuana users aged 12 to 17 obtained their most recently used marijuana from a friend, regardless of whether they bought it or obtained it for free or shared it (Figure 2). Moreover, when compared to those youths who obtained marijuana for free or shared it, youths who bought their most recently used marijuana were more likely to have obtained it from someone they had just met or did not know well. Youths who obtained marijuana for free or shared it were more likely than youths who bought marijuana to have obtained it from a relative or family member.

Among youths who bought their most recently used marijuana, females (84 percent) were more likely

than males (76 percent) to have purchased it from a friend. Males who bought marijuana were more likely than females who bought marijuana to have obtained it from someone they had just met or did not know well (19 vs. 10 percent). There were no gender differences regarding the source of obtaining marijuana among youths who received their most recently used marijuana for free or shared it.

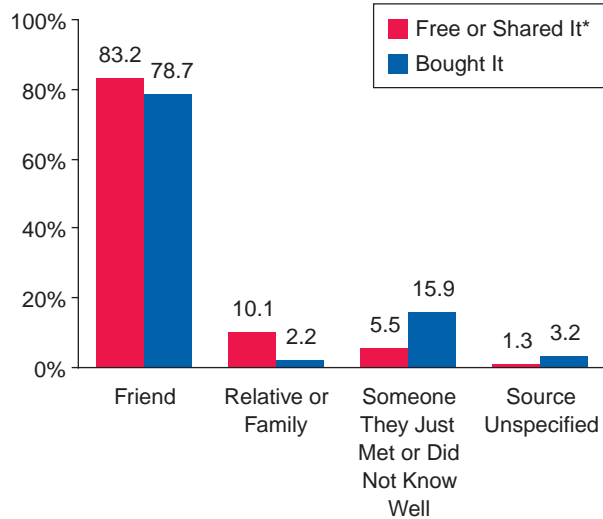
Black youths were less likely than white or Hispanic youths to have obtained marijuana from a friend, regardless of whether they bought it or obtained it for free or shared it. Among youths who bought marijuana, blacks (32 percent) were more likely than whites (15 percent) and Hispanics (10 percent) to have purchased it from someone they had just met or did not know well. Among youths who obtained marijuana for free or shared it, blacks (18 percent) were more likely than whites (9 percent) or Hispanics (7 percent) to have obtained it from a relative or family member.

### Where Most Recently Used Marijuana Was Obtained

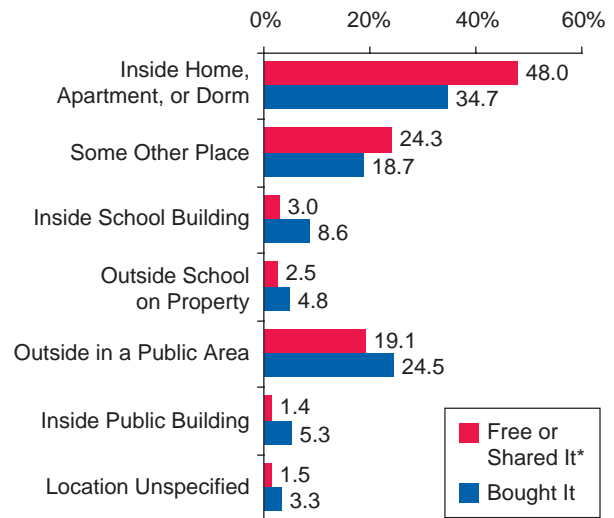
Regardless of how youths obtained their last marijuana, the most common place where they obtained it was inside a home, apartment, or dorm. Youths who received marijuana for free or shared it were more likely than youths who bought marijuana to have obtained it inside a home, apartment, or dorm (48 vs. 35 percent) (Figure 3). Youths who bought marijuana were more likely than youths who received it for free or shared it to have obtained it in a public building, outside in a public area, inside a school building, or outside on school property.

There were no gender differences regarding where marijuana was purchased among youths who bought it. However, among youths who obtained marijuana for free or shared it, males were less likely than females to have obtained it inside a home, apartment, or dorm (43 vs. 52 percent); and females were less likely than males to have received it

**Figure 2. Percentages of Past Year Marijuana Users Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Source of Their Most Recently Used Marijuana by Method Obtained: 2002**



**Figure 3. Percentages of Past Year Marijuana Users Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Location of Their Most Recently Used Marijuana, by Method Obtained: 2002**



in some other place (22 vs. 28 percent).

Among past year marijuana users aged 12 to 17, blacks were more likely than whites to have obtained marijuana outside in a public area and less likely than whites or Hispanics to have received it inside a home, apartment, or dorm, regardless of whether the marijuana was purchased (data not shown).

Almost 14 percent of youths who bought marijuana did so on school property (9 percent inside a school and 5 percent outside on school property). Among youths who bought their most recently used marijuana, white youths (9 percent) were more likely than black youths (4 percent) to have purchased it inside a school building.

- Response options for source of marijuana that was most recently used were (1) a friend, (2) a relative or family member, and (3) someone I had just met or didn't know well. Those who answered "don't know" were considered to be "source unspecified."
- Response options for where the most recently used marijuana was obtained were (1) inside a public building; (2) inside a school building; (3) outside on school property; (4) inside a home, apartment, or dorm; (5) outside in a public area; and (6) some other place. Respondents were also classified as "location unspecified."

- American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and Asian youths were excluded from these analyses on obtaining marijuana due to the small sample sizes for these racial/ethnic groups.

**Table and Figure Notes**

Source (table and all figures): SAMHSA 2002 NSDUH.

\*Youths who had not bought or traded for marijuana in the past year and who obtained their most recently used marijuana for free.

**End Notes**

- Respondents were asked how they obtained their marijuana the last time they used it. Response options were (1) you bought it, (2) you traded something else for it, (3) you got it for free or shared someone else's, and (4) you grew it yourself. Respondents also were classified as "method unspecified."

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 68,216 persons aged 12 or older, including 23,645 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.

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

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NHSDA Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available on-line:  
<http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

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