

# The NSDUH Report

January 9, 2004

## Marijuana Use and Delinquent Behaviors among Youths

Research suggests that among youths, frequency of marijuana use is associated with problem behaviors,<sup>1,2</sup> including delinquent behaviors. The National Survey on

Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), asks youths aged 12 to 17 to report how often they engaged in the following delinquent behaviors during 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 anything worth more than \$50, (e) selling illegal drugs, or (f) carrying a handgun.<sup>3</sup> Youths also are asked whether they used marijuana or hashish during the past 12 months. Past year marijuana users are asked how many days they used marijuana or hashish during the past year.

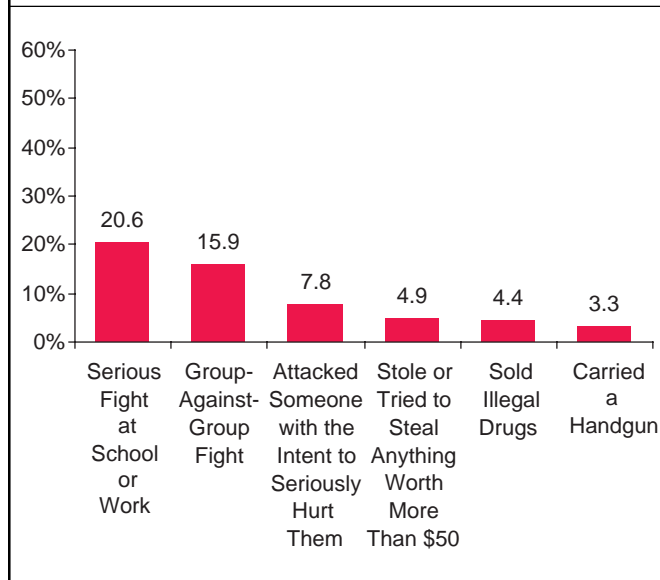
### In Brief

- More than 5 million youths (21 percent) engaged in serious fighting at school or work, and almost 4 million (16 percent) took part in a group-against-group fight in the past year
- In 2002, 4 million youths (16 percent of those aged 12 to 17) used marijuana in the past year
- The percentages of youths engaging in delinquent behaviors in the past year rose with increasing frequency of marijuana use

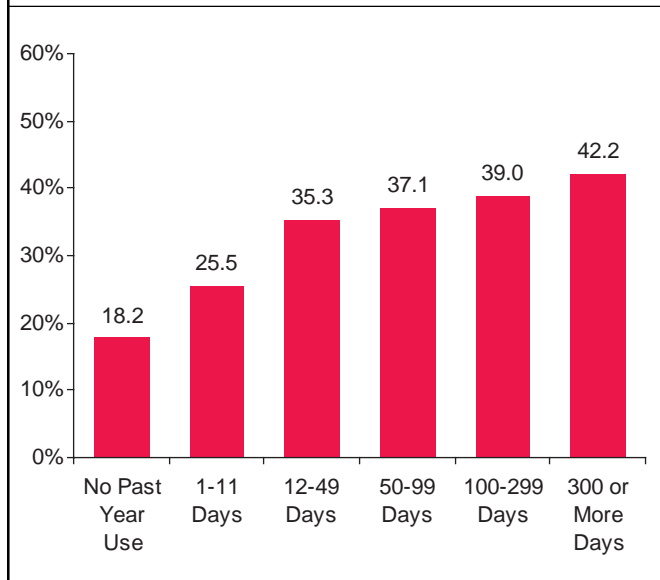
### Frequency of Marijuana Use among Youths

In 2002, almost 4 million youths aged 12 to 17 (16 percent) reported using marijuana during the past year. Nearly 1.5 million (38 percent of past year users) used marijuana on 1 to 11 days in the past year, 21 percent used on 12-49 days, 9 percent used on 50-99 days, 23 percent used on 100-299 days, and 9 percent (358,000 youths) used marijuana 300 or more days in the past year.

**Figure 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Participating in Delinquent Behaviors One or More Times in the Past Year: 2002**



**Figure 2. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Took Part in Serious Fighting at School or Work in the Past Year, by Frequency of Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002**



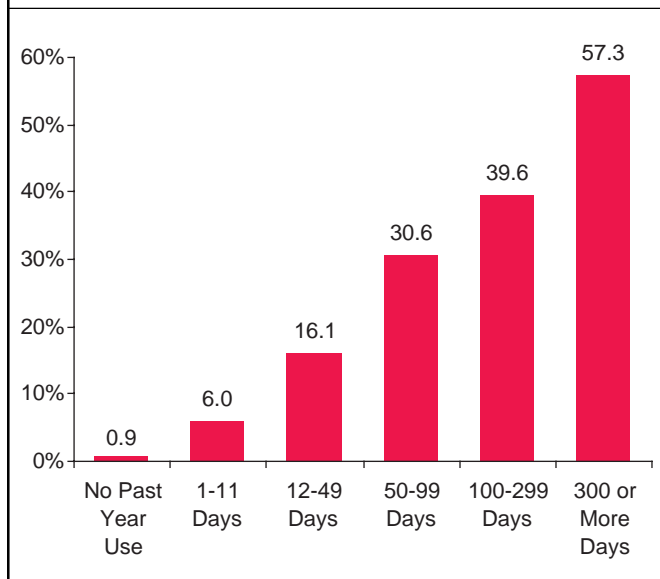
## Prevalence of Delinquent Behaviors among Youths

In 2002, approximately 21 percent of youths (5 million) engaged in serious fighting at school or work, almost 16 percent (4 million) took part in a group-against-group fight, and almost 8 percent (2 million) attacked someone with the intent to seriously hurt them during the past year (Figure 1). Nearly 5 percent of youths (1.2 million) stole or tried to steal something worth more than \$50, more than 4 percent (1.1 million) sold illegal drugs, and more than 3 percent (800,000) carried a handgun during the past year.

## Delinquent Behaviors and Frequency of Marijuana Use

In 2002, the percentages of youths engaging in delinquent behaviors was higher among past year marijuana users than among those who had not used marijuana. For all six of the delinquent behaviors examined, the percent of youths engaging in the behavior rose with increasing frequency of past year marijuana use (Figures 2-7).

**Figure 3. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Sold Illegal Drugs in the Past Year, by Frequency of Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002**



3. Youths were asked how many times in the past year they had participated in each delinquent behavior. The response options are: (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. For this report, youths were counted as engaging in the behavior if they reported participating one or more times.

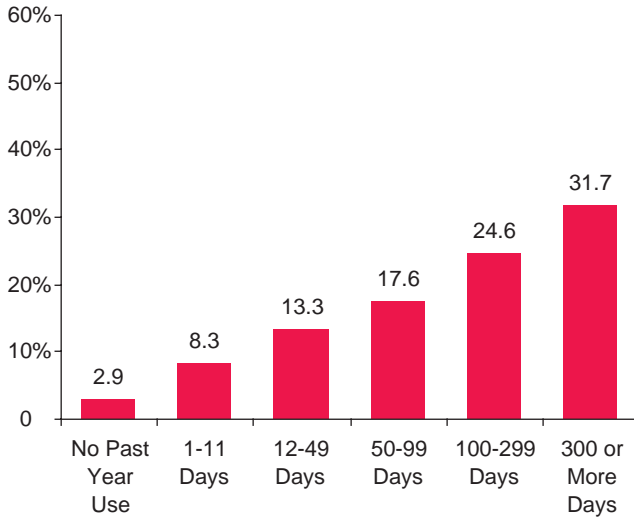
### End Notes

1. Donovan, J. E. (1996). Problem-behavior theory and the explanation of adolescent marijuana use. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 26, 379-404.
2. Greenblatt, J.C. (1998). Adolescent self-reported behaviors and their association with marijuana use. In: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies, *Analysis of Substance Abuse and Treatment Need Issues* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 98-3227, Analytic Series A-7). Rockville, MD.

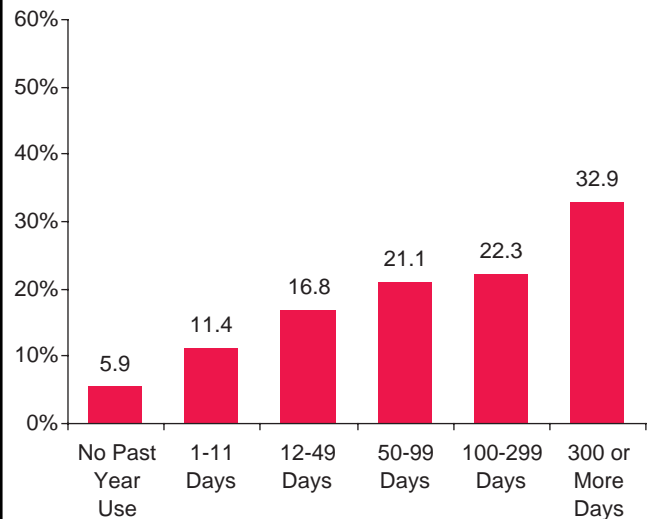
### Figure Note

Source: SAMSHA 2002 NSDUH

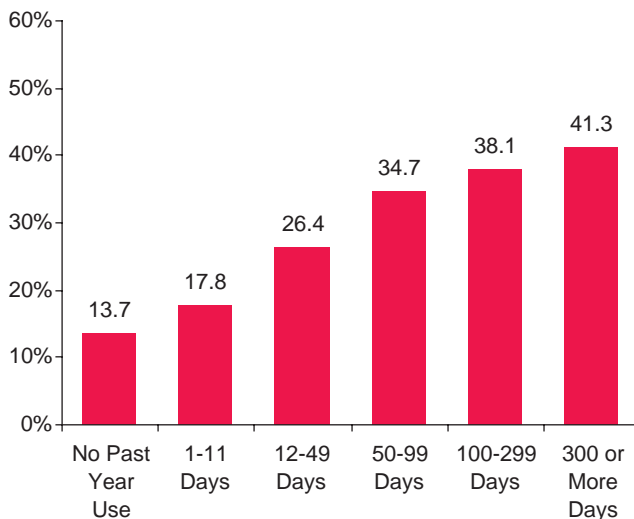
**Figure 4. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Stole or Tried to Steal Anything Worth More Than \$50 in the Past Year, by Frequency of Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002**



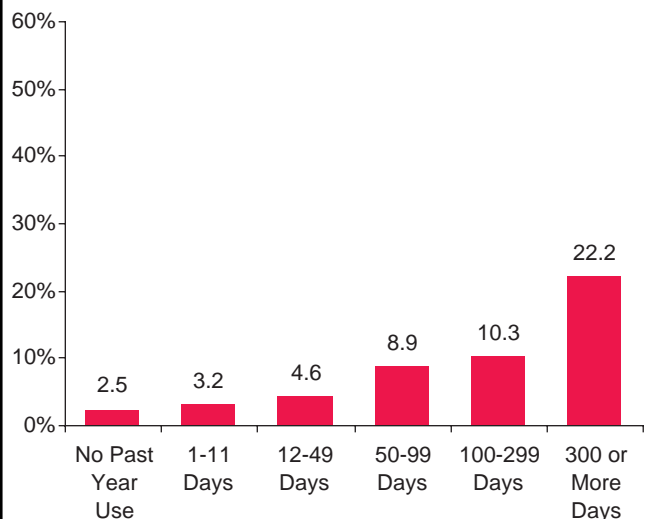
**Figure 5. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Attacked Someone With the Intent to Seriously Hurt Them in the Past Year, by Frequency of Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002**



**Figure 6. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Took Part in a Group-Against-Group Fight in the Past Year, by Frequency of Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002**



**Figure 7. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Who Carried a Handgun in the Past Year, by Frequency of Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002**



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.

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

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



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration  
Office of Applied Studies  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)