

# The NSDUH Report

October 21, 2005

## College Enrollment Status and Past Year Illicit Drug Use among Young Adults: 2002, 2003, and 2004

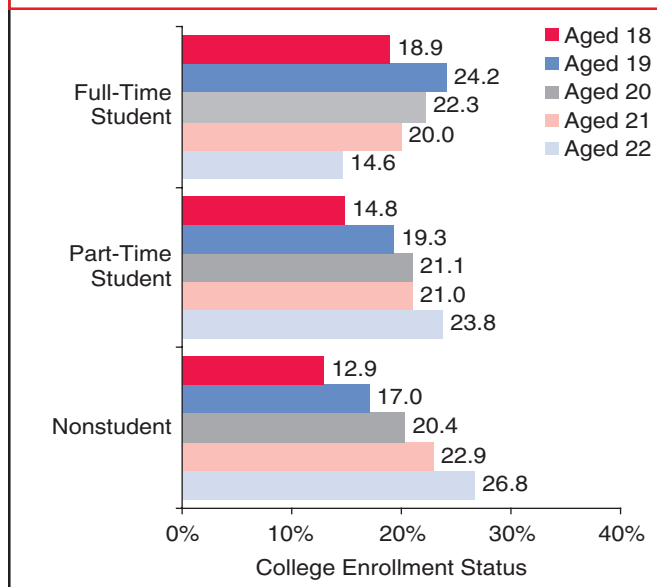
### In Brief

- Past year illicit drug use rates among young adults aged 18 to 22 were similar for full-time college students (37.5 percent), part-time students (38.5 percent), and nonstudents (38.4 percent)
- Among males, the rate of past year illicit drug use was lower for full-time students than nonstudents (40.0 vs. 43.0 percent), but among females, the rate was higher for full-time students than nonstudents (35.3 vs. 33.1 percent)
- Full-time students were less likely than nonstudents to be past year users of cocaine (6.3 vs. 8.2 percent), crack cocaine (0.4 vs. 1.4 percent), pain relievers (used nonmedically) (11.6 vs. 13.9 percent), and methamphetamine (0.8 vs. 2.6 percent)

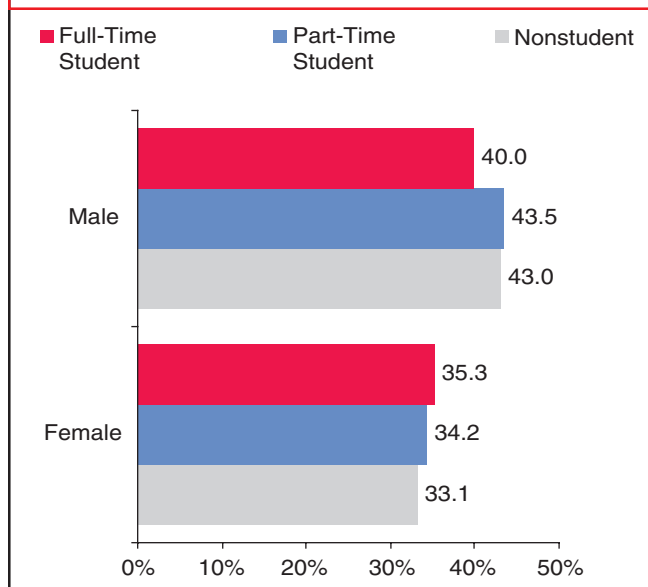
Research has shown that illicit drug use among college students continues to be a significant problem.<sup>1,2</sup> The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older to report their use of illicit drugs during the past year. NSDUH defines *any illicit drug* as marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.<sup>3</sup>

NSDUH also asks young adults aged 18 to 22 about college attendance. For this analysis, respondents were classified as college students if they reported that they were in their first through fourth year at a college or university and that they were either full- or part-time students. Respondents were classified as nonstudents if their current enrollment status was known and they were not classified as a full- or part-time college student. Respondents who were on break were considered enrolled if they intended to return to college or university when the break ended. Respondents whose current college enrollment status was unknown were excluded from the analysis. This report

**Figure 1. Percentages of Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Age: 2002, 2003, and 2004**



**Figure 2. Illicit Drug Use among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Gender: 2002, 2003, and 2004**



compares the rates of past year illicit drug use among college students and nonstudents aged 18 to 22 using annual averages based on combined 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUH data.<sup>4</sup> Comparisons also were made according to whether young adults resided with a parent or other relative versus in other living arrangements.<sup>5</sup>

## Demographic Characteristics

Among the estimated 18.4 million young adults aged 18 to 22 in 2002, 2003, and 2004 for whom college enrollment was known, 7.9 million (42.8 percent) were classified as full-time college students, 1.4 million (7.6 percent) as part-time college students, and 9.1 million (49.6 percent) as nonstudents.

Full- and part-time students aged 18 to 22 were more likely to be female (53.5 and 53.8 percent, respectively) than male (46.5 and 46.2 percent, respectively), but nonstudents in that age range were more likely to be male than female (53.4 vs. 46.6 percent). Among persons aged 18 to 22, full-time students included more younger individuals than did the nonstudent group. Persons 18 or 19 years of age accounted for 43.1 percent of full-time students compared with 29.9 percent of nonstudents and 34.1 percent of part-time students (Figure 1).

## Past Year Illicit Drug Use

Rates of past year illicit drug use were similar among persons aged 18 to 22 who were full-time college students (37.5 percent), part-time college students (38.5 percent), or nonstudents (38.4 percent). Males were more likely than females to use illicit drugs in the past year, regardless of

enrollment status (Figure 2). Among males, the rate of past year illicit drug use was lower for full-time students than nonstudents (40.0 vs. 43.0 percent), but among females, the rate was higher for full-time students than nonstudents (35.3 vs. 33.1 percent). Among persons aged 18 or 19, full-time students were less likely than nonstudents to have used illicit drugs during the past year (37.9 vs. 43.3 percent). Among 20 to 22 year olds, the rates of past year illicit drug use were similar for full-time students, part-time students, and nonstudents.

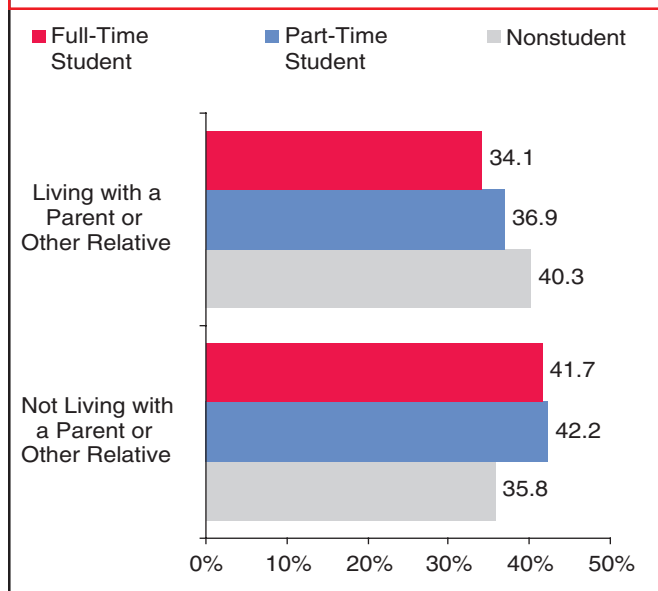
## Living Arrangements

Among young adults aged 18 to 22 who lived with a parent or other relative, the rate of past year illicit drug use was lower for full-time students (34.1 percent) and part-time students (36.9 percent) than for nonstudents (40.3 percent) (Figure 3). Among young adults with other living arrangements, however, the rate of past year drug use was higher for full-time students (41.7 percent) and part-time students (42.2 percent) than for nonstudents (35.8 percent).

## Illicit Drugs Used

Rates of past year marijuana use were similar among full-time students, part-time students, and nonstudents (Table 1). Full-time students were more likely than nonstudents to have used inhalants (2.9 vs. 2.3 percent) in the past year. Both full-time students (0.4 percent) and part-time students (0.6 percent) were less likely than nonstudents (1.4 percent) to have used crack cocaine in the past year. Full-time students were less likely than either part-time students or nonstudents to have

**Figure 3. Past Year Illicit Drug Use among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Living Arrangement: 2002, 2003, and 2004**



**Table 1. Percentages of Persons Aged 18 to 22 Reporting Past Year Illicit Drug Use, by College Enrollment Status and Illicit Drug Used: 2002, 2003, and 2004**

	Full-Time Student (Percent)	Part-Time Student (Percent)	Nonstudent (Percent)
<b>Illicit Drug Used</b>			
Marijuana	32.0	32.1	32.0
Cocaine	6.3	7.0	8.2
Crack Cocaine	0.4	0.6	1.4
Hallucinogens	8.1	10.4	8.3
Inhalants	2.9	2.5	2.3
Nonmedical Use of Prescription Pain Relievers	11.6	13.4	13.9
Stimulants	4.5	3.4	4.1
Methamphetamine	0.8	1.5	2.6

used prescription pain relievers nonmedically (11.6 vs. 13.4 and 13.9 percent, respectively) during the past year. Full-time students (8.1 percent) and nonstudents (8.3 percent) were less likely than part-time students (10.4 percent) to have used hallucinogens during the past year. Rates of past year stimulant use were higher among full-time students (4.5 percent) than part-time students (3.4 percent). Nonstudents (2.6 percent) were more likely than full-time students (0.8 percent) and part-time students (1.5 percent) to have used methamphetamine in the past year, and part-time students were more likely to have done so than full-time students.

children. Respondents not reporting any of the living arrangements above were excluded from the analysis by this variable.

**Figure and Table Note**

Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUH.

**End Notes**

- Mohler-Kuo, M., Lee, J. E., & Wechsler, H. (2003). Trends in marijuana and other illicit drug use among college students: Results from 4 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study surveys: 1993–2001. *Journal of American College Health, 52*, 17–24.
- Gledhill-Hoyt, J., Lee, H., Strote, J., & Wechsler, H. (2000). Increased use of marijuana and other illicit drugs at US colleges in the 1990s: Results of three national surveys. *Addiction, 95*, 1655–1667.
- NSDUH measures the nonmedical use of prescription-type pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants, or tranquilizers. Nonmedical use is defined as the use of prescription-type drugs not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used only for the experience or feeling they caused. Nonmedical use of any prescription-type pain reliever, sedative, stimulant, or tranquilizer does not include use of over-the-counter drugs.
- National estimates for persons aged 18 to 22 who used illicit drugs in their lifetime or during the past year were similar for 2002, 2003, and 2004. The 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUH data were combined to increase the sample size.
- Living with a parent or other relative refers to a respondent reporting currently living in the same household with a parent, sibling, grandparent, or other relative. Not living with a parent or other relative refers to a respondent reporting currently living in the same household with a spouse, unmarried partner, housemate/roommate, parent-in-law, boarder/roomer, or other nonrelative, as well as respondents reporting living alone or with their

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 14,927 persons aged 18 to 22, of whom 5,717 were full-time college students, 967 were part-time college students, 6,724 were nonstudents, and 1,519 were of unknown college status. The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 persons aged 12 or older, including 14,416 persons aged 18 to 22, of whom 5,656 were full-time college students, 926 were part-time college students, 6,422 were nonstudents, and 1,412 were of unknown college status. The 2004 data are based on information obtained from 67,760 persons aged 12 or older, including 14,555 persons aged 18 to 22, of whom 5,759 were full-time college students, 934 were part-time college students, 6,420 were nonstudents, and 1,442 were of unknown college status. 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:

Office of Applied Studies. (2005). *Results from the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4062, NSDUH Series H-28). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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.

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

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002, 2003, and 2004 surveys should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.

