

The NSDUH Report

July 2, 2004

In Brief

- Youths aged 12 to 17 who had run away from home in the past 12 months were more likely to be male (55 percent) than female, and nearly half (46 percent) were aged 16 or 17
- Youths aged 12 to 17 who had run away from home in the past 12 months were more likely to have used alcohol, marijuana, or an illicit drug other than marijuana in the past year than youths who had not run away
- Alcohol use was higher among female youths who had run away (55 percent) than male youths who had run away (46 percent)

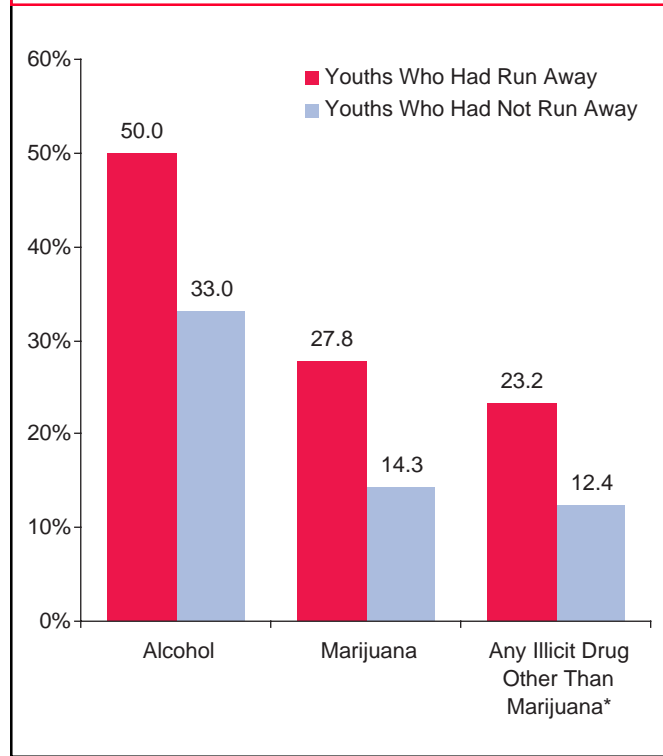
Substance Use among Youths Who Had Run Away from Home

Previous research has shown that alcohol and illicit drug use is higher among youths who have run away from home than among those who do not run away from home.^{1,2} The 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks youths aged 12 to 17 to report whether they had run away from home and slept on the street in the past 12 months.³ NSDUH also gathers information from youths on their use of alcohol or any illicit drug during the year prior to the interview. “Any illicit drug other than marijuana” refers to cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. Responses were analyzed by age and gender.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Runaway Youths Aged 12 to 17: 2002

Youths Who Had Run Away		
Characteristic	Percent	Standard Error
Total	100.0	-
Age		
12 or 13 years	23.6	1.86
14 or 15 years	30.2	2.07
16 or 17 years	46.2	2.06
Gender		
Male	54.7	2.32
Female	45.3	2.32
Race/Ethnicity		
White	60.3	2.40
Black	18.5	1.79
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.8	0.98
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0	0.04
Asian	3.2	0.99
Hispanic	14.9	1.74
County Type		
Large Metropolitan	47.7	2.37
Small Metropolitan	32.4	2.08
Nonmetropolitan	19.9	1.54

Figure 1. Percentages of Past Year Alcohol and Illicit Drug Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Runaway Status: 2002



Prevalence of Running Away among Youths

In 2002, approximately 1.6 million youths (7 percent) aged 12 to 17 had run away from home and slept on the street in the past 12 months. Approximately 5 percent of youths aged 12 or 13, 6 percent of youths aged 14 or 15, and 10 percent of youths aged 16 or 17 had run away from home in the past 12 months. Youths aged 12 to 17 who had run away from home in the past 12 months were more likely to be male (55 percent) than female, and nearly half (46 percent) were aged 16 or 17 (Table 1).

Prevalence of Alcohol Use among Youths Who Had Run Away from Home

The rate of past year alcohol use was higher among youths who had

run away from home in the past 12 months (50 percent) than among youths who had not run away (33 percent) (Figure 1). This difference was evident across age groups and for both males and females. The rate of alcohol use among youths aged 14 or 15 who had run away from home was 47 percent compared to 34 percent among youths in the same age group who had not run away (Figure 2). Alcohol use was higher among female youths who had run away (55 percent) than males youths who had run away (46 percent).

Prevalence of Illicit Drug Use among Youths Who Had Run Away from Home

The rates of past year marijuana use and past year use of an illicit drug other than marijuana were higher among youths who had run away

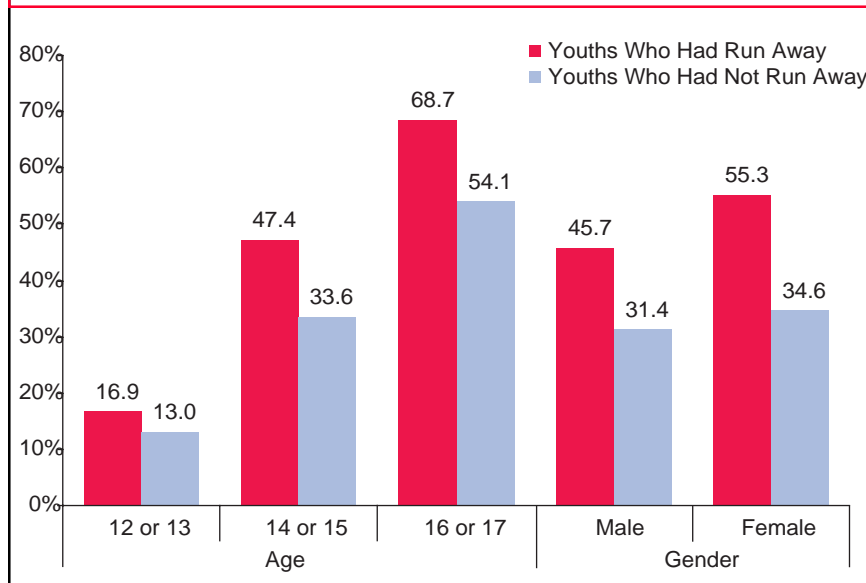
from home in the past 12 months than among youths who had not run away in the past 12 months (Figure 1). For example, in the past year about 23 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 who had run away had used an illicit drug other than marijuana compared with 12 percent of youths who had not run away.

Among both male and female youths, and across age groups, the rate of illicit drug use was higher for those who had run away in the past 12 months compared to youths who had not run away. For example, youths aged 16 or 17 who had run away were more likely to have used marijuana in the past year (40 percent) than youths aged 16 or 17 who had not run way in the past year (27 percent) (Table 2). Females who had run away in the past 12 months reported a higher rate (31 percent) of marijuana use than females who had not run away (14 percent).

Table 2. Percentages of Past Year Illicit Drug Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Runaway Status and Demographic Characteristics: 2002

Demographic Characteristics	Youths Who Had Run Away				Youths Who Had Not Run Away			
	Marijuana		Any Illicit Drug Other Than Marijuana*		Marijuana		Any Illicit Drug Other Than Marijuana*	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Age								
12 or 13 years	7.1	1.95	15.6	3.04	2.8	0.36	7.3	0.54
14 or 15 years	24.7	3.44	19.6	2.84	14.6	0.73	12.4	0.67
16 or 17 years	40.4	3.20	29.5	3.32	26.6	1.00	18.0	0.85
Gender								
Male	25.2	2.47	22.0	2.41	14.4	0.61	12.0	0.57
Female	30.9	3.15	24.7	2.99	14.3	0.64	12.9	0.62

Figure 2. Past Year Alcohol Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Runaway Status and Demographic Characteristics: 2002



End Notes

1. Busen, N.H., & Beech, B. (1997). A collaborative model for community-based health care screening of homeless adolescents. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 13*, 316-324.
2. Greene, J.M., Ennett, S.T., & Ringwalt, C.L. (1997). Substance use among runaway youths and homeless youths in three national samples. *American Journal of Public Health, 87*, 229-235.
3. The question on running away from home was administered to a random 50 percent sample of 11,766 youths as part of a methodological experiment embedded in the 2002 NSDUH. The analytic weights for this sample were ratio adjusted back to the total 12-17 population of 24,753,586. Any records with missing data for the runaway question were removed from the analysis. This resulted in a net sample size of 11,751 (i.e., a loss of 15 records). A total of 787 youths in the sample reported that they had run away from home in the past 12 months.

Figure Notes

Source: SAMHSA, 2002 NSDUH.

* Any illicit drug other than marijuana includes cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or any prescription-type drug used nonmedically.

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 11,751 youths aged 12 to 17 who were asked a question on running away from home. 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 online: <http://www.oas.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.



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