

The NHSDA Report

November 9, 2001

Youth Violence Linked to Substance Use

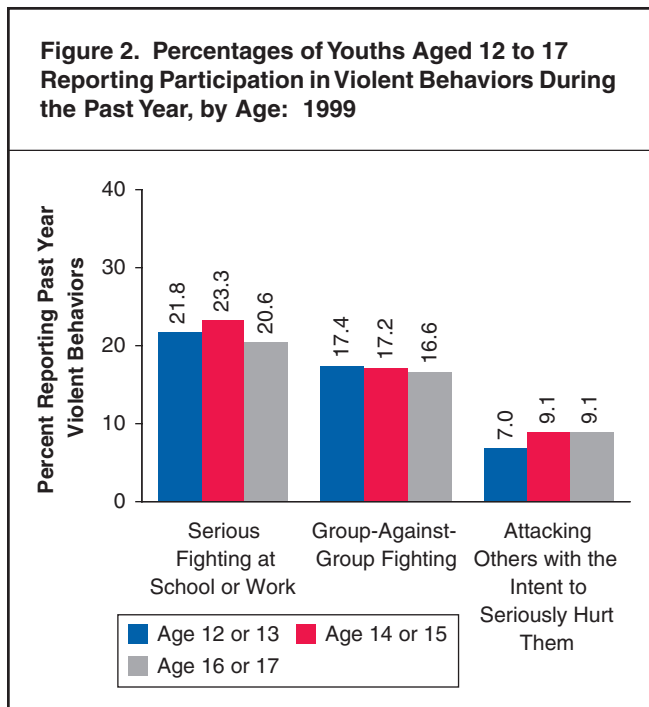
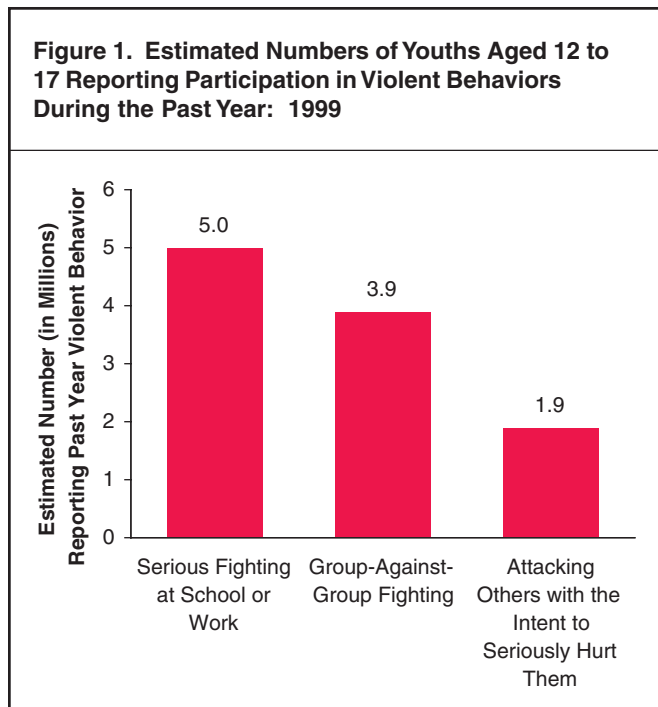
In Brief

- Among youths aged 12 to 17, males were more likely than females to participate in violent behaviors
- Asian youths were less likely than youths from other racial/ethnic groups to engage in serious fighting at school or work and attacking others with the intent to seriously hurt them during the past year
- Youths who reported participating in violence during the past year were more likely to use alcohol and illicit drugs during the past month than youths who did not report past year violence

The 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) asked youths aged 12 to 17 to report on their participation in violent behavior during the year before the survey, including serious fighting at school or work, group-against-group fighting, and attacking others with the intent to seriously hurt them. Youths were also asked about their use of alcohol and illicit drugs during the month before the survey. Illicit drug use was defined as use at least once of marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens (including PCP and LSD), heroin, or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used non-medically.

Prevalence of Youth Violence

Violence among young people has increased during the past 15 years.¹ Of the estimated 23 million youths in the United States aged 12 to 17, the 1999 NHSDA showed that more than 5 million reported participating in serious fighting at school or work, almost 4 million took part in a group-against-group fight, and almost 2 million attacked others with the intent of seriously hurting them during the past year (Figure 1). Youths aged 14 or 15 were more likely than 16 or 17 year olds to report being involved in serious fighting at school or work during the past year, and youths aged 14 to 17 were more



likely than 12 or 13 year olds to report attacking others with the intent to seriously hurt them in the past year (Figure 2). There were no significant differences between age groups in reporting group-against-group fighting. Males were more likely than females to participate in these violent behaviors (Figure 3). Asian youths (13 percent) were less likely than youths from other racial/ethnic groups (white 21 percent, American Indian/Alaska Native 21 percent, Hispanic 25 percent, and black 26 percent) to participate in serious fighting at school or work during the past year and attacking others with the intent to seriously hurt them during the past year (Asian 4 percent vs. white 7 percent, Hispanic 9 percent, American Indian/Alaska native 9 percent, and black 13 percent). There were no clear differences between racial/ethnic groups in reporting past year group-against-group fighting. Also, no clear differences in violent behaviors emerged between youths who lived in metropolitan versus non-metropolitan counties.

Link Between Violent Behaviors and Use of Alcohol and Illicit Drugs

According to the 1999 NHSDA, youths who participated in violent behaviors during the past year were more likely to use alcohol and illicit drugs than youths who did not participate in violent behaviors during this time period (Figure 4 and Figure 5). For example, 26 percent of youths who had participated in a serious fight at school or work during the past year reported past month use of alcohol compared with 14 percent of youths who had not participated in a serious fight at school or work during the past year. Also, 18 percent of youths who had participated in a serious fight at school or work during the past year reported past month use of illicit drugs compared with 7 percent of youths who had not participated in a serious fight at school or work during the past year.

Summary

Among youths aged 12 to 17, males were more likely than females to participate in violent behaviors. Asian youths were less likely than youths from other racial/ethnic groups to report serious fighting at school or work during the past year and attacking others with the intent to seriously hurt them during the past year. NHSDA findings illustrate the close link between youths' participation in violent behaviors and their use of alcohol and illicit drugs. Youths who engaged in violent behaviors during the past year were more likely to report past month alcohol and illicit drug use than youths who did not engage in violent behaviors during the past year.

End Note:

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2001, January). *Youth violence: A report of the Surgeon General* [on-line]. Available: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/youvioreport.htm> [2001, June 11].

Figure 3. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Participation in Violent Behaviors During the Past Year, by Gender: 1999

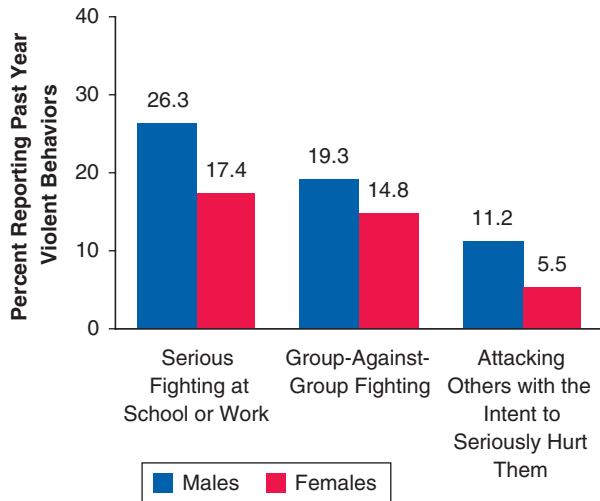
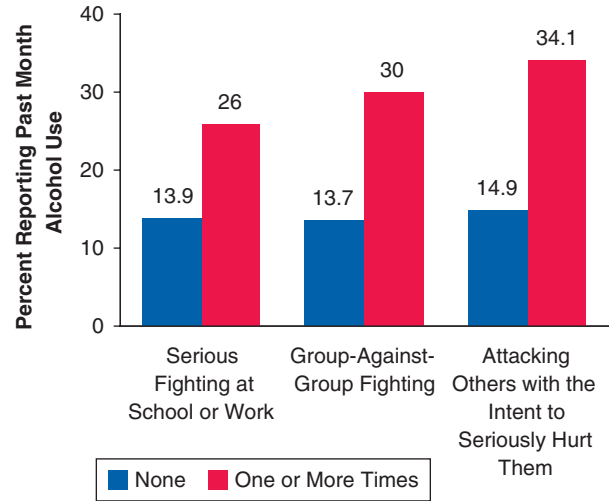


Figure 4. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Alcohol Use, by Whether or Not They Participated in Violent Behaviors During the Past Year: 1999*



The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 1999 data are based on information obtained from nearly 70,000 persons aged 12 or older. 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 NHSDA 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:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2000) *Summary of findings from the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 00-3466). Rockville, MD: Author.

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

Additional tables: 3.31A; 3.31B; 3.32A; 3.32B; 3.36A; 3.36B from http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/2kdetailedtabs/Vol_1_Part_3/V1P3.htm.

Figure 5. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Illicit Drug Use, by Whether or Not They Participated in Violent Behaviors During the Past Year: 1999***

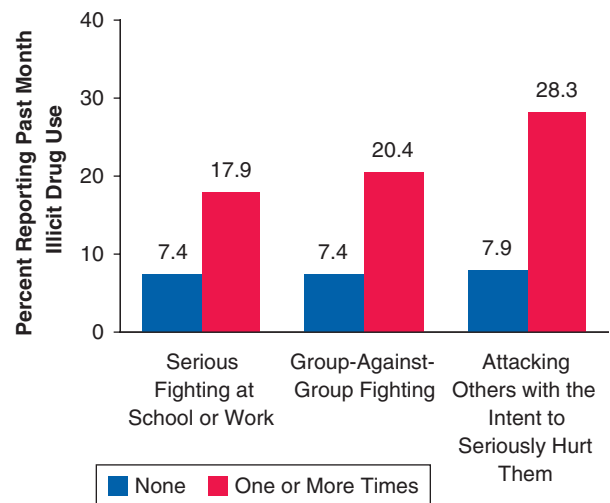


Figure Notes

*Data presented differ from previously published data from the 1999 NHSDA because of corrections made to imputation procedures.

**Illicit Drug Use was defined as use at least once of marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens (including LSD and PCP), inhalants, or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used non-medically.

Source (all figures): SAMHSA 1999 NHSDA