

The NHSDA Report

August 31, 2001

Obtaining Marijuana Easy for Youths

In Brief

- In 1999, 57 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 agreed that obtaining marijuana would be easy
- Nearly 25 percent of youths agreed that a lot of drug selling occurs in their neighborhoods; one in six had been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey
- More than 25 percent of youths who had been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey had used marijuana in the past month

The 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) included questions related to risk factors associated with marijuana use among youths aged 12 to 17 (i.e., factors that may increase the likelihood of marijuana use). Youths were asked (1) how easy or hard it would be for them to obtain marijuana if they wanted some, (2) whether they agreed that a lot of drug selling occurred in their neighborhoods, (3) whether they had been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey (i.e., in the past month), (4) whether their friends used marijuana, and (5) whether adults they knew used marijuana. The survey also enabled an examination of the relationship between marijuana use and exposure to these five risk factors.

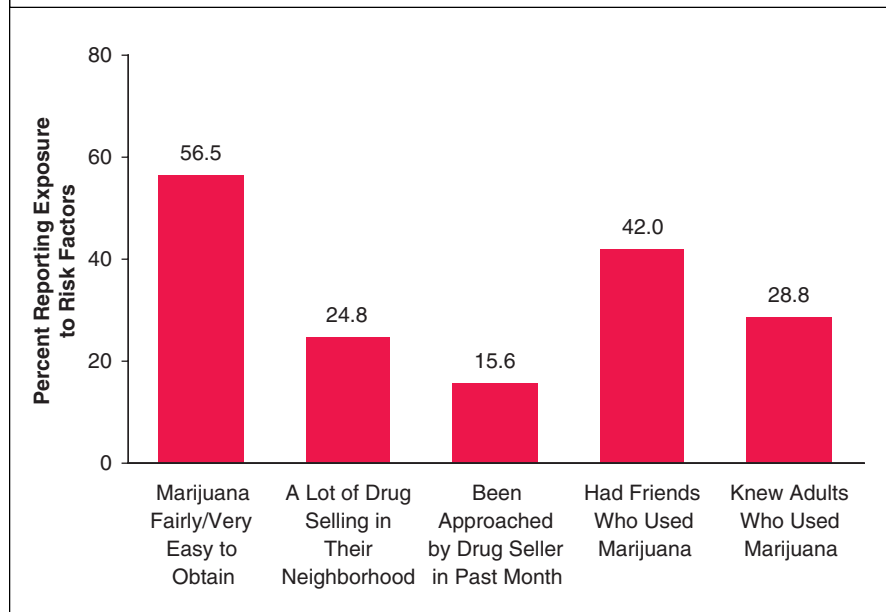
Risk Factors Associated with Marijuana Use

According to the 1999 NHSDA, more than half of youths aged 12 to 17 (i.e., 12.7 million nationwide) reported that marijuana would be fairly or very easy to obtain if they wanted some (Figure 1). Approximately one in four youths (5.5 million) either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that a lot of drug selling went on in

their neighborhoods, and almost one in six youths (3.6 million) had been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey.

An estimated 42 percent of youths (9.5 million) reported that a few, most, or all of their friends used marijuana (Figure 1). Approximately 29 percent of youths (6.5 million) reported that a few, most, or all of the adults they knew used marijuana. Approximately 12 percent (2.7 million) reported that most or all of their friends used marijuana, and approximately 4 percent (860,000) reported that most or every adult they knew used marijuana.

Figure 1. Percentage of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Exposure to Risk Factors Associated with Marijuana Use: 1999



Racial/Ethnic Differences in Risk Factors

Among youths aged 12 to 17, there was little variation in the percentage of whites, blacks, and Hispanics reporting that marijuana would be fairly or very easy to obtain if they wanted some (Figure 2). Compared with those in other racial/ethnic groups, blacks and Hispanics were more likely to agree that a lot of drug selling went on in their neighborhoods, and Hispanics were more likely to have been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey. Hispanics were also more likely to report that a few, some, or all of their friends used marijuana, and blacks were more likely to report that they knew at least a few adults who used marijuana. Asians were the least likely to

report being exposed to each of these five risk factors.

Marijuana Use Among Youths at Risk

Overall, approximately 7 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 reported using marijuana in the month before the survey. Past month marijuana use was higher among youths who had been exposed to risk factors associated with marijuana use than among youths who had not been exposed to these factors (Figure 3). More than one in four youths who had been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey had used marijuana in the past month. Compared with youths who reported that none of their friends used marijuana (0.5

percent), youths who reported that a few, some, or all of their friends used marijuana were more than 30 times as likely to have used marijuana in the past month (17 percent). Youths were also 9 times more likely to have used marijuana in the past month if they knew any adults who used marijuana compared with youths who did not know any adult marijuana users.

Summary

In 1999, more than half of youths aged 12 to 17 reported that they could obtain marijuana fairly or very easily if they wanted it. Marijuana was available from a variety of sources. One in four youths agreed that there was a lot of drug selling in their neighborhood, and almost one in

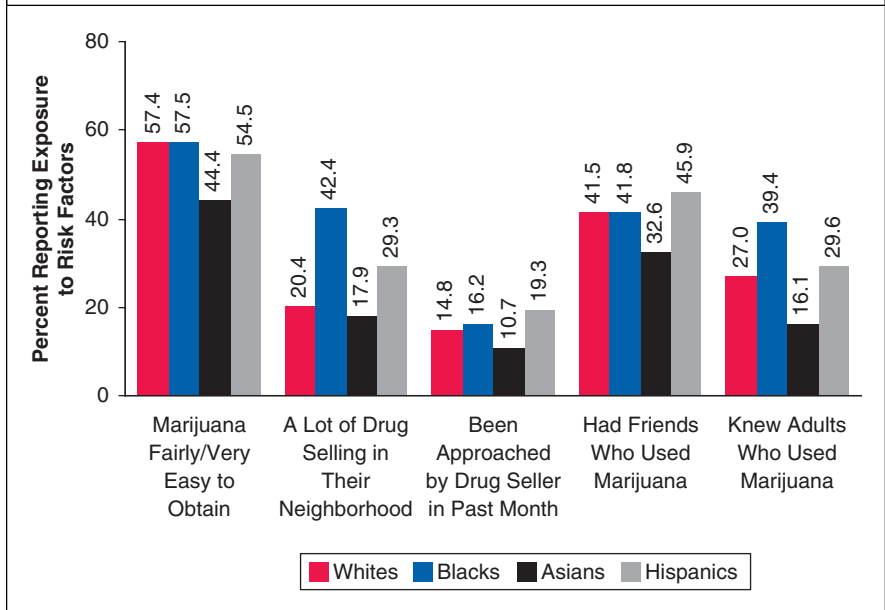
six had been approached by someone selling drugs in the month before the survey. Almost half of youths had friends who used marijuana, and more than one in four knew adults who used marijuana. Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than youths of other racial/ethnic groups to report exposure to several risk factors associated with marijuana use. The rate of past month marijuana use was significantly higher among youths who reported exposure to these risk factors than among those who were not exposed to these factors.

Figure Notes

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

Source (all figures): SAMHSA 1999 NHSDA.

Figure 2. Percentage of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Exposure to Risk Factors Associated with Marijuana Use, By Racial/Ethnic Group: 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 3.13A, 3.13B, 3.18A, 3.18B, 3.21A, 3.21B from http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/2kdetailedtabs/Vol_1_Part_3/V1P3.htm.

Additional table 1.2B from http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/2kdetailedtabs/Vol_1_Part_1/V1P1.htm.

Additional tables available upon request.

Figure 3. Percentage of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Marijuana Use, by Exposure to Risk Factors Associated with Marijuana Use: 1999*

