

# The NSDUH Report

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## Risk and Protective Factors for Substance Use among American Indian or Alaska Native Youths

### In Brief

- American Indian or Alaska Native youths were more likely to perceive moderate to no risk of substance use
- A larger percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native youths did not perceive strong parental disapproval of youth substance use than youths in other racial/ethnic groups
- American Indian or Alaska Native youths were more likely to believe that all or most of the students in their school get drunk at least once a week

Recent reports have shown higher rates of substance use among American Indians or Alaska Natives compared with persons from other racial/ethnic groups. Among American Indian or Alaska Native youths aged 12 to 17, the rates of past month cigarette use, binge drinking, and illicit drug use were higher than those from other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>1,2</sup> The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) collects data on a variety of risk and protective factors found to be associated with youth substance use. Risk factors for substance use typically are associated with an increased likelihood of substance use (e.g., drug availability), whereas protective factors are associated with a decreased likelihood of substance use (e.g., perceived parental disapproval of alcohol or drug use). Research has shown similar associations with risk and protective factors and substance use among American Indian or Alaska Native youths compared with youths in other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>3,4</sup>

**Table 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Individual and Peer Risk and Protective Factors, by Race/Ethnicity: 2002 and 2003 Annual Averages**

Factor	American Indian or Alaska Native	Other Racial/Ethnic Groups
<b>Risk<sup>5</sup></b>		
<i>Perceived Moderate to No Risk if</i>		
Smoke 1 or More Packs of Cigarettes Per Day	46.7 <sup>b</sup>	36.3
Smoke Marijuana Once or Twice a Week	57.5 <sup>b</sup>	46.9
Have 4 or 5 Alcoholic Drinks Once or Twice a Week	67.8 <sup>a</sup>	61.6
<i>Peers Do Not Disapprove if</i>		
Smoke 1 or More Packs of Cigarettes Per Day	20.0	15.0
Smoke Marijuana Once or Twice a Week	22.3	19.7
Have 1 or 2 Alcoholic Drinks Nearly Every Day	21.2	17.2
<b>Protective<sup>5</sup></b>		
<i>Participation in Youth Activities</i>		
2 or more	73.8 <sup>b</sup>	85.7
<i>Religiosity</i>		
Attended Religious Services 25 or More Times in the Past Year	18.4 <sup>b</sup>	33.0
Religious Beliefs Are a Very Important Part of Life	71.8 <sup>a</sup>	77.5
Religious Beliefs Influence How Youths Make Decisions	64.0	68.7
Important for Friends to Share Religious Beliefs	38.9	35.2

**Table 2. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Family Risk and Protective Factors, by Race/Ethnicity: 2002 and 2003 Annual Averages**

Factor	American Indian or Alaska Native	Other Racial/Ethnic Groups
<b>Risk<sup>5</sup></b>		
<i>Parents Do Not Strongly Disapprove if</i>		
Smoke 1 or More Packs of Cigarettes Per Day	17.9 <sup>b</sup>	10.3
Try Marijuana Once or Twice	15.7 <sup>a</sup>	10.7
Have 1 or 2 Alcoholic Drinks Nearly Every Day	15.2 <sup>a</sup>	11.2
<i>Parental Monitoring</i>		
Parents Seldom/Never Provided Help With Homework	22.6	18.8
Parents Seldom/Never Limited Amount of Time Out with Friends on School Nights	33.8	29.3
Parents Seldom/Never Made Youth Do Chores Around House	11.9	12.6
Parents Seldom/Never Limited Amount of Time Watching Television	64.6	62.8
<b>Protective<sup>5</sup></b>		
<i>Parent-Child Communication</i>		
Talked to at Least 1 Parent about Dangers of Substance Use	54.8	58.5
<i>Parental Encouragement</i>		
Parents Let Youth Know They Had Done a Good Job	84.1	85.8
Parents Told Youth They Were Proud of Something They Had Done	84.5	85.3

This report looks at risk and protective factors for substance use among 46,310 respondents aged 12 to 17 (representing a national population of 25 million) comparing American Indian or Alaska Native youths with youths among all other racial/ethnic groups combined. The focus is on American Indian or Alaska Native youths and their higher levels of risk factors or lower levels of protective factors compared with youths of other races. Three categories of risk and protective factors were examined: individual/peers, family, and school. All estimates are annual averages based on combined 2002 and 2003 NSDUH data.

### Individual and Peer Risk and Protective Factors

Individual and peer risk factors studied included low perceived risk in using substances and peer approval of

substance use. A larger percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native youths perceived moderate to no risk of substance use compared with youths in other racial/ethnic groups (Table 1).<sup>5</sup> For example, 47 percent of American Indian or Alaska Native youths believed there was moderate to no risk in smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day compared with only 36 percent of youths in other racial/ethnic groups. Although a larger percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native youths perceived their peers did not disapprove of smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day, smoking marijuana once or twice a week, or having one or two alcoholic drinks nearly every day compared with youths in other racial/ethnic groups, the differences were not statistically significant.

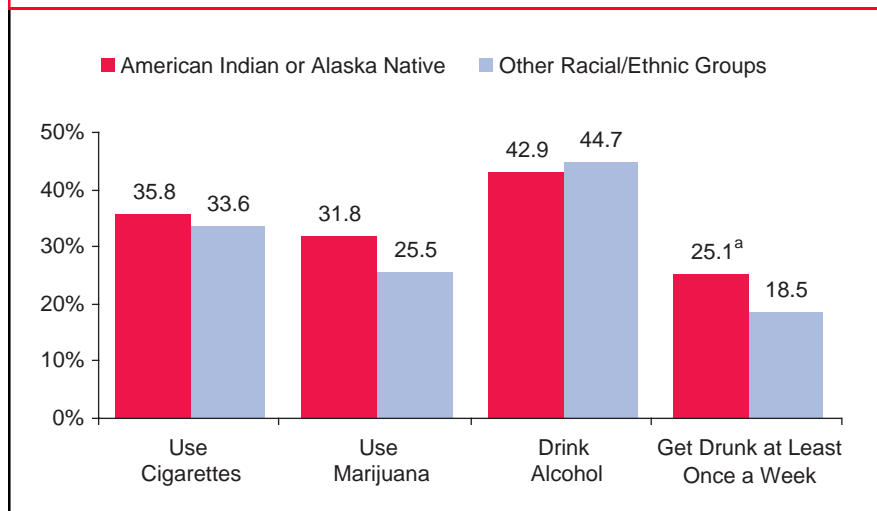
Individual and peer protective factors studied were participation in youth activities and the importance of reli-

gious beliefs.<sup>5</sup> American Indian or Alaska Native youths were less likely to have participated in two or more youth activities than youths in other racial/ethnic groups. A smaller percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native youths attended religious services on a regular basis than youths in other racial/ethnic groups. Fewer American Indian or Alaska Native youths also agreed that religious beliefs are a very important part of their lives compared with youths in other racial/ethnic groups.

### Family Risk and Protective Factors

A larger percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native youths did not perceive strong parental disapproval of youth substance use compared with youths in other racial/ethnic groups (Table 2).<sup>5</sup> For example, 18 percent of

**Figure 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Substance Use by All or Most of the Students in Their School,<sup>5</sup> by Race/Ethnicity: 2002 and 2003 Annual Averages**



American Indian or Alaska Native youths felt their parents would not strongly disapprove if they were to smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day compared with 10 percent of youths in other racial/ethnic groups. American Indian or Alaska Native youths were about as likely to have spoken with at least one of their parents about the dangers of substance use (55 percent) as youths from other racial/ethnic groups (59 percent).<sup>5</sup>

## School Risk Factors

An important risk factor for youths is poor school performance. A similar proportion of American Indian or Alaska Native youths (9 percent) and

youths in other racial/ethnic groups (6 percent) reported a D or lower average for the past semester or grading period.

Another risk factor for youths is the belief that the majority of their peers are using cigarettes, alcohol, or illicit drugs. American Indian or Alaska Native youths were equally as likely as youths in other racial/ethnic groups to report that most or all of the students in their school grade use cigarettes, use marijuana, or drink alcohol (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> However, a greater percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native youths (25 percent) believed that all or most of the students in their school grade get drunk at least once a week than youths in other racial/ethnic groups (19 percent).

## End Notes

- Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2003, May 16). Substance use among American Indians or Alaska Natives. *The NSDUH Report*. [Available at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/facts.cfm>]
- 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.
- Moncher, M. S., Holden, G. W., & Trimble, J. E. (1990). Substance abuse among Native American youth. In G. A. Marlatt & G. R. VandenBos (Eds.), *Addictive behaviors: Readings on etiology, prevention, and treatment* (pp. 841-856). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Lane, J., Gerstein, D., Huang, L., & Wright, D. (2001). *Risk and protective factors for adolescent drug use: Findings from the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 01-3499, Analytic Series A-12). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. [Available at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/analytic.htm>]
- Specific questions regarding youth risk and protective behaviors can be found in: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2003, March). *2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: CAI specs for programming, English version* [PDF, March 2003], pgs. 154 and 234-240. Retrieved August 26, 2004, from <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda/methods.cfm#2k4>

## Figure and Table Notes

- Difference between American Indian or Alaska Native estimate and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups estimate is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
- Difference between American Indian or Alaska Native estimate and Other Racial/Ethnic Groups estimate is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: SAMHSA, 2002 and 2003 NSDUH.

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 and 2003 data are based on information obtained from 135,910 persons aged 12 or older, including 665 American Indian or Alaska Native 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

International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.)

Information and data for this report are based on the following publications 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, NSDUH Series H-22). 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.

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

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

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