

The NHSDA Report

February 14, 2003

Youths' Choice of Consultant for Serious Problems Related to Substance Use

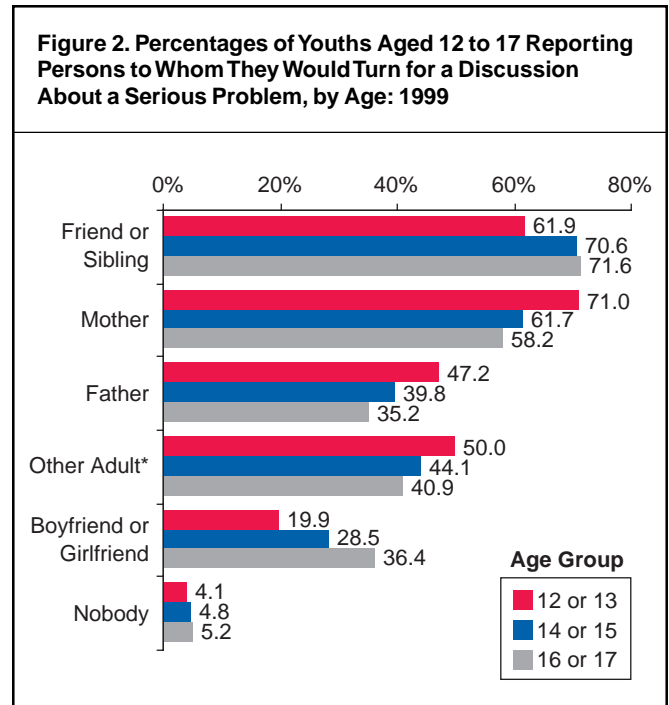
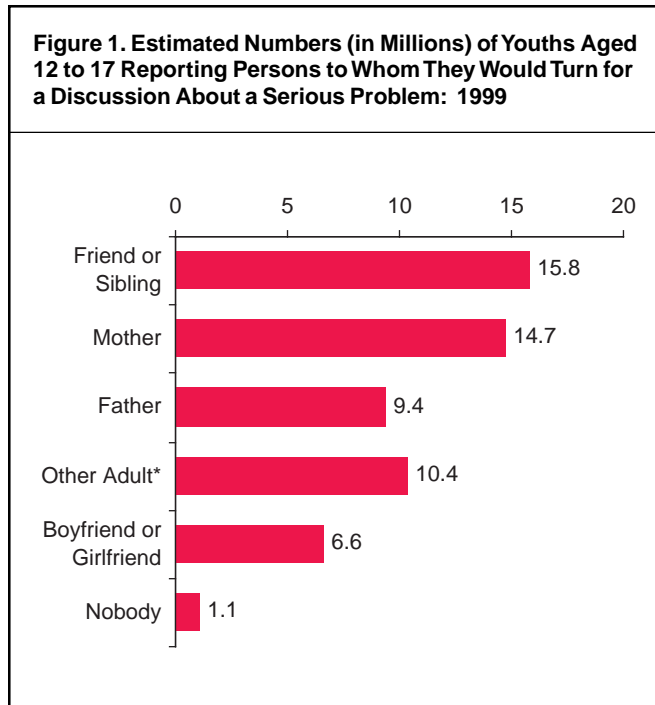
In Brief

- In 1999, youths confronted with a serious problem were most likely to say they would talk to a friend or sibling
- Among youths, males were more likely than females to say they would talk to their fathers
- Rates of past month cigarette, alcohol, or marijuana use were lower among youths who would talk to an adult than among youths who would talk to dating partners

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) asks youths aged 12 to 17 to identify all the persons they would talk to about a serious problem.¹ Respondents were also asked about household composition and past month use of cigarettes, alcohol, and various illicit drugs, including marijuana, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.

Whom Do Youths Consult About Serious Problems?

Of the estimated 23 million youths in the United States aged 12 to 17 in 1999, the NHSDA showed that most would talk to a friend or sibling about a serious problem (Figure 1). Almost 16 million would turn to non-adult friends or siblings, nearly 15 million would turn to their mothers, more than 9 million would turn to their fathers, over 10 million would turn to another adult, and close to 7 million would turn to their boyfriends or girlfriends. Over 1 million would turn to nobody.



Younger youths more frequently identified adults as confidants than did older youths (Figure 2). Females were more likely than males to turn to others to discuss a serious problem, although males were more likely than females to turn to their fathers (Figure 3). White youths were more likely to turn to parents or other adults than youths from other racial/ethnic groups (Figure 4).

Approximately 92 percent of youths lived with their mothers, and 67 percent of these youths would turn to their mothers to discuss a serious problem compared with 60 percent of youths who did not live with their mothers. Likewise, 76 percent of youths lived with their fathers, and 48 percent of these youths would turn to their fathers to discuss a serious problem compared with 34 percent of youths who did not live with their fathers.

Youths' Consultant Choices and Substance Use

According to the 1999 NHSDA, rates of past month cigarette, alcohol, or marijuana use were lower among youths who reported they would talk to an adult about a serious problem than among those who would talk to a boyfriend or girlfriend. For example, youths aged 12 or 13 who would consult their mothers, fathers, or other adults were less likely to use alcohol during the past month (2 to 3 percent) than youths who would consult a dating partner (7 percent) (Figure 5).

End Note

1. Respondents were asked, "If you wanted to talk to someone about a serious problem which of the following people would you turn to?" In 1999, the thirteen response options were: 1) there is nobody I can talk to about serious problems; 2) my mother; 3) my father; 4) my grandmother or grandfather; 5) my boyfriend or girlfriend; 6) my brother or sister; 7) some other relative; 8) a friend; 9) a neighbor; 10) a teacher, principal, coach or school counselor; 11) a therapist, psychiatrist, or other private counselor; 12) a pastor, clergy or church group; or 13) some other person. The response categories were not mutually exclusive, and youths could provide more than one response. Responses were grouped into the following categories: 1) nobody, 2) mother, 3) father, 4) other adult (including grandparents, teacher/principal/coach, therapist/psychiatrist), 5) boyfriend or girlfriend, 6) non-adult (including siblings or friends), and 7) other person (including other relative or a neighbor). Respondents who chose "nobody" are included in this report; however, respondents who did not indicate any of the choices are not.

Figure 3. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Persons to Whom They Would Turn for a Discussion About a Serious Problem, by Gender: 1999

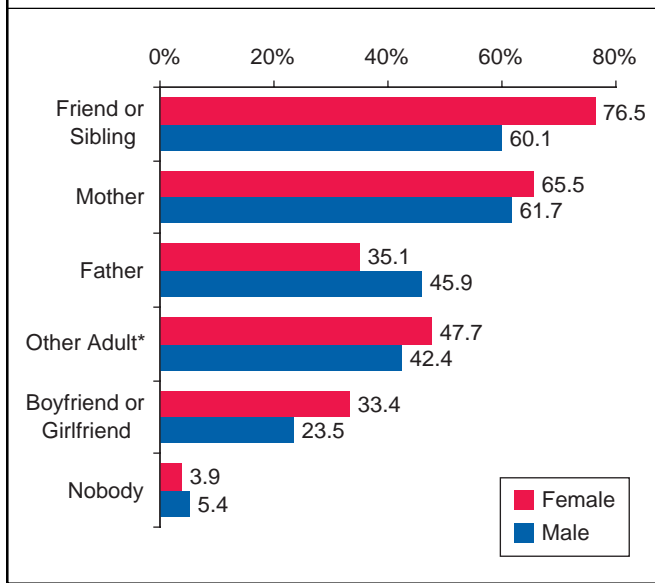


Figure 4. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Persons to Whom They Would Turn for a Discussion About a Serious Problem, by Race/Ethnicity: 1999

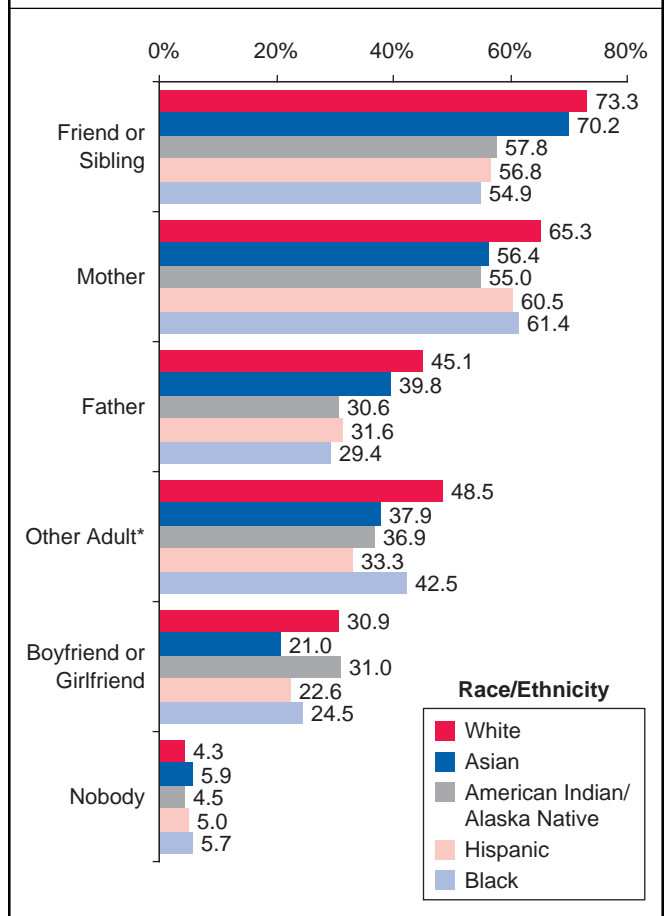


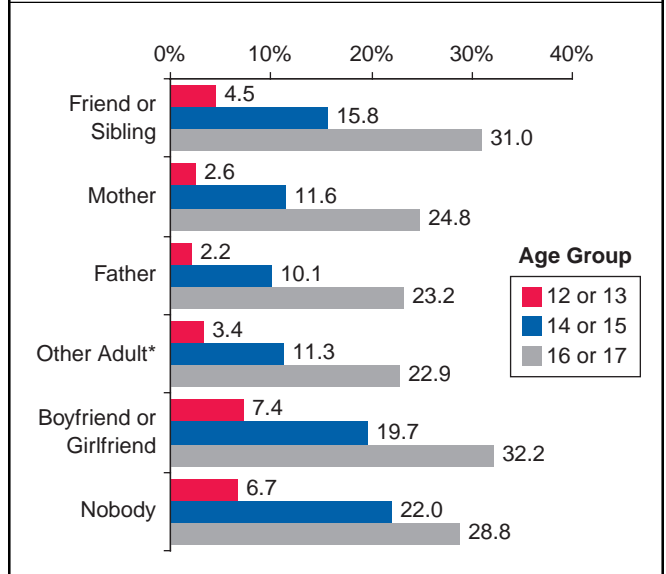
Figure Notes

Note (all figures): Respondents were asked to mark all the persons they might talk to about a serious problem; thus, these categories are not mutually exclusive. Respondents who did not indicate any of the choices have been excluded.

* Other adult includes grandparents, teacher/principal/coach, therapist/psychiatrist, or pastor/clergy/church/church group.

Source (all figures): SAMHSA 1999 NHSDA

Figure 5. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Alcohol Use, by Age Group and Person to Whom They Would Turn for a Discussion About a Serious Problem: 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>

Tables available upon request.



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