

## 6. Prevention-Related Measures

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) includes an extensive set of risk and protective factors concerned with substance abuse prevention issues among youths aged 12 to 17. Risk factors include those individual characteristics or social environments associated with an increased likelihood of substance use, while protective factors are related to a decreased likelihood of substance use or to nonuse. These factors derive from circumstances, influences, and perceptions at many levels, such as the individual, peer, family, school, and community levels (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). A number of risk and protective factors have been shown to be correlated with youth use of cigarettes, alcohol, and other illicit drugs. One goal of youth prevention programs has been to identify those factors, and, subsequently, design programs that might affect them. Because individual attitudes and perceptions of substance use typically precede substance use, tracking risk and protective factors over time can provide an advance alert of increases and decreases in actual illicit drug, alcohol, and tobacco use.

A report based on the 1997 NHSDA data presented initial findings on a number of risk and protective factors for youth substance abuse (Lane, Gerstein, Huang, & Wright, 2001). A more comprehensive list of possible risk and protective factors was included in the 1999 NHSDA, and a report based on those data, including analyses that address the issue of the relative change in these factors over time and their impact on substance use, is in preparation (Wright & Pemberton, in press). The section below presents results from the 1999, 2000, and 2001 NHSDAs using data from all individuals aged 12 or older on perceptions of risk and availability of cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs, as well as data from youths aged 12 to 17 on parental disapproval of youth substance use, participation in delinquent activities, and youth exposure to substance abuse prevention messages and programs. Following this, trends in substance use by risk and protective factors are presented.

### Perceptions of Risk

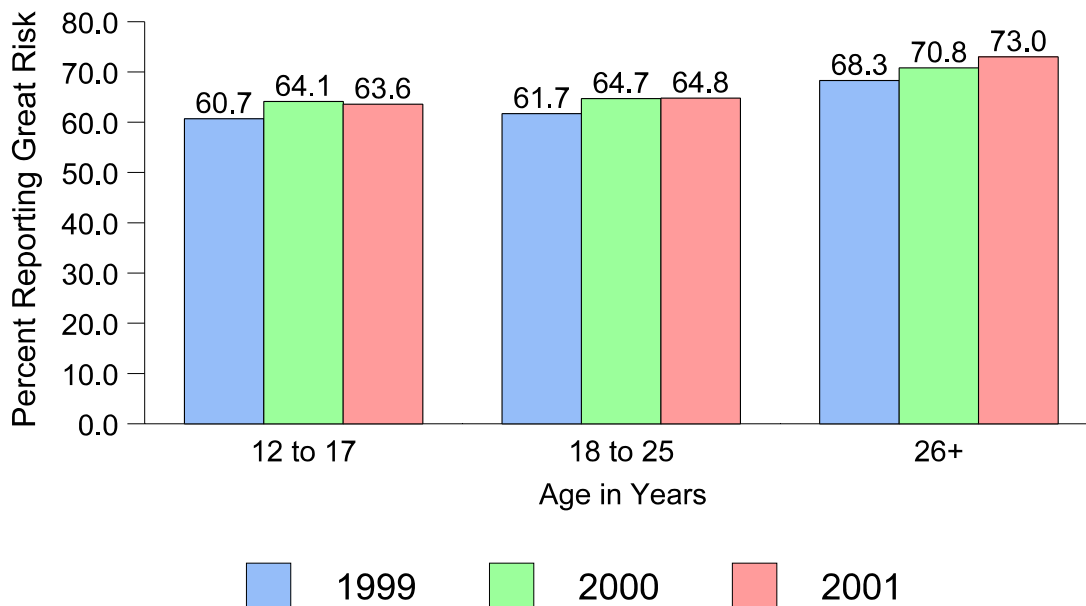
- For persons aged 12 or older, the perceived risk of using cigarettes increased between 1999 and 2001, but perceptions of risk of a number of other substances decreased during the same period. For cigarettes, the percentage of persons aged 12 or older who indicated there was a great risk of smoking one or more packs per day rose from 66.7 percent in 1999, to 69.3 percent in 2000 and 71.0 percent in 2001. The increased perception of cigarette use risk in 2001 relative to 2000 can be attributed to the 26 or older age group (70.8 percent in 2000 to 73.0 percent in 2001), while differences in perceived risk from 2000 to 2001 in the younger age groups were not statistically significant (Figure 6.1).
- Of the remaining 10 questions related to perceived risk of substance use, 8 questions displayed decreases in perceived risk, and 2 others showed no change between 2000 and 2001 for persons aged 12 or older. Perceived great risk of smoking marijuana once or twice a week decreased from 56.4 percent in 2000 to 53.3 percent in 2001 (Figure 6.2). Perceived risk of using cocaine once or twice a week dropped from 90.8 to 90.0 percent. Similarly, perceived risks of trying heroin once or twice, trying LSD once or twice, and having five or more drinks once or twice a week all declined between 2000 and 2001.

- Among youths aged 12 to 17, there was a significant decline between 2000 and 2001 in the proportion reporting great risk in smoking marijuana once or twice a week, from 56.0 to 53.5 percent. There were no statistically significant differences between 2000 and 2001 in the percentages of youths reporting great risk of having five or more drinks once or twice a week or in the perception of risk of having four or five drinks nearly every day.

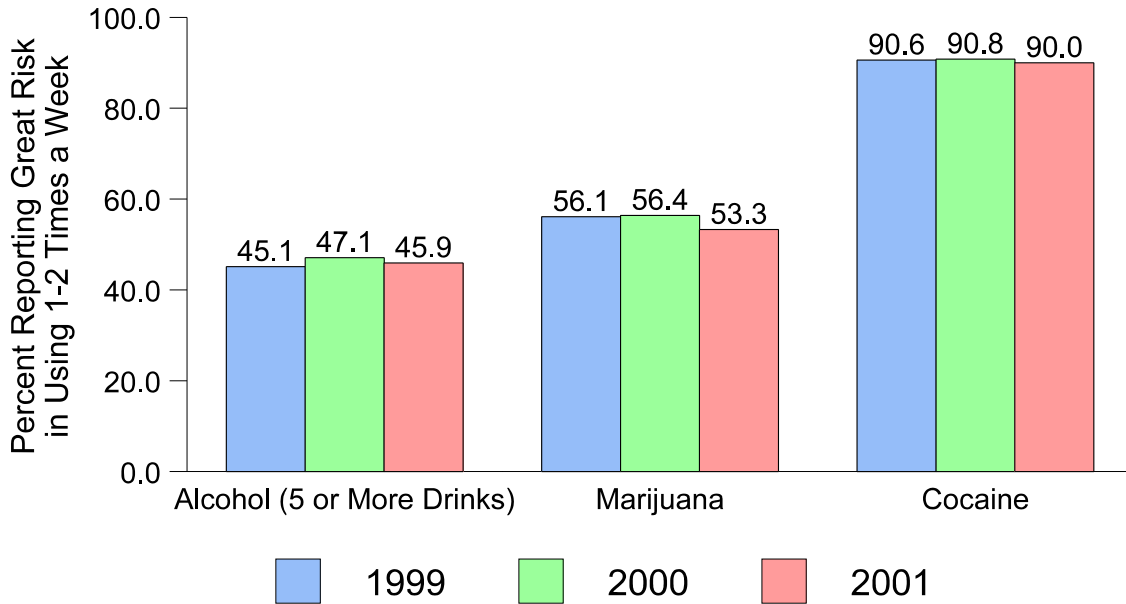
### Availability

- The percentage of persons aged 12 or older indicating that it was fairly or very easy to obtain marijuana increased between 2000 and 2001 (54.8 to 56.6 percent), while differences in the perceived availability of cocaine, crack (not presented in figure), heroin, and LSD were not statistically significant (Figure 6.3). These trends were consistent across all age groups (12 to 17, 18 to 25, and 26 or older).
- The percentage of persons aged 12 or older who had been approached in the past month by someone selling drugs increased slightly between 2000 and 2001 from 7.4 to 7.8 percent.

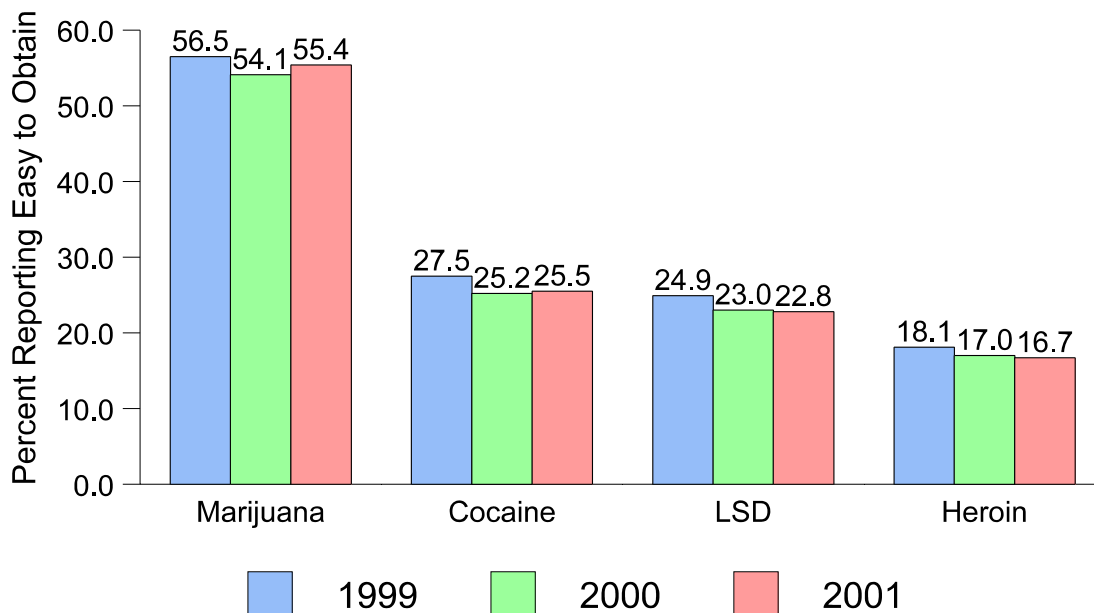
**Figure 6.1 Perceived Risk of Smoking One or More Packs of Cigarettes Per Day, by Age: 1999, 2000, and 2001**



**Figure 6.2 Perceived Risk of Substance Use among Persons Aged 12 or Older: 1999, 2000, and 2001**



**Figure 6.3 Perceived Availability of Drugs among Youths Aged 12 to 17: 1999, 2000, and 2001**



## **Parental Disapproval**

- The percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 indicating that their parents would strongly disapprove of their smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day increased from 87.8 percent in 2000 to 88.9 percent in 2001. The percentage of youths who felt that their parents would strongly disapprove if they had one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day increased from 87.9 percent in 2000 to 88.9 percent in 2001. The percentage reporting strong parental disapproval about trying marijuana or hashish once or twice remained consistent from 2000 to 2001 at 89.5 percent.

## **Delinquent Behaviors among Youths Aged 12 to 17**

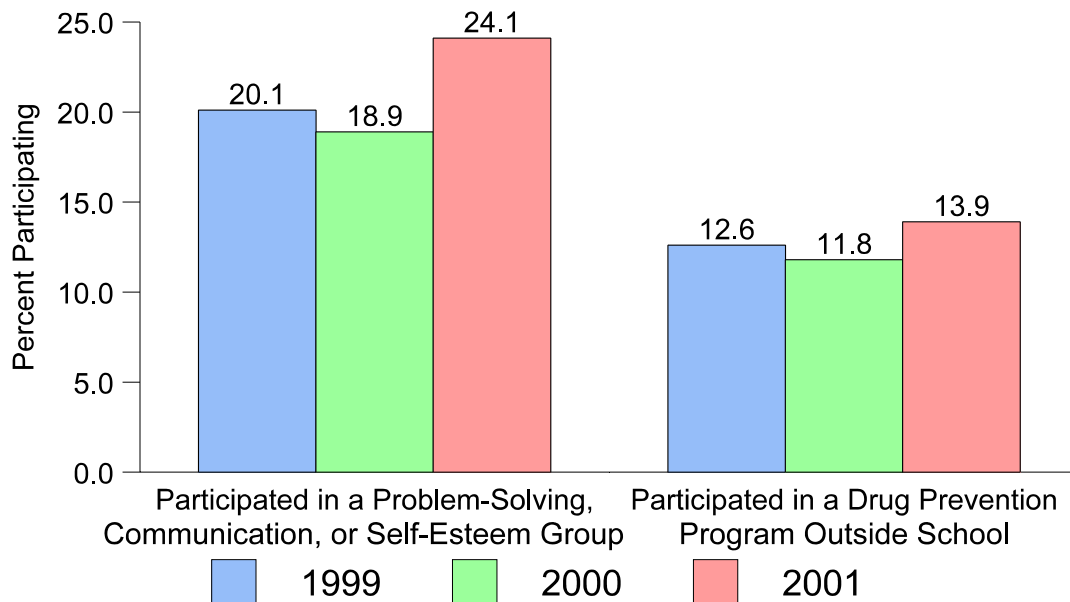
- Even though the percentage of youths who reported that they had gotten into a serious fight at work or school in the past year dropped from 21.9 percent in 1999 to 17.9 percent in 2000, there was an increase in 2001 to 18.9 percent. The percentage participating in a group-against-group fight one or more times in the past year was stable between 2000 and 2001 (15.0 percent).
- Although a small percentage of youths reported that they had carried a handgun one or more times in the past year, the percentages were not significantly different in 2000 and 2001 (2.9 and 3.1 percent, respectively). The percentage of youths who reported selling drugs in the past year also remained stable between 2000 and 2001 at about 3.5 percent.
- Since 1999, there has been a slight decline in the percentage of youths who reported having stolen or having tried to steal something worth \$50 or more at least once in the past year. The percentage fell between 1999 (4.8 percent) and 2000 (4.3 percent) and remained at a similar level in 2001 (4.1 percent).
- Since 1999, there has been a drop in the percentage of youths reporting that they had attacked someone with the intent to seriously hurt them during the past year. The percentage fell from 1999 (8.4 percent) to 2000 (7.5 percent), but remained stable in 2001 (7.8 percent).

## **Youth Exposure to Prevention Messages and Programs**

- In 2001, a majority (82.8 percent) of youths aged 12 to 17 reported having seen or heard alcohol or drug prevention messages outside of school in the past year. This represents a slightly larger percentage than in 2000 (81.9 percent).
- Among youths aged 12 to 17 in 2001 who reported being enrolled in school during the past 12 months, 77.6 percent reported having seen or heard drug or alcohol prevention messages in school during that period. This percentage was similar to the percentages in both 1999 (77.6 percent) and 2000 (77.9 percent).

- In 2001, a slightly smaller percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 (55.9 percent) indicated that they had talked with a parent in the past year about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, or drug use than in 2000 (57.6 percent).
- The percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 who participated in a problem-solving, communication, or self-esteem group in 2001 (24.1 percent) was considerably higher than the percentage reporting this in 2000 (18.9 percent) (Figure 6.4). The percentage who had participated in a drug prevention program outside of school was higher in 2001 (13.9 percent) than in 2000 (11.8 percent).

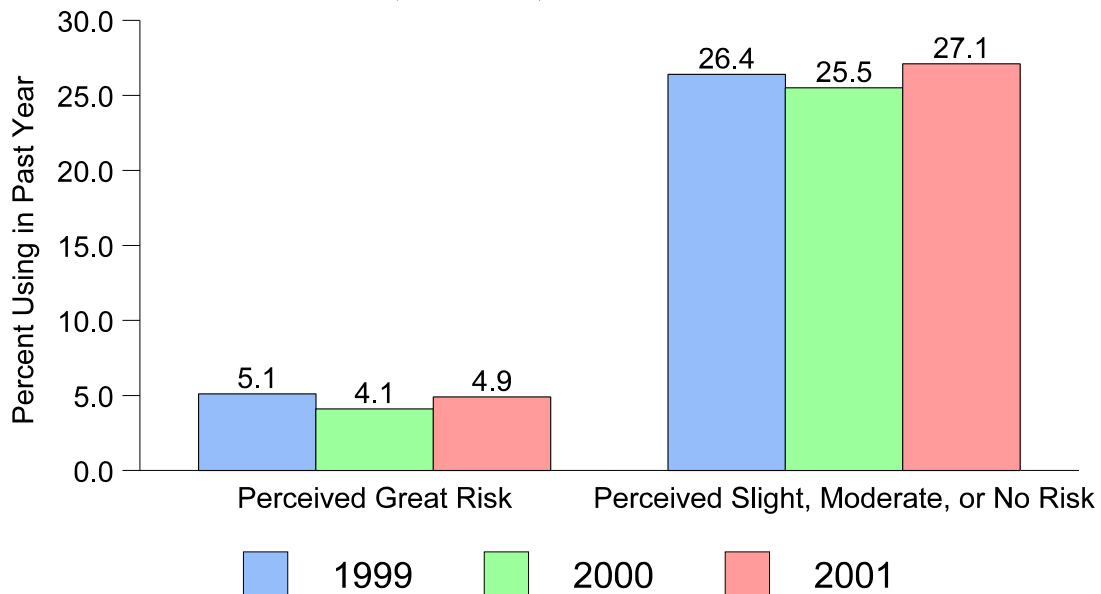
**Figure 6.4 Participation in Drug and Alcohol Prevention Programs among Youths Aged 12 to 17 in the Past Year: 1999, 2000, and 2001**



#### Trends in Substance Use, by Risk and Protective Factors

- Concurrently with a decrease in the percentages of youths aged 12 to 17 who perceived a great risk in smoking marijuana once or twice a week (from 56.0 percent in 2000 to 53.5 percent in 2001), past year use of illicit drugs among youths who perceived a great risk in smoking marijuana weekly increased from 8.3 percent in 2000 to 9.6 percent in 2001. During that same period, their prevalence rates for past year use of marijuana increased from 4.1 to 4.9 percent (Figure 6.5). Compared with youths who perceived a great risk of using marijuana once or twice a week, youths who did not perceive a great risk had higher rates of substance use and had increases in past year substance use between 2000 and 2001. For example, the rate of past year use of illicit drugs among youths who did not perceive great risk of marijuana use increased from 32.1 percent in 2000 to 33.9 percent in 2001. Past year use of marijuana rose during the same period from 25.5 to 27.1 percent.

**Figure 6.5 Past Year Marijuana Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Perceived Risk of Smoking Marijuana Weekly: 1999, 2000, and 2001**



- Among those youths aged 12 to 17 who reported that marijuana was fairly or very easy to obtain (over 50 percent of all youths), the rate of past month marijuana use increased from 12.5 percent in 2000 to 13.6 percent in 2001.
- Youth aged 12 to 17 who indicated that they had been approached in the past month by someone selling drugs (about 16 percent of all youths) reported levels of past month use of illicit drugs that were higher in 2001 (32.9 percent) than in 2000 (31.7 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant. However, youths who indicated that they were not approached in the past month by someone selling drugs reported a statistically significant increase in past month use of illicit drugs—from 5.5 percent in 2000 to 6.5 percent in 2001.
- Among the approximately 80 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 who strongly or somewhat disapproved of someone their own age trying marijuana once or twice, past month use of marijuana increased slightly from 2.5 percent in 2000 to 3.1 percent in 2001.
- In 2000, 11.8 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 participated in an alcohol, tobacco, or drug prevention program outside of school. That percentage rose slightly in 2001 to 13.9 percent. The rates of past month illicit drug use among participating youths were not statistically different in those years (10.9 percent in 2000 and 10.8 percent in 2001). Those who had not participated in such a program reported an increase in past month use of illicit drugs from 9.5 percent in 2000 to 10.7 percent in 2001.