

The NSDUH Report

January 16, 2004

Availability of Illicit Drugs among Youths

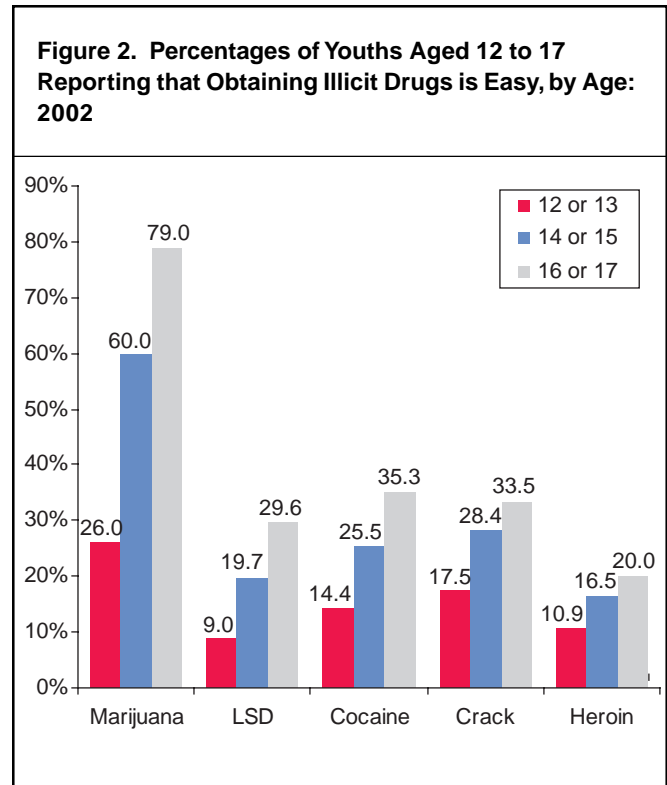
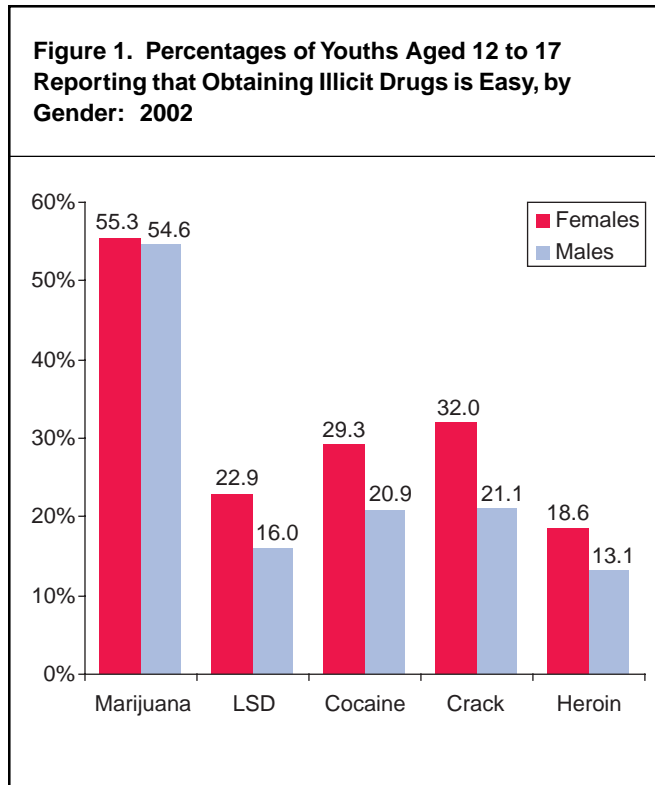
In Brief

- In 2002, more than half of youths aged 12 to 17 felt that marijuana was easy to obtain
- Almost 17 percent of all youths reported they had been approached by someone selling drugs in the past month
- Youths who felt that illicit drugs were easy to obtain or who reported they had been approached by someone selling drugs in the past month were more likely to use illicit drugs in the past month

The 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), asks persons aged 12 or older to report their illicit drug use during the month prior to the interview. Illicit drugs include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. Respondents also were asked to report how easy or difficult it would be to obtain marijuana, LSD, cocaine, crack, or heroin if they wanted some¹ and whether or not they had been approached in the past month by someone selling drugs. Responses were analyzed by gender, age, and the type of county in which the respondents lived at the time of the interview.² This report focuses on respondents aged 12 to 17.

Prevalence of Illicit Drug Use among Youths

In 2002, almost 3 million youths (12 percent) aged 12 to 17 used an illicit drug in the past month. Marijuana was the illicit drug used most frequently by youths in the past month (8 percent). During the past month, 4 percent of



youths used prescription-type drugs nonmedically, 1 percent used inhalants, and 1 percent used hallucinogens, including LSD. Cocaine (including crack) and heroin were each used by less than 1 percent of youths.

Ease of Obtaining Illicit Drugs

Overall, 55 percent of all youths aged 12 to 17 reported it would be easy to obtain marijuana. More than one in four youths felt that it would be easy to obtain crack, compared to 25 percent for cocaine, 19 percent for LSD, and 16 percent for heroin.³ Females were more likely than males to report that LSD, cocaine, crack, and heroin were easy to obtain, but females and males were equally likely to report that marijuana was easy to obtain (Figure 1). Youths aged 16 or 17 were more likely to indicate that mari-

juana, LSD, cocaine, crack, and heroin were easy to obtain than youths aged 12 to 15 (Figure 2).

Youths in metropolitan areas were more likely to report that LSD or cocaine were easy to obtain than youths in non-metropolitan areas. Youths living in large metropolitan areas were more likely to report that heroin was easy to obtain than those living in small metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas. Perceptions of the ease of obtaining marijuana or crack were similar among youths living in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

Youths Approached by Someone Selling Drugs

Almost 17 percent of youths reported they had been approached in the past month by someone selling drugs. Males were more likely to have been approached than females (20 percent vs. 13 percent). Youths

aged 16 or 17 were more likely to have been approached by someone selling drugs (26 percent) than those aged 14 or 15 (17 percent) or 12 or 13 (7 percent). Youths living in metropolitan areas were more likely to have been approached by someone selling drugs than youths living in non-metropolitan areas.

Availability and Illicit Drug Use

Youths who perceived illicit drugs to be easy to obtain were more likely to report past month use of marijuana, LSD, cocaine, or crack than youths who perceived illicit drugs to be difficult to obtain (Table 1).³ Youths who had been approached by someone selling drugs during the past month were also more likely to report using marijuana, LSD, cocaine, or crack in the past month than those who had not been approached (Table 2).

Table 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Illicit Drug Use, by Perceived Ease of Obtaining That Drug: 2002

	<i>Easy to Obtain</i>	<i>Difficult to Obtain</i>
Marijuana	14.1	1.2
LSD	0.8	0.1
Cocaine	2.0	0.1
Crack	0.4	<0.1
Heroin	0.1	<0.1

Table 2. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Illicit Drug Use, by Whether or Not They Had Been Approached by Someone Selling Drugs in the Past Month: 2002

	<i>Approached</i>	<i>Not Approached</i>
Marijuana	29.4	3.9
LSD	1.2	0.1
Cocaine	2.7	0.2
Crack	0.5	<0.1
Heroin	0.1	<0.1

End Notes

1. Response options for the questions about ease of obtaining drugs were (1) probably impossible, (2) very difficult, (3) fairly difficult, (4) fairly easy, and (5) very easy. For this report, responses were combined into "difficult" (responses 1-3) and "easy" (responses 4 and 5).
2. Large metropolitan areas have a population of 1 million or more. Small metropolitan areas have a population of fewer than 1 million. Non-metropolitan areas are outside metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget.
3. Respondents were asked two separate questions about the ease obtaining cocaine and the ease of obtaining crack, a form of cocaine. However, respondents are asked about past month use of crack only after responding "yes" to past month use of cocaine.

Figure and Table Note

Source: SAMHSA 2002 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 data are based on information obtained from 68,126 persons aged 12 or older, including 23,645 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 in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

Information and data for this issue are based on the following publication 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, NHSDA Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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

Additional tables available upon request.

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



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