

The NSDUH Report

April 24, 2008

Parent Awareness of Youth Use of Cigarettes, Alcohol, and Marijuana

In Brief

- Youth substance use in the past year was generally higher within one-parent households than within two-parent households for both mother-child and father-child pairs and was generally highest among youth in father-child pairs within one-parent households
- Parent awareness of youth use of cigarettes and alcohol in the past year increased with the youth's increasing age among both mother-child and father-child pairs
- Rates of parent awareness of youth substance use in the past year were generally higher among mothers in mother-child pairs than among fathers in father-child pairs and were generally highest among mothers in mother-child pairs within one-parent households

Data from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) indicate that 17.0 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 used cigarettes in the past year, 32.9 percent used alcohol, and 13.2 percent used marijuana.^{1,2} Parents are encouraged to communicate with their children about drugs and alcohol,³ and some research has examined the extent to which parents are aware of their children's drug and alcohol use. Studies focusing on the general population have found high levels of parent awareness of adolescent cigarette use, but awareness of alcohol use is low; findings on parent awareness of adolescent marijuana use are mixed.⁴

NSDUH includes a sample of parents and their children who live in the same household. Parent-child pairs in NSDUH are composed of a child aged 12 to 17 and his or her biological, step, adoptive, or foster parent. NSDUH asks youths aged 12 to 17 about alcohol and illicit drug use during the past year. Adults in the parent-child sample are asked whether they think their child has used alcohol or other drugs during the past year.⁵

This report uses data from the paired sample to examine overall rates of youth cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use in the past year, as well as parent awareness of their child's use of these substances. Parents were considered to be aware of their child's substance use if both the parent and the child reported that the child used a specific substance in the past year. Household composition was slightly different for mother-child and father-child pairs,⁶ with mother-child pairs being more likely than father-child pairs to come from one-parent households.⁷ Weighted data indicate that approximately 22.2 percent of youths in mother-child pairs were in one-parent households compared with 5.6 percent of youths in father-child pairs. All findings presented in this report are based on combined NSDUH data from 2002 through 2006 and are weighted to be nationally representative of mother-child and father-child pairs in the United States.

Substance Use among Youths

Combined data from 2002 to 2006 indicate that an annual average of 16.6 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 in parent-child pairs used cigarettes during the past year, 32.1 percent used alcohol, and 12.9 percent used marijuana.⁸

Rates of past year use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana were similar in mother-child and father-child pairs (Figure 1). In mother-child pairs, 17.6 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 used cigarettes in the past year, 32.5 percent used alcohol, and 13.4 percent used marijuana. In father-child pairs, 15.3 percent of youths used cigarettes, 31.5 percent used alcohol, and 12.3 percent used marijuana.

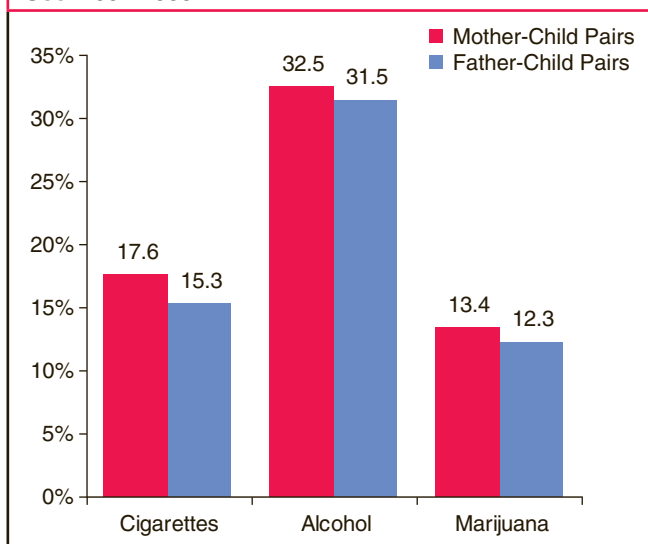
For both mother-child and father-child pairs, youth substance use in the past year was generally higher within one-parent households than within two-parent households (Table 1). For example, 20.2 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 in mother-child pairs within one-parent households used cigarettes in the past year compared with 16.8 percent of youths in mother-child pairs within two-parent households. Overall, rates of use were highest for all three substances among youths in father-child pairs within one-parent households.

Parent Awareness of Youth Substance Use

Rates of parent awareness of youth cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use in the past year were generally higher among mothers in mother-child pairs than among fathers in father-child pairs (Figure 2). For example, 41.1 percent of mothers in mother-child pairs with children aged 12 to 17 who used marijuana in the past year were aware of their child's marijuana use compared with 32.5 percent of fathers in comparable father-child pairs.

Parent awareness of adolescents' use of cigarettes and alcohol in the past year increased with the youth's increasing

Figure 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 in Parent-Child Pairs* Who Reported Past Year Substance Use: 2002-2006



Source: SAMHSA, 2002-2006 NSDUHs.

Table 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 in Parent-Child Pairs* Who Reported Past Year Substance Use, by Household Configuration: 2002-2006**

Substance	Mother-Child Pairs		Father-Child Pairs	
	One-Parent Household	Two-Parent Household	One-Parent Household	Two-Parent Household
Cigarettes	20.2	16.8	23.3	14.9
Alcohol	34.5	31.9	36.6	31.2
Marijuana	16.4	12.6	18.9	11.9

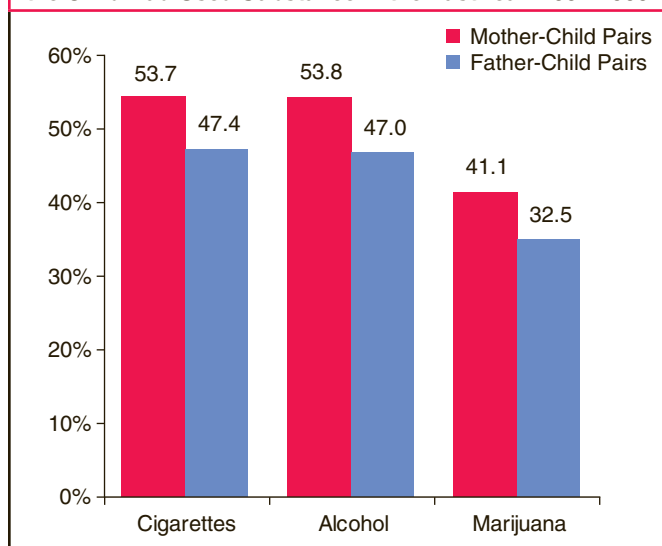
Source: SAMHSA, 2002-2006 NSDUHs.

age among both mother-child and father-child pairs (Table 2). For example, 33.4 percent of mothers in mother-child pairs with children aged 12 to 14 who used alcohol in the past year were aware of their child's alcohol use. In comparison, 60.5 percent of mothers with children aged 15 to 17 who used alcohol in the past year were aware of their child's alcohol use. The percentage of parents who were aware of their child's marijuana use was relatively consistent regardless of the age of the youth.

Parent Awareness of Youth Substance Use, by Household Configuration

Mothers in mother-child pairs within one-parent households generally had the highest rates of awareness of their child's

Figure 2. Percentages of Parents in Parent-Child Pairs* Who Were Aware of Their Child's Substance Use Where the Child Had Used Substance in the Past Year: 2002-2006



Source: SAMHSA, 2002-2006 NSDUHs.

Table 2. Percentages of Parents in Parent-Child Pairs* Who Were Aware of Their Child's Substance Use Where the Child Had Used Substance in the Past Year, by Age of Children: 2002-2006

Substance	Mother-Child Pairs		Father-Child Pairs	
	12 to 14	15 to 17	12 to 14	15 to 17
Cigarettes	42.3	57.3	35.2	51.1
Alcohol	33.4	60.5	29.2	53.4
Marijuana	40.8	41.2	34.5	32.1

Source: SAMHSA, 2002-2006 NSDUHs.

Table 3. Percentages of Parents in Parent-Child Pairs* Who Were Aware of Their Child's Substance Use Where the Child Had Used Substance in the Past Year, by Household Configuration: 2002-2006**

Substance	Mother-Child Pairs		Father-Child Pairs	
	One-Parent Household	Two-Parent Household	One-Parent Household	Two-Parent Household
Cigarettes	61.4	51.0	***	47.3
Alcohol	53.1	54.0	***	46.6
Marijuana	44.4	39.9	***	30.9

Source: SAMHSA, 2002-2006 NSDUHs.

past year substance use, followed by mothers in mother-child pairs within two-parent households, and then fathers in father-child pairs within two-parent households (Table 3).⁹ For example, 61.4 percent of mothers in mother-child pairs within one-parent households were aware of their child's past year cigarette use compared with 51.0 percent of mothers in mother-child pairs within two-parent households and 47.3 percent of fathers in father-child pairs within two-parent households.

End Notes

- Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 07-4293, NSDUH Series H-32). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed tables*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Available in Table 2.22B for cigarettes, Table 2.38B for alcohol, and Table 1.25B for marijuana at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k6NSDUH/tabs/TOC.htm>]
- Office of National Drug Control Policy, National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. (2005, September 23). *Keeping your teens drug-free: A family guide*. Retrieved February 15, 2008, from <http://www.theantidrug.com> (see http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/resources/general/General_Market_Parent_Guide.pdf)
- McGillicuddy, N. B., Rychtarik, R. G., Morsheimer, E. T., & Burke-Storer, M. R. (2007). Agreement between parent and adolescent reports of adolescent substance use. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse, 16*, 59-78.
- Parents report on the awareness of the substance use of the responding child (other member of the pair) specifically with no regard to their perceptions of substance use by other children in the household.
- The phrases "mother-child pair" and "father-child pair" are used in this report to refer to parent and youth pairs from the same household. These phrases do not necessarily reflect the total household member composition. For example, a youth from a mother-child pair could also have a father and siblings, or even nonrelatives, living in the same household.
- A "one-parent household" is defined as a household in which only one parent currently resides. This does not necessarily imply that the parent is unwed, divorced, separated, or widowed. For example, a one-parent household could include a mother whose husband is deployed in the military.
- Average rates for 2002-2006 estimated from weighted data for the full sample aged 12 to 17, not simply youths in child-parent pairs, indicate 18.4 percent used cigarettes in the past year, 33.8 percent used alcohol, and 14.3 percent used marijuana.
- Information on parent awareness among fathers in father-child pairs within one-parent households could not be presented because of low precision.

Figure and Table Notes

- * See End Notes 5 and 6.
- ** See End Note 7.
- *** See End Note 9.

Suggested Citation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (April 24, 2008). *The NSDUH Report: Parent Awareness of Youth Use of Cigarettes, Alcohol, and Marijuana*. Rockville, MD.

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2002-2006 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

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The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2002 to 2006 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 19,946 parent-child pairs. 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 on NSDUH used in compiling data for this report is available in the following publication:

Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 07-4293, NSDUH Series H-32). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Information for earlier NSDUHs is available in the following publications:

2005 NSDUH: (DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-4194, NSDUH Series H-30)

2004 NSDUH: (DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4062, NSDUH Series H-28)

2003 NSDUH: (DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964, NSDUH Series H-25)

2002 NSDUH: (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NSDUH Series H-22)

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

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002 through 2006 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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