

# The NSDUH Report

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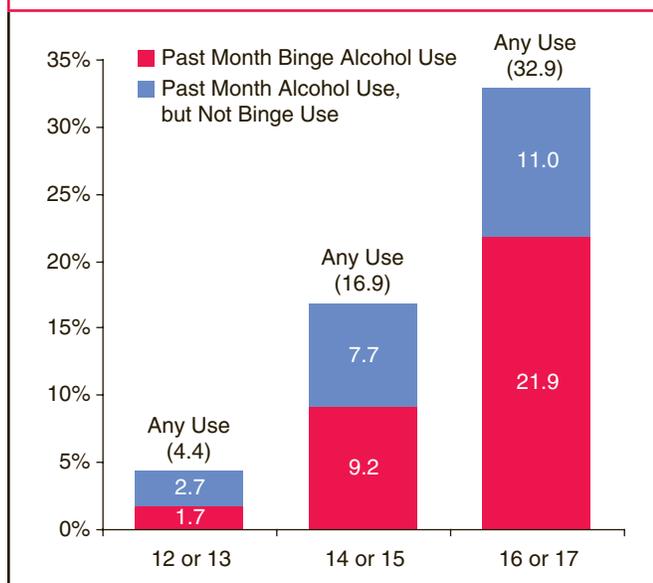
## Academic Performance and Substance Use among Students Aged 12 to 17: 2002, 2003, and 2004

### In Brief

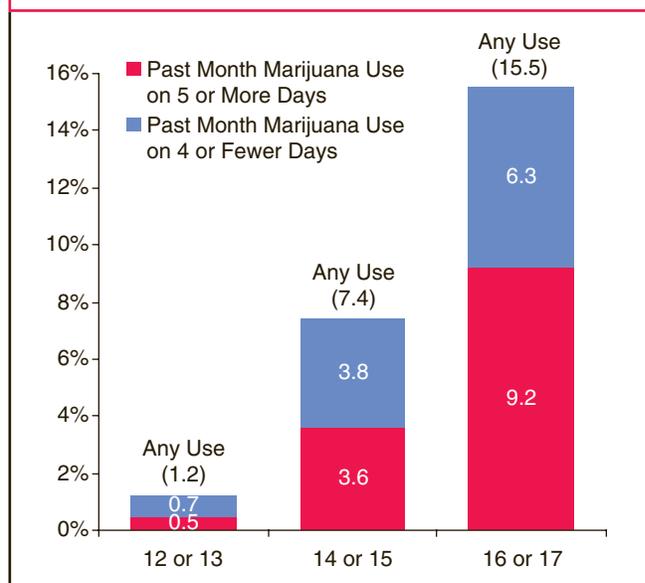
- In 2002–2004, 70.4 percent of students aged 12 to 17 reported that they had an A or B average in their last semester or grading period, while 29.6 percent had a C average or less
- An estimated 72.5 percent of students who did not use alcohol in the past month reported an A or B average in their last semester or grading period compared with 67.1 percent of those who used but did not binge on alcohol and 57.7 percent of those who binged on alcohol in the past month
- An estimated 72.2 percent of students who did not use marijuana in the past month reported an A or B average in their last semester or grading period compared with 58.0 percent of those who used marijuana on 1 to 4 days and 44.9 percent of those who used marijuana on 5 or more days during the past month

Research suggests that there is a relationship between academic performance and adolescent substance use. Students who use alcohol or drugs have been shown to be at greater risk for performing poorly in school, and vice versa.<sup>1-4</sup> The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks youths aged 12 to 17 who reported being enrolled in school during the past year about their average grades during the last semester or grading period.<sup>5</sup> NSDUH also includes questions on the use of alcohol and marijuana during the month prior to the interview. *Binge alcohol use* is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past 30 days.

This report examines the differences in self-reported academic performance (i.e., average grades in the last semester or grading period) among students aged 12 to 17 by gender, age, and substance use. All findings

**Figure 1. Percentages of Students Aged 12 to 17 Using Alcohol in the Past Month, by Age Group: 2002 to 2004**

Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

**Figure 2. Percentages of Students Aged 12 to 17 Using Marijuana in the Past Month, by Age Group: 2002 to 2004**

Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

are annual averages based on combined 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUH data.

### Academic Performance

In 2002–2004, 70.4 percent of students aged 12 to 17 reported that they had an A or B average in their last semester or grading period, while 29.6 percent had a C average or less. Female students were more likely to have an A or B average than their male counterparts (76.6 vs. 64.5 percent). Academic performance varied by age, with 75.6 percent of those aged 12 or 13 having an A or B average compared with 67.9 percent of those aged 14 or 15 and 68.3 percent of those aged 16 or 17.

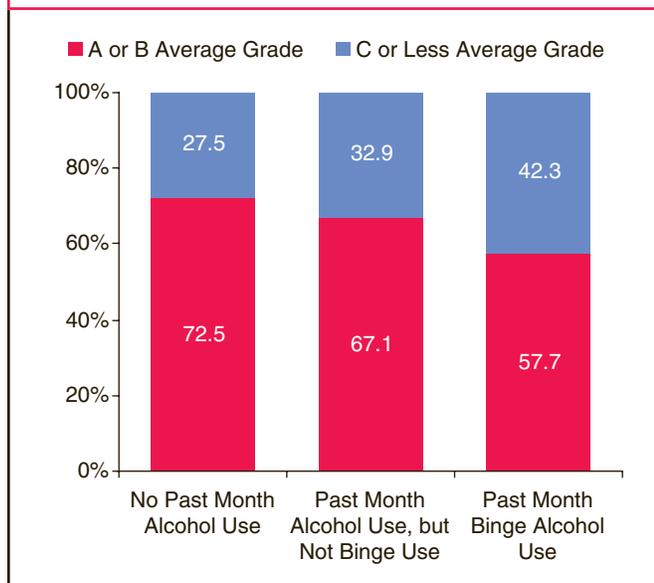
### Past Month Substance Use

Among 12- to 17-year-old students, 18.5 percent drank alcohol in the month prior to the survey. Of these, 11.2 percent binged on alcohol, and 7.3 percent used but did not binge on alcohol. There were some differences in the level of alcohol use by gender and age. Among male students, 17.9 percent used alcohol in the past month, with 11.7 percent engaging in binge use. Among female students, 19.1 percent used alcohol in the past month, with 10.7 percent engaging in binge use. Older students were more likely to have used and binged on

alcohol in the past month than younger students (Figure 1). Nearly one quarter of students aged 16 or 17 engaged in past month binge alcohol use.

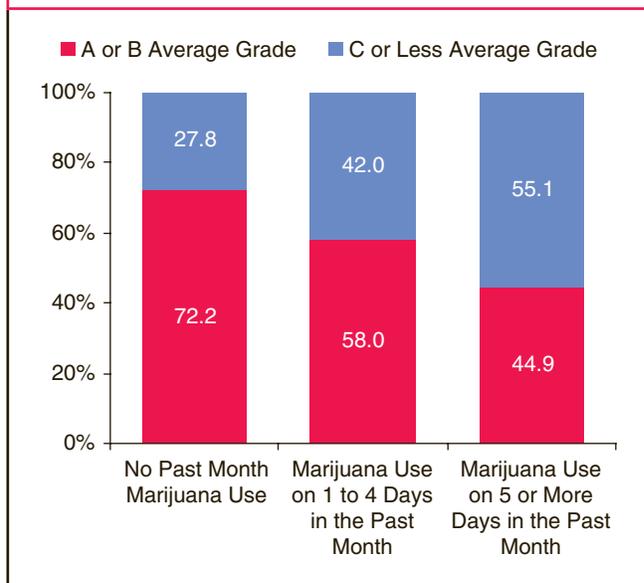
Among 12- to 17-year-old students, 8.3 percent used marijuana in the month prior to the survey. Of these, 4.6 percent used marijuana on 5 or more days during the past month, and 3.7 percent used marijuana on 1 to 4 days in the past month. Among male students, 8.7 percent used marijuana in the past month, with 5.4 percent using marijuana on 5 or more days in the past month. Among female students, 7.6 percent used marijuana in the past month, with 3.6 percent using

**Figure 3. Average Grades During the Last Semester or Grading Period among Students Aged 12 to 17, by Past Month Alcohol Use: 2002 to 2004**



Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

**Figure 4. Average Grades During the Last Semester or Grading Period among Students Aged 12 to 17, by Past Month Marijuana Use: 2002 to 2004**



Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

marijuana on 5 or more days. Rates of past month marijuana use also increased with age (Figure 2). Nearly one tenth of students aged 16 or 17 used marijuana on 5 or more days in the past month.

### Academic Performance and Substance Use

The frequency of the use of alcohol and marijuana during the past month was related to academic performance. Among students who did not use alcohol during the past month, 72.5 percent reported an A or B average in their last semester or grading period (Figure 3). In comparison, 67.1 percent of students who used

but did not binge on alcohol in the past month had an A or B average, and 57.7 percent of those who engaged in past month binge alcohol use had an A or B average. Similarly, 72.2 percent of students who did not use marijuana in the past month reported an A or B average in their last semester or grading period compared with 58.0 percent of those who used marijuana on 1 to 4 days in the past month and 44.9 percent of those who used marijuana on 5 or more days during the past month (Figure 4).

### End Notes

- Bergen, H. A., Martin, G., Roeger, L., & Allison, S. (2005). Perceived academic performance and alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use: Longitudinal relationships in young community adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors, 30*, 1563–1573.
- Ellickson, P. L., Tucker, J. S., & Klein, D. J. (2001). High-risk behaviors associated with early smoking: Results from a 5-year follow-up. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 28*, 465–473.
- Diego, M. A., Field, T. M., & Sanders, C. E. (2003). Academic performance, popularity, and depression predict adolescent substance use. *Adolescence, 38*, 35–42.
- Sutherland, I., & Shepherd, J. P. (2001). Social dimensions of adolescent substance use. *Addiction, 96*, 445–458.
- Students with unknown or missing data on the grade average measure and those who indicated that they attended schools that did not give letter grades were excluded from this analysis.

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2002, 2003, and 2004 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

## Academic Performance and Substance Use among Students Aged 12 to 17: 2002, 2003, and 2004

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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). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2002, 2003, and 2004 data are based on information obtained from 68,611 persons aged 12 to 17, of whom 59,649 gave responses about their last semester or grade period averages. 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 issue is available in the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2005). *Results from the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4062, NSDUH Series H-28). 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.

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.

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

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002, 2003, and 2004 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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