

The NSDUH Report

March 18, 2004

Inhalant Use among Youths: 2002 Update

In Brief

- In 2002, more than 2.6 million youths aged 12 to 17 had used inhalants at least once in their lifetime
- Among youths, the rate of past year inhalant use was about the same for boys (4.6 percent) and girls (4.1 percent)
- Youths who had used an inhalant in the past year were more likely to use marijuana, hallucinogens, cocaine, and prescription drugs nonmedically than those who had not used inhalants in the past year

The 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), asks respondents aged 12 or older to report on their use of inhalants or other illicit drugs during the past year and in their lifetime. Inhalants are defined in the survey as “liquids, sprays, and gases that people sniff or inhale to get high or to make them feel good.” The categories of inhalants asked about in the survey are (a) amyl nitrite, “poppers,” locker room odorizers, or “rush”; (b) correction fluid, degreaser, or cleaning fluid; (c) gasoline or lighter fluid; (d) glue, shoe polish, or toluene; (e) halothane, ether, or other anesthetics; (f) lacquer thinner or other paint solvents; (g) lighter gases, such as butane or propane; (h) nitrous oxide or “whippets”; (i) spray paints; and (j) other aerosol sprays. This report focuses on past year inhalant use, but also presents information on the lifetime use of specific inhalants.

Lifetime Prevalence of Inhalant Use among Youths

The 2002 NSDUH estimates that 10.5 percent of youths aged 12 to 17, or more than 2.6 million youths, had used one or more inhalants in their lifetime. The category of inhalants most

Figure 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Lifetime Use of Inhalants, by Inhalant Type: 2002

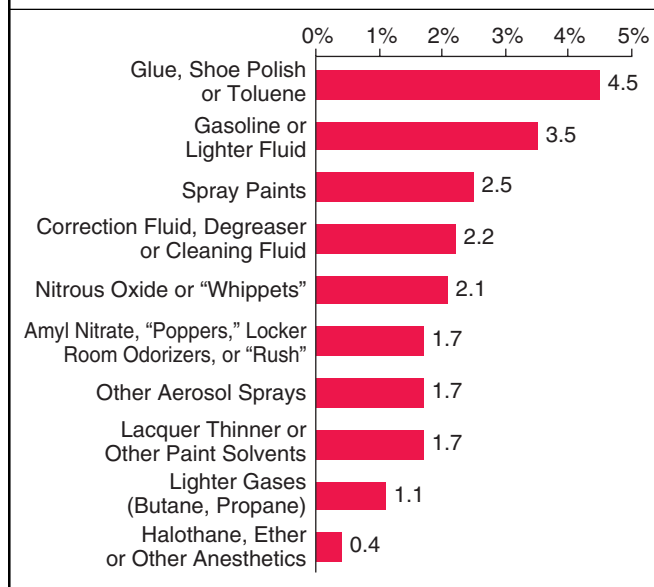
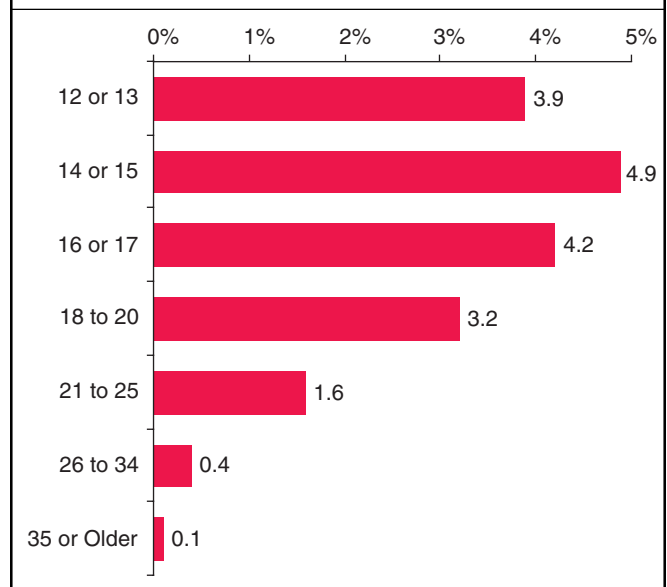


Figure 2. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 or Older Reporting Past Year Use of Inhalants, by Detailed Age Category: 2002



frequently reported by youths was glue, shoe polish, or toluene (4.5 percent) (Figure 1). About 3.5 percent of youths had inhaled gasoline or lighter fluid in their lifetime, and 2.5 percent had inhaled spray paints. Approximately 2 percent had inhaled correction fluid, degreaser, or cleaning fluid; 2 percent had used nitrous oxide or "whippets"; 2 percent had used amyl nitrite, "poppers," locker room odorizers, or "rush"; 2 percent had used other aerosol sprays; 2 percent had used lacquer thinner or other paint solvents. Among youths who had used an inhalant, 53 percent had used more than one type in their lifetime.

Past Year Inhalant Use

In 2002, 4.4 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 reported using an inhalant during the past year. The rates of past year inhalant use peaked among 14 or 15 year olds (4.9 percent) (Figure 2). Among youths aged 12 to 17, the rates of past year inhal-

ant use were similar among males (4.6 percent) and females (4.1 percent) (Figure 3). However, among adults aged 18 to 25, males were more likely to have used an inhalant during the past year (3 percent) than females (1.4 percent).

Among youths aged 12 to 17, whites, American Indians or Alaska Natives, and Hispanics were more likely than Asians or blacks to have used an inhalant during the past year, though not all of the differences between these racial/ethnic groups were statistically significant (Figure 4).¹ Whites were significantly more likely to have used an inhalant in the past year than either Asians or blacks; Hispanics were significantly more likely to have used an inhalant in the past year than blacks. American Indians or Alaska Natives had relatively high rates of past year inhalant use, but because of the small sample of American Indians or Alaska Natives, none of the comparisons with other racial/ethnic groups were statistically significant.

Use of Inhalants and Other Illicit Drugs

According to the 2002 NSDUH, youths aged 12 to 17 who had used an inhalant during the past year were more than 3 times as likely to have used other illicit drugs than those who had not used inhalants during this time period (60 vs. 19 percent) (Table 1). For example, youths who had used an inhalant in the past year were more than 3 times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year as those who had not used an inhalant (47 vs. 14 percent). Youths who had used an inhalant in the past year were more than 4 times as likely to have used psychotherapeutic drugs nonmedically in the past year compared with youths who had not used an inhalant (39 vs. 8 percent). Youths who had used an inhalant in the past year were more than 7 times as likely to have used hallucinogens in the past year compared with youths who had not used an inhalant (23 vs. 3 percent).

Figure 3. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 or Older Reporting Past Year Inhalant Use, by Gender and Age: 2002

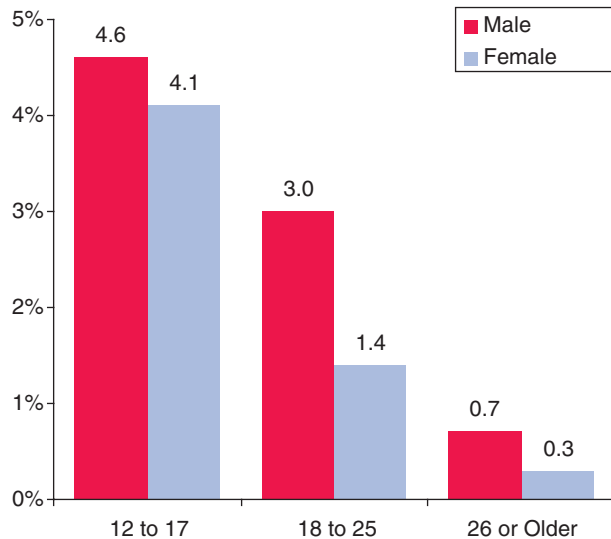


Figure 4. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Year Use of Inhalants, by Race/Ethnicity*: 2002

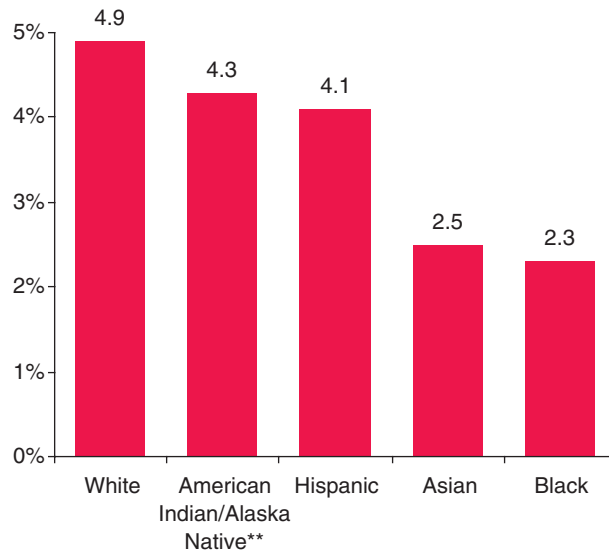


Table 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Year Illicit Drug Use, by Past Year Inhalant Use: 2002

Substance	Past Year Inhalant Use		No Past Year Inhalant Use	
	%	SE	%	SE
Any Illicit Drug other than Inhalants	59.5	2.01	18.7	0.36
Marijuana	46.6	2.09	14.4	0.32
Psychotherapeutics Used Nonmedically	38.8	1.96	7.9	0.24
Hallucinogens	22.6	1.81	3.0	0.14
Cocaine	12.5	1.45	1.6	0.11
Heroin	1.7	0.42	0.1	0.04

SE = standard error

End Note

1. Youths who were Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander were excluded from the racial/ethnic comparisons due to their small sample sizes.

Figure and Table Notes

* Small sample sizes prevented comparative analyses with Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders.

** Because of the relatively small sample size of American Indian or Alaska Natives, the prevalence for this group is not significantly different from any of the other racial/ethnic groups.

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 International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute).

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>.

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



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Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
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