National Survey on Drug Use and Health

The NSDUH Report

April 19, 2007

Youth Activities, Substance Use, and Family Income

Research has shown that participation in afterschool activities is associated with higher levels of academic achievement and self-esteem, as well as lower levels of substance use.[1,2] Other research has indicated that these relationships may be moderated by socioeconomic status, such that adolescents from low- to middle-income families demonstrate more positive outcomes from participation in afterschool activities than do youths from high-income families.[3]

In the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), youths aged 12 to 17 are asked questions about different kinds of school-based, community-based, church- or faith-based, and "other" activities (e.g., karate lessons) they participated in during the past 12 months.[4] For each type of activity, respondents are asked to report how many different kinds of activities they participated in during the past 12 months. Response options are none, one, two, or three or more. To calculate the total number of activities in which each respondent participated, the number was summed across the four types of activities; responses of three or more were counted as three activities. NSDUH also asks about past month use of cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs[5] and total annual family income before deductions.

In Brief

- In 2005, most youths aged 12 to 17 (92.4 percent) participated in at least one school-based, community-based, church- or faith-based, or other type of activity during the past year
- Regardless of family income, youths aged 12 to 17 who did not participate in any activities had higher rates of past month cigarette and illicit drug use than those who participated in four to six or seven or more activities
- Among youths aged 12 to 17 who participated in any activities, those with higher family incomes showed a consistent pattern of decreasing rates of past month cigarette, alcohol, and illicit drug use with increasing numbers of activities

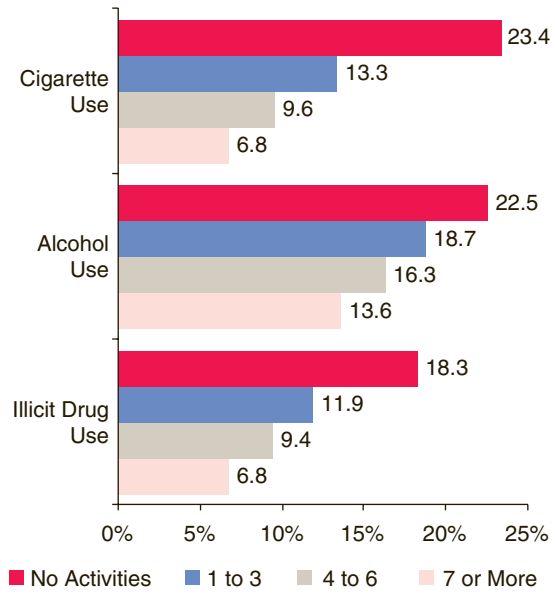
The NSDUH Report (formerly **The NHSDA Report**) is published periodically by the Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (**SAMHSA**). All material appearing in this report is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from **SAMHSA**. Additional copies of this report or other reports from the Office of Applied Studies are available online: http://www.oas.samhsa.gov. Citation of the source is appreciated. For questions about this report, please e-mail: shortreports@samhsa.hhs.gov.

Table 1. Participation in Youth Activities in the Past Year among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Demographic Characteristics: 2005

Demographic Characteristic	Number of Activities: No Activities	1-3 Activities	4-6 Activities	7 or More Activities
Age Group				
12 or 13	5.8	26.4	32.2	35.7
14 or 15	7.6	27.0	32.0	33.4
16 or 17	9.5	27.9	30.0	32.6
Gender				
Male	8.5	30.4	32.8	28.3
Female	6.7	23.7	30.0	39.6
Family Income				
Less Than $20,000	13.0	33.7	30.5	22.9
$20,000 to $49,999	9.4	30.7	31.5	28.4
$50,000 to $74,999	6.1	25.1	31.4	37.4
$75,000 or More	3.6	20.7	31.8	43.9

Source: SAMHSA, 2005 NSDUH.

Figure 1. Past Month Cigarette, Alcohol, and Illicit Drug Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Participation in Past Year Activities: 2005



Source: SAMHSA, 2005 NSDUH.

This issue of *The NSDUH Report* examines the associations between past year youth activities, past month substance use, and family income among youths aged 12 to 17. All findings presented in this report are based on 2005 NSDUH data.

Participation in Youth Activities

In 2005, most youths aged 12 to 17 (92.4 percent) participated in at least one activity during the past year. Over four fifths (82.0 percent) participated in at least one school-based activity, 71.9 percent in at least one community-based activity, 64.1 percent in at least one church- or faith-based activity, and 42.7 percent in at least one other type of activity.

One third of youths aged 12 to 17 participated in seven or more activities in the past year (33.9 percent), 31.4 percent participated in four to six activities, and 27.1 percent participated in one to three activities. Demographic groups varied in the number of activities reported (Table 1). Females were more likely than males to participate in seven or more activities in the past year (39.6 vs. 28.3 percent), and youths aged 12 or 13 were more likely to participate in seven or more activities than those aged 14 or 15 and those aged 16 or 17 (35.7 vs. 33.4 and 32.6 percent, respectively). Youths from households with higher family incomes were more likely to participate in a greater number of activities than those from households with lower family incomes.

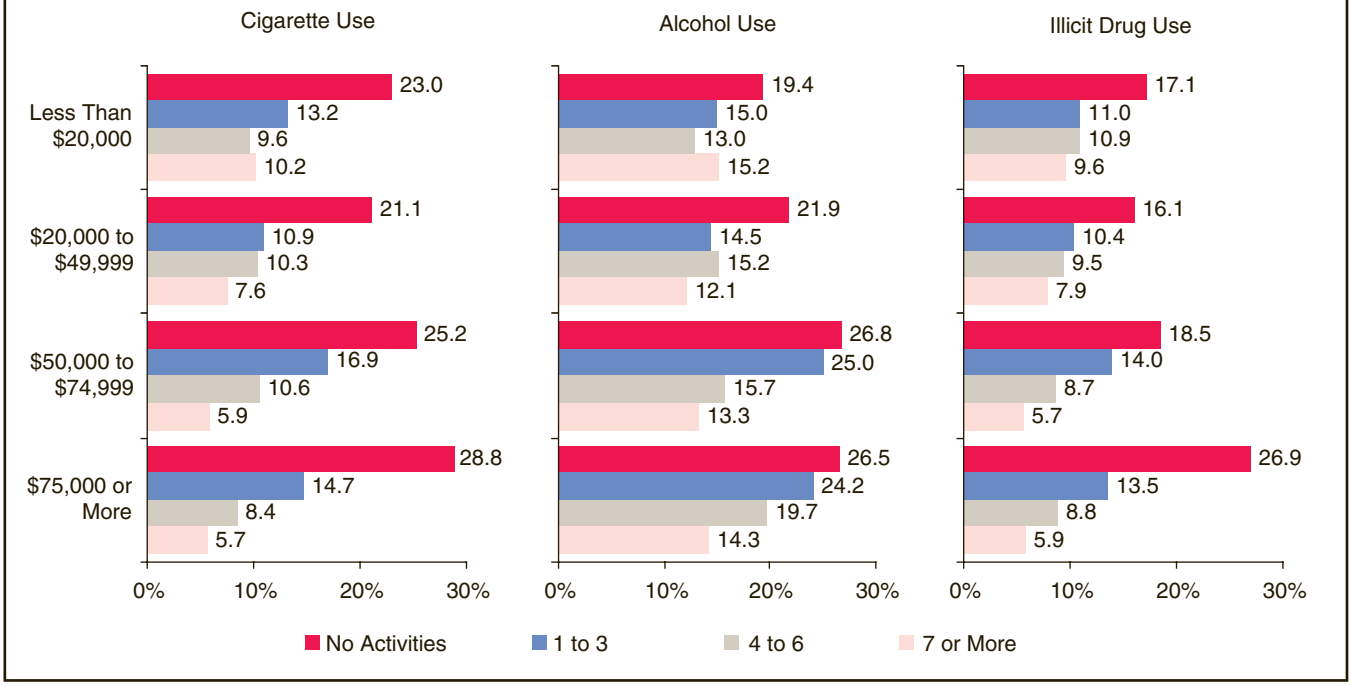
Participation in Youth Activities and Substance Use

Youths aged 12 to 17 who participated in a greater number of past year activities were less likely to have used cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs in the past month than those who participated in fewer past year activities (Figure 1). For example, 6.8 percent of youths who participated in seven or more activities during the past year used an illicit drug in the past month compared with 18.3 percent of youths who did not participate in any activities.

Participation in Youth Activities, Substance Use, and Family Income

Regardless of family income level, youths aged 12 to 17 who did not participate in any activities had higher rates of cigarette and illicit drug use than those who participated in four to six or seven or more activities (Figure 2). For example, among youths from families with incomes of less

Figure 2. Past Month Cigarette, Alcohol, and Illicit Drug Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Number of Past Year Activities and Past Year Family Income: 2005



Source: SAMHSA, 2005 NSDUH.

than $20,000, 23.0 percent of those with no past year activities and 10.2 percent of those with seven or more activities smoked cigarettes in the past month; similarly, among youths from families with incomes of $75,000 or more, 28.8 percent of those with no past year activities and 5.7 percent of those with seven or more activities smoked cigarettes in the past month.

Among youths aged 12 to 17 who participated in any activities, those with higher family incomes showed a consistent pattern of decreasing rates of past month cigarette, alcohol, and illicit drug use with increasing numbers of activities, whereas the relationship between substance use and number of activities was less clear among youths with lower family incomes (Figure 2). For example, the rate of past month alcohol use among youths from families with incomes of $75,000 or more was 24.2 percent for those with one to three past year activities, 19.7 percent for those with four to six activities, and 14.3 percent for those with seven or more activities. In comparison, among youths from families with incomes of less than $20,000, 15.0 percent of those with one to three past year activities, 13.0 percent of those with four to six activities, and 15.2 percent of those with seven or more activities drank alcohol in the past month.

End Notes

[1] Thorlindsson, T., & Bernburg, J. G. (2006). Peer groups and substance use: Examining the direct and interactive effect of leisure activity. *Adolescence, 41*, 321-339.

[2] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (February 8, 2002). *The NHSDA Report: Team sports participation and substance use among youths.* Rockville, MD. [Available at http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k2/athletes/athletes_DrugUse.cfm]

[3] Luthar, S. S., Shoum, K. A., & Brown, P. J. (2006). Extracurricular involvement among affluent youth: A scapegoat for "ubiquitous achievement pressures"? *Developmental Psychology, 42*, 583-597.

[4] In the survey questions, school-based activities include team sports, cheerleading, choir, band, student government, or clubs. Community-based activities include volunteer activities, sports, clubs, or groups. Church- or faith-based activities include clubs, youth groups, Saturday or Sunday school, prayer groups, youth trips, and service or volunteer activities. "Other" activities include dance lessons, piano lessons, karate lessons, or horseback riding lessons.

[5] *Illicit drugs* refer to marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. NSDUH measures the nonmedical use of prescription-type pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants, or tranquilizers. Nonmedical use is defined as the use of prescription-type drugs not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used only for the experience or feeling they caused. Nonmedical use of any prescription-type pain reliever, sedative, stimulant, or tranquilizer does not include over-the-counter drugs. Nonmedical use of stimulants includes methamphetamine use.

Suggested Citation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (April 19, 2007). *The NSDUH Report: Youth Activities, Substance Use, and Family Income.* Rockville, MD.

For change of address, corrections, or to be removed from this list, please e-mail: shortreports@samhsa.hhs.gov.

Research findings from the SAMHSA 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

Youth Activities, Substance Use, and Family Income

- In 2005, most youths aged 12 to 17 (92.4 percent) participated in at least one school-based, community-based, church- or faith-based, or other type of activity during the past year
- Regardless of family income, youths aged 12 to 17 who did not participate in any activities had higher rates of past month cigarette and illicit drug use than those who participated in four to six or seven or more activities
- Among youths aged 12 to 17 who participated in any activities, those with higher family incomes showed a consistent pattern of decreasing rates of past month cigarette, alcohol, and illicit drug use with increasing numbers of activities

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 2005 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 22,534 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 on NSDUH used in compiling data for this report is available in the following publication:

Office of Applied Studies. (2006). *Results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-4194, NSDUH Series H-30). 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, 2004, and 2005 surveys should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
www.samhsa.gov