

The NSDUH Report

February 28, 2008

Nonmedical Stimulant Use, Other Drug Use, Delinquent Behaviors, and Depression among Adolescents

In Brief

- Youths aged 12 to 17 who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year were more likely to have used other illicit drugs in the past year than youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year
- Over 71 percent of youths who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year engaged in any of six types of delinquent behavior in that period, compared with approximately 34 percent of youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year
- Almost 23 percent of youths who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year experienced a major depressive episode in the past year compared with 8.1 percent of youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in that period

In 2006, 2 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 (an estimated 510,000 persons) used stimulants nonmedically in the past year, a rate twice as high as that observed among adults aged 26 or older.¹ Across adolescent age groups, the rate of past year nonmedical stimulant use in 2006 increased from 0.7 percent among youths aged 12 or 13 to 3.3 percent among those aged 16 or 17.¹ Other research has found that stimulant misuse is associated with alcohol or drug use disorders, criminal justice involvement, and receipt of mental health treatment.²

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks youths aged 12 to 17 questions related to their use of illicit drugs in the past year, including nonmedical use of stimulants. Nonmedical use is defined as the use of prescription-type psychotherapeutic drugs not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used only for the experience or feeling they caused. Nonmedical use of

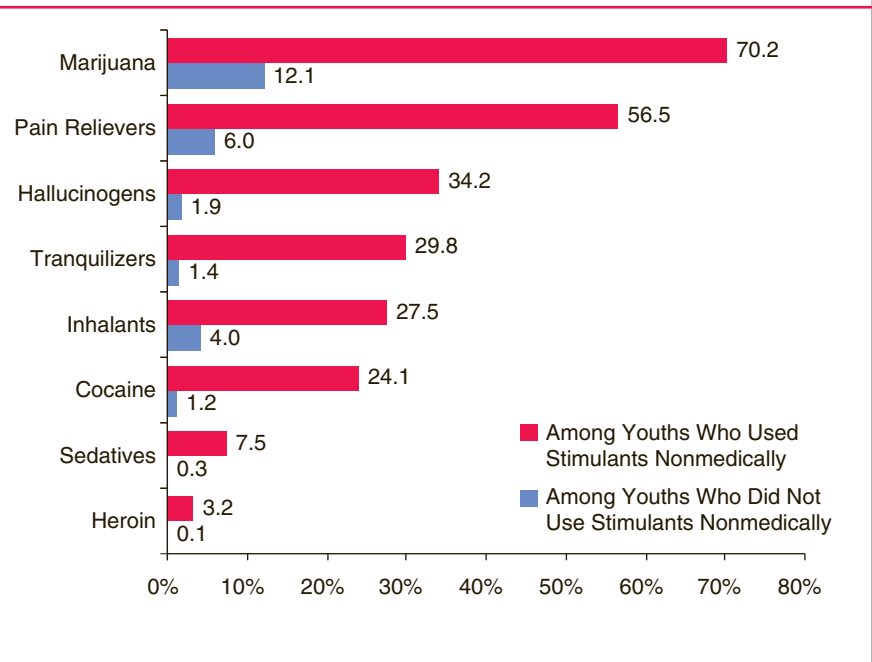
prescription-type stimulants does not include use of over-the-counter drugs, but it does include use of methamphetamine as well as other stimulants. *Illicit drugs* refer to marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.

NSDUH also asks youths aged 12 to 17 how often they engaged in the following delinquent activities during the past year: (a) getting into a serious fight at school or work, (b) taking part in a fight where a group of friends fought against another group, (c) carrying a handgun, (d) selling illegal drugs, (e) stealing or trying to steal anything worth more than \$50, and (f) attacking someone with the intent to seriously hurt them.³

NSDUH also includes questions for youths aged 12 to 17 to assess lifetime and past year major depressive episode (MDE). For these estimates, MDE is defined using the diagnostic criteria set forth in the 4th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*,⁴ which specifies a period of 2 weeks or longer during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image.⁵

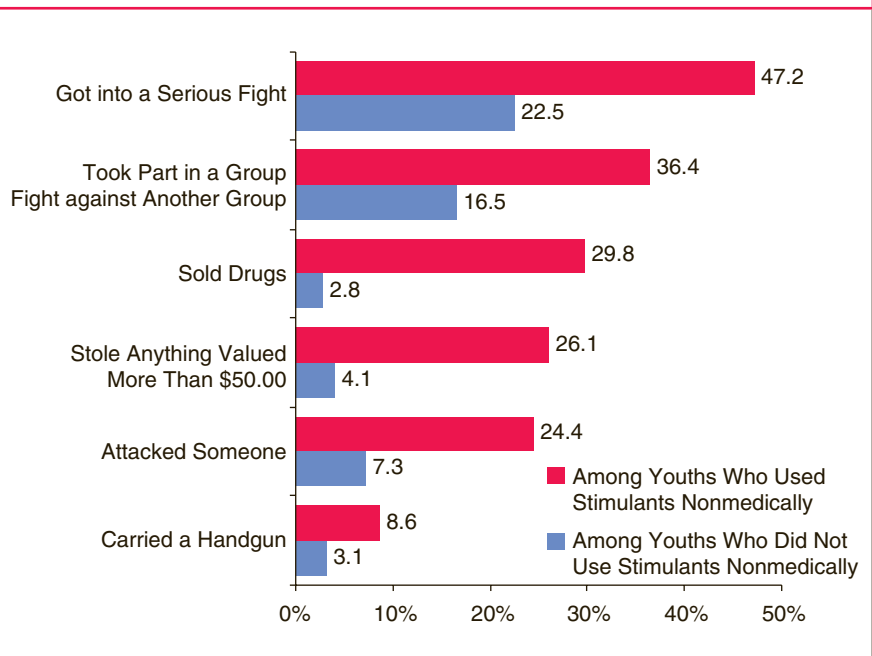
This report examines past year nonmedical use of stimulants among youths aged 12 to 17 and its association with other illicit drug use, delinquent activity, and MDE. All findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2005 and 2006 NSDUH data.

Figure 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Using Illicit Drugs in the Past Year, by Past Year Nonmedical Stimulant Use: 2005 and 2006



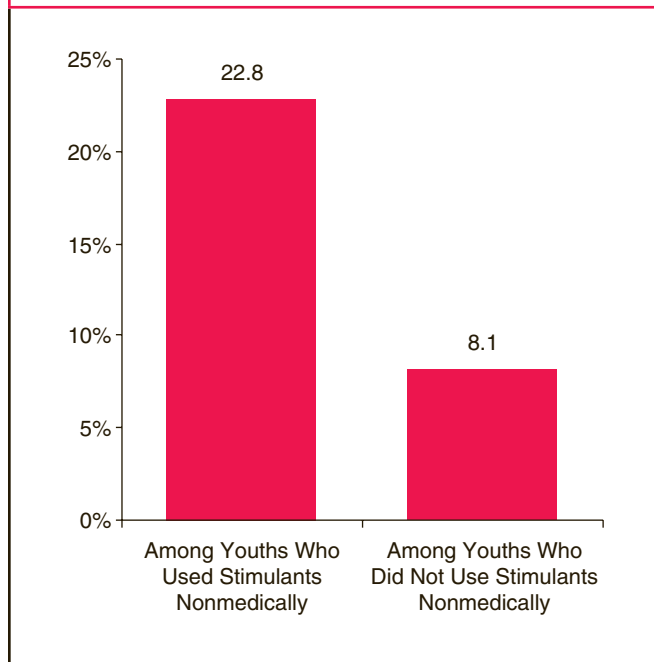
Source: SAMHSA, 2005 and 2006 NSDUHs.

Figure 2. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Engaging in Delinquent Behaviors* in the Past Year, by Past Year Nonmedical Stimulant Use: 2005 and 2006



Source: SAMHSA, 2005 and 2006 NSDUHs.

Figure 3. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 with Past Year Major Depressive Episode (MDE), by Past Year Nonmedical Stimulant Use: 2005 and 2006



Source: SAMHSA, 2005 and 2006 NSDUHs.

Nonmedical Use of Stimulants and Other Illicit Drug Use

In 2005 and 2006, youths aged 12 to 17 who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year were more likely to have used other illicit drugs in the past year compared with youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year (Figure 1). For example, 70.2 percent of youths who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year also used marijuana compared with 12.1 percent of youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year.

Nonmedical Use of Stimulants and Delinquent Behavior

In 2005 and 2006, an estimated 8.7 million (34.5 percent) youths aged 12 to 17 reported that they engaged in at least one of the six queried types of delinquent behavior in the past year. Over 71 percent (approximately 360,000) of youths who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year reported any type of delinquent behavior compared with approximately 34 percent of youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year.

Youths who engaged in nonmedical stimulant use in the past year were more likely to have participated in each of the six delinquent behaviors in the past year compared with other youths (Figure 2). For example, almost 30 percent of youths who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year sold drugs compared with 2.8 percent of youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year.

Nonmedical Use of Stimulants and Major Depressive Episode

In 2005 and 2006, an estimated 2.1 million (8.3 percent) youths aged 12 to 17 experienced at least one MDE in the past year. Youths who used stimulants nonmedically in the past year were more likely to have experienced MDE in the past year than youths who did not use stimulants nonmedically in the past year (22.8 vs. 8.1 percent) (Figure 3).

End Notes

- Office of Applied Studies. (2007, September). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed tables*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/WebOnly.htm#NSDUHtabs>]
- Wu, L. T., Pilowsky, D. J., Schlenger, W. E., & Galvin, D. M. (2007). Misuse of methamphetamine and prescription stimulants among youths and young adults in the community. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 89, 195-205.
- Youths aged 12 to 17 were asked how many times in the past 12 months they had participated in each delinquent behavior. The response options were (a) 0 times, (b) 1 or 2 times, (c) 3 to 5 times, (d) 6 to 9 times, and (e) 10 or more times. For this report, youths were counted as engaging in the behavior if they reported participating one or more times. Youths with unknown or missing data of delinquent behavior were excluded from this analysis.
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- In assessing MDE, no exclusions were made for MDE caused by medical illness, bereavement, or substance use disorders.

Figure Note

- * See End Note 3.

Suggested Citation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (February 28, 2008). *The NSDUH Report: Nonmedical Stimulant Use, Other Drug Use, Delinquent Behaviors, and Depression among Adolescents*. Rockville, MD.

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2005 and 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 2005 and 2006 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 45,405 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 publications:

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. (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://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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