



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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2003 Survey Found Teens Hear Prevention Messages

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) today released data showing that youth who reported seeing or hearing media messages on preventing drug and alcohol use are significantly less likely to report substance use.

While 10.3 percent of youths who reported seeing or hearing media prevention messages in the past year reported binge alcohol use in the past month, 12.5 percent of youth who were not exposed to media prevention messages engaged in binge drinking. Similarly, 10.8 percent of youth who saw or heard media prevention messages reported past month illicit drug use compared to 13.7 percent who received no messages. In 2003, 83.6 percent of youth (20.8 million) reported seeing or hearing an alcohol or drug prevention message.

SAMHSA extracted the data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2003, which asked youth ages 12-17 if they had seen or heard any alcohol or drug prevention messages from posters, pamphlets, radio, TV or other sources. The survey also asked about alcohol and drug use.

“Teenagers exposed to prevention messages through the media are less likely to use alcohol and illicit drugs,” SAMHSA Administrator Charles Curie said. “Clearly, the media is one of the many avenues we must use to communicate with young people that drinking and drug use are dangerous and wrong.”

The data also show that youth who reported talking to at least one parent about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol or drug use in the past year were significantly less likely to report past month binge alcohol use, 10 percent, compared to 11.6 percent who did not talk to a parent. For illicit drug use, 10 percent of teens who talked to a parent used drugs in the past month compared to 13 percent who did not talk to a parent.

John Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy, said: "It is crucial that our youth receive clear and consistent messages about the dangers of marijuana and other drugs. Important health information delivered through print, radio, television, and online advertising by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign complements parents' efforts to keep their children healthy and drug-free. Research indicates the Media Campaign is moving in the right direction and that is good news for American teens and parents."

In 2003, 14.6 million youth ages 12-17 (58.9 percent) reported that they had talked to at least one parent during the past year about the dangers of using tobacco, alcohol or drugs. Youths ages 12-15 were more likely to have talked to a parent than those ages 16 or 17.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is an annual survey of close to 70,000 people. The survey collects information from residents of households, residents of non-institutionalized group quarters and civilians living on military bases. The survey provides estimates for 21 different measures related to substance use or mental illness.

The 2003 survey included responses from 22,665 youth ages 12 to 17.

The report is available on the web at www.oas.samhsa.gov.

SAMHSA, a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the lead federal agency for improving the quality and availability of substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment and mental health services in the United States.