

The NHSDA Report

January 4, 2002

Neighborhood Characteristics and Youth Marijuana Use

In Brief

- Almost 23 percent of youths perceived that their neighborhoods have a lot of crime; 27 percent perceived a lot of drug selling
- Among youths, blacks and Hispanics more often perceived a lot of crime, drug selling, street fights, abandoned buildings, and graffiti than did whites or Asians
- Marijuana use was higher among youths who perceived high rates of these neighborhood characteristics than among youths who perceived low rates

As part of the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), youths aged 12 to 17 were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about their neighborhood. Response choices were: (1) strongly agree; (2) somewhat agree; (3) somewhat disagree; and (4) strongly disagree. Statements about their neighborhood addressed crime and violence (drug selling, crime, and street fights), as well as the physical environment (i.e., empty or abandoned buildings, graffiti). The survey data permit examinations of the links between these perceptions of neighborhood characteristics and marijuana use among youths.

Perceptions of Neighborhood Characteristics

According to the 2000 NHSDA, more than one in five youths aged 12 to 17 (an estimated 5 million) reported that they strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that there is a lot of crime in their neighborhoods (Figure 1). More than one in four youths (an estimated 6 million) agreed with the

Figure 1. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Perceptions of Neighborhood Characteristics: 2000

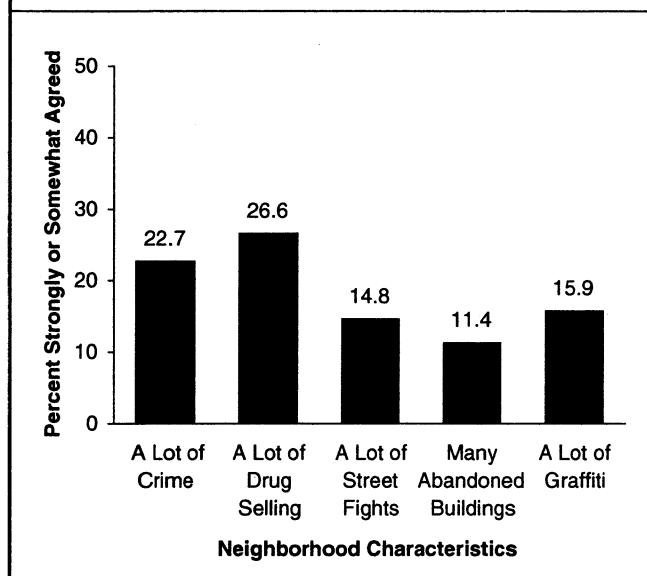
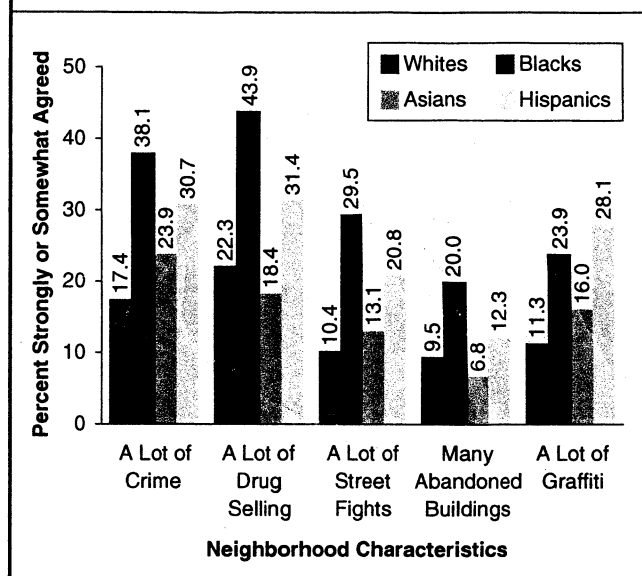


Figure 2. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Perceptions of Neighborhood Characteristics, by Racial/Ethnic Group: 2000



statement that there is a lot of drug selling in their neighborhoods, and more than one in seven youths (over 3 million) believed that there are a lot of street fights in their neighborhoods. More than one in nine youths (almost 3 million) agreed with the statement that there are a lot of empty or abandoned buildings in their neighborhoods, and more than one in seven youths (almost 4 million) perceived that there is a lot of graffiti in their neighborhoods.

Among youths, blacks more often agreed with the statements that their neighborhoods have a lot of crime, drug selling, street fights, and abandoned buildings than did black, Asian, or white youths (Figure 2). Hispanics agreed with these statements less often than blacks, but more often than whites or Asians. Furthermore, Hispanics more often perceived that there is a lot of graffiti in their neighborhoods

than did black, Asian, or white youths.

Youths who lived in large metropolitan counties were more likely to perceive that their neighborhoods contain a lot of crime, drug selling, street fights, and graffiti compared with youths who lived in small metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas (Figure 3). Youths who lived in non-metropolitan areas were more likely to perceive that their neighborhoods contain a lot of abandoned buildings compared with youths who lived in small or large metropolitan areas.

Neighborhood Characteristics and Marijuana Use Among Youths

Youths who agreed with the statements that their neighborhoods have a lot of crime, drug selling, street fights,

abandoned buildings, or graffiti were more likely to use marijuana in the past month than those who did not agree (Figure 4). The strongest links to marijuana use were found for drug selling and street fights; youths who agreed with the statement that there is a lot of drug selling in their neighborhoods were twice as likely to have used marijuana in the past month (12 percent) compared with those who disagreed (6 percent). Almost 11 percent of youths who agreed with the statement that there are a lot of street fights in their neighborhoods reported past month marijuana use compared with 7 percent of those who disagreed.

Summary

The 2000 NHSDA data indicate that many youths aged 12 to 17 perceived that their neighborhoods contain crime, violence, and poor physical

Figure 3. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Perceptions of Neighborhood Characteristics, by County Type: 2000

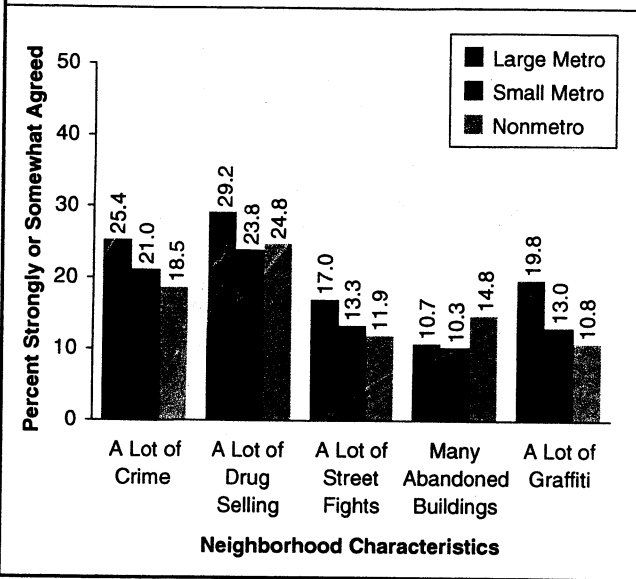
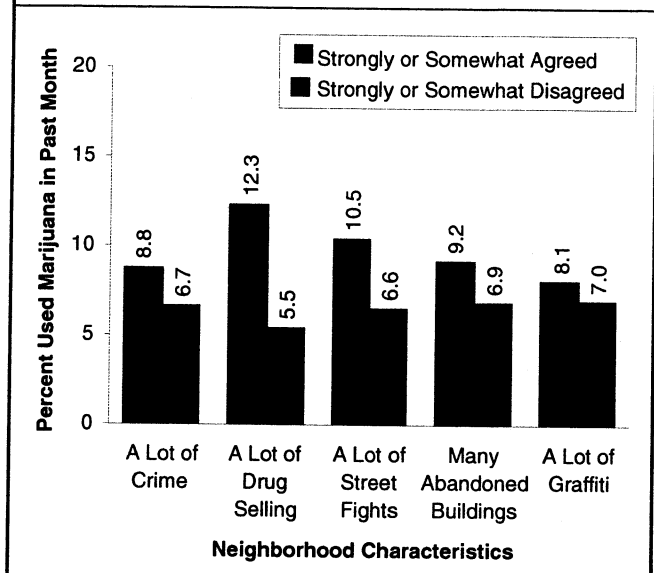


Figure 4. Percentages of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Marijuana Use, by Perceptions of Neighborhood Characteristics: 2000



environments. More than one in five youths perceived that there is a lot of crime in their neighborhoods, and more than one in four perceived that there is a lot of drug selling in their neighborhoods. Blacks and Hispanics more often perceived that they live in neighborhoods with these characteristics than did whites or Asians. Furthermore, these data indicate that youths who perceived high rates of these neighborhood characteristics were more likely to use marijuana during the past month than youths who perceived low rates.

Figure Notes

Figure 3 – Large Metro = Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with population of 1 million or more; Small Metro = MSAs with population of 50K to < 1 million; Nonmetro = not part of an MSA.

Source (all figures): SAMHSA 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA).

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The 2000 data are based on information obtained from nearly 72,000 persons aged 12 or older. 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 NHSDA Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, and by RTI in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Information and data for this issue are based on the following publication and statistics:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2001) *Summary of findings from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Series: H-13, DHHS Publication No. SMA 01-3549). Rockville, MD: Author.

Also available on-line:

www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov

Additional tables 3:20A, 3:20B, 3:21A, 3:21B, 3:23A, 3:23B, 3:24A, 3:24B, 3:26A, and 3:26B from http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/2kdetailedtabs/Vol_1_Part_3/V1P3.htm