SAMHSA Data Indicate Racial/Ethnic Differences in Drug Use
May Be Reduced After Adjusting for Other Sociodemographic Characteristics

Data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 1991 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse were used to quantify the effects of race/ethnicity and other sociodemographic variables on drug use. Column 2 in the table shows the relationship between race and drug use <u>without</u> adjusting for other sociodemographic characteristics, and Column 3 shows the relationship between race and drug use <u>with</u> adjustments for other sociodemographic variables. Without adjustments, the data show that blacks are statistically more likely than whites to report nonheavy use of cigarettes, use of crack, and frequent use of marijuana, and cocaine; and are statistically less likely to report heavy and nonheavy use of alcohol, heavy use of cigarettes, and nonfrequent use of cocaine.

With the exception of the nonheavy use of alcohol, the differences in the use of drugs by blacks and whites were reduced after adjusting for other sociodemographic characteristics. For example, without adjusting for other sociodemeographic characteristics, blacks are 3.9 times more likely than whites to use crack (significant difference between blacks and whites). When other sociodemographic characteristics are controlled for, blacks are only about 1.9 times more likely to use crack, a nonsignificant difference.

Odds of Using Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Illicit Drugs
for Blacks Relative to Whites Among Respondents Aged 18 to 49: 1991

Drug Measures	Odds Ratios[1]	
	Unadjusted Model	**Model Adjusted for Sociodemographic Variables[2]**
Alcohol		
Nonheavy	.689***	.715***
Heavy	.709**	.554***
Cigarettes		
Nonheavy	1.722***	1.212*
Heavy	.552***	.355***
Marijuana		
Nonfrequent	.926	.680**
Frequent	2.022***	1.290
Cocaine		
Nonfrequent	.721*	.552**
Frequent	3.173***	1.865*
Crack	3.948***	1.872
Poly-Illicit Drug Use	.705	.433***

* p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001

1   The odds ratios reflect the odds of being a user (at the level indicated) relative to a nonuser for blacks relative to whites. Odds ratios greater than 1.0 indicate higher odds for blacks than whites; odds ratios less than 1.0 indicate lower odds for blacks.

2   Demographic background variables include gender, age, geographic region of residence, and metropolitan status; socioeconomic status (SES) variables include educational attainment, occupation of chief household wage earner, and household income; social variables include marital status, employment status, number of jobs in past 5 years, and number of residential moves in past 5 years.

SOURCE: R.L. Flewelling, S.T. Ennett, J.V. Rachal & A.C. Theisen, "National Household Survey on Drug Abuse: Race/Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status, and Drug Abuse, 1991." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Released December 1993. For more information about the report, contact the Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA at (301) 443-7980.