

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

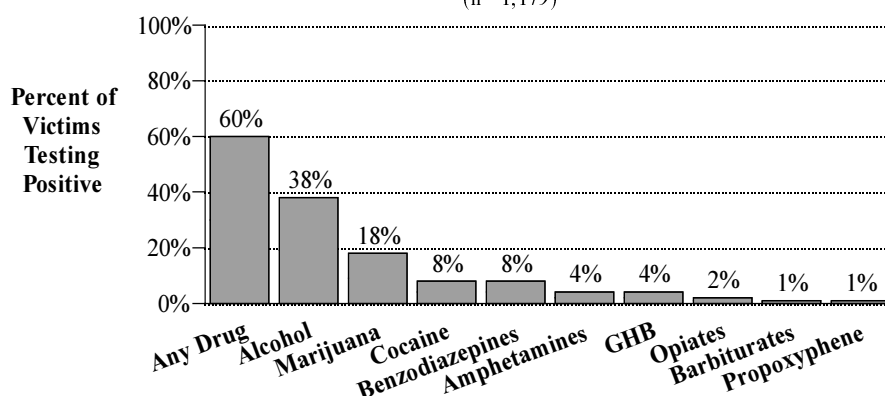
University of Maryland, College Park

U.S. Victims of Sexual Assault Test Positive for a Variety of Drugs, Including GHB

Urine samples from victims of sexual assault where drug use was suspected were collected from law enforcement agencies, emergency rooms, and rape centers across the U.S. Of the 1,179 samples analyzed, 60% were positive for at least one drug. The most common substances found were alcohol (38%), marijuana (18%), cocaine (8%), and benzodiazepines (8%). GHB, a drug frequently mentioned as being involved in sexual assault cases, was found in 4% of the samples (see April 1999 DEWS Alert for more information on GHB). This is of special note because laboratories do not routinely test for this drug, thus allowing the potential for undetected use of GHB in sexual assaults. According to the authors, "urine samples should be collected from a sexual assault victim as soon as possible from the time of the incident" and tested for a wide range of drugs, including GHB. The authors caution, however, that "the presence of these substances in the urine of individuals does not necessarily indicate the involvement of these drugs in the sexual incident and may reflect an exposure to the drug before or after the incident" (p.145).

**Percentage of Sexual Assault Victims Testing Positive for Selected Drugs,
May 1996-June 1998***

(n = 1,179)



*No samples tested positive for PCP or methaqualone.

NOTE: A total of 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico submitted samples for this study. Most (65%) of the samples were collected within 24 hours of the incident, and 96% of the samples were collected within 72 hours.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from M.A. ElSohly and S.J. Salamone, "Prevalence of Drugs Used in Cases of Alleged Sexual Assault," *Journal of Toxicology* 23:141-146 (May/June 1999).

• 301-403-8329 (voice) • 301-403-8342 (fax) • CESAR@cesar.umd.edu • www.cesar.umd.edu •
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