

The **DASIS** Report

April 14, 2005

Characteristics of Primary Alcohol Admissions by Age of First Use of Alcohol: 2002

In Brief

- Of the 683,000 primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older admitted to treatment in 2002, 88 percent reported their age of first use of alcohol younger than 21 years old
- Primary alcohol admissions with an age of first use prior to age 12 were more likely than all other age groups to have had five or more prior treatment episodes
- Among primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older, the average age of first use for males was 16.7 years old and for females 18.0 years old

Recent research has found an association between the age at which a person begins abusing alcohol and past year alcohol dependence and abuse.¹ Alcohol was the most prevalent primary substance of abuse² reported by 46 percent of admissions aged 21 or older in the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) in 2002. This issue of *The DASIS Report* will examine the 683,000 primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older with a known age of first use of alcohol.

TEDS defines “age of first use” differently for alcohol than for drugs. For alcohol, age of first use signifies age of first intoxication. For drugs, age of first use identifies the age at which the respective drug was first used.

Figure 1. Primary Alcohol Admissions Aged 21 or Older, by Age of First Use of Alcohol: 2002

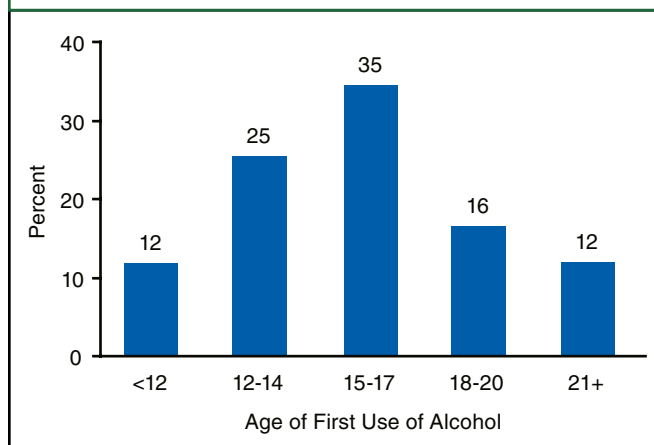
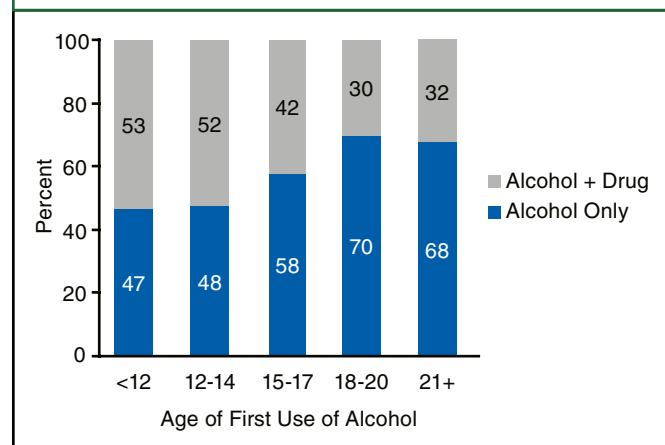


Figure 2. Primary Alcohol Admissions Aged 21 or Older, by Age of First Use of Alcohol and Presence of Secondary Substance: 2002



Source: 2002 SAMHSA Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).

Age of First Use

Of the 683,000 primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older admitted to treatment in 2002, 88 percent reported their age of first use of alcohol younger than 21 years old (Figure 1). One fourth reported their age of first use of alcohol as between 12 and 14 years old, 12 percent reported their age of first use as younger than age 12, and another 12 percent reported their age of first use as 21 or older.

Secondary Drug(s) of Abuse

In 2002, 57 percent of primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older were admitted to treatment for alcohol alone while the remaining 43 percent reported abusing alcohol and drugs. Examining the distribution of primary alcohol admissions and the presence or absence of a secondary drug of abuse by age of first use indicates that admissions with an age of first use younger than 15 years old were more likely to report both alcohol and drug use upon admission than

those who reported their age of first use of alcohol as 15 or older (Figure 2).

Prior Treatment

Of the primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older who reported their age of first use of alcohol as prior to the age of 12, the majority (68 percent) had been in treatment previously (Figure 3). In contrast, of those that reported their age of first use of alcohol as 21 or older, slightly more than half (51 percent) reported prior substance abuse treatment. Admissions with an age of first use prior to age 12 were more likely than all other age groups to have had five or more prior treatment episodes.

Sex

Females made up 24 percent of primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older, while the majority of users were male (76 percent). However, females made up a larger percentage of primary alcohol admissions that reported their age of first use as 21 or older than among those that reported

a younger age of first use (34 percent) (Figure 4). Among primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older, the average age of first use for males was 16.7 years old and for females 18.0 years old.

Race/Ethnicity

Among primary alcohol admissions aged 21 or older, the majority were White regardless of age of first use (Table 1). The average age of first use of alcohol varied greatly by race/ethnicity with American Indian/Alaska Native primary alcohol admissions starting at the earliest age (mean age 15.1 years old), followed by White (mean age 16.6 years old), Black (mean age 17.2 years old), and Asian/Pacific Islander admissions (mean age 17.9 years old). Hispanic primary alcohol admissions reported the latest age of first use: 19.7 years old.

End Notes

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (October 22, 2004). *The NSDUH report: Alcohol dependence or abuse and age at first use*. Rockville, MD.

² The *primary substance of abuse* is the main substance reported at the time of admission.

Figure 3. Primary Alcohol Admissions Aged 21 or Older, by Age of First Use of Alcohol and Prior Treatment Episodes: 2002

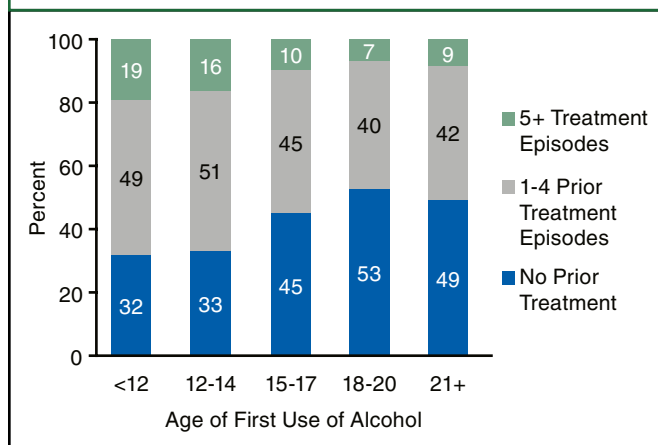


Figure 4. Primary Alcohol Admissions Aged 21 or Older, by Age of First Use of Alcohol and Sex: 2002

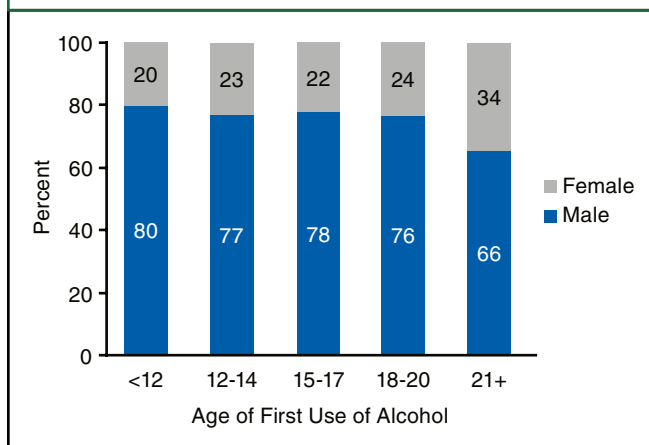


Table 1. Primary Alcohol Admissions Aged 21 or Older, by Age of First Use of Alcohol and Race/Ethnicity: 2002

	Age of First Use (Percent)					Mean age of First Use
	<12	12-14	15-17	18-20	21+	
White	66.1	68.8	67.4	62.6	56.4	16.6
Black	19.8	18.0	19.9	20.0	24.0	17.2
Hispanic	8.4	8.2	8.6	12.9	15.2	19.7
American Indian/Alaska Native	4.3	3.7	2.8	2.6	1.9	15.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.0	17.9
Other	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.3	1.5	17.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

The Drug and Alcohol Services Information System (DASIS) is an integrated data system maintained by the Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). One component of DASIS is the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). TEDS is a compilation of data on the demographic characteristics and substance abuse problems of those admitted for substance abuse treatment. The information comes primarily from facilities that receive some public funding. Information on treatment admissions is routinely collected by State administrative systems and then submitted to SAMHSA in a standard format. TEDS records represent admissions rather than individuals, as a person may be admitted to treatment more than once. State admission data are reported to TEDS by the Single State Agencies (SSAs) for substance abuse treatment. There are significant differences among State data collection systems. Sources of State variation include completeness of reporting, facilities reporting TEDS data, clients included, and treatment resources available. See the annual TEDS reports for details. Approximately 1.9 million records are included in TEDS each year.

The DASIS Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA; Synectics for Management Decisions, Inc., Arlington, Virginia; and by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina (RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute).

Information and data for this issue are based on data reported to TEDS through March 1, 2004.

Access the latest TEDS reports at: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/dasis.htm>
 Access the latest TEDS public use files at: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/SAMHDA.htm>
 Other substance abuse reports are available at: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov>



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