

# The NSDUH Report

June 2, 2005

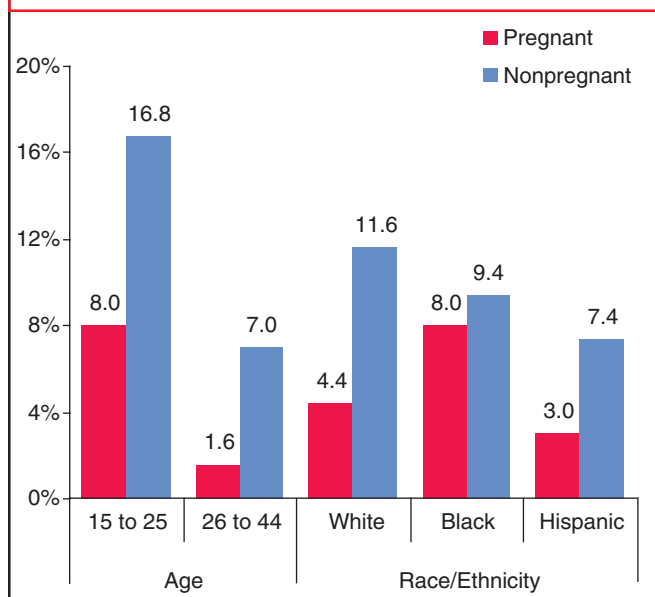
## Substance Use During Pregnancy: 2002 and 2003 Update

### In Brief

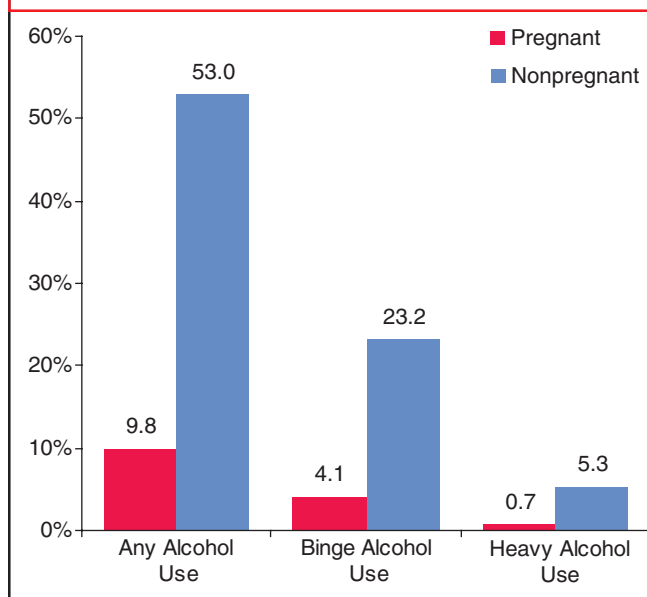
- In 2002 and 2003, 4.3 percent of pregnant women aged 15 to 44 used illicit drugs during the past month, 4.1 percent reported binge alcohol use, and 18.0 percent reported smoking cigarettes
- Pregnant women aged 15 to 25 were more likely to use illicit drugs and smoke cigarettes during the past month than pregnant women aged 26 to 44
- Among pregnant women aged 15 to 44, whites were more likely to have smoked cigarettes during the past month than blacks or Hispanics

Substance use by pregnant women is a leading preventable cause of mental, physical, and psychological problems in infants and children.<sup>1,2,3</sup> This report examines illicit drug, alcohol, and cigarette use among pregnant and nonpregnant women aged 15 to 44.<sup>4</sup> The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks female respondents aged 15 to 44 whether they are currently pregnant. NSDUH also asks respondents about their illicit drug use, alcohol use (including binge alcohol use and heavy alcohol use), and any tobacco use during the past month. NSDUH defines illicit drug use as the use of marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. Binge alcohol use is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past 30 days. Heavy alcohol use is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days; all heavy alcohol users also are binge alcohol users. The

**Figure 1. Percentages of Past Month Illicit Drug Use among Women Aged 15 to 44, by Pregnancy Status, Age, and Race/Ethnicity\*: 2002 and 2003**



**Figure 2. Percentages of Past Month Alcohol Use among Women Aged 15 to 44, by Pregnancy Status: 2002 and 2003**



findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2002 and 2003 NSDUH data.

## Illicit Drug Use

In 2002 and 2003, 4.3 percent of pregnant women aged 15 to 44 had used an illicit drug during the past month compared with 10.4 percent of nonpregnant women in this age group. Pregnant women aged 15 to 25 (8.0 percent) were more likely to have used an illicit drug during the past month than pregnant women aged 26 to 44 (1.6 percent) (Figure 1). Pregnant white women and Hispanic women had lower rates of past month illicit drug use (4.4 and 3.0 percent, respectively) than nonpregnant white women and Hispanic women (11.6 and 7.4 percent).<sup>5</sup> There was little difference in past month illicit drug use between nonpregnant and pregnant black women.

## Alcohol Use

Among pregnant women aged 15 to 44, 9.8 percent reported drinking alcohol during the past month, 4.1

percent reported binge alcohol use, and less than 1 percent reported heavy alcohol use (Figure 2). In this age group, pregnant white women, black women, and Hispanic women had lower rates of past month alcohol use, binge alcohol use, and heavy alcohol use than nonpregnant women in these racial/ethnic groups. Pregnant women aged 15 to 25 and aged 26 to 44 reported similar levels of past month alcohol use (10.9 and 8.9 percent, respectively), binge alcohol use (5.0 and 3.3 percent), and heavy alcohol use (0.7 and 0.6 percent).

## Cigarette Use

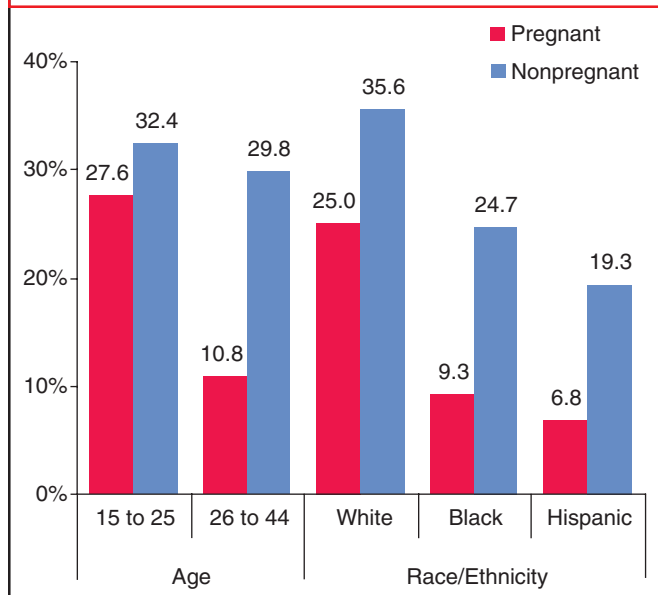
Among women aged 15 to 44, the rate of past month cigarette use was higher among nonpregnant women (30.7 percent) than pregnant women (18.0 percent). Pregnant women aged 15 to 25 (27.6 percent) were more than twice as likely to have smoked cigarettes during the past month than pregnant women aged 26 to 44 (10.8 percent) (Figure 3). Among women aged 15 to 44, the rate of past month cigarette use was higher among pregnant white women (25.0 percent) than among pregnant black

women (9.3 percent) or pregnant Hispanic women (6.8 percent). Pregnant white women, black women, and Hispanic women had lower rates of past month cigarette use than nonpregnant women in these racial/ethnic groups.

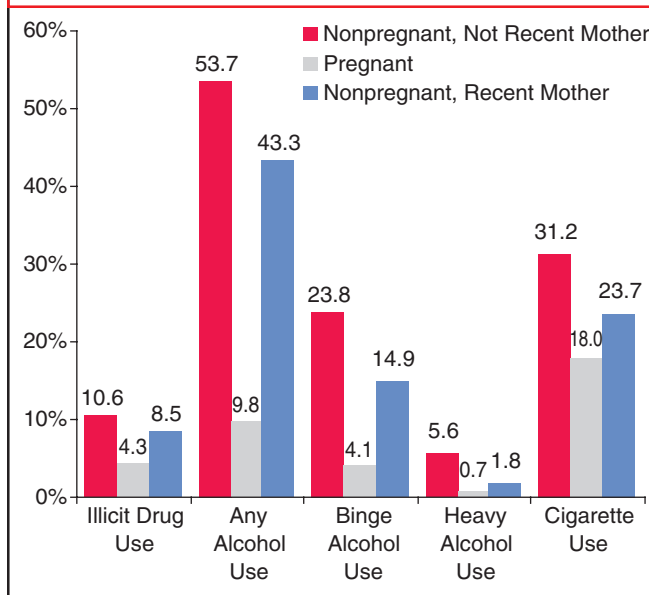
## Substance Use During the Year After Giving Birth

The rates of past month illicit drug, alcohol, and cigarette use were lower among pregnant women aged 15 to 44 than among nonpregnant women who were recent mothers and nonpregnant women who were not recent mothers (Figure 4).<sup>6</sup> Among nonpregnant women, substance use rates were lower for recent mothers than for women who were not recent mothers. These data suggest that women aged 15 to 44 increased their substance use during the year after giving birth, although not to the level of nonpregnant women who were not recent mothers.

**Figure 3. Percentages of Past Month Cigarette Use among Women Aged 15 to 44, by Pregnancy Status, Age, and Race/Ethnicity\*: 2002 and 2003**



**Figure 4. Percentages of Women Aged 15 to 44 Who Reported Past Month Substance Use, by Pregnancy and Recent Motherhood Status\*\*: 2002 and 2003**



**End Notes**

1. March of Dimes. (2002, December). *Cocaine use during pregnancy*. (Quick reference: Fact sheet). Retrieved March 4, 2005, from [http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332\\_1169.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1169.asp)
2. March of Dimes. (2004, July). *Smoking during pregnancy*. (Quick reference: Fact sheet). Retrieved March 4, 2005, from [http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332\\_1171.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1171.asp)
3. March of Dimes. (2002, August). *Drinking alcohol during pregnancy*. (Quick reference: Fact sheet). Retrieved March 4, 2005, from [http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332\\_1170.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1170.asp)
4. The information on past month illicit drug, alcohol, and cigarette use indicates past month use during pregnancy, except for women who had been pregnant for less than 1 month. These estimates are conservative because they only

reflect past month substance use during pregnancy, not substance use at any point during pregnancy. The estimates of past month substance use reflect use among women who were pregnant at the time of the survey, not among all pregnant women in 2002 or 2003.

5. Race/ethnicity categories are determined by combining the responses from two questions. For this report, respondents identifying themselves as Hispanic are assigned to the Hispanic group regardless of their racial identification. Respondents identifying as non-Hispanic are grouped according to their racial identification. Thus, "white" refers to those identifying as non-Hispanic and white.
6. For this section of the report, "nonpregnant, recent mothers" were defined as women aged 15 to 44 who were not currently pregnant and who had a biological child under 1 year old in the household. "Nonpregnant, not recent mothers" were defined as women aged 15 to 44 who were not currently pregnant and who did not have a biological child under 1 year old

in the household. This definition of nonpregnant women is different from the one used in other sections of this report.

**Figure Notes**

- \* The estimates for American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Asian respondents are not shown because of small sample sizes.
- \*\* "Pregnant women" were those women aged 15 to 44 who were currently pregnant at the time of the survey. "Nonpregnant, recent mothers" were defined as women aged 15 to 44 who were not currently pregnant and who gave birth during the prior year. "Nonpregnant, not recent mothers" were defined as women aged 15 to 44 who were not currently pregnant and who did not have a biological child under 1 year old in the household.

Source: SAMHSA, 2002 and 2003 NSDUH.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2002 data are based on information obtained from 68,126 persons aged 12 or older, including 1,104 pregnant women aged 15 to 44. The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 persons aged 12 or older, including 1,122 pregnant women aged 15 to 44. 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 NSDUH Report is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies (OAS), SAMHSA, 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 the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964, NSDUH Series H-25). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health:*

*National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NSDUH Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available online: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov>

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002 and 2003 surveys should not be compared with estimates from the 2001 or earlier versions of the survey to examine changes over time.

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