

# The NSDUH Report

December 12, 2003

## Quantity and Frequency of Alcohol Use

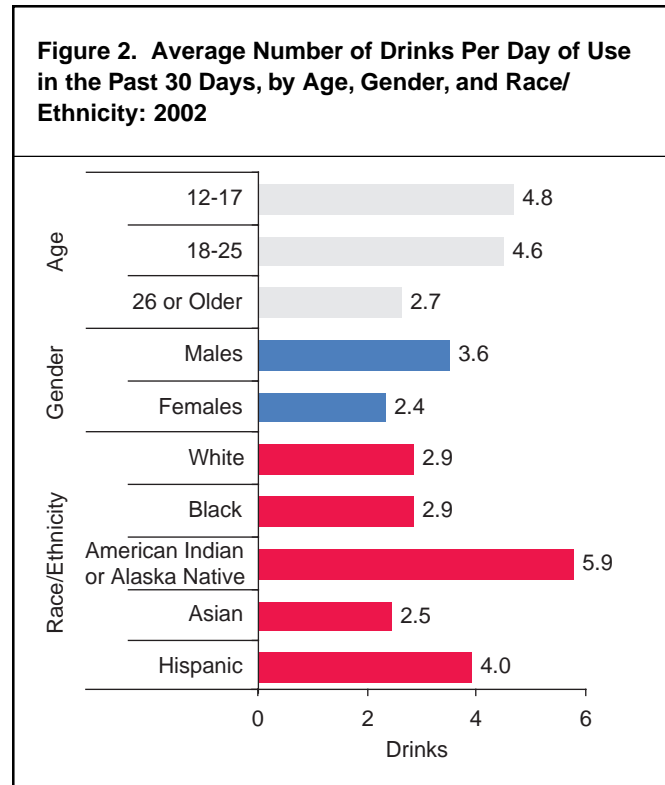
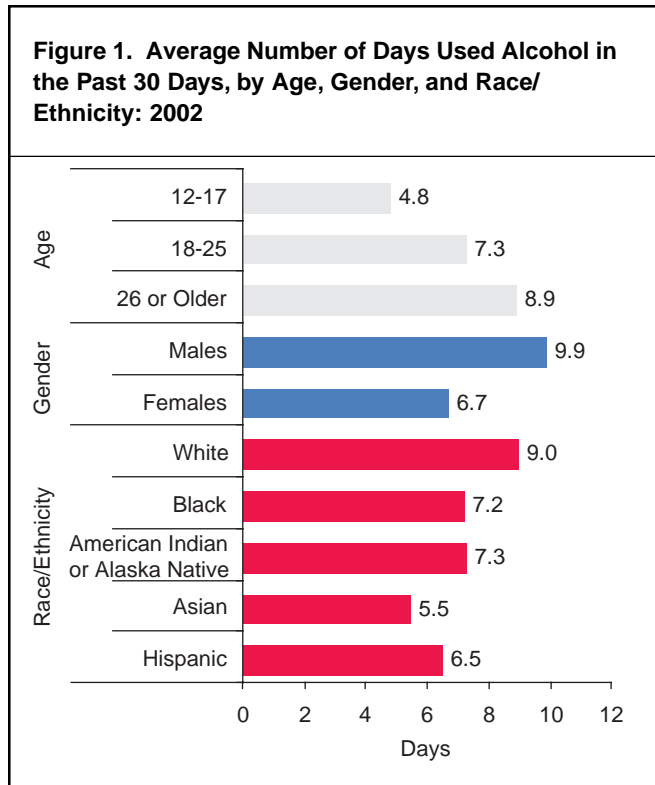
### In Brief

- In 2002, 51 percent of persons aged 12 or older were current drinkers
- Current drinkers aged 12 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 25 drank more drinks per day on the days they drank alcohol than adults aged 26 or older
- Current drinkers aged 18 to 25 were more likely to drive under the influence of alcohol during the past year than drinkers aged 26 or older

The 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), asks respondents who drank alcohol in the past 30 days (i.e., current drinkers) to report the number of days they drank alcohol in the past month and the average number of drinks consumed per day on each of the days they drank alcohol. Respondents also were asked whether they drove under the influence of alcohol during the past year. Responses were analyzed by age, gender, and race/ethnicity for comparison purposes.<sup>1</sup>

### Prevalence of Past 30 Day Alcohol Use

Among persons aged 12 or older, 51 percent drank alcohol in the past 30 days. Current drinking rates were higher among young adults aged 18 to 25 (61 percent) than older adults aged 26 or older (54 percent) or youths aged 12 to 17 (18 percent). A higher percentage of males used alcohol during the past month (57 percent) than females (45 percent). Past month alcohol use also was higher among whites (55 percent) than



American Indians or Alaska Natives (45 percent), Hispanics (43 percent), blacks (40 percent), or Asians (37 percent).

### Number of Days Drank Alcohol in the Past 30 Days

Current drinkers aged 12 or older drank on an average of 9 of the past 30 days. Among current drinkers, adults aged 26 or older drank alcohol on more days in the past 30 days (9 days) than adults aged 18 to 25 (7 days) or youths aged 12 to 17 (5 days). Current male drinkers drank on more days in the past 30 days (10 days) than current female drinkers (7 days). Among current drinkers, whites drank alcohol on more days in the past 30 days than blacks, Hispanics, or Asians (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

### Number of Drinks Per Day in the Past 30 Days

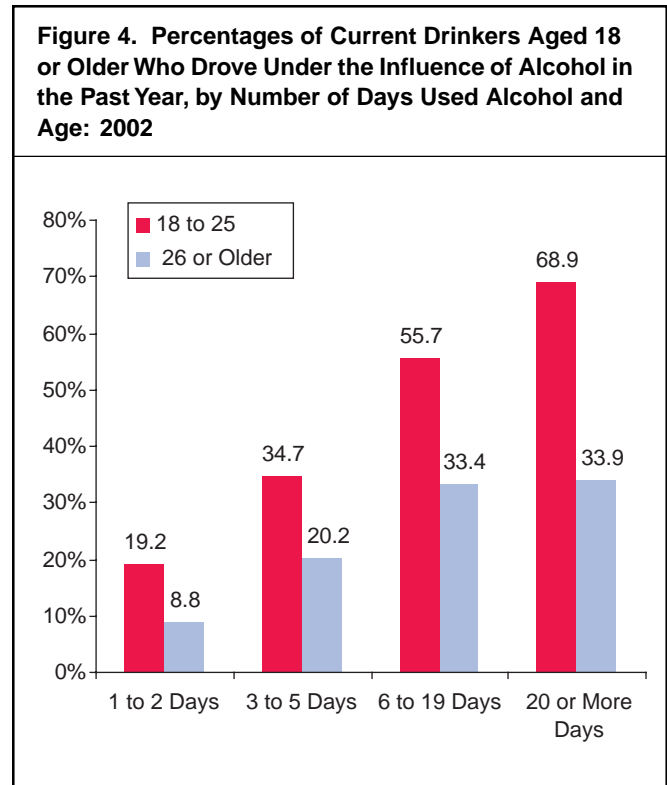
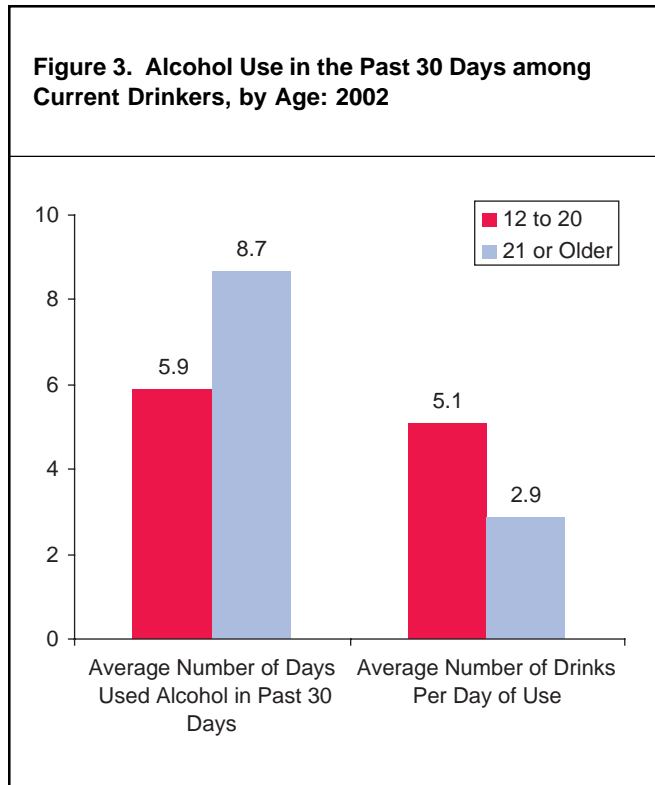
Current drinkers aged 12 or older drank an average of 3 drinks per day on the days they drank alcohol. Current drinkers aged 12 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 25 drank more drinks per day on the days they drank alcohol than adults aged 26 or older. Among current drinkers, males drank 4 drinks per day compared to females who drank an average of 2 drinks per day on the days they drank alcohol. Among current drinkers, American Indians or Alaska Natives drank more drinks per day on the days they drank alcohol (6 drinks) than Hispanics (4 drinks), as well as whites, blacks, or Asians (each at 3 drinks) (Figure 2).

### Underage Drinking

In 2002, adults aged 21 or older were more likely to drink alcohol during the past 30 days (55 percent) than persons aged 12 to 20 (29 percent). Among current drinkers, adults aged 21 or older drank more days on average in the past 30 days compared with persons aged 12 to 20 (Figure 3). However, current drinkers aged 12 to 20 drank more drinks per day on the days they drank than adults aged 21 or older.

### Alcohol Use and Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol

In 2002, 27 percent of persons aged 18 to 25, 14 percent aged 26 or older, and 4 percent aged 12 to 17



drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year. Current drinkers aged 18 to 25 were more likely to drive under the influence of alcohol during the past year than adults aged 26 or older, regardless of the number of days alcohol was used in the past 30 days (Figure 4). For example, 69 percent of adults aged 18 to 25 who drank alcohol on 20 or more days during the past month drove under the influence of alcohol during the past year compared to 34 percent of adults aged 26 or older.

**End Notes**

1. Estimates for Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander respondents are not shown for the racial/ethnic comparisons in this report due to low precision.
2. Because of the small sample size for American Indian or Alaska Native respondents, the estimate for this group is not statistically different from estimates for any of the other racial/ethnic groups.

**Figure Note**

Source: SAMHSA 2002 NSDUH

The National Household 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 68,216 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 NSDUH 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 publications and statistics:

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836, NHSDA Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Also available on-line: <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

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

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