

The NSDUH Report

April 17, 2008

State Estimates of Persons Aged 18 or Older Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs

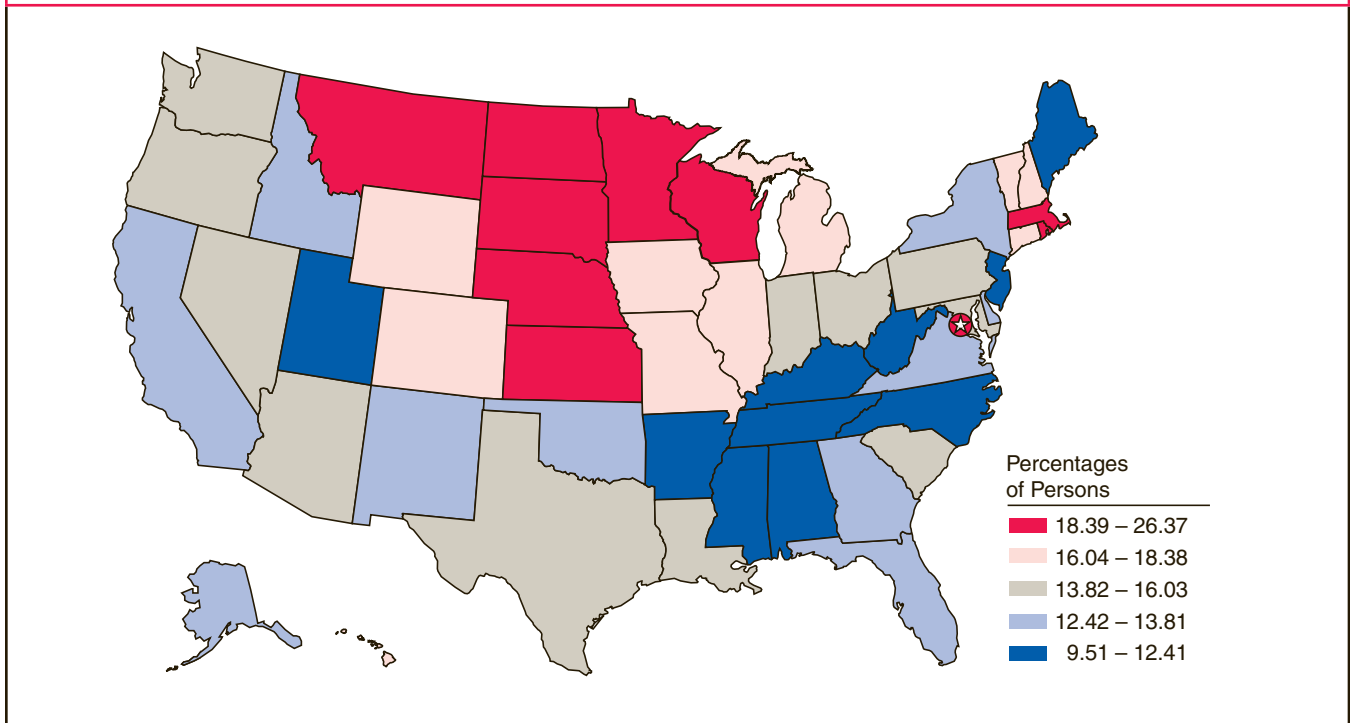
In Brief

- Combined data from 2004 to 2006 indicate that 15.1 percent of current drivers aged 18 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past 12 months (“past year”), and 4.7 percent drove under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year
- Rates of past year driving under the influence of alcohol were highest among persons aged 18 or older in Wisconsin (26.4 percent), North Dakota (24.9 percent), Minnesota (23.5 percent), Nebraska (22.9 percent), and South Dakota (21.6 percent)
- Past year rates of driving under the influence of illicit drugs among persons aged 18 or older were highest in the District of Columbia (7.0 percent), Rhode Island (6.8 percent), Massachusetts (6.4 percent), Montana (6.3 percent), and Wyoming (6.2 percent)

Impaired driving continues to be a severe and persistent threat to public safety, and the number of deaths from traffic crashes involving impaired drivers is higher than the number of deaths from all other causes among persons aged 3 to 33.¹ In 2006, an estimated 30.5 million persons aged 12 or older drove under the influence of alcohol at least once in the past 12 months (“past year”), and 10.2 million persons aged 12 or older reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs during the past year.²

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older if they had driven a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs in the past year.³ NSDUH defines *illicit drugs* to include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.⁴

Figure 1. Percentages of Current Drivers* Aged 18 or Older Reporting Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol in the Past Year, by State: 2004, 2005, and 2006



Source: SAMHSA, 2004-2006 NSDUHs.

This report presents estimates of past year driving under the influence of alcohol and illicit drugs among current drivers aged 18 or older in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia.^{5,6} All findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2004, 2005, and 2006 NSDUH data. State estimates were rank ordered from highest to lowest and divided into quintiles (fifths).⁷ States with the highest estimates were assigned to the top quintile, and States with the lowest estimates were assigned to the bottom quintile.

State Estimates of Past Year Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol

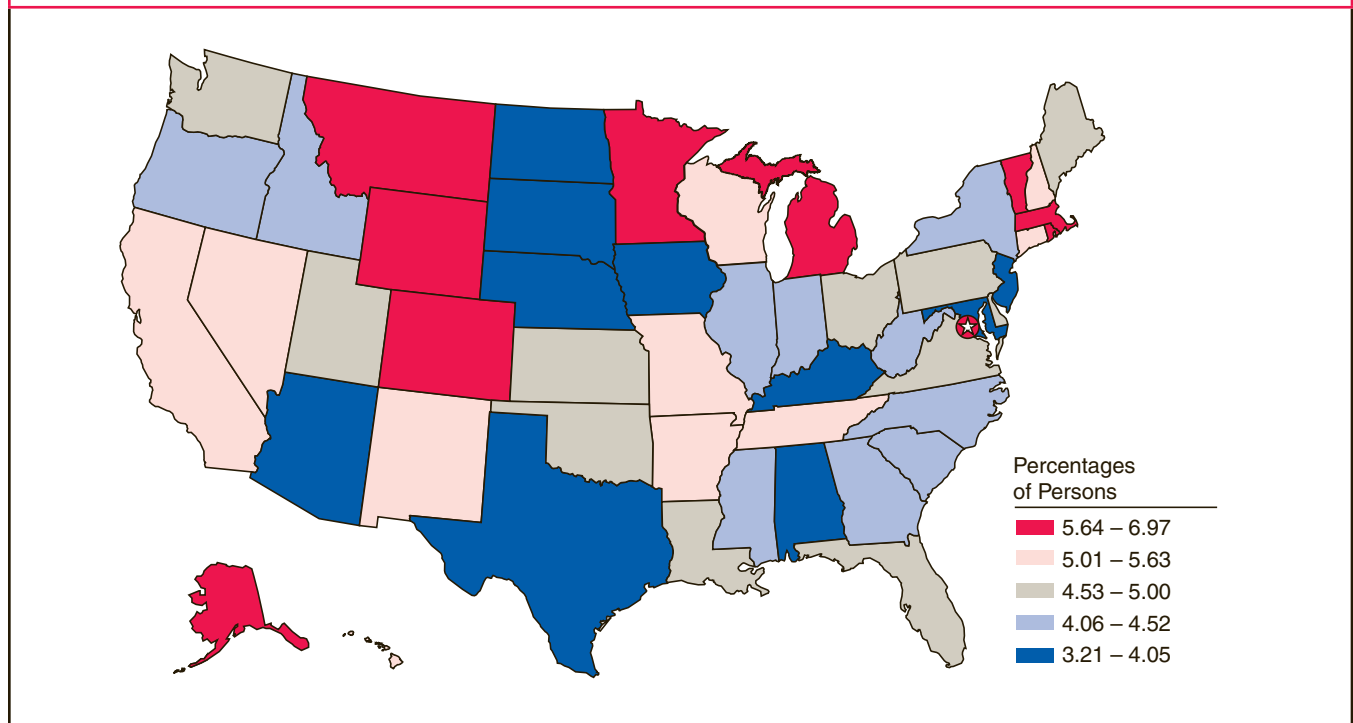
Combined data from 2004 to 2006 indicate that 15.1 percent of current drivers aged 18 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year. Rates of past year driving under the influence of alcohol were highest among current drivers aged 18 or older residing in Wisconsin (26.4 percent), North Dakota (24.9 percent), Minnesota (23.5 percent), Nebraska (22.9 percent), and South Dakota (21.6 percent) and the lowest in Arkansas (10.8

percent), Kentucky (10.5 percent), North Carolina (10.4 percent), West Virginia (10.1 percent), and Utah (9.5 percent) (Figure 1).

State Estimates of Past Year Driving Under the Influence of Illicit Drugs

Combined data from 2004 to 2006 indicate that 4.7 percent of current drivers aged 18 or older drove under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year. Past year rates of driving under the influence of illicit drugs among persons aged 18 or older were the highest in the District of

Figure 2. Percentages of Current Drivers* Aged 18 or Older Reporting Driving Under the Influence of Illicit Drugs in the Past Year, by State: 2004, 2005, and 2006



Source: SAMHSA, 2004-2006 NSDUHs.

Columbia (7.0 percent), Rhode Island (6.8 percent), Massachusetts (6.4 percent), Montana (6.3 percent), and Wyoming (6.2 percent) and were the lowest in Kentucky (3.6 percent), North Dakota (3.5 percent), South Dakota (3.5 percent), Alabama (3.4 percent), and New Jersey (3.2 percent) (Figure 2).

End Notes

- 1 International Association of Chiefs of Police. Impaired Driving Subcommittee. *Impaired driving guidebook: Three keys to renewed focus and success*. [Available at http://www.wtsc.wa.gov/documents/idsc_guidebook.pdf]
- 2 Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 07-4293, NSDUH Series H-32). Rockville,

- MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- 3 Respondents were asked in three different questions if during the past 12 months they had driven a vehicle while under the influence of (a) alcohol only, (b) illicit drugs only, or (c) a combination of alcohol and illicit drugs used together. Responses to these questions were recoded to determine the prevalence of driving under the influence DUI involving (a) any alcohol and (b) any illicit drugs. Respondents with unknown DUI information were excluded from the substance-specific analysis.
- 4 NSDUH defines nonmedical use of prescription-type drugs as use not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used only for the experience or feeling they caused. Nonmedical use of any prescription-type pain reliever, sedative, stimulant, or tranquilizer does not include over-the-counter drugs. Nonmedical use of stimulants includes methamphetamine use.
- 5 Driving status is determined by a respondent's answers to questions on seatbelt use. Persons who indicated either wearing or not wearing a seatbelt when driving were defined as current drivers; those who responded that they did not drive were defined as nondrivers. Persons with unknown responses or those who reported not driving were excluded from the analysis. Approximately 94 percent of individuals aged 18

- or older who responded to this question were classified as current drivers.
- 6 In this report, "State" refers to the State of residence of the respondents. NSDUH does not collect data on the State(s) where respondents drove under the influence.
- 7 Estimates were divided into quintiles for ease of presentation and discussion, but differences between States and quintiles were not tested for statistical significance.

Figure Note

* See End Note 5.

Suggested Citation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (April 17, 2008). *The NSDUH Report: State Estimates of Persons Aged 18 or Older Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs*. Rockville, MD.

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2004-2006 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

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The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The combined 2004, 2005, and 2006 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 127,283 current drivers aged 18 or older; sample sizes within States ranged from a low of 1,501 to a high of 6,897. 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 on NSDUH used in compiling data for this issue is available in the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 07-4293, NSDUH Series H-32). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Information for earlier NSDUHs is available in the following publications:

2005 NSDUH: (DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-4194, NSDUH Series H-30)

2004 NSDUH: (DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4062, NSDUH Series H-28)

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

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2004 through 2006 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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