

# The NSDUH Report

September 2, 2005

## Arrests for Driving Under the Influence among Adult Drivers

The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimated that there were over 1.4 million arrests for driving under the influence (DUI) in the United States in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 10.9 percent of drivers/motorcyclists in fatal motor vehicle crashes in 2003 were under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medication.<sup>2</sup>

### In Brief

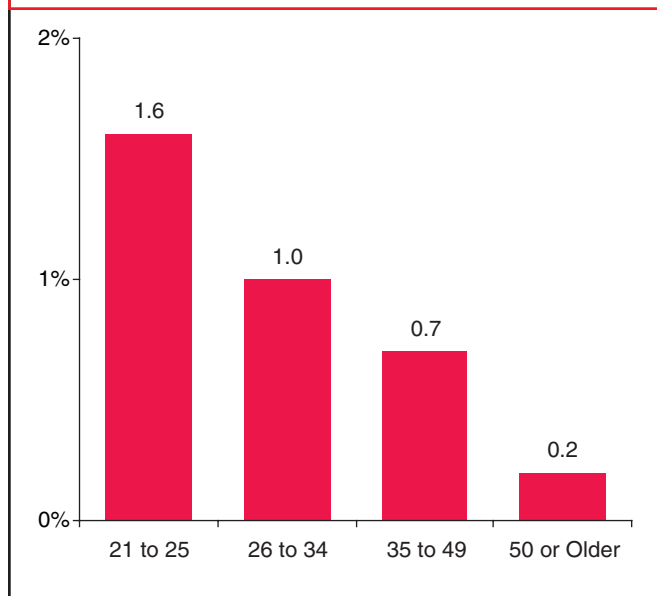
- An estimated 1.2 million adults aged 21 or older (0.6 percent of drivers in that age group) were arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol or illicit drugs during the past year
- Male drivers aged 21 or older (1.1 percent) were more likely than female adult drivers (0.2 percent) to have been arrested for DUI, and past year DUI arrest rates were higher among younger adult drivers than older adult drivers
- Among drivers aged 21 or older who reported driving under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs during the past year, 2.8 percent reported having been arrested for DUI in the past year

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<sup>3</sup> and if they had been arrested for DUI.<sup>4</sup> NSDUH defines *illicit drugs* to include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. This report focuses on past year alcohol and illicit drug use and driving behaviors of adults aged 21 or older. All findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2002 and 2003 NSDUH data.

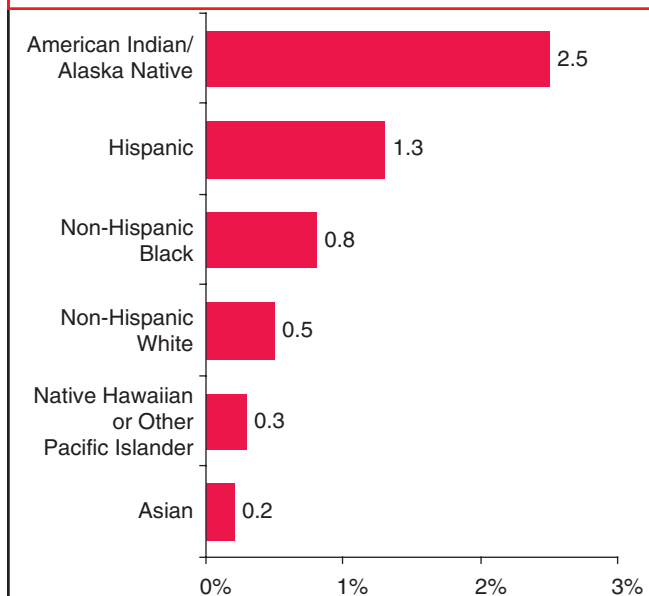
### Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs in the Past Year

In the United States, 93.6 percent of persons aged 21 or older (an estimated 186.4 million persons) were classified as drivers.<sup>5</sup> In 2002 and 2003, 16.6 percent of adult drivers aged

**Figure 1. Percentages of Drivers Aged 21 or Older Who Reported a Past Year Arrest for DUI, by Age Group: 2002 and 2003**



**Figure 2. Percentages of Drivers Aged 21 or Older Who Reported a Past Year Arrest for DUI, by Race/Ethnicity: 2002 and 2003**



21 or older (an estimated 30.7 million persons) reported that they had driven while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs during the past year.

### Past Year Arrest for DUI

Of the estimated 186 million adult drivers aged 21 or older, 1.2 million (0.6 percent) had been arrested for DUI in the past 12 months. Male drivers aged 21 or older (1.1 percent) were five times more likely to have been arrested for DUI during the past year than adult female drivers (0.2 percent).

Among adults, younger drivers were more likely than older drivers to have been arrested in the past year for DUI. The past year DUI arrest rate for drivers aged 50 or older was low (0.2 percent), but past year DUI arrest rates were higher among the younger age groups. For example, 0.7 percent of drivers aged 35 to 49 were

arrested for DUI during the past year, and 1.6 percent of drivers aged 21 to 25 reported a past year DUI arrest (Figure 1).

Among racial/ethnic groups, American Indians/Alaska Natives (2.5 percent) had the highest past year arrest rate for DUI while Asians (0.2 percent) had the lowest rate (Figure 2).<sup>6</sup>

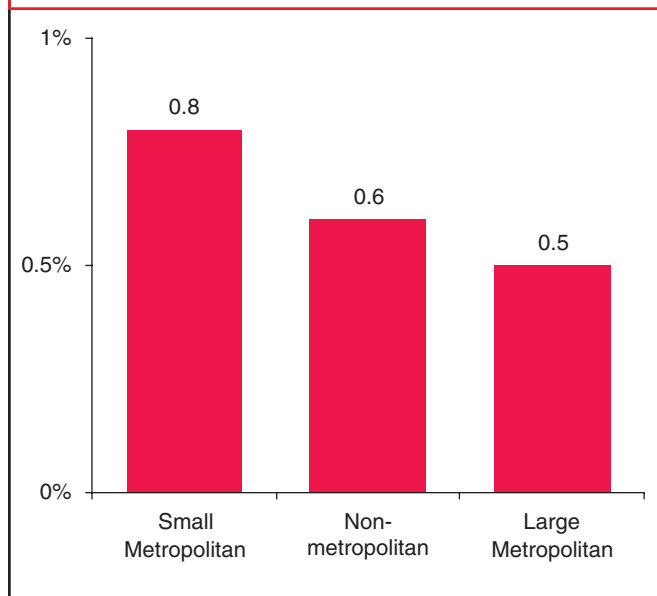
### Geographic Differences

Past year DUI arrest rates among drivers aged 21 or older were higher in the Midwest, South, and West (all 0.7 percent) than in the Northeast (0.4 percent).<sup>7</sup> Rates of past year arrest for DUI varied by county size. Drivers aged 21 or older residing in small metropolitan counties (0.8 percent) were more likely than those residing in large metropolitan counties (0.5 percent) to report having been arrested during the past year for DUI (Figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

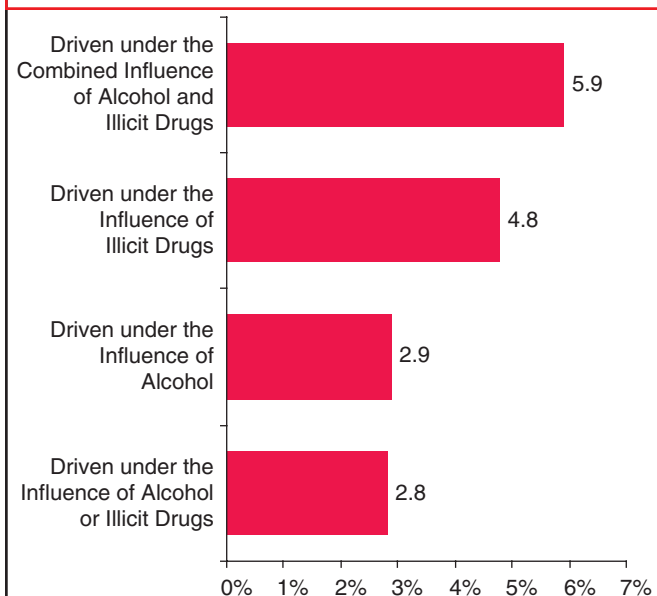
### Past Year Arrest Rate for DUI among Adults Who Reported Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs

Among drivers aged 21 or older who reported that they had driven under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the past year, 2.8 percent also reported they had been arrested during the past year for DUI (Figure 4). The past year DUI arrest rate was 2.9 percent for drivers aged 21 or older who reported driving under the influence of alcohol during the past year and 4.8 percent for adult drivers who reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs during the past year. Almost 6.0 percent of drivers aged 21 or older who reported driving under the combined influence of alcohol and illicit drugs during the past year also reported having been arrested for DUI in the past year.

**Figure 3. Percentages of Adult Drivers Aged 21 or Older Who Reported a Past Year Arrest for DUI, by County Type: 2002 and 2003**



**Figure 4. Percentages of Adult Drivers Aged 21 or Older Reporting a Past Year Arrest for DUI, by Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol and/or Illicit Drugs in the Past Year: 2002 and 2003**



**End Notes**

1. Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice. (2004). Section IV: Persons arrested. In *Crime in the United States: 2003 Uniform Crime Reports*. Retrieved May 20, 2005, from <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/03cius.htm>
2. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2005, January). *Traffic Safety Facts 2003: A compilation of motor vehicle crash data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System* (DOT HS 809 775). Table 65 retrieved June 28, 2005, from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-30/ncsa/AvailInf.html>
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 then were recoded to determine the prevalence

of DUI involving (a) alcohol, (b) illicit drugs, (c) either alcohol or illicit drugs, or (d) both alcohol and illicit drugs.

4. Respondents were asked if during the past 12 months they had been arrested and booked for DUI involving alcohol or drugs.
5. Respondents were identified as drivers if they responded "never," "seldom," "sometimes," or "always" to a question about the frequency of their wearing a seatbelt when they drove. If a respondent indicated that he or she did not drive when asked the question about wearing a seatbelt while driving or did not give a response to that question, he or she was excluded from this analysis.
6. Race/ethnicity categories are determined by combining the responses from two separate questions. For this report, respondents identifying themselves as Hispanic were assigned to the Hispanic group regardless of their racial identification. Respondents identifying themselves as non-Hispanic were grouped according to their racial identification. Thus, "white" refers to those identifying themselves as non-Hispanic and white.

7. The Midwest has 12 States: IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, and WI. The South has 17 States: AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV. The Northeast has 9 States: CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VT. And the West has 13 States: AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, and WY.
8. Large metropolitan areas have a population of 1 million or more. Small metropolitan areas have a population of fewer than 1 million. Non-metropolitan areas are outside metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. See U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2003, June 12). *About metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas*. Retrieved May 26, 2005, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/aboutmetro.html>

**Figure Note**

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 and 2003 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 71,648 persons aged 21 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 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 and statistics:

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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