

The NSDUH Report

August 26, 2005

Binge Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 12 to 20: 2002 and 2003 Update

In Brief

- In 2002 and 2003, approximately 7.2 million persons (19.2 percent) aged 12 to 20 were past month binge alcohol users
- Binge alcohol use rates for persons aged 12 to 20 were among the lowest in Utah (13.7 percent) and among the highest in North Dakota (32.5 percent)
- Among persons aged 12 to 20 who reported past month binge alcohol use, approximately half (50.6 percent) reported binge alcohol use on 3 or more days per month

Research has shown that persons who engage in binge alcohol use as teenagers are at increased risk for binge drinking as young adults.¹ The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks respondents aged 12 or older to report their frequency and quantity of alcohol use during the month before the survey. NSDUH defines binge alcohol use 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. All findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2002 and 2003 NSDUH data.

Prevalence of Binge Alcohol Use

In 2002 and 2003, approximately 7.2 million (19.2 percent) persons aged 12 to 20 reported past month binge alcohol use. Adults aged 21 or older were more likely to be binge alcohol users than persons aged 12 to 20 (23.4 vs. 19.2 percent). The

percentage of persons aged 12 to 20 who were binge alcohol users increased with age, from 0.8 percent of 12 year olds to 40.1 percent of 20 year olds (Figure 1).

Males aged 12 to 20 and 21 or older were more likely to be binge alcohol users in the past month than females of the same age (Figure 2). Females aged 12 to 20 were more likely to have engaged in binge alcohol use than females aged 21 or older, while males aged 12 to 20 were less likely to have engaged in binge drinking than males aged 21 or older.

State Estimates of Binge Alcohol Use

Binge alcohol use rates for persons aged 12 to 20 were among the lowest in Utah (13.7 percent) and among the highest in North Dakota (32.5 percent). The Southeast and West Coast States had lower rates of binge alcohol use than States in other regions. Figure 3 illustrates State differences in the rate of binge alcohol use among persons 12 to 20 years old. States with the highest estimates fall into the top quintile (fifth) and are shown in red; States with the lowest estimates are in the bottom quintile and are shown in blue.

Figure 1. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 to 20 and Aged 21 or Older Reporting Past Month Binge Alcohol Use,* by Age: 2002 and 2003

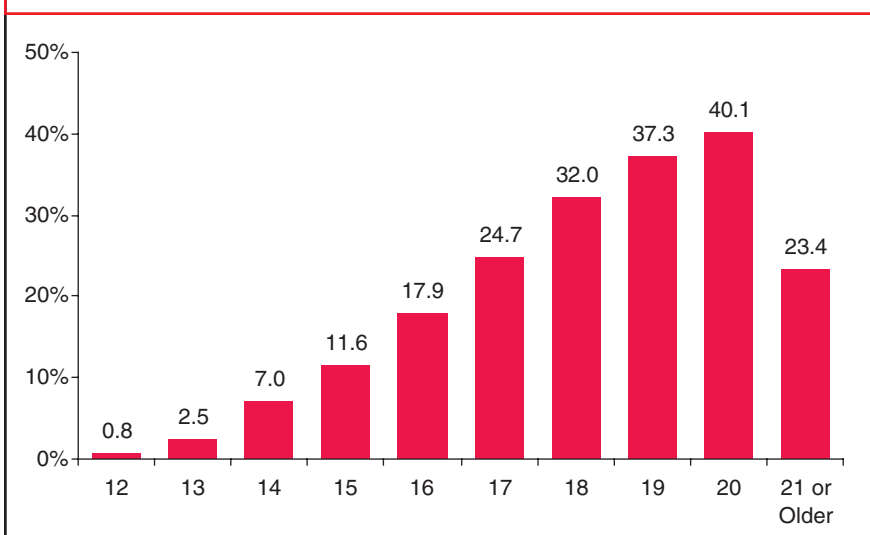
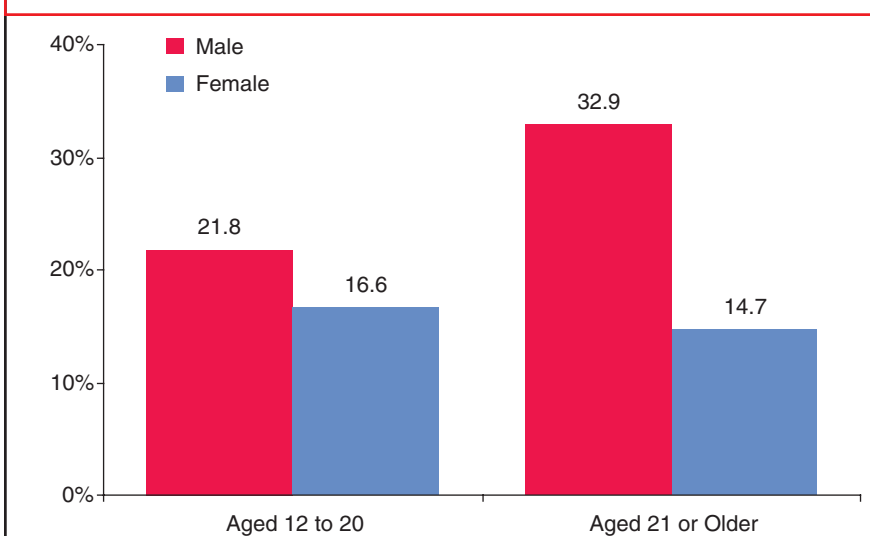


Figure 2. Percentages of Persons Reporting Past Month Binge Alcohol Use,* by Age Group and Gender: 2002 and 2003



Frequency of Past Month Binge Alcohol Use among Binge Drinkers Aged 12 to 20

Among persons aged 12 to 20 who engaged in binge alcohol use in the past month, males did so on more days than

females. Binge drinking on 3 or more days in the past month was reported by 56.1 percent of males compared with 43.4 percent of females (Figure 4).

Among binge drinkers aged 12 to 20, 49.3 percent reported binge alcohol use on 1 or 2

Figure 3. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 to 20 Reporting Past Month Binge Alcohol Use, by State: 2002 and 2003

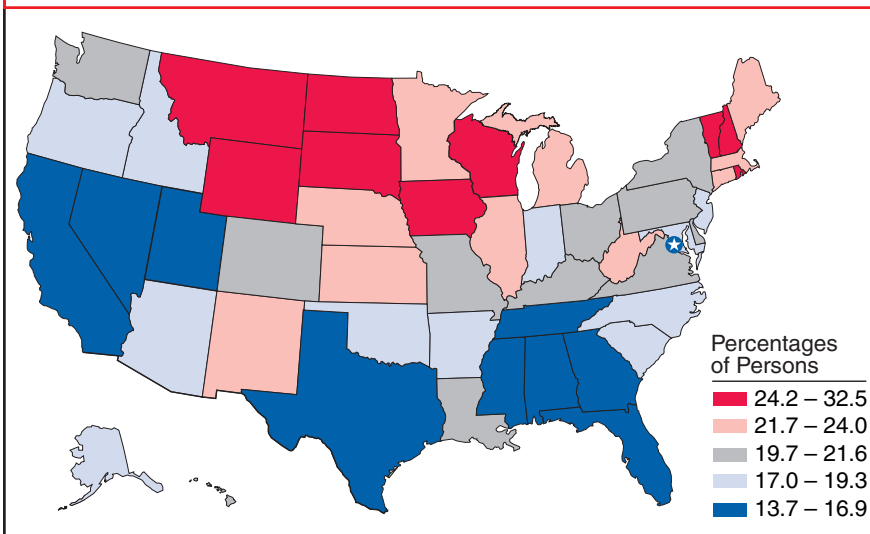
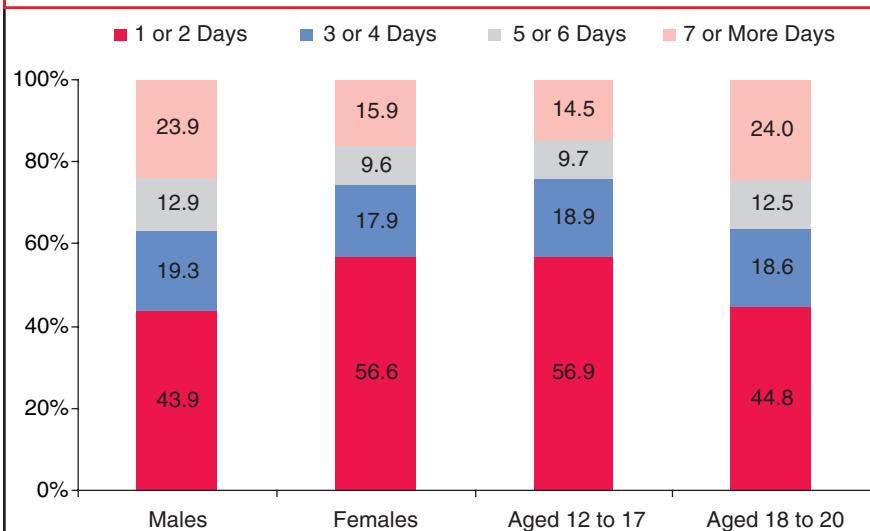


Figure 4. Percentage of Binge Drinkers Aged 12-20 by Number of Occasions of Binge Drinking in Past Month, Gender, and Age Group: 2002 and 2003



days in the past month, 18.7 percent reported 2 or 3 days, 11.5 percent reported 5 or 6 days, and 20.5 percent engaged in binge drinking on 7 or more days in the past month. Among past month binge alcohol users, 55.2 percent of those aged 18 to

20, compared with 43.1 percent of those aged 12 to 17, engaged in binge drinking on 3 or more days in the past month (Figure 4).

End Note

1. McCarty, C.A., Ebel, B.E., Garrison, M.M., DiGiuseppe, D.L., Christakis, D.A., & Rivara,

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 32,787 persons aged 12 to 20. The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 persons aged 12 or older, including 31,475 persons aged 12 to 20. 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 publication 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.

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

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.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
 Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
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F.P. (2004). Continuity of binge and harmful drinking from late adolescence to early adulthood. *Pediatrics*, 114, 714-719.

Figure Notes

* NSDUH defines binge alcohol use 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.

Source: SAMHSA, 2002 and 2003 NSDUH.