

# The NSDUH Report

May 28, 2004

## Marital Status and Substance Use among Women

### In Brief

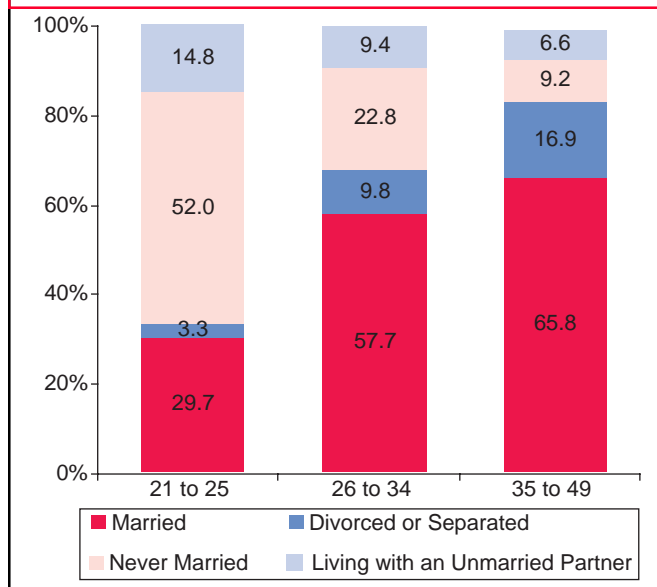
- In 2002, almost 58 percent of women aged 21 to 49 (nearly 35 million) were currently married
- Married women aged 21 to 49 were less likely to have used tobacco, engaged in binge alcohol use, or used an illicit drug in the past month compared with women aged 21 to 49 who were divorced or separated, never married, or living with an unmarried partner
- Among married women aged 21 to 49, those with children younger than 18 living in the home were less likely to have used tobacco, engaged in binge alcohol use, or used any illicit drug in the past month than those with no child living in the home

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older to report their tobacco, alcohol, or illicit drug use during the month prior to the interview. Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco (i.e., chewing tobacco or snuff), and pipe tobacco. 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 hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past 30 days.<sup>1</sup> Any illicit drug refers to marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. Respondents also were asked to report their current marital status.<sup>2</sup> In addition, respondents were asked about the number of persons who live in the home and how the respondent was related to each person.<sup>3,4</sup> This report focuses on women aged 21 to 49.

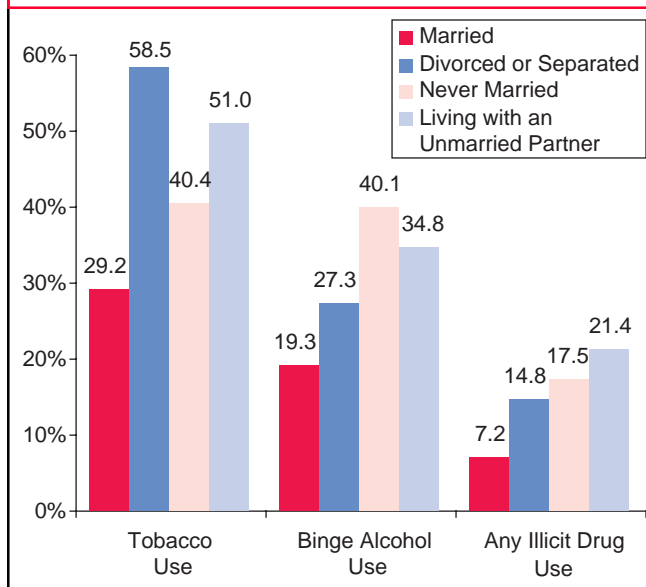
### Marital Status among Women

In 2002, almost 58 percent of women aged 21 to 49 (nearly 35 million) were currently married. Almost 20 percent had never been married; 13 percent were divorced or separated; 9 percent were living as married with an unmarried partner; and less than 1 percent of women aged 21 to 49 were widowed. The majority of

**Figure 1. Percentages of Women Aged 21 to 49 Reporting Marital Status, by Age Group: 2002**



**Figure 2. Percentages of Women Aged 21 to 25 Reporting Past Month Substance Use, by Marital Status: 2002**



women aged 21 to 25 were never married (52 percent) or married (30 percent) (Figure 1). Most women aged 26 to 34 (58 percent) or 35 to 49 (66 percent) were married. Because the distribution of marital status varies by age group, this report presents substance use by marital status controlling for age.

### Substance Use among Women

Among women aged 21 to 49, the rates of past month substance use were lower among married women compared with women who were divorced or separated, never married, or living with an unmarried partner. Rates of past month tobacco and illicit drug use were higher among women living with an unmarried partner than among women from other marital status groups.

In general, among women aged 21 to 49, rates of past month substance use were lower among those who were married compared with those who were divorced or separated, never married, or living with an unmarried partner. For example, among women aged 21 to 25, past month binge alcohol

use was 19 percent among married women, 27 percent among divorced or separated women, 40 percent among women who had never been married, and 35 percent among women living with an unmarried partner (Figure 2). In general, among women aged 26 to 34, those living with an unmarried partner had higher rates of past month substance use compared with those who were married, divorced or separated, or never married (Figure 3). Among women aged 35 to 49, those living with an unmarried partner were more likely to have used tobacco or engaged in binge alcohol use in the past month than those who were married, divorced or separated, or never married (Figure 4).

### Children Living in the Home

Among married women aged 21 to 49, 73 percent (over 25 million) had at least one child younger than 18 living in their home. Among women aged 21 to 49, 63 percent of women who were divorced or separated, almost 44 percent of women who were living with an unmarried partner, and 27 percent of women who had never been married

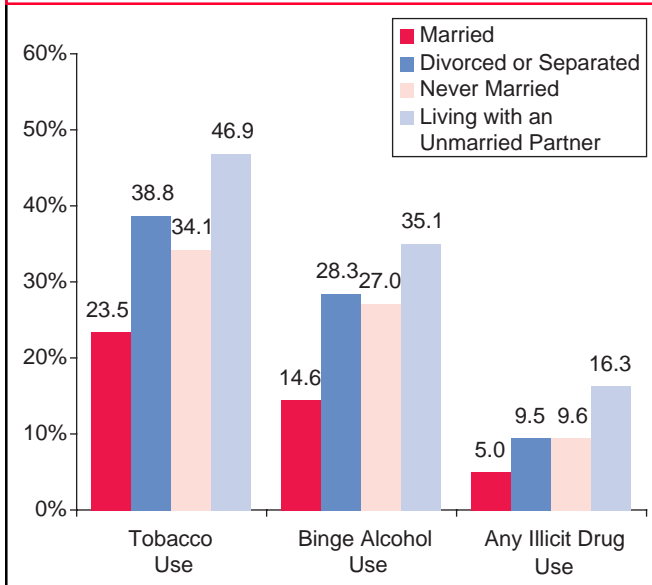
lived with at least one child younger than 18.

Among married women aged 21 to 49, those with children younger than 18 living in the home were less likely to have used tobacco, engaged in binge alcohol use, or used an illicit drug in the past month (Figure 5) than those with no child living in the home.<sup>5</sup> Among women aged 21 to 49 who were divorced or separated, or living with an unmarried partner, rates of past month substance use were similar among those with children aged 18 or younger living in the home and those with no child living in the home. Women aged 21 to 49 who had never married and who had children younger than 18 living in the home (41 percent) were more likely to have used tobacco in the past month than those with no child living in the home (34 percent).

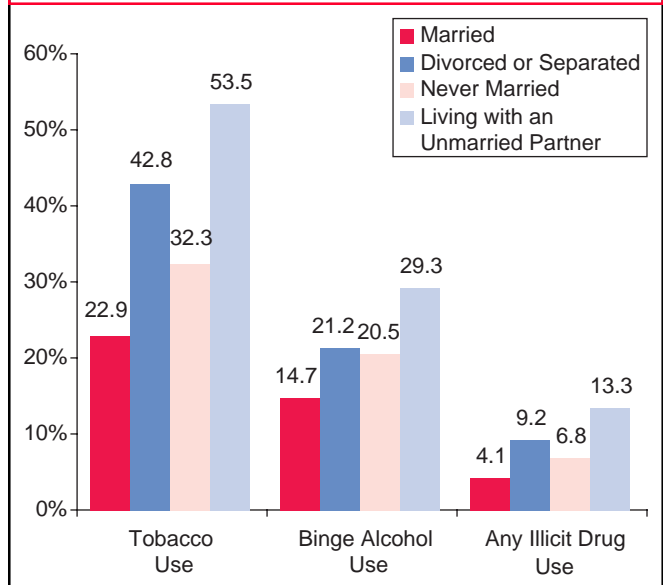
### End Notes

1. A "drink" is defined as a can or bottle of beer, a glass of wine or a wine cooler, a shot of liquor, or a mixed drink containing liquor.
2. Current marital status response options were (a) married, (b) widowed, (c) divorced or separated, and (d) have never married. For this report, estimates for widowed women are not shown due to small sample size.

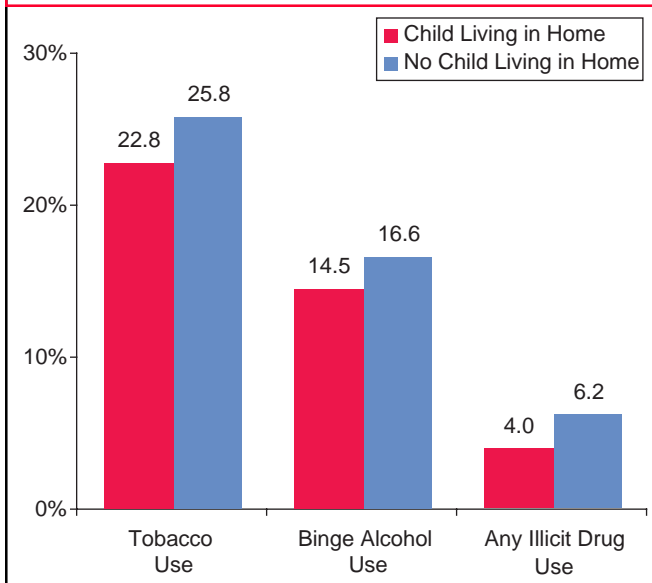
**Figure 3. Percentages of Women Aged 26 to 34 Reporting Past Month Substance Use, by Marital Status: 2002**



**Figure 4. Percentages of Women Aged 35 to 49 Reporting Past Month Substance Use, by Marital Status: 2002**



**Figure 5. Percentages of Married Women Aged 21 to 49 Reporting Past Month Substance Use, by Whether at Least One Child Younger Than Age 18 Lived in Their Home: 2002**



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 16,010 women aged 21 to 49. 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 report are based on the following publication 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 online: <http://www.oas.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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3. Respondents could indicate whether they were living as married with an unmarried partner. For the purposes of this report, respondents who indicated they were living with an unmarried partner were classified as such, regardless of their reported marital status. This resulted in five mutually exclusive categories: (a) married, (b) widowed, (c) divorced or separated, (d) never married, and (e) living with an unmarried partner.
4. Respondents are considered to have children living in the home if they indicate that at least one of the members in their household is their son or daughter. This could be a biological, step, adopted, or foster child. This report focused on women aged 21 to 49 with children younger than age 18 living in the home. In 2002, 93 percent of women living with a child younger than age 18 were aged 21 to 49.

5. The differences were significant at  $p < 0.05$  for past month tobacco and illicit drug use, but  $p = 0.0734$  for binge alcohol use.

**Figure Note**

Figure 1: Percentages for each age category in Figure 1 do not add to 100% as a result of the exclusion of widowed women due to small sample size. Percentages of widowed women in each age category were 0.1 percent in women aged 21 to 25, 0.3 percent in women aged 26 to 34, and 1.5 percent in women aged 35 to 49.