

The NSDUH Report

August 28, 2008

Underage Alcohol Use: Where Do Young People Drink?

In 2006, more than one in four persons aged 12 to 20 in the United States, or about 10.8 million persons, drank alcohol in the past month (i.e., were current drinkers).¹ Nearly one in five persons aged 18 to 20 drove under the influence of alcohol in the past 12

months in 2006,¹ and each year approximately 1,900 people under the age of 21 die as a result of alcohol-involved motor vehicle crashes.² In addition, early initiation of alcohol use is associated with increased likelihood of unprotected sexual intercourse and multiple sex partners.^{3,4}

The 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asked past month alcohol users aged 12 to 20 how they obtained the last alcohol they drank and where they were when they consumed it. This issue of *The NSDUH Report* examines age-related changes in the locations where male and female underage drinkers use alcohol. It also examines differences by college enrollment and living situation for those aged 18 to 20. Findings presented in this report are based on 2006 NSDUH data.

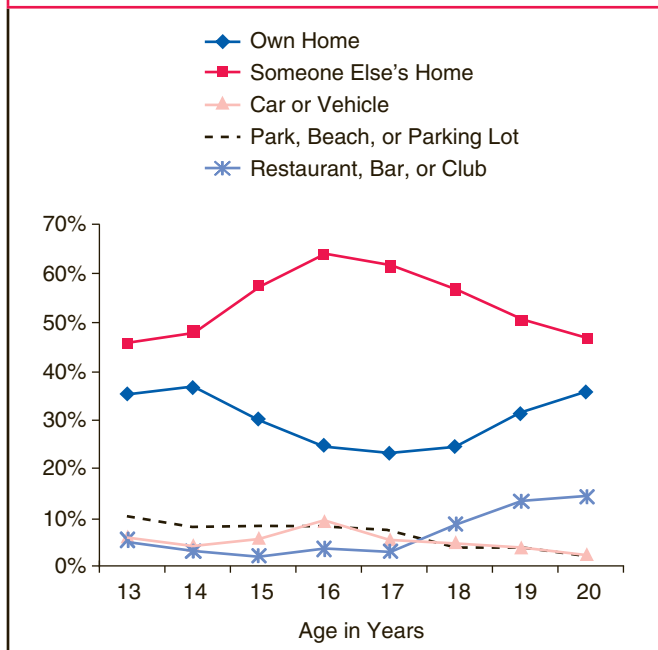
In Brief

- A majority (53.4 percent) of current alcohol users aged 12 to 20 drank at someone else's home the last time they used alcohol, and another 30.3 percent drank in their own home
- The percentage of underage alcohol users who had their most recent drink in a car or other vehicle peaked at 10.1 percent at age 16 (12.8 percent of females and 7.3 percent of males)
- Among 20-year-old current drinkers, 20.0 percent of females drank in a restaurant, bar, or club the last time they used alcohol compared with 10.2 percent of males

How Do Drinking Locations Change with Age?

In 2006, a majority (53.4 percent) of current alcohol users aged 12 to 20 drank at someone else's home the last time they used alcohol, and another 30.3 percent drank in their own home. This overall pattern of last using alcohol

Figure 1. Location of the Most Recent Alcohol Use in the Past Month* among Past Month Alcohol Users Aged 13 to 20, by Individual Years of Age: 2006**



Source: SAMHSA, 2006 NSDUH.

in their own home or at someone else's home held for drinkers at each age from 13 to 20 (Figure 1).⁵ More than 60 percent of drinkers aged 16 or 17 used alcohol in someone else's home the last time they drank. About 36 percent or more of drinkers aged 13, 14, and 20 last used alcohol in their own homes. In addition, 10.0 percent of 13-year-old drinkers last consumed alcohol in public places (such as a park, a beach, or a parking lot).

The percentage of underage alcohol users who had their most recent drink in a car or other vehicle peaked at 10.1 percent at age 16. An estimated 15.0 percent of those aged 20 last drank in a restaurant, bar, or club. Approximately 7 to 10 percent of alcohol users aged 13 to 17 last drank in public places, with the percentages decreasing to fewer than 4 percent of drinkers aged 18 to older. In contrast, most recent use of alcohol in a restaurant, bar, or club started to increase at age 18 and was at its highest point at age 20.

Do Age-Related Changes in Drinking Locations Differ for Males and Females?

Among male alcohol users, the percentage reporting that they drank most recently in a car or other vehicle did not differ significantly by age between ages 15 and 20,⁶ but it did differ for females (Figure 2). An estimated 12.8 percent of female alcohol users who were aged 16 last drank

Figure 2. Location of the Most Recent Alcohol Use in the Past Month* among Past Month Alcohol Users Aged 15 to 20, by Gender within Individual Years of Age: 2006**



Source: SAMHSA, 2006 NSDUH.

alcohol in a car or other motor vehicle, a rate that was 8 times greater than the rate for female drinkers who were aged 20 (1.6 percent). At age 16, 7.3 percent of male current drinkers had their last drink in a car or other vehicle.

Among 15-year-old drinkers, females were twice as likely as males to have last used alcohol in a public place, such as a park, beach, or parking lot (10.6 vs. 5.0 percent). Among males, alcohol consumption in public places peaked at age 16 and then declined. Among females, alcohol consumption in public places declined after age 15.

The proportion of underage current drinkers who consumed their last alcohol in a restaurant, bar, or club generally increased with age. Starting at age 17, female drinkers were more likely than their male

Table 1. Most Recent Alcohol Use in the Past Month at Home or at Someone Else's Home* among Past Month Alcohol Users Aged 18 to 20, by College Enrollment Status and Parental Living Situation^{*}: 2006^{**}**

College Enrollment Status/Parental Living Situation	Location of Most Recent Alcohol Use			
	Home		Someone Else's Home	
	%	SE ⁺	%	SE ⁺
Total Aged 18 to 20⁺⁺				
Living with a Parental Relative	24.3	1.07	55.4	1.29
Not Living with a Parental Relative	42.9	1.90	43.1	1.92
Full-Time College Student				
Living with a Parental Relative	21.2	1.49	56.8	2.03
Not Living with a Parental Relative	33.5	2.28	50.7	2.33
Other⁺⁺				
Living with a Parental Relative	26.6	1.54	54.4	1.72
Not Living with a Parental Relative	56.9	2.55	31.7	2.47

Source: SAMHSA, 2006 NSDUH.

counterparts to have consumed alcohol in one of these locations. Among 20-year-old current drinkers, 20.0 percent of females drank in a restaurant, bar, or club the last time they used alcohol compared with 10.2 percent of males.

Where Do Persons Aged 18 to 20 Drink?

Among drinkers aged 18 to 20, those who were living with a parent or similar relative were more likely than those who were not living with a parental relative to have most recently used alcohol in someone else's home (55.4 and 43.1 percent, respectively) (Table 1). This pattern was more pronounced for drinkers in this age group who were not full-time college students (54.4 percent of those living with a parental relative vs. 31.7 percent of those who were not). However, more than half of underage drinkers who were full-time college students last drank alcohol in someone else's home regardless of whether they were living with a parental relative.

Discussion

Underage alcohol use poses important public health and public safety risks. Knowing the locations where this behavior is most likely to occur can help parents talk with their teenagers more effectively about the dangers of alcohol use and alert parents to times when they need to exercise greater monitoring and supervision. These data also provide prevention specialists with new information to help guide program development or modify existing prevention activities in their communities.

End Notes

- 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. [Available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/p0000016.htm>]
- Hingson, R., & Kenkel, D. (2004). Social, health, and economic consequences of underage drinking. In R. J. Bonnie & M. E. O'Connell (Eds.), *Reducing underage drinking: A collective responsibility* (pp. 351-382). Washington, DC: National Academies Press. [Available at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309089352/html>]
- Stueve, A., & O'Donnell, L. N. (2005). Early alcohol initiation and subsequent sexual and alcohol risk behaviors among urban youths. *American Journal of Public Health, 95*, 887-893.
- Swahn, M. H., Bossarte, R. M., & Sullivent, E. E. 3rd. (2008). Age of alcohol use initiation, suicidal behavior, and peer and dating violence victimization and perpetration among high-risk, seventh-grade adolescents. *Pediatrics, 121*, 297-305.
- Estimates were unreliable for 12-year-old drinkers and were therefore not used.
- A lower age limit of 15 years was set for estimates regarding locations of the most recent alcohol use among male and female underage drinkers by single years of age because of the larger sample sizes of male and female drinkers aged 15 to 20.

Table and Figure Notes

- * Respondents could indicate multiple locations for the most recent time they used alcohol; thus, these response categories are not mutually exclusive.
- ** Respondents with unknown responses were excluded.
- *** Persons with unknown parental living situations were excluded. Parental relatives include a parent, grandparent, or parent-in-law.
- + Standard error (SE) is a measure of the sampling variability or precision of an estimate, where smaller values represent greater precision and larger values represent less precision.
- ** Estimates for persons aged 18 to 20 include those with unknown enrollment status. Other persons include those aged 18 to 20 not enrolled in college, enrolled in college part time, enrolled in other grades either full or part time, or enrolled with no other information available.

Suggested Citation

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Research findings from the SAMHSA 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

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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 2006 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 31,320 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 on the most recent NSDUH is available in the following publication:

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.

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

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