

# The NSDUH Report

February 13, 2004

## Alcohol Dependence or Abuse among Parents with Children Living in the Home

### In Brief

- In 2002, almost 5 million adults were alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing and had at least one child younger than age 18 living in their home
- Parents dependent on or abusing alcohol in the past year were more likely to have smoked cigarettes or used illicit drugs than parents who were not dependent on or had not abused alcohol
- Parents with past year alcohol dependence or abuse were more likely to report household turbulence than parents who were not alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), asks respondents aged 12 or older to report on their symptoms of dependence on or abuse of alcohol. Dependence or abuse is defined using criteria in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, which include symptoms such as withdrawal, tolerance, use in dangerous situations, trouble with the law, and interference in major obligations at work, school, or home during the past year (Table 1).<sup>1</sup> Respondents also are asked about their use of cigarettes and illicit drugs in the past year. "Any illicit drug" refers to marijuana or hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically. In addition, respondents are asked about the number of persons who live in the home and how they were related to each person.

This report focuses on the characteristics of respondents aged 18 or older who reported that they have at least one child living in the home with them. These individuals are referred to as parents throughout this report.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. DSM-IV Diagnosis of Substance Abuse or Dependence**

A person is defined with abuse of a substance if he or she is not dependent on that substance and reports one or more of the following symptoms in the past year.

1. Recurrent use resulting in failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home
2. Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous (e.g., driving an automobile)
3. Recurrent substance-related legal problems
4. Continued use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems

A person is defined as being dependent on a substance if he or she reports three or more of the following symptoms in the past year.

1. Tolerance—discovering less effect with same amount (needing more to become intoxicated)
2. Withdrawal (characteristic withdrawal associated with type of drug)
3. Using more or for longer periods than intended
4. Desire to or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
5. Considerable time spent in obtaining or using the substance or recovering from its effects
6. Important social, work, or recreational activities given up or reduced because of use
7. Continued use despite knowledge of problems caused by or aggravated by use

**Table 2. Percentages and Standard Errors of Past Year Cigarette and Illicit Drug Use among Parents Aged 18 or Older, by Past Year Alcohol Dependence or Abuse: 2002**

	Past Year Alcohol Dependence or Abuse		No Past Year Alcohol Dependence or Abuse	
	Percent	SE	Percent	SE
Cigarette Use	57.9	2.31	30.6	0.63
Illicit Drug Use	35.5	2.23	11.0	0.41
Marijuana	25.8	1.95	7.1	0.31
Cocaine	9.5	1.36	1.2	0.13
Heroin	0.4	0.27	0.1	0.04
Hallucinogens	3.1	0.64	0.6	0.09
Inhalants	1.0	0.37	0.1	0.04
Prescription Drugs Used Nonmedically	16.3	1.63	5.0	0.29

### Characteristics of Alcohol-Dependent or Alcohol-Abusing Parents

In 2002, over 69 million adults had at least one child younger than age 18 living in their household. Almost 5 million adults were alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing and had at least one child younger than age 18 living in their home. These 5 million parents with serious alcohol problems account for 28 percent of all adults with alcohol dependence or abuse. More than 60 percent (62 percent) of these alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing parents were fathers and 38 percent were mothers. Most (69 percent) were married.

### Other Substance Use among Alcohol-Dependent or Alcohol-Abusing Parents

Alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing adults with children living in the home were more likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past year than parents who were not dependent on or had not abused alcohol and had children living in the home (Table 2). In addition, the rate of past year illicit drug use was higher among alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing parents compared with parents who were not alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing. For example,

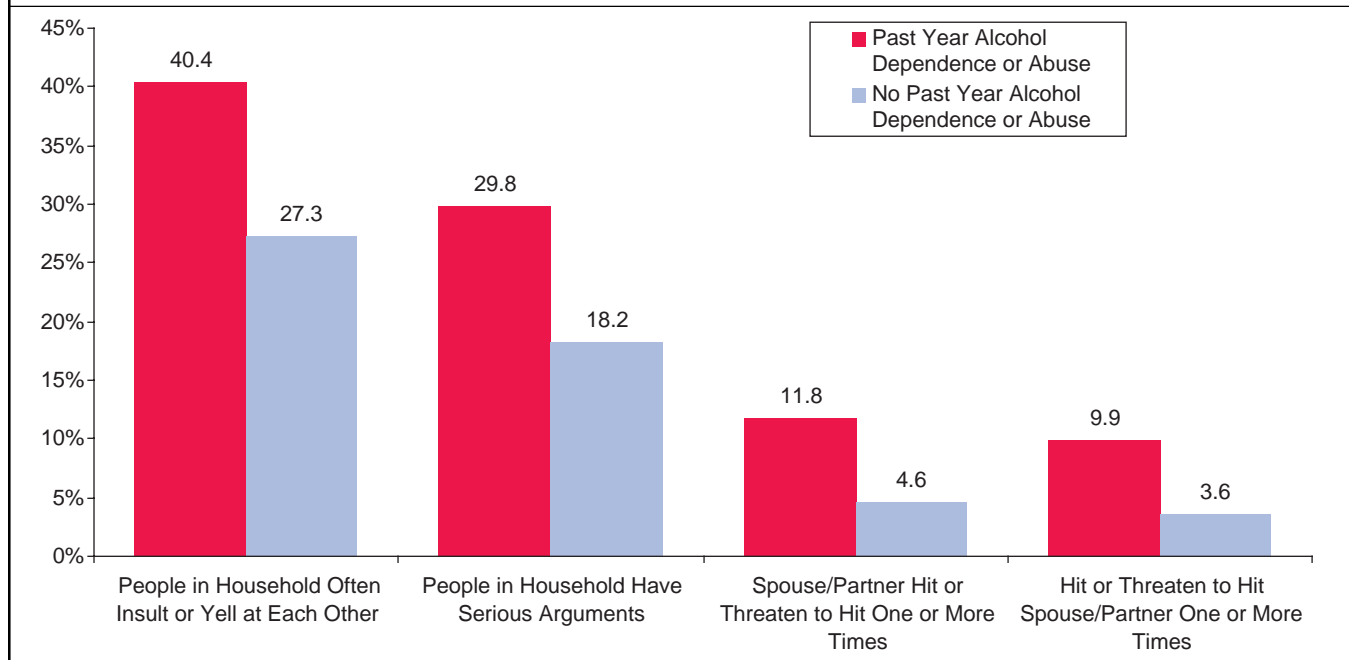
26 percent of past year alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing parents used marijuana in the past year compared with 7 percent among parents who were not dependent on or abusing alcohol in the past year.

### Household Turbulence among Alcohol-Abusing or Alcohol-Dependent Parents

Parents were asked if they agreed that people in their household often insult or yell at each other, or if people in their household have serious arguments.<sup>3</sup> Alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing parents were more likely to report that people in their household often insulted or yelled at each other and that people in their household had serious arguments than parents who were not dependent on or abusing alcohol in the past year (Figure 1).

Parents who indicated that they lived with a spouse or partner were asked how many times in the past year their spouse or partner threatened to hit them, or they threatened to hit their spouse or partner.<sup>4</sup> Past year physical violence between parents and their spouses or partners did not differ significantly by whether or not the parent was alcohol-dependent or alcohol-abusing.

**Figure 1. Percentages of Parents Aged 18 or Older Reporting Past Year Household Turbulence, by Past Year Alcohol Dependence or Abuse: 2002**



**End Notes**

- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Respondents are considered to be parents if they indicate that at least one of the members in the household is their son or daughter. This could be a biological, step, adopted, or foster child.
- Respondents were asked if "People in your household often insult or yell at each other" and "People in your household have serious arguments." Response options were (a) strongly agree, (b) somewhat agree, (c) somewhat disagree, and (d) strongly disagree. For the purposes of this report, responses were categorized as agree (responses a and b) and disagree (responses c and d).
- Respondents were asked how many times in the past year their spouse or partner hit or threatened to hit them, and how many times in the past year they had hit or threatened to hit their spouse or partner. Response options for the two questions were (a) 0 times, (b) 1 to 2 times, (c) a few times, or (d) many times. For the purposes of this report, responses were categorized as 0 times and 1 time or more.

**Figure and Table Notes**

Source Table 1: American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Source Table 2 and Figure: SAMHSA 2002 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 data are based on information obtained from 68,126 persons aged 12 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.

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Information and data for this issue 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 on-line: <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>.

Additional tables available upon request.

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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