

unspecified races. These groups are included in the totals in each table.

**Education**—This question was asked of the household respondent and not verified with the sample adult. The question asks for the highest level of school attended or highest degree received. Respondents were shown a flash card to choose an appropriate category. Greater detail is available on the data file; categories were combined due to small sample size in some groups.

**Poverty status**—Percent above and below the official U.S. poverty level was calculated using income and family size reported in the Family questionnaire. Poverty criteria were obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (26).

**Marital status**—Respondents were asked to choose a marital status category and, for the first time beginning in 1997, one of the choices was “living with partner,” which is also termed “cohabiting.” Adults could select the category they felt most appropriate for their marital situation. The major differences in the new NHIS design is that persons who were “living with partner” were considered members of the same family whereas in the pre-1997 NHIS, they were considered separate families.

**Geographic region**—The four major regions of the United States are defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**MSA**—MSA or metropolitan statistical area, a term first used in 1983, was defined by the U. S. Office of Management and Budget and is used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to classify geographic areas (27). The categories shown in this report are: (a) “MSA, central city,” which generally refers to cities with populations of 50,000 or more; (b) “MSA, not central city,” which refers to communities adjacent to the central city of an MSA that have a high degree of economic and social integration with the central city; and (c) “Not MSA,” which refers to more rural areas of the country. The classification of areas in the 1997–98 NHIS is based on data from the 1990 decennial census.

## Alcohol use terms

**Lifetime abstainer**—Has had fewer than 12 drinks in entire lifetime. (Prior to 1997, the NHIS definition of a lifetime abstainer was a person who had fewer than 12 drinks in *any one year*).

**Former infrequent drinker**—Has had 12 drinks or more in lifetime, but never as many as 12 drinks in a single year, and has had no drinks in the past year.

**Former regular drinker**—Has had 12 drinks or more in lifetime, 12 drinks or more in 1 year, but no drinks in the past year.

**Current drinker**—Has had at least 12 drinks in lifetime and at least one drink in the past year. (Prior to 1997, the criterion for current drinker was having had at least 12 drinks *in 1 year* and at least one drink in the past year.)

**Current drinking levels**—Levels were based on self-reports of the average frequency of alcohol consumption during the past year (could be reported in terms of days per week, per month, or per year), and the number of drinks the respondent drank on the days he or she drank. Neither size nor type of beverage was specified. In calculating current drinking levels, the number of days the respondent drank was converted from the time unit initially reported (days per week, per month, or per year) to number of days per year. Then, average number of drinks per week was calculated as follows:

$$\left( \frac{\# \text{ of days per year} \times \# \text{ of drinks per day}}{365 \text{ days}} \right) 7$$

Current drinkers were classified as:

**Infrequent:** At least 12 drinks in lifetime and 1–11 drinks in the past year.

**Light:** At least 12 drinks in the past year and 3 drinks or fewer per week, on average.

**Moderate:** Men—more than 3 drinks up to 14 drinks per week, on average; women—more than 3 drinks up to 7 drinks per week, on average.

**Heavier:** Men—more than 14 drinks per week, on average (more

than two per day); women— more than seven drinks per week, on average (more than one per day).

**Nondrinker**— Person who has not had any drinks in the past year, including former drinkers and lifetime abstainers.

**Five or more drinks in 1 day in the past year**—Current drinkers were asked how many times in the past year they had five or more alcoholic beverages in a single day. Answers to this question were in the time units volunteered by the respondent and could have been reported in terms of days per week, per month, or per year.

## Alcohol questions

The 1997 and 1998 National Health Interview Survey Sample Adult questionnaires contained the five questions on alcohol use shown below. Each question is preceded by its question number, beginning with AHB. AHB is the acronym for Adult Health Behavior, one of the sections of the Sample Adult questionnaire. The complete NHIS Sample Adult questionnaire as well as information about other components of the NHIS are available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>.

AHB.140 In any ONE year, have you had at least 12 drinks of any type of alcoholic beverage?

AHB.150 In your ENTIRE LIFE, have you had at least 12 drinks of any type of alcoholic beverage?

AHB.160 In the PAST YEAR, how often did you drink any type of alcoholic beverage? {Days per week/month/year}

AHB.170 In the PAST YEAR, on those days that you drank alcoholic beverages, on the average, how many drinks did you have?

AHB.180 In the PAST YEAR, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks of any alcoholic beverage?