

The NSDUH Report

December 31, 2004

Driving Under the Influence (DUI) among Young Persons

In Brief

- In 2002 and 2003, 21 percent of persons aged 16 to 20 reported that they had driven in the past year while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs
- Among persons aged 16 to 20, whites and American Indians/Alaska Natives were more likely to report DUI than other racial/ethnic groups
- In 2002 and 2003, approximately 4 percent of persons who reported DUI in the past year had been arrested and booked for DUI in the past year

Motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of death among young persons aged 16 to 20 in 2002.¹ In that year, 6,327 persons aged 16 to 20 were involved in fatal crashes, representing a 10 percent increase since 1999. In addition, 29 percent of drivers aged 15 to 20 who were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2002 had been drinking alcohol.² The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older if they had driven a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs in the past year³ and if they had been arrested for driving under the influence (DUI).⁴ The survey also asks about the use of alcohol and any illicit drugs in the past year and past month. Alcohol measures used in this report include any past month use, binge use, and heavy use. 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 of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past 30 days. Heavy alcohol use is defined as drinking five or

more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days; all heavy alcohol users also are binge alcohol users. NSDUH defines "illicit drugs" to include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, or prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.

This report presents the prevalence of DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs, as well as the prevalence of being arrested for DUI among persons aged 16 to 20.⁵ To improve the reliability of estimates for population subgroups, all estimates presented in this report are annual averages based on combined data from the 2002 and 2003 NSDUH. However, the prevalence of DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs among persons aged 16 to 20 was lower in 2003 (20 percent) than in 2002 (22 percent).

Prevalence of Substance Use and DUI

In 2002 and 2003, an annual average of 44 percent of persons aged 16 to 20 had used alcohol in the past month, 30 percent were binge alcohol users, and 10 percent were heavy alcohol users. Approximately 38 percent of this age group had used an illicit drug in the past year.

In 2002 and 2003, more than 4 million persons (21 percent) aged 16 to 20 reported DUI involving either alcohol or illicit drugs in the past year (Figure 1). In this age group, 17 percent reported past year DUI involving alcohol, 14 percent reported DUI involving illicit drugs, and 8 percent reported DUI involving a combination of alcohol and illicit drugs used together.

Demographic Differences in DUI

Among persons aged 16 to 20, older persons had a higher reported prevalence of DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs than those who were younger (Figure 2). For example, persons aged 20 were nearly 3 times more likely to have driven under the influence than persons aged 16 (28 vs. 10 percent). Among all persons aged 16 to 20, males (24 percent) were more likely to report DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs than females (18 percent). Among racial/ethnic groups, whites (26 percent) and American Indians/Alaska Natives (28 percent) were more likely to report DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs than members of other racial/ethnic groups (Figure 3).

In 2002 and 2003, approximately 25 percent of persons aged 16 to 20 who lived in the Midwest reported DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs in the

Figure 1. Percentages of Persons Aged 16 to 20 Who Reported Driving a Vehicle Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs in the Past Year: 2002 and 2003

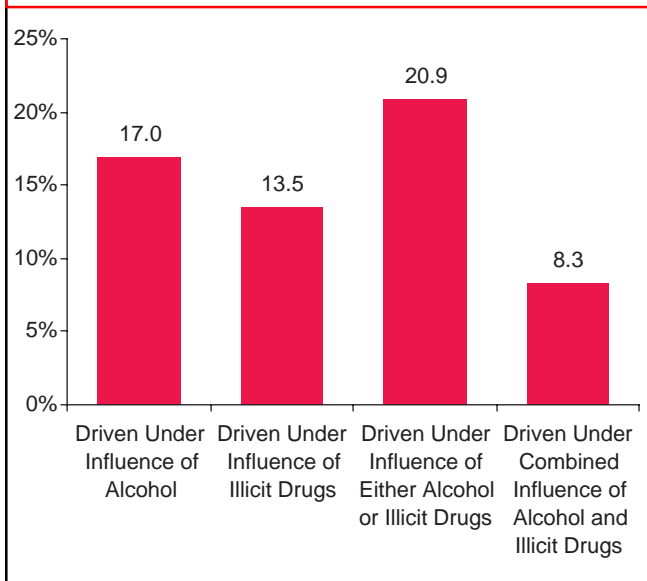
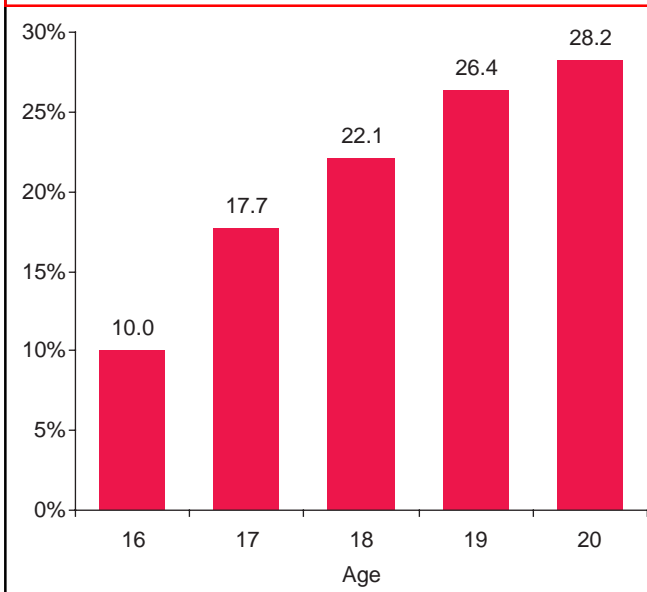
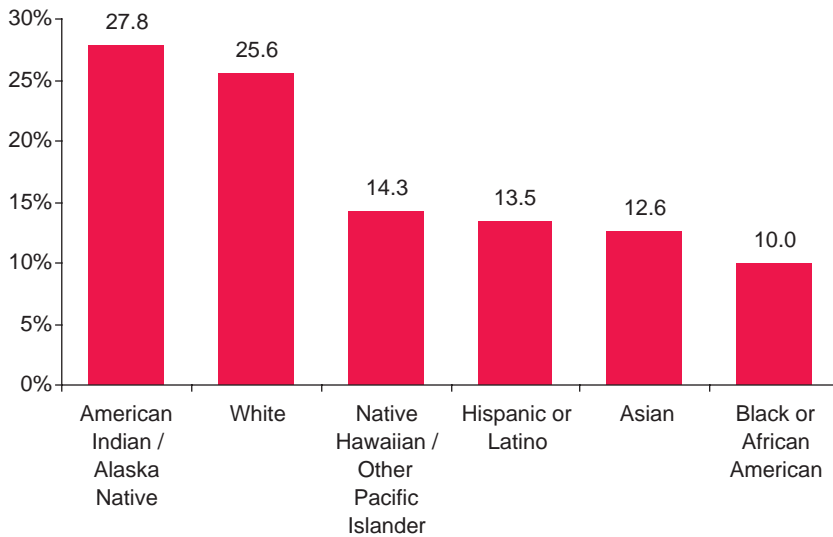


Figure 2. Percentages of Persons Aged 16 to 20 Who Reported Driving a Vehicle Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs in the Past Year, by Age: 2002 and 2003



past year compared with approximately 20 percent in the South and 19 percent of persons in this age group in the Northeast and West.⁶ The prevalence of DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs was highest among persons who lived outside of metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) (25 percent), followed by persons who

Figure 3. Percentages of Persons Aged 16 to 20 Who Reported Driving a Vehicle Under the Influence of Alcohol or Illicit Drugs in the Past Year, by Race/Ethnicity: 2002 and 2003



lived in small MSAs (23 percent) and persons who lived in large MSAs (19 percent).⁷

Prevalence of Being Arrested for DUI among Those Reporting DUI

Among the estimated 4.2 million persons aged 16 to 20 in 2002 and 2003 who reported DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs in the past year, approximately 4 percent (169,000 persons) indicated they had been arrested and booked for DUI involving alcohol or drugs in the past year.⁸ The percentage of this group who reported being arrested for DUI was higher among males than among females (6 vs. 2 percent).

End Notes

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2004, November 30). *WISQARS leading causes of death reports, 1999 - 2002*. Retrieved December 2, 2004, from <http://webapp.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcaus10.html>
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2003, August). *Traffic safety facts 2002: Young drivers*. Retrieved December 2, 2004, from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2002/2002ydrfacts.pdf>
- Respondents were asked, in three different questions, if during the past 12 months they had driven a vehicle while under the influence of (a) alcohol only, (b) illicit drugs only, or (c) a combination of alcohol and illicit drugs used together. Responses to these questions then were recoded to determine the prevalence of DUI involving (a) alcohol, (b) illicit drugs, (c) either alcohol or illicit drugs, or (d) both alcohol and illicit drugs.
- Respondents were asked if during the past 12 months they had been arrested and booked for DUI involving alcohol or illicit drugs.
- Persons aged 15 or younger were not included in these analyses because a substantial portion of persons aged 15 or younger are prohibited from driving by State laws.

- The Midwest has 12 States: IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, and WI. The South has 17 States: AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV. The Northeast has 9 States: CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VT. And the West has 13 States: AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, and WY.
- Large metropolitan areas have a population of 1 million or more. Small metropolitan areas have a population of fewer than 1 million. Non-metropolitan areas are outside metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. See the U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2003, June 12). *About metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas*. Retrieved December 1, 2004, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/aboutmetro.html>
- This excludes an estimated 38,000 persons who reported they had been arrested and booked for DUI in the past year but indicated elsewhere that they had not driven under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the past year.

Figure Note

Source: SAMHSA 2002 and 2003 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, including 16,723 persons aged 16 to 20. The 2003 data are based on information obtained from 67,784 persons aged 12 or older, including 16,167 persons aged 16 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.

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Information and data for this issue are based on the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2003). *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 03-3836,

NSDUH Series H-22). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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>

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.

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