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Alcohol Dependence or Abuse: 2002, 2003, and 2004

In Brief

- Among persons aged 12 or older, 7.6 percent (18.2 million) met the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year
- Alcohol abuse or dependence was more prevalent among adults aged 18 or older who were never married (16.0 percent) than adults who were divorced or separated (10.0 percent), married (4.6 percent), and widowed (1.3 percent)
- Persons aged 12 or older who were dependent on or abused alcohol in the past year were more likely to have been treated in an emergency room at least once in the past year than those who did not meet alcohol dependence or abuse criteria (34.2 vs. 27.9 percent)

Alcohol use can result in long- and short-term health consequences, including liver disease, cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease, psychological disorders, and injury from alcohol-related accidents.¹⁻³ The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks persons aged 12 or older questions to assess their use of alcohol and symptoms of alcohol dependence or abuse during the past year. NSDUH defines alcohol dependence or abuse using criteria specified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV),⁴ including 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.

This report examines alcohol dependence or abuse among persons aged 12 or older. All findings presented in this report are annual averages based on combined 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUH data.

Figure 1. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 or Older Who Met the Criteria for Alcohol Dependence or Abuse in the Past Year, by Age Group: 2002, 2003, and 2004

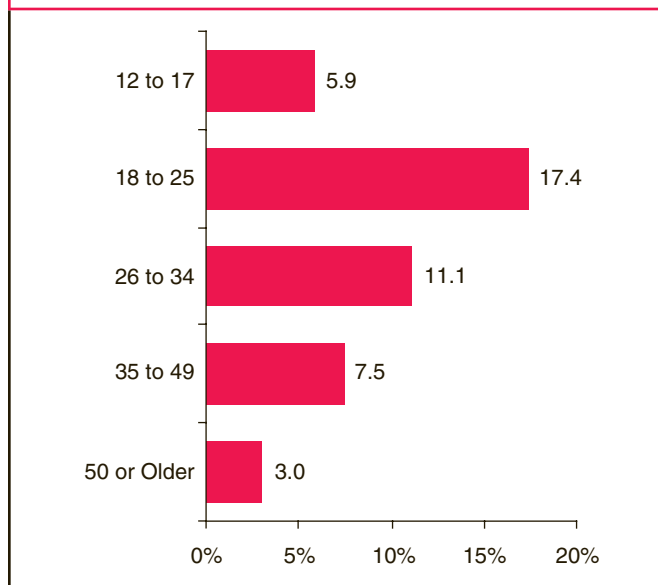
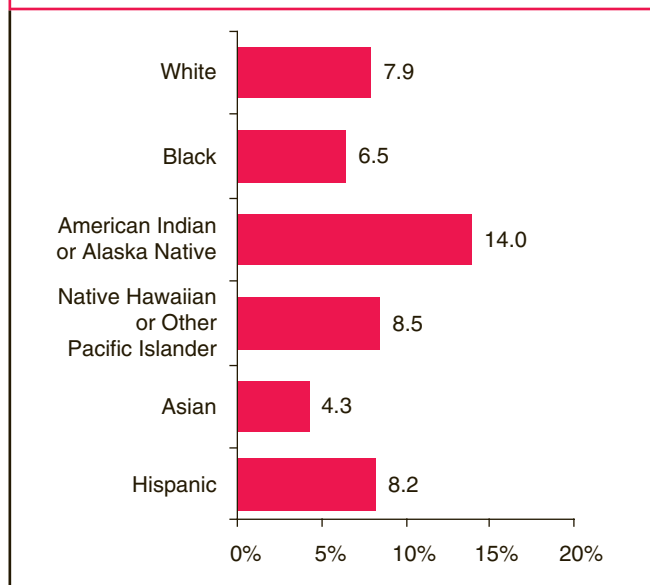


Figure 2. Percentages of Persons Aged 12 or Older Who Met the Criteria for Alcohol Dependence or Abuse in the Past Year, by Race and Ethnicity: 2002, 2003, and 2004



Alcohol Dependence or Abuse

In 2002–2004, 7.6 percent of persons aged 12 or older (18.2 million) met the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year. Adults aged 18 to 25 (17.4 percent) were more likely to have been dependent on or abused alcohol during the past year than adults aged 26 to 34 (11.1 percent), 35 to 49 (7.5 percent), and 50 or older (3.0 percent) (Figure 1).

Among persons aged 12 or older, males were more likely than females to have met the criteria for past year alcohol dependence or abuse (10.6 vs. 4.9 percent). Past year alcohol dependence or abuse was more likely among American Indian or Alaska Natives (14.0 percent) than among whites (7.9 per-

cent), Hispanics (8.2 percent), blacks (6.5 percent), and Asians (4.3 percent) (Figure 2).

Alcohol Dependence or Abuse, by Family Characteristics

Combined data from 2002, 2003, and 2004 indicated that past year alcohol dependence or abuse was more prevalent among persons aged 12 or older with family incomes of less than 125 percent of the Federal poverty threshold (9.4 percent) than those with family incomes from 125 to 199 percent (7.7 percent), from 200 to 399 percent (7.2 percent), and 400 percent or more (7.2 percent) of the Federal poverty threshold.⁵

Among adults aged 18 or older, 16.0 percent of those who were never married met

the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year compared with 10.0 percent of those who were divorced or separated, 4.6 percent of those who were married, and 1.3 percent who were widowed. This pattern was found for both males and females (Table 1). Approximately one fifth of males who were never married (20.2 percent) were dependent on or abused alcohol in the past year.

Adults living with one or more children under age 18 were less likely to have met the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year than adults living without any children under age 18 (6.5 vs. 8.5 percent).⁶ This was true for males and females and for each of the three youngest age groups. However, adults

Table 1. Percentages of Adults Aged 18 or Older Who Met the Criteria for Alcohol Dependence or Abuse in the Past Year, by Family Characteristics: 2002, 2003, and 2004

Family Characteristic	Gender		Age			
	Male	Female	18 to 25	26 to 34	35 to 49	50 or Older
<i>Marital Status</i>						
Married	6.7	2.5	7.5	6.9	5.6	2.6
Widowed	3.1	0.9	*	*	5.7	0.9
Divorced or Separated	15.3	6.3	17.2	15.4	12.2	5.7
Never Married	20.2	11.0	19.3	16.6	10.7	5.2
<i>Living with Children</i>						
Living with 1 or More Children under Age 18	9.2	4.3	9.1	7.2	5.9	5.2
Not Living with Any Children under Age 18	12.1	5.0	19.4	16.1	9.9	2.8

who did not meet the criteria to report excellent or very good health (Table 2). Individuals who were dependent on or abused alcohol in the past year were more likely to have been treated in an emergency room at least once in the past year than those who did not meet alcohol dependence or abuse criteria (34.2 vs. 27.9 percent). However, persons who were dependent on or abused alcohol in the past year were less likely to have spent at least 1 night in the past year as an inpatient in a hospital than those who did not meet the criteria for dependence or abuse (8.9 vs. 10.1 percent).

Table 2. Perceived Health Status, Emergency Room Treatment, and Inpatient Hospital Treatment in the Past Year among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Past Year Alcohol Dependence or Abuse: Percentages, 2002, 2003, and 2004

	Met Criteria for Alcohol Dependence or Abuse in Past Year	Did Not Meet Criteria for Alcohol Dependence or Abuse in Past Year
Excellent or Very Good Perceived Health	61.8	62.6
Treated in Emergency Room at Least Once in Past Year	34.2	27.9
Spent at Least One Night in Hospital as Inpatient in Past Year	8.9	10.1

aged 50 or older with at least one child under the age of 18 were more likely to meet the criteria for past year alcohol dependence or abuse than adults aged 50 or older without children under age 18 (5.2 vs. 2.8 percent).

Alcohol Dependence or Abuse, by Overall Health and Health Care

Persons aged 12 or older who met the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year were equally likely as those

End Notes

- ¹ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2000, June). *10th special report to the U.S. Congress on alcohol and health* (NIH Publication No. 00-1583). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health.
- ² Rehm, J., Gmel, G., Sempos, C. T., & Trevisan, M. (2003). Alcohol-related morbidity and mortality. *Alcohol Research & Health*, 27(1), 39–51.
- ³ World Health Organization. (2004). *Global status report on alcohol 2004* (WM 274 [NLM Classification]). Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, Department of Mental Health and Substance Use.
- ⁴ American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- ⁵ The poverty threshold variable is based on the family income of the respondent expressed as a percentage of the Federal poverty threshold as published annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. It takes into account family size and the number of children in the household.
- ⁶ "Living with children" refers to cohabiting with one or more biological, step, adoptive, or foster children under the age of 18. Those with unknown child type or child age were excluded from the analysis of this variable.

Figure and Table Notes

Source: SAMHSA, 2002, 2003, and 2004 NSDUHs.

* Data suppressed because of small sample size.

Research findings from the SAMHSA 2002, 2003, and 2004 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

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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). Prior to 2002, this survey was called the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA). The 2002, 2003, and 2004 data are based on information obtained from 203,670 persons aged 12 or older, including 135,059 persons aged 18 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.

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 NSDUH used in compiling data for this issue is available in the following publications:

Office of Applied Studies. (2005). *Results from the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4062, NSDUH Series H-28). 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.

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.

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

Because of improvements and modifications to the 2002 NSDUH, estimates from the 2002, 2003, and 2004 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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