

The NSDUH Report

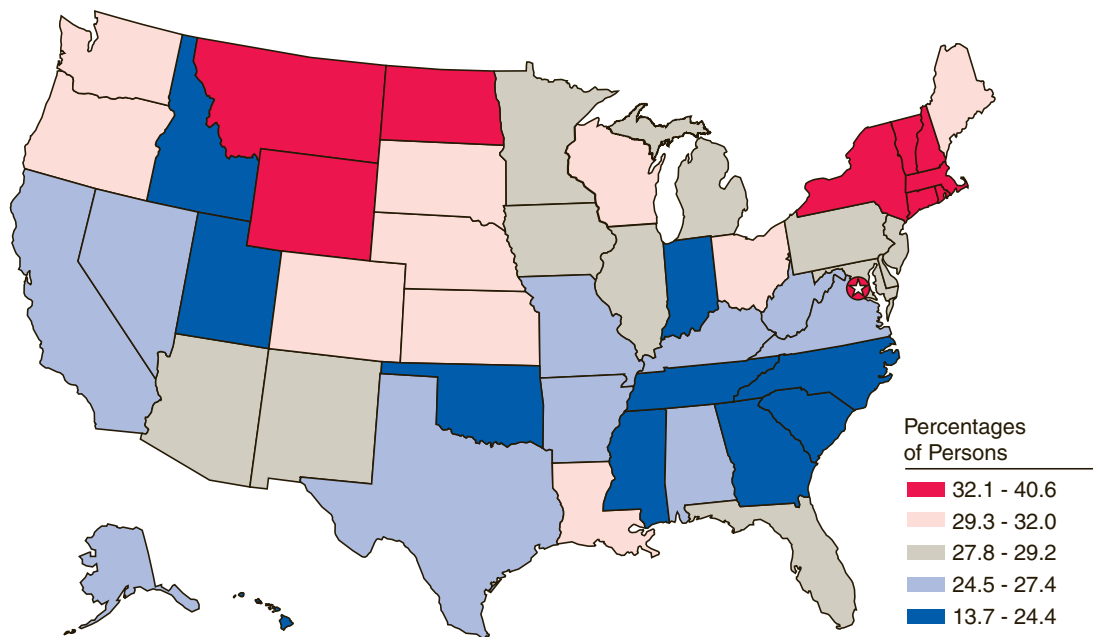
April 1, 2010

State Estimates of Underage Alcohol Use and Self-Purchase of Alcohol

In Brief

- Combined 2006 to 2008 data indicate that 27.6 percent of persons aged 12 to 20 drank alcohol in the past month
- Rates of underage past month alcohol use were among the lowest in Utah (13.7 percent) and among the highest in North Dakota (40.6 percent) and Vermont (40.4 percent)
- Approximately 8.6 percent of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 purchased their own alcohol the last time they drank
- The percentages of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 who bought their own alcohol were among the lowest in Alaska (3.1 percent) and New Mexico (3.7 percent) and among the highest in Louisiana and the District of Columbia (both at 18.8 percent)

Alcohol use constitutes one of the most serious public health issues for young people in the United States, creating negative health, social, and economic consequences for adolescents, their families, communities, and the Nation as a whole.¹ Reducing access to alcohol is a critical element in the prevention of underage alcohol consumption and is particularly important to the States, which have had authority for alcohol control since 1933. All 50 States and the District of Columbia currently prohibit possession of alcoholic beverages by persons younger than 21, and most prohibit underage purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages.² Despite the efforts to limit access, underage drinkers still are able to obtain alcohol, and many are able to purchase alcohol themselves.³ Information about underage alcohol use at the State level can provide States with vital data to inform enforcement, educational, and prevention efforts.

Figure 1. Percentages of Past Month Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 12 to 20, by State: 2006 to 2008

Source: 2006 to 2008 SAMHSA National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs).

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) asks respondents to report on their alcohol use in the past 30 days. Past month alcohol users are asked if they paid for the last alcoholic beverage that they drank; if they paid for it, they were asked if they purchased the alcohol beverage themselves or if they gave someone else the money to buy it for them.

This issue of *The NSDUH Report* presents estimates of past month alcohol use among persons aged 12 to 20 and estimates of self-purchase of alcohol among past month drinkers by State (including the District of Columbia).⁴ All findings are annual averages based on combined 2006 to 2008 NSDUH data. State estimates are rank ordered from highest to lowest and divided into quintiles (fifths). States with the highest estimates fall into the top quintile and are shown in red; States with the lowest estimates are in the bottom quintile and are shown in blue.⁵

State Estimates of Underage Past Month Alcohol Use

More than one quarter (27.6 percent) of persons aged 12 to 20 drank alcohol in the past month. Rates of past month alcohol use were among the lowest in Utah (13.7 percent) and among the highest in North Dakota (40.6 percent) and Vermont (40.4

percent) (Figure 1). Of the 10 States with the highest rates of past month alcohol use, 6 were in the Northeast (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont). Of the 10 States with the lowest rates of past month alcohol use, 6 were in the South (Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee).

State Estimates of Underage Past Month Drinkers Who Purchased the Last Alcohol They Drank

Approximately 8.6 percent of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 purchased their own alcohol the last time they drank. The rates of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 buying their own alcohol were among the lowest in Alaska (3.1 percent) and New Mexico (3.7 percent) and among the highest in Louisiana and the District of Columbia (both at 18.8 percent) (Figure 2). Six of the States in the top quintile were in the South (Alabama, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, South Carolina, and the District of Columbia). Five of the States in the bottom quintile were in the West (Alaska, Hawaii, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington), and four were in the Midwest (Indiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

For change of address, corrections, or to be removed from this list, please e-mail: shortreports@samhsa.hhs.gov.

Findings from the SAMHSA 2006 to 2008 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs)

State Estimates of Underage Alcohol Use and Self-Purchase of Alcohol

- Combined 2006 to 2008 data indicate that 27.6 percent of persons aged 12 to 20 drank alcohol in the past month
- Rates of underage past month alcohol use were among the lowest in Utah (13.7 percent) and among the highest in North Dakota (40.6 percent) and Vermont (40.4 percent)
- Approximately 8.6 percent of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 purchased their own alcohol the last time they drank
- The percentages of past month drinkers aged 12 to 20 who bought their own alcohol were among the lowest in Alaska (3.1 percent) and New Mexico (3.7 percent) and among the highest in Louisiana and the District of Columbia (both at 18.8 percent)

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 to 2008 data used in this report are based on information obtained from 94,176 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. (2009). *Results from the 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National findings* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 09-4434, NSDUH Series H-36). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Also available online: <http://oas.samhsa.gov>.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
www.samhsa.gov