

Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking

Health Risks of Excessive Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol use among adults in the United States is a topic of considerable public health importance.¹ The harm associated with the consumption of large amounts of alcohol has been well documented. However, at the same time, there are some reports that suggest that the intake of small or moderate amounts of alcohol may be beneficial to health.² Problem drinking causes medical damage including pancreatitis, nutritional deficiencies, malignancies, fetal alcohol syndrome, and cirrhosis.^{3,4} Prenatal exposure to alcohol is one of the leading preventable causes of birth defects, mental retardation, and neuro-developmental disorders in the United States.⁵

National and State Prevalence

The National and State BRFSS item concerning amount and frequency of alcohol consumption in the past month is structured and reported differently from the similar item in the Nashville Community Health Behavior Survey, so the data cannot be compared.

The BRFSS does report binge drinking (having five or more drinks on one occasion) in the same manner as the Nashville Community Health Behavior Survey. Twenty-five percent of the respondents from Tennessee reported binge drinking at least once during the past month. Males in Tennessee tended to binge drink more than females; 34.2% of males and 11.1% of females reported having five or more drinks on one occasion in the past month. Nationwide, 27.8% of respondents admitted binge drinking at least one time during the past month in 2001. By gender, 36.5% of males and 15.5% of females reported binge drinking at least once during the past month in 2001.⁶

Healthy People 2010

There are no Healthy People 2010 objectives specifying changes in drinking behavior.

Description of Measures

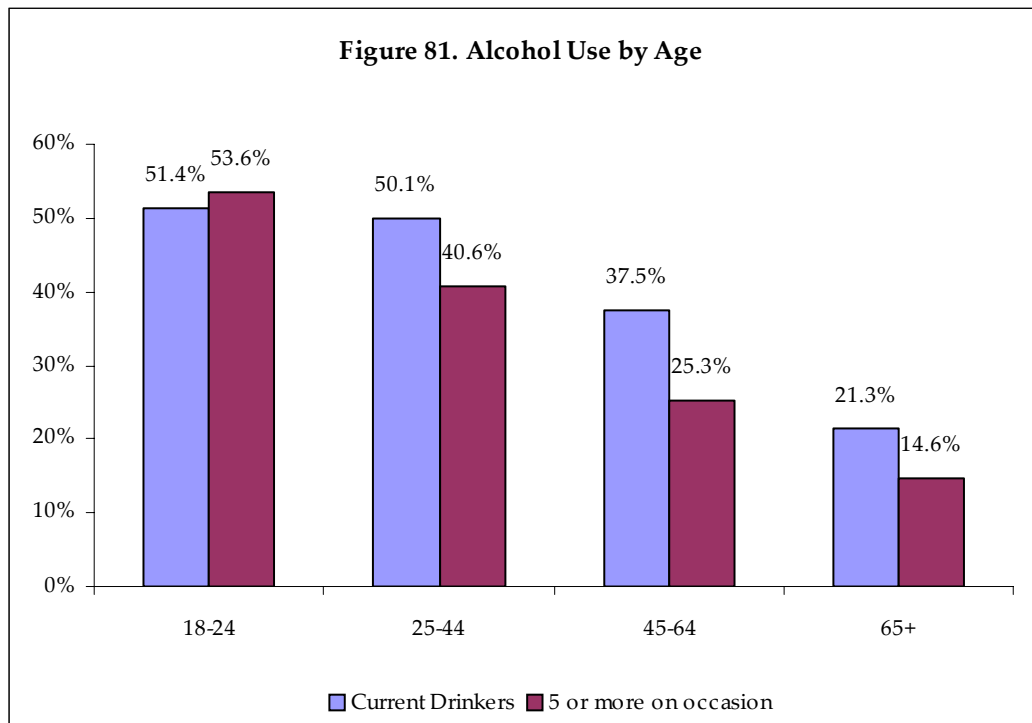
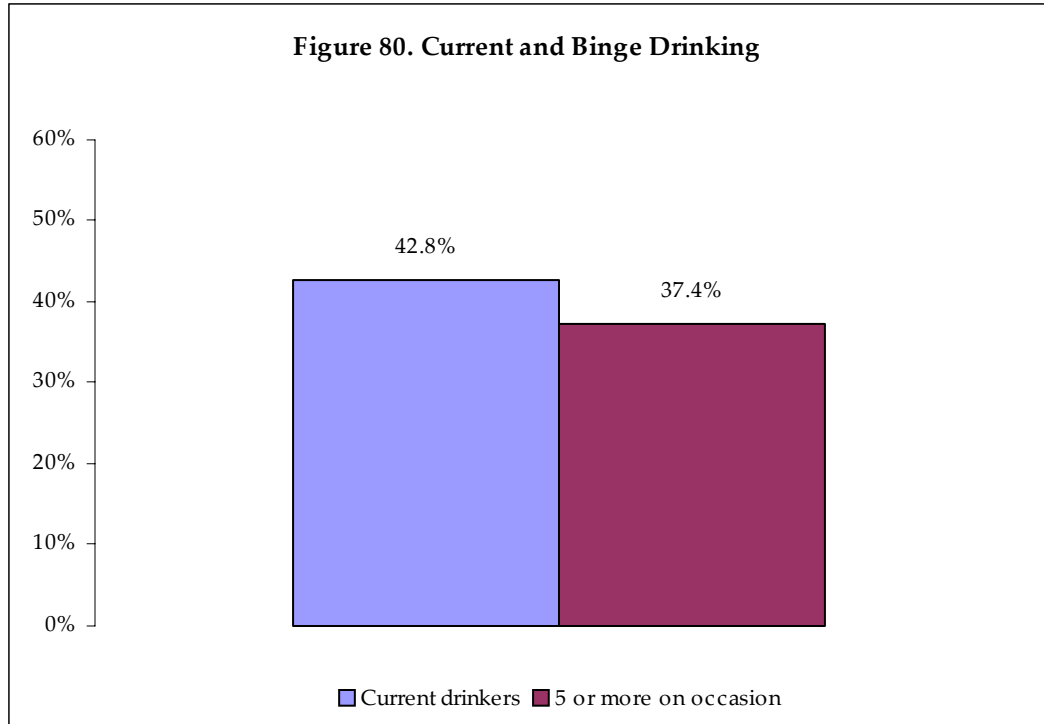
The questionnaire item measuring current drinking was: "A drink is 1 can or bottle of beer, 1 glass of wine, 1 can or bottle of wine cooler, 1 cocktail, or 1 shot of liquor. During the past month, how many alcoholic drinks did you have in an average week?" For analysis, respondents were divided into two categories – those who reported one or more drinks in an average week, and those who reported none.

Respondents who had one or more drinks in an average week were asked the item measuring binge drinking: "Considering all types of alcoholic beverages, how many times during the past month did you have five or more drinks on an occasion?" As with the previous item, this was treated as a dichotomous variable, dividing responses into two categories, those who reported binge drinking behavior and those who did not.

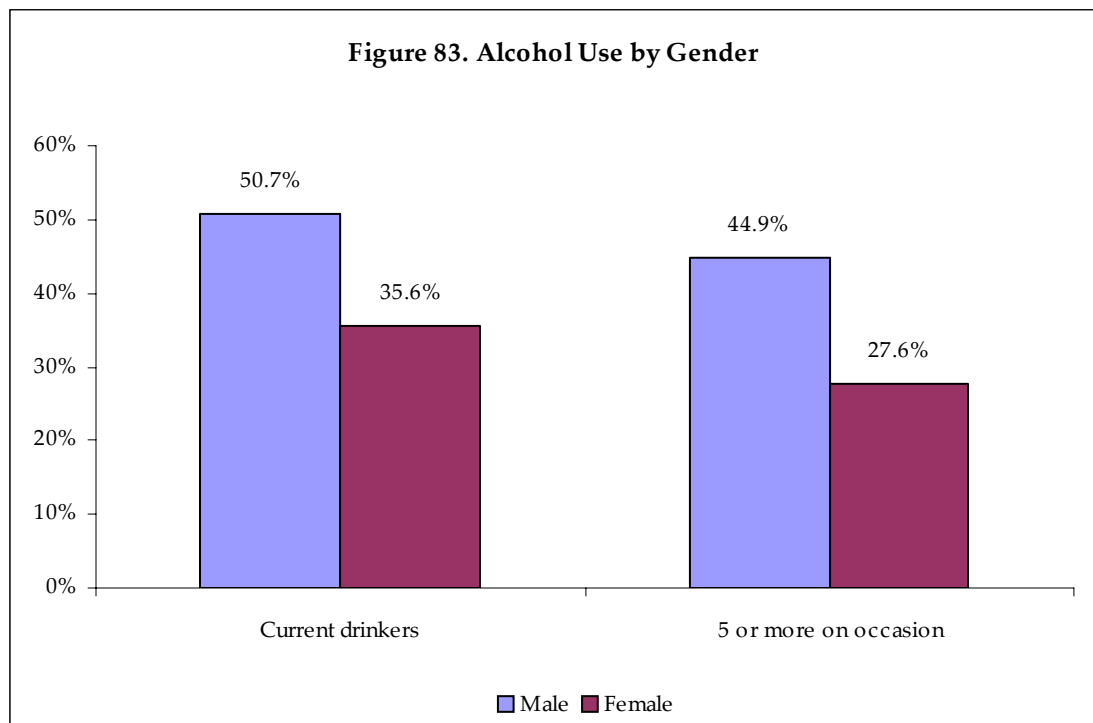
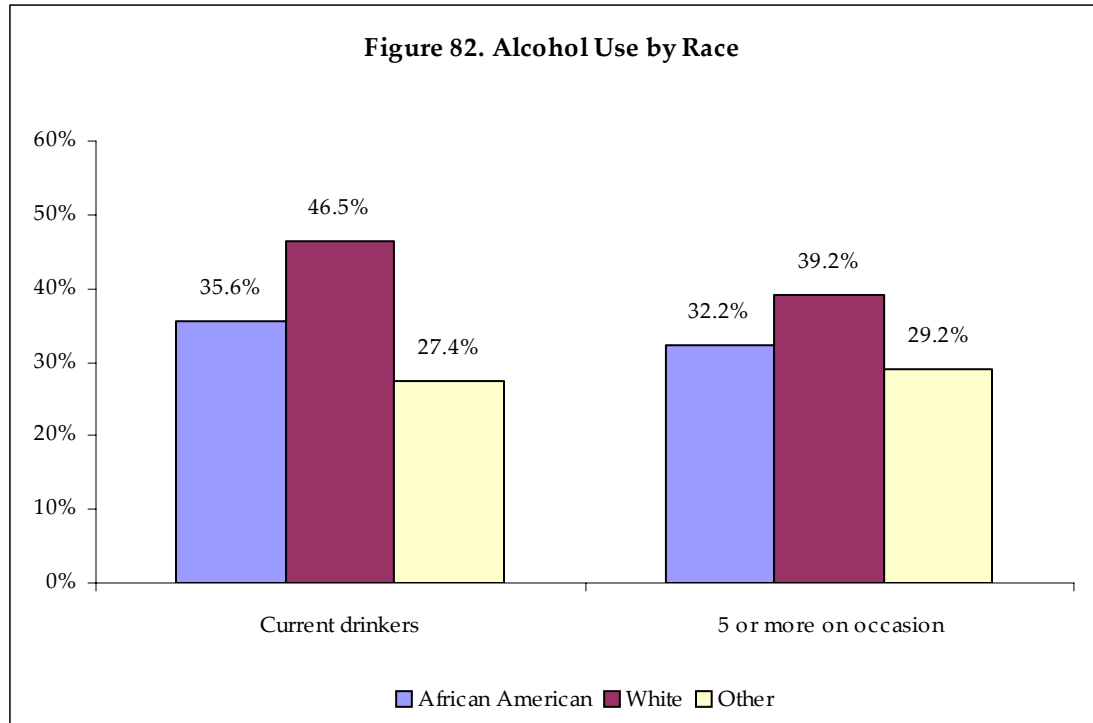
Results

- Overall, 42.8% (95% confidence interval 41.7 – 43.9) reported having a drink in an average week during the past month (were current drinkers).

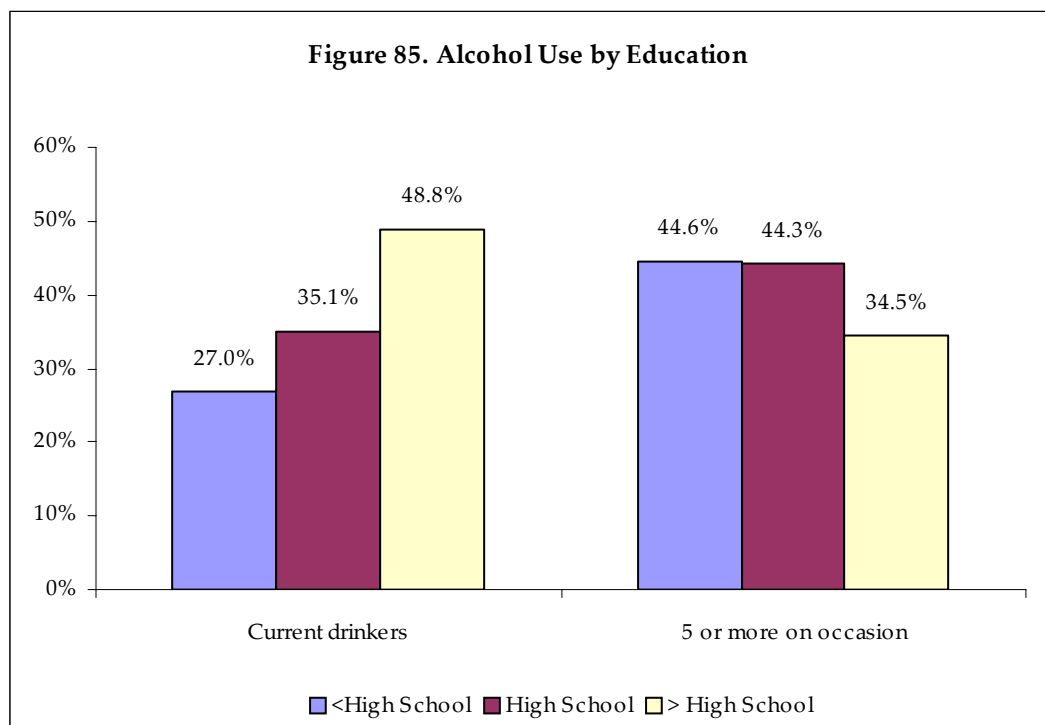
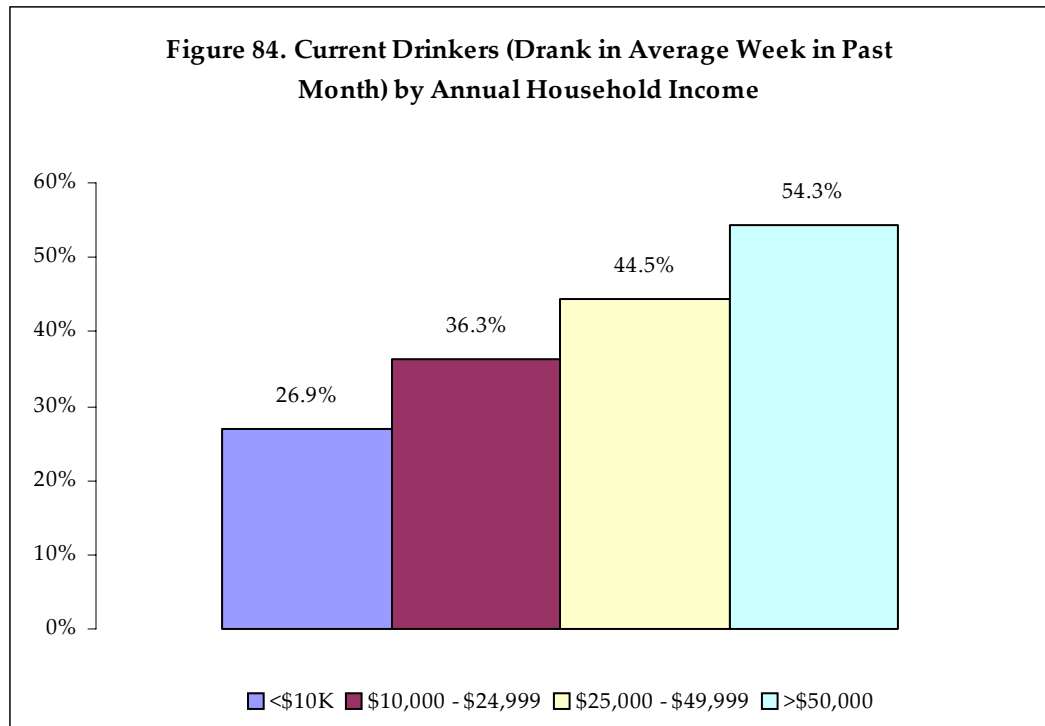
- Of those who reported current drinking in the first question, 37.4% (95% confidence interval 35.2 – 38.7) reported binge drinking (had 5 or more drinks on one occasion) in the past month. (Figure 80)
- Younger age was associated with both current drinking and risk of binge drinking. (Figure 81)



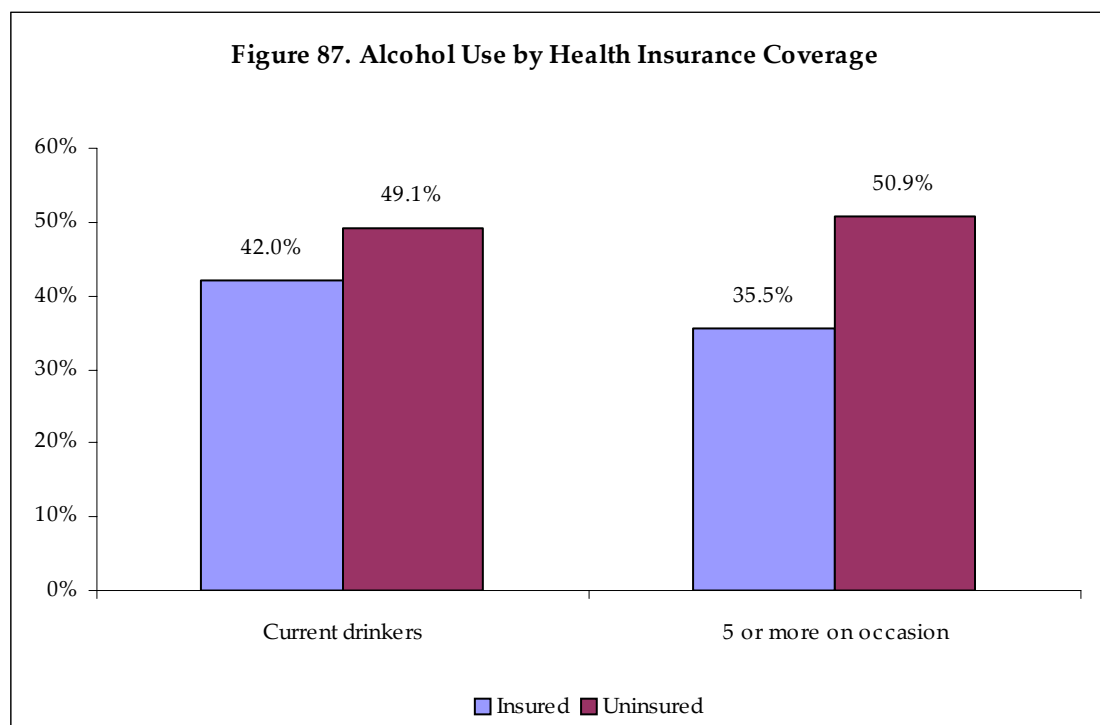
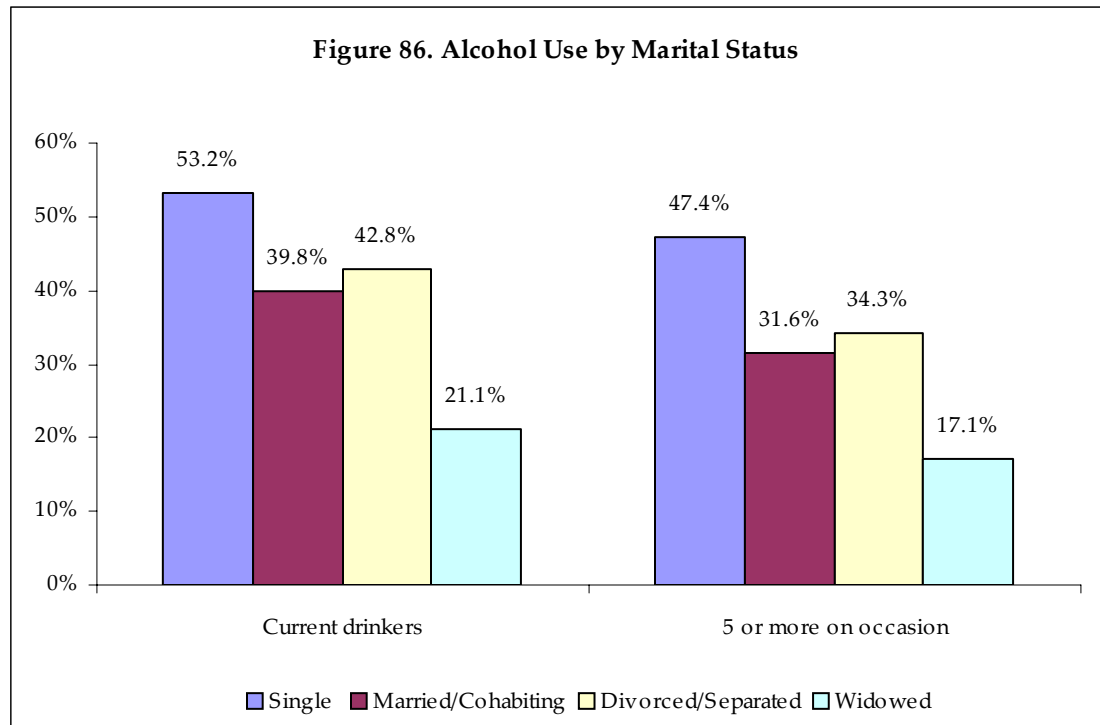
- Whites were more likely than African Americans or Other races to be current drinkers and to be binge drinkers. (Figure 82)
- Men were more likely than women to be current drinkers and to be binge drinkers. (Figure 83)



- Higher income was associated with higher percentages of current drinkers. There was no substantial difference between income groups in binge drinking. (Figure 84)
- Respondents with education past high school were more likely to be current drinkers but less likely to binge. (Figure 85)



- Never-married singles were more likely to be current drinkers than married, cohabiting, divorced, or separated persons. Widowed persons were least likely to report being current drinkers. Of current drinkers, single persons were most likely, and widowed persons least likely, to have five or more drinks on one occasion. (Figure 86)
- Persons without health insurance coverage were more likely to be current drinkers and to be binge drinkers. (Figure 87)



References

1. Schoenborn, C.A. & Adams, P.F. (2002). Alcohol Use Among Adults: United States, 1997-1998. *Advance Data – From Vital and Health Statistics*. 324: 1-20.
2. Moore R.D. & Pearson T.A. (1986). Moderate Alcohol Consumption and Coronary Artery Disease. A Review. *Medicine*. 65(4): 242-267.
3. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Statistics of the United States: Volume II*. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, (Vol I and Vol II for each year, covering the years 1945-1980).
4. CDC (1986). "Trends in mortality from Cirrhosis and Alcoholism—United States, 1945-1983). *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 35(45): 703-5.
5. CDC (2002). "Alcohol use among women of childbearing age—United States, 1991-1999). *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 50(49): 273-6.
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Prevalence Data [Web page]. June 12, 2003. Available at: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp>. Accessed June 19, 2003.

**Table 8. Alcohol Use. Results of the 2001 Community Health Behavior Survey in Davidson County, Tennessee
Weighted by Council District, Age, Sex, and Race (95% Confidence Interval)**

<i>Demographics</i>	<u>Current Drinking (Had a Drink in Average Week in Past Month)</u>	<u>Binge Drink in Past Month (Had Five or More Drinks on One Occasion)</u>
<u>Total</u>	42.8% (41.7 - 43.9)	37.4% (35.2-38.7)
<u>Age</u>		
18-24	51.4% (47.5 - 55.3)	53.6% (48.5-59.5)
25-44	50.1% (48.3 - 51.8)	40.6% (38.6-43.4)
45-64	37.5% (35.4 - 39.6)	25.3% (21.9-28.1)
65 and older	21.3% (19.1 - 23.6)	14.6% (10.2-19.8)
<u>Race</u>		
African American	35.6% (33.3 - 37.9)	32.2% (28.3-36.1)
White	46.5% (45.1 - 47.8)	39.2% (37.2-41.2)
Other	27.4% (21.4 - 33.4)	29.2% (17.5-40.9)
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	50.7% (48.7 - 52.6)	44.9% (42.2-47.6)
Female	35.6% (34.2 - 37.0)	27.6% (25.4-30.8)
<u>Income</u>		
<\$10,000	26.9% (21.7 - 32.0)	38.9% (27.2-50.7)
\$10,000-\$24,999	36.3% (34.1 - 38.5)	41.0% (36.9-45.1)
\$25,000-\$49,999	44.5% (42.5 - 46.4)	39.8% (36.8-42.7)
\$50,000 or more	54.3% (51.9 - 56.7)	34.8% (31.7-37.9)
<u>Education</u>		
< High School	27.0% (24.0 - 29.9)	44.6% (37.5-51.6)
High School	35.1% (33.0- 37.2)	44.3% (40.4-48.3)
> High School	48.8% (47.3 - 50.3)	34.5% (32.5-36.6)
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Single	53.2% (51.4 - 55.0)	47.4% (44.3-50.5)
Married/Cohabiting	39.8% (37.2 - 42.4)	31.6% (28.9-34.3)
Divorced/Separated	42.8% (40.6 - 45.0)	34.3% (30.3-38.3)
Widowed	21.1% (18.3 - 23.8)	17.1% (10.8-23.4)
<u>Insurance Coverage</u>		
Insured	42.0% (40.8 - 43.2)	35.5% (33.7-37.4)
Uninsured	49.1% (46.3 - 51.8)	50.9% (45.4-56.4)