

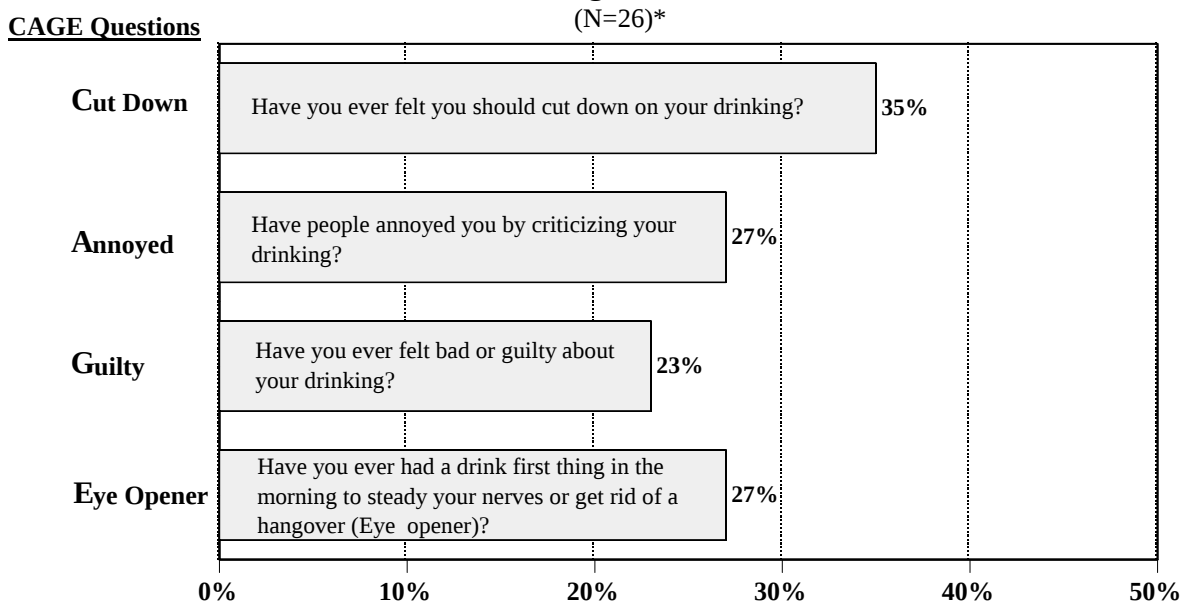
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Widely Used Alcohol Screening Instruments Confusing to Deaf Persons

Deaf persons have difficulty understanding questions on traditional alcohol screening instruments, according to a recent Texas study. Deaf persons recruited from San Antonio and Austin were asked to read the CAGE and the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), two instruments widely used to screen for alcohol problems. Deaf individuals reported difficulty understanding not only individual words and phrases in both instruments, but also entire questions—even after being shown corresponding American Sign Language (ASL) signs for words or phrases within the question. This difficulty occurred, in part, because of reading-level limitations and because certain phrases or words do not exist in ASL. For example, more than one-third did not understand the first CAGE question, “Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?” Similar results were found for the AUDIT instrument (data not shown). The authors suggest that a “new alcohol and other drug screening tool should be created for Deaf populations, taking into account linguistic and cultural considerations” (p. 77).

Percentage of Deaf Participants Who Reported They Did Not Understand CAGE Questions, Even When Given Signs for Words or Phrases



*Participants were recruited using internet announcements, flyers, word of mouth, and referrals from agencies that serve the Deaf. It was difficult to gather a large Deaf sample, because they are 1) a relatively small percent of the population and 2) are reluctant to discuss alcohol and other drug issues with outsiders. *Editor's Note: While we would not normally highlight a study with such a small sample size, we felt that the unique subject matter of this research outweighed the limitations of the small sample size.*

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Alexander T, DiNitto D, Tidblom I. “Screening for Alcohol and Other Drug Use Problems Among the Deaf,” *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* 23(1):63-78, 2005. For more information, contact Tara Alexander at alext@lake.ollusa.edu

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