

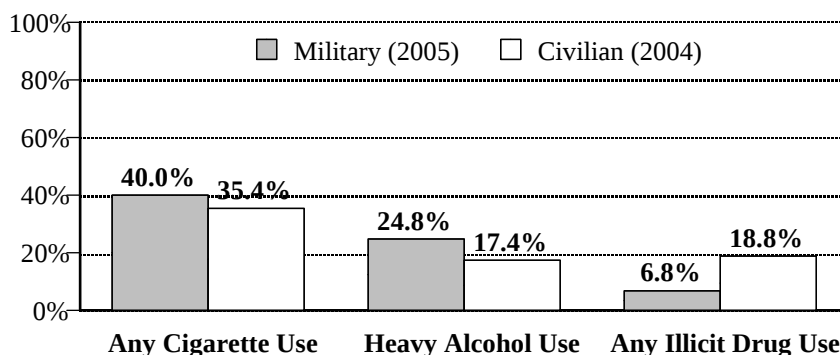
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Young Adults in the Military Report Lower Rates of Illicit Drug Use Than Civilians; Higher Rates of Cigarette and Heavy Alcohol Use

Young adults in the military report substantially different patterns of substance use than their civilian counterparts, according to the most recent data from the Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty Military Personnel. One-fourth of military young adults reported heavy alcohol use,* compared to 17.4% of civilians. And 40% of military personnel reported smoking cigarettes in the past month, compared to 35.4% of civilians. In contrast, the percentage of military personnel ages 18 to 25 reporting any illicit drug use** in the past 30 days was less than one-half of that of civilians (6.8% vs. 18.8%), suggesting that the “military environment discourages illicit drug use quite successfully” (p. 111). It is also possible, however, that military personnel are less likely to report illegal drug use in a survey.

Percentage of Military Personnel and Civilian Young Adults (Ages 18 to 25) Reporting Past Month Cigarette, Heavy Alcohol,* and Illicit Drug Use**



All differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

NOTES: Military data are from the 2005 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty Military Personnel. Civilian data are from the 2004 National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health (the most recent data available at the time) and were standardized to the military data by sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, and marital status.

*Heavy alcohol use: having five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once a week in the past 30 days.

**Illicit drug use: nonmedical use of marijuana/hashish, cocaine, hallucinogens/PCP/LSD, amphetamines/stimulants, tranquilizers or other depressants, barbiturates/sedatives, heroin or other opiates, analgesics or other narcotics, inhalants, anabolic steroids, and sexual enhancers.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Department of Defense (DoD), *2005 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty Military Personnel*, 2006. Available online at http://www.ha.osd.mil/special_reports/2005_Health_Behaviors_Survey_1-07.pdf.

•• 301-405-9770 (voice) •• 301-403-8342 (fax) •• CESAR@cesar.umd.edu •• www.cesar.umd.edu ••
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