

Prioritizing the lived experience of young adults with mental health conditions in mental health services research

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Acknowledgements

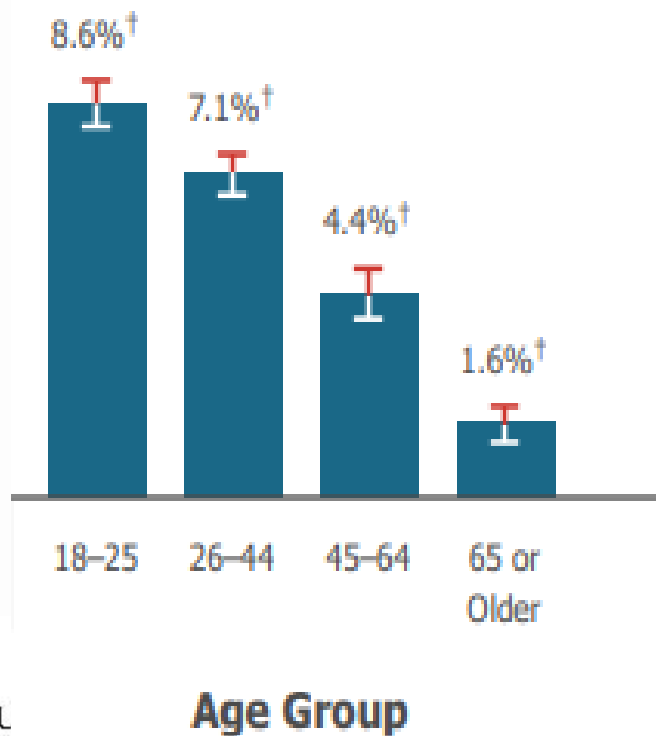
The Learning & Working Center at Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research is a national effort that aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives. We are located at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, Department of Psychiatry, Implementation Science and Practice Advances Research Center.

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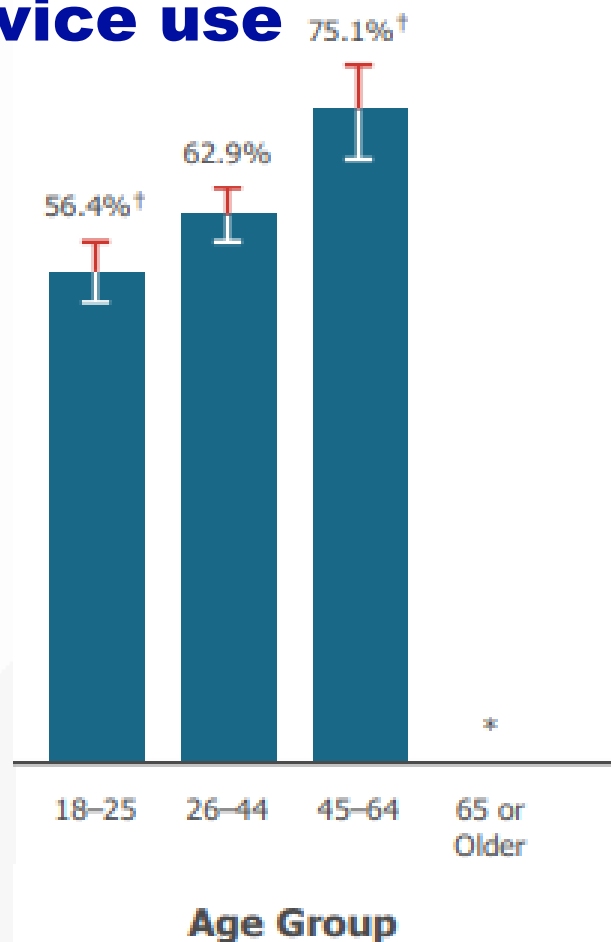


Young adults with mental illness

Highest rates of serious mental illness compared to other ages...



Lowest rates of mental health service use



A crisis brewing...

Rates of serious mental illness among 18-25-year-olds almost doubled between 2008 and 2019

Similar pattern for serious thoughts of suicide

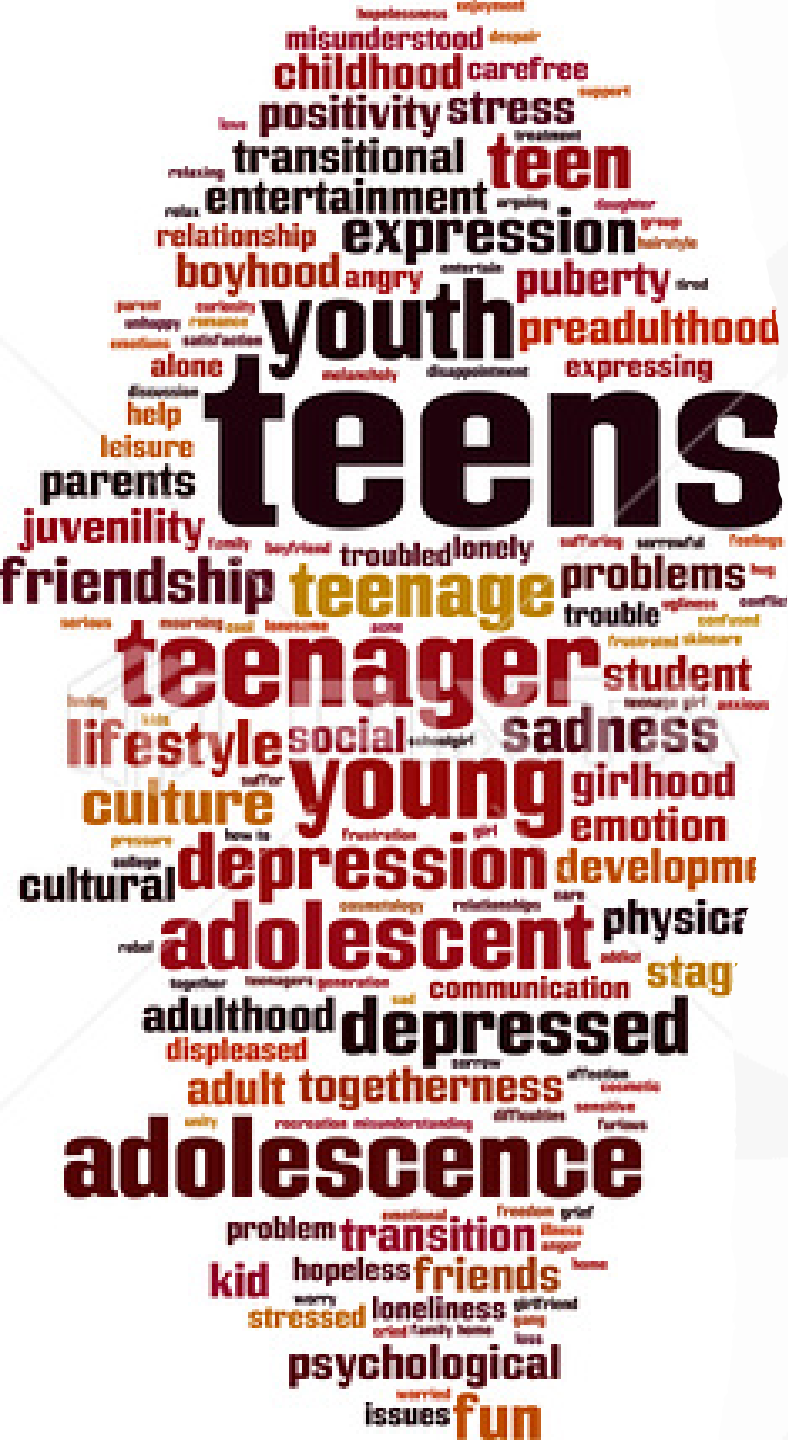


My research....

- Utilizes sociological perspectives to emphasize the social contexts, causes, and consequences of mental health and illness in young adulthood
- Prioritizes participatory approaches in partnership with young adults with lived experience of mental health challenges (i.e., the lived experts)
- Includes qualitative and quantitative exploratory research that centers and elevates the lived experiences of young adults
- Creates new knowledge and understanding about the needs and experiences of young adults with serious mental health conditions that can be applied to the development, testing, and implementation of age-appropriate and culturally appealing evidence-based and promising practices that improve outcomes among young adults with mental health challenges

Young Adulthood

- Broadly ages 14-30, most often 16-25
- Developmental period with rapid cognitive, social, and moral development
- Increased peer influence and identity exploration
- Elongated exploration between late adolescence and milestones of adulthood
- The “milestones” of adulthood are being pushed later and later
 - Marriage
 - Childbirth
 - Independent living

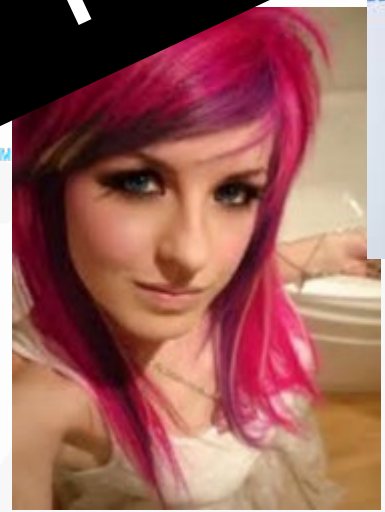




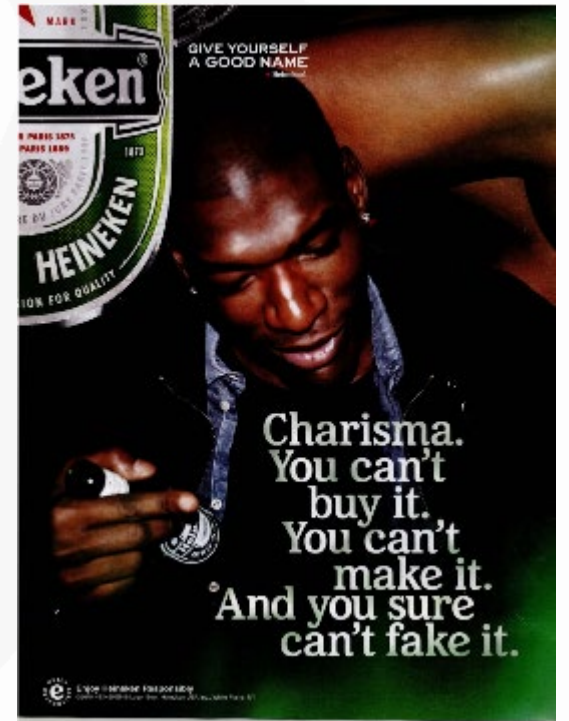
Youth Culture



twitter™



Selfie

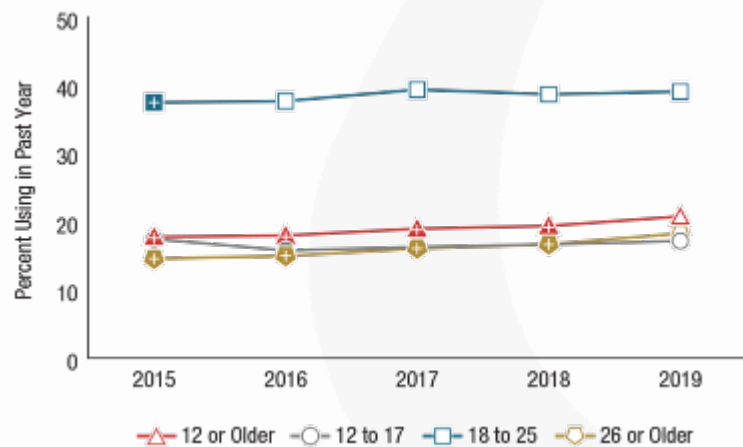


Youth Culture

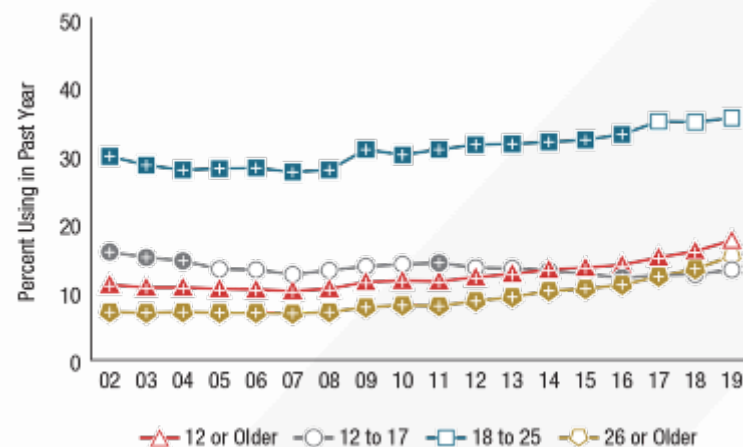


NSDUH: among people aged 12 or older

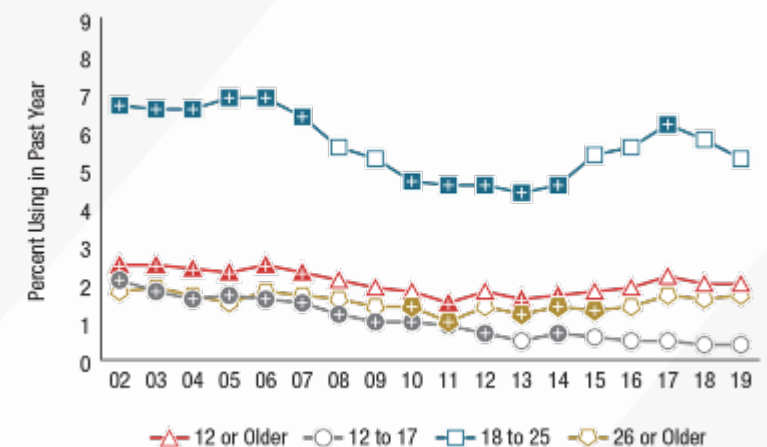
Past Year Illicit Drug Use: 2015-2019



Past Year Marijuana Use: 2002-2019

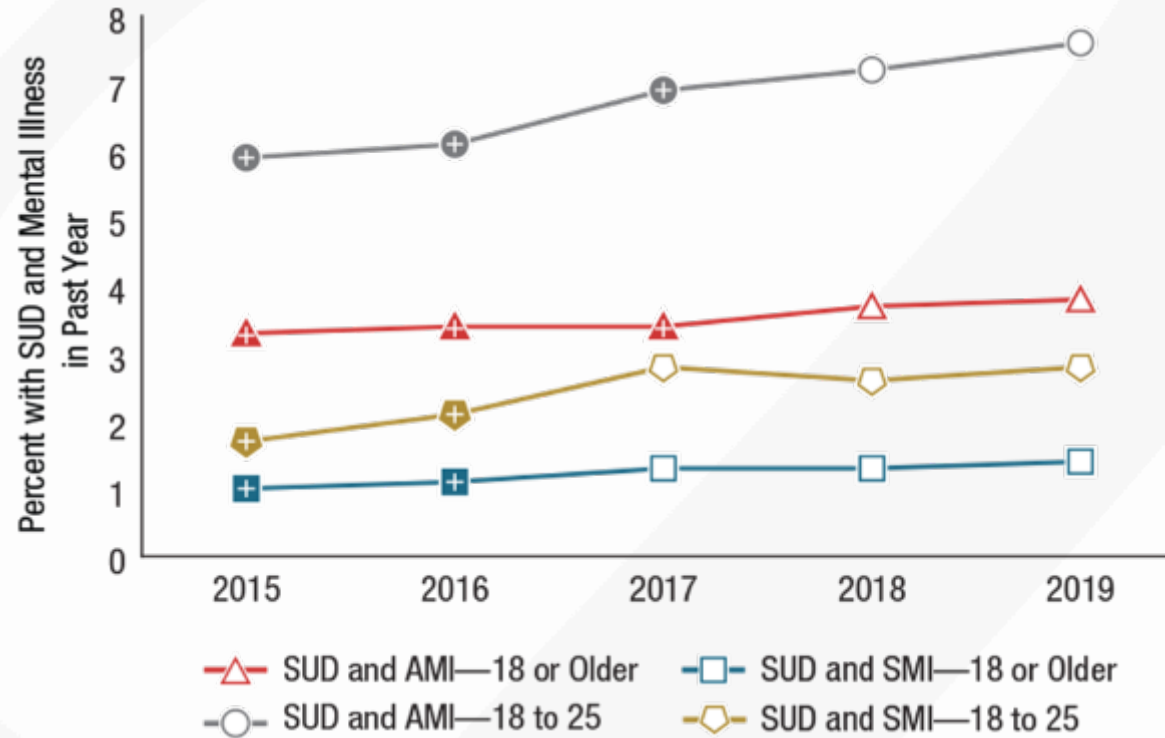


Past Year Cocaine Use: 2002-2019



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA

Co-Occurring Past Year Substance Use Disorder (SUD), Any Mental Illness (AMI), and Serious Mental Illness (SMI) among Adults Aged 18 or Older: 2015-2019



SUD/Mental Illness Status and Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
SUD and AMI					
18 or Older	3.3*	3.4*	3.4*	3.7	3.8
18 to 25	5.9*	6.1*	6.9*	7.2	7.6
SUD and SMI					
18 or Older	1.0*	1.1*	1.3	1.3	1.4
18 to 25	1.7*	2.1*	2.8	2.6	2.8

Source:
National
Survey on
Drug Use
and Health,
SAMHSA



What are the lived experiences of young adults with co-occurring mental health and substance use challenges?

Findings to date (qualitative inquiry)

- Life history narrative study of 55 young adults (ages 25-30) with serious mental health conditions in MA (2016-2017)
- Retrospective exploration of experiences managing their mental health condition, school, training and work experiences
- Seventeen young adults (31% of the sample) reported that their alcohol or drug use interfered with school, training, or work
- Of those, 12 (71%) were not engaged in school, training, or work at the time of their interview.

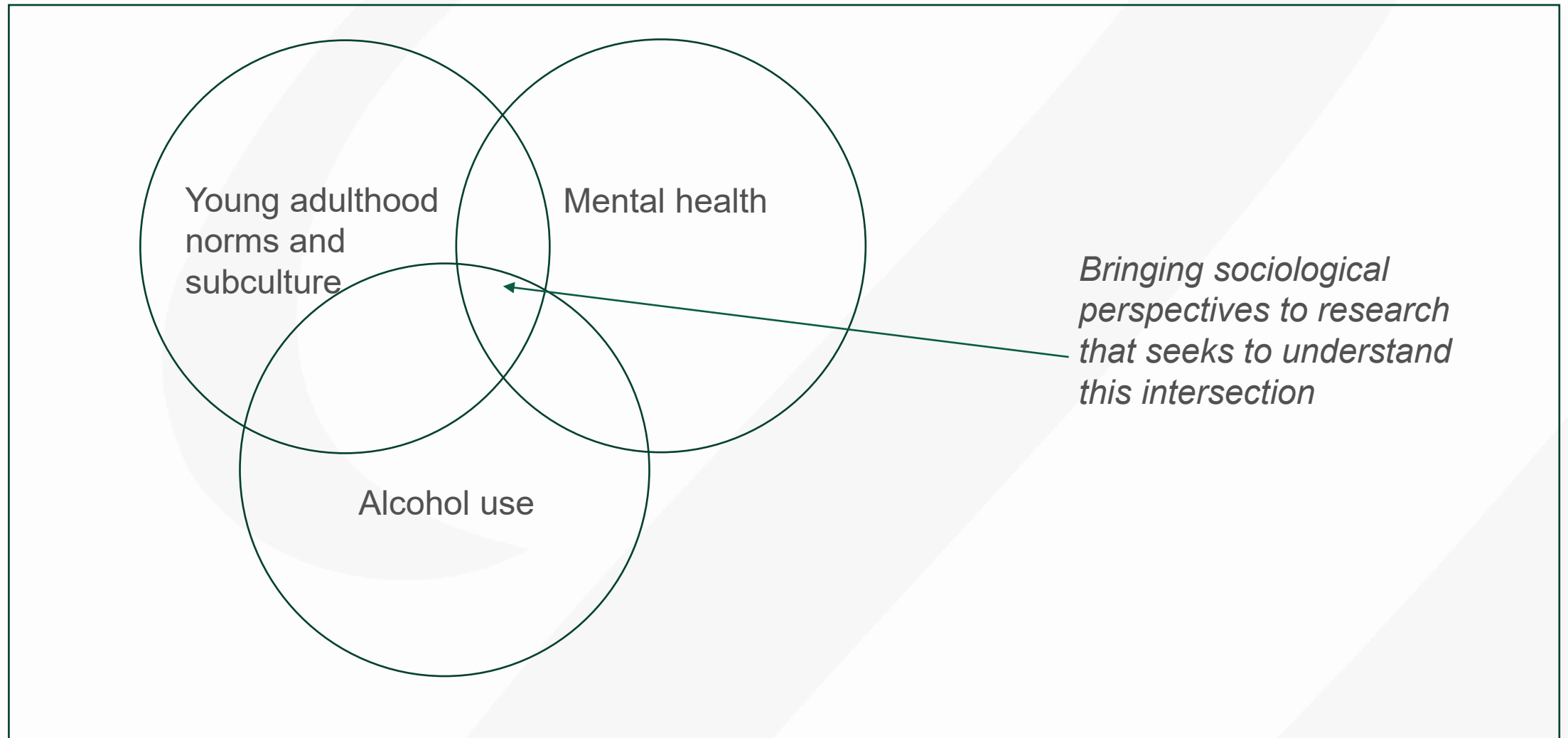
It's been hard to work with my drinking. And it's been hard to get into school with it. Yeah, it's even been hard with friends and stuff, so it's just been a pretty negative experience, but it's been hard to kick, because it just makes you feel better....I used to go out a lot, and then I would have to wake up early, and I'd be kind of hungover going to work. So, it made it difficult. And then once it wore off, then I would have the anxiety and the depression kicking in. And so it made it a lot harder to go and do a full day of work.

Findings to date (quantitative inquiry)

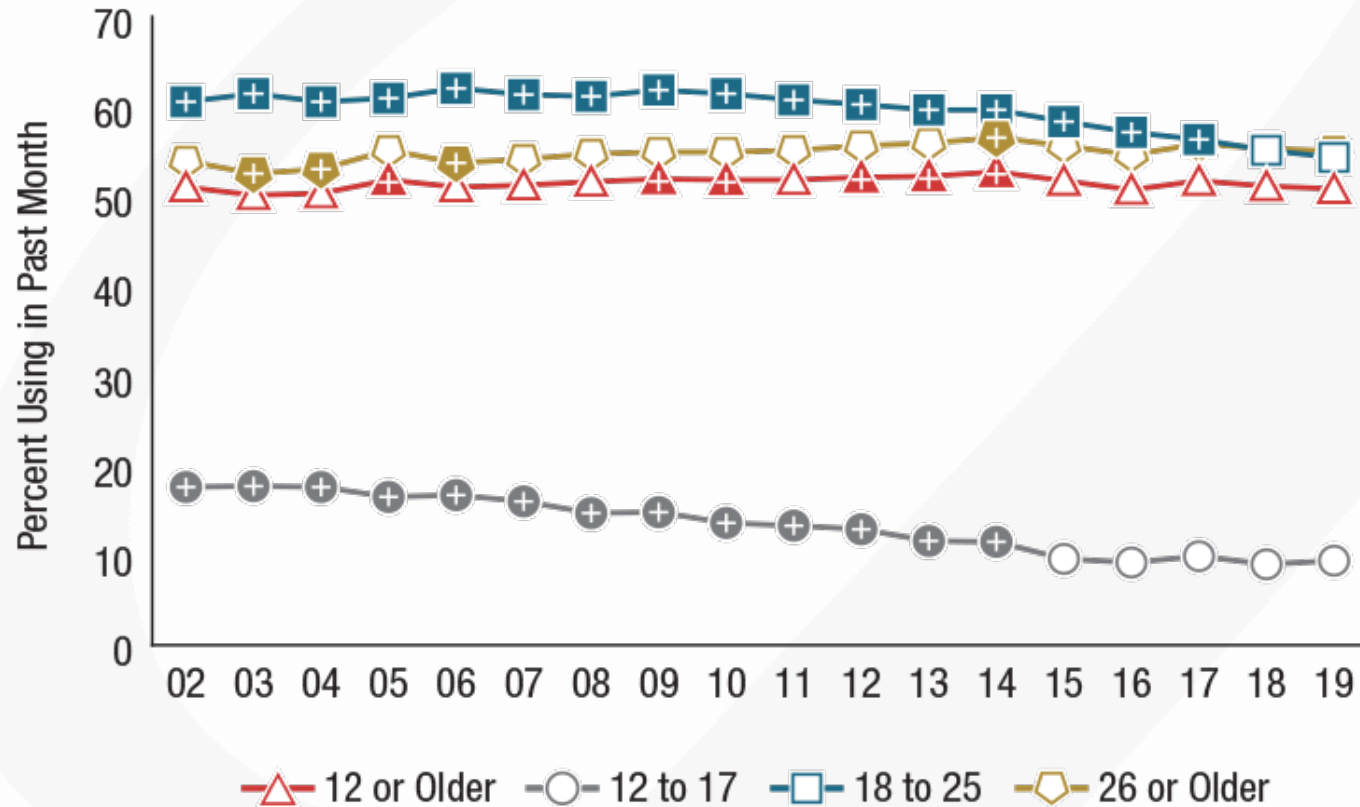
- Young adults ages 16-25 with SMHC
- Longitudinal quantitative web-based survey every 4 months
- Between 12-24 months of data collection, 2018-2022
- Investigation of school, training, and work activities, general demographics, life events, and theoretically informed psychosocial covariates

Experiences at any point during the study duration (p<.05)	Without co-occurring substance use challenges (n=120)	With co-occurring substance use challenges (n=104)
Hospitalized for mental illness	16%	28%
Had no place to call home	15%	34%
Major depressive disorder	63%	76%
Unemployed	11%	27%

Future lines of research



Past Month Alcohol Use among People Aged 12 or Older: 2002-2019



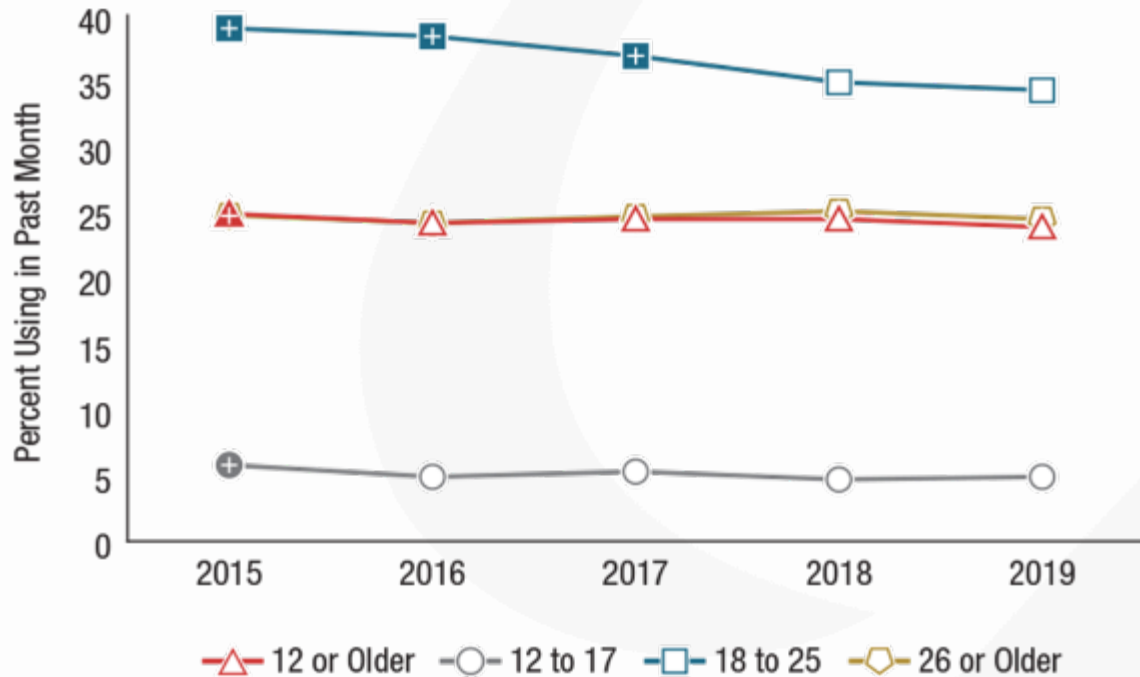
Age	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
12 or Older	51.0	50.1	50.3	51.8*	51.0	51.2	51.6	51.9*	51.8*	51.8	52.1*	52.2*	52.7*	51.7	50.7	51.7	51.1	50.8
12 to 17	17.6*	17.7*	17.6*	16.5*	16.7*	16.0*	14.7*	14.8*	13.6*	13.3*	12.9*	11.6*	11.5*	9.6	9.2	9.9	9.0	9.4
18 to 25	60.5*	61.4*	60.5*	60.9*	62.0*	61.3*	61.1*	61.8*	61.4*	60.7*	60.2*	59.6*	59.6*	58.3*	57.1*	56.3*	55.1	54.3
26 or Older	53.9	52.5*	53.0*	55.1	53.7*	54.1	54.7	54.9	54.9	55.1	55.6	55.9	56.5*	55.6	54.6	55.8	55.3	55.0

Source:
National
Survey on
Drug Use
and Health,
SAMHSA

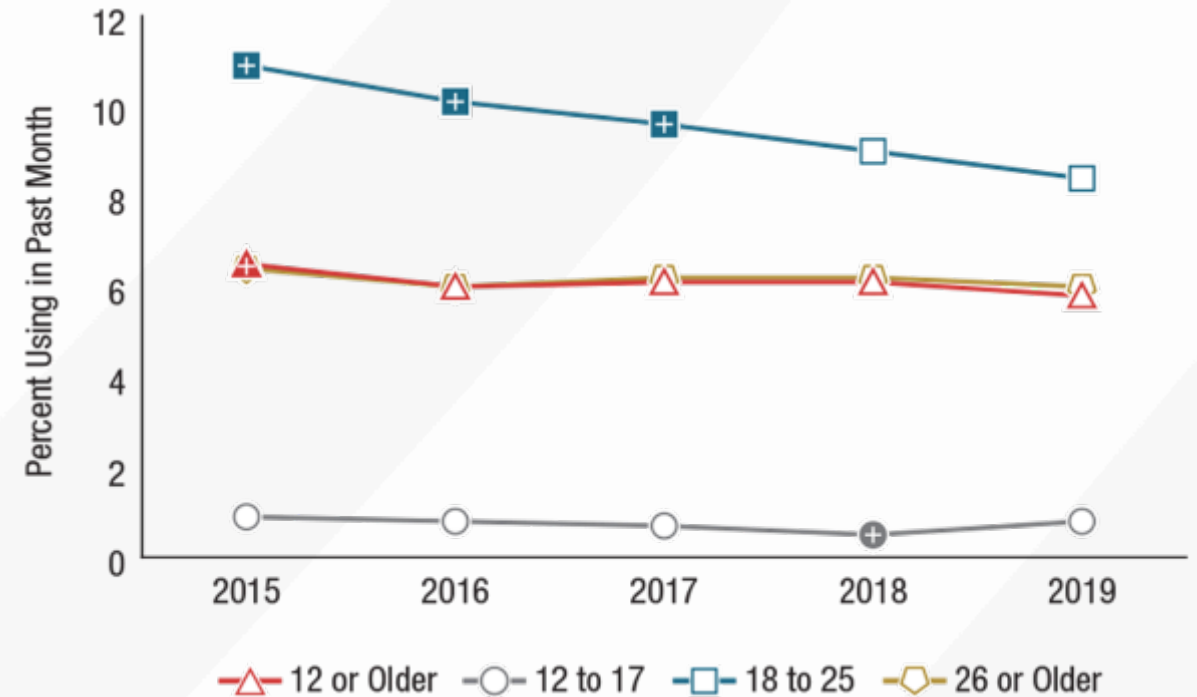
+ Difference between this estimate and the 2019 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Alcohol use in young adulthood

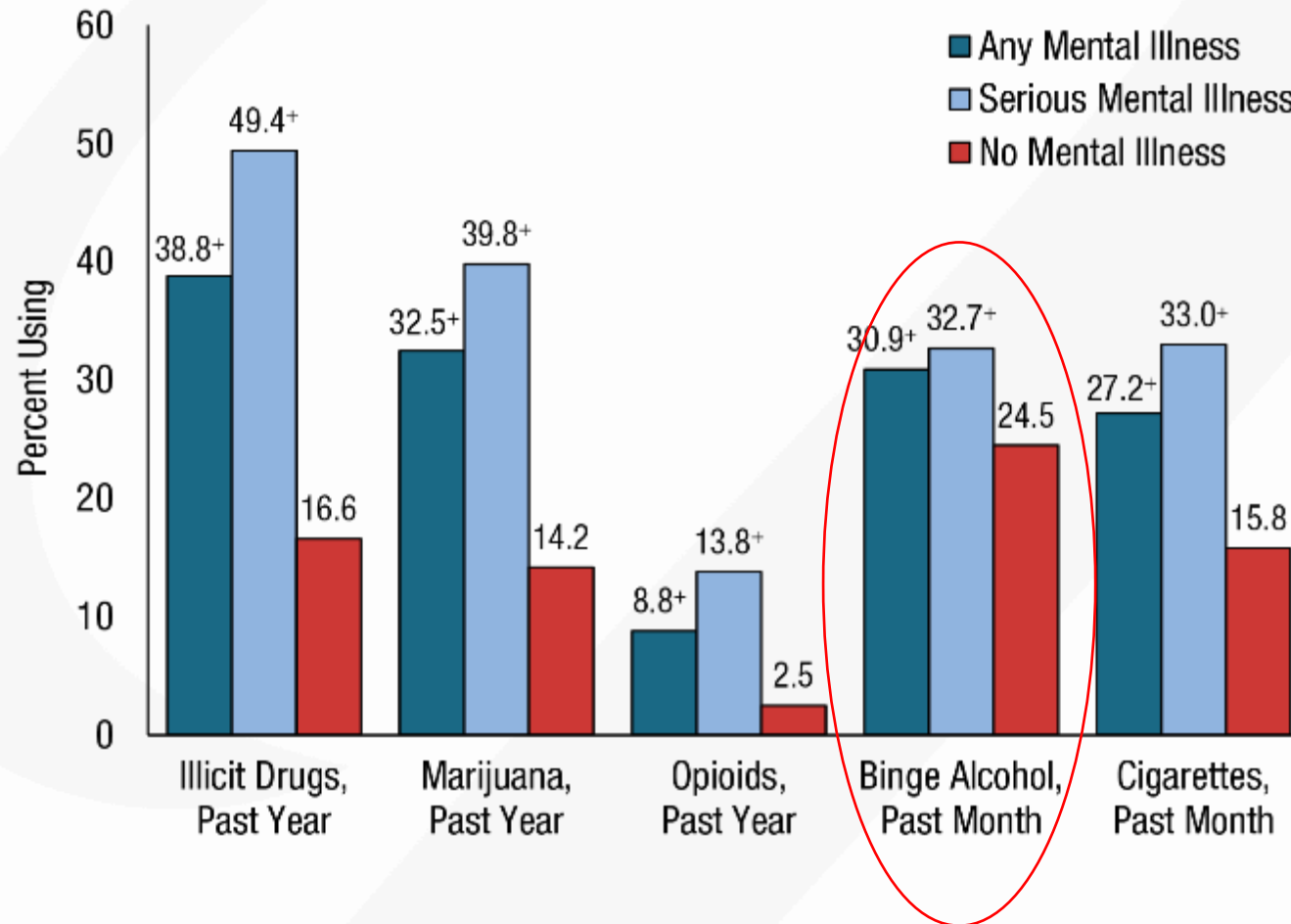
Past Month Binge Alcohol: 2015-2019



Past Month Heavy Alcohol Use: 2015-2019



Substance Use among Adults Aged 18 or Older, by Mental Illness Status: 2019



+ Difference between this estimate and the estimate for adults without mental illness is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Exploratory research question #1

How do young adults conceptualize substance use (particularly alcohol and marijuana use) as normalized parts of young adulthood (or not)? What is the role of advertising and media portrayals of substance use?

- Data can inform interventions (e.g., trainings) that increase awareness of how an individual's substance use is influenced by media and in turn, an increased self-reflection of substance use

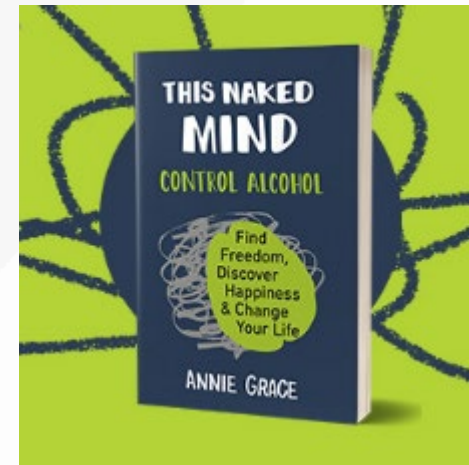
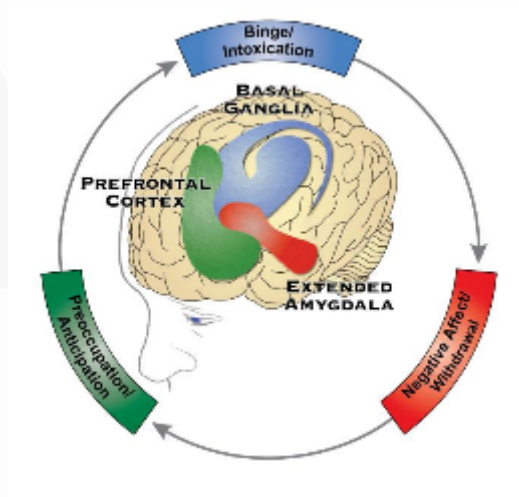


"You know it's play hard, work hard, and you go out, and that's totally the norm. You're taking shots, you're encouraging each other, and it becomes kind of the way you interact with people. Making a fool of yourself is kind of a downside, but you get used to that. That's what you do."

Exploratory research question #2

How do young adults experience the intersection of health, mental health, and substance use?

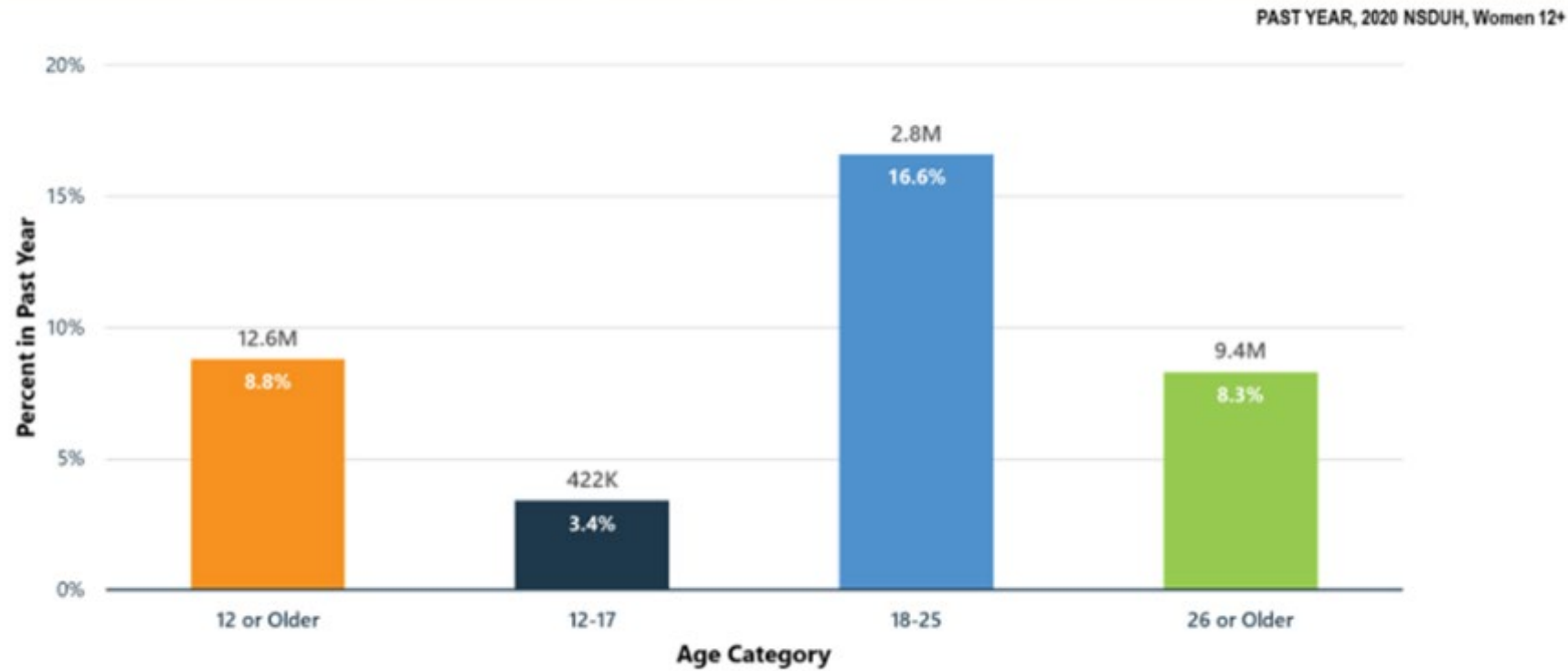
- Self-medication versus increased “hangxiety”; how the science of alcohol use can inform the development of interventions that walk young adults through the psychological and neurological components of alcohol and substances and how they intersect with mental health challenges and psychiatric medications



Exploratory research topic #3

Increasing alcohol use in young adult women....

Alcohol Use Disorder in Past Year: Among Women Aged 12+



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA



....and mothers of young children



What we do know:

- Rates of binge-drinking and alcohol use disorders among women have increased
- Women are almost two times more likely than men to be using anti-depressants, and the rates of anti-depressant use among women is increasing
- Increasing recognition of perinatal mental health needs and substance use challenges of mothers, both during pregnancy and 12 months following birth

What we don't fully know:

- The sub-clinical mental health needs among mothers of young children and how they intersect with binge-drinking
- The scope and patterns of binge-drinking behaviors among mothers of young children and how they impact mother's mental health and family dynamics
- How excessive alcohol intake intersects with symptoms of anxiety and depression, especially among mothers who are taking psychiatric medication for such conditions, and if/how reducing alcohol intake improves mental health outcomes.

Next steps

- Build participatory research capacities in this topic area
- Secondary analyses of existing quantitative datasets
- Pilot funding to pursue qualitative inquiries
- Collaborations with Dr. Byatt, Dr. Yonkers, and colleagues as well as new iSPARC faculty member Lourah Kelly (joining July 1)
- Sociological investigation to quantify and deconstruct damaging social messages around alcohol (e.g., “mommy wine culture”, college drinking scenes)

Thank you!

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