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Contact: Diane Swanbrow
Phone: (734) 647-4416
E-mail: swanbrow@umich.edu
Web: www.umich.edu/~newsinfo
www.isr.umich.edu
www.monitoringthefuture.org

Party Animals are a Rare Breed after College,
ISR study finds, with drinking and drug use
declining as a result.

ANN ARBOR -- By the time they're in their early 30s, most Americans don't get around much anymore, according to a study conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research (ISR), the world's largest academic survey and research organization.

At age 18, when they are seniors in high school, 52 percent of men and 48 percent of women surveyed went out in the evening three or more times a week. But by the age of 31 or 32, only 15 percent of men and 11 percent of women still go out that often.

"Evenings out for fun and recreation, especially going to parties, hanging out with friends, and going to bars, are activities that decline steadily and substantially with age," says ISR social psychologist Jerald G. Bachman, noting that the drop is a symptom of adult responsibilities, not a sign of the times, since today's 18-year-olds go out about as often as 18-year-olds did in 1976.

Bachman is the lead author of *The Decline of Substance Use in Young Adulthood: Changes in Social Activities, Roles, and Beliefs*, just published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. His co-authors are U-M social scientists Patrick M. O'Malley, John E. Schulenberg, Lloyd D. Johnston, Alison L. Bryant, and Alicia C. Merline.

The book analyzes 25 years of data on more than 38,000 people from the ISR Monitoring the Future Study, conducted every spring since 1975 among nationally representative samples of students in public and private secondary schools throughout the United States.

Supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, one of the National Institutes of Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the study has become one of the best-known and most reliable sources of information on trends in drug use, cigarette smoking, and various other behaviors among American adolescents and young adults.

In addition to conducting annual surveys of high school students, the Monitoring the Future team also conducts follow-up surveys of a sample drawn from each class of high school graduates. Every two years, participants receive questionnaires asking about work and living arrangements, including marriages, pregnancies, parenthood, and divorces, as well as drug use, social activities, and other issues.

These follow-up surveys have shown that while the new freedoms of young adulthood lead to temporary increases in substance use after high school, new responsibilities such as marriage, pregnancy, and parenthood contribute to subsequent declines. In the current book, Bachman and colleagues investigate the various ways that these new freedoms and responsibilities might be linked to changes in substance use.

Not surprisingly, they find that young adults who frequently go out in the evening for fun and recreation are more likely than average to drink heavily and to use illicit drugs. Smoking is also higher among high school seniors and young adults who go out often in the evening. These relationships grow weaker, however, as people age; indeed, the relationship between going out and cigarette smoking virtually disappears by the time respondents reach their late twenties and early thirties.

Dating, including going out in the evening with one's spouse, seems to be an exception. "First, the relationship between substance use and dating is a lot weaker than the relationship between substance use and total evenings out," Bachman explains. "Further, we see a different pattern of change in the frequency of dating as people age."

At age 18, about 44 percent of men and 51 percent of women reported going out on a date at least once a week. By ages 31 and 32, only 30 percent of men and 25 percent of women reported going out that often with a date or their spouse. Thus, among those in their early 30s,

dating is a far more prevalent activity than going to parties or bars. “Marriage itself doesn’t put an end to dating,” Bachman says. “It’s parenthood that really puts the kibosh on it.” Parenthood also reduces substance use of various types.

Among the other study findings:

For high school seniors, the frequency of evenings out is linked with cigarette use, but a decade later, there is little correlation. “Presumably most graduates who smoke at all are habituated,” Bachman notes, “and their cigarette consumption is unaffected by whether or not they go out in the evenings.”

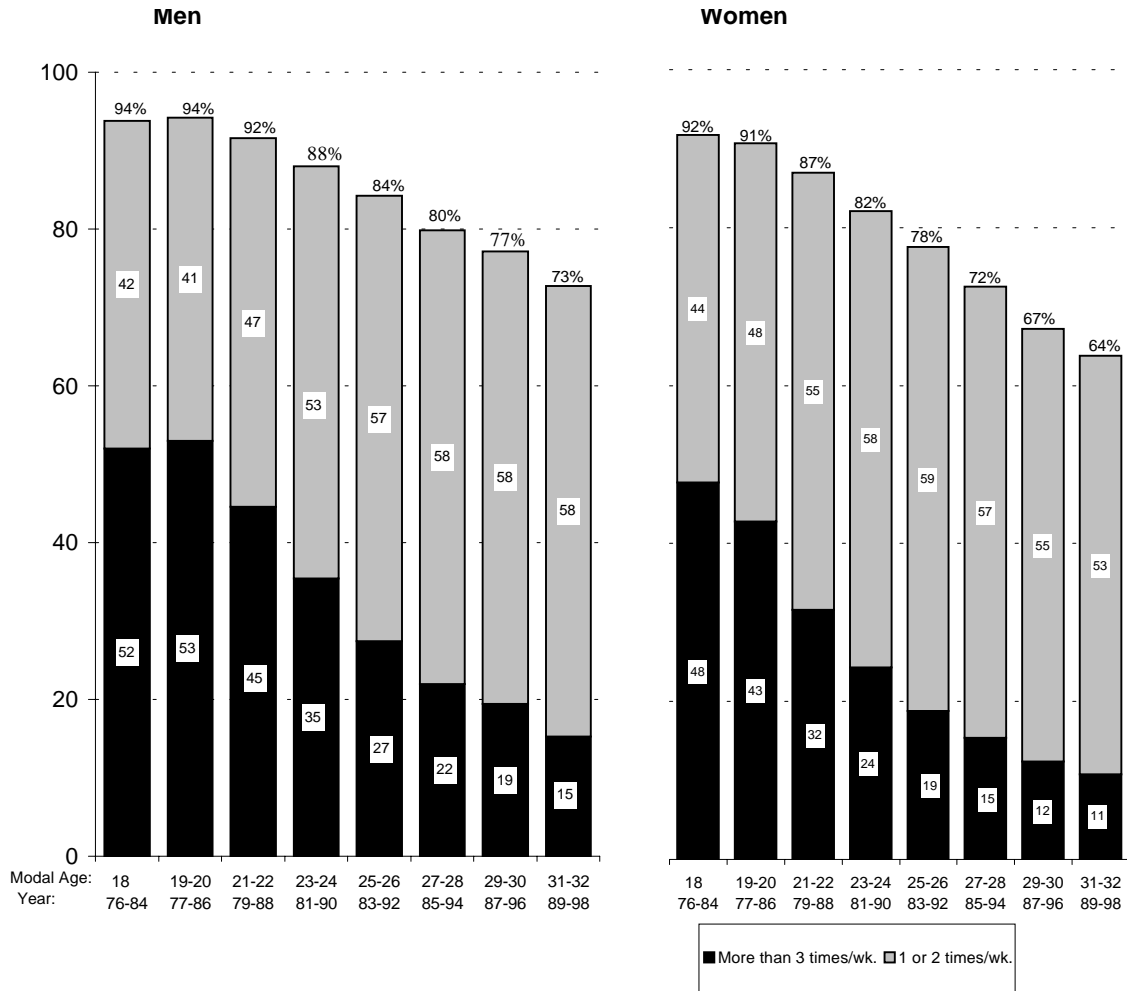
The relationship of evenings out to heavy drinking and marijuana use weakens somewhat with age, but even between ages 29 and 32, a correlation remains. Those who go out 3 or more nights a week are twice as likely as those who go out less than once a week to report heavy drinking in the last two weeks or to report using marijuana in the last month.

Young adults who consider religion very important in their lives and who frequently attend religious services are less likely than others to use drugs. They are also a little less likely than average to go out for fun in the evening, and a lot more likely to disapprove of drugs and see drug use as risky.

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Established in 1948, the Institute for Social Research (ISR) is among the world’s oldest survey research organizations, and a world leader in the development and application of social science methodology. ISR conducts some of the most widely-cited studies in the nation, including the Survey of Consumer Attitudes, the National Election Studies, the Monitoring the Future Study, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the Health and Retirement Study, and the National Survey of Black Americans. ISR researchers also collaborate with social scientists in more than 60 nations on the World Values Surveys and other projects, and the Institute has established formal ties with universities in Poland, China, and South Africa. Visit the ISR website at www.isr.umich.edu for more information.

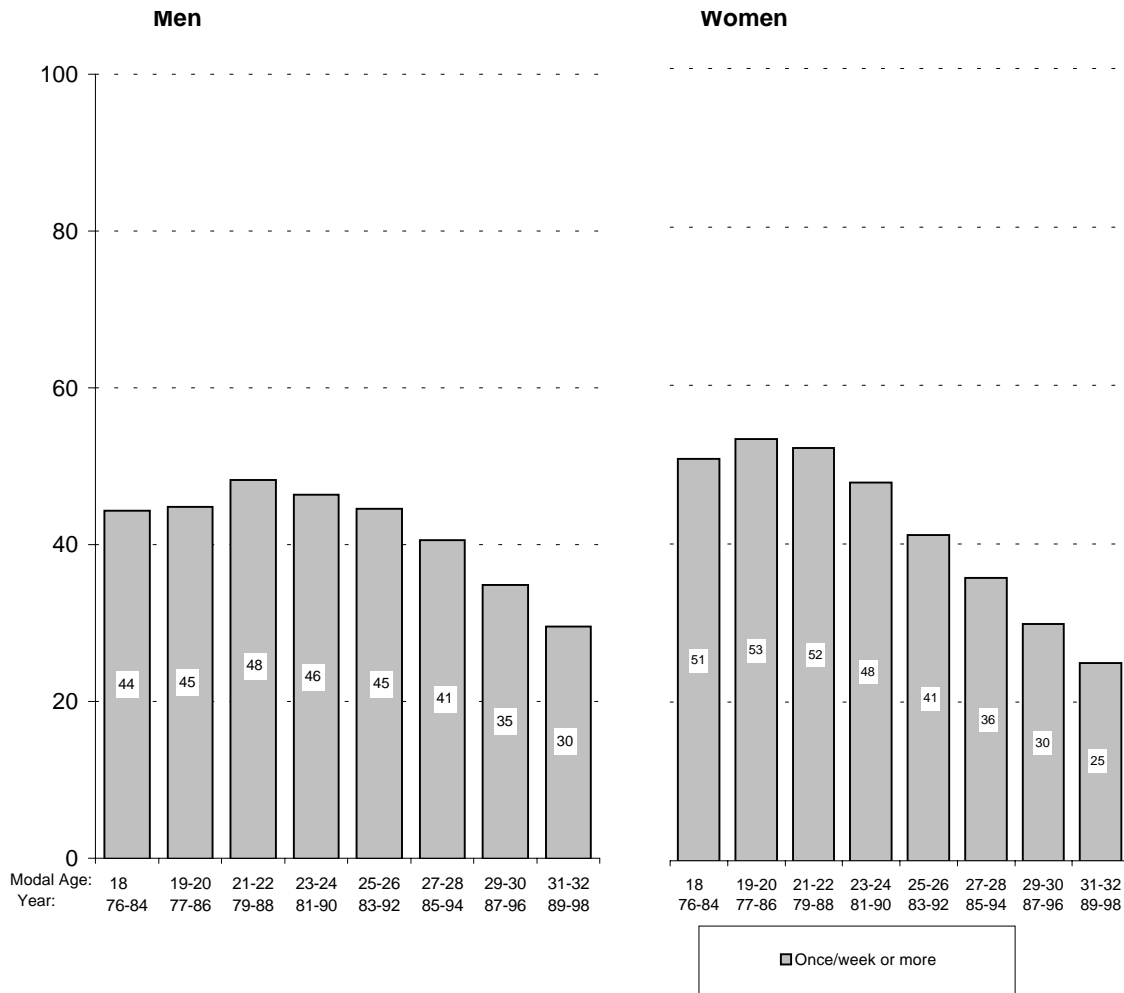
Percent going out at night for fun and recreation*



Source: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research

*Approx. 4,400 men and 5,400 women in each age group

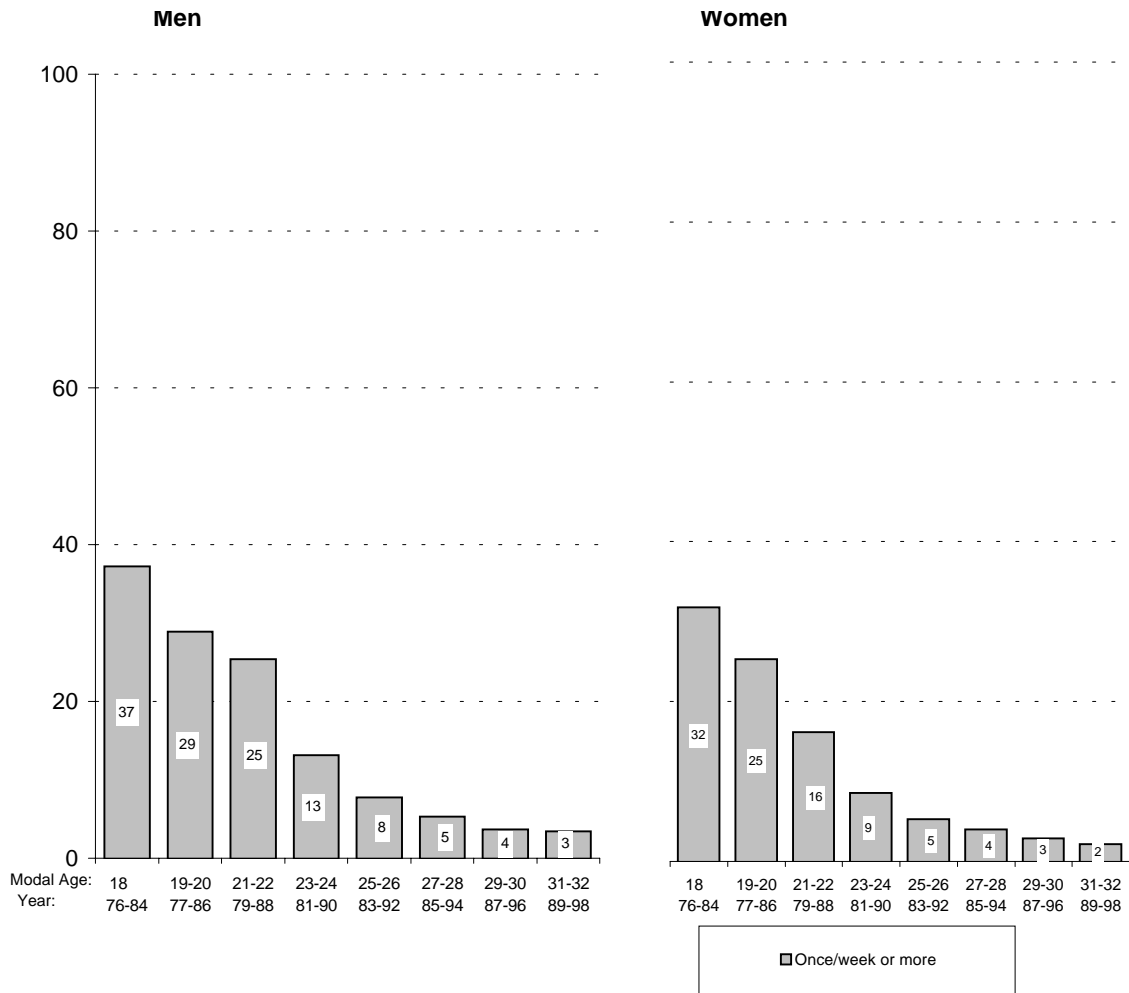
Percent who date (including going out at night with a spouse)*



Source: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research

*Approx. 4,400 men and 5,400 women in each age group

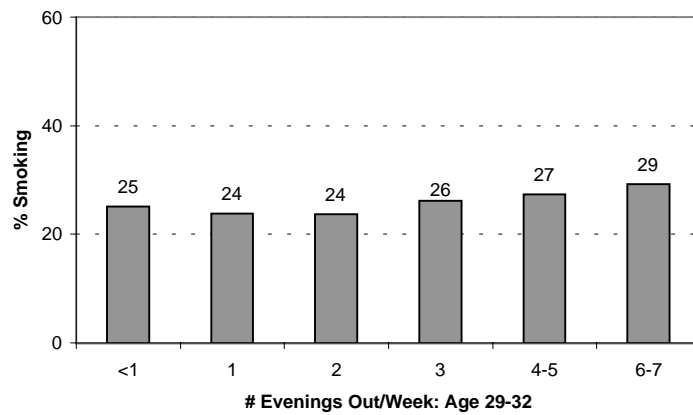
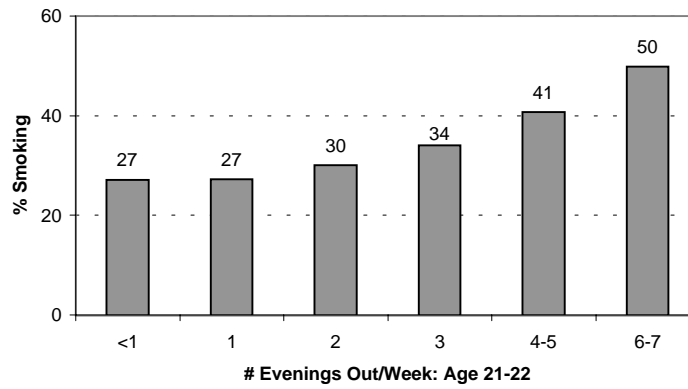
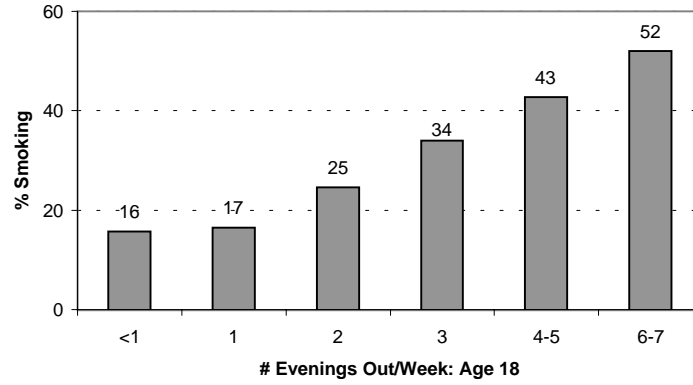
Percent who attend parties or other social affairs*



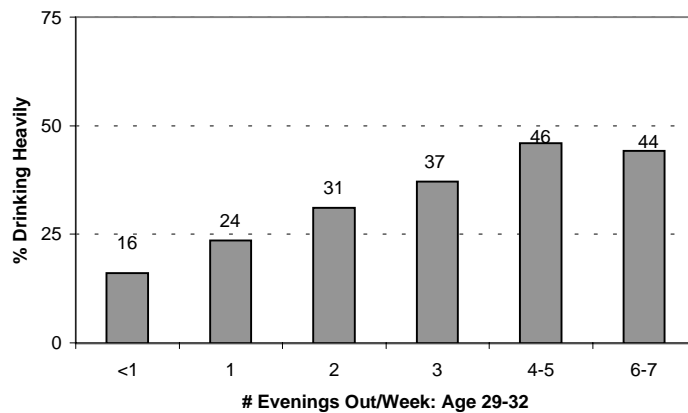
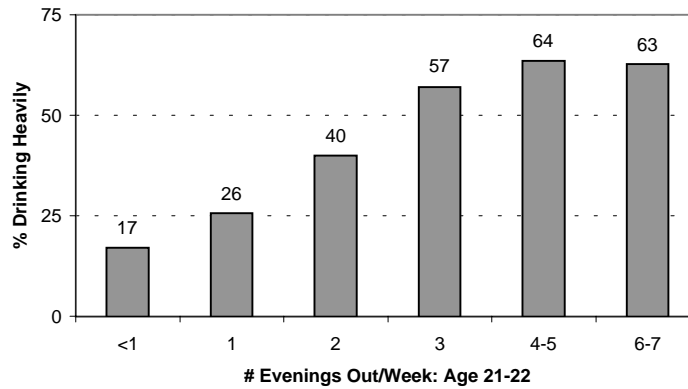
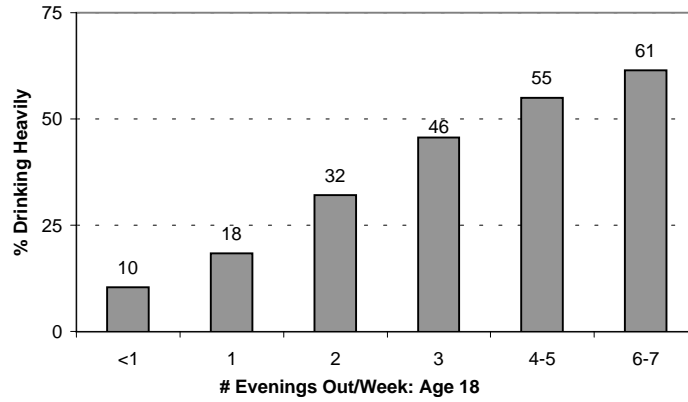
Source: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research

*Approx. 880 men and 1,090 women in each age group

30-day prevalence of cigarette smoking related to evenings out at different ages



Two-week prevalence of drinking 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row related to evenings out at different ages



30-day prevalence of marijuana use related to evenings out at different ages

