



## Differences in the prevalence rates and correlates of alcohol use and binge alcohol use among five Asian American subpopulations<sup>☆</sup>

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ This study examined 7 years of recent nationally representative data.
- ▶ Help understand alcohol and binge alcohol use among Asian American subpopulations.
- ▶ Asian Americans are not homogenous regarding sociodemographic characteristics.
- ▶ Asian Americans have much variability in alcohol use and binge alcohol use.
- ▶ Sub-ethnically specific intervention programs for alcohol use problems are needed.

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study (1) estimated the prevalence of alcohol and binge alcohol use among adult Asian Americans by sub-ethnicity; (2) examined alcohol drinking patterns among these subpopulations; and (3) investigated sub-ethnic differences in characteristics associated with alcohol and binge alcohol use.

**Method:** Data from 8900 Asian Americans aged 18 or older who participated in the 2002–2008 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs) were analyzed. Descriptive analyses and multivariate logistic regression modeling were applied.

**Results:** Korean Americans (51.8%) and Japanese Americans (49.7%) reported higher rates of past-month alcohol use than Chinese Americans (42.0%), Filipino Americans (37.9%), and Asian Indian Americans (34.0%). Korean Americans (24.6%) reported the highest rate of past-month binge alcohol use, followed by Filipino Americans (14.5%), Japanese Americans (14.2%), Asian Indian Americans (10.1%), and Chinese Americans (8.1%). Among these examined Asian Americans, foreign-born Chinese, Filipino, and Asian Indian Americans were less likely to have past-month alcohol use than their corresponding U.S. born counterparts; and only foreign-born Asian Indian Americans were less likely to have past-month binge alcohol use than their U.S. born counterparts. Males were 3–5 times more likely to have binge alcohol use than females among examined Asian American subpopulations except for Korean Americans. Korean Americans were more likely to have binge alcohol use than the other examined sub-ethnic Asian Americans.

**Conclusions:** Adult Asian Americans are heterogeneous in sociodemographic characteristics and alcohol and binge alcohol use. These differences suggest the need for sub-ethnically specific prevention and treatment programs for alcohol use problems among Asian American subpopulations.

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### 1. Introduction

Asian Americans have the fastest growth rate among all the major racial/ethnic groups in the United States (Barnes, Adams, & Powell-Griner, 2008). According to the most recent population estimates of

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the U.S. Census Bureau, Asian Americans make up 5.2% of the total U.S. population since about 16.0 million persons identified themselves as Asian alone or in combination with one or more other races in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), representing a 126% increase from the 1990 U.S. Census. The number of Asian Americans is expected to comprise over 10% of the population by the year 2050 (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2003). In 2011, the prevalence rates of alcohol use and alcohol use disorder among Asian Americans were 40.0% and 2.5%, respectively, which were lower than those among the general U.S. population (51.8% and 6.5%, respectively, SAMHSA, 2011a). Asian Americans have been considered a “model minority” (Caetano, Clark, & Tam, 1998).

Nevertheless, Asian Americans are heterogeneous populations with a wide variety of languages, dialects, and cultures as well as wide ranges of socioeconomic and health status (Barnes & Bennett, 2002). Alcohol use and alcohol use disorder may be influenced by socioeconomic and cultural characteristics as well as biological factors. Socioeconomic characteristics (such as educational achievement, income, occupation, and age distribution) are associated with alcohol use among Asian Americans (Barnes et al., 2008; Le, 2009). The rates of alcohol use and alcohol use disorder vary significantly among Asian countries (Demuyttenaere et al., 2004; Hwu, Yeh, & Cheng, 1989; Kawakami et al., 2005; Shen et al., 2006). Country of origin and immigration status (such as birthplace and duration in the U.S.) may be related to alcohol use due to acculturation, although the findings on relationships between acculturation and alcohol use among Asian Americans are inconsistent because the impact of acculturation on behavioral problems differs among various Asian American subpopulations (Lee, Crittenden, & Yu, 1996; Streltzer, Rezendes, & Arakaki, 1996).

A few studies indicate relatively higher prevalence rates of alcohol use and heavy alcohol use among Japanese Americans and Korean Americans than those among Chinese Americans and Vietnamese Americans, although these results were not based on nationally representative samples (Parrish, 1995; Varma & Siris, 1996; Zane & Kim, 1994). Another previous report used nationally representative data and estimated the prevalence rates of alcohol use in the past month among Chinese Americans (39.0%), Filipino Americans (40.3%), Japanese Americans (60.9%), Asian Indian Americans (38.2%), Korean Americans (47.2%), and among Vietnamese Americans (32.5%) (SAMHSA, 2004). Two other studies based on national survey data indicated that the prevalence rates of alcohol use and binge drinking were higher among Japanese Americans and Korean Americans than those among Chinese Americans and Asian Indian Americans (Barnes et al., 2008; Brown, Council, Penne, & Gfroerer, 2005). However, little is known about whether factors associated with prevalence of alcohol use and binge alcohol use vary by sub-ethnicity (Breslau, Kendler, Su, Gaxiola, & Kessler, 2005; Huang et al., 2006; Zhang, & Snowden, 1999).

To fill this literature gap regarding specific sub-ethnic variations of alcohol use and binge alcohol use among adult Asian Americans, this study (1) estimated the prevalence of alcohol use and binge alcohol use among adult Asian Americans by sub-ethnicity; (2) examined alcohol drinking patterns among these subpopulations; and (3) investigated sub-ethnic differences in characteristics associated with alcohol use and binge alcohol use based on recent nationally representative data.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Data sources and sample

This study analyzed data from 8900 Asian Americans aged 18 or older who participated in the 2002–2008 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), nationally representative surveys conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The NSDUH is the primary annual source of information on the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in the civilian, non-institutionalized population in the United States. Data are collected by interviewers in personal visits to households and noninstitutional group quarters. Audio computer-assisted self-administered interviewing (ACASI) is used, providing respondents with a private, confidential way to record answers. Among the 8900 adult Asian American participants, about 500 also reported as Hispanic and were included in the analyses. The sample size has been rounded to the nearest 100 to reduce potential data disclosure risk, which is a new SAMHSA requirement due to disclosure risks associated with using the exact sample size in conjunction with the NSDUH restricted-use data analysis system (R-DAS, 2012). Further description of the data source is available from the SAMHSA website (SAMHSA, 2011b).

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Alcohol use, binge alcohol use, and alcohol drinking patterns

The NSDUH measures past-month alcohol use and binge alcohol use. Past-month binge alcohol use is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (e.g., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past month (yes, no). The NSDUH collects alcohol drinking patterns among past-month alcohol users, such as the number of drinking days in the past month and the average number of drinks per drinking day in the past month.

#### 2.2.2. Sociodemographic characteristics

The following sociodemographic characteristics were examined: Age (18–24, 25–34, 35–49, or 50 or older), gender (male or female), sub-ethnicity of Asian Americans (Korean American, Chinese American, Japanese American, Filipino American, or Asian Indian American), education status (less than high school, high school, some college, or college graduate or above), marital status (married/cohabitating, widowed/separated/divorced, or never married), annual family income (less than \$20,000, \$20,000–\$49,999, \$50,000–\$74,999, or \$75,000 or more), current employment (full-time, part-time, unemployed, or other), immigration status (U.S. born or foreign born), and duration in the U.S. (less than 5 years, 5–9 years, or 10 years or more) for foreign-born respondents.

### 2.3. Statistical methods

Descriptive analyses were conducted to (1) examine and compare (using Wald F tests) the distributions of sociodemographic characteristics of Asian Americans aged 18 or older by sub-ethnicity; (2) estimate and compare (using paired t tests) the prevalence rates of past month alcohol use and binge alcohol use by sub-ethnicity; and (3) assess and compare (using paired t tests) alcohol drinking patterns by sub-ethnicity. Multivariate logistic regression modeling was applied to investigate characteristics associated with past month alcohol use as well as past month binge alcohol use among adult Asian Americans. Possible interaction terms were examined and were added to the pooled models if they were statistically significant. Further stratified logistic regression models by sub-ethnicity were presented after significant interaction terms between ethnicity and covariates were identified in the two pooled models. The analyses used SUDAAN software (Shah, Barnwell, & Bieler, 2005) to account for the complex sample design (through using SUDAAN's NEST statement) and sampling weights (through using the SUDAAN's WEIGHT statement) of the NSDUHs. Because this study combined 7 years of NSDUH data, person-level weights for estimates of annual averages were obtained by dividing the sampling weights by 7.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Sample characteristics

Among adult Asian Americans, 9.1% (weighted percentage) were Korean Americans, 27.0% were Chinese Americans, 10.7% were Japanese Americans, 25.9% were Filipino American, and 27.3% were Asian Indian Americans. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of sampled adult Asian Americans by sub-ethnicity. Compared to the other Asian Americans, Japanese Americans were more likely to be aged 50 or older (49.1%) and to be born in the United States (63.9%); Korean Americans were more likely to be aged 18 to 24 (21.7%), female (61.4%), and never married (41.6%); Chinese and Asian Indian Americans were more likely to have college education (63.4% and 65.0% respectively); Japanese and Asian Indian Americans were more likely to have annual family income \$75,000 or more (44.1% and 41.1% respectively); and Asian Indian Americans were more likely to be foreign born (92.9%).

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