

**UNDERAGE  
DRINKING**

**Not a minor problem**

## Underage Drinking Fact Sheet

Young people who began drinking before age 15 are 4 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who abstained until age 21. (12)

### Alcohol Use

#### HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug among adolescents. By their senior year of high school, nearly 4 out of 5 students (78%) have consumed alcohol. (1, 5)

Adolescents who drink are likely to be heavy drinkers or binge drinkers (defined as 5 or more drinks in one sitting). Heavy drinking is reported by 12% of eighth graders, 22% of tenth graders, 29% of twelfth graders and 40% of college students. (5)

A majority of young people do not drink or do not drink regularly. A national study shows that just 17.6% of youth age 12-17 drank alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey. (3)

New York State youth report similar alcohol use to the national averages. However, New York has a lower percentage of youth ages 12-17 who meet the DSM-IV criteria for alcohol dependence or alcohol abuse (1.85% vs.1.64%). (4)

Seventy percent of parents of 15-16 year olds say they would be very worried if their child had been drunk, and only 10% believe their child has been drunk. However, 35% of 15-16 year olds report they have been drunk. (5, 17)

In a national survey, 95% of 12th graders report that it is fairly easy or very easy to get alcohol. (5)

#### COLLEGE STUDENTS

Full-time college students aged 18-20 are significantly more likely to have used alcohol in the past month or to have binged compared to their peers not enrolled full time (includes part-time students or persons not enrolled in college). (11)

Past month alcohol use was reported by 64.1% of the full-time students versus 54.3% of their counterparts who were not enrolled full time. Binge drinking was reported by 44.4% and 18.8% respectively. (3)

Among college students 18-22 years of age, males are more likely to report alcohol use. Of these students, 67.5% of the males and 59.2% of the females report they currently use alcohol. Among the males, 51% report binge drinking and about one-third of the females report binge drinking. (2, 5)

### Consequences of Underage Drinking

#### VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROBLEMS

Alcohol use among teens is associated with the three most common causes of teenage deaths: accidental deaths (such as car crashes), homicides and suicides. (13)

On average 8 adolescents a day in the U.S. die in alcohol-related automobile crashes and 9 out of 10 teenage automobile accidents involve the use of alcohol. (13)

95% of violent crimes on college campuses are alcohol-related. The majority of college rapes (90%) involve alcohol use by either the victim and/or the assailant. (11)

More than 70,000 students between the ages of 18-24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape. (11)

#### SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Higher levels of alcohol use are associated with unplanned or unprotected sexual activity among adolescents. This poses increased risk for teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. (14)

#### SCHOOL-RELATED PROBLEMS

Alcohol use and higher levels of use among adolescents is associated with poor grades, absenteeism and higher rates of school dropout. (14)

### Gender & Ethnic Differences

Lifetime alcohol use rates among underage males is 57.4% and 44.9% for underage females. (5)

Boys are more likely than girls to report more serious levels of alcohol use. Over 31% of males report binge drinking versus 15.1% females. (5)

Girls' behavior concerning alcohol has changed over the past 20 years. Girls today are 4 times more likely to begin drinking before age 16 than their mothers were. (6)

Nationally, past month alcohol use rates among people aged 12-20 ranged from 32.8% for whites, 32.4% for American Indian or Alaska Natives, 25% for Hispanics, 19.3% for African-Americans, and 15.5% for Asians. (3)

Binge drinking was reported by 22.7% of underage whites and 22.6% of underage American Indians or Alaska Natives, 16.8% of underage Hispanics, 9.8% of underage African-Americans and 8.6% of underage Asians. (3)

### Alcohol Marketing & Youth

Underage drinking accounts for 12% of all alcohol sales in the U.S., or approximately 3.6 billion drinks per year. (8)

College students spend \$5.5 billion dollars on alcohol annually—this is more than they spend on soft drinks, milk, juice, tea, coffee and books combined. (15)

Young people, ages 12-20, saw more television ads for beer and

(OVER)

ale in 2001 than for fruit juices and fruit-flavored drinks; gum; skin care products; cookies and crackers; chips, nuts, popcorn and pretzels; sneakers; non-carbonated soft drinks; or sportswear jeans. (15)

When asked about their favorite television commercial, more teens named ads for beer than for any other products (including popular soft drinks, sneakers and jeans). (10)

In general, youth ages 12-20 were exposed to 8% more beer and ale advertising than adults, 14% more advertising for distilled spirits, and 12% more advertising for flavored malt beverages. (9)

In a recent poll, teens reported that they prefer flavored malt beverages, also called “alcopops,” over beer or other mixed drinks since they are easier to drink because of their sweet taste. 41% of teens 14-18 years have tried “alcopops.” (2)

## Services in New York State

Prevention Works! New York State maintains a statewide network of prevention providers with some 350 programs serving our schools and communities.

A 2003 study shows that compared to 1998, all measures of underage alcohol use has significantly decreased. Past year use has dropped from 58% to 51%, past month use from 42% to 34% and binge drinking from 34% to 29%. (16)

Addiction treatment is effective for adolescents. It saves lives and money, and helps keep families together. Treatment services for youth are offered in a majority of New York’s 1,200 treatment facilities statewide, with 23 facilities offering services exclusively for youth.

## New York State Laws that Protect Our Youth

### UNDERAGE ALCOHOL POSSESSION

In New York State, if you’re under 21 years old, it is a violation of the law to possess alcohol with the intent to consume. If caught, youth can be fined, required to complete an alcohol and drug education seminar, and/or required to complete community service.

### ZERO TOLERANCE

If you are under 21 and drink and drive, you face strict penalties. Under the Zero Tolerance Law, for small amounts of alcohol, teens can lose their license up to 6 months to 1 year. For larger amounts of alcohol, DWI penalties apply, including possible jail terms.

### SEAN’S LAW

Underage drinkers who drive will have their junior license or driving permits promptly suspended if they are charged with an alcohol-related traffic offense.

### LOWERING BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT (BAC) FOR DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED (DWI) FROM .10 TO .08

In New York State, the BAC for legal intoxication while driving has been lowered from .10% to .08%. This law allows for the suspension of a license pending prosecution if the BAC at arrest is .08% or more.

### KEG REGISTRATION

This law requires that an identification tag be attached to every keg sold at a retail store that contains the name and address of the retail store, the name of the purchaser, and a keg identification number. This allows our law enforcement professionals to track keg sales, especially those purchased and then given to people under age 21 for consumption.

*\* Unless otherwise noted, statistics in this fact sheet are based on national studies.*

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