

## 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 (72%) have consumed alcohol. (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 10% of eighth graders, 22% of tenth graders, 26% of twelfth graders and 45% of college students. (3, 5)

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 ever been drunk. However, 35% of 15-16 year olds report they have been drunk. (5, 11)

In a national survey, 92% 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). (7)

Past month alcohol use was reported by 64.4% of the full-time students versus 54.1% of their counterparts who were not enrolled full time. Binge drinking was reported by 45.5% 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, 45% report binge drinking and about one-third of the females report binge drinking. (5)

### Consequences of Underage Drinking

Underage drinking cost the citizens of New York State \$3.2 billion in 2005. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth. (1)

Each year, approximately 5,000 people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking; this includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, as well as hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings. (14)

#### VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROBLEMS

Youth violence and traffic crashes attributable to alcohol use by underage youth in New York represent the largest costs for the State in 2005 -- \$2.3 billion. (1)

Alcohol use among teens is associated with the three most common causes of teenage deaths: accidental deaths (such as car crashes), homicides and suicides. (9)

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. (9)

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. (7)

100,000 students between the ages of 18-24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape. (14)

#### 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

Underage drinking can cause alterations in the structure and function of the developing brain, which continues to mature into the mid- to late-twenties, and may have consequences reaching far beyond adolescence. (14)

Alcohol use and higher levels of use among adolescents is associated with poor grades, absenteeism and higher rates of school dropout. (10)

### Underage Alcohol Use: Where Do Young People Drink?

A majority (53.4 percent) of current alcohol users aged 12 to 20 drank at someone else's home the last time they used alcohol, and another 30.3 percent drank in their own home. (4)

The percentage of underage alcohol users who had their most recent drink in a car or other vehicle peaked at 10.0 percent at age 16 (12.8 percent of females and 7.3 percent of males). (4)

Among current underage drinkers aged 20, females were almost twice as likely as males to have had their most recent drink in a restaurant, bar, or club (20.0% vs. 10.2%). (4)

### 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 rates among people aged 12-20

(OVER)

ranged from 32.7% for whites, 31.3% for American Indian or Alaska Natives, 25.3% for Hispanics, 18.6% for African Americans, and 19.7% for Asians. (3)

Binge Drinking was reported by 22.7% of underage whites and 23.6% of underage American Indian or Alaska Natives, 16.5% of underage Hispanics, 8.6% of underage African Americans and 11.8% of underage Asians. (3)

## Alcohol Marketing & Youth

In 2005, underage drinkers consumed 15.0% of all alcohol sold in the United States, totaling \$19.8 billion in sales. These sales provided profits of \$3.6 billion to the alcohol industry. (2)

In 2005, underage drinkers consumed 16.5% of all alcohol sold in New York, totaling \$1.7 billion in sales. These sales provided profits of \$834 million to the alcohol industry. (1)

In 2006, 6% of alcohol advertisements on television (18,200 of 299,475 advertisements) were placed on programming with underage audiences larger than 30%. (12)

Youth, young adult and adult exposure to alcohol advertising on television increased by 30%, 25% and 29% respectively from 2001 to 2006. (12)

Youth were exposed to 29 times more distilled spirits advertising on television in 2006 than in 2001. (12)

Television programming popular with teens is filled with alcohol advertising. Since 2001, alcohol ads have appeared every year on 13 or more of the 15 programs most popular with teens ages 12 to 17. (13)

## 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.

## Services in New York State

### PREVENTION WORKS!

A 2007 study shows that compared to 1997, most measures of underage alcohol use has significantly decreased. For example, past month use has dropped from 48.2% to 43.7% and binge drinking from 28.9% to 24.9%. (16)

New York State maintains a statewide network of prevention providers with over 300 programs serving our schools and communities.

These providers deliver a wide range of services including classroom presentations, skills development workshops, training sessions for parents and teachers, and positive alternative activities for youth. An emphasis is placed upon environmental strategies to change attitudes, behaviors and social norms in the community.

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

#### References

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