



Underage Drinking in Utah

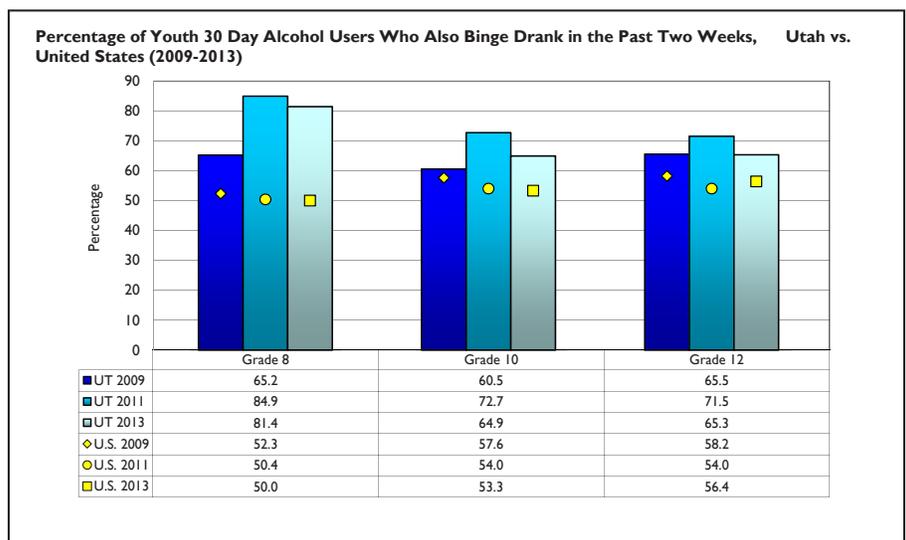
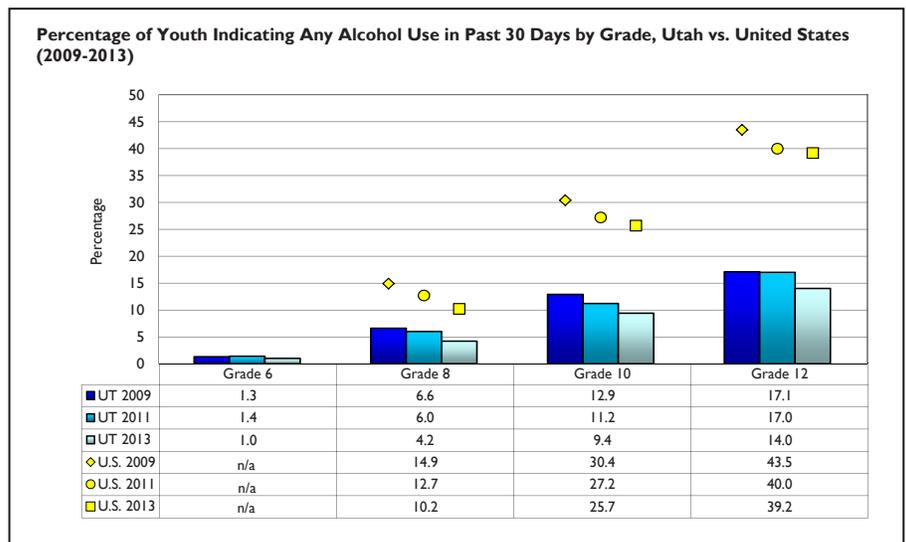
May 2014

Youth Alcohol Consumption

When it comes to alcohol use, survey data show that underage drinking has been decreasing steadily over the last decade both in Utah as well as nationally. Here in Utah, youth drink alcohol at much lower rates than the national average¹. This is true of lifetime alcohol use (“have you ever used alcohol in your lifetime”), past 30 day use, and binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) in the past two weeks. In fact, alcohol use rates among Utah youth have historically been about 50% of the national rate. For example, the 30 day use rate in 2013 for Utah 12th graders was 14%, while the rate nationally for 12th graders was 39%. For binge drinking, the rates for 8th, 10th and 12th graders in Utah (vs. the nation) were 3.4% (vs. 5.1%), 6.1% (vs. 13.7%) and 9.1% (vs. 22.1%), respectively. While Utah’s low underage alcohol use rates are definitely a positive sign of the overall wellness of the state’s youth population, there are also data that serve as reminders that underage alcohol use remains an important issue for prevention efforts.

Foremost, alcohol is and has been the most widely used substance by youth in the state. The 30 day alcohol use rate among 6-12th graders (combined) in Utah for 2013 was 7%; the rate for the second highest substance used was marijuana at 5.8%, and the rate of electronic cigarette use, which came in third, was 4.7%. With 9.4% of 10th graders and 14% of 12th graders indicating having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days, this equates to approximately 4,200 10th graders and 6,100 12th graders statewide who had recent alcohol use at the time of the survey². Secondly, while a smaller proportion of Utah’s youth drink alcohol compared to the nation, the data suggest that Utah youth who do drink alcohol are more likely to engage in binge drinking than their national counterparts. Nationally, about 56% of 12th graders who drank alcohol in the past 30 days also engaged in binge drinking in the past two weeks. In Utah, about 65% of 12th graders reporting 30 day alcohol use also indicated binge drinking. A similar pattern of high binge drinking rates among 30 day alcohol users holds for 8th and 10th graders in Utah as well. This is a significant concern; according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, binge drinking is associated with greater risk for negative alcohol related outcomes including: drinking and driving, becoming a victim of violence, and abuse and dependence³.

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¹Utah data from the Utah State Health and Risk Prevention Survey; National data from the Monitoring the Future Survey

²Based on 2011 statewide school enrollment and dropout data for 10th and 12th graders

³<http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm>

Alcohol-Related Consequences

Underage alcohol use is associated with a broad range of negative consequences that can affect individuals, families and society. The potential negative consequences of alcohol use range from immediate outcomes such as alcohol related motor vehicle crashes to more long term consequences such as alcohol dependence and alcoholic liver disease. Among youth, early initiation of alcohol use is associated with greater risk for a host of negative outcomes including: delinquency, academic problems, other substance use, sexual risk taking, and violence⁴.

Alcohol related motor vehicle crashes (ARMVC) involving underage drinkers in Utah represent a small but significant proportion of ARMVC across the state. From 2010-12, there were a total of 5,112 ARMVC on Utah roadways, including 76 crashes that resulted in fatalities and 2,258 that resulted in injuries. Drivers under age 21 were involved in 558 alcohol related crashes (10.9% of all ARMVC), including seven fatal crashes (9.2% of all

fatal ARMVC), and 236 injury crashes⁵ (10.4% of all injury ARMVC).

Research suggests that the younger youth are when they first begin using alcohol the more likely they are to develop alcohol dependence and abuse in later life compared to those who begin drinking at 21⁶. As such, preventing alcohol use among youth or delaying the onset of use is an important goal of prevention efforts that occur throughout the state. Unfortunately, a small percentage of Utah youth start displaying signs of alcohol dependence before they reach adulthood. Based on 2013 survey data, between 3-4.5% of 10th and 12th graders in Utah are estimated to be in need for alcohol treatment. Prevention and treatment services funded through the Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health aim to reduce the number of youth who will be negatively impacted by alcohol abuse and dependence, and help those who are experiencing these conditions.

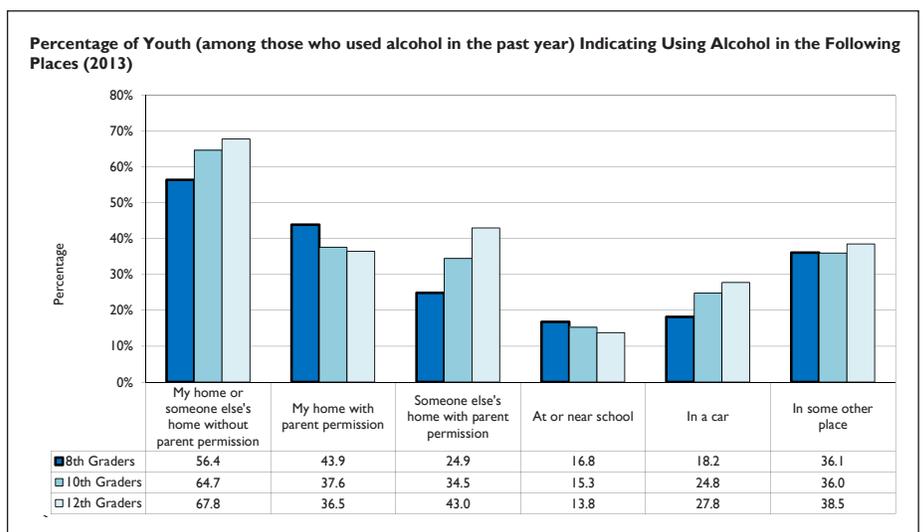
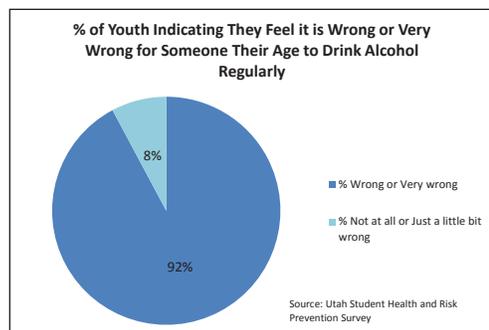
Causes and Contributing Factors

There are a variety of factors that contribute to alcohol use among underage drinkers. As a result, there is no single magic solution that will prevent all underage drinking. Fortunately, Utah enjoys some of the lowest rates of youth alcohol use in the nation. In looking at some of the causal factors for alcohol use, a strong relationship is apparent between what most youth in Utah believe about the risks and acceptability of alcohol use, and the low use rates in our state.

Perceived risk and Attitudes toward alcohol use. Utah youth in grades 6-12 overwhelmingly (84%) indicate that people who drink one or two alcoholic drinks nearly every day are at moderate or great risk of harming themselves. Additionally, nearly all Utah youth (99%) indicate that their parents would feel it is wrong or very wrong for them to drink alcohol regularly, and nine in ten (92%) indicate that they feel it is wrong for someone their age to drink alcohol regularly.

Places where alcohol is consumed. While alcohol use rates are lower in Utah than the nation, there is still a significant number of youth who use alcohol. For these individuals, what contributes to their drinking behavior? A look at survey data pertaining to where youth alcohol users typically drink provides insight regarding the contexts for underage drinking. Overwhelmingly, among those who drink, the most common place to drink is their home or someone else's home. Approximately 66% of 10th and 12th graders who drank alcohol reported drinking at their or someone else's home without permission, but surprisingly, about 37% of 10th and 12th grader drinkers indicated drinking in their home with parent permission, and nearly 40% indicated drinking at someone else's home with parent permission. Additionally, over 25% of 10th and 12th grader drinkers indicated drinking in a car, and approximately 37% indicated "some other place."

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⁴Ellickson, P.L., Tucker, J.S. & Klein, D.J. (2003). Ten-year prospective study of public health problems associated with early drinking. *Pediatrics*, 111, 949-955.

⁵Data from Utah 2010 Crash Summary report, Utah Department of Public Safety

⁶Grant, B. & Dawson, D.A. (2001). Age at onset of alcohol use and DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: A 12-year follow-up. *Journal of Substance Abuse*, 13, 493-504.