



Underage Drinking in Utah

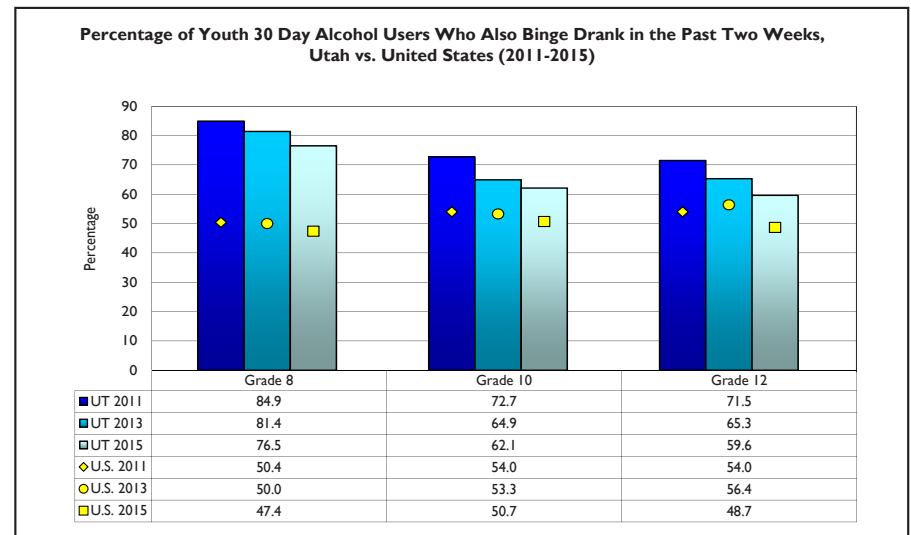
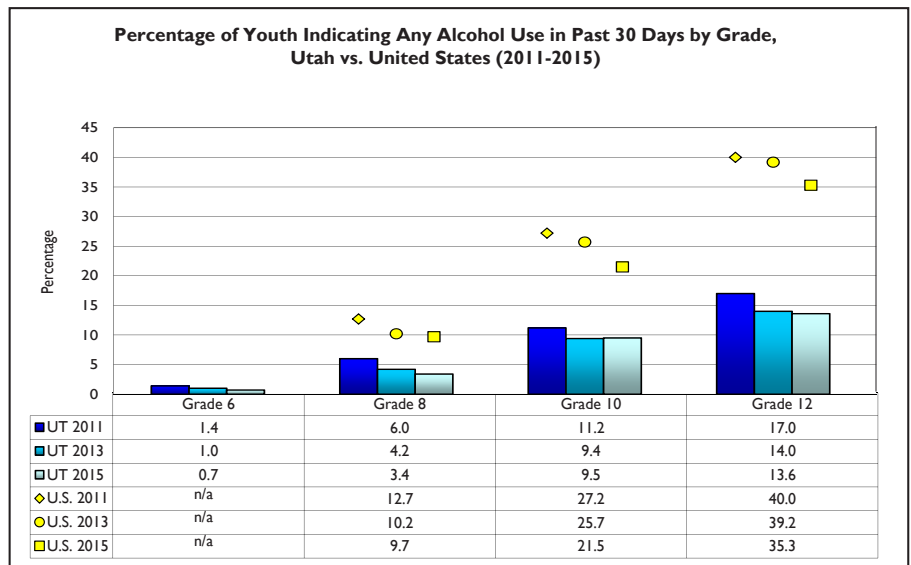
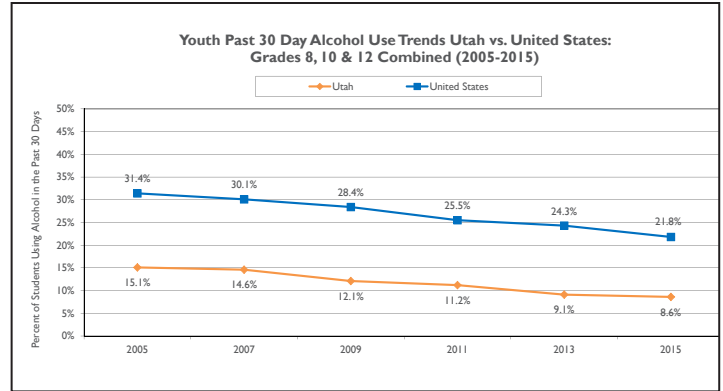
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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Youth Alcohol Consumption

Underage drinking rates have decreased dramatically in Utah as well as nationally over the past decade. Impressively, the 30 day alcohol use rate for grades 8, 10 and 12 (combined) in Utah for 2015 was almost half the 2005 rate (see figure). Adding to these positive trends is the fact that, here in Utah, youth continue to drink alcohol at much lower rates than the nation¹. 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 less than half of the national rate. In 2015, the 30 day use rate for Utah 12th graders was nearly one-third the national rate (13.6% vs. 35.3%, respectively). For binge drinking, the rates for 8th, 10th and 12th graders in Utah (vs. the nation) were 2.6% (vs. 4.6%), 5.9% (vs. 10.9%) and 8.1% (vs. 17.2%), 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.

Alcohol has historically been the most widely used substance by youth in our state. The 30 day alcohol use rate among 6-12th graders (combined) in Utah for 2015 was 6.5%. For comparison, the rate of electronic cigarette use (which came in first) was 8.1%, and the rate for marijuana (which came in third) was 5.2%². With 9.5% of 10th graders and 13.6% of 12th graders indicating having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days, this equates to approximately 4,400 10th graders and 6,100 12th graders statewide who had recent alcohol use at the time of the survey³. Additionally, 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 49% of 12th graders who drank alcohol in the past 30 days also engaged in binge drinking in the past two weeks. In Utah, about 60% 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, unintentional injuries, and abuse and dependence⁴.



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

²2015 is the first and only year that alcohol did not have the highest 30 day use rate in the 12 years that the Utah SHARP survey has been administered.

³Based on 2011 statewide school enrollment and dropout data for 10th and 12th graders

⁴<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 violence⁵.

Alcohol related motor vehicle crashes (ARMVC) involving underage drinkers in Utah represent a small but significant proportion of ARMVC across the state. ARMVCs have trended up in Utah between 2013 and 2015. A silver lining in these data is that ARMVCs with drivers under the age of 21 do not appear to be following the increasing state trend, and this is likely attributable to the decreasing youth alcohol use rates discussed above. From 2013-15, there were a total of 5,948 ARMVC on Utah roadways, including 91 crashes that resulted in fatalities and 2,561 that resulted in injuries. Drivers under age 21 were involved in 480 alcohol related crashes (8.1% of all ARMVC), including seven fatal crashes (7.7%

of all fatal ARMVC), and 203 injury crashes⁶ (7.9% of all injury ARMVC). For reference, from 2010-12, there were 558 ARMVCs involving drivers under 21, including seven fatal crashes, and 236 injury crashes.

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 217. 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 youth do start displaying signs of alcohol dependence before they reach adulthood. Based on 2015 survey data, approximately 2.5% of 10th and 3.8% of 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.

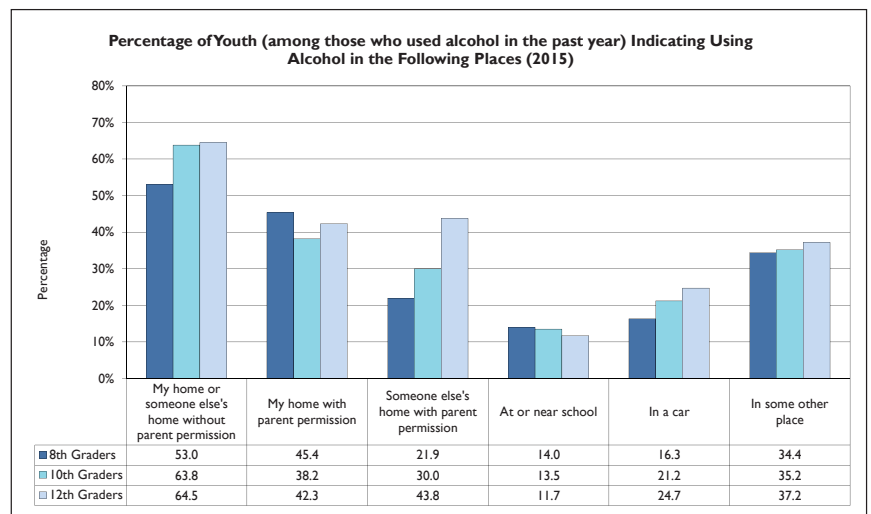
Causes and Contributing Factors

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 (85.4%) indicate that people who drink 5 or more alcoholic drinks once or twice a week 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, it is important to understand contributing factors that influence their alcohol use. 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 64% of 10th and 12th graders who drank alcohol reported drinking at their or someone else's home without permission, but surprisingly, approximately 40% of 10th and 12th grader drinkers indicated drinking in their home with parent permission, and between 30-40% indicated drinking at someone else's home with parent permission. Taken together, parent permission of youth alcohol use is likely an important contributing factor for underage drinking. Additionally, over 20% of 10th and 12th grader drinkers indicated drinking in a car, and approximately 36% 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.