

2014 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey Facts about Teens and Alcohol

Background: In the fall of 2014, 223,000 students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 participated in the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS). About 1,000 schools enrolled in the survey, representing all 39 Washington counties and 215 school districts. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is one of four state agencies supporting the HYS to provide data for state and local prevention planning.

What did students report about alcohol use in the past month?

Most students do not use alcohol, and past month alcohol use has declined significantly across all grades surveyed since 2006. The 2014 percentages are:

- 8th grade - down from 15 percent to eight percent
- 10th grade - down from 33 percent to 21 percent
- 12th grade - down from 42 percent to 33 percent

How many students are binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks in a row)?

Fewer students report drinking five or more drinks in a row since 2006:

- 8th grade - down from 9 percent to 5 percent
- 10th grade - down from 20 percent to 11 percent
- 12th grade - down from 26 percent to 19 percent

What types of alcohol do teens use the most?

Among students who drink, most use hard liquor, putting themselves at greater risk for alcohol poisoning:

- 8th grade: 27 percent drink liquor – 17 percent drink beer
- 10th grade: 39 percent drink liquor – 21 percent drink beer
- 12th grade: 42 percent drink liquor – 23 percent drink beer

Where do teens get alcohol?

The most common ways teens get alcohol, by grade:

- 8th grade: from friends or from home
- 10th grade: from friends, at party, or from home
- 12th grade: from friends, at a party, or give money to someone

How many students think it is risky to use alcohol? (one or two drinks everyday)

Substantially more students in grade 8 said there is great risk in using alcohol regularly:

- 8th grade - up from 38 percent in 2012 to 43 percent
- 10th grade - up from 43 percent in 2012 to 44 percent
- 12th grade – 38 percent (no change from 2012)

How many students believe it is easy to get alcohol?

- 8th grade - down from 32 percent in 2012 to 28 percent
- 10th grade - 52 percent (no change from 2012)
- 12th grade – down from 68 percent to 63 percent

Would parents think it's wrong for their kids to drink alcohol regularly?

Compared to 2012, slightly fewer students said their parents would think it is wrong:

- 8th grade – down from six percent to five percent
- 10th grade – down from 13 percent to 12 percent

What did students report about using alcohol and driving?

Nearly one in five 10th graders (18 percent) and 12th graders (17 percent) reported riding in a car with driver who had been drinking alcohol. The following numbers reported driving after using alcohol:

- 10 grade – 5 percent (down from 7 percent in 2010)
- 12 grade – 9 percent (down from 12 percent in 2010)

What are the risks when teens use alcohol regularly?

The developing teen brain is more likely to be harmed by using alcohol and other drugs regularly, compared to those who are age 21 and older. National data shows that each year, about 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking. This includes deaths from motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicide, and from other injuries from falls, burns and drowning. Kids who drink before age 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol problems when they're adults. Other risks of underage drinking include:

- Poor grades and not graduating
- Unwanted and unplanned sexual activity
- Addiction
- Depression

What increases the risk that teens will use alcohol?

- A low perception of harm.
- Friends who use.
- The belief that it is readily available and easy to get.
- Parents/adults who have favorable attitudes toward alcohol use.
- Community laws and attitudes favorable toward alcohol use.

What can parents and other adults do to help teens avoid alcohol/drug use and its negative consequences?

- Talk with children early and often about the risks of using alcohol and other drugs. There was a significant increase in the percentage of students in grade 10 reporting talks about alcohol with parents or guardians in 2014 (38%) compared to 2012 (35%).
- Parents are the number one influence on their children's decisions about alcohol and other drugs – get tips for talking with teens at www.StartTalkingNow.org.
- Monitor them. Know where your teens are and who they are with.
- Bond with them: love them unconditionally, let teens know you value them, and stay involved in their lives.
- Help teens to act independently and resist peer pressure.
- Set clear rules against using alcohol, and enforce logical consequences.
- Get help if you see warning signs. Call the Washington State Recovery Help Line for free emotional support and referrals to treatment: 1-866-789-1511 or Teenline: 1-866-833-6546.

What DSHS is doing to promote healthier youth and communities

DSHS is nationally recognized as a leader in supporting evidence-based prevention practices and collaborating with community-based prevention organizations. DSHS provides funding, training and oversight to communities to prevent, reduce and treat substance use disorders, promote mental health, and increase healthy community norms. DSHS also supports statewide initiatives to increase public knowledge about drug prevention and mental health.

For other Healthy Youth Survey fact sheets, visit www.AskHYS.net. For more information about DSHS-funded prevention services, email Sarah.Mariani@dshs.wa.gov.