

What can be done to limit underage drinking?^{4,9}

YOUTH CAN:

- Be aware of the dangers of drinking alcohol
- Choose not to buy or drink alcohol
- Choose not to drink with peers and help peers not drink
- Refuse drinks that are offered for free by others
- Get help from parents and schools in remaining alcohol-free

PARENTS CAN:

- Talk to their children about the dangers of drinking
- Supervise and make sure all parties are alcohol-free
- Keep lines of communication open
- Get to know their children's friends and adults who may offer alcohol to their children
- Make alcohol unavailable at home
- Limit the financial source for alcohol
- Serve as positive models

SCHOOLS CAN:

- Provide information and programs to increase the knowledge, skills and motivation to remain alcohol-free
- Build alcohol- and drug-free campuses
- Recognize that children who mature earlier or later than others may be at increased risk

STATES AND COMMUNITIES CAN:

- Reduce alcohol marketing to youth
- Grow partnerships between schools, community organizations, law enforcement and public health agencies to reduce underage drinking
- Adopt interventions that are known to work to prevent and control underage drinking

Resources

For help with alcohol abuse, call or visit:

- 1-866-925-4030 – Toll-free help line
- 1-866-883-6259 or alcoholhelpline.com
- aa.org – Website for Alcoholics Anonymous, an international fellowship for people with drinking problems
- 1-877-MADD-HELP (623-3435) or madd.org – Information on underage drinking, drunk driving and victim services
- 1-800-662-HELP (4357) - SAMHSA's national help line
- findtreatment.samhsa.gov – Substance abuse treatment services locator

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ARKANSAS EPIDEMIOLOGICAL WORKGROUP
PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Underage drinking

Underage* drinking is a widespread, persistent public health problem that causes serious personal, social and economic consequences in the United States. It is responsible for a host of serious problems, including homicides, suicides, injuries, drownings, burns, violence and crime, alcohol poisonings, and high-risk sex. Every year, more than 4,300 youths die due to excessive alcohol use.¹ In 2012, 24.3 percent of youths* ages 12-20 reported drinking alcohol in the past month.² More than 90 percent of this alcohol was consumed in binge drinking, which is a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration to 0.08 grams percent or above (*see specific definition on the next page*).³ By age 18, more than 70 percent of youths have had at least one drink.⁴ Young adults, ages 18-20, have the highest rate of alcohol dependence in the U.S. population, even though they cannot drink legally.⁴

Underage drinking is dangerous

Underage drinking is a leading contributor to death from injuries, which is the leading cause of death for people under age 21. Each year:⁴

- 1,900 youths die from alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes
- 1,600 youths die from alcohol-related homicides
- 1,200 youths die from alcohol poisoning, falls, burns and drownings
- 300 youths die from suicides involving underage drinking
- 189,000 people under age 21 visited an emergency department for alcohol-related injuries/conditions⁵

Alcohol use can impair a youth's judgment and lead to risky behaviors, including driving under the influence of alcohol, high-risk sex, aggressive behaviors and violent crimes. Brain development is not completed by age 20. Alcohol can alter brain structure and function, potentially causing cognitive or learning problems and making the brain more prone to alcohol dependence. A study tracked the long-term drinking behavior of more than 39,000 people who began consuming alcohol in the 1970s, when some states had legal drinking ages as low as 18. It shows that people who lived in states with lower minimum drinking ages weren't more likely to consume more alcohol overall or to drink more frequently than those from states where

Alcohol is the most widely and commonly used and abused substance among America's youth.



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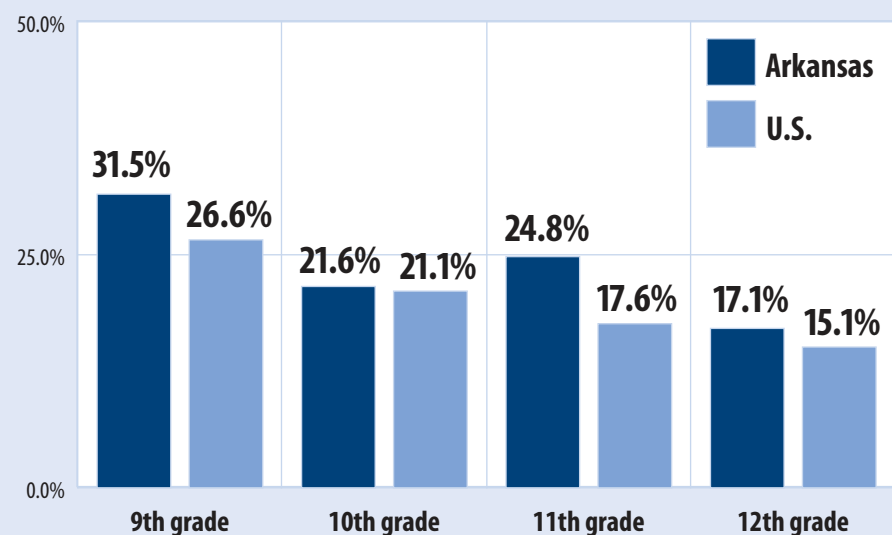


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*For the purpose of this document, underage refers to persons under the minimum legal drinking age of 21. Youth refers to children and adolescents under the age of 21.

FIGURE 1.
Percentage of students who drank alcohol for the first time (other than a few sips) before the age of 13, by grade (2011)



SOURCE: 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

the drinking age was 21. However, when they did drink, they were more likely to drink heavily.⁶ Youth who began drinking before age 15 were four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and more than twice as likely to become alcohol abusers than those who began drinking at 21.⁷

Underage drinking is prevalent

In 2011, 65.9 percent of Arkansas students in grades 9-12 reported they used alcohol at least once in their lifetime. Approximately 33.9 percent of students used alcohol and 20.1 percent engaged in binge drinking during the past 30 days. Compared with national estimates, a higher percentage of Arkansas students initiated alcohol drinking before 13 years of age among all the grades. The prevalence of having drunk alcohol before age 13 was higher among 9th grade (31.5 percent) than 11th grade (24.8 percent), 10th grade (21.6 percent) and 12th grade (17.1 percent) students (Figure 1). For current alcohol use, students in 11th grade (38.0 percent) were more likely than students in 10th grade (34.3 percent), 12th grade (33.3 percent) and 9th grade (30.3 percent) to drink alcohol in the past 30 days. Among current drinkers, more than half of drinkers were binge drinkers among students in 10th grade (21.1 percent), 11th grade (25.1 percent) and 12th grade (20.8 percent) (Figure 2).

The prevalence of current alcohol use among Arkansas students in grades 9-11 was similar to national prevalence. The prevalence of binge drinking in 10th

How much is a drink?

A standard drink is roughly 14 grams of pure alcohol, which is found in:

- 12 ounces of beer
- 5 ounces of table wine
- 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits

What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking means men drinking five or more alcoholic drinks, or women drinking four or more alcoholic drinks within a short period of time. It takes fewer drinks for children:

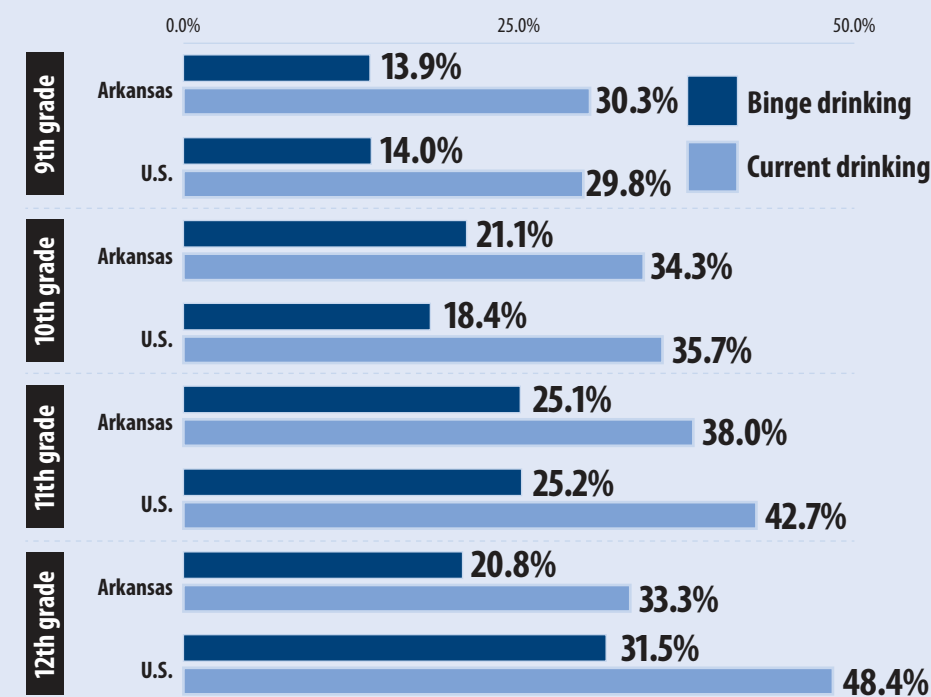
FOR BOYS:

- **Ages 9-13:**
About three drinks
- **Ages 14-15:**
About four drinks
- **Ages 16-17:**
About five drinks

FOR GIRLS:

- **Ages 9-17:**
About three drinks

FIGURE 2.
Binge and current alcohol use among students in the past 30 days, by grade (2011)



SOURCE: 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

grade was higher among Arkansas students (21.1 percent) than the national prevalence (18.4 percent).⁸ Arkansas 12th grade students had a lower current drinking rate (33.3 percent) than the national level (48.4 percent) (Figure 2).

How do young people get alcohol?

Underage drinking is illegal, and most grocery stores and alcohol outlets require identification to prove a customer's age for alcohol purchase. However, underage people are still able to obtain alcohol and consumed approximately 11 percent of alcohol sold in the nation.³ How do young people get alcohol? According to 2011 YRBS⁸, a third (31.6 percent) of current Arkansas alcohol drinkers grades 9-12 usually obtained alcohol by someone giving it to them. Girls (38.1 percent) are more likely to obtain alcohol for free than boys (25.2 percent). The 2012 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment survey showed the most prominent source of alcohol among Arkansas youth was from someone age 21 or older. The next most prominent sources were getting alcohol from someone under age 21, getting it from home with a parent's permission and getting it at home without a parent's permission. Students who did drink mostly drank at home or at someone else's home.¹⁰

Warning signs of underage drinking⁹

- Changes in mood, including anger and irritability
- Low energy level and less interest in activities and/or care in appearance
- Academic and/or behavioral problems in school
- Smelling alcohol on a young person's breath
- Problems concentrating and/or remembering
- Changing groups of friends
- Slurred speech
- Rebelliousness

Arkansas "social host" law:

Act 976, or the "social host" law, provides a "criminal liability for a social host who knowingly serves alcohol to persons under the age of 21 and who knowingly allows minors to consume alcohol on his or her property."

- A first violation is a Class C misdemeanor.
- A second violation is a Class A misdemeanor.
- A third or subsequent violation is a Class D felony.