

Adult and Underage Alcohol Use in Florida

Perhaps no other substance has as widespread consumption and acceptance in the United States as alcohol. It is the drug most used by adolescents today. Recent research show that those who begin drinking in their early teens are at greater risk of developing alcohol dependence at some point in their lives, more quickly and at younger ages, and of developing chronic, relapsing dependence (NIH News, 2006).

Consumption of Alcohol

Youth. Of the students surveyed in Florida in 2008, 53.2% have used alcohol on at least one occasion in their lifetimes. Current use is substantially lower. Overall, 29.8% of surveyed Florida students reported the use of alcohol in the past 30 days.

Lifetime Prevalence	Grade Level		
	8 th grade	10 th grade	12 th grade
Alcohol	47.9	66.0	73.9
Cigarettes	23.7	33.1	40.3
Marijuana	15.2	29.8	38.0
Inhalants	15.1	10.6	8.6
Any Illicit drug other than marijuana	21.4	22.6	25.4

Source: 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

Adults. Data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) continue to show that alcohol consumption by adult Floridians is at or below the levels of the nation except among persons 65 or older, where 30 day use is substantially higher than the national average and binge drinking is slightly higher.

Consequences of Alcohol Use

Florida reports a rate of alcohol related motor vehicle deaths per million miles traveled that is slightly higher than the national average. Similarly, Florida's three year age-adjusted death rate from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis is slightly above the national average. Among Florida counties, the highest rates of both of these fatal consequences occur in rural counties.

Data from Florida's Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YBRS) show that high school students who began drinking before the age of 13 are at much greater risk than all other students of engaging in a variety of risky behaviors related to sexuality, use of illicit drugs, carrying weapons, etc. While the very early alcohol use may not be causal, it is at the very least a sign of a syndrome of youth behavior and family dynamics that places young people at very high risk of harm.

- **Females** ages 11 to 18 were more likely than males to report past 30 day alcohol use (30.6 percent vs. 29 percent) and lifetime use of alcohol (54.9 percent vs. 51.5 percent).
- **Males** ages 11 to 18 were more likely to report binge drinking, which is defined as having had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row in the past two weeks (15.6 percent vs. 14.0 percent).
- Among three broad categories of **ethnicity**, White, non-Hispanic youth (34.5%) were most likely to have reported past 30 day alcohol use followed by Hispanic (31.5%) and African American youth (20.1%).
- Overall in 2008, alcohol use increased with increasing age among Florida students:

	Age 11	Age 18
Lifetime Use	18.3%	73.2%
Past 30 Day Use	6.8%	47.9%
Binge Drinking	1.8%	29.8%

Source: 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

Binge Drinking

Binge drinking rates in Florida's 2004 FYSAS were 12.5%, 21.6% and 27.9% respectively while rates for 2007 were 12.2% for eighth graders, 20.6% for tenth graders and 30.0% for 12th graders; Florida has seen a slight decrease since 2004 in binge drinking rates for younger adolescents, but a notable increase among 12th graders. About one-third of counties showed increases in binge drinking between 2004 and 2006, one-third showed decreases and one-third showed no change.

Consequences of Binge Drinking

Episodic heavy drinking, often referred to in the prevention literature as "binge drinking," is operationally defined in the FYSAS survey as reporting consumption of 5 or more drinks in a row at least once in the past two weeks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience the following:

- School problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities.
- Legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk.
- Physical problems, such as hangovers or illnesses.
- Unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity.
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development.
- Physical and sexual assault.
- Higher risk for suicide and homicide.
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries, such as burns, falls, and drowning.
- Memory problems.
- Abuse of other drugs.
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects.
- Death from alcohol poisoning.

About Florida's State Epidemiology Workgroup (SEW)

Florida's SEW was established in June 2005 under funding from a federal Strategic Prevention Framework – State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG). The SEW, which meets face-to-face on a semi-annual basis, is composed of members with expertise in epidemiologic data and/or drug policy drawn from a wide variety of state agencies, universities, and community-based organizations. SEW staffing is administered under a contract from Department of Children and Families to the Comprehensive Drug Research Center at the University of Miami - Miller School of Medicine (UM). For more information, visit: <http://ww3.med.miami.edu/tpeg/x55.xml>

