

The Impact of Underage Drinking

The Impact of Underage Drinking is a series of information pages designed to provide general information about some of the consequences of underage drinking.

According to the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey, alcohol continues to be the most widely used drug among Illinois youth. Survey results show that in the past year more students drink alcohol than use cigarettes, inhalants, and marijuana combined.

Underage drinking is the focus of the Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success program. Through this program, communities in Illinois are provided with resources to prevent the onset and reduce the progression of underage drinking and its related problems.



Academic Success

The negative impacts of underage alcohol use on academic performance can affect not only drinkers, but their student peers. While the effects of heavy, binge drinking* may be evident the same day or next day, moderate or occasional alcohol consumption by youth can have a less-observable impact. Research shows that youth alcohol use changes in the brain that affect young learners' ability to:

- Form memories of facts and events
- Learn new information
- Use executive functioning skills in support of their academics
- Comprehend and interpret visual information
- Comprehend language and maintain short-term verbal memories

Alcohol Use	% of U.S. high school students who engaged in each drinking behavior by grades mostly earned.	
	A's	D's/F's
Ever drank (at least 1 drink)	63%	87%
Current use (at least 1x in last 30 days)	32%	62%
Binge drinking (5+ drinks in a row at least 1x in last 30 days)	17%	46%
Drank before age 13 (more than a few sips)	14%	41%

WHEN FRIENDS DRINK

Taking care of or interacting with intoxicated friends can result in problems for non-drinkers that can affect their academic performance as well. Problems include:

- Study time disruptions
- Sleep disruptions
- Time spent taking care of drunk or buzzed friends
- Assaults at the hands of drinkers
- Humiliation and insults from intoxicated peers

THE COLLEGE YEARS

About one in four college students report academic consequences from drinking, including:

- Missing classes
- Falling behind in classes
- Reduced study hours for males; increased study hours for females who report needing to work harder to compensate for the negative effects of drinking
- Doing poorly on exams or papers
- Receiving lower grades overall

Heavy drinking has also been indicated as a probable contributor to student retention at colleges and universities.

*Binge drinking is defined by five or more alcoholic drinks within a two-hour period for males, four for females.

REFERENCE SOURCES

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