



# Underage drinking in Benton County

## EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON YOUTH

An American Medical Association report shows that adolescent drinkers perform worse in school, are more likely to fall behind and have an increased risk of social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence. Even occasional heavy drinking injures young brains.

Rather than “outgrowing” alcohol use, young abusers are significantly more likely to have drinking problems as adults. Researchers found that 45 percent of the people who began drinking before age 14 developed later alcohol dependence, compared with only 10 percent of those who waited until they were 21 or older to start drinking. More than one of every 20 youth ages 12 to 17 suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence requiring treatment.

In Oregon, youth who drink are more likely to be involved in other risky behaviors:

- Youth who drink are eight times more likely to smoke cigarettes and 10 times more likely to smoke marijuana.
- Nearly a quarter of eighth grade girls who binge-drink report attempting suicide in the past year.
- Two-thirds of 11th grade boys who binge-drink also gamble.

## IN BENTON COUNTY:

- Alcohol use and binge drinking is lower than the state average for youth of all ages.
- However, alcohol use and binge drinking is increasing for eighth grade youth.

### CONSUMPTION RATES

**Alcohol is the most widely used addictive substance in Oregon.**

#### One drink is...

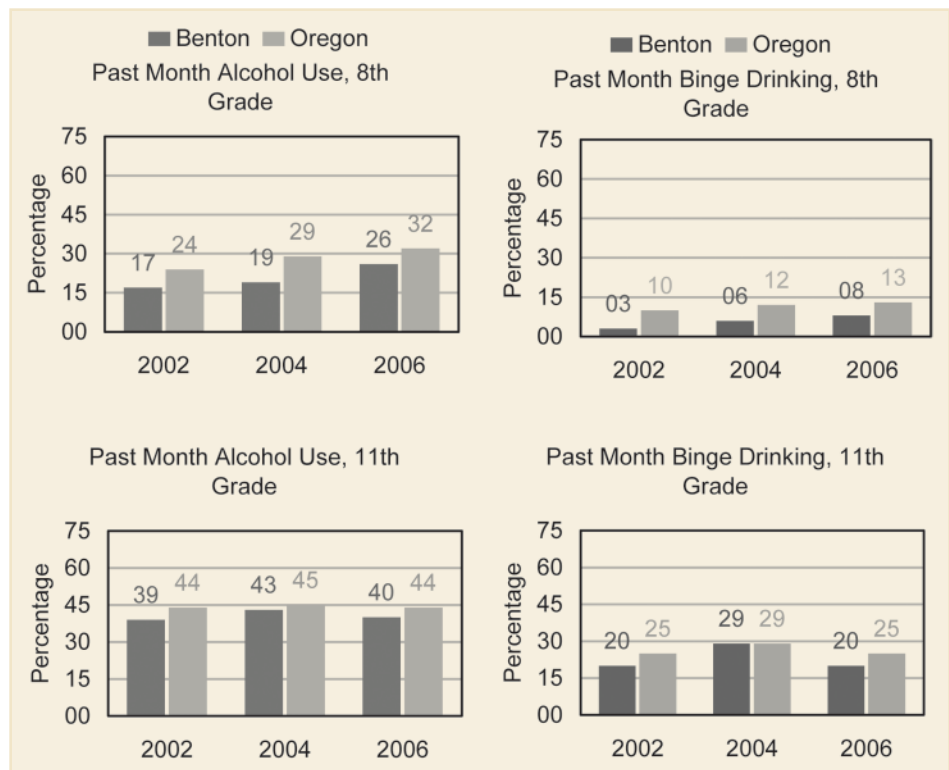
- 12 ounces of beer or
- 5 ounces of wine or
- 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits

Forty percent of 11th grade youth and about one of every four 8th graders drink alcohol on one or more occasions each month.

Binge drinking involves consumption of five or more drinks within a couple hours. About one of every five 11th grade youth and one of every twelve 8th graders binge drink on one or more days each month.

In 8th grade, girls have slightly higher rates of alcohol use and binge drinking. By 11th grade, this trend is reversed and boys have slightly higher rates of alcohol use and binge drinking.

One of every twenty 11th grade youth report driving after drinking.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit these Web sites:

**Face It, Parents** is Oregon's public education campaign using radio and television advertising written and produced by youth.  
[www.faceitparents.com](http://www.faceitparents.com)

**Stop Underage Drinking** is a portal of federal resources  
[www.stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov)

**Statewide contact:**

Jeff Ruscoe, M.Ed.  
Underage drinking prevention coordinator  
Phone: 503-945-5901  
E-mail: [jeff.ruscoe@state.or.us](mailto:jeff.ruscoe@state.or.us)

Department of Human Services  
Addictions and Mental Health Division  
500 Summer Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301-1118

**Benton County contact:**

Prevention coordinator  
Phone: 541-766-6247  
Benton County Health Department  
530 NW 27th Street – PO Box 579  
Corvallis, OR 97339-0579

*If you need this fact sheet in alternate format, please call 503-945-5763 (Voice) or 503-945-5895 (TTY).  
Addictions and Mental Health Division*

**WHAT PARENTS CAN DO**

Youth listen to their parents. Students were asked, "How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to drink beer, wine or hard liquor regularly?" Eighth graders who said their parents think it is "wrong or very wrong" were 2-½ times less likely to drink and four times less likely to binge drink than those who said their parents think it is "a little bit wrong or not wrong at all." Two-thirds of eighth graders and 82 percent of eleventh graders say it is easy or somewhat easy to get beer, wine or hard liquor. And they most often get alcohol at parties, from friends or by taking it from their homes.

**Parents can prevent underage drinking by:**

- Telling their children not to drink;
- Knowing their children's whereabouts; and
- Ensuring parties are alcohol-free and supervised by adults.

**WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO**

Youth who drink are at greater risk of academic failure. Alcohol use during adolescence is associated with significant and possibly irreversible damage to memory and learning. In Oregon, one in 12 youth who said they drank alcohol in the past 30 days also reported missing school or class because of drinking alcohol.

**Schools can help by:**

- Providing lessons about the effects of alcohol in elementary, middle and high school;
- Establishing and enforcing strict policies against alcohol use; and
- Providing information to parents about the consequences alcohol use can have on their children.

**WHAT COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNMENT CAN DO**

Community attitudes about underage drinking must support the efforts of parents and schools. Eighth graders who believe most adults think it is "wrong or very wrong" for someone their age to drink alcohol are half as likely to drink when compared to youth who believe adults think it "a little wrong or not wrong at all."

**Communities and local government can help by:**

- Sponsoring events that send the message that underage drinking is not allowed;
- Prohibiting open containers of alcohol in public places; and
- Supporting strict enforcement of underage drinking laws.

**DATA SOURCES**

*Data about Oregon youth comes from the Oregon Healthy Teens survey and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Information on the effects of alcohol on youth was obtained from the American Medical Association report, Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Use on the Brains of Children, Adolescents, and College Students.*