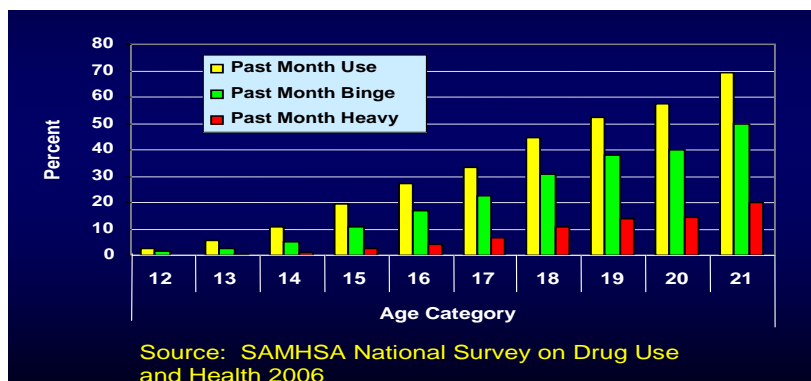




Statistical Snapshot of Underage Drinking

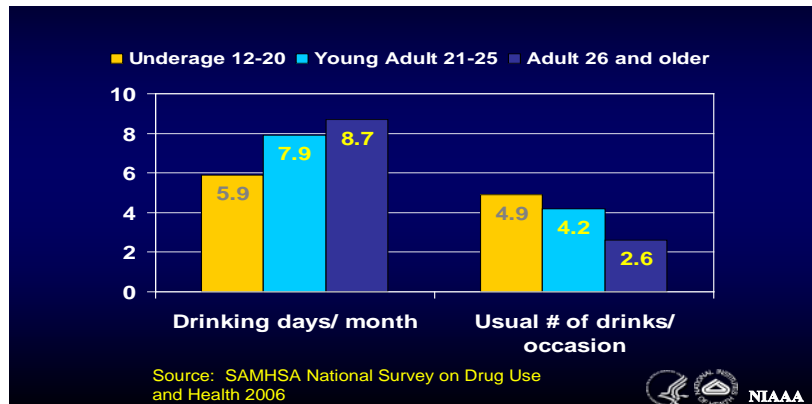
Alcohol consumption and dangerous patterns of drinking are widespread among adolescents and lead to many adverse consequences for underage drinkers and others.

- **Underage Drinking is Widespread:** There are an estimated 10.8 million underage drinkers in the U.S.
- **Alcohol is the Drug of Choice Among Adolescents:** Three-fourths of 12th graders, more than two-thirds of 10th graders, and about two in five 8th graders have consumed alcohol (more than a few sips) in their lifetime. Forty-five percent of 12th graders; 34 percent of 10th graders; and 17 percent of 8th graders reported using alcohol in the past month – more than cigarettes and marijuana combined.¹
- **Many Adolescents Engage in Binge Drinking:** Twenty-nine percent of 12th graders, 22 percent of 10th graders, and 11 percent of 8th graders have engaged in binge drinking.² In this study, binge drinking was defined as consuming 5 or more drinks on a single occasion.
- **Binge Drinking Increases Dramatically During Adolescence:**



From age 13 to age 21, the percentage of young people who report past month binge drinking increases from about 1 percent to 50 percent.³

- **Adolescents Drink Less Frequently than Adults but More Per Occasion:**



On average, underage drinkers consume about 5 drinks nearly 6 times a month, while adults 26 and older have between 2 and 3 drinks about 9 times per month.⁴

- **Adolescents Often Get Alcohol From Adults:** Underage youth report that alcohol is easy to obtain:

- In a recent survey, more than 40 percent of underage drinkers (persons aged 12 to 20 who drank in the past 30 days) reported obtaining alcohol at no cost from adults 21 or older.⁵
- The same survey also found that more than 6 percent of underage drinkers were given alcohol by their parents in the past month.
- The same survey also found that, the younger the underage drinker, the more likely he or she is to get alcohol from a parent, guardian, or other family member. For example, more than 30 percent of 12 to 14 year old drinkers get alcohol from these familial sources, compared to about 12 percent of drinkers age 18 to 20.

- **Fatal Injuries and Lifelong Dependence are Common Consequences of Underage Drinking:** Injury is the leading cause of death among young

people in the U.S. and alcohol is the leading contributor to injury deaths. In the U.S., an estimated 5,000 individuals under age 21 die each year from injuries caused by underage drinking.⁶

These include:

- **Motor Vehicle Crashes:** About 1,900 deaths
 - **Homicides:** About 1,600 deaths
 - **Suicides:** About 300 deaths
-
- **Alcohol Dependence:** Early alcohol use, independent of other risk factors, strongly predicts the development of alcohol dependence. Of all people who ever meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol dependence in their lifetime, nearly half do so by age 21 and two-thirds by age 25.⁷

 - **Numerous Risks are Associated with Underage Binge Drinking:** Among high school students in the U.S., those who binge drink frequently are at higher risk for the following outcomes than are students who abstain from drinking:⁸
 - Risky Sexual Behavior
 - Assaults
 - Sexual Assaults
 - Injuries
 - Academic Problems
 - Legal Problems

However, no causal connections have been established between all of these outcomes and binge drinking.

- **Underage Drinking is Common in the Military:** According to the most recent (2005) Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Military Personnel, 62.3 percent of underage military members drink

at least once a year. The same survey found that 21 percent of active duty military personnel age 20 and younger reported heavy alcohol use -- defined as drinking five or more drinks per typical drinking occasion -- within the past 30 days.⁹ A similar proportion of college students report binge drinking, as noted in the [*Statistical Snapshot of College Drinking*](#).

Notes/Additional Resources

¹ Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2006). *Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975–2005: Volume I, Secondary school students* (NIH Publication No. 06-5883). Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

² *Monitoring the Future* 2006

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k6nsduh/2k6Results.pdf>

⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k6nsduh/2k6Results.pdf>

⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2008) *Underage Alcohol Use: Findings from the 2002-2006 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health*. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/underage2k8/toc.htm>

⁶ U.S.Department of Health and Human Services. (2007) *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*. Office of the Surgeon General. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/calltoaction.pdf>

⁷ Hingson RW, Heeren T, Winter MR. Age at drinking onset and alcohol dependence: age at onset, duration, and severity. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 2006 Jul;160(7):739-46.

⁸ U.S.Department of Health and Human Services. (2007) *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*.

⁹ Bray RM, Hourani LL. Substance use trends among active duty military personnel: findings from the United States Department of Defense Health Related Behavior Surveys, 1980-2005. *Addiction*. 2007 Jul;102(7):1092-101.