



Making the Link

Underage Drinking and Violence

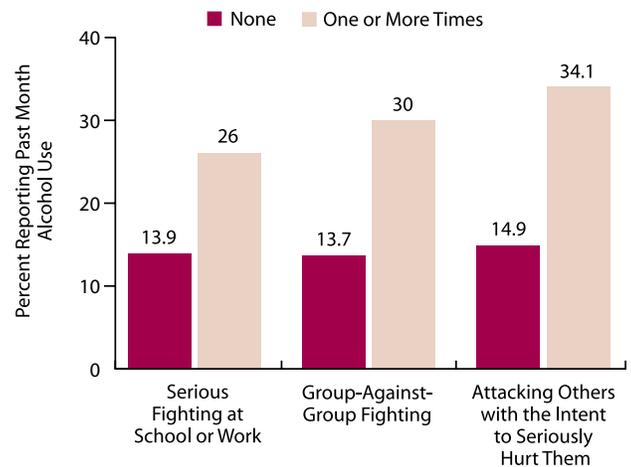
Underage drinking is linked to violent and aggressive behavior.

- According to a national survey, youths ages 12 to 17 who reported violent behaviors in the past year reported higher rates of past year illicit drug or alcohol use compared with youths who did not report violent behaviors.¹
- Almost 12 percent of adolescent drinkers (about 1.2 million 7th – 12th graders) engage in alcohol-related physical fighting.²
- A national study indicates that those who began drinking before age 14 were 11 times more likely to have ever been in a fight while drinking or after drinking than adults who began drinking after the age of 21.³
- Youths ages 12 to 17 who had engaged in past month binge alcohol use were almost four times as likely to have carried a handgun in the past year compared with youths who had not engaged in binge drinking.⁴

Studies suggest that boys who drink are prone to fighting and sexual aggression.

- In one study, males were almost twice as likely as females to engage in alcohol-related physical fighting (15.6 percent of males and 8.0 percent of females).⁵
- Among male high school students, 39 percent say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex with a girl who is drunk or high.⁶

Percentage of Youths Aged 12 to 17 Reporting Past Month Alcohol Use, by Whether or Not They Participated in Violent Behaviors During the Past Year: 1999*



* Data presented differ from previously published data from the 1999 NHSDA because of corrections made to imputation procedures.
 Source: NHSDA Report. Youth Violence Linked to Substance Use, 2001.

Studies suggest that girls who drink are more likely to be victims of self-inflicted violence.

- Among eighth grade girls who drink heavily, 37 percent report attempting suicide, whereas 11 percent of girls who do not drink report attempting suicide.⁷
- Researchers estimate that alcohol use is implicated in one- to two-thirds of sexual assault and “date rape” cases among teens and college students.⁸

¹ Office of Applied Studies. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. NHSDA Report. Youth Violence and Substance Use, 2001 Update. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2002.
² Swahn MH. Epidemiology of alcohol-related fighting among adolescents. Paper presented at the 129th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, October 23, 2001, Atlanta, GA.
³ Hingson R, Heeren T, Zakocs R. Age of drinking onset and involvement in physical fights after drinking. Pediatrics 108(4):872-877, 2001
⁴ Office of Applied Studies. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. NHSDA Report: Youths Who Carry Handguns. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2001.
⁵ Swahn. Epidemiology of alcohol-related fighting among adolescents.
⁶ Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Youth and Alcohol: Dangerous and Deadly Consequences. Washington, DC: Health and Human Services, 1992.
⁷ Windle MA, Miller-Tutzauer C, Domenico D. Alcohol use, suicidal behavior, and risky activities among adolescents. J Res Adolesc 2(4):317-330, 1992.
⁸ Office of the Inspector General. Youth and Alcohol.

Initiative Partners

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIH)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Office of Research on Women's Health (NIH)

National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH)

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DOJ)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (DHHS)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT)