



2018 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey

Data Brief: Alcohol

In fall 2018, over 230,000 students participated in the Healthy Youth Survey. Over 900 schools administered the survey, representing all 39 Washington counties and 228 school districts.

Nationwide, alcohol use plays a substantial role in all three leading causes of death among youth: injuries, suicides, and homicides (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth). Youth who begin drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who start after age 21 (National Survey on Drug Use and Health).

- Both the percentage of students reporting any alcohol use and binge drinking (having 5 or more drinks in a row) declined over the past decade and was relatively stable between 2016 and 2018.

Past 30-day alcohol use dropped:

- 8th grade – down from 16% to 8%
- 10th grade – down from 32% to 19%
- 12th grade – down from 41% to 28%

Binge drinking dropped:

- 8th grade – down from 9% to 5%
- 10th grade – down from 18% to 10%
- 12th grade – down from 26% to 15%

Although we have seen positive change, too many teens are still using alcohol.

- One in five 10th graders used alcohol in the past month; one in ten binge drank in the past two weeks.
- Heavy use, drinking 6+ days in the past month and/or 2+ episodes of binge drinking in the past two weeks remains a concern. About one-third of current alcohol users are heavy users.
- Frequent alcohol drinking remains a concern. About one-third of current alcohol drinkers report drinking six or more times a month.

Driving under the influence of alcohol has declined since 2008 and decreased among 12th graders between 2016 and 2018.

- Five percent of 10th graders and 7 percent of 12th graders reported driving after drinking alcohol in 2018.
- Seventeen to 18 percent of students reported riding in a car in the past month with a driver who had been drinking.

Keep talking to teens; they're listening.

- A majority of teens reported their parents talked to them in the last year about the risks of drinking.
- Most teens believe their parents don't approve of teen drinking, 81 percent of 8th graders, 70 percent of 10th graders, and 56 percent of 12th graders reported their parents think teen drinking is very wrong.
- Over the past decade, the percentage of students perceiving low or no risk to using alcohol regularly has dropped to about one in four across grades.

State, local, and community prevention efforts are crucial for reducing youth alcohol use and driving under the influence.

- Reducing underage drinking is a statewide priority. For information about Washington's underage drinking prevention program strategies, visit www.TheAthenaForum.org/SPEplan
- For information on what you can do, visit www.StartTalkingNow.org.

For more Healthy Youth Survey fact sheets and reports, visit www.AskHYS.net.