

# New report shows steady decline in underage drinking from 2002 to 2013

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*Yet alcohol still remains the most widely used substance of abuse among youths aged 12 to 20*  
A new report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) shows a significant decline in the level of past month (current) underage alcohol consumption, as well as a drop in underage binge drinking.

The report shows that level of current underage drinking among those aged 12 to 20 decreased from 28.8 percent in 2002 to 22.7 percent in 2013.

Likewise, the level of current underage binge drinking also declined from 19.3 percent in 2002 to 14.2 percent in 2013. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least one day in the past 30 days.

Despite this reduction, however, more youths aged 12 to 20 currently use alcohol (22.7 percent) than use tobacco (16.9 percent) or use illicit drugs (13.6 percent).

“When parents communicate clear expectations and they are supported by community efforts to prevent underage drinking, we can make a difference,” said Frances M. Harding, director of SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). “However, there are still 8.7 million current underage drinkers and 5.4 million current underage binge drinkers. This poses a serious risk not only to their health and to their future, but to the safety and well-being of others. We must do everything we can to prevent underage drinking and get treatment for young people who need it.”

The last decade has seen an increased focus on preventing underage drinking in national and local policy, community coalitions, law enforcement efforts, and through campaigns, including SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.” underage drinking prevention national media campaign that encourages parents and caregivers to talk with children early about the dangers of alcohol.

As part of this campaign the “Talk. They Hear You.” mobile app helps parents prepare for one of the most important conversations they may ever have with their children. This free app features an interactive simulation that uses avatars to help parents practice bringing up the topic of alcohol, learn the questions to ask, and get ideas for keeping the conversation going. More information about the campaign and talking to young people about underage drinking is available at: <http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov>.

SAMHSA also has materials for how parents can talk to their children in a variety of situations -- including teenagers who are heading off to college:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXOVzTpjDrA> (link is external)

The report, *Underage Drinking Declined Between 2002 and 2013* is based on SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health report, an annual national survey of 67,5000 Americans aged 12 and older. For a copy of the full report go to:

[http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report\\_1978/Spotlight-1978.pdf](http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_1978/Spotlight-1978.pdf)

**For more information, contact the SAMHSA Press Office at 240-276-2130.**

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