

News Release

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Underage Drinking 2005: Girls Bingeing More

Nation's biggest youth drug problem stays big

Washington, DC - Binge drinking among girls is growing at a faster rate than boys, according to a [new status report on underage drinking in the United States](#) released today by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at Georgetown University. Underage Drinking in the United States, 2005: A Status Report summarizes the most up-to-date, relevant research and data on underage drinking. Highlights from CAMY's report include:

- According to all three federal surveys, girls are binge drinking more, while boys are bingeing less or increasing their bingeing at a slower rate than their female peers.
- Twelfth-grade female drinkers and binge drinkers are now more likely to drink distilled spirits than beer.
- Long-term studies now show a direct link between alcohol advertising and youth drinking. Young people who see and hear more alcohol ads are more likely to drink (and in many cases drink more heavily) than their peers.
- Every day, 5,400 young people under 16 take their first drink of alcohol.

"Underage drinking costs the United States more than \$62 billion each year. At this crucial time when research shows that girls are binge drinking with alarming regularity, more must be done to reduce youth access to alcohol, and the appeal of alcohol to our youth," said David Jernigan, CAMY's executive director.

Youth are more likely to drink alcohol than smoke tobacco or use other illegal drugs. In the most recent national household survey, more than 7 million underage youth reported binge drinking ? having five or more drinks on a single occasion ? at least once in the past 30 days.

Every day three teens die from drinking and driving, and at least six more die from other alcohol-related causes, such as homicide, suicide and drowning. Heavy alcohol use in adolescence may interfere with brain development, causing loss of memory and other skills.

Underage youth continue to find alcohol easily accessible, according to federal surveys. At the same time, alcohol's appeal to young people is substantial: between 2001 and 2004, for instance, the number of television alcohol ads seen by youth ages 12 to 20 increased by more than 30 percent.

Research has found that the more difficult it is for youth to obtain alcohol, the less likely they are to drink. Policies that reduce youth access include beer keg registration, sales to minors compliance checks and penalties, and commercial and social host liability. Policies that counter the link between youth exposure to alcohol advertising and the greater likelihood of youth drinking include stronger self-regulation by alcohol companies, for instance tightening advertising placement standards to reduce the number of alcohol ads that youth will be more likely to see than adults.

"At the end of the day we know how to reduce and prevent underage drinking," said Jernigan. "What is lacking is the will to put what we know to work on behalf of our youth."

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