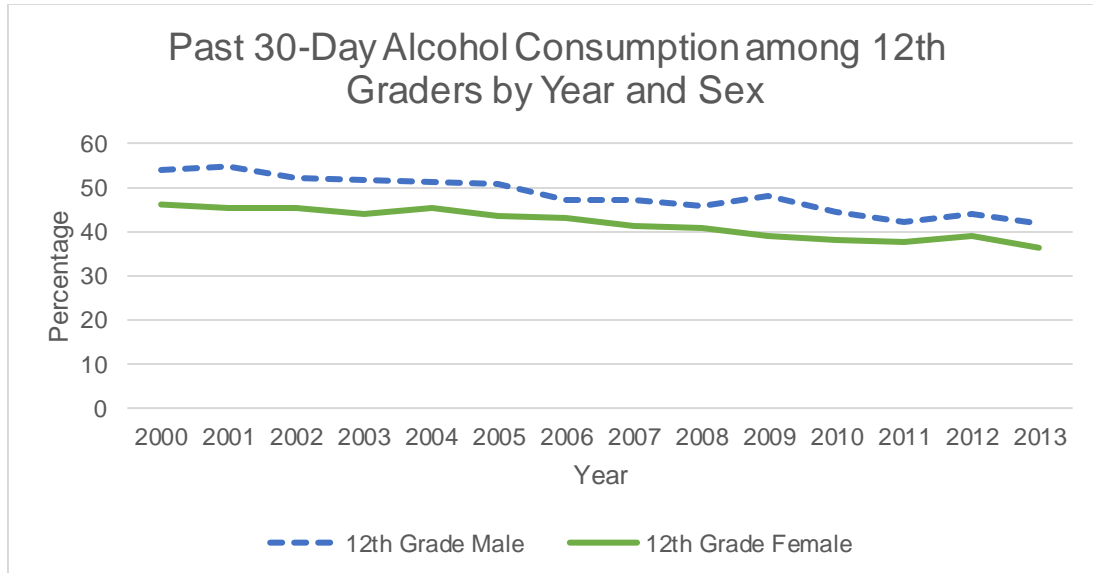


# Women, Girls, and Alcohol

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM:

- In 2015, 66% of female high school students had ever drunk alcohol compared to 62% of male high school students.<sup>1</sup>The gender gap between girls' and boys' past 30-day alcohol use closed for 8<sup>th</sup> graders and is narrowing for 12<sup>th</sup> graders:<sup>2</sup>



- From 2002 to 2012, binge drinking declined for both 12 to 20-year-old males and 12 to 17-year-old females but not 18 to 20-year-old females.<sup>3</sup>
- The percentage of males age 12+ who abuse or are dependent on alcohol decreased between 2002 and 2012, but there was no such decrease for females.<sup>3</sup>

## YOUTH EXPOSURE TO ALCOHOL ADVERTISING:

- Longitudinal data shows 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls' frequency of exposure to alcohol advertising predicts alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems by 9<sup>th</sup> grade. These relationships hold even after controlling for alcohol problems in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, age, friend's/adult's drinking, general TV watching, acculturation, and parent's job/education.<sup>4</sup>
- Girls are more likely to prefer alcopops than boys. Specifically, flavored alcohol brands Smirnoff Ice, Mike's, and Bartles & Jaymes are twice as popular among underage girls as they are among underage boys.<sup>5</sup>
- Girls may be particularly susceptible to alcohol advertising, especially to alcohol-branded merchandise (ABM). One study found that 10-to 14-year-old girls who owned ABM were 3.3 times more likely to start using alcohol within 1-2 years than girls who did not own ABM. There was no relationship between owning ABM and early initiation of drinking in boys in this age group.<sup>6</sup>

- Underage women aged 18-20 years old were exposed to more advertising than adult women for 16 of the top 25 brands they consumed.<sup>7</sup>

## **HEALTH CONSEQUENCES:**

- Women generally drink smaller amounts and less often than men. However, women drinkers are at higher risk for certain medical problems, including liver, brain, and heart damage than are men who drink comparable amounts.<sup>8</sup>
- Women metabolize alcohol differently than men. When women and men of the same body weight drink the same amount of alcohol, women reach higher peak blood alcohol levels.<sup>9</sup>
- Several meta-analyses risk of breast cancer rises as the level of consumption increases; the risk of breast cancer rises by 2% to 12% for each additional standard drink consumed per day.<sup>10 11</sup>
- Approximately 6,133 breast cancer deaths in the United States are attributable to alcohol consumption.<sup>12 13</sup>

## **DRINK DRIVING:**

- From 1990 to 2007, the rate of self-reported drunk driving decreased 12% for men age 18 years or older, but the rate of women's drunk driving only fell by 2%. During that same time, men's arrests for driving under the influence decreased by 32% while women's arrests only declined by 5%.<sup>14</sup>
- The sex differences are striking among those younger than 18 years old. Between 1998 and 2007, boys' DUI arrest rates fell by 23.7% but girls' rates rose 28.0%.<sup>15</sup>

## **PREGNANCY & MATERNAL HEALTH:**

- No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy, and there is a dose-response relationship between binge drinking and adverse outcomes for the fetus.<sup>16</sup>
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) include cognitive, behavioral, and physical abnormalities due to prenatal alcohol exposure.<sup>15</sup> Up to 2.4%-4.8% of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students (24-48 cases of FASD per 1,000 first grade children) have an FASD, and they are 100% preventable.<sup>17</sup>
- In a study using BRFSS data from 2011-2013, 1 in 10 (10.2%) pregnant women aged 18-44 years reported drinking while pregnant. One in 33 (3.1%) pregnant women reported binge drinking during their pregnancy.<sup>18</sup>
- Early initiation of alcohol use increases the likelihood that a teen mother will drink during pregnancy.<sup>19</sup>

## **RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND SEXUAL ASSAULT:**

- A 2006 study of 551 college females found 20.4% experienced an alcohol-related sexual assault.<sup>20</sup>

- Forty-seven percent of women aged 18 to 24 years old who were raped or sexually assaulted between 1995 and 2013 thought their attacker was under the influence of alcohol/drugs.<sup>21</sup>
- Young women's first sexual intercourse that involves alcohol is more likely to be unplanned and consist of casual sex with an older partner.<sup>22</sup>
- Each year between 1995 and 2013, an estimated 96,970 youth aged 18 to 24 years were sexually assaulted or date raped by another youth who had been drinking.<sup>23</sup>

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## Notes

1 Calculated using 2015 YRBS data available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/yrbs/data.htm>

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