



*Communities United for
Substance Abuse Prevention
NH SPF Region D*

Young Adults Survey Summary (18-24 years)

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Alcohol & Substance Use Among Young Adults in Greater Sullivan County

Background

Communities United for Substance Abuse Prevention (CUFSAP) is a regional Community Prevention Coalition funded by a grant from the NH Strategic Prevention Framework (Region D) grant. Sullivan County is our fiscal agent.

Methodology

8 field interviewers spent 4 weekends in late May and June, 2009 visiting communities throughout the CUFSAP area (most of Sullivan County and adjacent communities Walpole and Alstead in Cheshire County) to find and survey young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. Interviewers went door-to-door and also to areas where young adults were likely to cluster (parks, ballfields, swimming holes, shopping areas, downtown streets, etc.) conducting a 20-minute survey. This is the first comprehensive survey of young adult substance use our region. Research was conducted and supervised by Harry Wolhandler, CUFSAP Evaluator.

Demographics ...

The survey targeted youths between 18 and 24.

Half of the respondents were female, half were male.

Ethnically, this group is slightly more diversified than the overall population (white: 91% vs. 97% for the county; black or african american: 7%; Native American: 2%; Hispanic 2% - note that some respondents fit more than a single category, so results add to more than 100%)

Education: one in five attend school full time (19%), and one in six part-time (16%).

Job status: Overall, two in five work full time, and three in ten work part-time. One in four are seeking work. (Among older respondents, 21-25, half work full time, one in four are part-time, and one in five seek work. Among younger respondents, 18-20, one in four work full time, two in five are part-time, and one in four are seeking more work). Few are not working or seeking work (5%).

Alcohol Consumption Patterns

Four in five young adults had at least one drink in the past 30 days. Most drank less than a third of the time (56% drank on 1 to 9 of the past 30 days), while 22% drank on 10 to 29 of the past 30 days. Only 3% drank on all 30 of the past 30 days.

Nearly all who drink began before they turned 21. Seven in ten started before they turned 18. One in four had their first drink before they turned 12, but drinking really begins to take off among between the ages of 14 (9th grade) and 16 (11th grade).

Most young adults (65%) think that their peers typically consume 5 or more drinks at parties or social occasions. Beer is the drink of choice (61%), while hard liquor (20%) and pre-mixed or sweet drink drinks like hard lemonade, twisted tead, wine coolers (17%) make up most of the rest.

Attitudinally, a majority feel it is ok for people to get drunk occasionally if it doesn't interfere with work or other responsibilities (59%). One in five (22%) feel that it is ok even if it does interfere with work or responsibilities if that's what the individual wants to do. When asked to project what others their age believe, three in ten (30%) think their peers feel it is ok even if it does interfere with work or responsibilities if that's what the individual wants to do.

Acquiring Alcohol / Preventive beliefs

Underage young adults aged 18 to 20 generally get alcohol from older friends and siblings (70%) or give friends money to buy it for them (56%). Only one in four say that 18 to 20 year olds are able to buy alcohol at stores (28%) or bars and restaurants (15%). A majority say it is easy for 18 to 20 year olds to get alcohol if they want to (71%).

While only a third think drinking one or two drinks daily presents moderate or great risk, half think having five or more drinks once or twice a weekend presents a risk, and the vast majority, four in five, think daily binge drinking (5+ drinks in a setting) is a risky behavior.

Most (85%) believe that parents can have a strong influence on their child's decision to use alcohol. A majority (63%) think advertising influences a young person's decision to drink.

On the other hand, a similar majority (66%) think it is ok for underage drinkers to party as long as they don't drive. Half (50%) agree that young adults aged 18 to 25 who don't drink alcohol at a party feel left out. Fewer than one in four are concerned about drinking the our community (23%).

Marijuana Use

Three fourths (77%) of young adults have tried marijuana, hashish or related substances, and nearly half (48%) have smoked it in the past 30 days. One in four have smoked marijuana or related substances on at least 10 of the past 30 days (10 to 29 days – 12%; all 30 days – 14%).

Marijuana trial generally begins at age 12, and blossoms between the ages of 14 and 16. By ages 17 and 18, fewer were first-time triers. There was little first-time trial among young adults 19 or older.

Other Drugs

Over their entire lifetimes, nearly a third of young adults (31%) have ever taken over-the-counter drugs to get high.

A majority (58%) have ever taken a prescription drug like ocycontin, percocet, vicodin, adderall, ritalin or xanax without a doctor's orders. One in four have taken one of these prescription drugs in the past 30 days, and one in ten have taken them on 10 or more of the past 30 days. Prescription drug use without doctor's orders tends to begin later than either alcohol use or marijuana use, blossoming around age 16.

Two in five have ever tried other illegal substances like LSD, cocaine, heroin, methedrine or ecstasy, and one in five have used one of these in the past 30 days. Significant first-time trial begins around age 14 and blossomes between ages 16 and 18, tapering off by age 20.

Community Messaging about Danger of Alcohol Use

In the past 3 months, half (49%) have not heard any messaging about the dangers of harm due to underage drinking or binge drinking, and two in five (40%) have only heard one to 3 messages. At this low level, advertising messaging is ineffective at leading individuals to drink less or become more concerned about their drinking.

Nearly half (47%) know parents or other adults in the community who host parties where alcohol is available or served to underage youth. A strong majority (70%) say they would be unlikely to report a party where alcoholic beverages might be available to people under 21. Most (69%) say it is unlikely that someone under the age of 21 who drank beer, wine or hard liquor in the the community would be arrested by the police.

Nearly all (90%) are aware that it is against the law in New Hampshire to host a party where alcohol is consumed by underage people even if they don't provide the alcohol. Obviously, that has little impact on their behaviors.