

Alcohol Use in North Carolina: Current Research



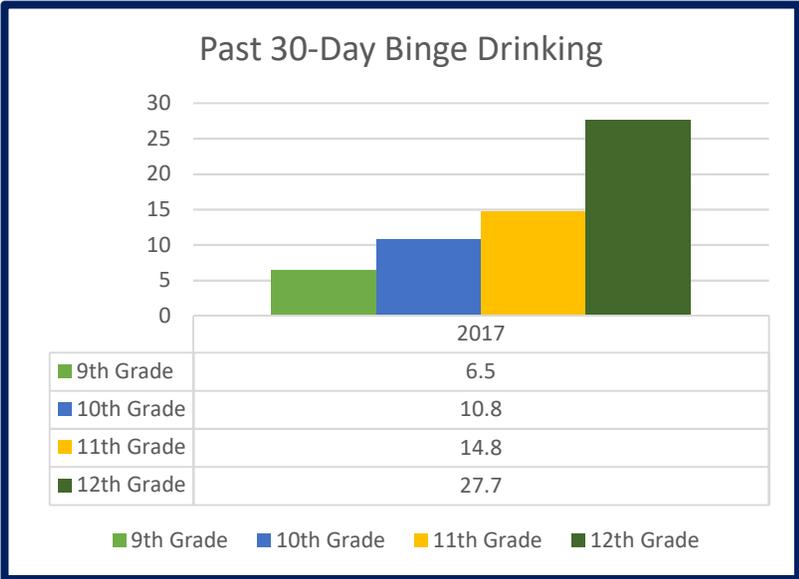
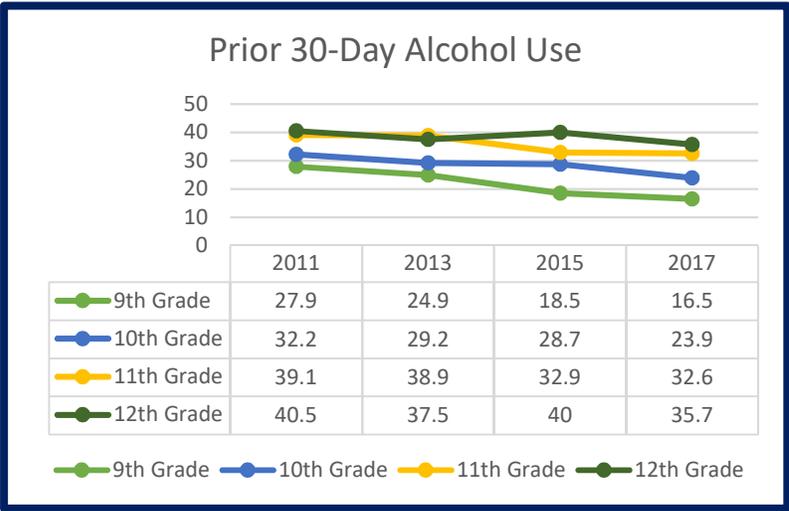
Overview

Alcohol is a sedative and a widely used substance among young people. At low doses it acts a stimulant while at high doses it is a potent depressant. Alcohol causes many side effects including slurred speech, drowsiness, impaired judgement and in higher doses it can cause vomiting, breathing difficulties and unconsciousness. Binge drinking is far more dangerous than casual consumption of alcohol. At high doses alcohol can lead to coma, breathing difficulties and death. The long-term effects of alcohol are extremely adverse, including liver disease, heart disease, ulcers, and various cancers.

Teen Use Rates in North Carolina

The 2017 NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides prior 30-day use rates (current use) for North Carolina students from 2011 – 2017. Rates are down, but teen alcohol use remains high.

North Carolina youth in the 12th grade had the highest percent of alcohol use, with nearly 36% reporting current use. Use rates are declining for grades 9th – 12th between 2011 - 2017.



North Carolina youth had a 12.9% increase in binge drinking between 11th and 12th grade. This almost doubles the amount of current binge drinking between 11th and 12th grade.

How North Carolina Compares Nationally

Effective SUD prevention initiatives have contributed to the decline of underage alcohol use rates in North Carolina, however, teens in NC are continuing to use alcohol at higher rates than their peers across the country. In 2017, North Carolina 23.9% of 10th graders reported current alcohol use- while 19.7% of teens of the same age across the country report current use. Similarly, 35.7% of NC 12th grade students report regular use, compared to the national average of 33.2%. Underage drinking rates are on the decline, but it is important to note that teens in North Carolina are using alcohol at high rates.

Tips for Parents and Prevention Professionals

- The most important thing about preventing underage alcohol use is providing a positive role model for your children.
- Keep alcohol safely secured in a locked cabinet at all times. Know how much alcohol you have in the home.
- Be open to communication about alcohol use and discuss regularly your expectations for your children to not experiment and to make safe choices.
- Making sure that you have a plan for when your child asks questions about alcohol.
- Get and provide proper education about responsible use and the dangers of abusing alcohol.
- Create a healthy environment for children to ask questions and provide them with accurate information on alcohol.
- Monitor youth activities throughout adolescence.
- Use interactive techniques when teaching alcohol education to keep students engaged and involved.
- Active family involvement in prevention is essential to the success of any program.

Parents and not just prevention professionals should monitor the attitudes about alcohol with young people closely. If your child begins making light jokes about alcohol use, even if they are jokes on social media, this shift may indicate a change in perception of harm. This is a time to pay close attention, have ongoing conversations, and ensure proper monitoring and alcohol storage in the home. Alcohol is one often one of the first substances that young people are exposed to, and the earlier the use begins, the higher the risk of harm.

As a statewide agency, The North Carolina Training and Technical Assistance (NCTTA) Center provides workforce development, training, and technical assistance opportunities to substance abuse prevention stakeholders. Funding for the NCTTA is provided by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services with funding from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. To learn more visit ncpreventiontta.org.

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