

# Alcohol: Underage Drinking

## UNDERAGE AND UNDER THE TABLE

Alcohol use by Iowa youth is a serious problem. The 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimated that 18% (approximately 45,000) of Iowans 12-17 years of age and 67% (approximately 234,000) of Iowans ages 18-25 had used alcohol during the past month. The same survey estimated that 11% (approximately 28,000) of Iowans 12-17 years of age and 51% (approximately 177,000) of Iowans ages 18-25 had engaged in binge drinking during the past month. The percent of 18-25 year-old Iowans who had used alcohol and engaged in binge drinking in the past month was higher than the national rate. Favorable community and peer norms about alcohol use and easy access both contribute to this problem.



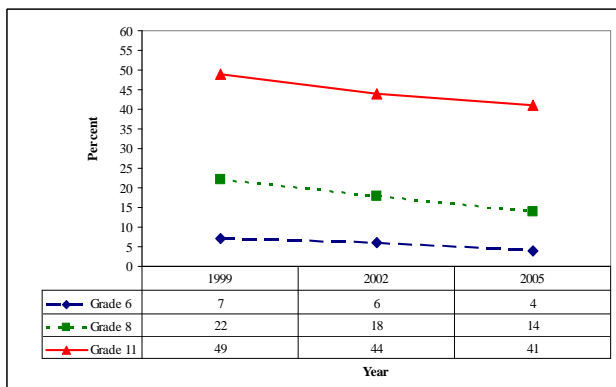
### IN BRIEF

- For every five 11th graders in Iowa, two drank alcohol in the past month.
- For every three 11th graders in Iowa, one engaged in binge drinking in the past month.
- Binge drinking is defined as four or more drinks for females and five or more for males 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.
- A drink refers to one half ounce of absolute alcohol as found in one 12-oz beer, one 4-oz glass of wine, or one 1-oz shot of 100 proof distilled spirits.

## ALCOHOL USE

Even though there is a downward trend, 20% of eighth graders surveyed in 2005 reported using alcohol before turning 13 (Iowa Youth Survey, 2005).

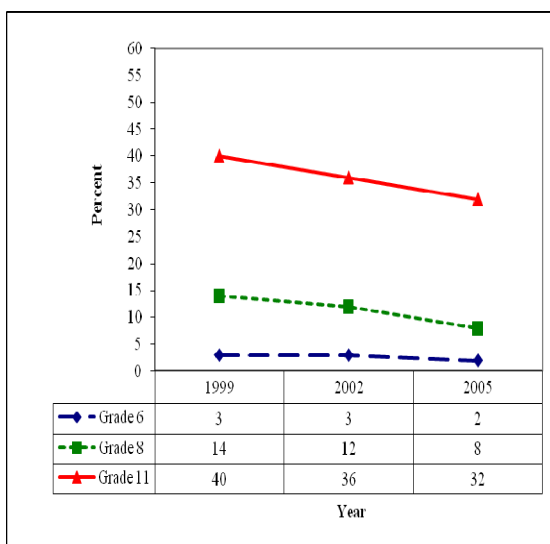
**Figure:** Percent of 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>-Graders Reporting Current Alcohol Use (Past 30 Days)



Source: Iowa Youth Survey, 2005

Although current alcohol use has fallen for each grade reported in the Iowa Youth Survey since 1999, the overall number of youth reporting current alcohol use is still alarming. For every five 11th graders in Iowa, two drank alcohol in the past month and one in every three engaged in binge drinking in the past month. The binge drinking ratio for 8th graders is about one in ten. Overall, 12-to-17 year olds in Iowa report current and binge drinking rates that are that higher than the national averages.

**Figure:** Percent of 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>-Graders Reporting Current Binge Drinking (Past 30 Days)



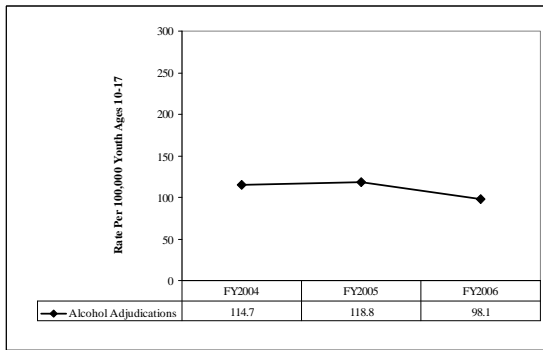
Source: Iowa Youth Survey, 2005

## CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL USE

The numbers of **suspensions and expulsions from school** for both alcohol and drugs increased per 100,000 students from 292 in 2005-2006 to 360 in 2006-2007.

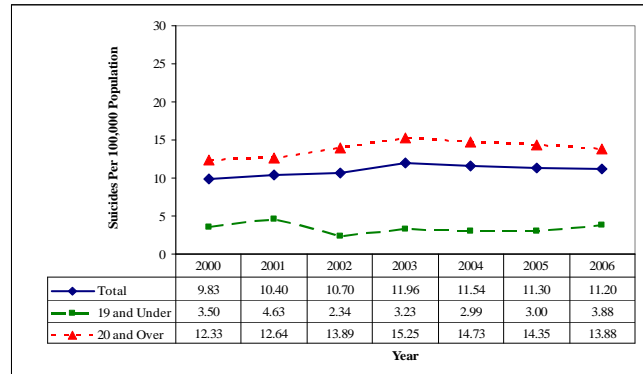
Even though juvenile **adjudications** due to alcohol were lower in fiscal year 2006 than in fiscal years 2004 or 2005, this may not indicate a decrease in offense rates. The rate of alcohol-related juvenile adjudications in Iowa per 100,000 youth ages 12-17 was 98 in fiscal year 2006.

**Figure:** Juvenile Adjudications Due to Alcohol, by state fiscal year



Source: Iowa Court Information System, Justice Data Warehouse

**Figure:** Suicides per 100,000 Population, by calendar year



Source: Vital Records

A 2006 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that, of **suicide** victims who were tested for alcohol or drugs, approximately 33% were positive for alcohol and 16% were positive for opiates.

The number of suicides in Iowa has remained relatively stable in recent years, averaging approximately 325 suicides from 2000 to 2006, as has the population-adjusted suicide rate.

## CONCLUSIONS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING IN IOWA

- Underage drinking is a major problem in Iowa.
- According to estimates, more than a quarter-million Iowans under the age of 25 are current alcohol users.
- For every five 11th graders in Iowa, two drank alcohol in the past month; and for every twenty 8th graders, three drank in the past month.
- Consequences of alcohol use can be significant and far-reaching; many Iowa youth incur these consequences with disastrous personal and societal results.
- Youth drinking rates in Iowa have fallen slightly since 1999—this trend can be sustained through continued research-based prevention efforts; increase communication among peer groups and between youth and caring adults; and continued investment in Iowa youth.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information or to learn about treatment resources contact the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center at 1-866-242-4111 or [www.drugfreeinfo.org](http://www.drugfreeinfo.org).

**Developed by the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup:** Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Behavioral Health; Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning; Iowa Department of Corrections; Iowa Department of Education; Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy; Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation; and the Minnesota Institute of Public Health

