



# Underage Drinking In Texas

## Underage Drinking is a Texas-sized Problem

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among Texas youth. About **1 in 4 (25%)** middle and high school students report using alcohol in the past month and about **1 in 2 (58%)** report using alcohol at least once in their lifetime. Past-month binge drinking was reported by **18%** of middle and high school students and about **40%** of college students in Texas.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Underage Drinking Harms Youth

Apart from being illegal, underage drinking puts youth at risk. Alcohol use during adolescence has been shown to impair memory and increase adolescents' risk of developing alcohol dependency later in life. Underage drinking is also linked to a number of negative consequences, such as drunk driving, fatal crashes, suicide, sexual assault, and high-risk sex.<sup>3</sup>

## Underage Drinking Costs Texans

In 2006, underage drinking cost Texans **\$1.8 billion**. These costs are primarily due to health-care costs and lost productivity but are also associated with motor vehicle crashes, fire response, and the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup>



## Underage Drinkers Get Alcohol from Social Settings

Most underage drinkers get their alcohol from parties and friends. In fact, in Texas 39% of middle and high school students and 78% of underage college students report obtaining alcohol at a party or from friends, respectively.<sup>1,2</sup> Also, about one-third of high school seniors in Texas say alcohol is always used at the parties they attend.<sup>1</sup>

## Underage Drinking Can Be Prevented

Prevention strategies that change the community or environment where drinking occurs reduce underage drinking and related harms. A few recommended strategies to reduce underage drinking in Texas are:

- Increase alcohol excise taxes
- Train law enforcement officers in controlled party dispersal techniques to safely break up underage drinking parties
- Pass local social host ordinances to deter underage drinking parties by holding social hosts accountable
- Strengthen enforcement of zero-tolerance laws
- Limit alcohol outlet density and youth exposure to alcohol marketing, and
- Implement screening and brief intervention for risky drinking with youth and young adults



**25%** of middle and high school students report using alcohol in the past month

**18%** of middle and high school students reported binge drinking in the past month

<sup>1</sup> DSHS Texas School Survey of Substance Use Among Students, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> DSHS Texas Survey of Substance Use Among College Students, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> NIAAA Alcohol Alert, No. 59, April 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Sacks, J. J., Roerber, J., Bouchery, E. E., Gonzales, K., Chaloupka, F. J., & Brewer, R. D. (2013). State Costs of Excessive Alcohol Consumption, 2006. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 45(4), 474-485.