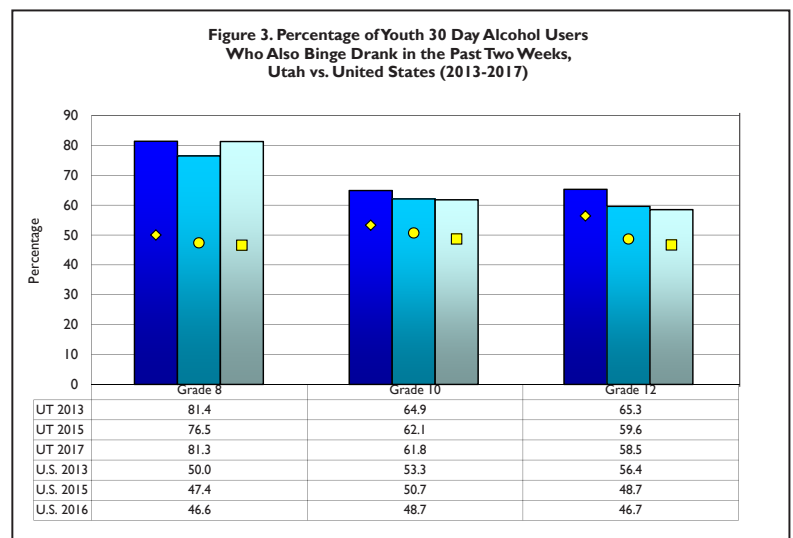
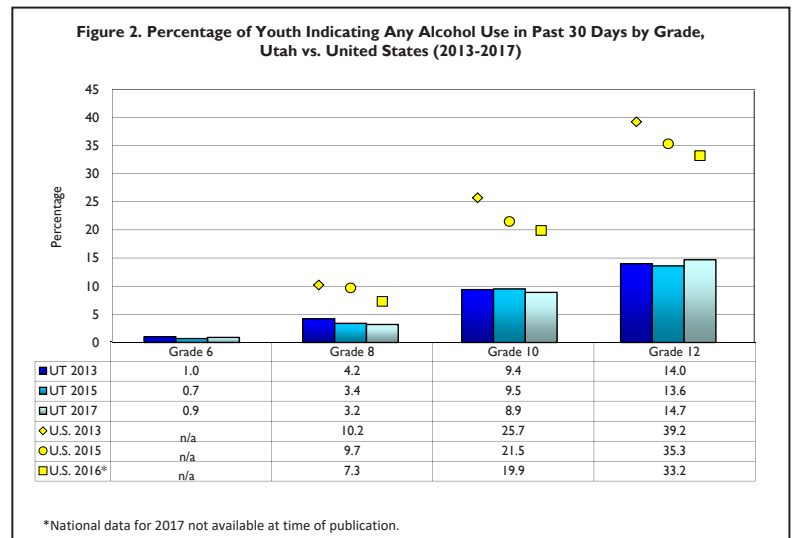
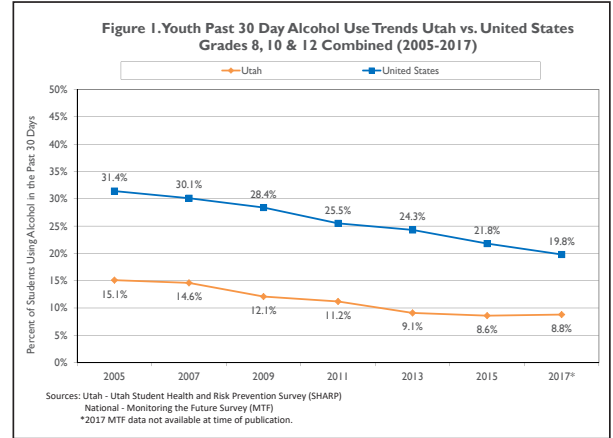




## Youth Alcohol Consumption

Underage drinking rates have decreased dramatically in Utah over the last decade and a half (see Figure 1). Impressively, the 30 day alcohol use rate for grades 8, 10 and 12 (combined) in Utah declined from 15.1% in 2005 to 8.8% in 2017. Additionally, in 2017, alcohol rates among Utah youth continued a trend of being about half of national youth alcohol use rates<sup>1</sup>. This is true of lifetime alcohol use (“have you ever used alcohol in your lifetime”), past 30 day use, and binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) in the past two weeks. In 2017, the 30 day use rates for Utah youth were less than half of the national rates for 8th, 10th and 12th graders (see Figure 2). For binge drinking, the rates for 8th, 10th and 12th graders in Utah (vs. the nation) were 2.6% (vs. 3.4%), 5.5% (vs. 9.7%) and 8.6% (vs. 15.5%), respectively. While Utah’s low underage alcohol use rates continue to be a positive sign of the overall wellness of the state’s youth population, there are also data that serve as reminders against becoming complacent in our efforts to prevent underage alcohol use.

Until 2015, alcohol was historically the most widely used substance by youth in our state. Currently, it is the second most widely used substance after electronic cigarettes. With that said, 2017 marked an important milestone for youth alcohol use rates in Utah. For the first time since 2003 (the first year the SHARP survey was administered), we observed increases in youth alcohol use rates. The most dramatic increases were seen in 12th graders, where 30 day use rates increased from 13.6% to 14.7% from 2015 to 2017, and binge drinking rates increased from 8.1% to 8.6%. These increases were offset somewhat by smaller decreases in use by 8th and 10th graders, but overall, the statewide 30 day use rate increased slightly from 6.5% to 6.7% when combining grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 together. In terms of absolute numbers, the observed 30 day use rates of 8.9% for 10th graders and 14.7% for 12th graders, equate to approximately 4,200 10th and 6,400 12th grade youth statewide who had recent alcohol use at the time of the survey<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, while a smaller proportion of Utah’s youth drink alcohol compared to the nation, Utah youth who do drink alcohol are more likely to engage in binge drinking than their national counterparts (see Figure 3). Nationally, about 47% of 12th graders who drank alcohol in the past 30 days also engaged in binge drinking in the past two weeks. In Utah, nearly 60% of 12th graders reporting 30 day alcohol use also indicated binge drinking. A similar pattern of higher binge drinking rates among 30 day alcohol users holds for 8th and 10th graders in Utah as well. This should warrant concern given that binge drinking is associated with greater risk for negative alcohol related outcomes including: drinking and driving, becoming a victim of violence, unintentional injuries, and abuse and dependence<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>1</sup>Utah data from the Utah State Health and Risk Prevention Survey; National data from the Monitoring the Future Survey  
<sup>2</sup>Based on 2011 statewide school enrollment and dropout data for 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders  
<sup>3</sup><http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm>

# Alcohol-Related Consequences

Underage alcohol use is associated with a broad range of negative consequences that can affect individuals, families and society. The potential negative consequences of alcohol use range from immediate outcomes such as alcohol poisoning and alcohol related motor vehicle crashes to more long term consequences such as alcohol dependence and alcohol related diseases. Among youth, early initiation of alcohol use is associated with greater risk for a host of negative outcomes including: delinquency, academic problems, other substance use, sexual risk taking, and violence<sup>4</sup>. Alcohol related motor vehicle crashes (ARMVC) involving underage drinkers in Utah represent a small but significant proportion of ARMVC across the state. Fortunately, the number of ARMVC involving youth drivers has decreased since 2010. From 2014 through 2016 (3 year aggregate), there were a total of 6,175 ARMVC on Utah roadways, including 100 crashes that resulted in fatalities and 2,646 that resulted in injuries. Drivers under age 21 were involved in 473 alcohol related crashes (7.7% of all ARMVC), including seven fatal crashes (7.0% of all fatal ARMVC), and 199 injury crashes<sup>5</sup> (7.5% of all injury ARMVC).

Research suggests that the younger youth are when they first begin using alcohol the more likely they are to develop alcohol dependence and abuse in later life compared to those who begin drinking at age 21<sup>6</sup>. As such, preventing alcohol use among youth or delaying the onset of use is an important goal of prevention efforts that occur throughout the state. Unfortunately, a small percentage of youth do start displaying signs of alcohol dependence before they reach adulthood. Based on 2017 survey data, approximately 2.5% of 10th and 3.4% of 12th graders in Utah are estimated to be in need for alcohol treatment. Prevention and treatment services funded through the Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health aim to reduce the number of youth who will be negatively impacted by alcohol abuse and dependence, and help those who are experiencing these conditions

## Causes and Contributing Factors

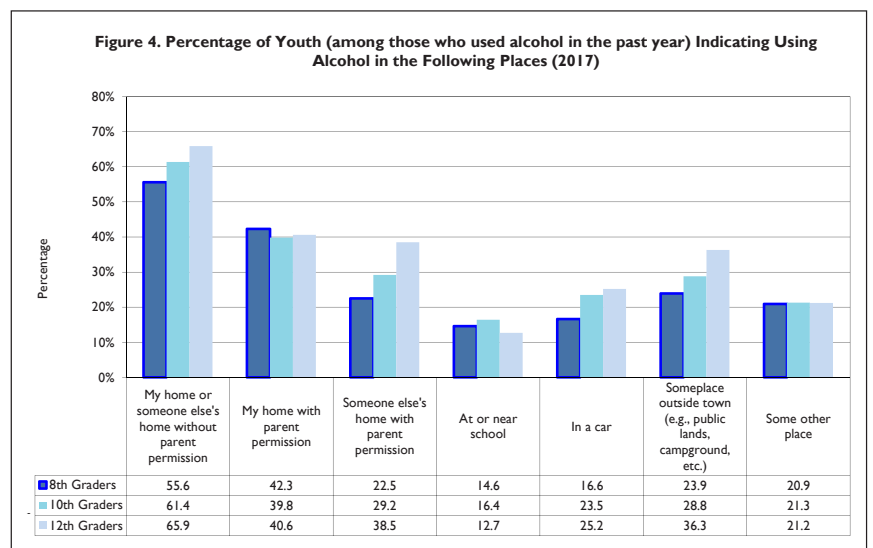
There are a variety of factors that contribute to alcohol use among underage drinkers. As a result, there is no single magic solution that will prevent all underage drinking. Fortunately, Utah enjoys youth alcohol use rates that are among the lowest in the nation. In looking at some of the causal factors for alcohol use, a strong relationship is apparent between what most youth in Utah believe about the risks and acceptability of alcohol use, and the low use rates observed in our state.

**Perceived risk and Attitudes toward alcohol use.** Utah youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 overwhelmingly (84.2%) indicate that people who drink 5 or more alcoholic drinks once or twice a week are at moderate or great risk of harming themselves. Additionally, nearly all Utah youth (97.6%) indicate that their parents would feel it is wrong or very wrong for them to drink alcohol regularly, and nine in ten (92.9%) indicate that they feel it is wrong for someone their age to drink alcohol regularly.

**Places where alcohol is consumed.** While alcohol use rates are lower in Utah than the nation, there is still a significant number of youth who use alcohol. For these individuals, it is important to understand contributing factors that influence their alcohol use. A look at survey data pertaining to

where youth alcohol users typically drink provides insight regarding the contexts for underage drinking (Figure 4). Overwhelmingly, among those who drink, the most common place to drink is their home or someone else's home. Approximately 61% of 10th and 66% of 12th graders who drank alcohol reported drinking at their or someone else's home without permission, but perhaps more alarming, approximately 40% of 10th and 12th grader drinkers indicated drinking in their home with parent permission, and between 30-40% indicated drinking at someone else's home with parent permission. Taken together, parent permission of youth alcohol use is an important contributing factor for underage drinking.

**98% of Utah youth indicate that their parents would feel it is wrong or very wrong for them to drink alcohol regularly.**



<sup>4</sup>Ellickson, P.L., Tucker, J.S. & Klein, D.J. (2003). Ten-year prospective study of public health problems associated with early drinking. *Pediatrics*, 111, 949-955.

<sup>5</sup>Data from Annual Utah Crash Summary report, Utah Department of Public Safety

<sup>6</sup>Grant, B. & Dawson, D.A. (2001). Age at onset of alcohol use and DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: A 12-year follow-up. *Journal of Substance Abuse*, 13, 493-504.