

Teen Alcohol Use

DEFINITION

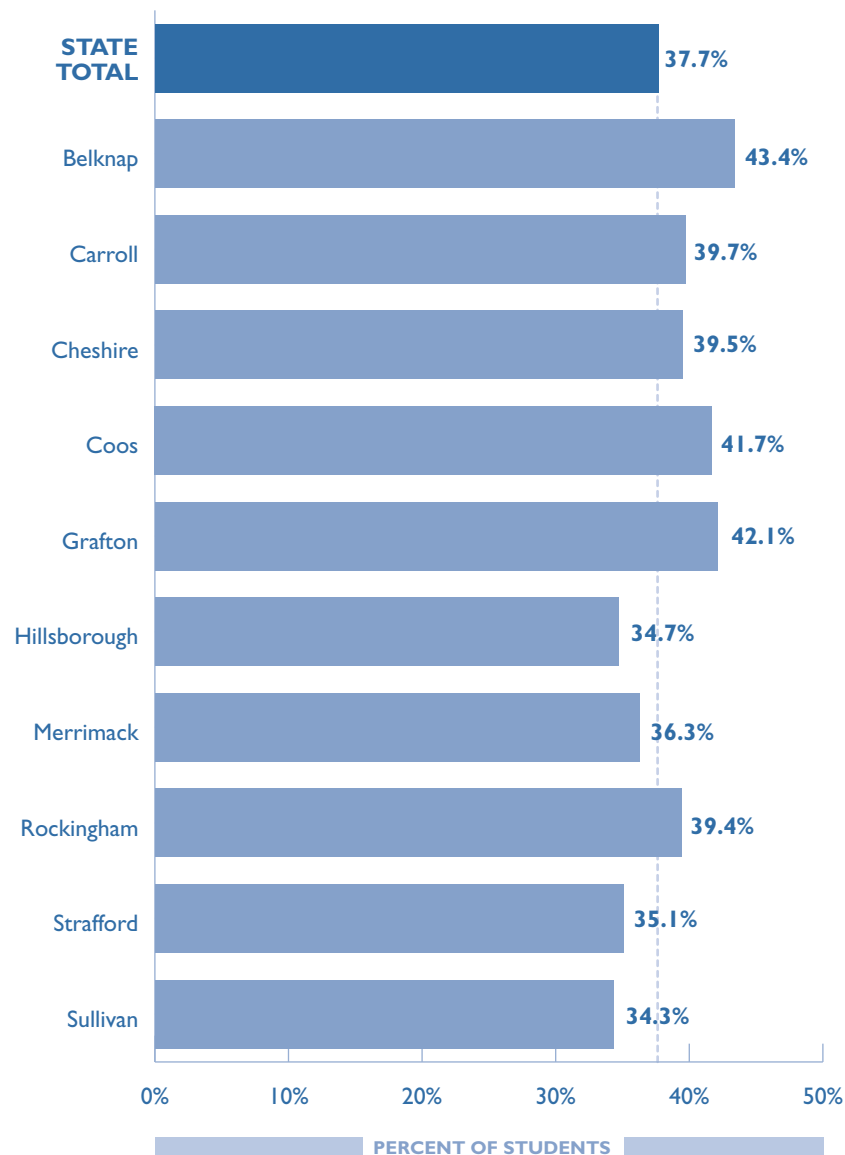
This indicator reports the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who say they have had at least one drink of alcohol in the last 30 days.

CONTEXT

Although drinking alcohol and possession of alcohol is illegal for persons under 21 years of age, alcohol is the most commonly used drug among young persons in the United States. The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found 42 percent of high school students had at least one drink of alcohol in the last 30 days and 24 percent indulged in binge drinking (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2010). "Binge drinking" is defined as consuming five or more drinks during a single event.

In recent years research has shown alcohol has different effects on adolescents than on adults. Excessive alcohol use by adolescents can damage their developing brains causing long-term impact. Adolescents who consume excessive amounts of alcohol significantly increase their risk of their becoming alcoholics (Butler 2006), and are more prone to school absences and failing grades, social problems, unplanned or unprotected sexual activity, alcohol-related car crashes, and abuse of other drugs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2010).

Students Reporting Alcohol Use During the Past 30 Days
By County, 2009



NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

In 2009, 37.7 percent of New Hampshire high school students reported having at least one drink of alcohol in the last 30 days (DHHS 2011). This rate has decreased significantly over the last nine years, from 49.4 percent in 2001. (New Hampshire Office of the Governor 2010, 1). Nationally, the percent of youth who reported drinking at least once in the last 30 days declined from 47.1 percent in 2001 to 41.8 percent in 2009 (U.S. DHHS 2010).

Not only is adolescent drinking declining, but binge drinking is declining also. In 2003, 30.6 percent of New Hampshire high school students surveyed said they drank five or more alcoholic drinks in a row in the previous 30 days, but by 2009 that had dropped to 24 percent (New Hampshire Department of Education 2009b).

The Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention credits the drop in the state's youth drinking rate to the Strategic Prevention Framework Initiative, a federal grant funded project administered by the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services at New Hampshire Division of Health and Human Services. Within this initiative, the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol created a network of ten coalition regions focused on substance abuse prevention education and prevention services (NH Office of the Governor 2010 and Mure 2011).

The rate of teen alcohol usage varies across the state, with the lowest rate of 34.3 percent in Sullivan County, and the highest rate of 43.4 percent in Belknap County. (see chart on previous page)

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). 2011. Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services, Division of Community Based Care Services.

In the spring of 2009, 1,493 students in 53 New Hampshire public high schools completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The school response rate was 78 percent and the student rate 83 percent. Some students are not in school on the day of the survey and because those students may have a different risk profile than the general school population, this may bias results slightly. Also, students may not respond truthfully or carefully to surveys or may be influenced by peer pressure in their survey responses (Oyster River 2007, ii).

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services provided survey results by school. The following methodology was used to estimate usage rates by county. First, each school that participated in the survey was identified by county. County-level rates were computed using a weighted average of school-level rates based on enrollment. Special estimates were computed for schools with students from more than one county (see methodology in Appendix).

REFERENCES

Butler, Katy. 2006. *The Grim Neurology of Teenage Drinking*. The New York Times. July 4.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010. *Fact Sheet: Underage Drinking*. www.cdc.gov/Alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm.

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New Hampshire Department of Education. 2009a. *2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results*.

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Oyster River: New Hampshire Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Community Level Report, 2007. www.ci.durham.nh.us/generalpdfs/YRBS.pdf.

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