


YOUTH SURVEY


FAIRFAX COUNTY

TEENAGE ALCOHOL USE in Fairfax County


Self-reported by 8th, 10th and 12th grade students on the Fairfax County Youth Survey

49% of 12th graders report ever drinking alcohol

29% of youth who have ever used alcohol report first use by age 12 

6% of 12th graders have driven a car  after they had been drinking in the past month

14% of 12th graders report binge drinking

21% percentage point decrease since 2001 of youth reporting alcohol use in the past 30 days 

What You Need to Know

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance by Fairfax County teens. Although reported use is high, particularly among 12th graders, alcohol use in Fairfax County continues to be lower than the national data for 8th, 10th and 12th graders.

Over all grades surveyed, 34% of youth report using alcohol at least once in their lifetime. However, use increases significantly by grade level. "Ever using alcohol in their

lifetime" is reported by 19% of 8th graders and increases to 49% by the 12th grade.

Past month use among 8th, 10th and 12th graders has decreased 21 percentage points from 36% in 2001 to 15% in 2019.

In the Fairfax County Youth Survey, binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more alcoholic drinks in a row in the past two weeks. About one in seven 12th graders (14%) report binge drinking.

When asked how much people harm themselves by drinking alcohol nearly every day, 26% of students report no or slight risk.

Girls have a slightly higher rate of alcohol use than boys (36% vs. 31% lifetime and 17% vs. 13% for past month use). However, both engage in binge drinking at about the same rates (7% vs. 6%).

What Can You Do?

IF TEEN SHOWS SIGNS OF

- ▶ Problems in school: low grades, poor attendance, recent disciplinary actions.
- ▶ Switching friends.
- ▶ Lack of involvement in former interests.
- ▶ Slurred speech.
- ▶ Lack of coordination.
- ▶ Memory lapses.
- ▶ Mood changes, irritability and defensiveness.
- ▶ Low energy.
- ▶ Bloodshot eyes.
- ▶ Rebellious against family rules.
- ▶ Having a "nothing matters" attitude.

CONSIDER THIS

- ▶ Alcohol has serious consequences on the teenage brain because it is still developing at this age.
- ▶ Alcohol affects motor coordination that can include walking and driving a vehicle.
- ▶ Drinking lowers one's inhibitions, leading to actions that teenagers will later regret.
- ▶ Impaired memory and blackouts can occur when too much alcohol is consumed.
- ▶ Drinking may lead teenagers to participate in risk-taking behaviors that may cause illness, injury or death.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED

- ▶ Set clear expectations for their behavior and apply appropriate and consistent consequences.
- ▶ Talk to your teens. Listen and try to understand the pressures of their life. Avoid criticism.
- ▶ Keep track of where your teens are and what they are doing. Get to know who their friends are.
- ▶ Encourage and support involvement in positive pro-social activities such as sports, school clubs, the arts, community service and any activity that provides a sense of belonging.
- ▶ Build your teen's self-confidence by congratulating them on their successes. Notice when your teens make good choices and let them know they did the right thing.
- ▶ Talk to your teen's school counselor, psychologist or social worker.
- ▶ Be a positive role model. Don't misuse alcohol or use illegal drugs. Don't drink and drive.

Adapted from www.drugfree.org and www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking

Who Can Help?

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board
<http://bit.ly/FairfaxCSB>
Entry & Referral 703-383-8500, TTY 711
24-Hour Emergency Services
703-573-5679, TTY 711

Fairfax County Public Schools Intervention and Prevention Services
<http://bit.ly/FCPSspecialsvcs>
571-423-4020

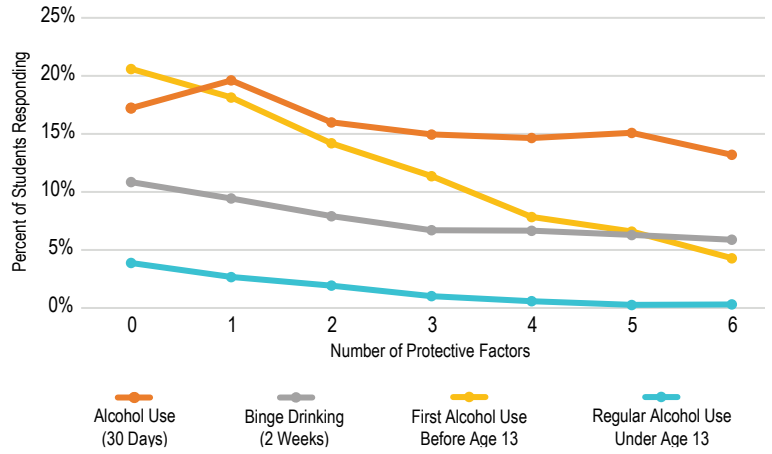
Fairfax County Public Schools Student Safety and Wellness Office
<http://bit.ly/FCPSspecialsvcs>
571-423-4270

3 THREE to SUCCEED

The Factors That Matter

Data from the Youth Survey reinforces decades of research that shows that when youth have protective factors (also known as assets) in their lives, they do better in lots of different areas. **Having just three protective factors dramatically reduces the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors.** The Youth Survey shows that every protective factor makes a difference.

Young people in Fairfax County report positive influences from the people and opportunities in their lives. Take action to be an asset in a young person's life and help to build a stronger, more positive community that benefits ALL children and youth.



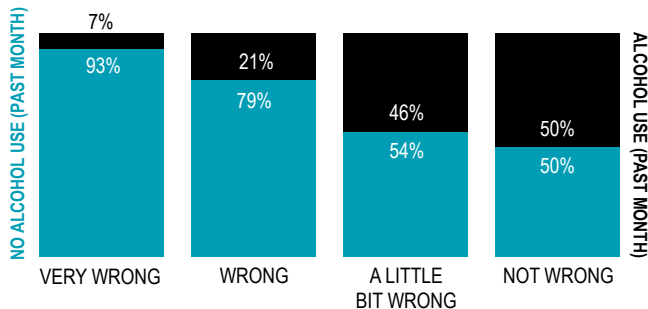
Protective Factors

- Accepting responsibility for one's actions
- Having community adults to talk to
- Performing community service
- Participating in extracurricular activities
- Having teachers recognize good work
- Having parents available for help

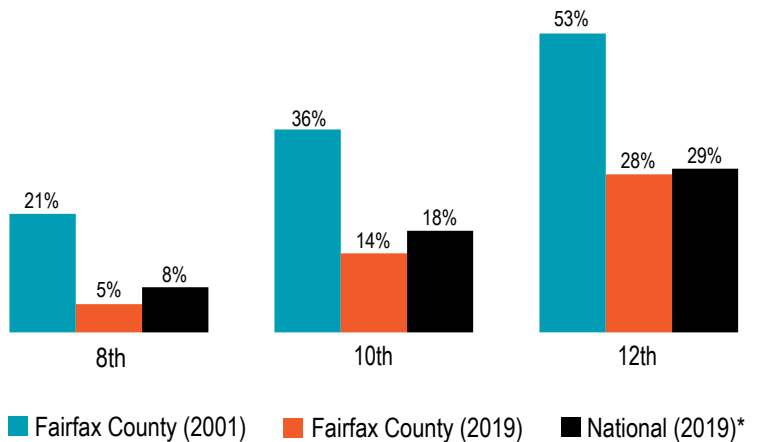
What parents think matters

93% of students who thought their parents disapproved of them drinking alcohol (Very Wrong) **didn't drink** in the past month.

50% of students who thought their parents were fine with them drinking (Not Wrong) **didn't drink**.



Past 30-day use by grade



* National comparisons are from the Monitoring the Future survey.

WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Fairfax County Youth Survey
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/youthsurvey
- Fairfax County Prevention System
<http://bit.ly/FairfaxPrevention>
- The Partnership for a Drug-Free America
www.drugfree.org
- NIDA for Teens
teens.drugabuse.gov
- SAMHSA Underage Drinking
www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking

Related Factors

Fairfax County youth who have used drugs or alcohol in the past 30 days are more likely to

- Have bullied others or to have been a victim of bullying.
- Have carried a weapon.
- Have experienced symptoms of depression or considered suicide.
- Have had sexual intercourse.

The Fairfax County Youth Survey was administered in the fall of 2019.



Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For information, call 703-324-4600, TTY 711.



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