

## Juvenile Drinking

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### Abstract

Consumption of alcohol by anyone under the age of 21 known as underage drinking remains a considerable public health challenge. Adolescent alcohol use is not an acceptable rite of passage, but a serious threat to adolescent development and health. Underage drivers and drinkers can cause great harm as they lack driving experience and the ability to handle alcohol with their penchant for risk taking behaviors. Parents have a superior accountability to ensure that children are cared properly and not indulged in alcohol drinking, if not curbed at initial stages. This issue needs to be addressed with great urgency to curb juvenile drinking in future.

**Keywords:** Alcohol; Underage; Behaviour; Adolescent.

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### Introduction

Alcohol is the drug of choice among children and young adults. In India, today drinking alcohol is still considered only a minor sin. Social drinking is slowly catching on and societal tolerance towards drinking is going up.

Consumption of alcohol by anyone under the age of 21, also known as underage drinking, remains a considerable public health challenge. Adolescent alcohol use is not an acceptable rite of passage, but a serious threat to adolescent development and health [1]. A Research conducted by CADD amongst 1,000 youth who go to pubs and bars, reveals nearly 62% of these youth are in the age group 14-21 years even though the minimum legal drinking across major cities varies between 21 -25 years [2]. Medical research shows that the developing adolescent brain

may be particularly susceptible to long-term negative consequences of alcohol use [1].

Underage drivers and drinkers can cause great harm as they lack driving experience and the ability to handle alcohol with their penchant for risk taking behaviors. Behavioral patterns such as speeding, rash driving along with a tendency to underestimate the consequences of such behaviors and to overestimate their driving skill – contribute to the high crash rate among young drivers [2].

### Data and Statistics

- Every day in the United States, more than 4,750 kids under age 16 have their first full drink of alcohol [3].
- Underage drinking accounts for 11% of all the alcohol consumed in the United States [1].
- Youth who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse in their lifetimes than those who begin drinking at age 21 years or later [1].
- A study conducted among children in Delhi aged between 20 and 25 has revealed that 89.8 percent of boys and 64.6 of girls surveyed have consumed alcohol before they turned 18 [4].
- The survey found underage drinking has gone up by 22.5 percent since 2012 in the age group

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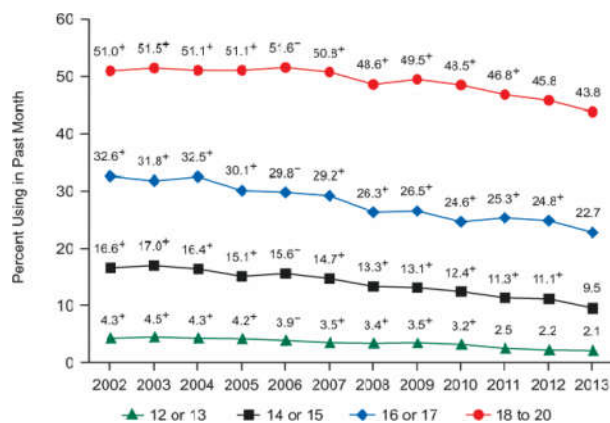
of 18-25 years [4].

- Reports of underage alcohol use were highest in the Northeast (28.3%) and lowest in the South (22.3%). Rates in the Midwest and West were both around 24.5% [1].

Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 12 to 20, by Age: 2002-2013 [5].

### Risk Factors

Although adolescence brings increased risk for alcohol use, some factors put teens at higher risk for abusing alcohol. These include high levels of impulsiveness, novelty seeking, and aggressive behavior; having conduct or behavior problems; and a tendency not to consider the possible negative consequences of one's actions [1].



*The Problem of Underage Drinking, Which Have Bearing on Policing Are [6]*

- Traffic accident and fatalities.
- Alcohol related injuries.
- Property damages.
- Assaults, rape and other violent crimes.
- Disorderly conduct in public places.
- Rave Parties.

- Vandalism.
- Noise complaints in residential areas.
- Suicides, deaths

*Reasons of Underage Drinking Can Be [6]*

- Seeing drinking as a 'Rite of Passage' or fundamental part of adolescence and college life.
- Acceptable of underage drinking in society e.g. Peer groups, parents.
- To be as part of group.
- To reduce stress, worries, tension & to make them more socially confident.
- The advertisements of alcoholic drinks that are youth oriented with similar packaging.
- Availability in the form of vendors, pubs & restaurants serving alcohol.

*Drunken Driving Law in India*

The blood alcohol content (BAC) legal limit is 0.03% or 30 µl alcohol in 100 ml blood. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012, the Union Cabinet approved proposed changes to the Motor Vehicle Act. Higher penalties were introduced, including fines from 2,000 to 10,000 and imprisonment from 6 months to 4 years. Different penalties are assessed depending on the blood alcohol content at the time of the offence [7].

*Dry Days*

Dry Days are specific days when the sale of alcohol is not permitted. Most of the Indian states observe these days on major national festivals/occasions such as Republic Day (January 26), Independence Day (August 15) and Gandhi Jayanti (October 2). Dry days are also observed on and around voting days [7].

### Conclusion

Parents have a superior accountability to ensure that children are cared properly and not indulged in alcohol drinking, if not curbed at initial stages. This issue needs to be addressed with great urgency to curb juvenile drinking in future. Awareness, Enforcements and laws can bring a substantial revolution only if drunken is made socially deplorable at the community level which would lead to better life situations in the future.

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