

# FAST FACTS

# Binge Drinking in New Mexico

## New Mexico Has a Binge Drinking Problem

In 2005, more than a third of New Mexico 9th graders and half of 11th and 12th graders reported drinking alcohol in the past month. Dangerous binge drinking was the norm among these drinkers: 60% of 9th graders and more than 70% of 11th and 12th graders reported binge drinking.<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, 27% of New Mexico high school girls and 28% of boys reported binge drinking.<sup>2</sup> Liquor is the most commonly consumed alcoholic beverage by teen binge drinkers in New Mexico.<sup>3</sup> It's easy to conceal from parents and can be mixed with juice, soda or energy drinks to make it more palatable. It's also more potent than beer or wine.

While nearly half of all college students binge drink, binge drinking is a problem behavior for other age groups as well. About 70% of binge drinking episodes involve adults over age 25.<sup>4</sup>

**About 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth under the age of 21 in the United States is in the form of binge drinks.<sup>5</sup>**

## What is Binge Drinking?

Binge drinking is a pattern of excessive alcohol use. This typically happens when men consume 5 or more drinks, and when women consume 4 or more drinks, in about 2 hours<sup>6</sup>. Binge drinking can result in alcohol poisoning which occurs when a drinker consumes alcohol more quickly than his/her body can metabolize it. This can result in brain damage and death. An average of 50 U.S. students a year die from alcohol poisoning - almost one every weekend.<sup>7</sup>

## ABC's of Academics and Alcohol

**Alcohol** affects the biological development of young people as well as their school achievement and behavior. It damages areas of the brain responsible for learning and memory, verbal skills and visual-spatial cognition. Alcohol use is tied to lower grades, poor attendance and increased dropout rates. As rates of alcohol use by 12- to 17-year-olds increase, grade point averages decrease.<sup>8</sup>




**Underage high school binge** drinkers are 4-6 times more likely than nondrinkers to say they cut classes or skipped school. They are twice as likely as nondrinkers to say that their school work is poor, and they report more disobedience at school. Among high school students, those who use alcohol are 5 times more likely to drop out than those who don't use alcohol. High school binge drinkers who continue to college are 3 times more likely to binge drink in college.<sup>9</sup>

**College** students report that alcohol is implicated in more than 40 percent of all college academic problems and in 28 percent of all college dropouts. Students who binge drink are 21 times more likely than non-binge drinkers to engage in unprotected sex and unplanned sexual activity. Binge drinking on college campuses also triples a woman's risk of sexual assault.<sup>10</sup>

## Binge Drinking is Associated with Many Health Problems Including:

- Unintentional injuries (drunk driving crashes, falls, burns, drowning, pedestrian fatalities).
- Intentional injuries (firearm injuries, sexual assault, domestic violence, homicide, suicide).
- Unintended pregnancy and children born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.
- High blood pressure, stroke, cardiovascular and liver disease and neurological damage.<sup>11</sup>

# Binge drinkers have significantly higher rates than non-binge drinkers for many risky behaviors.

|                                     |   |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Other Substance Use</b>          | Early age of first alcohol use<br>Current smoking<br>Current alcohol use<br>Current cocaine use       |   | <b>Alcoholism<br/>Overdose<br/>Death</b> |
| <b>Violence &amp; Victimization</b> | Weapon carrying<br>Fighting<br>Being hurt by boyfriend/girlfriend<br>Being forced to have sex         |   | <b>Homicide</b>                          |
| <b>Depression &amp; Self-Harm</b>   | Being sad or hopeless<br>Seriously considering suicide<br>Making a suicide plan<br>Attempting suicide |   | <b>Suicide</b>                           |
| <b>Sexual Activity</b>              | Being sexually active<br>Using alcohol/drugs before sex   |   | <b>STD/HIV</b>                           |
| <b>Motor Vehicle Related</b>        | Low seatbelt use<br>Riding with drunk driver<br>Driving drunk   |  |  |

## By the Numbers

Percentages reported by New Mexico high school students in the 2007 United States Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance:

- 27.4% reported binge drinking.
- 30.7% had their first drink before age 13.
- 23.7% of sexually active students drank alcohol or used drugs before last sexual intercourse.
- 33.0% of girls and 28.9% of boys rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.
- 12.5% drove after drinking.

**Binge drinkers are 6 times more likely to drink and drive than non-binge drinkers.<sup>12</sup>**

2003 NM Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS)  
Underage Drinking in New Mexico - Overview and Highlights, Jim Roeber, NMDOH

## Recommendations for Reducing Binge Drinking

Reducing the supply of alcohol to underage and binge drinkers through law enforcement; reducing the demand for alcohol through prevention strategies and education; and reducing the harm of alcohol abuse through treatment and social support should be the focus of our efforts to reduce binge drinking. Possible strategies are listed below:

- Enact legislation to make it illegal for anyone under age 21 to consume alcohol. (Currently in New Mexico, it is illegal for people under 21 to be served, buy or possess alcohol but not to consume.)
- Require offenders to attend an early intervention alcohol diversion program.
- Screen all adult primary care patients for potential alcohol-related problems.
- Assist communities to reduce binge drinking by promoting shoulder tap and checkpoint programs.
- Enhance alcohol server training to recognize binge drinking episodes.
- Ask parents to talk with their children before they become teenagers about the dangers of binge drinking.
- Target prevention efforts toward preteens and younger children.
- Raise alcohol taxes to reduce underage drinking by dedicating the revenue raised to alcohol prevention and early intervention programs.
- Fund statewide media campaigns that promote zero tolerance for underage drinking and encourage those over 21 who drink to do so in a "low risk" manner (no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men).
- Enforce dram shop liability, keg registration, and social host liability laws.



**Sources:** <sup>1</sup>NM Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey 2005, <sup>2</sup>CDC 2007 United States Youth Risk and Behavior Surveillance Survey, <sup>3</sup>2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, <sup>4</sup>Journal of the American Medical Association 2003, <sup>5</sup>Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, <sup>6</sup>National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, <sup>7</sup>UNM COSAP, <sup>8</sup>Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, <sup>9</sup>Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, <sup>10</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, <sup>11</sup>National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, <sup>12</sup> Underage Drinking in New Mexico - Overview and Highlights, Jim Roeber.

