



Problems and Costs Associated with Underage Drinking

This research overview presents the most recent information (2007) on the public problems and costs of underage drinking in the United States. The data were collected as part of a study by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This study examined problems associated with underage drinking and the percent of problems that were actually attributable to or caused by alcohol-use. For example, the study only looked at alcohol-attributable murders, not all murders.

Problems Associated with Underage Drinking

- Youth violence — murders, rapes, robberies, other assaults, child abuse and neglect perpetrated by youth.
- Youth traffic crashes — deaths and nonfatal injuries resulting from crashes involving drivers under age 21 with positive blood alcohol levels.
- High-risk sex — unplanned pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases due to unprotected sex or other unreliable birth control method among youth aged 14-20.
- Youth property crime — burglaries, larcenies, and motor vehicle thefts committed by youth under age 21.
- Youth injury — burns, drownings, and suicide deaths and nonfatal suicide attempts among youth.
- Poisonings and psychoses — fatal and nonfatal poisonings and psychoses among youth under age 21.
- FAS among teen mothers — Fetal Alcohol Syndrome births to mothers aged 15-20.
- Youth alcohol treatment — treatment for alcohol dependence syndrome including detoxification for youth.

Costs Associated with Underage Drinking

The total cost of underage drinking was in excess of \$68 billion in 2007. Costs per state ranged from a high in California of \$8.1 billion to a low of \$129 million in Vermont. Underage drinking costs were highest in California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Ohio, collectively accounting for nearly 40% of all underage drinking costs in the U.S. Alaska was ranked 39th for total underage drinking costs, representing less than one-half of one percent of underage drinking costs in the U.S. (See Table 1.)

State	Youth violence	Youth traffic crashes	High-risk sex	Youth property crime	Youth injury	Poisoning and psychoses	FAS among mothers	Youth alcohol treatment	Overall total cost
California	\$5,196.7	\$1,141.7	\$608.1	\$429.6	\$228.8	\$53.5	\$180.8	\$258.7	\$8,097.9
Texas	\$4,149.7	\$817.7	\$707.9	\$305.8	\$180.3	\$39.1	\$149.8	\$27.5	\$6,377.8
Florida	\$3,153.8	\$617.2	\$246.1	\$232.5	\$94.9	\$19.0	\$61.7	\$46.6	\$4,471.8
New York	\$2,269.3	\$405.9	\$248.5	\$128.2	\$119.7	\$34.3	\$61.8	\$230.2	\$3,497.9
Ohio	\$2,272.5	\$326.6	\$226.9	\$130.1	\$81.2	\$19.7	\$52.9	\$123.1	\$3,233.0
Alaska	\$217.4	\$40.6	\$15.9	\$7.9	\$15.6	\$1.2	\$4.3	\$17.3	\$320.2
U.S. total	\$43,835.3	\$10,019.0	\$4,871.4	\$3,178.8	\$2,064.2	\$416.3	\$1,227.4	\$2,400.5	\$68,012.9

Source of data: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, *Underage Drinking Costs*, <http://www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp>

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Costs Per Youth Capita

The average cost of underage drinking was \$2,378 per youth capita in 2007. Costs varied across the country, ranging from a high in Alaska of \$4,393 per youth to a low of \$1,120 in Utah. Underage drinking costs per youth capita were highest in Alaska, the District of Columbia, Nevada, New Mexico, and Arkansas. Alaska had the highest cost of underage drinking per youth capita, at nearly twice the national average. (See Table 2.)

State/district	Youth violence	Youth traffic crashes	High-risk sex	Youth property crime	Youth injury	Poisoning and psychoses	FAS among mothers	Youth alcohol treatment	Cost per youth (Actual)
Alaska	\$217.4	\$40.6	\$15.9	\$7.9	\$15.6	\$1.2	\$4.3	\$17.3	\$4,393
District of Columbia	\$174.1	\$30.7	\$6.2	\$9.1	\$0.0	\$0.5	\$2.1	\$3.9	\$3,958
Nevada	\$514.5	\$131.3	\$50.4	\$36.3	\$27.2	\$3.2	\$14.0	\$17.3	\$3,543
New Mexico	\$426.2	\$87.1	\$68.7	\$26.2	\$18.6	\$3.7	\$17.3	\$10.1	\$3,239
Arkansas	\$547.1	\$185.5	\$56.7	\$34.5	\$29.7	\$3.1	\$14.5	\$12.9	\$3,238
U.S. total	\$43,835.3	\$10,019.0	\$4,871.4	\$3,178.8	\$2,064.2	\$416.3	\$1,227.4	\$2,400.5	\$2,378

Source of data: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, *Underage Drinking Costs*, <http://www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp>

The Alaska Response

In October 2009, after several years of community collaboration and study, the Alaska Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (Committee) released the *State of Alaska Plan to Reduce & Prevent Underage Drinking*. The plan includes recommendations for science-based state and community actions to reduce underage drinking. The Committee has identified, and is beginning to implement, a 5-year plan focused on policy development priorities. Evaluation of the plan will be ongoing.

The Committee is composed of representatives from 12 state-wide agencies and associations and is in the process of creating a Youth Advisory Panel. Current strategies are aimed at developing community responses to underage drinking that will be coordinated at the state level. Pilot projects are underway in Yakutat and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough where community assessments have been completed. Prevention strategies to address risk behaviors and increase resiliency among juveniles, include dissemination of information, education, providing alternative activities, community-based processes, and environmental approaches to reduce and prevent underage alcohol use.

The PIRE *Underage Drinking Costs* can be found at <http://www.udetc.org>.

The *State of Alaska Plan to Reduce & Prevent Underage Drinking* can be found at <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dbh>.

Research compiled by Khristy Parker, Research Assistant



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