

O'Malley, P.M., Johnston, L.D., & Bachman, J.G. (1998). Alcohol use among adolescents. *Alcohol Health & Research World*, 22, 85-93.

Abstract

Several ongoing national surveys, including the Monitoring the Future study, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, are investigating the drinking behaviors of adolescents in the United States. These studies have found that the majority of adolescents under the age of 18 have consumed alcohol, although the minimum legal drinking age is 21. Drinking rates may even have increased in recent years in some age groups. No substantial differences exist among various sociodemographic subgroups with respect to drinking rates, although alcohol consumption generally is lowest among African-Americans and highest among whites. Moreover, alcohol consumption increases sharply throughout adolescence. Various attitudinal and behavioral factors, such as religious involvement, truancy, and average grade level, also influence adolescents' drinking behaviors. Almost two-thirds of 12th graders who report consuming alcohol experience the pleasurable effects of alcohol, such as having a good time with friends.