

# **Alcohol Use and Related Behaviors for Alabama Students in Grade 6-12**

## **Background**

During the past three school years the Alabama Department of Education has teamed up with the Department of Mental Health and ADECA to conduct a statewide population study of students in grades 6-12. The survey measured student behaviors related to substance use, violence or bullying, and related behaviors. This study has placed Alabama in a favorable position for reporting behaviors and perceptions related to alcohol use to local, state and federal agencies.

A population survey of students in Alabama for grades 6-12 was conducted by Pride Surveys during the school years 2002-03, 2003-04, and 2004-05. Each school received a report, and each district received a consolidated report of combined data from all schools in their district.

The State Department of Education, State Mental Health Division, and ADECA received a consolidated state report. Special analysis has been provided for Alabama State Board of Education by Districts represented by the Board members. Also, reports for the 22 Mental Health districts and combined data for the state were presented to the State Mental Health Division. Special data reports were prepared for ADECA to assist in meeting needs for the federal State Incentive Grant.

The following report from the Alabama study will explore variables related to alcohol use by students in grades 6-12. With growing concern for students' use of alcohol, some of the variables and behaviors related to "Binge Drinking," "Use of Alcohol in the Past 30 days" and for those students who report "*never*" to the use of alcohol will be reviewed. Research indicates that ethnicity is related to prevalence and patterns of alcohol use. This report will also consider these factors as they relate to White, Black, and Hispanic students in Alabama.

## **New Alcohol Initiatives**

During the first week of November 2005, key federal and state officials met in Washington D.C. to discuss new steps in an alcohol initiative. One of the initiatives will be 1500 town hall meetings across the nation during the last week of March 2006. These meetings along with public service announcements will attempt to increase awareness of the dangers associated with underage drinking.

The Pride Surveys 2004-05 National data reports that 22.5 percent of students in grades 6-12 have used alcohol in the past 30 days and are considered current users. Also, we find *Binge* drinking (5 or more drinks within a few hours) is reported by 24.7 percent

of students. Alcohol-related automobile deaths continue to be a major concern across the nation and almost 10 percent of students participating in the Pride Survey in 2005 say they have driven a car “after” or “while” drinking alcohol.

**Selected “Core Measures” for Alcohol Use**

Many federal agencies have identified certain data that are most important in measuring alcohol use and perceptions of use among youth. These data are often referred to as the *Core Measures* and include:

- **Reported 30-Day Use** – the percentage of students who have reported use in the last 30 days.

Reported percentage of use for Alabama students in 2003-05:

Any alcohol use in the past month for students grade 6-12.

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
White	23.0	23.7	22.3
Black	21.3	22.2	21.1
Hispanic	21.7	22.3	20.8
<i>All Students</i>	22.8	23.5	22.1

- **Perception of Risk** – the percentage of students who reported that alcohol was *harmful* or *very harmful*.

Perception of risk for alcohol products -- reported *harmful* or *very harmful* by Alabama Students in 2003-05:

	<u>Beer</u>		
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
White	60.4	60.2	60.5
Black	58.2	57.9	57.7
Hispanic	55.0	53.6	55.1
<i>All Students</i>	59.3	59.1	59.3

	<u>Coolers</u>		
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
White	50.3	48.4	44.8
Black	37.7	36.7	32.8
Hispanic	50.0	47.6	45.7
<i>All Students</i>	46.1	44.5	40.8

Liquor

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
White	70.4	70.4	71.4
Black	72.7	73.4	74.0
Hispanic	64.8	64.2	66.3
<i>All Students</i>	70.7	71.0	71.9

- **Perception of Parental Disapproval of Use** – the percentage of students who reported that their parents would “*disapprove*” or “*strongly disapprove*” of alcohol use.

Perception of parental disapproval by Alabama students in 2004 and 2005\*:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>
White	80.2	80.5
Black	68.2	68.6
Hispanic	62.5	62.6
<i>All Students</i>	75.5	75.8

- **Perception of Friends’ Disapproval of Use** – the percentage of students who reported that their friends would “*disapprove*” or “*strongly disapprove*” of alcohol use.

Perception of friends’ disapproval by Alabama students in 2004 and 2005\*:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>
White	46.9	46.0
Black	40.7	40.1
Hispanic	41.1	40.2
<i>All Students</i>	44.6	43.8

\*The Questionnaire did not include this question prior to 2004.

## **Behaviors Related to Alcohol Use in Alabama by Underage Drinkers**

While many consider alcohol use to be a normal or at least inevitable part of growing up, the connections between alcohol use and other negative behavior patterns cannot be ignored. Three examples are found in prevalence of illicit drug use, gang activity, and suicidal thoughts. The data on this page is from the 2005 Alabama survey.

**Illicit Drug Use** – Students who use alcohol consistently report more illegal drug use than students who do not drink.

Students who reported using an illegal drug in the last year:

- Students who never drink: 3.6%
- Students who use alcohol monthly: 60.3%
- Students who report binge drinking: 69.5%

**Gang Activity** – Students who use alcohol report more gang activity than students who do not drink.

Students who reported taking part in gang activities Seldom, Sometimes, Often, or A Lot:

- Students who never drink: 6.4%
- Students who use alcohol monthly: 27.9%
- Students who report binge drinking: 36.2%

**Suicidal Thoughts** – Students who never drink are far less likely to report thinking about committing suicide.

Students who said that they thought about committing suicide “Often” or “A Lot”:

- Students who never drink: 3.9%
- Students who use alcohol monthly: 15.8%
- Students who report binge drinking: 22.9%

A table showing these and other factors is located at the end of this report, together with data from 2003 and 2004 demonstrating the consistency of these results. (Chart 1)

## **Differences in Alcohol Use by Ethnicity**

Cultural differences in attitudes about alcohol will certainly affect students' experiences, beliefs and opinions about alcohol. These factors should be taken into account when planning programs to tackle these issues.

**Parents Talk** – Students are asked if their parents talk to them about the dangers of alcohol use.

Percentage of Alabama students who answered “Never” to this question\*:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>
White	18.9	19.3
Black	22.5	23.0
Hispanic	18.7	22.0
<i>All Students</i>	<i>20.5</i>	<i>21.0</i>

**Binge Drinking** – Students are asked if they have had 5 or more glasses of beer, wine, or liquor within a few hours.

Percentage of Alabama students who answered “Often” or “A Lot” to this question:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
White	11.0	11.4	10.5
Black	6.4	6.8	6.4
Hispanic	10.6	11.3	10.0
<i>All Students</i>	<i>9.8</i>	<i>10.1</i>	<i>10.0</i>

**Friends Drink** – Students are asked if their friends drink alcohol.

Percentage of Alabama students who answered “Often” or “A Lot” to this question:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
White	29.3	30.4	25.5
Black	22.0	23.0	20.8
Hispanic	23.3	23.4	22.4
<i>All Students</i>	<i>26.9</i>	<i>28.0</i>	<i>24.6</i>

A table showing these and other factors is located at the end of this report. (Chart 2)

\*The Questionnaire did not include this question prior to 2004.

## When and Where Alabama Students Use Alcohol

Although schools are ideal places to educate students about the effects and dangers of alcohol, it must be recognized that a partnership with parents and with the community is essential to reducing alcohol use and abuse by students. Most alcohol use is occurring at home, at friends' houses, and on weekends when school is not in session.

The question "*Where do you use any alcohol?*" includes beer, wine coolers, and liquor. Students could mark more than one answer, or could mark that they "Do Not Use." The following are percentages of Alabama students who report using alcohol:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
<u>Where</u>			
• At Home	21.8	21.9	23.0
• At School	2.9	2.6	2.4
• In A Car	6.0	6.3	6.9
• Friend's House	21.3	22.3	21.8
• Other	15.9	16.6	16.9

The question "*When do you use any alcohol?*" also includes beer, wine coolers, and liquor. Students could mark more than one answer, or could mark that they "Do Not Use." The following are percentages of Alabama students who report using alcohol:

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
<u>When</u>			
• Before School	2.5	2.3	2.5
• During School	2.3	2.1	1.7
• After School	6.0	6.0	6.3
• Weeknights	7.4	7.5	7.8
• Weekends	32.9	34.2	33.8

### **Population of the Study:**

In 2003, 247,237 Alabama students completed the Pride Surveys Questionnaire for Grades 6-12. Of these, 149,389 students identified themselves as white, 78,310 as black, and 4,302 as Hispanic. In 2003, 128,828 students said that they never drink, 53,572 students said they drank alcohol monthly or more frequently, and 22,700 said that they consumed 5 or more drinks in a short period of time (binge drinking) “often” or “a lot.”

In 2004, 262,050 Alabama students completed the Pride Surveys Questionnaire for Grades 6-12. Of these, 160,072 students identified themselves as white, 79,104 as black, and 5,468 as Hispanic. In 2004, 136,092 students said that they never drink, 60,125 students said they drank alcohol monthly or more frequently, and 26,046 said that they consumed 5 or more drinks in a short period of time (binge drinking) “often” or “a lot.”

In 2005, 263,944 Alabama students completed the Pride Surveys Questionnaire for Grades 6-12. Of these, 159,674 students identified themselves as white, 79,882 as black, and 6,131 as Hispanic. In 2005, 140,081 students said that they never drink, 58,503 students said they drank alcohol monthly or more frequently, and 25,329 said that they consumed 5 or more drinks in a short period of time (binge drinking) “often” or “a lot.”

### **Recommendations:**

- 1 – Conduct additional analysis of trend data for Alabama student as related to underage use of alcohol.
- 2 – Communities that participate in town hall meetings on underage alcohol use should compare their local data with state and national data.
- 3 – Develop statewide goals and objectives for decreasing underage alcohol use.
- 4 – Furnish data on automobile accidents and fatalities involving alcohol use to communities that hold town hall meetings on alcohol and underage drinking.
- 5 – Involve **parents** in all programming

## Chart 1

### Behaviors Related to Alcohol Use in Alabama by Underage Drinkers in Grades 6-12 -- 2003-2005

**Binge:** The percentages for *binge* are from students who reported that they have had 5 or more glasses of beer, wine or liquor within a few hours. (Sec. II, Ques. 34, Grades 6-12)

**Monthly:** The percentages for *monthly* are from students who reported using alcohol "once a month" or more frequently (weekly, daily, etc.)

**Never:** The percentages for *never* are from the students who said they never used alcohol.

The prevalence of other self-reported negative factors was calculated within these groups.

Questions (sec. II, Grade 6-12 Questionnaire)	2003			2004			2005		
	Binge	Monthly	Never	Binge	Monthly	Never	Binge	Monthly	Never
Do you make good grades? (Never)	5.0	3.2	0.7	6.2	3.7	0.8	7.3	4.3	0.8
Get into trouble at school? (Often/A Lot)	22.5	17.2	6.0	23.3	17.5	6.0	24.7	18.5	6.1
Attend Church/Synagogue? (Never)	15.6	12.1	6.2	17.0	13.3	6.6	18.1	13.9	7.1
Threatened to Harm a Teacher? (Often/A Lot)	9.9	5.7	1.1	12.0	7.1	1.2	13.5	7.5	1.3
Parents Punish for Breaking Rules? (Never)	13.5	10.5	4.8	16.3	12.2	5.0	17.4	13.2	5.2
Gang Activity? (Seldom/Sometimes/Often/A Lot)	32.9	25.8	5.3	33.4	25.7	5.6	36.2	27.9	6.4
Thought About Suicide? (Often/A Lot)	19.4	13.3	3.1	21.6	15.2	3.9	22.9	15.8	3.9
Friends Use Alcohol? (Often/A Lot)	81.0	61.5	9.2	83.9	66.3	10.5	83.7	65.5	9.9
Friends Use Drugs? (Often/A Lot)	59.6	42.4	6.9	59.8	43.5	6.9	59.7	42.9	6.4
Skipped School? (Often/A Lot)	40.0	26.7	3.0	41.5	27.4	3.2	43.0	27.7	3.2
Have you used any illicit drug in the last year?	69.4	60.3	3.9	69.0	60.0	3.7	69.5	60.3	3.6
Population of Groups:	22700	53572	129828	26046	60125	136092	25329	58503	140081

## Chart 2

### Alcohol Trends by Ethnicity

Monthly Use refers to the percentage of students who reported use monthly or more frequently -- weekly, daily, etc.

The twelve questions following are from section II of the Pride Survey for Grades 6-12. The question "Do your parents talk to you about the dangers of alcohol?" was not a part of the questionnaire in 2003.

The last three data points are drawn from section III of the Survey, which asks students if they believe that specific substances are harmful to their health. Students may respond No Harm, Some Harm, Harmful, or Very Harmful.

Questions	2003			2004			2005		
	White	Black	Hisp	White	Black	Hisp	White	Black	Hisp
Monthly use - Any Tobacco	22.3	11.6	16.2	23.1	12.9	17.7	22.8	12.5	17.0
Monthly use - Any Alcohol	22.3	21.1	20.8	23.7	22.2	22.3	23.0	21.3	21.7
Monthly use - Any Illicit Drugs	12.7	12.1	14.3	12.7	12.9	15.8	12.4	13.1	15.2
Do you make good grades? (Never)	1.0	1.1	3.4	1.1	1.3	4.1	1.2	1.4	4.0
Trouble at school? (Often/A Lot)	7.3	11.4	10.5	7.3	11.9	11.4	7.2	12.2	11.7
Attend Church/Synagogue? (Never)	8.4	5.1	13.9	8.9	5.5	15.1	9.4	5.6	15.7
Threatened to Harm a Teacher? (Often/A Lot)	1.5	2.9	5.1	1.7	3.3	5.4	1.7	3.5	6.0
Parents Talk About Dangers of Alcohol? (Never)	n/a	n/a	n/a	19.3	23.0	20.0	18.9	22.5	18.7
Parents Punish for Breaking Rules? (Never)	4.1	8.7	6.9	4.8	9.3	11.5	5.1	9.6	12.5
Gang Activity? (Seldom/Sometimes/Often/A Lot)	7.8	15.1	20.9	8.1	15.3	20.8	8.6	16.9	21.4
Thought About Suicide? (Often/A Lot)	5.9	5.4	7.6	7.1	6.4	9.0	7.0	6.6	9.2
Friends Use Alcohol? (Often/A Lot)	25.5	20.8	22.4	30.4	23.0	23.4	29.3	22.0	23.3
Friends Use Drugs? (Often/A Lot)	16.0	18.3	17.7	16.3	19.6	18.4	15.4	18.9	17.3
5 or more Glasses of Alcohol? (Often/A Lot)	10.5	6.4	10.0	11.4	6.8	11.3	11.0	6.4	10.6
Skipped School? (Often/A Lot)	9.1	8.3	11.1	9.9	8.6	11.8	9.7	8.6	12.2
Perception of Risk - Beer (Harmful/Very Harmful)	60.5	57.7	55.1	60.2	57.9	53.6	60.4	58.2	55.0
Perception of Risk - Coolers (Harmful/Very Harmful)	44.8	32.8	45.7	48.4	36.7	47.6	50.3	37.7	50.0
Perception of Risk - Liquor (Harmful/Very Harmful)	71.4	74.0	66.3	70.4	73.4	64.2	70.4	72.7	64.8
Population of Group	149389	78310	4302	160072	79104	5468	159674	79882	6131

Note: Students could also identify themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Mixed Origin, or Other, but these groups are not considered here because of the comparatively small populations of these students.