

# Underage Drinking in Pennsylvania

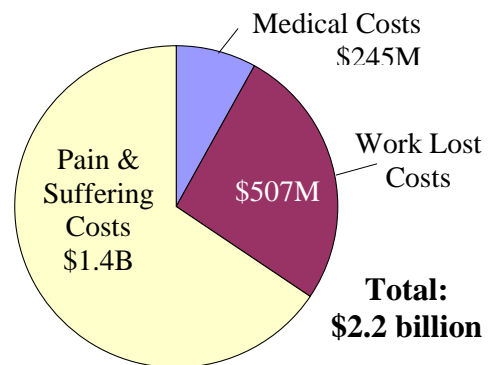
## *The Facts*

Tragic health, social and economic problems result from the use of alcohol by youth. Underage drinking is a causal factor in a host of serious problems, including homicide, suicide, traumatic injury, drowning, burns, violent and property crime, high risk sex, fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol poisoning, and need for treatment for alcohol abuse and dependence.

### *Problems and Costs Associated with Underage Drinking in Pennsylvania*

Underage drinking cost the citizens of Pennsylvania \$2.2 billion in 2007. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth.<sup>1</sup> This translates to a cost of \$1,759 per year for each youth in the State. Pennsylvania ranks 44<sup>th</sup> highest among the 50 states for the cost per youth of underage drinking. Excluding pain and suffering from these costs, the direct costs of underage drinking incurred through medical care and loss of work cost Pennsylvania \$752 million each year.

**Costs of Underage Drinking  
Pennsylvania 2007**



**Costs of Underage Drinking by Problem, Pennsylvania 2007**

Problem	Total Costs (in millions)
Youth Violence	\$1,378.2
Youth Traffic Crashes	\$401.4
High-Risk Sex, Ages 14-20	\$111.2
Youth Property Crime	\$88.8
Youth Injury	\$66.1
Poisonings and Psychoses	\$12.6
FAS Among Mothers Age 15-20	\$32.9
Youth Alcohol Treatment	\$97.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,188.3</b>

Youth violence and traffic crashes attributable to alcohol use by underage youth in Pennsylvania represent the largest costs for the State. However, a host of other problems contribute substantially to the overall cost. Among teen mothers, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) alone costs Pennsylvania \$32.9 million.

Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence

and are two and a half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, 2,693 youth 12 - 20 years old were admitted for alcohol treatment in Pennsylvania, accounting for 10% of all treatment admissions for alcohol abuse in the State.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Alcohol Consumption by Youth in Pennsylvania***

Underage drinking is widespread in Pennsylvania. Approximately 487,000 underage youth in Pennsylvania drink each year. In 2007, according to self-reports by Pennsylvania students:<sup>4</sup>

- 78% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 70% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported having used alcohol at some time in their lifetimes.
- 45% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 32% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported the use of alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 26% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 17% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported having five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (i.e. binge drinking) in the past 30 days.

In 2007, underage drinkers consumed 11.1% of all alcohol sold in Pennsylvania, totaling \$743 million in sales. These sales provided profits of \$364 million to the alcohol industry.<sup>1</sup>

## ***Harm Associated with Underage Drinking in Pennsylvania***

Underage drinking in Pennsylvania leads to substantial harm due to traffic crashes, violent crime, property crime, unintentional injury, and risky sex.

- During 2007, an estimated 57 traffic fatalities and 3,100 nonfatal traffic injuries involved an underage drinking driver.
- In 2006, an estimated 90 homicides; 34,500 nonfatal violent crimes such as rape, robbery and assault; and 58,300 property crimes including burglary, larceny, and car theft involved an underage drinking perpetrator.
- In 2006, an estimated 13 alcohol involved fatal burns, drownings, and suicides involved underage drinking.
- In 2006, an estimated 4,200 teen pregnancies and 19,100 risky sexual acts by teens involved alcohol.

Produced by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), November 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, TR, Levy, DT, Spicer, RS, & Taylor, DM. (2006) Societal costs of underage drinking *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 67(4) 519-528

<sup>2</sup> Grant, B.F., & Dawson, D.A. (1997). Age at onset of alcohol use and its association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the Nation Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse* 9: 103-110.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). (2007). *Substance Abuse Treatment by Primary Substance of Abuse, According to Sex, Age, Race, and Ethnicity*.

<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania Youth Survey Report (2007). Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Available [On-line]: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=5396&&PageID=494708&level=3&css=L3&mode=2> .