
Health Disparities Fact Sheet: Underage Drinking Among Latino Youth

Research has proven that young people who begin drinking before the age of 15 are more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who wait until they are 21. They are also more likely to be in a motor vehicle crash and physical fights after drinking.

- **Latino youth are more likely to drink and get drunk at an earlier age than non-Hispanic white or African American youth.**¹
- **Latino youth are more likely than their counterparts to have consumed alcohol in their lifetimes and to report current use of alcohol.** Several studies have identified predictors of drinking among Latino youth² and stipulate that males and older adolescents consume significantly more alcohol than females and younger adolescents. In addition, a higher level of alcohol consumption tends to be reported more frequently by Mexican adolescents living in single-parent homes than those in two-parent homes.
- **Latino youth are substantially more likely to report binge drinking in the past two weeks in the eighth grade than either White or African American youth, and are slightly more likely to do so in the 10th grade.**¹
- **Latino youth are more likely than both African American and White youth to have consumed alcohol prior to driving or have ridden with a driver who has consumed alcohol.**³ Moreover, the number of deaths related to alcohol consumption while driving, riding in a car with a driver who has consumed alcohol, and/or alcohol-related homicide is higher among Latinos, compared to their African American and White counterparts.⁴
- **In 2003 and 2004, 10 alcohol brands spent close to \$160 million to advertise on Spanish-language television.**⁵
- **Younger Latinos are more likely to use English- than Spanish-language media. Most of the alcohol industry's advertising spending is for English-language media.** These media are the primary vehicles for exposure of Hispanic youth to alcohol advertising.⁶
- **Latino youth 12- to 20 years old in the United States saw 20% more alcohol advertising per capita in English-language magazines in 2004 than did young people of this age group in general. In 2003, they saw 7% more of this advertising than did all 12-to-20-year-olds.**⁶
- **In six of the top 20 markets by Latino population in 2003, and in seven of the top 20 markets in 2004, Latino youth ages 12 to 20 heard more radio alcohol ads per capita than all youth in those markets. In the other markets included in this top 20, Latino youth heard nearly as much radio alcohol advertising per capita as all youth.**⁶
- **Death rates linked to alcohol-related conditions like cirrhosis and chronic liver disease are exceptionally high among Latinos.**³ While the category of cirrhosis and chronic liver disease is not included in the top leading causes of death for African American, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander males or females, it is the seventh- and tenth-leading cause of death for Latino men and women, respectively.⁷

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¹ L.D. Johnson, e. a. (2004). National Survey Results on Drug Use for Secondary School Students. *Monitoring the Future*, Tables D-63, D-66, D-69, D-70.

² Sokol-Katz, J. a. (1992). Family structure and adolescent risk-taking behavior: A comparison of Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican Americans. *International Journal of the Addictions*, 1197-1209.

³ Caetano, R. a. (2001). Alcohol use and alcohol-related problems among Latinos in the United States. In M. Aguirre-Molina, *Health Issues in the Latino Community* (pp. 383-412). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁴ Crowley, M. (2003). Latino access to mental health, development disabilities, and substance abuse services in North Carolina. *North Carolina Medical Journal*, 127-128.

⁵ T.M. Intelligence (2003-2004)

⁶ Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, C. (2003-2004). *Exposure of Hispanic youth to alcohol advertising*. Washington DC: Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (. (2003). Deaths: Leading causes for 2001. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 1-86.