

Substance Abuse Trends *Alert!*

March 2019

More Girls than Boys Initiate and Use Alcohol in Florida

Introduction

Prevention of underage drinking represents one of the priorities of the Florida Department of Children and Families Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH). Prevention of initiation represents a best and most efficient strategy to reduce alcohol use among adolescents. An increase in initiation signals a subsequent increase in underage drinking.

More Girls than Boys Initiated Alcohol Use

Data from the [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\)](#) indicate an increased rate of onset of alcohol use among Florida youth from 2015 to 2017; while the same rate for the nation declined. Data from the [Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey \(FYSAS\)](#) in 2018 indicate that girls in Florida were more likely than boys to report having ever used alcohol (38.9% vs. 34.1%, Figure 1), suggesting a higher initiation rate of underage drinking among girls than boys. The higher rate of lifetime alcohol use in 2018 suggests potentially higher rates of alcohol use among girls in 2019. This gender difference in lifetime alcohol use was also observed in 2017 FASAS data. Extra attention is needed to prevent more girls from initiating alcohol use.

More Girls than Boys Eventually Use Alcohol

Consistent with the higher rates of underage lifetime alcohol use for girls, the [2018 FYSAS data](#) also revealed that more girls than boys reported having used alcohol in the past 30 days (15.8% vs. 13.8%, Figure 1). Furthermore, the 2018 FYSAS data indicate that the gender difference in past 30-day alcohol use persists across all seven Managing Entity Regions in Florida.

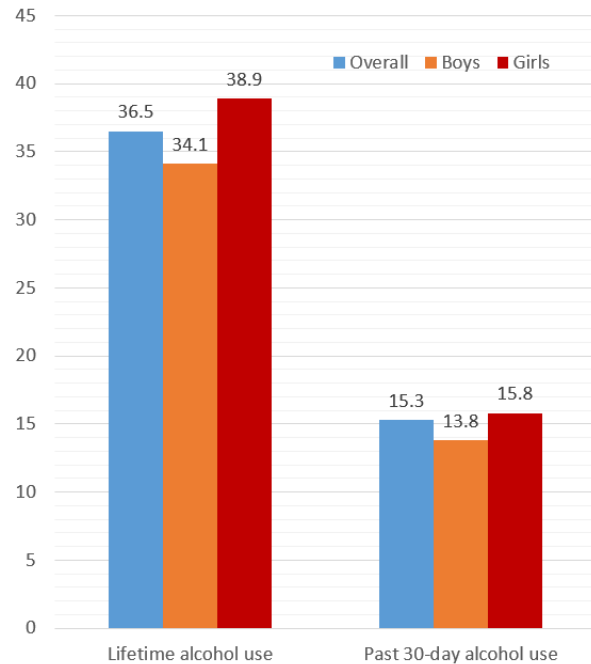


Figure 1. More Girls than Boys Initiated Alcohol and Used Alcohol in the past 30 days in Florida

Summary

The higher rates of alcohol use among girls in Florida suggest the need for additional research to help understand why girls are more likely than boys to drink and to identify new and improved prevention strategies and interventions.

Resources

National Institute on Drug Abuse Advancing Addiction Science
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/alcohol>
Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC):
<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/data-stats.htm>
Monitoring the Future:
<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/18data.html>
National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/search/all/?term=PMC2792994>

