

# The DAWN Report

Data Spotlight

July 3, 2014



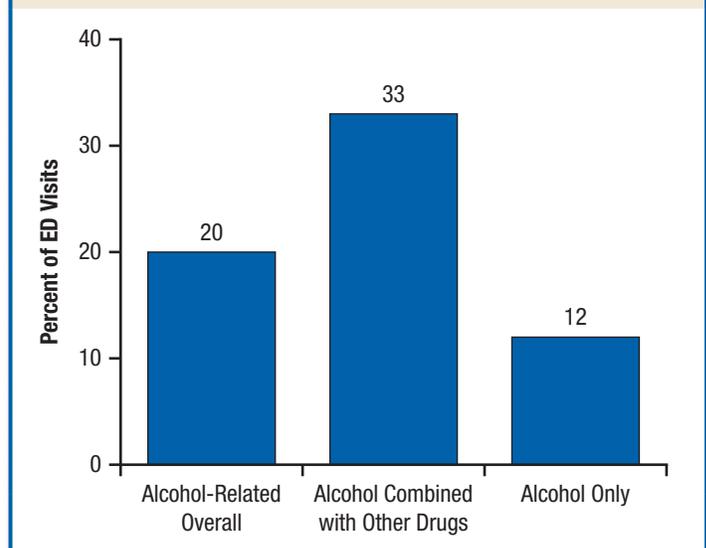
## Alcohol and Drug Combinations Are More Likely to Have a Serious Outcome Than Alcohol Alone in Emergency Department Visits Involving Underage Drinking

Underage drinking is a serious public health problem in the United States. In 2012, about one in four (9.3 million) teens and young adults under the legal drinking age of 21 used alcohol in the past month.<sup>1</sup> About 15 percent (5.9 million) of youths aged 12 to 20 were binge drinkers, and 4 percent (1.7 million) were heavy drinkers.<sup>1,2</sup> Underage drinkers are at risk of injury from events such as car crashes, burns, falls, drowning, and alcohol and drug poisoning that can require hospitalization or result in death.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), nearly 188,000 alcohol-related emergency department (ED) visits in 2011 involved patients aged 12 to 20. Of these visits, 20 percent resulted in a serious outcome including admission to the hospital, transfer to another health care facility, or death. Visits involving alcohol and other drugs were more likely than visits involving alcohol only to result in a serious outcome (33 vs. 12 percent).<sup>4</sup>

Parents and adult caregivers can play a powerful role in preventing alcohol use among teens and young adults. Talking to youths about the dangers of underage drinking, creating and maintaining open lines of communication, and sending a clear message that underage drinking is not acceptable are some effective ways to prevent underage drinking. To learn more about how to talk to youths about alcohol use, please see <http://beta.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>.

**Hospitalization, Transfer to Another Health Care Facility, or Death Following an Alcohol-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visit Among Patients Aged 12 to 20: 2011**



1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2013). *Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed tables* (Tables 2.77B and 2.79B). Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2012SummNatFindDetTables/DetTabs/NSDUH-DetTabsTOC2012.htm>

2. Binge drinking is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past 30 days. Heavy drinking is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days; all heavy alcohol users are also binge alcohol users.

3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (December 2013). *Report to Congress on the prevention and reduction of underage drinking*. Retrieved from <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP13-RTCUAD/PEP13-RTCUAD.pdf>

4. About 62 percent (117,000 visits) of ED visits related to underage drinking involved alcohol only, and about 38 percent (71,000 visits) involved alcohol and other drugs.

Source: 2011 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN). DAWN is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits and drug-related deaths to track the impact of drug use, misuse, and abuse in the United States.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. The **Data Spotlight** may be copied without permission. Citation of the source is appreciated. Find this report and those on similar topics online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

