

# Alcohol Use and Consequences: St. Mary's County



This report highlights recent information on the consumption and consequences of alcohol in St. Mary's County, Maryland.

## SUMMARY

- Alcohol use is common among St. Mary's County high schoolers
- St. Mary's County high school students have comparable perceptions of risks of self-harm due to binge drinking compared to their peers across the state
- The percentage of survey respondents meeting criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence declined between 2008-2012
- The prevalence of alcohol-related hospital events increased with age
- Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in St. Mary's County were below the state average

## County Demographics (2010 U.S. Census)

- **Population:** 105,151
- **Racial mix:** 14.3% black, 78.6% white, 2.5% Asian, 4.6% other
- **Below poverty level:** 8.6%
- **Unemployed (2013):** 6.3%
- **Median household income (2011):** \$80,943
- **High school graduation rate:** 87.7%



## Alcohol Consumption

According to the 2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), more than 1 in 5 high school students in St. Mary's County reported binge drinking (Figure 1). Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks of alcohol (such as beer, wine, or liquor) within a couple of hours on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey. The prevalence of binge drinking was higher among St. Mary's County high schoolers compared to their peers across the state (17.7% vs. 13.1%).

Compared to all Maryland students, a similar percentage of St. Mary's County students (76.1% vs. 76.9%) perceived people to be at moderate or great risk of harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they binge drink. Slightly lower perceptions of binge drinking risk among St. Mary's County youth correlate with higher levels of reported binge drinking behavior. Conversely, Maryland youth with higher perceived risks of self harm due to binge drinking were less likely to excessively consume alcohol.

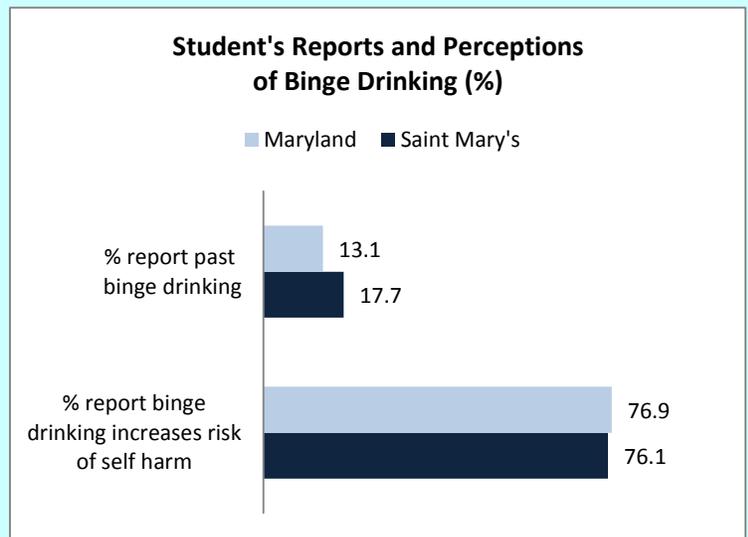


Figure 1. Data Source: Maryland High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2014

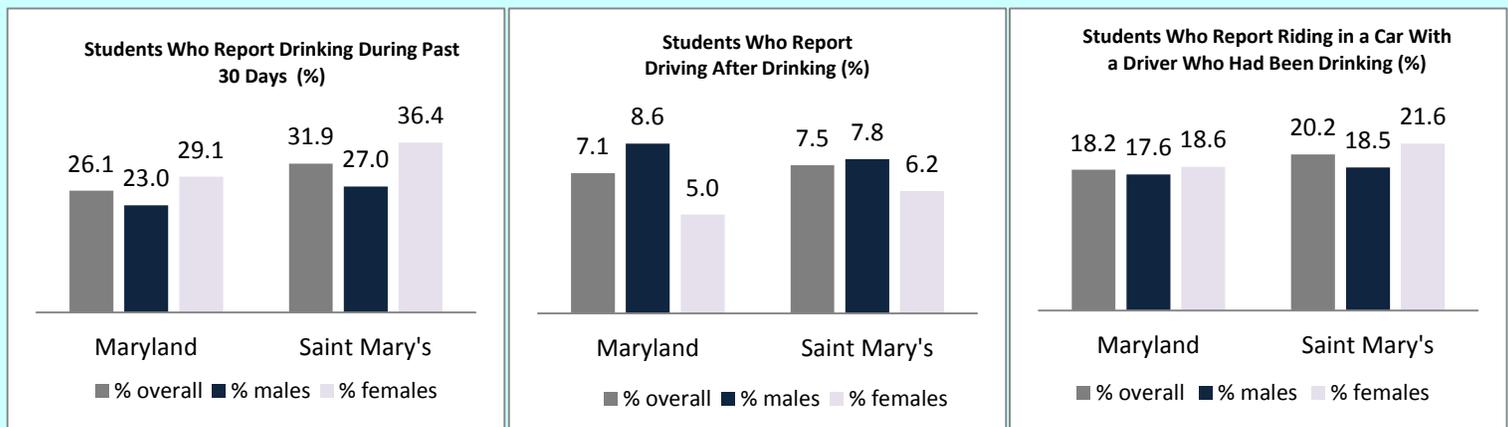


Figure 2. Data Source: Maryland High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2014

Nearly one-third (31.9%) of St. Mary's County high schoolers (compared to the state average of 26.1%) reported use of alcohol in the past 30 days. Female students were more likely to report alcohol use than male students. Almost 1 in 15 St. Mary's County students had driven a car in the past 30 days when drinking alcohol. Driving when drinking alcohol was more prevalent among males than females; however, female students were more likely to ride in a car with a driver who had been drinking.



# Impacts of Alcohol: Abuse/Dependence, Hospital Visits & Crashes

Data from the 2010-2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) suggest the proportion of survey respondents aged 12 years or older who met criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence decreased in the South from 6.7% to 5.5% compared to 2008-2010 data (Figure 3). The "South" substate region comprises Calvert, Charles, Dorchester, St. Mary's, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties.

Maryland also experienced a reduction (6.4% to 5.6%) in the prevalence of respondents meeting alcohol abuse or dependence criteria. Examples of alcohol abuse include: recurrent use resulting in a failure to fulfill major obligations at work, school, or home, recurrent alcohol-related legal problems, and regular alcohol use in situations in which it is physically harmful. Examples of alcohol dependence include: tolerance, withdrawal, unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control alcohol use, and time spent in activities necessary to obtain alcohol.

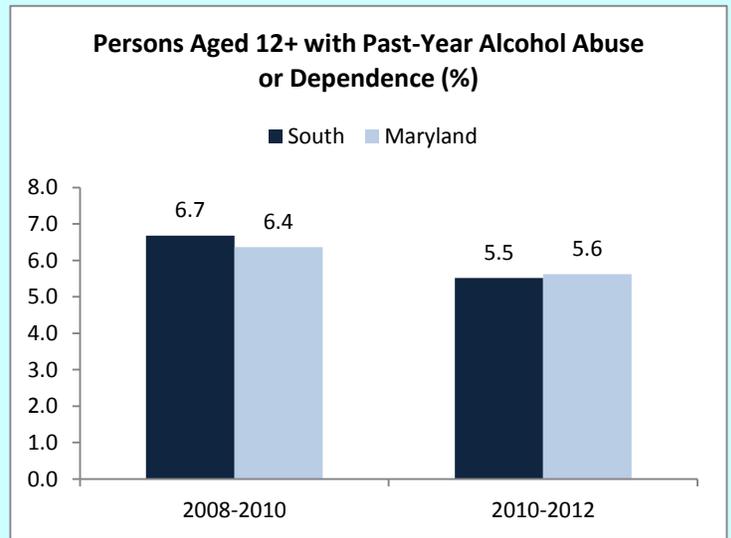


Figure 3. Data Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2008-2012

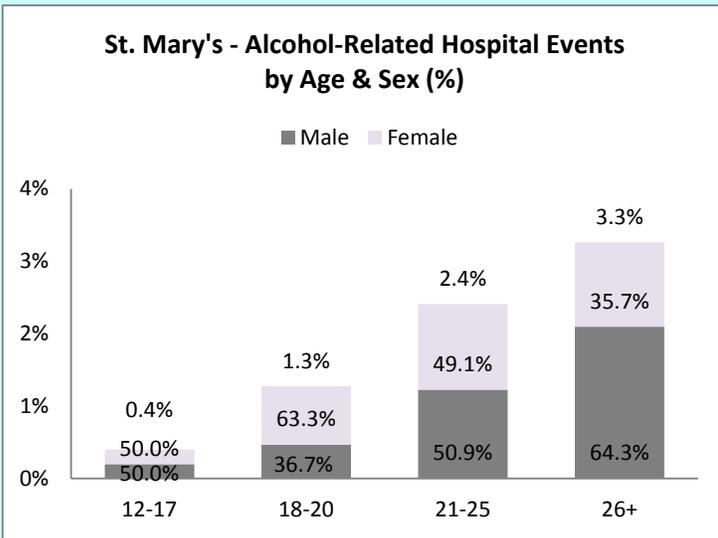


Figure 4. Data Source: Health Services Cost Review Commission, 2014

Figure 4 presents data on alcohol-related emergency department (ED) visits and inpatient hospitalizations for St. Mary's County residents treated in facilities within Maryland in 2014. Alcohol-related hospital events included acute (e.g., intoxication/poisoning), chronic, and alcohol involved suicide attempts, self-harm episodes, and assaults.

In 2014, 0.4% (n=14) of all ED and hospitalizations of St. Mary's County youth aged 12-17 years were related to alcohol use. The prevalence of alcohol-related hospital events grew with increasing age: 1.3% (n=30) among 18-20 year olds, 2.4% (n=114) among 21-25 year olds, and 3.3% (n=1,525) among those 26 years and older. The proportion of alcohol-related hospital events involving males increased as age increased. For example, among St. Mary's residents aged 12-17 and 26+ years in 2014, males accounted for 50.0% and 64.3% of alcohol-related hospital events, respectively.

In 2015, there were 1,474 motor vehicle crashes in St. Mary's County and 105,309 in Maryland (Figure 5). Alcohol-related crashes were defined as crashes involving at least one driver who:

- was reported to have been drinking, or
- had a positive blood alcohol level, or
- had a contributing circumstance related to the influence of alcohol.

The percentage of motor vehicle crashes involving alcohol among all crashes in St. Mary's County was 4.5%. Statewide, 4.9% of all crashes were related to alcohol. In St. Mary's County, more than 2 in 5 (42.9%) crashes related to alcohol resulted in an injury, whereas 29.8% of alcohol-related crashes in Maryland resulted in injury. No fatal crashes were reported among alcohol-related crashes in St. Mary's County.

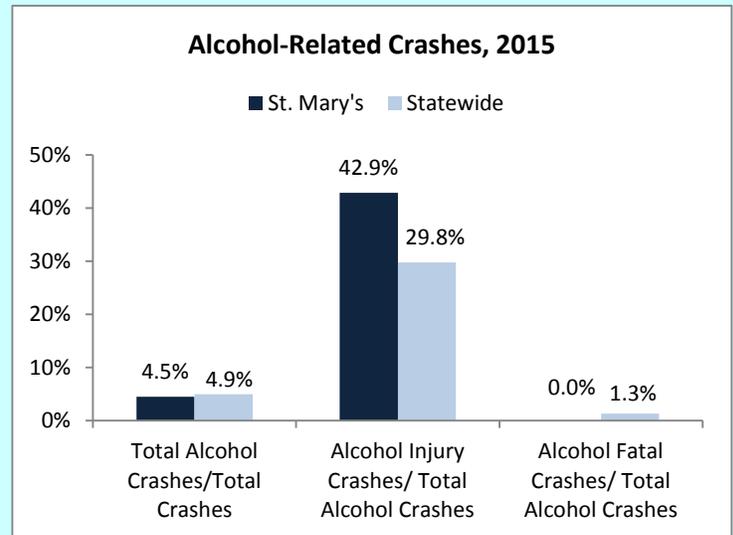


Figure 5. Data Source: Maryland State Police Crash Data, 2015