



# Underage Binge Drinking & Mental Health-Related Consequences



Kelli Jim  
University of Hawaii at West Oahu

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the correlation between underage binge drinking and mental health-related consequences. I wondered how the age at which adolescents begin to drink, peer influences, and parental supervision affects their level of mental health issues.

I created a survey composed of quantitative and qualitative questions, and questions from three screening questionnaires for anxiety, depression, and suicide sensitivity. After conducting three in class data collections and several in person data collections, I found that adolescents that first binge drink when they are 12 to 17 years old, are not influenced by their peers, and are supervised by their parents have higher levels of anxiety, depression, and suicide sensitivity.

## Introduction & Research Question

### Introduction

On my home island, the island of Kauai, underage drinking is an epidemic. Underage drinking has become a social norm. You will see adolescents drinking at the beach, parking lots, and family gatherings. Police officers tend to turn a blind eye, and parents often encourage their children to drink. In fact, some parents offer their children alcoholic beverages despite being underage. Since adolescents are not punished for drinking under the age limit of 21 years, they continue to drink and at higher quantities. Binge drinking can have consequences, such as traffic fatalities and poor school performance. Other consequences include mental health-related consequences.

### Research Question

How does the age at which adolescents begin to binge drink, peer influences, and parental supervision affect their level of mental health issues?

### Hypothesis

If adolescents binge drink at earlier ages, are easily influenced by peers, and lack parental supervision, then they will have higher levels of mental health issues.

## Independent and Dependent Variables

Age of first alcoholic drink  
- Child (3 to 11 years)  
- Teenager (12 to 17 years)  
- Legal Adult (18 years & up)

Peer Influences  
- Peer Pressure  
- Conformity

Parental Supervision  
- Monitoring  
- Guidance  
- Protection

Mental Health  
- Anxiety  
- Depression  
- Suicide Sensitivity

## Research Design & Data Collection

I created a survey on google forms, which included a screenshot of my consent form and 33 questions. My survey had quantitative and qualitative questions, and questions from three screening questionnaires for anxiety, depression, and suicide sensitivity. I surveyed 40 students at the University of Hawaii at West Oahu (UHWO) by conducting three in class data collections and several in person collections.

## Analysis

### Demographics

I divided the 40 respondents into three cohorts: adolescents (18 to 20 years old), young adults (21 to 35 years old), and middle-aged adults (36 to 65 years old). There are 12 adolescents, 19 young adults, and nine middle-aged adults. 22 respondents are males, 17 respondents are females, and one respondent did not specify his or her gender. Most of the respondents are Asian, Caucasian/European, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

### Independent Variables

The respondents had their first alcoholic beverage between the ages of 4 to 21 years. The average age is 15.18 years. 32 respondents have binge drunk (consumed five or more drinks on one occasion. A majority of respondents did not feel pressured by their peers to drink alcohol, did not drink alcohol in order to fit in with their peers, were monitored by their parents, was offered guidance about alcohol consumption by their parents, and was not protected from drinking alcohol before reaching the legal age pf 21.

### Dependent Variable

A majority of respondents did not have anxiety, had minimal depression, and did not have the desire to end their life.

Table 1: Age of First Alcohol Consumption

Age Cohort	Range (years)	Average (years)
Adolescents	12 to 20	16.6
Young Adults	4 to 21	12.41
Middle-Aged Adults	7 to 19	15
Total	4 to 21	15.18

Table 2: Binge Drinking

Age Cohort	Yes	No
Adolescents	9	3
Young Adults	16	3
Middle-Aged Adults	7	2
Total	32	8

## Results

### Adolescents

Adolescents that first binge drank when they were teenagers (12 to 17 years old), were not influenced by their peers, and were supervised by their parents have higher levels of anxiety, depression, and suicide.

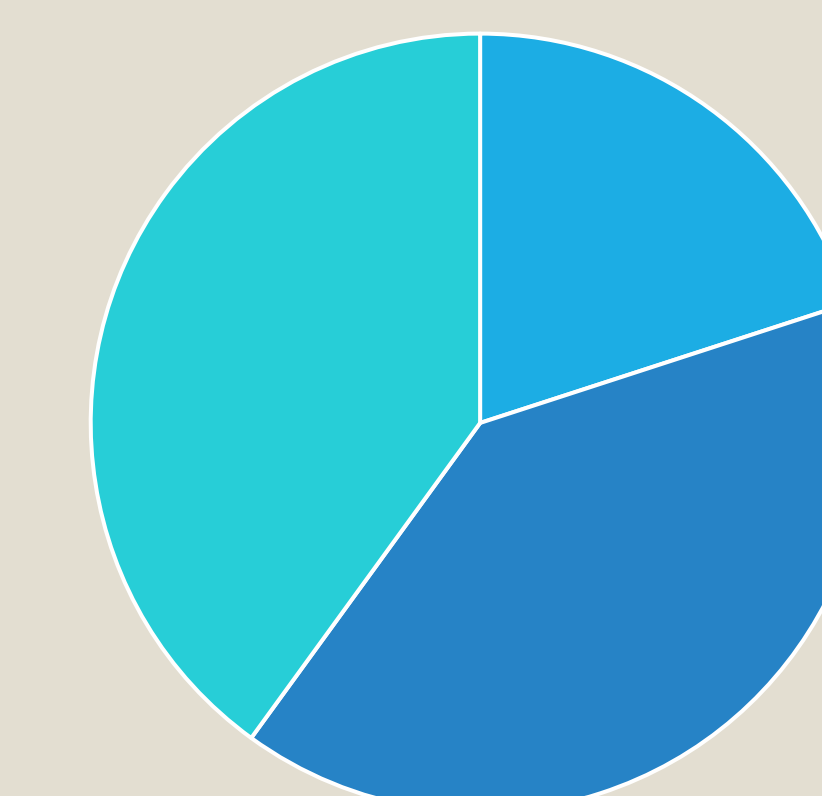
### Young Adults

Young adults that first binge drank when they were teenagers (12 to 17 years old), were not influenced by their peers, and were supervised by their parents have higher levels of anxiety. Young adults that first binge drank when they were legal adults (18 years & up), were influenced by their peers, and were supervised by their parents had higher levels of depression and suicide sensitivity.

### Middle-Aged Adults

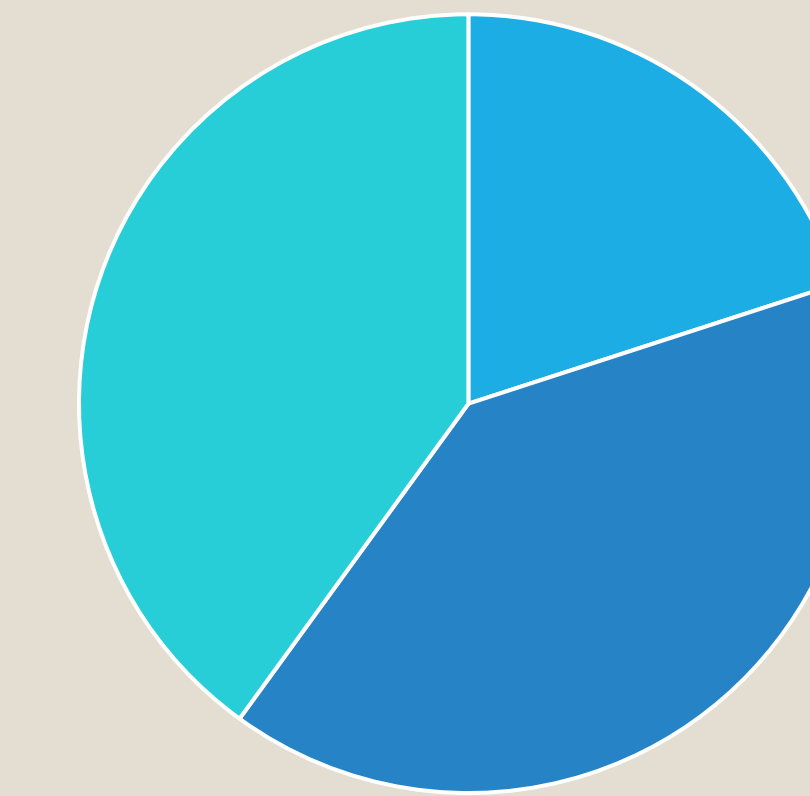
Middle-aged adults that first binge drank when they were legal adults (18 years & up), were influenced by their peers, and were supervised by their parents had the highest levels of anxiety and depression. Middle-aged adults did not have the desire to end their life.

Adolescents (Anxiety): First Alcoholic Drink as Teenager, No Peer Pressure, & Parental Supervision



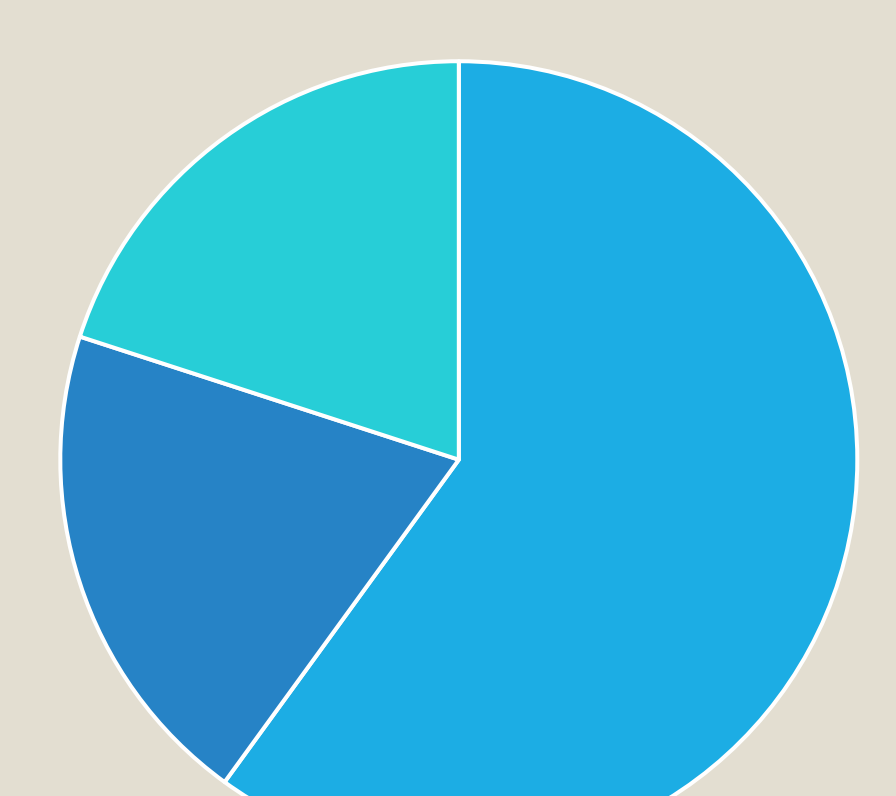
None Mild Anxiety Moderate Anxiety

Adolescents (Depression): First Alcoholic Drink as Teenager, No Peer Pressure, & Parental Supervision



None Minimal Depression Moderately Severe Depression

Adolescents (Suicide Sensitivity): First Alcoholic Drink as Teenager, No Peer Pressure, & Parental Supervision



None High Sensitivity Inconclusive

## Conclusions

My hypothesis is disproven. Adolescents that first binge drink when they are 12 to 17 years old, are not influenced by their peers, and are supervised by their parents have higher levels of anxiety, depression, and suicide sensitivity.

Among the three age cohorts, young adults had the highest levels of anxiety, depression, and suicide sensitivity. As adolescents become young adults, their mental health worsens. As young adults become middle-aged adults, their mental health improves. Their levels of anxiety and depression return to their levels during adolescence, and they do not have the desire to end their life.

## Contact



Kelli Jim  
University of Hawaii at West Oahu  
Email: kellijim@hawaii.edu  
Phone: (808) 755-5025

## References

- Collins, S.S. (2016). Associations Between Socioeconomic Factors and Alcohol Outcomes. Alcohol Research: Current Reviews, 38(1), 83-94. Retrieved from <https://libproxy.westoahu.hawaii.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=115170585&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Moss, H.B. (2016). Viewing risky underage drinking through the lens of human development. American Journal of Drug & Alcohol Abuse, 42(4), 374-376. <https://doi-org.libproxy.westoahu.hawaii.edu/10.3109/00952990.2016.1150486>
- Patrick, M.E., & Terry, M.Y.M. (2017). High-intensity drinking by underage young adults in the United States. Addiction, 112(1), 82-93. <https://doi-org.libproxy.westoahu.hawaii.edu/10.1111/add.13556>
- Richter, L., Pugh, B.S., Peters, E.A., Vaughan, R.D., & Foster, S.E. (2016). Underage drinking: prevalence and correlates of risky drinking measures among youth aged 12-20. American Journal of Drug & Alcohol Abuse, 42(4), 385-394. <https://doi-org.libproxy.westoahu.hawaii.edu/10.3109/00952990.2015.1102923>
- Windle, M. (2016). Drinking Over the Lifespan: Focus on Early Adolescents and Youth. Alcohol Research: Current Views, 38(1), 95-101. Retrieved from <https://libproxy.westoahu.hawaii.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=115170586&login.asp&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- <https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/images/res/SBQ.pdf>
- <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/AnxietyQuestionnaire.pdf>
- <https://uspreventiveservicetaskforce.org/Home/GelFileByID/218>