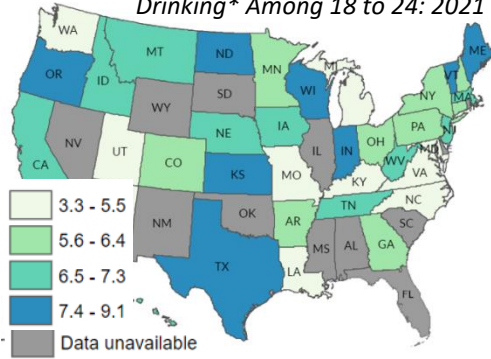


## SUBSTANCE USE

Figure 1. Past Month Heavy Drinking\* Among 18 to 24: 2021



Maine has some of the highest heavy drinking rates among young adults (18 to 24) in the Nation. In 2021, nearly one in ten (8%) young adult Mainers qualified as heavy drinkers (Fig.1).<sup>1</sup> In addition, one in four (24%) adults 18 to 24 reported binge drinking\*\* in the past month.<sup>1</sup>

While illicit drug use (other than marijuana) among Mainers 18 to 25 has declined in recent years, Maine is still among the highest in the Nation. In 2019-2020, Maine's rate of past month use was 6.4% compared to the U.S. at 5.4%.<sup>2</sup>



In 2019-2020, more than one in three (35%) Mainers 18 to 25 used marijuana within the past month; this was much higher than the U.S. (23%) and an increase of 25% since 2012-2013 (28%).<sup>2</sup>

## CONSEQUENCES

In 2021, Emergency Medical Services responded to 671 calls for alcohol intoxication/withdrawal among Mainers 18-34. These calls were disproportionately high compared to other age groups, representing one in four (25%) alcohol related responses.<sup>3</sup>



Nearly half (42%) of drug/alcohol impaired crashes were among Maine drivers 18 to 29 in 2021. Four percent of all crashes among drivers 21 to 34 involved impaired driving.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System\*\*\*  
<sup>2</sup> National Drug Use and Health Survey\*\*\*  
<sup>3</sup> Maine Emergency Medical Services  
<sup>4</sup> Maine Department of Transportation  
<sup>5</sup> Winters KC, Arria A. Adolescent Brain Development and Drugs.  
<sup>6</sup> Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse  
 \*\*\*Self-reported data

\*Heavy Drinking is defined as 14+ drinks/week for males, 7+ drinks/week for females  
 \*\*Binge drinking is defined as 5+ drinks for males and 4+ drinks for females during one occurrence

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Mainers 18-25 have lower perceptions of harm related to using substances. Only 56% felt cocaine use was risky; this was lower than the U.S. (61%) and a 10% decrease since 2015-2016 (62%).<sup>2</sup>



In 2019-20, nearly one in three (32%) young adults (18-25) in Maine reported any diagnosable mental illness within the past year: a 45% increase since 2015-2016 (22%). Young adult Mainers (18-25) are more likely than other adult age groups to be diagnosed with any mental illness, need mental health treatment but not receive it, and to have seriously considered suicide.<sup>2</sup>



*Young adults are very susceptible to risky substance use and poor mental health. It is crucial to address risk and protective factors and strengthen prevention efforts.*

## PRIMARY PREVENTION



*"Investing in prevention interventions can save lives and dollars."  
 – Nora Volkow<sup>6</sup>*

In 2020, nearly one in three young adult Mainers qualified as having a substance use disorder: ranking Maine 3rd in the Nation.<sup>2</sup> Research suggests that the portion of the brain responsible for decision making does not fully mature until 25 years of age, making this population more vulnerable to risky and harmful behaviors.<sup>5</sup> It is vital to continue to monitor young adults and gather data around the risk and protective factors that affect their decision to use substances. Now more than ever, Maine must focus on upstream primary prevention efforts including screening and interventions before negative health outcomes occur.