

# Making the Connection: Alcohol and Academic Grades

Data from the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show that students with higher academic grades are less likely to drink alcohol, begin drinking at a young age, or engage in binge drinking. It is important to remember that these associations do not prove causation. School health professionals, school officials, and other decision makers can use this information to better understand the associations between alcohol use and grades, as well as to develop and reinforce policies, practices, and programs that promote healthy behaviors.

## Key findings

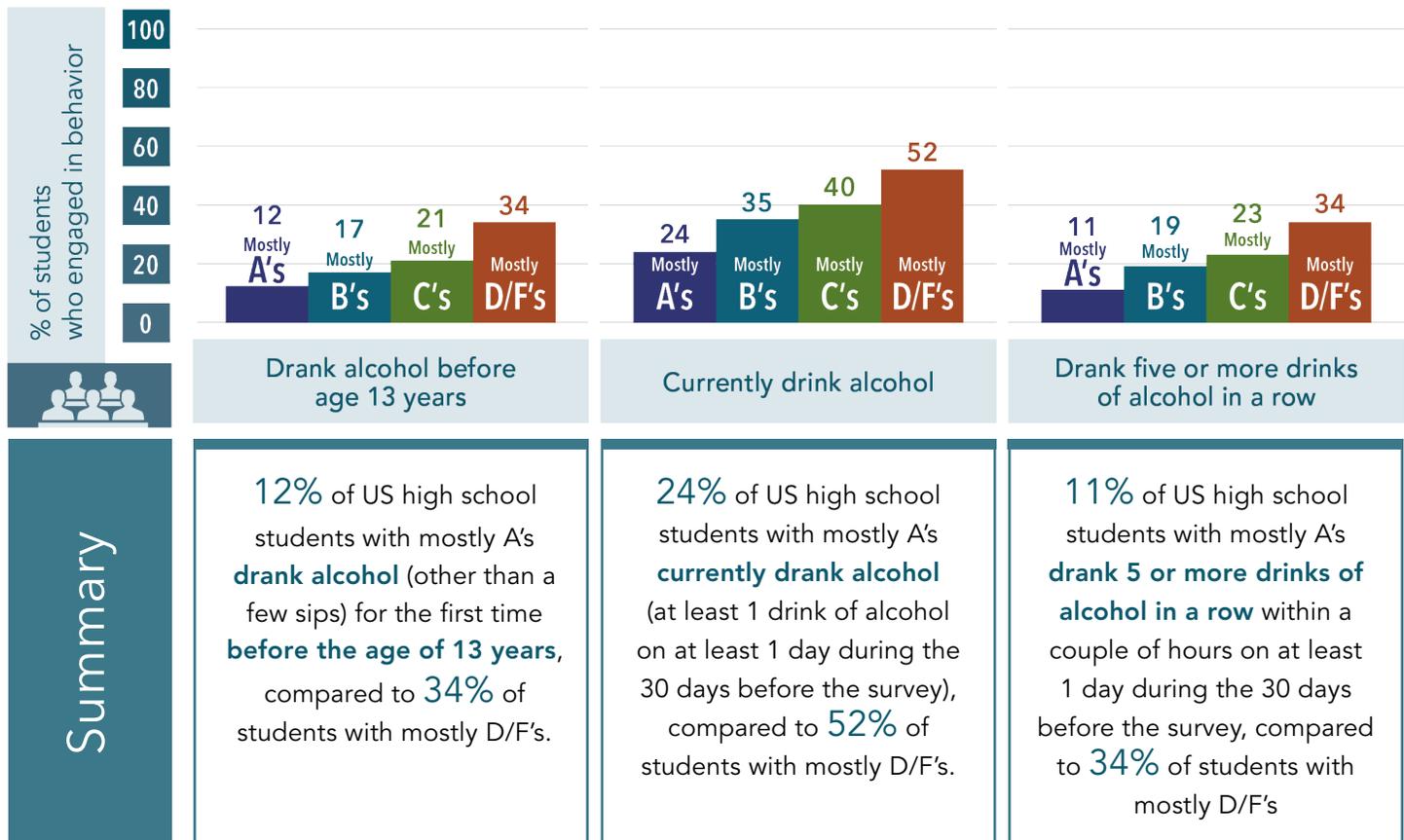
Compared to students with lower grades, **students with higher grades are**

**less likely to:**

- Drink alcohol before the age of 13 years.
- Currently drink alcohol.
- Drink 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours.

FIGURE  
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**Drinking Alcohol Behaviors, by type of academic grades earned**  
- United States, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015



\*Figure 1 illustrate the percentage of students who engaged in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned in school (mostly A's, B's, C's, D's/F's) (row proportions). The percentage of students who did not engage in each risk behavior are not shown. However, the percentages of students who did and did not engage in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned in school, sum to 100%. Logistic regression analyses (not shown) controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade in school confirmed a significant association between drinking alcohol and academic grades. You can also view data from other [2015 YRBS drinking alcohol behavior variables](#).

## Conclusions

These results from the YRBS provide evidence of a significant association between academic grades and drinking alcohol. Further research is warranted to determine whether higher grades in school lead to lower alcohol consumption and delayed alcohol initiation, if lower alcohol consumption and delayed alcohol initiation lead to higher grades, or some other factors lead to these alcohol-related behaviors .

There is a close relationship between health and education. By working together, education and health agencies, parents and communities can ensure that students are healthy and ready to learn in school.

## About the Data

The National YRBS monitors priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. It is conducted every 2 years during the spring and provides data representative of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in public and private schools throughout the nation. In 2015, students completing the YRBS were asked, "During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?" and given seven response options (Mostly A's, Mostly B's, Mostly C's, Mostly D's, Mostly F's, None of these grades, Not sure). In 2015, 32% of students received mostly A's, 38% received mostly B's, 20% received mostly C's, 6% received mostly D's or F's, and 4% reported receiving none of these grades or not sure.

For more information, visit the [CDC's Healthy Youth website](#), or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).



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