

# Aggressive teens more prone to drinking and are drinking more

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A Finnish study released Aug. 6 in the [Journal of Adolescence](#) finds teenagers who behave aggressively are more likely to drink alcohol and in larger quantities than their peers. According to the researchers, this study found [aggressive behavior](#) to be more common in teen girls compared to boys aged 13- to 18-years-old.

"The findings raise questions about a possible change in the behavior of adolescent girls and their vulnerability during adolescent social and emotional development," says Eila Laukkanen, lead researcher, in a University of Eastern Finland [news release](#).

The study investigated the association between aggressive behavior or other psychosocial problems and alcohol use among more than 4,000 Finnish teens. The results indicate that smoking and attention problems also increase the probability of alcohol abuse. Among girls, parental divorce and earlier onset of menstrual periods also are associated with drinking.

The study made no mention whether the behavior turned aggressive because of poorer judgment caused by alcohol consumption, or if the drinking was an outgrowth of underlying aggressive attitudes.

A related article in the same journal a decade earlier performed an analysis of studies evaluating the connection between violent video game content and teen aggression. The [article](#), one of the most downloaded pieces from the journal, made the not-quite-unexpected conclusion that the violent

games are "significantly linked" to increases in aggressive behavior and thoughts, as well as cardiovascular arousal and decreases in helping behavior. "Experimental studies reveal this linkage to be causal. Correlational studies reveal a linkage to serious, real-world types of aggression."

Child psychology experts are quick to add that teen aggression can stem from other causes, not just gaming. Stress from peer pressure can cause acting out. Physical changes can result in confusion, frustration and anger. Teens can also react with hostility due to real or perceived academic and extracurricular overload. According to the [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#), some other factors related to teen aggression include being the victim of physical and/or sexual abuse, exposure to violence in the home/community/media, as well as socioeconomic factors like poverty, single parenting or family unemployment. Aggression also can be related to brain damage from head injury.

Regardless of the cause of the aggression, the new Finnish study did note that the proportion of teens turning to alcohol was unchanged compared to earlier surveys, but the ones who are drinking may be consuming more. More than one in four 12- to 20-year-olds in the United States have had a drink in the past month according to a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) report. The rate of minors drinking in the nation was 26.6 percent. (See "[Report: 1 in 4 minors are drinking alcohol](#)")

[Underage drinking](#) leads to higher incidence of crime and alcohol use disorders such as alcohol abuse and the disease of [alcoholism](#) in adults. Although there has been progress in reducing underage drinking in recent years, particularly among those aged 17 and younger, the rates of underage drinking are still "unacceptably high" according to SAMSHA.

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