

OHIO POPULATION NEWS

Issue 36

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High-Risk Behavior in Early Adulthood

High-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual behavior, and idleness (not engaged in education or employment) in early adulthood can shape later health and social outcomes. In 2007, the leading cause of death among those aged 15-24 in Ohio was motor vehicle accidents followed by intentional self-harm. Ten years later, accidental poisoning, which wasn't in the top three in 2007, now claims the highest share of young adult lives in Ohio. "Accidental poisoning" encompasses unintentional overdoses on illegal or prescribed drugs, as well as alcohol poisoning. In this issue, we explore behaviors and trends among those in early adulthood that may be related to the recent rise of a new leading cause of death.

Table 1. Leading Causes of Death Among Young Adults Aged 15-24

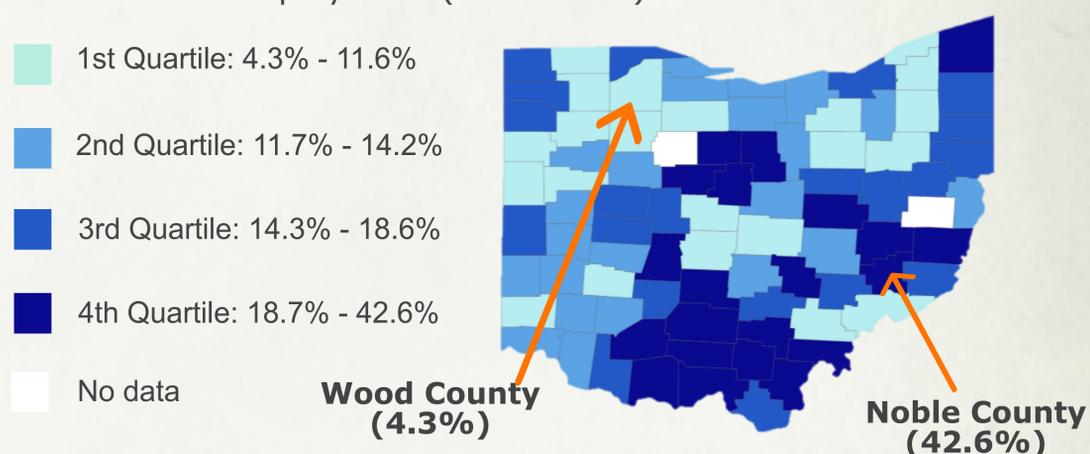
2007	2017
1. Motor Vehicle Accident	1. Accidental Poisoning
2. Intentional Self-Harm	2. Intentional Self-Harm
3. Homicide	3. Motor Vehicle Accident

Source: 2007-2017 Ohio Public Health Data Warehouse

Geographic Variation in "Idleness"—Not Engaged in Education or Employment

Those who are not engaged in education or employment may be more likely to participate in risky or harmful behavior, or vice versa (Hair et al., 2009). Across 2011 and 2015, a five-year average of 13.4% of those aged 16-24 in Ohio were not in education and not employed, which is slightly lower than the national average of 14.3%. Individual Ohio counties' averages vary greatly around the state average, with Wood County being home to the smallest percentage of idle young adults (4.3%) and Noble County being home to the highest percentage (42.6%). A large cluster of counties with high shares of "idle" youth exists in the central southern portion of the state, while the most dominant cluster of counties with low shares of "idle" youth appears in the northwestern portion of the state.

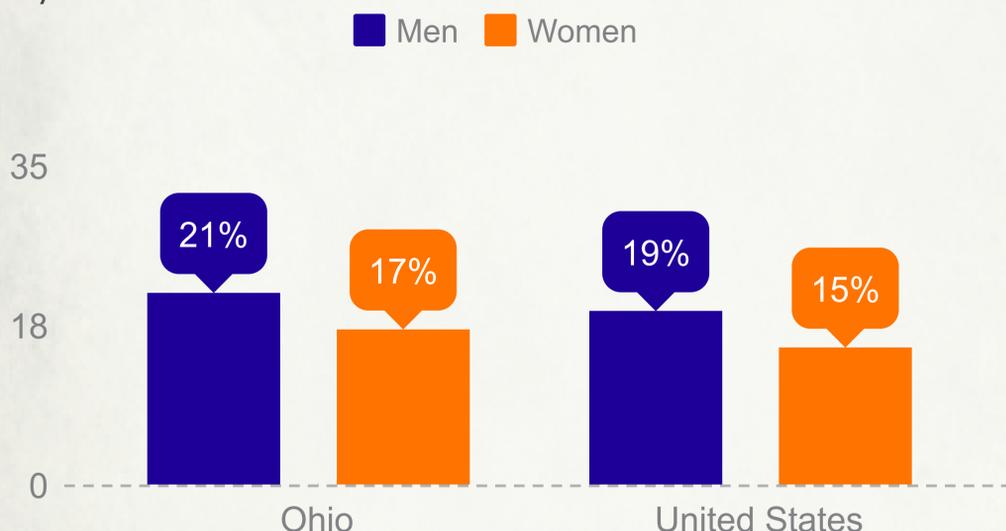
Figure 1. Percentage Aged 16-24 Who Are Not Engaged in Education or Employment (2011-2015)



Source: 2011-2015 Opportunity Index

Risky Behavior: Comparing Ohio to the United States

Figure 2. Percentage in Early Adulthood (18-24) Who Engaged in Risky Behavior in the Past Year



Source: 2017 BRFSS

A larger share of those in early adulthood in Ohio engaged in risky behavior than the average 18-24-year-old in the United States. The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) identified "risky behavior" by asking respondents if any one of the following situations applied to them in the past year: used intravenous drugs; received treatment for a sexually transmitted or venereal disease; received or given money in exchange for sex. One in five young men aged 18-24 in Ohio engaged in risky behavior in the past year compared to 17% of young women. Larger shares of men (compared to women) in Ohio and in the U.S. as a whole engage in risky behavior.

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Smoking and the Emergence of Vaping

While the percentages of men and women aged 18-24 who smoke traditional/analog cigarettes has decreased since 2007, some of the reduction appears to have been offset by the use of e-cigarettes, vape pens, and/or electronic hookahs, especially among men. Between 2007 and 2012, the share of young men who smoked cigarettes decreased from 32% to 25%. The decline continued into 2017 with 17% reporting they smoke cigarettes regularly. However, an additional 9% of men reported that they vape regularly, but do not smoke analog cigarettes. Combined, a total of 26% of men reported either smoking and/or vaping--a slight increase from 2012.

The share of women who smoked is lower than that of men at each time point. While nearly one in three women (31%) smoked cigarettes in 2007, less than one in five (23%) reported smoking and/or vaping in 2017. However, as seen among men, vaping behavior appeared to have dampened the magnitude of the decline of women who smoked regularly.

Although the detrimental effects of cigarette smoking have been known and publicized for decades, devices used for vaping are still new to the market and as such have received less scrutiny. However, nicotine--which is ingested via smoke in traditional cigarettes and a vapor via new electronic devices--has been shown to harm brain development among users up to their mid-20s. Using vaping devices in early adulthood may also increase the risk of future cigarette use (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

Binge Drinking

Similar to smoking/vaping trends, young men consistently report greater levels of binge drinking compared to young women. Further, the gender gap has increased since 2007. The BRFSS defines binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks on a single occasion for men and four or more drinks for women. In 2017, more than one in three Ohio men aged 18-24 reported binge drinking, and this level has increased over the last decade.

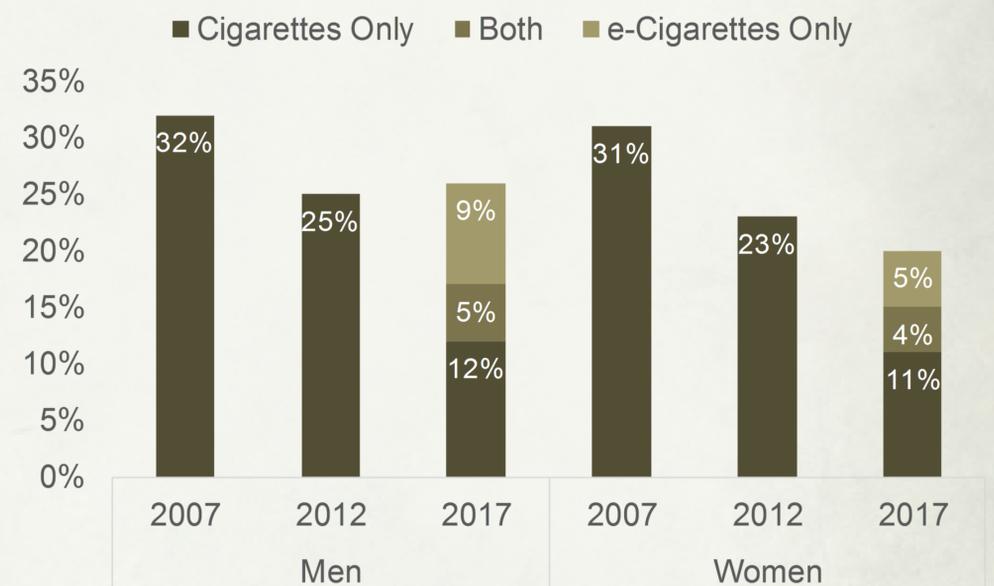
While binge drinking among Ohio women aged 18-24 increased between 2007 and 2012, the share has since dropped below the level observed in 2007. Across the last decade, the share of women who reported binge drinking within the past 30 days has remained close to one in four.

References:

Hair, E. C., Park, M. J., Ling, T. J., & Moore, K. A. (2009). Risky behaviors in late adolescence: Co-occurrence, predictors, and consequences. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 45*, 253-261.

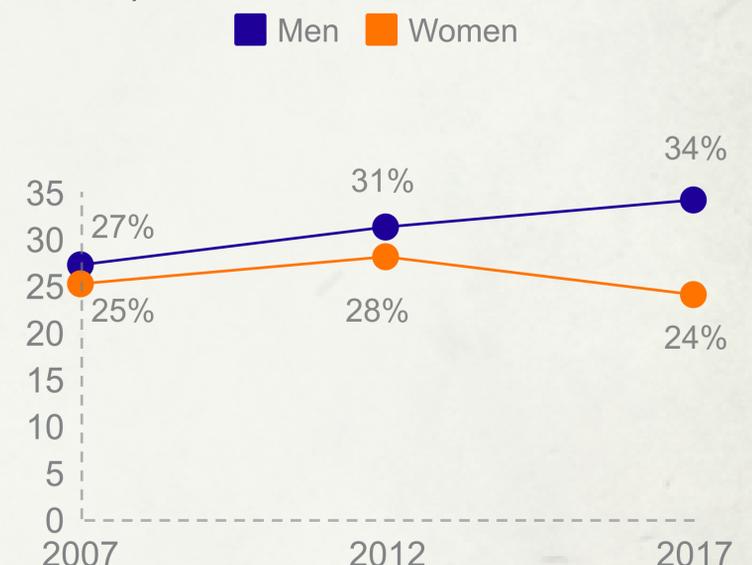
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. (2016). "E-cigarette use among youth and young adults: A report of the surgeon general.

Figure 3. Percentage in Early Adulthood (18-24) Who Smoke and/ or Vape Every Day or Some Days



Source: 2007-2017 BRFSS

Figure 4. Percentage of Ohioans in Early Adulthood (18-24) Who Engaged in Binge Drinking During the Past 30 Days



Source: 2007-2017 BRFSS