

The State of Underage Drinking in North Carolina

Quantitative Executive Summary

Methodology

McLaughlin & Associates conducted separate surveys among parents and students in North Carolina. A statewide survey of 500 parents of middle and high school students was conducted between March 27 and April 9, 2017. A statewide survey of 300 students in middle and high school was conducted between March 27 and April 11, 2017. This is a unique study with all interviews conducted by professional interviewers via telephone. All respondents, both parents and students, were promised confidentiality and that their individual personal responses would remain private. Prior to each student interview, the interviewer received permission from the student’s parent or guardian to conduct the survey. Interview selection was at random within predetermined geographic units. These units were structured to statistically correlate with appropriate population models. The accuracy of the sample of 500 parents is within +/- 4.5% at a 95% confidence interval. The accuracy of the sample of 300 students is within +/- 5.7% at a 95% confidence interval. The survey results in this summary have been rounded and may not equal 100%.

Parent Survey Summary and Key Findings

The survey among parents of middle and high school aged students illustrates that the TalkItOutNC campaign has continued its ability to reach its targeted audience and to influence the attitudes and behavior of parents in regards to the issue of underage drinking. In order to sustain and grow the campaign’s influence it will need to maintain a continuous and long-term approach.

Although at a lower rate compared to last year, the survey results show the TalkItOutNC paid advertising campaign has continued to successfully reach its targeted audience of parents. The 41% of parents who recall an ad about stopping underage drinking is 5-points lower than last year’s 46% recall. The ad recall increases among parents in the Greensboro, Wilmington and East media markets. The ad recall is greater among White and Hispanic parents than African-American parents.

Over the last few months, have you seen, read or heard any ads about stopping underage drinking?

	Total	Raleigh	Charlotte	Greensboro	Wilmington	East	West
Yes	41	41	37	46	46	44	31
No	56	56	60	50	46	54	67

*East = Greenville-New Barn, Myrtle Beach & Norfolk Markets

*West = Atlanta, Chattanooga & Greenville-Ashville Markets

	White	African-American	Hispanic	Men	Women
Yes	45	31	43	40	41
No	52	66	52	57	56

- Parents recall specific images and messages from the advertising. The top verbatim responses to what they remember most about the ads are: “drunk driving” (12%), “girl alone/stop breathing” (11%), “disturbing/shocking/horrific” (8%), “talk it out/underage drinking” (7%), “underage drinking/serious” (6%), “upset parent/child in hospital” (5%), “consequences/future” (4%), “brain damage” (3%), and “stop underage drinking” (3%).
- Virtually three-quarters (74%) of parents say the ads make them more likely to talk with the children about underage drinking and the dangers of alcohol.

Two in five parents specifically recall the “Lung” (41%) and “Ventilator” (44%) advertising. The majority of parents in the Raleigh media market recall both ads. The ad recall declines outside the major media markets. The recall among White parents is similar for both ads. The recall of the “Ventilator” ad is significantly higher than the “Lung” ad among African-American and Hispanic parents. Overall, the recall among Hispanic parents is lower than White and African-American parents.

Percentage of Parents who Recall “Lung” and “Ventilator” Advertising

	Total	Raleigh	Charlotte	Greensboro	Wilmington	East	West
“Lung” Ad	41	54	43	45	9	23	9
“Ventilator” Ad	44	56	45	46	34	34	6

***East = Greenville-New Barn, Myrtle Beach & Norfolk Markets**

***West = Atlanta, Chattanooga & Greenville-Ashville Markets**

	White	African-American	Hispanic	Men	Women
“Lung” Ad	44	37	22	39	42
“Ventilator” Ad	43	50	34	45	44

- One in five (20%) parents have heard of or visited the TalkItOutNC.org web site or social media sites. If driving parents to the web or social media sites is a priority, the web/social media sites will need a stronger presence online and in the advertising.
- Greater than 9 in 10 (95%) parents have talked to their children about underage drinking, which is slightly up from the previous survey (92%).



The frequency in which parents are talking to their children about underage drinking has been on a slight decline over the past 2-years; however, the frequency of communication is significantly higher among those who have seen, read or heard an ad than among those who don't recall an ad. Overall, 37% of parents say they "frequently" talk with their children about underage drinking. Among parents who recall an ad, 42% "frequently" talk with their children compared to 33% of parents who don't recall an ad.

Would you say you frequently, sometimes or rarely talk about alcohol abuse and underage drinking with your children?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	2/24/16	4/9/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Frequently	33	43	39	37	42	33
Sometimes	48	41	46	47	45	47
Rarely	19	16	15	16	12	19
Don't Know	0	1	1	0	1	0

Four in five (83%) parents have talked with the children about underage drinking within the last few months. The results depict the paid media campaign has had an impact on when they are talking to their children. If they recall an ad, 89% have talked to their children about underage drinking. If they don't recall an ad, the percentage decreases to 79%, a 10-point gap.

Specifically, have you talked about alcohol abuse or underage drinking with your children in the last few months?

	4/9/15	2/24/16	4/9/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Yes	86	83	83	89	79
No	13	16	17	10	21
Don't Know	1	1	0	1	0

Four in five (81%) parents view underage drinking in their community as a problem. The "problem" and "not a problem" percentages dipped slightly this year because the "don't know" percentage increased. Although the percentage of parents who consider it a "serious" problem remains virtually the same at 42%, the results illustrate the media campaign has influenced this group. If they recall an ad, 47% say the problem is "serious" in comparison to 40% among those who don't recall an ad.

Do you think underage drinking in your community is a serious problem, a minor problem or not a problem at all?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	2/24/16	4/9/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Problem	84	87	84	81	85	79
Serious	37	44	43	42	47	40
Minor	47	43	42	39	38	39
Not a Problem	10	7	10	8	5	10
Don't Know	6	5	6	11	10	11

The parents' concern level of their own children drinking alcohol continues to be far less than their opinion of underage drinking being a problem in their community. Although 81% view underage drinking as a problem in their community, including 42% who say it's a "serious" problem, 60% are concerned about their children drinking alcohol with just 13% saying they are "very" concerned. The overall concern about their children drinking alcohol remains virtually the same from the last survey. The percentage of those who are "very" concerned is down from 19% to 13%. The overall concerned percentage is 8-points stronger among parents who recall an ad (64%) than among parents who don't remember an ad (56%).

How concerned are you that your children will drink alcohol?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	2/24/16	4/9/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Concerned	64	59	59	60	64	56
Very	18	16	19	13	14	13
Somewhat	46	43	40	47	50	43
Not Concerned	36	41	40	39	36	43

- The average age that parents think it's appropriate to start talking with their children about alcohol abuse and underage drinking is 10.2 years old, which is essentially the same as the last survey (10.3). Half (50%) think it's okay to start talking to children at 10 years or younger. Among parents who recall an ad, a slight majority (52%) thinks it's appropriate to start talking to their children when they are 10 years or younger. This group is 48% among parents who don't recall an ad.
- The majority (56%) thinks it would be appropriate for their children to try an alcoholic drink at 21 years of age or older (4% at 25/older). One in five (21%) parents think it's okay for their children to try alcohol between 18-20 years old, 8% say between 15-17 years old and 5% say 14 years old and younger. The mean age that parents think it's appropriate for their children to try alcohol is 19.7 years old. The majority who thinks their children should wait until their 21 to try alcohol is 58% among parents who recall and 54% among parents who don't recall an ad.

- The overwhelming majority (90% to 8%) of parents believe children who drink underage are more likely to act irresponsibly and make bad decisions rather than being able to handle drinking alcohol and make responsible decisions.

The majority of parents continue to believe friends have more influence than parents on whether or not minors drink alcohol. The percentage saying parents have more influence has fluctuated a bit over the previous surveys.

Who or what do you think has the most influence on minors and whether or not they drink alcohol?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	2/24/16	4/9/17
Friends/Peers	55	60	58	61
Parents	35	30	34	30
Media	8	7	6	6
School System	1	1	1	2
Don't Know	2	2	1	1

Student Survey Summary and Key Findings

The student survey illustrates that the TalkItOutNC advertising campaign continues to reach and leave an impression on middle and high school students. Despite the ads being directed at parents, the results indicate a positive influence on the attitudes and behaviors of students. The survey also highlights some of the challenges that the campaign continues to face. The majority of students know people their age who have tried alcohol, the average age of a student first trying alcohol is 14 years old and 2 in 5 students drink at least once a month.

The campaign continues to successfully reach its targeted student population. Similar to the ad recall from last year's survey (54%), the majority (52%) of students remember seeing, hearing or reading an ad about stopping underage drinking. The recall of an ad is 11-points stronger among students than parents (52% to 41%). The majority recall is evident in the big media markets. The recall is higher among White students than African-American students.

Over the last few months, have you seen, read or heard any ads about stopping underage drinking?

	Total	Raleigh	Charlotte	Greensboro	Wilmington	East	West
Yes	52	51	55	54	31	53	43
No	47	49	43	43	56	48	57

***East = Greenville-New Barn, Myrtle Beach & Norfolk Markets**

***West = Atlanta, Chattanooga & Greenville-Ashville Markets**

	White	African-American	Men	Women
Yes	54	47	51	52
No	45	51	46	48

- The data shows the ads’ visuals and messages left an impression. The top responses to what they remember most about the ads are: “drunk driving” (12%), “girl alone/stop breathing” (11%), “just remember ads” (8%), “disturbing/shocking/horrific” (8%), “talk it out/drinking” (7%), “underage drinking/serious” (6%), “upset parent/child in hospital” (5%), “consequences/future” (4%), “brain damage” (3%), and “stop underage drinking” (3%).
- Virtually three-quarters (74%) of students say the ads will make students more likely to talk with their parents about underage drinking and the dangers of alcohol.
- Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) students have heard of or visited the TalkItOutNC.org web site or social media sites. The percentage of this group of students is 11-points higher (24% to 13%) among those who recall an ad than those who don’t remember an ad.

Like last year, four in five (83%) students say their parents talk to them about drinking alcohol; however, 61% say “sometimes” and only 22% say “a lot.” Less than 1 in 5 (16%) say their parents “never” talk to them about alcohol. Ninety-five percent of parents say they have talked to their children about alcohol. Among these parents 37% say they “frequently” talk with their children, 47% say “sometimes” and 16% say “rarely.” Even though the questions are not identical, it remains evident that parents and students have different accounts of how often they discuss drinking alcohol. The communication between parent and child is greater among students who recall an ad (86%) than among those who don’t remember an ad (81%). The talk “a lot” percentage is 6-points higher (25% to 19%) among students who recall an ad than among those who don’t remember an ad.

Would you say your parents talk to you about drinking alcohol a lot, sometimes or never?

	7/28/14	4/9/15	3/1/16	4/11/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Talk	81	78	84	83	86	81
A lot	23	19	20	22	25	19
Sometimes	58	58	64	61	61	63
Never Talk	18	21	16	16	14	19
Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	0

The percentage of students who say their parents have talked to them in the last few months increased from 58% to 62% in comparison to the last survey. The numbers show that students who recall an ad are more likely to have had a conversation with their parents than students who don't recall an ad. By a 13-point differential (68% to 55%), more than two-thirds of students who remember an ad say they have talked with their parents about alcohol in the last few months.

Specifically, have your parents talked to you about alcohol abuse or underage drinking in the last few months?

	4/9/15	3/1/16	4/11/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Yes	64	58	62	68	55
No	35	42	37	31	43
Don't Know	1	0	1	1	2

- The top responses to “what did your parents mostly talk about” are: “don't drink/underage” (33%), “drinking is bad/hurt me” (23%), “health dangers” (11%), “making right decisions/responsible” (8%), “don't drink & drive/dangerous” (7%), “alcohol/act different” (4%), “alcoholism” (3%) and “avoid peer pressure” (2%).

Nine in ten (93%) students continue to believe alcohol use by people their age is a problem. Three in five (60%) students consider underage drinking a “big” problem, which is similar to last year. The combo “problem” percentage is roughly the same whether the students do or don't recall an ad. The difference is among students who consider underage drinking a “big” problem. Students who recall an ad are more likely to consider underage drinking a “big” problem (62% to 58%). There continues to be a disconnect between the opinions of parents and students. Three in five (60%) students say underage drinking is a “big” problem compared to two in five (42%) parents who consider underage drinking a “serious” problem in their community.

Do you think alcohol use by people your age is a big problem, small problem or not a problem?

	7/28/14	4/9/15	3/1/16	4/11/17	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Problem	87	94	91	93	93	93
Big	58	54	59	60	62	58
Small	29	40	32	33	31	35
Not a Problem	12	5	9	7	7	6
Don't Know	1	1	0	0	0	1

- Two in five students believe most people their age are embarrassed or afraid to talk to their parents about alcohol, which is down 7-points from last year (49% to 42%) and down 13-points over the last 2-years (55% to 42%). High school students are more likely than middle school students (46% to 36%) to think people their age are embarrassed or afraid to talk to their parents about alcohol.
- Like last year’s survey, 55% of students know people around their age who have talked about drinking alcohol, which is down 5-points from the last survey. A little less than one-third (31%) of middle school students and 71% of high school students know people their age who have talked about drinking alcohol.
- Over two-thirds (36%) say more people around their age think it’s okay to drink alcohol, which is down 4-points from last year (40% to 36%) and down 7-points from 2-years ago (43% to 36%). The majority (60%) says people around their age think it is not okay to drink alcohol. Among middle school students, 13% say people their age think it is okay to drink alcohol. The percentage is four times greater among high school students (51%).
- As seen in last year’s survey, 61% of students know people around their age who have tried alcohol. Over one-third (36%) of middle school students know people their age who have tried alcohol. More than three-quarters (78%) of high school students know people their age who have tried alcohol.
- 14.3 years old is the mean age when students say people their age first tried drinking alcohol, which is up slightly from last year (13.9). The perception of when people their age first tried alcohol is different between middle school (12.4 years old) and high school (14.9 years old) students.
- Similar to last year, the plurality (45%) students who know people who have tried alcohol say those students drink at least once a month. Specifically, 16% drink at least once a week while

29% drink once a month. Two in five (41%) drink less than once a month. The majority (54%) of high school students drink at least once a month while 16% of middle school students do so.

- Four in five (80%) students think their friends should wait until they are 21 years old to start drinking alcohol. Sixteen percent (16%) say their friends should wait between the ages of 18 to 20 and 3% believe it would be okay to start drinking between 15 and 17 years old. The mean age to start drinking is 20.9. In comparison, 77% of parents think children should wait until the age of 21 to drink alcohol (19.7 mean age).
- As seen before, four in five (83%) students believe it would help stop underage drinking if parents talked more to their children about alcohol and the dangers of underage drinking. The majority consensus is larger among middle school (90%) than high school (79%) students.
- Similarly, four in five (81%) students believe it would help stop underage drinking if students in school talked more among themselves about alcohol and the dangers of underage drinking. The perception is the same among middle (81%) and high school (81%) students.
- An overwhelming majority (94% to 4%) of students believe when people their age drink alcohol they are more likely to act irresponsibly and make bad decisions rather than being able to handle the alcohol and make responsible decisions.