

The State of Underage Drinking in North Carolina

Quantitative Executive Summary

Parent Survey Methodology

McLaughlin & Associates conducted a statewide survey of 500 parents of middle and high school students between February 15-24, 2016. This is a unique study with all interviews conducted by professional interviewers via telephone. All respondents were promised confidentiality and that their individual personal responses would remain private. 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 survey results in this summary have been rounded and may not equal 100%.

Parent Survey Summary & Key Findings

The survey among parents of middle and high school aged students depicts the TalkItOutNC campaign has stayed relevant by continuing to reach its targeted audience and influence the attitudes and behavior of parents in regards to the issue of underage drinking. The survey also illustrates that parents believe talking to their children about how underage drinking affects brain health and development would be an effective way to influence their decision about drinking alcohol. The vast majority of parents view the messages related to brain health and development as convincing arguments to reduce underage drinking. In order to sustain and grow the campaign’s influence it will need to maintain a continuous and long-term approach.

The survey results show the TalkItOutNC paid advertising campaign has continued to successfully reach its targeted audience of parents. Similar to the ad recall from last year’s survey (49% TV ad recall), roughly half (46%) remember seeing, hearing or reading an ad about stopping underage drinking. The ad recall increases among parents in the Raleigh, Greensboro and East media markets. The ad recall is greater among African- Americans than White and Hispanic parents. It’s also bigger among men than women.

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	46	51	41	56	41	52	19
No	53	48	59	44	59	48	79

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

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

	White	African-American	Hispanic	Men	Women
Yes	45	50	39	50	44
No	54	50	61	49	56

- The top verbatim responses to what they most about the ads are: “underage drinking” (12%), “anti- drinking & driving” (12%), “don’t wait” (11%), “death/disability/injury” (9%), “accidents/wrecks” (8%), “talk to kids/drinking” (8%), “severity/danger” (7%), “anti-underage drinking” (6%), “parents w/disabled kid” (4%), “sad/negative ad” (3%), “scare tactic” (3%), and “parental influence” (2%).
- Over one-third (36%) of parents have heard of the website TalkItOutNC.org, which is 7-points higher than the last survey (29%). Among those who recall an ad, 49% have heard of the website.
- Among all parents, 7% visited the web site TalkItOutNC.org, which is similar to the previous survey (6%). The percentage increases slightly to 9% if they recall an ad. If driving parents to the web site is a priority, the web site will need to be highlighted more in the advertising.
- Nine in ten (92%) parents have talked to children about underage drinking, which tracks closely with the previous survey (94%).

The frequency in which parents are talking to their children about underage drinking is down a bit from the last survey; however, the difference is within the margin of error of the survey. The “rarely” communicate is virtually the same as before. The frequency of communication is higher among those who have seen, read or heard an ad than among those 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	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Frequently	33	43	39	41	36
Sometimes	48	41	46	47	46
Rarely	19	16	15	12	17
Don’t Know	0	1	1	0	1

As seen in the previous survey, greater than 4 in 5 adults talked with the children about underage drinking within the last few months. The results illustrate the paid media campaign has had an impact on when they are talking to their children. If they recall an ad, 91% have talked to their children about underage drinking. If they don't recall an ad, the percentage drops to 74%, a net difference of 17-points.

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

	4/9/15	2/24/16	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Yes	86	83	91	74
No	13	16	8	24
Don't Know	1	1	1	2

Greater than 4 in 5 parents continue to view underage drinking in their community as a problem. Although the percentage of parents who consider it a “serious” problem remains virtually the same at 43%, the results show the media campaign has influenced this group. If they recall an ad, 47% say the problem is serious in comparison to 40% of those who don't recall an ad.

Do you consider children starting to drink alcohol before the age of 15 to be a crisis, a problem but not a crisis or not a problem?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	2/24/16	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Problem	84	87	84	85	84
Serious	37	44	43	47	40
Minor	47	43	42	38	45
Not a Problem	10	7	10	10	10
Don't Know	6	5	6	6	6

The parents' concern level of their own children drinking alcohol continues to be far less than their concern of underage drinking being a problem in their community. As seen above, 84% view underage drinking as a problem in their community, including 43% who say it's a “serious” problem. In contrast, 59% are concerned about their children drinking alcohol and only 19% say “very” concerned. The overall concern about their children drinking alcohol remains the same from the last survey. The percentage of those who are “very” concerned is up a bit. The “very” concerned percentage is 6-points stronger among parents who recall an ad than among parents who don't remember an ad.

How concerned are you that your children will drink alcohol?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	2/24/16	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Concerned	64	59	59	60	59
Very	18	16	19	23	17
Somewhat	46	43	40	37	42
Not Concerned	36	41	40	40	40

- The average age that parents think it's appropriate to start talking with their children about alcohol abuse and underage drinking is 10.3 years old, which is essentially the same as the last survey (10.4). A little less than half (48%) think it is okay to start talking to children at 10 years or younger. Among parents who recall an ad, the majority (52%) thinks it's appropriate to start talking to their children when they are 10 years or younger. This group is 44% among parents who don't recall an ad. The mean age to start the conversation is 9.8 (recall ad) to 10.7 (don't recall ad).

The majority of parents believe friends have more influence than parents on whether or not minors drink alcohol. The percentage saying parents have more influence did increase a bit from the last survey and it appears the ads had some impact. The percentage saying parents is 6-points higher among respondents who recall an ad than among those who don't remember an ad.

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	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Friends/Peers	55	60	58	59	56
Parents	35	30	34	37	31
The Media	8	7	6	4	9
School System	1	1	1	0	2
Don't Know	2	2	1	1	2

- Seven in ten (70%) parents say they have talked to their children about what's good and bad for their brain or how their brain develops as they grow up; however, the survey shows parents infrequently talk to their children about how alcohol affects their brain. Roughly one-third (32%) of parents say they "always" talk to their children about the effects of alcohol on their brain, but the majority says "sometimes" (39%), "rarely" (19%) or "never" (9%). Men say the conversations are less frequent than women (Men: 28% always, 32% sometimes, 25% rarely and 13% never & Women: 35% always, 43% sometimes, 15% rarely and 6% never).

- Nearly half (49%) thinks a person’s brain fully develops before 21 years of age (Under 15 years 11%, 15- 17 years 10% and 18-20 years 28%). Two in five (44%) parents say the brain fully develops at 21 years of age or older and 7% don’t know. The mean age of when parents think a person’s brain fully develops is 20.3 years.

Nine in ten (92%) parents believe underage drinking significantly affects the brain health and development of teenagers in middle and high school. Four in five (84%) parents say talking to their children about how underage drinking affects brain health and development would be an effective way to influence their decision about drinking alcohol. Half (50%) say it would be “very” effective. The total effective percentage is above 80% among key demographics. The “very” convincing percentage increases among parents with both male and female children, parents who talk to their children frequently about underage drinking, and African- Americans.

Do you think talking to your children about how underage drinking affects brain health and development would be an effective or ineffective way to influence their decisions about drinking alcohol?

	Total	Child 14/ Younger	Child 15/ Older	Male Only	Female Only	Both Gender
Effective	84	84	83	81	83	89
Very	50	49	51	45	50	56
Somewhat	34	35	32	36	32	33
Ineffective	13	13	14	16	15	9
Don’t Know	3	3	3	4	2	2

	Talk	Sometimes Talk	Rarely Talk	White	Afr-Am	Hisp.	Men	Women
Effective	88	81	82	83	85	85	83	84
Very	65	43	38	45	57	46	47	52
Somewhat	23	39	44	38	28	39	36	32
Ineffective	9	16	17	14	14	13	15	13
Don’t Know	4	3	1	3	1	3	2	3

All of the messages about how alcohol affects brain health and development resonate with parents. More than 4 in 5 parents consider the statements to be convincing reasons to do more to prevent underage drinking. The messages also have intensity with roughly half or more considering the messages to be very convincing. Although all of the messages are strong, the top three messages are scientific evidence shows that underage drinking can damage the parts of the brain responsible for judgment, reasoning, impulse control, learning and memory; teenagers are less sensitive to the sedative effects of alcohol, making them more likely to binge drink, which can lead to risky behavior,

violence, unsafe sex and blackouts; and images of the brain show teenagers who drink heavily have less brain activity and smaller brain sizes than non-drinkers.

Now I'm going to read you various statements about how underage drinking affects brain health and development. Please tell me how convincing you find each statement as an argument IN FAVOR of doing more to PREVENT underage drinking.

Total Convincing/Very convincing	Total	Child 14/ Younger	Child 15/ Older	White	Afr- Am	Men	Women
Scientific evidence shows that underage drinking can damage the parts of the brain responsible for judgment, reasoning, impulse control, learning and memory.	93/61	94/62	94/63	92/54	97/74	91/55	94/64
Teenagers are less sensitive to the sedative effects of alcohol, making them more likely to binge drink, which can lead to risky behavior, violence, unsafe sex and blackouts.	88/60	87/60	92/62	87/56	90/68	85/55	91/64
Images of the brain show teenagers who drink heavily have less brain activity and smaller brain sizes than non-drinkers.	88/60	87/61	88/58	89/58	88/69	84/51	90/66
The brain does not finish developing until a person's mid- twenties. Preventing underage	86/48	86/51	87/48	85/45	88/57	85/46	86/50

<p>drinking will help a teenager’s brain have a healthy and full development.</p>							
<p>Alcohol kills by shutting down the part of the brain that tells you to breathe. Teens are more at risk for this because they are physiologically predisposed to binge drinking.</p>	<p>85/54</p>	<p>85/58</p>	<p>86/50</p>	<p>83/50</p>	<p>91/62</p>	<p>81/48</p>	<p>88/58</p>

Student Survey Methodology

McLaughlin & Associates conducted a statewide survey of 300 students in middle and high school between February 15 and March 1, 2016. This is a unique study with all interviews conducted by professional interviewers via telephone. All respondents 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 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%.

Student Survey Summary and Key Findings

The results in the student survey indicate that the TalkItOutNC advertising campaign continues to reach and leave an impression on middle and high school students. Although the ads have been directed at parents, the numbers suggest the campaign could continue to have a positive influence on the attitudes and behaviors of students. The brain health and development messages resonate with the students. The vast majority of students believe it would help stop underage drinking if parents talked to their children about how alcohol affects their brain health and development. The students found the brain health and development messages to be convincing reasons to stop underage drinking. 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 be successful with its media placement efforts to reach both parents and students. Similar to the ad recall from last year’s survey (59% TV ad recall), the majority (54%) of students remember seeing, hearing or reading an ad about stopping underage drinking. The recall of an ad is 8-points higher among students than parents (54% to 46%). The ad recall increases among students in the Raleigh, Charlotte and Wilmington media markets.

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	54	58	60	48	59	39	45
No	45	41	39	50	41	61	55

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

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

	White	African-American	Men	Women
Yes	53	52	53	54
No	46	48	47	44

- The responses to what they remember most about the ads are: “severity/danger” (14%), “anti-underage drinking” (13%), “anti-drink & drive” (11%), “underage drinking” (10%), “parents with disabled kid” (8%), “accidents/wreck” (5%), “don’t wait” (4%), “talk to kids/drinking” (4%), “sad/negative ad” (3%), “police/jail” (2%), and “affects lives/relationships” (2%).
- One-third (34%) of students have heard of TalkItOutNC.org, which 5-points higher than the last survey (29%). Recognition of the website is 20-points greater among students who recall an ad than among student who don’t remember an ad (44% to 24%).

The percentage of students who say their parents talk to them about drinking alcohol increased from 78% to 84%; however, nearly two-thirds (64%) say “sometimes” and only 20% say “a lot.” Less than 1 in 5 (16%) say their parents “never” talk to them about alcohol. Ninety-three percent of parents say they have talked to their children about alcohol. Among these parents 39% say they “frequently” talk with their children, 46% say “sometimes” and 15% 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. Although we don’t know if both the parent and child in the same household recall an ad, the communication between parent and child is greater among students who recall an ad (91%) than among those who don’t remember an ad (77%).

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	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Talk	81	78	84	91	77
A lot	23	19	20	22	18
Sometimes	58	58	64	69	59
Never Talk	18	21	16	9	23
Don’t Know	1	1	1	0	1

The percentage of students who say their parents have talked to them in the last few months dipped from 64% to 58% in comparison to the last survey; however, 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 23-point differential (69% to 46%), more than two-thirds of students who remember an ad say their parents have talked to them 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	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Yes	64	58	69	46
No	35	42	31	54
Don't Know	1	0	0	0

Nine in ten (91%) students continue to believe alcohol use by people their age is a problem. Overall, the percentage of students who consider underage drinking a “big” problem is up a bit from 54% to 59%. 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 (65% to 52%).

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	YES Recall Ad	NO Recall Ad
Problem	87	94	91	92	90
Big	58	54	59	65	52
Small	29	40	32	27	38
Not a Problem	12	5	9	8	9
Don't Know	1	1	0	0	1

- Virtually half (49%) of students believe most people their age are embarrassed or afraid to talk to their parents about alcohol, which is a down a bit from the last survey (55%). High school students are more likely than middle school students (54% to 44%) and female students are more likely than male students (53% to 45%) to think people their age are embarrassed or afraid to talk to their parents about alcohol.
- The majority (55%) of students know people around their age who have talked about drinking alcohol, which is down 5-points from the last survey. However, the students in this survey are somewhat younger, which helps account for the movement. One-quarter (27%) of middle school students and three-quarters (75%) of high school students know people their age who have talked about drinking alcohol.
- Two in five students (40%) continue to say more people around their age think it's okay to drink alcohol (43% last survey). A slight plurality (54%) say people around their age think it is not okay to drink alcohol, which is up from 49%. The younger student population in this survey explains the shift in opinions. Among middle school students, 14% say people their age think it is okay to drink alcohol. The percentage is four times greater among high school students (57%).
- Down 6-points from the last survey, 61% of students know people around their age who have tried alcohol. Again, the movement can be attributed to the younger student universe in this survey. Essentially one-third (32%) of middle school students know people their age who have tried alcohol. The percentage is two and half times greater among high school students (81%).
- Similar to the last survey, 13.9 years old is the mean age when students say people their age first tried drinking alcohol. The perception of when people their age first tried alcohol is different between middle school (11.7 years old) and high school (14.4 years old) students.
- Down 5-points from the last survey, two in five (42%) students who know people who have tried alcohol say they drink at least once a month. One-quarter (25%) drink at least once a week and 17% drink at least once a month. One-third (34%) drink less than once a month. This question gets a high don't know response (24%). Approximately half (48%) of high school students drink at least once a month while 20% of middle school students do so.
- Students believe a person's brain is fully developed by 20 years old (19.9 mean), which is similar to the perception among parents (20.3 mean).
- The majority (61%) says their parents have talked to them about how drinking alcohol affects their brain. In contrast, 89% of parents say they have talked to their children about the effects of alcohol on their brain (32% always, 39% sometimes & 19% rarely). The number of students who say their parents have talked to them is a bit higher among middle school students (65%) than high school students (59%).

- Like parents, nine in ten (91%) students believe underage drinking significantly affects the brain health and development of teenagers in middle and high school. This belief is a bit stronger among middle school students (95%) than high school students (89%).
- Four in five (81%) students believe it would help stop underage drinking if parents talked more to their children about alcohol and the dangers of underage drinking, which is up 5-points. The majority consensus is larger among middle school (89%) than high school (75%) students. The younger population in this survey helps account for the increase among all students.
- Close to 9 in 10 (88%) students believe it would help stop underage drinking if parents talked to their children about how underage drinking affects their brain health and development. The consensus is stronger among middle school students (93%) than high school students (85%).

Ranging from 83% to 89%, the vast majority of students find each of the messages to be a convincing reason to stop underage drinking. The percentages are stronger among middle school students than high school students. The biggest difference by race is White students by a 10-point margin (84% to 74%) are more responsive to the message about the brain not fully developing until a person's mid-twenties. By gender, the message about teenagers being less sensitive to the sedative effects of alcohol/more likely to binge drink resonates stronger among females than males (88% to 79%). Conversely, the message about the brain not finishing its development until a person's mid-twenties resonates stronger among male than female (87% to 79%).

Please tell me whether each of the following statements is a convincing reason to stop underage drinking?

Yes Percentage	Total	Middle School	High School	White	Afr-Am	Men	Women
Scientific evidence shows that underage drinking can damage the parts of the brain responsible for judgment, reasoning, impulse control, learning and memory.	89	93	85	90	87	90	87
Alcohol kills by shutting down the part of the brain that tells you to breathe. Teenagers are more at risk for this because they are more likely to binge drink.	88	90	87	88	89	86	90
Images of the brain show teenagers who drink heavily have less brain activity and smaller brain sizes than non-drinkers.	85	87	83	86	81	84	87
Teenagers are less sensitive to the sedative effects of alcohol, making them more likely to binge drink, which can lead to risky behavior, violence, unsafe sex and blackouts.	83	88	80	84	81	79	88
The brain does not finish developing until a person's mid-twenties. Preventing underage drinking will help a teenager's brain have a healthy and full development.	83	86	82	84	74	87	79