



## Underage Drinking In North Carolina and Talk It Out Campaign Fact Sheet

- **The problem.** North Carolina has an underage drinking problem.
- **The campaign.** Recent research shows that the Talk It Out campaign, launched originally in December 2014, is starting to have an impact on perception of underage drinking and the volume of communication about the issue, but also shows that there is *still a large awareness gap*.
- **The research.**<sup>1</sup> McLaughlin & Associates conducted separate surveys among parents and students in North Carolina on behalf of the NC ABC Commission.
  - A statewide survey of 500 parents of middle and high school students was conducted between February 15-24, 2016.
  - A statewide survey of 300 students in middle and high school was conducted between February 15 and March 1, 2016.
  - The 2016 surveys were a follow-up to similar surveys conducted in the spring of 2015 and summer of 2014, before the Talk It Out campaign was launched.
  - 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 2016 findings and measurable impact of the Talk It Out campaign.**<sup>1</sup> The 2016 research indicates that the Talk It Out advertising campaign is starting to have a positive impact. The results show that the frequency of communication and perception of the problem is higher among parents and children who have seen, read or heard an ad than among those who do not recall an ad.
  - Parent highlights
    - Nearly half (46%) of the parents surveyed recall seeing or hearing the ads without any aid.



- The frequency of communication is higher among those who have seen, read or heard an ad than among those who do not recall an ad.
  - If they recall an ad, 91% of parents 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.
- The vast majority (84%, down 3 points from 4/15) of North Carolina parents say underage drinking is a problem, only 43% (down from 44%) of whom think it is a serious problem.
  - If they recall an ad, 47% of parents say underage drinking problem is a serious problem in comparison to 40% of those who don't recall an ad.
- The majority of parents still believe underage drinking is a community problem, however they continue to be far less concerned about their own children drinking alcohol. While 84% of parents see underage drinking as a community problem, only 59% are concerned about their own children drinking underage, 19% "very" concerned.
  - There is a 6-point increase in the percentage of parents who are "very" concerned among parents who recall an ad.
- Parents who recall an ad are more likely to talk to their children about one year earlier regarding the dangers of underage drinking than those parents who do not recall an ad (approximately 9.5 vs. 10.5 years old)
- Student highlights
  - Although the ads have been directed at parents, the student survey numbers suggest the advertising could have a positive influence on the students' attitudes and behaviors in regards to underage drinking. In fact, ad recall is higher among students than parents (54% to 46%).



- Frequency of communication between parent and child is greater among students who recall an ad (91%) than among those who do not recall an ad (77%).
- Students who recall an ad are more likely to have had a conversation with their parents in the last few months 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.
- Nine in ten (91%) students believe alcohol use by people their age is a problem whether or not they recall an ad.
  - Students who do recall an ad, however, are more likely to consider underage drinking a "big" problem (65% to 52%).
- Parents vs. Students
  - There is a big perception gap between parents and students regarding the severity of underage drinking.
    - Fifty-nine percent of students believe that underage drinking is big problem, while only 43% of parents believe it is a serious problem.
  - While communication between parent and child has increased, it remains evident that parents and students have different accounts of how often they discuss alcohol.
    - More than three-quarters (84%, up 8% from 4/15) of students say their parents talk to them about alcohol; however, nearly two-thirds (64%) say "sometimes" and only 20% say "a lot." Less than one in five (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."
  - There is also a disconnect between parent and child regarding whom they believe has the biggest impact on a child's decision whether or not to consume alcohol.
    - The majority of parents still believe peers have more



influence than parents on whether or not minors drink alcohol, while four in five students (81%, 5-point increase from 4/15) feel parents talking more with them would help stop underage drinking.

- The percentage of parent respondents who believe parents have greater influence increased slightly from 4/15, with a 6-point increase among respondents who recall an ad than among those who don't remember an ad.
- **New opportunities and messages.** The NC ABC Commission has been working closely with researchers from North Carolina-based research institutions, including Duke University and UNC-Chapel Hill, to gather facts on alcohol and the adolescent brain. This year's survey included related questions to gauge awareness and perception of the brain health and development, and the effects of alcohol on the developing brain.
  - Parents and students believe that the brain is fully developed much sooner than it actually is.
    - The average age students believe a person's brain is fully developed is 19.9, which is similar to the perception among parents (average age 20.3).
  - 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%).
    - Sixty-one percent of students say their parents talk to them about the effects of alcohol on their brain. In contrast, 89% of parents (32% always, 39% sometimes & 19% rarely) say they have talked to their children about the effects of alcohol on the developing brain.
  - Parents and students believe alcohol affects the teenage brain.
    - Nine in ten parents (92%) and students (91%) believe underage drinking significantly affects the brain health and development of teenagers in middle and high school.



- Parents and students believe that talking to about how underage drinking affects brain health and development would help.
  - 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.
  - 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.
- **What's next.** Phase III of the Talk It Out campaign, launched in July 2016, is rooted in research and aims to close these awareness gaps, with a focus on the invisible toll alcohol can take on children's developing brains and future potential. Visit [www.TalkItOutNC.org](http://www.TalkItOutNC.org) to learn more.

*Source:*

*1. McLaughlin & Associates, The State of Underage Drinking in North Carolina Statewide Survey – Executive Summary, May 2016*