

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 31 and April 9, 2015. A statewide survey of 300 students in middle and high school was conducted between March 31 and April 15, 2015. 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 how the TalkItOutNC campaign has been successful in taking the first step to reach parents and begin influencing their attitudes and behaviors regarding the issue of underage drinking. The results indicate TalkItOutNC could capitalize on opportunities to expand the campaign and further influence parents' attitudes and behaviors with a continuous and long-term media campaign approach.

It's clear that the TalkItOutNC paid advertising campaign has been successful in reaching its targeted universe of parents of middle and high school aged children. The television ads have had the greatest reach. Virtually half (49%) of the parents recall the television ads without any aid. When given some details about the television ads, 51% recall the ad with the father and 50% recall the ad with the mother. The advertising penetration is impressive, especially in the larger markets where there is more advertising clutter and competition. Among the big three markets, the ad recall is strongest in the Raleigh market. Although the radio (26%) and digital (20%) advertising had less reach than the television ads, the survey results indicate it had a significant impact among parents who recall multiple ads from different mediums.

**“YES” Recall of TV, Radio, and Digital Ads in General and
“YES” Recall of TV Ads with Parents**

	Total	Raleigh	Charlotte	Greensboro	Wilmington	East	West
TV – Father	51	67	47	43	81	37	13
TV – Mother	50	66	50	43	58	35	19
Television (general)	49	59	50	45	69	34	18
Radio (general)	26	26	33	19	36	14	25
Digital (general)	20	23	23	11	25	13	19

***East = Greenville–New Bern, Myrtle Beach, and Norfolk Markets**

***West = Atlanta, Chattanooga, and Greenville–Asheville Markets**

In general, African-American parents recall the television and radio advertising more than white parents. African-Americans also recall the television ad with the father more than white parents. The recall of the television ad with the mother is virtually the same among the two groups. Only one-quarter of Hispanics recall the television ads in general. Unlike African-American and white parents, the ad recall among Hispanics increases sharply when they are given specific details about the television ads. The ad recall differences by gender are not as wide. In general, men and women equally recall the television ads. The general recall of radio and digital ads is slightly larger among women. The biggest difference (7 points) is that men recall the television ad with the father more than women.

	Total	White	Afr-Am	Hispanic	Male	Female
TV – Dad	51	49	55	39	54	48
TV – Mom	50	51	49	45	52	49
Television (general)	49	49	58	25	49	49
Radio (general)	26	24	31	22	24	28
Digital (general)	20	19	21	12	17	22

- The advertising has been successful in reaching the parents and leaving an impression. Four in five parents (80%) who recall the advertising recite what they remember about it without any aid. The top verbatim responses to what they remember most about the ads are: “mother and dead daughter” (15%), “parents too late to talk to kids” (12%), “boy in wheelchair” (9%), “dangers of drinking” (6%), “graphic/intense” (5%), “powerful/emotional” (4%), “underage drinking” (4%), “don’t drink and drive” (3%), “wrecked vehicles and crashes” (3%), “raising awareness” (2%), and “need to stop underage drinking” (2%).
- Among the entire parent survey universe, 29% have heard of the website TalkItOutNC.org. The percentage increases if they have seen or heard a television (40%), radio (46%), or digital (51%) ad. It also increases if they have viewed or heard ads on different platforms: 1 of 3 (28%), 2 of 3 (44%), and 3 of 3 (66%).

- Among all parents, 6% visited the website TalkItOutNC.org. The percentage increases if they have seen or heard a television (9%), radio (13%), or digital (22%) ad. It also increases if they have viewed or heard ads on different platforms: 1 of 3 (4%), 2 of 3 (9%), and 3 of 3 (31%). If driving parents to the website is a priority, it appears the website will need to be highlighted more in the advertising. The digital ads have the greatest conversion rate, but television ads have the greatest reach.
- One-quarter (25%) of parents have researched underage drinking or ways to talk to their children about it. The percentage increases if they have seen or heard a television (30%), radio (38%), or digital (40%) ad. It also increases if they have viewed or heard ads from multiple outlets: 1 of 3 (26%), 2 of 3 (28%), and 3 of 3 (53%). Nearly all (97%) parents who have done some research consider it to be helpful (40% very helpful).
- Two-thirds (66%) agree that “parents often do not feel fully prepared with the information or resources they need to properly address underage drinking with their children, which is up 4 points from the last survey (62%). The “strongly” agree has increased from 28% to 33%.

As demonstrated, the TalkItOutNC campaign has been successful in reaching its targeted audience. The survey results also illustrate that the advertising has been effective in starting to influence attitudes and behaviors of parents regarding the issue of underage drinking. Although this is a good first step in changing attitudes and behaviors, the survey results indicate there are opportunities to expand the positive results. It would take a continuous and long-term campaign strategy to build on the current momentum and capitalize on the opportunities.

Nine in ten (94%) parents say they have talked about alcohol abuse and underage drinking with their children, which is similar to the July 2014 survey results (92%). The difference between the two surveys is the frequency with which parents talk to their children. Parents who say they “frequently” talk with their children increased by 10 points since the July 2014 survey. The “frequently” level is 52% among parents who recall seeing a television ad in contrast to 34% among those who haven’t seen a television ad. Clearly, the advertising campaign is making a difference. The “frequently” percentage is greatest (57%) among parents who recall all three modes of advertising (television, radio, and digital); however, this is a small universe (8% of sample). The results also indicate the potential opportunities to influence attitudes and behavior with a long-term advertising campaign that reaches more parents across multiple platforms.

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

	7/21/14	4/9/15	YES TV	NO TV	0 of 3 Ads	1 of 3 Ads	2 of 3 Ads	3 of 3 Ads
Frequently	33	43	52	34	35	46	47	57
Sometimes	48	41	36	46	44	37	43	35
Rarely	19	16	12	19	20	16	10	8
Don't Know	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0

***X-Tabs of 0 to 3 through 3 of 3 ads refer to recall of television, radio, and digital ads.**

Most parents continue to consider underage drinking a problem in their community. The overall “problem” percentage hasn’t significantly increased from the last survey. The key difference is the rise in the percentage of parents who think underage drinking is a “serious” problem. This group increased in size by 7 points (37% to 44%). The advertising certainly has assisted in this perception change. If they recall a TV ad, the overall problem percentage is 88% including 47% who think it’s a serious problem. Among those who haven’t seen a television ad, the percentages are 86% “total” problem including a 41% “serious” problem. The percentage of parents who say underage drinking is a “serious” problem is bigger among those who have seen the ads across multiple platforms. The “serious” problem percentage reaches 59% among parents who have seen 2 of the 3 types of advertising.

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	YES TV	NO TV	0 of 3 Ads	1 of 3 Ads	2 of 3 Ads	3 of 3 Ads
Problem	84	87	88	86	86	86	92	87
Serious	37	44	47	41	41	38	59	45
Minor	47	43	42	45	45	49	33	42
Not a Problem	10	7	6	9	9	8	5	6
Don't Know	6	5	5	5	6	6	3	7

***X-Tabs of 0 to 3 through 3 of 3 ads refer to recall of television, radio, and digital ads.**

As seen in the last survey, 9 in 10 (90%) parents currently say they are aware that many children start drinking alcohol before the age of 15, and nearly all parents consider it to be a problem on some level. Although the percentages of parents who see it as a crisis (38%) or just as a problem (57%) haven’t changed, the results indicate the advertising is having an impact. There is a 7 point difference in the “crisis” percentages between parents who have and have not seen a television ad (42% and 35% respectively). The “crisis” percentage increases among those who have seen ads from multiple outlets: 2 of 3 (44%) and 3 of 3 (63%).

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	YES TV	NO TV	0 of 3 Ads	1 of 3 Ads	2 of 3 Ads	3 of 3 Ads
Problem	94	95	95	95	95	97	97	88
Crisis	38	38	42	35	33	35	44	63
Problem	57	57	53	61	62	62	53	25
Not a Problem	4	3	4	2	1	3	3	7
Don't Know	2	2	1	3	4	0	0	5

***X-Tabs of 0 to 3 through 3 of 3 ads refer to recall of television, radio, and digital ads.**

- Greater than 4 in 5 (86%) parents have talked about alcohol abuse or underage drinking with their children in the last few months, which coincides with the TalkItOutNC media campaign. If they recall a television ad, 90% have talked with their children. The percentage drops 9 points (81%) among parents who haven't seen a television ad. The percentage increases among those have seen or heard the ads across multiple mediums: 0 of 3 (80%), 1 of 3 (87%), 2 of 3 (89%), and 3 of 3 (95%).
- Among the parents who recall a television, radio, or digital ad, 78% say the ads make them more likely to talk with their children about underage drinking and the dangers of alcohol. The majority (53%) say the ads make them "much" more likely to talk with their children. The impact of the advertising increases if they recall the various types of advertising: 1 of 3 (71% more/48% much), 2 of 3 (82% more/50% much), and 3 of 3 (90% more/71% much).
- Parents are receptive to the message that it's never too early to talk to your kids about the dangers of alcohol, but it can be too late. Nearly all (96%) parents agree with the sentiment. Greater than 4 in 5 (85%) "strongly" agree.
- The average age that parents think it's appropriate to start talking with their children about alcohol abuse and underage drinking is 10.4 years old, which is up from 9.8 years old in the July 2014 survey. A little less than half (48%) think it is okay to start talking to children 10 years old and younger. Despite being receptive to the message that it's never too early to talk to your kids and that 90% are aware children start to drink before the age of 15, 48% think it's better to wait to talk about alcohol until the child is 11 years of age or older (40% say 12 years or older). At this stage, the advertising hasn't impacted the mean age of when it's okay to start talking to their children about alcohol. The mean age is virtually the same whether or not they have seen or heard any advertising. It appears parents have to be educated with statistics about how early minors might actually start drinking and how it's important to start a dialogue well before those vulnerable years.

The campaign is facing an issue where the parents’ concern level about their own children drinking alcohol is far less than their concern about underage drinking being a problem in their community. As seen above, 87% see underage drinking as a problem in their community, including 44% who say it’s a “serious” problem. In contrast, 59% are concerned about their children drinking alcohol and only 16% say “very” concerned. The concern level about their children drinking alcohol has dipped slightly since the last survey. The concern level of their children drinking alcohol is higher among those who have seen the advertising, but it’s still significantly lower than the perception of underage drinking being a problem in their community.

How concerned are you that your children will drink alcohol?

	7/21/14	4/9/15	YES TV	NO TV	0 of 3 Ads	1 of 3 Ads	2 of 3 Ads	3 of 3 Ads
Concerned	64	59	65	52	50	64	69	59
Very	18	16	18	13	11	17	21	20
Somewhat	46	43	47	39	39	48	48	39
Not Concerned	36	41	34	47	48	34	32	41
Don't Know	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0

Although the goal of the advertising is to make parents talk to their children about alcohol and the dangers of underage drinking, the majority of parents by a 2 to 1 ratio (60% to 30%) believe friends have more influence than parents on whether or not minors drink alcohol. The numbers show that the ads haven’t had any effect to this point in changing this mindset. Instead of using this question as a measurement of the campaign’s progress, it might be better used as a data point that illustrates the need for parents to be able to talk with their children about peer pressure and how to handle it.

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	YES TV	NO TV	0 of 3 Ads	1 of 3 Ads	2 of 3 Ads	3 of 3 Ads
Friends/Peers	55	60	65	56	57	61	65	75
Parents	35	30	26	33	33	30	25	12
The Media	8	7	7	8	7	7	7	10
School System	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	3
Don't Know	2	2	1	3	3	0	3	0

- The majority (56%) of parents believe most minors get alcohol from their friends, which underscores the perception that friends have the most influence. (20% their parents, 8% other family members, 7% friend’s parents, 2% stores, 1% siblings)



- Three-quarters (76%) think adults who were caught for knowingly serving alcohol to minors would likely be prosecuted for it. Less than half (43%) believe it would be “very” likely while 33% think it’s “somewhat” likely. One in five (20%) think it’s unlikely to happen.
- As seen in the July 2014 survey, three-quarters (77%) of parents use online social media. The majority (60%) remain Facebook users while the other social media sites only garner single digit percentages (6% YouTube, 3% LinkedIn, 3% Instagram, 2% Pinterest, and 2% Twitter).

Student Survey Summary and Key Findings

The student survey illustrates that the TalkItOutNC advertising campaign reached and left an impression on middle and high school students. Although the ads have been directed at parents, the numbers suggest the advertising could have a positive influence on the students’ attitudes and behaviors regarding underage drinking. Students continue to view underage drinking as a bigger problem than parents; however, thanks to the advertising, that gap has started to shrink. There are still challenges and concerns such as that the majority of students think people their age are embarrassed or afraid to talk with their parents about alcohol, two-thirds know people their age who have tried alcohol, nearly half say those who drink alcohol do so at least once a month, middle school students say the people their age who have tried alcohol started around age 12, and the results show that parents are saying they talk to their children about alcohol more often than students say they do.

The campaign has been successful with its media placement efforts to reach both parents and students. In fact, the recall of the television, radio, and digital ads is higher among students than parents. The recall of the television ads is 10 points higher among students than parents (59% to 49%). By a 24-point margin, students recall the digital ads more than parents (44% to 20%). The radio ad recall is 12 points larger among students than parents (38% to 26%). Within the big media markets, the television ad recall increases in the Raleigh and Charlotte markets. It decreases a bit in the Greensboro market. The recall of the digital ads is flat across the big markets. The radio ad recall slightly increases in the Raleigh market and dips in the Greensboro market.

“YES” Recall of TV, Radio, and Digital Ads in General and “YES” Recall of TV Ads with Parents

	Parents	Students	Raleigh	Charlotte	Greensboro	Wilmington	East	West
Television (general)	49	59	64	66	55	62	45	38
Digital (general)	20	44	44	45	42	62	34	52
Radio (general)	26	38	41	38	27	62	34	48

*East = Greenville–New Bern, Myrtle Beach, and Norfolk Markets

***West = Atlanta, Chattanooga, and Greenville–Asheville Markets**

More African-American students recall the television and radio ads than white and Hispanic students. White students have seen the digital ads at a greater rate than African-American and Hispanic students. The biggest difference by gender is male students recalling the digital ads more than female students (46% to 41%).

	Total	White	Afr-Am	Hispanic	Male	Female
Television (general)	59	57	68	59	60	57
Digital (general)	44	47	39	31	46	41
Radio (general)	38	38	42	32	38	38

- As seen with parents, the advertising not only reached students but also left an impression. Greater than 4 in 5 students (86%) who recall an ad recite what they remember from the ad. The top responses to what they remember most about the ads are: “dangers of drinking” (27%), “don’t drink and drive” (11%), “underage drinking” (8%), “dad feeding child in wheelchair” (6%), “intense/graphic” (5%), “wrecked vehicles/crashes” (4%), “burying a child” (4%), “demonstrated the effects” (3%), “statistics” (3%), “parents should talk early” (3%), “child has brain damage” (2%), “more likely to have an accident” (2%), and “victims’ aftermath” (2%).
- Among all students, 29% have heard of TalkItOutNC.org, which is the same percentage as parents. The percentage increases if they have seen or heard a television (39%), radio (43%), or digital (41%) ad. It also increases if they have viewed or heard ads on different platforms: 1 of 3 (24%), 2 of 3 (33%), and 3 of 3 (54%).
- Among all students, only 4% have visited TalkItOutNC.org. The percentage increases if they have seen or heard a television (6%), radio (10%), or digital (7%) ad. The largest percentage of website visitors is among students who have seen or heard 3 of 3 ads (television, radio, and digital): 1 of 3 (3%), 2 of 3 (2%), and 3 of 3 (14%).
- Although the ads were directed more to parents, the ads could have a positive effect on student attitudes and behaviors. Two-thirds (67%) of students who recall an ad think the ads will make people their age more likely to talk to or listen to their parents about underage drinking and the dangers of alcohol. This belief is greater among students who have seen or heard ads on multiple platforms: 1 of 3 (47%), 2 of 3 (68%), and 3 of 3 (86%).

Up 7 points from the last survey, 94% of students think alcohol use by people their age is a problem. The big problem is down 4 points, but the majority (54%) of students continue to believe underage drinking is a “big” problem. The students’ total problem percentage is larger than the parents’ percentage (94% to 87%). The intensity level is also bigger among students (54% big problem vs.

44% serious problem); however, this gap has decreased from 21 points in July 2014 to 10 points in this survey. As highlighted in the parent survey, the advertising campaign played a role in influencing the parents’ perception. Among the students, it appears the radio and digital ads had some influence on whether they perceive the problem as a “big” one. If a student has heard the radio ad, 57% say the problem is “big.” The percentage goes down to 51% among those who haven’t heard any radio ads. Likewise, if they recall the digital ads, 56% consider underage drinking a “big” problem. The percentage decreases to 51% if they haven’t seen any digital ads. The numbers are virtually the same regardless of whether they have or have not seen the television ads.

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	YES TV	NO TV	YES Radio	NO Radio	YES Digital	NO Digital
Problem	87	94	93	94	93	94	96	92
Big	58	54	54	53	57	51	56	51
Small	29	40	39	42	36	43	39	41
Not a Problem	12	5	6	4	5	5	4	6
Don't Know	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	2

Nearly every student believes it’s dangerous for people their age to drink alcohol. The “very” dangerous percentage is down from 76% to 72% since the last survey; however, that difference is within the survey’s margin of error. The results indicate that the advertising has had an impact on the attitudes of students. The “very” dangerous percentage is larger among the students who have seen or heard the ads.

How dangerous do you think it is for people your age to drink alcohol?

	7/28/14	4/9/15	YES TV	NO TV	YES Radio	NO Radio	YES Digital	NO Digital
Dangerous	99	97	97	96	98	97	98	96
Very	76	72	75	68	83	65	76	69
Somewhat	23	25	22	28	15	31	22	27
Not Dangerous	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	2
Don't Know	0	2	2	1	2	1	1	2

- How often students say their parents talk to them about alcohol is more or less the same as from the July 2014 survey. Currently, over three-quarters (78%) of students say their parents talk to them about alcohol; however, the majority (58%) say “sometimes” and only 19% say “a lot.” One in five (21%) says their parents “never” talk to them about alcohol. Ninety-four percent of parents say they have talked to their children about alcohol. Among these parents 43% say they “frequently” talk with their children, 41% say “sometimes,” and 16% say “rarely.”

Although the questions are not identical, it's clear the parents and students don't see eye to eye on the frequency of their talks about alcohol.

- A little less than two-thirds (64%) of students say their parents have talked to them about alcohol abuse or underage drinking in the last three months. This is 22 points less than the parents (86%) who say they have talked to their children about the issue. Among students, the percentage who say their parents have talked to them in the last three months is higher among white students (67%) than African-American (61%) and Hispanic (52%) students. Female more than male students (69% to 60%) say their parents have talked to them.
- Just as in the July 2014 survey, a slight majority (55%) of students believe most people their age are embarrassed or afraid to talk to their parents about alcohol. There aren't any significant differences by age or gender. By race, Hispanic (68%) and African-American (61%) more than white students (53%) believe most of their peers are embarrassed or afraid to talk to their parents about alcohol.
- The majority (60%) of students know people around their age who have talked about drinking alcohol, which is up 6 points from the last survey. However, the students in this survey are somewhat older, which accounts for some of the movement. One-third (34%) of middle school students know people their age who have talked about drinking alcohol. The percentage more than doubles to 77% among high school students.
- Up 9 points from the last survey, 43% would say people around their age think it is okay to drink alcohol. There is only a slight plurality (49%) that would say people around their age think it is not okay to drink alcohol, which is down 13 points from 62%. Again, the older student population in this survey accounts for some of the shift in opinions. Among middle school students, 24% say people their age think it is okay to drink alcohol. The percentage jumps to 55% among high school students.
- Up 3 points from the last survey, two-thirds (67%) of students know people around their age who have tried alcohol. Two in five (40%) middle school students know people their age who have tried alcohol. The percentage more than doubles to 85% among high school students.
- Like the last survey, 14 years old is the mean age at which students say people around their age first tried drinking alcohol. The perception of when people their age first tried alcohol is different between middle school (12.2 years old) and high school (14.7 years old) students.
- Although down 6 points from the last survey, nearly half (47%) of the students who know people who have tried alcohol say they drink at least once a month. One in five (21%) drink at least once a week and 26% drink at least once a month. One-third (33%) drink less than once

a month. This question gets a high “don’t know” response (19%). A slight majority (53%) of high school students drink at least once a month while over one-quarter (29%) of middle school students do so.

- Over one-third (36%) continue to think it would be easy to get alcohol. The majority (57%) of students think it would be hard. Among middle school students, 16% believe it would be easy to get alcohol. The percentage increases to 49% among high school students.

Similar to parents, students believe friends are the number one source for getting alcohol. Students are more likely than parents to see siblings as a potential source of getting alcohol. The percentage of students who view the parents as a source of getting alcohol increases among middle school students. One thing to keep in mind is that this question doesn’t distinguish whether they think parents are giving their children alcohol or if the children are taking their parents’ alcohol without the parents’ knowledge.

	Parents	Students	Middle School	High School
Friends	56	41	29	49
Their Own Parents	20	18	26	13
Other Family	8	11	11	11
Siblings	1	10	14	7
Stores	2	6	2	8
Friend’s Parents	7	6	6	5
Don’t Know	6	9	13	6

- Although down from 84% in the last survey, three-quarters (76%) continue to 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 (84%) than high school (72%) students. The somewhat older sample in this year’s survey accounts for part of the slippage from the previous survey.

Nine in ten (90%) students continue to use online social networks. Unlike parents, Instagram (33%) is the top network followed by Facebook (22%), YouTube (15%), Twitter (14%), Tumblr (2%), and Pinterest (1%). Instagram is the top choice among middle school (30%) and high school (35%) students. Middle school students are more likely to use YouTube than high school students. On the other hand, high school students are more likely to use Facebook and Twitter than middle school students.

	Parents	Students	Middle School	High School
Use Social Media	77	90	86	93
Instagram	3	33	30	35
Facebook	60	22	18	25
YouTube	6	15	24	10
Twitter	2	14	5	19
Tumblr	0	2	2	2
Pinterest	2	1	3	0
LinkedIn	3	0	0	0
Other	0	3	5	2
Don't Use Social Media	19	9	13	6
Don't Use Internet	4	0	0	0
Don't Know/Refused	0	1	1	1