

Youth Access to Alcohol Study: Youth Survey Report

Submitted to:

County of Orange Health Care Agency
Public Health Services
Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team
(ADEPT)



Submitted by:

The Applied Management & Planning Group
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006, the Orange County Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT), conducted a survey to study how underage youth in Orange County gain access to alcohol. The study was designed to assess the environmental conditions that enable underage youth to obtain alcohol, as well as the social norms that make underage drinking acceptable to youth and to the adults who routinely provide them with alcohol. Specifically, the study addressed four major areas:

- Attitudes toward underage drinking;
- Circumstances surrounding underage drinking;
- How alcohol is generally obtained by underage youth; and,
- Frequency and method of obtaining alcohol from specific sources.

The survey was conducted over a six-week period between March 8 and April 20, 2006 by the Applied Management & Planning Group (AMPG) and the Evaluation & Training Institute (ETI), outside research and consulting firms. The AMPG team administered the written survey to 1,925 high school and college students, ages 16 to 20, from the North, Central, and South Regions of Orange County. The overall margin of error for the study at the 95% confidence level was +/-2%; meaning that if the study were conducted repeatedly, 95 times out of 100 the results would be the same, give or take 2% age points. Weights were applied to the data when all age cohorts were combined to ensure that each age group was proportionally represented. The following summary presents key study findings, followed by conclusions and policy implications.

KEY FINDINGS

Attitudes towards Underage Drinking

- **Three-fourths (76%) of all youth surveyed agreed that using alcohol on a daily basis is “extremely harmful,” but only one quarter (26%) consider consuming alcohol several times a week as equally dangerous.** Most youth consider using alcohol once a month as harmless or mainly harmless.
- **Frequent drinkers (defined as youth who reported having a drink once a month or more in the six months prior to the survey) were less likely to rate underage drinking as harmful compared with infrequent drinkers and non-drinkers.** As drinking frequency increased, perceived harm from alcohol decreased.
- **In addition, older males and youth from the South Orange County Region were more likely than other respondents to minimize the harmfulness of underage drinking.**
- **With regard to the consequences associated with alcohol use, youth are most concerned about being in a car accident (76% of total responses), followed by losing control and doing something they regret (42%), getting arrested for driving under the influence (40%), alcohol poisoning (33%), and damaging their health (29%).** Few youth expressed concern over losing the respect of friends (8%), performing poorly in school (8%), performing poorly in sports (6%), or getting in trouble in school (5%) as a result of drinking.
- **Females are more concerned than males about the risk of having unwanted sexual encounters (35% of females compared to 18% of males) and losing control and doing something regretful (47% of females compared to 38% of males).** Male youth, on the other hand, are more concerned about performing poorly in sports (8% compared to 4% of female youth).

- **Of the youth who use alcohol, only one-third (34%) reported that their parents strictly forbid them to drink any alcohol before they are 21.** A total of 28% reported that their parents allow them to drink on special occasions, 24% reported their parents leave it to their judgment, 20% reported their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive, and 19% reported that their parents allow them to drink in moderation.
- **Youth from the North and Central Regions were more likely than youth from the South Region to report that their parents strictly forbid them to drink any alcohol until they are of age (37% compared to 28% of South Region residents).** Youth from the South Region were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive (24% compared to 18% of North and Central Region youth).
- **Non-drinkers were more likely to report that their parents strictly forbid the use of alcohol (58%), followed by infrequent drinkers (32%), and then frequent drinkers (25%).**
- **White youth were more likely than all other groups to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive.**
- **Findings suggest that parents become more lenient with regard to underage drinking as their children mature.** Younger youth (ages 16 to 18) were more likely than youth ages 19 and 20 to report that their parents strictly forbid them to drink alcohol. In addition, youth 18 and older were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive. Similarly, 19 and 20 year olds were more likely to report that they are allowed to drink in moderation compared to younger respondents.

Underage Drinking Behaviors

- **Nearly two-thirds (62%) of Orange County youth surveyed reported that they had used alcohol at least once in the six months prior to the survey.** Of those youth who have used alcohol, 46% drink frequently, defined as those who consume alcohol once a month or more, and just over half (54%) drink less than once a month.
- **Youth in the South Region were significantly more likely to report that they used alcohol frequently compared to youth from the other regions.** A total of 37% of youth in the South Region reported drinking frequently compared to 26% in the Central Region, and 21% in the North Region. Youth in the North and Central Regions were more likely to report that they do not drink, 40 and 42%, compared to 33% of youth from the South Region. Youth from the North Region were more likely to report that they drink infrequently, 38% compared to 32 and 31% of youth from the Central and South Regions, respectively.
- **White males between 17 and 20 were more likely to be frequent drinkers compared to other youth.** While no differences were found in the proportion of males and females who choose not to drink, males are more likely to be frequent drinkers. In addition, 17- to 20-year olds were significantly more likely to be frequent drinkers compared to 16 year olds. White youth are more likely to use alcohol than were Asian, African-American, and Middle Eastern youth.

Circumstances Surrounding Underage Drinking

- **Young people most often consume alcohol at a private home, either at a friend's home (52%) or at their own home (24%).** Youth rarely drink at stadiums or arenas, concert sites, parks, beaches, at a relative's home, or in a vehicle (1% each).

- **Underage drinkers more often drink with their friends (81%) than with anyone else.** One out of 10 youth surveyed drink with their parents.

How Alcohol is Generally Obtained by Underage Youth

- **More than eight out of 10 youth (81%) surveyed reported that it was “very easy” or “fairly easy” to obtain alcohol.**
- **Older youth and frequent drinkers were more likely than other respondents to report that it was easy to obtain alcohol.** Older youth, aged 20, were more likely than youth ages 16 to 18 to report that it was “very easy” to obtain alcohol (49% compared to 36% for 16 year olds, and 35% for 17 and 18 year olds).
- **Adults 21 years and older are the single most common source of alcohol for minors, outpacing all commercial sources.** More than one-quarter of underage drinkers (28%) cited older friends and relatives as the primary source for obtaining alcohol.
- **When asked where minors could most easily purchase alcohol, one-third (34%) of underage drinkers cited liquor stores, exceeding the proportion who cited supermarkets and convenience stores combined.** Underage drinkers in South Orange County were more likely to report that supermarkets were easy locations to make an alcohol purchase, while underage drinkers in North and Central Orange County were more likely to report that liquor stores were easy locations.
- **Almost half of underage drinkers surveyed (46%) have provided alcohol to others who were underage.** Youth from the South Region were more likely to have provided alcohol to someone underage compared to youth from the Central Region.
- **Individuals who provide alcohol to other underage drinkers are most likely to be frequent drinkers, male, White, and from a higher socioeconomic background** (inferred from having a mother with a college education).
- **The use of false identification to purchase alcohol is not widespread.** A total of 13% of underage drinkers surveyed have used false identification to purchase alcohol.
- **Frequent drinkers, males, and White respondents (compared to Asian and Hispanic) were more likely to have used false identification to purchase alcohol.**

Frequency and Method of Obtaining Alcohol from Specific Sources

- **Underage drinkers obtain alcohol most frequently at parties, followed by liquor stores and grocery stores, with one-third of youth surveyed (34%) reporting that liquor stores are the easiest commercial source.**
- **More than three-quarters of underage drinkers obtain alcohol at large parties and kickbacks (i.e. a gathering of a small group of friends).** Respondents more often obtain alcohol at kickbacks, 31% compared to 25% at large parties.
- **When underage drinkers obtain alcohol from a liquor store, they do so most often by asking an older friend or sibling to make the purchase.** A total of 58% of underage drinkers surveyed reported obtaining alcohol from a liquor store by asking an older friend or sibling, including 16%

of youth who reported that they used this method “often.” More than nine out of 10 respondents (92%) reported that they have never stolen alcohol from a liquor store.

- **Similar to findings for liquor stores, underage drinkers usually obtain alcohol from grocery stores by asking an older friend or sibling to purchase alcohol for them.**
- **Frequent drinkers, males, and older youth, ages 19 and 20, are more likely to have obtained alcohol from a liquor store and grocery store, regardless of method.**
- **Parents are not a primary source of alcohol for 16 to 20 year olds.** Most youth have never taken alcohol from their parents either with permission (61%) or without permission (63%). However, a total of 22% of underage drinkers indicated that their parents have bought alcohol for them on at least one occasion.
- **Nineteen and 20 year-old respondents were more likely to report that their parents purchased alcohol for them, compared to younger youth. White respondents were also more likely than Asian and Hispanic youth to report that their parents bought them alcohol.**
- **Most underage drinkers have never obtained alcohol from a club, bar or restaurant.** Youth who obtained alcohol at a club, however, were more likely to ask someone 21 or older to make the purchase for them.
- **Twenty year olds are more likely to order a drink at a club, bar, or restaurant, than are younger respondents.**

Conclusions and Implications

Most youth in Orange County between the ages of 16 and 20 have consumed alcohol on at least one occasion. Of those who do drink, almost half (46%) drink frequently. Study findings suggest that while youth and their parents recognize the dangers of excessive alcohol use among minors, most believe that alcohol is not harmful to young people when consumed responsibly and in moderation. Concern over underage drinking continues to center around drunk driving, with fewer youth aware of the adverse health effects of alcohol.

Adults 21 years and older are the single most common source of alcohol for minors, outpacing all commercial sources. Underage drinkers obtain alcohol most frequently at parties with more than three-quarters of underage drinkers surveyed having reported receiving alcohol from this source. When youth do obtain alcohol from commercial sources, most notably liquor and grocery stores, they most often ask an older friend or relative to make the purchase. Parents, while not a primary source of alcohol among the study’s age cohort, also provide alcohol to their children. A total of 22% of underage drinkers surveyed reported that their parents bought alcohol for them on at least one occasion. The use of false identification or theft to obtain alcohol is not widespread, nor is the purchase of alcohol by minors at restaurants, bars, or clubs.

Although adults 21 years and older are the single most common method by which minors obtain alcohol, nearly half of the underage youth surveyed reported that they have provided alcohol to other underage youth. These underage providers of alcohol are most likely to be frequent drinkers themselves, male, White and from a higher socioeconomic background, often from the South Orange County Region. Older, white males, particularly those from the South Region, also report the greatest alcohol consumption, lowest concern for the dangers of alcohol use, and have the least difficulty

obtaining alcohol from most sources. **Findings suggest that efforts to limit underage drinking focus on this high-risk group.**

Based on these findings, AMPG recommends the following strategies to reduce underage drinking.

- **Promote and support a countywide media campaign targeting parents and young adults about the direct health consequences of underage drinking.** The ease with which youth obtain alcohol from their older friends, siblings, parents, and even strangers is facilitated by a normative attitude that minimizes the harm of providing alcohol to minors. Moreover, youth who drink frequently are more likely to underestimate the dangers of underage drinking, suggesting that youth might be willing to consume alcohol, in part, because they do not believe it to be significantly harmful.

On a local level, Orange County might consider:

- Providing a consistent local message to youth and parents on the dangers of alcohol use by distributing existing media materials and resources through community organizations and coalitions.
- Working with local and regional media outlets and members of the media to increase coverage of community changes that have led to a reduction of underage drinking.
- **Promote the adoption of “social host” ordinances by Orange County cities to limit parties as a source of alcohol for underage youth.** Study findings indicate that parties, most often held on private property, are the primary venue for underage drinking. Social host liability would hold non-commercial individuals responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease, or otherwise control. In particular, Orange County should consider promoting response and recovery ordinances by Orange County cities that hold social hosts and landowners civilly responsible for the costs of law enforcement, fire, or other emergency response services associated with multiple responses to the scene of an underage drinking party or other gathering, whether or not the hosts or landowners knew about the parties.
- **Promote and support increased use of “shoulder tap” operations by law enforcement agencies to limit alcohol obtained from liquor stores and supermarkets by underage youth.** Second only to parties, liquor stores and supermarkets are a primary source of alcohol for underage drinkers. When underage drinkers obtain alcohol from these establishments, they do so most often by asking an older friend or sibling to make the purchase. With a shoulder tap program, a minor decoy, under the direct supervision of law enforcement officers, solicits adults outside liquor and grocery stores to buy the minor alcohol. Any person who does furnish alcohol to the minor decoy may be arrested for providing alcohol to a minor.

INTRODUCTION

Underage drinking is the leading cause of death for young people under the age of 21. Of the 5,000 youth who die each year as a result of underage drinking, 1,900 die in motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 in alcohol-related homicides, 300 in suicides, and 1,600 from alcohol-related injuries including falls, burns, and drowning, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Even youth who escape the fatal consequences of underage drinking face serious long-term health risks. Research indicates that underage drinking is a leading contributor to date rape, adult alcoholism, and may have long-lasting effects on the developing brain.

Despite these risks, alcohol remains the drug of choice among adolescents and underage drinking continues to be widespread as shown by nationwide surveys as well as studies in smaller populations. Nearly one-third (29%) of youth ages 12 to 20 use alcohol and nearly 8 out of every 10 adolescents have consumed alcohol by the time they are seniors in high school. And when youth drink they tend to drink intensively, often consuming four to five drinks at one time. According to data from the 2005 Monitoring the Future (MTF) study, 11% of 8th graders, 22% of 10th graders, and 29% of 12th graders had engaged in heavy episodic (or “binge”) drinking within the past two weeks.¹

To help address the problem of underage drinking, the Orange County Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT), contracted with the Applied Management & Planning Group (AMPG) to conduct the Orange County Youth Access to Alcohol Study. The purpose of the study was to identify how underage youth between the ages of 16 and 20 obtain alcohol and under what circumstances. The study addressed four major areas:

- Attitudes toward underage drinking;
- Demographics and circumstances surrounding underage drinking;
- How alcohol is generally obtained by underage youth; and,
- Frequency and method of obtaining alcohol from specific sources.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Data presented in this report were collected as part of a larger, two-phase study conducted by ADEPT to examine how underage youth gain access to alcohol. During Phase I, a series of nine focus groups were conducted with Orange County youth and their parents to collect primary information regarding access points to alcohol, as well as to inform Phase II of the study. Results from the focus groups, submitted under separate cover, are included as an **Appendix**.

The findings presented here reflect the results of Phase II, a written survey of 1,925 high school and college students living in Orange County. The survey was conducted from March 8 to April 20, 2006 with youth between the ages of 16 and 20 attending school in North, Central, and South Orange County.² The overall margin of error for the study at the 95% confidence level was +/-2%, meaning that if the study were conducted repeatedly, 95 times out of 100 the results would be the same, give or take 2%age points.

¹ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. All statistics available online at: www.niaa.nih.gov/niaaa/nih.gov. For primary sources see Bibliography.

² Geographic regions were defined based on ADEPT service areas.

Survey Procedures

Public high schools were selected randomly from within each region and asked to participate in the study.³ Principals who agreed to participate were asked to select two 11th grade (junior) and two 12th grade (senior) high school classrooms at their schools. The classes selected were required courses of all students to minimize selection bias. Teachers in those classrooms were asked to distribute opt-out forms to their students, which parents could sign and return if they did *not* want their child to complete a survey. Opt-out forms were provided in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Parents were also given the telephone number of the principal, whom they could call to remove their child from the study. Less than 1% of high school students in the selected classes opted out of the study. The written surveys were distributed by research staff at a designated date and time, completed by students, and collected.

All colleges and universities in Orange County were contacted for this study and asked if they would be interested in participating. Colleges and universities that were on spring break, had other surveys being conducted on campus during the same time period, were administering or preparing for standardized testing, or were otherwise not able to participate in the study were excluded. Research staff conducted intercept surveys on each campus willing to participate, asking students if they would be interested in completing a survey on alcohol use. Among those students who were under the age of 21, approximately 66% agreed to complete a survey; one-third of eligible respondents (34%) refused.

All students who completed a survey were given a free movie pass as an incentive to participate. High school teachers who were asked to distribute opt-out forms to their students were given a \$50 gift certificate to Staples.

A total of ten high schools and five colleges/universities participated in the study, as presented in **Tables A and B**.

Table A: List of High Schools Sampled

| High Schools |
|------------------------------|
| Costa Mesa High School |
| Dana Hills High School |
| El Dorado High School |
| El Toro High School |
| Huntington Beach High School |
| John F. Kennedy High School |
| Loara High School |
| Ocean View High School |
| Mission Viejo High School |
| Santa Ana High School |

³ Continuation schools and private schools were not included in the sample.

Table B: List of Colleges and Universities Sampled

| Colleges/Universities |
|--|
| California State University, Fullerton |
| Golden West Community College |
| Irvine Valley Community College |
| Orange Coast Community College |
| Saddleback Community College |

Profile of Survey Respondents

Tables C through E summarize the socio-demographic characteristics of the survey sample. A total of 50% of the surveys were completed by males, 50% by females. When all age cohorts were combined, the data were weighted to ensure that each age group was proportionally represented.

Table C: Sample Distribution by Age of Respondents

| | 16 year olds | 17 year olds | 18 year olds | 19 year olds | 20 year olds |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Total Surveys Collected | 313 | 553 | 465 | 312 | 282 |
| Percent of Sample | 16% | 29% | 24% | 16% | 15% |
| Distribution in Actual Population | 20% | 21% | 20% | 19% | 21% |

Table D: Sample Distribution by Region of Orange County

| | Central Region | North Region | South Region |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Total Surveys Collected | 704 | 556 | 547 |
| Percent of Sample | 39% | 31% | 30% |
| Distribution in Actual Population | 46% | 32% | 22% |

Table E: Sample Distribution by Ethnicity

| | White | Hispanic | Asian | African-American | Other/Multi-Racial |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|------------------|--------------------|
| Total Surveys Collected | 777 | 472 | 350 | 82 | 235 |
| Percent of Sample | 41% | 25% | 18% | 4% | 12% |
| Distribution in Actual Population | 50% | 32% | 14% | 1% | 3% |

Statistical Analyses

ANOVAs, t-tests, and differences in proportion tests were conducted for all comparative analyses to identify whether observed differences among groups or categories were statistically significant at the .05 level. A statistically significant difference indicates that the difference among groups is not by chance, and that a real difference exists. All comparisons discussed in the text of this report represent statistically significant comparisons unless otherwise noted.

The next section of this report presents study findings. Findings are presented for all respondents combined, followed by a discussion of any statistically significant differences by region, drinking frequency, gender, age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Limitations

There are limitations to the data included in this report that should be considered when interpreting findings. First, the regions presented in this report (North, Central, and South Orange County) are defined by ADEPT service areas and were not drawn based on an analysis of demographic characteristics. In some cases, regional differences might be over-emphasized or obscured. Second, the survey used mother's education as a proxy for income, a well-established practice in social research. Youth who reported that their mother had a college degree were defined as "higher income" youth. This general measure limits the reliability of analysis by income and may obscure important income differences.

Definition of Groups: Frequent/Infrequent Drinkers

For purposes of this report, frequent drinkers were defined as youth who reported having had a drink at least once a month in the six months prior to the survey. Infrequent drinkers were defined as youth who drank in the past six months but less frequently than once a month. Youth who did not have a drink in the six months prior to the survey were considered non-drinkers.

FINDINGS

Attitudes towards Underage Drinking

Perceived Harm in Using Alcohol Among Underage Youth

The Orange County Youth Access to Alcohol Study was designed to address both the environmental conditions that enable underage youth to obtain alcohol, as well as the social norms that make underage drinking acceptable to youth and the adults who provide them with alcohol. To assess the perceived risk of using alcohol, respondents were asked how harmful they thought it was for people their age to drink alcohol daily or almost daily, a few times a week, once a week, or once month. As shown in **Table 1**, **three-fourths (76%) of all youth surveyed agreed that using alcohol on a daily basis is “extremely harmful,” but only one quarter (26%) consider consuming alcohol several times a week as equally dangerous.** Most youth consider using alcohol once a month as harmless or mainly harmless.

Table 1. Perceived Harmfulness of Using Alcohol Among Underage Youth

| How harmful do you think it is for people your age to use alcohol... | Harmless 1 | Mainly Harmless 2 | Somewhat Harmful 3 | Harmful 4 | Extremely Harmful 5 | Mean Rating |
|--|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Daily or almost daily? (n=1,896) | 2% | 1% | 4% | 18% | 76% | 4.6 |
| A few times a week? (n=1,896) | 2 | 7 | 24 | 42 | 26 | 3.8 |
| Once a week? (n=1,896) | 10 | 24 | 33 | 24 | 8 | 3.0 |
| Once a month? (n= 1,911) | 34 | 30 | 22 | 9 | 5 | 2.2 |

* All mean scores are statistically different from each other.

Frequent drinkers (defined as youth who reported having a drink once a month or more in the six months prior to the survey) were less likely to rate underage drinking as harmful compared with infrequent drinkers and non-drinkers. As drinking frequency increased, perceived harm from alcohol decreased. Youth might be willing to consume alcohol, in part, because they do not believe it to be dangerous or they are trying to rationalize their alcohol consumption by rating alcohol use as less harmful (see **Table 2**). Both explanations suggest that if youth were convinced of the harmfulness of using alcohol they might limit their consumption.

Table 2. Mean Ratings of Harmfulness by Alcohol Consumption Frequency

| How harmful do you think it is for people your age to use alcohol... | Does not drink | Infrequently drinks | Frequently drinks |
|--|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Daily or almost daily? (n=1,891) | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.4 |
| A few times a week? (n=1,891) | 4.2 | 3.9 | 3.3 |
| Once a week? (n=1,892) | 3.4 | 2.9 | 2.3 |
| Once a month? (n=1,907) | 2.7 | 2.1 | 1.6 |

*The pattern of ratings for non-drinkers, infrequent drinkers, and frequent drinkers were all statistically different from each other.

**This analysis excludes cases with incomplete or inconsistent answers to all parts of the question.

Perceptions regarding the harmfulness of underage drinking varied by gender, age and region. Older males and youth from South Orange County were more likely than other respondents to perceive less harmfulness in the use of alcohol. As seen in Table 3, a total of 84% of females consider daily alcohol use to be “extremely harmful,” compared to 68% of males.

Table 3. Perceived Harmfulness of Using Alcohol Among Underage Youth by Gender

| How harmful do you think it is for people your age to use alcohol... | Harmless 1 | | Mainly Harmless 2 | | Somewhat Harmful 3 | | Harmful 4 | | Extremely Harmful 5 | |
|--|---------------|--------|----------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|--------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Daily or almost daily? | 2% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 6% | 1% | 23% | 13% | 68% | 84% |
| A few times a week? | 3 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 30 | 17 | 38 | 45 | 21 | 32 |
| Once a week? | 14 | 6 | 29 | 19 | 30 | 37 | 20 | 28 | 6 | 10 |
| Once a month? | 42 | 27 | 27 | 33 | 20 | 25 | 8 | 10 | 4 | 6 |

*Sample sizes for males varied from 904 to 912 for each question. Sample size for females varied from 898 to 907.

Older youth are more likely than younger youth to report that occasional alcohol use is harmless. As presented in Table 4, 20 year olds were statistically more likely to characterize monthly or weekly alcohol use by underage youth as “harmless” when compared to 16 to 18 year olds.

Table 4. Perceived Harmfulness of Using Alcohol Among Underage Youth by Age Percent Reporting “Harmless”

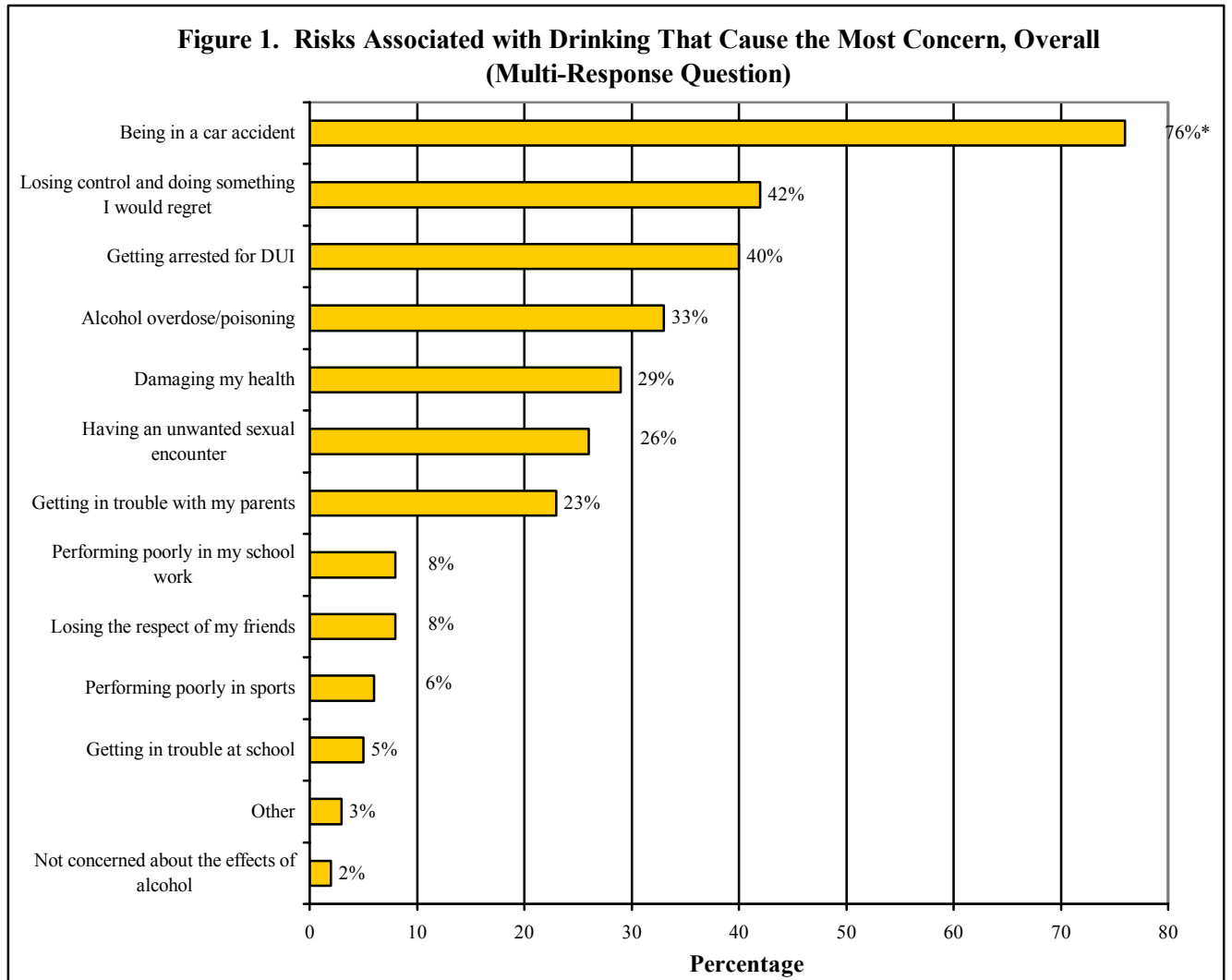
| How harmful do you think it is for people your age to use alcohol... | 16 years old | 17 years old | 18 years old | 19 years old | 20 years old |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Once a week? | 8% | 10% | 8% | 12% | 15% |
| | (n=369) | (n=387) | (n=387) | (n=379) | (n=374) |
| Once a month? | 31% | 34% | 34% | 32% | 39% |
| | (n=369) | (n=389) | (n=392) | (n=384) | (n=378) |

Youth from the South Region were less likely than youth from the North and Central Regions to report that monthly alcohol use is “harmful” or “extremely harmful.” As presented in Table 5, 11% of youth from the South Region consider monthly alcohol use to be “harmful” or “extremely harmful” compared with 16% from the North and Central Regions, a significant difference.

Table 5. Perceived Harmfulness of Using Alcohol Once a Month Among Underage Youth, by Region

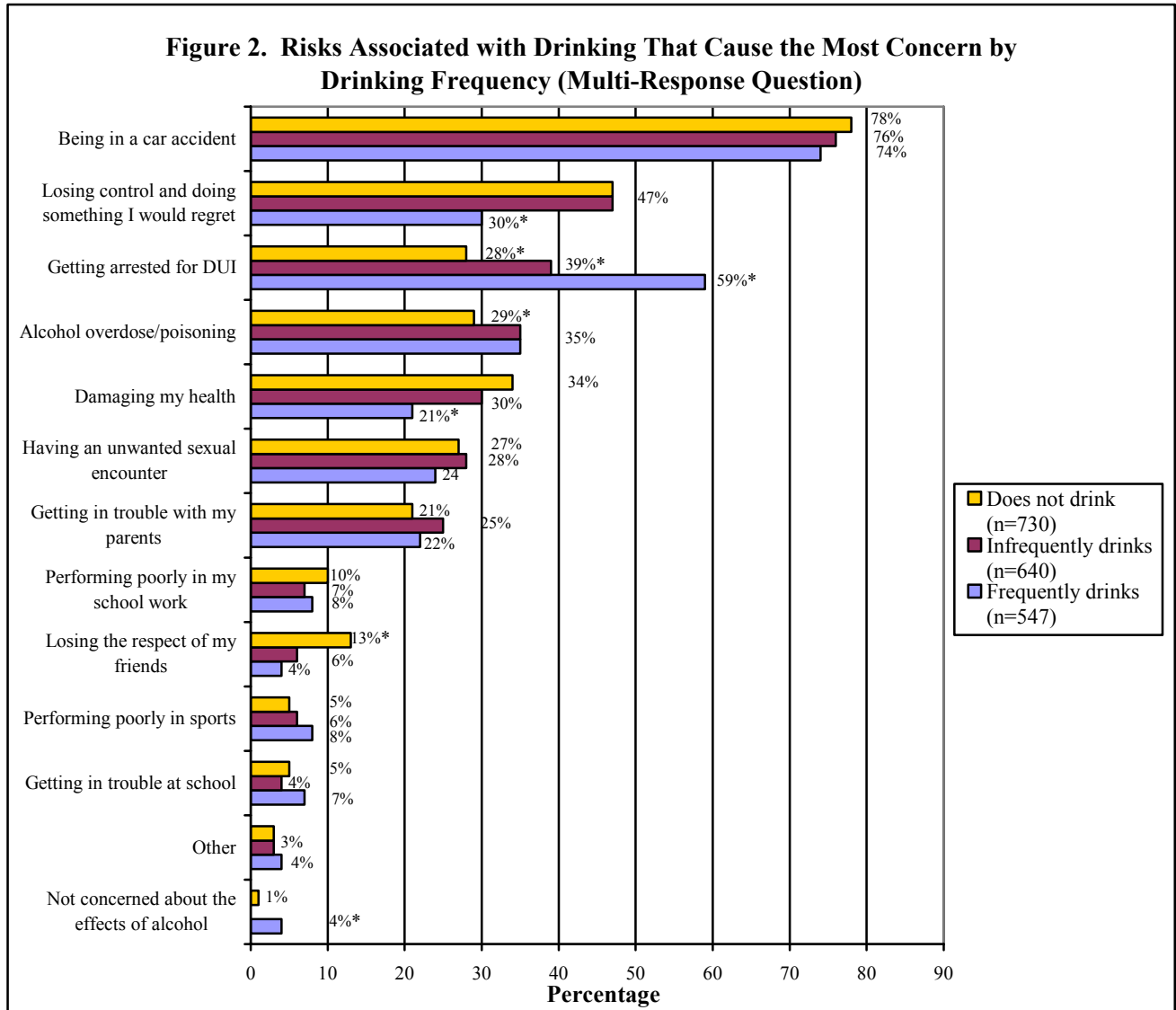
| How harmful do you think it is for people your age to use alcohol once a month? | North Region (n=536) | Central Region (n=709) | South Region (n=541) |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Extremely harmful | 7% | 6% | 3% |
| Harmful | 9% | 10% | 8% |
| Somewhat Harmful | 25% | 21% | 20% |
| Mainly Harmless | 27% | 30% | 32% |
| Harmless | 32% | 33% | 36% |

As a follow-up question, youth were asked to identify the three risks associated with alcohol that concerned them most. **Results presented in Figure 1 show that youth are most concerned about being in a car accident (76% of total responses), followed by losing control and doing something they regret (42%), getting arrested for driving under the influence (40%), alcohol poisoning (33%), and damaging their health (29%).** In contrast, few youth expressed concern over losing the respect of friends (8%), performing poorly in schoolwork (8%), performing poorly in sports (6%), or getting in trouble at school (5%) as a result of drinking. Only 2% of all youth surveyed reported that they were not concerned about the effects of alcohol.



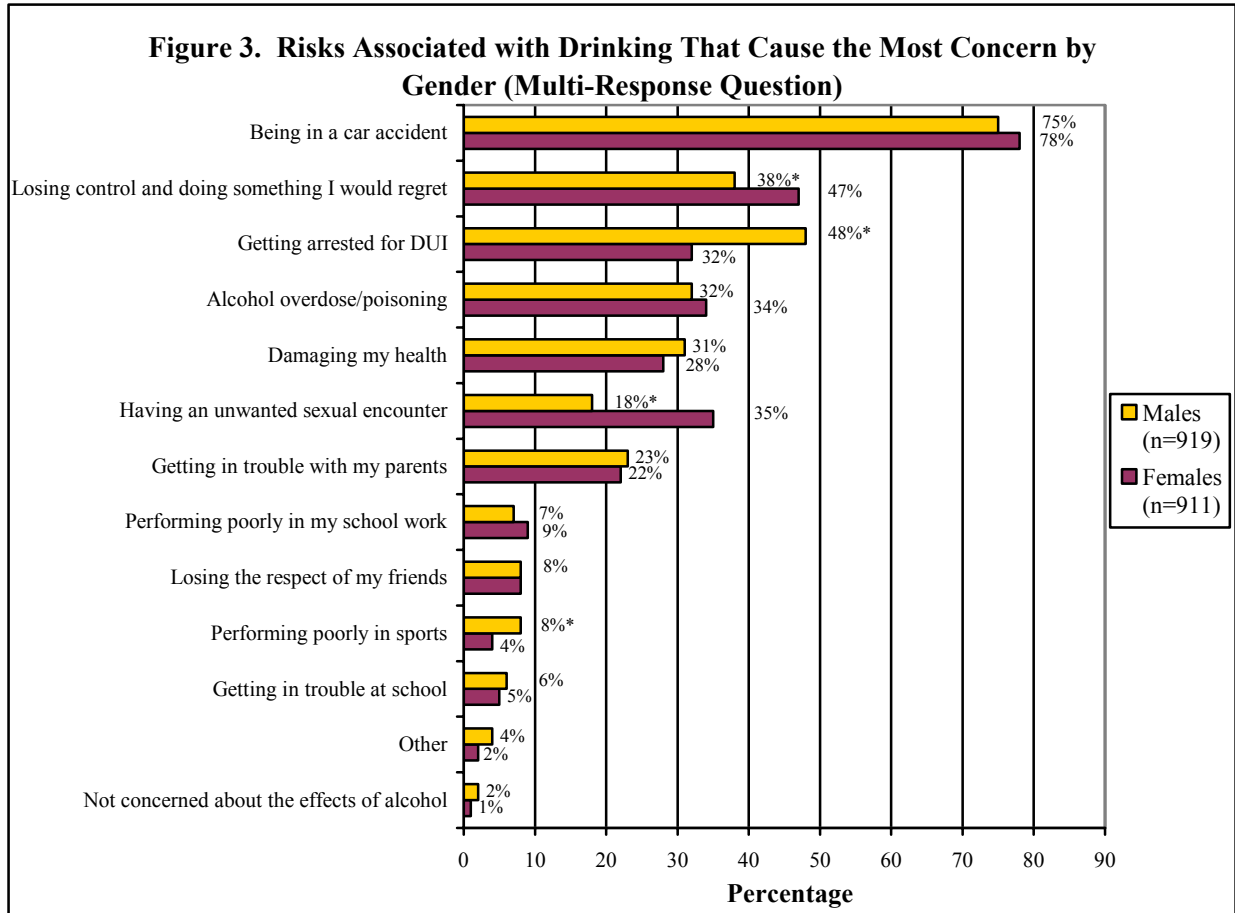
*Indicates a significant difference between being in a car accident and all other risk factors.

While youth in general are most concerned about being in a car accident, responses varied by frequency of alcohol consumed, gender, and age. As seen in Figure 2, youth who drink frequently are more concerned about getting arrested for driving under the influence (59%) compared to non-drinkers (28%) and infrequent drinkers (39%). In addition, drinkers reported more concern over alcohol poisoning (35%) compared to non-drinkers (29%) and were less concerned about the general health effects of alcohol. Youth who do not drink were more concerned with doing something they would regret, and losing the respect of friends compared to other groups.



*Indicates a significant difference between the marked drinking frequency and other drinking frequency categories.

Both males and females are equally concerned about the risk of being in a car accident, with 75% of males and 78% of females citing this risk as a concern; however, several differences emerged (see **Figure 3**). **Females are more concerned than males about the risk of having an unwanted sexual encounter (35% of females compared to 18% of males) and losing control and doing something regretful (47% of females compared to 38% of males).** Male youth, on the other hand, are more concerned about getting arrested for DUI (48% compared to 32% of female youth).



*Indicates a significant difference between males and females.

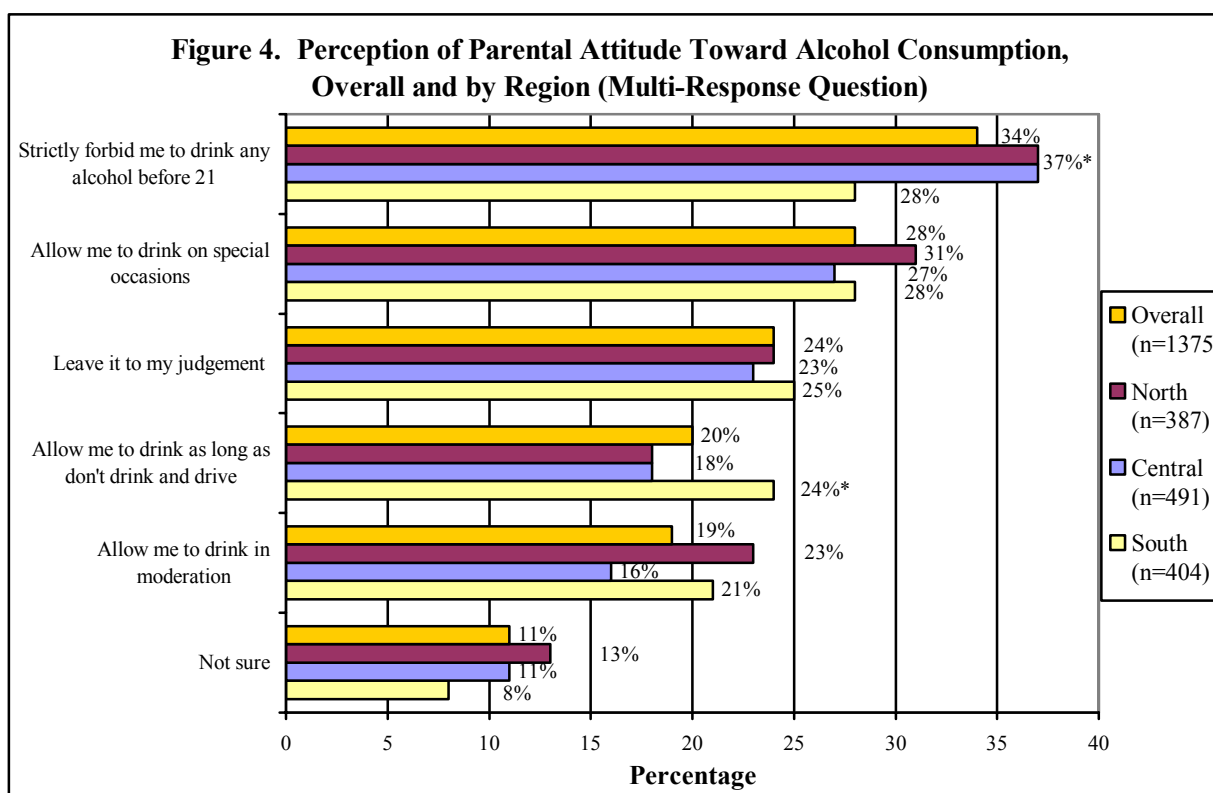
As shown in **Table 6**, concerns about the risks associated with underage drinking varied by age. Sixteen year olds are more concerned with losing control and doing something they would regret compared to 17-, 18-, 19- and 20-year olds. In addition, 16- and 17-year olds are more concerned with getting in trouble with their parents than are youth 18 and older, while youth 18 and older are more concerned about getting arrested for a DUI.

Table 6. Risks Associated with Drinking That Cause the Most Concern by Age

| Risks associated with drinking alcohol that cause the most concern: | 16 years old (n=369) | 17 years old (n=391) | 18 years old (n=396) | 19 years old (n=385) | 20 years old (n=381) |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Being in a car accident | 73% | 75% | 76% | 77% | 80% |
| Losing control and doing something I would regret | 52 | 42 | 43 | 39 | 34 |
| Getting arrested for a DUI | 24 | 33 | 45 | 48 | 52 |
| Alcohol overdose/poisoning | 30 | 34 | 32 | 36 | 31 |
| Damaging my health | 30 | 29 | 27 | 29 | 31 |
| Having an unwanted sexual encounter | 29 | 27 | 25 | 27 | 25 |
| Getting in trouble with my parents | 31 | 30 | 22 | 17 | 14 |
| Performing poorly in my school work | 9 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 12 |
| Losing the respect of my friends | 7 | 7 | 11 | 10 | 6 |
| Performing poorly in sports | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Getting in trouble at school | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Other | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Not concerned about the effects of alcohol | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |

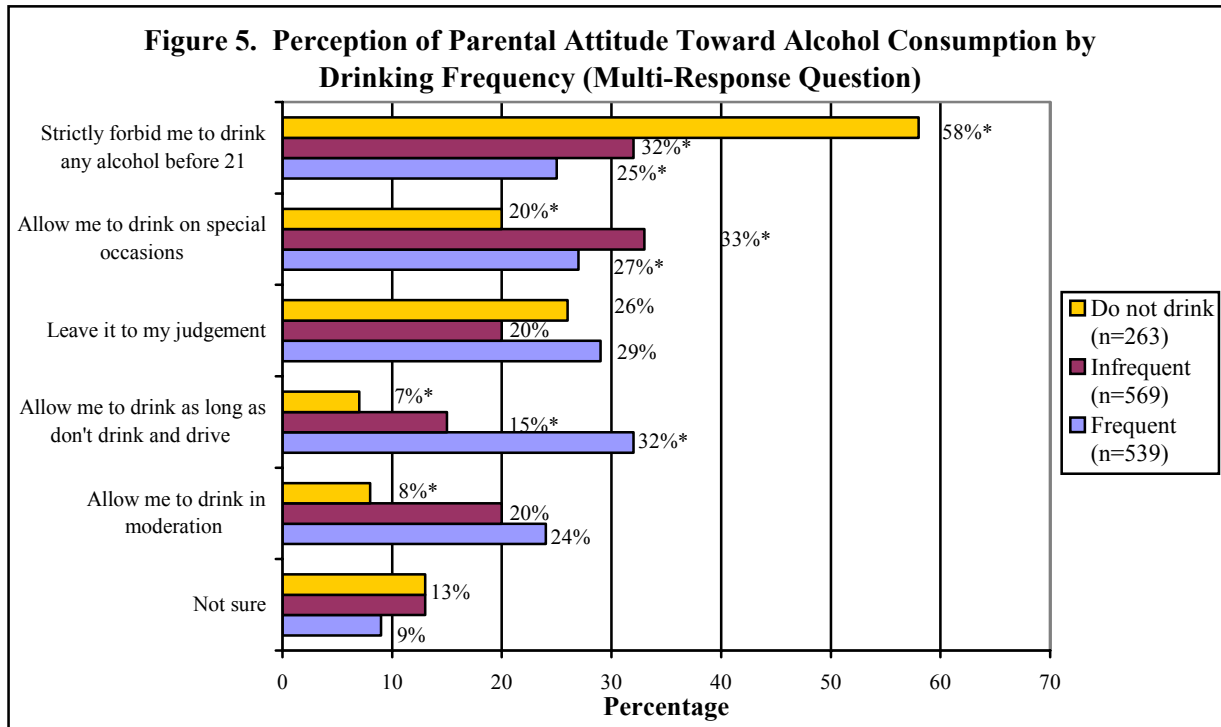
Parental Attitudes

In addition to gauging how youth perceive the risks associated with underage drinking, the survey asked respondents to describe their parents' attitudes. **As seen in Figure 4, youth perceptions of parental attitudes toward underage drinking mirror those of the youth respondents themselves; namely, that alcohol is not harmful to young people when consumed responsibly and in moderation.** Of the youth who use alcohol, only one-third (34%) reported that their parents strictly forbid them to drink any alcohol before they are 21. A total of 28% reported that their parents allow them to drink on special occasions, 24% reported their parents leave it to their judgment, 20% reported their parents allow them the drink as long as they do not drink and drive, and 19% reported that their parents allow them to drink in moderation. **With respect to regional differences, youth from the North and Central Regions were more likely than youth from the South Region to report that their parents strictly forbid them to drink any alcohol until they are of age (37% compared to 28% of South Region residents). Youth from the South Region also were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive (24% compared to 18% of North and Central Region youth).**



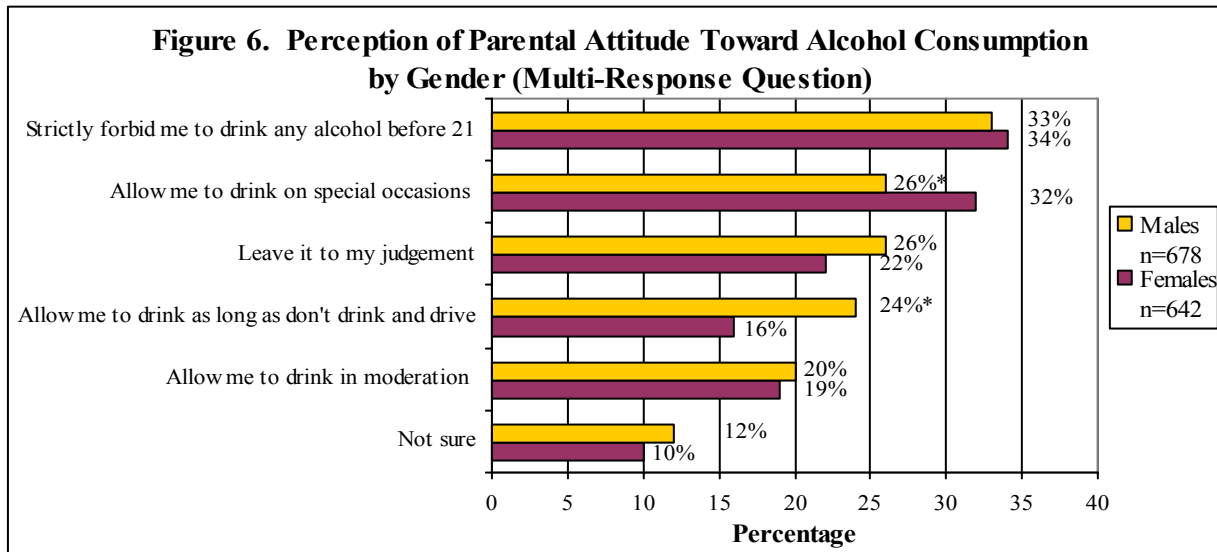
*Indicates a significant difference between the marked region(s) and the other region(s). Overall sample size is listed.

Data presented in **Figure 5** suggest a link between parental restrictions on underage drinking and youth drinking frequency. **Non-drinkers were more likely to report that their parents strictly forbid the use of alcohol (58%), followed by infrequent drinkers (32%), and then frequent drinkers (25%).** Youth who use alcohol were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink in moderation (24% of frequent drinkers and 20% of infrequent drinkers) compared to youth who do not drink (8%). Also, frequent drinkers are significantly more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive (32%), followed by infrequent drinkers (15%), and youth who do not drink (7%). Interestingly, infrequent drinkers were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink on special occasions (33%), followed by frequent drinkers (27%), and youth who do not drink (20%).



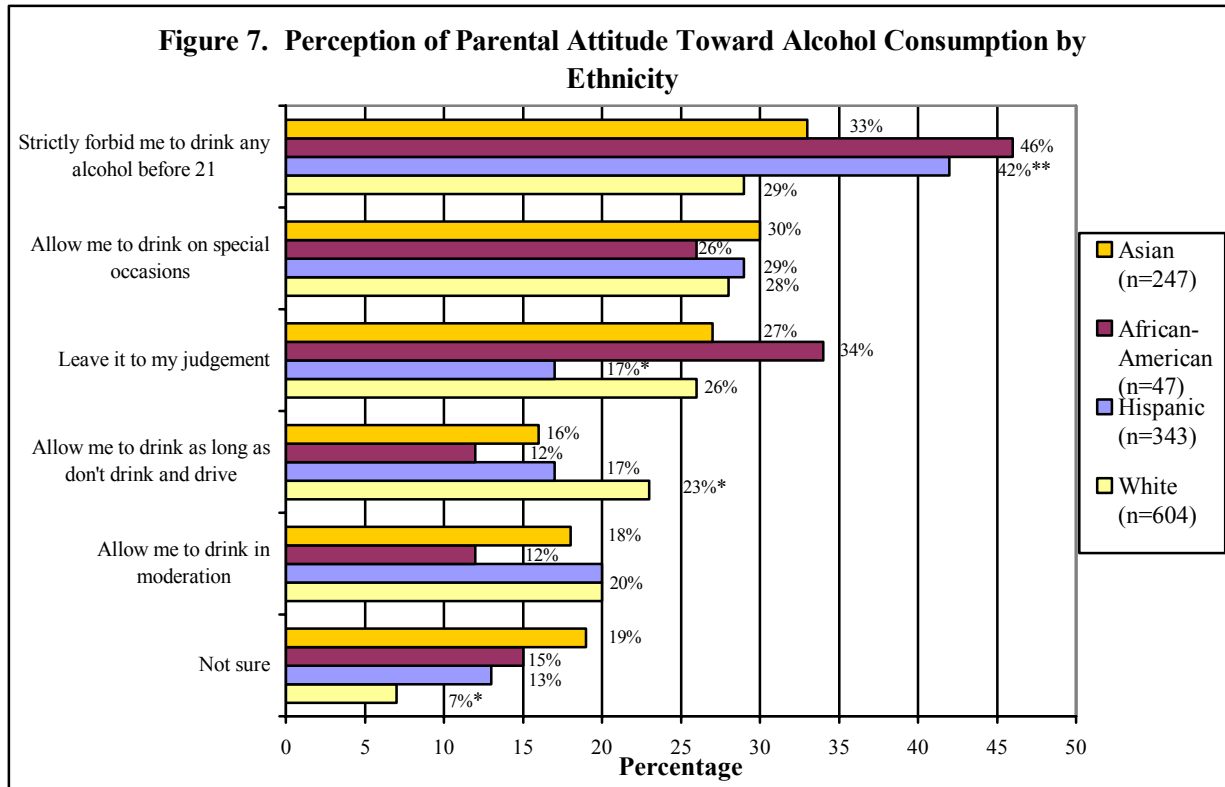
*Indicates a significant difference between the marked drinking frequency and other drinking frequencies.

As shown in **Figure 6**, perceived parental attitudes also differed by gender. Males were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive, 24% compared to 16% of females. Females, however, were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink on special occasions, 32% compared to 26% of male youth.



*Indicates a significant difference between males and females.

Parental attitudes also varied by ethnicity, as shown in **Figure 7. White and Asian youth were less likely to report that their parents forbid them to use alcohol**, compared to Hispanics. In addition, White youth were more likely than all other groups to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive. Asian, African-American, and Hispanic youth were more likely to report that they are unsure of their parents' attitudes toward underage alcohol use.



* Indicates a significant difference between the marked ethnicity and other ethnicities.

** Indicates a significant difference between Hispanic youth and Asian and White youth.

As shown in Table 7, findings suggest that parents become more lenient with regard to underage drinking as their children mature. Younger youth (ages 16 to 18) were more likely than youth ages 19 and 20 to report that their parents strictly forbid them to drink alcohol. In addition, youth 18 and older were more likely to report that their parents allow them to drink as long as they do not drink and drive. Similarly, 19 and 20 year olds were more likely to report that they are allowed to drink in moderation compared to younger respondents.

Table 7. Perceptions of Parental Attitudes Toward Alcohol Consumption by Age

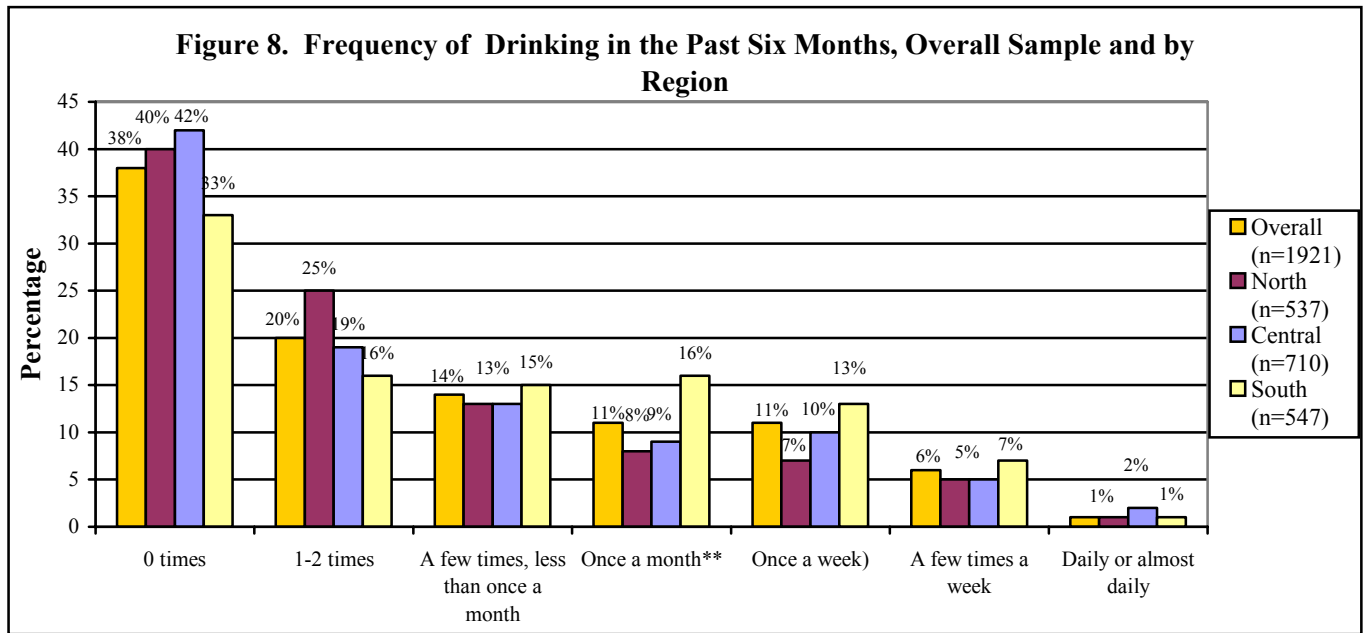
| | 16 years old | 17 years old | 18 years old | 19 years old | 20 years old |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | n=257 | n=299 | n=288 | n=259 | n=272 |
| Strictly forbid me to drink any alcohol before 21 | 39% | 39% | 35% | 26% | 31% |
| Allow me to drink on special occasions | 31% | 31% | 30% | 27% | 23% |
| Leave it to my judgment | 21% | 20% | 24% | 33% | 25% |
| Allow me to drink as long as I don't drink and drive | 10% | 11% | 22% | 27% | 31% |
| Allow me to drink in moderation | 17% | 14% | 16% | 28% | 24% |
| Not sure | 12% | 14% | 13% | 9% | 7% |

Circumstances Surrounding Underage Drinking

To identify the conditions under which underage drinking occurs, youth were asked whether they had consumed alcohol in the six months prior to the survey and to describe the most recent occasion. The survey also addressed frequency of underage drinking, location, and drinking companions.

Frequency

As shown in Figure 8, nearly two-thirds (62%) of Orange County youth surveyed reported that they had used alcohol at least once in the six months prior to the survey. Of those youth who have used alcohol, 46% drink frequently, defined as those who consume alcohol once a month or more, and just over half (54%) drink less than once a month. Youth in the South Region were significantly more likely to report that they used alcohol frequently compared to youth from the other regions. A total of 37% of youth in the South Region reported drinking frequently compared to 26% in the Central Region, and 21% in the North Region. Youth in the North and Central Regions were more likely to report that they do not drink, 40 and 42%, respectively, compared to 33% of youth from the South Region. Youth from the North Region were more likely to report that they drink infrequently, 38% compared to 32% of youth from the Central and South Regions, respectively.



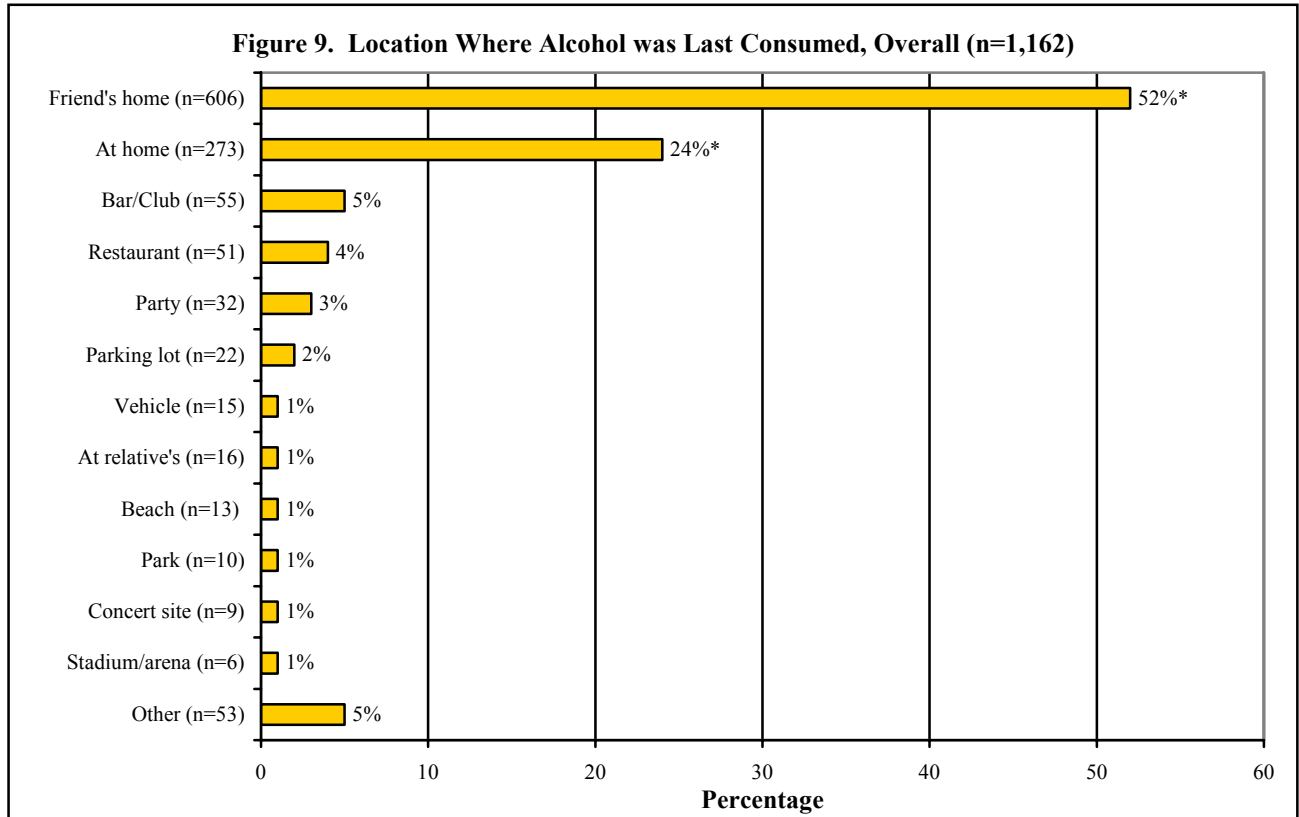
How frequently youth consume alcohol and under what conditions varied by gender, age, and ethnicity. White males between 17 and 20 were more likely to be frequent drinkers compared to other youth, as presented in **Table 8**. While no differences were found in the proportion of males and females who choose not to drink, males are more likely to be frequent drinkers. In addition, 17- to 20-year olds were significantly more likely to be frequent drinkers compared to 16 year olds. White youth are more likely to use alcohol than are Asian, African-American, and Middle Eastern youth.

Table 8. Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Gender, Age, and Ethnicity

| | Does not drink | Drinks Infrequently | Drinks Frequently |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender | | | |
| Males (n=919) | 36% | 30% | 34% |
| Females (n=912) | 39 | 38 | 24 |
| Age | | | |
| 16 (n=367) | 45 | 35 | 20 |
| 17 (n=391) | 33 | 40 | 27 |
| 18 (n=394) | 38 | 32 | 30 |
| 19 (n=384) | 39 | 32 | 30 |
| 20 (n=385) | 37 | 28 | 35 |
| | | | |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Asian (n=399) | 52 | 30 | 19 |
| African-American (n=91) | 50 | 40 | 10 |
| Hispanic (n=480) | 39 | 38 | 23 |
| Middle Eastern (n=42) | 45 | 40 | 14 |
| White (n=764) | 30 | 32 | 38 |

Location

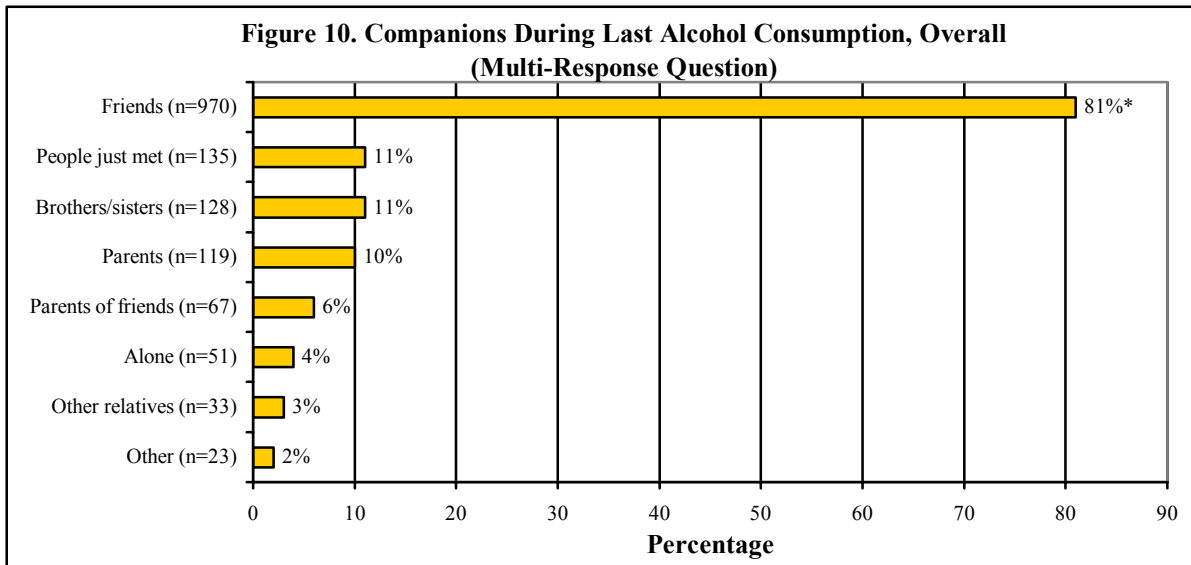
As shown in Figure 9, youth most often consume alcohol at a private home, usually at a friend's home (52%) or at their own home (24%). Youth rarely drink at stadiums or arenas, concert sites, parks, beaches, at a relative's home, or in a vehicle (1% each).



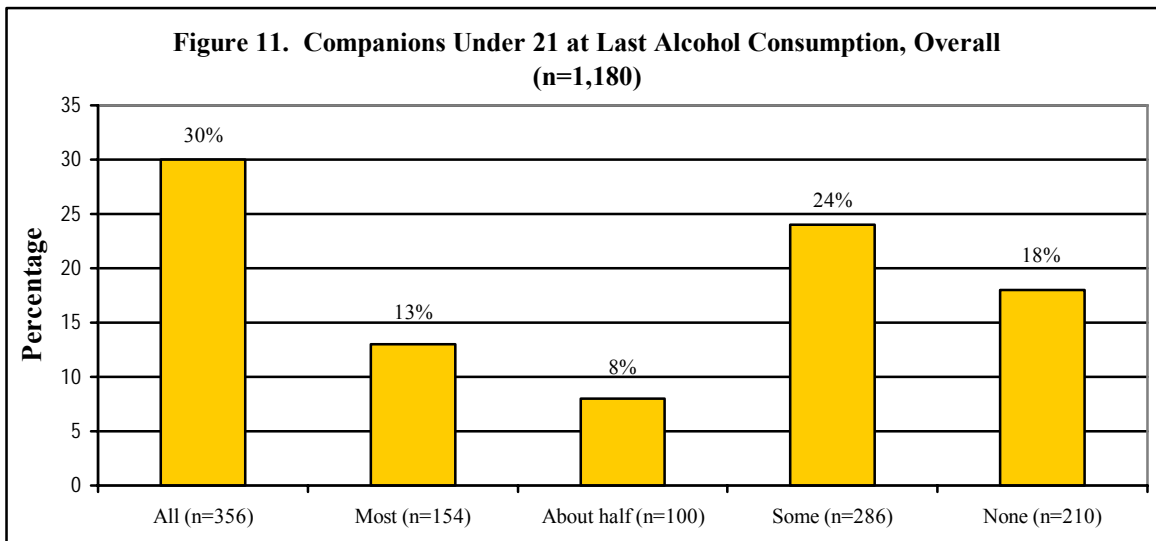
*Indicates a significant difference between the marked locations and other locations.

Drinking Companions

As shown in Figure 10, underage drinkers more often drink with their friends (81%) than with anyone else. Notably, 10% of youth surveyed drink with their parents. And, as seen in Figure 11, a collective 75% of underage drinkers consume alcohol with companions who also are under the legal drinking age of 21.



*Indicates a significant difference between the marked category and other categories.



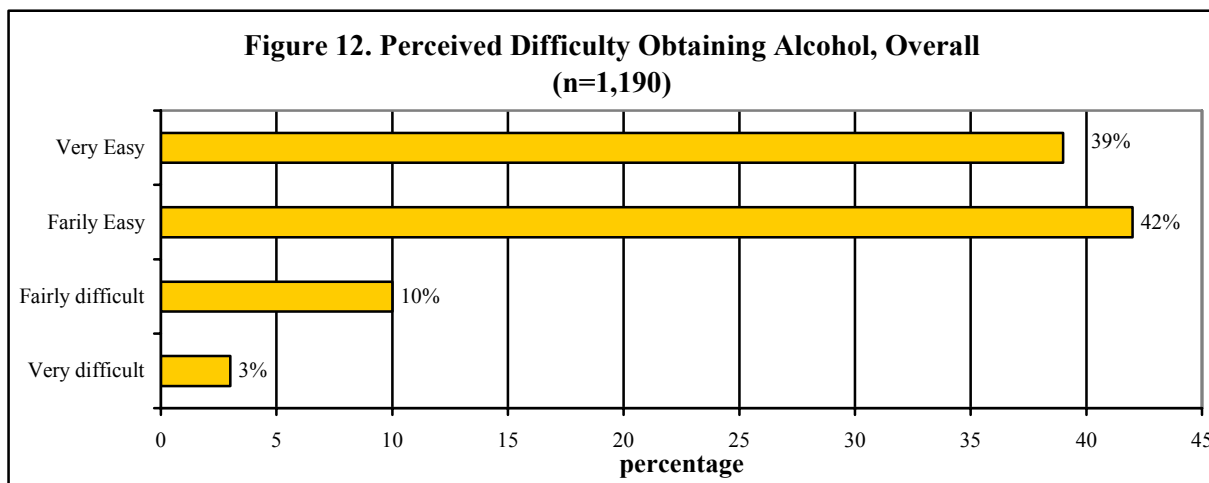
Does not add up to 100% because of respondents who were drinking alone (1%) or marked don't know (5%).

How Alcohol is Generally Obtained by Underage Youth

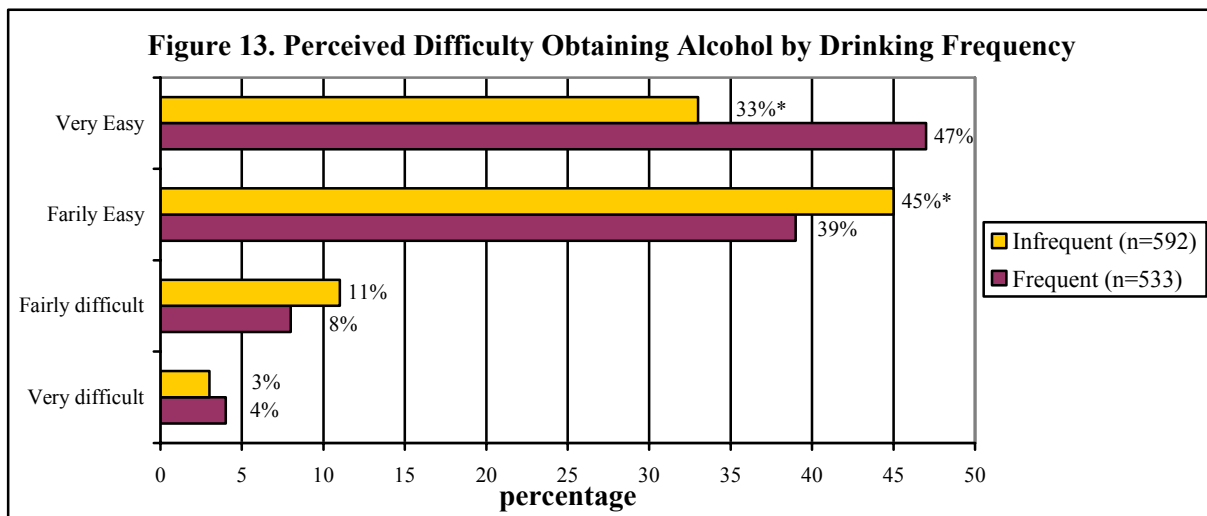
In addition to questions about respondents' most recent drinking experience, the survey included general questions about how difficult it is for youth to obtain alcohol and the most common method for their gaining access.

Perceived Difficulty Obtaining Alcohol

Respondents were asked on a scale of one to four, where one is "very easy" and four is "very difficult," how difficult it is for someone their age to obtain alcohol. **Overall, more than eight out of 10 youth (81%) surveyed reported that it was "very easy" or "fairly easy" to obtain alcohol, as presented in Figure 12.** Older youth, aged 20, were more likely than youth ages 16 to 18 to report that it was "very easy" to obtain alcohol (49% compared to 36% for 16 year olds, and 35% for 17 and 18 year olds—*data not shown*).



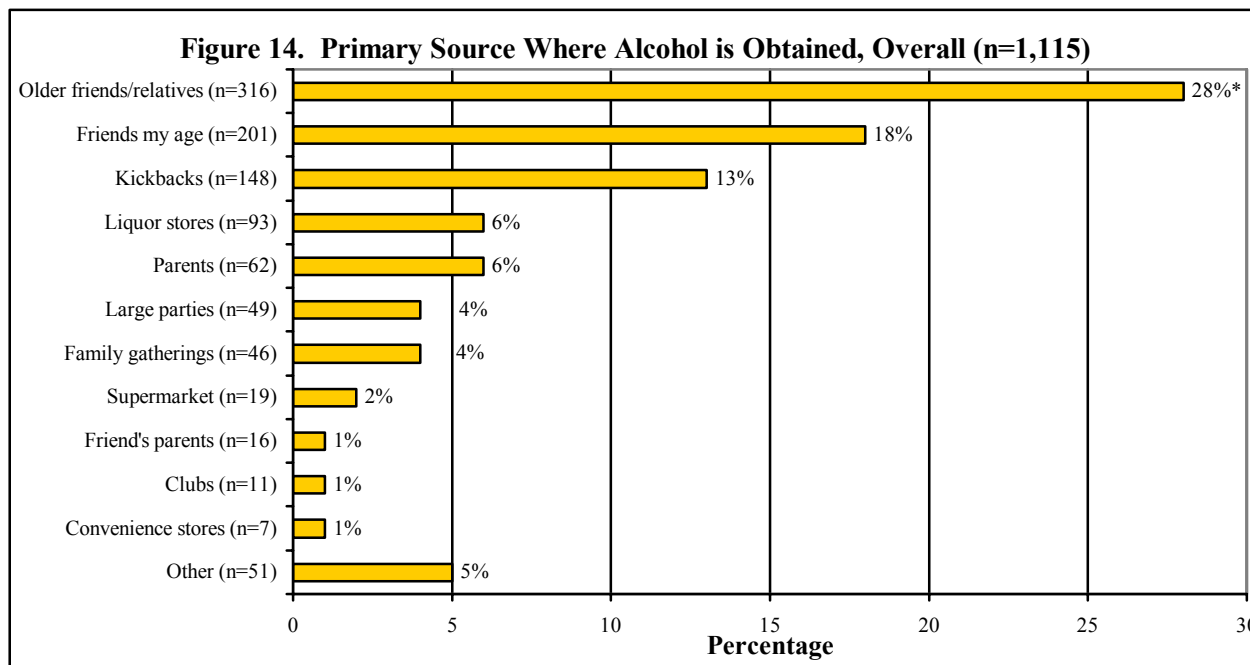
Frequent drinkers were more likely than infrequent drinkers to report that it was "very easy" to gain access to alcohol, as shown in Figure 13.



*Indicates a significant difference between infrequent and frequent drinkers.

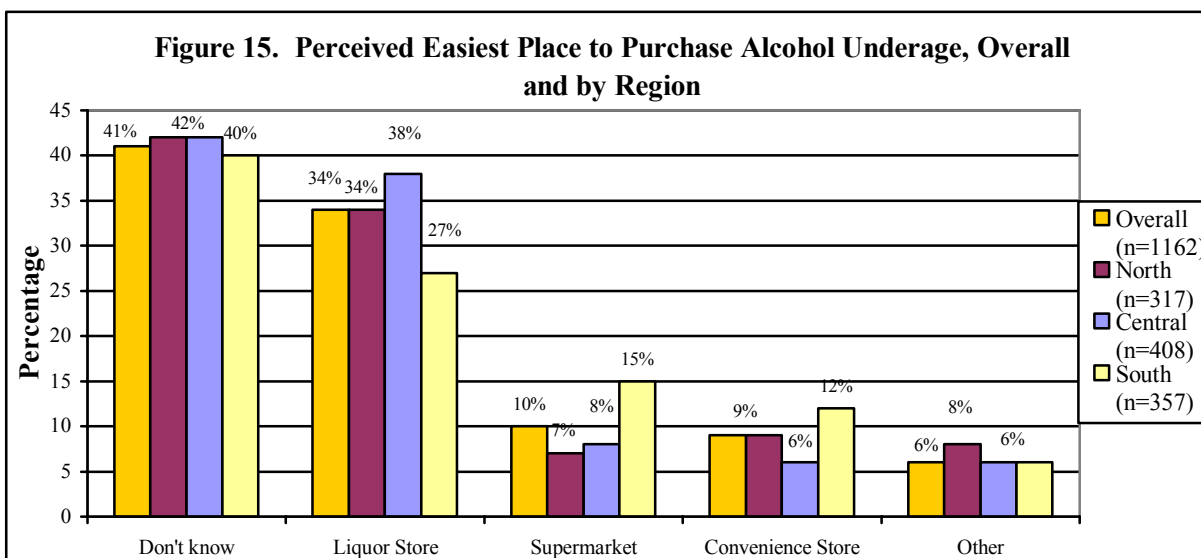
Most Common Sources of Alcohol

As seen in Figure 14, more than one-quarter of underage drinkers (28%) cited older friends and relatives as their primary source for obtaining alcohol. Underage youth also obtain alcohol from other underage friends (18%) and at small gatherings called kickbacks (13%). Supermarkets (2%), convenience stores (1%), and friend’s parents (1%) are not primary sources for obtaining alcohol by youth.



*Indicates a significant difference between the marked source and other sources. Multi-response question.

When asked where minors could most easily purchase alcohol, one-third (34%) of underage drinkers cited liquor stores, exceeding the proportion who cited supermarkets and convenience stores combined. Regionally, underage drinkers in the South Orange County region were more likely to report that supermarkets were easy locations to make an alcohol purchase, while underage drinkers in the North and Central regions were more likely to report that liquor stores were easy locations (Figure 15).



Overall, almost half of underage drinkers surveyed (46%) have provided alcohol to others who were underage. As seen in Table 9, youth from the South Region were more likely to have provided alcohol to someone underage compared to youth from the Central Region.

Table 9. Underage Drinkers Who Have Provided Alcohol to Someone Underage, Overall and by Region

| Overall | North | Central | South |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| n=1,186 | n=321 | n=413 | n=369 |
| 46% | 44% | 43% | 51% |

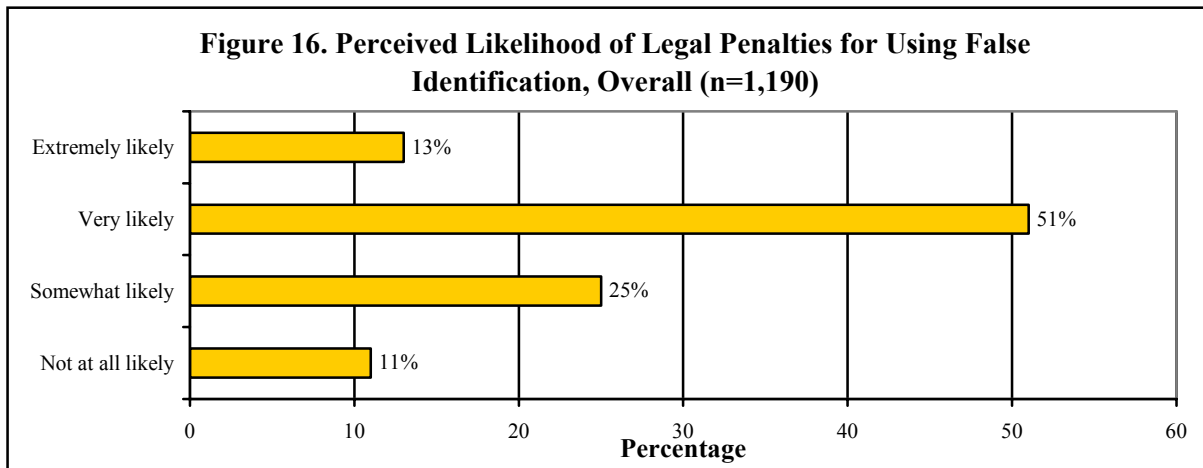
Individuals who provide alcohol to other underage drinkers are more likely to be frequent drinkers, male, White (rather than Asian, African-American, or Hispanic), and from a higher socioeconomic background (inferred from having a mother with a college education; see Table 10).

Table 10. Underage Drinkers Who Have Provided Alcohol to Someone Underage by Drinking Frequency, Gender, Ethnicity, Mother’s Education, and Region

| | Sample Size | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| <u>Drinking Frequency</u> | | |
| Infrequent | 638 | 29% |
| Frequent | 544 | 66 |
| <u>Gender</u> | | |
| Males | 586 | 54 |
| Females | 549 | 39 |
| <u>Ethnicity</u> | | |
| Asian | 193 | 40 |
| African-American | 45 | 27 |
| Hispanic | 291 | 39 |
| White | 537 | 53 |
| <u>Mother’s Education</u> | | |
| No college degree | 747 | 44 |
| College degree | 437 | 50 |
| <u>Region</u> | | |
| North | 321 | 44 |
| Central | 413 | 43 |
| South | 369 | 51 |

Use of False Identification

The use of false identification to purchase alcohol is not widespread. Only 13% of underage drinkers surveyed have used false identification to purchase alcohol. To determine the extent to which underage drinkers are aware of the penalties associated with the use of false identification, respondents were asked how likely they believe it is for someone their age to be arrested or fined for using false identification on a scale of one to four where one is “not at all likely,” and four is “extremely likely.” Overall, almost two-thirds of youth surveyed (64%) reported that the likelihood of facing legal penalties for using false identification was “very likely” or “extremely likely” as seen in Figure 16.



The use of false identification varied by group, as shown in Table 11. Frequent drinkers, males, and White respondents (compared to Asian and Hispanic) were more likely to have used false identification to purchase alcohol. (The statistical significance of differences between White respondents and African-Americans could not be determined due to the limited sample of African-American youth.)

Table 11. Underage Drinkers Who Have Used False Identification to Purchase Alcohol by Drinking Frequency, Gender, and Ethnicity

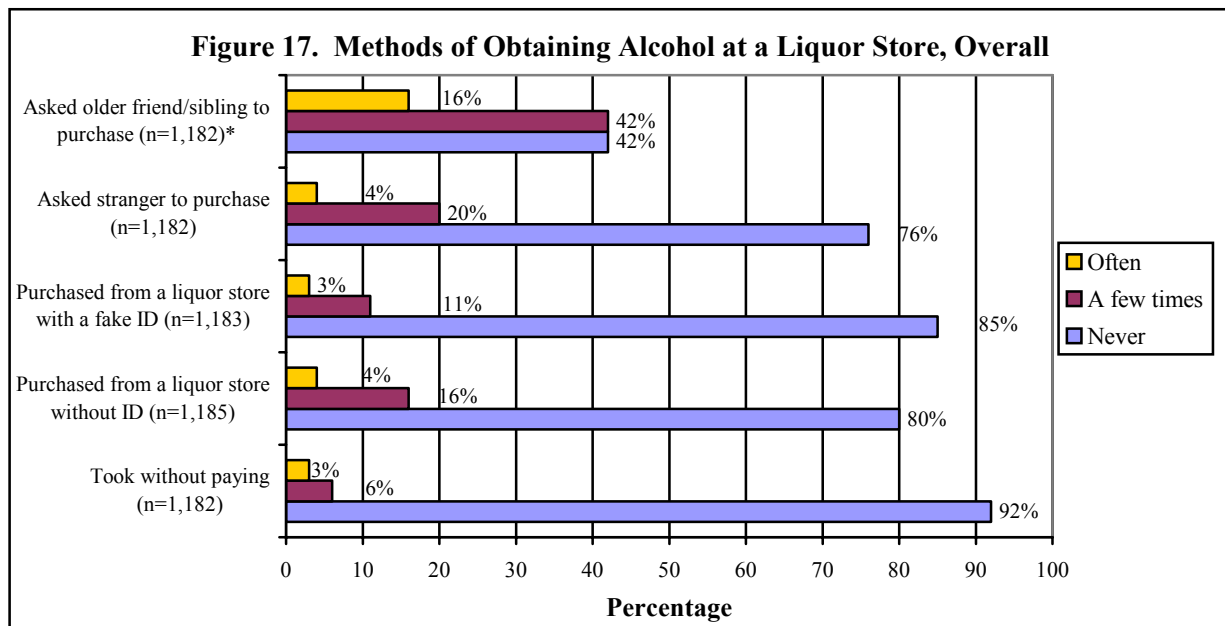
| | Sample Size | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Overall | 1,182 | 13% |
| Drinking Frequency | | |
| Infrequent | 635 | 5 |
| Frequent | 543 | 22 |
| Gender | | |
| Males | 586 | 18 |
| Females | 550 | 7 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Asian | 190 | 11 |
| African-American | 46 | 10 |
| Hispanic | 290 | 8 |
| White | 537 | 17 |

Frequency and Method of Obtaining Alcohol from Specific Sources

In addition to collecting general information on the most common access points for obtaining alcohol, the survey also identified the frequency and method for obtaining alcohol from *specific* sources. To address this, a series of questions were asked regarding the methods of obtaining alcohol from liquor stores, grocery stores, parental homes, parties, clubs, bars, and restaurants. Respondents were asked how often in the past six months they had obtained alcohol from each source and by what method.

Liquor Stores

As seen in Figure 17, underage drinkers most commonly obtain alcohol from liquor stores by asking an older friend or sibling to purchase alcohol for them. A total of 58% of underage drinkers surveyed reported obtaining alcohol from a liquor store by asking an older friend or sibling. More than nine out of 10 respondents (92%) reported that they have never stolen alcohol from a liquor store.



*Indicates a significant difference between the marked method and the other methods.

Methods of obtaining alcohol from liquor stores varied by region, as shown in **Table 12**. Fewer underage drinkers from the North Orange County region have obtained alcohol by purchasing it from a liquor store without identification (87% have “never” obtained alcohol by this method compared to 79 and 77% of Central and South Regions, respectively) or by asking a stranger to purchase it for them (81% have “never” compared to 73 and 76% of Central and South Regions).

Table 12. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Liquor Store by Region

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | North Region | | | Central Region | | | South Region | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Asked an older friend or sibling to go into a liquor store and buy it | 50% | 34% | 16% | 44% | 42% | 14% | 33% | 51% | 16% |
| Asked a stranger to go into the liquor store and buy it | 81 | 15 | 4 | 73 | 24 | 4 | 76 | 21 | 3 |
| Purchased from a liquor store with a false or borrowed ID | 88 | 10 | 3 | 85 | 11 | 4 | 84 | 12 | 3 |
| Purchased from a liquor store without ID | 87 | 9 | 4 | 79 | 17 | 4 | 77 | 19 | 4 |
| Taking it from a liquor store without paying | 93 | 4 | 3 | 91 | 5 | 3 | 90 | 8 | 2 |

Predictably, frequent drinkers were more likely than infrequent drinkers to obtain alcohol from a liquor store using all methods, including asking an older friend or sibling, asking a stranger, using false identification, purchasing without identification, and stealing, as shown in **Table 13**.

Table 13. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Liquor Store by Drinking Frequency

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Infrequent drinkers | | | Frequent drinkers | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Asked an older friend or sibling to go into a liquor store and buy it | 58% | 37% | 5% | 23% | 49% | 28% |
| Asked a stranger to go into the liquor store and buy it | 85 | 13 | 2 | 67 | 27 | 6 |
| Purchased from a liquor store with a false or borrowed ID | 93 | 7 | 1 | 77 | 17 | 7 |
| Purchased from a liquor store without ID | 88 | 10 | 2 | 71 | 22 | 7 |
| Taking it from a liquor store without paying | 93 | 5 | 2 | 90 | 6 | 4 |

Males were more likely than females to have obtained alcohol from a liquor store across all methods (see Table 14).

Table 14. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Liquor Store by Gender

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|---------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Asked an older friend or sibling to go into a liquor store and buy it | 37% | 44% | 19% | 47% | 41% | 12% |
| Asked a stranger to go into the liquor store and buy it | 71 | 24 | 5 | 82 | 15 | 3 |
| Purchased from a liquor store with a false or borrowed ID | 81 | 15 | 5 | 90 | 7 | 2 |
| Purchased from a liquor store without ID | 74 | 19 | 6 | 87 | 11 | 2 |
| Taking it from a liquor store without paying | 88 | 7 | 4 | 95 | 3 | 1 |

Older youth, aged 19 and 20, were more likely to report having used false identification to purchase alcohol at a liquor store compared to youth between 16 and 18 years old. Youth 18- to 20-years old were more likely than 16- and 17-year olds to have asked an older friend or sibling to buy alcohol for them (see Table 15).

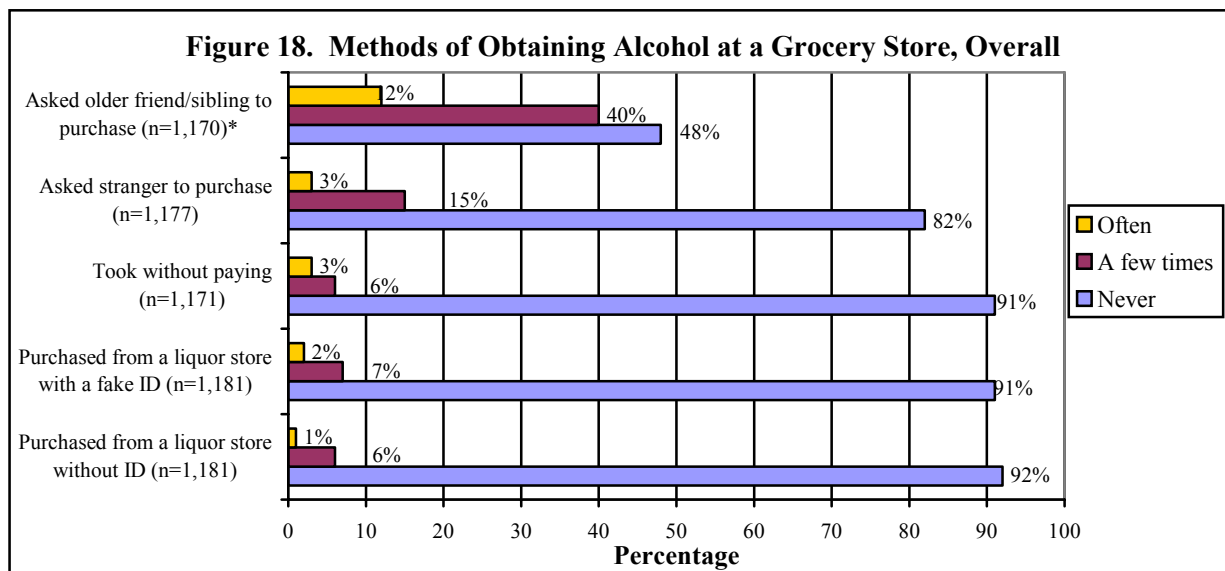
Table 15. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Liquor Store by Age

| | Asked older friend/sibling | | | Asked stranger | | | Purchased with false ID | | |
|------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------|-------------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Age | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | 55% | 33% | 12% | 74% | 22% | 4% | 93% | 6% | 1% |
| 17 | 49 | 39 | 11 | 73 | 24 | 4 | 92 | 6 | 2 |
| 18 | 40 | 43 | 18 | 76 | 19 | 5 | 88 | 9 | 2 |
| 19 | 39 | 45 | 16 | 84 | 14 | 3 | 80 | 15 | 5 |
| 20 | 28 | 51 | 21 | 76 | 20 | 3 | 75 | 19 | 6 |

| | Purchased without ID (n=1,196) | | | Took without paying (n=1,194) | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Age | | | | | | |
| 16 | 85% | 11% | 3% | 94% | 3% | 3% |
| 17 | 86 | 11 | 3 | 90 | 7 | 3 |
| 18 | 79 | 17 | 3 | 91 | 7 | 2 |
| 19 | 79 | 16 | 5 | 92 | 5 | 4 |
| 20 | 73 | 21 | 6 | 91 | 6 | 2 |

Grocery Stores

Similar to the findings for liquor stores, underage drinkers usually obtain alcohol from grocery stores by asking an older friend or sibling to purchase alcohol for them, as shown in Figure 18.



As shown in Table 16, frequent drinkers were more likely than infrequent drinkers to have obtained alcohol from a grocery store by all methods. In addition, males were more likely than females to have obtained alcohol from a grocery store, as seen in Table 17.

Table 16. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Grocery Store by Drinking Frequency

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Infrequent drinkers | | | Frequent drinkers | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Asked an older friend or sibling to go into a grocery store and buy it | 64% | 32% | 4% | 30% | 49% | 21% |
| Asked a stranger to go into the grocery store and buy it | 89 | 10 | 2 | 75 | 21 | 4 |
| Purchased from a grocery store with a false or borrowed ID | 96 | 3 | 1 | 86 | 11 | 3 |
| Purchased from a grocery store without ID | 95 | 5 | 1 | 90 | 8 | 2 |
| Took it from a grocery store without paying | 94 | 5 | 1 | 88 | 8 | 4 |

Table 17. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Grocery Store by Gender

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Males | | | Females | | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|---------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Asked an older friend or sibling to go into a grocery store and buy it | 45% | 40% | 16% | 51% | 41% | 8% |
| Asked a stranger to go into the grocery store and buy it | 77 | 18 | 4 | 88 | 10 | 1 |
| Purchased from a grocery store with a false or borrowed ID | 88 | 9 | 4 | 95 | 4 | 0 |
| Purchased from a grocery store without ID | 90 | 8 | 2 | 96 | 3 | 1 |
| Took it from a grocery store without paying | 86 | 9 | 4 | 95 | 4 | 1 |

As seen in Table 18, 19- and 20-year olds are more likely than younger youth to have obtained alcohol from a grocery store by purchasing it with false identification. Twenty year olds are also more likely to have “often” made a purchase at a grocery store without identification.

Table 18. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Grocery Store by Age

| Age | Asked older friend/sibling | | | Asked stranger | | | Purchased with false ID | | |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------|-------------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| 16 | 58% | 33% | 9% | 84% | 13% | 3% | 98% | 2% | 0% |
| 17 | 56 | 37 | 7 | 81 | 17 | 2 | 96 | 4 | 0 |
| 18 | 49 | 36 | 15 | 81 | 15 | 4 | 92 | 6 | 2 |
| 19 | 45 | 41 | 15 | 84 | 13 | 3 | 85 | 11 | 4 |
| 20 | 34 | 52 | 15 | 83 | 15 | 2 | 86 | 11 | 3 |

| Age | Purchased without ID | | | Took without paying | | |
|-----|----------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| 16 | 97% | 3% | 0% | 92% | 5% | 3% |
| 17 | 95 | 4 | 1 | 87 | 9 | 4 |
| 18 | 93 | 6 | 1 | 90 | 8 | 2 |
| 19 | 92 | 7 | 1 | 92 | 5 | 3 |
| 20 | 86 | 10 | 4 | 94 | 5 | 2 |

White (19%) and Hispanic (20%) respondents were more likely than all other groups to report that they have obtained alcohol by asking a stranger to purchase it for them. Conversely, 91% of Asian respondents reported that they have “never” asked a stranger to purchase alcohol, compared to 80 and 81% of Hispanic and White youth, respectively). White respondents were also more likely to report having asked an older friend or sibling to purchase alcohol on their behalf (see Table 19).

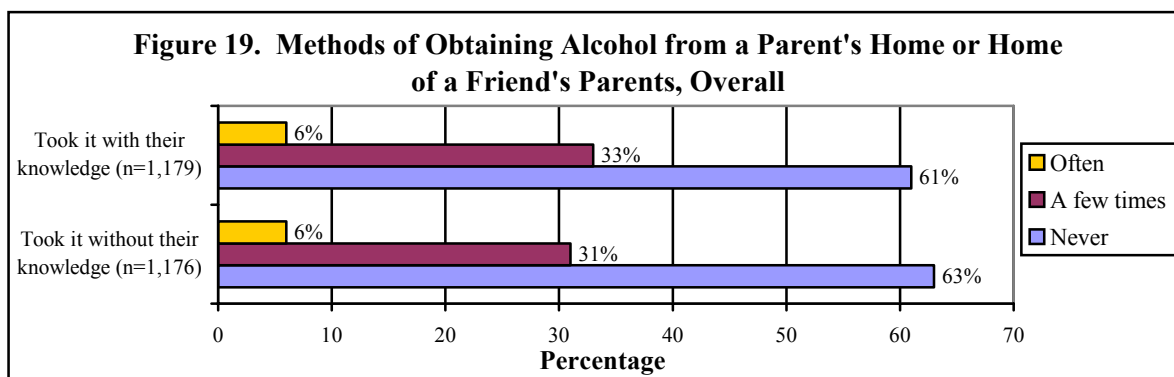
Table 19. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Grocery Store by Ethnicity

| | Asked older friend/sibling | | | Asked stranger | | | Purchased with false ID | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------|-------------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | |
| Asian | 52 | 38 | 9 | 91 | 8 | 2 | 93 | 4 | 3 |
| African-American | 58 | 39 | 3 | 88 | 10 | 3 | 88 | 9 | 3 |
| Hispanic | 54 | 36 | 9 | 80 | 17 | 3 | 95 | 5 | 1 |
| White | 43 | 41 | 16 | 81 | 16 | 3 | 90 | 8 | 2 |

| | Purchased without ID | | | Took without paying | | |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | |
| Asian | 91 | 6 | 2 | 93 | 6 | 1 |
| African-American | 85 | 14 | 2 | 90 | 7 | 3 |
| Hispanic | 95 | 5 | -- | 96 | 3 | 1 |
| White | 92 | 7 | 2 | 88 | 9 | 3 |

Parent’s Home

A substantial proportion of underage drinkers between the ages of 16 and 20 have taken alcohol from a parent’s home, either with (39%) or without permission (38%). See Figure 19. Additionally, a total of 22% of underage drinkers indicated that their parents have bought alcohol for them—*data not shown*).



Frequent drinkers were more likely to report that they “often” take liquor from a parent’s home, either with permission (10% compared to 2%) or without permission (9% compared to 2%), as seen in Table 20. Frequent drinkers were also more likely to report that their parents have bought alcohol for them, with 29% of frequent drinkers reporting that their parents have bought alcohol for them compared to 17% of infrequent drinkers.

Table 20. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol from Parent’s Home by Drinking Frequency

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Infrequent | | | Frequent | | |
|---|------------|-------------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Took it from parent’s house/a friend’s parent’s house with their knowledge | 67% | 31% | 2% | 54% | 36% | 10% |
| Took it from parent’s house/a friend’s parent’s house without their knowledge | 71 | 27 | 2 | 55 | 36 | 9 |

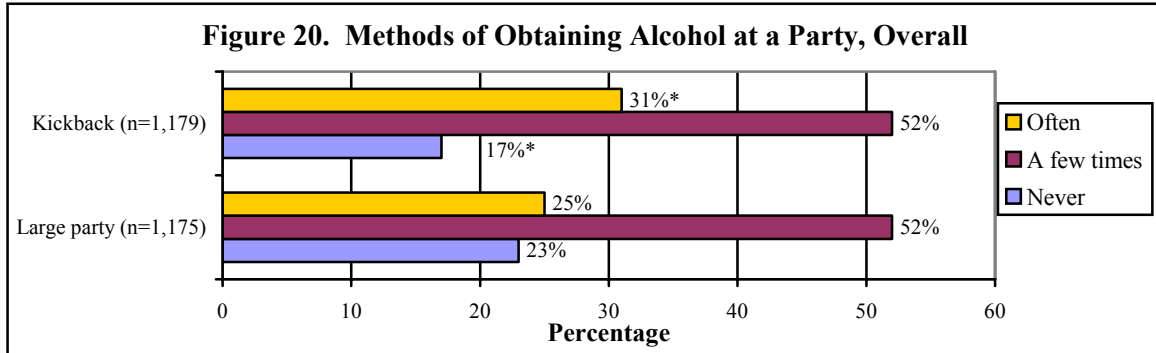
Nineteen and 20 year-old respondents were more likely to report that their parents purchased alcohol for them, compared to younger respondents. In addition, White respondents were more likely than Asian and Hispanic youth to report that their parents bought alcohol for them (see **Table 21**).

Table 21. Youth Reporting That Their Parents Bought Alcohol for Them, by Age and Ethnicity

| | Sample Size | Percentage |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| Age | | |
| 16 | 205 | 13% |
| 17 | 262 | 17% |
| 18 | 242 | 20% |
| 19 | 235 | 28% |
| 20 | 242 | 32% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Asian | 193 | 18% |
| African-American | 46 | 20% |
| Hispanic | 291 | 14% |
| White | 537 | 28% |

Parties

As shown in Figure 20, more than three-quarters of underage drinkers obtain alcohol at large parties and kickbacks (i.e. a gathering of a small group of friends). Respondents more “often” obtain alcohol at kickbacks (31%) compared to large parties (25%). No regional differences were found.



*Indicates a difference between the marked category and the other method

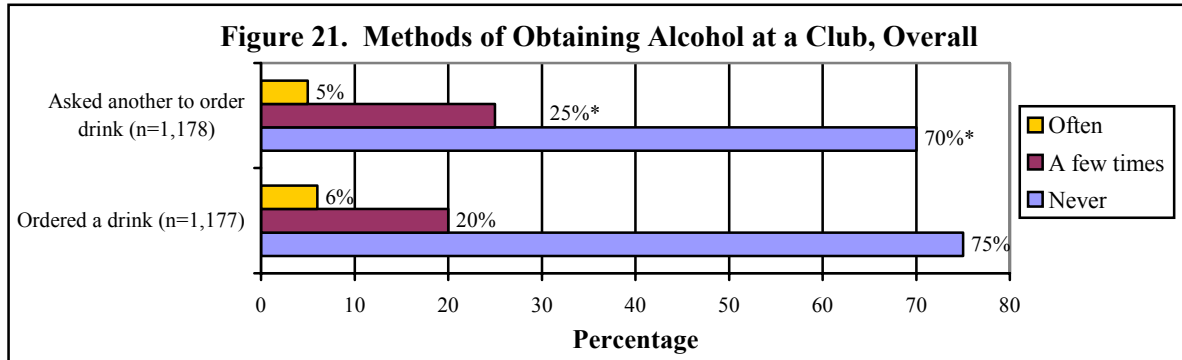
Males were more likely than females to report that they have obtained alcohol at large parties and kickbacks (see Table 22).

Table 22. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol from a Party by Gender

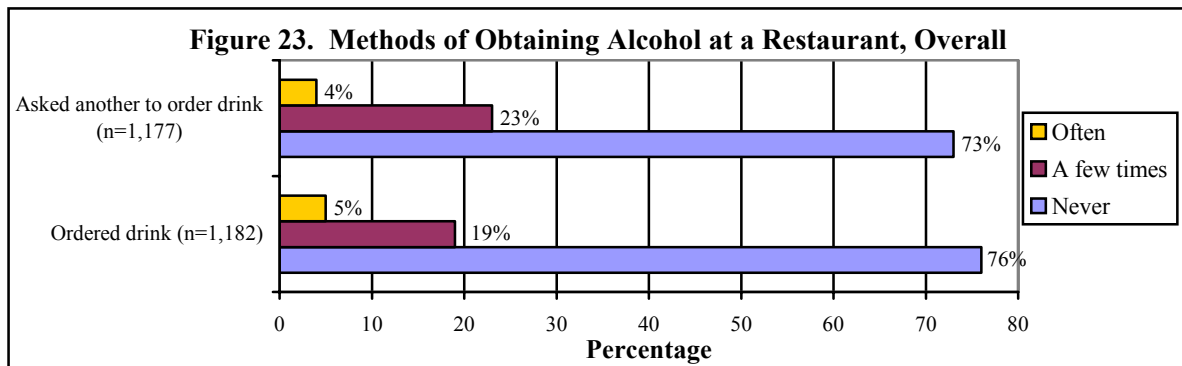
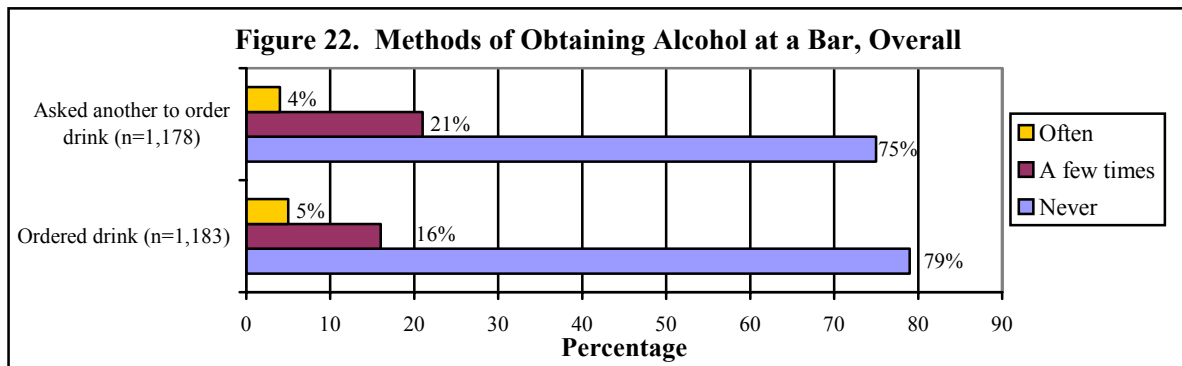
| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|---------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Going to a large party (n=1,127) | 19% | 53% | 29% | 26% | 53% | 21% |
| Going to a kickback with a small group of friends (n=1,131) | 15 | 52 | 33 | 19 | 53 | 28 |

Clubs, Bars, and Restaurants

Relatively few underage drinkers have obtained alcohol from a club, bar or restaurant. Youth who obtained alcohol at a club, however, were more likely to ask someone over 21 to make the purchase for them than to purchase the drink themselves. See Figures 21 through 23.



* Indicates a significant difference between methods.



Frequent drinkers were more likely than infrequent drinkers to report that they had ordered a drink, or had asked someone else to order them a drink, at a club, bar, or restaurant (see **Table 23**).

Table 23. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Club, Bar, and Restaurant by Drinking Frequency

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Infrequent drinkers | | | Frequent drinkers | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Ordered a drink in a club (n=1,174) | 84% | 14% | 3% | 64% | 27% | 9% |
| Asked someone to order you a drink in a club (n=1,175) | 80 | 18 | 2 | 59 | 32 | 9 |
| Ordered a drink in a bar (n=1,178) | 88 | 10 | 2 | 69 | 23 | 8 |
| Asked someone to order you a drink in a bar (n=1,175) | 84 | 14 | 2 | 64 | 29 | 7 |
| Ordered a drink in a restaurant (n=1,177) | 85 | 13 | 2 | 67 | 26 | 8 |
| Asked someone to order you a drink in a restaurant (n=1,173) | 81 | 17 | 2 | 64 | 29 | 7 |

Males are more likely than females to have obtained alcohol by ordering a drink at a club, bar, and restaurant (see **Table 24**).

Table 24. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol at a Club, Bar, and Restaurant by Gender

| How many times have you obtained alcohol by...? | Males | | | Females | | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|---------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Ordered a drink in a club (n=1,129) | 71% | 23% | 7% | 79% | 16% | 4% |
| Asked someone to order you a drink in a club (n=1,129) | 68 | 26 | 6 | 73 | 22 | 5 |
| Ordered a drink in a bar (n=1,131) | 76 | 18 | 6 | 84 | 13 | 3 |
| Asked someone to order you a drink in a bar (n=1,130) | 73 | 21 | 5 | 78 | 19 | 3 |
| Ordered a drink in a restaurant (n=1,133) | 74 | 20 | 6 | 80 | 18 | 3 |
| Asked someone to order you a drink in a restaurant (n=1,127) | 73 | 21 | 5 | 74 | 24 | 2 |

Twenty year olds were more likely to report that they had ordered a drink at a club, bar, or restaurant, or asked someone else to make the purchase for them, than were younger respondents, as seen in Table 25.

Table 25. Methods of Obtaining Alcohol from a Club, Bar, and Restaurant by Age

| | Ordered a drink in a club | | | Asked other to order drink in club | | | Ordered drink in a bar | | | Asked other to order drink in bar | | |
|------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------------------|-------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Age | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | 89% | 8% | 3% | 84% | 12% | 4% | 93% | 5% | 2% | 89% | 9% | 2% |
| 17 | 86 | 12 | 2 | 84 | 14 | 2 | 90 | 8 | 2 | 86 | 11 | 2 |
| 18 | 77 | 19 | 3 | 72 | 25 | 4 | 81 | 15 | 4 | 78 | 20 | 2 |
| 19 | 67 | 24 | 9 | 64 | 29 | 6 | 73 | 20 | 7 | 68 | 26 | 6 |
| 20 | 54 | 36 | 10 | 47 | 42 | 11 | 60 | 31 | 9 | 54 | 37 | 9 |

| | Ordered drink in restaurant | | | Asked other to order drink in restaurant | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------|--|-------------|-------|
| | Never | A few times | Often | Never | A few times | Often |
| Age | | | | | | |
| 16 | 91% | 9% | 1% | 83% | 16% | 1% |
| 17 | 86 | 12 | 2 | 83 | 15 | 2 |
| 18 | 77 | 21 | 2 | 75 | 22 | 3 |
| 19 | 72 | 22 | 6 | 73 | 22 | 5 |
| 20 | 56 | 33 | 11 | 52 | 40 | 8 |

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Most youth in Orange County between the ages of 16 and 20 have consumed alcohol on at least one occasion. Of those who do drink, almost half (46%) drink frequently, at least once a month. Study findings suggest that while youth and their parents recognize the dangers of excessive alcohol use among minors, most believe that alcohol is not harmful to young people when consumed responsibly and in moderation. Concern over underage drinking continues to center around drunk driving, with fewer youth aware of the direct health effects.

Adults 21 years and older are the single most common source of alcohol for minors, outpacing all commercial sources. Underage drinkers most often obtain alcohol at parties with more than three-quarters of underage drinkers surveyed reported receiving alcohol from this source. When youth do obtain alcohol from commercial sources, most notably liquor and grocery stores, they most often ask an older friend or relative to make the purchase. Parents, while not a primary source of alcohol among the study's age cohorts, also provide alcohol to their children. A total of 22% of underage drinkers surveyed reported that their parents bought alcohol for them on at least one occasion. The use of false identification or theft to obtain alcohol is not widespread, nor is the purchase of alcohol by minors at restaurants, bars, or clubs.

Although adults 21 years and older are the single most common method by which minors obtain alcohol, nearly half of the underage youth surveyed reported that they have provided alcohol to other underage youth. These underage providers of alcohol are most likely to be frequent drinkers themselves, White, male, and from a higher socioeconomic background, often from the South Region of Orange County. White males, particularly those from the South Region, also report the greatest frequency of drinking, the lowest concern for the dangers of alcohol use, and have the least difficulty obtaining alcohol from most sources. **Findings suggest that efforts to limit underage drinking focus on this high-risk group.**

Based on these findings, AMPG recommends the following strategies to reduce underage drinking.

- **Promote and support a countywide campaign to educate parents and young adults about the direct health consequences of underage drinking.** The ease with which youth obtain alcohol from their older friends, siblings, parents, and even strangers is facilitated by a normative attitude that minimizes the harm of providing alcohol to minors. Moreover, youth who drink frequently are more likely to underestimate the dangers of underage drinking, suggesting that youth might be willing to consume alcohol, in part, because they do not believe it to be significantly harmful.

On a local community level, Orange County might consider:

- Providing a consistent local message to youth and parents on the dangers of alcohol use by distributing existing media materials and resources through community organizations and coalitions.
- Working with local and regional media outlets and members of the media to increase coverage of community changes that have led to a reduction in underage drinking.
- **Promote the adoption of “social host” ordinances by Orange County cities to limit parties as a source of alcohol for underage youth.** Study findings indicate that parties, most often held on private property, are the primary venue for underage drinking. Social host liability would hold non-commercial individuals responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease, or otherwise control. In particular, Orange County should consider promoting response and recovery ordinances by Orange County cities that hold social hosts

and landowners civilly responsible for the costs of law enforcement, fire, or other emergency response services associated with multiple responses to the scene of an underage drinking party or other gathering, whether or not the hosts or landowners knew about the parties.

- **Promote and support increased use of “shoulder tap” operations by law enforcement agencies to limit alcohol obtained from liquor stores and supermarkets by underage youth.** Second only to parties, liquor stores and supermarkets are a primary source of alcohol for underage drinkers. When underage drinkers obtain alcohol from these establishments, they do so most often by asking an older friend or sibling to make the purchase. With a shoulder tap program, a minor decoy, under the direct supervision of law enforcement officers, solicits adults outside liquor and grocery stores to buy the minor alcohol. Any person who does furnish alcohol to the minor decoy may be arrested for providing alcohol to a minor.

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APPENDIX: FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Youth Access to Alcohol Study: Focus Groups Report

Submitted to:

Orange County Health Care Agency
Public Health Services
Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention
Team (ADEPT)



Submitted by:

The Applied Management & Planning Group

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Orange County Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT) conducted a series of focus groups with youth and parents to gather information on how underage youth in Orange County gain access to alcohol. The groups were designed to collect primary information on the pathways to alcohol, as well as to inform a subsequent survey of 2,000 Orange County youth regarding the same subject.

The findings presented in this report reflect the content of nine focus groups conducted with North, Central, and South Orange County residents between October 19 and December 7, 2005. The study addressed four major areas:

- Parental attitudes toward underage drinking;
- The most common sources of alcohol for youth;
- Details on how alcohol is obtained from the various sources; and
- Assessment of risk associated with different methods of obtaining alcohol.

METHODOLOGY

The focus groups included male and female youth between the ages of 16 and 20, and parents of 16 and 17 year olds. Participants were recruited from North, Central, and South Orange County as presented in **Table 1** on the following page. To ensure a representative sample, youth were screened for ethnicity, gender, and age, and asked whether they had had a drink in the last 30 days. If they met the screening criteria, individuals were asked if they would like to participate in a discussion group. Youth, under the age of 18, were required to obtain their parents' signature on a consent form. Parents of 16 and 17 year-olds also were screened for gender and ethnicity. All recruited individuals were provided with details regarding dates, times, directions and parking. Since attrition is expected in focus group recruitment, 14 participants were recruited for each group, resulting in a total of 7 to 10 individuals attending. Participants received an incentive of \$60 and were served a light meal. The groups were held during the week starting in the late afternoon and evening. Each focus group session was audio taped and transcribed to provide an accurate account of the discussion. The distribution of the focus groups by region is presented on the following page.

**Table 1: Number of Focus Groups
By Geographic Region**

| | North Region | Central Region | South Region | Total Groups |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Youth 16-17 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Asian Youth 16-17 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Youth 18-20 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Parents | 1 | | 1 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |

“My parents don’t know that I drink at all. They don’t know that I do anything, really. They just think I go out with my friends and go bowling.”

--16/17 year-old

“I think if parents do see you drunk, they lie to themselves. They’re like ‘no he’s not drunk.’”

--16/17 year-old

“It’s not the alcohol. It’s the risk of stuff that you do when you’re under the influence. Driving or getting into a fight. That’s what they’re [parents] mostly scared of.”

--18/20 year old

“I kind of like my step-dad’s point of view on it. He doesn’t want me to drink, but he says that if I do and if I’m not okay to drive, he wants me to call him.”

--16/17 year-old

FINDINGS: YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

This section presents detailed findings for the youth focus groups, organized around the following topic areas:

- Parental attitudes toward underage alcohol;
- Most common sources of alcohol;
- Social Sources; and,
- Commercial Sources.

Major trends are summarized under each heading, followed by any observed differences by age, gender, or ethnicity.

Parental Attitudes Towards Underage Drinking

Participants from all youth focus groups were asked a series of questions regarding their parents’ attitudes towards underage drinking, the extent to which their parents were aware that they drank alcohol, and household/family rules regarding the use of alcohol.

- **The majority of 16 and 17 year-old youth agreed that their parents disapprove of underage drinking in general, but are often in “denial” about the extent to which their own children use alcohol.** Youth reported that their parents turned a blind eye to their drinking and were “in the dark” about how much their children drank. Reflecting a similar attitude, some youth reported that it would be “disrespectful” to drink around their parents.
- **Youth ages 18 to 20 were more likely than younger participants to report that their parents know they drink but conceded that their parents underestimate the frequency with which their children use alcohol and how much they drink.** The majority of youth in this age group reported that their parents allow them to drink in moderation, although they are warned against drinking and driving.
- **Regardless of age, only a minority of youth reported that their parents strictly forbid them from using alcohol entirely. Most youth reported that their parents have no clear rules about underage drinking.** Some youth ages 16 and 17 reported that their parents’ occasionally allow them to have small amounts of alcohol under controlled situations, such as in the parents’ presence or at a family function. Some 16 and 17 year olds also reported that their parents allow them to drink in moderation, even without adult supervision, as long as they do not drink and drive. Most 18 to 20 year olds were allowed to drink openly in front of their parents as long as they consumed small amounts and did not drive.

“They know that I’m going to drink, and they say ‘don’t drink too much and don’t drink and drive.’”

--18/20 year old

“My dad told me drunken stories of himself, but that was island life and drinking age is 18. I’m an islander too so I can drink at 18. My Dad knows I’m responsible.”

--18/20 year old

“My Mom would never talk to me about alcohol because she knows I’m smart and I know how to handle myself.”

--18/20 year old

“I think if your parents didn’t care what other people thought, they would let you [drink].”

--16-17 year old

“There are always a couple liquor stores that sell to underage people.”

--16/17 year old

- **While few youth reported that their parents restricted alcohol use all together, there were important differences by age, ethnicity and gender.** Findings suggest that parents become less strict as their children get older and teens are encouraged to use their own judgment by the time they are out of the home. According to focus group participants, moderate alcohol use is considered appropriate by most parents among youth 18 years or older.
- **Asian youth reported the strictest family rules against drinking, and they were more likely to report that their parents forbid them from drinking alcohol entirely even after the age of 18.** Asian girls included in the study unanimously reported that they were not allowed to drink, even in moderation, explaining that it would bring shame on them and their families. Girls of all ethnicities were more likely than their male counterparts to report that their parents do not allow them to drink.
- **When asked if their parents had spoken to them about alcohol use, the majority of youth said they had not.** In those cases where parents had spoken to youth about drinking, the emphasis was on the dangers of drinking and driving and, for girls, concerns over sexual encounters. Few youth reported that their parents had spoken to them about the health consequences of drinking or how to avoid toxicity.
- **Several youth indicated that they do not believe their parents have strong convictions regarding underage drinking, and were strict out of concern for how they would be perceived by other parents.** Most youth reported that their parents keep alcohol in the house, use alcohol regularly as adults, and admitted to using alcohol as teenagers. Several youth reported that their parents had their own drinking problems and were not in a position to enforce alcohol restrictions.

Most Common Sources of Alcohol

In addition to discussing their parents’ attitudes towards underage drinking, youth were asked about the sources and methods they used to obtain alcohol. **Although there were differences by age and gender, the majority of youth in all groups cited social sources, particularly older friends and siblings, as the primary source of alcohol.**

- Among 16 and 17 year olds, the most frequently cited source of alcohol was older friends and siblings, followed by purchasing

alcohol from a liquor store either directly or by asking a stranger to make the purchase for them. Stealing alcohol from a supermarket (a “beer run”) was the third most frequently cited response among this age group. Large parties and small get-togethers are also a source of alcohol, particularly for girls, although many youth reported that they bring their own alcohol to such gatherings.

- Taking alcohol from their parents’ home was not cited as a common method for obtaining alcohol among 16 and 17 year olds; however, many reported doing so when they were younger. Similarly, bars, restaurants, and clubs are not common sources of alcohol for this age group. Several youth reported that family restaurants were more likely to serve to minors than were other establishments. None of the participants included in the study reported purchasing alcohol over the Internet.
- As with younger participants, the most frequently cited source of alcohol among 18 to 20 year olds continued to be older friends and siblings, followed by purchasing alcohol directly from a liquor store. Some participants in this age group, particularly girls, reported obtaining alcohol from clubs, which do not always require girls to provide identification.
- Youth ages 18 to 20 were much less likely than younger youth to ask a stranger to purchase alcohol for them, since many people in their social circles were already 21 years or older. Few 18 to 20 year olds reported stealing alcohol once they were 18, primarily because there are easier ways to acquire alcohol and because they are concerned about the legal consequences.
- Males are more likely than their female counterparts to steal alcohol from a store. Females, however, are more likely to be served a drink in a bar, restaurant, or club and are more likely to receive alcohol at a party.
- Asian girls are much less likely than other youth to purchase alcohol from a liquor store. Several Asian girls reported that they would not make a purchase at a liquor store because, even if their parents never found out, the proprietor would “look down on them.” Asian girls who drink are considered “trashy,” one youth explained. As a result, Asian females are much more likely to have a male purchase alcohol for them.
- In general, false identifications appear unnecessary and are used only by a minority of youth included in the study.

Social Sources

Next, participants from all groups were asked more detailed questions about the conditions under which they obtain alcohol from social sources; namely parties, parents’ homes, and individuals 21 and older.

“[Small parties] are more common. That’s like....just whenever four or more people gather in a house, who just happens to be there. Yeah, you’ve got your friends to drink with you ...you drink with them a few days out of the week at least.”

--18/20 year old

“The [police] walk straight up to the door [at a large party], tell everyone to get out, and that’s it. I’ve never seen anyone get arrested or anything, you know, for underage drinking. I have run by a cop with a beer and they don’t do anything.”

--16/17 year old

Parties

- All youth agreed that parties were the most common place for alcohol to be consumed, but the source of alcohol at these parties is manifold. There are various points of access including older friends, siblings, strangers, and liquor stores.
- 16 and 17 year olds most frequently drink at small parties or “kickbacks” which involve only a few friends and are often held at parents’ homes when adults are away for the evening. In some cases, parents allow their children and their children’s friends to drink at the house while they are present. In a few cases, parents provide the alcohol.
- 16 and 17 year olds also reported drinking at “house parties,” involving large numbers of youth. At these parties, youth pay a cover charge at the door, ranging from \$3 to \$5, and are provided with alcohol for the evening.
- The majority of 16 and 17 year olds reported that family parties were not a common source of alcohol, particularly in large quantities.
- When asked if supplying alcohol at a party increases an individual’s social standing, most youth ages 16 and 17 reported that it had only a moderate effect since alcohol is considered relatively easy to acquire by this age. Among 18 to 20 year olds providing alcohol was of little social consequence.
- 18 to 20 year olds said they most frequently drink with their friends at small gatherings, although some continue to attend large house parties.
- All female respondents, regardless of age, claimed that they had little or no difficulty getting alcohol at parties and were often admitted to parties without paying a cover charge.
- The majority of youth reported that parties are one of the easiest and least risky access points for obtaining alcohol. Even house parties are not considered high risk since many youth believe it is rare for a party to be raided and even less likely that police will make arrests. It should be noted, however, that a few African-American and Latino participants reported that they had seen minors arrested for consuming alcohol at a party and were more concerned about using large parties as an access point for alcohol as a result.

Parents

While most youth reported that on at least one occasion they obtained alcohol from their parents or their friends’ parents (either with or

“I know a couple people where the parents mark the bottle when they leave to make sure the kids don’t drink.”

--16/17 year old

“I would never take alcohol from parents without them knowing. You normally do the courtesy of asking.”

--18/20 year old

without their knowledge), most agreed that this was not a primary source of alcohol once they were 16 or older, due in part to a limited supply. Parents' alcohol was more often described as an introductory source of alcohol for younger teens and a short term activity until more reliable sources were identified.

- **In those cases where parents' alcohol was used by 16 and 17 year olds, it was most often obtained without the parents' knowledge; however, several youth reported that they knew of parents who regularly provide alcohol to their children and their children's friends.** Youth reported that parents who provide alcohol do so to "keep kids safe" by mitigating the risks associated with underage drinking, particularly drunk driving.
- When alcohol was taken from parents it was usually hard liquor, and the missing alcohol was replaced with water.
- Only a minority of youth 18 and older reported using alcohol obtained from their parents. When alcohol among this age group was obtained from parents it was usually in small quantities with the parent's permission.
- Some youth expressed discomfort at the idea of taking alcohol from their parents, either with or without their permission, describing the practice as "weird" or "disrespectful." Other youth said they feared their parents' disapproval.

Persons 21 and Over

Asking people 21 and older to purchase alcohol was by far the most commonly reported method by which underage youth access alcohol, particularly among youth 18 to 20. In the majority of instances, the person over 21 is a friend or sibling. All youth reported that they knew at least one older person who was willing to purchase alcohol for them.

“I think that it’s also that, as you get older, your friends are a little bit older, so it’s easier to get access to people that are twenty-one.”

--18/20 year old

“I have this liquor store that has been selling to me since I was fourteen. As long as they know there are no cops around, they are more than willing to take your money and give you the beer.”

--16/17 year old

“At Albertson’s or Ralph’s, the bigger grocery stores, they usually card everybody who is at the register. Especially if it looks like a younger group.”

--18/20 year old

- Asking older friends and siblings to purchase alcohol was considered by the majority of youth from all seven groups as the least risky way to obtain alcohol as a minor. Asking a stranger outside of a liquor store to make a purchase was considered higher risk, but is still practiced.
- When youth do approach a stranger to purchase alcohol for them, they allow the buyer to keep the change, usually amounting to a few dollars. In other cases, the buyer receives some of the alcohol as compensation, although this is less common.

Commercial Sources

Liquor Stores and Supermarkets

While social sources are the most common way underage youth obtain alcohol, focus group participants reported that purchasing alcohol illegally from liquor stores or stealing it from supermarkets are two other frequent access points. Participants were asked how and under what circumstances the alcohol was obtained from these sources.

- **The majority of youth from all groups reported that liquor stores are lax in requiring identification and in many cases knowingly sell alcohol to minors.** Youth reported that they rarely need false identification at these establishments. At least half the focus group participants in each group said they had recently purchased alcohol from a liquor store. Youth reported that they generally target liquor stores in low-income neighborhoods.
- **Youth agreed that supermarkets were the least likely place to attempt to purchase alcohol because rules regarding proper identification are strictly enforced.** Furthermore, because many supermarkets swipe the driver’s license through a machine that reads the barcode, false identification cannot easily be used. When first introduced, self-check out machines were used by some youth to purchase alcohol. However, focus group participants reported that supermarkets are now much more careful. The machine issues a signal to a nearby clerk when alcohol is scanned through the machine, and the clerk then checks the identification.

“If there’s a restaurant with a bar in there, you can just have your friends go to the bar and buy drinks for all of you to take to the table.”

--18/20 year old

“You know, if you see one person sitting with a bunch of people [at a restaurant] that look over the age of twenty-five, you’re really not going to go and question them.”

--16/17 year old

“I went in there [a family restaurant] and ordered a Margarita one time, and ever since then they always serve me and never ask for ID. Family restaurants are definitely more lax on that kind of thing.”

--16/17 year old

- **There is a common perception, however, that supermarkets are easier to steal from because they have “no chase” policies and the alcohol is usually displayed close to the door.** In most cases, one youth goes into the store to get the alcohol, while one or more youth wait in a car outside. Most youth reported that they would be “scared” to steal alcohol from a liquor store for fear that the owner might have a gun or would otherwise pursue them.
- Youth aged 18 to 20 were more likely than other youth to characterize the practice of stealing alcohol as risky and unnecessary. When asked why teens steal liquor, 16 and 17 year olds described it as a thrill and a last resort when they want alcohol but have no money.

Restaurants, Bars, and Clubs

Restaurants, bars, and clubs are secondary sources of alcohol for underage youth, particularly those between 18 and 20. Youth were asked how they obtained alcohol from these sources.

- Youth ages 18 to 20 years old were more likely than younger focus group participants to report that they had successfully ordered a drink at a restaurant, bar, or club. Among youth 16 or 17 only a minority of participants (one to two people per group at most) reported successfully ordering alcohol at a restaurant or club. No youth aged 16 and 17 reported successfully ordering a drink from a bar directly, but one person had been given a drink by another patron. Girls generally had more success than males in getting served.
- At restaurants, youth are more likely to purchase alcohol when they are in a group of people where some members of the group are 21 or older. In those cases, wait staff do not always ask for identification. In other situations, adults 21 and over order the alcohol and give the drink to a minor. Girls also reported that men are often willing to buy them a drink at a bar, in which case the bartender does not ask for identification.
- Clubs have the most relaxed rules regarding underage drinking, according to focus group participants. Girls, particularly those considered attractive, are often let into clubs without identification or with only a cursory review of a driver’s license. Those clubs that admit underage youth often use codes such as bracelets or stamps to indicate who can drink alcohol. Youth reported that these methods are easy to get around and, if necessary, youth simply ask someone else to buy them a drink.
- Some youth reported that they have false identification and use it to purchase alcohol at restaurants, bars, and clubs, but borrowing someone else’s identification is far more common. Youth

reported that a false driver's license can cost as much as several hundred dollars and is difficult to acquire.

FINDINGS: PARENT FOCUS GROUPS

In addition to conducting groups with youth, the study included two focus groups with parents of 16 and 17 year olds. As part of the recruiting effort, parents were asked simply if they were parents of teenagers aged 16 and 17 and not whether their son or daughter used alcohol. This section presents detailed findings for the parent focus groups, organized around the following topic areas:

- Family history with alcohol;
- Attitudes towards underage drinking; and,
- Awareness of drinking among teenagers in general, and their children in particular.

Family History

Parents were asked to describe their own experience with alcohol as teenagers and the household rules they grew up with regarding alcohol use.

- Focus group participants came from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from strict families who prohibited alcohol entirely to more lenient environments where alcohol was served at the dinner table and given to younger teenagers. However, regardless of family rules, nearly all participants across the two focus groups acknowledged drinking as teenagers.
- In those families where alcohol was strictly prohibited, focus group participants reported that they simply did not drink in front of their parents, citing it as a sign of disrespect. When asked if their parents knew they drank, many participants said their parents probably suspected but never asked.
- For the majority of participants, the emphasis in their families was about drinking in moderation and avoiding "trouble."
- Most participants agreed that their parents were stricter with daughters than with sons regarding alcohol use.

Attitudes Towards Underage Drinking

Next, parents were asked whether they believe teenagers should be allowed to drink alcohol and what they believe are the greatest risks associated with alcohol use among teens.

"My parents always told me it's not good to drink when I was a teenager. They didn't know. [I'd tell them] 'I'm going over to my friend's house for a birthday party,' but really I was out drinking."

--Parent

"My Dad always said that he never smoked or drank in front of his parents, even after being married. I never really drink in front of my parents. It's out of respect."

--Parent

"[My parents] didn't allow drinking basically at all in the house. If I was caught drinking I would be in trouble."

--Parent

"Drinking was very acceptable in my family. I had a lot of aunts and uncles and we had a lot of celebrations and I was drinking at the dinner table when I was maybe 12 and it was acceptable."

--Parent

"My parents were really strict because my father was a recovering alcoholic. But my brother and sister and I we all drank. In high school we went to parties and we drank but we always knew if we took it too far, we'd get in trouble."

--Parent

- Parents' greatest concern regarding drinking was its use as a gateway to drugs and other risky behavior, followed by concerns over drunk driving and sexual misconduct. **Health concerns associated with regular drinking were raised by only one participant in the first group and two participants in the second group as an important consequence of underage drinking.**
- When asked at what age they thought youth should be allowed to drink legally, the majority of parents from both groups agreed that 21 was a good legal age, but admitted that they were inclined to allow their own children to drink at a younger age if they demonstrated responsible behavior.
- **Although the majority of parents included in the study disapprove of underage drinking and expressed concern about their 16 and 17 year-old children being involved in drunk driving or other dangerous situations related to excessive alcohol use, they were divided over how strict parents should be with regard to underage drinking.** Some parents reported that they believe a zero tolerance policy is the only way to stop teens from drinking and that to allow any drinking condones alcohol use. Slightly more parents said they believed it was important to allow teens to drink in moderation under controlled situations, such as at a family dinner or by offering to share an adults' drink, to expose them to the effects of alcohol in a protected setting. A few parents touted a "realistic view of teenage behavior" and reported that they provide alcohol for their children and encourage their children to drink at home where at least they know they are safe. All parents said they believed it was important to for teens to drink only in moderation.
- A few parents reported that their children had been invited to parties where alcohol was provided by the host's parents. Most participants agreed that parents have a right to know if alcohol is being provided and to prohibit their child from attending such parties if they wish. Some parents were angry that other parents purchase alcohol for minors, arguing that it condones alcohol use among teens and is disrespectful of other parents.
- Most parents had spoken to their children about drinking and driving. The majority of parents reported that they told their 16 and 17 year-old children to call them if they were drunk and needed a ride. One parent received such a call.

“Well, I think her kids drink [laughter]. Am I allowed to say that? I think your kids drink, but I don’t think my kids drink.”

--Parent

“If she [my daughter] wants a drink I’ll buy her the drink. I would rather have her drink with me than run around like I used to do and hide it from her parents. She doesn’t drink all the time but if she wants to, I’ll buy her whatever she wants.”

--Parent

Awareness of Teenage Drinking

Finally, parents were asked what proportion of teenagers they think drink alcohol, whether their own children use alcohol and, if so, how they access it. Results are presented below.

- **Overall, the majority of parents from both groups reported that they believe most teenagers between the ages of 16 and 17 have had at least one drink.** When asked what proportion of teenagers use alcohol on a regular basis, estimates varied from under 50% to as high as 90%.
- **However, when asked if their own children drank alcohol on a regular basis, only one parent out of the two groups reported that she believed her child drinks on a regular basis.** Several parents said they had witnessed their teenage children tipsy, drunk, and even hung over, but that they believed those were isolated incidences.
- **When asked how teens access alcohol, parents gave responses that were consistent with what youth themselves reported.** Liquor stores were mentioned most frequently by parents as a primary source of alcohol for underage youth, whereby youth either buy it directly from proprietors or ask a stranger 21 or older to make the purchase. Parents’ alcohol, either with or without their permission, was also mentioned as a source of alcohol for underage youth. A few parents said their children had attended parties at which alcohol was purchased by the parents and given to minors.

CONCLUSIONS

The majority of youth in all groups cited social sources, particularly older friends and siblings, as their primary source of alcohol. Among commercial sources of alcohol, 16 and 17 year olds most frequently obtain alcohol from liquor stores, followed by stealing alcohol from supermarkets. Among 18 to 20 year olds, liquor stores are also the primary commercial source, followed by clubs. Parties are an important component of the circumstances in which youth drink, providing a perceived safe haven for consuming alcohol and, in some cases, a source of alcohol as well.

