



Underage Drinking through the Eyes of Teens and Parents



Preventing substance abuse together

SAFE

Substance Abuse Free Environment Inc.
(SAFE)

P.O. Box 40

Chesterfield, VA 23832

chesterfieldSAFE.org

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Underage Drinking: Teen vs. Parent Perceptions

Survey Background

One of the most important days in a teen's life is the day he or she receives an official driver's license. In Chesterfield County, teens are presented with their driver's licenses in a courtroom proceeding that includes a presentation from a juvenile court judge. These driver's license ceremonies are held once a month, and a parent or guardian is required to attend with the teen. Because nearly 300 young people receive their license each month, the event is held in the auditorium of a local high school. Most of these teens are 16 or 17 years old and represent a diverse cross section of the community.

SAFE has had a presence at these monthly events since 1999. As parents and teens arrive at the school, a volunteer from SAFE hands them literature relating to safe driving and underage drinking laws. Parents and their teens then wait at tables in the commons area until the doors to the auditorium are unlocked a few minutes before the beginning of the proceeding.

With the permission of the juvenile court judges, SAFE used this venue to gather information from teens and their parents about their perceptions of alcohol use among high school students. During the winter of 2010, SAFE invited parents and their teens to complete a survey that would help the coalition better understand alcohol use patterns among young people in Chesterfield County, including when, where, why, and what students drink. The survey did not request teen participants to report their own behavior or attitudes; instead, it measures their *perceptions* of the behavior and attitudes of Chesterfield high school students. Parents answered the same set of questions about drinking among high school students, so their perceptions could be compared to those of the teens.

A total of 521 surveys were collected. Teens completed 207 of these surveys and 314 were filled out by their parents. There were 264 males and 257 females who completed this survey. A copy of the survey is found at the end of this report.

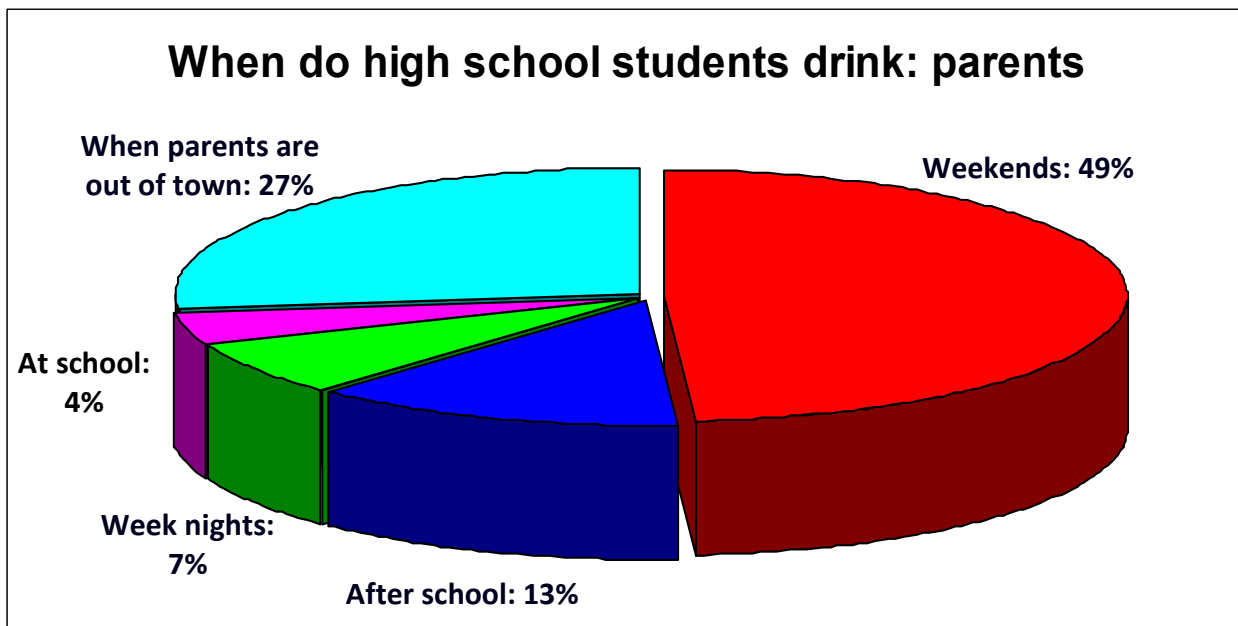
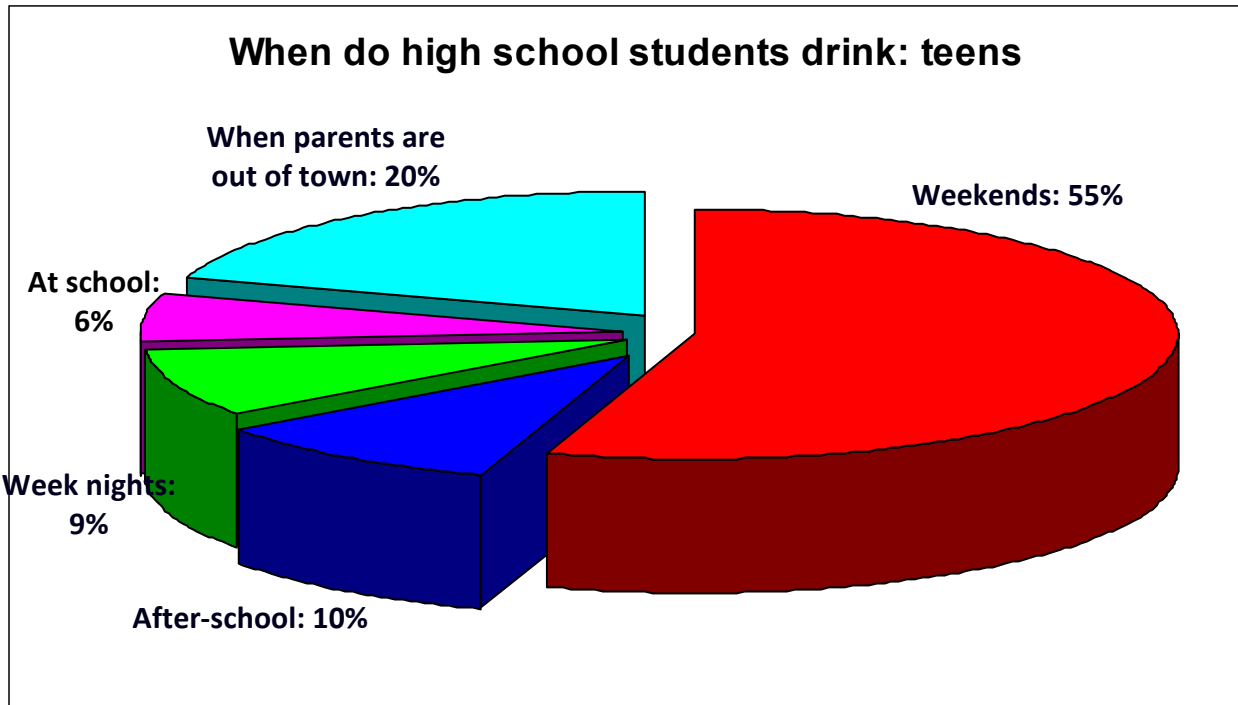
Underage Drinking: Teen vs. Parent Perceptions

Survey Highlights

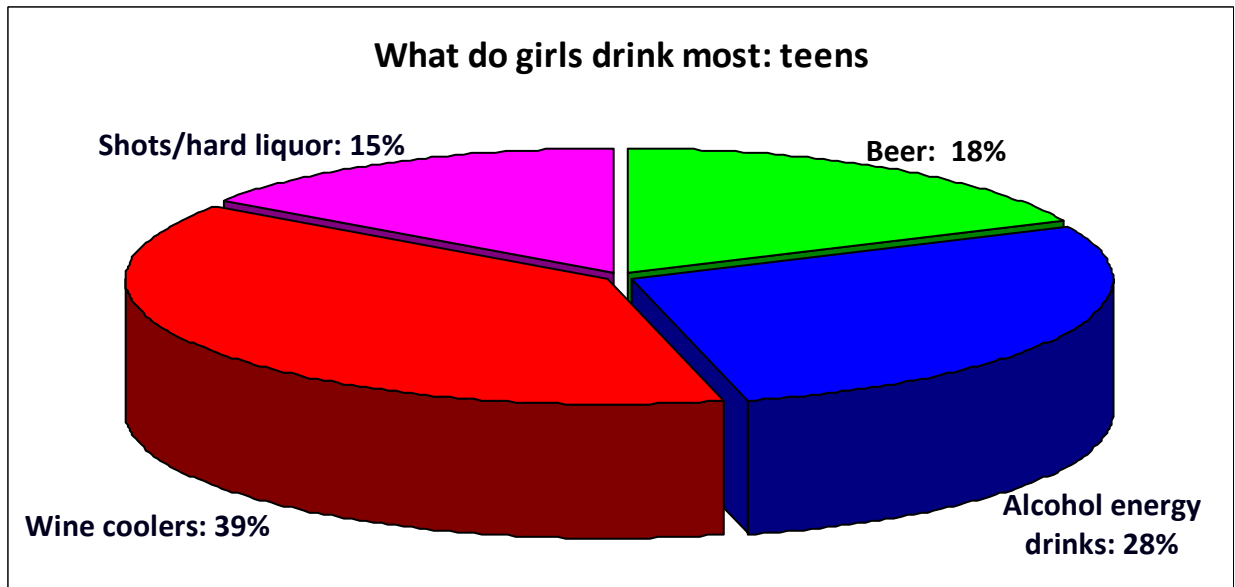
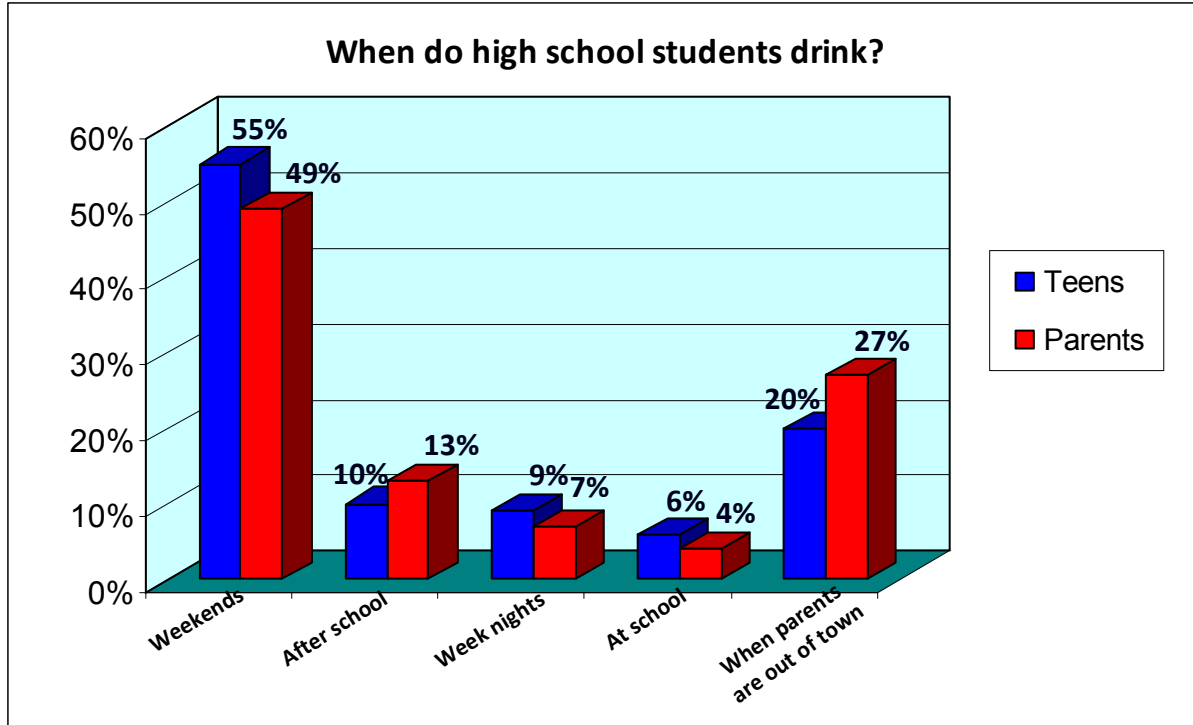
The results of the survey are included in this report. In many cases, teen and parent perceptions about underage drinking were similar, but there were also some significant differences. Of particular note are the following:

- Parents may not be aware of what high school age teens are drinking. Although both adults and teens agreed that boys drink mostly beer, 19 percent of teens said boys drink hard liquor, compared to only 11 percent of parents. Parents thought girls are drinking mostly wine coolers (49%), but the teens' answers showed alcohol energy drinks becoming popular drinks among girls (wine coolers –39 percent and alcohol energy drinks—28 percent). Interestingly, both parents and teens agreed that about 15 percent of girls are drinking shots/hard liquor.
- The old adage that teens drink to fit in with their peers may not be as accurate as some parents think. Fifty-six percent of parents said teens drink to fit in, compared to only 35 percent of students surveyed. In the same question, 11 percent of parents said teens drink to feel good or reduce stress, while 31 percent of students said this is the primary reason teens drink. This raises some questions. Are teens feeling more stress than their parents realize? And if so, why are they turning to alcohol for stress relief?
- Parents don't realize the extent to which teens are drinking alcohol in homes, not in cars, parks or other locations. Seventy-five percent of students said teens drink in homes — either their own or a friend's — while only sixty-two percent of parents said teens drink in homes.
- Both groups surveyed said the primary source of alcohol for teens is friends or older siblings and that the second source is parents' stashes. Parents believe that only 1 percent of teens get alcohol directly from their parents, while 8 percent of teens said they do.
- Both teens and their parents agree that high school teens are drinking most frequently on weekends and that parties include underage drinking the majority of the time.

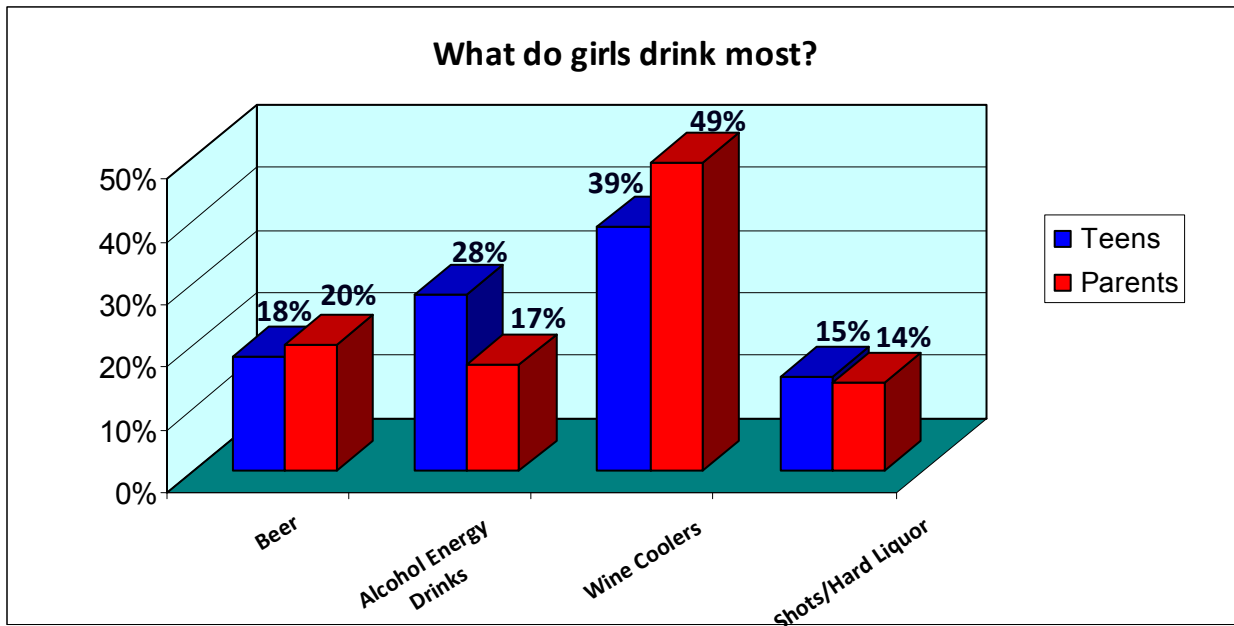
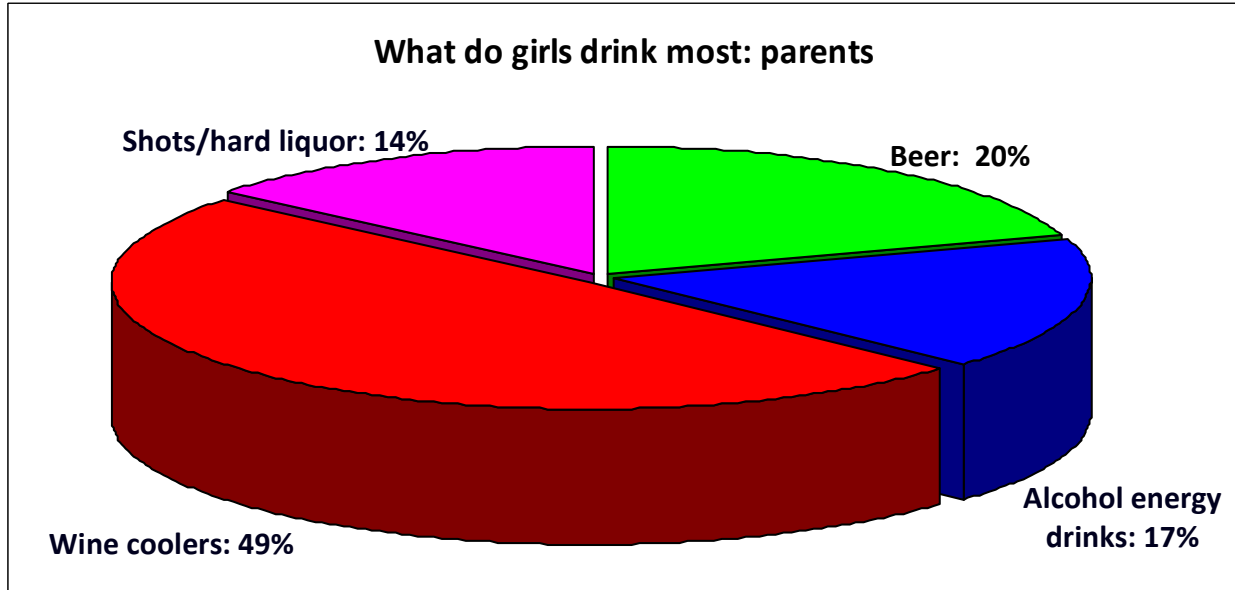
Underage Drinking: Teen vs. Parent Perceptions



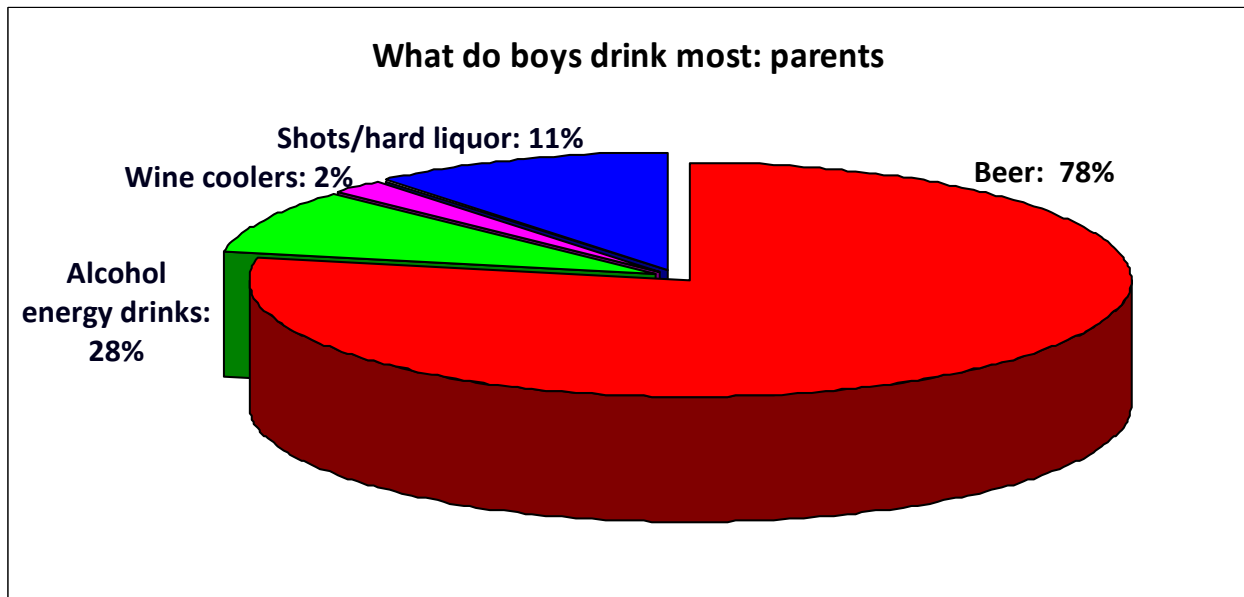
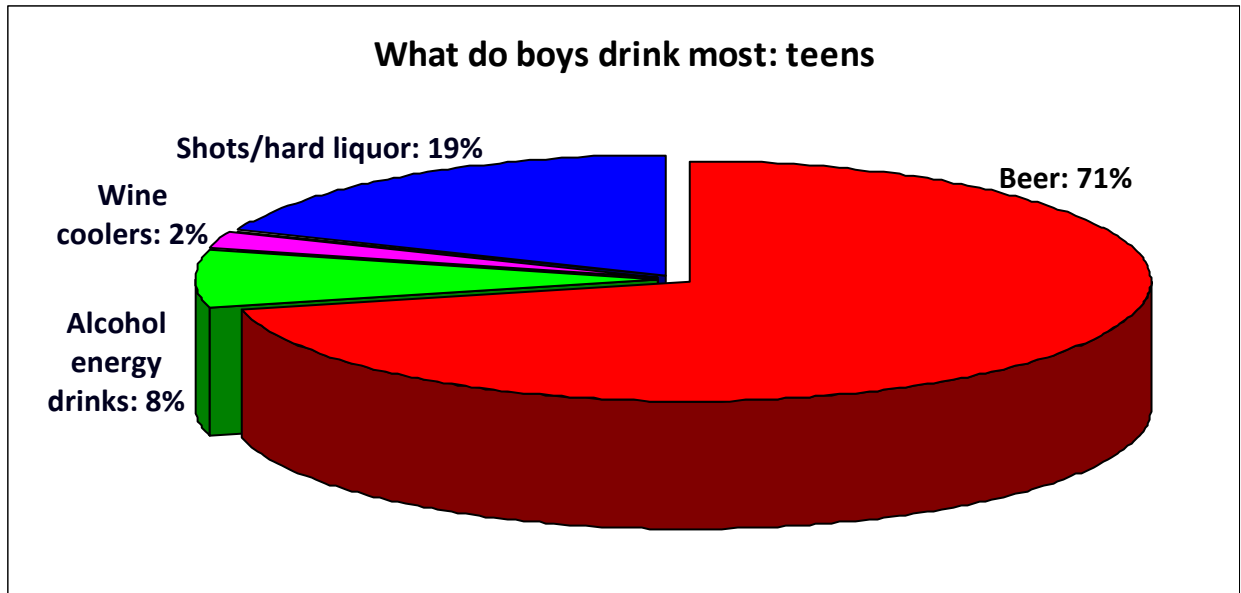
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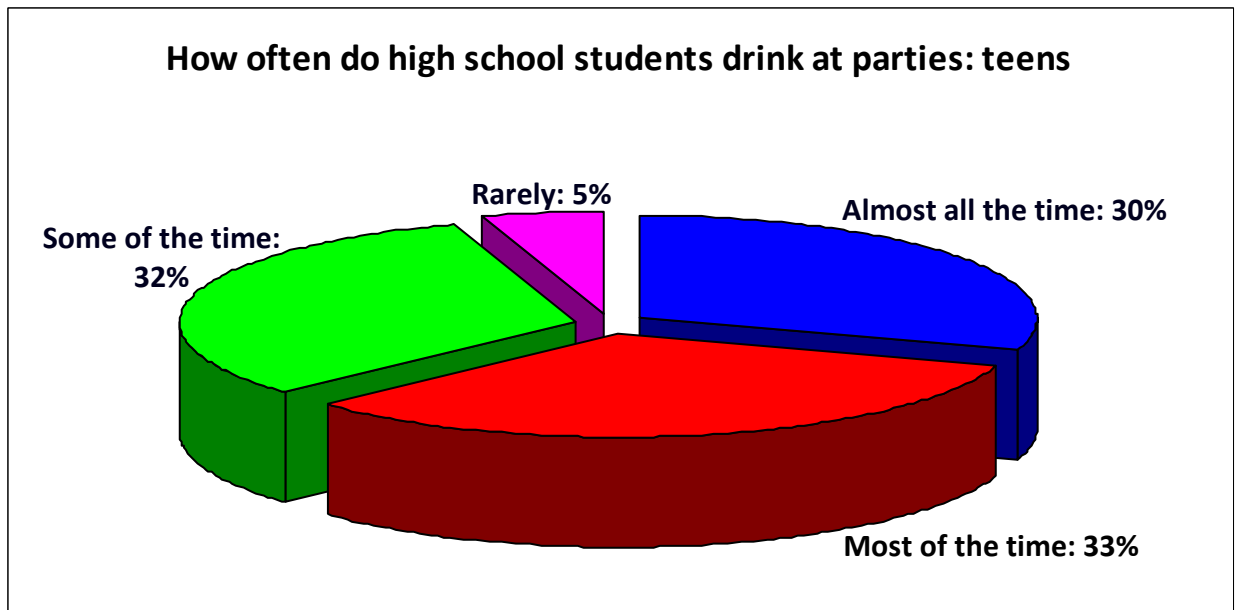
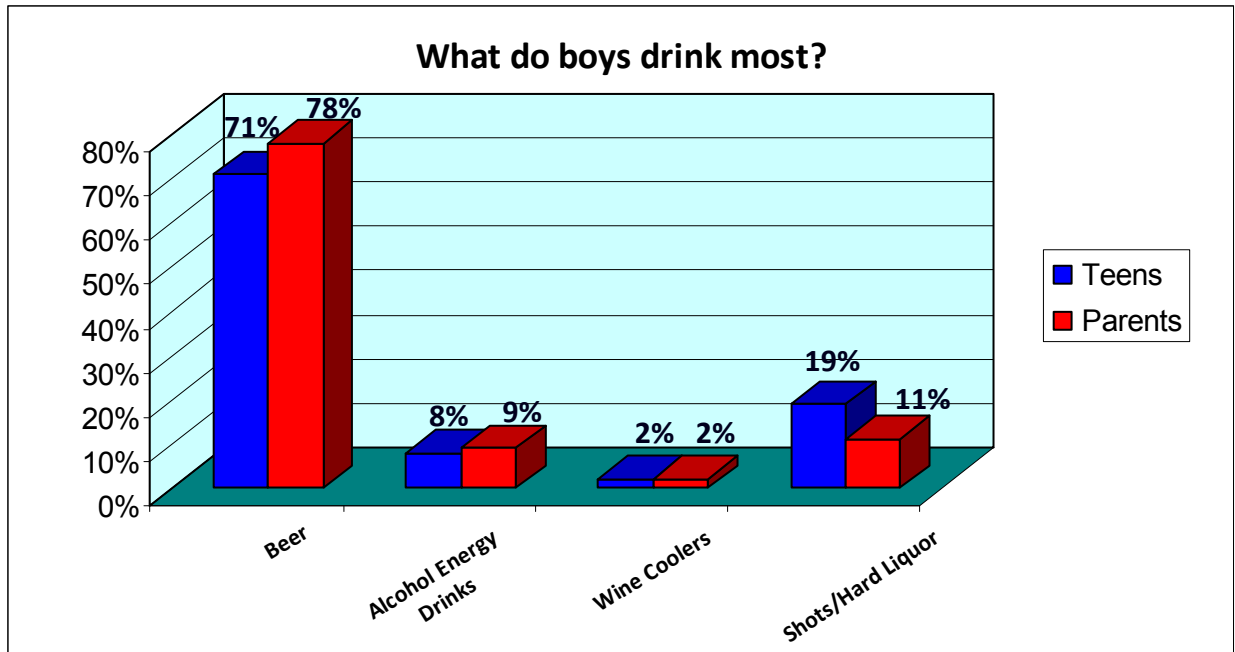
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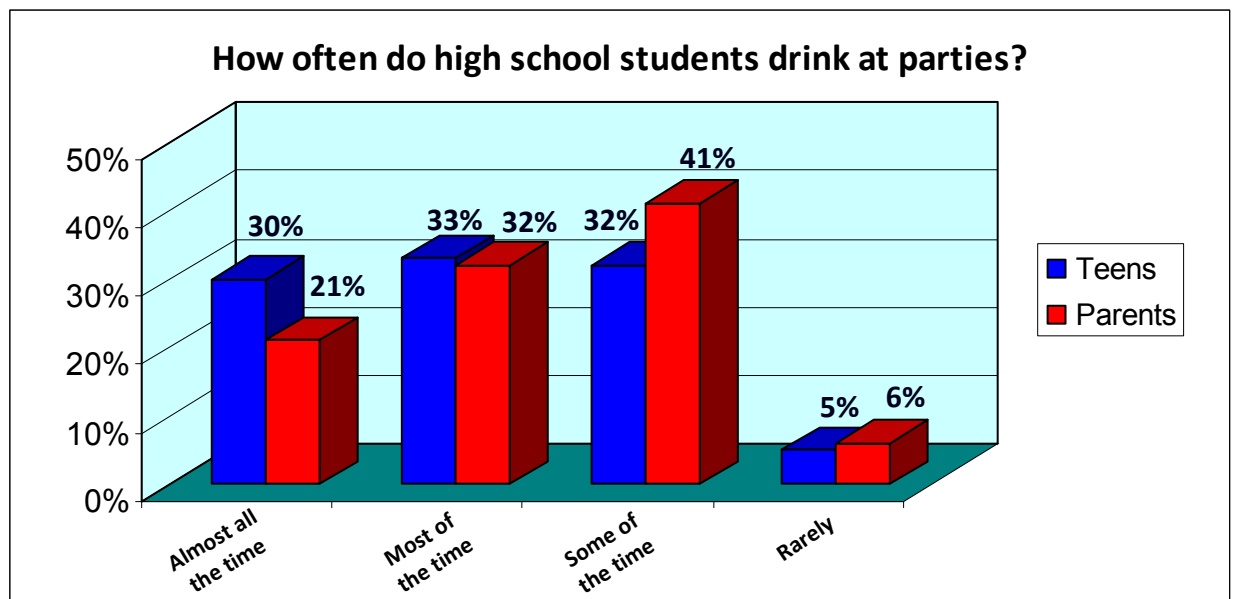
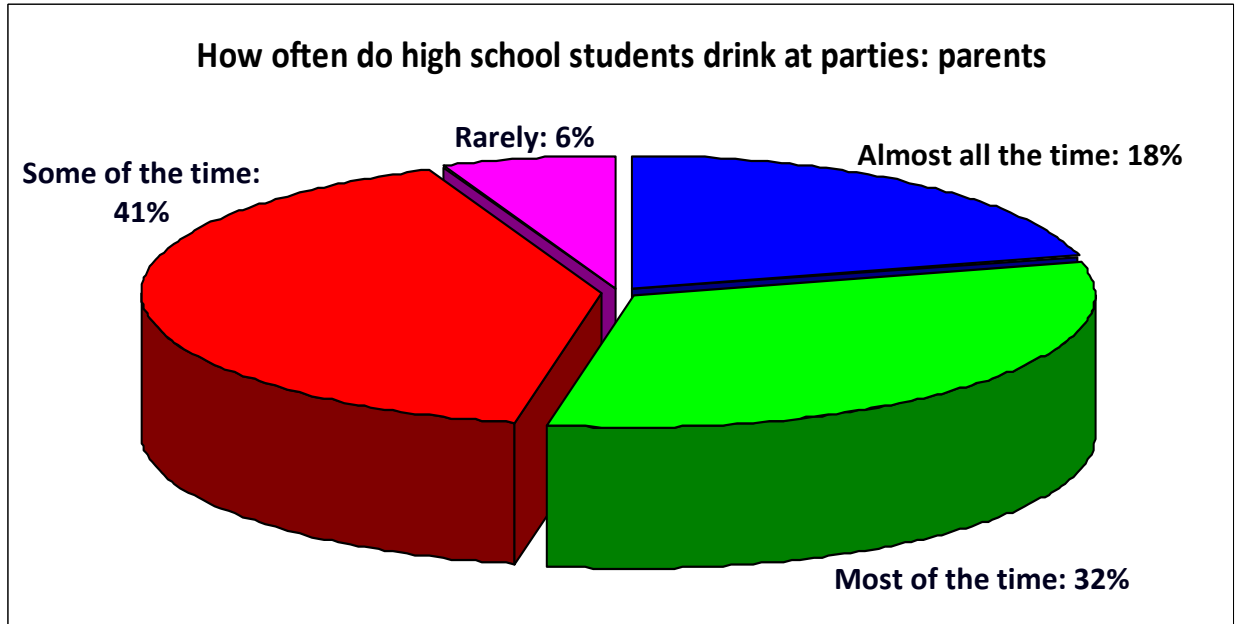
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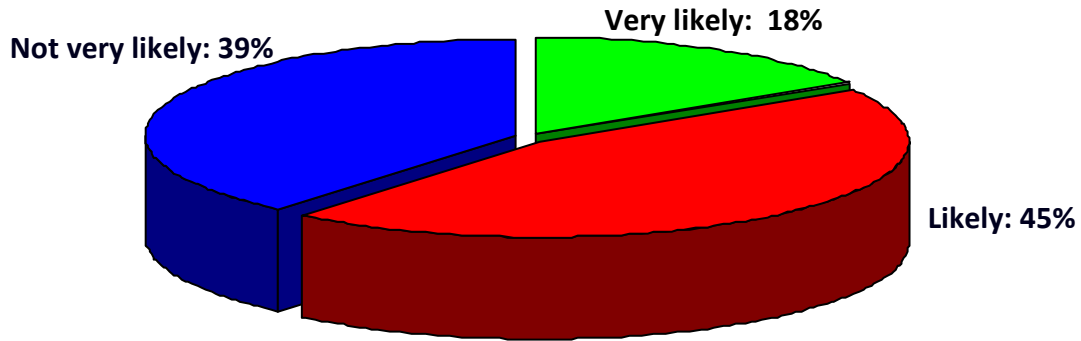


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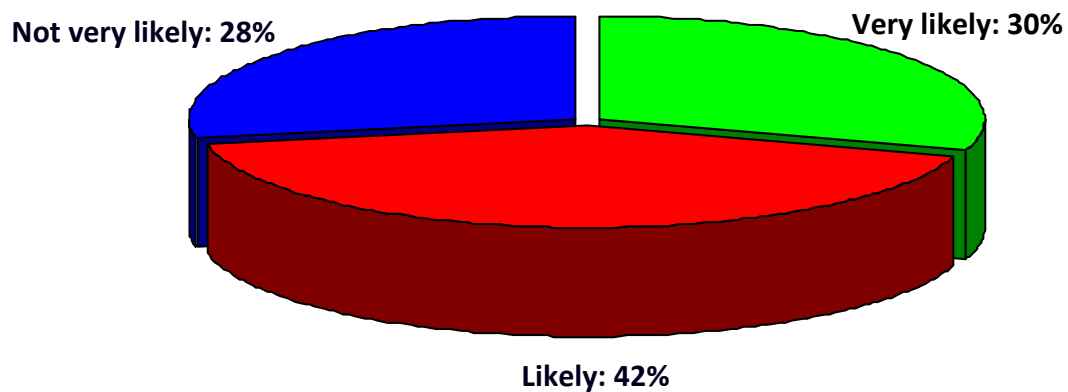


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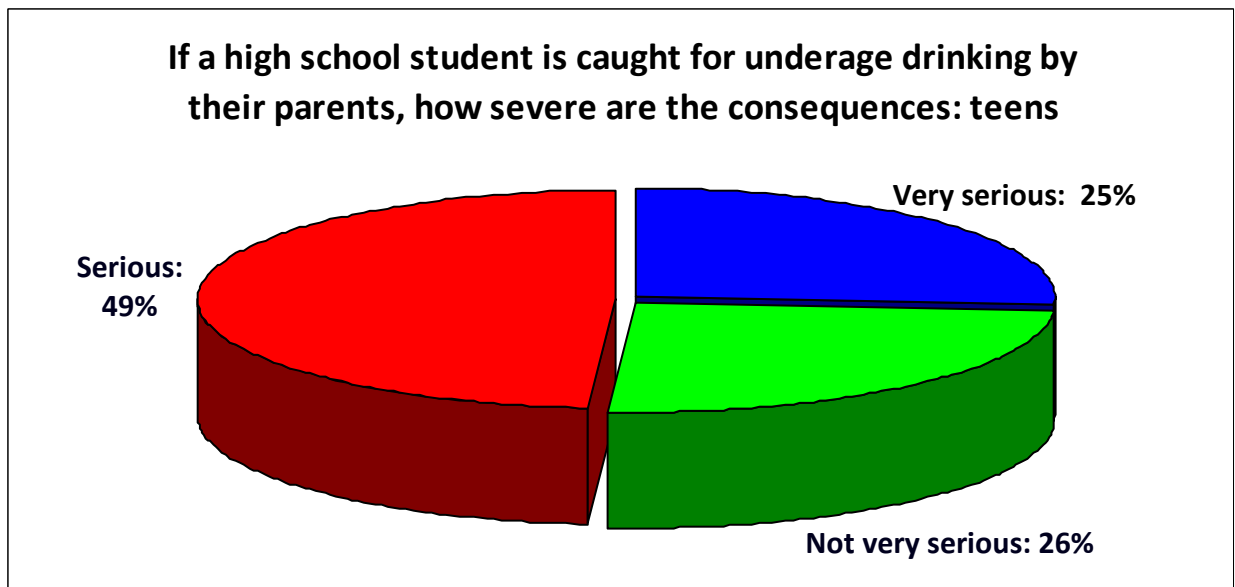
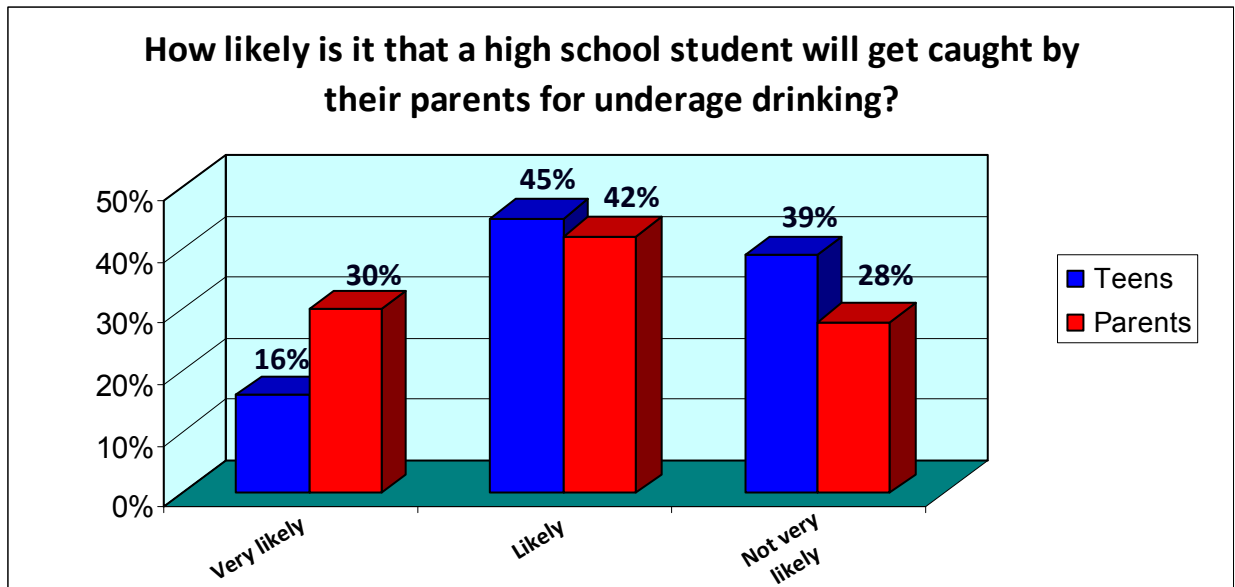
How likely is it that a high school student will get caught by their parents for underage drinking: teens



How likely is it that a high school student will get caught by their parents for underage drinking: parents

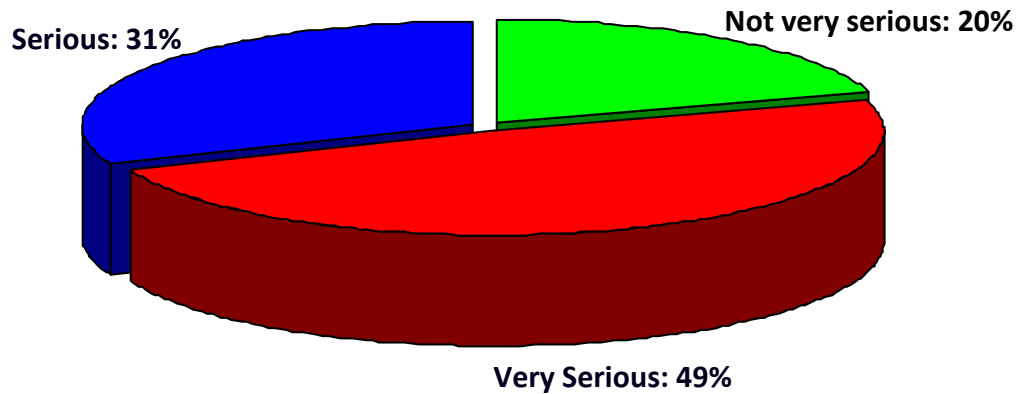


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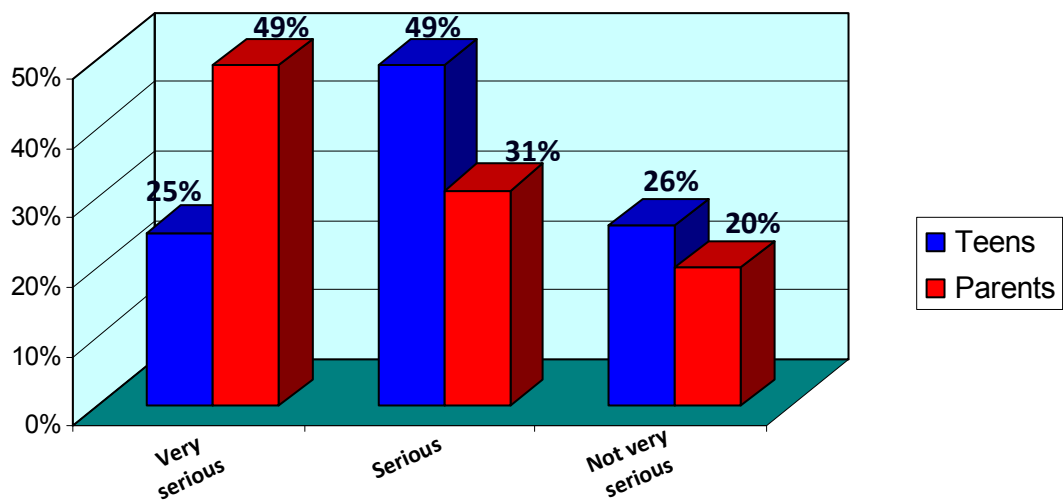


Underage Drinking: Teen vs. Parent Perceptions

If a high school student is caught for underage drinking by their parents, how severe are the consequences: parents

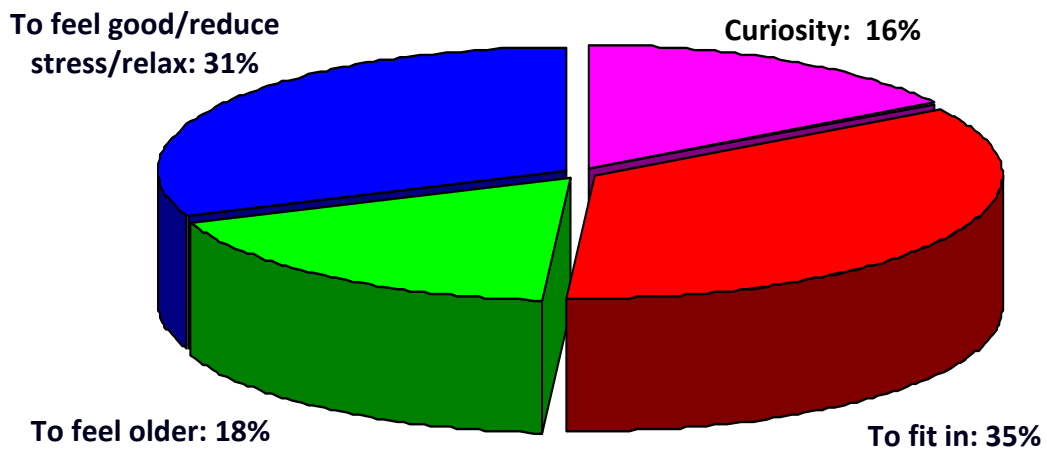


If a high school student is caught for underage drinking how severe are the consequences?

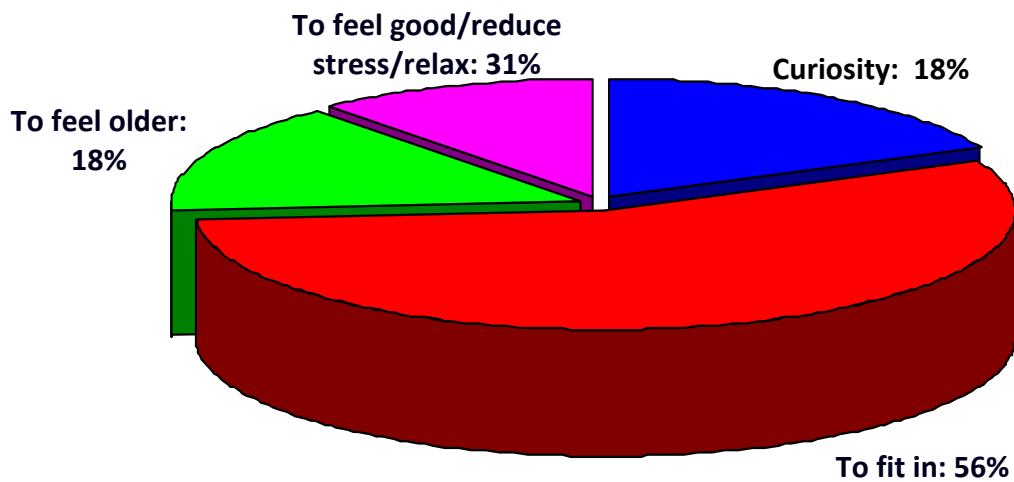


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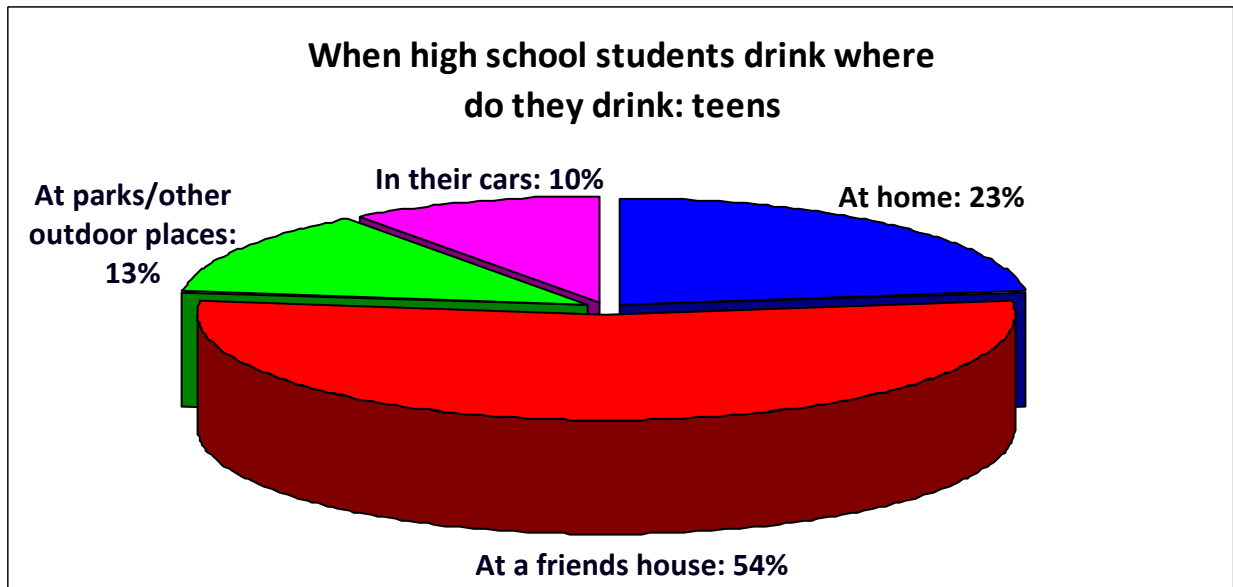
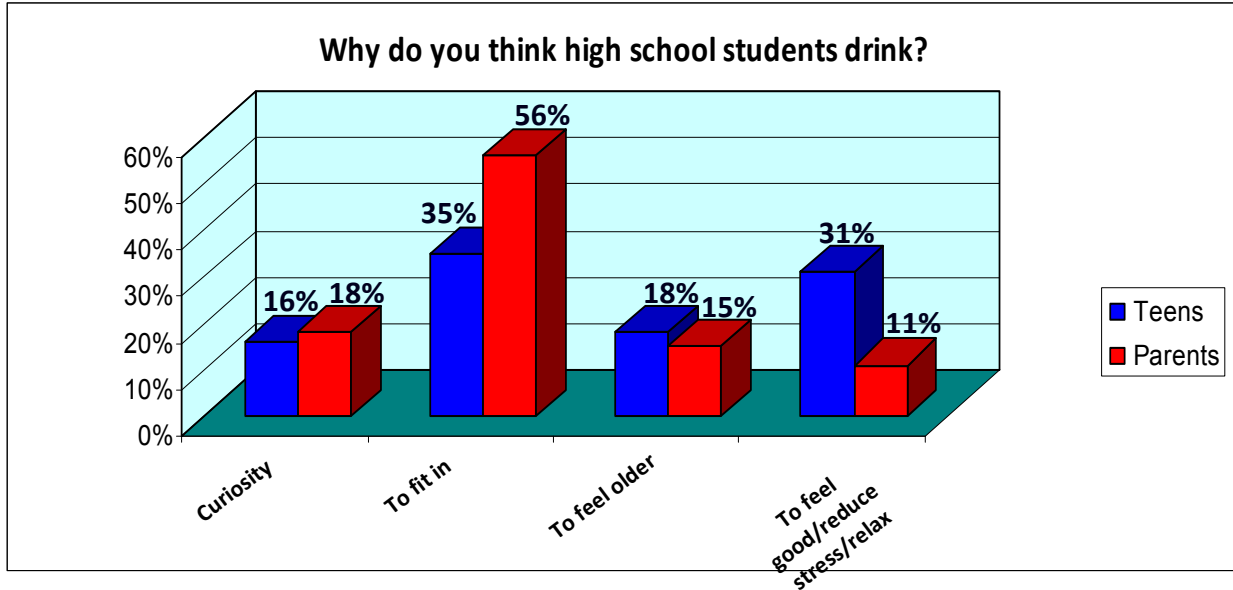
Why do you think high school students drink: teens



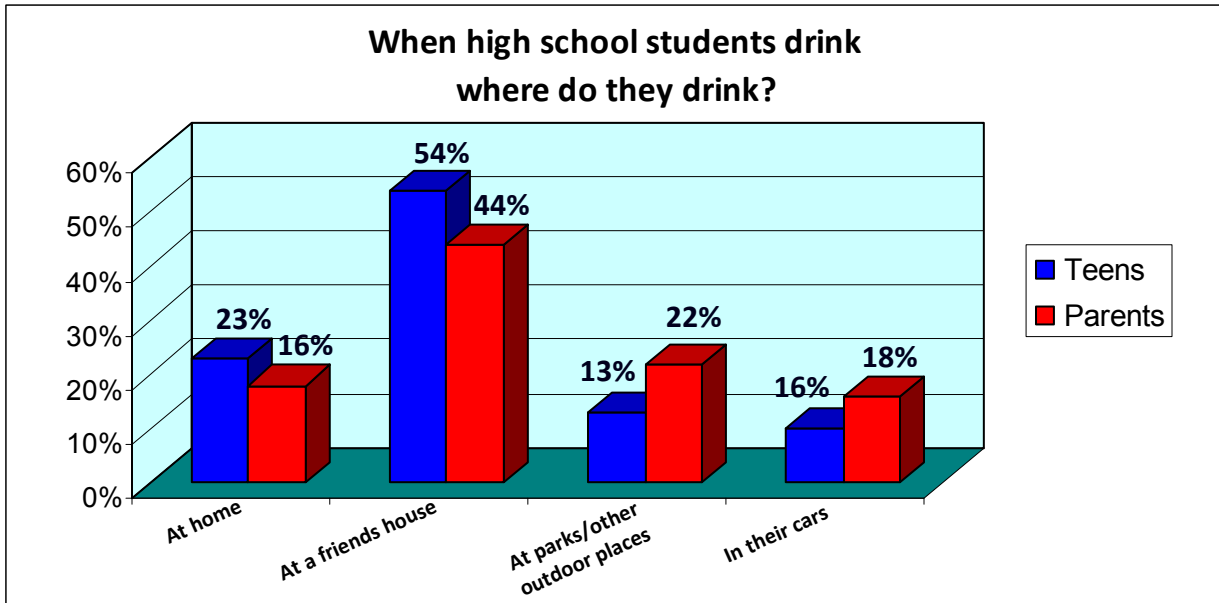
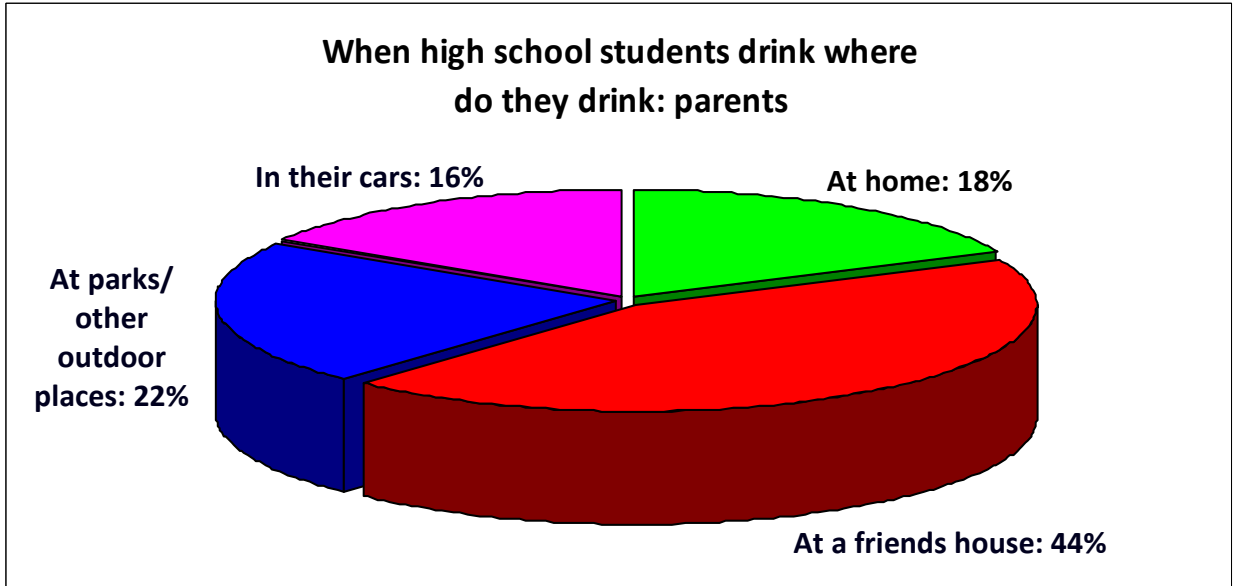
Why do you think high school students drink: parents



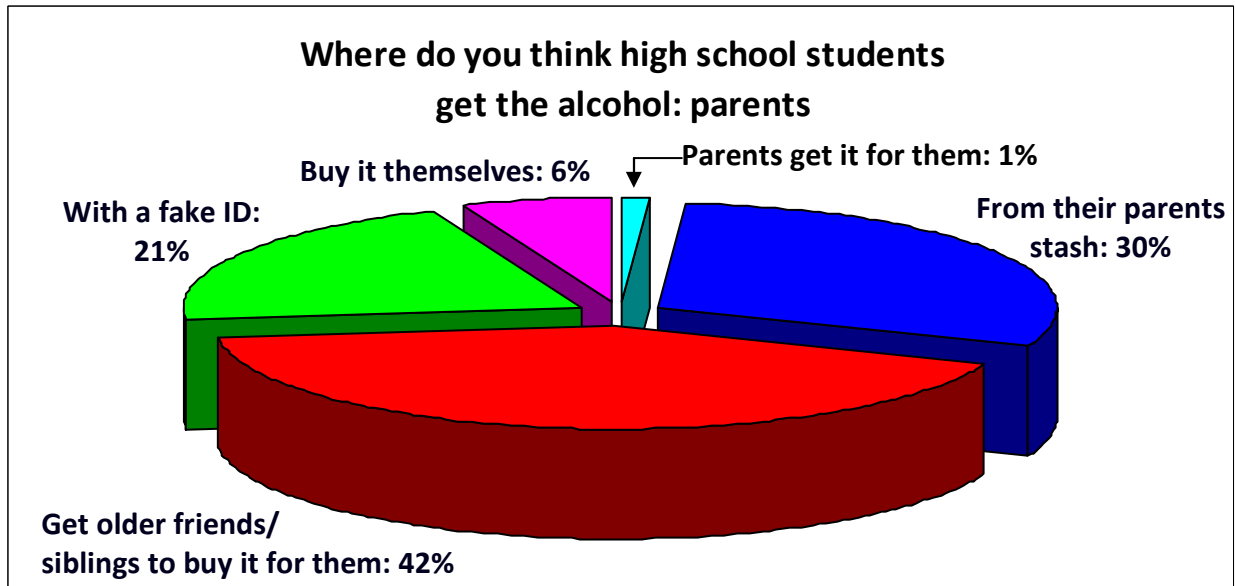
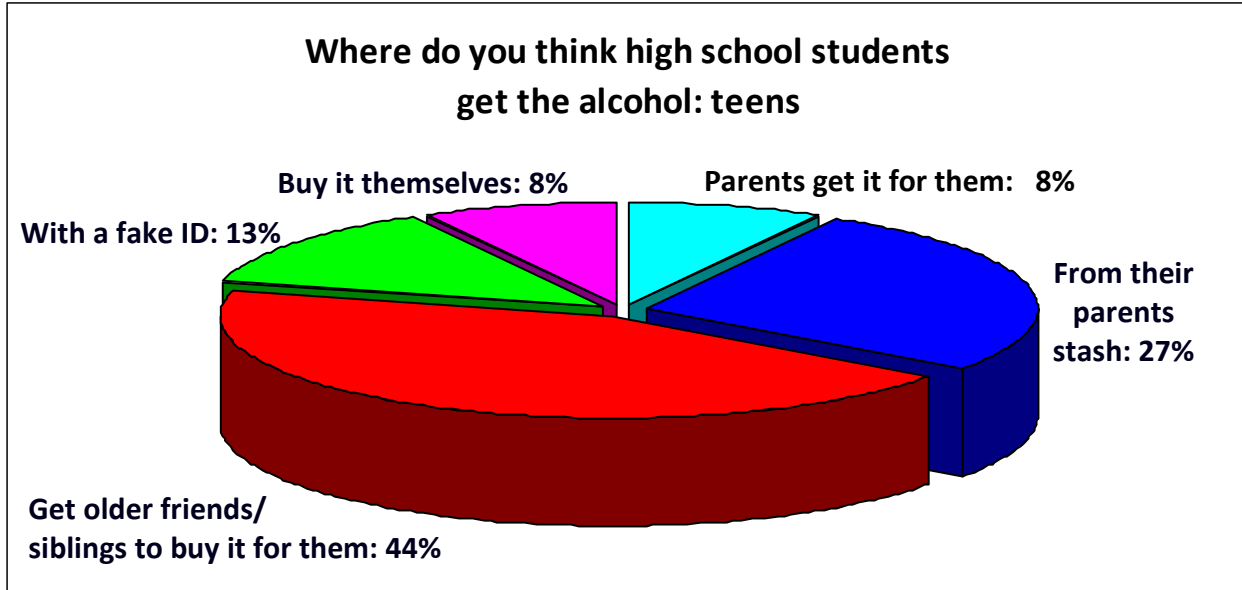
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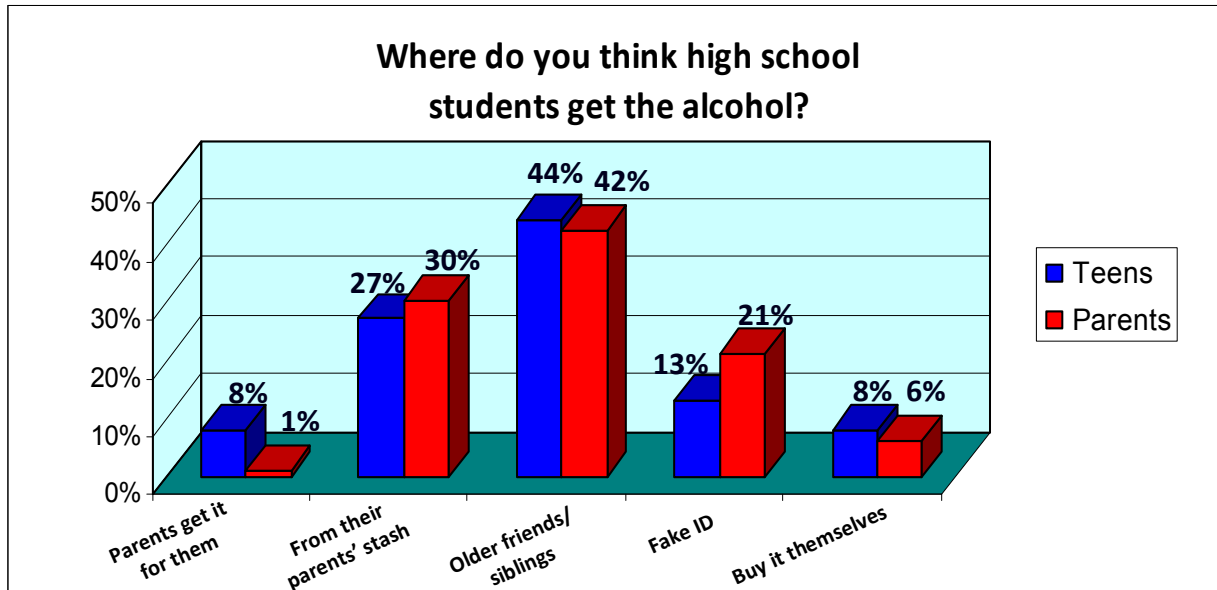
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Underage Drinking: Teen vs. Parent Perceptions



Survey Questionnaire

EVEN THOUGH SURVEYS HAVE SHOWN THAT MOST YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL, WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO SHARE YOUR *PERCEPTIONS* ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. When do high school students drink?
 - a. Weekends
 - b. After school
 - c. Weeknights
 - d. At school
 - e. When parents are out of town

2. What do girls drink most?
 - a. Beer
 - b. Alcohol energy drinks (Joose, Four Loko)
 - c. Wine coolers (Smirnoff, etc.)
 - d. Shots/hard liquor

3. What do boys drink most?
 - a. Beer
 - b. Alcohol energy drinks (Joose, Four Loko)
 - c. Wine coolers (Smirnoff, etc.)
 - d. Shots/hard liquor

4. How often do high school students drink at parties?
 - a. Almost all the time
 - b. Most of the time
 - c. Some of the time
 - d. Rarely

5. How likely do you think it is that a high school student will be caught by their parents for underage drinking?
 - a. Very likely
 - b. Likely
 - c. Not very likely

6. If a high school student is caught by their parent/s for underage drinking, how severe do you think the consequences are?
 - a. Very serious
 - b. Serious
 - c. Not very serious

7. Why do you think high school students drink?
 - a. Curiosity
 - b. To fit in
 - c. To feel older
 - d. To feel good, reduce stress, relax

8. Where do you think high school students get their alcohol? (choose two)
 - a. Parents get it for them
 - b. From their parent's stash
 - c. Get older friends or siblings to buy it for them
 - d. With a fake ID