

## Chapter 3. Teens and Alcohol

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Historically, the most widely used and abused drug in America is alcohol. Teens today are no exception to this norm. By the time teens are seniors, over 80% have used alcohol.<sup>1</sup> By eighth grade, almost 50% have had their first drink with over 20% report being drunk.<sup>2,3</sup> The younger one is when they start drinking, the greater the chance of developing an alcohol problem later in life.<sup>4</sup> Of greater concern is how they use alcohol. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of teens in Wisconsin, grades 9-12, reported that they had had 5 or more drinks (binge drinking) at one time.<sup>5</sup> Nationwide, close to one million high school students are frequent binge drinkers which makes them more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as using drugs, sex with many partners and a decrease in school performance.<sup>4</sup>

Underage drinking has many negative outcomes, including accidental death, homicide, suicide, STI's, pregnancy, and social and mental development.<sup>3</sup> Each year about 5000 underage adolescents die due to underage drinking; approximately 1900 deaths are from vehicle accidents, 1600 homicides, 300 suicide and from various other injuries.<sup>4</sup> In Wisconsin, 44% of seniors report driving after they have been drinking and 30% of student grades reported riding with a driver who had been drinking in the last 30 days.<sup>5</sup>

Many factors influence youth's decision on whether they decide to drink. Some important factors are parental monitoring, perception of parental approval, perceptions of peer alcohol use, need for social acceptance and youth's refusal skills.<sup>3</sup> Parents need to talk to their children early in life to make the greatest impact because perceptions of alcohol are developed before they are in elementary.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter highlights the survey findings regarding alcohol use. Questions include:

- How often do students use alcohol?
- How often in the past month do teens report having had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row?
- To what extent are youth involved with alcohol and motor vehicle operation?
- What role do parents play in alcohol use?

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control. (2005) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States.

<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (2003). Underage Drinking: A Major Public Health Challenge. [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

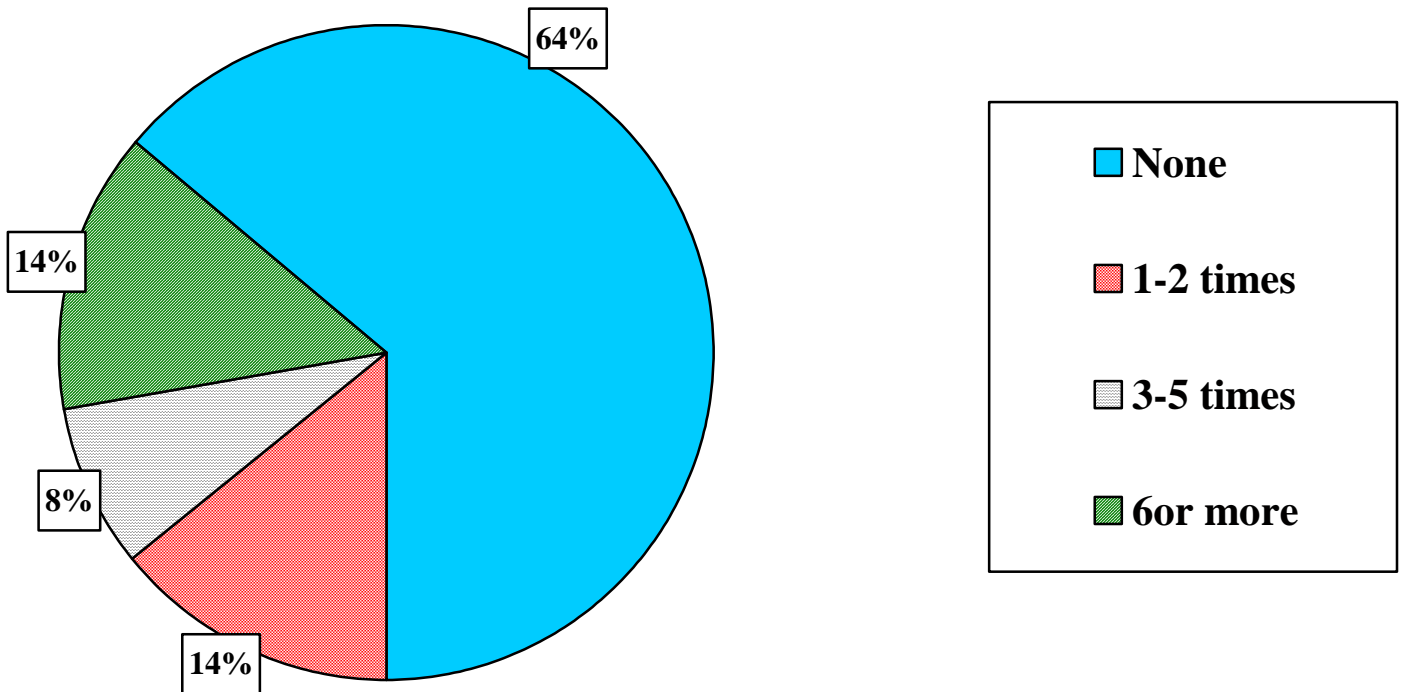
<sup>3</sup> Eaton, Danice K, Melinda S Forhofer, et al. (2004). Factors Related to Alcohol use among 6-10<sup>th</sup> graders: The Sarasota County Demonstration Project. *The Journal of School Health*, 74(3), 95-104.

<sup>4</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. (2006) Underage Drinking Why do Adolescents Drink, What are the Risks and How can Underage Drinking be Prevented? *Alcohol Alert*, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Executive Summary (2005).

## TEEN ALCOHOL USE

Teen responses to the question, “During the past 30 days, how many times did you...drink alcohol?”:



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### Key Findings:

Sixty-four percent (64%) of students report they did not drink alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Fourteen percent (14%) of students report they used alcohol 1-2 times in the 30 days prior to the survey.

### Other Notable Findings:

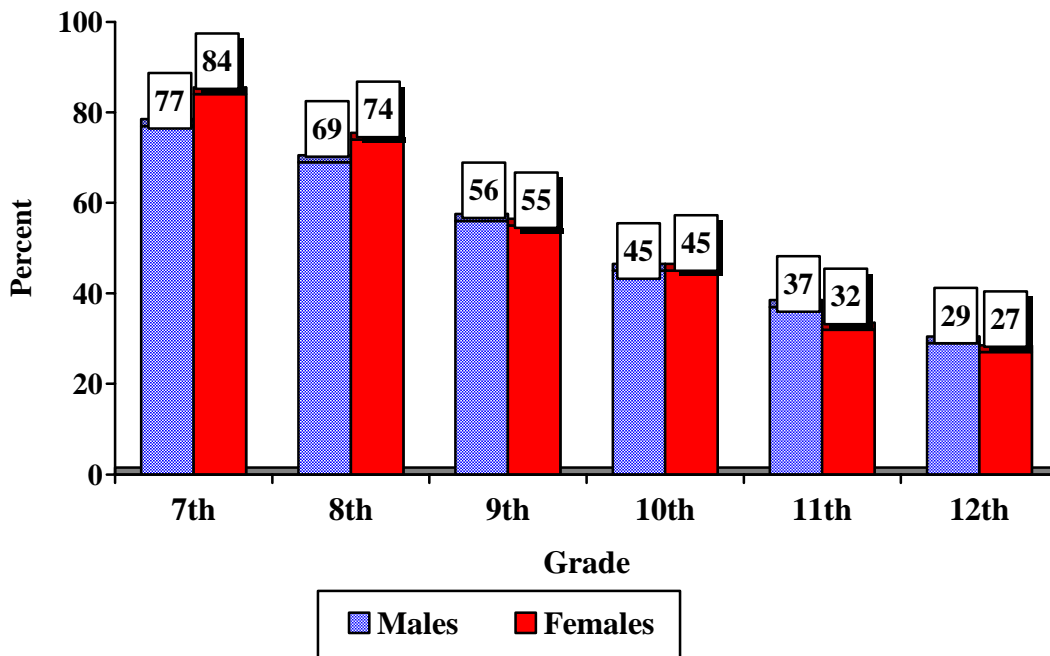
The percent of males who report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days rises steadily from 17% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders to 52% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders. For females the rate of 30-day use increases from 15% in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 51% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

One in five (21%) of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 19% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade females report drinking alcohol 10 or more times in the 30 days prior to the survey.

About one in four 12<sup>th</sup> graders (27% of males and 24% of females) report drinking alcohol six or more times in the past month.

## TEENS WHO NEVER TRIED ALCOHOL BY GRADE AND GENDER

Teens who responded “*never used*” to the question, “*tell us how old you were when you first....tried alcohol (more than just sips)?*”:



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### Key Finding:

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 84% of females and 77% of males say they “*never used*” alcohol. By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, only 27% of females and 29% of males say they “*never used*” alcohol.

### Other Notable Findings:

Overall 51% of teens report they never tried alcohol.

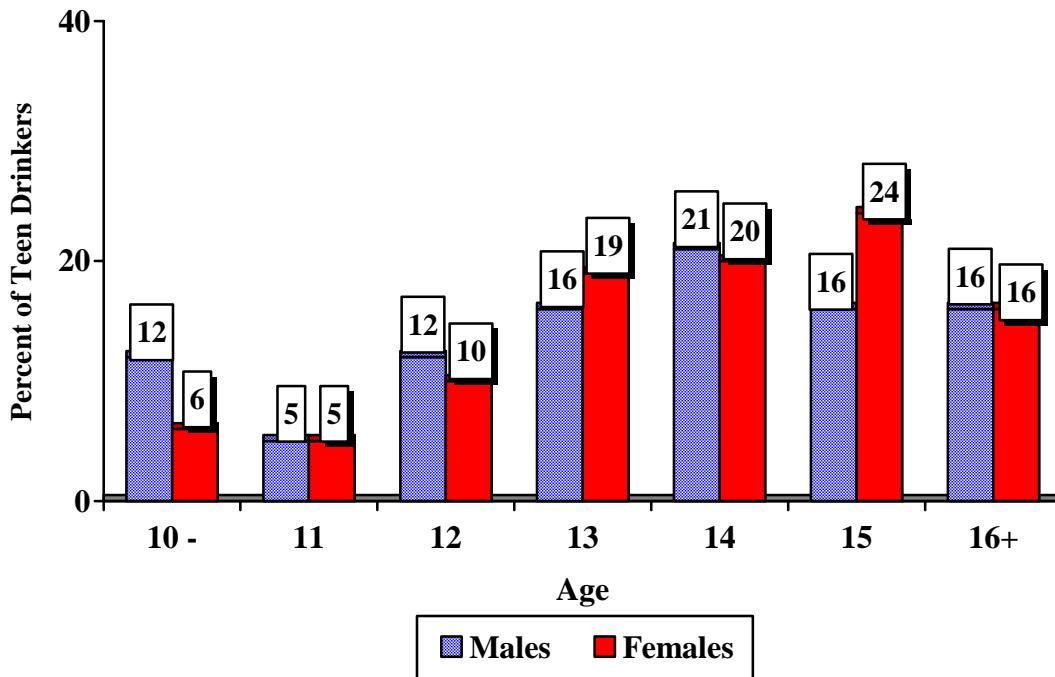
Thirty-four percent (34%) of teens who have tried alcohol report smoking a whole cigarette at least once in the past 30 days, while only three percent (3%) of teens who have never tried alcohol report smoking in the past 30 days.

Thirteen percent (13%) of teens who have tried alcohol report smoking a whole cigarette at least forty times in the past 30 days, while less than one percent (.5%) of teens who have never tried alcohol report smoking at that level in the past 30 days.

One percent (1%) of teens who have never tried alcohol report using marijuana in the past 30 days, while seventeen percent (17%) of teens who have tried alcohol report using marijuana in the past 30 days.

## AGE TEENS FIRST STARTED DRINKING ALCOHOL

Responses of teens who have tried alcohol to the question, “Please tell us how old you were when you first....tried alcohol (more than just sips)?”



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### Key Finding:

Seventeen (17%) percent of males who drink report they started prior to age 12, while 11% of females report the same.

### Other Notable Findings:

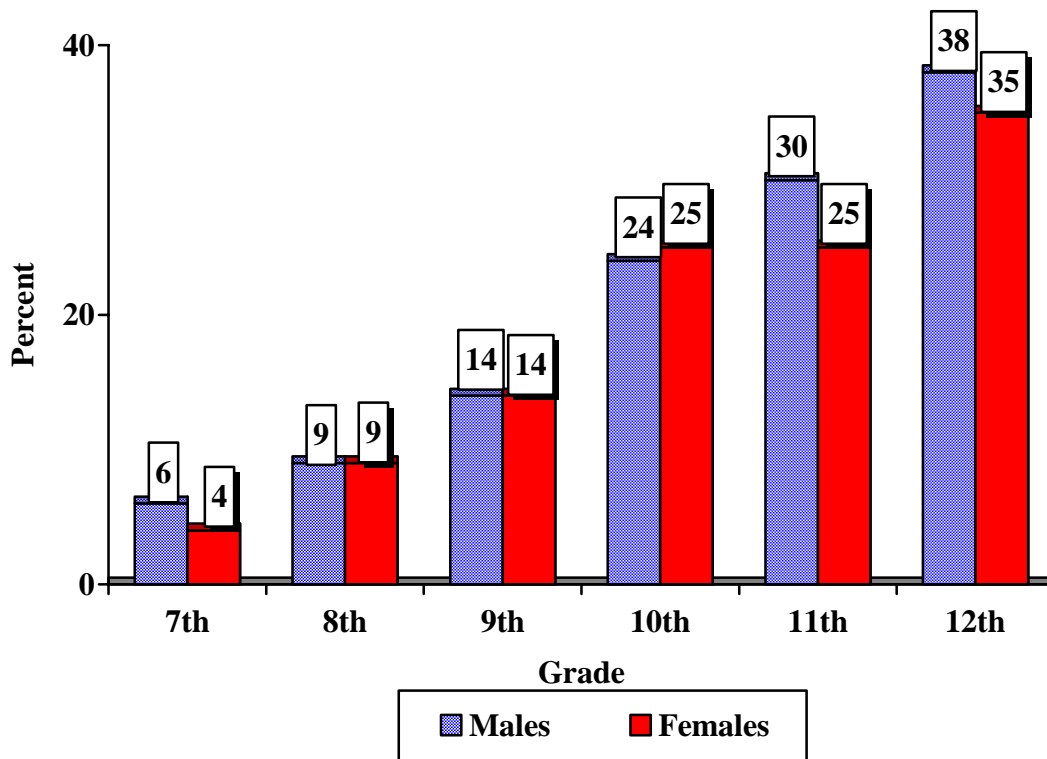
Of the teens that drink alcohol, 8% of males and 3% of females report having tried alcohol prior to their tenth birthday.

Three in five (60%) of females that drink alcohol report having tried alcohol prior to their 15th birthday, while 64% of males report having tried alcohol prior to their 15th birthday.

Overall 30% of females and 33% of all males have tried alcohol prior to their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## BINGE DRINKERS BY GRADE AND GENDER

Teens who had five or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion in the past month:



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### Key Finding:

At no grade level do the majority of the students report binge drinking (having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row within a couple hours time) in the past month.

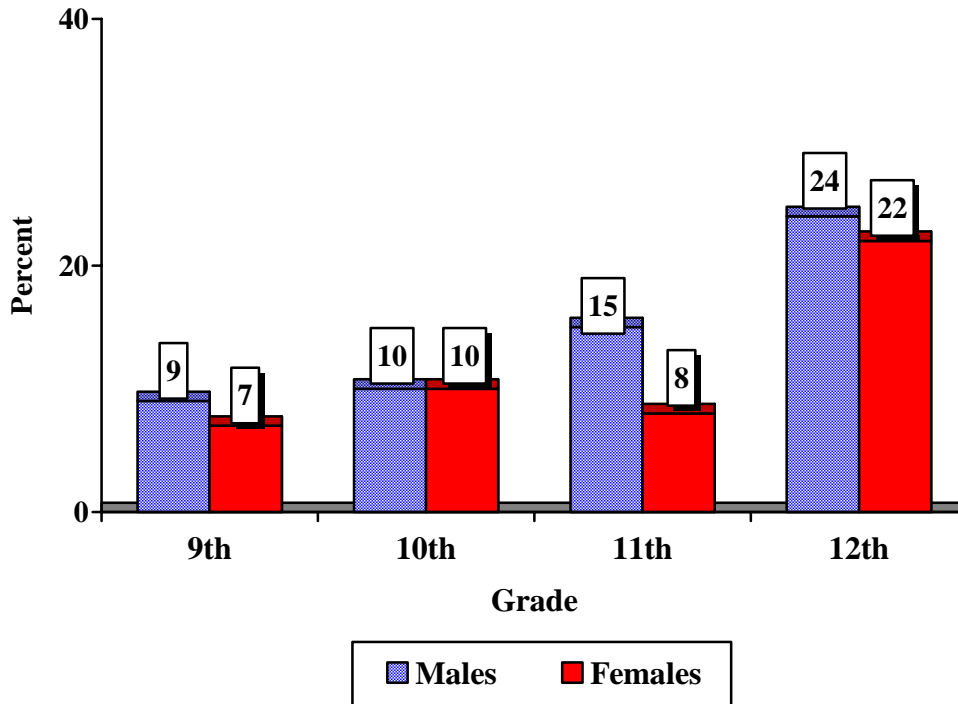
### Other Notable Findings:

Four out of five students (80%) report they did not binge drink in the past month. In 2001, 73% of students reported that they did not binge drink in the month prior to the survey.

More than one in ten students (13%) say they binge drank at least three times in the past month and 6% said that they did so on 10 or more occasions. In 2001, 10% reported binge drinking three or more times and 3% reported binge drinking 10 or more times.

## DRINKING AND DRIVING

Teens who respond “once or more” when asked, “During the past 30 days how many times did you drive a car or another vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol?”



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### Key Findings:

One quarter (24%) of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males report they drove a car or other vehicle after drinking alcohol with-in the past 30 days.

One in five (22%) 12<sup>th</sup> grade females report driving after drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.

### Other Notable Findings:

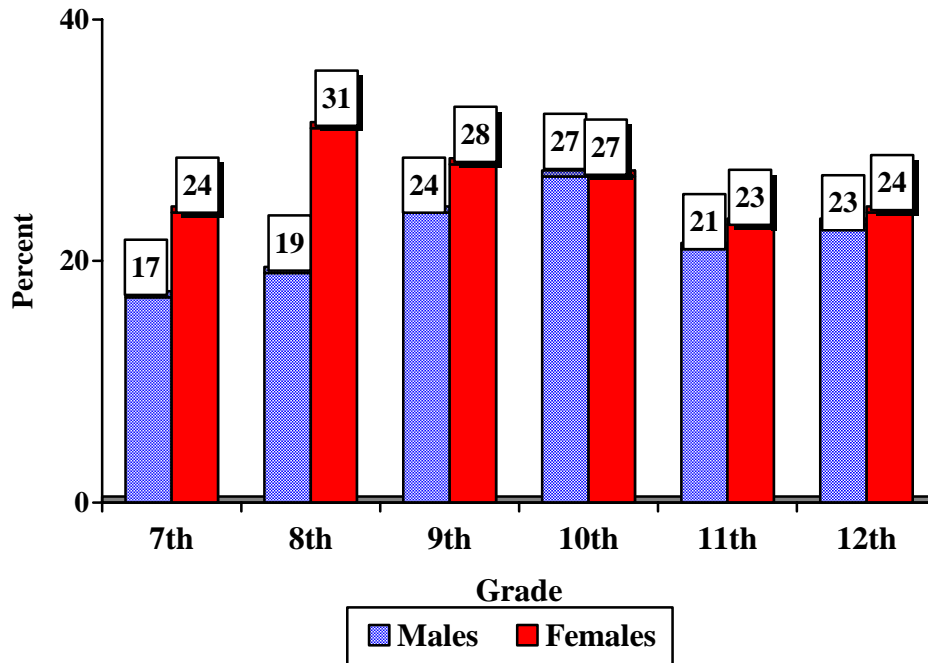
Overall, 89% of 7<sup>th</sup> –12<sup>th</sup> grade students report they did not drink and drive in the past 30 days.

Six percent (6%) of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade males as well as 4% of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade females report they drove a car or other vehicle after drinking during the past 30 days.

Although this is not a finding of the survey, it is important to point out that most motor vehicle operation is illegal before age 16.

## RIDING WITH A DRIVER WHO HAS BEEN DRINKING

Teens who respond “once or more” when asked, “During the past 30 days how many times did you ride in a car or another vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol?”



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### Key Findings:

At nearly every grade level, females are more likely to report having ridden with a driver who had been drinking alcohol during the past 30 days.

Eighth grade females are the most likely to report they have ridden with a driver who was drinking alcohol in the past 30 days with 31% saying that they had done so at least once. The next largest group is 10<sup>th</sup> grade females (28%).

### Other Notable Findings:

One in four (24%) students report they have ridden with a driver who was drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.

Over all, 6% of all students report that at least four times in the past 30 days, they have ridden with a driver who was drinking alcohol.

## USE OF A DESIGNATED DRIVER AMONG TEEN DRINKERS

Responses to the question, “If you or your friends go out and consume alcohol, how often do you use a designated driver? (A designated driver who has not been drinking)”:

	Never or Rarely use a designated driver		Always use a designated driver	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
7 <sup>th</sup>	80%	57%	15%	26%
8 <sup>th</sup>	44%	55%	35%	29%
9 <sup>th</sup>	50%	44%	28%	32%
10 <sup>th</sup>	39%	33%	31%	38%
11 <sup>th</sup>	31%	24%	43%	51%
12 <sup>th</sup>	27%	27%	28%	40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>40%</b>

Table includes only teens that drink.

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### Key Findings:

Eleventh grade males and females that drink are most likely to report they “*always*” use a designated driver when they or their friends go out and consume alcohol.

Four in ten (40%) females and three in ten (32%) of males who drink report they “*always*” use a designated driver when they or their friends go out and consume alcohol.

Forty-one percent (41%) of males and 33% of females who drink report they “*never*” or “*rarely*” use a designated driver when they or their friends go out and consume alcohol.

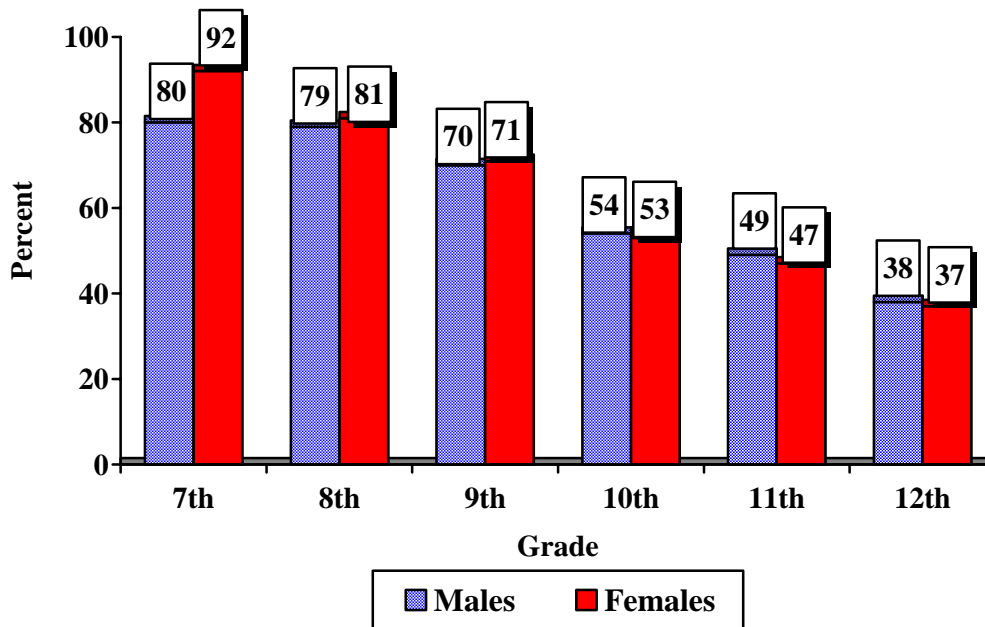
### Other Notable Findings:

Seventeen percent (17%) of females and 14% of males who drink report they “*often*” use a designated driver when they go out and consume alcohol.

Overall, 343 teens report they “*never*” use a designated driver when they go out and consume alcohol.

## TEEN VALUES AND ALCOHOL

Teens who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “It is against my values to drink alcohol while I am a teenager”:



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### Key Finding:

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade more females than males “strongly agree” or “agree” it is against their values to drink as a teen, in 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> the trend is more even between the genders.

### Other Notable Findings:

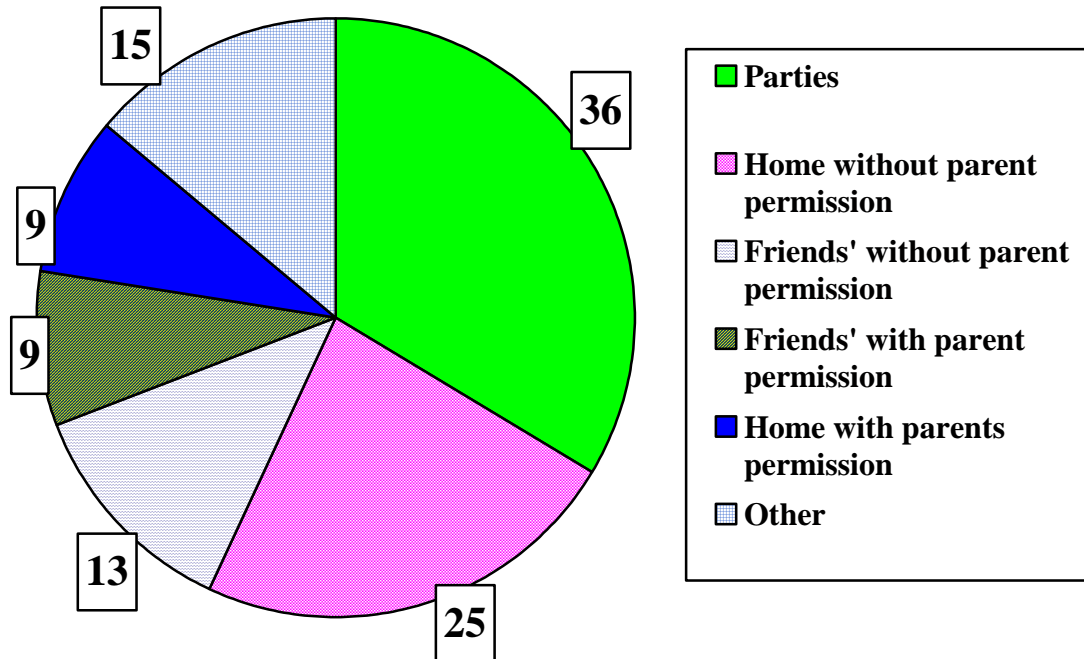
Overall, 61% of teens report it is against their values to drink alcohol as a teen.

The percentage of teens who “strongly agree” it is against their values to drink alcohol as a teen drops dramatically from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (in 7<sup>th</sup> grade 72% of females and 63% of males “strongly agree”, in 12<sup>th</sup> grade only 20% of males and 18% of females “strongly agree”).

Ninety three percent (93%) of the teens who “strongly agree” it was against their values to drink as a teen abstained from alcohol in the past 30 days, 72% of those that “agree” abstained, 37% of those that “disagree” abstained and 26% of those who “strongly disagree” abstained.

## WHERE TEENS DRINK

Teens who drink alcohol responses to the question: “If you drink alcohol, where do you most often do it?” (By percent of teens who drink)



Other includes: Outside in a park or other hangout, vehicles, school events, bar or restaurant – all less than 5%.

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### Key Findings:

More than a third (36%) of teens who drink say parties are the places they drink most often.

Eighteen percent (18%) of teens who drink say they most often drink “at home with their parents’ permission” or “at a friend’s home with their parent’s permission”.

### Other Notable Findings:

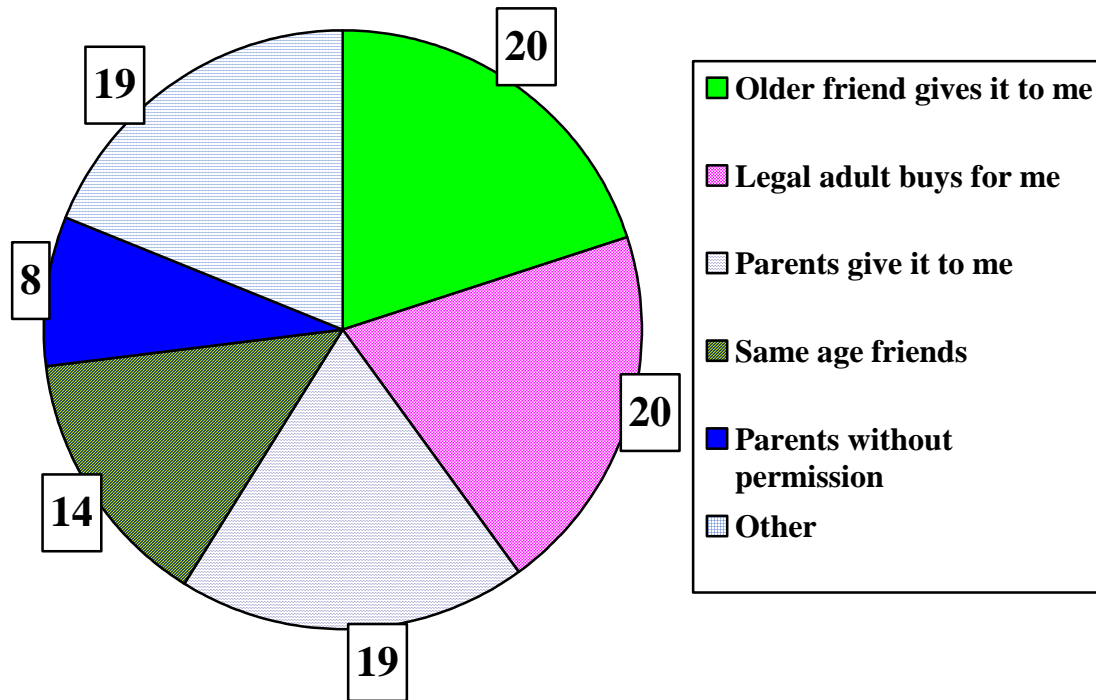
More than half (52%) of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade females who drink alcohol report they most often drink “at home with their parents’ permission”.

About one third (31%) of 7<sup>th</sup> grade males who drink alcohol report they most often drink “at home with their parents’ permission” another third (32%) report they most often drink at home or friends home without parent permission.

Fifty three percent (53%) of 12<sup>th</sup> graders who drink say they most often drink at parties.

## WHERE TEENS GET ALCOHOL

Teens who drink alcohol responses to the question: “If you drink alcohol, where do you usually get the alcohol you drink?” (By percent of teens who drink)



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### Key Findings:

One in five (20%) teens that drink say they usually get their alcohol by asking “someone of legal age to buy for them”.

One in five (20%) teens that drink say they usually get their alcohol from “older friends that give to them”.

Nineteen percent (19%) of teens that drink usually get their alcohol from “their parents who give it to them”.

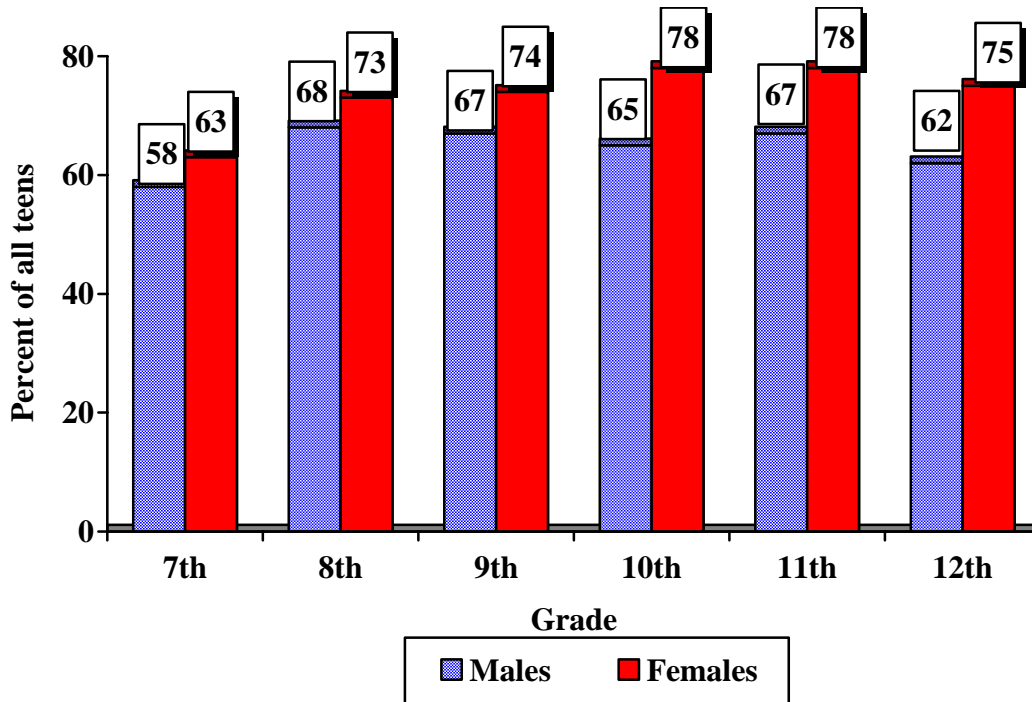
### Other Notable Findings:

Thirty-five percent (35%) of 7<sup>th</sup> grade females that drink and 28% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade males that drink usually get their alcohol from their parents who give it to them.

About one third (32%) of 12<sup>th</sup> graders report they usually get the alcohol they drink by having someone of legal age buy it for them.

## PERCEPTION OF RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL USE

Teens who respond “*moderate risk*” and “*great risk*” when asked “*how much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically and other ways) if they...use alcohol regularly?*”:



\* - Regular alcohol use is defined as drinking alcohol at least three times per month or dinking 5 or more drinks in a row within a few hours time at least once a month.

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### Key Finding:

At every grade level, more females than males report they see a “*moderate risk*” or “*great risk*” with drinking alcohol on a regular basis.

The vast majority of teens see “*moderate risk*” or “*great risk*” associated with drinking alcohol on a regular basis.

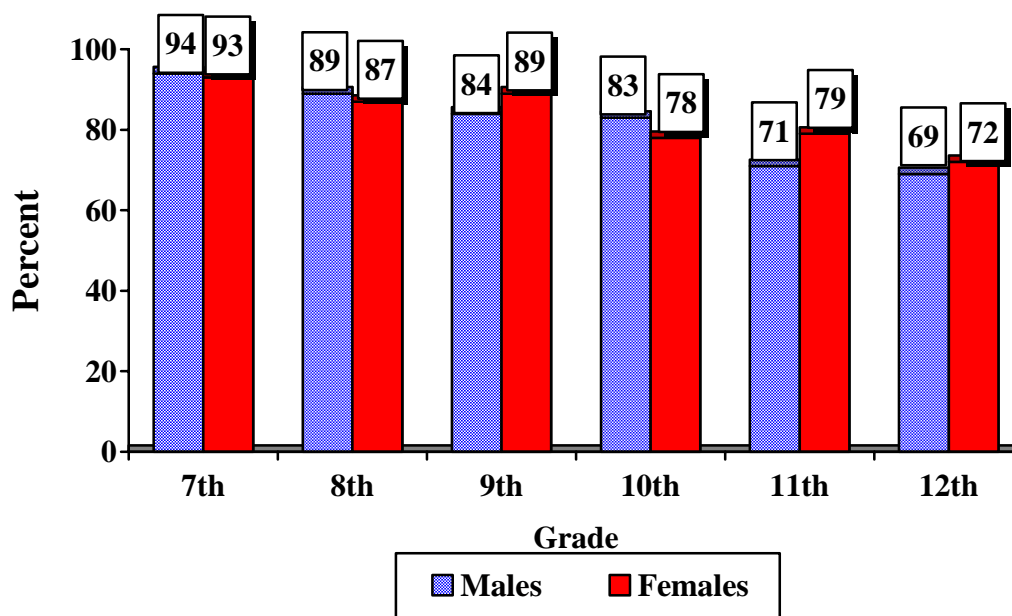
### Other Notable Findings:

Overall, 8% of teens see “*no risk*” associated with drinking alcohol on a regular basis.

Of the students that attributed a “*moderate risk*” or “*great risk*” with drinking alcohol on regular basis 71% did not drink in the past 30 days, while 17% of these teens drank on three or more occasions. For those who attributed “*no risk*” or “*slight risk*” with regular alcohol use, 52% had not had any alcohol in the past 30 days, while 33% of this group drank on three or more occasions.

## TEEN PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY NORMS

Teens who “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” with the statement, “*The majority of adults in my community think it is wrong for teens my age to drink alcohol.*”:



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### Key Finding:

While 94% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade males and 93% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade females perceive adults in their community think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol, less than three out of four 12<sup>th</sup> grades feel this way.

### Other Notable Findings:

The percentage of teens who “*strongly agree*” the majority of adults in their community think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol drops from 61% of males and 65% of females in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 20% of males and 23% of females in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

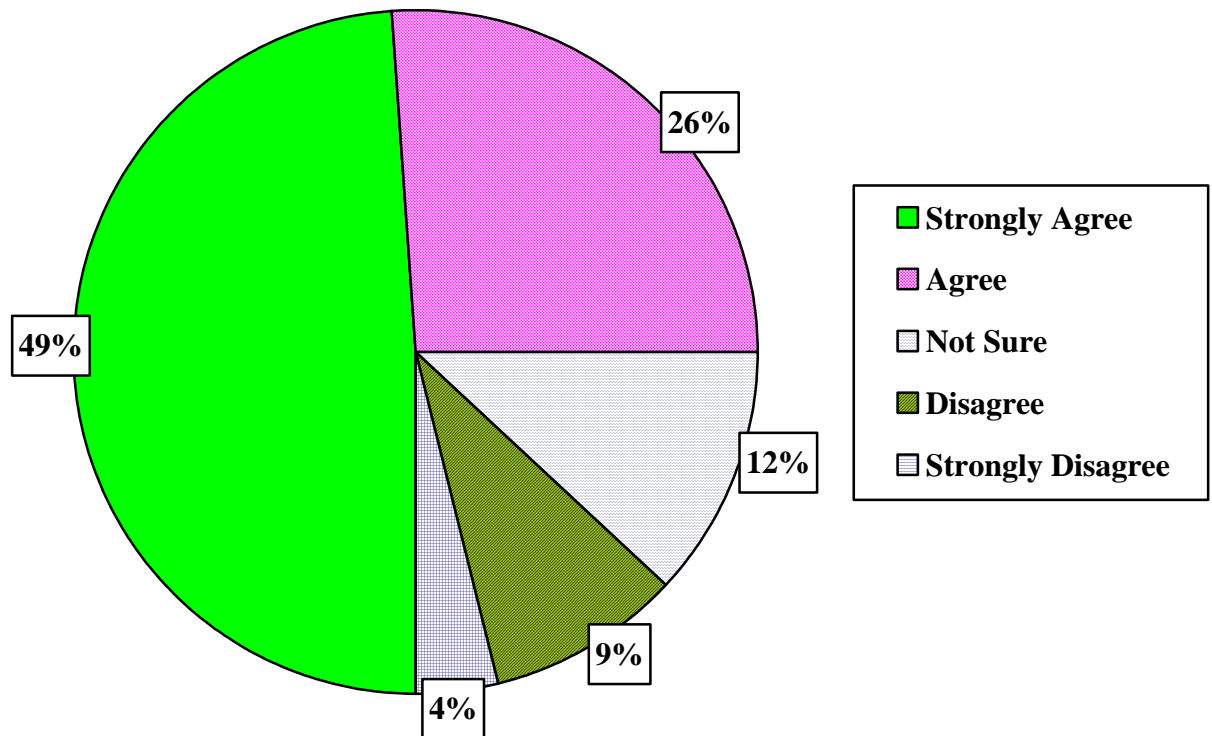
Seventy-four percent (74%) of the teens who “*strongly agree*” the majority of adults in their community think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol did not drink in the past 30 days while 54% of teens who strongly disagree with the statement did drink alcohol.

Only 20% of teens that are significantly attached to their community reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, while 61% of those who are significantly unattached drank in the past 30 days.

Only 26% of the teens that “*strongly agree*” an adult in their community would tell their parents or report them to police if they saw them engaged in drinking, smoking, vandalizing property or doing drugs drank alcohol in the past 30 days. This compares to 60% of the teens that “*strongly disagree*” with the statement.

## PERCEIVED PARENTAL ATTITUDES REGARDING TEEN ALCOHOL USE

Teen responses to the statement, “*My parent(s)/guardian(s) think it is wrong for teens my age to drink alcohol*”:



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### Key Finding:

Three out of four (75%) students either “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” their parent(s)/guardian(s) think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol.

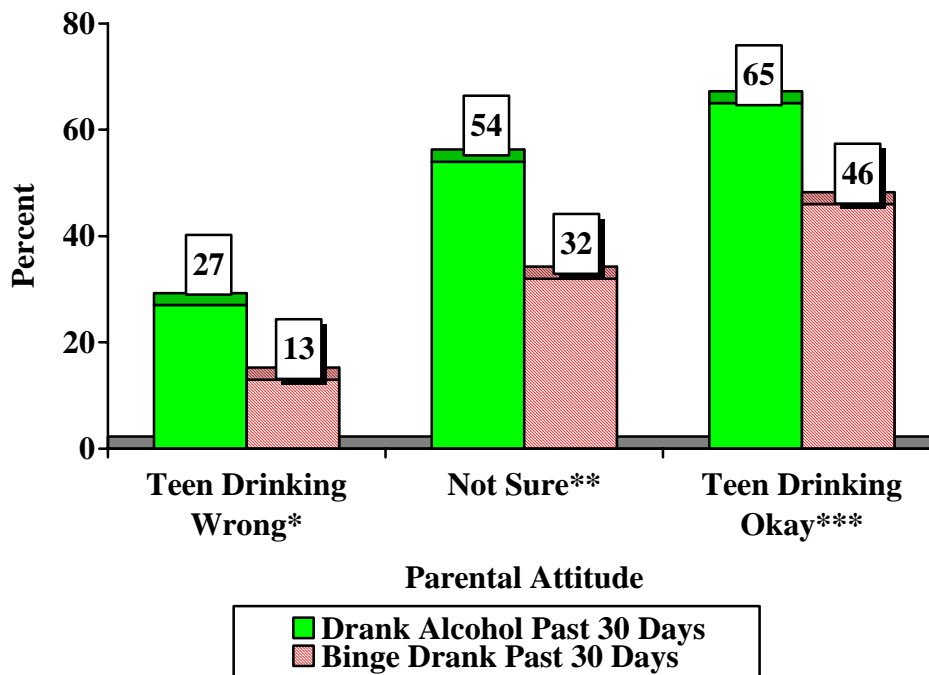
### Other Notable Findings:

One in four (23%) 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 21% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade females “*disagree*” or “*strongly disagree*” that their parent(s)/guardian(s) think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol.

Thirteen percent (13%) of students who “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” that their parent(s)/guardian(s) think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol binge drank in the past month, 32% of those who were “*not sure*” how their parents felt binge drank in the past month and 46% of those who “*strongly disagree*” or “*disagree*” binge drank in the past month.

## PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON TEEN DRINKING

### Teen drinking vs. perceived parental attitudes regarding teen alcohol use:



\*Teens who perceive their parents think it is wrong for teens their age to drink.

\*\*Teens who are unsure of their parent's attitudes toward teen drinking.

\*\*\*Teens who perceive their parents think it is not wrong for teens their age to drink.

### Key Findings:

Teens who “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” that their parent(s)/guardian(s) think it is wrong for teens their age to drink alcohol are less likely to report using alcohol in the past 30 days and less likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days.

Teens who are “*not sure*” about how their parents feel about teen drinking, report patterns of alcohol use very similar to those who feel their parents think it is okay for teens their age to drink alcohol.

### Other Notable Findings:

Teens who report having frequent meals as a family and who report their parents are high level parental monitors, consistently establish and enforce consequences for violating family rules, provide love and support when they need it, and are likely to report violations of school codes to school officials are less likely to report they use alcohol.

*For more information on parents' roles see the chapter on family relationships.*

