

Injury Free Nova Scotia

Attitudes about Underage Drinking among Nova Scotia Parents

June 12, 2014

Final Report



Thinkwell

1.0 Background and Methodology

Injury Free Nova Scotia (hereafter, “IFNS”) engaged us to test attitudes about underage drinking among Nova Scotia parents.

The primary objectives of the research were to:

- Measure concern about underage drinking in relation to other health and wellness issues;
- Collect (current and past) underage drinking estimates; and
- Gauge knowledge of the various risks associated with underage drinking.

Methodology

A total of 307 Nova Scotia parents completed an online questionnaire, hosted on our web platform, between the dates of March 17 and April 9, 2014. Respondents were recruited through Research Now’s respondent panel.

At the beginning of the survey, each respondent indicated having *at least one child under the age of 19*.

Questionnaire Design

Thinkwell designed and programmed the survey, in cooperation with IFNS.

Additional Considerations

The percentage totals detailed in this report may not add up to 100, due to rounding. Also, all figures are reported in integers.

2.0 Quick Stats

SURVEY BACKGROUND

- 307** Number of parents who completed the survey
- 84** The % reporting they drank alcohol before the age of 19

LEVEL OF CONCERN

- 0** The % identifying alcohol as the number one health issue facing NS youth, on an unaided basis
- 51** The % identifying issues related to childhood obesity as the number one health issue, on an unaided basis
- 72** The % rating underage drinking as a concern when prompted (i.e. rate their concern as a “4” or “5” on 5-pt. scale)

PERCEPTIONS

- 55** The % who “underestimate” the number of NS youth who have tried alcohol
- 62** The % who “overestimate” the number of Grade 12 students who drink more than once a month
- 89** The % who think young people drink the same or more than they did 20 years ago

ATTITUDES

- 56** The % who believe that underage drinking is inevitable
- 29** The % who believe it is okay for youth to drink at home, occasionally, under adult supervision
- 8.3** The average score on a 0-20 “permissive scale” we created, where 20 is the most permissive
- 9.2** The average “permissive” score for fathers
- 7.4** The average “permissive” score for mothers

3.0 Detailed Findings

3.1 Top Issue (Unaided)

Childhood obesity is a top concern, with half of Nova Scotia parents identifying **being overweight/obese, a lack of physical activity and poor diet/nutrition** (51% combined) as the **number one health and wellness issue facing youth in the province.**

Mental Health (12%) is also a leading source of worry, followed by *drug and tobacco use* (7%) and *access to health care professionals* (6%).

Q. What, in your opinion, is the number one health and wellness issue facing youth in Nova Scotia?

Issue	Support
Being Overweight/Obese	27%
Lack of Physical Activity	16%
(Poor) Diet and Nutrition	8%
Mental Health/Depression	12%
Drugs	4%
Smoking	3%
Lack of Doctors	3%
Wait Times at Hospital/to see Specialists	3%
Disease/Illness/Disorders	3%
Stress	2%
Bullying	2%
Alcohol	0%
Other	12%
Don't know/no response	4%

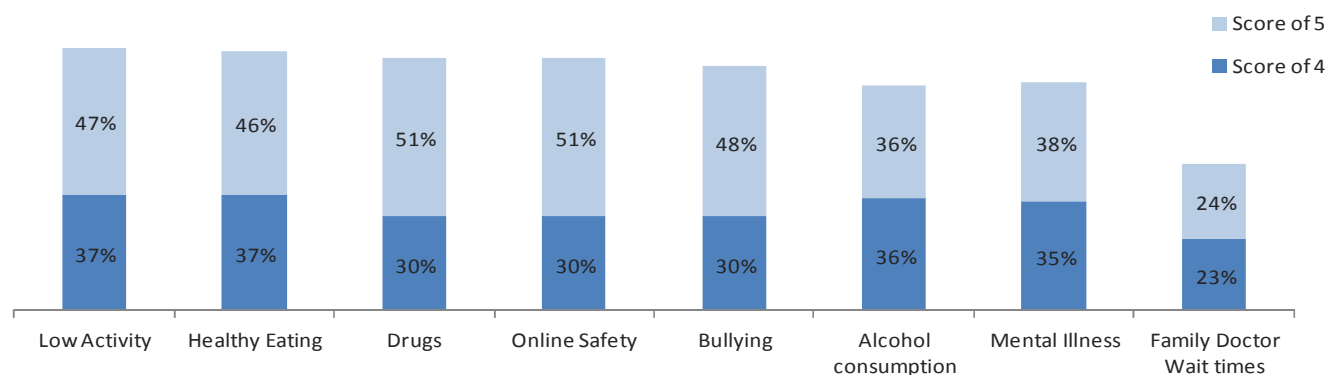
Interestingly, *alcohol consumption* by youth does not register as a top issue, on an unaided basis, at all.

3.2 Level of Concern (Aided)

Concern about *low levels of physical activity for children, healthy eating and drug use* is even stronger on an aided basis, with more than eight in ten parents placing those issues at the top of a severity scale (i.e. rating as a '4' or '5' out of '5').

Other options like *children's online safety, bullying, alcohol consumption and Mental Illness* also tend to earn high concern ratings, when presented for scoring. Most notably, three quarters of parents place *underage drinking* above the middle mark (i.e. rate it as a '4' or '5' out of '5') – suggesting that *alcohol consumption* is a source of concern for many Nova Scotia parents, although not necessarily 'top of mind.'

Q. Please indicate your level of concern about each of the following issues on a scale from '1 to 5,' where '1' means 'I am not concerned at all about it' and '5' means 'I am extremely concerned about it.'



Further Analysis

Mothers

Sex matters. *Female parents* are slightly more concerned about *bullying, online-safety and Mental Illness* than *male parents*, on an aided basis.

Young Kids

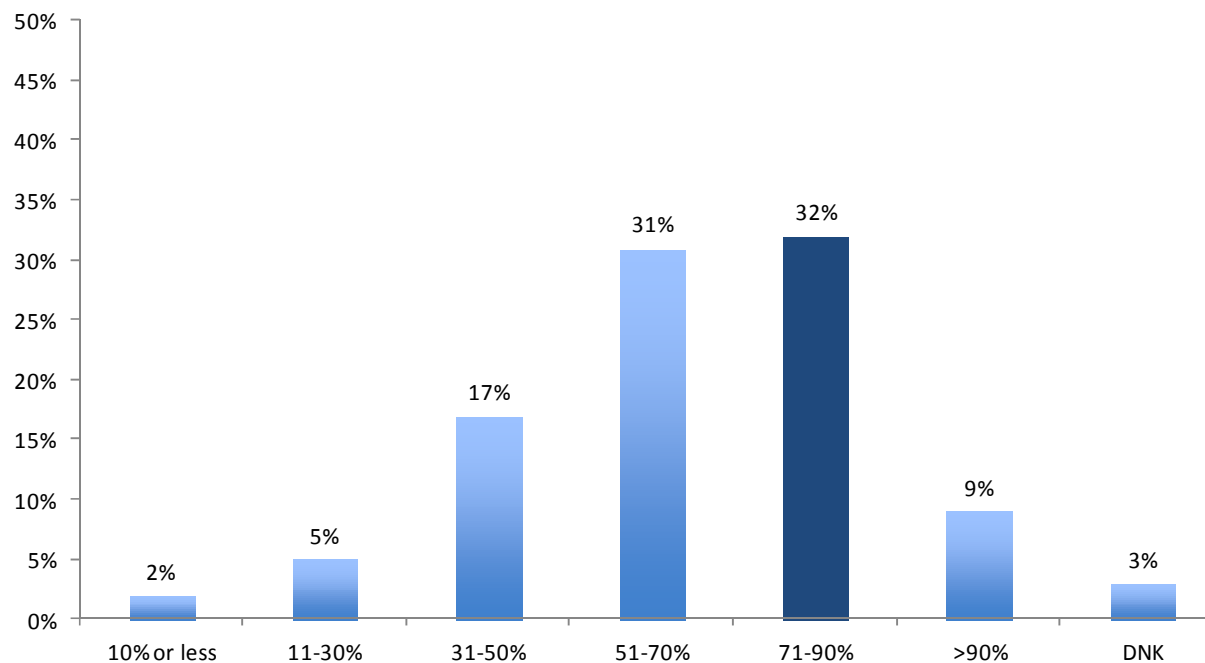
Parents of young children (i.e. kids *under 16*) also tend to be more concerned about *online safety and bullying* than those with *teenagers aged 16 to 18*.

3.3 Underage Drinking Estimates

Just under one-third (32%) of parents believe that that the percentage of youth in Nova Scotia who drink alcohol (at least once) before turning 19 is between 71 and 90% (the “correct” answer). The remainder tend to provide *lower* estimates.

The “correct” figure lies in the 71-90% range, according to 2012 figures (76.6% of Nova Scotia Grade 12 students have used alcohol). More than one-half (55%) of parents provide an estimate below this range.

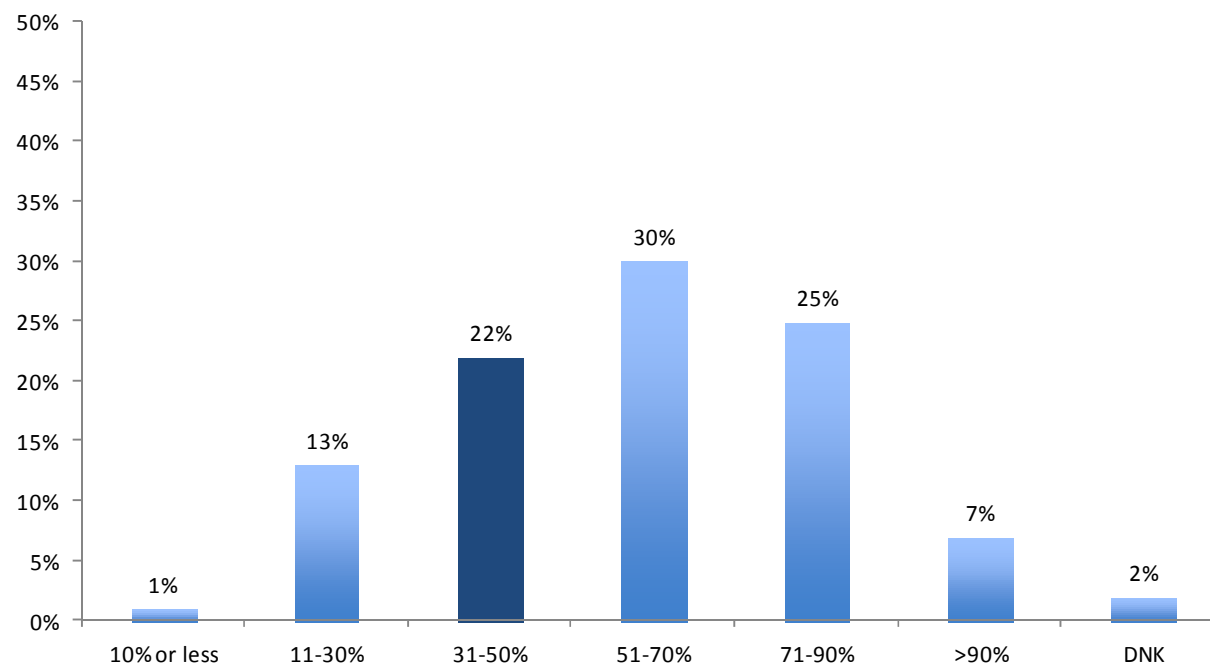
Q. To the best of your knowledge (your ‘best guess’), what percentage of Nova Scotia youth drinks alcohol (at least once) before turning 19?



Just over one in five (22%) parents estimate that 31 to 50 percent of *Grade 12 students in Nova Scotia consume alcohol more than once a month* (the “correct” response). A majority of parents provide *higher estimates* (51 percent or more).

The “correct” figure lies in the 31-50% range, according to 2012 figures (47.9% of Nova Scotia Grade 12 students use alcohol more than once per month). More than six in ten (62%) parents provide an estimate that is higher than this range.

Q. And to the best of your knowledge (again, your ‘best guess’), what percentage of Grade 12 students in Nova Scotia drinks alcohol more than once per month?



3.4 Underage Drinking Over Time

Most parents think that *young people drink more or as much alcohol as they did twenty years ago.*

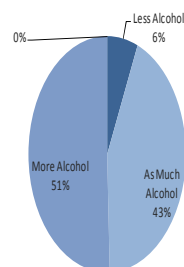
Q. How do you think current rates of underage drinking compare to underage drinking rates 20 years ago?

“Young people drink less alcohol now than they did 20 years ago.”

“Young people drink about as much alcohol now as they did 20 years ago.”

“Young People drink more alcohol now than they did 20 years ago.”

“I’m not sure.”



Further Analysis

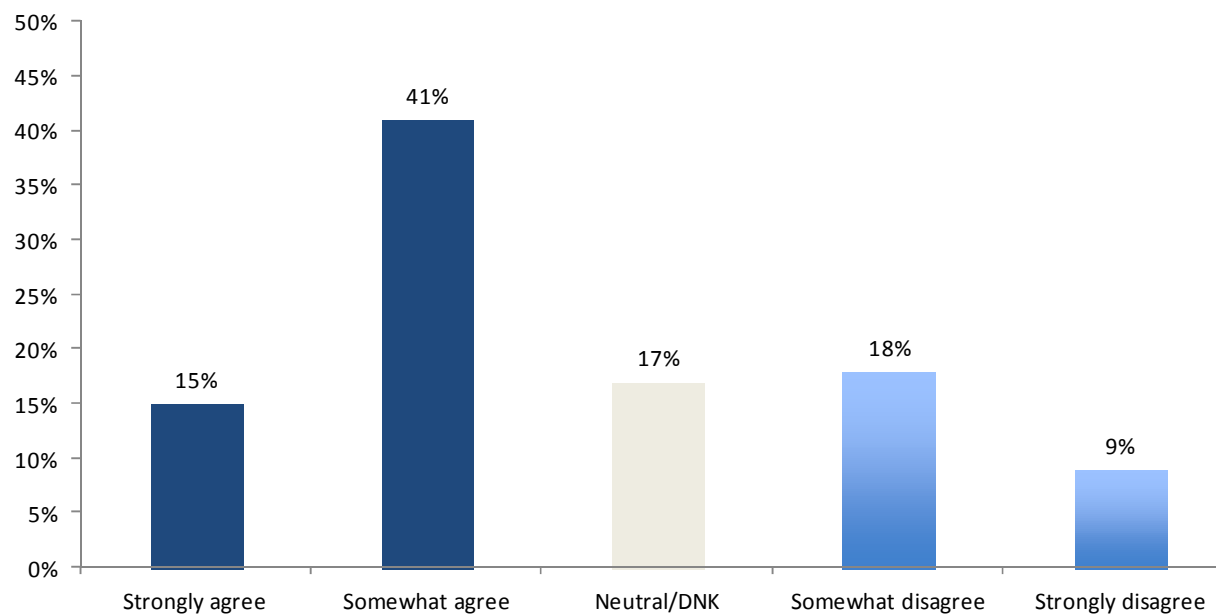
Residents of Towns *Parents that live in towns tend to aim high, with more than two thirds estimating that young people drink more now than they did twenty years ago (67%).*

3.5 Attitudes about Underage Drinking

Over one-half (56%) of parents agree that “underage drinking is inevitable.”

Q. Now we’re going to show you a series of statements. Please indicate your level of agreement with each one.

Underage drinking is inevitable.



Further Analysis

Fathers

Male parents are more likely to *strongly agree* with this statement (21%) than *females* (10%).

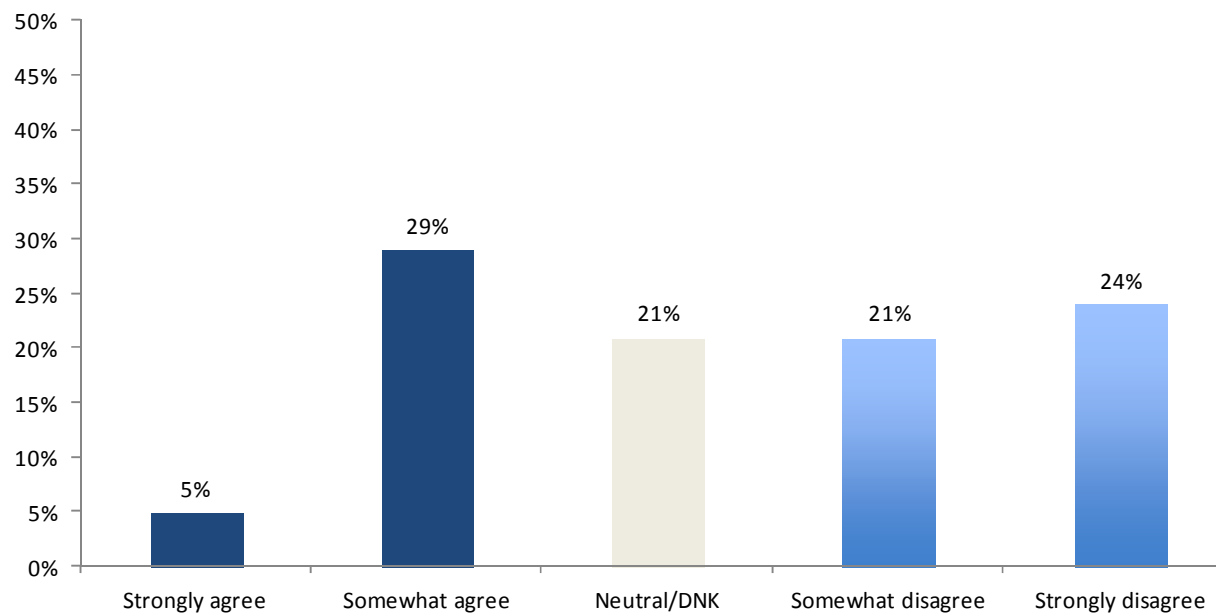
The Suburbs

Parents living in suburban areas are also more likely to *strongly agree* that underage drinking is inevitable (25%).

But, only about one-third (34%) agree that “underage drinking is a ‘rite of passage’ that most young people go through.”

Q. Now we’re going to show you a series of statements. Please indicate your level of agreement with each one.

Underage drinking is a ‘rite of passage’ that most young people go through.



Further Analysis

Older kids

Parents of 16-18 year olds are more likely to strongly agree with this statement (8%).

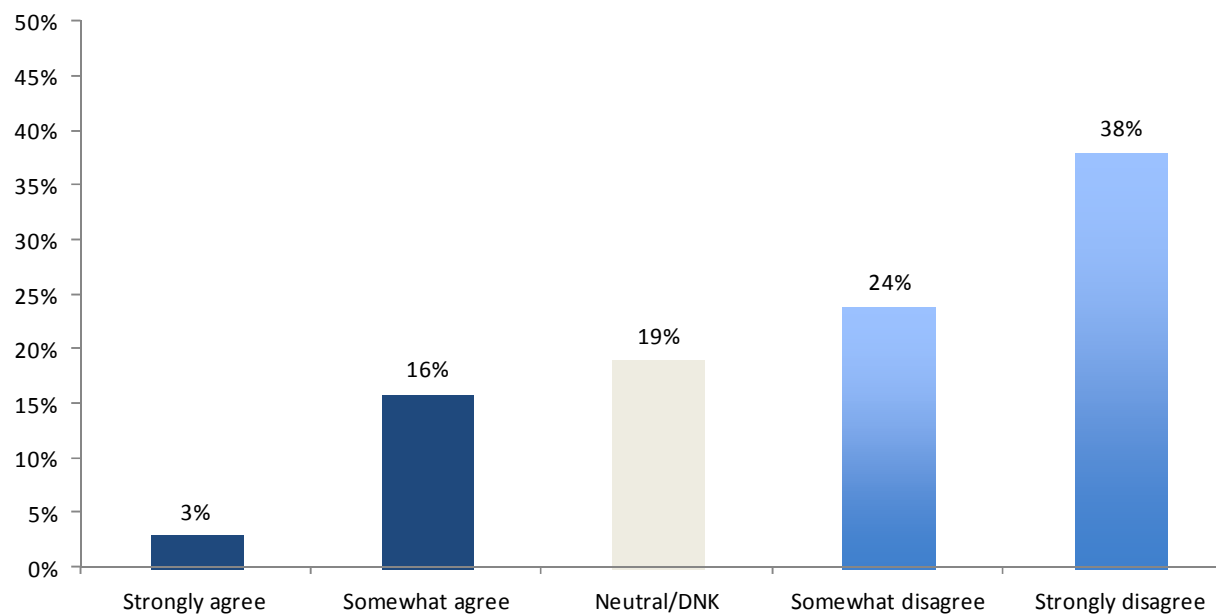
Boys

Those who have only boys in their household are also more likely to strongly agree (12%).

Fewer than one in five parents (19%) agree that it's okay if youth drink alcohol occasionally, under parental supervision.

Q. Now we're going to show you a series of statements. Please indicate your level of agreement with each one.

It's okay if youth drink alcohol occasionally, provided it's under the supervision of an adult.



Further Analysis

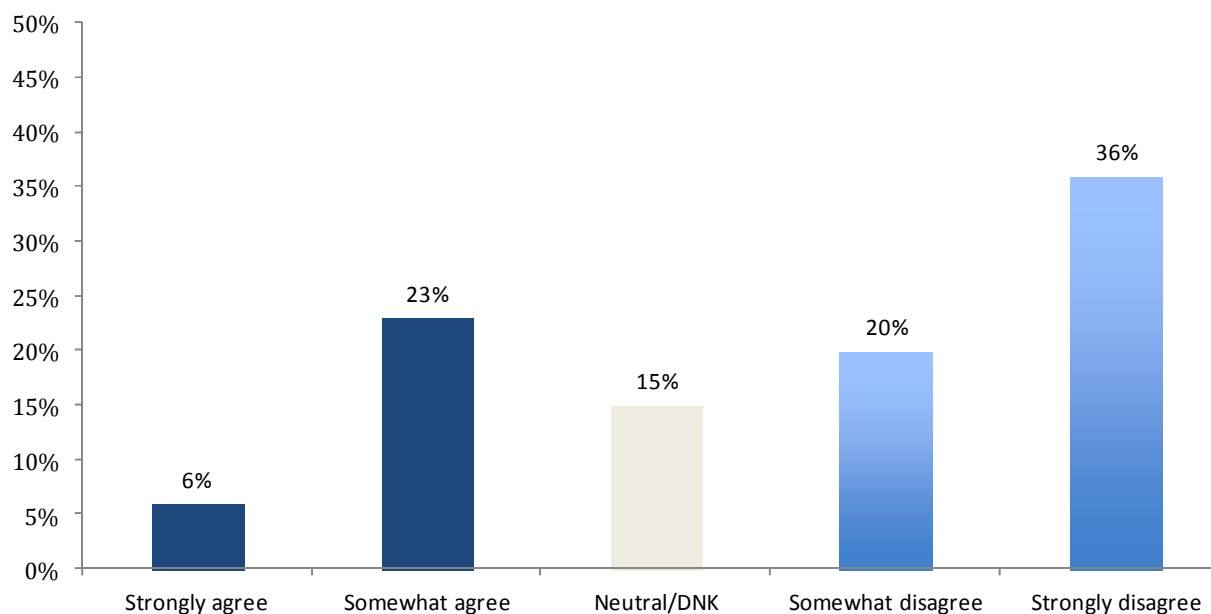
Mothers

Female parents are more likely than *males* to express *strong* disagreement with this statement (45% versus 31%).

Parents are slightly more comfortable with youth occasionally drinking under parental supervision at home, but this is still a minority viewpoint.

Q. Now we're going to show you a series of statements. Please indicate your level of agreement with each one.

It's okay if youth drink alcohol occasionally, provided it's at home, under the supervision of an adult.



Further Analysis

Mothers

Again, *female parents* are more likely than *males* to express *strong* disagreement (42%). In fact, among men, total *agreement* (strongly + somewhat) with this statement reaches 40%.

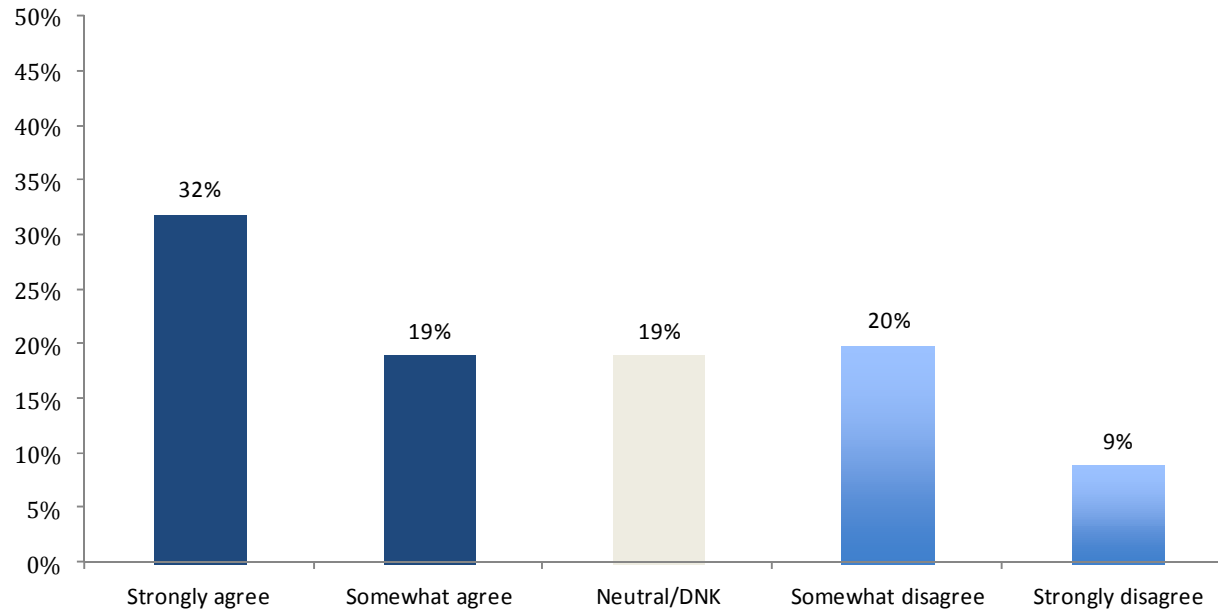
Young teens

Parents of 13-15 year olds are most likely to *strongly* agree with this statement (9%).

A slim majority (51%) of parents believe that it's never okay for youth to drink alcohol.

Q. Now we're going to show you a series of statements. Please indicate your level of agreement with each one.

It's never okay for youth to drink alcohol.



Further Analysis

Outside the City

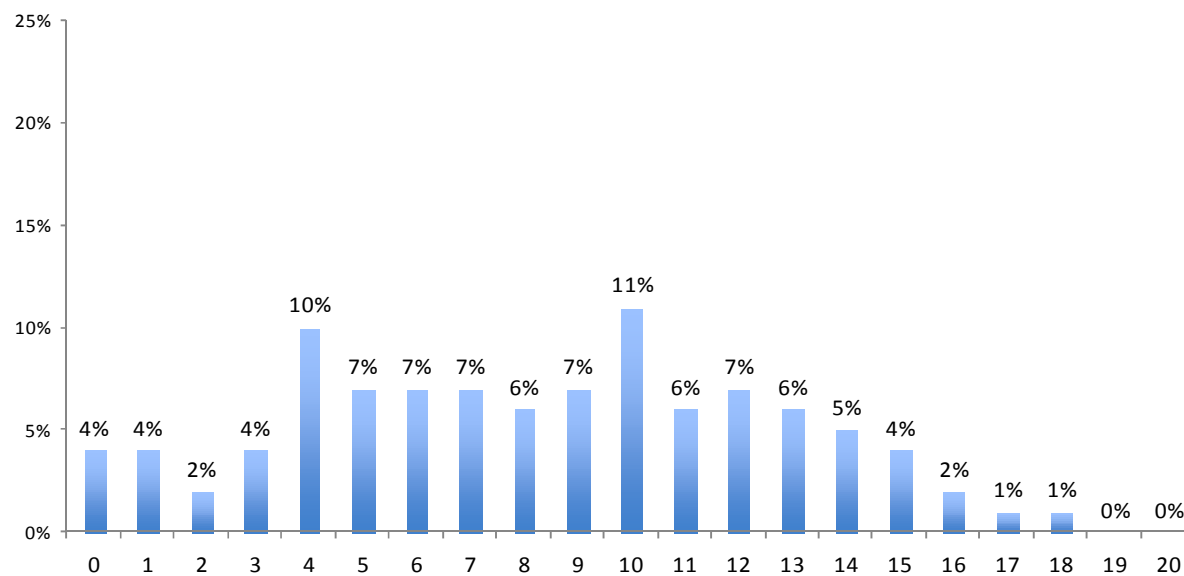
Parents living in areas other than the HRM are more likely than HRM residents to strongly agree (39% versus 25%) that it's never okay for youth to drink.

3.5 Permissive Scale

Most parents fall somewhere in the middle of a “permissive scale” generated from the attitudinal questions in the previous section, suggesting that opinions on youth and alcohol rarely fall on either extreme. On a scale of 0 (least permissive) to 20 (most permissive), the mean score is 8.3. The median is 8.9.

The scale was calculated using a simple scoring system, whereby the least permissive responses on the 5 attitudinal questions in Section 3.4 were scored a 0, and the most permissive were scored a 4. Neutral or “don’t know” responses were scored in the middle (2). For example, any respondent who *strongly disagreed* that it’s “okay for youth to occasionally drink alcohol under adult supervision” would be scored a 0, those who *somewhat disagreed* would be scored a 1, etc. By combining the results of the five attitudinal questions, the highest (and therefore, most permissive) possible score would be 20. The lowest, of course, would be 0.

Permissive Scale Scores (0=lowest possible permissive score; 20=highest possible permissive score)



Further Analysis

Concerned

There is a strong correlation between permissive scale scores and the level of concern parents express about youth alcohol consumption (see Section 3.2), i.e. higher degrees of concern correlate with lower permissive scale averages. In fact, there is a correlation between the permissive scale and concerns in a number of other areas – namely *wait time to see a doctor, Mental illness, drug use, online safety, and bullying* – suggesting that attitudes about underage drinking may also reflect a general unease about youth safety and wellbeing.

Youth drinkers

Parents who consumed alcohol themselves before the age of 19 (at least once) have higher average scores than those who did not (8.6 versus 5.8).

Fathers

Male parents have higher mean permissive scale scores than female parents (9.2 versus 7.4).

Age of children

Although the differences are not large, parents of older children (16-18, and 19+) tend to have slightly higher permissive scores.

3.6 Risks Associated with Underage Drinking (Unaided)

Parents commonly associate *underage drinking* with *addiction, reckless behaviour (like drinking and driving and impaired judgment), liver disease and injury/death*, on an unaided basis.

Q. What health risks do you associate with underage drinking?

Risk	
Addiction	25%
Drinking and driving/Car accidents	23%
Liver disease/damage	18%
Injury/death	18%
Alcohol poisoning	15%
Reckless behaviour/impaired judgment	11%
Mental health issues/Depression	6%
Brain damage/development issues	6%
Binge drinking/Over consumption	6%
Sexual promiscuity/Unprotected sex	5%
Lead to drug use	4%
Rape/sexual assaults	3%
Pregnancy	2%
Heart disease	2%
STDs	2%

Further Analysis

Addiction

Parents that *live in towns* are more likely to see a connection between *underage drinking* and *addiction* than those who reside in other settings. The same is true of parents with *household incomes under \$50K* (33%) or *\$50 to \$90K* (29%) versus parents that earn *more than \$100K* (17%).

Car accidents

Female parents associate *underage drinking* with *drinking and driving/car accidents* (33%) more often than *male parents* (14%).

3.7 Exposure to Specific Risks (Aided)

Virtually everybody agrees that *underage drinking increases the likelihood of risky behaviour* as well as *driving under the influence of a controlled substance*, with many also believing that it *increases the likelihood of physical and sexual violence*.

Q. In your opinion, does underage drinking increase the likelihood of...?

Risk	Yes	No	Not Sure
Risky behaviour	98%	1%	1%
Driving under the influence of a controlled substance	94%	3%	3%
Physical violence	90%	4%	6%
Sexual violence	85%	6%	9%

Further Analysis

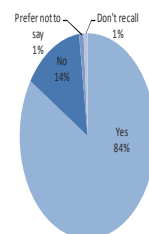
Sex of child

Parents who are caring for *female children only* are more likely to agree that underage drinking increases the likelihood of sexual violence (90%).

3.8 Own Behaviour

An overwhelming majority of parents report *drinking alcohol before they turned 19*.

Q. Did you drink alcohol (at least once) before you reached the age of 19?



Further Analysis

Permissive Scale

As noted in Section 3.5, there is a clear correlation between the answer to this question and the permissive scale: *Parents who drank alcohol before they turned 19* have higher permissive scores (8.6) than those who did not (5.8).

4.0 Demographic Profile

This table provides the demographic traits of participants.

Gender	
Male	49%
Female	51%
Marital Status	
Married	80%
Single/divorced	20%
Age of Children	
Under 10	16%
10 to 12	36%
13 to 15	47%
16 to 18	47%
19 or more	15%
Sex of Children	
Male only	38%
Female only	37%
Male and female	25%
Household Income	
Under \$50,000	21%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	19%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	16%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	15%
\$125,000 - \$149,000	9%
\$150,000 - \$174,999	2%
\$175,000 - \$199,999	2%
\$200,000 or more	4%
Prefer not to say	11%

Education	
Less than High School	2%
High School Diploma	15%
Community College/Technical School Diploma	40%
Some University	10%
University Degree	32%
Place of Residence	
Urban area	25%
Suburban area	29%
Town	16%
Rural area	30%
Region	
HRM	49%
Non-HRM	51%

5.0 Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research.

We're going to begin with some quick background questions – to ensure that we're speaking to a broad range of individuals.

S1. Please identify the year that you were born, for qualification purposes only. _____ **(IF UNDER 19 TERMINATE)**

S2. Are you the parent or guardian of one or more children between the ages of 10 and 18?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No **(TERMINATE)**
- 3 Don't know/ Not sure **(TERMINATE)**

S3. Using the categories provided below, please identify the age(s) of your child(ren). *Multiple responses are permitted.*

- 1 Under 10 years old
- 2 10 to 12 years old
- 3 13 to 15 years old
- 4 16 to 18 years old
- 5 19 years of age or older

-IF ONLY "1" OR "5" CHOSEN, THANK & TERMINATE

S4. Are the children in your care who are between the ages of 10 and 18....

- 1 Male(s) only
- 2 Female(s) only

3 I'm caring for both male and female children in that age range

Top Issues of Concern

Q1. What, in your opinion, is the **number one** health and wellness facing youth in Nova Scotia?

OPEN END

Q2. Please indicate your level of concern about each of the following issues on a scale from '1 to 5,' where '1' means 'I am not concerned about it at all' and '5' means 'I am extremely concerned about it.'

RANDOMIZE

- a. Wait times to see family doctor
- b. Healthy eating
- c. Alcohol consumption by youth
- d. Mental illness
- e. Drug use by youth
- f. Children's online safety
- g. Low levels of physical activity/exercise among youth
- h. Bullying

1 – I am not concerned at all

2

3

4

5 – I am extremely concerned

8 – Don't know/unsure

Perceptions of Underage Drinking

Q3. To the best of your knowledge (your “best guess”), what percentage of Nova Scotia youth drinks alcohol (at least once) before turning 19?

- 10 percent or less
- 11 to 30 percent
- 31 to 50 percent
- 51 to 70 percent
- 71 to 90 percent
- More than 90 percent
- Don’t know/not sure

Q4. And to the best of your knowledge (again, your “best guess”), what percentage of **Grade 12 students** in Nova Scotia drinks alcohol **more than once a month**?

- 10 percent or less
- 11 to 30 percent
- 31 to 50 percent
- 51 to 70 percent
- 71 to 90 percent
- More than 90 percent
- Don’t know/not sure

Q5. How do you think *current* rates of underage drinking compare to underage drinking rates 20 years ago?

- Young people drink less alcohol now than they did 20 years ago
- Young people drink about as much alcohol now as they did 20 years ago
- Young people drink more alcohol now than they did 20 years ago
- I’m not sure

Q6. Now, we're going to show you a series of statements. Please indicate your level of agreement with each one.

- a. Underage drinking is inevitable.
- b. Underage drinking is a "rite of passage" that most young people go through
- c. It's okay if youth drink alcohol occasionally, provided it's under the supervision of an adult.
- d. It's okay if youth drink alcohol occasionally, provided it's at home, under the supervision of a parent.
- e. It's never okay for youth to drink alcohol.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 6 Don't know/ Not sure

Q7a. What health risks do you associate with underage drinking?

OPEN END

Q7b. In your opinion, does underage drinking increase the likelihood of...?

- a. Risky behaviour
- b. Physical violence
- c. Sexual violence
- d. Driving under the influence of a controlled substance

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know/ Not sure

DEMOGRAPHICS

To conclude, we just have a few demographic questions for you. *Please be assured that all of your answers for this section, as well as the preceding ones, will remain anonymous and only be reported to our client in aggregate.*

D1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 1 Less than high school
- 2 Graduated from high school
- 3 Graduated from community college or technical school
- 4 Attended some university
- 5 Graduated from university
- 6 Don't know/ not sure
- 7 Prefer not to say

D2. What is your gender?

- 1 Male
- 1 Female

D3. What is your marital status?

- 1 Single
- 2 Married
- 3 Divorced

D4. Did you drink alcohol (at least once) before you reached the age of 19?

- 1 Yes

- 2 No
- 7 Prefer not to say
- 8 Can't recall

D5. What is the total annual income of your household before taxes? Is it...?

- 1 Under \$50,000
- 2 \$50,000 to \$74,999
- 3 \$75,000 to \$99,999
- 4 \$100,000 to \$124,999
- 5 \$125,000 to \$149,999
- 6 \$150,000 to \$174,999
- 7 \$175,000 to \$199,999
- 8 \$200,000 or more
- 9 Don't know/ not sure
- 10 Prefer not to say

D6. How would you describe the area in which you live? Is it....?

- 1 An urban area
- 2 A suburban area
- 8 A town
- 9 A rural area

D7. In which county do you live?

Annapolis
Antigonish
Cape Breton
Colchester
Cumberland
Digby
Guysborough
Halifax (HRM)
Hants
Inverness
Kings
Lunenburg
Pictou
Queens
Richmond
Shelburne
Victoria
Yarmouth

6.0 About Thinkwell

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