



Whose Kids?...Our Kids!

Exeter Region Cooperative School District Teenagers' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs

Recently, the Exeter Region Cooperative School District, Rockingham County UNH Cooperative Extension and community members joined together to learn more about the youth in our community by conducting the Teen Assessment Project (TAP).

Approximately 89% of the students were surveyed in the Exeter Region Cooperative School District. In all, information from 2045 surveys was used for this newsletter.

		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
399	7 th graders	197	202
392	8 th graders	205	187
377	9 th graders	173	204
359	10 th graders	182	177
289	11 th graders	137	152
229	12 th graders	110	119

"Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" is a parent newsletter series of the Teen Assessment Project (TAP), a program of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Support for this project was provided by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Jeffrey Gutin Fund and Safe and Drug Free School and Communities Grants. The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) originated at the University of Wisconsin at Madison under the direction of Stephen A. Small, Ph.D. Exeter TAP in Rockingham County was under the direction of Lynn Garland, UNH Cooperative Extension 4-H Educator in cooperation with Charlotte W. Cross, UNH Cooperative Extension, Youth Development Specialist. For more information about TAP call Charlotte W. Cross at (603) 862-2495 or e-mail at charlotte.cross@unh.edu.

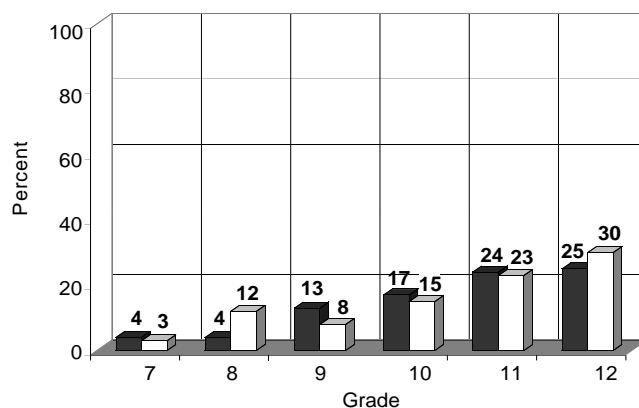
This issue of WHOSE KIDS?...OUR KIDS! looks at the topic of alcohol and other drugs. How often do teens drink and use drugs? Is this part of growing up? Should we be concerned?

Today's teenagers hear mixed messages about drinking alcohol and using other drugs. One minute they hear the simple message, "Just say NO!" or they hear "Don't Drink and Drive." Television commercials, magazine ads, and billboards have a different message. These state that drinking is "fun," "sexy," "romantic," "adult," or "macho." On top of this, teens know adults who use alcohol or pills to relax, to get rid of stress, or to socialize.

Alcohol and Drug Use Among Local Teens

About 1 in 8 males (13%) and 1 in 8 females (14%) smoke cigarettes monthly in grades 7-12. Smoking increases from the middle school years to the high school years. Far more high school boys smoke regularly as compared to middle school boys (4%, middle school; 19%, high school). The same is true for girls. In middle school, only 1 in 14 females (7%) smoke, but in high school, almost 1 out of 5 girls (18%) smoke.

Teens Who Smoke Tobacco
(Once or More per Month)



■ Male □ Female

Number Responding 2043

Warning Signs of Teenage Alcohol or Drug Abuse

When can you tell a teen has gone beyond trying out drinking or drugs? There are signs that show that a teenager may be abusing, or often using, alcohol or other drugs. The following warning signs show a teen may frequently be drinking or using a drug:

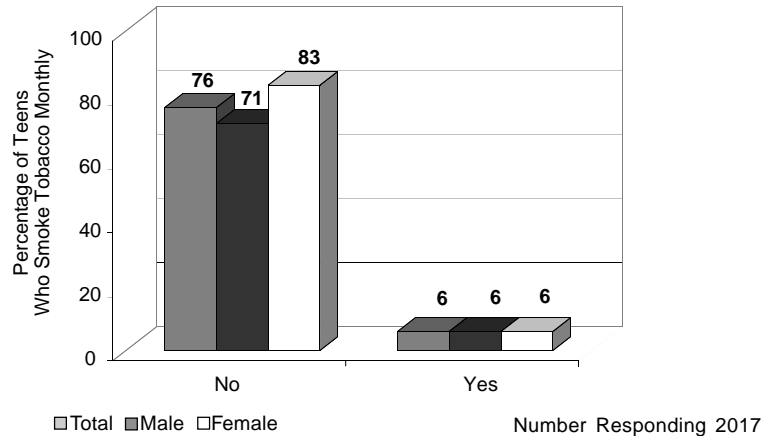
- missing work
- not saying where he or she is going
- lying about where he or she has been
- stopping activities the teen used to enjoy and not filling the time with other fun activities
- getting angry easily and often
- borrowing money from parents or friends
- can't explain loss of money or valuables
- sniffing, running nose; losing appetite; dilated or red eyes
- associating with a new group of friends, often with those who use drugs
- hiding things that would show alcohol or drug use.

Source: *National Institute on Drug Abuse*

Clearly, teens who think they will get in trouble at home are much less likely to smoke on a monthly basis.

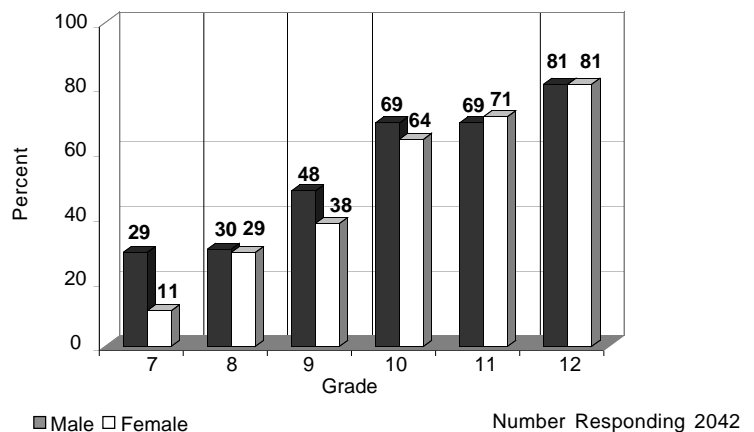
“If your parents knew you were smoking cigarettes, do you think you would get in trouble at home?”

Relationship Between Teens' Level of Smoking and Thinking They'll Be in Trouble at Home



Our survey shows more local teens are using alcohol than their parents may expect. The following chart shows many youth have tried alcohol (beer, wine, and hard liquor) even in middle school. The number of youth who have tried alcohol generally increases with age.

Ever Used Alcohol



Ways Parents Can Help

- **Encouraging teenager’s abilities and interests.**

Parents need to encourage their teens in activities that develop interests and skills. These activities should help teens feel good about themselves without the use of alcohol or drugs. Hobbies, school events, sports, and volunteer work may keep youth from using alcohol and drugs out of boredom.

- **Helping your teen or pre-teen deal with peer pressure.**

Parents can help their teens say no to alcohol/drugs without “losing face.” Here are some things teens can say: “I don’t like the way it (beer, cigarettes) tastes,” or “I’d rather sit here and watch you guys get stupid.”

- **Permitting white lies.**

“My mom’s going to give me a driving lesson this afternoon.” In a pinch, your teen can “blame” you. “If I don’t drink, I’ll get to use my dad’s car on Friday nights.” Many times, a simple “no thanks” or “not today” will do.

- **Knowing the facts about alcohol and other drugs.**

Parents should know the effects of alcohol/drugs on the body and on driving, and the risks of alcohol/drug abuse.

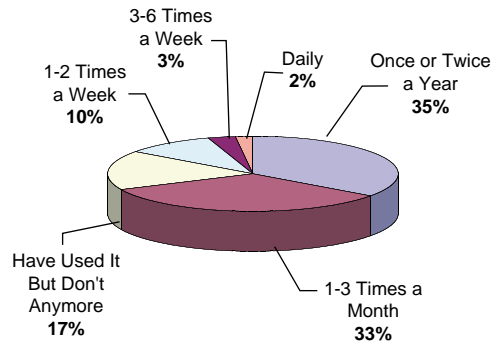
- **Creating strong family ties.**

Strong family ties can help protect against alcohol/drug problems in young people. Family activities (for example, sports, movies, or family meetings) along with open discussions and flexible rules can be particularly helpful. Really listening to your teen, even when you don’t agree, will strengthen the ties between you.

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About 1 in 3 students (35%) who said they use alcohol, only drink a couple of times a year. Over three-quarters of the students (84%) in middle school have either never tried alcohol or are not currently drinking. The same holds true for almost half (45%) high school youth.

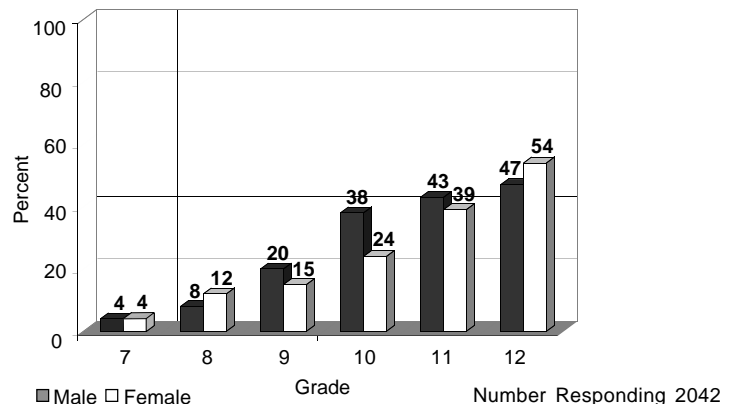
Frequency of Alcohol Use
(Of Those Who Drink)



Number Responding 982

How many teens drink every day? This is an important question. Drinking every day is serious and will hurt a teen’s school work, personal relationships, emotional development and health. Of the local teens who drink, only a few (2%) drink every day. Overall, 3% of middle school youth drink alcohol once or more per week. This increases to 10% in the high school years. Those who drink once or more per month, on average, includes 7% of middle school youth and 33% of high school youth. Overall, 1 out of 4 (25%) of middle school students and 3 out of 5 (63%) of high school students report drinking at least once.

Teens Who Use Alcohol
(Once or More per Month)



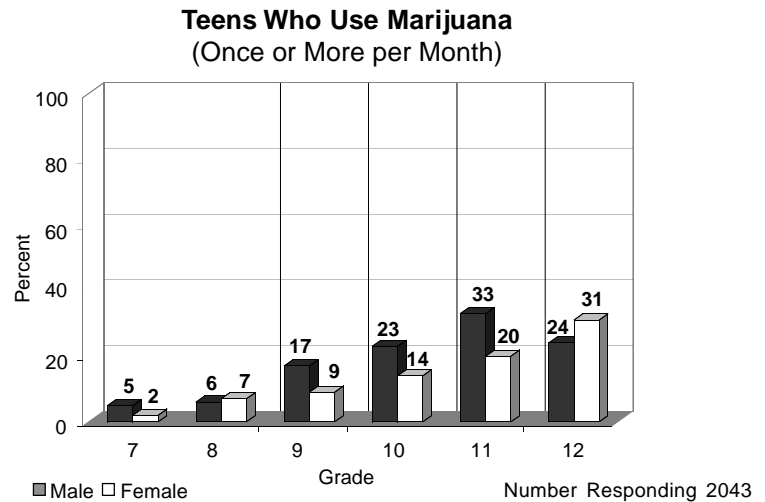
Binge drinking is when teens have 5 or more drinks in a row at one time. In response to a question about binge drinking in the past month, about 1 in 10 middle school students (10%) reported they binge drank at least one time in the past month. This rose to 32% by the high school years.

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Ways Parents Can Help

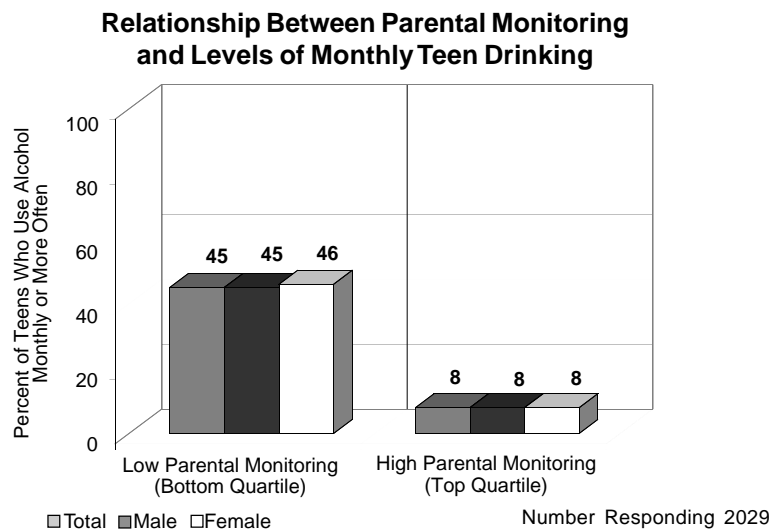
- **Keeping calm.**
Parents shouldn't get too alarmed. Most teens will use alcohol once in a while and experiment with some other drugs. This doesn't mean parents should accept such use. Still, parents shouldn't overreact. Don't assume your child is an alcoholic or drug addict. Parents should worry if a teenager is involved in frequent, heavy, or very early use of alcohol or other drugs (see "Warning Signs" section of this issue).
- **Guiding and limiting.**
Prevention of alcohol and drug abuse can begin at home. Parents need to guide their youngsters and set clear and reasonable rules. To do this, parents should:
 - clearly state rules about alcohol and drugs (for example, tell teens not to drink and drive)
 - calmly talk about alcohol/drug use before problems start (for example, use news reports of alcohol related accidents to discuss the harmful outcomes of drinking)
 - encourage teens to be healthy (for example, eat nutritious foods, exercise, and drive safely).
- **Making a contract.**
Many families have found it helpful to sit down together. They write up a parent-teen "contract" for no drinking and driving. In the contract, teens agree not to ride in a car when the driver has been drinking. They agree to call their parents for a ride if they or the driver of the car has been drinking. Parents agree to pick up their teens and not discuss the event that night. Discussion is saved for the next morning.

Use of marijuana is lower than alcohol use for both middle and high school youth. Overall, 1 in 20 (5%) middle school youth and 1 in 5 (20%) high school youth use marijuana monthly or more often. Weekly alcohol use is also less than marijuana use for both middle school and high school youth.



Alcohol and marijuana are used by local teens more than any other drugs. Most people believe alcohol is not as harmful as other drugs. Still, more Americans die each year from alcohol-related illnesses and accidents than from the use of all illegal drugs combined. Motor vehicle accidents involving alcohol are the leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-olds.

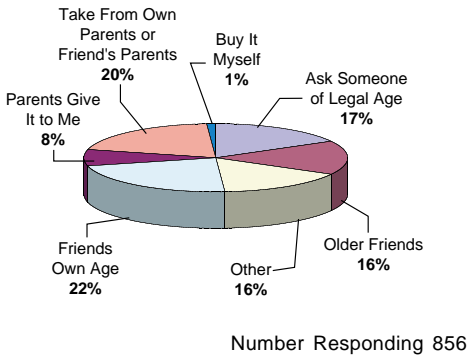
What role does parental monitoring play in lowering the levels of teen drinking? Parental monitoring is important in preventing adolescent problem behavior. Parental monitoring means parents supervise their children or know where they are and what they're doing. Higher levels of parental monitoring are related to lower levels of alcohol drinking in youth. Young people who are closely supervised are much less likely to drink on a monthly basis.



Where do teenagers get their alcohol?

One-third (33%) of local youth get alcohol by asking someone of legal age to buy it for them or from older friends.

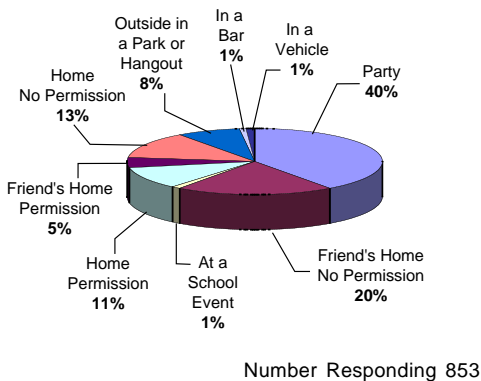
Where Teens Get Alcohol
(Of Those Who Drink)



Where do teenagers drink alcohol?

When asked where they drank alcohol, more kids said they drank at parties than any other place. Others said they drank at their homes or their friends' homes with or without permission.

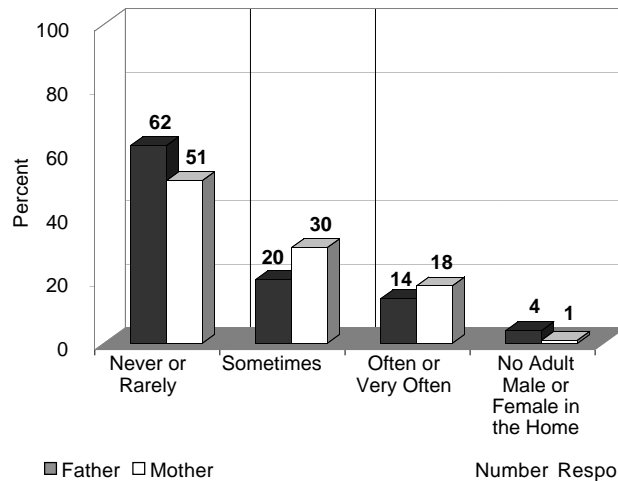
Where Teens Drink Alcohol
(Of Those Who Drink)



Parent-Teen Communication

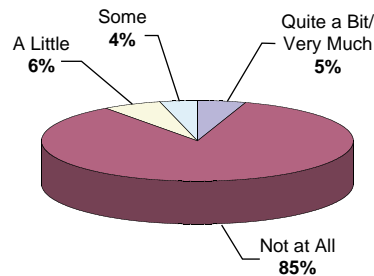
Many parents express concern over possible problem drinking and drug abuse among teens. But, they don't always discuss their views and concerns with their children. Or, parents may wait until a problem actually arises before bringing up the topic at all. Our survey of local youth shows many have rarely or never talked with their mothers or fathers about the risks of drinking or taking drugs.

“To what extent have you spoken with your mother or father about the risks of drinking or taking drugs?”



Most local teens aren't worried about family alcohol or drug abuse. Still, 1 student in 6 (15%) shows some level of concern. If youth have already started to drink or use drugs themselves, they may not worry quite as much about their parents' drinking or drug use.

“How much do you worry about your parent(s) drinking too much or using drugs?”



Would You Like To Get Involved?

If you are interested in getting involved with others in the community to address teen issues, please call Claudia Boozer-Blasco at Rockingham County Cooperative Extension at 679-5616 or Karen Pelletier at Exeter High School at 775-8444.

Further Reading

- Perkins, W. & Perkins, N. (1986). **Raising Drug-Free Kids in a Drug-Filled World.** New York: Hazelden.
- Schaeffer, D. (1996). **Choices and Consequences: What To Do When a Teenager Uses Alcohol/Drugs.** Minneapolis, MN: Johnson Institute Books.
- Steinberg, L. & Levine, A. (1997). **You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10-20.** New York: Harper & Row.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1993). **Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention.** Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Dept. of Education. (1989). **What Works, Schools Without Drugs.**
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Substance Abuse Prevention. (1989). **Parenting as Prevention: Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Use Problems in the Family.**
- Youcha, G. & Seixas, J.S. (1989). **Drugs, Alcohol, and Your Children: How to Keep Your Family Substance-Free.** New York: Crown Publishers.

UNH Cooperative Extension Resources:

- **Publication Series:**
Living with your Teenager
- **Workshop Series:**
Family Focus: Parenting the Adolescent

Helpful Resources

In-School Help

School District Switchboard	775-8400
High School	775-8402
High School Guidance	775-8417
Middle School	775-8700
Middle School Guidance	775-8706

Abuse

Division for Children, Youth and Families (to report)	1-800-894-5533
after hours helpline:	1-800-852-3388
Safe Place (Domestic Violence)	436-7924
Sexual Assault support Services (SASS)	1-888-747-7070

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

AD Care Hospital	1-800-252-6465
Al-Anon/Alateen	1-877-825-2666
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)	1-800-593-3330

Counseling Services

Center for Eating Disorders Management	742-0047
ParentLine	1-800-640-6486

Crisis Hot Lines

24 hr. Crisis Referral Hotline (Drug & Alcohol only)	1-800-888-9383
Boys Town Hotline	1-800-448-3000
TeenLine (confidential, for any problem)	1-800-639-6095
Youth Crisis Hotline (17 years and younger)	1-800-448-4663

Family Planning/Health Services

Birthright (24 hr.)	1-800-550-4900
Portsmouth office	436-5558
Planned Parenthood.....	772-4326

Information and Referral

Info Link	1-888-499-2525
Poison Control Center	1-800-562-8236

Runaway

Child & Family Services of NH Group Home	224-9313
National Runaway Switchboard.....	1-800-621-4000

Sexual Identity

Seacoast Outright	431-1013
PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) .	1-800-750-2524

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

AIDS Hotline	1-800-752-2437
STD/HIV	594-3355

Suicide and Depression

Exeter Hospital	1-800-443-1119
or	778-7311
Riverbend.....	1-800-852-3323
Seacoast Mental Health (24 hour)	772-2710

UNH Cooperative Extension

Rockingham County, Family and 4-H Youth Development	1-800-248-6672
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Also see the "Self-Help Guide to Human Services in N.H." at the front of your telephone book

This newsletter was based on a publication by Susan Silverberg, University of Wisconsin at Madison. The UNH Cooperative Extension newsletter "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" was edited by Charlotte W. Cross, Extension Specialist, Youth Development and Mary W. Temke, Ph.D., Extension Specialist, Human Development, with technical assistance from Carolyn L. Miller, Research Assistant, UNH Cooperative Extension. Desktop publishing provided by UNHCE Educational Marketing & Information Office.

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