

Summary: Parents' attitudes towards young people's alcohol habits 2024

In this report, we examine teenage parents' knowledge of and attitudes toward alcohol consumption, both among their own children and among young people in general. The report is based on data from a web-based survey, conducted among 1,517 parents, each with at least one child aged 13-17 years. The data was collected by the research agency Epinion – through Norstat's panel – during the period from March 18th to April 23rd, 2024. The data is nationally representative regarding parents' gender, region, and the age of their child.

Parents' attitudes towards young people and alcohol

Around 8 out of 10 parents believe that Danish youth consume too much alcohol, and that Danish children and youth generally start drinking alcohol too early. One-third of parents think it's acceptable for children and young people to drink their first unit of alcohol before the age of 16, while 14 % believe they should be at least 18 and 17 % think that children and young people should not consume alcohol at all. The majority (79 %) of parents consider it acceptable for children and young people to drink alcohol at their own or a friend's 18th birthday party, while just over half (55 %) believe that it is also acceptable at high school parties. Slightly more than a third think it is acceptable for children and young people to drink alcohol on the last day of school, while 30 % believe it is acceptable at their confirmation/non-confirmation or similar events. Around 1 out of 10 parents think it is acceptable for children and young people to get drunk before they turn 16, whereas nearly a quarter (24 %) believe they should be at least 18, and 31 % think children and young people should not get drunk at all.

Parents' views on enforcing age limits

7 out of 10 parents believe more should be done to enforce the age restrictions on purchasing alcohol in retail stores.

Parents' awareness of their children's alcohol consumption

Slightly over half of parents (56 %) report that their child has drunk an alcoholic unit. About one-third (32 %) also say their child has been drunk. Notably more parents of 15-17-year-olds compared to those with 13-14-year-olds report that their child has consumed one unit of alcohol and has experienced being drunk. Approximately 3 out of 4 parents (74 %) believe that their child drinks *less* than their peers, while 21 % believe their child's drinking behavior is like the *average*. Only 1 % of parents believe their child drinks *more* than their peers.

Parents attitudes and concerns regarding their children's alcohol habits

Among parents whose children do not drink alcohol, most (58 %) are pleased about it, while 5 % are concerned. Among parents whose children have tried drinking one unit of alcohol, 84 % believe their child's alcohol consumption is appropriate, while 12 % believe it's too high. More than 4 out of 10 parents (45 %) whose child have tried drinking one unit of alcohol have concerns about their child's drinking habits. Most concerns relate to the risk of accidents (29 %) and assaults (28 %) associated with their child's alcohol consumption. Fewer parents are concerned about conflicts/fights (17 %), health consequences (16 %), and consequences related to their child's school or work performance (10 %).

Parents' influence on their children's alcohol habits

8 out of 10 parents feel they have an influence on their children's alcohol consumption, while 15 % feel they have no influence. More parents of 13–14-year-olds than parents of 15–17-year-olds feel they have influence. Furthermore, 86 % of parents actively try to influence their child to drink less or avoid alcohol. Parents primarily try to influence their child's alcohol consumption by talking to their child about alcohol (48 %), by trying to be a role model by limiting their own alcohol consumption (42 %), setting agreements about alcohol (41 %), and not serving alcohol to their child (38 %). Among parents whose children have tried drinking one unit of alcohol, about a quarter (23 %) find managing their child's alcohol habits challenging. Some parents mention, among other things, that it is challenging because alcohol is part of the culture and societal pressure, it can be difficult to monitor what their children do outside the home, and it can be hard when other children are allowed to drink more. Over half (57 %) of all parents have introduced their child to alcohol, and 20 % plan to do so at some point in the future, mainly to teach their child to handle alcohol responsibly.

Nearly half of parents (44 %) believe other parents allow more, while a third believe they are equally permissive. Only 3 % think other parents are less strict. Among parents of 13–15-year-olds, 19 % have purchased alcohol for their child, compared to 36 % of parents of 16–17-year-olds who purchased alcohol for their child before the child turned 16.

Alcohol in school context

Around 6 out of 10 parents (62 %) say alcohol has been addressed at a parent-teacher meeting in their child's class in primary school, while 31 % have not experienced it. Among parents whose children attend high school, most (64 %) say alcohol has not been discussed at parent meetings in youth education, while 24 % say it has. Around 4 out of 10 parents (39 %) whose children are in high school feel it became harder to interfere with their child's drinking habits once they started high school. 84 % of parents believe making agreements about alcohol with their child is effective when the child starts on a youth education, while 11 % believe it has no effect.

Parents' knowledge of the link between alcohol and cancer

When asked which diseases they believe alcohol increases the risk of, 28 % of parents mention cancer (unaided awareness). When cancer is presented as one of the response options to the question about which diseases and conditions alcohol increases the risk of, 54 % mention cancer (aided awareness).

See the full report (in Danish) here:

<https://www.cancer.dk/om-os/udgivelser-og-rapporter/forebyg-kraeft/rapport-foraeldres-holdninger-til-unges-alkoholvaner-2024/>

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