

**Cambridge Prevention Coalition**  
**Social Marketing Survey of**  
**Parents of Middle School-Aged Children (grades 5-8)**

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August 2006

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## BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Between June and August 2006, the Cambridge Prevention Coalition conducted a community survey of parents of middle school-aged children (grades 5-8). The survey consisted of 31 questions that assessed respondents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about underage drinking. Specifically, respondents were asked about their: 1) knowledge of Massachusetts Liquor Laws; 2) perception of use and perceived ease of access; 3) attitudes about underage alcohol use; 4) methods to restrict youth access; 5) behaviors around potential protective factors; and 6) opinions about appropriate prevention strategies.

The questionnaire was made available both online and in paper and pencil format. Overall, the Coalition received 158 completed surveys. Of these, 41 surveys were excluded because the respondents did not have a child in grades 5-8. The final sample consisted of 117 parents of middle school-aged children.

Demographic information provided by the respondents is summarized in the table below. Overall, 79% of respondents were female, and 21% were male. The largest number of respondents described themselves as white (68%), followed by Black or African American (21%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (11%). No other racial/ethnic group was represented by more than 3% of respondents. According to the 2000 Census, 68% of Cambridge residents were White, 12% African American, 12% Asian, and 7% Hispanic. The racial/ethnic breakdown in the current survey is similar to this proportion, with a slight over-representation of Black or African American respondents, and a slight under-representation of Hispanic/Latino respondents.

Of those who were surveyed, 40% had a male child, 54% had a female child, and 6% had one male and one female child. Twenty-four percent (24%) of respondents had a child in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 34% had a child in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 23% had a child in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 30% had a child in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The majority of respondents (84%) had only one middle school-aged child, and 16% had two middle school-aged children.

**Respondent Demographics (N=117)**

Type	N	%	Type	N	%
<b>RESPONDENT GENDER</b>			<b>GENDER OF CHILDREN</b>		
Female	90	79%	Male	43	40%
Male	24	21%	Female	58	54%
			Both Male and Female	6	6%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY <sup>(a)</sup></b>			<b>GRADE OF CHILDREN <sup>(b)</sup></b>		
Hispanic/Latino	4	3%	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	28	24%
White	74	68%	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	40	34%
Black or African American	21	21%	7 <sup>th</sup> grade	27	23%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11	11%	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	35	30%
Haitian	0	0%			
Portuguese	1	1%	<b># OF MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN</b>		
Brazilian	1	1%	1 middle school-aged child	98	84%
Other Race	2	2%	2 middle school-aged children	19	16%

<sup>a)</sup> Percentages do not add up to 100% because participants were asked to check *all that apply*.

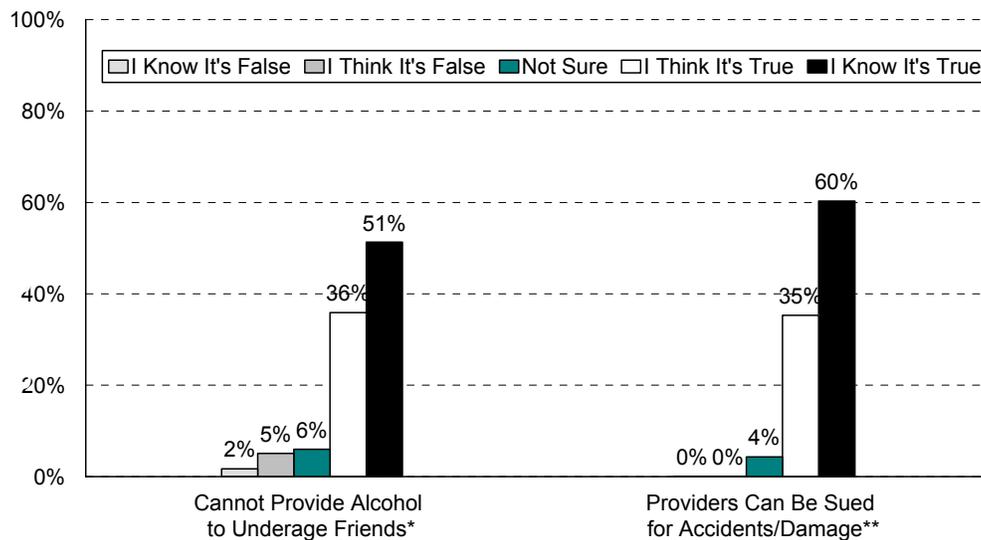
<sup>b)</sup> Percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could have more than one child.

## KNOWLEDGE OF MASSACHUSETTS LIQUOR LAWS

Respondents were asked two questions about their knowledge of MA liquor laws. The first question assessed whether or not respondents knew that a parent cannot give alcohol to their child’s underage friends (even within their own home, with the permission of the other child’s parents). The second question assessed whether or not respondents knew that anyone who provides alcohol to an underage youth is potentially liable if the youth hurts themselves, hurts someone else, or damages property while under the influence of alcohol.

Overall, 87% of respondents indicated that they *thought it was true* (36%) or *knew it was true* (51%) that it is not permissible under MA liquor laws to provide alcohol to their child’s underage friends under any circumstances. Similarly, 95% of respondents *thought it was true* (35%) or *knew it was true* (60%) that anyone who provides alcohol to an underage youth is potentially liable for anything that happens while the youth is under the influence of alcohol. It is, however, important to note that only about half of the respondents (51% and 60%) expressed absolute certainty that either law was true. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Knowledge of MA Liquor Laws**



\* In Massachusetts, you cannot give alcohol to your children's friends under age 21 in your own home, even with their parents' permission.  
 \*\* In Massachusetts, others can sue you if you give alcohol to anyone under age 21 and they in turn hurt someone, hurt themselves, or damage property.

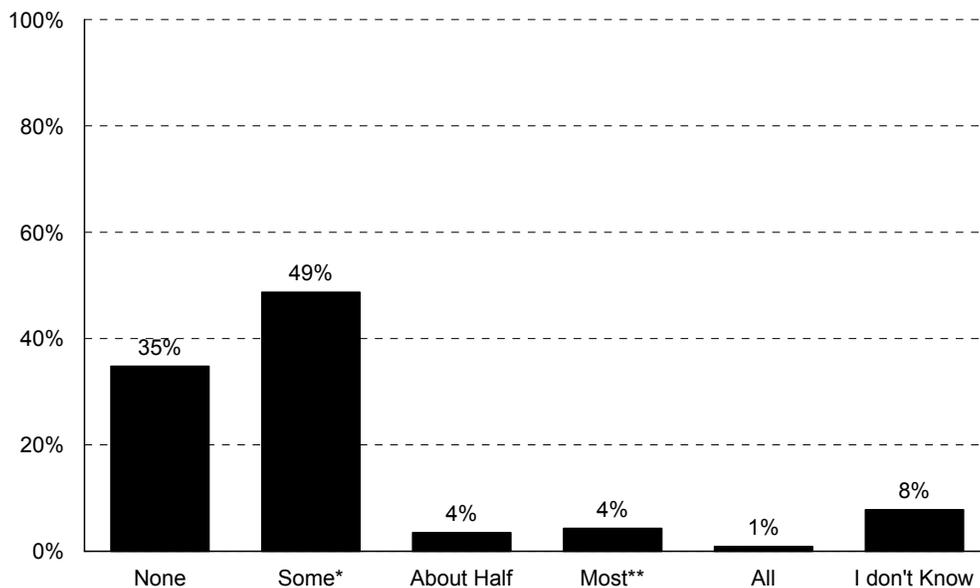
## PERCEPTION OF USE AND PERCEIVED EASE OF ACCESS

Four items on the survey assessed respondents' perception of underage alcohol use, and their perception of the ease with which underage youth are able to obtain alcohol.

### Perception of Use

Respondents were asked to indicate the proportion of kids their child's age that they think drink alcohol at least once in a while. As shown in Figure 2, half of the respondents (49%) thought that *Some* of the kids their child's age drink alcohol. Over one-third of respondents (35%) thought that *None* of the kids their child's age drink alcohol, and only 9% thought that *About Half* (4%), *Most* (4%), or *All* (1%) drink alcohol. Roughly one in ten respondents (8%) reported that they *Didn't Know* how many kids their child's age drink alcohol at least once in a while.

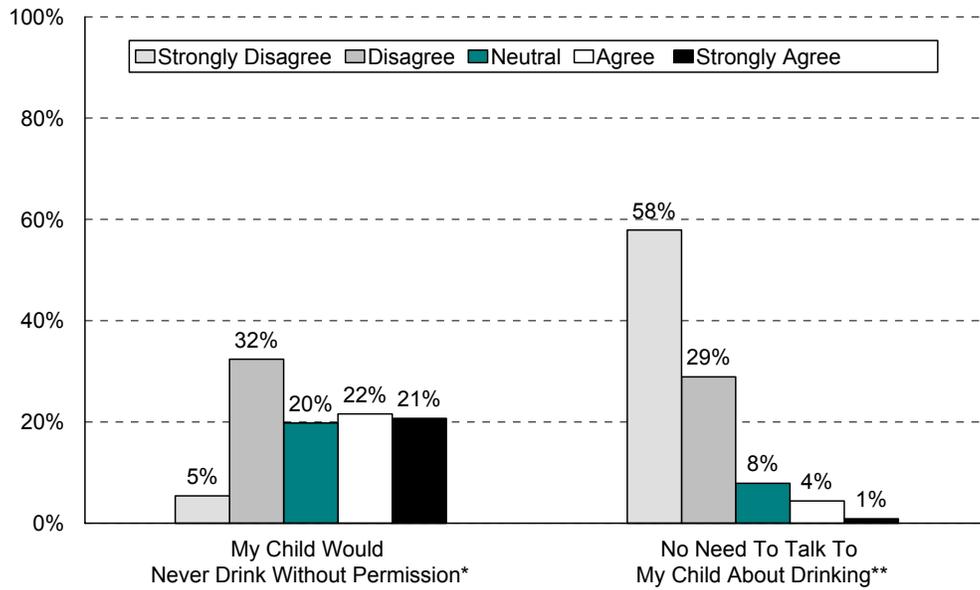
Figure 2: I Think \_\_\_ Of The Kids My Child's Age Drink Alcohol At Least Once In A While



\* The full response option read, "Some (fewer than half)."  
\*\* The full response option read, "Most (more than half)."

Two additional questions assessed the extent to which respondents believed that their child would never drink without parental permission, and that there was no need to talk to their child about underage drinking because their child doesn't drink. As shown in Figure 3, less than half of the respondents (43%) either *Agreed* (22%) or *Strongly Agreed* (21%) that their own child would not drink without parental permission, and only 5% *Agreed* (4%) or *Strongly Agreed* (1%) that there was no need for them to talk to their child about underage drinking because their child doesn't drink. On the opposite side, 37% of respondents thought that their child might drink without parental permission, and 87% thought that it was necessary to talk to their child(ren) about underage drinking.

**Figure 3: Perception of Own Child's Drinking and Need to Talk To Their Child About Drinking**



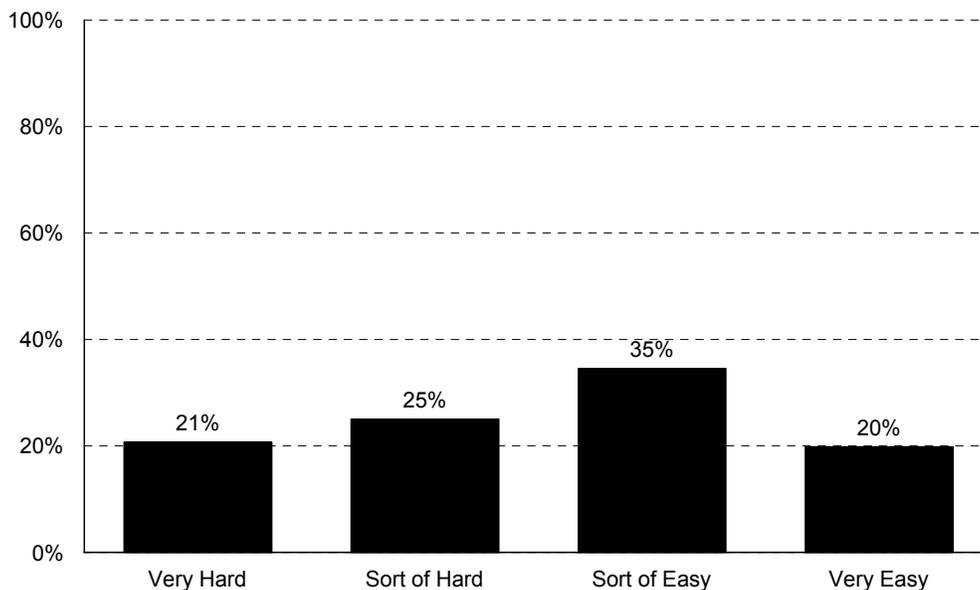
\* The full item read: "My child would never drink alcohol without my permission."

\*\* The full item read: "There is no need for me to talk to my child about underage drinking because they don't drink."

### Perceived Ease of Access

Another item asked respondents to indicate how difficult or easy they thought it would be for their child to get some alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine, or liquor. As shown in Figure 4, about half (46%) of respondents felt it would be *Very Hard* (21%) or *Sort of Hard* (25%) for their child to get some alcohol, and about half (55%) felt it would be *Sort of Easy* (35%) or *Very Easy* (20%). The largest proportion of respondents (35%) felt it would be *Sort of Easy*, and only one in five respondents (21%) thought it would be *Very Hard*.

**Figure 4: If Your Child Wanted To Get Some Alcoholic Beverages (such as beer, wine, or liquor), How Easy Do You Think It Would Be For Them To Get Some?**



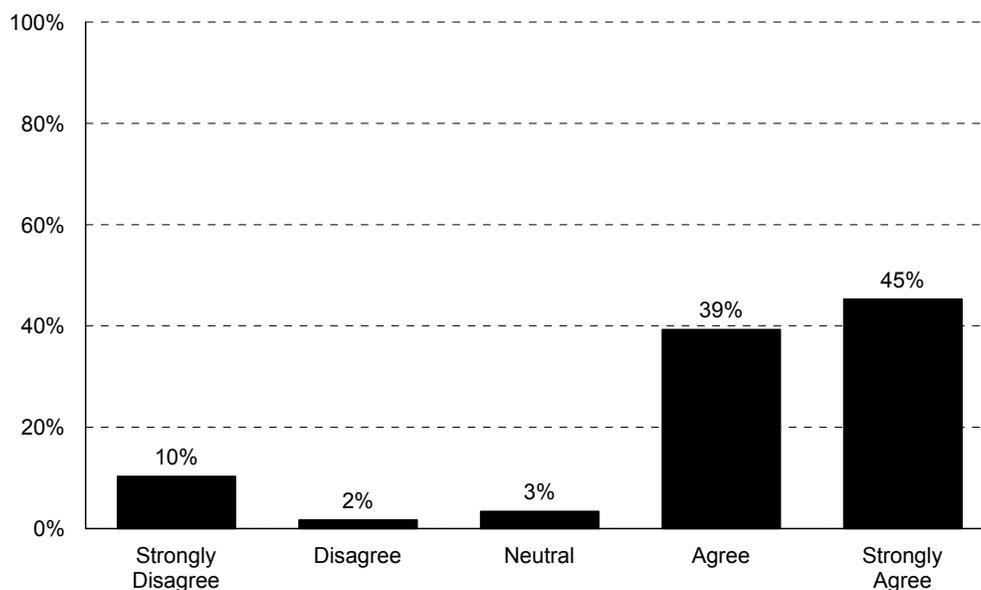
## ATTITUDES ABOUT UNDERAGE ALCOHOL USE

Ten questions assessed respondents' attitudes about underage alcohol use. This consisted of one item concerning respondents' attitude about underage drinking, one item assessing respondents' opinion about the age at which it is permissible to drink alcohol, a multi-part item assessing respondents' potential reasons for being concerned about underage drinking, an item about respondents' perception of the risk to underage youth of using alcohol, four items on respondents' permissiveness of underage drinking, and two items measuring feelings of concession about underage drinking (i.e., the extent to which respondents feel helpless in dealing with underage drinking and have decided to give up trying to do anything about it).

### Attitude About Underage Drinking

The first question asked respondents to either disagree or agree that they think underage drinking is a problem. As shown in Figure 5, the vast majority of respondents (84%) either *Agreed* (39%) or *Strongly Agreed* (45%) that underage drinking is a problem. Only 12% either *Disagreed* (2%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (10%). Three percent of respondents remained *Neutral*.

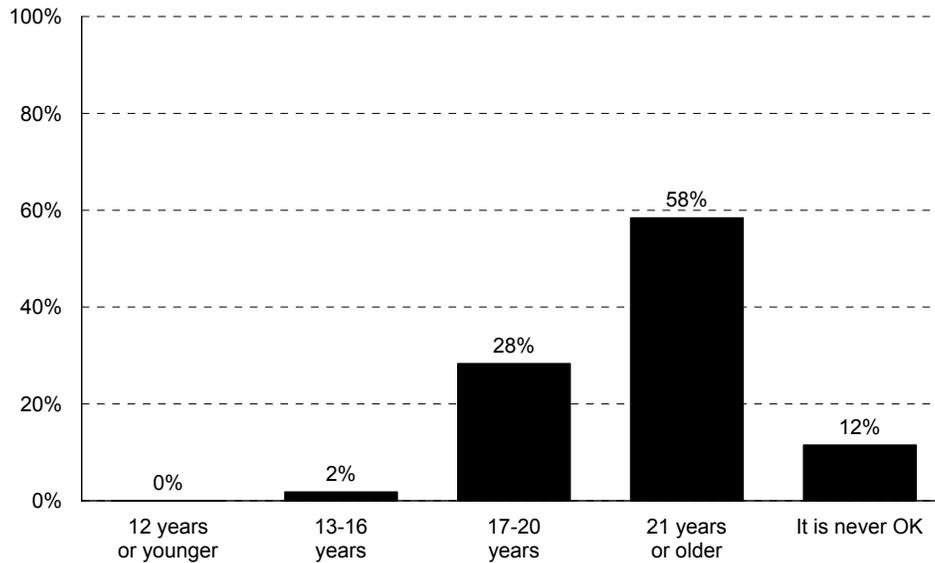
Figure 5: I Think Underage Drinking Is A Problem



### Age When It Is Permissible to Drink

Respondents were asked to indicate the age at which they think it is OK to drink alcohol. As shown in Figure 6, the majority of respondents (58%) indicated that it is not OK to drink until someone is 21 years old or older. Three in ten respondents (30%) thought it was OK to drink between the ages of 17 and 20 (28%), and between the ages of 13 and 16 (2%). None felt it was OK to drink prior to age 13, and 12% thought that it was *Never* OK to drink.

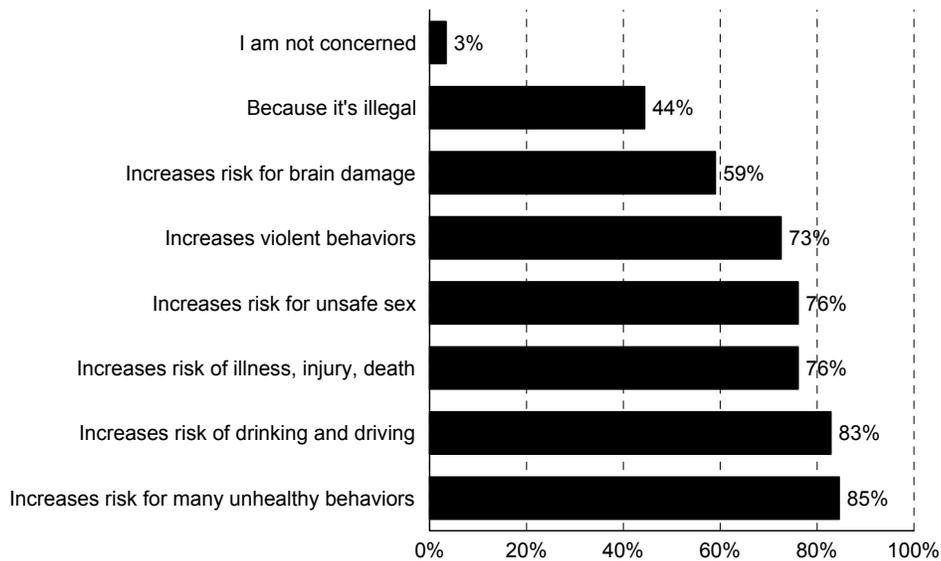
**Figure 6: Age When It Is Permissible to Drink Alcohol**



**Reasons for Concerns About Underage Drinking**

Another question asked respondents to indicate why, if at all, they were concerned with underage drinking. The percentages in Figure 7 do not add to 100% because respondents were asked to “check *all* that apply.” Overall, the largest number of respondents reported that they were concerned about underage drinking because *drinking increases the risk for many unhealthy behaviors* (85%), *drinking increases the risk of drinking and driving* (83%), *drinking increases risks for injury, illness, and death* (76%), *drinking increases risks for unsafe sex* (76%), *drinking increases violent behaviors* (73%), and *drinking increases risk for brain damage* (59%). Less than half of the respondents were concerned about underage drinking because *it is illegal for young people to drink* (44%). Only 3% of respondents indicated that they were *not* concerned about underage drinking.

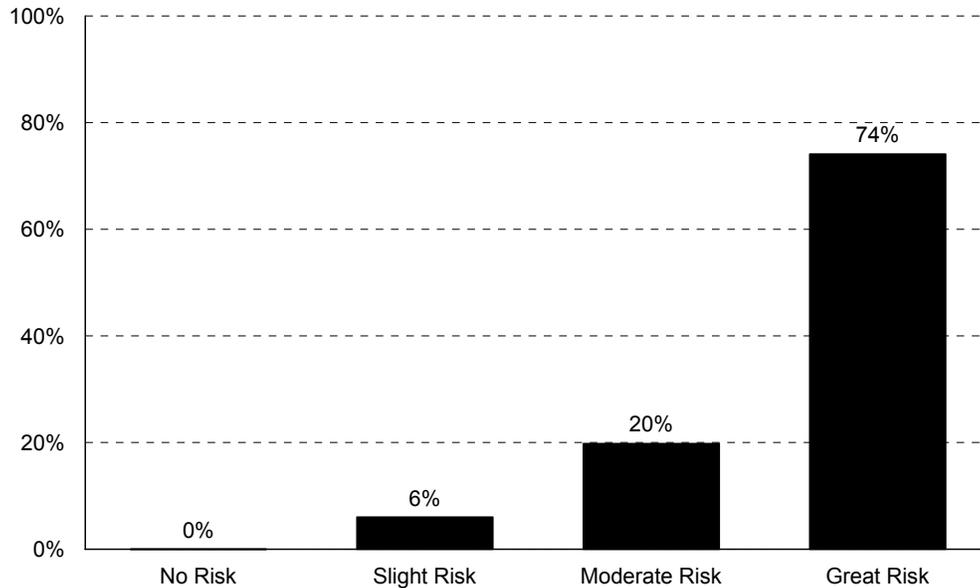
**Figure 7: Reasons for Concerns About Underage Drinking**



### Perception of Risk of Use

Respondents were asked to indicate how much they think youth under 21 years of age risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor) nearly every day. The vast majority of respondents indicated that underage youth put themselves at *Great Risk* (74%). An additional 26% indicated that underage youth put themselves at *Moderate Risk* (20%) or *Slight Risk* (6%), and none reported that underage youth put themselves at *No Risk*. See Figure 8.

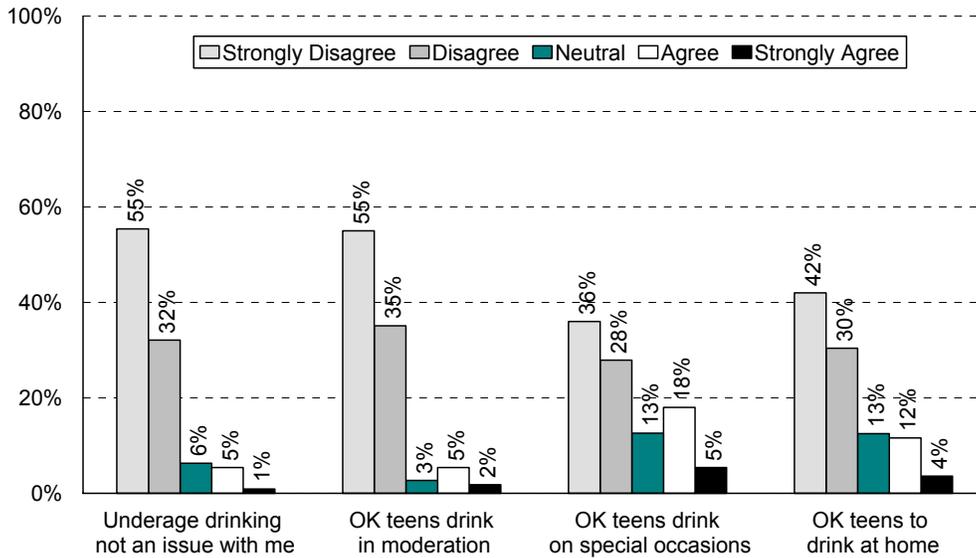
**Figure 8: How Much Do You Think Youth Under 21 Years of Age Risk Harming Themselves If They Take One Or Two Drinks Of An Alcoholic Beverage Nearly Every Day?**



### Permissiveness of Underage Drinking

Four questions assessed respondents' permissiveness of underage drinking. Respondents were asked to disagree or agree with the following statements on a five-point scale: "All teenagers are going to drink alcohol; it's not an issue with me," "It's OK for teenagers to drink in moderation," "It's OK to allow teenagers to drink alcohol on special occasions," and "It's OK to allow teenagers to drink at home." Overall, 23% felt that it was OK for teenagers to drink on special occasions (64% disagreed); 16% felt that it was OK for teenagers to drink at home (while 72% disagreed); 7% felt that it was OK for teenagers to drink in moderation (90% disagreed); and 6% felt that all teenagers are going to drink and that it is not an issue (87% disagreed). See Figure 9.

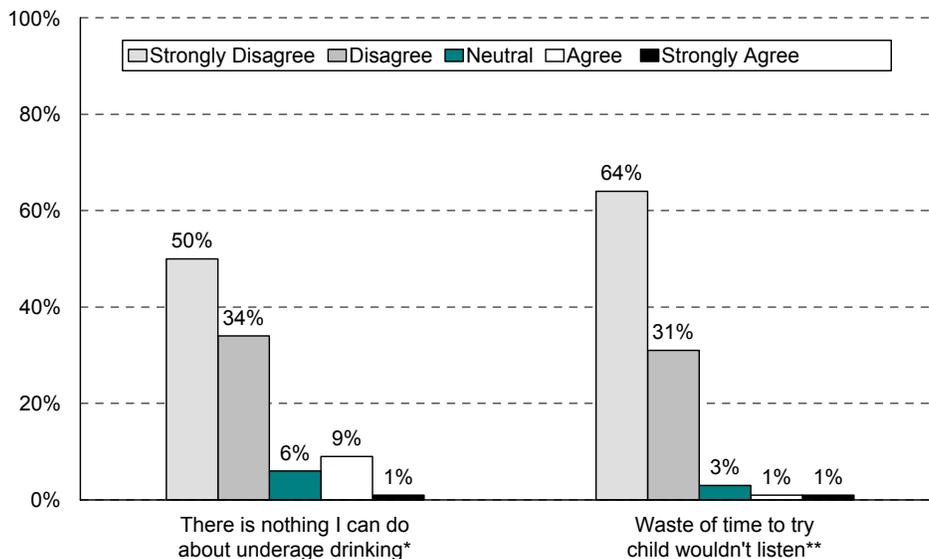
**Figure 9: Permissiveness of Underage Drinking**



**Feelings of Concession About Underage Drinking**

Two questions assessed respondents’ feelings of concession about underage drinking. Specifically, respondents were asked to disagree or agree with the following statements, “Teenagers are going to drink and there’s nothing I can do about it,” and “It’s a waste of time to talk to my child about underage drinking because they wouldn’t listen anyway.” Overall, 84% either *Strongly Disagreed* (50%) or *Disagreed* (34%) with the statement that teenagers are going to drink and there’s nothing that a parent can do about it, and 95% either *Strongly Disagreed* (64%) or *Disagreed* (31%) that it would be a waste of time to talk to their child about underage drinking. On the opposite side, only 10% agreed that there was nothing a parent can do about underage drinking, and only 2% agreed that it would be a waste of time to talk to their child. See Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Feelings of Concession About Underage Drinking**



\* The full item read: "Teenagers are going to drink and there's nothing I can do about it."

\*\* The full item read: "It's a waste of time to talk to my child about underage drinking because they wouldn't listen anyway."

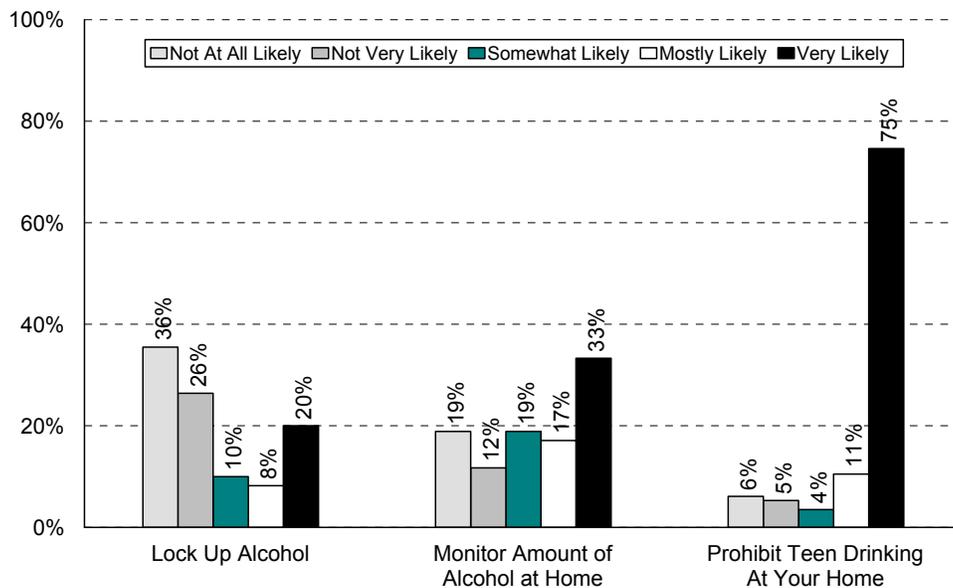
## MEANS RESTRICTION

Five questions assessed the extent to which respondents are likely to take action to restrict their child's access to alcohol.

### Limiting Access in the Home

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to lock up alcohol in their home, to monitor the amount of alcohol in their home, and to prohibit teenagers from drinking in their home. Overall, respondents were most likely to prohibit teenagers from drinking in their home (with 86% *very* or *mostly likely* to do so), followed by likelihood of monitoring the amount of alcohol in their home (with 50% *very* or *mostly likely* to do so), and locking up alcohol in their home (with 28% *very* or *mostly likely* to do so). The majority of respondents (62%) reported that they are *Not At All Likely* (36%) or *Not Very Likely* (26%) to lock up alcohol in their home, 31% are *Not At All Likely* (19%) or *Not Very Likely* (12%) to monitor the amount of alcohol in their home, and 11% are *Not At All Likely* (6%) or *Not Very Likely* (5%) to prohibit teenagers from drinking in their home. See Figure 11.

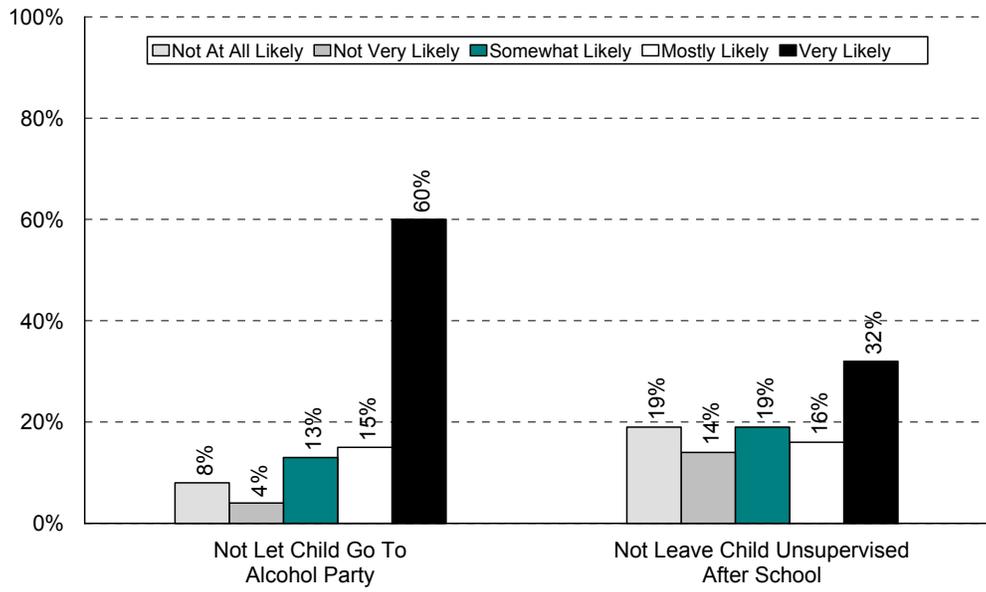
Figure 11: Limiting Access in the Home



### Limiting Situations in Which Youth Might Drink

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to not let their child go to a party where there is alcohol, and to not leave their child unsupervised after school. Respondents were much more likely to report that they would not let their child go to a party where there is alcohol (with 75% *very* or *mostly likely* to do so), than to not leave their child unsupervised after school (with only 48% *very* or *mostly likely* to do so). On the opposite side, 12% of respondents would be *Not At All Likely* (8%) or *Not Very Likely* (4%) to prohibit their child from going to a party where there is alcohol. See Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Limiting Situations in Which Youth Might Drink**

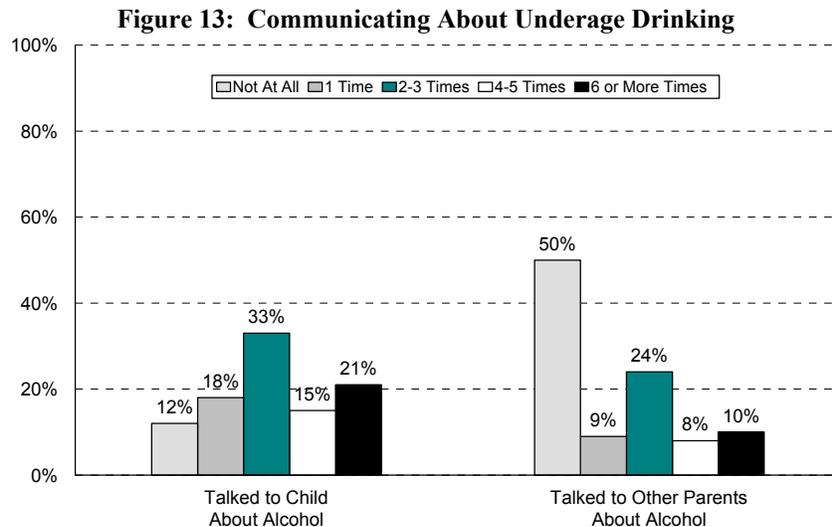


## POTENTIAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Three questions assessed the presence of potential protective factors against underage drinking.

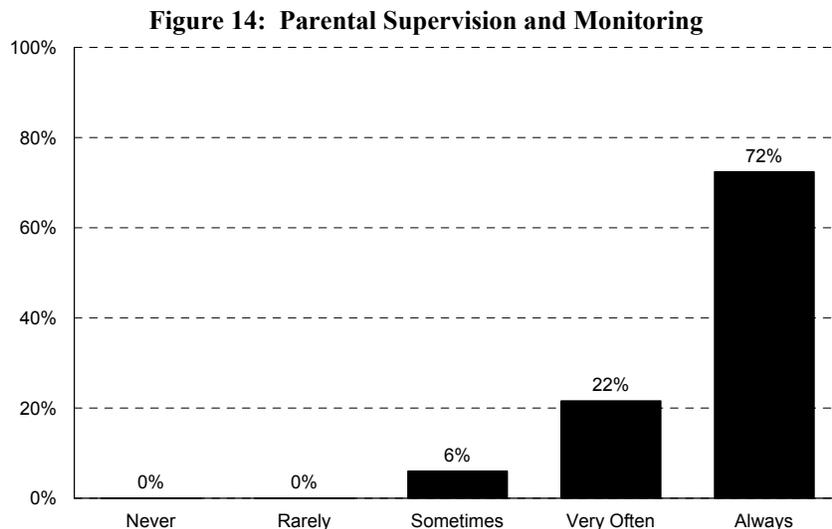
### Communicating About Underage Alcohol Use

Two questions assessed the extent to which respondents talked with their child(ren) about alcohol use in the past 12 months, and the extent to which respondents talked to their child's friend's parents about the consequences of underage drinking in the past 12 months. Overall, 88% of respondents reported talking to their child(ren) about alcohol use in the past 12 months, and half (50%) reported talking to other parents about the consequences of underage drinking.



### Parental Supervision and Monitoring

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they know what their child is doing after school. As shown in Figure 14, almost all of the respondents (94%) reported that they either *Always* (72%) or *Very Often* (22%) know what their child is doing after school. Only 6% indicated that they only know *Sometimes*, and none of the respondents reported that they *Rarely* or *Never* know what their child is doing after school.



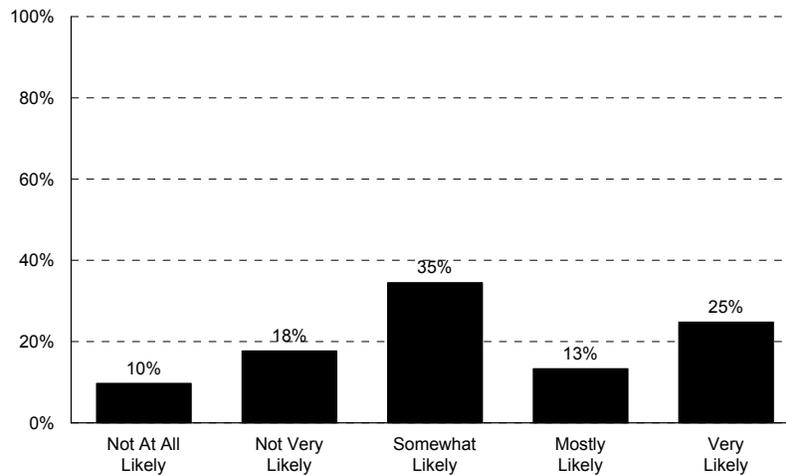
## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Three questions asked respondents about potential prevention strategies.

### Likelihood Of Being Part Of A Parent Prevention Network

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to be part of a parent network to reduce underage drinking. As shown in Figure 15, only 38% of respondents indicated that they would be *Very Likely* (25%) or *Mostly Likely* (13%) to be part of a parent network to reduce underage drinking. An additional 35% reported that they would be *Somewhat Likely*, while 28% reported that they would be *Not Very Likely* (18%) or *Not At All Likely* (10%).

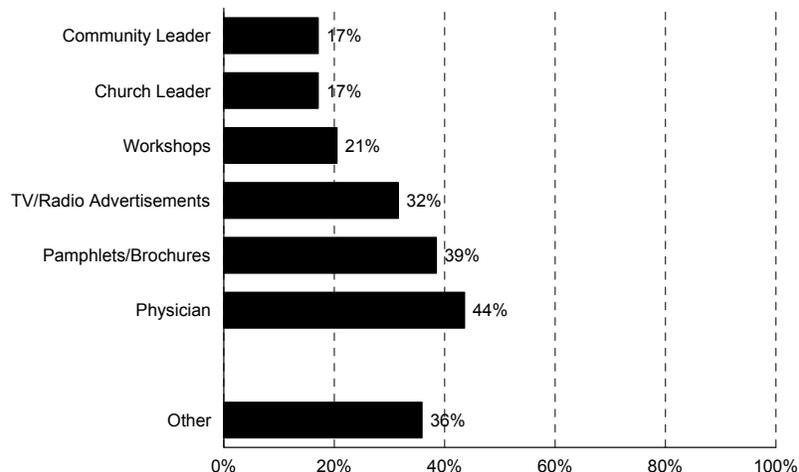
Figure 15: Likelihood of Being Part of a Parent Network



### Trustworthy Sources of Information

Respondents were asked to indicate what sources of information most influence their decisions at home. The percentages in Figure 16 do not add to 100% because respondents were asked to “check *all* that apply.” Overall, the largest number of respondents reported that their *physician* (44%) most influences their decisions at home, followed by *pamphlets/brochures* (39%), *TV/Radio Advertisements* (32%), *Workshops* (21%), *Church Leaders* (17%), and *Community Leaders* (17%). An additional 36% indicated that they were most influenced by another source.

Figure 16: Trusted Sources of Information



Among respondents who indicated that they were most influenced by another source, the largest number of respondents said that they were most influenced by their friends and neighbors (11 respondents), the news/media (8), their own personal values (7), research and reading (5), family members (4), the Internet (3), personal experience (3), their own career/education (2), and other parents (2). See Table 1.

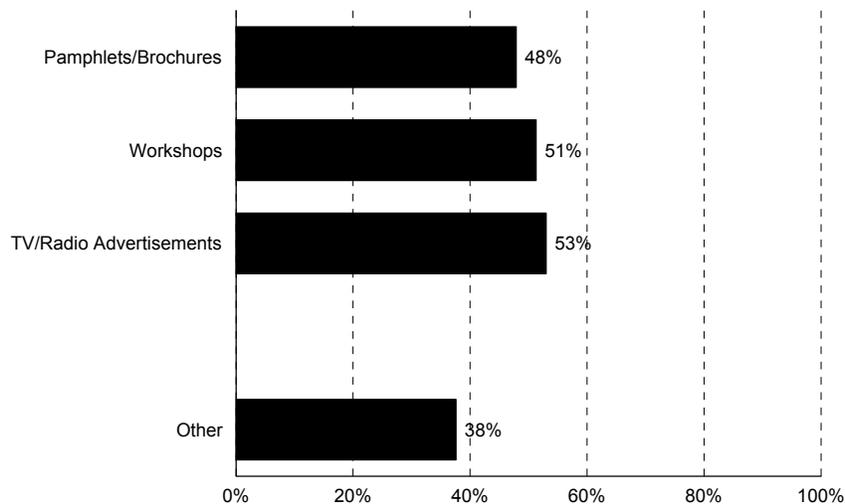
**Table 1: Other Trusted Sources of Information**

11	Friends and neighbors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community of trusted friends (x2)</li> <li>• Conversations with friends (x2)</li> <li>• Discussions with friends</li> <li>• Friends (x4)</li> <li>• Neighbors</li> <li>• Word of mouth (respectful friends)</li> </ul>
8	News/media
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News (x3)</li> <li>• News items</li> <li>• News stories (x2)</li> <li>• News/press</li> <li>• Newspaper</li> </ul>
7	Personal values
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My religious background</li> <li>• Own family values (x2)</li> <li>• Personal conviction</li> <li>• Personal values (x3)</li> </ul>
5	Research and reading
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal research (x3)</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Reading studies and watching documentaries about child rearing</li> </ul>
4	Family members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family (x3)</li> <li>• Home</li> </ul>
3	Internet
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet (x2)</li> <li>• Material from reliable websites</li> </ul>
3	Personal experience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Experience with family alcoholism</li> <li>• Their clean father of 8 years from alcohol and drugs</li> </ul>
2	Career/education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My education</li> <li>• My work in substance abuse</li> </ul>
2	Other parents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other parents</li> <li>• Talking amongst parents and kids</li> </ul>
1	Books
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books</li> </ul>
1	Multiple sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple sources</li> </ul>
1	Professionals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals</li> </ul>
1	School
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School</li> </ul>

## Best Way to Help Parents Prevent Underage Drinking

Respondents were also asked to indicate what would be the best way(s) to help them prevent underage drinking. The percentages in Figure 17 do not add to 100% because respondents were asked to “check *all* that apply.” Overall, the largest number of respondents reported that *TV/Radio Advertisements* (53%) would be the best way to help parents, followed by *Workshops* (51%), and *Pamphlets/Brochures* (48%). An additional 38% indicated that they would be best helped by another source.

Figure 17: Best Way to Help Parents Prevent Underage Drinking



Among respondents who indicated that they would be best helped by another source, the largest number of respondents said that the most helpful things would be parent education/workshops/organizations (8 respondents), school curricula (5), youth groups and teen-to-teen support (4), parents communicating with their kids (3), family involvement (3), online resources (3), community education (2), and adults model responsible drinking behavior (2). See Table 2.

**Table 2: Other Ways to Help Parents Prevent Underage Drinking**

8	Parent education/workshops/organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of parent council</li><li>• Other adults</li><li>• Parent education at all PCP visits</li><li>• Parent groups</li><li>• Parents talking with each other</li><li>• School organizing parents</li><li>• Unitarian Church - Program Owl</li><li>• Workshops with parents (skills for intervention)</li></ul>
5	School curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health class in school</li><li>• In school education for kids</li><li>• School education</li><li>• School information</li><li>• Workshops in school</li></ul>
4	Youth groups and teen-to-teen support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Church youth groups</li><li>• Teen-to-teen support groups</li><li>• Teens talking to teens</li><li>• Youth/peer groups</li></ul>
3	Communication with kids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussing consequences, communication</li><li>• Parents talking to their kids</li><li>• Talk with my kids</li></ul>
3	Family involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family</li><li>• Parent's influence</li><li>• Parental involvement</li></ul>
3	Online resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• E-mail, Internet</li><li>• Online</li><li>• Sophisticated website with straightforward practical instructions and information</li></ul>
2	Community education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information through school and community</li><li>• Talk about it - use statistics</li></ul>
2	Model responsible behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Model only very responsible use of alcohol in appropriate amounts and places</li><li>• Having parents who model responsible drinking behavior</li></ul>
1	Allow periodic exposure to alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allowing them periodic, safe exposure to alcohol</li></ul>
1	Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Books</li></ul>
1	Moral education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Giving child a strong moral foundation</li></ul>
1	Peer pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer pressure</li></ul>
1	Teen outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teen outreach</li></ul>
1	Youth activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Giving them better things to do with their time</li></ul>

## ITEM ASSOCIATIONS

Pairwise correlation coefficients were calculated for all survey items. All correlation coefficients at or above .45 (20% variance explained) were retained and interpreted. All correlations reported are statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

There was a strong positive relationship between respondents who think that it is OK to allow teenagers to drink on special occasions and those who think it is OK to allow teenagers to drink at home ( $r = .750$ ; 56% variance explained).

There was a strong positive relationship between respondents who reported that they are likely to lock up alcohol in their home and those who are likely to monitor the amount of alcohol in their home ( $r = .681$ ; 46% variance explained).

There was a strong positive relationship between respondents who know that it is not legal to provide alcohol to underage youth under any circumstances and those who know that a person who provides alcohol to an underage youth is potentially liable for anything that occurs while the youth is under the influence of alcohol ( $r = .568$ ; 32% variance explained).

There was a strong positive relationship between respondents who think it is OK for teenagers to drink in moderation and those who think that it is OK to allow teenagers to drink at home ( $r = .554$ ; 31% variance explained).

There was a strong positive relationship between respondents who report that they would *not* let their child go to a party where there is alcohol and those who report that they would prohibit teenagers from drinking in their own home ( $r = .508$ ; 26% variance explained).

There was a moderate positive relationship between respondents who think that it is OK for teenagers to drink in moderation and those who think that it is OK to allow teenagers to drink alcohol on special occasions ( $r = .491$ ; 24% variance explained).

There was a moderate positive relationship between respondents who think that teenagers are going to drink and there is nothing that parents can do about it, and those who think that it would be a waste of time to talk to their child about underage drinking because the child wouldn't listen anyway ( $r = .470$ ; 22% variance explained).

There was a moderate negative relationship between respondents who reported that it is not OK for youth under 21 years of age to drink alcohol and those who think that it is OK to allow teenagers to drink on special occasions. That is, those who think that youth should be 21 years or older before drinking alcohol were less likely to report that it is OK to allow teenagers to drink on special occasions. ( $r = -.458$ ; 21% variance explained).