

Parental attitudes to young people's alcohol habits 2015

The Danish Cancer Society and TrygFonden smba (TryghedsGruppen smba) September 2016.

Danish title: "Forældres holdninger til unges alkoholvaner 2015"

Summary

This report outlines parental attitudes towards and knowledge of Danish young people's alcohol consumption among parents of young people aged 13-16. Parents were also asked about the alcohol consumption of their own children and any concerns associated with this. In addition, the report shows parents' experienced influence on their children's alcohol consumption. The report is based on data from an online survey carried out among 1,763 parents with at least one child aged 13-16. The data has been gathered by the research agency Userneeds in the period from the 21st September to the 23rd October 2015. The report has been written by the Danish Cancer Society and TrygFonden's preventative alcohol campaign with the Danish name "Fuld af liv".

Parental knowledge of and attitudes towards Danish young people's alcohol consumption

According to a 2014 survey from the "Fuld af liv" campaign, around 20% of young people aged 15-20 drink more than the recommended safe limit for alcohol consumption as defined by the Danish Health Authority (1,2)¹. In this survey 54% of parents estimate that 10-30% of young people aged 15-20 drink above the recommended safe limits, while 44% overestimate young people's consumption and believe that at least 40% drink above the recommended safe limit.

The majority of parents (89%) think that parents have the overall responsibility for the alcohol consumption of children and young people when the child is under 18 years old.

When parents are asked to state the minimum age for children and young people the first time they consume a full unit, 45% responded under 16, in spite of the fact that it is illegal to sell alcohol to children and young people under 16. Only 10% of parents believe that children and young people should be minimum 18-years-old the first time they consume a full unit.

Parental knowledge of their child's alcohol consumption

89% of parents of 16-year-olds state that their child has drunk a full unit compared to 8% of parents of 13-year-olds. The proportion of parents who state that their child has been drunk also increases with the age of the child.

¹ The Danish Health Authority's recommended safe limit for alcohol is 7 units a week for women and 14 units a week for men.

When parents are asked how often they think their child drinks alcohol, 39% respond that their child drinks alcohol at least once a month. 2% respond that their child drinks alcohol 2-3 times a week. Among parents of 13-14-year-olds, 17-19% respond that their child drinks alcohol at least once a month while 61% of parents of 16-year-olds respond that their child drinks alcohol at least once a month.

Parental attitudes to and concerns around their child's alcohol consumption

Among parents of children who do *not drink* alcohol (n=972), 92% are pleased that their child does not drink. At the same time, 87% of parents of children who *drink* alcohol (n=748) think that their child's alcohol consumption is appropriate.

The majority of parents (76%) of children who have drunk a full unit (n=815) believe that their child drinks *less* alcohol than the child's peers, while just 1% estimate that their child drinks *more* than average. 67% of parents of children who drink alcohol (n=748) state that they have no concerns about their child's alcohol consumption. Among parents who state that they have concerns, the majority are concerned about the risk of assaults or accidents.

Parental influence on their child's alcohol consumption

Nine out of ten parents (90%) experience that they have influence on their child's alcohol consumption. More parents of 13-14-year-olds compared with parents of 15-16-year-olds experience that they have influence on their child's alcohol consumption (94% compared with 87%).

Among parents who state that they have or want to have an influence on their child's alcohol habits (n=1,717), almost three quarters (75%) respond that they do something to influence their child's alcohol consumption. The methods most often used by parents to influence their child's alcohol consumption are:

- Speaking to their child about his/her alcohol consumption (57 %),
- Trying to be a role model by limiting their own alcohol consumption (51%),
- Not serving alcohol to their child (51 %),
- Having an alcohol agreement with their child (48 %).

Among parents who experience that they do *not* have any influence on their child's alcohol consumption but would like to have (n=91), 58% state that the lack of influence is due to their child being more influenced by friends than parents. In addition, 24% state that the lack of influence is due to the fact that their child does not listen to them and another 24% state that their child is old enough to buy alcohol.

Among parents who state that they do not have any influence on their child's alcohol consumption and at the same time do not want to get involved (n=46), the majority state that they do not want to get involved because their child is old enough to take responsibility for himself/herself.

Parental knowledge of the link between alcohol and cancer

When the parents in the survey are presented with a number of factors and have to mark which factors they believe increase the risk of cancer, slightly over half (56%) believe that alcohol increases the risk of cancer.