

Assessing children's norms and perceptions of peer drinking

Introduction

The Alcohol Education Trust, as part of its work to help reduce the harms of early and excessive use of alcohol among young people, tries to change behaviour by helping children realise that their peers do not drink as much or as often as they think. By correcting their social norms we can help them resist peer pressure or their fear of missing out (fomo) as they come to realise that most young people go out to have a good time, without getting drunk. Data was collected from 651 11-17 year olds in Southampton, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Bridlington, Hull and Rotherham during 2017 to help us understand their views and to then feedback to them and their schools the correct statistics around young people's drinking.

Alcohol Quiz Questions and answers given to participants at the end of the day

1) How many 11–15 year olds HAVEN'T tried alcohol?

The answer is B - 62%.

Both parents and young people think that more young people drink than actually do! Only 10% of 15-year-olds drink weekly – and 2% of 13 year olds. It's important to know that choosing not to drink at this age is 'normal'.

2) Of those who do drink, where do you think young people (age 11–15) say they get alcohol from?

The answer is B – Parents and family.

32% of 11–15 year olds say they get alcohol from their parents or carers. The other main source is 25% from friends. Only 5% have tried to buy alcohol themselves.

3) What's the average age of a first whole drink? (a full glass of wine/ beer/ spirits/ cider)

The answer is C – Age 14.

This is usually in a family setting. Young people's livers and brains can only cope small amounts of alcohol at this age so it's best to wait until you're older.

4) How many 16–24 year olds regularly get drunk? (in the last week)

The answer is E - 18%.

The proportion of young people (aged 16 to 24) that report binge drinking in the previous week has fallen since 2005, from 29 per cent to 18 per cent.

From what we see in the media, you'd think most young people were out getting drunk on a Friday and Saturday night, and it's what younger teenagers think too – as they're the ones you notice! The reality is that most young people go out to have a good time, but not to get drunk.

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Pupil responses

Total number of pupils taking part in the survey = 651

Year groups participating:

Year 6 = 1

Year 7 = 126

Year 8 = 125

Year 9 = 135

Year 10 = 120

Year 11 = 65

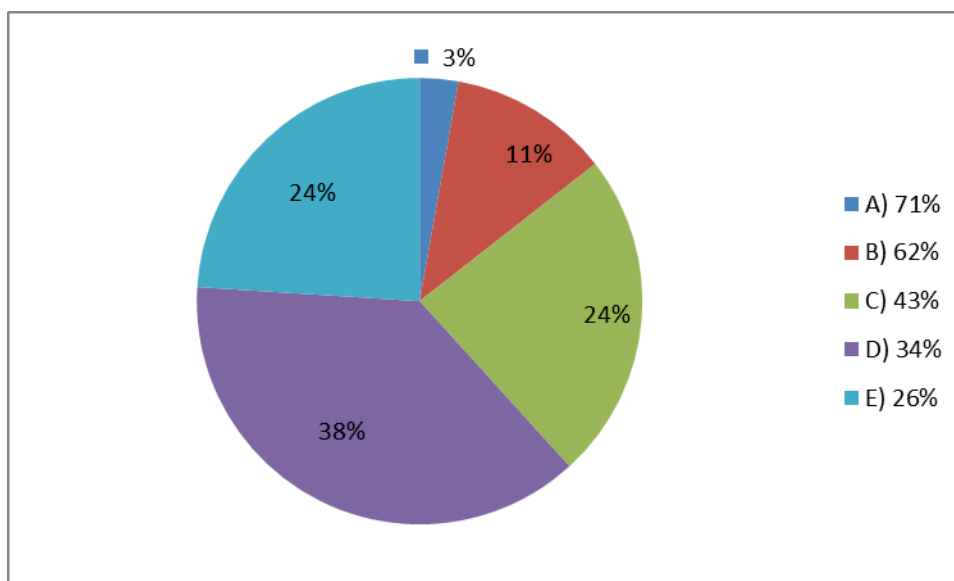
Year 12 = 20

Year 13 = 18

Year 14 = 1

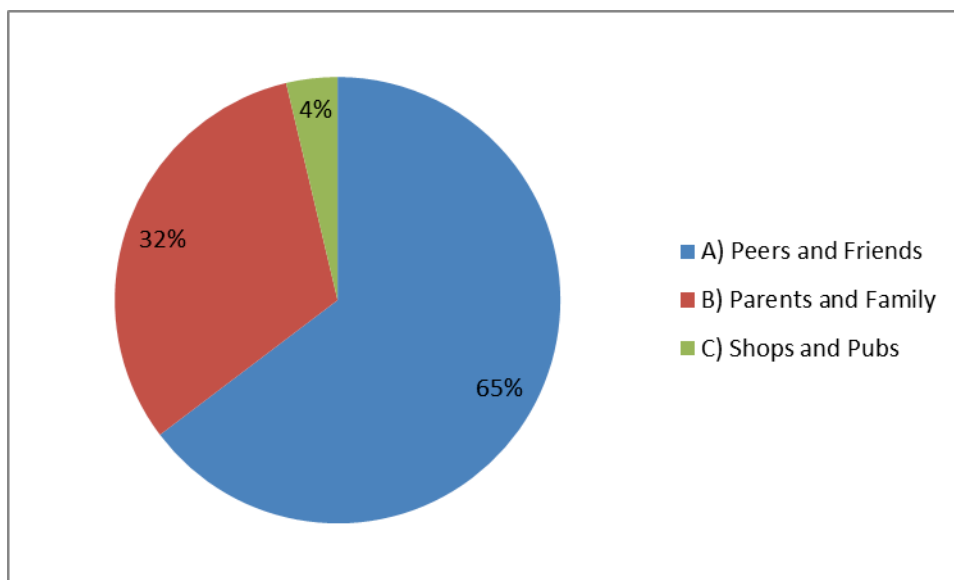
Unspecified = 40

1) How many 11-15 year olds HAVEN'T tried alcohol?



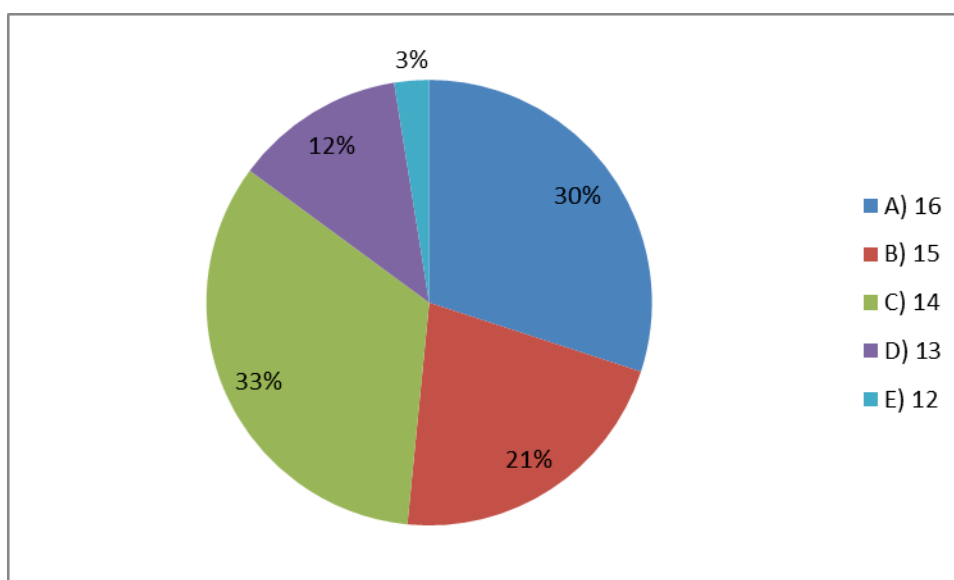
As you will see, just 14% of pupils guessed correctly or under estimated what percentage of youngsters had tried alcohol, with the majority presuming 60% or more of 11-15 year olds were drinking. The correct answer is B – 62% of 11 – 15 year olds have NOT tried alcohol.

2) Of those who drink, where do you think young people aged 11-15 years say they get alcohol from?



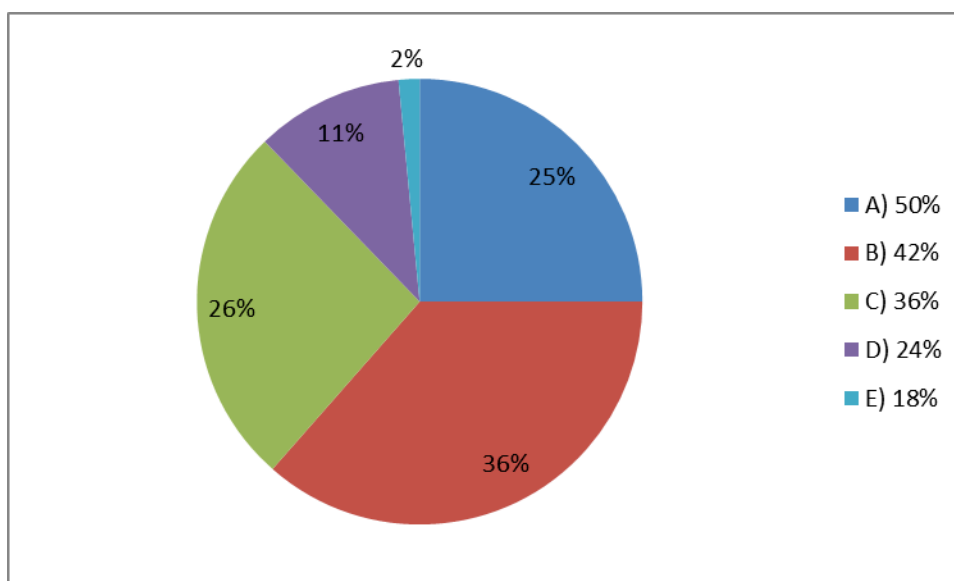
65% of respondents thought their peers got alcohol from friends and peers – whereas it is overwhelmingly from parents and carers - The correct answer is B – parents and family. This is encouraging as it suggests that the children do not expect their parents/carers to supply them with alcohol, 96% are aware that they will be unable to buy from a shop or pub if under 18.

3) What's the average age of a first whole drink? (A full glass of wine/beer/spirits/cider)



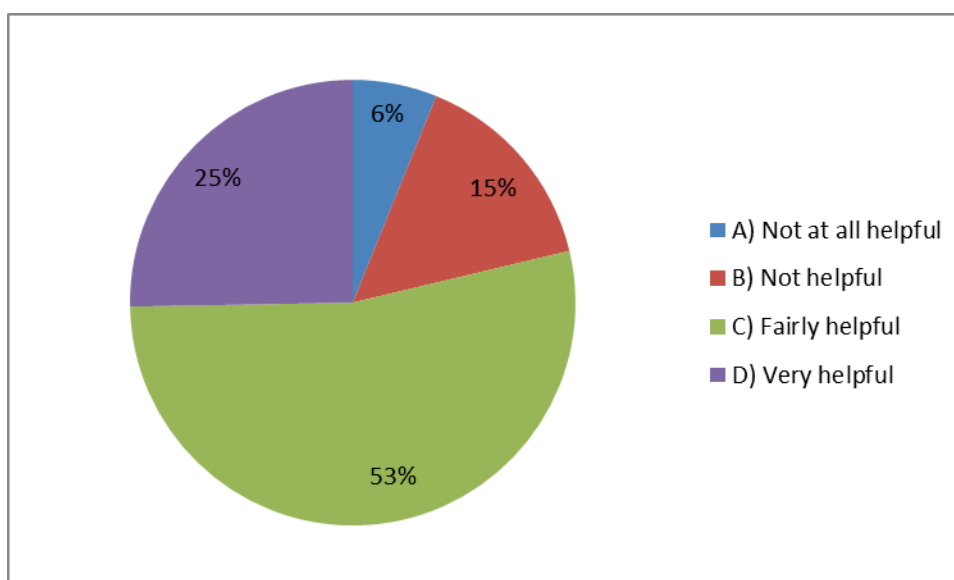
The correct answer is C – age 14 as was correctly estimated by 33% of students, many 51% of respondents believed the average age to be 15 or 16, which is an encouraging indicator of behaviour change in this cohort.

4) How many 16-24 year olds regularly get drunk? (In the last week)



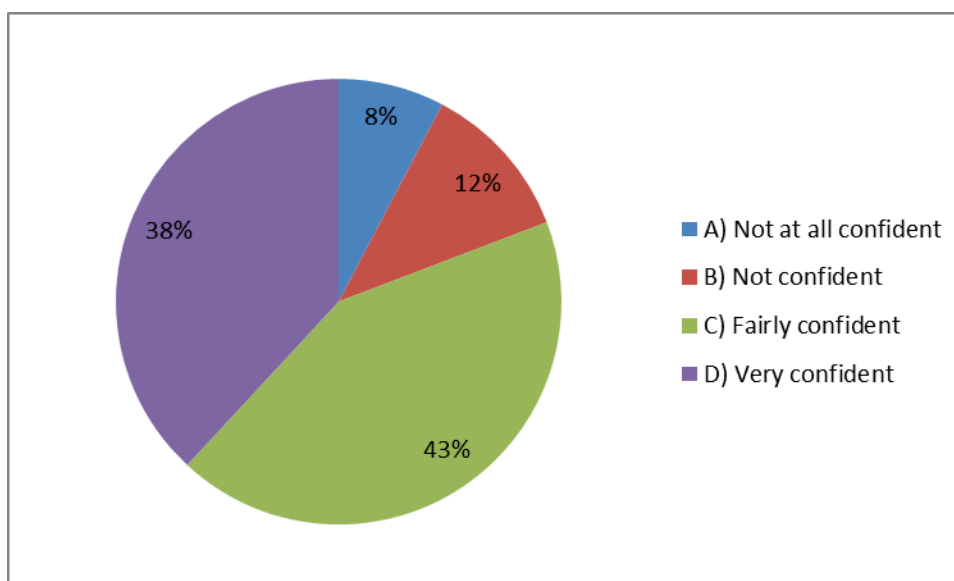
The correct answer is E – 18%, which only 2% of children guessed correctly. Younger teenagers vastly over estimate the number of young adults who get drunk, 62% of respondents thought 42% or more of this age group get drunk weekly. It is important to make students aware that although young adults may drink alcohol as part of the evening, 80% do not go out to get drunk or see it as socially acceptable.

5) How helpful is the alcohol education and information you receive at school?



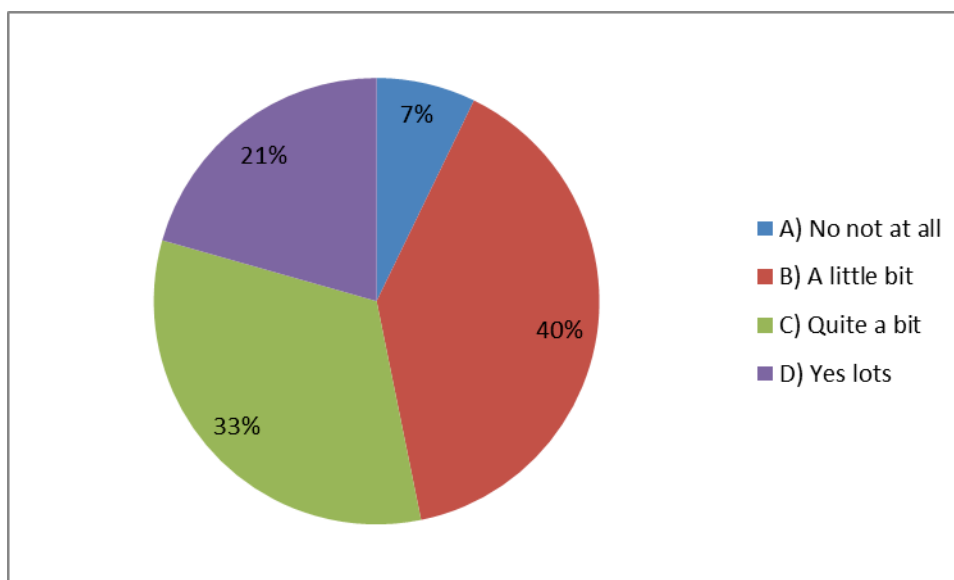
As a result of this work with these children from schools new to the AET, the AET have now provided each of the participated schools with the offer of free access to the highly evaluated talk about alcohol programme to improve engagement with the 74% of children who only found alcohol education fairly helpful or less.

6. How confident do you feel you will be at resisting peer pressure to drink alcohol?



The majorities of the participating children's' resilience appears fair to strong, which is encouraging.

7. Have your parents/carers talked to you about alcohol at all?



47% of parents had only spoken a little bit, or not at all to their children about alcohol. We know that parents and carers maintaining open dialogue and discussion, setting boundaries and agreed rules around alcohol, as well as knowing where they are and who they are with, substantially reduces both experimentation and the amount drunk by their children

Concluding thoughts

It is interesting to note that most young people believed the age of first whole drink was older than the actuality of 13 ½ suggesting that they may accept stricter parental controls as to at what age it is appropriate to begin drinking. They also did not presume that their parents or carers would supply them with alcohol, believing peers and friends would be the first point of supply. It is important therefore that we inform children that it is against the law for them to ask someone over 18 to buy alcohol on their behalf – buying by proxy, as they put both that person as well as the shopkeeper at risk of a fine, police action and in the case of the shopkeeper, losing their licence. Finally, younger teenagers presume far more 16 – 24 year olds are getting drunk than actually are, as do their parents and carers, so it is important that educators, the press and those working with young people emphasise that the majority of young people go out to enjoy themselves responsibly and that this is the norm.

Prepared by The Alcohol Education Trust August 2017