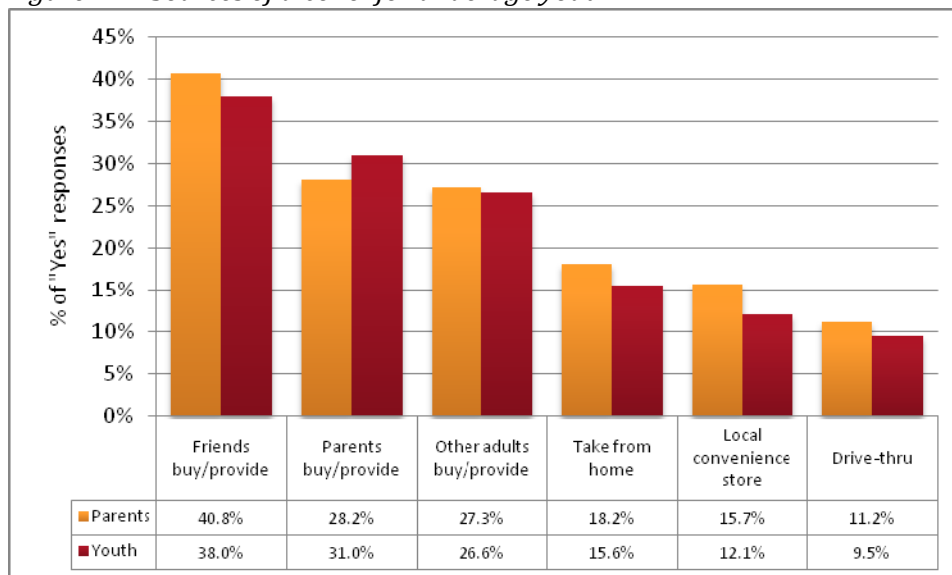


Illegal Underage Alcohol Use: Where do Youth Obtain and Consume Alcohol?

A recent analysis of longitudinal evaluation data from the *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking* media campaign sheds new light on the questions of where minors illegally obtain and consume alcohol. The analysis was conducted with a matched sample of 4,823 parents and their children from Franklin County, Ohio obtained from surveys conducted annually between 2002 and 2006. All children were between the ages of 13 and 18. The results depicted throughout this paper are based on the matched sample of 4,823 pairs of parents and children for which complete data were available on each issue from all respondents. The media campaign and its evaluation are funded by the Ohio Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction Services with funds from the United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Interestingly, responses of parents and their children regarding the underage sources of alcohol were relatively similar, particularly in agreeing that friends are the primary source of alcohol, followed by parents, that other adults are accomplices, and that youth often take alcohol from their own homes. Finally, responses indicate convenience stores and drive-thrus are not being judicious enough when verifying IDs (Figure 1).

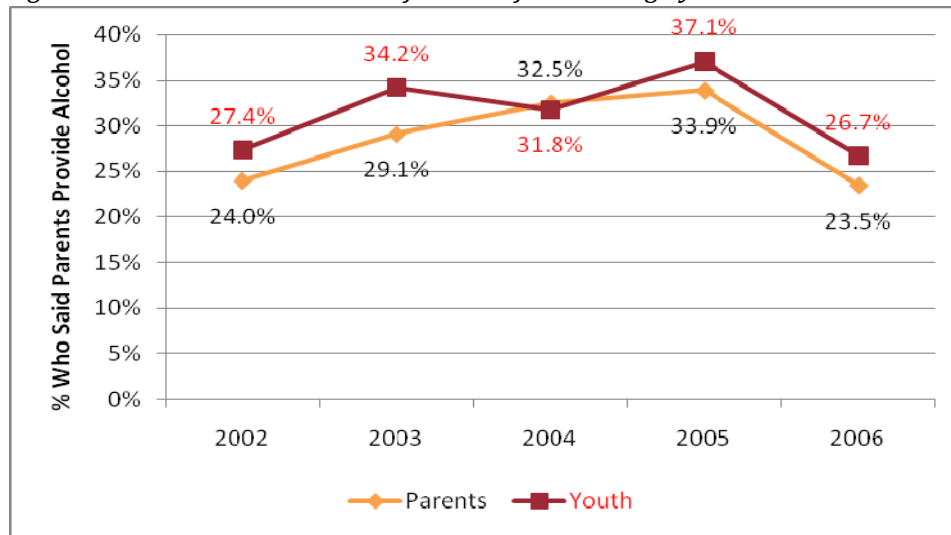
Figure 1 Sources of alcohol for underage youth



These results are significant, since approximately 15% of Ohio adults are still unaware (as of 2006) of the legal consequences of supplying alcohol to minors or permitting them to drink alcohol. Ohio law states that underage individuals cannot be given alcohol or be permitted to consume alcohol by anyone other than their parents, who must be present at the time of consumption. Also, it is illegal for parents to give alcohol to their teens' underage friends even if the friends have their parents' permission. Parents and other adults can be sued if they give alcohol to anyone under age 21 who then hurt themselves or someone else and/or damage someone's property. Finally, parents and other adults can face a maximum sentence of six months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine for breaking these laws.

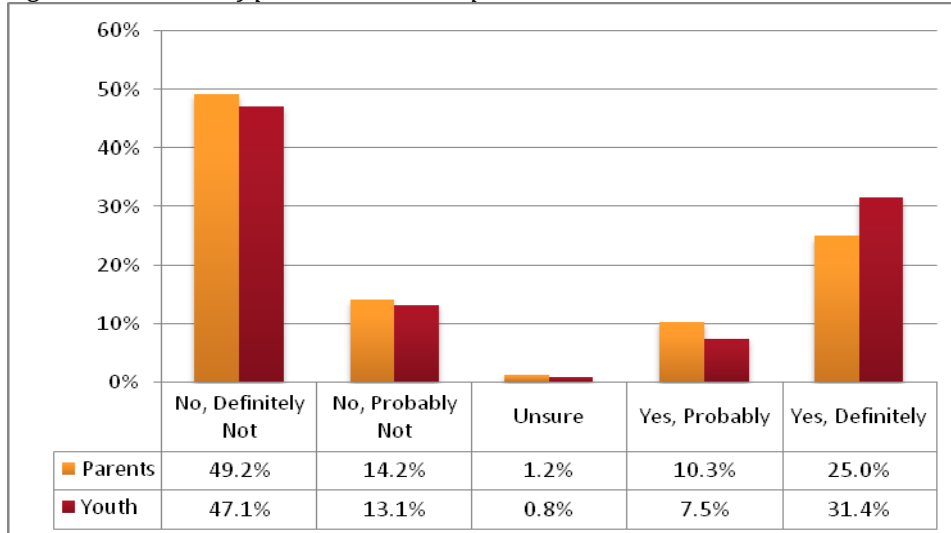
Compared to youth, parents consistently underestimated the extent to which youth obtain alcohol from other parents (Figure 2). However, the perception that a parent is often the primary source of alcohol increased among both parents and youth from 2002 through 2005 and then it declined significantly in 2006. These changes are due, at least in part, to the *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most* media campaigns (Seufert and Kubilius, 2008). The results suggest that raising awareness of this problem—along with keeping the public informed about Ohio’s underage drinking laws—can increase parental vigilance regarding their own children’s behaviors. Nevertheless, it is important for parents to know that other parents may be sanctioning alcohol use by their children and their children’s friends. Some parents think that hosting their teenager’s party in the home will keep the kids out of trouble and safe. While their intentions are good, simply taking the car keys away does not prevent all the problems related to underage drinking. Also, as shown above in Figure 1, youth illegally obtain alcohol from multiple sources other than parents. Therefore parents need to not only communicate with other parents, but also regularly monitor where their children are and what they are doing.

Figure 2 Parents as a source of alcohol for underage youth: 2002-2006



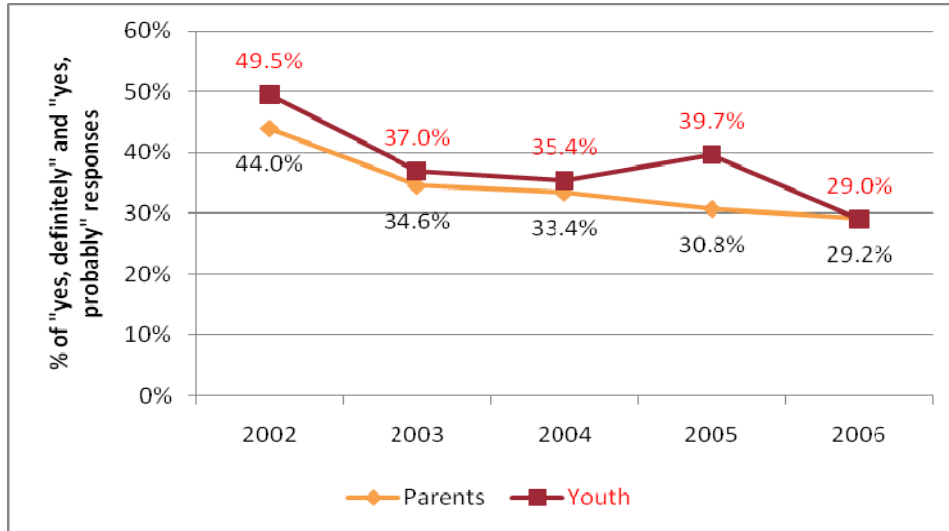
Combined data from 2002 through 2006 show that youth were somewhat more likely than their parents to know of parents who host parties where alcohol is available or served to teens (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Know of parents who host parties where alcohol is available to teens



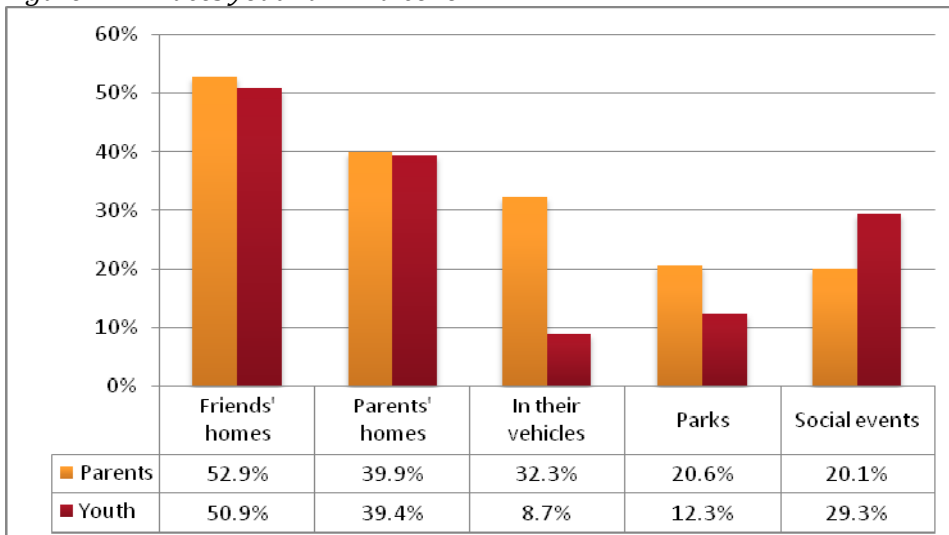
However, the proportion of both parents and youth who said they know of parents who host teen parties with alcohol has declined since the inception of the *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most* campaign in Franklin County (Figure 4). As of 2006, 29% of both parents and youth said that they “definitely” or “probably” knew of such parents, showing declines of 20 percentage points in this belief among youth and 15 percentage points among parents since 2002. It is likely that increased familiarity with Ohio laws and increased emphasis on reducing underage drinking (both goals of the *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most* media campaign) have helped to produce these positive results.

Figure 4 Know of parents who host teen parties with alcohol: 2002-2006



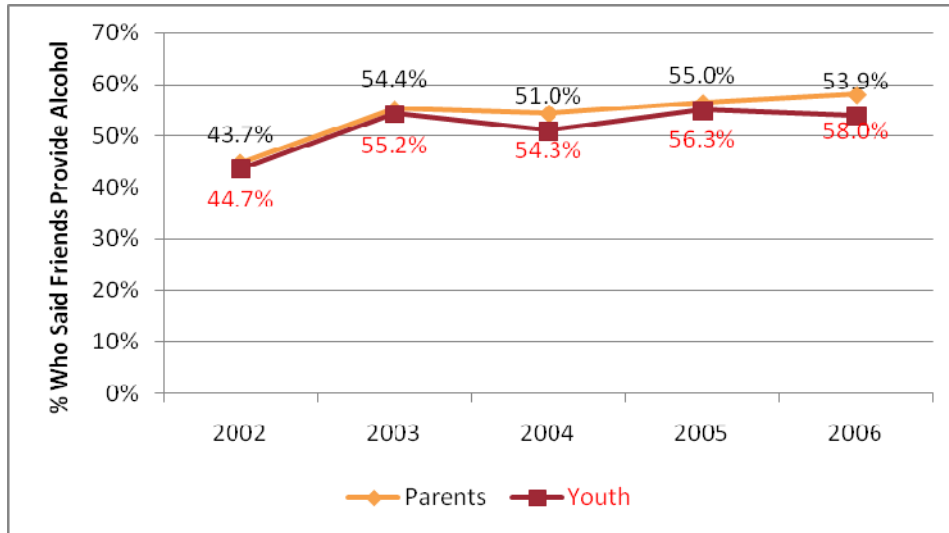
Parents and youth agree that friends’ and parents’ homes are the primary locations where underage youth drink alcohol (Figure 5). However, parents are far more likely than their children to assume youth drink in vehicles—a disparity of nearly 24 percentage points. Since many youth have been warned about the danger of drinking and driving, they may, as a result, seek places they believe to be safer than motor vehicles at which to consume alcohol. It should also be noted that “social events” in Figure 5 may occur at home (house parties), chaperoned events such as dances, or un-chaperoned outings; a survey participant’s response may vary depending upon his/her own definition of “social event” which may, in turn, be mediated by whether the respondent is a parent or youth.

Figure 5 Places youth drink alcohol



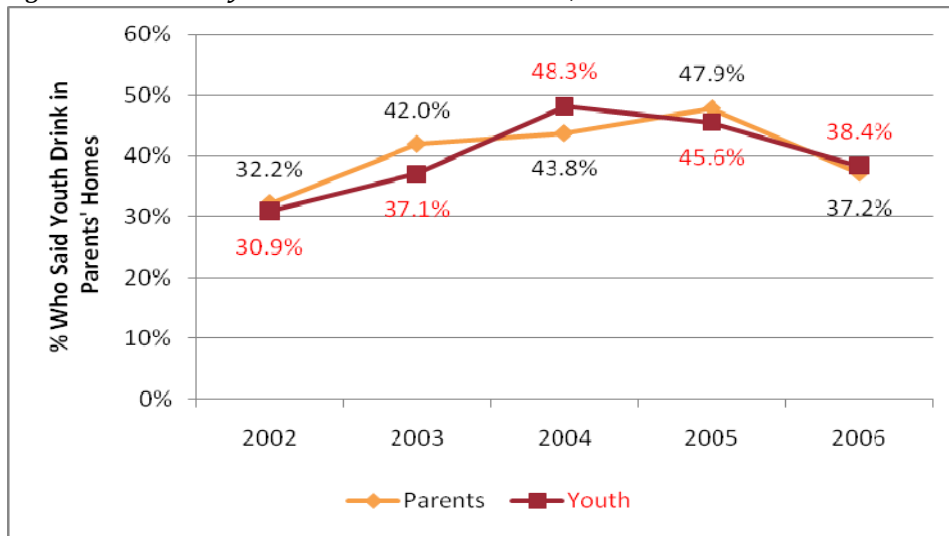
Parents' and youths' responses from year to year have generally remained consistent. Since 2003, over 50% of parents and youth say that underage drinking occurs in friends' homes (Figure 6). What is unknown is how often a parent was at home and knew—or should have known—and did nothing to prevent it.

Figure 6 Places youth drink: Friends' homes, 2002-2006



It is interesting to note, however, that youths' and parents' perceptions of parents' homes as a place youth drink increased from approximately 30% in 2002 to approximately 45% in 2004 and 2005 (Figure 7). Despite the efforts of *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most* campaigns and positive changes since 2004 and 2005, over one-third of youth drinking occurs in parents' homes, though not necessarily with the parents' knowledge or a parent "hosting."

Figure 7 Places youth drink: Parents' homes, 2002-2006



The above results show the effect that media- and school-based educational campaigns can have on parent and youth perceptions about the complicity of parents and others in underage drinking. The *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most* media campaign likely helped to raise awareness and remind parents to be diligent in preventing their children's alcohol use, particularly when it is reasonable to expect them to know when drinking is occurring in their homes. Even when they are unaware of underage alcohol use in their homes, parents may still be liable in the event of death, injury, or vandalism. Finally, parents must be encouraged to take responsibility and remain vigilant since youth illegally obtain alcohol from multiple sources other than parents.