

THE TOUGH TALK: AGING PARENTS
AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE



The ToughTalk

March 15, 2018

It's not easy to parent your parents.

Alcohol, recreational drug and prescription drug abuse doesn't just impact teens these days – many elder Americans are also susceptible to misusing them. A new survey commissioned by WellCare Health Plans, Inc., conducted by Kelton Global, reveals that while many Americans are more concerned about the risks of substance abuse for their aging parents than their children, they feel far less equipped to talk to them about it or help them if they were abusing drugs or alcohol.

Despite their concerns, many adult children are in the dark when it comes to their parents' use of drugs and alcohol. The majority even feel they would have a tough time distinguishing between an alcohol or drug problem and the regular signs of aging.

Methodology

Online survey to 1,055 Americans ages 30-55 who have a child 13 years or older and a living parent/in-law, with a margin of error of +/- 3.1%.

The survey was commissioned by WellCare Health Plans, Inc., and conducted between February 20th and February 26th 2018 among 1,055 respondents, using an e-mail invitation and an online survey.

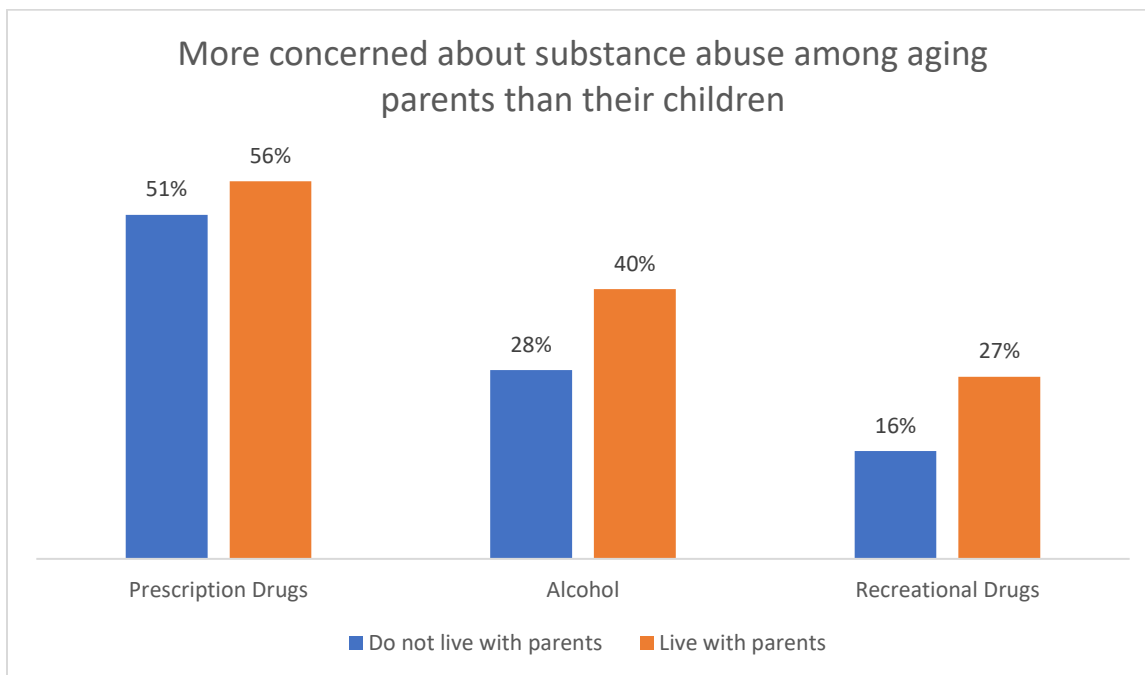
Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results.

In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percent, from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample. The margin of error for any subgroups will be slightly higher.

Kelton Global is a leading global insights firm serving as a partner to more than 100 of the Fortune 500 and thousands of smaller companies and organizations.

Many adults are more concerned about their aging parents than their children abusing drugs and alcohol

Among adults polled, one-half (51%) are more concerned about the risk of their elderly parent abusing prescription drugs than their children doing so. While they are less concerned when it comes to their parents' use of alcohol and recreational drugs, those that worry the most are the ones living under the same roof with their aging parents.



Many are concerned by the side effects of their parents' medications (36%), the number of prescriptions they take (28%) and how long they've been taking the prescriptions (24%).

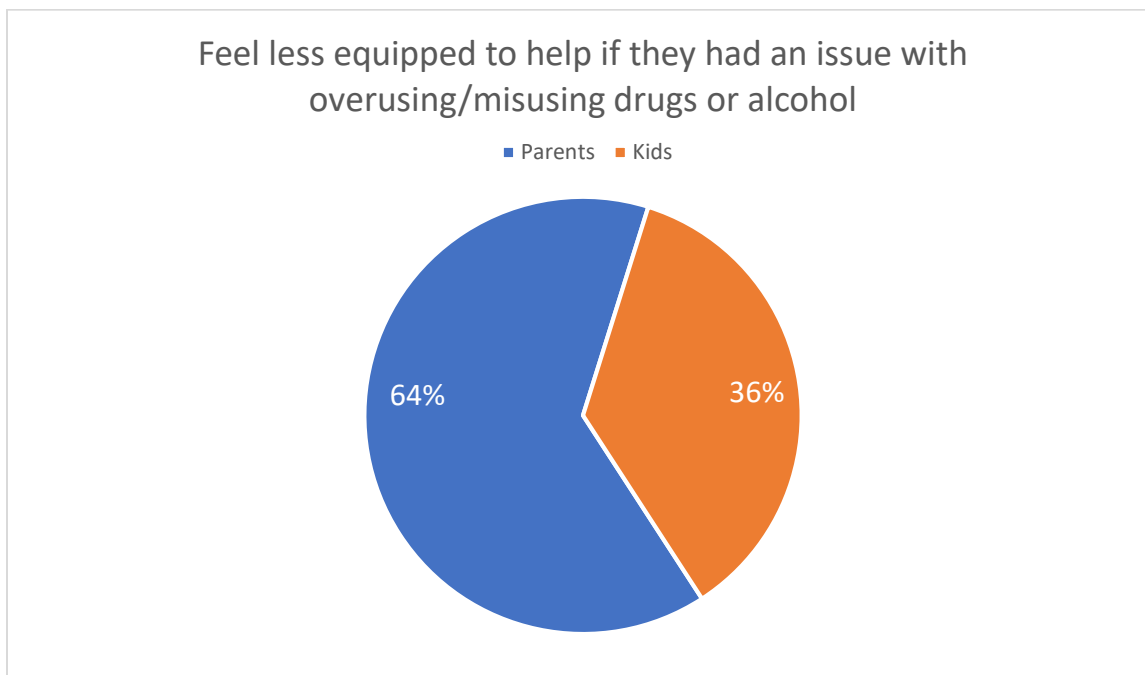
More than 1 in 4 Americans 30-55 are concerned about the number of prescriptions their parents take

Adults feel ill-equipped to talk to their parents about or help them with a drug or alcohol problem

Nearly one-quarter (22%) don't know how to talk to their parents about overusing, misusing or abusing drugs, while 15% feel the same when it comes to their children.

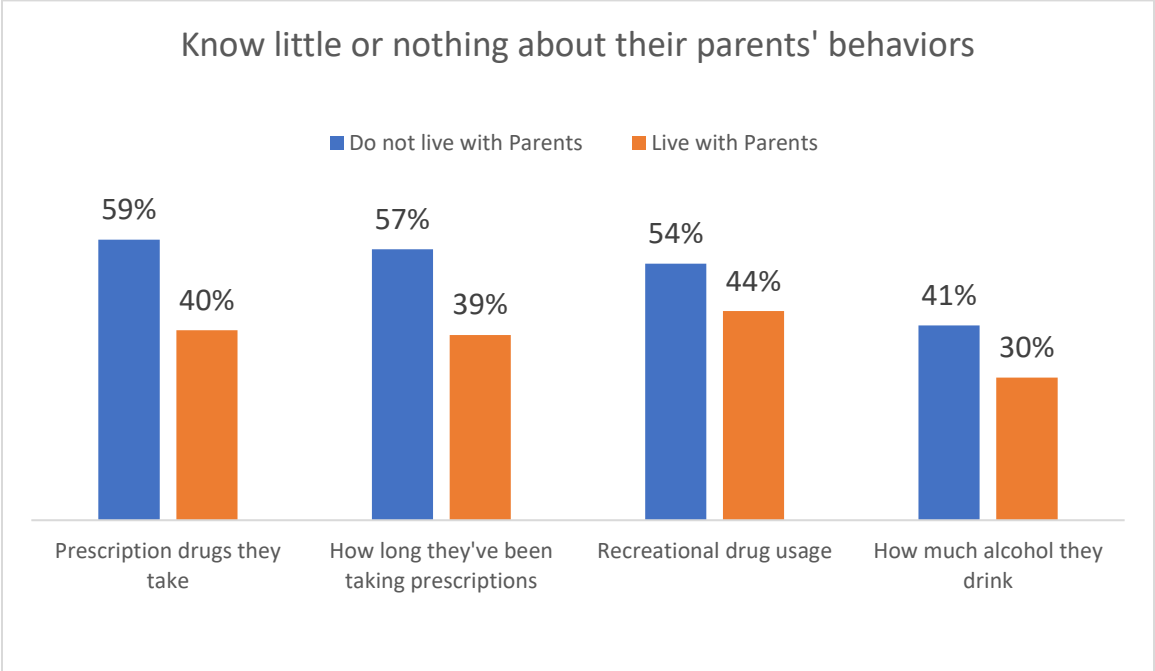
- Those who live with their elderly parents are more likely to say they don't know how to talk to their parents about it than those who don't live with their parents (37% vs. 19%).

Nearly two-thirds (64%) say they're less equipped to help their parents than their kids (36%) if they had a problem overusing drugs or alcohol.



Despite concerns, many are ill-informed about their aging parents use of prescription drugs and alcohol

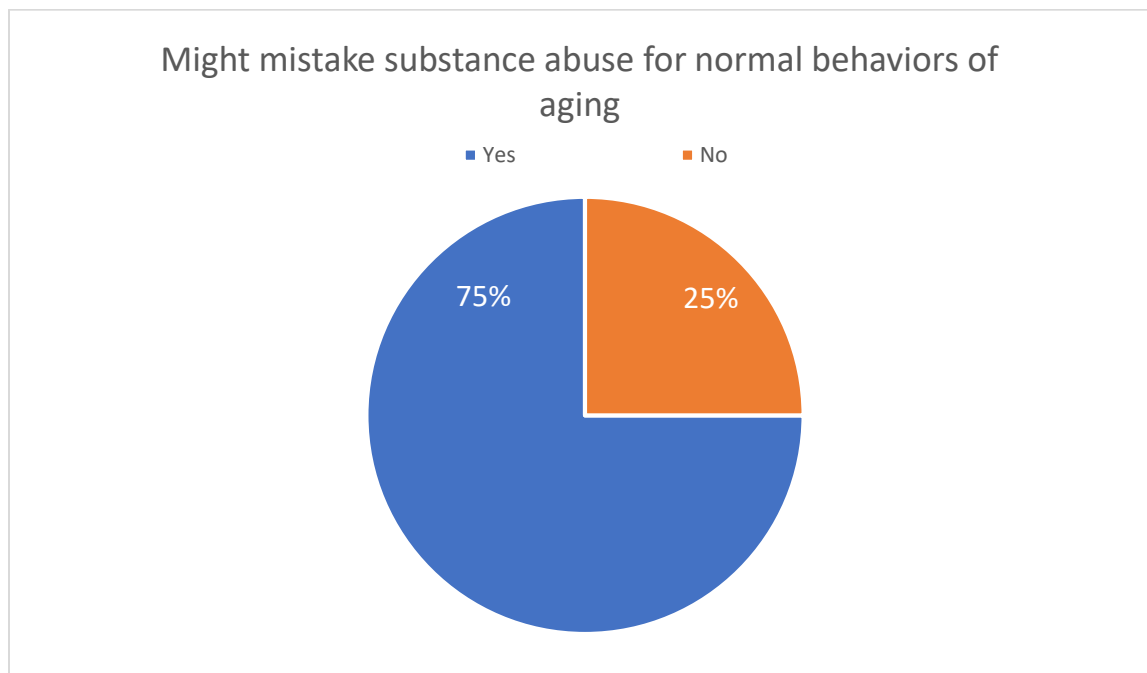
There's a lot about their parents' behaviors with drugs and alcohol that people know little to nothing about.



Adult children admit that they'd have a hard time recognizing the signs of a parent's substance abuse problem

There's a lot of confusion between what is potential overuse and what is just parents getting older. Three-quarters (75%) admit that it's possible to mistake potential signs of overuse, misuse and abuse of prescription drugs or alcohol for normal behaviors of aging.

- Being around elder parents more often actually makes it harder to recognize the problem. Those who live with their parents are more likely than those who don't to say it's possible to mistake the signs (83% vs. 74%).



Even if suspecting a substance abuse problem, many adult children would have a hard time raising the issue with their parents

Nearly one in three say they don't feel comfortable talking to their parents about recreational drugs (30%), alcohol (28%) or prescription drugs (28%). Those who do not live with their parents are more likely than those who live with them to say they're uncomfortable discussing prescription drugs (30% vs. 21%) or alcohol (29% vs. 20%).

They cite a number of reasons for not wanting to engage in that discussion: they think their parents would get mad at them (22%), they wouldn't know how to start the conversation (20%), or they don't feel like they're in a position to tell them they have a problem (18%).

Or, for some Americans 30-55, they may be uncomfortable due to past conversations. **More than 1 in 10 (11%) say they've talked to them in the past but it didn't go well; that number jumps to 20% for those who live with their parents.**

