

# IDENTIFICATION INFILTRATION

Fake IDs have become normalized among teenagers, despite the possible legal consequences

## THE PREVALENCE



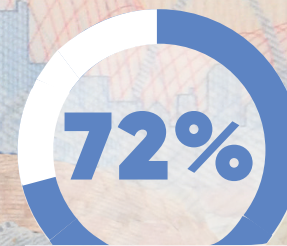
\*from an Instagram poll of 291 votes

### USAGE RATES

How often people with fake IDs use them



\*information from American Addiction Centers



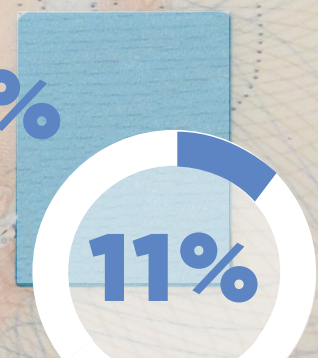
of poll voters don't believe people think about the consequences when buying a fake ID

\*from an Instagram poll of 290 votes



got a fake ID by paying someone to make it

\*information from American Addiction Centers



of alcohol consumed in the U.S. is consumed by people ages 12-20

\*information from American Addiction Centers

## THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

\*information from I.D. Checking Center

### CLASS B MISDEMEANOR

Minors charged with a first time offense

- at least 100 hours of community service
- a fine between \$200 and \$500

### LEVEL 8 FELONY

Possessing any personal identity information for another person with intent to gain benefit

- a jail sentence between 7-23 hours
- fines up to \$100,000

### LEVEL 5 FELONY

If the crime results in a monetary loss that is greater than \$100,000

- fines of up to \$300,000

\*names changed to protect identities

by sydney newton

**A**s the weekend approached, senior Ava Nelson\* had one goal in mind — buying one bottle of Mango Rum and one bottle of Pink Whitney.

After shuffling through the student ID and drivers license in her wallet, Nelson reached for her fake ID, double checking it featured her 1999 birthdate. Taking one last glance around her car to make sure her Lancer spirit wear couldn't be seen from the window, she headed into the liquor store.

Noticing an employee following her, she immediately grabbed the cheapest bottles she could find and hurriedly walked to the front counter, keeping her head down and repeating her fake birthday and address in her head. Sliding her fake ID across the counter, the worker realized her young age from her small eyes and instantly took her ID — she was caught. She left immediately, knowing she still had her second fake to use.

"I wasn't expecting to get caught," Nelson said. "It was a really good fake. I had used it so many times. Honestly, I'm still not scared about getting caught, but I just don't want to have to buy another fake because it takes a while to come in and it's expensive."

As spring break and college approach, Nelson has noticed an increase people getting fakes at East. In a poll of 291 Instagram votes, 33% stated they had used a fake ID before. In another poll of 290 votes, 72% stated they don't think people consider the consequences when buying a fake ID.

Nelson feels people aren't scared of getting caught because of how foolproof teenagers believe fake IDs have become — most look almost identical to a real ID. With technology that allows fake IDs to scan, Nelson thinks most places can't catch them. She just had an unlucky experience.

However, these "unlucky experiences" can lead to legal consequences. In Kansas, minors caught using a fake ID to illegally obtain alcohol are charged with a Class B misdemeanor — the second lowest level misdemeanor — which can include penalties of up to 100 hours of community service and a fine between \$200 and \$500, which goes on your permanent record if you're over 18. If the fake ID uses a fake name, it additionally classifies as identity theft, and penalties can include a jail sentence between seven to 23 months and fines up to \$100,000. The Prairie Village Police Department did not have a record of the number of fake IDs cases reported in the area.

SRO Seth Meyer, who's worked with the Prairie Village police department for 16 years, has seen how little students care about the consequences since most bars and liquor stores only confiscate the IDs themselves, leaving the police uninvolved.

"There's fake IDs everywhere," Meyer said. "You know it, and I know it. [Students] just don't care, honestly. Their ultimate goal of getting a fake ID is to go to bars or go hang out at clubs or go buy alcohol. They know that they're less likely to get caught."

Senior Rachel Smith\*, who has purchased group orders of fake IDs in the past through a website, believes the influx in fake IDs is due to lack of fear of the consequences, since most people, like Nelson, receive minor punishment. Now 18, Smith doesn't believe the legal risk of placing orders is worth it anymore, but still gets asked if she is at east three times a month — a number that has significantly increased in the last month because of college and senior spring break approaching.

According to a study done by Alcohol Rehab Guide, 80% of college students consume alcohol to some degree, with 50% of students engaging in binge drinking. Having a fake ID is common for college students, according to Meyer, so they can get into bars with age limits of 21 and buy alcohol. A large portion of East seniors have one or plan on purchasing one, according to Smith, who gets asked to purchase fakes for college.

College is the biggest drinking period in your life, according to Smith, and getting into bars is a large part of that. Smith and her friends feel it's easier to get a fake ID in high school so they can go into college ready to go out. And without a fake ID, she's heard it's



At the start, you're scared that there's undercover cops in the store or the restaurant, you're scared that the waitress is gonna take it away. There's always those risks. But I feel like more and more once you keep using it at certain places, certain restaurants, you'll get more and more comfortable with it and you won't really consider the risks that you did at the beginning.

**rachel smith\* | senior**

harder to have a night out, especially at schools that revolve around bars.

"A fake is kind of an essential for college," Smith said. "It's easier for people who have fakes to get alcohol or go out and drink, go to the bars. I think people fear being [left out of] a group of people on a night out if they don't have one."

Since the new international CDC travel guidelines require a negative COVID test to re-enter the United States plus a week-long quarantine, most seniors are traveling within the U.S. for spring break. The drinking age is 18 in places like Mexico and the Bahamas, so a fake is needed to drink during spring break this year. This makes obtaining a fake ID more common this year than before, according to senior Gracie Andrews\*, who plans to get a fake in the spring for her Florida spring break trip.

"Right now is the perfect time to get one," Andrews said. "It's right around that time where everybody's not going to be relying on you to get [alcohol], but it's just enough time where you can use it a few times and practice before you go to college. It won't be an old picture. Everybody knows how to do it, what websites and what people go through now. There's more people who know what they're talking about."

East parent and criminal defense attorney Lindsey Erickson has seen cases involving fake IDs with charges ranging from diversion — a system of doing community service to get charges off your record — to several years of jail time. According to Erickson, the severity of the charges can depend on the person's age, criminal history, the number of charges associated with the case and the jurisdiction of the case.

Erickson feels the use of fake IDs has become prevalent, and minors don't realize how easy it is to get caught. The ways of getting caught range from undercover cops in liquor stores to car searches, and she thinks getting charged is more common and frequent than people realize.

"A lot of minors are pretty cavalier about it, and think it's no big deal," Erickson said. "People are fixated on 'Everybody does it. It's no big deal.' And the thing is, everybody doesn't do it. And it is a huge deal if you get caught. So you have to decide, is it worth the risk?"

Not only have high schoolers become casual about having a fake, but Smith thinks that having one has become a normal part of having fun on the weekends, especially for seniors.

"We do more stuff revolving around having fakes than we do not having fakes," Smith said. "It's been a huge part of our senior year, especially with this weird situation going, that everyone has been thinking about other distractions and what they can do to have fun. A fake gets them excited for college and relaxed when going out."

The presence of fakes comes long before senior year, according to Andrews. She believes the presence of fake IDs has increased in every grade because of how common underage drinking has become.

"Slowly but surely, the age when people start doing illegal things has been going down," Andrews said. "When we were in middle school, the big thing was vaping, and that was the only thing that was going on. Now, middle schoolers are getting wasted on the weekends."

Sophomore Parker Ross\* got her fake when she was 15 — making her seven years younger than the age on her ID and one of the first in her grade to get one. She's used to getting comments like 'You look so young' and 'How old are you' from the store workers, normally bringing a friend in her car to the liquor store to warn her if an adult she knows is outside the store.

Using it around once a week, Ross worries about facing severe consequences if someone

finds her wallet or the police walk in, but has gotten used to the routine of using her fake. For her, the benefits of getting a fake at such a young age outweighed the risks of getting caught because of the security of buying her own drinks and not having to rely on other people for alcohol.

"Knowing that I could see what I was getting for myself was important," Ross said. "Who knows if people were putting things in my drinks? I don't know, just little things as simple as that made it worth it. There wasn't really any huge factors other than just I thought it'd be more convenient."

After getting stopped by a cop when buying alcohol at a concert, senior Noah Gray\* saw a glimpse into these consequences. Not expecting to get caught because of how well-made his fake was, Gray feels lucky that his fake only got taken away rather than facing legal consequences, and thinks it was a learning experience.

Even though he purchased another fake a few months later, Gray decided to stop using it because he didn't want to make the same mistake again — the risk wasn't worth it. With a majority of his friends having a fake ID, Gray thinks people aren't worried about the consequences because only a cop can tell the difference, but believes people should be more careful.

"No matter how invincible you think you are or however much you don't think you will get in trouble, you still can always get in trouble no matter what," Gray said. "It's important to remember that."

Smith feels people consider the consequences when first getting a fake, but disregard them after using it because of how easy and simple the process of using it becomes — some people even become "regulars" at liquor and vape stores, where the workers know them by name.

"At the start, you're scared that there's undercover cops in the store or the restaurant, you're scared that the waitress is gonna take it away," Smith said. "There's always those risks. But I feel like more and more once you keep using it at certain places, certain restaurants, you'll get more and more comfortable with it and you won't really consider the risks that you did at the beginning. Even though they're literally still the same risks you still have."

The risks can be more long-term than legal. Several job and college applications ask for prior criminal history, even down to a speeding ticket, according to Erickson. Having a fake ID or identity theft charge against you puts you at a disadvantage, making it harder to get a job in the future.

"The decisions you make today can haunt you for a lifetime," Erickson said. "When you're 16 or 17 or 18, you're just thinking, 'I just want to get some beer for tonight.' I don't think you're thinking about fast forwarding to five or six or 10 years later when you're filling out an application. It's a concern about instant gratification, about how am I going to have fun tonight, rather than thinking forward."