MOST of us®

Community Survey

KEY FINDINGS

Sheridan County

Adult Beliefs, Behaviors, and Perceptions about Alcohol Use

This report reveals data about adult beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions regarding underage drinking, adult binge drinking, and impaired driving in Wyoming. As you will read on the following pages, there are three important conclusions:

(1) Most adults are making good decisions by not binge drinking, not driving while under the influence of alcohol, and have healthy attitudes about alcohol use and non-use;

(2) Many adults over-estimate the prevalence of underage drinking and adult binge drinking in Wyoming and under-estimate the prevalence of healthy attitudes among other Wyoming adults;

(3) Far too many adults are misusing alcohol such as over-drinking and driving while impaired.

All three of these conclusions must be addressed in a comprehensive prevention effort.

So, while most adults in Wyoming are making good decisions about alcohol, the negative impacts associated with high risk drinking can be devastating. The Wyoming Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) estimates that there are approximately 250,000 binge drinking episodes *per month* among Wyoming adults and over 200,000 impaired driving incidents per year. Alcohol related accidents among 15-24 year-olds are the leading cause of death. In 2008, alcohol was involved in 71% of law enforcement custodial arrests in Wyoming[1].

These data indicate that Wyoming must work to prevent these problems by increasing the majority of adults who are making healthy decisions. The role of the community is to address this challenge by clearly communicating accurate information about how most Wyoming adults do not misuse alcohol, establishing clear guidelines on the safe and healthy use and non-use of alcohol, and cultivating positive community norms.

Survey Background

The results presented in this report are based on the 2008 Most of Us® Wyoming Community Survey. The survey was conducted by the Wyoming Call Center and provides state and county level measures of adult alcohol behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. The results for Sheridan County are based on 249 telephone interviews conducted between June 14th and September 22nd 2008 of randomly selected adults aged 18 and older. The statistical results presented in this report provide a 95% confidence level with a ±6% confidence interval.

[1]Report "Evaluation of Alcohol Factors in Custodial Arrests in the State of Wyoming 2008."

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Beliefs about Underage Drinking

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Adults OVER-ESTIMATED drinking by high school students.

85% of Sheridan County adults believed most high school students in their community drink 3 or more times per month (Q5).

35% of Sheridan County adults believed most high school students in their community drink 10 or more times per month (Q5).

78% of Sheridan County high school students reported NOT drinking in a typical week; 57% reported not drinking in the past month (PNA 2008 Q49).

Most adults would NOT allow their children to drink before age 21.

Whether or not they were a parent, 60% of Sheridan County adults would not allow their children to first drink alcohol (other than a few sips) until age 21 (Q1).

Adults STRONGLY AGREED local law enforcement should strongly enforce underage drinking laws.

83% of Sheridan County adults strongly agreed that local law enforcement should strongly enforce laws regulating alcohol use by youth under age 21 (Q2).

Adults STRONGLY AGREED that adults who provide youth with alcohol should be prosecuted, but many did NOT perceive most WY adults felt the same way.

73% of Sheridan County adults strongly agreed that adults who supply alcohol to youth under age 21 in violation of Wyoming law should be prosecuted (Q4).

38% of Sheridan County adults did not perceive most Wyoming adults would agree that adults who supply alcohol to youth under age 21 in violation of Wyoming law should be prosecuted (Q4A).

Conclusion

Adults in Sheridan County have very strong beliefs which support reducing underage drinking. However, because so many Sheridan County adults over-estimate the prevalence of underage drinking, they might think that the problem is overwhelming. Similarly, adults under-estimate the level of support to address this problem among their fellow citizens.

Beliefs and Behaviors about Adult Drinking

Most adults reported NOT binge drinking, but many over-estimated this behavior.

77% of Sheridan County male adults did not consume five or more drinks on an occasion in the past 30 days (Q13).
84% of Sheridan County female adults did not consume four or more drinks on an occasion in the past 30 days (Q13).
73% of Sheridan County adults perceived more than 25% of Wyoming adult males consumed five or more drinks on an occasion at least once in the past 30 days (Q14A).
27% of Sheridan County adults perceived more than 50% of Wyoming adult males consumed five or more drinks on an occasion at least once in the past 30 days (Q14A).
66% of Sheridan County adults perceived more than 25% of Wyoming adult females consumed four or more drinks on an occasion at least once in the past 30 days (Q14B).
16% of Sheridan County adults perceived more than 50% of Wyoming adult females consumed four or more drinks on an occasion at least once in the past 30 days (Q14B).

Adults AGREED "binge drinking is wrong," but many perceived that most other Wyoming adults would not agree.

60% of Sheridan County adults strongly or somewhat agreed that "it is wrong for men to drink five or more drinks or women to drink four or more drinks on one occasion" (Q11).
68% of Sheridan County adults did not perceive most Wyoming adults would agree that "it is wrong for men to drink five or more drinks or women to drink four or more drinks on one occasion" (Q12).

Adults had mixed feelings about alcohol's role in community events.

38% of Wyoming adults strongly or somewhat agreed that "alcohol should not be sold at community events, such as fairs, sporting events, parades and rodeos" (Q8).
51% of Wyoming adults strongly or somewhat disagreed that "alcohol should not be sold at community events, such as fairs, sporting events, parades and rodeos" (Q8).

Conclusion

Most adults in Sheridan County do not binge drink and think it is wrong. However, because so many Sheridan County adults over-estimate the prevalence of binge drinking, they may be more at risk to over drink or not address the problem in others. Similarly, adults under-estimate the level of agreement that binge drinking is wrong among their fellow citizens.

Beliefs and Behaviors about Impaired Driving

Most adults DID NOT drive while under the influence of alcohol in the past year, but many perceived otherwise.

91% of Sheridan County adults reported that they had not driven under the influence in the past 12 months (Q9).

54% of Sheridan County adults perceived most Wyoming adults had driven under the influence of alcohol in the past 12 months (Q10).

Of those Sheridan County adults who perceived most had driven under the influence, 61% perceived most Wyoming adults had driven under the influence seven or more times in the past 12 months (Q10A).

Most WY adults STRONGLY AGREED that "impaired driving is wrong," but many did not perceive others felt the same.

95% of Sheridan County adults strongly agreed that "it is wrong to drive after drinking enough alcohol to be impaired" (Q6).

58% of Sheridan County adults did not perceive most Wyoming adults would strongly agree that "it is wrong to drive after drinking enough alcohol to be impaired" (Q6A).

Adults STRONGLY SUPPORT the enforcement of drinking and driving laws.

92% of Sheridan County adults strongly agreed that "local law enforcement should strongly enforce drinking and driving laws" (Q3).

Adults STRONGLY SUPPORT intervening to prevent impaired driving, but most did not perceive that other WY adults felt the same.

92% of Sheridan County adults strongly agreed that "people should intervene to prevent someone from driving after drinking enough alcohol to be impaired" (Q7).

56% of Sheridan County adults did not perceive most Wyoming adults would strongly agree that "people should intervene to prevent someone from driving after drinking enough alcohol to be impaired" (Q7A).

Conclusion

Most adults in Sheridan County do not drive while under the influence and believe impaired driving is wrong. They also support enforcement of impaired driving laws and intervening to prevent someone else from driving while impaired. However, Sheridan County adults misperceive these protective attitudes in others. These misperceptions may make adults more likely to drive while impaired and less likely to intervene to stop someone else.

Key Actions

This report fosters both hope and concern when it comes to preventing risky alcohol use in Wyoming. There are serious problems that must be addressed and can be prevented.

As a community member, your voice matters. Data are only helpful when put into action. Here are key actions you can take:

- Share and discuss this report with coalition members, community leaders, and friends
- Use this information to promote hope for successfully reducing alcohol problems
- Facilitate clear guidelines among adults regarding the safe and healthy use and non-use of alcohol
- Promote intervention and treatment options
- Compare these results with other findings in your community
- Use these data to guide policy development
- Frame media and steer public conversations using these data
- Create messages to correct misperceptions

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