



Wyoming Residents

Voice Their Concerns
and Opinions about

ALCOHOL

Issues in Wyoming



INTRODUCTION

What is the opinion of Wyoming residents about alcohol use in Wyoming? Is there concern that alcohol abuse is on the rise and becoming a serious problem in our state? Is underage drinking also a problem? And, is drinking and driving an increasing problem in our communities? Are Wyoming residents really concerned about these issues? If so, which policies or laws directed at reducing these abuses would Wyoming residents support?

Wyoming statistics in regard to these alcohol issues appear to validate the concerns expressed by Wyoming residents recently. From April through August of 2006, a total of 4,699 residents from every county in Wyoming participated in a comprehensive opinion survey regarding these issues. This phone survey was conducted by the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center of the University of Wyoming.

A survey sampling of this size typically yields a margin of error of +/- 1.5 percentage points with a 95% confidence level. This statistically high level of confidence ensures that this survey accurately represents the opinions of Wyoming residents in regard to alcohol issues in our state.

Is there legitimate cause for public concern regarding these issues in Wyoming? Do the statistics in Wyoming warrant spending time and money to gauge public opinion in regard to these issues? The unfortunate answer to both these questions is “**YES.**”

This booklet provides the *reality* about alcohol usage in Wyoming—along with the relative *opinions* expressed by residents during the survey. The results of this survey was published in a report entitled “**Wyoming Alcohol Use Issues Survey – 2006.**” This report provides statewide, as well as county-by-county statistics of opinions voiced by Wyoming residents. The full 137 page report can be viewed and downloaded from the following websites:
<http://www.uwyo.edu/wysac> <http://www.wfli.org>

Alcohol Use By Underage Youth in Wyoming

The Facts

- ◆ 38% of Middle School students report drinking alcohol other than a few sips
- ◆ 28% of High School students report drinking alcohol other than a few sips before age 13
- ◆ 42% of High School students report having at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasions during the past 30 days
- ◆ 29% of High School students report that they have been involved in binge drinking on one or more occasions during the past 30 days
- ◆ Approximately 10% of all persons arrested for driving under the influence are under the age of 21

Public Perception/Opinions

86.3% believe that alcohol use by underage youth in Wyoming is a serious or somewhat serious problem.

⇒ 55.6% thinks of it as a *serious problem*

⇒ 30.7% consider it to be a *somewhat serious problem*.

71% believe that binge drinking on college campuses is a problem

⇒ 42.8% believe it is serious problem

⇒ 28.2% believe that is a somewhat serious problem

Alcohol Use By Underage Youth in Wyoming

Public Support for Enforcement and Changes in Policy or Laws

- ◆ 94.6% believe that law enforcement should strongly enforce laws regulating alcohol use by youth under 21
- ◆ 93.9% believe that adults supplying alcohol to youth under 21 should be prosecuted
- ◆ 91.2% believe that the WHSAA should have statewide rules for every school district regarding teen alcohol use and restrict participation in extra-curricular activities
- ◆ 79.6% believe that schools should restrict participation in extra-curricular activities for youth who engage in underage drinking
- ◆ 78.6% believe that youth under 21 who drink alcohol should have their driver's licenses suspended

For youth who are known to engage in underage drinking, schools should restrict their participation in extra-curricular activities.	Do you have any children under 21?		Total
	Yes	No	
Agree	83.3%	82.4%	82.7%
Disagree	16.7%	17.6%	17.3%
Total Count	1552	2864	4416
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%

Alcohol Use and Abuse By Adults in Wyoming

The Facts

The following statistics were compiled from a total of 11,591 persons who were arrested and subsequently detained in a county detention facility in Wyoming from April 1 through September 30, 2007:

- ◆ Alcohol was a factor in 68.5% of all arrests
- ◆ Arrests for public intoxication accounted for 9.3% of all arrests
- ◆ The average blood alcohol content for persons arrested for public intoxication was 0.2513

Public Perceptions/Opinions:

- ◆ 77.8% view alcohol abuse by Wyoming adults as a serious or somewhat serious problem
- ◆ 70.7% view alcohol abuse by adults in their community as a serious or somewhat serious problem
- ◆ 47.4% view binge drinking by adults in their community as a serious or somewhat serious problem



Alcohol Use and Abuse By Adults in Wyoming

Public Support for Enforcement and Changes in Policy or Laws

When Wyoming residents were asked whether they would support an alcohol tax increase if the money were set aside to pay for drug and alcohol prevention and treatment programs:

- ◆ **53.9% strongly supported the increase**
- ◆ **22.2% somewhat supported the increase**
- ◆ **11.6% strongly opposed the increase**
- ◆ **4.8% somewhat opposed the increase**

When Wyoming residents were asked whether they would support a state law that would require persons who serve or sell alcohol to complete a certified training program that addresses alcohol issues such as teenage drinking and identifying intoxicated customers:

- ◆ **59.8% strongly supported the requirement**
- ◆ **22.9% somewhat supported the requirement**
- ◆ **6.4% strongly opposed requiring the training**
- ◆ **5.4% somewhat opposed requiring the training**

When Wyoming residents were asked whether they would support a state law that would prohibit selling or serving alcohol to someone who is obviously intoxicated:

- ◆ **75.8% strongly supported such a law**
- ◆ **13.6% somewhat supported such a law**
- ◆ **4.2% strongly opposed such a law**
- ◆ **3% somewhat opposed such a law**

Drinking and Driving in Wyoming

The Facts

The following statistics were compiled from a total of 3,640 persons who were arrested for driving under the influence and subsequently detained in a county detention facility in Wyoming from April 1 through September 30, 2007:

- ◆ **Driving under the Influence (DUI) arrests accounted for 31.4% of all arrests statewide**
- ◆ **The average blood alcohol content (BAC) reported for persons arrested for driving under the influence was 0.1529**
- ◆ **45% of the persons arrested for driving under the influence had average blood alcohol content **ABOVE** 0.16**
- ◆ **The average BAC reported for 404 traffic crashes that involved alcohol was 0.1628**

Public Perceptions/Opinions

- ◆ **86.8% of Wyoming residents believe that drinking and driving in their community is a serious or somewhat serious problem.**
 - ⇒ 45.5% believe it is a serious problem
 - ⇒ 41.3% believe it is somewhat serious problem
 - ⇒ 10.4% believe that it is not a very serious problem
 - ⇒ 2.9% believe that it is not a problem at all

Drinking and Driving in Wyoming

When Wyoming residents were asked whether they would support a state law that would allow roadside sobriety checkpoints by local law enforcement to help reduce drunk driving in their community:

- ◆ **45.9% would strongly support the law**
- ◆ **26.8% would somewhat support the law**
- ◆ **13% would strongly oppose the law**
- ◆ **7.1% would somewhat oppose the law**

When Wyoming residents were asked, "Should people who are arrested for DUI have the right to refuse to take the test to measure the amount of alcohol in their system?":

- ◆ **63.3% said no**
- ◆ **32.8% said yes**
- ◆ **3.8% had no opinion**

When Wyoming residents were asked, "Should people who are involved in a crash that results in serious injury or death have the right to refuse to take the test that measures the amount of alcohol in their system?":

- ◆ **84.7% said no**
- ◆ **13% said yes**
- ◆ **2.3% had no opinion**



Social Norms About Alcohol

Contradictions

The statistics regarding underage drinking, adult abuse of alcohol, and drinking and driving clearly shows there is problem. Wyoming residents, drinkers and non-drinkers alike, view these issues as serious concerns in their communities. The Public Opinion Survey indicates strong support for many of the policies and law changes directed at reducing these abuses. However, drinkers are not as supportive of policies that appear to meddle in their personal or family affairs, or which inconvenience their drinking habits.

Underage Drinking

A commanding majority (**94.6%**) of Wyoming residents agree that law enforcement agencies should strictly enforce laws to control underage drinking. **However, a third of residents who responded to the survey would allow their children to drink before they reach the age of 21.**

Participants were asked to give their opinions about penalizing adults who supply alcohol to youth, which is a violation of Wyoming law. An overwhelming majority (**93.9%**) of respondents agree that adults who supply alcohol to youth should be actively prosecuted. However, statistics show that

- ◆ **Minors arrested for alcohol-related offenses reported obtaining alcohol at a party, home, bar, liquor store or drive-up window.**
- ◆ **23% of all liquor sold in the state of Wyoming is being consumed by minors.**

There is evidence that alcohol sponsorship of public community events promotes underage drinking. However, when Wyoming residents were asked whether they would support policies that restrict alcohol sponsorship at these events, opinions varied greatly between drinkers and non-drinkers:

Alcohol should not be sold at community events, such as fairs, sporting events, parades, and rodeos.	Do you drink alcoholic beverages, including wine or beer, even occasionally?		Total
	Yes	No	
Agree	37.9%	75.4%	50.2%
Disagree	62.1%	24.6%	49.8%
Total Count	2834	1384	4218
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%

Adult Alcohol Abuse

Regarding support for the elimination of happy hours, there is strong and significant statistical difference between those who drink and those who do not drink.

What about a law in your community eliminating “happy hours” that offer drink specials at bars and restaurants?	Do you drink alcoholic beverages, including wine or beer, even occasionally?		Total
	Yes	No	
Would Support	37.0%	67.9%	47.2%
Would Oppose	63.0%	32.1%	52.8%

Social Norms About Alcohol

When surveyed, only 47% of Wyoming residents believe binge drinking is a problem of some seriousness in their communities. However, statistics appear to indicate otherwise:

- ◆ Arrests for public intoxication accounted for **9.3% of all arrests.**
- ◆ The average blood alcohol content for persons arrested for public intoxication was **0.2513.**



Drinking and Driving

Wyoming residents who drink and those who do not drink vary in their levels of support for eliminating drive-up window sales of alcohol.

Would you support a state law that would eliminate drive-up window sales of alcohol?	Do you drink alcoholic beverages, including wine or beer, even occasionally?		Total
	Yes	No	
Would Support	30.6%	61.1%	40.6%
Would Oppose	69.4%	38.9%	59.4%

A Sampling of Notable Quotes

- “Alcohol causes too many deaths.”
- “Drinking and driving needs the harshest convictions rather than a slap on the wrist.”
- “I hope we work better towards ending the alcohol problem.”
- “I have a nephew at UW who binge drinks. He has hurt himself while drinking, and he has no support. Alcohol is a social thing. If you don’t drink, you don’t have friends.”
- “Alcohol abuse is a real problem with our youth. There needs to be more education to our kids about alcohol and how to drink responsibly.”
- “Alcohol is a drug that’s just as addictive as heroin. It’s the most abuse drug on the planet.”
- Numerous quotes that stated “I had...

...a cousin and a nephew killed by...
...a friend killed by...
...my uncle killed by...
...lost 3 people to...
...my husband killed by...
...I’ve been hit by...
...my son killed by...

...a drunk driver.”

Statistical References

Statistics regarding alcohol use by youth – Wyoming’s 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Wyoming Department of Education

Statistics regarding alcohol/DUI arrest data – Evaluation of Alcohol Factors in Custodial Arrests in the State of Wyoming – 2007, Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police

Statistic regarding percentage of alcohol being consumed by minors – Underage Drinking in Wyoming: The Facts, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, March 2004

Survey Highlights

4,699 residents from every county in Wyoming participated in this telephone survey. A survey sampling of this size ensures that this survey accurately represents the current opinions in regard to alcohol use issues in Wyoming.

Concerns

- 86% believe that alcohol use by underage youth in Wyoming is a serious or somewhat serious problem
- 78% view alcohol abuse by Wyoming adults as a serious problem or somewhat serious problem
- 87% of Wyoming residents believe that drinking and driving in their community is a serious or somewhat serious problem.
- Numerous incidents were related where friends or relatives were “lost” to alcohol abuse or drinking and driving traffic crashes

Support for Enforcement, Laws and Taxation

- 95% believe that law enforcement should strongly enforce laws regulating alcohol use by youth under 21
- 94% believe that adults supplying alcohol to youth under 21 should be prosecuted
- 73% would support a state law that would allow roadside sobriety checkpoints
- 76% of Wyoming residents would support an alcohol tax increase if the money were set aside to pay for drugs and alcohol prevention and treatment programs

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