

# Study says fewer Wyoming students drinking and smoking

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Reports from a new survey show Wyoming continues to see overall significant declines in junior high and high school students saying they use alcohol and tobacco.

Administered for the Wyoming Department of Health by the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC) at the University of Wyoming, the 2012 Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA) student survey provides detailed state- and county-level data on substance abuse issues, risk factors and protective factors affecting Wyoming youth.

The survey indicates 17 of the 19 participating counties saw substantial reductions in alcohol use and 15 of 19 had substantial reductions in [tobacco use](#) among Wyoming junior high and [high school students](#).

"Over the last several years, together with many community partners, our department has focused on [alcohol misuse](#) and abuse issues such as underage drinking and tobacco use as prevention priorities, and we are pleased to see some positive results," says Keith Hotle, Chronic Disease and Substance Abuse/[Suicide Prevention](#) Unit manager with the Wyoming Department of Health.

"Not surprisingly, at the state level, alcohol remains the most commonly reported used substance in all grade levels," Hotle says.

Current (the past 30 days) alcohol use in the eighth grade has decreased from 24 percent during 2006-2010 to 18 percent in 2012. For 10th

grade, that number went from 38 percent during 2006-2010 to 32 percent in 2012. Self-reported [binge drinking](#) also has declined from 2006-10 averages of 14 percent to 10 percent in 2012 for eighth grade, and from 24 percent to 17 percent for 10th grade.

"Smoking data is similarly encouraging," Hotle says.

From 2006-2010, cigarette use—sometime during the lifetime—was reported at an average rate of 12 percent for sixth grade and 48 percent for 12th grade. Results for 2012 describe an 8 percent rate for sixth grade and a 43 percent rate for 12th grade.

Hotle notes, in 2012, Wyoming middle school youth reported an average rate of current prescription [drug misuse](#) (during the past 30 days) at 1 percent, while [high school](#) youth reported an average misuse rate of 4.5 percent.

"This is an issue many communities are concerned with," he says.

Eric Canen, the study's principal investigator and senior research scientist with WYSAC, says it is interesting that Wyoming students consistently overestimate how often and, to what degree, most students in their schools use drugs and alcohol.

"For example, the odds of perceived methamphetamine use by most students were 92 to 213 times greater than the odds of actual methamphetamine use, depending upon the grade level," Canen says.

The Wyoming Department of Health uses data from the PNA to monitor changes in important youth substance use trends. Community agencies also use the data to set priorities for their efforts and sometimes to seek out additional funding.

"Unfortunately, there are holes in the data for four counties," Canen notes. "In 2012, six school districts chose not to participate or had response rates too low to be included in the survey results. Continuing to provide this important information requires the cooperation and participation of schools throughout Wyoming."

To review the detailed state- and county-level reports and fact sheets, visit [www.pnasurvey.org](http://www.pnasurvey.org).

Provided by University of Wyoming

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