

# Data IS Important!

Whether you need data for *Problem Identification* (assessment), for *Persuading Others* about the extent or nature of the underage drinking problem (establishing your credibility with decision makers and media), for *Measuring* your progress (evaluation), or for using a *Social Norm Approach* to correct misperceptions about underage drinking in your community...

## *local data is best.*

The following kinds of information are helpful to activists working to reduce underage drinking:

- Information about underage alcohol consumption including quantity, frequency, and location
- Youth and adult perceptions of youth consumption
- Harmful consequences related to youthful consumption including traffic crashes, injuries, deaths, unwanted sexual activity, interpersonal violence, and harassment
- Arrests and records of penalties
- Youth and adult perceptions of enforcement
- Information about where youth get the alcohol they consume
- Youth and adult attitudes about underage drinking
- Location of alcohol related traffic crashes.

Schools, health department, courts, and law enforcement agencies have some local data. Information about attitudes and perceptions may need to be collected through surveys. (See companion piece “A Word About Surveys.”) Groups working to reduce underage drinking in their community may also want to survey their community for alcohol advertising, product placement, and alcohol industry promotion of local events. This information is easiest to collect through observation.

It is often productive to use a map to record the location of schools, alcohol retailers, and crime incident locations (if available). This is called “mapping.”

The most recently collected statewide data about youth consumption of alcohol is the 2005 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This is a school-based survey of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The 2005 data may be found at [www.michigan.gov/yrbs](http://www.michigan.gov/yrbs).

Another source of statewide data about Michigan youth consumption of alcohol in 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades was collected in public schools in 2000/2001 by the Michigan Department of Community Health/Office of Drug Control Policy. This data is also reported by State Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency regions. The information reported in this survey covers:

- lifetime and past month use
- perception of whether peers would see regular use of alcohol as “cool”
- perception of risk of harm associated with regular use of alcohol

- student attitudes about how wrong they think it is for someone their age to drink alcohol regularly
- perception of parental disapproval
- perceived ease to obtain alcohol
- perceived risk of getting caught by the police
- students with best friends who tried alcohol when parents didn't know about it.

Some of this data is reported by gender and race. [[www.michigan.gov/mdch](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch), click on “Mental Health & Substance Abuse,” click on “Drug Control & Substance Abuse,” scroll down list on left and click on “Prevention.” Near the middle of listing, click on “Prevention Related Reports”, then “Statistics Manuals.” Then scroll down to “Prevention” and click on “Michigan Substance Abuse Risk and Protective Factors Student Survey.”]

Available at this same page – click on “Assessing Substance Use Prevention Needs in Michigan Counties: A Study Using Social Indicators” – is a one page “Prevention Needs Assessment Profile” for each county in Michigan. A county is ranked according to liquor law violations, alcohol permits and outlets per 1,000 persons, and alcohol sales per capita. It includes several other factors that may also be of interest to decision makers.

The actual data by county is included in the whole report found by clicking on “Download Full Report in PDF format.” The charts of most interest are as follows:

- B-1 (Juvenile Arrest Rate for Liquor Law Violations) [page 46 of the PDF document]
- B-3 (Juvenile Property Crime Arrest Rate and Juvenile Arrest Rate for Other Crimes) [page 61 of the PDF document]
- B-6 (Alcohol Permits Per 1,000 Persons and Alcohol Sales Per Capita) [page 70 of the PDF document]

A list of retailers by county (names and addresses of people holding liquor licenses) is available on the web from the Liquor Control Commission that is part of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. [[www.cis.state.mi.us/mlcc/liclists/liclis3.htm](http://www.cis.state.mi.us/mlcc/liclists/liclis3.htm)] Instructions are provided for downloading a county list into an EXCEL file so that labels can be produced.

Information about Michigan's 2005 alcohol related traffic crashes at the county and community level may be found at [www.michigantrafficcrashfacts.org](http://www.michigantrafficcrashfacts.org). This data is reported in PDF format but it is not necessary to download the whole document because an index is provided. Click on “Alcohol” in Table of Contents. Scroll down until you come to the section on “Alcohol/Drugs” and you will find “Reported Age of Drinking Drivers Involved in Crashes by County.”

A good source of information about the adjudication in the courts of alcohol related driving arrests and minor in possession tickets may be found at [www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607-123-1645\\_3501\\_4626-27728--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607-123-1645_3501_4626-27728--,00.html). Click on “Statistics,” and choose area to survey.

If you would like any of the data mentioned in this paper and do not have access to the Internet, you may call Marie at Prevention Network for assistance, 1-800-968-4968. If you need help obtaining any of the data or would like to discuss how to use the data call for technical assistance.