

Social Norms and Traffic Safety

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**Executive Committee For Highway Safety
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www.hsrc.unc.edu

Outline

- What are social norms?
- Examples
- Using them to reduce traffic injuries/fatalities



What are social norms?

- **Beliefs about how members of a group should behave in a situation**
 - Why did you pick what you wore today?
- **Shape and influence our behavior**
- **We usually aren't aware of them**

Reusing towels

Experiment:

- Group 1: “HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT. You can show your respect for nature and help save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay.”
- Group 2: JOIN YOUR FELLOW GUESTS IN HELPING TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT. Almost 75% of guests who are asked to participate in our new resource savings program do help by using their towels more than once.”

Result:

- Group 2 was 25% more likely to reuse their towel.



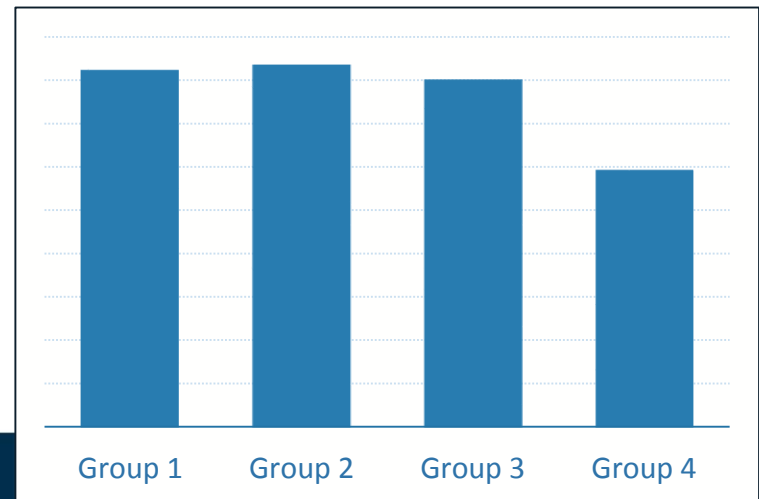
Energy conservation

Experiment:

- Group 1: To protect the environment
- Group 2: To benefit society
- Group 3: To save money
- Group 4: Your neighbors are conserving energy

Result:

- Energy use lowest in group 4.



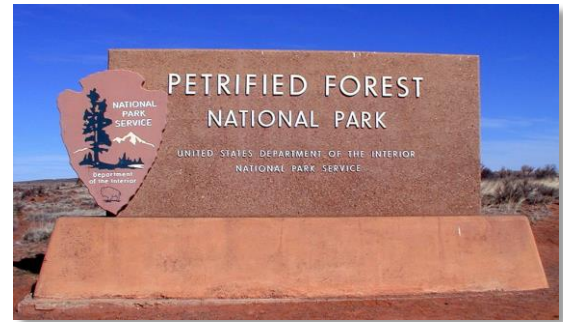
Theft of petrified wood

Experiment:

- Group 1: “Please don’t remove the petrified wood from the park. *Many past visitors have removed the petrified wood from the park*, changing the state of the Petrified Forest”
- Group 2: “Please don’t remove the petrified wood from the park. *The vast majority of past visitors have left the petrified wood in the park*, preserving the natural state of the Petrified Forest”

Result:

- Theft higher in group 1 than 2 (7.9% vs. 1.7%)



Social norms in advertising

- Used to increase sales
 - “Best seller”
 - “America’s #1 brand”

How MILD can a Cigarette be?

MAKE THE 30-DAY CAMEL MILDNESS TEST—SEE WHY...

MORE PEOPLE SMOKE CAMELS than any other cigarette!



MAN'S IDEA OF A MOVIE HERO. And the women agree! 6 feet, 4 inches, John Wayne has smoothed his way to fame in dozens of motion pictures!

"The roles I play in movies are far from easy on my voice—I can't risk throat irritation. So I smoke Camels—they're mild"

John Wayne
POPULAR, HANDSOME
HOLLYWOOD STAR

“I've been around movie sets enough to know how important mildness is to an actor. So when it came to deciding what cigarette was right for my throat—I was particular. I made a sensible test—my own 30-Day Camel Mildness Test!

“I gave Camels a real tryout for 30 days. The most pleasure I ever had from smoking. My own ‘T-Zone’ told me just how mild a cigarette can be!”



Make your own 30-Day Camel MILDNESS Test in your ‘T-Zone’
(T for Throat, T for Tests)



Not one single case of throat irritation due to smoking CAMELS!

Yes, these were the findings of nasal throat specialists after a total of 2,879 weekly examinations of the throats of hundreds of men and women who smoked Camels—and only Camels—for 30 days.

R. J. REYNOLDS TOB. CO., Winston-Salem, N. C.

Question...

What percent of American's use marijuana?



Misperceptions of norms

- **Overestimate the risky behavior of others**
 - Examples: Marijuana use, college student drinking
 - Driven by the media which focuses on the unusual/extreme

Social norms & student drinking

Students overestimate drinking on campus



Incorrectly believe that frequent, excessive drinking is the norm



Implicit pressure on students to drink

Correcting misperceptions should help reduce student drinking

UNC “2 out of 3” study

Goals of the program:

1. Examine actual student drinking
2. Develop and evaluate a social norms program to reduce drinking

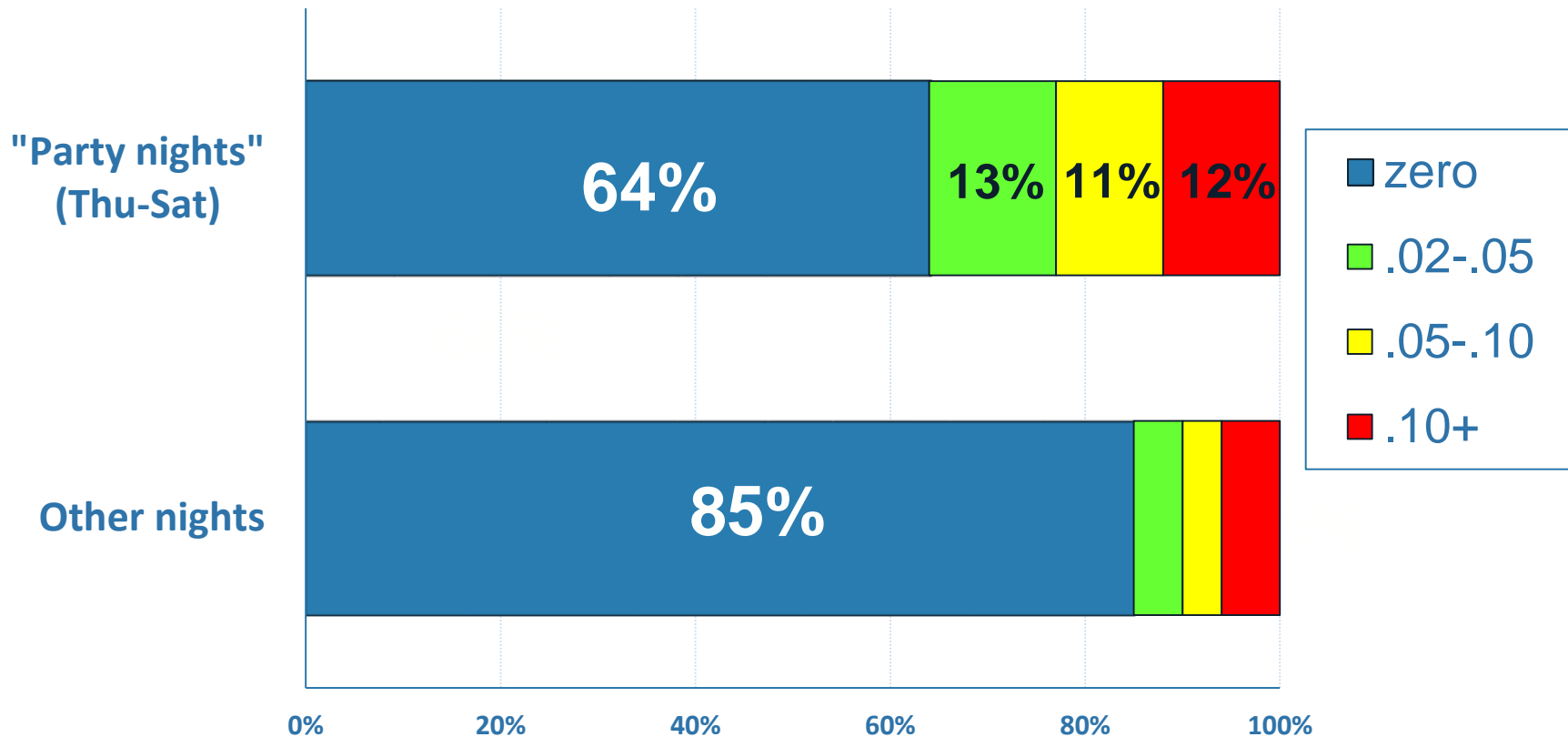
UNC “2 out of 3” study

Fall 1997:

- Interviewed ~2,000 students
- All nights of week, 10 p.m. – 3 a.m.
- Dorms, Greek houses, apartments
- 97% gave a breath sample



Measured BAC on night of interview



Alcohol Fact:

*Whether it's Thursday, Friday or Saturday night,
2 out of 3 UNC students return home
With a .00 Blood Alcohol Concentration.*



***“2 out of 3”* Campaign**

- **Freshman orientation classes**
 - Postcard demonstration



Posters

Basic Message



Posters



Reminder that this is not simply self-report data

“It’s not what they say,
it’s what they blow.”

Posters



Full Message

Includes: “Most of those who drink have four or less.”

Posters



Source of Fact to Lend Scientific Credibility

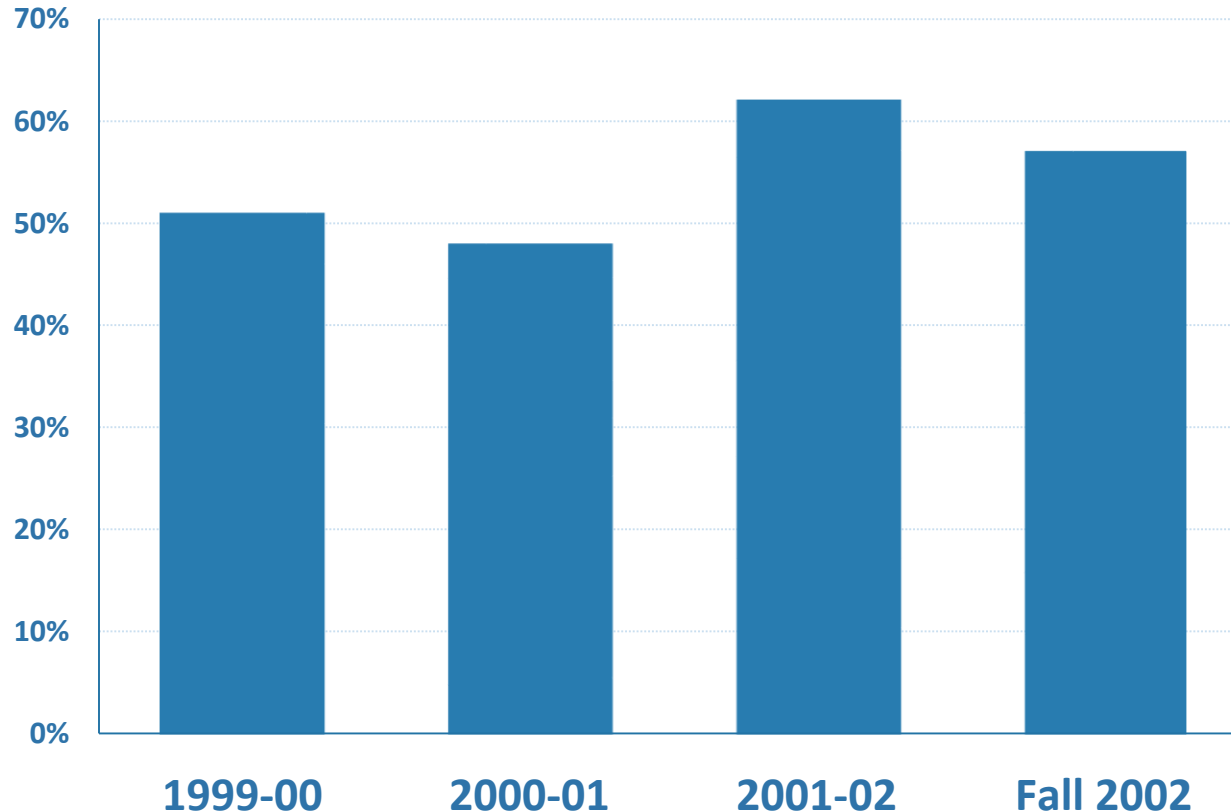
“Based on Fall 1997 breathalyzer data collected between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m....”

New posters each year

- Posters displayed in common areas and residence hall rooms



Residence Hall Rooms with a “2 out of 3” Poster Displayed



Prize patrols



What does **2 out of 3** mean?

- ☐ 2 out of 3 UNC students stay home and play board games on weekends.
- ☐ 2 out of 3 UNC students don't ever drink.
- ☒ 2 out of 3 UNC students return home with a .00 blood alcohol concentration on weekend nights.

Win **\$1** for knowing this fact.

or

Win **\$5** by wearing this zipper pull.

Put the zipper pull on something you carry with you, like a back pack.

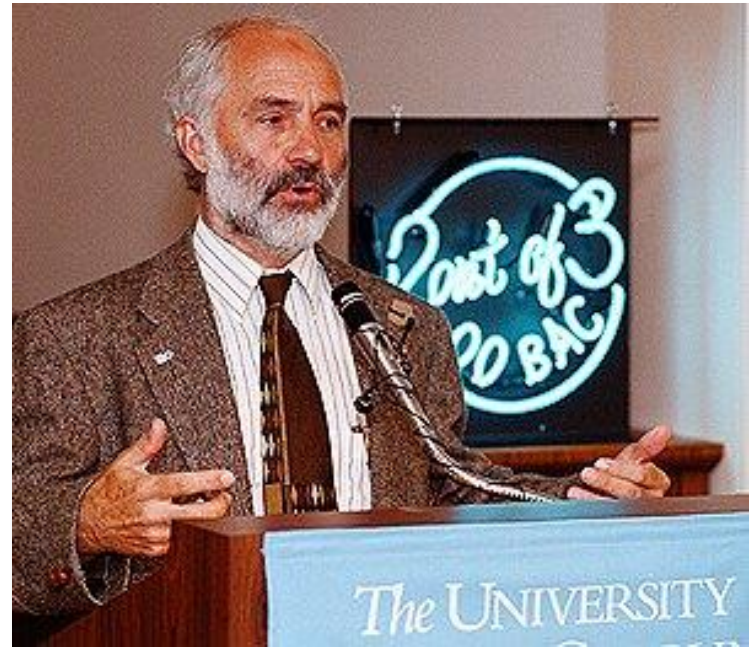
Every week a prize team will walk around campus and randomly stop students. If we spot the zipper pull, you win \$5. Or if you don't have one, but remember the **2 out of 3** fact, you win \$1.

Sponsored by Student Affairs

Pick up a zipper pull at the **Pit** around **lunchtime** this **Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday**. Go to www.2outof3unc.org for more info.

Media

- Press Conferences



Media

- Earned media

Novel approach to curb drinking

Kudos to the smart-thinking UNC administrators who came up with a new program that shows incoming freshmen an objective look at student drinking.

It's not a particularly complicated program, but its approach is original and refreshing, especially considering past efforts the same administrators used to curb or at least control alleged alcohol abuse by students.

The program, which will kick in this fall, will use statistics from a 1997 University Highway Safety Research Center study. Researchers stopped 1,846 students on typical party nights (read: any night after Wednesday and before Monday) as they returned home to dorms, fraternities, sororities and apartments. The research center asked students how much they had had to drink and then gave them a Breathalyzer test to determine their blood alcohol levels.

Results showed that 2 out of 3 students had no alcohol in their systems. That's way more than half, folks. And imagine how much higher the sober percentage is on a nonparty night. A typical Monday night, for instance, must see only a handful of students indulging in the devil's brew and even less abusing it.

An incentives program will reward freshmen this fall for knowing about student drinking, based on these statistics. University representatives will go dorm to dorm, giving cash rewards to students who correctly answer questions about the prevalence of drinking — or apparent lack thereof — among UNC students.

Freshmen will perhaps not feel the immense pressure to conform to a preconceived norm that is pretty much false. They won't move in to their dorm rooms, kiss the folks goodbye and then immediately set about to get wasted



Tom Acitelli
Columnist

because, hey, that's what most UNC students do, right?

They'll know, at least eventually, that most UNC students do not get wasted, according to the 1997 statistics.

Of course, you could say that the statistics are way off, that the Breathalyzers were given on slow party

nights, that the highway research center missed the true UNC students, that statistics can be used to prove most anything. You could say that, in fact, most UNC students, like college kids across this great land, are hopeless boozehounds with nothing better to do on a Thursday or Saturday night than hit a keg party or the bars on Franklin Street.

Say whatever you want, but the heart of the new program is what makes it a worthwhile one. It is a program grounded in straightforward information. It gives the facts on student drinking. It doesn't give students slogans, warnings, testimonials from one-time drunks, poorly attended nonalcoholic social alternatives or scary statistics about what can happen to them after that fourth beer. Nope.

It simply shows them that on a few given party nights a couple of years ago, most UNC students stayed sober. At least two-thirds, thank you very much.

Such straightforward information implicitly shows our wide-eyed freshmen that it's OK not to drink. Being at UNC does not mean that you have to be drunk every weekend or weekday, for that matter. Most students don't drink that much, and here's some information to prove it. And, furthermore, the university will reward

you for knowing this information.

This information-based, nothing-fancy program is refreshing when compared to other programs implemented in recent years to combat apparently false — or at least flimsy — perceptions about student drinking.

In the fall of 1997, UNC administrators launched the instantly laughable "Don't Get Wasted" campaign, replete with published picas for sobriety from important people like Woody Durham as well as Frisbees and bottle openers with the specially created "Don't Get Wasted" logo on them. Whether the campaign changed the alleged drinking habits of students depends on who you ask and what survey you believe. After all, statistics can be twisted to prove almost anything. But, the whole thing sure was funny at the time.

Not as funny, however, as the "Ralph Beer" ads that began showing up in the student newspaper last fall. I remember asking a friend if these ads were meant to be funny or serious, as no significant warning or explanation about them had been issued by the university beforehand. The ads just seemed to appear one week out of nowhere, and they kept appearing every week thereafter. As I learned, they were not supposed to be funny. They were supposed to graphically show the negative effects of alcohol abuse, "ralph" being a popular nickname for vomiting after too much drinking. Nice try at least. But ultimately a poor waste of time and probably money.

The university should have tried the information-based approach from the start. Just give students, especially freshmen, the facts about drinking at UNC. They can go from there.

Readers may write to Tom Acitelli at The Chapel Hill Herald, 106 Mallotte St., Chapel Hill, NC 27516.

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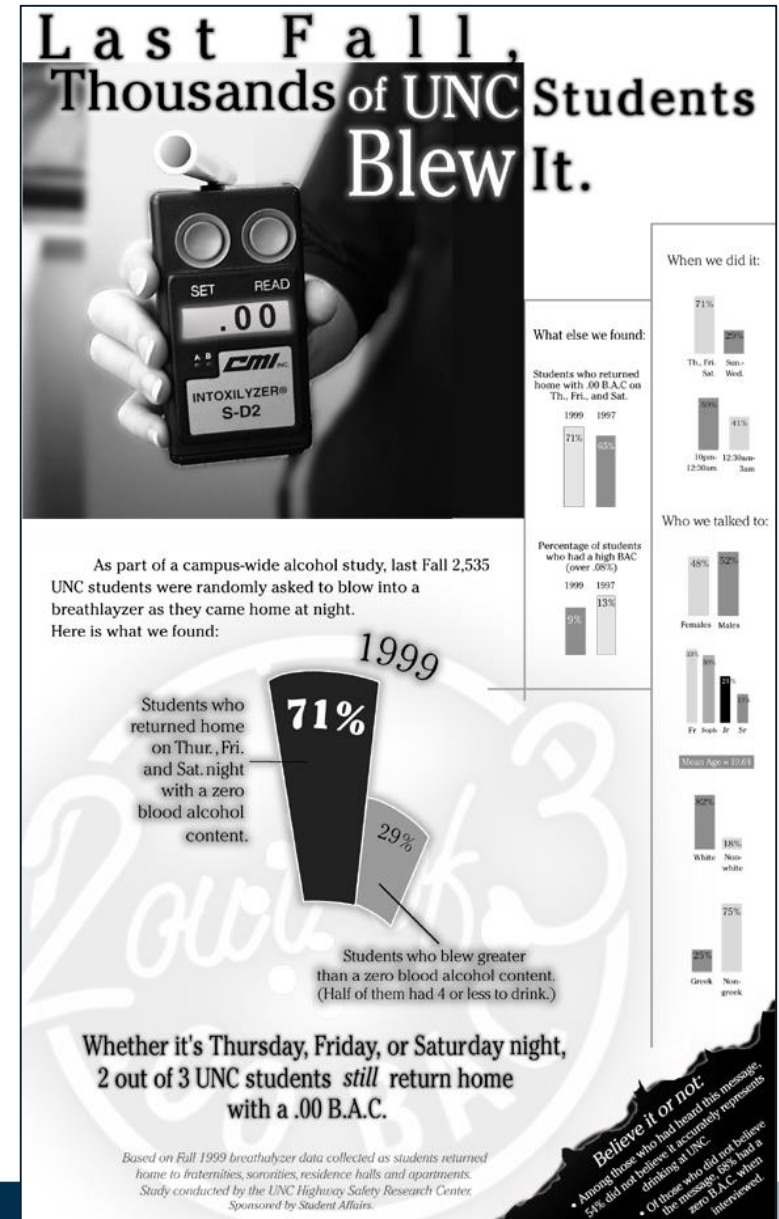
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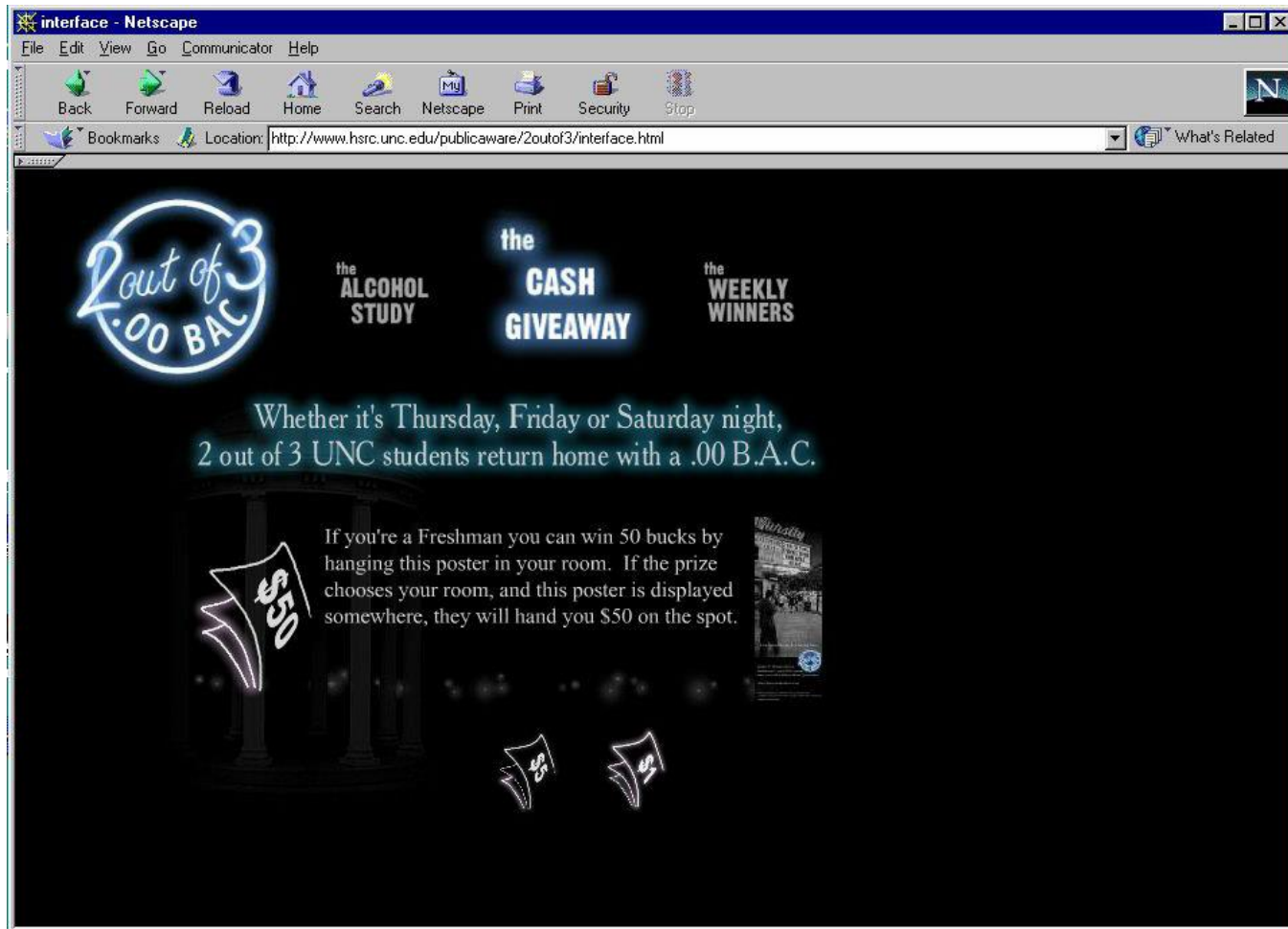
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Media

- Paid media (e.g., student newspaper)



Website



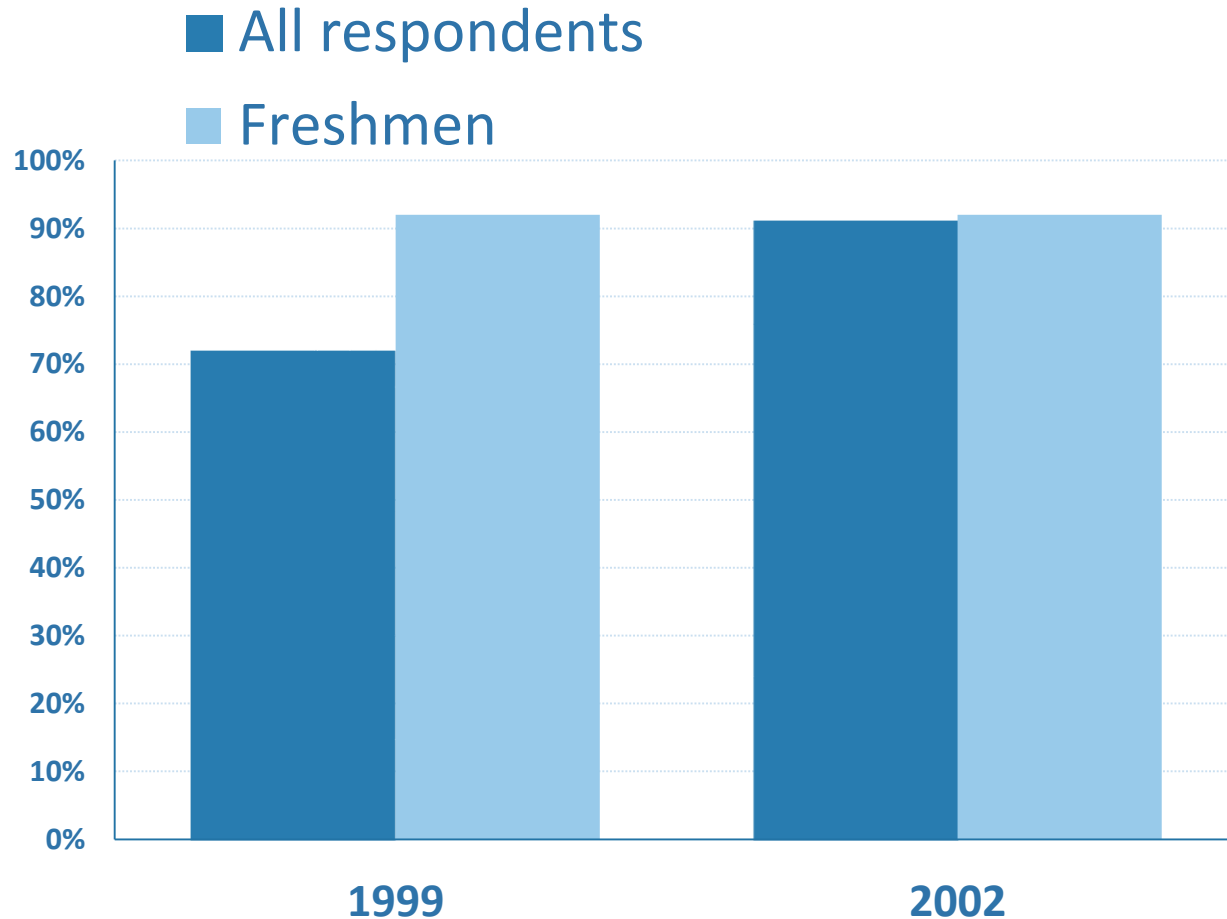


UNC “2 out of 3” study

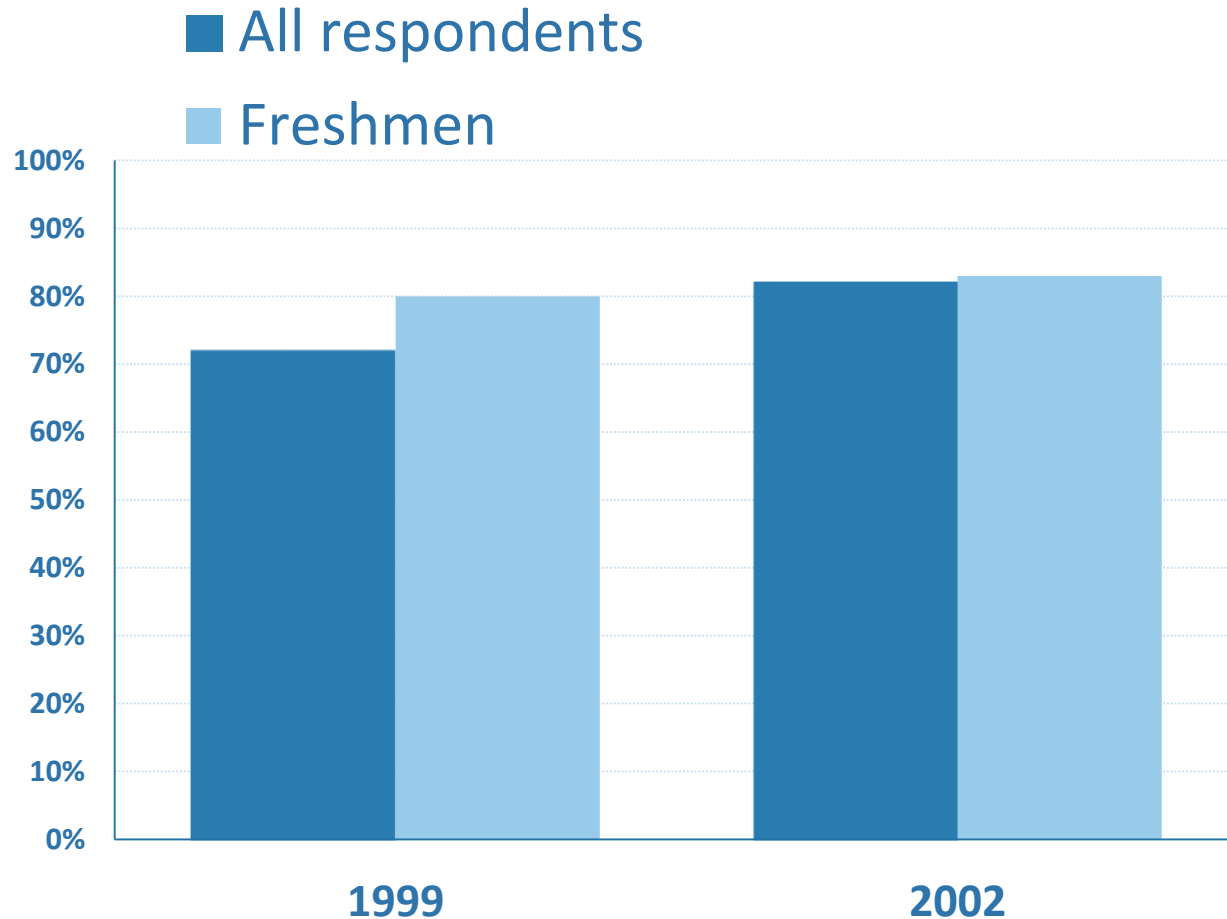
Repeated the survey:

- 1999: 2540 students
- 2002: 1886 students

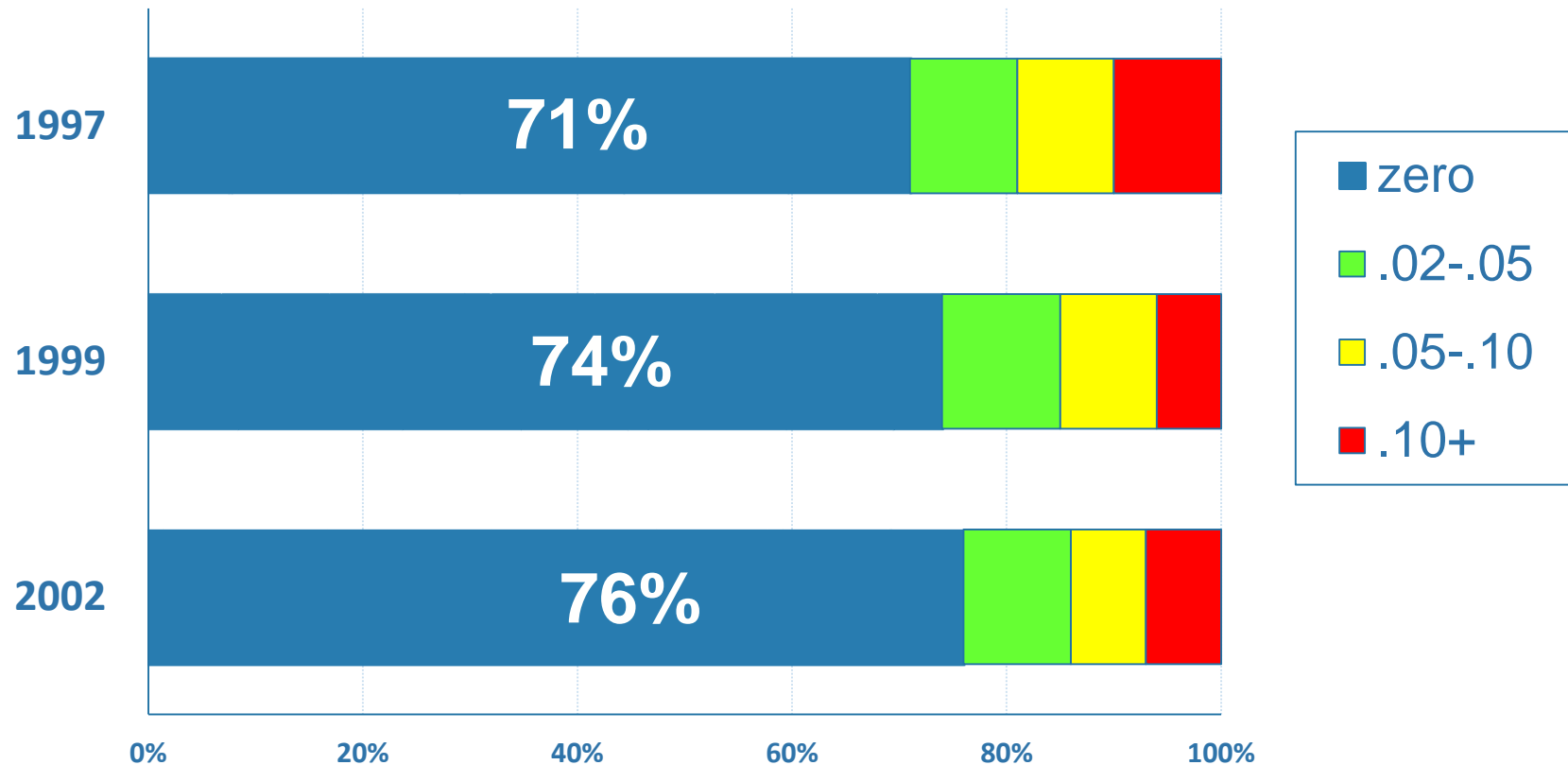
Campaign Awareness, by Year



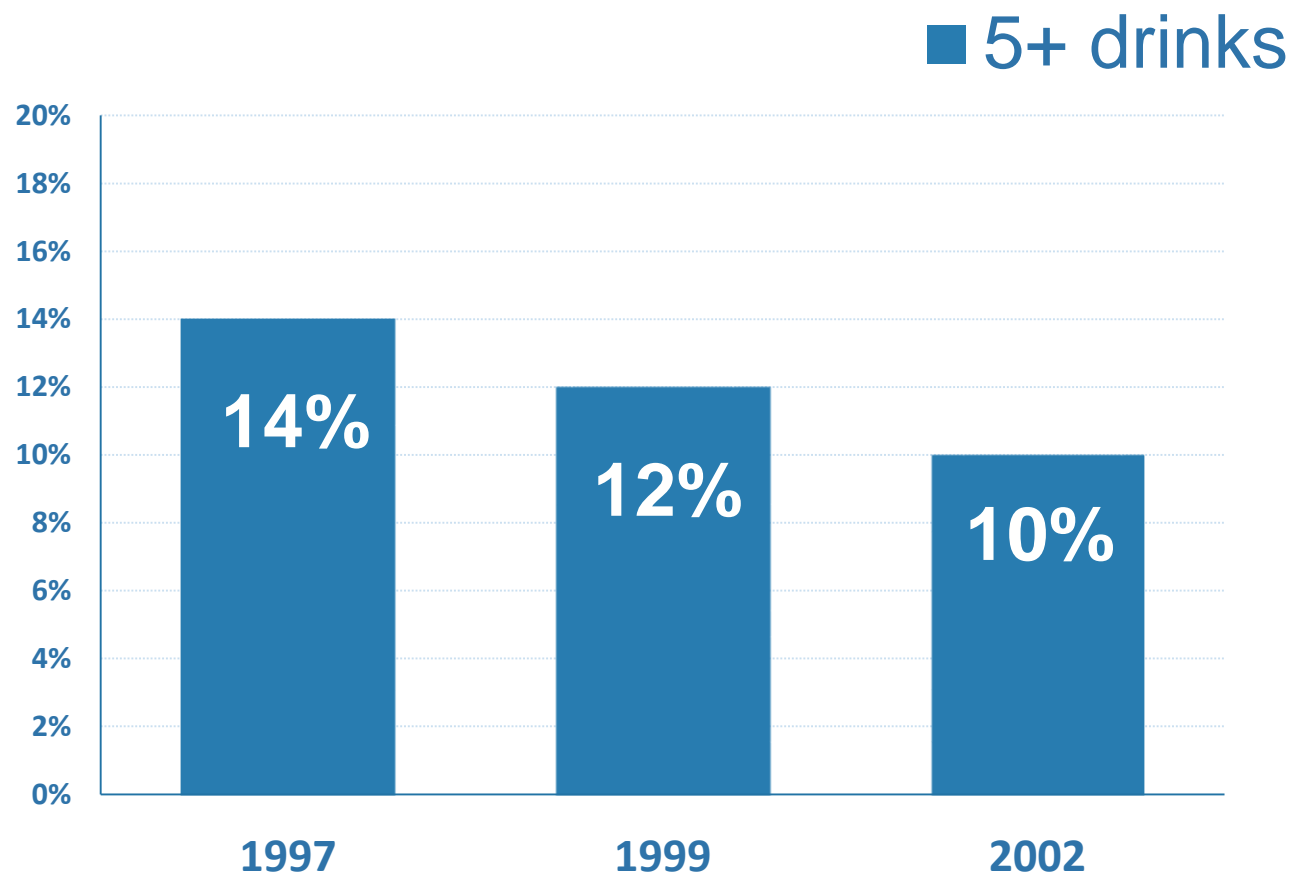
Campaign Understanding, by Year



BAC Distribution, by Year



Heavy Drinking, Night of Interview



Conclusion

Comprehensive social norms program:

- Reduced measured BAC
- Reduced heavy drinking



Social norms and traffic safety

Montana: “Most of Us Wear Seat Belts”

- 84% reported wearing a seat belt
- 59% thought others wear seat belts

Montana: Most of Us Wear Seat Belts

Campaign

- Extensive radio ads
- Print ads and promotional items
- Billboards
- Earned media



Montana: Most of Us Wear Seat Belts

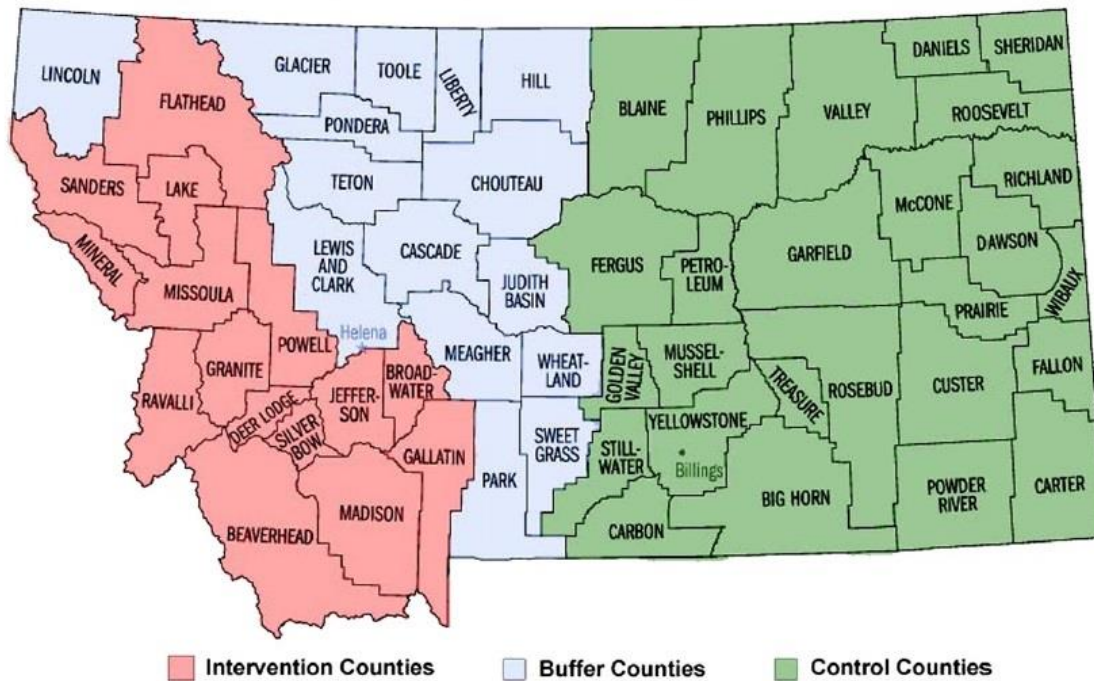
Results

- 49% awareness for campaign
- 12% increased belief that others wear belts
- 4% increase in self-reported belt use

Social norms and traffic safety

“Most Montana Young Adults Don’t Drink and Drive”

- NHTSA-funded study



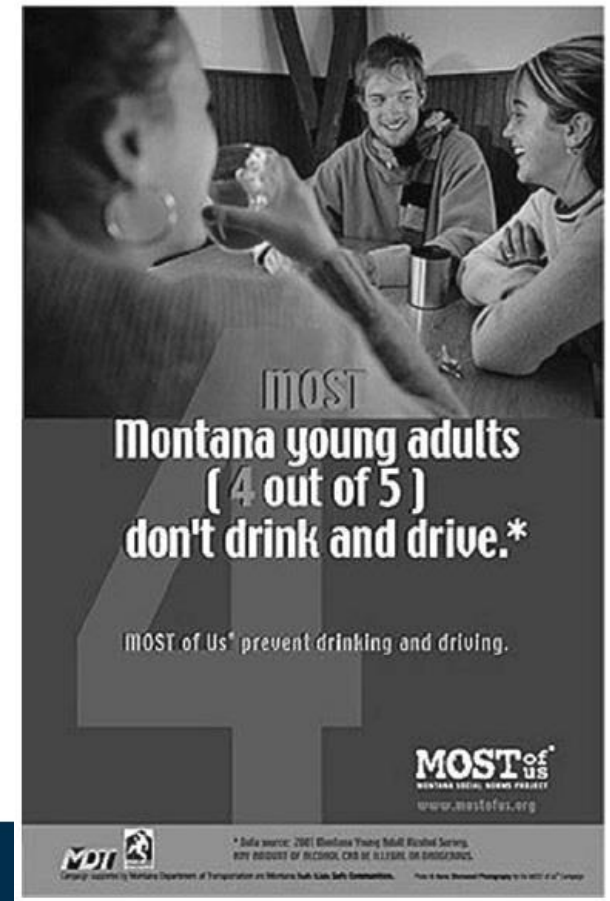
Most Montana Young Adults Don't Drink and Drive

Campaign

- TV, radio & print ads, billboards, posters, etc.

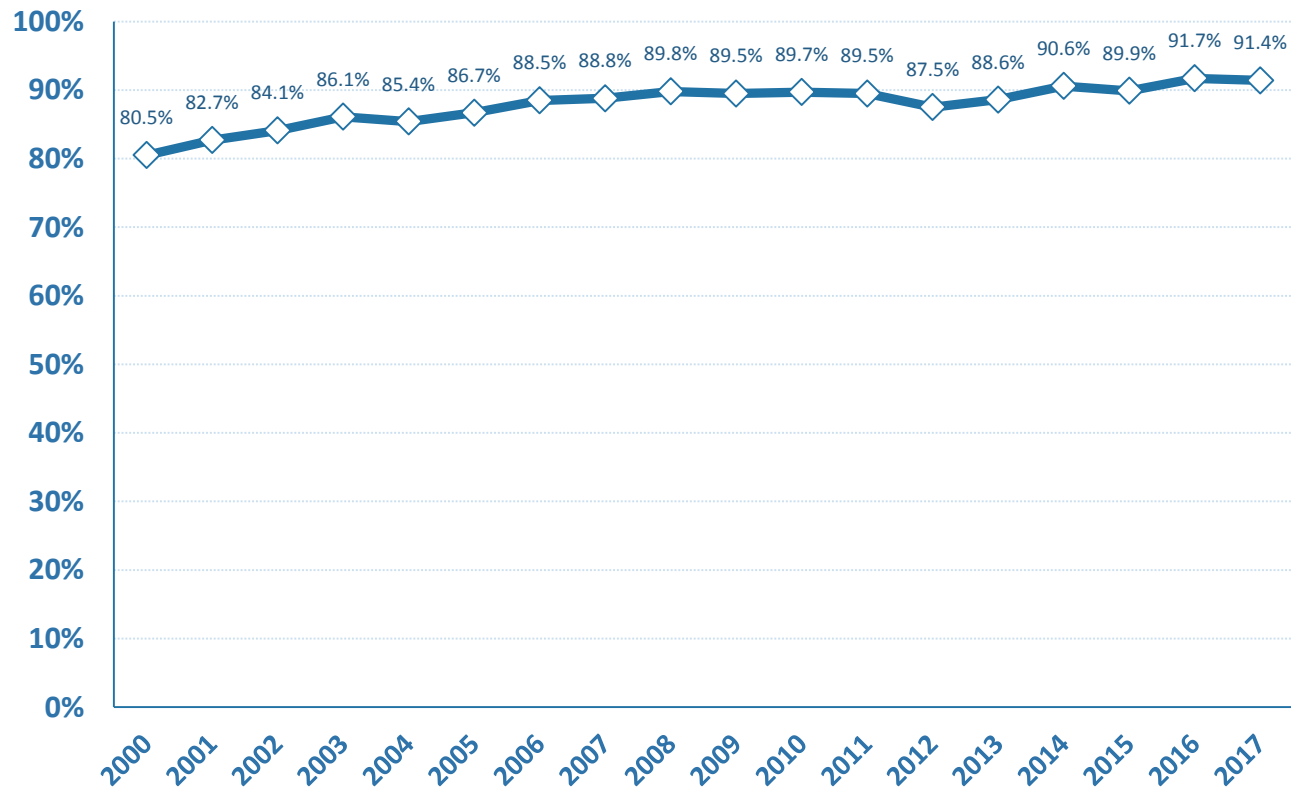
Results

- 71% recalled the message
- Self-reported drinking
 - Down 2% in intervention counties
 - Up 12% in control counties



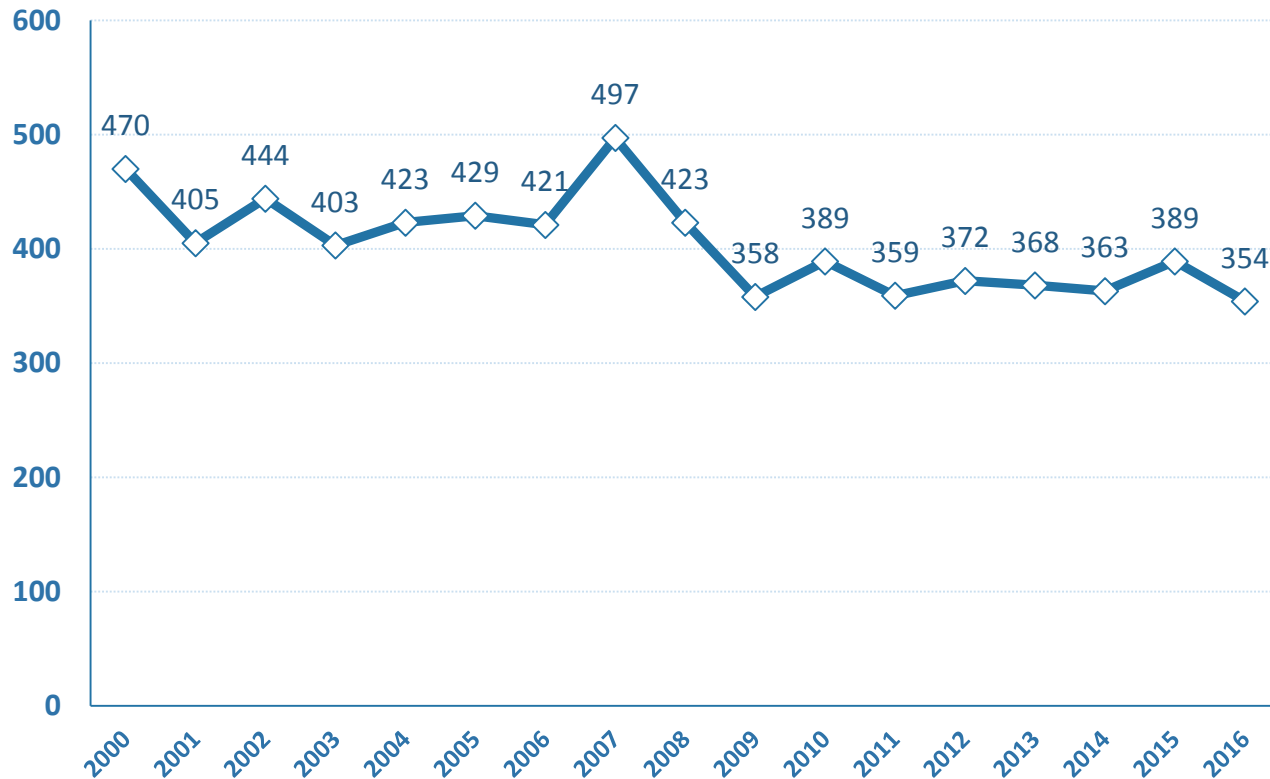
Could it work here in NC?

Seat belt use rate:



Could it work here in NC?

Fatalities involving a driver or MC operator with a BAC $\geq .08$:



Summary

- **Social norms programs proven effective in reducing risky behaviors**
 - Adolescent bullying
 - Substance abuse
 - Sexual risk taking
 - Belt non-use, impaired driving
- **Positive approach**
 - Unlike enforcement or scare tactics
- **Highlighting risky behaviors may backfire**

Summary

Steps for a successful program:

1. Discover what the *real* norms are (survey, observations)
2. Get the truth out – provide credible data that counters misperceptions
3. Risk takers learn they are in the minority
4. Empowers those who make safe choices

Thank you!

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