

# Alcohol involved in most Wyoming arrests, study says

By [WILLIAM BROWNING Star-Tribune staff writer](#) | Posted: Wednesday, April 20, 2011 1:45 am |

The majority of crimes committed throughout the state of Wyoming have a direct link to alcohol abuse.

That was the crux of a presentation given by Ernie Johnson, a management consultant for the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, at the 12-24 Club in Casper on Tuesday.

A group of community leaders from around Natrona County gathered inside the Wolcott Street building to see the presentation, which was based on an ongoing five-year study of people arrested in Wyoming.

According to the most recent study, which collected data from all people arrested and taken to jail in Wyoming in 2010:

18,946 people were jailed.

Of that number, 76 percent were male and the average age was 34.

Felony arrests accounted for seven percent of all arrests. "Wyoming is relatively safe from serious crime," Johnson said.

Seventy-two percent of all arrests involved alcohol. Seventy-nine percent involved alcohol and/or drugs.

Thirty-five percent of all arrests were for driving under the influence. The average blood-alcohol content for those arrests was 0.15.

Seventeen percent of all arrests were for public intoxication. The average blood-alcohol content for those arrests was 0.23.

The study also shows that the number of arrests statewide involving alcohol has been rising during the past five years.

Johnson said the major concerns the studies illustrate are underage drinking, overconsumption of alcohol and drinking and driving. He noted that his presentation was not an assault on alcohol, but instead an honest look at the effects of binge drinking.

The alcohol issues across Wyoming should be a priority to leaders, Johnson said, because excessive drinking leads to an increased risk to public safety and an increased cost to taxpayers.

“I hope what people take away from this is the extent of the effects that alcohol has on crime,” Casper Police Chief Chris Walsh said after the forum.

Johnson, who has worked in law enforcement for more than 44 years, urged the room full of people to take action, saying that if steps aren’t taken, the situation will only grow worse.

“We no longer have the luxury of doing nothing,” he said. “We might not know the complete solution. ... but we’ve got to get the ball rolling.”

Casper Councilwoman Kim Holloway, who attended the forum, said afterward that the information about alcohol-related arrests did not come as a surprise.

Still, Holloway said she hopes the meeting spurs community leaders into action.

“I hope it was not a meeting where we all go and listen and agree that it’s a problem and then do nothing,” she said.

“What we need to do is figure out how to coordinate a message that does not demonize alcohol but still gets across how serious of an issue this is, particularly underage drinking,” Holloway said.

The forum Tuesday was co-hosted by the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, the Natrona County Sheriff’s Office and the police departments of Casper, Mills and Evansville.

Reach reporter William Browning at (307) 266-0534 or at [william.browning@trib.com](mailto:william.browning@trib.com). Follow him on Twitter @wtbrowning.

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