



**Office of Addiction  
Services and Supports**

OASAS. Every Step of the Way.

# **Substance Use Prevention for Older Adults**

**Division of Prevention Services**

Patricia Zuber-Wilson, Associate Commissioner

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

# **NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS)**

## **Mission Statement**

To provide, support, and oversee a data-driven continuum of addiction services delivered with equity, dignity, compassion, and respect.

## **OASAS Continuum of Services**

- Prevention
- Treatment
- Harm Reduction
- Recovery



# New York State Prevention System

## 145 OASAS-funded Prevention Providers

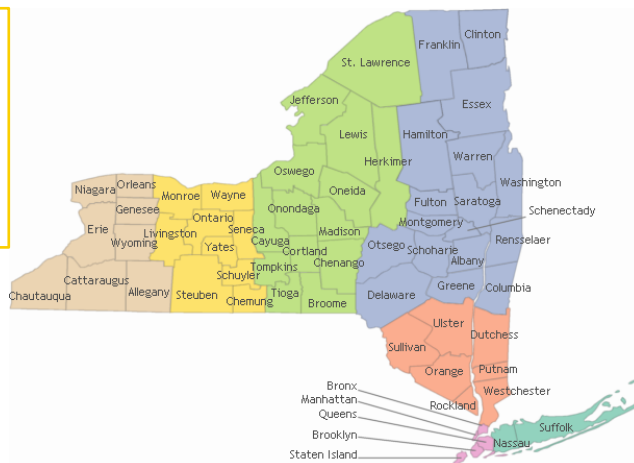
- Community Based Prevention Programs
- Schools (public/non-public)
- Local Government

## 9 Regional Addiction Resource Centers

## 6 Prevention Resource Centers

## Community Coalitions

- 150 local coalitions (funded/unfunded)
- **OASAS Funded**
  - 14 Special Populations
  - 6 Partnership for Success Coalitions
  - 5 High opioid burden counties



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## Older Adults in New York State

### New York State

- 4.6M individuals aged 60+
- Fourth in nation for number of older adults, behind California, Florida, and Texas
- Counties with older adult populations of 30% or more are expected to increase:
  - From 9 counties (2020) to estimated 33 counties (2030)



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## Older Adults and Alcohol Use

- Increase of those age 65+ with higher levels of alcohol use and Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) overburdens healthcare system
- Excessive alcohol consumption by older adults increases risks of:
  - AUD
  - adverse medication interactions
  - sleep disturbance
  - cardiovascular disease
  - cancer
  - injuries/death due to falls

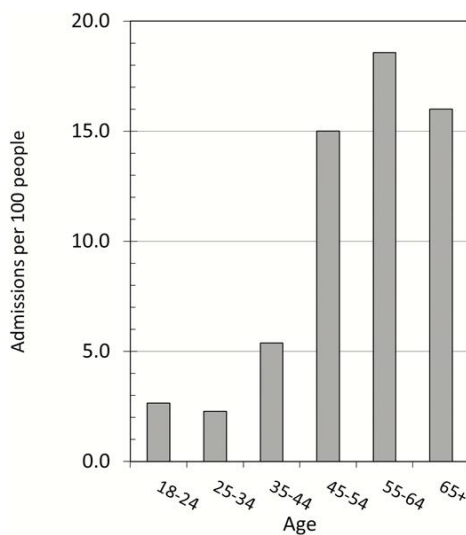
White AM, Orosz A, Powell PA, Koob GF. Alcohol and aging - An area of increasing concern. *Alcohol*. 2023 Mar;107:19-27.  
Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcohol.2022.07.005>



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## Emergency Department Alcohol Related Injuries



- **High-risk drinkers age 45+:**
  - Up to 7.5x more likely to be admitted to EDs\* for alcohol-related injury compared with those age 18–34
- **Older adults face additional risks from alcohol use**
  - More likely to take medications (which may negatively interact with alcohol)

\*Emergency Departments (EDs)

Richard A Gucza, Jennifer K Bello-Kottenstette, Carrie M Mintz, Jacob T Borodovsky, *The changing landscape of alcohol use disorder and problem drinking in the USA: implications for primary care, Family Practice, Volume 37, Issue 6, December 2020, Pages 870–872, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmaa066>*



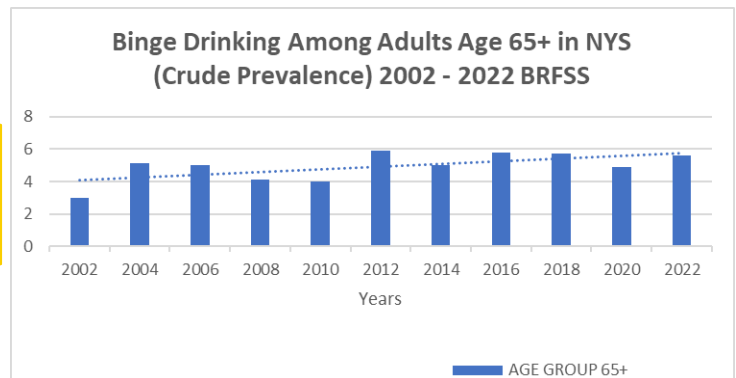
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## New York State Data: Older Adults

### Binge drinking increase over time among people aged 65+

- 10% of adults age 65+ drank five or more drinks (men) or four or more drinks (women) on at least one occasion in the past month



Balu RK, O'Sullivan G, Haile K, Battles H. Binge and Heavy Drinking. New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Brief, No. 2024-08 [Internet]. Albany, NY: New York State Department of Health, Division of Chronic Disease Prevention, Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research; 2023; Available from: [https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2024-08\\_brfss\\_binge\\_heavy\\_drinking.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2024-08_brfss_binge_heavy_drinking.pdf)



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## **Risk and Protective Factors**

### **What are the risk factors for older adults?**

**Transitions (retirement, loss of partner, income changes)**

**Coexisting Medical Conditions**

**Isolation**

**Loneliness**

**Depression**

**Pain**



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## **Risk and Protective Factors**

### **What are the protective factors for older adults?**

**Affectivity**  
**Connections**  
**Having a Partner**  
**Sense of Purpose**  
**Life Satisfaction**  
**Health Literacy**  
**Positive Coping**



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## Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE)

- **6-session (WISE)**
- **Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)**
- **Curriculum topics:**
  - healthy aging
  - cultural and generational diversity
  - medication use/misuse, substance abuse & addiction
- **WISE/SBIRT Model:**
  - More accurate reporting of substance use in SBIRT
  - Quality health and wellness information
  - Safe space for sensitive or private concerns about substance use
  - Brief individualized interventions and referrals to additional supports



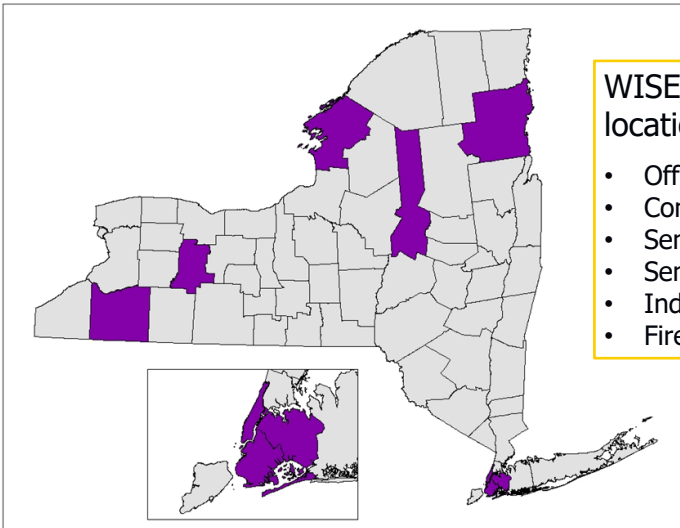
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## Thank You for the Partnership!



- Buy-in by other agencies is important
- County aging/veteran serving agencies:
  - Home/in-home/community-based programs and supportive services
- Webinar with county aging/veteran serving agencies

## WISE/SBIRT Counties



WISE/SBIRT conducted in 100 locations across 9 counties, including:

- Office of Aging Nutrition Sites
- Community Centers
- Senior Centers and Senior Clubs
- Senior Housing Facilities
- Independent Livings Communities
- Firehouses and Town Halls

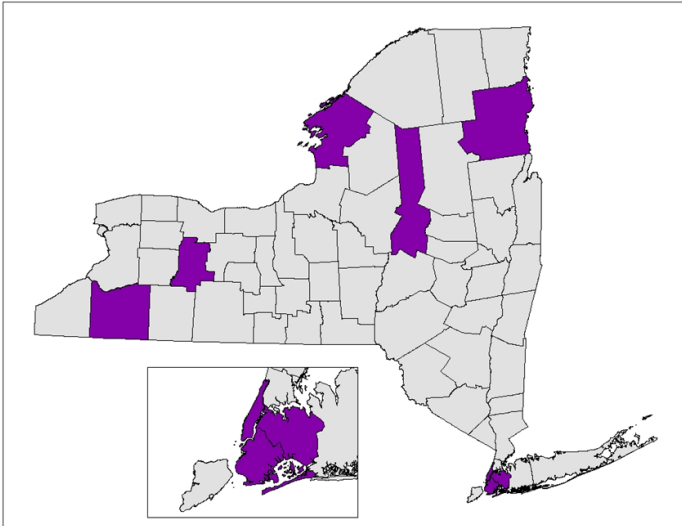
*Abbreviations: Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE); Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)*



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## WISE/SBIRT Counties



- Allegany Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Inc.
- CASA-Trinity Cattaraugus
- CASA-Trinity Livingston
- Education Alliance, Inc.
- Elmcort Youth and Adult Services, Inc
- Substance Abuse Prevention Team of Essex County
- Catholic Charities of Herkimer
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse Council of Jefferson County
- Riseboro Community Partnership

Abbreviations: *Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE); Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)*



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## WISE in New York State

- 9 Prevention Agencies (3 downstate / 5 upstate)
- 108 facilitators trained to deliver the WISE curriculum
- Over 1000 older adults participated in one year of implementation



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## WISE Pre- and Post-Survey Outcomes



- Healthier lifestyle choices and behaviors
- Better management of medications and substances like alcohol
- Improved understanding about alcohol, medications, aging, and depression
- Enhanced medication management

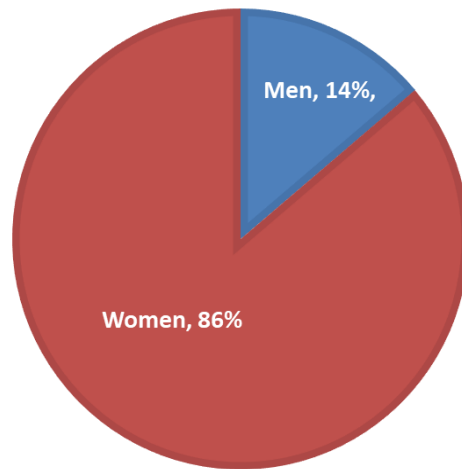


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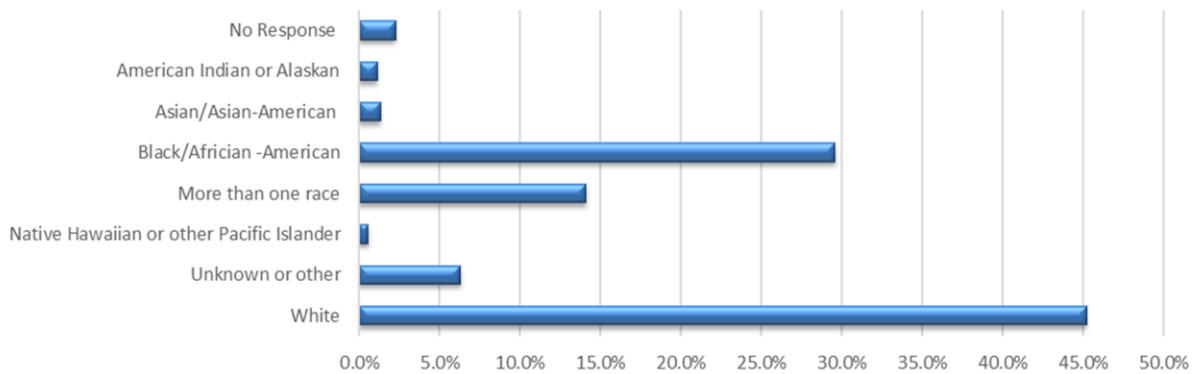
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## WISE Demographics

- **Age Range** = 46 – 95 years
- **Median Age** = 74 years
- **Mean Age** = 74 years



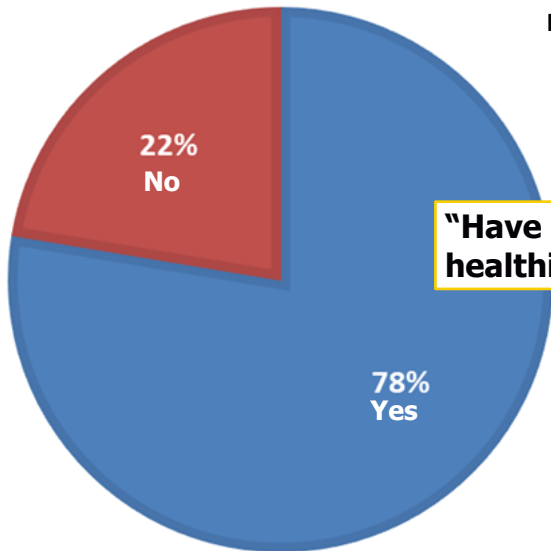
## WISE Demographics: Participant Race



|         | White | Unknown or other | Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | More than one race | Black/African - American | Asian/Asian- American | American Indian or Alaskan | No Response |
|---------|-------|------------------|---|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| ■ Total | 45.2% | 6.3%             | 0.6%                                      | 14.1%              | 29.6%                    | 1.3%                  | 1.1%                       | 2.3%        |

## WISE Demographics: Participant Behavior

n = 726

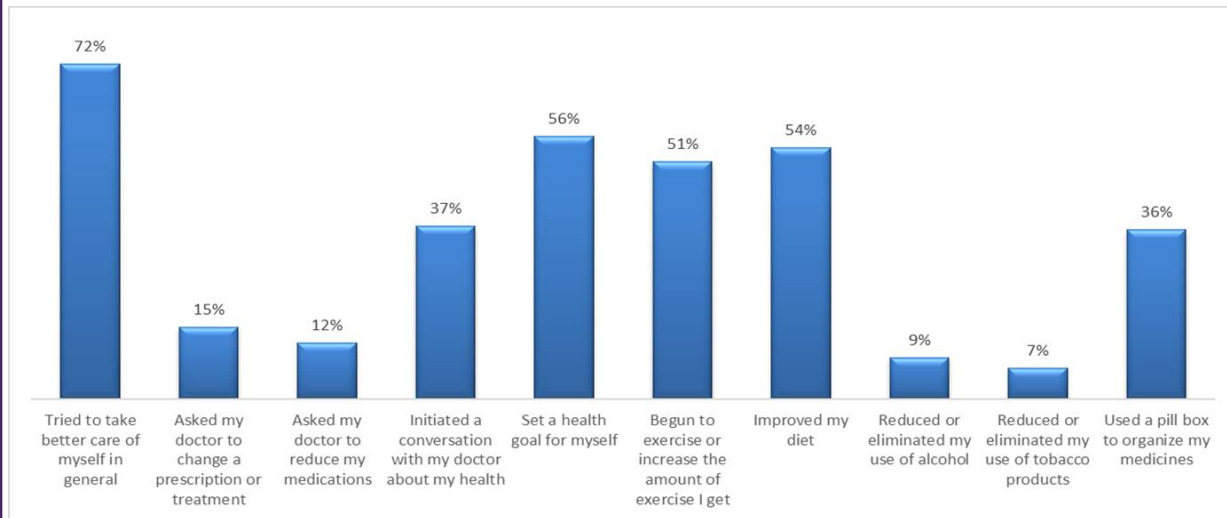


**"Have you changed any behavior to promote a healthier lifestyle in the past six weeks?"**

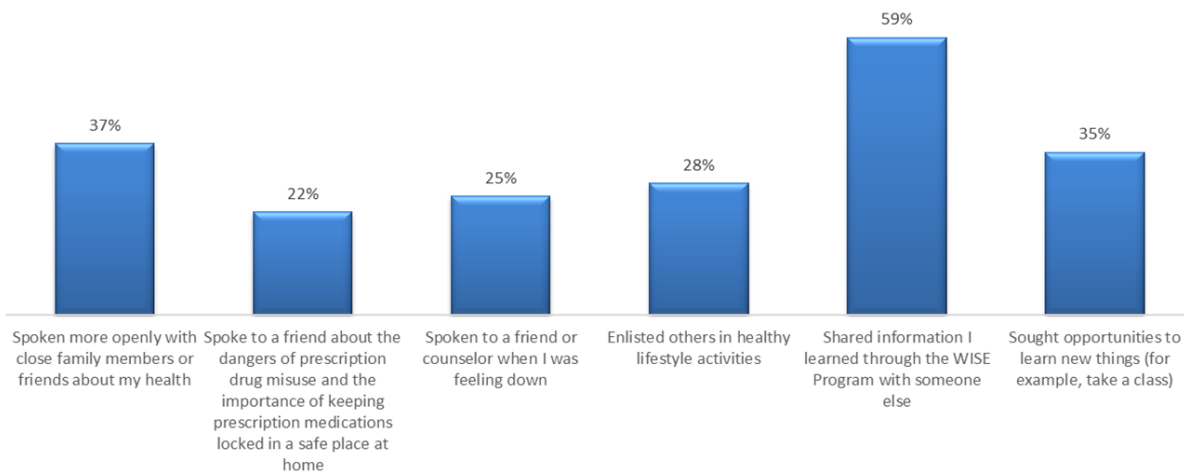


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## Self-Reported Health Behavior Changes Made



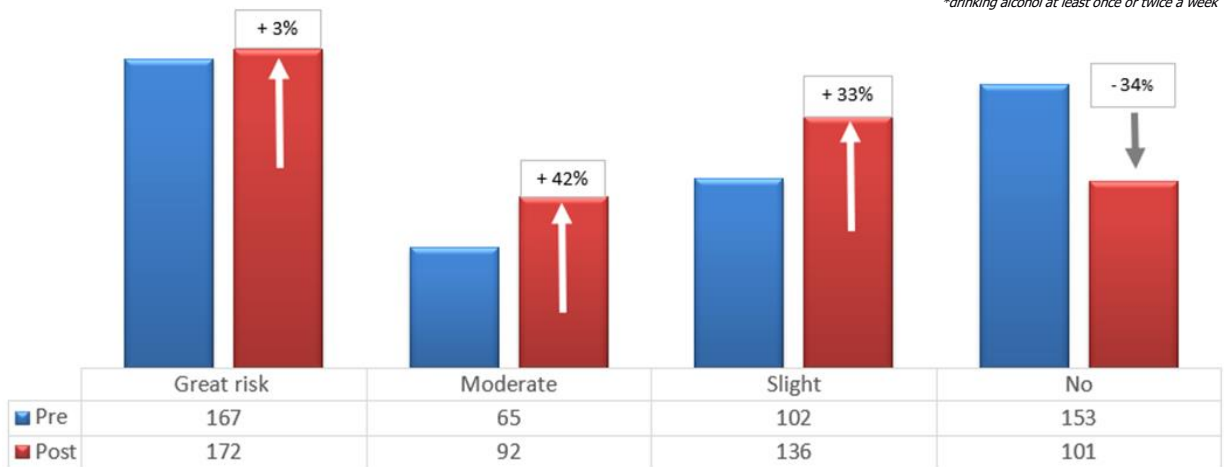
## Self-Reported Social Connectedness Changes Made



## Perceived Risk of Harm

### Drinking one or two alcoholic beverages regularly\*

*\*drinking alcohol at least once or twice a week*

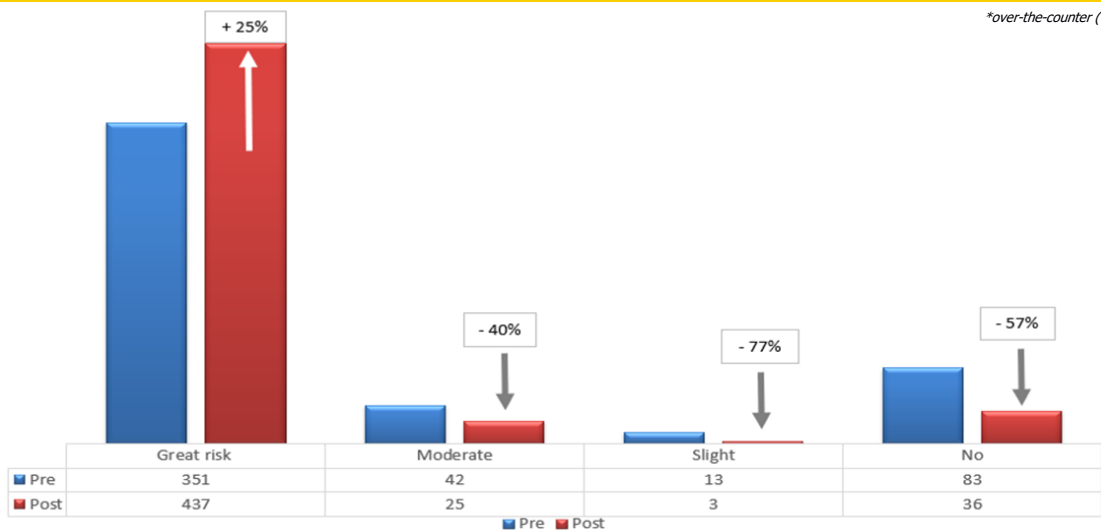


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## Perceived Risk of Harm

### Use of prescription and/or OTC\* medications while drinking alcohol

*\*over-the-counter (OTC)*

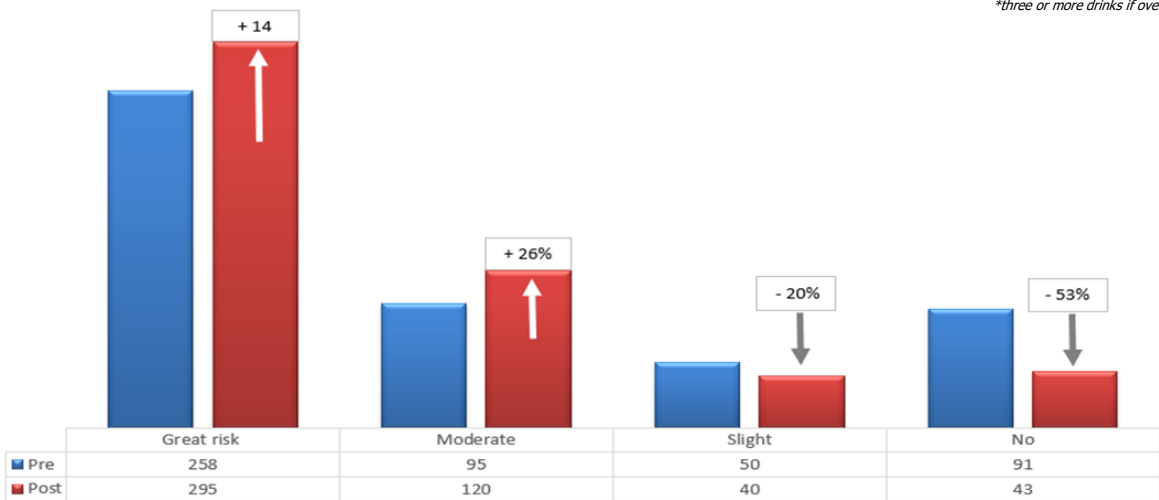


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## Perceived Risk of Harm

**Drinking 5+ alcoholic beverages once or twice a week\***

*\*three or more drinks if over age 65*



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## Participant Feedback

*"It's so relatable to what I am going through mentally and physically. It reminds me that I am not alone. When we age, we have questions like 'what do I do' and now we have those answers from WISE."*



*"I've enjoyed all the classes. I've saved all the lesson materials, they're helpful. The information about substance use is helpful in my understanding of our community."*



*"I would recommend the program for all seniors. The WISE program is for everyone."*



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## Lessons Learned

- Well received by participants/facilitators/partner sites
- Requests for more or extended programming
- Serves older adults in place
  - Improves access to prevention/wellness programming
- Frames interventions on substance use/misuse in broad “healthy aging” context
  - Builds rapport and engagement



## New York: Older Adult Coalitions

### Excessive Alcohol & Binge Drinking (ages 50+)

- Rural: UP! Coalition, Lewis County
- Suburban: FCA, Nassau & Suffolk Counties
- Veterans: Partnership for Ontario, Ontario County

### Using SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework

- Community-level data
- Building Prevention capacity
- Environmental Strategies for population level change

### Measuring Outcomes

- Past 30-day binge drinking
- Perceived risk of binge drinking
- Community Norms for binge drinking

### Challenges

- Engaging the communities
- Risk and protective factor data
- Adapting youth-focused approaches for older adults



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## Questions?

**Patricia Zuber-Wilson**

Associate Commissioner  
Division of Prevention Services

[Patricia.Zuber-Wilson@oasas.ny.gov](mailto:Patricia.Zuber-Wilson@oasas.ny.gov)

518-485-6022



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