Center for Health and Human Services

Middle Tennessee

Community Stigma Report

Public Health

Measuring Community Stigma: An Effort in Wilson County, TN

KAHLER STONE, CYNTHIA CHAFIN

SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

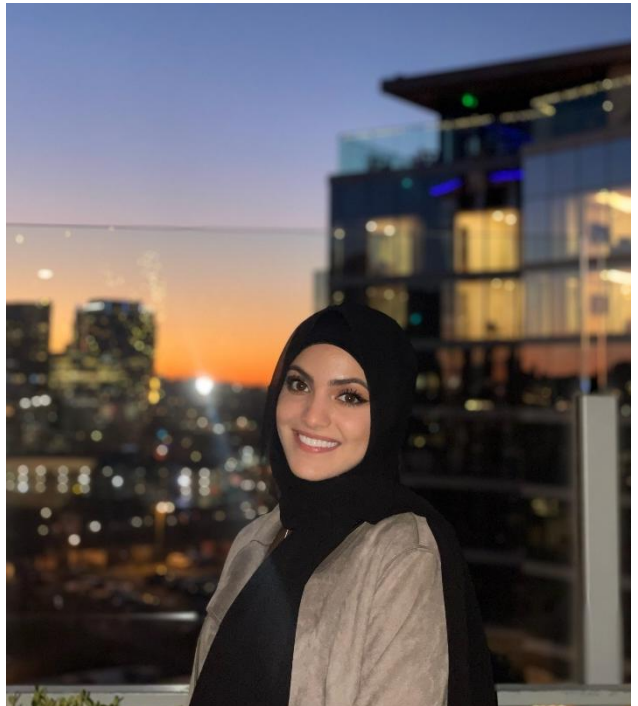
Who We Are -
MTSU RCORP Team, RCORP Wilson County Consortium

Center for Health and Human Services

Public Health

Data Science Institute

DrugFree WilCo

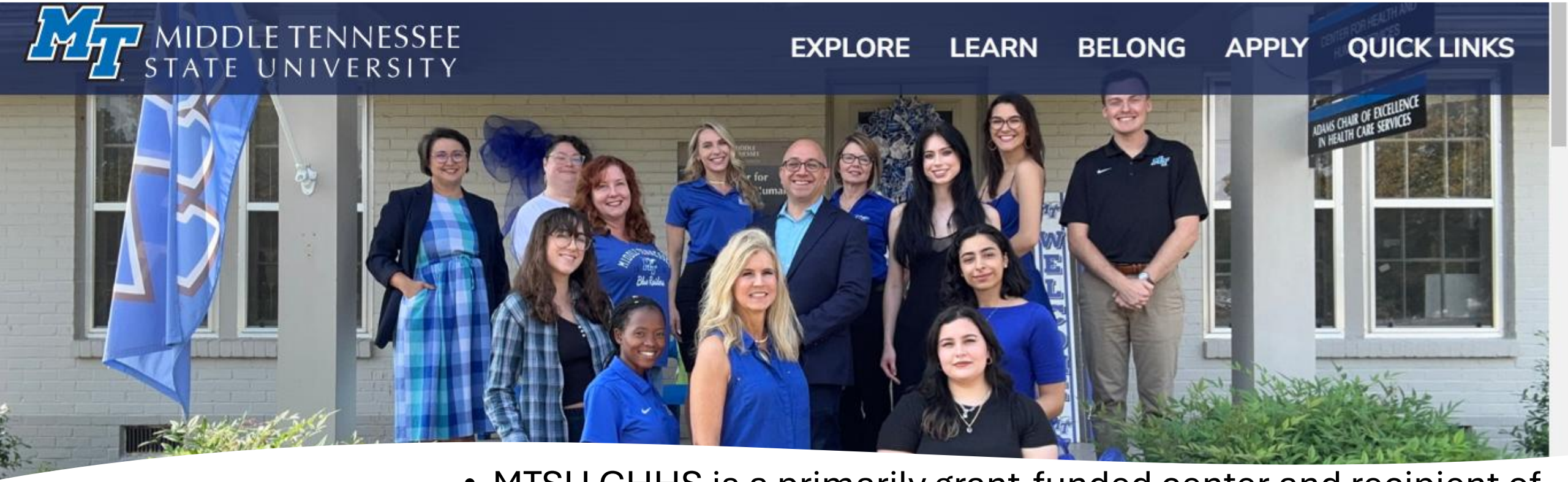


MTSU RCORP TEAM

- Lead PI & Project Director: **Cynthia Chafin,** *PhD, MCHES* ®, Director, Center for Health and Human services
- Co-PI and Project Director: **Kahler Stone,** *DrPH, MPH, Associate Professor, Dept. of Health and Human Performance, Public Health Program*
- Local Coordinator: **Michael Ayalon,** *Master of Public Service, Program Coordinator, Center for Health and Human Services*
- Data Analyst: **Keith Gamble,** Director, Data *Science Institute, Professor Economics and Finance*
- Project Assistant: **Chipper Smith,** MPH & **Maimoonah Dabshee ,** *MPH*

Project Partners forming **MTSU RCORP Consortium** (formal MOUs in place)

- DrugFree WilCo: Drug use prevention coalition of Wilson County
- MTSU Center of Health and Human Services: To shape a healthier future and advance the health and well-being of Tennesseans – Lead Agency for RCORP Wilson County grants
- Cedar Recovery: Largest addition treatment center in Wilson County
- Mid-Cumberland Transportation: public transit system serving Wilson County and PIC Center needs and Uber.



MTSU Project Team - Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS), Lead Partner

www.mtsu.edu/chhs

- MTSU CHHS is a primarily grant-funded center and recipient of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) grant funding that supports activities to address opioids in Wilson County, Tennessee.
- During 2020-2024 CHHS received $1.2 million in grant funding through HRSA's RCORP to support this work in Wilson County.
- Since its founding in 1993 by the Adams Chair of Excellence in Healthcare Services, CHHS has received more than $25 million in external dollars to support public health research and outreach in areas of importance to Tennesseans.

Project Partners

- MT Public Health
  - Basic and applied research, community and university service, and educational and community partnerships
- MTSU Data Science Institute
  - Using complex data to create actionable insights

Public Health

Data Science Institute

Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) Grant Funding

- The Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) is a multi-year initiative by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

- It is aimed at reducing the morbidity and mortality of substance use disorder (SUD), including opioid use disorder (OUD), in high-risk rural communities

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HRSA
Health Resources and Services Administration

Two Grants, One Goal:

Reducing fatalities due to overdose and the associated economic burden related to misuse.

Planning Grant (18 months, 9/1/2020 – 2/28/2022)

- Understand the needs of those in Wilson County specific to opioid use disorder
- Focus Group studies
- Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis

Implementation Grant (3 years, 9/1/21 – 8/31/24)

- Put ideas into action
- Educate and inform
- Reduce stigma
- Save lives

These projects are supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance awards totaling $200,000 and $1,000,000 with 100% funded by HRSA/HHS and $0 amount funded by nongovernment sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government." For more information, please visit hrsa.gov

Four Project Core Areas

What is Stigma and Why is Reducing it Important?

- Stigma against those with substance use disorder is a set of negative attitudes and stereotypes that can create barriers to treatment and make these conditions worse (Volkow, 2020).
- Anyone can have stigmatizing attitudes – individuals, healthcare providers, and other professionals.
- Stigma is an overarching concern that is addressed as part of the Wilson County RCORP project activities.
- Addressing stigma as an overarching concern means we are more likely to be successful in all project activities and to demonstrate positive impact.

Source: Volkow, ND. Stigma and the toll of addiction. New England Journal of Medicine. 2020;382 (14): 1289-1290. doi: 101056/nejmp191736-

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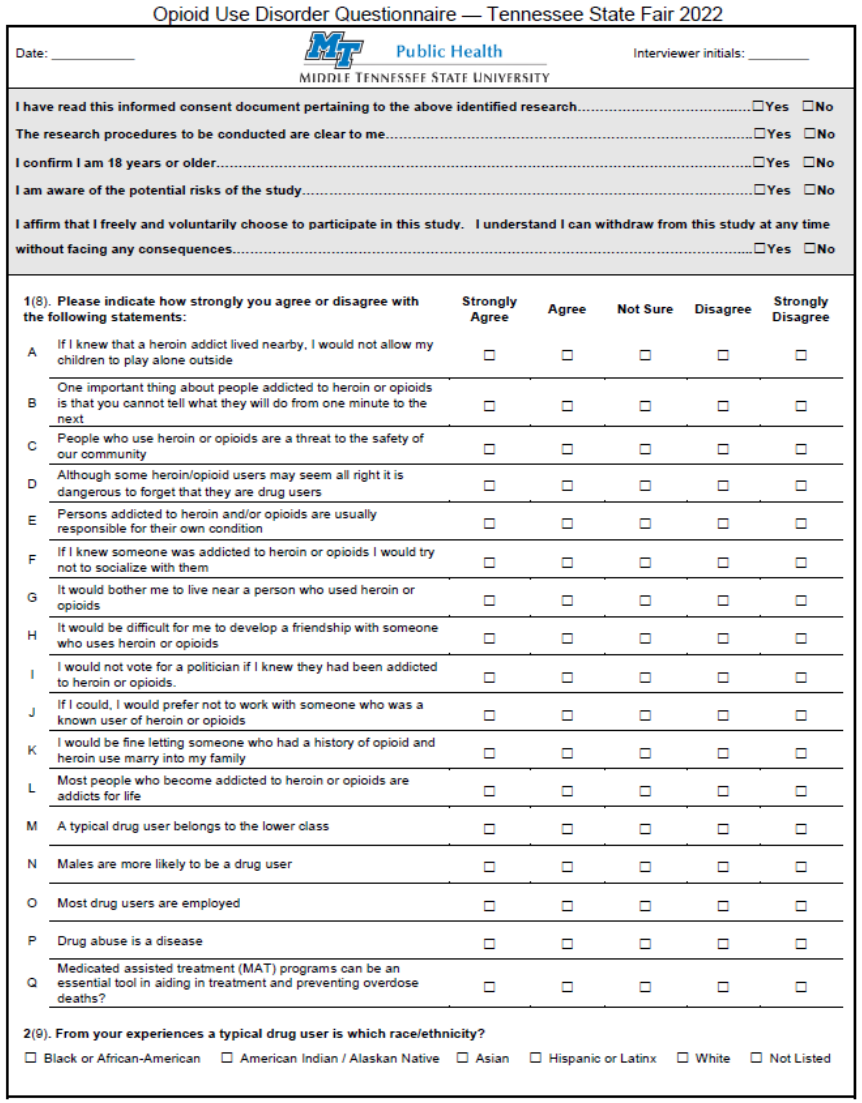


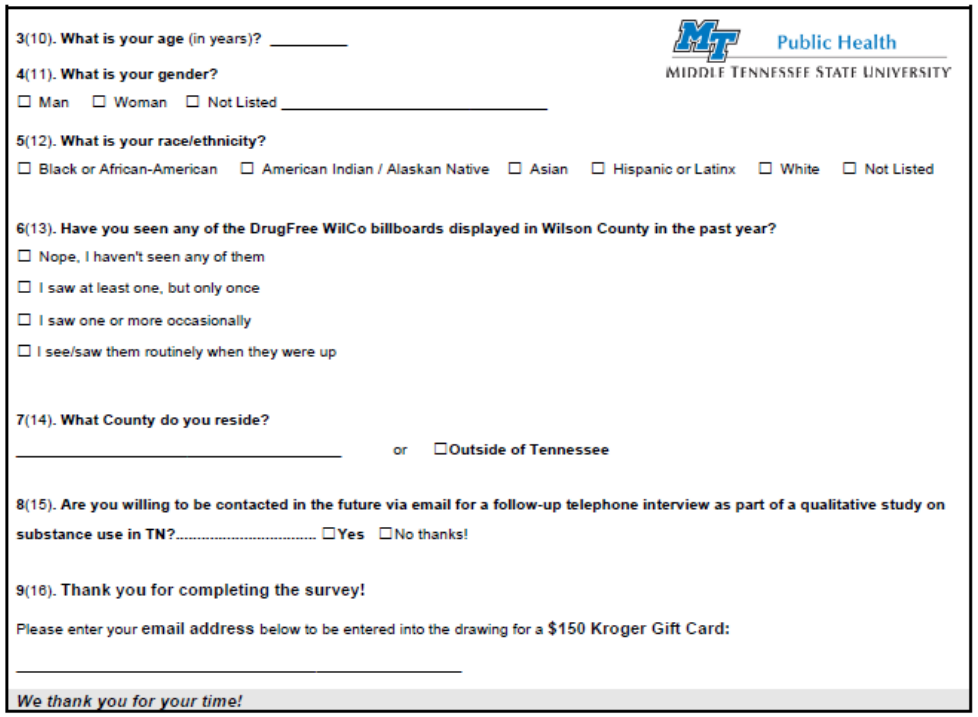
Opioid Use Disorder Questionnaire — Tennessee State Fair 2022

Date: _____ Public Health MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY Interviewer initials: _____

I have read this informed consent document pertaining to the above identified research..... ☐Yes ☐No
The research procedures to be conducted are clear to me..... ☐Yes ☐No
I confirm I am 18 years or older..... ☐Yes ☐No
I am aware of the potential risks of the study..... ☐Yes ☐No
I affirm that I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study. I understand I can withdraw from this study at any time without facing any consequences..... ☐Yes ☐No

1(8). Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	If I knew that a heroin addict lived nearby, I would not allow my children to play alone outside	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B	One important thing about people addicted to heroin or opioids is that you cannot tell what they will do from one minute to the next	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C	People who use heroin or opioids are a threat to the safety of our community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D	Although some heroin/opioid users may seem all right it is dangerous to forget that they are drug users	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E	Persons addicted to heroin and/or opioids are usually responsible for their own condition	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F	If I knew someone was addicted to heroin or opioids I would try not to socialize with them	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G	It would bother me to live near a person who used heroin or opioids	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
H	It would be difficult for me to develop a friendship with someone who uses heroin or opioids	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I	I would not vote for a politician if I knew they had been addicted to heroin or opioids.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
J	If I could, I would prefer not to work with someone who was a known user of heroin or opioids	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K	I would be fine letting someone who had a history of opioid and heroin use marry into my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L	Most people who become addicted to heroin or opioids are addicts for life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M	A typical drug user belongs to the lower class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
N	Males are more likely to be a drug user	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O	Most drug users are employed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
P	Drug abuse is a disease	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q	Medicated assisted treatment (MAT) programs can be an essential tool in aiding in treatment and preventing overdose deaths?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2(9). From your experiences a typical drug user is which race/ethnicity?
☐ Black or African-American ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native ☐ Asian ☐ Hispanic or Latinx ☐ White ☐ Not Listed



3(10). What is your age (in years)? _____

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4(11). What is your gender?
☐ Man ☐ Woman ☐ Not Listed _____

5(12). What is your race/ethnicity?
☐ Black or African-American ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native ☐ Asian ☐ Hispanic or Latinx ☐ White ☐ Not Listed

6(13). Have you seen any of the DrugFree WilCo billboards displayed in Wilson County in the past year?
☐ Nope, I haven't seen any of them
☐ I saw at least one, but only once
☐ I saw one or more occasionally
☐ I see/saw them routinely when they were up

7(14). What County do you reside?
_____ or ☐Outside of Tennessee

8(15). Are you willing to be contacted in the future via email for a follow-up telephone interview as part of a qualitative study on substance use in TN?..... ☐Yes ☐No thanks!

9(16). Thank you for completing the survey!

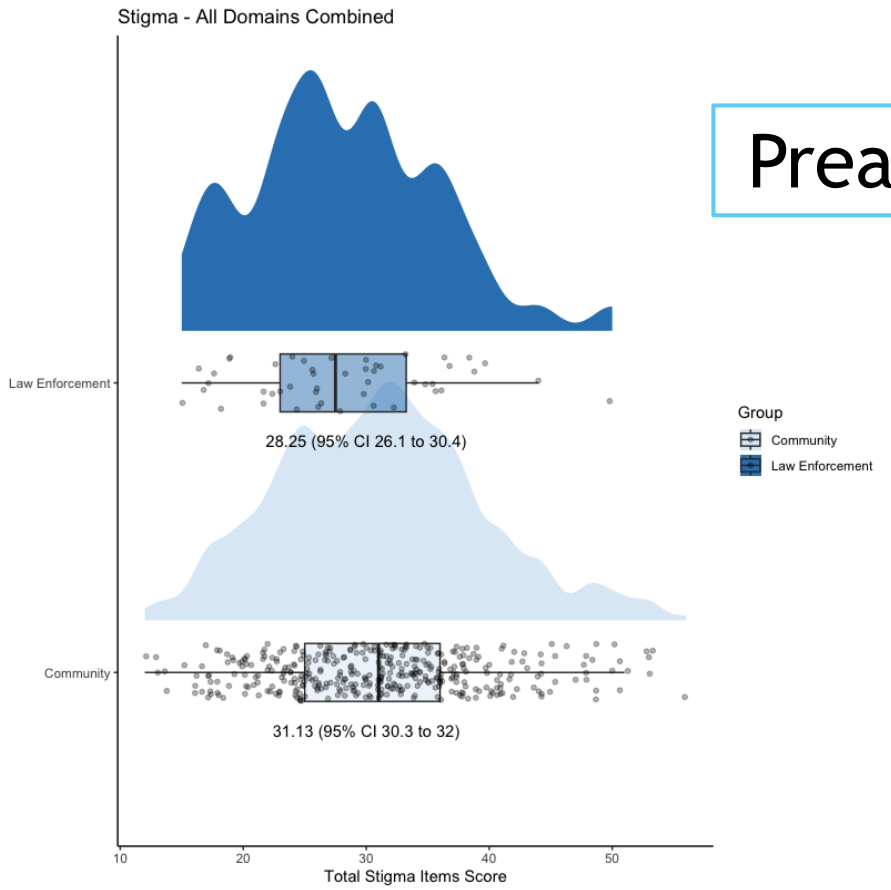
Please enter your email address below to be entered into the drawing for a $150 Kroger Gift Card:

_____

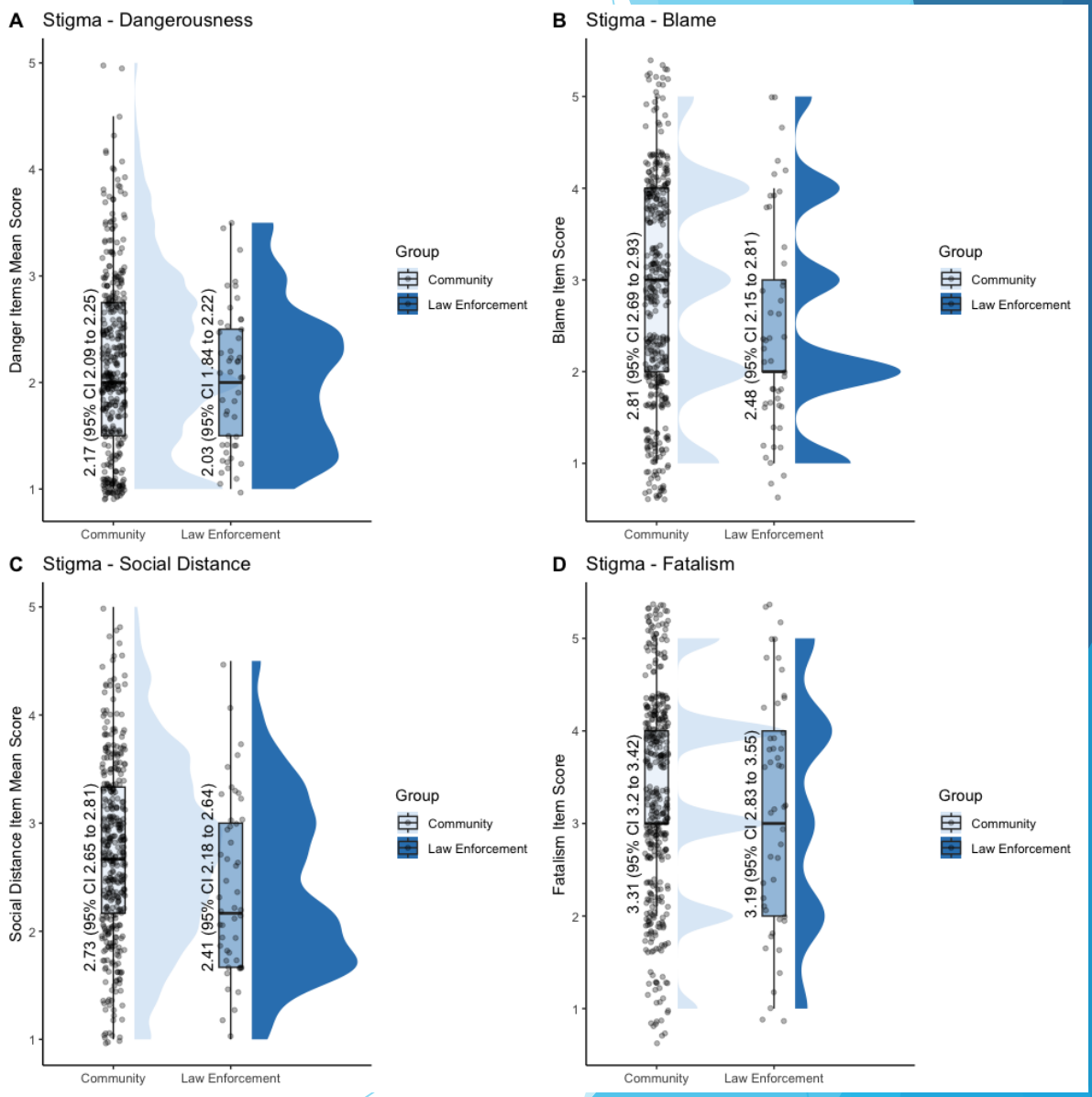
We thank you for your time!

- Informed Consent
- 14 Stigma oriented questions
- Billboard sign visibility
- Drug user stereotyping questions (biases)
- Respondent demographics (age, gender, race)
- **Loved/close one affected question added**

Community Stigma Report



Preamble



Law Enforcement Training - Six virtual (held via Zoom) peer-led harm reduction model presentations were delivered over two days in January 2022, for local law enforcement officers in Wilson County. Of those that attended a classroom with lunch (N=112), 52 agreed to participate in the survey.

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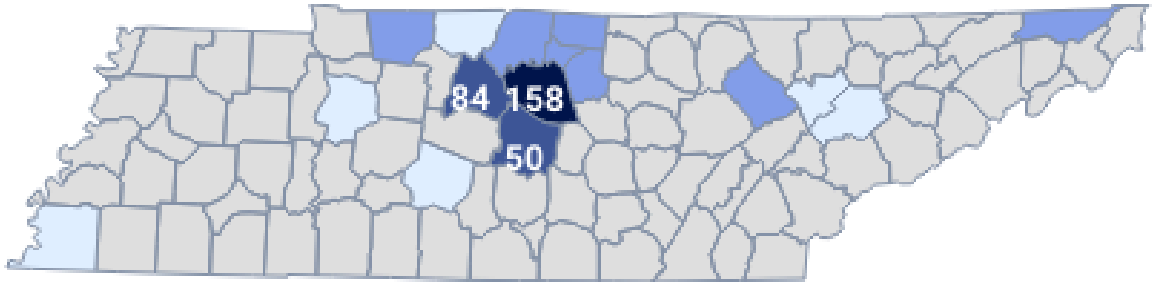


Map of Where Respondents Reside, 2023

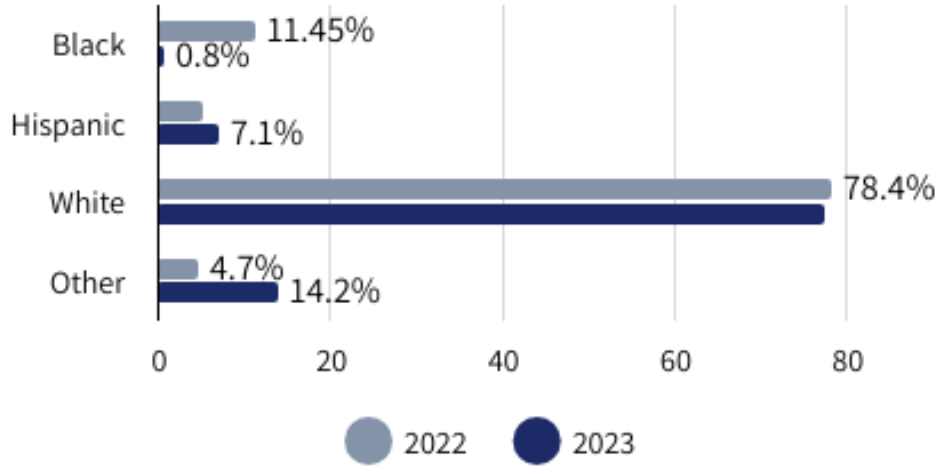
< 5 | 5 - 49 | 50 - 100 | > 100

Throughout five days of data collection (August 17-26, 2023), a total of 2,250 recruitment cards were distributed. On three of those days, paper surveys were additionally offered. In total, 407 surveys were completed online and 28 on paper, amounting to 435 surveys. Surveys that were mostly incomplete, lacked informed consent, or were missing significant sections were excluded from the final analysis. After meticulous data cleaning, we had 387 complete and usable responses. Analysis was conducted using Stata Version 17 (College Station, TX) and QGIS 3.26 (Boston, MA).

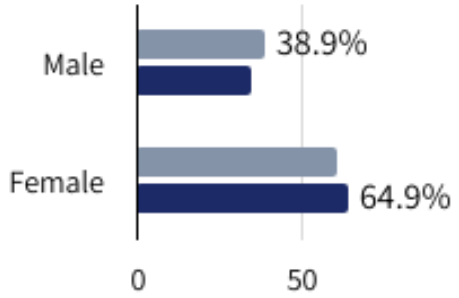
Data Collection / Demographics

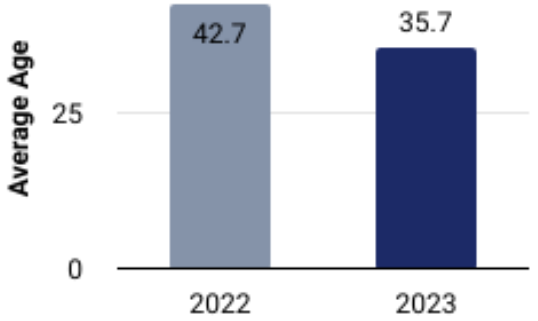
At the fair, RCORP staff and MTSU student volunteers, using a questionnaire that included a new query about personal connections to substance use disorder, assessed perceptions of drug use and the visibility of DrugFree WilCo billboards. They engaged adults, offering both digital and paper survey options. The 2023 survey revealed a younger average age of 35.7, a higher female participation, stable white representation, fewer black respondents, and an increase in non-disclosures on race from under 5% to 15.2%.

Race/Ethnicity Proportion by Survey Year



Respondent Reported Gender by Survey Year





Average Age of Respondents by Survey Year

Our survey inquired about participants' views regarding the typical profile of a drug user, focusing on attributes such as gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and employment status. Our findings show that the variation in these perceptions is marginal from 2022 to 2023 within our sample.

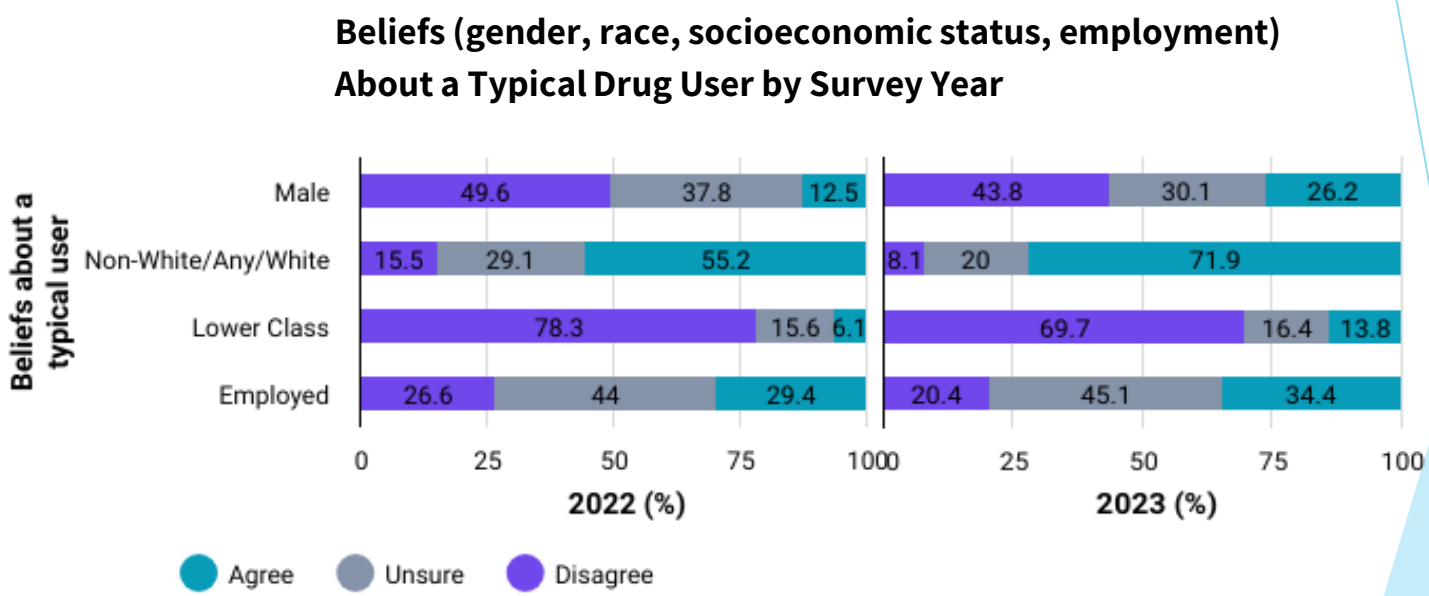
TDH Estimates

White: 77.9%
Black: 19.7%
Other: 3.1%

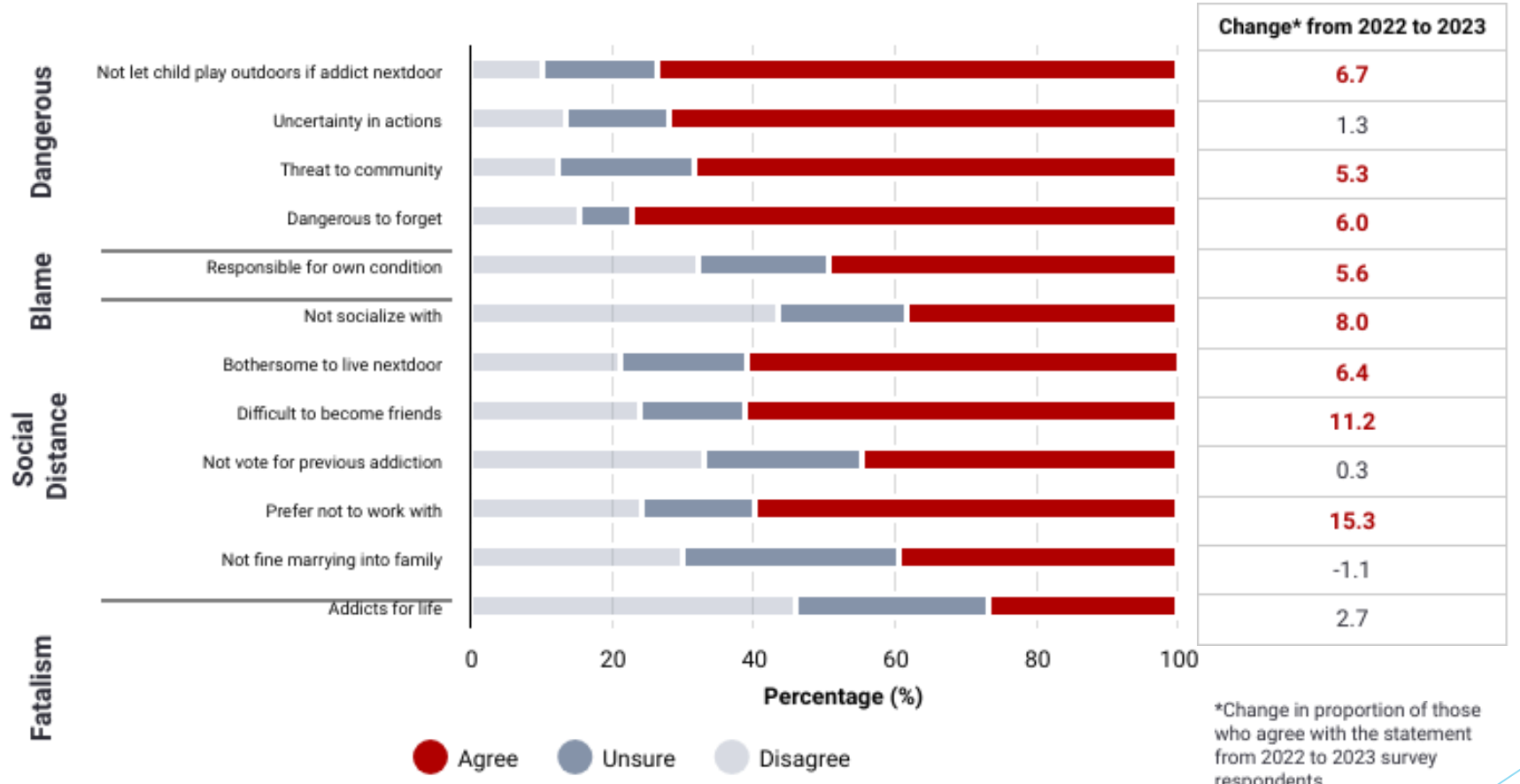
Men: 65.8%
Women: 34.2%

Existing Literature

Income and education linked with fatal and nonfatal overdoses



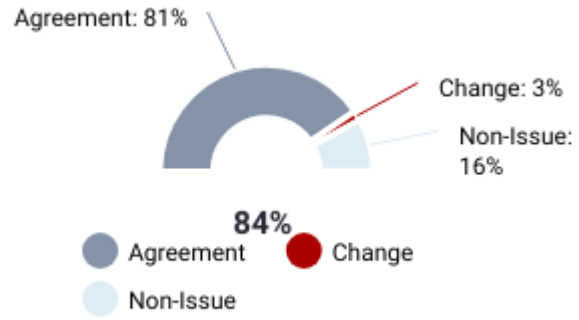
Stigma Item-Specific Changes by Year and Across Domains



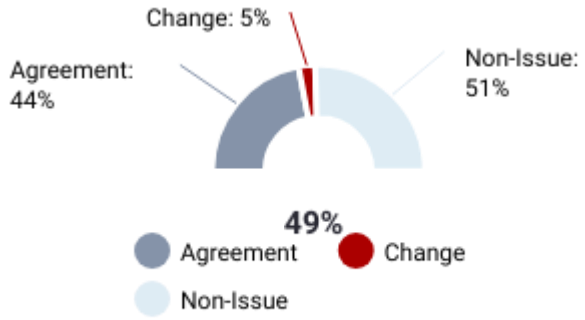
Change* from 2022 to 2023
6.7
1.3
5.3
6.0
5.6
8.0
6.4
11.2
0.3
15.3
-1.1
2.7

*Change in proportion of those who agree with the statement from 2022 to 2023 survey respondents.

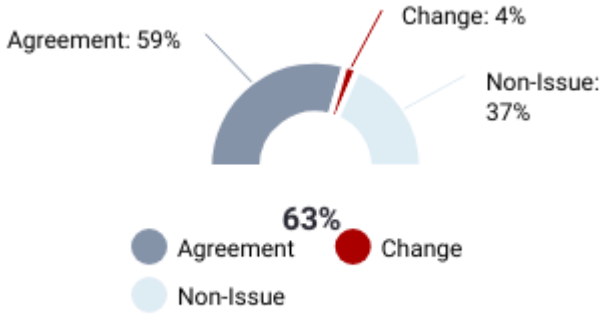
Stigma Domain Changes from 2022 to 2023



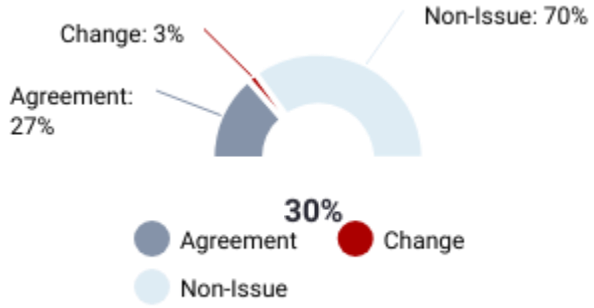
Dangerous



Blame

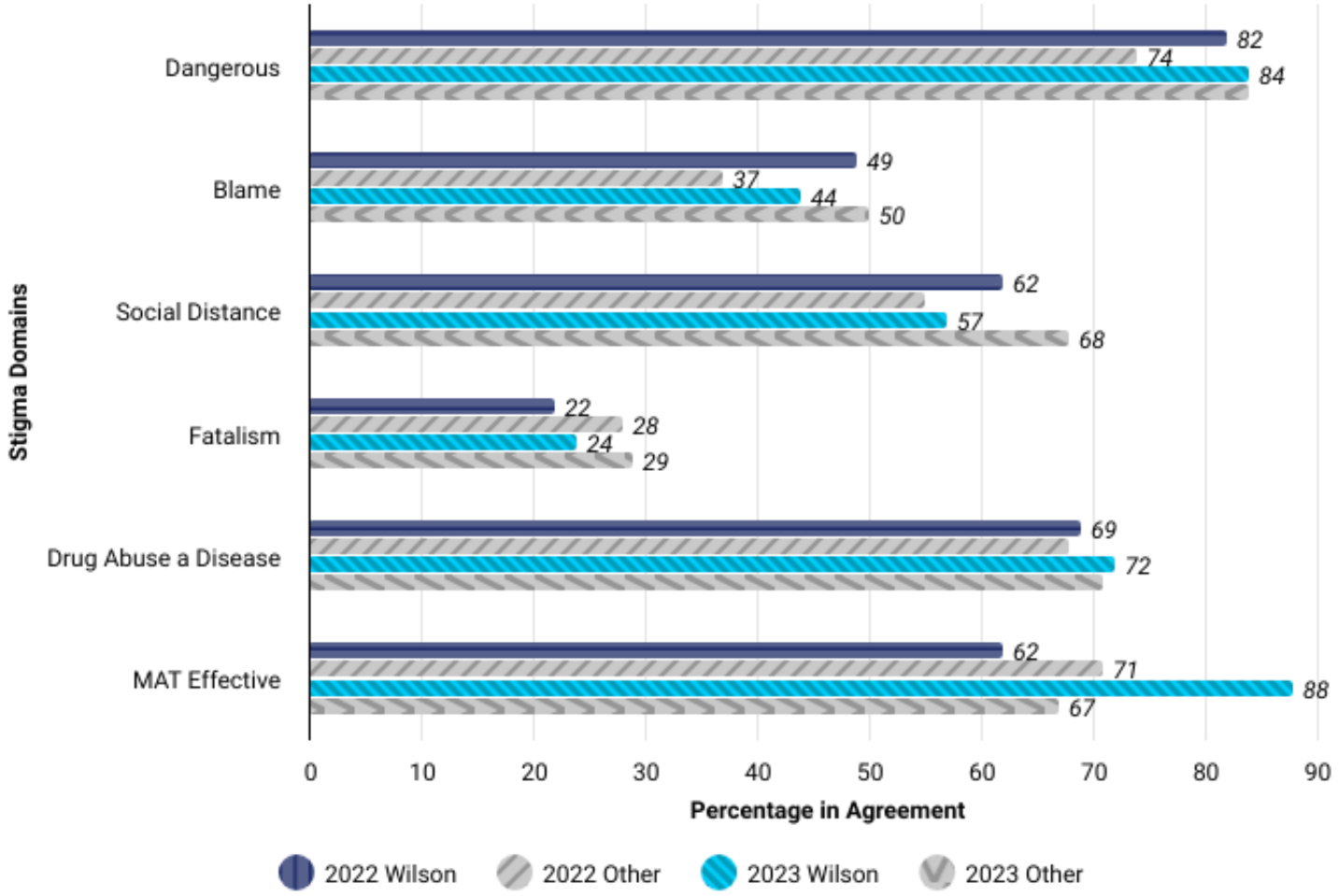


Social Distance

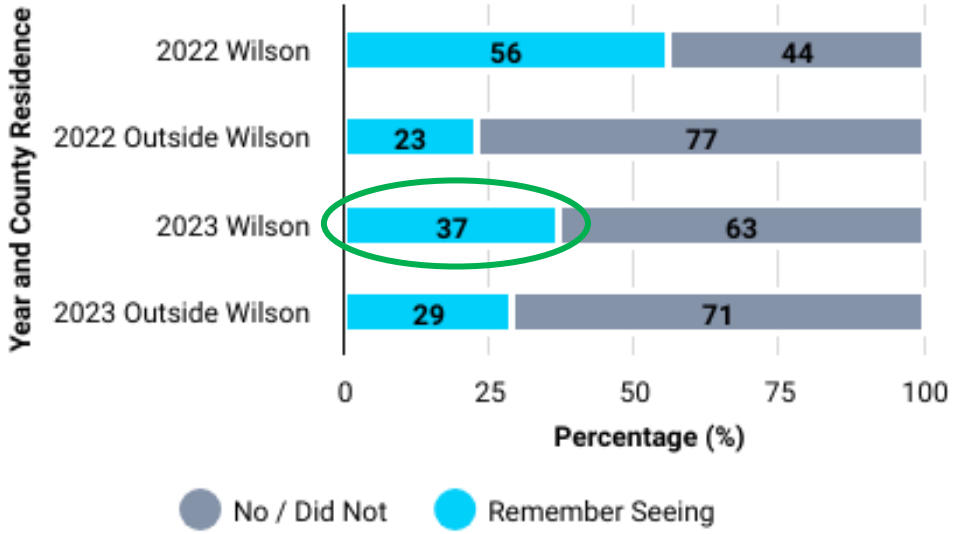


Fatalism

Stigma Domain Changes from 2022 to 2023 by Wilson County Resident Status

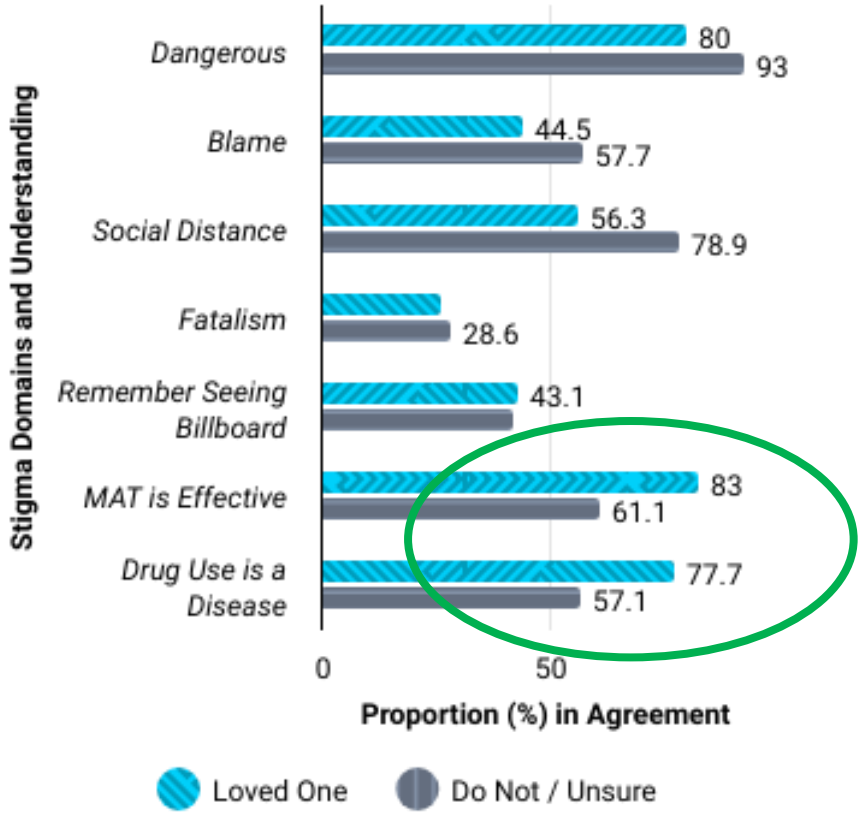


Billboard Viewing Recall by County and Year



A billboard campaign aimed at reducing stigma towards individuals using drugs and promoting recovery and treatment efforts ran from March to December 2022. We surveyed respondents in August 2022 and again a year later in August 2023 to see if they remembered seeing any of the billboards. As anticipated, Wilson County residents showed better recall in both years, with 37% still remembering the billboards after more than a year. Notably, there was an increase in recall among respondents from outside the county.

Stigma Domain Level by Affected Loved One Status



Overall, the data indicates that individuals with a close friend or family member involved in drug use tend to have:

- lower levels of stigma across all domains,
- are more likely to believe in the effectiveness of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- and recognize drug abuse as a disease.

2023 Highlights

Minimal change in perceptions of a drug user's profile from 2022 to 2023.

Wilson County saw social distance stigma fall, and acceptance of treatment and understanding of drug use improved.

Individuals with affected loved ones exhibit lower drug stigma and greater belief in treatment effectiveness.

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This publication is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling $333,000 with 0% percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit HRSA.gov. The survey methodology and data collection processes received approval from the MTSU Human Subjects Institutional Review Board under protocol number: 22-1072 1q.

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Community Stigma Report

Third Year Data Collection (2024)

- Attended fair over 5 days/evenings
- Team of Six Public Health Students (not all shown)
- Passed out 1527 QR cards
- Preliminary collection results
    - **N = 359**
        - 68 paper versions
        - 291 electronic via QR Code