

Shifting Attitudes Around Alcohol

An Overview of Rethink the Drink's First Campaign



October 2023

In an innovative effort aimed at curbing excessive drinking, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) launched a public health awareness brand and campaign, Rethink the Drink (RTD), in the summer of 2022. As the first effort of its kind in the U.S., RTD invites people in Oregon to consider the role of alcohol in their lives and communities.



The Hidden Cost of Excessive Drinking

Most of us recognize the harms of underage drinking and alcohol addiction. However, excessive drinking—which is both legal and often socially encouraged—also takes a toll on individual and community health. In 2020, **nearly 1 in 5 people in Oregon reported binge drinking**, the most common form of excessive drinking. **Excessive drinking costs the state \$4.8 billion every year** in motor vehicle crashes, healthcare expenses, criminal justice costs and lost productivity. Importantly, it is also the **third leading cause of preventable deaths and disease** in Oregon.

To respond to the growing concerns around excessive drinking, OHA leveraged key findings from their Alcohol Formative Audience Assessment and the expertise of nonprofit and local public health partners. Together, they informed RTD's initial goals to:

Educate and reveal:

- The health harms of excessive drinking
- A better understanding of what counts as excessive drinking
- New considerations for the conversations we have around alcohol
- The proliferation of alcohol's presence

Introduce a new brand to the state of Oregon:

- One that has the ability to carry several campaigns

Desired outcomes:

- Begin to change the conversation around alcohol
- Encourage individual behavior change
- Increase support for policies to reduce excessive alcohol use



Q: What is excessive drinking?

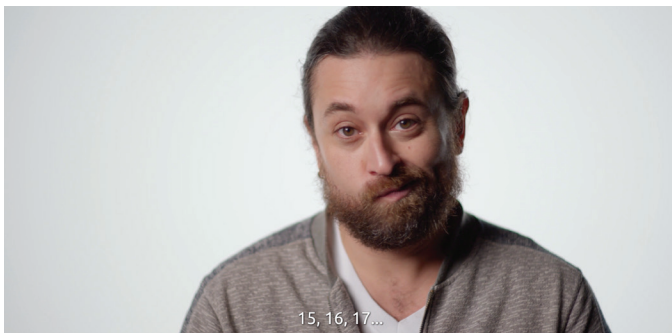
A: Excessive drinking involves binge drinking (when a person has 4 to 5 drinks or more on a single occasion) or heavy drinking (having 1-2 drinks or more every night in a week) that can lead to potential negative health, social or behavioral consequences.

Source: Centers for Disease Control

Inviting a Conversation: The Rethink the Drink Brand

OHA worked with partners and a social marketing firm, Coates Kokes to create RTD. As a brand, RTD is a long-term initiative to shift the conversation around excessive drinking. With a distinctive name and logo, the RTD brand encourages people throughout Oregon to be mindful of when they drink, how often they drink and why. The brand does this by:

- Sharing scientific facts about what's considered too much drinking and the hidden harms it can have on the health of individuals and communities
- Showing that alcohol impacts people of all backgrounds and situations to reduce judgment and stigma
- Using a friendly and approachable tone and visuals
- Introducing unique campaigns over time and developing culturally specific materials



How Many Drinks (Spanglish)
<https://vimeo.com/721135988>

Launching the First Campaign

OHA launched RTD in June of 2022. The first paid media campaign included a strategic mix of streaming videos, television ads, radio and audio streaming spots, digital display and print ads in rural community newspapers.

“ *The tv commercials I've seen... [that] stuck with me are the ones where people were saying how many drinks are too many per week. Those numbers were interesting.... It probably caused a lot of people to think, 'Wow, I didn't think it would be that few drinks per week that could create a problem.'*”
- Focus group participant

Tailored Strategies for Reaching Spanish-Speaking Audiences

To effectively reach and engage Latino/a/x communities, OHA developed specific strategies and media for Spanish-speaking audiences including a 60-second spot titled “Gambling with Your Health.” Additionally, a series of “Spanglish” spots were developed to better reflect the experiences of Latino/a/x community members who straddle cultural boundaries and Spanish and English.

“ *Seeing the advertisement forced me to realize [that] maybe I was putting myself at risk without even knowing it because maybe I hit those numbers on a weekly basis during a few weeks.*”
- Focus group participant



Successes and Opportunities: Evaluating RTD's First Campaign

In April 2023, RMC Research completed a comprehensive evaluation of RTD's first campaign. This study evaluated whether RTD achieved initial short and long-term goals. Evaluation methods included:

- A pre-campaign survey of 1,200 people in Oregon
- A post-campaign survey of 1,400 people in Oregon
- Focus group discussions with 21 participants who saw the campaign
- 10 key informant interviews with community members working in alcohol prevention



Q: Why evaluate the campaign?

A: Engaging outside third-party experts to examine the effectiveness of public health efforts is important. They provide an unbiased and objective review, offering information on how well the campaign is working and using scientific evidence to help identify gaps or opportunities.

[Click here to read the full report.](#)

Did the first campaign reach its goals?



The findings from the campaign evaluation were positive overall and demonstrated the campaign's success in achieving its short-term objectives. People who saw the campaign:

- Had more conversations about their own drinking, friends' and family's drinking and what excessive drinking is
- Thought more about their drinking habits
- Were more likely to plan on cutting back their drinking than those who did not see the campaign

The first campaign exceeded expectations by showing movement toward some of RTD's long-term goals. People who saw the campaign were also more likely to:

- Agree that alcohol seems to be everywhere in their communities and that it should have less of a presence
- Support community-level strategies to prevent excessive drinking

Additional Takeaways

Over one-third of post-campaign survey respondents recalled seeing RTD campaign messaging. Of those who saw RTD messaging:

- **62%** of respondents agreed RTD messaging got their attention
- **67%** found the campaign content believable
- **50%** agreed the campaign got them to think about others' drinking habits

Extending the Brand's Reach and Impact

In addition to the campaign materials, OHA positioned the RTD website as a hub with tools and resources for communities and partners. Evaluation participants praised its content, design and user-friendly interface.

8 out of 10 informant interviewees reported using RTD materials such as the website, toolkit, and drink calculator. Interviewees appreciated the Spanish language version of the website and materials, and noted the need for additional culturally specific materials.

RTD also made the most of public relations, social media and technical assistance to broaden the campaign's reach.

- RTD was featured in 87 stories in media outlets across the state and in the New York Times.
- OHA provided a toolkit in six languages and held a series of trainings for nonprofit, tribal and local public health partners across the state.
- Partners extended the campaign with customized RTD materials.

“

The visuals drew me in. I wanted to read the information—they made it a little approachable and a little more visually appealing so that you'd want to go and read it and check it out.”

- Focus group participant

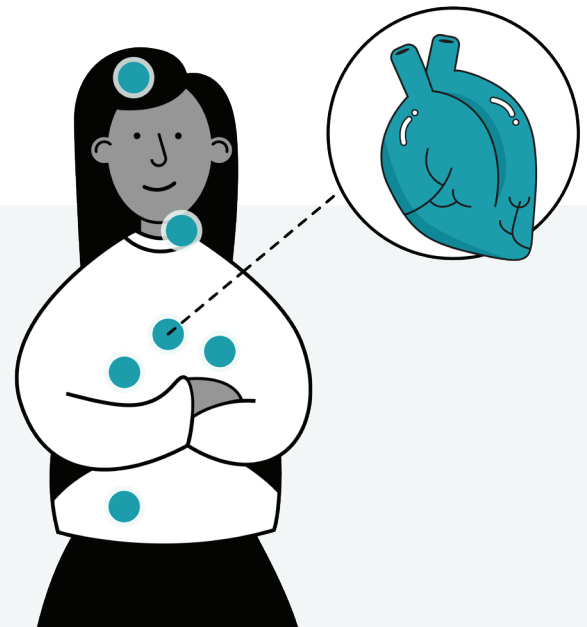
“

For a lot of OHA communications we have to take the time and translate in-house because they are not always available in [Spanish] so it was really great that the website itself has this Spanish language information section”

- Key informant interviewee

What's Next for Rethink the Drink

RTD's first campaign evaluation pointed to what worked, such as the brand's non-judgmental tone, memorable ad content and user-friendly website. OHA looks to build on its success by increasing support for long-term, community strategies to prevent excessive drinking across Oregon. The next campaign will focus on investing in new statewide ads and developing additional culturally specific materials in partnership with communities.



If you want to know more about Rethink the Drink, become a partner or learn more about the evaluation, visit rethinkthedrink.com or email: info@rethinkthedrink.com

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