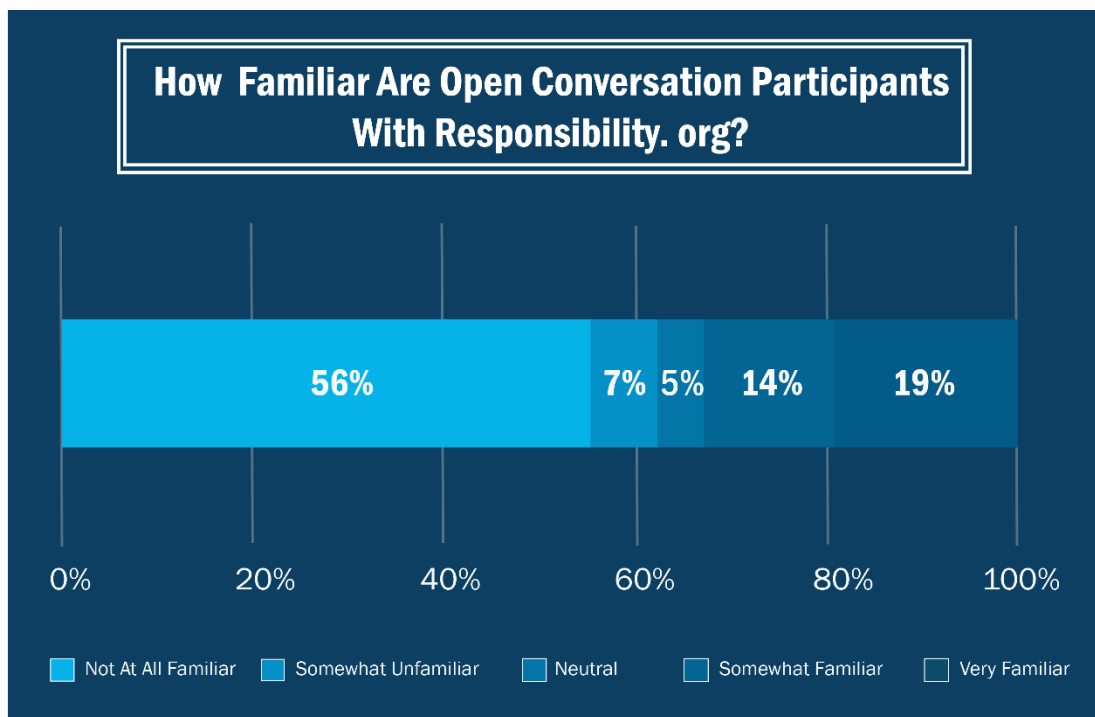


# *Executive* **SUMMARY** *Open Conversations*

In early 2016, the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility ([Responsibility.org](http://Responsibility.org)) held a series of Open Conversations in Seattle, Dallas and Chicago. The attendees ranged from high school counselors, to judges and police officers, safety advocates, medical professionals, community activists and others. We were excited to hear your unique perspectives on how we could work together to promote responsible decision making regarding alcohol. Our goal was to spark a conversation about this important topic and bring a diverse group of community stakeholders together to listen to their views.

Reaching out to new stakeholders was an important measure of the success of these discussions. In fact, a majority of Open Conversations participants were not at all familiar with Responsibility.org.



All three conversations, in January, February and March 2016 respectively, featured individual guest speakers who shared their views on the topic of alcohol responsibility. In advance of each meeting, we asked participants to provide feedback around the following topics:

- **Definitions of alcohol responsibility**
- **Context of alcohol responsibility**
- **What does the future look like for alcohol responsibility?**

While individual meetings reflected the issues of each community, certain overall themes emerged from the three events.



## **1. Consistency of inconsistent alcohol responsibility messaging**

Despite the geographical spread of the three Open Conversations, there was significant consistency in the topics that came up in our discussions. The most prevalent subject raised is the inconsistency in alcohol responsibility messaging, in large part caused by a lack of clear definition of what alcohol responsibility fundamentally means today.

- Attendees said we needed a better way of “naming and framing” alcohol responsibility.
- We heard that “responsibility” as a term was too broad, too dated, and too negative.
- There was agreement that alcohol responsibility means different things to different people, at different times in their lives.
- Recognizing there is no single definition that can satisfy all the different criteria, participants agreed there is still a need to move towards a coherent base for these conversations.

## **2. Sending mixed messages about alcohol responsibility**

We also heard attendees say conversations about alcohol responsibility often contain too many mixed messages.

- For instance, the term “designated driver” seems, for some people, to mask the safety message we want to get across and instead gives permission to those not driving to overconsume.
- Many participants remarked that a diversity of messages was needed to appeal to the diverse nature of our communities. We agree these mixed messages, combined with increasing need to tailor our conversations, makes the need for a clearer definition of alcohol responsibility ever more urgent.

### 3. Negative tone of conversations

There was general agreement that conversations about alcohol often took on a negative tone, and they were often “reactive” rather than “proactive” in nature.

- The discussion noted that an unfortunate event or incident often provides the opening for a meaningful conversation about alcohol responsibility.
- Further, a negative event brings about a negative conversation focusing on the negative consequences and outcomes of irresponsible consumption.
- Many attendees expressed the need for a more positive tone of conversation, which would emphasize the benefits of responsible choices.
- Participants acknowledged that Millennials are increasingly focused on health and wellness, and this may present an opportunity to incorporate this interest into conversations with this age group. By emphasizing the benefits of drinking alcohol responsibly, and explaining what they have to gain rather than lose by making the right choices, the conversations might be more impactful and more frequent.

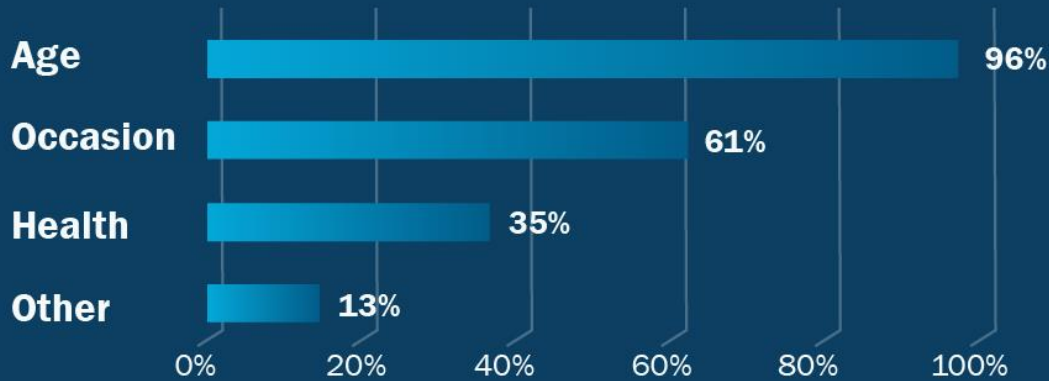


#### 1. Context of alcohol responsibility is important

We had a rich discussion on the varying roles that drinking occasions and contexts play in alcohol responsibility. Across all three conversations, this topic elicited perhaps the most diverse feedback. On the whole, we heard that while context, age, gender and occasions play significant roles in alcohol responsibility, heritage, background, culture/religion and, for some, residence, also can be a key driver in the choices people make concerning alcohol.

When we analysed the feedback you provided us online in advance of our discussions, we found that attendees believed that age, followed by occasions and health, had the greatest impact on how alcohol responsibility was defined.

From your own experience, which of the following contexts has the greatest impact on definitions of alcohol responsibility?



## 2. Workplace and alcohol responsibility

In addition to the various contexts identified in the chart, above, the issue of alcohol and the workplace generated an interesting and wide-ranging discussion.

- Numerous participants spoke to the varied pressures felt by employees to consume alcohol at work-related events. Whether it is networking, social events or client/customer dinners, there are expectations placed on employees to be “involved.”
- When addressing this challenge in depth, some of you spoke about Millennial’s concern over networking events, and how they frequently turn to alcohol to lower their inhibitions, particularly when they are new to the workplace.
- The need for Human Resources to play a more active role in employee wellbeing at work, including educating their workforces about alcohol responsibility, was mentioned regularly in the discussions.

# Future of Alcohol Responsibility: *KEY OVERALL THEMES*



Finally, our discussions touched on the future of alcohol responsibility, and where you would like Responsibility.org to play a role.

## **1. Helping define alcohol responsibility**

Many of you mentioned a role in helping create a broad definition for alcohol responsibility. We acknowledged this is a wider challenge that not only faces the beverage alcohol industry as a whole, but also educators, parents, policy makers and others.

## **2. Partnerships with Human Resources**

There was guidance suggesting Responsibility.org should partner with the human resource field, to help HR professionals better understand what alcohol responsibility means in the workplace. This would be a new focus for our organization and something that we will need to carefully consider.

## **3. Regular stakeholder engagement**

You also mentioned the need for regular engagement across all stakeholder groups, and we are delighted to see such a variety of individuals attending our sessions. We welcome this appetite for cross-stakeholder engagement, and agree that to achieve meaningful change, further dialogue is needed. As a result, we will consider hosting future conversations. Further regular outreach from us may also serve as a platform for you to continue to discuss these topics in your community.