



Alcohol Facts and Statistics

Alcohol Use in the United States:

- » **Prevalence of Drinking:** According to the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 86.4 percent of people ages 18 or older reported that they drank alcohol at some point in their lifetime; 70.1 percent reported that they drank in the past year; 56.0 percent reported that they drank in the past month.¹
- » **Prevalence of Binge Drinking and Heavy Alcohol Use:** In 2015, 26.9 percent of people ages 18 or older reported that they engaged in binge drinking in the past month; 7.0 percent reported that they engaged in heavy alcohol use in the past month.² (See sidebar on page 2 for definitions of binge drinking and heavy alcohol use.)



Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) in the United States:

- » **Adults (ages 18+):** According to the 2015 NSDUH, 15.1 million adults ages 18 and older³ (6.2 percent of this age group⁴) had AUD. This includes 9.8 million men³ (8.4 percent of men in this age group⁴) and 5.3 million women³ (4.2 percent of women in this age group⁴).
 - About 1.3 million adults received treatment for AUD at a specialized facility in 2015 (8.3 percent of adults who needed treatment).⁵ This included 898,000 men⁵ (8.8 percent of men who needed treatment) and 417,000 women (7.5 percent of women who needed treatment).⁵
- » **Youth (ages 12–17):** According to the 2015 NSDUH, an estimated 623,000 adolescents ages 12–17⁶ (2.5 percent of this age group⁷) had AUD. This number includes 298,000 males⁶ (2.3 percent of males in this age group⁷) and 325,000 females⁶ (2.7 percent of females in this age group⁷).
 - An estimated 37,000 adolescents (22,000 males and 15,000 females) received treatment for an alcohol problem in a specialized facility in 2015.⁸

Alcohol-Related Deaths:

- » An estimated 88,000⁹ people (approximately 62,000 men and 26,000 women⁹) die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the fourth leading preventable cause of death in the United States.¹⁰
- » In 2014, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 9,967 deaths (31 percent of overall driving fatalities).¹¹



Economic Burden:

- » In 2010, alcohol misuse cost the United States \$249.0 billion.¹²
- » Three-quarters of the total cost of alcohol misuse is related to binge drinking.¹²

Global Burden:

- » In 2012, 3.3 million deaths, or 5.9 percent of all global deaths (7.6 percent for men and 4.0 percent for women), were attributable to alcohol consumption.¹³
- » In 2014, the World Health Organization reported that alcohol contributed to more than 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions, most notably DSM-IV alcohol dependence (see sidebar), liver cirrhosis, cancers, and injuries.¹⁴ In 2012, 5.1 percent of the burden of disease and injury worldwide (139 million disability-adjusted life-years) was attributable to alcohol consumption.¹³
- » Globally, alcohol misuse is the fifth leading risk factor for premature death and disability; among people between the ages of 15 and 49, it is the first.¹⁵ In the age group 20–39 years, approximately 25 percent of the total deaths are alcohol attributable.¹⁶

Family Consequences:

- » More than 10 percent of U.S. children live with a parent with alcohol problems, according to a 2012 study.¹⁷

Underage Drinking:

- » **Prevalence of Underage Alcohol Use:**
 - **Prevalence of Drinking:** According to the 2015 NSDUH, 33.1 percent of 15-year-olds report that they have had at least 1 drink in their lives.¹⁸ About 7.7 million people ages 12–20¹⁹ (20.3 percent of this age group²⁰) reported drinking alcohol in the past month (19.8 percent of males and 20.8 percent of females²⁰).

Definitions

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD): AUD is a medical condition that doctors diagnose when a patient's drinking causes distress or harm. The fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)*, published by the American Psychiatric Association, described two distinct disorders—alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence—with specific criteria for each. The fifth edition, DSM-5, integrates the two DSM-IV disorders, alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence, into a single disorder called alcohol use disorder, or AUD, with mild, moderate, and severe subclassifications.

Binge Drinking:

- » NIAAA defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels to 0.08 g/dL. This typically occurs after 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men—in about 2 hours.³⁷
- » The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which conducts the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), defines binge drinking as 5 or more alcoholic drinks for males or 4 or more alcoholic drinks for females on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past month.³⁸

Heavy Alcohol Use: SAMHSA defines heavy alcohol use as binge drinking on 5 or more days in the past month.

NIAAA's Definition of Drinking at Low Risk for

Developing AUD: For women, low-risk drinking is defined as no more than 3 drinks on any single day and no more than 7 drinks per week. For men, it is defined as no more than 4 drinks on any single day and no more than 14 drinks per week. NIAAA research shows that only about 2 in 100 people who drink within these limits have AUD.

Substance Use Treatment at a Specialty Facility:

Treatment received at a hospital (inpatient only), rehabilitation facility (inpatient or outpatient), or mental health center to reduce alcohol use, or to address medical problems associated with alcohol use.

Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatality: A fatality in a crash involving a driver or motorcycle rider (operator) with a BAC of 0.08 g/dL or greater.

Disability-Adjusted Life-Years (DALYs): A measure of years of life lost or lived in less than full health.

Underage Drinking: Alcohol use by anyone under the age of 21. In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21.



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- **Prevalence of Binge Drinking:** According to the 2015 NSDUH, approximately 5.1 million people¹⁹ (about 13.4 percent²⁰) ages 12–20 (13.4 percent of males and 13.3 percent of females²⁰) reported binge drinking in the past month.
- **Prevalence of Heavy Alcohol Use:** According to the 2015 NSDUH, approximately 1.3 million people¹⁹ (about 3.3 percent²⁰) ages 12–20 (3.6 percent of males and 3.0 percent of females²⁰) reported heavy alcohol use in the past month.

» **Consequences of Underage Alcohol Use:**

- Research indicates that alcohol use during the teenage years could interfere with normal adolescent brain development and increase the risk of developing AUD. In addition, underage drinking contributes to a range of acute consequences, including injuries, sexual assaults, and even deaths—including those from car crashes.²¹

Alcohol and College Students:

» **Prevalence of Alcohol Use:**

- **Prevalence of Drinking:** According to the 2015 NSDUH, 58.0 percent of full-time college students ages 18–22 drank alcohol in the past month compared with 48.2 percent of other persons of the same age.²²
- **Prevalence of Binge Drinking:** According to the 2015 NSDUH, 37.9 percent of college students ages 18–22 reported binge drinking in the past month compared with 32.6 percent of other persons of the same age.²²
- **Prevalence of Heavy Alcohol Use:** According to the 2015 NSDUH, 12.5 percent of college students ages 18–22 reported heavy alcohol use in the past month compared with 8.5 percent of other persons of the same age.²²

» **Consequences—Researchers estimate that each year:**

- 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes.²³
- 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.²⁴
- 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.²⁴
- Roughly 20 percent of college students meet the criteria for AUD.²⁵
- About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.²⁶

Alcohol and Pregnancy:

- » The prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in the United States was estimated by the Institute of Medicine in 1996 to be between 0.5 and 3.0 cases per 1,000.²⁷



- » More recent reports from specific U.S. sites report the prevalence of FAS to be 2 to 7 cases per 1,000, and the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) to be as high as 20 to 50 cases per 1,000.^{28,29}

Alcohol and the Human Body:

- » In 2013, of the 72,559 liver disease deaths among individuals ages 12 and older, 45.8 percent involved alcohol. Among males, 48.5 percent of the 46,568 liver disease deaths involved alcohol. Among females, 41.8 percent of the 25,991 liver disease deaths involved alcohol.³⁰
- » Among all cirrhosis deaths in 2013, 47.9 percent were alcohol related. The proportion of alcohol-related cirrhosis was highest (76.5 percent) among deaths of persons ages 25–34, followed by deaths of persons ages 35–44, at 70.0 percent.³¹
- » In 2009, alcohol-related liver disease was the primary cause of almost 1 in 3 liver transplants in the United States.³²
- » Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, pharynx, larynx, liver, and breast.³³

Health Benefits of Moderate Alcohol Consumption:

- » Moderate alcohol consumption, according to the *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, is up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.³⁴
- » Moderate alcohol consumption may have beneficial effects on health. These include decreased risk for heart disease and mortality due to heart disease, decreased risk of ischemic stroke (in which the arteries to the brain become narrowed or blocked, resulting in reduced blood flow), and decreased risk of diabetes.³⁵
- » In most Western countries where chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease (CHD), cancer, stroke, and diabetes are the primary causes of death, results from large epidemiological studies consistently show that alcohol reduces mortality, especially among middle-aged and older men and women—an association which is likely due to the protective effects of moderate alcohol consumption on CHD, diabetes, and ischemic stroke.³⁵
- » It is estimated that 26,000 deaths were averted in 2005 because of reductions in ischemic heart disease, ischemic stroke, and diabetes from the benefits attributed to moderate alcohol consumption.³⁶
- » Expanding our understanding of the relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and potential health benefits remains a challenge, and, although there are positive effects, alcohol may not benefit everyone who drinks moderately.
- » More information about the potential health benefits, as well as risks, of moderate alcohol consumption can be found at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15201626>.



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