



Alcohol Facts and Statistics

Alcohol Use in the United States:

- » **Prevalence of Drinking:** In 2012, 87.6 percent of people ages 18 or older reported that they drank alcohol at some point in their lifetime; 71 percent reported that they drank in the past year; 56.3 percent reported that they drank in the past month.¹
- » **Prevalence of Binge Drinking and Heavy Drinking:** In 2012, 24.6 percent of people ages 18 or older reported that they engaged in binge drinking in the past month; 7.1 percent reported that they engaged in heavy drinking in the past month.²



Alcohol Use Disorders (AUDs) in the United States:

- » **Adults (ages 18+):** Approximately 17 million adults ages 18 and older (7.2 percent of this age group) had an AUD in 2012. This includes 11.2 million men (9.9 percent of men in this age group) and 5.7 million women (4.6 percent of women in this age group).³
 - About 1.4 million adults received treatment for an AUD at a specialized facility in 2012 (8.4 percent of adults in need). This included 416,000 women (7.3 percent of women in need) and 1.0 million men (8.9 percent of men in need).⁴
- » **Youth (ages 12–17):** In 2012, an estimated 855,000 adolescents ages 12–17 (3.4 percent of this age group) had an AUD. This number includes 444,000 females (3.6 percent) and 411,000 males (3.2 percent).⁵
 - An estimated 76,000 adolescents received treatment for an AUD at a specialized facility in 2012 (8.9 percent of adolescents in need). This included 28,000 females (6.3 percent of adolescent females in need) and 48,000 males (11.7 percent of adolescent males in need).⁶

Alcohol-Related Deaths:

- » Nearly 88,000⁷ people (approximately 62,000 men and 26,000 women⁸) die from alcohol-related causes annually, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States.⁷
- » In 2012, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 10,322 deaths (31 percent of overall driving fatalities).⁹



Economic Burden:

- » In 2006, alcohol misuse problems cost the United States \$223.5 billion.¹⁰
- » Almost three-quarters of the total cost of alcohol misuse is related to binge drinking.¹⁰

Global Burden:

- » In 2012, 3.3 million deaths, or 5.9 percent of all global deaths (7.6 percent for men and 4 percent for women), were attributable to alcohol consumption.¹¹
- » Alcohol contributes to over 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions, most notably alcohol dependence, liver cirrhosis, cancers, and injuries.¹² In 2012, alcohol accounted for 5.1 percent of disability adjusted life years (DALYs) worldwide.¹¹
- » 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.¹³

Family Consequences:

- » More than 10 percent of U.S. children live with a parent with alcohol problems, according to a 2012 study.¹⁴

Underage Drinking:

- » **Prevalence of Underage Alcohol Use:**
 - **Prevalence of Drinking:** 2 out of 5 15-year-olds report that they have had at least 1 drink in their lives.¹⁵ In 2012, about 9.3 million people ages 12–20 (24.3 percent of this age group) reported drinking alcohol in the past month (24.7 percent of males and 24 percent of females).¹⁶
 - **Prevalence of Binge Drinking:** Approximately 5.9 million people (about 15 percent) ages 12–20 were binge drinkers (16.5 percent of males and 14 percent of females).¹⁶

Definitions

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD): AUDs are medical conditions 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.³³
- » 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 drinking 5 or more alcoholic drinks on the same occasion on at least 1 day in the past 30 days.³⁴

Heavy Drinking: SAMHSA defines heavy drinking as drinking 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days.

NIAAA's Definition of Drinking at Low Risk for Developing an 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 an 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.



- **Prevalence of Heavy Drinking:** Approximately 1.7 million people (about 4.3 percent) ages 12–20 were heavy drinkers (5.2 percent of males and 3.4 percent of females).¹⁶

» **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 an AUD. In addition, underage drinking contributes to a range of acute consequences, including injuries, sexual assaults, and even deaths.¹⁷

Alcohol and College Students:

» **Prevalence of Alcohol Use:**

- **Prevalence of Drinking:** In 2012, 60.3 percent of college students ages 18–22 drank alcohol in the past month compared with 51.9 percent of same-age peers not in college.¹⁸
- **Prevalence of Binge Drinking:** 40.1 percent of college students ages 18–22 engaged in binge drinking (5 or more drinks on an occasion) in the past month compared with 35 percent of same-age peers not in college.¹⁹
- **Prevalence of Heavy Drinking:** 14.4 percent of college students ages 18–22 engaged in heavy drinking (5 or more drinks on an occasion on 5 or more occasions per month) in the past month compared with 10.7 percent of same-age peers not in college.²⁰

» **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.²¹
- 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.²¹
- 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.²¹
- Roughly 20 percent of college students meet the criteria for an AUD.²²
- 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.²³

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 1,000.²⁴
- » More recent reports from specific U.S. sites found the prevalence of FAS to be 2 to 7 cases per 1,000,²⁴ and the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) to be as high as 20 to 50 cases per 1,000.²⁵

Alcohol and the Human Body:

- » Among all cirrhosis deaths in 2009, 48.2 percent were alcohol related. The proportion of alcohol-related cirrhosis was highest (70.6 percent) among decedents ages 35–44.²⁶



- » In 2009, alcohol-related liver disease was the primary cause of almost 1 in 3 liver transplants in the United States.²⁷
- » Alcohol has been identified as a risk factor for the following types of cancer: mouth, esophagus, pharynx, larynx, liver, and breast.²⁸

Health Benefits of Moderate Alcohol Consumption:

- » Moderate alcohol consumption, according to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, is up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.²⁹
- » 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.³⁰
- » 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.³¹
- » It is estimated that 26,000 deaths were averted in 2005 because of reductions in heart disease, stroke, and diabetes from the benefits attributed to moderate alcohol consumption.³²
- » 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.

For more information, please visit: www.niaaa.nih.gov

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³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Available at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2012SummNatFindDetTables/DetTabs/NSDUH-DetTabsSect5peTabs1to56-2012.htm#Tab5.8A>

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⁹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. 2012 Motor vehicle crashes: Overview. Available at: <http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811856.pdf>

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Excessive drinking costs U.S. \$223.5 Billion. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/alcoholconsumption/>

¹¹ World Health Organization. Global status report on alcohol and health, p. XIV. 2014 ed. Available at: http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/msb_gsr_2014_1.pdf?ua=1

¹² World Health Organization. Global status report on alcohol and health, p. XIII. 2014 ed. Available at: http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/msb_gsr_2014_1.pdf?ua=1

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