

Liver disease deaths jump 25% in England: study

March 22 2012

Deaths from liver disease have risen 25 percent in England in less than a decade, mainly due to increased alcohol consumption, a study revealed on Thursday.

Alcohol-related liver disease in Britain, notorious for its binge-drinking culture, accounted for over a third (37 percent) of the deaths, according to the National End of Life Care Intelligence Network report.

Obesity, [hepatitis B](#) and [hepatitis C](#) have also boosted the rate of liver disease deaths between 2001 and 2009, the authors of the government-commissioned study said.

The steep increase in liver disease deaths comes as [mortality rates](#) from other major causes of death, such as cancer and heart disease, are falling.

"[Liver disease](#) is the only big killer on the rise," said Andrew Langford, chief executive of the British Liver Trust, adding that higher alcohol prices and taxes on high-fat foods could help save lives.

Some 90 percent of victims are aged under 70, the study said, and a rising number of those dying are in their forties. Three-fifths of the victims are men.

There are three times as many deaths from alcoholic liver diseases in the poorest areas of the country than in its richest, the study found.

Britain was named binge-drinking capital of Europe in a 2010 study of the European Union's 27 nations.

A survey by EU pollsters Eurobarometer found that while the British are not Europe's most regular drinkers, they drink the most in one sitting.

[Excessive drinking](#) costs Britain £2.7 billion (\$4.3 billion, 3.2 billion euros) a year, according to government figures, and has been described by Prime Minister David Cameron as "one of the scandals of our society".

Cameron is reportedly expected to announce a consultation on introducing a minimum price per unit of alcohol in the next few days.

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