

Unhealthy drinking widespread around the world, study shows

March 4 2013

A new study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) shows that alcohol is now the third leading cause of the global burden of disease and injury, despite the fact most adults worldwide abstain from drinking.

This research, part of the 2010 Global Burden of Disease study, was published in this month's issue of the journal *Addiction*. It also found that Canadians drink more than 50 per cent above the global average.

"[Alcohol consumption](#) has been found to cause more than 200 different diseases and injuries," said Kevin Shield, the lead author of the study. "These include not only well-known outcomes of drinking such as [liver cirrhosis](#) or [traffic accidents](#), but also several [types of cancer](#), such as female [breast cancer](#)."

The study reports the amount and patterns of alcohol consumption by country for 2005, and calculates estimates for these figures for 2010. It reveals vast differences by geographical region in the numbers of people who consume alcohol, the amount they drink, and general patterns of drinking. Some other findings:

- Drinkers in Europe and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa are the world's heaviest consumers of alcohol, on average.
- People in Eastern Europe and Southern Sub-Saharan Africa consumed alcohol in the unhealthiest manner, as they frequently

consumed large quantities, drank to intoxication, engaged in prolonged binges, and consumed alcohol mainly outside of meals.

- People in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia consumed the least amount of alcohol.
- North Americans in general, and Canadians in particular drink more than 50 per cent above the global average, and show a more detrimental drinking pattern than most [EU countries](#), with more bingeing.

The global burden of disease and injury attributable to alcohol is large and growing. In 2010, it was responsible for 5.5 per cent of this overall burden, third after [high blood pressure](#) and [tobacco smoking](#), among 67 risk factors overall.

This study summarizes the results from population surveys, sales or production data, and data on alcohol consumption not covered in official records, from all countries, territories and regions.

Researchers also found that almost 30 per cent of alcohol consumed in 2005 was "unrecorded" alcohol – referring to alcohol not intended for consumption, home-brewed alcohol, and illegally produced alcohol. In some regions, unrecorded alcohol constituted more than half of all alcohol consumed.

"The amount of unrecorded alcohol consumed is a particular problem, as its consumption is not impacted by public health alcohol policies, such as taxation, which can moderate consumption," said Dr. Jürgen Rehm, a study author and director of CAMH's Social and Epidemiological Research Department.

"Improving alcohol control policies presents one of the greatest opportunities to prevent much of the health burden caused by alcohol

consumption," said Dr. Shield "To improve these policies, information on how much alcohol people are consuming, and how people are consuming alcohol is necessary, and that is exactly the information this article presents."

More information: Shield K, Rylett M, Gmel Gs, Gmel G, Kehoe-Chan T, Rehm J. (2013). Global alcohol exposure estimates by country, territory and region for 2005 – a contribution to the Comparative Risk Assessment for the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study. *Addiction*.

Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Citation: Unhealthy drinking widespread around the world, study shows (2013, March 4)
retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-unhealthy-widespread-world.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--