

# For men, heavy drinking can get you killed

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Russian men who are heavy drinkers are five times more likely to be a homicide victim compared with non-problem drinkers. Credit: University at Albany

Alcohol abuse can take a serious toll on your health, from cirrhosis of the liver to an increased risk for certain types of cancers. But for men between 25 and 54, it can also lead to a violent death.

Reporting in *Social Problems*, University at Albany School of Criminal Justice Dean and Professor William Alex Pridemore has found strong evidence of an association between patterns of hazardous drinking and vulnerability to violent death. Results from this study show that men ages 25 to 54 who are problem drinkers are five times more likely to become a homicide victim compared with non-problem drinkers.

Pridemore's research provides a new insight into violent victimization and new knowledge of how alcohol contributes to crime. Data for this work came from the Izhevsk Family Study (IFS), a large-scale study of premature mortality among working-age Russian men. Unique to this study is the use of population-based case-control data to explore the effects of hazardous drinking on violent mortality.

"This study is among the first to examine the effects of an underlying pattern on hazardous drinking on homicide victimization," said Pridemore. "I found that hazardous drinkers have an elevated risk of homicide victimization no matter how the former is measured, and that problem drinkers are five times more likely to be the victim of homicide than non-problem drinkers."

Sixty-four percent of [homicide](#) victims in this study were defined as "problem drinkers." In the 12 months before they died, [homicide victims](#) drank 17 liters of ethanol alcohol (4.5 U.S. gallons) on average and 29 percent of victims consumed more than 20 liters of pure ethanol (5.3 U.S. gallons). Additionally, at least once a week 40 percent of victims drank non-beverage alcohol like colognes, medicines, and cleaning fluids. Pridemore found that men who drank these alcohol surrogates at least once per week were about 11-15 times more likely to die a [violent death](#) compared with those who did not.

How is [hazardous drinking](#) associated with violent mortality among men?

"There are several potential reasons for this association," said Pridemore. "First, heavy drinkers may be more likely to engage in behavior that exposes them to dangerous people, places, and situations, including involvement in the nighttime economy. Second, both the drinker and his acquaintances and family members likely become frustrated with and embroiled in the repeated negative outcomes

associated with his drinking behavior, including antagonistic relationships, economic insecurity, and romantic quarrels. Finally, one's actions during heavy drinking episodes may be an irritant to and provoke violence from others, and the decreased physical and cognitive function resulting from intoxication may leave one unable to retaliate or protect oneself."

**More information:** William Alex Pridemore. Hazardous Drinking and Violent Mortality Among Males: Evidence from a Population-Based Case-Control Study, *Social Problems* (2016). [DOI: 10.1093/socpro/spw018](https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spw018)

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