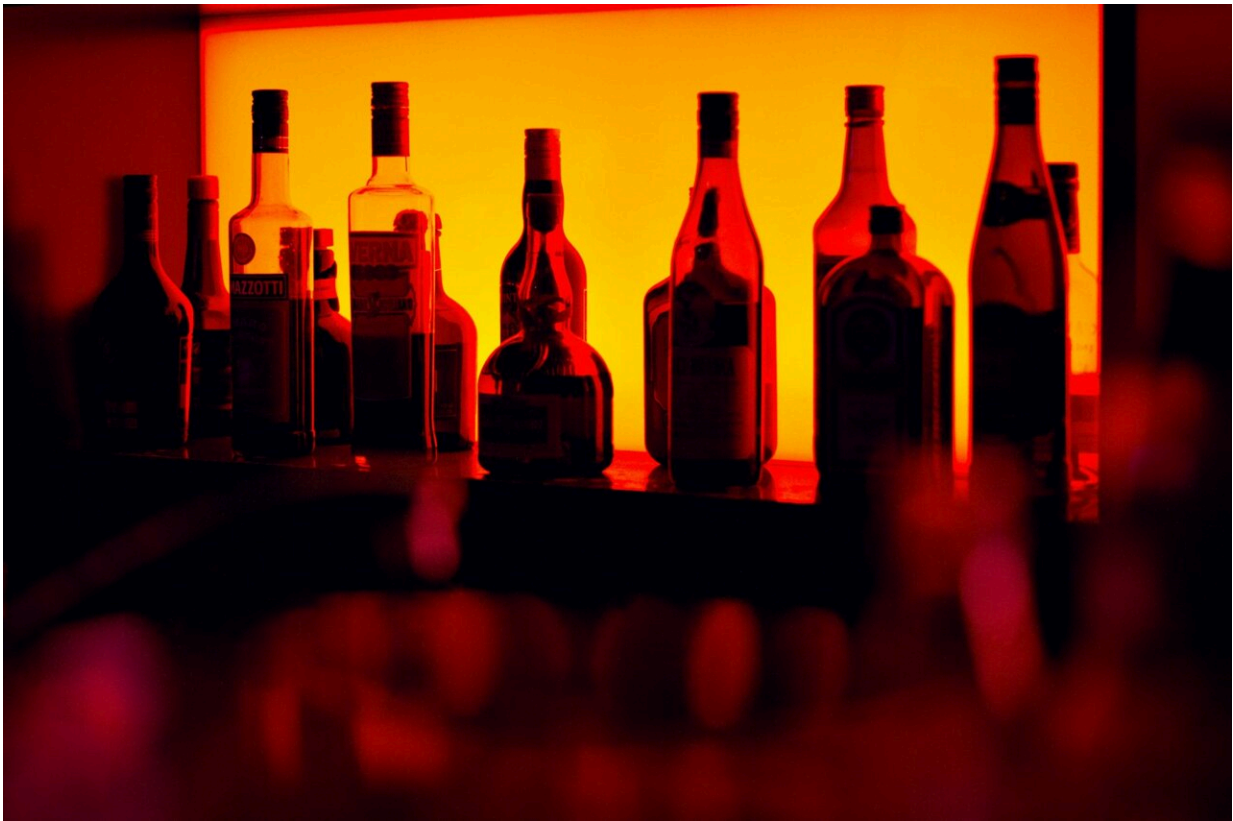


# Immigrants report declining alcohol use during first two years after arriving in US

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Newly arrived immigrants drank decreasing amounts of alcohol in their first two years in the United States, according to a study of Latino immigrants living in Miami-Dade County in Florida. The study,

published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*, found greater decreases for certain groups, such as young adults and immigrants with permanent residency status. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic halted some declines.

The study points to the importance of motivators, stressors, and protective factors that impact immigrants' drinking patterns. Prior studies of Latino immigrants have found alcohol use to increase as time in the United States increases; the current study finding of decreasing alcohol use in the years immediately post-immigration highlights an opportunity to support [recent immigrants](#) to prevent later escalation of alcohol use.

Overall, the study found that alcohol use declined in the first two years following immigration to the United States, from an average of 18 drinks per month before immigration, to 14 drinks per month in the first year to 10 drinks per month in the second year after immigration. Certain groups showed greater decreases.

Eighteen- to 20-year-olds drank the least of any group and showed greater declines in alcohol use than other age groups—from 12 drinks per month prior to immigration to two drinks per month in the second year after immigration—which the authors suggest may be due to the United States' minimum legal drinking age of 21. The minimum legal drinking age in most Latin American countries is 18.

Legal residency status was associated with rates of decline in alcohol use. Drinking among immigrants with permanent residency status sharply decreased, from 18 drinks per month prior to immigration to two drinks per month in their second year post-immigration. By contrast, drinking by [undocumented immigrants](#) dropped by only about one drink per month, from 18 drinks per month before immigration to 17 drinks per month in their second year in the United States.

The authors suggest that those with permanent residency status may be more optimistic about opportunities for themselves and their families and may be more likely to avoid behaviors that might compromise those opportunities.

'To celebrate' was the most often cited motivation for drinking among study participants and was associated with significantly less [alcohol use](#) than drinking motivated by boredom or 'to forget.' During the COVID-19 pandemic, 'to forget' became the most often cited reason for drinking.

Self-reported data were collected from November 2018 to December 2020 from more than 500 Latino immigrants aged 18-34 living in Florida's Miami-Dade County who had arrived in the U.S. within the year prior to their participation in the study. Participants had immigrated from South America, Central America, and other Latin American countries, reflecting the demographics of recent Latino immigrants in the United States.

The findings provide insight into potential stressors and motivations for recently arrived [immigrants](#), which can inform targeted interventions to support vulnerable groups.

**More information:** Eduardo Romano et al, A characterization of pre-to post-immigration alcohol use among recent Latino immigrants to the United States before and during the COVID -19 pandemic, *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.14993](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14993)

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