

U.S. deaths linked to alcohol keep rising, especially among women

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Deaths where alcohol played a key role have climbed sharply in recent years, hitting women even harder than men, new government data shows. The study was [published](#) in the CDC journal *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Between 2016 and 2021 (the latest numbers available), "the average number of U.S. deaths from excessive alcohol use increased by more than 40,000 [29%], to 178,000 per year," reported a team from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Put another way, during 2020 and 2021, an average of 488 Americans died each day from excessive drinking, the report's authors concluded.

The rate of increase appears to be accelerating: Between 2016 and 2019, deaths where alcohol was a factor rose by 5%, but between 2018 and 2021 they climbed by 23%.

Men continue to lose their lives to alcohol in greater numbers than women, the report found. However, the rate at which women are dying from excessive drinking is rising faster than that of men, the researchers found.

Over the study period, deaths from [excessive alcohol use](#) among [women](#) rose by about 35%, compared to about a 27% rise among men.

The new data looked at deaths directly linked to drinking—things like [alcoholic liver disease](#) or excessive intoxication—as well as more indirect causes, such as heavy drinking's role in heart disease and stroke.

Over the study period, death rates rose for most forms of alcohol-related deaths, but "death rates among females [involving alcohol] were highest from [heart disease](#) and stroke," noted a team led by CDC alcohol researcher Marissa Esser.

Why the steady, steep rise in deaths? According to the researchers, numerous factors may be to blame, including a widening of access to alcohol (for example, [home delivery](#)) that began during pandemic lockdowns.

Binge drinking also seems to be on the rise. For example, "the prevalence of binge drinking among adults aged 35-50 was higher in 2022 than in any other year during the past decade," the CDC team noted.

That rise doesn't bode well for the future, Esser's group warned.

What can be done to turn these trends around? The researchers believe boosting taxes on alcohol and cutting back on the number of outlets licensed to sell beer, wine and liquor could only help.

More information: Find out more about alcohol's effects on the body at the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#).

Marissa B. Esser et al, Deaths from Excessive Alcohol Use—United States, 2016–2021, *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2024). [DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7308a1](https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7308a1)

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