

alcohol

Global status report on alcohol and health

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CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	x
1. Consumption	2
1.1 How much do people drink?	3
1.1.1 Total adult per capita consumption	4
1.1.2 Unrecorded alcohol consumption	4
1.1.3 Adult per capita consumption and income of countries	6
1.1.4 Most consumed alcoholic beverages	6
1.2 Changes in alcohol consumption over time	8
1.2.1 Trends in adult per capita consumption since 1990	8
1.2.2 Five-year change 2001–2005 in alcohol use	9
1.3 Alcohol consumption among young people	10
1.4 Patterns of drinking	12
1.4.1 Abstention	12
1.4.2 Patterns of drinking score	14
1.4.3 Heavy episodic drinking	16
2. Consequences	20
2.1 Alcohol and health	20
2.1.1 How alcohol causes disease and injury	20
2.2 The burden of disease attributable to alcohol	23
2.2.1 Alcohol-attributable mortality	24
2.2.2 Alcohol-attributable burden of disease and injury	29
2.2.3 Alcohol consumption compared to other health risks	31
2.2.4 Alcohol, health and economic development	33
2.3 Harm to society	34
2.3.1 Harm to other people	35
2.3.2 Harm to society at large	36
3. Policies and interventions	40
3.1 Leadership	42
3.2 Availability of alcohol	43
3.3 Prices and taxes	45
3.4 Drinking and driving	46
3.5 Alcohol advertising and marketing	49
3.6 Raising awareness	52
3.7 Treatment	53
3.8 Conclusion	53

References	54
Appendix I	59
Country profiles	59
AFR	61
AMR	107
EMR	143
EUR	165
SEAR	219
WPR	231
Appendix II	259
Additional indicators	259
Appendix III	273
Alcohol consumption data	273
Appendix IV	279
Data sources and methods	279
Data sources	279
Country profiles: indicators	280
WHO regions, WHO subregions and World Bank income groups	280
1. Consumption	282
2. Consequences	284
3. Policies and interventions	286

FOREWORD

The harmful use of alcohol is a worldwide problem resulting in millions of deaths, including hundreds of thousands of young lives lost. It is not only a causal factor in many diseases, but also a precursor to injury and violence. Furthermore, its negative impacts can spread throughout a community or a country, and beyond, by influencing levels and patterns of alcohol consumption across borders.

The Global status report on alcohol and health (2011) presents a comprehensive perspective on the global, regional and country consumption of alcohol, patterns of drinking, health consequences and policy responses in Member States. It represents a continuing effort by the World Health Organization (WHO) to support Member States in collecting information in order to assist them in their efforts to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, and its health and social consequences.

In May 2010, the World Health Assembly (WHA), representing all 193 WHO Member States, approved a resolution to endorse the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. The strategy includes an array of evidence-based policies and interventions that can protect health and save lives if adopted, implemented and enforced. The World Health Assembly resolution urged countries to strengthen national responses to public health problems caused by the harmful use of alcohol.

Many countries recognize the serious public health problems caused by the harmful use of alcohol and have taken steps to adopt preventive policies and programmes, particularly to reduce drink-driving and the carnage that it causes. However, it is clear that much more needs to be accomplished.

This report, which is written for all who are concerned about the dangers posed by the harmful use of alcohol, can serve as a comprehensive knowledge base on the status of alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm and alcohol policies in the world. Health ministries and other concerned parties can use it to support the development and implementation of their policies and interventions.

Since 1974, WHO has been actively involved in documenting and reporting on alcohol-related health issues and problems. Indeed, this publication follows in the wake of the first *Global status report on alcohol* in 1999 and the second in 2004. These reports were based on global, regional and national data collection efforts supported and coordinated by WHO. Data collection initiatives began with the Global Alcohol Database in 1996, which was further developed and transformed into the Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (GISAH; <http://www.who.int/globalatlas/alcohol>) in 2008, and which now contains data on more than 200 alcohol-related indicators.

In recent years, a larger number of countries have been providing data, enabling WHO to create a more comprehensive picture of the global situation on alcohol use and its health consequences. However, many gaps in the data remain and a detailed picture cannot be clearly drawn for all countries and regions. This information is critical in assessing progress in reducing the harmful use of alcohol at all levels and in monitoring and evaluating progress made in the implementation of the global strategy. I therefore encourage WHO Member States and all stakeholders to make a joint effort to improve data collection and reporting.

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