



Alcohol-Related Deaths in U.S. Doubled in Two Decades

The rate of alcohol-related deaths in 25- to 34-year-olds increased nearly fourfold from 1999 to 2020.

November 25, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Alcohol-related deaths in the United States have doubled over the last two decades, according to a new study published in [The American Journal of Medicine](#).

Researchers from Florida Atlantic University's (FAU) Schmidt College of Medicine studied trends in alcohol-related deaths from 1999 to 2020 and found that the [mortality](#) rate nearly doubled from 10.7 per 100,000 to 21.6 per 100,000. Indeed, the total number of alcohol-related deaths increased from 19,356 to 48,870.

[Alcohol-related liver disease](#) is the result of liver damage caused by heavy consumption of alcohol. The liver processes what the body needs and discards what it doesn't, including [alcohol](#). If there is too much alcohol, the liver can't process it, which increases the risk of [liver](#) damage. Over time, that damage can become serious.

Every age group saw increases in alcohol-related deaths, particularly those aged 25 to 34, whose rate increased nearly fourfold, according to a [university news release](#). What's more, those aged 55 to 64 saw the largest increase in mortality and had the highest absolute rates in both 1999 and 2020.

When looking at trends by gender, researchers found that men had the highest rate of alcohol-related deaths in both 1999 and 2020 and saw the largest overall increase.

"While men had higher overall death rates, women experienced a larger relative increase, which may reflect changing social norms and the alcohol industry's increased targeting of women through marketing campaigns," said senior and corresponding author Panagiota Kitsantas, PhD, chair of the Department of Population Health and Social Medicine, FAU Schmidt College of

Medicine, in the news release.

Researchers found that alcohol-related deaths in women increased from 4.8 per 100,000 in 1999 to 12 per 100,000 in 2020—the largest proportional increase.

“As alcohol consumption among women has grown, so have the associated risks,” Kitsantas said. “Women appear to be more vulnerable to alcohol’s harmful effects due, possibly, to differences in body composition and metabolism, leading to higher blood alcohol concentrations. Moreover, mental health issues like depression and anxiety, already more common in women, can be worsened by alcohol use.”

Additionally, the study highlights the need to increase interventions targeting such risk factors as obesity, diabetes and liver damage, which may accelerate liver disease and alcohol-related mortality.

Study coauthor Charles H. Hennekens, MD, FACPM, emphasized the need for health care providers to recognize the impact heavy alcohol use has on mortality and health conditions such as cardiovascular disease.

“To mitigate these risks, screening for alcohol use in primary care settings is essential,” said Hennekens. “Coexisting conditions like overweight and obesity can accelerate liver damage, which may in turn lead to earlier onset of cirrhosis and liver cancer. The U.S. has the highest rates of overweight and obesity in the world and low levels of daily physical activity. The deleterious interaction of these factors may contribute to the observed trends in alcohol-related mortality, particularly in younger adults.”

In the United States, a standard drink contains about 14 grams of alcohol, according to [Hep’s Basics on ALD](#) (alcohol-related liver disease). The ALD practice guidelines issued by the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases say men who drink 60 to 80 grams of alcohol per day for 10 or more years are at risk of developing cirrhosis.

“Both globally and in the U.S., high levels of alcohol consumption are closely linked to premature deaths and disability,” said Hennekens. “The difference between consuming small amounts of alcohol daily and larger amounts could be the difference between preventing and causing premature death. One immediate effect of alcohol is liver damage, and in the U.S., the rising rates of obesity and diabetes also contribute to early liver damage.”

To read more, click [#Alcohol-related Liver Disease](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Beer-Only Drinkers' Diets are Worse Than Wine Drinkers](#)," "[Liver Cancer Screening Improves Survival but Is Underused](#)" and "[Liver Fibrosis Diagnosis Promotes Lifestyle Changes](#)."

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/article/alcoholrelated-deaths-us-doubled-two-decades>