



National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

Alcohol is widely used in our society, and its use has both risks and possible benefits depending on a variety of biological and behavioral factors. Research supported and conducted by NIAAA is aimed at understanding variations in why some people drink, why some drink more than others, and why some continue to drink despite experiencing negative consequences—from traffic crashes and health concerns to problems with family, work, or school. Understanding the differences between and within diverse groups that confer both risk for and protection from alcohol-induced problems will provide the basis for developing targeted interventions aimed at reducing disparities and improving health in the United States and abroad.

NIAAA's Mission

NIAAA provides leadership in the national effort to reduce alcohol-related problems by:

- Conducting and supporting research in a wide range of scientific areas, including genetics, neuroscience, epidemiology, health risks and benefits of alcohol consumption, prevention, and treatment;
- Coordinating and collaborating with other research institutes and Federal programs on alcohol-related issues;
- Collaborating with international, national, State, and local institutions, organizations, agencies, and programs engaged in alcohol-related work; and
- Translating and disseminating research findings to health care providers, researchers, policymakers, and the public.

A total of 18 million Americans (8.5 percent of the population age 18 and older) suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence. Alcohol consumption is the third leading cause of death and disability in the United States and among the top 10 actual causes of death. Among American Indians and African Americans this rate is even higher. The cost of hazardous alcohol use to the U.S. society is estimated to be \$185 billion annually. It also is a factor in other causes of death and disability, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, motor vehicle crashes, liver cirrhosis, and alcohol-related birth defects. These rates may be particularly high for certain populations. Research indicates that cirrhosis death rates are higher among White men and women of Hispanic origin than among non-Hispanic Blacks or Whites. In the United States, the rates of alcohol-related traffic deaths are highest among American Indians or Alaska Natives. From 1992 to 2001, alcohol dependence increased significantly among Asian men and Black women and decreased significantly among Hispanic men.

