584

STATEMENT OF NEED

Alcohol misuse was already a public health concern and COVID-19 may have made it worse. Initial studies and data show increased daily and risky alcohol use, increased rates in alcohol related injuries, and increased sales. This brief provides information and context around alcohol use in Maine during the pandemic.

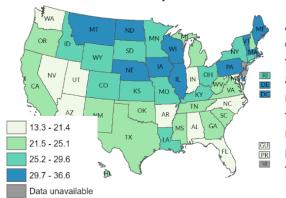
NEW RESEARCH - COVID19 STUDIES

According to a national study, 32% of the participants reported binge drinking during stay-at-home orders, with 60% of those indicating they had increased alcohol consumption during the pandemic. Non-binge drinkers increased their consumption by 28%. Another study concluded that adults who reported high levels of impact from COVID-19 reported significantly more alcohol use, both in days and total drinks, then those who reported lower levels of COVID-19 impact.

MAINE ALCOHOL DATA

Alcohol use can have a harmful impact on society, including motor vehicle accidents, crime, straining health/medical resources, and lowering work productivity. It is the manner and frequency with which people use drugs and/or alcohol that are often linked to substance-related consequences.³

Binge Drinking Among 18 to 25-year-olds, by State: 2019



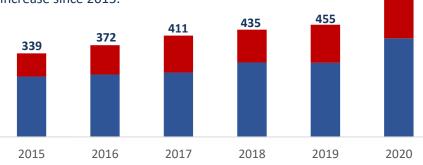
Alcohol is the substance most often used by Mainers across the lifespan, especially in youth and young adults. According to recent survey data, nearly one third of (32.4%) Mainers 18-25 reported binge drinking in the past 30 days. This was one of the highest rates in the nation.⁴

This fact sheet is a product of the Maine State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW). For more info, visit www.maineseow.com

MORTALITY

In 2020, based on preliminary data, there were a total of 584 Mainers who died from a cause related to alcohol, this was a 28% uptick since 2019 and a 72% increase since 2015.⁵

Alcohol Related Deaths in Maine: 2015 to 2020

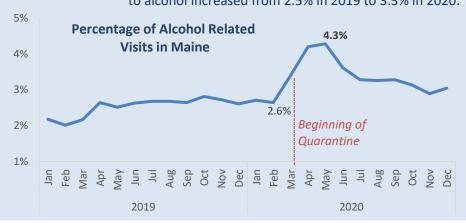


■ Alcohol related death (excludes poisoning) ■ Alcohol poisoning death

Excessive alcohol use is a public health problem that appears to have worsened in Maine since the onset of COVID-19.

IMPACT FROM COVID-19 IN MAINE

The proportion of emergency department (ED) visits related to alcohol increased at the beginning of the pandemic and peaked in May at 4.3%. The percentage of all ED visits in Maine related to alcohol increased from 2.5% in 2019 to 3.3% in 2020.6



ALCOHOL AND COVID19 IN MAINE AND THE NATION

MORBIDITY

Rates of alcohol related Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responses in Maine have been increasing over the past decade. In 2020, for every 10,000 EMS responses, there were about 98 calls related to alcohol. There were nearly 2,500 EMS responses related to alcohol (based on primary impression) in 2020; this is a 60% increase since 2010.⁷



2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020

IMPAIRED DRIVING

In April 2020, shortly after COVID-19 began, the percentage of crashes related to impaired driving in Maine peaked at 6.2% compared to 4.4% in April 2019. Rates of impaired driving crashes remained consistently higher in 2020.8





- 1. American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse 8. Maine Dept. of Transportation.
- ² Int J Environ Res Public Health
- 2020 SEOW State Profile
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*
- Maine Data, Research, and Vital Statistics
- Rapid Health Information for Maine
- 7. Maine Emergency Medical Services
- 9. USDA Economic Research Service. (2020). Nielsen: Scantrack.
- ¹⁰ Bureau of Alcohol Beverages and Lottery
- ¹¹ U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- *Self-reported data

SALES

Millions

Total alcohol sales outside of bars and restaurants increased by 24% during the pandemic nationwide. Sales of spirits with higher alcohol content rose faster, with more than a 27% increase over the last year. In the month of September 2020, online alcohol sales nationwide were up 256% compared to 2019. 9



Agent sales of spirits (e.g., hard liquor) to off premise outlets (e.g., agency liquor stores) in Maine have never been higher. Agent spirit sales in Maine increased by 10% from 2019 to 2020 and by 33% since 2016. 10

It is important for Maine to consider public health concerns when making decisions on alcohol policy and longer-term impacts of increased alcohol consumption.

RISK FACTORS FOR EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE

Individual

- Inadequate social support
- Limited coping skills
- Pre-existing mental health, or dependence issue
- Low perception of harm

Environmental

- Ease of access/low pricing
- Exposure to marketing
- Relaxed regulations/laws
- Economic downturn
- Isolation

Long-standing research is clear that stress, isolation, and increased accessibility are known to increase high-risk alcohol use and related harms. Recent studies suggest that younger adults, minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers experienced disproportionately worse mental health outcomes, increased substance use, and higher rates of suicide ideation as a result of COVID-19.11 It is crucial that we continue to monitor and study the impact of COVID-19 on substance use and mental health, particularly among vulnerable populations.

This fact sheet is a product of the Maine State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW). For more info, visit www.maineseow.com