

WELLNESS/ HEALTH BUZZ

Health Buzz: Americans Are Drinking a Lot – and It's Scaring Researchers

And it's not just the study authors who are concerned.

By [David Oliver](#), Associate Editor, Social Media | Aug. 10, 2017, at 11:58 a.m.



Specifically, American alcohol consumption has increased 11.2 percent from 2001-2002 to 2012-2013 (65.4 percent to 72.7 percent, respectively). (GETTY IMAGES)

If you're an American and you drink [alcohol](#), you're not alone. In fact, there are more people like you now than in the past. But with increased drinking comes increased health consequences – so much so that researchers are calling it a [public health crisis](#).

Specifically, the portion of Americans consuming [alcohol](#) during a year has increased 11.2 percent from 2001-2002 to 2012-2013 (65.4 percent to 72.7 percent, respectively). High-risk drinking ticked up from 20.2 million Americans to 29.6 million Americans during this period, and those diagnosed with alcohol use disorder rose from 17.6 million to 29.9 million Americans.

High-risk drinking was defined as four or more regular drinks on any day for women, five or more for men, and exceeding those limits at least weekly during the year. A person was considered to have alcohol use disorder if they met criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year.

The study took into account about 80,000 people's individual interviews between several surveys, and was published earlier this week in [JAMA Psychiatry](#).

[Women](#), older adults, racial/ethnic minorities and people of lower income and education levels saw the largest increases, save for a few exceptions.

"These increases constitute a public health crisis that may have been overshadowed by increases in much less prevalent substance use (marijuana, opiates and heroin) during the same period. ... Most important, the findings herein highlight the urgency of educating the public, policymakers and health care professionals about high-risk drinking and [alcohol use disorder], destigmatizing these conditions and encouraging those who cannot reduce their alcohol consumption on their own, despite substantial harm to themselves and others, to seek treatment," according to the study.

And it's not just the study authors who are concerned.

"This should be a big wake-up call," David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told [Bloomberg](#). "Alcohol is our number one drug problem, and it's not just a problem among kids." He was not a part of the research.

It's estimated that 88,000 people die every year due to alcohol-related causes, reports the [Washington Examiner](#) – and people can't seem to agree on how to get a handle on them.

Why is this happening in the first place? There isn't one root cause, Bloomberg reports. Researchers suggest economic stress post-Great Recession could play a role, in addition to the improved accessibility of alcohol at retailers and restaurants and weakened alcohol tax impact. Today, [alcohol is cheaper](#) than it's ever been since at least 1950 in relation to average income.

[7 Health Risks of Binge Drinking You Can't Ignore](#)

[9 Reasons It Rocks to Be the DD](#)

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