

Alcohol-related Deaths and Hospitalizations by Race, Gender, and Age in California



This fact sheet summarizes the main findings of an Alcohol Justice study published in January 2010. We estimated the total deaths and hospitalizations in California attributable to moderate to high alcohol use for the most current year available (2006) and broke this data down by age, gender, and race/ethnic origin. This is the first study of its kind in more than 20 years. There is no national breakdown of alcohol harm by demographics and we are unaware of any other published studies.

Results

- In California in 2006, there were 10,619 deaths and 72,771 hospitalizations caused by alcohol use.
- The majority of alcohol-related deaths and hospitalizations (51%) were due to chronic diseases such as alcohol liver disease.
- About 28% of alcohol-related injury deaths were due to motor vehicle traffic crashes.

Race and Ethnicity Differences

- Hispanics have a significantly higher (56%) alcohol-attributable death rate from homicide than non-Hispanics.
- When examining differences in alcohol-attributable injuries by race, whites and blacks had similar results for traffic fatalities. However, the alcohol-related homicide rate for Blacks was five times higher than for Whites. (Note homicide data is for race of victim, not perpetrator.)
- Information for Asian populations was difficult to ascertain due to underreporting and discrepancies in classifying Asian subpopulations.

Gender Differences

- Males experienced more than twice the number of alcohol-related deaths than women.
- Males experienced more than half of the alcohol-attributable hospitalizations due to illness while slightly more than half (52%) of alcohol-related injury hospitalizations were experienced by women.

Age Differences

For the under 21 population, the leading cause of alcohol-related death was homicide (263 cases), and the second leading cause was motor vehicle crashes (207). Overall, this differs from national estimates which show alcohol-related traffic crashes are the leading killer for those under age 21. The California estimates are being driven by the high number of underage males who die from homicide. For females under age 21 in California, the leading cause of death mirrors the national culprit of alcohol-attributable motor-vehicle traffic crashes.

Older Californians tend to suffer from alcohol-related chronic illness, while younger groups tend to experience more alcohol-related injuries. The one exception is falls, which are overwhelmingly found in people over age 65. However, more research is needed to fully understand to what extent alcohol is a contributing factor to falls in older individuals.

Reference

1. Stahre M, Simon M. Alcohol-related deaths and hospitalizations by race, gender, and age in California. *The Open Epidemiology Journal*. 2010;2:85-97.