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Alcohol Justice Calls on HHS Leadership to Release Crucial Alcohol Harm Study

Repressed Report Continues Concerning Pattern of Ignoring Alcohol Harm Data

SAN RAFAEL, CALIF. (September 11, 2025)—Alcohol Justice calls on Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to release the suppressed *Alcohol Intake and Health* report, and let the state of the science guide the forthcoming *USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. On Thursday, September 4th, *Vox* reported that [the Department of Health and Human Services had decided to bury an internal study on the health impacts of alcohol](#), which found that, for known causes of harm, the risks of drinking rise starting with the first sip. The study, one of three major alcohol-related publications compiled by the government at the beginning of this year, was intended to be used to inform the updated *Dietary Guidelines*. By refusing to release it, HHS gives the impression of “data shopping” and turning a blind eye to robust science that contradicts its predetermined findings.

“The government has a duty to consider all the evidence when giving alcohol-related guidance,” said Miryom Yisrael, Executive Director of Alcohol Justice. *“Their mission is not to selectively*

interpret data, but to provide comprehensive information that safeguards health and preserves life.”

In January of 2025, three reports on alcohol harm were released, each through a different governmental or quasi-governmental entity, and each with distinct key findings.

- The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) released the *Review of Evidence on Alcohol and Health*, finding that “moderate” drinking protected against all-cause mortality.
- Mere days later, the Office of the Surgeon General released *Alcohol and Cancer Risk*, highlighting the carcinogenic properties of alcohol and noting that the risk rises starting with the first drink.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released a draft of the *Alcohol Intake and Health* study, which found that, when looking at known alcohol-related causes of death and disease including but not limited to cancer, risk likewise rises starting with the first drink.

For more background on the competing methodologies, aims, and concerns around this type of alcohol health research, please see Alcohol Justice’s [“Alcohol’s Impacts on Health” FAQ](#).

“There are real flaws in the NASEM report, indications of bad science corrupted by industry,” said Carson Benowitz-Fredericks, MSPH, Research Director at Alcohol Justice. *“But you don’t clear the air by burying later research. You do it by tackling the question from new perspectives—that’s what SAMHSA did, and now the government needs to release that vital report.”*

Publishing the *Alcohol Intake and Health* report does not just provide important data for the USDA *Dietary Guidelines*. It also provides context for the alarming trend towards more alcohol-related deaths in the U.S., even as the numbers of drinkers fall.

- In under 10 years, [alcohol-related mortality rose 29%](#), from 138,000 per year in 2016-2017 to 178,000 per year in 2024.
- Alcohol-related harms [cost the U.S. \\$249 billion annually](#).
- This is particularly affecting older Americans, [for whom alcohol-related causes of death have been steadily increasing](#) since 2000.
- At the same time, [Gen Z consumption rates are falling](#).

To understand and reverse the outsized impact on remaining drinkers, the United States needs consistent, evidence-based, actionable behavioral recommendations from credible sources. HHS’s decision to disown its own findings cripples the ability to generate that. And the loss of key research does not start with the buried report. The alcohol mortality trends were first

highlighted by a department at CDC that was eliminated in the DOGE-driven cuts earlier this year.

“As alcohol-related harm grows, withholding the risks does real harm,” said Raul Verdugo, Director of Advocacy at Alcohol Justice. *“The public deserves the full facts to make informed choices. Many at HHS understand this—let evidence, not silence, guide our public health policy.”*

The USDA *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* has, for decades, included advice on recommended drinking thresholds. They have consistently honed in on two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women as a “moderate drinking” threshold. This threshold, however, has been accompanied with advice that drinking less is always safer than drinking more. Mounting evidence now suggests that two drinks per day for men is still excessive, and previous USDA advisory committees have recommended lowering that to one. Instead, according to sources close to the process, [the guidelines committee may move to remove all concrete recommendations](#) beyond “drink in moderation”.

This follows the concerning pattern where health authorities relinquish their obligation to educate, prevent, and protect. Alcohol Justice insists that the public have access to high-quality information—including studies, analyses, and guidelines.

“This research was conducted for the American people, to benefit the American people,” said Yisrael. *“Secretary Kennedy, release the report.”*

Alcohol Justice is a nonprofit based in San Rafael, California, dedicated to advancing evidence-based policy that promotes public health and safety. For more information, please see www.alcoholjustice.org.