



Global status report on alcohol and health 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



World Health
Organization



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CHAPTER 1. REDUCING THE HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL: A KEYSTONE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- The harmful use of alcohol is one of the leading risk factors for population health worldwide and has a direct impact on many health-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those for maternal and child health, infectious diseases (HIV, viral hepatitis, tuberculosis), noncommunicable diseases and mental health, injuries and poisonings. Alcohol production and consumption is highly relevant to many other goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Alcohol per capita consumption per year in litres of pure alcohol is one of two indicators for SDG health target 3.5 – “Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol”.

Box 1. Health targets 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 for SDG 3

SDG health targets		Indicators for SDG health targets	
3.3	By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases	3.3.1	Number of new HIV infections per 1000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations
		3.3.2	Tuberculosis incidence per 1000 population
		3.3.3	Malaria incidence per 1000 population
		3.3.4	Hepatitis B incidence per 100 000 population
		3.3.5	Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
3.4	By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being	3.4.1	Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
		3.4.2	Suicide mortality rate
3.5	Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol	3.5.1	Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders
		3.5.2	Harmful use of alcohol, defined according to the national context as alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol
3.6	By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	3.6.1	Death rate due to road traffic injuries

- Alcohol frequently strengthens inequalities between and within countries, hindering the achievement of SDG 10 which calls for inequalities to be reduced. Harms from a given amount of drinking are higher for poorer drinkers and their families than for richer drinkers. This pattern of greater “harm per litre” is found for many different harms caused by alcohol.
- Economic development from a poorer society to a richer one may have potential in the longer term to mitigate alcohol-related harm, but more immediately it can bring about an increase in alcohol consumption and related harm as the availability of alcoholic beverages increases. Effective alcohol control measures in the interests of public health are especially important when rapid economic development is under way.
- Alcohol is often consumed before, along with, or after other psychoactive substance use, and the comorbidity of alcohol and tobacco dependence is strong and well documented. Public health policies, strategies and interventions should take into account the frequent association of alcohol consumption with the use of other psychoactive substances, particularly with opioids and benzodiazepines – for prevention of overdose deaths – and with cannabis – for road safety.

CHAPTER 2. GLOBAL STRATEGIES, ACTION PLANS AND MONITORING FRAMEWORKS

- The harmful use of alcohol is mentioned in numerous global strategies and action plans, but WHO's Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol continues to be the most comprehensive international policy document providing guidance on reducing the harmful use of alcohol at all levels.
- With development and ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, alcohol remains the only psychoactive and dependence-producing substance with significant global impact on population health that is not controlled at the international level by legally-binding regulatory frameworks.
- The update of the evidence on cost-effectiveness of policy options and interventions undertaken in the context of an update of Appendix 3 of the Global action plan on NCDs resulted in a new set of enabling and recommended actions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. The most cost-effective actions, or "best buys", include increasing taxes on alcoholic beverages, enacting and enforcing bans or comprehensive restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising across multiple types of media, and enacting and enforcing restrictions on the physical availability of retailed alcohol.

Box 2. Overarching and enabling actions, "best buys" and other recommended interventions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol

Overarching and enabling actions to reduce harmful use of alcohol

- Implement the Global strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol through multisectoral actions in the recommended target areas
- Strengthen leadership and increase commitment and capacity to address the harmful use of alcohol
- Increase awareness and strengthen the knowledge base on the magnitude and nature of problems caused by harmful use of alcohol by awareness programmes, operational research, improved monitoring and surveillance systems

"Best buys"

- Increase excise taxes on alcoholic beverages
- Enact and enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising (across multiple types of media)
- Enact and enforce restrictions on the physical availability of retailed alcohol (via reduced hours of sale)

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