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# ALCOHOL POLICY AFTER COVID

A critical window for public health and  
prevention

**NPN Conference - August 25, 2021**

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# AGENDA

- » Alcohol policy and consumption changes during COVID-19
- » Suicide risk during COVID – intersections with alcohol
- » Influencing alcohol policy: Massachusetts case example
- » Questions and Discussion



# Alcohol use during COVID-19

➔ Changes in policy and consumption

# Changes to Alcohol Policy Since the Start of the Pandemic

- Alcohol establishments deemed “essential” in many states
- Relaxed regulations for:
  - Home delivery
  - On-premise retail: Cocktails-to-go, sales of bottles for “at-home” consumption
  - Off-premise: Delivery allowed without special licenses
  - Consumption in outdoor spaces
- Industry promoted itself as “supporting” first responders

# IMPACT ON Alcohol Use



**Increase in Use  
and Who Uses**



**Where and How  
People Use**



**Inter-related  
Problems**

- **Unintended normalization of alcohol during COVID – stress relief**



# Adult Alcohol Use Since Early 2020

- Increase in frequency of use\*
- Increase in heavy consumption\*
- Significant increase in alcohol sales (22%)\*\*
- Rate of increase among women greater than among men\*
- More solitary drinking among men and non-whites\*\*

Source: \*Pollard, \*\*Rehm, \*\*\*Satre

# Youth Substance Use

- Alcohol use increased from 28.6% to 30.4%\*
- Frequency of marijuana use increased\*
- Informal conversations with youth revealed youth who used socially before the pandemic began using to cope with stress during the pandemic

\*Source: Dumas, 2020



# How Alcohol Use is Changing

- Using alcohol to cope with stress and isolation:
  - Women with small children under 5
  - Older Adults
- Drinking more at home, alone
  - Easier access via unregulated home delivery



# References

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# **Suicide and Alcohol Access during COVID-19**

# Funding and Disclaimer



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The views, opinions, and content expressed in this product do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of CMHS, SAMHSA, or HHS.

# What Do We Know about Suicide Trends during COVID?

- Survey data (with limitations): Increases in self-reported distress, mental health conditions, suicidal thoughts.
- Increase in adolescent ED visits for suspected suicide attempts (ages 12-17).
- Preliminary 2020 death data indicate a slight decrease in suicide death rates.
  - In at least one state, increases among communities of color.

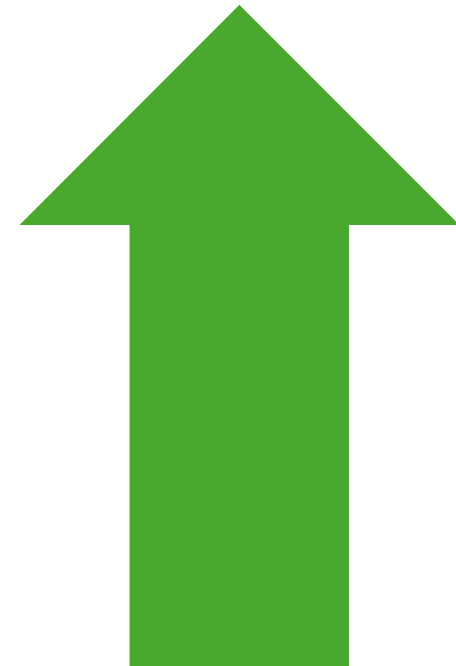


Source: Edwards, 2021

Sources: Ahmad & Anderson, 2021; Bray, Daneshvari, & Radhakrishnan, 2021; Czeisler, 2020; Yard, 2021

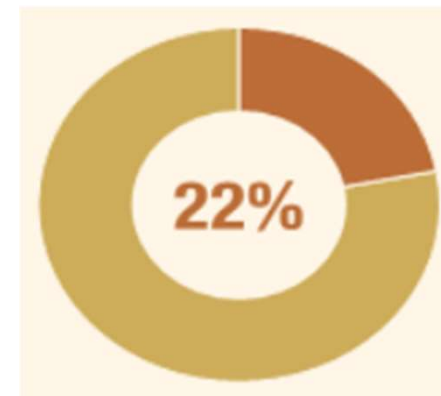
## Increases in Suicide Risk Factors during 2020

- Economic stress
- Housing/food insecurity
- Loss/disability of loved ones due to COVID
- Exposure to family violence
- Racism and related traumatic events
- Climate events
- Social isolation



# Suicide Risk and Alcohol Misuse

- Alcohol use is a major risk factor for suicide.
  - Acute alcohol use
  - Chronic alcohol use disorders
- Increased alcohol use is a warning sign for suicide.
- Reducing alcohol access reduces suicide risk.



22% of deaths by suicide in the United States involve alcohol intoxication.

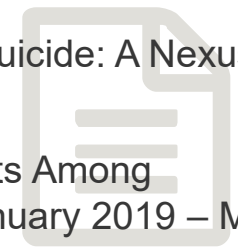
Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016

Shared Risk Factors	Shared Protective Factors
Academic failure	Trusting relationship with counselor, physician or other service provider
Aggression/history of violent behavior	
Involvement in bullying, victimization	Coping and problem-solving skills
Family conflict	Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and substance misuse
History of trauma or abuse	
Hopelessness, impulsivity, low self-esteem	Employment
Mental illness and/or substance use disorder	Community connectedness/involvement
Peer rejection	Receiving effective mental health/SUD treatment/care
Physical illness or chronic pain	Resilience, self-esteem, direction, perseverance
Previous suicide attempt(s)	Sobriety
Relational, social, work, or financial losses	Strong family bonds and social skills
Social withdrawal	

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016

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- Ahmad, F. B., & Anderson, R. N. (2021, March 31). The Leading Causes of Death in the US for 2020. *JAMA*, 325(18):1829-1830.
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- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2016). Substance Use and Suicide: A Nexus Requiring a Public Health Approach. In Brief.
- Yard, E. et al. (2021, June 18). Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts Among Persons Aged 12-25 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, January 2019 – May 2021. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 70(24): 888-894.







## What We Can Do: Effective Interventions to Mitigate Alcohol Deregulation

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# Most anything we do these days comes with a drink

By **Dugan Arnett** Globe Staff, May 10, 2019, 12:24 p.m.



**10K & 5K RACES  
& 1K FAMILY FUN RUN**  
2019



@ Medford HS  
Medford, MA  
11am-4pm

For more information  
or to register, visit  
[www.m3outdooradventures.com](http://www.m3outdooradventures.com)

**OKTOBERFEST**  
Trail Race, Beer Garden  
and BBQ

**YOGA  
&  
WINE**



Tuesday  
December 13th

@ 7 p.m.



YOU'RE INVITED!

**BREWBIES  
PINK LAGER**

*a fall lager made with hints of cranberry & mango*

LIMITED BATCH RELEASE PARTY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2019  
5:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M.

**FORDHAM & DOMINION**  
BREWING COMPANY  
BREWED IN DOVER, DE

1284 McD Drive, Dover, DE 19901

Food Trucks, Live Music & More!

100% of all sales of **BREWBIES PINK LAGER** will directly benefit the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition's statewide programs and services.



THE OFFICIAL  
BEER OF THE  
BOSTON MARATHON





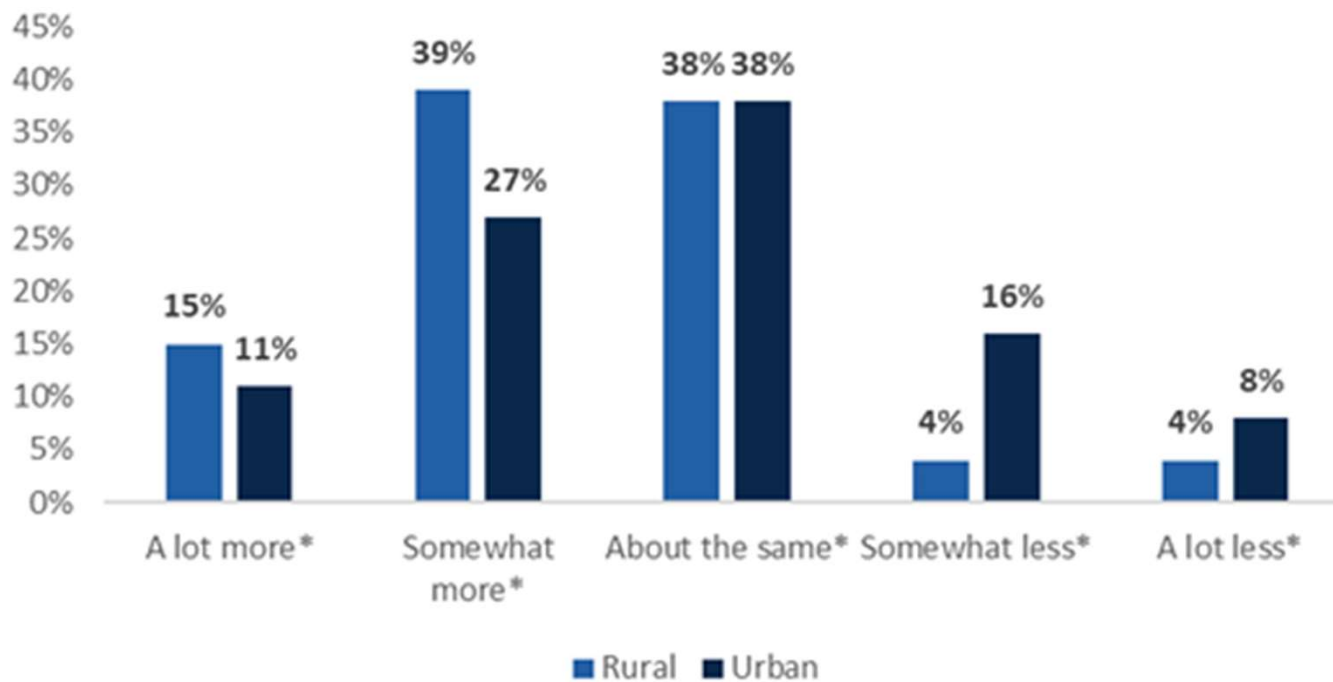
Today's drink special:  
**The Quarantini.**



It's just a regular martini, but  
you drink it alone in your  
house.

# CHANGES IN SUBSTANCE USE

Changes in Youth Substance Use, Rural v. Urban



Youth living in rural areas were **significantly more likely to report more substance use** since the pandemic began, compared to youth living in urban areas

Youth living in urban areas were **significantly more likely to report less substance use** compared to youth living in rural areas

The most requested resources youth need right now are **in person therapy\*** (14% of youth living in rural areas and 7% of youth living in urban areas) and **peer support\*** (9% of youth living in rural areas and 3% of youth living in urban areas)

\* denotes statistically significant findings

## Federal Dietary Guidelines for Alcohol Use

### DRINKING IN MODERATION:

1 drink or less  
in a day  
for women

2 drinks or less  
in a day  
for men



## Excessive Drinking Definition

- Binge drinking: 4 or more for women in one sitting, 5 or more for men in one sitting
- Heavy drinking: 8 drinks/week for women, 15 drinks/week for men
- Any drinking by people under age of 21
- Any drinking by pregnant women

## Federal Dietary Guidelines for Alcohol Use

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2 drinks or less  
in a day  
for men



## Breast Cancer Risk Science

One drink a day  
**increases** risk of  
breast cancer by  
**14%**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4299758/pdf/nihms-654017.pdf>

## Best Practices to Preventing Excessive Drinking

- Regulation of Alcohol Outlet Density
- Increasing Alcohol Taxes
- Dram Shop Liability
- Maintain Limits of Hours/Days of Sale
- Enhanced Enforcement of Laws Prohibiting Sales to Minors
- E-SBI

## What the Pandemic Did to Alcohol Regulation



City waives fees for liquor license holders; cites impacts of Covid

POSTED ON: NOVEMBER 3, 2020 - 4:08PM



Riding the Coattails of Pandemic Deregulation

## To-Go Alcohol Becomes Permanent in Several States

July 22, 2021

Executive Order on Promoting  
Competition in the  
American Economy

JULY 09, 2021 • PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

After a decades-long ban, Massachusetts's bid to bring back happy hour is gathering steam

## Perfect Storm: Deregulation & Limited Enforcement

- State alcohol enforcement entity enforcing COVID regulations
- Gaps in information about youth access during COVID
- Data collection of youth use interrupted or altered
- Key state decision makers are new and often have different generational attitudes about alcohol availability

## Our Response



### Impact of Deregulation of Alcohol During COVID-19 Pandemic

Alcohol is the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States, resulting in over 95,000 deaths each year [1]. Per capita consumption has been increasing in the past years, but has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic [2]. When stay at-home orders began in some states in late March, in-person and online sales of alcohol increased by 54% and 262%, respectively, compared to 1 year before [3]. Excessive alcohol use is a common response to stress. Similar increases in alcohol use have been observed following past traumatic events in the United States, which have been associated with adverse health and social consequences [4].

#### MASSACHUSETTS HIGHLIGHTS

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns (March-June), the sale of alcohol for on-site consumption was prohibited [5]. To ease the economic effects of the lockdowns, the sale of malt beverages and wine for off-premise consumptions was authorized in April, with licensees not being required to obtain a separate transportation permit in order to make deliveries [6]. In June, expanded outdoor seating was authorized for on-premise consumption of alcohol, including on public spaces such as sidewalks [7]. In July, the drinks to-go authorization was extended to include cocktails to-go [8].

#### COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

##### READING

In Reading, there have been no additional restrictions or deregulation of alcohol, except the expansion of restaurant alcohol service to parking lots. Self-help groups for people in recovery have gone virtual, but this has



### How Can We Protect Youth from Alcohol Harms? What Lawmakers Need to Know

An Educational Forum



May

4

1:00pm - 2:00pm

2021

States with greater alcohol policy safeguards have healthier kids. Join **Senator Jason Lewis** and **Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian** for a presentation about best practices for protecting all our residents from alcohol harms.

Guest Presenter: David Jernigan, PhD, Boston University School of Public Health

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# Alcohol Action Network



## MISSION:

The goals of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Section of APHA are to:

- Develop, foster and advocate for sound research, policy and practice in the fields of ATOD epidemiology, prevention and treatment.
- Enhance communication concerning ATOD issues among the Section members and the Section leadership, APHA members and the wider community.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP PROTECT KIDS FROM A HARMFUL SUBSTANCE LIKE ALCOHOL?

1. Increase awareness and education for self, the field and the decision-makers
2. Build relationships with allies who share your goals/mission
3. Get youth involved
4. Connect with local, state and national entities who can support your work
  - a. Alcohol Action Network [leadership@apha-atod.org](mailto:leadership@apha-atod.org)
  - b. US Alcohol Policy Alliance [Info@alcoholpolicy.org](mailto:Info@alcoholpolicy.org)
  - c. Alcohol Policy Alliance in your state?

# Some Central Texans concerned over new alcohol to go law

**Alcohol needs to carry a cancer warning, public health groups urge government**

FOOD DIVE October 22, 2020

**Changes to alcohol rules face pushback**

Health advocates oppose loosening sought by business

By Dan Adams  
GLOBE STAFF

**Call for a Population-Based Response to a Doubling of Alcohol-Related Mortality in the United States**

Sean J. Haley PhD, MPH, Jonathan Noel PhD, MPH, Raimee Eck PhD, MPH, MPA, Diane Riibe BBL, Kathleen Lenk MPH, and Alicia C. Sparks PhD

<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305904>



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# THANK YOU

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