



NCADD

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND
DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

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NCADD FACT SHEET: USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS AMONG WOMEN

CONSUMPTION RATES, PATTERNS AND TRENDS

- In 2009, (46.5%) of females aged 12 years or older were current drinkers (past month use), (16.1%) were binge drinkers, (defined as five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the past 30 days) and (3.5%) reported heavy drinking (five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of five or more days in the past 30 days.)¹
- Among women aged 26 or older, in 2009, (48.4%) reported current alcohol use, (14%) were binge drinkers, and (2.9%) were heavy drinkers. In addition, current alcohol use (57.7%), binge drinking (33.6%) and heavy alcohol rates (8.4%) were higher among women 18-25.² Overall, fewer adult women (46.5%) than men (57.6%) used alcohol in 2009.³
- Among 12-17 year olds, (8.6%) of females reported cigarette use (past month), similar to males, (9.2%).⁴
- In 2009, (6.6%) of women reported current use of an illicit drug; of these, (0.4%) used cocaine.⁵ Among 12 to 17 year olds, males had higher rates than females for current use of illicit drugs, overall, (10.6% vs. 9.4%).⁶
- Heavy drinking is more common among women who have never married, are living unmarried with a partner, or are divorced or separated.⁷ Among pregnant women aged 15 to 44, an estimated (10.0%) reported current alcohol use, (4.4%) binge drinking, and (0.8%) heavy drinking.⁸

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG-RELATED PROBLEMS

- Heavy drinking is more risky for women than men, increasing their risk to violent and sexual assault. Women who suffered childhood sexual abuse are more likely to have drinking problems, depression and low self-esteem.⁹
- Approximately, 5.9 million or (5.1%) of adult women were in need of alcohol treatment in 2008—a percentage that has remained relatively stable since 2002.¹⁰ Additionally, (70%) of women who were in drug abuse treatment report histories of physical and sexual abuse with victimization beginning before 11 years of age and occurring repeatedly.¹¹
- Alcohol or other drug use may make women more vulnerable to sexual assault. On college campuses, assaults, unwanted sexual advances, and unplanned and unsafe sex are all more likely among students who drink heavily on occasions.¹² Research suggests that annually, approximately 4.8 million intimate partner rapes and physical assaults are committed against women, and about 2.9 million physical assaults related to intimate partner violence are committed against men.¹³
- While most pregnant women do not abuse illicit drugs, combined 2008 and 2009 data found that pregnant women ages 15 to 44 reported the greatest substance use. In addition, pregnant women, ages 15 to 17, had similar rates of illicit drug use (15.8% or 14,000 women) as women of the same age who were not pregnant (13.0% or 832,000 women).¹⁴

HEALTH ISSUES

- Women alcoholics have death rates (50% to 100%) higher than those of male alcoholics, including deaths from suicides, alcohol-related accidents, heart disease, stroke, liver cirrhosis, hepatitis, brain disease and other related illness.¹⁵ In a national survey of 1,200 pregnant women, more than (54%) said they had used alcohol or tobacco during their pregnancies, and three percent said they had used illicit drugs.¹⁶
- Other research suggests that one drink per day can slightly raise a woman's risk of breast cancer.¹⁷
- AIDS is now the fourth leading cause of death among women 15 to 44 years of age and approximately two thirds of the AIDS cases among women are related to injection drug use. Among the total cases of pediatric AIDS in the United States, (54%) are related to either maternal injection drug use or maternal sex with an injecting drug user.¹⁸

TREATMENT ISSUES

- More than four million women need treatment for drug abuse.¹⁹ In 2009, (9.7%) of the clients admitted for alcohol treatment or drug-related problems were women.²⁰
- According to treatment admission data, in 2009, (17%) of non-Hispanic White and (23%) of non-Hispanic Black females were admitted for alcohol and secondary drug use.²¹
- In 2009, among females of Mexican origin, 12 percent were admitted to substance abuse treatment for methamphetamine/amphetamines. For female admissions, other commonly reported primary substances were marijuana (19%), opiates (15%), and cocaine (9%).²²
- For Asian/Pacific Islander female admissions, methamphetamine/amphetamines were the most commonly reported illicit substance (24%), followed by marijuana (18%), opiates (13%), and cocaine (6%).²³

PREVENTION

“NIAAA now defines how much drinking may put people at risk for developing alcohol dependence. Low risk drinking limits for women are: No more than 7 standard alcoholic drinks per week and no more than 3 drinks on any single day. To stay at low risk, women must keep with in both the single day limits and weekly limits. Low risks does not mean no risk. Even with in these limits, you can have problems if you drink too quickly or have other health issues.”

Sources

¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2010) Office of Applied Studies, Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Volume II. Technical Appendice and Selected Prevalence Tables. Rockville, MD <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9Results.htm> ²Ibid. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2010), Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Volume I. Summary of National Findings, (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-38A, HHS Publication No. SMA 10-4856). Rockville, MD. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9Results.htm>. ⁶Ibid. ⁷National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, National Institute of Health, Women's Health Issue. NIH Publication No. 03-4956, Revised 2008 pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochurewomen/women.htm <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/womensfact/womensfact.htm> ⁸Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2010), Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Volume I. Summary of National Findings, Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-38A, HHS Publication No. SMA 10-4856 Rockville, MD. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9Results.htm> ⁹National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, National Institutes of Health, A Women's Health Issue NIH Publication No. 03-4956, Revised 2008 Alcohol <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/womensfact/womensfact.htm> ¹⁰Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, The TEDS Report: Trends in Adult Female Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions Reporting Primary Alcohol Abuse 1992 to 2007, Office of Applied Studies, (January 7, 2010), Rockville, MD. ¹¹<http://www.4therapy.com/life-topics/substance-abuse/women-often-experience-drug-abuse-and-addiction-quite-differently-men-25> ¹²National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse: Women and Alcohol National Institute of Health March 2011 <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/womensfact/womensfact.htm> ¹³Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality: Data Spotlight National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services, (December 7, 2010) <http://oas.samhsa.gov> ¹⁴National Institute on Drug Abuse Prenatal Exposure to Drugs of Abuse, May 2011 ¹⁵National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, National Institutes of Health, A Women's Health Issue, NIH Publication No. 03-4956: Revised 2008. ¹⁶<http://alcoholism.about.com/b/2007/10/24/drinking-during-pregnancy-increases-preterm-risks.htm> ¹⁷National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, National Institutes of Health, Alcohol: A Women's Health Issue NIH Publication No. 03-4956. Revised 2008 ¹⁸<http://www.4therapy.com/life-topics/substance-abuse/women-often-experience-drug-abuse-and-addiction-quite-differently-men-25> ¹⁹<http://www.pregnancy.org/article/pregnancy-and-drug-use> ²⁰Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Volume I. Summary of National Findings, Office of Applied Studies: <http://oas.samhsa.gov> ²¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) 1999-2009 <http://oas.samhsa.gov> ²²Ibid. ²³Ibid.