



Bulletin No. 6
February 5, 1996
Alcohol-Related Mortality in Alaska: 1992-94

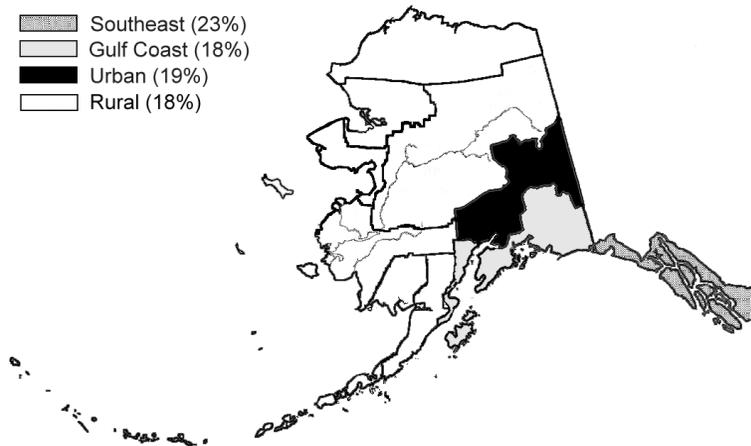
Alcohol Use in Alaska

Alaska had the second highest binge drinking (five or more drinks on an occasion, one or more times in the past month) prevalence rate in the United States in 1991.¹ Binge drinking is a risk factor for some alcohol-related deaths such as those due to injury. The highest binge drinking prevalence in Alaska in 1993 was found in the Southeast region (Figure 1).²

Table 1. Binge Drinking Prevalence among Adult Alaskans by Race and Sex

	Alaska Native ³	All Races ²
Men	21.2%	26.0%
Women	20.1%	12.0%

Figure 1. Binge Drinking Prevalence in Alaska²



Deaths Caused by Alcohol

Deaths that are related to alcohol use are of two types: 1) those that are definitionally related to alcohol such as alcoholic cirrhosis and alcohol abuse, and 2) those partially attributable to alcohol such as deaths from cardiovascular disease, injuries, and cancers of the liver, larynx, oral cavity, esophagus and stomach.⁴ Only deaths definitionally related to alcohol were counted in the alcohol-related category in the January 12, 1996 *Epidemiology Bulletin* titled "Smoking Related Mortality in Alaska: 1992-1994."

Using the Alcohol-Related Disease Impact approach developed by CDC,⁴ which also includes causes of death partially attributable to alcohol, we estimate that **801 deaths to Alaska residents** during 1992-1994 were attributable to alcohol, accounting for 11.2% of the 7,159 deaths during that time (Table 2). Injuries account for over half of these alcohol-related deaths.

Table 2. Major Causes of Alcohol-Related Deaths in Alaska 1992-94

Cause of Death	Total Deaths ⁵	Alcohol-Related Deaths	Percent Alcohol-Related ⁴
Motor vehicle injury	339	142	42%
Suicide	412	115	28%
Homicide	136	63	46%
Alcoholic cirrhosis	53	53	100%
Alcohol dependence	51	51	100%
Alcoholic liver disease	38	38	100%
Alcohol abuse	36	36	100%
Fire	63	28	45%
Drowning	71	27	38%
Esophageal cancer	36	27	75%

Alcohol-Related Mortality Among Males and Females in Alaska

Of the 801 deaths attributable to alcohol, 570 (71.2%) were among males and 231 were among females.

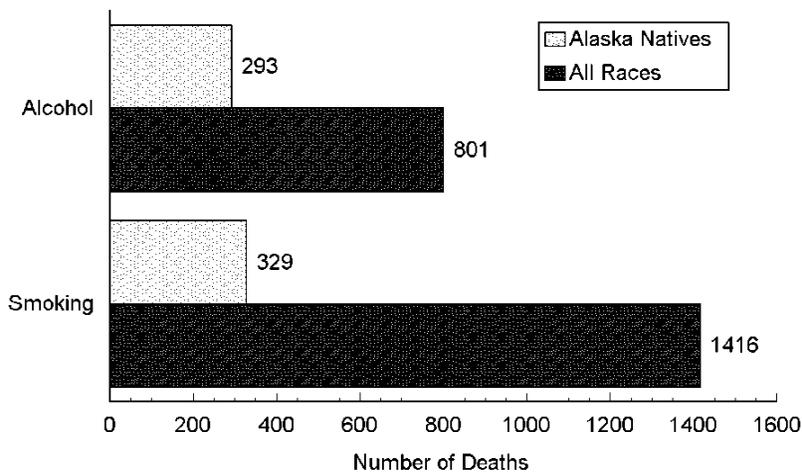
Deaths to Alaska Natives from Alcohol

Alaska Natives account for 36.6% (293) of the alcohol-related deaths, although they account for 16.5% of the state's population.

Comparison to Smoking-Related Deaths

The graph below shows how alcohol-related death compares to smoking-related death in Alaska.

Figure 2. Number of Alaska Resident Deaths
by Race and Selected Cause, 1992 - 94



Summary

Alcohol problems, including alcohol-related mortality, are directly related to per capita alcohol consumption.⁶ Alaska's per capita alcohol consumption was the third highest among states in 1994, and Alaska's injury rate was the highest among states during 1988-1992.

There are several approaches to lowering rates of alcohol problems. The prohibition of alcohol sale and importation has been associated with lower rates of alcohol-related injury in remote Alaska villages (see Bulletin No. 7, February 6, 1996). However, prohibition is unlikely to be implemented elsewhere in Alaska. Increases in **alcohol taxation** have been associated with decreased alcohol consumption, cirrhosis mortality and motor vehicle injury rates.⁶

References

1. CDC. CDC Surveillance Summaries, August 27, 1993. MMWR 1993;42(No. SS-4).
2. Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance, 1993 Annual Report; Alaska Division of Public Health.
3. Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance, 1991-93 Average, Alaska Division of Public Health.
4. Schultz JM, Rice DP, Parker DL, et al. Quantifying the disease impact of alcohol with ARDI software. Public Health Reports 1991;106(4):443-450.
5. Mortality Data for Alaska Residents, provided by the Bureau of Vital Records, Alaska Division of Public Health.
6. Moore MH and Gerstein DR (Eds): Alcohol and public policy: Beyond the shadow of prohibition. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1981.

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