

# NYC Vital Signs

## Alcohol Use in New York City

While most New Yorkers have healthy drinking habits or don't drink at all, excessive drinking is an under-recognized public health problem. Every year in New York City, excessive drinking causes about 25,000 hospitalizations from preventable injuries and illnesses and more than 1,500 deaths from a host of causes, including motor vehicle crashes, falls, assaults, liver disease, and cancer.

Excessive drinking can devastate families. It is a contributing factor in domestic violence, homicide, and suicide. It causes, complicates, or makes harder to treat many illnesses, including depression. Excessive drinking causes miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

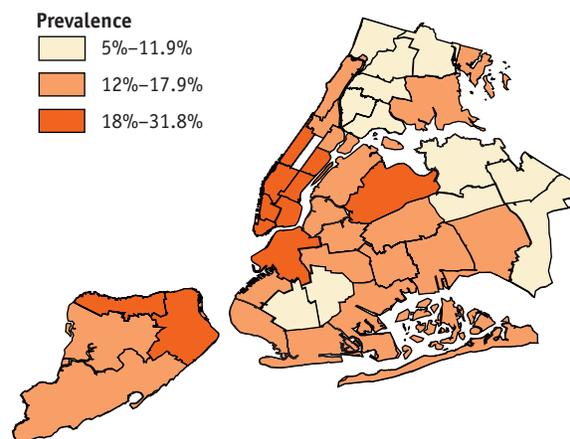
By contributing to risky sexual behavior, excessive drinking fuels the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. It also lowers productivity and robs communities of economic health.

According to the 2003 New York City Community Health Survey, almost half of New York City adults (49%) don't drink at all. Most others (36%) have healthy drinking habits. But about 15% report excessive drinking—defined as either heavy drinking (consuming more than 60 drinks a month for men and more than 30 a month for women), or binge drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks on any one occasion). About 2% of New Yorkers are heavy drinkers, about 11% binge drink, and an additional 3% do both.

### Excessive drinking occurs more frequently among Manhattan residents

- Excessive drinking occurs most frequently among persons who live in Manhattan below 96th street as well as among persons living in the Jackson Heights/Elmhurst/Maspeth section of Queens, the Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene/Park Slope area, and Northern Staten Island.
- Excessive drinking is least common in Borough Park, Flatbush, Eastern Queens, the South Bronx, the Northeast Bronx, and Kingsbridge.

Excessive Drinking by Residence, New York City, 2003



Some people should not drink at all, including those with a history of alcohol problems, pregnant women, people under 21, and anyone who will be driving.

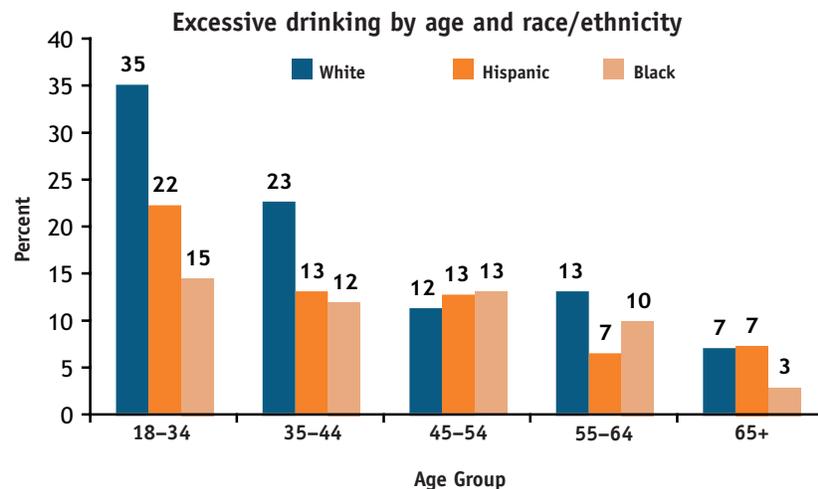
## Young, white, and male New Yorkers are at highest risk for excessive drinking

- Men and adults under 45 are twice as likely to report excessive drinking as other New Yorkers.
- Whites have much higher rates of excessive drinking than do black and Hispanic New Yorkers.
- Excessive drinking is more common among New Yorkers who have never married.
- More than 20% of New Yorkers with annual household incomes greater than \$50,000 drink excessively, compared to 12% of low-income New Yorkers.

	% who drink excessively
<b>All New Yorkers</b>	<b>15.3</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Men	20.4
Women	10.7
<b>Age Group (in years)</b>	
18–24	22.5
25–44	19.8
45–64	11.0
65 and older	6.3
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	21.1
Hispanic	14.8
Black, non-Hispanic	11.0
Asian	8.8
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Never married	18.8
Married/Partnered	12.9
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	12.4
<b>Household Income</b>	
\$50,000 or more	22.0
\$25,000 to \$49,999	16.7
Less than \$25,000	12.2
<b>Employment Status</b>	
Employed	18.1
Unemployed	14.2
Out of workforce	8.4

## Racial/ethnic differences in drinking behavior vary by age

- Drinking behaviors vary considerably by race/ethnicity and age. Among New Yorkers under 45, excessive drinking occurs more often among whites than among blacks and Hispanics. In the older age groups, however, rates of excessive drinking do not differ by race/ethnicity.



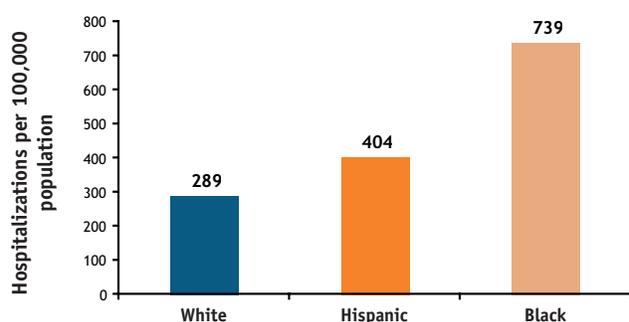
Note: This report is based on the 2003 New York City Community Health Survey, in which adults age 18 and older representing every neighborhood in New York City were interviewed by telephone about their health and the health of their families. For full survey details, see: [nyc.gov/health/survey](http://nyc.gov/health/survey). Other data sources include the New York State Department of Health Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS) and the New York City Department of Health Vital Records. The number of alcohol-related deaths was derived from 2002 Community Health Survey indexed prevalence estimates and 2002 Vital Statistics mortality data using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Alcohol Related Disease Impact system (ARDI) available at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/ARDI/HomePage.aspx>

## Consequences of excessive drinking are worse for black and Hispanic New Yorkers

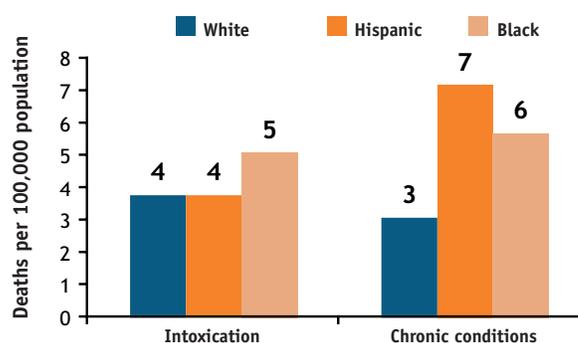
- Despite lower reported levels of excessive drinking, black and Hispanic New Yorkers are more likely than whites to be hospitalized or to die as a result of excessive drinking. Blacks are hospitalized for alcohol detoxification at

approximately twice the rate of Hispanics and whites, and have higher rates of death from alcohol intoxication. Both Hispanics and blacks are more likely than whites to be hospitalized or to die from chronic alcohol-related conditions.

**Hospitalizations for alcohol detoxification by race/ethnicity, New York City, 2001**



**Deaths from alcohol intoxication and chronic alcohol-related conditions by race/ethnicity, 2001**



## More than 1,500 New Yorkers die from alcohol-related causes each year

- Alcohol is directly responsible for approximately 640 deaths per year from alcoholic liver disease, alcohol-related psychiatric disorders, and from diseases of the heart, nervous system, and digestive system.
- Each year, alcohol also plays a role in an estimated 630 deaths from homicide, suicide, motor vehicle accidents and unintentional injuries.
- In addition, alcohol contributes to about 280 additional deaths each year from a variety of causes.

Cause of death	Estimated number of alcohol-related deaths
<b>Direct effects of alcohol</b>	
Alcoholic liver disease	330
Alcohol-related psychiatric disorders	260
Other disorders directly caused by alcohol	50
<b>Alcohol-related deaths from injuries and violence</b>	
Homicide	255
Suicide	100
Motor vehicle accidents	90
Other accidents and poisonings	185
<b>Other deaths contributed to alcohol</b>	
Liver disease	110
High blood pressure	50
Heart disease	35
Stroke	30
Cancer	30
Other conditions	25

## Recommendations

✓ **Live free of dependence on alcohol and drugs. Get help to stop excessive drinking. Recovery is possible.**

- An answer of 'yes' to any of the following questions may indicate an alcohol problem.

Have you ever:

- Thought you should cut down on your drinking?
- Become annoyed when people criticize your drinking?
- Felt scared, bad, or guilty about your drinking?
- Taken an eye-opener drink to feel better in the morning?
- Has your alcohol use caused you any problems with family, friends, social, health, depression, anxiety, work, money, lifestyle, legal, driving, or family law?

**LIFENET Hotline**  
 24-hours-a-day / 7-days-a-week  
 In English: 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638)  
 In Spanish: 1-877-AYÚDESE (1-877-298-3373)  
 In Chinese: ASIAN LIFENET (1-877-990-8585)  
 Other languages: Call 1-800-LIFENET and ask for an interpreter.  
 TTY (hearing-impaired): (212) 982-5284  
 Website: [www.800lifenet.com](http://www.800lifenet.com)  
 Or call 311 and ask for LIFENET

For information and help with alcohol or drug problems, call LIFENET or 311.

✓ **Pregnant women and women planning pregnancy, people with alcohol problems, and people under 21 should not drink at all. Neither should anyone who is driving.**

- Drink only in moderation. "Moderation" is defined as  
 For men: no more than 2 drinks per day, on average, and never more than 4 on a single occasion.  
 For women: no more than 1 drink per day, on average, and never more than 3 on a single occasion.

A report from the New York City Community Health Survey




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