

ALCOHOL FACTS



Secondhand Effects of Alcohol Use

The cost of alcohol consumption can be far greater than the price of a drink. Alcohol use is responsible for increased violence and crime, decreased worker productivity, higher health insurance premiums, and deaths and injuries from drinking-driving crashes. Drinkers alone do not pay these costs—everyone splits the bill.

Problem: The consequences of alcohol use affect everyone—even those who drink rarely or not at all.

- There is a strong association between alcohol consumption and physical assault¹; communities that have a higher density of liquor stores and bars experience more violent assaults.²

- Every year in the U.S., approximately 40 percent of fatal traffic crashes involve alcohol. Estimates from 2000 show that the societal costs of driving under the influence come to \$1 per drink, with people other than the drinking driver paying 60 percent of those costs.³

- Alcohol costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$134 billion per year in lost productivity and earnings due to alcohol-related illness, premature death, and crime.⁴

- Less than half of the economic burden of alcohol abuse falls on those who drink alcohol—government bears nearly 40 percent of the burden, with private insurance and victims also losing billions of dollars.⁵

Solution: Because the costs of alcohol use have an impact on everyone in a community, the most effective solutions often involve community change. Educating the public about alcohol's secondhand effects and implementing environmental prevention strategies can reduce those costs.

- To effectively reduce the secondhand effects of alcohol, communities can change the environment that fosters problematic alcohol use. Environmental prevention is a proven method that focuses on four areas that shape community alcohol problems: community norms, access and availability, media messages, and policy and enforcement.⁶

- Because drinkers are responsive to price changes, increasing taxes on alcohol reduces consumption and decreases problems associated with alcohol abuse.⁷

- Due to the relationship between alcohol availability and crime, regulating outlet density and restricting sales can reduce availability, decrease crime rates, and improve communities.⁸

- Carefully measuring alcohol's impact is a key to change. Collecting and reporting data—including statistics, stories, and pictures—can help motivate community members and policy makers.^{9 10}



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