

## The Health Consequences and Economic Impact in Alcoholism

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### DESCRIPTION

Alcoholism, a chronic disease characterized by an inability to control one's drinking despite negative consequences, is a global health concern that affects millions of people. Beyond its devastating impact on individuals and families, alcoholism also places a significant burden on healthcare systems and societies as a whole. In this article, we will delve into alcoholism statistics to shed light on the prevalence, consequences, and potential solutions to this pervasive issue.

### The global prevalence of alcoholism

Alcoholism, often referred to as Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), is a widespread problem across the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2018, over 3 million deaths worldwide were attributed to alcohol consumption, representing 5.3% of all deaths. This statistic underscores the severity of the issue on a global scale.

In the United States, alcoholism remains a substantial concern. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) reports that approximately 14.1 million adults in the U.S. (or 5.6% of the population) had AUD in 2019. Furthermore, only about 7.2% of individuals with AUD received treatment during that year. This gap between those who need help and those who receive it highlights the challenges in addressing alcoholism effectively.

### Alcoholism by gender and age

Alcoholism affects individuals of all genders and age groups, but statistics reveal some interesting patterns. Historically, men have been more likely to develop AUD compared to women. However, recent trends suggest a narrowing gender gap. The NIAAA reported in 2019 that 8.6% of men and 2.5% of women in the United States had AUD. This suggests that while men still have a higher prevalence, women are increasingly affected.

Age is another critical factor in alcoholism statistics. Young adults and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the development of AUD. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in 2019,

around 20.2% of young adults aged 18-25 had AUD. Additionally, 4.6% of adolescents aged 12-17 were reported to have AUD. These figures highlight the need for early intervention and prevention programs targeting these age groups.

### Health consequences of alcoholism

The health consequences of alcoholism are severe and wide-ranging. Long-term excessive alcohol consumption can lead to various physical and mental health issues. Some of the notable health consequences include

- **Liver disease:** Chronic alcohol abuse can cause liver damage, including fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, and cirrhosis.
- **Cardiovascular problems:** Excessive drinking can lead to high blood pressure, irregular heartbeats, and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Mental health disorders:** Alcoholism is often linked to mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.
- **Cancer:** Alcohol consumption is a known risk factor for several types of cancer, including mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and breast cancer.
- **Neurological damage:** Prolonged alcohol abuse can result in brain damage, leading to memory problems, cognitive impairments, and a higher risk of dementia.

### Societal and economic impact

Beyond the individual toll, alcoholism has a significant societal and economic impact. The consequences of excessive drinking include

- **Economic costs:** The economic burden of alcoholism includes healthcare expenses, lost productivity, and costs related to alcohol-related accidents and crime. In the United States, it was estimated to be \$249 billion in 2010.
- **Public safety:** Alcohol-related accidents, including drunk driving incidents, contribute to a substantial number of injuries and fatalities.
- **Family and social issues:** Alcoholism can lead to strained relationships, domestic violence, child neglect, and broken families.
- **Workplace productivity:** Employees struggling with alcoholism are often less productive and may miss work due to health issues or personal problems.

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Alcoholism is a pervasive issue that affects individuals, families, and societies at large. The statistics surrounding alcoholism emphasize the urgent need for prevention, early intervention, and effective treatment programs. Addressing alcoholism requires a multifaceted approach, including public health

initiatives, increased access to treatment, and destigmatization of seeking help. By understanding the extent of the problem and working collaboratively, we can reduce the burden of alcoholism on individuals and communities, ultimately improving public health and well-being.