

**RESEARCH SUMMARY**  
Date Compiled: May 2024

**Key takeaways from included research:**

- Researchers examined the impact of alcohol advertisements related to breast cancer awareness or charities on attitudes and beliefs. The study involved US adults viewing pinkwashed ads for beer, wine, and liquor. They found that breast cancer risk perceptions and intentions to purchase the products did not differ by ad type. However, when participants were informed about the link between alcohol and breast cancer, participants reported the ads to be more misleading and expressed greater support for requiring breast cancer warnings on products.
- A report was recently released examining whether the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with increased rates of high-acuity alcohol-related complications, instances when chronic alcohol-related diseases suddenly worsened requiring immediate medical attention. Researchers found that rates of high-acuity alcohol-related complications were statistically higher than expected in the 4-18 months of the pandemic after March 2020, especially among women aged 40-64 who experienced a 33.3-56.0% increase in complications.
- An Australian research team wanted to examine the concerns that zero-alcohol products may encourage adolescents' earlier interest in alcoholic products and increase their exposure to alcohol company branding and how this poses a challenge for parents. They found that parents reported conflicting and cautious views on these products. The parents expressed that zero-alcohol beverages support reduced adult drinking but were mainly unnecessary for adolescents and that these products could normalize alcohol consumption.
- A new study examined to what extent recent age and gender trends in binge drinking vary by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) identity. Researchers found that at the beginning of the study, LGBTQ+ women endorsed binge drinking at higher rates than their cisgender, heterosexual peers. Disparities in LGBTQ+ women's drinking diminished over the study period among midlife aged women due to increases in binge drinking among cisgender, heterosexual women. No evidence of disparities was seen among the men.
- A study was conducted in Australia to examine the proportion of drinking occasions and total alcohol consumed that takes place at off-premise locations. Researchers compared results in Australia, New Zealand, England, and Scotland and found that overall, a majority of drinking occasions among high-risk drinkers occurred at off-premise location in all four countries: 80.1% Australia, 72.0% New Zealand, 61.7% England, and 60.7% Scotland. They also determined that both high- and low-risk drinkers consumed significantly larger quantities of alcohol per occasion at off-premise compared to on-premise locations.

## **THE IMPACT OF “PINKWASHED” ALCOHOL ADVERTISEMENTS ON ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS: A RANDOMIZED EXPERIMENT WITH US ADULTS**

**May 2024**

**Objective:** To examine the impact of alcohol advertisements related to breast cancer awareness or charities (i.e., pinkwashed ads) on attitudes and beliefs.

**Methods:** In 2023, an online experiment randomized 602 US adults to view three pinkwashed ads for beer, wine, and liquor, or three standard ads for the same products.

**Results:** Breast cancer risk perceptions (average differential effect [ADE] = 0.03;  $p = 0.58$ ) and intentions to purchase the advertised product (ADE = -0.01,  $p = 0.95$ ) did not differ by ad type. When informed about the link between alcohol and breast cancer, participants who viewed pinkwashed ads reported the ads were more misleading (ADE = 0.51,  $p < 0.001$ ) and had stronger support for requiring alcohol breast cancer warnings (ADE = 0.23,  $p < 0.001$ ). The pinkwashed ads for beer (but not for wine or liquor) led to greater: perceived product healthfulness (ADE = 0.16,  $p = 0.03$ ), perceived social responsibility of the company (ADE = 0.18,  $p = 0.02$ ), and favorable brand attitudes (ADE = 0.14,  $p = 0.03$ ).

**Conclusions:** Informing the public about pinkwashing increases perceptions of misleadingness and support for alcohol policies.

**Policy implications:** Exposing the industry practice of pinkwashing could be a promising theme for campaigns to reduce alcohol consumption and increase support for alcohol policies.

**Source:** Hall, M. G., Lee, C. J., Jernigan, D. H., Ruggles, P., Cox, M., Whitesell, C., & Grummon, A. H. (2024). The impact of “pinkwashed” alcohol advertisements on attitudes and beliefs: A randomized experiment with US adults. *Addictive Behaviors*, 152, 107960.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0306460324000091>

## **HIGH-ACUITY ALCOHOL-RELATED COMPLICATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**April 2024**

**Importance:** Research has demonstrated an association between the COVID-19 pandemic and increased alcohol-related liver disease hospitalizations and deaths. However, trends in alcohol-related complications more broadly are unclear, especially among subgroups disproportionately affected by alcohol use.

**Objective:** To assess trends in people with high-acuity alcohol-related complications admitted to the emergency department, observation unit, or hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on demographic differences.

**Design, Setting, and Participants:** This longitudinal interrupted time series cohort study analyzed US national insurance claims data using Optum’s deidentified Clinformatics Data Mart database from March 2017 to September 2021, before and after the March 2020 COVID-19 pandemic onset. A rolling cohort of people 15 years and older who had at least 6 months of continuous commercial or Medicare Advantage coverage were included. Subgroups of interest included males and females stratified by age group. Data were analyzed from April 2023 to January 2024.

**Exposure:** COVID-19 pandemic environment from March 2020 to September 2021.

**Main Outcomes and Measures:** Differences between monthly rates vs predicted rates of high-acuity alcohol-related complication episodes, determined using claims-based algorithms and alcohol-specific

diagnosis codes. The secondary outcome was the subset of complication episodes due to alcohol-related liver disease.

**Results:** Rates of high-acuity alcohol-related complications were statistically higher than expected in 4 of 18 pandemic months after March 2020 (range of absolute and relative increases: 0.4-0.8 episodes per 100 000 people and 8.3%-19.4%, respectively). Women aged 40 to 64 years experienced statistically significant increases in 10 of 18 pandemic months (range of absolute and relative increases: 1.3-2.1 episodes per 100 000 people and 33.3%-56.0%, respectively). In this same population, rates of complication episodes due to alcohol-related liver disease increased above expected in 16 of 18 pandemic months (range of absolute and relative increases: 0.8-2.1 episodes per 100 000 people and 34.1%-94.7%, respectively).

**Conclusions and Relevance:** In this cohort study of a national, commercially insured population, high-acuity alcohol-related complication episodes increased beyond what was expected in 4 of 18 COVID-19 pandemic months. Women aged 40 to 64 years experienced 33.3% to 56.0% increases in complication episodes in 10 of 18 pandemic months, a pattern associated with large and sustained increases in high-acuity alcohol-related liver disease complications. Findings underscore the need for increased attention to alcohol use disorder risk factors, alcohol use patterns, alcohol-related health effects, and alcohol regulations and policies, especially among women aged 40 to 64 years.

**Source:** Shuey, B., Halbisen, A., Lakoma, M., Zhang, F., Argetsinger, S., Williams, E. C., ... & Wharam, J. F. (2024, April). High-Acuity Alcohol-Related Complications During the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *JAMA Health Forum* (Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. e240501-e240501). American Medical Association. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2817439>

### **“THEY START ON THE ZERO-ALCOHOL AND THEY WANNA TRY THE REAL THING”: PARENTS' VIEWS ON ZERO-ALCOHOL BEVERAGES AND THEIR USE BY ADOLESCENTS** March 2024

**Objective:** Zero-alcohol beverages containing 0.0–0.5% alcohol by volume may offer public health benefits if individuals use them to substitute for alcohol-containing products, thereby reducing alcohol use. There are, however, concerns that zero-alcohol beverages may encourage adolescents' earlier interest in alcohol and increase exposure to alcohol company branding. As this poses a challenge for parents, we studied parents' views on zero-alcohol beverages and their provision to adolescents.

**Methods:** We interviewed n=38 parents of 12–17-year-olds and used reflexive thematic analysis to interpret interview data.

**Results:** Parents considered zero-alcohol beverages to be 'adult beverages' that potentially supported reduced adult drinking but were unnecessary for adolescents. Parents were concerned that adolescent zero-alcohol beverage use could normalise alcohol consumption and be a precursor to alcohol initiation. There was a potential conflict between moderate provision in 'appropriate' contexts, and potential benefits, which were each supported by some parents. Uncertainty on health qualities was also reported.

**Conclusions:** Parents reported conflicting and cautious views on zero-alcohol beverage provision to adolescents.

**Implications for Public Health:** As evidence on the impacts of zero-alcohol beverage availability develops, parent-targeted messages highlighting the potential risk of normalisation of alcohol use for young people could be developed, in conjunction with broader policy responses.

**Source:** Harrison, N. J., Norris, C. A., Bartram, A., Murphy, M., Pettigrew, S., Dell, A. O., ... & Bowden, J. A. (2024). “They start on the zero-alcohol and they wanna try the real thing”: Parents'

views on zero-alcohol beverages and their use by adolescents. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 100119. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1326020023052962>

## **TRENDS IN BINGE DRINKING IN THE UNITED STATES BY LGBTQ+ IDENTITY, GENDER, AND AGE, 2014–2022** **April 2024**

**Background:** People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) have higher rates of risky drinking than their cisgender, heterosexual peers. It is unknown to what extent recent age and gender trends in binge drinking vary by LGBTQ+ identity.

**Methods:** We used nationally representative, serial, cross-sectional surveys from men and women in the 2014–2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (N = 2,099,959) to examine trends in past-month binge drinking by LGBTQ+ identity, gender, and age (18–29, 30–44, 45 and older). We estimated stratum-specific prevalence ratios for an average 1-year increase in prevalence of past-month binge drinking using survey-weighted log-binomial models, controlling for education, race/ethnicity, marriage, and parenthood status.

**Results:** In the beginning of the study period, LGBTQ+ women endorsed binge drinking at higher prevalences than their cisgender, heterosexual peers (i.e., 2014 predicted probability for women ages 30–44: 0.22 for LGBTQ+, 0.15 for cisgender, heterosexual). LGBTQ+ disparities in women's drinking attenuated over the study period among women in midlife (30–44 age group) due to increases in binge drinking among cisgender, heterosexual women (Prevalence Ratio [PR]: 1.025, 95% CI 1.018–1.033). Among men, we saw no evidence of LGBTQ+ disparities in binge drinking probabilities or in binge drinking trends across all age groups.

**Conclusions:** Disparities in mid-life binge drinking between LGBTQ+ and cisgender women have begun to diminish. These disparities are closing not because LGBTQ+ women are binge drinking less, but because cisgender, heterosexual women in midlife are binge drinking more.

**Source:** McKetta, S., Jager, J., & Keyes, K. (2024). Trends in binge drinking in the United States by LGBTQ+ identity, gender, and age, 2014–2022. *Alcohol, Clinical & Experimental Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.15333>

## **WHERE DO HIGH-RISK DRINKING OCCASIONS OCCUR MORE OFTEN? A CROSS-SECTIONAL, CROSS-COUNTRY STUDY** **April 2024**

**Introduction:** The current paper examines the proportion of drinking occasions and total alcohol consumed that takes place at off-premise locations. Comparisons are made between high-income countries: Australia, New Zealand, England and Scotland, and across drinker-types: high-risk and lower-risk.

**Methods:** Data were taken from the International Alcohol Control study in Australia (N = 1789), New Zealand (N = 1979), England (N = 2844) and Scotland (N = 1864). The cross-national survey measures location and beverage-specific alcohol consumption. The number of drinking occasions and mean consumption across on- and off-premise locations and the proportion of drinking occasions that high- and lower-risk drinkers had at on- and off-premise locations was estimated for each country.

**Results:** The majority of drinking occasions among high-risk drinkers occurred at off-premise locations across all four countries; Australia 80.1%, New Zealand 72.0%, England 61.7% and Scotland 60.7%. High-risk drinkers in Australia had significantly larger proportions of drinking occasions occurring at off-premise locations compared to England and Scotland. Across all countries, high-risk drinkers and

lower-risk drinkers consumed significantly larger quantities of alcohol per occasion at off-premise locations compared to on-premises locations. Finally, the majority of total alcohol consumed occurred at off-premise locations across all countries for high- and lower-risk drinkers.

Discussion and Conclusions: As the accessibility to alcohol outside of licensed premises continues to increase, particularly with the expansion of home delivery services, it is important to be mindful of the high proportion of heavy drinking occasions that occur off-premise.

**Source:** Torney, A., Room, R., Jiang, H., Huckle, T., Holmes, J., & Callinan, S. (2024). Where do high-risk drinking occasions occur more often? A cross-sectional, cross-country study. *Drug and alcohol review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13844>