



The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

Miles to Go: Inconsistency and Lower Sale to Minor Penalties Sends Wrong Message to Nebraska Retailers



The past year has brought significant changes to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC). A new executive director was hired in October 2025, two new commissioners began serving in December 2025, and significant staff turnover has resulted in a major loss of institutional knowledge.

The most pronounced example of this loss of institutional knowledge has been seen in the penalties given to businesses that sell alcohol to minors, which have ranged from [discounts with no reason given to 50 percent discounts for businesses with no history of sales in the last four years to a significant discount for a business that had a sale to minor on their record in the last three years](#) – the LCC's own penalty guidelines indicate that should have been two days of mandatory closure (no alcohol sales allowed) and 30 days of suspension at \$100 per day. Instead, the business, La Mesa Mexican Restaurant located at 11002 Emmet St. in Omaha, received 10 days of suspension at \$50 per day and were required to train their employees.

In total, the current LCC Commissioners have deviated down eight times to a penalty lower than what their guidelines recommended since taking over -- not once deviating up to a stronger penalty. For some of these deviations, no reason was given. For the most recent six deviations, all businesses had a clean lookback history (the last four years preceding the sale in question).

Of course, the LCC has discretion over how it penalizes businesses for violating our state's liquor laws. However, there is wisdom in staying consistent with the penalties in case they are challenged in court by retailers that perceive that they are not receiving the same favorable treatment that other businesses have received. It also stands to reason that businesses that sell alcohol to minors only to see penalties reduced -- sometimes without reason -- will be encouraged to continue selling to minors instead of correcting course.

In particular, the LCC has recently justified reducing the penalty because the businesses have "no history of sales." There are a couple of problems with this line of reasoning. First, the LCC already rewards businesses that have no official record of sales to minor in the last four years by treating the most recent sale as a first offense – even if they had multiple sales over four years ago. This allows the business to pay a \$50 per day fine instead of \$100 per day. This incentive is adequate for businesses to do the right thing and refuse the sale of alcohol to underage youth.

Second, there aren't enough resources to frequently conduct these checks. That means that while a business may not have failed a compliance check in the last four years, that

doesn't mean that they haven't sold alcohol to a minor on another day. These checks occur a few times a year at best and we can't even check all the businesses in Omaha in a given year – there are just too many.

Sales to minors are one of the most serious violations of our liquor laws, so much so that the Nebraska Legislature added language in 1999 to strengthen the penalties that businesses were facing at the time. Instead of just days of suspension that could be paid off as a fine, allowing repeat offenders to keep selling alcohol, [the legislature gave the LCC the authority to prevent those repeat offenders from being able to sell alcohol for up to 48 hours](#) to send a strong message that sales to minors will have economic consequences for the businesses that sell alcohol frequently to underage youth.

Miles to Go: 18 Omaha Area Businesses Sold Alcohol to Minors

OMAHA, Neb -- With school back in session and homecomings on the horizon, law enforcement conducted compliance checks in Cass, Douglas and Sarpy counties to ensure that retailers are refusing the sale of alcohol to minors as students prepare for their first celebrations of the school year.

18 (10%) out of 176 businesses checked were cited for selling alcohol to minors, with 10 of those businesses not even asking for the minor's ID. Over 95 percent of businesses that checked the ID refused the sale, and 100 percent of the businesses that passed the checks asked for IDs. Cass County had the highest non-compliant rate with 29% of businesses selling alcohol to the minor.



"These operations are an important reminder for businesses to have a strong policy for checking IDs and training staff to know what to look for," said Ralston Police Department Sgt. Jeremy Leifeld. "Most businesses don't intend to sell alcohol to minors, but more could be done on the front end to ensuring that it doesn't happen. We all want our kids back safe at the end of the night."

Two of the businesses cited are facing enhanced penalties due to a prior sale to minor within the last four years -- the "lookback" time frame used by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) to assess penalties.

- Spin Neapolitan Pizza, 248 Olson Dr, Papillion (12/2024);
- Superior Mart, 906 Webster Blvd, Plattsmouth (4/2024).

[Click here for full media release.](#)

Local view: Preventable tragedies demand action

by Project Extra Mile

Appeared in the Lincoln Journal Star on July 23, 2026

On July 9, at around 6:30 p.m., tragedy struck two young boys, their family, and our entire community. According to the Omaha Police Department, an impaired driver, who later tested above the legal limit, was traveling at nearly 100 mph when he slammed into a vehicle that was attempting to make a turn. The force of the crash was so severe that it split the impacted vehicle in half. In the back seat of that vehicle were two brothers, ages 10 and 5, with their entire lives ahead of them. Despite the efforts of emergency responders, both boys later died from their injuries.

We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to tragedies like this. There is much more we can and must do to prevent excessive alcohol consumption and impaired driving that leads to tragedies like this.

There is no single solution to a problem that has plagued our state and nation causing 178,000 deaths and nearly \$250 billion in economic costs each year, but there are evidence-based solutions that have worked to significantly reduce excessive alcohol consumption and its harms in other states and around the world. Many of them are policies that lawmakers can enact to change the environment in which individual decisions are made around alcohol consumption.

Some states are much better at changing that environment than others. They restrict how alcohol is sold, how it is advertised, and tax it more heavily to discourage binge and heavy drinking, leading to lower excessive consumption rates. Nebraska is not one of those states — over the past two decades, we consistently rank in the Top 10 worst binge drinking states in the nation. The latest data available shows that we are the third worst. This is due to outdated tax rates that haven't been increased to keep pace with inflation, tax cuts on emerging types of alcohol, hyper availability of alcohol in neighborhoods, and a lack of swift and meaningful penalties for illegal alcohol sales. Consequently, over 1,000 Nebraskans die each year due to excessive alcohol consumption, and our state has over \$1 billion in economic costs annually.

With regard to alcohol-impaired driving, studies have shown that a person can drive up to 2,000 times while under the influence of alcohol before being arrested. One study found that Nebraskans reported driving while intoxicated at a rate of 955 episodes (from Point A to Point B) per 1,000 population — that's nearly double the national average and the second worst rate at the time of the study.

Between 2015 and 2024, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported an average of 69 alcohol-involved fatality crashes in Nebraska involving a driver with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 or higher, this is approximately 28% of all fatal crashes in that timespan. An additional 14 fatalities per year involved a driver with a BAC between 0.01-0.08%. The Nebraska Highway Safety Office also reports an average of 572 serious and minor injury crashes involving an impaired driver between 2021 and 2025. These are injuries that seriously alter people's lives forever and could have been prevented with evidence-based policies.

Higher taxes reduce excessive drinking, binge drinking, youth alcohol use, impaired driving, and alcohol-related deaths. During the last Legislature, there was a bill that would have been monumental in reducing alcohol-related harms. It would have increased the state sales tax on alcoholic beverages by 10% and used a portion of the projected \$133 million in revenue to treat and prevent excessive alcohol use. That measure did not make it out of committee despite the state needing to address a \$640 million deficit.

We've seen higher taxes work in other states. Maryland implemented a 3% alcohol sales tax in 2011 and found that adult binge drinking declined by 17% over the following five years. High school alcohol use fell by 26%, youth binge drinking dropped by 28%, and alcohol-positive drivers between the ages of 21-34 declined by 12%. A 2009 tax increase in Illinois reduced fatal alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes by 26%.

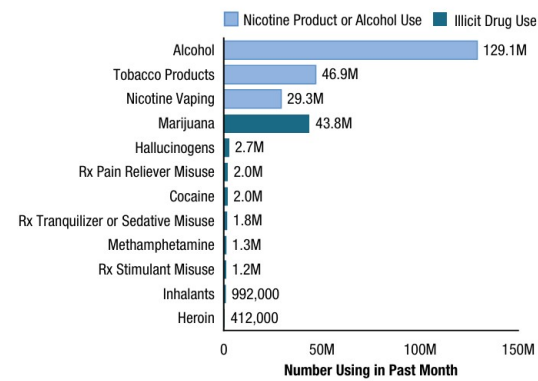
Policymakers cannot keep passing alcohol industry priorities and expect law enforcement to make alcohol-related crashes and crime disappear. We need our elected officials to recognize their role in preventing these harms and pass evidence-based policies that will save lives and make our communities safer.

Research Brief: New National Survey on Drug Use and Health Data Released

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has released the latest findings from the 2025 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). The data provides an updated snapshot of alcohol use across the United States. The survey found that [alcohol remains the most commonly used substance](#), with 129 million Americans ages 12 and older reporting alcohol use in the past month. Nearly 57 million people engaged in binge drinking during the past month, while 14.5 million also reported heavy alcohol use. Although underage drinking continues its long-term decline, excessive alcohol consumption among adults remains widespread, underscoring alcohol's

continued role as a leading preventable cause of injury, chronic disease, and death in the United States. The new findings reinforce the importance of evidence-based prevention strategies that reduce excessive alcohol use before harm occurs. Public health experts continue to emphasize policies that decrease excessive consumption—including increasing alcohol taxes, limiting excessive alcohol availability, enforcing impaired driving laws, and expanding alcohol screening and brief intervention in healthcare settings.

Figure 1. Past Month Substance Use: Among People Aged 12 or Older; 2025



Rx = prescription.

Note: The estimated numbers of current users of different substances are not mutually exclusive because people could have used more than one type of substance in the past month.

Figure 9. Past Month Alcohol Use: Among People Aged 12 or Older; 2021-2025

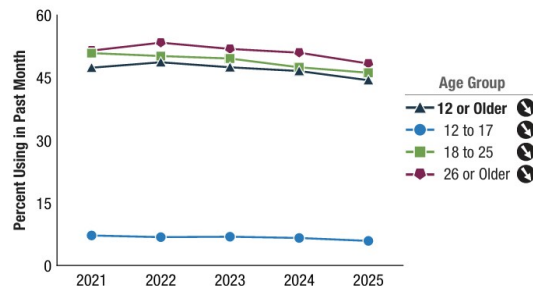
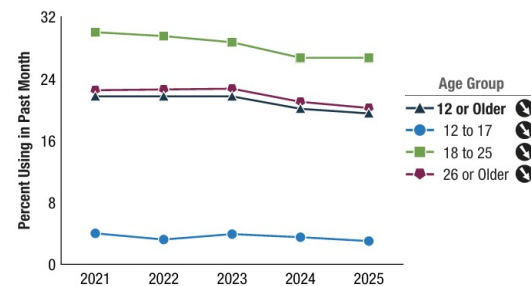


Figure 10. Past Month Binge Alcohol Use: Among People Aged 12 or Older; 2021-2025



Research Brief: Concerning Data Regarding Alcohol Use During Pregnancy



A national study found that [alcohol use among pregnant women increased substantially](#) from 2011 to 2024, with current alcohol use rising from 9.1% to 14.5%, binge drinking reaching 4.6%, and heavy drinking reaching 2.0% by 2023–2024. Because no amount of alcohol consumption is safe during pregnancy, these trends are concerning and highlight the continued need for prevention, screening, education, and policies to reduce these harmful behaviors and the associated harms. Reducing alcohol-related harms during pregnancy should remain a public health priority in Nebraska. A 2015 study found that Nebraska had the highest proportion of costs among all

50 states associated with alcohol use during pregnancy, totaling [\\$55.7 million, or 4.8% of the state's total alcohol-related costs](#). Strengthening prevention and early intervention can help Nebraska reduce preventable harms to pregnant individuals and their children.

We look forward to seeing you!



projectextramile
PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

OMAHA METRO COALITION MEETING

September 9, 2026 @ 9:00AM



UNO's Community Engagement Center
6400 University Drive South
Room 209 and via Zoom

**Please join us as we welcome the
Division of Behavioral Health
to discuss youth and adult
alcohol surveillance data.**



More Information :
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402-963-9047
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2026 Meeting Dates

January 21st

February 11th

March 11th

April 8th

May 13th

*No Meetings in
June or July*

August 12th

September 9th

October 7th

November 18th

December 9th



Meetings are held at
UNO's Community
Engagement Center
6400 University Drive South



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