

Wisconsin Epidemiological Profile on Alcohol and Other Drug Use, 2010

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Prepared by the Population Health Information Section, Division of Public Health, in consultation with the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

Funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services remains strongly committed to moving toward need-based funding of services through improved data collection and analysis. One important aspect of prevention services is the ability to track the needs of communities through epidemiological factors. Based on identified needs, resources can be allocated to address the problem using evidence-based programming.

Like its 2008 counterpart, Wisconsin's *2010 Epidemiological Profile on Alcohol and Other Drug Use* presents data on the use and abuse of alcohol and other substances in Wisconsin and the resulting consequences. This edition of the Profile again includes data at the county level, to make it more useful in understanding and addressing substance abuse problems in Wisconsin communities.

Key Findings

Consequences of Alcohol and Other Drug Consumption

Many types of mortality, morbidity, and dangerous criminal behavior have been linked to the use of alcohol and other drugs. Given Wisconsin's high rate of alcohol consumption, it is not surprising that the rates at which Wisconsin experiences the consequences associated with alcohol use also tend to be higher than the national average.

Since at least 2000, rates of alcohol dependence, alcohol abuse, and alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities have been higher in Wisconsin than in the United States as a whole. (Wisconsin's motor vehicle fatality rate fell just below the U.S. rate for the first time in 2008.) Wisconsin has one-and-a-half times the national rate of arrests for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated and more than three times the national rate of arrests for other liquor law violations. In 2004-2006 (combined years of data), Wisconsin also had the highest rate in the nation of self-reported drinking and driving; more recent data are not available.

Wisconsin's rate of alcohol-related motor vehicle deaths has decreased annually beginning in 2006, with a sharp drop in 2008. Wisconsin's rate of death from alcohol-related liver cirrhosis was below the national average prior to 2004, but the two rates have converged in recent years. Wisconsin's rate of other alcohol-related deaths (other than liver cirrhosis and motor vehicle) has increased since 2000.

The number of clients receiving publicly funded services for alcohol and other drug abuse decreased sharply from 2006 to 2008, returning to the level seen in 2000. Inflation-adjusted public expenditures for those services decreased 15% from 2006 to 2008 and 11% overall from 2000 to 2008.

Wisconsin's age-adjusted rate of drug-related deaths increased from 2000 to 2006, then leveled off in 2007 and fell in 2008, but was still double the 2000 rate. The statewide rate of

drug-related hospitalizations increased steadily from 2002 to 2008. Wisconsin's rate of arrests for drug law violations remains lower than the national average and has decreased somewhat over the past five years.

Alcohol Consumption

Wisconsin's rates of alcohol use and misuse are among the highest - if not the highest - in the nation. As of 2008, Wisconsin adults continue to have the highest rates of alcohol consumption, binge drinking and heavy drinking among all U.S. states and territories, and Wisconsin rates of underage drinking (ages 12-20) exceed national levels.

Alcohol consumption patterns among high school students provide somewhat better news. In recent years, the percent of Wisconsin high school students who started using alcohol before age 13 has been similar to the national average and decreasing, and Wisconsin no longer has the nation's highest rate of binge drinking among high school students. Binge drinking among young adults (ages 18-24) has also declined in Wisconsin since 2000.

Data for the years 2001-2008 consistently show that Wisconsin women of childbearing age are more likely to drink - and to binge drink - than their national counterparts. This has important implications for unplanned pregnancy and infant health.

Other Drug Consumption

The use of drugs other than alcohol also remains a problem in Wisconsin. As a whole, consumption patterns of illicit drugs in Wisconsin mirror national trends. Since 2001, both lifetime and current use of marijuana in the United States and Wisconsin have decreased.

Both nationally and in Wisconsin, the misuse of prescription drugs for non-medical purposes has emerged as a problem, especially among young adults. In 2007-2008, 15% of Wisconsin adults ages 18-25 reported using pain relievers for non-medical purposes.

Conclusion

Areas of progress and of continuing need are clearly identified in this report. For the first time since 1999, Wisconsin's rate of drinking among high school students fell below the national average in 2009. Combined with a steadily increasing age of initiation, and falling rates of underage binge drinking, Wisconsin appears to be improving in terms of youth alcohol use. Also, for the first time in many years, Wisconsin's rate of alcohol-related motor vehicle deaths has fallen below the national rate.

Despite this welcome evidence that underage drinking and alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities have dropped, it is important we continue to monitor these trends to ensure continued progress. Thus two continuing priorities are:

- Underage drinking (ages 12-20)
- Alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities and injuries (especially among people ages 16-34).

In less welcome news, Wisconsin continues to have the highest rate of adult binge drinking in the nation. In addition, drug-related deaths have doubled since 2008. Thus, new priorities are:

- Adult binge drinking (ages 18-34)
- Drug-related deaths (with a focus on unintentional opioid-related overdoses and deaths among people ages 20-54).

The Wisconsin rate of drug-related deaths increased from 2000 to 2007, and while there was a decline in 2008 it remained twice the 2000 rate. The rate of drug-related deaths surpassed mortality from alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in 2004 and has been higher ever since. Most of this increase appears to be due to misuse of prescription drugs rather than illicit drugs. The State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse has formed a Controlled Substances Workgroup that will be exploring this issue in depth and will release a report in 2011 with recommendations for improvement.

The economic and health costs of substance abuse in Wisconsin are substantial, as are the related costs to the community of arrests and criminal offenses. Focus on these key areas will be useful in guiding the State's funding decisions regarding which problems to address and which interventions to use.

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I Introduction

This report summarizes current data on the consequences and use of alcohol and other drugs in Wisconsin. The Executive Summary is followed by a narrative with charts and tables detailing key trends for Wisconsin in the consequences of alcohol and other drug use and in patterns of consumption. The Appendices provide information on indicator definitions, data sources, and sample sizes.

Data in this report primarily reflect trends at a statewide level. Where available, information by county has also been included.

In the sections on the consequences of alcohol and other drug use, this report includes data on both arrests and reported offenses. Both kinds of data have advantages and disadvantages. Reported offenses are not influenced by the laws and enforcement practices of a particular locality. Nevertheless, arrests provide a measure of the socioeconomic toll of these crimes. Data on reported offenses are only available for “index” crimes: burglary, theft, arson, motor vehicle theft, homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Arrest data are available for a wider range of crimes.