

CALL TO ACTION

TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT
NATIONAL POLICIES TO REDUCE
THE HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL

In 2014, HCC urged CARICOM Council For
Human and Social Development (COHSOD)
to develop a Caribbean Region-Wide
Comprehensive Policy on Alcohol

We now renew this call in the spirit of
THE FIRST ANNUAL HCC

CARIBBEAN ALCOHOL REDUCTION DAY
MISUSE OF ALCOHOL IS A BIGGER
PROBLEM THAN YOU THINK

DRINK LESS, LIVE BETTER



Alcohol and NCDs

The harmful use of alcohol, along with tobacco use, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, is recognized as one of four major common risk factors for NCDs.

Alcohol contributes to cancer, liver and heart disease, mental illness, violence, accidents and injuries. Much of this is preventable.

Globally the harmful use of alcohol is linked to **3.3 million preventable deaths annually**.

Alcohol caused over **300,000 deaths in the Americas in 2012 OR on average approximately one death every 100 seconds¹**.

Alcohol on the global NCD agenda

SDG 3 on health and well-being. Target 3.5: strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

NCD Global Monitoring Framework. Target: At least 10% relative reduction in the harmful use of alcohol, as appropriate, within the national context.

Alcohol on the regional NCD agenda

The PAHO Plan of Action for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the Americas 2013-2019. Specific Objective 2.2: Reduce the harmful use of alcohol. Indicator: Number of countries that by 2019 achieve a reduction of harmful use of alcohol from the level established at national baseline to the level established for interim reporting for the WHO Global Monitoring Framework, thus contributing to the global target of 10% relative reduction by 2025.

2016 Port of Spain (POS) NCD Summit Grid. Indicators: Written national alcohol policy/action plan; Legal blood alcohol content (BAC) for driving; Sobriety checkpoints/random breath testing; national anti-alcohol TV/radio campaign in last 24 months; Restrictions on sales (hours, days).

Harmful Use of Alcohol in the Caribbean

Men have higher rates of harmful use of alcohol than women, with **one in five men reporting binge drinking**. Rates of alcohol abuse are half or lower in women².

Grenada has the highest per capita consumption of alcohol among both males and females in the Americas³.

Among **youth in Trinidad and Tobago, males** have the **highest** and **females** the **third highest percentage**, of **Heavy Episodic Drinking** (more than 5-6 drinks in a sitting) in the Americas⁴.

In the **British Virgin Islands, Barbados, Dominica and St. Kitts & Nevis**, **42-65% of males** were identified as current **drinkers** and **10-21% of males** were identified as **problem drinkers** (more than 5 drinks at any one time)⁵.

In **Barbados** **¼ of all men reported binge drinking⁶**.

Women in the Americas have higher rates of alcohol use disorders than women in any other region⁷.

Alcohol and Young People in the Caribbean

Alcohol use in 13 to 15-year-olds exceeds 40% in 11 out of 20 countries⁸.

On average 1/3 of Caribbean students aged 13-15 years reported drinking at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days and 1/5 of students reported drinking so much alcohol that they were really drunk one or more times during their life with figures reaching in Jamaica as high as 53% and 35% respectively⁹.

Youth are heavily exposed to all forms of marketing - from direct advertising in the streets, bars, restaurants, outdoor billboards, sponsorships of sports and cultural events, in social media and on TV, radio, and other forms¹⁰.

Alcohol impact on Caribbean Households

Households in Trinidad and Tobago which reported alcohol consumption, were significantly more likely to report illnesses within the households, relationship problems, and behavioural and antisocial problems with children. Among households where a member was employed, those who consumed alcohol were nearly twice as likely to have a household member call in sick to work and 2.9 times as likely to have a household member suffer work related problems¹¹.

Alcohol Policies in the Caribbean

In the 2014 Civil Society Regional Status Report¹² reported 1 national alcohol policy in the region and thus called for:

- Policies on reduction in harm from alcohol: development, implementation and monitoring of national strategies on the reduction in harm from alcohol.

At the 19th Special Meeting of The Council For Human and Social Development (COHSOD) – Health in 2014, the HCC presented a case for urgent political action for the development of a Caribbean Region-Wide Comprehensive Policy on Alcohol.

Emerging out of this meeting the COHSOD:

- Agreed to make the reduction of alcohol-related harm a public health priority in the Caribbean;
- Agreed to revisit the 2011 PAHO/WHO Regional Plan of Action to Reduce Harmful use of Alcohol;
- Agreed to commence the development of a regional, culturally-relevant comprehensive policy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol
- Committed to taking action to develop and implement alcohol policy in every CARICOM Member State.

Today, although all CARICOM member states have some form of regulations governing alcohol only 1/15 CARICOM full member states has a comprehensive National Alcohol Control Policy.

¹ Regional Status Report on Alcohol and Health in the Americas, PAHO 2015

² POSDEVAL Fact Sheet

³ WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2014

⁴ WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2014

⁵ PAHO Non Communicable Disease Risk Factor Data

⁶ The Barbados Health of the Nation Survey

⁷ Health Impacts of Women's Alcohol Consumption, PAHO

⁸ POSDEVAL Fact Sheet

⁹ CDC Global School-based Student Health Survey

¹⁰ PAHO Meeting on Alcohol Marketing Regulation: Final Report

¹¹ The National Alcohol Survey of Households in Trinidad and Tobago (NASHTT)

¹² HCC Civil Society Regional Status Report on NCDs

HCC CALL TO ACTION

The HCC is committed to advocating for the introduction of a Regional Comprehensive Policy on Alcohol and supporting civil society organisations (CSOs) at the country level to advocate for national comprehensive policies for the reduction of the harmful use of alcohol.

Priority policy areas include:

Marketing of alcoholic beverages: comprehensive bans on alcohol marketing particularly to children and adolescents.

Pricing policies: Increase taxes on alcohol beverages and earmark revenue from those taxes for NCD prevention and control programmes.

Awareness and Political Commitment: Raise awareness of the public and CSOs about the magnitude of alcohol-related problems.

